

Saturday Writers Newsletter

March • 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

Take a “Poetry Nap” with Mimi Herman at Saturday Writers March 27 Meeting

On Saturday, March 27, Saturday Writers will experience writer, editor, and writing instructor Mimi Herman’s presentation: “Poetry Nap: Relax Your Way to Great Writing.” If your life feels like one commitment piled on top of another, with no time for writing, join us to ease your way into inspiration.

You’ll slowly relax, breathe deeply as we rarely get the opportunity to do, and take a journey into the deepest part of yourself. When you emerge

from your poetry nap, you’ll be ready to spill ideas and images onto the page, and craft them into poetry.

This workshop is designed for writers of all levels. Mimi’s workshop will be followed by a reading of selected poems from her collections, *Logophilia* and *A Field Guide to Human Emotions*.



Continued on page 2—Herman

Andrew Doty Guided SW through World of Editing at February Meeting



At our Feb 27 meeting, Andrew Doty answered the question of “Can you edit your own book?”

You may be surprised to learn that the answer is yes. And no. Yes, you can self-edit, but no, you need an actual editor for the finished product. Andrew defined editing as a verb meaning “to prepare a book.” He also said there is an order to editing.

One of his strongest suggestions

was that once it is written, set the book aside for at least a month. Longer if you have the luxury of time. Time is a magical thing. Coming back to your book after a break changes your perspective.

Another top suggestion was to read your book aloud. Note the places where you stumble over words or phrases.

One thing we can all do, even with limited editing skills, is a search and destroy mission for most, but not all, adverbs. Use a tool like charactercounttool.com to identify repeated words

Continued on page 5—Doty

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.

March 27 Meeting

- 10:00-10:45 a.m.—**Members only** workshop **VIA ZOOM**. Topic: creating templates for contest submissions.
- 11:00-1:00 p.m.—Regular meeting **VIA ZOOM** for business items and our guest speaker.

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Digging for Ideas

I am fortunate that my desk faces a panel of three windows looking out over my front garden. I joke that the bird feeder hanging there is my twitter feed. In addition to birds, squirrels regularly visit to entertain me with their antics. We greased the pole, thinking it would reduce the seed they consumed. Nope—those furry critters can jump a long way. They also dig, and that's what I want to talk about today.

As I sat there wondering what pearls of wisdom I might convey this morning, an industrious squirrel was busy in the yard, digging for who knows what. He took his little paws and scraped the ground repeatedly in the same spot. Then he stopped and ate something. After that, he hopped to another spot and repeated the action. I thought about what squirrels do all summer and fall. They harvest the bounty of the earth and hide it for later. Well, now is "the later" and they are reaping the rewards of their earlier labor.

As writers, we can do something similar. All around us the world is moving and things are happening. Are you paying attention? Did you catch that stray bit of conversation while standing in line at the grocery store or wherever you've ventured? I don't know about you, but people watching is how I build characters. I pay close attention to the cadence and accents of everyone around me—it helps to be an introvert. How do they position themselves to speak to a loved one compared to a business associate compared to a couple on a date? What are they saying with their body language? Are they sitting quietly with



another person saying nothing, absorbed in their meal?

Like the squirrels in my yard, I am constantly harvesting for later use. I may have no idea what I'll use a tidbit for, but later down the road, I will stop and dig, seeking the nuggets of information I've stored. What did those four teenage girls look and sound like while giggling at the clothes rack? What unusual words did they use? When I was their age, it was "man" and "far out" (yes, I'm dating myself). A few years ago it was the "Valley girl" phase where the favorite word was "like" to the point of being ridiculous. Today? I don't know, but if I were going to write a YA novel, I would be listening in to find out.

I live in a cul-de-sac and lots of people walk past my house. Since I'm facing the window most of the day while I write, I watch them. I rarely recognize any of them, so I make up stories about them. Today I saw a lone man coming around the curve. I noticed something off about his foot pattern. Was that a slight hesitation with his right leg? I wondered whether he, like me, had a knee that wasn't all that happy. I had seen him before with a dog, and today the pet was absent. I wondered where the furry creature might be.

