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VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4
 SEPTEMBER 2002

September Workshop

“Goal, Motivation and Conflict”

Date/time: Saturday, Sept 28,
 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a break for lunch
Place: Wyndham Hotel
Cost: Members \$25, Non-members \$45

Mark your calendar for this month’s PPW workshop, “Goal, Motivation, Conflict.” This one is an all-day affair, and features best-selling author Debra Dixon, who teaches novel-writing courses for the

University of Memphis as well as one-day workshops across the country. Dixon is currently at work on her tenth book and is the recipient of a Romantic Times Career Achievement Award.

Journalistic Roots Pay Off if Used Wisely

by Sarah Byrn Rickman

Most journalists fancy themselves novelists. Surely the creative juices will flow once the deadlines, the five-to-midnight trick on the copy desk, the sto-

ries about other people’s successes or failures are behind you.

Journalism and fiction both are about story. The difference is, whereas a good journalist won’t allow herself to intrude on a news story, in fiction writing, you

ARE the story. You must freely give to the reader that which you think, hear, smell, taste, see, feel, imagine.

Not as easy as it sounds.

When the novelist reverts to reporter and begins to tell the story, the power is lost. My creative writing professor used to tell me: “there’s that reporter again,” right in the middle of my novel-in-progress’s most riveting scene. The novelist must abandon the journalistic distance she has been trained to keep from her subject . . . her story . . . and dive into the fray.

She must become part of the story, live it, experience it, wallow in it, let the characters take over and run with it.

When I’m writing a novel I immerse myself in the story and characters. When I “wake up” to find myself back in my own world, I’m a bit disoriented. I’ve been living in another dimension.

So, if you’re a journalist, how do you lose the objectivity and learn the immersive creativity required by fiction? I did it by going back

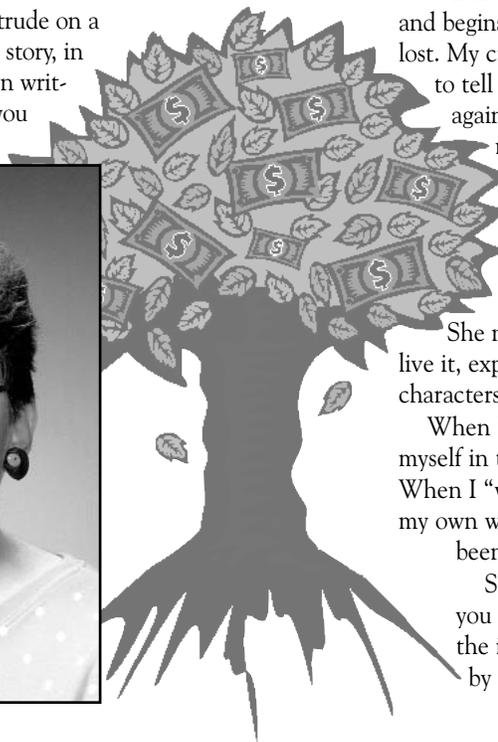
continued on page 6

“ I cringe when critics say I’m a master of the popular novel. What’s an unpopular novel?”

~ Irwin Shaw



Sarah Byrn Rickman



from the editor



Happy September! And welcome to four fantastic features in this issue that will teach, entertain, inform, and fascinate you.

Jimmie Butler's Writer's Toolkit Series wraps up with an article aptly titled "Hello, Goodbye, and Pass the Salt." As always, Butler offers invaluable tips of writing effective dialogue.

Sarah Byrn Rickman, journalist-turned-novelist, offers golden nuggets on making the transition from journalistic writing to fiction writing. For those of us who were trained in the "Get in, get to the point, and

get out" method of storytelling/reporting, this is a must read in teaching us how to make the critical transition.

Charles S. Kaine, publisher/owner of Last Knight Publishing, shares a collection of secrets on how to, and not to, impress a publisher. Everything from making your pitch to sharing a meal is covered in Kaine's humorous and enlightening piece.

"The Way I See It," written by POV pro Charles Rush (PPW First Vice President), takes us on the Point of View journey. A rather high-ranking member of the POV Police, Rush saves us from becoming habitual headhoppers.

So go ahead, grab your favorite overstuffed pillow, stroll on out to the lawn before it turns brown, stretch out, and enjoy your writer's break with September's PPW.



