



2024

November

FRESH INK

Inland Empire California Writers Club

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Autumn is in full swing. It's a season to be like a tree—and leave!

Leave on vacation, go visit families for Thanksgiving or the winter break. Use your last reserves to finish old projects or put them away for hibernation. Let things that do not serve you drop like a leaf on the ground. Make room space for new ideas.

In fact, clear the way for Antagonists! I invite fiction writers to focus on bad guys, unexpected foes, all your friends misbehaving. We are going to perfect our Antagonists in the next session. For non-fiction, sink your teeth into the challenges that need to be overcome, this is the information all readers seek!

We do not have meetings in December, but we will party. Come to my place Sunday December 8th, noon to three. I will make kabob and saffron rice, you bring a side, a salad, a dessert. Also, a favorite book to gift. It can be used, it can be one of your own books!

Write on,
Judy Kohnen



EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue was edited using
Canva



Anything Under the Moon



Hello reader,

The month of hibernation, chrysanthemums, thanksgiving, and college applications has arrived. Whoopdeedoo. I hope you're making the most of 2024's NaNoWriMo!

This issue of Fresh Ink incorporates whimsical yet cozy elements. Canvas has a plethora of watercolor clip art which I enjoyed sprinkling most pages with. You may notice red, yellow, blue, and green colors reoccur. (Muggles may not catch that detail.)

Gratitude is a common theme for November but necessary nonetheless. A 5-page literacy narrative I wrote for English class begins like this: "Literacy is an ability often taken for granted. Language, both the spoken and written word, is a powerful tool that influences perception." What you say and how you say it has an impact. Let's make sure it's a positive one.

Faith, trust, and eraser dust,
Abigail Elina Handojo



@abigail_handojo



Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 10:10 am
 Ovitt Family Library
 215 E C St, Ontario, CA 91764



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

For years the villain, the antagonist, the “big bad” in stories has traditionally been depicted as the ultimate in evil—doing bad things for the sake of being bad. Bad guys are seeking money, power, and working hard to dominate the world. Often though, we never learned why. In recent years, writers have given villains some incredible backstories, making them much more complex, giving readers a chance to watch the journey from innocence to evil. This has made some villains just as popular as the heroes they battle. How does this happen? How can we generate empathy for our villains in the stories we write? In this presentation, we’ll explore effective ways writers can add depth to their villains/antagonists, thus creating more tension and deepening conflict in their stories.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dennis K. Crosby is the award-winning author of the Cassidy Simmons novels, *DEATH'S LEGACY*, *DEATH'S DEBT*, and *DEATH'S DESPAIR*. Since 2020, he has published three urban fantasy novels and ten short stories in the horror and supernatural thriller genres. Dennis holds a Master's Degree in Forensic Psychology and a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing. With experience in retail sales, private investigation, and social service, Dennis uses his knowledge and experience to craft compelling characters experiencing real world challenges against the backdrop of magical, supernatural, and mythological phenomena. Dennis has been the subject of several interviews and podcasts, a guest speaker for writer's groups and multiple conferences, and he's been a panelist and moderator at StokerCon, WonderCon, and Comic-Con International. Dennis grew up in Oak Park, IL, and currently makes his home in San Diego, CA.

Dennis's Website:
<https://www.denniskrosby.com/>

NOVEMBER 2024 MEETING

WHAT'S COMING UP

OCTOBER 2024 MEETING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Introduction

How do you publish a book? That is the \$10 million question, and we could literally have the \$10 million answer within these pages.

What will you take away from this book?

My theories have proven themselves with an accomplished track record. I want to share that knowledge with you. In this book, I discuss what I did on the road to writing and publishing my first book, my second book, my third book, and so forth. My simple yet effective secrets to literary success are discussed at length in the following pages. If you utilize my easy-to-follow methods, you, too, could go from a publishing zero to a publishing hero in no time.

Chapter 1: Publishing

"This sounds boring."

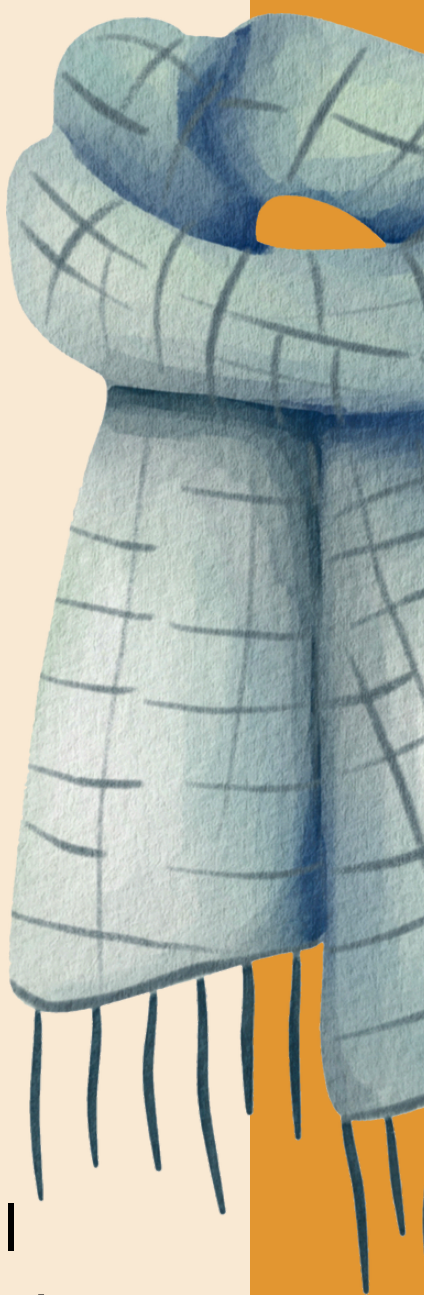
The days of landing a big publishing deal are still here, not gone, and certainly not forgotten. However, there is a new game in town, and it is called Amazon KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing). That means to folks like you and me that anyone can self-publish their book if they want to. The only thing stopping you from doing that is you.

Here are some suggestions for getting that manuscript of yours published.

1. Hire an editor who has had books (with emphasis on the plural) published on Amazon or other self-publishing sources.
2. Do it all yourself. Good luck with that one. If you can figure out editing, formatting, book layouts, book covers, etc., then by all means, go for it. Perhaps start with a small project, a 50-to-70-page manuscript with few, if any, photos. Once you complete that first book, the others will become easier to do. Also, if you are not up to speed with Adobe Photoshop, no worries; many companies can create a decent-looking book cover for modest prices. I am not listing them here because I created all of my book covers myself, along with the assistance of my mentor and editor. Also, I discussed book covers in detail in Volume 1, of which I have received fantastic feedback from readers on that and other subjects.
3. Speaking of mentors, find a mentor or support group to assist you. I did, and I am eternally grateful for the opportunity and knowledge my colleagues have bestowed upon me.

I will avail myself of mentorship guidance for my readers. All you have to do is go to my website and email me.

www.johnwriteshistory.com



OCTOBER 2024 MEETING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

4. You can always try conventional publishing. Producing a single book can take 2-3 years, and you might have to buy hundreds of copies. Remember that any publishing house receives thousands of book submissions annually, and fewer than 1% are published.

5. You could also go with the “Vanity Publishing” approach, but watch out—it could cost you as much as \$15,000.00 per book and forfeiture of significant publishing rights. This might be a consideration for a “one-hit wonder,” meaning an author who just wants to publish that one and only book. The publisher does all the heavy lifting but reaps the rewards at the author’s expense. It is also sometimes referred to as subsidy publishing.

6. Hybrid publishers are similar to vanity publishers, but they care more about the author and quality of the books. This is probably a better way to go over vanity publishing.

