Two FWA Writers Groups Publish Anthologies

Alison’s 2017 Florida Writers Conference Playbook

Off the Cliff: From Manuscript to Printed Book
Focus Days
9 am - 4 pm | Registration begins 8:30 am
$89 Members | $109 Nonmembers
More info at FloridaWriters.net

April 29
Orlando
Character-Driven

ARThUR DOWEYKO
Presenting on plot line

TAWDRA KANDLE
Presenting on characters

DARLYN FINCH KUHN
Presenting on dialogue

May 20
Boca Raton
E-Books

ELLE BRYANT HENRY
Presenting on formatting

MILLY TAIDEN
Presenting on platform options and why

ROBIN LUDWIG
Presenting on cover

KELLI SMITH
Presenting on dialogue

June 24
Orlando
Marketing

ROBBIE COX
Presenting on print marketing

JADE KERRION
Presenting on social media

MELANIE MARSH
Presenting on bloggers

JENNIFER WEDMORE
Presenting on personal assistants

July 22
Fort Myers
Conflict-Driven

BRIA BURTON
Presenting on pre-pilot outline

J KENT HOLLOWAY
Presenting on setting

CHERI ROMAN
Presenting on types of conflict

KEN PELHAM
Presenting on climax

All-day workshop | back to back presenters with a panel at the end
Lunch & all-day beverages included
Interviews available for an additional fee
The Florida Writer, published six times a year, is the official magazine of the Florida Writers Association, Inc. (FWA), the first and only statewide 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization dedicated to the support of aspiring and published writers in any genre.

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Step 1: What to Submit

Celebrations

Let’s celebrate your writing successes together. Marking a milestone in your writing career? Members who have good news to share about their writing-related accomplishments should send announcements for publication.

• Write a one-paragraph announcement in third person
• Type “Celebrations” in the subject line of your submission email
• One entry per issue per person
• Maximum word count: 100

Paragraphs

We publish selected creative writing by members who respond to a prompt. Prose, poetry, and excerpts from larger works that can stand alone are all welcome.

• Type “Paragraphs” in the subject line of your submission email
• One entry per person per issue
• Maximum word count for prose: 700
• Maximum line count for poetry: 50

Prompt for the June 2017 issue:
Two people who haven’t seen each other in a long time bump into each other (figuratively) on the street. What happens next?

Prompt for the August 2017 issue:
This prompt is called “Wow the Editor.” You are free to submit writing on any subject you like. There are two requirements: 1) Follow all our submission guidelines to the letter, and 2) Send your best quality work, something that takes readers somewhere they haven’t been before.

Step 2: How to Submit

• Deadline for June 2017 issue is 5/1/2017
• Deadline for the August 2017 issue is 7/1/2017
• Send all submissions in doc format as an email attachment. Please do not embed your submission’s text within the email message.
• Include your name and contact information within the attachment
• You may include one headshot or a photo of the front cover of your book to accompany your entry, but it is not required. The image file must be high resolution, 300 ppi, jpg format, and sent as an attachment. Please don’t send embedded images.
• To be eligible for publication, you must be a member of the Florida Writers Association
• Before hitting the “send” button, please double check to be sure your entry meets all the requirements and is as free of typos and other errors as possible
• Email your submission to tfw@floridawriters.net

Advertise in The Florida Writer

• Affordable rates, discounted for members
• Color ads accepted at no additional charge
• Need help to create an ad? We can put you in touch with a designer.
• For rates, specs, and deadlines, contact tfw@floridawriters.net
I read a lot of manuscripts, and I’m here to tell you there are some story openers in danger of being used more often than “Once upon a time.” Here are some beginnings I see frequently:

• Character waking up
• Character looking out a window and thinking about the weather
• Character thinking about the setting and reviewing the objects in a room in internal monologue
• Character thinking or saying out loud, “This isn’t happening”
• Character pondering her life, her appearance (while looking in a mirror), or the day ahead in internal monologue
• “When [name] woke up that morning, he never imagined by the end of the day, he would end up [fill in the blank]”

At this point, I bet you think I’m going to tell you not to write one of these frequently used story openers. I’m not.

Starting a novel with a cliché (“It was love at first sight”) worked out pretty well for Joseph Heller in Catch 22, and the character-waking-from-a-dream opener made The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka a classic, and so I’m not going to tell you not to use the story beginnings I listed.

What I’d rather you take away is the knowledge that these openings are oh-so-common. If you’re going to use one of them in your final work, you’ll want to make sure you’ve done it effectively—in an uncommon way—unless you want to blend into the crowd of other manuscripts when you submit your work for possible publication.

But here’s something else to consider. Did you notice that all the openings I listed depict a character sitting and thinking alone? I have a theory about that. What’s the person who writes that line doing? Sitting and thinking alone! Maybe that’s why these openings come so easily.

And because they come so easily, I’m going to suggest something to you: Go with it! Write the sitting and thinking opening if that’s what comes to you immediately. Maybe it’s what you need to do to warm up, to get your writing pump primed. It’s a way for you to get started, a way to initiate your flow of words and ideas. It’s a way to begin solving the problems that writing a story present. Getting it right the first time isn’t important. Getting started is very important.

Confession: I didn’t know what I was going to say in this article until I wrote—and re-wrote—it. It’s likely you can’t write your “real” beginning until you know for sure what your story is about. And you may not (probably won’t) know for sure what your story is about until you’ve worked through to the ending in your first draft.

Eventually, during revision, I’ll bet you’ll find where your story truly begins. And I’ll bet you find it begins at some point after all that sitting and thinking.

Mary Ann de Stefano is the editor of The Florida Writer and the Monday Muse. She is an independent editor with 30+ years experience in publishing and consulting. Besides working one-to-one with writers who are developing books, she organizes writing workshops and designs author websites. Mary Ann does business at MAD about Words, named as a play on her initials and love for writing. Visit madaboutwords.com.
**Mark Your Calendar**

**April 1, 2017**
Royal Palm Literary Awards Competition
Entry fee increases

**April 29, 2017**
Focus on Character-Driven Stories
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

**April 30, 2017**
Royal Palm Literary Awards Competition
Florida Writers Association Collection Competition
Closes for submissions

**May 20, 2017**
Focus on E-Books
Lakeside Terrace, Boca Raton

**May 20, 2017**
Focus on Youth
Hilton Boca Raton Suites

**May 21, 2017**
2nd Annual I ♥ Books
Lakeside Terrace, Boca Raton

**June 24, 2017**
Focus on Marketing
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

**July 22, 2017**
Focus on Conflict-Driven Stories
Crown Plaza at Bell Tower Shops, Fort Myers

**October 19, 2017**
Florida Writers Foundation Celebrity Workshop
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

**October 19 – 22, 2017**
16th Annual Florida Writers Conference
Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

*For more information visit floridawriters.net*
I hope each of you have taken a bit of time to enjoy the time change as well as the lovely spring weather. What a great time to take a break outside and write until your heart’s content. Get lost in it, the same way others get lost on the Internet. It’s a great time to get lost in your writing.

April is the last month to submit your entries for the Royal Palm Literary Awards (RPLA) as well as the Florida Writers Collection.

RPLA will accept entries until April 30th. You still have plenty of time to finalize your submission(s) and enter them in the competition. When you submit to the Royal Palm Literary Awards, in addition to being in competition for the award, you receive great feedback from the rubrics provided to you at the end of the competition. The feedback is a wonderful added benefit to your entry. If you need additional information or you have a manuscript ready for submission visit the RPLA page on floridawriters.net.

Our Florida Writers Collection book also closes entries on April 30th. The 2017 theme is What a Character. If you are writing a short story it can be up to 1,200 words; if you choose a poem if can be up to 50 lines. Haven’t started writing your collections story? Don’t stress, you can do this before the end of the month! Why not get started today? There’s no entry fee. You only need to be a current FWA member at time of publication and make sure to submit by midnight April 30th. I look forward to seeing the amazing stories each of you weaves this year. For more information or to submit your story visit the Collections web page.

April is a big month for Florida Writers Association. In addition to RPLA and Collections closing, we kick off our Focus Days. If you recall, we rebranded our mini-conferences to Focus Days, and this month is the first one. On April 29th we will have Focus on Character-Driven Stories. The conference is held at the Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs, same as the annual conference. If you haven’t registered yet, you can do so online through April 22nd. Visit our website for more information or to register today!

