



Writing Pursuits



Newsletter of the Twin Falls Chapter, Idaho Writers' League • March 2007

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NEXT MEETING

**March 17, Noon at
Peking Restaurant --
NOTE VENUE CHANGE.**
The Peking is located 824
Blue Lakes North (behind
Wendy's and in the same
shopping center at
Hastings, near the corner
of Falls and Blue Lakes.

So you're going to enter a contest...

by Loy Ann Bell

Here is a valuable checklist for the upcoming short story contests:

1. Is there an opening hook that grabs the reader? Does it surprise/amuse/intrigue? Does it establish the mood of the story?

2. Are the characters interesting to read about? Are their interactions with each other believable? Are they properly motivated? Do they each have flaws as well as virtues? (Or vice versa in horror stories.)

3. Does each character have his or her own voice? Is dialogue flowing and natural, not stilted? Does the dialogue move the story along?

4. Are secondary characters, if any, vivid without overwhelming the main characters? Do they serve a useful purpose in the plot? Do they add interesting elements to the story?

5. Does the narrative show action, not just tell about it? Do descriptive passages evoke vivid mental images? Is the balance between narrative and dialogue appropriate for this work?

6. Is the emotional situation and/or appropriate level of tension set up between the characters? Is the conflict clearly presented?

7. Is the story paced so it holds the reader's attention? Are transitions smooth? (Does the action proceed logically?) Are flashback scenes and background information worked into the plot appropriately for fiction of this length?

8. Are facts, figures, locales, believable and/or correct? Are the language, actions, and attire of the characters appropriate for the time period and setting of the story?

9. Is the writing fresh, free of clichés? Does it show the author's own unique style? Are viewpoint changes clear and well handled?

10. Is the grammar correct? Is the spelling accurate? Is the manuscript professionally prepared?

11. Reveal your characters primarily through their actions, not by telling your reader about them. Keep in mind that good fiction reveals rather than explains. Your goal in each piece of fiction is to provide your reader with actual experience, not merely with concepts and outlines of events.

Checklist, continued on page 3

February minutes

Pres. Sherri George conducted the February 17 meeting. Present: Sherri George, Carol Spelius, Ronna Horst, Grace Lesneski, Vaughn Phelps, Jack Lintelmann, Bill Strange, Loyd Bakewell, Loy Ann Bell, Marilyn Aggeler, Carol Hunt, Barbara Knudson, Art Selin, Wes Scantlin, Linda Helms.

Minutes from January meeting was approved as written in the *Writing Pursuits*.

Treasurer Report: Today's bank balance \$1956.48. We paid Cindy \$39 for postage for the *Pursuits*. One person paid dues and the appropriate IWL state dues were sent. Carol Hunt reported the audit was appropriate and in order.

Critique meeting: Bill reported it was the "best one we've had" with a total of 11 persons. Everyone had something to be critiqued. It was held at the Club House at 1605 Grandview Dr. North, Twin Falls, at the Countryside Estates subdivision, just south of the Reformed Church. Loyd provided refreshments. The next meeting is 10 a.m. March 3 at the same location. This has been scheduled for the first Saturday of each month. Call Bill for information: 944-0060.

Publications: Letters to the editor of *Times News*: Bill, Wes, Vaughn, Vic, Forrest, Jack, and Win. The *Times News* decided the best letters of 2006; one of these was Art's letter about the alien takeover over the Blue Lakes Boulevard. Linda's historical society newsletter article about Jerome's first bank was printed (without permission) in the *Times News*. She discussed that with TN and they printed it again with appropriate attribution. There will be several articles throughout the year for Jerome's centennial.

Announcements: IDAHO magazine Fiction contest is closed. The Non-Fiction contest is for IWL members only: 2500 word limit, deadline August 1, 2007. \$10 entry fee for first entry, \$5 for second entry. There are also a recipe contest and a photo contest for magazine cover. Linda distributed copies of the writing guidelines for IDAHO magazine. They are available on line at IDAHOMagazine.com

Bill and Loyd did not receive their Leagazette issues. Sherri will check with David.

March 21: Herrett Center—Windmills for power generation in Southern Idaho. Twin Falls Public Library: noon brown bag lecture series—February 23 Arthur Hart: Our architectural heritage. April 27: History of Twin Falls Canal Company. May 25: Minidoka Japanese American Internment Camp.

Old Business: State IWL Delegates: Win was not able to attend today. Bill has not received items since David has the old email address. Discussion to delegates about the way the judges are selected and paid. Sherri is the contest receiver and we are using Linda's PO Box 303, Jerome. Contest postmark dates: February 1 through July 2., 2007. We all need to help find four or five judges. Judges cannot be an IWL member or immediate family relative of an IWL member. The judge should have some knowledge of story structure, English language, and knowledge of writing and critique. We need to have the judges by July 2. The judges are given an honorarium.

