

# *Plotting Success*

Website: [www.SarasotaFictionWriters.com](http://www.SarasotaFictionWriters.com)

## **May 2016**

This month's meeting: Tuesday, May 3, 2016

### **General Meeting**

Selby Library

1331 First St., Sarasota

6 pm

Guest Speaker Eric Sheridan Wyatt will speak at the May 3 meeting of the Sarasota Fiction Writers about "Making the Most of Your Writing Efforts." He will discuss opportunities writers have to continue to mature in their craft and how to best utilize various support structures to their creative advantage.

"Writing is a solitary art," Wyatt said. "But the great paradox of creative writing is that we benefit greatly when we have access to the right kinds of support, encouragement and accountability."

"Making the Most of Your Writing Efforts" will focus on the ways writers can find support from others (whether a critique group, creativity coach, book doctor, professor or editor for hire) to help take their writing to the next level.

His short fiction has appeared in Silk Road Review, Saw Palm, Ruminare, New Plains Review, Eunoia Review and The First Line, among others. His collection, "Five Stories," features the first five published stories of his early writing career. His nonfiction writing has been included in various anthologies, including "Letters to Me: Conversations with a Younger Self."

Wyatt teaches fiction, creative nonfiction and literature courses through adult and continuing education programs in Sarasota and Bradenton. He offers creative writing services to private clients through his business, Words Matter Creative Writing Instruction.

For more information, visit [wordsmatteresw.com](http://wordsmatteresw.com)

## **Sarasota Fiction Writers Critique Meeting**

6:30 pm, Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall  
Bring 5 pages of work to read,  
At least ten copies, double-spaced, 12 font.

\*\*\*\*\*

Overdue or New Members: Please mail dues to:

Sarasota Fiction Writers  
Bob Spitzer  
2450 Harbourside Drive, Apt 213  
Longboat Key, FL 34228

## **Current SFW Officers:**

**President:** Jerry Keane — [destiny716@comcast.net](mailto:destiny716@comcast.net)  
**Co-Vice Presidents:** Fred Weiss — [fweiss@binghamton.edu](mailto:fweiss@binghamton.edu)  
**Critique Monitor:** Pat Gray – [patrickgray1@msn.com](mailto:patrickgray1@msn.com)  
**Co-Secretary Publicity:** Grier Ferguson  
**Co-Secretary Newsletter:** Dona Lee Gould – [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com)  
**Treasurer:** Bob Spitzer — [mbspitzer@gmail.com](mailto:mbspitzer@gmail.com)  
**Blogmaster Extraordinaire:** Position open

\* \* \* \* \*

**Index:**

**Page #**

Bits & Pieces

Other Voices, Other Rooms

Conferences

Contests

Of Writing Interest

Events

Publishing Opportunities

Words of Writing Wisdom:

## BITS & PIECES

This is our announcement section of happenings and events in the lives of our members. If you have any info you want to share from the sale of a short story, publication of your book, a book signing, entering a contest, especially winning, or if you have a birth, wedding, or other event in your family you just want to share with your fellow members.... For your announcements, please email me at Dgould497@aol.com or at sfwnewsletter@hotmail.com and I will include your announcement in the letters. If you know of any upcoming contests, workshops, or conferences you plan to attend, or just want to inform the rest of us about one you like, please let me know. I would also like to know about other local writing groups. Sharing information always helps everyone.

**Please consider purchasing books written by your fellow members and support their efforts. Soon it will be your turn! Also, if the books are available on Amazon, write a four or five star review. (If you feel a member's book is lower than a four of five star, please just pass on the review. Amazon considers a three-star and lower as a bad review.)**

**Good Reviews help sell books on Amazon.**

**Member Bohdan O. Szuprowicz** is testing the advertising feature of Amazon with a specific E-Book "How to Spot Spy Camera Watching You". Once some results are available he plans to develop a presentation for the various writers groups which will show the most attractive results. These will be measured by numbers of impressions, clicks and conversions for each combination of keywords representing contents of the E-Book tested. Tests will take one week at a time and will keep as many parameters equal as possible. Our discussions with Amazon marketing people indicate that selection of most representative keywords is the most productive approach.

As announced last month, he is preparing a special offer of free review copies of several of his E-Titles for Mother's Day on May 8. Readers can enter his name into the Amazon Kindle search window and when they click they will see a list of his E-Titles with some prices being \$ 0.00 which will vary every few days. You can also check current free review copies by clicking on the link below:

[http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=node%3D154606011&field-keywords=Szuprowicz](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=node%3D154606011&field-keywords=Szuprowicz)



**Past Speaker Lisa Unger** a New York Times Best-selling author of thirteen novels just won Creative Loafing's 2015 Best of the Bay Award for **BEST LOCAL FICTION WRITER!**



Congratulations, Lisa!

**Please note: Lisa will be our speaker in June. Don't miss it!**

**Member Donn Fleming** announced he currently has two books out and available on Amazon and Kindle. He recently attended a book fair and was pleased with the results.



Great covers, Donn.

**Member Elizabeth Sims** had a few announcements in this month's blog:

"1) The audio book company Audible made an offer on all five of my Lillian Byrd crime novels, and we signed the contract last week. This was in the works for quite a while. Am thrilled that Lillian will have a voice! Was able to approve the narrator; more about her next time. Mega thanks to the team at the Donald Maass Literary Agency for making it happen: Rights Director Katie Shea Boutillier and Agent Cameron McClure.

Not sure when the audio books will be available, though the rumor is several months out from contract signing. Funny thing: I realized I need to reread those books closely and make pronunciation notes for the narrator, so I'm doing that in betwixt and between other stuff. Detroiters have developed idiosyncratic pronunciations for countless streets and places. Ask a Detroiter how to get to Gratiot or Livernois or Ecorse.

2) In honor of this weekend's Oscars (which I don't usually watch, but hey, it's a good excuse to do a promo), *The Actress* – Rita Farmer mystery #1 is free on Amazon Kindle. If you haven't snagged it yet, please do. I hope you enjoy it! Maybe it will whet your appetite for the next two in the series, *The Extra* and *On Location*. (I might note that you don't need a Kindle device to download the book; you can get the free app for just about any device you can use to get connectivity.) And yes, I know I've been promising the fourth in the series forever, but bear with me. I swear I'll get it out there.

3) Meanwhile, I'm nearly finished with final edits on a mainstream standalone that I'll be self-publishing through my imprint Spruce Park Press. *Crimes in a Second Language* was inspired by my Aunt Tracy, who befriended her cleaning woman after discovering that she was not only illiterate, but had barely attended school at all in her native Mexico. My story takes two similar women on a twisty road through education, insight, deception, and (naturally enough) dangerous malfeasance. More soon.

4) It's a little late to report this, but Lillian Byrd #5, *Left Field*, did in fact win a Goldie award at last year's GCLS conference. Very happy about that. And no, I can't make it to the GCLS con this year—too much other travel going on. Hope to have news of other appearances soon.

5) With enormous help from Marcia, my [website](#) got a makeover last fall, and I couldn't be happier with it.

6) My [blog](#) keeps going, as well as articles for [Writer's Digest](#) magazine. Most recent is "Power Tools" in the January issue. Currently I'm writing one for them on "The Little Things" that are easy for writers to overlook but can make a huge difference in the quality of your work.

7) My work will also appear in the forthcoming *Crafting Dynamic Dialogue: The Complete Guide to Speaking, Conversing, Arguing, and Thinking in Fiction* (Writer's Digest Books, June 2016). I was honored to be asked to write an original chapter on internal dialogue for it. Also, they'll be using some material from my book *You've Got a Book in You*."

