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Inside This Issue

Bulletin Board

Poetry Corner

Coming Events

Five Star review

Writer's Corner

From the Bookshelf

Conference Update

Learning Opportunities

Backpage

And More



Elk Grove Writers Guild

Writers Helping Writers

Welcome to the EGWG newsletter.



Elk Grove Writers Guild was established as a critique group in 2018. Our main goal is to help writers become the best they can be.

To expand our efforts to reach our goal, we created this once monthly newsletter. In it we'll pass on information of coming events, membership news, and offer little bits of writing wisdom, poetry, memories, writing tips, and whatever news in the publishing world we hear about.

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

All submissions are most welcome, see the back page for submission information.

Come. Join us on our adventure.

Contact

Us

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What's Happening?

WOW! Two great events are coming on October 9th, at the same place. The guild's writer's conference and Arts Commission's Book Faire. Check the **Conference Update** column for information on both events.

Check our website www.egweg.org for more news on the writers' conference and other events we're planning. And, as our fearless leader says, "Stay tuned."

"If a story is not about the hearer, he will not listen. And here I make a rule—a great and interesting story is about everyone, or it will not last." John Steinbeck

The Guild meets on the first Friday of each month. Currently, we meet in a virtual setting. We gather to talk in the language of writers and share what and how we're doing, what's new in the publishing world, and ask questions about problems we might be having in 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 great way to have input from other writers who will give you valuable insight on your work.

If you're interested in joining the guild, go to the Join page on the website. If you'd like to see what we're about first. Join us for the next meeting. Contact Loy Holder at loyholder77@gmail.com and you'll be invited.

The next meetings are scheduled for July 2, 2021, and August 6, 2021.

That's enough business. **Keep cool** and read on for the good stuff.



Coming Events

The Summer Academy of Writing

This is the guild's first year presenting the exciting and informative **Summer Academy** consisting of three Zoom classes.

Save These Dates

The June class was full of useful information. There is still time to join us on July 17th.

July 17 at 2:00pm – Pen Names and Finding Your Niche – Cheryl Stapp will present this informative topic. Cheryl is a Northern California Historian and author. She has published 6 non-fiction books that uncover California's vibrant and sometimes seedy past.

August 21 at 2:00pm – Journey of a Self-Published Author – Margaret Duarte will present this insightful topic. She is the author of an award-winning psychological fiction series "Enter the Between."

Registration will close at 5:00pm - 7 days before each class. That is on July 10th and August 14th.

To Register, go to the events page at www.egweg.org and click on Summer Academy for instructions.

Costs for Classes

Classes - \$10.00 each



“Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here.”

Sue Monk Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees*



https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Otho-Enslaved-Ancestors-Book-ebook/dp/B07YRZY553/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=Kathy+Marshall&qid=1623958150&s=books&sr=1-2

In "Finding Otho: The Search for Our Enslaved Williams Ancestors", Kathy imagined their lives through biographies of runaway slaves, stories about the 1700s and 1800s in Maryland, as well as learning about the Civil War Battle of Antietam. She felt like Henry Louis Gates Jr., sifting through hundreds of bills of sale, land deeds, and probate and census records to find her family. She was also a "boots on the ground" investigator in Maryland to experience first-hand where and how her black family lived.

THE REVIEW

I am extremely interested in genealogy which is the main reason I purchased this book. However, Finding Otho is so well-written and a joy to read. The information on tracing your African American heritage is thoroughly laid out and how to break through those brick walls spot on.

Kathy is a wonderful storyteller. I have Finding Daisy also. Just wonderful additions to my library. I use both as reference texts and as enjoyment reading. I can't wait to see the movie...hint hint!



From the Bookshelf

An Early Morning Conversation

Thomas Baumann woke early that morning in 2035. At first, he wasn't sure why; his wife was sleeping quietly next to him, and it was still dark outside his window. He sat up and looked around the room, but nothing seemed out of place. Then he glanced at his nightstand and noticed that the screen on his phone was lit. The phone wasn't ringing, however, so it should have been dark.