*Linda Seger, a recent and welcome addition to the Colorado Springs writing community, is pictured hosting a book signing with her first non-screenwriting book, **Web Thinking: Connecting, Not Competing for Success**. The signing took place July 27 at new bookstore **Author, Author!**, 5975 N. Academy.*

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Paul Gillette Memorial Writing Contest

The 11th annual Pikes Peak Writers Conference, to be held April 25-27, 2003, seeks manuscripts for its annual writing competition. The contest deadline is January 6, 2003. The contest is for unpublished writers of novel-length fiction, book-length creative nonfiction and writers who have not yet sold/optioned a screenplay.

Getting noticed by an agent or an editor may be the biggest challenge to new writers. Doing well in a writing contest is just one way a writer can gain valuable feedback on a manuscript and get published.

Winners attending the 2003 Pikes Peak Writers Conference will be recognized at the awards dinner on Saturday, April 26, 2003, at

the Wyndham Colorado Springs. The first place winner in each category will be refunded his/her conference registration fee (if attending the 2003 Pikes Peak Writers Conference) or will be awarded a cash prize of \$100 if not in attendance. Second place will be awarded \$50 and third place will be awarded \$25 in each category. In addition, winners (first through third) attending the conference will have the opportunity to meet with an attending editor or agent of their choice.

For a complete set of rules, visit any of the Pikes Peak Library District facilities.

Contest rules and entry forms are also available on the web at www.ppwc.net.

In real life, people say hello, good-bye, and pass the salt, but you're better off finessing those exchanges in your novel.

Sometimes the interchange in a greeting or a farewell is a significant

event in your storyline. If so, let the readers in on it. However, if your protagonist greets 50 people throughout the novel, we don't need to see those details on the page. Instead use any of hundreds of transitions you can make up. For example, After brief hellos, John got down to business. Readers will accept that whatever niceties are appropriate were taken care of.

Often farewells are totally finessed. You bring the conversation to a critical revelation, then break to a new scene showing your protagonist in action based on what was learned. You don't have to say all the goodbyes and get everyone out the door. Readers will assume that took place.

Paul Gillette used to run through a hilarious ad-lib routine describing a couple of cheap crooks planning the big job while having lunch in a run-down diner. The purpose of the scene gets entirely lost as the crooks get involved in passing the salt, asking for relish, and asking the waiter for more catsup. Such dialogue occurs during real meals, but readers won't be distracted, nor miss those words, if you don't bother to include those words.

Other odds and ends:

I learned over months and years that anytime I put the following construction into my manuscript, I could expect a red mark from Paul.

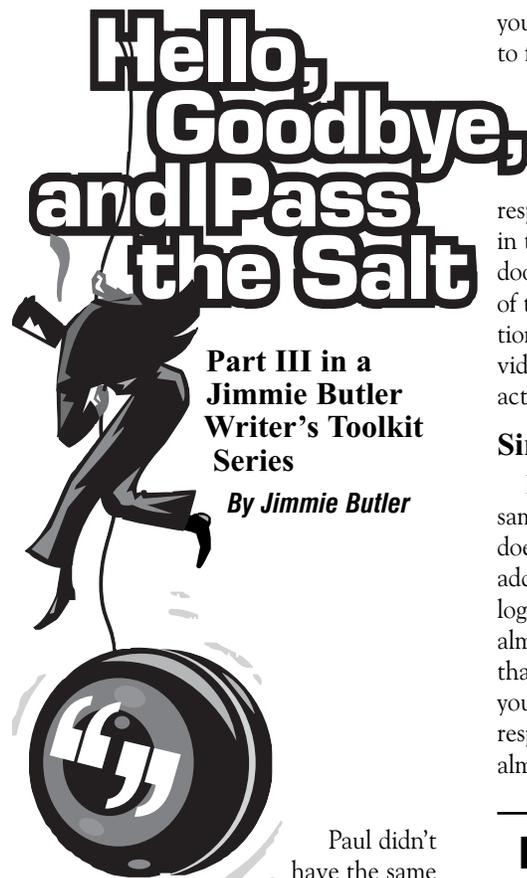
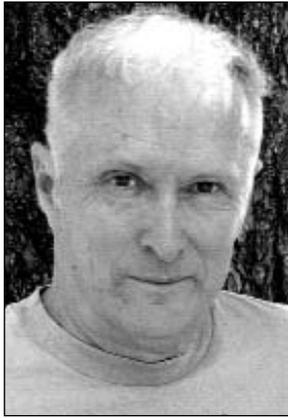
"Let's get going," John said and got his coat out of the closet.

became

"Let's get going," John said, taking his coat out of the closet.

