

The Woodlands Writers Guild Newsletter

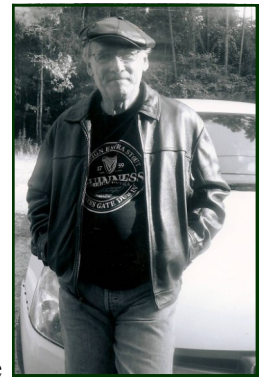
Vol. 2 Issue 1 January/February 2010

-VOTING: WED JAN 6- see back page- From the desk of... El Presidente

Greetings from **El Presidente** - I hope everyone had a good Holiday Season, and are ready to enjoy a prosperous New Year. We had a good 2009 - We decided, at the beginning of last year to upgrade our speakers and teachers, and that we did; bringing forth authors such as **Joe Lansdale**, **Rosemary Poole-Carter**, **Khozi Makai**, **Deborah Frontiera**, and **Colleen Thompson**, who also gave us a seminar on writing romance novels. Our very own **Erin Rice** explained how to promote a self-published novel. **Theresa Lehr** talked about how to be descriptive, and **Betty Eddy** gave us a lesson in character refinement. We stepped out of the box and put together a first for the guild, a show titled "**Naughty Nites in The Woods**," using the talents of **Reed Izatt**, who brought us three Stand-Up comedians. We made money from all our ventures, including two short story contest and a reading at **Good Books in The Woods**. We also increased the size of the membership. Needless to say, we had a very busy year. The motto for 2010 is **Resolution**, so here's

Camaraderie is important, we will do a series of activities with that in mind, starting with a reading party at Dr. Jones home on January 30th - see page 8. **Communication** is a key to success, and the newsletter is a step in that direction. Local **Respect** as an organization is essential if we're to move forward as an organization. The plan is to do a genuine all day Writer's Seminar in a hotel, complete with food, speakers, hands on teachers, and book signings by local authors. **Education** is a must if we're to improve our skills as writers, and we will continue to bring in local writers, editors, and publishers. And finally we will have **Fun**. We need to have lots of it to make the meetings enjoyable. We will bring back our writing games. My resolution is to accomplish all these goals, along with ridding ourselves of stuffed shirts, naysayers, and hangers on who come to meetings but do not join.

-A.A.



2010: Back to Beowulf

Let us pause for a moment to reflect on where we came from. As members of The Woodlands Writers Guild, we gather for two main purposes: to learn and to critique. Most of us write in English. Some of us have a second or even third language in our repertoire, but we all endeavor to write, and publish, in English. This simple fact is often taken for granted; and we don't think about it. But, looking back (continued on p. 2)

Inside this issue:

Grammar in Drag	3-4
Interview— Bob Dailey	4
Book-to-Market / Inside Track— Improving Your Writing	5
About Us / Monthly Challenges	5
Book Review	6
Bulletin Board	7
Ask the Editor	8

2010

to our literary forefathers, we can perhaps revive not only our writing skills, but also our motivation. In other words, find inspiration from the past.

Beowulf is characteristic of true descendants of the Anglo-Saxon race (and those who relate to it -at least in spirit). The poem shows the love of liberty and law; and the willingness to fight any dragon that threatens them. It portrays the recognition of the great forces of manliness, bravery, loyalty, devotion to duty, and the sense that death is preferable to dishonor. Anglo-Saxons are doers: actions outweigh words. They feel more than they express. Repression of sentiment is a “peculiarity of the Anglo-Saxon race.” And so on. These sentiments are from my 1913 copy of *Halleck's New English Literature*.

The introduction of this book summarizes the Anglo-Saxon gift of literature thus: “...the descendants of the English are still truthful and sternly just; they still dislike to give full expression to their feelings; they still endeavor to translate thoughts into deeds, and in this world where all need so much help, they take self-sacrifice as a matter of course. The spirit of *Beowulf*...still persists in Anglo-Saxon thought and action.”

