

SouthWest Sage

January 2014 www.southwestwriters.com

Measuring Success: Changing Times, Changing Goals

by Kristi Holl

Before reading a great article last week, I secretly feared I had lost my drive to write.

Not my "want to." Just my drive.

For thirty years I've set goals, worked hard toward meeting them (some called me "driven"), achieved most of them, then set more. I happily set one-year goals, five-year goals, and ten-year goals.

Goals that Once Spelled Success

- Graduate from the [Institute of Children's Literature](http://www.instituteofchildrensliterature.com) course.
- Sell first article.
- Sell first short stories.
- Repeat many times.
- Sell first novel. Sell more novels.
- Get agent. Fire agent.
- Sell first series. Sell many series.

They were busy whirlwind years, with writing, raising children, and teaching. But somewhere around Book #35 or so, I found myself losing the drive. Or so I thought.

I still loved writing and didn't want to quit. But enjoying the writing and having a balanced life (e.g. more time to sleep and be with grandkids) meant more to me than the next contract, the next conference, or jumping on the next social networking bandwagon.

Changing Times, Changing Goals

But last week, in a romance writers magazine that was given to me, I read an article by Barbara Wallace called "Defining

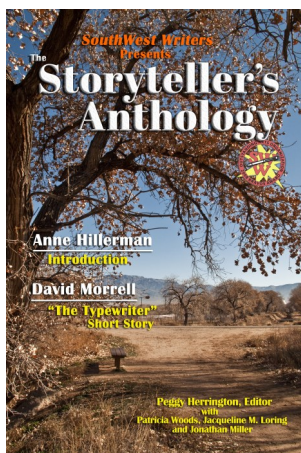
Success." Many of the definitions were as expected: get published, be represented by an agent, win an award, get fan letters. I almost stopped reading, thinking, "Same old, same old." *But then!*

I read some definitions of success written by women who had been writing quite a while, most of them published many times. Here's what their current "definitions of success" were:

- Jackie Braun: Now, more than 25 books later, my definition has changed again. I see success as achieving and maintaining a happy balance between writing books and spending time with my family.
- Judith Arnold: Today, with my mortgage paid off and no more college tuitions to cover, I define success as writing the books of my heart. I define it as ignoring the commercial pressures and focusing on the stories I feel compelled to share.
- Donna Alward: If I never wrote again, I'd survive and I'd do something else. But if something happened to my family, I'd be destroyed. Figuring that out was really liberating and helped me rediscover the joy of writing.
- Pam Nowak: I feel good about what I have done. If I never sell again, I'll know what I achieved, and I'll feel good about having done so.

(Continued on page 14)

Kristi Holl is the author of 42 books, including *More Writer's First Aid*. Visit her website at www.kristiholl.com and her blog [Writer's First Aid](http://www.writerfirstaid.com). This article was originally posted to *Writer's First Aid* on March 14, 2012 and is reprinted here with permission.



- ♦ *The Storyteller's Anthology* is now available to order in paperback on Amazon [here](http://www.amazon.com). Please consider leaving a positive comment on the Review page with a 5-star rating to get things rolling.
- ♦ The Bookworks reading and signing event will be at 3:00 pm on January 19. If you want to sign up to participate, send an email to peg@msn.com.
- ♦ Bookworks has posted a page about the event at this [link](http://www.bookworks.org) and on their January calendar [here](http://www.bookworks.org).

Get Your Manuscripts Ready!
**2014 SWW INTERNATIONAL
 WRITING COMPETITION**
 February 1 - May 15, 2014

For more information, go to the contest website at
<http://www.swwcontest.com/>.



Despite the arduous and hotly contested campaign for president of SouthWest Writers, I feel I need to introduce myself. I am Lee Higbie and my writing interest is genre novels. The novels I've completed are pre-publication quality thrillers, mysteries, and science fiction. My nonfiction publications are mostly related to computer engineering and were all part of another life from, hopefully, a well-obscured past.

I welcome your suggestions about any aspect of SouthWest Writers. Specifically, I hope you'll offer me:

- Program or discussion suggestions for our monthly meetings
- Topics you'd like to see discussed in the *Sage*
- Topics you'd like to see presented in workshops or classes

You've heard Kathy Kitts, Peggy Herrington and Jonathan Miller talk about our need to increase revenues. The best long-term solution is to increase membership. I think helping people attend our meetings may abet their joining. If you need a ride or can provide one to our SWW meetings, please send a note to the *Sage* editor at swwsage@swcp.com with the following information:

1. Your name and contact info
2. The meetings you do or would like to attend, carpool to, or provide a ride to (first Saturdays, third Tuesdays, or both)
3. Where you will be coming from (and returning to)

Hopefully, if you can provide a ride or need a ride you will find a carpool mate in the *Sage* column. In time, we will automate this matching process and put it entirely on our website. Also, if you can spread the word about our meetings, please do so.

Help with craft is something many of us can use. I've been collecting writing *laws* for several years and given some of them to our projectionist, Kim. You may have seen my rules of thumb on the screen. Remember that writing is an art, so even the best writing rules" should be understood and then thoughtfully broken. Also, many rules apply to specific types of writing and may have no relevance to yours. Two examples based on often quoted rules of writing:

1. **Never change the point of view in the middle of a paragraph.** If you're writing in a Pre-Nineteenth Century style, then this rule probably doesn't apply to you. But most modern editors denigrate this type of writing with the term "head hopping." My recommendation is to never do it unintentionally.
2. **Avoid adverbs, especially in speaker attributions.** If you look at contemporary fiction, adverbs in speaker attribution, even to the point of being Tom Swifties, abound in some writing. The writers who get away with it seem to be well established and to be great storytellers, like J.K. Rowling. In the case of *Harry Potter*, the fact that Ms. Rowling is writing for tweens also helps her get away with it.

So, if you are trying to improve your craft, learn the rules of writing and the rules of grammar. Follow or violate the rules intentionally. Stuck? Try Raymond Chandler's suggestion—when in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand.

Lee

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SouthWest Sage Advertising Rates 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
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 in .jpg format.

Annual Membership in SouthWest Writers

Individual: \$70 (\$65 renewal if paid two months in advance)

Student: 18 and over, \$40; under 18, \$25

Requires proof of student status

Outside U.S.: \$75, Lifetime Membership: \$750

Download the *Sage* from www.southwestwriters.com

Join us first Saturday, 10 am-Noon and third Tuesday, 7-9 pm
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE,
Albuquerque, New Mexico



SouthWest Sage

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A Note from the Outgoing Editor

This is my last issue as editor of *SouthWest Sage*. If there is one thing I've learned in the two years of working on the SouthWest Writers' newsletter, it's that I couldn't have done the job without the help of so many people who were willing to give their time, talent and/or sympathy.

I want to thank all those who contributed to the newsletter but especially the writers who submitted monthly columns during the past two years: A.R. Aeby, Dodici Azpadu, Olive Balla, Sherri Burr, and Bentley McGrath. Fine articles and adhering to deadlines earned this editor's gratitude.

