

# Pikes Peak Writer

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## TOP 10 Rules of Networking as a Writer

By Beth Groundwater

To follow up on my on-line chat about networking, I thought I'd share with PPW members the top ten rules of networking as a writer that I've learned in the last few years of doing just that. What exactly is this thing called networking? It is simply goal-directed friendship. We all do it in all parts of our lives. When we move to a new neighborhood, we meet the neighbors to gather names of good dentists, doctors and decorators and to find playmates for our children. When we attend a writing conference or join a writing group, we meet others to trade information on agents, editors, and publishers, to learn the business and craft of writing and to find critique partners.

### Where do writers network?

In one-on-one personal contacts, through professional organizations, such as PPW and the national organization for your genre, through writing conferences and workshops, online in e-mail groups, discussion lists and community Web sites. No matter where or how you network—be it in writing, on the telephone or face-to-face—there are certain rules you should follow to succeed. So, without further ado, here are the rules.

### Plan your networking

Target the people you want to contact and make carefully researched efforts to build relationships. Develop a SMART objective (specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, time-bound) for a networking opportunity—what you plan to get out of

this conference, this organization, this e-mail loop, this person. But also be prepared to take advantage of connections that fall in your lap.

### Do research

Collect information on networking groups and associations to find out which ones will work for you. Research your contacts by asking them questions so you'll know with whom you are dealing. Ask your contacts what they know about others. Keep your eyes and ears on news, current events and local developments in the writing business.

### Be professional (polite, fair, honest)

Make a good impression when meeting someone—make eye contact, smile, introduce yourself, shake hands,

*continued on page 6*

## “The Writer's Life”—Critique Groups

By D.B. deClerq

You put words on paper, day after day, until a finished manuscript sits on your desk. You let your mother, spouse and best friends read it. They love it. You bask in the praise and wonder if you should start querying agents. The answer is a resounding no.

A disinterested third party is what you need now. Several, in fact. A good critique group can mean the difference between sending out a polished, professional manuscript and sending pages that will be rejected somewhere halfway down the first page. They'll point out your spelling, grammar and punctuation *faux pas*. More importantly, they'll find your plot holes, weak characterizations, and stilted dialogue.

There are different kinds of critique groups. What you want is a group of people who will give you honest feedback. You need to know what works as well as what doesn't. Because if all you hear about are the problems with your writing, you won't know what to keep. When a problem is pointed out, a suggestion for how to

*continued on page 2*

“You get ideas from daydreaming. You get ideas from being bored. You get ideas all the time. The only difference between writers and other people is we notice when we're doing it.” — Neil Gaiman

# From the Editor

By Debbie Meldrum



“How did you do on your goals this month?”

At the end of each Board of Directors Meeting, Chris Mandeville asks everyone to answer two questions. The

first is how we did on the writing goals we set for the previous month. The second is what goals we want to meet in the coming month. I send out a similar challenge to a Yahoo! Group list I'm part of on the first day of each month.



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Why this emphasis on goals? Goals are self-imposed deadlines, and deadlines are motivating for most people. One of my high school teachers had a theory he referred to as Greenwood's Law of Delay. It stated that the more time allotted to complete a task, the longer that task would take. If he gave students two weeks to write a research paper, the majority would finish it the night before it was due. If he gave the same students a month to turn in the same paper, the majority would finish the night before the paper was due.

Why monthly goals? I guess you could pick any length of time, but a month seems to be manageable for most people. And there is a built in trigger that reminds us where the end of that time period is. We have to turn the page on the calendar.

Setting monthly goals also forces you to break your overall task (“write a novel”) into bite-size portions (“outline the major plot points and write character sketches for the antagonist and protagonist” or “write two chapters”). It gets you thinking about what you need to make the long journey through your manuscript. Are there facts you need to research? What are the characters' goals and conflicts? What motivates them?

How do you know what you can accomplish in a month? That's a tricky one, and the only way I know is by trial and error. I tend to set really tough goals for myself. This can be motivational, or it can just seem too daunting to tackle. You'll have to figure out what works for you. Think about what other things will claim your time in that month. Do you have tickets for a concert or is there a big family function? Are you going to be busy with an important project at work? These things will impact how much time and energy you'll have to give to your writing.

Some people set word or page count goals. Others state how much time they'll spend writing. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. The best advice I can give is to play around with goal setting for a month or two. See whether a time goal or a page count goal works better for you. It may be that you'll have to adjust depending on what other commitments you have for that month. Be realistic. Be honest. Most of all, be flexible.

So, what are your goals for the next month?

## “The Writers Life”—Critique Groups

*continued from page 1*

fix it should follow. Sometimes the person giving feedback will feel a scene doesn't work but can't quite pinpoint what the problem is. This happens. But it should be the exception rather than the rule.

Some people prefer groups who all write in the same genre. If you write fantasy, you probably want at least one person who is familiar with the genre. They can point out the clichés and tired plots or characters. But it's not necessary for everyone in the group to write the same thing. As a matter of fact, it can be helpful for someone who never reads fantasy to read your work. They won't know the conventions and may be confused by a term that is commonly used by fantasy authors but not in the rest of the world.

Should everyone be at the same experience level? Not necessarily. If a more experienced writer is willing to share her expertise, the others can improve more than they might have by struggling on their own. And beginning writers can be excellent readers

who give extremely helpful critiques.

Finding a critique group can be a challenge. Not only do the members have to agree to how the group should be run, but it helps if the personalities work well together. You don't all have to be best friends, but personality clashes can ruin the group for everyone. Spelling out ways to deal with conflicts before they happen can save everyone a lot of headaches later. It also helps if the group members have common goals with regard to their writing.

Pikes Peak Writers hosts Open Critiques most months. You can come and be critiqued or just listen. You may find others who want to form a critique group with you. Or you may find an established group that you'd fit with. Open Critique dates and times are listed at [www.pikespeakwriters.com](http://www.pikespeakwriters.com).

Realize that everyone is nervous at first in a critique situation. It can be scary to hear negative comments about your work. But it does get easier, and you will see an improvement in your work—if you find the right group.

