



The Gabriel Writer

For The San Gabriel Writers' League
www.SGWL.net
August 2010



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SGWL August Meeting

By Robert Fears

Rick Guzman on Copywrite Laws and Plagerism

Rick Guzman, a literary attorney, is the speaker for the August meeting of SGWL.

Guzman will speak on copywrite laws and plagiarism.

Copywrite laws help protect ownership of our written creations.

Plagiarism is the act of stealing another author's work.

Plagiarism often occurs without the writer being aware that he or she is committing an illegal act. Non-fiction writers, in particular, need to be extremely careful of when using published references without permission.

Copywrite laws and plagiarism are something we all need to understand. The August program i will benefit each and all of us.

Editor's notes

- ♦ A check of the internet provided me, at <http://www.copyrighthistory.com/anne.html>, with an image of the first copyright act in the world—the British Statue of Anne, from 1710.
- ♦ <http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1a.html> provides a brief introduction and history of the U. S. Copyright Office stating that the first federal copyright law was enacted by Congress in May, 1790.
- ♦ <http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/plagiarism/famous-examples-of-plagiarism.html> offers famous examples of plagerism

Remembered

Long-Time SGWL member, Trudy Wheeler, died July 8 at the Wesleyan Nursing Home in Georgetown. She was active in the organization for many years and a delight to all of us who knew her. Even more recently, those of us who visited her at the Nursing Home never went away without a warm feeling from her good humor. Trudy's funeral was Monday, July 12, at 2 PM at the First Methodist Church in Georgetown. Related story on page 6; Poem on page 7.

Call for Submissions: SGWL Halloween Anthology

by Joan Hall

Yes, a published book (contingent on getting enough entries)

Story (max 200 words not counting the title) May be about ghosts, vampires, or anything else that "goes bump in the night"; must have a plot (limit one per person) (Humor okay)

Poem (max 20 lines) Anything that captures eerie feelings of the season (limit one per person) (Humor okay)

- Aim for a general audience (intermediate grade through adult)
- Deadline Sept. 1, 2010. Email to manuscript editor: jmuhall@aol.com
[Earlier is appreciated, and entries are already coming in.]
- Send as an attached Word.doc (no docx files please). OR Paste into the body of the email.
- You will have an opportunity to approve edits (if any). SGWL as publisher will require one time publishing rights.
- No entry fee but must be a current SGWL member to enter. We hope you will purchase at least one copy of the book (at a contributors discount, of course); price will be released when available.
- You may give a short bio-blurb (3-5 lines) and website listing with your entry.

Target date for release: Oct. 1, 2010

Minutes for June 2010 meeting

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The July 1, 2010 meeting of the **San Gabriel Writers' League** was called to order by **Vice President Dede Harper**.

Vice President Dede Harper welcomed 27 members and 1 guest. **Wayne Dawson** from Sun City was a first time visitor. He submitted his first article that day.

New memberships are ½ price for the remainder of the year.

Dede read the **Treasurer's Report** for Helen Nardecchia.

Dede updated the membership on the **Website**. Two new member pages were added this month. Members may email Sam Holland (samholland@austinfoam.com) to have their member page added.

Newsletter: **Carol Menchu** asked members if they liked their newsletter. Members answered with a round of applause. Carol reminded everyone members can get their writing published in the newsletter.

Old Business:

The **Fall Workshop** will be held on Nov. 6, times to be announced. Russ Hall, a New York editor, will talk on "So You Want to Be Published." As soon as Sylvia Dickey Smith is told the times, she will reserve the library room.

New Business:

Joan Upton Hall announced the **Halloween Flash Fiction challenge**. It's on the first page of the newsletter. Members are invited to submit a scary story or poem. She asked, why couldn't SGWL print a book of these Halloween stories?

The stories will appear in the newsletter if we don't get enough entries. If we get enough entries there will be a print-on-demand book for under \$7. The deadline for submissions is Sept. 1. Email entries to JMUHall@aol.com. Joan asked for a show of hands. Twenty members said they would submit stories. Joan also offered to edit the stories.

Announcements and Brags:

Jeanelle Bolton received a check in the mail for placing first in the Crested Butte, Colorado, romance contest.

Anne Bell told the membership about createspace.com. The site can do print-on-demand for \$4 a copy and puts the publication on amazon.com.

Ross Carnes volunteered to submit an illustration for the Halloween Flash Fiction book cover.

William Russeth's second book, *The Cult of Camulos*, will come out this September through Wing Press.

One of the new critique groups now has a name: **Bard Masters**.

Suzy Miller brought in a copy of AARP magazine and read the six-word memoirs to the group. She suggested doing something similar within our group for our newsletter. Carol suggested six-word stories for the Christmas issue.

Sylvia introduced the evening's speaker, **Earl Staggs**, who explained why everyone should write short stories, the difference between novel and short story plots, and other tips.

Respectfully submitted, Jaime Roton,
Secretary

Member(s): New and/or Changes

Address change:

Teleph # change:

New Members:

Regular Board Meetings

are held at the Georgetown Texas Public Library at 6:00 p.m. on the day of the monthly meeting. Members are welcome....

Membership:

Dues \$25.00 for one
\$35.00 for two

Pay at the meeting
OR

Mail to
SGWL Membership
181 Young Ranch Rd
Georgetown TX 78633

Programs: 2010

If You have a topic you would like to hear discussed, please email Robert Fears at Robert-fears@earthlink.net

August 5: Copy Write Laws & Plagiarism with Rick Guzman, literary attorney.

September 2: Steps to Self-Publishing with Candice Adams, editor

October 7: 7 Steps in 7 Minutes to Create Characters That Make Your Stories Sell, Nancy Robinson Masters

November 6: Workshop (Regular meeting cancelled!) December 2: Holiday Party

President's column: By Sam Holland 48 hour moving making madness

As I discussed last time, I was primed to participate in the 48 Hour Film Project, a time filmmaking competition where entrants have 48 hours to write, direct and edit a 7 minute film. Since then I'm sure you've been on pins and needles wondering what happened, here's a recap:

Friday, June 25th

6:00 p.m. - Arrived at the Kick Off Event right on time; chatted with Sherry Mills the head of Reel Women and the local sponsor for 48HFP and took a seat and waited.

