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# Elk Grove Writers Guild

*Writers Helping Writers*

## Welcome to the EGWG newsletter.



Elk Grove Writers Guild first met in 2018 as a critique group. Our main goal was and is to help writers be the best they could/can be.

To expand our efforts in reaching our goal, we created this once monthly newsletter. In it we'll pass on information of coming events, guild news, and offer little bits of writing wisdom, poetry, memories, writing tips, and whatever news in the publishing world that comes our way.

We offer you, our readers, a chance to write and be published in this newsletter which is also available on our website.

All submissions are most welcome. If you're interested in seeing your work here, see the back page for submission information.

Come. Join us on our adventure.

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## What's Happening?

The 2021 conference is over. All that's left is paying the bills and picking up the pieces. And rest—lots of rest—physical and mental.

Keep checking the President's Column for information on upcoming events. We're planning a busy year for 2022.

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*“Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen.”*

*John Steinbeck*

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The Guild currently meets on the first Friday of each month. Because of Covid-19 we meet in a virtual setting. We gather as a Writer's Circle to talk in the language of writers. We share what and how we're doing, what's new in the publishing world, and ask questions about problems we might have with our works in progress.

Guild members post their WIP on Google Docs and share it with other members for critiques. The posted work is guaranteed to get a response. It is a wonderful way to have input from other writers who will give valuable insight on the work presented.

If you're interested in joining the guild, go to the **Join** page on the website. Fill out the membership application and send us your dues. If you'd like to see what we're about first, and want to join our next virtual meeting, contact Loy Holder at [loyholder77@gmail.com](mailto:loyholder77@gmail.com) and you'll receive the link.

The next meetings are scheduled for Nov. 5, 2021, and Dec. 3, 2021.

Meeting will begin at 12:30 and last approximately one and a half hours.

With school year starting, the time for the meetings changed to allow the teachers and parents in the guild to fulfill their duties.

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## The Mugwump

by Richard Eddy

In 1884, a group of activists switched political parties in the presidential election. Critics called them, “mugwumps,” deriding them as people who tried to have it both ways, sitting on the fence, as it were, with their “mug” on one side and their “wump” on the other. When I first heard the term, I pictured a salamander-like creature so perched, and the following limerick came to mind:

Said a mugwump one day to another  
“I have not seen my dad nor my mother,  
because they would hide  
with their mug on one side  
of the fence and their wump on the other!”

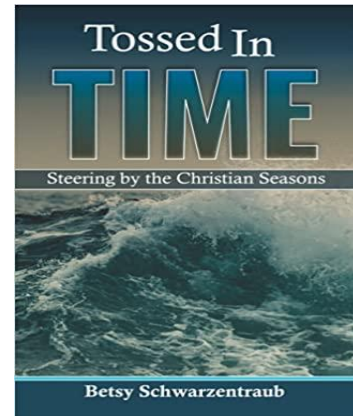
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## 🕒 Information for the Older Folk

A large study in the United States found that:

- The most productive age of a person is from 60 to 70 years.
- The 2nd most productive human stage is the age from 70 to 80 years old.
- 3rd most productive stage - 50 and 60 years old.
- Before that, the person has not yet reached his peak.
- The average age of the Nobel Prize laureates is 62.
- The average age of the presidents of the 100 largest companies in the world is 63 years.
- The average age of pastors in the 100 largest churches in the United States is 71.
- The average age of dads is 76 years.
- This confirms that a person's best and most productive years are between 60 and 80 years of age.
- This study was published by a team of doctors and psychologists in the NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE.
- They found that at 60 you reach the peak of your emotional and mental potential, and this continues until you are 80.
- Therefore, if you are 60, 70 or 80 years old, you are at the best level of your life.

