WISE WOMEN WRITE™

April 2010

Local author and Wise Woman Write founder Diane Amento Owens brings women together to write, share, and grow.

Need writing inspiration? Visit Diane's Weekly Wise Words and sign up!

Blooming Among Friends

by author Diane Amento Owens

As I recently met with a new Wise Women Write group, I was honored to be among these eager women. I admired their courage in trying something new and the risk-taking that will be required to show up next time, writing in hand, willing to share.

A few days after the new group met, a friend asked me to hike with her hiking group. I walk in my neighborhood, lift weights, and can treadmill at least a mile and a half. A hike—no problem! After arriving at the Gateway Trail in the McDowells and seeing the "moderately difficult" 3.6- mile trail winding upward, I questioned the wisdom of my can-do attitude.

As we climbed the trail, the Beatles tune "I get by with a little help from my friends" came to mind. The three women encouraged me, slowed their pace to match mine, and frequently stopped to snap pictures of the blooming desert. Still, once we reached the trail's "saddle," I wished for an easy way back down. Yet, on the downward rocky trail, the women repeatedly paused and waited as my screaming knees dictated my slow pace. As we crossed over the copper-colored bridge at trail's end, I realized I would have quit early on without their companionship and encouragement.

It takes courage to tackle a new venture, like joining a hike or a writing group, but female companionship can make anything bearable. In a five-year study for her book *Connecting: The Enduring Power of Female Friendship*, Sandy Sheehy reports that 85 percent of women 25 to 40 say they have trouble maintaining friendships, but that in their early forties, "It's like all of a sudden a light goes on and they say, "I need women in my life." Sheehy calls ages 40 to 64 "friendship's second flowering."

Never having had sisters, I have always craved the companionship of women, but now more than ever, women pull me along. Like the McDowell Mountain desert vista, I am blooming into who I'm supposed to be because of the women in my life. Whether I'm navigating a trail or sharing a piece of writing, women inspire and encourage me to keep on the path.

There is a Spanish proverb: "Tell me with whom you walk and I'll tell you who you are." I am so incredibly blessed to walk the writing road with all the wonderful women I've connected with through Wise Women Write.

Writing and Taxes (part two)

a feature article by Renee Rivers

THE HOBBY LOSS RULE

Employees make the best dates.
You don't have
to pick them up and they're
always tax-deductible.
--Andy Warhol

My husband, the businessman, loves to say, “If you’re not making money, it’s not a business. It’s a hobby.” But exceptions, at least temporarily, exist in the arts world. Most writers aren’t John Grisham or Stephenie Meyer, so it’s a given that lean periods exist between paychecks. Writer and instructor Steve Almond knows this firsthand. In a writers’ forum at ASU’s Rising Stars Writers Conference, Almond underscored this dilemma: “I filed 29 separate W-9’s last year to keep the kids in diapers.”

For tax purposes, profit must be shown in three out of five years of writing. Otherwise, it’s considered a “hobby loss.” Scottsdale accountant Mary Fiore says, “For the first two years you get a hall-pass. The 3rd, 4th and 5th year you must make a profit,” or fall under the hobby loss rule, which until proven, leaves artists open to IRS scrutiny. Given that first books take, on average, ten years from inception to publication, this law can be difficult to follow for many writers. Adequate documentation is required to show what tax specialists call “profitable intent.” If after three years you still have not made a profit, with good record keeping you can argue, “I’m attempting to make money. It’s just not happened yet,” according to Ms. Fiore.

The idea of profitable intent was established by a tax court precedent case in which an artist, although she had not yet made profits, was able to demonstrate that she had profitable intent via her records whereby she paid fees to attend conferences, took classes, sent out business cards to generate business, among other things. She was able to prove she was attempting to make money with her art.

Writers should keep rejection letters, conference notes, handouts and critique papers. (For a more comprehensive list, please refer to last month’s “Taxes and Writing Part One” article)

Do you still take deductions if you’re not profitable? According to Mary Fiore, “If you’ve kept your records in a fashion that shows you’re attempting to make money then, yes.”

Mary Fiore recommends two books on this subject. *Tax Deductions A-Z* and *The New Tax Guide for Performers, Writers, Directors, Designers and Other Show Biz Folk.*

Be advised that the Federal Tax Code is complicated and specific issues should be reviewed with a tax professional before filing taxes.

An applicable article on tax law for artists can be found at: https://artistsregister.com/resource2.phtml?resourceId=82.

Whether Andy Warhol really deducted employee dates on his taxes or not, he put it this way, “Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.”

