

# Saturday Writers Newsletter

June • 2021

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

## What's a Beta Reader? How To Train One? Cherie Postill To Address All Things Beta at SW Meeting Saturday, June 26



Every new product should be beta-tested to uncover problems and validate strengths before launching to the mass market. Your book is no different.

Author and speaker Cherie Postill will draw on experience working with global product marketing giants like Anheuser-Busch, 7-UP,

Nestle Purina, Rawlings Sporting Goods, and AT&T to lead us through identifying, qualifying, and utilizing beta readers to get comprehensive manuscript critique with actionable feedback and optimal results.

In today's crowded market, your manuscript needs to stand out more than ever. The methods outlined in this workshop will give you a competitive advantage and make you a better writer by identifying your target readers so

*Continued on p. 3—See Postill*

## Sandra Beckwith Shows SW How To Navigate Build a Platform, Boost Sales at May Meeting

As we near the time to resume our live meetings at Spencer Library, I'd like to point out that our zoom meetings have given us the opportunity to host some great guest speakers from outside our area. Recent speakers came to us from North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and in May our speaker was Sandra Beckwith from Fairport, New York. Sandra is an author and award-winning former publicist who now teaches writers how to use publicity, promotion, and marketing to increase their following and sales. She has written numerous articles, books, and blogs on the subject.

Sandra's approach to getting

noticed by publishers and increasing book sales is to build a solid online presence. You can do this by having a platform designed to advertise your work, increase your following, keep people updated on your activities, and show your knowledge of your subject.

She offered us thirteen platform elements on a cheat sheet that are invaluable for self-promotion.

*Continued on p. 5—See Beckwith*



### Welcome to Saturday Writers

Due to social distancing, until further notice all meetings and events will be held via Zoom and recorded. Recordings will be provided to members via email.

Join us on the last Saturday of each month, January through September, to hear speakers share their knowledge of all things writing. Membership is \$35.00 per year. **Guests are welcome to attend our virtual meetings for free.**

**Zoom Instructions:** You can join an online video meeting via Zoom from your smartphone, computer, or tablet. Follow the prompts and allow your device to access your camera and microphone. Click on this link for the meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84805532643>

When the box requesting the password pops up, type in 561472

The meeting ID is 848 0553 2643 if needed.

#### June 26 Meeting

• 10:00-10:45 a.m.—**Members only** workshop **VIA ZOOM**. Topic: Kathleen Sweeney on using BookBrush to create professional ads and social media images for your books.

• 11:00-1:00 p.m.—Regular meeting **VIA ZOOM** for business items and our guest speaker.

#### Newsletter Contents

June Speaker 1  
May Speaker Review 1  
From the President's Desk 2  
Member News 2  
What's the Big Idea? 3  
Poet's Corner 4  
Contest Winners 4  
Contest Deadlines 5  
Upcoming Events 5  
Back Page with Tammy 6

From the President's Desk . . .

## Sprint Your Way to Words on the Page

I've known for years that I tend to get more done when handed a deadline. There's something about a ticking calendar that revs my engine. Did you know that setting tiny deadlines can do the same thing?

Welcome to sprinting. And no, I don't mean racing around a track. My initial introduction to sprints was with groups that wanted to get together for timed writing. My response is always no because I simply don't write well in a group. However, the "idea" of sprints is one that can be done on my own.

A sprint is a set amount of time where you focus on a single task. For instance, I'm doing a 15 minute sprint right now to get this article written. Sprints work by tricking the brain into doing an activity that can feel unlimited and overwhelming otherwise. It's another way to eat the proverbial elephant.

Writing sprints can help us get words on the page quickly. When faced with an unlimited amount of time, we naturally become pickier about each word. Setting a timer helps to turn off that inner critic so your creative brain can fire. This is where you can actually get the work done and finish that novel that's been bouncing around in your head for years. The magic happens when you edit.

There are probably as many ways to sprint as there are people who do them. I've been using them lately for reading email and Facebook. I set a timer for 15 minutes and do whatever I can in that timeframe. Then I stop and do something else. I've found that by doing this, I waste far less time on the trivial. I also use them when editing for my clients. It makes that 80k manuscript less daunting.

Setting an actual timer is critical. Don't just use your watch unless it has a timer—I use my phone. Knowing a bell will ring eliminates the need to constantly check the time so you can focus on writing or whatever task you're doing.

