



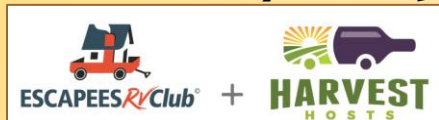
*Celebrating 30 Years*

Fall  
2024

# PENWHEELS

For Escapees Writers... Published or Not

## Harvest Hosts Buys Escapees!



An e-mail sent from Escapees on July 23 reads, in part:

*As we reflect on this journey, the Carr family is excited to announce a significant transition for Escapees RV Club.*

*After heartfelt discussions and careful consideration, we have decided to pass the leadership and operations of Escapees RV Club's membership, support services, educational programs, and events to Harvest Hosts. This acquisition excludes the Escapees Mail Service and Escapees RV Parks, which will remain under the management of the Carr family...*

*Escapees RV Club current memberships and benefits will remain unchanged. Harvest Hosts understands how important the services and support provided by Escapees are to you, and they are committed to preserving the integrity and excellence you have come to expect.*

When Joanne Alexakis asked Escapees Chapter/BoF Director Wendy Stanwood if we should expect any changes, she replied: "At this time there will not be any changes. If there any changes I will make sure everyone knows about them right away. Everything is the same we are just under Harvest Hosts now."

As of this writing (early August), no updates were posted on the Escapees website (escapees.com).

As for us? We're content to continue as we always have—sharing our writing and inspiration to fellow traveling writers!

## Editor's Note

The leaves are changing... the winds are shifting... fall is... falling ☺ Things are changing and shifting within Penwheels, too.

Deb Sanders, who's been writing the Fiction Tips column since the Spring of 2022 issue, is immersed in so many things she needs to step away from that commitment. And Marisa Wolf, who started writing the member profiles at the same time, has so many other writing projects going she must pull back from her current Penwheels schedule as well.

These create some openings I'd love to fill with YOUR talent ☺ If you have experience writing (though not necessarily publishing—see our tagline in the banner) fiction and would love to share your thoughts on tackling aspects of the craft, let me know.

And if you'd like to get to know other Penwheelers by doing two profiles a year, you'd be helping us keep that popular newsletter item.

These are both great opportunities to share with and care for other SKPs through Penwheels—and I'll help. **Let me know if you're interested:** [penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com) or just reply to one of the e-mails I send out.

It's fun, I promise ☺ *Ellen*



## Inside this Issue....

[Braggin' Rights](#)  
[Jaimie's Tips](#)  
[Free Online Class](#)  
[Little Free Libraries](#)  
[Member Profile](#)  
[World of Publishing](#)  
[Market Share](#)  
[Fiction Tips](#)

[Change, Part 2](#)  
[Lew Leistikow Essay](#)  
[Joanne's PW Memory](#)  
[Poem from Donna](#)  
[Jaimie's PW Memory](#)  
[Marisa's New Book](#)  
[Charlie Parker Story](#)  
... and more!



## Braggin' Rights

by Joanne Alexakis

We haven't seen any of our members in the pages of *Escapees Magazine* lately ☹️ If we missed something you published there—or anywhere, for that matter—don't be shy! Let Joanne Alexakis or Ellen know so we can do the braggin' for you.



## Jaimie's Tips

by Jaimie Bruzenak

I had not heard of several of these and did not know that *Escapees* magazine reimbursed any expenses. (Not in my day!). See "6 RV And Van Life Publications That Pay Writers" by Teri O'halo McMahon in the 7/27/24 *Writers Weekly* ezine.

<https://writersweekly.com/marketing-secrets/6-rv-and-van-life-publications-that-pay-writers-by-teri-ohalo-mcmahonn>



Want to submit something to *Escapees Magazine*? Click the link to discover the variety of ways you can see your name in print! <https://escapees.com/escapees-magazine/submissions/>

Are you using either form of AI? If so, read carefully. It may mean your work is not eligible for a copyright. Read "Generative vs. Assistive AI...and When Writers Need To Disclose" by K.M. Robinson in the 5/26/24 issue of *Writers Weekly*:

<https://writersweekly.com/this-weeks-article/generative-vs-assistive-ai-and-when-writers-need-to-disclose-k-m-robinson>

If you enjoy writing short pieces (under 1000 words) you may be able to sell your work to one of these markets. "8 Lesser-known Paying Flash Speculative Fiction Markets for Writers" by Avery Springwood in the 8/1/24 *Writers Weekly*.

<https://writersweekly.com/this-weeks-article/lesser-known-paying-flash-speculative-fiction-markets-for-writers-by-avery-springwood>

And if you want to expand your marketing, this new feature of Instagram may bring more sales: "5 Ways to Promote Your Books Using Instagram's New 'Broadcast Channels' Feature" by Jada Elder. <https://writersweekly.com/marketing-secrets/how-to-promote-your-book-using-instagram-s-new-broadcast-channels-feature-by-jada-elder>

## Have You Written Your Nutgraf?

Nope, I'd never heard of a "nutgraf" in all my 50 years of writing (I started young ;-)) until I dove into *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writer's Guide*, edited by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call and including essays by Nora Ephron, Tom Wolfe, Trace Kidder, and many other known (and excellent but less-known) writers. Just as I was thinking there wasn't much here to help me with my memoir because the focus was on the journalistic essay, I came across "nutgraf" and realized these little items can help us all.

So what is it? It's your story/essay/memoir/chapter/article summed up in a nutshell of a paragraph. Here's the formula: (nutshell+paragraph=nutgraf).