I know I will catalogue this man's walking cadence for later use in something. I don't write these observations down, but somehow, somehow, like the squirrels who plant tidbits of food all over the place, I will find them just when I need them. And voila—I will have a characteristic that, while subtle, another character may notice and recall when trying to identify the stranger she saw in her neighborhood that day "the bad thing" happened.

Be a squirrel, always harvesting and planting for future use. Your creative endeavors will thank you.

—Jeanne, Felfe, President

Herman—Continued from page 1

Mimi Herman is a writer and editor, Kennedy Center teaching artist, and co-director of Writeaways writing workshops in France, Italy, New Mexico, and online. Since 1990, she has engaged over 25,000 students with writing workshops. She is an Association of Writers & Writing Programs Board of Directors member and a Warren Wilson alumna and was the 2017 North Carolina Piedmont Laureate.

Mimi has held readings at *Why There are Words*,

Symphony Space, and—with David Sedaris—at Memorial Auditorium in North Carolina. Her writing has appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Prime Number* and other journals. She is the author of *Logophilia* and *The Art of Learning*. Her collection of poetry, *A Field Guide to Human Emotions*, is available from Finish Line Press. You can find Mimi at www.mimiherman.com and www.writeaways.com.

—Sarah Angleton, Secretary

What's the Big Idea?

February Thaw

The frigid Missouri temperatures and Covid-19 kept many folks inside this year. Apparently, SW members were busy writing, because we had quite a few entries in the President's contests. This month I had the privilege of interviewing the first-place winners in five categories. They offered some interesting and encouraging advice for fellow writers.

Donna Mork Reed took first place for her drabble, "Just Desserts." A drabble must be exactly 100 words. Her entry describes a woman sneaking up behind her husband and scaring him. The twisted ending made me chuckle. You'll want to read it for sure.

When asked if it is more difficult to write with such a restricted word count, Donna replied, "The word count limit on drabbles makes that a bit harder. But it is fun to experiment and find the perfect word. In short stories, sometimes a descriptive word can be one of ten options and any of them will work because you have more space where you can add words to help focus the writing. With a drabble, you don't have that luxury and really have to focus on the specific word choice. But if you do have an idea already, it can be a fast write."

Donna belongs to two children's and one novel critique group. She finds them extremely helpful because "the groups often offer suggestions for spots when you get stuck. Like, how do I get from point A to point B? My group always comes up with several suggestions, and usually one of the ideas is PERFECT for what I need."

When asked if she had any advice for other writers, she said, "Just write. You can't edit something that hasn't been written. It doesn't have to be written perfect the very first time." That's a great reminder. Thanks, Donna.

Sherry Cerrano took first place in the Essay category for her entry, "Nosey Spirit." I love when a writer leads me down one path and then surprises me with the ending. I was fascinated imagining a spirit living in Sherry's home. She wittingly drew me in and then made me laugh at the unexpected conclusion.

I asked Sherry what her inspiration was for the story and she told me, but I don't want to ruin the surprise for the readers, so I will share a couple of notes from her response. "I find a table mysteriously moved several feet or I hear an ajar pantry door creak open. I always find a decorative lion sitting askew. I'll realign it, he moves it." Want to know who "he" is? Be sure to look for it when the anthology comes out next year!



Diane How

During the Covid-19 lockdown, Sherry hoped to finish her second novel. Unfortunately, "the psychological effects often interfered with my creativity and motivation. A short-term goal of writing a short story or poem for SW contests was often more achievable."

Sherry encourages writers to use critique groups. "Once you put yourself out there and you get accustomed to other writers commenting on your 'little darlings,' you'll never go back to writing without readers' input." Thanks for those encouraging words, Sherry.

Although Flash Fiction gives a writer 500 words to work with, it remains a challenge to pick just the right words for a great story. That's exactly what Heather Hartmann did when she wrote her winning entry, "Go Swimming."