The same day as Focus on Character-Driven Stories, we have the privilege of our new Executive Vice President presenting his esteemed workshop, Novel in a Day. Vic DiGenti receives great praise from attendees each time he delivers this workshop. The April event is also at the Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs in support of the Florida Writers Foundation. The mission of the foundation is to overcome illiteracy through writing, and the proceeds of this workshop will help to do just that. If you would like to enroll for Vic’s workshop visit the Florida Writers Foundation’s website at floridawritersfoundation.com today.

April is jam-packed full of fun. Before I have a chance to write you again, we also have our Focus on E-Books, Focus on Youth, and I ♥ Books book signing the weekend of May 20th. We will be in Boca Raton for these events. You can obtain more information on the FWA website.

We have a busy spring in FWA. I hope to see you at one of our upcoming events!

Cheyenne Knopf Williams is a lifetime member and President of FWA. She also sits on the board of the Florida Writers Foundation. Her full-time job is as the Marketing Manager for OnLineBinding where she helps authors realize their dreams of indie-publishing their books.

“Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist.”

Pablo Picasso
**Ask the Book Doctor**

- When Your Publisher Drops You
- Print Advertising
- Reprinting A Book
- Point Of View

by Bobbie Christmas

**Q:** My publisher closed the imprint under which my book was published. What should I do now?

**A:** You have several options, but first and foremost, you must have the publisher return your rights to you. After you receive a letter that officially reverts the rights to you, you can then look for another publisher or choose to self-publish.

Cardoza Publishing, which bought and published my book on creative writing, *Write In Style*, did exactly what you describe, a few years after releasing my book in 2004. It shut down the Union Square Publishing imprint that specialized in books for writers and moved the company from New York to Las Vegas, where it concentrated on books about gambling.

I halfheartedly queried one or two publishers about rereleasing the book, but no one snapped it up. Frustrated, I let the book languish. Years passed, and the information in the book grew dated.

One day I was talking to the owner of a local book printing company, and he asked whatever happened to *Write In Style*. He knew it had sold well but was out of print. When I said I was remiss in updating it, he suggested I self-publish and release it at a conference he had planned in a few months. With his encouragement, I had a plan and a deadline, if I wanted to launch the second edition at his conference.

My decision was a great one. With a deadline looming, I revamped, updated, and expanded the book, had a new cover designed and the book printed in time for the conference. The printer brought the first fifty copies to the conference, and I sold all but one of those copies, the first day the book was released. The book continues to sell copies through Amazon and other outlets. I make much more per book than I did with the traditional publisher, and I had complete control over the cover, the layout, and the title.

Speaking of the title, I needed to keep the same title for continuity, but I updated and simplified the subtitle and ditched the long, convoluted subtitle the previous publisher had insisted upon. I even added an index, which the prior publisher would not do. Because I had more control over the self-published edition of *Write In Style*, writers get more information from it than before, the printer makes money every time a copy is sold, and I make more money per book. Everybody wins.

Self-publishing is not for everyone, but it met my needs.

**Q:** I’ve been given a 45% discount on an ad in *The New York Times*, where I can promote my self-published novella. The ad would cost me only $3,000. What do you think?

**A:** I’m not a book promoter, but an editor, so I cannot professionally evaluate the worth of such an offer. I can advise you only of my opinion of the financial aspects, which means I’ll speak from my gut feelings, rather than giving professional advice on the subject. Nevertheless, here goes.

Do the math. I will pick a number out of the air as an example. If you are fortunate enough to make $5 per book sold, you would have to sell 600 books on the one day the advertisement appeared, simply to recoup your
expenses, before you even made a profit. I suspect, but have no knowledge to back up my suspicions, that only the bestselling books by well-known authors might sell as many as 600 copies in one day. I also wonder if an ad in a newspaper in print or online would compel readers to stop reading the paper and either put the newspaper down and go online or switch to another website to order a book online.

It’s been my experience that I sell the most books wherever I appear in person. Print ads, on the other hand, have given me weak responses in terms of sales. For example, one particular ad resulted in my selling one copy of one of my books. Pitiful.

I won’t delve into the fact that few people even subscribe to a newspaper anymore, because in the end it is up to you how you spend your promotional dollars. I suspect you can find cheaper, more effective ways to promote a novella, however. I suggest reading a book on how to promote a book. I’ll bet (but I don’t know for sure) that such books do not recommend buying advertisements in a daily newspaper.

Q: I have a client whose manuscript has a limited omniscient point of view, but the author gets into the perspective of only two characters: a woman and then her boyfriend. These perspectives are not in separate scenes, but within one scene, all through the book. Can an author do that? I’m thinking it will be a deal breaker with a publisher, but the author is quite determined to keep it. What do you think?

A: Creative writing tends to have guidelines, rather than rules. The guidelines say to use only one point of view per scene, and that each scene should be in the point of view of the most important character in that scene. New writers hoping to sell to a publisher are wise to follow that rule of thumb, because not following it could be a deal breaker with many a publisher. If an agent spots something that would be a deal breaker with a publisher, the agent has no incentive to handle the book either.

I recall reading a wonderful book with two perspectives of each scene, but the author handled it brilliantly by putting the scene in separate chapters, first in the woman’s point of view, and then in the next chapter, the same scene from the man’s point of view. The points of view differed in hilarious ways. The book rocked!

Has anyone ever succeeded while disregarding the current one-point-of-view-per-scene recommendation? John Grisham comes to mind. He tells great stories, but in the one book that I read, the POV was often in three or more characters within the same scene. It drove me crazy. As a result I will never read another of his books. Anyway, if a writer has a reputation and readership as strong as John Grisham’s, it’s fine to ignore the basic tenets of strong creative writing, but I would never advise an unpublished writer to disregard those tenets.

Although we editors must give advice, the author makes the final decisions, until and unless an agent or publisher gets involved. Will an agent or publisher even get involved with a book that breaks away from the standards of creative writing? Grisham’s success says yes, but how many of us are as well-known as Grisham? I didn’t read his first published book, so I don’t know if it followed the standard guidelines for point of view. I suspect it did, and after he met with success, he could write any way he wanted. If anyone knows differently, I’m open to hearing more information.

Q: Does a reprint of a book that has no changes in content require it to be labeled second edition? I would like to leave it as is, first edition, but want to follow protocol.

A: A reprinted book in its original form would be called the second printing, third printing, and so forth. A new printing does not constitute a new edition. When the book differs from the original but is also similar, it is a new edition. With my book, Write In Style, for example, when my publisher decided not to go into a second printing and returned the rights to me, I changed the subtitle, updated the information, and greatly expanded the book. Because of all the upgrades and changes, the new printing is considered a second edition.

Bobbie Christmas is a book editor, owner of Zebra Communications, and quadruple-award-winning author of Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing. Read more “Ask the Book Doctor” questions and answers at zebraeditor.com.
WANT TO TURN YOUR BOOK INTO A TV SHOW?
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BEHIND THE MASK
IT'S NOT ALWAYS OUR ENEMIES WHO BETRAY US.

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“She’s the scene setter—the voice in the narrative—the point-of-view of the protagonist—the twist in the plot and the killer of my babies.” We are ...

www.coast2coastpenpals.com
**Collective Wisdom: Best Advice from Writers Groups**

**Two FWA Writers Groups Publish Anthologies**

by Chris Coward

and panelists Maureen Jung and Carol Jones

Usually in this series we weigh in on a difficult or controversial issue. Not today.

Today we’ll see how two Florida Writers Association writing groups independently came up with the same great idea: to publish a book of stories written by their members. Here’s our interview of Maureen Jung, leader of Clay County Writers in Orange Park, and Carol Jones, leader of Freedom Writers Group in Ocala.

**Chris Coward: What motivated you to create an anthology?**

Maureen: Jung: “Local writer Carol Wolverton (North Florida Writers, Inc.) spoke at our fourth anniversary meeting. She challenged us to put together an anthology of our work. I was a little anxious about the undertaking, but when Skapyak Harlin (Shantyboat Writers leader) signed on as editor, I had the confidence to go forward.”

Carol Jones: “There are so many good writers in our group who have yet to be published. We figured, with at least one story in print, they now can say, ‘Yes, I have a story (or two or three) in print.’ Hey, Got a Minute? is a collection of short stories and quick reads—a collage of fiction and nonfiction, of mixed genre tales plus essays, memoirs, and poems—all arranged within an eye-catching gold cover designed by Carrie Richter. We’re proud of our accomplishment. We like to think we have something for everyone.”

**Chris: Did you encounter any surprises?**

Maureen: “As a result of many contributors dropping out early in the project, I put a strong stamp on the project outcome, helping with research tips, reading/commenting on early drafts, and focusing many meetings on hands-on exercises. Outside speakers addressed topics that also informed and motivated our contributors. Through personal donations, we have about $600 to put toward editing, publishing, and promoting the book. Still lots of work to do, but it is coming along.”

