

The Gabriel Writer

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

May 2011

Inside this Issue

2	Minutes Programs
	Board Members
	Membership changes
3	To Brag or Not to Brag
	Diane Fanning Recap
4	Why Corporations Hire Private Military Contractors
5	Artificial Wear & Tear of Library Books
	Member News
	HCBS
6	The Reunion
	Who Said?
7	1st Friday
	Foxy
8	13th Annual Mystery Month
	Creating Games
9	Creating Games cont
10	The Book Doctor
	10 Minute Fixes to 10 Common Problems
	Answer to Who Said
11	SIGs
	Member Websites
	Recycle
	Promote Your Book
	Books by Members
	Promote Yourself
12	Demystifying Writers' Demons
	Meeting Information



Poets Delayed – But Not Forgotten If you Attend the May Meeting

By Robert Fears

Thanks to Diane Fanning's great presentation, the last SGWL meeting was conducted with only a faint mention of April being poetry month. I am acutely aware that this month belongs to the poets; but after several unsuccessful attempts to find a speaker to talk about poetry, I gave up on the idea. Then Kayla Marnach rode to my rescue on a lame horse that caused her to arrive after I had already booked Diane. She did arrive, however, in time for me to ask Scott Wiggerman to talk about publishing poetry during our May meeting.

Kayla met Wiggerman at the Annual Summer Writing Retreat in Alpine where she attended his workshop. Wiggerman's biography, taken from his website, is presented below.

Scott Wiggerman is the author of *Vegetables and Other Relationships* (Plain View Press, 2000), as well as the editor of the *di-verse-city* series of poetry anthologies for the Austin International Poetry Festival (AIPF, 1997-2002), an organization on which he served as a board member for eight years. He is the recipient of the 2003 Taos Summer Writers' Conference D.H. Lawrence Scholarship in Poetry. Wiggerman's poem "What Poets Are Good For" won the Poetry Society of Texas award in 1998. His work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Bay Windows*, *Gertrude*, *Midwest Poetry Review*, *Spillway*, and the *Paterson Literary Review*. In addition, his poems appear in several anthologies, including *Will Work for Peace* (Zeropanik Press, 1999), *Southern Breezes* (PoetWorks Press, 2000), *The Cancer Poetry Project* (Fairview Press, 2001), *A Christmas Collection* (July Literary Press, 2001), *Affirming Flame* (Evelyn Street Press, 2002) and *The Fairest of Them All* (Daniel & Daniel, 2003), and most recently, *This New Breed: Gents, Bad Boys and Barbarians 2* (Windstorm Creative, 2004).



Wiggerman is host of the Queer Poets series of readings, now in its fifth year. In addition, Wiggerman teaches "Poetry 101: The Way We Word" and "Poetry 201: Digging Deeper into the Poetic Toolbox," two online poetry courses for Universal-Class.com.

A longtime high school librarian for the Austin Independent School District, Wiggerman has been able to share his love of poetry by sponsoring several student poetry readings as part of his library's programming and by conducting several workshops on poetry for his fellow librarians.

Born in North Carolina, raised in Illinois, and schooled in Michigan, Wiggerman has lived in Texas since 1980. He lives in Austin with his partner, David Meischen, with whom he has founded Dos Gatos Press, publisher of the *Texas Poetry Calendar*.

**The May meeting is dedicated to SGWL poets.
We non-poets need to attend, however.
We will probably learn something.**

Minutes for April 2011 meeting

The April 7, 2011 meeting of the **San Gabriel Writers' League** was called to order by **President Sam Holland**.

Kayla Marnach, Writing Competition Chair, welcomed and congratulated the young authors who were the winners of the recent **Hill County Book Festival** writing competition. They were in attendance to receive their personal copy of their anthology *The Magic of Friendship* and then to sign books for those who wished to purchase a copy. Their book is also available on Amazon.com in both Kindle and print versions.

Following a formal introduction of the young authors, **Sam Holland** announced that they were being given honorary membership in the **League** and were encouraged to stay for the meeting.

Kayla Marnach read the **Treasurer's Report**.

Carol Menchu reminded the Membership once again that inputs for **The Gabriel Writer** newsletter have fallen off and she encouraged everyone to submit articles more often and in a timely manner.

Sam Holland explained that the **SGWL** was unable to secure official space for this year's **Red Poppy Festival** scheduled for April 16-17 in downtown Georgetown because of limitations in the number of non-profit organizations. He also mentioned that our participation in the **Red Poppy Parade** has been cancelled. However, **Sam** indicated that the **Hill Country Bookstore** (on the Georgetown Square at 719 S. Main St.) has graciously allowed us to place two tables out front for eight of our authors to sell their books and promote the **League**.

Sam Holland introduced the Organization's new **Secretary/Historian Durwood "DJ" Heinrich**.

Announcements and Brags:

Ann Bell, President of the **Hill Country Book Festival**, reminded everyone to sign up and participate in the **HCBC** event to be held on August 20, 2011, from 10:00 to 3:00, at the **Georgetown Community Center** in **San Gabriel Park**. It is an expanded festival for all authors and readers of all genres in all reader age groups.

Janet Kilgore introduced **Brooklyn James**, an author/singer/songwriter, and also a new member of the **League**. Brooklyn's book **The Boots My Mother Gave Me** has advanced in the **2011 Amazon Breakthrough Award Contest** from a group of 5000 to 1000 and recently to 500 in the **Quarter-Finalists** in the **250 General Fiction** round. She is now moving on to the **Semi-Finals**.

