

# The Gabriel Writer

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

February 2012

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## Ann Seaman at the February Meeting

**A brief description of the talk would be that, in both fiction and non-fiction, we collect a lot more information than we can use. But we have to do it, because that's the only way to find the little details that are the storytelling elements – especially in non-fiction. I will also talk about my experiences doing research and interviews.**

Ann Rowe Seaman was born in Austin, Texas in 1946. She began publishing articles in 1973 on a wide variety of topics, starting with the popular music scene in her home town. She has written, edited, and produced materials for magazines and newspapers, and authored TV and film narrations.



Her articles and columns on music, film and television, natural history, international business, anthropology, and other subjects have appeared in publications such as the Los Angeles Times and World Trade Magazine. She has served as Public Relations Director for Austin-Travis County MHMR, editor of campus publications at the University of Southern California, freelance editor of fiction and nonfiction books, and editor of TERRA, the magazine of Los Angeles County's Natural History Museum. Her publications and video productions have won national awards, including ones from such organizations as the American Association of Museums and the Broadcasters' Promotion Association. Her 1999 biography of Jimmy Swaggart won the Texas Institute of Letters' Carr P. Collins Award for Best Nonfiction book. Her biography of Madalyn Murray O'Hair was released in summer 2005. She is currently working on several non-fiction projects. A fourth-generation Texan, she holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree from the University of Southern California. She is married with four grown children and divides her time between Austin and Los Angeles.

### Selected Works

True Crime Biography America's Most Hated Woman: *The Life and Gruesome Death of Madalyn Murray O'Hair*

"...structured like a movie thriller...well balanced and thoroughly researched biography of a very complex woman." –Secular Nation Biography Swaggart: The Unauthorized Biography Of An American Evangelist

"...remarkable...a mirror on the lurching changes in religion, sex and media in the late 20th century."

--Chicago Tribune



# \$ \$ Dues are due \$ \$

## January 2012 Minutes

The **January 5, 2012** Meeting of the San Gabriel Writers' League was called to order by **President DJ Heinrich** at 7:05 p.m.

**DJ** welcomed attendees and visitors (**Andy B. Cook, Ebby Green, Dianna Davis Forest,** and **Ann Seaman**) and thanked Board Members and Officers who served in 2011 and those who serve in 2012.

The **new Board** consists of:  
Membership/Newsletter: **Carol Menchu**, thirdgate@aol.com;  
PRESIDENT: **DJ Heinrich**, dj@redbaronconcepts.com;  
Program Coordinator: **Sylvia Dickey Smith**, sds@suddenlink.net;  
Publicity/Member-at-Large **Sam Holland**, samholland@austinfoam.com;  
Resident Agent: **Roger Busfield, Jr.**, busfield@suddenlink.net;  
Secretary/Historian: **Janet Kilgore**, janet-kilgore@austi.rr.com;  
Treasurer: **Kayla Marnach**, kjwmtells@austin.rr.com;  
Vice President: **David Ciabrone**, mysterywriter5@msn.com;  
WebMaster: **Jaime Roton**, pug-story@aol.com;  
Writer's Liaison: **Joan Upton Hall**, jmuhall@aol.com

**Minutes** for the November 2011 meeting were accepted as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report** was given by **Kayla Marnach**.

### Welcome New Members:

**Charlene Heinrich**, wife of President **DJ Heinrich**, became a member in her own right. **Laraine Brown** and **Jennifer Jones**.

### Old Business:

**Ann Bell** called for registrants for the **Hill Country Book Festival**.

**Remarks on the SGWL Christmas Party** were mostly positive concerning the venue, food, service, etc. On the whole, the price was deemed appropriate, but ideas for funding attendance for anyone needing assistance will be considered for the next year's party.

**Volunteers for the 2012 Fall Workshop** were requested. Growing

membership was discussed and **DJ** requested ideas for increasing SGWL membership.

### New Business:

Letters received from new members and visitors were discussed and problems were addressed. The Board will consider setting up a Welcoming Committee, and members were encouraged to mix and mingle before and after meetings to make sure visitors and new members feel welcome. The **Secretary** will send a letter of welcome from the Board to new members after each meeting. She will also send a meeting reminder to **Carol Menchu** to be put in the newsletter and to be sent out to members with email. Closed writer groups will now be referred to as "full" and emphasis will be increased on groups in need of members and in forming new groups.

**A questionnaire** was distributed to attendees requesting feedback and suggestions for improvements for SGWL meetings and events.

**Carol Menchu** requested that emails requiring immediate attention be sent to her with "**Open Now**" in the subject line. Regular newsletter submissions do not require special attention.

It was explained to the attendees that we need to collect sales tax when we sell SGWL materials or host authors selling their books. We must make sure authors are collecting sales tax, but we are not liable for remittance of those taxes. However, we can declare, in advance, two events to be "tax free," but a formal proposal must be made. In accordance with this, **Sam Holland** made a motion, and **Carol Menchu** seconded it, that the Georgetown Poppy Fest and the SGWL Fall Workshop be designated as "tax free" events. The motion was called to a vote and passed.

There has been some confusion about payments made to the Georgetown Library for use of their meeting room and the need for renewal of a contract. **Kayla Marnach** and **DJ Heinrich** will address this issue.

Checking account signatures need to be updated to reflect the new Board. **Kayla, DJ, and Janet Kilgore** will address this issue.

