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PIKES PEAK WRITERS

News Magazine

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official publication of the Pikes Peak Writers

Special Conference Edition

“The two most engaging powers of an author are to make new things familiar and familiar things new.”

—Samuel Johnson

Meet the Winners

By Dawn Smit Miller

In this year's Paul Gillette Writing Contest, 21 writers won prizes for their work. They're an eclectic bunch, as you will see. Here are some of their stories.

Karen Clark and Michele Braun Whiteaker
Second Place, Romance,
“Southern Serenade”

In 2001, these writing buddies each completed their first novel—together. Since then, Karen earned her MFA in Writing and Michele successfully pursued freelance writing. Becoming finalists is, by far, the high point of their writing careers and just goes to show that persistence is key—persistence and lots of re-writes, edits, story element changes, spell-checks, fact-checks, compromises, rejections, late nights, early mornings, long distance phone calls and pats on the back.

Chris Myers
First Place, Mainstream,
“Born to Kill”

As an engineer, Chris has worked with every secretive government agency, writing tech manuals and white papers that would put any sane person to sleep. Fortunately, she hasn't let that stop her from writing fiction that does the opposite.

Douglas Fain
Second Place, Mainstream,
“Sink the Kamkara”

The first draft of “Sink the Kamkara” was written after returning from a year of combat in Southeast Asia. After 35 years, Douglas rewrote it for the Paul Gillette contest and was gratified to receive second place. He said, “This has been a great encouragement as I continue working on my third manuscript. Many thanks to the judges for their excellent, detailed feedback. Their comments have been extremely helpful.”

Laura Chambers, Third Place
Mystery/Suspense/Intrigue,
“Murder in Spades”

This story is Laura's first attempt at writing anything more creative than a shopping list since high school creative writing class 25 years ago. She entered the Paul Gillette hoping for feedback and advice from seasoned professionals, never imagining that this would be the outcome.

Rebecca Davis
Second Place, Children's,
“Fairy Trails”

A sunny day, a dusty deck and a broom inspired Rebecca to write “Fairy Trails.” She entered the contest last year and was disqualified immediately because her name appeared on every piece of paper that accompanied the entry. Every single page! Lesson learned.

Pam Mingle
First Place, Young Adult,
“Pandemic!”

Out of 187 entries, only six received a total score of over 200 points. Three of those were in the Young Adult category, and Pam's entry placed first among tough competition. This is her story: Orphaned during the influenza pandemic of 1918, a teenaged girl struggles to gain her independence in the face of financial ruin and a sexually abusive uncle.

Ceil Boyles
Second Place, Young Adult,
“Found Guilty”

After working as a researcher in both early child development and youth corrections, Ceil delved into a long-time dream of writing for children. In 1990 she wrote her first book, a Christmas fantasy starring her stepdaughter, nieces and nephews. It was professionally printed at Kinko's and illustrated by Ceil, an amazing feat since she can't draw a stick figure. Still, it was a hit at her niece's second grade show-and-tell class. And who could stop writing after that kind of recognition!

Manette Snow
First Place, Creative Nonfiction,
“I Am Other”

Manette began writing mainstream fiction, but while pitching her first two novels at the PPWC, she was repeatedly asked the question, “What makes you uniquely qualified to write this book?” Unfortunately, she didn't have a good answer. This forced her to think about what she was uniquely qualified to write about, which led her to write “I Am Other,” the story of a young Filipina-American in search of her cultural identity. Evidently it was a good decision. She placed second in the 2004 contest and now won first place in 2006.

Letter from the Editor



Girl crushes. Boy crushes. The terms have made a comeback in the media over the past few months. They refer to a fervent non-sexual infatuation one person has

for another of the same sex who seems amazingly gifted, sophisticated or accomplished. These types of crushes can trigger the same excitement and nervousness of a first love.

I'll admit I've had my share of girl crushes. But I've had even more of something else, something I'll coin the "author crush." Take this little quiz to see if you've ever fallen in this same category.

1. Have you ever talked about an author to your friends so much they finally read one of her books just to shut you up?
2. Have you ever shed a tear or two when you realized you'd finished reading everything an author had written—including his website?
3. Have you ever refused to loan out an author's book because it had her autograph in it?
4. And my most recent favorite author crush activity: Have you ever bid on an eBay auction for just about anything having to do with a certain author?

Conferences are a fantastic place to fulfill author crushes. Where else can you sit down over a meal with someone who's flown in from across the country and talk face-to-face about the writing process? Where else can you pile up their entire collection of books and plead for more than

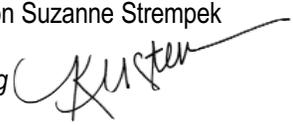
your share of autographs?

