

South West Sage

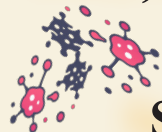
The Voice of South West Writers

Vol. 36 No.5

May 2020

Yes, It's True, Our Meetings Are Cancelled.

(To protect our members' health during the COVID-19 emergency, all scheduled in-person meetings through May have been cancelled.)



So, Sign Up For This ONLINE Workshop And Prepare To Be Dazzled!

What I Learned From Nancy Drew Tools For Fast-Paced Plotting

with Chris Eboch

A ghostwriter shares what she learned while writing about a famous sleuth, from “grab you by the throat” openings to cliffhanger chapter endings and always more, more, more action. Now learn how you can use these techniques to make any story or book better. Writers at all levels can use these tips for both fiction and nonfiction, including memoir.

CHRIS EBOCH'S books for children include nonfiction and fiction, early reader through teens. Her novels for ages nine and up include *The Eyes of Pharaoh*, a mystery in ancient Egypt; *The Well of Sacrifice*, a Mayan adventure; and *The Genie's Gift*, a middle eastern fantasy. Her writing craft books include *Advanced Plotting* and *You Can Write for Children: How to Write Great Stories, Articles, and Books for Kids and Teenagers*. Visit Chris' website at ChrisEboch.com.



\$20 SWW members, \$30 Non-members

To Register:

Use the Online Registration Form, found on the SWW website, or call the SWW office, 505-830-6034, Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m. - noon. The Zoom invitation link and the password will be emailed to those who purchase this workshop. For more information, contact the workshop coordinator at: programs@swwriters.com

**Saturday, May 2
12:30 – 2:30 p.m.**

Platform: Zoom Live Meeting

Writer's Digital Talk

In addition to providing SWW members with the ZOOM workshop above, Chris Eboch has generously recorded her talk, *Myths About Writing for Children*, which was previously scheduled for the May 2 South West Writers meeting. Eboch's recording is available now on the SWW YouTube Channel, the SWW Facebook page, and via the SWW Website.

Myths About Writing for Children

- Writing for children is easier than writing

for adults.

- You can't address tough topics in children's books.
- Children's books should be written in rhyme.

The myths about writing for children are many, and sometimes contradictory. (You can't make money. You'll get rich, like J.K. Rowling!) Learn the truth from the author of over 60 books for young people, including fiction and nonfiction, for beginning readers through teenagers

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*I saw it
in the SAGE!*

What's Inside?

Despite our sadly silent meeting hall and current lack of personal contact, brought on by Covid-19 and social distancing, SouthWest Writers and its members aren't slowing down.

Want to support local, independent bookstores as they struggle to survive mandatory closure? There's now an app for that (page 15).

Plenty of writers groups and enterprises have newly created online contests—some with extraordinary prizes. SouthWest Writers just added two weeks to its own contest entry deadline (page 14)!

SWW will also, for the first time, offer a live, online workshop (page 1) as well as an online meeting opportunity (page 3), and that's just the beginning of all that's happening with this ambitious group. Register for the **Writing Is a Business** conference (page 10) and SWW classes that start later in the year (page 5). This issue also contains recipes from our readers (page 9), bunches of new writing and publishing opportunities, additional memoir offerings from the March Memoir Challenge, helpful writing hints and information from all your favor-

ite columnists, and Jonathan Miller weighed in with some advice for getting your novel written while in isolation (page 8).

No doubt about it, SouthWest Writers is alive and well and preparing for the future!

SOUTHWEST
WRITERS
WELCOMES
HOPEFUL AND
PUBLISHED
WRITERS



SouthWest Sage

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An Invitation to Login for a May 19 Membership Meeting

With SWW President Rose Marie Kern Presenting *Finding Your Niche Market*

Although we cannot yet meet in person, SWW would like to offer all of you a chance to attend a **Live Online ZOOM Meeting on Tuesday, May 19 at 6:30 p.m.**

The meeting will start out as usual, with information for members on what is happening as we try to keep everyone moving forward in their writing careers. Though the bulk of the membership will not be allowed to speak during the event, anyone with questions will be able to type them into the *chat* portion of the meeting format. Vice-President Elizabeth Layton will convey the questions to the appropriate persons for answers, or she will answer them herself.

During this prototype meeting, SWW President Rose Marie Kern will speak on the topic of **Finding Your Niche Markets.**

Rose has helped dozens of writers find a niche that compliments their knowledge, skills and abilities. By focusing their talents in those areas, authors can write short stories, articles and books that play to their

strengths.

Look for the Zoom meeting link in an e-let that should arrive in your inbox by May 15. If you have problems with the e-let system, send an email to info@swwriters.com and they will email the link to you. Since this is the first online membership meeting we are attempting, please be patient and hopefully we will all have a great time. Attendees will be able to see and hear what is going on, but may not be able to send videos of themselves and all audience members will be muted to allow for a more enjoyable Zoom experience.



**Writers Connecting
With Writers!**



President's Corner

Redefining Priorities

Greetings everyone! Are you tired of cooking for yourselves yet? If Covid-19 does nothing else, it is making all of us look hard at how we live. I like to cook but, even though I can bake and grill with the best of them, my husband and I would love to just go and have someone wait on us.

Isn't it funny how things change. I grew up in a big family that went out to dinner at a sit down restaurant all of twice a year. Just popping over to Burger Chef or the A&W Root Beer for a hot dog once a month was a HUGE thing for us. Modern conveniences, especially when you live anywhere close to towns and cities, have really spoiled us. Those who live in rural areas are much less likely to care about such things.

One thing about being forced to stay home is that I have been able to focus on my two favorite activities – gardening and writing. My husband and I also finished building a pergola on the front of our house. (The picture is me on my tractor!)

I do miss one thing more than anything else...you. For over a decade I've enjoyed hanging out with South-West Writers and I always find our meetings energizing. The ideas that have flown from good presentations fill notebooks that I still have at home, and hearing about

how people achieve their goals stimulate me to reach for my next challenge.

SWW will have meetings again when it is deemed safe. In the meantime, the Board of Directors is discovering alternate avenues for providing members with the information and inspiration we crave. In addition to the current writing contest, we have dangled our toes into the online ocean and set up opportunities for meetings and workshops through Zoom. If they work, we may continue this program even after Covid so that members who do not live close by can participate.

Change is difficult but, without it, humanity cannot thrive and grow.

I hope all of you are finding ways to turn your restrictions into creative challenges.

Rose Marie

Passing the time in isolation, SWW President Rose Marie Kern digs into one of her favorite activities.



