



*Celebrating 30 Years*

Summer  
2024

# PENWHEELS

For Escapees Writers... Published or Not

## Tucson Festival of Books

by Jaimie Bruzenak

Each year I look forward to the Tucson Festival of Books held in early March each year at the University of Arizona campus. My sister, who comes from Los Angeles, and I pick out authors we'd like to see, identifying when they are speaking, mostly with other authors in a panel. This year we picked a mixture of new-to-us authors and old favorites. Some we've read and would like to find out more about them; others are new discoveries. The authors we saw were:

- Memoirs/immigrant stories - Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez, Patty Lin, Aomawa Shields. (All new)
- Mystery: James L'Etoile, CJ Box, T. Jefferson Parker (L'Etoile new)
- Literary - Historical Fiction: Lisa See, Luis Alberto Urrea

The Festival is one of the larger ones in the US. There are 5 sessions each day, each time period with multiple choices of panels and speakers. The moderators of the panels we saw were excellent. Their questions were thought-provoking, giving the audience insight into their lives and viewpoints as authors.

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## Editor's Note

It's been a busy spring! My husband and I bought a sticks and bricks house—our first in about 15 years, having been on the road since the spring of 2009. And what changes since then! No simple plug in the TV and call the cable service (if you want that extra); no simple call to the phone company to get hooked up. But I do love the "AI" option on the washer and dryer!

We plan to continue RVing, and our Escapees membership is paid through the next couple of years, so I'm happy to stay as editor if you'll have me. ☺

This issue is clear evidence why I love putting together this newsletter so much: the range of writing our members produce, the willingness to share that writing, and the support we give each other are all the best examples I've ever seen of the SKP motto of sharing and caring.

Long-time members are encouraged to send in thoughts about your Penwheels membership as we continue our year-long celebration.

This issue includes TWO announcements of new books—let us know about yours. Not aiming for publication? Share something with us about what you're creating so we can all be motivated to write what moves us, what we want to preserve with our words.

If you haven't shared something you've written, please don't be shy! We'd love to read it. Worried about needing editing? I can help with that if you'd like. Just send your submissions to me at [penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com), okay? Okay!

Happy fireflies and s'mores,

*Ellen*



## Braggin' Rights

by Joanne Alexakis

Carol Ann Quibell (SKP#38554) provided her photo for the cover of the *Escapees* March/April 2024 magazine. Congrats, Carol Ann! She supplied a striking shot of a British Columbian ferry in action. This ferry spiked our interest for her article, "Canada's Hidden Gem, A Route to Remember," on page 57 of the issue. Carol Ann takes us traveling the Arrow Slocan Region, on a 78-mile trip through a string of eclectic scenic and historic silver mining towns.

In the May/June 2024 *Escapees* magazine, Lucinda Belden (SKP#159950) introduces us to the *Escapees* Twist Your Throttle BoF (motorcycles - page 20) which is hosting the September 2024 *Escapees* Music & Motos Hangout in Nashville, Tennessee.

Have you been recently published? Inspire fellow Penwheelers! Send your Braggin' Rights to Joanne at: [joalexakis@earthlink.net](mailto:joalexakis@earthlink.net)



## Jaimie's Tips

by Jaimie Bruzenak

If you write a book, you need an editor. Period. However, this important article in *Writers Weekly* 2/24/24 will help you decide when you are ready for one. Be sure to read "Five things you must know before hiring an editor." <https://writersweekly.com/this-weeks-article/five-things-you-must-know-before-hiring-an-editor-by-clayton-jones>



"[T]he primary job of the essayist or memoirist is to use the craft of writing to illuminate and make meaning of *the ordinary*—to name or crystalize experiences that are incredibly common in such a way that readers understand their own versions of those common experiences anew."

...from the introduction to Sari Botton's *And You May Find Yourself...: Confessions of a Late-Blooming Gen-X Weirdo*

### Prompting You!

Use this real fortune cookie to write something:  
*It can't rain all the time.*

## From the "OMG - Do People Really Buy These?" Department

Fake books! Why would anyone want to substitute the real thing for something that's meant to simply "add a touch of elegance and sophistication to your home or office decor."

I don't know about you, but when I hear "sophistication" I don't think of someone who'd prefer a fake book to the genuine article.

Maybe I'm missing something. Oh, here it is: "Unlike real books, our decorative books require minimal maintenance to keep them looking their best." Oh, I get it now. **And** minimal time and brain power because you don't actually have to read them.

Think I'm kidding? Here's the link:  
<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CYP3RWYV/>

*Ikes! What is the world coming to?!?!*



## Little Free Libraries

Contributed by Jaimie Bruzenak

Corvallis, Oregon, must be quite the town of readers! Jaimie found at least three different LFLs in this town—one with a beverage in case you want to browse awhile (below, left).



The others offer books for adults (above, right) and children (center), just like having a separate children's room.

