



ABILENE WRITERS GUILD

APRIL 2022 NEWSLETTER

KEEPING MEMBERS IN TOUCH

ABILENE WRITERS GUILD.ORG

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FIND YOUR VOICE

Our Annual Workshop last month featured a presentation by Laura Conner Kestner, a small-town journalist and writer from nearby DeLeon, Texas. I enjoyed her casual, conversational approach filled with snippets of local history and pointers for writers that she had gathered on her journey from “closet writer” to journalist to award-winning novelist. She has published a series of three novels (with more to come) set in a small town on the Texas frontier.

I came away from her talk with two major pieces of advice for writers – to write what you love and to know your voice. The characters in her series live out some dramatic incidents that actually occurred in the lives of early Texas settlers. This infuses the pages with a sense of realism. That same authentic ambiance is augmented by the Texas flavor in the vocabulary, tone, and syntax of her writing.

“To write what you love” is an easy concept to understand. If you love something, you want to know more about it so that you become quite knowledgeable. When you talk about those interests to others, your passion and genuine feelings create an enthusiasm that draws the listener into what you have to say.

“To know your voice as a writer” was a more difficult concept for me to grasp. The

writer’s voice does not mean the author’s point of view or the voices of the characters, but rather is the way the writer’s personality comes through on paper. To further understand this aspect of writing I did some additional reading. Most of the articles agreed that writer’s voice is comprised of several elements including choice of words, syntax, rhythm, punctuation, tone, perspective, and subject matter. But it is more than the sum of all those parts; it is how you see the world. It determines how you say something as much as what you say. Rather than being something that is learned and acquired, your voice comes from within you. It is not, however, something that you are born with; it sprouts and grows with use. Your personal moral code and system of beliefs are reflected in your voice. Your life experiences – culture, religion, travel, illnesses, family, and friends – help shape that voice. By reading various works of literature, you will be influenced by the styles of other writers. All of these external bits and pieces encountered along your way through life become internalized and eventually comprise your voice.

There is no magic formula for you to grow your voice. Finding your voice takes time, practice, and getting comfortable with your own choice of expression. Just give it time and let it flow. Write on.

Mary Berry
AWG President



Marguerite Gray: BRAG: I am turning in my novella "Crystal Clear"--part of a Christmas Castle anthology--to my publisher, releasing December 2022.

Chuck Anderson: BRAG: I am overwhelmed with how well my writing did at the annual workshop. SAG: I tried but, I am dropping the full structure of Greek Tragedy from my next book. Following Aristotelian rules is just too complex. They may work for a five thousand word Greek story but not a hundred and fifty thousand word novel.

Coy Roper: BRAG: Truth for Today, the periodical in Arkansas I worked for for ten years, has agreed to buy my latest work, a thirteen-lesson series on Romans 12.

Suanna Davis: BRAG: I joined a critique group and got feedback on 10,000 words.

Jo Cox: BRAG and SAG: I am looking for Beta Readers for my book, *Creation Parables*. Anyone want to volunteer?

Mary Berry: BRAG: No personal brag, but a brag for AWG as a group - of the 24 paid prizes in our Annual Contest, writers from AWG took 12. Congratulations to all!

Lou Mougín: BRAG: Stuff still coming out from Shudder and Carmilla, getting close to the finish line on Frank 3. SAGS: Trying to source copyright holders for history book.



Linda Gordon: READING: I am reading Ann Voskamp's latest release titled *Waymaker*

Gail McMillan: READING: *Remember Texas* by this year's AWG workshop presenter, Laura Conner Kestner.

Carolyn Dycus: READING: *The Stranger in the Lifeboat* by Mitch Albion and *The Church Cracked Open* by Stephanie Spellers. Just found *E.R. Nurses* by James Patterson and Matt Eversmann in the Large Print section of the Abilene Public Library.

Mary Berry: READING: *Midnight Library* by Matt Haig is a fantasy novel in which the main character visits her lives in alternate universes as they would have played out if she had made different choices. Jeanine Cummins' *American Dirt* is the fictional account of the journey of a mother and son fleeing for their lives from a Mexican drug cartel and seeking refuge in the U.S. The well-researched novel details the harrowing aspects of the trek and presents a sympathetic view toward migrants. The latest read-aloud to my husband was John Grisham's *The Judge's List*. If you like Grisham, this does not disappoint.

Lou Mougín: READING: Raena Rood's Christian trilogy, a great story of a near future where Christianity is outlawed.

Suanna Davis: READING: Travis Bardlee's *Legends and Lattes*.

