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HIGH PLAINS WRITERS

The Window

Official Newsletter of Panhandle Professional Writers
d/b/a Texas High Plains Writers

May 2016

A Bi-Monthly

Newsletter

From the President

Kimberly Black

Believe Your Own Words

Words have power. If you don't believe this, you're not a writer. Writers know this to be true, though sometimes we have a little trouble understanding what that really means.

We have a thought, and we write it down or type it up or say it out loud. The words we put together and record have the power to make people think and wonder. They trigger imagination. They bring tears and laughter.

As a reader and a writer, I know what a powerful tool this can be. To see these reactions in others gives me a sense of pride, but also a deep humility.

However, as the person sitting at the keyboard, I forget the power of the words I hear in my own mind. Not the story unfolding keystroke by keystroke, but the mental conversation of self-talk. I too often allow doubt enter that vocabulary. Will anyone even bother to read this? This story is completely lame. I don't even know what genre this is. How can I explain this to anyone else?

That is the conversation that we must banish from our brains. Replace it. It's easier said than done, but we have to erase those thoughts if we ever plan to have any measure of success.

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work. It's not boring or bland—and if it is today, it's only because you haven't applied the polish to it that you'll find tomorrow. Once you get it finished, revised, edited, and shiny, you'll discover exactly what genre it is, and you'll be able to sell it to just the right person.

Speak encouragement to yourself every time you sit down to write. Remind yourself that someone is counting on you. Think of your favorite book. What if the author had given up before it was finished? Don't let that happen to your reader. Treat yourself kindly. Have a positive conversation with your inner author. And, believe yourself. (You're pretty great.)

May Program

Dan Brown, Presenter

How much do you know about the business side of writing? Nowadays a writer has to know more than how to tell a good story, whether or not to put an I before the E or to self-publish or go a more traditional route. Our May speaker, Dan Brown, public accountant, will be an excellent follow up to Bethany Claire's talk in March. Dan will be able to provide the information that will help you decide if you need to create a limited liability company, a limited partnership, obtain a federal employer identification number, or form a business at all. In addition, he plans to do a PowerPoint presentation that will clarify which types of records a writer should keep, the things we can legally claim, and much more.

Of special interest to a lot of us is the murky water of a home office. Can you claim part of your utilities, insurance, cell phone, and office supplies? What about research books? Car mileage? Gasoline? Lunches? Dan will explain what types of expenses we can claim or not claim that deal particularly with all aspects.

Dan is employed at Lemert, Holder, and Ohm, PLLC, here in Amarillo. Previously, he worked as a restaurant manager for a local chain. The career change opened up new, exciting opportunities that now allows him to help clients sort out the rules dealing with the complexity of tax preparation in this changing world in which we live. The team at the firm of Lemert, Holder, and Ohm, PLLC, has provided the area with expertise and exceptional service for over 25 years.

There are lots to think about. Bring your questions to the May meeting and get the answers you need.

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sponsoring this month's speaker. Thanks, Natalie!

Member Spotlight on . . .

Janet Taylor

My life has been absolutely crazy these last few months, and I realized, as I sat down to put this newsletter together, that I didn't have a member to shine the spotlight on. So, you all get me.

Other than being a ghost writer for my mother-in-law's letter to the editor regarding the number of unwanted cats in Odessa, Texas, and the need for spay and neuter, I have only been published in ... you guessed it ... *The Window*. The bulk of my writing experience has been annual Christmas letters to family and friends, business letters at the law firms I've worked at, and essays I wrote for English Composition 101 at El Centro Community College in Dallas umpteen years ago. Oh! I almost forgot the illustrated story I wrote back in second grade of a girl, her cat, and a bear. It's doubtful that I will ever publish a novel, but that's okay. I enjoy writing, even this article.

It has been my desire to combine my love of genealogy with my love of writing and to someday write fact-based fiction stories about my ancestors to share with my son, my granddaughters, and those that come after them. I'd also like to write a fiction based on my findings of a search I did back in the 80's for a 66 year-old Lubbock woman. She was born in East Texas and had been given up for adoption. Although her biological mother was deceased, I'm proud to say that I found her biological aunt and had the honor to be present when they met for the first time.

