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The WAG Digest

VOLUME 11 ISSUE 5

MAY 17, 2010

Join Author Rick Sapp—Yes, You Can!

Join Author Rick Sapp – Yes, You Can!

Join us on Sunday, May 23 at 2:30 p.m. at the Millhopper Branch Library as local author Rick Sapp gives a talk entitled, “Yes, You Can! [have a life, make a living, and write full time].”

Rick, who also proudly serves as WAG’s Webmaster and treasurer, sold his first story in 1980. Since then, he’s written hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles in publications as diverse as *Canoe & Kayak*, *The Naturalist*, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, *Safari*, *Tactical Gear*, *Women’s Wear Daily* and *Florida Living*; and published 20 books, including such diverse titles as *Paintball Digest: The Complete Guide to Games, Gear & Tactics*; *Road Biking Florida: A Guide to the Greatest Bike Rides in Florida*; and *Civil War Commanders*.

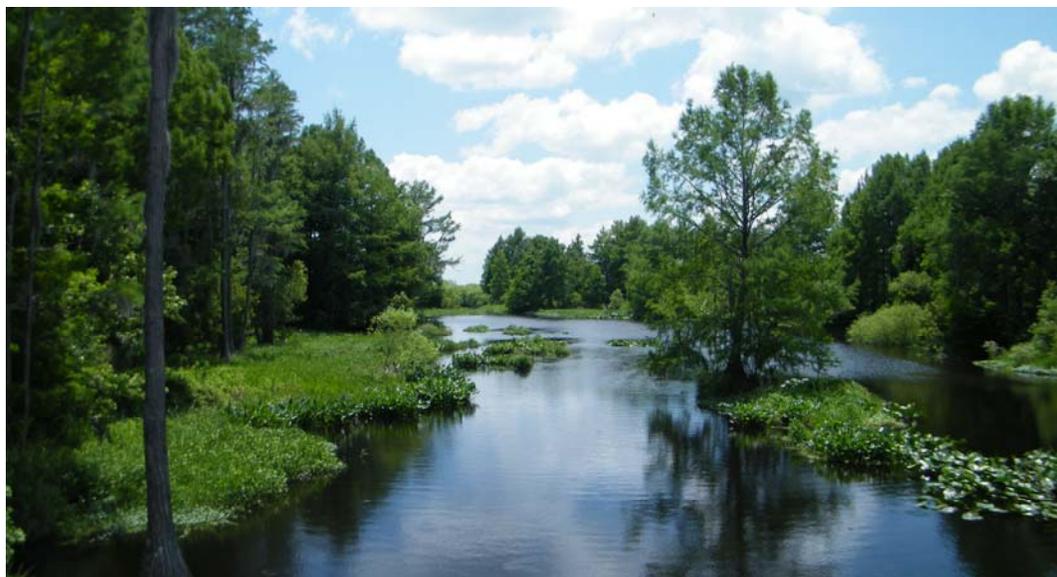
Rick has been a newspaper editor and also started a newspaper in Rockford, Minnesota. For six years, he served as editor and manager of *Archery Business* and *Bowhunting World* magazines.

One of his upcoming books is *Great American Cities Past and Present*; another is the *Gun Digest Book of Green Shooting: A Practical Guide to Non-Toxic Hunting and Recreation*. Rick currently writes cover features on local business issues for the *North Central Florida Business Report* and has a standing column in *Shooting Sports Retailer*. He will bring copies of contracts and a box filled with *Yes You Can!* Join us for this informative and hugely entertaining presentation – in other words, come share a laugh at (or with) this writing fool!

The Millhopper Library is at:

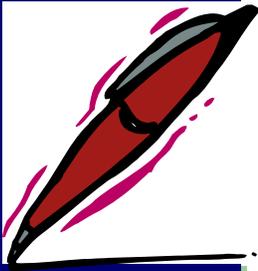
3145 NW 43rd Street
Gainesville, FL 32606
(352) 334-1272

For a map to this location, go to this Web site: <http://www.aclib.us/milhopper>



River Styx, Cross Creek, FL Photo by Wendy Thornton

POD CORNER: Latest Scoop on Critique Pods



Dorothy Staley
WAG Pod Coordinator

“The small group format is a really good tool for forcing the writers to crank out more material. The small size also ensures that everyone plays an active role in the critiquing, and we all learn a lot from that process. “

Active WAG Pods

1. Robin Ecker hosts a 7-member, novel/short fiction pod that meets every Thursday afternoon at 4:00. Her pod is full. Visitors contact Robin at recker5975@aol.com.
2. Susie Baxter's nonfiction/memoir pod has 5 active members who meet twice a month on Tuesdays at 6:30. Two new WAG members plan to visit her pod May 10th. If they decide to join, her pod will be full. Visitors contact Susie at Susiebaxter@aol.com.
3. Gil Murray's 5-member poetry pod meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30. He has openings for interested poets and welcomes visitors. Contact gilmurray33@gmail.com.
4. Wendy Thornton's 3-member short fiction pod meets the first Thursday of the month at 6:30. Wendy writes short stories and some flash fiction. Pod member Kaye Linden writes flash fiction and encourages other flash fiction writers to join Wendy's pod. Charlotte Porter and Dorothy Staley visited the pod in April. Both were impressed with the writing excerpts and the critiques. Visitors contact Wendy at floi-dawendy@cox.net.
5. Dorothy Staley's 5-member novel pod meets every other Saturday at 11:00 a.m. Given the length of the novel excerpts, five is her pod limit. Diane Childs visited the pod in April. Visitors contact Dorothy at dasapr41@yahoo.com.
6. Liz Wilson's 7-member memoir pod meets the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month at 1:30 p.m. She has openings. Visitors contact Liz at wilson5321@bellsouth.net.
7. Avery Cahill's 3-member science/speculative fiction pod got off the ground last month. He welcomes any and all WAG sci-fi writers. Visitors contact Avery at avd-cah@gmail.com.

