



Write Connections

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The TAMPA WRITERS ALLIANCE is an organization of adult writers—amateur and professional, beginning and advanced—who share a keen interest in improving skills and resources. Its members, who number about 100, create works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry; as well as stage and screenplays. In addition to its monthly general meeting, the TWA conducts workshops in specific aspects of writing, provides free assistance to scholastic and literary groups, sponsors an annual writing contest open to all writers, and publishes a yearly anthology.

Fried Writer to Discuss Humor Writing and Publishing

Our next General Meeting will be held at 7:00pm on Wednesday, **MAY 5th**, in the auditorium of the John Germany Library, 900 Ashley Street, downtown Tampa.

Florida humor writer Dennis Fried, Ph.D., will discuss his humorous books and his independent publishing firm, Eiffel Press.

Memoirs of A Papillon: The Canine Guide to Living with Humans without Going Mad, purports to have been written by Fried's tiny brown and white papillon, Genevieve, who may accompany him to the meeting. Calling Genevieve's *Memoirs* "the funniest book ever written by a dog," Fried advises, "Read this book before your dog does." "Wonderfully witty," enthused *Pet Times* in 2000. "...a must for all dog lovers...."

"I got so jealous of Genevieve's success," says Fried, "that I wrote my own book, which just came out. *A Tongue in the Sink: The Harrowing Adventures of a Baby Boomer Childhood* is a humorous look at growing up in a small town in the 1950s, with reflections on the changing nature of childhood and on aging (besides 'ugh')."

Fried has published both books through his Eiffel Press and has done all promotion, marketing, and other chores. "I've learned a lot about publishing and its challenges," he says, adding, "I'll speaking about the history of both books, why I decided to self-publish, the challenges involved, and the economics of book selling."

Holding advanced degrees in physics and philosophy, Fried says he has "been laughed out of numerous careers, including college teaching, marketing, advertising, software development, and stand-up comedy." He lives in Sarasota with his wife, Katrina, and his "trainer," Genevieve.

MAY 2004 Renewals

EVA CRONE  **CAROL JONES**  **DENIS O'CONNOR** 

Members may bring their \$25 annual dues to the next General Meeting, or mail it to:

Frank Cáceres, Treasurer—34731 Double Eagle Court Zephyrhills FL 33541.

Members receiving *WC* via the US mail, your renewal date is on your label.

MEMBERS IN MEDIA

JEDD POPE won first place in fiction for her short story, *The Bus Ride*, in the Clearwater Branch of the National Penwomen 2004 Writing Contest.

KAL ROSENBERG's story "Hitchhiking on the Information Superhighway" was published in *Sunscripts* 2003. His poem "Remembering Everything" was published in *Poetica*—a journal of Jewish poetry—in Norfolk, VA. The *Clockhouse Review* will be running his story "Red Things with Sharp Edges" which was first submitted to the TWA contest (and was the 2003 2nd place Fiction winner).

FRANK CÁCERES's second novel, "*Chronic Nights*," has been accepted for publication by JoNa Books, a full-service, royalty-paying publisher. Estimated time to publication is one year.

Information for this feature needs to be sent to the editor by the 20th of each month.

Any man who keeps working is not a failure. He may not be a great writer, but if he applies the old-fashioned virtues of hard, constant labor, he'll eventually make some kind of career for himself as a writer.

Ray Bradbury

"...THE RIGHT WORD..." – JIM CHAPLIN

How often do we let the familiar phrase slip into our writing rather than express the idea with our own unique set of 'right words'? Phrases such as "big wig" as in, "everyone turned to get a glimpse when the big wig walked into the room," or "that lady is about as 'straight-laced' as you can get." Or 'easy does it', common phrases embedded in our subconscious, the use of which is often trite and actually robs the writer's writing of an opportunity to be fresh and creative. Where did these phrases or sayings come from? Here's the quiz: the origin of one of the above three illustrations you are about to read is absolutely false. Which one?

Big Wig comes from the time when bathing was only a twice a year occasion and, due to lice and bug infestations, women kept their hair covered while men shaved their head. Wealthy men could afford good wigs made from wool that could not be washed. To clean them they would carve out a loaf of bread, put the wig in the shell and bake it for 30 minutes. The heat made the wig big & fluffy, hence the term "big wig,"

Easy does it comes from 14th century England where Hezekiah Grey, a Yorkshire coal miner, developed black-lung disease and had to stop working in "the pits", as the mines were called. (Where the term, 'it's the pits' came from.) After his forced retirement, "Eezy", as his mates called him, began doing all sorts of odd jobs around town to eke out his meager living. So when any of the locals needed something done, they'd say... 'Eezy does it!'