# Muse of the Month



Ruh's Muse of the Month  
As told to Chris Mandeville

*Ruh (pronounced "Roo") is a service dog and PPW/C mascot. He likes stories of all kinds, especially those involving good chase scenes. His favorite things are writers, children, his cat Loki, and Fontina cheese.*

## OCTOBER

As I lie here enjoying the last of the summer weather, dozing off and on while listening to a baseball playoff game, I can't help but wonder what my good friend **Ron Heimbecher** is doing. My guess is he's home watching the game with Sailor the Dog curled up at his feet. Sometimes I envy Sailor, having his own Web site and such (check out [SailortheDog.com](http://SailortheDog.com)), but I digress. I mention Ron because he's such an incredible, inspiring guy. We haven't been pals all that long—a tad over a year, I'd guess—but he's one of my favorite PPW people. He started out volunteering as the PPWC Transportation Coordinator, and the next thing I know he's PPW Vice President. I tell you, I could not be happier about that. It means I get to hang out with him a bunch more. I particularly enjoyed seeing his performance at American Icon 3. He read from one of his *Solace Creek* stories, and man-oh-man, talk about inspiring. Writing as Ron Lynch Chalice, he's created an entire Colorado town of over 350 people, er, characters. There's a dozen associated Web

sites, by golly, for his fictional newspapers, broadcast network, mega-retailer, church... It's like a real town. Don't believe me? Go see for yourself at [RonChalice.com](http://RonChalice.com). I'm not telling you about this to "plug" his site (though I certainly wouldn't mind if you ordered a book, calendar or wallpaper from him). I bring this up because his work is so doggoned inspiring. Makes me wanna create my own make-believe town, or perhaps I should start smaller, like with a dog park. "Ruh's Ruff-n-Tumble Canine Playground." I could populate it with all sorts of dogs, from miniature Chihuahuas to the largest, droolin'est Mastiff. Maybe include some cats, too. And squirrels, definitely squirrels. Hey, do you think that Ron would make me a Web site for my playground and all the doggy tales (tails, get it?) that come out of it??? Oh, in case you haven't figured it out, Ron is my muse for October. Need a little inspiration in your writing life? Have a chat with Ron. He's got plenty to go around.

## NOVEMBER

For this month I couldn't limit myself to just one muse. Here's why: **Barbara Nickless** and **Beth Groundwater** are the Dynamic Duo of PPW's nonconference events. Their PPW teamwork began when they worked the pitch appointment desk together at PPWC 2006. I could tell right away that they formed a winning combo. Now they use their joint brainpower, creativity and ingenuity to think up and produce fantastic programming. I'm inspired by them at each and every event, as I see them working hard to make everything run smoothly. They smile in the face of tight deadlines, stand tall when confronted by last-minute changes, speak in front of large groups without breaking a sweat, and leap capital letters in a single bound! Their grace, professionalism and style in their personal writing careers inspires me, too.

**Barb Nickless** is serving her second year on the Pikes Peak Writers Board of Directors as Workshops Director. Her science fiction and horror stories have appeared in a wide variety of magazines and anthologies. *To Each Man an Island*, her novel-length mystery manuscript, placed first in PPW's Paul Gillette contest, first in the Colorado Gold, and second in the Daphne du Maurier Award for Excellence in Mainstream Mystery/Suspense. She's currently in edits with her agent, and I know that any day now we'll hear of a big

sale. Wow. She's beautiful, smart and talented, too. And tall. I like Barb. If my socks came off, she'd impress them right off me.

**Beth Groundwater** is PPW's Vice President in charge of Programming. She's had six short stories published, including one in *Wild Blue Yonder*, Frontier Airlines' in-flight magazine, and her amateur-sleuth novel, *A Real Basket Case*, was released in hardcover earlier this year. And we've not seen the last of her by far! What impresses me most about Beth is that behind her relaxed demeanor is a real go-getter. She orchestrated a marketing blitz to promote her novel, doing more appearances than McGruff the Crime Dog. I wasn't at all surprised to learn they'd paid off—she recently outsold her advance. So don't let her sweet smile and kind words lull you into a false sense of mellowness. If Beth says in that soft voice of hers that she's going to do something, stand back. Get out of the way. Run with your tail between your legs if you have to, because this woman's on fire.

## Ruh's News

I really enjoyed raising funds for the PPWC Scholarship Fund at the last PPWC, so I thought I'd help out my friends who put on PPW's nonconference events. These folks need a microphone system. I invite you to join me in a fundraiser to purchase one. Here's what you do: come to a Write Brain session at Cottonwood and browse the used books we have on display. When you find a book or two (or three or four) that you like, make a donation to the micRUHphone fund and you can take your fiction selections home with you. It's that easy.

Or if you don't live close enough to partake in the monthly Write Brain sessions, but you'd still like to help, you can make a direct donation by clicking on the "donate" button at [www.pikespeakwriters.com](http://www.pikespeakwriters.com) under "Latest Info ...".

Also, watch for news about a special book sale on December 11th to benefit the MicRUHphone Fund.

# What Literary Agents Want It's a Matter of Black and White—Maybe

By Linda G. Crume

As literary agents Sandra Bond and Anita Kushen were seated for their panel discussion at the September Write Brain session, the audience wondered aloud if the agents had a dress code. Both were dressed in black and white—but in direct contrast: one in a white tee with a black blazer, the other in black shell with a white shirt.

Sandra and Anita, in their respective agencies, represent both fiction and nonfiction for numerous published and yet-to-be published writers. Both are interested in representing new authors and authors with new, innovative works. Both stressed that it's the personal relationship between an agent in a small agency and the writer that is the key benefit of using a small agency over a large one.

The rigidity of black and white didn't always translate to their responses in the question and answer session. The information about literary agents and their functions each gave was sometimes similar and sometimes contradictory, but always complement the other.

Sandra and Anita began the discussion by describing why a writer should consider using an agent instead of just submitting a manuscript directly to a publisher. The main reason is that some publishers, particularly large publishing houses, will not take unagented work. Also, agents have personal and professional relationships with editors (like it or not—it is sometimes who you know). Agents understand how the publishing business works—something writers, especially those being published for the first time, may not. And, the business of publishing is a lot of work. Agents know what work is involved and how to get it done. Writers could learn the business, but wouldn't they rather be writing?