It was emphasized that it is the responsibility of the **Program Coordinator** to ascertain AV needs for speakers and contact the Library (Robert or Rachael in Reference 512-930-3551) to make arrangements. Microphones did not function properly during the January meeting, due to battery malfunction. **DJ** will address this issue with the Library.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SUCCESSES:

**Carol Menchu** read poetry at **Ruta Maya** over the holidays. **Chiclet Café** reviewed **Sylvia Dickey Smith**, and her book made **Tops** for 2011. Her son just got a job a Mayo Clinic as Chaplain. **Kayla Marnach** is in the editing stage of the last novel in her trilogy.

**Joan Hall** introduced guest speaker **Cindy Weigand**, author of one book and numerous articles, many about women pilots. She spoke on **Animated Film Production: From Concept to Hollywood Premier!**

**DJ Heinrich** adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janet L. Kilgore, Secretary

## New members:

### Laraine Brown

137 Blazing Star Dr  
Georgetown TX 78633

### Jennifer Jones

P O Box 1327  
Georgetown TX 78627-1327

512-863-3727  
jonesj7@verizon.net

### Charlene Heinrich

1523 Shinnecock Hills  
Georgetown TX 78628  
512-966-9954  
magabear@suddenlink.net

**Joy Nord** has new email address:  
glyndajoyord@yahoo.com



**The 2012 New Year is now well-underway and I hope it is turning out to be all that you anticipated that it would!**

If you were not able to attend the January meeting, we distributed a short questionnaire to the attendees so that they could let us know how we can improve our League. I have included the questions below so that you too can participate by sending your comments by email to any Board Member (see January's Newsletter for Board Member email addresses). Alternatively, you can pick up and fill out a questionnaire at the February meeting. Please don't pass up the opportunity to not only tell us *how* we are doing, but also what you think we *should* be doing.

Thank you for taking a brief few minutes to share your thoughts about how your League's Membership Meetings, programs, and activities might be improved during the coming year.

1. What do you feel we are **doing right** and should remain in place?
2. What do you feel **should be deleted** from our Meetings, programs, or activities?
3. What **should be added** to our Meetings, programs, or activities?
4. What **speaker topics** are most important to you or you wish to see added in future Meetings?
5. What types of **instructional programs** (outside of the monthly Membership Meetings) would you support/attend?
6. What **community outreach** programs/activities do you feel are beneficial or should be added?
7. What suggestions do you have about how the League can **increase membership**?
8. What are your suggestions regarding how we

can make new members, returning members, and guests (as well as current members) feel **welcome and involved**?

9. How would you improve the SGWL **Newsletter** and/or **Website**?

**The following is a flavor of the responses (by question) that we have received so far:**

1. Keep up the consistent meetings with good speakers. Overall praise for Newsletter & Website.
2. Speaker presentations should remain appropriate, crisp, and informative.
3. Provide presentations that offer writing mechanics. Enhance League anthology, contest, & festival participation.
4. Seek more speakers with tips on editing/publishing/marketing, writing dialogue, and getting started as a writer.
5. Important instructional programs include general writing, editing, and promotion skills.
6. League should continue participation in Red Poppy Days & writing contests. Reach out to literary students.
7. Increase membership by greater exposure in local newspapers and magazines. Expand outreach to include Sun City and local educational institutions.
8. Welcome members (new and existing) by enhancing interaction experience prior to meetings (greeters at door, introductions/recognition, and more comfortable atmosphere).
9. Newsletter is well-received. Ensure Website is up-to-date.

**Thanks again** for providing us with your thoughts and suggestions. The San Gabriel Writers' League is only as good as all of us make it to be as a group. **Participate, learn/benefit, contribute, and recruit!**

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## Dues are due for 2012

**Thanks to all of you who have already paid your 2012 dues — to the others . . .**

It is that time again.

**\$25.00** for one person

**\$35.00** for family.

Payable in a variety of ways:

**At the February meeting by Cash or Check**

**A check in the mail to**

SGWL  
181 Young Ranch Rd  
Georgetown Tx 78633

**By PayPal** via [www.sgw.org](http://www.sgw.org) (with an email to [thirdgate@aol.com](mailto:thirdgate@aol.com) to tell me you done it.

**Members who do not pay their dues by April 1, 2012 will be removed from all email and newsletter lists.**

**The dues you pay help SGWL give member discounts for workshops and other special events; participate in Red Poppy Days; pay stipends to special speakers and many other things. So . . .**

**Pay your Dues**

**Attend the meetings**

**Participate in the President's questionnaire above**

**Be MORE than just a name on the list**

In a small mountain village just outside Uji, Japan, there is a little wishing well. It sits in a garden clearing, near a footbridge, and only a few steps from a walking path. The well's damp stones ring around a pool where resident frogs can turn a full circle and trust there will always be a familiar rock looking back at them. The rocks are so familiar, in fact, there is really no reason to look at them and the frogs pay them little mind.

One might think such a small place would become cramped and dull but this is a special well where villagers pray and make wishes, filling it with an abundance of blessings. Speaking or rubbing a wish into a coin before tossing it into the well grants the same wish to human and frog alike. Thus, frogs want for nothing within their little paradise. The fresh water that feeds the well not only provides a lush place for them to swim and raise their families, it teems with minnows and attracts a variety of thirsty insects upon which they feed. The frogs proudly tend to the upkeep of their round little village. Some arrange coins into hills and terraces, others collect soil from the well bottom to create cozy damp little surface dwellings, while still others craft bonsai, Ikebana, and beautiful gardens where they can enjoy themselves and reflect on their wonderful lives.