## \*\*\*\*Five Star Review \*\*\*\*



[Tossed in Time: Steering by the Christian Seasons: Schwarzentraub, Betsy: 9781532388699: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781532388699)

It's easy to feel lost at sea, stripped of a sense of meaningful movement through time, when so many social anchors have been torn away due to the recent pandemic. *Tossed in Time* introduces people to the ancient Christian seasons as a way to help them reshape their sense of time and find their place in a larger Story. Peter's experience of walking with Jesus on the stormy sea begins this book and ties the chapters together. Reflection questions and at-home activities help readers live by a rhythm that follows the life of Jesus, discovering a pattern that can infuse each day with meaning.

## The Review \*\*\*\*\*

2020 and 2021 brought disruption to people's social lives. In this book, Betsy presents a way to restore balance by living the year with biblical celebrations and holidays in your own home.

I especially liked the format of the book. An explanation and theme of the holiday followed by questions to make sure you understand and things to do, including recipes.



## From the Bookshelf

### JOIN THE CLUB

by Kathy Lynne Marshall

As the syringe approached, the dozen or so smiling faces around me morphed into frightening sneers.

“It’ll be OK, Karen,” Michael crooned in his sultry voice. “You know nothing’s going to happen, so don’t worry.”

Sheila patted my free arm condescendingly.

Their platitudes did nothing to calm my nerves. You see, it was supposed to have been Henry, not me, getting this experimental shot. But at the last minute, the doctors said he had a fever and that I had to take his place.

“You’re stronger than any of us, Karen. Genetically, you’re the perfect host,” my team assured. *The perfect host? Host for what? Why me and not one of the others?* Thoughts of Henrietta Lacks and the Tuskegee Syphilis experiment flashed in my mind: black folk subjected to medical experiments without their knowledge or consent.

Let me back up a few days. Business magnate, Velon Moskay, had honed his creative sights on a new mania. He invested a fortune to send regular people into space in an automated spacecraft... perhaps as the ultimate carnival ride. I was selected for this Expedition4 voyage on the new “Phoenix” spacecraft, along with billionaire Michael, nurse Sheila, and politician Henry. We all received thirty hours of training

in a flight simulator to prepare us for the rigors of the journey. We were thrilled beyond description, enjoying a perfect lift off from Cape Canaveral in Florida.

On our third and last day in space, orbiting 600 kilometers above the Earth, we noted a shiny, yellowish-green substance creeping down the outside edge of the hatch. Since this was a private venture, our observation was not publicized beyond Moskay’s control room, and we pseudo-astronauts were instructed to keep quiet about that discovery until the substance could be identified.

As soon as we splashed down in the Atlantic Ocean via an adrenaline-rush three-G descent through the atmosphere, a private recovery team arrived in fast boats, checking the outside of our spacecraft before it could be safely towed. Unbeknownst to the world watching a low-resolution live feed on their computer screens, the recovery crew retrieved the unknown goo from the capsule cone. The glowing sludge was deposited into a vial and sealed in a box that resembled the steaming “trap” from the original “Ghostbusters” movie.

After the capsule was lifted onto the “Go Get Em” ship, the hatch was opened. Ah! Fresh air! We proud astronauts exited one at a time, our fists pumping the air, excited, victorious after our remarkable adventure. The on-ship medical team checked our vital signs then cleared us for a helicopter transport which flew us to Moskay’s private launch facility in Florida. Soon, I would receive the shock of my life.

The scientists had begun testing the alien sample right away, wondering how it had survived the heat of reentry into our atmosphere. Was it alive? They decided to test the substance, not on animals, but on us humans who had been in space. Poor Henry drew the short stick and was selected.

Everything else obscured my field of vision, except that advancing cylindrical vial, filled with a reflective, chartreuse substance.

“I want to speak with my family before you do anything, just in case something goes awry,” I protested. But members of the medical team had already strapped me down to a gurney in their isolation lab. Intravenous tubes attached to my wrist, and wires clamped to my index finger, monitoring important



(Join the Club continues from page 4)

vital signs. *Why didn't I insist on waiting until the substance had been fully tested and analyzed on animals first? Why didn't I run for the hills when they shifted their plans from Henry to me? Now I'm stuck.*

Scientists in white lab coats gathered around me, like a coven of witches examining a boiling pot of bats' wings and eyes of newt. My heart rate accelerated to 160 beats-per-minute, booming out of my chest. Perspiration seeped from my forehead, legs tensed, arms strained to free themselves from the tight gurney bindings. And still the needle came closer.

