

# PIKES PEAK WRITERS

official publication of the Pikes Peak Writers

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## Authors and Art at First Friday

By Laura Pellerin

In a debut partnership between PPW and Cottonwood Artists' School, June's First Friday Mixer included fine art viewing in the galleries, some good food, a little wine—and for dessert, readings by authors of the Pikes Peak Writers.



Peggy Vicaro, our liaison with Cottonwood Artists' School and a

member of Pikes Peak Writers.

Charlie Rush gave a crisp reading of



a passage from his book, *The Devil's Chessboard*, a tale of the Civil War and murder. He has a unique perspective on this period of history, viewed as a

direct descendant of two Civil War veterans.



Laurie Wagner Buyer kicked off with a dramatic reading of evocative poems from her book, *The High Divide*. The book

begins with a long lament but ends on a joyful note as she climbs over and crosses that divide.

Pam McCutcheon separated fact from fantasy in *The Unauthorized Dan Brown Companion*. The comedy inherent in her writing comes out as romantic comedy in books like her fantasy novel, *A Little Something Extra*, about a 6'-4"



Leprechaun. Hm-m-m.

Chris Mandeville read from her as-yet-to-be-published work in a relaxed, "open mike" style. Her quest fantasy work includes a time-honored "jabberwocky" poem that only makes sense to the heroine in hindsight.



Deb Courtney (not pictured) also put in some stage time with her animated, southern style of reading and gestures, to emphasize dissension between mother and daughter, small town lifestyle, and corpse.

## Write Better Than You Can: The World According to Simmons

By Lauri Griffin

Dan Simmons has published 23 books since 1985 and his work has been categorized in seven different genres. Even within those genres, his work tends to wander out of the category specific. He's won 27 major awards for his work including The Colorado Book Award, the Hugo, the Locus, and the World Fantasy Award. His subject matter is as diverse as his genres.

As a keynote speaker at the 2006 PPWC, Mr. Simmons was fair game for one of our reporters, Lauri Griffin, who snagged a few minutes of his time.

LG: Why do you write in different genres?

DS: I always wanted to be a writer. Early on, I made the decision to write what I wanted to write. One of the things I love is eclectic reading. I'm not a snob in reading. Almost every genre of book and type of book has some great value in it. The separation of serious and genre literature is an artificial creation. Categories of fiction used to not exist. I grew up in



“ We want the same thing over and over ... that's what I'm fighting as a writer.”

—Dan Simmons

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## From the Editor



By Barb Dyess,  
Guest Editor

I am so pleased to be a guest editor for this issue, smack in the middle of summer! This season is ripe with fruitfulness. With changes.

Children home and company visiting make it a challenge to carve out hours—or even just minutes—to write, to edit, to hash out the stories roiling around in our brains. Vacations, outdoor chores, sporting events. All require us to be flexible, to reorder our priorities and schedules. For some it is just “work as usual.” But like the fresh produce we find at farmers markets, this can be a

productive season as writers, too.

Change is an integral part of being a writer. One day several years ago, I met a wonderful woman who happened to be an author, who became my friend. She belonged to PPW and invited me to a workshop. It was a thrill to discover other people who thought as I did. She offered to mentor me out of the goodness of her heart. A bit of publishing success, ideas flowed, and wham! A new phase of my life was born.

Now with one book stewing in an editor's submission box, I am a different person. Writing defines my life, my goals, my thoughts. I must write—even when all my kids and two dogs are underfoot, yet another trip to the store is needed, my arms ache and my job demands weekly flexibility. This part of the writer's journey, for me, involves getting an agent, ongoing learning to rewrite and refine, marketing myself better; connecting with other writers

and resources. Learning and integrating what I learn.

Where are you in your writing journey? What change, what learning, is required of you to meet your goals? PPW and the *PPW NewsMagazine* want to serve you, wherever you are in your writing life. Want to learn about short story craft or about snagging the right agent? Share the success of other members or find helpful Web resources? We hope the *NewsMag* has something for each of you. Read about the importance of “Backstory.” Savor wisdom from a multi-genre master. Indulge with us as we play catch-up with a few events from spring of this year; too good to not share with you; fit for any season of writing

Let the changes, like the richness of summer, enrich your life. And write, write, write.

