



SouthWest Sage

The Voice of SouthWest Writers

2022 Writing Contest

WINNER



And the Winner is ...!

After months of nail biting and waiting, SWW will announce the winners of the 2022 Annual Writing Contest during our Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 8, 2022!

Featuring the theme, “A Diversity of Expression,” this contest challenged creators of prose, poetry and artwork.

There were 248 entries in this year’s contest across 15 categories. The total number of certificates to be awarded is based on the number of entries per category, with cash prizes for First, Second, and Third place. The category with the most entries was “Opening Chapter of an Unpublished Book,” followed by “Poetry-Free Verse” and “Memoir.”

Winners will be invited to say something about what inspired their entries whether they are in person or on Zoom. All winners in attendance at the meeting will receive their awards that day. SWW will mail the awards to those who cannot attend in person.

Entrants wishing to receive a copy of the comments made by the judges concerning their entry may contact SWW at contest@swwriters.com after the Annual Meeting.



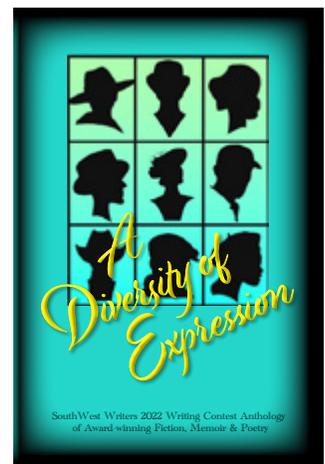
Strutting Our Stuff

SWW announces the publication of *A Diversity of Expression*. The award-winning prose, poetry and artwork submitted to the 2022 Annual Writing Contest is captured in this delightful anthology. We would have liked to include all of the contest’s high-quality entries, but what we have here is a delightful cross-section of talent.

SWW members will be able to purchase *A Diversity of Expression* on October 8 from Amazon for the reduced price of \$14.95. This price will be available for only two weeks. On October 22 the price will increase to \$24.95

for the holiday season. A limited number of copies have been ordered by the SWW office and will be available after the Annual Meeting.

Delight your family and friends with this charming literary collection. Watch the [SWW website](http://www.swwriters.com) for more information.



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SouthWest Sage

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ATTEND SouthWest Writers MEETINGS IN-PERSON or ONLINE

SouthWest Writers meets the second Saturday (Zoom/in-person hybrid) and the fourth Wednesday (Zoom only) of each month. Directions and login information at SouthWestwriters.com.



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The SWW Board of Directors meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Meetings are conducted via Zoom.

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WE GOOFED!

In the “Winning” section of the September SAGE, we misspelled Sara Frances’ name. At its annual meeting and 2022 Southwest Book Design Awards presentation, the New Mexico Book Association honored *Fragments of Spirit 60 Years: A Photographer’s Recollections of Taos Pueblo, the Region and Its Arts* with a finalist award. The book, including photographs, is entirely Sara’s work. *Unplugged Voices*, an anthology of 125 tales of art and life from Northern New Mexico, is a separate project curated, designed, and edited by Sara, to be published soon.

Look Who
JOINED SWW in
AUGUST!

Cathy Callow-Heusser

Autena Samani

Dorothy Nesbit

Sequoia Rudolph

Art Eisenson

Diane Hatz

Debbie White

Welcome!



SWW Membership chair, Jacqueline Loring, reports that as of September 13, we are 402 members strong!

From the President

We’ve come to the rush towards the end of the year. I know it’s only mid-September as I write this letter, but it feels like the rush started early this year. The holiday decorations have already appeared—Halloween, Thanksgiving and yes, I’ve seen hints of Christmas already. Halloween decorations began to sneak onto shelves back in August.



BRENDA COLE

I appreciate a more relaxed approach to the end-of-year madness. That’s not to say there won’t be bones and cobwebs draped all over my fences. I’m a huge fan of old school horror such as Edgar Allan Poe, *Dark Shadows* and anything by Hammer Films. I just take a more organic approach and try to make or repurpose my decorations.

This fall is also the culmination of the year in so many ways. Most of my garden has been harvested. I’m still getting plenty of tomatoes and beans, but the herbs have already found a place in the freezer. We have had the last sundown after 7:30 pm local time for this year, and it was a lovely 58 degrees at 6 am this morning.