A momentary pinch punctured my shoulder. It was no worse than the annual flu shot, really. Of course, it won't work, nothing will happen, I kept telling myself. Then I panicked. *Have I intentionally been injected with alien DNA?*

The team cheered, released me from my bonds, then suggested getting a bite of lunch to celebrate. After my initial fright, I sat up, feeling fine now. My blood pressure returned to normal.

"Yes, I would like a bite to eat." I was hungry after the ordeal, and stood up, a bit wobbly.

"We'll bring you something from the cafeteria. You should probably stay here and rest."

"Oh, I guess you're right. Bring me a burger with everything on it, would you? And a Coke. And a chocolate chip cookie."

"Sure thing," Sheila agreed. They gave me the thumbs up and clapped each other on the back, leaving me alone in the antiseptic lab, bright lights shining on my ebony face, me wondering what had just happened. *Why did the plans change so quickly from Henry to me? Was it engineered that way from the beginning?*

All of a sudden, the injection site began to itch. When I scratched it, I noticed a slight lump was forming there. Hmm, must be irritated from the invasive shot, I mused. No big deal. I walked around the bed, which seemed to get smaller and smaller with every step. My palpitations returned. What if I'm *not* OK? What if there really *are* aliens in that sample? Are they growing inside me now? Am I just a sacrificial lamb?

I had to get out of that room. *What? They locked me in. Where's my phone?* I needed to call my sons to let them

know what was happening, tell them I loved them, and remind them where my living trust was located, in case I never saw them again. I couldn't find my purse anywhere, and the lab phone had been disconnected somehow.

Mercifully, the gang returned with a lunch tray containing my food, and each of them bringing their meals with them.

"How ya feeling, hero?" Michael asked, making it seem as though everything was fine and dandy.

"Itchy. And a lump is forming here," I replied, pointing to the injection site. "I've also noticed tale-tell signs of discomfort in my elbow and knee joints."

"Oh, it's probably just being cooped up in the capsule for three days," the doctor replied. I noticed all eyebrows raised as they looked at me, then at each other. The doctor checked my vital signs and frowned. "Hmm, your core body temperature has increased to 103 degrees."

I restated, "I *want* to call my kids right now, in case I need to say goodbye or something."

Another scientist said, "Now you know we can't let you do that. There would be a media frenzy if word got out about this, and we don't really know what's going on yet. You might be fine."

My flight team, the scientists, and medical staff resumed their animated banter, proclaiming themselves heroes for finding what might be alien life.

"We'll get a Nobel Peace Prize for this discovery."

"We'll be on the news worldwide."

"Our 15-minutes of fame will go on in history for decades."

"BUT WHAT ABOUT ME?" I shrieked, interrupting their revelry. "Something is growing inside my joints. I can feel them."

"Them?" All looked shocked, then scared, bravado deflated, like a penis in a cold shower

Frantic, I babbled, "It's like when I had shingles on my face last year. It felt like critters were running back and forth underneath my eyelid. Something is moving inside my body, getting bigger and stronger every second. *Many* somethings."

The smiles disappeared, replaced by somber looks. I smelled their fear and they mine. We finally understood we were in way over our heads. This

(Join the Club continues from page 4)

discovery was bigger than us, but what should we do?  
Who should we notify?

“ARGGHH!” I screamed in agony, as a hole  
appeared on my forearm. “LOOK!” I waved my arm.  
“Something’s popping out of me!”

Sure enough, a chartreuse, worm-like creature  
wriggled out of my arm, standing vertically on its  
pointed tail-like structure, moving what I assumed was  
its head, looking around. Before we could blink, it coiled  
like a snake, then jumped off my arm and into Michael’s  
eye. Another creature escaped from the back of my  
knee, jumping into Henry’s shocked open mouth. More  
pores exploded with additional creatures who affixed  
themselves to everyone else in the room.