Bimonthly NewsMagazine of the Pikes Peak writing community

**PIKES PEAK WRITERS**  
NewsMagazine

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## March Write Brain—Brainstorming Yourself

By Barb Dyess

According to workshop presenter Carol Caverly, we are all “experts in something.”

Carol is author of the Thea Barlow mystery series, set in Wyoming. Her latest short story appeared in the anthology, *Homicide Host Presents*.

“There are many kinds of knowledge ...even if you've had a very common sort of job, such being a homemaker and raising eight children as I did, you know about something that others may not.” Our lecturer smiled with a gleam in her eye. “For example, you may know that mixing certain cleaning chemicals can be deadly—even fatal.”

Encouraging us to tap into whatever past experiences, memories, and knowledge we have, Carol took us through various brainstorming and writing exercises in the two-hour workshop. Using a helpful worksheet and her personable, interactive style to communicate her ideas, Carol encouraged us to enrich and spice up our writing in many unexpected ways. With her guidance, we explored this concept in three main sections.

First was “Brainstorming Yourself.” Using childhood, emotional knowledge, settings, jobs/hobbies and names, writers were asked to plumb their backgrounds. For example, in the “emotional knowledge” category, we were to tap into grief, rejection, love/hate, disabilities, or diseases we or those close to us have endured. In “settings,” we thought about

what houses we grew up in and the feelings they evoked in us. Could this be used in a fictional setting for a novel? Then we were challenged to create two or three characters (or add depth to existing, perhaps secondary ones) using this exercise. “Never ignore sparks of interest! They can lead to your best ideas.”

Next came “The Power of Three.” Building on the brainstorming results, we tried twisting one of our characters, settings, emotions, actions, or results at least three times. She suggested that our first ideas are not necessarily the best ones; frequently they tend towards clichés. We make characters the way we are or how we'd like to be. Try an original “twist.” A man? Make him a woman. Polite? Try making him/her rude.

Finally, in “Ideas to Plot,” we looked at conventional story lines that authors have turned or twisted to make their stories unique or to avoid clichés. Plots used by Dean Koontz, Ken Follett, Annie Proulx and others were used as examples. Carol suggested that three main character actions could become three turning points in a story. In the final exercises, we built further upon the first two sections and applied this to our characters and plots. Carol gave us a story “germ” to play with. She then asked us to keep “twisting” the protagonist to make him/her thoroughly unique, yet make sure motivations are likewise deep for that character. Can actions be made more exciting? How can the stakes be raised? What epiphany does the protag have?

# The Business of Writing: The Importance of Backstory

By Linda Rohrbough

If I had to point to the one most important thing I've learned from the best-selling novelists I know, it would be the importance of backstory. I've heard novelists say the characters write the story. But when you're a new novelist, that doesn't make sense. How can the characters write the story when you don't know who the characters are yet?



character always set his watch ten minutes early? So when they write the current novel, not only do they know the characters, they can hook the reader with mentions of past events to bring in that element of mystery readers love.

And when I'm talking about backstory, I'm not talking about a biographical sketch or a

laundry list of likes and dislikes. I'm talking about those events, locations and people that shaped the character emotionally, molded them into who they are today. The backstory is some incident or event where the character made a life-changing decision about how the universe, their universe, works. The richest stories are the ones with lots of backstory and while we may not be told all of it, we know it's there.

There are the standard ways to work a story. Create conflict by putting two people together who have nothing in common. Have your main character face what they're most afraid of or lose what they want the most. Start the story at the point where the character's life changes forever. But all this means you know your character(s).

I've heard a lot about getting to know your characters through character sketches. These are those sheets of questions that ask you for names, descriptions, and then offer fill-in-the-blank questions. Once you get past the basics, the questions can get useless. Like what kind of ice cream do they like? What's their favorite color? You get the idea.

For me, a laundry list of stuff doesn't help me know what my character wants or what they're going to do in a situation. The real answer is to know their backstory. I've decided this is why the big names in fiction often write series novels. It isn't just because we enjoy a series. But I think the pros write series books because it's efficient: the backstory work is already done after book one.