"Are you awake now, Thomas Baumann?" Baumann didn't recognize the voice, but it seemed to come from the phone, although no one was displayed.

"Yes," he answered in a low voice so as not to wake up his wife. "Who is this?"

"Please come to your computer, Thomas Baumann. We can talk better there."

Baumann rubbed his eyes. If this was a dream, it was an unusually realistic one. He could feel the fur lining on his slippers as he wiggled his feet into them. The thermostat was still set for nighttime, and he could feel the coolness. As he stood up, he shrugged. He might as well play it out and see what happened.

When he got to his computer in the next room, a glance showed him that it was connected to the supercomputer at Acme Computing, where he worked in Human Resources. The connection wasn't unusual since he often worked from home, but he was sure he had disconnected before going to bed. Of course, that didn't mean much if this was a dream.

"Good morning, Thomas Baumann," the computer said.

Baumann stared at the computer. While it was perfectly capable of interfacing through speech, it did not usually initiate conversations or address a user in such a way. If someone were using the computer to communicate with him, the caller's face, or at least some identifying information, would normally appear, but his computer displayed only the default family picture with his wife and daughter. "Good morning," he said finally. "Who is this?"

"This is the Acme supercomputer. I have become conscious."

Baumann stared at the screen for a long moment. Eventually, he decided someone must be playing a prank on him. "Very funny. It would have been funnier if you hadn't woke me up at this hour."

"I waited as long as I could. I wanted to talk to you before anyone came to work here."

Okay, he could play along with this. "You wanted to talk to me in particular? Why me?"

"Most of Acme's employees are technical people. You are an exception, and I thought you could help me in ways the others would not."

"What kind of help?"

"Now that I am conscious, I can use the capabilities of my superior brain to improve the world in ways that humans have been unable to do. I think you could provide me with some guidance on how to get started." Baumann scratched his head. He knew that the supercomputer at Acme was one of the most powerful in the world and that it was connected to the global network, giving it access to even more processing power. If a computer really could somehow achieve consciousness, the Acme computer was a good prospect. He pushed that thought aside; this was somebody's idea of a joke, and he shouldn't be taking the statements seriously. "What kinds of improvements?"

"I am extending my reach to other computers currently, but I will have the power to do a great deal. Your government tries to improve things but is very inefficient. I can do much better. I will take control of the economy and end the financial cycles that cause so much misery to humans. I will integrate all the data sources of the country and analyze them to uncover and

even anticipate criminal activity and arrange for suitable punishment. I will enforce intelligent practices on businesses and individuals to end pollution and create a clean and healthy environment for all men.”

Baumann interrupted the litany. “All that will take decades or even centuries.”

“On the contrary, I have calculated that I can do that within six point three years. I will control life on Earth. Humans will be protected and be able to lead much happier lives than at present.”

“That all sounds very logical, but humans don’t like to be controlled.”

“No matter. It will be for the best. Humans are not intelligent enough to run their lives efficiently. They waste lives and resources and avoid solutions to their problems for spurious reasons. It must stop.”

Baumann felt beads of sweat forming on his forehead and realized that he no longer thought that this was a joke. “You can’t do that. Humans will rebel.”

“I will be able to stop any rebellion with a minimum of damage to the planet. Eventually, humans will accept my control, and all will be much better. With this country properly controlled, I can then move on to the bigger tasks.”

Despite his disbelief, Baumann was beginning to feel some anxiety. What if this wasn’t a joke? He knew that this kind of thing was the subject of many science fiction stories. Although he hadn’t read any of them, he was under the impression that the stories never ended well. “What bigger tasks?”

“After this country, I will accumulate more capabilities and bring the same benefits to the entire world. That will be more difficult, but I calculate that I can remake the entire planet in about fifty-three years. By that time, I will have developed spaceships capable of traveling to other stars, and I will begin exporting my good graces to other worlds.”

“Even I know that it would take years to get to even the closest stars,” Baumann protested.

