

Saturday Writers Newsletter

Saturday
Writers



Writers Encouraging Writers Since 2002
A Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild
A Nonprofit Organization / Corporation
www.saturdaywriters.org • info@saturdaywriters.org
Post Office Box 2093 • Saint Peters • Missouri • 63376

April 2023

Inside this issue:

April Speaker	1
The President's Desk	2
What's the Big Idea?	3
ICYMI	4
Why join an open mic?	5
Spring Cleaning	6
Book Release, Anthology	6
Contest Winners	7
Contest Rules	7
Upcoming Events	7

April 2023 Speaker: George Sirois, Audiobooks, Podcasts, and Audio Dramas: Let Me Tell You a Story

It has been said all across the publishing industry: the future is in audio, and the rising number of audiobooks proves this. With ACX, Findaway Voices, and other platforms, the path for authors to bring their work to readers' ears has never been easier. But it's more than just audiobooks that makes audio such a wonderful path for authors to explore. From solo book review shows to extensive one-on-one interviews to roundtable discussions to full cast audio dramas and beyond, there are limitless possibilities in the podcasting world, both as a host & producer and as a guest. And the podcasting boom that started over ten years ago and continues to evolve to this day has led us to a truly creatively fulfilling destination: the audio drama. With all of these

different paths available, how can you get involved? Join George Sirois - narrator of over a dozen audiobooks, podcast host & producer and co-founder of the Once Upon a Podcast Network, and writer & director of Excelsior: The Audio Journey - as he takes you through the process of deciding the best course - or COURSES - of action that's right for you.

George Sirois is the author of the international bestselling young adult / science-fiction novel Excelsior, its two sequels, and the five-part science-fiction / sports serial From Parts Unknown. He served as President of the Missouri Writers Guild from 2017-2018,



and is the host and producer of the podcasts Excelsior Journeys and From Duck Till Dark: Outside the Marvel Studios. In 2023, George co-founded the Once Upon a Podcast Network, a collection of shows dedicated to inspiring, motivating, celebrating, educating, and rejuvenating creatives of all kinds. He is also an audiobook narrator, lending his voice to books of all genres. A New Yorker since birth, George now lives in St. Louis, Missouri with his wife and daughter. For more information, please visit www.hesgotit.com.

Join us on the last Saturday of every month at the Spencer Road Library Branch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in room M. Please note that this is a different room for April's meeting.

- ◆ Doors open at 10:30 a.m.
- ◆ Creative Salon is from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. in room P (Previously 265)
- ◆ Members are invited to participate via Zoom. The link will be sent out separately.



What's in a Name?

Shakespeare famously said, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose. By any other name would smell as sweet." Juliet says this declaring her love for Romeo, even though his last name is Montague. Shakespeare is suggesting that what truly matters is what something is, not what we call it. A profound sentiment to be sure, but absolutely false when writing fiction.

Just like parents of a newborn child, a good writer will put considerable effort into naming their children. To an author a name is more than something to call a character. A well-chosen name should both convey important information and evoke a desired emotion. A reader may assume a lot from a name, including ethnicity, age, sex, family background, and personality traits. Let's look at each of these bits of information individually.

Ethnicity is the most obvious assumption a reader will make. For example, Angelina Magdalani is clearly Italian, Shamus O'Malley is Irish, Reuben Goldstein is Jewish, and Muhammad Shera is Arab. You can name your character Shamus Muhammad if you want, but you will have to explain how he got that mix of a name. Names can also indicate age. Gladys, Myrtle, and Mildred were popular a century ago but not so much today. From 1900 to 1950

From the President's Desk

the most popular names in America were Mary and John. In 2020 the most popular names were Olivia and Liam. I use the website www.mom.com/baby-names/name-list/global to help me find believable names. This site tells me the most popular baby names for a given year and country.

A name may also indicate a character's sex. Names like John, Robert and James typically indicate a male, while Mary, Linda, and Jennifer indicate a female. However, this is becoming less and less true. Today many names once reserved for males have become popular names for girls, like Ashley, Sidney, Madison, and Taylor.

Family background can be foreshadowed in a name too. J. P Adams III suggests a proud and wealthy family, while Sunshine Smith evokes an image of parents from the 1960's hippie movement.