Some types of sprints are so well-known they have names, such as Pomodoro. This method is 25 minutes where you write as much as you can, then take a 5 minute break. Then repeat. There are even apps you can use. The goal is to keep you writing for the entirety of the time and avoid "shiny object" syndrome. Our brains accept this limitation because we know it's for a limited amount of time.

Chris Fox (author of *5,000 Words Per Hour: Write Faster, Write Smarter*) adheres to a slightly different



Jeanne Felfe

method. His method trains you to write faster by incorporating increasingly lengthy timed sprints and recording your word count. He suggests start short and build. First, brainstorm for 5 to 10 minutes about what happens next. Then set a timer for 5 minutes. Write as fast as you can and don't stop for anything. When the buzzer sounds record your word count. Gradually increase the amount of time, always recording the word count. Over a short amount of time, you should find you have increased both your word count and your stamina.

Some of the benefits of sprinting are to learn how to write faster, improve your speed, and learn how to focus on one task for a specified amount of time. Breaks are crucial to convincing your brain that this is good for you. Knowing you'll get a break frees you to focus. (My timer just went off, so see you in 5 minutes.) And control those breaks by setting a timer. Otherwise, you're likely to wonder off and get involved in something else (oh wait, that's me).

After doing some timed sprints, you'll start to get a feel for the length that works better for you. I've found I work best with longer sprints of at least 30 minutes when writing, and shorter for non-writing tasks. Chaining sprints together is a good practice to accomplish more. Commit to two sprints back-to-back—like two Pomodoros, where you write 25 minutes, break for 5 minutes, and repeat—but look at each sprint as a separate unit.

Bottom line—sprints can help you build endurance to write more in less time. If your goal is to become a commercially successful author, this is an invaluable way to learn how to meet demanding deadlines. If you're more of a pleasure writer, the world of enjoyment awaits at the tick of a clock.

—Jeanne Felfe, President

## Check It Out!

Have you seen the Saturday Writers new members-only bookstore yet? Find anthologies, romance, YA fiction, short fiction, history and historical fiction, all written by Saturday Writers members. Go to <http://saturdaywriters.org/member-bookstore.html> and click on the book to take you right to a link where you can order your next summer read.

*What's the Big Idea?*

## The Shapes of Our Minds

The quality of our writers continues to amaze me each month as I read the first-place entries and interview the diverse, creative, and unique people who have scripted them. Some writers are inspired by the contest prompts. Others are inspired by a passionate force.

The poetry contest incorporated not only triangles, but curves and quadrilaterals, too. If you've been following this newsletter for a while, the name of the first-place winner should be familiar.

Cathleen Callahan once again won first place for her poem, "Ripples." I've interviewed this gifted poet a number of times and she always shares a piece of her soul when she responds. Rather than dissecting her responses, I thought it would be more beneficial to share everything she wrote.

"As I think I've shared with you before, I rarely write for the SW prompts. I write in the context of my life at moments of inspiration, usually, especially in the last few years, while in nature, but throughout my life when I'm in love with someone or something, or am moved by a line in a novel or poetry or spiritual book that I'm reading, or by an event or happening that reaches into the depths of me and speaks wisdom or whimsy or grief or delight. When SW provides themes, I feel something I've written, sometimes years before, calls to me to come find it in the sheaves of poetry I've kept filed away and to set it free, give it life beyond its anonymity. Having their worth, their ability to move others displayed by Saturday Writers has finally pushed me beyond whatever fears have kept me from creating a publishable manuscript for them and to do just that this spring and summer. I am deeply grateful to all the members of SW for their generosity of spirit and confirmation that my poems deserve this gathering into a book.

"My poems tend to flow of their own accord through me as if from another source, from some attentiveness with which I was gifted, for surely it is not of my own making. Rather it is an openness within me to receive the flow as trustingly as I do the scent of a flower, or the touch of a breeze, or the muted rainbow colors in the clouds. That said, it has taken a lifetime to master its language! It has taken decades of study and myriad efforts to capture that which flows through me into words! I



*Diane How*

remember, when I was working on my Masters in Creative Writing in my early thirties, how frustrated I was with trying to bring down something huge and outside the bounds of language—something which I felt and "knew" —into the miniscule, two-dimensional march of words on a page! What didn't fail me through the years of those efforts was my openness to receiving the flow and finding the words. Yes, I studied and wrote poetic forms, but, ultimately, they were not the containers that held. Instead, I learned to hear and surrender to letting the poems flow onto the page as they choose to be. I get out of their way and let them breathe."