Once you decide to use an agent, how do you find one? Anita suggested spending time at your local bookstore to find books similar to yours. Check out the acknowledgements for the names of agents who represent work similar to yours. When querying an agent, mention how your book mirrors others the



**Literary Agents Anita Kushen and Sandra Bond**

agent has represented. *Writer's Market* is great resource that devotes an entire section to literary agencies.

What will catch an agent's eye in a query letter? The agents are looking for smart, really intelligent writing. If you have a good hook, use it in your query. Then, follow it up with exceptional writing in your query—no typos, good grammar, and neat format. If humor fits your personality and your pitch—use it in your query.

What in a query letter would be a turn-off? A letter with writing too rigid or dry—let your personality come through. And don't send an attachment in an unsolicited e-mail—an e-mail attachment won't get opened by an agent who does not know the sender. Do not send a query without some biographical information about yourself. If you have credentials regarding your topic or have previously been published, let the agent know. This is particularly critical in a nonfiction query.

Another definite turn-off is saying you're a published author if you've self-published. Be up front and say you're self-published. If a query (or the address line) reveals that it has also been sent to 50 other agents, the package gets trashed. And, as for Scriptblaster, neither agent opens a query coming from Scriptblaster—ever.

Both agents suggested that writers not become distressed over receiving a form rejection letter. Agents are just very busy people who simply cannot personally respond to every query.

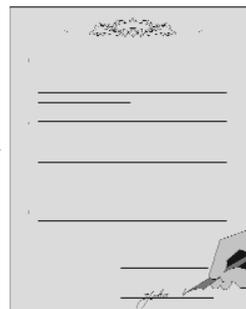
How about a synopsis? What should it include? How long should it be? It was here that the strongly opposing views of the two agents came out. Sandra preferred a good query letter to a synopsis, especially to a really long synopsis. Anita likes receiving a synopsis. Writers were reminded to always write a synopsis in the present tense. Sandra said a better use of a writer's time would be to write a very effective query letter including a five or six sentence paragraph that summarizes the book—for her that would be a good query.

In response to a question about the new trend of sending the first few pages of a manuscript with the query both agents recommended following the guidelines requested by the agent. Some agents may be fine with it, but for some agents the inclusion would be the kiss of death.

Both agreed that the difference for nonfiction is that nonfiction should always have a book proposal. The agents recommended reviewing some of the many good books on nonfiction book proposals but said that in general the proposal would include a table of contents, chapter summaries, and the first two chapters. Again, check the agency guidelines.

The agents recommended writers carefully consider a contractual agreement with an agent. Most agents require them, but some don't. When entering into a contract the agents suggested the least an author must know is what costs the author is expected to pay, including a termination fee, copy fees, mailing, etc., the agent's commission, usually 15%, and how to get released from of the contract. They both suggested writers be wary of agents who require up-front fees.

Sandra reminded writers that the publishing business, including the work of agents, is subjective, that there are exceptions to every rule, and that the differences between publishing fiction and nonfiction are huge. Anita and Sandra were clear in their responses that what agents want from writers is all black and white: intelligent, interesting, well-crafted narrative.



Pikes Peak Writers is pleased to announce a new benefit for members—PPW's Craft Book-of-the-Month program.

Each month, a PPW staff member will recommend a book on the craft or business of writing. PPW will then sell it to members at a discount.

The November recommendation is for *How to Write A Damn Good Novel II* by James N. Frey. It lists for \$19.95 but the PPW member price is \$13.97 plus tax. The December recommendation is *How to Write the Breakout Novel* by Donald Maas and lists for \$19.99. The PPW member price is \$13.97 plus tax.

These books—and many other books for writers—are available for purchase at PPW events. **The member discount applies during the month in which the book is featured, so read the recommendations and then come to the Write Brain Sessions on November 13th and December 11th to pick up your discounted copies. Enjoy!**

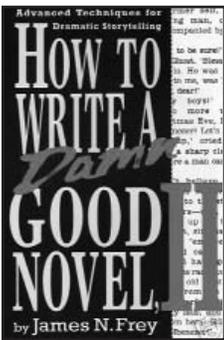
# Craft Book-of-the-Month



## Craft Book for November

*How to Write a Damn Good Novel II*  
By James N. Frey  
Recommended by Laura Pellerin

*Editor's Note: James N. Frey is an author of both fiction and nonfiction, an award-winning playwright and is considered one of America's premiere creative writing instructors.*



Frey's definition of Fiction is "It's all made-up stuff, totally fraudulent, a rendering of events that never happened concerning people who never were." He goes on to say, "Fiction writing is a

service business. Before you sit down to write a damn good novel, you ought to know what your readers want."

Why do people read fiction? They read for pleasure, and to find pleasure the reader must be transported. A writer must show sensuous details to the reader in order to let him feel, not think. While sympathy allows the reader to gain emotional access to a story, Frey points out that linking the hapless protagonist to a noble goal will transport your reader into a believer. "Empathy is a much more powerful emotion than sympathy."

"Suspense: 1. The state of being undecided or undetermined." Frey's advice is to do as the masters do and open with a powerful story question; hook readers so they cannot stop reading.

"Suspense: 2. The state of being uncertain, as in awaiting a decision, usually characterized by some anxiety or apprehension." Frey tells us that readers should

worry about bad things that might happen to sympathetic characters. The author has to plunge the character into a situation of menace and light the fuse.

Dicken's *Christmas Carol* is about Scrooge, a tightwad who has a change of heart toward his long-suffering employee. A protagonist must be driven, and they must be good at what they do. Since the wimpy accountant and his wife are one-dimensional and cannot be driven, they are not the protagonists. A character's ruling passion determines what the character will do when faced with dilemmas to be overcome in the story. A character's dramatic decision to change his passion will enhance personal growth and ups the stakes. At all times, a character must be driven by an active ruling passion, although a dormant passion seen at the start of the story may reappear once the danger is past and things return to normal.

Organizing your fantasy into a coherent sequence is what you do when you form a premise and set out to prove it, just like they do in scientific research. A premise is a brief statement of what happens to characters as a result of story actions. When the story is finished, the writer can then ask, "Is the premise proved by the actions of the story?" If not, the writer needs to change the premise, or the story.