June Venable recently took **Second Place** in the **Abilene Writers Guild Contest**.

Joan Upton Hall received a contract from a new publisher on her new book, **Dream Shifters**, a futuristic mystery.

Jane Thompson started a new novel.

Robert Fears introduced guest speaker **Diane Fanning** who presented the **Double Life of a Genre-Crosser: From Fiction to Non-Fiction Crime**. **Diane** is the author of 15 novels.

Respectfully submitted,
Durwood "DJ" Heinrich, secretary

2011 Programs

April.....Double Life of a Genre-Crosser: from Fiction to Non-fiction Crime.....Diane Fanning, author
May.....Selection of Poems to be Published.....Scott Wiggerman, Poet
June.....Attack Out of the Sun.....Durwood Heinrich, author, business consultant
July.....Writing, Editing and the Long Road to Getting Published.....James Parker, author

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Member(s): New and/or Changes

New Members:

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I had a wonderful talk with one of our members the other day. One of the many things we talked about was the 'brag' section of our monthly meeting where we open the floor to members to share their successes. This member had recently had an article published but didn't want to bring it up at the meeting, humbly explaining that it didn't seem like a big deal in a room full of published authors.

I immediately identified with him, because I have done the same thing. A few years ago when I was getting an article published nearly every month in the Williamson County Sun, I never made a peep at the meetings. I justified this by telling myself that a lot of these members had been published in the Sun (which was true) and it wasn't a big deal (which was not true).

We are very fortunate to have so many published authors in our ranks, but their success has no relation to yours. In fact, they would be the first to cheer you on because they know how difficult it is to get published.

I can't speak for anyone else, but for me this is part of a larger issue that many of us don't feel like a 'real' writer until some magical point is reached. That point could be the publication of a novel, a byline in a national magazine, or a particular contest won.

The problem is, many times once we reach that magical point, we've inexplicably moved it. The day my first short

story saw print, instead of saying 'I did it. I'm a writer,' I said 'well, that doesn't count because the publication has a small circulation.' When I had a two act play produced, instead of proudly professing that I was a playwright, I dismissed the accomplishment as luck.

The fact of the matter is, almost everyone can write, but not just anyone can write *well*. It takes discipline, practice and desire. Although it seems that bookstore shelves and periodical racks are packed with writers more successful than we are, it still is a very select percentage that has any kind of success in print, so when that is achieved, it should be celebrated. Someone saw value in your words and your point of view and chose those words to inform and entertain the public.



And keep in mind that by sharing your success, you're doing us all a service by reminding us that we need not get discouraged. Also, if the activities and programs of the SGWL have helped you develop as a writer, then the existence of this organization is justified.

Besides, to be successful as a writer, you've got to learn to toot your own horn. What better place than among friends?

So don't be shy, step right up and tell us the good news. And remember, it's not really bragging if it's true.

Diane Fanning Recap By Robert Fears

Diane Fanning, author of ten true crime books and five mystery novels, spoke at the SGWL April meeting. In her presentation Fanning explained her true crime book subjects and factors that influenced her topic selection.

Gone Forever, published in February 2006, relates the Richard McFarland story. McFarland was afflicted with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) that causes inattentiveness, over-activity, impulsivity or a combination of these symptoms. This disorder plus other undiagnosed mental problems resulted in McFarland possessing a need to control. He killed his wife Susan in the presence of at least one of their three young boys.

Into the Water was published in September of 2006. This book is written about Marc Evonitz – a serial killer, kidnaper and rapist responsible for the deaths of three girls in Spotsylvania County, Virginia and the abduction and rape of a 15-year-girl in Richland County, South Carolina.

Published in April, 2007, *Under the Knife* tells the story of Dean Faiello, an electrolysis technician who decides to become a practicing, non-licensed physician. Faiello takes the life of beautiful Filipino-born Maria Cruz when she seeks treatment for a rare, yet not fatal, disorder of the tongue.

One month later, in May 2007, *Through the Window* was published. This book provides an excellent account of the serial killer Tommy Lynn Sells' crimes. Sells crisscrossed the country indiscriminately killing men, women, teenagers and newborns. There was no one who was safe from falling victim to Sells and his need to kill.

In Diane Fanning's September 2009 release of *A Poisoned Passion*, she takes readers down the chaotic and disturbing path that led Wendi Davidson to become a killer. The path begins with Wendi's secluded childhood, winds through her promiscuous young adulthood and ends with Michael, her husband taking his last breath.

Mommy's Little Girl, released in November 2009, is the story of one of the most shocking, confusing and horrific crimes in modern American history. Fanning said, "When news broke of nearly three-year-old Caylee Anthony's disappearance from her home in Florida in July 2008, there was a huge outpouring of sympathy across the nation. The search for Caylee made front-page headlines. But there was a huge question mark hanging over the case: the girl's mother.

"Why did Casey Anthony wait one full month before reporting her daughter missing?

Why were searches for chloroform and missing children found on her computer?

Why did she go out partying with friends less than one week after Caylee disappeared?"

The above six book reviews represent the type of true crime books authored by Diane Fanning and present some of the information she discussed during her presentation. Although she highlighted her true crime books, her mystery novels are also very popular.

Why Corporations Hire Private Military Contractors

Part One by D. Alan Johnson

Everyone is familiar with the Military hiring civilian contracting firms to perform duties that used to be fulfilled by active duty servicemen and women. These firms provide personnel for everything from test pilots to cooks, from armed escorts to accountants.

