



SouthWest Sage

The Voice of SouthWest Writers

Volume 34, No 7

July 2018



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SWW members are invited to submit articles and information to the *Sage* and to the SWW website. Acceptance and printing is at the discretion of the editor. Contact Rose Kern at swwsage@swcp.com with proposals for new articles.



Lobby of the Navajo Lodge on June 9th.

Last chance! If you want a shot at being included in the "Best of the Sage" Anthology go to Page 22.

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KiMo book update: It is in its final revision. We have been invited to submit it to UNM Press and will hopefully be in a position to do that within a couple weeks.

I'd like to start this month by giving a big shout-out to all the people who made the Sci-Fi/Fantasy Conference a success. Thank you, to all the speakers and volunteers. And I'd like to especially thank the coordinator, Rose Marie Kern. Unless you've ever run a conference, it's hard to believe how much goes on behind the scenes. Thank you, Rose! I've heard nothing but good feedback. Also, thank you to all who attended.



As July kicks off with high temperatures and a hope for monsoons, I find myself indoors more than usual. I can't wait to see the rain fall and the desert awake. It's always amazing to me how little water it takes to turn New Mexico green.

The good part about being indoors? It's easier to carve out time to write. And summer—in spite of the heat and humidity of my Louisiana homeland—was always a time of joy. Three months off to ride horseback with my cousins, fish bayous with my grandmother, and ride bikes with friends until the sun finally set. And I was fortunate to have a mother who loved to travel and had at least part of the summer off from teaching, so it was also a time to travel and camp, and to discover faraway places. Southern Louisiana has no rocks, so Devil's Tower and the Grand Tetons blew my mind!

As I sit back and remember those days, I can hear wind through Smoky Mountain forests, smell crisp Alaskan air, see sunlight glistening off clear mountain streams, feel Death Valley's heat prickling my skin, and taste sweet steamed Maine lobster. The wonderful thing about being a writer is I can use those memories to fill out my work, green it up like the monsoon rains will soon green up my backyard. Can there be any better way to celebrate life?

Enjoy the summer, and happy writing!

SWW is on YouTube!

- Have you ever missed a SouthWest Writers meeting you wanted to attend?
- Do you ever wish you could go back and listen to your favorite speaker again?
- Are you a devoted member who just can't make it to Albuquerque twice a month?



If you've said yes to any of the above, you'll be happy to hear that we record many of our meetings and put them on YouTube for you to enjoy—for free! Go online to the YouTube homepage (www.youtube.com). Once you're there, go to the search box at the top and type in "SouthWest Writers." You'll get a

page with search results, some of which will be recordings of past meetings, and one of which will be the channel itself. The channel will have the SWW pen logo. Click on that, and you'll get to the **SouthWest Writers YouTube homepage!**



Help Support SouthWest Writers
SWW receives a commission on books ordered via the SWW website's link to Amazon.

Editing Services by Sarah Rowe

Specializing in science fiction and fantasy books. Services
Developmental Editing A look at large-scale elements such as narrative structure, style, voice, pacing, characterization, organization structure, and information content. Includes one round of editing (1-2 pages of comments) and up to half-an-hour discussion by phone. Books- 50,000-80,000 words: \$300 flat rate. Short fiction or creative nonfiction- 10,000-49,000 words: \$6/1000 words. Articles and short stories up to 10,000 words: \$60 flat rate.

Content Editing: Checking for issues on the paragraph and sentence level such as sentence structure, flow, voice, style, logic, dialogue, and transitions. Includes two rounds of editing (with time for you to make revisions in between) and up to an hour discussion by phone. Books- 50,000-80,000 words: \$500 flat rate. Short fiction and creative nonfiction- 10,000-49,000 words: \$10/1000 words. Articles and short stories up to 10,000 words: \$100 flat rate.

Fact Checking: Checking the validity of details in an informative piece, from concepts to the spelling of names. Author must provide copies of or links to all references. Articles up to 10,000 words: \$250.

Proofreading On previously edited works only. A last pass to catch typos, consistency errors, and other small mistakes. Can also check for agreement with a style guide upon request. \$8/1,000 words.

Sarah_Rowe@outlook.com (575) 425-1563

Taking off the Uniform

By Jim Tritten

Jasmine and I entered the medicine circle, arm in arm, from the east, the direction of the rising sun and the new day. Dusty tan stones lined the sandy path to the center. The acrid tang of burning sage hung in the air. We turned to the south and walked to the makeshift altar. We poured cool water from an earthen jug over each other's hands, and the water dripped into a large yellow and red basin. We dried our hands on thin cotton towels, smiled at one another and turned around to face the center of the circle. Our medicine man, David Singing Bear, a Marine Corps veteran of Cherokee descent, chanted while he waited for us with a Storm Cloud ceremonial blanket. He unfolded the sacred cloth, woven in red and black, grey and white, and raised it to the sky. He called on his gods to bless us as a couple, and me as a returning service member. Based on Native American rituals that welcome home warriors after battle, this ceremony was the culmination of an eight-day retreat the National Veterans Healing & Wellness Center in Angel Fire, New Mexico.

David draped the woolen Storm Cloud over our heads and shoulders. Jasmine and I, who had been married then for 20 years, spoke to each other in total privacy. I thanked her for being there for me when I needed her most, when I was at the deepest depths of PTSD. David resumed his chant and we emerged. He continued his song, and I felt lighter, as though a burden had been eased.

We walked back to the center of the circle and turned to the north, and there stood two colonels, one in Air Force blue, and one in Army green. They stood at attention, next to a sculpture of a rifle with bayonet in the ground, helmet on the stock. I adjusted my frame, stood ramrod straight, felt my heels click together, and raised my right arm. I executed a very crisp, very Navy salute. They slowly returned the salute and said, "Welcome home, Sailor."

I remember dropping my arm, and not much else. My chest shuddered, eyes shut against the sting of tears, and I lost all sensation of sound, smell, or my feet touching the ground. Jasmine took my elbow and led me back out through the center of the medicine circle, along the sandy path lined with stones. The first thing I saw through the tears, and the first thing I could feel was the rest of my fellow veterans and their spouses, my village, my community, clapping me on the back, hugging me with abandon, welcoming my return. I had taken off the uniform twenty-seven years earlier, but today I was finally home.



"Taking off the Uniform," previously appears in *As You Were: The Military Review*, November 2016, <http://militaryexperience.org/taking-off-the-uniform/> This story won 1st place in the 2018 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Jim Tritten is a retired Navy pilot who lives in Corrales with his Danish author/artist wife and five cats.

Sci-Fi/Fantasy Writer's Conference Opens Doors

The Science Fiction/Fantasy Writer's conference brought SWW members a new genre of writing events and information. Topics ranged from genre specific to solid general information concerning the business and craft of writing.

Praise was high for the Great Publishing Debate which opened the event. Both the Traditional Publishers and those advocating Self-Publishing put forth valuable advice and information enthusiastically while offering varying points of view.