6:30 p.m. - Lined up with my group (Group A) and pulled my genre out of a little tin bucket. My genre: Mockumentary. I had never made a mockumentary before, so it was an exciting challenge. The wheels in my head started turning. Unfortunately, so did the ones in my stomach.

6:45 p.m. - They revealed the Required Elements. This is exactly what it sounds like. There are three elements that are required to appear somewhere in the film or it will be disqualified. Element 1: Line of Dialog: "Why does everyone always say that?" Element 2: Prop: a balloon. Element 3: Character: Vincent or Vanessa Lowe, potter.

7:00 p.m. - We are released into the wild. With 39 teams in all, there will be a lot of people not getting much sleep this weekend.

8:00 p.m. - Finally home. Long drive from Austin, but used the time to brainstorm. Would really like to do a mockumentary on a minor league basketball team but have to see if I can get a gym to shoot in. We have company staying with us from out of town, so I visit for a bit before excusing myself to write.

8:20 p.m. - Realize that I still haven't fixed my desk after a little moving accident. Have to fix it before I can write. Have my team working on the gym while I work.

9:00 p.m. - Desk is fixed and we have a gym secured! Shoot is scheduled for 9:00 a.m. Writing begins in earnest.

11:00 p.m. - You wouldn't think that a 7 page script would be so difficult to write, would you? Never written a mockumentary before so that added to the required elements and writing around the actors I have makes it a bit jumbled. The key is to tell a simple story; I always get too ambitious.

Saturday, June 26th

1:30 a.m. - That's it, I need a nap.

2:00 a.m. - That's better. Where's that Monster?

5:00 a.m. - The script for "Whatever Happened to the Godzilla Gorillas?" is complete! Let's see if I can sneak another nap.

6:00 a.m. - The family that was staying with us is leaving so we visit for a little bit before they have to leave.

7:00 a.m. - Nothing like a nice shower to wake you up!

8:30 a.m. - Finally have all the scripts printed and the props and equipment loaded in the car- time to head to Round Rock for the shoot!

9:00 a.m. - I was actually late, but I can't remember by how much, so as far as you know, I got there at 9. I'm all punctual and stuff. The scripts and jerseys are handed out and do a sound and lighting check.

9:30 a.m. - ACTION!

12:30 p.m. - We wrap the gym location and are on route to our second location. I'm tired but jazzed that we got such good stuff. My actors are full of enthusiasm. I've only called them 'talking props' once.

1:30 p.m. - After a short break for pizza, we're shooting again. It's going pretty fast now, which is good, because I'm fading even faster. Wow, but I miss sleep. I mean, who would have thought that hard tile floor would look so inviting?

3:00 p.m. - Done with the shoot! Have to track down a couple of cast members because I forgot to get them to sign a release form. Drat!

4:00 p.m. - Home! I need a nap before I start editing.

8:00 p.m. - Nap, dinner, spend some time with the kids (the cousins are staying over- could there be any more happening in one weekend?). Time to edit!

Sunday, June 27th

5:30 a.m. - I can't function anymore- need sleep! All the footage has been captured and the initial edit is done but its running long- over 9 minutes. Got to cut 2 minutes to get it down to 7.

7:00 a.m. - Rise and shine! Back to the edit bay! 12 hours to go. Still a lot to do.

1:00 p.m. - Finally got the edit under 7 minutes. Now I need to fix the sound on some scenes and add text and title cards.

3:30 p.m. - My 'first reader'- my wife- watched the movie. I can't even stay in the same room while she does, but I hear her laughing so that's a good thing. A few tweaks and it's time to render the master.

4:00 p.m. - The master is done but there's an audio glitch in one of the scenes. Have to re-render which will take another 30 minutes.

4:30 p.m. - Time to burn it to DVD to take to the drop off location- it says it's going to take an hour to transcode and burn. Sheesh, technology.

5:45 p.m. - It's still burning- is something wrong? I've got to leave by 6:30 to make it to the Drop Off Location in Austin by the 7:30 deadline.

6:30 p.m. - All my desperate efforts are in vain- it didn't burn. I will miss the deadline. But can I at least get it in before they leave at 8:30?

7:00 p.m. - I go to work to try it on our media station. Huzzah! It works.

7:30 p.m. - heading down to the Dropoff Location.

8:27 p.m. - Drop off the film- late, but will still screen at the Long Center with the other films. Yay! Thus ends 49 hours of movie making madness!

Would I do it again? In retrospect, I had a great time and everyone loves the movie we made and is itching to do another one so I guess we did something right. Are there more movies in my future? Like the magic 8 ball said, "Signs point to yes."

Recap: Earl Staggs by Robert Fears

Attendees at the July meeting of SGWL heard a presentation from Earl Staggs on writing novels versus short stories.

Staggs writes award-winning short stories, has published one novel and is working on a second one. During his humorous and entertaining presentation, he explained how to select and build characters in a novel and

how to develop a primary plot and several secondary plots involving supporting characters.

He then told the audience how to condense the novel into a short story by using only the primary plot and including only information that moved the story forward. Staggs also demonstrated the use of "a hook" by the reading the first line of several novels including his own.

As a teacher with the summer off, I am using this time to catch up on some personal and educational reading. My goal is to avoid buying new books, but to read those already on my shelf and then pass them on so others can enjoy and I don't have to dust them anymore!

Sleep, Pale Sister (P.S.) by Joanne Harris

I had previously read *Coastliners* by this British author who also wrote *Chocolat*. This tale takes place in England in the 1800's and each chapter is told by a different character. Very unusual story, not sure I appreciated the ending, but I really enjoyed the book.

Signora Da Vinci by Robin Maxwell

It is a historical fiction piece about Renaissance Italy and Leonardo da Vinci's mother, Caterina, an apothecary's daughter who is schooled from an early age in the art of alchemy. I found it fascinating to learn more about Leonardo and what his mother may have gone through during that part of history. This is the first novel I've read by Maxwell, but would pick up another one for sure!

