

Pikes Peak Writer

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PikesPeakWriters.com: Our New House

By Ron Heimbecher

Want to know how many people expressed an interest in joining Pikes Peak Writers in November? 265! It's December 1. Debbie is on deadline, anxiously awaiting this article, and our new Web site (pikespeakwriters.com) has been on line for one month. So far, 265 people have visited our Membership Information page and we've had a total of 10,004 visitors. (Baseball fans and math majors, see the accompanying table for more stats.)

Thanks to the technical work of PPW member Maleesha Speer, PikesPeakWriters.com brings an array of new features and a new technology base that makes adding and updating information exceptionally easy. Articles, events, even photographs can be added to the site in seconds with

no special expertise or programming skills. We have new "Members Only" content and discussion areas, a calendar, three new Weblogs (Blogs) and more.

In early November, we sent user names and passwords to all members' e-mail addresses. This user name and password, when entered into the "Login" box on the new Web site, allow access to all member areas and visibility to articles and content items that are for members only. We recommend that you change your password through the "Your Details" link on the User Menu. Passwords should contain a combination of upper and lower case letters and numbers. Don't use something that may be easy to guess, like common words, names, or dates. For help on this, and many more items, visit the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

sections. Now (he says, rubbing his hands), let's take a tour.

Events are an important part of our organization's commitment to our membership and the community, and they are a predominate part of our Web presence. The next upcoming event will always be on the front page. In the lower left corner of the page, you'll see a two-month calendar. A colored box on a date means there is an event taking place on that day. The top menu "Calendar" link will show you a large calendar of the current month, which can be scrolled to the next month, or jumped to a specific date. Finally, under the Calendar link, you'll find an "Events" link that will provide a list of detailed information.

The Pikes Peak Writers Forum, accessible by the "Forum" links on the

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The Writer's Life— A New Year's Resolution for Writers

By D.B. deClerq

The holidays are over. A new year is upon us. Many resolutions have been made, and many of those have already been broken. We writers like to make

resolutions and set goals for our writing at this time of year.

"I'm going to finish that novel before the Pikes Peak Writers Conference so I can pitch to [fill in the blank]."

"I will submit one short story a month this year."

"I will take a couple of classes to help improve my craft."

You may have made one or all of those resolutions. Good for you. They are all worthy goals. May I suggest another?

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"Anything's possible if you've got enough nerve."

—J.K. Rowling

from the editor



Changes

January is a natural time to make changes. Ringing in the New Year and hanging up that new calendar seem to trigger something in us. We're ready for

new goals, new ideas and new things to go with our brand new shiny year.

Maleesha Speer and Ron Heimbecher have given the members of Pikes Peak Writers a brand new shiny Web site at pikespeakwriters.com. Now, I don't want to

steal Ron's thunder. He has a very informative article about the Web site elsewhere in the *NewsMagazine*. I do want to talk on the subject of what I like about the new Web site.

My favorite thing so far is Aaron Brown's *Diascribe*. What's a *Diascribe*? It's a blog that isn't being called a blog. He is on a mission to change "that word" as he calls it. If Aaron's fiction is half as funny as his bl— I mean *Diascribe* posts, I can't wait to read it.

Another fun feature is the member forum. Topics range from finding the right critique group to talking about the best book you read in 2007. For the record, I listed three favorite books for the year, but no one seemed to mind. Members can make announcements and congratulate each other on successes, or commiserate on rejections. It's a great place for non-members to ask questions concerning writing in general and PPW in particular. Talk about community outreach!

Then there's the information about upcoming events. The old Web site had that information too. But when the December

Write Brain had to be rescheduled because of weather, the notice was posted immediately on the Web site. I saw it there before I had a chance to check my personal e-mail. How cool is that?

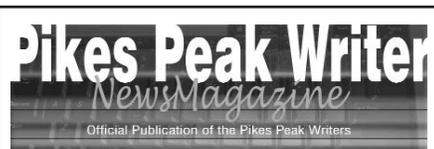
Want to volunteer for PPW? You can do it online.

I realize that change is also scary. Ron and Maleesha have included instructions on how to do just about everything you can think of on the Web site. And if you still have questions or concerns, they are more than willing to work with you.

The best news is that you can't break it. Sign on and play around for a while. Check out the tabs and links. See what works for you and what doesn't. Let the appropriate person know what isn't working for you or what you find confusing.

Oh, and please let them know what you do like about the Web site. That way they'll know what to keep as well as what may need changing. With your help, we'll have a site that we can be proud of and that will work for all of us.

Happy 2008!



Bimonthly NewsMagazine of the Pikes Peak writing community

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PikesPeakWriters.com: Our New House

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home page, provides a number of discussion areas, where topics can be created and comments added. Most of these areas are visible to all members, and all members can create new topics and comment on existing items. Some are available to the general public, and other areas are reserved for groups like volunteers, officers, and critique groups. The Forum also provides space for Virtual Critique Groups (VCGs). These discussion areas allow the formation of online critique groups for members who find challenges to participation in face-to-face groups. Whether these challenges are scheduling, distance, or just bad-hair days, VCGs can be the answer.

We have three Blogs (okay, according to Aaron Brown, we have two Blogs and a *Diascribe*) on the site. Aaron's *Diascribe* will take us along on his journey into the publishing world. It's available to members and visitors. The Member Liaison Blog allows Member Liaison Jené Hanna to have an open exchange with PPW Members. The third Blog is open for use by the Board of Directors and PPW staff, and is available to the visiting public as well as the member community.

Okay then, we're out of space for this issue. If you want more detail on the Web site in a future issue of *NewsMag*, please contact me directly through the VP "Contact Us" Link or e-mail to VP@pikespeakwriters.com.