There are those in every endeavor who work behind the scenes and often go unnoticed—in this case, the proofers who I've relied on to catch my many mistakes. A huge thanks to Lola Eagle, Larry Greenly, Carola Sena, and Jeanne Shannon who volunteered their time and eagle eyes to the cause.

Thank you, also, to the readers for which this newsletter is dedicated.

Rose Kern will introduce herself to you next month as the new editor of *SouthWest Sage*.

See you-all at the monthly meetings.

Critique Groups Seeking Members

Children's/MG/YA

See Albuquerque Area Writing Groups, below

Fiction/Nonfiction

Wally Gordon, wallygordon@q.com or
Chris Enke, enke@unm.edu
Erna Fergusson Library
Second Wed. each month, 4-6:00 pm
With interest, can change day & time

Genre. Novel Length

Lee, Lee@seki.com
Second Tues. each month, 7:00 pm
Reviewing ready-to-query novels

Mainstream Fiction

Online Critique Group
Christie Keele, ckeele10@hotmail.com

Sci-Fi

Send name and writing experience to:
Cosmic_Connections_SF_Critique_Group@yahoo.com

Screenwriting

See Albuquerque Area Writing Groups, below

~ WRITING MARATHONS ~

Two SWW members host an
8-hour writing marathon
on the last Sunday of every month,
2:00-10:00 pm, at alternating locations.
Email kt wag@msn.com or
ruffwag3@earthlink.net.

Albuquerque Area Writing Groups

The Albuquerque Croak & Dagger
chapter of Sisters in Crime meets 4th
Tuesday of the month, 7 pm, police
briefing room at James Joseph Dwyer
Memorial Substation. www.croak-and-dagger.com/

The Wordwrights: Don Morgan and
Dennis Kastendiek moderate, all genres
welcome. North Domingo Baca
Multigenerational Center, Room 1,
2nd floor. Mondays, 1:30-3:30 pm.
Contact Dennis: dwjkas@yahoo.com

Children's/MG/YA Writers: 3rd Saturday
critique group meets monthly
at Erna Fergusson Library, San Mateo
and Comanche, 10:30 am-12:30 pm.
Bring five copies of five pages, double-
spaced, to share.

Duke City Screenwriters: Every
other Thursday, 6-8 pm at UPublic
Station on 3rd St: critique, education
and fun. Contact Marc Calderwood at
skatingkokopelli@hotmail.com.

**SCBWI: Society of Children's Book
Writers and Illustrators:** 2nd Tuesday
each month, 7-8:30 pm, Alamosa
Books. Short workshops/discussions.
Pre-schmooze dinner, Flying Star,
Wyoming & Paseo, 5:30-6:45 pm.
schmooze@scbwi-nm.org

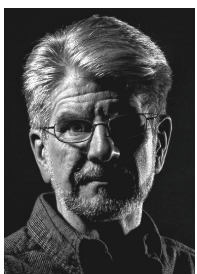
Writers2Writers meets the 2nd Monday
each month, 6:30-7:30 pm, Has-
tings Café, NE corner of Coors and
Montano. Monthly speakers. All genres
are welcome. Contact
FAAiken@aol.com

MEET THE 2014 SWW BOARD OF DIRECTORS



President: Lee Higbie

Lee worked as a supercomputer engineer for four decades and has now transitioned to writer. He has written several genre novels of pre-publication quality (two science fiction, two mysteries, and a thriller). The latest of these has been ePublished on Scribl.com.



Secretary: Andy Mayo

Andy completed his career in the financial services industry as a financial advisor and regional sales director for Smith Barney. A diverse writer, he began as a newspaper reporter, and has three plays that received staged readings. His two novels in progress are about money laundering and high frequency trading.



Class & Workshop Coordinator: Sharon Serrano

Sharon has been a cake decorator, home educator and worked for the USAF. She is a certified Life-Cycle Funeral Celebrant. She volunteers with the NM Tombstone Transcription Project and is writing faith-based historical fiction, memoir and a daily devotional.



Membership: Cynthia Boyd

Cynthia did her undergraduate work at NMSU, then took a Commission with the US Army and started a career as an Ordnance Officer. She is a graduate of Oriental Medicine and teaches Acupressure, Shiatsu and Tui Na. She writes genre fiction; however, she'd like to break into comedy.



Social Media: Robyn Ruff-Wagner

Robyn, also known as Robyn Mackenzie, is a writer and musician. She is a yearly participant in February Album Writing Month (writing 14 songs in 28 days) and a similar challenge called 50/90. Robyn also writes fiction and cheesy graphic novels. She released a debut album *Of Dreams and Dust* in 2010.



SouthWest Sage Editor: Rose Kern

Rose is a Master Gardener, beekeeper, lecturer, photographer and writer. Her articles have appeared in aviation magazines, as well as *Countryside* magazine, *Backwoods Home*, *Solar Today* and *HomePower*. She has two books on the market, *FUNdraising Events* and *The Solar Chef*. *The Solar Chef* is in its 7th edition.



Vice-President: Robin Kalinich

Artist, writer, and chemist, Robin works for the man, but her true passions lie in the creative realm. She leads Ink & Alchemy, focusing on inspiring, encouraging, and transforming creative people via networking and social media. Robin has published scientific papers, short stories, and poetry. She is an aspiring novelist.



Treasurer: Dino de Leyba

Dino has a design degree from Otis Parsons School of Design. His manuscript *Sketching a Life* became text for fashion students at Brooks College in Long Beach. He has a financial background and owns BeautyMark Foundation specializing in design and marketing of couture jewelry and women's accessories.



Member-at-Large: Larry Greenly

Larry has been an SWW member since 1992 and has held every position on the board except treasurer. He has published hundreds of articles and won awards as a writer and editor. He also taught writing at Bear Canyon Senior Center for 8 years. His YA biography *Eugene Bullard: World's First Black Fighter Pilot* was published in 2013.



Member-at-Large: Bob Kidera

Bob has a B.A. in History and a Masters in Educational Technology. He left his position as a Unit Publicist for 20th Century-Fox in New York City for a 39-year career in education, during which he wrote textbooks and workbooks. After retiring he followed a life-long dream to write full time. He's writing his first novel *Red Gold*.



Volunteer Coordinator: Betty Higbie

Betty was an educator in Kansas, Wyoming, Colorado, Australia and Poland. She has written newsletter columns and magazine articles, but picture, middle grade, and YA books involving science/nature are her true love. She is currently writing *Sourdoughology*, tracing the history of sourdough through the adventures of Sourdough Man.



Webmaster: Kathy Kitts

Kathy is a retired geology professor who served as a science team member on the NASA Genesis Discovery Mission. She also directed a planetarium for 9 years. She has dozens of non-fiction publications but no longer wishes to talk about "what is" but rather "what if." She writes short literary fiction and novel-length science fiction.

