

Pikes Peak Writer

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Speech by Award-Winning Historical Novelist Richard S. Wheeler at Whitefish, Montana

The following article begins a speech by award-winning historical novelist, Richard Wheeler, at a Whitefish, Montana writers conference. Due to the length, the NewsMag will offer this in two parts in the next two issues. We feel that the subject is pertinent and of interest to our members and readers of the NewsMag.

PART I

I am pleased to be here today. Thank you for coming here and listening to an elderly novelist wend his way along the primrose path. Writing skills are largely self-taught, but perhaps I can steer you in a new direction, and maybe I will inspire you to try something different and promising. I am hoping to persuade you to look at literature in new ways. I am also hoping that by freeing you from certain shackles of mind, you will find yourself writing more

compelling novels, and selling them successfully.

What I'm going to say does not seem at all radical to me, but it will seem radical to you because it will challenge your understanding of modern literature.

We are all familiar with the idea that there is literary fiction, and there is popular fiction. Most of us choose to write in one realm or the other. Literary fiction is considered the more prestigious form of the novel, the

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PPW Member Alice Marks Our Inspiration

By Pat Kennelly

Critique groups aren't for everyone. For many writers it can be difficult to find a group that is a good fit. But when it works, the support can inspire you to write more and push you to achieve your goals. And, your writing can move from decent to publishable very quickly. Just ask Alice Marks.

Alice is not new to writing, but she was new to critique groups when she joined in 2003. She credits the group for giving her the positive

reinforcement she needed to keep sending out submissions. And although she has had her share of rejections—what working writer doesn't?—she doesn't give up. When the critique group decided to have one of the monthly meetings online, some members dropped out. But Alice was not to be deterred. She upgraded her computer, learned all about Yahoo and educated herself on downloading files.

Alice has been writing since grade school. In 11th grade, in 1938 she won a Drake Creative Award for a short story and had her first story published. She was the editor of the high school



Alice Marks

annual, wrote for the college newspaper and then for the *Junior Gazette*, a Cedar Rapids, Iowa publication. After getting married, Alice put her writing career on hold to concentrate on raising her family. And to teach. She taught special

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“We keep going back, stronger, not weaker, because we will not allow rejection to beat us down. It will only strengthen our resolve. To be successful there is no other way.” —Earl G. Graves

From the Editor



Facing Down Rejection

By Pat Kennelly

Although I don't have any statistics on rejections, I do know that many best-selling authors

often boast of how many rejections they received before they got their first work published. And almost every how-to writing book includes a chapter on accepting rejection as part of the writing process. Successful writers all say the same thing...surviving the rejection process is the only way to succeed as a writer.

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Yet for many writers one rejection can be the end of the submission process. They continue writing but tell anyone who will listen about the horrific way their literary masterpiece was rejected.

Here are five ways to keep ahead of the "not right for our publication" without losing your desire to be published.

1. Make a game of it. In my writing group we award prizes quarterly for the most rejections, the quickest rejection and the most interesting or funniest rejection. Some writing groups stipulate that you can't join without 25 rejections. Their theory is that you're not a real writer if you haven't been rejected 25 times.

2. Don't take it personally. Although it hurt when my query was rejected in six minutes (e-mail query, e-mail rejection), I kept my personal feelings out of the equation and re-submitted, and submitted and submitted. It might be rejected by 20 publications before being perfect for one or at some point it might need to be scrapped. Either way, if you treat your writing as a business product instead of an extension of you, you can move ahead instead of giving up.

3. Don't do the editor's job. Don't reject your own work before you send it out. It might never be "good enough" in your eyes. It's like the lottery—you can't win if you don't play. Let your queries, articles, poems and fiction pieces see

what lies beyond your pile of musings. Many smaller publications will even give you constructive criticism along with the rejection.

4. Find your niche. What comes easy to some is like strolling through waist-high oatmeal to others. If you've tried for years to write literary fiction, but everyone thinks your writing is hilarious, you might want to try chick-lit. Trying on new genres might just be the spark your writing needs to get noticed and published. A site like www.duotrope.com makes it easy to search for markets for your short fiction, poetry or novel-length work. It also offers interesting stats on slowest and quickest response times for publications.

5. Learn from your mistakes. If most of the editors are telling you the same thing or your writing buddies are telling you "you need to take a class," don't be stubborn. A refresher class in grammar or a writing workshop could make a big difference.

Consider that collecting rejection slips is like going to "safety meetings" in the corporate world—a necessary part of the job. Enjoy them while you can and then you can brag about all the rejections you received when your book hits the best-seller list.

Best wishes,

Pat

Our Inspiration

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education/speech therapy for almost 20 years—led to the field by her daughter's profound deafness.

With her family grown, five children, 12 grandchildren, four great grandchildren, and with both she and her husband retired, Alice looked to publishing some of those stories she had set aside. She met Martha Lancaster at a PPW function and then they both joined Olgy Gary's critique group. The group has been meeting twice a month since its inception. Group members have supported each other through many rejections and increasing numbers of acceptances. Alice has gone from writing one picture book to writing short stories of her childhood in Iowa, memoir articles, poetry, and more. She is fearless about trying new things.

Alice's article and recipe for kolaches, yeast

dough with fruit filling, has been published in the January 2007 issue of *Good Old Days Magazine*. This is her second published piece for *Good Old Days*. She has published poems, had many honorable mentions, and her most recent honor an Honorable Mention in the *Writer's Digest* 75th Annual Writing Competition in the category of Inspirational Writing.

Her fellow group members weren't surprised she won in that category, because for them, Alice is a bonafide inspiration. Olgy Gary keeps Alice's picture on her cell phone to show off the most prolific member of the group. PPW member Lauri Griffin agrees. "Alice is still learning new things and she's not just trying...she is achieving!" Alice shows all of us "we are never too old to follow our dreams." Alice Marks decided not to write as a hobby, as many of us imagine ourselves doing in retirement. She decided to write, improve her craft, submit, and she got published. In other words, at 84 years young, Alice Marks became a pro.