Since this letter will be for the October SAGE, we have also reached award season for SWW! In a few weeks we’ll finally have the answer to who won what in our annual writing contest. If you were notified that you were a winner, you’ll find out your ranking on October 8. This is also the perfect time to get a copy of this year’s anthology of the winning entries. Check the SAGE and website for prices and when they can be ordered.

Another fall tradition is the Arts and Craft show at UNM in November. SWW is participating this year. The entire UNM Continuing Education Building will be full of vendors. Among the soaps, candles, and jewelry, SWW will have our own tables. We will be selling our anthologies and have space for our members to put out their own books. Check with the office for details.

As we start down the path towards the end of 2022, give yourself a break from the intensity of life right now. Remember to write a little every day, read something you enjoy, and sit outside on these cool evenings to rediscover why our mountains are called the Sandias.

Brenda

Working with Beta Readers

by Cornelia Gamlem

You have a draft manuscript and have done some initial review and revision. Before you do anything else, you want some feedback. To whom should you turn? Consider finding a beta reader.

A beta reader is someone who will review your work as a reader, not a writer, and help you gain perspective. Let's be honest, if you've reviewed and revised your manuscript multiple times—everyone does—objectivity falls by the wayside. You need fresh eyes on it. The feedback from beta readers should be focused on the whole story—the whole book.

Don't expect a beta reader to:

- Edit or proofread your work. Those are different steps that occur later in the process.
- Act as a sensitivity or cultural authenticity reader, or a subject matter expert. While these may be necessary for your book, separate these processes out. The questions you ask these experts will be much different than those you ask a beta reader.
- Act as a critique partner who offers targeted tips on how to fix things. A critique partner is a specific relationship, one in which you'll be expected to reciprocate.

Do expect a beta reader to provide you with specific feedback in certain areas, especially ones where you may be struggling. For example, be prepared to ask questions about:

- **Characters.** Were they fully fleshed out and believable. Are they compelling, sympathetic? Are the relationships among the characters believable? Are their voices consistent and distinct from one another?
- **Hook.** Does the book begin with an interesting hook that made you want to keep reading?
- **Dialogue.** Is the dialogue natural and realistic? Was the use of tags and beats effective in identifying what character was speaking? Is there an appropriate mix of dialogue and narrative?
- **Pacing.** Do the stories move along at an appropriate pace and not drag or stagnate? If not, can you share an example of where it dragged or lost your focus?

- **Story arc and tension.** Is there the right amount of tension throughout to hold your interest? If not, where did I lose you? Does the story ignite a sense of conflict and anticipation?
- **Backstory.** Was too much background material provided—such as information dumps? Was the backstory layered in at appropriate times to add clarity? Is there any point where the beta reader would quit reading the story? If so, where and why?

You can find examples of questions to ask and beta reader worksheets by doing a Google search.

Identifying beta readers. First rule is, **do not** ask family and friends. They love you. They won't be objective. Consider the following when you are looking for beta readers:

- Can they provide a balance between critique and encouragement?
- Can they provide empathic feedback?
- How do you best receive feedback, in writing or face to face? Can a beta reader meet your needs?
- Have they acted as a beta reader before? Will their style of feedback work best for you?

Look to readers who read in your genre—ideally someone who represents your target audience. Don't overlook other writers who write in your genre—but you don't have to know them too well.

If you can afford to pay for a beta reader, you can look on platforms such as Fiverr, which will provide reviews. Also, check out BetaBooks which offers a mix of free and paid services. Keep the number of beta readers reasonable. Too much feedback can be distracting.

Working with a beta reader. Set clear expectations to make the best use of everyone's time. Remember you want feedback that's focused on the book as a whole.

- Be clear what feedback you need. That's why a list of questions, such as the ones presented earlier, is important.
- Set a deadline and make sure to ask if they can meet your deadline. Turnaround time is important.
- Let them know in what format you expect to receive the information—written or oral—and what specific information you'd like to receive.

continued on next page

BETA READERS, cont'd.

For example, if they thought too much background material was provided, ask for examples.

- Respect their time, especially if they are not a paid beta reader.

Feedback isn't always easy to receive, but don't take negative feedback personally. The goal is to produce a great book. While you don't have to agree with all the feedback you receive, be objective. If the feedback points out places that need work, work on them. If you don't agree with certain feedback, you don't have to change anything. In the end, it's your book.

CORNELIA GAMLEM is an author and consultant with years of business experience.

