

# PIKES PEAK WRITERS

official  
publication  
of the  
Pikes Peak  
Writers

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VOLUME IV, ISSUE 3  
March-May 2006

## Beginning Writers' Workshop

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

## PPW Presents: American Icon 2

**American Icon 2 is coming up soon—July 7th.  
Please note the venue and time have changed.**

Back by popular demand, PPW hosts "American Icon," a writing contest in the spirit of American Idol™. American Icon 2 will be held at the Cottonwood Artists' School on Friday, July 7, 2006 from 6-9 p.m. Prizes will be awarded for "Best Overall" entry, "People's Choice," and several other categories.

Our "Celebrity Judges" this year are Colleen Collins, Todd Fahnestock and Charles Kaine. Special guests include last year's "Best Overall" winner, Morgen Leigh and "Audience Favorite" winner, Giles Carwyn.

Reservations are still being accepted for contestants, but we will cap it at 15, so inquire now if you'd like to participate in the competition. Contestants pay a \$20 entry fee, but there is no charge for attendees.

### Prizes include:

- Critique of a proposal by Five Star editor John Helfers (and review for possible publication).
- Personal reading of a proposal by agent Kristin Nelson of the Nelson Literary Agency.
- One hour one-on-one consultation and professional editing of five pages by editor Laurie Wagner Buyer.
- Review and critique of synopsis by



Pam McCutcheon, author of *Writing the Fiction Synopsis: A Step-by-Step Approach*.  
• One-night stay at the Wyndham Colorado Springs for two.

### Rules:

- Contestants read aloud for two minutes from their original works of fiction in any genre and a panel of three judges provides brief verbal critiques in front of an audience.
- Entries must not have been previously published.
- One entry per contestant.
- Materials should not exceed the equivalent of a movie "R" rating.
- Winners are determined by three-judge panel and overseen by a member of the PPW Board of Directors. Decisions are final.
- PPW reserves the right to publish winners' names, prizes and titles of works for use in publicity and other materials.
- Judges and prizes subject to change without notice.
- Contestants and attendees must be 18 years of age or older, unless parental consent is verified by PPW.
- All contestants must sign an affirmation of eligibility and a publicity release form at the event.

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

Pam McCutcheon is the author of two nonfiction books for writers, ten novels, two novellas, and four short stories (the latter written as Pamela Luzier). She has taught at numerous writing workshops and conferences around the country and has served on the board of directors of three national and three local writing organizations.  
**Date: August 5th, 2006**

**Time: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.**

**Place: Cottonwood Artists' School, 25 Cimino Dr.**

**Cost: \$45 for members; \$50 for nonmembers (price includes lunch)**

**“Writing is the only thing that, when I do it, I don't feel I should be doing something else.”**

**—Gloria Steinem**

## From the Editor



After a year of dedicated service as Editor of the *Pikes Peak Writers NewsMagazine*, Kirsten Akens has resigned to focus more energy on her “other” job, Director of Resource

Development at T•E•S•S•A: A Community Without Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault. (For more information about TESSA, please visit [www.tessacs.org](http://www.tessacs.org).)

We thank Kirsten for her tireless devotion to Pikes Peak Writers, in particular for her contributions as editor, and we look forward to her continued involvement on our Board of Directors. For the next few issues

*Bimonthly NewsMagazine of the Pikes Peak writing community*

**PIKES PEAK**  
**Writers**  
NewsMagazine

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of the *NewsMag* we will be featuring several “guest” editors. Please let me know if you'd like to try your hand at it or wish to help out in other ways. We rely on the efforts of volunteers, and we always welcome your submissions.

Due to preparations for an extra busy Pikes Peak Writers Conference, we let the *NewsMag* get away from us and we missed our March issue. Thus this edition is a “double,” jam-packed with two issues worth of articles and information. You'll notice we have lots of summer events scheduled. For those of you who might be slacking off a bit from your beginning-of-the-year goals, this is your chance to get reinvigorated and recommitted. For those of you outdoorsy folks who've been looking forward to fun in the sun, we offer you the chance to spend a few hours indoors with us to gather your thoughts and ideas before you head outside with pen and paper in hand. And for those with friends and acquaintances who are “thinking

about writing a book,” the long days of summer provide opportunities for them to explore this idea—support them by bringing them to a Write Brain or American Icon 2, and encourage them to attend the August workshop especially geared to new novelists. I know I'll be bringing my mom to the short stories Write Brain, and taking an August Workshop flyer to my dentist who has “always wanted to write a novel.”

Whatever your plans this summer, I hope that they include writing. I look forward to seeing some of your writing in the form of *NewsMag* articles and “Write Now” entries, viewing some of your creative explorations in the July Collage Write Brain, and hearing some of your work at American Icon 2. Your enthusiasm, productivity and communal support lift me up and inspire me in my own writing, so I'm taking my laptop out on the deck to write a little bit about Ol' Man Coyote and his summer antics.

## June Events

### Write Brain—Writing and Marketing Short Stories

Tuesday, June 13, 2006, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Cottonwood Artists' School  
25 Cimino Drive (street name recently changed from 101 Conejos)

What's new in Short Fiction? Join a panel discussion that will take a look at the current short fiction market, from micro-fiction, to genre markets, to contests: what's being published, what's being paid and where the markets are.

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

FREE for PPW Members!

### First Friday—Featuring guest authors Laurie Wagner Buyer, Pam McCutcheon, and Charles Rush

Friday, June 2, 2006, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Cottonwood Artists' School

Join us at Cottonwood Artists' School for their First Friday Gallery Opening. On the First Friday of each month Cottonwood and other Colorado Springs galleries celebrate by launching new exhibitions and mingling over drinks and hors d'oeuvres. Beginning in June, PPW will participate by hosting selected readings and booksignings. This month Cottonwood is having a Studio Artists' Exhibit and the following authors will be PPW's guests:

Laurie Wagner Buyer, reading a selection from *Across the High Divide*, in which her poetry gently coaxes us to consider our own sense of place, and the diversity of love's many paths.

