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THPW 2018 Issue 1 January

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# HIGH PLAINS WRITERS

## The WINDOW

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## SO YOU WANT TO WRITE A SPY NOVEL?

AMARILLO AUTHOR,  
TAYLOR MOORE IS HERE  
TO HELP YOU EXPLORE  
THE SPY GENRE.

LEARN TO DEVELOP  
YOUR HEROES AND  
VILLAINS LIKE A PRO.



January 20th, 2018

9:30 a.m. Registration

10:00 a.m. Workshop

Chase Building

Edward Davis Room (9th Floor)

600 S. Tyler St.

Downtown Amarillo

**For more on Taylor's Topic Visit:  
[texashighplainswriters.com](http://texashighplainswriters.com)**

### **So You Really Want to Write a Spy Novel? Now What?**

by Linda Broday

We're so excited about our January speaker. It's not everyday that we get to pick the brain of an ex-CIA agent! Taylor Moore has the credentials and will share some of what he knows. If he tells us all, he'll have to kill us. (That's a joke.)

What are the differences between Mystery, Thrillers, and Suspense? Taylor will tell you and explore a little deeper into the spy genre which is his field of expertise. He'll

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wanted to.

He'll help you see the world as the CIA sees it, challenge your system of beliefs, challenge the boundaries of morality, and make your bad guys good and your good guys bad. He'll talk about what's real and what's fake from a CIA operative's perspective. Taylor will help you develop your heroes, villains, and everything in between. Help craft scenes, give your story a satisfying ending but leave a hook for the next one in the series, and so much more, including where to find resources for crafting this type of novel.

This is only a small portion of what he'll cover. This program is jam-packed and you'll learn some of the actual duties of working for a spy agency. As much as Taylor is at liberty to say.

Bring paper and pencil! Part of the program will be interactive!

**About Taylor:**

He's a sixth generation Texan and grew up on a farm and ranch in Brazos County. He received a degree in journalism from Texas A&M followed by a master's in Public Policy at Pepperdine. After traveling extensively in Latin America and completing a graduate level internship at the U.S. Mission to the European Union, he was recruited by the CIA. Taylor has always had a passion for telling stories as well as a love of history, foreign policy and international travel. Despite his departure from the intelligence world, he continues to monitor world affairs with great interest. He now lives in the Texas Panhandle with his wife and two children.

## 2018 Programs

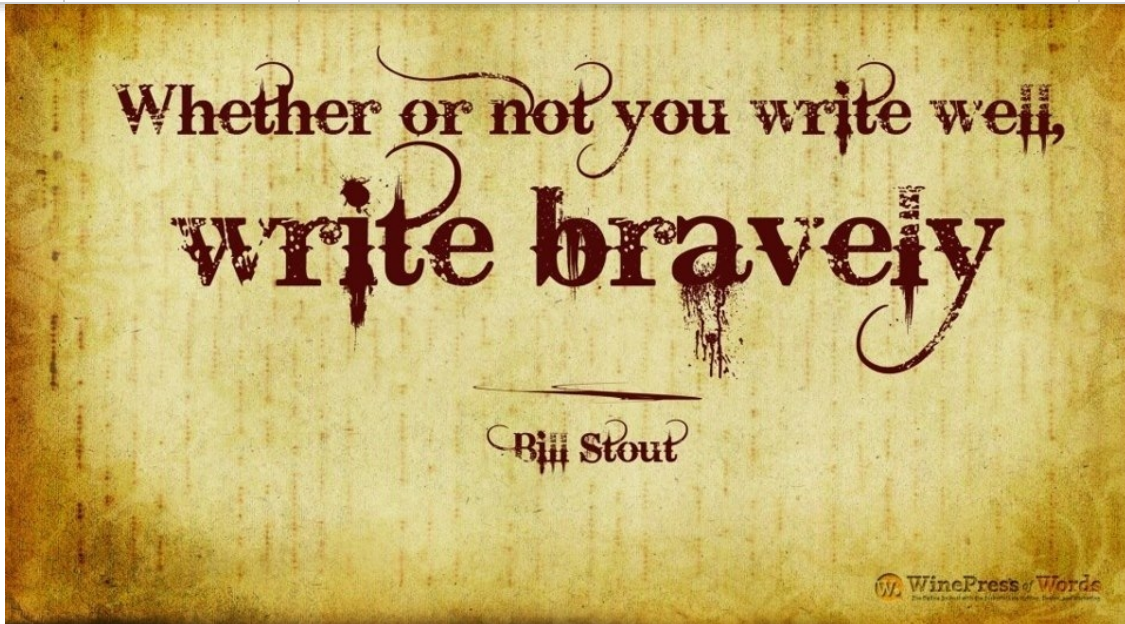
**March 17:** [Kim Hunt Harris](#) and [K. J. Waters](#)