And that's just what one little frog named Ayumu was doing the day a coin smashed into a ledge on which he was working.

Ayumu had just finished shoring up his coin-ledge when the new coin disturbed his work. He hopped over to survey the damage. Spying the newest coin, Ayumu picked it up and held it in his mouth while he repaired the ledge. He noticed it had a remarkable taste, which was odd because up until this point all the coins pretty much looked and tasted the same. Ayumu took it out of his mouth and inspected it. The coin looked much like any of the others. He tasted it again. It tingled slightly on his tongue. There was definitely something different about this coin. Unable to see anything out of the ordinary, Ayumu shrugged his little froggy shoulders and added it to his newly repaired coin-ledge.

Satisfied with his work, he wiped his brow and looked up from the ledge expecting to take in the tranquility that was his village. He saw all the beauty that made his home but was surprised by how dark and barren the stone wall facing him from across the well was. He looked left then right. Those sections of wall too stood in contrast to the bright and vibrant areas within the well. Ayumu felt an uneasiness in his stomach. He closed his eyes and turned to face the wall behind him. When he opened his eyes, the wall was there as it had always been but now it seemed larger and somewhat menacing. This was all too much for little Ayumu. He closed his eyes again, this time shaking his head and burying his face in his hands. Even with his eyes closed, he could almost feel the rocks reaching out to touch him. That night as Ayumu lay in bed, he dreamt his bed and covers had turned into rocks. Their weight was heavy and he struggled to rouse. To protect himself, he shielded his head with his mushroom pillow only to discover that it too had become stone. The bed of rocks surrounded him and squeezed in until there was only enough room to breathe. The rocks obscured his vision but there were

small cracks between them. When he tried to peer through, the cracks began to widen and the stones fell away.

Suddenly, he found himself awake sitting on his bed, with his leaf quilt covers pooled around him. Ayumu got up and hopped outside his house. He cautiously looked at the wall and followed it with his eyes until it ended and the sky began. There in the night sky of the well a boshi went darting across. Ayumu watched and braced himself, listening for the comet to crash into the sky wall that extended upward from the well. When nothing happened Ayumu surmised the sky must be a bigger circle than he had known his whole life. Contemplating further he wondered if there could be another side to the wall. It only made sense that there would be an Out side. Why had he never thought of it before? And, what could there be on the Out side? Ayumu aimed to find out. No longer afraid but filled with a sense of adventure he returned to bed so he could rest and plan the journey ahead.

\* \* \*

The next morning Ayumu gathered some food and collected water in a snail shell. After sealing the shell with a pebble, he placed his food and water in a knapsack and tied it to his waist. He closed up his house and set off for the southern portion of the well where he had worked the day before. Along the way, he told his friends about his plans. None shared his desire to climb the wall but they wished him well and encouraged him anyway. After swimming and hopping as far as he could, he came face to face with one of the stones of which he had only recently become so keenly aware. Ayumu eyed the stone. It was dark grey and rough with green moss peeking from between it and the stone next to it. He reached for the top edge of it and



started to hoist himself up. Not accounting for the moss, Ayumu lost his footing, slipped and fell. Undaunted he tried again. Paying close attention to the nooks and crannies between the stones he was able to see and feel for the best places to grip. And so he began to climb.

After climbing for a while, Ayumu saw a stone jutting out and thought it would be a good place to stop for a snack and a little rest. Not wanting to risk dislodging the pebble in his water shell, he removed the shell from his knapsack, set it on the ledge, and began to maneuver himself up when he felt the knapsack coming loose. In an attempt to secure it he lost his foothold and tumbled back down to the bottom of the well. With a loud kerklinking of coins, Ayumu landed on the ledge he had built. This startled many of the Well Frogs and they rushed to his aid.

They found him resetting the ledge once again and chipped in. The small ledge was rebuilt in no time. Someone handed him his sack and he thanked them all for their help. He decided to eat his meal sitting there at the bottom of the well and re-evaluate his climb.

Refueled and no longer weighed down by his pack he decided to embark on his quest again. This time he made it onto the stone ledge without any problems. The water shell was sitting there waiting for him. Ayumu removed the pebble and drank. It was some of the best tasting water he'd had in a long time.

## Continued

Ayumu climbed on. Closer and closer he came to the top but he soon tired and paused on another ledge for a rest. He could see the entire bottom of the well from this height. It was beautiful but he was surprised by the notion that the world he knew was actually kind of small. Ayumu thought he'd croak down to his friends and describe what he could see but he was too far up for them to hear him. He put both of his hands to his mouth and croaked as loud as he could. He managed to get some of their attention and they gathered to hear what he had to say. In his excitement, Ayumu lost his footing again and tumbled back down to the bottom of the well. His friends were able to cushion his fall by pushing a large toadstool in his path.