Amazon Author Central

by Elizabeth S. Layton

Do you currently have a fiction or nonfiction novel or eBook on Amazon? Are you planning to offer an eBook, short story, or novel on Amazon in the near future? Now is a great time to update or create your Amazon Author Central page.

Amazon makes the process simple for authors. As a new author to Amazon, you can find step-by-step directions at - [Setting Up Your Author Central Account](#). Many readers want to know who has written the book they are interested in purchasing. Readers also want to put a face and story to an author's name. A



well-crafted author's page is a way for authors to make a connection with a tremendously vast digital audience.



Within an author's page on Amazon, you should have an updated biography, photos, your author's website, and all your social media links. The more opportunities a reader has to interact with you on the web the more opportunities you have to make a connection with them.

Due to these strange times in our lives, we may have the time or we can schedule the time to create new ways to meet our current and potential readers where they are—surfing the endless internet. So, make sure you create a wonderful wave to catch their attention.

The Occidental Tourist

by Dan Wetmore

In my not-too-distant youth, a popular recruiting slogan of the military was, "Join the armed forces and see the world." I succumbed to that enticement, only to spend my third and fourth decades the way of the first two—state-side; no assignment more remote than the wilds of Wyoming, or more oriental than Ohio.

My particular vocation, nuclear launch officer, accounted for that. Combat's holy grail is action at a distance, and ICBMs—poster child for power projection—keep others as far as possible by enabling you to remain as near as your own backyard.

So when an unexpected, final posting to Turkey came up, I was determined to shoehorn 20 years of belated travel into that last one-and-a-half.

Which found me, in August of 2012, on the banks of the Bosphorus, strolling the grounds of Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul.

In those 18 months of travels around Europe and the Middle East, my status as tourist was immediately apparent, so I acquiesced to the role; camera always at the ready, neck craning around every corner, gawking openly over the architecture, and marvelling at the myriad pedestrian differences which were all but invisible to the residents bemusedly watching me watch them.

Accordingly, I grabbed up every guide book I could find, not only for their cultivated images (paling my own frantic snapshots), but the commentary (revealing



the details lurking below the surface of sight).

The opulence of the sultan's sanctum demanded such a keepsake, in search of which I drifted into a small shop along the plaza. I readily secured my prize, but could find no price, and no one to pay. I imagined the shopkeeper, a door or so down, seated at a small patio table or in a neighbor's upstairs apartment, sipping his second or third cup of chai, passing the long morning, staying abreast of the happenings which constitute remaining squarely in others' lives.

But for a (redundantly) impatient Westerner, time was slipping. Our tour bus had a schedule and I threatened it by lingering. So, finding pencil and paper, I scribbled a few words in English, risking impression of arrogance, born solely of ignorance; hoping for the gracious forgiveness of a foreigner's failings I'd experienced time and again.

Folding a twenty-lira note into the note, I tucked it under the faded blotter of the proprietor's desk and made my way out, book swinging openly in one hand.

Which got the attention I'd been seeking and knew must be there.

I was all of five steps out the door when an elderly man in turban and dimije separated from the scenery

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UPCOMING CLASSES

Enroll in classes at:
southwestwriters.com
or (505) 830-6034

JULY



Blogging Your Way To Writing Success

Instructor: Rob Spiegel

\$130/\$140 (5 weeks)

**Tuesdays, July 7 - Aug. 4
3-5 p.m.**



Writing for Magazines

Instructor: Melody Groves

\$79/\$89 (2 weeks)

**Saturdays, July 11 & 18
9 a.m.-Noon**

AUGUST



Creating Websites for Writers

Instructor: Loretta Hall

\$105/\$115 (4 weeks)

Saturdays, Aug. 8 - 29

Changing world circumstances could result in updates to class locations, venue, platform, etc. For information or enrollment, call the SWW office at (505) 830-6034.

SEPTEMBER

Writing your Family Legacy before you Croak

Instructor: Alexandra Dell'Amore

\$130/\$140 (5 weeks)

**Tuesdays, Sept. 2 - 30
3-5 p.m.**

OCTOBER

Crafting a Nonfiction Book Proposal

Instructor: Loretta Hall

\$105/\$115 (4 weeks)

**Sunday, Oct. 4 - 25
2-4 p.m.**



MAKE A SUGGESTION

Have an idea for a class or workshop you'd like SWW to offer? Email the Class and Workshop Coordinator at:
Info@SWWriters.com

OCCIDENTAL, cont'd. from previous page

and put himself on a collision course, striding with speed and purpose.

Grabbing me forcefully by the upper arm, he spun me around, marching me back into his shop. Afraid of fueling his anger through protest, I said nothing, chagrined that—for this moment, at least—I had become that ugly American I'd striven mightily to avoid.

Though a Muslim country, Turkey isn't under the severity of Sharia Law. As the gateway between Europe and Asia, it enjoys a blend of traditions and sensibilities, along with the openness such breadth gives. Fleeting fears of losing a hand were allayed by that thought, along with my planned pantomime of explanation, and intercession of our local tour guide if need be.

Closing the door and turning full to face me, his eyes were accusing and maybe slightly triumphant. I tried to absorb their heat, and held out my hands; a magician

demonstrating he'd nothing up his sleeves.

As intrigue dampened ire, I pointed to the desk behind, urging him to look, with an entreaty of "Lütfen." It must have seemed like the universal feint of, "What's that behind you?!" as his stare fixed on me until he spied my square of paper patiently awaiting attention.

I watched his features soften into embarrassment and maybe a bit of relief as he scanned the page, made full apology by his pro-offering of five lira as change, me having morphed from miscreant to improbably welcome customer.

"Teşekkür ederim" and "Birşey değil" punctuated my slight bow of thanks and his of the same, and the release from that dim and stuffy shop into the bright, awaiting day had me wondering if—inadvertently—I'd made a better impression on behalf of my fellow explorers than I could have intentionally; the first... so bad... having made the last more lasting.

Scene Endings

by Kirt Hickman

Your scene ending is the reader's reward for having read the scene. It should do two things: wrap up the scene in a way that satisfies the reader, and compel him to begin the next scene. To do this, your scene should end in one of the following ways:

Cliffhanger:

My favorite scene ending in my science fiction novel, *Venus Rain*, occurs when our hero, Kelly, along with her brother and boyfriend, are fleeing a contingent of Chinese military troops on a space station. Kelly gets the bright idea of using a space walk to escape. Only one problem:

Kelly, Mark, and Rod rocketed into space, blown like projectiles, followed by the three remaining pressure suits and all the loose gear in the room. In her haste, they'd forgotten to tether themselves to the station.

Get your hero into trouble, then leave your reader hanging.