Proposed WAG Pods

1. New member/published author, Fay Alexander offered to host a Historical Fiction pod.
2. Doc Harris volunteered to host a children's literature pod in Melrose.
3. Although a member of Robin Ecker's pod, Shari King would like to host a short fiction pod close to her home in High Springs.

Wanted—Pod Hosts

1. Several WAG members indicated interest in joining a novel pod. To date no one has volunteered to host a new novel pod.
2. WAG members have expressed interest in nonfiction/journalistic writing, but none have volunteered to host such a pod.

Any WAG member interested in joining or hosting a critique pod please e-mail pod coordinator, Dorothy Staley at dasapr41@yahoo.com.



Stay Tuned for These Exciting Upcoming Presentations in Our WAG Speaker Series

June 27 - Millhopper Branch Library, 2:30 pm – Vic DiGenti.



Vic DiGenti author of the Windrusher cat detective series.

Vic worked 35 years in public broadcasting and produced the Jacksonville Jazz Festival, before he turned to writing. He found inspiration in his household of feline critters and wrote three adventure-fantasies with a feline protagonist. His novels — *Windrusher*, *Windrusher and the Cave of Tho-hoth*, and *Windrusher and the Trail of Fire* (Ocean Publishing) — have won multiple awards and attracted readers of all ages. He's a regional director of the Florida Writers Association.

July 25—Millhopper Library – 2:30 p.m. Poetry Colloquium –

local poets **Wendy Thornton**, **David Maas** and more talk about their work and passion: how to get poetry published, what genres are in high demand and which publications (print and internet) are hot-hot-hot. David Maas will talk about promoting your poetry and yourself, including the joys and agonies of self-publishing. Wendy Thornton will give specific examples of how to make editors crazy, how to put together a bio and how to perfect your craft.





"A flash offers a tiny slice of life, a portrait of a character in a struggle with just one minute aspect or event of his or her life."



Big Choices for a Little Story:

A Peek at Basic Flash Structure By Kaye Linden

Structure. Who wants to deal with that? I'd rather just sit down and write. Each of us has a different style of writing a story. I once wrote the beginning of a novel, completed half the novel and realized I had written a narrative stream of ideas. But at least, I had the essence of a story. I did have to start all over again. Novels are tough. Flash fiction is easy. Phew! Or is it?

What's involved in building a short-short story?

Stories offer the framework for scenarios and perspectives on how a person can evolve and grow. Characters are intrinsic to a story, as is the movement forward of the events. To have characters, we must have action. With action, there is complication, and either inner conflict, or outer conflict with other characters. A flash offers a tiny slice of life, a portrait of a character in a struggle with just one minute aspect or event of his or her life.

This month, we will begin to discuss the basic structure and treatment of a short -short story and later, that of a longer short story. As there are multiple ups and downs and all arounds to a short story, we will continue to discuss basics each month. For example, compression, treatment of time, characterization, dialogue, to arc or not to arc, theme, focus, shape, setting, milieu, point of view...painting the flash is a long story!

In order to understand the skinny bones of a flash, let's look at the following story published in the September '09 *Soundings Review*:

Last Breath

The call comes at two in the morning. I reach for the phone in the darkness. The voice of the head nurse tells me that Mr. Mann's breathing has changed. It seems he is about to die.

"Ok," I say, my throat dry. "I'm on it."

Damn it. I hate going to a death in the middle of the night. I throw on a coat, grab a stethoscope and drive through empty streets. Clouds transform the sky into a kaleidoscope of silver and gray skimming with fragments of moon. The road is wet.

2.30 am:

No one answers the door so I knock louder. I look around to see if the neighbors are watching. I stand next to a sweet smelling gardenia bush. The front door groans open.

"Mrs. Mann, I'm the hospice nurse."

She wears dark, red lipstick, smeared into cigarette lines at the corners of her mouth.

I enter and smell the stale hang of dying.

2.55 am:

A Peek at Basic Flash Structure (Continued)

Night light flickers. A black cat with gray paws runs under the bed. Somewhere a faucet drips... a cuckoo clock springs to life crowing the rhythm of three in the morning, a shrill that tries to wake the dead. I take a deep breath to calm this racing heart.

3.05 am:

Mr. Mann is prone. Six feet under dirty blankets. 30 years old. Not alert. Not oriented. Expiring stale cigarettes. A short breath, a long breath, a longer breath. No breath. Cheyne-Stokes breathing. Blood pressure 80 over nothing. Going down.

3.30 am:

No breath. No breath. Carotid barely palpable. Pupils fixed. Chest still. No breath.

“Time to call the minister,” I say. *Another early awakening.*

Mrs. Mann doesn't say goodbye. She said goodbye a long time ago. She walks away from the bed, wooden. We exchange a painful glance.

4 am:

Carotid pulse absent. Pupils fixed and dilated.

I pronounce him. Time on the cuckoo clock is 4.05 am. December 25th 1997.

4.06 am:

I hesitate, take another blood pressure, look behind me to see if Mrs. Mann is watching. My armpits dampen. Something is skewed. The body is life full. Bristling. Did I make a mistake?

