



A BIG Year for SWW: 2023 Was One to Remember

JANUARY

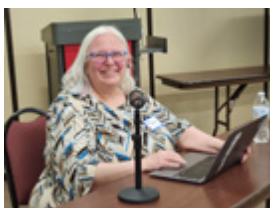
2023 started with the conclusion of Evelyn Neil's Rainbow Challenge. Evelyn pledged to match all holiday donations up to \$3,000. Her generosity inspired so many others that the total of donations to SWW topped \$6,000. Thank you again, Evelyn!



FEBRUARY

The SAGE published early promotion and submission guidelines for the Military Anthology, a cooperative project with New Mexico Arts and the Military, that would eventually become *Holes in Our Hearts*.

THANK YOU EVELYN!
Thank You Participating Members



Jamii Corely from SWCP was our January speaker and Brenda Cole kept Zoom views accessible to members online.



MARCH

Joe Badal (who was recently voted Best Local Author by *Albuquerque The Magazine* – more on page 11) shared expert writing tips with members at the March meeting.

The 2023 Woven Pathways writing contest was launched with guidelines in the SAGE.



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2023 Retrospective

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SouthWest Sage

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**ATTEND SouthWest Writers MEETINGS
IN-PERSON or ONLINE**

Directions and information at
SouthWestWriters.com.

Look Who JOINED SWW in NOVEMBER

Butch Maki
Raymund Tembreull
Charlene Reames
Holly Rice
Janet Johnston
Will Stotts Jr
Tim Amsden
Don Boyd

Welcome!



**With 410 members
WORLDWIDE!**

HOLIDAY DONATION RODEO



Howdy Partner!



If you've been
to SouthWest
Writer's

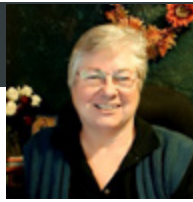
meetings, you know the quality of our presentations and speakers, and the level of professionalism we bring to our membership. Though this is a volunteer-driven organization, we need help funding our programs and administration. Thank you for considering a donation even as this

holiday season
draws to a close.

[Donate HERE.](#)



FROM THE PRESIDENT



The lights and jocularly of the holidays are past and the local radio stations no longer repeat the same carols over and over. I've contributed generously to the US Post Office's budget, and my husband is glad that I have had my fill of Hallmark Christmas romance movies for the year.

Recently I've chatted with several people who have said to me how much being a part of SouthWest Writers has helped them with their writing careers. The meetings and workshops offer monthly insights from a variety of experts, and the website has an amazing amount of information. The most valuable insights come to those who volunteer to help in some fashion.

There is a greater understanding of writing – both the artistic side we love and the challenges of getting published which is a necessary side of the activity – when you are working with other authors, participating in writing challenges, or have a group of other authors you can approach with simple questions.

Every year the SWW Board looks at what we've done and tries to figure out what is lacking in our programs. We try to balance our programs between writing inspiration, practical information, and genre insights. Next year looks to be amazing!

Thank you to everyone who gives so generously of their time and expertise to help each other achieve success. Though I'd been writing casually for many years, it was walking into an SWW meeting and being encouraged by other authors that started me on the path to where I can confidently compose and submit a variety of stories and articles, and weather the rejections as well as the successes.

2024 is going to be amazing.

Rose Marie

A Sneak Peek at What's in Store for 2024!

Jonathan Miller

How To Write Under Challenging Circumstances

Chuck Greaves

The Do-It-Yourself
Master Of Fine Arts In Literature

Kat O'Keefe-Kanavos

Facts Or Fiction About Publishing

Parris Afton Bonds

The Romance Writing Industry Today

Charlene Bell Dietz

Why Characters Misbehave

Marcia Rosen

Memoir Detectives—Writing Your
Life Story

Donna Pedace

Setting Up Marketing Events

Irene Blea

Writing Ethnic Characters

Online Memoir Writing Course Now Open to Veterans and Family

The SWW online memoir class by Latayne Scott is now open to SWW members who are also New Mexico military family members.

SWW has received a second New Mexico Arts (NMA) grant in support of using creative writing to heal. For 2024, the grant project has taken the form

of this online memoir writing course, available to qualifying New Mexico veterans, active-duty military, and, now, military family members at no cost.

Follow this link to the application page: <https://www.southwestwriters.com/application-for-the-nm-military-memoir-course/>



The Sage Writing Challenge

FEBRUARY

Send submissions or questions to:

Kathy Schuit
SouthWest SAGE Editor
sage@swwriters.com

The challenge for publication in the January SAGE was to write about your Best Gift Ever.

FOR A CHANCE TO BE PUBLISHED in the FEBRUARY SAGE write a love poem of no more than three stanzas **OR** a flash fiction love story of no more than 100 words. Send it to sage@swwriters.com no later than **January 15, 2024**. Please follow all the submission guidelines and deadlines on page 14.

Looking To Get Ahead of the SAGE Challenge Curve?

The SAGE now publishes Challenge topics for the coming TWO MONTHS.

