

SouthWest Sage

June 2011 www.southwestwriters.com

***SouthWest Sage* Going Online**

The *SouthWest Sage* will become an exclusively online publication effective with the July 2011 issue. This will help us control costs, deliver the newsletter with more current news, and add color and active links to the *Sage*. You can still have a print copy to read at your kitchen table by printing out the pdf file from your computer.

If you would like to receive an email link to the e-*Sage* when it is posted and you are an SWW member, the process is simple. If you already receive e-letters for other SWW news, you are on the notification list and you need do nothing more. You will receive an email when the *SouthWest Sage* is available, and it will appear as a pdf, which you can then read on your computer, download to your computer, or print a hard copy to read under your backyard shade tree or anywhere you like to read.

If you are an SWW member and you do not get e-letters and you'd like a *Sage* posting notice, simply send a message with your correct email address to Larry Greenly at SWWriters@juno.com with the subject line e-letter update.

If you are not an SWW member, you will not receive a posting notice. However, the *Sage* will still be available on the website at www.southwestwriters.com.

SouthWest Writers Officer Nominations Sought

Would you like to get more involved and have an impact on the writing community? The SouthWest Writers nominating committee is seeking candidates for the offices of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer for 2012.

According to SWW bylaws, to be eligible for either of the offices of president or vice-president, a person shall have been a member of SouthWest Writers in good standing for no less than one year immediately preceding the date of nomination and shall have served one year on the SouthWest Writers Board in the past five years. The secretary and treasurer shall have been a member of SouthWest Writers in good standing for no less than one year immediately preceding the date of nomination, unless waived by the Board, and have the necessary qualifications for the job. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact either Melody Groves at MelodyGroves@comcast.net or Joanne Bodin, Nominating Committee Chair, at jsbodin@msn.com.

Taming My Computer Fears

by Bob Gassaway

My computers are my favorite writing tools--but they scare the devil out of me.

I have an aging desktop computer and a beautiful new two-pound portable, and both of them scare me because I know they will fail. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow. But it will happen.

My challenge is to be sure my files are constantly backed up somewhere safe.

I suppose part of my problem lies in my dependency on computers. I hate to write in longhand because it seems too static. The words just sit there on the paper doing nothing. And I can't move them. But once I commit my words to a computer, I can edit them, delete them, color them, enlarge them, massage them, print them or e-mail them.

As a journalist, and a sociologist, I worried about losing my golden words in a computer. But with nonfiction, I could go back to my notes and reconstruct what I'd written. That was time consuming and annoying, but it worked.

When I began writing mystery novels, however, the fear that my computer would swallow my prose escalated. I could imagine crafting a detailed portrait of an important character, complete with the speech patterns and sartorial peculiarities and social blemishes that would make him or her memorable, perhaps even lovable or detestable, then losing it all to a computer glitch.

So I take a couple of precautions.

I've added an external hard drive to my computer, and I have software that backs up my files every day. Unfortunately, I don't get much peace of mind from the extra drive because a burglar or a house fire could easily defeat my effort.

The most important safeguard is what computer geeks call "backing up in the cloud." That means I use an Internet service to save copies of my work.

My backup service also synchronizes my work on all my computers. Let's say I take my laptop to a restaurant or coffee shop that has free wi-fi service. If I write a few hundred

Continued on page 5

President's Message: Something Wise to Say

by *Melody Groves*

So there I was listening to my newest favorite musical group, the Zac Brown Band, when a lyric caught my attention. The singer was talking about trying to communicate with a homeless man who was intent on spending his panhandled money on booze. The singer wanted to tell him how to change his life, quit drinking, get a job, but instead said, "I tried to think of something *wise* to say, like..."

Silence.

I always chuckle at that pause. And then I think. Do we have the right words? As writers, we strive to hit that mark—to say something wise that matters, that changes people's lives. If only it were that easy. But I've seen it happen. You probably have, too. We keep trying, don't we?

Speaking of changing lives—I'd like to acknowledge everyone who's emailed me responding to my past few president's letters. All have been positive, which in itself is pretty amazing. It's terrific knowing somebody reads my diatribe besides the editor and proofer. They kind of *have* to read it. Thank you for taking time out of your day to read this. Also, it's half scary, half exhilarating to know that my words have made an impact on lives, however minor the impact may be. A few readers have responded to my letter that ran a couple months ago about treating each other right. Being in each other's corner. It must've struck a chord. Must've been the right words.

Were they wise? I don't know.