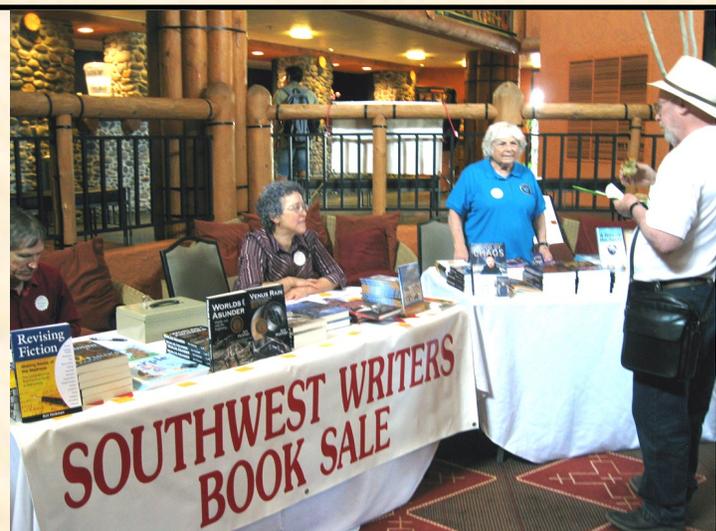


Eric Michael Craig, Robin Cutler, Director of Ingram Spark, and Zachry Wheeler promote the benefits of Self-Publishing. *Picture by M.K. Stein*



Betsy James and Judith Avila keep the pitch sessions moving along!

Picture by Larry Greenly



Kathy Wagoner and Joyce Hertzoff managed the book table at the conference. *Picture by Larry Greenly*



R.J. Mirabal discusses methods of creating fantasy races for Fantasy books that depart from your run-of-the-mill elves, dragons, and vampires.

Picture by Larry Greenly



Traditional Publishing team Marty Gerber (Terra Nova Books), Geoff Habiger (Artemesia Publishing) and Kurt Mueller (Speaking Volumes) pointed out what services they perform for authors during the Great Publishing Debate. *Pictures by M.K. Stein*

Survey forms turned in after the event indicated approval and enthusiasm for the conference. Over half of the attendees took advantage of the opportunity to pitch their work to the publishers. Although it was announced well in advance that there would be two tracts of presentations, many people indicated they would have liked to see ALL of them.

Kudos for the Conference Team!

By conference manager Rose Marie Kern

In 2017 SWW put out a survey to the readers asking for input on speakers and conferences. For the first time we had a large number of our members requesting a science fiction/fantasy writers conference.

The road to the conference had some major stumbling blocks, but it all came together on June 9th at the Navajo Lodge in Albuquerque.

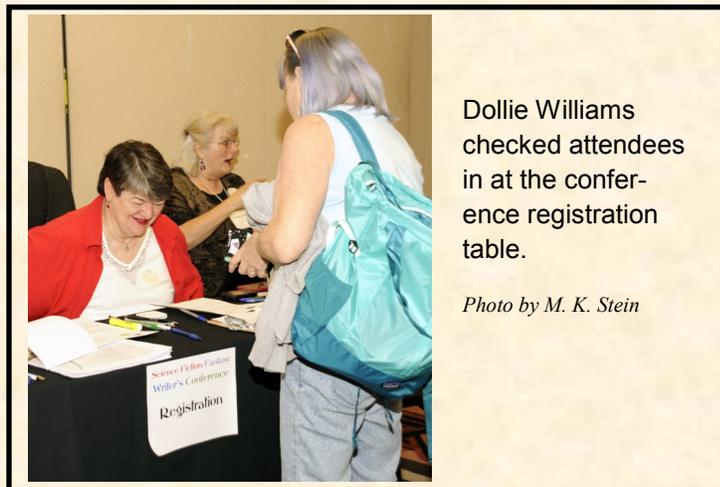
We want to extend our thanks to the key players in this endeavor. Several SouthWest Writer members answered the call for volunteers for which I am very grateful.

I'm going to start with the general helpers who pitched in and helped us move boxes, set up and later take down booths, signs and media equipment. A big thank you goes to the ones who showed up early including Paul Shank, Kathy Wagoner, Sarah Baker, Laura Arrasmith, Catalina Rowe, and Joyce Hertzoff.

Of course, those who were there all day were pretty tired at the end, so it was a blessing to have Linda Neal and Frank Stephens say behind to help with clean up and tear down!

Dollie Williams managed the Registration Table with some backup by Caitlin Rowe and Joanne Bodin. Gayle Laurandun and Don DeNoon shared the volunteer check in table responsibility. Kathy Wagoner and Joyce Hertzoff ran the SWW book table which gave the speakers a place to display their talents and Laura Arrasmith ran the Raffle Table.

Since we were running two presentation tracks, Sarah Baker shared the awesome responsibility with me of in-



Dollie Williams checked attendees in at the conference registration table.

Photo by M. K. Stein

roducing our line-up of illustrious speakers. Judith Avila and Betsy James rode herd on the authors waiting to pitch their books to the publishers.

Of course, behind the scenes were those whose efforts were less visible but very important. Thanks to Su-Ellen Lierz who lent a hand with publicity. Office Manager Larry Greenly kept track of the attendee registrations. Both he and member Mary Kay Stein took pictures for the Sage!

From the beginning Dollie Williams and Sarah Baker helped with the planning and with holding my hand when frustrations hit.

Thanks to Dollie, Zachry Wheeler and Eric Michael Craig for their help in spreading the word through the SciFi community about the event.

The biggest complaint that I heard from attendees was that they really enjoyed having a variety of topics, but wished they didn't overlap because they wanted to see it all!



Melinda Snodgrass shows how methods she uses to write scripts in Hollywood can be used in creating a compelling story.

Photo by R.M.Kern

Create a World Your Readers Can Buy Into

By Kirt Hickman

Jake Scranton shifted in the driver's seat of the old stagecoach as his team's fidgeting grew more violent. "Easy girls."

His partner, Buckshot Bill, gave him an uneasy glance—the company had already lost one coach in this canyon—and cocked both barrels of the shotgun cradled in his arms.

A tendril of dirt and pebbles trickled down the side of the sandstone cliff to their left.

Jake undid the clasp on his own holster. He scanned the ridge, but saw nothing more until a rifle shot echoed throughout the canyon.

The bullet slammed Bill against the back of his seat. The man slumped forward and fell from the stage. His shotgun tumbled to the floorboard and fired. The blast splintered the brake lever and Jake's startled team lunged forward.

Behind them, Bad Bart and a dozen of his worst men rounded the corner, whooping in anticipation. The thunder of hooves drowned out the racket of the stage and its cargo.

Panic coursed through Jake's blood as he fumbled the reins into his off hand and dialed the sheriff. *C'mon. Pick up. Pick up.*

"Forget it," Buckshot said from the seat beside him. "You'll never get a signal way out here."

The approaching bandits rode their animals up to surround the coach. All drew weapons of one sort or another. Bart raised his blaster. "Thou art mine!"