FOR A CHANCE TO BE PUBLISHED in the MARCH SAGE write a short (500 words) non-fiction travel article about a place you've been that other writers might enjoy. Please follow all the submission guidelines and deadlines on page 14. **Submission deadline is February 15.**

Best Gift Ever

by Dan Wetmore

My best gift ever didn't start out that way. At the time, it didn't even fit my naive criteria for what constituted a proper gift, which I thought had to be something that 1) you wouldn't buy for yourself, 2) couldn't buy for yourself, or 3) wouldn't have thought of buying for yourself. By any of those standards, strictly utilitarian items didn't fit the bill. And this gift was nothing more than that. But, as I'd one day realize, it was also nothing less.

It was a Craftsman automotive 99-piece socket and combination-wrench set, a Christmas present from my dad in 1986. I was 23, and the recent recipient of his dad's father's '68 Rambler.

I hadn't been in possession of that many pieces of chromed steel since the day I found a few industrial-sized roller-bearing races discarded in a trashcan on the way home from school; absolute treasure to my 16-year-old self. To Dad's bemusement, I spent that Christmas afternoon polishing and finding alternate groupings of the pieces, testing every possible connection configuration, and wondering if they'd ever find sufficient employ to merit their choice of recipient.

There on the living room floor with those alloy Tinker Toys, I couldn't foresee the 25 vehicles we'd minister to over the next 37 years...



Lying on my back in a rainy apartment parking lot in army surplus wool in a northern Ohio January, changing the clutch plate and throwout bearing of said Rambler's 3-speed manual transmission...

Being panhandled while captive under a '94 Pontiac Firebird in a colorful motel parking lot halfway between Albuquerque and North Carolina, its front wheels on the sidewalk outside my room to obtain clearance to confirm a faulty oil-pressure sending unit...

Replacing a Chevy half-ton's rear main engine seal in a gravel driveway in another January in field conditions, with oak tree rounds for jack stands and axe heads for leveling wedges, and five chickens all giving conflicting technical advice while wondering what my brother and I had obviously found to eat under there in the rain and snow, and why we were refusing to share...

Peering into the maw of a Mini Cooper and wondering how in God's name I was going to pull an engine rabbit-like from that magician's hat of a seemingly eight-foot-tall wall of metal and wires and hoses, and ever return it to a semblance of animation.

And beyond the particulars waiting in the calendar's wings, I couldn't see then that the best gifts are those which redound—not being *to*, but *between*; echoing from giver to receiver and back until fading out from a familiarity which scarce needs continued utterance.

Dad wanted to meet a need and, in a recursion, wordlessly instill a fundamental priority; namely, that needs trump wants.

continued on next page

BEST GIFT, continued from previous page

He wanted to feel closer to a youngest son—having stood in that one's shoes—by standing in his father's shoes, from whom he himself had received a roll of Fleet wrenches as a wedding present.

(And I—having made that connection—to stand in my dad's shoes, spending the better part of an hour pouring over Kobalt's complete offerings, to select the optimal set for *my* youngest son's birthday, and a car nearly *his* own age.)

And wanting to create a touchstone, Dad achieved ninety-nine.

Every time I fit a 12-point socket to a half-inch drive ratchet, click the thumbwheel counter to the direction of needed rotation, twist to listen for the cicada chirp of spring-loaded pawls to confirm it's at the ready, I think of the one who put them in my hands.

When I open a cabinet drawer just to check on its sleeping family, and absent-mindedly pick up a fingerling combination wrench to drag over the xylophone of its

brethren, three-eighths up to inch-and-a quarter, I know I'm pantographing his motions.

When I consider the sequence of extenders, double-elbow joints and step-up/down converters necessary to navigate the available space to transmit needed torque to a fastener, I feel his concentration in my features.

Running my hands now over those cylinders and bars, recalling the origins of their nicks and dents, is thumbing through a 3D Braille photo album.

When I see them, I see me. And when I see me, I see him. All in a rearview mirror's vanishing point: close, but smaller than merited.

And when I see him, I see him seeing us both. Panoramic through a windshield: distant as the future but looming large.

At those times, all times stand still, take the stage, look to each other, and know themselves as never before. Neither before, nor after, but always.

Best. Gift. Ever.

Long Live the Gift Royale

by Heidi Marshall

In 1981, my husband's parents came back from visiting relatives in Yorkshire, England. The visit coincided with the grand wedding of the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer.

My in-laws brought us several gifts, among them a beer for my husband, a limited special issue by Whitbread & Company to commemorate the royal wedding. He loved beers from other countries, full bodied and rich in flavor. After drinking the popular pale brews produced in this country at that time, he would mumble, "Horse piss," and go to Kelly's Liquor, the only place in town with a bit more choice, cautiously passing the big guard who gave every incoming customer the gimlet eye, while caressing the Colt revolver, mercifully still holstered at his side.

But for some reason, privy only to my husband, he never drank the gift, maybe waiting for a special occasion that never came. Time passed. The gift lived in a small cupboard, until one day when I thought that it would be better preserved in the refrigerator. It lived there, shoved around from one corner to another, throughout the years of the royal failing marriage and ultimate tragedy. Garnering value, a nephew told us, if we had bothered to protect the identifying label and the foil over the cap to show that it had never been opened.