So there we have it. As a student of the English language, and especially of its literature, we have absorbed the Anglo-Saxon characteristics that continue to pervade- even to our writing. We have read English Lit, British Lit, and World Lit at some point in our high school years or beyond. But writing? Forget it. We *feel* more than we express. We can't seem to get the words out. Every word we have read fills us with inspiration. We want to write! We want to express what we feel as eloquently as our literary forefathers. But somehow, the thought of writing fills us with awe and trepidation (unless, of course, we have thoroughly mastered the nuances of the spellings and meanings of the English language, or have attained a G.L. – Guru of Literature).

While the muse escapes us periodically, we know what we like and what we don't; what works and what doesn't. That is the critique aspect of our guild. When we meet, we listen to others and offer what advice we have learned ourselves. A critic is, among other things, a specialist in the explication and judgment of literary or artistic works. Words change over time and 'critic' now has more of a negative connotation. But it was once based on *critique*, a critical review or commentary, especially one dealing with a literary or other artistic work.

The “first meritorious essay on criticism in the English language” is *The Apologie for Poetrie* (which defends the poetic arts) by Sir Philip Sidney: 1554-1586. As they say, we've come a long way, baby. Four hundred years later, we're still, in some respects, giving critical reviews and commentaries. We're just having more fun here at The Woodlands Writers Guild.

Everyone's a critic - or at least thinks they are. There is a big difference between being a critic (making intelligent opinions, determinations, or appraisals) and being a criticaster (a petty or inferior critic). Suggesting that the writer improve his characters or tone is better than suggesting that the work “is idiotic and wouldn't appeal to my dog”.

-Editor

Fractured Facts– Grammar in Drag Ray Fitzgerald

Guest-written by Editor

What... you didn't know? Just when you had the basic noun, verb, adjective, and adverb figured out, they show up in drag. Anyone remember diagramming sentences? I never could get it straight until I took a course in Modern English Grammar. The answer is obvious: it was only when words showed up in drag that I got confused.

To be sure, the only reason I took the course was because of the prof. The venerable Dr. John Cormican was a linguist who taught English, raised goats, and looked like the cross between an old Jewish rabbi and a Russian Orthodox priest (who professed to be a converted Catholic). The man intrigued me. Surely, I hoped, he could explain grammar in a way I could understand. And he did.

The English language, unless someone has arbitrarily decided otherwise, consists of nine sentence patterns. Hold on tight while we review these quickly.



The 9 Basic English Sentence Patterns are as follows:

1. N be Adj (The novel is long.)
2. N be Adv (The meeting was yesterday.)
3. N¹ be N¹ (The man is an author.)
4. N LV Adj (The audience laughed aloud.)
5. N¹ LV N¹ (My brother became a doctor.) [note: "doctor" is the subjective complement]
6. N InV (The authors wrote.)
7. N¹ TrV N² (The girl bought a dress.) [note: N² is the notorious Direct Object]
8. N¹ TrV N² N³ (The mother bought the girl a dress.) [N TrV IO DO (indirect object, direct object)]
9. N¹ TrV N² + N² or Adj or Pronoun or... (anyone still interested can ask me later).

Dressing in drag, if done by the book, confuses everyone. Never mind the "why," we are concerned with the "how." Did you know there is actually a "how to" for dressing in drag? I noticed it was for guys, not gals, but moving on... you hide your true colors, show some cleavage (or fake it), find flattering clothes, eliminate the five o'clock shadow, and apply makeup flatteringly. Don't tell me if you've succeeded- I don't want to know. We are concerned with its application to grammar.

So when is grammar in drag? Its position and function in the sentence is the key to uncovering grammar in drag. The phrase "to miss the party" contains a preposition, verb, article, and a noun.

Analysis:

Alex Perez said:
"The sergeant, my
secondary jailer,
was a more
amiable fellow."

N be N¹

Where "the
sergeant" and the
"fellow" are the
same, and the verb
is a form of "to
be".

Thanks, Alex!

