

# SouthWest Sage

March 2011 [www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com)

## Creative Nonfiction, Then and Now – A Personal Exploration

by Bonnie Lee Black



Creative nonfiction (CNF) writing is neither new nor American in origin. Gifted writers have been telling their truths colorfully, dramatically, and enduringly for centuries. Egyptian funerary texts have been cited as one example. Or, closer to home, take the writer Seneca (the Younger), born in Cordoba, Spain, about the same time as Christ: Four of Seneca's essays, which certainly qualify as creative nonfiction, introduce the "Forerunners" section of Phillip Lopate's excellent anthology, *The Art of the Personal Essay*.

And then there is Michel de Montaigne of France (1533-1592), who many, including Lopate, claim may have been the greatest essayist who ever lived. After the successful publication of his first book, *Essais* (French for "attempts" or "trials"), Montaigne's writing "grew longer and more confiding," Lopate says, until he announced that his mission was to "put before the public a full verbal portrait" of himself. Montaigne is said to be the first to do this.

Published about the same period as Shakespeare's sonnets and plays and roughly a decade before Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Montaigne's essays were not the narcissistic products one might suspect. He believed "Each man bears the entire form of man's estate" and that the personal essay could, in Lopate's words, "strike a chord of grateful recognition in readers everywhere."

So why the talk of "literary revolution" among the leading lights of creative nonfiction in this country? And, conversely, why the controversy regarding CNF's meaning and purpose? In a genre that claims to be made of both substance and style, is there any substance to the suggestion that it's just "a huge fad" – destined to go out of style?

The discussion has gotten heated. In a widely discussed 1997 essay in *Vanity Fair* magazine entitled "Me, Myself, and I," critic James Wolcott called creative nonfiction "a sickly transfusion, whereby the weakling personal voice of

sensitive fiction is inserted into the beery carcass of nonfiction."

Other publications in the late 1990s, including *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*, expressed opinions that the popular form (especially memoir) would be little more than a passing fancy.

Although the origin of the name "creative nonfiction" is debated, when the National Endowment for the Arts adopted this label in the 1970s, it achieved some legitimacy. The agency needed a word to categorize grant submissions of nonfiction that appropriated fictional elements, such as dramatic tension, dialogue, shift in points of view, and attention to detail. The NEA felt that "creative nonfiction" accurately described "factual prose that is also literary."

This style of writing certainly wasn't new, though. Classic American examples abound: Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, Ernest Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*, among many others. But the term "creative nonfiction" seemed to get more attention in literary circles after a slew of best selling memoirs were published in the mid-1990s.

Lee Gutkind, editor of the successful journal *Creative Nonfiction*, says he was the first – or one of the first – to teach this genre on the university level when he started teaching creative nonfiction at the University of Pittsburgh in 1973. "My colleagues snickered when I proposed teaching a 'creative' nonfiction course," says Gutkind in his CNF anthology *In Fact*, "while the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences proclaimed that nonfiction in general – forget the use of the word 'creative' – was at its best a craft, not too different from plumbing."

When I was a student in the writing program at Columbia University in New York in the late '70s, there were no creative nonfiction courses to choose from. Knowing that I wanted to write a memoir that would touch readers viscerally, I had no choice then and there but to take fiction writing classes to hone my craft. The stories I wrote for that class and passed off as fiction, all of which employed fictive tools (dialogue, description, detail...) and *showed* rather

*Continued on page 12*

## Three Ways to Help Fellow Writers



**President Melody Groves**

After attending a couple of book launches last month, I got to thinking about how we, as writers, can all help each other. There are many ways to do so, but here are three easy, expensive and fun ways to support other writers. So, after much thought, here they are.

1. If you're invited to a book launch party or a book signing—GO. The idea behind these events is to showcase a newly-published book or to encourage sales of one recently published. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the time, the author is in charge of putting on such an event—assuming the authors want one. They schedule their own book signings and do all the legwork.

As you're standing around chatting with the author and then other attendees, be sure to take your business cards. There's no telling who you'll run into. Take advantage of meeting the bookstore owner (assuming it's in such a store) and other authors. Of course, this isn't *your* party, but as a guest you can "mingle." Plan to buy the book. If it's out of your price range, be honest and tell the author that you'd like the book, and will buy it when you get a chance. Otherwise, he may think you came just for the free food.

2. Any time you read a book, especially written by someone you know, post a quick review on Amazon. The review doesn't have to be long, but honestly, a sentence or two does amazing things for the ratings. It'll take you no more than five minutes. And...it's another way to get your name out there. If you didn't care for the book, please don't write a bad review. It won't make you feel better. There has to be something that was good. Dialogue? Character development? Plots? You can always say something like: "The setting reminded me of my vacation in southern California." It's relatively nebulous, and people can interpret it any way they like.

3. Magazine articles. If you read one from a writer you know, cut it out and mail it to him/her. AND...send a quick note to the editor telling him that you read it/learned something/enjoyed it. This does several things. First, it gets your name in front of an editor. Second, it gets your friend's name in front of the editor again and may result in another assignment for him. And third, the letter may go to print and then lots of people will see your name.