Discouraged and embarrassed, Ayumu thanked his friends for their quick thinking. They all remarked how impressed they were that he had gotten as far as he did. They clamored to know what he could see from that height, confessing they would probably never make the same journey. Their words went a long way toward making him feel better, but Ayumu wasn't sure if he had what it took to climb the wall again. Just when he was about to excuse himself and head back to his little house, Shigeo hopped forward from the crowd. Shigeo was the oldest and wisest of the Well Frogs. He had silently watched the day's goings-on and could now sense Ayumu wanting to quit. Anticipating Shigeo wishing to speak, all the other frogs formed a silent circle around the old frog and the young adventurer.

"Ayumu, what is it that has you on a quest to climb our wall?"

"I wanted to know where Night and Day go as they take turns looking into our village." Hearing this, some of the other frogs looked up at the sky and, maybe for the first time as well, began to wonder if the sky could really be bigger than the piece they saw above them. "Do you not wonder where the stars travel after they pass overhead or where they rest when it's day?"

"For me it is enough to know that they follow each other and will do so again every day that I am."

"Maybe that could be enough for me too."

Shigeo stopped the young frog. "Ayumu, this is my truth. You mentioned how small our village looked to you. That was not just your perspective; it is now your perception. You have outgrown this well and you owe it to yourself to find your own truths." Shigeo hopped closer to Ayumu and placed a hand upon his shoulder. "What are you waiting for? We all believe in you and we're all here if you need us." Ayumu respectfully looked into the wise frog's eyes and quickly looked away hoping Shigeo did not recognize the defeat he was trying to conceal. "What are you afraid of?" Shigeo asked tenderly.

"I have fallen three times and I'm afraid to try again. I'm afraid I'll never get to the top of the wall. If I stop now I can at least still have my dream."

"If you stop now, you will never get over the wall and your dream will turn hollow. That will become your truth. There is an old saying, 'Fall down seven, get up eight.' You simply keep getting up until you stop falling."

Ayumu knew the old frog spoke the truth and looked around at all his friends who had not once left his side. He took a deep breath, reached up on his shoulder and squeezed Shigeo's hand. With that, he got up and hopped back over to the wall. Ayumu had become quite adept to all the nooks and crannies and making it to the ledge where his water shell lay didn't take near as much time as it had before. He drank the last of the water and nibbled on some moss that grew on the rocks. It was moist and nutritious. Ayumu was pleased to see it grew to the top of the well and calculated it would sustain him on the rest of his climb. When he reached the second ledge, he did not stop. Onward he climbed.

Climbing higher, Ayumu encountered sounds and smells he had never encountered before. These things excited him and did as much to sustain him as the moss or the support of his friends. The closer Ayumu got to the top, the wider the ring of sky grew until he was finally able to pull himself up and out of the well. Sitting on the edge of the well Ayumu was amazed to see how big the sky was and felt silly for ever imagining that Day and Night stood just outside taking turns peering in on his little village. To be sure though, he gave a quick glance around the base of the well to confirm Night wasn't resting down there while Day hovered in

the sky. Satisfied, Ayumu studied the rest of the world on the Out side. Random coins lay scattered along the well's lip. Flowering trees edged a walking path leading to a bridge where he could hear water flowing. A gentle breeze carried the fragrances he had noticed toward the end of his climb. It came from a beautiful garden filled with plants and flowers he'd never seen before. The sounds of birdsong, once muffled and echoed, were now clear and melodic. The Out side was as beautiful as the In side and it was vast and seemed to go on forever.

Just then, a dragonfly flew overhead catching Ayumu's attention. It was heading Northeast, a lucky direction, so he decided to follow it. Besides, he was hungry again. He turned once more to look back down in the well. He could see his house, all his friends, and Shigeo. The well was not as deep now that the wall had been conquered. Ayumu looked at the village and the frogs he had known his whole life. Then he looked out over the new village he was yet to discover.

Ayumu hopped over to one of the coins and placed a palm upon it. Closing his eyes, he prayed to always know the excitement of discovery, and also the familiarity of home. Ayumu pushed the coin into the well. And with that, he waved farewell to his friends and jumped off into his new adventure.

The End



*More delightful, beautiful stories like this in  
Fables for Japan Volume 2  
now on sale at*

<http://www.fables4japan.com/p/buy-fables-for-japan.html>

**It's rut season here** and the does in heat shoot back and forth in front of my office window like greased bars of soap, while right behind, head lowered and sniffing, comes a big buck, his eyes full of business.

Not much courtship. No flowers, music, or chocolates. The rest of the year the grown bucks could care less about the does, who take that as a justification to rule the groups in matriarchies—all except for this time of year (actually, there are two short rut seasons, with a space in between for resting or a halftime show).

Some deer get hurt by running fast on grass only to find themselves suddenly running on asphalt. They limp on hurt hooves for a few days, and my place seems to be a designated Red Cross center. One not entirely respected by the bucks, who haven't heard about the Geneva Convention.

Sometimes the scenario shifts, as it just did, when an even bigger buck comes on the scene, and heading the list on his agenda is fight first and make love later. The smaller



buck seems to catch on and has to step lively, so now he's on the lam, shooting past my window at about the same pace the does used earlier. A twisted sense of fairness somewhere. It's a real merry-go-round out there.

I suspect they will all relax a bit when the curtain drops on this whole series of events and life gets back to so-called normal for them all. In the meantime, I get to feed and nurse my herd and even the biggest of the visiting bucks seem to understand I'm the guy with the endless bucket of food and not to be prodded with antlers. My regular pal Spikey has been missing in action for a spell, which is understandable since his spindly bent knitting needle antlers are peashooters against cannons in this contest. I haven't found his foxhole in my hikes yet, but I expect he'll come sheepishly back to my place as he did last year with half of one antler missing and an appetite fueled by long not entirely dignified absence. Ah, it's always tough to watch the kids grow up.