The premise of your story is your truth, it's the way things work out in the world you've created. Your premise is your log line. The three types of premises are chain reaction, opposing forces, and situational. While *Crime and Punishment* has two premises, the crime and the punishment, *War and Peace* has more than two stories, and you know if you've read through the book, it has more than two premises.

**There are Seven Deadly Mistakes you don't want to make.**

**A. Timid of criticism or of writing strongly dramatic material.**

**B. Trying to be literary:** An original writer does not seek to emulate literary "gods."

**C. Ego-Writing:** The author's view is not always sovereign.

**D. Failure to re-dream the dream:** Author's inability to change a premise, a character or plot.

**E. Failure to keep faith:** Life goes on, the writer may give up on writing. Frey's advice: If your significant other doesn't support your writing life, then change your significant other.

**G. Failure to produce:** At some point, you have to decide what you want out of life: clean floors, balanced checkbook or a novel on the rack at 7-11's throughout the state.

James N. Frey winds up his book by informing us how lucky we are to be writers in the Information Age, with word processors to correct errors, writer support groups, conferences, billion-dollar markets and small presses springing up everywhere. "Self-publishing has passed from vanity to being a viable alternative-and potentially an extremely profitable one. . . opportunities for foreign sales abound. . . Novels are often optioned for motion pictures and television . . . Cable TV, made for video cassette movies, and the Fox Network. . ." And as Frey points out in his last chapter, what other profession gives you the opportunity to affect people's lives as profoundly as that of a writer with passion?

**I took the following from this book:**

1) Take your truth, and embellish it. 2) It's your world if it proves your premise. 3) Any man of mine better know that I'm a writer first. 4) But my goal to be published has to be fed with more writing.

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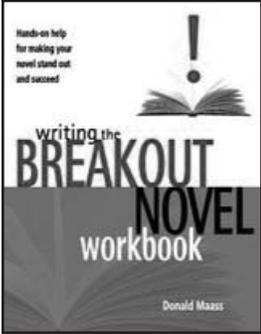
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## Craft Book for December

### *Writing the Breakout Novel Workbook: Hands-On Help for Making Your Novel Stand Out and Succeed*

By Donald Maass

Recommended by Lauri Griffin



Like most writers, I own a shelf full of writing books. This workbook is unique. My own copy is dog-eared and covered with notes.

Donald Maass runs a successful literary agency, The Donald Maass Agency, and is a fiction author himself.

He's been teaching Breakout Novel classes since the year 2000. He has even taught these techniques at the Pikes Peak Writers Conference.

The workbook exercises are applicable for all genres. This book is recommended for those with a finished manuscript, although some of the exercises could be helpful for the building phase of characters and plots. Readers should also be familiar with terms like plot layers, turning points, and backstory.

Maass' suggestions aren't easy or quick. He emphasizes that a breakout book should have tension on every page. And by that he means going through every single scene and page of your novel and adding tension. The 34 chapters include hundreds of questions to help authors improve their novels. Maass says he expects these exercises to give writers hundreds of new ideas for improving their work.

For character development the writer will find exercises on adding heroic qualities,

creating inner conflict, reversing motives, and adding extra dimensions to protagonists and to secondary characters. Exercises on raising stakes, making complications active, heightening turning points, and weaving plot layers will help develop a plot full of complications and tension.

Maass also includes exercises for enhancing first and last lines, measuring inner change, how to create a sense of time and place, how to deal with backstory, and how to strengthen point of view. All exercises are explained with excerpts from bestselling and award-winning novels to illustrate the technique. The workbook is paperback and opens easily so the novelist can write ideas and answers in the spaces provided. The appendix contains a checklist for the 591 tasks in the workbook and advice for pitching.

Any writer who needs help with a specific area of revising should try a few of these exercises.

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# Top Ten Rules of Networking as a Writer

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ask a question. Thank people who have helped you, in public if possible. Don't stalk editors and agents at social functions or in bathrooms and only pitch if you're asked. Give others their turn. When someone posts good news online give them a pat on the back. Tell/E-mail published authors if you like their books. Treat others as equals. Everyone has worth and everyone deserves your respect.

If you can't say anything nice don't say anything at all—never send an e-mail when feeling any kind of negative emotion, never flame, and don't get involved in controversies. Don't criticize another author's work for any reason, to anyone, even in jest. Everyone knows everyone in this business, so don't assume the new friend you made at a conference lunch will keep your secrets. Be discrete. If you decide to gossip, be prepared to be on the receiving end someday. Never drink heavily at a conference.

## Listen, listen, listen

Use questions to identify individuals' primary concerns and at least one piece of personal information. The primary objective of networking should be to understand others' concerns and problems so you can quickly assess whether and how you can help them. Most people focus on themselves and

expound on their credentials. A better approach is to spend most of the time with contacts asking questions and collecting information. Don't make the mistake so many people do. Rather than listening, they are thinking of the next thing they plan to say, thus taking in virtually nothing.

## Ask for help

Talk about yourself and your needs so your contacts can identify how they can help you. Don't be afraid to ask a smart question in a workshop or on an online loop, but be sure the question is "universal" enough to be of interest to everyone. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you know that person can provide it and make it easy for them to do so.

## Create a connection

Find that common place where your interests, lives, and writing intersect. Keep on talking and asking questions until you find that common ground and how at least one of you can help the other. Be open to new ideas, opportunities and people. There can be answers and magic in everything and everyone. Think creatively about how to connect.

## Give more than you take

Provide valuable information on a regular basis for free. Give just to give. Don't give with the sole purpose of getting something back. You'll reap rewards from others feeling they owe you, thinking that you're a nice

person who should be helped, etc. Refer your contacts to other people in your network who can solve their problems. You'll be seen as a problem solver, and those people who benefit from your referrals will be likely to provide you with referrals in return.

## Organize

Put all contact information such as business cards in a single spot and write why you are keeping them on the back of cards. Make note of their interests, what you've shared with them, and when and how to contact them next. Create a database, put them in a Rolodex, and/or add them to the mailing list you are creating for when you sell. Make a to-do list of follow-up actions.

## Follow up

Don't let the connection die. Follow up regularly with members of your network, or they'll forget you exist. Follow through on your commitments, both to yourself and others. Send an article about the topic you were both discussing. Read her critique partner's book and drop a review on Amazon. Join the loop he recommended. Judge that contest, like you promised. Commit yourself to following through on help you receive. Don't abuse others by receiving their help then not acting on it.