In summary, tell people about other author's writing. There's a myriad of ways to support each other. In today's world, we all need support. Happy Writing.

*Melody*

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## SouthWest Sage

Published monthly by the Board of Directors of  
SouthWest Writers, a nonprofit, tax-exempt  
501(c)(3) organization.

Subscription is a benefit of membership.

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## Grammar Tip: The Secret Life of Pronouns

by Dodici Azpadu

The problem with pronouns is they turn up where you least expect those, which case they are confused by who. Any questions?

If you type this sentence into your computer, the grammar checker will not signal a single error. Possibly the opening sentence received a pass because the errors in it crashed the correction function. Enough said about relying on a grammar checker for pronoun errors.

Consider the types of pronouns writers need to use correctly: personal, demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative, possessive, reciprocal, reflexive, and relative. I tell my English 101 students that I don't care if they know the names of parts of speech, so long as they use words correctly. For writers, however, knowing the parts of speech and how they function is essential to craft. After all, if writers were painters they would know how and when to mix cadmium white and cerulean blue.

Last month, I concentrated on pronoun agreement using personal and indefinite pronouns. In this column, I will note a few rules that help writers avoid the vague use of **they**, **it**, and **you**. A frequent error comes in the form of **they say** or **it says** constructions.

*They predict that Federer will not be in the Australian Open finals this year.*  
The pronoun **they** must refer to a specific antecedent, and there is none.

*Bloggers predict that Federer will not be in the Australian Open finals this year.*

*Bloggers* is almost as vague as **they**, but it is a noun.

Writers who use the pronoun **it** carelessly can also go astray. The clause above—**but it is a noun**—uses **it** correctly because **it** refers back to *bloggers*. Students frequently use the following faulty construction.

*In the essay, it says Romeo was a teenager.*

The construction is not simply wordy and vague. The pronoun **it** has no specific antecedent. A corrected version can be written as

*The essay describes Romeo as a teenager.*

The pronoun **you** should not be used in a general sense to refer to a group. It should be used when the writer directly addresses the reader.

*The rule book says you cannot bat out of turn.*

Many people speak this way informally, but writers can maintain an informal tone and still write correctly. The tone is not appreciably changed by the correct form:

*The rule book says players cannot bat out of turn.*

Notice how correct grammar helps writers achieve clarity.

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# Bios Made Easy

by Chris Eboch

Writers need bios for query letters, for websites, for conference brochures. Surely writers can write about themselves. Yet while coordinating writing conferences, I discovered that even published authors often write poor bios, whether through modesty, carelessness or overwriting. Many bios are entertaining, but don't do their job.

What is the job? To sell yourself and your books. Keep that focus in mind and the rest will follow.

**Content:** List your publications. If you have many, mention the number but only go into detail on three or four—perhaps the most recent or popular. Specify the genre, because titles aren't always clear by themselves. If you don't have published books, mention your other credentials—"Cub Newshound's articles appear in *Slate*," for example.

List awards, but don't get carried away. If each book has four or five minor awards, the reader bogs down in dull details. List the most prestigious or combine them—"Ms. Ink-slinger's books have received 11 Readers' Choice Awards from various states."

**Relevancy:** If people are considering buying your book or coming to hear you speak, they want to know your success as a writer or speaker, not the names of your pets. If you do include personal data, put your professional information first. Don't start with your hobbies or childhood, unless it directly relates to your book. (For example, you're a nurse and you wrote a hospital drama.) Don't thank your family for their support. Save that for your book dedications.

**Style:** You may need different bios for different uses—playful on a book flap; professional for a newspaper article; focused on your teaching experience for a conference catalog; praising your writing success for a booksigning. Regardless, focus on information. Humor and lively writing are fine, but don't get so wrapped up in sounding "literary" that important facts get buried or forgotten.

If your bio will be one of many in a conference brochure, the designer probably wants some consistency of style. A touch of formality may be appropriate—you're trying to portray yourself as a professional. Pretend you're someone else writing about you in the third person. "Bard Wordsmith is an award-winning author...." For a query letter, use first person. A website could go either way.

**Length:** Keep it short and to the point. If your bio will stand alone, on an individual brochure or flyer, try 100-200 words. If your bio will appear along with others, 50-100 words is plenty (unless you're asked for a certain length). Many people will skim anyway. Include your website for people who want more information. An editor may cut to save space, so put the most important information in the first sentence.

I keep several versions and cut and paste as needed. For example, here's a 173-word bio that focuses on my writing, especially the books I'm promoting heavily:

Chris Eboch's *Haunted* series, for ages 8-12, follows a brother and sister who travel with their parents' ghost hunter TV show. The kids try to help the ghosts, while keeping their activities secret from meddling grownups. *The Ghost on the Stairs* is set at a Colorado hotel haunted by a ghost bride from the 1880s who is waiting for her missing husband to return. *The Riverboat Phantom* features a steamboat pilot still trying to prevent a long-ago disaster. In *The Knight in the Shadows*, a Renaissance French squire protects a sword on display in the Metropolitan Museum in New York City.