Once again, Cathleen not only took first place; she also claimed second and third place in the contest. We are fortunate that she shares her gift with SW.

The April prose contest focused on triangles. Christine Anthony wrote the winning prose entry, "Love Lines." This crime-solving story captured my attention and didn't let go until the end. Christine finds some prompts more helpful than others.

The triangle theme fit effortlessly into her story as she rearranged photos of three suspects to solve a mystery. I asked if she's always enjoyed reading and writing this genre. "I have always had an interest

*Continued on p. 5—See Big Idea*

---

---

### *Postill—Continued from p. 1*

you can sell more books and attract a loyal fanbase. This in turn can lead to more reviews, referrals, and comparison titles that you can use in query letters, on your book cover, and in promotional material.

Cherie Postill is a writer, marketing professional, and a speaker. She is the author of *How to Train a Beta Reader and Sell More Books*. Her debut novel for middle-grade readers and the first in a planned series, *Cory Summers and the Wrath of Naytas*, is scheduled for publication in Fall 2021. Her upcoming humor/adventure novel for middle-grade readers is targeted for release in October 2022. Ms. Postill serves on the St. Louis Writers Guild Board, where she holds the title, VP of contests and works as the liaison for more than 21 school districts. She teaches workshops for writers young, and not so young, and is an active member of the St. Louis Publishers Association. When she is not writing or speaking, she enjoys time with friends and family, reading, camping, hiking, cooking, and helping aspiring writers. You can learn more about her writing at [www.clpostill.com](http://www.clpostill.com). She loves to connect with readers and fellow writers, and welcomes your emails at [cherie@clpostill.com](mailto:cherie@clpostill.com). Find out what she is up to on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

—Sarah Angleton

## Weak Poetry— Scatter Shots

I have recently read a novel, *Where the Crawdads Sing*,<sup>1</sup> by Delia Owens. I would judge the book to be a good summer read. However, if you do not wish to know the ending until you have a chance to read the book, stop reading here. The poem in the novel is:



R.R.J. Sebacher

### The Firefly

Luring him in was as easy  
As flashing valentines.  
But like a lady firefly  
They hid a secret call to die.

A final touch,  
Unfinished;  
The last step, a trap.  
Down, down he falls,  
His eyes still holding mine  
Until they see another world.  
I saw them change.

First a question,  
Then an answer,  
Finally an end.

And love itself passing  
To whatever it was before it began. A. H.

This poem is a concise synopsis of the novel's plot. It is also a description of the firefly's mating habits. The author gives the answer away to who committed the murder around halfway through the book, although she does try to misdirect the reader now and again. The book is full of the details of a marsh. It is very descriptive, and she makes these factoids seem elegant and interesting.

The protagonist does not seem to pay for her crimes, as in most of Western Literature. In *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, there is a very good example that people will pay for their crimes no matter the extent of provocation. In *Where the Crawdads Sing*, the author does not punish the murderer.

The author, acting as her character's god, does decide that she and her mate remain childless, but this fact is given as an offhand aside that hardly qualifies as a just punishment. The mate finds a box full of old poetry including *The Firefly* after Kya's death, along with other evidence of her crime and in shock, he burns all her poetry to protect her memory. I find this last to be a sign that he was unworthy of

this woman who had the courage to do what needed to be done. Maybe I like the book only because I am a poet and found *The Firefly* to be a worthy poem, one which the author needed an entire prose novel to unpack.

I have many times told students who were writing pastoral poetry about flowers, birds, and bees, etc., to try to relate these to the human condition, thereby making them a far stronger poem. *The Firefly* does this in spades. The book states that Kya, who wrote under the pseudonym Amanda Hamilton (A.H.), never made her mate aware that she was the poet. He thought Amanda Hamilton wrote weak poetry. I do not believe he was a good judge of poetry.

Perhaps this book is of greater worth than I first realized. It certainly initiated some thought on my part. The book has made me question whether I have given too little value to pastoral poetry. Please let me know what you think.

—R.R.J. Sebacher

<sup>1</sup>Owens, Delia. *Where The Crawdads Sing*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2018.

