



Penwheels Newsletter

For Escapees Writers Published or Not

Summer 2015



By Margo Armstrong

This summer is the perfect time to finish at least a chapter or two of that novel, poem, memoir or how-to book. If you are enjoying the ocean beaches or mountain forests, take the laptop outside and be inspired.

My *Createspace* newsletter shared this choice tidbit, "You write with passion. You rewrite with purpose."

That is to say, your first draft is spun with reckless abandon. The words click onto the page as fast as you can tap your fingers across the keyboard. They are delivered from a place that is located deep within the right hemisphere of your brain.

You write what you see. You don't think about what you write. Rewriting? Not so much."

For the rest of the story, click [HERE](#).

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Penwheels is a private group of Escapees members who enjoy writing and discussing the writing adventure.

The Penwheels is a free digital newsletter published quarterly to all members

RVillage: The New Forum

Join our new **Group** forum at RVillage.com.

There is no charge to sign up or use any of their features.

Once you join, click **Groups**, scroll down the page to the *Group Directory*.

In the *Search for a Group* field, enter **Penwheels**.

In the *Results* list, click **Escapees BOF - Penwheels** to get to our homepage.

Once on our Penwheels homepage, click **Group Forum** to participate or read the posts.

Click **Group Map** to see where all our members are located.

Newsletter Archives

The **new** location for accessing any past Penwheels newsletter from 2009 to the current issue:

<http://Penwheels.MovingOnWithMargo.com>

Tips From Jaimie



For \$150 and an outstanding essay, you could be the owner of a goat farm in Alabama!

[For the rest of the story!](#)

Need an excuse to watch TV? This writer feels watching TV has made her a better writer. In "[How To Sharpen Your Writing Skills By Watching TV](#)" by Wendy Hobday Haugh, she explains how it has given her ideas, helped her sharpen dialog and improve weak characters.

There are [two paying markets](#) discussed in *Writer's Market* that may be of interest to writers. One is a magazine seeking articles about traveling with your dog; the other is *The First Line*, which helps writers jump-start their creativity.

Good article on 25 words writers should eliminate from their vocabulary. [Read on ...](#)

"[Retire to an RV](#)" is Jaimie Bruzenak's latest book.

Braggin' Rights

By Joanne Alexakis



"Kiwis, Penguins and Tuataras - Oh My!" by Jaimie Bruzenak, appeared in the May 2015 issue of *MotorHome* magazine. The article details her 2014 trip to New Zealand's South Island in a rented camper-van.

In the March/April *Escapees Magazine*, Ramona Creel's article, "Cash In With Craigslist," tells us how to get rid of stuff and make \$\$\$ to boot!

In the *May/June Escapees magazine*, a piece by Terry Hager SKP#48315, "You, too, may be an avid RVer if:" Terry goes on to list 15 elements that may classify you as being a RVer. Terry, as always, shows his funny streak.

"Healthcare & The RV Lifestyle," a guide for senior travelers by Margo Armstrong. Just published at [Amazon](#), [Barnes&Noble](#), [Apple iBooks](#) and [Kobo](#). The PDF version is available at [TheMaxwellGroup.net](#)

Tucson Festival of Books

By Jaimie Hall Bruzenak

The last two times I attended the Tucson Festival of Books, I walked away frustrated. Each year they schedule excellent speakers and popular authors and strictly enforce the room capacity guidelines, meaning many people get turned away. In 2014, I spent almost two hours in line several times to make sure I got in to see an author I wanted to hear.

Festival volunteer

This year I decided to approach the festival differently. First, I volunteered to escort an author. You could put up to four choices in for whom you wanted to escort. Since I was late choosing, my first choice (best-selling author Daniel James Brown of *Boys in the Boat*) was long gone but I did get my second choice.



Jane Eppinga is a fellow member of Arizona Professional Writers and her topic was "Gravestones, Epitaphs and Art." Her fellow panelist, Parker Anderson, has written about gravestones in Yavapai County where Prescott is located.

She had an interesting presentation about unusual gravestones and famous people buried in Southern Arizona.

Free tickets

The biggest change this year, that seemed to work very well, was allowing attendees to order free tickets in advance at five of the largest (and most popular) venues. I put in for and got a ticket for "A Conversation with Lisa See." The ticketing system worked like a charm.

Lisa See is an excellent speaker and her moderator, Jennifer Lee Carrell, author of thrillers and historical fiction, was well prepared with penetrating questions. We learned that Lisa enjoys research for her novels and can spend hours on it.