Chris is also the author of *The Well of Sacrifice*, a middle grade drama set in ninth-century Guatemala. *Kirkus Reviews* called *The Well of Sacrifice*, "[An] engrossing first novel....Eboch crafts an exciting narrative with a richly textured depiction of ancient Mayan society....The novel shines not only for a faithful recreation of an unfamiliar, ancient world, but also for the introduction of a brave, likable and determined heroine." See her website at [www.chriseboch.com](http://www.chriseboch.com).

If I name the *Haunted* books without describing them and cut the quote from *Kirkus*, it trims the bio to below 50 words, while still including the book titles and their target age range.

In comparison, here's an 76-word bio for teaching a class on writing for children:

Chris Eboch is the author of 12 books for young people, including middle grade action, historical fiction, inspirational biographies, and nonfiction for elementary through high school students. She has published two stories in *Highlights for Children* and dozens of articles in *Children's Writer*. She teaches through the Institute of Children's Literature and is the New Mexico Regional Advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Visit her "Write Like a Pro" blog at <http://chriseboch.blogspot.com>.

If I'm promoting my critiquing/editing business, I would focus on my experience as a teacher and workshop leader, noting that people can get recommendations and rates on my web site. The details depend on what I'm trying to sell.

So what about you? To get started, make a list of the facts that you want to share. Then write a simple, straightforward paragraph that includes them. Next, decide if it's appropriate to dress it up, but as in all good writing, communication comes first.

# Memoir Writing: Lessons from Jeannette Walls

by Sherri Burr

Writers who have contemplated crafting memoirs, but were too afraid, can learn lessons from Jeannette Walls, author of *The Glass Castle*. She feared that if she revealed her impoverished childhood with eccentric parents, who lived on the streets of Manhattan and dumpster dived for food, people might cease to speak to her. One day she quizzed her mother, "What am I supposed to tell people about my parents?"

"Just tell the truth," her mother said.

Walls did just that in her 2005 memoir that has been translated into 23 languages and sold over 3 million copies. In *The Glass Castle*, you can open any random page and find a gem. On page 39, Walls explains why she doesn't believe in Santa Claus. Her parents disillusioned their four children from expecting expensive gifts on Christmas morning. "Try not to look down on those other children," Mom said. "It's not their fault that they've been brainwashed into believing in silly myths."

Turn to page 56 where Walls explains that her mother didn't like cooking. "Why spend the afternoon making a meal that will be gone in an hour," her mother asks, "when in the same amount of time, I can do a painting that will last forever?" Walls describes how her mother would make a pot of beans to eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for a week or more.

Then there was the time Walls and her brother Brian found a two-carat diamond ring, which her mother refused to sell. Walls writes, "But Mom, ... that ring could get us a lot of food." "That's true," her mother replied, "but it could also improve my self-esteem. And at times like these, self-esteem is more vital than food." When Walls reminds her mother, "We haven't had anything to eat but popcorn for three days," the mother said, "You're always so negative."

Walls' portrait of her mother is a testament that she is sensitive to people's feelings. Like all memoirists, Walls was concerned with violating her loved ones' privacy. She recommends sharing the manuscript. After doing this, she found it brought her closer to her family, not farther apart.

Her brother Brian was astonished she remembered the story of their father taking him to a whorehouse. Brian said at the time Walls looked far away. That she recalled enough detail to write the scene flattered him.

Walls believes that writers can tell stories without hurting loved ones. "If you are looking to understand them," Walls says, "you might be surprised how supportive people will be. Be open to changing names to protect privacy." Walls did that in *The Glass Castle* on the recommendation of lawyers who vetted her book.

Perseverance is another lesson from Walls' life. She first tried penning her story as a teenager, then again in her twenties and thirties. It wasn't until she was 40 and encouraged by her second husband, the writer John Taylor, that she set down in earnest to write. "I needed perspective," she says.



She created a version in six weeks and then spent five years polishing it. "Just sit down and write," she counsels. "Tell the story from beginning to end. Read it out loud. It takes a lot of work to seem spontaneous."

It was in the revision that Walls threw out material from her New York experiences, which she initially thought compelling, and

added scenes she had dismissed as unimportant. One of the turning points in the book was when Walls discovered her mother owned over a million dollars worth of land containing oil and gas rights. When confronted, her mother refused to sell despite their dire poverty. It was Taylor who urged Walls to include that scene.

Walls warns writers not to read other memoirs while writing their own. Walls started reading *Angela's Ashes* during the midst of her revisions and noticed blarney creeping into her story. Once she realized she was channeling another writer's voice, she put the book down. Even for her own books, Walls instructs to read and set them aside. "Don't try to copy me. Everyone has her own story. Listen to your own voice."

In her second book, *Half Broke Horses*, Walls found the voice of her grandmother Lily Casey Smith and spins the tale of a woman with true grit. Lily, who grew up breaking horses in New Mexico, left home when she was 15 to become a teacher in Arizona. Eventually she would learn to fly. But because Lily wasn't around to interview by the time Walls wrote the story, she invented dialogue and calls it a True Life Novel.

