

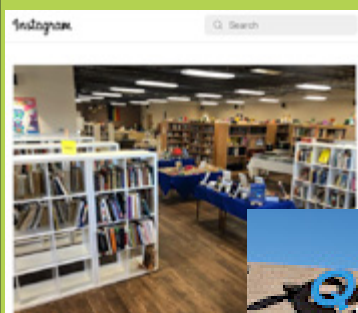


## Support Indie Bookstores

*SWW wants independent bookstore owners and operators to know that local writers see them and support them. If you have a favorite indie bookstore in New Mexico, tell the SAGE about it and we'll spread the word. The series will continue every month for as long as members continue to report their bookstore finds.*

*To get your special bookstore included in the SAGE, send the store's name, location, phone number and up to 200 words describing what makes it special to [SAGE@swwriters.com](mailto:SAGE@swwriters.com). If you happen to be visiting your bookstore and can snap a photo, make sure to include it as a JPG file.*

### Quirky Used Books and More



Instagram:  
quirkybooksabq

Also on [Facebook](#)



## Quirky

### New, Used Bookstore Open In NE Albuquerque

Submitted and written by Brenda Cole

I have a new favorite used bookstore:

#### Quirky Used Books and More

120 Jefferson St NE

(505) 492-2948

Hours:

Mon.–Sat. 11 am to 6 pm.

They are just North of Central Avenue, behind the Firestone store. Look for the tan brick building with the blue sign.

The store is roughly 75 percent non-fiction. Books are grouped by subsection such as History, Spirituality, Theater, Gardening, Crafts etc. They also have used magazines and graphic novels. The fiction section has the usual genre – Sci-Fi, Romance, Mystery...and there are limited children's and YA selections as well. They have a fabulous bargain section. All material in this marked section is \$1 or Free. My best bargain find was a 1947 *Good Housekeeping Needlecraft Encyclopedia* for free. A wide selection of DVDs, bookmarks, mugs and kitsch round out the store.

Quirky supports various community and social projects and is currently accepting donations of clothing and sanitary items for [SafeStreet New Mexico](#), a nonprofit group “striving to reduce the harmful consequences associated with life on the street.”

The store opened in April of 2022. I have never left without at least a book or two. The staff is friendly and there is off-street parking with handicap access through the rear door. They are receptive to scheduling book signings and author events. Go check it out and give yourself enough time to browse.

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### SouthWest Sage

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

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ATTEND SouthWest Writers MEETINGS  
IN-PERSON or ONLINE

Directions and information at  
[SouthWestWriters.com](http://SouthWestWriters.com).



## Board of Directors

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**Cornelia Gamlem**, Treasurer

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**Brenda Cole**, Past President/Collegium

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Kathy Louise Schuit, SAGE Editor

Lynne Sturtevant, Marketing Materials

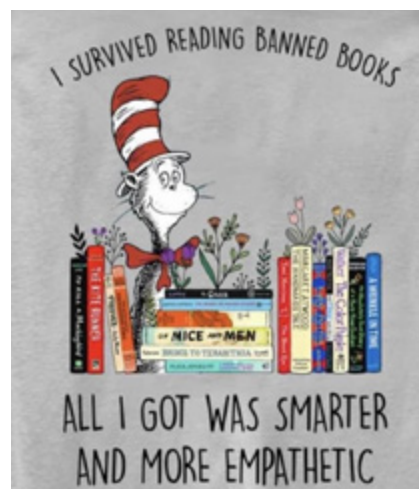
Silver Vanus, Digital/Social Media

Kathy Wagoner, Web Master

Debbie White, Writing Contest

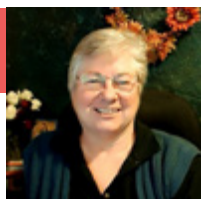
ReVaH Loring, Office Manager

The SWW Board of Directors meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Meetings are conducted in person and via Zoom.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Who Has the Guts to go for It?



Dear Members,

I love this group...I've been a board member for a couple decades and served several terms as president. But the reality is that I am tired, and need your help.

This organization is not a big corporation with a lot of money. We mostly operate on our membership fees, the fees from our classes and workshops, donations, and the occasional grant. Our leaders are all volunteers who love the idea of helping other writers become successful.

Our leadership consists of writer/artist members who, for 34 years, have managed to figure out how to make things work through both tranquil times and the challenges of an office flood and a global pandemic. The current board structure is solid—each person contributes something, but not more than they can handle.

My job as president is mostly oversight and I get to stand up in front of the microphone during meetings. When and if the tough decisions come up, I have an executive committee of really smart people to draw on for support in figuring them out.

Why am I telling you this? Because for the past few years we've been trying to identify people who would be willing to jump in and help out, and we need someone to train to become the next SWW president.