Screen writing workshop: Sherri has not been able to contact Michael Flare, screenwriter. Pat would give one hour, but not do the entire day. It was suggested that Vaughn do the screen writing. He suggested that it not be for the general public. More discussion will be held later whether we have the workshop or not. Perhaps we would have a speaker for one of our meetings instead of a workshop. Barbara has some contact with Michael and will try to contact him.

Discussion: Loy Ann discussed a writing Internet site: <http://www.Inspired2write.com> This is free. Many good writing articles, including common writing mistakes, finding your voice, shaping up short stories, etc. Sherri showed a book on writing description: *A Guide to Writing More Descriptively*. The public library has many good writing books. *The Plot Thickens*, *Eight Ways to Bring Fiction to Life*, *The First Five Pages*, *Writing Creative Non-Fiction*, *Complete Idiot's Guide to Screen Writing*.

Vaughn discussed CSI Internet writing classes.

We discussed people in Magic Valley who make a living writing. Not very many write as their sole income.

Program: Wes Scantlin discussed how he published his Civil War novel, *Cry For Dixie*, which is in the second printing. He is finishing his second book, *The Last Choctaw*. He now has an agent. When he finished his manuscript, it was professionally critiqued and published by Publish America. His discussion notes are available through the Internet. Some questions he had to ask himself are How seriously do you take your writing? Are you willing to take criticism? Write a synopsis. Don't put a copyright symbol on the manuscript, than shows amateurism. Give a word count and a market for the item: audience, age, gender, etc. Describe the main character and supporting characters. Describe your background and bio and publishing credits. Are you willing to spend time on your project? Use good paper, #24 ultra white or better. No typos or corrections. Use regular manuscript format.

Next meeting: March 17, noon to 2 p.m. at the Peking Chinese Restaurant (824 Blue Lakes North (behind Wendy's and in the same shopping center at Hastings, near the corner of Falls and Blue Lakes).

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

Critique group meets April 7

By Bill Strange

The March 3 critique meeting turned out well. Seven people attended, that's about half the number that attended the previous meeting. Our next meeting will be on April 7, the place will be announced later. If you have manuscripts that you would like to have critiqued at our next critique meeting please present 5 or 6 copies ready at this coming regular business meeting. I'm in hopes that by having manuscripts in hand ahead of time we will be able to spend more time discussing them and less time having to read them at the meeting.

**2007 IWL Conference:
September 27- 29
in Coeur d'Alene with
Sandpoint chapter hosting.**

Checklist, continued from page 1

12. Read each of your drafts carefully, aloud. If you can't experience a scene as if you were living through it yourself, work on it some more.

13. Your ending must leave your readers satisfied—even if it is unhappy, unexpected, or inconclusive. Above all, your readers must feel the piece was worth their time and attention. Pay special attention to your final sentence, image and/or line of dialogue, because your readers certainly will.

14. Remember that stories over 4,000 words are very difficult to place.

If you are submitting to magazines, here is another tip: Building a list of publication credits in your cover letter will open new doors for your writing. In addition to your stories being well crafted, they must be submitted regularly and extensively. Beat the odds with strong writing COMBINED with a powerful and tenacious submission strategy.

WRITING CONTESTS 2007

Receiving addresses for the contests:

Assigned Titles: Linda Helms, PO Box 303, Jerome, ID 83338.

Fiction and Non-Fiction book contests: Linda Helms, PO Box 303, Jerome, ID 83338.

Open Titles: Idaho Falls Chapter, DE LORIS HENSCHIED, 121 N. SHILLING AVE, BLACKFOOT ID 83221-3340

All entries must be postmarked between Feb. 1 and July 2, 2007.

2007 Assigned Titles:

A Long Way Home

The Woman With The Orange Coat

2007 Assigned Themes:

Love Gone Wrong

Starting Over

Writing Pursuits **submissions:**

April — Wes Scantlin
May — Linda Helms
June —
July — Forrest Lampe
August — Bill Strange
September —
October — Linda Helms
November —
December — Carol Spelius

Remember the newsletter submissions can be a review of a book, an article about a writing tip or style, a sample of something you've written. Aim for about 400 words. Deadline is the first of the month you've signed up for.

Andrei Codrescu on New Orleans

I had a chance to hear Andrei Codrescu—poet, essayist, screenwriter and commentator for National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*—in February. He read from essays he wrote about and from New Orleans (his adopted hometown, he was born in Romania) following Katrina and during the ongoing recovery efforts.

He is expecting the arts to not only recover but shine in New Orleans following Katrina. "I see a great future for writers and artists," he said. "If you're creative you should head there immediately."

One reason Codrescu is so optimistic about the future of the arts in New Orleans (while being less optimistic about the city itself) is that hurricanes Katrina and Rita uncovered issues in New Orleans that artists will wrestle with for ages. Issues such as race, poverty, religion.

He also believes New Orleans offers artists metaphors that perhaps can't be found anywhere else. Writers over the years—William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Walt Whitman among them—have done time in New Orleans.

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