

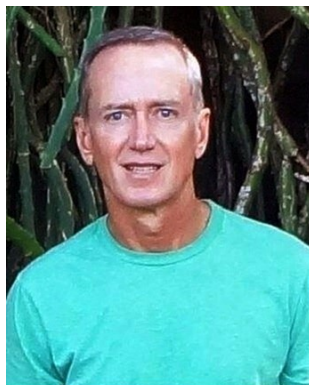
# SouthWest Sage

November 2012 [www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com)

## The Best Way to Create Suspense Is...

by Keith Pyeatt

Suspense is an emotion. It's that feeling when you don't know what's going to happen next...*but you want to*. Using that definition, it's easy to see why creating suspense is an effective way to keep readers turning pages. I write in the broad category of suspense/thriller, and I was already scheduled to write this article when the print galleys for my novel *Dark Knowledge* arrived. I took the timing as an opportunity. While I searched for typos, I also noted the different ways I generated suspense so I could share some of my favorite methods with you.



1. Use setting to enhance or create suspense. I mention setting first because I used it to build suspense right from the opening paragraphs of *Dark Knowledge*. My mentally challenged protagonist, Wesley, enters a world inside his mind that's shrouded in fog, radiates a "bad color" that terrifies him, and proves it can hurt him. The mind-world became a steady source of suspense because I kept it mysterious, dangerous, and full of paranormal surprises, but suspenseful settings certainly don't need to be supernatural ones. A boat on rough seas, a job interview, or a packed department store during a bridal sale can all add tension and suspense, especially if there's a pregnant passenger on the boat, the interviewee needs the job to feed his family, and there's a good reason why the bride-to-be needs a certain gown.

2. Withholding information from the readers can generate suspense, but be careful not to be too obvious and cheesy about it (like I was with the title of this article) or the reader will feel manipulated. Withheld information works best when it's natural. For example, the point of view (POV) characters introduced so far don't know the information, so they can't relay it to the reader. This method is a clear favorite of mine, and it works well because I normally have multiple POV characters in my novels, which helps me control when information is presented.

3. Withholding information from the protagonist is another great way to create suspense, especially in novels with multiple POV characters. Let that antagonist reveal his dastardly plans to the readers. Doing so creates the classic "Don't go in there!" response when readers know the bad guy is waiting behind the door with a knife but the hero doesn't. Note that this type of suspense pretty much defines the difference

between suspense and mystery novels. In a mystery, we know Professor Plum was killed from the beginning pages, but we don't know who bludgeoned him to death with a candlestick until the end. The fun is trying to figure out who did it and why. In a suspense/thriller, the professor is alive, but the readers know Miss Scarlet's plans and motivations to kill him. The suspense is whether the hero will discover the plan and be able to stop Professor Plum from meeting his death in the library.

4. Impose a time restraint. Whether the bank will repossess Grandma's iron lung if money isn't raised in time or the wormhole that leads to present day Earth is about to close, a hero's race against a ticking clock adds urgency and suspense.

5. Complicate things. For an added shot of suspense, start the ticking clock mentioned above, and just when it looks like your hero might actually succeed in time, drop a delay or complication on her. Now will she make it? Yes? Drop another complication on her.

6. Be unpredictable. Readers are smart, and once they get used to the flow of a story, they may start thinking they know where it's going. Add an unexpected twist, and now they're in suspense about how this new development, revelation, or character will change the course. The only way to know is to keep reading.

7. Mind games are another of my favorite ploys, which is probably why my paranormal thrillers can also be classified as psychological thrillers. I love a good dilemma, and there's a whopper of one in *Dark Knowledge* that stands out as a suspenseful element. Wesley doesn't know whether to sacrifice his life to save his soul or if he needs to sacrifice his soul to protect mankind from evil. With a big dilemma like that, readers get a whole new element of suspense. In addition to wondering "can he succeed?" and "can he succeed in time?" they wonder along with the character which course of action leads to success. Smaller dilemmas add suspense too, so experiment with them. Create a reason your protagonist can't, won't, or shouldn't do something, then make sure he must do it to get what he needs. Or give him options, but make sure every option has a serious downside.

(Continued on page 16)



At midnight on November 1, armed only with their wits, the vague outline of a story and a ridiculous deadline, more than 300,000 people around the world will set out to become novelists. Would you like to be one of them? November is National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, the world's largest writing challenge. Participants pledge to write 50,000 words in a month, starting from scratch and reaching "The End" by November 30.

More than 600 regional volunteers in more than 110 countries will hold write-ins, hosting writers in coffee shops, bookstores, and libraries. At press time here in Albuquerque, there are already eleven write-ins and other activities scheduled during the month of November. Write-ins offer a supportive environment and surprisingly effective peer pressure, turning the usually solitary act of writing into a community experience. New and published authors are welcome.

There are no judges, no prizes, and no one will read these works unless the authors hand them a copy. So, what's the point? "The 50,000-word challenge has a wonderful way of opening up your imagination and unleashing creativity," says NaNoWriMo Founder (and thirteen-time NaNoWriMo

winner) Chris Baty. "When you write for quantity instead of quality, you end up getting both. Also, it's a great excuse for not doing any dishes for a month."

Although the event emphasizes creativity and adventure over creating a literary masterpiece, more than 150 NaNoWriMo novels have since been published, including *Water for Elephants*, a New York Times #1 Bestseller by Sara Gruen.

"Writing a novel in a month inspires incredible confidence in seasoned and first-time novelists alike," says NaNoWriMo Program Director, Lindsey Grant. "Completing a draft of the novel they've been contemplating for ages gives participants a tremendous sense of accomplishment."

Last year, Wrimos in the Albuquerque region penned more than ten million words. Worldwide, authors added just shy of 3.1 billion words to their novels. Join me and move from a wannabe writer to an author, or if you are already established, remember that on November 1, the Stephen Kings of the world are on the same page as the first timers. We all start with a word count of zero. This will be my tenth novel in ten years. It works.

For more information, visit [www.nanowrimo.org](http://www.nanowrimo.org). The greater Albuquerque area activities are listed here [http://www.nanowrimo.org/en/regions/usa-new-mexico-albuquerque#regional\\_forum](http://www.nanowrimo.org/en/regions/usa-new-mexico-albuquerque#regional_forum). The Office of Letters and Light is a California-based international non-profit 501(c)(3) charity just like SouthWest Writers. Learn more at [www.lettersandlight.org](http://www.lettersandlight.org).

Happy Writing!