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## I Prefer "Member at Medium" by Sam Holland

In preparation for my outgoing presidential address (now a full three months late) I've been reading the Gettysburg Address and other writing of Abraham Lincoln. It's fair to say that he was one of the greatest speechwriters of all time. What follows will not remind you of the Gettysburg Address, but there are words, just like the Gettysburg Address, and those words are put into deliberate order, just like the Gettysburg Address. So in that way I guess you could say it's exactly like the Gettysburg Address, except the words aren't as well chosen and the order is a little sloppy. But you didn't elect Abraham Lincoln; you elected me (twice) so I guess the jokes on you (twice). Next time elect someone with a better grasp of grammar. Or a top hat. Top hats are cool and give the illusion of competence.

After two years of standing at the bow of the good ship SGWL, I now join the ranks of president's past. Unlike the Ghost of Christmas past, I do not have two small children in my robe, but I do share his propensity for reflection.

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...

I enjoyed my time as the Big Kahuna. We made some good strides and did some positive things, but I seem to remember what didn't get accomplished instead of what did. What I'll miss most is the blind obedience and devotion my flock, who pledged their lives to me and would do my bidding at a moment's notice. Wait, what's that? You were humoring me all along? Betrayers! I cast you out of the kingdom with my Mind-Blink!

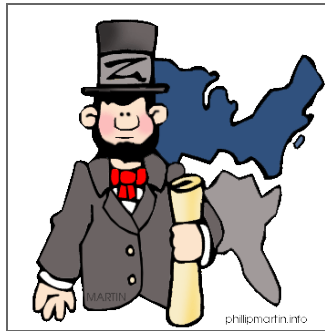
I suppose the highlight of my tenure was the Red Poppy Festival. It got the SGWL into the community, introducing us to hundreds of people. I'm also extremely proud of the publication of *Flashes of Fear*; not just because of the great book, but because of the energy and excitement

that filled the League. I think my biggest regret (other than not getting a top hat) is getting oh-so-close to resurrecting the playwriting event Madcap Classics but missing the mark mere yards from the finish line. But I see it as hope delayed and not hope abandoned.

I imagine the thing I'll be remembered for the most is the *Win the Prezident's Stuff* contest at the monthly meetings. Over a dozen books found their way into the loving (although sometimes unwilling) embrace of our members. Not sure what it says about my reign that my most successful program was giving away used books, but I'll leave that one for the historians. As I slip into the velvet robe reserved for the outgoing president, I puzzle at the title that I've been given: Member at Large. It's no secret that I'm a big fellah, but my fragile self esteem rebels at the 'Large' tag. I much prefer Member at Medium (I'd have gone with Member at Small, but really, have you seen me? It would be stretching credibility). Not only does it shed the 'Large' it adds a little mystery to the position. Is it 'medium' like size medium or is it 'medium' like he can channel spirits from the great beyond? I'm not telling, but your Great Uncle Murray says hello and the savings bonds are under the floorboard in his bedroom.

To all those who served and assisted me and the League these last two years, thank you. I'd list them all but then I'd have to look through my rolodex (does anybody still use those?) or think real hard and make a list and both of those sound like a lot of work, and work is something presidents do, not Members at Medium. We get to sit back, relax and order our bodyguard to get us drinks with little umbrellas. What's that? I don't get a bodyguard?

Betrayers!



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# Organizing: Vision, Strategy, Tactics

By Randy Ingermanson

Every writer is an entrepreneur, by definition. We're in the business of creating and selling entertainment.

As I see it, when you're in business, you need three distinct kinds of planning skills:

\* Vision – a high level understanding of where you want to go.

\* Strategy – a high level description of how you want to get there.

\* Tactics – a step-by-step description of how to get there.

As an example, say you wanted to go traveling "somewhere." That is far too vague to be useful. Somewhere isn't really anywhere. Real planning is concrete, not abstract.

Your Vision, Strategic Plan, and Tactical Plan will be progressively more concrete and detailed. This is what they might look like:

\* Vision: I want to visit New York City.

\* Strategy: I'm going to fly (not go by car, train, or moped) and stay at the XYZ Hotel, see the ABC play on Broadway, visit Ground Zero and the Empire State Building, and play chess with Donald Trump.

\* Tactics: Now here is a ten-step plan to get my airline tickets, reserve a room at XYZ, learn the subway system so I can get where I want to go, buy tickets for the ABC play, and persuade the Donald to let me demolish him at chess... (Fill in with detailed action items.)

Vision, Strategy, and Tactics will come into play in at least two ways for you:

\* Planning your career

\* Writing each book

Which is most important to you as a writer? Vision? Strategy? Tactics?

I believe they're all critical. If you don't do a good job in all three, then you aren't going to do well as a writer.

The problem is that very few people are good at Vision AND Strategy AND Tactics.

I'm not good at "the vision thing." It takes me a long time to figure out what I actually want to do in life. But I'm very good at strategic thinking, and I'm exceptional in tactics.

At various times in my life, I've filled in my "Vision gap," either by working with people who are better at the Vision thing than I am or by intentionally writing down my long-term Vision for my life.