Discipline and Learning Styles: An Educator's Guide (School Support Series) by William Haggart

Read while watching my son's multiple baseball games in June, this one reminded me of the importance of identifying learning styles and then teaching to children's different styles. It's a keeper that I will refer back to during the school year.

Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith by Anne Lamott

I picked up this one because the author is famous for her book on writing, *Bird by Bird* (which I also have, but have never read). It is a series of autobiographical essays written during the second Bush's presidency as the Iraq war began. Her writing style makes it a quick read and she is quirky enough to hold my interest, although I almost started to keep a count of how many times she included Bush's name (she's not a fan). I loved one of her quotes, "...

peace is joy at rest, and joy is peace on its feet...".

The Essential 55: An Award-Winning Educator's Rules for Discovering the Successful Student in Every Child by Ron Clark

Oprah fans know who this guy is. This book is another quick read with useful information. Mostly he is big on manners, incorporating them from Day 1 into the classroom to help it run more smoothly and benefit kids in the real world. I don't think I need to focus on all 55 in my classroom, but Numbers 7, 9, 30 and 44 are definites. And I will work on Number 23, making sure the kids know and use all teacher's names, especially in the Kindergarten hall. The rules at the end are great, especially Numbers 52 and 53, but check out Number 47. I wonder what my Doritos rule should be!

A Love Worth Giving: Living in the Overflow of God's Love by Max Lucado

I know he's a well known inspirational author, so I picked this author off the shelf when I was overwhelmed one evening. Unusually, I started in the middle and read a few chapters whose titles caught my interest. The author spoke to me loud and clear that night, now I need to go back to the beginning and read it all.

Now I'd like to read a novel. *Revenge of the Middle-Aged Woman* by Elizabeth Buchan is calling, but so is *Almost French* by Sarah Turnbull, a memoir. Really I should read *Letting Go: a Parents' Guide to Understanding the College Years* by Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger. I got it last summer before my daughter became a freshman at George Washington University in D.C. If I'm not careful she'll be graduating and I'll still be dusting the book! If you've read any of these and would like to share your comments, please send me an email (tpettyconrad@att.net). I'm also open to ideas for other reads this summer.



Member News



Rejoice with me (despite my migraine hangover)! Megan McKeever, an editor I am interested in, awarded me FIRST PLACE in the romance category of the Crested Butte (Colorado) contest, the Sandy! But, no, she didn't request that I send her the full ms. Still, it's a FIRST PLACE, and fifty dollars. Jeanell

Member websites

Anna M. Bell

Website: <http://www.annamaebell.com>

Author Blog: <http://annbell.wordpress.com/>

Educational Technology Blog: <http://annamaebell.wordpress.com/>

Margie Boyd

www.margieboyd.com

Ross Carnes

<http://webstarts.com/RHCarnesStoryTeller>

David Ciambrone

www.davidciambrone.com

Mary Fenoglio

www.eggsinmypocket.com

Joan Hall:

www.JoanUptonHall.com

Sam Holland:

www.samholland.com

Melissa Leedom:

www.forgive490.com

Linda Lipscomb:

www.lblipscomb.com

Jason Minor:

www.jason-minor.com

Helen Nardecchia

www.helennardecchia.com

Joy Nord:

www.joynord.com

Jamie Roton aka Lillian Grey blog

<http://lilliangurey.wordpress.com/>

Sylvia Dickey Smith:

www.sylviadickeysmith.com

Jane Thompson:

www.aboutbipolarbook.com

SGWL website:

www.sgwl.net

The Easter Egg Hunt By William H. Russeth

Children stampeded to the pine trees where the eggs were hidden, real eggs colored with bright dyes.

I went down, tangled in my basket, and the stampede passed me.

It was hard going against the tide of children returning with full baskets.

A glimmer of pink ... an egg had been overlooked!



Fatso Jim Bass' elbow came out of nowhere and sent me sprawling across the lawn, under a huge pine.

Despondently, I raised my head.

A rabbit sharing my sanctuary bounded away and a bright yellow egg shined in a ray of sunlight where the rabbit had been sitting.

Self –inflicted Wounds by Sylvia Dickey Smith

He'd spent a lifetime training her to be the perfect wife, and she'd come so close to 'perfection'.

For years he'd given her the answer to every question she ever asked and even to many she hadn't. He'd convinced her he was God, or had a direct line to the man.

He never believed she'd think for herself. Instead, she'd forever let him do her thinking for her. And she had until the day she brought home a book that talked about when God was a woman, and that started it all—the end of his control over her.



"If I ever get my hands around the neck of whoever gave her that damn book," he yelled, pounding his fist into the wall.

Which ended up breaking the bones in his hand, which hurt like hell, the hell he'd used to frighten his wife into submission.

The doctor splinted the hand and sent him on his way admonishing him to stay away from walls and anger. Then she asked him what his wife thought about the book she'd loaned her.

Hoping for a newspaper book review? from Sidney W. Frost



I attended the Writers' League of Texas 2010 Agents Conference June 25-27 and thought these notes about getting a book review in an Austin newspaper might be interesting.

The panelists for this breakout session included book editors Kimberley Jones of the *Austin Chronicle* and Jody Seaborn of the *Austin American-Statesman*.

Both book editors said to emphasize how the book would be interesting to their readers. A local connection is a plus. They both said they get many books to review and currently have hundreds unread. Neither accepts self-published books, but Jody said he knows they will eventually need to take a look at them. Press releases from self-publishers are filtered and not read. They mentioned Lulu and iUniverse in particular.

Jody suggested going to a local bookstore, such as BookPeople, in Austin. He said they stock and push self-published books that have a local connection.

Kimberley suggested trying to get reviewed on blogs

instead of newspapers since the review will be available much longer in the blog than in the paper.

In addition to the many books they receive, they get about 200 digital galleys each day. However, neither reads anything unless it is printed so that they can easily make notes in the margins.

They also talked about the need to be timely, since they write for newspapers. However, if the book has been out for awhile, they may use an event date such as a book signing as a reason to write about the book. Events may help you get reviewed, or at least listed in the newspaper.

Jody said a book with an Austin or Texas back story has a better chance of mention in the paper. This was encouraging to me since *Where Love Once Lived* is set in Austin. However, it is self-published, so I don't think I'll see a review in either paper.

