

# South West Sage

*The Voice of South West Writers*

Vol. 36 No. 6

June 2020

**Saturday, June 6: Attend a SWW  WORKSHOP!**

with Sarah H. Baker

## Starting Right: *A Fiction Building Block*

Not sure where your story starts? We'll discuss a few things to consider in order to hook agents, editors, and readers. Join us for this interactive workshop presented by Sarah H. Baker, author of more than 20 novels.

**Sarah Hanberry Baker** grew up in New Orleans, left college for the wilds of Alaska in the 70s, then returned to the Lower 48 to become an engineer for the government. In 1997, Sarah started writing fiction, and she sold her first romance novel in 2001. She now has 21 novels, a dozen novellas, and several short stories published in various genres under different names. Sarah enjoys sharing what she has learned about



writing and the publishing world and currently teaches for UNM's Continuing Education program. She has spoken and conducted writing workshops across the country and in Ireland.

### 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](mailto:programs@swwriters.com)

<https://sarahhanberrybaker.com/>

**Saturday, June 6**

**Right after the meeting (see pg. 3)**

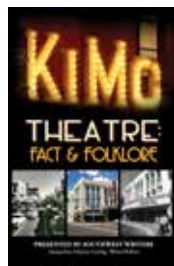
**Platform: Zoom Live Meeting**

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

## We Have Some Winners!

SouthWest Writers is pleased to announce four organizational and member publications that have advanced to the status of finalists in the National Federation of Press Women 2020 Communications Contest.

Entry into the NFPW contest requires having achieved a First Place award in a local or regional Press Women contest during the current year. Winners' placings will be announced at the NFPW online conference June 6, 2020.



**LEFT - Kimo Theater: Fact and Folklore**, with contributions by SWW members, edited by Jaqueline Murray Loring; **SouthWest Sage** newsletter, a publication of SouthWest Writers, with member contributions, edited by Kathy Louise Schuit. **RIGHT - Victory From the Shadows** by Gary Ted Montague and Elaine Carson Montague; **Obsession**, a short story by Chris Allen.



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## What's Inside?

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This month's Sage Challenge resulted in two very different and engaging short stories about time travel (p. 5 and 7). Both are recommended reading!

Most importantly though, it should be evident throughout this edition of the Sage that your organizational leaders are adapting to the changing requirements and responsibilities of keeping a group the size of SWW healthy, safe and, at the same time, connected. Workshops (p. 1), Programs (p. 9), Classes (p. 11) and the September *Writing IS a Business* conference (p. 14) are still on the calendar. Most will take place with new formats that allow members internet access to the activities.

In her report of the May board meeting (p. 16), SWW Secretary Patricia Walkow inserted a note recording that 53 members attended the later, June 19, first ever SWW Zoom meeting—that's nearly two-thirds the average attendance of a normal, live Tuesday meeting. Not bad for SWW's first attempt at getting together via Zoom.

If you have internet service and a computer, smart phone or tablet, you can access any Zoom meeting. A few days before any scheduled meeting, SWW sends all

its members an email with the login number, passcode and link to the meeting. From there it's easy to join the fun! Jot down the login number and passcode and click on the link, which will take you directly to Zoom. Once there, follow the prompts and get ready to be greeted by your SWW writing community.

As SWW and other organizations move forward in this strange age of COVID-19, logging into Zoom or other online meeting programs is likely to become somewhat of a norm. Learn it with us and have a new skill for life!

SOUTHWEST  
WRITERS  
WELCOMES  
HOPEFUL AND  
PUBLISHED  
WRITERS



### SouthWest Sage

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## President's Corner

June 2020

And now for something completely different.

It has been almost three months since news of the pandemic forced us all to reconsider our lives. That which we were accustomed to doing daily was disrupted. Masks are worn, not to rob banks like in an old western, but to protect us from sickness and death. "Social Distancing" has become the new mantra.

Isn't it sad that the one thing most of us value as being a basic tenant of our humanity is torn away—the touch of another person. A simple conversation with friends gathering for a meal is now a phone call over a bowl of soup or a sandwich. When we do encoun-

ter old friends as we wait standing six feet apart to get into Sam's or Costco, we cannot hug them. We can but hope the look in our eyes sends a smile that our covered mouths cannot disclose.

Our country has withstood many disasters over the last hundred years. Earthquakes, tornadoes, mudslides. But even the destruction of the twin towers was something that, unless you were directly affected by it, became a very tragic news report. Even the wars our country has participated in were always in another part of the world.

2020 has seen something unique for anyone living today. EVERYONE is DIRECTLY affected, for a prolonged period of time, and not just in the U.S., but everywhere. The actions of every individual during this time will cause ripples.

I wonder how it will affect our literature.

Saturday, June 6 at 10 a.m. LIVE  MEETING!