And....

\*\*\* **Member Dona Lee** will be on her honeymoon (in Italy) in late May/early April. You will receive a June newsletter in Mid May. But it will only show June meeting dates and the information I have at this point.

Dona and Al are partners in a video production company. DNA Productions, LLC produces **book trailers**, music videos, workshops, small business commercials, and even a political parody serial for Youtube. Filming will begin in the new year on *Redneck White House 2016*. If you need a video for your business, your book, your website, or any reason, commercial or personal contact her for more information. (No weddings, the insurance is too pricey ;-)) They have registered drones and can provide 4K and HD aerial videos when desired. You can see DNA Videos on Youtube at Al Musitano or Dona's Redneck White House Channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCphTzpNdHdWoe44C50yPDyw>

Her literary business, Plotting Success (named after our newsletter), is the canopy for many of the numerous projects she manages. Her **Author Services company offers editing, manuscript evaluations, and coaching on all aspects of writing**. Plotting Success also offers publishing services; formatting your manuscript for both e-book and tree book (paper) publication, including custom-created covers, children's picture books, and help with the uploads. After it's published, she offers coaching to help you focus your marketing plan directly to your readers. **All at a price far below subsidy and independent publishers**. And when you are done, you receive ALL royalties directly from Amazon's Createspace and Kindle divisions.

Plotting Success released two environmental thrillers, *The Shoo-Fly Man* and *Chimera*, and is working on the marketing plan for both. *It's Raining Mangoes* is her cookbook filled with Mango recipes for every course. Only available at Village Voices Book Gallery. Village Voices & Eclectic Art Emporium in the Village of the Arts, Bradenton is a Florida Author's Only bookstore. If you have published books, contact Dona Lee to discuss placement in the gallery.



Dona hosts a weekly show on Radioearnetwork.com every Thursday at 2 pm called *Culture Coast*, interviewing musicians and artists of every venue. Check it out online at [www.radioearnetwork.com](http://www.radioearnetwork.com) Please tell your friends and neighbors to listen in and discover what our Culture Coast has to offer. If you know any artists, **authors**, or musicians in the local area who might be interested in talking about their music or art, have them contact [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com) for an interview. Now that the Author's Connection is no longer taking new interviews, please contact her for your new releases and general book interviews.



If you have finished or are close to finishing your manuscript, it would behoove you to buy a copy of *Published! A Complete Guide to Nontraditional Publishing*. The book helps writers at every level decide whether to follow the path to traditional publishing, use a subsidy, or self-publish; and if the decision is subsidy or self-publishing, how to choose the best option for your manuscript. It includes sections on editing, formatting, and marketing as well. Foreword by best-seller Dan Poynter.



For more information on any of the above feel free to contact Dona Lee at [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com) or call 941-748-6865.

We now create live action & computer slide show book trailers. Al Musitano has completed the live action book trailer for the YA novel, *Gothmares*. Check it out on youtube.com, here's the **CORRECTED** link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iklBBPIP\\_8I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iklBBPIP_8I) If you wish to inquire on having your own book trailer, contact Al Musitano at [eye2eye@inbox.com](mailto:eye2eye@inbox.com). He creates both live action trailers, computer graphics to text and music like Andrew's, or green screen scenarios like Dave's.

We are featuring **Member Dave Pierce's** new website: <http://davidmpearce.wix.com/author> Dave is planning on a traditional path to publication so he has information on what he is working on and excerpts from his first book as well as a book trailer.

This is Andrew's Book Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7jGQdjWw5I> Please give it a thumbs up. Ivan helped him create it but has asked Plotting Success to take over any future requests for these trailers. If you want us to create a book trailer, please contact me at [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com). Andrew would appreciate any comments you might have about the trailer. Contact **Andrew Parker** at [andycp1999@yahoo.com](mailto:andycp1999@yahoo.com)



---

---

Want to advertise your published book? Your company? Your services?  
If you would like to place an ad in our newsletter or know someone else who might like to place  
an ad, let me know. The cost is \$5.00 a month or \$50.00 a year for three to five lines of text.

Pictures will be extra.

Send requests to [Dgould497@aol.com](mailto:Dgould497@aol.com) write SFW Ad Query in the subject line

---

---

Paid Advertising (Place your Ad here - \$5.00 a month)



Florida Author's Book Gallery

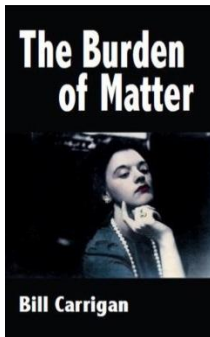


International Online Weekly Radio Show for Creatives

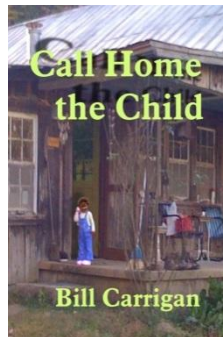


Contact me for help with editing, formatting for self publication, ghost writing, and more.  
Reasonable rates, local references.

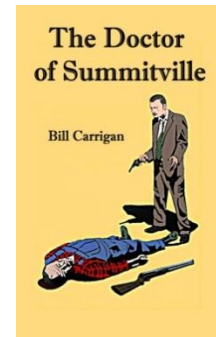
**Read and enjoy the many works of our esteemed Bill Carrigan.** All editions are newly edited and available on Amazon. (Search Books by Bill Carrigan) Read the first three chapters of any book for free. Kindle editions are 2.99 and paperbacks cost around \$10.00. Please review on Amazon after reading.



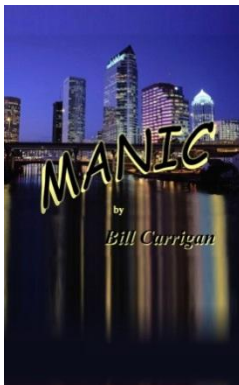
Anatomy of a WWII love affair in Washington D.C.



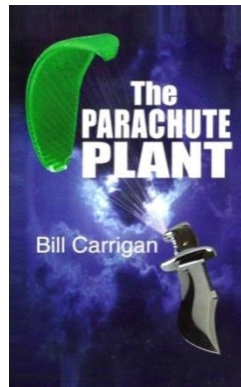
An interracial adoption in 1988 Virginia breaks bad.



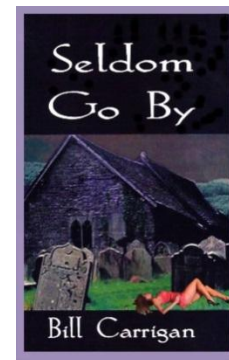
In 1927 a doctor's love affair leads to a death



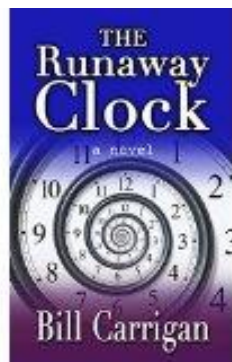
A young Tampa writer joins up with a killer to bring him down.



An Oregon doctor and wife solve gruesome murders.