## Free Stuff!

How about a free guide on how to get traditionally published? Signing up for this means getting onto an e-mail list for a regular newsletter about publishing, but that might not be a bad thing:

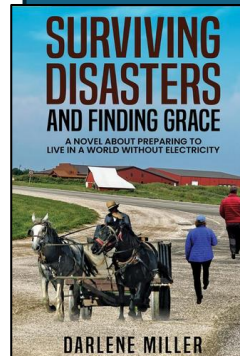
<https://authorspublish.com/books/manuscript-submission/>

*{My apologies if this is a repeat... getting old... forgetting what happened yesterday...}*



## New Book by Penwheeler!

Darlene Miller has been a Penwheels member since 2002 and has published seven books, including her newest title, "Surviving Disasters and Finding Grace."



To promote it, Darlene plans to hand out a **pencil** taped to a piece of paper with the heading Emergency Computer Back-Up System with the following instructions: "In the event of computer and cell phone failure, use this stick. Sharpen the end by removing excess wood with a

knife. Turn the paper over and make marks on it. If you make an error, gently move the opposite end of the stick over your marks. Now you can compose your list, note, letter or poem."

E-mail Darlene directly for info on how to order: [rovingpenna@gmail.com](mailto:rovingpenna@gmail.com)

## Member Profile: Deb Sanders

by Marisa Wolf

Deb Sanders, published as Debra Sanders, has written in a wide range of genres—from sexy urban fantasy to nonfiction tips on dumpster-diving for furniture—and has the wide-ranging, lived experience to go along with it!



She's been published since 2011 when her first book, a romantic suspense novel, became an immediate Amazon bestseller. It was quickly picked up and translated into German, published under Amazon's international imprint.

Traveling is a key piece of her inspiration. She and her husband were full-time RVers for 5 years, and while they're currently back in a sticks and bricks, Deb definitely gets antsy if she's penned up too long. In fact, her husband will notice if she hasn't snuck out to camp for a while and will send her out. The direct quote is, "It's time. Take a hike." Deb knows this translates as "go hug a tree and come back when you're in a better mood," and then does so—may we all have someone who understands us so well!

Deb finds that returning to nature is what gets her imagination recharged and very much enjoys southern Arizona for its wild and untouched camping areas. A few years ago, she took a solo camping trip from Arizona to North Carolina and filled a notebook with ideas for new books, including character sketches, full scenes, and several outlines. Travels like these are what led to her anthology of strange lore that she put together for reader enjoyment and likely, given the subject matter, chills.

For writing time itself, she's a night owl, getting her best work done in those liminal hours between 9pm-2am. She often has instrumental music in the background, including the handpan (a Native American flute), to set the tone and help with her focus.

The routine clearly works well for her, as in addition to the books mentioned above, she also has a Psychic Romance mystery series, and her current work in progress is an Agatha Christie-style murder mystery with an entire cast of suspects.

To keep herself fueled for action, she makes great low-carb Parmesan Chicken Nuggets—good hot or cold, and therefore excellent for road trips, camping, or a long night writing. Other great snacks include cheese, apples, and crackers featuring her go-to Kirkland Coastal Cheese, which is an intense extra sharp white cheddar bound to satisfy cravings.

*{Read the rest of Marisa's profile of Deb on page 11}*

### Prompting You!

Use this real fortune cookie to write something:  
***It doesn't take guts to quit.***

Use this real fortune cookie to write something:  
***Be patient. Good things will come your way.***



## Market Share: Restarting My Own Marketing

by Marguerita McManus

I've done plenty of marketing for another line of books but I feel like a brand-new publisher as I "restart" my experiments with marketing, because I'm writing in a new genre.



First, I made a video book trailer using book covers from a series and AI for the voiceover. I used the program iMovie (although any basic program would work), dropped in book covers, wrote a script and created a free account with ElevenLabs (the best in AI voices). I downloaded the audio file and then uploaded it to iMovie. The most complicated thing I had to figure out was how to fit a book cover (vertically oriented) onto a video format that's wide—not high. I ended up creating a square image for each cover, with whitespace bracketing the covers on the sides, and that worked. On a YouTube channel with no subscribers, the short one-minute clip had 5 views within 24 hours, giving me hope.

My next experiment was creating my first Pinterest account, and creating a "board" of pins while learning more about that platform. It truly has me baffled, but I've been told that authors are finding their tribes there, and selling books, so I'm giving it a try. I have a lot of photos that inspire my writing, and now I'll have a place to share them with people who might be interested. My first effort was an Author Board, with all the book covers under that pen name. It looks pretty good.

Lastly, I believe in newsletters as the best way to stay in touch with readers, but I also believe that if I have to prove I'm not a spammer one more time, with another website DNS validation, I'm going to give up. I actually can't believe I managed to validate my domain email successfully—again. If you are a newsletter sender, I hope this isn't news to you. Email providers like Google/Gmail, Yahoo, etc. are requiring all service-provided newsletter senders (like MailChimp or MailerLite) to use a validated, domain-level email address for sending newsletters. Although I'd done this years ago, and remembered the challenge, I am now using a new domain for publishing and I had to go through it all again.

I hope your marketing is working for you. As we head into "beach read" season, I hope we all sell lots of books.

