

# *The League Link*

## Idaho Writer's League

### Sandpoint Chapter Newsletter

Editor Sherry Ramsey  
January/February 2006

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#### **Thanks!**

A special thanks to Dianna Winget for sharing her teaching abilities. She has been a regular contributor for the Words of Wisdom Column for the past year, teaching us with examples and comparisons that help us to see her point. She has taught us how to write a query letter, the difference between active and passive verbs, and describing emotions. Her article in the Leagazette taught us to recognize Character Gawking and how to do away with it. Thank you also to Joanna Fuchs, who taught us how to create our own blog site.

Belonging to a writer's group is more than just critique, although that is a very important part of it. It's where we go to learn more about something from people who know more than we do. We each have our own specialty. Maybe Dianna knows more about query letters than any of us. Maybe Marylyn is the research guru, and Cassandra the critique queen. Or Harvey and Charlie have a vast knowledge about just about everything practical. Maybe Sherry and Pam know how to format and send things to publishers. Are Mary Buchanan and Heather our plot pro's? Are Jane and Mikki good with description? Setting? Linda, Joanna and Paul are of the few who can critique poetry when we decide to whip out a poem. Mary and Sandy Smith are our published romance experts. And Kathryn can write a limerick about anything.

With all this knowledge spread out amongst a group that is so willing to help each other, we should all be better writers for it. We are a group to be reckoned with and anyone would be proud to be a part of us.

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## Writer's Spotlight!

This spotlight will focus on Mikki Webster and Jane Roach. Read on to find out more about our fellow writer's.

### *Mikki Webster*

I'm from Spokane, various parts of California, Seattle, and finally Northern Idaho, with lots of warm winters in Nayarit, Mexico.

I started writing young and I've always loved books. They were my hideaway, adventures, mentors, and friends. Mostly I write to figure life out ("unh-huh, right"). Sometimes I jot down events and people that get me thinking, and anecdotes that enliven life.

If I would and could, I should write characters like Ma Baxter in 'The Yearling', or the family Madeline L'Engle created for 'A Wrinkle in Time'. The bravery of author Anne La Mott, early on, grabbed me.

With friends I started a writer's group in Seattle about 8 years ago. They continue to grow. After we moved to Priest River I joined the Sandpoint IWL. Their interesting meetings and lively cast of characters keep me returning, even though we now live near Coeur d'Alene, where I've recently joined. Both groups challenge me. Many members are seriously respecting their abilities by taking time to write, and submit, and they are getting published.

Will I be my own hero, and take up this challenge? Stay tuned.

### *Jane Roach*

In my career as a physical therapist, I've done grant writing, newsletters and published in clinical journals. I've always loved to write and still find myself in awe of a well turned phrase, the perfect sentence and the power of writing to describe, persuade, entertain and share. Now I am trying to do more creative writing. I'm working on non-fiction nature and travel experiences and a historical novel based on family history of homesteading in Alberta. Perhaps that will be the great American novel inside me or it may just be shared with family.

As a newcomer to North Idaho, I was eager to find writing colleagues. In the Idaho Writer's League I found those fellow writers plus the support and encouragement to finally put those thoughts and ideas down on paper. I look forward to the League meetings and workshops.

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## Christmas Party!

Our 2005 Christmas party was a huge success! I think everyone had a good time with lots of delicious food and fun games. We put together a Time Capsule to be read at our 2006 party. It had three questions answered by each member who participated and the ones who didn't make it sent in their answers by email. If yours didn't make it, email it to Sherry at [ramsey@supersat2.net](mailto:ramsey@supersat2.net) and I'll put it in the capsule. The questions were:

1. What goals do you realistically set for your writing by next year this time?
2. What writing goals do you have in your wildest fantasies by next year this time?
3. Do you have any advice to impart to future generations?

We also had a 'First Line Contest'. Each person wrote the first line to the greatest novel they could ever write. Keep in mind, the first sentence to an article or novel should put enough curiosity in the mind of the reader to make them want to read on and find out what the heck is going on. I think our first place winner accomplished that. See what you think. First place went to Cassandra Cridland with this chilling sentence:

*The stiletto slid easily from beneath the lace cuff of Tara's wedding gown, stepping quickly behind Jacob she slit his throat with a deft stroke while whispering, "I'll see you in hell."*

2<sup>nd</sup> place went to Pam Webb with this sentence packed with cliché's.  
*It was a dark and stormy night when I asked, "Where are you going with that axe, Papa?" and by his reply I knew it was the best of times and the worst of times."*

I think the funnest and most enlightening game we played was the 10 minute write. Now this wasn't your ordinary timed write with a topic tossed out for everyone. This write took Sandy and Sherry a lot of time and hysterical laughter to come up with! We wanted to make everyone write out of their element. Poets couldn't write poetry. Non-fiction writers had to write fiction etc. But more than that, we took a topic and put the writer in a situation and they had a specific assignment. Below are a couple of examples.

Western: You're the town doctor and run your business out of a room in

your house. Frank & Jesse James just barged in. Frank's been gut shot and Jesse tells you you'd better fix his brother...or else. Let's have dialogue and the gory details of the wound.