An author should be careful when trying to indicate personality traits with a name. Authors, like Charles Dickens, used to do this quite often. For example, can you imagine Ebenezer Scrooge by any other name? Or what about Hannibal Lecter? Somehow Hannibal works perfectly. Maybe because it sounds like cannibal.

The same is true for good character names too. Returning to Dicken's *Christmas Carol*, I have always liked the name Mr. Fezziwig. Doesn't he just sound like a fun person? And there is something about Indian Jones that sounds playful (even though it was the dog that was named Indiana).

Be careful about spending too much effort trying to convey personality with a name. Although it was popular in Dicken's day, and can still be used to good advantage today, for the most part modern-day readers don't buy into this premise.

There are two other considerations when naming characters. First, don't confuse your readers by giving your characters similar names. Help your reader by starting each name with a different letter. Most people read by sight, rather than sounding out the whole word. So, names like Jeff, John, James, and Jack in the same story won't work. Stories with large casts may be a problem. If you must use the same first letter, then vary the length of the name. Jan and Jennifer can be differentiated at a glance.

"A well-chosen name should both convey important information and evoke a desired emotion."

Second, be consistent. If a character goes by a nickname, be sure to always use the nickname. If Melissa is going to be Mel, then stick with Mel as much as possible. Maybe, only her mother calls her Melissa.

To conclude, it's most important that you do your research and pick believable character names that are age and location appropriate. If you can add some further information, such as family background or personality traits, all the better.

Until next month, keep writing, writing, writing.

Jeffrey Czuchna – 2023 President

What's the Big Idea?



A Fistful of February Fallacies

Thanks to our fantastic President and formative Poet Laureate, February was a fabulous, free-for-members, fun contest month with four first-place winning entries in Flash, Drabble, Prose, and Poetry. Sorry. couldn't resist the alliteration opportunity.

Mark Vago captured first place in both the Flash and Drabble. In less than 500 words (flash), he wrote a powerful, historical fiction story titled *We'll Have Friends for Dinner* which offered a vision of Elitha Donner James as she prepared to marry at the age of fourteen.

When asked what inspired Mark to write this story, he responded: "Every morning I peruse a web page of vastly diverse top-10 lists. One list that crossed my path recently was "10 Photos Taken Moments Before Disaster Struck". This got me thinking about how we can be elated and hopeful one moment and oblivious to an imminent downfall. This is where the story started. Pat Wahler's works on historical fiction inspired me to set the story in the old west. In researching the Donner expedition and those that made the trip, I exchanged Mr. Donner as the main character for his daughter, Elitha, and a young man who worked for him. They were a better fit for the story I wanted to tell. I confess their budding romance was poetic license."

Don't you love how our imaginations weave stories from slivers of history?

Mark normally starts with a plot and then invites characters to present themselves. His choice of characters for his hundred-word Drabble, *Blood Relation*, left me curious and wanting to know about the ambiguous ending. Instead of spoiling the mystery, I decided to ask about his writing muse.

"It's a tad embarrassing, but the various novel outlines I have sitting in storage have come from auditor skepticism sprinkled with general paranoia. My professional persona looks for the ulterior motive, what is left unsaid, the missing puzzle piece, and the yet undetected deception in the person across that table. I think my storyline ideas tend to reflect this part of me."

Sounds like the core of many successful writers. Keep writing and entertaining us, Mark.

The President's Prose winning entry, *Follow Me*, written by Christine Anthony, takes the reader on the emotional journey of two sisters as they struggle to survive a horrible car accident. Christine's attention to details excels in her visual descriptions throughout the entire short story. The unexpected ending lingered in my thoughts long after reading it.

This wasn't the only February SW contest in which Christine placed. She also took third in Prose, third in Flash, and second in Drabble. That's one for the books! With four different stories, I wondered what she most enjoyed writing.

"My favorite genre is mystery/romance. I love a puzzling whodunit with the added bonus of a love story. Agatha Christie is my favorite author. When it comes to mysteries, she's amazing. She keeps the reader guessing. I love that!"