I say it that way because we realize it is a challenge to just jump into a top leadership position. That is why the Bylaws have been revised to set up the president's spot as a three-year commitment. The first year is vice president, which allows someone to be in the inner circle and learn the ropes. The second year is as president, and during the third year, as past president, the individual can sit back and give sage advice and support. This structure is consistent with that of many non-profits around the country.

To be eligible for the presidential post, a person has to have been a member of SWW for at least two years and served on either the Board of Directors or on one of the advisory committees for at least a year. This includes people who served in the past, but have not done so recently. There are a lot of you out there...so

## Look Who JOINED SWW in JUNE!

**John Crain  
Tamara Couture  
Sagan Couture  
Tanya Shpakow**

*Welcome!*



**With 409 members  
WORLDWIDE!**

please think about it.

Because the Bylaws revisions do not take effect until after the SWW election in October, I will be “running” for my current position as president and over the next year I will be working alongside my VP in order to make sure they have the training and support they need. [Click HERE to look over the 2023 Proposed Bylaws.](#)

In addition to VP, we are searching for someone to be the organization's secretary. This is someone who can keep track of what goes on in board meetings and report it in the minutes. This is also an executive committee position so you will be “in the know” of what is coming up next.

Please, think about this—we have so much talent in this group and really great potential leaders. The advantages of being president mean that you exponentially expand your influence throughout the writing community. You also learn a great deal about the fascinating and delightful diversity of writers and writing styles brought to the table by our membership.

If you want to discuss this further, please send me an email at [president@swwriters.com](mailto:president@swwriters.com). I'd love to hear from you!

Rose Marie Kern



# Links To Upcoming SWW Events

## MEETINGS in August

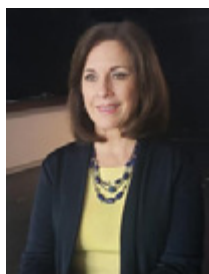
Saturday, August 12  
10:00 am – noon  
In Person & Zoom

**Speaker: Kathy Louise Schuit**  
**Don't Make Your Friends and Family Read Bad Stuff**



Wednesday, August 23  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
Via Zoom

**Speaker: Diane Dimond**  
**How to Investigate and Write about a Secretive System**

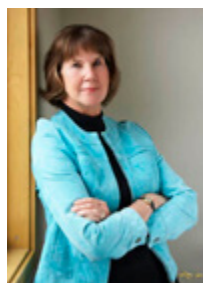


<https://www.southwestwriters.com/meetings/>

## August WORKSHOP

**Let's Make a Scene**  
**with Charlene Bell Dietz**

Saturday: August 12, 2023  
12:30 – 2:30 pm (MST)  
In Person & Zoom  
SWW members: \$20 ♦ Non-members: \$30



Scenes communicate our stories, so they must be strong. We measure the strength of a scene by the degree to which it engages readers and by how much a scene changes the story. We'll discuss the importance of the scene's five building blocks and show how to increase the scene's effectiveness by what it accomplishes. Participants will learn how these building blocks can be turned into absorbing moments by keeping the reader's imagination active, avoiding a huge pitfall encountered by even excellent writers. Then each participant will be given a handout of fourteen tasks that scenes perform. Participants will use their own work, or provided examples, to identify the hierarchy of tasks the scene accomplishes. This workshop will give participants tools to create more effective, engaging, and dynamic scenes.

<https://www.southwestwriters.com/workshops/>

## CLASSES Starting Soon

**Class Instructor:**  
**Kathy Louise Schuit**  
**SHOW, Don't TELL!**  
**aka: Don't Make Your Friends and Family Read Bad Stuff**

3-week Class  
Saturdays: September 16, 23, 30  
Platform: In Person & Zoom  
10:00–noon (MST)  
\$120 SWW members ♦ \$150 Nonmembers

<https://www.southwestwriters.com/classes/>

## PLAN AHEAD

for the remainder of 2023!

- Saturday, September 9 at 10:00 am  
**Phil Mills: Children's/YA Writing**
- Wednesday, September 27 at 6:30 pm  
**Sonja Dewing: Making Dollars and Sense out of Amazon Ads**
- Saturday, October 14 at 10:00 am  
**Annual Meeting & Awards**
- Wednesday, October 25 at 6:30 pm  
**Michael Arnzen: Writing Horror**
- Saturday, November 11 at 10:00 am  
**Stories from the Veterans Anthology**
- Wednesday, November 22 at 6:30 pm  
**Ernie Witham: Finding Humor in Everyday Situations**
- Saturday, December 9 at 10:00 am  
**Christie Lowrance: Historical Nonfiction/Biography**
- No Wednesday meeting in December  
– See you in 2024!

## Creative Hearts



Photo Credit: Jim Tritten, Photo Editing: Jasmine Tritten

Continuing his efforts to recognize the authors, editors and proofreaders of *Holes in Our Hearts*, Jim Tritten provided the SAGE with this photo of the Veterans' writing group that can surely be considered the heart of the book. *Holes in Our Hearts* is an anthology of stories from active and retired military, their family members and caregivers. It was published in July by SouthWest Writers through a grant from New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, Arts Division.