The Business of Writing Self-Promotion 101

By Linda Rohrbough

Some authors magically get attention for their books through no efforts of their own. I don't know any of them, but I've heard they exist. The truth about publishing is you'll probably have to do something to get the word out. The two no-brainer things to do are book signings and writing articles.

The thing to remember about promotion is the "rule of threes." Everything you spend time on should provide at least three benefits. For a book signing, a rule of three grouping could be: one, the bookstore promotes you and your book. Two is you work up a press release and send it to local media attempting to get at least a calendar mention or an article in the local paper (but at least the local media will see your name). And three, you get on the reorder list at the bookstore which means your book will be available in the store longer.

What's this bookstore reorder business? George Arnold, an acknowledged expert on hand-selling books says you stay in the store until you sell 20 to 30 books. That's how many it takes to get on the bookstore's regional reorder list. When I interviewed George in July, he'd completed 36 signings in 2006, selling 958 copies or just over 26 books per signing. Bookstores consider 20 books a day by one author a huge success.

Before you panic, let me give you the tips he uses from his book *Bestseller* (Eakin Press, 2003) to make this not only realistic, but practical. First, he recommends you politely insist on being in a conspicuous spot, like up front near the door. Then have a full-size poster of yourself holding your book beside your table. Be dressed the same as you are in the poster. If a costume makes sense for your book, wear it both in person and in the photo. The poster gives you credibility and people quickly put together you're the author and not just someone sitting at a table. It also continues selling if you leave to grab a snack, take a bathroom break or talk to potential buyers.

George suggests frequent breaks, at least one each hour. Have a sign prepared to stick in the top of one of your books that says "Back in Ten Minutes."

He advises authors target a specific demographic and have a funny or charming line ready to start a conversation. For example, you could call out in a charming way, "Hey, I thought you'd be here at one and here it is nearly two-thirty. Where have you been?" Of course, this means you know who your readers are. In the beginning, George wondered if this would work but he consistently sells three books an hour.

Now, if you've got a topic where you can give an hour talk and draw a crowd, then you can hit your quota faster. For example, the book I'll be promoting this fall is one I wrote with my doctor about a safe, surgical approach to weight loss. I plan to do a 20 minute talk with my life-size before and after poster beside me, answer questions and sell my 20 to 30 books. Either way, the idea is to stay on the reorder list.

"Everyone who writes for this newsletter has the rule of threes in operation. They're getting known by other writers who have influence, polishing their craft, and they're putting a sample out there hoping you'll want more."

The other no-brainer way to promote yourself is to write articles. If you are reading this, then you're probably a member of PPW. Smart move, because one of the easier ways to get your name out is to write for this *NewsMagazine*.

It never ceases to amaze me how many writers' newsletters are begging for material. One editor for another writers' group newsletter told me people call him with article suggestions. When he suggests, good idea, why don't you write that for the newsletter, they answer, "Me? I couldn't do that." Aren't

we writers? Why isn't every writer's newsletter editor's in-box overflowing with ideas and articles?



Everyone who writes for this newsletter has the rule of threes in operation. They're getting known by other writers who have influence, polishing their craft, and they're putting a sample out there hoping you'll want more.

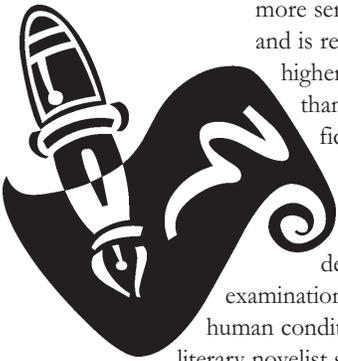
To get started, it would be smart to develop a short list of article ideas, say five or six, each a sentence or two long, then e-mail them to Pat Kennelly (kennelly25@msn.com). (That's called "pitching" by the way, and it's a skill you can carry over to talking to an editor or agent about your work.) Even if you aren't comfortable writing from your own experience, you can interview someone or report on an event. If Pat likes one of your ideas and you submit your article, be sure to write that bio at the bottom about who you are and what your book is about. And yes, it's immodest, but that's how it's done.

So I hope you'll give these ideas for doing book signings and articles a try. It can't hurt and hopefully you'll do something different that'll make you and your work stand out.

—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 latest book *Stepping Out of the Shadow of Obesity: The Comprehensive Guide to the Adjustable Gastric Band*, co-authored with Robert Sewell, M.D., will be published by Marlowe & Company in 2007. She completed her first techno-thriller novel and is working on a romantic suspense. Visit her Web site: www.PCbios.com.

Wheeler Speech

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more serious art, and is regarded as a higher calling than popular fiction.

Literary fiction is usually defined as the

examination of the human condition. The

literary novelist sets out to depict the truth in human relationships, and wins acclaim according to how penetrating the novel is. The perception we entertain is that the literary novelist is a person of great education, whose language is disciplined and rich with metaphor and simile and figures of speech, whose work is polished and refined to a level rarely seen in commercial fiction. It is the dedicated literary novelist who receives the great prizes, the Pulitzer, the Nobel, the National Book Award. It is the art of writing literary novels that is taught in academic venues such as the famous Iowa Writers Workshop. It is modern literary novels that are dutifully studied in thousands of college English classes.

It is easy to see why so many of us seek to write this prestigious fiction, seek its rewards, seek the reviews and serious criticism that envelop this literature. An appreciation of literary fiction is taught on campuses across the country by intelligent academics who want their students to absorb the greatness placed before them.

Popular fiction, on the other hand, is regarded as commerce, factory fiction for a humbler readership, mostly the less-educated. Here plot becomes more important, page-turning tension is vital, characterization and subtlety are sacrificed to the more important business of keeping the story rolling along. There is less space for reflection, and little soul-searching depth in commercial fiction. Popular fiction often transports readers away from the real world whereas literary fiction often carries a reader into the real world, and literary novelists are celebrated for their keen eye.

A popular novel is rarely regarded as a contribution to our literary heritage. Popular fiction ranges from the big commercial novels of skilled authors down to sheer hackwork one occasionally finds in some original mass market paperbacks. Indeed, I believe the very

idea of popular fiction rose from the appearance of mass-market paperbacks after World War Two.