Have you tried to write a nutgraf of your piece of writing? If you're stuck or it's feeling flabby or expansive or unfocused, give the nutgraf a shot.

(Which is what I intend to do right now....)







## Little Free Libraries

Contributed by Jaimie Bruzenak

Jaimie spotted this La Posada Free Library in Sahuarita, Arizona. Thanks for sharing!

***Have you seen a little free library (official or not)? Snap a pic and send it so we can all celebrate the ways people are sharing books! ☺***

## FREE Learning Event!

### CANVA eBook DESIGN TUTORIAL

Presented by Penwheeler Deb Sanders

Ready to create stunning ebook covers that captivate readers and boost sales? Join my comprehensive Canva tutorial and master the art of eye-catching digital book design. From understanding retailer-specific dimensions to personalizing templates and perfecting image layering, you'll learn insider techniques to make your covers stand out in digital format. Whether you're a seasoned author or just starting out, this step-by-step tutorial will equip you with the skills to design professional-quality covers that reflect your genre and personal style.

Don't let your great story get overlooked—sign up now and start creating covers that demand attention! Register at <https://debsanders.com/CanvaTutorial> **DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS OCTOBER 20! Don't Wait!**

This tutorial will present a step-by-step process to create an ebook cover in CANVA, suitable for the FREE or PRO version. I will cover:

- eBook dimension requirements for retailers, including Amazon, Apple, Kobo, and IngramSpark.
- What makes a good eBook cover: images, color, theme, font, genre
- Designing a cover to reflect your genre
- Personalizing a premade template design with your title and author name
- Creating a book cover from a blank form
- How to layer and blend images
- How to make text "pop"
- Resolution
- CMYK vs. RGB color
- Sharpness vs. Clarity
- FORMATS (Print and digital requirements. Using your ebook cover on a bookmark, flyer, poster, etc. requires setting changes to enable clear, quality prints. The same is true for submitting cover art for a magazine article.)



***\*\*Registration required. Link will be provided to a previously recorded tutorial. The tutorial will be available from October 23-November 21, 2024. This recording is copyrighted material. Please do not copy or share.***

Amazon Bestselling author Debra S. Sanders has published 12 titles spanning fiction and non-fiction over the past 10 years. She is currently working on a traditional Agatha Christie-style mystery. Debra is on the Board of Directors for Sisters in Crime Grand Canyon Chapter, a co-chair of Mysteries & More Marketing Network, and mentors other writers.



## Member Profile: CarolAnn Quibell

by Marisa Wolf



CarolAnn has been writing for many years and published for over twenty-five of them. In that time she's written a great deal of nonfiction and over 100 magazine articles. She had a monthly column with *RVWest*, a Canadian publication, and has had articles in a variety of RV and seniors' magazines, business publications, and church journals. While she has only recently felt comfortable calling herself a writer, it's clear she's well suited to the title.

CarolAnn's writing has included a broad range from travel to business—destinations, marketing, start-ups, and more. She often focuses pieces toward her age-group peers, though there is much to be gleaned for anyone. Now that she's comfortable in calling herself a writer, she's considering turning her attention toward two dream projects.

One has been sidelined over time, but she has it planned out in her head: a series of second chance romances about five mature women with their own unique circumstances, all of whom are clamoring to be brought to life on the page.

Her other planned project is to write a book about the incredible three-month adventure she had with her adult children, a low-budget, high-delight backpacking excursion through Central America. She envisions it as a collection of daily diary entries told through the point of view of each member of the trip—each with their own version of events—and sounds like something full of endless entertainment for those joining the trip vicariously!

Travel is a huge inspiration to CarolAnn, who has been to at least three countries in her RV, and more across the world. While she doesn't currently travel in her RV, she's having a wonderful time in her fifth wheel in gorgeous British Columbia, occasionally heading across the border to Washington state to stock up on the amazing Tillamook cheese(s)! Previously, she spent a year RVing across Canada, where she is from, and then around the US and Mexico, covering vast portions of North America.

Whether in travels or at home, her writing routine is most productive at a library or a coffee shop—indeed, some of her favorite memories involve sitting in coffee shops in various countries and settings, taking joy from observing the locals, and writing. As a matter of fact, she wrote an article about RVing in the United States while ensconced in a Starbucks in Shanghai, which sounds like the making of a perfect day.

You can find her work and more of her writing at <https://rvingincanada.com> and <https://writefortravel.com>. Although they are not recently updated, there is plenty of wonderful stuff to dig into. Perhaps following her blogs will allow us a first peek at an announcement for the projects she's planning—if the Penwheels community can serve as a group accountability buddy, we're sure to be greatly rewarded by her continuing wonderful stories ahead!

*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).*



Don't you love getting to know fellow Penwheelers through these profiles? Well, Marisa's busy writing schedule means she must drop back to two profiles a year for us, so we're looking for a volunteer to handle the other two. You'll get all the help you need, and it's a fun gig! Just contact Ellen at [penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com) to get started!



# World of Publishing

by Margo Armstrong



Before signing a contract or agreement with a publisher (or actually any company), it is wise to review these simple rules created by Victoria Strauss, co-founder of the Writer Beware blog.

As the author of several books, she has years of experience dealing with exactly this topic. Her blog is sponsored by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA), so her advice is highly recommended.