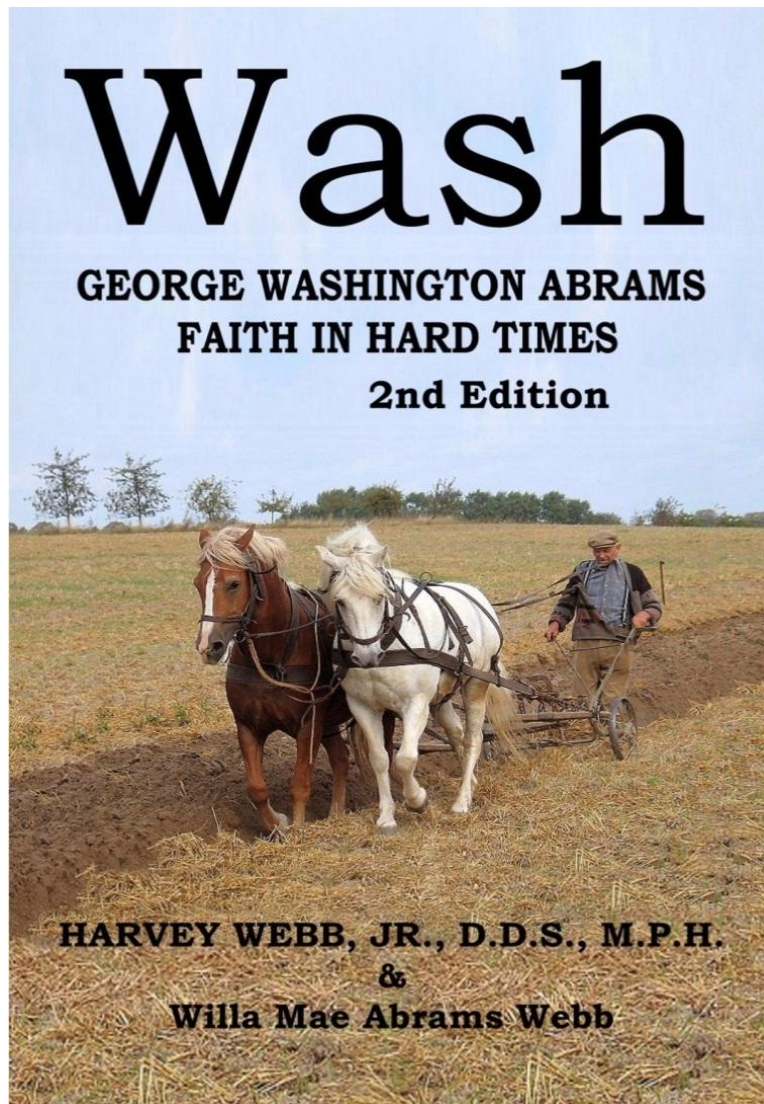
Murders surround Aunt Esterleen at her mansion, Seldom Go By.



A scientist falls victim to premature aging after proving its cause.



A varied palette of tales and a translation of Poe's "Ulalume."



**Wash**, born a slave in Georgia, is Harvey's maternal grandfather. His life story begins around 1854, during slavery, followed by the hardships, trials, and achievements attained through his beliefs and determination to succeed during the Jim Crow era.

Harvey spent over thirty years researching Wash's experiences in the development of this novel describing the challenges facing a black man's efforts to make a livelihood in the rural south of the 1800's.

Wash may be purchased in hard cover, soft cover, and e-book on amazon.com or ordered at book signings, or any bookstore. Currently autographed copies may be obtained at a reduced price from Harvey for the special price of: \$35.00 - Hard cover; \$25.00 - soft cover; Plus \$5.00 for packaging and postage; you may anticipate a two week turnaround. The Second Edition is Available on Amazon for \$24.99 and on Kindle for \$9.99.

## **Other Voices, Other Rooms**

Local area critique groups and meetings  
Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

An online writing blog for Sarasota and Manatee Writers includes all the vast resources available to local writers. The web address has changed. Now access information for writers in the area at [www.floridawritersassociationmanatee.com](http://www.floridawritersassociationmanatee.com). We have past newsletters and many of my workshops on the site.

I hope you check it out and find it useful. If you know of any other resources please feel free to add them or forward the information to me and I will add them.

There is a similar blog for Pinellas and Hillsborough writing events at:  
<http://www.marylouihess.com/enews.html>

### **FICTION WRITER'S FORUM**

#### **Critique group**

6:30 pm Second Thursday of the month May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall

6:30 pm Fourth Thursday of the month, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall

Bring ten to fifteen copies of up to ten pages of your fiction.  
Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Florida Writer's Association Manatee**

**Critique group**, bring six to eight copies of up to ten pages double-spaced.

Fiction and Nonfiction, shorts, articles, novellas, memoirs, & Novels

First & third Thursdays, at 6:00 pm May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

First & Third Saturdays, at 4 pm May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016

All meetings (except April 2<sup>nd</sup>'s) are held at **Village Voices & Eclectic Art Emporium**, 1010  
10<sup>th</sup> Ave West, Bradenton. For more information call Dona Lee at 748-6865 or email to

[Dgould497@aol.com](mailto:Dgould497@aol.com)

## **Florida Writers Association, Sarasota Branch**

### FWA-Sarasota Chapter

Has a new group leader! Please welcome Ernie Ovitz. Thank you for taking the reins from George.

FWA Sarasota meets two evenings each month: on the FIRST and THIRD Wednesday. The training room of the Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department is located at the corner of US41 and Pavonia Road. Pavonia Road is the street that has the flashing emergency lights on US 41 south of Matthews-Currie Ford. Pavonia is about a quarter mile south of Albee Road.

The FIRST meeting of the month is dedicated to subgroups of various genres, will be May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The members of each subgroup bring stories, poems, articles, or novel chapters for reading and critiquing. The SECOND meeting of the month May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 is the general meeting. A few members read to the entire group and then receive comments and suggestions from the group. The rest of the general meeting is dedicated to questions, discussions, progress reports, and general information about writing, publishing and marketing.

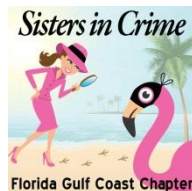
A half hour of socializing is encouraged for attendees arriving at 6:00. The regular meetings begin promptly at 6:30 and last until about 9:00. Come join us on the FIRST and/or THIRD Wednesday