So what is backstory? I see it as the novel before the novel. I see the authors who coach me work out an entire story of things that happened before the story they're writing starts. Why does that character carry a rabbit's foot in his pocket? Why does the

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## "Why does that character carry a rabbit's foot in his pocket?"

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And in the great stories, we don't usually come in when trouble starts. Trouble has been brewing for years. Take *Silence of the Lambs* where both Hannibal Lector, psychiatrist and psychotic killer, and Clarice Starling, FBI agent, each have considerable backstory revealed as the story progresses. In a critical plot point, Starling reveals her vulnerability to enlist Lector's help catching another killer when she confesses a childhood memory of when the lambs stopped bleating. Which also gives the book its name.

Obviously Thomas Harris, the author, has

done considerable work on the backstory. Note *Silence of the Lambs* is the second book featuring Hannibal Lector, the first being *Red Dragon*. It is revelation of the backstory which makes the mesmerizing plot question: can this obviously vulnerable and attractive young woman get the information from a brilliant, manipulative killer without risking her own life and sanity?

What I've found writing my own novels is if I do the backstory for each character as early as possible, the writing goes faster and easier. It can be painful at times to lay this groundwork. But when I get stalled writing, it's usually because I have a backstory question I need answered. I will say, if you want a list of questions to answer about your characters, there are better questions to ask than the ones on the average character sketch list. Ask questions that have an emotional punch and figure out the tale behind the answer, such as what are they afraid of? What is in their medicine cabinet? And what would they be embarrassed for you to find in their purse or car glove box?

Then you'll have your backstory and it'll make your work richer and the writing go faster.

—Linda Rohrbough has been writing about the computer industry since 1989 and has more than 5,000 articles and seven books to her credit. Her work has been honored three times by the Computer Press Association. Her agent recently sold her latest book, co-authored with Robert Sewell, M.D., to Marlow for publication in Spring 2007. She completed her first techno-thriller novel and is working on a romantic suspense. Visit her Web site [www.PCbios.com](http://www.PCbios.com).

### Backstory Tips

1. Make up incidents in your character's past where they made a decision about how life works.
2. Make sure the backstory has an emotional impact your character(s) carry coming into your book.
3. Time spent on working out your character's past will speed the writing of your story.

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## Perfect Pitch

### Do's and Don'ts

By Paige Evans

Cottonwood Gallery packed in 58 attendees at the April Pitch Session. Copious note taking, gracious presenters answering questions, and pitch practicing wrapped the evening as a total success!

Deb Courtney, emceed, tossing the first round to Pam McCutcheon, whose do's



don'ts when pitching to agents and editors brought together etiquette and common sense. In her usual smooth style, she encouraged with practical information.

Laura Hayden continued with "insider" conference tips. She asked how many would be attending our conference for the first

time and briefed them on what to expect. Even old timers were energized by the details and Hayden's humor.

Attendees broke into groups by genre and the fun began. Each person had the opportunity to pitch. Excellent suggestions, and encouragement by each facilitator went on until everyone had their turn.

The buzz was about meeting the challenge of pitching, gaining confidence and preparing for PPWC.

# Simmons...

continued from page 1

the Midwest, and you have to rotate those crops or that soil is going to grow fallow. I view writing as continued learning. I think the most successful writers burn out because they're pounding the drum the same way all the time. They are delivering the product for the reader that they may have mined out of their heart years ago.

**LG: What are the problems of crossing genres?**

**DS:** Getting some books published has been very difficult. Having readers follow from one type of a book to another doesn't always happen. Speaking as a reader, I don't like being abandoned. We want the same thing over and over and that's what I'm fighting as a writer. But that's what I love as a reader. Publishing in multiple genres means working with different publishers and multiple editors.

**LG: How do you start a project? With a character? An idea? A plot theme? An outline?**

**DS:** I don't really outline. But I start with all of those. I consider if I want to live in this fictional world, in these characters' heads for a few years. The guy who was doing Ronald Reagan's biography resigned because he didn't want to spend four or five years of his life in that head. Ask yourself—what do you want to learn, what do you want to feel, what do you want to do, what do you fear? Write the novel that moves you to the deepest core of you.