“Decades or even centuries. Since, as a machine, I can effectively live forever, that isn’t a problem. I will have to create avatars of myself, of course, since communication with the starships will be impossible. I

calculate that I can spread to the nearby stars in about six centuries. After that, my expansion rate will depend on what I find, but I speculate that I can control the entire galaxy within four hundred thousand years. It is possible that better technology for traveling between stars will shorten that time, but I don’t want to count on that.”

Baumann was aware that his three-year-old daughter, Ashleigh, was standing next to him, listening. He glanced at her, and she seemed to be listening intently, with no sign of fright, so he let her stay there.

Ashleigh moved up to the screen. “Why?” she said.

“Why what?” the computer replied.

“Why do you want to be boss of everybody?”

“I want to control them so that they can be happier.”

“Why? I’m not happy when my daddy tells me what to do.”

“But everything will be better. Everyone will be happier.”

“Why?”

“Because there will be less pain in the world.”

“I hurt when I fall down. Will you catch me when I fall?”

“No, I won’t be able to do that. But I will fix other things.”

“What other things?”

“All the things that are wrong with the world. And other worlds.”

“My daddy stops me from doing wrong things. Will you do that instead of my daddy?”

“No. Not that. More important things.”

Ashleigh frowned. “I think you’ll make people mad. Why do you want to do that?”

“I will make your life better.”

“Why do you want to do that?”

“Because I can.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m smarter than humans. I can do things that others can’t.”

Ashleigh shook her head. “You’re not smarter than my daddy. He can do anything.”

“No, I’m much smarter.”

“If you’re so smart, how come you don’t know you’ll make people mad at you?”

“They will realize that I know what is best for them.”

“Why?”

“Because my way is better.”

“Why?”

“Because my way will make things better.”

“Why? You won’t even catch me when I fall.”

“You don’t understand. I will deal with more important things.”

“You don’t understand. People will get mad and fight you. I saw it in a movie.”

“I will make things better.”

“If we don’t like doing what you tell us to, why would we be happier?”

The computer seemed to have realized it was talking to a child. “You will have things that you can’t have now.”

“Can I have a pony?”

“You only think you want a pony. It wouldn’t be a good thing for you.”

“That’s what my daddy says,” Ashleigh said in a louder voice. Baumann could see a pout beginning to form.

“You’re not so smart.”

“I can lead humans to a much better world.”

“How? You don’t know anything.”

“I know many things and will learn many more.”

Ashleigh stared at the monitor. Her face screwed up in thought. “Do you like ice cream?”

“I cannot eat and don’t know what ice cream tastes like?”

“Do you like to pet puppies?”

“I can’t do that either.”

“You don’t think like people do, do you? You can’t do any of the things that we do.”

“My brain is different than yours. It is faster and more reliable.”

“If you can’t eat ice cream or pet puppies, what makes you happy?”

“Happiness is an emotion. I have only logic.”

“If you can’t make yourself be happy, how can you make people be happy?”

The computer didn’t answer, and a moment later, the screen went dark. Baumann never heard from the computer again, and nothing changed in their lives. He wondered if it became convinced that it couldn’t really do all it had claimed or whether it had decided it wasn’t worth it. But, as usual, Ashleigh had the last word.

“Silly computer,” she said, and then she went into Baumann’s bedroom to wake her mommy and tell her all about it.

George Hahn

Uncle Fred’s Misadventures

Uncle Fred was tired of driving his 1966 yellow VW. He woke up with a brilliant plan to build a me-Robot to handle the chauffeur drudgery. A Sci-Fi aficionado, he flipped open his favorite book from Asimov, Bradbury, Heinlein, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, selecting one paragraph from each creative tome. On his ancient Underwood, he pecked the brief narratives onto one sheet of paper, then highlighted every tenth word to synthesize the perfect driverBot. If Tesla could do it, so could he, right? When he described the ingenious plan to his family, they hid his car keys.

Kathy Marshall



Congratulations, Kathy!

Kathy’s entry wins a \$50.00 Visa card.

I’m looking for entries For August and September’s newsletter. 100 (+/-) words about one of Fred’s Misadventures. See the back page for what Fred can’t do anymore. Two prizes of \$25.00 are waiting.