- ❖ Don't assume that every single word of your contract won't apply to you at some point.
- ❖ Don't mistake "nice" or "responsive" or "professional" or even "crazy about my work" for "author-friendly."
- ❖ Don't make assumptions about what contract language means.
- ❖ Don't rely on your publisher's assurance that objectionable contract language won't be enforced.
- ❖ Don't accept your publisher's claim that contract language means something different from what you think it means.
- ❖ Don't let your publisher convince you that asking questions is a bad thing.

Victoria also has some tips about deal-breaking editing clauses you should be aware of before signing on the dotted line.

- ❖ Publisher shall have the right to edit and revise the Work for any and all uses contemplated under this Agreement.
- ❖ The Publisher shall be entitled to develop, alter, edit, and proof the content, usage, format, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling of the Work to conform to the Publisher's style, the subject matter, and intended audience previously agreed upon by the parties of this Agreement.
- ❖ Publisher has the right of final approval of Author's manuscript. Publisher will assign an editor to work with Author in making revisions. The Author agrees that Publisher can make editorial changes to the manuscript, including, but not limited to spelling, grammar and punctuation corrections, and abridgments of text *without Author's consent*.
- ❖ Publisher shall have the right to correct errors, and/or edit and *revise the Work for any and all uses* contemplated under this Agreement (collectively "Editing"), provided that the meaning of the Work is not materially altered.

"These clauses give all the power to the publisher—and in publishing, *the letter of the contract is the bottom line*. You should never assume that what the contract says *could* happen, *won't* happen. If the publisher has a dictatorial attitude toward its authors or employs not-very-competent editors—both of which, unfortunately, are not uncommon, especially in the small press world—you could find yourself with a poorly-edited manuscript and no way to protest it or fix it."

Find more details on her [blog](https://writerbeware.blog/2024/07/26/evaluating-publishing-contracts-six-ways-you-may-be-sabotaging-yourself-2/) about these and other publishing topics that could reduce stress, build confidence and save money: <https://writerbeware.blog/2024/07/26/evaluating-publishing-contracts-six-ways-you-may-be-sabotaging-yourself-2/>



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 <mailto:MovingOnWithMargo@outlook.com>





# Market Share: Update on My Experiment

by Marguerita McManus

Here's an update on my recent marketing experiment with new novels.

The short teaser video I created and put on YouTube now has a grand total of 1 subscriber and 7 views. That's only for one video. I need to do more of them, and put a novella out there, too. But that's not at the top of my list with single digit views.

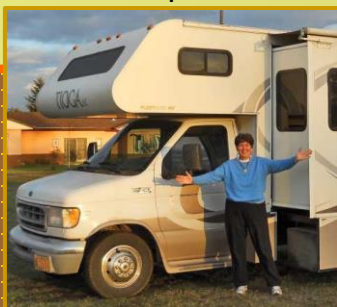
My next experiment was creating my first Pinterest account, and creating "Boards" of pins (photos or images) while learning more about that platform. It still has me baffled. I created several Boards and the views go up daily. The lowest number of views is 72 (for a single image), but it has 5 clicks—the highest of all the images I've uploaded. That image is a composite, about my cover versus the paid designer's cover, with a short story and a link to my website.

The highest number of views (156) is an image about a series. It has 4 book covers, a blurb, and a snap of a 5-star review and has 3 clicks. A Board with 2 inspirational photos for the prequel also has 3 clicks, and 84 & 148 views on those two images (photos of boats with short descriptions). Lastly, a Board of 6 separate book covers has views ranging from 81-116, but only 2 covers have clicks—1 each. No trackable sales from that platform, but overall, I'm impressed with the numbers and will continue to create more boards.

Now on to newsletters. I joined two newsletter promotions for women's fiction books in July via BookFunnel and I was surprised that the swap-owner/creators accepted me because on that platform I have a rank of zero: no history of successful promotional swapping. But I have a newsletter base (on quilting, not novels) that I appealed to for help. From the 1,100 readers that opened my own newsletter, 75 clicked one book promo link and in that promotion my book received 21 views. In the other promotion, 86 clicked but my book received only 6 views. Between the two, I received ONE sale. The graphic images for both promotions were pitiful and one of the promos was for steamier books than mine. Next time I'll create my own graphic and only join promos for books of a less erotic nature.

Overall, summer is not an easy time to sell books. For "Beach Reads," marketing has to start well before June.

Amazon running their "Stuff Your Kindle" promotion doesn't help sales, either and at 4 times a year, it's serious competition to authors who are not Kindle exclusive.



*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)*



**Thunder Bay Seiners**

A contemporary saga exploring the intertwined lives and loves of commercial fishing brothers, working in the rough waters of untamed, wild Alaska.

Stories of adventures on the water and at home, with slow burn, second chance, first love, betrayal, jealousy, friends-to-lovers, finding yourself, starting over.

Explore life on the boats, bays, and small towns of Alaska.



Available at Amazon, Apple Books, Google Play, and Ingram.

★★★★★ **Good**  
Reviewed in the United States on March 17, 2024  
**Verified Purchase**  
Nice to have something written by someone who knows the Great Land and can write about it. I truly enjoyed this excursion into the life of a commercial fisherman. About to get the next one.

**Read Thunder Bay - the Short Prequel - for free when you sign up for our newsletter: <https://BookHip.com/LPMKKCC>**



**Inside Alaska Novels**

**Thunder Bay - The Prequel**

Thunder Bay is a short prequel to the growing (9 books so far!) Alaskan Seiner Series... **more**

# The Art of Eavesdropping: A Writer's Secret Weapon for Authentic Storytelling

Fiction Tips from Debra S. Sanders

When outlining an idea for a novel, writers often turn to research for scenes and settings. I've spent endless hours on Google searches. Haven't you? But what if the most valuable resource for your next masterpiece is sitting right next to you at the coffee shop?