7. For first-time independent authors, I recommend writing books in a series as it gives you much more credibility on the Amazon platform and with the public. Smaller books, such as manuals or “how-to” books, are not as difficult to produce. Keep them simple with little to no photos or complicated graphics. I would put your larger projects off until you get your feet wet with a shorter, simpler manuscript. I did this with my *Combat Essays* and *Children’s Golf* books. Both books are not lengthy and were relatively easy to produce. My first book, *American History, a Veterans Perspective*, was based on my graduate studies, so all I had to do was edit the preexisting material together and create the presentation. This publication was more complicated as it included not only written content but photos, maps, and illustrations. I also wrote my own personal military story within the context of the book to give it some variety, which is not typical for its respective genre. I felt this approach personalized the book somewhat, introducing my story and me to the literary world.

Another effective strategy is creating shorter books between lengthier or more complicated publications. This can be an effective way for new authors to get on the map. Amazon also recognizes this, which can positively affect your various category ratings. I will discuss category ratings in more detail in the following pages. To conclude, start with small projects once you start writing books. A point of clarification. You might have noticed that I have already mentioned starting out with a small and less complicated book several times. Some in the literary field might consider this redundant. I, however, like to repeat the highly important aspects of the writing and publishing process. This is my style and technique. I will share a quote from a review of my work on this subject.



OCTOBER 2024 MEETING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Chapter 2: Audiobooks

"Not so boring and the wave of the future."

As I review my current manuscripts (this book series), a unique, life-altering event occurred. Amazon contacted me and stated that my books were eligible for a new audiobook program they were introducing. I didn't initially jump on it, as Amazon sometimes tries to get you to sign up for new programs or additional advertising methods while collecting extra money from you. But this is different. This time, Amazon does not require any additional money from its authors. In other words, this is a free service. The only catch is that you must utilize their AI-generated voices. That is a small price to pay for getting a free audiobook produced, which will inevitably come with additional sales. Chapter One of Volume 1 mentions that nothing in this world is free. So, why is Amazon providing such a service for free? Usually, an author would be stuck with a \$2,500 to \$3,500 bill for getting an audiobook produced. Well, I look at it this way. Amazon sees potential for additional revenue with this medium. Plain and simple, the almighty dollar prevails. Amazon is smart. I presume that they assert that when an author makes more sales and money, Amazon, in turn, also benefits. This is just good business and Amazon is good at the business of making money. LOL

Chapter 3: Marketing

"This is starting to sound boring again."

1. Social Media.
2. Create an Author page on Amazon.
3. Goodreads.
4. Hire a publicist.

Chapter 4: Advertising

"This is sounding really boring."

1. I call advertising on Amazon another necessary evil.
2. Click-by-click charges.
3. 3 types of advertising on Amazon: Sponsored Products Ads, Lockscreen Ads, and Sponsored Brand Ads. I use Sponsored Products Ads due to their high visibility (but they are expensive!) (Three books in one ad.)

Chapter 5: Market Yourself

"Now we are getting somewhere. I can do this."

1. You are your own literary marketing machine!
No one else is going to help you market yourself except you.
2. Create a brand for yourself. (www.johnwriteshistory.com)
- 3 Business cards are a must! (See my cards.)
4. Self-promotion. This is up to your own creativity.



OCTOBER 2024 MEETING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

These are some examples of what I did:

- a. Create a press release (see Appendix 2 for an example). Sending a press release to one of my alma maters, Valley Forge Military Academy and College, included my book in the alumni newsletter that went out to thousands of alumni (see Appendix 3).
- b. Create a list of all print, radio, and television news agencies with appropriate points of contact in your area and FOLLOW UP!
- c. Inform newspapers, television, and news organizations.
- d. Call into open-line radio shows or podcasts. (See Appendix 4).
- e. Contact book reviewers.
- f. Write letters to the editor.
- g. Look for veterans' news events or stories.
- h. After numerous attempts, I eventually contacted CBS Veterans' Voices (See the John J. McBrearty section of this book).
- i. Create a website. This is a prime opportunity to educate the public about yourself, your talents, and your products. The catch is that you must lead people to your website; otherwise, they won't find it.
- j. www.johnwriteshistory.com

5. Create an email list for future book releases and updates.

6. Write a blog or podcast (it sure sounds easier than it probably is). 7. Create events. (Book signings, for me, Veterans, and related events work.)

8. Utilize alumni associations, military associations, fraternity or sorority affiliations, and your High School or University alumni associations.

9. Follow up, follow up, follow up.

10. As an author, just because the book is completed does not mean you are done. You never have nothing to do. (I know it is a double negative, but it says it so well!) LOL. If you are not creating content, then you are marketing your completed content.

Conclusion

I shared a broad spectrum of information, including publishing, audiobooks, marketing, advertising, and how to market yourself, along with many invaluable examples from my literature. Use these tools and develop your own strategy for getting your manuscript published. These are proven methods, as quantified by my twelve published books.

If you follow my simple yet effective secrets to the writing and publishing processes, you, too, will go from a publishing zero to a publishing hero in no time. JM



MEMBER *Spotlight*

Meet your secretary!

ELISABETH ANGHEL



Elisabeth Maria Anghel

Does your last name translate into "angel" in English?

My husband's forefathers came to Romania from Greece. They were horse traders going and coming between Greece and Romania. The surname Anghel comes from the Greek "angel" and it means "angel" in English and also Romanian. Romanian orthography requires an "h" between "g" and other vowels, so "Anghel" was born.

I started attending CWC in 2016.

When did you start attending CWC?

Why, what was your primary objective in joining our branch?

I was retired for two years already, from 30 years of librarianship and library work. My daily activities were limited with no particular interest in gym, hiking or Canasta at the senior center. At that time I was fully involved with my grandchildren, but searching for some personal activity. I wanted to be affiliated to a group that shared an interest for information, books, writing and reading. I knew about a writing/storytelling club/group in Riverside, but later I learned that it was no longer active.

I googled, of course, and I found a number of California Writer Clubs around Riverside. I picked the one located in Ontario for two reasons, one was the closest and second it met in a library.

I met interesting people, learned from every presentation, and got inspired by the club members who actively publish. However, there is little interaction at the meetings and little conversation between us, members and guests. The critique group and Constance's efforts to interact after meetings at a group lunch are welcomed.

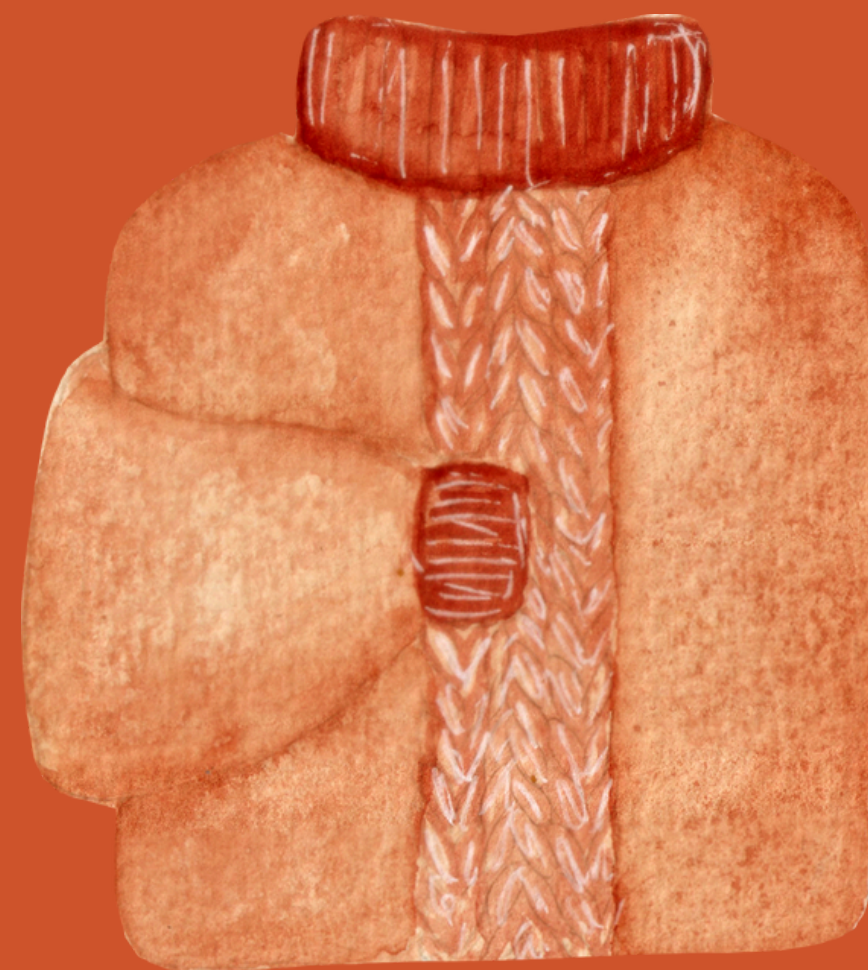
Did you reach that goal?