**Author Marguerita McManus writes quilting books and contemporary fiction based on life in her home state of Alaska. A snowbird RVer, she's happiest boondocking in the desert. Contact her at [MMQuilts@gmail.com](mailto:MMQuilts@gmail.com)**

## Get Lost in Beautiful Books

Ever feel as though you've completely fallen into a book's world? Artist Isobelle Ouzman has taken the idea of "getting lost in a book" and made it real. Her stunning transformations of journals and other books into detailed works of art. You have to take a look! And if you love them so much you can't wait to transform a book of your own into something similar, you can take her course to learn how. (She uses blank journals and published books, so I'm just trying not to think of the books that lost their original form and the authors who were once so proud of them.)

Here's the link to her online portfolio, but poke around her site to see examples from her students and more:

<https://isobelleouzman.com/portfolio> {Follow the link for images. I didn't want to violate copyright laws by republishing any here without the artist's permission. They're worth the time online, believe me!}

# World of Publishing

by Margo Armstrong

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has changed the publishing business in a profound way. As Amazon is experiencing, real-time, garbage books are flooding the book market. Yes, there have always been garbage books, as Amazon well knows, but the gates of hell have opened with this new technology.

It is now possible to launch 100 new books each and every day. Fake author, fake titles, fake book covers—nothing is sacred today.

Amazon implemented a policy last winter that all self-publishers must provide information as to whether their content is AI generated. Amazon also capped the number of titles published in one day. Strangely, the book customer is still in the dark.

The Authors Guild March newsletter puts it all into prospective with their article “AI Is Driving a New Surge of Sham ‘Books’ on Amazon.” For a Penwheels writer, this could move your whole writing career in another direction. One really offensive scam target is biographies. Used as examples in the article are writers Stephanie Land and Kara Swisher. These authors found AI-generated books for sale on the Amazon market that plagiarized as much as 180 pages from the autobiographical originals. New book cover, new graphics but not new content. “Sham” authors seem unfazed by copyright and trademark laws.

The Authors Guild encourages any reader who unwittingly purchases scammy AI-generated books to request a refund and file a complaint with Amazon. The Authors Guild would also like to help, so submit a legal help request if you are a member.



Margo Armstrong is the author and publisher of over 20 books now available on Amazon. Her book *Writing and Publishing Books for Fun and Profit* is available in ebook and print format. Listen to her podcast “RV Lifestyle Expert” on your favorite podcast platform (now available on Amazon Music). Contact Margo at [MovingOnWithMargo@outlook.com](mailto:MovingOnWithMargo@outlook.com)

## Book Launch From the RV!

What do you do when the bookstore that agrees to be your venue for your book launch is too full of books to hold a six-foot table? You park your RV in the parking lot, that's what you do! Or at least that's what Darlene Miller did. She clearly demonstrated she knew what she was talking about in her new “Surviving Disasters” book—this could have been a disaster for many other authors but she turned it into an opportunity.

She writes, “I was asked, ‘What is a book launch party?’ My answer is that it is when you first publicly show and sell your new book. A party usually includes food, drink, and balloons. My daughter served Jaarsma crisp windmill cookies, lemonade, and bottled water. The balloons were attached to a basket with a photo of the book on its side and two dolls inside.”



*{Mmm! Cookies! See the announcement about Darlene's book on page 3}*



# Prologues and Epilogues: When and How to Use Them

Fiction Tips by Debra S. Sanders



While not every story requires a prologue or epilogue, these bookending sections are powerful tools in a writer's arsenal. Prologues and epilogues allow readers to explore events beyond the main narrative. They can set the mood with foreshadowing or tie up loose ends by expanding on the story's resolution.

They are not a "package deal" and can be used independently of the other. A prologue can serve as a "hook" but it is far more complex by providing crucial context or backstory.

Here are some ideas to create a compelling prologue:

- Keep it brief and impactful – Your prologue should be short, usually no more than a few pages. Use it to intrigue readers without giving too much away.
- Establish a critical situation – A prologue can depict a pivotal moment, dramatic event, or a cryptic scenario about to unfold in the chapters ahead.
- Introduce key characters or settings – You can use a prologue to acquaint readers with the primary characters before the main story begins. Some authors use a prologue to establish an older character's flashback to a specific event or to set the stage for a fantastical world.
- Create anticipation – Leaving the prologue on a cliffhanger can ratchet the tension and drive readers into the book's opening chapter.

While prologues whet the appetite, epilogues provide a sense of closure after the climactic events. An epilogue always takes place in the future by tying up loose ends or revealing the fate of characters. Epilogues should contain new information, not serve as a recap of the story.

*{Read Deb's conclusion, with tips on how to write a good epilogue on page 12}*

## The Best Rejection Letter EVER

Jaimie Bruzenak found this in James Clear's blog (<https://jamesclear.com/3-2-1/may-9-2024>) and I sure wish I'd had this as a template when I was fiction editor for a literary magazine. Clear found it in JD McClatchy's "Sweet Theft: A Poet's Commonplace Book":

*Writer and translator Estelle Gilson shares this translation of a rejection slip issued by a Chinese economic journal and, in the process, reveals the most incredible way to say no:*

*"We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper, it would be impossible for us to publish any work of lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that in the next thousand years we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition and to beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity."*

[Thanks, Jaimie, for passing this along! If you've come across something interesting related to writing or reading, please send it to Ellen with a link to where you found it so we can share it.)