LEFT to RIGHT, these creative heroes are:

**Steve Borbas** (Army, creator of sculpture with the name *Holes in Our Hearts*.)

**Norbert Wood** (92-year-old Korean War Army combat veteran who writes longhand and does not own a computer – never been published before.)

**Mike Hibner** (Navy)

**Butch Maki** (Army)

**Jim Tritten** (Navy)

**Earl Rugen** (Army, also writes only longhand and does not own a computer – never been published before.)

**Tom Neiman** (Army – took a new video of all of us, saying, “Read our stories in *Holes in Our Hearts*.”)

**Kathy Hopkins** (VA Volunteer to the group but also a contributor to the anthology.)

**Dan Wetmore** (Air Force)

**Paul David Gonzales** (Army)

**Chuck Nemeth** (Army, legally blind and 95 years old.)

**Mark Fleisher** (Air Force)

**Cat Ivie** (Government employee – Recreation Therapist who officially runs our meetings. She is not an author in the anthology.)

## Anthology Facts

*Holes in Our Hearts: An Anthology of New Mexican Military Related Stories and Poetry* provides snapshots of military life and how the military has affected lives. It is written from the perspective of New Mexico active-duty military members, veterans of the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard, as well as their family members and caregivers.

The anthology is a beautiful collection of works that are emotional, humorous, frightening, enlightening, or thought-provoking. The recollections in *Holes in Our Hearts* are, in many instances, the only way the authors could share their memories and experiences.

This collection of prose and poetry was gathered and created by SouthWest Writers and funded through a grant from New Mexico Arts and the Military.

Buy your copy of the [Holes In Our Hearts](#) anthology through the SouthWest Writers office, at an in-person Saturday meeting, or through Amazon by clicking the link above.



# The History of SouthWest Writers

## PART THREE

### SWW in the 21st Century

Things were running smoothly for SouthWest Writers during the mid 2000s. Now under the leadership of president Rob Spiegel, twice monthly meetings continued at the New Life Presbyterian Church building in northeast Albuquerque. Meeting topics shifted to help the organization keep pace with the technology leaping throughout the United States. Paper notebooks and typewriters were slowly giving way to computers as the most popular writing tools and experts on blogging and social media became more frequent speakers as SWW rolled with the change.

The writing community took notice of how SWW helped legions of writers and of the group's inspiring survival story in an era that was not particularly kind to nonprofits. In 2008, the Albuquerque Arts Alliance awarded SWW its prestigious Bravo Award for Outstanding Arts Organization in Albuquerque.

By 2010, SWW was nearing \$100,000 in capital—its goal for establishing a permanent writing fund. Although the meetings and office were (and still are) homed in Albuquerque, entry fees for the annual book writing contest included a one year membership in the organization, which attracted a worldwide membership and member rolls that neared 1,000 for a few years.

At the time of our annual book awards in 2010, SWW was one of only a few groups nationwide that offered this opportunity to new authors. There were very few book award contests, and authors were eager to append the title “award winning” to their bio. Since then, literally hundreds of writing organizations and other professional writing companies have offered this opportunity to make money.

The contest required a great deal of hands-on work by the office manager, Larry Greenly, and those members who agreed to be judges. Income from the book contest declined and was discontinued, which meant that membership levels also lowered as the “free” year which came with the contest entries ran out.

Catastrophe struck in January 2013 when, on a weekend, a water line burst inside SWW's office. The massive flood wasn't discovered until almost two days later. Many books, files, and supplies, as well as furniture was destroyed or damaged. Luckily, most of SWW's computers survived. But after six weeks

of being virtually dead in the water (pun intended), SWW was forced to move to its present location on Carlisle Boulevard.

SWW's expenses from the flood and the resulting move caused an operating cash shortfall.

Over the next decade, the number of paid memberships went down by about 300 (though we had/have nearly 50 lifetime members). We had one person working in the office and only about eight active volunteers. Income went down dramatically, and just keeping the office open was a challenge.

In 2013 Jonathan Miller came up with the idea of creating an anthology and publishing it to raise money and to increase the group's exposure. *The Storyteller's Anthology* featured short stories by some of our more famous members. In an effort to provide relief, a committee led by Peggy Herrington defined the parameters of this anthology.

All SWW members were invited to submit up to 4,000 words on any family-friendly topic—fiction or nonfiction, previously published or not—for possible publication in this anthology. The goal was to make both the printed book and eBook available before the 2013 winter holidays. All funds raised by this project, including royalties, went directly to SWW.

In 2018, another anthology was created using prose and poetry drawn from the SAGE newsletter. The *Sage Anthology* was crafted by a committee of members chaired by Rose Marie Kern.