But few know that multinational corporations hire both individual contractors and Private Military Contracting Companies to help them perform a myriad of tasks.

These PMC's provide:

- Security
- Transportation
- Executive protection
- Logistics support
- Intelligence
- Training
- Product Development

Security

The highest worry in the mind of every CEO is the fear that some of his people will be kidnapped or killed on the job. Multinationals operate in dangerous countries, and Americans do not realize the level of violent crime and warfare in many parts of the world. The first time that my wife came to Colombia to visit me she was amazed at how almost every mall, bank, and apartment complex had guards with automatic weapons. (Colombia is better now, by the way.)

Their second greatest worry is that corporate offices or means of production will be damaged or destroyed. Resource companies have no choice but to operate in hostile environments. Oil fields, copper mines, and diamonds are all located in conflict areas. (If you ever needed proof that God has a sense of humor, just look at where he put the oil.) Before a company will invest millions in infrastructure, management wants to know that they will be able to maintain a certain level of safety.

Thus was born the Corporate Security Department. Every large corporation has one, and it's usually headed up by a retired member of one of the elite military units; Delta, SF, and SEALs dominate these slots. Occasionally, one will run into a retired FBI or CIA officer. These in-house departments handle many routine tasks such as hiring guards, securing sites, and meeting OSHA mandates. But these groups, some with odd names like "Department of Environment, Health, and Safety", hire individual contractors and PMC firms to help them with the mission of protecting corporate personnel and property in odd places and in trying times.

Security Surveys

Having worked for some of these firms in the past, I've been tasked most often with performing security surveys. Often a company wants a new set of eyes looking around at a forward operating base to catch any lapses in physical security. These jobs have run the gamut from teaming up with a psychologist to screen out guerilla infiltrators at an oil production facility to touring mega-yachts after 9-11 to determine their susceptibility to pirates and terrorists. These surveys usually consist of touring the site, interviewing management, writing a white paper and then presenting the findings at a meeting of both local and senior management.

While making my report to one company with a facility in a war zone, I pointed out a weak area where a truck bomb could crash right into a building.

"Here at the edge of the road, you need to sink some eight inch pipes ten feet into the ground and then fill them with concrete," I said.

"Oh, we have orange cones to divert the traffic," the in-country manager said.

"Orange cones won't stop a truck bomb," I said with a laugh.

"You don't understand," he said, holding his hand out about waist high. "We have the big orange cones." Like I said, every company has some blind spots.

War Zones

In many of the "hot" countries a corporation will form a partnership with that country's government to extract and sell their natural resources. In the agreement, the host nation will provide military units to guard the corporation's personnel and facilities.

For example, a mining company might "hire" a host nation Army battalion to watch over their mines, company housing, and the railroad that transports smelted ore to the port. In return, the company will provide new equipment for the military, a school built in a poor area, or even a power plant. At one large facility, I have witnessed the corporation pressed into providing all three.

The company now needs someone to interface with the troops. You can bet they won't look for such a person in the accounting department. The corporation will hire a PMC that will send a retired Special Forces trooper who speaks French or Portuguese, or whatever the language needed. The contractor will spend his days and nights with the troops, developing relationships. With the help of the senior officers he will write a battle plan to include attack scenarios and, in the worst case,

evacuations. With the junior officers, he will help them with how many security patrols need to be sent out, what type of local intelligence needs to be collected, and the rules of engagement.

In many of the Third World countries, this military manager will also have to develop and implement a training program to bring the host nation military up to an effective level. This will take the form of classes in communications, how to call in close air support, and small unit combat tactics.

Some conspiracy theorists cling to the perception that multinational companies still maintain private paramilitary groups. While that was somewhat true up until the mid '80's, today it is purely contractors. This is a function of liability.

Should something ever go wrong, the host nation would sue the contracting company instead of the multinational. After calling in a successful airstrike against some insurgents, two contractors in my company were accused of murder by corrupt prosecutors and judges bought off by the terrorists. Even though the actions of these men saved a major installation, the corporation quietly fired the contractors and continued extracting the resources. My



Continued . . .

company sent in two new people. The fired contractors got hired by another company in another place, and life goes on.

Non-combatant Evacuation Operations

NEO's are the ace-in-the-hole for employees stationed in hot areas. Certain contractors are specialists in getting personnel out of bad places. One almost never hears of the successful NEO. The big exception is when Ross Perot hired retired Special Forces colonel Bull Simon to bust his people out of an Iranian prison and take them across the desert to Turkey. (Documented in the book, **On Wings of Eagles.**)

A contractor assigned to a NEO will be put in country months ahead of the anticipated fall of the government. He will develop a plan, hire transportation, and train company personnel to work the plan.

During the months of waiting, the contractor will give classes to the corporate officers in first aid, high speed

driving, counter-surveillance operations, and escape and evasion should everything go wrong.

When a signal is given, the clients meet at a rally point and are taken out by plane or boat. There will always be two back up plans, and usually a decoy plan that is leaked to the bad guys. As you can see, we can't go too much into the nuts and bolts.

Corporations are just like people. Most are good; a few are rotten. The good ones realize that their greatest assets are their people, followed remotely by the facilities. While most people don't think of corporations as caring organizations, I have seen that many care deeply about their people. These are the ones willing to spend real money on capable contractors to head off trouble. If the trouble is already there, good companies provide leadership to real soldiers to protect their personnel. Then, if everything goes bad, the best multinationals look to the contractors to pull them out of a bad situation.