Welcome to the controversial yet transformative world of creative eavesdropping.

Eavesdropping, the act of listening in on others' conversations, has long been considered impolite at best and unethical at worst. For a fiction writer, however, it can be a wellspring of inspiration. Real-life dialogue, unfiltered and raw, offers an authenticity that's hard to replicate from imagination alone.

Before you don your metaphorical spy gear, let's address the elephant in the room: ethics. Creative eavesdropping isn't about invading privacy or stealing personal stories. It's about observing the human condition in its natural habitat. Use these glimpses into strangers' lives as springboards for your imagination, not verbatim transcripts.

So, how does one become a master of discreet observation? Start by choosing your locations wisely. Coffee shops, airports, and park benches are gold mines for overheard gems. Position yourself strategically—close enough to hear, but not so close as to draw attention. Your smartphone can be the perfect cover; pretend to be engrossed in it while your ears do the real work.

Once you've mastered the art of listening, the next challenge is translating what you overheard into compelling fiction. Real conversations are often rambling or one-sided. Your job is to distill the essence of what you've heard into something coherent and purposeful for your narrative.

Eavesdropping isn't just about dialogue. Pay attention to body language, facial expressions, and the unspoken dynamics between people. These visual cues can prove valuable in developing unique, three-dimensional characters. The way a person fidgets with their coffee cup or talks to their children can speak volumes about their personality or current emotional state. I once sat in a hotel lobby waiting for a conference to begin and wrote three pages of character sketches based on those around me.

Sometimes, a brief overheard exchange can spark an entire plotline, like a woman who called the police on her neighbor because his tree had dropped leaves on her driveway. Let your imagination run wild with the possibilities of what led to that moment and what might happen next. I imagine a terse woman poking around her neighbor's yard, looking up at the tree with a disgruntled expression. As her foot sinks into soft soil, the neighbor rushes out the door to ask what she's doing—and right behind him is his dog, who begins furiously pawing at the freshly disturbed earth. The man is jittery and ill-tempered, telling her to leave as he tugs on his dog's collar. The woman turns away but not before she spies the glint of a gold necklace where the dog was digging.

It's that easy to let your imagination run wild.

Some of the best characters you develop will be a composite of people, not based on a single individual. The goal is to capture the essence of human interaction. So the next time you're out in public, keep your ears open and your creativity ready. The greatest story you've yet to write might be unfolding at the table next to you.



*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>*





## Change (Part 2)

A Short Story by Donna Gates-Smeall

*{Editor's note: If you missed the beginning of this story, see page 8 in the Summer issue}*

She was the one who held me when I got chicken pox and the measles; she was the one who held me when my first boyfriend dumped me; and even, yes, she held me when Ma died of cancer a bit too early in her life. Gam had been mother to me and my siblings, all six of us after Ma died. Her old-fashioned ways had given us many chuckles, but we still respected her for her beliefs.

The pain of losing her was too hard for me to contend with, and then to watch some strangers treating her body like bad meat, well, it didn't work for me.

I choked and gasped out a plea, "Please treat her gently, even if she is dead." Then I backed out of their way as they moved the gurney through the sitting room, then on to the foyer and front entrance of the old two story Victorian that had housed Shanna since she had been born. I recalled her telling all of us how we had all been born in the huge queen-sized bed upstairs in the room she referred to as the "Family" Room.

In reality, it was her bedroom once decked in mahogany colors when her mother had decorated; now it radiated lavender throughout its niches and corners like it was the most fragrant of gardens instead of a bedroom. I knew that if Wilson inherited the house, all the lavender would be gone soon enough. Then Shanna would really be gone. I shuddered at the thought of the house being so empty without her.

Toby called out my name, "Hannah, I need you in the kitchen. Someone here to see you!"

I mentally shook myself, stood up, left the sitting room, heading to the kitchen. I walked slowly, as if in a trance, sort of out of place in this time and moment. When I arrived in the kitchen, Toby was nowhere to be seen, but there was someone at the screen door, gently knocking at it. A glance upward had me looking into a pair of blue eyes I knew so well; her crown of hair was a glorious blonde-silver, and she stood regally on the stairs in a hoop skirt with a '50's hairdo and blouse to top off the outfit. Her feet were bare like she had been burrowing them in sand, all dusky with grains of sand clinging to them.

Her soft voice came from the doorway, "Hi, I was wondering if I might use your phone a second to call my brother Wilson. My car broke down just down the lane." Her voice was soft as a whisper, her manner shy and reserved, yet friendly.

Without saying a word, I opened the door to let her in so she could call; pointing at the phone, I started to leave the room but she spoke again, which stopped me in my tracks.

"I know me and my brother don't always get along but we do care about each other. That is why I gotta call him. I have to let him know it is okay." She wrung her hands anxiously around the wrinkled handkerchief she held in her right hand.

"Sure, you would definitely want to let someone in the family know you need help," I replied. Glancing up again, I noticed that the woman had an aura of golden light surrounding her.

"What is your name?" I asked, sure I would hear Gam's name on her lips, I waited for her reply.

"Oh, I am sorry, I forgot to introduce myself, didn't I? The name is Shanna, Shanna Hennessy." I nodded to myself and smiled at her.

"Of course it is. My name is Hannah, Hannah Hennessy Osborne. How nice to meet you," I commented.