Carol: “Surprises? Oh yeah! Not with the stories themselves or their authors, but with preparation for publication. We encountered delay after delay. For example, establishing an account with the publisher. We didn’t know that the publisher we chose is set up to handle one book/one author, meaning one author would equal one email address and would handle all the financials himself. We’re like a subsidiary company that works through the parent. This publisher was not set up for this. A key person at FWA, Chrissy Jackson, came to our rescue. If not for her, we would have had to publish elsewhere.”

**Chris: How did you set up the process?**

Maureen: “We started with a mind mapping session to explore the project. In later meetings, we fleshed out ideas. Our title, Embedded in Clay, emerged from an early discussion and caught on right away. Drawing on materials developed by Lynn Skapyak Harlin for her Shantyboat Writers group, I encouraged writers to research their topics at local archives and libraries and in interviews. The poets also rose to the occasion, absorbing the embeddedness of local stories and conveying that sense through voice, tone, and images.”

Carol: “We started with a committee of five who established guidelines. We chose a word count max of 3,000 and decided on the kinds of stories/essays/poems we would accept as well as those we would not accept.”

**Chris: Any other thoughts or observations?**

Maureen: “As a result of many contributors dropping out early in the project, I put a strong stamp on the project outcome, helping with research tips, reading/commenting on early drafts, and focusing many meetings on hands-on exercises. Outside speakers addressed topics that also informed and motivated our contributors. Through personal donations, we have about $600 to put toward editing, publishing, and promoting the book. Still lots of work to do, but it is coming along.”

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with community groups and make presentations and build alliances. I believe in writers in the community.”

Carol: “That old adage, ‘If anything can go wrong, it will,’ is alive and going strong in the Freedom Writers Group. We had to change the projected completion date so many times that my calendar looks like a bad editing job. And it’s not finished yet!”

Huge thanks to Maureen and Carol for sharing their experiences. Is their work an example of Writers Helping Writers, or what?

Soooo … writers, is your group doing something innovative that you’d like to share? If so, feel free to contact Chris at chriscoward@comcast.net.

Chris Coward is the co-leader of FWA’s Oxford Writers critique group, chairperson for the 2017 Royal Palm Literary Awards competition, a member of the FWA Board of Directors, and past FWA president. She is also 2017 chairperson for general fiction for the Florida Book Awards sponsored by Florida State University Libraries.

Maureen A. Jung, Ph.D. trained as a sociologist at University of California, Santa Barbara, won the Theodore Calvin Pease Award (Society of American Archivists) Fellow of the South Coast Writing Project, UCSB’s affiliate of the National Writing Project. For 18 years, she ran a writing consulting firm in Sacramento, California. She prepared two White House presentations and a successful $15-million healthcare grant proposal. Her best practices manual for community nutrition was funded by the California Department of Public Health and is used in public health departments statewide and by the Los Angeles Unified Public School District. She launched FWA Clay County Writers in 2010.

Carol Jones joined Florida Writers Association in November 2004 and has been the leader of Freedom Writers Group in Ocala since October 2005. She won a Royal Palm Literary Award in 2010 and again in 2011, and has had short stories published in FWA’s Collections series as well as Ocala’s Good Life magazine. Carol wrote a newspaper column for nearly five years, edited several books, and has a novel in progress. She is also collaborating with her sister on a duo memoir. Find her book, Life’s Rough Roads, a biography about a Jewish actor and a Catholic nun, a local Ocala couple, on Amazon.

ABOUT THE ANTHOLOGIES

Embedded in Clay
Clay County Writers, Orange Park, FL
Description: More than a dozen local writers explore local communities and characters who called Clay County home
Genres: Nonfiction, creative nonfiction, poetry
Requirements: Maximum word count 2,500 words; references required
Editor: Lynn Skapyak Harlin
Contributors: Lillian Kiernan Brown; Lena and Billy Crain; Beth Eifert; Michael Ray FitzGerald, Ph.D.; Tim Gilmore, Ph.D.; Paula R. Hilton; Lynn Skapyak Harlin; Inez Holger; Maureen A. Jung, Ph.D.; Marshall Lenne; Nancy E. Moore; Major Bryan J. Pitchford; Diane E. Shepard; Joan T. Warren; Penina Weltman
Projected publication: May 2017
Purchase information: TBD

Hey, Got a Minute?
Freedom Writers Group, Ocala, FL
Description: Short stories and quick reads from various genres arranged in an order to keep the pages turning; personal life’s maxims interspersed; 26 authors contributed 87 stories
Genres: Fiction and nonfiction; genres include science fiction, mystery, humor, horror, romance, children’s, inspirational, memoir, essay, and poetry
Requirements: Maximum word count 3,000; no erotica, no political rhetoric, and no sermonizing; entries were required to undergo the critique/revision process and receive final approval of the committee
Editors: Came from outside (Red Adept Editing) and within the group (Joan Francis, Beverly Gilewitz, Lyn Hill, and Carrie Richter).
Committee: Carol Jones, Writers Group Leader; Lyn Hill; Anthony LaPenta; Karen Lowry; R.M. Prioleau
Projected publication: April 2017
Purchase: Amazon $16.99; Kindle $2.99 (anticipated price)
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& Conference Guest of Honor

“An absolute master of the thriller novel” —Dean Koontz

“The father of the modern action novel” —Vince Flynn

David Morrell

Lessons from a Lifetime of Writing

In this all-day fiction-writers workshop, New York Times best-selling author David Morrell discusses the lessons he has learned in his unusually long, 45-year career.

David Morrell is the bestselling author of 34 novels, including his debut novel, *First Blood*, which became the 1982 blockbuster film *Rambo* starring Sylvester Stallone. His influential espionage novel, *The Brotherhood of the Rose*, became the only TV miniseries to be broadcast after a Super Bowl.

David is a popular and inspiring writing instructor whose peers endearingly call him “the professor” and whose book *The Successful Novelist: A Lifetime of Lessons and Writing and Publishing* has been praised by many esteemed authors, including Dean Koontz, Peter Straub, Lawrence Block, Joe R. Lansdale, Donald E. Westlake, and F. Paul Wilson.

He is an Edgar and Anthony finalist, a Nero and Macavity winner, and a three-time recipient of the distinguished Bram Stoker Award from the Horror Writers Association. The International Thriller Writers organization gave him its prestigious career-achievement Thriller Master Award. Bouchercon, the world’s largest crime-fiction convention, gave him its Lifetime Achievement Award.

David Morrell will also be the Florida Writers Association’s Guest of Honor at the Florida Writers Conference, where he will be interviewed, sign books, and later present the one-hour craft of writing workshop, “A Trap for the Unwary: The Risks and Rewards of the First Person Viewpoint.”

• Thursday, October 19, 2017
• Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
• $125. Florida Writers Association Members
• $150 Non-members | $200 Walk-up. Includes continental breakfast, lunch, and all-day beverages
• Register online at shop.floridawritersfoundation.org

How to find your own voice and subject matter
How to write a creative alternative to conventional outlines
The importance of research
Choosing a narrative viewpoint
The most common and easily corrected mistakes in structure, description, and dialogue
Self-publishing versus the conventional road
How to market your book after you finish it

Your workshop fee is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Proceeds support the Florida Writers Foundation, Inc. (FWF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation formed to promote literacy and enhance the writing skills of children, youth, and adults.
W
riting a book is like jumping off a cliff. But fear not. As Annie Dillard says, grow wings on the way down. For authors, a safe landing transforms a manuscript into a printed book. If you’re adventurous, I’m here to tell you that you can land your book by self-publishing.

If you have the time, instead of paying an online “full-service book publisher,” hire several freelancers. Through networking with other authors, you can find an experienced editor, a book designer, a photographer, and a copy editor. If you can manage this arrangement, you may save a load of time, money, and aggravation. I did. My guidebook was: The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing by Marilyn Ross & Sue Collier—it’s well tested, with more than 100,000 copies sold. I also referenced The Copyright Permission and Libel Handbook by Lloyd J. Jassin and Steven C. Schechter, and The Writer’s Legal Companion by Brad Bunnin and Peter Beren. With these, I learned that self-publishing, although not easy, is possible.

Consider these steps:

1. **Be sure you are ready to publish.** When you are, edit again anyway. For guidance, I studied Getting the Words Right by Theodore A. Rees Cheney, How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One by Stanley Fish, The Scene Book: A Primer for the Fiction Writer by Sandra Scofield, Self-Editing for Fiction Writers by Browne & King, and Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art by Judith Barrington, and The Art of Subtext by Charles Baxter.