Until recently, authors who wrote popular fiction thought it provided a better income than literary fiction. Publishers threw their publicity resources behind blockbuster and midlist novels, and the result was real rewards for the commercial novelist. But times are changing and who can say what the future will bring? I suspect that just now, literary novelists earn more.

If you have believed in these distinctions, and have believed that the world of fiction has always been divided into these two sharply defined categories, you will be surprised to learn that it probably is not so. The distinction made between literary and popular fiction is quite modern; indeed, it evolved in my own lifetime. Back in the forties and fifties, if you had asked Ernest Hemingway, or John Dos Passos, or John Steinbeck, whether he wrote literary or popular fiction, you would probably have gotten a blank stare or a request to define what you mean. Likewise, if you had asked such distinguished publishers as Alfred Knopf or Charles Scribner whether they published literary or commercial fiction, he would have been confounded by the question. For these people, there was simply literature. It might be serious literature or light-hearted literature. It might be genre literature—mysteries and westerns were identified as separate branches of literature. Those publishers produced all sorts of novels. Alfred Knopf proudly published W. R. Burnett, a novelist who wrote westerns as well as the classic crime story that brought him fame, *The Asphalt Jungle*. Scribners proudly published S. S. Van Dine, a mystery writer, alongside Hemingway and Tom Wolfe and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.

If the distinction between literary and commercial fiction was unknown to authors and publishers, it was also unknown to the Pulitzer Committee in that period, which awarded its prizes without drawing such inferences. *Gone With the Wind*, by Margaret Mitchell, won a Pulitzer for fiction. So did *The Yearling*, by Margorie Kinnan Rawlings. So did *Tales of the South Pacific*, by James Michener. So did *Advise and Consent*, by Allen Drury. So did *The Way West*, by A. B. Guthrie Jr. So did *The Caine Mutiny*, by Herman Wouk. So did *The Travels of Jaimie McPheeters*, by Robert Lewis Taylor. So did *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's masterpiece. These were all simply literature, none of it pigeonholed as literary or popular fiction.

Most authors and publishers of that period would have told you that good fiction requires all the qualities that were later divided between literary and popular fiction. That is, a fine novel does have a compelling storyline with a beginning, middle, and end, page-turning tension, rich characterization, lapidary prose, a consideration of the human condition, a sense of tragedy or comedy, mastery of a milieu, and broad appeal to both well educated and less educated people. Authors of that period prided themselves on the universality of their stories. If they could appeal to college-educated people, fine; if they could appeal to the humblest reader, even better. There was little of the elitism that now attaches to literary fiction. Ernest Hemingway made a point of using words that were universally understood. No reasonably literate reader could possibly have trouble understanding or interpreting a Hemingway novel.

“The literary novelist sets out to depict the truth in human relationships, and wins acclaim according to how penetrating the novel is.”

So, the distinction between literary and popular fiction is quite recent, perhaps half a century old. When I was a youth it didn't exist. Yet today it is a given: we assume that there have always been two branches of literature, and we writers need to make one or the other our own. Where did it come from? I had no idea how it evolved until my friend Win Blevins, who has an advanced degree in criticism from Columbia University, enlightened me. The distinction between literary and popular fiction arose, he told me, about the time when colleges began to offer workshop courses in creative writing, especially in the 1960s.

Teachers used the term “literary” to describe what was to be taught in these workshops. These seminars would teach students the art of writing a “serious” novel, and not something light or transitory or appealing to popular tastes. This distinction gradually became the norm, and in modern times “literary fiction” has become a distinct branch of literature that pursues truths about the human condition and is also a vehicle for progressive social comment.

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Rub's Muse of the Month



As told to Chris Mandeville

This is the first installment of a column written by Rub (pronounced "Roo") as told to his friend and owner, ChrisM, President of PPW and writer of the "Magical Realism" variety of Fantasy. Rub is a service dog who loves being the PPW/C mascot. He likes stories of all kinds, but particularly enjoys those involving good chase scenes. His favorite things are writers, children, his kitten Loki, and cream cheese.

If I had thumbs I'd be a writer. How could I not be? I'm surrounded by amazing writers who volunteer for PPW, and they never cease to inspire me. I hang out with my buddy Charlie and get excited about writing historical fiction. Then I pal around with Jen and decide I'll write mystery. But when I hear Chris M2 talking about her latest novel, I can't help but want to write suspense. PPW's dedicated bunch of volunteers is chock full of writing talent, publishing know-how, editorial skill and creative ideas. Their enthusiasm for the craft and business of writing makes me want to write, too. I thought it might inspire you as well, so each month I'll share a mini-profile of a volunteer with you.

For the month of March I couldn't decide which of my friends on the Board of Directors to highlight, so I'm going to tell you about them all. My Muse of the Month for April is none other than Jodi Anderson, our incredibly talented PPWC Emcee. Check back with me next issue to learn about more of our inspiring PPW volunteers. Or when

you see me at a PPW event, gimme a scratch behind the ear and tell me about your writing. Who knows, you might just be my next Muse.

Muses for March:

Laura Hayden, is Conference Director for the fourth time this year, as perhaps you already knew.

But did you know she was officially crowned "Queen of the Universe" at PPWC 2006? I'm told her reign really began back in PPWC's inaugural year, when she placed first in the Historical Romance category of the Paul Gillette contest. Since then she has volunteered and/or spoken at every PPWC but one. She was also the first president of PPW. Her Majesty has had 10 books published in a variety of genres. Currently she has four proposals in the pipeline, in four different genres, of course. The thing I like best about Laura is that she loves me and isn't afraid to show it. Find me at a PPW workshop and you'll likely see Laura curled up on the floor beside me, crown and all.

Charles Rush is currently Member-at-Large on the Board of Directors, as well as serving as the Chair of the Grants Committee.

Charlie was instrumental in forming the nonprofit Pikes Peak Writers organization based on the highly successful Pikes Peak Writers Conference. He's also been the Vice President, Conference Director, Deputy Director, Volunteer Coordinator, and a member of the Hotel Committee and Strategic Planning Committee. He's a consummate professional, and the Board counts on him to be the voice of reason, to offer common sense solutions to complex problems, and to draft many of our policies. In his fiction writing he has a gift for making Civil War history come alive, the good, the bad and the very, very bad. I'm sure glad I wasn't a camp dog during the War Between the States. What a life they must have led. Hey, maybe there's a story there...

