

# The Woodlands Writers Guild Newsletter

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## The Case for Printed Matter

When was the last time you read a cheap paperback novel, be it romance, mystery, or western, and threw it across the room or slammed it down in disgust because you simply could not believe what a stupid ending it was or that the author dared to leave you hanging at a crucial moment? Have you ever fallen asleep in the hammock or on the couch only to have your book or magazine slide off with a thud? Have you ever climbed a tree with a book or magazine or found a corner in the garage or shed just to get away from everyone so you could read uninterrupted? Do you have a second library (be it boudoir, bathroom, or bedroom)?

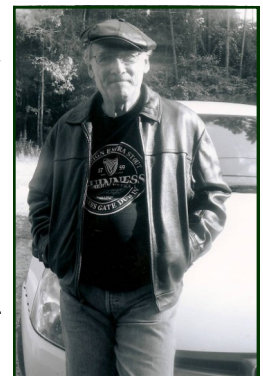
How many can recall warm sunny afternoons (or cool, rainy ones) browsing among the stacks in a used book store and running your fingers over forgotten books: Ah, yes! I read that when I was sick! Or, that was the summer I read nothing but mysteries! Even finding titles you thought were out of print. You can't do that with an electronic reader. Not really. Have you ever flown on an airplane only to have the stewardess inform you to put the book or magazine or newspaper away? I didn't think so. But you have to turn off all the electronic gizmos.

I really did give the Kindle and Nook a serious, if momentary, consideration. At first, I was irritated by all the advertising hype. But after a while, I got thinking about the concept and about the iPad because it has large icons and no buttons. My husband has huge hands and his

From the desk of...

El Presidente

I have been successful in getting one novel published. Big Whoop! Being a one-trick pony is nothing to hang your hat on. Everyone can get lucky. The goal is to get two published. No one gets lucky twice. Here's my two cents of the process (I go through) writing fiction: I start by writing for myself, that produces a garbled mess that only I can understand. Then I write for an audience, usually our guild members and a few selected friends. The piece exposed is designed to test the humor and to expose the buffoonery of a particular chapter. Some attention to the critique is required, criticism and adoration are needed to continue the march. Finally, I take the plunge, scratch all the bull\*\*\*\* from it and go for a commercial effort. At that point, I actually begin to write seriously. The self-publishing industry is where most authors who write for themselves or for a particular audience end up, unless you pen non-fiction. When you send your manuscript to a publisher,



### Inside this issue:

The Case for Printed Matter -continued	2
Interview— Ron McWhorter	4
Book-to-Market	5
About Us / Monthly Challenges	6
Book Review	7
Bulletin Board	9
Contest Winners/Ask the Editor	9

## From the President (con't)

please understand he/she is looking for something they can turn into a buck, so you better pay attention to what sells. Did any one say sex sells? How about unbridled buffoonery? Does laughter sell? Scandalous behavior is known to catch the eyes of those who live precarious lives in the safety of their closet. To put it bluntly: A commercial work of fiction has to be on the edge in order for the publisher to take a chance on it. Fiction is a highly competitive field. What makes you different? After eight years of trying my hand at writing everything from fantasy to erotica, it was the character of Alex Perez who won me the big prize. Think about it. Doctors of Literature found commercial value in an immigrant with dubious morality, questionable behavior patterns, and a taste for buffoonery. If you haven't read my novel, *Cut & Run* yet, if you do...you will find that I broke most of the established rules except for an important one – People will forgive you and will give you a hand if you make them laugh. The publisher has so much faith in the novel; it was nominated for The Great Lakes Colleges Association Annual New writers Awards. Here's the wisdom: Sometimes blindness and desperation are necessary to find the Cuban cigar. -Alberto Arcia

## The Case for Printed Matter– con't.

large fingers make using a cell phone or other small electronic device nearly impossible. He might enjoy the iPad. Then I got thinking about the electronic aspects of the Kindle and Nook and whether they might be worth anything to me after all. I heard great raves from my writing heroes about the benefits of the electronic readers.

But it's just not the same.

I grew up smelling the ink from old printing presses, scouring dusty boxes in the attic to find books and other collectibles with copyrights seventy-five years before I was born. I read and reread old comic books, Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, and a million others. Not climbing over boxes!?! Not discovering lost secrets!?!