# Change (Part 1)

A short story by DG Smeall



The small lavender change purse lay on its side, spilling out pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters from its opening. While the change huddled in a small pool of brown and silver bits of coin, it was to be noted that there were fewer pennies than anything. Why I would notice that, I hadn't a clue... but there you have it: I did notice.

Shanna had always managed to live on the nickel and dime. In addition she had also taught us how to be thrifty. Today was the last time she would ever spill out the contents of that lavender purse. For the past 80 years, each week when Mickey the milkman came knocking, she'd pull the purse out of the pocket of her flowered pinafore jumper, unzip it and spill the coins onto the old Linotype antique dining room table she inherited from Grandmother Sansone.

Something had changed today: it was the last time coins were found on the table, but the change sat forlornly on the table, untouched, unshuffled for the two bits Shanna usually sought.

Towards the edge of the table, a lukewarm cup of tea with a lemon slice wallowing in the tea, yellowed the tea left over in the cup an over bright lemon yellow. While Shanna's muffin (another morning tradition, started when she was 20 and had discovered Mrs. Ambrose's Bakery down the walk from the house) sat crumbling on the tea rose china dish. The china had been her mother's and she had gotten that set the same day she found the bakery. The chips and nicks in the plate marked her many years as a dedicated homemaker.

A flash of memory hit me: Shann and I were walking back towards the house with a delicate box of muffins in her arms and bread loaves in mine. We were laughing about our good fortune at finding the bakery so close to our new home. A small smile crept across my lips. It was sad day for me; we wouldn't be visiting the bakery anymore.

Glancing back at the dining room table, I noticed a slender arm stretched alongside the teacup and muffins plate in slumbering array. Shanna's head rested on her arm, tilted back, her pouty lips pursed softly towards the air. Feathery tendrils of her braided silver hair swept the inside of her cheekbone as she seemingly slept. The house robe she wore, which bore the usual pink floral she preferred, had been tucked firmly around her slim frame, tied at her waist. Her crossed ankles finished the picture of Shanna's rest. This was not the Shanna I knew.

To the right side of the kitchen stood the milkman, Mickey by name, awkwardly. It was he who found her in the huge country kitchen. Mickey was being questioned by the local constable who was stocky and used a rather direct speech about this last stop of Mickey's.

I stood at the table's left, glaze-eyed, watching Shanna, hoping she would suddenly sit up and surprise us all with her quick nap ending. This really shook me—for Shanna had not made it for our lunch date today. I shuddered in repressed tears and let loose a heavy sigh, "Oh Gam," I cried inside.

Toby slid silently in to wrap his arms around me. We so rarely gave Shanna the time of day; but today, we were going to tell her she would become a great-grandmother soon.

"It is too soon for her to leave, Toby. I wanted her to see the baby," I wailed pitifully at Toby.

"Mmm, I know. But she is gone. We have to deal with this clean-up and call the rest of the family. Do you know where she kept her address book?" He pressed gently to get me to move to action.

"Damn it, Toby! I don't want to do this." I clunked hard into one of the hardwood chairs stationed around the table, reached out and touched Shanna's hand, "I want her to wake up." Pushing on the cold clammy hand, I insistently tried to rouse her.

Toby scooped me up and took me out of the kitchen and deposited my small frame onto the sofa in the tiny sitting room where Santa often spent her evenings crocheting afghans for her grandchildren; all nineteen of them.

Toby left me to prowl through the antique roll-top desk seated at the center of the sitting room's back wall. Pulling the roll top up, he systematically went through all the drawers. Eventually he found her lavender address book. He sniffed appreciatively at the sachet cover before opening it up to find names and numbers of all the family members that would have to be called.

*{Read more of Donna's story on page 11}*



# Could This Be My RV?

by Sabine Hartmann

Retirement, finally! Now it's time to hit the road again.

I've been saving toward one of those fancy travel vans, or at least a full-size van (intending to get a pop-up roof installed later), but I'm now reluctant to sink that much money into a part-time dwelling. Yes, I'm planning on traveling in the USA, but I'll also travel abroad and should, therefore, watch my spending. I kept hoping that used car and van prices would come down, but no such luck!

In the meantime, my 2010 Dodge Grand Caravan minivan has proven to be a really good car with few issues and, at this point, still low mileage. So, why throw away something that's good to buy something that might not be great and that's expensive? I'd rather put the money toward leisure activities.

Thus was born the idea to travel in my minivan... for months on end. I'm not foreign to "roughing" it. Twenty-five years ago, I traveled all over Mexico with my then-boyfriend... in a Suburban! I can and will do it again.

How do I get the minivan ready?

Last fall I completed a successful 15-day road trip from Boise to Vancouver Island, where I lived out of my minivan during half of that time. The trip helped me contemplate possible improvements, in addition to some "trucker" items I already have. I've also spent a lot of time daydreaming about it at work while wishing for my retirement to come about sooner.