Heather painted her story so vividly, I feared it was a painful memory of a tragic event. However, she reassured me it is completely fictional. When asked about the difficulty of writing a flash fiction with such emotional intensity, she responded, "I enjoy that flash challenges me to keep my story tight and to the point. I often struggle in the middle of a story and flash needing to be concise allows me to almost skip over that middle story lag I struggle with. Poetry is by far the most difficult. I am in awe of the poets!"

As many of you know, Heather has two active young boys who keep her busy all day. I wondered how she finds time to write. "Well, truth be told it's tough and I haven't had a lot of time to write in the past several months. Many of my entries lately have been old work that I've found a little bit of time to rework and reenter. Just goes to show what's not right for one contest could be a winner in another!"

I totally agree with her. Every judge looks at the entries differently. Just because a piece didn't get selected the first time, don't toss it aside. Try again. She ended our interview with another reminder. "Enter contests! Join a critique group! Enter contests! Listen to your critique group! Enter contests! You only get better by writing and learning. If you don't put yourself out there, the growth process is much slower."

Normally a successful short story writer, Jim Ladendecker expanded his winnings with a first place Poetry entry, "Shape of Our Future." Jim's poem offers an interesting and inspirational comparison of our reactions to life's problems to the shapes of water and ice. I asked him how it felt to write a poem versus a short story. He said, "Poetry is more difficult for me, because it can be interpreted in different ways. I've only written a few poems and those came

Continued on page 4—Big Idea

Big Idea—Continued from page 3

to me quickly, possibly because I had an emotional connection to the topic.” I believe many poets/writers would agree their best work comes from a place of deep passion.

When asked about his writing process, Jim advised, “I don’t write every day, but I try to write at least five days each week. It always seems like the story I’m working on is running in the background of my mind, because ideas will come to me while driving to the store or taking a walk. I make notes on my phone when I have an idea that I think is worthwhile.”

Jim also appreciates the use of critique groups to help improve his writing skills. “Critiques of any kind are helpful. The members in Saturday Writers are always willing to help. It’s very helpful to hear a different viewpoint on your writing. We tend to have blinders with our stories or poems, so getting suggestions from others opens your eyes to new ideas.” So true, Jim. Thanks for the reminder.

Last, but certainly not least, M. Rose Callahan won first place in Prose for “Training Day.” When a story begins with the main character perched thirty feet up in a tree while wearing nothing but a robe, there’s little doubt it’s going to be a winner. Vivid descriptions, subtle humor, and strong wordsmithing make this a delightful read.

I asked Rose if she has always had a strong imagination. “Emphatic YES! But it often gets me into trouble. I believe many creatives struggle with the gift—and the curse—of their imaginations. It’s easy for me to imagine experiences at a deeper level, but it also creates problems such as chronic overplotting. I have to keep myself in check. When I’m rolling with an idea, it can also be overwhelming for others and exhausting.”

When asked what inspired the story, Rose replied, “I wanted to explore the message: We have the power to allow others second chances. To be able to see beyond the mistake and see into the potential is one ability that makes us unique. In ‘Training Day,’ I use a dead gal on the first day of training in her afterlife as the vehicle for the message.” What an inventive way to share a message and stir our imaginations.

I wondered if she had any resources or inspiration for others who are interested in writing about spirits. Here’s what she had to share: “Trick question. Depends on how you want to use a spirit in your story, whether it’s primary to the story, or simply a device. I think the key resource is knowing ourselves. After all, spirits are driven by the same wants and needs as those living, but they have the advantage of not being confined to a three-dimensional world.

A basic understanding of folklore, physics, and psychology helps, too.”

Rose also mentioned a number of resources. “I’m always looking for quirky news and history. Additional inspirational resources: family stories, journal/newspaper databases accessible online with your library membership, ghost short stories, ghost tours.”

What an exciting month of remarkable writing! Keep writing. Keep submitting. Maybe next time I’ll be interviewing you!

—Diane How

DEADLINE SATURDAY March 27!