He's alive. No, he's not. He's alive. I'm breathing. He's not. What have I done? What have I not done?

I pronounced him at 4.05 am. I just documented the time in my paperwork.

She's calling the minister. The funeral car is coming. God waits.

I pour his morphine pills down the toilet. A mirror catches me as I exit the bathroom. Pupils dilated, skin diaphoretic, pulse pounding. I move to his bedside. No pulse. No pressure. Not sure.

I place an open palm under the nose to feel for respiration and a shot of lightning pulses into my palm, fiercely electric, as if his soul is escaping. I jump back, look around the room. Did anyone see that? Feel that? Doubt gallops through my chest.

I wait. Quiet. Listening. The body is now lifeless. I breathe deep.

4.12 am:

I place open palms over staring eyes. I wash the body.

(author: K. Linden)

A Peek at Basic Flash Structure (Continued)

Let's look at a few of the basic structural characteristics of this flash fiction.

1. What is the point of this narrative?
To offer challenge to the reader and trigger him/her to think about a surprising situation.
2. Where is the story going? It makes a point about how things are not always as they seem. Uncertainty and fear drive the main character's actions.
3. Does it have a limited number of characters? Two. The nurse and the patient. The wife is a shadow in the setting. For a successful flash, focus the story line and limit the characters.
4. Is there a change in the main character or the situation? Yes. The nurse is not sure whether the patient is dead. After she feels the shot of "energy" - she knows for sure that he is gone. Therefore, this flash fiction does have a story arc.
5. What is the setting? Inside a room. For a flash fiction, hone in on the setting – almost like a camera zooming in for a close shot.
6. Is there a central idea that can hold the focus of the story line? A nurse is uncertain as to whether her patient is dead or alive.

The emotions of the main character and the tension of the indecision and doubt, create the inner conflict that propels the story. The words are simple, the dialogue is minimal, the narrative is broken up to reflect uneven breathing, and there is a surprise at the end. The treatment of time is specific in order to support the tension. We have peeked into a slice of this nurse's life.

For now, review this flash fiction and assess its basics. What makes it work? Or not work? This is a flash on the page of time, structured like a minimalist painting, no excess weight, just a chilling image of a nurse with her dying patient.

More next month. If there is a specific branch of short story treatment you would like to hear about, email me at prasanga@bellsouth.net

"The words are simple, the dialogue is minimal, the narrative is broken up to reflect uneven breathing, and there is a surprise at the end."



St. Augustine, FL Photo by Wendy Thornton

The Art of Description: Eight Tips to Help You Bring Your Settings to Life

by Anne Marble

Description is something that gets in the way of many authors. Why? Well, because it's so darn hard to write. And no wonder. If you're not careful, descriptive sequences can become static, even dull. Writing action and dialogue is so much more *fun*. On top of that, description incorporates so many elements. It doesn't just cover describing the setting -- it also involves descriptions of the characters' clothes and appearance, the "props" your characters use, the weather, and so forth.

If you're not very accomplished at writing description, then sometimes you might want to avoid writing it. But then, you can wind up with stories where people wander vague hallways or buildings, and readers don't get a sense of time or place from your story. A story without enough description is missing something. People who read a story that's lacking in description might ask "Where does this take place? Are there buildings around them?" I must admit that often happens when people look at my early drafts.

At the same time, some writers err in the other direction, including too much description. They fall in love with their setting and can't help tell the readers about it. And tell and tell. This can impede the flow of the narrative. Imagine readers skimming your book in the store. If they see pages and pages describing the castle grounds, or the chic hotel, they will probably put it down and pick up someone else's book instead.

How bad is bad description? Think of bad description as being like that teacher who droned on and on and put the class to sleep. Good description is more like the teacher who got students involved by using anecdotes and making the class interactive. You don't want the descriptive passages in your story to put your readers to sleep, do you?

Avoid Huge Lumps of Description

In the past, authors could get away with including long, detailed descriptions in their stories. There's an infamous anecdote about a penny dreadful called *Varney the Vampire*. The author couldn't decide what happened in the next installment, so he interrupted the story to send all his characters off to the park or the zoo. The story picked up again in the next installment. This problem wasn't limited to the penny dreadfuls. Many famous novels of this period came to a complete stop while the author described something (such as a cityscape, a history, or even an entire profession) for a chapter or two.

Unless they're seeking out writers known for lyrical descriptive passages, today's readers wouldn't put up with that sort of thing. They don't want to sit and read several pages about a park outing that had nothing to do with the story, or about the workings of the fireplace in a Medieval castle. They have better things to do with their time -- and they want to read a story, not a travelogue.

Of course there *are* authors who, even in today's marketplace, can get away with pages and pages of description. Even genre writers. (John Crowley is a great example in the SF/fantasy field.) Those writers get away with it only because they're really really good. Either their writing is lyrical, or it's witty, or it's somehow so enthralling that people don't care that the book has ground to a halt. However, not all readers will put up with this, even if the writing is the terrific. Also, it's worth noting that there are many published writers who rhapsodize on everything from history to their characters' politics for long passages without being lyrical about it. In these cases, the reality is that even the fans know to skim those passages.

Make Description an Active Part of the Story

To make your stories more interesting, you must find ways to blend the description into the story. Descriptions that just sit there are generally known as "narrative lumps." Like lumps on proverbial logs, they sit there and do little to your story. Send those lumps to the gym and make them work out. They can set the scene, move the plot, set the mood, foreshadow events, give us a sense of character, whatever they have to do to get the ball (or log) rolling.