**May 19:** Rosa Latimer. author, consultant,  
instructor. [Website](#)

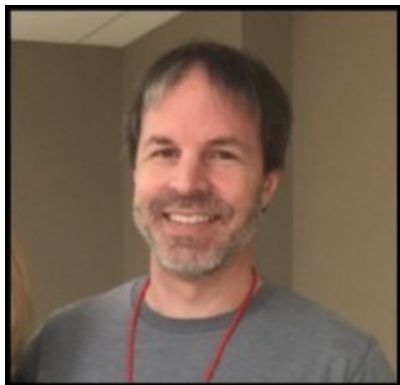
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## Meet Your 2018 Board of Directors



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President



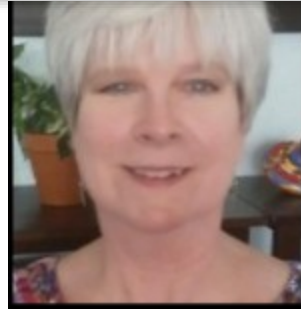
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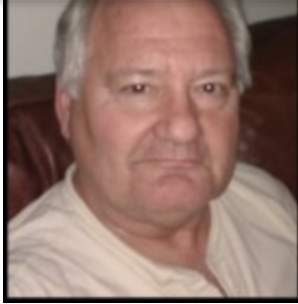
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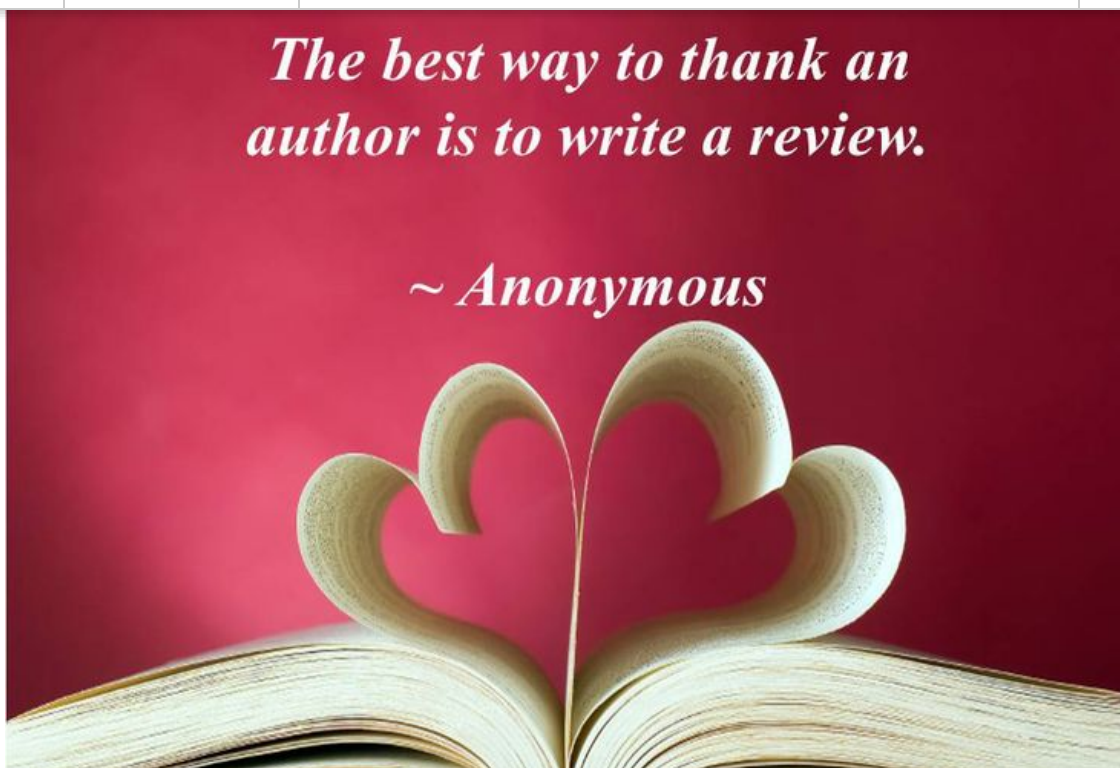
**Rick Brown**  
**Membership Chair**



Elections were held and your new officers were installed. Kim Black makes it official by passing the President's gavel to Mike Akins, who will take us into 2018 and beyond!

### **Thank you, Kim!**

Your service on the Board and tireless efforts for the THPW organization these past many years is greatly appreciated.

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## How To Get Reviews for Your Self-Published Book

by Ryan McSwain

I've had several people ask me how I got so many quality reviews on Amazon and Goodreads for my first self-published novel, [Monsters All the Way Down](#). It took a long time, so I'm not sure my approach was the most effective, but I'm happy to share.

I got reviews from three primary sources:

- Word of mouth
- Book bloggers
- Amazon reviewers

### Word of Mouth

If you've ever written anything, you know how flattering it is when people tell you they enjoyed it. Whether it's in person, on Facebook, or on Twitter, it makes my day every time. I try to follow up my heartfelt thank-you by asking them to review the book on Amazon and Goodreads.

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goes double for posting a review. Even if they loved your book, there are countless reasons they might not feel comfortable reviewing it. In the event they take time out of their lives to review your work, it's time for another of those heartfelt thank-yous.