In 2019, another SWW book, *Kimo Theater: Fact & Folklore*, garnered several awards. The creation and editing of this important historical work was done by Jacqueline Murray Loring with stories written by SWW members and key historical figures connected with the iconic establishment. The book was originally proposed by Peggy Herrington, who arranged for support by the City of Albuquerque's cultural affairs office.

The big annual conferences were reduced to one day events—until they ceased due to Covid in 2020. During all these events, SWW never missed a beat. Its twice-monthly meetings with speakers who were experts in various facets of writing, continued to attract 60-100 people each month. Workshops and classes also continued to draw motivated students.

Look for Part Four: *SWW Moves into the Future*, in next month's SAGE!



# The Writing Life: Endings

by Sherri L. Burr

**O**utlander series creator Diana Gabaldon prides herself on not knowing the endings to her books as she writes them. “What fun is that?” she told the Santa Fe International Literary Festival in May 2023. A month later, at the National Federation of Press Women Conference in Cincinnati, fiction writer Abby Vandiver stressed the importance of knowing endings before beginning a project. I wondered what wisdom flows from these approaches.

If one writes works that exceed 300,000 words and 1,000 published pages, like Gabaldon, the process must feel like adventure travel with no clear destination. Her main characters time travel through stone circles. While in varied eras of history, Claire and Jamie Fraser encounter people who positively and negatively impact their lives. Some of Gabaldon’s books take her upwards of five years to prepare. Perhaps if she knew the ending, she would get bored getting to a previously thought-out conclusion.

Abby Vandiver, by contrast, writes shorter (or what some consider normal-sized) fiction. With her books of about 300 – 399 pages, perhaps she needs to know the ending before beginning to keep within the contracted length. Explaining Vandiver’s approach may also be that she trained as a lawyer before becoming an author. Law students are taught to write briefs introducing their arguments for judges, argue their points, and then summarize. Repetition stresses legal points. For fiction writers, however, the value lies in conciseness.

I thought about these two approaches to writing fiction after I watched the fifth and final *Indiana Jones* movie starring Harrison Ford. I found myself frequently checking my phone clock throughout *Indiana Jones and The Dial of Destiny* wondering how long it would drag on. This was a sign of boredom. Then I remembered seeing the writing credits and looked on [www.imbd.com](http://www.imbd.com) to confirm them as:

<a href="#">Jez Butterworth</a> ...	(written by) &
<a href="#">John-Henry Butterworth</a> ...	(written by) and
<a href="#">David Koepp</a> ...	(written by) and
<a href="#">James Mangold</a> ...	(written by)

As an Entertainment Law scholar, I recognized that this line-up signaled there had been three different writing teams. An ampersand (&) indicates that two writers worked together as joint authors, whereas the word “and” signals that the writer was given a

SHERRI L. BURR has authored over two dozen books. Her 27th, *Complicated Lives: Free Blacks in Virginia: 1619-1865* (Carolina Academic Press, 2019), was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in History. West Academic published *Wills & Trusts in a Nutshell 6th Ed.*, her 31st book, on October 31, 2022. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College, Princeton University, and the Yale Law School, Burr has been a member of SouthWest Writers for over 30 years.



previous script and told that it was not quite right. The instructions could have been “ramp up the action for the female lead” or “make the action age-appropriate for the male lead.”

*Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* was penned by a writing team with the last name Butterworth and two additional writers working separately. That’s a lot of cooks in the kitchen of scriptwriting. The more writers, the more likely the final script is confusing. Here, the middle felt like a rambling rollercoaster ride. However, the ending was magnificent.

Without revealing too many details, the series *Indiana Jones* wrapped in the most perfect way because it circled back to the beginning while moving forward. While I loved the ending, I would not see the film again. However, if someone else purchases a ticket, I recommend staying until the last minute.

Too often, fans have been disappointed when a series wraps up in a surprising way. Remember HBO’s *Game of Thrones*? Given the title, the audience expected a winner from among those who played The Game. Fans demanded that the producers reshoot the ending because it was perceived as a terrible conclusion.

Thus, endings are important. They signal that our time of reading a book or watching a movie or television series was worth the journey. When a television series ends the way *Game of Thrones* did, the viewer feels robbed. Perhaps the author of the book series, George R.R. Martin, will finish with a different ending in *Winds of War* so that his readers feel differently from those who watched the television series.

The question of whether the writer needs to know the ending can be left up to individual writing processes. For some writers, like Vandiver, it’s helpful to know where they are going. For others, like Gabaldon, knowing the ending robs them of the fun in their journey to uncovering the story. You decide!

# The Sage Writing Challenge

SEPTEMBER

For a chance to be published in the September SAGE, use 800 words or less to write about a future in which all of Earth's trash is being deposited on Mars.

Follow the guidelines and submission instructions on page 13.