Chris Olson has been with PPWC since its inception. Formerly the PPW Secretary, she is now Faculty Director and Member-at-Large.

The BOD depends on her for public relations and marketing information and recommendations. She is also the person responsible for bringing fabulous agents, editors and authors to PPWC. Chris "O" rarely talks about her own stories, but the

sparkle of her intelligent eyes hints at the empowering, thought provoking, character driven women's fiction she writes. She is a true caretaker, always ready with a hug and an encouraging word, plus she makes time to write. Now that's inspiring.

Pat Kennelly is Editor of the PPW NewsMagazine.

I've seen first-hand what an impressive job she's doing as our editor. She's down-to-earth with loads of common sense, plus she's blooming with imaginative ideas. Pat's a natural leader, bringing together people, ideas and words. She writes *NewsMag* articles and editorials, of course, but she has also written restaurant reviews, poetry, chick lit and a variety of short stories, as well as working as a freelance editor. As if that's not enough, she also owns and runs the Mediterranean Café in downtown Colorado Springs. She whips up good food and good stories—what more could an aspiring writer dog want?

Chris Myers, also known as "Chris M2," holds the office of Secretary.

In addition she has been training and coordinating our moderators and monitors for the last few conferences, and this year brings her skills and insight to the "Reality Track" programming for PPWC. Last year she won first place in the Paul Gillette Writing Contest for her Mainstream entry, *Born to Kill*. Currently she is making final revisions to her Suspense novel, *Offshored*. I admire how she writes every single day and is always striving to hone her craft and improve her stories through reading, workshops, critique and research. Plus she's a cool cat.

Dawn Smit Miller, our Contest Director and new member of the Board, has systemized, organized and revolutionized the Paul Gillette Writing Contest.

Her talent for creating order through systemization is also showcased in her non-fiction craft book, *Rainbow Editing*. She's presented workshops on this innovative editing tool to individuals and groups across the front range. As for fiction, Dawn has the amazing ability to dream novels. (Not fair—I just dream about chasing squirrels.) In addition to *Through Spiral Eyes*, her first published novel, she's got more than 80 complete books in her head. She recently put

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Ruh with his friend, the border collie Whisper, and his kitten Loki.

Ruh's Muse of the Month

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aside a science fiction story to work on an exciting new project. I'm not allowed to reveal what it is yet, but I can say it involves a well-known retired Colorado Springs homicide detective and a request from a New York literary agent. Keep your ears perked for exciting updates.

Jennifer Webster-Valant is the PPW Treasurer, and a treasure, too.

Kind-hearted and friendly, brilliant yet humble, she does her job quietly, professionally and accurately. As for her writing, Jen's talents span the gamut of the mystery genre, from straight mystery to psychological thriller to suspense. Her favorite writers are Anne Rice and Jodi Picoult, but Jen's writing style is all her own. I don't know how she

puts words together so beautifully and manages to handle numbers so well, too. My kitten says Jen must be cookin' with both sides of her brain, but that's a story for another day.

Beth Groundwater is our recently elected Vice President.

She brings her logic, tenacity and level-headedness to PPW non-conference events, and I know I can always count on her for a calming pat in a stressful situation. Beth's been a participant in PPWC since 1997, and last year—after selling her first novel—was on the faculty. Her mystery, *A Real Basket Case*, just came out in hardcover from Five Star Publishing. A promotional wizard, she has a whirlwind book tour this spring. Amidst it all Beth is writing, writing, writing. Currently she's working on stories starring a female river ranger, so hold on tight for the whitewater ride of your life.

Barb Nickless, Workshops Director, handles her duties with calm and charm.

No matter the challenge, she is poised and put-together. She looks like a high-powered executive or evening news anchor, so I'd never expect to find her in the morgue, but sure enough that's where she went to do research for her books. Her writing has taken first place in the Mystery category of both the Colorado Gold and the Paul Gillette contests. She's now busy revising her latest book, a tantalizing "literary mystery," as her agent calls it. I wish

I could read because I bet her stories are as captivating as she is. To see grace under pressure, come to any of the PPW non-conference events. She welcomes all with sincere warmth, fixes glitches without batting an eye, and doesn't ever seem to mind when I shed on her suit.

Muse of the Month—April:

Jodi Anderson, who writes as Jodi Dawson, is my Muse of the Month for April.

She inspires me every time I see her, and I'm fortunate to see her often during April since she is Deputy Director and Emcee for PPWC. Jodi always has a smile on her face and a positive thing to say. She's a genuinely kind, caring and generous human, and I know if she had a tail she'd be wagging it more often than not. She imbues the characters in her novels with those same endearing qualities, so you root for them and hurt for them, laugh and cry with them. She has the special gift of being able to make people (and dogs) feel good about who they are, and it comes across in person and on the page. The most inspiring thing about Jodi is how she makes you believe that your writing project is awesome and you have the obligation to work diligently to get it out for others to enjoy. She gives writers a kick in the pants in the nicest possible way. I know if I had pants (and thumbs) I'd be a more confident, dedicated writer for having spent a few minutes with Jodi.

Wheeler Speech

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This is tragic. It is well to keep in mind that the novels that endure through the generations, the ones that we call classics, were largely written for ordinary people, not educated elites. Mark Twain and Charles Dickens and Jack London wrote stories intended for all of us. In fact, through most of American literature, both fiction and nonfiction, authors made a point of writing for people in all walks of life. Let me do a roll call of authors and poets who sought to write for all people: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry David Thoreau, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Walt Whitman, Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, James Baldwin. Where is this leading me? To a belief that the whole idea of an elite "literary" fiction

is a departure from a deeply-rooted American storytelling tradition that has always been democratic and universal. I suspect that American letters has been hijacked by elitists and American fiction has suffered ever since.