Our Life Members

*Stewart Caffey, Nancy Masters
Alice Greenwood, David Dodge
Betty Thomason*

Members gain the status by gift from the membership as a whole, by paying a one-time fee of \$600, by receiving the honor as a gift from another, or by reaching the age of 90 while a member of AWG



Our Officers

President: Mary Berry	(2022)
Executive VP: Darla McCloud	(2023)
Program VP: Sharon Ellison	(2022)
Secretary: Linda Gordon	(2023)
Treasurer: Gail McMillan	(2023)
Board Member: Chuck Weber	(2023)
Board Member: Mary Ann Smith	(2022)
Board Member: Kay Talley	(2022)
Alt. Board Member: Carolyn Dycus	(2023)
Monthly Contest Coordinator: Linda Gordon	



MEMBERS ONLY

CONTEST

MAY

NATIONAL SHORT STORY

MONTH

NO THEME



ROSE PARK

THE PLACE TO BE

THURSDAY APRIL 28

7:00 PM

AWG MONTHLY MEETING

**COME GLEAN FROM THE
KNOWLEDGE OF**

JUDY SITTON WARE



MEMBERS ONLY
CONTEST WINNERS

MARCH

FLASH PROSE

1ST PLACE-CHUCK WEBBER
“SPLASH CRASH”

2ND PLACE-SHARON ELLISON
“AN AH-HA MOMENT”

HM-MARY BERRY
“MAY FREEDOM LIVE”



FLASH POETRY

1ST PLACE- MARY BERRY
“SUMMER STORM”

2ND PLACE- MARY BERRY
“DREAMS TO ASHES”



Judy Sitton Ware



Judy is from Cisco, Texas and will be our guest speaker at our monthly meeting on April 28. She is a former AWG Board member and an amazing writer.

Judy has entered AWG's contests for many years and won many times. This gifted writer admits to having “writer's block”—can anyone relate to that?? OF COURSE!!

We will all be interested in what made her want to write in the first place, what she wants to write and why. And if her writer's block isn't broken by then, many of us can commiserate with her.

2022 Members Only Contest

Exclusive: For current members of AWG only. All entries eligible for Annual Contest. No fees!

Judging: Judges are professionals who may or may not choose to critique entries. Judge's decisions are final. If there are fewer than four entries per category in double category months, categories will be combined. Six entries per month are required for judging.

Prizes: \$20 first prize and \$15 second prize. You are encouraged to attend the meetings to pick up your check. Otherwise, they will be mailed to the physical address provided.

Pay careful attention to all guidelines

Deadline: Submissions may be sent any time after the 12th of the previous month, but no later than the 12th of the contest month.

Enter by Email Only: Send documents as attachments and in Word format only. Subject Line should state: AWG Contest and "Month" (e.g. January). Entries will be returned to the email on coversheet. Warning: some devices may not transmit document correctly, thus disqualifying entry. AWG will respond within five days. It is entrant's responsibility to verify and resend.

Send to: awg.entry@yahoo.com

Mix & Match: Submit up to 3 entries per month. Enter poetry, prose, or both. Blended themes are acceptable. Must be original work unpublished at deadline (includes Internet posts).

**** You may send up to 3 entries and accompanying cover sheets in the same email, but all cover sheets and entries must be separate attachments.****

Cover Sheet Format: Top left: author's name, physical address (to mail prize check), telephone number, and email. Top right: Chosen month of entry, word count for Prose and Flash entries or line count for poetry. (Do not count the title when determining line or word counts.) Title of entry should be centered midway down the page.

Entry Format: Do not include author name on any page. Minimum one-inch margins; prose double spaced; poetry single or double spaced. First page: center title at top, double space then start text. Number subsequent pages at the top center or top right.

2022

MONTH	THEME	CATEGORY
JANUARY	No contest this month	Extra writing time for February
FEBRUARY	Winter, Nature, Milestones	Poetry – 50 lines or less Non-Fiction – 1,000 words or less
MARCH	Mandatory prompt words: tear, color, wind, sort, drift	Flash entry: Fiction or Poetry 100 max using 5 prompt words
APRIL	National Poetry Month NO THEME	Rhymed or Unrhymed Poetry 50 lines or less
MAY	National Short Story Month NO THEME	Fiction - 1,000 words or less
JUNE	AWG Non-Fiction Month NO THEME	Non-Fiction - 1,000 words or less
JULY	Home, Travel	Poetry – 50 lines or less Fiction – 1,000 words or less
AUGUST	Mandatory prompt words: project, double, shine, top, way	Flash entry: Fiction or Poetry 100 max using 5 prompt words

Flash Fiction/Poetry use 5 mandatory prompt words, or close form and meaning, like: Oil = oiled, oils, oiling, oiler, oily not spoil or foil; boat = lifeboat; speak = unspeakable, not spoken; place = placement; defect = defection or defective.