Send questions or submissions to:

Kathy Schuit  
SouthWest SAGE Editor  
[sage@swwriters.com](mailto:sage@swwriters.com)

*The challenge for publication in the August SAGE was to write a story that included a description of someone eating a habanero pepper. An additional challenge was issued at the July 10 meeting that limited the story to 50 words or less.*

## El Pimiento del Diablo

by David Harris

"Got anything hotter?" Johnny asked. Preparing for months preceding the contest, Johnny had accustomed himself to the Devil's own food. The pain and intense burning inside his very soul, was now acceptable to the man he held dearly inside, and could not keep him from repeating, "Another one please?"



## The Tourist

by K. Crew

I'd heard it before.

"Yeah, yeah. I can handle it." The tourist's words slurred through a Margarita haze.

"Habaneros are super hot," I warned him again.

Other diners, forks suspended, watched him bite the red habanero pepper; assured witnesses to a destined red-faced, tongue-fanning reaction.

Defying expectations, the tourist simply fainted.

## Selfie

by Ruth Vogel Mast

Mid-January 1968. My husband and I are on the way to Albuquerque, New Mexico, our new home to be. We stop just east of the NM/Arizona border in Gallup, for gas. The long drive from our old home in Thousand Oaks, California, takes place in a Chevrolet Corvair Monza that has already seen hard use from previous owners. We have now loaded it beyond capacity; this situation has made my husband grumpy and me his pouty, silent spouse. The bucket seats have long since lost their original firm bounciness, which doesn't help the mood after sitting for hours in a position not meant for human backsides. The heater quit in Flagstaff.

We get out to unfold and stretch our bodies while the station attendant fills the tank and swipes a wet rag over the bugs splattered on the windshield. We stomp our feet and shiver in the unfamiliar climate. At over 6,000 feet altitude, the freezing cold easily penetrates our inadequate layers of Southern California-weather clothing.

We watch the last sun rays retreating from the road just traveled, darkening the road ahead and fading the distant mountain peaks from a fiery red to a soft pink glow. The sign on the motel across the street turns on, its blinking red and green neon lights making our eyes blink in turn. I ask the attendant if the motel has a restaurant.

"Yeah. Mostly Mexican food. But you can get gringo burgers too."

Only a couple of hours to go and we would reach our destination. We debate if we should keep going or take a break. Smoke lazily drifting up from the motel chimney beckons with a promise of warmth. We stay.

The smell of food makes my mouth water as soon as we walk in the door. Warmth spills in waves from a cone-shaped, corner fireplace with a furnace space big enough to roast the Corvair. It envelops our cold limbs, making us droop like rag dolls. Tables and carved wood chairs sit along a wall. Mirrors framed in shiny, perforated tin decorate the space above each table.

We choose the table closest to the fire. I sit with my back to the warmth, watch the flames reflect on the mirror, and admire the design created with dotted perforations through the tin frame.

continued on next page



A young waitress approaches our table. The shy smile on her rounded face contrasts with her bright eyes and bouncing shape that has my husband's eyes bouncing in unison. She hands us menus.

We are in New Mexico, so we ignore the gringo burgers. Mike, that's my husband, says he has eaten Mexican food in his home state and knows all about it. I, coming from a family where the most daring spice is black pepper, defer to him.

He orders while I peruse the exotic sounding names on the menu: Blue Corn Beef Enchiladas, Chiles Rellenos, Carne Adobada Tamales, Salsa Caliente, Corn Tortilla Chips.

"... and Sopaipillas, please." He smiles up at the waitress. "And a Carta Blanca beer."

"Never on Sunday," she tells him.

"What?"

"No alcohol in New Mexico on Sundays."

First culture shock. His mouth still hangs open, so I reach over and tap his chin up.

After my refusal of her offer of iced tea—having never heard of such disgrace to my beloved hot tea—she brings us each a Coke.

The food comes. It smells out of this world, like nothing I've ever tasted before. I salivate.

"The Salsa Caliente is made with habaneros," she says, placing a basket of corn tortilla chips alongside the dish.

Sounds like a warning to me.

Mike hesitates a moment, then gets a chip, dips it generously in the salsa, and hands it to me.

I smile a thank you, then put the whole offering in my mouth.

The mirror on the wall in front of me frames my face—if one can call a face the tortured contortions playing like a slow-motion horror movie inside the tin frame. I see my puckered mouth begin to open like a whale that just lost her ocean. Sweat breaks out on my scalp and trickles down my forehead. My nose begins to run, joining the distorted tears that seem to slide down the mirror.