The great thing about using descriptions in combination with action is that you can cut the description down into palatable pieces. In a fantasy short story, I once wrote the following sentence: "Zara grabbed her mug and gulped it down, shivering when a few drops of the ale trickled under her leather top." I made my words work for me. I didn't have to say "The ale was cold. She wore a leather top." Instead, I used action to fit that description into the story in tiny bits.

How did I come up with that line? It came from imagining Zara and what she might experience when she drank that ale. Try it with your own stories. Try to think of your story as scenes unfolding in a movie or play. What do your characters interact with? Let's say you're writing a story set in a modern-day office building. Instead of stopping the story to describe the lush

The Art of Description (Continued)

lobby with trees and waterfalls, come up with a reason for this description to be in the story. Yes, even "Because this office should have a fancy lobby" is a legitimate reason for the description to be in the story, as long as it doesn't drag the story to a stop. Now, come up with an excuse -- whoops, I mean a reason -- for the characters to be interacting with that setting. Are your hero and heroine walking through the lobby while having an argument? Or are they sitting at the fountain when they realize they may be in love? What they are doing will influence what they interact with, and how they filter those details.

Want to describe the heroine's living room or bedroom? Then describe it as a part of a scene full of tension, such as an argument, or during the love scene. Blend the description with action. The same goes for describing the characters. Something as simple as "He picked up the invitation with his slender fingers" is more exciting than "She noticed that he had slender fingers." zzz

Don't forget to trust in the intelligence of your audience. You don't have to spell everything out for them. You can make them figure out what something, or someone, looks like by dropping hints. Early in Walter Miller, Jr.'s classic post-apocalyptic novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, a monk realizes for the first time that the pope's cassock is getting threadbare, and that the carpet in the pope's audience room is worn. Miller uses description to clue the reader in on this world and to mark changes in the way the character is viewing the world around him.

Describe What Your Characters Would Notice

Unless you're writing in omniscient viewpoint, chances are that you are filtering the setting (and background) through the eyes of your characters. This will be the case whether you are writing first person or third person limited stories. In the Miller example above, the monk noticed that the pope's cassock was worn because it was something out of place.

Let's go back to the office building with the fancy lobby. If your heroine has been in that office building dozens of times, she will only give it a passing glance. Unless something has changed or something usual is going on. Then she will notice it. For example, she might not take much notice of the lovely fountain in the center of the lobby, but she would notice if the fountain wasn't working or if the building manager had changed the color of the water because of a holiday, or if the hero was standing in the fountain and fishing for quarters.

Characters in a Medieval setting won't think it's odd that there are tapestries on the walls or rushes on the floor. They will notice the unusual -- rushes that haven't been changed for a while, or for that matter, rushes that have been changed often and smell sweet. Similarly, characters in fantasy and futuristic stories won't look at the setting in the same way we would. A star pilot is unlikely to walk into a starport and think of its history, notice the number of starships, etc., unless there is a good reason. A fantasy warrior isn't going to look at a group of wizards and remember the history of magic. Instead, he would look at them and try to size up their strengths as potential enemies or allies.

You should probably avoid stopping the flow of your story to tell your readers all about how nice the hero's castle is or how important the rain forest is. I've seen stories that do so, and even if the setting is pretty, the result to the story isn't pretty. Some authors *can* get away with this. If you're one of them, then go for it, but at the same time, always keep your readers in mind. Do they want to read a ramble about the rain forest? Or do they want to know what happens next?



“You should probably avoid stopping the flow of your story to tell your readers all about how nice the hero's castle is or how important the rain forest is..”

The Art of Description (Continued)

Words, Words, Words

Use strong, active, concrete writing words when writing description. The stronger the writing, the better the description. Use concrete details -- such as the detail about the cold ale trickling down Zara's chest. Nouns and verbs are your friends. Adjectives and adverbs can be your friends, or your enemies, depending on how you use them.

What should you avoid? One of the most important things to keep in mind is that you should avoid *adjectivitis* and similar "writing sins." Yes, I know "adjectivitis" isn't a real word -- but it should be in the dictionary, because so many writers suffer from it. *Adjectivitis* refers to using too many adjectives. Some writers are notorious for piling on adjectives. Not to mention adverbs, weak qualifiers such as "somewhat," and so forth. Using them in any part of the story weakens your writing. Using them in your descriptions risks putting the readers to sleep.

I won't do like some other writing guidelines say and tell you "Never use adverbs." Sometimes you will need adverbs. Sometimes people speak softly or walk slowly, or quickly. Sometimes saying "He walked slowly down the hall..." is right for the story and saying "He plodded down the hall..." is dead wrong.

Oh, and don't go to the thesaurus too often. Yes, I know, sometimes you need another word for "walked." Still, just because it's in the thesaurus under the entry for "walked," that doesn't mean it's the right word for your story. Besides, sometimes it becomes obvious that certain writers are too in love with their thesauruses. Their characters don't just shout -- they exclaim and yell and caterwaul. Enough already!

Use All the Senses

Most writers tend to concentrate on sight and sound. This is natural as those are the main ways in which we observe the world. However, you can really bring a scene to life by including the other senses. The sense of smell is an important one. What's a Western romance without the smell of leather? Of course, don't forget the sense of touch -- very important in a romance, even when you aren't writing a love scene. Taste is harder to include as humans don't tend to go around tasting things unless they're eating, but be sure to include it during love scenes.