Cliffhangers are particularly useful for scene endings that also end a chapter. Be aware, however, that each cliffhanger must be a natural development in the story line. Otherwise your reader will recognize that you've manipulated your characters and events solely for dramatic effect.

Don't end your scene with some version of your hero going to sleep at the end of the day. If your hero is in danger and passes out because somebody drugged her drink, then "the hero went to sleep" might make a good cliffhanger. Otherwise, there's no hook, nothing to make the reader turn the page and begin the next scene.

So how do you turn "the hero went home and went to sleep" into a cliffhanger? Sometimes you've just droned on too long. Look at the last few paragraphs of the scene. Can you do without them? Would your ending the scene earlier provide a better hook? If so, delete the unnecessary paragraphs.

Revealing Internal Monologue:

In one *Worlds Asunder* scene, Chase loses an important case to a federal agent named Forsythe. I might have ended this scene with:

Chase left the meeting and went home.

How does Chase feel about losing control of the case? You'd never know from the passage above, which provides no incentive for the reader to turn the page. Watch what happens when I use revealing internal monologue to let the reader into Chase's mind:

When Chase left the meeting an hour later, he felt a hollow ache inside. He wandered the tall corridors of the base, sifting through his feelings. He'd been in charge of his own activities for decades. The autonomy of the Office of Accident Investigations, like that of deep-space flight, had allowed him a freedom of action that he'd miss under Forsythe's direction. As his loss of flight status had been four years before, this was one more step toward the inadequacy and dependence that defined old age.

This passage occurs early in the book and reveals the starting point of Chase's character arc, that old age has left him feeling inadequate and dependent. In addition, Chase has a personal need to solve the case himself. This paragraph shows what losing control of it does to him emotionally. The reader will want to know what he's going to do about it.

Emotional Dialogue:

In this example, Bill Ryan, the commander of the *Puma*, has failed to return from a combat mission. The scene, written from the viewpoint of a woman named Dana, could have ended like this:

"If there's a chance they're still alive," Snider said, "then they deserve every effort we can make to help them. In the meantime, Robinson, try to raise the *Puma* on the comm."

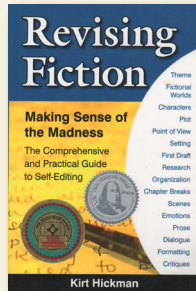
This passage tries to be a hook because Bill remains unaccounted for at the end of the scene. This ending offers the reader too much hope, however, so I added the following paragraphs:

Dana moved to the window and looked down at the bustle of activity on the launch pad. The *Snow Leopard* looked small and fragile from up here as it disappeared into the hangar. Her gaze drifted out over the horizon to the stars and she started to cry.

Johnny Miller put a reassuring hand on her shoulder, gave her a cup of coffee, and said nothing. He didn't tell her that they could be wrong. He didn't promise that Bill was all right.

Dana held the cup dumbly before her. "I never told him that I loved him."

Here the reader discovers Dana's feelings for Bill. The passage raises the stakes and dampens the hope. It creates the suspense necessary for an effective hook.



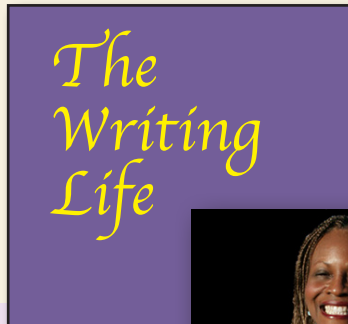
When Any Work Will Do

Like other professional writers, I have received emails from friends and acquaintances asking if I have taken advantage of the pandemic to become more productive than usual. Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead of sitting at my desk in my home office by 8 a.m., I now barely make it by 11 a.m.

As my days begin more leisurely, I no longer breakfast and read the local newspaper in 30 minutes. Rather, the time has expanded to include reading sections of the Sunday New York Times. Then I often walk and listen to audiobooks, some for leisure, such as the latest John Sandford mystery, or history books.

When I finally arrive in my home office, I sometimes begin the day surfing the internet looking for updates on COVID-19. A 90-minute session passes quickly as I check the newest numbers in New Mexico, the country, and the world. I started monitoring the outbreak in China in December, wondering when the virus would hop rides inside of hosts traveling crowded airplanes. The news is so depressing that instead of working on my projects, I often walk downstairs for lunch and to read another section of the Sunday New York Times.

After lunch, I sometimes stay in my kitchen. In March, I concentrated on perfecting a gluten-free, chocolate-chip cookie recipe with no cane sugar. Ripe bananas, coupled with a bit of coconut sugar work well as a sweetener. At a local grocer on my now weekly outing, I found dark chocolate chips sweetened with stevia. To increase the healthiness of the cookie, I mixed almond flour into the store bought gluten-free flour after I found straight-up almond flour crumbled. For nuts, I experimented with cashews, but found walnuts to be tastier and crunchier. If that time had been spent on my next book, I might have finished a chapter or two.



Sherri Burr is the author of 27 books, including *Complicated Lives: Free Blacks in Virginia: 1619-1865* (Carolina Academic Press, 2019). A graduate of Mount Holyoke College, Princeton University, and the Yale Law School, Burr transitioned from being a full-time law professor at the University of New Mexico to become a full-time author in 2017. She has been a member of Southwest Writers for over 30 years and currently serves as the President of New Mexico Press Women.



by Sherri Burr

I stopped chastising myself after a writer friend in Pennsylvania wrote that she was suffering from Doom Insomnia and was behind schedule on her next book. In the April 12 edition of the New York Times, author R.O. Kwon wrote about grieving the loss of her old life. Kwon reached out to psychotherapist Megan Devine, the author of “It’s Ok that You’re Not OK.” Devine cautioned that folks were grieving the loss of friendship, fellowship, and the need to connect with others.

I miss my writing community. Before the “shelter in place” orders were issued, I knew at the end of each work week awaited a meeting with my critique angels, Judy and Sue. Monthly, I often attended First Fridays and Southwest Writers. As president of New Mexico Press Women (NMPW), I had worked for several months on our annual conference bringing together a variety of jour-

nalists and writers to discuss their work in March. Ten days before the conference was to begin, New Mexico Governor Michele Lujan Grisham issued her public health declaration related to COVID-19, and the NMPW board cancelled the conference. My heart shattered even as I knew that it was the right thing to do. If even one asymptomatic person had attended the conference, several could have left infected.

While grieving the loss of personal contact with my writing community, I have spent more time in my kitchen. In addition to perfecting a gluten-free chocolate chip cookie recipe, I also made lotion bars for health care professionals. I reasoned that with all the additional handwashing, I could contribute to keeping hands moisturized.

