

SouthWest Sage

December 2009

www.southwestwriters.com

February 20 Conference Features The Business of Writing and NM Novelists

By Sandra Toro

Based on debriefings with the agents and editors we've had at the past two conferences, we've decided to follow their advice, and sponsor a conference which focuses on the business of being a writer followed by an afternoon during which we showcase New Mexico's successful novelists.

We will hold this conference at the National Hispanic Cultural Center where we will have plenty of space for a large meeting, for a special buffet lunch, and tables to display our authors' books that will be for sale. The museum featuring Hispanic art and the gift shop will be added attractions during the lunch hour.

The morning will begin with a panel discussion of non-fiction freelance writing. Panelists will be editors and successful writers of full-length books and magazine articles. The writers will discuss their careers, how to break into freelance writing, how to sell a non-fiction book, how to query magazine editors, and what to expect in compensation. The editors will discuss what they look for in a query, how to contact them (by phone, e-mail or in person), how to get repeat assignments, when you need an agent. Following the formal presentation, the floor will be opened for questions and answers.

The second panel will deal with legal issues involved in a writing career, both fiction and non-fiction. Attorneys who specialize in these issues will discuss:

- Contracts and agreements
- Subsidiary rights
- Copyright law
- Finance and taxes
- Publishing timelines
- Libel, invasion of privacy issues
- Model release forms

After a mid-morning break, the third panel will be all about agents.

- When do I need an agent?
- What will an agent do for me?

- What will agents not do?
- How to query an agent
- How to pitch to an agent at a conference
- Book doctors and editors

Lunch will be a buffet featuring salads and New Mexico specialties.

After lunch, we will hold a showcase for New Mexico fiction writers. We expect to have prominent authors in all the following genres:

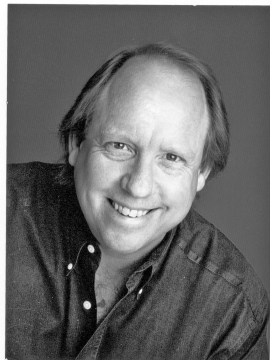
- Young Adult novels
- Historical fiction
- Fantasy, science fiction and horror
- Mystery and thrillers
- Romance
- Literary mainstream

In addition to signing autographs and selling their books, these novelists will speak and answer questions about their careers.

The names of the panelists and the afternoon speakers will be announced in the January issue of the *Sage*. A registration blank will be published in the *Sage* and will be available on line at www.southwestwriters.com. The registration fee will be \$99 for members, \$130 for non-members, which will include a six-month membership, and \$140 at the door.



Here Comes the New Blood



President

Rob Spiegel

In the next issue of *Sage* our incoming president, Melody Groves, will take over these messages. Melody will bring a fresh look to SouthWest Writer programs and member benefits. She has a bunch of new ideas that will extend our reach into new writing communities and bring new programs and events to our members. But I don't want to steal her thunder, so I'll stop here and let Melody announce her plans in the coming year.

Melody built her successful writing career during the years she has participated in SouthWest Writers. Like Keith Pyeatt, Kirt Hickman, Jonathan Miller, Judy Avila, Gale Rubin, Sue Houser, Larry Greenly, Rose Marie Kern, Jerry Davis, Ron Perea and Sherri Burr – and countless other members of SouthWest Writers, including me, Melody has taken what she's learned during our programs and put them into practice in the publishing world. And she has thus created a successful writing career for herself. She has always shared what she's learned with fellow members. As president, she'll share at a higher level, leading, directing and managing everything we do to help members succeed.

I truly appreciate all of those who have helped me during my time as president of SouthWest Writers. Thanks to the 2008 and 2009 board members: Larry Greenly, Keith Pyeatt, Harold M. Burnett, Edith M. Greenly, Bob Gassaway, Ruth Friesen, Jeanne Shannon, Kathleen Hessler, Sandy Toro, Gary Ness, Peggy Herrington, Dianne Layden, Pat Bost, Rose Marie Kern, Ron Schultz, Wendy (Becky) Bickel, Bonnie Hayes, John Candelaria, Sandy Schairer. Thanks also to Gail Rubin, Arielle and Devin Windham, and a ga-zillion others.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Reyna Lehker
Theresa Miles

SouthWest Sage Advertising Rates Worldwide Internet Circulation

The SWW website receives hundreds of thousands of page requests every month.

Business card size: \$16	1/8 page: \$24
1/4 page: \$36	1/3 page: \$45
15% discount for 3 mos.	20% discount for 6 mos.

Deadline: 1st of each month for the following month.
Payment due with camera-ready ad copy.