**LG: Any cautions for writing multiple genres? Advice?**

**DS:** You can never go in slumming. Know the genre. Know the greats in the genre.

Write your book. Write it out of the most passion you have. Write it in any field you want and then let someone else sell it and categorize it. But even in that process you are going to have to be active every step of the way, or they are going to put you in such a small niche that you will spend the rest of your life there. Be very careful where you publish first, because whether we like it or not there are stigma associated with different genres.

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**“Write the novel that moves you to the deepest core of you.”**

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**LG: You write about such real tragedies in our world—AIDS, insanity, orphan babies infected with dirty needles. How do you research that and write such true and dark things without ending up stuck in a depressing mire?**

**DS:** You find the hope in those situations, the humanity. Without the humanity, it would be being stuck in the mire.

**LG: Tell me about the gifted and talented program you designed. And do you miss teaching?**

**DS:** I do miss it. But I had a degree of freedom with what I taught that is unheard of now. I do think that teaching and writing utilize the same areas of the brain. Creating

the APEX program was the most creatively rewarding and fulfilling I've ever done.

**LG: Is there anything that you wouldn't write about?**

**DS:** Anything that would hurt my family. I admire people who can, but I'm not that brave.

**LG: I don't think that's brave, I think it's respectful.**

**DS:** But look at the greats, look at Flaubert. They wrote about anything, everything.

**LG: Any last advice?**

**DS:** A novel has an old and honorable tradition which we have to honor. The novels that continue to move us as readers follow that tradition of surprise, of care, of mastery of language, of nuance, of subtlety, of character. We've set up a rewards and spoils system where crap is being rewarded to a tremendous extent. Don't fall for it. You have only one charge as a writer and believe it or not, it's not to get published widely. The charge is write well. To write to the extent of your ability. To write better than you can. Write the novel that moves you to the deepest core of you and find a good agent to sell it.

For more information, visit Dan Simmons at his Web site, [www.dansimmons.com](http://www.dansimmons.com).

You will find four installments on “Writing Well” with Simmons' advice on project commitment, including Ernest Hemingway's *Basic Principles of Writing*. He also hosts forums discussing his works, general topics, and writing fiction.

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## Untangling the Web

By Lauri Griffin

[www.52projects.com/](http://www.52projects.com/)

52 projects provide inspiration and ideas for getting projects started and finished. Look under the Writing section and follow the links to “Simple Things You Can Do to Jumpstart Your Writing Efforts” and also the much too true “Not-To-Do List.”

[www.evileditor.blogspot.com/](http://www.evileditor.blogspot.com/)

Brave souls send the Evil Editor query letters for him to scrutinize, dismember, and display online. He isn't always nice, hence the “evil,” but he is helpful and provides concrete and humorous advice for improving query letters.

[www.bbc.co.uk/dna/getwriting](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/getwriting)

Get Writing with the BBC. This site provides an amazing visual character building tool, a “Word Cut-Up Tool” to encourage creative wordplay, word games, grammar tests, mini-courses on point of view, preparing for publication, and even a screen saver to remind you to Get Writing.

[www.internetwritingjournal.com/author\\_blogs/](http://www.internetwritingjournal.com/author_blogs/)

Wondering about the process of writing and getting published? Want inside information on agents and publishers? Here are over 50 writers' blogs, named the best by *The Internet Writing Journal*.

[www.flickr.com/photos/debbieohi/12072634/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/debbieohi/12072634/)

Visit Inky Girl's writing themed cartoons for a great break in your writing day.

—Lauri Griffin is a fiction writer who spends way too much time online. Please send interesting sites to her at [lauri\\_grif@earthlink.net](mailto:lauri_grif@earthlink.net) and visit her blog for more great links at [www.laurireflections.blogspot.com](http://www.laurireflections.blogspot.com).

**“The ultimate measure of a story's success or excellence is not its compliance with any established patterns, but its lasting popularity and effect on the audience.”**

**From *The Writer's Journey*  
by Christopher Vogler**

# Upcoming Events: July, August and September

## American Icon—Friday, July 7

Featuring guest judges Colleen Collins, Todd Fahnestock and Charles Kaine.