It took a long time for Paul's objection to sink in. It boiled down to a problem with maintaining parallelism with the compound verb coming after dialogue.

The first version essentially says "Let's get going," John said, and "Let's get going," John got.



Part III in a Jimmie Butler Writer's Toolkit Series

By Jimmie Butler

Paul didn't have the same criticism when I reversed the order of the sentence to:

John got his coat out of the closet and said, "Let's get going."

Actually he likely would have marked out the character ident and pared the sentence to:

John got his coat out of the closet. "Let's get going."

Until I got myself broken of the habit, I would search my manuscript for the word combination of said and and modify those sentences.

Questions and Answers:

In real life we might fire off two or three questions in a row before getting any answers. In written dialogue, you may add unneeded confusion if your characters do the same thing. So, I recommend having your characters ask one question at a time.

Once the question is asked, give the response right away. Few things are more confusing to a reader than to read a question, then finding the answer a page or two later after several paragraphs of narrative describing what is going on, or paragraphs of back story to put the question into better perspective. My first reaction is: What's this?, and you've just knocked me out of

your story. Then I have to go back and try to find the question.

But, you may ask, What if I don't want the other character to answer to that question? Fine. My original statement was give the response right away. The response might be a glaring stare, or a punch in the nose, or a quick exit and a slammed door. Or the response may come in the mind of the POV character who asked the question. In any case, you're better off if you provide a quick response before letting a character ask another question.

Simultaneous Dialogue:

In the real world, we sometimes say the same thing at the same time as someone else does. You can write that in dialogue but may add confusion. When I read a line of dialogue attributed to a couple of people, I almost always ask, Would they really say that at the same time? So, you may keep your readers in the story if you let the responses come in slightly different words almost simultaneously.

In real life we might fire off two or three questions in a row before getting any answers. In written dialogue, you may add unneeded confusion if your characters do the same thing.

Writing good dialogue is a challenge in terms of making it read smoothly and to avoid making all your characters sound like you. Listen to good conversations. Take notes of phrasings that work. I used to listen to Hank Stramm broadcast NFL football games on the radio. I often came away with two or three sayings that could easily be adapted to add more color to the dialogue of a fictional character.

Apply the suggestions included here and you can start constructing more effective dialogue from this point on in your writing career.

—Jimmie H. Butler is the author of *The Iskra Incident*, *Red Lightning—Black Thunder*, and *A Certain Brotherhood*. A new expanded hardcover edition of *A Certain Brotherhood* is available at <http://www.Stealthpress.Com/acb>. He is the founder of the highly successful Pikes Peak Writers Conference.

I have to admit that I was very nervous about attending the 2002 Pikes Peak Writer's Conference. Being the "new kid on the block," I was very concerned about the reactions of the faculty and attendees to someone who hadn't yet published a single book. My fears were removed the moment I walked into the conference. Everyone was very welcoming, friendly and excited for me. They put me at ease and allowed me to do what I do best . . . talk.

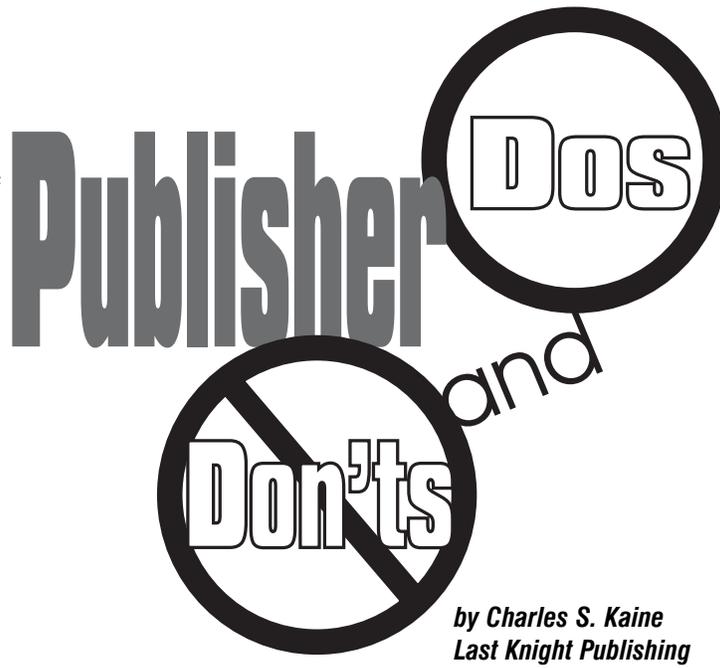
I was impressed with the level of organization and professionalism displayed by the staff. They volunteer their time and talents to make sure the conference goes off without a hitch. I especially want to thank Carolyn Duncan for her organization of the one-on-one sessions. She made it look easy to send 36 people an hour through the editorial gauntlet.