What made you stay so long with us?

Is it too long? I do not think 8 years is a long time. I enjoy the meetings, I always learn something, I like to be involved and I currently volunteer on the Board and writing the Program Review monthly for the club's newsletter FreshInk.



What have you done besides (board positions)?



Actually I am glad for all the Board positions I had. I have a very high level of responsibility when I take on a job and consequently I make every effort to do it well. Very close to the time I joined the club I was asked to do different jobs in the organization. I was in charge of Programs for longer than 3 years. During this time I was responsible for booking monthly guest speakers and for Annual club retreat. Two remarkable guests come to mind in two different years. In 2018, Michael McCarthy, Storytelling Griot, well known nationally and in 2019, Professor Jonathan Lethem from Claremont Colleges, the author of book title "Motherless Brooklyn". This book received national awards and was turned into a feature movie with Edward Norton as main character.

Upon retiring from his position, during the now famous year of 2020, I started to write the Program Review. I enjoy and appreciate my involvement in the Club. I also contribute short stories to the FreshInk newsletter, CWC Southern online newsletter, the two club's anthologies and 2022 Inlandia anthology. On February 2024, with the occasion of Presidents Day, I gave a presentation to the club, on the topic of "The Office of First Lady".


Additional from the CWC activities, I developed and delivered a number of specific subject presentations to other organizations. Titles are: "Charles Perault, renaissance man", "El Camino de Santiago de Compostela", "The Office of First Lady", "Romania, a cousin of France"



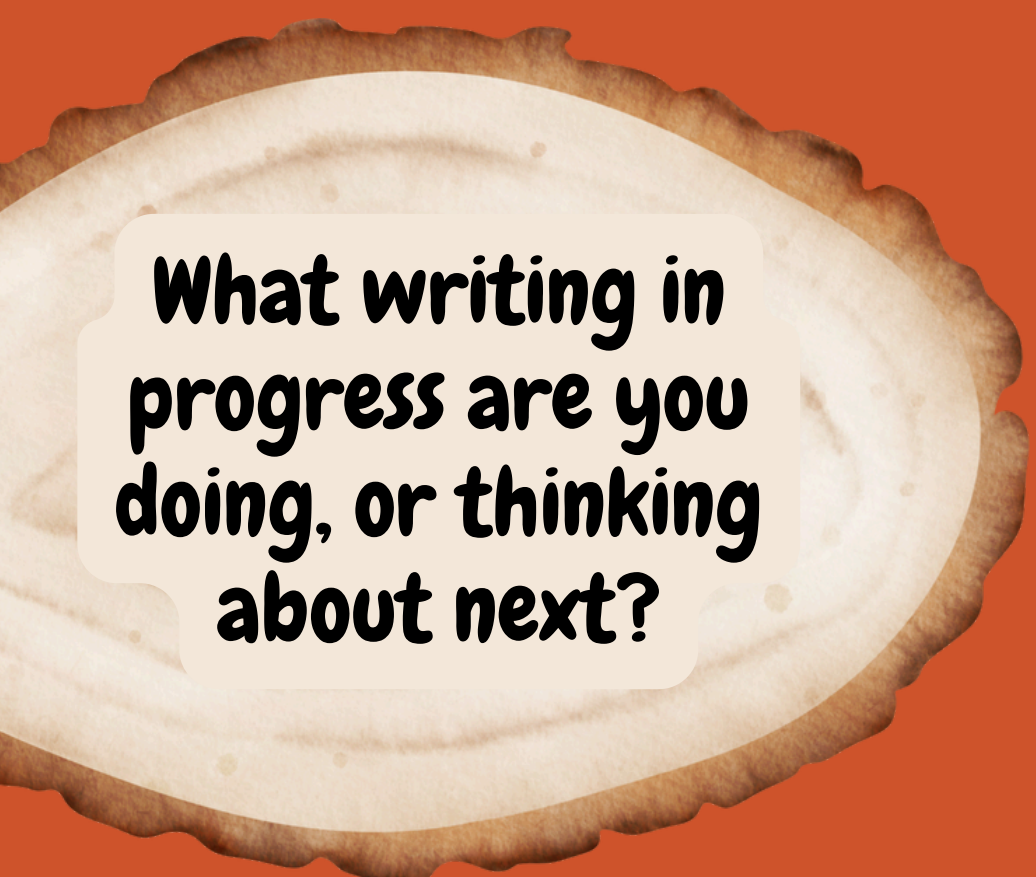
What is your top writing tip(s)?

My answer to this question is: *If you cannot be a good example, be a strong warning.* I know of many tips of how to be a good writer, but I am not disciplined enough to follow.

I took classes with Inlandia Workshops. They were all valuable experiences, encouragement to write. Some of the short stories written during the classes were published in the Inlandia Anthology 2022.



Any new support technology, tools, classes?



What writing in progress are you doing, or thinking about next?

Currently, I am all set for Nanowrimo that starts on Nov. 1st. Also I am learning how to make Zine books.

Thank you for your interest in our club fellows. I am looking forward to working together on the new board. Have a good day, Elisabeth Anghel



benefits of IECWC

MEMBERSHIP



- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
 - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
 - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
 - Members who were published the year before
 - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
 - Our state-level parent organization at www.calwriters.org, with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
 - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at www.socalwritersshowcase.com
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

Active
\$65

Supporting
\$65

Student
\$15
ages 8-22

Renewal of Membership
\$45

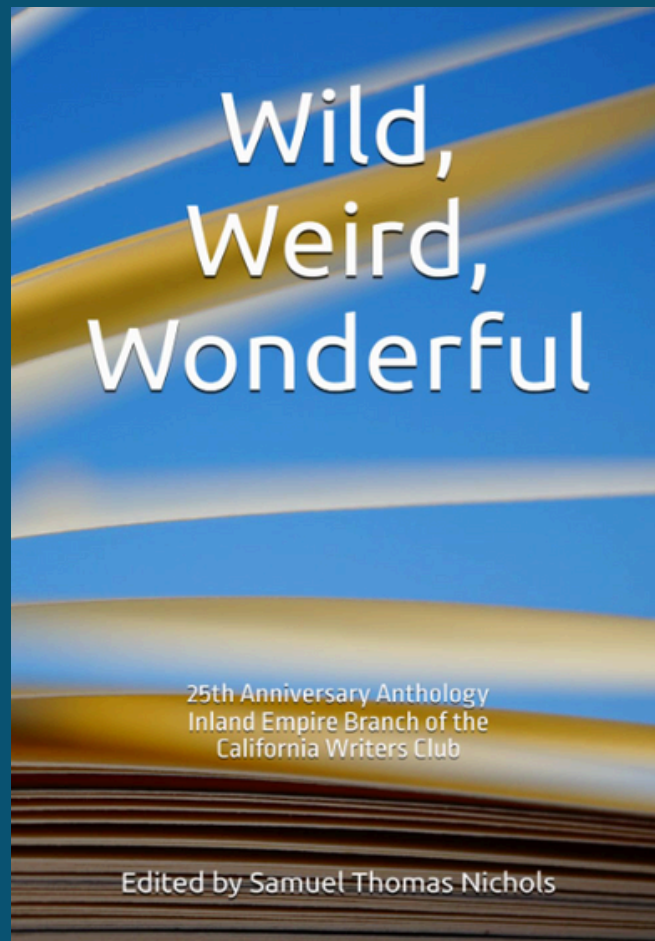
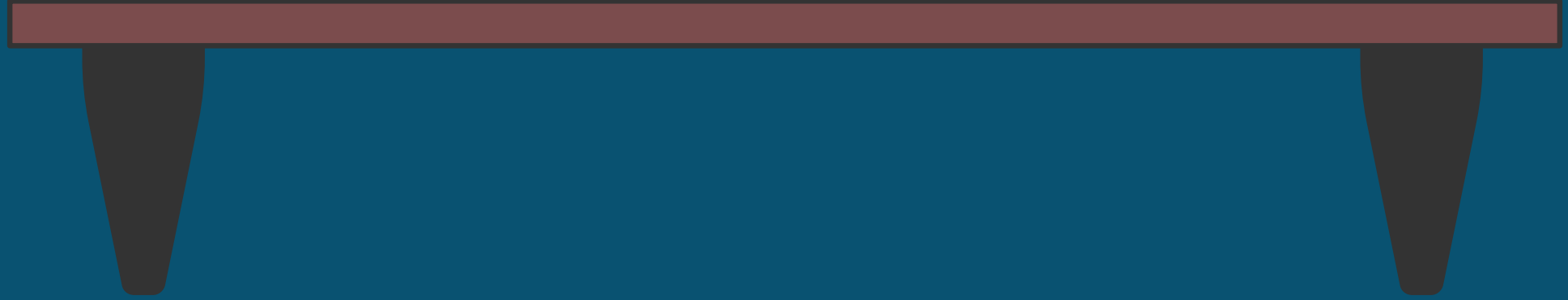
Renewal deadline September 30.
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls. If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.