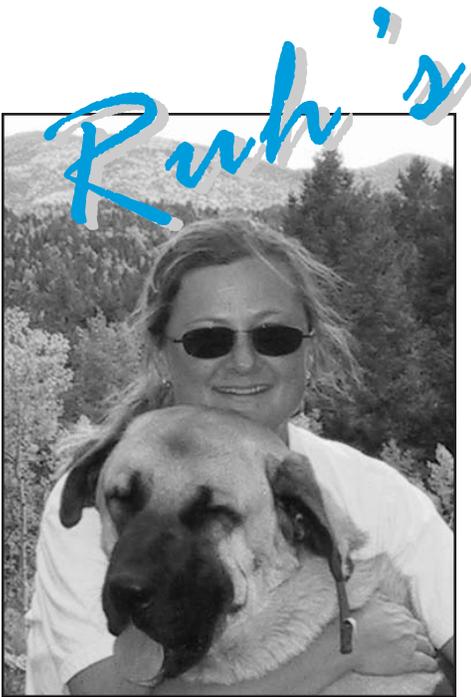
Web site Statistics November 2007

Total Visitors	10,004
Registered Members	403
Number of Articles	111
Number of Web Links	41
Forum Members (you become a member automatically the first time you visit the forum)	113
Topics	25
Posts	51
Most Members online at one time	13

Top Five Pages or Articles and Number of Visitors

Membership Information (page)	265
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Muse of the Month



As told to Chris Mandeville

Rub (pronounced "Roo") is a service dog and PPW/C mascot. He likes stories of all kinds, especially those involving squirrels. His favorite things are writers, children, his cat Loki, and Wisconsin cheddar.

DECEMBER

Whenever I can, I take the opportunity to lean on my muse for December, **Charlie Rush**. And I'm not the only one. At one time or another, most of the PPW volunteers have needed Charlie's support. Of course, in my case, I mean that I physically lean on him, but his support skills are much more diverse and advanced than that. Folks go to him for advice when making hard decisions. They go to him when they need to talk to someone who's strong, calm, and logical. They go to him for lots of stuff, in particular info on the history of Pikes Peak Writers and the PPW Conference, because he's been around since pretty much the beginning of time (at least as far as PPW is concerned). I tell ya, Charlie's cautious, he's skeptical, he's a "hard sell" and the "voice of reason," but once you win him over, he's a real softie, gives a good scratch behind the ears, and is definitely the guy you pick first for your team.

So, you might ask, what's Charlie been up to lately? Well, he just got back from a big book tour in Texas (Charlie's a born-and-raised Texan, for those who don't know) where he was promoting his second novel,

One Turn of the Cards, a fact-based and thoroughly researched historical about the men fighting with Terry's Texas Rangers during the Civil War. This cool story is based on Charlie's real-life ancestors, Billy Jones and his older cousin Austin, and if you've ever had an interest in Civil War stuff, this is a must-read. If you missed Charlie's local signings and need a copy, you can order from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and Publish America.

Now that he's back from Texas, "The Colonel," as some fondly call him (he's an honest-to-goodness retired Air Force Colonel) spends time in the great outdoors hiking or skiing as the weather dictates. He also enjoys hanging out with his wife Cindy, and they spend as much time as they can with their kids and grandkids. I sure hope he's finding time to write some more, too. I can't wait for him to finish *A Galvanized Yankee*, a novel about a Confederate officer released from a Union prison to fight Indians on the western plains. It was a winning contest entry during an Albuquerque writers conference, and is a sequel to his first novel, *The Devil's Chessboard*, about Hood's Texas Brigade.

Charlie inspires me because he's an all-around good, solid person. He's a great ally, a staunch supporter when you need someone to lean on, and he has a lot of really good war stories to tell. Next time you run into Charlie, see if you can detect that twinkle hiding in his eyes. I bet you might even be rewarded with a grin if you ask him about genealogy research, Air Force football, Terry's Texas Rangers, or his grandchildren. If his warm smile isn't enough to brighten your day, ask for a scratch behind the ears. He's really good at that.

JANUARY

Cold, blustery January. You might be thinking "brrrr." You might want to cuddle up in front of the fire with a good book and a cuppa hot cocoa. But not me. No, I like to romp in the snow, play with the icy disk-toy that materialized in my water dish, and bark at the silly squirrels who'd rather taunt me from the fence than hole up for the winter. Where you might look outside and see a chilly white blanket that makes your socks wet, your floors muddy and prevents you from driving to the bookstore, I see an enormous, white snow-cone. I see a pristine white canvas that I

can't wait to make my marks on. I see the positive. The bright side. The puppy in the dog-days of winter. You might think I'm much too young to have such a mature perspective, but I'll tell you, my positive outlook is entirely the result of a good role model: **Susan Goldstein**. Yes, you've guessed it—Sue is my muse for January.

Sue is one of those humans who, if she had feathers, they'd be tough to ruffle. If she wears knickers, I'm sure they are rarely in a twist. When she takes a drink of water, her glass (or Nalgene bottle) is *never* half empty. But she's not a Pollyanna, no sir. She just has a knack for seeing through all the clutter, figuring out the heart of the problem, and formulating a positive plan of action faster than snow melts on my tongue. I tell ya, she knows how to take care of business. Everyone likes it when Sue runs a meeting because she's punctual, gets the job done correctly and quickly, and never, *never* goes over the time allotted. Sometimes when I'm hanging back on the leash, meandering along, I think about Sue. I think "I wanna be a

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Ruh's News

To all those who contributed to the MicRUHphone Fund, a big tail waggin' thank you! We were able to purchase a set of four microphones and are now working toward buying cables, amps, and a mixer.

We're still accepting donations to the Fund at www.pikespeakwriters.com. If you want to contribute a few bucks, go to the "About Us" dropdown menu and click on the "Donate" link. Or you can always stop by a Write Brain and tuck some spare change in my pocket. If we're fortunate enough to have excess funds after meeting our A/V needs, the Board of Directors has agreed to use it to buy me a pet squirrel. Oh, I wish it were true! No, any extra money will go directly into our non-conference events programming where it will be put to good use. Did you know that PPW hosts about 20 events each year that are offered at no cost to attendees? I'm told this money's gotta come from somewhere. Too bad it doesn't grow on trees. Like squirrels. Sigh. If only I could climb ...

Ruh's Muse of the Month

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go-getter like Sue,” and I kick a little pep in my step. (Not so much as you’d probably notice, but when you’re a big galoot like I am, it takes more than a little *oomph* to actually look peppy.)