What about you? Which are you best at? Which are you worst at?

In the next three months, I'm going to look at each of these in a bit more detail.

Next month, we'll begin with Vision and how it applies to both your writing career and to each book you write. Most importantly, I'll give you some ideas on how to improve your Vision.

In the two months after, we'll do the same with Strategy and then with Tactics.

Stay tuned!

Award-winning novelist Randy Ingermanson, "the Snowflake Guy," publishes the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, with more than 29,000 readers, every month. If you want to learn the craft and marketing of fiction, AND make your writing more valuable to editors, AND have FUN doing it, visit <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>.

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## Upcoming Meetings

March	Mike Cox on the Texas Rangers
April	Open Microphone at Cianfranni's — hopefully
May	Open
June	Mike Kearby on westerns for young adults
July	Ginger Mynatt on travel writing
August	Linda Lipscomb on writing children's books
September	Workshop
October	Open
November	Louis Fairchild on writing oral histories
December	Party

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## Read Between the Letters

by Kayla J. W. Marnach

January is the month of new beginnings. I'm sure you, like most of us, have committed to write more but have you made a plan to accomplish it? Maybe you are at the exciting step of wanting to submit more in 2012. It all seems like a great idea, but how are you going to do it? What steps will you put into place, what goals have you set or is it merely a dream?

**You have to decide.**

**We have the answers within the league. It's no secret.**

"Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here before God and these witnesses..."

Despite the cool temperature, beads of sweat dotted Chip Stone's forehead. His suit coat, too tight for his broad shoulders, felt as though every stitch would rip if he took a deep breath. His new custom boots pinched his toes. He tugged on his starched collar to let air down his shirt. And his string-tie reminded him of a hangman's noose.

Another unwelcome thought flashed through his mind. How come groom's attire was the same as funeral clothes? Maybe because both were conducted by a minister? Or because the "death do you part" of the wedding vows eventually led to a graveside service? *Damn!*

He glanced down at his bride, Sarah Ann Turnbuckle, standing proud in her pale blue gown. The wildflowers in her bouquet drooped as if her touch had drained the moisture from their stems. He looked over his shoulder at his brothers, Rip and Whip, who served as groomsmen, and sent them a silent plea for help.

They answered with shit-eating grins. *They're enjoying this.*

"Chip," Sarah Ann whispered, "You're suppose to look at me, not them. And stop fidgeting."

Yeah, yeah. So like Sarah Ann, he mused, struck with annoyance. If she acted any bossier, he'd have to call her "ma" instead of "wife." Then realization hit. Here they were in the middle of the most important day of their lives, and Sarah Ann couldn't let up on her never-ending, motherly ways long enough to complete the short ceremony.

A few nights ago, last minute jitters had attacked Chip with a vengeance. An unforeseen alarm shot through him when his sister Nancy revealed that Sarah Ann wanted to marry just to escape her father's overbearing behavior. *Guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.*

He'd argued that Sarah Ann loved him. But now he questioned his love for her. He tried to remember what had lured his interest. Yes, she was an attractive woman, with raven hair and bright green eyes, just like himself. Most folks said they made a handsome match. Yet, as a gambler, Chip's concept of *handsome* was not a female reflection of himself, but rather a foursome known as a Royal Flush. Now that was handsome!

Standing before his family and friends, Chip couldn't picture spending the rest of his life with Sarah Ann. *Why did I let myself get drawn into this game?*

Although Nancy knew the importance of this day, his sister refused to attend what she called 'the crooked deal ceremony.' Chip snickered at Nancy's gambling idiom. His bride elbowed him in the ribs and gave him "the look" that mothers are so fond of.

*Too late.* He could never walk out on Sarah Ann. On the other hand, marriage at this point would be a disaster for them both.

The reverend's harmonious voice interrupted his thoughts. "If anyone sees just cause why this man and this woman should not be joined as . . ."

Unexpectedly the rear double doors flew open, and a gust of cool wind made its way to the altar. *Aha air! A welcome lifesaver.*

All eyes turned to the back of the church.

Chip watched a tall woman reunite the doors with one hand as she held on to a bundle with the other. When she turned, she took the hand of a little girl who had entered with her, and they proceeded down the aisle. He didn't need to take a second look to know the woman was on a mission. Gussied up in a flamboyant red coat with a feathered hat to match, she looked out of place for a wedding guest. In fact, she reminded him of the owner of a gambling dive in Fort Worth he frequently visited.

"Chip Stone!" she called, with a flair southern charm. "You can't marry that woman. I didn't file the paper work for our divorce."

Chip stared wide eyed in disbelief, while at the same time relief swept through him like he'd just been dealt a wild card.

"By the way, you call this a wedding? Why, all of New Orleans showed up for our little espousal six years ago," the woman said. She gave Sarah Ann a big smile, then turned to Chip and kissed him on the cheek. "And you get more handsome every time I see you. How long's it been since we were last together? A year, maybe eighteen months at the most?"

A blanket of silence spread over the church.

"Sugar, will you hold Ruby?" The woman placed the bundle in Chip's arms before he could answer, and whispered, "I want to have a little chat with your bride here." Meanwhile the little girl had let go of the woman's hand and wrapped her arms around his leg. Something about the kid seemed vaguely familiar, but he wasn't sure what.