Just because sight and sound are the most commonly used senses, that doesn't mean you have to make them, well, common. Find some new way to describe the things your characters see and hear. For example, don't fall back on the old clichés about the color of your characters' eyes -- invent new phrases that are so powerful they become clichés in the future! Also, don't forget to describe their voices or the other sounds they hear. Try listening to people talking on the radio or listening to people on TV without looking at the picture, just to get an idea of the nuances of voice.

Fit the Description to the Type of Story

If you're writing an action-oriented romance, too much description will get in the way of the pace. James Bond isn't going to stop in the middle of skiing away from gun-toting spies to ponder the beauty of the Alps. He's going to get away from them.

On the other hand, description will be a more important part of many slower-paced stories. If the book is about a hero coming to his hometown to lick his wounds after a divorce, we want to know what the area looks like and why it's so important to him. Also, a spooky paranormal tale might use description to build up the sense of unease -- for example, you might linger on descriptions of dark hallways in the old mansion and hint that there are ghosts there.

Avoid Excessive Name-dropping

First, you should know that it's all right to use brand names in stories. There are a few basic rules: 1) get the trademark correct; 2) don't use the trademark in a generic or incorrect sense; and 3) Don't portray the product in disparaging light. (In other words, don't have your characters getting food poisoning at the KFC.) You can learn more about the use of trademarks at an article on The Publishing Law Center web site <http://www.publaw.com/fairusetrade.html>.

However, while using trademarks is all right, using too many brand names is over-the-top and annoying. Unless you're writing chick lit about a brand-obsessed heroine, then don't waste valuable narrative telling the reader about your heroine's designer clothing, designer perfumes, expensive car, and designer pets. Some books include so many brand names that readers begin to wonder if the writer is getting kickbacks for product placement.

The Art of Description (Continued)

Don't avoid brand names altogether, however. Using brand names can be a good way to provide the reader with a quick concrete description. Does your hero drive a Jaguar? Or does he drive a VW bus? Right away, those are two very different heroes. (Even more different is the hero who owns both a shiny Jag and an old VW bus.)

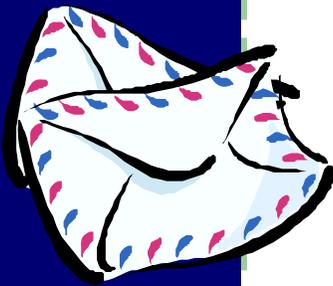
Don't Let Description Hang You Up during a First Draft

If you're not comfortable with writing description, don't let it get in your way when you're writing the first draft. Remember, you can always go back and add it later. If you have any critique partners, however, you might want to warn them that your early drafts won't have all of the details built in.

This is the way I work. For example, when I was writing the first draft of my fantasy novel set in a prison of mages, I had a clear idea of the characters and plot, and I certainly knew what my characters looked like. (They were yummy!) But I wasn't set on the description of the setting yet. So instead of stopping, I wrote. I worked out the plot. Then, whenever I went back and edited the novel, I added more description where needed.

This technique doesn't work for all writers. Some writers must have the description down-pat, or they won't be able to continue. However, if you think it might work for you, try it out. This technique has an added advantage -- if you change any aspects of your setting in midstream, you won't have as much rewriting to do.

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Organizing Your Writing Time

by Penny Lockwood Ehrenkranz

Many writers, myself included, have a hard time organizing their days, weeks, or months to accommodate all the tasks required by the writing life. We all know we need to write, edit, send out queries, market, network, do research, and keep abreast of what's happening in the publishing world.

How can we be sure we have enough time to do all we need to do to succeed in the writing business? To get started create a document for yourself. Track your activities for a couple of days. My typical day might look like this:

8:00 a.m. - wake, shower, breakfast
 9:30 a.m. - animal care
 10:00 a.m. - mail, queries
 11:00 a.m. - editing
 12:00 p.m. - grocery shopping
 1:00 p.m. - marketing
 1:30 p.m. - Facebook
 2:45 p.m. - animal care
 3:00 p.m. - teabreak
 4:00 p.m. - Facebook again

By tracking my day, I see how much time I've wasted. (Really, Facebook twice in one day?) With this visible reminder, it's easier to re-organize my time to be more productive. Do you treat it like a job or a hobby? How many hours in a day are you willing to devote to your writing and related activities? These decisions determine how to organize your writing day.

Interested in how successful authors manage their time, I asked several prolific writers how they organize the time they devoted to writing related activities. Perhaps their answers will help you to become more organized.

Poetry writer and editor of *The Centrifugal Eye*, Eve Hanninen writes full-time or part-time, depending on her editing schedule for the magazine. Eve believes that "writing has to be thought of as a job first, before a creative venture. Most people take having a job seriously. They set their alarms and adhere to a schedule." Part of taking her writing seriously is having clearly marked files to keep research, notes, and manuscripts in order. She "uses several calendars pinned to the wall... to jot writing and editing tasks... and (she tries) to adhere to the calendars' schedules as closely as possible." In addition, "writing more specific and detailed lists often help..." Also, "keep track of all correspondence with care... and keep a notebook that lists all pertinent information about your submissions to publishers and journals... Dates, journal and editors' names, article or poem titles, whether simultaneous submissions or reprint rights offered -- all these things in one place avert time-consuming letters and emails about duplications and other problems."

Devon Ellington is a full-time writer. Ms. Ellington writes under several names and a variety of genres such as mystery, fantasy, romantic comedy, as well as short stories and non-fiction pieces. Devon has been successful because she has taken the time up front to set up systems. "For instance, at the top of every year, I set up a pitch log and a submission log, so that I can keep track of pitches and submissions, track payments, track pub dates, and see what needs follow-up. I took the time to set up an invoice form. I create a clip file for each article as it is published... so if I need to use them (again)... I don't have to hunt them down..." Devon doesn't "throw out the research files as soon as the book or article is finished, because usually I write again on the same topic, and why do all the research again?"