I have decided the time has not yet come in my world to embrace these electronic readers. They cannot replace the look, feel, and smell of books I love so dearly. And besides, if I get the notion to, I would not be able to throw a Kindle down in disgust or not worry if I spilled my coffee or spiked lemonade over the “pages.” I'm sure that when I doze in my hammock, the Nook will fall to the ground and my dogs would appreciate the new toy. For now, and probably for always, my reading material will have been produced by a tree and some ink. I'll just leave the electronic gadgets to the rest.

-Rebecca Harkins, Editor

**I have decided the  
time has not yet  
come...**



## Fractured Facts—

Ray Fitzgerald

## Diacritically Speaking

Guest-written by Rebecca Harkins

**D**iacritically speaking, stress tells all. We are bombarded with the sounds of words and stress patterns every day, but unless we know what to listen for, we often don't hear it.

Stress marks, or diacritical marks such as seen in a dictionary, include primary / ˈ /, secondary / ˘ /, and tertiary / ˙ /.

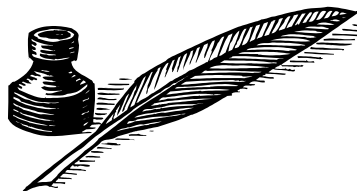
Note these examples: blackboard vs black board, paleface vs pale face.

Generally, the first type is a “compound noun” and the second is a “modifier + noun” pattern. Diacritically, then, the roundhouse is really a round house and the darkroom is a dark room.

Why? Rearrange the order: the black **board** was a genuine **blackboard**. Note that the stronger stress shifts to the first syllable (front of the word). English “favors an alternation of weaker with stronger stresses.”

Each phrase can have only one primary stress, so the next syllable gets demoted: the dark **room** (room is *primary*) → **darkroom** (room is *tertiary*).

There are always exceptions to the rule, and the English language is no different. For further discussion, see *An Introductory English Grammar* by or similar text.



**There are always exceptions to the rule, and the English language is no different.**

## The Inside Track Topics in Writing What Is Your Blood Type?

*The coroner will find ink in my veins and blood on my typewriter keys.*

C. Astrid Weber

Blood is the life force of the body. As a writer, what motivates you? What drives you? When the coroner opens you up, what will be found in your veins? Technically, there are over 30 distinguishing blood types or “human blood group systems,” but I prefer to stick with A, B, AB, and O.

- ◆ A As needed (freelance writing, e.g.)
- ◆ B Because (hell-bent drive or journaling)
- ◆ AB Combination of As needed and Because (pressing article deadline , e.g.)
- ◆ O Occasional (when the muse deigns to visit)

Are you positive or negative? If your drive is to make money you could be AB+, but if you are stressing yourself and/or your family, it just might be AB-. Regardless of your

..our writing takes us places and shows us what we're supposed to do with it.

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### Interview– Ron McWhorter

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For Ron McWhorter, writing is a way of life. Inspired by his high school English teacher, Ron continues to write in several arenas. During the day, oil and gas prospects receive the special touch of his writing flair. At night, his brain switches gears to write creative pieces. These have included Christmas stories for friends and family, a short-story thriller with a Chinese folk-tale inspiration (*A Poor Piece of Rock*-2<sup>nd</sup> place in a WWG contest), two thrillers (novels), and now a science fiction novel (in progress).

Ron’s words of wisdom are these: “I think that our writing sometimes takes us places and shows us what we’re supposed to do with it. Sometimes when we try too hard to make a story fit a category, it’s a lot harder for the magic of writing to take over.” Whether Magic or Muse, Ron can’t rest until he gets the idea down on paper. From there, who knows where it will go.

Ron’s father was a geophysicist in Libya and Indonesia. Because of that, Ron has a world-view perspective of the needs of young professionals and helped create a mentoring program at Devon Energy. Always a leader, Ron has been a Boy Scout Scoutmaster, chairman of a college advisory council, and in 2000, the chairman of WWG’s writing conference. The care and effort that Ron puts into his family and work reflects his devotion to his writing- and vice versa.

-R. Harkins, Ed.

## Book-to-Market ... will return next issue

### Pantoum of Truth

Truth is a fractal. It tiles the universe.

Truth will transcend Time.

Order within Chaos, Chaos within Order,

Truth is most interesting at its edges.

Truth will transcend Time.

Infinitely consistent, nowhere the same,

Truth is most interesting at its edges.

We can never know Truth--only little truths.

Infinitely consistent, nowhere the same,

Truth and Comfort--Yin and Yang,

We can never know Truth--only little truths.

Comfort is our aperture on Truth.

Truth and Comfort--Yin and Yang,

Truth is naked; we clothe it for our own comfort.