Pam McCutcheon, reading a selection from *The Unauthorized Dan Brown Companion*, for which she wrote the concordance explaining what's factual in Dan Brown's four novels.

Charles Rush, reading a selection from his Civil War novel about the *Texas Brigade*, *The Devil's Chessboard*.

This event is open and free to all.

# 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 July 26th at 6:30 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists’ School (see [ppwc.net](http://ppwc.net) for details). Our guest critiquer will be writer and editor R.T. Lawton. If you’d like to sign up, contact [critique@ppwc.net](mailto:critique@ppwc.net).

## OUT OF BOOK EXPERIENCE

### A Review of *Give ‘Em What They Want—The Right Way to Pitch Your Novel to Editors and Agents*

by Blythe Camenson and Marshall J. Cook

By Liz Tarpy

Typing ‘The End’ on the last page of your novel marks the beginning of another process—marketing. Crafting the submission package is a major stumbling block for most writers. This book examines the marketing process and breaks it down into manageable steps. Topics covered include: creating a salable product, your publishing options, finding agents and editors, the query letter, the in-person pitch, successful synopses, and the cover letter.

The authors define a query letter as a mini-proposal. Its aim is to hook the attention of the agent or editor, describe your project, tell who you are, and produce a request to send more. All query letters should contain a hook, a handle or commercial appeal, a mini-synopsis, your credentials, your credits, what you’re offering and the closing. Here’s a checklist of items to watch for and fix: weak lead sentence, wordiness, awkward

phrasings, lack of clarity, illogical paragraph organization, repetitiveness, weak verbs, clichés, lack of rhythm, overusing adjectives and adverbs, no transitions between paragraphs, weak plotting and incorrect punctuation, grammar and spelling.

The authors also address the often dreaded synopsis. Each segment of the synopsis is analyzed and examples are offered providing an easily followed roadmap. A synopsis should include a perfect opening sentence, the hook, sketches of the main characters, plot highlights, core conflict and conclusion.

For the in-person pitch, novelist/screenwriter Christine Desmet gives these tips: Start your pitch with your logline, that sentence that summarizes the book, then what’s at stake in the book, next cover your character’s major weakness or flaw, then his strength. Stick to one of each. A focused writer reflects a focused story. Finally, touch on the major plot points.

This book is ideal for the writer who is beginning the marketing process and is looking for solid examples of how to create the submission package. It also offers helpful advice on finding an editor or an agent. The authors note that the submission process can take more than a year, so they stress the need for organization. Create a chart of the agents/editors you plan to contact and be methodical in tracking what you send out and to whom. In the age of simultaneous submissions it’s easy to get overwhelmed if you don’t stay on top of your system.

A helpful bonus in the book is advice offered by heavyweights in the writing field like Peter Rubie, Evan Marshall, Michael Seidman, Russell Galen, Kate Duffy, Dick Francis, and Tom Clancy. An unfortunate detractor is that the sidebar format is hard on the eyes. But overall this is a worthwhile book for writers wanting information about how best to present their work to industry professionals.

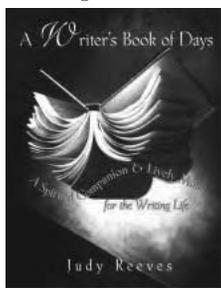
# The Writer's Life: Spotlight on Judy Reeves

can't expect big tours and an unlimited marketing account. Many

By Bret Wright

A woman sits by herself at one of the many tables in a hotel banquet room. She's not alone because she's unpopular or disliked, it's simply late in the morning and the rest of the conference-goers are off to their first writing seminar of the day. She looks about the room with a warm smile as the few remaining people wish her a good morning. Everything about her exudes a sense of self-confidence and genuine caring for those attending the writing conference. Finished with breakfast, she heads to her first session. She will be helping writers hone their craft, a topic for which she is both suited and passionate. This is Judy Reeves in her element.

Among other titles, Reeves is the author of *Writing Alone*, *Writing Together*, and *A Writer's Book of Days*. She spends her life teaching the craft of writing and ways to be



successful in getting that writing published. Starting out as a commercial writer doing everything from press releases to copywriting, Reeves earned her bones in the writing business the hard way. Though

commercial writing paid fairly well, she found she was spending more and more time teaching colleagues and new-comers the tools of the trade. She also discovered that she loved doing it. "I decided to combine my two loves," she says, "teaching and writing." In 1993, she left her regular job and founded the San Diego Writing Center, a non-profit workshop-oriented organization dedicated to helping writers develop their skills. "The writers learned a lot about themselves. I helped them explore who they were as writers, and where they wanted to be. In the process, I discovered a lot about myself, too."

The Writing Center closed in 1998 because of funding difficulties, but Reeves's passion for the spirit of the center remained so she expanded her teaching and mentoring projects into a full-time career. Today, in addition to her three successful books on writing and creativity kits, Reeves teaches writing at the University of San Diego, the Writers Salon in San Francisco and Berkeley, writers' retreats, and conferences around the globe. Her passion has become

**4 Pike's Peak Writer**



Judy Reeves

her business, and that's the way she likes it.

Reeves says that it's hard to make a living as a writer. "Almost everybody in the writing business has a day job," she explains. "People have to earn a living, of course." She finds, however, that many creative writers earn their living, as editors and tech writers, lawyers and paralegals. The common thread among the wide array of professions is the writing. "There is that need, longing, desire inside of them to write. They can't not do it."

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**"Marketing and selling yourself may eat into your writing time, but you're just going to have to accept that if you expect to be successful."**

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Reeves' workshops draw a wide range of writers of varying experience. "At my writing marathons, retreats, and workgroups, I'll often get published authors who want to change something about their writing. A memoirist might want to move into fiction, or a fiction writer wants to change the genre she writes in. I've even had a poet who discovered a need to write long works and needed help learning the differences in styles."

Reeves is a firm believer in workshops and critique groups, but she thinks there is also a need for local groups of authors helping each other get their names out there. In the current world of publishing when even the big presses are on budgets, an author

writers feel that their only job is to write, but Reeves thinks that approach is wrong. "Marketing and selling yourself may eat into your writing time, but as a writer, you're just going to have to accept that if you expect to be successful." She suggests that an author who doesn't want to expend the energy to do his own marketing might want to consider hiring a marketing professional to do the job for him. "We hire all sorts of professionals to do the jobs we either can't or won't. Why not a marketing specialist, too?"