Where did this piece fall apart? When Jake drew a cell phone instead of his six-shooter? When Bill appeared beside him after tumbling from the stage? When the bandits' horses and guns became generic "animals" and "weapons of some sort or another"? Or when Bart raised a blaster and started spouting Shakespearean dialog?

Consistency:

This story lost its credibility when you, the reader, detected inconsistencies in the world I created. Though this example is exaggerated, it makes my point clear. Build your world carefully, completely, and with consistency, or your reader won't buy into it.

Regardless of your genre, ask these questions about your world before you write^[1]:

What are the moral codes? What are the predominant beliefs and values (even prejudices) of the various people who live there?

What is the economic state? Are people wealthy? Poor? Divided? How is commerce handled? Through money? Barter? Information? Something else?

What is the domestic political structure? Does it work for the people (particularly for your main characters)? Why or why not?

What is the world political environment? Is it stable? Are countries at war? Who is the dominant power and why?

What is the predominant religion (or religions)? Are people advanced enough to understand the difference between religion, philosophy, natural philosophy, and magic?

If there's magic, how does it work?

What is the level of scientific achievement? What are the preferred forms of transportation and communication? What is the state of medicine? Does your world have any unique technologies? If so, how do they influence the lives of your characters?

How does day-to-day life differ from that of your reader?

In science-fiction or fantasy writing, you'll largely make this stuff up. For historical writing, or for a piece set in another country or culture, you must do sufficient research to get the details right. Either way, these characteristics must mesh into a coherent whole? Your character, setting, props, and language must be consistent with that whole.

Beware anachronism!

Specificity:

Finally, populate your world with specific, concrete details. Not just canyon walls, but sandstone cliffs. Not animals, or even horses, but green-broke mustangs. This is what will capture your reader's imagination. This will make your world real.

Consider the following passage:

Amanda moved away from the dangerous equipment to a safer location near the wall.

Does the word "equipment" invoke an image or emotion? Does it reveal anything about Amanda or the world in which she lives? Does it bring the story to life? No, because it's not specific.

Watch what happens when I replace the equipment and dangers in this passage with specific details:

Liquid helium whistled past the breached valve with the wail of a wounded banshee, 272 degrees below zero, cold enough to freeze human flesh in microseconds. Amanda dove for the far wall, where the stream of evaporating helium dissipated into the heat of the temperature-moderated maintenance chamber. Just beyond the bulkhead, super-heated gasses, the life-blood of the terraforming project, roared through pipes as big around as a docking collar. An incessant, numbing vibration shook the floor.

A few well-chosen details, molded into the action of your scenes, can transform your world from a mere silhouette into a living, breathing reality that your readers can buy into.

[1] This is an expansion of a similar list given to the author by Eileen Stanton in her critique of *Worlds Asunder*.



Kirt Hickman was a technical writer for fourteen years before branching into fiction. His methodical approach to self-editing has helped many make sense of the mass of advice available to the novice writer. He has contributed a monthly column titled "Revising Fiction" to the SouthWest Sage. He has also written *Mercury Sun*, two children's books, and the award-winning writers' guide, *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness*.

Upcoming Workshops

These workshops take place after the regular Saturday meetings from 12:30pm to 2:30pm.

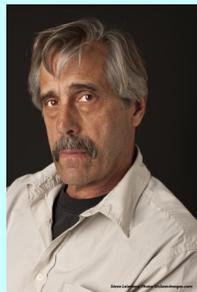
August 4th
Bob Kidera



September 1
Melody Groves



October 6th
Spontaneous Writing
With Gerald Hausman



November 3rd
Rose Marie Kern



December 1st
Betsy Moffett
Spinning Stories Into Gold

More information about the workshops and speakers is available on the SWW Website Workshops page. All workshops cost \$20 for SWW members, \$25 for OSHER members and \$30 for non-members.

Next Workshop

July 7th



Can You Relate?

With Judith Avila

Learn to create characters that you love by immersing them in the details of the world around them. Their relationships with each other—and with the place they live, the car they drive, the job they work at every day—strengthen your narrative. Realistic relationships add tension and conflict to your story, while flat relationships will kill it. Don't let that happen to you! Whether good or evil, your characters should convince you, and everyone who reads your book, that they are absolutely real.

Judith Avila, a graduate of Duke University, discovered writing after working as an air traffic controller and a computer consultant.

In 2007, she convinced Navajo code talker Chester Nez that his story needed to be heard. Chester, the last of the twenty-nine original Navajo Code Talkers of WWII, agreed with some trepidation. Judith recorded Chester's narrative for three years, then determined how to structure it and commit it to paper. She wrote a proposal, found an agent, and sold the memoir to Penguin's Berkley Caliber division. The resulting work, *Code Talker: The First and Only Memoir by One of the Original Navajo Code Talkers of WWII*, has sold upwards of 130,000 copies and is still going strong. It won the New Mexico Presswomen's Zia Award and the New Mexico-Arizona Book Award. National Public Radio selected *Code Talker* to read on-air.

Speakers for the July Meetings

Saturday, July 7 10am-Noon Marketing, Research and Fortitude for Authors By Marcia Fine

What It Takes to Break through in the Independent Publishing World and Sell Books!

This presentation is a glimpse into the options you have for marketing your book. It is a talk about public relations, social media, book events and other creative ideas to get your books noticed!



Award-winning author and speaker **Marcia Fine** has written seven novels, including *THE BLIND EYE*—A Sephardic Journey, historical fiction chosen by the state library of Arizona for ONEBOOKAZ 2015. *PAPER CHILDREN*—An Immigrant’s Legacy has been a finalist for three national prizes. *PARIS LAMB*, her sixth novel, deals with anti-Semitism in the 1950s. She has also written the only satirical series about Scottsdale. Her novel, *HIDDEN ONES* released in 2017, examines conversos in Mexico during the Inquisition. It has won First Prizes in the categories of Historical Fiction and Multicultural as well as Honorable Mention from AZ Authors. It is a finalist for the International Chaucer Chanticleer Awards. Marcia has a BA from Florida State University and a Masters from Arizona State University.

Tuesday, July 17 – 7-9pm

RESEARCH BETWEEN THE EARS

RJ MIRABAL



Conducting research between the ears for your book before going online or even getting out of bed is an important early step in the writing process. Though world building is essential to most any fantasy or science fiction novel, other genres require the writer to envision and plan the appearance, geography, and function of their setting. More than setting, it is creating a universe your reader will inhabit and it has to be consistent and believable. RJ will share his experience and offer advice to writers of all genres.

