

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

August 2022

- > Welcome to Saturday Writers
- > We're excited to be meeting in person on the last Saturday of each month at the Spencer Road Library, Room 240.
- > Doors open at 10:45 a.m.
- > Works in Progress Café starts at 10 a.m. in room 265.
- > There will still be a Zoom option for members who continue to social distance, or can't attend.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE :

August Speaker	1
President's Letter	2
What's the Big Idea?	3
June Contest Winners	4
August Contest Rules	4
Upcoming Events	4

August Speaker Maria Rodgers O'Rourke: Are you a plotter, or a pantser? How a good editor can help

There's value in plotting out your writing or going with the flow. In either case, a good editor will help bring out the best in your work. Maria Rodgers O'Rourke is a developmental editor who helps authors with story lines, themes, genre, structure, etc. – the plotter approach. As a writer, she tends to be more of a pantser. Maria will share from her experience how these two approaches can work together, and how important the editor/author relationship is, to creating a solid

manuscript.

Maria Rodgers O'Rourke is a writer, speaker, and editor who also serves in nonprofit communications. A Certified *Story Grid* Editor, Maria is a gifted wordsmith and developmental editor who helps individuals and organizations tell their stories. Maria is publisher and author of two women's journals. She's a contributing columnist to the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Suburban Journals*, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, the *HuffPost*, and has been published in the popular *Chicken Soup for the Soul* collections. Maria's known for her warmth,

wisdom, and humor which shine through in her workshops, retreats, and coaching. Maria and her husband Steve have two adult daughters and enjoy music, traveling, hiking, wineries, Wordle, and Cardinals baseball.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK: CREATING A POSITIVE WRITING ENVIRONMENT



“I do believe the right environment can truly help make the writing experience more enjoyable and less of an effort.”

This has been a frustrating year for me, so far. I struggle to find writing inspiration. I know what your thinking: never wait for inspiration—just write. Easier said than done. Every time I try to write I end up staring at a blank screen for thirty minutes before I switch off the computer and go to bed. Why has the creative spirit left me? I’m sure there are some deep reasons that only months of intensive therapy can uncover. But I don’t want complicated explanations. I’m looking for something simple I can do to improve my mood and energy. With that thought in mind I recently examined my writing environment.

I have a room I call “my office” where I do most of my writing. It is a converted bedroom downstairs next to the TV room. Like many home offices, the space is also used to manage our family finances, track our investments, and pay bills. One wall is covered with shelves containing a small library of favorite books, both read and unread. The room is decorated with family photos, memorabilia from my days as an aerospace engineer, and old baseball cards. Clearly this room is not a dedicated writing space. My office is more of a multi-purpose room. Every time I write I’m surrounded by visual triggers that turn my attention to money, reading, family, and hobbies.

Normally I am an organized, neat, and tidy person. Everything has a place and everything in its place is my motto. But when I look around my office, I see clutter. Piles of papers intended to be sorted and filed months ago, a sea of multi-colored sticky notes

with reminders of tasks long past due, note pads, pencils, pens, and last year’s Father’s Day and birthday cards. Nary an exposed square inch of desktop visible amongst the mess.

I like my chair, although it is rather old, it still does the job. After fifteen years the seat cushion is perfectly molded to the shape of my behind. The room is well lit by one ceiling light, a high intensity floor lamp and a small desk lamp. Two windows provide some sunlight on nice afternoons. However, the windows also remind me that maybe I should be outside enjoying the afternoons instead of squinting at a computer screen in an artificially lit, air-conditioned room. Speaking of the air conditioner, the vent blows from the ceiling directly into the center of the room where my chair is located.

When I’m writing I try to minimize potential distractions by turning off my cell phone and closing email and internet applications. Shutting the door and listening to soothing music usually helps put me in a creative mood. I enjoy listening to instrumental music when trying to write. Give me a good symphony by Beethoven or Haydn, or maybe a piano concerto by Mozart. For a more modern sound I like smooth jazz.

Finally, a big mug of ice water during

the warm summer months or a cup of hot herbal tea during the winter complete the scene. My favorite snacks include animal crackers, dry roasted peanuts, and apple slices with peanut butter.

So, there it is. That’s the environment I write in. After some reflection I’m giving myself a below average grade. Good music and snacks, adequate chair and lighting, but poor on the clutter and distracting objects. I’m not saying that a poor writing environment is the only reason for my lack of productivity, but I do believe the right environment can truly help make the writing experience more enjoyable and less of an effort. I think I’m going to make some changes.

This month’s book review is *How to Write Winning Short Stories* by Nancy Sakaduski. With a title like that you would think the book would provide a wealth of usable knowledge. Especially to a young writer trying to learn the craft by entering short story contests, like the one’s offered by Saturday Writers. But that is not what I found in this book. The advice offered was not of much help. Topics are introduced and touched on but never adequately explained. Other how-to-write books do a much better job of teaching the craft. I give it two stars out of five.

Until next month, examine your writing environment and write, write, write, and keep writing.