As writers, we learn from each other. It may not necessarily be about proper comma placement, or using various points of view. We *do* learn diplomacy (accepting someone's offered book that wasn't really wanted)—always accept it with a smile; marketing (how someone launches their newest work)—book signings and/or cards; newest book formats (e-book, audio, print)—the good, bad and ugly. We learn how to hold our heads up after reeling from a bad book review (it happens sometimes)—never, ever badmouth reviewers. They're entitled to their opinions. By attending meetings and book launches, we learn how to dress for success—promoting our genre. The romance writer wears flouncy clothes, the mystery writer wears a Sherlock Holmes hat, western writers wear cowboy hats and boots...or scarves, neckties or t-shirts indicative of their genre.

We learn from each other. Writers are pretty amazing, aren't we?

Melody

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|
| | Natalie Wright | |
| | Stephen M. Grimble | |
| | Rivkela Brodsky | ★ |
| | Phil Staten | |
| | Lee Higbie | |
| | Betty Higbie | |
| | Susan Cooper | |
| | Brian Lincoln | ★ |
| ★ | Tiffany Tackett | |
| | Sally Collins | |
| | David Bachelor | |
| ★ | Dave Koepsell | |
| | Carol J. March | |
| | G. Gray McVicker | |
| | Claude Phipps | |

SouthWest Sage Advertising Rates Worldwide Internet Circulation

The SWW website receives thousands of page requests every month.

Business card size: \$20 1/4 page, vertical: \$40 1/3 page, horizontal: \$50
15% discount for 3 mos. 20% discount for 6 mos.

Deadline: 1st of each month for the following month.
Payment due with camera-ready ad copy in .jpg format.

Annual Membership in SouthWest Writers

Individual: \$60 (\$100 for 2 years), Two people \$50 each,
Student 18 and over: \$40, Under 18: \$25

Requires proof of student status

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

Download the Sage from www.southwestwriters.com

Join us first Saturday: 10 AM-Noon: Third Tuesday: 7-9 PM
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE,
Albuquerque, New Mexico



SouthWest Sage

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The Photograph

by Terry Civello

FELOPZD
DEFPOTEC
LEFODPCT

The DMV eye chart flashes on the wall. After seventeen years of mail-in renewals, now at sixty-two, I must appear in person to pass the eye test without my glasses or get a new photo. I want to keep the 1988 license picture on my renewal. It's the most important photograph of my adult life.

FELOPZD
DEFPOTEC
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I wait in line clutching my license, studying my picture. A morning at the Elizabeth Arden Salon had created the image staring back at me. Dark, thick hair and zingarina earrings frame a chubby face. Eyebrows arch perfectly over large brown eyes. *Apricotta* rouge and *Mela Rosa* lipstick complement her red turtle-neck. She smiles. She has all her teeth. I will do anything to keep that photograph on my driver's license.

The same letters appear on the wall. I memorize them.

FELOPZD
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On my 45th birthday, I redeemed a gift certificate for a morning of beauty treatments at the exclusive Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon on Fifth Avenue before renewing my driver's license that afternoon.

I did not fit in with the Red Door society clientele. I'd had a rotten year. I worked twelve-hour days while caring for my mother, and I was grieving a bitter breakup with my boyfriend. I looked like a sixty-year-old matron: mousy gray-brown hair, dark circles under my eyes, and more overweight than Rubenesque.

I'd placed myself in the hands of the beauty professionals that morning, hoping for an Oprah makeover. After having had my hair dyed and styled, eyebrows plucked, a facial, a manicure, and a make-up session, I looked beautiful.

At the DMV, I joined hundreds of people as they shuffled through mazes of lines and windows. Ninety minutes later, after passing my eye test and paying my fees, I was photographed. When the woman behind the barred window handed me my license, I peeked and smiled.

Thanks to mail-in license renewals, I have been able to retain my Elizabeth Arden photo for seventeen years. Now, at age sixty-two, facing license renewal at the DMV, I must pass the eye test without my glasses to keep the photograph.

FELOPZD
DEFPOTEC
LEFODPCT

"Next," says a stern-looking woman behind the counter. "Cover your right eye. Read the top line without your glasses." She presses the projector button. Letters flash.

JHERLOC
Or is it
JKEBLDO?

Terry won first place in the SWW 2011 first bi-monthly contest with this piece. She was a technical writer for more than 25 years. Last year, one of her flash fiction pieces was included in the 2010 OASIS National Journal Anthology.