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**CWC's Best of the Best:
2024 Literary Review**

A collection of poems and stories selected from Branch publications. This 300+ page collection is on sale for **\$15.00** on Amazon. There are stories and poems from 20 of the branches.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



**Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th
Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire
Branch of the California Writers Club**

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuPt>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.



**Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art,
Photography, Prose and Poetry**

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>



BO
OK
S



KUDOS KORNER

Congratulations
Abigail Handojo!

She was selected as a Finalist of Riverside County's Teen Poet Laureate competition. On November 20th she will attend an awards ceremony to receive a Certificate of Recognition. Her poetry will be published in this year's Teen Poet Laureate book.



Congratulations

Colonel John J. McBrearty

His book *Combat Journal, Part 2, Battle for Iraq*, was featured on pages 18-19-20 of "Veterans Breakfast Club Magazine" Fall 2024 edition. They have a readership in the tens of thousands. He is both honored and humbled by their act of support and kindness.

Link to the publication:

<https://veteransbreakfastclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/9.21.24-VBC-FALL-2024-e-Magazine.pdf>



HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO SOCALWRITERSSHOWCASE.COM

- You must be a member in good standing
 - AKA submitted application & paid your dues
- Maximum length of submissions: 500 words
 - You can add 1 link to your website
- Software: Microsoft Word (.docx) file attachment
- No indents, columns, tables or bullet points
- Subject line must read: SUBMISSION FOR SOCAL SHOWCASE
- In Body of email: list (1) your name, (2) your branch name, and (3) title of work
 - Also in the Body, include this permission: "I am submitting this for use on the CWC South website and confirm that I am a member of a Southern branch of the California Writers Club. I further confirm that it is my original work and all rights to its use belong to me. CWC South may use this on its website, archive it for future use on its website or choose to not use it, however the rights I grant are non-exclusive and I retain the right to sell it, allow its publication elsewhere including simultaneously, and all other rights to its use. CWC South is not paying me for its use. CWC South may not sell it or authorize its use outside of the CWC South website without"
- Send email & attachment to the current branch President, Judy Kohnen.
 - She will verify membership and will forward it on to be published.



Visit www.socalwritersshowcase.com to familiarize yourself with the categories of content.

- Short fiction: "flash fiction" - stories with beginning, middle, end
- Memoir: short memoir pieces or vignettes about our past
- A Writer's Life: ideas, humor, tips to keep your writing going
- Craft: "how-to" articles related to writing or marketing your work

Most work is accepted by the Editor if it is of appropriate quality. The site is updated monthly, but there may be a backlog in a category. Once your work appears on the site, it stays on the site for 6 months. After that, your name and the title of your work will appear on the Archive List page by month. You retain the copyright for your submission. Our website copyright notice: Articles or stories appearing on this website submitted by members are copyrighted with all rights reserved by their respective authors. Note that some contests/publishers will consider posting on a website to mean that the piece has been previously published and perhaps ineligible for a contest or future publication, so keep that in mind.

Save the date for upcoming reading:

- Saturday, Nov 23 @ 2:00pm: Poets About Town open mic

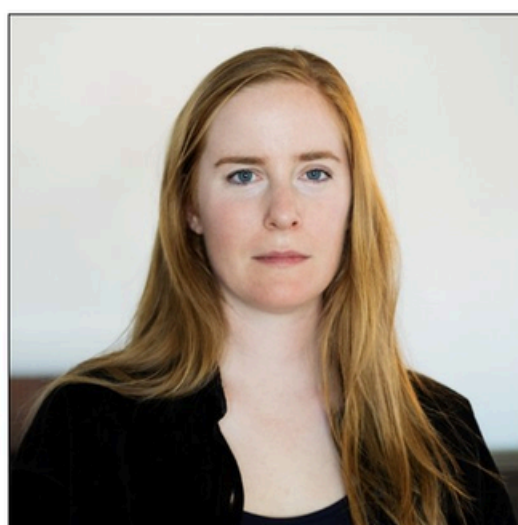
Fourth Saturdays: Poetry at the Claremont Library

Fourth Saturdays: Poetry at the Claremont Library

PROUDLY PRESENTS A READING BY

NANCY MILLER GOMEZ & SARA ELLEN FOWLER
2:00 PM Saturday, August 24, 2024

NANCY MILLER GOMEZ is the author of *Inconsolable Objects* (YesYes Books) and the chapbook *Punishment* (Rattle chapbook series), a collection of poems and essays about her experience teaching in prisons and jails. Her work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Adroit Journal*, *TriQuarterly*, *New Ohio Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Massachusetts Review*, *VerseDaily*, and elsewhere. With Ellen Bass, she co-founded an organization that provides writing workshops to incarcerated women and men; she has taught poetry in Salinas Valley State Prison, the Santa Cruz County Jails, and Juvenile Hall. She lives with her family in Santa Cruz, CA.



SARA ELLEN FOWLER is the author of *Two Signatures* (University of Utah Press, 2024), winner of the 2023 Agha Shahid Ali Prize in Poetry (selected by Joan Naviyuk Kane). A recipient of a 2023 California Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship, Sara holds a BFA in Fine Art from Art Center College of Design and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of California, Riverside. Publication credits include: *The Offing*, *X-TRA Contemporary Art Journal*, *Gigantic Sequins*, and *Cream City Review*, among others.

This reading will take place at the Claremont Helen Renwick Library, 208 N. Harvard Ave. in Claremont, CA.
Please check your email and our Facebook page for updates; [follow local covid protocols](#) (masks, distancing) as needed.

Presented in association with
The Claremont Helen Renwick Library & the Friends of the Claremont Library

Poetry With Purpose 
Hope Service non profit

@ Rival Coffee Co. 
24865 Hospitality Pl Bldg E
Murrieta, Ca 92562

5-7 pm
Last Saturday
Every month

I'LL BE THERE I'LL BE SQUARE

Join us for Poetry Night, an enchanting celebration of the written word where the magic of language comes to life!

Admission is \$10 at the door. All proceeds go towards supporting our dedicated teachers and our Educator of the Month program.

