



Writing Pursuits

Newsletter of the Twin Falls Chapter, Idaho Writers' League • March 2005

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Upcoming Events

March 19, 2005
Regular Meeting
12 noon
Idaho Joe's

2005 IWL Conference
Sept. 22-24
Pocatello, ID

February meeting minutes

Pres. Jay Goemmer opened the meeting at 12:02. Members present: Roslyn Kinley, Jay Goemmer, Bill Strange, Carol Spelius, Win Mobley, Marilyn Aggeler, Jack Lintelmann, Vaughn Phelps, Sherri George, and Linda Helms. Guests: Cheryl Hart, Armin Sutterlin (Herman Neuman), and Papa Russ (Russell Bowles). Each person told what he or she was interested in writing. Linda distributed copies of January 2005 Leagazette and IWL writing contest information.

Prior to the meeting, Bill and Linda audited the treasurer's account and found a very small discrepancy, \$11.44, which stemmed from the treasurer before last.

Checkbook will be adjusted for this and Bill made some recommendations on the bookkeeping process for the coming year. He will have a written report at the next meeting to be placed in the treasurer's account book.

Linda reported receipt of dues from one new member, Helen Smith, and the state dues sent. Two checks were written in January for the speaker's lunch and for the treasurer's reimbursement of office supplies and stamps.

Linda stated she is keeping a notebook of incidental expenses such

as stamps from her personal account for sending the dues to the state fund.

Our balance on February 19, 2005 is \$2531.97. This is from a phone call to the bank's automatic checking system. The only item not back to the bank is the \$15 check to the state for dues. Motion made and passed to accept the audit and the treasurer's report.

Announcements:

2005 IWL conference in Pocatello: not much information yet except the date: September 22-24. Linda will keep in contact with Pocatello and the state officers. Bill noted a report in the February issue of National Geographic about the brain and hypergraphia—an irrepressible compulsion to write.

Linda, Roslyn, and Marilyn are attending a four-week journaling workshop at CSI. Win circulated a list of contests. Juniper Creek Writers, Carson City Nevada is holding a writing contest. Deadline June 1, 2005. Entry fee: \$15 for 3 poems or one short story, word limit 3000. Prizes: First--\$500, plus publication; Second--\$250, plus publication; Third—free Juniper Creek writers conference, value \$200, plus possible publication. Juniper Creek Publishing, PO Box 2205, Carson City, NV

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89702. For more information
www.junipercreekpubs.com/events

Publications:

Russ: one of his poems will be set to music. Little, Brown, and Company, NYC and a place in Cleveland, Ohio, requested poems, "Papa Russ's voice and style is unusual and that may be a draw." Jack has received a check from Backwoods Home magazine for his coyote story, but they did not say when it would be published.

Discussion—some publishers they pay on acceptance, others pay on publication. Perhaps one could say, "I sold my story." Check for your rights on publication. Roslyn's chicken coop story was published by Women's Shoe Internet publishing.

Writing Pursuits:

Jay explained the newsletter for benefit of the guests. Jack's October slot is up for auction, but Jay won't let him off the hook. Win in November, and Bill in December.

Linda donated three reams of paper to whoever wished. She gets these free when taking ink cartridges back to Office Max.

Questions:

1) Could we do a book review at one of our meetings? Discussion was if it pertained to the craft of writing, it should be done in the Pursuits, unless it is a scheduled program at one of our meetings. We should refrain from being a general book discussion group.

2) Could we have some information on manuscript formatting? This would be helpful for the upcoming writing contests, considering the article by Sherri George in the *Leagazette* and comments at this meeting during critiques.

Program:

Items by Russ, Linda, Bill, Roslyn, Jack, Carol, and Vaughn were critiqued.

Next meeting: March 19, 2005, Idaho Joe's Restaurant. Cindy Snyder will present a writing exercise from the 2004 Idaho Writers League Conference.

*Respectfully submitted,
Linda Helms, Secretary*

Volunteers needed!

Volunteers are needed to serve on a Idaho Writers League Nomination Committee. Because the current officer slate's term of office expires at the end of the year, it is time to find a new slate of officers. These officers are not eligible for another term in their current positions.

If you're interested in serving on the nomination committee, please contact:

Brian Cornett, IWL president
795 S. Shilling
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IWL 2005 Contest

The **assigned titles** for the 2005 IWL contest are:

- "Off the Top of My Head, From the Bottom of My Heart"
- "It Will Never Happen Again"

The **assigned themes** are:

- "Writing: The Poetry of Life"
- "Epiphany"

The contest runs through June 2005. More details can be found at the IWL website.

Newsletter submission calendar

Here's the 2005 submission calendar, a few months are still open. If you'd like to volunteer for one of those months, contact Cindy.