2. **Set a publication date and plan your tasks backwards from that.** My guide for this was The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results by Gary Keller with Jay Papsan.

3. **Hire a professional editor.** Every manuscript should be checked by a second set of eyes. When you interview editors, ask them for a free sample edit of a few pages from your manuscript. An experienced editor can be especially helpful with the story’s structure.

4. **Review your editor’s recommendations.** As the author, you make the final decisions.

5. **Solicit feedback from a few readers.**

6. **When you are “finished” revising, on the last page type “END.”** That is good psychologically.

7. **Hire a copy editor.** This is a specialization. Many editors do not do copyediting. When interviewing, ask, “How many passes do you do?” meaning: How many times do they read it looking for corrections to make? If they don’t understand the question, find someone else. Your copyeditor should follow the style for your genre. For memoirs and fiction, it’s usually The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS). For journalism and business writing, it’s usually AP Style.

8. **Collect promotional blurbs from authors and experts.** Provide complimentary copies of your manuscript and ask them to meet a deadline.

9. **Hire a professional book designer.** These artists make book interiors look like real books, not fancied-up Word documents. Designers can make or break your book with the cover. Before hiring, evaluate samples.

10. **Pay a professional photographer for an author photograph.** Put it on the back cover. Resist the temptation to use selfies.

11. **Optional: form a Limited Liability Company (LLC) as your press.** Mine is New Wings Press, LLC. There are tax advantages.

12. **Get your book printed.** I vote for print-on-demand companies—either CreateSpace (owned by Amazon) or IngramSpark. I chose IngramSpark. Why? Their free sample copy was high-quality, they have numerous distribution channels, and their production process easily guides you through the steps to transform your manuscript into a beautiful book. You can call with questions, too. I love that.

Charlene L. Edge earned a B.A. in English from Rollins College. She gives presentations about her seventeen-year cult experience and is a member of the Florida Writers Association, the Authors Guild, and the International Cultic Studies Association. Charlene lives in Florida with her husband, Dr. Hoyt L. Edge, and blogs at: charleneedge.com. She authored Undertow: My Escape from the Fundamentalism and Cult Control of The Way International, New Wings Press, LLC.
Ray Flynt

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The conference is coming; the conference is coming! Yes, I am excited about the upcoming 2017 Florida Writers Conference from October 19-22 at the Orlando Hilton Altamonte Springs. Why you ask? Because I’m a conference junkie.

The first thing I love about the Florida Writers Conference is the people. Like most writers, I don’t often interact with other writers beyond my small group. This is an opportunity for me to meet and talk about the craft of writing with like-minded people.

The Florida Writers Conference is designed with writers in mind. There are several (and I mean several) activities to entertain your inner muse. For example, there are the Genre Breakfasts where writers find a table labeled with their chosen genre and break bread with other writers who specialize in that genre—or you can be a contrarian and sit with writers of a genre less known to you.

Then there are the breakout sessions. These are workshops and panels led by top professionals in their fields such as romance writers, publishers, or legal experts who have their fingers on the pulse of the writing world. Learn how to plot, plan, and pen the next bestseller or just have a refresher course on self-editing.

Agents and acquisition editors are also attending the Conference in hopes that your manuscript will be their next big thing. So be sure to register for an interview, as slots fill up quickly. Not ready to pitch your manuscript? Sign up for the Gong Show and practice your pitch to a panel of experts or just watch for some added inspiration.

But did you know you could request a private interview with an agent or acquisition editor even if your work is unfinished? The agents are at the conference for you, so you can choose how you’d like to conduct the interview. I personally scheduled an interview last year, offered a short summary, then asked the editor what my manuscript was missing. She provided invaluable assistance and helped me create a path forward.

The Florida Writers Conference also has 20-minute interviews available with industry experts. This year’s faculty has knowledge of everything from ethics for writers to navigating social media. Have an idea for a children’s book? Talk with an experienced children’s author. Want a 20-minute private editing tutorial? Sign up to meet with a book doctor. Need marketing advice? You guessed it, plan to meet with a marketing expert.

And, yes, there’s more! Before the Conference, on Thursday, October 19, our National Guest of Honor David Morrell will be hosting a session about the lessons he’s learned from 45 years of fiction writing. This daylong session requires a separate registration, but your fee helps support the Florida Writers Foundation. Then there’s Steve Berry, the Florida Writer of the Year, who will be holding workshops and providing a keynote speech designed to inspire us to reach for the stars.

This year’s conference will have a bookstore for members to sell and sign their books, a welcome party for writers to meet and greet one another, a silent auction to benefit the Florida Writers Foundation, FWA’s sister organization formed to promote literacy, a “coffee shop” to relax and unwind, shopping, swag, vendors, food, networking, and much, much more.

On Saturday, enjoy an unforgettable evening of camaraderie and celebration at the 2017 Royal Palm Literary Awards. This banquet is the conference pinnacle when attendees mingle with best-selling authors, agents, and publishers to cheer on the talented pool of FWA writers as the coveted RPLA awards are announced. Even the hotel shows off its best meal and extravagant desserts.

So, yes, I am a conference junkie, and I can’t wait to see you in Altamonte Springs this October.

Alison Nissen is a writer who does daily battle with laundry and dog hair. She is managing partner of 3 Dog Tales Productions, a ghost writing company, the chair of FWA’s Lakeland Writers, and author of Resolve, Courage, Hope. Read “Tales from the Laundry Room” at alisonnissen.com
The publishing industry is hopping. There are more than 4,500 books published every day! Despite the increased competition, book bloggers still review and promote books—and some books still generate a lot of buzz. If you’d like to tap into some of that buzz, then read on! Pitching bloggers, while not difficult, can be intimidating. Whether you don’t know how, or you don’t like rejection, rest assured, book lovers really do want to know about great books! So here are some of best practices for generating blogger interest!

1. **Are you pitching the right bloggers?** Although I’m sure you wouldn’t, it happens often enough that it’s worth repeating. Don’t create a blanket pitch and use it for every blogger everywhere. Instead, pitch the bloggers who read your genre or who have reviewed similar books. Read their terms carefully. If they say they don’t accept e-book only, or indie-published, or a specific genre, don’t assume they’ll make an exception for you. Respect their rules and don’t pitch them.

2. **Remember that less is more.** Lots of people (authors, publicists, etc.) are fans of pitching huge numbers of bloggers. And they often pitch them all in one e-mail using the blind copy function. This is a bad idea for a variety of reasons, but one big one is this: being bcc’d on an e-mail lacks personalization, looks like spam, and seems as though you simply couldn’t take the time to address a personal e-mail.

3. **Be personal.** Several years ago, I set up an e-mail for an unknown romance writer. I went through a list of one hundred bloggers appropriate for her book and pitched them individually. Not only did I personalize each e-mail with a salutation, but I also took a moment to mention things from their blogs. In one instance, one of the bloggers had just gotten a dog and named it Library, and I commented on how cute I thought that name was. This level of personalization got the author eighty out of a hundred blogger requests, even though she had no history and virtually no social media footprint. In an age of “point and shoot” it’s often little touches like these that make a difference whether your pitch is seen and responded to, or “filed” in the trash folder.

4. **Engage with the bloggers.** Don’t just reach out to bloggers when you want something from them. Many appreciate a personal touch where you engage with them before pitching them your book. If you need a starting point, start commenting on five blogs you absolutely love. That simple act can get you more exposure than you realize. Just posting a thoughtful comment tells a blogger that you’re engaged with them, you are reading their blog, and you’re paying attention. I can almost guarantee if you do this, when your turn comes, they’ll be paying attention, too.

5. **Don’t expect a response.** Bloggers often don’t respond to pitches that they don’t have time for or don’t interest them. They aren’t ignoring you personally—
it’s just that your book wasn’t a right fit for them at that time. Again, it’s not personal. A lot of our authors ask us what the response was when we’ve pitched them to bloggers, and I always remind them that no response means no interest—but it’s anyone’s guess as to why. Bloggers are busy. And most book bloggers do it for fun. They love books. Don’t expect them to respond to every e-mail they get, and don’t badger them when you don’t hear. That said…

6 **Take the time to follow up.** While you shouldn’t ping bloggers daily, it is okay to send a follow-up e-mail to your initial pitch after a week or two. But I would not start by saying something like “since I didn’t hear from you, I’m writing you again.” (A blogger once told me they used to get this pretty often.) Any follow-up should have a slightly tweaked pitch—maybe some great news if you won an award, got a great new blurb, or have a fantastic new book to boost the offer.