Now that you know the rules, go out and have some fun creating your own network of writing buddies!

# American Icon 3

## A Star-Studded Evening



**Beth Groundwater, PPW vice president, Laura Hayden, emcee, and Kirk Farber, contestant**



**Judges Carol Berg, Charles Kaine, and Barbara Samuel scored the contestants**

**By Laura Pellerin**

**American Icon.** The words bring back memories of the longest two minutes of my life, when I stepped up to the mike and read my own work aloud before an audience. What I won that year was a certificate and a PPW sweatshirt.

This year, the prizes were even better. Honorable Mention winners received gift certificates provided by local merchants. Top prizes included manuscript critiques by various editors and a coveted one-on-one consultation with Kristin Nelson of the Nelson Literary Agency in Denver. Judges Carol Berg (award-winning fantasy author), Charles Kaine (founder and editor, Last Knight Publishing), and Barbara Samuel (award-winning romance and women's fiction author) scored each of the 17

contestants as they read aloud.

Each reader introduced his/her piece with a short log line “blurb”, the genre, and the title. This was followed with two minutes of reading. One contestant recited his lyrical narrative from memory! The judges gave a brief but insightful oral critique of the work, per its strong and weak points.

### The major areas judged were:

**Concept:** Is it marketable?

**Plot/Pacing:** Does such a short snippet set the plot into motion or give us clues as to what it holds for the reader?

**Conflict/Hook:** Does the audience want more? Is the concept fresh and intriguing?

**Voice/Mood/Style:** Is it unique, interesting, appropriate for the

genre, emotional?

**Mechanics:** Is the grammar, language flow, and POV executed properly?

**Presentation:** Does the speaker engage the audience?

The contestants lined up and were introduced again so audience members could vote for their favorite. Fresh new faces this year included Barb Dyess with a “fascinating concept” for her historical; David Lazaroff with his poetic tale of cross-cultural lovers; Ed Hickok and Brandon Myers with YA Fantasies; and Jenny Preston’s tense! tense! tense! study of a husband watching his wife contemplate suicide.

While the judges conferred in private to select Icon winners, the participants and guests mingled to sample desserts from Alpine Chef Catering, along with various

beverages provided by PPW.

Kirk Farber’s raffle number even won the last door prize of the evening—clearly a star-studded night for this talented guy who had recently relocated to the Springs. We welcome him and all the newcomers to PPW.

Now the stage is empty until next year. Hone your writing, step up to that mike and take a deep breath. Will you be next year’s winner?

## And the winners:

### Kirk Farber

*Postcards from a Dead Girl*  
Audience Favorite, Best Overall,  
Best Character

### Ron Heimbecher

*The Price of a Heart*  
Best Action

### Andrea Catalano

*License for Liberty*  
Best Voice

### Jenny Preston

*Following Julia Roberts*  
Best Tension

### Mike Hedrick

*Connections*  
Best Premise

### Barb Dyess

*Solomon’s Knight*  
Honorable Mention

### Robin Widmar

*Lochan’s Sun*  
Honorable Mention

### Ed Hickok

*Blood Nation*  
Honorable Mention

### Brandon Myers

*The Yebnti*  
Honorable Mention

# The Business of Writing

## Point of View: The Unappreciated Discipline

By Linda Rohrbough

If you spend time in a writer's critique group, you'll hear some feedback about point of view (POV). Competent handling of POV makes a story work. Incompetent handling can make a story unsellable. A lot of problems I see in manuscripts boil down to this problem, hence I call it the underappreciated discipline.

First, let's define POV as the eyes through which the story is told. POV is also the crux, the basis for the story, and it determines every detail. If you read this article as a story, the point of view is mine. You only see and hear what I know and experience.

Forgive me if this is too elemental, but I also notice sometimes writers get POV confused with what person the story is told in. This article is in first person, because I use the term "I" and "me." I could use second person (you) or third person (they or someone's name like Linda). I can tell the story from my viewpoint in either first person or third person. The person the story is in doesn't determine POV unless I use first person, in which case the story has to be in the viewpoint of the person talking.

So what makes POV so powerful? Frankly, it determines everything. Let's say I have a story where a young woman goes to the bridal store, picks up her wedding dress, tries it on one last time and the dress is too small. The story is going to be different from the bride's viewpoint than from the mother's, the father's, or even the shop owner's. The head I choose to be in is determined by what I want to do with the story. In this example, it could be really interesting to have a cynical shop owner tell the story. She could say things in her head like she just lost ten percent profit margin when all ten pearl buttons popped off.

Now that we've defined POV, let's talk about some common POV errors. I'll present a set of do's and don'ts and describe the symptoms when POV is violated.

1. Avoid describing things the POV character couldn't possibly know. "Sylvia looked at Fred. Fred was upset." How does Sylvia know Fred is upset? This is the old "show don't tell," advice, which in my opinion, is a POV problem. Instead, Sylvia could notice Fred chewed his lip, or his face

turned red and he hit the counter with his fist. Observation of action or body language by our viewpoint character is much more interesting and lets the reader draw the conclusion instead of being told.

2. Avoid "head hopping." This is the writer's "street" term for rapid POV shifts that are unannounced and distracting. First we see the world from one character's viewpoint. The next sentence or paragraph we're suddenly jerked into an omniscient viewpoint or into someone else's thoughts. Readers ask, "What?" and scratch their heads trying to figure out who is talking or where they are in the story. The only working exception to this rule is in sex scenes, mostly in romance novels; and it only works if the writer is clear whose head we're in when feelings or thoughts are being described.

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**"If you find yourself with a lagging story or one with description you know doesn't work, take a look at point of view."**

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3. Look at POV if descriptions don't work. If you find yourself uncomfortable with a description or your critique partners complain your character wouldn't say or do that, you've got a POV problem. You're either not far enough in the character's viewpoint to recognize what they'd say to describe something, or you don't understand enough of their backstory to know who they are. Either way, you've got a POV problem to correct.

4. Experiment with various POV's. One mistake new writers make is not trying different points of view. A change is especially powerful if you have a story or a scene that isn't working. You'll learn about your story even if you abandon the POV. This can often be done in your imagination, though some writers do it on paper.