## INSIDE the MIND of a PUBLISHER

with Bennett R. Coles

This is a candid look at the traditional publishing world from the perspective of the publisher, intended to explain to authors why publishers act and make decisions the way they do. It goes through the intricacies of the sales and distribution system, the timelines, how the author can help, and how the publisher is the entity with the most financial risk with any book. It tries to answer the question "what is a publisher looking for in a submission"—which is a question authors are always trying to answer!

**BENNETT R. COLES** is an award-winning author who has been published by Harper Collins (New York) and

Titan Books (London). He spent a decade as the publisher at a traditional small press, and he is the founder of Cascadia Author Services. With years of experience in both the traditional and self-publishing worlds, he works tirelessly to guide and support fellow authors toward the path to success.



Information needed to join this Zoom meeting is available on the SWW website: [southwestwriters.com](http://southwestwriters.com)

## Look Who Joined SWW in April

*We Can't Wait To Meet You!*



Heather McGuire



Esther Jantzen



# Memorable Author Websites

by Elizabeth S. Layton

When was the last time you took a good look at your Author's Website? Do you have a website for your writing portfolio? You can think of a website as a business card that is updated, edited, and spruced up frequently for your audience's viewing pleasure. In our current age of technology, people will make sure you are authentic by searching you up online. Having no website equals not really a writer or maybe not even a real person.

Here are the **Top 5 Website Must Haves**:

1. Does your audience know right away that you are an author and what you write? Make a good impression on your homepage. Those first 30 seconds *do* count.



2. Where's your sparkling Bio? This should be written in the third person.

3. How can you be contacted? Your contact information should be easily found on every page. Searching leads to those pesky invading squirrels.

4. Are you being social? Social media links or buttons should be easy to find. Even if you only use one form of Social Media, drive your readers directly to it.

5. Where can they read what you write? List your books, links to online articles, share a teaser from an upcoming chapter or book, share a poem, a video clip of a talk you've given, and the like.

Content is Queen or King! So give all of your website visitors the royal treatment to keep them coming back.

## Watch SWW Presentations Online

*Subscribe to the SouthWest Writers YouTube Channel*

SWW records the presentations from many of our member meetings. These presentations are on a variety of topics by well-known authors, scriptwriters, publishers, editors and others in the publishing world. You can watch them (or even binge watch them) on YouTube.

Subscribe to the SouthWest Writers YouTube channel to be notified when new videos are available.

**The newest SWW uploads to YouTube include:**

- Best selling author and *Rambo* creator, **David Morrell**, speaking at the March 7 SWW meeting.



- *Myths About Writing For Children*, a prerecorded presentation by **Chris Eboch**, for the May 2 SWW Zoom meeting.



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



# The Sage Writing Challenge

JULY

Has isolation provided you insights into ways to improve your writing, organize your writing space, or even make better use of your time. If your personal epiphany is something you think could benefit other writers, share it with them in 1-500 words.

Email submissions to [sage@swwriters.com](mailto: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.

## 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](mailto:sage@swwriters.com)



The June Challenge was to write a fictional report of your experiences as a time-traveler.

## Meetup in the Bermuda Triangle by Jim Tritten

The thing about flying at night, at sea, with no moon or stars, is there is no horizon. No way to distinguish where the air ends and the water begins. You have to trust your instruments. The artificial horizon, or attitude gyro, and the vertical speed indicators are your guideposts.

That night, a cold day in December, was very dark. Flashes from the towering thunderstorm ahead provided the only lights. And of course, the white and cobalt blue flames coming out of the exhaust stacks on either side of the A-1E's massive Wright 2700 horsepower engine,



and the red and green wingtip lights. This old bird had been designed before I was born and had the looks of a classic World War II fighter.

The rule about thunderstorms is to fly as low as possible underneath the lousy weather. I decided five hundred feet was about right. Enough altitude to live through a sudden downdraft. High enough to be well over the small Caribbean atolls and keys that dot the Bahama Islands. The steady drone of the engine lulled me into a fixation on the artificial horizon and neglecting to watch whether I was holding my altitude or on a slow descent.

The warning button on the radar altimeter turned red, and an audible alarm sounded in my helmet's earphones. I shook my head, blinked, and pulled back on the stick while I added about ten inches of engine manifold pressure to permit me to gain altitude and level off again at five hundred feet. I throttled back to cruise settings and double-checked my heading against the magnetic wet compass. I was three hundred fifty miles off the coast. No chance I would miss hitting the United States but not at all certain I would be anywhere near the exit of the St. John's River. This area of the Caribbean had been labeled the Bermuda Triangle for numerous strange occurrences, including difficulties in navigation. Then too, there was that story about the missing Flight Nineteen – five Fort Lauderdale-based Navy TBM Avenger torpedo planes disappearing over these same waters in December 1945.