For a new writer, the publishing world is a gauntlet of unfamiliar terms and hostile-seeming rules, but Reeves says it doesn't have to be that way. "I've found that many authors are willing to mentor or do workshops. In some cases it's a way of supplementing their incomes—which isn't a bad thing—in others it's just their way of giving back to the community." Writers' conferences are excellent places to meet people in the business, too. "Here's a place where you can actually meet and talk with others in the community. They're good places to make contacts, and contacts mean so very much. If you have that common thread with, say, an editor, you can always invoke it."

Conferences help to provide a common ground where there was none, which can help writers learn the business they have chosen to be a part of. No amount of talent exempts a new writer from learning the business of writing, though good writing does come first. "The first thing writers should do is make sure their work is ready to go out there. With the Internet it's easy to put anything up. There's a lot of stuff on line that frankly isn't ready. Finish your work, please."

Publishing, she says, is a numbers game. "A writer has to be organized. Make lists and approach the business in an orderly manner. Check out guidelines and deadlines, keep track of what you send out and who makes what kind of comments. Make the time to do it right . . . and be prepared for the inevitable rejections."

It's not that Reeves is a negative person, far from it, but she is realistic about the business. She says that the best way to cope with rejection slips is to try to turn them into positives. "In Carolyn See's book, *Making a Literary Life*, she suggests sending out what she calls 'charming notes.' That is, if you get a rejection, or meet an agent, or even if you read a book that you particularly like, then send out a hand-written note—not

*continued on page 5*

# 2006 Volunteer of the Year Awards

## Conference Volunteer of the Year: Kirsten Akens

As Director of the 2005 Pikes Peak Writers Conference, Kirsten Akens not only organized the conference with efficiency, calm and grace, but she introduced a number of innovations such as the Relax and the Renew Room and the Reality Track which ensured a successful conference. Her valuable expertise in grant-writing and as our editor of the *Pikes Peak Writer News Magazine* also contributes toward the success of the conference and the organization. We're proud to award the 2006 Pikes Peak Writers Conference Volunteer of the Year Award to Kirsten Akens.



**Volunteer Award Winners: Kirsten Akens and Jennifer Webster-Valant**

## 2006 Pikes Peak Writers Volunteer of the Year: Jennifer Webster-Valant

Jennifer Webster-Valant started volunteering for PPW as the Transportation Coordinator about four years ago and did such a fabulous job that we asked her to be our Treasurer. As Treasurer, she is reliable, responsive, open-minded, practical and visionary. She has also steered us successfully through a potential budget crisis and taken on many responsibilities that don't fall within her job description—always with a smile on her face. We are proud to recognize Jennifer Webster-Valant as our Pikes Peak Writers Volunteer of the Year for 2006.

## The Writer's Life

*continued from page 4*

e-mail—to the person, thanking them for their work or time. I've seen this lead to long-term correspondence," which can open the door to writing success.

Reeves says, "It's disheartening to get so many rejections. It is personal because we put so much into the work... . Of course it's going to be a let down." Reeves' answer? Turn as many as possible into positives. Write that thank you note, enlist the support of friends, and talk about it with other writers. Work through the rejection and be professional. Always be professional.

Judy Reeves is a delightful blend of guru and cheerleader. She's lived the life she teaches in her classes. Reeves is proof that a person can be deep-down good, and still make her way successfully in the world. She describes herself as a "writer, teacher and writing practice provocateur," but the bottom line is that Reeves cares. She cares about writers and the craft of writing and is dedicated to helping novice and experienced alike become as passionate about it as she is.

Whether she's teaching a nine-week course on the subject at a university or hosting her San Diego Writers Inc. "Salons With the Masters" series, Judy Reeves believes in the power of writers helping writers. "There are so many ways a writer can give back to the community," she says. "Host a poetry festival, or go read stories at the local library." A successful writer is one who not only writes, but pays it forward to the next person...or the next generation. Judy Reeves does both.

## July Open Critique

*By Laura Harvey*



**R.T. Lawton**

how, you may ask, does one find like-minded people with whom to form a group? The answer is to attend Open Critique.

Currently meeting every other month, Open Critique is essentially a "try before you buy" critique group. You bring copies of your work, the group reads it, and each participant makes constructive comments. And as a bonus, each meeting is led by an experienced writer/critiquer. You learn more about the critique process, get great advice about your writing, and network with other writers.

Our July 26th guest critiquer will be R.T. Lawton. He ran the highly successful surveillance workshop at PPWC 2005 and 2006. Lawton's years of working in the Criminal Justice system and 40+ published stories will make this Open Critique espe-

cially fun for all you mystery writers out there, however, all genres are welcome and should find lots of help and useful suggestions at all sessions of Open Critique.

RSVPs for Open Critique are a must, so reserve your spot now. The earlier you register the more time we have to solicit a second critiquer if one is needed. Observers are welcome but must RSVP if they want to receive a copy of the materials being critiqued.

Currently we hold Open Critique sessions every other month on the fourth Wednesday. We will meet on July 26 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Cottonwood Artists' School. Directions are available at [ppwc.net](http://ppwc.net)

Send your questions and reservations to Laura Harvey at [critique@ppwc.net](mailto:critique@ppwc.net).

We look forward to seeing you there!

**I'm not a very good writer, but I'm an excellent rewriter.**

**—James Michener**

# 2006 Pikes Peak Writers Conference Wrap-Up

By *Laura Hayden, PPWC Director*  
*"The Queen of the Universe"*

38 faculty members, 376 attendees, 280 pitch appointments, 135 Read and Critiques, 48 workshops, and 1,500 meals later, the 2006 PPWC staff and PPW Board wish to thank everyone who came to the

conference—the volunteers who donated countless hours of labor, the faculty who offered wisdom and instruction and the attendees who have all been so generous with their praise and their enthusiasm.

