“Tell me again exactly what happened,” Dad said, looking back and forth between Mom and me.

“When Chloe and I were walking to the neighborhood meeting, a lady saw our press pass and thought we were the two newspaper reporters chosen to cover the governor’s event. By the time we realized the problem, it was too late,” I explained. It was the third time I’d recounted the story to Mom and Dad.

“I hope you took lots of notes and pictures,” Mom commented.

“We did – and as soon as we finish our paper route tomorrow, we’ll come home and write the story,” I said, stretching and yawning. “It’s only 7:30, but this newspaper business is exhausting. I’m going to hit the sack,” I said, kissing Mom and Dad goodnight.

“Not so fast, Reporter Rover,” Mom said, stopping me in my tracks. “Woody, the governor of Kentucky came to our town tonight. Everyone – including Dad and me – expects to read about it tomorrow – not two days from now. You have to submit a story and picture to Mr. Dawson tonight, for tomorrow morning’s paper. He’s expecting a story from the two newspaper reporters he assigned to cover this event. He’s going to be plenty surprised when he finds out what happened.”

“But isn’t the newspaper office already closed?” I asked, scratching my head.

“News doesn’t stop at 5:00 every evening,” Dad answered. “In order for the news to be current, reporters are awake until the wee hours of the morning, covering and composing stories for the morning newspaper edition.”

I remembered when our local school football team won the state championship, Chloe and I couldn’t wait to wake up and see the front page of the paper. Now I realized someone had taken care of that while Chloe and I were fast asleep.

“You start writing the story while Chloe calls Mr. Dawson to explain the situation,” Mom instructed. “And Woody, don’t even think about using the typewriter. You can borrow the laptop.”

“I don’t even know how to begin,” I said, staring at a blank screen, while Chloe scrolled through pictures she had taken. Finally, I took a stab at it. My name’s Woody and I’m going to tell you about...

I deleted that sentence. Chloe and I had been reading the paper every day and I hadn’t seen any article begin that way.

Once upon a time...

I deleted that too. I wasn’t writing a fairytale.

“I’m having serious writer’s block,” I announced, feeling the pressure. Mr. Dawson told Chloe our deadline was 10:00. It was 7:45 and I hadn’t typed a single letter.

“Remember when Officer Payne talked about the 5 W’s?” Chloe asked. “He said if we saw something suspicious to report it like we would write a news story – stick to the facts and use the 5 W’s: who, what when, where, why.”

“Chloe, you’re a genius,” I exclaimed, before opening my notebook and looking at all the notes we took. We put a checkmark beside all the important facts and an x next to the things that weren’t important. Then we put the facts in order of importance and started our story with the most important fact. Once our story was complete, Chloe and I – along with Mom and Dad - each checked it three times to make sure we didn’t have any mistakes.

Although we emailed the story and several pictures to Mr. Dawson, we decided we should hand deliver the files. At 9:45, when we were usually sound asleep, we entered The County Courier and were amazed at what we saw.

“Why are so many people here?” I asked, shocked at the bustle of activity.

“We’re trying to put the paper to bed,” Mr. D. replied. I thought about our parents tucking us in and reading us a bedtime story. This didn’t look anything like our bedtime ritual. Mr. Dawson must have read my mind because he smiled and began explaining.

“Putting the paper to bed means we are making the final changes and putting the finishing touches on it before it’s printed. Some parts of the paper, such as feature stories, obituaries, letters to the editor, advertisements and classified, were ready hours ago. We’re still covering the breaking news people will want to read first thing in the morning,” Mr. D. explained, confirming what our parents had told us.

“Sam, the sports reporter, just completed his story of tonight’s big game and Jenny from the news department just sent pictures of the house fire on 5th street. The story of the governor is tomorrow’s lead story, so we definitely needed that. I’d just finished typing the banner when you folks arrived.” Mr. Dawson turned the computer monitor so we could see. My heart skipped a beat when I looked at the screen.