

Write Connections

A publication of and for the **Tampa Writers Alliance**

Volume 20, Number 5, May 2005



Celebrating over Twenty Years of Service to Our Members and the Community

May Program - Gone Fishing



The featured speaker at the Wednesday, May 4th Tampa Writers Alliance general meeting will be outdoor writer Captain Fred Everson, owner of Tampa Bay Fishing Guide Service.

Working out of Shell Point Bait and Tackle, Captain Everson has been a professional fishing guide on Tampa Bay since 1995 and is the author of three books. *Catch Snook* and *A Bar Player's Guide to Winning Darts* are already in publication. His third book, *Fish the Flats*, is due out this spring.

A member of Outdoor Writers Association of America, Captain Everson has had his articles and photography featured in most outdoors publications including "Saltwater Fisherman," "Sports Afield" and "Florida Sportsman."

Everson's program will be centered on nonfiction writing for the great outdoors and on-demand book publishing. For more information of Captain Everson, visit his Web site at www.tampabayfishingguide.com.

The event begins at 7 P.M. in the auditorium of the John Germany public library, 900 Ashley Street, in downtown Tampa. Admission is free and is open to all interested people. No reservations are necessary.

Have you met Swift?

Swift, one of Pasco County Sheriff Office's Canine Corps senior members, demonstrated his talents at the Pasco County Homeland Security Symposium held in April. Imported from Europe, Swift is about to retire from full duties to the equivalent of a canine desk job - drug detection. Read more about Swift, his friends and co-workers and researching the nitty-gritty of law enforcement procedures as it applies to writing a thriller in "Researching the Wrong Side," one of our feature articles.



2005 CONTEST RULES

Rules and entry forms are finalized and available. Check the Tampa Writers Alliance at <http://tampawriters.org> or Blue Eagle Press at <http://blueeaglepress.com> to download, or email Jim Chaplin to arrange for a copy to be sent to you.

What's Happening and the President's Message.....	2
Critique Group Report.....	2
Poetry Group Report.....	4
Marketing Magic & Legal Loops.....	5
Travel Pic Tips.....	6
Internet Intel.....	8
Researching the Wrong Side.....	9
Commentary from the Shark's Den.....	10
Yea!!!! - Party Time.....	11

WHAT'S HAPPENING WHEN and WHERE

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 critique groups and workshops on 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. The Tampa Writers Alliance is a nonprofit organization, organized by and for volunteers interested in assisting others through education and support. Your knowledge and skills may help someone else improve as a writer.

Share. Become a volunteer today.

TWA Critique Group

Having a characterization problem with a story and need some advice? The TWA Critique Group's new protocols may be just the help you need. Get 30 minutes of intense feedback focused on a specific topic or if you want general comments, choose the traditional protocol and receive comments from up to 15 writers. The new protocols put you, the writer, in charge of the evaluation process so you get the help you need.

The group evaluates fiction, nonfiction, and even poetry. All genres are welcome. Some of our members are just beginning their writing career, others are award-winning authors, and some are professional writers. Consequently, each piece generates a wide spectrum of opinions. We give honest feedback in a positive and gentle manner designed to help you improve your writing.

The group meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month from 7-9 PM in the right rear of the Barnes and Noble bookstore at 11802 North Dale Mabry Highway (next to Piccadilly cafeteria). That's just south of Stall Road. If you see Borders, you're too far north.

If interested, email me at charles.greenwood@yahoo.com and I'll send you more information and the submissions for the next meeting. Please be aware that only TWA members may submit work for evaluation for the group.

I hope to see you at the next meeting!

Charles Greenwood - Coordinator

The Right Word President's message

I don't know about you, but sometimes I get a severe case of 'writer's block' when I sit down to write something of substance... or that *should be* of substance... like now. So here I am, President of the Tampa Writers Alliance, the duly elected and supposedly dedicated titular had of this... what shall we call it... group of like-minded people whose passions lie in producing the written word, and I can't seem to come up with a message that will inspire, stimulate, provoke, entertain or prompt you into action. I mean, after all, that is part of my job, isn't it? So each month I get to compose my prose to the tune of 300 or so words to accomplish one or all of the afore mentioned actions. (Right now I'm at 153 words - only 147 to go. Halfway there!) So I ask myself... what do I really have to say? Well, first of all, writing is fun... even when I don't think I have anything to say. But you know what? Once you get into it, you just might discover that in fact, you do have something to say, and that you never would have said it if you didn't sit down and start to write it. Like now. Hey, there *is* a message in this after all. Veiled as it might appear, the message is simply - sit down and write - see what will come - but above all, like Nike says, just do it. Just like you never know what's going to happen when you get up in the morning, you never know what's going to flow forth from your fingertips when you sit down at your keyboard. But unless you get up in the morning and sit down at your keyboard, it's definitely certain that one thing will happen - nothing. And another day will have passed without having written a thing. Gosh, that having been said, I'm up to 330 words. Don't want to wear out my welcome. See you next month. (353 words)

Jim Chaplin



Job Hunting?