Sidney W. Frost is publishing his Christian novel, *Where Love Once Lived*, through CreateSpace. He blogs about his experience in The Christian Bookmobile: <http://christianbookmobile.blogspot.com/>.

Special Opportunity Announcement from Elizabeth K. Burton, Executive Editor Zumaya Pubs LLC

I'm co-chairing this year's ArmadilloCon (Aug. 27-9 in Austin), and our themes are among the hottest categories in both SF and romance: urban fantasy and steampunk. I especially want local RWA readers and writers to know about our headliner guests:

- * Guest of Honor: **Rachel Caine**
- * Artist Guest: **Cat Conrad**

- * Editor Guest: **Anne Sowards**
- * Fan Guest: **Elsbeth Bloodgood**
- * Toastmistress: **Nancy Kress**
- * Urban Fantasy Special Guest: **Ilona Andrews**
- * Steampunk Special Guest: **Michael Bishop**

FFI visit: <http://www.armadillocon.org/>

Who "said" ?

"Writing is thinking in slow motion....Most thoughts are a light rain, [that] fall upon the ground, and dry up. Occasionally they become a stream that runs for a short distance before it disappears. Writing stands an incomparably better chance of getting somewhere."

answer on page 10



Happy (Belated) Birthday Barbie by June Venable

Dear Barbie,

This is by way of an apology for missing the big 5-0 you celebrated last year. Don't know how it got by me, but I must say you really don't look a day over 21.

While I have your attention, there are a few things I've been meaning to tell you for some time.

You may not be aware of it, but long before you came on the scene there were dolls made of paper. These flexible figures did not demand dream houses or pink convertibles. Nor did they dress like they were off to Las Vegas for a wild fling, knowing that what happened in Vegas, stayed in Vegas. And they definitely did not have handsome boy toy Kens hanging around to carry those little plastic suitcases. Personally, I think those bags were filled with brunette wigs in case you were ever accused of being a dumb blond. No, paper dolls stayed at home where they belonged.

They may not have had your curvy figure either, but we know the work that goes into maintaining that 12-inch waistline. Paper dolls were content with their boxy shapes. Why bother when they had those modest white slips that covered everything and never, ever came off? Their clothes were attached with two little shoulder tabs after their owners spent hours cutting them out of books with small blunt scissors. Usually, the dresses were little flower-sprigged numbers with Peter Pan collars, topped off with black patent leather Mary Janes and white socks. Sexy, they were not.

Paper dolls would have shunned one of their own who appeared in public with bleached hair... present company not excepted. Sleeping all night with bobby-pinned curls was about the extent of living *la dolce vita*.

Paper dolls did not hang out at gyms working on their abs so they could don bikinis and lounge around the dream house pool. They had better things to do with their time. School, for instance. Usually the brightest students, paper dolls could answer all the arithmetic problems. Remember the story problem that began with the two trains starting from different stations at 9:00 A.M.? If memory serves, you were only interested if they were troop trains.

Paper dolls were faithful, dedicated and belonged to the Girls' Scouts. They knocked each other down rushing to help little old ladies across the street. On the other hand I've heard rumors about you selling cookies in a racy scout uniform your designer put together, but I won't repeat them here.

Paper dolls were models of decorum and did not have boyfriends who changed clothes as often as they did. And when leaving home they were content to take the bus rather than jumping into that pink convertible, zooming off to some exotic destination.

But, I suppose those wild and crazy days are over. Now that you've reached an age where you can't squeeze into that mini-dress anymore and your curves are...

Wait! Come back, Barbie! Don't you know pink isn't "in" for cars anymore?



This article originally ran in TGW, July 2005

July Member of the Month—Trudy Wheeler by Patricia Morse-McNeely

"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth/And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings/Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth/Of sun-split clouds . . . /High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there . . . /Put out my hand and touched the face of God."

This poem by a 40's poet named Magee describes Trudy Wheeler—she has truly been there, bravely showing us that youth has no corner on derring-do! For her 84th birthday, she asked her children to give her money for their gifts and took off, unbeknownst to them, high into the blue sky in a balloon! Watching the passing scene below and above. A former SGWL member, Mary K. Earney, was her ground chaser and took pictures.

Trudy was born in the shadow of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on August 25, 1915, where she caught the bug of Independence! She was the daughter of a WWI vet who was an occupational therapist to other veterans, and established a cut glass factory in Philly in 1900. The family moved to Maryland, where she grew up, and there she had to ride a train to Jacob Tome Institute, a private, five year high school in Fort Deposit, MD. On a blind date, she met Peyton Wheeler, who became her husband for 43 ½ years. She has been a widow since his death 212 years ago. A year after his death, she joined an ElderHostel group where she knew nary a one and toured

London, Wales, and Scotland for three weeks. Says she made some really nice friends on the trip. She has three children, one great grandchild, and many step-grandchildren, some of whom will come to help celebrate her 90th year this coming August, 2005.

Her first story was submitted to the General Federation of Women's Clubs when she was 79 years old. It won the National Grand Award and was published in their magazine. She says when she moved to the Wesleyan after becoming tired of TV dinners and moving around, she found the San Gabriel Writers and found she could write poetry. Some of Trudy's poetry has been in *The Writer*. She is working now on a novelette—has completed 12 chapters about the innkeeper of the Biblical story of Jesus' birth. It begins ten years before the Biblical event.

I am eager to see it, aren't you?

Trudy says her mother lived to be 100 ½ years old. Well, Trudy, I for one say with your verve, talent, and zest for living, I hope you stick around a lot longer to show us all that even though old age is not for sissies, we do have a chance of beating it down! Look at you! You are on the winning side!

Ed note: Trudy was Secretary for two years and membership chair following that.

3. Can Writers Get Creative With Facts? by Art Spikol From WritersDigest.com

Is it ever OK to get creative with the facts in nonfiction?

If you think honesty's the only policy, here are some gray areas to consider.