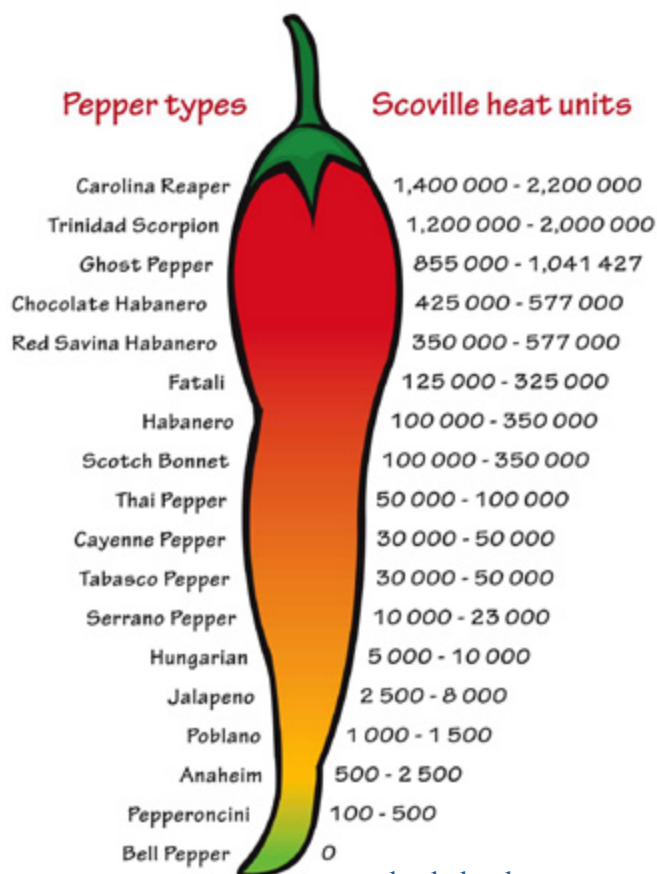
I try to talk. The incoherent sounds working their way around a tongue no longer alive are capitalized crystal clear in my mind.

"I WANT A DIVORCE."

He stuffs a piece of honey-drenched sopaipilla in my mouth and says, "Now you can eat the rest of the food. Nothing else will taste that hot."

I feel the soothing sweetness loosen my tongue; then lash out a string of honeyed curses instructing him to go and roast forever in a Hell filled with habaneros.

## Scoville Scale



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

### ANYONE CAN VOLUNTEER!

SWW is a volunteer-driven organization and there are myriad ways that both those who live far away and those who live close by can help keep us moving forward. Consider participating in one of these exciting and interesting activities and facilitate our mission to become a literary inspiration:

- Meeting Zoom Hosts
- Sage Anthology Committee
- PR and Media Committee
- Newsletter and Website Help
- Professional Directory Updates
- SWW Office Support and Assistants



# Improve Your Writing with Beta Readers

by Ramona Gault

Helpful feedback on your drafts is essential to quality writing. One way to obtain that important input is to find beta readers.

## *How can beta readers help you?*

Beta readers function like future readers of your work, rather than like editors. They can spot flaws and gotchas that you want to fix before you send your book to prospective agents. They can point out plot holes and so-called “miracles” (such as a character having curly red hair in one chapter and straight black hair in another). They can tell you where they got bored and where they got “bumped” out of the story because of something that was confusing.

## *Where do beta readers come from?*

- **Readers from your target audience/topic/genre.** They share what they like about your manuscript, what didn't work for them, and whether they'd buy your book. It's not an in-depth critique. It's preferable to have beta readers who are familiar with your genre. (I can't do beta reads of speculative fiction, for example, because I don't know what's current in the genre.)
- **Writer friends.** People you know whom you trust to be honest with you. In her excellent blog post, Lisa Cooper Ellison (<https://janefriedman.com/to-set-beta-reader-expectations-have-an-honest-conversation/>) says writer friends are “often people authors know through critique groups, classes, conferences, or online communities, though the best readers are people who've never read the author's work. Often writer friends will perform this task for each other at no cost.”

Obviously these two groups might overlap somewhat. (Sensitivity Readers and subject matter experts are also beta readers, but they are paid for their work.)

Beta readers are especially helpful for self-published authors, who don't have the benefit of an in-house editor to offer guidance, according to author Sassafras Lowrey (<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/pw-select/article/91243-the-importance-of-beta-readers.html>). Beta readers ideally should be the kind of readers you hope will be reading your book once it's published.

Some points for both authors and beta readers to keep in mind:

- A beta read is most valuable after you feel your manuscript is finished but before you send out queries to agents and publishers.

- Before you agree to do a beta read, have a conversation with the author to establish guidelines and expectations. Do they have a deadline for getting your feedback?
- Get a one-page synopsis of the book. Ask how many drafts the author has done. If this is their first draft and they haven't taken any writing classes, it's probably not a good idea to do a beta read at this stage.
- Ask for a “trial” first chapter, so you can decide whether the book is right for you to take on.
- Make sure the manuscript is in Microsoft Word, so you can insert comments. Google Docs might work for some folks, but I find it clunky. PDFs are limited in their usefulness for giving feedback if you don't have Adobe.