For example, in her latest best-selling novel, *China Dolls*, about Chinese nightclub singers from the 1930s and 40s, she had one of her characters changing into her homemade audition outfit.



That got Lisa wondering just what she would be wearing underneath her outfit! Those were the days of bloomers and no bras. It led to some interesting revelations and pieces of history!

Another change this year for me was taking the new Tucson trolley to the university campus. As a senior with a pass, I can ride for \$.50 each way and had only a short walk from my stop.

So many people attend that it can get overwhelming. However, I plan to be back, especially now that they have a ticketing system. As writers, attending a book festival is a wonderful way to get inspired.

Getting Settled



By Ellen Behrens

Mary woke up, happy she didn't have to go to school that day. She had plans: she would play by the water all day after she finished her chores. She hurried to dress so her mother would not have to call for her.

Quiz: where's Mary? What year is it? What season? What if I said Mary was awakening in a cabin by a stream in the 1800s? Or lived in a fishing village with her missionary parents in Indonesia?

Feeling a little lost? Did you re-read the sentences above to see what you missed? Most of us would. Unfortunately, many stories begin this same way – too much of the setting and situation in the head of the writer rather than on the page.

If an author does not quickly orient readers, they are left to fill in the gaps just as you did with the story about Mary.

Some of the best opening lines quickly establish time and place:

- ❖ “The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting.” –Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)
- ❖ “It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.” –George Orwell, 1984 (1949)
- ❖ “It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York.” –Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

Not only does Crane establish his battlefield setting, he creates an atmosphere of melancholy chill.

Orwell tells us, with matter-of-fact precision, that we are in a world where clocks strike an hour we do not have.

Plath establishes geographical location, year and season, but also summons an oppressive mood that telegraphs the narrator's troubled mindset.

It is a lot to ask of an opening line, but something we should try to accomplish in the first few sentences.

Most of us first learned about "setting" back in English class when we had to identify when and where a story took place: London, 1898; the Maine woods, on a dark and stormy night. Now that we are writers, we should expand our idea of “setting” to encompass place and atmosphere.

Writers are magicians. We plunge readers into a fictional world we have created, beginning with where and when the story takes place. The right details (“clocks were striking thirteen”) reveal whether the story is contemporary, historical, or happens in another world altogether.

Give your characters somewhere to walk or something to ride on; show us what they see, hear, and smell. Invoke the senses, and your readers will experience your story – and remember it.

Ellen Behrens' newest novel, [Pea Body](#), is the first in a series featuring characters Walt and Betty Rollin, full-time RVers who solve mysteries as they travel the country.

She is former fiction editor of *Mid-American Review* and the recipient of an Ohio Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship.

She and her husband have been full-time RVers since 2009. Learn more about her books at <http://www.ellenbooks.wordpress.com>, or e-mail her directly at <mailto:ellenbehr@aol.com>.

From the Editor

Follow the 80/20 Rule in Social Media

One of the questions that authors often ask is: "What should I blog/tweet about?" The answer depends on a lot of factors, but the most important is the subject matter of your book.

While of course you want to promote your work, if that is all you do, it's going to be hard to attract - and keep followers. Who wants to read endless tweets that constantly shout "Buy my book!" (Am I right?)

Fill your blog with information about any subject, as long as it relates in some way to your catalog of books. Incorporate a link to your book somewhere in the discussion, making sure it appears helpful to the reader. Use links to provide more information outside your blog.

[Read on...](#)

Author Book Talks and Signings



By *Jaimie Hall Bruzenak*

Are they worth it? Do they drive sales? There are mixed reviews about how effective they are.

Readers like meeting an author and finding out the back story and more about the person. They do not always result in sales or that many book sales.

I went to a successful author talk at Payson Public Library in Payson, AZ. Sponsored by the Library Friends, the author Nancy E. Turner lives in a nearby community and writes historical fiction.

Her first book, *These Is My Words: The Diary of Sarah Agnes Prine, 1881-1901*, is a fictionalized account of her great-grandmother, an Arizona pioneer woman.



She followed that up with two more novels about Sarah Prine, plus au-

thored another about World War II. Her latest, released in February of this year, is *My Name Is Resolute*, a story set during the American Revolution.

I had an appointment so had to leave right after her talk, but quite a few people were lined up purchasing and having her sign their books.

