



Issue 30

Arizona Authors Association

February/March 2024

Index

Editor’s Note	Page 1
President’s Message	2
Association Leadership	3-4
Outgoing President’s Report	5
AAA Benefits	6
Digest Submission Guidelines	6
Recent Events	7
Upcoming Events	7
Tucson Festival of Books	8
Congratulations to our Members	9-10
Free Ink from Story Monsters	11
Poets’ Corner	14
Jack Hawn - How to Interview Celebrities	15
Mark Walker - Million Mile Walker	16-17
What Are You Reading?	18
New Book Releases	19-20
Kevin Gundlach - Puzzle It	21-22
Cherie Lee - The Road to Imagination	23
Daniel Dickinson - Building a Galaxy	24-25
Robert Ronning – The Siren Call of Music	25
Janet Alcorn - Where in Arizona?	26
Penny’s Two Cents	27
AAA Literary Contest	28
Invitation to Join AAA	29
The Last Word	30

Editor’s Note

I’ll confess to a couple of major panic attacks when it dawned on me just what I had taken on when I agreed to edit this newsletter. My predecessor, Kathleen Cook, had given broad hints (as she is now President of our organization, I hesitate to call them complaints) about the immensity of the task and the massive time-suck it represented. But, tech-challenged though I be, in my arrogance I perceived it as an opportunity to shine.

Bring. It. On.

I suddenly found myself swimming upstream through the deluge of information this enterprise demands. I held my breath through wave after wave. It kept coming. Holy flapjacks, you mean there’s more? Are you bloody serious??

You know those lawyer shows on TV where the prosecutor drowns the defense counsel in a tsunami of files? Yup.

Fortunately, I have inherited a dedicated army of scribes willing to produce a column every couple of months. With these folks and others talking me off the ledge every few days, my blood pressure and chest pains have subsided a bit. As their suggestions, written pieces, and community information slide effortlessly into place, I feel the ol’ arrogance returning.

Penny’s first principle of showbiz has always involved sequins. My mantra: “Give them something shiny to look at.” Turns out I was right—I think I can shine as your editor. Thanks for the opportunity!

(Penny’s website: www.pennyorloff.com)

Unless expressly stated, Arizona Authors Association, including its newsletter staff, neither endorses nor takes responsibility for the opinions expressed in this publication.

Send editorial correspondence and newsletter submissions to pennyorloff@me.com

President's Message

New Beginnings

Hello, everyone.

In my first column as President, I'd like to thank everyone who voted in the Arizona Authors election. As I start my new term, I am extremely lucky to have Jane Ruby as my Vice President, and grateful beyond measure that she has agreed to continue as Literary Contest Coordinator. She's a powerhouse of knowledge and energy, and together, we will increase not only membership, but also the number of reasons why members choose to be a part of our thriving organization.

My thanks go as well to Penny Orloff, a multi-talented whiz who stepped in as Editor-in-Chief of the *Arizona Authors Digest* and the *Arizona Literary Magazine*, and in a host of other tasks as a Board Member. She saw a need and she filled it. Our own longtime columnist, Mark D. Walker, has also stepped up to assume a Board Member position. With his extensive expertise in running nonprofits, we now have the kind of talent and skills that I have always hoped we would acquire. I would also like to thank Vijaya Schartz, our Facebook administrator and Blog manager. We wouldn't have a presence on social media if not for her.

Thanks, too, to the irrepressible Toby Heathcotte who, despite negotiating multiple health issues, has decided to remain on the Board. Kyle Patton continues to serve as our Forum Director (www.arizonaauthors.org/forum), and I deeply appreciate his service. Together, we are committed to making 2024 the best year ever for the Arizona Authors Association.

The Arizona Authors Literary Contest reflects that commitment. We are adding more and better prizes than last year. The PDF submissions proved popular, so we will continue with them. If any of you have trouble converting your doc files to PDFs, please write to me at faerland@yahoo.com and I'll be happy to walk you through the process (trust me; it's easy). We've reintroduced cash prizes for Best of Category entries, with more categories than before. Please check out the contest ad in this issue of the *Digest*. I think you'll like what you see!

In the coming months, we'll add more features to the website, including an archive of both old and new issues of the *Arizona Authors Digest*. On the resource page we'll add educational videos to help our authors learn all aspects of their craft, including the all-important (and often neglected) marketing and distribution aspects. Check our resource page often; you never know when we'll add something to enrich your writing career.

The Arizona Authors Association has faced tough times, but we've held the line on costs. We will do our best to keep membership fee increases to a minimum and will also offer half-off specials for immediate household members. If you have a spouse or child who writes, please consider the advantages of this offer. Family members will earn their own professional web page on our website, where the traffic we generate far surpasses most authors' websites. They will also earn the right to advertise their books, short stories, articles, and achievements in the *Arizona Authors Digest*.

While some things will change, as is inevitable with new leadership, the basics will not change. We are committed to the legacy of Boyé De Mente who, with David Rich, founded this organization in 1978. Boyé was never one to turn down a challenge, nor was he satisfied with the ordinary or mundane. He wanted this organization to become the best literary association in the USA and I think, somehow, his spirit is nudging me in the right direction to achieve that goal.

Thank you all for being a part of this wonderful association.

Peace,

Katy

Association Leadership

President and Web Administrator - **Kathleen Cook**



Kathleen Cook is a copywriter/editor who operated her own editing service for many years before retiring in 2018. She served as an editor for the Open Directory Project during the Internet's early days. An alumnus of Rio Salado College, she joined the Arizona Authors Association in 2009 and served as its proofreader from 2014-2016. Katy edited the *Arizona Authors Association Digest* from 2019-2023 and joined the Board of Directors in 2020. She currently serves as the Association's President and web administrator.

Vice-President, Treasurer, and Literary Contest Coordinator - **Jane Ruby**



Award-winning novelist, essayist, and short story writer Jane Ruby served for several years as a judge for the Arizona Authors Association annual literary contests. She has directed the Association's Literary Contest since 2019. A former Secretary of the organization, she has most recently performed in two capacities as both the Contest Coordinator—mercilessly enlisting her daughters as judges—and as the Treasurer of the Association. Once a research chemist, she has transformed her technical expertise into presentations for elementary and high school students.

Secretary, Digest Editor, and Literary Magazine Editor – **Penny Orloff**



Penny Orloff has 25+ years of non-profit arts organization management and grant proposal writing experience. From 2008-present she has worked as non-profit arts organization consultant, grant writer, and/or development associate for Los Angeles Ballet, Mt. Wilson Institute, Skylight Theatre, and others. She served as Managing Director and subsequently Development Director for LA's award-winning Rogue Machine Theatre (2008-2012); as Producing Artistic Director of Seattle's Radost Folk Ensemble (1999-2001); and as Executive Director of Chaspen Foundation for the Arts (www.chaspenarts.org) since 1991.

Continued on next page

President Emeritus and Historian – **Toby Fesler Heathcotte**

Toby joined Arizona Authors Association in 1996 and became active in a critique group. She took on the annual Literary Contest and hosted the first Contest Awards banquet in 1999. From 2005 to 2015 she served as President, assisting on the organization's first two websites. She returned to the presidency from 2021-2023. She is delighted to pass the leadership to excellent new officers, and continues with the board as statutory agent, providing support and historical context.

Board Member and Nonprofit Consultant – **Mark Walker**

A former Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala, Mark has dedicated over 40 years to managing and raising funds for nonprofit organizations like Make-A-Wish International. Mark is a member of PEN America; a founding board member of Advance Guatemala; and served as former CEO of Hagar USA, and President of both the Greater Arizona Association of Fundraising Professionals and Scottsdale North Rotary, receiving the "Service Above Self" Award from Rotary International.

AAA Forum Director – **Kyle Patton**

Phoenix-based editor, writer, journalist, and photographer Kyle Patton studied English and journalism at Scottsdale Community College and ASU. He has worked for a variety of publications and newspapers, including *The Arizona Republic* and *USA Today*. For eight years he has served as an associate editor for two national medical magazines. Kyle works as a manuscript editor, ghostwriter, and freelancer. He is a member, volunteer, and occasional presenter for PEN America.

Facebook Administrator and Blog Manager – **Vijaya Schartz**

With thirty titles published to date, Vijaya Schartz writes action adventure laced with sensuality and suspense, in exotic, medieval, or futuristic settings. Her books have collected many five-star reviews and literary awards. She makes you believe you actually lived these extraordinary adventures among her characters. Her stories have been compared to Indiana Jones with sizzling romance, and she takes that as a compliment anytime. She writes to entertain.

Outgoing President's Report

In 2023 our members enjoyed participating in the literary contest, literary magazine, the *Digest*, our website, the banquet, the forum, and our Facebook page.

The *Digest* affords members an opportunity to get publishing credits for writing columns, to display their photos, and to promote their books. Thanks to Kathleen Cook, our website continues to provide members and the public with individual webpages, a forum, links to previous workshops and other pertinent resources. Our former president, Vijaya Shartz, runs our Facebook page.

Although the AAA Literary Contest harvested 138 entries in 2023 under the stewardship of Jane Ruby, we encourage even more participation. Everyone who attended the Literary Contest Awards banquet at Bottega's Ristorante in Glendale had a wonderful time. Penny Orloff hosted the banquet, and Kebba Buckley Button captured the event with outstanding photos. We are fortunate that Jane Ruby will continue in her role as contest coordinator. While our new approach to the contest worked pretty well, we've tweaked some things for this year's contest. We hope you'll find the changes useful and appropriate. Be sure to enter to help yourself and our association.

The *2024 Arizona Literary Magazine* had a new editor, Penny Orloff. Cover photo by member Linda F. Radke. It's very professional and beautifully done. You can order copies by going on our website.

We did not participate in book fairs as an organization this year; however, some of our members participated independently. Neither did we have a booth at the Tucson Festival of Books. A decision is yet to be made about our future participation.

I'm proud to announce 199 total members now. All who owe dues will be contacted individually about payment. We've changed the way we work renewals for new people; they will have their renewal dates calculated from the date they joined.

As of November 30, 2023, we had \$25 in our savings and \$16,047.29 in our checking accounts at Desert Financial.