What's does she find most difficult when it comes to creative writing? "Writing romantic scenes is often very difficult for me because there's such a wide range of what readers find acceptable, or, unacceptable, when it comes to romance. I don't want to offend anyone by being overly explicit, but at the same time, I want to give my readers enough "spice" to satisfy them."

Christine is proof that finding beta readers and listening to critiques makes for a better writer.

Congratulations on your wins, Christine. We're fortunate you share your talents with SW.

Having a poem selected for first place in the Poet Laureate contest is an honor Carol Roberson claimed with *Mount Zion*. While it's challenging to script a condensed story in a flash or drabble, being able to share a story using selective words, rhythm, and purpose within fourteen lines of a poem also is an accomplishment to be admired. That's what Carol did when she wrote her poem.

"Mount Zion is a mystical place. The cemetery next to the little white church is where my great grandparents and their two-year-old son are buried. Many of the graves date back to the early 1800's."

Where does she start when writing a poem? "First, I find a topic I care about. Then I begin to write phrases. Finally, I connect them, trying to give them a voice."

Carol's interest in poetry began as a teenager. She loved to read George Betts. "Visions of You was my favorite. Today, I probably read more Mary Oliver."

Keep searching for those passions, Carol, and you'll be back here soon with another winning entry!

That's all folks!

In Case You Missed It: Melissa Ridley Elmes, First Lines: Opening your Poem with Intent

Poet or not, everyone has the first line of a poem that springs to mind when they are asked to recite one. Melissa Ridley Elmes spoke to us on March 25th to share ways to make your poems spring to mind.

According to Melissa, an opening line can do many things. The three that she emphasized were that it can establish the voice or persona of the speaker. It can establish subject, theme, or focus. One thing your first line must do is get the reader's attention.

Ms. Ridley Elmes' advice for beginning to write a poem was to draft or brainstorm. There are many ways you can do this. You can select a specific subject or image and use charts or Venn diagrams to generate ideas. She also suggested generating possible opening lines. As a first draft, these are nowhere near set in stone and can always be changed as you edit. The last brainstorming idea she gave us was to write down things that come to mind from other places or other times.

One important recommendation Melissa had was to keep a writer's notebook or use Google Docs to keep track of your poem ideas. An advantage to using Google Docs is that you can sync it with your phone and write on the go if you're out and about.

With those opening

recommendations, we had some prompts to try. Some simple prompts that we received were

- I remember/I've forgotten...
- I wish I had/hadn't told you...
- Here's to/This is for...
- I want to know/I don't want to know...
- How do I...?
- I see/saw, hear/heard, smell/smelled, taste/tasted, feel/felt, touch/touched...

Once you have some freewriting done, there are some considerations to think about.

You may begin with a prompt, but the form or genre you choose guides whether you stick to it or not. In thinking about this, you can ask yourself if that prompt still serves a purpose or if it makes sense. If you remove it, what rewriting might you need to do?

When you have done some rewriting, it may become clear that your poem has shifted to a different subject or frame. If this has happened, your original prompt may not make sense in that context.

Other revision advice we heard was to go back to the first line and evaluate whether it accomplishes one of those three purposes. You can also think about whether the poem is

focused inward or outward. Ask yourself what the subject of the poem is and whether the first line points the reader in that direction. Finally, what is the primary idea, and is the first line indicating that?

We had some time for questions at the end. One of the questions asked was about line breaks. Ms. Ridley Elmes imparted that there are unfortunately no correct answers to line breaks. Some can be determined by the form you may choose, such as a sonnet, villanelle, haiku, etc. Otherwise, line breaks are a matter of aesthetics and sound.

Regardless of whether poetry is your genre or not, Melissa Ridley Elmes' advice about first lines can apply to any genre of writing you prefer.

Happy National Poetry Month, and happy writing!

—Beatrice Underwood-Sweet

Why should I attend an open mic?

Donna Mork Reed

You may be thinking, I'm not Carrot Top or Tina Fey. I'm not Ariana Grande or even Neil Gaiman. Why should I go to an open mic?

Good question. There are several reasons for going to (and participating in) an open mic. This is not a comprehensive list, but here are a few reasons to consider attending.

Reading aloud helps your editing. When you read a piece out loud, you catch things that your mind's eye skips over when you read silently. Face it, you wrote your piece and KNOW what it was supposed to say. But until you read it aloud, you often miss any typo, perspective, or other errors.