Kathy

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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: \$60 (\$55 renewal if paid two months in advance)

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

Requires proof of student status

Outside U.S.: \$65, Lifetime Membership: \$750

Download the Sage from [www.southwestwriters.com](http://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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## Members Seeking Critique Groups

### Fantasy/Sci-Fi

Linton Bowers, lbowers27@gmail.com  
prefers: online/email group

### Mainstream Fiction Only

Stephen Gregg, sgregg5@cableone.net  
Albuq./Bernalillo/Rio Rancho  
Flexible: day/time

### Mainstream Fiction/Other

—Genre  
Mike Zimmerman, mikeyzman@gmail.com  
Albuq./Rio Rancho  
Mon-Thu evenings

### —Memoir

Kate Leistikow, Call 867-9586  
kathleenleistikow@gmail.com  
Albuq./Corrales/Placitas/Rio Rancho  
No evenings, flexible time

### Memoir

Terry Wright, Terry\_w38@yahoo.com  
anywhere near Montgomery Blvd  
11:00 am, Mon-Fri

### Mystery/Suspense

Pete David, cp\_david@msn.com  
Albuq. NE Heights  
flexible: day/frequency

### Young Adult Fiction

Damita Butler  
deneemarieb@yahoo.com  
any day, after 4:00 pm

## Critique Groups Seeking Members

### Mainstream Fiction

Online Critique Group  
Contact Christie Keele  
ckeele10@hotmail.com

### Nonfiction

Contact John Egbert or Wally Gordon  
egbertenator@gmail.com  
wallygordon@q.com

### Sci-Fi

Send name/writing experience to:  
Cosmic\_Connections\_SF\_Critique\_  
Group@yahoo.com  
Visit [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/  
Cosmic\\_Connection\\_SF\\_Critique\\_Group/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Cosmic_Connection_SF_Critique_Group/)

### Screenwriting

Duke City Screenwriters  
Every other Thursday, 6-8 pm  
UPublic Station on 3rd St  
Contact Marc Calderwood  
SkatingKokopelli@hotmail.com

## Welcome New SouthWest Writers Members

**Montie Chambers**

**Marsha DeKeno**

**Hollie Hohlfelder**

**Terranda King**

**Judith Rapping**

**RoseMarie Rudy**

**Eileen Wiard**

## NEW MEXICO-ARIZONA BOOK AWARD FINALISTS

Congratulations to the finalists in the 2012 NM-AZ Book Awards. The following SWW members are on the list:

**Avila, Judith Schiess** *Code Talker*, Penguin • Biography, NM

**Bodin, Joanne** *Piggybacked*, Mercury Heartlink • Poetry

**Corwell, David** *Many Genres One Craft*, Headline Books Inc • in two categories: Business; Crafts/Hobby/How-To Book

**Downs, Robert** *Falling Immortality*, Rainbow Books • Fiction-Mystery/Suspense

**Galligan, Elizabeth Ann** *Secrets of the Plumed Saint*, ABQ Press • Religious

**Giomi, Thelma** *Weaving the Wind*, CreateSpace • Poetry

**Greaves, Chuck** *Hush Money*, St Martins • Fiction-Mystery/Suspense

**Hickman, Kirt** *Purple*, Quillrunner Publishing • Children's Picture Book

**Hickman, Kirt** *Fabler's Legend*, Quillrunner Publishing • Fiction-Sci Fi/Fantasy

**Houser, Sue** *La Conquistadora*, Sunstone Press • Religious

**Julyan, Robert** *Sweeney*, UNM Press • Fiction-Adventure/Drama

**Jung, Dennis** *Still Life in a Red Dress*, Martin Brown Publishers • Fiction-Adventure/Drama

**Libo, Lester** *Openings*, ABQ Press • Fiction-Adventure/Drama

**Liddell, Judy** (and Barbara Hussey) *Birding Hot Spots of Central New Mexico*, Texas A&M Univ Press • Nature/Environment

**Miller, Jonathan** *Lawyer Geisha Pink*, Cool Titles • Fiction-Adventure/Drama

**Pearson, Annmarie** *The Fetish Ruby*, CreateSpace • Fiction-Mystery/Suspense

**Pearson, Annmarie** *Nature Rhymes with Natural Impressions*, CreateSpace • Poetry

**Redmond, Shirley Raye** *Fairies: A True Story*, Random House • Young Readers

**Rucobo, Bonnie** *King Pachuco & Princess Mirasol*, Wildflower Press • Fiction-Sci Fi/Fantasy

**Schwartz, Elaine** *Fixed and Free Poetry Anthology 2011*, Mercury Heartlink • Anthology

**Shannon, Jeanne** *In a Rose Wood Wandering*, Mercury Heartlink • Poetry

**Tessler, Margaret** *Black Widow White Lies*, Booklocker • Fiction-Mystery/Suspense

**Wagoner, Kathy** (writing as Cate Macabe) *This New Mountain*, Casa de Snapdragon • Biography-NM

**Warren, Stewart** *Fixed and Free Poetry Anthology 2011*, Mercury Heartlink • Anthology

**Wolfert, Lela Belle** *Whispers on the Wind*, Maverick Publishing • Poetry

## 2012 PARRIS AWARD WINNER: JOSEPH BADAL

The Parris Award is a one-time service award given to a SouthWest Writers member who has exemplified the following three criteria:

1. An extensive body of written work
2. Demonstrates a pattern of extraordinary effort in furthering the mission of SWW
3. Encourages other writers by word, deed and action.

The award is named after the first recipient, Parris Afton, whom we honored in 1987.

This year the award goes to Joe Badal who has five published suspense novels: *Shell Game*, *Evil Deeds*, *Terror Cell*, *The Nostradamus Secret*, and *The Pythagorean Solution*. Joe's next novel, *The Lone Wolf Agenda*, is due for release in 2013. He is completing a non-fiction book about Relationship Selling and writes a monthly blog titled Everyday Heroes. He's also written dozens of articles that have been published in a variety of business magazines and trade journals.

Joe has served on the board of directors of SouthWest Writers and continues to give generously to the organization, as well as encouragement to writers regardless of their place in their writing journey.

For thirty-eight years, Joe has worked in the banking and financial services industries. Prior to his finance career, he served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army in critical, highly classified positions in the U.S. and overseas, including tours of duty in Greece and Vietnam, during which he earned numerous military decorations. You can visit his website at [www.josephbadalbooks.com](http://www.josephbadalbooks.com).



### National Novel Writing Month:

Every November, tens of thousands of people take on NaNoWriMo's challenge of writing a 50,000-word novel in thirty days. It's an anti-contest writing contest, where the judges are missing, the prizes are lousy, and writers and non-writers alike have the time of their lives bashing out surprisingly unhorrible books in an absurdly short amount of time.

**Love novels? Write one!**

Sign up at:

**[nanowrimo.org](http://nanowrimo.org)**



I am once again preparing to face NaNoWriMo—the death-match between me and 50,000 words in 30 days. As part of my preparation, I have regularly put in my appearance on the NaNoWriMo forums, discussing novel structure and the origins of inspiration. Since more than 250,000 writers in more than 60 countries participate in the writing marathon every year, the NaNoWriMo community, by necessity, is largely an online one. At the moment I am writing this article, there are 74,301 users logged into the NaNo website. *Writer's Digest's* online community boasts 83,072 members. Ostensibly, all of these users are writers looking to connect. With ideas, with research and with inspiration, if not with one another. But is it possible for more than 74,000 people to make meaningful connections virtually?

[Look over there. Is that a soapbox? Why, yes. Yes, it is. Excuse me for a moment while I take advantage of its sudden appearance.]

Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting that the Internet and social networking are without merit. Many productive relationships are formed and maintained entirely online. And 24-hour access to information has broadened writers' and readers' cultural exposure. But I wonder how many Hemingways and Woolfs and Ginsbergs the literary world has lost and will continue to lose to the advent of virtual connections. Perhaps only a handful. But we'll never know, will we? I worry that, in addition to the loss of great works of literature, we will lose writers who recognize the tremendous importance of artistic encouragement, collaboration, and support of an actual writing community. And the unequaled joy of immediate, passionate discourse.