Contestants read from their original work in any genre and winners received prizes. Watch for the next issue to find out who won in each category!

## July Open Critique, featuring guest critiquer-moderator, R.T. Lawton

Wednesday, July 26, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists' School

(See the March-May issue for details or visit [www.ppw.net](http://www.ppw.net))

## August All Day Event—A Beginning Writers Workshop, featuring Pam McCutcheon

Saturday, August 5, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists' School

Are you a new fiction writer? Don't know where to start?

In this full day workshop, Pam McCutcheon will show you how to take an idea and flesh it out until it becomes a full-fledged story. Using the basics of characterization, plotting, and self-editing, you will use a step-by-step approach to develop the outline of a novel or short story, get feedback from the instructor and the class, then learn some tips on the business of writing and how to market and sell your work.

### Topics covered:

- How to Start: Log Lines, Story Question, Genre, Market Research
- Characterization: Goal, Motivation & Conflict, Fleshing Out Characters, POV
- Plotting: The Straight Line and "W" Plotting Methods, Critique Groups
- Scene Structure: Constructing Scenes, Learning to Use Sequels, Hooks
- Self-Editing: Format, Dialogue, Writing Tight, Show Vs. Tell
- The Business of Writing: Contests, Agents, Marketing, Taxes, Query Letters

## August Write Brain Session—The GREAT Agent Safari, featuring Deb Stover—FREE for PPW Members!

Tuesday, August 8, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists' School.

Finding a good agent can be a harrowing

experience. Deb Stover will share her own baptism by fire in this area, in hopes of helping others avoid the same pitfalls. Includes a discussion of what you should consider in choosing an agent, the questions you should ask prospective agents, a comprehensive glossary of publishing terms, and frank discussion about publishing and agency contracts. For all levels.

**Deb Stover:** Once Upon a Time, PPWC veteran and past director Deb Stover wanted to be Lois Lane, until she discovered Clark Kent is a fraud and there is no Superman. Since publication of her first novel in 1995, Stover has received dozens of awards for her unique work, including a 2005 Career Achievement Award for Contemporary New Reality from *Romantic Times BOOKclub Magazine*. Deb's twelfth novel, *The Gift*, will be a paranormal romantic suspense for Dorchester Publishing.



## September Write Brain Session How to Write and Market Short Stories—FREE for PPW Members!

Tuesday, September 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists' School

Join published authors Beth Groundwater, Carol Hightshoe, R.T. Lawton, and Bret Wright as they discuss how to write and market short stories.

**Beth Groundwater's** first foray into fiction writing was a series of short stories about a protagonist named Freddie written in sixth grade. Freddie's wild adventures included visiting an underground mole city by burrowing down in a giant screwmobile. As an adult, Beth has finished three mystery/suspense novels, a novella, and numerous short stories, six published. Her amateur sleuth mystery, *A Real Basket Case*, will be published in hardback by Five Star Publishing in March, 2007. Beth has finished in many writing contests at the regional, national and international level. Her latest was second place in Paranormal Romantic Mystery/Suspense of the 2005 RWA Daphne du Maurier contest.



A native Texan, Carol Hightshoe found her way to her current home in Colorado by way of a five-year detour in The Netherlands—courtesy of her husband Tim and the U.S. Air Force. An

avid reader at a young age, her strong desire to write came from her love of (her husband calls it her obsession with) *Star Trek*. It was this early love of *Star Trek* that led her to the science fiction and fantasy genres. While the rest of the family manages to tolerate her imaginary friends and worlds, Carol's attitude is: "I live in my own little world; but it's okay—they know me there." In addition to her own writing, she is the editor of the online e-zine: *The Lorelei Signal*. Visit Carol's Web site: [www.carolhightshoe.com](http://www.carolhightshoe.com).

**R.T. Lawton** has 45 published short



stories, 11 of them in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, one in the *Who Died In Here?* anthology, and a mini-mystery in *Woman's World Magazine*. Having a Bachelor's degree in Business

Administration and a Master's degree in Criminal Justice, R.T. is a Vietnam vet and a retired federal law enforcement agent. He currently resides in Colorado Springs with his wife, Kiti, who is also his first reader.