Annual Membership in SouthWest Writers

Individual: \$60 (\$100 for 2 years), Two people \$50 each,
Student over 18: \$40, Under 18: \$25
Requires proof of student status
Outside U. S.: \$65, Lifetime Membership: \$750
Download the *Sage* from www.southwestwriters.com
Join us first Saturday: 10 AM-Noon: Third Tuesday: 7-9 PM
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE,
Albuquerque, New Mexico



SouthWest Sage

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How I Found Santa Without NORAD

By John Orman

"NORAD to Track Santa's Journey." The newspaper story headline happened to catch my eye as I ate breakfast on the day before Christmas this year. I recall that similar stories frequented many Christmastime newspapers during my youth.

But before there was a NORAD to reassure us, what if somehow Santa could not find everyone on that precious List? What if one of those missed children was me? That thought was so frightening to me on Christmas Eve of 1954 that I leapt out of bed, shivering with fear, but also determined to not allow Mr. Claus to miss me.

Banging open my parent's bedroom door, I barked into the darkness, "Daddy, is Santa coming tonight for sure?"

Groggily awakening, my Dad could only mumble, "Yes, son, he will. Go to bed."

Of course, that soft mumbling did not relieve my rising anxiety. "But what if he misses our house?" I whined as only a five year old can.

"Santa wouldn't dare miss our house." My father's voice was louder now.

"But I want to know now that he is on his way here."

I am not sure whether it was anger or resignation to my persistence that got my father to quickly rise from his bed and throw on his bathrobe. "OK, Johnny, let's go find Santa and I will show you that he is heading right here."

My curiosity then overcame my dread as I followed my swiftly-moving Dad up to the attic, his inner sanctum of electronic wizardry. He quickly powered up his old ham radio set and started calling out his call letters.

"WOKKC here in Denver. Anybody else out there foolish enough to be broadcasting on Christmas Eve?" Not sure of what Dad's plan was, I wondered if anybody would respond to his call.

After long "dead air," the silence was broken by a crackling voice. "VE1WWZ, Nova Scotia, out here in the frozen north. Merry Christmas."

Dad looked at me with a big grin. "Sounds like we have found some Christmas spirit out there."

My father leaned right up to the microphone, booming out a mighty "Merry Christmas to you!"

"Have you seen Santa out there yet? My little son is anxious about Santa making it all the way to Denver."

"Oh yes, you can tell your son that he just made his deliveries in our town and is heading your way with many presents to give out." Then for hours, the returning calls came from fellow listeners--Bangor, New York, Dayton, Wichita.

As I noted all those call locations on Dad's world globe, I could see that Santa was indeed heading directly for Denver and, in particular, my house. Relieved, I was finally able to sleep a few hours until the Christmas dawn arose. Santa indeed made it to our house.

So before NORAD was finding Santa, my Dad tracked him all the way to our house. A Merry Christmas, indeed!

John Orman's essay won first place in SWW's December 2008 monthly contest.

Revising Fiction: Suspense Builders

by Kirt Hickman

For many writers, the challenge of story lies in how to plot, rather than plod, through the long, languid, middle of the novel. The key to holding your reader's attention lies in the art of maintaining suspense. This article presents a list of elements that will increase the suspense in your story. Build as many into your plot as it can accommodate.

Make at least one character especially violent or adversarial.

This character is a wild card. He should have the ability and inclination to severely and unexpectedly hurt your hero (or at least hurt your hero's chances of achieving her goal).



Spring surprises. Keep the reader guessing. Provide many obstacles that come at your hero when she least expects them and when your reader least expects them. Provide at least one surprise turning point in each chapter. These surprises must not be contrived events, however. They must all stem from the characters, their goals, and their motivations.

Mislead your reader. If you mislead your reader, the surprises will have more impact. Nevertheless, you must play fair. Leave clues that are consistent with who your characters are—even if the characters are different from how your reader believes them to be.

Do your worst. In every scene, ask yourself: What is the worst thing that could happen to the hero? Then make it happen.

Take away that which is most important to your hero. What does your hero care about more than anything else? Take it away, or better yet, destroy it. At the very least, put it at risk.

Haunt your hero with memories of a past failure. Relate the failure to the events in the book. Put your hero in the same situation she was in when she experienced her failure. Use her memories of that failure to undermine her confidence and make her challenges more difficult and more personal.

Turn the environment loose upon your characters. In my science fiction novel, *Worlds Asunder*, the vacuum of space lurks beyond the walls of the buildings, vehicles, and pressure suits that keep my characters alive. I frequently turn it loose inside.

For the purpose of building suspense, "environment" doesn't have to mean "natural phenomena." It can refer to any element of the character's surroundings that is beyond the

control of the main characters, including sociological, political, or economic circumstances and events. To keep an environmental event from seeming contrived, establish early that such an event is possible.