RJ Mirabal has lived in the Middle Rio Grande Valley for most of his life. Recognized with awards for his teaching, he is now retired, pursues writing and music while volunteering with various organizations. All three books of his New Mexico-based *Rio Grande Parallax* series were Finalists in the New Mexico/Arizona Book Awards in the Fantasy/Science Fiction category. Website/Blog: <https://rjmirabal.wordpress.com/>

Speakers for Upcoming SWW Meetings

August 4	Jonathon Miller
August 21	Loretta Hall
Sept. 1	Jane Lindskold
Oct. 6	Gerald Hausman
Oct. 16	Rose Marie Kern
Nov. 3	Laura Mixon

More information about upcoming speakers for SWW Meetings is available on the SWW website:

www.southwestwriters.com



A FOURTH TO REMEMBER

By Evelyn Neil

The barrage of explosions shattered the pre-dawn Wyoming solitude and signaled the arrival of the first Fourth of July since the end of World War II.

I leaped from my bed. The celebration had begun.

The aroma of cigarettes and fresh coffee along with the soothing sound of my parents' muttered conversation beckoned me to the kitchen. Still in my night gown, I slid into my place at the breakfast table.

My little brother, Jay, climbed onto his chair and rubbed the sleep from his eyes. "When can we light firecrackers?"

"Later." Mother placed a bowl of oatmeal and a glass of milk in front of each of us. "Now eat."

After breakfast, Jay and I stood with our parents on Main Street in the mid-morning sun and watched the two-block long parade led by a grizzled cowboy wearing a denim shirt, Levis and a new white Stetson. Old Glory unfurled high over his spirited chestnut mare's rump. Cowboys and cowgirls of all ages astride nervous, prancing horses followed close behind. A Shetland pony pulling a red, white and blue cart carrying a 55-gallon steel drum was flanked by clowns with scoop shovels. Majorettes in red satin blouses, tall white boots and short blue skirts strutted in front of the high school

band sweating in their red wool uniforms. The strains of *Stars and Stripes Forever* blocked the crackle of nearby firecrackers. A white-bearded Uncle Sam waved a black stove-pipe hat from atop his sleek black stallion.

Later, we ran alongside Daddy as he carried our box of fireworks to the park where everyone gathered to celebrate. He handed us each two boxes of black snakes. With the cigarette lighter from his khaki shirt pocket, the one with his name below the Conoco patch, he lit two sticks of punk.

"Light them on the sidewalk. Don't burn yourselves."

Round black pellets tumbled out of the ripped boxes. We lined them up and lit each in turn with the red-tipped punk. Marvelous black snake-like ash twisted and curled out of each pellet. A mob of barefoot kids gathered around. I held my breath to see how long each snake would grow. A boy dashed across the sidewalk, kicked the most perfect one and took off across the park. Black ash scattered in the breeze. The only evidence left was the round black spot on the concrete.

"Hey, Tommy, you jerk," I yelled. "You ruined my best snake."

Daddy joined his Coors-drinking buddies on the other side of the park to play horseshoes. After several beers, they began putting cherry bombs under empty Maxwell House coffee cans and lighting the short fuses. KABAM! The cans sailed aloft. These grown-up boys whooped and hollered and slapped one another on the back after each explosion. Jay and I sat on the grass with our hands over our ears.

"Come eat," My mother shouted. She and the other apron-wearing women had assembled platters of fried chicken, bowls of potato salad, baked beans, fruit pies and chocolate cakes along with churns filled with homemade ice cream on long tables made of saw horses and planks covered in gingham oil cloth.

I took my overflowing blue enamelware plate and cup of lemonade and sank onto the grass under a leafy box elder tree. Tommy, plate in hand, plopped down.

"Sorry I killed your snake."

"It was my best one, too." I tried to look dismayed, but started to giggle.

The northern summer evening faded to darkness as we devoured the last bites of apple pie and ice cream. Mosquitoes the size of hornets landed on my arms and legs. I slapped and swatted. Each one left behind a spot of blood and an itchy red welt.

"Here, Eva." My father handed me two sputtering sparklers.

I took the fiery rods and inhaled the acrid smoke. The buzzing mosquitoes shied away as I jumped and twirled amid the gold sparks as free as the mystical Firebird. As my bare feet skimmed the tips of the prickly grass, I felt no pain when an errant hot spark bit into my arm. As the last glimmer of gold sailed into the night, I sensed a loss similar to when I had blown out the eight candles on my birthday cake in March. I wanted this day to never end.

For the finale, the men rigged a five-foot piece of steel pipe onto the tailgate of a battered pickup truck. My uncle, Charlie, held a sky rocket over the end of the launch pipe while Daddy lit the dangling fuse with his cigarette lighter. Charlie dropped the rocket into the pipe. Everyone ducked and waited. I held my breath. The rocket soared higher than the lodge-pole pines, as high as the millions of twinkling stars before bursting into a shimmering spray of gold and silver sparkles raining toward earth. I sucked in new air. "OH! OOH! AW!"

The next rocket, with a mind of its own, swished up the chute, skimmed the chimney of a nearby house and disappeared into the darkness. No one moved. The eerie silence was broken by a thunderous bang, followed by a loud clang like a load of tin cans dumped into a trash bin.

"What the hell?" a man shouted.

Everyone raced through the alley to the next street. A rotund man rubbing his head was on his back in the dirt in front of a Diamond Rio truck. My father helped the dazed fellow to his feet, dusted off his denim bibs and handed him a Coors. The truck driver took a long slow swig of the cold beer, looked us over and grinned.

"Damnedest thing. I climbed on that there powder box with my flashlight to check the oil in my truck. Some damned sizzling thing flew right in there with me. I fell back. Knocked the hood rod loose with my head when it exploded. Scared the hell out'a me, it did."

* * * * *

Evelyn Neil grew up on the prairies of southeastern Wyoming during World War II. She moved to New Mexico in 1957 and earned a degree in business education from the University of New Mexico. She began writing in 2014 following retirement from the petroleum equipment company she and her late husband Don founded in 1972.

Evelyn has been published in *From the Frontlines to the Home Front*. Her work has also appeared in Southwest Sage and is due to be published soon in the Ageless Authors' Anthology. She is active in Southwest Writers and Write Stuff critique group. Evelyn serves on the boards of the Guild of the Santa Fe Opera and of the Friends of the UNM College of Education.



Want to Write a Memoir?

SWW hosts a memoir writing group which meets at the North Domingo Baca multigenerational center on Carmel (just north of Paseo del Norte and West of Wyoming) on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. This is a SWW program and it is free of charge to anyone who wants to attend. For more information contact

Gabriella Savarese savaresegabriella@gmail.com



Driving to Deming

By Gayle Lauradunn

The gossamer rhythms of piano jazz ripple through the car and out over the landscape of boulders and bulging mountains where above the horizon three tent shaped peaks appear. From here they look like this. From there they look like that. Which should I believe under a cerulean sky sprinkled with delicate fleece? I thought of asking you but our resolve would not survive such a question. The jazz voice murmurs, a hint of blues. You increase the volume. I reach out to touch you. You reach for the clouds layer them over us like adamants. The ballast. The vacancy of brilliance.

5 WAYS TO ADD MORE PUNCH TO YOUR STORY:

WRITING REALISTIC ACTION SCENES

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2018

Instructor: Melody Groves

Ever wonder how writers suck you into their stories? How they make readers feel every punch, every shoulder bump, every banging of head against the blank computer screen? You can, too!