Here's the commonly accepted drill in the quest for publication:

- Take a few creative writing classes.
- Buy a library full of treatises on how to write the great American novel.
- Write a great 60,000-word to 100,000-word story that's equal parts plot- and character-driven.
- Re-write and edit.
- Give your novel a unique and intriguing title.
- Develop an impressively bulging platform on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and any other of the hundreds of social networking sites you can access.
- Re-write and edit again.
- Create, pay someone else to create, or have your nephew create a brilliant website upon which you regularly write witty and pithy blog posts.
- Take a class on guerilla marketing strategies, since you'll be required to market your own book.
- Re-write and edit some more.
- Brush up on the art of contract negotiations, or hire a literary attorney to represent you in negotiations with Big Publishing.
- Craft a succinct yet compelling Query, Synopsis, and Pitch.
- Re-write and edit yet again.
- Find the one-in-a-thousand agent who represents your genre, and more importantly, who is willing to be queried by the as-yet-unpublished.
- Be prepared to give copies of your book to bloggers, Goodreads reviewers, and friends and family.
- Eschew indie or self-publishing as the last resort of those lost souls doomed to forever wander in the wilderness of literary untouchables.

But wait. Apparently the wonderful world of technology is in the process of rendering all the above so much balderdash.

Ever heard of Hugh Howey? According to *Forbes*, thousands of copies of this 37-year-old man's science fiction novel are selling on two continents at this very moment. How did he do it?

Howey carefully and slavishly stuck to the accepted blueprint for publishing success, right? Wrong. Howey's path to household word-dom bears little resemblance to the standardized version drilled into our heads by agents, authors of publishing how-to books, and guest speakers at writers' conferences.

Well then, Howey certainly must have spent at least 10,000 hours honing his writing skills—the number of hours Dr. Anders Ericsson's research on expertise indicates is necessary to become really good at anything. (That would be 1,250 eight-hour days doing nothing but writing.) Wrong again. Evidently, Mr. Howey has spent most of his years adventuring on his boat, rather than practicing his writing.



Olive Balla is a retired educator and professional musician who lives in Los Lunas, New Mexico with her husband Victor and their puppy HalfNote. Ms. Balla has authored one suspense novel entitled *An Arm And A Leg*, and is nearing completion on a second. The first chapter of *An Arm And A Leg* is posted on her website at www.omballa.com.

So how did Hugh Howey attain his position in the rarified stratum of Consistent Best Sellers? Let's compare and contrast, as my college English professor used to say, the universally accepted means to achieve publication with Howey's path—the path currently being sneered at by the mentally-concretized literati:

1. Howey must have given his novel a brilliant title, right? Um, no. He named his series *Wool*. Could have just as easily been *Cotton*, or *Crepe* for all the excitement his title elicits.
2. He must have a ponderous platform, with thousands of Twitter and Facebook followers. No again. At the time of the *Forbes* article, he didn't even have a website or blog. Instead, his time and creative energies are fully focused on writing his novels.
3. He must at least be a radio or television star with untold numbers of fans avidly awaiting his book. Wrong. Until he published his own book on Amazon, his name was basically known only to friends and family.
4. Once Howey self-published, no self-respecting Big Publisher or agent would look twice at him. Wrong yet again. Not only has he been picked up by Simon & Schuster, but he's now dickering for movie and television series rights—both foreign and domestic.

Howey's self-published success is most assuredly not the norm. And although his prose is top-notch, there are lots of self-published novels that, even to my bourgeois palate, seem less than stellar. In fact, there are some offerings out there that scream "first draft." (Even at that, many of them are bestsellers—go figure.)

The point is that the times they are a-changing. Remember that old story about the buggy whip manufacturer who adamantly refused to change with the times? The company's upper management asserted that the automobile was just a meteoric fad. And the same was said about computers.

We writers are faced with the same kind of choice. We can either take the standard, recommended path to publication

(Continued on page 14)

Meetings

Members are free, Guests \$10

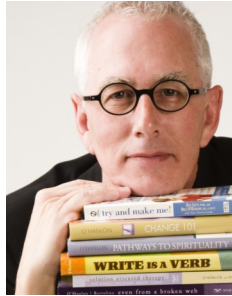
Saturday, January 4
10:00 am to noon

The Poisons That Can Kill Your Writing Dreams and Ambitions (and Their Antidotes)

Bill O'Hanlon

Lessons from a formerly reluctant procrastinating author who now has 37 published books. He will talk about the things most writers struggle with and that stop some writers in their tracks—and how he and the authors he has coached to write and publish over 100 books have overcome these poisons so their books saw the light of day.

Bill O'Hanlon has been a featured *Oprah* guest and is the author of books published by W.W. Norton, HarperCollins, Penguin, Pearson and other mainstream publishers. Visit his website at www.billohanlon.com.



Saturday, February 1
10:00 am to noon

An Overview of Kindle Publishing

Vikki Kestell

This overview covers three major topics: 1) Why ePublish; 2) The Mechanics of ePublishing; and 3) Marketing in the ePublishing World. Using her own ePublishing experience with three novels and several studies over the past two years, she will explore available ePublishing options, her decision to publish exclusively on Kindle, and the results of her publishing efforts. There will be time for questions and discussion about this timely topic.

Vikki Kestell has more than 20 years of career experience as a writing, instructional design, and communications professional in government, academia, semiconductor manufacturing, health care, and nonprofit organizations. She holds a PhD in Organizational Learning and Instructional Technologies. Vikki is an accomplished speaker and teacher and belongs to Tramway Community Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she teaches an evening Bible study for working women. Vikki and her husband Conrad Smith make their home in Albuquerque.



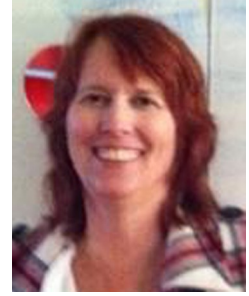
Tuesday, January 21
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Appetites: Using Food as Metaphor in Your Writing

Jules Nyquist

Like cooking, writing is the process of pulling together raw ingredients with inspiration to create a finished work of art. Food and the rituals associated with it can bring powerful emotions and inspire strong writing. Jules will speak about how to use food as a metaphor through readings and writing examples that will draw upon cultural images toward food, rituals and preparation, gender, politics, body image, and hunger. You will gain ideas for your own writing using food as metaphor, whether it is fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction or memoir and a bit of insight into your own appetites.

Jules Nyquist lives in Albuquerque and is the creator of the Poetry Playhouse, a place for poetry, visiting poets, workshops and play. She received her MFA from Bennington College, Vermont, and her poetry collection *Appetites* (Beatlick Press) was a finalist in the 2012 New Mexico/Arizona Book Awards. Her next book of poems is entitled *Behind the Volcanoes*. Visit her website at www.julesnyquist.com.



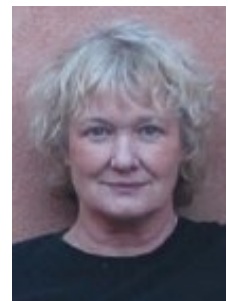
Tuesday, February 18
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

How Books Live On

Judith Van Gieson

In spite of the emphasis on eBooks these days, print books live on in a way that eBooks don't. There is still that chance encounter with a book that leaps off the shelf and changes the life of the reader (who might also be a movie producer) and the author. Judith will talk about the ways these chance encounters have changed her life in recent years.