It was a wild, thought-provoking, laughter-filled weekend of inspiration and instruction. We'll be sifting through the workshop

and conference evaluations to see what suggestions the attendees and faculty have to help refine the process.

To everyone who had a hand in the production, process or sheer enjoyment of the conference, thanks for a great 2006.

Hope to see you for the next PPWC:

April 20-22, 2007.

## My First Writer's Conference

By *Jack Gilmore*

I just got back from the Pikes Peak Writers Conference, my first trip into the world of writing, and everybody wants to know what it was like. If I had to say in just one word, that word would be "WOW!" But that wouldn't come close to telling the story.

On the way up from my home in Trinidad, I didn't know what to expect. I was a little worried about meeting new people, especially the authors. What if I made a fool of myself? And I was terrified about showing my writing. What if everybody hated it? Worse, what if they were just bored? And I had a virtually limitless supply of stupid questions about the business end of writing. As I walked up to those doors to the Wyndham Hotel, I remember thinking it wasn't too late to turn back. It wasn't like I hadn't made a fool of myself before. What was the worst that could happen? Total humiliation and a shameful death, but that was the worst.

As it turned out, I needn't have worried about meeting new people, at least not these new people. I asked the staff some of my stupid questions right away. "What is a log line?" and "How do I do a pitch?" Nobody said, "What a stupid question." Instead, everybody had useful answers, cogent suggestions and directed me to good sessions that were on point.

I'm not sure what I was expecting from the other attendees, but what I found was a surprise. I stood in line beside total strangers and we just started talking. During the meals I walked up to tables where I didn't recognize a face and asked to sit down. Every person I met was open, friendly and interesting, and man, could they write. We talked about what we were in real life, what we were writing, exchanged tips and suggestions and had a great time. I came to understand this wasn't a competition. We rooted for each other, I mean really rooted for each other. We patted

each other on the back after the successes. We consoled each other after the disappointments. These people were old friends. I had just finally met them.

The authors were a special surprise, approachable, helpful and inspiring. After I listened to fantasy writers Giles Carwyn and Todd Fahnstock, I wanted to buy their book and thought maybe I should switch to writing fantasy. Then I listened to western writer Johnny D. Boggs. I wanted to buy all his books and thought maybe I should write about the West too. Diane Mott Davidson and KJ Erickson made me want to buy all their books and think about writing whodunits. Then there was Wendy French, chick lit specialist and, you guessed it, I wanted to buy all her books and switch to chick lit. Well, why not? Maybe I could use a pen name.

I was right to worry about saying something stupid, but even this is an example of how gracious the authors could be. I saw Johnny D. Boggs standing by himself so I thought maybe I could share a little story I knew about Bat Masterson, who was once the Trinidad Town Marshal, and Doc Holiday. I thought I was doing him a favor, giving the great writer a tip. I didn't know he already knew the story. I used up three or four minutes of this man's life. He could have told me to get lost. Instead, he listened patiently. Afterwards, I felt like an idiot but his graciousness made it a lot easier. That's class and it was typical of all the authors.

I went to my first Read and Critique session hosted by a New York agent. I wasn't scheduled to read but I thought I'd just sit in to get a feel. As I listened to others read their material I thought, Man, these guys are good! I learned that a log line was a one-sentence summation of your story, impossible to do but worth the effort. There was a little extra time at the end and they asked if anyone else wanted to read, so I swallowed my heart and pulled out a piece I had been working on. I was so nervous I don't even remember the critique. Nobody said, "This guy is going to

set the world on fire," but nobody went Harlan Ellison on me either. (That's an inside joke for us literary types.) That was okay. I had just cleared a big hurdle, and nobody had laughed me out of the room.

I'm already out of space so let me say quickly I laughed, I even cried once but not for the reasons you might think, I ate some great food, I met all kinds of fabulous people, and I learned more in two and a half days than my previous 50 years.

There, you see. I haven't scratched the surface, and I didn't even get to share my story about stalking Dan Simmons. Maybe there's a book in this somewhere? If there is, I've got a great log line.

## Story of a First Place Winner

By *Shelley Ring*

Placing in a national writing contest like the Paul Gillette is a major accomplishment. It doesn't happen overnight and placing first in that contest could take years. Just ask Donnell Bell, first place winner for the Romance category at this year's Pikes Peak Writers Conference. Writing since 2001, she's entered several national contests and says, "I've run the gamut from winning to finaling to bombing."

Donnell has a collection of four completed manuscripts and several partials. When asked about her first manuscript, she says, "It's bad. You don't want to read it. [The hero] is out of town when the antagonist comes to kidnap the heroine and the store clerk shoots him. It never occurred to me that the hero should save her."

Donnell's writing career began as an editor the *The Colorado Springs Business Journal* and *Pikes Peak Parent Newsmagazine*. She is published in nonfiction, but her goal is to become published in fiction as well. Her genre of choice is Mystery Suspense and favorite authors include Sandra Brown,

Linda Castillo, P.C. Cast, Lawrence Sanders, David Baldacci, and Ken Follett. Donnell was first hooked by Mystery Suspense in college after reading Lawrence Sanders' *The First Deadly Sin*, *The Second Deadly Sin*, and *The Third Deadly Sin*.

"I was wowed by Sanders who made his serial killer a woman in *The Third Deadly Sin* all those years ago. To this day, I think his protagonist, Edward X Delaney, is one of the most vivid characters imaginable." True to her Paul Gillette entry and category win, she says, "Of course, throw a little romance in there any day."

When she's not writing, Donnell works for a structural engineering company. She has two children in college and volunteers. "I volunteer a lot," she says. "During Diane Mott Davidson's talk at the PPWC, she spoke about volunteerism and several friends at various tables were looking at me." Though it's a struggle, Donnell is learning how to pare down and say no. "Kirsten Akens had a great quote for us 'never say no' people. 'If it feels good to say yes, say yes. If it doesn't...'" Consequently, her writing schedule varies. She is currently coordinating the Daphne du Maurier Writing Competition for the Kiss of Death Chapter of the RWA. "It's my last year," she says. "With both my kids in college, I will have plenty of time now."