Characters in Conflict

by Chris Eboch

A strong story needs conflict. But conflict doesn't just come from dramatic things happening. It comes from the character—what he or she needs and wants, and why he or she can't get it easily.

Let's start with a premise: a kid has a math test on Monday. Exciting? Not really. But ask two simple questions, and you can add conflict.

Why is it important to the character? The stakes should be high. The longer the story or novel, the higher stakes you need to sustain it. A short story character might want to win a contest; a novel character might need to save the world.

Why is it difficult for the character? Difficulties can be divided into three general categories, traditionally called man versus man, man versus nature, and man versus himself. You can even have a combination of these. For example, someone may be trying to spy on some bank robbers (man versus man) during a dangerous storm (man versus nature) when he is afraid of lightning (man versus himself).

For our kid with the math test, here's one example: It's important because if he doesn't pass, he'll fail the class, have to go to summer school, and not get to go to football camp, when football is what he loves most. Assuming we create a character readers like, they'll care about the outcome of this test and root for him to succeed.

Our football lover could have lots of challenges—he forgot his study book, he's expected to baby-sit, a storm knocked out the power, he has ADHD, or he suffers test anxiety. But ideally we'll relate the difficulty to the reason it's important. So let's say he has a game Sunday afternoon and is getting pressure from his coach and teammates to practice rather than study. Plus he'd rather play football anyway.

We now have a situation full of potential tension. Let the character struggle enough before he succeeds (or fails and learns a lesson), and you'll have a story. And if these two questions can pump up a dull premise, just think what they can do with an exciting one!

Fears and Desires

As this exercise shows, conflict comes from the interaction between character and plot. You can create conflict by setting up situations which force a person to confront their fears. If someone is afraid of heights, make them go someplace high. If they're afraid of taking responsibility, force them to be in charge.

You can also create conflict by setting up situations which oppose a person's desires. If they crave safety, put them in danger. But if they crave danger, keep them out of it.

In my romantic suspense novel, *Rattled* (written as Kris Bock), Erin likes her adventures safely in books. But when she finds a clue to a century-old lost treasure, she's thrust into a wilderness expedition full of dangers from wild animals, nasty humans, and even nature. In my Mayan historical novel *The Well of Sacrifice*, Eveningstar never dreams of being a leader or a rebel. But when her family, the government, and even the gods fail to stop the evil high priest, she's forced to act. The reluctant hero is a staple of books and movies because it's fun to watch someone forced into a heroic role when they don't want it. (Think of Han Solo in *Star Wars*.)

Even with nonfiction, you can create tension by focusing on the challenges that make a person's accomplishments more impressive. In *Jesse Owens: Young Record Breaker*, I made this incredible athlete's story more powerful by focusing on all the things he had to overcome—childhood health problems, poverty, a poor education. I showed his successes *and* his troubles, to help the reader understand what he achieved.

Some writers start with plot ideas and then develop the character who'll face those challenges, while others start with a great character and then figure out what he or she does. Regardless, remember to work back and forth between plot and character, tying them together with conflict.

To build conflict:

What does your main character want? What does he need? Make these things different, and you'll add tension. It can be as simple as our football player who wants to practice football, but needs to study. Or it could be more subtle, like someone who wants to be protected but needs to learn independence.

Even if your main problem is external (man versus man or man versus nature), consider giving the character an internal flaw (man versus himself) that contributes to the difficulty. Perhaps your character has a temper, is lazy, or refuses to ever admit she's wrong. This helps set up your complications and as a bonus makes your character seem more real.

Before you start, test the idea. Change the character's age, gender, or looks. Change the point of view. Change the setting. Change the internal conflict. What happens? Choose the combination that has the most dramatic potential.

Chris Eboch writes for adults as Kris Bock. Rattled brings romantic suspense to the dramatic and deadly southwestern desert. Read the first three chapters at www.krisbock.com.

Taming My Computer Fears, continued from page 1

words there and save my file, the service backs up my prose online, and downloads a copy via the Internet to my desktop computer at home. When I get home, my story is waiting for me to edit or continue writing.

Saving your files to a faraway computer on the Internet is relatively easy these days and free on some sites.

For instance, Amazon.com just began offering five free gigabytes of space. Signing up for the space is quick and easy.

A Microsoft service called WindowsLive.com offers 25 gigabytes of free space. You can upload files from your computer or create them online through a Web browser. Creating documents on this site is slow and clunky, but uploading files is quick and pretty smooth.

Google Documents offers a similar service but with just one free gigabyte of space, although you can buy more.