Organizing Your Writing Time

(Continued)



According to Devon, "It should take 15 minutes to put together a sparkling pitch with relevant clips. If you're constantly taking an hour or two to hunt down information, you lose billable time, you get discouraged because of the wasted time, you wind up not pitching as often, and you don't land as many well paying jobs."

Karina Fabian, author and editor, also writes full-time. She believes "the key is finding a system that works for you -- something that lets you move toward your goals as a writer and not spin your wheels in fruitless efforts." Because she writes full-time, she keeps to "a schedule of days and tasks. Monday I do work for the Catholic Writers Guild and any conferences I'm participating in. Tuesday is marketing day; Wednesday is all for writing; Thursday writing and the basic administration; Friday, computer work -- websites, clearing out files, back-ups, etc. I also blog twice a week and microblog/Tweet three times a week. I try to make an hour each day for some kind of writing -- whether an article, edits, etc. -- on my non-writing days."

Anjali Banerjee has published several children's novels. She doesn't feel she's an organized writer but because she only writes part-time, she also feels she has to treat her writing as a job and as a habit. "Practice. Practice. Practice," she says. "I try to write in the morning every day, before I go to work. I have a daily goal. Small steps... Some writers organize their year by writing deadlines on a calendar. My daily goal varies, depending on the following: deadlines; whether I'm giving presentations, speaking at conferences, schools or libraries; the demands of my day job. Some days I don't get any pages written. Some days I'm just brainstorming. Some days I'm revising a manuscript, in which case I might have to plow through 50 pages a day. When I actually do have time to write, I shoot for three to six pages a day."

Tamara Kaye Sellman is a part-time writer who also works in several different areas of the publishing world ("writer, editor, literary outreach, networking"). Tamara specializes in literary fiction, magic realism, and food and garden writing. According to Tamara, "writer(s) need to figure out what it means for them to be organized." For her, "it's piles of paperwork kept in their assigned places... a well-kept Google calendar, and the discipline to keep things on schedule (while being flexible in the face of personal necessities...)." She thinks "writer(s) know they are organized when they can sit down in their workspace and aim their focus on the work at hand without being delayed by the administrative tasks that surround (them)." For her, "arriving at that organizational Zen is really more a matter of mindset than anything that can be made physically apparent. I can have a hugely messy office and still be organized in my thoughts..." However, "if you can't work in a slightly chaotic world, you may need to rely on hanging files, electronic reminders in your Blackberry, a Rolodex... Only you can know what that is for certain."

Novelist Matt Briggs works full-time as a technical writer and writes fiction in his "spare" time. "I write when I first wake up, before I begin the work that people pay me to do... In the morning, just about every day, I write 800 words on average." He says, "as a person who has a job, I only have about an hour a day for writing and so I have to break large projects into tiny pieces and track those tiny pieces. This requires the work of making outlines and lists and plans... I know many writers, particularly writers with time pressures such as jobs and children who do work this way." Matt reflects on a teacher he had: "Charles Johnson, who wrote the novel *Middle Passage*... said about his work habits that he made a plan to sit in a chair. He had to sit in a chair for a certain amount of time even if he didn't know what he was going to do. He didn't have to write anything if he didn't

Organizing Your Writing Time

(Continued)

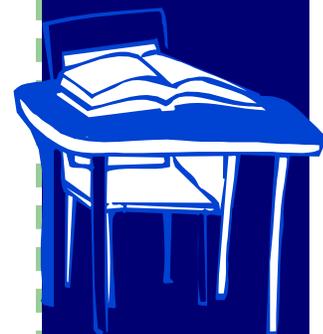
feel like it. But he had to sit. And gradually, it was more interesting for him to write than to just sit there." Matt believes the key to organizing is to "break things into chunks and commit yourself to a certain amount of time to do the work."

Ann Charles is another prolific author with several novels to her credit. She writes part-time while working full-time and taking care of her family. Ann breaks her writing up into half year segments. She writes one book a year currently, from January to June, and from July to December she wears her marketing/promo hat. She thinks being an organized writer is a "character trait." She is a "right-brain when it comes to plotting and writing... books, but when it comes to marketing/promo and goal setting, I'm disgustingly organized and left-brained." She has a "five-year plan, a career plan, yearly goals, monthly goals, and weekly goals, and... keep... post-it notes of 'to dos' next to my keyboard that I update almost daily." She states, "I didn't used to be this organized when it came to non-writing, writing-related tasks, but I learned a couple of years ago that I work best when I have written goals to meet. Also, the more I learned and dabbled in the marketing and promo side of writing, the more messy my desk and files became. Soon, I was forced to be organized or risk losing crucial information or missing important meetings/deadlines."

Ruth Brown writes part-time, but for her it is more challenging as she works full-time at a job that has only one down season, summer. When she does write; she doesn't "make decisions consciously of how much time to spend on writing or writing related activities. When writing during an evening, I just sit down and write until bedtime, so that may be two hours or three or more. I'm more of a project-oriented person, rather than working the clock. I don't typically have short bursts of writing time. If it's going well, I keep at it."