Judith Van Gieson is the author of 13 mystery novels set in New Mexico. Her first series (published by HarperCollins) featured Albuquerque lawyer/sleuth Neil Hamel. In the second series (paperback by Signet, hardcover by UNM Press), Claire Reynier is a librarian at UNM. Books in both series have been regional and IMBA (Independent Mystery Booksellers Association) bestsellers. *The Shadow of Venus* in the Reynier series was given the Zia Award from NM Press Women for the best work of fiction by a New Mexico woman. Judith runs the publishing company ABQ Press which helps writers self-publish their work. www.judithvangieson.com



Try our Google Calendar link to see what's coming up for each month. Use the link on the SWW website or click here: www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=swwcalendar%40gmail.com&ctz=America/Denver

January Classes & Workshops

Classes and Workshops are held at the SWW Office, 3200 Carlisle Blvd NE, Albuquerque 87110, 505-830-6034

GETTING AROUND BEGINNER'S BUMPS

A Half-Day Workshop
with Sarah Baker

January 25
Saturday, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

See workshop pricing on this page.

What is it that published fiction authors know? Why are their novels published? This workshop covers some of the bumps that all writers must learn to maneuver around. Have you started in the right place? Why is a hook important? Is your writing tight? How do you make the dialogue believable? Bring your questions and we'll discuss your work.

Sarah H. Baker is the author of more than 20 published novels. She holds an MS in engineering and works full time, but also writes fiction under S. H. Baker, Sarah Storme, and Lydia Parks. Sarah's publishers range from Kensington and Harlequin to small presses, one of which she worked for as an acquiring editor. Most recently, she has written award-winning full-cast audio books, and has self-published her backlist. Sarah teaches for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNM. More than anything else, she enjoys sharing her experience with other writers.



SO! YOU WANT TO WRITE A BOOK! with Jacqueline Murray Loring

4 Sessions: January 4, 11, 18, 25
Saturdays, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

\$160 members, \$200 non-members

Do you have a story waiting to be written? What's stopping you from sharing that story with the world, your friends, your family? During this beginner course, attendees will see writing a book as a realistic goal and start the process of getting their story on paper. We will discuss tools to use immediately to get the first draft written and will set individual writing goals to keep students on-track to that completed draft. The class will also focus on story, characters, plot, point of view, beginnings, middles, chapter and story endings, and page stoppers. As time allows we can discuss agents, editors, query letters, book proposals, traditional publishing houses, supported self-publishing, and new technology such as Kindles and ePublishing. Join us and take the next step, or the first step, towards getting your story told.



Jacqueline M. Loring writes poetry, scripts and stage plays. She teaches writing and works as a book editor. She compiled, edited, published and contributed to *Summer Home Review Volume I* and *Volume II*. Her poetry is published in journals and anthologies including the *Scribner Anthology*, *From Both Sides Now*, *A Sense of Place: An Anthology of Cape Women Writers* and *Cadence of Hooves*. In 2012 she won the Doire Irish International Poetry Book Prize for her book *The History of Bearing Children*. *History* was the 2nd place winner of the New Mexico Press Women award for creative verse. She is the coordinator of the Eventide Arts Full Length Play-writing Competition, a past-president of the Cape Cod Chapter of the NLAPW and the past executive director of the Cape Cod Writers Center. She and her husband live in Albuquerque's South Valley.

*Thanks to all who bring goodies to share at our meetings.
The board and the membership truly appreciate it.*

Thank you!

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 505-265-9485.*

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

HALF-DAY WORKSHOP PRICES:

\$40 SWW MEMBERS

\$50 OSHER MEMBERS W/CARD

\$70 NON-MEMBERS • \$75 AT THE DOOR

Workshop and 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 or 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.



Find SouthWest
Writers on Facebook



Follow us on Twitter
@SW_Writers

February Classes & Workshops

Classes and Workshops are held at the SWW Office, 3200 Carlisle Blvd NE, Albuquerque 87110, 505-830-6034

WRITE A MARKETABLE CHILDREN'S BOOK IN 7 WEEKS

**A Half-Day Workshop
with Shirley Raye Redmond
and Jennifer McKerley**

February 8

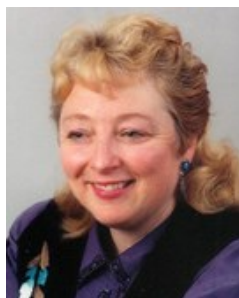
Saturday, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm

\$55 Members • \$65 Osha Members
\$70 Non-members • \$75 at the door

*The fee includes a copy of the 80-page
workbook required for the course.*

Using the method explained in their workbook, Shirley Raye and Jennifer have sold dozens of children's books to major publishers. Covering everything from market analysis to plotting and building a story arc, this session is designed to jumpstart the participants' desire to write a kids' book. The authors will focus on the workshop's key word—marketable—and explain the importance of tying one's nonfiction topic or novel to the school curricula and/or current events.

Shirley Raye Redmond and **Jennifer McKerley** are award-winning authors of more than three dozen children books, many published by Random House and Simon & Schuster. Several of their titles have been translated into French and Spanish and a few have sold more than 200,000 copies each. Shirley Raye's, *Lewis & Clark: A Prairie Dog for the President* was a Children's Book of the Month Club featured selection. Visit their websites at <http://jennifermckerley.com/> and <http://shirleyrayeredmond.com/> and their blog at <http://www.writechildrensbook.com/blog>.



WRITING GENRE FICTION AND GETTING PUBLISHED with Sarah Baker

**4 Sessions: February 1, 8, 15, 22
Saturdays, 2:00 - 4:00 pm**

\$160 members, \$200 non-members

You have a good start on your first novel, but are you on the right track? And what do you do after it's complete? With examples and discussion, this interactive class provides an overview of writing and publishing genre fiction. Bring your questions and we'll discuss them.

Topics include:

Understanding Genre Fiction
Editing to Sell
Submitting Your Work
After The Call
Publicity

Sarah H. Baker, author of more than 20 published novels, grew up in New Orleans and has lived all over the country from Alaska to Georgia. She holds an MS in engineering and works full time, but also writes fiction under S. H. Baker, Sarah Storme, and Lydia Parks. Sarah's publishers range from Kensington and Harlequin to small presses, one of which she even worked for as an acquiring editor. Most recently, she has written award-winning full-cast audio books, and has self-published her backlist. Sarah teaches for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNM. More than anything else, she enjoys sharing her experience with other writers.



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.

Ready to take the plunge this year to pursue writing books for kids? Then here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Word Choice

It's harder to break into children's book publishing than it is to sell a romance, science fiction, mystery or western novel for adults. This usually comes as a surprise to those who equate a short word count with "easy-to-write." When writing for young children, the text is sparse—that's true. But every word must count. Children's book editors are per-snickety. Say goodbye to utility words, flowery adjectives, adverbs and complex sentence structure. And be prepared to substitute one and two syllable words for those three and four syllable ones, which might not be "age appropriate."

2. Know What Kids Like

What kids like and what you *think* kids like may be completely different. Did you love curling up with a stack of library books when you were a child? If so, you've probably dreamed off and on about writing for children or teens, because you have a sentimental recollection of the joy of reading when you were that age. Once, youngsters enjoyed the escapades of Betsy, Tacy and Tib. Today, they follow the adventures of Danny Dragonbreath and his best friend Wendell, the iguana. And those biographies you once devoured about Tom Edison and Dolly Madison? Now editors want biographies of Richard Branson and Pink.