As I passed under the thunderstorms, the windscreen lit up with electrical sparks that crawled from the center outward. I glanced out to the wings and saw the St. Elmo's Fire advance from the fuselage outboard to each wingtip. I watched the meteorological phenomenon. It didn't seem to affect the navigation lights or my instruments.

Not much to do as I motored along and passed through the bad weather. I flipped the toggle switch to see if I could pick up the automatic direction-finding radio beacon on New Providence Island. The number one needle swung from side to side, pointing back to the thunderstorms. No sense trying to use the onboard navigation aids. Just keep flying west, report back to the ship "feet dry" when I was over land. Then figure out if I was north or south of the St. John's River. From that point, it'd be a cakewalk to follow the eastern shore to the welcoming white and green rotating beacon at the Mayport Naval Air Station.

The audible alarm from the radar altimeter woke me up, and I instinctively pulled back on the stick and added throttle. The aircraft responded, and the altitude warning alert ceased. I again shook my head and thought how lucky I was to have technology work in my favor. I reduced power and stretched my torso and legs – time to dig out the maps.

The windscreen filled with an opaque gray, and I realized I had entered a fog bank. Focus on the attitude

gyro, keep the wings level, and maintain altitude.

I reached down to the documents pouch on the right side of the cockpit. I extracted the aviation charts for the southeast U.S. As I turned my head back up to the left, I had difficulty getting my eyeballs to steady on the artificial horizon. My stomach churned with foul-smelling burps escaping my gut. My head hurt – classic symptoms of vertigo or spatial disorientation.

Focus on the attitude gyro. Ignore what my body is telling me. I am not in a turn to the left and a climb. The artificial horizon shows wings level. Do not touch the stick. Disregard the pain in my head. Keep my head steady, and don't move it to upset the semi-circular canals in my ears further. The sloshing of fluids will settle down if I can sit still.

My nausea intensified, and I opened my helmet bag just in case I needed to barf.

I knew I was in a turn, and the instruments were wrong. I turned to the right and took off power to compensate. There, that feels better. I'll have this bird thoroughly checked before I take it back to the aircraft carrier.

The feel of the plane seemed normal. I smiled without a care in the world as the A-1E struck the water, cartwheeled, and came to a stop amid the screeches and sounds of tearing metal.

When my eyes opened, it was daylight, and I stood outside the cockpit on a sandy treeless island. My A-1E sat upright on a windswept beach. Somehow it was resting on its landing gear, and there was no damage to the airframe. I patted my body to see if I could feel my touch. Everything felt the way it should. I removed my helmet and my orange Mae West and dropped them on the sand.

"Hi there." A voice came from behind me.

I turned to face the source. I saw five young naval aviators in World War II-era tan flight suits and cloth headgear. Five TBM Avengers sat on their landing gear undamaged. On the side of each aircraft was stenciled, NAS Ft. Lauderdale. Looked just like the flyers that appeared at the ending of the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

The Bermuda Triangle is real?

One of the other flyers shouted and asked, "What year are you from?"

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Jim Tritten's *Meetup in the Bermuda Triangle* recently won Fourth Place in the Title Wave Books Revised and Plot Duckies Flash Fiction Contest. Jim additionally secured the contest's First Place spot with his short story, *My Permanent Record*, which will be re-printed in a coming Sage issue.

[titlewavebooks.com](http://titlewavebooks.com)

During this time of social distancing, it is still possible to support us by buying gift cards for future shopping. Buy now, shop when the quarantine is lifted!



[plotduckies.com](http://plotduckies.com)

Short Storyathon: June 19 @ 8 a.m. - June 21 @ 5 p.m.

Go from idea creation (on Friday night) all the way to your published short story on Amazon by Sunday! Start making money from your creative ideas.

# The Gibraltar Assignment

June 16, 2320

To: Operating Supervisor  
Temporal Irrelevance Mission Engineers (TIME) Commission  
From: Temporal Special Agent Francis Rose  
Re: Gibraltar Assignment

As per the request received from the Planetary Geological Commission, my trainee, Lt. Tandy, and I took the Temporal Orbital Observation Bubble (TOOB) back five million years to observe activities related to the Zanclean deluge, a flood theorized to have refilled the Mediterranean Sea 5.33 million years ago. This was to clarify points as to what caused the flood as recorded in many ancient documents. During the Miocene Era the Mediterranean was severed from the Atlantic Ocean and partly dried up. Previously, two theories were postulated explaining the opening of the Gibraltar Straits and subsequent refilling of the Mediterranean basin.

1. Erosion of the isthmus due to tectonic activity
2. Impact from a large meteor.

As directed, we hovered the TOOB at a mile above Gibraltar on the south side of what was destined to become the straits. It took several jumps of decreasing spans of years to finally come close to the exact moment. Once we were certain it would happen within a couple weeks we kept on station and took turns at the controls.