This is my short list of modifications I want to complete:

- Remove the middle and back seats – Since the seats fold into the floor of the van, once removed they will free up a lot of storage space. I hope that most of my stuff will fit into it.
- Curtains – I have already custom-cut pieces of reflective bubble wrap to cover all of the windows by night. However, I want to add curtains, which could be drawn in the daytime, or in the night if I want to crack a window for airflow. I also want to add a curtain behind the front seats (see "toilet").
- Mattress – I have an old mattress in the minivan but it proved too thin for my old bones and muscle aches. I'm currently looking to add a second mattress on top and will cut the old one to 30 inch width. Two thin mattresses will be soft enough and the skinny width will allow more space next to the bed, since the minivan's width is what it is.
- Toilet – I've researched small toilets because older guts need more amenities and I wouldn't want to use a bucket when it's not save or practical to go outside. I've found what I need and that will fit into my small quarters: a Trelino Evo Small toilet. I will tie it down with bungee cords. With curtains, I will even be able to use it during daytime, if there is an emergency. (I've already ordered this toilet and it should arrive soon.)

*{What other items are on Sabine's To Do list before she heads out? Find out on page 14}*



## Summer on the Beach

by Guest Contributor Charlie Parker

*[Writer's Note: While wintering at Jojoba Hills SKP resort near Temecula, California, I participated in a weekly creative writing group. Sessions consisted of 3-5 ten-minute writing assignments, although some were only given five minutes. Most of the stories written were very short because of the time, but were a lot of fun. Some just stop without an ending because the timer went off. Many could be expanded. At the end of each writing assignment we went around the table reading our stories and then discussing them. It was amazing the amount of talent that was shown and developed through the course. We often laughed until we had tears in our eyes. Prompts for the assignments varied; this one came from the randomly drawing three cards from a deck. Mine were: Location—the Beach; Character—White-haired Man; Situation—Yard Sale]*

The beach was an unusual place for the yard sale to be held; everyone told that to the white-haired man who was standing next to the tables of “treasures.”

“No, it is not,” said the old man as his mane of white hair blew in the breeze.

“Tell me why it is not a bad place,” asked the young boy who was holding his mother’s hand.

“Well,” said the man, “this is where my wife and I lived for more than 60 years. Each morning we would get up and walk on this very beach. We found all kinds of treasures, and it is those treasures which are sitting on these tables.”

“Where is your wife?” the little boy asked

“She died last week and I had her cremated. Tonight when the yard sale is over I am going to take her ashes and I am going to go surfing one last time,” replied the white-haired man.

“Why?” said the little boy.

“Don’t be so nose,” the little boy’s mother said as she gripped his hand tighter.

“Young man, do you see anything on these tables that you would really like to have?”

“Yes, I like that green glass ball wrapped in rope,” he said. “Why is it like that?”

“That,” said the old man, “is a Japanese fish net float. My wife and I found many of those on the beach over the years and each had a story. Would you like to have that? I’ll tell you the story someday.”

“But,” said the boy, “you said you were going surfing tonight for the last time. When you get back will you tell me the story?”

“Yes” said, the white-haired man as tears welled up in his eyes. Then he gave the green glass ball to the little boy and walked back towards his beach shack. His hair blowing in the breeze as it whipped around his shoulders.

## Penwheels Memory

Contributed by Darlene Miller

I joined Penwheels in 2002 in Quartzsite, AZ. It was the first writing workshop that I had ever used. Jaimie Hall Bruzenak, Alice Zyetz and Joanne Alexakis not only helped with ideas and editing of my *RV Chuckles and Chuckholes* books but also gave me reviews to include on the back cover. These foundations started me on writing my seven books. Thank you Penwheels for your help and encouragement.

*{Many thanks to Darlene for sharing this! Your turn! How has Penwheels helped you? Drop Ellen a line so we can share the power of this writing community!}*





## Member Profile: Deb Sanders (*Continued from page 4*)

by Marisa Wolf

If you're craving something targeted to help improve your craft, Deb has that too. She loves to give back and does so through her YouTube channel and by writing Fiction Tips right here in our very own Penwheels newsletter. For mystery and thriller lovers, she also serves on the Board of Directors for the Grand Canyon Chapter of Sisters in Crime and is the Co-Chair and Program Director for Mysteries & More Marketing Network for Published Authors.

You can enjoy those mystery skills on the page, too—her next book, *The Mystery Writer*, will be out this June, and it's bound to be as delightful as she is!

Find more about Deb and her books here:

Author website: <https://debsanders.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/debsandersauthor>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/debrasandersauthor>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@debrasanders>

TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@debrasandersauthor>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/Deb-Sanders/author/B0068UNQ48>



Marisa Wolf has been writing since the age of six when she penned and illustrated "Sarah and the Idaho Potatoes." A science fiction and fantasy novelist, Marisa's latest novel, *Beyond Enemies*, is now available. She and her husband have been full-timing for over two years. Find out more about her books at [marisawolf.net](http://marisawolf.net).

## Change -- Part 1 (*Continued from page 8*)

A short story by DG Smeall

"Hmm, she always did smell like lavender." Toby smiled softly and sadly, "Honey, where is her phone? I gotta get started calling the others."

I pointed back behind me blindly at the phone. I still didn't grasp the situation. More like, I couldn't or didn't want to.