3. Nonfiction Sells

Many children's book editors buy more nonfiction than fiction. Lively book manuscripts that support the school curriculum are often easier to sell, and they stay in print longer. My nonfiction reader *Pigeon Hero!* was published by Simon & Schuster in November 2003—just in time for Veterans' Day, which is appropriate as the book is about GI Joe, the WWII American messenger pigeon. It even won the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Gold Book Award. Now ten years later, the publisher has reissued the title with a new cover and new publicity efforts. A whole new generation of beginning readers will learn about GI Joe's role in the war. The same reissuing happened with my nonfiction title *The Dog That Dug for Dinosaurs*, about Mary Anning, the princess of paleontology. If you haven't considered writing nonfiction for kids, you should.

4. Story Structure

If you're writing fiction, you must build your story around clear conflict that your character will overcome in the end. Conflict gives a story meaning. Remember, a story plot has these essential ingredients: character + action + conflict + climax + resolution. The story plot in a children's book may be simpler than those in books for adults, but it's there. If

you can't identify it, then you're not ready to write for kids or the editors that buy for them.

5. Bait the Hook

Children's book editors get thousands of submissions each month. Many only read the opening paragraph or first 60 words before they reject the manuscript or decide to keep reading. Forget the slow "once upon a time" beginning. Put backstory on the backburner. You need to bait your hook and reel them in quickly with an intriguing first page.

6. Query Letters

A well-written query letter can get you noticed by a New York editor, whether you have an agent or not. In a query, you must convince an editor that your manuscript, if published, will make money for the publishing company and ultimately for you as well. Basically, you're pitching a product. Learn to pitch like a pro.

7. Know What Editors Want

Market analysis is frequently the key to getting a manuscript accepted. This is not as difficult as it sounds, but it can be time-consuming. Think of it like this: you're a realtor and when someone comes looking for a three-bedroom ranch, you're not going to waste the customer's time showing her an eight-bedroom Victorian home with detached garage. Give the editors what they want!

8. Revision

Careful revision separates the published from the unpublished. You must pay attention to story and sentence structure, as well as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. One editor mentioned how frequently he finds three or more mistakes on the first page of a manuscript. He reads no further, rejecting the submission. Take your time to polish and hone. It could mean the difference between a sale and another rejection letter.

9. Manuscript Format

Correct manuscript format is crucial too. It tells the editor that you are a savvy writer who knows the book business. It's hard to believe, but editors are still receiving and rejecting handwritten submissions and manuscripts that are typed single-spaced.

10. Invest the Time

You're never going to *find* the time to write that children's book you've been considering. You must *make* the time.

Shirley Raye Redmond is a national award-winning, bestselling author of children's books and women's fiction. Visit her website at www.shirleyrayeredmond.com. Shirley Raye will teach the workshop Writing a Marketable Children's Book in 7 Weeks on February 8. See page 8 of this newsletter for details.

Sarah H. Baker is the author of more than 20 novels, with publishers ranging from Kensington to Harlequin to small presses. She holds an MS in engineering and works full time, but also writes fiction under three pen names: S. H. Baker, Sarah Storme, and Lydia Parks. Her series, the Dassas Cormier Mysteries, is set in 1920s southwest Louisiana. The first book in the series, *Murder in Marshall's Bayou*, was recommended for an Edgar Award. Her full-cast audio version of the first mystery, *Return to Marshall's Bayou*, was a finalist in the Audie Awards. Sarah enjoys sharing her experience with other writers—see page 7 for information about her January 25 half-day workshop and page 8 for her writing and publishing class that starts in February.

Tell us about your newest work.

Angel in My Arms is a full-cast audio romance set in 1920s Louisiana. Captain Joshua Wakefield lost his wife and child seven years ago in a Gulf storm. Lydia Wakefield, a young woman wise beyond her years, offers the love and joy he never expected to find again.

What do you hope readers will take away from *Angel in My Arms*?

I hope readers will be reminded that there is always hope for a better tomorrow, no matter how bad things are, and that love is the one thing we must give away in order to find.

What unique challenges did this work pose for you?

This was the first piece I'd written specifically for full-cast audio. The producer—Linda of Siren Audio Studios—and I shared a vision of what audio could be, and worked hard to fulfill that vision with this book. We've done things in here never done before. For example, as Joshua and Lydia grow more intimate, their internal dialogues weave together, and when they move apart, their internals move apart. The effect is breathtaking! But there was quite a bit of trial and error involved before we were both happy. And, since there are a dozen actors in the book, the post-production took quite a while. I think readers will be happy with the result, too.

What was the most rewarding aspect of writing *Angel in My Arms*?

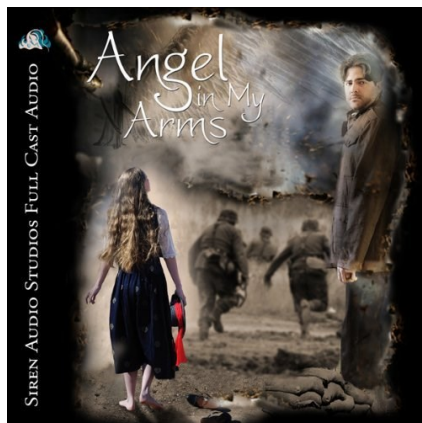
The most rewarding aspect of this project was working closely with Linda and the actors. Everyone participated in bringing the book to life. And having the opportunity to actually hear the characters' voices has to be one of the most amazing things a writer can experience.

What are you most happy with, and what do you struggle with most, in your writing?

My struggles have evolved with my writing, as everyone's do. At this point, I'm most happy with my dialogue, and tend to struggle with getting enough detail and use of senses into descriptions.

Of all the novels you've written, which one did you enjoy writing the most?

Beside the audio books, the book I most enjoyed writing was *Death of a Dancer*, part of the Dassas Cormier Mystery Series.



The story takes place in New Orleans in 1925. Although I grew up there, I had no idea what the city was like in 1925. I don't think I've ever enjoyed researching a book so much. I found amazing information including a city map from 1919 and a menu from Antoine's in the early 1900s, and I even located an officer in the NOPD who answered all my questions. I had a blast visiting the original police station in the French Quarter, long ago turned into an office building. When the book was released, I sent a signed copy to the officer who had helped me. Best I can tell, it ended up on his desk the day before Katrina hit.

What is the hardest part of writing a series?

The only series I've written is the Dassas Cormier Mystery Series, but the hardest part for me is remembering details. It would be easier if I wrote all the books straight through (or if I had a younger brain), but, instead, I've written several books between each of those in the series. I did discover early on that I needed a map of Marshall's Bayou and a list of all the secondary characters. If I were going for another dozen books in the series, I'd probably need to keep a detailed summary of each book. At this point, I just keep basic relationship notes. Before I get back to work on the next book (the last in the series), I plan to reread the other four.

You write under three pen names—what is your advice to writers considering doing the same?

I admit, I've signed the wrong name to a book at least twice! My advice is to be sure you need different names. In my case, I write in three genres and don't want my romance readers picking up a mystery by mistake, or my mystery readers picking up erotica. Genre fiction is about reader expectation, so I want my readers to know what they're getting. If you don't write multiple genres and don't need to write under other names, I wouldn't advise it. Life is confusing enough!