Like to write, but would really like to write for pay?

Personal histories, ethical wills, family histories, memoirs, and autobiographies are becoming very popular items, especially for the 73 million baby boomers. **Superior Writing Services** is a member of the Association for Personal Historians and is looking for writers.

Applicants should email a resume and letter of interest to Kirt Dressler at info@superiorwritng.com.

Selected candidate must be friendly, enjoy all kinds of people, especially old people, be willing to drive to people's houses to interview them, possess interviewing skills (i.e. how to draw people out), be organized, dress nicely, and be at least a halfway-decent writer (writing sample required). Also required are basic computer, Email, internet, and typing skills.

Helpful—Familiarity with Adobe Illustrator or similar software—or willingness to learn. Design ability. To some extent, our design expert Eleanor can help us on individual client projects. But rep would need to learn how to scan in photos and documents and make everything look nice and ready for the bookbinder and/or printer. Mandy and Sherry can also help rep on this.

Candidate would need to familiarize him/herself online with Personal Histories and Ethical Wills.

Helpful—sales or marketing experience. But this is a very low-pressure sale. The publicity and advertising will produce people who are very interested and then it is mostly a process of establishing rapport and letting them choose which “package” of services they want.

At the moment, this is a straight commission position—it pays 30% on each job. The average job will be \$1,000 or more just for a simple printed product, so a \$300 commission per client. (Ethical Wills may be lower cost jobs, but those can be done very quickly). But many clients will want their Personal History in actual book form, so that could double their cost and our interviewer would then be liaison with a bookbinder or printer, producing more income on each job for the representative. Longer Histories, Memoirs, and books to be self-published could easily reach \$5,000 or more cost to client.

Candidate may be paid as employee or independent contractor.

Contact Sandra Kischuk at sjkischuk@juno.com for more details.

Attention, attention....

The following members are due to renew. Don't miss out on another exciting year full of promise and high expectations - please pay at the next meeting or send your check to the treasurer - see back page for address:

Mark Beyer
Allison Corsones
Jeff Corydon
Vee Dayton
Dominique DiCamillo
Rebecca Elliott
Bea Ferland
Edward Kurtz

James McEachern
Karen McKinney
Charrie Moscardini
Lucy Parker
Denise Passmore
Wade Wetherington
Michelle Welks

May 1 Writers Picnic RSVP

(This is an annual event held by our fellow writers across the Bay)

A reminder that all Tampa Bay area writers, their family and guests are invited to the Annual Writers Picnic, sponsored jointly by PINAWOR and the St. Pete Writers Club on Sunday, May 1 in Taylor Reservoir Park in Largo from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Shelter 5. Access is off SW 8th Ave west of Ridge Road. It's rain or shine, since this is a roofed shelter. Please email your interest, number attending and since attendees are asked to bring a dish to share, what you would like to contribute. You can bring your own utensils, but they will provide paper plates and plastic utensils. The clubs will provide coffee and soft drinks. The St. Pete writers always provide hot dogs and buns. Please RSVP to me and cc Miriam Goodspeed at KeeSpeed@aol.com, as she passed along the invite.

Steve Traiman at straiman@mindspring.com



Swift at Work

POETRY WORKSHOP

The Poetry Group will be meeting on the 4th Thursday of this month again. That will be on April 24th, 7 PM, at the Barnes & Noble Booksellers NORTH. That's just south of Stall Road on N. Dale Mabry. Stall Road is the first traffic light south of Fletcher if you are coming by interstate. Bring half a dozen copies of your poems so we can read along. You're welcome to request whatever desired response... critique or simply appreciation. Songsters are also invited. I will have my little player along in case you have stuff on tape or CD.

One doesn't have to be some great bard to join in. Lark Underwood and Ersula Odem are collaborating on poems in some obscure form called "Tanka," 5-7-5-7-7 syllables per line as I understand. This is one she (Ersula) submitted to the group about traveling on a train.

I have time to think
Now of this peaceful journey
Metal music calms
Motion massage feels so good
Planning my three months of fun

A correction from last month. Warner Conarton did earn the privilege of competing for the title: Poet Laureate, that is of Sol Magazine an E-mag on the Web, which to him is quite an honor. His six poems have been submitted to the competition, the outcome may be available next month. Angela Masterson Jones, one of our great TWA prizewinning poets has, I understand, conquered another competition. We all had a great time at the Hillsborough English Teachers Writing Contest reading. Probably a dozen of us were there at Jedd Pope's house doing the grading. What a chore, but how rewarding.