Did you know that Sue isn’t just a warm, friendly writer type? She is that, of course, but she’s also a television producer and director. Isn’t that cool? On top of that, she writes TV and radio commercials, plus incredible short

stories and literary fiction. For PPW she uses her media savvy

and her masterful way with words to write our press releases, marketing plan, promotional materials, and sponsorship packages. She advises our Board about marketing and publicity, plus she handles armloads of releases and notifications that spread the word about Pikes Peak Writers to folks all around the globe. I’m not exaggerating.

So this winter when it’s cold and dreary out, and all you want to do is mope, or watch a movie, or take a nap, I hope you’ll think of

Sue and be inspired to hold your tail (or your head, for those of you without a tail) up a little higher. Toss out that cup of ultra-soothing-herbal-sleepy tea and have a super-grandiose-triple-caffinated mug of java and get that tail in gear. Write something. Build a snowman. Paint a picture. Bake a cake (or some dog biscuits—yum). Look at that water dish as “half-full” or even as a magical frozen play-toy. Keep your meetings short and be positive. That’s what it’s all about. Thanks, Sue, for keeping my happy glass running over. I hope others gain inspiration from your awesome *paws*-i-tivity, too.

Upcoming PPW Events January, February

January Write Brain

**Your Best Writing Year Yet
featuring Cynthia Morris, CPCC**

**Tuesday, January 15, 2008, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Location: Cottonwood Artists’ School**



Many writers are challenged by the need to focus. So many ideas, so many possibilities—how to bring your brilliance down to earth and to the page? It is possible, and easier than you thought.

Join Certified Coach Cynthia Morris for Your Best Writing Year Yet. In this interactive workshop, you’ll design your focus for the year, develop a set of action steps and get accountability to stay committed to your focus.

Forget resolutions, ditch goals, and get connected to what really helps you stay on track with your writing dreams. Make this your best writing year yet!

Through her company Original Impulse, Cynthia Morris helps writers, business owners and visionaries make their big dreams a powerful reality. A speaker, certified coach and published author, Cynthia leads writing and creativity workshops in the U.S. and France. Cynthia is the author of *Create Your Writer’s Life: A Guide to Writing with Joy and Ease* and has penned hundreds of articles on writing and the creative process. She has

published several e-guides on writing and creative travel and has completed a historical novel set in Paris. Join her creative tribe at her Web site www.originalimpulse.com.

Open Critiques

**January 30th and February 27th
at 6:30 p.m.**

**Location: Cottonwood Artists’ School
RSVP to
critique@pikespeakwriters.com**

• style (saying it with precision and energy).

Come learn strategies for examining and improving structure, plot, character, scenic detail, and writing technique in your fiction manuscript, so as to take best advantage of your ideas and creativity. We’ll work on bringing to bear the craft of writing as well as the art and the passion. Bring one or two chapters of your work, including chapter one, and three colored markers (preferably highlighters.)

February Write Brain

**The Art, Craft, and Strategy
of Manuscript Revision**

**featuring Carol Berg and Kathy Brandt
Tuesday, February 19, 2008, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Location: Cottonwood Artists’ School**

**All Write Brains and Open Critiques
are FREE for PPW Members!**

Nonmembers may attend one Write Brain session for free. For more information and a map, go to pikespeakwriters.com.

The meetings are held at Cottonwood Artists’ School.

If you would like to participate in a Write Brain session, PLEASE RSVP AND INCLUDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION. Note that this does not commit you to attending, but does enable us to prepare enough materials for expected attendees, and importantly, it gives us a way to contact you if we have an emergency change to the Write Brain session, such as a postponement due to weather. We will make every attempt to post changes to the PPW Yahoo loop and the Web site, but to be ensured of notification you must RSVP at rsvp@pikespeakwriters.com.



Effective writing, no matter the form means re-seeing and rewriting for:

- meaning (what the story is really about, what you really want to say)
- structure/development (telling it in the most dramatic and effective way)

Pikes Peak Writers Craft Book-of-the Month recommendation for January is *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg. It lists for \$12.95 but the PPW member price is \$10 plus tax. The February recommendation is *Techniques of the Selling Writer* by Dwight Swain and lists for \$26.95. The PPW member price is \$19 plus tax.

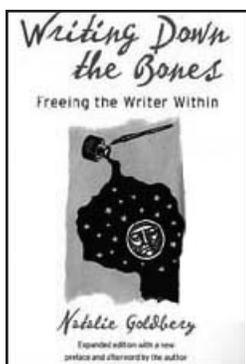
These books—and many other books for writers—are available for purchase at PPW events. **The member discount applies during the month in which the book is featured, so read the recommendations and then come to the Write Brain Sessions on January 15th and February 19th to pick up your discounted copies. Enjoy!**

Craft Book-of-the-Month

Craft Book for January

Writing Down the Bones

By Natalie Goldberg
Recommended by Robert Spiller



The essence of Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones* can be summed up in three words: write, write, write. Since I promised 500 words to the newsletter, I thought I'd elaborate beyond those three.

In *WDTB*, Goldberg connects writing with the Buddhist tradition of mindfulness practice—think meditation. For her, writing is a way to still the mind and center the consciousness. Like another Buddhist writer, Alan Ginsberg, she is a proponent of the First-Thoughts-are-the-Best-Thoughts school. In aid of this, she has devised a number of rules. I have to confess I'm a fan of rules simply because once you acknowledge them, you are free to embrace or reject them. Here are Natalie's rules of First Thoughts:

1. Keep your hand moving. Don't whine about why you can't write. Just do it.

2. Don't cross out. There is an old Buddhist saying. If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him—I'll explain that one in another essay if you're interested. For writers, the saying goes: If you meet the Editor on the road, kill him.

3. No conventions in writing practice—spelling, punctuation, grammar out the window.

4. Lose control.

5. Don't think. Don't go all logical. Not during First Thoughts. That comes later after we give the Editor CPR.

6. Go for the jugular. If something is scary or naked or might make your mother crazy, go for it. It probably has a lot of energy.