As I contemplated my home office, I decided to adopt a standard of “Any work will do.” If I turn on my computer and write a Southwest Sage column, that counts for the day’s output. If I read a history tale related to my next book, then that also counts. In the midst of these trying times, I acknowledge grieving the loss of community. If you would like a lotion bar or chocolate cookie recipe, please contact me and I’d be happy to share. At a safe distance, of course.

Editor’s Note: Due to the irresistible description of Sherri’s Chocolate Chip Cookies, we reached out to her to see if we could just share the recipe with everyone! It appears on page 9.

The Corona Incident

by Jonathan Miller

While the Roswell incident should more accurately be called the Corona Incident, my latest manuscript should be considered my Corona novel. Hopefully, these thousand words will help you with your manuscripts, both in quarantine and beyond.

Ever since I'd been a public defender in Roswell, I'd wanted to write a UFO legal thriller: Lawyer defends client who claims aliens made him do it. She raises competency, but suppose he's telling the truth?

With the deadline for the New Mexico Book Awards contest moved up to April 30, 2020, I planned to complete this manuscript by early April, self-publish it on Kindle, then enter it in the e-book category. Armed with a potentially award-winning e-book, I'd then successfully pitch the manuscripts to New York publishers in May. I'd then be on a Barnes & Noble book tour around America by June.

What could possibly go wrong?

Even without quarantine, my manuscript would not be ready for the real world at the end of April. My pages as they stood were barely worthy as a replacement for the last roll of Charmin. Still, I had faith. I knew I could turn the negatives into positives.

Well, not that kind of positive.

For you SouthWest Writers out there, hopefully we can quarantine successfully and get published while we're at it. There's a chance we might have to go through this again, so please make a hard copy and store with those extra rolls of paper towels and bottles of hand sanitizer. That said, here is my survival guide to writing during the time of Corona:

First, get a quiet place to write and stay there.

Once it was clear, that I was not going to become a road warrior—I mean road writer—anytime soon, I found that I'd get the most work done at my office, where I could quarantine alone. My staff was gone, and I could limit distractions in between telephonic and video court hearings. Even better, I could type as I waited to testify, and no one would be the wiser.

Second, to make your quarantine work, sign a peace treaty with your significant other. My wife and I made an informal agreement. She would work at home, and I would be exiled to the office. I didn't tell her I'd be revising my manuscript at said office, but that's a Sage article for another time.

Third, do a site visit, even if you can't leave the county. My out-of-this-world manuscript takes place entirely within New Mexico. Unfortunately, I couldn't visit or revisit these locations while locked down. Luckily, Google Maps can take you anywhere. I just hit the "Your Contributions" link on the app and soon accessed every place I'd been over the last few years.

I'd been to the legendary Shakespeare Ghost Town last October, for example. No need for you to go, but it sure sounded like a great setting for my story. My manuscript was soon titled *The Shakespeare Incident* and inevitably a character has to ask whether to be or, well ...you get the idea.



With Google Maps, some photos didn't just spark joy, they sparked scenes. I remembered a "toxic waste evaporation pond" near Holloman Air Force base. After seeing my photo of an unworldly sunset, I knew my heroine would have to go there to find the missing clue. The app can take you anywhere on earth, and you don't have to quarantine for 15 days when you get there.

Fourth, a pandemic can force you to literally focus on life and death issues, especially if you have aging relatives susceptible to the virus. In my earlier drafts, the heroine's main journey was to uncover the alien conspiracy in order to win the case. At first it felt like a bad X-files episode.

As I worried about my family's health, my heroine's motivation became much more basic. She had to win the case to save her mother's life. The conspiracy took care of itself.

Fifth, to paraphrase philosopher Ringo Starr, you can get by with a little help from your friends. However, unlike Ringo, you don't want your manuscript to end up in an Octopus's Garden, in the shade. You can send a draft to a fellow writer for feedback, but only do it once. It is understood that you are still writing your manuscript after you send it to a friend, but you can burn bridges (as well as pages) if you then send a revised version the next day, and another version after that.

Sixth, when you can't leave your driveway, don't try to reinvent the wheel. Aristotle decreed that a story should have three things—a beginning, a middle and an end. More recently, SWW member Kirt Hickman wrote *Revising Fiction, Making Sense of the Madness*, which offers

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Readers Share
RECIPES

Sherri Burr's *Somewhat Healthier Chocolate Chip Cookie* (adapted from *The Joy of Cooking* by Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Cream:

4 ounces or ½ cup (usually a stick) of Organic butter

Add gradually and beat until creamy:

6 ounces of ripe mashed bananas pre-mixed with 2 ounces of coconut sugar

Beat in:

1 egg
½ teaspoon of vanilla

Sift together and stir in:

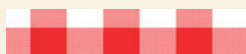
1 cup of gluten-free all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons of almond flour
½ teaspoon of baking soda
½ teaspoon of sea salt

Stir in:

½ cup of chopped walnuts
½ cup of Lily's Dark Chocolate Baking Chips (Stevia Sweetened 55% Cacao)

Use a teaspoon to drop the batter onto a greased (with butter or coconut oil) cookie sheet. Strive for small (approximately one to two-inch) cookies. Bake for 7 to 10 minutes, depending on whether you have a convection oven (about 7 minutes) or conventional oven (about 10 minutes).

Note from Sherri: The batter will keep for a week in the refrigerator. Unless you are a disciplined eater of delicious cookies, I encourage you to bake the cookies in small batches.



Cheddar Cornbread
from Kaylynn Johnsen

Preheat oven to 400 degrees

20 oz Bob's Red Mill Cornbread Mix
2 eggs, beaten
1/4 C milk (or Lactaid)
3/4 C sour cream
1 (14-3/4 oz) can of cream-style corn
1/2 C Shredded cheddar cheese

In a bowl, combine the cornbread mix, eggs, milk, and sour cream until blended.

Stir in corn and cheese.

Pour into a greased 13 x 9 inch baking pan.

Bake at 400 degrees for 18-22 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near center comes out clean.

Cut into squares.

Serve warm with butter and honey.

Yield 12 servings.



INCIDENT, cont'd. from previous page

excellent tips that are even more timely when you can't go to SWW meetings in person.

Finally, your humble computer can also be your writing partner. Don't forget to check the top of your screen for ways to make your manuscript better. And in the bottom left-hand corner, make sure to check your word count to make sure that you don't go on too...

By the time you read this, the quarantine will be over, and I should have a solid draft of *The Shakespeare Incident* ready to be or not to be published. And next year when I think of Corona, I will remember the real location of the UFO crash as opposed to the pandemic.

So, stay safe everyone and keep writing wherever you are!