Artificial Wear and Tear of Library eBooks? By Sidney W. Frost

HarperCollins has initiated a new procedure for selling ebooks to lending libraries that sets a maximum of 26 checkouts per book. Since eBooks could last forever, the publisher has set an artificial wearing out time so that ebooks, like print books, will have to be periodically replaced.

How have libraries responded?

They're not happy. Especially at this time of reduced budgets and higher costs. Some have refused to buy more HarperCollins eBooks. Others are negotiating to increase the maximum from 26 to some larger number that more closely matches the lifetime of printed books. I've read that some hardback books are checked out hundreds of times with little wear and tear. Even paperback books last longer than 26 check outs.

As an author, I'm not so sure HarperCollins approach is unreasonable. Those sturdy library editions cost more because they're built to last. Electronic books sell for less than printed books because of the reduced manufacturing cost.

Here is an example of the cost difference: I sell the Kindle edition of *Where Love Once Lived* on Amazon.com for

\$5.99 and my cut is \$4.16. The iPad version which sells for the same provides a profit of \$3.36 after Apple takes its cut. It's less than that if the book is sold in UK or Canada, but not much.

In contrast, the print edition of *Where Love Once Lived* sells for \$15.99 and my share from Amazon.com is \$5.17. Books sold in bookstores and by other online outlets bring me \$1.98 per book.

Since ebooks don't wear out, is it fair to the copyright holders for libraries to buy ebooks for less than the print editions and use them forever? Especially now with so many people switching to electronic book readers.



Member News

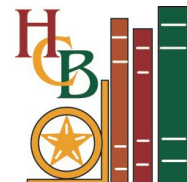
Sylvia Dickey Smith received word that her latest novel, *A WAR OF HER OWN*, placed 1st. in the Press Women of Texas Communications Contest. Sylvia will be honored with a presentation at the Awards Dinner, Saturday, April 30, during the annual conference in Georgetown. Details of the conference are posted on the website presswomenoftexas.org

Gary Clark tells us his story "Riding Saddam" has been selected as the Third Place winner of the SCRATCH Winter Quarterly. The story will appear online and in the 2011 anthology. <http://scratchcontest.net/index.html>

Hill Country Book Store

Preston Stone, Owner of Hill Country Bookstore, is giving all members of the San Gabriel Writers' League a 10% discount on all purchases!

To get your discount, take your merchandise to the register and tell them you're a member of the SGWL. That's it! Go to the Hill Country Bookstore today and flex your discount!



A crisp breeze blew through the street, tossing fallen leaves at a collage-aged girl and her year-older boyfriend who hurried down the vacant alleyway. They passed the near empty stores that were currently inhabited by mainly the workers. The smell of cinnamon wafted through the air, and sounds drifted to them, sounds of talking and laughing and perhaps the faint playing of a guitar. Far ahead, past the last expanse of alley, the square was swimming in color and movement. The semi-annual festivities had begun. Excitement urged the couple on.

A chestnut brown haired mother with head ducked hurried passed them, eagerness prompting behind her walk. She held the hand of a little boy. Anne, the girl, couldn't help smiling as she watched his short legs work twice as fast as his mother's to keep up with her. A vending machine captured the attention of the boy, and he turned his head to keep his big black eyes glued to it, his legs slowing. His mother came to a stop at the extent of his short arm and glanced back to see what had stopped her little boy.

"Mommy," he began to say in his small, piping voice. "Can we-"

"Not now," she replied hastily. "Daddy's coming home; he sent us a letter. We're going to meet him here; don't you want to go see him?"

The candy was forgotten, a trifle in comparison to the return of this man, and the mother whisked her little boy on.

Almost unconsciously, Anne's thoughts swarmed about the mystery of a husband and father come home to his wife and son. Was this man some sort of a hero? Did he deserve a medal of bravery? If anyone saw him would they be able to recognize him for what he was?

The boy and his mother disappeared in the crowd ahead, and Anne hesitated just on the outskirts, eyes flitting across the chaos. Two laughing girls, a blond and a red-head, strolled past, arms linked as they laughed merrily. A middle aged woman with gray streaks in her hair pulling a rolling backpack scurried past going the other direction, a middle school girl following along behind. A girl sat silently on the edge of a bench, completely engrossed in a book that lay open in her lap, and two older women took up the rest as they chattered on to each other.

"Come on, Annie," Bill, her boyfriend, urged, excitement burning in the depths of his eyes. "I'll buy you a cinnamon roll."

She followed along behind as he cleared the path through the crowd, leading them on. Then she spotted the street musician, a tall gangly fellow looking to be in his late twenties with tussled dark brown hair, a narrow face, slim body, and eyes that gazed down at his acoustic guitar with the fondest of looks. He caressed its slim neck, fingers dancing across the strings, sending a beautiful tune through the crowd. Two men accompanied him: one with wheat blond hair, playing a set of drums, keeping a soft low-tempo beat and the second with black hair and a backup guitar that slowly sang the song's melody.

"Wait, Billy," Anne requested, and he instantly turned back to the sound of her soft voice. "My mom always said street musicians were a treasure." Her mom had died when she was very young. But she remembered almost everything her mom had ever told her, or all the things that mattered anyway. "Let's listen for a minute."