Thank you all for voting. Now that the election votes have been counted, I offer my congratulations to our new officers and board members: President Kathleen Cook, Vice President Jane Ruby, Editor-in-Chief Penny Orloff, Board Member Mark D. Walker, and yours truly,

Senior Board Member Toby Heathcotte



All that I hope to say in books, all that I ever hope to say, is that I love the world. –

E.B. White

Tucson Sunset Photo by Cara Crowley-Weber All permissions granted

Arizona Authors Association Membership Benefits and Digest Submission Guidelines

Please send your news and articles in Word, Notepad, or Wordpad. Pictures may be gif, png, or jpegs. Pictures smaller than 2"x4" cannot be enlarged without deterioration. All submissions are subject to light editing/proofreading. You will be informed in advance of publication if extensive edits are needed. The deadline for all features, articles, news, and submissions is **March 10**. Late submissions will be held for a future issue. Please send submissions to: pennyvorloff@me.com.

Membership Benefits

Annual Literary Contest – An opportunity to showcase your work, and the possibility of earning awards that will enhance your reputation as an author. Contest is open to fiction, nonfiction, short stories, poetry, Young Adult books, and children’s picture books. Do you have an older book that never got the recognition it deserved? Relaunch and renew interest in it through our “Oldie but Goldie” category.

Online Book Fairs/Other Events through AAA Zoom account.

The Digest – A bimonthly newsletter and guide to workshops, events, and activities - many of them free or low cost - designed to hone your skills as a writer. In addition, both our Digest and our blog offer advice, suggestions, and insight to reinforce your expertise.

Book Releases – Books released within the previous six months (or about to be released) receive a free, full-page ad. Promote your work and increase your visibility with a minimum of expense and effort. We’d love to advertise your new work in our next issue.

Free Digest Advertising under the Arizona Authors Association banner. One of the greatest benefits of Arizona Authors Association membership is the opportunity to reach others with your advertisements. At present, members may submit a quarter-page ad for author-related services without cost.

Our “Congratulations” Page is designed to report your accomplishments, to applaud your efforts, and inspire other members. Let us know what you’ve been up to!

Submissions to the Digest

Features – We welcome original, previously unpublished articles between 800-1200 words to motivate, educate, and inspire writers, enhance their skills, assist in publishing/promoting their works, etc. (longer or shorter submissions will be considered).

What Are You Reading? – Share your current reading adventure in 200 words or less. Tell us what you like or dislike about a book written by anyone except yourself, to help other members in their quest for new reading material.

Road to Imagination – Your finished original stories of 800 words or less based upon the previous issue’s story prompt. This ongoing exercise is a fine way to practice your craft. Try it!

Jokes and Quotes – Jokes or quotes (200 words or less) on the foibles of writing, editing, or publishing.

Arizona Landscape Photos – We are always on the lookout for inspiring space fillers for our Digest. If you send a photo, please be sure to credit the photographer and state that you have obtained permission to use the photo.

Writing Related Events – We will be happy to list any upcoming writing-related events, meetings, workshops, book sales, book signings, etc., across the state or in nearby regions as space permits.

Professional Services Ads – If you offer editing, proofreading, coaching, or other literary services, submit a print-ready quarter-page jpg or pdf ad. This benefit is provided at no cost to members in good standing.

Apologies to **JoLee Kennedy** and **James Heath**, both of whom were inadvertently omitted from the 2023 year-end list of AAA contributors. We wish to thank them both for their service as AAA Literary Contest judges.

Recent Events

Patricia L. Brooks made a return engagement for her healthcare client at the Fairmont Princess Hotel on January 23. She goes to the group to run a book club for their attendee spouses. This was a private event, but it should be noted she was asked to read and discuss with the group Ly Tran's book, *House of Sticks*. Patricia can be reached on her website, Brooks Goldmann Publishing Company, LLC, or through text at 480-250-5556, or by email at patricia@plbrooks.com

Scottsdale Society of Women Writers presented Dr. Laura Bush at their December 13 meeting. Digital marketing expert Terry Ambrose was the SSWW guest on January 31, speaking about artificial intelligence as it relates to writing, publishing, and marketing.

Global Connections Television (GCTV) host Bill Miller interviewed **Mark Walker** for a third time, discussing book banning in Arizona and "The Making" of Mark's forthcoming book. GCTV airs on UN TV and at universities around the world. Like Mark, Miller is a returned Peace Corps Volunteer. They were on the Partnering for Peace Board for several years. The interview aired in mid-January. To access the talk, click [HERE](#).

In January, the Board of Directors of Arizona Authors Association decided that outgoing President **Toby Fesler Heathcotte** should carry the lifetime title of President Emeritus. In that role she will continue to offer the Board the benefit of her extensive experience and wisdom with strategic advice on all aspects of the workings of the association as we move forward into a new era. Additionally, with her lengthy support and tireless dedication to building the organization over many years, Toby will act as AAA Historian, preserving the legacy of our founders.

New AAA board member **Mark Walker's** review of one of our newest member's books, *The Wind in the Elephant Tree* by Earl Vincent de Berge, has been published in the *Midwest Review's* January issue of "Reviewer's Bookwatch" and will be on their website for the next year. Mark's reviews appear in the **Million Mile Walker Review** in our newsletter, Goodreads, Amazon, and Walker's website, which includes over 55 book reviews.

Your intuition knows what to write, so get out of the way. – Ray Bradbury

Upcoming Events

Scottsdale Society of Women Writers president **Patricia Brooks** announces upcoming meetings:

February 28: SSWW member Maria Crimi Speth, an intellectual property attorney, will talk about laws pertaining to writers, authors, and photographers.

March 27: Deborah Ledford—a Hillerman Sky award finalist, screenwriter, and novel writer of psychological suspense thrillers—will be the featured speaker for SSWW.

April 24: publications marketing expert Courtney Schauben Haik will be the speaker. Schauben is a ghost writer, freelance writer, and works in public relations. For more information regarding SSWW, please see www.brooksgoldmannpublishing.com

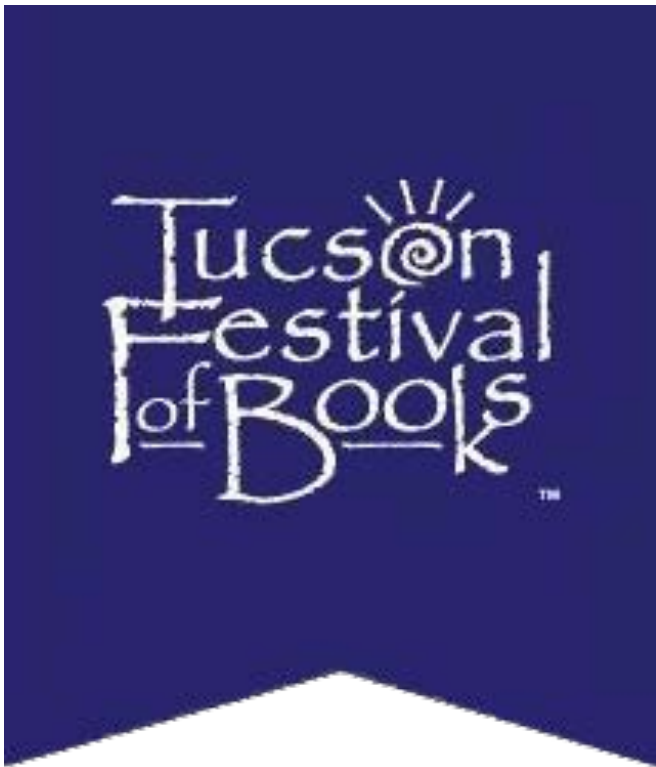
Donis Casey's monthly series of author essays, *Tell Me Your Story*, (<https://doniscasey.com>) brings successful authors to share their life experiences and tell how those events have influenced their writing.

February 20-29: NY-based author Tim Maleeny (<https://timmaleeny.com/>). His work: *The Cape Weathers* mysteries ("...smart, snappily written, energetic mysteries starring an engaging hero"-*Booklist*); the comedic thriller, *JUMP* ("a perfectly blended cocktail of escapism"-*Publishers Weekly*). His short fiction appears in several major anthologies and has won the Macavity Best Story of the Year Award.

March 20-31: Jeffrey Siger (<https://jeffreysiger.com>), an American living on the Aegean Greek island of Mykonos. The former Wall Street lawyer abandoned his career as a partner in his own NY City law firm to write mystery thrillers. His Andreas Kaldis novels explore serious societal issues confronting modern day Greece, for which he receives an impressive number of death threats; he seeks to improve that number with posts about Greece every Saturday on the *Murder is Everywhere* [blogsite](#).

Scottsdale's 3rd annual Desert Foothills Book Festival has officially kicked off! There are three openings on the Organizing Committee. For more information on how you can bring a love of reading to the Valley, please contact **Caren Cantrell** at caren.cantrell@gmail.com

The annual Tucson Festival of Books returns to the University of Arizona campus on Saturday and Sunday, March 9 & 10. All exhibits are open to the public free of charge. For more information on the festival, go to: www.tucsonfestivalofbooks.org



Tucson Festival of Books 2024

University of Arizona Campus

Saturday, March 9, 2024, &
Sunday March 10, 2024

9:30 am – 5:30 pm
TucsonFestivalofBooks.org

All exhibits and events open to the public
Free of Charge

Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people, citizens of distant epochs, who never knew one another. Books break the shackles of time — proof that humans can work magic. – Carl Sagan

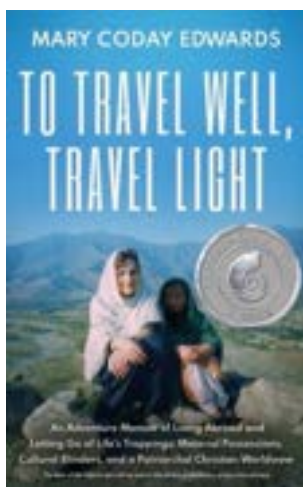
Congratulations!

Patricia L Brooks, author of three memoirs and a soon-to-be-published nonfiction, self-help book on writing memoir, will once again be teaching her workshop—Write the Memoir You’re Afraid to Write—for Arizona State University. Summer session is four Saturdays in July, 10am - noon. The four-week Fall session is not set at this time. Both these are non-credit courses. Please contact Patricia via text 480-250-5556 or email patricia@plbrooks.com for more details on the workshop and to be on the tentative attendee list. More information will be available in the coming months.