Some of the most prolific eras in literary history took place when social networking meant night- or month-long face-to-face discussions of art, politics, philosophy and writing, fueled by smoking and drinking and other "unsavory" activities. Paris in the 1920s had the Lost Generation and the Stein Salon. London in the early decades of the 20th century had the Bloomsbury Group. New York and San Francisco in the 1950s had the Beat Generation. New Mexico in the late-19th and early-20th centuries had the Taos art colony and Taos Society of Artists. The volume and quality of work produced during these times were nothing less than groundbreaking. And this creative momentum resulted from the actual, physical gathering of artists.

Even as I take part in an online community of writers, I grieve the loss of this type of personal connection in my own



**Bentley McGrath** is a bit embarrassed to have written something so seemingly serious. She apologizes and will now stand on her head and attempt to gargle peanut butter to make up for it. You will find no pictures of this attempt at [www.BentleyMcGrath.com](http://www.BentleyMcGrath.com).

life. Some of the most extraordinary writers I know are the ones I met during high school and college, in the years just prior to the internet. During those years, our creativity was a tinderbox awaiting a match. And we sought out that match with holy pilgrim-like passion. In high school, we met at a local coffee house located in the front room of the home of an old earth-mother. She let us nurse coffee for hours while we listened to local singer/songwriters and discussed Camus, "Twin Peaks" and *Beowulf*. We sat in the moonlight in front of the coffee house until curfew and set right all the wrongs of the world and solved all the problems of our generation.

In college, we walked from our last English class of the day to Double Rainbow. We discussed Sherwood Anderson and Milton until they closed, then we walked down to the Frontier. We fueled our creative and academic endeavors with sweet rolls and sleep deprivation.

Some of us smoked pot or dropped acid. Some of us drank too much. Some of us faced internal struggles with sexuality and depression. We took comfort in one another and found common ground in reading and writing. And from all of that came art. Gorgeous, glorious art. Poetry. Novels. Plays. Musicals. You name the genre and I can produce for you the tome penned by someone present at our impromptu salons.

I think this is the way virtual connections should work: Go online. Dive into writerly forums. Find someone with whom you have one or two things in common. Then turn off your computer and meet them for chai. See what happens. Then do it again. And again. And again. Drink too much. Eat too much. Stay up too late. Indulge in a spontaneous salon. Then find more writers and more artists and invite them as well. Create a community. Then give me a call, because I love chai and salons!

[Would someone kindly return this soapbox to Dr. Bronner? I seem to have channeled him somewhere in the middle there.]

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*On the field of the self stands a knight  
and a dragon. You are the knight.*

*Resistance is the dragon.*

*The battle must be fought anew every day.*

— Steven Pressfield

## Meetings

Members are free, Guests \$5

**Saturday, November 3**  
**10:00 am to noon**

### ***Peeling Back the Layers: The Art of Interviewing***

**Slim Randles**

Award-winning author and columnist Slim Randles claims his first interview was with Christopher Columbus, so he's pretty experienced with the genre. Randles will discuss techniques of interviewing, advice on what to do and not do, and he will no doubt throw in a yarn or two.

For 17 years, **Slim Randles** wrote a column called "Bosque Beat" for *The Albuquerque Journal*, consisting of feature stories on interesting people. Six years ago, he began writing "Home Country," a syndicated newspaper humor column. Today it appears in 261 newspapers in 44 states and has a readership of more than 2.1 million. He's also the author of nine books, including three novels and the biography of *The Rounders* author, Max Evans. One of Slim's most recent books, *A Cowboy's Guide to Growing Up Right*, won two state awards and one national award.



**Saturday, December 1**  
**10:00 am to noon**

### ***How to Eat Rejections for Breakfast and Sell Your Book***

**Larry Greenly**

Award-winning author, columnist and editor Larry Greenly will discuss how he chose the subject for his new book and the importance of perseverance in getting published. He'll describe the often frustrating experiences that landed him a contract after four years for his YA narrative biography, *Eugene Bullard: World's First Black Fighter Pilot*. Through anecdotes/instructional tips, he'll outline the steps to research and obtain an agent or publisher, the importance of networking and contacts, and the steps to help you succeed in getting *your* book published.

SWW vice-president Larry Greenly has had several professions throughout his life—starting as a physics teacher (and even working on a sheep farm)—but his favorite one is being a writer. "It doesn't matter how old you are, and there's no overhead," he says. Greenly started his writing career in 1987 as coauthor of a medical article and soon became a contributing editor with a column in a professional peer-reviewed international journal that lasted for 13 years.

Greenly says he has chalk dust in his veins and enjoys teaching others. During his 20 years on the SWW board of directors, he has given writing talks at SWW conferences, workshops, classes, meetings, and other venues. He recently ended an eight-year stint as a co-instructor of writing at Bear Canyon Senior Center.



**Tuesday, November 20**  
**7:00 pm to 9:00 pm**

### ***Collaboration: Half the Work, Twice the Fun!***

**Kathy Barco and Valerie Nye**

Kathy and Val discuss their three co-authored books, how they became authors, and their experiences sharing the spotlight. They'll highlight considerations in undertaking a joint writing project, and provide their answers to: who holds copyright, how are profits divided, how are project roles split up, and who gets the best speaking engagements. They will also share their Top Ten List of reasons why collaborating is fun.

**Kathy Barco** is the Literacy Coordinator with Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Library System. **Valerie Nye** is the Library Director at the Institute of American Indian Arts. They have co-authored three books: *Breakfast Santa Fe Style*, *Breakfast New Mexico Style* (2009 NM Book Award: best travel book), and *True Stories of Censorship Battles in America's Libraries*.



### ***Holiday Brunch***

**Saturday, December 1**  
**10:00 am**

Join us as we gather with lots of goodies to celebrate another year of SouthWest Writers. Bring your favorite yuletide treats to share and help us ring in a new writing year!

### ***Reminder:***

***There will be no Tuesday  
evening meeting in December  
due to the holidays.***

## Classes

Classes are held at the SWW Conference Room, 3721 Morris NE, Suite A, Albuquerque 87111, 505-265-9485

### WRITE ABOUT YOUR DAILY LIFE AND GET PAID FOR IT

By Wally Gordon

4 Sessions: Nov 5, 12, 19, 26

Mondays: 6:00 - 8:00 pm

\$160 members, \$200 non-members

**Limited to 14 students**

Discover, research, write, and publish magazine, newspaper, and web articles based on three broad categories: your life; the lives of people you know; and larger events in the world. Everything from the traumatic to the trifling can be material for an article, no matter how unexciting a person you may think you are. The trick is to see these subjects as an outsider would.

**Wally Gordon** has turned his immediate world into thousands of published articles for the past 50 years, and has supported himself as a full-time nonfiction writer. He has worked on the staff of major publications, including 10 years for the *Baltimore Sun* and shorter periods for *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*; owned and edited his own newspaper for 12 years; and freelanced for more than a hundred newspapers and magazines. *A Reporter's World: Passions, Places and People*, a collection of his articles and essays, was published in March, 2012 as both a print book and an ebook.



### THE "GET YOU WRITING" FICTION CLASS

By Betsy James

8 Sessions:

Jan 30, Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 and Mar 6, 13, 20

Wednesdays: 6:00 - 8:00 pm

\$320 members, \$380 non-members

**Limited to 10 students**

It's a new year. You want a nudge, a boost, and a fresh eye for your writing.

