



Writing Pursuits

Newsletter of the Twin Falls Chapter, Idaho Writers' League • January 2006

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Upcoming Events

January 21, 2006

Regular Meeting

12 noon
Idaho Joe's

Book Review of *78 Reasons Why Your Book May Never Be Published and 14 Reasons Why it Just Might*

Pat Walsh

New York: Penguin (Non-Classics) paperback, 2005

ISBN: 0143035657

224 pages

By Bonnie Dodge

With a great deal of humor and brutal honesty, in his book, *78 Reasons Why Your Book May Never Be Published and 14 Reasons Why it Just Might*, Pat Walsh gives sage advice to aspiring authors. An editor for MacAdam/Cage, as well as a writer, Walsh knows what it takes to make a good, saleable book. Some of what he says is repetition; we've heard it before, but perhaps never with such force and honesty.

The book is divided into nine parts, each part focusing on an aspect of publishing a book. In Part One, Walsh points out the number one reason your book will never be published is simply because you haven't written it. He reminds us that talk is cheap. Talking about the book you're going to write isn't the same as writing the book and publishers can't sell a book that hasn't been written.

In Part Two, Walsh lists the cold hard facts: your book isn't good enough, you're unwilling to revise, you have an over-inflated ego, you won't listen to advice, you don't care about language, you can't tell a story, you preach rather than entertain and you don't know your audience. In this section, Walsh claims copycats and authors with poor grammar and vocabulary are less likely to sell because many of the manuscripts publishers receive every day are written so much better. He says you may have a brilliant and intriguing idea for a story, but if your story is badly written, your chances of selling it are nil. Gone are the days when an editor took you by the hand and groomed you to become a professional writer; there is simply not enough time. From the thousands of submissions MacAdam/Cage receives regularly, less than 1 percent are eventually published.

Parts Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight of the book explain the publishing game: following bad advice, what happens in the slush pile, how to find the right agent, how to work with editors and how, as authors, we create our own bad luck.

Review, continued on back page

November minutes

Pres. Sherri George conducted the meeting. Members present: Bill Strange, Carol Spelius, Jack Lintelmann, Carol Hunt, Win Mobley, Jay Goemmer, Sherri George, Marilyn Aggeler, Vaughn Phelps, Linda Helms, Lisa Cresswell, Forrest Lampe, guest Loy Ann Bell. Art Selin, momentarily.

Minutes from October meeting were approved as written in the *Writing Pursuits*.

Treasurer Report: Income: (dues) \$275, (interest) \$1.54. Expense: (state dues) \$165, (Cindy—stamps) \$37. Bank balance: \$2,635.67.

Publications: Letters to the editor: Forrest, Bill, and Herman.

Announcements: Linda received a phone call from Fran in Mt. Home wanting to know how to join IWL and enter contests. She was given Nancy's phone number. Fran called back to say Mt. Home chapter had disbanded. Linda suggested Fran join our chapter and could send manuscripts via email or snail mail for critique. Linda then called Nancy who confirmed the demise of Mt. Home chapter. She was also invited to join our chapter. Some people in Inkom requested information to begin a chapter. Discussion followed regarding formation of new chapters.

Loy Ann announced Sisters in Crime, Boise, will have a conference in June 2006. Ridley Pearson will speak. *IDAHO* magazine announced it's third annual Fiction Writing Contest. Entry deadline: January 31, 2006. Submissions have to be unpublished and have an Idaho setting, theme, or an Idaho character as a central element of the story. Word limit 500 to 2500. Cover letter with name, contact information, category and title. Adult entry \$10, additional entry \$5. Youth (under age 18) \$5. Full rules www.idahomagazine.com or 1-800-655-0653. Send entries to Attn: Fiction Contest; *IDAHO* magazine; 1412 West Idaho, Suite 240; Boise, ID 83702. Jack won in 2004, Sherri won in 2005, and we need another TF Chapter winner in 2006.

Health Report: Rex is still under the weather. Lavonne has not been able to attend due to health issues. Linda will obtain cards for members to sign at the December meeting.

Critique group: This is in addition to our regular meetings. Links Apartments Common Room, 1285 South Lincoln, Jerome. Bill reported four people attended. This is an informal critique meeting. Every-

one is welcome to bring a few copies of a manuscript. Next critique group meeting will be 7 p.m. December 5, and interested persons will be notified by email or telephone.

Old Business: By-Law changes/additions: these were updated and will be voted on in January.

Election: 2006 Officers: Pres: Sherri George. Vice Pres: Carol Hunt. Sec-Trees: Linda Helms. Writing Pursuits: Cindy Snyder.

New Business: Suggestion was made for a writing workshop in the Spring 2006 open to the entire community, not just IWL members. This is in addition to a regular meeting. Suggested speakers include Ken Rand and some of our local members. Question raised: what genre are we writing? Need workshops on each genre represented. Discussion held regarding last workshop. Suggestion was to have the workshop sometime in the summer.

Question: Why do some people use pen names? Answer: Some writers want to change genres, or to not let readers know their gender or home address or they might offend someone.