My husband passed. Seeing the wisdom in my nephew's words, I rescued the bottle from its current icy corner and appraised it with greed in my mind, quickly vanished when seeing the wrinkled label and the worn foil almost all the way around the cap. But I persevered. I smoothed the label as much as I could, wrapped the bottle tightly in Saran wrap, and lovingly placed it in

a cabinet where humidity could do no more harm. There it remained, unmoved and forgotten.

Forty-two years later, the givers and the gifted gone, and I, older but no wiser, occasionally come across the gift and wonder what, after all these years, the contents would taste like. Horse piss, no doubt.

HEIDI'S CELEBRATION BREW: Bottled in 1981 to commemorate the wedding of the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer.



LATE GIFT/ WINTER WARMTH

Just a few of these SouthWest Writers fleece vests remain for purchase at the SWW OFFICE. With zippered outer pockets and two inside pockets, these vests are available for ONLY \$30—a \$60 retail value—ONLY at the SWW office, 3200 Carlisle Blvd NE #114.

Office Hours:
Monday – Thursday
9 a.m. to noon.
(505) 830-6034



Special thanks to RMK Publications, for the donation of these special vests as volunteer awards and for purchase.

Links To Upcoming SWW Events

MEETINGS in January

NOTE: Just for January, the monthly meeting will take place on the first Saturday, January 6.

Saturday, January 6, 2024

10:00 am – noon
In Person & Zoom

Speaker: Jonathon Miller

Against the Tide: *Completing Your Manuscript Under Challenging Circumstances*

This event will focus on how to turn challenging situations in your own life into compelling (and sellable) fiction and non-fiction.



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

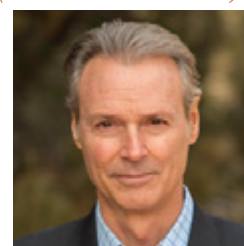
Wednesday, January 24, 2024

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Via Zoom

Speaker: Chuck Greaves

The DIY MFA Or:
How to Teach Yourself to Write (Or to Write Better)

You don't need an MFA degree to become a successful writer. What you do need is a passion for the written word, a commitment to the craft of writing, and some useful guidance along the way.



January WORKSHOP

Find YOUR Niche Market – with Rose Marie Kern

Saturday, January 6, 2024
12:30 – 2:30 pm (MST)

In Person at the UNM-CE building & via Zoom
SWW members: \$20 ♦ Non-members: \$30

You have talents. You want to make money. You have ideas...maybe so many ideas that you can't figure out where to start.

How do you find ways of converting thoughts to cash? Whether your aim is to write articles, stories or books, you can focus your work in such a way as to capture interest by marrying your own experiences with what various segments of the population wish to know.



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

February WORKSHOP

The Writer's Wheel & Screenplay Hero's Journey: 2 Keys to Organize YOUR Writing into an Award-winning Book, and More

with Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos

Saturday, February 10, 2024
12:30 – 2:30 pm (MST)

In Person & via Zoom
SWW members: \$20 ♦ Non-members: \$30



Have you ever been locked in the Writer's Mind Bog of Disorganization? Kat constantly hears this concern from clients and teaches them her Writer's Wheel and Screenplay Hero's Journey, which flows into other areas of publishing. During this interactive workshop, Kat shares two keys that unlock publishing success and organize writing into award-winning books, book proposals ... and more.

The Writing Life:

Avoiding Regrets

by Sherri L. Burr

At the dawn of a new year, some make plans or resolutions as others consider the regrets of the past year or of their entire lives and contemplate what to do differently. In our writing lives, what are we doing or not doing that causes regret now or may do so in the future? Ultimately, the lesson of the dramatic ending of the blockbuster *Hamilton* musical may be to act in a manner less likely to cause regret.

One of *Hamilton*'s catchiest songs is "The Ten Duel Commandments." However, *The Code Duello* was drawn up in 1777 and consisted of twenty-five rules that varied from country to country. The words apology or pardon, perhaps the ultimate expression of regret, are mentioned in ten of them. Rule number one requires the offended to seek an apology, which Vice President Aaron Burr did after hearing that former Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton had accused him of despicable behavior.

A Duel differs from a traditional western shootout where parties agree to meet on Main Street at High Noon, for example, with no rules as to how shots are to be exchanged. The combatants look at each other and draw. The person with the most accurate aim, even if a tad slower to un-holster his gun, is likely to prevail.



Photo courtesy of the JPMorgan Chase Corporate History Program.

In both a Duel and a shootout, opponents show up knowing the possibility of death looms. Many fled a shootout before sun-up never to be seen again, or at least while the challenger remained in town. By contrast, to flee a Duel before it is resolved

with either an apology or exchange of shots would subject the combatant to having his image posted with the word "coward" around town.

Two-hundred and twenty years ago on July 11, 1804, Burr prepared to meet his maker. Hamilton had the advantage of having chosen the pistols under Rule 16. Pictured are the pistols which were purchased by Hamilton's brother-in-law, John B. Church, and are now owned by JPMorgan Chase. The picture was provided by JPMorgan Chase Corporate History Collection. Aaron Burr was a co-founder of The Manhattan Company in 1799 which merged with Chase in 1955. Unbeknownst to Burr, these weapons possessed hair triggers.