Books:

- *They Did What? Unbelievable Tales from the Workplace,*
- *The Manager's Answer Book* - 2020 Next Generation Indie Book Award Winner.
- *The Big Book of HR*
- *The Essential Workplace Conflict Handbook*
- *The Conflict Resolution Phrase Book*

www.bigbookofhr.com

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MEETINGS IN OCTOBER

SATURDAY, October 8

10 a.m. – noon

In Person & Zoom

SWW ANNUAL MEETING

- Writing Contest Awards
- Election Results Announced
- Anthology available at reduced rate for a LIMITED TIME



WORKSHOP

Saturday: October 8

12:30-2:30 p.m.

*How to Speak in Public
and Live to Tell the Tale*
with Brenda Cole

Live and Via Zoom
SWW members: \$20
Non-members: \$30

WEDNESDAY, October 26

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Via Zoom

Dan Klefstad

*DIY Book Promo: Getting Your Book
Into Readers' Hands*



No budget? No problem. In this discussion, Dan will explore ways to promote your book for free on social media and in interviews. He will focus on getting reviews and convincing bookstores to add your book to their shelves – then using bookstore photos to get excellent engagement on social media.

SouthWest Writers meetings are free to everyone. We ask individuals who have attended up to three meetings to please join our organization. Memberships enable us to continue bringing high quality speakers to meetings. Details for these and other meetings on the [SouthWest Writers Website Meetings page](#).

Does the thought of speaking in public leave you gasping for breath with a heart rate like that of a hummingbird?

Join Brenda for this practical workshop on how to prepare, give and survive public speaking.



More information on the [SWW website, Workshops page](#).

SWW CLASSES STARTING SOON

Self-Publish Your Book with KDP Amazon

Class Instructor: Rose Marie Kern

3-week Course

Thursdays October 13, 20, 27

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Mountain Time

***NOTE:** Classes will be recorded so if someone cannot make a session they can view it later

Platform: IN-PERSON and VIA ZOOM

\$120 SWW members, \$150 Nonmembers



Producing Print-Ready PDFs with Affinity

Class Instructor: RJ Mirabal

4-week Course

Saturdays, November 5, 12, 19, and 26

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Mountain Time

(NOTE: November 12, time: 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. MT)

Platform: IN-PERSON

\$160 SWW members, \$200 Nonmembers



Class details, descriptions, and enrollment are on the SWW website [Classes page](#).

To Register:

Call the SWW office (505-830-6034, Monday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – noon), or use the [online registration form](#).



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19 • 10AM - 4PM

Come shop for unique, locally handmade gifts from New Mexico artists and vendors.

- Free entrance
- Unique and fun workshops to make your own gifts!
- Live entertainment
- Free and easy parking
- Convenient location in the heart of Albuquerque
- Wide variety of artists

UNM Craft Fair Book Sale Opportunity

Albuquerque area members of SouthWest Writers are invited to display their books at the University of New Mexico's Arts and Craft Fair on Saturday, November 19. There are also some limited time slots available for authors to sit at a table with their books to interact with the Fair participants and do book signings.

Those participating will be required to deliver copies of their books to the event in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon. SWW will not be responsible for books left behind.

Members will be able to display up to 6 titles during the event. There is no upfront fee to participate, however authors will be charged 10% of all sales to reimburse SWW for expenses. Authors will determine the price they wish to assign each title. SouthWest Writers office manager, ReVaH Loring, will be on site to handle all financial transactions. Strict records of sales will be kept and authors will be sent a check covering their sales after the event.

For more information and an application contact info@swwriters.com or call (505) 830-6034. Applications must be received by the SWW office no later than Monday, November 14, 2022.

SWW ELECTION - 2023 Slate of Officers

SouthWest Writers members may vote for the 2023 Executive Committee in one of two ways:

- Vote in person at the Annual Meeting on October 8, or
- Vote in advance via online voting.

Online voting is open from September 18 to October 3. Click [HERE](#) to go to directly to members' voting page.

2023 Executive Committee Nominees

PRESIDENT

Rose Marie Kern

Rose attended Butler University where she began her studies in Arts Administration, though she received her Bachelor's degree in nonprofit management from the University of New Mexico. In addition to working for the FAA and, later, Lockheed Martin, Rose has owned and managed her own business since 2003. As an author, Rose has had over a thousand articles published in national and regional magazines on solar energy, sustainable living, solar cooking, aviation, and organic gardening, and has written five books. Currently, she works with authors who want to learn how to self-publish, and has given a number of classes and workshops for SWW. Rose has been a member of SouthWest Writers since January of 2006, and a board member since 2008.