GETTING THE INTERVIEW YOU NEED TO PITCH THE STORY

You can't say you're on assignment unless you are. So, what if you're not? You're hoping to get a byline for a freelance article, but what does the interviewee get for her time? Whether this question comes up or not, it's top of mind for the person who is considering your request for an interview. Some things you may be able to offer are publicity, increased visibility or an added line on the subject's résumé—all true if and when you sell the piece.

RULE OF THUMB: There are ways to imply that publication is a possibility. If an editor has agreed to look at your idea, even though that's no promise of a sale, you could say that the publication has indicated interest. If you can't honestly say that much, phrase your request to give the interviewee a stake in the action. "I'm researching an article about ___ and think you might want to add your point of view."

WORKING UNDERCOVER

Guy Neal Williams wrote a piece for me at *Philadelphia* magazine many years back. He spent two weeks as a migrant worker on a Pennsylvania farm. He smuggled a camera in and never told his employers his real name or what his intentions were—or even that he could speak English. He was probably in danger the entire time, and he couldn't have done the article without lying to the owners. His article revealed how migrant workers were being cheated, mistreated and worse by employers in one particular industry, and he won a major journalism award. In hindsight, we didn't pay him enough.

TIPS: Look stupid. Restaurant reviewers don't warn the maitre d'; if they did, they'd get the best meals. If you go forth with hidden tape recorder or video camera, use caution—states have varying rules regarding taped conversations, so check the statutes. At the time of this writing, the folks who taped those embarrassing ACORN videos were being accused of violating wiretap law.

INTERPRETING THE FACTS

Facts may be facts, but if they were all that mattered, life would be easy. What also matters is the interpretation of those facts. In court, witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but both prosecutors and defenders still call experts to the stand. In the final analysis, opinions are more compelling.

What to do?

You're entitled to your opinion. What a country! But opinions should be expressed as opinion, not as fact, though hyperbole is usually fine. Your chances of avoiding libel are better if you make sure your opinion sounds like one. A food reviewer can say a steak "tasted like it was two years old," but cannot claim she was served a two-year-old steak. Similarly, "There's evidence that Mr. Spikol cheated on his income tax" is a statement for which I could sue you—unless I'd already been found culpable. It's not the writer's job to interpret evidence. But you can say, "The government's evidence may cause problems for Spikol." Or phrase it as a question: "Could this be the end for Spikol?"



GET UP TO SPEED: For your protection (and that of the publications you write for), you should be familiar with the laws regarding libel, as well as the protections for writers under a principle called "fair comment." Look it up.

BEING PAID TO LIE

Hey, don't feel bad. Not everybody is Clark Kent. If you work in public relations, your job probably includes spreading the good news and stifling the bad. Employee newsletters often sugarcoat things for employees. Mission statements rarely state that the company's primary goal is to make money. Annual reports usually are optimistic. And it's not your fault. It's dangerous out there in foreclosure land. We gotta do what we gotta do.

THE TRUTH: In the age of the Internet, most writing is out there for everyone to see. And there's that built-in bullshit meter most of us have: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. To wit, ads mislead on a regular basis, putting bad news in tiny print or delivering health information against a background that makes it difficult to focus. On TV, diets work and tap water sells. And that device I bought to get me online in a heartbeat doesn't perform as advertised.

One last word. Reporting isn't what it used to be when who, what, where, when and how were the elements that kicked off every story. Today's writers are often characters in their own pieces; the first person is common; nonfiction employs fictional devices. In this environment—where credibility is so important—it's essential for writers to establish who they are by behaving in the ways for which they would like to be recognized. So whoever you choose to be, choose to do the right thing.

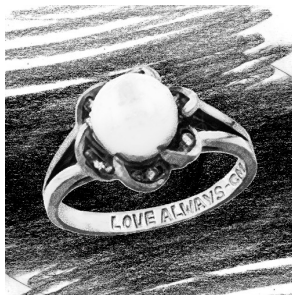
To My Children by Trudy Wheeler with permission of Lucy Wheeler Aymond, Trudy's daughter

When I reached eight or nine,
The Lord placed His hand on mine
"I will be with you always
As you travel along life's way."

I leave you now, children three
And my growing progeny
Dwell not on past hurts, slights
Keep loving kinship in sight.

Grieve a bit, carry no regret.
Dailey you accorded me respect,
Helped to meet every need,
Gave joy with embracing deed.

Fill your lives with love and grace,
Build dreams, with loving acts lace.
In God's abundant goodness, rejoice.
Walking ever with Him your choice.



Chapter II: In which the hero finds love.

Carl McGavin knows he's screaming. He can feel the muscles in his jaw strain, the vibration in his throat, and the pain in his lungs. But he can hear nothing but a high-pitched whine. Something is in his eyes, blurring his vision red. He rubs them with the back of his clenched fist and sees that it's blood. Was he shot?

Maybe the one-eyed dwarf shot him because Carl wouldn't find his daughter. He pats his chest with his bloody fist and then his stomach where the scars of two bullet holes still remain. He doesn't find any new wounds. No, he wasn't shot and there was no dwarf. That's only in his book. In reality, Louis wasn't even a dwarf, just a short man with a Napoleon complex. But he did have one eye. Is it offensive to make him a dwarf in the book? Carl doesn't know. And why is he on the kitchen floor?

Carl coughs and tries to sit up but his left arm collapses under his weight. Pain shoots through him and makes his jaw ache. There was an explosion. Jesus Christ, a woman just exploded in his house. What was her name? Martha...Stuart? No, Ellington. Martha Ellington. She claimed Carl's daughter was missing. But that doesn't make sense. He doesn't have a daughter. She exploded, right in front of him. The blast must have knocked him into the kitchen. He coughs again, rolls over on his right arm, and pushes himself up onto his feet. Carl shakes his head to clear the fog. Fresh blood gushes down his face and he wipes it away with his forearm. The Ellington woman knew a lot about him. Too much, it made him uncomfortable. She knew he was forced to retire and she knew Katarina.