Cut & Run
Alberto Arcia

Grammar in Drag– continued

However, in *She hated to miss the party*, the phrase “to miss the party” is a DO (direct object) fitting sentence pattern number 7 where N¹ is “she”, TrV is the transitive verb “hated”, and N² is not a noun, but a “nominal embodying a verbal” phrase. Thus, “to miss the party” is in drag. One more for fun: *The trees that had mistletoe were half dead*. The phrase “that had mistletoe” is a relative clause adjectival which simply means it is a group of words, in drag, acting like an adjective (adjectives modify nouns and “that had mistletoe” modifies the noun *trees*). It’s a wonder any of us can still write anything after all that!

Now you know why diagramming sentences gets a little interesting beyond the basic N, V, Adj, Adv, articles, and prepositions. Practical application? When a sentence or paragraph just doesn’t feel right, break it down. See which sentence patterns they fit in. If you use N be N² for most of your work, it’s time to change it up. Diagramming, for most writers, is not all that important except that, like spices, variations flavor the soup a bit. When the muse leaves you, take the sentence you are working on and rewrite it in each of the sentence patterns and see where it takes you. Remember, dressing in drag is ok-only if you are grammar.

-Editor

**An ex-Navy man,
chef, fisherman, and
gardener... Bob
Dailey enjoys life to
the fullest.**

Interview– Bob Dailey

I’ve heard rumors– and they’re all true. Bob Dailey is a gentleman. I suspect he simply enjoys life for what each day brings. At least, that’s what he said. He began writing back when we were attempting to conquer math facts and long division– somewhere in the 7th grade. He was involved in 4H and writing about gardening and other things. Not only can you find Bob in the garden, but out on a lake or river fly-fishing. He’s good with a net. It’s in times like these, pondering the serenity of the great outdoors, that he finds the muse– or it finds him.

As a speaker and lecturer, Bob spends much of his time eating, breathing, sleeping, and dreaming of all things nature and wildlife preservation. It comes as no surprise that he can cook, too. While I can’t say I’ve tried it, I’ve heard he makes a mean étouffée. He also collects boxes– but one would expect that of someone who also collects fallen birds’ nests, samples of plants, rocks, dirt, and what-have-you.

While you might be familiar with his WaterWise articles, you may not know that he was a Navy man. That makes sense when you think about his love of water and fishing. He was almost a priest, but plans changed. Years ago, he was also in charge of a large \$150-million budget overseeing mineral operations and conservation at the Louisiana State Mineral Board. A Master Gardener and protector of all he surveys, Bob Dailey is content to write about and to continue exploring the nature that surrounds us.

You can read more about Bob at <http://desertwaterwisegardens.suite101.com/> or <http://robertdailey.com/>

-Editor

Book-to-Market Jennifer Blanchard

Why Every Writer Needs a Website

Sample website:
(Basic and Appealing)

<http://www.natshao.com/index.html>

If you ever plan to turn your written talent into dollars, you need to market yourself. With the wide-spread availability of the Internet everywhere from computers to cell phones to game systems, writers need to be accessible to their readers (and potential readers) at a moment's notice.

One way to do this is to have a website.

- **Makes a writer look professional**—If you're ever going to make any money from your writing, you need to appear as professional as possible to the public.
- **Is a simple marketing tool**—Anyone can create a basic using templates and click-to-publish Web programs.
- **Can serve as a writer's portfolio**—Imagine your writing being available to prospective customers/readers 24/7/365.

When it comes to creating your author website, you have a couple of options: a blog—where you use a free site such as Blogger.com or Wordpress.com to create a blog that spotlights your writing—or buying a domain name and building a website using pre-made templates on a hosting service, such as Go-Daddy.com or ixwebhosting.com. Also, it's important to remember, if you are writing under a pen name/writing alias, you should create the website for your alias, not for yourself. At a minimum, your website should have the following pages:

- **Home page**—Use this page to welcome and introduce people to your site.
- **Samples of your writing**—Include at least 2-3 pieces samples. Create separate pages writing in different categories, such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry.
- **About the Author**—Include your full bio and a professional photo of yourself.
- **Contact the Author**—Include your e-mail address. Don't include your home address and phone number. You can exchange additional information with the person who contacts you later if necessary.

The Inside Track Topics in Writing

Improving Your Writing

...as writers, we can break the rules.

Voice, tone, mood, diction, style— what are they and why should I care?