It was a Christian song that she used to hear often on the radio, and as she listened, she faintly hummed along, the words flowing through her mind. "What more proof does it take? That he died for your sake-This is the meaning, Truth of a Father's love." She closed her eyes as the long-missed, indescribable feeling of a savior's perfect love grew close in her. It flowed into her heart, the complete fullness that took up every hole pierced into an aching heart, swelling like a beautiful flower blossoming with the morning sun's rays to warm its petals, a real and tangible love that filled every lonely gap.

She hadn't felt this way in a very long time.

Opening her eyes, she fished her wallet from her back pocket, searched out a five-dollar bill, and dropped it into the open guitar case laying at his feet. He looked up at her, smiled softly, and nodded his thanks and then turned back to his guitar.

"Here." Bill offered Anne a steaming cinnamon roll with sugar glazing melted on top. She took it, slightly annoyed as the icing coated her fingers making them feel sticky.

"Daddy!" A familiar high-pitched voice caught Anne's attention. She turned to see the little black-eyed boy running towards a man in a faded olive and beige uniform and dusty boots. His dark chair was cropped close to his head, and a scar ran across his cheek. He knelt and spread his arms as the little boy flew into his embrace.

The mother followed along not too far behind her son, and the man rose to meet her. She hugged him tightly, and a

tear trickled down her cheek. Anne watched, a lump rising in her throat as she watched the reunion. So, he *was* a hero. She sent a silent prayer to God, thanking him for all the men and women that sacrificed a part of their life to leave their families and go out to defend the country, asking him to comfort the loved ones left behind in their absence, letting him know how lucky and thankful she was that it wasn't her dad who left for such dangerous work.

Slipping her hand into Bill's, she looked up, meeting his blue-eyed gaze. Then they turned away and ventured through the stalls, not finding much interest in anything in particular. It was not long before they headed out back of the square, back down the deserted streets as the breeze blew some stray leaves chasing each other on in a twirling dance across their path.



"Words ought to be a little wild for they are the assaults of thought on the unthinking."

Answer on page 10

I began my journey to the Georgetown Square at five o'clock, realizing later that the crowds didn't arrive until after six. My first stop was the Hill Country Bookstore. The new owner, Preston Stone, and his young worker greeted me, knowing I would arrive since I had called both their store and Book Pride earlier in the day.

I carried about 25 SGWL “Find Your Voice” brochures, three or four deep-dish paper plates, and three boxes of caramel-wrapped candies. After setting these up on the counter, I gave my pitch on how our goal is to draw more attention and recognition to our writers' league in Georgetown.

Preston agreed completely with our aim and offered his assistance saying that a discount would be given on all purchases in the store to SGWL members. He also encourages book signings and entertainment from the league at any time.

June and Bob Venable came in at this point and we left for Book Pride with the intention of coming back to the Hill Country Book Store later.

The size of Book Pride amazed me. I remember when Jane Goetz, the previous owner, had “Dog-Eared Books” and allowed me to have one of my first book signings in her small, out-of-the-way store on Austin Avenue. The new owners moved the store to the Square and renamed it “Book Pride.”

The woman I talked to, while setting up my candy and brochure display is charming. She also will spread the word about our League, but doesn't allow book signings. Hmmmm, too bad. I sold four books when Jane owned it!

I met several people while in the store and one young lady greeted me with a smile, saying she loved to write and would attend our meetings. She tucked the brochure in her purse as I began to leave and yelled out, “The first Thursday of the month?” I nodded “yes.”

June and Bob left and I canvassed the square, handing

out brochures and talking to people as they arrived. Some were interested, some not, but all friendly. One man said “I know it's a friendly league because you're so friendly.” I liked that!

Now, it's after six and the fun begins. Hill Country Book Store and Book Pride set out snacks and wine, the band begins to set up near the courthouse, people are arriving in droves and hilarious laughter and loud music flow from “The Winery.” Mardi Gras is in full bloom with costumes of all generations. What excitement!

Now, it's seven o'clock and I realize, sitting in a chair at the Hill Country Book Store, that I am running out of brochures. People are filtering in the store in large numbers, laughing and snacking on food while Preston pours wine.

Shortly before I left, I approached a couple with my last brochure. He was a writer and as we talked the Sun photographer came up and asked if she could take our pictures. We gathered together and it was an unexpected pleasure to see my picture in the local newspaper a few days later.

I can't promise that I will be at First Friday every month, but I'll certainly encourage SGWL members to put it on their calendars for a full evening of friendly mingling with fellow residents on the Square.

Put a name tag on. Be sure you have “San Gabriel Writers' League—Author” on it.

Carry several SGWL brochures with you—they make greeting people easier. You can get these from Sam Holland or pick up a bunch at the Visitor's Center where they are always on display.

You WILL be amazed at how many people who attend are writers . . . Tell them about us !!!

Foxy by Jane Thompson

Several years ago, I moved into a new apartment. It was one of those deals where friends helped me, and it took hours and many trips to get everything from the old place to the new. I was exhausted, and before I could get settled, I came down with one of those three-day migraines that leave you unable to do anything but lie very quietly in bed and moan.

The cat wouldn't eat and I couldn't get up and cajole him, so I actually had one of my old neighbors, who was friends with him, come over and do it. I mean, I was helpless. The second night, my phone rang about one a.m., and a man's rough voice said, “You want some coke?” I answered back something brilliant, like “Whut?” and he hung up.

After I recovered, I went back to work, then spent the hours after work unpacking and I took the time to send everyone I knew a note telling them my new address and phone number. I really congratulated myself on my efficiency.