These services, and others you can find on the Internet, are limited because you have to take responsibility for uploading your files. And if you modify a file on your computer, you have to upload the entire file again.

By contrast, an online service called Carbonite backs up files for you once you specify which folders and files you want backed up. You install a relatively small piece of software on your computer, and it watches the directories you've marked for backup. When you add or change a file, it backs up the new files. It costs \$59 per year for each of your computers. But Carbonite does not sync files among your computers.

Several other services, such as Mozy, compete with Carbonite. ConsumerSearch.com offers free access to reviews on most of the competitors.

But I prefer the syncing service. I use DropBox, which costs \$99 per year for up to 50 gigabytes of space and covers all my computers.

DropBox also has competitors, such as IDriveSync and SugarSync, and ConsumerSearch.com has reviews on those, too.

Many backup services provide you with access to your files via any Web browser from any computer--provided you can remember your password. And some services give users access from smartphones.

I took the oath of the confirmed computer scaredy-cat several years ago when the motherboard of my desktop computer failed.

But I reaped the rewards a couple of years ago after the hard drive on one of my laptops died.

When I hauled it in to a computer shop, the man at the front desk said a new, faster hard drive would cost a hundred bucks. But he kept tapping numbers into his calculator.

After the calculator blinked a total, the man smiled when he said, "And we'll try to recover your data. That'll cost about \$200."

I returned his smile but shook my head. "Don't worry about the data," I said. "I have it backed up."

That wiped the \$200 smile off his face.

"Backed up?"

"You don't hear that too often?" I asked.

He shook his head, and I kept smiling.

Former journalist and journalism professor Bob Gassaway writes murder mysteries. He holds a Ph.D. in sociology.

*Thank you and best wishes
for a winning entry
to all who entered the
South West Writers
Annual Writing Competition*

2011 SWW Bi-Monthly Contest Winners

CONGRATULATIONS to the winners of the 2011 January/February Bi-Monthly Writing Competition. The topic was "Memoir Hook."

1st: Teresa Civello, Albuquerque, NM, "The Photograph"

2nd: Donald T. Morgan, Albuquerque, NM,
"Seventy-Seven and Counting"

3rd: Charles Powell, Albuquerque, NM, "Deadwood Jail"

Honorable Mention:

Dodici Azpadu, Albuquerque, NM, "Shoebox"

Maralie W. BeLonge, Albuquerque, NM, "Flight Patterns"

Donald DeNoon, Albuquerque, NM, "Nightmare at Midnight"

Holly Deuel Gilster, Albuquerque, NM,

"This is Bloody Awful"

Desiree Perriguet, Rio Rancho, NM, "The Struggle"

Sandra Toro, Albuquerque, NM, "Willy's Battered Heart"

Jasmine Tritten, Corrales, NM, "Terror"

Classes and Workshop

FLASH YOUR FICTION

Dodici Azpadu

Saturday, June 4, 1:30 pm - 4:30 p.m.

\$45 members and \$60 non-members

Classes Limited to 12 Students

SouthWest Writers Conference Room

3721 Morris NE, Suite A (NW corner Comanche and Morris)

Short forms of fiction writing are both challenging and satisfying for writers of all skill levels. This interactive workshop will help you complete a very short story or flash fiction. Participants will write 3-word sentences about themselves in order to get comfortable with concise expression. We will then practice the one-sentence story, also called *hint fiction*. Finally, participants will tackle 150-word flash fiction using a series of fail-safe prompts. These activities will prepare participants to enter the mid-June *Alibi* flash fiction contest.

Dodici Azpadu is currently adjunct faculty in the English department at Central New Mexico Community College. She holds a PhD in Language and Literature, and earned an MFA from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. She is a prize-winning flash fiction writer and has published novels, short stories, poems, and essays. Her third novel *Living Room* was a 2010 New Mexico Book Awards finalist. For more information visit www.dodici-azpadu.com.

SURFING YOUR ENTHUSIASM - How to Make Writing Goals Work For YOU!

Sue Sullivan

Wednesdays, July 6 and 13, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

\$75 members and \$105 non-members (includes six months of membership)

Classes Limited to 14 Students

SouthWest Writers Conference Room

3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

If the traditional way of attaining writing goals—schedules, accountability, being driven, feeling busy all the time—isn't for you, there is another way. In this class, you'll learn a system for working with your writing goals that is designed to support you in clarifying what you really want; following your natural rhythms of taking action, receiving, and resting; developing your own internal motivation, so you can't wait to act on your goals; and staying balanced. With a little bit of structure, you can let go and be like a kid again, enjoying the experience of attaining what you want in your writing.

