

WRITER'S ALLIANCE
OF GAINESVILLE

TOPICS
COMING
IN FUTURE
ISSUES

- Gainesville Poetry
- How to spot literary scams (part 2)

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The WAG Digest

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 4

MAY 18, 2009

Out of This World!

Join us for Science Fiction writer Joe Halderman. Joe will speak to the Writers Alliance of Gainesville on Sunday, May 31, at the Tower Road Branch of the Alachua County Library, at 2:30 p.m.

Halderman, one of Gainesville's most distinguished authors, will speak on "One Way to Do It," or "How I Write Books and Why Nobody in His Right Mind Should Do It That Way."

Joe has written about thirty novels, plays, and short story collections, and he is known as one of America's foremost science-fiction authors. He has won the Hugo Award for the best short story, the Nebula and the Ditmars awards for the best sci-fi novel, the Galaxy Award for "Science and Spirituality," the Rhysling Award for the best science-fiction, the World Fantasy Award, and many others.

Joe divides his time between Gainesville and Cambridge, MA, where he teaches creative writing at MIT. He has also taught at University of Iowa, Michigan State, SUNY-

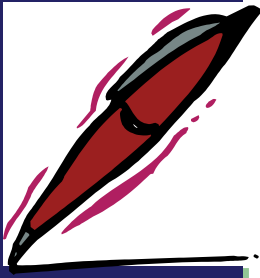


Buffalo, Princeton, University of North Dakota, Kent State, and the University of North Florida.

To learn more about how Joe Halderman has supported himself as a writer since the 1970's, click here: <http://home.earthlink.net/~haldeman/index.html>



POD CORNER: Pod Popularity Grows



Dorothy Staley
WAG Pod Coordinator

The good news is that the number of members wishing to join critique pods has steadily grown since WAG held its inaugural event in January. As of this month, WAG has six official pods (listed below) covering four genres; poetry, short fiction, memoir and novel. They meet in locations as far west as Jonesville and as far east as Waldo. Pods are hot!

However, we need more pod hosts. To date, there are more members wanting to join pods than there are pods to accommodate them. I'll speak to that later. But first, we soon realized that we needed an easy, systematic way for WAG members to join the pod of their choice. As one new WAG member told me, "I thought I'd be able to go to WAG's website, find a pod I liked and join."

"The small group format is a really good tool for forcing the writers to crank out more material. The small size also ensures that everyone plays an active role in the critiquing, and we all learn a lot from that process. "

-Perky Granger

Her comment challenged WAG Board Members to figure out the simplest and most direct way for interested members to join pods. First, as pod coordinator I turned over all the information I had gathered on who, what, when, and where of pods to our President. She, being a computer savvy wench, created an Excel database that will be accessible to WAG members on the website—everything you ever want to know about pods at your fingertips.

Second, I reconfigured the Pod Sign-up Sheets (available at WAG monthly meetings) to accommodate information transfer from sign-up sheet to database.

Third, we will announce new pods and vacancies in established pods each month in WAG Digest's Pod Corner. So, if you want to find a pod, check WAG's website, sign up at one of our monthly meetings, or check WAG Digest.



Wanted: NEW Pod Hosts

Pod Corner by D. Staley cont.

“Robin Ecker asked me to sign on with her group. I was a little reluctant at first but having had the benefit of meeting Robin I decided to join. The results for me as a writer could hardly be better. I received great constructive criticism, and I have learned a lot by critiquing the work of others. I think my writing has improved and the feeling of camaraderie is an extra benefit. It was a good step for me and I would encourage others to give it a try. “

Frank Fiordalisi

From my experience, the benefits of being a pod host far outweigh the small effort hosting requires. **Pod hosts get to choose where to meet.** This is a distinct advantage to me, as my novel pod meets in Waldo, a mile from my house.

A pod host may cast the deciding vote on when and how often to meet. And, oh yes, we do have a responsibility to promote positive critiques, productive suggestions for improvement, and equal time for all pod members.

Pod hosts are not alone. WAG offers help. New hosts or members interested in hosting may shadow an existing pod to see how it's done. Also, new hosts may request an experienced host to sit in on the first meeting of a new pod.