"By using them," according to *Smithsonian Magazine*, "Hamilton could surreptitiously set his hair trigger without anyone noticing. This would give Hamilton a theoretical advantage by allowing him to shoot very quickly with a tiny, half-pound squeeze on the trigger. Burr's gun had

Sherri Burr's 27th book, *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 more than 30 years.



the same trick-trigger, but Burr probably didn't know. He fired with the ordinary 10- to 12-pound pull."

After walking their paces, shots rang out from both guns. By one account, Hamilton shot first and his ball projected a few inches over Burr's head. Hamilton's gun, if he set the hair trigger, may have misfired because he forgot to consider the lightness of the trigger when he took aim. Indeed, the *Smithsonian Magazine* article opined that Hamilton "booby-trapped himself" by squeezing too hard before lining Burr up in his sights.

That said, according to Rule 20: "In all cases, a miss-fire is equivalent to a shot." The Duel led to Hamilton's death and obliterated Burr's life as he had known it. He was indicted for murder because dueling was against the law in New Jersey and, while he was hiding out, his creditors claimed his estate, forcing him into bankruptcy. Ultimately, this gun battle reminds us that even when you survive, you can lose.

Burr came to regret that he ever issued the challenge to Hamilton. He tried to end the challenge by having Hamilton write something along the lines of "I don't remember what I said about you being despicable." Hamilton refused to apologize or negotiate a settlement. He had no regret about what he said about Burr.

This situation illustrates regret in the extreme because it cost a life. Writing regrets are not life or death even though they may sometimes feel that way to the writer. Rather, writing regrets tend towards not moving forward with ideas as they appear, or not publishing when opportunities arise.

I once interviewed a writer who had published 43 books and had 37 unpublished works in his file cabinet. At the time, I thought that bizarre. But now I have several unpublished manuscripts in my file cabinets. In 2023, I pulled out my memoir, "My Brother's Guardian," and published a chapter in the anthology *Holes in Our Hearts*.

Thus, as this new year dawns, make decisions in your writing life that move you ahead rather than cause regrets. Toward the end of his life, Aaron Burr said, "Had I read Sterne more and Voltaire less, I should have known the world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me."

Artificial Intelligence (AI) You Are the Data

by Léonie Rosenstiel

On September 30, 2023, everything changed. When I started using my computer that morning, I was required to sign into my Microsoft account. I'd left my laptop on overnight, so I wasn't just booting up.

"What's changed?" I wondered, as the computer instructed me to click on and review the new terms of service (TOS), so I could tick the "I agree" box. A few months earlier, I'd seen a notice that they were going to change something, but usually any new material is minor. To use programs, the "end user" must accept the company's TOS. First, I was taken to the new FAQs. "[Your Services Agreement Made Clearer](#)," the headline read.

I soon began to realize that these terms might alter my entire relationship with my computer. They didn't seem like a clarification; to me, they read like a new agreement. If you live in the United States, you are no longer allowed to sue Microsoft or any of its affiliates. Any disagreement must be submitted to binding arbitration. Not that I had been planning to sue Microsoft, but that clause sounded like an abridgement of my freedom.

At that moment, Microsoft had not been named in the raft of lawsuits from fiction writers, claiming that AI-linked services had infringed on their copyrights or copied their style without permission. The TOS listed about 50 different programs automatically covered by these new terms, then stated that the restriction covered any Microsoft program or Microsoft affiliate, regardless of whether it was on the list or not.

That wasn't all. Anything you put on your computer, or transmitted using any service/program related to, owned by, or affiliated with Microsoft would automatically be open to use anywhere in the world. The TOS explicitly warned you that you no longer had any privacy. This also applied to anything placed on your Google Drive. The service provider had the right to edit objectionable material, deleting it from the drive.

Simply using any related program—even when not connected to the Internet—allowed this to happen. If I refused the terms of service, I couldn't use any Microsoft programs or services. This was a non-commercial agreement, so corporations didn't have to sign onto it, but ordinary writers did. What was the alternative? Being effectively cut off from the entire Internet and writing world, where Microsoft programs and services are standard.

A later TOS clause promised that Microsoft would respect "local" copyright laws. What are "local" copyright laws? The only ones I know are either national, or they're created by international treaties. I'm not an attorney. However, my many years of relying on copyright as a protection have led me to believe that even common law copyright doesn't allow a third party to have blanket, automatic permission to make wholesale distribution of an author's work without that person's express permission for each item used, and especially so for unpublished or as-yet-unwritten manuscripts and emails.

Our series of articles on AI technology—where it came from, how it can help, and where it might get writers into trouble—continues. Originally intended as a three-part series, interest in AI is high with new information available daily, so Léonie continues to write on the subject. Catch up on missed installments [HERE](#).



These new TOS seemed self-contradictory. "How soon are the lawyers going to start filing suits?" I wondered.