Sue Sullivan has been actively involved in personal development for nearly 30 years. She used to go between the extremes with her goals, getting all psyched and working diligently on them, then burning out and crashing. She realized she needed to find a more sustainable way to achieve. Visit <http://surfingyoureenthusiasm.com/blog/>

***To register for classes and workshops sign up at SouthWest Writers meetings,
Register online at www.southwestwriters.com or call the SWW office at 265-9485***

INTRODUCTION TO WRITING HISTORICAL FICTION

Lois Ruby

Wednesday Evenings, June 8, 15 and 22, 6:00 p.m. -8:00 p.m.

\$90 members and \$120 non-members (includes six months of membership). Limited to 14 Students

SouthWest Writers Conference Room

3721 Morris NE, Ste A, (NW corner Comanche and Morris)

If you'd like to dip your toes and your pen into the past and make it breathe again in stories and novels, this class is for you! We'll explore how to research and hone another era through fascinating characters who populate the past and invigorate the present. And we'll try to answer the Big Question: how *true* does historical fiction need to be? While



there's no obligation, you're welcome to bring something you've been working on, or start something during the weeks of the class, that we can gently workshop together for a brief part of each session. Open to novices and pros alike.

Lois Ruby is the author of 14 books for young people, including historical novels set in such diverse times and places as the 1607 Virginia Colony, the Underground Railroad in 1856 Kansas, the 1901 Galveston hurricane, Shanghai refugees in 1937, and the 1953 red-scare McCarthy era. She ventured into an historical ghost story in her latest book, *The Secret of Laurel Oaks*, and her next book is even more of a departure -- historical nonfiction. An ex-librarian, she now writes fulltime between speaking at literature festivals, presenting workshops, and touting the joys of thought-provoking reading in schools around the country. Visit her website, www.loisruby.com, for more about her and her books.

Class

SYNOPSIS and QUERIES - A hands-on approach

Rob Spiegel and Melody Groves

Mondays, July 11, 18, 25, August 1, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
\$75 members and \$85 non-members

Classes Limited to 14 Students

SouthWest Writers Conference Room

3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

Synopsis. Query. Those two little words can strike terror in even the seasoned writer's heart. So, what can we, the not-so-seasoned, do without hiring somebody else to write it for us? All is not lost. You can do this. Rob Spiegel and Melody Groves will explain, with tips and techniques, how you, too, can write them.

The first two sessions will be devoted to Synopsis. It's much easier to write a query when you really, truly understand what your story is about. Sessions three and four will cover writing that query. We'll talk format, voice and where to send them.

Rob Spiegel is the author of six published non-fiction books. **Melody Groves** is the author of two published non-fiction books and three fiction books.

Scott M. Tyson released his first book, *The Unobservable Universe*, on May 15. All SWW members can get a free copy of the PDF version of the eBook by entering discount code "TUUSWWFREE" at www.theunobservableuniverse.com/purchase.html. Scott attended the Independent Book Publishers Association's (IBPA) Publishing University held in conjunction with Book Expo America on May 22-23 in New York City. His book will be displayed at two exhibits at the Expo during May 24-26.

2011 Third Bi-Monthly

Writing Contest

A Love Poem

It can be kind, cruel, about an occasion or an event, or for all time, to a romantic partner or to a cat. Anything you love, anything that brings out the passion is game. Can rhyme, or be just a bunch of cool words. Can be any length. Submit only one poem per entry. Post-mark deadline: June 30, 2011. Please note if you grant publication permission. All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail entries to SWW Bimonthly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

Successes

Linda Crockett, writing as Linda Lea Castle, is one of five finalists for the Audio Award, the premiere award for audio books, for *By King's Command*, one of her medieval adapted novels. This award has been won by Nelson Mandela and Stephen King. It will be announced in late May in New York and Linda will be in attendance with the SirenAudioBook owner/director, Linda Roybal.

Shirley Raye Redmond's YA nonfiction book, *Oak Island Treasure Pit*, was released by Gale/Cengage in March. *Bunips*, her newest addition to the *Monsters* series, will be released in May and a biography of mogul Richard Branson will be released in June. www.readshirleyraye.com

Rob Spiegel's poetry has recently been accepted in *Adobe Walls*, *Rougarou*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Ken*Again*, *Shaking Like a Mountain* and *New Verse News*. His one-act play, "May Your Judge Smile Sweetly," has been accepted by the literary magazine *Prick of the Spindle*.