Straight-laced is from the time women wore corsets that laced up the front. A proper woman would have her corset tightly tied and as straight as possible, and the term 'straight laced' was born?

Which one did I make up? One is an original 'from the writer's brain' while the other two are ones I read elsewhere. Just for giggles, email me which one you think is my 'original' at jpcflorida@hotmail.com.

POETRY WORKSHOP

The meetings are held at Barnes & Noble's south, near Kennedy at 7pm in the Café on the **LAST THURSDAY** of the month. The **MAY** meeting will be **5/27/04**.

Bring a draft entitled, "**AN ALCHEMY OF MIND**" – any poetic form, any length & any current piece you wish to share or have critiqued.

Contact the Coordinator Lark Underwood at the1lark@hotmail.com or go to www.tampawriters.org for more information.

THE CRITIQUE GROUP ---Warner Conarton, Coordinator

At the last meeting of the critique group, (As of this writing, that was on March 24th) we did our thing with four submissions. There were 21 people there, so by the time we got around the table all four times and heard rebuttals and arguments (friendly) it was time to go home. The four authors critiqued had, by that time, heard nearly 21 different viewpoints of their work, what was good and what could be improved. It's a very good and efficient system.

I was one of the authors critiqued and I was amazed at the commentary, both complementary and/or helpful suggestions, that plus all the little editing marks and notes on the copies of my manuscript which were handed down the table to me after the verbal critique. (Gosh-darn, I had thought it was all written so perfect, but then, don't we all.) What I received from the group, not counting the very generous encouragement, would have cost me a bundle and a half had I subscribed to a professional service.

Here's our line-up for April and May. 1. Al Lucas, Chapters 4 & 5 (The Bitter Pill), 2. Wendy Cousins-Savage (To be Drinking, Driving and Free), 3. Mario Bartolletti (A Little Too Perfect), 4. John Charles Miller (La Chispa), 5. Greg McColm (The Nature of Time), 6. Chris Battle (Writer's Poems), 7. Dorothea Kaletta (3 short-shorts), 8. Charles Greenwood (Itsy Bitsy Spider), 9. Robin Knowles (Giving Snook the Finger' from 'One to Nuthin'), 10. Charles Greenwood (Lost Sheep), 11. Chris Battle (It Tastes just like Chicken), and 12. Martha McIntosh (Never Satisfied).

Get in touch with me if you want to come by and I'll arrange to make you feel most welcome when you arrive. 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 7 pm, Barnes and Noble Book Sellers (North) Y'all come.

THE ART AND NECESSITY OF CRITIQUE: Part 1—How to Find (or Create) a Writers' Critique Group

by Hilari Bell

If you ever see one of my books that doesn't mention my two writers' groups in the acknowledgments, it's because I didn't get the acknowledgments turned in to the publisher in time. My writing groups have a profound impact on everything I write, I love them dearly, and I wouldn't be the writer I am today without them. But before you run out to search for a writers' group of your own, there are a couple of things you ought to consider: Am I ready to be critiqued?

When I first started writing, when I was struggling to develop my own voice and feeling insecure about getting ideas down on paper, I wasn't yet ready to be critiqued. Before you go looking for critical feedback (as opposed to someone who loves you and thinks that everything you write is brilliant) you need to reach a place where you can look at your work, realize that there are things that could be improved, and that someone else might see them more clearly than you do. You also have to be ready to evaluate comments, accept them when they're right, but also reject them when they're wrong. This is one of the reasons you should always try to get multiple opinions on your work. If you have only one, or a few critiquers, you tend to pay too much attention to their opinions. If you have multiple critiquers, you can listen to them argue--and if they all see the same problem you can be pretty sure that you do have a problem, even if your critiquers disagree on how to solve it. Finally, don't underrate the value of someone who loves you and loves everything you write--they have their uses.

How do I find the right group? These days there are endless sources for online critique groups--if that's what you're looking for, you can just get on the web and hunt. Personally, I prefer the face-to-face give and take of a group that meets in the flesh. If you're looking for one of those, any local writer's organization might be able to put you in touch with fellow writers. I found The Wild Women of the West and a few Great Guys through the SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators--www.scbwi.org) and the grandly named Denver Science Fiction Writers Guild (there are only five of us) through the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop -- www.burgoyne.com/pages/workshop. I've also heard of people finding/creating writers' groups out of writing classes, and even on library bulletin boards.