"My pleasure to meet you, Hannah."

"Well, Wilson will be worrying something fierce. Might I make my call now?" Shanna rose to her feet and looked towards the kitchen wall where the phone hung.

*[{Read the conclusion to Donna's story on page 13}](#)*





## Cassidy and Robin

by Lew Leistikow



She came blasting in through the door, a two-foot-high stick of dynamite with Shirley Temple blond curls all over her head. Cassidy, just turning two years old with an inexhaustible supply of energy. Curious and grabbing anything and everything within reach, with 'Nana' Robin chasing, yelling and steering her away from trouble.

A baby girl, living with her Grandmother Robin while her errant single mom tries to get her life in order so she, hopefully, can become the good mother Cassidy needs and deserves. And Grandma Robin ("Nana"), a tall and slender and young 62, seems to have enough energy and drive to rein in this tiny whirlwind.

Robin puts one in awe at how she can cope with her little granddaughter who is not only a lot to handle but is just entering the Terrible Twos and becoming even more of a challenge.

In our close, gated community, Robin takes young Cassidy out in the late afternoons to "visit" her many adoptive grandparents. When she bursts through our kitchen door, she comes in shouting, "Ella, Lew!" and running into Eleanor's arms. Sometimes she'll come to me too, but more often, her sharp eyes spot something sitting out at her level that requires her inspection—and that means picking it up, then maybe dropping it back when Robin raises her voice in a stern, "Excuse me!"

It's been over a year now since we first were happily introduced to Cassidy. She now is passing her third birthday; she speaks quite plainly and overall is smart as a whip. She has always learned very quickly, so much so that soon after meeting her I felt that she had to be a candidate for advanced learning classes. Her hair is still blossoming in tight curls all over her head, her energy is still boundless, and she still runs Nana to exhaustion.

Eleanor loves all babies and toddlers and can't resist buying things for Cassidy. Especially clothes, which this young lady loves. Be it shoes, a cute top or pants, Cassidy knows at first sight that the items are for her. In fact, one of her early words was "mine!" So, Eleanor has become (along with other ladies in the neighborhood) an adoptive grandmother to Cassidy and she/we delight every time this young dynamo comes running through our kitchen door.

Sadly, they must move. They are going back north to Pennsylvania where Grandpa Tom hopes to find better job opportunities. Their house has been sold, and they have already found another one up north. Only details remain to settle the deals here and up there, then they'll be gone.

Too bad that the really special people we meet come into our lives then drift away. And the not so pleasant ones seem to linger on and on....

#



### Free Stuff!

Planning to participate in the Annual NaNoWriMo this November? Or just looking for some motivation? Get your FREE copy of "Challenge Accepted: Your NaNoWriMo Toolkit" from Writer's Digest here: <https://writersdigestshop.com/products/challenge-accepted-your-nanowrimo-toolkit>

And start prepping at the official website:  
<https://nanowrimo.org/nano-prep-101>



# My Penwheels Memory: Editing the Newsletter

By Joanne Alexakis

This is a page from one of my PWNL issues. I had asked for contributions/comments about "Boondocking" from our membership. I asked a different question each issue, and if I didn't get enough responses I would submit something myself. This was my contribution to that query.



## Writers Challenge (continued from page 6)

### Boondocking - Picture it!

by Joanne Alexakis

My husband and I have been full-time RVing since April 1994. We have had the opportunity to do much boondocking - a lot of it in picturesque places. Though Nick's favorite area is anywhere in the Sonoran Desert, he would happily be a fulltime boondocker *anyplace*. If only I could go along with that plan.

When you gaze at these peaceful pictures, you can easily agree with him. From parking at a fishing pull-out on the Blackfoot River just off of I-90 by Bonner, Montana in the Rocky Mountains to a secret stop-over place just west of Hwy 395 in the Alabama Hills of the Sierra Nevada by Lone Pine, California - we've found such serene beauty. These photos tell the stories.

And when you really need it - there's always Wal-Mart for some heavy-duty shopping and a sweet overnight sleep spot. We were parked at that store in Ft. Stockton, Texas down on I-10 in the third snapshot - delighting in this awesome sunset at the end of a long day.



This boondocking 1997 photo is Nick & my '96 Dodge Ram w/fiberglass topper towing our '85 Holiday Rambler travel trailer around the USA! Now, in 2024, the RV is long gone and we just traded our beautiful red Dodge Ram in on a Chrysler Pacifica van with sliding side doors, in gray. We are officially 'old fogies' now!

{Ed. Note: Aren't we all?!? Thanks, Joanne!}

Joanne and Nick Alexakis have been Escapees members since 1992. They began full-time RVing in 1994 and have explored many Escapees benefits (Boomers BoF, Boondockers BoF, Amateur Radio BoF, North Ranch RV Park, Rainbows End RV Park, and CARE) over the years as they travel around the USA. Joanne is active in the Penwheels BoF, holding voluntary positions of newsletter editor in the past and membership coordinator currently. She enjoys the camaraderie of that inspiring RVers' writing group.



# Here is to Renewal, Reflections, and Ruminations

by D.G. Smeall

Renewal calls to me in the early dawns, spreading her fingers wide as if she is fingerprinting  
My soul yawns long and wide for the dewy drops of wisdom and  
My mind stretches forth to grasp what the wispy streams of color are attempting to  
Inform me or enlighten me.