As an SWW past president, Rose Marie is familiar with the requirements of the job. She plans to expand opportunities for members to participate in decisions and activities of SouthWest Writers as we go forward.

VICE PRESIDENT

Léonie Rosenstiel

Léonie Rosenstiel is a seasoned freelance writer, working in many different genres, from record liner notes, to translations from French and Spanish, to a college-level textbook for Schirmer Books, a division of Macmillan. She was Special Projects Editor for *Current Musicology*, then received grants from the American Council of Learned Societies as well as the Rockefeller Foundation to do research for her 1982 biography, *Nadia Boulanger: A Life in Music* (W.W. Norton; still in print). She and her late husband ran a small publishing house that produced the reference book, *Literary Agents of North America*. Recently, she has been trying her hand at fiction; several of her short stories have been published in the SAGE. Léonie has also written articles for newsletters and edited them. She can't recall a time during the past 30 years when she wasn't serving on one nonprofit board or another.



Notes about the Executive Committee

The SWW Board of Directors (BOD) can contain between 11 and 15 members. With the exception of the Executive Committee (President, VP, Treasurer, and Secretary) all other voting members are appointed by the President. Since Rose is currently the Treasurer, which is a two-year term, the role of Treasurer in 2023 will be appointed by current President, Brenda Cole, and confirmed by a vote of the sitting BOD to finish out the current term.

At SWW, EVERYONE'S a VOLUNTEER

This month, SAGE editor Kathy Louise Schuit, starts a series of interviews to help you get to know more about the volunteers you see at every meeting; who work to produce publications, the website and social media posts; who vote on policy; who pay the bills; who recruit new members, etc. Kathy wanted to find out how these leaders initially came to SWW and what made them decide to get more involved. She starts with SWW President Brenda Cole.

SAGE: How long have you been an SWW member, and what prompted you to join?

BC: I've been a member since 2001. I was looking for someplace to expand my social network and maybe do some volunteering. My job at the time was extremely stressful and I was a single parent as well. SWW sounded interesting.

SAGE: What was your first volunteer position with SWW?

BC: Cleaning up after meetings, I just sort of jumped in. My first formal volunteer slot was helping Sarah Baker when she was President. I pitched in as an editor on something.

SAGE: As a member, you receive the many benefits SWW has to offer, why did you decide to take the extra step to become a volunteer and give more to the organization?

BC: That's part of who I am. I'm the oldest of three and was always taught to pitch in with the sibs, Girl Scouts, school etc. I usually give myself a year or two with a new organization so I can see where I match up with what they need. I was working full time and raising my son so I just did background help. I'm also very adept at running events so when Rose asked me to chair the Writing Contest in 2019 I jumped at it.

SAGE: Fill us in on your experience as a SWW volunteer. Why would you recommend the experience to others?

BC: Cleaning up after events, especially when we had food or the convention. Scanning documents in the office, judging the writing contest, editing the anthologies, teaching workshops, learning the tech so I can run Zoom, serving on the board (multiple times). Volunteering is the best way to get to know others in the organization. If I just sat back and watched, I'd get bored and wouldn't know the multitudes of people I now call friends. I also volunteer so I don't feel guilty for letting others do all the work while I enjoy all the bennies.

SAGE: You became SWW President in January of



SAGE Editor
Kathy Louise
Schuit



SWW President
Brenda Cole

this year. This seems like a huge volunteer responsibility. What part of handling this position would you highly recommend to others? Why?

BC: I truly like being in charge. I had seen how the organization works and knew I could do a good job for everyone. As President, you are not sailing a ship by yourself. One of my main jobs is building a coalition between the voting board, the advisory board and the members at large. All of us must work together or SSW will not continue. President gives one the opportunity to run the organization, learn to delegate, be an attentive boss to our office manger, and be able to speak to others about SSW. This is a great way to grow your own strengths and become more at ease with public speaking.

SAGE: Do you have any other words of encouragement for members who might be considering a phone call to SWW to volunteer?

BC: You have no idea just how valuable you are to this organization! We have over 400 members in the group. There are four positions that are voted on. The President needs to fill in the rest of the board to get up to 15 members. In 2023 I will be the past President and the job of recruiting new board members will fall to the new President. If you have interest or curiosity about the possibility of volunteering to serve on the SWW Board of Directors as a voting or advisory member, please contact ReVah at info@swwriters.com or (505) 830-6034.