But, I continued getting late-night, weird phone calls. Men wanting to know if I wanted company, if I was working. I never was too sharp, having been awakened out of a dead sleep, and couldn't think to ask them any questions about why they were calling me.

Finally, after about a week of this, I turned down another guy who wanted my company, and he said, “Well, this is the Foxy Dream Girls Escort Service, isn't it?”

I replied, emphatically, that it was not.

He told me, furious, “You are on page 259 of the Dallas phone book, and that's the number I called!”

I explained as well as I could that there had been some kind of mistake. After he hung up, I made a run for the telephone book and discovered that yes, indeed, the Foxy Dream Girls Escort Service was listed with my new telephone number.

I had learned a few new things; that men who call escort service seldom do before 1 a.m., that they are usually drunk when they do so, and that the telephone company is not the slightest bit sympathetic when they make a grievous mistake like this. They wouldn't even pay my postage for all the notes I had to send out with my new telephone number.



13th Annual Mystery Month

Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter is pleased to announce the upcoming schedule for the Thirteenth Annual 2011 Texas Mystery Month in May. The purpose of Texas Mystery Month is to spotlight Texas Mystery Authors.

Texas Mystery Month events include panel discussions, book signings, author presentations and more. Austin, Houston, Lubbock, Marble Falls, Round Rock and San Antonio are currently planning events to spotlight Texas Mystery Authors with activities in May, Texas Mystery Month.

2011 Texas Mystery Month events currently scheduled include:

February 15-May 15 - Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Project, Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter and the Barbara Burnett Smith Mentoring Authors Foundation - Contact Sarah Ann Robertson <hotxsinc@yahoo.com>

May 5, Thursday, 1:00 p.m., Texas Mystery Author Dave Ciambone. Marble Falls Library Mystery Book Club, Mary Jackson, Dir. <mjackson@burnetcountrylibrary.org>, 1-830-693-3023, 101 Main St., Marble Falls, TX, 78654. Event Contact: B. Ochandarena <arenas@nctv.com> .

May 6, Friday, 4:00 p.m. Texas Mystery Author George Arnold. Barnes & Noble-Baybrook 1-281-554-8224, 1029 West Bay Area Boulevard, Webster, Texas 77598

May 7, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. Texas Mystery Author George Arnold. Barnes & Noble-Baybrook 1-281-554-8224, 1029 West Bay Area Boulevard, Webster, Texas 77598

May 8, Sunday, 11:00 a.m. Texas Mystery Author George Arnold. Barnes & Noble-Baybrook 1-281-554-8224, 1029 West Bay Area Boulevard, Webster, Texas 77598

May 14, Saturday, 3:00 p.m., Robin Allen book launch "If You Can't Stand the Heat".

Book People, Scott Montgomery, Crime Fiction Coordinator <wildremuda@yahoo.com> 1-512-472-4288, 603 N.

Lamar, Austin TX 78703.

May 14, Saturday, 4:00 p.m. Texas Mystery Author Panel: George Arnold, Ken Squier, Murder by the Book, 1-888-4-AGATHA, 2342 Bissonnet Street Houston, Texas 77005. Event Contact: Julie Wray Herman <JulieWrayH@yahoo.com>

May 15, Sunday, 2:00-5:00 p.m. - Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event with presentation of the Sage Award, and the 2011 Mentor Authors and Aspiring Writers. Barnes & Noble-Westlake. Bob Kissinger, Mgr., crm2757@bn.com, 1-512-328-3155, 701 Capital of Texas Hwy S. #P860, Austin TX 78746. Event Contact: Sarah Ann Robertson hotxsinc@yahoo.com

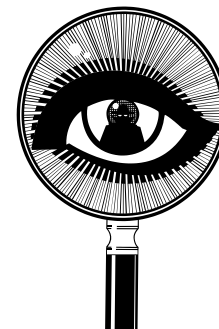
May 20, Friday, 7:00 p.m.- Texas Mystery Writers' Forum: George Arnold, Ken Squier. Barnes & Noble-San Pedro Crossing, Debra Castanon, Community Relations Mgr. <crm2802@bn.com 1-210-342-2386, 321 NW Loop 410 #104, San Antonio TX 78216.

May 21, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. Texas Mystery Author George Arnold Berkman Books, 611 South Washington Street, Fredericksburg, Texas

May 27, Friday, 10:00. Texas Mystery Author: George Arnold. The Book Spot, Danny Woodfill, Mgr. <info@JuliesBookSpot.com> 1-512-278-5411, 1205 Round Rock Ave. Round Rock TX 78681.

May 28, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. Texas Mystery Author: George Arnold. The Book Spot, Danny Woodfill, Mgr. <info@JuliesBookSpot.com> 1-512-278-5411, 1205 Round Rock Ave. Round Rock TX 78681.

TBA - Texas Mystery Authors presentation. Barnes & Noble-Northwoods, Jacki Dyess, Community Relations Mgr. <crm2927@bn.com> 1-210-490-0937, 18030 Hwy 281N Ste. 140, San Antonio TX 78232.



Creating Games People Don't Play from the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

By Randy Ingermanson

Fiction is about characters in conflict. In this column, I've talked about many different kinds of conflict over the years, but there's one kind that I don't recall ever discussing.

It's the conflict that comes when one character changes the rules of the game. Changes them so radically that it's suddenly a completely different game.

To understand this kind of conflict, let's look at an extreme example. Imagine that you challenge your buddy to a match at the tennis courts. Whoever loses has to buy the pizza for dinner.