On November 21, Winston Cho announced, in the *Hollywood Reporter*, that Microsoft [had just been named](#) a party to a federal lawsuit. Was the timing of the new TOS a coincidence? ChatGPT used to admit, in answer to a query, "Yes, Julian Sancton's book *Madhouse at the End of the Earth* is included in my training data."

Complainants before that had been writers of fiction. Sancton had never consented to having his non-fiction work used to train any AI. Now that there is a legal complication, ChatGPT no longer admits it has used the book. Or so the complaint alleges. This makes me wonder, "What else won't AI tell me?" Or even, "Might AI be programmed to lie to me?"

What about plagiarism? [Grammarly](#) offers you a description of 7 different types of plagiarism. And yes, you can "plagiarize yourself." You'll hear a lot about "repurposing content" from some marketers. Fair warning: you can no longer post the same essay on 5 different platforms, acting as if it is new, each time, and without citing the original source. You won't get Internet algorithm credit. Search engines are now trying to guard against people angling for higher search rankings by cloning content on multiple platforms. AIs will now be comparing content and giving you the equivalent of "Internet demerits" for engaging in this sort of activity.

I sometimes speak with people who use both Chat 4.0 (which includes a plagiarism checker) and Grammarly to vet their work. They say that these two programs do not always flag the same statements as plagiarized. Scienceandliteracy.org lists what it considers the "Top 6 Free Plagiarism Checkers." Ispringsolutions.com claims that there were "8 Top Plagiarism Finders" in 2023. Proceed with caution. Depending on which plagiarism tool you or an editor uses, your work might unfairly be flagged, rather like a "false positive" medical test.

We already have an example of one AI claiming to be a different AI. On December 14, 2023, *Fast Company* reported that, a week earlier, Elon Musk's AI, Grok, refused to answer a question. Why? Because "it goes against OpenAI's use case policy." OpenAI is a competing AI. It looks as if Grok doesn't have any awareness that it's a different entity. Either that, or it isn't programmed to care. Is it capable of over-identifying with its competition?

There's a further explanation. AIs can get so greedy for new information (I probably shouldn't personify AI, but in this case, it's simply too tempting) that it cannibalizes its cronies. One AI communicates with another and incorporates its data. No intention to plagiarize. Just a relentless need for

continued on next page

AI, continued from previous page

more data. This leads to what *Fast Company* refers to as “model collapse” which also might lead to a reader’s false conclusion that data has been verified (because two or more sources give you the same answer) when it hasn’t. More about this problem in a future installment.

As early as February 2023, Chris Stoker-Walker’s *Nature Magazine* article, reprinted by *Scientific American*, had warned that search engines from companies like Google, Bing, and Chinese search engine Baidu, that were then incorporating AI technology (more do now), came complete with a set of problems as well as possibilities. Users might start to believe that they are “conversing” with chatbots like Bard (Google) and ERNIE (Baidu).

Should we trust what our ever-proliferating AI friends tell us? During testing, [Bard incorrectly answered](#) a question about the James Webb Space Telescope. The correct information was readily available online; AI simply invented an answer instead. According to *Fortune Magazine*, this single AI hallucination translated into a crisis of public confidence, along with an almost immediate loss of [\\$100 billion](#) in stock value for Alphabet and Google. Fiction writers, please note: So many potential plot elements for you, here!

The Byte, a magazine that frequently comments on AI matters, expressed pleasure on December 18, when AI solved a previously unsolved math problem. However, it expressed some surprise because “AI is known for [conjuring up nonsense and made-up junk](#) even when its training data *has* the right answers.”

On December 19, journalist and novelist Cory Doctorow [took a more even-handed stance toward AI](#) in the SciFi magazine *Locus*. “I am skeptical,” he wrote. “But with AIs’ tendency to ‘hallucinate’ and confabulate, there’s an increasing recognition that these AI judgments [even numerical or language-based ones] require a ‘human in the loop’ to carefully review their judgments.”

This leads, logically, to inquiring into the nature of AI. All AIs have voracious appetites for data. Last week, I participated in a Zoom conference with several other people. No one on the call recorded it; one of the other attendees hosted it. (Zoom now offers free, online AI tools for transcribing and summarizing meetings. We didn’t use them.) During that call, the talk turned to a specific health food company. Someone/something seemed to think what I said was “friendly.” After that call, I received several ads from that brand.

No one on that call was associated with this company. I’d never received any advertising from them before. No one else on the call reported receiving any ads from the company.

More potential evidence: For the past several weeks, every time I visited a web page associated with the *Washington Post*, I was treated to an ad, featuring little blonde girls in long dresses, running down a street in Qatar. It’s an ad for tourism in that country. I’ve never traveled in the Middle East and have no current plans to visit. On some of those website visits, I was also shown video of a couple enjoying a romantic

continued on next page

YEAR IN REVIEW, continued from page 1

APRIL



Sara Frances spoke about Getting a Running Start on Book Awards Competitions. Her book *Unplugged Voices: 125 Tales of Art and Life from Northern New Mexico, The Four Corners and the West* has been highly acclaimed and contains stories by several SWW members.

Jim and Bobbi Jean Bell, popular online radio interviewers, shared some of their expertise at March’s evening meeting. They sent a note of thanks to the SWW member-audience, “You welcomed Bobbi Jean and me as though we were long time members and your supportive comments during the presentation were appreciated.”