7 **Keep it short and sweet.** Any pitch you send should be short. There’s an old pitching adage: “above the fold.” This comes from the newspaper industry where the biggest news is always at the top of the paper, so “above the fold.” Your pitch should be one paragraph—short and sweet. I get pitched for reviews more than you’d think (considering I don’t review books on my blog) and the pitches are often long-winded and take three paragraphs to get to the point.

8 **Take some time to craft your e-mail subject line.** A strong e-mail subject line is the most important piece of your pitch. If the subject line is lengthy, unclear, or boring, it won’t get noticed. Sometimes I spend more time on the e-mail subject line than I do on the actual pitch. It’s that important.

9 **Think outside the blog.** Depending on your topic, consider non-book bloggers who write about industry-specific topics. For example, Jane Friedman is a fab blogger who talks about all things publishing. Though she doesn’t review books per se, she’ll often excerpt my newly released books for her blog. If you wrote a book with a heavy focus on food, consider pitching food bloggers. Get to know your industry and what they are doing, and even if bloggers specifically say they don’t review books, you may want to approach them with a book excerpt or guest blog post.

10 **Keep pitching and take advantage of every opportunity.** There’s no reason that pitching should be limited to ninety days after publication. Keep pitching as long as there are bloggers you haven’t pitched. I often start with smaller bloggers if the author is an unknown and then build their platform from there. It’s much easier to get bloggers interested in something that’s showing a bit of momentum online and sometimes smaller profile bloggers are a great way to do that. Also, if you’re discouraged by the lack of response, consider smaller bloggers who aren’t getting thousands of pitches each month. You may get a better response and certainly some nice attention for your book.

11 **Say please, say thank you.** Anyone who knows me knows I am a maniac about manners. I send personal thank you notes. Even if a pitch is declined, I always thank them for considering the book, as well as for taking the time to respond. Remember, a pitch that didn’t get picked up probably has more to do with the blogger’s schedule rather than your book. And again, if the blogger did review the book, or excerpt it, or even mention it—never, ever, ever forget to say thank you. And finally…

12 **Promote the blogger review/mention.** Whatever you manage to get, promote it. Share it on your social media and be sure to tag the blogger, too. Bloggers appreciate that you share your good news, and be sure to let them know when you do.

Although marketing has always been all about relationships, in my opinion it’s more true now than ever. Your friends, family, and any bloggers you already know will play a huge role in your book’s success. But, it’s also about the people that you have yet to meet. You must be willing to step out of your comfort zone and reach out to bloggers, thought leaders, and influencers, and make the effort to connect. Although not everyone will respond, you’ll be pleasantly surprised by those that do. And direct results will begin to come through in the form of promotional opportunities for your book—perhaps double, perhaps triple the requests you saw before!
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What do the novels *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *On the Road*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey* have in common? Fredrik Colting.

Unlike Ernest Hemingway, Truman Capote, Arthur C. Clarke, and Jack Kerouac, Swedish author Fredrik Colting is not a household name. However, you might remember him as the author of *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye*, the unauthorized sequel to *Catcher in the Rye*. Shortly before his death in January, 2010, J.D. Salinger obtained an injunction against publication of the book in the United States and Canada until such time as the original work goes into the public domain. The Court had denied Colting’s claim that the sequel qualified under the copyright exception known as fair use.

Since the Salinger lawsuit, Mr. Colting has been focused on converting iconic copyright-protected novels into simplified illustrated books for children. In the process, he has garnered eye-catching headlines such as this one from the *New York Times*: “Forget ‘Pat the Bunny.’ My Child is Reading Hemingway.”

On January 9, 2017, Mr. Colting was sued by the four copyright holders who claimed that his children’s books are unauthorized derivative works, which take the plot, settings, themes, sequence of events, and principal characters from each novel and then abridge and condense each one. According to the plaintiffs, each of Colting’s books simply re-tells critical plot elements in language addressed to children, rather than transforming, commenting upon, or criticizing each novel as would be required to qualify for fair use.

In response, Mr. Colting claims that the books are study guides for elementary children and therefore qualify for an education-based fair use exception to the copyright laws.

American copyright law provides that translations, abridgements, and adaptations of literary works belong to the original copyright holder. Such versions are considered derivative works, i.e., they “derive” so closely from the original work that the copyrights of each cannot be separated.

While this particular lawsuit is still in its infancy, it may be instructive to review J. K. Rowling’s successful copyright action against Steven Jan Vander Ark for his *Harry Potter* guidebook. In denying Vander Ark’s claim of fair use, the Court stated that his lexicon copied enough of the *Harry Potter* series to constitute a copyright infringement.

Anne Dalton, Esquire, has provided business and personal legal services to writers and other creatives in all phases of their creative development for 40 years. She proudly serves as General Counsel to the Florida Writers Association and is an FWA Lifetime Member. Ann is licensed in Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania. Her credentials can be viewed at daltonlegal.com. Contact her at ad Dalton@daltonlegal.com.

Comments contained in this article are informational only and do not constitute legal advice. Please seek the advice of an attorney of your choice regarding specific factual issues.

* “Holy Cow, How Did That Happen? The Mystery of Joint Copyrights” was recently re-published on the Florida Writers Association blog. floridawriters.net/mystery-joint-copyrights/
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I have had a passion for publishing since I was very young. My first article was published when I was ten years old in the Courier-Times, a newspaper covering Philadelphia and vicinity. The newspaper’s idea was fantastic. It was called the Jr. Reporter’s Club where anyone under eighteen could submit an article or story idea. It made me want to read more so I could write with more and better ideas. And I was starting at an age where the fear of rejection didn’t mean as much to me as it does now.

Today, I have the good fortune to be the leader of the Orlando Chapter of the Florida Writers Association where I meet several new writers each month. Invariably, the new member’s eyes will light up like Christmas morning when they tell me about the topic of their manuscript. It is their passion, but sadly many go on to tell me they have not yet published because they fear the writing isn’t ready for publication or they’re worried about rejection and its effect on future projects.

As a former gymnastics coach, I taught young gymnasts to do back handsprings on a balance beam that was four feet high and only four inches wide. The most important part of my job was knowing when the gymnast had the competence and confidence to go for the skill one hundred percent—anything less could lead to severe injury.

Most of the writers that present in my critique group have the competence. In fact, many times I’m jealous of their writing ability. Still, submitting for publication is delayed because the author lacks the confidence to submit. In other words, they won’t go for it. In gymnastics, as in writing, there is nothing to coach or to give feedback to unless you go for it.

You can get feedback by letting your friends and associates read your manuscript, but do you really think they’re going to give feedback that may hurt your feelings? My suggestion is you join a local critique group. Florida Writers Association has several critique groups around the state where you can present your material and get honest, helpful feedback (floridawriters.net). You can also go to meetup.com to find writers groups where you live, or you can create your own critique group through a library or other organization with authors that write in a similar genre.

You can also self-edit by reading your manuscript out loud. Digitally recording your manuscript and listening to it is another way to catch clunky sentences and improper wording. Even better, in my opinion, is to allow someone else in your critique group to read it out loud. You can identify the places where people stumble over the writing and take notes.

If you are really brave, you can publish today, virtually within hours of writing a manuscript. You can create what publishers call an ARC (Advanced Reader’s Copy) and publish it as an e-book or paperback on any of several platforms. If the feedback is good—congratulations! If the feedback is less than acceptable, pull the book down and make the changes suggested in the review(s). Remember, you are writing to a niche audience, so take feedback only from those interested in what you write.

Joining critique groups, attending FWA meetings, webinars, and conferences, and presenting your material at open microphone events is a great way to get feedback and keep the passion for publishing a driving force in your writing.

Keep in mind what you write and publish today may, in the future, seem like it needs a few tweaks, or after feedback, you might just think, “I wrote that? Awesome!” Practice writing every day and don’t worry about perfection. Focus on doing the best you can, solicit feedback where appropriate—then submit for publication!

If you think you can publish, you can!