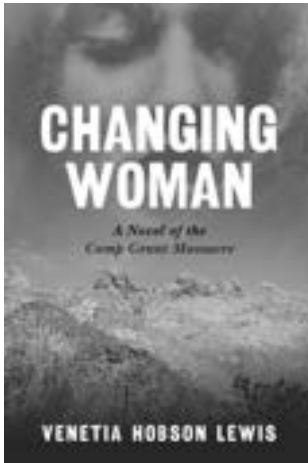
Jack Hawn’s 2010 memoir, *Blind Journey – A Journalist’s Memoirs*, has been updated and republished. The book recounts highlights of Hawn’s career including Muhammad Ali title fights, boxing at the 1984 Olympics, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr, and other celebrities until his retirement in 1991. Of *Blind Journey’s* 2010 edition, the New York Times Book Review wrote: “Inexperienced and beyond his control, Jack found himself deep into the world of journalism, covering sports and entertainment spanning 43 years, half of those years employed by the Los Angeles Times.” The review quoted a Readers Favorite comment: “This is a charming book, written in a laid-back style, as if the author is inviting the reader to walk down Memory Lane with him. Amusing and entertaining anecdotes pepper the text, bringing well-known names and personalities to life.” At age 94, and now unable to travel, Jack must give up ownership of his beloved Sedona Summit time share after 32 years. The property is available for exchanges at hundreds of resorts worldwide. Priced to sell. Call Jack or Mary Beth at 623-584-3677.

Janet Alcorn’s short story, “The Fourth Man,” won 2nd place in Arizona Mystery Writers’ 2023 Jim Martin Memorial Short Story Contest. “‘The Fourth Man’ was inspired by my desire to see more older women in crime stories that aren’t cozy mysteries,” says Janet. “I fiddled with the idea of an elderly main character, and Victoria Patrick, 81-year-old former darling of B-movie Westerns—who describes herself as ‘Annie Oakley with double-Ds’—marched onto the page, struck a pose, and proceeded to embarrass the hell out of her daughter.” Read the story free online [HERE](#). More about Janet at <http://www.janetalcorn.com>.



Award-winning author **Mary Coday Edwards** has received an Artist Opportunity Grant through the Arizona Commission on the Arts to develop a workshop and a study guide for the second part of her book, *To Travel Well, Travel Light. An Adventure Memoir of Living Abroad and Letting Go of Life’s Trappings: Material Possessions, Cultural Blinders, and a Patriarchal Christian Worldview*. Find it [HERE](#). Part 1 tells the story of the joys and pitfalls of living and working abroad with children in tow. Mary, her husband Mike, and their two young sons moved to Peshawar, Pakistan, to help their Afghan friends rebuild their country after the Soviet departure in 1992. In Part 2, Mary narrates the crumbling of a conservative, patriarchal, Christian worldview that no longer served her and the building of one based on her soul-driven values and goals. The workshop and study guide follows Part 2. Watch for the announcement of the completion of this next writing project!

Continued on next page



Changing Woman, A Novel of the Camp Grant Massacre, a historical fiction novel by **Venetia Hobson Lewis**, published by University of Nebraska Press, Bison Book division, and released in June, 2023, was a finalist for Best Western Fiction in the 20th annual American Book Fest Awards. It was long-listed for the Goethe Award and is short-listed for the Laramie Award, both in the Chanticleer International Book Awards. The story was inspired by a true tale set in Arizona Territory in 1871. Plagued by Apache attacks, men from Tucson took matters into their own hands and on April 30, 1871, slaughtered 150 Apache women and abducted at least 32 Apache children. Ms. Lewis’s fictional characters interact with historical persons: What the men’s wives in Tucson said and did about the massacre is the premise of *Changing Woman*. For more about Lewis’s work, please see <https://venetiahobsonlewis.com>

An article about **Patricia Brooks** and her Scottsdale Society of Women Writers was featured in the January 5 issue of *Scottsdale Progress* newspaper. Access the article [HERE](#).



“My determination to complete this three-book historical fiction series and share my stories with the world defies the notion that age should dictate the scope of one’s aspirations.” Well into her 70s, **Karen Lynn Klink** resolved to complete and publish her *Texian Trilogy*, along with “a treasure trove of manuscripts that have found a home in the recesses of my computer.” The first book of the series, *At What Cost Silence*, launched in November, 2023, to positive reviews. Ashley Sweeney writes: “Oozes with deep southern charm and boiling point angst as [Klink] breathes life into a colorful cast of mid-19th century Texans on the cusp of the Civil War. Her descriptive language, lively dialogue, and swift pacing enhance this multi-faceted narrative.” Another review, from Charlotte Whitney, states: “The writing is masterful... Kudos to the author for this rich, evocative tale.” The novel is available at amazon.com and other outlets. Find more about Karen at <https://karenklink.com>

Multi-Award-Winning Writer **Marilyn June Janson's** piece, “The Shunning,” appears in the Winter 2024 edition of *Persimmon Tree*, a literary magazine. Read it [HERE](#).



Sales of **John Floyd's** *The Expendable*—independently published in August 2020—passed 20,000 copies as of January 1, 2024, including paperback, hardback, e-book, and audiobook sales. A retired physician, over a long career he lectured and published articles, essays, and book chapters, including two-dozen scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals. With medicine behind him, John resurrected and published his long-simmering first book, *The Expendable*, a true story from the opening months of WWII in the Pacific. “The people in this book are no longer with us,” writes John, “though I was fortunate to speak to several of them over the years, most extensively the central character of this tale, CWO4 Charles Beckner, my father-in-law for 38 years.” The book was a finalist in the Eric Hoffer Book awards, a nonfiction winner of the Arizona Authors Association 2020 Literary Contest Prize, and an Amazon #1 Bestseller in multiple categories.

Free Ink from Story Monsters



"My life's mission is to get excellent books in the hands of as many kids as possible. Story Monsters Ink is an incredible resource for teachers and librarians and parents—anyone at all—who shares that mission. Through feature stories about talented children's book authors and illustrators and kid-friendly book-inspired activities, Story Monsters Ink does a wonderful job of bringing books to life and introducing kids to the joys of reading for fun. I urge you to pick up this magazine. You'll love it!"
 - Judy Newman, Chief Impact Officer, Scholastic

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For book submission guidelines, email cristy@storymonsters.com.

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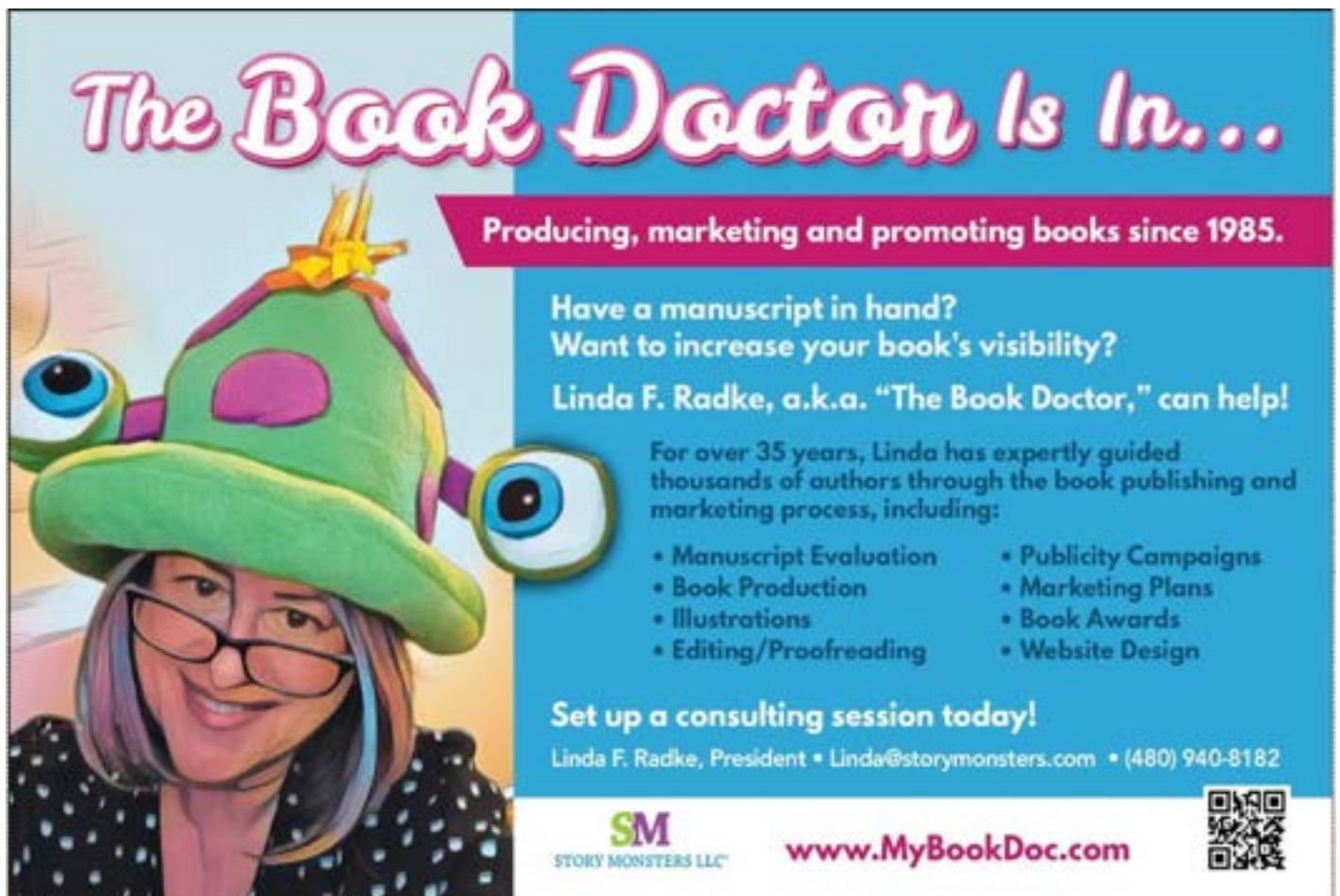
Cisco, a feral donkey who lives behind Penny's Goodyear house. Photo by Charles Long. All permissions granted.




PEN AMERICA ARIZONA

Join like-minded people for literary conversation, to share your projects and to support the Arizona writing community at PEN America's Arizona chapter events. Founded in 1922, PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to support free expression in the U.S. and worldwide. Current and past PEN members include Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, John Steinbeck, Barbara Kingsolver, Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison and many other prolific artists.