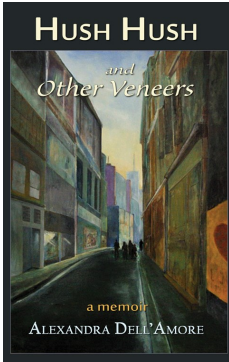
Why do you write in the genre(s) you've chosen?

I started out writing romance because I enjoyed writing about relationships, and I'm an optimist. With romance, the

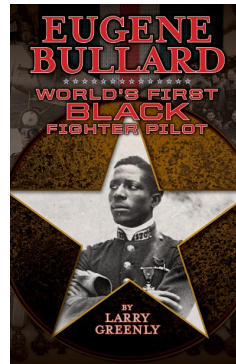
(Continued on page 15)

KL Wagoner (writing as Cate Macabe) is the author of *This New Mountain: a memoir of AJ Jackson, private investigator, reposessor, and grandmother*. Cate blogs about writing memoir and living more and fearing less at www.ThisNewMountain.com/blog.

Member Books



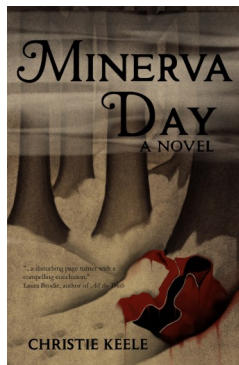
Hush Hush and Other Veneers is the true story of a girl who endured abuse to protect her family and eventually shot the man her parents called "doctor." Although she protected her family from an evil man, she nevertheless became an outcast. The story shows how greed and lies kept her from being believed. Her life is a journey of resilience and courage—a story of hard-won freedom. At Amazon and CreateSpace.



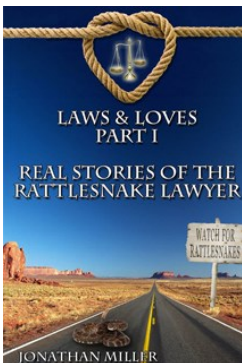
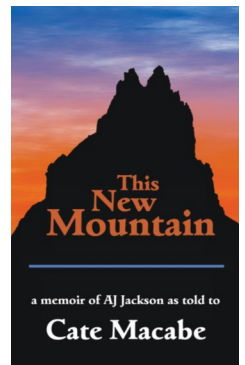
"A remarkable book about a remarkable man." ~ David Morrell, NYT bestselling author.

Eugene Bullard, descended from slaves, became the world's first black fighter pilot, though he was barred from serving the U.S. because of his skin color. Eugene Bullard is a story of accomplishment despite racial prejudice. Available at www.newsouthbooks.com/eugenebullard, Amazon & bookstores.

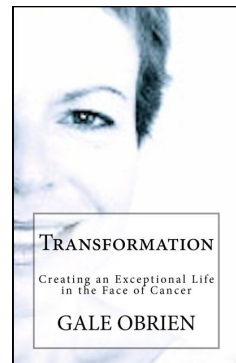
When Minerva Day's grandson turns up missing at a Christmas carnival, her daughter accuses Minerva of his murder. Could she have done such a thing? Had she forgotten to take her medicine? The unnerving thought haunts Minerva, just like it did four years earlier when her husband died of a mysterious illness. A new love brings balance to Minerva's life, but her daughter still believes Minerva is guilty of this most horrendous of crimes.



Like most private investigators, AJ Jackson has more than one foot in the fire to make ends meet, but not every PI is a grandmother, an ex-gun dealer, a former mental patient, or a descendant of a Choctaw chief. These are the real-life adventures of a country girl with a go-to-hell attitude who faces her fears to make a future for herself. Casa de Snapdragon Publishing. Available world-wide in paperback and eBook formats.

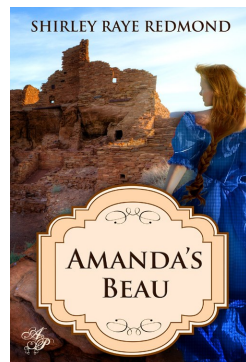


Laws & Loves contains the real stories of the Rattlesnake Lawyer, Jonathan Miller: the chronicles of his early years, how he learned to balance the law with literature while looking for love in all the wrong courtrooms. This is a must read for those thinking of practicing law or falling in love. In eBook format at Amazon and Smashwords. Casa de Snapdragon Publishing.

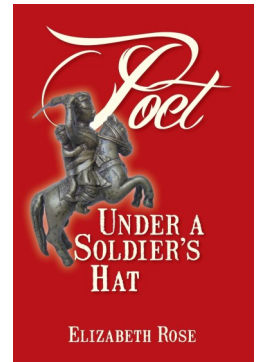


This much anticipated book explores the passion for living that lies inside each of us. Gale reveals how she conquered emotional repression and the fear of dying to emerge with a new attitude toward food, health and fitness, relationships, time management, work and spirituality. *Transformation: Creating an Exceptional Life in the Face of Cancer* is a no holds barred description of Gale's transformational journey to survival. At Amazon & CreateSpace.

The year is 1905 in New Mexico Territory. While struggling to care for her ailing sister and her infant niece, spinster Amanda Dale falls in love with the local school teacher, a man intent on excavating the Anasazi ruins on the edge of town. The archeological project excites the cash-strapped farmers, but will it be enough to save Amanda's family from financial ruin? Available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Astraea Press.



Few people are still alive who remember the British Empire. Hugh Rose served as a British Officer with the Gurkhas in India, and also with the Political and Foreign Service in the Hadramat, Iran and North West Frontier. Elizabeth Rose weaves the facts and details from her father's diary into a fascinating story of a time in history now fading to the past, including the tribal warlords in Waziristan and British society of the past century.



SWW MEMBERS: Place an ad for your book with cover art and blurb of 50-60 words.
Only \$10 per month or \$25 for three months. Contact Rose Kern, Sage Editor, swwsage@swcp.com.

Member Successes

Leandro Thomas Gonzales' novel *Follow the Spinning Sun* was nominated by the Regional Library of Karviná, Karviná-Mizerov, Czech Republic for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. The Award is jointly sponsored by the City of Dublin and IMPAC, a productivity improvement company which operates in over 50 countries. Nominations for the award are made by main libraries from 39 countries.

Larry Greenly's book *Eugene Bullard: World's First Black Fighter Pilot* will receive a starred review in the Feb. issue of *Booklist*, published by the American Library Association.

E. H. Hackney (writing as Geoffrey Ganges) has published his first novel *By The Blood, Book One, Revelation*, the first of a fantasy trilogy. It's available in eBook from Amazon and Barnes and Noble, and in paperback from Amazon and CreateSpace.

Corran Harrington's novella and closely linked short story collection *The River Reader* is a finalist in the Hidden River Arts 2013 Eludia Award international writing competition (previous stories written/published as Connie Harrington).