Now we live in a world in which New York publishers are sharply divided. Some, such as Viking, Scribners, Alfred Knopf, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, or Harper Collins, devote themselves almost entirely to literary fiction while others, such as St. Martin's, Forge, Doubleday or Simon and Schuster largely devote themselves to popular fiction. And you, the novelists, must decide which direction to go. *The New York Times* and the *New York Review of Books* and *The New Yorker* are largely devoted to reviewing literary works. Only rarely do they review popular fiction, while other publications such as regional newspapers often devote themselves to popular fiction.

I consider this a most unsatisfactory state

of affairs. For one thing, I think the dichotomy is false. There is no reason why a popular novel with a dramatic storyline cannot also be a novel that probes the human condition. There is no reason why a literary novel that delves deep into relationships or character cannot also have a storyline that hustles along and compels attention. These false distinctions should be thrown out. A slow and plotless novel is bad writing, no matter whether it is the proper form for literary fiction. A shallow story that moves fast but is devoid of characterization is bad writing no matter whether it is the proper form for popular fiction. I believe that a good story avoids the weaknesses of both:

- It moves right along.
- It rewards readers.
- It illuminates life.

Next Issue: Part 2 continued

Pikes Peak Writers Conference—2007

By Laura Hayden, 2007
PPWC Director

It all started in 1993.

The very first Pikes Peak Writers Conference was held at the Sheraton South on Circle. Approximately 175 people attended and the featured speakers included Stephen Coonts, Frank Waters, and John Nichols. Other speakers included Robert Crais, Diane Mott Davidson and Paul Gillette.

I ran the bookstore along with a couple of friends which meant I didn't get to many workshops. But I'd won first place in the Historical Romance category of our contest in its inaugural year with a time travel entry called *A Margin in Time*. That year, we'd invited a brand new editor, Denise Little, and PPWC was her first conference.

Jump fifteen years later.

I'm the director for the fourth time. Denise Little bought my winning manuscript on a two book contract and *A Margin in Time* came out in 1995 from Zebra, and she's returning to the conference this year. Bob Crais, now a *New York Times* best-selling author, is returning for his second time as a featured speaker.

This year, we'll be celebrating our 15 years by glancing at the past while we plan for the future. We're also adding some new elements to this year's conference.

On Friday, besides having Agent Roundtables, Editor Read & Critique sessions, Author Critique sessions, the Newcomers



Orientation and Pitch Practice, we'll hold a track of general workshops, and have a session on Flash Fiction (and a Flash Fiction contest as well). Dr. Eric Maisel, one of America's premier creativity coaches will start our kick-off.

On Saturday, besides our multi-tracks of workshops, we plan to have a "free-to-the-public"

area right off the lobby with programming of interest to readers and teachers along with some booksigning times. We'll post more about that later when the schedule is set. So if you know someone who is thinking about writing but hasn't made the commitment to writing or isn't ready for a conference, invite them to stop by the Marriott and attend one or more of our mini-seminars. Our luncheon speaker will be Mary Jo Putney, a *USA Today* bestselling author who writes romance and fantasy. We're planning a big blow out at our Awards Banquet to celebrate our 15th anniversary with Jim Butcher, author of *The Dresden Files* series in print and now, adapted for television. The University of Denver is one of our sponsors for Saturday events.

On Sunday, we're opening part of our conference to the public. For a modest fee, we will invite the public to attend our two Law & Order Reality Track workshops and to The Interrogation Room where we grill ...er...ask Bob Crais questions. Their price of admission includes a book which he'll sign afterwards. Then the public component will

join us at lunch where Bob will speak. There will be special door prizes for everyone. The *Colorado Springs Independent* will co-sponsor the Crais event.

After that, the staff will all go home, collapse into their easy chairs and watch *The Dresden Files* on the SciFi Channel.

A quick note about the hotel: The Wyndham is now a Marriott and if you've stayed there before, you're going to be stunned and pleased by the changes. All rooms have been renovated and now are elegant yet functional with working desks with high tech hookups, the most comfortable beds in the business, flat screen televisions and redesigned bathrooms. All hallways have been redone with new paint, wallpaper and carpeting. A new elevator system should be installed by the time we get there. There's a new concierge level service on the 9th floor and plans for a new restaurant. (We have been told that yes, the restaurant will be open during our stay.) The lobby already boasts a sleek new check-in area and all new furniture and carpet. There's also a new chef at the Marriott that the staff is raving about. (And they eat there every day...)

But best of all, we have much of the same hotel staff as last year, which means they understand who and what we are and consider us one of their top and most valuable clients. We're pleased at the changes they've made so that now both the conference and the hotel are working hard to give you the highest quality programming and surroundings.

We'll have more about our free-to-the-public seminars on Saturday and our special concurrent Crais event on our Web site and via our e-mail loops. Stay tuned!

See you there.



Eric Maisel
Keynote
Speaker for
Friday Opening
Ceremonies



Mary Jo Putney
Keynote
Speaker for
Saturday Lunch

**Jim
Butcher**
Keynote
Speaker
for
Saturday
Night
Awards
Banquet



**Robert
Crais**
Keynote
Speaker
for
Sunday
Lunch



More complex than “Just the facts Ma’am”

By Suzanne Metzger

Dum, de, dum, dum. Back in Joe Friday’s day, crime scene investigation was not as complex as it is today. Each of the professionals who spoke during the full-day CSI workshop was well educated, articulate, and eager to share their knowledge.

Crime Scene Investigation II was every bit as exciting as the first CSI workshop presented in 2004! The focus this time was on the actual crime scene, the process of homicide investigation, and courtroom procedures. We also revisited weaponry and were treated to demonstrations (with blanks, of course) by Tim Hightshoe.

Chris Herndon, Deputy Coroner Investigator, started us off on a humorous note. The title of her talk, “People Are Just Dying To See Me” is a clue to the tone of her presentation. She told us if she wasn’t able to interject humor into her job, she wouldn’t be able to do it.

When it comes to dead bodies, she informed us that she’s the boss. Nothing can be touched until she completes her preliminary examination of the scene. In a later talk, we learned that an exception might be a dangerous situation where a gun that needs to be secured is found next to a body. Occasionally a naïve officer, still new to law enforcement, will move or touch something—and when he or she does, they will definitely hear from their supervisor.