And, you know the rest—over the past six years, I've sat on the Board of PPW/THPW as Hospitality Chair, Membership Chair, President-Elect, President, and now as Publicity/Newspaper Director. I've been the sole organizer of the annual youth writing contest since 2012. As you also know, and this article isn't any different, I keep bugging you all to get involved and contribute your time and talents to this organization steeped in the history of the Texas Panhandle.

Fundraising Results of

Dinner Theatre and Silent Auction

Early results indicate that we cleared \$1,360. Awesome! We also sold over \$100 in

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Member and author Patsy Rae Dawson attended the event and posted the following on Facebook:

What a fun evening at the Love & Marriage Dinner Theater! So you'll know where this compliment is coming from, Deryl Stephens and I love to laugh. We go to the Amarillo Little Theater plays every time they produce a comedy. We plan to attend Hairspray this month.

The Love & Marriage trilogy was brilliant on so many levels. The six actors and actresses sat at a center table and ate with us. We didn't realize we were going to be drawn into the intimate details of their romantic affairs as eavesdroppers until the first play started.

The setup was beyond brilliant and unexpected. They pulled it off flawlessly. The actors's and actresses's performances, facial expressions, one liners, and body language were totally believable and entertaining. It's the first time we can say that we truly were at a "dinner" theater. Ryan McSwain and Mike Akins did a bang up job writing these scripts.

It started with Ryan's comedy, "The Triple Do-Over." Karen Colin and Canon Brown portrayed a young couple getting off to a bad start on a blind date. Their spaced-out romance triggered a dramatic fight by an older couple dining at their table. Caroline Kenealy and David Limer let us listen in as the older couple struggled with the potential of ending their marriage in Mike's "Remembrance."

With one couple left at the table, the dinner theater climaxed with Mike's "The Proposal." This bi-polar fiasco of the attraction of two opposites, played by Mike Akins and Sarah LaMascus, fizzled before our eyes.

This trio of love affairs worked together absolutely brilliantly from beginning to end with superb performances. They'll have a hard time topping these gems next year. What a great evening!

Kudos to the Fundraising Committee who pulled this off. The food and atmosphere at Youngblood's Cafe were very appropriate. All in all, it was a very enjoyable evening.

Thank you, Patsy, for the wonderful critique.

Writing Tip

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Don't overlook the use of putting weather into your stories. The setting/weather can be similar to a character. You can use this device to add gripping tension, especially to a suspense. Crazy snowstorms, drenching rain, heat waves and droughts, hurricanes, etc. can add a multitude of emotions and often immense struggle. A weather event can also add a deeper level of romance, mystery, humor, or drama to enhance your story and make it leap off the page. The more depth you can bring to the reader to make them care about the people they're reading about the better.

Membership

Molly McKnight

Every month we add a few more to our membership roster. That is great!

Word of our great programs and wonderful sharing is getting around. If you have not been in some time, please join us. Hope to see your smiling face at our May 21 meeting. Bring your curious mind also.

Member Writing Contests

Below is a list of this year's writing contest prompts and their postmark deadlines:

- "There are three children sitting on a log near a stream. One of them looks up at the sky and says..." May's contest has a July 1 postmark deadline.
- "A twinkling eye can mean many things. Start with a twinkle in someone's eye and see where it takes you." July's contest has a September 1 postmark deadline
- "Write about something ugly — war, fear, hate, or cruelty—but find the beauty (silver lining) in it." September's contest has a November 1 postmark deadline.
- "He turned the key in the lock and opened the door. To his horror, he saw..." November's contest has a January 3 postmark deadline.

Your entries can be a short story of any genre or a poem. For details go to our [website](#).

HPN On Demand

Buyer Beware

We received in the mail information about HPN On Demand, a division of

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Demand offers competitively priced on-demand printing services.

"HPN On Demand is the newest division of a 40-year-old company. HPNbooks was established by Lammert Publications, Inc., which was founded in 1973. Throughout the years, HPNbooks has published community and business newspapers, directories for organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, city maps and quality coffee table books with historical or photo journalistic themes. Five years ago, in 2011, on demand printing was added to the list of services we provide to our customers."