Author's Note: Jonathan Miller will not be submitting his e-book to the NM Book Awards. He will not be doing a book tour anytime soon. Hopefully, he will be speaking at SWW in person at the January meeting.



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Southwest Writers Presents

WRITING IS A BUSINESS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2020

8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Albuquerque Center for Spiritual Living
2801 Louisiana NE

COME HEAR EXPERTS TALK ABOUT:

- **Tax Questions:** Answered by N.M. Taxation and Revenue (Dorian Johnson, Audit Bureau Chief)
- **Intellectual Properties and Tax Laws & Copyright** (Gina Constant, Intel. Property Atty.)
- **Keeping Track of Your Business Expenses—A Hands on Approach** (Gail Rubin, Cornelia Gamlem, Kirt Hickman)
 - **Will and Estate Planning** (Jim Plitz)
 - **Planning a Home Office** (Rob Spiegel)
- **Working With Accountants** (Brian Reinhardt, CPA)

REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION AT: 505-830-6034

Early Bird, June 1- Aug. 31, 2020: \$99 members/\$104 Osher, \$109 non-members

Sept. 1 – 25: \$119/\$124/\$129

Sept 23: Last day of online registration

Register at the door: \$139

Price includes: Light Breakfast/Lunch/Snacks



Kauai Writers Conference



The November, 2020, **Kauai Writers Conference** is now open for registration. Faculty includes some 35 prominent authors, literary agents and publishers.

Discounts to SWW members - enter the code WG789 when asked for it on the check-out page. <https://kauaiwritersconference.com>

Left Coast Crime



Left Coast Crime #31

Southwest Sleuths

Albuquerque, New Mexico
April 8-11, 2021

INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION:

www.leftcoastcrime.org/2021/AboutLCC.html

Left Coast Crime is an annual mystery convention sponsored by mystery fans—readers and authors. Conventions have been held from Anchorage to El Paso, from Boulder to Hawaii, and various locations in between. In 2021 it'll be in Albuquerque!

Each Left Coast Crime Convention raises money to support a local literacy organization with funds collected through silent and live auctions, and the annual Quilt Raffle.

The Sage Writing Challenge

JUNE

Time travel is now possible and you have been selected as one of the first to leap forward or backward in time. You will choose where you go and who you meet. File your first report with the Temporal Irrelevance Mission Engineers (TIME) Commission via the Sage. Keep it to fewer than 1,000 tasteful, nonpolitical words.

Email submissions to sage@swwriters.com

CHALLENGE AND ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Payment is in bylines and clips. **Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue.** Standard article lengths are from 300-1000 words; certain Sage Challenges may set more specific word count requirements (see the Challenge description box, above). Submissions may be edited for accuracy, readability and length. Submissions must be tasteful; free from profanity, explicit sex or violence, etc.

Send all submissions as either standard text in an email or in a Word document in 12 pt. size. Single spaced. Do not get fancy with formatting or fonts.

The Bottomless Cup

by Jane Epstein

She used to joke that life would not be worth living without coffee. "Don't make me choose between you and coffee," she once told her husband as she kissed him. "I need you both, madly." He knew it was true. She lived life with an energy he treasured. She could work a 12-hour shift at the hospital, come home and make love to him, hungry and expansive like it was a Sunday afternoon. If coffee was the secret to her passion, he would keep her cup full.

They had started dating after medical school, a big surprise to those that knew her. "I don't get the attraction," one friend said. "He's so quiet. Girl, he must be good in bed or something because he just doesn't seem like your type." With silence and a beguiling lift of her

SouthWest SAGE

The *SouthWest Sage* newsletter welcomes submissions focusing on all aspects of research, writing, and publishing in any genre. See past issues of *SouthWest Sage* for the types of articles we publish.

Here are four ways you may be included:

- Write an article for the *Sage* related to the craft of writing, getting published, etc.
- Enter stories, poems, or articles inspired by the monthly writing challenge announced in each Sage.
- Send in a short story/poem/essay of your own—on any topic (inclusion in the Sage is subject to the discretion of the editor).
- Enter artwork/photographs related to writing in general or accompanying your stories.

Be sure to read, understand and follow the guidelines for submission. **Submissions that do not comply with the guidelines will not be considered.**

Send questions or submissions to:

Kathy Schuit
SouthWest Sage Editor
sage@swwriters.com



The May Challenge was to tell an apocalyptic, third-person tale in 1,000 words or less.

dark brow, she left her friend to her thoughts. What she did not say was that the attraction went far beyond their connection in bed. Something about his quiet brilliance and confidence settled her overactive mind, and his broad build tethered her spritely nature. She breathed more deeply around him.

As they transitioned from residency to full-paying jobs, he longed for children. But at 35-years-old, she still could not decide. "I'm just not ready," she told him. "I like my crazy life working in the emergency room, and I like my time with you. I love you. In fact, I haven't had enough of you lately," she declared as she undid his belt, derailing the conversation yet again. Her life moved too rapidly to sit on the couch nursing an infant. So, he waited.

When the fires started, they hoarded supplies like everyone else. Toilet paper, canned food and coffee. Lots

of coffee. Her husband teased, "When the end of the world arrives, you, my dear, will be plenty caffeinated."

"Yes. It is my superpower," she replied with an impish grin. "With both coffee and you, I will outrun the end-of-times and live forever!"

Just a few months later, she sits slumped against the wall of her bedroom, incredulous at her blithe ignorance. She cannot believe she has arrived at this moment.

Even when the patients started to arrive with atypical pneumonias from the smoke inhalation, it seemed more like a dystopian novel than real life. "Surely," she thought, "all will be well soon." Hanta virus, H1N1, even COVID-19 had eventually ended. Then the food shortages began, the looting and the rationing of their supplies. Thankfully, the ample coffee dimmed her hunger while she continued to work. Emergency medicine fit her agile mind and endless energy. It had engendered in her a belief that she could handle anything, anything that came through the door. But when the patients outpaced resources at the hospital, comfort was all she could give to the desperate and dying.

Only a week had passed since his cough began, waking her in the middle of the night. She had panicked, packing and preparing to take him to the hospital. "Stop," he had quietly implored, "Honey, just stop." She

had sunk to the floor. They both knew that the hospital had nothing to offer them anymore.

Now, her remaining power drains into tears that fall on the dusty hair of her husband whose head lies still in her lap. Outside, the evening sun stirs the smoke-filled skies into a copper-colored brew. The shafts of light illuminate his body as if conducting his soul to travel up and out. She removes her mask, to sip her weak, tepid brew. While the skies darken outside, she recalls his transformation over the past week.