I recalled, in that moment, the last time I had seen Shanna. She had been on the phone with her older brother Wilson, who lived in Chicago. She had tears pouring down her cheeks and was so upset by her brother's words I took the phone from her unresisting hand and told Wilson goodbye.

They had never gotten along. Wilson had been too headstrong and Gam, well, she was Gam. There was no taking back the hurtful words he had hurled at her now. I flushed with embarrassment for my uncle's mean thoughts. I did not imagine that he would be any happier with her gone. He never was happy about anything.

Soon the sounds of the medics packing up came to me; they were bundling Shanna on the gurney like a sack of oats. "Hold it, buster!" I screeched at the man who slapped her down on the gurney like a slab of butchered meat, "Tha-that is my Gam you are throwing around on the gurney." I hiccupped through my screen of tears as I tried to ask for some respect for the one woman who had given me much to be proud of.

*{Watch for the conclusion of Donna's story "Change" in the next newsletter!}*

Donna Gates-Smeall is an accomplished writer with two books (*Com-PEN-di-um* and *Forever Friends* [co-written with Karol Barkley of Tacoma, WA]) under her belt, plus plans to write a few more in her lifetime. She has two Associates degrees and a BA in English.

## Prologues and Epilogues: When and How to Use Them (*Continued from page 7*)

Fiction Tips by Debra S. Sanders

As an ardent *Tombstone* movie fan, I loved the epilogue/narration scene with Robert Mitchum. The Harry Potter books also used a successful epilogue to conclude the series.

Consider these options for your epilogue:

- Resolve remaining plot threads - Use the epilogue to address any unanswered questions that remain after the climax.
- Provide closure - Wrap up character arcs, show where people ended up after the main conflict, or illustrate lasting impacts on the world. Romance authors love epilogues as a way to bring estranged couples together for that important “HEA” (happily ever after) ending.
- Shift time/perspective - Epilogues can jump ahead to show repercussions years later or present a different character’s viewpoint. The Last of the Dogmen movie illustrated this with a feel-good “what if” narration by Wilford Brimley.
- Impart final thoughts or morals - This section can contemplate themes, offer wisdom gained by characters, or ruminate on the story’s deeper meanings.
- Teasers for future books - Use an epilogue to plant seeds for the next book in a series. Or a sequel featuring a supporting character

Whether hooking readers with a compelling prologue or leaving them with final thoughts, these auxiliary sections can elevate your storytelling. Crafting a well-written prologue or epilogue will amplify your narrative and provide a complete experience for readers.

Debra S. (Deb) Sanders lives in southern Arizona where she embraces the Old West, seeks out good hiking trails, and pens cozy mysteries and thrilling tales late into the night. You can learn more about her books and adventures at <https://debsanders.com>



### New Book by New Penwheels Member!

Welcome Karen E. Sizelove-Murphy to Penwheels! She’s the proud author of the children’s book *Nature’s Secrets Awaken Life Skills Activity Book*, designed for curious minds aged 6 to 12, and young at heart. It includes 50 engaging activities to encourage interaction with nature, awaken a sense of wonder, and nurture important life skills, among other benefits.

Sounds like a perfect gift for children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and older folks who welcome a walk in the woods or along the beach or through the meadow or into the local park—even the backyard. Find more info here: <https://www.amazon.com/NATURES-SECRETS-AWAKEN-SKILLS-ACTIVITY/dp/B0CWNXW95C/>

Karen draws on her experiences as a youth nature educator, and Youth Education Coordinator Board Member at Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited.



# Writing My Memoir the StoryWorth Way

by Jaimie Bruzenak

I recently completed my memoir, *My First 78 Years*. I chose [StoryWorth](https://www.storyworth.com), an online memoir service. I am very pleased with the result, though there are pros and cons for doing it this way.

## How it works

A year's subscription is \$99; often a discount is available. For a year, once a week you receive a question in your email. You can answer that question. You also have the option to pick one of their other questions or you can create your own question or subject. I changed all the questions to topics I wanted to write about rather than use a question as a title of a chapter. You can add photos. At the end of the year you submit your book (if ready) and receive a printed copy. The maximum number of pages is 480, though you pay extra if it exceeds 360 pages. Color photos raise the cost, too. You can purchase additional copies. (See <https://welcome.storyworth.com/faq> for more information.)



## Pros

1. The questions stimulate memories. You can change questions or choose your own topic.
2. You can preview your chapter (and entire book), allowing you to go back and make edits.
3. You can print one and then make edits or changes before printing another at no additional cost. You can work on your book for longer than a year as long as you don't get more questions. I spent 3 months editing my book..
4. If you have a vanity publisher print it, you could end up spending a great deal more than with SW. If you are going to print a number of copies or think friends or others might want to read it, SW is not the way to go. For 2 or 3 copies, it is probably the cheaper option and the finished product looks very nice.
5. When you preview your finished book, you get a PDF you can save. This would not have the cover but would be a way to share it with other people. I sent a preview of the chapter on my son to him to make sure it was accurate.
6. As you complete a chapter, you can have it automatically sent to other people, too.