Employ phobias. What is your hero afraid of? Make him confront the source of his fear. If you choose something the reader also fears, it will heighten his emotional response.

Never make anything easy. Turn all your minor challenges into major ordeals. Make even simple tasks difficult if circumstances can justify your doing so.

Show that the danger is real. Hurt your hero, kill a good guy, or both. If you kill someone your hero cares about, it will raise the personal stakes and inject a strong emotional element into your plot. At one point in *Worlds Asunder*, my hero is hospitalized for his wounds following a battle for his life. In addition, several good guys die, including one of my hero's closest relatives. This shows that the threat to him is very real.

Impose a deadline. This is the ticking clock. It need not be a clock the hero can see, or one with a specified time to zero, but one way or another you must create a sense of urgency.

In *Worlds Asunder*, the political events surrounding my hero's investigation escalate toward war. If he can solve the case in time, his findings might defuse the building crisis. He doesn't know how much time he has, but he and the reader can see the escalation. In alternating scenes, the hero takes a step toward solving the case, and then political events expand. This creates an unseen clock. My hero and the reader are never quite sure it hasn't already reached zero, the point beyond which no one can stop the war.

Prevent your hero from running away. You don't need to impose a physical barrier, but make your hero's need to stay in the conflict stronger than his desire to escape it. The same must be true for your villain. In *Worlds Asunder*, my hero wants to retire and go home to his family—that would be his escape—but averting war is much more important. He won't quit, even when the stakes rise and he must risk losing his own daughter.

Use these techniques in combination. Don't restrict yourself to one suspense builder per scene. Stack these elements one upon another, particularly in key scenes. This will compel your reader to keep turning the pages.

Kirt Hickman, author of Worlds Asunder, a science-fiction conspiracy thriller, and the 2009 self-editing guide Revising Fiction, teaches "Revising Fiction" courses through SouthWest Writers.

The Dirty Dozen: Myths About Writing for Kids

By Shirley Raye Redmond

As a full-time writer and author of several children's books, I'm constantly amazed at the uninformed statements people make regarding the writing and publication of kids' book manuscripts. So here they are, the 12 most prevalent myths I've had to deal with in the past 15 years:

(1) Talking animal stories are always popular. Not so. Some editors loathe anthropomorphism and say so in their submission guidelines. Before you write that tale about singing peaches or piglets, do your market research.

(2) Rhyming books are always popular. Again, not so. Because there are too many beginners unaware of meter, scansion, true rhyme and the Bell curve of reading comprehension, many editors will not read rhyming manuscripts at all.

(3) Kids books have no plot. The story plot may be simpler, but it's there. Can't see it? Then you're not ready to write for kids—or the editors that buy for them. Even nonfiction books have story arcs.



(4) It's easy to break in with kids' books. Not really, particularly in the picture book market. I've written three romance novels. These were easier to sell than any of my children's books—and the editors were less persnickety.

(5) Anyone can come up with a good idea for a kids book. Perhaps, but it's transforming that idea into marketable book manuscript that's tough.

(6) Children's book critics are kinder, gentler creatures. Yeah, right! Only someone who has never had his new book torn apart by a critical librarian, who posted her comments on the Internet, would believe that. When a reviewer declares the artist's illustrations "too cartoony" or your diction "cumbersome and not age appropriate," there are thousands of parents, teachers and librarians who won't buy your book.

(7) Children's books don't sell as many copies as books for adults. Tell that to the author of *The Poky Little Puppy*, which has sold 14,898,341 copies or Margaret Wise Brown who wrote *Goodnight Moon*, which has sold 3,613,958 copies. And don't forget J.K. Rowling, Beatrix Potter and Shel Silverstein—just a few of the many, many authors that made *Publisher's Weekly* list of children's book authors that have sold over 750,000 copies for a single title.

(8) There's no money in it. Tell that to J.K. Rowling, Edward Stratemeyer or Judy Blume, to name a few. Frankly, the ad-

vances and royalties for my kids' books have all been larger than those I've received for my romance novels.

(9) You'll get rich. Few do. But if you're willing to write for the school encyclopedia companies and other work-for-hire publishers and write fiction series titles under popular pseudonyms, such as Carolyn Keene and Franklin W. Dixon, while you work on your own YA, middle grade novel or picture book, you can quit your day job.

(10) Writing for kids is easy—there are so few words. When writing for young children, the text is sparse. But every word must count. Say good-bye to utility words, flowery adjectives, adverbs and complex sentence structure. And be prepared to substitute 2-syllable words for those 3- and 4-syllable ones, which might not be "grade level appropriate."