Between spasms of coughing and violent fevers, he had talked. Really talked. Impending mortality seemed to loosen a cavalcade of words from his spartan voice. His mind expanded into newfound freedoms even as his body withered. (When had they last made love, she wonders.) A few days ago, he even thanked her for not having children. "I could not bear to watch my children suffer," he'd said. She knew this was the beginning of his goodbye, making peace with the unfinished corners of his life. He spoke words of love and hope, gratitude and pleasure, talking more to himself than to her as the days passed. While she cradled him, he midwifed himself into a peace that came, gently and utterly.

And, now she is left with nothing but her cup of coffee, her grief and the coming of the dry, fiery night.

Sheltered In

by Gayle Lauradunn

In the white kitchen
gurgles erupt

from the sink,
a double white sink,

each side speaks
to the other

so they are not alone,
not alone like I am

looking out the window
to see someone,

anyone, walking
the street,

someone to wave to.
It is at times

like this I long
to be a double.

Mom's Fishy Revenge

by Brenda Cole

Unless you've had the misfortune to be in Eastern Iowa in high summer, you can't understand that 94 degrees and 95 percent humidity will warp one's capacity to reason. Doesn't matter if you're my twelve-year-old brother or my melting mom.

My mother was dripping wet, it was a toss up who was wetter, mom or the dishes. It was hot, humid and muggy that July afternoon. Dad had taken me and my two siblings fishing. Mom had stayed home and was washing dishes as we carried a bucket full of live bluegill into the backyard.

Dad and I were trying to get up the effort to think about cleaning the fish. My sister had disappeared, but I caught movement out of the corner of my eye. As I turned, I saw my brother walk through the back door trailing the garden hose behind him. Before I could even shout

at him, I heard my mother shriek like she'd seen a rat. I bolted for the door and slid into the kitchen. Mom stood glaring at my brother, water streaming down her body and dripping all over the linoleum floor.

"What, she was hot, so I cooled her off." My brother calmly looked at me, handed me the hose and walked out the back door. I took one look at my drowned mother and wisely fled back outside with the hose.

Mom followed me out and walked up to my oblivious father. He and my brother were standing next to the bucket of fish. She stood in front of them, water still streaming down her face and glasses. Maybe if either of them would have been concerned or tried to help her she wouldn't have snapped. Instead they continued talking about fishing or basketball or something. She turned to me and before I could say anything, she held up her index finger and stared at me over her glasses. I closed my

cont'd. on next page



Dear Eliza,

I'm having a hard time writing lately. I just never feel motivated to work on anything. It used to be one of my favorite things, it would help me relax and work stuff out. How can I get that inspiration back?

Sincerely,

Blank Page

Dear Page,

Both inspiration and motivation are things that come and go. But we can build them up and work through the times that they are slacking.

Having a regular habit can help you accomplish any sort of activity, whether writing or running. Carve out a chunk of your day for writing. It doesn't have to be long – you can start with ten minutes. Sit down with your computer or notebook and, for that time, put words on a page. You can even write "I don't know what to write" over and over. The idea is that motivation is something you can generate, not something you have to wait to feel. Write drivel for five minutes and you will find that creative part of your brain waking up, steering your words in more fulfilling directions. Do this a few times a week (every day if you can) and it will get easier, like working a muscle. You will start to believe that inspiration will come if you rev the engine a bit.

Sometimes, though, you need a little more gas in the engine before you can even want to try. There are many ways to build up your excitement about writing. Seek out books or blogs about writing. Take an online class. Call up someone else who writes and ask them about their latest project. Read one of your favorite books and pay close attention to how the author creates certain ef-



fects. Spending that time thinking about writing will help you tap into the part of you that wants to create it. The moment you start feeling your fingers itch or an idea bubble in your brain, grab your tools and start writing. When the moment fades, you can go back to your muse to generate another one.

We are always changing, and sometimes that means moving away from one fun activity and towards another. If, despite trying to regenerate your interest, your "writing for enjoyment" is truly no longer enjoyable, you don't have to make yourself do it. Find something else with which to express yourself, and wait for writing to circle back around on your wheel of interests.

Yours sincerely,

Eliza Haywood

Eliza Haywood Answers is written by SWW member Sarah Rowe. Sarah is an independent book editor specializing in science fiction and fantasy. Email her your writing and grammar questions at Sarah.Rowe@outlook.com

FISHY, cont'd. from previous page

mouth and waited for the completely justified verbal tirade to commence.

Mom was only squeamish about two things in nature; touching live fish and any kind of rodent. So when she calmly reached into the tub and pulled out a live bluegill with her bare hands I almost fell over. She had a death grip on that fish and held it down by her side. She looked up at my six-foot-tall little brother, he smiled at her and went back to talking with Dad. Lighting fast Mom reached for the waistband of my brother's shorts with her left hand, pulled out the waistband of both shorts and underwear and quickly shoved that squirming bluegill headfirst into his pants. For good measure she patted it sharply.

There was a split second of delayed reaction before my brother leapt into the air, screamed and simultaneously ripped off his clothes. The poor fish flopped on the grass as my stunned brother stood there half naked trying to breathe. Then the wolf whistle from next door made

him realize he was in the backyard without benefit of his pants. He snatched his shorts off the grass, covered himself and bolted for the backdoor.

Dad finally realized something was wrong with Mom and turned to look at her. She mumbled something about, "he's your son, you go clean up the floor!" and headed for the shower.

I rescued the poor fish and explained to Dad what he'd missed. I carefully made my way through the kitchen; water was everywhere. I ran upstairs and dragged my brother down to clean up the disaster he'd made. Growing up in a 110-year-old house with no air conditioning made summers brutal. At least my brother had been creative.

As for Mom, I never knew she had it in her. Moms from along the block took her out to dinner that night, lauding her creative genius.

My little brother was grounded and, for the rest of the summer, all the moms just glared at him.

Writing Contests You Can Enter NOW

Sunspot Literary Journal

*100 Bucks for 100 Words
Contest*

Microfiction, micro essay, micro memoir, short poem, micro script, micro screenplay...if it's 100 words or less, it might be worth \$100. No restrictions on theme or category.

In addition to receiving the cash prize, the winner will be published. Select finalists will have the chance to be published. Sunspot asks for first rights only; all rights revert to the contributor after publication.

Enter as many times as you like. One piece per submission. Pieces must be unpublished except on a personal blog or website. Simultaneous submissions accepted. Work can have won other awards without being disqualified.

Cash award of \$100.
Entry fee: \$5
Open: April 1, 2020
Closes: June 30, 2020

Sunspot Literary Journal
SunspotLit@gmail.com
<http://www.SunspotLit.com>

SWW Contest Entry Deadline Extended *Closing Date Is Now May 15!*



There has been a surge of interest in the SouthWest Writers 2020 Annual Writing Contest! Authors are asking for a little more time for the finishing touches to be added, so SWW has postponed the deadline to **May 15 at midnight**. The contest theme is "Seeing the World in 20/20." There are 66 potential awards for both Prose and Poetry.