Join Betsy James's popular jump-start course. Seven weekly assignments challenge you to consider various aspects of fiction—voice, description, dialogue, point-of-view, "show, don't tell"—and invite you into the conversation of respectful peer critique. Looking for a critique group? By the end of the course you and your classmates will have the skills to facilitate your own. Assignments, a manageable maximum of 1000 words, suit any fiction form: novel/short story, realistic/fantastic, adult/juvenile. Get your writing and the new year off to a lively start!

**Betsy James** is the award-winning author of sixteen books for young adults and children. Her most recent title, *Listening at the Gate*, was a New York Public Library Best Book for the Teen Age. Visit her at: [www.listeningatthegate.com](http://www.listeningatthegate.com) and [www.betsyjames.com](http://www.betsyjames.com).



### SOUTHWEST WRITERS MONTHLY MEETINGS

are held at

**New Life Presbyterian Church  
5540 Eubank NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87111**

*For more information,  
call the SWW office at 265-9485.*

*To register for classes and workshops,  
sign up at SWW meetings or contact Larry Greenly,  
M-F, 9:00 am-noon, at the office.*

### New 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.*

### 2013 Scheduled Classes

Melody Groves

Magazine Writing  
Mondays in February

Betsy James

Writing for Kids and Teens  
July 10-August 28

Betsy James

Writing Fantasy and Science Fiction  
October 2-November 20



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To honor the passing of an amazing writer, teacher and man, Sid Fleishman, I thought I'd share some of his wisdom from a workshop he gave at a Los Angeles SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators) conference some years ago.

"Plotting is the most baffling of the bafflements."

You need three things for a strong story: 1) a sympathetic character who 2) faces a problem (conflict) and 3) then the main character solves the problem. The reversal, with the villain as the main character who suffers a payback at the end, can be done but is a hard sell. Mr. Fleishman practiced plotting with those three elements, without intending to write the stories.

Once you have an idea, weigh your story—is it big enough for a novel, or simple enough for a picture book? What if you don't seem to have enough for a complete, complex story?



"It takes two ideas to make one story idea," Mr. Fleishman said. "With one stick, you can only throw it to a dog. With two, you can rub them together and make something new—fire." For example, he took a folklore idea, that if you're born at midnight, you can see ghosts, and added dumb pirates who killed their captain at the treasure site and then lost the map. The combined ideas became *The Ghost in the Noonday Sun*, where pirates capture a boy born at midnight, hoping he can see their captain's ghost and lead them to the treasure.

He combined witchcraft trials and the fear of number 13 to get *The 13th Floor*.

You can then make your story idea more dramatic by upping the ante. "The stronger the story problem, the stronger the story," Mr. Fleishman said, "(and) the stronger the villain, the stronger the story." *Treasure Island* would be forgotten without Long John Silver, so aim for villains who are as interesting and well-rounded as your heroes. You can also use a time lock to add pressure—like in James Bond, the world will end in three hours, unless.... Don't give your main character endless time to solve the problem. Put the pressure on now.

Write your story in scenes to give elements the right emphasis. "Don't make the mistake of dramatizing scenes that aren't important," Mr. Fleishman said. He never used flashbacks—"they're poisonous"—but dropped in backstory in small nuggets. "Flashbacks stop the story dead in its tracks."

Finally, Mr. Fleishman shared one piece of advice I've never heard from anyone else. If there's a hole in the story—some flaw in the logic of the characters' behavior, for example—point it out and it disappears. He gave an example from one of his *McBroom* stories, a tall tale where the family is dealing with a mischievous "Hidebehind" that always stays directly behind you. Why wouldn't the family just use a mirror to see the Hidebehind? Mr. Fleishman had them try it, and then state simply, "It's too clever for tricks like that." No other explanation needed.

Exercise: Try Sid Fleishman's three-part story development exercise. See if you can come up with 1) a sympathetic character who 2) faces a problem (conflict) and then 3) solves the problem. You might even make lists of characters and problems, and then try mixing and matching them. Perhaps you'll come up with a new idea you want to develop. At the very least, this can help you get a better grasp of how character and plot interact.

**Chris Eboch** is a popular writing teacher, workshop leader, and editor. Her book *Advanced Plotting* is designed for the intermediate and advanced writer. Learn how to get off to a fast start, prop up a sagging middle, build to a climax, improve your pacing, and more. Visit her websites: [www.chriseboch.blogspot.com/](http://www.chriseboch.blogspot.com/), [www.chriseboch.com/](http://www.chriseboch.com/) and [www.krisbock.com/](http://www.krisbock.com/).

## Planning a Party or Banquet?

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Reading was my first love; writing quickly followed. Before I started school, I found the joys of the public library. My older brother let me tag along one Saturday morning while he chose books to take home. When the librarian informed me I, too, could have the privilege of borrowing books, I could hardly believe it. They were going to allow me to take some of their precious books home with me every week? My love for public libraries was born and for the rest of my life, no matter where we moved, one of my first excursions in each new town was to find the library.

The more I read, the more my brain conjured up stories of my own, tales that I wanted to put down on paper, experiences I wanted to share.

I wrote my first novel at the age of thirteen, laboriously typing it out on the old manual typewriter in my dad's office at his auto repair shop, breathing in the grease smell from the work being done in the adjoining space. It was a story about a young woman who moved to New York City and became secretary to a private detective. All this was, no doubt, the result of many hours spent in movie theaters in our small town.

As I pecked away at the keys, saving the words of my story on yellow foolscap, I imagined my name on the cover of a book, maybe even a best-seller. Long gone is that old manuscript. I've often wished I'd saved it so I could judge it against my present-day writing. Have I learned anything?

In high school, Journalism was my favorite subject, and my hero was Eric Sevareid. I dreamed of being a foreign correspondent.

Real life got in the way of my dream: a job to earn my living, marriage, children, the demands of everyday life.

In the midst of the stresses of my real life, however, I began to make time to write about my children—"things to laugh at later." After some years, I gathered those stories into a book for my three kids.

I was emboldened to submit some stories and poems to magazines. My first rejection letter—from the *Saturday Evening Post*, no less!—left me so devastated that I sent out no other manuscript for twenty years.

In due course, I happened to hear of an organization called SouthWest Writers with its workshops, seminars, conferences, and meetings. Networking with other writers, meeting publishers and editors, I learned more about my chosen craft and wrote for the newsletter. At my first SWW conference I met an editor for a west coast magazine called *Career World*. They were looking for articles about careers that high schoolers would be interested in. At the time I was a paralegal, so I pitched an article about my work in a law office. It was my first sale.

Little by little, piece by piece, amidst many rejections, my work began to sell. Nothing happened all at once, but slowly I began to see my byline in magazines—*Career World*, *Byline*, *Grit*, *Woman's World*, *The Evangelical Beacon*, *Mature Years*.

Encouraged by each acceptance, I tried my hand at travel writing and romance writing, selling stories to *RV West* and several romance magazines.

Opportunities opened to me and for several years I wrote for various local newspapers, interviewing people and writing feature articles.

Other of my work was chosen for half a dozen hard-cover anthologies; one such was *Timeless Voices* (poetry) and another was *2010 Albuquerque Almanac*.