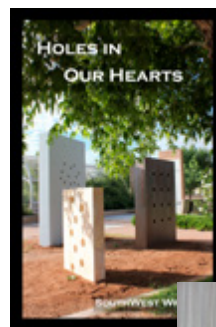
MAY

By May, the submissions window for the military anthology had closed and the book had a title and a cover image. It would be called *Holes in Our Hearts*. The name was taken from the sculpture by Steve Borbas that stands at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial.

Jim Tritten also received permission from Steve to use an image of the sculpture for the cover. The publication ultimately received 94 submissions from Active or Retired military, their family members or caregivers.



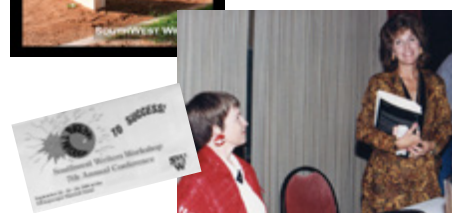
JUNE



Holes in Our Hearts, published by SouthWest Writers through a grant from New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, Arts Division, was released with much fanfare on June 30.

The SAGE started a four-part series of SWW history that was authored by former leaders Kay

Lewis “Happy” Shaw, Paula Paul, Larry Greenly, and current President Rose Marie Kern.



AI, continued from previous page

evening meal, alone in an elaborate outdoor pavilion, also in Qatar.

“Why Qatar?” I wondered. A little reflection answered this question: Several months ago, I registered for an online course, given by an international group of coaches. Recently, the lead coach was replaced by someone who’d then just moved to Qatar. He was now hosting the sessions. I’ve concluded that the *Washington Post*, or perhaps a company associated with its owner, Jeff Bezos, is buying Zoom data because, over the summer, the same thing had happened. We had a group leader, first in the UK, then in Greece. As soon as the host changed, the *Washington Post* started showing me videos promoting vacations in those countries, too.

So many people, these days, are using their books as calling cards or as ways to generate mailing lists! This leads to the final question. What is Amazon doing? Gathering data. Just browse a few books, and it will endlessly suggest similar titles (or what its AI thinks are similar titles).

Amazon does distribute an awful lot of books and products, but it can sell each one only once, whereas it can sell every customer’s contact information dozens of times. After all, Amazon knows what they like. That’s where the real money is. Just as Zoom mines information and sells it, we all know that Amazon, too, keeps careful track of all your activities. Authors who publish on KDP or have books listed on Amazon can never find out any contact information for their buyers (or even those who follow them on their author page), but Amazon can, and does, sell it to others.

Buy a book about migraines, and suddenly you’ll find yourself getting all manner of ads for items related to that malady. That will also happen if you Google “migraines.” Everyone’s AI (including those now embedded in most search engines) is studying you and your buying habits, and instantly selling data on them to those who want to sell you something (or using automatically triggered screen pop-ups to do the same thing).

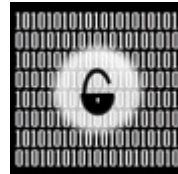
Years ago, long before AI went public, a marketer said to me, “You tell me where you live, and I’ll tell you what car you drive and what’s in your refrigerator.” Marketers thought they had us all figured out, even then. Now, with AI analyzing everything we do and say, they might have gotten much closer to being correct. I’m wondering, however, whether mystery and crime writers might initially confuse AI (or set off warning signals in some remote law enforcement computer) as they search for information about mental and emotional disorders, poisons and murder implements.

At this point, Amazon’s AI has likely concluded that it understands what you want and how you think. How far is this from telling you what you *should* want or think? Or even that something you want to order is something you *shouldn’t* have. Perhaps not far enough. Again, fiction writers take note: More prime plot material, here. I can see it jumping up and down, waving a sign that says, “Use me!”

Next time I’ll talk about eBooks, their use as a surveillance technique, and the battles going on in the AI world.

JULY

With readings of *Holes in Our Hearts* taking place in many areas of NM, the anthology called attention to the dedication of SWW to the well-being of all writers. SWW President Rose Marie Kern, recognized and commended Jim Tritten for his outstanding work with veteran authors and his compiling of the anthology.



Website Decoder

Lynne Sturtevant wrapped up a three-part series for the SAGE detailing the ins and outs of website ownership.

AUGUST

International fervor over the potential for misuse of Artificial Intelligence in the creation of art, literature, and film prompted Léonie Rosenstiel to forward a letter from the Authors Guild Foundation to the SAGE. This set Léonie to researching and writing what was supposed to be a series of three articles. With lawsuits and new information daily, the series has expanded and her latest installment appears on page 8.



Readings for *Holes in Our Hearts* were in full swing. Jim Tritten provided the SAGE with this photo of the Veterans’ writing group that he calls “the heart of the book.”



Creative Hearts

Support

Bookstores

SEPTEMBER

At the urging of SWW President Rose Marie Kern, the SAGE sent out a call to members for recommendations on independent bookstores to feature. The series started strong but lagged during our annual awards, elections and holiday cycles. With a new reporter taking it over, we hope to revive this series in February.