1. Literary technique is the “conventional rules of literature”. It's important to know the rules because, as writers, we can break the rules. It's more fun to break the rules when you know what the rules are.
2. Style is voice, tone, mood, diction, et cetera, and are all part of literary technique.
3. Tone is the mood you set by the words you write (diction) and the word order (syntax). Compare “He had been buried in a small room deep inside the pyramid, and his tomb was covered by a stone sarcophagus that was about a foot thick and barely two inches from the surrounding stone walls” with “I hated to give that grisly woman ammunition with which to abuse me, but hell, I deserved it.” Both are from the same book. Both have a completely different tone or voice.
4. Voice includes diction, syntax, punctuation, character development, and dialogue (among other things) and is “tone expanded.” Some authors are known not just for their genre, but their voice. Melissa Hance's voice in her winning essays is, perhaps, Stephen King Comedy Hour. Experts probably would call it dark humor or something. Call it what you want, it's her distinct use of tone, characters, diction, and syntax that stands out.
5. These elements are all part of your writing style. These are necessary for interesting reading. Otherwise, what you offer is no better than a dull reading of dry annual reports.

-Editor

About Us

The Woodlands Writers Guild is a group of writers who gather together to motivate each other to write something— anything. The main unifying theme is that we write— some of us to the point of living and breathing words and all things lexical.

Formally, from the 2009 elections, we have on the Board of Directors: President (Alberto Arcia), Vice President (Allan Liu), Secretary (Kevin Langley), Treasurer (Ray Fitzgerald), and Marketing Director (Belle Whittington). Informally, we have the Guild Elder (currently Frank Bayer; appointment made by the current President of any given term) and Newsletter Editor (Rebecca Harkins). The Guild Elder is chosen based on respect, accomplishment, and age (wisdom of the ages). Newsletter Editor is a committed volunteer position.

Changes are in the wind!! We kick off this new year with the Newsletter in full swing— name yet to be decided on. Elections have an exciting race for Marketing Director between two very talented ladies. 2011 elections will need President and Treasurer (who will be withdrawing from future elections), so we will be looking for suitable replacements. The Scholarship Committee should have something to tell us this year and new committees or sub-committees formed by the Board as needed. Please participate, we are here to help each other.

Monthly Writing Challenge

January & February Challenges

Back when I was quilting, we had monthly “challenges”- based on color themes, patterns, or a workshop. For the Woodlands Writers Guild, these challenges will be easier— like mini-contests: but simpler.

The idea is to take one page and write based on the challenge of the month.

Bring them and read them aloud!

-Editor

JANUARY

Based on Grammar in Drag, try to write one sentence for each of the 8 sentence patterns on page 3. Try pattern 9 if you feel particularly daring. Of course, you have to read the article first!

FEBRUARY

Take one character you are developing and put him/her/it into a completely out-of-character situation. Write one page. Example: Melissa Hance’s “Daddy’s Promise”- put the zombie husband in an English Tea Party setting. What would he do? Say? Think? Feel?



Book Review

Bob Dailey

Writing Naturally, a Down-To-Earth Guide to Nature Writing
by David Petersen

I gave up on “how to write” books years ago. That’s why, when I picked up David Petersen’s *Writing Naturally*, I was expecting another bout of literary indigestion.

In the past, I’ve spend beaucoup bucks on “writing” books, suffering literary indigestion caused by some pompous professor looking to pick up a few pesos for his or her post-retirement plan.

I was pleasantly surprised. David Petersen serves up an interesting and tasty feast, and I truly enjoyed the meal, to belabor the metaphor.

Of course, I picked up the book with more than a little cynicism. But a friend had recommended it and I’d paid more than the \$14.00 price for a lot less book in the past.

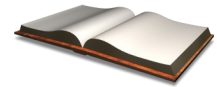
Petersen hooked me right away in his preface with a curious and somewhat humble statement: “While I could live without writing, I could not live without the things I write about.” I knew then I was in the right church and the right pew.

As soon as I finished reading the preface (and I must confess, I rarely finish reading a preface... I suppose that makes me anathema in many writers’ circles) I jumped immediately into the book.