Rik Feeney is a published author, editor, cover designer, and book coach working with clients on writing, publishing, and marketing. Contact: usabookcoach@gmail.com or 407-529-8539. Send Rik your e-mail for a free PDF copy of Writing Books for Fun, Fame and Fortune! (rickfeeney.com)
Balance Sheet
January - December 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>AS OF DEC 31, 2016</th>
<th>AS OF DEC 31, 2015 (PY)</th>
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<td>$44,748.49</td>
<td>$15,706.81</td>
<td>$29,041.68</td>
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| **LIABILITIES AND EQUITY**  |                    |                          |         |
| Liabilities                 |                    |                          |         |
| Current Liabilities         |                    |                          |         |
| Other Current Liabilities   |                    |                          |         |
| 2030 Sales Tax Payable      | 535.25             | 410.77                   | 124.48  |
| **Total Other Current Liabilities** | $535.25 | $410.77 | $124.48 |
| **Total Current Liabilities** | $535.25 | $410.77 | $124.48 |
| **Total Liabilities**       | $535.25            | $410.77                  | $124.48 |

| Equity                      |                    |                          |         |
| 3001 Opening Bal Equity     | 7,451.68           | 7,451.68                 | 0.00    |
| 3010 Unrestrict (retained earnings) | 7,844.36 | -11,218.13 | 19,062.49 |
| Net Income                  | 28,917.20          | 19,062.49                | 9,854.71 |
| **Total Equity**            | $44,213.24         | $15,296.04               | $28,917.20 |
| **TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY** | $44,748.49 | $15,706.81 | $29,041.68 |
Welcome to the Florida Writers Association 2016 Financials. This past year was a year of change and moving forward for FWA. The second year of holding the annual conference at the new venue was a great success, and also gave us the opportunity to see what worked and what can change for 2017.

We also saw a huge increase in submissions for the RPLA and Collection series contests, which is thrilling not only for the authors but for FWA as a whole. The word is getting out so keep those submissions coming in!

The FWA is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) entity, is debt-free, and is current with all required federal and state compliance filings.

As new Vice President, Finance, for the FWA, I look forward to serving our community and working with Board members and members alike over the next year. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at fwa.treasurer@gmail.com or celticadlx@gmail.com.

—Lisa Buie-Collard
Vice President, Finance

Profit and Loss
January - December 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JAN - DEC 2016</th>
<th>JAN - DEC 2015 (PY)</th>
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A Fish Tale
by Diane M. Boilard

“I’m the world’s greatest fisherwoman,” Paula exclaimed to her friend Susie.

“Why are you the greatest?”

“I’m the greatest fisherwoman of our Maine vacation fishing trip.”

“Paula, what d’you mean?”

“I’m a woman and I like to fish. That makes me a fisherwoman.

“And you’re the greatest in the whole world?”

“Susie, listen to this.”

“I can’t imagine what kind of fish tale you’ll tell me.”

“Elsie, Roland, Leo, and I flew in a float plane from Greenville, Maine, to fish at Bradford Camp, on the shore of Lake Munsungan.”

“I don’t like to fish. They eat my bait and I don’t catch anything,” Susie said.

“Well, here’s what happened. The pilot anchored the floatplane to the dock. We carried our fishing gear and suitcases to our log cabins. The next morning, we registered for fishing licenses and put them in the ribbon of our sports hat. Elsie and I helped the men load the two aluminum boats with our equipment. The guys started the motors and steered the boats to the middle of the lake.”

“Is the lake deep?” Susie asked.

“It’s about one-hundred-twenty feet. We trolled at low speed with the bait down twenty feet, hoping to catch brown lake trout.”

“Did you catch any?”

“Within the hour, Elsie caught a three and a half pounds. After lunch, she caught another. At Bradford Camp, there’s a tradition. For dinner, the chef cooked the first fish caught and served it to the one with the honor.”

“Did you eat some?”

“Elsie shared her delicious trout with us.”

“The next day, I caught my first fish. Leo netted it. He took the scale out of the tackle box. It weighed five pounds two ounces. I felt great.”

“And that makes you the best? It still doesn’t explain why you’re the greatest.” Susie expressed a look of disbelief with a frown at Paula’s story.

“You’ll see. The next day, we women each caught two. The score: Elsie: 4, me: 3, the men: 0. On the third day, we repeated our luck. The score, Elsie: 6, me: 4, the men: 0.

“Doesn’t that make Elsie the greatest fisherwoman?” Susie said.

“Oh, but there’s more. During our last fishing day at Camp, lucky me, I felt a strong pull on the line. The fish fought hard and swam deeper. It jumped out of the water many times before I finally reeled it next to the boat. Leo netted the trout and weighed it. He said, ‘You caught a gorgeous one, a six and a half pound. It’s a beauty.’ I was so happy.”

“Wow, Paula. I would be too.”

“Back ashore, the camp helper placed my trophy fish, along with the others we caught, on blocks of ice cut from the frozen lake. They cover the blocks with sawdust to keep them from melting during the summer months.

“On the last day, before we packed the fish in our cooler, the camp’s helper cut a branch a half-inch thick and five feet long.”

“What for?” Susie asked.

“Elsie threaded her five fish, remember we ate the first one, and I added my five to the branch. It curved down from the weight including the largest fish caught. Mine. That’s why I’m the greatest!”

“That’s great, but what about the men? How did they do?” Susie asked.

“Elsie and I smiled and gloated with our beautiful string of fish while our husbands took pictures. We couldn’t take photos of their fish. They had none.”

“Didn’t you feel bad for them?”

“Elsie and I did feel bad. Well, not really.” Paula giggled. “Our husbands had no luck at all, not even a bite. Elsie reveled in beginner’s luck, but I caught the biggest fish of all the fisherpersons that week at Bradford Camp.”

Paula held the framed certificate for Susie to read as she exclaimed with joy, “I’ll always treasure my earned award and my new title, The Greatest Fisherwoman of Lake Munsungan.”

Diane M. Boilard lives in Port Orange, FL.
I’m the world’s greatest birdwatcher and perhaps the most unusual man ever to set foot in the woods or meadows to search for elusive avian species.

Nothing compares to the scent of a forest when first setting out early on a summer morning with the dew still dripping off the pine needles and the sound of my feet smacking the ground. I am stimulated with the anticipation of the hunt. The solitude of the natural world fills me with joy.

On my excursions, I’m always accompanied by a fellow birder. At first it was my daughter, Gabby, who picked up her interest in birds after seeing a National Geographic special on TV. She was fascinated by the flocks of flamingos hurrying across a pond in south Florida. Since she started her law career, though, her times with me have been limited to the occasional weekend. My neighbor Bart has replaced Gabby on my latest excursions. He’s not as observant as Gabby and tends to talk too much. He should be called Gabby as well. He gives me assistance though and is very good at describing what he sees.

A couple of weeks ago, he spotted a Merlin much lower in the trees than you usually find one. I heard the call and directed Bart where to aim his scope to spot the elusive raptor. He found him, but when he did his shriek of joy frightened the bird and it flew away. I told him that if he was going to be successful birder, he would have to learn to control his emotions and approach all bird targets with stealth. Birds in the wild aren’t like neighborhood robins that concentrate on the worms in the grass, ignoring all other distractions around them. Forest birds aren’t used to all the noise we humans make.

Bart apologized and told me he would work on it, but knowing Bart and his natural inclination to chatter, I doubt that I’ll ever see the day when we go on a field trip and discover a truly rare bird.

My birdwatching exploits are known nationally, thanks to a feature article in Birdwatching Today that was published two years ago. They sent a reporter out to interview me and paid for my lunch at Crispy’s, our local diner. He asked me how I got into the hobby, how long I had been at it and a lot of other general questions. What interested him most was the fact that I’m legally blind. I told him that I can see a little, especially movements close to me, but as far as seeing birds in the high branches of trees, I am helpless.

I lost my eyesight in an industrial accident at the book publishing plant. We were working on a re-issue of Audubon’s Birds of America, and those images have stayed with me ever since. I know those birds like I know my own children.

The reporter seemed to have his doubts about my bird-log, where I describe the date, place, time, sex, and species of the birds I find. It is a respectable list. I know there are other sighted birders that have more extensive bird-logs than mine, but I can do something other birders can’t. I can imitate the song of any bird I hear. I have produced a CD that contains over fifty bird songs in various habitats.

During the interview, I asked the reporter if he would like to hear an example of my ability. He said “Sure,” and I told him to name a bird for me to imitate. He chose an easy one, a meadowlark. I puckered up my mouth and gave him a good example of the meadowlark’s song. He wanted to hear more, but I told him to buy the CD.

Hal Palmer lives in Ponte Vedra, FL.

“One day I will find the right words, and they will be simple.”

Jack Kerouac
The World’s Greatest Loser
by Don (“Doc”) Sanborn

S tan, my best friend since sandbox days, pushed aside my varsity jacket on my bed and flopped down with a sigh. He held his head in his hands and groaned as though in pain.

I gripped his shoulder in encouragement, saying, “Come on, Stan, spill it. What’s your grief, Pal?”

“Oh, God.” He groaned louder. “I’ve got to be the world’s greatest loser, an ignoramus of the first water, a total fool.”

“Okay, okay. I get it. But why? What’s happened?”