"Berry Picking" by **Angie Jones** finished 3rd in the 2005 Mount Dora Festival of Music and Literature poetry contest, and her personal essay "Fishing for Hummingbird" won 2nd place in nonfiction. Her poem "Any Room, Any Reason" and personal essay "Sole Surrender" were published in the 2004 *Sunscripts*. Angie's poem "Accidents Hoppin'" appeared on the cover of the Easter edition of the *North River News*, and she guest spoke at Myakka City Elementary in March celebrating poetry with puppets.

...And a report from Angie.....

"Things that are true about short poems are probably pretty much true about longer ones," Peter Meinke, Poet Laureate of St. Petersburg, began his last workshop at the Florida Suncoast Writers' Conference on February 5. A couple advantages of short poems are they're easier to publish because they don't take up much space, and they also lend themselves to snappy little witticisms.

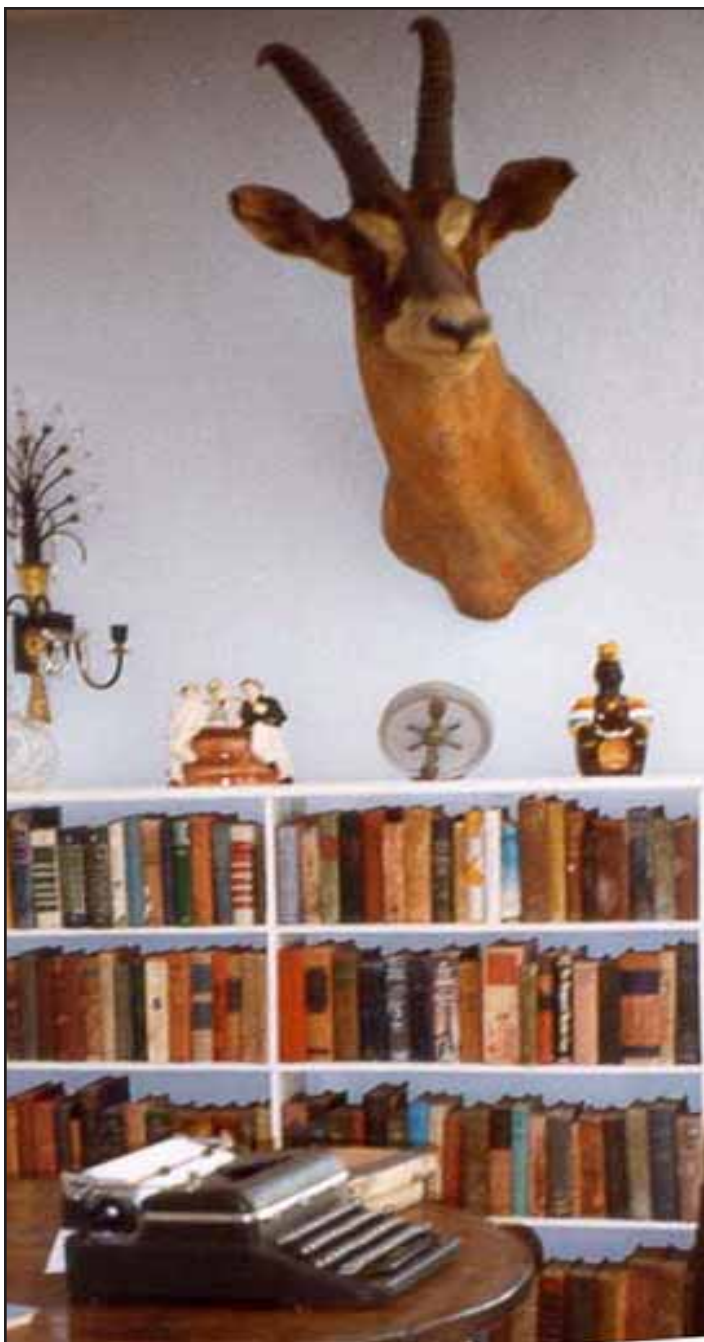
He recommends submitting short poems to all the little magazines and journals in your area, even if they only pay in 2 or 3 copies, for that's how he got his start in the 1960s. And squeeze into an envelope as many poems as a stamp will carry. His first major publication, in *The New Republic*, was a little poem called "Progress." Once that editor learned Meinke's name, *The New Republic* began publishing his longer poems—20 to 25 of them—over ensuing years. The lesson he learned was: Don't shortchange your short poems.