If you are interested in hosting a pod, contact me (Dorothy Staley, Pod Coordinator) at dasapr41@yahoo.com, fill out a one-page questionnaire for the WAG database, and, with my help, begin contacting potential members. Remember, hosting is not only fun and rewarding, it guarantees your participation in a pod comprised of fellow WAG writers specifically working in your genre. What could be better than that?

Pod of the Month

Memoir/Non-Fiction/Personal Essay Pod

Pod Host Stephanie Seguin writes—Yes, that's a lot of slashes, but this genre is too tough to narrow down to one simple title. We are meeting once a month at rotating locations. We critique everything from essays about thong bikinis in Brazil, to treatises on Twinkie addictions, to magazine articles about fertility treatments, as well as long-form memoirs and fictionalized short stories based on memoirs. Members of our pod can e-mail things ahead of time or bring work to the meeting and have people read it on site. Either way, we are getting good feedback for our writing.

And that folks is what it's all about—good feedback.

A note to our members and potential members from the WAG Board of Directors:

Our pod formation is proceeding quickly. The genre-specific pods are an important part of what we set up the Writers Alliance to achieve. The pods allow you to get substantial critique immediately, on an ongoing basis. But, you must be a member of the Writers Alliance to join a pod. Our organization works hard to organize, support and maintain the pods, but we can't do this without information about the members. We want you to be part of this great opportunity, so please join the Writers Alliance. You can join at the next meeting. Dues are \$36 per year, prorated at the rate of \$3 per month.

We hope to see you in a pod soon.

Sincerely,

WAG Board of Directors





"If an agent is asking for any fees (reading, evaluations, marketing, or retainer fees), let the red flags unfurl."



Warning Signs: How To Spot A Literary Agent Scam: Part One

How can you tell if a literary agent or agency is legitimate and not a scam?" New novelists and veteran writers can fall prey to literary agency scams—hidden tricks that literary agents use to fake legitimacy or make a quick buck on a book. Writers should be wary of scams when approaching literary agencies or individual agents.

The way that a reputable literary agent should make money is by selling books. That's it. If an agent is asking for any fees (reading, evaluations, marketing, or retainer fees), let the red flags unfurl. Reading fees at agencies weren't always a red flag, but because several agencies began abusing the system—charging fees without having any genuine interest in the material itself—the practice was abolished by the Association of Authors' Representatives or AAR (the trade group for US literary agents). The same goes for evaluation fees. If an agency offers an evaluation of your manuscript, it should be free. Disreputable agencies will sometimes charge the writer for a "critique," which is generic, widely applicable, or performed by an underqualified staff member. The AAR frowns upon this practice and so should you.

Other dubious fees fall under the category of administration, marketing, or submission costs. A good agent will only charge the client for expenses that are above and beyond normal and reasonable expenses, such as long-distance phone calls and shipping costs. These are usually deducted from the client's royalties and should not be up-front costs. Watch out for agents who demand money up-front, especially for such vague reasons; if in doubt, request an itemized list of any charges—you should not be billed for every Post-it your agent uses.

Sometimes an agent is not dishonest, but merely inept. This is an agent who uses questionable methods to submit your work to editors—sending your work to editors who aren't looking for what you are trying to sell; bundling several queries into one package; using shotgun types of submission methods; and not doing their homework. These agents quickly develop a reputation among editors, and their clients can expect their work to be ignored. Some writers feel that any agent is better than none at all, but this simply is not the case.

Reputable agents do not need to advertise in magazines or search for clients online, and they never send spam. If you are approached by an agent without ever having contacted them, beware. Dishonest agents often troll online writers' forums or purchase subscription lists from writers' magazines to beef up their client list.

Note: Once in a great while, an agent will read your work in a magazine and contact you directly; this is a legitimate practice, and you should be able to tell that it is not a generic form letter, that the agent actually read your work and admired it.

Thank you to Writer's Relief for the use of this article:

"Writer's Relief, Inc. is a highly recommended author's submission service. Established in 1994, Writer's Relief will help you target the best markets for your creative writing. Visit their Web site at <http://www.WritersRelief.com> to receive their FREE Writers' Newsflash (today, via e-mail), which contains valuable leads, guidelines, and deadlines for writing in all genres."