"Today, HPN On Demand works with many self-publishing authors and poets in Texas and around the country, helping them to accomplish their goal of publishing their books."

Here's the contact information contained in the letter:

Christopher Sturdevant
csturdevant@hpnbooks.com
On Demand Print Coordinator
11535 Galm Road, Suite 101
San Antonio, Texas 78254
(210) 688-9004 or toll free (800) 749-9790

Upcoming Programs

Speakers for the remainder of 2016 are

July: Marcy McKay and Jennifer Archer

September: Kimberly Willis Holt

November: Robyn Conley, The Book Doctor

Link Up

Links to Members' Websites

This will be an ongoing article that, hopefully, will grow with each newsletter. If you would like your website "linked up" in our next newsletter, email us your website address along with any special information about the site.

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[Subscribe](#) to Kim Black's email list and receive a free story. What kind of writer is Kim? Find out by going to her [website](#) and reading what she writes.

Dianne Sagan

Dianne's [website](#) has a free newsletter to announce new books, recipes, contests, and giveaways. You can also find her [Book Club-in-a-Box](#) on her website. Dianne's other [website](#) has a membership section and offers a free newsletter.

Vicki Schoen

Would you like to include Vicki in your [book discussion group](#)? You can sign up for Vicki's [mailing list](#) and you can read her [blog](#).

Ryan McSwain

You can get a [signed copy](#) of Ryan's book *Monsters All The Way Down* on his [website](#). You can join his mailing list and get access to free short stories by going to his ["All My Stuff"](#) page.

Linda Broday

Visit Linda's [website](#) and sign up for her newsletter and check out her blog and booklist. You can also find information about her book that is being released in October. Interested in a trip to Las Vegas? Meet Linda there April 12-17.

Natalie Bright

Learn about Natalie and the books she's written by visiting her [website](#).

Phyliss Miranda

Discovery Phyliss's books, what her favorite links are, and check out her new contest [here](#).

Marcy McKay

Learn more about Marcy McKay and what she writes [here](#).

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Critique Session Guidelines

To participate in the critique session, you do not need to have a piece to be critiqued. The sessions begin at 1 p.m. and, depending on the number of those who have a story or a poem needing to be critiqued, can last up to a couple of hours. We suggest that your material not exceed approximately 750 to 1,000 words. Please bring at about five copies of your story or poem. If possible, it is helpful if you bring a short synopsis of your story so those critiquing have some background. We ask that you format your manuscript as follows:

1. Use white 8.5 by 11-inch paper.
2. Double space using either Times New Roman 12 or similar font.
3. In the header, give your last name, a slash (/), and a short title on the left and the page number on the right (at the top of each page).
4. Use one-inch margins.
5. Use one side of the paper only.
6. If possible, use line numbering.
7. Note: Your synopsis may be single-spaced.

Each person, in turn, will read 1,000 words or less (15 to 20 minutes) or the author will read their own writing, based on preference; then, the group facilitator will ask for discussion from the group. While each person is reading, we urge all other participants to offer written comments on the manuscript. All copies will be returned to each author.

The goal of every critique is: "How can we make it better."

Meetings are held on the third Saturday in odd-numbered months: January, March, May, July, September, and November.

The public and Texas High Plains Writers members are invited to hear speakers on selected writing or related topics.

You may order a box lunch from our Hospitality Director between 9:30 and 10:15 or bring a sack lunch. Box lunches are \$10.

Our meetings/programs follow this schedule:

Check-In and Meet & Greet
9:30 - 10:00 a.m.

Business Meeting
10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

Program/Presentation
10:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Box Lunch
12:15 - 1 p.m.

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	<p>1217 S. Tyler Amarillo, Texas (Note: We must occasionally switch our meeting location, or we may need to change the date to avoid conflicts. So, please check the address and date for each meeting.)</p>	<p>Need to contact us? You can write to us at: Texas High Plains Writers P. O. Box 19303 Amarillo, TX 79114 or email us at: panhandlewriters@gmail.com</p>



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