During last year's Pikes Peak Writers Conference, I had two "author crushes," one pre-conference on Meredith Blevins and one that developed during conference on Rupert Holmes. What fun I had! My heart beat a little faster every time I was in their presence. I'll admit it's all a little weird, but as long as I'm not following them into bathrooms and it brings a little extra cheer to my day, what's the harm?

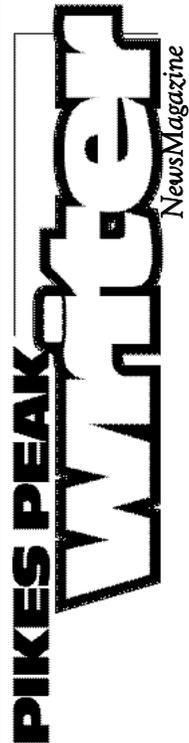
This year my crush falls upon Suzanne Strempek Shea. I can't wait to pick her up at the airport—a task I specifically asked for—and strut around with my soon-to-be-signed copy of *Becoming Finola*.

Ah, to have a crush and not have to return to junior high for it.

P.S. Did I mention Suzanne Strempek Shea has this great book titled *Becoming Finola*?



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Pikes Peak Writer—PPWC Edition

Write Brain—February 2006

Improvational Writing with Deb Courtney

By Suzanne Metzger

In this month's Write Brain Session with Deb Courtney, we explored how to stimulate all five senses in our writing.

Deb provided each of us with a bag filled with goodies to elicit the senses of sight, smell, touch, and taste. Mine contained a silly post card, two distinct flavors of wrapped hard candy, a small piece of bright pink lace, and material in a baggie soaked in vanilla. As she prepared us for the writing exercises, she urged us to pick a character in a story we are already working on. Otherwise, we could write from our own experience or make up a character.

Our first exercise stimulated the sense of sight. We wrote to the prompt: "My character saw this and it reminded him (or her) of...." This was followed by the prompt, "My character felt _____ when..." This helped us flesh out and expand our previous writing.

Next we moved to scent. She explained scent and taste are intertwined, but working with them separately would evoke more information about our plot or character. Scent, in particular, evokes hidden emotions and physical responses. It can stimulate deeply buried memories. Participants opened their baggies and were greeted with the strong fragrance of either lemon, clove, amber, or vanilla. Both the personal reactions and the writing the scent-filled bags provoked were different for each person.

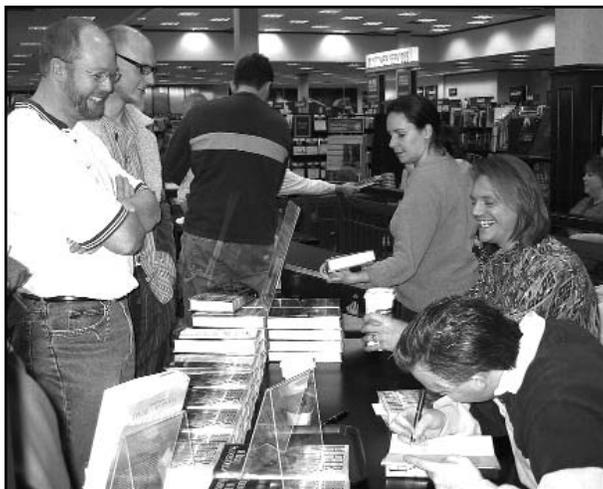
Exploration into the sense of taste followed. Taste can fill in information about your character each time he eats, whether he's alone or sharing a meal. He may have a strong reaction to a flavor or a particular food. Unique flavors can also help establish the time period and regional setting of your story.

Touch, she explained, can evoke setting, mood, or plot. For example if the character has sand in his shoes, it can tell us something about the location. His reaction to feeling the sand can tell us something about his mood or cause him to flashback to a memory of another time when he experienced a similar sensation. We wrote to the prompt "This texture is one my character always thinks of when... ."

We completed our multi-sensory exploration with sound. Deb explained sound was frequently the hardest to portray because it's usually an action that causes a reaction. The reaction could be your character's response to a scream in the night, utter silence, or a love song. She used different musical pieces to call forth memories and ideas related to sound and then had us write to the prompt "Imagine a scene where your character hears... ."

Many participants shared their pieces and some indicated they could use them in their current project. I left feeling more connected to my senses and had a greater understanding of the importance and benefit of providing more sensory information to my readers.