Comfort is our aperture on Truth.

There is only one Truth, but infinite apertures.

Truth is naked; we clothe it for our own comfort.

Truth is a Möbius strip; there is always a twist.

There is only one Truth, but infinite apertures.

The other side of Truth is also true.

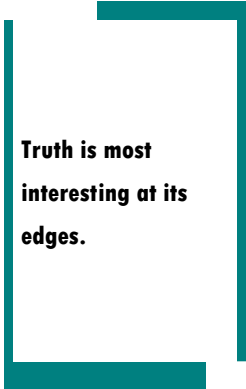
Truth is a Möbius strip; there is always a twist.

Order within Chaos, Chaos within Order,

The other side of Truth is also true.

Truth is a fractal. It tiles the universe.

Paul Bussard  
December 2004



**Truth is most  
interesting at its  
edges.**



## 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.

### **Board of Directors:**

- President (Alberto Arcia),      -Secretary Pro Tem (Rebecca Harkins),
- Vice President (Allan Liu),      -Treasurer (Ray Fitzgerald),
- Marketing Director (Jennifer Blanchard)

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 volunteer position.

### March & April Challenges

## Monthly Writing Challenge

**B**ack 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!

### May

Write word pictures or descriptions. Pick an item (any item) and describe it in as many creative words as possible. Does it have shape? Texture? Taste? Color? Smell? Use your senses.

### June

Take a break from your own writing.

Read some of your favorite authors you have forgotten about.

Oh, yeah, maybe you can write a book review on what you read.

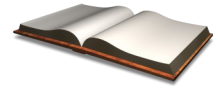
Enjoy your summer!

*-Rebecca Harkins,  
Editor*

Book Review

Bob Dailey

*The Lord of the Rings*  
by J. R. R. Tolkien



Part One

**The Fellowship of The Ring**

By J.R. R. Tolkien, Ballantine Books, New York, 1965

*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,  
Seven for the Dwarf lords in their halls of stone,  
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,  
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne,  
In the land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.  
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,  
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*

When I first read *The Fellowship of The Ring* (and the other two books that constitute *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy: *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*), I was living in a commune in West Philadelphia. A girlfriend loaned me a copy of *The Fellowship* and suggested I read it. I sped through the book and the rest of the trilogy, reading with feverish attentiveness.

The experience, as I remember, was epiphanic. I devoured the books. I have since read the trilogy at least 10 times since then, and am now in my 11<sup>th</sup> reading and am still finding new elements that I had not seen or been attentive to before.

Tolkien's works, which include *The Hobbit* and *the Silmarillion*, began a half century of writing in the style and genre known as "high fantasy." The style continues today and has produced thousands of titles, and perhaps tens of thousands of successful and not-so-successful writers.

In *The Lord of The Rings*, the two archetypal powers – good and evil – vie with each other for control of Middle Earth, a place where Men, Elves, Dwarves and Halflings dwell.

The good is represented by representatives of the races of Middle Earth, led by a wizard named Gandalf. These representatives have come into possession of a ring, a ring which conveys great power to the person who wears it, but also physically and morally corrupts the wearer. The ring is owned by Sauron, a powerful and sinister being, who, if he possesses the ring, will have control of all of Middle Earth.

The powers of good determine that the ring must be destroyed. A Halfling or "hobbit" is chosen as "ring bearer" and charged with taking the ring to Mount Doom, where he must destroy the ring by throwing it into the flames there. The Halflings were a tiny race of beings, known for their naïve and guileless nature – but also known for their integrity and quick wits.

Continued on page 8...

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## Book Review, continued

Bob Dailey

Archetypes abound in all three of the books. *The Hobbit*, a precursor to *The Lord of the Rings*, was written essentially as a children's tale. However, when Tolkien began writing the trilogy, he quickly realized that this was an adult tale.

Those with Judeo-Christian-Islamic inclinations will see definite relationships between the main characters and basic monotheistic conceptions.

He writes:

***"The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like 'religion', to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism."***

One of the fascinating elements of the trilogy is Tolkien's creation of languages. A master of many languages and a student of many more, Tolkien used existing and known tongues to develop Elvish, which he noted was a sort of Elvin Latin, based on many grammatical elements in Latin, but utilizing words from Anglo Saxon and other Teutonic linguistic traditions. He used Semitic as a base for Numeanor, the language of the kings of Middle Earth.

The Lord of the Rings became very popular in the 1960s and 70s (when I first read it). It is rated as one of the most popular works of fiction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both from sales and from reader surveys.