The photos we took during these snapshots of time show the relevant areas including some islands no longer in existence and the unique flora and fauna of the region.

What happened then was not anticipated. Lt. Tandy's implant malfunctioned causing her hormone levels to accelerate to an uncommon high. As the only other human being in existence for the next few million years she requested my assistance in reducing the stress caused by the malfunction.

As you are aware, the TOOB was originally designed to be used in case an asteroid of unusual size headed to earth was deemed likely to cause a cataclysmic annihilation event, and as such it carries photon torpedoes strong enough to vaporize a chunk of space debris greater than 10 miles in diameter.

As Lt. Tandy and I were engaged in a personal yet medically necessary activity, we were unaware of physically reclining across the control panel, triggering the release of the photon torpedo. In fact, the subsequent sudden, violent movement of the TOOB initially seemed to be related to our activity. It was a few minutes later that we realized it was a shock wave resulting from the violent explosion of a torpedo on the thin ridge of land connecting what is now Europe to Africa.

We noted that the waters of the Atlantic engendered a most magnificent waterfall as they rushed eastward, and the sun on the spray created what is the first triple rainbow this specialist has ever encountered. Lt. Tandy commented on the magnificent afterglow.

As the geological effects on the ocean floor and surrounding topography is virtually identical to a meteor impact, I recommend that this be listed as the official cause of the creation of the Strait of Gibraltar.

# F

## From Right And Left: *A Very Short Memoir* by Roger Floyd

Someone once asked me, “Where do you come from?”

I was born in Springfield, Illinois, in October, 1941. My father was a Presbyterian minister in the little town of Greenview, about 20 miles north of Springfield, the capital of Illinois and the resting place of Abe Lincoln. A village of only a few hundred souls in 1941, Greenview was much too small to have anything like a hospital. A general practitioner who made house calls, maybe. So when it came time for me to be delivered my mother had to go to Springfield. That’s where I came into this world.

Only about seven weeks after I was born, one of the most momentous events in United States history occurred: the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It knocked the U.S. out of neutrality and forced it to enter World War II whether it wanted to or not. Countries in Europe, Africa, and the western Pacific had already been conquered by the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan, and the mood in the U.S. after the attack was, to say the least, downcast. And on Monday, December 8, 1941, my father—like so many other men and women across the United States—went to the Army recruiting office (in Springfield, most likely) and joined the Army. He did it without telling my mother and she was furious, though I’m sure she understood.

As an ordained Presbyterian minister, my dad entered the Army as a chaplain. They made him an officer, a first lieutenant. When and where he had to report, I don’t know, but his immediate induction into the Army meant he could no longer continue as a minister in a civilian church, and he tendered his resignation to the church in Greenview where he’d served for a couple of years. My mother couldn’t remain in Greenview either. Left alone with an infant son to take care of, she’d have to get a job, but women didn’t work outside the home much at that time. She made the same decision as many other women whose husbands had joined the Armed Forces, she would return to the home where she grew up and move in with her mom and dad.

Her parents lived in Boone, Iowa, about 350 miles north and west from Greenview, but at the time there wasn’t a highway that took a direct route northwest. A trip to Boone required a drive north from Greenview to meet US Highway 30, the Lincoln Highway, then west to Boone. So my mother and father, with a small child barely eight weeks old in the car with them, started out one cold, crisp autumn day. The trip must have taken them a full day.

But that’s only part of the story. In order to really understand the nature of my origin, we have to take into account the state of mind of the country, and the state of affairs in the world beyond U.S. borders. By 1941,



Germany—to my parents’ right as they drove north—controlled almost all of Europe, including most of France, the Low Countries, Norway, Denmark, and other countries in eastern and southern

Europe. The battle of Britain, that long bombing campaign waged by Hitler’s Germany on England, had taken place only the year before. The outlook in Europe was dark indeed.

To my parent’s left, the Japanese dominated large areas of China, and were threatening other countries in South East Asia. And they had just attacked the U.S. Even Hitler never attacked the U.S. directly. News of the war was constantly on the radio and in the newspapers and magazines of the day. Newsreels showing the horrors of the war were shown at the movies. A young couple just starting a life together couldn’t get away from it. It came at them from right and left. With all this swirling about in their minds, they headed to Boone.

What a somber mood in that car. I can’t help wondering what they were thinking as they drove north and west. Did my father think he’d never come back from the war the US had been so violently thrown into? Did my mother wonder what it would be like to raise a child in a world saturated in conflict? I don’t have the answers for certain, but I think it likely that she did. Yet, on they drove and all three of us eventually survived the war.

That’s where I come from.