POETRY WITH PURPOSE PRESENTS
THE POETRY LOUNGE

More info: <https://3030publishing.com/poetry-with-purpose/>

Poetry With Purpose
Open Mic third
Saturday of every month

All 5-7 pm
Rival Coffee Co.
24865 Hospitality PL Bldg E
Murrieta, CA 92562

\$10 admission fee
Purchase tickets at
[eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)
or at the door.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WRITERS BRANCH

Announcing our 2025 Anthology

The San Joaquin Valley Writers branch is pleased to announce the theme for its next anthology, to be published in the fall of 2025: *Beginnings & Endings*.

It is human nature to conceptualize the world consisting of beginnings and endings. This duality permeates almost everything we see, imagine, feel, and hope for. Beginnings and endings can be real and tangible such as birth and death, marriage and divorce, the first and last day of school. They can be metaphorical, perhaps not even visible, such as a thought that blinks into existence only to disappear just as quickly from someone's mind, or a first impression of someone or something that changes over time. Beginnings and endings can be fast, sudden, or they can be slow, gradual. They can be far apart or blend into each other. Maybe a beginning is also an ending and vice versa. Send us your stories, memoirs, essays, or poetry in which a beginning and/or an ending takes center stage or is the background for something else. Show us the human experience through images, dialogue, verse, but no matter what, with beautiful words. And maybe, just maybe, show us a new take on beginnings and endings.



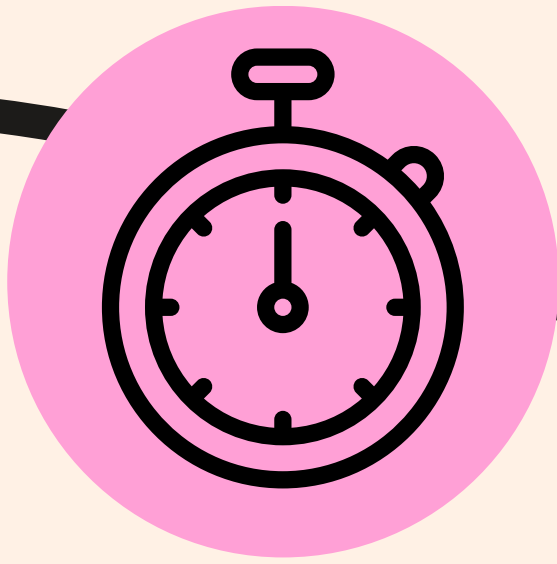
Participation is open to all CWC members in good standing. Submission information and guidelines can be found on our website at www.sjvalleywriters.org/publications or by using the QR code to the right below.



2025 ANTHOLOGY ANNOUNCEMENT

Deadlines

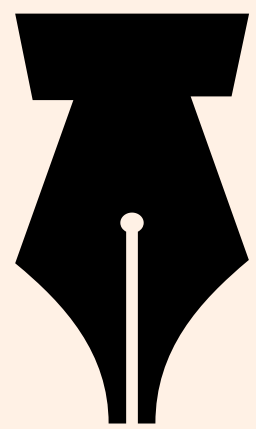
Submissions are due the **15th** of every month



Content Limits

Submissions with the following will not be considered:

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



FRESH INK

guidelines



Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment
Google or Word document
Times New Roman
12pt font



Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



Email

Share with Abigail Handojo at iecwcfreshink@gmail.com

Subject line must read "FRESH INK - month"

Replace "month" with your target month for publication

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor



Poetry Musings

SAMUEL THOMAS NICHOLS



Gratitude

I received our local paper this morning lying in the driveway, wrapped in a plastic bag. Fortunately, it was dry and readable, for often it lies in the gutter being drowned by the neighbors overwatering. As usual, I scan the paper, looking for news I should know about, and stop to read the obituaries. This is something I have done for as long as I can remember and, though they're always sad, this morning's four also made me think about November's theme of gratitude. Each of the four obituaries were of men who were younger than me anywhere from a year to thirty-seven years. Yes, I have much to be grateful for, including my inherited genetics that have kept me healthy to date.

I looked back through some of my poetry and saw that I had written two poems titled *Gratitude*. The first was published in the December 2015 *Fresh Ink*, from a prompt given at our November 28, 2015 IECWC meeting, and the second one, written in September 2016, languishes in my Scrivener poetry project.

A few decades ago, I collected Native American prayers and songs because I was fascinated by how much gratitude and thankfulness was contained within them, in spite of the horrors these peoples endured. Gratitude was expressed to Mother Earth, Father Sky, the four winds, the spirits of the four directions, the seasons, children, mates, and, of course, life itself. Consider this traditional Navajo prayer expressing gratitude on a grand scale:

As I Walk with Beauty
As I walk, as I walk
The universe is walking with me
In beauty it walks before me
In beauty it walks behind me
In beauty it walks below me
In beauty it walks above me
Beauty is on every side
As I walk, I walk with Beauty.

What joy it must bring to see beauty all around and in every possible form. To paraphrase Andy Warhol: *If everything isn't beautiful, then nothing is.*

As I searched through my poetry collections for poems of gratitude, I was surprised to not find many at all. I stopped to think about what poets might be likely to express gratitude, and the first three that crossed my mind were Eugene Field, Edward Guest, and James Whitcomb Riley.



In Eugene Field's collection, *Love-Songs of Childhood*, there is a poem titled *INSCRIPTION FOR MY LITTLE SON'S SILVER PLATE*, which ends with:

A nice sentiment from the poet who authored *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod*, which in some sense seems to express its own brand of gratitude.



Be ever mindful of the poor,
Nor turn them hungry from the door;
And unto God, for health and food
And all that in thy life is good,
Give thou thy heart in gratitude.

Edward Guest, whom, for some reason, Eugene Field had a poor opinion of, was known as the *People's Poet* and was known for writing much in the way of uplifting poetry about nature, family, work, and gratitude. He was a prolific and popular poet, bringing joy to many Americans during the dark days of the Great Depression and World War II. In *A Heap of Livin'* there are many poems that express gratitude, including the one he titled *Gratitude*, of which the first stanza is:

Be grateful for the kindly friends that walk
along your way;
Be grateful for the skies of blue that smile
from day to day;
Be grateful for the health you own, the work
you find to do,
For round about you there are men less fortunate than you.



There is more to be found in his *Just Folks*, as well as his more than forty other books of poetry. All in all, he penned more than 11,000 poems.

James Whitcomb Riley, the *Hoosier Poet*, a favorite of my mother who read us his poems when we were children, as did my wife Denise, she herself a Hoosier. Riley wrote around 1,000 poems, nearly all as dialect poems like *When the Frost is on the Pumpkin* and *Little Orphan Annie*, a favorite to read to my own children, nieces, and nephews. In *Thanksgiving*, a poem of gratitude he writes, in stanza four:



Let us be thankful for the loyal hand
That love held out in welcome to our own,
When love and only love could understand
The need of touches we had never known.

Yes, it bides well to be grateful for our friends and loved ones. In the short poem, *A Parting Guest*, a rare non-dialect poem, he writes about another flavor of gratitude:



What delightful hosts are they --
Life and Love!

Lingeringly I turn away,
This late hour, yet glad enough
They have not withheld from me
Their high hospitality.
So, with face lit with delight
And all gratitude, I stay
Yet to press their hands and say,
“Thanks. -- So fine a time! Good night.”

In the *Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H Johnson, a topical index is included and under gratitude, three poems are indexed, numbers 989, 1192, and 1617. In poem #989, she writes:

- Gratitude - is not the mention
- Of a Tenderness,
- But its still appreciation
- Out of Plumb of Speech.

What an interested phrase,
Out of Plumb of Speech.
To be *Out of Plumb* is to be
misaligned from the vertical
or from what is true.
An interesting observation.
In poem #1192, she writes:

So here, it seems, gratitude will even survive the ravages of time. In poem #1617, she writes:

To try to speak, and miss the way
And ask it of the Tears,
Is Gratitude's sweet poverty,
The Tatters that he wears -

Reared by itself -
No Deputy suffice -
Gratitude bears
When Obelisk decays

Here the speaker finds gratitude even in their ragged clothes. I have sometimes thought of Emily Dickinson as a poet of death because it is a prevalent recurring theme. But even a poet of death must have her own share of graticudes, but they do not percolate through her poetry.