Ideally, look for a trade of beta manuscripts, unless you're just a really nice, generous person! Reading a manuscript and inserting comments takes time and energy, so an equal exchange feels more balanced (to me).

Networking with other writers at in-person SWW meetings is a great way to connect with potential beta readers.

## Successful Critique Groups Coordination

While SWW doesn't sponsor critique groups, we do help interested parties come together and provide insights into how to form and maintain a successful group. Here are some groups that have formed in the past year and are looking for members:

**Write Minds** (Meets first & third Sat.): Up and running almost one year now, this group had one opening as of July 15.

**Santa Fe First Friday** (First Fri.): This group has been meeting for about six months and has one opening for an experienced writer; will need to provide a writing sample. **Note:** There is a splinter group in Santa Fe that meets Tuesday eves (first & third) with one opening.

**Spec Fic** (1st & 3rd Thu.): a newly forming group that has one opening.

**Poetry:** new group, open for more participants.

Contact Mike Hays, [critique@swwriters.com](mailto:critique@swwriters.com)

## AGF Letter Calls for Fair Author Compensation By Generative AI Leaders

*As an Authors Guild Foundation member, SWW Vice President Leonie Rosenstiel received the following Press Release via email and agreed to share it with readers of the SAGE.*

As you may know, the Authors Guild [has been working non-stop on issues surrounding the impact of generative AI](#) on the writing community. Earlier this month, the Authors Guild circulated to its members an [Open Letter to Generative AI Leaders](#) calling on the CEOs of OpenAI, Alphabet, Meta, Stability AI, and IBM to compensate writers fairly for the use of copyrighted materials in their generative AI programs.

Currently, more than 9,000 writers and their supporters have signed the letter including luminaries such as **Margaret Atwood, David Baldacci, Dan Brown, Michael Chabon, Ron Chernow, Suzanne Collins, Louise Erdrich, Jonathan Franzen, Roxane Gay, Min Jin Lee, Rebecca Makkai, Celeste Ng, Viet Thanh Nguyen, James Patterson, Jodi Picoult, Michael Pollan, Nora Roberts, George Saunders, Andrew Solomon, Jesmyn Ward, Tobias Wolff**, and many others.

The open letter emphasizes that generative AI technologies heavily rely on authors' language, stories, style, and ideas. Millions of copyrighted books, articles, essays, and poetry serve as the foundation for AI systems, yet permission was not requested nor have authors received any compensation for their contributions. These works are part of the fabric of the language models that power ChatGPT, Bard, and other generative AI systems. Where AI companies like to say that their machines simply "read" the texts that they are trained on, this is inaccurate anthropomorphizing. Rather, they copy the texts into the software itself, and then they reproduce them again and again.

The potential of mediocre, machine-written books, stories, and journalism based on authors' original work flooding the market poses a significant threat to the writing profession. The Guild's letter points out that the bulk of the books used in the "training" datasets originated from pirate sources and websites, and calls

into question AI companies' fair use arguments. The letter goes on to note that the recent Supreme Court decision in *Warhol v. Goldsmith* further casts doubt on the AI companies' fair use arguments by rejecting it as a valid defense where the use results in a commercial substitute for the original work.

Over more than the last decade, authors experienced a 40% decline in income, and the median writing-related income for full-time writers for 2022 was a mere \$23,330 according to the Authors Guild's most recent income survey with over 5,700 respondents. The advent of AI technology further exacerbates these challenges and will make it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for writers—particularly those from underrepresented communities—to earn a living from the craft most spent years if not decades perfecting.

When writers have to give up their profession, it is a grave problem for all of us, not just the writers, because far fewer great books get written and published; and a free, democratic culture depends on a healthy, diverse ecosystem in which all views and voices are heard and ideas exchanged.

**The Authors Guild appeals to the leaders of the AI industry to address these concerns and take the following actions:**

- 1 Obtain permission for the use of copyrighted material in generative AI programs.
- 2 Fairly compensate writers for both past and ongoing use of their works in generative AI programs.
- 3 Fairly compensate writers for the use of their works in AI output, regardless of whether the outputs infringe upon current laws.

The Guild has been diligently addressing the challenges posed by generative AI technologies to the writing community. This open letter represents one of the many efforts to advance the cause of fairness and compensation for authors and to ensure that the writing profession endures and thrives into the future.

[Click here to read the open letter](#)

[Click here for FAQs about the Authors Guild position on AI](#)

*AI promises to be the next big, divisive technology. Is it friend or foe? Will it make writers obsolete? Amazon has taken aim at AI generated books, de-listing them so they cannot be sold. Writing teachers have adopted software geared toward identifying AI-written material as well as plagiarized passages. **Upcoming:** Leonie Rosenstiel's three-part series on the new technology--where it came from, how it can help and where it might get you into trouble.*



## CONTESTS and OPPORTUNITIES for WRITERS

### Native Voices Award

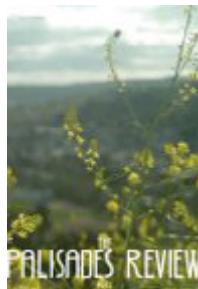
Writing and Art Publication Contest

Submissions for Kinsman Quarterly's *Native Voices Award* are open until October 31, 2023. Indigenous storytellers (Native American, First Nation Australian, Polynesian, etc.) may submit original, unpublished work in English; short stories, nonfiction essays, scripts, poetry, or art collection. Top winners will be published in Kinsman Quarterly's online journal and seasonal anthology with prizes up to \$500 USD. No fee required. More details found [here](#).