## Cons

1. No formatting other than using caps to emphasize a section.
2. If you add a lot of photos, it can make formatting a challenge. If a photo is large, for example, it may move to the next page, leaving a lot of white space. (You can make a photo larger or smaller but you need to check it by previewing that chapter again.)
3. Printing additional copies is expensive. I did make a video and got a discount, but a long book with color photos costs \$99. For the first copy, you pay whatever is over your \$69 credit.

My sister and I both did our SW memoirs at the same time. It helped with bringing up and comparing memories plus we could share photos. I learned so much about her life and recognized what a good writer she is!

## Happy Birthday, Ray Bradbury—Born August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois

"You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them."

"There's no one way to be creative. Any old way will work."

"Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future."

"You fail only if you stop writing."

"We are cups, constantly and quietly being filled. The trick is knowing how to tip ourselves over and let the beautiful stuff out."



## Could This Be My RV? *(Continued from page 9)* by Sabine Hartmann

- Cooler – While traveling in a Suburban years ago, I was always annoyed when the ice melted and various items started floating around in the water inside the cooler. The water had ways to get into even tightly closed zip-lock bags. I've finally come up with a solution: I bought a fairly large screw-top plastic container. I will add my food items into this container before putting it in the cooler. The food will be cold and remain dry.

Two question remain:

- Should I keep the roof box or not? (Removing it would improve the gas mileage, but do I need the extra storage?)
- And where do I store the propane bottle? (I can eat cold foods but I do like my particular brand of morning coffee.) I'm weary of propane bottles when traveling in the summer and possibly having to leave the van parked in the sun. I don't know how that would work out. If anyone can give me an answer to this question, I'd be grateful and delighted.

Take-off date is early June. I'll be driving to Maine. About 5000 miles and possibly 6 weeks or so round trip! I'm so excited!

*{We're excited for you, Sabine! We look forward to your next installment of your cross-country adventure!}*

Born and raised in Switzerland, Sabine Hartmann discovered a love for writing in her thirties. She moved from her German mother tongue to French, then to English. She's been a journalist (in French) and a technical writer (in English). Besides blogging, writing short stories and articles mostly for free, she's written one book in French and has self-published another one in English.



## Tucson Festival of Books *(Continued from front page)* by Jaimie Bruzenak

In addition, in the grassy center between classroom buildings, there are all sorts of vendor tents – publishers, nonprofits, food trucks. There is a children's area, talks on science, technology and current issues. Food is also available in the Student Union. Author signings are offered after each event while other authors appear at their publisher's tents to sign books and talk to attendees. Of course, each author hopes you'll buy one or more of their books! We left with several each.

A few years ago, the Festival started offering free advance tickets a week before the event for the more popular events with well-known authors. If you are a sponsor or Friend, you can put in for tickets in advance of the general public. The more you donate, the more free tickets you get. This has helped take the stress out of trying to see an author you love. A certain percentage of seats are reserved for walk-ins on the day of the event. It is not without its stress, but it's much better than before they started this practice. I have no doubt many people donate just to get an advantage in getting tickets – my sister and I do!

Many of the authors who my sister and I currently read are ones we were introduced to at the Festival over the years. In Tucson, we are able to take the free trolley right to the University of AZ campus and thus avoid a long walk and paying for parking. On the we chatted with others heading to the festival and then compared notes with some we recognized at the end of the day. We look forward to the Festival each year!

Jaimie Bruzenak began writing about travel, RVing and working on the road while full-time RVing with her late husband Bill. It led to writing publishing books and articles, some with her co-author Alice Zyetz. She now resides in Tucson, AZ, in an over-55 mobile home park, still traveling, but no longer by RV.



## Letter to the Editor

Hi Ellen: Great newsletter as usual. You are putting so much into it. I'm sure that the other members appreciate your efforts as much as I do.

The article by Joanne was like reading my own beginnings. I too began by writing family and friends about our travels. Those letters evolved into our own small newsletter, complete with letterhead, "The Tumbleweed Tattler" (and of course, we were the Tumbleweeds). Then one winter in Tucson, there was a Writing Workshop at our resort. I attended. We were also given the short 10 minute challenges but had homework too. As a result of that class, I wrote a short story that even today, almost 30 years later, I still like. Then there was an Escapade and few folks met for a writing workshop. This was sometime in the 90's. I had signed up with Penwheels before I believe, but that one brief meeting helped to keep me going. It was just fun!

Never had a desire to be a Published author. Just really enjoy the writing part. I have 3 binders full of miscellaneous 'stuff'. And, have spent almost a year working on a novel that is a little more than half way finished. It's an on again/off again thing.

Thanks again for the newsletters and also my thanks go out to the contributors. I learn from them.