Charlee Compo writes full time as a dark fantasy and speculative fiction author. She works "from nine until noon, then one to six every day, seven days a week. I spend three-fourths of that time answering emails, working on the webpage I designed, created and maintain, working on the group I founded for speculative fiction authors, and looking for new places to showcase my 70 plus published novels. The rest of the time is spent writing." For Charlee, "a good filing cabinet with hanging files with appropriate names for research material is a must... Anything you use on a daily basis should at the very least be in a protective cover sheet or laminated and easily at hand. Books on your genre, on grammar, research should be readily at hand as well." As a novelist, she has also found that having a "good, concise compendium of each character, place or location... and who's who and how they relate to one another, idiosyncrasies, traits appearance" means "you won't make mistakes later on."

If you, too, are to succeed in your writing business, take heed of what these published authors advise. Whether you organize your writing time by the day, the week, or the year, actual writing should be your number one concern. This is not to say that you should feel guilty if you aren't writing seven days a week. Life does get in the way, but try to move toward a goal where writing encompasses the major portion of your work time. If it has been pushed to the side due to other activities, re-evaluate. Devon Ellington sums it up, "Managing one's time efficiently is a huge part of being a working, paid writer. You work until it's done. Period."



Organizing Your Writing Time

(Continued)

To find more about the authors featured in this interview visit:

Eve Hanninen: <http://tinyurl.com/yjwxwj9>

Devon Ellington: <http://www.devonellingtonwork.com>

Karina L. Fabian: <http://www.fabianspace.com>

Anjali Banerjee: <http://www.anjalibanerjee.com/site/children/home.html>

Tamara Kaye Sellman: <http://www.angelfire.com/wa2/margin/TamaraSellman.html>

Ann Charles: <http://www.anncharles.com/>

Ruth Brown: <http://www.ruthlbrown.com/>

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US 441 Photo by Ken Booth

Calls for Submission

The Southern Review

is currently accepting previously unpublished poems, stories, and essays for a special on Americana to be published in the Spring 2011 issue. TSR wants work that takes on the enchanted and rhinestoned, the love canals, tourist traps and old manufacturing towns—wherever you find the embroidery and the embellishments that make up the borders and roadside attractions of our wild Americana map. Deadline: October 1

<http://www.lsu.edu/thesouthernreview/news.html#americana>

Hunger Mountain – Stage and Screen Segment.

<http://www.hungermtn.org/submit/>

Submit via their online submission manager (see link above) or send to:

Hunger Mountain
Vermont College of Fine Arts
36 College Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Stage and Screen

Please send a **print submission** consisting of a typed, double-spaced manuscript no more than 10,000 words, or a **video submission**, consisting of a description of your project and a **link** to the video (we cannot accept files over 500KB). We welcome an array of examples of and responses to work on “stage” or on “screen”: film, theater, performance art, dance, dance film, animation, television, etc. We’re looking for both traditional and experimental work, including, but not limited to, video art/short film/recorded performances; excerpts from plays/screenplays; interviews of artists working in the field; critical reviews; and lyrical, personal or critical meditations about the genre/s. We like work that demonstrates an engagement with the world beyond its borders, clear stakes, and a beating heart.

Kaleidoscope:

Exploring the Experience of Disability through Literature & the Fine Arts.

“Finding Good/Strength in Adversity.” Aug 1

<http://www.udsakron.org/>



Calls for Submission

About The 2 Bridges Review

The celebrated East River Bridges (Two Bridges) – the Brooklyn and the Manhattan, connect downtown Brooklyn with downtown Manhattan. Between these bridges a community of writers and artists has found a home in the former warehouses and factories of New York's most literary outer borough. Like the artists who make it, the art that lives in these narrow streets goes on its nerve, and we, nerved with newness – and just a bit nervy – want to fill our pages with a distinctive, eclectic assortment of work by both unknown & established writers and artists.

<http://2bridgesreview.blogspot.com/>

Contests

Indiana Review

Fiction Prize

\$1k+pub

Final Judge: Alberto Rios

Deadline: June 15 (annual)

Fee: \$15 (includes 1 year subscription)

<http://www.indianareview.org/general/prizes/microprizeguidelines10.html>

POSTMARK DEADLINE: June 15, 2010

Reading Fee: \$15 for US entries, \$27 for international entries, \$22 for Canadian contestants. Includes a year's subscription.

All entries considered for publication.

All entries considered anonymously.

Send no more than 3 pieces, 500 words maximum per piece. (*That's 3 short-shorts or prose-poems max per entry fee.*)

Each piece must be either a prose-poem or short-short. Prose-poems should not have any deliberate line breaks (ie no lined poems). You may send a combination of short-shorts and prose poem pieces, as long as you have no more than 3 pieces per submission.

No previously published works, or works forthcoming elsewhere.

Simultaneous submissions acceptable, but fee is non-refundable. Further, IR cannot consider work from anyone currently or recently affiliated with Indiana University. In addition, IR cannot consider work from anyone who is a current or former student of the prize judge. We also will not consider work from anyone who is a personal friend of the judge.

Entry entitles entrant to one-year subscription, an extension of a current subscription, or a gift subscription. Please indicate your choice and include complete address information for subscriptions.



Contests

Entrant's name should NOT appear on the prose poems/short shorts.

If submitting electronically:

Please click [here](#). For payment instructions, please click [here](#). Electronic submissions will close on *June 15th, 2010 at 8 pm EST.*

If submitting by post:

Please click [here](#) for our official entry form

Entries must be accompanied by SASE for notification.

Manuscripts will not be returned.

We prefer you to pay online. Payment instructions are available [here](#). With your entry, include a print out of the receipt that is e-mailed to you as confirmation of payment.

If you are unable to pay online please contact us.