You show up at the courts with your tennis racket and all your other gear.

Your buddy shows up with a chessboard, sets it up on the sidelines, and sits down behind the white pieces.

He hasn't got a racket. He's not dressed for tennis. He isn't even on the court.

You wait for him to get his act together, but he's paying no attention to you, so finally you serve an ace to an empty court.

Your buddy moves his king's pawn forward.

You serve another ace.

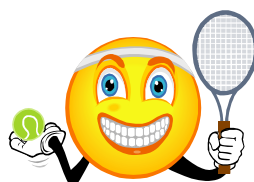
Your buddy moves his queen out to the fifth rank.

You ace him again.

He moves his king-side bishop out.

You miss on your next serve, but you aren't worried, because he still isn't on the court. One more serve, and you'll have him nailed for this game.

He moves his queen down to the seventh rank, takes your king's bishop pawn, shouts, "Checkmate!" and leaps out of his chair, doing a victory dance.



What just happened there? You were winning, weren't you? But he thinks he's winning, because you've been playing different games.

This is an extremely weird kind of conflict. A meta-conflict. A conflict over what the nature of the conflict is supposed to be.

You might think this can never happen in real life. But in fact, it happens all the time. Here's an example that's a little less extreme:

Bossbert walks into Wally's cubicle. "Wally, have you got the report done for the Gooberheimer project?"

Wally blows his nose loudly and tosses the Kleenex at Bossbert. "Wow, I've got the worst cold you ever heard of."

Bossbert leaps back from the germy tissue. "I asked you a yes or no question. That means I need a yes or no answer. Are you planning to give me one or not?"

Wally coughs into his hand, then wipes it on his pants. "I should probably go home, if I didn't have so much work to do."

Bossbert's hands are curling into fists. "Would you like me to fire you?"

Wally puts his hand to his forehead. "I think I've got a fever. Maybe it's the flu."

What's going on here? Why is Bossbert getting madder and madder?

What's going on is that Bossbert is playing one game and Wally is playing another. Bossbert needs information, so he's asking simple yes-or-no questions.

Wally has no intention of giving an answer because he hasn't done his work. Instead of playing Bossbert's game (which he would lose), he plays a different game – "feel sorry for me because I'm sick."

Only an unfeeling brute would fire a worker who has the flu. Bossbert can't win at Wally's game, and Wally refuses to play Bossbert's game. So Bossbert loses.

You can introduce conflict like this in any category. In *Gone With the Wind*, Scarlett meets Rhett Butler in the library and learns that he's been listening to her throw herself unsuccessfully at Ashley Wilkes.

Scarlett is upset and tries to insult Rhett by calling him an eavesdropper.

Rhett takes this as a compliment and happily informs her that he's an experienced eavesdropper.

Scarlett gets more angry and tells Rhett he's no gentleman.

Rhett is unperturbed and agrees with her. He tells her she's no lady, and that's what he likes about her.

Now Scarlett is furious. She tells Rhett that he isn't fit to wipe Ashley's boots.

Rhett thinks this hysterically funny, since Scarlett has just told Ashley she would hate him all her life.

Scarlett and Rhett are playing different games. Scarlett is playing the insult game, because she believes that words have the power to hurt. Rhett is playing

the game of court jester. He accepts every insult with a grin. Scarlett can't win, because Rhett isn't playing her game. Rhett wins simply by refusing to play.

This works even in the most direct of all conflicts – hand to hand combat. Every street fighter knows that the easiest fight to win is the one that's over before your opponent has even begun.

In Lee Child's novel, *ECHO BURNING*, our hero Jack Reacher is lured into a bar by a couple of toughs who are being paid to beat him up. They've even called an ambulance in advance to make sure he won't die if they get too rough.

They make the mistake of telling Reacher what they plan to do – how they beat up another guy once before, how they cut him up so bad, he almost bled out. They're trying to scare him, to weaken his resistance. This is an intimidation game, part of the larger game of provoking a street fight. It would work on most people.

Reacher knows this game and he's not worried. It's been a long time since he lost a fight in a two-on-one battle. So he lets them know he thinks they're full of beans. Matter of fact, he tells them that he'll be happy to fight them right now if they'll step outside with him. He heads toward the exit and they follow.

Reacher now has them playing the game he wants them to play, the game of "We'll start an unfair fight out in the parking lot 30 seconds from now."



But that isn't Reacher's game. His game starts 25 seconds before theirs, the instant he reaches the rack of pool cues. He grabs one, spins around and lays into Billy first, then into Josh, while they're still thinking about what they'll be doing half a minute in the future.

They're unconscious before their game is even due to begin.

Why? Because Reacher refused to play their game. Because he chose to break up the timing of their game.

In most scenes of your novel, your characters are all going to be playing the same game. It might be tennis. It might be office politics. It might be verbal jousting. It might be a fist fight.

It's not **WRONG** to let your people all play by the same rules. That's the way most of life is played. You can have a nice conflict where everybody plays fair.

It's just a whole lot more interesting when one of the characters decides to play a different game – a game the other characters aren't expecting, aren't prepared for, and can't win.

If you want to try taking one of your scenes up a notch, see if you can find a way to get one of your players to change the game. He can either change the rules, change the turf, change the timing, change the definition of winning.

Whatever this rogue character does to change the rules, it needs to massively tilt the game to his advantage.

Try it and see what happens.

What have you got to lose?