In our bridal dress example, the ten pearl buttons popping off could be viewed by the father of the bride as something he'll make sure the shop owner corrects without extra charges. And he could be looking for evidence the dress was swapped for a different size to please another customer.



If we get into the head of the mother of the bride, she thinks back to last week's meals, wondering if she used light sour cream in the stroganoff or should have served salad instead of macaroni and cheese. She's watching her daughter's figure for telltale clues of extra pounds.

You see how shifting POV changes the story even if it's the same events, told in the same person. Done correctly, readers learn a lot about the POV character without being "told." TV shows sometimes play with POV by doing an episode where we see the same event through the eyes of several different people. Regular people quickly get bored by this, because they want the story to go someplace. But writers are endlessly fascinated by shifting viewpoints and love the arts-y-ness of a production that explores this discipline.

If you find yourself with a lagging story or one with description you know doesn't work, take a look at point of view. Shift things around a bit and look at the events through another set of eyes. You'll be glad you did.

*Linda Rohrbough has been writing professionally since 1989, has more than 5,000 articles, seven books, and several national awards for her nonfiction and fiction. Her current publisher was bought by Da Capo, a division of Perseus so her latest book will now come out in the spring with a new title Weight Loss Surgery with the Adjustable Gastric Band: Everything You Need to Know Before and After Surgery to Lose Weight Successfully. Visit her updated Web site for more details: [www.LindaRohrbough.com](http://www.LindaRohrbough.com).*

### PPW Holiday Market Booksigning

PPW invites members to participate in a Holiday Market on Saturday December 8th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. put on by Cottonwood Artists' School and the Colorado Farm and Art Market. If you'd like to learn more about how you can sign your books at this event, please contact [president@pikespeakwriters.com](mailto:president@pikespeakwriters.com).

# The Countdown to Conference

By Kirsten Akens, Director, PPWC 2008

It's that time of year again. We know you've already marked your calendar for the 16th annual Pikes Peak Writers Conference, April 25-27, 2008. Now, it's time to get yourself signed up.

For PPW members, registration begins January 1, 2008. Not a member? Think about joining for the best chance to meet with the agents and editors of your choice. Otherwise, nonmembers can register starting February 1.

If you're waffling at all about why you should attend conference, here are the top four reasons to attend PPWC 2008:

## Editors, Agents and Authors (Oh my!)

Each year PPWC welcomes almost 40 editors, agents and authors from all over the country to share their wisdom. 2008 will be no different. From New York to Los Angeles, our presenters this year span the country. Visit our Web site to see just who this year's big names will be!

## Expand-your-mind workshops

PPWC offers over 40 workshops, providing top-notch education for beginners and beyond. This year, per former attendees' requests, we've added an Advanced Workshops Coordinator to our list of staff members who will be focusing on opportunities for those of you who have been coming year after year and are looking for more specialized learning.

*continued on page 11*

# KISS for Writers

By Cindy Keen Reynders

During my early years in the writing trenches, I felt I had finally found my life's calling. I knew somewhere deep inside this was what I had been born to do. I pounded out novel after novel and considered myself a fairly decent writer.

Unemployed at the time, I watched anxiously as the mailman dropped off envelopes every day, none with an acceptance letter. The phone remained aggravatingly silent. Not a single editor wanted to purchase my books. I received all the typical rejection letters. After a while, it seemed getting published was a goal other individuals managed to achieve. Just not me.

Finally, I dusted off my panty hose and went back to work. It was rewarding and brought good benefits, a retirement account and a nice paycheck. I continued to write, but decided it had merely become my hobby. I targeted my market, sent out query letters and manuscripts, but only for fun. That's what I told myself, anyway.

A funny thing happened on the way to my day job. I sold a book. Then I sold another. I had prepared myself for this event years before when I was home taking care of my kids and writing full time. Now I had a busy job and only dabbled with my hobby. I was perplexed, but I wanted to make this work. Needed to make it work. How?

I knew one thing for sure—my writing journey was far from over. It had only begun. More blood, sweat, and tears lurked around the corner. You see, a writing career

can be highly rewarding on one hand, yet overwhelming on the other. Be assured it is definitely worth pursuing if becoming a published author is your life-long passion.

For a split second, I considered calling my boss and telling her I planned to resign. That presented a problem. I enjoyed my job. No way did I want to quit. Overnight, my goals changed. I would learn to establish a writing career in addition to maintaining my full-time job.

I sat down and drafted an action plan. A firm believer in the KISS principle, I decided to utilize this method in combining two careers. Once my ideas flowed onto the paper, the task actually seemed possible. Bit by bit, piece by piece it is working. Here's my version of KISS for writers:

- **KEEP** your own office or office area. It must have a computer just for writing, dedicated file cabinets and ample workspace. It needs to be comfortable and inviting. No other human being is allowed in when you are working unless they want to deal with writer's wrath.

- **IT** needs to be organized. Whether it's your writing projects, your tax records, or your daily thoughts, you must keep everything in order. If you allow your thoughts or your workspace to be overly cluttered and disorderly, you won't function professionally. Maintain a structured schedule that includes networking with other writers, editors, and agents at meetings or conferences in order to build your skills.



- **SIMPLE** time management will allow you to accomplish your goals. If you work eight hours a day, free time is precious. For example, in the evening I could read either for recreation or research. I could outline my next scene while relaxing in the bathtub and get to bed by 9 p.m. I could then get up at 4 a.m. with the birdies, dress, eat a quick breakfast, write until 7 a.m., and head off to work. I could answer writing related e-mails or phone calls during my lunch break. By sticking to this, my lifestyle could be accommodated.

- **SWEETHEART**, take time to sharpen the saw. If you have read Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, you know what I'm talking about. Basically, this means you must take time to enjoy life. Otherwise, you will become dull and worn out and your writing will suffer. Keep yourself healthy and fit. Spend time with your family, visit friends, treat yourself to a movie, take long walks. Camp in your own back yard or take a vacation to Hawaii. Whatever meets your own expectations and maintains your budget.

Am I a time-Nazi? Yes. Does it work? You bet. Keep in mind that no matter how much discipline you maintain there will be occasions when you need to be flexible. Learn to adapt.