→EVERY GENRE USES ACTION SCENES←

There are tricks to writing believable action and I'll share them with you.

Action scenes should:

1. Give readers a deeper understanding of the character's motivations
2. Propel your story forward and have consequences for your characters, whether immediately or down the road.
3. Keep readers engaged
4. Make sure it rings true
5. Be unique

Instructor Biography:

Eight-time award-winner **Melody Groves** is the author of six historical fiction novels, three non-fiction books. Her dozens of magazine articles appear in Wild West, True West, New Mexico Magazine, enchantment Magazine and many more. Past-president of SouthWest Writers, she's also a member of Western Writers of America. And when not writing, she plays rhythm guitar in the Jammy Time Band.

Questions? melodygroves@comcast.net

A Light Dusting of History



An Encounter with the Pony Express

By Stan Rhine

US highway 50 wends its unfrequented way across the empty, arid miles of central Nevada. The tranquility of this undulating basin and range passage is infrequently broken by such widely spaced urban clusters as Ely, Eureka, Austin and Fallon. Nevada fittingly deems this 350+-mile traverse “America’s Loneliest Highway.”

Reaching the deserted junction of Nevada Highway 892 with US 50 east of Eureka, we turned north. To our left were the Diamond Mountains, with 10,614-foot Diamond Peak just a few miles past the junction. US 50 had been mile after mile of open range; here were fences, and as we passed Newark Dry Lake, the desert startlingly metamorphosed into irrigated cropland. This brief patch of bright green fields and sloughs along Newark Lake was antipodal to the arid brownness that prevails elsewhere throughout central Nevada.

The green soon faded behind us, and after 35 miles almost due north up the Huntington Valley, the pavement ended. The road continued, asphalt-free, nearly 40 miles farther north to Jiggs, then another 28 to I-70 at Elko. We craved not the regimentation of the divided highway, but the freedom of the truly open road, where if you should happen to meet a car—or more likely, a pickup—its driver would wave. Our immediate goal, Railroad Pass (one of at least four such-named passes in the state), was only another 19 miles to the north and west. It looped around, eventually returning to US 50 at Austin.

A few miles before we came to the Railroad Pass turnoff, we stopped. An ephemeral dirt road arrowed eastward across the rolling Huntington and Long Valleys. Another faint trail led to the west. This remote intersection was marked only with a small sign identifying the crossing trail as the Pony Express route.

Turning southwesterly off the Overland Trail in central Wyoming Territory in the early 1860s, the route of “the Pony” angled down across the Salt Lake Valley and into Nevada. A Pony Express Station was located in the Butte Valley near Cherry Creek, about a third of the way from what is now Ely north to Humboldt Wells (now Wells, Nevada). From the station the trail climbed up through a saddle in the low Butte Mountains. Looking far to the east from where we stood, that saddle was visible, connecting to the little track in front of us.

The money-losing Pony Express lasted only 18 months, but created a legacy that has persisted for over a century and a half. Starting on April 3, 1860, “wiry lads” (“orphans preferred” said the advertisements for the teen-aged riders) pounded across here on horseback, hightailing it from the last outpost of civilization in Missouri to San Francisco in the ten-year-old State of California. Across the prairies, through the mountains, crossing deserts, fording streams, dodging cactus, they galloped. Through moonless nights and blazing noon-day suns, skirting sometimes-hostile Natives, through rain and snow, day after day, they galloped.

A small dust cloud swirls in the distance.

Is it the Pony Express?

Out here in the middle of Nevada’s Great Basin Desert all the usual trappings of modern life—fences, power and telephone poles, contrails overhead, houses, paved roads, the roar of traffic and the hubbub of people, are absent. You could almost imagine that by squinting and listening carefully, you could see that trace of dust becoming a plume, growing larger, closer—then, in a flurry of hoofbeats, the rider is upon us. Lightweight saddlebags slapping against the horse’s sweat-glistened flanks, he thunders past. With a whoop and a wave he disappears into a swale. Dust engulfs us. You can taste the dust of his passage.

The sun beats down. A meadowlark pours forth its song. The moment is gone.

The Pony Express is gone.

Lasting only until the transcontinental telegraph was completed, its fragrant memory pervades the halls of western history down to this very day.

Stan Rhine is an articulate mystery wrapped in an enigma shrouded by Peripatetic silence. Until he breaks down and actually sends a bio to go with his stuff, I’ll leave it at that.



The Lantern

By Harule Stokes

Darkness filled my hollow core for such a long time I'd forgotten what light felt like. I could no longer find memories of warm illumination, could no longer feel it lift my spirit on dark days. I sat in that darkness and remained ignorant of what life felt like to exist in anything but the shadows. That space became my home and I learned to not only endure it, but enjoy my stay therein. It was safe in the gloom, because I knew it. I mastered my navigation within its rocky seas, accepting the crashes, satisfied only with the fact they didn't shatter me.

Everything changed when I saw the light.

There it stood, defiant before the shade, inscrutable to it and subsequently, myself. How could such a thing exist in the midst of this army of night? How could it beam its warmth, give it away so freely, and not be consumed by it? How could this light pass so easily through the moon-less landscape and never be marred or dimmed by the roughened environment? Yet, there it stood, joyfully giving its energy to the world with a bright smile and a sunny disposition. Then, the light smiled at me.

I wanted the light for myself.

When you see the light, know of its presence, you are forever changed. No longer can you be satisfied with the cold shadows. Once you desire the light, it becomes impossible to be at peace within the night's grasp or satiated by its muted existence. You can only seek the light once entranced. So, with greed in my heart, I moved to take the light, contain it. I wanted to shackle the light and consume it for my own desire, needed to be its sole possessor. To my

great surprise, the light, seeing me through a world of darkness, sought to give its light to me willingly. The light wanted a home.

I cannot contain the light.

Too big to be locked away, too powerful to be enclosed within my grasp, I feared I might lose the light to the shattered shadows of desired hopes that lived within me. But, wanting to contain the light... that's a fool dream. Nothing can control the light. It cannot be forced into a box and sealed away. It cannot be confined and held back from the world. I dreamed that dream for a time until I saw the truth through the illumination the light brought with its mere presence. It showed me my true desire. I didn't want to only contain the light, I wanted to be it. But, I cannot be the light. I cannot steal the light's power or draw from the warmth it gives, a sense of power. That is not my role.

I am the lantern.

I protect the light with my love. Through the windows of my soul, filled with my love for the light, its warm glow can shine even brighter. I am the lantern, not the light. Through the love I give with my willingness to fulfill my purpose, the light can illuminate the night, guide the lost to safe shores and chase away the chill of darkness. I know this to be true, because the light performed this service for me.

Today, the light and the lantern are one. Together, we can do great things. That is OUR purpose. That is why we have one another. That is why we were married. So, I am forever thankful for your light, for you have given me a profound reason to love.