I did learn several things by observing the attendees and from a publisher's point of view, I would like to pass on a few DOs and DON'Ts when dealing with publishers:

DO know your market. If you can't tell me who wants to read your book, it makes it much harder for me to judge whether you are going to hit your target reader. Research other books in the same field. Who is buying those books and why will they want to buy yours? Promotional/marketing allotments are small at best, so make sure you can get the most for your publisher's money. Editors must look at the bottom line. You must convince them that your book is worth the risk.

As a general rule, you should consider the restroom a "No Talking" area. And PLEASE don't try to shake hands . . .

DO NOT talk to the publisher while he is standing at the urinal. This should be a given but you would be surprised. As a general rule, you should consider the restroom a "No Talking" area. And PLEASE don't try to shake hands . . .



*by Charles S. Kaine
Last Knight Publishing*

DO NOT react adversely when an editor tells you that your book is not right for them. Trust them when they say this. They know what they are looking for. It is not a judgement on the quality of the book you have written; it is an evaluation of the book in relation to that specific publisher. Indignant outrage does not weaken the heart of an editor; it resolves it.

DO let your guest editor/publisher eat. Everyone wants to talk to the editor/publisher/guest speaker sitting with you at the meals but remember, there are about ten or twelve writers to one poor editor. Not to appear rude, the hungry editor spends the entire time talking, not eating. So, if your table's guest has a fork full of food and is about to take a bite, wait to ask your next question. I think I lost four pounds in three days!

DO NOT let any constructive criticism go to your heart. Even editors are allowed an opinion. No matter if a particular editor doesn't like your story, the next night. That is the wonder of print.

DO write a book. I know this sounds like a given, but I actually met with several people who had wonderful "ideas" they wanted me to buy but had not put a single word on the page. Those of us who do write know that the writing will take on a life of its own. Their wonderful idea may not be so wonderful after 30 pages. Their main characters may even have gone in a completely different direction, one that is far superior to the original idea . . .

DO NOT give up. "103 rejections ren-

dered instantly meaningless." These words were posted on a writer's chat room bulletin board by Brian Kaufman, after selling his book "The Breach" to my firm. Rejection slips are a temporary setback. You only fail when you don't send the project back out for another try.

DO join a writer's group. Can't find one, start your own. I do not believe that a writer can achieve a publishable level of quality unless they have been a part of a writer's group. This happens in a two-part process. First, the writer must submit writing that's metal will tested by other writer's. This gives the author valuable insight into how others will read the work and give the author a chance to glean information from other writers to make the author's work better.

Second, the writer must think critically about other works and will hopefully begin to apply those same critical judgments against their own works.

Rejection slips are a temporary setback. You only fail when you don't send the project back out for another try.

And one last note: DO have fun. We came to writing because we have a "knack" for it or because we like it or because it is an itch that can't be scratched any other way. Whatever your reason, don't lose that reason in the rewrite. I met so many people who said, "I wrote this because this is what they say will sell." I want to place the argument for the opposite. Write what you love first, sharpen it with rewrites and critiques and then find an editor. Don't waste your time with stuff you are not interested in or passionate about. I love the saying "Even a blind squirrel finds the occasional nut." Write what you love and then find the editor. And if you find one, great! If not, you had a good time writing it. Go home and start another. You will have already succeeded.

—Charles Kaine is the owner/publisher of Last Knight Publishing Company. For more information about him or his company, go to www.lastknightpublishing.com.