One of the interesting tidbits about Natalie's Rules for First Thoughts Writing is that they are equally applicable if you are talking about sex. Think about it.

WDTB offers additional gems to keep the reluctant writer with pen in hand, and once there, to improve the quality of the practice. Some, like Show Don't Tell and Be Specific have become staples in every writer's book of aphorisms. I maintain that Goldberg, even writing twenty-one years ago, illuminates these truths in unique ways.

However, I will limit myself to Natalie's less traveled roads.

1. New Moments: Never rest in success. Okay, you've written something wonderful. Good, but now is a new moment. Write something else.

2. Permission: Give yourself permission to write the worst crap in the world. The good stuff will come. Have Faith. It's just stuck for a moment behind this gook. Get the gook out of the way by putting it on paper.

3. Tricks: We avoid writing saying it's too hot, too noisy; I need to paint this room; I need a better pencil; I need to put on better music (or no music). Cut it out. Just write.

4. A Little Sweet: A taste of honey is often given to students at their first reading of the Torah. This way a young boy associates learning with sweetness. So it is with writing. Don't battle with it. Make writing your friend.

5. Don't Marry the Fly: Detail is there to further the story not as an end in itself. Get over the tangerine sunset already!

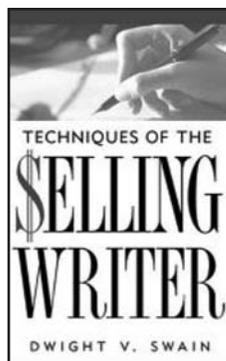
Finally, Natalie asks—like a million other authors before her—Why do I write? She offers a few answers. Spiritual: Because I'm the reincarnation of William Shakespeare. Vindictive: To annoy my mother. Existential: I write out of hurt and the writing makes the

hurt okay. To all these and a hundred other answers, Natalie says they are wonderful reasons to write but don't just say them aloud. Write them down.

Craft Book for February

Techniques of the Selling Writer

By Dwight V. Swain
Recommended by Ron Heimbecher



With half a hundred of its pages dog-eared, cover curled from a thousand readings, *Techniques of the Selling Writer* (ISBN: 9780806111919) tops a stack of craft books within easy reach. Stuck with an

improbable character reaction, I reach for Swain. Struggling to revitalize a passage of mediocre dialogue, I reach for Swain. Dwight Swain died in 1992, yet *Techniques of the Selling Writer* still ranks number eight on Amazon's books on fiction writing. I've forgotten how to extrapolate sales from an Amazon ranking, but I am sure that a number eight ranking in a category that contains nearly 23,000 titles is a LOT OF DANG BOOKS!

Swain's beginning premise is "you only need to know four things to write a solid story:

- How to group words into motivation-reaction units;
- How to group motivation-reaction units into scenes and sequels;
- How to group scenes and sequels into story pattern;

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The Countdown to Conference

Mark your calendars now for the 16th annual Pikes Peak Writers Conference in Colorado Springs

Save these dates: April 25-27, 2008!

You won't want to miss out on the 16th year of the Pikes Peak Writers Conference. The Marriott Colorado Springs will once again host three packed days of learning and networking. This year boasts a spectacular lineup of editors from HarperCollins, Pocket Books, Random House, Kensington Books and Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young

Readers; a handful of agents ready and willing to take pitches; and a wide range of authors from the west coast to the east coast and in-between.

Our faculty this year includes best-selling authors Vicki Lewis Thompson, Bob Mayer, Carol Berg and Stephen Coonts, and veteran film and television producer, writer and director Kenny Golde. And one of the newest features to our workshop schedule will be graphic novel sessions with Louise and Walter Simonson—two bestselling New York artist/writers.

For PPW members, note that our registration date this year has changed. It will begin January 15, 2008. And if you're 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 15.**

More information is available on our Web site, www.pikespeakwriters.com.

—Kirsten Aikens, Director, PPWC 2008

The Writer's Life—A New Year's Resolution for Writers

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"I will take care of myself."

This resolution would seem at first glance to belong to the fitness resolution category. The one that includes getting down to a high school weight and running a marathon come June. But it isn't really one of those. What I am talking about includes eating right and exercising, but not starving or living at the gym.

Your body needs fuel to work properly. You wouldn't take off on a cross-country trip without putting gas in your car. The same holds true for your body. Eat well, eat healthy food

(whatever that may mean for you), but eat.

• **Get some exercise.** Walking is a great exercise for writers because it gives you time. Time to daydream. Time to think about a story you are already working on. Time to observe the world around you for future writing.

• **Get enough sleep.** I know. I know. We're always hearing that we should get up an hour early to write. Good advice. But what I'm asking you to do if you decide to get up earlier is to go to bed earlier as well. Getting up an hour early and staring at the computer screen half asleep isn't helping you.

• **Keep balance in your life.** Spend time with family and friends. Feed your spiritual self. Have fun. Exercise your mind—learn something new. All of it helps your writing.

My writing resolutions for 2008? Finish my mystery novel, research appropriate agents to query, pack lunch at least three times a week so I don't go out for fast food, and spend time outside four or more days a week.

How about you?

Craft Book of the Month

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• How to create the kind of characters that give a story life."

From these tenets, detailed chapters take the reader on a full-circle journey from "Fiction and You" to "You and Fiction." This seems, at first, like a cutesy play on words, until the reader begins to digest the depth of the craft behind the content. The book begins with a discussion on learning to write and solidly establishes that writing is hard work. Swain then provides an ample toolbox with which to do that work. Filled with meaningful examples and well-structured lessons, each chapter provides a new course in the brickwork foundation of story craft.

Digging into the toolbox, "The Words You Write" is a treatise on the basic building

blocks of language. "Plain Facts About Feelings" digs into the emotions that make stories come to life; the motivations of characters, and the use of both internal and external responses can be used to build tension. "Conflict and How to Build It" expands emotional tension to actions and believable reactions. The chapter explains the importance of the focal (POV) character, and ensuring that this character's goals and challenges are clear and engrossing.