Stan raised his head and looked plaintively at me. “I decided it was time for me to start dating. Here I am, a senior in high school and I’ve never had a real date. So I decided to take the plunge. The YMCA sponsors a dance every Saturday night—”

I interrupted. “And you never talked to me about this? Man, this is earthshaking news. You’re our school’s egghead, our Debate Society leader, our Chess Club champion. You’re our prize intellectual, but you’re right, you don’t know squat about girls.”

“I know that now.” Stan rubbed his head with both hands in frustration. “After my decision, I was in the cafeteria when this girl bumped into me, almost dumping my tray. She apologized all over the place, and the next thing I knew we were sitting together and she was talking a mile a minute—and I think she was flirting with me. She kept touching my hand and staring into my eyes.”

I raised an eyebrow. “Was she cute?”

Stan paused, considered the question as though he’d never evaluated a girl’s physical attributes before. “Yeah, I think so,” he tentatively replied.

“Okay. Go on. What happened next?”

“It’s the strangest thing. I asked her to the dance before I realized what I was doing. And she accepted. Can you believe it?”

“The world is a mysterious place, and women are among its deepest mysteries,” I stated sagely. “What’s her name?”

“Zandy . . . I don’t know her last name.” He looked puzzled at this.

“Is she a junior, average height, very well built, blonde hair with red streaks, and wears big hoopy earrings?”

“Yeah. That’s her. Do you know her?”

“Nope, but I remember her name. She was pointed out to me as Tony Cardozza’s girlfriend. I should say ex-girlfriend. They just broke up, again, for the umpteenth time.” I didn’t mention that Tony was the school’s premier bad boy and had been suspended from school at least twice for unnecessary roughness. This sort of scuttlebutt information was the kind Stan ignored.

“I should’a been suspicious from the start. Girls just aren’t interested in me. Anyway, moving on. Let me tell you what happened.”

“I nodded.

“She no sooner got in my car but what she asked if I’d brought a flask. I said I didn’t drink. A minute later she asked if I had any weed. I said I didn’t smoke—”

“You mean, you two never talked about any of that stuff during your heart-to-heart in the cafeteria?”

“Fraid not.”

“Oh. Okay. Go on.”

“We got to the Y, and while we’re dancing she’s looking all around as though she’s searching for someone. Then, suddenly, she comes in close and acts all lovey-dovey. I thought she’d finally succumbed to my charms. What a joke. Next thing I know, some guy grabs me from behind, spins me around, power-pushes me in the chest, and I fall ass-over-teakettle on the floor.”

“Jeezus. Were you hurt?”

“Naw. Just my pride. Anyway, I’m lying there and he snarls, ‘Come near my girl again and I’ll break your face.’ Zandy says to him, ‘So, lover, you finally missed me enough?’ And then they walked out together, hand-in-hand.”

“I’m sorry, pal.”

“Me too. This dating stuff is more complicated than I thought. I think I’ll stop for awhile.”

Don (“Doc”) Sanborn lives in Bradenton, FL.
Family Ties by Ruth Senftleber

“I am the world’s luckiest person, Sandra. Let me tell you, I really am.” Olivia leaned forward, her elbows on the table. Early afternoon sun coming through the diner’s front window highlighted gray strands in her light brown hair. She was wearing a Chanel-style jacket of pink-checkered tweed missing a button on the sleeve and large hoop earrings.

“How so?” Sandra raised her eyebrows, wondering why Olivia had wanted to meet. They had not seen each other since their grandmother’s funeral years ago.

Olivia tapped her coffee cup with a red, chipped fingernail and stared at her cousin. “You don’t know much about my life, do you? I mean, our mothers weren’t close after my father died, even though he was your mother’s favorite brother.”

Sandra shook her head, wishing that her mother had not encouraged this meeting, had not played the blood-is-thicker-than-water card.

“You know, that terrible auto accident left my mother with me and my sister and not much money. She always had to work two jobs. Life was tough, let me tell you.” She paused to eat a bite of pie.

“So why are you lucky?” Sandra asked.

“Well, in our part of Brooklyn you could walk ten blocks and be in another world. I got a job as a dog walker for people in several posh apartment buildings. The money was good, and the dogs were sweet. There was a cute Pomeranian, a Borzoi, a dachshund. I remember them all.” Olivia smiled. “One day we met another dog walker, and the Borzoi broke his leash and dashed off into traffic, would you believe it?”

“Oh, no!” Sandra exclaimed, ready to commiserate at least with the dog, if not with Olivia’s misfortune.

“It was for the best, really. The owner was getting a divorce, and the dog was part of a custody battle. Anyway, it wasn’t my fault, and I only lost a few clients.” Olivia shrugged her shoulders. “And this happened in front of a bakery with a help wanted sign. How lucky is that?”

Sandra looked confused. “Why lucky?”

“Did I say that I worked in a pizzeria during high school? I figured that making pizza and baking cookies were close, so I gave my dogs to my sister and started at the bakery. They liked my work right away, especially when I started a craze for cupcakes with my cute designs. Of course, some of the Halloween ones were creepy, but overall, I was quite popular.”

Olivia finished her coffee. “It was lucky that I was working there, because one day a very nice man walked in. He was the chef at a fancy restaurant in Manhattan and he gave me a job as pastry chef. What fun that was!”

Sandra looked skeptical. “But …”

“And then I was sent to Paris to learn about French pastry. That’s where I got this fabulous jacket.” She stroked the sleeve lovingly.

Sighing, Sandra thought about how lovely it would be to go to Paris. She was beginning to feel intrigued in spite of her misgivings.

“A year of training I was hired by a nice café on the Left Bank. Then I worked for a three-star restaurant on the Champs-Élysées. Three stars is the highest rating in Europe, you know.” Olivia smiled.

“My latest job is the best one yet. I got the chance to invest in a chain of French restaurants and I’ve made lots of money. How’s that for luck?” Olivia winked. “That’s why I needed to see you. Since you’re family, I want you to make money too.”

“What? How could I?” Sandra asked.

“Give me three or four hundred and your investment will quadruple in a month. Wouldn’t you like that?” Olivia patted her pockets. “Darn, I left my credit cards at home.”

Sandra was stunned. “No, I’m not interested in investing,” she snapped.

“You don’t need to invest that much. How about two hundred?”

Speechless, Sandra snatched the bill and stood up.

“Really, think about investing with me,” Olivia said. “Remember, I’m the luckiest person you’ll ever know!”

Ruth Senftleber lives in Jacksonville, FL.
Louisa placed her cup of cappuccino on the table. She lifted a biscotto from her plate and played with it at eye level. A smile played across her lips. She looked across the table at her mother, Beatrice, then she glanced to her right at Marie.

“This reminds me of the Italian grinders I made at my parent’s deli. I, Louisa Reivilo, am the world’s greatest Italian grinder maker.” She bit into the biscotto and crunched it loudly.

Beatrice slipped a silver flask from her purse and poured an amber liquid into her Sprite. “Come on. Tell your story already. We don’t have all night.”

Marie sat with her back straight, legs tucked together, and her hands folded on the table. She didn’t look like the wild girl from high school that had been the first to kiss a boy and smoke pot.

“I worked at the deli after school. As I entered the shop, I heard the whine of the meat slicer as Poppa cut the salami.” Louisa held up her left hand, fingers a quarter inch apart. “It was this thick.”

“We imported all of our meats and cheeses from Italy,” Bea said. She sipped her drink, and smacked her whiskered lips.

Marie closed her eyes, and inhaled deeply. “I can still smell your deli. It always smelled of fresh bread, basil, and oregano. I loved going there.”

Bea laughed. “Marie, it wasn’t the spices you loved. It was Louisa’s brother Tony.”

Marie chewed on her lip. “Stop Bea, that was a long time ago.”

“We used capicola, pepperoni, and salami. Then layered provolone over the meat. The grinder was placed into the brick oven until the cheese bubbled and the bread turned crispy and brown,” Louisa said.

Marie’s mind drifted back to 1968. She felt warm all over thinking of that wonderful year with Tony. Their little town managed to miss most of the social turmoil. It wasn’t until the end of summer the following year that the world went to crap. He shipped out to Viet Nam.

Louisa continued her story. “After the sandwiches came out of the oven, we piled tons of chopped onions, bell peppers, tomatoes, lettuce and black olives on top of the cheese. Lastly, we trickled olive oil and vinegar over the grinder, and sprinkled on oregano. They tasted so good,” Louise said. “That was a memorable summer.”

“I wish Tony were still around to make me a hot Italian grinder,” Marie said.