Because they're small they tend to be punchy, they open up a playfulness of language, and they're easily organized. Writers of novels and stories are jealous of poets because "the hardest thing about being a poet is what to do with the other 23 hours. But, truthfully, a lot of work goes into even a short poem because in short poems everything matters."

Meinke surmised that any good poem is trying to achieve two opposite things: to fulfill an expectation set up in the first few lines and, at the same time, to surprise. Poetry that doesn't surprise the reader in some way—by idea, by a word, somehow verbally, by a rhythm—doesn't work. Poetry is something you read more than once, so it must be liked right away, but it also has to contain secrets withheld until reread.

"You can pack all kinds of things into a short poem," said Meinke, "and good ones are more interesting the more you read them." He believes poetry is the best words in the best order. And with poetry you have to be willing immediately to "lie factually"—using better-sounding, better-looking words to suit your subject, even if they're not literally true. Poetry is about emotional truth that is memorable. "News that stays news." He will trade facts for sound often in his rewriting.

"Unlike the rest of your life, a poem you can totally control. . . . Writing poetry is the best thing a person can do," Peter Meinke proclaims. "It's not boring, and it's all yours."



Alex Haley said apply your seat to the seat. You're trying but your computer is a bit balky? Spell check doesn't always give you the correct word? Delete? Try an eraser.

Tools may not be your problem. This is Hemingway's Remington at his desk in his study in Key West. No cut and paste (except scissors and paste - the flour and water kind - a technique he was familiar with from his journalist days). Spell check involved the use of a heavy dictionary. Google? Try an encyclopedia or just good old personal experience.

For all of his talents and faults, perhaps Hemingway had the right idea. Write all morning, fish in the afternoon, and drink away the night at Sloppy Joe's, then off to Havana.

A pretty good life, eh? Just remember Alex's advice and don't skip the morning part.

Marketing Savvy

Writing a book is only about 20% of the work required to get it to the marketplace. A carefully crafted query letter addressed to an agent or publisher who is interested in your genre is essential. An agent should not charge a commission of more than 15% on domestic sales and 20-25% on co-agented sales.

There are a hundreds of ethical agents. Many are members of the Association of Author's Representatives. Check:

<http://www.anotherealm.com/prededitors/>

<http://www.sfw.org/beware/agents.html>

Online places to look for an agent? Try:

<http://www.writersmarket.com>

<http://www.writer.net/>

<http://www.writer.net/agents.html>

www.writers-free-reference.com/agents/

<http://www.everyonewhosanyone.com/agus1.html>

Literary Market Place and Jeff Herman's Guide to Literary Agents are invaluable printed books. Check your local library.

Want to find out more? If you weren't at the last meeting, there may be a few handouts left over from the April general meeting - if you get there early enough on May 4!

Sandra Kischuk, Professional Writer and Coach

www.LivingBeyondLimits.com

I change lives.

Protecting Your Intellectual Property

Key Points

- Registering your copyright is one of the most important, if not the most important, step an author can take to protect his or her work of original authorship.

- Form TX is the U.S. Copyright Office form used for literary works, including short stories and poetry. Use it, Form TX is your friend.

- Neither ideas not titles can be copyrighted, but for original works of authorship, such as books, short stories, screenplays, etc., the author can apply for registration of the copyright.

- Be VERY careful of 'works made for hire.' Such employment means that you, the author, will not receive credit as the actual author - the person who has hired you will be considered the author for purposes of copyright and ownership.

Kevin D. Astl - <http://www.lawyers.com/kevindastl>

Quick Course In Travel Photography

“A picture is worth....” Well, you know the rest of the line, and believe me, travel editors know it too. That’s why photos take up so much space in travel magazines. When I buy a travel guidebook I almost always pick the one that has the most pictures—I want to see what a place looks like. Surprisingly, few travel writers are also photographers. That means travel editors usually have to go to two sources to put together a complete article. If you’re pitching a travel article it can only improve your chances of getting it sold if you can also provide good

For digital camera shots, shoot in your camera’s largest-file/highest-resolution image size. If it’s strictly for a web site you can get away with shooting in a medium or small resolution image size. But for giving digital camera images to a magazine or newspaper, it’s always best to give them too much rather than not enough. Ideally they want the image to be large enough to fill a page (up to 8X10) at 300 dpi, and they are sticklers for sharp detail and rich color. Digital imaging may have turned the photography world on its ear, but the basics of tak-



photos. With the automated features in today’s cameras, and with just a little knowledge, it’s easy to take great pictures to compliment your travel writing. In addition to your camera, you’ll need a couple things: a tall sturdy tripod, a remote shutter release (unless your camera has a shutter release timer), and—if yours is a film camera, several rolls of slow speed film (rated 50 or 100 ISO preferably—100 is more readily available). For film, most magazine and newspaper photo editors prefer to scan slide (positive) film rather than negative film. But recently, digital has become their medium of choice.