Ask the Book Doctor: Font Befuddled

Dear Doc

I am reading *The First Five Pages* by Noah Lukeman, who writes, "Font should be written in black ink, in a 12-point type." He is very emphatic about what editors will and will not read, so everything has to be perfect in presentation.

In one of your workshops a few years ago, you encouraged Courier 12, and I have my novel written that way but would like to change it. My question is whether Courier is still the font publishers want. – Font Befuddled

Dear Befuddled,

Good reading choice, Lukeman's book.

Very few editors still prefer Courier. The old preference was mainly because it makes length easier to estimate. Every character whether an "m" or an "i" takes the same amount of space. However, with computers figuring word count nowadays, that is no longer a factor. Most guidelines I've seen lately list Times and Times New Roman, as preferred fonts. In fact, some no longer accept Courier at all. If the publisher you are targeting doesn't specify a preferred font, I would go with Times or Times New Roman. Besides being bolder print than Courier, and therefore, easier to

read, you get more words per page.

Do follow the publishers' guidelines exactly, even if they make a request that sounds odd. This might be a test to see if you are able to follow directions and will be easy to work with.

Now here's another thing to think about. The above pertains to manuscript submission of course. Print matter you use on the internet is an entirely different matter. For example, web-sites, blogs, etc., I am told the simplest kind of letters [sans serif fonts, like A (Calibri) instead of A (Times)] are preferable for reading on a screen.

Follow the submission guidelines if a preference is given. If not, go ahead with Times or Times New Roman.

Best of luck with your submission. – Joan Hall

Have a question to share in this column? Email me at: jmuHall@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.



10-Minute Fixes to 10 Common Plot Problems

by Elizabeth Sims from www.writersdigest.com . . . Continued

Let's look at 10 common plot problems you can tackle in a flash—and then find out how to do it.

5. I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHOULD COME NEXT.

You're writing something new; perhaps you even have a rough outline. You're galloping along, happy and breathless, and you finally bring a scene or chapter to a satisfying conclusion. Then you get that uh-oh feeling.

10-MINUTE SOLUTION: Have a 10-minute brainstorm.

I actually feel great in this situation: I love to brainstorm, and I know I'm about to have ideas I've never had before.

Flip to a fresh page in your notebook or computer notepad, check the time and give yourself 10 minutes to write down anything and everything that might come next. Record every idea that comes to you, even if it seems ridiculous or awful. Keep going. If you do this with a feeling of open exploration, you will come up with a good idea of what should come next.

I once had a student challenge this technique, saying, "It's all well and good to just vomit out everything you can. But how am I supposed to get from vomit to good writing?"

The answer is a paradox: The more honestly and thoroughly you brainstorm, the sooner your material will sort itself out. The chaff will be obvious—and there will be wheat.

Have confidence that as a writer, you are by nature a bit of a mystic. We take the creative journey others fear to take, and we return with something no one's ever seen before. You can't force it, but when you shift into a place of non-judging receptivity, you'll be amazed at what you get.

Who "said" Answer

John Maynard Keynes, 1st Baron Keynes /'keInz/ *KAYN*-z, 5 June 1883 – 21 April 1946), CB, was a British economist whose ideas have profoundly affected the theory and practice of modern macroeconomics, as well as the economic policies of governments. He greatly refined earlier

work on the causes of business cycles, and advocated the use of fiscal and monetary measures to mitigate the adverse effects of economic recessions and depressions. His ideas are the basis for the school of thought known as Keynesian economics, as well as its various offshoots.

Special Interest Groups

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. **And there is room for one more !!**

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 George-town 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, iwritecozies@gmail.com. Currently, we are closed to new members.

Bard Masters Critique Group The focus of the critique group is historical fiction and fantasy. Meeting Tuesdays, 6:00 PM at the Georgetown Library. Currently open to a new member with a serious work in progress. Contact: Ross Carnes graphicrex@hotmail.com

If you are interested in joining a critique group, contact Joan Upton Hall (jmuhall@aol.com) or Sylvia Dickey Smith (sds@suddenlink.com)

Member websites

Anna M. Bell

Website: <http://www.annamaebell.com>
Author Blog: <http://annbell.wordpress.com/>
Educational Technology Blog: <http://annamaebell.wordpress.com/>

Ross Carnes

<http://webstarts.com/RHCarnesStoryTeller>

David Ciabrone

www.davidciabrone.com

Mary Fenoglio

www.eggsinmypocket.com

Joan Hall:

www.JoanUptonHall.com

Sam Holland:

www.samholland.com

D Alan Johnson

www.dalanjohnson.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://lilliangrey.wordpress.com/>

Sylvia Dickey Smith:

www.sylviadickeysmith.com

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Demystifying Writers' Demons One at a Time by Joan Upton Hall

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©

Quit/ quite/ quiet

- **quit** (verb) (to discontinue something)
"Will you please quit tapping?" (stop)
"I quit!" (resign; desist)

Memory tip: "Quit" rhymes and ends with "it," as in, "Please quit it."

- **quite** (adverb) (extremely; very; certainly)
"I am quite exhausted."
"That's quite true."

Memory tip: *Quite* rhymes with *bite*, and the two words end the same, as in,
"A dog bite gives quite a fright."

- **quiet** (adjective) (silent or near silent)
"Will you please be quiet?"
"She's a quiet, well behaved child."

Memory Tip: "Think of the not-so-quiet growling of a stomach on a diet."

The Gabriel Writer



the
May 5
SGWL meeting
is at the
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between
7th and 8th
gather at 6:30
meeting
at 7:00 p.m.

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