Arizona Authors Association member **Michelle Beaver** launched the Arizona chapter of PEN America in April 2022. Since then, the chapter has hosted events at Changing Hands Bookstore, Grassrootz Bookstore, Palabras Bilingual Bookstore, downtown Phoenix restaurants, and several other locations. Speakers have included poets, journalists, best-selling authors, Arizona Sen. Christine Marsh, *The Arizona Republic's* famed columnist E.J. Montini, a global human rights attorney, etc. Pen America is now collaborating with groups such as ASU's Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing, where Michelle serves as a teaching artist. The coming year will include more great panels as well as social events that feature complementary appetizers and drinks. PEN membership is not mandatory for attendance. If you'd like more information, please contact the founder and director of PEN America's Arizona chapter, Michelle Beaver, at: Michelle.L.Beaver@gmail.com.



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Poets' Corner

A poet is somebody who feels, and who expresses his feelings through words.

This may sound easy. It isn't.

A lot of people think or believe or know they feel—but that's thinking or believing or knowing; not feeling. And poetry is feeling—not knowing or believing or thinking.

Almost anybody can learn to think or believe or know, but not a single human being can be taught to feel.

Why? Because whenever you think or you believe or you know, you're a lot of other people: but the moment you feel, you're nobody-but-yourself.

To be nobody-but-yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight, and never stop fighting.

As for expressing nobody-but-yourself in words, that means working just a little harder than anybody who isn't a poet can possibly imagine. Why? Because nothing is quite as easy as using words like somebody else. We all of us do exactly this nearly all of the time—and whenever we do it, we're not poets.

If, at the end of your first ten or fifteen years of fighting and working and feeling, you find you've written one line of one poem, you'll be very lucky indeed.

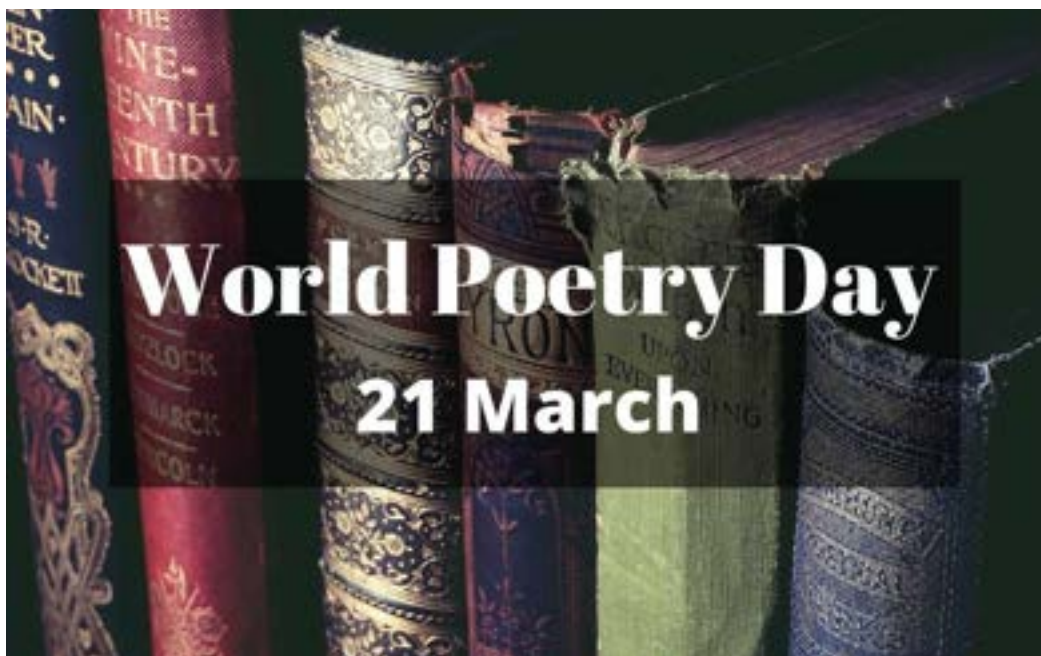
And so my advice to all young people who wish to become poets is: do something easy, like learning how to blow up the world—unless you're not only willing, but glad, to feel and work and fight till you die.

Does that sound dismal? It isn't.

It's the most wonderful life on earth.

Or so I feel.

e.e.cummings



How to Interview Celebrities

by Jack Hawn

Penny Orloff, the new editor of the AAA Digest, thought this subject might be of interest to members, so I Googled it. Surprise! The Web must have several thousand suggestions. It never occurred to me there are so many options. At my age, I don't want to start another book. So, I'll just focus on how **not** to interview a celebrity, if that singer is Eartha Kitt or anyone like her.

Even though I'm old enough to remember Eartha, I had never met her before my wife and I were ushered into her dressing room where she was preparing for her performance at the Vine St. Bar & Grill in Hollywood.

Wearing a drab, unflattering, wrap-around robe and smudged sneakers, sipping red wine and smoking a cigarette, Eartha Kitt was far from a glamorous celebrity.

Her hair was pinned up at weird angles, and a makeup artist was darting in and out with brushes and eye pencils between her words—no simple task. Kitt's words often came with machine-gun rapidity, particularly when the subject was heavy.

I had arrived with a list of questions I was anxious to ask Kitt, who was noted for delving into controversial issues, particularly racial issues.

Having just finished editing the article I had written about Eartha more than 40 years ago for the Los Angeles Times, I'm going to lift a few paragraphs from "*Nostalgia: Stars of Yesteryear*," my current project nearing completion.

Before typing a word of my own, I decided to quote a poem Eartha had composed that morning. It was a perfect start for the article—an angle that hopefully would hook my readers. It did, at least, hook me.

A published author working on her third book, Kitt said she writes something every day, "even if it's nothing." Her poem was something. It impressed me.

"I am not white enough to pass, and I am not black enough to be. I'm caught in between. But still I have to be me."

I don't recall my response to the poem, or perhaps a question about it, but whatever came out of my mouth should have been left on a back burner...way back. It was an uncomfortable few moments. I thought the interview had concluded before it began.

But there was so much more she wanted to express, mostly racial inequality from using kitchen doors to perform in Las Vegas to breaking rules in South Africa. She remembered drinking champagne on stage, then passing the glass to front-row spectators, black and white, each taking sips and passing it on.

"It was not permitted," she said, "but I did it. When you break a precedent, the precedent is broken."

Okaaay...so what came next? The short reply: a flood of other admirable examples of how she would have liked to change the world. But it was almost show time. My wife and I found our reserved, up-front table, ordered drinks and soon, there she was—a glamorous celebrity.

Almost magically, her appearance and personality had changed as effortlessly as changing gears.

Makeup in place, hair suitably styled, a sexy, black-sequined gown and heels replacing the drab robe and sneakers, Eartha Kitt batted her lashes and began purring those familiar sounds heard for decades.

And I learned something of value that night: Save the tough questions for last, folks.

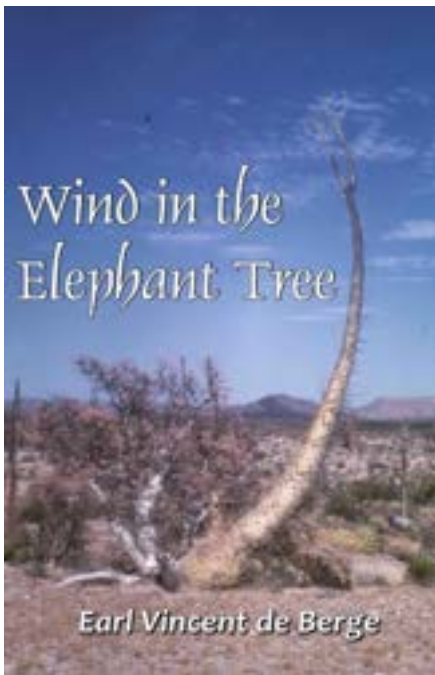


Born in 1930 in Nebraska, Jack Hawn later spent four years assigned to the army's public information offices. In civilian life, he then found work as a copyboy at a Hollywood newspaper, was paid \$5 to review plays and nightclub acts, and—a year later—filled a sports desk vacancy. Working for the LA Times, Jack Hawn's journalism career covered sports and entertainment. He earned extra income as a television dramatist and wrote TV and radio scripts for sportscasters. During his 43-year career, he covered Muhammad Ali title fights, boxing at the 1984 Olympics, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr., and other celebrities until his retirement from the LA Times in 1991. His books include [*Blind Journey: A Journalist's Memoirs*](#) and [*Insomnia: Two Wives, Childhood Memories and Crazy Dreams*](#)



The Million Mile Walker What We're Reading and Why

By Mark D. Walker



Arizona native Earl de Berge's third book of poetry is an Ode to his wife, Suzanne. Most poems are love poems or valentines to the life partner. Most of his poems are about his wife—whom he met in college and married just after she graduated—like this one written in Tucson in 1965:

Suzanne Beguiles Me

*To me, it is the richness and
Kindness of your mind
That beguiles my intellect.
From your caring, tender touch,
My heart grasps the fullness of
Your grace and beauty.
The two combined
Are a greater gift
Than I deserve.*

Writer, photographer, and poet, Earl de Berge was educated at Antioch College (BA) and U of Arizona (MA). A political scientist, he founded the Behavior Research Center, created the respected Rocky Mountain Poll and was its editor for 35 years. Earl and Suzanne split their time between Arizona and Guatemala, where they founded the nonprofit Seeds for a Future.

As I mentioned in my October column, "I was surprised to learn that he started writing in 1959 and is publishing an autobiographical novel laced with poetry and photos about his adventures as a young man in the Sonoran deserts of Baja California, Mexico, and Arizona, *A Finger of Land on an Old Man's Hand*. As a high school senior, he came across Chinese poet, Li Po, noted for his elegant romantic verse. Earl was soon writing about nature, the environment, cities, and social issues; his imagination was fueled by his travels through Central America, the Sonoran Desert, and the Andes. "Everything I experience has potential for a poem—even the increasingly dreadful business of politics."

As with much of his writing, this book is replete with elements of poetry, prose, and several photos that make up the author's literary adventures. He begins the book with the image of an elephant tree in bloom, harkening back to his 20s when he "rough-necked my way through wilderness deserts of Mexico with several friends," and came to the realization that neither he nor anyone else "is the center of the universe..."