Yes, I have much to be grateful for, a trait I'm sure I share with most. November marks Robert Lee Brewer's Poem-A-Day Chapbook Challenge, in which he provides a daily prompt to springboard our creativity. I intend to participate again this year and have personally challenged myself to submit a completed Chapbook, by January 15th, to be judged by Robert. If this sounds like something you might be interested in, you can check it out at: <https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry>.

Number your graticudes, be grateful, and have a wonderful November.

MISSING

Leticia Garcia Bradford

A page is ripped out of my journal
Was it a note or poem
A laundry list of to do's
Maybe a love song
My mind drifts off
In the lost poem/words/lists
Written but now lost
Can't be a poem to a lover
I have none
Childhood doesn't hold
written words
Aim to capture the image
All dissipated
In the missing page



EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

Ann Casas

Death
The inevitable
End to life
We must celebrate it
Like our ancestors did
On El Dia de los Muertos

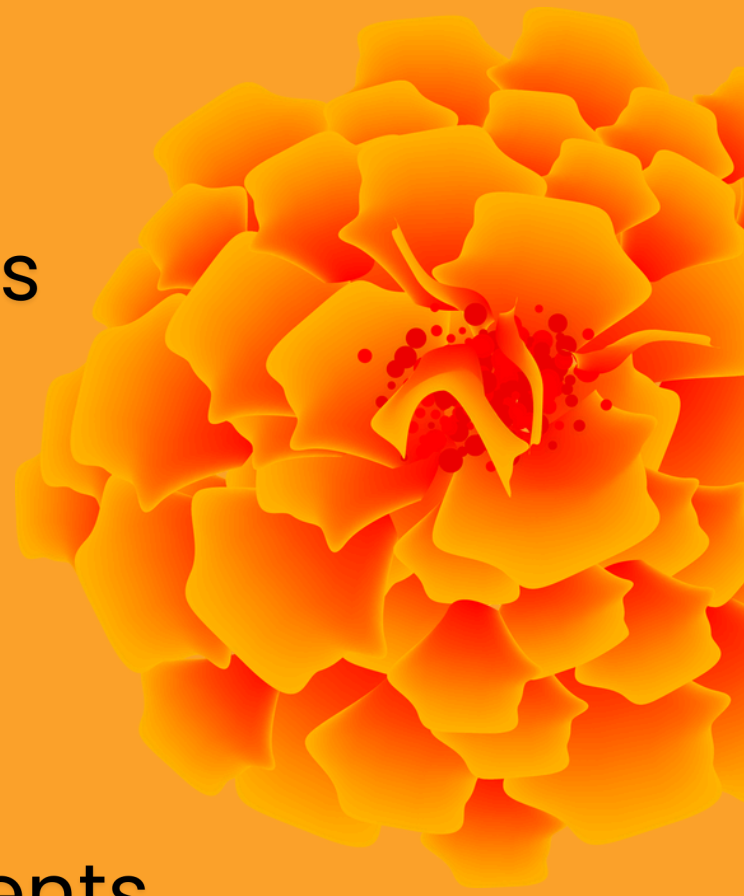
A swirling of autumn leaves
Burnt umber, mustard yellow
Rust red
Lead me to the ofrenda
Where death is honored
Revered
Appreciated
Never feared

My heart is bursting
With love and memories
Of those that crossed over
To the other side

A garland of marigolds
Grace the ofrenda
Grinning calaveras
White bones
On the walls
Calacas play instruments
In death
As in life

Pictures and memorias
Are placed carefully
On the table
Favorite foods
And trinkets
Summon their presence

Holy candles burn
with strength
To guide
The souls
That left us
But not
From our hearts



EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

Ann Casas

We sit
Chat
Reminisce

I recall
Tía Encarnacion's
Lovely raven hair
Soft skin
Wide toothless smile
Handing me tortillas
Made from scratch

Tío Ignacio's
Love for tequila
Here for you
A shot of Mescal
Salud

Roses for Ramona
From her garden
Toys for Tomas
Gone too soon

Don't be sad
Recuerdos los moridos
Remember the departed
on El Dia de los Muertos

Respect Death's power.
Embrace it.
Accept it.
Welcome it.
On El Dia de los Muertos.





TRAPPED IN HELL ON EARTH

By *Peter Hall*

So, this is how it all ends, being tied to a cactus? Somehow this prospect never crossed my mind. Before my life went to hell, I was a successful businessman, well a gambler at any rate, and an investor in many business ventures. My troubles started when some less than legitimate clients/business partners lost some money, and thought that I had something to do with it. After a very long and unpleasant conversation, they decided to tie me to a giant beast of this prickly porcupine plant. One of my clients, a man who I only knew by sight and not by name, taunted me by telling me the exact type of cactus that I was left to rot under.

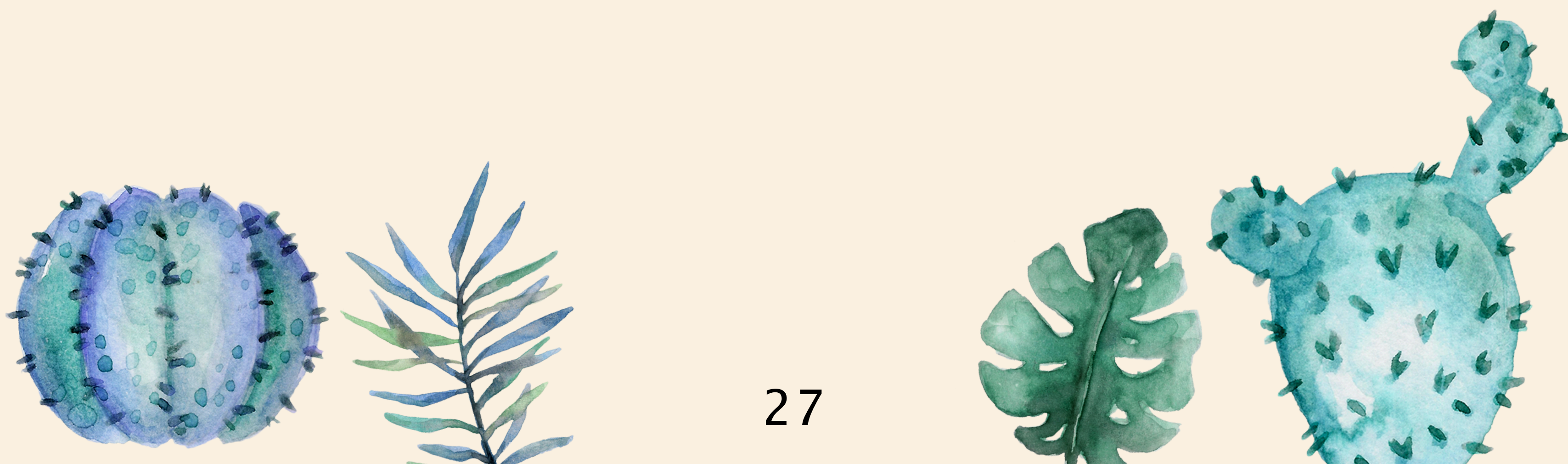
Apparently, he liked bragging about his Horticultural Knowledge. I begged them to kill me quickly, but they just laughed at my pleas for mercy. Soon they left, and I was alone with nothing for company except the blazing sun, the whistling wind which would soon dry my lips like old parchment, and this Giant Saguaro Cactus, even the shade of this gigantic plant was denied to me. Stuck to this cactus time almost seemed to stop entirely, the only thing that helped me discern its passing was the sun, I wondered what would get me first? The heat boiling my brain, or the agonizing death of thirst?

Perhaps the vultures would peck my eyes out while I was still alive, or some other animal would take advantage of my inability to defend myself. I could feel it happening already, the sweltering heat slowly and steadily frying my brain, destroying my mind, and making me slip into insanity.