* * * * *

Brooklyn native **Harule Stokes** has always dreamed of creating interesting and powerful stories. But, practicality took him into



a career in Finance. No longer interested in pushing his dreams aside, Harule is now focusing on being a writer full time! His two self-publishing novels, *Fallen Sun* and *Sectors* are available on Amazon, and he's currently working on the third and final book in this speculative fiction trilogy.



Have you checked out the SWW Member's Announcement page on the website lately?

<http://www.southwestwriters.com/membership-news-announcements-and-successes>



Do you have a success to share with other aspiring writers?
Be sure to send it to us!
Swwsage@swcp.com





Unpacking the Batik Painting

by Neill McKee

When I returned from Indonesia in January of 1970, my house in Kota Belud, Sabah, Malaysia smelled musty. Mold grows quickly in North Borneo when rooms are left closed and unaired, and I had been away during almost two months of school vacation. I had completed over half of my two-year assignment as a Canadian volunteer teacher at Kota Belud's secondary school.

I really missed Rebecca, my traveling companion in Indonesian. Before flying to Singapore, I had dropped in to see her at her school in Sarawak and invited her to join me in Central Java, after her classes ended. I had been somewhat surprised by her spontaneous acceptance.

I played my new Bob Dylan LPs on my little record player—"Girl from the North Country" and "Lay Lady Lay." The songs brought back my time with her.

While the music played, I unpacked and sorted my belongings. I took out the only cultural memorabilia I had collected along the way, a batik cloth painting purchased in Indonesia, which I unfolded and tacked to the living room wall. It was bright yellow-orange on a black background—more shocking than I'd remembered—with the artist's name and date inscribed in the bottom righthand corner: "Bambogodoro Wokidjo 1969."

As I stared at the painting, the whirling ceiling fan caused it to shudder and come to life. Its intricate elements rippled, stirring up my experiences during the past few weeks. The four-legged beast at its center, lurched downward. Another beast's head, emerging from the upper left, had cat-like whiskers and scary eyes, but both had ears like delicate butterflies. Strange fish-like creatures with ornamental tails flew in the dark sky. Detached eyes and

volcano-like formations erupted in winged patterns. Streams of a blood-like lava oozed downwards. The whole scene flowed counter-clockwise, chaos emerging into a kind of symmetry; pockets of stars pulling me inwards towards black spaces of unpacked memories.

Just a few weeks earlier, I had been lying on a straw mat on the deck of a freighter, gazing at the stars. I could see the Southern Cross near the horizon. European explorers of long ago, the first to venture into the southern hemisphere, discovered this constellation as guidance in navigating these waters, where they could no longer sight the North Star and Big Dipper. For me, as for them, it was a beacon in the night sky, inviting me southwards into the unknown.

Continue the adventure begun in this excerpt by going to: <http://www.ekphrastic.net/the-ekphrastic-review/unpacking-the-batik-painting-by-neill-mckee>

Neill McKee is a creative nonfiction writer based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This essay is adapted from his soon-to-be published memoir of his adventures in Sabah, Malaysia (North Borneo), where he served as a Canadian volunteer teacher and program administrator during 1968-70 and 1973-74. McKee, who holds a Masters in Communication from Florida State University, lived and worked internationally for 45 years and became an expert in communication programs for social change. He is director and producer of a number of award-winning documentary films/videos, and multi-media initiatives, as well as the author of numerous articles and books on development communication

SouthWest Sage Advertising Rates

The Sage has Worldwide Internet Circulation

The SWW website receives thousands of page requests every month.

Business card size: \$20

1/4 page, vertical: \$40

1/3 page, horizontal: \$50

1/2 page horizontal: \$75

15% discount for 3 mos. 20% discount for 6 mos.

Deadline: 15th of each month for the following month.

Payment due with camera-ready ad copy in .jpg format.

Ask Chaucer!

Dear Chaucer,

I'm regularly told my writing is too passive. I don't get it. I'm an active person, I run every day. And I write about action. What does this mean?

Signed,

Active Writer

Dear Active,

We're used to hearing passive voice in technical writing and sometimes reporting. Examples are: **The chemical reaction was produced by scientists stirring the mixture**, and **Speeders were arrested by police**. To rewrite these statements in the active voice, you need to change the structure. For these examples, the active examples would be: **Scientists produced the chemical reaction by stirring the mixture**, and **Police arrested speeders**.

The basic structure of **active voice** is **subject-verb-object**; or the person acting, followed by the action taken, followed by the object or person being acted upon. The basic structure of **passive voice** is **object-verb-subject**, or the object or person being acted upon, followed by the action taken, followed by the person acting.

Of course, clauses and other element of complex sentences can make the voice more difficult to determine. Try writing the sentence and then underlining the three elements: subject, verb, and object. For example: **As clouds thickened and rain started**, Jimmy (*subject*) set up (*verb*) the tent (*object*) and then searched for (*verb*) dry firewood (*object*). This sentence uses a basic subject-verb-object structure; the "and" makes it a compound sentence, so we know "Jimmy" is the subject for both parts. In the second half, "Jimmy" is implied before the verb.

There are times we want to use a passive voice. It tends to be a good way to distance the reader from the action, or make the passage feel more like a news report. Otherwise, active voice is generally preferred for fiction and creative non-fiction. Active voice makes the reader feel more like an active participant in the story than just a passive viewer.

Beware of mixing the two voices in one sentence. For example: **As clouds thickened and rain started, Jimmy set up the tent, and dry firewood was searched for**. This is not a well-constructed sentence, and we don't know who actually searched for the firewood.

Good luck with your active writing!

Signed,

Chaucer

Do you have questions about writing or about SWW you'd like to ask Chaucer? Send them to [swws-
age@swcp.com](mailto:swws-
age@swcp.com) with the subject line: ASK CHAUCER before the 20th of the month for the next month's *Sage*.

SOUTHWEST WRITERS CRITIQUE SERVICE

An experienced critiquer, picked from a panel of professional writers and editors, will be matched with your genre and will critique your manuscript for a reasonable price below the usual market rate.

The SWW Critique Service accepts all genres, including:

- Query letters
- Synopses
- Articles
- Essays
- Nonfiction books
- Book proposals
- Short Stories
- Mainstream/literary fiction
- Genre fiction
- Children's
- Middle-grade
- Young Adult
- Screenplays/stageplays
- Poetry

COST

- \$15 - Poetry of no more than 3 pages
- \$15 - Query letter of no more than 3 pages
- \$25 - Synopsis of up to 3 pages
 - additional pages are \$3.50/page
- \$35 - Minimum charge for up to 10 double-spaced manuscript pages
 - additional pages are \$3.50/page

SWW critiquers follow genre-specific guidelines. But feel free to include specific questions you want answered and any points you want the critique to focus on (such as point of view, plot structure, etc.). Go to SouthWestWriters.com for guidelines and information on submitting your manuscript to our critique service.

Attendee's Endorsement: "The value of learning on Saturday far exceeds the workshop expense... I am so glad I came. You have made me better."