## M

### Modern Dating by Sam Moorman

My pert niece complained about internet matchmaking. After weeks of the usual getting-to-know-you emails, she finally had a phone chat with a fellow described as a long-haired paint-

er—and suffered an hour of whining about his last three drama-filled relationships! Exhausted from listening, she stifled a laugh when he complimented her, “You’re so easy to talk to.”

She apologized, “You don’t seem ready to date yet.”

Her next internet prospect was the athletic manager of a computer compa-

ny, and again she looked forward to their first phone talk—until his opening words, “Soooooo, if I were to come home to you each night what would you be cooking me for dinner?”

She joked, “Well that depends on what you made me for lunch!”

There was a long, awkward silence until his strained, “Goodbye.”



## Illustrative Ideas For Standout Memoir, Poetry and Prose

presented by Kathy Louise Schuit

Depending on which online scorecards you read, Memoir is either the fastest growing genre in book publishing or it's the most oversaturated. Obviously, it's both. It should be just as obvious that savvy memoir writers will be using every tool in their marketing arsenal to get people to pick up, hold onto and favorably review their stories.

This presentation will introduce you to some of these tools. Many are more familiar than others. Some have been used by celebrities to more fully personalize their own memoirs. Old black and white photographs have widespread appeal for readers of many genres and generations but did you ever think of writing a key memoir chapter or vignette in the form of a screenplay? Illustrative ideas for adding a unique flare to memoir, poetry and prose are endless and may be as simple to tap into as using a marker-drawn hand puppet as your narrator.

Saturday, July 4, 2020, via zoom, 10 a.m. - noon  
Members will receive an alert with login instructions.

**KATHY LOUISE SCHUIT** won her first writing awards as a journalist in the early 2000's. These days she devotes great swaths of each 24 hours out to seeking out ways to creatively use words and pictures in digital fine art and design. She is the author/illustrator of an award-winning picture book



and the current editor of the SouthWest Sage newsletter—a finalist awaiting placement in the National League of Press Women's Communications Contest.

Reach her at: [designers@openwithdesign.com](mailto:designers@openwithdesign.com)

## No, We Are NOT Crazy *(Well maybe a little)*

Researchers at Durham University teamed up with the Guardian and the Edinburgh international book festival to survey 181 authors. Sixty three percent said they heard their characters speak while writing, with 61 percent reporting characters were capable of acting independently.

"I hear them in my mind. They have distinct voice patterns and tones, and I can make them carry on conversations with each other in which I can always tell who is 'talking'," said one anonymous writer. "They sometimes tell me that what I have in mind for them isn't right – that they would never behave or speak that way. I don't usually answer back," said another.

The study also found that 56 percent of the writers surveyed reported visual or other sensory experiences of their characters when they were writing, while a fifth had the sense that their character was occupying the same physical space. Fifteen per cent of writers said they could even enter a dialogue with their creations.

"When I'm trying to 'put words in their mouth' instead of listening they often talk back. And then we discuss things until I find what they would say," reported one anonymous respondent. Another revealed that their characters' voices were distinct from their own inner speech: "When my characters are running dialogue in my head I feel like a spectator, but with my own inner speech I feel like the one speaking."

Researchers were keen to stress that there was no question of writers confusing fiction with reality. When the academics rated the writers on how prone they were to hallucinations, they did not score differently to other samples of the population. "Hearing voices and other unusual experiences are not in themselves a symptom of a mental health problem," they wrote. "This shows that vivid imaginative states – including losing control of one's own imagination – [are] a healthy and safe thing which is important for how some people create fiction."

reprinted from

**The Guardian**

<https://www.theguardian.pe.ca>



# Attracted to Boycotts

Throughout history, individuals and groups have banned and boycotted material deemed politically, sexually, violently or racially offensive. Ironically, boycotts attract more attention to creative material, sometimes turning films, music, and books into blockbusters. The year 2020, for example, brought calls to boycott the book *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins, a New York Times bestseller.

Over one hundred authors signed a petition urging Oprah Winfrey to withdraw the title selected for the Oprah Book Club. Winfrey declined, and instead invited three of the protestors to join her to assist in interviewing the author for her television show on Apple TV.

On Amazon.com, 75 percent of nearly three thousand customer ratings were five stars, creating a 4.5 average. Five percent provided one-star reviews, one of which bemoaned the book's seven-figure advance given to a white woman while "Mexican writers are horribly underpaid," and struggled "to get their stories told, to get their manuscripts into the hands of agents and past the publishing industry's gatekeepers." The reviewer also asserted that "Cummins screws up Spanish egregiously," and her characters "are stereotypes ... participating in stereotypical activities."