Coughing, he stumbles into his office. The air is smoky. The heat has him sweating. Something must be burning. The room looks like a charred cinder. His desk is wrecked and there is no sign of his laptop. His book is gone, all the notes he's taken over the years, his outline, the short stories, the previous drafts, the shaky re-start to his first chapter, everything. The thought makes him sick. He remembers the Ellington woman's wrinkled nose expression when she read his main character's name out loud. Now, there is only a scorch mark where she stood, along with a few scraps of clothing and some chunks he won't let his mind decipher. Someone must have planted a bomb in her bag, but why? Then Carl remembers what's in his clenched right fist. He relaxes his hand and looks at the ring that Ellington gave him. Katarina's ring. She offered it as proof that he had a daughter. It doesn't prove anything. He rolls it over and reads the engraving again, "LOVE ALWAYS - CM." The same engraving he asked a jeweler to put there sixteen years ago. Damn it, all of this is Saffy's fault.

Carl was a beat cop in New Orleans when he busted Saffron James for rolling some tourist. She was a fifteen-year-old junkie with no family and no future. Carl had already lost his sister, Marguerite, to drugs and didn't want to see Saffy end up on the skids too. He took her under his wing, helped get her sentence reduced, and put her in rehab. He did what he could for Saffy but mostly he just listened when the kid needed him to..

Carl coughs but doesn't notice the flickering orange light coming from behind him or the intense heat. The Ellington woman knew how important this ring was to him. Did Katarina tell her the story? Did she tell Ellington how they met?

One night, Saffy showed up at Carl's door with a beautiful Russian blond named Katarina Sereda. She was in a bad way, Katarina had been beaten but refused to say who did it and wouldn't go to the police. Carl reluctantly agreed not to report it and took care of her wounds. Although her English wasn't very strong, Katarina and Carl talked most of the night. By morning, Carl knew two things. First, he'd been on enough domestic abuse calls to recognize the work of a wife-beater and second, he was in love with Katarina. Both spelled bad news. Saffy didn't know much about Katarina's husband, Igor Sereda, other than he was a dangerous man. He had been Saffy's dealer and she became good friends with his wife but beyond that, she never had much to do with him.

Smoke fills the room. Carl tries to keep from coughing but can't. Could Igor Sereda have planted the bomb in Ellington's purse? Carl wouldn't put it past him but bombs never seemed to be his style, too elaborate.

Igor was a small time thug. In the two years he'd been in the U.S., he'd already had a couple of run-ins with the law. A few charges of drug possession, one charge of dealing, some assault and battery, but none of the charges stuck. It seemed that Igor was protected on high. Because of this, the N.O.D.T., New Orleans Drug Taskforce, were keeping tabs on Igor. They suspected he might have connections to the Russian Mafia and could be trafficking drugs into the U.S. Carl tried to convince Katarina to work with the N.O.D.T. and put this scum ball behind bars. She wanted to but was afraid. Not only of Igor but also of the man he worked for. Igor's benefactor had arranged for them to enter the U.S. and now they were his slaves. Carl promised he would protect her and she reluctantly agreed to wear a wire.

For six months, they tried to get the goods on Igor but he was too clever. Carl and Katarina saw each other whenever they could and fell deeply in love. But they got sloppy and Igor found the engraved pearl ring Carl had given Katarina. He followed them to a hotel on the outskirts of town, kicked in the door, and put two rounds in Carl's gut before grabbing Katarina and making a run for it. They didn't get far. The police caught up with them and Igor was arrested. The taskforce couldn't get him on the drug trafficking charge but shooting a police officer was good enough. They locked Igor away. However, once again, the case was ultimately dismissed. Maybe he turned stoolpigeon on his benefactor. Maybe Carl's indiscretion with a key witness was a liability. All he knew was that Igor was on the streets a few weeks later.

Carl was still in the hospital when Katarina paid him one brief visit. Something had changed in her. She told him that Igor was going to be released and planned to leave town. Katarina made it clear she would be leaving with him and that Carl was not to follow. Igor's bullets had almost ended Carl but Katarina's words destroyed him.

"It's because you were pregnant, wasn't it?" Carl mummured to himself, "That's why you left with him." Tears stream down his face as he looks at the ring. "He would have killed you, me, and the baby if you'd stayed." He coughs. Blood drips into his eyes again and he wipes it away. Carl looks around at the destruction. The flickering orange light of the fire now fills the room. He should get out. Carl starts for the door but a wave of dizziness washes over him and he stumbles to his knees. The fire quickly engulfs the room. "You should've told me about our daughter, Kat." Carl's vision blurs and he falls face forward to the floor, unconscious. The ring bounces into the encroaching fire. Flames quickly surround him, leaping onto his pant leg.

To be continued...

Notice—Notice—Notice—Notice

The critique group **Williamson County Coroners** has an opening for a new member. They **MUST** have a **MYSTERY** or **MYSTERY - ADVENTURE NOVEL** being started or in work and commit to meeting every Wednesday at 10:30 at the library. Chapters are e-mailed to members to critique by the Sunday prior to each meeting. The contact is Dave Ciambone, mysterywriter5@msn.com

It was harder to squeeze into *The Forgotten Door* than it was *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, but Penn, Cal and Marcy did so one at a time. Penn entered with more than a little anxiety. If they could not find his ink chamber here, then there was a good chance it would be gone forever and, being a pen with no ink, he would be discarded to the Great Can on the Floor.

"What are we looking for exactly?" Marcy asked. She was still recovering from being captured, still sore from being stuck in a stone. Even though she was a pen knife, she had not been used for much more than opening letters or cutting tags off of clothing, so the abrasions were a new experience for her.

"An Independent Clause," Penn replied. "The one that stole my ink."

Marcy looked around, reading the story for a moment. "I hate to break it to you, but there are a lot of independent clauses here. What did it say?"

Penn had tried hard to recall what form the independent clause had taken, but it had all happened so fast.

Cal, a sword shaped letter opener answered for his best friend. "It was handwritten, so it should stand out if it's trying to hide within the story."

They passed from page to page in silence and by the time they got to page 50 Penn's hopes were dropping rapidly. "This is a good story," Marcy said, "I'd like to read it when I'm not so-" Marcy stopped mid sentence. "Uh, guys?"

There they were- the words they had been looking for. The words that started this whole mess in the first place. In poor penmanship, the words *'We aren't digital'* tried to hide behind 'metamorphic granite,' but neither the words nor an actual rock could have hidden the high loop of the 'L.' And laced within, held tightly in the cursive, was Penn's ink.