(11) Kids' books should teach a lesson. Really? As a child, I wanted to lose myself in a good story. Books with lessons were called textbooks. I don't recall being fond of any of them. Kids want to be entertained. They want to lose themselves in another place, another time—Narnia, Redwall, Hogwarts. If you can weave a lesson throughout the narrative, that's great. But first concentrate on the characterization, action, conflict, climax and resolution.

(12) Kids books are boring. Have you read any lately? C.S. Lewis once said, when teased by his Oxford colleagues about his constant reading of children's books, "A mature palate...ought still enjoy bread and butter and honey."

Shirley Raye Redmond is the award-winning author of nearly two dozen books, including *The Jersey Devil*. Visit her website at www.readshirleyraye.com.



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WRITERSSHOWTIME.COM

Program Location: New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE, Albuquerque

SouthWest Writers Holiday Potluck

Saturday, December 5

Bring your appetites and food to share



Saturday, December 5
10:00 a.m. to noon

Amy Lahti

A Press Release is Not Enough: Selling Your Book to Readers in the Age of Facebook

Do you have a self-published book that you'd like to sell more copies of? Are you confused about why you can't seem to get local bookstores interested in holding events for your book? Have you seen other authors use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or other online resources to get attention (and sales) for their books? These days, simply publishing a book and putting it "out there" isn't enough. There are many free and easy-to-use tools at your disposal that can help generate interest in your book - but you have to use them to see results. We will discuss different avenues for promoting self-published books, what's reasonable to expect and what's not, using the web for promotion, and also what to think about as you write and design your next book.

Amy Lahti is a marketing and communications professional with over 10 years of experience in public relations, web marketing, social networking, and promotion. She has worked for large corporations like PNM and small businesses like Bookworks. Her insights into book promotion from the bookseller's side will help you make good decisions about marketing your books.

**There is no Tuesday evening
meeting in December.**

On December 10 at 5:30 p.m. the New Mexico Book Association (NMBA) will hold its holiday party in Santa Fe at the residence of Ellen Bradbury and Ed Reid, 510 Alto Street. Tickets are \$12 for holiday punch (alcoholic and non) and canapés. **SouthWest Writers** is a co-host, along with Recursos de Santa Fe/Southwest Literary Center, the Narrative Arts Center, and the International Women's Writing Guild. Details and directions: Barbara Harrelson, 505-989-4561, barbarah@newmexico.com

Saturday, January 2
10:00 a.m. to noon

Loretta Hall

Your First Customer: Selling Your Book to a Publisher

You dream of hordes of readers ordering your book from Amazon.com or happily discovering copies on the shelf at their local bookstore. But that's not going to happen unless you can sell your manuscript to a publisher first. (Even if you decide to self-publish, you'd better evaluate your book like a publisher would!) Loretta will explain the steps for selling to your first, and most important, customer.

Loretta Hall has four nonfiction books in print and is writing the next one. The lessons she has learned from experiences with several publishers will give you a head start with your sales efforts. Although her personal experience is in the nonfiction realm, her tips for thinking like a publisher can be useful to novelists as well. Loretta served on the SouthWest Writers board for four years and received the 2007 Parris Award.



Tuesday, January 19
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Michael Clark

Digital Masters: Adventure Photography - Writing a How-To Book about Your Profession

Michael Clark will present his award winning photography and speak about the process of negotiating the contract, creating an outline, working with an editor, and the nuts and bolts of writing his book, *Digital Masters: Adventure Photography*. In addition to these topics, Michael will talk about how he was chosen by publisher Lark Photography Books to write a how-to book on Adventure Sports Photography and how his blogging and marketing materials were key part of getting the book deal.

Michael Clark is an internationally published outdoor photographer specializing in adventure sports, travel, and landscape photography. He uses unique angles, bold colors, strong graphics and dramatic lighting to capture fleeting moments of passion, gusto, flair and bravado in the outdoors. Balancing extreme action with subtle details, striking portraits and wild landscapes, he creates images for the editorial, advertising and stock markets worldwide.

Cont. on next page

DO-IT-YOURSELF WEBSITES, Class**Loretta Hall****November 23, 30, December 7, 14, 2009
Monday Evenings 6:30-8:30pm**

\$65 members, \$75 non-members, Limit: 14 participants
SouthWest Writers Conference Room
3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

In this eight-hour series, you will learn how to create and maintain your own web site without knowing HTML codes. Using the types of template-based programs and reliable but inexpensive hosts we will discuss, the cost of your site will range from \$0 to about \$10 per month. Topics include domain names, hosting options, web site design concepts, search engine rankings, and inexpensive (or free) site-building software. In-class demonstrations and take-home exercises will get you started establishing your Internet presence.