I fought it as long as I could, and then Cactus: "Hey Amigo, how's it going?" "What who said that?" Cactus: "I did" "And who are you?" Cactus: "Who do you think I am?" "How the hell, should I know? I can hear you, but I can't see you! Now quit yanking my chain and just tell me who you are!" Cactus: "You can feel me though, right?" "I CANNOT BE TALKING TO A CACTUS! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!" Cactus: "Oh but you are my friend, and you might want to be nicer to me considering that I'm your only company right now. Maybe if you had been nicer to those men, they wouldn't have left you out here" "And what the hell would you know? I'm very nice! I have to be, I'm a businessman" Cactus: "That's funny, I got the impression that you were a thief."

"HEY! I AM NOT A THIEF! I TOLD YOU I'M A BUSINESSMAN! Those men gave me money to invest, the investments didn't do as well as they would have liked, and they blamed me for their bad luck! I'm a money manager, not a miracle worker" Cactus: "That's human nature to blame others when things go wrong, those men blamed you for losing their money, and you blame the stock market" "What the hell do you know about The Stock Market? You're a Cactus! And that's all you'll ever be" Cactus: "Yes that is true, but I'm alive, and pretty soon you'll be dead, and that's all you'll ever be" "Don't you think I know that? And why did you have to remind me?" Cactus: "Because I'm a Cactus, as Prickly as I am on the outside, it is my nature to be painfully truthful" "Yeah, yeah, whatever."



Scanning the downtown skyline
Oakland, California

The Tribune Tower stands tall
measuring the blocks where business turns

Inside the city landscape
the clock marks off time of long ago

What's below the elegant structure?
Do you see the dirty sidewalks

Illuminated by a full moon
Gutters filled with a river of refuse

escaping to the underground sewer
Sidewalks cracked with uneven payment

A small wind sends a chill
over the bundle huddled

in the entryway of an abandoned storefront
Nearby books are stacked inside safe

No use for the homeless man
making the streets his home

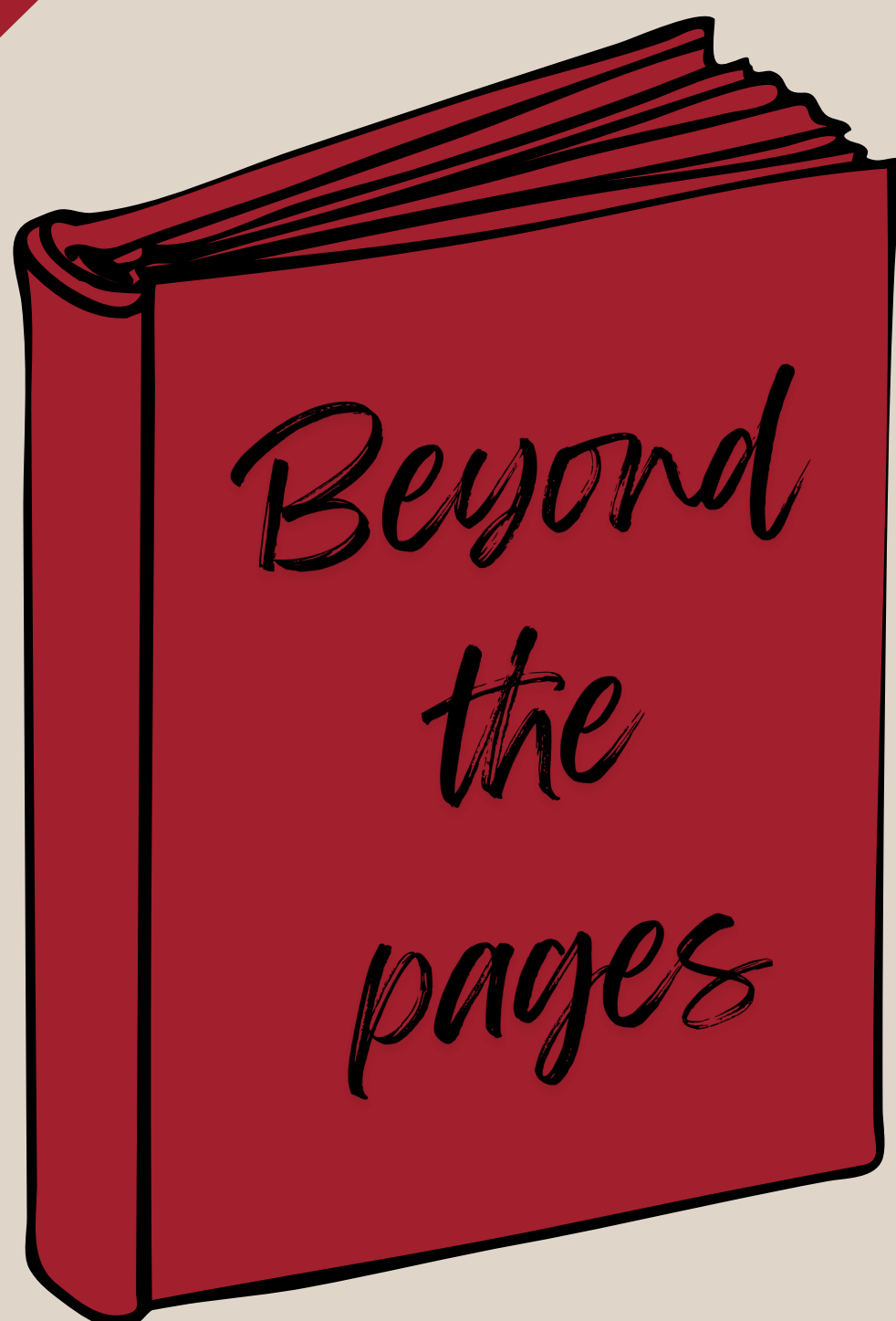
His silent eyes peer into nothingness
Another lonely sleepless night

Invisible

The poem Invisible is currently on exhibit at the Hayward Main Library, Hayward Area Council's ekphrastic show, "Intertwined."

I N V I S I B L E

Leticia Garcia Bradford



A Conversation with Nikki Erlick

By Ben Alirez

On September 24, our very own president, Judy Kohlen, was asked to serve as moderator for "Beyond the Pages: A Conversation with Nikki Erlick," an exercise she performed admirably and professionally. The event itself was sponsored by the Ovitt Family Community Library in Ontario and hosted by librarian Starla Villalba.

With an aptly decorated platform stage and white accent chairs, the quaint and endearing conversation delivered a living room vibe, before a candid and insightful Q&A segment with the audience took place.

A graduate of Harvard University *summa cum laude*, Ms. Erlick proved delightfully reserved and thoughtfully engaging on this night.

After graduating, she worked as a ghostwriter, travel writer and journalist, her articles published in *New York Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *The Huffington Post*, *Literary Hub*, *Indagare Travel*, *BookTrib*, and *Vox Media*. However, it is her debut novel, *The Measure*, that has found remarkable success. Since being published in June 2022, it has skyrocketed to the *New York Times* Bestseller list.

On this warm SoCal Wednesday in front of a crowd of eager listeners, she described *The Measure* as "a book about choice ... and the idea of hope." The story itself follows eight characters as the entire world awakens to small wooden boxes outside the residence of every earthly denizen, be it suburban doorsteps, desert tents, or lakeside cabins. No continent is spared the supernatural offerings. And what do these strange boxes hold? Only the exact number of years each recipient will live. And therein lies the dilemma.

Do I open the box or not?

Ms. Erlick drew early inspiration for her modern-day tale from Greek mythology and the Three Fates, Pandora's Box, and Homer's *Odyssey*. Initially intended as a love story, she started the project in 2018 when time permitted. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, she was laid off as a travel writer and forced to move back in with her parents. An opportunity that helped her focus on the novel from the confines of a quiet attic.

Admittedly, the backdrop of the pandemic provided world-changing inspiration. And with *The Measure*, Ms. Erlick knew the ending from the beginning. Nor was outlining the plot necessary. Instead, she toggled between characters in a chronological order when writing, typically only one character per day.