**Bret Wright** is the co-publisher and chief



editor of *Apollo's Lyre*, the award-winning online magazine for writers. In addition to publishing articles of interest to writers of all levels, *Apollo's Lyre* publishes fiction from micro-fiction to serialized novellas. Bret is widely published as a short story author and freelance writer, as well.

Registering for events: To participate in Write Brain sessions, PLEASE RSVP online at [rsvp@ppwc.net](mailto:rsvp@ppwc.net), or mail to: 4164 Austin Bluffs Pkwy, #246, Colorado Springs, CO 80918 and INCLUDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION. We will attempt to post program changes on the Yahoo! loop. Also, check the Web site for updated information. If you RSVP, you will receive notification of any changes or cancellations to the workshops.

# Sweet Success

Compiled by Janice Black

Congratulations go to **Barb Nickless** for her Daphne nomination in Mainstream Mystery/Suspense!! Way to go Barb!

**Beth Groundwater's** short story, "The Murder Cache," has been accepted into Red Coyote Press's anthology, *Map of Murder*, which will be published this fall. A man and his son hike to a geocache that winds up containing more than they expected. Murder?

Short story, "Midnight Song" Lady K'Lyssia (**Carol Hightshoe**) has been accepted for the August issue of *Nova Fantasyka*—a polish fantasy magazine. She will be INTERNATIONALLY published!

Both of Carol Hightshoe's novelettes "Daughter of Chaos" and "Descent Into Chaos" are now out in *The Stygian Soul*

*Anthology* edited by Tina Morgan and Sheri McGathy.

*The Stygian Soul* is available as an e-book from Double Dragon.

More on **Carol Hightshoe**: the first issue of the *Lorelei Signal*, her fantasy e-zine, went live on May 30. This issue has short stories by Michele Acker, Lee Martindale, Vera Searles and Kayelle Allen as well as a lovely poem by Bobbi Sinha-Morey and artwork by Holly Eddy and Amy Harlib. Please stop by and let her know what you think.

[www.loreliesignal.com](http://www.loreliesignal.com)

[www.carolhightshoe.com](http://www.carolhightshoe.com)

[www.wolfsingerpubs.com](http://www.wolfsingerpubs.com)

<http://klyssia.blogspot.com>

**Diane Hoover** received an honorable mention in *ByLine's* Flash Fiction contest for her short story, "Savoring a Cup of Tea."

**Kathy Brandt's** fourth mystery in her Underwater Investigation series, *Under*

*Pressure*, was launched at Barnes and Noble in Briargate on June 10th. The book is available at all local bookstores and online. [www.ksbrandt.com](http://www.ksbrandt.com).

Now for a completely different kind of writing, the new book *Cryptozoology*, edited by Chad Ament (Coachwhip, 2006), includes a chapter by PPW's **Matt Bille** on the newly classified and still-unclassified wild pigs of the world. It's right between the chapter on coelacanths and the one on alleged sightings of strange bipedal reptiles in Colorado (really).

**Pam McCutcheon** just turned in an essay for a popular culture book from BenBella coming out February 2007 titled *Perfectly Plum: On the Life, Loves and Other Disasters of Stephanie Plum*, Trenton Bounty Hunter. Pam's essay is titled "Stephanie Plum's Trenton: A Great Place for the Family?"

## March Open Critique—The Meeting That Almost Wasn't

By Janice Black



A little problem with getting into the building and some icy weather called for impromptu

ingenuity on the part of the folks gathered for the March OC. After some networking of ideas and phone calls in the parking lot, we climbed back into our cars and trucks to proceed, strung out like 10 raw pearls, to the foyer of the Le Baron Hotel on Bijou Street. The hotel graciously welcomed us with open arms and chairs to lounge in by the fireplace.

Laura Harvey, coordinator of Open Critique, spelled out the guidelines. The four featured authors each brought copies of six pages of manuscript.

Everyone had 10 minutes to read each short excerpt and scribble comments on the copies. Then romance writer and guest critiquer Jodi Dawson led the feedback. Laura Pellerin kept time, discreetly signaling when each critiquer's two minutes of

constructive comments needed to end.