Nonfiction author **Loretta Hall** has built four web sites using template-based software. Her current site, Subsurface-Buildings.com is the top search result for "underground buildings." A Top 20 Architecture site, it also received a 2007 Regional Award of Excellence from the Society for Technical Communication. In September 2008, she rebuilt the site using different software, and accomplished a smooth transition from the former version.

January 19 meeting, cont.

As a former physicist, Michael has worked on both sides of the technical revolution – helping refine the technology and using it for his current profession. Michael has worked as a professional photographer since 1996 and added digital photography to his repertoire in 2003. While Michael still shoots some film, mostly medium format, the lion's share of his images are now produced with high-resolution digital cameras. He has been featured in *Outdoor Photographer* (September 2001), *Nikon World Magazine* (Summer 2006) and *New Mexico Magazine* (2007) for his work with extreme sports.

He contributes to *National Geographic*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Outside*, *Men's Journal*, *Backpacker*, *Outdoor Photographer*, *Digital Photo Pro*, *Climbing*, *Alpinist*, *Rock and Ice*, *Bike Magazine* and *The New York Times* among many others.

A sampling of Michael's advertising clients include Nike, Nikon, Adobe, Patagonia, Propel/Gatorade, Pfizer, DuPont, 20th Century Fox, Black Diamond, Cloudveil, Prana, Arc'teryx, Camelbak, La Sportiva, Gregory Packs, and Butterfield and Robinson.

SHOW, DON'T TELL**Shirl Brainard****Saturday, January 16,
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

\$65.00 (includes lunch), Limit: 10 participants
SouthWest Writers Conference Room
3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

This workshop is designed to hone descriptive writing skills and explore your creativity by the use of visual material. You will describe your visual in 500 words maximum. We'll take 20 minutes per writing and 10 minutes per reading and peer comments. Free association of ideas is encouraged. This is a non-threatening, quick-brained, FUN hands-on workshop with NO critiques (and no grade!) Each participant will need paper, pen/pencil and a sense of humor.

This workshop (for writing) is an adaptation from a 6-week course, *Exploring Your Creativity*, which Shirl designed from the book, *The Courage to Create*, by psychologist Rollo May. She has taught this workshop for over 30 years.

Shirl Brainard is a retired design and color theory instructor from a community college. Just after she retired, her college textbook was published and is now in its 4th edition. Shirl writes non-fiction articles, her memoirs and is working on several fictional short stories.

Entries are now being accepted for the 2010 Western Writers of America Spur Awards competition. To be eligible, works submitted must be set in the American West, the early frontier, or relate to the Western or frontier experience. Non-members, as well as members, of the WWA, Inc., are encouraged to enter. Works submitted for this competition must have been first published or aired during the 2009 calendar year. Entries must be postmarked no later than January 9, 2010. For details, visit http://www.westernwriters.org/2010_SPUR_RULES.pdf

When good and evil intertwine,
taking one means accepting the other

DARK KNOWLEDGE
by Keith Pyeatt

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FIVE EASY STEPS: GET YOUR NON-FICTION OR FICTION BOOK PUBLISHED**Rob Spiegel and Melody Groves****NON-FICTION****January 28 – February 25, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

Thursday evenings 5 weeks
 \$79 members, \$89 non-members
 Class limited to 14 students

FICTION**March 11 – April 15, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

Thursday evenings 6 weeks
 \$89 members, \$99 non-members
 Class limited to 14 students

A series of two classes. Register for one or both

SouthWest Writers Conference Room
 3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

Ready to get your non-fiction book published? Want someone to buy your novel? Rob Spiegel and Melody Groves will teach two sets of classes to propel you on your way to fame and fortune.

The first series of 5 classes addresses issues of non-fiction and will cover finding markets, writing queries (these will be critiqued by Rob and Melody), writing proposals (also critiqued and shared with the group), attending conferences (why that's crucial), and finding an agent. The 6 fiction classes will address markets, the submission process (proposals), writing the synopsis (critiqued in class) as well as suggested conferences (why you should attend) and finding an agent.

Rob Spiegel is the author of six published non-fiction books. **Melody Groves** is the author of one published non-fiction book and three fiction books.