Once the foundation is set, "Fiction Strategy" asks two questions to help create the blueprint: "why does your reader read?" and "what is the source of story satisfaction?" He proceeds to provide strategic alternatives based on the answers. "Beginning, Middle, and End" helps to ensure that the blueprint provides the components

necessary to complete the story, and "The People in Your Story" tells how to mix the glue of character development.

Now that the plan is done, the blueprint created, work begins. To kick off the chapter "Preparation, Planning, and Production," Swain begins with, "A story is the triumph of ego over the fear of failure." The idea, no matter how creative, innovative, or brilliant it may be, goes nowhere until one does the work to write it.

Swain wraps the package with one of the shortest chapters on record. "Selling Your Stories" is less than a hundred words in length. The key points? Study your markets, get manuscripts in the mail, and keep them there.

Get your hands on this book. Read it.

Breaking News

New York Times best-selling author Jeffrey Deaver is coming to Pikes Peak Writers! Set aside the afternoon and evening of Saturday March 1, 2008, for a workshop, Q&A session, dinner, keynote speech and more.

Not familiar with the prolific writer whom *Publisher's Weekly* calls "the most clever plotter on the planet"? Don't worry—PPW is here to help. To introduce you to Deaver's work (and to feed the habits of those of us already addicted), in an unprecedented opportunity, PPW will make five of his books available to members at a 30 percent discount at the January Write Brain session. Plus, our Web site will be set up with several "book clubs" for those who would like to engage in discussions about Deaver's deftly crafted fiction.

We'll look at a sampling of Deaver's diverse backlist so there's something to interest everyone:

The Bone Collector: A Lincoln Rhyme Novel, the first in his gripping suspense thriller series featuring quadriplegic forensic investigator Lincoln Rhyme and his protege Amelia Sachs (made into a feature film starring Denzel

Washington and Angelina Jolie).

A Maiden's Grave, an "all-night page-turner" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) about eight deaf girls and their teacher taken hostage in an abandoned slaughterhouse.

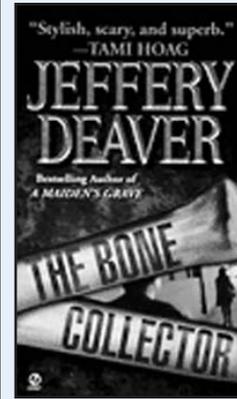
Hell's Kitchen, a Location Scout Mystery (originally written under the name William Jefferies), part of a series started early in his career featuring an ex-con Hollywood location scout. A "...finely crafted book..." where "...every character has a hidden agenda that is only revealed at the exciting climax." (*Book Magazine*)

The Blue Nobbere, a "gripping high-tech page-turner" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) about a sadistic computer hacker who uses cyberspace to lead his victims to their deaths.

Garden of Beasts: A novel of 1936 Berlin, a stand-alone historical thriller called "a deliciously twisty tale" in which Deaver "bring[s] to life the Berlin of 1936" in a starred review by *Publisher's Weekly*.

Watch www.pikespeakwriters.com for details about the book clubs and news about Deaver's visit to PPW.

Movie Night



On February 7th, *The Bone Collector* (a feature film based on the book by Jeffrey Deaver) will be shown at the Colorado Springs Business of Arts Center (BAC). And the best news is, it's completely FREE. If you're not familiar with Jeffrey Deaver's writing, this is a chance to check out one of his stories before his visit in March.

BAC will open at 6 p.m., offering coffee beverages, soft drinks, wine, beer, and light snacks for sale. The movie will begin at 7 p.m. Afterward, our own Prez, Chris Mandeville, will lead a discussion about the movie.

Although admission is free, we do ask that you RSVP to rsvp@pikespeakwriters.com if you plan to attend.

Sweet Success

By Janice Black

When I receive word of literary accomplishments that warrant recognition here, I tuck them away in an electronic folder until the deadline for the next issue draws near. This time, to begin the compilation process, I navigated down through the labyrinth of folders and came upon a typo, which was really quite apropos. I had inadvertently named the destination folder "Sweet Success"? Yes, a good name.

One byproduct of those stolen moments, the scribbles on scraps, the late nights, the marathons, disciplined and wild both, the forfeiting of leisure, all that dedication in the service of writing is sweat. Yes! Whether we do it full time or squeeze precious minutes into a life already full, writing elicits mental, intellectual and emotional sweat.

Sine the last issue, sweat has yielded *sweet success* to at least a few of us.

- *Crime and Suspense*, an online magazine, accepted **Beth Groundwater's** short story, "The Extra Gift," for their Jan./Feb. issue.

- **Maureen Anderson** broke into print with the publication of her short story, "Bridges," in the Sept./Oct. issue of *Writer's Journal Magazine*. The story took first place in one of the magazine's contests, a win that included \$150 in prize money.

- Also, a performance group in Denver, Colorado Homegrown Tales, selected **Beth Groundwater's** story, "Biscuit Connection," to be dramatized by an actor at their holiday program in late December.

- **Matt Bille** and co-author Erika Lishcok wove excerpts from their book *The First Space Race* into a new article, "Sputnik: The Human Story," printed in *Quest* magazine, Vol. 14 #4 (Fall 2007).

- **Margaret Brettschneider's** *Mutti's War* is now a part of the curriculum at the U.S. Air Force Academy literature program. Not just published, but also required reading!

- More for **Margaret, aka M.J.Brett**. She heard from a lady who interviewed her about a couple of her books months ago. Apparently the interviews will now be aired. She had book signings at the UCCS bookstore and the Air Force Academy.

- Congratulations to **Kirsten Akens**, our own PPW conference director, on her most-excellent cover story, "Making Tracks," in one week's *Independent*. It ran in the first week of December (the Nov. 30th issue).

- Here's a little accolade from **Diane Hoover**. She got an honorable mention from *ByLine's* contest Opening Lines: *The Small Gift Wrapped Package*.

- And **William M. Brock's** latest short story, "Almost," is up on *Nossa Morte Magazine* at nossamorte.com.