SWW in Crisis: **UPDATE**

In September the SWW Board of Directors reached out to all of you to help us navigate a route to our future. At that time, after several months of announcing the need for leaders for 2023, we were not able to field a roster for the upcoming election of President and Vice-President.

We are so grateful to those who spoke up and indicated a willingness to serve in some capacity. As written, the bylaws impose restrictions on who can be eligible for some positions, but luckily, a board member has expressed a willingness to take on the role of Treasurer, which frees up our current Treasurer, Rose Marie Kern, to run for President. Another board member, Léonie Rosenstiel, also has stepped up to run for Vice-President.

Needless to say, next year's board will be scrutinizing the bylaws and procedures of the organization with an eye to eliminating this roadblock in the future.

Although the immediate needs are met, these past couple years of isolation have left us with holes in our leadership structure. We need minds and spirits—as well as the physical forms—of our awesome members to participate in creating the future of SWW. After the election on October 8, look for a message from the new President requesting ideas and goals for 2023.



The Thunderbird

by Lu Evans

Like most days, it's a beautiful summer afternoon in Las Cruces. The clear blue sky makes me happy, and that's when I want to be outdoors and enjoy nature.

Two hours pass by so quickly that, before I know it, I'm exhausted. Then, finding a park that I don't usually visit, I sit down on the bench farthest from the playground

Based on fossil records, the US National Park Service website, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-giant-bird.htm>, reports that *Teratornis merriami*, Teratorn, had a 12-foot wingspan.

where children play under the watchful eyes of their mothers.

I take out of my purse a sandwich and a can of Coke. Realizing that I have food, some pigeons approach me, walking awkwardly with their tiny legs and bobbing their heads back and forth.

I toss them some breadcrumbs. The number of pigeons increases around me until an immense shadow descends over my head and, with a screeching sound, a creature plunges on them with all the weight of its heavy body. A few pigeons manage to escape. Others are crushed under the creature. Some, hit by the huge wings, are disoriented.

The great bird swallows the pigeons under it until there are none left.

In a state of shock, I remain motionless as a statue.

The bird is not a hawk or an eagle, not a vulture or condor. It is bigger and more robust than any bird I have ever seen.

"Oh, nothing like a mid-afternoon snack, huh?" The bird speaks in its high-pitched, terrifying voice.

I look around to make sure that it is really me he is talking to. No one else is near or looking our way.

My voice shakes. "Yes, it's a good time for a snack indeed. Are you thirsty? I have a bottle of water in my purse," I offer, figuring that it's more prudent to be friendly than edible.

"The day is very hot, indeed. Global warming is a bitch. If you don't mind, I accept the offer."

I hasten to reach for the bottle of water. With trembling hands, I open the cap and hand it to the bird. He grabs the bottle with one of his clawed feet and drinks noisily.

"Thank you! It is very kind of you."

"You're welcome. Would you mind telling me what you are, sir? Don't get me wrong, but I've never seen such a creature, and I'm an attentive viewer of nature documentaries."

"I don't mind one bit," he replies. "I'm a Thunderbird."

"Thunderbird! That legendary bird?"

The bird laughs so hard that he holds his belly with his wings. "I'm not a legend. Can't you see I'm very real?" He turns around, spreading his very long wings.

"Yes, of course. But I'm confused—"

"Oh, I'm the original Thunderbird—Teratorns, at your service."

Bewildered, I ask if I can look up the term on my cell phone, and the creature tells me to go ahead. To my surprise, the bird comes to sit next to me, explaining that he has always been curious to see how a cell phone works. I scoot to the edge of the bench.

"I'm sorry. I'm a little nervous." I try to smile.

"It's understandable, but please, go on," he says politely.



In 500-800 words, describe a color in a way it can be felt by one who cannot see it.

To submit your Challenge entry for possible publication in the November SAGE read, understand and follow the submission guidelines on page 14.

Send submissions or questions to:

Kathy Schuit

SouthWest SAGE Editor

sage@swwriters.com

The Challenge for October publication was to write a tale of Gothic fantasy/fiction. Since there were no takers for this Challenge, we have published a couple more of the submissions received for the September Challenge, which was to write about an unusual animal encounter.

continued on next page

“Well, it’s actually very simple. We just need to put the subject we want to research in that little bar and click on the magnifying glass. See? I just click on the term Teratorns, and a list of articles comes up. Now I’ll select one of those articles to learn all the information about you.”