My foggy brain resists the information infusion amidst my coffee suffusion leaving me  
Colluding with my full oversized coffee mug and my gray kitty, Gracie, who inelegantly  
Announces that I am ignoring her presence with her snappy MEOW and sweeping tail,

When the caffeine elevates my mind to an AWakenING then I am able to  
Reflect on what temperatures, what duties, what responsibilities call to me,  
My sluggish fingers pick shakily upon the tools of my trade as wife, kitty momma, and  
Writer call for my attention to detail;

Here, the bowl of kibble to kitty I navigate to her messy space so Gracie may eat,  
Hubby stares on, hoping that he too would receive libations and refreshment for the  
Start of his own day,  
While writer (me) yearns to sprint out the door to our casita and my desk (my hidey hole) to  
Write, Reflect, Renew and Ruminates on LIFE in all its forms.

Reflections are streams of color pouring across the glorious morning sky, telling us  
What weather will come,  
How we should carry ourselves  
When we should reflect, renew, and take comfort in our rambling rumination on the  
Treats or Trials of life.

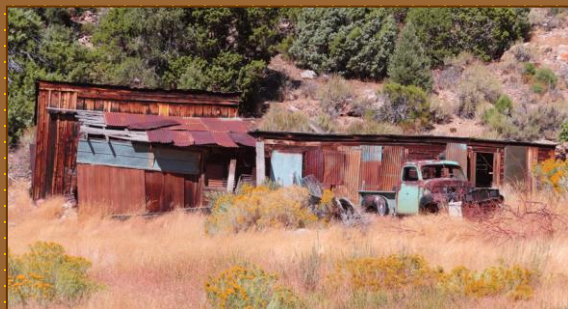
Forgive me my rumination, my distraction, and my deliberate thinking upon the life I live,  
Show me more, my soul cries  
Render me speechless and in awe of all  
God creates and Mother Nature graces with her natural gifts  
While my soul reacts to succor from Words revealed by the local pastor or a faithful friend

I take the words to heart, reflecting on how I may use them in my day.  
If a verse I must take, let it be from the Book of Ephesians where proclaims are made:

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."  
Ephesians 1:2 KJV

Blessed be! From me to thee. D.G. Smeall

*Copyright 2024 August*



# My Penwheels Memory

by Jaimie Bruzenak

We got together at Escapee gatherings—mostly Boomers for the live writing since several of us were Penwheelers; I think we called them writing circles. We picked a topic and wrote for 5-15 minutes then each read our piece aloud. There was supposed to be no critiquing or even reacting though generally people did give some positive feedback. What was so interesting to me was that people wrote in their own style. You were supposed to go where the energy was and keep writing. If you got stuck, you could repeat the last word you wrote until something popped in your head.

Myrna Courtney blew me away by writing fiction on these topics! If we had a topic like "red" we'd get so many different pieces. It was a great way to get to know other people. I miss that. Our groups were great sports and nearly everyone read their piece aloud. I've since tried this in other writing groups and more than half the group "passes" on reading theirs to the group. Others preferred to write on a topic ahead of time and share that rather than write spontaneously.

For me, the heart of Penwheels was getting members to contribute—both how-to pieces and creative pieces. The challenges were a great way though, as editor, I would get frustrated because many people wrote more than 100 words and didn't go back and edit. For me personally, editing it down to 100 words was both fun and challenging! If you submit something to a magazine or website and they say 300 words, they mean 300, not 301. It can take creativity and discipline to edit out adverbs like "very" or replace 3 words with one.

#

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 and working for Workamper.com and 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.



**Merriam-Webster**   
@MerriamWebster

Something interesting you might not have realized: a number of words in English are nouns when you stress the first syllable but verbs when you stress the second.

*[Many thanks to Jaimie for sending this!]*



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@MerriamWebster

"Always thank someone for a PREsent they preSENT to you."

"With that INSult, you inSULT my intelligence."



**Merriam-Webster**   
@MerriamWebster

SUSpect/susPECT  
CONflict/conFLICT  
PROtest/proTEST  
CONvert/conVERT

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Fall photos © Ellen Behrens





## Change (Part 2) (Concluded from page 8)

A Short Story by Donna Gates-Smeall

Without words, I nodded my head and let her go to the phone. At that point, the telephone jangled in its old-fashioned twangy ring. Shanna never got used to the new phones so she insisted on keeping the old rotary phone in black in her kitchen.

"Hello," I spoke into the phone, "Yes, it is I, Hannah. Yes, Wilson, she is gone. No, Wilson, we haven't gotten ahold of everyone yet. Yes, I know..."

I listened to his voice on the other end of the line and wondered how he would react if he knew I had just met the younger Shanna, the one he grew up with. I smiled to myself and thought, "Thanks, Gam...for loving us all."

Shrugging my shoulders in acceptance, I went back to listening to Wilson planning the service. Somehow, I knew they had found their peace before Shanna left. I knew I had found mine in that short visit she had with me.

#

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.