Send entries to:

1/2 K' Prize *Indiana Review*
Ballantine Hall 465
1020 E. Kirkwood Ave.
Bloomington, IN
47405-7103

Please note that, while we attempt to contact entrants whose submissions are not in accord with our guidelines, this is a courtesy. It is ultimately and solely the responsibility of entrants to ensure they have followed the guidelines.



Lake Wauburg Photo by Ken Booth

Contests

Sonora Review

Contest

Short Essay Contest:

\$1000 and publication in Sonora Review will be given for the first annual Concentrated Nonfiction Contest. The inaugural contest will be judged by Ander Monson. Submit a work of unpublished nonfiction, up to 1,000 words, by June 1st. Entry fee is \$15, which includes a copy of the Summer 2010 issue of Sonora Review. Include a cover letter with full name, title of work, mailing and email address. The author's name should not appear anywhere on the manuscript. No previous published work will be accepted.

By "concentrated nonfiction" we mean a short essay of any variety under 1000 words, not limited to any specific type of essay. In fact, we encourage creativity that projects the malleability of the form. We also are willing to publish multimedia essays as long as the main force of the essay is through language (and it is short). (Can submit online – go to this Web link:

<http://sonorareview.com/contest/> or

Send Submissions To:

Sonora Review. Contest

Department of English, University of Arizona

Tucson, AZ 85721



Frank Butler Park, St. Augustine., FL Photo by Wendy Thornton

Contests

Mid-American Review.

Poetry, Short Shorts. 6/1/2010

<http://www.bgsu.edu/studentlife/organizations/midamericanreview/fineline.html>

The 2010 Finline Competition for Prose Poems, Short Shorts and Anything in Between

Guidelines

Judge: Alan Michael Parker

Author of *Elephants & Butterflies*, *Cry Uncle*, *Days Like Prose*, *The Vandals*, and *Love Song with Motor Vehicles*.

First Prize: \$1,000 and publication in *MAR* Volume XXXI, Number 1.

Ten finalists: Possible Publication

Postmark deadline: June 1, 2010. Contest is for previously unpublished work only—if the work has appeared in print or online, in any form or part, or under any title, it is ineligible and will be disqualified. There is a 500-word limit for each poem or short. A \$10 entry fee (check or money order, made out to *Mid-American Review*) is required for each set of three prose poems/short short stories. Entry fees are non-refundable. All participants will receive *Mid-American Review* v. XXXI, no. 1, where the winners will be published. Submissions will not be returned; send SASE for early results. Manuscripts need not be left anonymous. Contest is open to all writers, except those associated with the judge or *Mid-American Review*, past or present. Our judge's decision is final.

Note: All pieces submitted in verse form—i.e., poetry with line breaks--will be automatically disqualified, as will previously published work or pieces over 500 words.

Send all entries with check or money order to:

Mid-American Review

Department of English

Bowling Green State University

Bowling Green, OH 43403



M.K. Rawlings typewriter, Cross Creek, FL Photo by Wendy Thornton

Conferences

<http://www.unfwritersconference.com/registration.html>

The Florida Writers Association partners with the University of North Florida to kick off the three-day conference on Friday, August 6, with a full day of writing workshops. On Saturday, August 7, and Sunday, August 8, writers participate in Critique Workshops in the following categories: General Fiction, General Non-Fiction, YA (Young Adult), Children's Book (Picture and Chapter Books), Memoir/Oral History or Screenwriting. Sunday afternoon's schedule includes a "First Page Panel" and a workshop featuring the UNF Writers Conference Book & Film Deal Connection, an opportunity for attendees to submit their work to agents, book editors and film producers after the conference.

Three days of workshops, critiques and connections:

FRIDAY WORKSHOPS presented in partnership with the Florida Writers Association. Learn about the craft of writing fiction, non-fiction and screenplays. Sharpen your marketing skills and network with best-selling authors and produced screenwriters.

WEEKEND CRITIQUE WORKSHOPS for fiction writers, non-fiction writers and screenwriters.

Have your work critiqued by faculty and fellow writers in a nurturing workshop environment.

BOOK & FILM DEAL CONNECTION submits your written pitches/loglines to agents, book editors and film producers in the form of a PITCH BOOK. If representatives and buyers like your pitch, you'll be invited to submit your work.

9th Annual Florida Writers Conference Lake Mary, FL

Go for the Gold!

*Dates for the 2010 conference
Oct 22nd thru 24th, 2010*

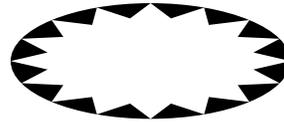
http://www.floridawriters.net/FWA_Annual_Conferences.html





Writer's Alliance of Gainesville
A not-for-profit Florida corporation
 p.o. box 358396
gainesville/florida/32635-8396
352-336-8062/wagmail@cox.net

The **Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG)** promotes, encourages and supports aspiring and experienced regional writers. This goal is accomplished via **WAG** monthly meetings, public readings, ongoing small critique groups, a literary journal, writers' contests, and collaborations with schools and civic organizations to foster creative expression through the written word.



Coming Soon!

A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville is pleased to announce that we're almost ready for submissions to our second edition of our literary journal, Bacopa. (Want to know what Bacopa is? See the picture below. Maybe you've seen this plant around Gainesville.)

**WE DON'T CARE WHERE, WHEN, OR IF
 YOU'VE PUBLISHED.**

**We just want quality fiction, nonfiction, and
 poetry for our literary journal. Prize Numbers
 and amounts have been increased**

Visit WWW.bacopaonline.Com
 for further information