Though writing fiction, Walls follows her mother's advice, and tells the truth.

*Sherri Burr is the author or co-author of 13 books, and the Dickason Professor of Law at the University of New Mexico. Her memoir-in-progress is Living with Nephew: How I got voted the meanest parent in the world. Burr attended Jeannette Walls' talk at UNM on January 29 and conducted a follow-up telephone interview with her on February 1.*

## Meetings

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

**Saturday, March 5**  
**10:00 a.m. to noon**

**Jonathan Miller**

### ***Writing New Mexico People and Places***

Jonathan Miller will discuss how to write about New Mexico, both in fiction and non-fiction. He will explore ways to make New Mexico come alive in your writing.

**Jonathan** is the author of six books. *La Bajada Lawyer* recently won the silver medal for multi-cultural fiction in Foreword Magazine's National Book of the Year contest. His last book, *Conflict Contract*, was a finalist for New Mexico Mystery of the Year and New Mexico Adventure Story of the Year. As a lawyer, Jonathan has traveled all over the state and has lived in Albuquerque, Roswell and Las Cruces. He also had a short-lived job in Santa Fe.



**Tuesday March 15**  
**7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**Judy Avila**

### ***A Great Idea for a Book***

So you want to earn a living by writing books? That's great. But expect days when you'll feel like you're skimming the Atlantic in a Concorde, then days when you're crossing that ocean in a freight train. Judy Avila talks about the life cycle of a book from creation to sale. She covers her ups and downs in the industry and how, with a little talent and lots of determination, you can make it work.

**Judy Avila** has been writing for thirteen years. She joined SouthWest Writers in 1998. During the past four years she helped WWII Navajo Code Talker Chester Nez write his memoir. Although she has written four novels, the memoir, to be published by Berkley Books in 2011, is her first book sale. Judy's writer's website is [www.JudithAvila.com](http://www.JudithAvila.com).



**Mary Lou Dobbs** recently published articles in a number of magazines. She was number one in the country in corporate insurance sales six consecutive years while running The Wells Fargo Insurance Department, and also booked 54 T.V. and radio shows across the country. She says, "With 37 years in sales, you learn how to move projects along with power-phrases and stimulating ideas."

**Saturday, April 2**  
**10:00 a.m. to noon**

**Bonnie Lee Black**

### ***Creative Nonfiction in a Nutshell***

Can everything that could be said about the broad, relatively new genre of creative nonfiction (CNF) writing fit into a nutshell? Well, no. But CNF author and instructor Bonnie Lee Black will do her best to give you enough to get you going in this one-hour presentation. She'll highlight the fundamentals, provide helpful handouts, and read from her newest CNF book, *How to Cook a Crocodile: A Memoir with Recipes*.

**Bonnie Lee Black** earned a bachelor of arts degree from Columbia University in New York and an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University-Los Angeles. She was a professional writer and editor in New York for twenty years and has been an educator in the U.S. and overseas for over fifteen years. She is the author of the memoir *Some-where Child* (Viking Press) and most recently *How to Cook a Crocodile: A Memoir with Recipes* (Peace Corps Writers). Black's essays have appeared in a number of anthologies and literary journals. She lives in Taos and teaches English and Creative Nonfiction Writing at UNM-Taos.

**Tuesday April 19**  
**7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**Mary Lou Dobbs**

### ***Radical Ideas on How to Write & Get Published***

- How to think out of the box when it comes to writing a book, manual or article.
- How to get past the fear of rejection and learn how to communicate with the publisher or editor to get your work accepted.
- What is the appropriate time to wait for a response and what do you say before hanging up that insures a follow-up call.
- What is the startling statement that will catch an agent, publisher or editor's attention?
- How to create an interesting story to hook interest in your project when starting to market nationally.

**Mary Lou Dobbs** has written two books: *The Cinderella Salesman*, and *Repotting Yourself, Financial-Emotional-Spiritual Flow*. She developed two trainer courses: The Five Step Customer Care Course which she taught in Wells Fargo Bank and throughout the country, and The Nuts & Bolts of Selling which she taught to major national companies.



## Classes

### GRAMMAR AND WRITING MECHANICS

**Dr. Dodici Azpadu**

**Wednesdays March 9, 16, 23, 30, and April 6.  
6:00 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

\$180 SWW members. Non-members: \$220 (includes 6-month SWW membership) Limited to 14 participants. SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris St. NE, Suite A (NW corner Comanche and Morris)

This is a refresher course on sentence mechanics and usage. Starting with sentence fragments and subject verb agreement, participants will learn to use the semi-colon with confidence; avoid unnecessary commas, comma splices, and run-on sentences; and manage antecedent/pronoun agreement and strategic modification. Participants will also practice using active and passive voice and appropriate word choices for particular nuances.

Enrolling in this course can help you save time and money:

- **Revising your draft?** A copy editor or proofreader charges \$35 average per hour.
- **Sending out a query and/or manuscript to an agent or publisher?** Mechanics errors can land your work in the circular file.
- **Submitting your work to a contest?** Entries with errors will eliminate you on the first screening.