—Jeffrey Czuchna
2022 President

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? BY DIANE HOW

Misguided Quotes

“Even a blind squirrel finds a nut sometimes.” When I first heard this quote many years ago from my husband’s hunting friend, it was intended as a congratulatory phrase for an unexpected success. Hubby and I have repeated it occasionally over the years, like after the July SW meeting when I learned my short story, *Treasures of the Heart*, won first place.

I searched the internet to see who first said this quote. One finding said it’s attributed to one of my favorite authors, Susan Mallery. I was surprised and disappointed to read the expression isn’t meant as a positive reinforcement, rather it’s a warning in

reference to an unreliable person succeeding once in a while.

Well, that sure put a damper on things. Being responsible and reliable are two traits I work hard to embody. Being humble is important to me too. So, interviewing myself for *What’s the Big Idea* seemed silly. Yet, I wanted to share a little background about where the story took root.

Treasures of the Heart started from an anecdote my husband shared many times over our fifty-plus year marriage. He and two of his friends were about seven years old when they decided to bury a treasure. They each selected a few of their favorite baseball cards, wrapped

them in tin-foil, and stuffed them in a Prince Albert tin.

Their daily playground was the Devil’s Backbone in southern Illinois. Wart, Snook, and Monk (their real nicknames) buried the tin can in a cave called Oven Rock. In their innocence, they planned to return when they were fifty years old to retrieve it. Even if they had stayed in touch over the years—which they hadn’t—as full-grown men, entering the small opening of the cave would have been impossible.

Hubby often wonders if anyone ever found their hidden treasure or if it’s still in the cave. I decided it was a story that needed an ending. So, that’s how the story took root. Maybe you’ll be



intrigued enough to want to know how it ends. You’ll have to wait until it’s published in the next anthology. Such a tease!

More important, I hope it inspires you to remember a favorite family anecdote and share it in a short story or poem for one of our contests. I promise not to mention the squirrel quote if I have the pleasure of interviewing you for our next column.

JUNE CONTEST WINNERS

June Contest

Theme: Caves - underground caverns, canyons, valleys, coves, etc.

First Place: Diane How for *Treasures of the Heart*

Second Place: Cheri Remington for *Wish Upon a Star*

Third Place: Kenneth Lee for *The Veil*

Honorable Mention: Susan Gore Zahra for *Milestones and Mules*

Honorable Mention: David Reed for *Valley of Time*

Honorable Mention: Susan Gore Zahra for *A Reasonably Well-Told Tale*

Children's Anything Goes Contest

Theme: Any Earthly Element Goes

First Place: Cheri Remington for *The Mechanic in the Town*

Second Place: Heather Hartmann for *Mortified*

Third Place: Carla Sabotta for *Riding a Space Elevator*

Honorable Mention: Donna Mork Reed for *Let Your Light Shine*

Honorable Mention: Billie Holladay Skelley for *The Superstition Mountains*

Honorable Mention: Diane How for *Treasures of the Heart*

AUGUST CONTEST GUIDELINES

Theme: Any Earthly Element, Anything Goes

Entry Fee: \$5 for members, \$7 for non-members.

Prose: 2022-word limit

Poetry: 50-line limit

Prose Deadline: 8/27/22

Poetry Deadline: 8/27/22

For contest rules and guidelines, click [here](#)

To submit, click [here](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

September Open Mic: Tuesday, September 20th, 6-8 p.m., Zoom only

September 24th: Emily Hall Schroen: "Wherever Books are Sold: A Guide to Forming Lasting Partnerships with Independent Bookstores"

September 24th: Pen and Paint II entries due, paintings to be posted on SW website by August 27

October 20th: Pen and Paint Reception, details to come

October Workshops:

October 4th Shana Youngdahl at Spencer Road Library, topic TBA

October 13 speaker and topic TBA

October 17 on Zoom only, Christina Gant, Don't Wait for the Muse: Forcing Inspiration and Invention Strategies

October 25 at Spencer Road Library, Jessica Matthews, How to Write and Publish Children's Books Using the Old Man and the Pirate Princess Method

Saturday Writers Officers

President:

Jeffrey Czuchna

president@saturdaywriters.org

Vice President

Donna Mork Reed

vicepresident@saturdaywriters.org

Secretary:

Sarah Angleton

sarah.a@saturdaywriters.org

Treasurer:

Diane How

diane.h@saturdaywriters.org

Volunteers/Chair Positions

Directors: Brad Watson, Jennifer Hasheider

Speaker/Workshop Chair: Jeffrey Czuchna

Assistant Treasurer: Denise Scott

Contest Chair: Heather Hartmann

Newsletter Editor: Beatrice Underwood-Sweet

Newsletter Assistant: Sherry Cerrano

Website Chair: Heather Hartmann

Membership Chair: Diane How

Membership Assistant: Denise Wilson

Anthology Chair: Brad Watson

Social Media Chair: Heather Hartmann

Assistant: Pat Wahler

Publicity Chair: Pat Wahler

Youth Outreach Co-Chair: Sue Fritz

Youth Outreach Co-Chair: Nikki

Jacobsmeier

Hospitality Chair: Bob Weismiller

Assistant: Diane How

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: Sue Fritz

Pre-Meeting Saturday WIP Cafe &

Creative Writing Salon: Robert Sebacher

Write-In Chair: Brad Watson