2021 Contest Theme: Shapes

Prose: 2021-word limit

Poetry: 50-line limit

Begins: 2/27/21

Prose Deadline: 3/27/21

Poetry Deadline: 4/24/21

March Theme:

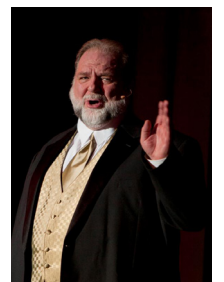
Quadrilateral Family: square, rectangle, trapezoid, parallelogram, kite, etc. Plot your story across squares on graph paper, squash your poem into a trapezoid and let it soar like a kite.

Congratulations!



SW member, Ken Lee, has been busy! *Voices from the Bible: Volume Two* is his fourth book to be released since August 2020. This is the second of a two-part series of play anthologies. The new volume includes plays written for Christmas church celebrations. The scripts are scripture based, humorous and can easily be performed by volunteer actors of all ages. Volume Three, a collection of Easter plays, is due to be released in summer of 2021.

This and Ken’s other books are available on Amazon.



And the Winners Are . . .

President's Contest: Things that have no shape themselves.

Prose

First Place: M. Rose Callahan for "Training Day"

Second Place: Christine Anthony for "Dinner with Daniel"

Third Place: Billie Holladay Skelley for "Bottomless Fear"

Honorable Mention: Donna Mork Reed for "A Breathless Night"

Honorable Mention: Max Eisele for "Animal Love"

Honorable Mention: Cheri Remington for "Stone"

Flash

First Place: Heather Hartmann for "Go Swimming"

Honorable Mention: Wesley Ginther for "The Caretaker"

Poetry

First Place: James Ladendecker for "Shape of Our Future"

Second Place: Billie Holladay Skelley for "Amorphous Doubt"

Third Place: Kenneth Lee for "Visit with an Elf"

Honorable Mention: Susan Gore Zahra for "2020 Collage"

Honorable Mention: Tara Pedroley for "The Shape of My Soul"

Essay

First Place: Sherry Cerrano for "Nosey Spirit"

Honorable Mention: Jane Hamilton for "A Stroke of Luck"

Drabble

First Place: Donna Mork Reed for "Just Desserts"

Second Place: Jane Hamilton for "Homecoming Nostalgia"

Honorable Mention: Sherry Cerrano for "Woodland Romance"

Pen & Paint Contest Part I

Poetry

Susan Gore Zahra for "Aging Well"

Carol Roberson for "The Chickadee"

Billie Holladay Skelley for "Nature's Script"

Diane How for "Nirvana"

Cheri Remington for "Echo"

Prose

Robert Walton for "Dogwood Dream"

James Ladendecker for "Last Minute Christmas"

Donna Mork Reed for "The Visit"

Christine Anthony for "The Visitor"

Cheri Remington for "How to Build a Bridge"

Doty—Continued from page 1

and phrases, word difficulty, and many other useful breakdowns.

Get a second opinion, especially if you can't afford an editor or if you plan to self-publish. Critique partners and beta readers are useful for this. (For information on how to properly utilize beta readers, be on the lookout for our June speaker announcement.)

Andrew pointed out that there are many kinds of editors and that most books will go through multiple layers of editing. Each provides a different service and optimally, these functions should be performed by a different person because, after a read-through, anyone can become "blind" to errors.

Developmental editors look for the big picture throughout the entire content. They might also be called a book coach. Their job is to make sure the story and structure are sound. This type of editor might be involved prior to the completion of the book and could help direct its development.

Copyeditors check for clarity and cleanliness, basically the functionality of language.

Proofreaders check for consistency and cleanliness. By the time a book gets to a proofreader, it's ready to print. Markup is done on a PDF file.

The question came up as to whether to have your book professionally edited prior to submitting to an agent and/or publisher. While traditional publishers employ all the various kinds of editors, your book will be edited if contracted. Realize that if you submit a book full of errors, it is unlikely to make it to the contract stage. Employing a professional editor will increase your chances of submitting a clean manuscript. And never, ever submit a first draft. You are wasting everyone's time.