I was no longer alone in this crazy-ass club.

Kathy Marshall

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## Poetry Corner

### **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!**

The streets hold chilling forms  
Blood on the pavements  
Spilling into the gutters  
Unwelcome sights  
Of carnage and betrayal  
Black lifeless forms sleep  
Self-genocide  
And police abuse  
Thrive  
Enough is Enough!  
Its past time  
To turn the page  
And save ourselves  
Before we disappear  
Like blood on the pavements  
Spilling into the gutters  
Washed out through  
The sewers  
Into a sea of  
Forgotten waste

Cynthia R. Hobson

## **Poetry Corner**

### TIME IS FUNNY

Though Einstein said you're relative  
We really are not kin.  
You go too fast when I want slow  
And shorten my weekend.

And when I have you on my hands  
It's much to my dismay.  
Cause all I get is extra work  
Without the extra pay.

You're good for wine and some bourbons  
But terrible for skin.  
And all who race must beat you first  
If they expect to win.

You're nanos short and eons long --  
No uniform amount.  
And some of us who count on you  
Have found that you don't count

So please slow down when I am late  
And need the extra time.  
Then go just like a bat from hell  
When I must stand in line.

It couldn't stand the strain.  
The ghost arising now is filled  
With loss and searing pain.

Barbara Barrett

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**“I am irritated by my own writing. I am a violinist  
whose ear is true, but whose fingers refuse to  
reproduce precisely the sound he hears within.”**

**Ayn Rand**

## The EGWG Bulletin Board

**The Guild** is planning now for events in 2021, 2022 and the **2023 Conference** and is searching for speakers for classes and other events.

Are you interested in joining the guild's speaker roster? If you are, contact Loy Holder at [loyholder77@gmail.com](mailto:loyholder77@gmail.com)

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“If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it. Or, if proper usage gets in the way, it may have to go. I can't allow what we learn in English composition to disrupt the sound and rhythm of the narrative.”

Elmore Leonard

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## **Embrace the Side Benefits**

Send in by Barbara Barrett

Writing is a lonely career with little money and no stability. We all know that. God, do we all know that. (Why are we doing it again?) Anyway, the misery of writing makes it important—again to the degree that you can—to embrace the unique side benefits of being a writer. You might not earn as much as your friend in corporate finance, but on the other hand you might be able to live in a country for free for several months as part of a residency. Maybe you don't have 401(k) matching like your family members with full time jobs, but at least your parties are better. So, I say embrace the side benefits of being a writer, University appearances, book fairs, international writing festivals, art residencies, etc. Grab ahold of as many of the pleasures that writing life offers up as you can. Lincoln Michel

## **Ellipsis ... versus the Em-dash—**

The ellipsis, always three dots, signifies a pause within a character's dialogue, missing text within quoted material, or a trailing off at the end of dialogue.

The em-dash shows an interruption in speech or is used to emphasize a phrase.

Don't mix them up!

**Ellipsis** style, how it's written, depends on what your editor says, or what stylebook you use.

**AP Style:** Word ... word. No space between dots.

**Chicago Style:** Word . . . word. Space between each dot.

Whichever style you use be consistent throughout your work.

**Hesitation:** “What I meant was ... I don't know how to begin.”

**Trailing off:** “She came with you? But I thought . . .”

**Em-dash** isn't the same as an ellipsis. Most of the mistakes are confusion between **hesitation**, a pause in dialogue and/or **interruption** which is a stopping of dialogue.