Widowed twice, I decided to dedicate my time to self-publishing some of my work in book form. I have now published a collection of short stories and poems, *From the Eye of an Eagle*; a memoir of my mother, *The Music of Her Life*; and a book of poetry, *More Visions in Verse*.

My love of reading and writing led me to a very satisfying role as book reviewer for [readingnewmexico.com](http://readingnewmexico.com). In the five years since I began doing that, I have written 160 reviews.

Although I never became a foreign correspondent or a best-selling author, I continue to write, and SouthWest Writers has always been there for me to continue learning my craft.

**Lola R. Eagle** is the author of three published books, numerous magazine and newspaper articles, and both poetry and short pieces featured in anthologies. Her poetry and short stories are posted online at [jbstillwater.com](http://jbstillwater.com). A member of SWW for about twenty years, she has served on the board of directors, written for the *Sage*, and currently volunteers as *Sage* proofreader. She has written 160 reviews of books by New Mexico authors for [readingnewmexico.com](http://readingnewmexico.com). She lives with her canine companion Lucy in Albuquerque.

### You Can Write for *SouthWest Sage*

Would you like to add a *Sage* byline to your portfolio? We welcome submissions focusing on all aspects of researching, writing, and publishing any genre. See past issues of *SouthWest Sage* for the type of article we publish. Payment is made in bylines and clips. Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. Article lengths from 300 to 1000 words. Submissions may be edited for accuracy, readability and length. Send questions or submissions to Kathy Wagoner, *Sage* Editor, [JustWriteSWW@gmail.com](mailto:JustWriteSWW@gmail.com).

## Member Successes

**Joe Badal** will give a presentation about the real-life basis for his latest thriller *Shell Game* at Bookworks at 3:00 pm on Saturday, November 3.

**Sandy Bazinet** posted an interview with **Irene Blea** at <http://ssbazinet.com/wp/interviews/irene-blea-interview/>

**Thelma Giomi** has published *Weather's Store: Encounters with the Sacred*, a novel set in northern New Mexico.

*HARD TWISTED*, **Chuck Greave's** sophomore novel, will be published worldwide by Bloomsbury on November 13, 2012. It was the winner of the Best Historical Novel category in the 2010 SWW writing contest and was selected as one of the nine international novels that Bloomsbury launched with its Bloomsbury Circus imprint in the UK.

**Karen McKinnon** has published three poems in the *Malpais Review*: "Nothing More To Fix," "Leaving," and "Affinities."

**Rose Marie Kern** won 2nd place in the Professional Writers of Prescott Annual contest for her short story "The Oldest Daughter." Go to [www.rosemariekern.com](http://www.rosemariekern.com) to read the story.

**Jeanne Shannon's** poetry chapbook *At the Horizon Line* is scheduled to be published by Finishing Line Press in Georgetown, Kentucky in 2013.

### 2012 Sixth Bi-Monthly Writing Contest Holiday Anecdote

Write up to a 500-word Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's-related anecdote about a memorable event that happened any time in your life. About food, critters, family, strangers (you get the idea), humorous or poignant—whatever turns your crank and you think is an interesting story that someone would like to read in a magazine column. Double-spaced; include word count. **Postmark deadline: December 31, 2012.**

Please include your address, phone, and email plus permission to publish or not on a separate sheet. Do not include identifying information on the manuscript itself. All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail to SWW Bi-Monthly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Suite A, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

*If you're a SouthWest Writers member with a success or announcement you want to share, send it to Kathy Wagoner, SWW Sage Editor, [JustWriteSWW@gmail.com](mailto:JustWriteSWW@gmail.com).*

### FICTION BOOK ENTRIES SOUGHT FOR NM WOMEN WRITERS CONTEST

The 2013 Zia Award will be given to the author of an outstanding fiction book published in 2010, 2011, or 2012.



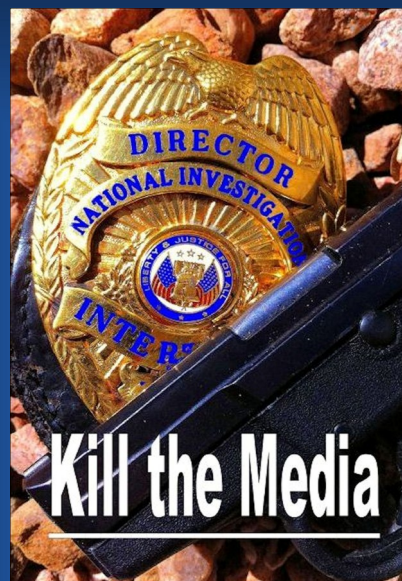
The writer must be a woman who lives in, or has a strong connection to, New Mexico. The contest is open to all sub-genres of fiction except children's books, which will be eligible for the 2014 contest.

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 submit, send a cover letter with 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 the \$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 Monday, January 14, 2013.** For more information, send correspondence to the address listed above or e-mail [loretta@authorhall.com](mailto:loretta@authorhall.com).



## Kill the Media

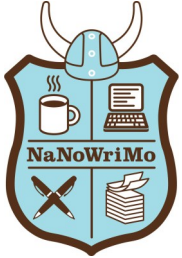
A Political Thriller Book

By Former Private Eye Jeffrey A. Friedberg

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

## Announcements

**Rose Metal Press** announces a special reading period, **October 15-November 15, 2012**, for pitches for creative, innovative, hybrid-focused anthologies, craft guides, or other types of multi-author projects. No reading fee. [www.rosemetalpress.com/Submit/Submit.html](http://www.rosemetalpress.com/Submit/Submit.html)



**National Novel Writing Month** (NaNoWriMo) begins at midnight on **November 1**. If you're ready for thirty days and nights of literary abandon, taking on a 50,000 word challenge that will silence your inner critic and get your creativity flowing, sign up on their website: [www.nanowrimo.org](http://www.nanowrimo.org).

**Open to Interpretation** brings together photographers and writers—photos become the literary inspiration for writers' submissions. Your poems and stories may include the literal description of the work, personal memories, metaphorical associations, or your mood inspired by the image. All genres are acceptable. Theme: Fading Light. Deadline: **November 13, 2012**. Go to [www.open2interpretation.com](http://www.open2interpretation.com)

The **Narrative Fall 2012 Story Contest** is open to fiction/nonfiction—short shorts, short stories, essays, memoirs, photo essays, graphic stories, literary nonfiction, and excerpts from longer works. Unpublished, up to 15,000 words, and not a winner, finalist, or honorable mention in another contest. 1st prize \$2,500; 2nd prize \$1,000; 3rd prize \$500, ten finalists get \$100 each. \$22 entry fee. Deadline: **November 30**. [www.narrativemagazine.com/node/182044](http://www.narrativemagazine.com/node/182044)

**Water, Danger, Humor Novella Competition** from Brookhus Publishing. 10,000-20,000 words, fiction aimed at an adult audience. Must contain the themes water, danger, and humor. 1st Place \$500; 2nd Place \$300; 3rd and 4th Place \$100. \$5 dollar entry fee. **Deadline: November 31**. For details, go to [www.bookkus.com/2012/09/water-danger-humour-short-story-contest-2/](http://www.bookkus.com/2012/09/water-danger-humour-short-story-contest-2/)