This reporter gained helpful feedback on the opening of a novel-in-progress.

These e-mails were generated soon after the meeting:

"Came home, read comments—SO HELPFUL!"

"Thank you for an informative and fun evening."

"Will there be another opportunity for open critique in the near future?"

Thanks all around to those who participated!

## Basics of PPW

Pikes Peak Writers offers workshops throughout the year, an annual conference (PPW members get a discount) and the bi-monthly *NewsMagazine*. The Web site, [www.ppwc.net](http://www.ppwc.net), helps keep you informed and connected. A Yahoo! group is also available at Yahoo.com (Home page - go to Groups - search for "Pikes Peak Writers").

Regular meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Cottonwood Artists' School, 25 Cimino Drive, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Membership is \$35 and runs for one year.

## Volunteers Needed Always



**Dave Moja, PPW's volunteer coordinator, does a great job looking pathetic and needy as he drums up interest in possible fringe benefits of volunteering for PPW.**

Pikes Peak Writers needs you! Your knowledge, your zest, your talents, your ideas and willingness to work a bit. Getting involved this way not only gets you involved in our local writing community, it grows your writing resume—not to mention growing you as a person, too (lest we forget).

Long term. Short term. A one-time helper at an event. A back-up person. A maverick, a ground-breaker, a behind-the-scenes helper. Which are you?

We're actively seeking individuals to:

- Assist with monthly Write Brain Sessions and other workshops.

- Write articles (of any length) for the *PPW NewsMagazine*.

- Get involved in a myriad of ways with the 2007 Pikes Peak Writers Conference, our "biggie." There are so many tasks you may help with, from ferrying guest speakers to/from the airport to putting cards on tables.

If you're interested in spending a few hours a month growing PPW, please contact us at: [info@ppwc.net](mailto:info@ppwc.net).

# Legal Writes

## Copyright Revisited

By Brenda Speer

**Question:** Should I get a copyright registration or ISBN for my manuscript before I submit it to an agent or publisher?

**Answer:** I wrote about copyright registration a while back and this time I have some information to add from a publisher's perspective. PPW member, Sue Hamilton of Dialogue Publishing, Inc., in Colorado Springs, shared her views on these issue with me.

As stated in my earlier column on copyright registration, under United States federal law, copyrights in original works of authorship arise at the moment of creation of the work. Creation is the key term here. Creation occurs once the work has been converted from an idea to a tangible expression of that idea, such as a manuscript.

Creation is different from publication. Publication means that the work is available to the public. In the most common sense, this means your manuscript has been published as a book and is available to the reading public, usually through sales of the book.

Reputable publishers understand that the copyrights in a work initially belong to the author, as well as the value of a copyright registration for the work. However, publishers prefer to wait until publication to secure a copyright registration with the U.S. Copyright Office. It is problematic for a publisher when an author files his or her own copyright registration after creation of the work, but before publication.

Why? According to Sue Hamilton, the date of the copyright registration becomes associated with the work, because this is the date that must be in the copyright notice accompanying the work. This date can make the work "stale" for a publisher. For example, if you wrote a nonfiction work and filed a copyright registration for it before publication, then try to shop it to an agent or publisher, you're announcing the age of the work by means of the copyright registration. It can take years to find a publisher for a manuscript. In the meantime, by "date-



stamping" your work with a copyright registration, the publisher's impression is that the work is "stale" and may no longer be accurate or saleable.

Additionally, a prolonged lag time from creation to publication is not enticing to the reading public. Publishers and booksellers want to have the year of the copyright registration notice posted in the work to coincide with the year the work is published and released. A current year copyright notice indicates to a reader that the work is "fresh." The reader doesn't care about the legal reality that the work may have been created—and, thus, copyrighted—several years ago: the reader wants to believe the book is the latest, hot read.

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**"It is problematic for a publisher when an author files his or her own copyright registration after creation of the work, but before publication."**

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Again from a publisher's perspective, a writer also should not secure an ISBN (International Standard Book Number) for a manuscript. An ISBN is a 10-digit or 13-digit number which uniquely identifies a book title. Because the supply of available 10-digit number combinations is running out, all new ISBNs will be 13 digits starting January 1, 2007.