Faculty Members Carwyn and Fahnestock Sign Debut Novel *Heir of Autumn*



By Beth Groundwater

On a winter afternoon in 2003, languishing in the doldrums of writer's block with their solo projects, Giles Carwyn and Todd Fahnestock decided to start another collaborative novel. They struggled to create a gripping, eye-catching beginning that would capture attention. It had to be the perfect "hook." Several nights later, as he paced the floor with his wailing infant daughter, Giles Carwyn imagined she must be infected by some terrible evil that, if released, could consume the world. He feverishly typed out the first draft of the prologue, and *Heir of Autumn's* "hook" was born...

Carwyn and Fahnestock signed the completed novel, published by HarperCollins, at a Barnes and Noble in

Colorado Springs on Saturday, February 11th. They also told the story of the path to publication of their first novel and the four factors they believe led to their success.

The first factor was persistence. Carwyn and Fahnestock, friends since high school, collaborated on five novels—yet unpublished—prior to hitting upon the idea for *Heir of Autumn*. It took them seventeen years to become published. If they'd given up after the third, fourth, or even fifth novel, they

would not have experienced the success they have today.

The second factor was going to a writing conference, the 2004 Pikes Peak Writers Conference to be exact. When their friend, Lawdon, encouraged them to attend, and they asked why, he answered, "Because it will change your life." He couldn't have been more right.

The third factor was having a hook in the first three pages. Carwyn and Fahnestock approached literary agent Donald Maass at the conference and asked if he would read their first three pages. He agreed, was hooked, and asked them to submit the first three chapters to him after the conference. Two weeks later, he requested the rest of the novel, which unbeknownst to him, was not exactly finished. Carwyn and Fahnestock frantically wrote and revised the remainder

of the novel and shipped it off. Maass arranged an auction among the seven major fantasy publishers, and the rest is history.

The final factor that led to their eventual success was passion. They say they write the types of stories they loved to read when they were 15-year-old geeks playing *Dungeons and Dragons*. Whatever your passion may be, Carwyn and Fahnestock encourage you to write stories you feel passionate about.

When questioned about their collaboration on *Heir of Autumn*, Carwyn and Fahnestock said they believe their collaboration works because they each play on their strengths. While Carwyn focuses on plot, Fahnestock focuses on character. To learn more about the collaborative process—the good and the bad aspects—check out their Saturday afternoon workshop, "Mysteries of Collaboration."

To conclude their presentation at their debut book signing, Fahnestock gave a dramatic reading of the prologue that hooked their agent. Afterward many "hooked" audience members lined up to purchase copies so they could read the rest of the story about a prince falsely accused of murder, the deadly gladiatorial game of Nine Squares, and a concubine sorceress seduced into the ultimate test of will. Forty copies were snatched up at the signing, which was also a fundraiser for the Pikes Peak Writers scholarship fund.

Carwyn and Fahnestock are just two of many Pikes Peak Writers who have found success after attending the Pikes Peak Writers Conference. Visit their website at www.carwynfahnestock.com and be sure to say hello as you pass them in the halls at the Wyndham.

Estimating Word Count

By Pam McCutcheon

Pam is the author of ten romance novels, four fantasy short stories and two books for writers. <http://www.pammc.com>

When you query a publisher, it's customary to include your novel's estimated word count. Assuming you use the standard conventions for manuscript format (1" margins, 25 double-spaced lines per page, and a 12 point non-proportional font like Courier), then a good rule of thumb is one page equals 250 words.

Now, I know your word processor will give you the exact word count, but that's not what the publisher is looking for. According

For the math-impaired, that means you multiply the number of manuscript pages times 250 to get your word count. To make it even easier, here's a chart:

200 pages =	50,000 words
240 pages =	60,000
280 pages =	70,000
320 pages =	80,000
360 pages =	90,000
400 pages =	100,000
440 pages =	110,000
480 pages =	120,000

to my computer, my second book has 62,389 words. But if I calculate it using the formula, 272 manuscript pages times 250 words/page equals 68,000 words. That's a big difference.

Why the difference? Because short sentences/dialogue, chapter breaks, and scene breaks take up more space on the page, but use fewer words. For example, the sentence "Rick laughed." is only two words, but it occupies an entire line of text.

From the publisher's standpoint, it's more important to know how much space will be used in the printed book than to know the exact word count. So by using this method of estimating word count, you can give the publisher what they really want.

Pikes Peak Writer—PPWC Edition

Pitches, reading appointments, standing in line next to famous authors, sitting beside an agent you'd love to have represent you—writers' conferences are full of nervous moments. Here are some Web sites to help you turn those nail biting moments into opportunities.