In her years of writing, Donnell says she has been blessed to have several mentors, including some published authors in PPRW and mentors from the Kiss of Death chapter. She believes a wide writing support group, her own belief in her ability and "an awesome critique partner" have kept her going.

As for contests, she says, "I believe if a writer has a tough shell, a contest can be invaluable. It's like taking a car around the block for a test drive or walking into a showroom and kicking the tires." Urging caution, Donnell says a contest can be detrimental if a writer isn't sure of the story or confident in his craft. "The best advice for contests and critiques I've ever received is, 'Take what works and leave the rest.' In the same vein, listen to what people have to say. If more than one person makes a comment that something in your manuscript yanks them out, pay attention."

Donnell's advice for the writers: "Write often, read lots and not just your genre. Study the craft. Surround yourself with upbeat, positive people who genuinely want to see you succeed."

So, what does the near future hold for this first place winner? Not one to let her ego take over, Donnell says, "It's nice to win, but

as a contest coordinator, I of all people know that writing is subjective. The moment I get too cocky, I think of all the talent I've seen and I'm humbled. My next step is to get back to writing and submit, submit, submit."

And what entry won first place?

"*Bad Timing*. When Elena Gerardi overhears her employer's scheme, she rushes to the CSPD. But along with bad luck, she's got incredibly bad timing. The cop taking the statement is the hitman hired to commit the murder."

As she moves forward and takes hold of her goal for publication in fiction, Donnell's biggest obstacle might be one that has little to do with writing. "I'm shy," she says with a smile. "Honest."

## 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 shows 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 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 first place in 2006.

# The Business of Writing: Looking Like a Writer

By Linda Rohrbough

Perception is everything. I'm a firm believer every job and every place has its own unwritten codes about conduct and dress. I'm fascinated by uncovering those "unwritten rules" to each new place I visit. I'm a second generation Colorado native, but I lived in Los Angeles for nine years. People there told me you can wear anything in LA. That's not true. I had a pair of navy blue, polyester slacks and when I wore them, I had a tough time getting anyone to talk to me. It turns out navy blue and polyester are social no-no's in LA.

One time, I was in my swimsuit laying on Zuma beach in Malibu and a guy walked up to me wearing a flannel shirt, jeans, a brown leather belt and hiking boots. He asked for directions and I said, "You wouldn't happen to be from Colorado?"

He said, "How did you know?"

I'm a genius. Actually, my writer friends say I don't miss much, which leads me to the point of this article. You can look like a writer.

Most writers believe there's not a set way writers dress and present themselves. They talk a lot about working in PJ's and fuzzy slippers (well, the romance writers do) or spending life in a pair of blue jeans. That's all true. But if you want to look like a writer, I'll let you in on a secret. There's a uniform. And it's pretty specific. It consists of a jacket or blazer over jeans. The shirt or blouse doesn't matter and the shoes don't matter. But the jacket matters. And the jeans matter. Another way to state the writer's uniform is "business casual," but with jeans.



Those jeans my grandmother wore when she had to, the ones with the elastic waist and no pockets that only classify as jeans because they're denim—those are out. If you need some room, jeans that stretch at the sides or the back are fine, but you want jean pockets, like the ones on Levi's.

The look is, "I'm giving a nod to business by throwing a suit jacket over what I usually wear writing, which is something laid back and comfortable." Note I said comfort, not poverty—no grunge look. The jeans can be faded, look lived in and that's good, but patched holes don't get it.

A friend of mine was arguing with me about this, saying I didn't know what I was talking about, until she went to hear Robin Cook speak the year before he died. And sure enough, Cook came out in exactly the wardrobe I'm describing. Ever since, my friend shows up to the writer's group wearing one of her husband's jackets, rolled up at the sleeves, over a pair of jeans.

The other thing a writer always has is a handful of business cards and a pen in the pocket of that jacket. The cards say "writer" someplace on them.

I get argument from new writers about putting "writer" on the card when someone is not yet published. I actually saw a card with "Wants to be a writer" on it. That's not more honest, it's naïve. If you write, you're a writer. You may be a pre-published writer, but you're a writer. So just state it.

Business cards are cheap and easy to come by, so there's no reason not to have them. You don't need to spend more than \$20 to get decent-looking cards. You can buy the Avery 8871 "clean edge" business cards, 200 to a package, for under \$12. If you're a new writer, the odds are you won't give out 200 cards in a year.

The Avery cards print in any laser or ink jet printer. If you get a compatible store-brand, they'll probably cost less. Whatever brand you get,

make sure they're the clean edge kind, meaning they don't have a bunch of tiny perforations that leave a ragged edge when the cards are separated. The clean edge cards burst apart, leaving edges that appear as though they've been cut. And that's what you want—a clean look.

Avery even has Microsoft Word compatible templates for their cards you can download for free from their Web site. If you don't know how to use the Avery templates, trade something you can do to another writer who does.

You don't have to spend a lot of money to be perceived as a professional. But like any job, you want to look like you can deliver the goods. It's all in the details, the perception, you create.

Avery Web site with free, downloadable templates for use with Microsoft Word: [www.avery.com](http://www.avery.com).

—Linda Rohrbough has been writing about the computer industry since 1989 and has more than 5,000 articles and five books to her credit. Her work has been honored three times by the Computer Press Association. She has an agent for a medical nonfiction book she's writing with her doctor, has finished her first techno-thriller novel, and is working on a second novel. Visit her Web site [www.PCbios.com](http://www.PCbios.com).

## Local Links

By Lauri Griffin

What a talented city we are! The links that follow are all from local writers.

📖 <http://suspense.net/booktoscreen.html>

Thinking about who you'd love to see play the lead when your novel gets sold for movie rights? Visit Laura Hayden's site to study what books have been optioned for film.

📖 <http://www.pammc.com/Tips.htm>

Pam McCutcheon has great tips for writers, including critiquing, dialogue, point of view,

and how to avoid mistakes in your synopsis.