It's been many decades since I, long-haired and jean-clad, read a dog-eared paperback copy of one of the trilogy books on my way to some anti-war demonstration or as I lay in the grass beside the Schuylkill River.

Today, I sit in my middle-class neighborhood amidst my roses and tomatoes, still reveling in the adventures of men, elves, orcs, halflings and other assorted creatures of Middle Earth. Their predicaments and predilections are as real and as attributable to all of us today as they were 50 years ago.

In 2001, the first film of The Lord of The Rings trilogy was released. Three movies were released in all, with each movie roughly corresponding to one of the three books of the same title. As movies go, the rendering was astonishingly faithful to the book (although there was a large number of "cinematic licenses" taken).

At the end of the second movie, "The Two Towers," several young people sitting nearby complained "Ripoff!" thereby confirming that a) they had never read the trilogy and b) that they were children of this age. One of the unfortunate byproducts of the movie series will probably be that people will be content to see the movie, and not read the book. That may be suitable for passing works, but whole generations may be deprived of the rich experience of reading a timeless masterpiece like the trilogy.

-Bob Dailey

...Tolkien used  
existing and known  
tongues to develop  
Elvish...





# Bulletin Board

## Guild Member Notes and Upcoming Events

### Wanted:

Contributors! E-mail [techno\\_pen@yahoo.com](mailto:techno_pen@yahoo.com) (Subject: ATTN Newsletter Editor) (WWG reserves the right to publish- and/or edit all material)

**DEADLINE** for July/August submissions: June 15, 2010

### Meeting Dates: (1st Wed; 3rd Sat)

May	5	6:30 PM
May	15	10 AM
June	2	6:30 PM
June	19	10 AM

### NEW LOCATION:

Mitchell Library, The Woodlands  
(George and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Library)  
8125 Ashlane Way  
The Woodlands, TX77382

### **Need Legal Advice?** Copyright Infringement Issues?

Thoughts from C. Hope Clark's newsletter  
<http://fundsforwriters.com>

"Some states have Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. These are usually nonprofit entities, geographically specific to a state, region or town, that aid artists in obtaining pro bono help. They have an income measurement to determine eligibility. You can find most of them at:

<http://www.starvingartistslaw.com/help/volunteer%20lawyers.htm>"

### EVENTS / SPEAKERS

- ◆ None scheduled for May.
- ◆ Members will be notified via email. Stay tuned!

### NEWS OF NOTE

#### ◆ Meeting Location

The Woodlands Writers Guild has moved to the -

#### **Mitchell Library**

-where the private rooms are larger and quieter, and both those reading and those critiquing can be heard.

- ◆ Gail Collins won the Dead of Winter Nonfiction Contest with her "Larry, Come Out ... Please" about a SWAT standoff in her immediate neighborhood. Other winners can be found at <http://www.thewritehelper.com/id28.html>

Find out more about Gail Collins: [gailcollins.com](http://gailcollins.com) and click the 'writings' link.

## Writing *For* the Book Review

Perhaps we have it backwards. We write, then we get published, and then someone writes a book review. What would happen if we wrote the other way around?

“A book review is a description, analysis, and evaluation of a book,” according to Dr. Robert C. Worstell, “It talks about the quality, meaning, and significance of a book.” In writing about how to write a book review, he suggests the familiar themes: stating the author’s purpose, sum up the book in an elevator pitch (two minutes or less), explain how the author got his point across, check out the author, note special formatting or an index, and summarize briefly.

But what if we started with those points? Suppose I write the book review first, and then write the book? Does that give an adequate outline for the book? Some books just start at one end and flow out the other, but writing your own review: does it work? Can you write a book review that answers the most pressing questions about who, what, why, where, when, how? Once you can answer those questions, you are on your way to writing your book!

The last comment: if your stuck halfway through, or in the last chapter, take a break, write your book review, and see where it takes you.

*-Rebecca Harkins, Editor*

**Join  
Now**

Dues \$20 annually.

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

What’s *Your* Motivation?  
Sticks and Goads vs. Sticks and Carrots

### Sticks and Goads

- ◆ Personal Trainer- keeps you moving
- ◆ Deadline– nearly yesterday
- ◆ Boss or Publisher or Fan base

### Sticks and Carrots

- ◆ Paycheck
- ◆ Intrinsic desire to write
- ◆ Muse throwing ideas your direction

Sometimes we need both. Learn to use goads and carrots to your advantage.

*-Rebecca Harkins, Editor*