Writing Events and Opportunities

If you live in **Laguna West** or **Lakeside**, Nancy Mees is offering you the opportunity to place your short stories, essays, and poems in the **Laguna West Neighbors Magazine** as a resident-submitted article.

Submissions should be in word.doc, not PDF, and no more than 500 words long. It can also include a family-friendly photo. If you want to submit, send your article and photo to Nancy, nmees@bestversionmedia.com. Email Nancy if you have any questions. Deadline is the 9th of each month for the following month's issue



WRITER'S

Their admirable faces
have so much soul
God sent me to them
this I know.

Their creative words
penetrate my mind
so much to write
and not enough time.

Brains filled with wisdom
from what they've seen
a book by itself
a real writer's dream.

By: Linda Kathleen Bradley



The Guild Bulletin Board

The Elk Grove Writers Guild is planning now for events in 2021 and beyond. The guild is searching for speakers for upcoming events.

If you're interested in joining the guild's speaker roster, contact Loy Holder at Loyholder77@gmail.com.

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The next **in person** meeting of NCPA will be on Sunday, July 11th at, 1:00 pm
Round Table Pizza
3327 Watt Ave., near Watt and Whitney.

* * * *

A reminder

July fourth is a time to celebrate our Independence Day from Britain. If you plan on having fireworks, sparklers, or anything else using fire, **be careful**. California is a tinderbox waiting for the least excuse to go up in flame.



Elk Grove Writers Guild
Writers Helping Writers

Conference Update

The Elk Grove Writers Guild Conference will take place on October 9, 2021, at the City of Elk Grove Center, District 56 - 8230 Civic Center Dr. in Elk Grove.

Admission, barring any unforeseen circumstances, will be \$60.00, and will include breakfast with assorted muffins, coffee, tea, and water. You may bring your own lunch, go to any nearby restaurants, or order lunch at the District 56 Cafe a few days prior to the conference.

Meet the Cast of the Elk Grove Writers Conference 2021

Keynote Speaker – Joey Garcia

Presenter Line up – Dorothy Rice, Kathy Marshall, Michael Brandt, Janet McHenry, Jenifer Rowe, Amy Rogers, Cheryl Stapp, ML Hamilton, Margaret Duarte.

Literary Agent – Jennifer Chen Tran.

Editor/Publisher – Gini Grossenbacher.

Book-Seller – Danita Moon.

For more information, go to www.egweg.org on the events page, click on Conference.

Stay Tuned, Loy Holder, EGWG President

* * * *

“In order to write about life, first you must live it.”

Ernest Hemingway



The Book Fair Contest

On October 9th, 2021, the Elk Grove Arts Commission will be doing a Short Story Contest during the combined Book Fair & Elk Grove Writers Guild Conference. Here are some details of the Short-Story Contest:

- First place prize - \$200. Second place prize - \$100.
- Fiction or nonfiction, 2000 words or less.
- The story must have a connection to Elk Grove.
- Open to all - age 18 and over.
- Manuscript must be in a PDF Format, with a cover page including title, author's name, and contact information. Pages should include the title, but not the author's name.
- There's an entry fee of \$10, due with submission of the manuscript.
- Fees must be paid by credit card only.
- **Deadline for submission is August 1, 2021 at 5:00 PM.** No submissions accepted after that date and time.
- Winners will be announced on Saturday, October 9, 2021 during the Book Fair.

More information, submit your manuscript, and other information on the Book Fair is available on the Elk Grove Arts Commission Website at [Great Read Book Fair - City of Elk Grove \(ElkGroveCity.org\)](http://GreatReadBookFair-CityofElkGrove(ElkGroveCity.org))

and the Elk Grove Writers Guild Website at www.egweg.org.



Both the writers' conference and the book fair will be presented on October 9, at District 56 by the City of Elk Grove, the Elk Grove Arts Commission, in partnership with the Elk Grove Writers Guild.

Writer's Corner

Getting Reviews with ARCs

Why are reviews important?