So what made it successful?

- ❖ **She was humorous and open.** She shared how she got into writing and how she wrote her first novel. Her story was interesting but she also got laughs as she shared how she stumbled into fiction writing.

She became intrigued with the American Revolution and then developed a woman character to convey the war through her experiences.

Turner shared some little-known, fascinating facts such as in 1750 there were more white slaves in America than black—many of them indentured servants. The British taxed everything—they might cut down half your peach trees because you had more than you needed and use that for tax.

You could not have iron door hinges because the metal could be turned into weapons.

In fact, using original documents, she noticed that linens were mentioned as contraband and that intrigued her.

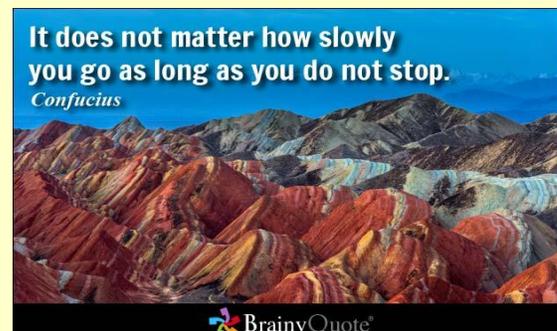
She developed a story where her character would be captured then sold as an indentured servant in New England and later get training as a weaver.

- ❖ **She made us curious.** We were already curious about the linens. Then she read a few sections from the beginning of her book. We knew *Resolute*, the daughter of a wealthy plantation owner, would be captured and taken from Jamaica but Turner left us with *Resolute* and her sister standing in a slave's cabin. How would it happen? You had to purchase the book to find out.
- ❖ **All five of Turner's books were available for purchase.** Arrangements had been made through Poisoned Pen, an independent bookstore in Scottsdale, to have books on hand. Someone handled sales while Turner signed books.
- ❖ **The Library Friends had done a good job of publicizing the talk.** Several mentions in the local paper plus a full article about Turner and her books and the event appeared in the couple of weeks prior to her talk. There was a full house and more chairs had to be brought in to accommodate the audience.

All of this worked together to make the audience glad they came. They received something of value whether they purchased a book or not. She planted seeds. I am sure others will read her work in the future even if they did not buy a book that day.

I had already read *These Is My Words*, one of the reasons I came. I am not a fan of books about wars, but she made it sound so interesting that I will read *My Name is Resolute* and probably purchase it.

In-person appearances are only one part of a marketing campaign. They can cost the author money if she spends a lot on travel or does not end up selling any books. In this case, all the elements came together and the book talk was a success for author, audience and the Library Friends.



News From the Publishing World

Your Books Are Not Selling - 10 Actions to Take

With so many books now published on Amazon in particular, the competition to attract book buyers is fierce. While there are countless sources of advice and marketing tricks on how to sell ebooks and books, the most important factors of all are to have a good product and to attract positive attention to your books.

If you have published more than a couple of titles, perhaps it has been some time since you analyzed what you are really doing to attract attention. As with all things Internet, change is the only constant.

While certain approaches may have been successful a year or so back, it is not necessarily true that they are working now. If your book sales have slowed down, maybe it is time to take stock and look for action you can take to improve your chances.

Sure, writing better and publishing more often will help, but what can you do to help your existing titles maintain long tail income?

1. Your Book Is Lost In The Forest. One of the easiest actions to take to help book sales is to change the genre and category. Having a book lost in the forest of genres such as Romance or Science Fiction it is competing against hundreds of thousands of other titles. A good tip is to make your own specific category and reduce the competition. Here is how it's done.

For the rest of the story, click [HERE](#).

Building Your Author Platform

Whether you are planning on self-publishing or taking the tradition route by finding a literary agent, you are going to need to build an author platform.

Literary agents today are not only looking for great writers, but also for those who can market themselves. Of course, if you take the self-publishing route, you are on your own, so marketing yourself is an absolute imperative.

If you have already published, and do not have a clear idea of how to market yourself and your books, it is time to play catch up.

Writing books and marketing, however, are two skill sets that are so far opposed that many authors shudder at the thought of having to turn themselves into hyperbolic sales people.

[Read on ...](#)

28 (Better) Things No One Tells You About Publishing

1. Selling books is harder than writing them. There are 300k books published in the U.S. every year. 30% of Americans read only 1 to 5 books in 2014.