WRITING FOR MAGAZINES: BAGGING YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE ASSIGNMENT

Saturday, October 13, 2018 9am-noon

Saturday, October 20, 2018 9am-noon

Instructor: Melody Groves

Where: SWW office: 3200 Carlisle NE, suite #114
Cost: \$79 SWW members; \$84 Osher; \$89 non-members

Register at the SWW meetings or call the SWW office @ (505) 830-6034 (M-Th 9-12)



Thanks to the invention of the Internet, the opportunity to write for magazines is almost endless.

With over 9,000 magazines published yearly, in addition to those online, the world is your oyster. But, there are tricks to bagging an assignment.

So if you've got a good idea but don't know where to go or how to start, look no more.

This class is for you.

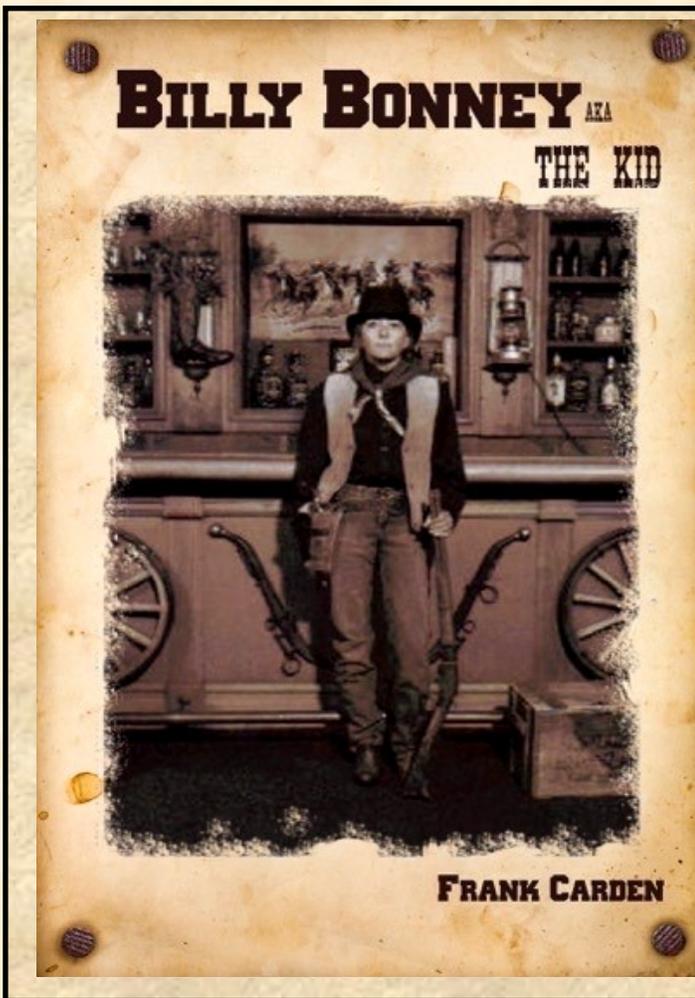
In six hours we'll cover:

- ✓ finding your story,
- ✓ finding the market,
- ✓ tweaking the same idea for different magazines,
- ✓ writing a query that sells,
- ✓ photo requirements,
- ✓ approaching an editor. And that's just for starters.

Instructor Biography:

Eight-time award-winner Melody Groves is the author of six historical fiction novels, three non-fiction books. Her dozens of magazine articles appear in Wild West, True West, New Mexico Magazine, Enchantment Magazine and many more. Past-president of SouthWest Writers, she's also a member of Western Writers of America. And when not writing, she plays rhythm guitar (and tambourine) in the Jammy Time Band.

Questions? melodygroves@comcast.net



1875, Silver City, New Mexico Territory

It didn't matter that the deputy sheriff tried to sexually assault her.

Wilma killed a lawman.

Now on the run, she needed a disguise. Dressing in her brother's old clothes, Wilma changed her name to William (Billy for short) and took the last name of her step-dad in New York.

Billy Bonney rode into the history books, a gunslinger with twenty-two notches on a colt forty-one, a legend, even during her short life.

Billy Bonney aka The Kid
is her story.



New Book Table Policy

At each of our meetings, a table is provided where members may display their

books for purchase. Melody Groves and Rose Kern have volunteered to sit at the

table and accept payment for books sold.

Following the meetings, when authors go to the table to retrieve their unsold books,

Melody and Rose will pay them for all of their books that were sold.

Cash or check only. No credit cards.

If you would like to be a book table volunteer, please talk to Melody or Rose .



The **Kauai Writers Conference** has become one of the premier events in the literary world.

The 2018 line-up includes some of the nation's most acclaimed authors: **Jane Smiley, Garth Stein,**

Alice Hoffman, Kirstin Hannah, Ellen Bass, Jane Smiley, Sara Gruen, Scott Turow, Jeff Arch, and Nicholas Delbanco among others.

Intensive **Master Classes**, limited to small groups, will be offered November 5th—8th. Choose from

Fiction, Memoir, Screenwriting, Poetry, How to Get Published and more. We encourage you to register soon if you would like to participate.

One-on-one **Pitch & Critique Sessions** with top literary agents, editors and publishers will also

be available. This is an opportunity for these powerhouses to get to know you and your work.

Meet and connect with writers from around the world.

Please click on this link for full details: [Kauai Writers Conference](#)

We look forward to everyone getting the most out of their experience. If you would like assistance in choosing from the extensive list of program choices based on your specific genre and interests,

please contact: constance@kauaiwritersconference.com

RISE TO THE OCCASION! The Vallum Award for Poetry 2018

1st prize: \$750
2nd Prize: \$250
+ publication

DEADLINE:
July 15th 2018 (postmarked)

JUDGE:
Liz Howard



for more info, visit
vallummag.com/contestrules.html

Eleventh Annual Green River Writers Workshop:

"Turning Memory into Story"

July 12-15, 2018

Location: the historic Plaza Hotel, Las Vegas, NM

Begins 7 pm Thursday - ends 4 pm Sunday

Using memory as a starting point, the Green River Writers Workshops focus on the craft of storytelling through memoir, fiction, historical writing, & poetry.

Both experienced and beginning writers are welcome

Workshop limited to 15. Fills early.

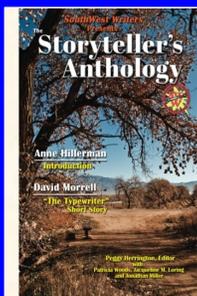
greenriverwritersworkshop.com

Aesthetica Creative Writing Award

Hosted by the international art and culture publication [Aesthetica Magazine](#), the Award celebrates excellence in **Poetry** and **Short Fiction**, supporting new writing talent and presents a fantastic opportunity for writers to further their involvement in the literary world.

Publication is awarded within an inspiring anthology to a shortlist of 60 writers, included a winner from each category. The winners are also presented with further opportunities to expand their careers: **£1,000 cash prize** each, a consultation with literary agency **Redhammer Management**, a Full Membership to **The Poetry Society**, a subscription to **Granta** and books courtesy of **Bloodaxe Books** and **Vintage Books**.