Whether you like his art or not, Warhol had the business thing down. In short, Fiore says writers who want to deduct expenses need to understand, “You are a business. Conduct yourself as one.”

Renee Rivers is a mother and travel enthusiast who is writing a memoir about coming of age in Alaska. An award-winning writer, Renee has taught writing at Phoenix College and assisted as associate editor with *Hayden’s Ferry Review*. Renee’s writing has appeared in: *Change Your Life Through Travel, The Geneseo Scene, Raising Arizona Kids, The Moon Valley Tattler,* and *The Arizona Republic*.

Corner the Market
by Windy Lynn Harris

READ YOUR PUBLISHING CONTRACT LIKE A PRO!

What happens when you get a letter from a magazine editor who loves your poem, short story, or essay? First, you stand up from your desk chair and do the "I'm getting published dance!" Next, you check over the details of your publishing contract.

Let's say this editor is offering $150 for First North American Rights to your poem, "The Wisest Woman," with the rights reverting back to you 90 days after publication. How do you know if this contract is right for you? Let's look at the specifics of the language:

First North American Rights--This editor is asking for the coveted position of being the first to print this fabulous poem in all of North America. There are two specific subcategories here:

> **First Print Rights**--This is the right to publish your poem on paper.
>
> **First Electronic Rights**--This is the right to publish this poem on the internet and in ebook form.

If your contract doesn't specify First Print Rights or First Electronic Rights, like the text of the contract above, assume this editor wants both.

When your contract states the date that your rights revert back to you, this means that the magazine intends to have this poem exclusively for a specified time. After the 90-day post-publication date, as the contract above states, you are free to resell this piece of writing as a *reprint*. You can sell First Rights one time only. Typically, editors pay half as much for a reprint as they do for a first-run piece.

If 150 bucks and the opportunity to resell this piece next autumn sounds good to you, sign your contract with confidence! Got any other contract questions? Just ask!

World Rights--Permission to publish this piece in any country, not just North America. This is common when the editor has a sister publication in the UK.

Second Rights--The industry term is "reprint." Any time you sell a great piece of writing to a second (or third, or fourth) magazine, make sure you are clear that only the Second Rights are available when you write your query letter.

Copyright--Your work is automatically copyrighted once you put those beautiful words of yours down on paper or on the computer screen. You own the copyright to all of your original work. When you sign a publishing contract, you are selling the *right to publish* that work.

All Rights--ALL rights to this piece of writing, period. That means the editor can print your work anytime they wish, in any medium they wish, forever. You cannot resell this piece.

Returning the Favor
by author Susan Pohlman

Join us here each month where award-winning author Susan Pohlman reveals her path to publishing success!

Part Five: Shopping the Manuscript

The day dawns like any other: the sun rises, the coffee drips, the shower steams up a white cloud around your sleepy head. Then you remember. It is THE day. The one you have been awaiting for months, perhaps years. Your agent is hitting the streets today with a kick in her step, and your manuscript tucked neatly under her arm. (Okay, so that's a little dramatic. She'll be attaching your document to her emails.) Nonetheless, it is *showtime.*

Your book will vie for attention among thousands of others. It may take a few nail-biting weeks for editors to read it and decide if they want to take it under consideration. Then, they will respond.

My agent prepared me for the worst, even asked if I wanted to see the responses. Sometimes the editors are too busy to be delicate, so it was nice to be warned.

Within a few days, the emails began to trickle in. Pass, Ouch! Pass, Gulp! Pass, Sigh! And on it went until all of them had answered.

Crushing defeat.

I was drained and demoralized. How could it be that no one wanted my story? Could all of that work have been for naught? I felt like the Olympian hopeful who missed the qualifying heat by .001 of a second. Now what?

My agent and I agreed to take a breather. We would touch base again in a month and decide whether or not we could rework the project. Rejection is just part of the process, she said. What else would push us to be better?

I sat down with all of my rejections and reread them one by one. Yes, it was painful, but it illuminated the weak spots, like sunlight through the wall of a splintered barn.

Next month I'll tell you what I had been missing and reveal what the editors really wanted. Till then, keep writing!

Watch the "700 Club" feature that tells the story behind Susan's latest memoir here!

Great News! Susan's debut memoir, *Halfway to Each Other*, is available in bookstores now!

Spinning a Good Yarn

a book review by Trish Dolasinski, Ed. D.