All entries must be submitted via the SouthWest Writers website. SWW welcomes work by both published and unpublished authors, and provides constructive feedback, from published authors, on each submission. This is a rare opportunity to get constructive critiques that can help you refine your talents. Details are on the SouthWest Writers contest web page: <https://www.southwestwriters.com/annual-writing-contest/>

:: The Black River Chapbook Competition ::



The Black River Chapbook Competition is a semi-annual prize from Black Lawrence Press for a chapbook of poems or prose (including fiction, creative non-fiction, lyric essay, and prose hybrid manuscripts). Entries should be between 16 and 36 pages in length.

Entry deadline: May 31, 2020

Prizes: \$500 and publication.

Entry (online only): \$15

Submission and information: <https://blacklawrencepress.com>

All entries are read blind by a panel of judges and editors.

I R E L A N D W R I T I N G R E T R E A T

Wild Atlantic Writing Awards

Flash Fiction Award

Theme: Pen a flash fiction story in any style or genre focusing on the act of writing in any way, shape or form, with a maximum length of 500 words.

Prize: 500 euro in cash plus paid excursions, by land and sea, food and drinks tastings, concerts and dance performances, and all writing workshops and author talks at one of our retreats of your choice, either this autumn in either Paris or Donegal, or one of our retreats next year.

Creative Nonfiction Award

Write a story of not more than 500 words on any subject – whether it be in the form of memoir, profile, literary journalism, personal essay, travel.

Prize: 500 euro in cash plus paid excursions, by land and sea, food and drinks tastings, concerts and dance performances, and all writing workshops and author talks at one of our retreats of your choice, either this autumn in either Paris or Donegal, or one of our retreats next year.

Submission and information at:

irelandwritingretreat.com

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WRITERS

AUDIVITA

Get Your Audiobook Produced and On-the-Market Today!

Audivita works with publishers and authors worldwide to produce and distribute audiobooks. There are two basic approaches:

- We record your performance of your audiobook.
- We work together to produce your audiobook with professional voice talent.

Information and FREE consultation available at: <https://audivita.com/audiobooks/>



Publishers of Jack Canfield's iconic *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series are at it again. Submissions are now being accepted for a possible new book, *Age is Just a Number*.

So, you're a certain age now, and you're ready for what's next. You might be enjoying an empty nest, or starting a second career, or winding down a first one. You might be downsizing, or traveling, or caring for elderly parents.

You might be going on the adventure of a lifetime or taking long walks in the woods. The one thing you know for sure is that you're not ready to stop living! You feel energetic and young and there is still so much more to see and do and give and enjoy.

We are looking for stories about the humorous or serious sides of life after 60.

The DEADLINE for story and poem submissions is MAY 31, 2020.

chickensoup.com/story-submissions/possible-book-topics

SHORTS MAGAZINE

This newly launched, free, global online magazine is strictly for short fiction, essays, opinion, life writing, poetry and more. Submissions are welcome from both new and experienced writers.

Email submissions to: editor.shortcuts@gmail.com.

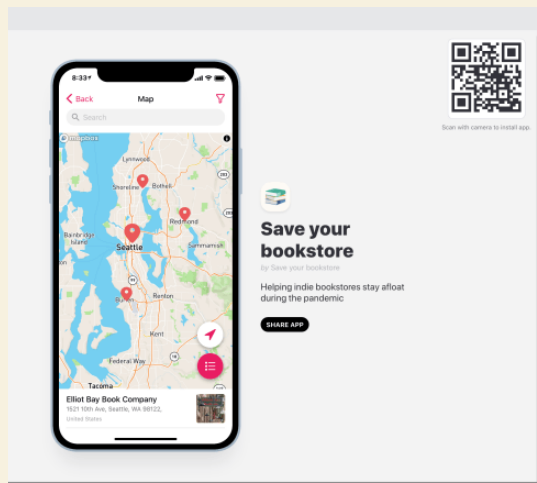
Go to the website or Facebook page for submission guidelines and to read the first two issues.

Website: www.shortcutsmagazine.com

Facebook page [@shortsonlinemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/shortsonlinemagazine)



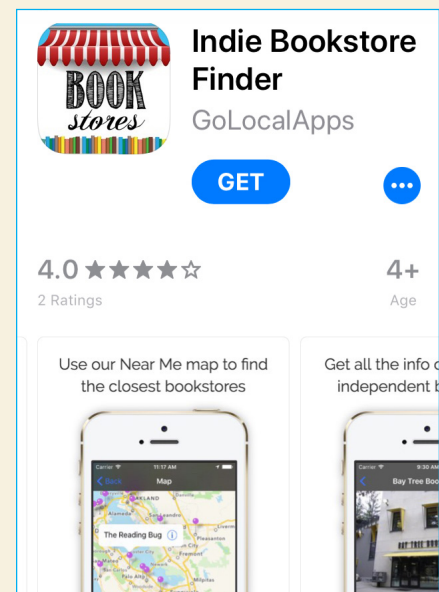
Apps Help You Find and Support Local Bookstores



saveyourbookstore.com

Save Your Bookstore is an app specially designed to help you reach indie bookstores that are closed during the pandemic. It is accessed online using any smart phone camera to scan a QR code. It will help you “find your nearest bookstore - order books through them, get gift cards, curb side pick ups, free deliveries and great discounts on your quarantine reads.”

Indie Bookstore Finder and many other, similar apps are available through your phone's App store or iTunes store. Many of these apps already include or are being updated with features to put you in touch with the indie book sellers you want to support.



Sue Houser Wins Zia Award

When New Mexico Press Women's Association announced the winner of this year's Zia Awards Competition, it was SWW member, Sue Houser who came out on top.