Chris had many interesting slides demonstrating details important to an investigation, such as how time of death is determined, how a person died, and how she knows if the body has been moved.



Shaun Kaufman and Chris Herndon

performing an autopsy. The room is always flooded with light. Also, in El Paso County and most other places, bodies are stored in meat lockers for easier access, rather than

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those sleek drawers that slide out on the CSI shows.

The next presenter, John San Agustin, a former crime multimedia specialist who is now an inspector with the Sheriff’s Department, used the Columbine High School shootings to present the “geek” angle of crime investigation.

“...they snuck out into the early morning darkness and stole a meth suspect’s trash.”

He told us that the physical evidence never lies, unless it’s been contaminated. He demonstrated how they assembled the timeline of the entire event through a series of recordings and slides showing the evidence.

The timeline proved especially important to the officer accused of killing a student in the first five minutes. John charted and recorded every call, beginning with the first 911 call and continuing through subsequent calls from victims and law enforcement. This proved that the accused officer arrived after the boy was shot.

Author and private investigator, Colleen Collins, along with her investigative business partner, Shaun Kaufman, a former trial attorney, were the next presenters. They shared many interesting experiences about their lives as private investigators. Since they work privately, usually for the defendant, their mission is to find something that law enforcement overlooked. My favorite story they shared was one of their famous “trash hits.” Both dressed in black, they snuck out into the early morning darkness and stole a meth suspect’s trash. This led to an interesting discussion about property encroachment and the legal advantages a private investigator has over law enforcement.

Later Shaun, who has nearly 25 years experience with the Criminal Justice System, spoke to us about testifying in court and interviewing witnesses. He shared that a lay witness’ testimony is based on perception, whereas the testimony of an expert witness is based on experience and training.

For expert witnesses to be effective, the party who hired them needs to make sure that they have a thorough knowledge of the entire case—not just the crime scene. It’s best if they are able to practice their testimony to assure that they can withstand cross-examination. The ideal expert witness is not necessarily the one with the best credentials, but the one who is able to speak to the jury and the judge in terms they can relate to.

Jeff Nohr, an El Paso County Sheriff’s Office Detective, with 27 years experience in Colorado law enforcement, told us that he speaks for the victim who no longer has a voice. He described himself as always having one foot on the scene and one foot on the stand. Throughout the investigation, he must always be aware of the law and how the courts work in order to be able to adequately present the victim’s case.

He spoke to us about insects and how their presence helps to determine the timeline. He also told us how they use the RN# on clothing to trace where the victim might have purchased it, and he gave examples of how every piece of evidence is a potential key to solving the crime.

Tim Hightshoe, a Certified Firearms Instructor with over 35 years of shooting experience, wrapped up the day. Before launching into a comprehensive talk about the



Tim Hightshoe and his artillery.

weapons used by both the good and bad guys, he spoke about safely. On the surface, his advice seemed obvious, but there was more to it. He warned us to always keep our finger away from the trigger because there is reflex, called Inner Limb Reaction, that can cause you to pull the trigger unintentionally when you move the corresponding finger on your other hand. Another good tip was to always know what lies beyond your target.

By the end of the workshop, it was clear that the people involved in this work and the things that happen in a crime investigation are infinitely more complex than Joe’s “Just the facts Ma’am” and other one-dimensional investigative techniques used in the past.

Subjected, Rejected, Dejected or The Writer's Survival Guide

By Beth Groundwater

The January Write Brain meeting on January 16 featuring Cindi Myers and Lynda Sandoval was a tremendous success. Thirty-eight attendees squeezed into Classroom B to hear how to stay motivated during the low points in a writer's career. They left energized and focused on their writing goals for the year.

Both of these speakers are highly successful writers. Almost half a million copies of Cindi Myers' 25 books have been published around the world. And Lynda Sandoval has 19 book sales to her credit. But both struggled with rejection and depression at the beginning of their careers and at low points during. Cindi wrote 10 manuscripts before her 11th was accepted for publication and, Lynda wrote three before her fourth was sold. During both of their careers, they hit a dry spell that lasted about two-and-a-half years where they did not sell a single manuscript.

What kept them going? The most important point the speakers made is that during the down times, it's important to keep on setting goals and to keep on writing. However, they also suggested these were good times to go outside of your comfort zone and explore something new, like writing in a different genre or voice.

Then came the fun part of the Write Brain, exercises! First we spent five minutes listing our

fears that we had about writing. The speakers said that these fears can become personal laws, sweeping negative statements that aren't true. They quoted Proverbs, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Then we were told to look at our list of fears and figure out what we needed to do to assure that the feared outcome doesn't happen. This leads to writing down affirmations, which are used to refute the personal laws. For instance, if your personal law is, "I'm not a good enough writer to get published," then an affirmation to combat this could be, "I'm dedicated to



improving my craft to the point that publishers are clamoring for my work."

Next we worked on goal-setting. First, we wrote down five things we want out of our writing careers in five years. These can be wild and astronomical, like "I want to make the *New York Times* Bestseller List." Lynda told the story of how she did this, lost the list, then found it six years later, and all of the goals had come true. We followed this pie-in-the-sky goal-setting with listing the five things we wanted to accomplish in the next year, then in the next month. Sharing the goals with each other helped make them feel real.

Finally, Lynda listed seven major energy leaks and ways to stop the drain. For instance, to stop distractions of everyday life from draining your energy, increase the stillness time in your life. As Lynda said, "Silence is a solvent that gets through the clogs." Another energy leak is being too serious and trying to make every word perfect. To keep yourself from becoming too attached to the outcome versus the process, you need to recover the pure joy of writing, by allowing yourself to free-write, make mistakes, and explore.

Motivational books recommended by Cindi and Lynda:

Write It Down, Make It Happen by Henriette Ann Klausner

The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron

The Courage to Write and *The Writer's Book of Hope*, both by Ralph Keyes

Writing From the Inside Out by Dennis Palumbo

Unstuck: A Supportive and Practical Guide to Working Through Writer's Block by Jane Anne Straw

Write for Your Life by Lawrence Block (out-of-print, but he has some newer writing books out)

Untangling the Web

People are finding new ways to use the Internet every day. Below are resources for marketing, blogging, daily writing, polishing your prose, a new way to keep track of your personal library, and a just-for-fun quiz.