Journalistic Roots Pay Off if Used Wisely

continued from page 1

and reading books written by the best of the 20th century's Southern women writers beginning with Willa Cather (she was born in Virginia) and Eudora Welty up to present day writers Alice Walker, Lee Smith and Sharyn McCrumb. And I studied how they created character and scene, how they dealt with description, wrote dialogue, handled flashbacks and multi-generational stories. I chose Southern women writers because my first novel was about Southern women and the South through the eyes of an expatriate Southerner—me.

Pick your own era or genre, but read good writers.

Apprentice writers get too caught up in the mechanics of how they “say” things—forcing the power of words. But unless all that power creates a STORY with a beginning, a middle and an end, it's just an exercise in the use of words.

Go back to your journalism roots, GET THAT STORY, and then write it with all the power, guts, and glory you can muster.

My days as a working reporter helped me discover a subject I came to love. I'm enamored of aviation and women's role in it, so for years I studied and researched, immersed myself in the subject, and became an expert on pioneer women in aviation, in particular those who flew for the Army in World War II. Once again, I was a journalist seeking facts. Choose your own area of expertise. You'll find your story. I did.

In 1998, I wrote my first historical flight novel. It won first place in historical fiction

in the PPWC Paul Gillette Memorial Writing Contest. Publishers liked it, but told my agent they couldn't sell it in today's market. The appeal was too narrow. Then one of the women pilots I interviewed while researching the novel asked me why I had to make up a fictional story when a fascinating true story was right under my nose.

Back to my journalism roots. With the cooperation and encouragement of the women themselves, I wrote the nonfiction book, *The Originals: The Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron of World War II*. I decided early-on that it wasn't going to be a dry history. I employed the techniques of fiction I had spent years perfecting. I used plot, characterization, scene, dialogue, description, metaphor. I looked for scenes that begged to be dramatized and raised the tension level to make the reader WANT to turn the page.

Apprentice writers get too caught up in the mechanics of how they “say” things—forcing the power of words.

Dramatic tension moves a story. When you have gorgeous young women flying cross country in powerful and unpredictable airplanes, in unstable weather conditions producing violent thunderstorms, ice, and pea-soup fog, and in the middle of the uncertainty of war, you have all the elements of good fiction. These real-life women lived through the deaths of three of their comrades. They triumphed over odds as they dealt daily with detractors among both the male and female population. And, in the long run, they faced

the aching disappointment of having their program shut down. Those are the elements of a good story—conflict, dramatic tension, action and suspense.

Between my journalistic training and my hard-won feel for creative writing, I knew how to tell a true story that was, according to my WAFS mentor Nancy Batson Crews, better than any fiction.

Disc-Us Books Inc. published *The Originals* in 2001. It is available in both hardcover and trade paper. The hardbacks are nearly sold out.

Because of its success, this fall, Disc-Us is publishing my PPWC prize-winning novel, *Flight from Fear*—the “made up” story based on the women flyers in WWII. The true story, *The Originals*, paved the way for the fictional story.

And *Flight from Fear* has all the same elements as the nonfiction book: young women flying dangerous airplanes, adventure, conflict, romance, heartbreak, premature death, tragedy and triumph of the spirit, all set against the backdrop of World War II. Like *The Originals*, it is a marriage of reality and fiction—journalism and creative writing—only in reverse.

—Sarah Byrn Rickman, PPW member, blends the best of journalism with the techniques of fiction writing in order to write both fiction and nonfiction books about women in aviation: *The Originals: The Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron of World War II* (2001) and *Flight from Fear* (fall 2002), both from Disc-Us Books, Inc.

Next issue:

Rickman's “The Difference in Selling Nonfiction versus Fiction to Publishers”

Pikes Pique, or . . .

Spotted by an alert PPW internet browser:

Dear Doctor Science,

Is there a reason for not ending a sentence with a preposition that you can think of?

—John Mostrom
from Seattle, WA



I must admit I don't know where you're coming from. Correct usage in English and Science is something I've devoted my whole life to. Of course, if I say anything you can't understand, it will just become a new hammer you can try to hit me or another expert over the head with. There are plenty of people like you I can't hope to change the mind of. But then, I've dealt with people like

you before. People who don't really want to learn, but just hope to find someone they can publicly disagree with. There's little I can say that your type won't find something to object to. But getting back to your question, no there's really no reason for not ending a sentence with a preposition, at least none I can think of.