To find an editor who is a good match for you and your project, research online, get recommendations from other authors, and read the acknowledgment pages of books you felt were well-edited. Get multiple sample edits to evaluate skill and fit. Once you hire an editor, do *not* make changes while the editor is working on it. During this time, work on something else. Be patient. Editing is all about quality, not speed, so allow it the time it needs. Plan for at least one month for copyediting, a month for proofreading, and as long as it takes for developmental editing.

Price varies depending on the qualifications and demands of any particular editor and even the region (e.g., editing rates are higher in California). Editors charge by the hour, the page, per word, or by the project.

—Jeanne Felfe

Taking a Second Look



For the past year, SW newsletters have been visual deserts with few graphics beyond regular contributor photos. Virtual events result in no candid shots of members participating in meetings, open mics or anthology signings, or socializing at holiday parties or meet-and-greets. As lovely as our columnists are, I

miss the pictures of, well, just about anything to add more color to the sea of black and white.

I wasn't thinking about the newsletter when I went out to my yard. I was thinking that I had missed the winter blooms on the witch hazel bush. We planted the bush several years ago when I realized how much I needed a shot of hope during winter. Witch hazel leaves turn deep red tinged with green and cling to the color late into fall. They also bloom between October and April, depending on the variety. Ours breaks out in tiny blossoms of sunshine yellow around early February, right when both days and my moods are grayest.

This year, snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures kept me from my witch hazel pilgrimage. When I went out last week, I found rust-colored blossoms and assumed they were dead, perhaps victims of the freeze. The leaves clinging to the bush were crisp, curled, brown, but somehow still clinging to branches instead of lying on the ground. A gentle brush of the crinkly, wispy petals found them still supple. For the first time since we planted the bush, I smelled the sweet, spicy, earthy scent. My mood brightened as much as it had from the sunshine flowers in years past.

What does this have to do with writing? Take a look at your files, notebooks, snippets of ideas languishing on backs of envelopes. Do you see something different now? Has something ripened into a sweet coming-of-age memoir? A spicy romance? An earthy poem? What is there that you could not perceive when you set those words aside?

It never hurts to take a second look.

—Susan Gore Zahra, Editor

2020 Anthology Set To Launch April 10!

Join us via Zoom on Saturday, April 10, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You won't want to miss this celebratory launch of Saturday Writers' 14th anthology, *Decades in Writing*! We hope to make this event as much fun as our virtual holiday party, so mark your calendar and watch for more details via email and on our Facebook Members Only page.

See page 7 to pre-order copies at reduced rates by April 9, or order on line at: <https://saturdaywriters.org/2020-anthology-preorder.html>

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.

March

Open Mic:

Monday, March 22, 7-9 p.m.

Mini-Workshop:

Saturday, March 27, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

General Meeting:

Saturday, March 27, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

April

Book Launch:

Saturday, April 10, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

SEE <https://saturdaywriters.org/upcoming-special-events.html> for details.

11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Open Mic:

Monday, April 19, 7-9 p.m.

Mini-Workshop:

Saturday, April 24, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

General Meeting:

Saturday, April 24, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

May

Open Mic:

Monday, May 24, 7-9 p.m.

Note: Date of Mini-Workshop/General Meeting

Mini-Workshop:

Saturday, **May 22**, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

General Meeting:

Saturday, **May 22**, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.



Writers Encouraging Writers

*A Proud Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild
Established 2002*

PRE-ORDER FORM

(VALID UNTIL 11:59 P.M. APRIL 9, 2021)