Louise could hear the pain in Marie’s voice. She felt bad about picking this story. “Those grinders tasted great. The Ledger declared them the best Italian grinders ever. They interviewed me and put my picture on the front page.”

Bea winked at Louisa. “It probably didn’t hurt that the paper’s food critic was David Finkelstein’s father. David had the hots for Louisa.” Bea reached over and patted Marie’s hand. “I shouldn’t have brought up Tony. I’m sorry.”

“Wow, David Finkelstein. He came into shop almost every day to buy grinders.” Louisa pushed a lock of gray hair out of her eyes. “But Mom only allowed me to date guys from Catholic Prep. He went to Tech.”

Bea took a drink straight from her flask, and offered it to Marie. To her surprise Marie drank.

“Did David ever catch you?” Marie asked.

“He sure did.” Louisa blurted. “But that’s a story for another day.”

“What?” Bea said. “You rotten girl. You hid it from me all these years.”


Louisa leaned forward and grabbed both Marie’s hands. She gripped them tight. “He and Tony went down on the same chopper in Viet Nam.” The women hugged and separated. Tears filled their eyes and ran down their cheeks.

Bea handed her flask around, and they all took a drink. “Salut.”

Marie looked downcast. “I’m sorry. I was so sunk in my own misery over Tony, I didn’t notice. Forgive me?”

“No one knew. I wasn’t supposed to be seeing him,” Louisa said.

Bea handed around napkins. She swiped at her own eyes. “I see great-grandchildren coming. Dry your eyes, and put on your smiles.”

Bruce G. Smith lives in Tampa, FL.
As a boy, I envisioned myself the world’s greatest hunter, like Teddy Roosevelt. However, these images needed reconsidering in the early 1980s.

Dad was a hunter in Iowa. I grew up with him in the backwoods of Florida. My older stepbrother and I hunted for quail or squirrel, typically.

Dad, Mom, and I lived in a ten by thirty-five-foot trailer with an attached Florida room. A bedroom extension was mine. The bed rested about fifteen feet from four rifles hanging on the wall. There was a 10-gauge double barrel shotgun (a real kicker). Under it hung a 16-gauge pump shotgun. Next to these hung a .410 over and under (a small gauge shotgun with a 22-gauge barrel) and a wonderful semi-automatic 22-gauge rifle.

The guns weren’t loaded. However, the ammunition hung on the wall too. Why? There were visiting rattlesnakes, coral snakes—and alligators. A neighbor’s Dalmatian almost died from a gator attack next to the brackish black creek. It flowed in front and around the back of our home.

One morning, when thirteen years old, I suddenly awoke to the sound of Dad shooting a gator in the creek behind our trailer. He was the talk of our subdivision. I couldn’t get enough of the spillover attention. Then at fifteen, I shot a seven-footer in the back yard creek, too. In 1966, I was seventeen. I proudly wore an Army Expert Marksman medal earned in boot camp. So you can understand my rifle ego quotient was not low!

Then, in the 80s, it happened! It was hunting season. Three friends and I decided on boar hunting in Florida’s Withlacoochee Forest. We were obsessed with the notion. We owned rifles. We had .45 caliber pistols and sharp knives. The hunting ego quotient was off the Richter scale! However, boar hunting experience, not so much.

We, the brave fearless four, arrived at the edge of the forest, parking on the side of a dirt road. The crew came bejeweled in hunting regalia. We wore military water bottles attached to brown webbed military belts. The belts held extra ammunition, knives, and 45s. It was May. The temperature was about 60 degrees with low humidity. It was cloudy, overcast, and without a visible sun. Hog heaven awaited us.

Shrewdly deducing our probability of success, we split into two hunting teams. My partner and I went one way along the dirt road. The others marched in the opposite direction. Eventually all four entered the woods. We were ready for anything—except what happened!

I will disclose my decent sense of direction, if I see the sun! I couldn’t see the sun. We did not have compasses or maps. The woods were unknown. We didn’t know four roads bordered the woods we selected.

My friend and I walked, walked, and walked. At some point in this mess, in a less than a comfortable tone, he said, “I think we’ve been past this tree before.” We were lost. It took less than 10 minutes. Honestly, if we had seen a hog, I wouldn’t have shot it! I would have asked for directions and given acorns as homage.

Eventually, after many circular treks, we saw two real hunters. They stopped and scanned our foolish regalia. Their bewildered expressions gave it away. I don’t think they were eager for a close encounter of the huntin’ kind. Their gaze revealed cautious disbelief, apprehension, then, fortunately for us, pity. They directed us to our escape. It was a straight line toward a dirt road. “Keep the woods on your right,” the older man said. “Stay on the dirt, you’ll find your car eventually.” They knew the way. I think they had compasses.

We eventually found the car and our friends. We drove home. No one spoke much. Later, at a party, we disclosed our misadventure to friends. For at least 30 minutes, everyone poked fun, joked, and laughed. Lucky us, huh?

PS: I quit hog huntin’.

Michel R. Willis lives in Brooksville, FL.
World’s Greatest Acrobat
by Beth Tyree

Scampering, frolicking up,
He snickers at gravity’s hold;
Gymnastic positioning there
At the top of the bird feeder pole.

He can’t fit his butt on the ledge
To comfortably feast on the seed.
He has to hang on upside down
By his tail and his muscular feet.

While his front paws are emptying the tray
Of delicious treats meant for the birds,
He eats with a mischievous grin,
As if searching for cat-taunting words.

“World’s greatest acrobat: Me!”
He would say if he just had the skill
To the cat who is watching the trick
From the inside of the windowsill.

The cat knows this is a lost cause
And puts his head down for a nap.
The squirrel eats the rest of his lunch
Then twists and leaps both in a snap.

His noon-time performance is done;
His acrobat skills demonstrated.
Now all that is left for the yard
Is some angry birds leaving frustrated!

Beth Tyree lives in Brandon, FL.
Nancy Blanton’s historical novel *The Prince of Glencurragh* has won a bronze medal in the 2017 Feathered Quill Book Awards. This is a national competition of multiple genres now in its eighth year. The book won the RPLA for Unpublished Historical Fiction in 2016 and was first runner-up for Unpublished Book of the Year. Published in July 2016, *The Prince of Glencurragh* is part of an Irish historical series including the previous RPLA winner, *Sharavogue*. For more info, see the author’s website at nancyblanton.com.

Nancy J. Cohen announces the release of *Facials Can Be Fatal* (#13 in the Bad Hair Day Mysteries) from Five Star. Kirkus Reviews says, “The death of a philanthropist has Florida salon owner Marla Vail tearing her hair out.” The victim was getting a facial at Marla’s day spa. To salvage her reputation, Marla jumps on the case. Soon she’s unraveling clues involving historic buildings, family journals, pirates, and shipwrecks off the Florida coast. “A whole lot of fun to read.”—Suspense Magazine. Hardcover and e-book editions available at Amazon and BN. nancyjcohen.com

Donna Parrey is pleased to announce that her nonfiction story, “The California Jug,” has been accepted and published in the *Lost Dreams* anthology, a collection of stories assembled and edited by Dawn M. Bell. The stories in the book portray various kinds of personal loss, demonstrating that dreams can be lost in many ways, often altering life’s expected path. *Lost Dreams* is available on Amazon in paperback and Kindle editions.

Three-time Royal Palm Literary Award winner Tricia Pimental is delighted to announce she has signed a contract with *International Living Magazine*. As their official Portugal Correspondent, she’ll be contributing regularly to the magazine online and in print, as well as to its sister publications, *International Living Australia* and *Incomes Abroad*. Visit facebook.com/internationallivingeurope to see her posts about what’s going on overseas. Tricia can also be found at facebook.com/amovablemarriage and on her website, triciapimental.com, now featuring her recent interview with Linda Thompson of *The Authors Show*.

Crimes in a Second Language, a new novel by Elizabeth Sims, is now available from Amazon. “Crimes is a departure from series work for me,” she told *The Florida Writer*. “This is a standalone novel about the relationship between two very different women in contemporary Los Angeles. The story was inspired by my late, great aunt and her relationship with a Mexican-American housecleaner.” From an early reviewer: “The story is told at a rocketing pace, in such a staccato style, that my heart was thump-thumping through all 257 pages. This story just does not stop.” Keep your cardiac medications handy.

We bid best wishes and thank you to Robyn Weinbaum who has stepped down from her position on the FWA Board of Directors as Vice President of Finance due to the increase in her business.
## Lifetime Members of the Florida Writers Association

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Forbidden Room

Joanne Lewis, a long time member of FWA and on the Board of Directors, pens murder mysteries, historical fiction and historical fantasy books and has won several RPLA awards.

joannelewiswrites.com

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