All the reviewer's criticisms seemed legitimate. Cummins's book went through a three-day auction, with multiple publishers bidding on it, and the winner agreed to pay \$1,000,000. One of my writer friends saw her book go to a several-hour auction that resulted in her book receiving \$125,000 advance. How publishers make these decisions to bid on certain books, but not others, frustrates writers of all hues. Someone who is more familiar with Latino literature could consider the characters as stereotype and criticize the Spanish. Those of us less steeped in that genre might miss these nuances.

Some negative reviews told people not to purchase or read the book, with "Don't get suckered!" or "This book is actual dirt." Among the 75 percent of positive

reviews came "A stunning discourse on humanity, life" and "Hooked after reading the first page."

Attracted to boycotts, I ordered the audiobook from the public library. Within ten minutes, I was committed to listening to all sixteen hours, fifty-one minutes. It took four days. Notwithstanding the criticisms, I found the story compelling.

Middle-class Lydia and her eight-year-old son Luca journey from their home in Acapulco to the United States after 16 members of their family were murdered by a Mexican cartel. Violence has motivated many people to abandon all that they know. Lydia and Luca's travails reminded me of slaves who escaped slavery in the South and headed north.

Could Cummins be considered the Harriet Beecher Stowe of our time? Stowe was a white woman who was paid a considerable sum to write about slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Born in Litchfield, Connecticut, Stowe and her husband opened up their home as

a stop on the Underground Railroad. When President Lincoln met Stowe, he allegedly told her, "So you are the little woman who wrote the book that started this Great War."

Would it have been fabulous if a black woman had written the second bestselling book of the 19th century? Would it have been great if a black woman had received the royalties? Absolutely!

Because of the impact, I am grateful Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Does *American Dirt* humanize the plight of migrants similarly to what Stowe's book did for enslaved people? Americans have listened to politicians vilify immigrants as "rapists and murderers." In *American Dirt*, however, migrants trek 2,000 miles from their homeland to escape rapists and murderers. If Cummins humanizes migrants for even one American, then her book has succeeded.

Yes, *American Dirt* may have flaws. Yes, the publishing industry has peculiarities in awarding big advances. But Cummins is to be applauded for creating Lydia and Luca's hair-raising journey. It demonstrates how migrants seeking asylum may indeed have a "well-founded fear of persecution," the legal standard to receive legal sanctuary. These migrants don't deserve to be separated from their children, another unfortunate reminder of how slaveholders sold children away from their mothers. *American Dirt* should be commended for humanizing migrants' plights.

## The Writing Life



by Sherri Burr

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.

## UPCOMING CLASSES

Enroll in classes at:  
[southwestwriters.com](http://southwestwriters.com)  
or (505) 830-6034

To protect our members' health during the COVID 19 emergency, classes originally set for June and July have been rescheduled for later in the year. The following classes are currently accepting enrollment.



### AUGUST

#### *Creating Websites for Writers*

Instructor: Loretta Hall



\$105/\$115 (4 weeks)  
Saturdays, Aug. 8, 15, 22 and 29  
2-4 p.m.  
SWW Office: 3200 Carlisle Blvd NE,  
Suite #114

Why should you have a website? Because people say you should? If that's your only reason, you won't have a good one. In this six-hour series, you will learn how to plan a website and design one that will be attractive and effective. Topics include domain names, website design concepts, blogs versus websites, hosting options, search engine rankings, and inexpensive (or free) site-building software. We will explore options for creating and maintaining your own website without knowing any programming language. Using the types of template-based programs and reliable but inexpensive hosts we will discuss, the cost of your site can range from \$0 to about \$10 per month. If you decide to have someone build your site for you, this class will prepare you to talk knowledgeably with that person about what you want. In-class demonstrations and take-home exercises will get you started establishing (or improving) your Internet presence.

**Loretta Hall** currently maintains five websites of her own creation. The oldest one, which she built in 2004, has received multiple awards and earned her the title of Female Architectural Author of the Year in 2016 by Build magazine. Loretta describes herself as computer literate but not a programmer. She is a former board member of Southwest Writers and winner of the 2007 Parris Award. In 2016, she was named Communicator of Achievement by the National Federation of Press Women.

### SEPTEMBER

#### *Writing your Family Legacy before you Croak*

Instructor: Alexandra Dell'Amore



\$130/\$140 (5 weeks)

Tuesdays, Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29  
3-5 p.m.

SWW Office: 3200 Carlisle Blvd NE, Suite #114

Learn how to write your personal history in this two-hour, five-week class. Stories and your experiences are happenings that should not be lost. When you write your legacy, you will continue to live through the written word. This is not grammar oriented, but written in your own voice, so not to worry. It is a comprehensive class covering aspects of family, environment and what inspired you—how to live your life. It's going to be great fun. The month of September is a great time to remember all that stuff.