✦ <http://www.writingworld.com/publish/pitch.shtml>

Writing World has great instructions on how to prepare your pitch and do your homework, what not to say, how to handle your nerves, how to accept criticism, and a welcome reminder that agents and editors are only people doing their jobs.

✦ http://www.writersdigest.com/articles/clark_writers_conference.asp

Writers Digest explains how to discuss your work with agents and editors.

Untangling the Web

By Lauri Griffin

✦ <http://agentobscura.livejournal.com/2005/08/05/>

Agent Nadia Cormier provides an amusing look at life from the other side of the table and provides helpful pitching tips.

✦ <http://www.sararwa.com/articles/pitch.htm>

How to prepare, aim and pitch at a conference.

✦ <http://www.kathycarmichael.com/generator.html>

If you are having trouble summing up your book in a few sentences, try this interactive pitch generator.

✦ <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art36179.asp>

Here are great tips on how to answer the questions “what do you write?” and “what’s your book about?”

✦ http://www.southbaywriters.com/gallery/writers/beth_proudfoot/getthemostconference.htm

Find great ideas for connecting with other attendees, and reasons why you should.

✦ <http://www.fictionwriters.com/tips-conferences.html>

Some quick do’s and don’ts for attending conferences.

✦ <http://www.experiencecoloradosprings.com/travel.asp?pageid=17%7C57%7C113%7C152>

And lastly, for those of you visiting from different areas, a few tips on surviving at altitude.

Hot Topics

FREE Service!

If you haven’t already visited the Find An Author site at www.ColoradoBook.org you’re missing out.

Developed by the volunteer efforts of Kenn Amdahl, Becky Clark Cornwell, Liz Hill and Bonnie McCune, and lovingly supported by Book Organizations of Colorado and the Colorado State Library, it’s a very cool database of Colorado authors who want to speak to school, library or community groups. It offers one-stop shopping for organizations seeking authors for whatever event they’re envisioning.

It’s free to those seeking authors and free to authors as well. Even if you’re not quite published yet, please make sure all the teachers, librarians, Rotarians, and other event planners in the state know about you.

The Find an Author motto is, “Be swoonful.” If you’re already listed on the site, check to make sure your entry makes you swoon. You can edit your listing whenever you like. Make each word count, because you only have a few words to make everyone else swoon too.

If you’re not listed on the site... well, golly, what are you waiting for?!

Golden Nuggets

Open Critique De-Mystified!

By Barb Dyess

The January Write Brain featured our first Open Critique Session, led by author and experienced critiquer Pam McCutcheon. The goal was to introduce the concept of critiquing to those unfamiliar with it. Open Critique is literally “open” to all PPW members writing in any genre who wanted to take a small risk and go public in a safe, friendly and supportive environment. For this session the number of participants was limited, but for future OC’s PPW will try to accommodate all who want to take part.

For this session, five writers submitted five pages of a work-in-progress. Copies were made available to all in attendance, so that everyone could provide feedback to the writers. The Brave Five took seats in front with Pam, who served as leader-moderator. Pam explained various ways that critique sessions operate, contrasting and comparing. She encouraged criticism to be balanced with positive feedback, since it is easier to take the negative when well-seasoned with praise. She also gave helpful suggestions, such as writing comments in colored ink for easier reading. Armed with the basic instructions, everyone dove in to read the writers’ work and to jot down comments before verbal critiquing began.

The participants brought stories from a cross-section of genres—from children’s to mainstream to paranormal-suspense. Both

short story and novel-length works were represented. The writing styles varied, and some stories were polished while others were in earlier stages of development. You might expect it would be difficult for such a disparate group to hold together in a cohesive critique session, but you’d be wrong. Although the comments were tailored to each unique work, general issues kept recurring. Could the reader connect quickly to the main point-of-view character, “get into his or her head,” empathize? Was the POV consistent? Did the story flow well? Was the motivation of the main character clear? Did it make us want to keep reading?

Compliments and constructive criticism abounded. Of course implementing changes based on others’ suggestions is always at the discretion of the writer, but many participants said that if several readers found a common problem, they would seriously consider revising it.

Participant Laura Pellerin had this comment:

“This has given me a whole new perspective. I plan to use the suggestions given, such as expanding a minor character.”

The event was a fun window into the world of critique groups, and many left inspired as well as informed.

The next OC session will be May 24th at 6:30 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists’ School (see ppwc.net for details). Our guest critiquer will be writer and editor Laurie Wagner Buyer. If you’d like to sign up, contact critique@ppwc.net.