**Dodici Azpadu** earned a PhD in Language and Literature, and also holds an MFA from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. She has taught in the Honors College at UNM, and currently teaches at CNM. Her novels *Saturday in the Prime of Life* and *Goat Song* were published in the United States and Great Britain. Her third novel, *Living Room* was a finalist for the 2010 NM Book Awards in Fiction.

### BUILD YOUR WEB SITE

**Loretta Hall**

**Saturdays April 16, 23, 30 and May 7, 1:30 to 3:30 PM**

\$70 SWW members. Non-members: \$90

Limited to 14 participants

SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris St. NE, Suite A (NW corner Comanche and Morris)

Learn how to design a web site that will be attractive and effective. Topics include domain names, web site design concepts, hosting options, search engine rankings, and inexpensive (or free) site-building software. We will explore options for creating and maintaining your own web site without knowing any programming language. Using the types of template-based programs and reliable but inexpensive hosts we will discuss, the cost of your site can range

### BEYOND THE GATES: PUSHING BOUNDARIES WITH SPECULATIVE FICTION

**Betsy James**

**Wednesdays April 13, 20, 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1  
5:30 pm -8:00 pm**

\$240 members and \$300 non-members (includes one year of membership). Limited to 10 participants. SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris NE, Suite A (NW corner Comanche and Morris)

Speculative fiction—a.k.a. fantasy or science fiction—is the world's oldest literature, and currently it is evolving at a spectacular rate. Its "what if?" envelope pushing and imaginary settings provide a forum in which we can wonder, ask questions, express love and rage and grief. We can explore the conundrums of culture without the exploitation or misrepresentation that can be a danger in more literal fiction. Speculative fiction is a multi-verse in which we can give shape to who we are and who we are becoming.

Join author Betsy James for eight weeks of assignments designed to challenge your imagination. Each will be a maximum of 1000 words, followed by discussion, mini-lessons, professional-level editorial feedback and peer critique.

**Betsy James** is the award-winning author of sixteen books for young adults and children. Her most recent fantasy, *Listening at the Gate*, is a Tiptree Award Honor Book and a New York Public Library Best Book for Teens. Visit her on the web at [www.listeningatthegate.com](http://www.listeningatthegate.com)

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check at the SWW meeting., or call 265-9485.**

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from \$0 to about \$10 per month. If you decide to have someone build your site for you, this class will prepare you to talk knowledgeably with that person about what you want. In-class demonstrations and take-home exercises will get you started establishing your Internet presence.

Nonfiction author **Loretta Hall** has built five web sites using template-based software. She describes herself as computer-literate but not a programmer. One of her current sites, [SubsurfaceBuildings.com](http://SubsurfaceBuildings.com), is the top search result for "underground buildings." A Top 20 Architecture site and an Xmarks Top 10 Site, it also received a 2007 Regional Award of Excellence from the Society for Technical Communication. Her newest site, [NMSpaceHistory.com](http://NMSpaceHistory.com), supports her upcoming book *Out of this World: New Mexico's Contributions to Space Travel*.

## Workshop

### CONQUER SHYNESS: A SPEAKER'S WORKSHOP FOR WRITERS

**Rose Marie Kern**

**Saturday March 19, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

\$75 SWW members, \$105 non-members (includes a year's SWW membership for \$60) Fees include lunch.  
New Life Presbyterian Church  
5540 Eubank Blvd. just north of Spain

The thought of appearing on TV or radio shows, or speaking to groups or even doing book signings really bothers you. Conquer shyness by using some of the techniques used by professional actors to overcome stage fright. This interactive workshop will allow you to astonish yourself as you create your "Author's Persona."

Topics that the course will cover include: Finding your voice; creating your Persona; connecting with your audience; Radio/TV interviews (using a tape recorder). Participants should come to the workshop with an expository paragraph - less than four sentences - about their current writing project. This workshop focuses specifically on the physical and psychological person. There will be a handout available so participants can practice exercises at home.

**Rose Marie Kern** lectures for professional organizations, environmental groups, and aviation conferences. She has won professional awards for her ability to bring education and understanding on a number of topics to widely differing audiences. She has acted on stage and directed shows for more than 20 theaters.

### 2011 Second Bi-Monthly Writing Contest

A Pet Anecdote

Let's hear a pet story -- can be funny, can be loving, can be a border collie, can be a toad. Submit no more than 500 words. Postmark deadline: April 29, 2011. Please note if you grant publication permission. All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail entries to SWW Bimonthly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

### Make Your Work Shine

You know how to write.

I can make your manuscript error-free.

Retired Newspaper Editor, Award-winning Reporter

**JIM WAGNER**

*Now living in Albuquerque*

Let's talk: (850) 803-9298 or [jaw1340@comcast.net](mailto:jaw1340@comcast.net)

## Successes

**Dr. Irene Blea's** article, "We Are Family," is the featured article in this year's Gathering of Nation's program. The largest Pow Wow in the world prints 20,000 programs. The article is about how one of the founders, Dr. Lita, survived a liver transplant using both traditional and nontraditional medicine.