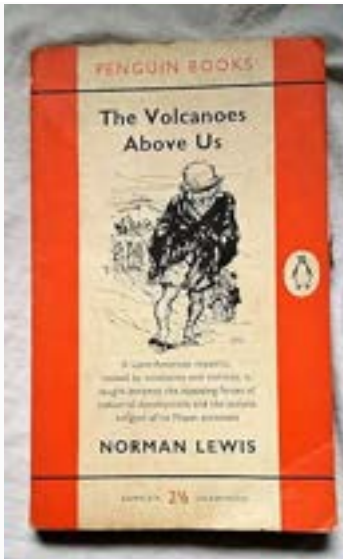
My favorite section of the book focuses on a place we both admire. "Guatemala and its people are dear to us," he writes, "and I have written about what I saw and assessed during those years. But Guatemala is also a place where we had time to dig deeper into why we loved each other." They purchased a home on Lake Atitlan to relax and be together, later to sell it to form "Seeds for a Future," which provides training for rural women in the region of Choccolá on the South Coast.

The book includes many outstanding, colorful photos beautifully reproduced by the publisher, Cyberwit.net. This eclectic mix of poems and stories makes for a rich literary experience and reminds us that "finding a new language and someone to speak it with" makes all the difference in life.

Read my entire review [HERE](#).

Mark's column continues on next page

Always be a poet, even in prose. – Charles Baudelaire



I first heard about *The Volcanoes Above Us* from Ryan Murdoch's podcast, **Personal Landscapes**. The segment was titled, "Norman Lewis: The 20th Century's Greatest Travel Writer." In it, Ryan interviewed Norman Lewis' biographer, Julian Evans. The podcast reveals what made this author and this book unique. Watch it [HERE](#).

Lewis was brought up in a bizarre family situation and didn't have access to the education or other advantages many travel writers of that period had. However, he did have an instinct to be in the right place to capture traditional ways of life on the brink of modernity, with an unerring eye for the absurd, making his writing enjoyable.

The author wrote a satirical novel about one of the great social divides in Guatemalan society, the gulf between the Mayan Indigenous community and the Europeanized, Spanish-speaking "Ladino" population. His fictional depiction of some of the absurdities and lack of respect for the Indigenous community is notable, considering Mayans represented over 50% of the population...

The story takes place outside of Coban in Alta Verapaz where, as I mentioned in my Goodreads review, "beautiful women [were] produced by the union of the German planters with the pick of the local Indian women."

He depicts a society torn between an internal and external revolution and the conflicts between the traditional Indian labor force and American industrialization, which was mediated by transitional dictatorships that shifted with the wind and foreign corporations. David Williams is the narrator and accepts a bogus military assignment to recover his coffee plantation, which he lost due to land reform.

Williams was tasked by a new dictator's plans to persuade the Chilam Indians that their "industrial peonage" would be to their advantage. At one point, one of the characters refers to the Indians as "stone-age proletarians." His barbed criticism of an American operator, Elliot, reflected his sympathies for the Mayan community. He instigates a type of benevolent slavery but turns the rather bizarre setting into a form of tourist trap. Lewis paints a rather depressing portrait of a country in the throes of upheaval, consistent with real political life in Guatemala today.

Lewis's satire is effective in depicting the total disrespect of Guatemala's ruling class for the Indigenous community, which is often overlooked or misunderstood by outsiders. I'll add this book to the bibliography of my next book, *The Guatemala Reader*. You can find the entire review [HERE](#).

British writer **Norman Lewis** died at 95 in 2003. While best known for his travel writing, he also wrote twelve novels and several volumes of autobiography. Subjects he explored in his travel writing include life in Naples, Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma, and the destruction caused by Christian missionaries. Graham Green described Lewis as "one of the best writers, not of any particular decade, but of our century."

You can find complete reviews of these two books and 80 others on my website under the "Library" tab. Please let me know what you think - about this article, my reviews and, most importantly, what you are reading so I can ponder it and share some of your comments in my next column. Please email me at Mark@MillionMileWalker.com.

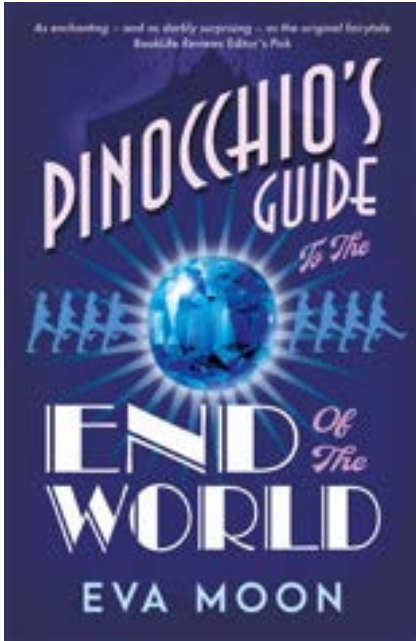
Regular *Digest* contributor **Mark Walker** was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala and spent over forty years helping disadvantaged people in the developing world. He managed programs abroad with CARE and Plan International and, for 30 years, raised funds for organizations such as Food for the Hungry, MAP International, Global Brigades, and Make-A-Wish International. His memoir, *Different Latitudes: My Life in the Peace Corps and Beyond*, was recognized by the Arizona Literary Association for Nonfiction. His next book, *My Saddest Pleasures: 50 Years on the Road*, is part of his Yin & Yang of Travel Series. Walker is a contributing writer for *Revue Magazine*, *The Authors Show*, *The Wanderlust Journal*, and the *Literary Traveler*. For more information about Mark's extensive writings and activities, please see my [website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

The secret of good writing is telling the truth. – Gordon Lish

What Are You Reading?

Eva Moon's *Pinocchio's Guide to the End of the World*

Reviewed by Penny Orloff



Carrying the same, cancer-causing BRCA1 genetic mutation that was killing her mother, in 2012 singer/songwriter Eva Moon made the heart-wrenching decision to undergo a preventative double mastectomy and total hysterectomy. Recovering from the surgeries, she felt she might never create again. To help process her grief, she wrote a song. Then another. And a one-woman musical comedy, *The Mutant Diaries: Unzipping My Genes*, was born. The show has entertained and inspired audiences across the U.S and in the U.K. and is now streaming on Amazon. Moon has written award-winning screenplays and is a former Huffington Post blogger. In her first novel, *Pinocchio's Guide to the End of the World*, she explores questions she has struggled with since her surgeries: How much of your identity is defined by your body? How much can you change and still be yourself?

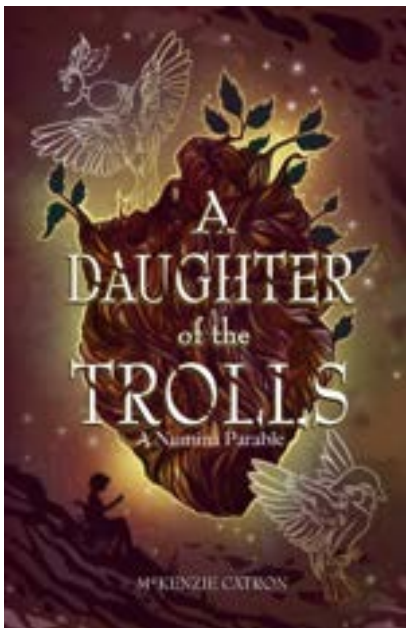
Eva Moon's real-boy Pinocchio honors the familiar fairy tale while pulling no punches regarding what it means to be truly human. This gritty, gripping tale marches unflinchingly through some of the bleakest terrain of 20th-century Europe. The novel was the winner of the 2023 Washington Indie Author Project.

"As enchanting—and as darkly surprising—as the original fairy tale."

BookLife Reviews, Editor's Pick

McKenzie Catron's *A Daughter of the Trolls*

Reviewed by A.L.Means



Occasionally I venture beyond my usual choices in reading material, and such was the case with a fantasy novel entitled *A Daughter of the Trolls*, by McKenzie Catron—one of our own members in addition to other distinctions.

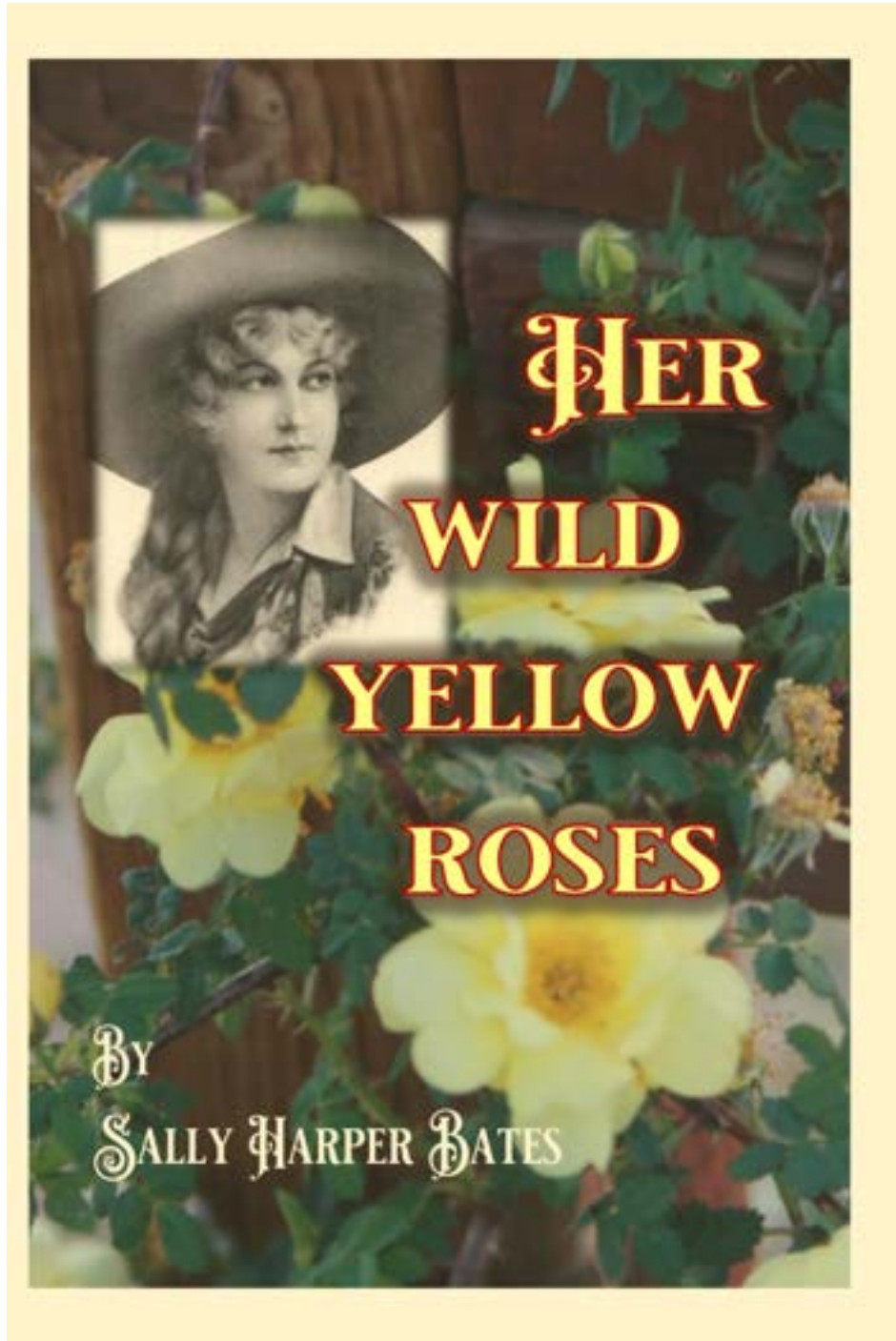
It's a story about a young woman named Sparrow who lives with her mother along with trolls, gnomes, fairies, and goblins in a forest glade. This idyllic community is threatened by a witch, Black Annis, who is capable of great cruelty. Thus, the community has to be on constant guard. Sparrow's duties include a nightly check of the community's protective barrier of salt. Perhaps she missed, or even caused, a break in it because, one night, Black Annis invades, slaughtering some of the inhabitants and taking others, including Sparrow's mother, back to her lair. Sparrow and Rush, her childhood sweetheart (though she doesn't yet recognize that), set off in pursuit.