The Business of Writing

Antagonists: The Good Bad-Guy and The Bad Bad-Guy

By Linda Rohrbough

Conflict. It's the lifeblood of fiction. You can't keep your reader turning the pages without it. One of the more interesting ways to engineer believable conflict is to create multiple antagonists, or bad guys, for your good guy, the protagonist, to be up against. What makes this more compelling and more believable is if the bad guys aren't all bad; hence the good bad-guy and the bad bad-guy.

In laying the groundwork here, let me say it's pretty widely accepted the antagonist should be someone with reasons for what they're doing and redeeming qualities. The days of the dastardly Dudly Do-Right villains are long past. What's more popular and more interesting is an antagonist we like a little bit. I'm thinking of Timothy, the bad guy in *The Long Kiss Goodnight* starring Geena Davis and Samuel L. Jackson. Timothy is likeable, handsome, clever, even reasonable. But completely ruthless.

In fact, these days both antagonists and protagonists sometimes have deeply flawed personalities bordering on psychopathic disorders. Take the lead characters in the TV shows *Monk* and *House*. These are both pretty sick guys when you think about it.

The difference is how far the bad guy goes. We know *Monk's* heart is in the right place, so we forgive his annoying obsessive-compulsive disorder. But we won't forgive an antagonist who chooses to walk on the dark side of the force. Like Timothy, the antagonist in *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, who not only attempts to murder his ex-lover, but his daughter as well.

It really gets interesting when our protagonist, who has flaws of his own, takes on multiple antagonists, ones we like and ones we don't; the good bad-guy and the bad bad-

guy. The 1993 remake of *The Fugitive*, my favorite movie, starring Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones, illustrates this.

Jones plays Sam Gerard, a U.S. Marshall. We like Gerard from the moment we meet him in act two. But we also know Dr. Richard Kimball is in serious trouble with this Marshall on his tail. A significant twist in the plot comes when Kimball decides to use Gerard's ability for tracking criminals to uncover the real killer.

Which leads us to the bad bad-guys. There are two in *The Fugitive*. One is the jaded ex-cop who lost his arm in the line of duty and now murders for hire. The second is Kimball's doctor friend, who is the driving force behind the evil plot that got Kimball sentenced to death for the murder of his wife.

Jones won an Oscar and a Golden Globe for his work in *The Fugitive*, because what makes the movie is the change Sam Gerard undergoes. The Marshall shifts from a ruthless hunter who doesn't care about a criminal's pleas of innocence, to a guy with compassion for the people he's hunting. In the end, he helps Kimball prove his innocence. So we forgive him for his ruthless hunt, and near execution, of Kimball.

The bad bad-guys we have no sympathy for whatsoever. We are glad when the bad cop gets his comeuppance. We are not about to forgive him for the murder of Kimball's wife. And we like the bad doctor even less because he knew what he was doing.

But what holds us is the chess game between Kimball and Gerard, between the good guy and the good bad-guy. We understand the complexity of the conflict in their roles, and we're on the edge of our seats as we watch Kimball suddenly faced with navigating a world he doesn't understand.

When you get down to it, the TV show *Monk* offers a similar good bad-guy conflict.

The good bad-guy is *Monk* himself. And each week as he struggles with his compulsive disorder, we hope the good bad-guy will turn and join forces with the good guy to help solve the case. And each show, that's exactly what happens. *House* offers a similar conflict, but the difference is that in each *House* episode we're not sure if Dr. Greg has finally stepped over the edge into behavior we can't condone.

The bottom line here is if you can create a good bad-guy antagonist for your protagonist to battle against, your story is likely to be more interesting and more layered. It's not easy. The newly released DVD of *The Fugitive* with commentary from the writers and producers, tells how they were rewriting the script even during production. They had the basic premise of a doctor accused of the murder of his wife from the old TV series, but the script underwent huge changes. For example, at one point the script had Marshall Sam Gerard as the murderer of Kimball's wife.

Even the pros struggle and flounder before they get a working product. Studying the tools helps. Hopefully, this concept of the good bad-guy and the bad bad-guy will give you another tool in your arsenal for your next fiction project.

—Linda Rohrbough has been writing professionally since 1989, has more than 5,000 articles, seven books and awards for her fiction and non-fiction. Her latest publisher was bought by a bigger house, so her new book is being re-titled and moved to a March 2008 publication date. The new title is *Weight Loss Surgery with the Adjustable Gastric Band: Everything You Need to Know Before and After Surgery to Lose Weight Successfully from Da Capo Lifelong*, a division of the Perseus Books Group. Visit her updated Web site for more details: www.LindaRohrbough.com.



PPW + Books = Good Things

By Chris Mandeville

It all began at the end of November when Peggy Vicaro, Executive Director at Cottonwood Artists' School, mentioned that she'd love to have PPW participate in their annual Holiday Market for December

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2008. Of course I said, "Sure! But why not 2007?" That led to 10 days of scrambling to get PPW authors scheduled to sign books and a bookstore set up in time for the Market. Not a problem because we had only a hundred or so books in stock. Easy-peasy.

But our dear friends at Author, Author Books generously asked if they could donate

books for us to sell to raise money for the MicRuhPhone Fund. "Sure!" I said. I accepted a donation of about 4,000 books. Yes, 4,000. Suddenly, there was a whole lot more work to do to get ready for the Market. But several PPW members took time out from their busy holiday schedules to get the bookstore set up.

Unfortunately, the weather didn't cooperate. The First Friday event at Cottonwood and the Holiday Market the next day

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November is for Writers

National Novel Writing Month

By MB Partlow

I was sitting at the corner of a dark bar on Tejon Street, minding my own business and a rather industrial-sized gin and tonic. I watched her sashay through the door like she owned the place. For all I knew, maybe she did. Or maybe that rich husband of hers did.

Chin up, every coiffed hair in place, she devoured the place with her gimlet green eyes until she spotted me. She strode across the floor, three-inch pumps clicking like very expensive machinery. I looked down at my Crocs and tried to tuck my feet under my barstool before she noticed. No good.

“Darling, why do you insist on rubber shoes?” she purred, sliding onto the barstool next to mine.