It exposes you to variety. Not everyone that comes and reads at an open mic writes JUST LIKE YOU. You may not even care for their genre or for poetry or whatever. It may not be your thing. BUT...listening to it expands your horizons and you hear things you would not normally pick up off the shelf to read. Variety is the spice of life! LIVE SPICY my friends!

Practice. If you are a famous author, or plan to be one, or even accidentally become

one someday, you will most likely have to get up and read in front of a large audience. Scary, I know. I avoid it at all costs. But reading at our small open mic group is a safe place to start. We are all there to support one another. (I promise, no tomatoes will be thrown!) It will help build your confidence, and who doesn't need that?

It is inspiring. I am always inspired by our Saturday Writer's meetings each month. After listening to someone talk on craft, I can't wait to get home and work on something. The same happens with open mic. I think, wow, did you hear how good that story was. That reminds me of a time...and my brain is already off writing something mentally and drowning out everything else on repeat until I get it down on paper. This is the noisy world I live in, and I think many writers have similar issues.

Support other authors. Even if you don't want to read or have nothing you want to share, just being there provides an audience for the other writers in the group. A safe audience (again, no tomatoes!).

Be with friends or make new friends. You get to know a little bit about each writer when you come and listen

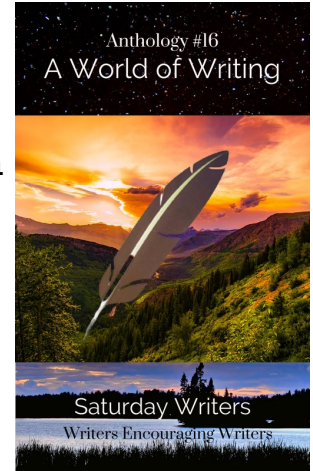
to open mics. Sometimes they will tell a back story that goes with a piece or how the work came about. We don't always have time for meet-and-greets at the meetings, so open mic is one more chance to get to know and become friends with other writers in our group.

Building a following. This may not pertain as much to our smaller group, but the skills transfer as you do become more well-known for your work and people begin to follow you and want to hear you read your work. Hey, it could happen. You just never know.

Please consider coming to open mic. Invite friends. Bring food and nosh while enjoying an evening with friends and family. It's entertaining and better than what is on most network television today. So give it a try. You can read a short story, a poem, a chapter from a longer work. Even a short, 100-word drabble, would be fine if you want to dip your pinky toe in the shallow end of the pool. We are good with that! Join us at our next event. We alternate between zoom and in-person. I hope to see you there!

Anthology Pre-Orders

The anthology is here! Get it while it's hot! The 2022 Anthology, *The Shape of Writing* is in production and will be available at the signing on May 31st. You can pre-order our 16th anthology for a discount and pay by cash, check, or PayPal, or you can wait until the release party to purchase. Pre-orders are available at \$10 for contributors and \$14 for everyone else. Pre-ordering will be available until April 30th, at which point the price goes up to \$18. You can find the link for ordering and more information [here](#).



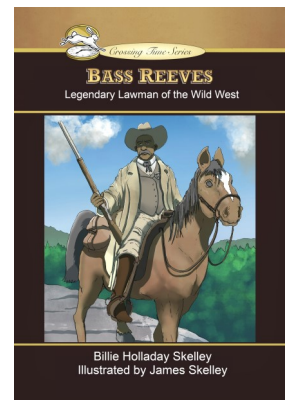
The release party and book signing will be on Wednesday, May 31st at the Spencer Road Library Branch. We look forward to seeing you there!

Billie Holladay Skelley's new

Book Release

book for young readers, *Bass Reeves:*

Legendary Lawman of the Wild West, is available in bookstores and at Amazon Books. This biographical work describes the life of one of the most amazing and respected lawmen in the West. It is Book # 5 in the Crossing Time Book Series.



Spring Cleaning

As we hope you already know, membership in Saturday Writers provides a variety of benefits, from networking opportunities to numerous means to build and refine your writing skills. But did you know about these two additional benefits not listed on the Membership Form:

Membership in the organization's private Facebook group
Saturday Writers' member bio page

Although these may not seem like a big deal, they too can provide significant value to you as a writer.