ing good photographs remain the same—digital or film. You are still just opening the shutter to let light into the camera (on to either a digital sensor or on to a strip of film) to capture an image. A photographer has two general initial decisions to make: How to compose the picture, and how to expose the picture. Let’s address exposure first. Whether you are shooting with the simplest point-and-shoot or the most complex programmable, when you click the shutter your camera is balancing only three variables:
1)—What is the film’s speed rating (or the “equivalent” film speed set on your digital camera)? The slower the

film speed rating, the longer it has to be exposed to light in order to get an image. But, the slower the film, the less grainy and more detailed the picture will be.

2)—How wide will the shutter open up? Will it be just a pinhole size, or will it open wide—perhaps as big as a quarter? That’s called aperture or F-stop. Don’t ask me why but the aperture numbering system is inverse—the larger the number, the smaller the opening. An F-stop setting of 16 or 22 is a very small aperture. An F-stop setting of 3.5 or 2.8 is large.

3)—How long will the shutter stay open? Just for a split second—maybe $1/500^{\text{th}}$ of a second, or maybe for a long time— $1/15^{\text{th}}$ or maybe $1/4$ of a second? That’s called shutter speed (or exposure time).

To get the exact right exposure—in other words: so the picture is not too washed out (over exposed), or not too dark (under exposed), these three variables—film speed rating, aperture, and shutter speed, have to compliment each other. A faster shutter speed will require a larger aperture. A smaller aperture will require a slower shutter speed. Happily, today’s cameras, with their auto-exposure metering, will do most of that work for you. (What about focusing, you ask? I’ll get into that when I talk about composing the picture.)

All right, enough with all the technical stuff. Just tell me how to take a good sellable travel picture, dog-gone-it!

Okay, lets take a scenic travel shot. First you have to pick the right time of day to shoot. You want the sun to be relatively low—that means shooting early in the morning or late in the afternoon. And you want the sun behind you and the camera, so that it lights up your subject.

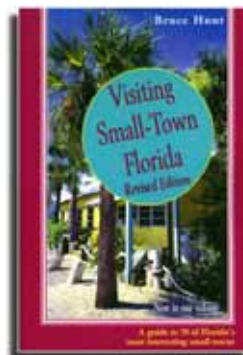
Have you ever taken snapshots that just didn’t seem to have any of the life or color that you know your subject has? That’s probably because you took those pictures in the middle of the day, when the sun was high. Color is nothing but light reflecting off an object and back to your eye (or to the “eye” of the camera). The more direct the light reflects back, the more vivid the colors will be. When light reflects back at an oblique angle (like at high noon) you get a lot of shadows and glare, and very poor color reflection.

Next, mount the camera on a tripod. If your camera has a “landscape” program exposure setting, use that. If not, you can duplicate what that program does by setting it to “aperture priority”. This will allow you to pick the F-stop (or aperture) that you want, and the camera will automatically pick the correct shutter speed to match it. Pick a small aperture—F-stop 16 or

F-stop 22. The smaller apertures (and corresponding slower shutter speeds) give your picture greater “depth of field”. That means objects up close in the foreground, as well as your main subject in the middle, and objects in the background, will all be in sharp focus. Faster shutter speeds (and corresponding larger apertures) would put your main center subject in focus, but the foreground and background would be out of focus. That would be fine for shooting a race car speeding by, but not good for capturing a scenic landscape or main street. You have to use a tripod because those smaller apertures will give you shutter speeds too slow to handhold the camera. Depending on the amount of sunlight, it might shoot at $1/30^{\text{th}}$ of a second, $1/15^{\text{th}}$ of a second, maybe even $1/4$ of a second. One more thing that can help—if your camera has a timer feature, use it. The camera will delay a few seconds before clicking the shutter and that will eliminate any camera shake from your handling. Or if your camera accepts one, use a remote release.

Shoot a variety of compositions. Focus on something prominent in the middle of your main subject. Many outdoor scenic shots require a wide-angle lens to fit everything in frame. Also, since magazine pages are vertical, be sure to shoot plenty of vertical format shots (your tripod will need a rotating head to do this) in addition to horizontal shots. Magazine covers are vertical—shoot some with blue-sky header space at the top. Take some shots that include interesting objects in the lower foreground in addition to the main subject behind in the center. If you can, try to shoot wide scenics from an elevated position. I shoot from a ladder sometimes. For close-ups use a medium to telephoto length lens, and pick interesting and colorful items. Magazine and newspaper editors love vivid colors. Shoot as many pictures as you have time (or film) to shoot. The more pictures you have to choose from, the better the odds of getting that one great shot.