WORKING FICTION: CHALLENGES AND PEER CRITIQUE**Betsy James****January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17, March 3, 10**

(note 1 skipped week) Wednesday evenings, 6:30—9 p.m.
 \$150 for members; \$180 for non-members which includes a 6-month SWW membership and online SW Sage
 Limited to 10 students



SouthWest Writers Conference Room
 3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

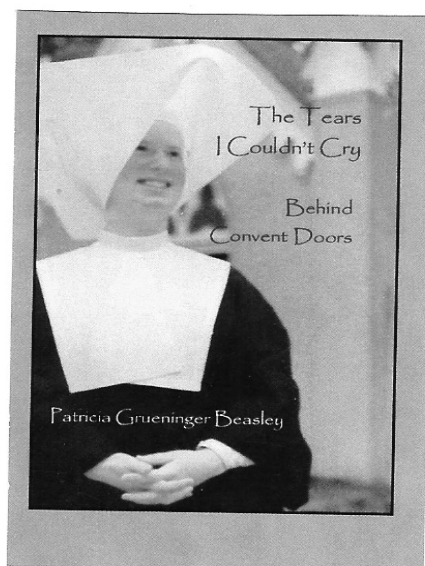
One of the best stimuli of fresh work is the challenge of an outside idea, followed by respectful peer critique. In seven weekly assignments we will write to various aspects of fiction—voice, description, dialogue, point-of-view, and so on—and bring our work into the conversation of critique. The skills of peer critique will be taught and modeled. Assignments—each a maximum of 1000 words—will be appropriate to any fiction form: novel/short story, realistic/fantastic, adult/juvenile. Come prepared to work hard.

Betsy James is the author of 16 books for young adults and children. Her most recent title, *Listening at the Gate* (Atheneum 2006), is a James Tiptree Honor Book and a New York Public Library Best Book for the Teen Age. Visit her on the web at www.betsyjames.com.

Register for classes and workshops

online at www.southwestwriters.com

or call the SWW office at 265-9485

***The Tears I Couldn't Cry, Behind Convent Doors***

The true life story of Patricia Grueninger Beasley of Magdalena, NM, SWW member

“For 8,241 days I was SWALLOWED UP IN A CULTURE OF SECRECY ... I was stripped of my identity ... my loves – family, art, music, & nature – were snatched away ... I WAS ERASED”

“... her story is both terrifying and beautiful and very moving”

-Barnaby Conrad ... co-founder of Santa Barbara Writers Conference

“... a triumph of the human spirit and an inspiration to anyone who is working up the courage to question cherished beliefs and seek closure ...”

-Vickie Patik ... Emmy award winning screenwriter

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Successes and Announcements

Barbara DuBois won two honorable mentions from *Writer's Digest* for the poems "Bags" and "Dr. Hermes."

Valerie Stasik of Santa Fe placed fourth in the stage play division of the *Writer's Digest* 78th Annual Writing Competition with her first full-length play *Prelude*.

Jeanne Shannon had a poem published recently in *The Rag*, another in *Iodine Poetry Journal*, and an essay about local autumn wildflowers called "Sprinkled With Gold All Over" in the October 2 issue of *The New Mexico Breeze*.

Rose Marie Kern's book *FUNdraising Events!* is now on the market. It ties together Rose's experiences helping small and medium sized non-profit organizations to raise money through events both large and small. *FUNdraising Events!* is available online at www.barnesandnoble.com.

Sally Cisney Mann's book *Yearning: A Memoir* is now being sold at the Hangar 25 Air Museum in Big Spring, Texas.

Larry Greenly was profiled in the October issue of Bear Canyon Senior Center's newsletter *The Bear Facts*.

Melody Groves has landed writing assignments with two Western magazines: *True West* and *American Cowboy*. She has written for *True West* previously, but *American Cowboy* had evaded her pen until recently. One article will feature the history of the cowboy boot and the other her research for her historical bar book, being published by UNM Press, Fall 2010.

Sandra Toro has sold her literary historical novel about the Spanish Inquisition to Gaon Books. *By Fire Possessed* will be published in hard cover in September, 2010. For more information, see www.gaonbooks.com and scroll down to Future Titles.

The Jerry B. Jenkins Christian Writers Guild's **Writing for the Soul conference** will take place February 18 – 21, 2010 in Denver, Colorado. Keynote speakers include Max Lucado, Philip Yancey, and Phil Vischer. For more information visit <http://www.christianwritersguild.com/conferences/default.asp>. The organization also offers correspondence writing courses, a critique service, and a novel contest.

Sandra Toro, President of The Toro Literary Agency, is now accepting e-mail queries concerning representation of your books. She agents both fiction and narrative-non-fiction, young adult novels and memoirs. If you are interested in submitting, please follow these guidelines: For non-fiction, send a cover letter explaining your expertise in writing this book, a chapter outline, and three chapters. For fiction, if you have completed and edited your novel, send a cover letter explaining your writing background, a synopsis, and the first fifty pages of your novel. Send all e-mail queries to: storo32567@aol.com.

"To a Wild Rose" Poetry Contest for the best poems about a flower, any flower, cash prizes of \$50, \$25, and \$15 and publication by The Wildflower Press. Poems may be in any form or in free verse. Must not have been published or be under consideration for publication elsewhere nor entered in any other contest. Entry fee: \$3.00 per poem or 3 poems for \$5.00. Postmark deadline: June 30, 2010. Put each poem on a separate page with your name and address at the top of the page. Send one copy of each poem along with entry fee to The Wildflower Press, P.O. Box 4757, Albuquerque, NM 87196-4757.