For questions you may email Ernie Ovitz at [egovitz@gmail.com](mailto:egovitz@gmail.com)

~~~~~

## **ALL NEW! Gulf Coast Sisters in Crime**

I do not have this month's dates or speaker information. Please contact Wendy for more information. They are working on a joint venture with Barnes and Noble and the Gulf Gate Library for a Sisters in Crime book signing event. Wendy is putting a lot into this club and I hope all interested Sister in crime writers join up and make this a successful venture.



Great Logo, Sisters! Contact the founder *Wendy Dingwall* for more information. This is only the second Sisters In Crime group formed in Florida. Let's make it rock, ladies.

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

[wendyldwriter@comcast.net](mailto:wendyldwriter@comcast.net)



## **Sarasota Authors Connection :**

**When:** Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup> (6 pm)

**Where:** Fruitville Library, 100 Coburn Rd. (half mile east of I-75 on the corner of Fruitville and Coburn Rd).



### **Guest Speaker**

May Talk Topic: Using Facebook to Increase Book Sales

My book is: 100 Amazing Computer Tips - \$15

Bio: Diane McKeever has been teaching adults for more than 25 years and in that time has taught over 100,000 students in the United States and Europe. Every day she earns her title of “Certified Patient Person” by teaching some of the most complex material in a fun, easy to understand way. Diane is a Certified Social Media professional and has helped many people increase their sales by showcasing their products on Facebook.

## **Authors Connection Radio Show**

The Show is no longer running. After nine years, the show holds the record for the longest running author talk show in the industry. It had a great run and a ton of fabulous guests.

If you have a new release, consider contacting Dona Lee who hosts an author once a month on her show, *Culture Coast*.



## **Manasota Films Group**

May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 6:30 pm

A group of local film/video members meet once a month at the Parkwood Theatre the third Wednesday of every month to network with those who are interested in creating films—shorts, documentaries, series, even feature films as well as viewing each other's completed work. Writers, Actors, Actresses, Film Crew, Extras, Directors, Producers, Set Designers, Make-up pros, Costume designers, and anyone else with a desire to be part of our growing film industry is welcome. To join just go to Facebook and search Manasota Films. Request to join and Mark Troy, the founder, will sign you up. It is **free** and currently there are around 1100 members. Donations are welcome to pay for the use of the theatre. Quite a few members have been winning awards at film festivals and there is a new feature film that is true genius. When you get the chance, don't miss "Catching Junior Tate" produced by Karl & Rhonda Wilson. I suggest this group to all writers. Screenplays and scripts are the future. Internet web videos need content. Youtube, as well as many of the other outlets online, need series, shorts, features, and so much more. Join the wave of the future. Our Culture Coast is rapidly coming of age in the film industry.

Free admission to theatre #5, Manasota Film Indie shorts. Donations accepted.

## **Screen Writer's Circle**

The Screen Writer's Circle will meet on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at Selby Library 5:30 to 7:30 pm. in the second floor conference room.

They have changed the format and it is working quite well. Table readings must be scheduled with the moderator, Laurie Stoner. She has a group of producers, directors, actors, and actresses to perform the table readings. They schedule 3 readings running approx. 40 minutes each. There is more information on Facebook: Sarasota Screenwriters. A LOT OF INTERESTING INFORMATION AS WELL. Please let Laurie know if you are planning on attending as they are outgrowing the room and only have seats for 30. They are creating a website: [www.sarasotascreenwriters.com](http://www.sarasotascreenwriters.com). A LOT of good feedback is coming in due to these professional table readings.

For more information contact Laurie Stoner at [mlstoner52@gmail.com](mailto:mlstoner52@gmail.com)

## FINALLY – A Writer’s Group in Lakewood Ranch

### Scribes Club

Summer hiatus is finished. The Scribes are back at their desks and writing. A writers group! It will be fun! Exercise the mind and develop the cranial muscle. Enjoy the "Smorgasbord for the mind" a potluck that all participants bring. This is the place for camaraderie and exchange of ideas. This offers an opportunity for honing your skills, as a writer. If you can pick up a pen you can write! So give yourself a chance to expand your horizons. Experienced writers please join and help others learn the skills you have acquired. The club will be meeting at Town Hall on the first and third Saturday of every month 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. To join email [AChaddha@aol.com](mailto:AChaddha@aol.com) , Aroon Chaddha.



~~~~~

**And a Poetry group! (Not in Lakewood Ranch)**

**And a Poetry group! (Not in Lakewood Ranch)**

### Selby Poets

Selby Poets meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month 10:00 AM – noon.

May 19<sup>th</sup> (10 am to noon) meeting of **Selby Poets** at the **Banyan Cafe** - located on the grounds of the **Ringling Museum**. 5401 Bay Shore Rd, Sarasota.(941) 359-3183

<http://www.urbanspoon.com/r/30/1282677/restaurant/Tampa-Bay/Banyan-Cafe-Sarasota>

Purchase of a drink (coffee, tea, soda) is expected. It is an informal group that gathers to encourage and ‘gently’ critique each other’s work. Park across the street – no entry fee to go to Cafe – walk or ride shuttle from entrance.

Everyone is welcome.

Bring 8 - 10 copies of one or two original poems to read aloud.

Open to the Public / Free

Contact: Gail Ghai

GGhai@ArtPoetica.com

**Note: Please see the information about the Poetry retreat under Writing Retreats.**

## ABC - Artisans of Books



**ABC is sponsoring a writing contest. See Contests below for more information.**

**General Meetings:** Our members meet at the Selby Library on the third Wednesday of each month from 1p – 3p.

We now accept authors of adult books as well as our children's authors

The membership fee is a flat \$25 annually.

Our main focus is still on marketing and having some great speakers coming to share their information.

Contact Brenda Spalding: [www.brendaspalding@abcbooks4children.com](mailto:www.brendaspalding@abcbooks4children.com)

[www.brendaspalding.com](http://www.brendaspalding.com) or Nancy Buscher for more information: [nancybuscher@yahoo.com](mailto:nancybuscher@yahoo.com)

**Applications are on the website:**

ABCBooks4Children.com

#209 1532 US 41 Highway BP S

Venice FL 34293-1032

*ABC– Artisans of Books* is made up of book authors & illustrators, and mainstream authors. Our mission is to form a networking alliance of independently published, self-marketing, and aspiring artisans to exchange knowledge, share experiences, assist in marketing, and promote literacy wherever possible.

~~~~~

## AMI Gulf Coast Writers

Meet the 1<sup>st</sup> Wed. of each month, at 12:45pm at the library in Holmes Beach. This month that will be May 4<sup>th</sup>. For more information contact Alice Moerk at [amoerk@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:amoerk@tampabay.rr.com) or contact the library. 5701 Marina Dr, Holmes Beach, FL 34217 Phone:(941) 778-6341

## NEW Memoir Group

A memoir writing group meets at the Braden River Library on SR 70 the fourth Tuesday from 1 pm - 2:30 pm. This month that will be May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016. There is no fee.

Call 941 727-6079 for more information.

~~~~~

**Florida Writers Foundation**, a 501(c)3 non-profit formed to promote literacy, as well as enhancing the writing skills of children, youth, and adults is stretching out for members and volunteers across the state. Their volunteers and partners have already started to make a difference by visiting elementary schools for reading days, sponsoring poetry contests, donating books to under-privileged schools, and contributing funds to middle school contests.

They have a new chairman, Tom Schwartz, who is working on fundraising including bringing in a nationally known bestselling author for the October Celebrity Workshop. They are establishing \$500.00 scholarships for students enrolled in a Florida College writing program.

Please go to their website for more information. [www.floridawritersfoundation.org](http://www.floridawritersfoundation.org)

## For our writers to the north...

The SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writer's & Illustrator's), critique group is led by Karen Hamade, (a FWA affiliated group). They are just in the process of setting up their meeting day & location. Any interested parties may contact her at [e](#) and she will be happy to email the next meeting information. They are a children's book author critique group in Brandon, Florida, who primarily critique Picture and Chapter Books, Middle Grade, and YA. For meeting information, please use online 'contact' form at: [www.brandonwriters.com](http://www.brandonwriters.com)

## For those writers to our south....

### Peace River Writers (a FWA affiliated group)

Group Leader: Douglas Houck

Type: Critique and Discussion

Meets: First Saturday of every Month at 9:00 am

New Location: Wyvern Hotel

101 E. Retta Esplanade

Punta Gorda, Florida

# Classes & Workshops

## Beginner's Guide to Building a WordPress Website (Authors Welcome)

### Expectations and Goals

This class will meet once a week for two (2) hours each for eight (8) weeks for a total of 16 hours. A live WordPress website will be available for each student to use for the duration of the class.

The purpose of this class is to show students two primary approaches to building a WordPress site: 1) using the WordPress.com platform; 2) or building a self-hosted site.

Students are not expected to have prior web-building or WordPress experience or any knowledge of coding or programming. The purpose of this class is not to learn those technical skills, but rather spend the bulk of the time practicing using WordPress.

The class will cover every aspect of setting up your own author website, from hosting and domain registration to assembling all the pieces of a WordPress website: themes, plugins, security, backups and how to operate WordPress.

We will be holding the class in a computer lab, so you do not need to bring a laptop.

More Info: Contact Joe Jacobson (Instructor) at 941-587-4530.