—Ask Dr. Science
2002/05/30



Writing in a limited viewpoint

by Charles Rush

Have you read a novel lately where the author narrates the story throughout? Probably not. This technique uses the omniscient viewpoint style, also known as the God's-eye view, and most editors today will reject this type of writing. And why is this?

Because readers of today's fiction want a vicarious experience with a story's character or characters. They want to feel what emotions the character experiences. They want to see, hear, smell the same things as the character. The closer they are in a character's head, the more readers can identify with the scene. This limited viewpoint approach decreases the distance between the reader and the character and makes the reader more of a participant.

Dwight Swain says, "Viewpoint is the spot from which you see a story. . . ."

Ordinarily that vantage point is inside somebody's skin. That is, your reader will live through your story as some specific character experiences it. (The reader) will see and hear and smell and taste and touch and think and feel precisely what that person sees and hears and smells and what have you. And (the reader will) see, etc. nothing the character doesn't see. No looking through walls. No second-guessing motives. No sneaking around in someone else's brain."

New writers typically make two common errors with viewpoint. First, they don't know how to get "inside somebody's skin." For example, Ted saw a skunk is a simple statement of fact. The odorous perfume from the skunk assaulted Ted's senses and made him sick to his stomach lets the reader identify with how Ted felt about this encounter with one of Nature's furry friends.

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Second, they tend to shift viewpoints from character to character in the same scene. The first paragraph of a scene might start with, Margaret loved to watch the mountain's purple hues during Colorado sunsets. Half-way down the page, a paragraph begins, Butch remembered he had to pack the sweet red apples in his saddle bag. The reader asks, "Which character am I supposed to identify with in this scene?"

Let's cut to the chase. What are some techniques a new writer should learn to help with this style of writing? First and foremost, learn to use viewpoint indicators. These are verbs that let the reader know the character is experiencing one of the human senses.



Readers of today's fiction want a vicarious experience with a story's character.

For example:

John smelled the grass fire.

(The reader is in John's head.)

Irene heard the birds singing.

(The reader is in Irene's head.)

Cindy enjoyed the movie.

(The reader is in Cindy's head.)

You are not necessarily in the character's skin if you use verbs that are NOT viewpoint indicators.

For example:

John walked toward the grass fire.
(Anyone could observe this. Are we in John's head? We don't know.)

Irene sang with the birds. (Anyone could observe this.)

Cindy went to the movies. (Anyone could observe this.)

Make yourself a list of verbs that are viewpoint indicators and use them with the character you are focusing on. For example: ached, agreed, annoyed, assumed, believed, bothered, checked, considered, dared, decided, eased, enjoyed, envied, felt, focused, found, glanced.

What other approaches should an author use to limit his/her knowledge to a character? How does he/she assume the persona of the

character? One way is to write in the first person. For example, When I wore a uniform, I savored Jim Beam straight up in a glass. Because the first person narrator is a character, he/she has all the limitations of a human being and cannot be omniscient. The author is confined (limited) to what the character could realistically know. The problem with this approach is that it is tough to hold onto throughout a 75,000-word novel. My recommended approach for new writers is to use third person limited viewpoint. For example, Billy believed the hat, bought special for this adventure, made him look older. This approach is the most saleable in today's markets and allows the reader to experience the tale in the heads/bodies of a minimum number of characters.

Other techniques fall in the category of "don't do." Try not to shift viewpoints. If you have to shift to the head of a secondary character, have a very good reason to do so and use a scene break to separate the action.

For example:

"God," Billy said. "Not even in the war yet, and already it's taken a toll." (We're in Billy's viewpoint)

**** (scene break)

Two weeks later, Austin Robinson pulled his hat low over his eyes to prevent the sleet from stinging his face. (Now we're in Austin's viewpoint)

Never shift viewpoint when your protagonist is on scene. In the example above, the author shouldn't switch to Austin's viewpoint if the protagonist, Billy, is in the scene. Keep the focus on your main character. You want your reader to identify most closely with the protagonist, but when you write from another's perspective, the reader focuses on that second character. Never shift viewpoints in the same scene (headhopping). This will confuse the reader, and he will ask, "Whose scene/story is this?" Stay with your protagonist!

