

# In a Surprise Move...

By Paula LaRocque

*Journalists don't speak as they write. If they did, it would sound something like:*

**Hack:** How were things at your vacation *facility*?

**Frack:** We had *wide-ranging* weather all season. One storm *dumped* more than seven inches of rain on our *densely wooded* lot, *spawning* hurricane-force winds and *golfball-sized hail*. Plus an *unprecedented* number of visitors arrived *amid* the facility restoration.

**H:** My, that must have *sparked burgeoning* confusion and *decimated* your plans for restoring your vacation site to a *state-of-the-art* facility. Was it sort of a *defining moment*?

**F:** It *spurred* a *major shift* in sleeping arrangements, *triggered sweeping changes* in the menu, and *fueled* a personal *economic crunch*.

**H:** What a *chilling effect*! How long were you *beleaguered* by this *worst-case scenario*?

**F:** The visitors left early, actually, but not before offending everyone, including a close friend and lifelong politician who *hails* from New York City and has *close ethnic ties*.

**H:** You say your friend is from *delegate-rich* New York?

**F:** Right. Anyway, yet another politician friend, *D-Dallas*, *weighed in* on the issue by calling for the visitors' *immediate withdrawal* from my vacation *site*. And that *provoked* a *firestorm of criticism*.

**H:** Awesome. Did that *level the playing field* and cause the visitors to leave your *strife-torn* facility?

**F:** Heck no. That was just the *cutting edge*. Next, they *targeted* my housekeeper, 45, and *launched* an unprovoked attack.

**H:** You mean they *fired a broadside* at her, too? Did a *heated debate* ensue? Did they *hurl verbal insults* at each other?

**F:** Too true. In effect, they *unleashed a new round* of difficulty, and the whole matter *escalated* to what some called "*critical mass*."

**H:** Which side *blinked* finally?

**F:** Well, *in a bizarre twist*, our *embattled* housekeeper resigned *amid allegations of wrongdoing*.

**H:** Too bad! Your guests actually *cited instances of infractions*?

**F:** Oh, a *litany*. Even a *laundry list*. But we're in the *midst of negotiations* and may be able to reinstate the popular employee.

**H:** Is the *bottom line* that there's a *thin line* between a *soft* and a *hard line*?

**F:** So it seems. *In the wake of* the controversy, there was a *sharp decrease* in the number of visitors to the summer facility.

**H:** A *sudden downturn*, a *free fall*, or a *steep decline*, I guess. Should we call it a *sea change* or a *ground swell*? Anyway, looks like you've won a *stunning victory*. Better than a *staggering defeat* any day!

**F:** I'm *cautiously optimistic*. But the same *scenario* could repeat itself all over again next year.

**H:** *Déjà vu!*

Paula LaRocque is a highly rated speaker and writing consultant who has worked with hundreds of groups in the United States, Canada, and Europe. She taught writing at Western Michigan, Texas A&M, Southern Methodist, and Texas Christian universities and was writing coach and assistant managing editor at The Dallas Morning News from 1981 through 2001. She is a columnist for Quill magazine and for The Dallas Morning News and author of "*Championship Writing: 50 Ways to Improve Your Writing*" (2000) and of "*The Book on Writing: The Ultimate Guide to Good Writing*" (Fall 2003, Marion Street Press). She served on the Associated Press Managing Editors Executive Board, and received the APME's Meritorious Service Award for exemplary contribution to journalism in 2001. She lives in Arlington, Texas, and Park City, Utah.