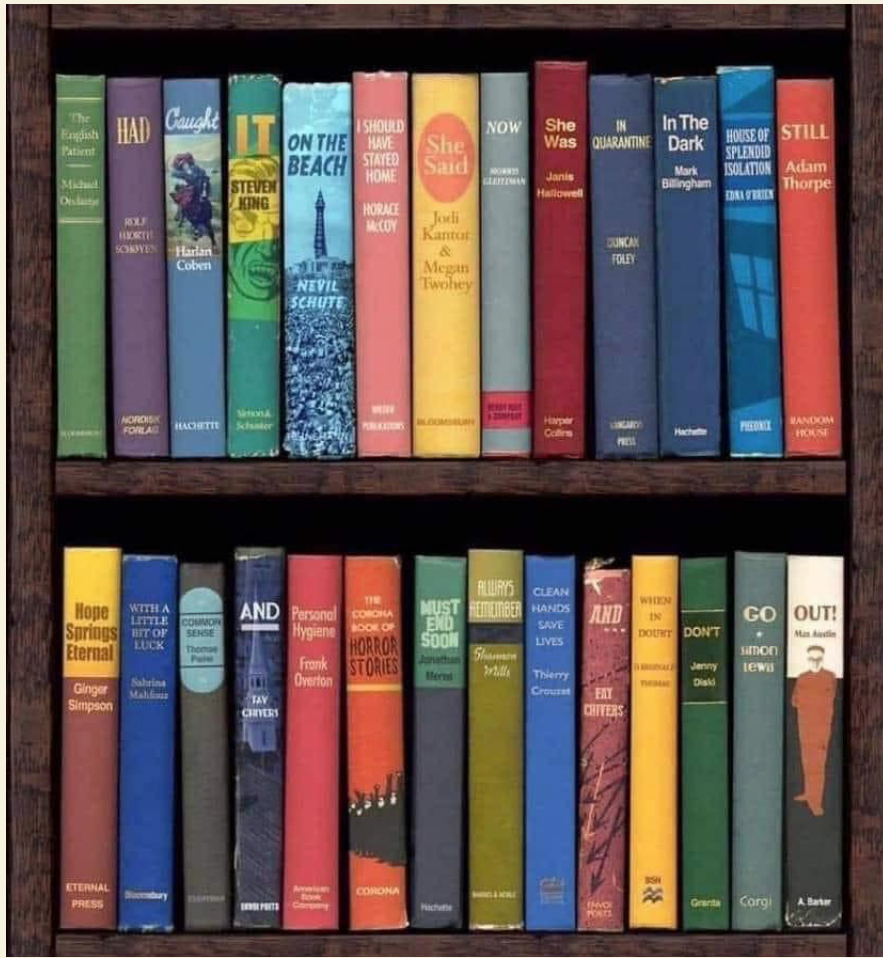
Started in 1953, the NMPW Zia Award honors an outstanding New Mexico woman author. This year, outstanding New Mexico women writers were chosen for their work in children's and youth books.

Houser won the 2020 Zia Book Award competition with her children's book, *The Corn Whisperer*, written by Houser with art by Ramon Shiloh.

Houser is a native New Mexican who retired from a career in social work/counseling. The book is a trio of stories about young Charlie's visits to his grandfather who lives at a pueblo. Grandfather relates stories about their ancient culture and how it relates to living in today's world. "The re-story-telling of these legends, through written words and authentic art, brings the tales to life to new generations of readers," one NMPW judge said.



Sue Houser
2020 NMPW Zia Award Winner



JUST FOR FUN!

Read these actual book titles left to right.

Submitted by Rose Marie Kern

Look Who Joined SWW in March

We Can't Wait To Meet You!

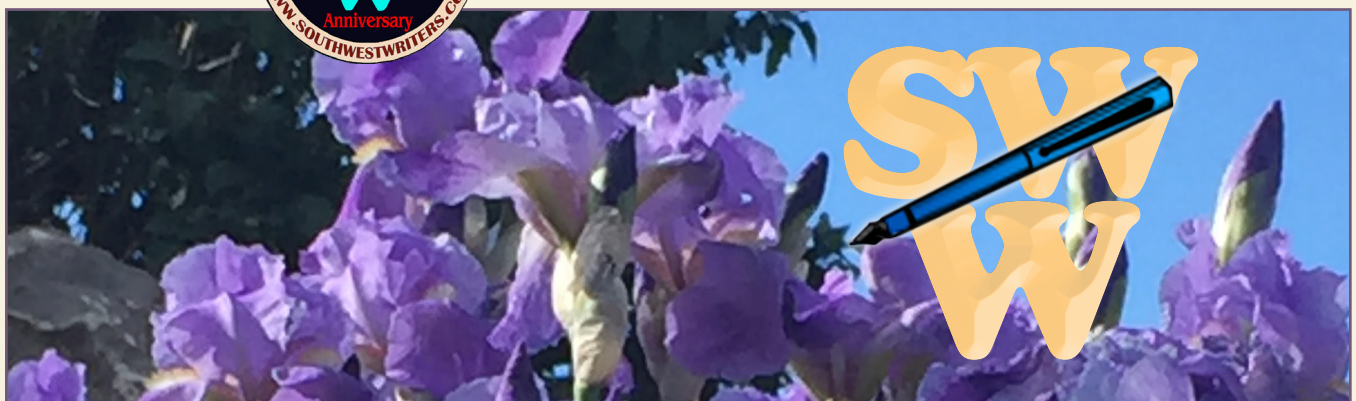
Francois-Marie Patorni
Charles Hedrick
Linda Kolsky



SWW Board Meeting Summarized

April, 2020

- April's board meeting was conducted on April 7, via ZOOM, set up by Elizabeth Layton.
- SWW bills are being paid through online banking, due to the business office being closed per COVID-19 personal distancing guidelines.
- March 7, 2020 meeting attendance was 136 persons.
- Membership stands at 365 members.
- An April 15 special edition of Sage suggested people write short pieces on how they are handling isolation, for potential inclusion in future issues of Sage.
- SouthWest Writers 2020 Writing Contest continues to receive entries through May 2, 2020. All entries are to be submitted via the website, using the submission guidelines listed there.
- Workshops are in flux, pending lifting of social distancing guidelines.
- Classes to be conducted later in the year are still on schedule. Others may be rescheduled.
- Saturday and Tuesday meetings are on hold until further notice.
- The Writing is a Business Conference is scheduled for September 26, 2020.
- Keep reading emails and visiting the SouthWest Writers website for ongoing, updated information.



Board of Directors

Rose Marie Kern, President
Elizabeth Layton, Vice President
Jennifer Black, Treasurer
Patricia Walkow, Secretary

Michelle Auron, Meeting Media and Video
Brenda Cole, Writing Contest
Roger Floyd, Signage/Setup
Melody Groves, Classes/Conferences
Jacqueline Loring, Membership
Sam Moorman, Facilities Manager
Léonie Rosenstiel, Media/Public Relations
Kathy Schuit, Sage Editor
Camille Singaraju, Historian
Kathy Wagoner, Website
Dan Wetmore, Procedures/Awards

The SWW Board of Directors meets on the first Tuesday of each month from 6 - 8 p.m. at Chez Axel restaurant located on the northeast corner of Montgomery and San Pedro. Members are encouraged to attend.

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email: info@swwriters.com
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