One last thing—only submit your very best tack sharp shots—throw away the blurry ones. You’ve got to edit your photos like you edit your writing—very critically.



Bruce Hunt
Author of
Visiting Small Town Florida,
Revised Edition

Online Research Resources

Lucy V. Parker, lvparker@cytex.com

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF GOOGLE

Google's own guide to its services is extremely detailed and can be downloaded as a 150-page book – but why download it when it's available online. For convenience, it's organized with different tracks for novices and experienced users.

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

“Googling to the Max” is a new online tutorial from the University of California at Berkeley Library. Quite technical, but factual and informative.

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Google.html>

OTHER GOOD SEARCH ENGINES

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

One of the newer search engines. Delivers your information in three sections – **Results**, or relevant web pages; **Refine**, or suggestions to narrow your search; and **Resources**, or links to collections from experts and enthusiasts.

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

Alltheweb.com offers advanced and customized options and also allows you search for news, pictures, video, and audio files.

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

The web's oldest directory is now powered by Google's crawler-based technology instead of its original human editors. If that's the case, you might ask why use Yahoo? But Yahoo enhances Google's listings with information from its own directory which may make search results more readable and it also offers shortcuts – quick ways to look up area codes, zip codes, gas prices, maps, weather, movie show times, and other commonly-needed information.

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

Microsoft's MSN Search provides a blend of human-powered directory information and crawler coverage different from other major search engines. Suggestions built largely by editors may guide you into making a more refined search. You may also be able to consult Microsoft's Encarta encyclopedia with two free hours of access whenever you click an Encarta link from MSN Search.

<http://www.infopeople.org/search/tools.html>

Little known, California's Infopeople search page combines leading search engines on the same page with additional help and advice. The Infopeople Project is designed to improve the quality of information access to the people of California by upgrading the skills, resources, and tools available through libraries. Fortunately, though the web, it's available to everyone who wants to use it.

<http://dmoz.org/>

DMOZ, the Open Directory Project, is the largest, most comprehensive human-edited directory of the Web – constructed and maintained by a global community of volunteer editors. It was founded in the spirit of the Open Source movement and prides itself on being the only major directory that is 100% free.

<http://lii.org/>

The Librarians' Index to the Internet operates under Federal funding and is administered in California by the State Librarian. It leads you to many obscure online sources that general search engines might miss.

Specialized search engines for government

<http://www.firstgov.gov/>

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

Specialized search engine for genealogy

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

Specialized search engine for finding people

<http://www.journalismnet.com/people/>

A FEW OTHER GOOD RESOURCES

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

Wikipedia is a free-content encyclopedia that anyone can edit, and it's a fascinating place to browse. A **Wiki** is a [website](#) that allows users to add content, as on an [Internet forum](#), but also allows anyone to edit the content. “Wiki” also refers to the [collaborative software](#) used to create such a website. The name was based on the [Hawaiian](#) term *wiki wiki*, meaning “quick” or “super-fast.”

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

The investigative guide to Internet research offers a wide array of resources for journalists and other writers, including an online course in using Google.

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

Heavy on science, technology, and medicine, this site provides a great deal of information and also directs you to selected sites where you can learn more.

Your local library. If you have a local library card, you can probably access the online resources of your local or regional library. For example, I was recently able to consult *Books in Print* online through the Pasco Library System for a writing project. The Pasco site even offers life on-line reference with their “ask a librarian” service.



Have you started your contest entry yet? Money, glory, accolades from your peers; agents, publishers banging at your door; phone ringing all night with offers from Hollywood. Yeah, maybe it is too much trouble. Just wait till next year. You'll be even smarter then.



RESEARCHING THE WRONG SIDE

TOP: Pasco County Commissioner Pat Mulieri, also a creative writing professor at PHCC, escapes with the help of the Pasco SWAT Team.

BELOW: Ghillie is a variation of Gillie, a male attendant to a Scottish Highland Chief, or a fishing and hunting guide. Ghillie suits are used by law enforcement and military snipers for concealment.

Do you know what a ghillie suit is? Can you describe busting in a drug dealer's door and the person next to you getting shot in the forehead? Know how to negotiate with a kidnapper and rescue a car-jack hostage?