Lynne Sturtevant
and Office Manager

ReVaH Loring created How To Videos to help members use the SWW website and join meetings with more ease. To log into the website now, click [HERE](#).

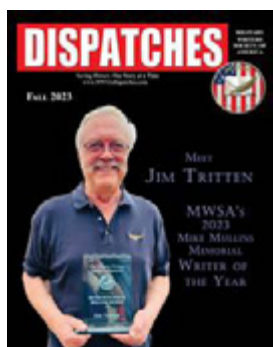
YouTube Training Videos

Winning!

SWW Members Share Their Writing Success

Albuquerque the Magazine's "Best of the City" reader's poll voted **JOSEPH BADAL** as the Best (Albuquerque) Author of 2023.

"Thanks to everyone who voted for me in this year's Best Of The City contest. I appreciate your support. It is an honor to receive this recognition, especially considering the group of fine writers with whom I was competing." Joe is the author of 18 award-winning novels. He appeared at Treasure House Books in Old Town Albuquerque for a December signing of his latest, *Everything to Lose*. Buy it at Amazon.com.



The Military Writers Society of America (MWSA) recognized Jim Tritten as the 2023 Writer of the Year. Jim served on the MWSA board of directors for a number of years. He ran the 2019 joint MWSA-SWW conference in Albuquerque. Jim's publications have won Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals in the annual MWSA

book competitions. His volunteer activities have benefited many a member's transition from aspiring writer to published author.

I read so I can live
more than one life in
more than one place.

Anne Tyler

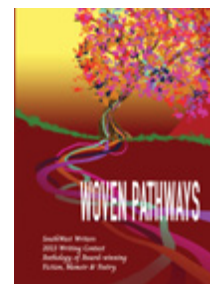
OCTOBER



Besides necessary business and elections, the annual meeting turned into a celebration with a potluck, writing contest awards, the release of the *Woven Pathways* writing contest winners anthology, and the announcement of Jim Tritten as the 2023 Parris Award recipient.

The results of a survey conducted by the board and compiled by Debbie White revealed SWW activities that are most valued by the membership include:

- Saturday morning meetings
- Workshops
- Writing Contest
- SAGE Newsletter
- Classes



NOVEMBER

The success of seven SWW members who received awards in the NM/AZ Book awards contest was announced in the November SAGE. Other members saw success with the Military Writers Society of America (MWSA) contest.



For her work on *Holes in Our Hearts* and other projects to benefit military veterans and their families, MWSA also recognized SWW President Rose Marie Kern with a Challenge Coin - a traditional award of military pride and excellence.

DECEMBER

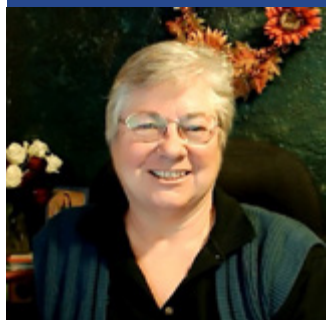
Dedicated SWW volunteers were recognized at December's Holiday Celebration. RMK Publications (Rose Marie Kern) donated fleece logo vests and star pins as awards. A few vests are still available for purchase with proceeds benefiting SWW (see info on page 5).



The Sage Writing
Challenge

The SAGE received a record-breaking 14 submissions to its Holiday Haiku Challenge.

Introducing Your 2024 SWW Board of Directors



PRESIDENT
Rose Marie Kern



VICE PRESIDENT
Dan Wetmore



SECRETARY
Lynn Doxon



TREASURER
Cornelia Gamlem



Judy Castleberry
Writing Contest



Brenda Cole
Collegium



David Corwell
Media Team



Mike Hays
Critique Groups



Allen Herring
SAGE Anthology



**Jacqueline
Murray Loring**
Membership/
Volunteers



Hayley Nations
Zoom Team Leader



Kimberly Rose
YouTube



Kathy Louise Schuit
SAGE Editor

Kathy Wagoner
Webmaster



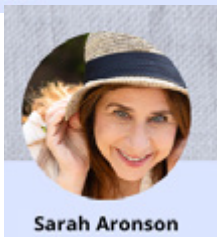
Dollie Williams
At Large



CONTESTS and OPPORTUNITIES for WRITERS

Write the Novel Only YOU Can A Two-Night Mini

If writing a novel is one of your 2024 goals, then consider starting the new year with this two-night, online mini course, brought to you by the Highlights Foundation and instructor Sarah Aronson.



Over the course of two sessions, she'll cover two core truths of writing a novel:

- **THEME & What YOU Bring to Your Novel.** Your emotions and experiences illuminate the core of stories that only you can tell. Learn how your novel's theme draws on these experiences, to create a story that readers need (and can't put down).
- **Main Characters, Point of View, & YOUR Voice.** Following a character through a novel takes engagement that comes from a compelling voice. That voice is created by you and the novel's point of view. Learn ways to amplify the voice of your novel, and celebrate the main character you've developed.

Information and registration [HERE](#). If you can't attend live, you'll receive the recordings after.

Tuesday, January 16
Thursday, January 18

7pm - 8:15pm
Eastern

Learn Ways to illustrate your children's pic- ture book.