SATURDAY WRITERS

2020 ANTHOLOGY

Contributor Copies - \$10 per copy **OR** Non-contributor Copies - \$16 per copy

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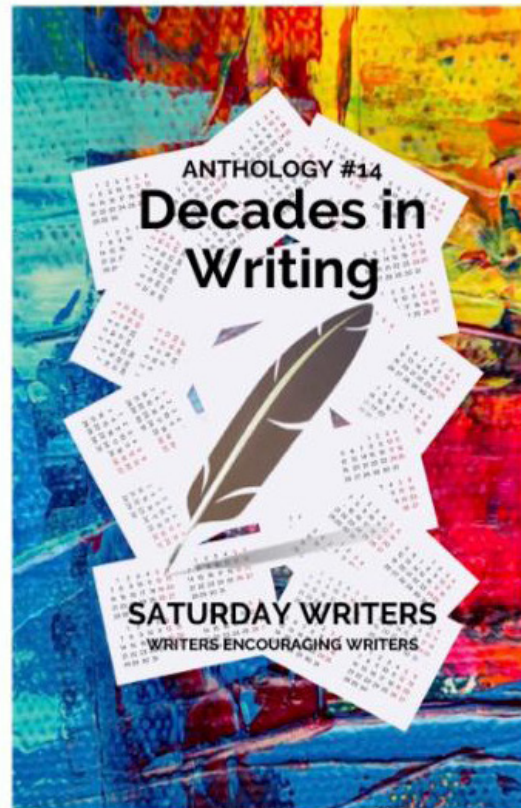
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DELIVERY METHOD

Ship to:

Pick-up: Email Diane How at talltales1@msn.com or call 636-240-6432 to arrange pick up once books are available.

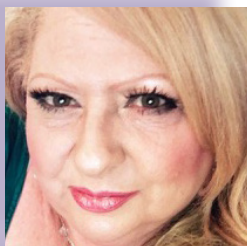


Create an Alter Ego

Some authors bang a gavel and declare we must have an alter ego to fully immerse our author-self into our main character. I say, I already have one and that is exactly what I do when I write my Lacey Kendall series. I become one with Lacey, or does she become one with me? Dunno, but it's a "gimmick" and it works. Sit down, take a deep breath, and become as close as you can to your main character's persona. The same character must show up every time you write unless you want your main character to appear like Sybil with 16 personalities. It isn't a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde kind of thing where you literally become one or the other. It's more a continuance of a shared character trait, an expanded personality trait or quirk. Think of it like the curtain opens and the show begins with the same personalities in every single scene. Every time.

Let's say you are the writer of fingernail biting thrillers but in the "real world," you wear a pocket protector and grease your hair to a far side-part with stiff wisps poking out here and there. You're not looking like the coolest of men in this garb. You don't look the part of a best-selling author of evil, either. Not one iota, and that's the point.

When you sit down to write a book in the terror genre, you must somehow become the ultimate thrill-machine, creating havoc and turmoil, forcing shrill screams from innocent victims. Unlike Pocket Protector Man, he would pull out a tiny screwdriver to tighten his oral retainer before apologizing profusely with "my bad," before freeing his victims



Tammy Lough

among aromatic wildflowers and patches of daisies.

You must be believable. Imagine you are a fan who drools when

the new Stephen King book comes out, but then you see him sitting by the plastic carry-home bag dispenser at the supermarket, wearing pastel bloomers, licking a giant lollipop. Gonna be a little difficult imagining the scary scenes of his novel without seeing a cartoon image of King with sticky drool on his chin. No, Mr. King sits to write *The Shining* and becomes his alter-ego, Jack Torrance (Nicholson). Argh! ArGH!! ARGH!!!

If you write in different genres, it is best to use a pen name and separate alter egos to maintain reader association. Consider mega-author J.K. Rowling. Her Harry Potter books will never know the meaning of bookstore shelf dust, but when she writes her more adult, gritty private investigator stories (specifically, the Cormoran Strike series, under her pen name, Robert Galbraith), her author rating shrinks to a 3.2. See how important reader association is?

Play the part of your alter-ego each time during 1) interviews, 2) emails to your readers (fan club) 3) participating in social media 4) your author website 5) book signings and 6) anywhere you are portraying your main character.

Find a trigger, other than a large phone booth that, like Clark Kent/Superman, transforms you into the ultimate alter-ego for your character. Maybe a special necklace when writing a historical novel or a rabbit's foot for a fantasy genre.

Or even light a candle as a pre-writing ritual to get into character. It doesn't matter what you do, just do it.

Why? Writers Write!

—Tammy Lough

Saturday Writers Officers

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Sherry Cerrano

Pre-Meeting Saturday

Works-in-Progress Café &

Creative Writing Salon:

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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, please contact Jeanne.F@saturdaywriters.org.