Nancy Marano was awarded Honorable Mention in the 78th annual *Writer's Digest* Writing Competition in the Magazine Feature Article category for a piece called "Therapy Cats." It was published originally in *PETroglyphs*.

Katherine B. Hauth's poem "Musical Light" placed fourth in Albuquerque's Poetry on the Bus contest for 2009.

Karin Bradberry won 1st place for poetry in the 2009 Prescott Professional Writers contest for "When Nobody Wore Clothes." She is grateful to SWW for advertising this contest.

CONGRATULATIONS to the winners of the Third 2009 SWW Quarterly Writing Competition

Anything Goes Poetry

1st Prize: Elaine G. Schwartz, Albuquerque, N.M. for "Bunuelos"

2nd Prize: Elizabeth Rose, Galisteo, N.M. for "discovery"

3rd Prize: Karen McKinnon, Sandia Park, N.M. for "Afterward"

Honorable Mentions (alphabetical):

Sylvia Ramos Cruz, Albuquerque, N.M. for "Read Me"

Ardith Johnson, Albuquerque, N.M. for "Sanctuary"

Karen McKinnon, Sandia Park, N.M. for "Leaving"

Karen McKinnon, Sandia Park, N.M. for "Threading"

John Orman, Albuquerque, N.M. for "Rescue Party"

Bev Zavitz, Dallas, Texas for "That Night"

SWW 2009 Fourth Quarter Writing Competition

Your most memorable character

Send us an essay about the most memorable character in your life. Double-spaced, up to 500 words. Postmark deadline: Thursday, December 31. Please note if you grant publication permission. All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail entries to SWW Quarterly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

Critique Group Etiquette

By Jeanne Shannon

At some point I could probably write a book about my experiences--good, bad, and ugly--with critique groups, but here are some of my thoughts about things that make critique groups work.

Make copies available. It's not effective to attempt a critique based only on hearing the piece read aloud, especially if it's read only once. The critiquer needs to see the paragraph breaks, the section breaks, the line breaks in poems, and so forth, just as the reader of the published piece will do. (Though it's certainly helpful for both author and critiquer to hear the piece read aloud. If it is read aloud, it's good to have someone other than the author read it, so that the author can hear how it sounds rather than how she thinks it sounds.)

Allow enough time for everyone in the critique group to read the material, either ahead of time or at the meeting, depending on the nature of the material.

Give thoughtful responses. Don't blurt out comments, especially negative ones, without having carefully read the work. Say something positive to begin with. Even if you have to search for something to praise and even if what you find is minor, find it and begin with that. This will make the author more comfortable and more open to accepting suggestions about parts that don't work. And be specific. "I like this" is not enough--say why.

Critique the work; don't criticize the author. One way to help with that is to avoid saying "You said" and to refer to the text instead, by saying something like, "The first sentence on page 3 says." Phrase your comments tactfully. Sometimes it's helpful to present your criticism as your own lack of understanding rather than the fact that the author hasn't been clear. For example, "Where are we in this scene? I can't quite tell whether

we're still in the city or out in the country."

"I want to know more," seems a lazy response. The author may reveal the "more" in due time as the story unfolds, or maybe it's part of the plot to have the reader figure out the "more." Perhaps the "more" is already there and the critiquer hasn't really looked for it. Consider whether you mean that the story is intriguing or whether you are missing a plot point or character trait, and address that.

Don't allow one person to dominate the discussion. If the person facilitating the meeting doesn't control this, or if there is no person identified as the facilitator, it requires everyone to be proactive and demand their own time to speak.

Remember to consider everything that's said but use only what's valuable. Some critiquers offer comments that come from their own personal biases, which may or may not be based on sound writing principles. What you're hearing is opinions, and if everybody in the group has a different opinion, it's up to you to decide what works. On the other hand, if several in the group are of the same opinion, you should definitely take heed to what they say.

Remember the purpose of the group, and don't let meetings become just times for social chitchat. Set specific times, not too far apart, for the group to meet and stick to the schedule.

Bring work to the meetings. Of course once in a while you may not be able to have something ready for group discussion, but let that be a rare occurrence.

Jeanne has been in four critique groups over the last 25 years. On her way to an M.A. in English at UNM, she enrolled in several writing classes that were called workshops and functioned like critique groups, with most of the feedback coming from other students.

Yearning



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What Type of Critique Group Is Right For You?