This month's book:

THE SUCCESSFUL NOVELIST

by David Morrell

When beginning a novel, "what matters is surrendering to the idea and getting those initial words on the page—get started," says David Morrell, author of *The Successful Novelist.*

Focus and create a plot with a satisfying proportion of character development and character illustration. Both plot and character are intimately related with the latter controlling the former. Consider also the *theme* of the novel—the foundational truth or the universal message that underlies the plot and the characters. The theme answers the question, "So, what?"

Equally critical to writing a strong novel is to know the tactics of structure. However, Morrell cautions against the locked-in composition outline format. He opposes such an approach because it takes away from the emotional and psychological process that not only created the characters but also underlies the theme. Subdivide the novel and think in terms of arcs and small units within those arcs, he says, making it easier to write, and easier for the reader to appreciate. This author also admonishes the writer to "forget the flashbacks and move the plot forward."

Just because you have a story idea and you create characters that illuminate and dazzle, it is no excuse to be ignorant of literary history. Do the reading, conduct interviews and get hands-on experience. "No matter what type of novel you are writing, you should want to be an innovator, and research is crucial to that goal," he says.

Don't put yourself through unnecessary narrative heartache, Morrell warns, providing an in-depth discussion surrounding the matter of viewpoint. Authors often abandon their work, blaming their plot when actually the problem is the way the story is being told. He nudges the writer to consider specific guiding questions first.

Morrell ends with reviewing elements of the business of writing, with chapters on writer's block, publishing and marketing. His final pages offer dozens of pertinent questions and answers. This book captivates and educates and is a must for every writer—whether a novice or seasoned.

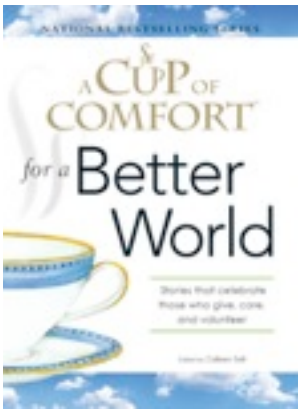
Be sure to stop by the cozy corner of Trish's journal writing page and become inspired to Spin a Good Yarn.

Join the conversation by leaving Trish a comment!

David Morrell was Diane Amento Owens' English professor when he sold *First Blood,* the first of this successful novelist's 28 books. Who knew this mild-mannered professor would bring *Rambo* to fame?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Betsy McPhee has a feature essay in the recently published anthology, *A Cup of Comfort for a Better World.* This essay was inspired by the time her daughter Lisa made a difference through a simple act of kindness. You can order your copy of the new book here!



Award-winning author **Susan Pohlman** was interviewed for the March cover article of *Psychology Today* called, "The Expectations Trap." Get your copy at news stands everywhere!

A huge welcome from Diane and all of the other Wise Women to new Wise Women Write members **Melanie Groseta**, **Jane Scoville**, **Nancy Marshall, Deb Findlow, Maria Warner, Liz Rice, Paula Cunningham, Jane Cebrynski, and Maureen Stepanek**!

Jennifer Fabiano's essay, "The Welcome," will be featured in the special "Mother's Voices" May edition of *Raising Arizona Kids*. This unique issue of *RAK* will be available at the end of the month.

Windy Lynn Harris will bring her popular "Six Steps to Publishing Success" seminar to the May meeting of the Scottsdale Society of Women Writers.
May 26th, 5:30 to 7:30 pm. See SSWW website for details.

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Scottsdale branch of The National League of American Pen Women will conclude this season's regular meetings on May 12th. The League promotes and conducts literary, educational, and charitable activities in the fields of Letters, Art, and Music. If you are interested in learning more about this amazing organization or being a guest at the May meeting, please contact League member Windy Lynn Harris.

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts unites, advances, collaborates, partners, and supports individuals and organizations in all aspects of arts, performing arts, literary arts and cultures in Arizona. Visit their website for information about *The Blue Guitar Magazine* and how to become a free consortium member.

Got news to share? Contact Wise Women Write Monthly editor Windy Lynn Harris.

WRITER'S RESOURCE

DO YOU WRITE ESSAYS, SHORT STORIES, OR POEMS? WANT TO GET PUBLISHED?

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION COACH AVAILABLE

Award-winning freelance writer Windy Lynn Harris will teach you:

*Where to find thousands of markets for your work
*How to find the right editor for each piece
*How to format your manuscript for submission
*How to write winning query letters

There is no magic wand needed to get your creative writing published, only a professional attitude toward the publishing industry and endless determination. Show editors that you deserve to be taken seriously as a writer by professionally presenting them your best work. When you submit an edited piece of writing and an interesting query letter to the right editor, you open the door to success.

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4-Week Coaching Session - $100

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