## April Prose Contest Winners

**First Place:** Christine Anthony for  
“Love Lines”

**Second Place:** Cheri Remington for  
“Change of Heart”

**Third Place:** Donna Mork Reed for  
“Eldon's Music Jam”

## February, March, April Poetry Contest Winners

**First Place:** Cathleen Callahan for “Ripples”

**Second Place:** Cathleen Callahan for  
“High Place”

**Third Place:** Cathleen Callahan for  
“Echoic Spheres”

**Honorable Mention:** Jeanne Felfe for  
“The Gulf”

**Honorable Mention:** Kenneth Lee for  
“The Hatchling”

**Honorable Mention:** Robert Walton for  
“Crescent Moon”

*Beckwith—Continued from p. 1*

These elements include joining some suggested social media sites, an email newsletter, creating a blog, doing personal appearances or speaking engagements, and print or TV media exposure. Also developing influential personal contacts can pay off big for book testimonials and recommendations.

Social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn can be useful tools, but they vary in the type and age of their followers. Some may not fit with your type of writing. Be selective and chose as few as one or two. The goal is to build your following. Publishers want to see you have a large following and are committed to your genre. Including your social media following information in your book proposals to publishers will greatly increase your chances of success.

After Sandra's presentation, the meeting was thrown open for questions. A number of members asked some great ones. Sandra's expertise was apparent as she gave very concise and informative answers to all of them. Talking with Sandra was a pleasure, and it seemed the meeting could have gone on much longer, but unfortunately time ran out.

If you missed the meeting, the recording is available to members on our Saturday Writer's website. You can also visit Sandra's website [www.buildbookbuzz.com](http://www.buildbookbuzz.com). Her handbook, "Platform Building for Author's Cheat Sheet" can be found on Facebook at <http://bit.ly/PBFACS>. The last six letters must be caps. It describes the thirteen elements of the platform in detail.

—John Marcum

*Big Idea—Continued from p. 3*

in solving crimes. Agatha Christie is my all-time favorite writer. I love the challenge of figuring out the mystery of "Who done it?"

I was curious about how Christine decides on the names of her characters. "Character names can be a challenge. I like names that are a little unusual. However, sometimes the age of the character dictates the name I choose. The popularity of names changes as time passes, and I sometimes go against the current trend. I like to be different."

The writing quality of "Love Lines" matched that of many stories I've read in magazines. I asked Christine if she has submitted to contests outside of SW. "Currently, I'm not submitting stories to other contests. I've been working to get a book ready to publish on Amazon and simply haven't had the time. I'm open to entering other contests and may do so in the future." After reading her story, I have no doubt she'd be successful.

Christine offered the following advice to writers. "I guess the best advice I can give is to not give up and use all the resources you have at hand. There have been times when I have questioned my writing ability/talent, but I haven't stopped writing. I know my work is not to everyone's taste, but I enjoy the stories I create, and, apparently, since 'Love Lines' won first place, so does someone else."

Whether you write for a prompt or fit a prompt into an already developed piece, keep writing and sending in those amazing treasures.

—Diane How

## **DEADLINE SATURDAY June 26!**

### **2021 Contest Theme: Shapes**

**Prose:** 2021-word limit

**Poetry:** 50-line limit

**Begins:** 5/29/21

**Prose Deadline:** 6/26/21

**Poetry Deadline:** 7/31/21

#### **June Theme**

**Unique Shapes:** Heart, star, arrow, "cookie cutter" shapes, etc. Search your yard for a four-leaf clover. Light the shape-shifting flame of a candle by your laptop. Whether you shoot your story arrow over moon and stars or at the heart of the matter, send in your prose and poetry. Good luck!

## **Upcoming Events**

Watch your email for instructions about how to participate, whether as reader at an Open Mic or as attentive audience in the comfort of your own home.

### **June**

#### **Mini-Workshop:**

Saturday, June 26, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

#### **General Meeting:**

Saturday, June 26, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

### **July**

#### **Open Mic:**

TBA

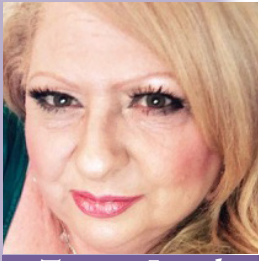
#### **Mini-Workshop:**

Saturday, July 31, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

#### **General Meeting:**

Saturday, July 31, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

## Brain Dance Your Way to a Bestseller!



Tammy Lough

What do Pablo Picasso, Steve Jobs, and Richard Bronson have in common? They all practice the origin of

human creativity, aka meditation.