Somewhere in the middle of the third chapter I discovered inked notes written along the margins of the page. What’s more, the writing was in my own crimped hand.

At some time during that first reading, I must have picked up a pen and began to write notes and observations. Now, I must say that I don’t usually write in books, except perhaps writing “ex Libras” and my name under it on the inside cover or flyleaf. Books are relics to me. All books. The gods gave us fire and civilization. The written word is, in my view, as important to our continued existence as a genus and species, as is fire. The archetype of “the word.”

So, I was a little concerned at first when I saw that I had been writing in a book.



Petersen’s book is filled with good and meaty quotes...

But chagrined as I was, I suddenly and happily realized that the author had “suspended” my cynicism and my base expectations. It was actually a freeing moment, and I actually felt comfortable enough to be collaborative.

The book is an absolute gem. David Petersen is not some sharpie, “how-to” writer, looking to make a book to sell to as many wannabe writers as he could possibly convince to do so. At least I don’t think he is. If he is a cunning scammer, then he fooled this old jaded eye. That’s not to say that we’re all totally noble, and there’s not a little of the sly fox in some, if not all, of us.

Instead, I found Petersen to be penetrating, observative, succinct and, as I mentioned previously, humble – all qualities I admire.

Petersen’s book is filled with good and meaty quotes: “the only worthwhile motivations for writing are not public recognition, not money, but having something worthwhile to say and a love of the process of saying it well.” Wow. He hit the ball out of the park with that one.

And then, a couple of paragraphs later, Petersen, both ball player and umpire here, calls us back into the game by saying: “...most problems of writer-self confidence – whether under or over – boil down to ego, the archenemy of creativity.”

A number of Petersen’s books are available. I am in the process of reading *The Nearby Faraway: A Personal Journey Through The Heart of The West* a nature narrative of life in the San Juan Mountains of southern Colorado.

Petersen has eight or nine books in print. Additionally he’s a freelance writer, and writes for nature, wildlife, hunting and fishing magazines. He’s also an editor and has compiled and edited the works of several well-known nature writers for publication. Petersen’s book is available from Amazon.

-B.D.



Bulletin Board

Guild Member Notes and Upcoming Events

Wanted:

Contributors ! E-mail the WWG (Subject: **ATTN Newsletter Editor**)
wwgtexas@yahoo.com

(WWG reserves the right to publish– and/or edit all material)

DEADLINE for March/April submissions: February 15, 2010

New Newsletter Title? We'll find out soon...

Meeting Dates:

January 6 6:30 PM at Borders

ELECTIONS!! See last page for more info

January 16 10 AM at Borders

February 3 6:30 PM at Borders

February 20 10 AM at Borders

Just Published:

Alberto Arcia's new book *Cut & Run The Misadventures of Alex Perez* is now on the shelves.

WWW.GLIMMERTRAINPRESS.COM

A good paying source for writing contests . A monthly contest for fiction with solid prize money. Entry fee is very reasonable.

IT'S A PARTY!!

The long awaited **exclusive** party on Lake Conroe is announced:

Band, booze, and buffet... Band supplied; BYOB (NO red wine) and bring a substantial appetizer. Questions? E-mail Jim Jones.

Entry: \$20 and 3-page eyebrow-raising essay. First 20 essays are guaranteed an entrance. Send to: Jim Jones (jwjones@bcm.tmc.edu) or Alberto Arcia (damneato@aol.com).

Jan 30 @ 7 PM 31 La Costa Drive, Del Lago subdivision.
Park on right side of the road.

Elections:

**VOTING ON WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 6, 2010.**

Slate:

President– Alberto Arcia

Vice President– Allan Liu

Secretary– Kevin Langley

Treasurer– Ray Fitzgerald

Marketing Director– choose:

1. Belle Whittington

2. Jennifer Blanchard

Absentee votes: email Alberto.

SEE BACK PAGE

DUES: \$20

Dues are due

January 2010

**Board Members: due
on Jan 6 before the
elections.**

Join The Woodlands Writers Guild ANNUAL DUES \$20.00

2010 Member Dues are \$20.00 and due by January 31, 2010. Board Members– pay before elections on Jan. 6 to be eligible for consideration. If you wish to vote, pay dues now.