Em-dash examples,

**Interruption:** “But I—”

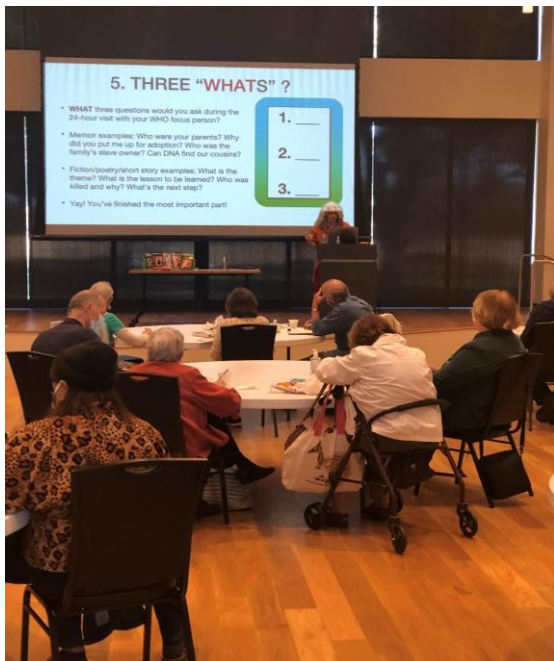
“But nothing! I don't want excuses.”

**Emphasis:** “Will he—can he—find the truth?”

## President's Column

I want to thank all who made the Elk Grove Writers Conference happen. **Elk Grove Writers Conference Sponsors:** City of Elk Grove, Elk Grove Arts Commission, California Writers Club, Sacramento, and James Holder; the **Elk Grove Writers Guild Board Members:** George Hahn, Penny Clark, Linda Bradley, and Chuck Woods; **District 56 Community Event Center Manager,** Lana Yoshimura and staff; the **Conference Cast:** Joey Garcia, Dorothy Rice, Kathy Marshall, Michael Brandt, Janet McHenry, Jenifer Rowe, Amy Rogers, ML Hamilton, Margaret Duarte, Cheryl Stapp, Jennifer Chen Tran, Gini Grossenbacher, and Danita Moon; **Volunteers:** James Holder, Bev Woods, Sandra Heaton, and Shelby Johnston.

According to the evaluation summary, the Conference was a great success. There were many positive comments. One lady wrote, "The entire conference was great! Definitely worth the \$60." Another said, "Beautiful setting. Very informative speakers."



**Fig. 1**  
*Kathy Marshall on how to organize*

*your first book for publication.*

The most profound comments came from one of the presenters, Amy Rogers, who said in part, "So much of our modern problems are rooted in a loss of community. People don't serve each other the way they once did, and we lose those connections that keep us civil. In a small way, your work knits us together and makes the world a better place."

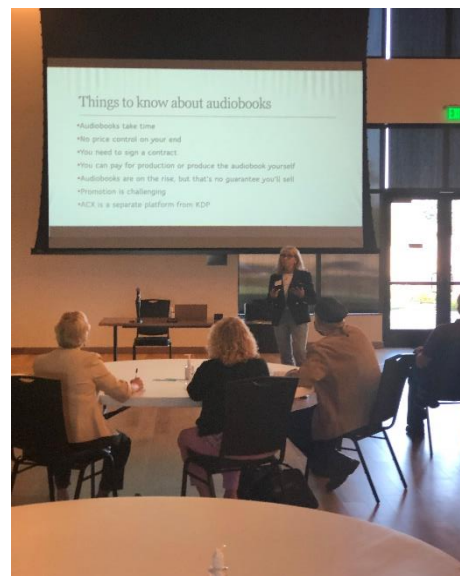
When the EGWG Board meets on 10/28, we'll be discussing what our evaluations have told us. There's always room for improvement. Here are some things on my list:

- Coffee is critical. Make sure the coffee-pots are plugged into a working circuit.
- Develop solutions for handling/avoiding A/V issues.
- PowerPoint presentations are a preferred choice for presenters.
- Develop a better arrangement for the Presenter Bookstore

Do you have comments or questions regarding the 2021 or 2023 Conference? Let us know your thoughts. Send them to [egwg2020@egweg.org](mailto:egwg2020@egweg.org)

EGWG is moving forward with plans for 2022. Check this space for information in the coming newsletters—and stay tuned.

Loy Holder



**Fig. 2**  
*Margaret Duarte supplying tips on*



## Odds and Ends

### Adverbs

Editor's note: Anyone who knows me, knows I will argue that adverbs are unnecessary and overused shortcuts. I found this little tidbit that says how I feel to a "T."