2006 writing contests were discussed. Sherri will distribute the contest entry category list at the January meeting.

2006 Conference: September 28, 29, 30. There is a change in location to the Owyhee Plaza, downtown Boise. The conference web site will have information with directions to the hotel and other pertinent information. Speakers include Pat Marcantonio and Sherri George.

Program: Sherri discussed the Carolyn Campbell magazine writing workshop from the 2005 conference. Some topics discussed were there are as many magazines as there are topics. Freelancing is a market of ideas. Choose a story that no one else has written. One story may be changed slightly to be used in several different magazines. Articles are sold on "spec" or idea. Have the idea in mind, write to an appropriate magazine about the idea, and hopefully the editor will want you to write the article. Ideas come from conflict, issues, people, and information that we think is valuable. Write in one sentence what the article will prove. Article length usually is 500 to 3000 words, depending on market. Query letter includes: use the first paragraph of the article as the first paragraph of the letter. Include as many elements

of the article in the letter. Tell why your topic is obscure and needs attention and why you are the person to write the article. Ask the editor: "If you would send me the approximate word length or deadline, I would begin this feature immediately."

Include tear sheets or clips from your other publications. Writers Market has a list of many magazines. Choose your category: informational, How-To, profile of single person or group, personal story with an emotional edge, inspirational, humorous, travel, historical, investigative.

Next meeting: December 17, noon. Christmas Party—Common Room (near the Office) at Links Apartments, 1285 South Lincoln, Jerome. From Interstate 84 Exit 167 south of Jerome near Wal-Mart, drive north approximately two miles until just past Farmers National Bank and Farnsworth Mortuary. (Across the street from B&R Bearing and Pizza Hut) Bring finger-foods for potluck. Gift exchange is \$10 limit, writing related, with a cryptic note attached to guess what is inside. For more information, call Bill 324-3293. No formal business will be conducted.

January 21, 2006 meeting: critiques, acceptance of revised by-laws

*Respectfully submitted,
Linda Helms, Sec/Treas.*

Role of the author during a critique

By Linda Helms

During the critique, the author is not to say anything such as "I meant to say _____", or "that sentence means _____," or "this is a true story" or similar items. Listen closely and take notes on the information given. When a book is sold in the store, the author is not standing there with each customer, saying, "This paragraph really means _____".

Before the story is given to be critiqued, read it out loud at home, wait a few days after writing, then read it out loud again from the perspective that you did not write it, but you are the reader. Are all the meanings clear? Are all the descriptions accurate? Can you picture what is happening as if you were watching a movie? Be sure the grammar and punctuation are accurate. The adage, "show not tell," is important to remember by all authors.

Inflections in the spoken voice need to be transferred to the written page, unless you are making a tape or CD that will be heard. Have another person look at the story, not just family who may say it is great, but someone who will give positive criticism.

Did you know....

Penguin Books was born 70 years ago last July to produce inexpensive, paperbound books. In America, Pocket Books followed suite in 1939. Before then, there were very few bookstores in America and many Americans didn't own a book other than the Bible. But the mass-market paperback, sold in drugstores and newsstands (where books never had been carried), made America a nation of readers like never before.

True or false:

1. When introduced to American by Pocket books, all paperbacks cost a quarter.

2. Pocket Book No. 1 was James Hilton's novel of Shangri-La, *Lost Horizon*.

3. During World War II, U/S. soldiers received millions of free paperbacks.

4. The best-selling paperback of all time is *Gone With the Wind*.

1. True. Legend has it that the publisher decided on that price when he threw a quarter into a toll machine.
2. True and False. A market test had been done with Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth*, but Hilton's book was officially Pocket Book No. 1 in an initial list of 10 books.
3. True. Known as the Armed Services Editions, these free books were distributed to GIs through the war years. Their motto was "Books Are Weapons in the War of Ideas."
4. False. Benjamin Spock's *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, first published in 1946, is generally considered the all-time sales leader.
Compiled by Kenneth C. Davis, author of *Don't Know Much About History*.

Answers:

Review, continued from front page

After all this doom and gloom, Walsh lists in Part Nine of 78 Reasons . . . 14 reasons why your book might sell. Walsh suggests that by writing a great book, knowing the writing business, making the most of your writing time, being flexible, learning from rejection, taking your writing career seriously and making your own luck, you just might get your book published. He reminds us that even though we may view our book as art, the publishing world views our book as a product. The final question is, is your book good enough to generate sales.

Walsh also reminds us there is still a demand for good books and that getting your book published isn't impossible, it just takes a lot of hard work. Unless you are willing to do that work, you're better off finding another profession.

As a serious writer for ten years, I've read several "how to" books on writing and publishing. Many of

the things Walsh had to say I had heard before. I appreciated his frank, professional and straightforward manner and recommend this book to anyone who spends hours in front of a blank screen, wondering if he or she has what it takes to be a professional writer. This book will help you answer that question and other questions you may have about the book publishing business.

2006 themes, titles

Assigned titles:

A Cloud of Dust.

A Handful of Stars.

Themes:

Nostalgia

Revenge

The deadline is July 1.

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