**Scott M. Tyson's** non-fiction book, *The Unobservable Universe*, will soon be released and is now available for pre-order at a special limited-time discount. Be among the first 1,000 people to sign up for a free downloadable copy of the eBook at [www.theunobservableuniverse.com](http://www.theunobservableuniverse.com).

**Albert Noyer's** fifth-century novels in the *A Getorius and Arcadia Mystery* series were selected by Amazon Encore for reprint and Kindle editions. The contract includes an option to bring out unpublished works in the series, originally published by The Toby Press LLC.

### SWW Conference Coming in September

Fall in Love with Writing: A Conference for All Genres  
and Awards Banquet

September 16-18, 2011

MCM Elegante, 2020 Menaul NE, Albuquerque

The conference will focus on  
writing and writing well in any genre.



### WET MOUNTAIN VALLEY WRITERS' WORKSHOP

*A unique & intimate 6-day writing experience with*

**ABIGAIL THOMAS  
&  
DOROTHY ALLISON**

AUGUST 7 – 13, 2011

COYOTE MOON LODGE

Westcliffe, Colorado

(75 miles southwest of Colorado Springs)

For more information and registration, visit



[WWW.TWINCOMPASS.COM](http://WWW.TWINCOMPASS.COM)





## Successes and Announcements

**Katherine B. Hauth's** nonfiction poetry picture book, *What's for Dinner? Quirky, Squirmy Poems from the Animal World*, Charlesbridge Publishers, is a Junior Library Guild selection and has received a starred review from Kirkus.

**Lois Duncan** was the luncheon speaker for the Texas Council of Teachers of English in Galveston, Texas on January 22.

Winners of SWW's 4th Quarter Contest, Thanksgiving Fiction, are: 1st, **James H. Brooks**, Abilene, Texas, "An In-Law Thanksgiving Dinner;" 2nd, **Donald T. Morgan**, Albuquerque, "Divine Intervention;" and 3rd, **Verona Winn**, Albuquerque, "Turkey Surprise." Honorable Mention winners are **Susan J. Alexis**, Albuquerque, "A Lot to be Thankful For," and **Alan Carlson**, Albuquerque, "Just Go to Denny's."

The seventh annual **Writer's Conference** co-sponsored by **UNM Continuing Education** and **SouthWest Writers** will be held Saturday, April 9 at the UNM auditorium. Featured speakers are thriller novelist David Morrell; Thomas Colgan, Executive Editor of Putnam; Peter Hubbard, Senior Editor at Harper Collins; Whitney Ross, associate editor at Tor; Chuck Adams, Editor-in-Chief at Algonquin; and agent Amy Burkhardt of Kimberly Cameron Agency. If you wish a pitch session, register before April 1. [www.dce.unm.edu](http://www.dce.unm.edu)

Entries for the **New Mexico Book Awards** are accepted until July. Books must be about New Mexico, written by New Mexican authors, or published by a New Mexico company. [www.nmbookcoop.com](http://www.nmbookcoop.com).

**Creative Nonfiction** is seeking new essays about anger and revenge, true tales of frustration and retribution, long-buried memories of outrage and reprisal—or the absence of either. Deadline is March 16. [www.creativenonfiction.org](http://www.creativenonfiction.org)

**The Bellingham Review** is accepting flash fiction, prose poetry, and brief essays for online publication. The submission period runs through April 15th. Pieces can be up to 1000 words in length on any subject. Submit at <http://bhreview.submishmash.com/submit>.

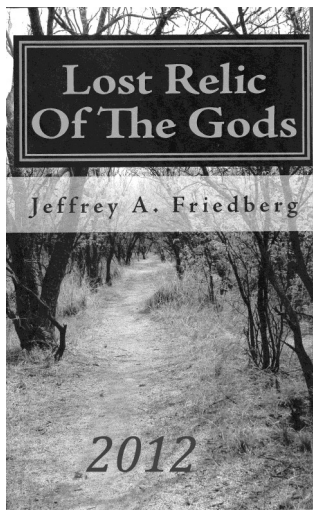
Submissions for the annual **Gulf Coast Prizes** in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry are now open. Deadline is March 15. [www.gulfcoastmag.org](http://www.gulfcoastmag.org).

The 2011 **Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition** accepts unpublished fiction up to 3500 words. Deadline is May 1. [www.shortstorycompetition.com](http://www.shortstorycompetition.com).

The **New Mexico Book Association** deadline for their Southwest Book Design & Production Awards for Excellence has been pushed back to March 18. [www.nmbook.org/formPDFS/SWBDAbrochure2011.pdf](http://www.nmbook.org/formPDFS/SWBDAbrochure2011.pdf)

**Ediciones Monarcas**, a new, not-for-profit publisher of bilingual (Spanish-English) books for children, announces the Infinity Auto Insurance Leer Conmigo Award in Children's Literature. Each month they will award a \$1,000 prize and publish the best submission. No website is available yet, but further information can be found at [www.verlakay.com/boards/index.php?topic=52840.0](http://www.verlakay.com/boards/index.php?topic=52840.0).