Follow These Rules For Stronger Writing

by Nancy Lamb

April 30, 2009

Strong prose is a matter of practice and discipline and conscious awareness of the words you put on the page. There are rules for effective writing, and you can save yourself a lot of unnecessary grief if you take the time to incorporate them into your writing psyche.

These rules can't make a good writer a brilliant one. But they can make an average writer a good writer, and a good writer better. They can turn a mediocre story into a memorable one. And they're a great guide for revising your work.

1. **NEVER LET THE TRUTH GET IN THE WAY OF YOUR STORY.** Creative writing is just that: creative. If the truth prevents you from telling your fictional story effectively, get rid of the facts and invent something that makes the story work.

2. **NEVER USE TWO WORDS WHEN ONE WILL DO.** Less is more. Usually one powerful word will do the same job as two weaker ones. Instead of:

Andrea stared at the horrible, slithering mass of snakes.

Write:

Andrea stared at the writhing mass of snakes.

3. **USE THE ACTIVE VOICE.** The difference between adequate prose and good prose is the difference between passive and active voice. Make certain that active verbs drive your prose. Instead of:

There were a great number of dead bodies on the ground.

Write:

Dead bodies littered the ground.

4. **USE PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION.** Parallel construction allows you to write in the most interesting, economical fashion by aligning your verb tenses and uniting phrases with a common construction. Instead of:

The vampire bared his teeth and then, raising his claws to sharpen them, he started licking his chops. "Gotcha!" he said with a grin.

Write:

The vampire bared his teeth, sharpened his claws and licked his chops. "Gotcha!" he said with a grin.

5. **KEEP RELATED WORDS TOGETHER.** Linguistic studies have shown that most of us have a natural instinct for the placement of adjectives. We don't say, "I have a blue shiny car." Instead, we say, "I have a shiny blue car." The same principle should be applied to sentences you write. Instead of:

Frankenstein noticed a large bloodstain in the rug that was in the middle.

Write:

Frankenstein noticed a large bloodstain in the middle of the rug.

6. **REPLACE ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS WITH VIVID NOUNS AND ACTIVE VERBS.** Cultivate the use of strong verbs and concrete nouns. They are the most powerful tools in a writer's arsenal. Instead of:

Since the day Barbara met the werewolf, she felt very scared and frightened.

Write:

Since the day she met the werewolf, terror haunted Barbara's heart.

There is no surer way to weaken your prose than to pepper it with adverbs. There are, of course, times when the adverb is appropriate and necessary. Choose those times carefully.

She looked longingly and lovingly at the chocolate.

Or:

She looked at the chocolate with longing and love.

Or better:

Her eyes consumed the chocolate.

Continued Page 6

Stronger Writing (Continued)



"The best prose has a rhythm to it. Honor that rhythm. There have been days when I've spent half an hour searching the thesaurus for a word that has three syllables instead of two."



7. **DON'T OVEREXPLAIN.** Give your reader the benefit of the doubt and allow him to intuit the meaning of the dialogue, rather than read about it. Instead of:

"I'm sorry," Peter said consolingly.

Write:

"I'm sorry," Peter said.

8. **WRITE CINEMATICALY.** When you write, think visually. Language holds endless possibilities for a creative approach to expressing an idea.

Eddy Peters exemplified this when he wrote, "Not only does the English Language borrow words from other languages, it sometimes chases them down dark alleys, hits them over the head and goes through their pockets."

9. **VARY YOUR SENTENCE STRUCTURE.** Using nothing but noun-verb declarative sentences makes for dull reading. Break up the monotony. Instead of:

John walked to the closet. He opened the door. He took one look inside and he screamed.

Write:

John walked to the closet and opened the door. Taking one look inside, he screamed.

10. **CREATE INTEREST BY MIXING IDEAS.** Mixing alien ideas and drawing unlikely parallels will make the writing fresh

She was the kind of girl who collected men like she collected speeding tickets. They both happened when she wasn't paying attention.

11. **LISTEN TO THE MUSIC OF THE WORDS.** The best prose has a rhythm to it. Honor that rhythm. There have been days when I've spent half an hour searching the thesaurus for a word that has three syllables instead of two. Sometimes the difference is subtle, but it can make the reading experience more satisfying. Instead of:

Some writers catch on to the rhythm and they delight in the sound of the music as soon as they learn to write.