Previously published works are accepted and there are no limitations on themes or subject matters. **Submission Costs:** Poetry entries £12 | Short Fiction entries £14
Entries close 31 August 2018.



The Storyteller's Anthology

is available to order in paperback on Amazon. A great addition to any library, it exemplifies the diversity of talent we bring to the literary world. Please consider leaving a positive comment on the Review page with a 5-star rating to enhance sales of this excellent example of outstanding authorship by members of SouthWest Writers!

SouthWest Writers Meetings Visitor/Guest Policy

SWW encourages new people to come and look over our award winning writers' association. However, since it is our membership dues that pay for the outstanding speakers, we request that visitors or guests limit their attendance to no more than three meetings, after which we hope they will choose to join the organization.

Visitors are requested to sign in with name, email and/or phone number and wear a name tag. They will be invited to stand, introduce themselves and tell what kind of writing they do so that other writers in that genre can network with them during breaks in the meeting.

The "Successes and Announcements" made at our meetings are limited to SWW members.

As always, we encourage visitors to join SWW – a bargain at only \$80 per year.

Are You Taking Full Advantage of your SWW Membership?

SWW sponsors four types of ongoing educational experiences:

1. Every meeting has prominent **SPEAKERS** who offer our members new insights into the art of writing at no charge.
2. **WORKSHOPS** are one-time events which take place after the Saturday meetings. These offer more extensive presentations and/or hands on experiences.
3. **CLASSES** take place at the SWW office and offer in-depth information useful for authors who are serious about getting published.
4. **CONFERENCES** are held twice a year and bring in big name writers, artists, screenwriters, and sometimes publishers or agents.

**Annual Membership in
SouthWest Writers**
Individual: \$80 as of Jan 1, 2018
Student: \$25
Requires proof of student status
Outside U.S.: \$75,
Lifetime Membership: \$750



I LOVE TO EDIT!!

Fast Affordable Accurate
Editing Services for Your
Memoir, Book, Article,
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10 years experience as an Albuquerque
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2 HOUR WORKSHOP PRICES:

SATURDAYS AFTER THE MEETINGS

\$20 SWW MEMBERS

\$25 OSHER MEMBERS W/CARD

\$30 NON-MEMBERS

Workshop & Class Refund Policy

Full refund if cancellation is received more than 7 days before class. From one week out to 24 hours before class, participant is entitled to select another class. Inside of 24 hours, participant receives no refund for the class. For multi-session classes, if you miss a class, you receive no refund. We pay our instructors based on how many students enroll, so you are part of that roll count if you don't cancel as detailed above.

“The Best of the Sage” Anthology

Last Chance to be Included!

Have you noticed that many of our membership’s contributions to the Sage are excellent?

Well, we have!

Next Fall the board is considering publishing another anthology - this time it will contain articles and stories published in the Sage and written by SWW members.

You have three ways of possibly being included:

- Write an article for the Sage related to the craft of writing, getting published, etc...
- Enter stories, poems, or articles inspired by the monthly writing challenges announced in each Sage.
- Send in a short story/poem/essay of your own - 800 words or less - on any topic. (inclusion in the Sage is subject to the discretion of the editor)
- Enter artwork/photographs related to writing in general or accompanying your stories.

In September of 2018 the editor of the Sage will submit stories and articles received over the past three years to a Board appointed committee who will review the pieces without names attached for inclusion in the “Best of the SouthWest Sage Anthology”.

The plan is for the Anthology to be in print and available by November of 2018.

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

SouthWest Writers is offering one-year scholarship memberships in our organization to high school and full time college students. To be eligible, an applicant must be enrolled in high school or college. If you know someone with the interest and desire to pursue a writing career or if you wish to apply yourself, contact the SWW office at swwriters@juno.com.

Are you ready to be published?

August Sage, Writing Challenge

A Desert Story—any genre

1000 words or less.

Send your masterpiece to Rose Kern :

swwsage@swcp.com by July 20th for inclusion in the August Sage. The editor has the final say as to whether the piece will be included.

You Can Write for *SouthWest Sage*

Want to add a byline to your portfolio? We welcome submissions focusing on all aspects of researching, writing, and publishing in any genre. See past issues of *SouthWest Sage* for the types of articles we publish.

Payment is in bylines and clips. Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. Article lengths from 300-1000 words. Submissions may be edited for accuracy, readability and length.

Please send all submissions as either standard text in an email or in a Word document with Times New Roman or Calibri font in 12pt. size. Do not get fancy with formatting or fonts—the more difficult it is for me to set it into the newsletter, the less likely I am to print it.

Send questions or submissions to Rose Kern, *SouthWest Sage* Editor, swwsage@swcp.com.

SouthWest Writers Volunteer Opportunity Lights! Camera! Action!

SWW needs a person to video tape the speakers during our meetings, then upload the videos to our YouTube page. This fun task brings SWW into the public eye and allows members an avenue for inter-communication.

We also need someone to help with the SWW website. Rose and Kathy do a lot, but we need help keeping up with it and with the Sage Newsletter! If interested in any of these things please contact Rose Kern or Kim Rose.



2018 SouthWest Writers Board of Directors

- President Sarah H. Baker,
- Vice President Rob Spiegel,
- Treasurer Kent Langsteiner
- Secretary Kimberly Rose
- Sage Editor Rose Marie Kern
- Facility Coordinator Sam Moorman
- Publicity Su-Ellen Lierz
- Donald DeNoon
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- Jim Tritten
- Joanne Bodin
- Office Manager, Larry Greenley
- Contact board members through the
SWW Office email at swwriters@juno.com

SOUTHWEST WRITERS MONTHLY MEETINGS

are held at
New Life Presbyterian Church
5540 Eubank NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111

*For more information, call the SWW office at
505-830-6034.*

*To register for classes and workshops: sign up
at SWW meetings or register online at
www.southwestwriters.com*

Member meetings are held on the 1st Saturday of the month from 10am to noon, and on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 7 to 9pm. There are nearly 350 members, all of whom are encouraged to come together in celebration of the art of writing. At each meeting, many members announce their recent successes and have an opportunity to network with other writers. Most meetings feature prominent speakers who bring their expertise in the arts of writing, publication, editing, and many other topics of interest to those in the profession.

Frequently after the Saturday meeting, an additional workshop session is held to provide members with training in a variety of areas.

SWW Office:

*3200 Carlisle Blvd NE, Suite 114
Albuquerque, NM 87110
phone: (505) 830-6034
e-mail: SWWriters@juno.com
website: www.southwestwriters.com*

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Do You Have a Published Book?



The SouthWest Writers Website scrolls member book covers across the Homepage. If you'd like us to add yours to the group, feel free to send it to swwsage@swcp.com. No more than one book cover per author. Can be updated as your next book comes out. Send a small picture file .jpg no more than 140dpi. The book covers will be a bit larger than icon sized. Webmaster reserves the right to edit to fit.