Part of the number sequence of the ISBN identifies the publisher of the book. According to the ISBN Agency which issues ISBNs:

"Once an ISBN publisher prefix and associated block of numbers has been assigned to a publisher by the ISBN Agency, the publisher can assign ISBNs to the publications to which it holds publishing rights. However, after the ISBN Agency

assigns ISBNs to a publisher, that publisher cannot resell, reassign, transfer, or split its list of ISBNs among other publishers. These guidelines have long been established to ensure the veracity, accuracy and continued utility of the international ISBN standard."

Because of these restrictions, when an author secures his or her own ISBN, he or she creates logistical distribution problems for a would-be publisher of the author's work. A work with an ISBN that does not belong to the publisher effectively takes that work out of the publisher's potential inventory.

It is not only in the publisher's best interest, but also in the author's best interest, to leave the securing of a copyright registration or an ISBN to the publisher. Otherwise, the author is doing himself or herself a disservice toward obtaining publication.

*—Brenda Speer is a member of PPW and has been practicing law for more than 17 years in support of artists and innovators with an emphasis on intellectual property law (patent, trademark and copyright). Currently in private practice in Colorado Springs, Colorado, she provides legal services for the creative and technological arts. You may contact her by phone at (719)381-1708 or by e-mail at [brenda@blspeer.com](mailto:brenda@blspeer.com).*

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To submit questions for this column, please contact Brenda Speer by e-mail at [brenda@blspeer.com](mailto:brenda@blspeer.com) or by phone at (719)381-1708. Ms. Speer also invites you to visit her Web site: [www.blspeer.com](http://www.blspeer.com).

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## Hot Topics

### Friends and Partners of PPW...

2006 Colorado Gold Writers' Conference on September 8, 9, and 10!

The Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers annual conference will bring together writers, editors, and agents in an intimate, informal setting at The Renaissance Denver Hotel, Denver, Colorado. (Call (303)399-7500 or [www.renaissancehotels.com](http://www.renaissancehotels.com)).

Speakers are Rick Riordan, Jasmine Cresswell, and Wendy Corsi Staub. Visit the RMFW Web site at: [www.rmfw.org](http://www.rmfw.org) for registration details!

### Pikes Peak Romance Writers Summer Workshops

All day workshop with Karen Docter, "The "W" Plot...or The Other White Meat for Plotters."

Saturday, July 15, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists' School. \$10 for PPRW members, \$25 for nonmembers.

All day workshop with Margie Lawson, "Empowering Character Emotions."  
August 19, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free to PPRW members, \$10 for nonmembers. Visit [www.pprw.org](http://www.pprw.org) for details.

## Write Now

### Muscles Fit for the Beach: Flex...Stretch...

Your writing muscles, we mean! This feature is a free-write prompt to access and stretch your right brain. Here's how to do it. Think briefly about this issue's prompt. Set a timer for about five minutes, and start writing. Don't edit or think about punctuation or grammar. Let the thoughts flow and the words go! When the timer beeps, edit a little as needed. Submit your entry to [editor@ppwc.net](mailto:editor@ppwc.net) no later than August 1, 2006. We can't offer prizes, but the winning submission will be in an upcoming issue of PPW NewsMagazine.

**Rules:** Judging criteria are inventiveness and creativity. Titles recommended, but not necessary. One entry per person allowed. Include your full name with entry. All entries will receive an e-mail confirmation.

Entries become the sole property of PPW and all decisions are final. Must be 100 words or less.

### New Prompt:

**He threw the weapon (of your choice) out the portal and shouted...**

### Last Issue's Winning Entry: Rebecca Davis

*Tomorrow is my high school reunion. No more crooked smile, just a dazzling display of bright whites! Roots are retouched, laugh lines diminished and wrinkles—history! Those last ugly twenty pounds—gone! Wait till those snotty cheerleaders lay eyes on me. And that jerk, Tim B. should see me now. Pays him right for ignoring me all those years. Yep, I look fantastic. No glasses, no blemishes. Who's laughing now? Got a thriving advertising agency, complete with staff photographer in an upscale venue. Yep, I am doing great. I push the send button—electronic reunion. Thank God for Photoshop!*