## The Palisades Review

The Palisades Review is an online literary magazine that celebrates **short form nonfiction**. We feature compressed stories that reverberate and deepen our collective sense of self, stories that are charged within by the extraordinary capacity of language to create community from individuals. Tell us anything, so long as it's true, in 1,000 words or less.



TPR is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December. OF THE MOMENT is an online feature of our magazine in which we publish writing about a timely matter. Be that matter the war in Ukraine, Multiple Sclerosis awareness week, or anything else you can think of as fitting, send us your writing. We want to read it.

To submit your work, visit our [Submittable](#).

## Remembering Vicky Ramakka

In late July, SouthWest Writers received word of the sudden passing of Vicky Ramakka.

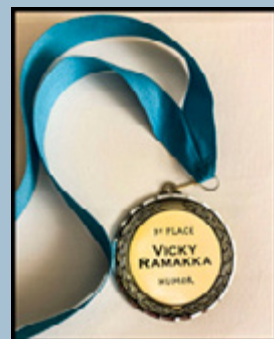


Vicky was a vibrant person, passionate not only about her writing, but also about New Mexico. We at SWW extend our thoughts, and sympathy to Jim Ramakka, Vicky's husband of 56 years, and to all of her family and friends. Her death has been attributed to a previously undetected and very aggressive cancer.

Vicky was the author of "The Cactus Plot" and "The Pearl Plot" mysteries. Her stories were about the Four Corners region, where she would meet "the most fascinating people who are willing to share their stories." She was an award-winner in contests sponsored by New Mexico Press Women and SouthWest Writers. Her career consisted of originating and



implementing programs for adult learners at community colleges and universities in several western states. During her academic career, she published in educational journals, wrote numerous grant applications and hundreds of reports, and created a variety of marketing materials. After retirement, she turned to writing creatively, drawing on a love for animals that was sparked in her early years growing up on a farm in upstate New York.



Besides SouthWest Writers, Vicky was a member of San Juan Writers, Women Writing The West, and New Mexico Press Women. She will be missed by all who knew her.

## SouthWest SAGE

### SAGE CHALLENGE & ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The SouthWest SAGE newsletter is the professional publication of SouthWest Writers. Submissions focusing on all aspects of research, writing, and publishing in any genre are welcome. To familiarize yourself with the types of articles published in the SouthWest SAGE, read past issues at [southwestwriters.com](http://southwestwriters.com).

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.

Read the following before submitting:

- Payment is in bylines and clips.
- Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue.
- Standard article lengths are from 300-800 words; certain SAGE Challenges may set more specific word count requirements, which will be found on the Challenge page. **Submissions may be edited for accuracy, readability and length.** Submissions must be tasteful; free from profanity, explicit sex or violence, political commentary, 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. To ensure proper author credit, your name or pen name must appear within the document you submit. **Submissions with no name will not be considered.**
- Polish your work. Submissions should be professional in appearance and quality of writing, fully edited and ready for publication.
- Accompanying art/photographs are appreciated; proper attribution and permission is required.
- Inclusion in the SAGE is subject to the discretion of the editor.

Send questions or submissions to:  
Kathy Schuit  
SouthWest SAGE Editor  
[sage@swwriters.com](mailto:sage@swwriters.com)

## SWW Board Meeting Minutes Summarized

**JULY  
2023**

- The UNM Book Fair this year will be the second Saturday in November, necessitating a move of our in-person meeting to the first Saturday—November 4. They are allowing us to use the big auditorium at no extra cost which will enhance our proposed program of anthology readings.
- The initial outlay of funds for the creation of the Military Anthology has been recouped and Jim Tritten has orchestrated at least five events featuring readings by the authors in central New Mexico.
- Lynn Sturtevant and ReVaH Loring are preparing a series of short videos for the SWW website, to answer frequent member questions: a guided tour of the site; how to change your password; log into zoom meetings; set up an author page; a web page; use Paypal; find and register for workshops & classes; and vote electronically in SWW elections. Look for them soon.
- Several members are pursuing grant opportunities, to include possible corporate sponsorship for future SWW conferences. If you can add to the list of those for which we'd be well-suited, or if you have suggestions about the location, please contact our office manager, ReVaH, at [info@swwriters.com](mailto:info@swwriters.com).

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