Good fiction has a basis - somewhere - on fact. Locales, climate, dress, customs, all influence setting. Language, dialect and speech patterns, along with physical characteristics, define the outward appearance of characters, assisted by body language, habitual behavior and emotional reactions for the internal characterization.

Writing fact? Then the need for research is obvious.

Writing fiction? How does this huge body of information affect a fiction writer?

Believability. Fiction authors are liars. To get readers to suspend belief and buy into the author's (hopefully entertaining) lies, the author must create an alternate world, one so realistic that the reader is willing to accept it as reality - at least for a little while. Using facts and descriptions garnered from research and personal experience, an author builds this alternate world using familiar ways and realistic settings, recreating a universe that may be different from "real" reality, but so good that the reader *wants* it to be the real one. I recently graduated from the Pasco Sheriff Citizens Police Academy and at least know what is ghillie suit is, the general procedures for hostage negotiations, and, most importantly, played a little catch with Swift - bonding, I hope.

You also have extensive personal experience, some more than others. The key here is if you have kept a journal (written, photographic, or a combination) of your experiences so they can be drawn from and used to create your "new" world... or have a remarkable memory.

By and large accurate memories of personal experience is the best reference, because they includes tastes, smells, all the tangible and physical sensations, but also are enriched by the intangible emotions evoked by events and personal interaction with other people and cultures.

But what if you haven't been there, done that?

Now it's time to turn to the Internet and the reference books. The locale descriptions in my thriller *Behind the Green Water* were based primarily on personal experience, (NSA, the Pentagon, Egypt, Saudi, nukes, missiles) but also on satellite imagery of Iraq (Irbil) and maps (Bashur airfield, Sinjar Mountains). Sure, I relied on personal memories from time spent in the Middle East to describe cultural attitudes, but also dug deeply into T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* for details of geography for places I have not been and historical events that happened before my time.

I am now researching a new thriller set on the Florida west coast, justifying a dive into local law enforcement procedures, boating, fishing, migrant communities, retired Greyhounds; all the elements I want to bring into the new story in such a way that a reader from one of these communities will read and say, "*Si, es verdad.*" My new-found knowledge of local law enforcement hopefully will keep a local cop from throwing the book down in disgust - or Swift from biting my butt.

Everything does not have to be factual, just believable. Look closely - a sniper lurks in the pile of brush. Be nice and Swift will sit quietly in the kindergarten class, but, teeth bared, tear into a bad guy on command. All facts from real life that may make your pretend universe real for your new friends.

Writers best friends - I call them readers!

jmt





April was a “back to school” month for me. “Volunteered” by a fellow writer, I found myself at Dunedin High School in the company of a mayor, councilmen, members of the Sons of the Revolution, retired and active teachers, and folks of many other ilks; all gathered to judge entries in the Pinellas County High School History Fair. Alan Kay, author of a highly acclaimed series of young adult historical novels, coordinated the activities as part of National History Day, turning apparent mayhem into a well-organized assembly of eager student competitors and wide-eyed judges. The Fair exuded all the tension of a Super Bowl, with the top placers moving on to the State competition!

To start with, I didn’t know such a thing existed. Turns out the bulk of the Fair was a series of displays - you know, the historical equivalent of erupting volcanoes. The theme was communications, so the exhibits ranged from secret communications by spies to the use of morse code to the development of modern telecommunications.

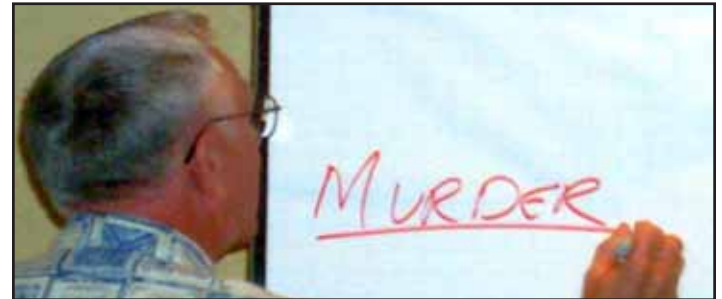
Fortunately, Alan didn’t sign me up for the exhibit judging - since I am part of communications history, being a retired Army Signal Corps soldier. Instead I had the privilege of judging written papers - essays in all but one case. The great aspect was that they were all well written and interesting. The tough aspect was that the judges had to pick winners - and, by definition - non-winners.

Believe me, there were no losers!

One paper recounted the history of the passenger pigeon in wartime, from the Prussian siege of Paris in 1870 to the trenches of the World War; another recounted the astonishing feats of the Peale family of artists who painted the portraits we all recognize daily of Washington, Jefferson and other great dignitaries of our Nation. An engaging fictionalized memoir of Sacajawea, the Shoshone Indian woman translator for the Lewis and Clark expedition, was so well written as to suggest a level of authenticity rivaling the expedition journals.