OK, that's how you find a group, but how do you find the right group? Oh, well that's harder. You might have to go through several groups to connect with the right one, and the group that's right for me might not be the group that's right for you. But I can tell you some things I think you should look for: The right blend of support and feedback. A group that does nothing but critique might as well be a business meeting. Part of the purpose of a writer's group is support; people with whom you can share news, rejoice in triumph, commiserate in failure, and just plain talk shop.

On the other hand a writers' group that offers nothing but support might as well be a social club. The main reason you're there is to figure out what's wrong with your work and how to make it right. You should also look for a group that offers the right blend of truth and necessary tact. If you leave a critique session ready to tear up your story and take up bricklaying, then you're involved with the wrong group. On the other hand, you should leave with the knowledge of exactly where your story needs improvement, and at least some idea of how to set about it.

And finally, don't overlook the option of creating a group instead of joining an established one. If you organize it yourself, with a couple of like-minded friends, you probably stand a good chance of getting a group that works for you. There are many practical concerns that a new group has to work out, such as where and how often to meet, whether to read work aloud or submit copies in advance. But that kind of thing is something each group has to decide for itself, and if the group produces the right kind of feedback to help you with your writing, that's what really matters.

I will add one other quick point--I've encountered a number of groups that insist that all members possess more or less the same level of experience. They have potential members submit a writing sample, or even require professional publication. That's up to the group, of course, but my feeling is that they're overlooking the fact that even a beginning writer may still be a skilled reader. And if he or she is made welcome, and hang around for a year or two, the writing will probably improve. One of my writing groups is nearing its 20th anniversary, the other is past its 25th--and both these groups welcome anyone who can give and take criticism without coming apart at the seams.

TWA Directory

TITLE	NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL ADDRESS
President	Jim Chaplin	813-835-4255	jpccflorida@hotmail.com
Vice President	Sandra Kischuk	813-935-7760	sjkischuk@juno.com
Secretary	Martha McIntosh	813-839-7277	martham@rapidsys.com
Treasurer	Frank Cáceres	813-783-3385	twa-treasurer@novel-guy.com
Member-at-Large	Cathie Astl	813-994-5455	cathieastl@hotmail.com
Critique	Warner Conarton	352-588-3228	warnerc@quixnet.net
Editor	Lark Underwood	813-908-3095	the1lark@hotmail.com
Publicity	Lucy Parker	813-996-1130	lvparker@cytex.com
TWA WEBSITE			WWW.TAMPAWRITERS.ORG

PINAWOR (Pinellas Authors and Writers Organization)

This writers' group meets each Saturday, 9:30 am to noon, at the Highlands Recreation Center Complex, 400 N. Highlands Avenue, Largo. Contact **Elenora Rose Sabin, 727-345-3376** or elanora36@yahoo.com

GENERAL FYI

- ✓ TWA meets each calendar month on the 1st Wednesday at the main Tampa library. The only exceptions are those first Wednesdays coinciding with a holiday, in which case the membership is notified in the newsletter of the alternative date/day several months in advance.
- ✓ The January meeting is a "writing workshop" & the February meeting is a staged reading of the winners of the Script category from the previous year's writing contest. February is also the month—every 2 years—TWA elects its new ExCom.
- ✓ The writing contest Awards Banquet is held in January to avoid the holiday crush & allow us better venues and prices. It is usually scheduled for the latter part of the month.
- ✓ To receive your free membership copy of THE WORDSMITH, our annual anthology, you must have been a member in good standing (paid up!) by the 31st of December of the previous year (i.e. to get the 2004 WORDSMITH, you must have joined by 12/31/03) and you must have "actively selected" to receive one. Contact Lark Underwood and "actively select" your copy. We only print a few archival copies beyond what we need for members, so if you do not let us know you want one, when it comes time, you'll have to either regret your lack of attention/effort or pay for a copy—if any are left.

Lifelong Writers, the membership arm of the *Florida Center for Writers*, meets 7pm to 9pm the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the MMH building at USF. Open to all writers and aspiring writers.
Contact **Martha Lakis**, at 813-974-8021 or mglakis@admin.usf.edu for more info.

PASAWOR (Pasco Authors and Writers Organization)

This group meets the 1st & 3rd Mondays, 12:30 to 3:00 pm, at the Pasco Art Council-5744 Moog Rd in Holiday, FL.

Tampa Writers Alliance *Write Connections*

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