April — Linda Helms
May — Rex Rathbun
June — Jay Goemmer
September — Carol Hunt
October — Jack Lintelmann
November — Win Mobley
December — Bill Strange

What's the purpose of literature?

By Cindy Snyder

I recently lead a discussion on Azar Nafisi's memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Many of the questions raised by this book centered around literature—what makes one novel a classic even if the characters are morally corrupt while another novel with “good” characters and “good” morals is forgotten on the bookshelf of time.

They were valid questions that not only I, but Azar Nafisi tries to tackle. If you haven't heard of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, here's a brief synopsis courtesy of the *Middle East Forum*:

"We all have dreams—things we fantasize about doing and generally never get around to. This is the story of Azar Nafisi's dream and of the nightmare that made it come true.

For two years before she left Iran in 1997, Nafisi gathered seven young women at her house every Thursday morning to read and discuss forbidden works of Western literature. They were all former students whom she had taught at university. Some came from conservative and religious families, others were progressive and secular; several had spent time in jail. They were shy and uncomfortable at first, unaccustomed to being asked to speak their minds, but soon they began to open up and to speak more freely, not only about the novels they were reading but also about themselves, their dreams and disappointments. Their stories intertwined with those they were reading—*Pride and Prejudice*, *Washington Square*, *Daisy Miller* and *Lolita*—their *Lolita*, as they imagined her in Tehran.

Nafisi's account flashes back to the early days of the revolution, when she first started teaching at the University of Tehran amid the swirl of protests and demonstrations. In those frenetic days, the students took control of the university, expelled faculty members and purged the curriculum. When a radical Islamist in Nafisi's class questioned her decision to teach *The Great Gatsby*, which he saw as an immoral work that preached falsehoods of "the Great Satan," she decided to let him put *Gatsby* on trial and stood as the sole witness for the defense."

During the discussion in Buhl, I pointed out that one reason literature gets to be "classic" is that it transcends time. You wouldn't think that Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* would have much in common with the Iranian revolution but Nafisi says, "What we in Iran had in common with Fitzgerald was this dream that became our obsession and took over our reality, this terrible, beautiful dream, impossible in its actualization, for which any amount of violence might be justified or forgiven."

Later she quotes a German philosopher about what makes literature great when she explains to her students that most great works of imagination were meant to make you feel like a stranger in your own home. "The best fiction always forced us question what we took for granted" she tells her students.

Early in the memoir (for that's about the best description for this book which is also part literary criticism and part history) she gives us, the readers, the same warning she has given her students: "Do not, under any circumstances, belittle a work of fiction by trying to turn it into a carbon copy of real life; what we search for in fiction is not so much reality but the epiphany of truth."

And when the students put *The Great Gatsby* on trial, she reminds them: "A novel is not an allegory...It is the sensual experience of another world. If you don't enter that world, hold your breath with the characters and become involved in their destiny, you won't be able to empathize, and empathy is at the heart of the novel. This is how you read a novel: you inhale the experience."

That's something we should keep in mind while we write as well as when we read.

She ends with this. "I have a recurring fantasy that one more article has been added to the Bill of Rights: the right to free access to imagination. I have come to believe that genuine democracy cannot exist without the freedom to imagine and the right to use imaginative works without any restrictions."

Gather Ye Ducks

By Marilyn Aggeler

Gloria Steinem, former editor of MS Magazine wrote:

“Writers are notorious for using any reason to keep from working; over researching, retyping, going to meetings, waxing the floors — anything.”

Procrastinating is one of the worst habits I have. What I plan today can be skipped until tomorrow; and what the heck, the next day too!

So, I ask myself, what should I do if I consider being a serious writer. Why do I want to write? I have experienced many things in my lifetime and wish to share them; plus I have a vivid imagina-

tion which enables me to create fictional stories. Now, what will it take to get me organized and started:

- Begin with getting my stuff together—tools: pencils, paper and set up program on computer (if that is your writer’s tool). Find a special special peaceful place where you can concentrate without interruptions. It’s nice to have access to an area that not only is quiet but roomy enough to have text books and other materials—a desk that is needed to spread your work on.

- Pick a time for writing on a daily basis if at all possible. Once you form a ritual of this schedule

it becomes a habit. Use a journal when you’re away from home. Things will pop up unexpectedly that come into mind when you are away from your daily ritual. It’s useful to jot down creative ideas and phrases, or whatever thoughts come to mind. It helps to share these thoughts into a language to use in a story. Keep a camera handy. “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

As I write these tips I recall reading, “this is where you write. This is when you write. This is what you write.”

So, now is the time to “Gather Ye Ducks” all in a row and get started.

Writing Pursuits

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