“Select this one, please. It has a nice picture that looks like me,” he points with the tip of his curved beak.

I read, “The legendary Thunderbird may have originated from the Teratorns—ancestral of the vultures—that flew over New Mexico about ten thousand years ago. However, there are reports of people having seen such birds as late as the 19th century in the Doña Ana

Mountains, outside Las Cruces.”

“Exactly,” he proudly says.

“Wow! Fascinating!”

“And you know what’s even more fascinating?”

“I have no idea, but I’m eager to find out.”

His bird-of-prey eyes grow narrower. “It’s just that I’m always hungry.”

“Mommy, look! A giant bird is carrying a woman!”

Concentrated on her knitting, the woman pays little attention to what her girl is saying, but still looks up at the sky. “Yes, yes...!”

“Never mind. The giant bird is gone now. It disappeared above the clouds.”

Mr. Snake

By Léonie Rosenstiel

Crews had come to fix broken sprinkler heads before. They simply did their work, packed up, drove away, and then the home office sent me the invoice.

It was different this time around. The crew arrived on a Wednesday afternoon in May. They had already finished their work and packed up their truck. They should simply have left. Instead, the foreman was standing at the front door, ringing my bell. He was deeply tanned.

“Thought I’d better tell you, Ma’am. There’s a snake in your yard.” His brow was furrowed. His expression told me that this was no ordinary snake.

“Where?”

“Around back. Sunning himself on the patio.”

“What color is it?”

“Yellow”

“How big?”

He raised his arms, chest high, showing about 18 inches between them.

“Thanks for telling me.”

“Doesn’t belong here,” he grumbled, as he turned away.

After I closed the front door, I checked the back patio. No snake.

I called a pest removal company. “We don’t do snakes,” they said.

I called another one. “We need a picture of it, to know whether we want to work with it.”

“I don’t have one. I didn’t see it; a workman did.”

“Email us a photo, when you have it.”

“What about the county? Don’t they do this sort of thing?”

“Waste of time. They’ll only help if the snake’s *inside* your house.”

“Oh.”

I avoided going into the backyard, hoping the snake wouldn’t find a way inside.

Early that Sunday morning, Mr. Snake finally showed up, slithering between two slabs of concrete on my back patio. I could see him from the kitchen window. What a beautiful creature! Iridescent yellow, almost luminescent, with no other markings and the sun glinting off his scales. Mesmerizing. He had bright green eyes. I knew that the foreman was right; Mr. Snake was totally out of place in my backyard.

Somehow managing to break the trance, I realized that my cell phone was several rooms away and went to get it. By the time I got back, Mr. Snake had made his getaway.

Looking for a match, I started Googling snakes of that color and size. The best match was

an eyelash viper, native to the rainforests of Central and South America. Definitely not a New Mexico native. It had a nickname, too, “ten pace snake,” because if it bit you, ten paces would be the furthest you’d get from the scene, before you died. No wonder the foreman was worried!

I copied a photo off the internet and sent it to the pest company. They consulted a herpetologist, then called me back.

“You need a permit to have a snake like that!”

continued on next page



MR. SNAKE, cont'd. _____

“It’s not my snake!”

“Which of your neighbors collects reptiles? That one doesn’t belong around here.”

“No neighbor who ever told me about it.”

“We won’t come out until after you’ve taken a photo of it yourself.”

I kept trying. Mr. Snake seemed to read my mind; he only showed up when my cell phone was some distance away. Meanwhile, I stayed out of the backyard. As far as I was concerned, he now owned it.

Some friends and I had arranged a Zoom meeting. They wanted to know what was new. “You’ve got to be kidding. You’re sitting here, telling us how beautiful he is!” Harriet was horrified.

“As long as he’s on the other side of the glass door, I’m safe. It’s not like I’m going outside to try to pet him. I’m certainly not tapping on the door to get his attention. But he is quite a sight.”

Life went on that way until the temperature dipped to 50°F and below for a couple of nights. It was still May, not consistently warm enough to avoid an occasional cold night. Or at least cold for New Mexico. The articles I’d read, and the herpetologist the pest company consulted, all said that the snake would be comfortable (and safe) only with temperatures above that level. I guessed that Mr. Snake was ultimately in more danger from the climate than I was from him. I hope that he found his way home before the temperature drop killed him. Who was his local host? I still don’t know.