**WritingRaw** is a weekly literary magazine dedicated to new and emerging writers. Their goal is to serve the literary community with the opportunity to have their work online and out in the world. In this world of disappearing literary magazines, WritingRaw is providing the blank pages for writers to fill. [www.writingraw.com/submit.html](http://www.writingraw.com/submit.html)

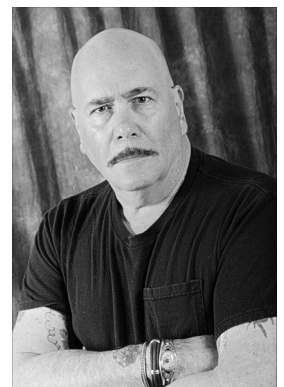


What if you could *live forever by moving heaven and Earth?*  
...but heaven and Earth *suddenly moved by themselves!*

Private investigator Jack Vane is forced into a mythic journey by murder. Half-crazed, he is trapped by discovery of ancient secrets, vengeance—and a chance to save the world. Follow Jack through a labyrinth of doom-confronting situations, shadow-governments, the menace of a world overlord, and a climactic battle with an ancient Power—deep into the most terrible secret ever *not* known.

*"Makes Indiana Jones look like child's play...action, love, magic, secrets, good and evil, and flat out outrageousness. Every surprise is topped by an even bigger, more unexpected explosion. Had me going right up to the end. ~Jenny Nathans, Book Review."*

*Amazon Bestsellers Rank: #15 Kindle Occult; #40 Kindle Science Fiction*



*Jeffrey Avalon Friedberg*

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# 29th SWW Annual Contest Rules

The SouthWest Writers 29th International Writing Contest puts winning manuscripts in front of acquiring agents and editors. The contest is open to all original, unpublished work in the English language. Cash prizes are awarded to the top three entries in each category. First-place winners compete for the \$1,000 best-of-show Storyteller Award. **You do not have to be a SouthWest Writers member to enter.**

**Deadline:** Postmarked no later than **May 1, 2011**

**Late entries:** Postmarked no later than **May 16, 2011**  
(\$5 late fee applies)

## FICTION

### 1. Mainstream/Literary Novel

### 2. Mystery/Suspense/Thriller/Adventure Novel

### 3. Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror Novel

### 4. Historical Novel (any locale and period)

### 5. Middle Grade (4-6th grade) or Young Adult (7th grade and up) Novel

For the above five categories, submit the first 20 double-spaced pages of the manuscript **plus** a single-spaced synopsis, two pages maximum. Number pages, starting with page two.

**6. Mainstream/Literary Short Story.** No more than 5,000 words. Manuscript must be double-spaced. Place word count on top of first page. Number subsequent pages.

## NONFICTION

**7. Memoir Book.** Submit the first 20 double-spaced pages of the manuscript.

**8. Memoir Article.** No more than 2,500 words, double-spaced.

**9. Nonfiction Essay/Article.** No more than 2,000 words, double-spaced.

**10. Personal Essay/Column.** No more than 750 words, double-spaced.

For the above four categories, place word count on top of first page. Number subsequent pages.

**11. Nonfiction Book.** Submit the first 10 pages **plus** a book proposal of no more than 10 double-spaced pages **plus** a one-page, single-spaced query letter. Number pages, starting with page two.

**12. Children's Picture Book.** Submit the entire manuscript, double-spaced. Maximum 10 pages. Number pages, starting with page two. Do **not** submit illustrations. Target age: 4-7 years.

## SCREENPLAY

**13. Screenplay.** Submit the first 20 pages in industry-standard format **plus** a one-page synopsis.

## POETRY

**14. Poetry.** Submit **one** poem of up to three pages **or** up to **three**

haiku on **one** page.

## OPTIONAL SOUTHWEST WRITERS CRITIQUE

You may purchase a professional critique from SouthWest Writers: Enclose the appropriate fee with your entry (see entry form); submit two copies of your entry; and enclose a 9x12 envelope with correct return postage (NOT metered postage). Poetry critiques may use a #10 envelope.