### Class Location

ACE-Adult & Community Enrichment

Suncoast Technical College

4748 Beneva Road

Sarasota, FL 34233

### Class Dates & Times

**Wednesdays: begin April 27, end June 15 (8 weeks)** Call Joe to see if he will accept a late start.

### Class Fee

\$149

### Registration

Registration will begin April 10, 2016.

Call 941-361-6590 or

Online: <http://ace-sarasota.com> or

Visit the office in person.

# Conferences

## Day at the Bay

### FWA Mini-Conference

#### Faculty & Workshops

##### All-Day Workshops

- Suspense / Thriller, TBA
- Historical Fiction, D.L. Havlin

##### Morning Workshops

- The Language of Screenplay, Tammy Gross
- Memoir: Write Your Life, Patricia Charpentier

##### Afternoon Workshops

- What Will Become of Us? An Exploration of Post-apocalyptic Fiction, Michelle Parker Randall
- The Intuitive Writer, Vic DiGenti

Faculty who teach half-day workshops are available for 15-minute appointments when not teaching. Appointments are \$25. All-day faculty will not be available for appointments.

##### When

- May 7, 2016
- Check-in and registration begins at 8:30 AM
- Bookstore will be open from 9:00 AM – 4:15 PM
- Closing and door prizes from 3:45 PM – 4:00 PM

##### Location

- Clarion Inn
- 9331 Adamo Drive, Tampa FL 33619
- Phone: 813-621-5555

##### Registration Fee

Includes continental breakfast, lunch and snacks

- \$89. Florida Writers Association Member
- \$109. Non-Member
- \$54.50 Non-Member Guest \*

Online registration closes May 4, 2016. Onsite registration available.

\* Available to members only. Bring a guest who isn't a member of FWA, and your friend gets in at half the non-member price. You must include your non-member guest when you register for the mini-conference in order to qualify for this special pricing.

# 15th Annual Florida Writers Conference

- CARPE DIEM: Conquer the World, One Book at a Time
- October 20 – 23, 2016 in Altamonte Springs, Florida

Florida Writers Association (FWA) members all over the globe look forward to the Florida Writers Conference year after year.

Whether you're an aspiring writer or a seasoned professional, you'll benefit from all the conference has to offer you this year.

Rub elbows with acquisition editors, publishers, film producers, editors, designers, book marketers and writers, into the wee hours. Connect with old friends and make new ones.

Fun and informative, your conference days will be packed from early morning until late at night with plenty to keep you busy.

## **10 Reasons You Should Come to the Florida Writers Conference**

1. 70+ workshops and panels with stellar faculty
2. Keynote Speaker, John Gilstrap, New York Times Bestselling Author
3. Network with writers and publishing industry professionals
4. Pitch to agents and publishers
5. Fabulous cuisine included in the cost of the conference
6. Sell your book at the conference bookstore and hold a book signing
7. Celebrate the winners at the Royal Palm Literary Awards Banquet
8. Bid on silent auction items and benefit literacy programs sponsored by the Florida Writers Foundation
9. One-to one meetings with conference faculty
10. Door prizes, open mic, and more!

Our motto, "Writers Helping Writers," is truer than ever before!

Early Bird Specials: Find out more at [www.floridawriters.net](http://www.floridawriters.net)



# Contests

## Lone Star Contest

Northwest Houston RWA© is proud to announce  
The 23rd Annual Lone Star Writing Competition 2015  
We'll begin accepting entries on April 1, 2015, so be sure to check the website.

**A place to find a few more Book Contests**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM BOOK AWARDS CENTRAL**

**IF YOU HAVE NEWLY PUBLISHED TITLES TO PROMOTE, WE HAVE AN AWARDS  
CONTEST FOR YOU**



Independent Publisher Book Awards - Axiom Business Book Awards - Living  
Now Book Awards  
Moonbeam Children's Book Awards - eLit Awards

Do you have an Award-worthy book that deserves more attention? Book Awards are an efficient, affordable marketing tool that can make a huge impact on your marketing campaign. Each year, medals go to both established mid-sized publishers and first-time self-publishers. We reward those who exhibit the courage, innovation, and creativity to bring about change in the world of publishing. This spirit and expertise comes from publishers of all sizes and budgets, and books are judged with that in mind.

Get more attention. Get a shiny sticker for your cover. Get the recognition your book deserves!

Need entry information about any of these book awards contests? See details and links about each contest below, or email me to request guidelines or to deliver questions or comments: **Jim Barnes, Awards Director** - [jimb@bookpublishing.com](mailto:jimb@bookpublishing.com)

~~~~

**Midlife Collage** sponsors a weekly contest of midlife short stories. U.S. citizens and legal residents age 40 and older may enter. The Editor selects five stories for publication on their website each week. Readers leave comments and Facebook thumbs-up likes urging the panel of Judges to choose a contest winner. Readers also send the Judges their opinion of the best story on our Closing Arguments page. The contest period is Monday through Sunday noon PT. The first-place story enters the Winner's Circle and receives a cash prize of \$50. Winners of a \$50 cash prize are eligible for a \$100 contest, which we run quarterly. ANYONE, worldwide, age 18 or older can comment on the stories in a contest.

Updated web site address for submissions: You should be able to post a submission at the following link: <http://www.writermag.com/writing-resources/update-my-contest/?id=6863&title=Midlife%20Collage%20Contests>

**[www.MidlifeCollage.com](http://www.MidlifeCollage.com)**

**\*yes, the spelling is collage not college.**

# Of Writing Interest

## Writers Brunch

We meet monthly on the third Sunday of the month from October through April to enjoy the company of others with a common interest in writing while we relax, mingle, network, and brunch. It is open to any writers and aspiring writers who want to just chat. Nothing to join, we just meet at Pier 22 at 11:30 on the patio, usually around the fire pit if it is available. We have coffee, mimosas, bloody marys, and a lite snack or brunch or lunch, separate checks. Bring your S.O. if you like, and join us as we chat about anything we have in common, advice we've picked up, and suggestions all amid the beautiful surroundings of Manatee River, yachts, good food, and good company. If you are thinking of joining us, please shoot me a short email so I can try to get a large enough area (from 6 to 20 so far). [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com) This month it will be on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

FWA member, Wendy Dingwall, also a member of the national **Sisters in Crime** organization, has agreed to start a Florida Gulf Coast chapter. **Sisters in Crime** has 3600 members' world-wide, offering support to women crime writers. Members consist of authors, readers, librarians, publishers, booksellers and agents. **Sisters in Crime** was founded by Sara Paretsky and a group of women at the 1986 Bouchercon in Baltimore. Their mission is to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers.

Wendy is actively seeking members for the new chapter. If you are interested, please contact her at [wendyldwriter@comcast.net](mailto:wendyldwriter@comcast.net).