Writing a book is purely up to you. But getting other people to buy and read your book is another matter.

2. Everyone obsesses about titles and covers but it is hard to prove their impact beyond above a basic level of quality.

It is easy to find popular books with lousy titles and covers, and unpopular books with great titles and covers. There are too many variables for magic answers. Publishers exert more control over titles and covers than you would expect; often authors have little say.

For the rest of the story, click [HERE](#).

To Self-Publish and Perish

This blog post by Claude Nougat puts the current Amazon market in perspective.

"I finally found where Amazon reveals a hidden (and juicy) statistic: the number of ebooks available in the Kindle Store. If you're an Amazon Associate, you can easily find it too but to make it simple I took a screen shot of the page where it shows, this one dated August 16, 2014:"

The post continues to enlighten us about the millions of eBooks (and print books) now available. It also boasts about the millions to come.

"You can bet that in 10 years time the number of titles in the Kindle Store could be anywhere between 20 and 40 million books."

One of the more interesting sections discusses how book sales rise and fall, then drop off a cliff. This explains why popular authors often allow free access to one of their books.

Read more of this insight at [his blog](#):

Some important points after reading this post:

- ❖ Book covers must stand out in the crowd
- ❖ Editing is as important as the creative writing
- ❖ Never stop promoting your books

Wonderfully Bad Book Reviews

From *Just Publishing's* Derek Haines comes this revealing post about bad book reviews.

"Call me a twisted masochist, but there is something perversely pleasurable that I adore about bad one star book reviews. After all the years of being fortunate enough to gain, mostly, wonderful feedback and reviews from readers, it never ceases to amaze me what some 'let's stick the boot in', readers find worth commenting on after reading (or perhaps possibly reading) my books.

Usually, it involves ignoring the story completely and finding fault in anything from spelling to hating the cover. With a little imagination I suppose, there is always something to dislike about a book – or an author.

For those new to writing and publishing, bad one star reviews can come as an unpleasant shock, and even a depressing experience. They are a reality, and for any author with a thin skin who struggles to deal with them, it's time to toughen up. Instead of jumping off the nearest balcony or in front of a train, accept them and understand that someone went to a lot of trouble to comment on your book, even if it was less than complimentary. A few bad reviews are a fact of life."

Read the rest of the story [HERE](#).

Changing URLs in Search Results

Google announced that they'll change the way they represent URLs in search results. Joost has written a post explaining the exact changes. In short, what will change is that the website name will be used instead of the domain name and the URL structure will be used as breadcrumbs.

This change means that your site's URL structure becomes even more important than it already was. Ugly URLs will be even more visible in the search results than before. In Joost's eBook, *Content SEO*, he wrote at length about site structure for SEO, and this article on site structure is still valid in his opinion, though a few years older than the eBook.

Joost's WordPress SEO plugin already has an update containing support for these changes (among other things).

For more info, read Joost's post.

<https://yoast.com/changing-urls-in-search-results>

Writing Contests & Awards

FreelanceWriting.com

Two of Cups Press Annual Chapbook Contest

Two of Cups is inviting writers to enter this year's annual chapbook contest.

Submit 15-30 pages of poetry. Style and theme are open. The winning author will receive \$100 and 10 perfect-bound copies of his/her book.

Deadline: 06/15/2015

Prizes: \$100

Fees: \$12

Genre(s): Poetry, Book

2016 Helen Sheehan Book Prize

Elephant Rock Books invites writers to enter this year's Helen Sheehan Book Prize. Submit one unpublished YA manuscript. First prize is \$1000 and an ERB Book Contract.

Deadline: 06/30/2015

Prizes: \$1,000

Fees: \$20

Genre(s): Book

2016 Press 53 Award for Poetry

The Press 53 Award for Poetry is awarded annually to an outstanding, unpublished collection of poems. The author of the winning manuscript receives a cash advance of \$1,000, and publication.

Deadline: 07/31/2015

Prizes: \$1,000

Fees: \$30

Genre(s): Poetry

The Altaire Short Fiction Award

A prize of \$1000.00 given to what Altaire Productions and Publications deems the best story entered into No Man's Land: The Crime Edition. Submit a crime fiction piece of up to 7000 words.

Deadline: 07/31/2015

Prizes: \$1,000

Fees: \$10 Genre(s): Fiction

Get more information and other contest and award listings at [FreelanceWriting](#).

And by the way, everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt. ~ Sylvia Plath