“They’re comfortable.”

“Who cares? They’re ugly.”

I sighed. I was never going to win this battle.

“What’s on your mind?” I watched her smile at the bartender as he melted into a subservient little puddle at her feet.

“NaNoWriMo.”

Not again. Was National Novel Writing Month here already?

Oh, I’d tried in the past. I’d signed up and eagerly sat in front of my blank computer screen, staring until my forehead bled. No magic. No novel appearing from the darkness of my soul.

“Are you doing it?” I took a slow drink and felt the ice feathers of gin sliding down my throat.

“I will if you will.”

I ask you, friends, how often have you been suckered by that line?

I took the challenge. I went to nanowrimo.org and signed up, easy as you please. It doesn’t cost anything, except your

sanity. And maybe a little personal hygiene. The goal, you see, is to write a 50,000 word novel between November 1st and 30th.

Think you can’t do it? Think again.

Sure, I tried and failed a couple of times, but this year I was prepared. While you can’t do any of the actual writing before the first, you can outline to your heart’s content, filling an entire wall of your home with various colored Post-It notes. So I outlined about half of a novel in the week or so before November first.

And off I went. Figuring one day off for Thanksgiving, my goal was 1,724 words each and every day.

The journey didn’t begin auspiciously. I didn’t write a single word on day one. But by day three I had caught up, and from that day forward, my life was consumed by my word count.

Did I churn out deathless prose, ready to be scrutinized by my critique group?

Hardly.

The goal of NaNo is to get a working draft on paper. I’ll admit, I have some chapters that start off with a paragraph of Things That Should Appear Earlier. Two chapters before the end, I thought of a great plot twist, so I included a note outlining it where I thought of it. I didn’t have time to think up clever names for all the characters, so I have more than one woman named Sylvia. I gave vicious nicknames to characters I didn’t like, and wrote things like “describe her better later,” or “wasn’t there a dog in the last chapter? And what happened to the cat?”

A goal of 50,000 words in 30 days means you don’t have time to edit yourself. Your inner critic is effectively bound and gagged, because you don’t have time to listen to him/her/it. You want broad strokes, the idea of the story; this is where you lay the foundation.

Even if you don’t have an outline, like I did, you can complete NaNo. Just plunge in and start writing. Nobody said what you write has to be linear. Know how your novel begins and ends? Then write the beginning and the ending. Then write scenes in between. Nobody will ever know what order you wrote the book in, as long as it makes sense when you’re done. And by done, I mean several drafts down the road, not the end of November.

Did I mention the e-mail I got from Neil Gaiman?

I have to confess, it was sent to everyone registered for NaNo. It was a Pep Talk, and besides Mr. Gaiman, whose writing I adore, I got e-mails from Julianna Baggott, Garth Nix, Sue Grafton, Sara Gruen, Naomi Novik, Deanna Raybourn and Tom Robbins. Trust me, some of those will never be deleted from my in-box.

“Your inner critic is effectively bound and gagged, because you don’t have time to listen to him/her/it.”

The NaNoWriMo Web site offers a lot of support. About all they won’t do for you is the actual writing. They provide regional forums, all kinds of plotting forums, “genre lounges” and places where you can go for goofing off or research to enhance the realism in your story. Want to know if a murder in rural Idaho would be investigated by the county sheriff or the state police? This is a place to ask.

Did I meet my goal? You bet your bippy. I hit 51,166 words on November 27th. I can’t remember the last time I was this excited about writing, about getting up every single day, ready to hit the computer and get more words on the page.

Won’t you join me next November?

PPW + Books

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were very subdued because of a big winter storm. Nevertheless, enough patrons visited our sale to net us almost \$200 in donations (designated for the MicRuhPhone Fund) and another couple hundred in sales. Thank you to the hearty PPW members who braved the snow to pay us a visit, and thanks to those PPW authors who signed books: Carol

Hightshoe, Bob Spiller, Lise Fuller and Beth Groundwater.

But the good doesn’t stop there. PPW learned that “Mr. Biggs Saves Christmas” (a program to help the working poor in Colorado Springs in the tradition of the Bob Telmosse Christmas event) had a good use for the leftover books from our sale—give them as gifts to the parents and guardians who brought children to their holiday party. Again, trusty PPW volunteers came to the rescue, sorting, boxing, and delivering books

to Mr. Biggs. I’m proud to say that we donated well over 1,000 books to the event. That means 1,000+ people received the gift of a book this holiday season thanks to the generosity of PPW and Author, Author. It makes me feel great that, along with the needed practical gifts of food and clothing, those folks also received the gift of a story.

Thanks to all who helped make these “Good Things” happen. Wishing you many wonderful stories and lots of good things in 2008.

October Workshop—Scaring Your Readers: Creating Suspense to Keep Them Reading

Featuring Carrie Vaughn,
Steve Rasnic Tem and
Melanie Tem

By Erin Shaw

So you want to write thrillers, mysteries or suspense novels? Or maybe you just want to pick up a few tips on how to keep your readers flipping the pages all the way till the end? Then you can benefit from the insights culled from the “Scaring Your Readers” workshop held on

November 3.

Four experts in suspense writing were scheduled to lead the workshop: Ed Bryant, Carrie Vaughn, Steve Rasnic Tem, and Melanie Tem. Unfortunately, Ed Bryant fell ill and was unable to attend. The three panelists in attendance count among their accomplishments hundreds of published short stories, solo and collaborative novels, plays, multi-media projects, and numerous awards for their creative talents.

Carrie Vaughn: Pacing and Structure, or Don't Go Into the Basement Alone!



Carrie Vaughn knows how to keep readers on edge, and from her treasure trove of experience, she proposes a few helpful questions to keep in mind when crafting suspense. For instance, do you want to create “slow creeping dread” or do you want a “sudden shock” to scare readers out of their seats? How

graphically do you describe the action, and how much do you leave to the readers’ imaginations? You can build suspense by allowing

readers to fill in the empty spaces with their own anxieties. But keep the tensions building; don’t solve one problem before creating a larger problem.