The private Facebook group is a great platform for networking, sharing tips and resource information, staying informed

about upcoming writing events, and celebrating members' successes. Through this group, you can connect with other writers who share your interests and goals.

Similarly, the member bio page on our website offers a unique opportunity to showcase your writing achievements, personal background, and interests. If you have a website or social media profiles, you can even include links to boost your online visibility. (If you're a member but are struggling to write a bio, feel free to reach out; we would welcome the opportunity to get to know you better and help you craft a bio page you'll love!)

Which all brings me back to the idea of Spring cleaning. These are benefits that truly do provide great potential to members. As such, we will soon be reviewing and updating the list of names in the Facebook group and on the members website page to make sure they best represent our current members.

If you're not yet a member or haven't renewed your membership, now is a great time to do so to best ensure you're not missing out!

(For the lengthy list of member benefits, see the Membership Form page on the Saturday Writers website.)

—Holly Elliott, SW Secretary

March Contest Winners

Prose:

First Place: Christine Anthony
for *Follow Me*

Second Place: Cheri Remington for *The Boys in the Bar*

Third Place: Christine Anthony
for *Sweet Sugar Water*

Honorable Mention: Tom Klein
for *Business Affair*

Honorable Mention: Tammy Lough

Flash:

First Place: Mark Vago for *We'll Have Friends for Dinner*

Second Place: Heather
Hartmann for *The Secret in the Attic*

Third Place: Christine Anthony
for *Wedding Punch*

Drabble:

First Place: Mark Vago for *Blood Relations*

Second Place: Christine Anthony for *The Morning After*

Third Place: Sarah Angleton for *The Toast*

Poet Laureate Contest

First Place: Carol Robertson for *Mount Zion*

Second Place: Holly Elliot for *A Refined Finish*

Third Place: Donna Mork Reed for *The Fancy Cheese*

Honorable Mention: Robert Walton
for *Chateau Drowsy Kitten*

Honorable Mention: Heather Hartmann
for *Morning After*

April Contest Rules

Theme: Main Course—Breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Prose: 2023-word limit

Poetry: 50-line limit

Begins: 3/25/23

Prose Deadline: 4/29/23

Poetry Deadline(All themes so far): 4/29/23

For more information, visit our website [here](#).

For submissions, visit this [page](#).

Upcoming Events

April Monthly Meeting: April 29th, George Sirois

May Open Mic: Zoom only. Thursday, May 18 7-9 p.m.

May Monthly Meeting: May 27th, Monique Daniels: Atticus Writing Software

Anthology Release Party & Signing: May 31st at Spencer Road Library Room L, 6-8 p.m.

June Social Activity: June 10th, Potluck Picnic at Brommelsiek Park

Officers and Volunteers

President: Jeffrey Czuchna
president@saturdaywriters.org

Vice President: Donna Mork Reed
vicepresident@saturdaywriters.org

Secretary: Holly Elliott
secretary@saturdaywriters.org

Treasurer: Diane How
diane.h@saturdaywriters.org

Assistant Treasurer: Alice Vierck

Volunteers/Chair Positions

Directors: Brad Watson, Jennifer Hasheider

Speaker/Workshop Chair: Jeffrey Czuchna

Contest Chair: Heather Hartmann

Newsletter Editor: Beatrice Underwood-Sweet

Website Chair: Mark Vago

Membership Chair: Diane How

Membership Assistant: Denise Wilson

Anthology Chair: Brad Watson

Social Media Chair: Pat Wahler

Publicity Chairs: Pat Wahler

Hospitality Chair: Bob Weismiller

Hospitality Assistant: David Reed

Holiday Party Chair: Donna Mork Reed

Poet Laureate: Robert Sebacher

Writing/Critique Groups

Members Online Critique: Susan Moreland

Tuesday Round-Table: Tammy Lough

Wednesday Novel Group: Brad Watson

Wednesday WIP Cafe: Jim Ladendecker

Thursday Novel Group: Bob Crandall

Children's/YA Critique: Heather Hartmann

Pre-Meeting Saturday WIP Cafe & Creative Writing Salon: Robert Sebacher

Write-In Chair: Brad Watson