Like many good stories, this one resonates beyond the described events. In this case, Sparrow moves with the aid of a wheelchair—a circumstance that mirrors the author's own. And so, Sparrow must navigate challenges and accept changes in herself beyond her anticipation. Whether Sparrow will provide a role model for readers with similar disabilities, I am not equipped to say. But certainly, McKenzie Catron can take pride in attaining her childhood ambition to be an author.

A.L. Means grew up in Britain and has lived in or near Phoenix for over 30 years. He has authored fiction and nonfiction in various genres, using different pen names, and has spent much of his working life as a journalist for magazines and newspapers. Find Andrew's many published works at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

New Releases

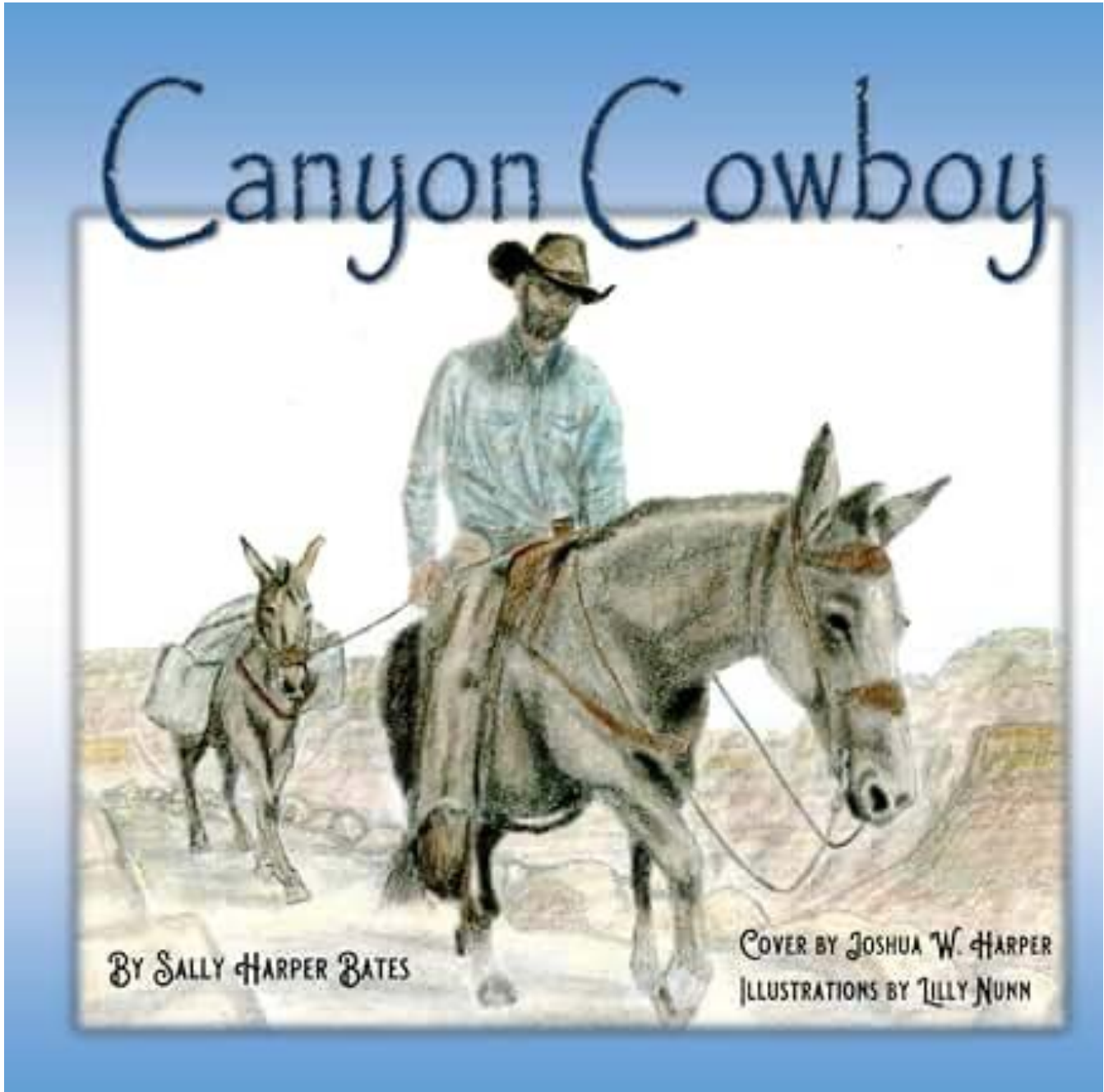
A new book by Sally Harper Bates, illustrated by Lilly Nunn of Wickenburg, with cover drawing by Josh Harper—all life-long Arizona residents. Available at Amazon.com



The story of one woman's journey through over 100 years of Arizona/New Mexico history. Raising seven children alone takes her from poverty to a wonderful career. Sally's seven generation history in the grass roots of Arizona fill the pages with memories and experiences.

New Releases

One more from Sally Harper Bates, illustrated by Lilly Nunn of Wickenburg, with cover drawing by Josh Harper—all life-long Arizona residents. Available at Amazon.com



A young cowboy who loves mules and horses searches for a place where he can work with mules and finds his way to the Arizona Grand Canyon. A Children's book for ages ten and under.

First, find out what your hero wants, then just follow him! – Ray Bradbury



Puzzle it!

A Logic Puzzle for Valentine's Day by Kevin Gundlach



This is a great month for Valentine's Day mystery and romance novels! You will be given a list of four book titles, authors, a main character, and the year the book was first published. Your assignment, if you choose to accept it, is to match all authors with their own works, characters, and the year of publication. While the easiest method is simply to Google the answers, that would be cheating! You may know or deduce some of these without the need for clues, and if so, then congratulations! You're a smart cookie! The rest of the answers will be revealed by the clues on the next page.

You may make your own list or create a grid on scratch paper, or print the grid on the next page to simplify the process of elimination. Just right click on the page; you'll see a "print" icon (or the word "print," depending upon your browser). Click the print icon and then ... very importantly ... **set the page** that you wish to print in the document (the next page). If you just click "print" without selecting the page, you'll wind up printing the whole digest!

Put an "X" in any boxes that connect two implausible choices and an "O" in the boxes that connect two correct choices, until you eliminate all wrong answers. Happy Puzzling!

Books:

Wild Irish Heart, Death By Baguette, Midnight Valentine, The Chocolate Cupid Killings

Authors:

Jennifer Alderson, JoAnna Carl, Trisha O'Malley, J.T. Geissinger

Main Character:

Lee, Keelin, Megan, Lana

Year of Publication:

2018, 2009, 2014, 2020

Good luck! If you solve the puzzle in 30 minutes or less, let us know so that we may congratulate you in the next issue! Let's have a great Valentine's Day and get puzzling!

continued on the next page

CLUES

- 1) The four books are:
 - *Death by Baguette*
 - The one by Tricia O'Malley
 - The one published in 2009
 - The one featuring Megan as the main character
- 2) Keelin is not the main character of *The Chocolate Cupid Killings*
- 3) The book by J.T. Geissinger was published some time prior to the one featuring Lana as the main character.
- 4) The book by Jennifer Alderson was published some time after the one featuring Megan as the main character.
- 5) *Midnight Valentine* was published some time after Tricia O'Malley's book.
- 6) It was either Jennifer Alderson or Tricia O'Malley who wrote the book featuring Keelin.
- 7) *Midnight Valentine* was either the book published in 2020, or the book written by J.T. Geissinger.

		Wild Irish Heart	Death by Baguette	Midnight Valentine	The Chocolate Cupid	Jennifer Alderson	JoAnna Carl	Tricia O'Malley	J.T. Geissinger	Lee	Keelin	Megan	Lana	2018	2009	2014	2020	
Title	Wild Irish Heart	O	X	X	X													
	Death by Bag't	X	O	X	X													
	Midnight Val.	X	X	O	X													
	The Choc. Cupid	X	X	X	O													
Author	J. Alderson					X	X	X	X									
	J. Carl					X	O	X	X									
	T. O'Malley					X	X	O	X									
	J. Geissinger					X	X	X	O									
Main Char.	Lee									O	X	X	X					
	Keelin									X	O	X	X					
	Megan									X	X	O	X					
	Lana									X	X	X	O					
Date	2018													O	X	X	X	
	2009													X	O	X	X	
	2014													X	X	O	X	
	2020													X	X	X	O	

Printing Tip

To print this puzzle, right click on this page and open the "print" icon. Be certain to select the **current page** to print **ONLY** this puzzle page, rather than the whole digest.