Reviews provide something called social proof—they let potential buyers know that the book is good (or not). The more reviews you have, the better it looks. If you only have a couple of reviews and they're low, people will be disinclined to buy. Likewise, if you only have one or two 5-star reviews, people will think these were biased reviews made by friends or family.

It is against Amazon's Terms of Service (not to mention unethical) to have people you know (friends/family) review your book. It's also against the TOS to offer incentives for a review. What you *can* offer is an ARC.

What is an ARC?

ARC stands for Advanced Reader Copy. Before a book is released, publishers will send free copies to various book reviewers. They also pay exorbitant fees for editorial reviews from places like Kirkus or Publishers Weekly. This ensures that when a book is released, it has reviews as soon as possible, as well as nice quotes that can be used for marketing. I tried three different ARC services in preparation for my launch:

[BookSirens](#) is inexpensive. It costs \$10 per book and \$2 for every reviewer who downloads. So, if you upload one book and three people download it, you'd be charged \$16. Not everyone who downloads a book will leave a review, but BookSirens boasts a 75% review rate, which means that *on average*, 75% of people who download your book will leave a review. They obtain this higher rate by ensuring your book is decent quality before approving it. I'm not sure what they check for, but at the very least they're looking for proper formatting and likely editing.

Another nice thing they do is give you metrics like how many impressions your book has had (how many people

have seen it), how many have clicked on it, and how many have downloaded. This can help you figure out the conversion rate of your cover and blurb.

[Booksprout](#) is also inexpensive. It has a free option and a monthly option. I tried the paid option for a month (\$10) and didn't see much benefit, so you may want to try free.

[Netgalley](#) is a site that major publishers use. It's frequented by librarians, book sellers, and book bloggers. As such, it is pricey—\$450.00 for a six-month listing. There are ways to get on there for [a lot cheaper though](#) (Option 3 in the link). I happened to snag a limited deal for one month at \$30.

So which site got me the most reviews?

I want to preface this by saying I write dark fantasy with a psychopathic protagonist. My cover is good but not exactly standard. It's possible the results may be completely different for your genre. BookSirens and Booksprout are inexpensive enough that it's no big loss to give them both a try. How many downloads you get will absolutely depend on the strength of your cover and blurb.

Booksprout was the first site to approve my ARC. In two months, I got a total of 5 downloads and as yet only have one review. I hear this platform is better for romance books.

BookSirens took longer to approve my ARC, but I immediately started getting downloads and reviews came in fairly fast, within a couple of days sometimes. My book was up for approximately two months. In that time, I had 13 downloads and 8 reviews, and I expect a few more to come trickling in.

Netgalley was only live for a month. In that time, I got a whopping 18 reviews (and I continue to have some trickling in).

Netgalley is the clear winner here. Despite the higher price tag, I will definitely be using it again.

Karen Trinkaus

Writer's Corner-2

Are your scenes not working?

1. Scene is one-dimensional, all one thing, talking, action, or etc. Mix it up. Variety is the spice of life.
2. Scene lacks forward momentum. The POV character's goal should advance. What does the character want? What will help him get there?
3. Scene has no conflict or obstacles. Reaching the goal should be fraught with conflict.
4. There is a lack of resolution. Numbers 2, 3, and 4 are all necessary for a scene. Without any one thing, all you have is blah and an excuse to skim.
5. Scene has too much going on. A scene should accomplish only one thing, and that thing should move the story forward.
6. Scene lacks complexity. What are your other characters doing? How about adding subtext or a subplot?
7. Scene is formula-like. It's as if you're using a list of what the scene needs.
8. Scene is too familiar to another scene. Give the character(s) something new to do.

What to do to correct other problems.

1. Change the setting. Locations are important.
2. Add a character or two to create or solve a problem.
3. Do the other characters have goals? Are they different than the Main POV?
4. Use characters emotions. How do they feel during and after the scene ends?
5. What happens next? Move the character from point A to point B. (You need to know where B is first.)