**Alexandra Dell'Amore** is a Registered Nurse and holds a degree in Fine Art Painting. Her career included directing a residential drug rehab program in the Bronx, working with the homeless mentally ill in New York City. She has received numerous awards for her painting. Her work has been featured in many gallery and museum shows and exhibitions, both in New York and Taos, New Mexico. As a poet she is cited in two poetry anthologies and as a writer in SWW's Storyteller's Anthology. Her interest in Jungian psychology and in art (as well as her experience in the medical field) inspired her to write her memoir, *Hush Hush and Other Veneers*, to tell how her often chaotic life became integrated. She presently lives in New Mexico where she continues to write and paint.



#### 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](mailto:Info@SWWriters.com)

*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.*

# T “To be” or not “to be”

by Kirt Hickman

Avoid to-be verbs whenever possible. These verbs (*am, is, are, was, were, be, been, and being*) can appear in a number of ways that weaken your writing style.

## Passive Voice:

Passive voice refers to a sentence in which the object of the action is the subject of the sentence. For example:

Sue was hit by Bill.  
Sue was hit.

You can eliminate passive voice by turning the sentence around so the person or thing doing the action becomes the subject of the sentence. This is called active voice.

Bill hit Sue.

Passive voice is more wordy and less direct than active voice. It's more laborious to read and often harder to understand. Use it only when the object of the action is much more important than the subject, or when the subject is unknown:

He was murdered.

## Past Progressive Tense:

Past progressive tense indicates ongoing action in the past:

The smell was coming from the basement.

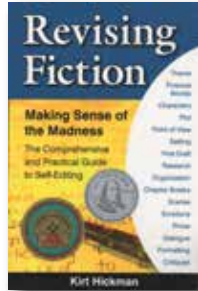
Change past progressive tense to past tense whenever possible:

The smell came from the basement.

This makes the narrative more immediate, more compelling to read. It gives it more punch.

## Statements of Being:

A statement of being tells the reader what something is without showing action. Statements of being are pure description. Learn to recognize them. Purge them from your style. For example:



Statement of being:	Statement of action:
- It was after two when the game started.	- The game started after two.
- Joan was there when it happened.	- Joan arrived before it happened.

The following excerpt, the opening paragraph of a non-fiction short story, is from a critique submission. \*

It was dark both inside and outside the cabin of the Super Constellation. It was night and we were somewhere over the North Atlantic. The four huge propellers imparted a noise and vibration onto the airframe that wore on both crew and equipment. Behind me were a half dozen air controllers, their eyes focused on the radar screens in front of them. They were tracking each plane that crossed the Atlantic headed in the direction of the United States. They knew the schedule of the airlines, the typical speed and altitudes of airliners, transport planes and of Soviet bombers. Their job was to identify any plane that didn't belong there and had flight characteristics that might make it a potential enemy. My job as radioman was to transmit in Morse code their observations to our operational base in Newfoundland. This was the cold war, and we were on radar patrol.

This paragraph contains nine to-be verbs, which are underlined. Most are unnecessary.

We flew at night, somewhere over the North Atlantic. The four huge propellers of the Super Constellation imparted a noise and vibration onto the airframe that wore on both crew and equipment. In the darkness behind me sat a half dozen air controllers with their eyes focused on their radar screens, tracking each plane that crossed the Atlantic toward the United States. They knew the schedule of the airlines, the typical speed and altitudes of airliners, transport planes and of Soviet bombers. They must identify any plane that didn't belong there and had flight characteristics that marked it as a potential enemy. As a radioman, I transmitted their observations in Morse code to our operational base in Newfoundland.

This was the cold war, and we were on radar patrol.

This revision eliminates all but two to-be verbs. I moved the last sentence into a separate paragraph for emphasis. The difference between the first passage and the second is subtle, but important. Because to-be verbs don't indicate action, at best they create a static image in the reader's mind. They don't invoke emotion. A story that relies upon to-be verbs will fail to hold the reader's attention

no matter how interesting the topic.

That said, you can't expect to eliminate all to-be verbs from your writing, especially from dialogue. Nevertheless, purge as many as possible.

Search your manuscript electronically for the words: *am, is, are, was, were, be, been, and being* (including 's, 're, and 'm). Use the Find/Replace function of your word processor to change the text format of these words to a different color (say, blue). Doing so will help you find them during editing. Once you've finished revising, Select All and change the text back to black.

\* Critique submission reprinted with author's permission

## NOW ACCEPTING Executive Committee Nominations

Nominations for the 2021 SWW Board of Directors Executive Committee are now being taken. These are for the offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

All candidates must have been members of SWW in good standing for at least one year immediately preceding the election. Additionally, candidates for President and Vice-President must have served on the board of directors for a year.

Any member of SWW can nominate, including self-nominations.