**Rose Metal Press's** Seventh Annual Short Short Chapbook Contest submission deadline is **December 1, 2012**. The winning chapbook will be published in summer 2013. Submit your 25-40 page double-spaced manuscript of short short stories (fiction or nonfiction) each under 1000 words with \$10 reading fee. Stories may have appeared in print and online journals, as long as the collection is unpublished. [www.rosemetalpress.com/Submit/Submit.html](http://www.rosemetalpress.com/Submit/Submit.html)

The **2013 Tucson Festival of Books** Literary Awards writing competition and Masters Workshop is accepting fiction, nonfiction and poetry entries. \$20 entry fee. **December 1**. First-place winners receive \$1,000, second-place \$500 and third-place \$250. Winners get scholarships to the 2-day workshop after the March 9-10, 2013, Festival of Books. [www.tucsonfestivalofbooksliteraryawards.submittable.com/submit/16026](http://www.tucsonfestivalofbooksliteraryawards.submittable.com/submit/16026)

For a special "Sustainability" issue, **Creative Nonfiction** is looking for essays that illuminate environmental, economic, ethical and/or social challenges related to the state of the planet and our future. All essays must tell true stories, be factually and scientifically accurate, unpublished, up to 4,000 words. \$20 reading fee. Deadline: **January 15, 2013**. <http://brevity.wordpress.com/2012/10/03/sustainability-cnf-special-issue-and-book/>

**The Poisoned Pencil** (a Poisoned Pen Press imprint) is open for submissions of YA mystery novels, 45,000-90,000 words, both traditional and cross-genre with a protagonist between the ages of 12-18. They encourage off-beat approaches and narrative choices that reflect the complexity and ambiguity of today's world. Submissions from teens are welcome. [www.thepoisonedpencil.submittable.com/submit](http://www.thepoisonedpencil.submittable.com/submit)



### Albuquerque Area Writing Groups

The **Albuquerque Croak & Dagger** chapter of Sisters in Crime welcomes mystery fans who enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship and sensational speakers. Fourth Tuesdays of the month, 7:00 pm, police briefing room, James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Substation, (one block east of Tramway on Montgomery). [www.croak-and-dagger.com/](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com/)

**Bear Canyon writing group:** Don Morgan & Dennis Kastendiek moderate, all genres welcome, Mondays 2:30-3:45 pm, Bear Canyon Senior Center, 4645 Pitt St NE, 291-6211. Must be 50+ and a member of a senior center.

**Duke City Screenwriters** meets at UPublic Station on 3rd St, every other Thursday (email for next date) from 6:00-8:00 pm for valuable critique, education and lots of fun. Contact Marc Calderwood at [skatingkokopeli@hotmail.com](mailto:skatingkokopeli@hotmail.com) for more information.

**SCBWI: Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators** has monthly schmoozes in Albuquerque on the second Tuesday of each month, from 7:00-8:30 pm at Alamosa Books, 8810 Holly Ave NE, Albuquerque, NM 87122, phone (505) 797-7101. Schmoozes feature short workshops/discussions, followed by social time. Pre-schmooze dinner at the Dion's on Wyoming and Paseo from 5:30-6:45 pm. Contact [schmooze@scbwi-nm.org](mailto:schmooze@scbwi-nm.org) for more information. October 9 is the last one for 2012.

**Writers2Writers** meets the second Monday of every month, 6:30 pm at the west side Hastings at Coors and Montaño. Monthly speakers. All genres welcome.



Death came unexpectedly, as death often does. The news reached Riverview High School just before lunch. Over at the sawmill, as Johnny Kreuger was loosening a tie-down chain on a logging truck, the load of logs rolled off and crushed him.

Johnny was 19, and had graduated only five months before. The school was small, and all students knew each other. With tears running down her cheeks, Julie Mitchell said, "Oh, it's awful, just awful. And his wife just had a baby, too." Carl Riley, her boyfriend, nodded solemnly in agreement.

Carl, the school's basketball center, was tall and thin and seemed to tilt forward slightly as he walked. He put his arms around Julie and said, "Well..." and then nothing more. He generally didn't say much, but this time he couldn't think of anything to say. She shivered and drew the collar of her jacket close around her neck. It was Carl's athletic jacket; he had given it to her only the week before, and she was proud to wear the dark blue jacket with the big yellow "R" on the front.

That fall, Julie and Carl and their classmates struggled to accept the injustice of Johnny's death, and to understand why death had snatched one from their own ranks.

As the snows of that winter closed in, Johnny was not there to help put up the town's Christmas tree, or drape the strings of the red and green and blue lights on the wooden poles that supported the town's lone traffic light. For Johnny's friends, the winter was made even more cold and bleak by the realization that their days too were finite, and that someday their luck would run out.

Yet Johnny's death, as shocking as it was, turned out to be only a prelude to what followed. A few years later, many in the school came to know death far more intimately, as it shredded flesh and tormented minds in places they had not yet heard of—Chu Lai, Khe Sanh, Hamburger Hill.

Today, a wall of 494 feet of black Bangalore granite rises out of the ground like a tombstone in Washington, DC. The surface of the wall is meticulously inscribed with the names of 58,264 men and 8 women, brothers and sisters in arms, now rendered indifferent to all weathers. Carl Riley turned down a college basketball scholarship to be among them.

They did what they were asked to do, and did it well. War in its hunger touched them with fire, and alien swamps and jungles swallowed them up. They became names without stories or faces. Behind the letters that spell out their names, visitors see their own faces in the mirror-like wall, faces that show grief, awe, reverence.

On an April day, the early sunlight filters through the trees and highlights the name of Carl Brendan Riley, Jr. A breeze carries the scent of cherry blossoms. On the black granite ledge beneath the name, almost hidden in the morning shadows, there is a frayed patch of dark blue fabric. On it, there is a large yellow "R."

J. Allen Whitt is a Navy veteran who served during the Vietnam War. "The Endurance of Letters" was the national first-place winner in the Short, Short Inspirational Story category as part of the 2012 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (stories had to be both written and narrated on videotape in three minutes or less—about 500 words).

## Published a Book? Wanting More Readers?

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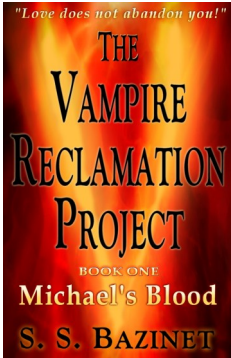
Book Marketing Resource can:

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- Maximize the potential of the online **social media** through Facebook, Twitter, and more
- Arrange for **interviews, reviews, readings and book signings**
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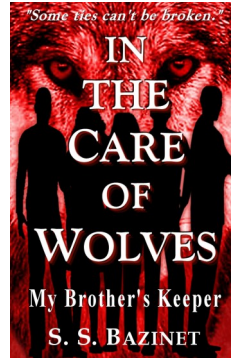
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## Member Books



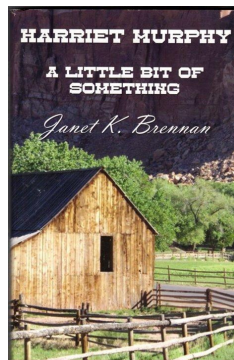
How can a loving angel create a disaster? Michael, an incarnate angel, shares his blood in an effort to purge vampire Arel of his dark curse. Facing death instead of redemption, Arel is left wondering if he's been cursed a second time. Published by Renata Press. Available at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Visit Sandy Bazinet [www.ssbazinet.com](http://www.ssbazinet.com)