Write:

Some writers feel the rhythm and hear the music from the moment they learn to write.

12. **AVOID WORD REPETITION.** There's nothing more tiresome for a reader than seeing the same tiresome words over and over in the same paragraph. This creates the overall impression that the reader is reading the same repetitive, tiresome prose over again and it tires out the reader. Note: The exception to this rule—the critical exception—is when you repeat a word for emphasis.

13. **BEWARE OF IT.** Grammarians call it an "obscure pronominal reference." That's when it is left dangling in a sentence without a clear reference to whom or what it refers. Double-check for dangling its. Where you find:

Kathy couldn't believe it was happening.

Clarify:

Kathy couldn't believe her sister was finally accepting the blame.

This article appeared in the March/April issue of Writer's Digest



Conferences, classes etc.

Santa Fe College asked Kal Rosenberg to once again offer *The Writer's Toolbox* in the Summer Session of Community Ed (June 10th through July 15th).

Those who have taken it before will tell you it is, well, different.

The enrollment is usually small as Kal tries to scare off as many as possible.

The survivors are in for a surprise. Here, critique is for finding answers, not finding fault.

Answers depend upon knowing the questions.

Questions depend upon how well the "fictional elements" are integrated (though the workshop is for fiction *and* memoir writers).

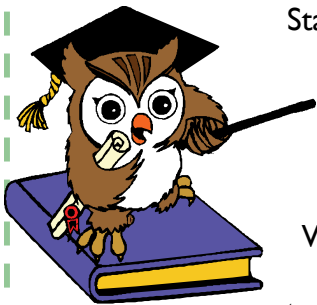
The class is interactive, the format shifts with the direction of the wind, and it is not unknown to include wine and cheese.

The workshop is on Wednesday nights from 6 to 8. Sign up by calling 395-4124.

Your writing will thank you.

Starts Wed., June 10th, from 6 to 8 p.m. for six consecutive weeks.

To register call 395-5193.



WAG member Perky Granger announces opening of registration for the Adirondack Mountain Writers' Retreat, to be held in the Lake George Region of New York August 20 - 23.

Writer/poet/teacher Irene Sherlock will lead ten participants in the four-day creative writing (fiction, memoir, personal essay) workshop, which will include seminars, readings, consultations, critique sessions and blocks of writing time, all at the remote and rustic Beaver Meadow Lodge in the town of Thurman.

Those interested should visit www.PersisGranger.com for details, and contact Perky at 518-623-9305 or PersisGranger@aol.com.

Perky also hosts the St. George Island (FL) Writers' Retreat with author Adrian Fogelin in November.

The Anhinga Writers' Studio is hosting the Anhinga Writers' Studio Summer Workshops July 29-August 1 in Gainesville, Florida.

Five genre tracks. Manuscript consultations.

Editors, publishers, agents. Conference anchored by Charlaire Harris, NYT bestselling author of Southern Vampire series

(True Blood -- HBO weekly drama).

For more information, visit: <http://www.anhingawriters.org/>.



“look for
contests that
offer copies
of the journal
or subscriptions
to the magazine
as part of the
entry fee.”

Writers Contests, Submission requests

Online journal

The Sylvan Echo

seeks submissions – multiple genres:

Our newest issue may be viewed at: <http://currentissue.sylvanecho.net>
This issue contains work from a diverse group of writers and artists that hail from nations around the globe.

Our next issue is tentatively scheduled for July 2009.
The submission deadline for our next issue is June 20, 2009.
The site is best viewed in Mozilla Firefox.

* * *

SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW - Guy Owen Prize Contest

\$1000 and publication in *SPR* awarded to the winning poem selected by a distinguished poet. Send 3-5 unpublished poems (10 pages max.), postmarked between March 1 and June 15. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for reply only, and a check for \$15 payable to *Southern Poetry Review*. We consider work published online or posted there as previously published. Include all contact information on cover sheet only; do not include name or contact information on poems. Please indicate simultaneous submissions. All entries will be considered for publication. We cannot accept electronic mail submissions, nor can we accept them on disk. Manuscripts will not be returned. The entry fee includes a one-year subscription to the journal.