I also had a few folks contact me directly about reviewing the book. If an active reviewer is already excited about reviewing you, go for it. Since I was new to the game, I didn't have anyone doing this to scam a free copy, but I guess it's always possible.

## Book Bloggers: The Unsung Heroes of Indie Publishing

Book blogging is a tough gig, especially if you're willing to accept indie reviews. I'd imagine they can quickly become overwhelmed with requests from writers who aren't ready to publish. I'm not surprised many close their gates or start charging for reviews.

I decided to go with bloggers who didn't charge. I spent several days at my desk looking at lists of reviewers who accept indie books. Here are two example lists, and you'll find more reviewers if you google a bit. Most of the people on the lists have their own blog, but some only do reviews.

- <https://indiebookreviewer.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.theindieview.com/indie-reviewers/>

I made a spreadsheet and went through the lists, recording all the ones currently open to submissions in the genre that fit my book. My spreadsheet listed the blog site (if applicable), the name of the reviewer, the contact information, and the submission requirements. I also had columns for whether I had sent them a request yet, if they had accepted my request, if I had sent them a copy, and if a review had been posted.

I finished compiling my spreadsheet before I sent out submissions. I would recommend just sending them as you go, because many of the reviewers were closed to submissions by the time I got back to them.

Submitting review requests felt like querying agents or publishers. Every blogger had a slightly different process. Some had weird things like mentioning the word "boomerang" in the email so they knew you read their requirements. It was a lot like that story about Van Halen having a contract that said they got a bowl of M&Ms with all the brown M&Ms removed. That way they knew people actually read the contract.



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to change it up based on their requirements. Like I said, they probably get an avalanche of requests, so be understanding that they need a way to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Some reviewers ask upfront if you're willing to do an interview or giveaway. I always said I would be up for either one, as long as it was an eBook giveaway. I love doing interviews, since it's a chance to talk about all the things I've been thinking about while writing the book. The occasional interview saves me from talking the ears right off of my loved ones.

Keep in mind, some reviewers only accept physical copies of a book. That's fine, but the cost can add up for an Indie Author, and not every physical copy you send turns into a review. Just prioritize physical review copies, and pay attention to where reviewers are located. Sometimes it's easier to send copies through Amazon, especially if they're international.

## Amazon Reviewers

I repeated the spreadsheet process with the top Amazon reviewers. These are folks who probably get more requests than the bloggers. Not just about books, either. From reading their profiles, they get asked to review way too many weight loss supplements. After I went through the top reviewers, I contacted a few folks who posted positive reviews in books similar to mine.

[Here's a link to Amazon's top reviewers.](#) Only contact the ones who say they review self-published books in your genre. I don't remember how far down the list I went, but I had a decent return.

## Paid services I haven't tried that worked for others

I've heard good things about [Net Galley](#), a service for sharing advance reader copies. It's not cheap, but apparently returns on the investment.

There are plenty of book bloggers who offer paid services, including reviews and blog tours. Let me say up-front, I have nothing against these folks. As long as the reviews are honest and the reviewers make it clear they were compensated, more power to them. Just remember, it's against Amazon's TOS to pay for reviews.

## Bottom Line: It Takes Time

I won't lie to you. I was glued to my desk for a couple of weeks to send out over 450

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there being fewer reviewers willing to read horror. Your mileage definitely may vary.

It was tough work, but remember we're on the same playing field as publishers who send out thousands of review copies to professional reviewers. You're going to need to invest some serious elbow grease to get noticed.

Be sure to follow up with a thank you to anyone who posts a review, and retweet/share/plus the positive ones. Helping publicize each other is a big deal, especially for folks working with Indie Authors.

Hopefully this is helpful for some of you out there. And for you reviewers: thanks for all your hard work. Indie authors are lucky to have you.

## **From the Editor's Desk:**

Happy New Year Everybody!

Have you given serious thought to your writing goals for 2018? There's something about actually putting the task on paper, or dry eraser board in my case, that makes the work official and real in my mind. All of those story ideas that are floating around in your head should be on your list. Make your list attainable. Finish that book! How about completing your research and writing a synopsis? Or, why not do an outline and character profiles in 2018, and write the first draft the next year? Remember to aim for solid, realistic goals that you can achieve. Give yourself some positive re-enforcement.

Maybe you want to focus on education this year. Your goal could be to take an online class or attend a writer's conference. Everything you do gets you one step closer to whatever your dreams. What are your dreams? Write that on your list too. Definitely include participation in THPW on your list. Linda and Phyliss are lining up some spectacular speakers for you. It's going to be a great year for learning and inspiration. Come hang with other creatives. We meet in every odd-numbered month on the 3rd Saturday. Remember, this year we are back in downtown Amarillo at the Chase Building.

Are you following THPW on Twitter? We have over 1300 followers now! Click the link below, and join us on Twitter. Be sure to like and ReTweet to help the organization and each other. Check out the newly designed THPW website to keep updated on upcoming events. The link is at the bottom of this Newsletter

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all have a productive and prosperous New Year!

*Natalie*

be fearless in  
the pursuit of  
what sets your  
soul on fire.



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Natalie Bright, Newsletter Editor/Publicity Chair

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