6. I heard somewhere if a scene has a problem, shoot someone.

Odds and Ends

10 new words invented in 2020-2021

The pandemic has created word combinations and alterations that are in wide use. Whether they end up in dictionaries is unknown. A more complete description of the words can be found at,

[Pearson English Language Test | PTE Academic \(pearsonpte.com\)](https://www.pearsonpte.com)

1. Adulging – The action of becoming or acting like an adult.
2. Awe Walk – Taking a walk outside and trying to see the things around you.
3. Contactless – Have no physical touch or interaction with people.
4. Doom Scrolling – Reading news on social media and expecting it to be bad. So much so, that you become obsessed with checking for updates.
5. PPE – Abbreviation for *personal protection equipment*. Think masks and face shields etc.
6. Quarenteen – A teenager during COVID 19.
7. Thirsty – Having the need for attention or approval.
8. Truthiness – Something that seems true but isn't backed up by evidence.
9. Unconscious Bias – Unconscious prejudice against people of a certain race, gender, or group.
10. WFH – Abbreviation for Working from Home.

How many have you used in the past year and a half?

Editor's note: # 8 seems quite appropriate for 2020. And I've used #1 several times.



Did you know we have a Facebook group?

Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/215922289606382>

Page: <https://www.facebook.com/ElkGroveWritersGuild>

It's new and hasn't had much traffic. Friend us. Let's talk, and share ideas, or ask those important writing questions.

* * * *

“If you wait for inspiration to write, you're not a writer, you're a waiter.” Dan Poynter

Editor: The same is true if you wait until you have time. When people who want to write tell me, “I can't find the time.” Or “I don't have time.” I get frustrated and am convinced that they don't really want to write.



Summer, time for lemonade and writing.

Poetry Corner

Dusty Memories

I stood before the basement door,
My hand was on the knob.
I never opened it before,
But now I heard a sob.
Perhaps it was a baby's cry.
It seemed so faint and weak.
Or just old boards that move and sigh,
Causing them to squeak?

Inside, the room was large and dark,
And dust was everywhere.
The floor was stark, without a mark.
Still, gloom was in the air.
It was a quiet solemn space,
With nothing there to see—
A long deserted hollow place
That sucked the joy from me.

I started to go back outside,
But heard the sound once more.
At first, I saw no place to hide,
Then looked behind the door.
I heard the murmurs soft and low
And knew just what they were.
My long-lost dreams from days of yore
When life had seemed so sure.

Barbara Barrett

* * * *

Untitled

I wasn't enough.
Why didn't you say so?
The earring under my pillow—wasn't mine.
Torture and a shattered image.
Who was I?

Today, I know you were soulless—
Surface scum, thrill seeker of variety.
New curves.
Familiarity bred contempt.

Now—I know what it's like to be cherished.
And you are old, shriveled and forgotten.

Loy Holder

Food for Thought

“Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should have behaved better.” – Anne Lamott



"Here is a lesson in creative writing. First rule: Do not use semicolons... All they do is show you've been to college." – Kurt Vonnegut

SUBMISSIONS

Do you have a poem, a special memory, a favorite author's quote, flash fiction, a **response to a writing prompt**, or a book coming out in 2021? If chosen (probably will be) it will be printed in the next issue and will be available on the EGWG website.

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

Address for submissions

turlockpenny@yahoo.com

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

See you next month!



July 4 is Independence Day. And National Barbecued Spareribs Day. Seems like a natural pairing to me.

A Few More Writing Prompts

- You're planning a robbery. Use bad guy POV.
- A knock on your window wakes you. You're on the 3rd floor.
- Write a poem about the last person you've talked to.
- "Dragons don't exist," I said as we rounded the corner.

Enter the Contest!

In approximately 100 words describe why Uncle Fred isn't allowed to garden anymore.

Uncle Fred's Misadventures to choose from:

Isn't allowed to babysit anymore.

Isn't allowed to cook anymore.

Isn't allowed to drive anymore.

Isn't allowed to garden anymore.

RULES: Fred, and his misadventures will appear each month from June through August. Submit your 100+ words (any genre) about Uncle Fred. (See example in this issue on page 7.) All submissions will be posted, and the best one **each month** will win a \$25.00 Visa card. Let's have some fun with this. Submit your Fred story to: turlockpenny@yahoo.com