📌 www.anotherealm.com/prededitors

Preditors and Editors help artists and writers market their work and make wise decisions. They point out good agents, contests, and groups as well as warnings against scams. You will find lots of resources here for different types and genres of writing.

📌 www.oncewritten.com

Once Written has a free daily spark newsletter with journal and writing prompts. They also offer inexpensive marketing for published authors, and chances to win free books.

📌 www.thewriterssite.com/direct_pages/writing_blogs.php

This site has links to many published and unpublished authors blogs.

📌 www.bloggingbasics101.com

For those who want to learn more about blogging, this is a good place to start.

📌 www.diyplanner.com/node/946

Here's an inspiring article on how and why to write every day. The site also links to directions and plans for designing your own planners and calendars.

📌 www.creativewritingprompts.com

Visit here for over 200 ideas to prompt your writing brain.

📌 www.pgtc.com/~slmiller/characterexercises.htm

Here's some interesting exercises for getting to know your characters even better.

📌 www.tameri.com/edit/words2kill.html

Do you have favorite words that you tend to overuse? Are there words that keep showing up in your writing? Here's a list of "words to kill."

📌 www.bookswellread.com

Keep an online record of the books you've read and the books you want to read. You can also share reviews and book lists with other readers.

📌 www.writersdigest.com/articles/alexander_finishthatnovel.asp

Writers Digest offers a fun quiz on "Are You Really Ever Going to Finish That Novel?"

—Lauri Griffin is mother of three, a gifted/talented teacher, manages a literacy program, and blogs for www.families.com on the subject of family fun. She might have an Internet addiction. Please send your writing links to lauri_griff@earthlink.net and visit her blog at laurireflections.blogspot.com for more great sites.

Upcoming PPW Events

March, April, May

PPW Fundraiser Book Signing

Saturday, May 19

Barnes & Noble Booksellers

1565 Briargate Blvd.

(across from Chapel Hills Mall)

You can present a voucher to the store cashier when you buy any merchandise that day and a percentage of the sale goes to Pikes Peak Writers. The percentage can vary from 10%-20% based on the total amount of purchases made with the vouchers. The voucher is posted on the Web site and is available in printed form at all PPW events held before May 19th. You don't need to be a PPW member to use the voucher, so encourage all your friends to save their summer vacation reading purchases for that day and support our organization.

Now for the book signing part. From 2-4 p.m. on May 19th, the Barnes & Noble store will conduct a book signing by all PPW published authors who wish to participate. If the buyer presents a PPW voucher to the cashier, books bought from the authors will count toward our fundraiser also. This is a way for PPW to provide a benefit to our published authors by sponsoring and publicizing a signing event, and the authors can support PPW, at no expense to themselves, by asking buyers to use the PPW voucher when purchasing their signed books.

PPW authors interested in participating in the signing should contact Beth Groundwater at bgroundwater@earthlink.net. She will put you in touch with the Barnes & Noble Community Relations Manager, who will explain their policy with respect to signed books. For those of you whose books are not available through the Barnes & Noble automated ordering system, you'll need to provide them to the store on a consignment basis. We hope to have a great turnout of both authors and buyers for this event!

March Write Brain

March 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

How to Do a Reading

Featuring Todd Fahnestock,

Ron Heimbecher, and Barb Nickless

Whether you're a newbie author hoping to read for an editor at the PPWC or a published author who's been asked to read

from your latest work, the March Write Brain is the place for you. Join Ron Heimbecher as he helps you manage your fears with his presentation, "Exorcising the Stage-Fright Demons." Barb Nickless will provide 10 tips for a successful reading. And Todd Fahnestock will wrap up the evening by giving you the tools you need to keep your audience members—be they editors or fans—enthralled. As a special treat, Todd will offer feedback to anyone who wants to work on their read-aloud skills. Please bring up to three pages of your manuscript to share with Todd and the other attendees. It's a perfect chance to finesse your material with a friendly audience!

Todd Fahnestock: In his senior year in high school, Todd wrote his first novel, forevermore addicted to the power of creating a character who was everything he wanted to be. Sixteen years, many adventures and almost a dozen novels later, he continues to perpetuate his dream of bringing heroes to life. His latest novel, *Heir of Autumn*, (co-written with Giles Carwyn) was published in hardback by the Eos imprint at Harper Collins in February. Todd resides in Englewood with his true love Lara, their daughter Elowyn, a big blue dog named Lancelot, a big red dog named Ade, and a new baby.

Ron Heimbecher: Ron is the owner of ChaliceMedia LLC, specializing in creative content production and design. Using the nom de plume Ron Chalice, he has published an illustrated collection of lyric poetry, *Kiss the Breath of Sunset*, and a suspense novella, *Batting Practice*, under the ChaliceMedia imprint. Amidst being a controller for a major retailer, a municipal IT director, and a relationship manager between two global giants, he's been a musician/composer, actor, writer/director. Ron retired in 2005 to focus on the creation of Solace Creek Colorado, Boulder-Springs Colorado, and over 350 people who occupy them; and the 60s Rock and Roll Band Boomersaurus. As a result, he's reliving an experience of the human condition he left long ago as a musician in Boulder of the 60s near starvation. Through it all, the stage-fright demon has been a consistent adversary.

Barb Nickless: Barb's horror, fantasy and science fiction stories have appeared in a wide variety of magazines and anthologies. Her mystery manuscript, *To Each Man an*

Island, won the Colorado Gold and took first place in the Paul Gillette Writing Contest. Barb thought the hard part was over when she landed the agent of her dreams, but now she's learning the meaning of the word "rewrite." Barb has done readings at conferences and bookstores and has so far managed to avoid having any rotten fruit flung in her direction.