By Keith Pyeatt

Critique groups are an excellent way to sharpen writing and editing skills and improve your work. Some writers benefit from an intimate, casual group that meets at someone's home. Other writers find online critique groups more helpful. What type of critique group is right for you? Only you can decide, but here are a few options and some information I hope will help you understand what to expect from each.

Online Critique Groups

In general, online groups give detailed critiques. Critiquers have your submission on a screen and their fingers on a keyboard. It's easy to suggest anything from overall comments about plot or characters to word choice and punctuation. A good way to define online groups is by size.

Monster groups have hundreds of members who choose what to critique from a steady stream of submissions, usually posted on a restricted site. You never know who or how many people will critique your work. There's usually little familiarity between members and limited supervision, so there's a greater chance for harsh comments compared to smaller groups. Monster groups work well for short stories and articles, but novelists who want input on arc, pacing, or character development beyond a single scene or chapter should look at other types of groups. Monster groups can provide fresh input on individual chapters, but it's unlikely a single critiquer will follow an entire novel.

Intermediate-sized groups are usually highly structured, closed groups, run and monitored by an administrator. It's likely one or more critiquer will follow an entire novel. Members learn about each other. Some bond. Over time in closed groups, members may begin conforming to the administrator's views and critique style, losing their individuality and limiting the effectiveness of the group. This is especially true if the administrator has a strong personality. Membership turnover can provide fresh views.

Intimate groups usually have fewer than 20 members, sometimes only three or four. There's little turnover, and they're selective, often requiring interested writers to start as a trial member and critique submissions before submitting material of their own. This practice helps ensure a writer is a good fit for the group, and it prevents writers from joining, getting input, and leaving without contributing. Like any small group of people, strong personalities can dominate, but intimate groups can be valuable, comfortable, and beneficial. To keep the group from stagnating, it's a good idea for members to soak up information outside the group and discuss it.

There's further differentiation within each type of online group mentioned above.

- Some accept only certain genres. Others take anything.
- Some critique only polished material. Others are for works in progress. Others take anything.
- Some accept only short stories. Or novels. Or articles. Some

accept anything.

- Some require regular submissions and critiques. Others let you participate only when it's convenient for you.

Face-to-Face Critique Groups

Membership size isn't usually a defining variable for groups that meet face to face. These groups don't function well with too many members, so they're always small. Four to six *active* members is usually a good size. Face-to-face groups differ widely in how they operate.

Groups may ask members to critique submissions in advance and bring their notes and marked-up text to the meetings. This method gives members time to study the writing style, examine word choice, sentence structure, flow, characterization, and other factors. They can even offer up alternate wording to help make a point to the author. Level of input is similar to online groups but delivered in person with verbal explanation and room for discussion (if allowed in the group).

Some groups hand out submissions at the meeting. Members see the material for the first time as it's read out loud. Then they offer their critiques. Unless the group provides time between reading and comments, critiques are limited to first-impression input.

Some groups hand out material at the meeting and ask members to read silently and make notes before discussing impressions. The level of input depends on how much time is given per submission. These groups should limit members, submissions per meeting, and/or time per submission or the meetings will last all day (and into the night).

There are many other variables. Some groups require members to walk in the door with their sleeves already rolled up and ready to work. Socializing isn't allowed until the meeting ends. Others chat, sip wine, and sample the cheese of the month before getting to work. Some make a point of sharing successes and frustrations, providing support beyond critiques. Others stick to critiquing.

Whatever type critique group you join, here are three strong suggestions.

- Know the group's expectations and respect their rules.
- If you need to experiment to learn what type group works for you, do it, but let the groups you try know what you're doing.
- Learn good critique group etiquette and use it 100 percent of the time.

Keith Pyeatt first joined an online critique group while living in the rural woods of Vermont. Fourteen years later, he still depends on contacts made in that critique group. Learn more about Keith and his paranormal thrillers at www.keithpyeatt.com.



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grandpajimsf@peoplepc.com

Nonfiction, Valencia County

Karen Keese 505-261-0040

skywriter@wildblue.net

Children's Books, Santa Fe

Idiemand@cybermesa.com

Fantasy/Sci-Fi

Tramway and Lomas

Abner Perez 505-363-1166

Abnerdontwanna@yahoo.com

Nonfiction

Peggy Spencer 505-270-8914

Fiction or Creative Non-Fiction

Farmington/San Juan County

Rebecca Larivee 505.632-8086

goatvalley@gmail.com

Rio Rancho

Alice Harpley and Bob Harpley

505-867-1408

riversedgebob@cablone.net

riograndema@cablone.net

Writers, Ink

Female, any genre

kgliniski@monarchnm.com

Seeking fiction writer to critique work

VATyas@aol.com

Writing Groups

Estancia Valley Writers Group

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2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.

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Marc Calderwood 505-897-6474

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