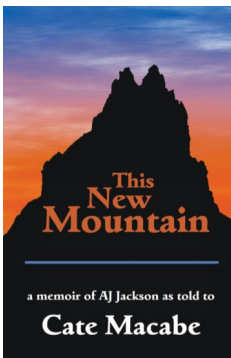
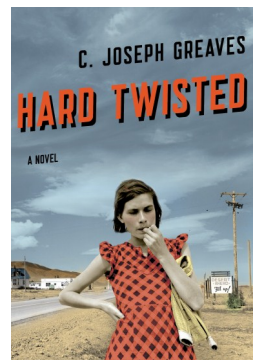


Is sixteen-year-old Theodore a secret weapon, programmed to destroy his lost family? Reunited with them and learning that they're werewolves, he helps them escape from those who are hunting them to extinction. He learns about loyalty and devotion. But in the end, will he unwittingly betray them? Published by Renata Press. Available at Amazon and Barnes and Noble. Visit Sandy Bazinet at [www.ssbazinet.com](http://www.ssbazinet.com)

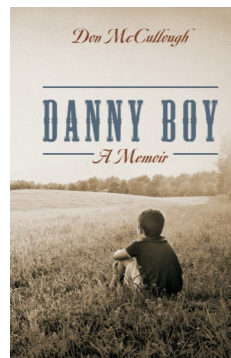
Come in, enjoy a cup of coffee, and sit a spell with Harriet Murphy as she regales you with her tales of family, life, and love in the early 1900's in the former gold mining town of Old Pine near Lake Tahoe in Northern California. Her tales revolve around a woman living alone in the hills of the Sierra Nevada with her horse, Pager, and a myriad of other wonderful and colorful characters. [www.casadesnapdragon.com](http://www.casadesnapdragon.com)



In bookstores November 13, 2012: "Greaves is the sort of formidable storyteller and mean prose-stylist that makes it look easy. With all the grit, suspense, pathos, and thrills you could ever ask for in a crime novel, *Hard Twisted* will leave you in knots." — JONATHAN EVISON  
Visit [www.chuckgreaves.com](http://www.chuckgreaves.com)



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. Paperback/ebooks. [www.ThisNewMountain.com](http://www.ThisNewMountain.com)

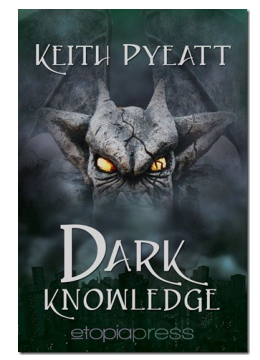


North Texas, the Summer of 1968. A small, segregated grain mill town that harbors an ugly, violent past. A twelve-year-old boy hiding a dark, shattering secret. Told with heart and humor, this is the story of a wounded, lonely boy and a country at war with itself during a defining time in American history. [www.outskirtspress.com/dannyboy](http://www.outskirtspress.com/dannyboy)  
Available October 13 in paperback and ebook formats.

"All that I have ever done, I have done for love.' The opening line says it all: Paula Paul's novel of the life of Catherine the Great is a story about the great loves and losses of the Russian empress, an obvious work of love by the author. Highly recommended."  
— Historical Novel Society Reviews  
Buy at <http://amazon.com> or <http://coolwellpress.com>



A mentally challenged man accepts a gift of knowledge that satisfies a craving but realigns him with a dark destiny. The more he understands about his heritage, the harder it becomes to tell good from evil, and the more difficult his choices become. What must he sacrifice to save the world from his dark knowledge...his life or his soul?  
[www.keithpyeatt.com](http://www.keithpyeatt.com)



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Only \$10 per month or \$25 for three months. Contact Kathy Wagoner, Sage Editor, [JustWriteSWW@gmail.com](mailto:JustWriteSWW@gmail.com).



***Congratulations to the  
Winners of the  
Fourth 2012 SWW Bi-Monthly  
Writing Competition***

**~ Happy or Sad Memories ~**

**1st Place**

Désirée Perriguet • Albuquerque, NM  
"The Weight of Life"

**2nd Place**

Embree H. Bolton • Grenada, MS  
"The Flag...A Burning Issue"

**3rd Place**

Christine Marie Alemshah • Lake Forest, CA  
"I Love You, Daddy"

**Honorable Mention**

Patricia Lamborowski Williams, Albuquerque, NM  
"Six Days Later"

J. Allen Whitt, Albuquerque, NM  
"Clyde"

Willma Willis Gore, Sedona, AZ  
"His Name was Bill"

Kathleen Adam, Albuquerque, NM  
"If It's Not One Disappointment, It's Two"

Jon Griffith, Cumming, GA  
"Dog Gone"

**Critique Groups Seeking Members  
and Members Seeking Critique Groups**

At SouthWest Writers, we love helping authors connect with each other. If you're a current member of SWW and are searching for a critique group, or are looking for another member to join your already existing circle, please email Kathy Wagoner at [JustWriteSWW@gmail.com](mailto:JustWriteSWW@gmail.com) and we will publish your request.

Please include in your email:

1. Your name
2. Email address and/or phone number (this will be posted publicly in both the *Sage* and on our website)
3. Whether you prefer fiction/nonfiction or a mix of both
4. Which genres you are looking for
5. Geographic location (Belen, NW Heights, near UNM, etc.)
6. Anticipated frequency and date of meetings if known (i.e. second and fourth Tuesday, evenings)

**FIRST PLACE  
4TH BI-MONTHLY WRITING COMPETITION  
The Weight of Life  
by Désirée Perriguet**

The day after Thanksgiving was crisp and clear with a hint of rain to the east, but it wasn't a forgiving day as the one before. Clouds dotted the sky with the sun bouncing off them, creating a pink hue along their edges. As we rode along the rutted, dirt road, my stomach wrenched in pain and my mind only wandered to the sky with the thought of what lay ahead for me. My dad, cousin, and I had come to spread Billy's ashes in the same spot he and I had last spoken of his impending suicide...the desert.

Growing up, our family spent every weekend on the desert floor, exploring the life of a past people. With our back windows open in the jeep, my brother and I hung our heads out into the fresh air like two Labrador Retrievers sniffing out a bird. Watching our parents bounce up and down as we dodged huge sand dunes made us laugh. Usually, each had a beer in their hands, and seeing the sloshing booze was a sight in itself.

Roaming the desert was an adventure for Billy and me. He was four years younger and, even though I considered him a pain, we somehow seemed to have fun traipsing across the windblown sand looking for anything other than hanging around our mom and dad.

Rabbit holes, snake holes, and stink bugs cluttered our playground. Would we really find a snake slithering out of the darkness of a soft, round mound of sand? Rabbits and those pitch-black stink bugs were abundant, though. We thought it was hilarious to tap the back end of the spider-like creature, watching it jut its butt into the air in its own defense. A vine of sorts connected some dunes and if you looked down at the ground, into the sun, it sparkled like diamonds on the water. Memories of dirty clothes, messy faces, and hot or cold weather, would linger in our minds and hearts well into adulthood.

Dad sat in the front seat of the jeep as my cousin Christie and I took the box from the back of the old, gray Willis. It was black plastic with Billy's name taped on what seemed to be the front. Here was a life, I thought, compacted into a square, plain container, without the thought of what the sign of such a thing could do to a sister.