~~~~~

## Wordier Than Thou

Open Mic for Writers of Prose

Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center

525 Kumquat Ct, Rear, Sarasota, Florida 34236

Third Thursday of the Month at 7:00pm

~~~~~

**\*NEW\*** A new rich source for poets has been recommended by our past President Pat Gray. For those of you who enjoy reading and writing poetry, please enjoy:

<https://archive.org/details/naropa?&sort=-downloads&page=2>

~~~~~

# Writing Retreat

**Dear Poets,**

**For those who don't know about the Retreat, here are the details. You have about 2 more weeks to register before the price goes up. Hope to see you there.**

**Yours in poetry,**

**Gianna**

***Public Invited to the Sandhill Writers Retreat at Saint Leo University***

**Saturday, May 14, 2016 9:00am-5:30pm Saint Leo University, Saint Leo, Florida  
SAINT LEO, FL--The Fourth Annual Sandhill Writers Retreat will renew the writer in you.**

The full-day retreat will take place on the beautiful, serene University Campus, located in rural Saint Leo, Florida, approximately 35 miles north of Tampa. The retreat will feature thirteen hands-on writing classes in fiction, nonfiction, journalism, poetry, comics and writing for veterans.. A faculty of nationally-acclaimed writers/poets includes Pulitzer Prize winner Lane DeGregory of *Tampa Bay Times*; novelist Rita Ciresi (*Bring Back My Body to Me*); poets Peter Schmitt (*Renewing the Vows*) and Erica Bernheim (*The Mimic Sea*); and comics writer Claire Stephens. These four renowned writers will be joined by Saint Leo writing faculty members Dr. Patrick Crerand, Gianna Russo, Dr. Steve Kistulentz and Iraq war veteran writer Brooke King to guide attendees through lessons in craft and imaginative exercises that lead to new works. The retreat will also include a faculty reading and book signing, a reception, and an optional lunch-time open reading for participants.

The Sandhill Writers Retreat is open to writers of all levels who wish to hone the craft and renew the joy of writing. Teachers, students, active and retired military and the general public are all invited to attend.

A very limited number of private one-on-one manuscript consultations are available on a first come, first served basis for an additional fee. Manuscripts of up to 10 pages of poetry, fiction and nonfiction must be submitted to the Retreat Director Gianna Russo by May 1, 2016. Retreat registration includes access to all activities. Both a box lunch and a one-on one-manuscript conference may be purchased for an additional charge. All participants must be pre-registered to attend. Early registration will close on at midnight May 7, 2016. Late registration from May 8-15, 2016, incurs an additional late fee of \$15 per registrant. For additional information contact Director Gianna Russo at [gianna.russo@saintleo.edu](mailto:gianna.russo@saintleo.edu) or 352-588-8282.

To read more detailed information and register online, visit this page:

<http://www.saintleo.edu/academics/schools/school-of-arts-sciences/the-sandhill-writers-retreat.aspx>.

## **More About Saint Leo University**

Saint Leo University is one of the largest and most innovative Catholic universities in the United States, offering more than 40 academic programs. Chartered in 1889 in the town of Saint Leo, FL, approximately 30 miles north of Tampa, Saint Leo University currently enrolls approximately 16,000 students. Students may choose to study at the traditional University Campus; at our 50 education centers, offices, and teaching locations in seven states; or through the Center for Online Learning. Saint Leo is a leader in the field of online education and one of the nation's foremost providers of higher education to the military. **Media contact:** For more information, contact Jo-Ann Johnston, Saint Leo University media coordinator, (352) 588-8237 or [jo-ann.johnston@saintleo.edu](mailto:jo-ann.johnston@saintleo.edu).

## **Paid Publishing Opportunity.**

Authors accepted for publication are paid. Thank you so much.

- The first issue of *Today & Yesterday*, an online international literary journal published by Laughing Fire Press, is available at [todayandyesterday.co](http://todayandyesterday.co). (.co NOT .com)
- Featured in this issue are short stories, poems, a memoir, and an author interview from contributors either living in or from the US, Germany, Nigeria, Turkey, the Philippines, and Iran.
- Laughing Fire Press invites submissions for the next issue of the journal. Short stories, poems, essays, interviews, memoirs, and photographs that examine contemporary or historical socially-relevant subject matter are desired. Areas of interest include the arts, politics, popular culture, economics, science and technology, human rights, psychology, philosophy, and the environment.

Jed Lewis  
Publisher and Editor-In-Chief  
Laughing Fire Press  
[www.laughingfire.com](http://www.laughingfire.com)  
[www.facebook.com/LaughingFirePress](http://www.facebook.com/LaughingFirePress)  
@LaughingFire

## ***Romance Wanted!***

Do you love writing romance as much as you love reading it? If you've written a full-length romance, Crimson Romance wants to consider it for publication! We're looking for romances in all the popular categories (contemporary, historical, romantic suspense and more!) Have an idea for a romance collection? Drop us a line and we'll consider it. Please submit your full story to [editorcrimson@gmail.com](mailto:editorcrimson@gmail.com) with "Short Story Submission – [intended collection]" in the subject line. If we get enough submissions to publish more than one title in each category, we will.

- See more at:

[http://www.crimsonromance.com/submissions/?et\\_mid=624366&rid=235541304#sthash.x3f1PFYf.dpuf](http://www.crimsonromance.com/submissions/?et_mid=624366&rid=235541304#sthash.x3f1PFYf.dpuf)

~~~~~

## **Agents**

A recommended source for finding literary agents:

<http://www.ebookcrossroads.com/agents.html>

\* \* \* \* \*

Local author and publisher E. P. "Ned" Burke is hosting a Web site, **Sarasota Authors Showcase**, [Sarasota.Authors.Showcase@gmail.com](mailto:Sarasota.Authors.Showcase@gmail.com) , on which local authors can post info about their books. The service is free. Send bio information along with the title of your book (s) and the book's URL sales page address on Amazon.com or another location to [authorepburke@gmail.com](mailto:authorepburke@gmail.com).

Burke also invites submissions and free subscriptions to his online magazines: [www.theperspiringwriter.com](http://www.theperspiringwriter.com) and [www.yesterdaysmagazette.com](http://www.yesterdaysmagazette.com). See guidelines on site.

\* \* \* \* \*

Leodegraunce (<http://www.leodegraunce.com>), founded in 2010, is a site for quality flash fiction funded entirely by its owner, author and editor Jolie du Pre. Every author is paid for their work. Jolie also has an associate editor on staff who she pays once a month. Jolie is hoping to keep Leodegraunce online for 2013. All donations are greatly appreciated to keep Jolie's labor of love up and running for 2013!

\* \* \* \* \*

## New Imprint Seeking Romance Stories with Heat

Untreed Reads is pleased to announce a brand-new imprint to expand our catalog of offerings. Untreed After Dark is our new line for romance stories that take the heat level up a few notches from our sweet stories. Even though there is a lot of romance on the market today, we feel that there are still niches to fill. That's the ultimate goal of our new line.

We do have some rules for this new line:

1. Every sexual orientation is welcome.
  2. We would especially love to see romance stories about people of various ethnic backgrounds, people in their fifties or older, people with disabilities, 19th and 20th century historical (1800-2000), etc.
- If you have looked around and said, "I don't see another story out there remotely like mine," you're probably what we're looking for.
3. Works need to be believable and real. No genies, werewolves, vampires, body-switchers, witches, aliens, etc. Need real people in real relationships/situations.
  4. Sorry, but no works that take place before 1800. We feel that market has plenty of material already.
  5. Only works 25,000 words or more will be considered. Short story collections, however, would be fine.
  6. Cross-genre stories are especially welcome (romantic mysteries, for example).
  7. As we are not specifically looking for erotica, the heat level is currently limited to "NC-17." Sex doesn't have to be in the story, but if it's appropriate for the work, that's fine.
  8. The overall story is infinitely more important to us than a couple of hot scenes. We prefer to think of this as "literary romance/literary erotica." We want engaging characters with real romantic struggles and successes.
  9. HEA (Happily Ever After) is NOT a requirement. Sometimes romance doesn't end with the two people ending up together, and that's perfectly OK. That's real.
  10. Absolutely, positively NO: rape, bestiality, sex with underage people, or all the other things you would expect to be forbidden.
  11. Previously published works are definitely acceptable, providing electronic rights have reverted to the author.
  12. Works that have been published through a self-publishing venture (i.e.: Smashwords, Kindle Direct/Kindle Prime) will not be accepted.
  13. Agents and current Untreed Reads authors may submit directly to: Jay Hartman.  
All others need to send works to [submissions@untreedreads.com](mailto:submissions@untreedreads.com)
  14. All submissions need to be sent in their entirety in RTF, DOC or ODP formats, Times New Roman, 12 pt. This rule does not necessarily apply to current Untreed Reads authors or agents. If you are unsure if a work would be appropriate for us, please do feel free to query Jay Hartman at [jhartman@untreedreads.com](mailto:jhartman@untreedreads.com).

~ ~ ~



# Saw Palm – A Literary Magazine published by USF Tampa

Saw Palm is a literary magazine devoted exclusively to creative work from and about Florida. For more information, please see our website: <http://www.sawpalm.org/>

Prepare Your Submissions for Saw Palm 2014, submissions are accepted between July 1 and October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Saw Palm is a Florida-themed journal, however we welcome writers and artists from across the country and the globe as long as the work is connected to Florida (via images, people, themes, et cetera). We also welcome creative works from Floridians that are not obviously about someplace else. Please check out past issues, available for download as free PDFs. We publish one issue per year in the spring.

Saw Palm does not accept work that was previously published either online or in print. We welcome simultaneous submissions as long as you immediately notify Saw Palm of acceptance elsewhere. Response time varies between 1 to 6 months. Our general reading period is between July 1st and October 1st, however submissions for Places to Stand in Florida are accepted year-round.

All submissions must be made electronically through our online submissions manager. Please upload prose and poetry files in .doc or .docx formats only. Art, photography, and comics should be uploaded in .jpeg / .jpg format only. Paper submissions sent via snail mail will be recycled unread. Click here to submit.

## **Poetry**

We accept up to five poems per submission period at a maximum of 10 pages. Please send all poems in one document.

## **Fiction**

We ask that fiction submissions be no longer than 6000 words. Please send only one story per reading period.

## **Flash Fiction**

We accept up to three works of flash fiction (750 words or less) per submission period. Please send all stories in one document.

## **Creative Nonfiction**

We ask that submissions of memoir and essays be no longer than 6000 words. Please send only one piece per reading period.

## **Art & Photography**

We accept up to five submissions of art or photography per reading period. Please send files in .jpeg / .jpg format only. You may also include a URL if a portfolio of your work is online.

## **Comics**

We welcome submissions of graphic fiction and nonfiction of up to seven pages, whether in black & white, greyscale, or full color. Submit in .jpeg / .jpg format only. Keep in mind that the journal's dimensions are smaller (5"x7") than the average literary journal and so comics with small panels filled with intricate art are not well-suited.

## **Interviews**

We are especially interested in interviews of Florida writers and artists, although we're open to almost any Florida-related subject. Please query us about the interview subject first, via email.

## **Reviews** (appear on sawpalm.org)

We are interested in reviews of any Florida-related subject: author, book, film, tourist attraction, CD, website, beach, park, toll roads, snack stands, local landmarks—anything! These reviews will appear on [www.sawpalm.org](http://www.sawpalm.org). Unlike submissions of creative work, current or recent USF students and faculty are welcome to submit reviews. Size limit: 6000 words.

## **Places to Stand in Florida** (appears on sawpalm.org)

Please tell us what it's like to stand at a specific place in Florida at a specific time of day in 500 words or less. While we enjoy the unusual, locations should be public and accessible (so not your bathroom!) Please include GPS coordinates.

Unlike other categories, current or recent USF students and faculty are welcome to submit pieces for the Places to Stand series.

Poems submitted as part of the Places to Stand series are welcome but should be justified left and otherwise not have complex formatting and spacing. This is due to technical limitations in Google Earth.

Update March 2016:

Sawpalm just released their 10th Anniversary Issue with the special theme—Florida-Cuba Connection.

We plan to return to our Florida theme for future issues. While our submissions for the journal won't open until July 1st, we take submissions for our online literary map, Places to Stand, year round. For this category, we accept short (500 word max) submissions of nonfiction and poetry that show what it's like to stand at a particular spot in Florida at a particular moment in time.

# Words of Wisdom

~~~~~

I again fall back to my mentor and really great muse, Holly Lisle, for this month's ...  
... Words of Wisdom

## How To Write Suckitudinous Fiction

---

It's fair to say that writing a good story is damned hard to do. Writing something that engages readers and wins them over to the side of the characters and makes these readers care about the outcome of your tale requires constant effort on the writer's part — brutal questioning of each scene and each line, a tight, sharp focus, and a deep belief in the story that you the writer want to tell.

Being mediocre is normal. It's where you start before you pick your path, hone your skills, and become either truly wonderful or friggin' gawdawful.

But the quest for good fiction is not the only way. There is ... another path. A dark path. And it is a path rich in tradition and esteemed by many. It is the Path of Suckitude.

Not all bad fiction is Suckitudinous. Some of it is simply bad — written by people who are completely tone-deaf to the language, blind to character and motivation, and incompetent with conflict.

Unlike bad fiction, Suckitudinous Fiction takes a dedication to the fine art of sucking that, if pursued with sufficiently rabid fanaticism, can win Pulitzers. (Yes, I think an inordinate number of recent Pulitzer-prize-winning novels suck. Hugely.)

If your grand fantasy is to suck like a Pulitzer winner, you have to be competent with the English language. You have to have a big vocabulary or a good thesaurus. It wouldn't hurt to have a graduate degree from an Ivy League college. But above all of those, you have to follow the Thirteen Sacred Commandments of Suckitudinous Fiction.

### ***The Thirteen Sacred Commandments of Suckitudinous Fiction***

#### **I. Thou shalt anoint no hero.**

If you have a real hero, you cannot reek magnificently. It simply cannot be done. Real heroes beget a whole slew of real sins of good writing that will in the end slaughter your hopes of Genius-Level Suckitude. So eliminate heroism from your main character's personality. This takes some serious mental gymnastics — but if you want to pursue writing at the GLS level, you have to know the stunts. Here's your floor routine.

Embrace the philosophy that everything is relative. Everyone's actions are morally equivalent to everyone else's actions. Heroes act out of self-interest, just as criminals do. The guy who risks his life racing into a burning building to save a kid is no better than the arsonist who set the building on fire — they're both imperfect people dealing with the world as best they can. (CONSUMER WARNING: The mental gymnastics required by this approach to your writing can cause irreversible brain damage. If you achieved the most rarified heights of GLS [Genius-Level Suckitude], you are probably lost forever to writing anything worth reading again. Proceed with caution.)

## **II. Thou shalt decree no villain.**

The no-hero requirement begets the no-villain requirement. Villains are as deadly to truly horrible fiction as are heroes, because even spineless wonders of main characters have been known to stop contemplating their navels and leap into startling life when faced off against a sufficiently driven, passionate villain. No — your antagonist may have dark demons and vile habits, but they must be equivalent to your protagonist's vile habits and dark demons, and you may not, under any circumstances, declare (or allow the reader to decide on his own) that one of these characters is morally superior to the other.

## **III. Thou shalt express no opinion.**

Please don't misunderstand me. You aren't avoiding opinions. You **have** an opinion if you are shooting for GLS greatness, and you must express it at every turn. Your opinion is "No opinion." Everything is relative, remember. If everything is relative, then any opinion is passing judgment, which you can't do because in the universe of moral relativism, everything is this mealy gray sludge of sameness. Nothing is bad — and if nothing is bad, then nothing can be good. So for every moral dilemma that your characters face, you must land firmly in the realm of "It's all the same." You cannot dare to suggest that anything your characters might do would matter, that anything might improve (or worsen) their state, that they might aspire to the sublime or sink into depravity — well, they can sink into depravity, but that's only because being depraved is the same as being good, only more so.