Laurie Green's science fiction romance manuscript, *P2PC*, which won the science fiction, fantasy and horror category of the 2009 SouthWest Writers contest, is a finalist in the 2011 RWA Golden Heart Award. Her second manuscript, *The Outer Planets*, (which was entered but did not place in the 2010 SWW contest) was also a finalist. Both manuscripts are in the paranormal category.

Jeanne Shannon has two poems in Issue 3 of *Psychic Meatloaf* (www.psychicmeatloaf.com), and four poems in the current issue of *BlazeVOX* (www.blazevox.org). Both are online journals, and *Psychic Meatloaf* also appears in a print edition.

Ruth Friesen's article "Katie and John" has been accepted by *Rhubarb* magazine. *Rhubarb* is an arts and literary quarterly magazine generated by the Mennonite Literary Society. www.rhubarbmag.com

Falling Immortality, **Robert Downs's** first mystery/manfiction novel, was published by Rainbow Books Inc. March 2011, and is available through Amazon.com.

Albert Noyer's first contemporary mystery novel, *The Ghosts of Glorieta / A Fr. Jake Mystery* is set for May release by Plain View Press of Austin, TX. Noyer is the author of the A.D. 5th century series, *A Getorius and Arcadia Mystery*.

B.K. Bryans' latest novel, *Those '67 Blues*, about the Navy's air war over North Vietnam, was published in April by Patriot Media, Inc. of Gulf Breeze, Florida. Details at www.brianbryans.com and www.patriotmediainc.com.

The **Tony Hillerman Conference** will be November 10-12 at the Hotel Santa Fe in Santa Fe. The agenda presented by seasoned professionals includes workshops on the craft of writing and the art of getting published. Call 505-471-1565 or www.wordharvest.com.

Announcements

The Office of Continuing Education at **West Texas A&M University** conducts its annual Writers' Academy "Writing to Sell: The Facts about Fiction" June 20-24 on campus. The five-day academy will offer four courses taught by four published authors along with the option of an in-depth manuscript critique. For more information call the Office of Continuing Education at 806-651-2037 or visit wtamu.edu/oce

The Crested Butte Writers Conference will be held June 17-19. www.crestedbuttwriters.org/conf.php.

The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts is accepting prose fiction and creative nonfiction submissions. The reading period ends on August 15. They publish (very) tiny, compressed prose creations of **600 words or less**. "Word count alone doesn't create compression, so we ask that you also consider why this piece works for a journal obsessed with what's compressed." <http://matterpress.com/journal>

The **University of Alabama** announces its annual *Black Warrior Review* contest. *Black Warrior Review* publishes poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and art by Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winners alongside up-and-coming writers. Deadline: September 1. www.bwr.ua.edu

The Cat Writers' Association is accepting entries for its Communications Contest with more than \$12,000 in prize money in its kitty. www.catwriters.org. Deadline is July 1.

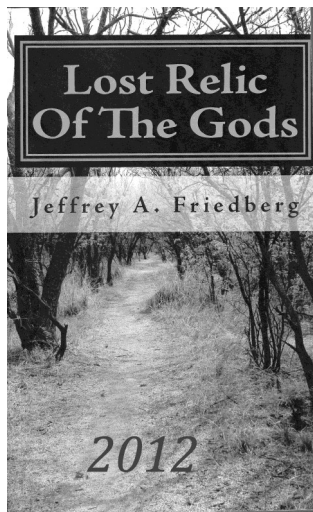
The 5th Annual **New Mexico Book Awards** is accepting entries. Until July 1, 2011, the entry fee is \$40 per category (there are over 35 categories). www.NMBookAward.com or www.NMBookCoop.com

The **Scare The Dickens Out of Us** ghost story writing contest for 2011 offers a first place prize of \$1000 for the best original, previously unpublished ghost story 5000 words or less. Entries are accepted beginning July 1. The contest post-mark deadline is October 1, 2011. Full rules are at www.clarklibraryfriends.com.

The **Oregon Coast Children's Book Writers Workshop** is July 11-15 in Oceanside, OR. www.occbww.com.