Adverbs—like loudly, painfully, beautifully—are well-meaning words that do nothing for the reading experience. Skillful writing is specific. Explicit writing paints a picture in a reader's mind.

Which sentence paints a better picture in your mind?

1. "She laughed loudly."
2. "Her loud laugh seemed to reverberate through the party."

Adverbs do lend a glimmer of meaning to a verb, but it's the difference between gold-plated and solid gold. Go for the real thing. Avoid adverbs.

By doing so, you'll improve your word count, and write fewer words telling a story rather than showing it. You might think adverbs make the verb stand out, but you can always use a better verb, one that won't need embellishing.

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### 4 Points in Writing about Disabilities

1. Refer to a disability when it's relevant to the story and when the diagnosis comes from a reputable source.
2. Use people-first language unless otherwise indicated by the source, that's "people with disabilities," not "disabled people," Get the idea?
3. Ask the source how they would like to be described. If you can't do that, for whatever reason, ask their friends or family or a relevant organization that deals with the disabilities.
4. Avoid using made-up words like diversability and handicapable unless using them as a direct quote or to refer to an organization.



CWC First Friday meeting, Nov. 5, 2021, 10 -11am via zoom with Scott Evans, UOP Writing Professor Emeritus, "Plot Flows from Character."

The Sacramento Monthly Meeting, Nov. 20, 2021, 1-2pm, via zoom open for chat at 12:30, "Get a Book Deal with a Publisher." with Randy Peyser.

For a link to the meetings, contact Marcia Ehinger of CWC at [mehinger@concast.net](mailto:mehinger@concast.net) Or contact CWC at [www.cwcsacramentowriters.org](http://www.cwcsacramentowriters.org) and click on announcement

### October EGWG Meeting

The highlight of October's meeting was a vibrant discussion on the scams that continue to prey on writers.

You get an Email that says your book is amazing, and they want to make it into a movie, but—they need to rewrite it into a screenplay. If you bite, they go on to tell you, it will cost you a bit to do that. That *bit* is a hefty chunk of 5,000 dollars or more.

If you balk at the expense, they'll offer you a better deal, but it will still cost you money.

#### **ALERT!**

This is a scam. It's wonderful to think your work has been recognized in such a way. But if someone comes to you with something like this or wants to publish your work, be wary if they want money up front. Money in a book deal should always come to you. If anyone wants you to pay, say, "Adios," and remove their email.

"Stories aren't made of language: they're made of something else... perhaps they're made of life."

Phillip Pullman, *Daemon Voices: On Stories and Storytelling*

## Food for Thought

“Don’t bend; don’t water it down; don’t try to make it logical; don’t edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly.”

Franz Kafka



## SUBMISSIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Looking for poetry, special memories, favorite author’s quotes, flash fiction, a response to a writing prompt, or a book coming out in 2021? Send it to me.

If chosen, it will be printed in one of the next issues and will be available on the EGWG website’s Newsletter’s page.

**Do you or your group have an event coming up?** Send me info, at least a month in advance, and I’ll publish it. Free advertising!

### **Address for submissions**

[turlockpenny@yahoo.com](mailto:turlockpenny@yahoo.com)

Please, use **Garamond – 12** for submissions. Send in **word doc not** PDF. Thanks.

**Do you know anyone who would enjoy this newsletter? Send their email address to**

[loyholder77@gmail.com](mailto:loyholder77@gmail.com)

## NOVEMBER

- Nov. 1 National Author’s Day. Yay us.
- Nov. 11 Veteran’s Day.
- Nov. 25 Thanksgiving.
- Nov. 26 Black Friday.

### A Few More Writing Prompts

- They came back every year to lay flowers where it happened.
- The streets were deserted. Where was everyone?
- She woke, shivering in the dark. What was that noise?
- He’d never noticed that door before.
- How did you meet your special other?

**Coming soon: PUMPKIN PIES and after dinner snoozes**



**What are you thankful for this year?**

**Have a great holiday, and See y’all next month**