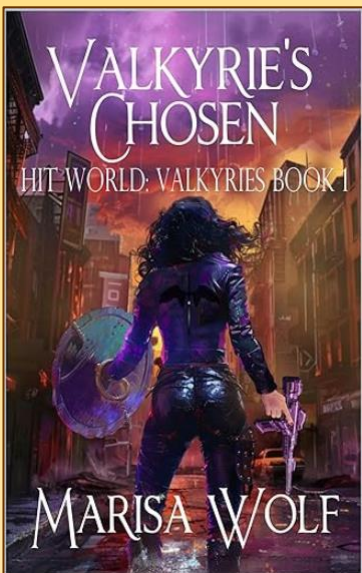


## New Book by Marisa!

You'd think publishing two books in a short period of time would mar the quality—not so with Marisa Wolf. Her second solo-authored book is fantastic (I just finished it)! Even if you don't normally read in this genre, you'll no doubt get caught up in this adventure because the main character is so snarky and brave and impulsive and smart. (Sort of how I'd like to be when I grow up.) Here's the official blurb:

*Bryn Siegmund has always been exceptional at her job as a top recruiter for Life Enders Incorporated. She's seen the best and worst the world has to offer. But nothing has prepared her for the challenge of her unexpected promotion: Director of the Valkyries Initiative. Her task is to assemble a team capable of facing interdimensional threats while she navigates a web of dangerous politics, treacherous allies, and powerful enemies. The Spider, a formidable criminal organization, is ahead of her at every step—targeting her and her fledgling team. Bryn has to rely on her instincts, her magic, and a team of questionable allies. The lines between friend and foe are blurred, and the stakes are deadly. Bryn's new role may cost her more than she ever imagined.*

Find out more here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0D9WWWXF2>



## Links

Indie authors out there, take heart! Things are looking better these days when it comes to getting your book on public library shelves. Read why in this short article: <https://booklife.com/news/authors/05/20/2024/breaking-down-barriers-to-library-circulation.html>

Wondering how to use Pinterest to market your books? See how one writer used it to attract freelance work: <https://makealivingwriting.com/pinterest-marketing-for-freelancers/>

Ever dream of staying in a library overnight? Well, now you can do that! Here's one writer's experience: <https://brevity.wordpress.com/2024/05/21/living-in-the-library/>

Renowned memoirist (and instructor thereof!) Dinty Moore (yes, that's his name) tells us all why and how we should use fictional techniques for describing characters to make those in our memoirs more real: <https://brevity.wordpress.com/2023/09/25/they-walk-they-talk/>

Ah! Have you seen a sign using quotation marks "incorrectly"? So has Bethany Keeley, and she's filled not only her blog but a book with very funny examples: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0081RLGOW>  
Click the "Read sample" button below the image to see a few of them. (Were those quotation marks used correctly, btw?)

Stuck in a rut with your novel? *Writer's Digest* offers "25 Plot Twists and Prompts for Writers": <https://www.writersdigest.com/be-inspired/plot-twist-ideas-and-prompts-for-writers>



## Poison Books?!?



You'd think hardcover books with an enticing but poisonous emerald green cover would be the stuff of fiction, right? Oh, no. It's real!

Between the 1840s and 1860s, tens of thousands of books were bound in a gorgeous emerald green. The only catch is that this color was made using arsenic. Although there were some accidental poisonings, the color was so popular that eliminating it would have cut sales, not something the publishers wanted.

These days, the Poison Book Project [[http://wiki.winterthur.org/wiki/Poison\\_Book\\_Project](http://wiki.winterthur.org/wiki/Poison_Book_Project)] is on the search for those books and others--not because of their value but because of their danger. While occasionally touching an emerald arsenic book can irritate your eyes, nose and throat, librarians and researchers who handle these books more frequently can suffer from additional symptoms, such as dizziness and nausea. Just don't lick the books!

So far more than 120 arsenical books have been identified, so if you love very old books and are especially attracted to those with bright green covers, you can request a specialized color swatch bookmark from the Poison Book Project. Oh, and wear nitrile gloves, avoid touching your face, and wipe down all surfaces after you're done—just to be sure!

**"Research grounds writing in reality. Every story must be believable—even the most speculative work—and research helps readers feel immersed in the world you have created for them."**

Christopher Stollar





# Werewolf

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 prompt: "What is a werewolf?" he asked.]*

It was getting close to Halloween and Fredrick had heard at school that one of his friends was going to dress up as a werewolf—he had no idea what that was but did not want to look stupid to this friends so he just said, "That is what I was going to be too! My mommy is making my costume today."

That night after dinner he asked "Daddy, what is a werewolf. Steve is going to be a werewolf for Halloween and I want to be one too."

Dad looked at Fredrick with a sly smile and said, "Freddie, you don't have to dress up to be a werewolf. You are one already—but I have not told you what it is or what will happen to you. It will take a few more years before the full transformation takes place. You know how some of the kids tease you because of the hair you have on your arms and cheeks?"

"Yes daddy" Fredrick replied "Why do I have all that hair and none of my friends have anything like it?"

"Well Freddie that is part of your being a werewolf. You know how I sometimes go out when the moon is full? And I don't get back until morning."

"Yes. Mommy told me that someday you would tell me where you go and what you do."

"Freddy tonight is not a good time to tell you. But, I will tell you the day will come when you will be able to "repay" your friends for making fun of you." Dad said, "As far as this Halloween is concerned why you don't just plan on going as superman like you did last year. There will be plenty of time for you to go out as a werewolf when you get to be a few years older."

Let me just conclude out talk tonight Freddy by saying when you learn of the powers you will have as a werewolf you will be amazed and you will be glad you did not pretend to be what you really are!"

"Okay, daddy, I'll be superman this year. But will you tell me what a werewolf is before next Halloween?"

#



ERIC GAY/ASSOCIATED PRESS  
**IMMIGRANTS LINE UP IN THE DINNING HALL** at the U.S. government's holding center for migrant children on July 9, 2019, in Carrizo Springs, Texas. A federal judge on Friday approved the Biden administration's request to partially end a nearly three-decade-old agreement to provide court oversight of how the government cares for migrant children in its custody.