Memoir: You are one of the most famous women of all time. You've rafted class 5 rapids, skydived, and scuba dived with great white sharks. You've scaled the tallest mountains and met the most amazing people. Let's hear your fascinating memoir.

Marketing: You have been hired by a huge company to write a radio commercial convincing the public to buy their pickled pigs feet. Be resourceful & persuasive.

Everyone was assigned a different topic, and when the votes were tallied, almost everyone voted for Charlie Glock for first place. His topic was the western doctor with Frank and Jesse James. Let me tell you, we saw a side of Charlie's writing that we'd never seen before. He was phenomenal! The man is a natural and puts Louis L'Amour to shame!

Second Place went to Harvey Pine who had the marketing topic, by writing a radio commercial to convince people to buy pickled pigs feet. Harvey was sensational! By the time he was done, half of us were tempted to replace the ham or goose for our Christmas dinners with pickled pigs feet!

Cassandra Cridland took 3<sup>rd</sup> place with her memoir. She had everyone rolling with laughter as she rattled on about her adventures white water rafting with Teddy Roosevelt, rock climbing the steep cliffs of Petra with Harrison Ford, and swimming with great white sharks with her good friend, Jimmy Stewart!

Sandy and Sherry want to thank everyone who participated and made it such a fun morning.

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Thanks to Delores Courtney for coming to the aid of one of our members, with a typewriter. It means a great deal to all of us when someone steps in to help another.

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Tip: If you use your printer strictly for writing and not pictures, you probably go through black ink cartridges and wear out your printer before you go through a color cartridge. If I'm working on a draft, not my final copy, I set my color to Midnight Blue or Dark Green. I can see it just as easily and

save my black ink for the important stuff. Also, to make my ink cartridges last, after clicking on 'print' a window comes up. Click on 'properties' or 'preferences.' It will show 'Best, Better, Normal, Fast Draft.' If you are working on a draft, click fast draft and you'll use half as much ink as usual. If you use these ink saving tips, you'll notice your expensive ink cartridges will last twice as long!

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### **Inauguration party!**

Our inauguration party brought out quite a crowd. We had sixteen people show up and filled the rooms nicely. There were munchies and drinks for everyone to enjoy and there was the potential there for several new members.

Awards were given to the prize winners of our fair contest, and to Sherry Ramsey who was leaving office. Bill Stevens of the Veterans of Foreign War, handed out awards to the judges of the Patriots Pen Contest: Mary Buchanan, Cassandra Cridland, Harvey Pine, and Sherry Ramsey.

We also had a writing contest based on new beginnings. Harvey Pine took 1<sup>st</sup> place and Sherry Ramsey took 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

A special thanks to Cassandra for making the awards and gifts and to Harvey for planning the party.

We welcomed our new board: Harvey Pine as returning president, Linda Rubin is the returning vice president, Jane Roach is the new secretary, Marylyn Cork is our new treasurer and Cassandra Cridland is our returning past president. Thank you all for your service to our group.

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### **President's message**

2005 was a great year for our club. We can be proud of our many accomplishments. As a group we added to the literary world with a number of publications. We contributed to the community with our participation in the County Fair and had a great response to our annual 5 Minute write contest. We were responsible for finding independent judges for the State Wide Contest and I am impressed with the quality of judges we provided. We sponsored a writing contest open to the public and we were rewarded

with a new member who chose to join our group rather than take the cash prize.

Our club put on a first rate work shop which was educational and entertaining. We were acknowledged for our efforts for judging the grade school patriotic contest sponsored by the local Veterans of Foreign War, and we can be proud of the efforts put forth by the judging committee.

We started the year with a successful installation party in January and ended with a great holiday party in December. Hopefully 2006 will be even more productive. Although we are always looking for new members who enjoy the thrill of writing, our number seem to be ideal for the personal interaction of providing critiques and feed back needed to improve our individual writing efforts. Let's continue to be "write on" as we make the "write turns."

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### **State IWL Contest**

The State IWL contest has begun! As of February 1, you can start entering the contests' many categories. And there's plenty of time since you have until July 1<sup>st</sup> to enter. Go online to [www.idahowritersleague.com](http://www.idahowritersleague.com) to find out the rules. They will also be available in the Leagazette soon.

We are an impressive group of writers. The things we accomplished this year completely floored the other chapters. Did you notice that our chapter news was featured on the front page of the Leagazette because of our triumph from extinction to publication? They are as proud of our little group as we are.

Let's all enter at least one category of the state contest. I want everyone to see a group that goes for it when a challenge is set before them. You have plenty of time. Pick a category or more. Write the best you can write and send it in. You may be surprised with an award and a check for your efforts.

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### **Writer of the Year**

Did you know that we have a Writer of the Year award at the state conference each year? It's true, and there is no reason that someone from our chapter can't win that award. We are really good writers and getting

better all the time.

Anyone who was published in the year 2005 and would like to be considered for the Writer of the Year Award, let me know. Our group has to nominate the members and put together a packet of published clips which include the date and masthead of the publication. This award would look pretty darned good on any one of our résumés and we shouldn't feel embarrassed about asking for it.