Elections are being held Jan. 6 and paid members are eligible to vote.

The ballot slate is as follows:

President–	Alberto Arcia	unopposed
Vice President–	Allan Liu	unopposed
Secretary–	Kevin Langley	unopposed
Treasurer–	Ray Fitzgerald	unopposed
Marketing Director–		___one needed___
	O Belle Whittington	
	O Jennifer Blanchard	

Send \$20 dues payable to WWG and (e-mail your selection of officers to Alberto ONLY IF you will not be attending on Wednesday and still wish to vote):

The Woodlands Writers Guild, P.O. Box 132221, The Woodlands, TX 77393-2221

SEE LAST PAGE FOR MORE INFO

Where are the winners?
Contest winners will be noted in the March/April 2010 edition.

Editor's Corner

Ask the Editor

Dear Editor:

Why only a bi-monthly newsletter? Who can contribute?

Annie Writes-a-lot

Dear Annie:

The bi-monthly format is for the 2010 year. As needed, it will expand to a monthly newsletter. If I'm overwhelmed with submissions, I'll do an off-month "supplement"- that is, February Supplement, April Supplement, etc. If you want to contribute, email wwgtexas@yahoo.com.
-Editor

Dear Editor:

What if I don't like the format or name or colors of the newsletter?

Picky Parsons

Dear Picky:

Bring it up at the next meeting– I'd be happy to discuss it with everyone! -Editor

Editor's note: Newsletter title is still under discussion... it will be resolved by the next edition.

Ballot ELECTIONS HELD JANUARY 6:

Pay your dues and vote!!

President: ALBERTO ARCIA “If you feel the time, effort, and money you've spent attending the guild meetings was worthwhile in 2009, and if more of the same is what you want in 2010, then I'm your man.”

Vice President: ALLAN LIU “The Guild has long been a place where members can bring their writings for rigorous critiquing. As Vice President I will work to insure that this tradition will continue.”

Secretary: KEVIN LANGLEY “I will endeavor to wholeheartedly serve as secretary to the Guild for the upcoming year.”

Treasurer: RAY FITZGERALD “I have been treasurer for 2 years and would like to serve one more year. Before retiring, I was the Controller and Finance Director for three different companies. My campaign slogan “A pen or an extremely small “Chick-fil-a” sandwich in the pot of every member who votes for me.” ”

Marketing Director: BELLE WHITTINGTON “My goal is to improve our online social networking, which would include a new online Guild forum where we can log on and critique/discuss/share/meet/post items of interest. I hope to bring in a few of the English professors from Lone Star College System and to grow our Guild in a manner that will bring in a younger group of writers from the surrounding college campuses and communities. Thank you for your consideration and for the past wonderful year with you all!”

JENNIFER BLANCHARD “Jennifer Blanchard is a full-time marketing writer and a part-time blogger and fiction writer. In 2009, she successfully grew her blog, Procrastinating Writers, from 0 visits a month to 5,142 visits a month solely based on marketing, social media and adding value. Some of her ideas include taking the WWG into the social media space, starting a member-written blog and hosting writing events that will attract the Woodlands and Houston writing community at large.”

**Vote
Now**

**THE WOODLANDS
WRITERS GUILD
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2010 ELECTIONS**

**Please vote for your candidate
of choice.
Absentee votes— email Alberto.**

Robert's Rules of Order keeps everyone from falling into sheer anarchy. Thus, our Guild has By-laws which “prescribes how the society functions;...” For this purpose, the following pertains to elections:

Article IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 3. Election shall be by a simple majority of those members present and voting during the election.

Elections for the 2010 Board of Directors will be on January 6, 2010 at the regular meeting, 6:30 PM at Borders. Those unable to attend but wanting to vote must mail in their dues and e-mail Alberto Arcia (damneato@aol.com) ASAP. Those in attendance who joined in the middle of the year do not need to pay their dues until January 31— but will still be able to vote. Everyone is urged to send their dues in early so we can begin planning for this year's events.

-Editor