Can you spot the goof in the caption?

*Give in to the temptation  
to share!*

**Deadlines are always:**

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

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

## What Do the Authors of *Little House on the Prairie* and *Dracula* Have in Common?

Laura Ingalls Wilder was in her 60s when she started writing her series. Bram Stoker didn't get *Dracula* published until he was in his late 50s.

Have you read the book or seen the movie "Where the Crawdads Sing"? Well, Delia Owens was 70 years old when that book, her debut novel, was published.

Can you see the trend here? If you're past 50 (or 60 or 70 or older) and wonder if it's too late to publish your book, do not fret. Many other authors, like Daniel Defoe (*Robinson Crusoe*, at age 59) and Frank McCourt (*Angela's Ashes*, at age 66), were more mature writers themselves.

So... "Nobody wants to read what someone my age writes" will not cut it as an excuse. Nope. Especially not here in the Penwheels BoF :)

Imperial County FOLLOW 15 Followers

One car caught on fire, another car hit a poll following crash

Can you spot the boo-boo?



*"I'm not following any kind of formula or program for myself...I'm just writing stories."*

-- Raymond Carver

{FYI: Raymond Carver was 51 when his first book (*The Big Sleep*) was published.}

## How Do You Autograph Your Books?

I always cross my name out and write it on the interior title page, adding a personal note at the top (if I can) and including the date and place I signed the book at the bottom. I heard years ago this was the best way to autograph a book, but a debate rages around this topic today.

Here's one take on it: <https://www.writersdigest.com/writing-articles/authors-cross-name-signing-book?>

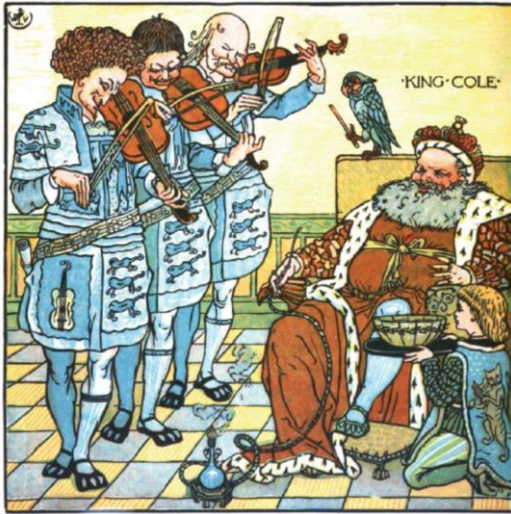
The best autograph I've ever received? Well, I've had books autographed by award-winning writers and folks who've had books turned into movies and stuff like that. But the best autograph I ever got was from Ron Carlson, who primarily writes short stories (and fabulous ones at that). I was driving him to the airport after his appearance at a writer's conference and he agreed to sign a book for me. He'd write, and I'd drive, then he'd glance at me, then he'd write a bit more.

I couldn't wait to see what he'd written, but first the airport, then the drive back to where I was staying for the conference. He started on the interior title page, then wrote "See page 165" with an arrow, then on that page made another little note, and finally, on the last interior page, he finished his inscription and signed the book.

How do you sign your books? Do you have an autograph from someone else you treasure? Tell us all about it! Send your responses to Ellen at [penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com) ☺



## Looking for Hard-To-Find Resources?



If you're working on something that requires dated material and/or hard-to-find older resources take a minute (or a few hours...! It's a rabbit hole....) to check out

[HathiTrust](https://www.hathitrust.org/) (<https://www.hathitrust.org/>). Read carefully their [use policy](#) so you won't inadvertently step into a copyright issue if you plan to use something you find. Otherwise, enjoy browsing!

## Did you spot the goofs?



ERIC GAY/ASSOCIATED PRESS  
IMMIGRANTS LINE UP IN THE DINNING HALL at the U.S. government's holding center for migrant children on July 9, 2019, in Carrizo Springs, Texas. A federal judge on Friday approved the Biden administration's request to partially end a nearly three-decade-old agreement to provide court oversight of how the government cares for migrant children in its custody.

Did you notice “dinning” should be “dining”?

Imperial County FOLLOW 15 Followers

One car caught on fire, another car hit a poll following crash

Did you notice “poll” should be “pole”?

## Prompts

These are actual ads. Write something using one of them—or both, combined, if you're looking for a challenge 😊

*Oldtown Flea Market*

*Buy • Sell • Trade*

*Also Open:*

*Amy's Covid Pig Eatery*

*Serving American & Filipino Foods*

### *Wayward in the Northwest*

*What if you were stuck in the woods? Could you survive?*

*In this 3-day immersive experience, you will learn to:*

- *Think and act appropriately in an emergency*
- *Be a leader & member of a team*
- *Prioritize your needs*
- *Build shelter and fire*
- *Eat what you forage and trap*
- *Source & purify all of your water*
- *And more...*

*No experience required! Enroll today*

We'd love to see what you came up with!

Send your results to Ellen at

[penwheels@yahoo.com](mailto:penwheels@yahoo.com) to share your writing!



# **Last Chance to Enter the 2024 Win-Win Contest!**

## **Special Anniversary Articles Especially Wanted!**

### **What is the Win-Win Contest?**

You win if your article is chosen and 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. **Deadline for the Winter 2024 issue is November 15.**

### **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 item is always of value.

### **When will winners be announced?**

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

### **What are the prizes?**

Previous winners have received \$5 or \$10 Amazon gift certificates or an EB Unique bracelet/cuff (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!***