Good luck! Let us know if you solved the puzzle in 30 minutes or less.



Kevin Gundlach was a senior software developer who, unlike most, undertook the flight between academia and industry in reverse order. He co-authored *Tryn*, *Just An Ordinary*, *Time-Traveling*, *Alien High School Teacher*. Find out more about Kevin [HERE](#).

The Road to Imagination

by Cherie Lee

Do you ever need a prompt to get you started? Try Cherie Lee’s story starter to spur your imagination and get the sentences flowing. An award-winning author, Cherie wrote the following paragraph as a guide:



“This fictional teaser can be used by teachers or by anyone (recommend sixth grade and up through adult) who wants a creative writing exercise or to jump start a new work. This idea is not meant to be genre specific but left to the writer’s imagination. There are no specific rules to follow. All the listed questions do not need answers. There is no order for preferred reading.”

If you would like to share a story (800 words or less) you have created with this prompt, please send it no later than **March 10** to pennyorloff@me.com and, as space permits, we’ll publish it to inspire other members to try their hand.

Point-of-View

Answer these questions:

Which person can tell this story best? Choosing first person will help you maintain one point-of-view (POV). To do this well, think of yourself as the hero telling the story: As I watched, I saw, I felt, it seemed to me, etc. More experienced writers might try more than one person to tell the story, using *** for scene breaks to show that another character is telling part of the story; or, switch POV for full chapters—He Said/She Said.

The Doll. First Person Example

When she first came into my life, I loved the leather feel of her. Her old fashioned, 1920s dress was the green of new leaves in Spring. I kept her carefully on my bed, letting no one touch her arms or legs for fear the leather might crack. She cost my mother much to purchase her—no lunches for a week. This doll is now all that is left to me of my mother’s life

Another First Person Example

Maggie came into my life on my sixth birthday. She was made of soft kidskin, and was dressed in an emerald green, satin 1920s dress. Mother went without lunches for one whole week to buy her for me. It was just Mother and I against the world. Every day of my life, I am haunted by how hard Mother worked and how diligently she saved, eventually sending me to college so I wouldn’t have to follow her footsteps into the factory.

Questions:

When did this take place? Is this an important fact in the story, or just a way to hook the reader?

Should this be a memoir, or might it be something else?

Is the girl with the doll a criminal who paid for her crime or is her past left to be discovered?

Did her mother die a natural death or in some other manner?

How did the child behave most of the time? What was her relationship with her mother?

How many other people (characters) might be needed to tell this story?

What type of house did the child live in? Did she have siblings?

Was she special or notable for a special reason? As a grown-up, is she a factory worker, a housewife, a doctor?

Now it’s your turn. Go forth and write!

Building a Galaxy by Daniel Dickinson

PART 1: Tolkien and Middle Earth

Gas, matter, and energy erupt and expand at an amazing rate of speed, sending seeds of discovery and growth to every corner of your sci-fi/fantasy galaxy. And all it takes is a spark of imagination to get it started. Maybe it even arises with a simple question: *Where do I even begin?*

Creative minds need a trigger—perhaps a title, an idea of a character, even a simple theme or emotion. Whatever your stimulus, you will certainly need to create a viable world in some capacity. Whether that world is a subdued, Tolkien-like secondary world or a hyper-real world like Neil Gaiman’s, your story and characters will need a cosmos of their own to explore. The size and scope of that universe is entirely in your hands. My role is to hand you the scales needed to balance the mind-staggering amount of effort needed to build a galaxy of your own, to provide contrasts between smaller worlds and bigger ones, and to illustrate how knowing the difference will save you a lot of work. To that end, I offer this 3-Part examination of different techniques for world-building.

J.R.R. Tolkien’s original unbridled vision of Middle Earth is the main focus of Part 1. It is also the most copied example of world-building. People have dived into the technique of Tolkien’s craft so often that it’s used as a ruler when measuring other worlds. Robert Jordan, Terry Brook, and even R.R. Martin have taken to copying aspects of Tolkien’s fantasy world-building.

The world of Middle Earth began with a hole in the ground, out of which grew the race of small, fur-footed creatures that would carry the entire narrative of the story. *The Hobbit*, the first of four novels in the *Lord of the Rings* series, was published by Allen & Unwin in 1937; the remaining titles followed nearly twenty years later. With millions of Tolkien’s books in circulation for eight decades, it’s rare to come across anyone who doesn’t know the story of the Hobbits and their quest to end the dark lord Sauron’s reign of terror.

“I now wanted to try my hand at writing a stupendously long narrative,” said Tolkien, “and to see whether I had sufficient art coming or material to make a really long novel which would hold the average reader right through.”

With a plan set up and basic guidelines for his world and how its inhabitants would interact, Tolkien set about making up the history that would later define and govern the race and the daily lives of those in Middle Earth. However, there are a few missing pieces to the puzzle in the *Lord of the Rings* series. Absent are religions, beliefs, and historical temples that would increase the size of the mythology into other levels of existence. Within the original Tolkien stories, there are no direct correlations to the greater cosmos outside of Middle Earth. Reading through the series, the reader is led along the narrative in a closed view of the world and its inhabitants; and, while the world they do interact with is detailed and complex, the story is limited to small sections of Middle Earth. There is a limited scope to the world around the Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, and men as the reader travels along the path of adventure. They are tightly packed within their own borders with only minor hints of outside lands such as Valinor, the retirement home of the Elves. As readers, we are never really treated to it and are kept at arm’s length.

The original trilogy also does this with other cultures within Middle Earth. For example, we are never brought to the lands of the Harad, or told much about them outside Tolkien’s narrative: “Tis said that there were dealings of old between Gondor and the kingdoms of the Harad in the Far South; though there was never friendship. In those days our bounds were away south beyond the mouths of Anduin; and Umbar, the nearest of their realms, acknowledged our sway. But that is long since.” (*Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, Book 4, Ch. 3 – “The Black Gate is Closed”)

Historical information is tightly packed into a few lines of dialogue about the Far South and its history. In these instances, the mythology of the world and the cosmos outside only exist to serve the narrative. The world never seems much bigger than what Tolkien wants it to be at any given time. The cosmology is boiled down to character focus, and it becomes an emotional journey. C.S. Lewis, a good friend of Tolkien, once commented on the storytelling aspect of his companion: “*The Hobbit* is merely an adaption to children of part of a huge private mythology of a most serious kind: the whole cosmic struggle as he sees it but mediated through an imaginary world.” (p. 630, *The Collected Letters*, Volume II, HarperOne).

This streamlined aspect to Tolkien’s world-building works for his narrative. As a reader, however, I never get the full breadth of the world. There is history but, despite the colorful descriptions, it never seems to go beyond the current scene or setting. We’re given information that the world is old, based on those living there now—Elves, Gandolf, Tom Bombadil are all aged, wise, and completely timeless.

Continued on next page

And that's when things start to become a bit weird. If we stop and study the time frames and history within *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* series, we find time and the greater cosmos take a back seat to the story and adventure. When asked about time in a 1964 BBC interview, Tolkien pointed out that he couldn't associate the time on Middle Earth with time as we know it "because it had been impossible. Because you would completely interfere with and trammel one in a free invention of history and an incident of one story."

Tolkien went on to explain that he did not want to use Earth time, nor would Earth's land masses make sense; he wanted his world to be free of the constraints of pre-conceived history. Time and space are fed to us in small, nutrient-packed bites that fill out the narrative with lively background for the characters to live in and interact with: "The Hunter's Moon waxed round in the night sky, and put to flight all the lesser stars. But low in the South one star shone red. Every night, as the Moon waned again, it shone brighter and brighter." (*Fellowship of the Ring*)

This works for Tolkien's stories and the way they flow. Keep in mind this densely packed world-building is not a bad thing—there's a reason Tolkien is so often copied and studied.

The question of where to start when developing a focused world becomes much easier when you're concerned with the characters, instead of the greater cosmos around them. By developing the characters and their world as you travel along, you can explore it with them, learning new things as conflict arise, like orcs from the mist.

For a fascinating interview with Tolkien, himself, click [HERE](#).



Beginning at the age of ten, Arizona native **Daniel Dickinson** has spent a lifetime inventing realistic realms for his fictional characters. His fantasy world, Xonthian—created during his teen years—is an entire domain that allows his characters' journeys to unfold in a diverse setting. He enjoys giving educational presentations about world-building and fantasy genres, in general. Daniel's published works include the short story, *Escape from Ogre Island*; a two-story horror book, *Don't Close Your Eyes: Two Thrilling Tales of Terror*; *Aggression Factor*; and *Gathering Tide*. More about Daniel at <https://www.tigerforce.net/> and <https://shoutoutarizona.com/meet-daniel-dickinson-author/>

The Siren Call of Music to Write By by Robert Ronning

I can't abide silence whether I'm reading or writing. I'll take music every time, if it offers a pleasant buzz as I write. I seldom listen to ballads or lyrical works: a singer's words distract me from the words I'm trying to write. The challenge of conjuring up a story with the right words is best met with pure instrumentals floating in the background like a pacifier. I do listen to occasional opera; an aria by Renee Fleming or Kiri Te Kanawa in a language I don't understand can be a positive distraction.

I go through phases and different styles of music. Recently I've been dipping into New Age, but I'm rather picky: I adore Ann Sweeten's romantic piano pieces that stand out from the musical herd of New Agers. Her distinctive style is recognizable on the first few notes, emotive and dreamy but never soppy. Her siren chords are pleasant and soothing, a muse to write by. Recently departed Tom Barabas was rather similar—a romantic and distinct pianist.

Of course, I have my daily go-to music, mostly NPR's classical music covering a whole gamut of musical styles and periods—its list is long in "long-hair music," as my dad called it.

I'm currently in a more upbeat mode and going back to the nineties of Willie & Lobo and their lively blend of flamenco guitar, gypsy riffs, and Willie's brooding and racing fiddle. How a violin and guitar put out the sound of a rich ensemble is stunning. Since I write adventure stories, they give me a lift even as I hold to my desk and write. They even make me feel young again ... almost.