Rhubarb magazine is soliciting submissions from writers and artists who self-identify as being of Jewish, Ukrainian, or Mennonite cultural heritage for a special issue to be published in spring 2012. "We share much in our common history: emigration in the face of oppression, pride of community, marginalization within the mainstream. This issue will explore how the writing and art we now make expresses both these commonalities and differences." Deadline: December 1. www.rhubarbmag.com/specialcrops.php

www.higherfaithpublications.com is looking for Christian or very clean novelettes between 10,000 and 20,000 words. They also publish **Highlights of Homeschooling** www.hshighlights.com which seeks short factual fictional stories (800-1500 words) about actual events, people or places in history that kids grade 3 to 6 would enjoy. Write Highlightsfreebird@yahoo.com to ask for a sample history study unit. Another of their publications is www.whateverlovely.com, an online FREE magazine that wants short fictional stories about lovely things, no death or dying stories or cancer stories.

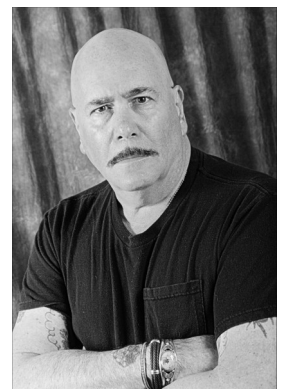


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No Computer in Heaven?

Thursday, September 30, 2010

This is an exact quote in an email I received from a friend who was dying: "I don't know how I can go to heaven without my computer." He said he had suffered a heart attack and his kidneys were shutting down. I immediately called him. Told him I would be right over to spend time with him. He asked me not to. Said he was busy gathering important papers and promised to call me when he was admitted to hospice.

Sunday, October 3, 2010

Before he could enter hospice for skilled nursing care, my friend died alone in his apartment. He never called me back.

No Computer in Heaven?

by Donald DeNoon

For Billy Burns

I don't know how I can go to heaven
Without my computer.
It holds my thoughts, my dreams
My poetry
Contains more of me
Than the world could ever imagine
Preserves messages
Between me and my friends
Connects me
To an infinite world of knowledge
Fingertips and keyboard have bonded
To capture emotion
Release feeling.

Doctor tells me
It's just a matter of time.
Go home and get ready to die.
But there is so much more I want to do
And I really need a computer
Please, God, can't you make an exception?
Isn't there some special connection
In heaven for guys like me?
Because
I don't know how I can go to heaven
Without my computer.

Donald DeNoon read this poem at the April 19 SouthWest Writers meeting as part of the celebration of poetry month.

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Mixed Constructions Nonsense

by Dodici Azpadu

As writers, we can be lulled by careless speech into thinking that what we hear is correct on paper.

The reason the Yankees lost the series was because of their pitching.

Sounds correct, doesn't it? Phrases like the following often result in mixed construction.

Is when, Is where, The reason ... is or was

These words suggest place, time, and causality; however, place, time, and causality often do not make sense with the verbs *is, are, was, or were*. After forms of the verb **to be** (*is, are, was, were*), a noun that renames the subject or an adjective that modifies the subject is customary. In the example above **was** is followed by an adverbial clause **because of their pitching**.

The Yankees lost the series because of their pitching.

Misplaced, Limited and Dangling Modifiers

Mixed constructions are frequently related to misplaced and dangling modifiers because errors in these groups do not make logical or grammatical sense. Misplaced limiting modifiers are epidemic in speech. Use the following limiting modifiers cautiously:

Only, even, almost, nearly and just

I only want my father to pay for tuition.

In this sentence, **only** modifies the verb **want**. Surely the speaker has other wants. Do not put a limiting modifier in front of a verb, unless you intend to modify the verb. The rule is to place a limiting modifier directly in front of the word or words it modifies. The meaning of a sentence changes depending on where **only** is placed.

I want only my father to pay for tuition.

I want my father to pay for tuition only.

Consider another example of a misplaced limiting modifier.

I just went to the grocery store, not to the bar.

Just modifies *went*, but to what purpose? Correctly written, *just* limits grocery store, not *went*, as in the example that follows.

I went just to the grocery store, not to the bar.

Sometimes you do want to limit the verb, as in the following example.

Sometimes, I can't even find the keyboard, much less strike the keys.

You may leave the grammatical subtleties to a paid copy editor, or you can save money by avoiding the faulty construction, which is often wordy as well as incorrect.

The Good Fight

by Olive Balla

The current economy has become a tough sparring partner for those of us who dream of seeing our stories in print. Many budding writers, after having been rejected for the umpteenth time, are tempted to crawl off into a corner and lick their wounds while hugging their latest manuscript to their bosoms. After finally getting a bellyful of rejection, a friend of mine - a published playwright with two sold and performed plays under her belt - has permanently packed away her story telling persona. That's not only sad, but it's a loss to our culture.