You're embracing entropy here, doing your bit to hurry along the heat death of the universe. No matter how deep into the pits your characters sink, you never need worry about getting them to notice that their lives are shit or that they're worthless excuses for human beings because **it's all the same.**

## **IV. Thou shalt embrace no theme.**

Even if you can manage hero-less, villain-less fiction and avoid expressing any opinion beyond 'no opinion', still you are not yet safe from the realms of mediocrity, or, God forbid, the pernicious upward creep into good fiction. Press forward — sweep themelessness to your bosom. Themes are nothing but trouble for the author of GLS caliber. Themes require having a point to

what you're writing — for example, that good triumphs over evil, or that love matters, or that there is some difference between day and night. And having a point is the antithesis of GLS fiction. The reasoning is simple. Well, no, it isn't. The reasoning is convoluted as hell, and it goes like this. If good and evil are relative, then your opinion on everything is 'no opinion' because at the very ground level, having an opinion is passing judgment, so passing judgment is BAD, and the reason passing judgment is bad is because ... because ... (a sane reason escapes me here, but just pretend along with me for a few more minutes that the basic premise of this whole exercise makes any sense whatsoever) ... passing judgment is bad because it might hurt someone's feelings or something, so THEREFORE writing to a theme that expresses an opinion about the relative merits of something — anything — is just unbelievably crass and tacky.

I'm getting a headache already. You might be too. But soldier on. If you can get the hang of this, potential Pulitzers await.

#### **V. Thou shalt sneer at conflict.**

Conflict requires stakes. Stakes require that something be at risk, and that the very same something which is at risk shall offer to the characters a potential to reach a resolution, and shall offer to the reader a reason to give a shit whether the protagonist triumphs or the antagonist fails. But in the Universe of Gray Tapioca, everything is equal, everything is relative, and picking a side would require taking a stand. When you're neck deep in tapioca, no stands are possible or desired — the objective is to **drown**. So your people can whine and bicker and have lots of meaningless sex and meaningless violence and meaningless conversations, but IT MUST BE MEANINGLESS. If the point of your fiction is that life has no point, conflict is right out.

#### **VI. Thou shalt commit no plot.**

The plot is the direction of the story — it is the way that one event leads logically into the next, with conflict creating actions that beget consequences. At this point in GLS fiction, plotlessness is almost like gravity. Unavoidable. If you have no theme, no conflict, no opinion, no hero and no villain, you **can't** have a plot. The second you try to create a plot, all those other essentials of good fiction are going to start beating at the door trying to get in.

#### **VII. Thou shalt eschew coherence.**

The GLS writer has taken his stand on saying nothing. However, having done this, he can't be satisfied to say nothing with no words, which would at least be admirably to the point, and save a few trees. Oh, no. The GLS writer has lots and lots of words, being in most cases very intelligent, if not too terribly smart, and, having nothing to say and many words with which to say it, the GLS writer needs to resort to pyrotechnics. What are these pyrotechnics, you ask?

Well, deconstructionism is always good. Or you can go to the Gertrude Stein School of Repetition and Word Salad, which offers Jackson-Pollock-Throws-Words-on-a-Page as a technique. Meta-fiction (writing fiction about fiction, usually to demonstrate the futility of fiction

itself) is always very neat. Vignettes work well, as does the first-person- superwhine. You can throw in tin cans trouncing cross-country, talking coyotes, and characters with erectile dysfunctions or the tendency to whack themselves between the eyes with hammers; these are always weird, depressing, and disturbing, which is what you shoot for in the world of GLS fiction, instead of being meaningful or entertaining. Remember that in GLS fiction, what you say is nowhere near as important as how you say it.

### **VIII. Thou shalt flee from any hint of pace.**

Pace requires that things within the story happen, and that they happen for a reason, and that when they happen, other things shall happen in consequence. But the sensation of pace — that is, of the story moving forward — also requires that there **be** a story. You, the would-be GLS writer, DO NOT want a story. Stories are nothing more and nothing less than fictional characters participating in a progression of events designed to cast light on the otherwise disorderly existence of the human species, and as such, stories cannot exist without a moral stance, an opinion, a plot, a theme, and characters who are unlike each other. So avoid any attempt at creating pace as if you were nocturnal and undead and pace was silver.

Those are long and somewhat complex rules. The rest are shorter and easier to follow.

### **IX. Thou shalt murder suspense.**

Suspense demands that the readers care, and that the writer give the readers something about which to care. Suspense demands that the writer invest himself deeply in the plight of his characters, and take an interest in the outcomes they face. To create suspense, the GLS writer would have to want one character to succeed and another to fail, and this is utterly anti-Tapioca. You would have to pass judgment on the relative merits of your characters. Who are ALL THE SAME.

No suspense, dammit. Suspense ... BAD.

### **X. Thou shalt excise vile passion like a nose wart, lest it shame thee.**

Love nothing, for nothing is better than anything else, so nothing is deserving of love. Hate nothing, for nothing is truly vile or evil — it is, at worst, misunderstood. Excitement is for the ignorant unwashed. You, the future GLS author, are beyond all that. You must not love your characters, your situations, or your significant other. You are, however, permitted to be insufferably pompous about your style.

### **XI. Thou shalt mock hope as plebian.**

Hope implies improvement — things getting better, people triumphing. Hope is a sneaky way of saying that everything ISN'T relative, and we mustn't have that. Nope, can't have that. So your fiction must never contain the slightest shred of hope. Ever. Your characters wallow in their filth and they LIKE it. Got that? Anyone who includes hope in fiction is a backward Neanderthal

hick redneck married to his sister whose non-branching ancestral tree makes him incapable of understanding that wallowing in filth and liking it is sophisticated.

**XII. Thou shalt equate self-determination with heresy.**

Self-determination is hope on steroids. Self-determination states that things could be better than they are, and **believes** the individual can do something to make them get better. In permitting your characters to express self-determination, you would be suggesting that your characters — those malcontent bastards — might in some way **wish** to see their worlds improve, or might even take a hand in improving them, or might have confidence in their own competence or the functioning of their own minds. You, the future GLS author, know that you can keep your fiction nailed to the Truth that everything is shit and that shit is good (or at least as good as ice cream) if you can just keep your dim little rodents away from claiming any control over the outcome of their own lives.

The GLS author in the world of Everything Is Relative has no room for individuals or individual merit. Kill upstart thinkers and doers before they have a chance to breed.

**XIII. Thou shalt declare story dead, and do thy bit to kill it dead.**

Having perpetrated your GLS un-story, you must then mock any fiction that does not worship at the altar of Everything Is Tapioca. You must get involved in awards committees and give awards exclusively to other GLS authors, all the while scoffing at relevance, plot, suspense, heroism, and villainy as rote tricks used by the untalented. You must turn up your nose at bestsellers and use the word “hack” for anyone who sells better than you do. Most of all, you must get a Creative Arts degree, work your way into a position as a tenured professor, and make sure that everyone who comes through your program either learns to write Suckitudinously, or else fails to graduate.

There you have it — the Sacred Path. Astounding suckitude is within your grasp, if only you cast off all common sense and Embrace the Tapioca! Decry reason, never say anything and be sure to say it in the most words possible, and someday, you too can hold your Pulitzer above your head and thank the little people who made it all possible. Only ...

... if you follow these rules and you DO win one ...

**... please please please don't mention me.**

And write with joy,

Holly

That's all for this month. Hope you enjoyed it.

Dona Lee  
“Plotting Success”