The box had a pebbled, shiny finish and I couldn't help but wonder who was the person chosen to write his name, find a cardboard box for shipping, and ultimately place the address of our father on the outside. Did they feel compassion every time they placed such a box in the mail? Were they saddened at the thought of the people receiving it and the impact it would have? I tried to prepare myself for what would be the next step in this process Billy would have wanted.

*(Continued on page 15)*



As Christie pulled a clear, plastic bag out of the box, I clenched my teeth and closed my eyes for what seemed like a lifetime. I had never seen ashes except on a TV sitcom. Cringing when I focused on the grayish powder, I felt a dagger of pain in my chest when I saw pieces of bone scattered throughout. At that moment, I wasn't sure if I could go through with this.

Christie dug a hole to bury the empty box. Digging was difficult; the sand kept re-filling the hole with every shovelful. Eventually, the box was covered with the soft earth that was threatened by the rain slowly moving west. And looking up one more time, I heaved a heavy sigh, letting it out with tears streaming down my cheeks.

I went to the jeep to get Dad, it was time for the inevitable. Christie held Billy's ashes as we walked toward her. Dad began crying, hanging his head. Slowly, he took Billy from her arms. As he cradled him, she and I each took one of Dad's arms to begin the last trip Billy would ever take. We stood as still as time would permit, and soon the man I called Father began to sob as I had never seen him do before. Taking our first steps toward setting Billy free, Dad looked down at the ash that once was his son and said through our anguish, "This is about what he weighed when he was born."

## SECOND PLACE

### 4TH BI-MONTHLY WRITING COMPETITION

#### **The Flag...A Burning Issue**

*by Embree H. Bolton*

**September 1946** As a six-year-old first grader, I participated in a "flag-burning" in my rural classroom setting in Hartsfield, Georgia. Mrs. Saylor, the world's best first grade teacher, had us standing at attention as we discussed our responsibility to God, country, and ourselves. Mrs. Saylor talked about the war and became misty-eyed, as she carefully explained the word "widow." Individually, we came to the center of the room, slowly recited the "Pledge of Allegiance," reverently touched the cotton material, and counted the stars. A new word was learned that I was never to forget—Pride! Yes the flag was "burned"—deep into my inner being—and it became the foundation upon which I built a love for America.

**September 1966** Twenty years later, the flag was "burned" again. Arriving in Vietnam, I was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division and selected to work in the base camp at DiAn. A buddy with whom I had gone through Basic and Advanced Infantry Training was assigned to the same field battalion for which I had originally been selected. The next afternoon his body was returned to the base camp, draped in a brand new flag. I'm thankful that I did not have to witness the pain in the eyes of his new wife, when the draped body was returned to Texas. The flag "burned" deeper!

**July 1969** "...one small step for man, one giant leap...."

These words etched deeply into my memory bank as I intently watched TV from my Army quarters in Germany. "Man on the Moon"—what more fitting tribute to the tenacity and commitment of this free nation than to leave a flag—still "burning" for all who witnessed the number one event of the 20th century.

**July 1976** Returning from two years in Australia, my family and I were grateful to be "home," where pride of country and "American patriotic hype" is not only accepted, but somewhat expected. How appropriate to be in our newest state for our Bicentennial Celebration! Flags flying on the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor "burned" even more deeply, as our guide explained why the bodies will never be recovered.

**July 1989** My wife and I both became teary-eyed as we attended Bellevue Baptist Church's "Celebrate America" and sang, "God Bless America," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and "I'm Just a Flag-Waving American." As a giant American flag was raised to fireworks, singing, and applause, Old Glory was burned again.

**September 2001** The country ushered in a new millennium only a few months earlier, but the average American had become complacent about the basic ideals of freedom—i.e., love of God, love of country. In the early hours of September 11, 2001, my sister-in-law died from a brain tumor, diagnosed a few months earlier. As the family surrounded her bed in the hospice unit, we prayed, shared memories, and sang as our loved one quietly took a final breath and slipped into the presence of the Lord. My wife and I discussed how fragile life is as we headed home to prepare for the funeral, reminding ourselves that no one is assured of tomorrow. Little did we know that only hours later, over three thousand would also step into eternity as the result of a major terrorist attack on this country.

Love of country resurfaced dramatically, and this attack awakened the spirits of Americans. Immediately, flags were sighted everywhere—from houses, buildings, cars and trucks, baby strollers, etc. It was exciting for this old veteran to see "Old Glory" returned to her place of respect and honor. The gauntlet was tossed and hundreds of thousands rose to the challenge! My heart is heavy at a Supreme Court decision that now permits flag-burning as freedom of speech. My personal conviction is that since this country has not allowed flag-burning for over 200 years, something is dreadfully wrong with the "system" that now allows it. However, I do not think governmental protection is appropriate for the individual involved, nor would I offer him any publicity.

**A Final Note** If one could burn all the available flags in the country, I would still carry mine with me—"burned" deeply into my heart and soul. Perhaps what is missing today is that there are precious few first grade teachers like "MY" Mrs. Saylor!

8. Create a convergence where separate lines of action meet, combine their energies, and shoot the story forward. In *Dark Knowledge*, there's a point where three scenes, each written from a different character's POV, bring storylines together as the characters charge into the mind-world for the climactic battle. Different motivations drive each character to the same point, and the convergence supercharges the tension and suspense.

9. Make the hero act alone or at a disadvantage. There's strength in numbers, so isolate your character when he needs help the most. Wesley has friends who would do anything for him, so I...Well, I'm not telling, but isolating the main character is a technique I frequently use to beef up suspense. A variation of isolation is to impose a disadvantage on your hero at a critical time. Maybe your urban fantasy heroine left her sword on all night and discovers it's out of juice just as a shape-shifting monkey demon attacks. Now how's she going to fight it?

10. Make the reader care about the characters. Sure, determined government hit men in helicopters chasing a desperate man through an active minefield is high action and may grab a reader's attention, but the suspense you need to hold interest comes from giving the readers reasons to care what happens to the desperate man. Let readers into your hero's head. Better yet, into his heart. Flesh out your antagonists and other major characters so readers care what happens to them, too.

Remember, suspense is an emotion.

*Keith Pyeatt served as an officer on the board of directors of SouthWest Writers for three years and received the SWW Parris Award in 2009. He has three published novels, all of them paranormal thrillers, and a fourth will be released in June, 2014. [www.keithpyeatt.com](http://www.keithpyeatt.com).*

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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 17 and mail it to:

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## Radio Interviews

Sharon Vander Meer, host of Writer's Block, a weekly live radio program on KFJN/KLVF out of Las Vegas, NM, is seeking interviews with published authors and unpublished writers who are developing their craft. The hour-long program streams live Tuesdays beginning at 9 am at [www.kfunonline.com](http://www.kfunonline.com). Contact Sharon at [fsvandermeer@gmail.com](mailto:fsvandermeer@gmail.com) or go to [www.vandermeerbooks.com](http://www.vandermeerbooks.com).

**Darker Times Fiction** hosts a monthly short story contest open to UK and international writers. Focus is on horror stories up to 5000 words but they accept entries linked to the theme of "darker times." Deadline: **the last day of each month**. Entry fee £5/\$8 via paypal. Monthly winners receive a percentage of money raised by entry fees plus publication in a Darker Times Horror Anthology ebook. For more details, go to [www.darkertimes.co.uk](http://www.darkertimes.co.uk).



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