Vaughn suggests that you consider killing off a major character early on (the “Wash Effect”), buying credibility with the readers and creating suspense that lasts the entire novel. Similarly, you can surprise readers by turning familiar cliché’s on their heads in unexpected ways.

She also advises granting both your villain and your hero a healthy dose of intelligence. This makes the characters more interesting and the conflict between the two more compelling. Likewise, consider writing excerpts from different points of view, including the villain’s, to gain insight into the minds of the characters.

For examples of writing that succeed in suspense, Vaughn suggests *The Island of Dr. Moreau* by H.G. Wells, *The Terror* by Dan Simmons, and *Deadhouse Gates* by Steven Erikson.

Steve Rasnic Tem: Language, Image, and the Atmosphere of Suspense



Steve Rasnic Tem admits that character and plot are crucial to any story, but it is the choice of language—what drives the emotional content of storytelling—that keeps readers’



hearts racing. Language is what sets the stage of your story, allowing you to direct how a reader is supposed to feel at specific points in the adventure.

For examples of highly “atmospheric” writing, Tem points to works by Ramsey Campbell’s *The Darkest Part of the Woods* and *The House on Nazareth Hill*, and Tom Piccirilli’s *The Midnight Road*. They are masters of creating anxiety using descriptive language, often distorting reality at varying levels to exaggerate fear and uncertainty. Charles Grant’s *The Grave*, *The Sound of Midnight*, *The Last Call of Mourning* succeed in the use of pathetic fallacy, allowing objects in the environment to mirror the character’s emotions and create tension. Tem suggests that you can use this in your own writing to foreshadow more dramatic events that come later. It is also a good tool to explore the protagonist’s inner thoughts by having the landscape of the story work to create characterization. Tem also points to excerpts from Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian* to demonstrate how the author successfully uses language to describe landscapes that mirror the character’s “private view of Hell,” creating a palpable discomfort and foreboding darker events to come.

Melanie Tem: Who’s Scaring Whom? The Importance of Character

To effectively create suspense, Melanie Tem recommends performing exercises that allow you to become more familiar with your characters. As with Vaughn, Tem suggests writing from different characters’ points of view, including minor players. Ask yourself what direction characters choose when faced with difficult decisions. Think about

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November Write Brain: Show Versus Tell

Featuring **Mario Acevedo**
By **Barb Dyess**

How often does a writer get lectured for “telling”? A lot! “Show, don’t tell” is a mantra not unlike “Follow the Yellow Brick Road.” But is telling always bad? Is showing always better? It depends. Not necessarily. There are no cut-and-dried rules. Travel on, curious writer.

Mario Acevedo learned the long and persistent way how to write and get published; about 17 years of persisting, in fact. He now has a very successful “contemporary vampire detective series” out with HarperCollins and is contracted for more. He is also a popular lecturer-presenter and a Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Western State University. And hey—he was gracious enough to drive from Denver and spend the evening with us.

Show = Reveal. Tell = Explain.

Mario explains that both showing and telling are important in crafting a story. However, there are no absolute rules in writing fiction, which may sound frustrating to the newbie writer, but is the real world. How authors employ literary devices varies as

much as the paths to publication do (just ask the self-published author who had the President, a big fan, call him up). For every rule set forth, there is someone who breaks it successfully. That being said, Mario shares some basics that we can find helpful.

The main thing is to avoid creating what Mario calls “speed bumps” for your readers. Make them buy into your world. Create empathy with your characters. Manipulate the pacing and tension to keep readers hooked. And keep the reader oriented within the story through well-crafted transitions between scenes.

Basically, a novelist’s purpose is to entertain and make the reader care enough to keep reading. How? By creating that emotional bond with the reader. Mario suggests that we think of showing vs. telling like using different lenses in filming. Dramatic scenes are rendered in greater detail and with close ups that may show the character’s emotional response. A long sweep of the camera tells us we’re now in a city, then a quick cut or zoom shows us a sign: County Courthouse. In fiction, this might be expressed in a succinct few sentences, including dialogue if it fits, that describe the main character’s taxi screeching to the curb of the courthouse.

Screenplays serve a purpose in telling stories, but it is the novel that lets a reader develop a deep bond with characters and to really internalize the story. Mario suggests studying outstanding novels. He used examples from personal favorites such as *The Lincoln Lawyer* by Michael Connelly and *Blues for the Buffalo* by Manuel Ramos. Find the passages that affect you and analyze them. Try to deconstruct the writing. Is it telling or showing, and how is it done? Does the author say volumes with compact but powerful prose? The best writing is provocative. It makes us ask questions and makes us think, whether through revealing or explanation.

It’s your license to Show and Tell. Now go forth and use it well.

Showing (Revealing): The use of sensory details and character internalizations to reveal the story.

Telling (Explaining): Use of exposition and summary to explain the story. Good in transitions, for example.

Scaring Your Readers

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back-stories for the characters and become familiar with past traumas and long-seated fears. Some aspects of your character you should consider are age, gender, ethnicity,

important historical events, fears, hopes, habits, prejudices, values, and general personal appearance. While this information may not appear in your final draft, it will help you develop situations and character responses that will help make your story more believable—and more suspenseful.

“We all want our readers to be launched out of their chairs and into the universe of our story, sweating out the tense moments of conflict along with our protagonist.”

Tem points towards Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven” as a good example of uniting characterization with suspense. We can

discern from clues that the writer is mourning the loss of someone important in his life. But what exactly happened? And what is about to happen? We don’t know the answers to these questions, but we get clues from his encounter with the bird tapping at his window. Is the raven’s only response, “Nevermore,” an answer to each of the character’s queries of the bird? Does the raven represent a former tragedy, or could he be a foreboding of events to come? The drama continues to build, and it is left for us to decide the nature of the relationship between the bird and the man in his home.

Every genre of fiction and dramatic non-fiction can profit from suspenseful scenes and language. We all want our readers to be launched out of their chairs and into the universe of our story, sweating out the tense moments of conflict along with our protagonist. The tips offered by the three panelists above will help any writer to succeed in engaging the reader from the first page through the last.



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