It's not that I can't relate to my friend. I can.

More than one agent has responded to my email query with words decrying harsh fiscal realities and suggesting my story might be marketable in less turbulent times. One soft-hearted agent actually apologized for turning me down. She offered words of comfort, saying her refusal did not mean my writing was not good; in fact, she'd spent a great deal of time in making her decision, but she could only accept authors who are a "sure fire" sell.



So, where does that leave those of us who are not of the J.K. Rowling ilk? What are the options available to those of us who would be thrilled just to have our work out there, and hopefully, being read - even if our readership might not number in the tens of thousands? The good news is that there are still some avenues open to today's writers.

Many authors are opting to self-publish, shouldering the task of marketing their own books. This approach can not only cost a great deal of the author's upfront money, but is heavily contingent upon the amount of time the author is willing, or able, to put into selling herself.

Other writers have put their stories online, selling them for ninety-nine cents a pop as E-books, hoping to position themselves ahead of the curve in what some say is the future of publishing. This tactic has potential, especially when there are so many folks willing to risk ninety-nine cents on a virtual book rather than spend eight dollars for a paperback.

Some shop their books to small publishing houses in hopes that having one published book will lead to heightened marketability for the next. But the small publisher will often purchase the book for a flat rate, sometimes a very small amount, and will not offer much in the way of an advance for future books. I know one writer who was thrilled to have her first book published by a small house, but had to start all over again when the publisher went bankrupt.

One thing for sure, the art of writing has metamorphosed into a completely different creature from what it was fifty years ago. Or perhaps the art itself has not changed so much

as has its audience. People whose lives are scheduled in five minute increments simply don't have the time, or the patience, to slog through an initial ten pages of description before getting to the meat of a story. For those of us who feel it necessary to bring the reader up to speed on characters and their pre-story lives, this presents a challenge. At what point in the story should we describe our protagonist's physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional attributes? How much detail should we offer about the setting?

Having spent hundreds of dollars on writing how-to's, I've found one golden thread that connects them all: if I want my fiction to be published, I must adopt a marketable style of writing and I must know my audience.

But isn't writing merely to sell prostituting the craft? That depends upon one's perspective, as well as one's goals. Every writer comes to a fork in the path and must make a choice: she can stubbornly stick to her style and be satisfied with the superlatives offered by friends and family; or she can sharpen her technique so that complete strangers will not only want to read her stories, but will pay to do so.

As for me, my story-teller's head may be bloodied, but remains unbowed. To give energy to the thought of hanging up my writer's crop and jodhpurs is anathema to me. Because the escapism of fiction brought me through a difficult stretch in my life, I will continue to find time to close out the rest of the world and catapult my senses into other times, other places, and other dimensions. I will continue tweaking, refining, and querying. I will continue to pay my subscriptions to various writers' magazines, I will enter writing contests, and I will continue to connect with other writers at meetings and conferences. But most importantly, to paraphrase Winston Churchill: I will never, never, never give up.

A retired educator, Olive Balla is a professional musician who lives in Los Lunas with her husband Victor and their puppy HalfNote. Ms. Balla is currently shopping one mystery entitled An Arm And A Leg, and has nearly completed a second entitled Settlings.

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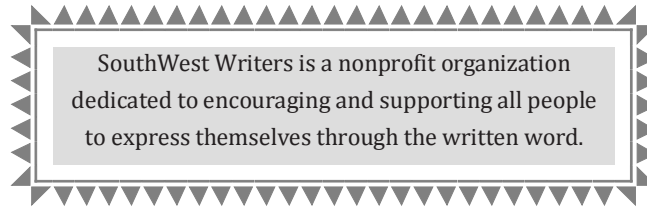
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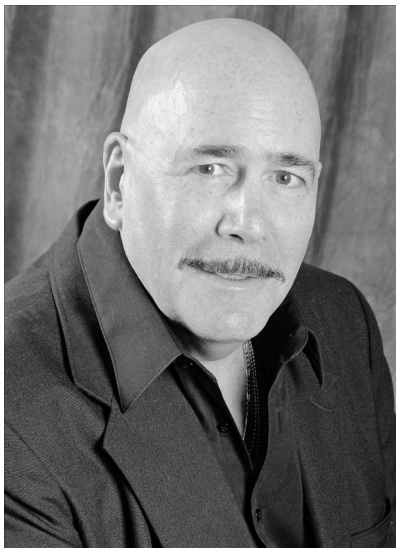


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