Robert Ronning writes about wildlife and conservation, and published his adventure novel, *Wild Call to Boulder Field* in 2023. He and wife Kathleen live in Tucson and summer in a cabin in Arizona's White Mountains, a few minutes daily dog walk from National Forest and wildlife. He considers his proudest achievements rescuing and assisting the rescue of lost dogs. A recovering golfer, now an avid Pickleball player, he likes to unwind with a crossword puzzle. More at www.RobertRonningAuthor.com.

Where in Arizona? by Janet Alcorn



Each issue we'll add a photograph taken somewhere in Arizona, along with a list of ten possible locations, one of which is correct. If you think you know the answer, please send it to pennyorloff@me.com no later than March 10. The name of the first person to guess the correct answer will win a \$5 Starbucks card and be published on this page of the next issue of the *Digest*, when we reveal the location of this photo. We had no winner for the last Where in Arizona?—the answer to which was Rimrock.

Possible locations:

Hereford, Sierra Vista, Douglas, Willcox, Globe, Kingman, Benson, Bowie, Camp Verde, Dudleyville



Janet is a librarian, published short story author, and aspiring novelist. She writes mostly suspense and horror with the occasional foray into other genres. She won Best of Category for her poem, *Mourning Doves*, in the 2023 Arizona Authors Association literary contest; and 2nd place in the Arizona Mystery Writers' 2023 Jim Martin Memorial Short Story Contest. Learn more about Janet and her writing at <http://janetalcorn.com>.

Penny's Two Cents



Is it already 2024? Another year rides off into the sunset... Six years, and I'm still procrastinating on my book, *Who Would You Be If You Had Nothing to Bitch About?*

Oh, what to do, what to do...

Although we feared their individual wrath, my siblings and I really made an effort not to displease both of our parents at the same time. For, in their ire, together they dreamed up ever-more-dastardly tortures to get us to toe the mark. By far the worst one The Parents could think of, the one that really got our attention and kept it, was “NO TV FOR A WEEK!!!”

Aaarrggghhhh! No *Mickey Mouse Club*, no *Leave It to Beaver*, no *Superman*? Even if joy was certainly not what Joe and Ruetta Orloff had in mind with so heinous a punishment, those television-less weeks were the birth of my passion for costume design, the germination of my playwriting skills, the perfection of my double pirouette. After all, I suddenly had hours of boredom to kill, and kids are nothing if not creative.

So, why not try it—how ‘bout I turn off the TV for a week? That goes for Netflix on the ol’ computer, too. And the endless scrolling through Facebook and Twitter feeds on the iPhone.

I—who have “no time” to finish that book, practice the piano, become fluent in French—how much time will I have suddenly exhumed? Might I have found even an hour a day? Half an hour?? If I’m watching TV and/or vegging online anywhere near the national average of four hours a day—and I am—I’d have more than a thousand hours a year. Writing at the slow rate of half a page an hour that’s still a pretty hefty book, even after my customary slash-and-burn editing.

How badly do I want to finish this third book, to see those who believe in me rejoice over my accomplishment? To revenge myself on the people who doubted me...

Resolution for the New Year: Right now—RIGHT NOW!!—I commit to one measly week without television and Facebook and Twitter and Netflix and YouTube, no matter what might be happening on ESPN+ or *Murder in Boston*. I may like my freedom so much that I never go back. (Yeah, that’ll happen...)

*Every book seems the struggle of a whole life. And then, when it is done — pouf!
Never happened. Best thing is to get the words down every day. And it is time to
start now. — John Steinbeck*

Penny Orloff was a working actress and dancer in LA when she relocated to New York on a Juilliard opera scholarship. She played featured parts on Broadway after 7 seasons and more than 20 Principal Soprano roles at New York City Opera. Her solo show, *Jewish Thighs on Broadway* (based on her award-winning novel, available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com)), played off-Broadway and toured the U.S. for a decade. Her new show, *Songs and Stories From a Not-Quite-Kosher Life*, is currently touring. More at www.pennyorloff.com

2024 Arizona Authors Literary Contest



Categories:

Unpublished

- 1. Poetry
- 2. Short Stories
- 3. Essays/Reviews
- 4. Novels/Novellas

Published Books

- 1. Fiction
- 2. Nonfiction
- 3. Oldie But Goldie Fiction
- 4. Oldie But Goldie Nonfiction

Published Youth

- 1. Children (under 12)
- 2. Teen/Young Adult
- 3. Oldie But Goldie Youth

Contest begins:

January 1, 2024

Contest ends:

11:59 pm MST

June 1, 2024

MORE CASH PRIZES! MORE CATEGORIES!

GRAND PRIZE (Best Overall):

\$500 & Featured in the *Arizona Literary Magazine*

THREE FIRST PRIZES:

\$200 & Featured in the *Arizona Literary Magazine*

THREE SECOND PRIZES:

\$100 & Featured in the *Arizona Literary Magazine*

THREE THIRD PRIZES:

\$75 & Featured in the *Arizona Literary Magazine*

THREE FOURTH PRIZES:

\$50 & Featured in the *Arizona Literary Magazine*

ELEVEN BEST OF CATEGORY PRIZES:

\$25 & Featured in the *Arizona Literary Magazine*

Winners in each main category (Unpublished, Published Books, Published Youth) will be awarded a First, Second, Third and Fourth prize. Best of Category prizes will be chosen from remaining entries after all other prizes are awarded. One prize per title; 24 total prizes available.



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INVITATION TO JOIN
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Arizona Authors Association is a 501-c-3 nonprofit organization. Its mission: To foster literary achievement; advance the art of writing; and serve the writers, authors, editors, publishers, and allied professionals of Arizona and the nation.

Membership Benefits

Attend workshops, events, and activities designed to hone your skills as a writer—many of them free or low cost. In addition, both our Forum and our bi-monthly *Digest* offer advice, suggestions, and insight to reinforce your expertise.

The annual Literary Contest provides an opportunity to showcase your work and the chance to earn cash prizes, enhancing your reputation as an author. We also offer online book fairs through our Zoom account.

Books you have released within the previous six months (or are about to release) receive a full-page ad in the *Digest* at no cost. Likewise, members may submit a quarter-page ad for author-related services to the *Digest* free of charge.

Application for Membership

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TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP Writer Professional Membership

PUBLICATIONS/CURRENT PROJECTS:

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Writers Published or Unpublished:	One year - \$45	Two years - \$80
Members' Spouses/Children:	One year - \$25	Two years - \$40

Professional Membership (Related Services such as Publishers, Agents, and Editors):

One year - \$60	Two years - \$110
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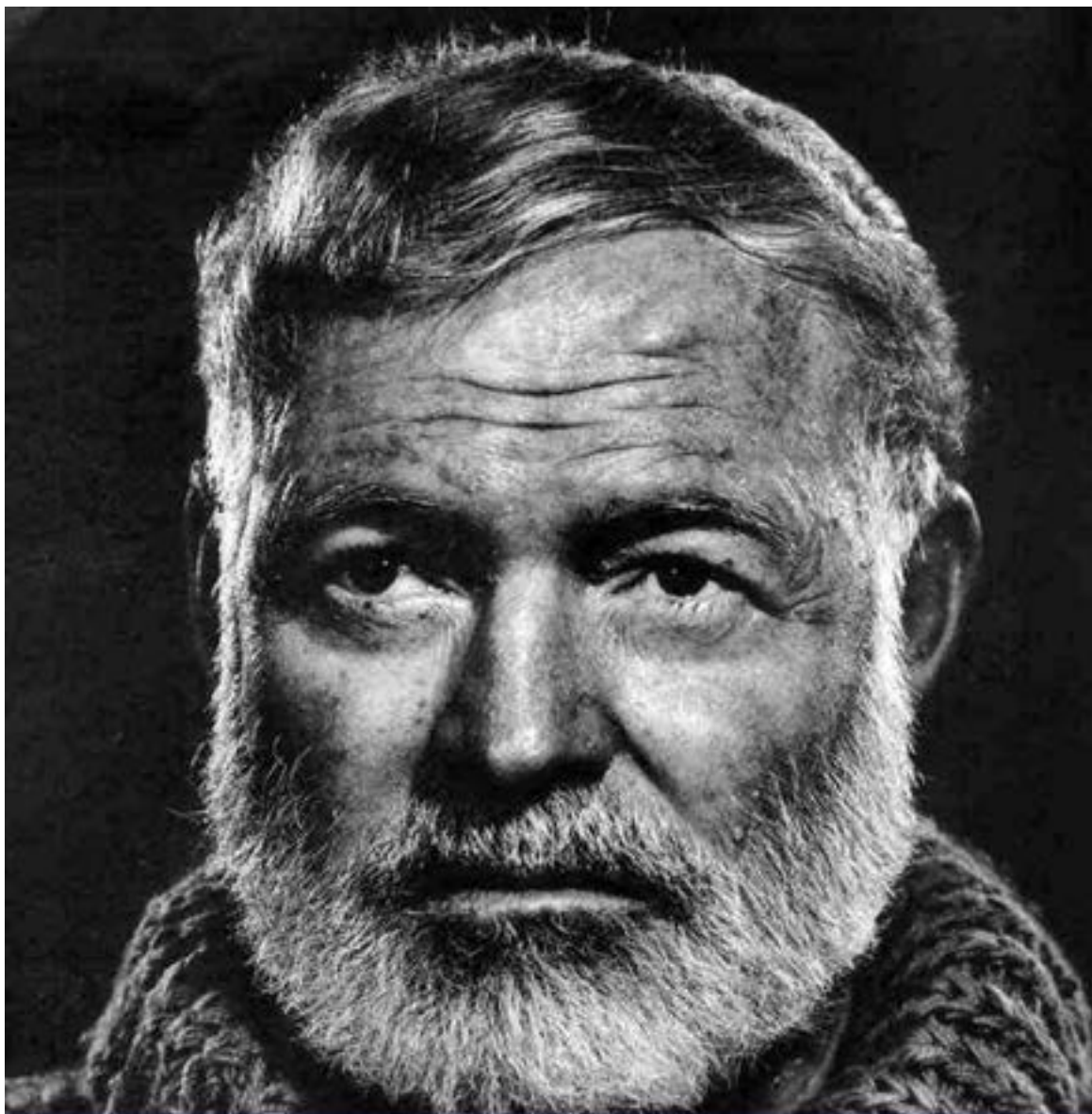
Please Send Checks or Money Orders To:

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arizonaauthorsassociation@gmail.com

The Last Word



"It's none of their business that you have to learn to write. Let them think you were born that way."

- *Ernest Hemingway*