How can a practice so simple spur so many positive changes in our bodies? Change your brain, change your life.

### Meditation and Key Brain Responses:

#### 1. Freezes Father Time

Many who meditate look decades younger and live longer than those who do not. You want a decent book jacket photo, right?

#### 2. Boosts Important Brain Chemicals

Increases “feel good” hormones, endorphins, and serotonin, and decreases the stress hormone, cortisol. Who doesn’t want to feel good and stress less?

#### 3. The Gut-Brain Axis

Meditation can transform your microbiome and your health. It’s a big deal!

#### 4. Weight Loss

Helps you reach your ideal weight by visualizing a leaner you during meditation.

#### 5. Success

Many CEO’s, movie icons, bestselling authors, and high-level executives claim meditation as the secret to their success.

### 6. Anxiety

Meditation enables us to put our thoughts into perspective and perform a filing of sorts. This keeps our lives real and manageable.

### 7. Intuition

Microsoft billionaire Steve Jobs claimed meditation was more powerful than intelligence.

### 8. Grit and Mental Toughness

Meditation is a true superpower. Practice this postivie resource.

### 9. Sleep and Insomnia

We can do away with some sleep disorders by meditating before bedtime.

### 10. Brain Power

Want to dramatically upgrade your intelligence and memory? You guessed it. Meditate.

### 11. Creativity

A book does not write itself. A fresh, rested mind that meditates does.

### How to Meditate

- Find a quiet, distraction-free place to meditate.
- Wear comfy clothes, such as loose or stretchy clothing that doesn’t pull or feel uncomfortable.
- Meditate when you already feel relaxed. Eat a light snack if you are hungry and use the restroom.
- You may want to bring a timer. Set it for 10 minutes or whatever time you desire so you aren’t checking a clock.
- Sit on a cushion or chair with a straight back so you can concentrate on your breathing as you inhale and exhale.
- Tilt your head down to open the chest.
- Breathe through your nose with mouth closed. Relax jaw.
- Focus on inhalation and exhalation. This is what meditation is all about.

- If your mind wanders, focus on your breath.
- You will experience inner chatter. Acknowledge it and let it pass.
- Practice every day.

Writers Write & Meditate!

—Tammy Lough

### Saturday Writers Officers

#### President:

Jeanne Felfe

[jeanne.f@saturdaywriters.org](mailto:jeanne.f@saturdaywriters.org)

#### Vice President:

Pat Wahler

[pat.w@saturdaywriters.org](mailto:pat.w@saturdaywriters.org)

#### Secretary:

Sarah Angleton

[sarah.a@saturdaywriters.org](mailto:sarah.a@saturdaywriters.org)

#### Treasurer:

Diane How

[diane.h@saturdaywriters.org](mailto:diane.h@saturdaywriters.org)

### Volunteers/ Chair Positions

Assistant Treasurer: Denise Scott  
Children’s/YA Author Critique:

Sue Fritz

Christmas Party Chair:

TBD

Contest Chair: Heather Hartmann

Hospitality Chair: Bob Weismiller

Assistants: Diane How &

Ryan Cort

Information Table: Tammy Lough

Membership Chair: Denise Wilson

Members Online Critique:

Susan Moreland

Newsletter Editor:

Susan Gore Zahra

Newsletter Assistant:

Sherry Cerrano

Pre-Meeting Saturday

Works-in-Progress Café &

Creative Writing Salon:

R.R.J. Sebacher

Publicity Chairs:

Rose Callahan

Speaker/Workshop Chair:

Jeanne Felfe

Social Media Chair:

Heather Hartmann

Assistant: Rose Callahan

Website Maintenance:

Heather Hartmann

Assistant: Rose Callahan

Wednesday Works-in-Progress Café:

Jim Ladendecker

Write-In Chair: Brad Watson

Youth Outreach Chairs:

Nicki Jacobsmeyer & Sue Fritz

Our meetings will be conducted using Zoom until further notice.  
For access information, visit [SaturdayWriters.org](http://SaturdayWriters.org) and look under the Meetings tab.