We can nominate as many members as we want, so if you'd like to be considered, get together your clips with mastheads from 2005 and put together a bio. Cassandra and Sherry will be filling out the nomination applications and yes we are filling one out for each other! We'd love to fill one out for you, so let us know. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. Let's make sure this years Writer of the Year is from the mighty Sandpoint group.

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### 2006 Editor's Challenge!

To encourage members to participate and help out in the group, to write and submit, and to enter contests, I want to start a points system of reward for this years Editor's Challenge. Last years challenge winner was Dianna Winget who chose a 2006 Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market. I'm still thinking on the prize for the most points earned in the 2006 Challenge. Everyone has a shot to win. You don't have to be published to earn points. Look below and you will see how many chances you have to earn points. I will start adding up points as of January 1, 2006 and in each issue, I'll list each members status so you can see where you rank in points. Good luck!

Member IWL	5
Member any other writer groups--each	2
President	10
Vice President	10
Secretary	10
Treasurer	10
Past President	5
Historian	10
Publicity	10
Newsletter	10
Serve on state board	5

Workshop committee	5
Party or awards committee	5
Fair booth committee	10
Fair booth	5
Contest reciever	5
Contest judge	5
Submit something	5 pts first time
article submitted and	
2 pts when resubmitted elsewhere.	
Published no-pay	2
Published w/pay	5
Enter contest	5
Place 2nd or 3rd in contest	5
Place 1 <sup>st</sup> in contest	10
Book self-published	5
Book traditionally published	10
Distribute flyers	2
Publish in different publication than previous	2
Classes, workshops, conferences	5
Bring in a new member	5
Attend Sandpoint IWL meetings	5

Please keep track of your submissions and publications and anything you do that will raise your points. You can email them to me or give them to me at the meetings. Otherwise I will find it impossible to keep track. I have everyone in my computer and the points that I know of listed there. Be sure to state what your points are for.

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### **Cda Workshop**

Don't forget the Mary Buckham Workshop February 17, 18 and 19. The woman knows her business and recently helped my query letter. I had sent my query for *The Secret of Baker's Woods* out 21 times. I received 21 rejections. I could have the most amazing kids novel of all time and no one will ever know if they can't get past my lousy query letter. Just because you can write a book, doesn't mean an editor will ever ask to look at it if your query isn't up to snuff.

I paid \$20 to have Mary help me with my query and synopsis. I sent her what I had and the next morning she emailed it back to me with her thoughts for changes. I made the changes and sent it to 5 agents the next morning by email. I had two rejections before bedtime but the next morning I received a reply from Alison Picard Literary that she would like to see the first chapter. It was the first time anyone asked to see any part of my manuscript and I was--glad no one was taping my reaction through the window!

I sent the first chapter via email and received a rejection a few hours later. But I wasn't upset. At least she had asked for a sample, that was further than I'd ever gotten before.

I had sent the Wylie-Merrick Agency my query and 10 pages. He wrote back and asked if I would be willing to add 4,000 words because it was a little too short for him. I wrote back and told him I'd be happy to. He then asked for the first 3 chapters to see if he really liked it first. Then he'll let me know if I should add on. Even then, it only means he'll read the whole manuscript, but I don't mind.

I had 2 nibbles on my hook the day after Mary Buckham helped me with my query and synopsis. After 21 rejections, I'd say she knows what she's doing. If you can make it to the workshop, I highly recommend it.

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## **Words of Wisdom**

### **Meandering With the Muse or (Creatively Wasting Time)**

By Dianna Winget

The next time you're floundering in between projects, looking for a creative jumpstart, or just feel like having a little fun, consider one or more of the following writing prompts, borrowed from Writer's Digest.

Finish the following sentence as someone ten years younger/older than you: The only thing I ever wanted was ... .

Merriam-Webster just released its list of top searched words of 2005: integrity, refugee, contempt, filibuster, insipid, tsunami, pandemic, conclave, levee and inept. Use all ten in a poem or story.

While unpacking at your new apartment, you find a box left behind in the corner of a closet. What's in it?

Remember the Vogon poetry reading scene from Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy? (No? That's okay.) Have a go at writing the worst poem in the universe.

You can't wait for your class reunion so you can tell all your school chums about what?

You're unhappy with the politics in D.C. and decide to secede from the union and form your own country. Name and describe this country. Write your country's constitution or bill of rights.

Write an intriguing first line for a romance novel. Repeat the exercise, writing first lines for a mystery, horror, western, and suspense story.

Pick an object in your living room and list the five most obvious words you'd need to describe it. Then write a vivid description of the object without using any of the five words.

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### **Write Fast, Don't Think**

I've heard it said many times to shut off your internal editor when you write. That the important thing is to get your thoughts out of your head and get the words down on paper. There will be plenty of time to edit when you have all the facts and information there in front of you, in black and white. Here's a quote from fantasy writer, Diana Pharaoh Francis:

*Have no standards, and write faster than your editorial demons can chase you. Just get the words on the page.*

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*Write On!*