WOMEN VETERANS WRITING SALON hosted by Caroline A. LeBlanc, MFA, MS, RN, published writer and veteran, meets at Cherry Hills Library, 6-7:30 pm on the following Mondays: Jan. 6, 27; Feb. 20, 24; Mar. 10, 24; Apr. 7, 21. Free, open group. No writing experience necessary. For more, email Caroline at wildernessspalding@msn.com.

**Send your successes and announcements
to the SouthWest Sage Editor at
swwsage@swcp.com.**



*"Write Here. Write Now.
Make it Happen!"*

**22nd Annual Pikes Peak
Writers Conference**

April 25-27, Marriott Hotel
Colorado Springs, Colorado

The conference will focus on writing in the moment not in some future that may never come, fearlessly submitting your work, revving up a career in the slumps, and busting through writer's block. New payment plan option! Go to <http://www.pikespeakwriters.com/ppwc/>.

My Perfect Pitch is a free resource for authors seeking traditional publishers who accept book submissions and proposals. The site contains a database of over 1000 book publishers. Each link leads directly to the publisher's submission guidelines page. www.mypitchperfect.com

The Corrales Writing Group wrote and published its own anthology in November 2013. Of the six authors who contributed to the anthology, three are SWW members—**Sandi Hoover**, **Tom Neiman** and **Jim Tritten**. Since publication, the writing group has had good success selling *Corrales Writing Group 2013 Anthology* and has been offered opportunities to conduct salons and workshops.

Scott Archer Jones is on the masthead of the *Prague Review* and coughs up an article every month.

Dianne Layden won first place in the *Santa Fe Reporter* essay contest, her third SFR award. The theme was "Come quick the revolution!" about events at UNM in May 1970 after the killing of four students at Kent State University by the Ohio National Guard. The essay was published in the Nov. 27-Dec. 2, 2013 issue of *Santa Fe Reporter*.

Behold Our Moral Body: Psychiatry, Duns Scotus and Neuroscience written by **Sally Severino** has been published by Versita: Emerging Science Publisher. Visit her website at www.neurospirit.net.

CHILDREN'S BOOK ENTRIES SOUGHT FOR NM WOMEN WRITERS CONTEST

The 2014 Zia Award will be given to the author of an outstanding children's book published in 2011, 2012, or 2013. The contest is open to all subgenres of children's books.



The writer must be a woman who lives in or has a strong connection to New Mexico. The book may be published anywhere.

Submissions can be made by the author or by someone else on behalf of the author. Membership in New

Mexico Press Women is not required. To be eligible to receive the award, selected winners must commit to reading at the award luncheon during the 2014 conference in April.

To submit, send a cover letter including complete contact information, the author's biography (including her connection to New Mexico), and a description of the book, a copy of the book, and a check for a \$25 entry fee payable to New Mexico Press Women to:

Loretta Hall
Zia Book Award Chair
3219 El Toboso Dr NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104

Entries must be postmarked by Friday, January 31, 2014. For more information, send correspondence to Loretta Hall at the address listed above or e-mail loretta@authorhall.com.

Announcements



Colorado Prize for Poetry: \$2000 honorarium and book publication by the Center for Literary Publishing. Submit book-length collection of poems by **January 14**. Manuscripts may consist of poems that have been published, but as a whole it must be unpublished. The \$28 online submission fee includes a subscription to *Colorado Review*. Guidelines at <http://coloradoprize.colostate.edu>.

The Eric Hoffer Award is offered annually for short prose (fiction and creative nonfiction) and the best independently published and self-published book. Prizes include \$250 for short prose (deadline **January 21**) and \$2000 for books (deadline **March 31**). No entry fee—authors and publishers nominate their own works. For more information go to: <http://hofferaward.com/>

New Millennium Writings is accepting submissions to its 37th Awards for Fiction, Poetry and Nonfiction. Short-short fiction up to 1000 words. Other fiction and nonfiction up to 6000 words. Each poetry entry: up to three poems not to exceed 5 pages. \$20 entry fee for each submission. Deadline **January 31**. www.newmillenniumwritings.com/awards.php

Nominations are open for the **William Saroyan International Prize for Writing**. Two prizes of \$5000 each are given biennially for works of fiction and nonfiction. Cosponsored by the Stanford University Libraries and the William Saroyan Foundation, the awards are intended to “encourage new or emerging writers and honor the Saroyan legacy of originality, vitality, and stylistic innovation.” Deadline: **January 31**. Visit <http://library.stanford.edu/Saroyan>

upstreet invites submissions of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction for its tenth issue. No previously published works; or more than three poems, two fiction, and two nonfiction pieces per issue. Fiction and nonfiction pieces up to 5000 words. Upon publication, payment will be \$50-\$150 for poems, \$50-\$250 for short stories or essays. Deadline **March 1**. http://upstreet-mag.org/guideline_layers.html



STORIES FROM THE HEART VII
National Women's Memoir Conference
Austin, TX • **April 11-13**
Sponsored by the Story Circle Network
Workshops, panel discussions and presentations focused on women's memoir, as well as lifewriting skills. Go to www.storycircle.org/Conference/.

Subtropics seeks to publish the best literary fiction, essays, and poetry by established and emerging authors. They consider works of fiction of any length, from short shorts to novellas (up to 15,000 words) and self-contained novel excerpts. Pays \$1000 (\$500 for short short), \$100 per poem. Submissions accepted until **April 15**. <http://www.english.ufl.edu/subtropics/submit.html>

More Ink is a social media platform led by Robin Kalinich with a goal of helping creative people promote their works online. Visit [her website](#) to learn the details about **More Ink's Featured Program**, find helpful [resources](#), and submit to become a Featured Writer (no cost) by submitting [this form](#).

The Pass in Review Magazine is seeking previously unpublished short fiction (1000-6000 words) by military veterans. <http://www.thepassinreview.com/>

Clarksworld is a monthly science fiction/fantasy magazine that is open for submissions of short stories of 1000-8000 words. Pays 10 cents/word for first 4000 words, 5 cents/word thereafter. <http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/submissions/>



Cup of Tea Books, an imprint of independent publisher PageSpring Publishing, is accepting submissions of novel-length titles in the category of Women's Fiction. Go to: www.cupofteabooks.com.

Henery Press is looking for mystery (all subgenres), thriller/suspense and Chick Lit novels and novellas. They will consider previously published work. <http://henerypress.com/submissions-humorous-mystery-series/>.

Nightmare is seeking original horror and dark fantasy stories of 1500-7500 words (5000 or less preferred). Pays 5 cents/word for original fiction, on acceptance. All types of horror or dark fantasy are welcome; if in doubt, submit and let the editors decide. <http://nightmare-magazine.com/about/guidelines/>

WritersWeekly.com is looking for freelance success stories of about 300 words in length. Pays \$40 for non-exclusive rights. Read guidelines under “Current Needs” at <http://writersweekly.com/misc/guidelines.php>.