This little fiasco was getting better by the minute. When he uncovered the baby's head she seemed to nestle closer to him.

Suddenly he realized that sharing parenthood with Sarah Ann was out of the question. Yes, he wanted kids, but not with her.

His rescuer faced Sarah Ann. "Oh, bless your heart, sugar. I know this must be a shock for you," she said, then gave his bride a brief hug. "But Chip is my man and has been for years. Although we've never lived in the same house together, we have consummated our union time after—"

Sarah Ann's father, Mr. Turnbuckle, jumped from his seat, and a stream of colorful profanity followed him to the altar. He looked prepared to fight a prairie fire with spit and guts. "What's the meaning of this Stone? Who is this woman?"

Chip didn't know what to say. He couldn't recollect being "espoused," whatever that meant, to anyone. All the same, she did claim to be his wife. And God only knew what had happened in New Orleans on the gambling circuit when he was younger. Hell! He could've married her during one of his drunken stupors after winning a big pot with a steal. Or maybe he'd won her.

Chip was keenly aware of the congregations shock. They probably thought, the flashy southern belle came from New Orleans's French Quarter and served as the devil's mistress. But to him she was his Florence Nightingale.

Sarah Ann shoved Miss Nightingale aside, and looked up at Chip. "When we became betrothed, you never said



**"One does not write a love story while making love."**

anything about being married before. And now this. . . this floozy comes in here like she owns the place claiming to be your wife. Tell me this is a mistake!"

He'd made plenty of mistakes in his lifetime, but none compared to this. In fact, he didn't even know if this was a mistake. A dream? A nightmare? Hell! He had to say something. "No! I mean yes! What was the question?"

Mr. Turnbuckle moved next to his daughter. "Either you're married or you're not. Which is?"

Unlike most high stake gamblers, Chip hated to draw attention. He stared into Miss Nightingale's blue-green eyes. She seemed amused by his predicament. Oddly enough, this woman was offering him an escape from a marriage that he didn't want. He scanned the faces of the wedding guests, and briefly wondered what they were thinking. How in the world could he get out of this without lying? Especially in a house of worship.

Then the solution struck him. "She's right. I never signed any divorce papers."

Miss Nightingale stepped forward and, as if on cue, the child hugging his leg said, "Daddy, will you come home with us?"

A kaleidoscope of emotions flashed in Sarah Ann's eyes, anger being the most prevalent. Without warning she smacked him across the face with her withered bouquet, petals flying. "I hate you!"

Mr. Turnbuckle shook his cane at Chip. "If I had wanted Sarah Ann to be a sister wife, we would've gone to Utah. This wedding is off!"

As Mr. Turnbuckle and Sarah Ann marched toward the double doors, he stopped and glared back at Chip. "Nobody gets away with humiliating my daughter. You'll be hearing from my lawyer."

All attention focused on Chip. The romantic onlookers sat in awe, curious to learn the details of this mysterious woman. "All right, you heard the man. There isn't going to be a wedding," he said. "Everyone out!"

While the confused guests filed out of the church, Chip turned to his brothers who'd flanked him when Mr. Turnbuckle approached the altar. "And that also means you two. I think I can get to the bottom of this without help."

After Rip closed the doors, Chip handed the infant back to Florence. "Now, you don't need to explain what just happened," he said. "But I do need to know who you are and who's the culprit behind this scene that you just per-

formed?"

She held out her hand. "Lucille Cartwright," she said, "but my family and friends call me Lula."

"Well, at this point I don't think we're neither—family nor friends, I mean."

Without warning, the forgotten child pulled on the hem of his suit. "Uncle Rip said you'd buy me a peppermint stick if I called you daddy," said a voice that he now recognized.

Chip knelt down and removed the child's bonnet.

"Timmy! Who dressed you up like a girl?" he said a little too roughly.

"Mama and Miss Lula did. They said I had an important re..re...repondsuebilly, today."

"An important responsibility?"

Timmy gave him a puzzled look. "That's what I said."

"Nancy and I believe in marriage, but only if it's built on a firm foundation of love and trust," said Florence, or rather Miss Cartwright.

Chip knew he'd never loved Sarah Ann, but that didn't mean anything, especially out west. In fact, most marriages were either prearranged by a third party, like his had been, or out of convenience. Now that his fiancée's father had called off the ceremony, Chip was in a position to pursue someone else, like Florence Nightingale. He definitely wanted to know her better. "My sister's friend, huh? I should have guessed."

"And your brothers too," she added.

Just to clarify the identity of all participating parties, he nodded toward the bundle in Lula's arms. "She yours? or is Ruby actually somebody's Ruben?"

"Oh, she's mine," Lula said. "My niece."

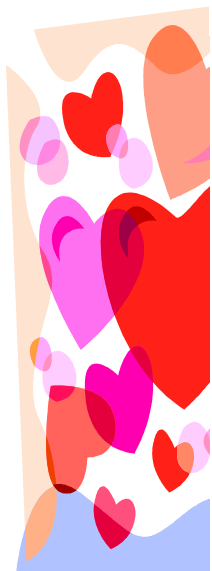
Chip loosened his tie, and then scooped his nephew into his arms. "Well Timmy, I wouldn't want to make a liar out of your Uncle Rip, and I surely don't like disappointing little girls," he teased, while sending Lula a wink. "Let's go buy some candy."