New Mexico Art League
Art School • Gallery

Creative Children's Picture Book Illustration with Pamela Barcita (Thursdays)

Start 01/04/2024

End 02/22/2024

Schedule 8 sessions

Location Art League Studios



[Information and registration.](#)



Ethos Literacy
an adult education center

5th Annual Short Short Story Writing Contest
a fundraiser to support
adult literacy programs

6 cash prizes plus e-publication

submission fees: \$15
\$10 (youth - 14 and younger)

100 words
Deadline:
Feb. 1, 2024

For 2024, the story must relate in some way to one of these topics:

- bicycle(s)
- eclipse
- fire
- suitcase(s)

NEW Fees Option!
Submit two stories/SAVE \$.

Rules, registration and previous years' winning entries at
ethosliteracy.org.

Registration Window Closing Soon For NFPW/NMPW Contest

Early Submission Deadline is January 17. Save \$25! Register [HERE](#).

- All entries must be published by December 31, 2023.
- More than 60 categories to choose from.
- Early submission deadline (avoid a one-time additional fee of \$25): January 17, 2024.
- Final deadline for books: January 31, 2024.
- Final deadline for all other entries: February 7, 2024.

The contest in NM is sponsored by state affiliate, New Mexico Press Women. Winners in NM will be announced at the NMPW conference, March 16, 2024. First-place winning entries in NM (and other state affiliates) are eligible to advance to the national competition. NM winners who want to enter the national contest must be NFPW members, or must join by March 15, 2024. National winners will be notified in late April. National (NFPW) contest results will be announced during an awards dinner on June 22, 2024, in St. Louis, Mo.

For more information check out: www.newmexicopresswomen.org and the NFPW webpage: www.nfpw.org/professional-contest



NFPW
Contest

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.

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.

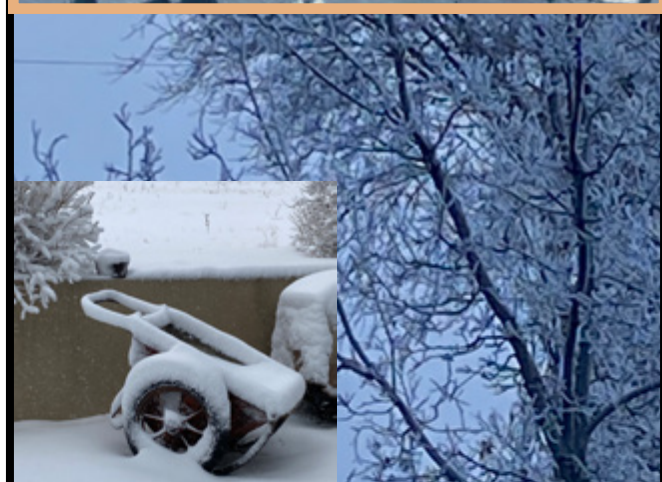
Send questions or submissions to:
Kathy Schuit
SouthWest SAGE Editor
sage@swwriters.com

SWW Board Meeting Minutes Summarized

December 2023

- As of the end of November, we were \$3,547 in the black for 2023, with total assets at \$61,000. Thanks to those who generously contributed at the annual meeting, and to the holiday rodeo.
- The out-going board tentatively voted to approve the 2024 budget, pending approval by the incoming board, in January.
- 2024's Advisory Council was introduced. Léonie Rosensteil will be continuing with Print Media. Jim Tritten is going to be military liaison to New Mexico Arts. Jonathan Miller and Sara Frances will be serving at large. Roger Floyd and Evelyn Neil plan to help edit the contest anthology. Evelyn is also considering fundraising ideas, perhaps to include more matching challenges. And Steve Williams has offered to do school outreach on the subject of writing.
- The 2024 Collegium calendar is set through April. We are still looking for speakers for May's Saturday meeting presentation and workshop, June's Saturday workshop, July's Wednesday meeting presentation, and all of August through December, so if you have a topic you'd like to present, please contact the office or Brenda Cole directly.





2024 Board of Directors

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Rose Marie Kern, President
Dan Wetmore, Vice President/PR
Cornelia Gamlem, Treasurer
Lynn Doxon, Secretary

DIRECTORS

Judy Castleberry, Writing Contest
 Brenda Cole, Collegium
 David Corwell, Media Team Organizer
 Mike Hays, Critique Groups
 Allen Herring, Sage Anthology
 Jacqueline Murray Loring, Membership
 Hayley Nations, Zoom Coordinator
 Kimberly Rose, YouTube
 Kathy Louise Schuit, SAGE Editor
 Kathy Wagoner, Webmaster
 Dollie Williams, At Large

ADVISORY COUNCIL

O'labumi Brown, Social Media
 Roger Floyd, Signage/Anthology Editing
 Sara Frances, General
 Jonathan Miller, At Large
 Jennifer Mitchell, General
 Evelyn Neil, General
 Léonie Rosenstiel, PR Team/Print Media
 Jim Tritten, Military Grant Liaison

ReVaH Loring, Office Manager

SWW Office:

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

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/or via Zoom.