Welcome New SouthWest Writers Members

Daniel C. Bowman
Karen Bailey-Bowman
Mary Candace Mize

THE ODD CALLING: CREATIVITY & WRITING *by Betsy James*

BEGINNING

For me it starts with a character who Needs to Do Something. Or who simply Needs Something, is driven by a desire so deep they're pushed willy-nilly into risk and change. Gish Jen—MacArthur recipient, author of *Typical American*, *Mona in the Promised Land*, among others—offers wise advice about beginnings:

- ♦ Use situation, rather than an abstract idea or theme, as a starting point for fiction: resonant narrative precipitates out of rich predicaments.
- ♦ Simple ideas yield big stuff. Start with one simple idea.
- ♦ Very effective: a simple, simple situation with one odd thing.
- ♦ Think situationally rather than in terms of abstracts.
- ♦ If you set things up right with A and B, C should happen by itself.

The impetus for each piece of writing may be different: a chance remark, a childhood song, a thought scribbled in darkness. The process has begun; now the center of gravity shifts from how to begin to how to keep at it. Me? I bash, grope, and incarnate my way through a story. When it's out I read it and think, "Did I write that?"

Betsy James is the author and illustrator of sixteen books for young adults and children. Visit her at www.betsyjames.com and www.listeningatthegate.com.

In Defiance of the Norm

(Continued from page 5)

(and I'm not denigrating that), or we can throw ourselves headlong into the mega-trend that's building momentum in ePublishing and self-publishing.

In a conference I recently attended we were given the chance to question a panel made up of four literary agents (one from Santa Fe, three from New York), and an ePublishing guru. An attendee asked the panel what her chances of attracting an agent would be if she first chose to go the self-published route. The agents semi-sterly admonished her against taking the self-pub road less traveled. But the ePublisher expounded on the joys of doing your own thing, at your own pace, and reaping all your rewards as opposed to sharing with Big Pub and an agent. While even the ePublisher warned against using a vanity press, every other do-it-yourself avenue seems to be fair game.

My caveat: make sure your novel is as polished, edited, and tight as you can make it before sending it to the printers or

Measuring Success

(Continued from page 1)

It helped me to see how their goals had also changed over the years. I could really identify.

Coming Full Circle

Actually my goals now aren't so very different than when I started writing when my kids were babies. Back then, I worried about how to write without neglecting anyone. In my first interview, the reporter came to my farmhouse to photograph me with the four kids piled on my lap. I still recall her last question: "How do you choose between your children and your writing?"

It was a great question, and it solidified my priorities for the next thirty years. I told the writer, "I don't choose. The kids come first. The writing comes after them. If I can't do a good job at both, I'll quit writing."

Some Things Don't Change

I feel the same way today, although it's about grandchildren now instead of children. They also grow up very fast! And they won't always love coming to Nana's house more than anything else they do.

Does that change my goals? Without a doubt. Will it mean less money? Probably. But like the other ladies in that article, success today (for me) means having a happy balance between writing and family—and writing the stories closest to my heart, despite the current market trends.

What About You?

How do you measure writing success? Depending on where you are in the process, your answers will differ. There is no "right" answer, so don't let anyone else define success for you. Your answer today may well change in a few years, and that's to be expected. But you'll be a happier writer once you figure out what success means to YOU.

out into the ether. Unlike with software and hi-tech gadgets that are commonly marketed before being completely de-bugged, the public will not help you clean up your novel. They'll find someone else's story to read, and word-of-mouth can torpedo your lazy booty right out of the water.

So, you can work for months or years on a novel, and then wait for more months or years while trying to find an agent who may or may not be able to sell your "baby," or you can do it all yourself.

It boils down to how ready and willing you are to take a chance. Roulette anyone?

LOOKING FOR A CRITIQUE GROUP? Email Rose Kern at swwsage@swcp.com with the following information and we'll publish your request: your name; email address and/or phone number; genre preference; geographic location (Belen, NW Heights, near UNM, etc.); preference for frequency/day of the week.

goal is to have the reader smile and sigh after reading the last page. What can be better? I also write mystery because I grew up reading everything from the Hardy Boys to Agatha Christie to James Lee Burke. I love the genre for the same reason I love romance: it's full of optimism. The good guy or gal wins out in the end, and the evil-doer is punished. Erotica is a different situation in that I was asked to write it. I found out, however, that I really enjoyed it, too. The genre gave me a chance to write paranormal again (vampires and shape shifters), and to expand my boundaries as a writer.

What first inspired you to become a writer?

I'm one of those lucky people who stumbled onto writing. Although I've always been an avid reader, when I was young I didn't know someone could just become a writer. I guess I thought people like Dickens and Mark Twain emerged into the world as writers. While living in Alaska, I discovered a fan fiction site on the still-new Internet for my favorite TV show and started writing short stories to share with others. It turned out one of those "others" was a NY editor who encouraged me to write a book. She said I had potential as a writer and should try my hand at writing romance. I had no idea what I was getting into!

Who are your favorite authors, your favorite books? Who do you wish you were more like in own writing?

I have lots of favorite authors and books, but my top authors are probably James Lee Burke, David L. Robbins, Julia Spenser-Fleming, Dick Francis, Elmore Leonard, Carl Hiaasen, Barbara Samuel (O'Neal), Gabi Stevens, Darynda Jones, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens...this list could get long, so maybe I should stop there. Books include *Last Citadel* (David L. Robbins), *In the Electric Mist with Confederate Dead* and *White Doves at Morning* (James Lee Burke), *In the Bleak Midwinter* (and the rest of the series by Julia Spenser-Fleming), and *The Pillars of the Earth* (Ken Follett). I also enjoyed *Water for Elephants* and *The Hunger Games* (first two books more than the third), and so many others. Just talking about them makes me want to go thumb through my bookshelf.

I would love to be more poetic like James Lee Burke, better at characterization like David L. Robbins, funnier like Carl Hiaasen, and better at writing outside the lines like Elmore Leonard. My goal is always to learn from every writer I enjoy reading.

What are you working on now?

Right now I'm working on two pieces set in the distant future, one post-apocalyptic, and one not. This is a strange time in my life, however, as I've been away from writing for a while and am just getting back into the habit, so I also have several other ongoing projects including the last Dassas Cormier mystery and a mystery told by a ghost. Oh, and then there's the YA mystery series I'm outlining. (Maybe I really need to work on focusing.)

What is the best encouragement or advice you've received in your writing journey?

There has been so much; I'm not sure where to start. The best encouragement I received from outside my family was from an editor who read my first manuscript and actually called me. She wanted me to know that she wasn't going to buy my book, but that she thought I had potential as a writer. She gave me a list of writing books to read and told me to get started on my next book right away. Without that call, I doubt I would be published today.

Advice? Never give up, never surrender! (Yes, I stole that from *Galaxy Quest*.) But I don't know anything for which persistence is more important than with writing. As soon as you finish one book, start on the next. Keep the creativity rolling. Another good piece of advice I received was to let a book rest before editing. Otherwise, you'll still be inside the story and unable to read the words you've written.

Anything else you'd like Sage readers to know?

The publishing world is competitive, but writing shouldn't be. No two writers will ever tell a story exactly the same way. Don't be afraid to help those around you, or to learn from others. If you're not improving and having fun as a writer, you may as well move on to something else. One of my characters once told me, "If you ain't havin' fun, you're just wastin' space." That has become my motto.

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SouthWest Writers is seeking deserving high school and college students for one-year scholarship memberships in our organization. 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, please print the application form on page 16 and mail it to our office at:

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