Reviewing these papers was a reminder of the fruits of research, the subject of several articles this issue. The major criteria for judging scores were the source, accuracy, and documentation of references, both primary and

secondary. If you write nonfiction and don’t know the difference, you need to do some research!



Next up was MURDER!

My questionable friend and fellow TWA member, Lucy Parker, hooked me up with Terry Sollazzo from Wharton High, who is also President of the Florida Scholastic Press Association. I found myself at the Association State Convention and Competition at the Tampa Hyatt in the midst of bustling interviewers and interviewees, interchangeable every few minutes, complete with video cameras and notepads, competitive journalism hard at work.

I presented two workshops - “IT’S A MYSTERY: The Fundamentals of CPSS - Character, Plot, Setting and Style in Writing Fiction” and “WHICH WAY NOW: Action Plots that Make Exciting Movies” as a bit of a change of pace for the student (and very professional) journalists. Both faculty and student members attended the workshops where we had chance to create a mystery - this time the murder of an undercover FDLE agent, thrown off a balcony complete with forensic clues, suspects and a dangerous and devious villain, solved by the intellectual and beautiful sister of the victim. Thank goodness they got poor José, the boyfriend, off the hook. I though he was headed for old smoky for a while!

The next workshop included outlining and the usefulness of the Syd Field screenwriting paradigm in plot development.

Two different and grand days. All a reminder the more you can share with our future writers, the better subsequent generations will be led, informed and entertained.

Give a little bit - you always get more in return.

Party Party Party Party...

Get ready for the

Tampa Writers Alliance

SPRING 'NEW MEMBERS' PARTY

Sunday, May 15, 3:30 - 7:00pm

at Sandra Kischuk's Party Central

2107 W Fore Drive, Tampa

Just off Armenia

Check out the map on our Web site,

www.tampawriters.org

under May 15 Party

TWA provides the 'juice'

(really good beer, some nifty wines and splendid soft drinks)

Oh, yeah, and our world famous

Giant Shrimp Bowl,

filled to the brim with actual dead-ready-to-eat cold shrimp

Plus... Cheeses of the World, succulently spread on a genuine 18th Century plastic tray surrounded by your favorite crackers... and so much more. You know, like olives, pickles, snaky things.

New TWA members who have joined up since October, '04, just bring yourself and a guest...

'Old' members are invited to bring a guest and, if you'd like, a 'pot luck' dish - appetizers, main course or desserts.

Let us know that you're coming...

call Jim at 813-835-4255 or email your reply to jpcflorida@hotmail.com

Pinawor, Pinellas Authors and Writers Organization, meets each Saturday at the Highlands Recreation Complex, 400 N. Highland Avenue, Largo, from 9:30 to Noon. Contact Elenora Rose Sabin at 727-345-3376 for more information.

St. Petersburg Writers' Club meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Thursday of each month at the Piccadilly Restaurant, 1900 34th Street N., St. Petersburg.

Editor
Write Connections
23745 Oakside Blvd
Lutz, FL 33549-6904

DIRECTORY

2005 ELECTED OFFICERS

President Jim Chaplin 813-835-4255
jpcfiorida@hotmail.com
Vice President Sandra Kischuck 813-935-7760
sjkischuk@juno.com
Secretary Marc Yacht 727-868-1016
myacht@tampabay.rr.com
Treasurer Frank Cáceres 813-783-3385
twa-treasurer@novel-guy.com
Member-at-large Cathie Astl 813-994-5455
cathieastl@hotmail.com

APPOINTMENTS

Publicity Lucy Parker 813-996-1130
lvparker@cytex.com
Write Connections . John Taylor 813-948-7747
WC@tampawritersalliance.com

WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

Critique Charles Greenwood 727-733-2186
charles_greenwood@yahoo.com
Poetry Warner Conarton 352-588-3228
warnerc@quixnet.com

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Tampa Writers Alliance is a nonprofit, self-help support group for aspiring and published writers of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, scripts and plays. Annual membership dues are \$25 and include the monthly newsletter, *Write Connections*, and one copy of the *WordSmith*, our anthology of annual contest winners.



To join or renew, please make your check out to Tampa Writers Alliance and mail to:

Frank Cáceres
34731 Double Eagle Court
Zephyrhills, FL 33541



Original material © J. M. Taylor; Copyright of quoted material remains with the authors.
This edition of *Write Connections* published by Blue Eagle Press,
an imprint of Taylor Communications, <http://TaylorCommunications.BIZ>