📖 [www.coloradospringsfictionwritersgroup.org/](http://www.coloradospringsfictionwritersgroup.org/)

The Colorado Springs Fiction Writers Group has been named one of the top 101 Web sites for writers for two years in a row! Includes author interviews, book reviews, publishing news, great links for research, and articles on improving your writing.

📖 [www.apollos-lyre.com](http://www.apollos-lyre.com)

Apollos Lyre is also an award-winning site, where you will find marvelous articles on writing, reviews, original fiction, contests, and info links to agents and publishers.

📖 [www.childrencomefirst.com/writing.shtml](http://www.childrencomefirst.com/writing.shtml)

Not only for children's writers, the Children Come First site is a wealth of resources, including interviews with authors, information on conferences, a free e-book by editor Cheryl Klein on how to keep a reader engaged in your novel, book reviews and other articles to polish your writing skills.

If you know of other Web sites that would be helpful to writers, please e-mail [lauri\\_grif@earthlink.net](mailto:lauri_grif@earthlink.net). We'd love to include them in future columns. Visit [www.laurireflections.blogspot.com](http://www.laurireflections.blogspot.com) for additional links.

# Legal Writes

**QUESTION:** I haven't gotten any questions lately, so I thought I'd recap the presentation I did for the PPW World Building Workshop in November 2005. My apologies to those of you who are getting a rerun. Please send writing-related legal questions for this column to [brenda@blspeer.com](mailto:brenda@blspeer.com). Thanks.



**ANSWER:** To create a world for your story, whether it's fiction or nonfiction, your building blocks are people, places and things. There are legal issues that arise when these building blocks involve real people, places or things, and as long as you stay within the legal bounds for usage, it is permissible to use them in your work.

Let's take people first. Bear in mind that the term "people" includes both natural persons, living or dead, and what are known in legal-speak as artificial persons, or legal entities (i.e., companies) and characters (think Mickey Mouse, Harry Potter, etc.). There are three, legal, "people" issues with which to concern yourself: Defamation, Right/Invasion of Privacy and Right of Publicity.

Defamation is explicit or implicit injury to a person's reputation, or in colloquial terms, talkin' trash about others. Defamation is an encompassing term that covers both slander (spoken/oral defamation) and libel (literal/written defamation). The latitude you have in making remarks about others depends on the person's status. Public officials, such as politicians and public servants, have the least legal protection against defamation, meaning you can say just about anything you want about them provided it's factually true or your reasoned opinion (beware of vitriol which takes you into a legal gray area). Public figures, such as celebrities or notorious people, are also fair game, but they have somewhat greater legal protection against defamation than do public officials. Private figures, or ordinary citizens, have the greatest legal protection against defamation and one should tread lightly when lambasting them. So, it's open season on any U.S. President, past or present (public figures), Brittany Spears or Simon Cowell (celebrities), and Scott Peterson or Amber Frey (people of notoriety), but not on your neighbor or boss (private figures).

The right/invasion of privacy is, simplisti-

cally speaking, the right to be left alone. This right applies only to living, natural persons.

An invasion of privacy may consist of public disclosure of private facts, portraying someone in a false light, physical intrusion into another's life, or misappropriation of another's name or likeness for your own benefit.

The right of publicity is the right to prohibit others from using

your persona (likeness, voice, unique behavior, etc.) for their commercial purposes and applies to both living and dead natural persons. It is permissible to use another's persona for the purpose of reporting, scholarship or commentary.

I am going to lump places and things together for purposes of discussion, because some of the same legal issues apply to both. The issues to consider are trade libel (applies to both), trademarks and trade dress (applies to both), and copyrights (things).

Trade libel is a false statement that injures the business reputation of a company or the sale of a company's products. Trade libel is also known as product disparagement and the concept is akin to defamation, but it applies to things, not people.

Trademarks serve as an indicator of source or origin of a good or service (for instance, UPS delivery service) and trade dress conveys the total image and overall appearance of a good or service (the brown uniforms and delivery vehicles of UPS). Trademarks and trade dress can apply to goods, services, titles, characters and book covers, among other things. It is permissible to use either trademarks or trade dress in fiction or nonfiction, provided the reference is to an actual good or service (i.e., don't make up products for real companies and vice versa) and proper format and ownership attribution are used. For proper format, a trademark should always be used as a noun, like so: trademark brand noun (Big Chief® brand writing tablet), and never as a noun or verb. Ownership attribution can be accomplished by implicit understanding of the reader within the context of the work, explicit statement within the work, or identification in the work, such as on the copyright page.

Copyrights apply to original works of

authorship and give the copyright owner the exclusive right to reproduce the work, prepare derivative works of the original work and distribute copies of the work. In writing, the types of original works of authorship that are most often used in world building are excerpts from literary works, musical works (including any lyrics) and dramatic works (including any music). To lawfully use the copyrighted work of another, you must have either express permission from the copyright owner or legal permission to do so. Legal permission is imputed if the usage falls within the parameters of the fair use doctrine. Fair usage must be for the purposes of criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research with regard to the original work. Whether or not use of a copyrighted work is a fair use is determined by the consideration of several factors: the purpose and character of the use, the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount and substantiality of the copyrighted work used, and the effect on the potential market for the original work.

Although you need to be cognizant of these issues, you don't need to worry about them during the creation phase of your work. Author and/or publisher liability for these types of issues only arise if/when the work is published. The time to address these issues, make appropriate changes and obtain necessary permissions for using third party matter is during the editing and pre-publication review stages of your work. To preclude these liability issues, be sure to come back to them prior to publication, but don't let them stifle your creativity during the process of building a world.

*—Brenda Speer is a member of PPW and has been practicing law for over 16 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 email at [brenda@blspeer.com](mailto:brenda@blspeer.com).*

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# Sweet Success



**Carol Hightshoe's** short story "Pawn's Gambit" has been accepted by Baen's Universe. Also, her short story about Pandora "The Gift of All" is now available through the Amazon shorts program.

To view the promo pages and links to more of her writing go to her Web site, [www.klyssia.com](http://www.klyssia.com).

Do a google search and discover one of her stories mentioned at Dean Wesley Smith's forum on the alternate list for this year's Strange New Worlds contest. Her story "Love, Loyalty and Sacrifice" was an alternate story which means Dean thought it was good enough to be in the anthology!