Although she referred to the book's success as a 'lucky break,' the then-burgeoning author did her due diligence, researching the publishing process via the internet once a viable draft was completed. Establishing a list of thirty potential agents, she began emailing the story's premise, hoping to find interest and professional representation. And after three months, she did. A literary agent took up her cause and helped find a publisher. But the road to success wasn't without a figurative pothole or two. Her publisher insisted she add a hundred pages to the first draft. Difficult to classify, too, was the book's genre, since she felt it touched on many genres. Eventually, *speculative fiction* took home the prize.

After the initial shock of being required to expand the storyline by a considerable number of pages, Ms. Erlick went to work, introducing more levity to the weighty subject. What better to counterbalance death than childbirth? And so began one hundred new pages.

As sound writing advice goes, Ms. Erlick confessed, "Not every day is a good day." Initially, she tried producing a thousand words a day, but it didn't go as expected. Now, she rarely tries to force the writing process. If she's enduring a lull, she'll simply use the opportunity to read more. "Reading is working, too," she wisely admits.



Did you have childhood support?

Not only did she have support, but she also attributes much of her success to early support from parents, a sister, teachers, and librarians. In her words, "Children just need one person who really believes in them."

Did you suffer from any self-doubt while writing the novel?

Like most of us, she did. It proved an obstacle she had to silence. Instead of relenting to the voices of doubt, she double downed on the project and her characters.

Do you believe being a travel journalist benefited you when writing the book?

Yes. It taught her to be observant and hyperaware. People watching was also beneficial, a practice that can benefit any novelist.

Can a character in the novel change their destiny?

As tempting as it was, she refused to allow a character the ability to alter their life string. Much as life imitates art, and vice versa, her characters had to accept things that were outside their control. However, they could determine how they chose to live their lives and the kind of people they were. In a more candid moment, Ms. Erlick admitted to being emotionally overcome by some of their destinies.

Did you have any famous people in mind while writing the characters, and should the story become a movie, do you have any famous actors in mind to portray your characters?

She really had no one in mind when writing the characters, nor does she have anyone in mind now. It's a task best left to the casting director.

What was your reaction the first time a famous person liked the novel?

She was happy and excited. She thought to herself, "We can be friends now!" Of course, she said it in jest, and it proved to be the furthest thing from the truth. An observation that drew laughs from the crowd.

What would you like your readers to take away from the story?

The idea of hope. Being a little more mindful of how to live tomorrow. Approach the world a little more open. Have a sense of empathy. And if her book should inspire even one person, she is grateful and comforted in that knowledge.

If presented with the same scenario in real life, would you open your 'box'?

No, but she would safeguard it somewhere in her home on the chance she might one day change her mind.

Has there been any interest in bringing 'The Measure' to the big screen?

Yes, the book has been optioned by a production company, but it's in the early stages and didn't elaborate further.

Do you expect to have another novel out soon?

Yes. Her next book may be out next summer. And while promoting *The Measure* consumes much of her time, she is thankful she can write for a living. As she put it, "Book people are the best people."

Note: Starla Villalba expects *Beyond the Pages* to be an annual offering of the Ovitt Family Community Library.

the
OPEN MIC

Ann Casas

Open mics can
Offer chances
Misfits mingle
Off the stage

Quirky artists
Have a platform
Eager for
The open mic

There is beauty
In its weirdness
Offbeat circus
Entertains

Aging wizards

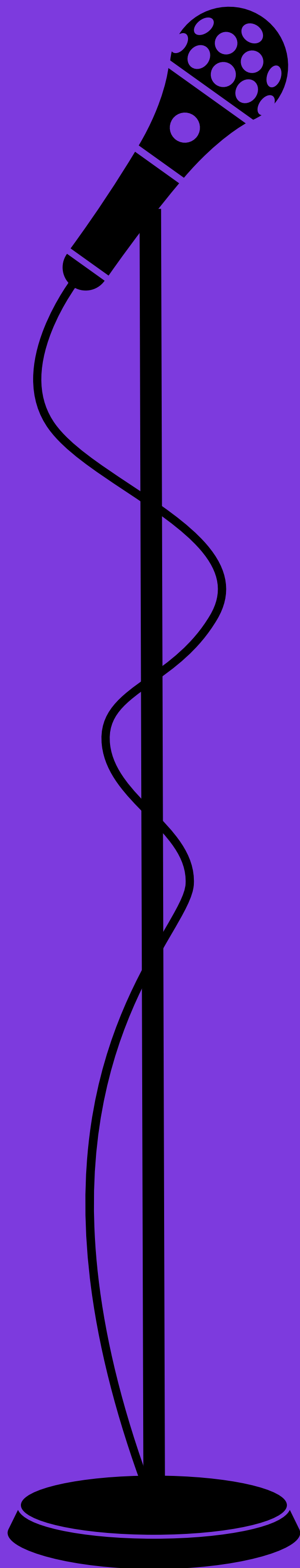
Doing card tricks
Never miss one
How's it done?

Frumpy singers
Strum and warble
Folksy music
Homespun tunes

Belly dancers
Spin and jiggle
See them sparkle
Watch them move

Raunchy poets
Read in anger
Social justice
Spoken loud

People hungry
For expression
Grateful for
The open mic





TIPS FOR HIRING AN *editor*

By *Brenda Hill*

A big mistake many new writers make is hiring someone other than a book editor to edit their manuscripts.

One prospective client dreamed of seeing her novel featured on her local bookstore shelf, but after a year of queries, that wasn't happening. She contacted me after the sixth agent sent a rejection. Even the small presses, which didn't require agent submissions, rejected her manuscript and she didn't understand the problem.

"After all," she said, "my Aunt Helen edited for me. She taught English & Grammar for twenty years, so who could be better? And the price was right. Free."

She felt happy about the arrangement—until the rejections poured in.

The problem was, while her aunt may know proper sentence structure and word usage, she did NOT know fiction techniques such as a POV drift, the MR Unit, or how to offer suggestions when the writer hadn't incorporated the basic standard of novel writing: "Show, don't Tell."

And Dialogue. Did Aunt Helen know that writing dialogue isn't the same as writing an essay for class?

Did Aunt Helen know the 5 critical items a fiction novel's opening chapter MUST include?

What Aunt Helen CAN do: proofing and copy/line editing. They can flag misspelled words, improper paragraphs and/or grammar.

So don't make the same mistake. If you want your manuscript to have a chance, don't get Aunt Helen, Uncle Bob, or Crissy from down the block to edit for you. Don't turn them down if they offer to read for you; they may all offer invaluable suggestions. Anyone who reads can tell you when a paragraph or page doesn't make sense or is too dry and boring to want to continue. So listen and consider taking their advice.

But when it's time to get serious about getting your manuscript in shape for publication, hire someone who knows fiction techniques. Hire a book editor to edit your book.



TIPS FOR HIRING AN *editor*

By *Brenda Hill*

We write and we rewrite, often a dozen times or more. At that point, typos and errors fade into oblivion because our brain helps us by supplying the correct word, or we memorize the text, which is fine until we change a sentence or cut and paste and unknowingly omit a word or sentence. Or perhaps we've gone over it so many times we're no longer objective.

That's a mistake professional writers can't afford to make.

A reader, if enjoying the story, will forgive one or possibly two typos. But they're noticed. If the reader sees more errors, the mood shatters and trust in the author is lost.

That's why we need editors. After all, once our book is published, our baby is out there for the world to see.

Let's make sure the diaper is clean.

Brenda Hill

www.brendahill.com

Multi-media published, Brenda Hill is an author, editor, and writing coach. She served as acquiring editor for a small press and freelanced as a book editor. Her course of study at the University of Iowa's workshops was opening pages/chapters and novel structure.

She writes mysteries and thrillers, although she ventured to the dark side with her paranormals, which Readers Favorite awarded FROM THE PAINTED TOMB a silver medal. Her vigilante thriller, WITH FULL MALICE was nominated for an Edgar award, and reviewed by Kirkus and International Thriller Writers, and by Michael Prescott, a NY Times bestselling author.

Check her website for more information:

www.brendahill.com



Next month's
theme is...

SLUMBER