CONTESTS and OPPORTUNITIES for WRITERS

Chicken Soup is always looking for new ideas!

Tell an exciting, heartwarming or funny story about something that has happened to you or someone you know. Your story should be written in the first person and should be about yourself or someone close to you.

The story should start “in the action” and draw in the reader. Do not start your story with an introduction about what you are going to say, or end with a concluding paragraph about what you just said.

Don’t be afraid to speak from the heart. Many people tell personal stories for the first time in our books, and they find it to be a cathartic and productive experience. We do let you use a pen name for your story if you do not want to use your real name.

Don’t try fancy moves with tenses. Writing in the present tense about something that happened in the past rarely works.

Keep your story to 1200 words or less. Tighten, tighten, tighten!

Your story must be true. No fiction, no creative writing.



<https://www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/possible-book-topics/>

WOW! Women On Writing



WOW! Women On Writing now hosts two quarterly contests: one for fiction writers and one for nonfiction writers. We’ve hosted the flash fiction contest since 2006, and over the years, writers have asked us to open up an essay contest.

So we are happy to add the essay contest to our offerings. We look forward to reading your work!

[FALL 2022 FLASH FICTION CONTEST](#)

[Quarterly Creative Nonfiction Essay Contest](#)

[Chicken Soup book topics NOW under consideration.](#)

THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

The deadline for submission is DECEMBER 15, 2022.

MIRACLES

The deadline for story and poem submissions is DECEMBER 31, 2022.

HOW STEPPING OUTSIDE MY COMFORT ZONE CHANGED ME

The deadline for submissions is DECEMBER 15, 2022.

FUNNY STORIES

The deadline for submissions is OCTOBER 15, 2022.

ANGELS

The deadline for submissions is DECEMBER 31, 2022.

SouthWest SAGE

SAGE CHALLENGE & ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The SouthWest SAGE newsletter is the professional publication of SouthWest Writers. Submissions focusing on all aspects of research, writing, and publishing in any genre are welcome. To familiarize yourself with the types of articles published in the SouthWest SAGE, read past issues at southwestwriters.com.

Here are four ways you may be 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 challenge announced in each SAGE.
- Send in a short story/poem/essay of your own—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.

Read the following before submitting:

- Payment is in bylines and clips.
- Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue.
- Standard article lengths are from 300-800 words; certain SAGE Challenges may set more specific word count requirements, which will be found on the Challenge page. **Submissions may be edited for accuracy, readability and length.** Submissions must be tasteful; free from profanity, explicit sex or violence, political commentary, etc.
- Send all submissions as either standard text in an email or in a Word document in 12 pt. size. Single spaced. Do not get fancy with formatting or fonts. To ensure proper author credit, your name or pen name must appear within the document you submit. **Submissions with no name will not be considered.**
- Polish your work. Submissions should be professional in appearance and quality of writing, fully edited and ready for publication.
- Accompanying art/photographs are appreciated; proper attribution and permission is required.
- Inclusion in the SAGE is subject to the discretion of the editor.

Send questions or submissions to:
Kathy Schuit
SouthWest SAGE Editor
sage@swwriters.com

SWW Board Meeting Summarized September 2022

- We've renewed our contract with UNM for in-person meetings for another year. Allowing for inflation, the agreement includes a slight increase from what we paid in 2022. We are working to correct bugs in the sound system, which have affected at-home and in-person participants.
- UNM's Arts & Crafts Fair on Nov. 19 will run from 10am - 4pm (with the doors opening for set-up at 8:30 am). SWW has paid for three tables: 1) to accommodate 36 different publications (up to six titles per author), and 2) to allow for eight authors at a time for signings. The two stipulations for authors wishing to participate are that SWW receive 10 percent of sales, and that authors are responsible for delivering and retrieving all their own books. If you haven't yet signed up, please contact ReVaH in the front office: info@swwriters.com
- Owing to a successful, month's-long dry-run of Excel for tracking our financial accounts, the motion was made, seconded and passed to have it replace the current QuickBooks system beginning in October. Our QuickBooks subscription, which runs through December, will be allowed to lapse.
- Owing to the excellent participation and performance, \$1,215 in prizes have been earmarked for the Writing Contest awards ceremony on Sat., Oct. 8. Some of this year's judges will share MC duties at the awards.
- In the interests of adding robustness to SWW's Volunteer Program, we'll seek a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator to optimize the efforts of our selfless stalwarts.

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