- Each entry must be in a separate envelope accompanied by a completed Entry Form and Entry Fee. No certified mail. Enclose a **self-addressed, stamped postcard** if you want notification of receipt. Please provide an email address.
- Write the Category Number you are entering on the outside of the envelope below your return address. Be sure to circle the Category Number on the entry form.
- Your entry must be original, written in English and unpublished or un-optioned at the time of submittal. If your entry previously won 1st place in a particular category, it is ineligible for that category.
- Using standard manuscript formatting, your manuscript must be printed on one side of 8-1/2 x 11 or A4 white paper in 12-point Courier or Times New Roman, double-spaced. Synopses and query letters must be single-spaced. Poems have no spacing requirements. Screenplays should follow industry-specific standards.
- Your name **must not** appear anywhere on the manuscript, synopsis, book proposal or query.
- Submit one copy of the manuscript, synopsis, book proposal or query, as specified for the category you are entering. Two copies are required if you request an optional SouthWest Writers critique.** Manuscripts will not be returned except for those receiving a SWW critique. **IF YOUR ENTRY FEE INCLUDES A CRITIQUE FEE:** Submit **two (2) copies of your manuscript PLUS** a 9 x 12 self-addressed envelope with enough postage stamps affixed for return mail. **NO METERED POSTAGE.** Put YOUR Return Address on the SASE. The critiqued manuscript will be returned in your SASE in August 2011. Poetry critiques may use a #10 envelope.
- Winners will be notified in August 2011. Prizes are as follows: 1st Place: \$150; 2nd Place: \$100; 3rd Place: \$50. All First Place winners compete for the \$1,000 Storyteller Award.
- Contest judging takes place in two phases. A qualified panel of writers and editors selects the top 20 entries in each category. Those top 20 entries are then judged by an acquiring agent, editor or publisher appropriate to each category. The top three winners in each category receive a critique from the acquiring judge. Contacting any judge during the contest period about an entry is an automatic disqualification.
- The professional editors, agents and/or publishers commissioned as judges are not employees of SouthWest Writers (SWW) and their opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinions of SouthWest Writers.

# 2011 SOUTHWEST WRITERS WRITING CONTEST 5-STEP ENTRY FORM

**Step  
1**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step  
2**

Circle Category Number: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

**SWW  
Mem-  
bers**

## SOUTHWEST WRITERS MEMBERS: Circle Fee Enclosed

### Postmarked no later than May 1, 2011

Contest Only	\$20	Poetry Only	\$10
Contest & Critique	\$45	Poetry & Critique	\$30

**Step 3**

### Postmarked no later than May 16, 2011

Contest Only	\$25	Poetry Only	\$15
Contest & Critique	\$50	Poetry & Critique	\$35

**Non-  
Mem-  
bers**

## NON-MEMBERS: Circle Fee Enclosed:

### Postmarked no later than May 1, 2011

Contest Only	\$30	Poetry Only	\$20
Contest & Critique	\$55	Poetry & Critique	\$40

**Step 3**

### Postmarked no later than May 16, 2011

Contest Only	\$30	Poetry Only	\$25
Contest & Critique	\$60	Poetry & Critique	\$45

**Step  
4**

## Method of Payment:

☐ Check or Money Order (no cash) US\$ payable to SouthWest Writers

☐ Charge my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code # \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Step  
5**

How did you hear of contest? \_\_\_\_\_

## Mail completed entry form, entry and fee to:

SouthWest Writers Contest 2011  
 3721 Morris NE Ste A  
 Albuquerque, NM 87111-3611

southwestwriters.com    swwriters@juno.com    (505) 265-9485

## SouthWest Writers Workshop

3721 Morris NE

Albuquerque, NM 87111

[www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com)

[SWWriters@juno.com](mailto:SWWriters@juno.com)

SouthWest Writers is a nonprofit organization  
dedicated to encouraging and supporting all people  
to express themselves through the written word.

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## SouthWest Sage



**National Federation of  
Press Women  
2010 Award-Winning  
Newsletter**

**Label shows your SWW Membership expiration date.  
Renew promptly to retain your membership benefits.**

## Change Service Requested

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### Contest Rules, continued from page 10

10. Winners will be posted on the SWW website.  
([www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com))
11. SouthWest Writers reserves the right to disqualify any entry if contest rules are not followed. Common mistakes: (1) Writer's name on manuscript; (2) Incorrect fee enclosed; (3) Incorrect number of manuscripts submitted for critique; (4) No return address written on the SASE (See Rule 7).
12. You agree questions regarding the interpretation of these rules and any matters relating to the contest that are not specifically covered by the rules, will be decided solely at the discretion of contest officials. You will accept as final and be bound by all judges' decisions. You understand and agree that your manuscript will be subjectively evaluated, and SWW cannot accept liability for consequences arising from any opinion expressed. You agree to hold harmless and indemnify SWW, its agents, employees and volunteers for any and all losses, costs or expenses incurred from any dispute arising from your participation in the contest.

**Save the Date  
SWW Conference September 16-18**

### Continued from page 1

than *told* the reader what to think, were all true -- as true as my memory served me -- and they appear as flashbacks in my memoir *Somewhere Child*, published by Viking Press in 1981. I was writing "creative nonfiction" before I knew its name.

Today, in my CNF classes at UNM-Taos, we begin the semester with the daunting question, *What exactly IS Creative Nonfiction?* And we take the rest of the semester to try to answer that question. At the end I ask each student to come up with their own working definition for this broad, and some would say fuzzy, genre. Here are snippets from a few:

"CNF is a way to structure nonfiction into real stories."

"CNF is what unjaundiced journalism with juice and jazz might be."

"CNF is making the truth read beautifully."

To me, it is many things, not unlike other artistic expressions: A journey toward truth written from the heart, often drawn from personal experience, and generously shared.

*Bonnie Lee Black teaches English and Creative Nonfiction Writing at UNM-Taos. She is the author of the recently published memoir, How to Cook a Crocodile.*