Penn motioned to Cal to go to the right while Penn went left to try to trap the Clause. It was not clear if it was

aware that it had been discovered; the dots on the 'i's' were not like eyes on other things and did not reveal emotion.

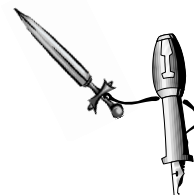
Suddenly the Independent Clause burst through the gap between 'metamorphic' and 'granite' and shot straight ahead, knocking Marcy over and running back the way they had come.

"Stop it!" Penn screamed. "Don't let it get away!" The trio pursued the Clause back through the book and all the while Penn wondered why it didn't just leave the book altogether. Why go back to the first page when freedom lies just beyond the page number?

They caught up with the Clause on page 2. It just sat there, three quarters up the page, the 'g' in *digital* stretching into what Penn thought was supposed to be a smile. "I'm going to take your ink again," the Independent Clause said. "And you can't stop me." It stepped backward, and suddenly there was nothing under its feet. Even as it disappeared from sight, Penn knew he was going to follow it. He could hear the cries of his friends as he leapt into the hole that had not been there mere moments before. He did not try to stop his fall, welcoming the speed which propelled him faster and faster toward the third act. As he was swallowed by blackness, he knew that this was the titular *Forgotten Door* and that wherever it led it would be the end of his journey.

Next: The Enemy Revealed!

Catch up on what you missed at smh4@wordpress.com/penn.



Grand Dead by Chris Lovett

Standing over the corpse, my legs planted like oaks rooted in the ground. My left hand is tightly clenched, in my right hand a Colt 45, smoke trailing from the barrel. The lifeless male figure stares, with a glassy stare, as if watching me with unwavering curiosity. I wipe my brow, blood. I smear the blood on my blouse, the one he gave me. My ears ring from the shots I just fired, muffling other sounds. *Breathe*, I tell myself, *in through the nose out through the mouth*. I practice; sucking in deeply, exhaling hard and quick, making my lips blow apart.

Am I having an out-of-body experience, looking through someone else's eyes? No. *I did it*. My thoughts repeat, first as a question, then as a statement, *I did it*. The light of the room filters into my consciousness, my tunnel vision fades and objects begin to appear around me—I'm in his house. The fireplace stands in front of me. I focus on a picture perched on the mantle, lovingly displayed.

The photo captures our smiles, the sunset, sodas lifted—a toast to my successful ballerina recital, and my brother;

his arm around me, his head leaning against mine, the framed image taken days before his death. The picture doesn't show the churning in my stomach and my burning questions— of adolescence, of the world around me, and of why people do the things they do.

Why did my mother run away from home, at the age of seventeen, pregnant with a one year old boy in tow? 'To escape,' she says. Why did mom have nothing to do with her father? Why did she allow him to be a part of my life? What was his power over her, even after she was grown and on her own? Why didn't she protect me and my brother from him? Why did my older brother kill himself at thirteen? What is an appropriate expression of love? Should I even ask?

One answer covered all my questions. The answer killed my brother and placed me here today. My brother chose to kill the innocent—himself. I chose to empty a revolver into the body of the guilty, the body of this man, laying in a cooling pool of blood, my grandfather, my father.



Ask the Book Doctor: "As & -ing" Baffled by Joan Hall

Dear Doc,

In a class you taught recently, one of the tips you gave told us to limit the use of the words "as" and anything ending in "ing." Sorry, but for the life of me I can't see anything wrong about these words. Also I find them in the works of famous writers.

Please explain.

—signed "As being-ing Baffled"

Dear Baffled,

Sounds as if I didn't do a very good job of explaining. I'll try to clarify.

Using as & -ing to combine sentences now and then provides variety. Unfortunately, these constructions can get downright annoying if overused, and it may weaken your creative style. Next time you edit your work, check for problems that might arise:

- May demote or undermine a potential action clause—fine if you intend to make one idea less important.
- May create physical impossibilities.
- Marks you as an amateur if overdone.
- Leads to overloaded, overly-long sentences.

Examine the following examples and see what works better.

"As she peered out the window, **she saw Oscar** trotting down the road, looking over his shoulder."

Revised: "She peered out the window in time to see Oscar. He trotted down the road, looking over his shoulder." (one -ing phrase kept to show this idea is less important and to avoid a string of short, choppy sentences; also repetition of "he" as a sentence opener)

1. "Tossing a green salad, Mazie sliced a loaf of French bread to go with it."

Revised: "Mazie tossed a green salad and sliced a loaf of French bread to go with it." (How many hands does Mazie have that she can do all that simultaneously?)

2. "Slipping out of her dress and donning her gym clothes, Jennie ran on the treadmill."

Revised: "Jennie slipped off her dress and donned her gym clothes so she could run on the treadmill." (Jennie must be quite a contortionist to be able to take off one outfit at the same time she puts on another one—let alone doing it while she runs!)

3. "As Jim's brakes failed, the brick wall crumbled, burying a toddler."

Revised: "Jim's brakes failed, and he hit a brick wall. Crumbled bricks buried a toddler." (Wouldn't the brakes have to fail before the car could hit the brick wall—not simultaneous actions? Then doesn't what happened to that kid deserve a sentence of its own? What's important here?)

Word to the wise: Some overworked agents and editors hire minimum wage workers (perhaps a high school kid) to weed out manuscripts that have more than a prescribed number of "as's" and "-ing's" (along with other easy to spot weaknesses). Such manuscripts are then placed in the rejection pile. It's not so much that these are bad words, but overuse of them indicates other weaknesses too.

Get your "-ing's" and "as's" under control! – Doc Joan

Have a question to share in this column? Email me at: jmu-hall@aol.com with "Ask the Book Doctor" as your subject line. If you want to remain anonymous, I'll address you by whatever pseudonym you sign. To see previous issues, go to: <http://www.joanuptonhall.com/books.htm>. Scroll past the book covers and click "Ask Doc" Q&A's.



Special Interst Groups

Story Spinners critique group is now closed to membership. When a spot becomes available, we will again have information in *The Gabriel Writer*.