Southern Poetry Review - Guy Owen Prize
Dept. of Languages, Literature and Philosophy
Armstrong Atlantic State University
11935 Abercorn Street
Savannah, Georgia 31419-1997
<http://www.spr.armstrong.edu/guyowen.html>

* * *

The American Poetry Journal announces
The American Poet Prize for Poetry.

The winner will receive \$500 plus publication in *The American Poetry Journal*. All entries will be considered for publication. Submit up to three original and unpublished poems (10 pages maximum total), cover letter with bio and contact information including email address, & SASE for results with a \$16.00 reading fee (\$19 for outside the US) to:

J. P. Dancing Bear, Editor
The American Poetry Journal
P. O. Box 2080
Aptos, CA 95001-2080.

Writers Contests, Submission requests

American Poetry Journal, cont.

Postmark Deadline: June 30, 2009.

Simultaneous submissions acceptable with notice. Multiple submissions acceptable with separate reading fee for each group of three poems.

All entries will receive a year's subscription to *The American Poetry Journal*.

All selections and winners are made by the editor. Personal Friends, Relatives, and/or Students of the editor are NOT eligible for the contest and their entry fees will be refunded.

Web site: http://home.comcast.net/~jpdancingbear/apj_contest.html

THE 2009 BARROW STREET PRESS BOOK CONTEST

The Barrow Street Press Book Contest award will be given for the best previously unpublished manuscript of poetry in English. The winner will receive book publication by Barrow Street Press, and \$1000.00.

Judge: David Wojahn

Deadline: June 30, 2009

Fee: \$25.00

*If entrants would like to
receive a copy of the winning book,
please include a book mailer
with \$2.59 postage.
Thank you.*

Barrow Street
PO Box 1558
Kingston, RI 02881
Our best wishes,
The Editors

www.barrowstreet.org

VERY COMPETITIVE—ENTER YOUR BEST WORK!
The Drue Heinz Literature Prize
Call for Submissions 2009



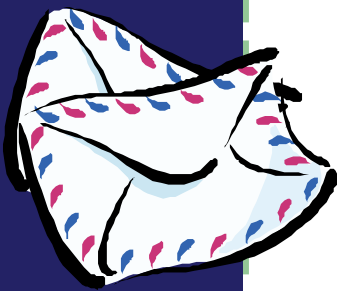
The Drue Heinz Literature Prize recognizes and supports writers of short fiction and makes their work available to readers around the world. The award is open to writers who have published a book-length collection of fiction or at least three short stories or novellas in commercial magazines or literary journals.

Manuscripts are judged anonymously by nationally known writers; past judges have included Robert Penn Warren, Joyce Carol Oates, Raymond Carver, Margaret Atwood, Russell Banks, Rick Moody and Joan Didion. The prize carries a cash award of \$15,000 and publication by the University of Pittsburgh Press under its standard contract.

The winner will be announced by the University Press in January. No information about the winner will be released before the official announcement.

The volume of manuscripts prevents the Press from offering critiques or entering into communication or correspondence about manuscripts. Please do not call or e-mail the Press.

Manuscripts must be received during May and June 2009. That is, they must be postmarked on or after May 1 and on or before June 30.



[http://www.upress.pitt.edu/renderHtmlPage.aspx?
srcHtml=htmlSourceFiles/drueheinz.htm](http://www.upress.pitt.edu/renderHtmlPage.aspx?srcHtml=htmlSourceFiles/drueheinz.htm)

Writers Contests,

Submission requests

And don't forget our upcoming literary magazine

BACOPA

FREE ENTRY FOR

WRITERS ALLIANCE OF GAINESVILLE MEMBERS

multiple genres:

\$1275 PRIZE MONEY

2009 *bacopa* magazine literary contest

There are no restrictions on theme or content,

no political canon, no social agenda.

Quality comes in all flavors.

And you don't have to send us your credits.

We care where you're going—

not where you've been.