**Kathy Brandt:** All three of the books in her underwater investigation series have been picked up by a German publisher and are being released in German this year. This has been written about them:

- *Dangerous Depths*—"White-hot writing, a charismatic heroine and crackling tension..." Top Pick! *Romantic Times*

- *Dark Water Dive*—"Exhilarating" Midwest Book Review

- *Swimming With the Dead*—"reminded me of the early Kay Scarpetta mysteries" *Mystery News*

AND her new book, *Under Pressure*, will be released in the U.S. from Signet/Penguin Putnam in June.

Her Web site is [www.ksbrandt.com](http://www.ksbrandt.com).



**R.T. Lawton** has signed contracts with Alfred Hitchcock's *Mystery Magazine* for two mystery short stories in mid-January 2006. "The Bond That Ties" is the seventh in the Twin Brothers Bail Bond series and is set in current day Bay City (San Francisco), California. "Ransom," second in the Armenian series, is set in the 1850s along the Terek River during the conflict between the Cossacks and the Chechens, a war that still continues 150 years later.

Those two short stories and a mystery story sold earlier, "False Keys," which is set

in the criminal underworld of 1660s Paris, should all see print in AHMM sometime in 2006.

**Robin Widmar:** Toot that horn! Robin's story "Game of Chance" placed 25th in the *Writer's Digest* Short Short Story Contest. There were more than 7,700 entries of stories 1,500 words or fewer.

Robin says this was the first short story she had written in many, many years and only the second contest she has entered (the 2005-2006 Paul Gillette contest being the first!).

Widmar writes, "Thanks to everyone who makes PPW such a great place to learn."



**Maggie Sefton:** This mystery writer has some wonderful news. The awards committee for the Malice Domestic mystery conference held in Washington, DC, area each spring has given notification that the first in her Berkley Prime Crime knitting mystery series, *Knit One, Kill Two*, has been nominated for an Agatha Award for Best First Mystery Novel. Maggie missed the Pikes Peak conference this year for the first time because she was at the LA Times Book Festival. She has more good news about the second in her Berkley Prime Crime mystery series. *Needled to Death* was the #2 bestselling paperback mystery on the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association Bestsellers' list for December



**Lori Lacefield:** Another sale! Lacefield has recently sold her first novel to a new mystery press here in Colorado called Capital Crime Press. The novel, *The Seventh Survivor*, will be out in September.



**Beth Groundwater** has signed a publishing contract with Tekno Books, the editing house for Five Star Publishing ([www.galegroup.com/fivestar](http://www.galegroup.com/fivestar)), a division of Thompson Gale Publishing. The contract is for *A Real Basket Case* amateur sleuth mystery novel. It will come out in

hardcover during the summer of 2007.

*A Real Basket Case* is the second manuscript Ms. Groundwater has completed; the third is its sequel, *To Hell in A Handbasket*. The first, *Virtual Death*, is being evaluated by editor Chris Keeslar at Dorchester.



**Charles Kaine:** Last Knight Publishing Company's poker book *Ace on the River* was chosen to represent the Publishing Marketing Association (PMA) on the cover of *Publisher's Weekly Magazine*. This magazine goes out to every library, bookstore and book wholesaler in the country. *Ace* was chosen out of 150+ submissions to be one of the 14 on the cover.

Last Knight Publishing Company's next release *Apocalypse Parable: A Conspiracy of Weeds* by Brian Kaufman (a previous Paul Gillette Contest winner) was one of those chosen to be on the inside front cover.



**Todd Fahnestock and Giles Carwyn:** The duo had fantastic turnouts for *Heir Of Autumn* at both the Barnes & Noble signing on February 11 in Colorado Springs (over 30 people and more than 40 books sold) and at the Tattered Cover book signing in Denver on February 22 (almost 100 people and 103 sales). They also hit #2 on the local Denver Bestseller list in the *Denver Post* on March 3rd; they were just ahead of James Patterson and were edged out of the top spot by none other than Stephen King.

The Attic Bookstore interviewed them in their podcast called "Book Stories." It can be seen at the following link: <http://bookstories.org> sometime in early-to-mid April.

The paperback edition of *Heir of Autumn* will be released in November, and the second in the series will be issued in hardback in February 2007.

Visit Todd and Giles' Web site ([www.carwynfahnestock.com](http://www.carwynfahnestock.com)), for updates and be sure to check out their cool new flash movie for *Heir!*

# Before You Begin Your Novel . . .

By Dawn Smit Miller

## Part Two: Writing the Fast and Fun Outline

The first article in this series covered loglines. The journey continues with outlining your story.

Don't worry. It doesn't have to be the outlining your English teacher taught you—no Roman numerals here. As long as the outline helps us organize the story and remember the details we might otherwise forget, it's a successful outline.

And if we can have fun while outlining, so much the better.

### Tell and Transcribe

Who among us does not love to regale friends and family members with our stories? We come alive as we speak, transforming into the archetypal Storyteller. Why not harness that energy and vivacity? Tell your entire story to someone in 20 minutes and tape it. Then either transcribe the tape or barter with someone to transcribe it for you.

You will be amazed at the amount of territory you can cover in just 20 minutes. And with someone listening to you, hanging on every word, you will rise to the challenge.

### A few caveats

1. You may be embarrassed the first time. Few people like to hear the sound of their



Dawn Smit Miller

own voice, but that will pass. Remember that you can always erase the tape when you're done.

2. Talk to the person, not the tape. If you focus on the tape, you may try to remember every detail in chronological order, and that

spoils the flow. The interest of your audience will help you keep the story moving.

3. You can speak for more than 20 minutes. However, a good transcriptionist takes two to three times as long to type something as it takes for you to speak it; an amateur, even longer. If you keep your session short, you'll keep your transcriptionist happy. And you can always schedule more than one session.

4. Don't edit while you transcribe! Finish typing the outline first. If you just can't help yourself, turn off your monitor—you can't edit what you can't see.