A talented teacher, Jack Bickam, says, "You should always know who your viewpoint character is, and you should stick with that viewpoint character throughout if you can. For we all live our lives with a single viewpoint—our own—and we most readily accept the credibility of stories we are told if we can identify with someone experiencing that story from inside, from a viewpoint as limited as our own in real life."

—Charles Rush writes historical fiction. He has three published short stories and is working on his third Civil War novel. He is Vice President of the Pikes Peak Writers and last year's PPWC Co-Director.

July Workshop Well Attended



photo by Jimmie Butler

Doris Booth

The July 25 PPW workshop was a solid success, with more than 50 attendees. Doris Booth's presentation, "In Search of That Mysterious Element Called Voice," shed light on what New York editors look for in a manuscript. Emphasizing the importance of the first few pages, Ms. Booth said that editors look for story promise, the hook, character and setting descriptions—all in the first pages. The author's style of writing combines with these to define "voice." The harsh reality, said Booth, is that most authors neglect some elements of voice and therefore, their manuscripts end up in the large pile of rejects versus the small pile of candidates for publishing. Doris Booth is Editor-in-chief of Authorlink.com and Authorlink Press. Authorlink.com (the site) showcases and markets ready-to-publish fiction and nonfic-

tion manuscripts to the publishing industry. But it is not a literary agency. Authorlink receives more than 2.5 million page views per year, and has an impressive track record for connecting writers with industry professionals. Editors such as Thomas J. Colgan, Senior Editor at Berkley Publishing Group, have called Authorlink "a



photo by Jimmie Butler

More than 50 PPW members and guests attended the July workshop hosted by Doris Booth.

worthy service with a great future." Colgan is Tom Clancy's paperback editor. Authorlink Press is the traditional publishing imprint of Authorlink.com.

A FIELD GUIDE TO

WRITING

FICTION

A Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist shares a lifetime of secrets on the art of writing fiction

A.B. GUTHRIE, JR.

AUTHOR OF THE BIG SKY

Out of Book Experience

a PPW Bookshelf Review

A Field Guide to Writing Fiction

Forty short (1 to 4 pages) essays on writing by a Pulitzer Prize winner. For example, his lesson in essay number eight reveals one of the major differences between dialogue that sells and dialogue that doesn't. Other chapter titles include: Internal Monologue, Dialect, Tenses and Voices, Flashbacks: Backcasting, Rooting Interest, Verbs of Saying, Overwriting, and Characters.

One of the best, quick references you'll find.

PIKES PEAK WRITERS REGISTRATION FORM

Interested in joining us? If you'd like to become a member of the Pikes Peak Writers, just fill out this form and mail it to PPW, P.O. Box 6726, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, along with your annual membership dues of \$25.

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PIKES PEAK WRITERS
P.O. BOX 6726
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80934

Hot Topics

Book signing

Carol Umberger will be signing *Circle of Honor* at Author, Author! on Saturday, September 21, 12-2 pm. *Circle of Honor* is a Christian historical romance and is Carol's first book, for which she won Romance Writers of America's coveted Golden Heart. Author, Author! is located at 5975 N. Academy Blvd.

New release

Brian Kaufman

The Breach, written by Brian Kaufman and published by Last Knight Publishing, is out and now available through Amazon.com. Last Knight publisher/owner Charles S. Kaine said, "We had the biggest book signing Barnes and Noble in Fort Collins has ever had . . . I have five bookstores carrying the book in Northern Colorado. A college in Arizona has picked up the book as a reading requirement in a history-through-literature class."

Editor's Note: *The Breach* has been picked up by distributor booksWest, through which bookstores nationally can order. Brian Kaufman's *The Breach* won first place in the 2001 PPWC Paul Gillette Memorial Writing Contest, Historical category.

PPW Meeting

The Pikes Peak Writers organization is looking for volunteers to fill the positions of assistant treasurer, assistant editor of this NewsMagazine, assistant secretary, assistant workshop coordinator, and other positions where you can learn the inner operations of the organization and help direct its path.

If you're interested, or just want to find out more, plan on attending the September PPWC Steering Committee meeting on September 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the East Library, 5550 N. Union, Colorado Springs.