He put his hand on the small of Lula Cartwright's back and guided her to the side door of the church. He still didn't know anything about her, except that she'd appeared when he needed someone to back his play, which wasn't necessarily a gambler's term, but a Texans way of survival.

The End

## Love Is by Tracey Skeen

The flutter within when you scan the crowd and find his face  
The flush on your cheeks at the first "I love you" in a whispered hush  
The song that reminds you of that thing you did that time at that place  
Long distance conversations deep in the night followed by hurried "hellos" in the  
morning light Glances exchanged and eyes that speak "I totally understand"  
Code words and secrets made in private shared in public on the sly  
A touch that quickens the pulse, even though a decade or more now spans  
Wars come and battles rage together side by side and eye to eye  
Though looks have faded and sight is dim and backs are bent  
Solomn vows to God are given, solomn vows to man are kept  
No regrets for memories made or some long forgotten youth mispent  
Sins, imperfections -no more cute yet all the "what if's" remain unwept  
Forgiving, hoping, giving, praying and living together forever  
It's knowing he's not perfect but making the choice to stay anyway  
Even fairy tales have witches and spells and lines not clever  
It's remembering on purpose the happy moments more than the sad  
It's holding one another through good times and not letting go in the bad



Have a question to share in this column? Email me at: [jmuHall@aol.com](mailto: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.



Joan Hall thanks GW readers for their interest in "Ask the Book Doctor." She says, "Because some of you have asked where you can look up previous issues, I have posted a few of them at "books, etc." on website: [www.JoanUptonHall.com](http://www.JoanUptonHall.com). Scroll past the book covers and click "Ask Doc" Q&A's .



## Anyone interested in forming a Poetry SIG should contact

Carol Menchu at  
[thirdgate@aol.com](mailto:thirdgate@aol.com) (be sure to put Re: Poetry SIG

With the following information:  
Best day of month for you to meet with a group  
Best time of day for you to meet with a group  
Pro or con of meeting at Georgetown Public Library  
And anything else you might want to say.

## 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 Georgetown Library. **And there is room for two 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](mailto:jmuHall@aol.com)

### Novel Crafters is Full right now, 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](mailto: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](mailto:iwritecozies@gmail.com). Currently, we are full.

**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](mailto:graphicrex@hotmail.com)

**Tale Spinners**, return with us to the days of yesteryear where we put some novel twists on old stories. Historical fiction's the name, publication's the fame. Join us now with your work in progress. We have an opening for one new member. We meet on alternate Mondays at 2:30 in the Georgetown Library. Contact Randall Best at [R\\_best@yahoo.com](mailto:R_best@yahoo.com)

**If you are interested in joining a critique group**, contact Joan Upton Hall ([jmuHall@aol.com](mailto:jmuHall@aol.com)) or Sylvia Dickey Smith ([sds@suddenlink.com](mailto:sds@suddenlink.com))

## Who "said" Answer ... Colette

**Colette** was the surname of the French novelist and performer **Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette** (28 January 1873 – 3 August 1954). She is best known for her novel *Gigi*, upon which Lerner and Loewe based the stage and film musical comedies of the same title.

Post-war, her writing career bloomed following the publication of *Chéri* (1920).

A controversial figure throughout her life, Colette flaunted her lesbian affairs.

She was a member of the Belgian Royal Academy (1935), president of the Académie Goncourt (1949) (and the first woman to be admitted into it, in 1945), and a

Chevalier (1920) and a Grand Officier (1953) of the Légion d'honneur.

During the German occupation of France during World War II she aided her Jewish friends, including hiding her husband in her attic all through the war. When she died in Paris on 3 August 1954, she was the first woman given a state funeral in France, although she was refused Roman Catholic rites because of her divorces. Colette is interred in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.



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### Helen Nardecchia

<http://www.helennardecchia.wordpress.com> **New!**

### Joy Nord:

[www.GlyndaJoyNord.com](http://www.GlyndaJoyNord.com) **New!**

### Jamie Roton aka Lillian Grey blog

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

### Sylvia Dickey Smith:

[www.sylviadickeysmyth.com](http://www.sylviadickeysmyth.com)

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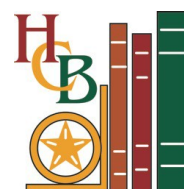
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## Demystifying Writers' Demons One at a Time by Joan Upton Hall

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](mailto: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](http://www.JoanUptonHall.com).

Demystifying Writers' Demons©

### USAGE - A lot/ allot

• **a lot** – informal for "a large amount" or "a great deal," (either of which would be better word choices for more formal usage) as in:

"Thanks a lot for all your help."

"I like peach cobbler a lot."

"A lot of people were at the concert."

• **allot** – to distribute or set aside for a share, as in:

"Mrs. Pendergast allots a certain portion of each paycheck to charity."

"The lieutenant's wife receives an allotment check as a dependent."

"Most of us allot equal portions of our estates to each of our offspring. A king, on the other hand, could not allot equal acreage to all his children without weakening the kingdom. Therefore the first born was allotted the whole thing."

**Memory Tip:** It's either one word with two "l's" – or two words with one "l."



## The Gabriel Writer

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the  
February 2  
SGWL Meeting  
is at the  
Georgetown Public Library  
Gather at 6:30  
Meeting at 7:00  
See you there!!

*The Write place for the writer in you!*

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