Your turn! Sit down and draft your own action plan. See where it takes you. You might be surprised. Most of all enjoy your writing to the fullest. Picture yourself as an artist creating a canvas colored with plots and characters. Your creations are unique. Your talent is unique. You are unique!

# Pikes Peak Writers' Board of Directors

By **Chris Mandeville**, President

PPW's all-volunteer Board of Directors holds elections each fall. The two-year terms are staggered so not all positions need to be filled at the same time. This fall saw some re-elections, some re-positioning, and some volunteers "promoted" to BOD positions from other volunteer jobs. Please join me in welcoming:

## Newly Elected Board Members:

**Ron Heimbecher** began volunteering as Transportation Coordinator for PPWC. He's now Vice President in charge of Operations. Current projects include Web site development, training new volunteers to coordinate transportation for the conference, and teaching an on-line class. Writing as Ron Lynch Chalice, he's penned *Kiss the Breath of Sunset*, a book of poetry, and *Batting Practice*, the first in his series of Solace Creek stories.

**Bret Wright**, who has been the PPWC Flash Fiction Contest Coordinator for several years running, is now PPW's Secretary. In addition to keeping track of votes and taking the minutes, Bret is also working hard on our blossoming Youth Program. Among the many hats he wears, he's the creator, publisher and editor-in-chief of the award-winning e-zine for writers, *Apollo's Lyre*, an eighth grade English teacher, and a prolific writer of fiction, creative non-fiction, nonfiction and poetry.

**Chris Myers**, who has been PPW Secretary for the past two years, remains on the Board as a Member-at-Large. She continues to help with conference moderators and Reality Track, as well as pitching in with the marketing committee. Her new interests include our Youth Program and the faculty selection committee for PPWC. In her personal life she multi-tasks, too—on top of her full-time job responsibilities, she writes every single day.

Award-winning novelist **Karen Fox** is our Faculty Director for PPWC. One of the founding members of Pikes Peak Writers, and a long-time volunteer for PPWC (she's been involved in every conference since the inception of PPWC in 1993), Karen comes to us with a wealth of experience. We're all sure to benefit from her terrific contacts in the publishing industry when it comes time for PPWC 2008.

**Kirsten Akens** is our Conference Director for the 16th Pikes Peak Writers Conference. She served as Director in 2005—do you remember when Rupert Holmes sang "Happy Birthday" to her?—and we're thrilled to have her back. She's been an innovator at PPWC, instituting the Relax and Renew Room and the Reality Track. At the same time she is committed to maintaining the classic components and high standards that PPWC has become known for. Set aside April 25-27, 2008 to see what great stuff she has in store for us at the next PPWC.

Our new *NewsMagazine* Editor is **Debbie Meldrum**, who comes to the Board after being one of our "go to" volunteers and a regular *NewsMag* contributor. PPW is fortunate to have Debbie turn her abundant enthusiasm, professionalism and creativity toward our already-stellar publication. In her personal writing, she writes cozy mysteries as D.B. deClerq, while her mainstream fiction is penned under her own name.

**Pat Kennelly** is a woman of many and varied talents. She's a restaurant owner, freelance editor, writer of chick-lit, poetry and short stories, chef and "foodie" columnist. We first "discovered" her as PPWC bookstore coordinator and knew immediately what a great asset she'd be to any aspect of PPW. After doing a fantastic job as Board Member and *NewsMag* Editor for a year, Pat volunteered to fill a vacancy in the officer position of Treasurer, revealing yet another facet to this multi-talented Renaissance woman. She's transitioned seamlessly into the Treasurer role, making a tough job look easy.

I (**Chris Mandeville**) have been elected PPW President for a second term. I'm honored to be serving in this capacity, and have been hard at work to bring new, exciting programs to PPW, while continuing to manage the programs that have made PPW and PPWC nationally recognized and respected. I'm excited about helping form a Youth Program that is scheduled to launch in January; I've been working with a team of grant writers to bring needed funds into our burgeoning nonprofit; and I help out at as many PPW events as possible. Ruh and I love meeting PPW members and visiting with friends at the Write Brains, workshops

and booksignings throughout the year. On occasion I write fiction—I'm currently working on a post-apocalyptic adventure story.

## Seated Members:

**Barb Nickless** remains our ever-faithful Workshops Director, producing monthly Write Brain sessions, quarterly workshops, booksignings, and the popular American Icon competition. In her personal writing, this award-winning author is hard at work with her agent to bring her mystery *To Each Man an Island* to a bookstore near you.

**Beth Groundwater** continues as Vice President in charge of Programming, working with Barb Nickless to produce more than 15 nonconference events each year. In between PPW events, she travels promoting her mystery *A Real Basket Case*, and is working on another novel.

Longtime volunteer and founding member of Pikes Peak Writers, **Charles Rush**, will serve a second year as Member-at-Large. In this capacity he chairs the grant writing committee, is a member of the PPWC hotel committee, and mentors newer members of the BOD. Charlie's second historical fiction novel was recently released—*One Turn of the Cards* is based on the Civil War experiences of one of his real-life ancestors who served in Terry's Texas Rangers.

Finally, **Dawn Smit Miller** will be our trusty Contest Director for another year. She's been responsible for instituting changes that have modernized and streamlined the contest. We're fortunate to have her working on further contest improvements and training new volunteers to run the program. She's the author of *Rainbow Editing*, a useful resource for any writer, as well as the science fiction novel *Through Spiral Eyes*. Her current project is a collaboration with her father, retired homicide investigator Lou Smit.

# August Write Brain

## Playing Spider, Enticing Your Web Audience



Featuring Ron Heimbecher

By Margaret Brettschneider

Ron Heimbecher used a whole cast of “spider” characters to show how to make a writer’s presence felt on the Web. He offered information on everything from creating a basic Web site to making use of social networking, syndication, and multimedia in a brisk two-hour session that left those of us who are “technologically challenged” quite breathless.

Ron claimed the most important piece of information to take away from the workshop was how to “feed” a search engine so your Web visitors can find you frequently. He gets about 1,000 hits a day, but if he doesn’t post for 30 days, the numbers drop by approximately 60 percent, so methods for feeding are vital. First, have fresh content. At least once a month, change something. Second, post every few days—upload a new photo, add comments, or blog. Do something to keep the search engine active in finding you. It is never necessary to pay someone to get you into search engines, though several people will try

to convince you to pay them for that service.