Lew Leistikow

*Thank YOU, Lew! Notes like yours reassure us that what we're doing is making a difference. Like you, I appreciate each and every contributor—especially the hard-working columnists who carve out time in very busy writing schedules to offer us insights and tips. In a volunteer effort such as this one, we treasure every contribution! Hope you'll send us a taste of what you're working on, Lew, or maybe something from one of those binders? (Hint, hint!) --Ellen the Editor*

**Add your voice! Share what you like about the newsletter or what needs improvement in your own Letter to the Editor. Send to Ellen at the e-mail address below.**



Durgadas Allon Duriel  
@DurgadasADuriel

The publishing world, aside from the major houses, lacks the money to heavily promote books. Authors have no choice but to do it themselves if they want their work to succeed. So when you see an author constantly mention their book, that's usually why. It's not vanity. #realtalk

*Thanks for sending this,  
Jaimie!*

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## Links

What is indie publishing? How do you find a good indie publisher? What are some good resources for keeping up on indie publishing as an industry? The Independent Publisher Website has answers:

<http://www.independentpublisher.com/>

Looking for some *affordable* online writing classes? Jaimie Bruzenak uncovered Outliers Writing University, which offers an "ongoing conference" plus more contained, individual courses. Check it out:

<https://www.outlierswritinguniversity.com/>

Scammers abound, sadly. Here's some great advice on how to avoid them when searching for a paid or hybrid publisher (with a link that explains hybrid publishing in case you're not familiar):

<https://janefriedman.com/hybrid-paid-publishing-red-flags/>


Many authors offer readers "bonuses" to lure them to their websites, get them to sign up for a newsletter, or just as additional materials. In "Crafting the Perfect Bonuses for your Book," Juliana Leamen lays it all out for you:

<https://booklife.com/news/authors/05/06/2024/crafting-the-perfect-bonuses-for-your-book.html>

## Sci-Fi Predicts the Future... Again

Science fiction writer JG Ballard saw the capacity of what would become AI waaayyyy back in the 1960s and started experimenting "with the earliest form of computer-generated poetry in the 1970s." He also wrote fiction using such technology. If you're intrigued by the very beginnings of AI and/or the perceptions of it through the eyes of a science fiction writer, you'll find this article fascinating:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240510-how-sci-fi-writer-jg-ballards-computer-poems-predicted-chatgpt>



*"The longer I live the more  
beautiful life becomes."*  
-- Frank Lloyd Wright

## Book Fairs and Festivals by State

If Jaimie's article on attending the Tucson Book Festival enticed you--either as a reader or writer (or both!)--to attend a book fair/festival yourself Writer's Digest offers up a great list, organized by state:

<https://www.writersdigest.com/publishing-insights/list-of-book-fairs-and-book-festivals-by-state>

If you know of one not covered here, let us know! Share your best book fair/book festival experiences on our Facebook page or send a note to Ellen so she can share it through this newsletter :)

*Give in to the temptation to  
share!*

**Deadlines are always:**

Fall Issue:	Aug 15
Winter Issue:	Nov 15
Spring Issue:	Feb 15
Summer Issue:	May 15

*Publication is on the first  
of the next month.*



## 2024 Win-Win Contest *Special Anniversary Articles Wanted!*

### What is the Win-Win Contest?

You win if your article is chosen; our fellow Penwheelers win because they benefit from what you've shared in the newsletter, so it's a win-win!

### How do you enter?

Simple! Just submit something for a 2024 issue. E-mail it (as a Word document if you can; if not, specify what you can send) to Ellen at [penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com). Put "Win-Win Contest Entry" in the subject line of the e-mail. [See page 16 for deadlines and publishing dates](#) for each issue.

### What should you submit?

For 2024 we're especially interested in reprinting anything you might have published in the newsletter before 2005, special memories of a Penwheels gathering, particular advice you took because of something you read here—generally, anything that celebrates how being a Penwheels member has helped you. And, as usual, you can send in articles on the craft of writing (how-to do something) or a personal experience essay (especially something related to your writing, RV travels, and/or involvement in Penwheels). Word length: 500-750 words preferred. Poetry (up to 25 lines) and short stories (up to 1000 words) are also welcome. Go with your gut and send it in!

### Who can submit?

Every Penwheels member! If you've never contributed to the newsletter before or if it's been a long time since you've sent something in, *you're especially encouraged*. Chances of getting published in the newsletter: 99% ☺

### How will winners of the Win-Win Contest be chosen?

Winners will be randomly picked because every article, column, poem, story or other tidbit is always of value.

### When will winners be announced?

Winners will be individually notified by e-mail and announced in the Winter 2024 issue of the newsletter.

### What are the prizes?

Previous winners have received \$5 or \$10 Amazon gift certificates or EB Unique bracelets (winner's choice). But it's not about the prize, anyway, right? It's more about contributing to your favorite—no, MOST favorite—e-newsletter and supporting the work of your fellow Penwheelers.

***Don't wait! Get started on your article today so it will be ready to submit!***  
***Questions? Contact Ellen at [penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com)***

## Missing newsletters, notifications, or announcements?

All members in our database receive e-mail messages when a newsletter is published. Those messages include a link for downloading the newsletter (also available here, with past issues: <https://ellenbooks.com/newsletter-archive/>) and have a copy of the newsletter attached.

If you're not receiving these e-mails, please send your name and SKP# to Joanne Alexakis ([joalexakis@earthlink.net](mailto:joalexakis@earthlink.net)) so we can add you to the e-mail list or update our membership listing for you. It's possible we have an old e-mail address on file for you.

If you're no longer an SKP member but would like to receive announcements and copies of the newsletter, please notify Ellen the editor ([penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com)) so she can add you to the e-mail distribution list.

We don't want you to miss a single thing!

***Hope you enjoyed  
this issue!***