5. You don't have to transcribe every word. Omit fillers such as "ya know," "basically," and "kinda." That's not editing; that's just an easy way to catch up with your speaking self.

Once everything is typed, then add your log line. It will help keep you focused. Rearrange to make the outline

chronological. Add any details you missed. Don't worry about grammar, transitions, or completed scenes. If you find a gap in the story, that's okay. You now know it exists, and can work on it. When you're ready, take a few minutes to tell that section and transcribe it into the outline as well.

### The Living Outline

Think of your outline as a creature that grows with your story. And like a growing creature, it can appear, well, awkward at times. Don't let that deter you. An outline can look terrible—the worst piece of writing you've ever had the misfortune to call your own—and still do its job. Save the beautiful prose for the novel.

Now you know of a fast and fun way to outline your novel. Try it. You risk only 20 minutes of your time.

### Internet resources

For details on how to set up a recording system, visit <http://www.dawnsmit.com/outlining.html>.

Mind mapping/visual learning tools, <http://www.inspiration.com>, has a great software program for students that works for outlining a novel, and it's free for 30 days.

The Snowflake Method, at [http://www.rsingermanson.com/html/the\\_snowflake.html](http://www.rsingermanson.com/html/the_snowflake.html), is a useful technique for organizing your writing from the log line to the first draft.

—Dawn Smit Miller is a freelance editor and the author of *Through Spiral Eyes* (a novel) and *Rainbow Editing™ A Colorful New Take on the Editing Experience*. She is also the coordinator for the *Paul Gillette Writing Contest*. Visit [www.dawnsmit.com](http://www.dawnsmit.com) for more information.

## Ask-an-Expert

By Janice Black

"Úrsula Iguarán's great-great-grandmother became so frightened with the ringing of sirens and the firing of M-16's that she lost control of her nerves and sat down on a lighted stove..." Whoa! Wait just one dang minute. How could anyone sit down on a waist-high modern stove? And this scene purportedly occurred when Sir Francis Drake attacked Riohacha. M-16's had not supplanted cannons. And "sirens?" Puhlease! "Alarm bells" is more like it. If Gabriel García Márquez had not known this, he would have double checked with his sources and experts. He did, in fact, use the more appropriate terms in this passage from *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

And you, wondrous Storytellers, Tale weavers, Pen Smiths of PPW, have at your disposal, a service called "Ask-an-Expert." That's right, if you need to know say, what accoutrements a musketeer would possess, we have an expert on "black powder shooting." Supposing your heroine is romping around Scotland, well, we have an expert on yon bonny land. Do you need vocabulary for a love scene with the piano teacher? (About music, for goodness sake. We're all experts on the other possibility.) You get the idea.

As of now, PPW's Ask-an-Expert has 63 database entries on topics as varied as skiing, raw milk and surgery. Many of the contributors are members of PPW. And I know there are more experts out there. What has been your passion? Livelihood? Obsession? Have you traveled to far distant shores? Do you have hobbies? Most important, are you

willing to share details or refer to good sources so that some writer doesn't inadvertently subject characters to time warps or some clumsy embarrassments that are out-of-time or place? Remember, Dan Brown didn't make it all up.

If you have an area of expertise to share, and consent to be on the database, please e-mail [AskAnExpert@ppwc.net](mailto:AskAnExpert@ppwc.net) with your name, contact information and brief (as in a word or two) description of the subject matter.

And e-mail [AskAnExpert@ppwc.net](mailto:AskAnExpert@ppwc.net) with questions, please. I'll reply with contact information for experts who have volunteered to give out information (please specify preferred format: word, pdf or html); when we don't have anything pertinent yet, we (you or I) can put out a call for it.

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## HOT TOPICS

### FREE Service!

If you haven't visited the Find An Author site at [www.ColoradoBook.org](http://www.ColoradoBook.org) do it right now.

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. The site offers one-stop shopping for organizations seeking authors for whatever event they're envisioning.

It's free to authors and Seekers of Authors. And even if you're not published, please tell all the teachers, librarians, Rotarians, and other event planners you know about the site.

If you're listed on the site, check to make sure your entry makes you swoon. You can edit your listing any time, because you only have a few words to make everyone else swoon. The Find an Author motto is, of course, "Be swoonful."

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

And please consider linking Find An Author to your Web site and making it part of your e-mail signature.

## Write Now

The "Write Now" segment of the *NewsMag* is going strong. Each issue features a free-write prompt you can use to exercise your creativity and stretch your writing muscles. Since this is a "double" issue, there are two prompts for you to choose from. Or do both. Write as yourself or from a character's point of view.

- 1) Tomorrow is my high school reunion.
- 2) Summer smells like...

After you've selected a prompt, think briefly about it, set a timer for five minutes, and begin writing. Don't think about punctuation or grammar. Don't edit. Just let the thoughts flow and have fun. Once your timer has beeped, edit a little (if it needs it). Then submit your entry to [editor@ppwc.net](mailto:editor@ppwc.net) no later than July 1, 2006. We can't offer money or prizes, but we'll pick our favorite submissions to highlight in an upcoming issue of the PPW *NewsMagazine*.

**Rules:** Judging criteria are inventiveness and creativity. One entry per prompt per person. Please include your full name with your entry. All entries will receive an e-mail confirmation. Entries become the property of PPW and the decisions of its judges are final. Entries must be 100 words or less. Titles are recommended but not necessary.

### Previous prompt:

#### **Trouble calls me on the phone each day at 10 p.m.**

**Winner:** Madge Walls, author of *Paying the Price*, a novel of real estate in Hawaii <http://payingthepricebook.com> and "Hawaii Real Estate Exam Book" <http://hawaiiirealbooks.com>.

#### **Winning entry:**

*Trouble calls me every day at 10 p.m.* My brother has been missing all week. Last time he spent four days crawling the underbelly of Seattle, learning soup kitchens, homeless shelters and free health clinics. I pray he is only using that knowledge, whatever his reasons. Our mother calls again with no news. To the police he is not a missing person, only to his family. What went wrong? College educated, two kids, own business. Why did the stress lines fracture now? Again no news. I fly to the city. How can I reach this life so silently slipping away?