Submit names of candidates to the Nominating Committee chairperson:

Dan Wetmore ([tampadan1@gmail.com](mailto:tampadan1@gmail.com)) by June 30, 2020. Elections will take place at the Annual Meeting, the first Saturday in October, with those elected beginning their terms on January 1, 2021.

For details on the duties of each position, contact:

**Dan Wetmore** ([tampadan1@gmail.com](mailto:tampadan1@gmail.com))

or the current officials:

### **President**

Rose Marie Kern ([president@swwriters.com](mailto:president@swwriters.com))

### **Vice President**

Elizabeth Layton ([programs@swwriters.com](mailto:programs@swwriters.com))

### **Secretary**

Patricia Walkow ([secretary@swwriters.com](mailto:secretary@swwriters.com))

### **Treasurer**

Jennifer Black ([treasurer@swwriters.com](mailto:treasurer@swwriters.com))



## Harold Burnett

SWW lifetime member, Harold Burnett, died on Tuesday, April 21, 2020, at 91 years of age, from symptoms of the COVID-19 virus. He was born on Friday, August 10, 1928, in Amarillo, Texas.

Harold served on the SWW board of directors as Treasurer for several years. He was a devoted student at all levels, and he remained committed to the philosophy of "lifelong learning." He earned a B.S. and a Masters in Chemistry and, in 1966, obtained a Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry.

Harold's professional career was as a chemist, meteorologist, Air Force officer, and small business owner. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the United States Air Force Reserve serving as a meteorologist, chemist, and scientist. Harold and his wife, Betty, lived in Los Alamos, NM, for 34 years where he worked with the Los Alamos National Laboratory and then owned the "Ojo De Dios" Bookstore.

In October 2018, Harold was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia. He bravely faced the changes in his health and the impact on his lifestyle. With supportive caregiving from his family he continued to participate in many community and family events. Though a memorial is not planned, the family encourages donations to Harold's favorite charitable organization, Heifer International.



SWW Lifetime Member, Harold Burnett, passed away in April from symptoms of COVID-19.

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

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



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## 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>

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## 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](http://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.*

## 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>



## Virus Poems Poetry Contest



For "Virus Poems" we're asking for your response to the pandemic and the times we're in now. While we're hunkered down, we can also be productive, allowing ourselves to reflect and clean out some of the cobwebs that cling to us – all good stuff for writing poetry. Maximum 40 lines. Ends August 31, 2020.

<http://www.publicpoetry.net>

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR WRITERS



### 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.  
shorts@gmail.com.

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



**Website:** [www.shortsmagazine.com](http://www.shortsmagazine.com)

Facebook page @shortsonline-magazine



Author David Fulmer is presenting an online version of the FICTION SHOP program that he's been teaching in Atlanta for the past fifteen years.

A series of ten lessons on writing fiction and narrative non-fiction have been posted on the YouTube channel. Each segment is under fifteen minutes. As time goes, other segments, like answers to specific questions on the craft will be added. All free, of course.

Fiction Shop channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel>

## GHOST STORIES

Short Stories appropriate for world-wide audiences.

Genre: Sci-Fi, Thriller (not horror).

Each story in the upcoming anthology will include characters encountering ghosts at some point in the story.

Poetry: 1-3 poems; typed.

Fiction/Non-fiction: 500-7500 words; typed, double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman. Please submit all written work as WORD DOC file.

All authors and poets must be 18+ Submit on or before  
JULY 1, 2020

Submit to: [sezpublishing\[at\]hotmail\[dot\]com](mailto:sezpublishing@hotmail.com)

<http://sezpublishing.blogspot.com/>

# SWW Board Meeting Summarized

## May 2020

- The Board met via ZOOM on Tuesday, May 5.
- President Rose Kern has applied for grants for SWW.
- Chris Eboch's workshop, *Fast-Paced Plotting – Things I Learned from Nancy Drew*; conducted via ZOOM and went well.
- Online banking is working well, per Treasurer Jennifer Black.
- Michelle Auron continues to place videos on YouTube.
- Writing Contest: The Writing Contest ended on May 15. Finalists will be announced on August 1. Awards will be given at the October 3 meeting.
- Summer Marketing Bootcamp has been called off for 2020.
- Class schedule is in place, but is subject to amendment based on social distancing requirements.
- Members of Southwest Writers have won awards in the national competition from National Federation of Press Women. Members are encouraged to share their successes on the Facebook page.

**SECRETARY'S NOTE:** Since the May 5 Board meeting, SouthWest Writers' regularly-scheduled Tuesday meeting on May 19 was conducted via ZOOM. Fifty-five people attended the virtual meeting.



## 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.

### SWW Office:

3200 Carlisle Blvd NE, Suite 114  
Albuquerque, NM 87110  
phone (505) 830-6034  
email: [info@swwriters.com](mailto:info@swwriters.com)  
website: [www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com)