The Williamson County Coroners is a mystery/suspense group and participants must have novels in progress. The meetings are held at the 10:30 a.m. at the Red Poppy Café in the George-town Library.

Last Writes Critique Group—Full

Meets (usually) at 7 PM, 2nd & 4th Wed. each month, at Oaks at Wildwood Clubhouse. Novels in progress, varied genres. Membership currently full. Contact: jmuHall@aol.com

Novel Crafters is Full right now, but welcomes a Waiting List

Meets every other Thursday on the second floor of the Georgetown Library in a private room. Contact is Mary Stafford at marylynn@mstafford.net

Quixotic Quills critique group represents varied interests. Our group writes historical novels, short stories and memoirs. Meetings are usually on the second and fourth Thursday of each month unless we reschedule because of holidays. We meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Monument Café. Contact is Sharon Lyle, 512-639-1162, iwritcozies@gmail.com. Currently, we are closed to new members.

Bard Masters Critique Group—Full

We meet at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays at the Georgetown library. We have 6 members and we feel that 6 manuscripts is all that we can handle and do the process justice. Until further notice Ross Carnes is the contact: graphicsrex@hotmail.com

If you are interested in joining a critique group, contact Joan

Upton Hall (jmuHall@aol.com) or Sylvia Dickey Smith



Who said ... Answer ... Susan Salter Reynolds . . .

is a staff writer at the Los Angeles Times, where she writes a column on books called "Discoveries" and a series called "The

Writing Life" (profiles of remarkable writers) as well as regular book reviews.

Short-Short Story Tips From Joan Hall

Need an **element of change**—perhaps in the reader's impression.

Must have a **complete plot**: from conflict to resolution; no “slice of life” or vignettes!

Techniques for tightening (might improve other fiction too)

1. Let dialogue carry the story at least part of the time - but must be **good** dialogue:
 - ♦no “as you know Bob”
 - ♦may answer quest. w/ quest
 - ♦implied meaning (trust reader to get it)
 - ♦fragmented dialogue
 - ♦tension in every line

2. Ways to cut:

- ♦test every adjective & adverb for its value
- ♦use strong verbs instead of be-verbs any time you can
- ♦phrases that can be reworded
- ♦use intentional fragments

3. Limit number of characters, time frame, & locations

4. Place in a setting that doesn't require much explanation

5. Use title as a clue or for irony



Careful How You Say that, Pahnner by Joan Upton Hall

(Example of a short, short story, aka Flash fiction:
182 words

Reprinted from *PageTurner*, July issue.)

I once went to a small writers' retreat in West Texas, which even these days is pretty rustic. Indian Lodge, a delightful, historic hotel is a rambling set of pueblo-style buildings off the main roads in the Davis Mountains.

When I arrived (long-suffering husband accompanying me), the desk clerk said there were two groups meeting that weekend. She asked if I was part of the one claiming a discount.

“I don't know,” I said, “but I'm part of the writers group.”

“Oh, yes.” She showed us on the site map the section of rooms assigned to us and handed me the key.

I was surprised to see everyone in that patio area wearing leather and bandanas, but it didn't stop me from striking up a conversation. After all, I was the one who looked out of place in my school-marm attire. It's been said that I'd talk to a post, and it paid off when they handed beers to Don and me.

“I do travel articles,” I explained.
“What do you write?”

“Oh, us Riders of the Purple Sage
all ride Harleys.”



11th Annual Writer's Digest Short Short Story Competition is now accepting entries

We're looking for fiction that's bold, different . . . But brief.
Send us your best in 1,500 words or fewer. But don't wait too long—
the deadline is December 1, 2010. <http://writersdigest.com/short>

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- Title of your book, copyright, date, publisher
- ISBN #:
- Retail price
- Genre
- Where can people buy it? Your website if you have one?
- Any awards this book has won?
- (up to 100 words) Description or synopsis OR blurbs from other writers, publishers, reviewers, etc., and remember to credit these quotes.

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IMPORTANT: to figure out how your submission will fit use Eurostile font—size 10 for body of article
Columns are 3 and 1/4 inches wide.
If you have illustration, send it and I will try to use it

Do demons bedevil your writing? Similar, confusing words? Grammar, punctuation, or capitalization rules? "The Demystifier" will clear up the mystery (primary reference unless otherwise noted: Garner, Bryan A. *Dictionary of Modern American Usage*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press). Address questions and comments to freelance editor, **Joan Upton Hall, PO Box 179, Hutto, TX 78634**, or email: jmuHall@aol.com. More problems like the one above are demystified in the booklet, *50 Writers' Tips*. Find a few of them at "books, etc." on website: www.JoanUptonHall.com.

Demystifying Writers' Demons©

Skunked - Questionable words still evolving

Questions regarding certain words come about while terminology is in transition. Bryan Garner calls these words "skunked terms" because whatever you choose may raise the hackles of either Reader A (hide-bound to traditional usage) or Reader B (okay with new usage).

Give it 10 to 100 years to settle into agreed usage. In the meantime, avoid terms that make either Reader A or B hold her nose unless you're prepared to defend your case. Following are two examples:

1. "Scientific data (show, shows) an increase..." Technically plural, "data" is more and more commonly being considered a mass noun requiring a singular verb form. Whichever form you use may bring on sneers unless it's in a character's dialogue. Suggested revision: "Scientific research shows..." because "research" isn't a skunked term.
2. "The virus totally (decimated, obliterated) the population." Since the word "decimated" historically meant killing one [hostage] out of every ten, the word "totally" would make no sense. Current usage has come to mean "destroying a large part," so your readers may be confused as to which definition you mean. Either leave out "totally" and say "ten percent of the population" or choose an unskunked term like "wiped out" or "obliterated."

o Other skunked terms are: *hopefully*, *enormity*, *fulsome*, and *transpire*, so be careful how you use them-or wait until the next 100 or so years before you use them at all.



The Gabriel Writer

181 Young Ranch Road
Georgetown TX 78628

the
August 5
SGWL meeting
is at the

Georgetown
Public Library

gather at 6:30
meeting
at 7:00 p.m.

SGWL is the right place for the *writer* in you ... do join us