Another important feature is use of multiple keywords. When putting together your Web page, enter as many keywords, separated by commas, as actually fit your topic, on every page of your site, and every entry in your blog. Ron gave the example of a historical romance set in the south in the 1800s. Keyword tags would be fiction, romance, historical, south and 1800s.

The most critical tip for creating and maintaining your Web site is branding. Branding is making sure the title, logo, font, colors and bleeding look about the same on each page so a visitor will immediately know it is “you.” Be sure to invite the reader in with answers to the five W questions of the journalist: who, what, why, where and when. Always include contact information. Put a photo that tells your story on everything—blog entries, forums, discussion boards, business cards. Use your Web address on everything as well. Be sure you have a signature line to be added to each post. These things help people recognize and respond to your brand. Ron informed us that PayPal will provide you with a free “shopping cart” should you want to allow visitors to buy directly from your Web site.

Another rapidly-expanding Web tool is social networking, or the ability to create online discussions. It may be MySpace, which has free blogging software, forums and discussion boards (which Ron recommends you have moderated rather than unmoderated), e-mail loops similar to our PPW loop, and online newsletters to your own mailing list. You should use a program for mailing lists that ensures they are CANSPAM compliant. There also must be a way for the visitor to “unsubscribe” if he chooses to do so. Be sure you

don’t spam, as the results are negative rather than positive. Ron said one must protect himself from “trolls” who are lurking to start “flame wars.” Some in the audience knew more about these than the rest of us.

Beth Groundwater explained how such a group might work. In her mystery group, each member blogs on a certain day, and occasionally they have a guest blogger. Content can be an exchange of information on mystery writing, what’s going well, what isn’t, agent information, or other topics relevant to mystery writers.

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**“When putting together your Web page, enter as many keywords, separated by commas, as actually fit your topic, on every page of your site, and every entry in your blog.”**

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There are other more advanced opportunities, like syndication, multi-media events, perhaps podcasting a radio interview, uploading video to your own site and putting it on YouTube to expand your audience. This, too, comes with a warning. Videos take a great deal of bandwidth, and you don’t want to pay for that yourself. Get it on Ziddio or YouTube and let them pay for the bandwidth.

All these topics were proposed in a fast-paced manner, but with Ron’s follow-up PPW WriteChat two days later and the Web site full of Spider characters working as a tutorial at [playingspider.com](http://playingspider.com) we should all be enticing our Web audience soon.

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## The Countdown to Conference

*continued from page 9*

### Pitch your project (or practice)

Ready to sell that book? PPWC offered 270 pitch appointments in 2007. An integral part of this conference, pitches provide you the opportunity to meet one-on-one at no extra charge with the people who can help you make your dreams become reality. Not ready

to pitch? Last year more than 125 Read and Critique appointments allowed up-and-coming authors the chance to test out their writing.

### Networking, networking, networking

Not only will you meet our conference faculty, but you’ll meet others just like you. Those just starting out to those who have been

in this for years. You’ll find support and assistance and likely meet new friends. Looking for a critique group? Or perhaps just someone to listen to your frustrations? Look no further. PPWC is the perfect annual gathering point for writers of all fiction genres.

Keep an eye out for the official conference brochure in the mail next month. After that, information will be updated regularly on the PPWC Web site, [www.pikespeakwriters.com](http://www.pikespeakwriters.com).



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## Sweet Success

**Compiled by Janice Black**

We have all been so busy with our day jobs, families, works in progress, research for said works and marketing efforts that we have neglected the tooting of our own horns. Come on. That is the very purpose of this column.

**Robert Spiller:** The second installment in the Bonnie Pinkwater mystery series, *A Calculated Demise* has now been released. It should be available at the bookstore where you purchased *The Witch of Agnesi*. For more information and for updates go to [www.rspiller.com](http://www.rspiller.com).

**Amy Koumis:** Amy signed with agent Lilly Ghahremani of Full Circle Literary.

Those two announcements came to me in two different ways. One was sent by the author and the other was submitted by a friend of the author. Brag about yourself or brag about a fellow writer. Compose a full-blown exposé, or just send in the nitty-gritty, and I'll put it together.

Send all contributions and inquiries to [SweetSuccess@pikespeakwriters.com](mailto:SweetSuccess@pikespeakwriters.com). One

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more thing, send a photo or two. (When I get the chance you can be sure I'll be sharing the photo for my driver's license that was taken in about 1999; that was a good year and the photographer was an artist, had an eye for beauty.)

## Hot Topics

### Donations to PPW

Please remember PPW when planning your year-end charitable donations.

### New PPW Web site Launched November 1

Soon members will be able to read the *Pikes Peak Writer NewsMagazine* online at the new Pikes Peak Writers Web site. This will not only save paper but reduce postage costs. Watch the current Web site and the Yahoo! group list for more information.

## Upcoming PPW Events:

### December Write Brain

**FREE for PPW Members!**

**Tuesday, December 11**

**6:30-8:30 p.m.**

**Location: Cottonwood Artists' School**

### Brainstorming, Books, and Partying—What Could be Better?

**Featuring Beth Groundwater, Barb Nickless, and Pam McCutcheon**

For our December Write Brain, we plan to have fun! First, we'll try out various brainstorming techniques that you can apply when you're stuck and at a loss for ideas. Bring paper and a writing implement and be prepared to try a sensory inventory, clustering, writing prompts, and the *Writer's Brainstorming Kit* to get yourself thinking in new directions. After sharing the results of our collective creativity, we'll break for cookies, socializing and a holiday book sale, so you can purchase some great holiday gifts and stocking stuffers. All books in the PPW bookstore will be 10% off list price, except for our craft book of the month. Also, we have a trunk load of donated books, available to exchange for donations to the MicRUHphone Fund. PPW will provide cookies, but if you'd like to participate in an informal cookie exchange, bring two dozen of your own and take home an assortment minus the number you ate.

If you would like to participate in this Write Brain, please RSVP to [rsvp@ppwc.net](mailto:rsvp@ppwc.net) and include your contact information.