April Write Brain Session

April 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Pitch Practice and Conference Tips

Featuring Pam McCutcheon

This Write Brain session will answer questions about the 2007 PPWC with tips on making the most out of the conference. Award-winning author Pam McCutcheon will explain how to pitch your manuscripts and take you through log line exercises to distill your manuscript concepts to one perfect sentence. Attendees will have the opportunity to practice pitching in front of a small group with experienced writers.

May Write Brain Session

Saturday, May 12 (note change in date)

3:00-5:00 p.m. Location: TBD

Colorado Publishers Panel

Come to the Open Meeting of PPW to hear Colorado book publishers talk about trends and their experiences in the state's vibrant publishing industry. Ask questions of the panelists, many of whom are members of the Colorado Independent Publishers Assoc.

Socialize after the panel in a discussion with the publishers and Colorado authors, and find out how Pikes Peak Writers can help you with your writing career. Watch here for more information!

All Write Brains are FREE for PPW Members! Nonmembers may attend one Write Brain session for free. For more information and a map, go to ppwc.net.

The meetings are held at Cottonwood Artists' School, 25 Cimino Drive, Colorado Springs, Colorado

If you would like to participate in any Write Brain session, PLEASE RSVP AND INCLUDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION. This does not commit you to attending, but enables 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 this Web site, but to be ensured of notification you must RSVP to rsvp@ppwc.net.

PPWC, 2007 Editor/Agent Preferences

Agents	Interested in	Material to bring to pitch session
Andrea Barzvi ICM	Commercial fiction including chick lit and women's fiction, and nonfiction including memoir and self-help, especially in the categories of relationships, health and fitness.	Synopsis, book proposal, first 10 pages.
Lilly Ghahremani Full Circle Literary, LLC	Literary fiction, chick lit, young adult, and middle grade. Multicultural, nonfiction including pop culture, how-to, crafts, lifestyle, relationships, parenting, and much more.	Pitch material isn't necessary.
Anita Kushen Anita Kushen & Associates, Inc.	Romance, fantasy, mystery, mainstream and nonfiction (especially historical nonfiction).	Hard copy of synopsis and proposals for pitch sessions.
Daniel Lazar Writer's House	All sorts of fiction, narrative nonfiction and humor.	Query letter and first 15 pages of the manuscript, no synopsis. Nonfiction: bring a hardcopy of the book proposal.
Kristin Nelson Nelson Literary Agency, LLC	Literary, commercial mainstream, women's fiction, chick lit, romance, science fiction and fantasy, young adult. For nonfiction, memoir and narrative only.	Just the pitch paragraph on the PPWC pitch sheet is fine, preferably typed.
Andrea Somberg Harvey Klinger Inc.	Both fiction and nonfiction, including literary, commercial, young adult, genre (fantasy/SF mystery, romance), memoir, pop-culture, how-to, self-help, humor, interior design, cookbooks, and health and fitness.	Authors can bring whatever material they prefer.
Debra Dixon BelleBooks, Inc.	Nonfiction, general (Southern) fiction, limited young adult fantasy.	Pitch material isn't necessary.
Sarah Durand Morrow/Avon	Mysteries, suspense, crime, narrative nonfiction, commercial fiction; historical fiction, memoir, true crime.	Wants to hear verbal pitches. Bring a portion of the book proposal/manuscript and synopsis and she will request it if she's interested.
Cecile Goyette Alfred A. Knopf	Hardcover titles only: picture books, middle-grade, young adult, graphic novels (that suit a hardcover trade imprint).	Bring synopsis and first page of the manuscript.
Mary Theresa Hussey Harlequin/Silhouette	Category romance, contemporary romance, romantic suspense, fantasy.	Will look at hard copy of synopsis.
Denise Little Tekno Books/Five Star	Romance, paranormal, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, Christian fiction.	Whatever works for the pitch person.
Krista Marino Delacorte Press	Middle grade and young adult fiction, primarily interested in contemporary works. I tend toward chick-lit with a supernatural twist, funny (both girl and boy protagonist), and horror, but I'm open to anything—traditional or new and innovative—that's fabulous!	Hardcopy of the proposal.
Anne Sowards Penquin Group (Ace/Roc)	Fantasy, particularly contemporary/urban and romantic fantasy, science fiction, specifically military, romantic, and post-apocalyptic science fiction, cozy mysteries, paranormal romance.	Pitch material isn't necessary.



PIKES PEAK WRITERS
4164 Austin Bluffs Parkway 246
Colorado Springs, CO 80918

Hot Topics

Open Critique

By Laura Harvey

Open Critique is a PPW critique group that is open to anyone who wants to attend. Like a private critique group, you participate by bringing several pages of your writing for the other attendees to read and critique. Unlike a private group, Open Critique features a guest critiquer each month—someone with writing and critique-group experience. Participants learn critique-group etiquette and methods, and gain valuable insight into their work. Those interested in forming critique groups of their own have the opportunity to meet other writers and, more importantly, work with them.

In 2007, Open Critique meets:

- March 28
- April — Date TBD
- May 30
- June 27
- July 25
- August 29
- September 26
- October 24
- November — Date TBD
- December — Date TBD

If you would like to attend an Open Critique session, please e-mail our critique coordinator, Laura Harvey, at critique@ppwc.net.

Sweet Success

By Janice Black

With each publication of the *Pikes Peak Writers NewsMagazine*, we applaud members of Pikes Peak Writers who achieve any measure of success in their passions for writing on this very page, hence the name of

the column, “Sweet Success.” Please send news of awards, publications, nibbles by editors and publishers, etc. for accolades here to sweetsuccess@ppwc.net. We all need recognition and find encouragement when our peers have success. Also, please send pictures of the writer as .jpps or .gifs.

The *NewsMagazine* is the end product of creativity, hard work and dedication by many dedicated volunteers. In this issue (quiet drum roll), in recognition of contributors to this very publication by, for and about writers—the *Pikes Peak Writer NewsMagazine*—(louder drum roll) would like to announce the Star Reporters. (rapt audiences)

Awards go to ... (crescendo)

First Place: Laurie Griffin

Second Place: Laura Pellerin

Third Place: Janice E. Black

These reporters contributed the most articles and columns to the *NewsMagazine* in 2006.

Congratulations to all!