Entry Fees

REMEMBER:

- Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG) Members in good standing, your first submission in any genre is **FREE**. You will also receive a Free copy of *Bacopa*.
- WAG Members—Additional Submissions are \$9 each

All Others—\$11 each submission Guidelines and information at:

bacopaonline.com





Writers Contests,
Submission requests

Memoir (and)

Memoir (and) is a nonprofit literary journal born with these ideas in mind. Our mission is to publish traditional as well as nontraditional forms of non-fiction allied with memoir. This includes, but is not limited to, autobiography, diary, personal and critical essay, reportage, autobiographical fiction, alternative histories, “flash memoir,” narrative poetry or “poemoir” (it’s okay to groan, we did) and graphic memoir.

We strive with each issue to include a selection of:

- * prose
- * poetry
- * graphic memoirs
- * narrative photography

...and more. The editors particularly invite submissions that push the traditional boundaries of form and content in the exploration of the representation of self. We also just love a memoir well-told.

No submission is too unusual—modern, postmodern, or hypermodern—for us to consider. We look forward to the ways you will surprise, delight and perhaps shock us, or move us to tears.

The reading period extends from 5/1/09 through 8/15/09. All submissions must be either uploaded to the Submission Manager by midnight PST, or sent by snail mail bearing a postmark of 8/15/09.

<http://memoirjournal.squarespace.com/>



Writers Contests, Submission requests

Anyone writing about Flanner O'Connor? Here's a place for your work:

Shenandoah: The Washington and Lee University Review has issued a call for essays, poems, short stories, reviews, photographs and other artwork about, related to or in honor of the fiction and life of Flannery O'Connor. The work is to be published in a special issue celebrating the journal's 60th anniversary. Deadline for submissions is October 1, 2009. A prize of \$1,000 will be awarded to the best O'Connor-related work published in the issue, which is planned for Fall, 2010. Queries about particular submissions should be directed to rodsmith@wlu.edu. Materials should be sent to O'Connor Issue, Shenandoah, Mattingly House, 2 Lee Avenue, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA 24450-2116.

<http://shenandoah.wlu.edu/>

Arch—the new annual, online literary magazine of Washington University in St. Louis—seeks poetry and fiction of all genres and subgenres, essays and nonfiction of any concern, translations from any corner, and new to this reading period: book reviews. Deadline December 1, 2009 for February 2010 publication.

<http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~archword/>

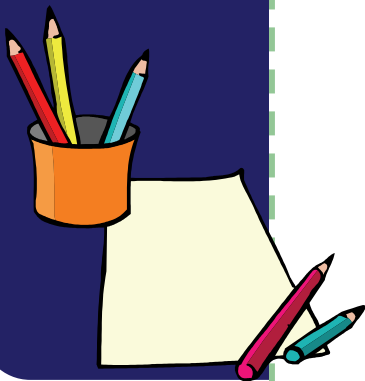
ONLINE POETRY JOURNAL SEEKS GENRE FICTION

Oregon Literary Review wants science fiction, western, horror, and detective fiction for upcoming "genre" section.

<http://orelitrev.startlogic.com/>

To err is human, but when the eraser wears out ahead of the pencil, you're overdoing it."

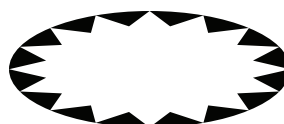
-J. Jenkins





Writer's Alliance of Gainesville
A not-for-profit Florida corporation
p.o.box 358396
gainesville/florida/32635-8396
[352-336-8062/wagmail@cox.net](mailto:wagmail@cox.net)

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG) promotes, encourages and supports aspiring and experienced regional writers. This goal is accomplished via WAG monthly meetings, public readings, ongoing small critique groups, a literary journal, writers' contests, and collaborations with schools and civic organizations to foster creative expression through the written word.



Announcing A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville is pleased to announce that we're ready for submissions to our new literary journal, Bacopa. (Want to know what Bacopa is? See the picture below. Maybe you've seen this plant around Gainesville.)

**WE DON'T CARE WHERE, WHEN, OR IF
YOU'VE PUBLISHED.**

We just want quality fiction, nonfiction, and poetry for our new literary journal. Open submissions deadline 6/30/09. Cash Contest entries July 1-October 31, 2009.

**Visit WWW.bacopaonline.Com for further
information**

