



Penwheels Newsletter

Spring Issue 2021

For Escapees Writers, Published or Not

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Jaimie's Tips

Jaimie Bruzenak

The RV industry is responding to the needs of people with disabilities. This could be a potential market for writers who have some sort of physical or mental disability. See how [Kerry Ridgeway in the Jan 22 2021 issue of Writers Weekly](#) has used her situation in regular life to write and sell essays and articles. The RV lifestyle could add another angle.

Does writing your memoir appeal to you? In that same issue Bill Vossler, who is working on a book of his memoirs, is, in the meantime, selling individual stories. He'll eventually include them in [his book](#).

More of Jaimie's Free Libraries

Tucson has a number of historic barrios. Barrio means neighborhood. An interesting barrio that two friends and I explored is *Dunbar Spring*.

Beginning in the 1980s volunteers, who call themselves urban neighborhood foresters, have transformed the Dunbar/Spring area into a vibrant, green landscape.

By planting more than 1,500 native trees such as velvet mesquites, desert ironwoods, foothills palo verdes and canyon hackberries, this area thrives.

Curbs have openings to allow water collection sites along public walkways to catch rainwater.

We found an intriguing neighborhood with some interesting murals and two Little Free Libraries.



The first has a sculpture of a gila monster reading a book in front of it!



The second, while nondescript, has a background of whimsical characters painted on the building behind it.

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

The Penwheels Newsletter is digitally published quarterly.

[Archives Available](#)



Easy Peasy Writers' Challenge

Joanne Alexakis

We hope these questions inspire comments from all of you. Respond to either or both questions.

#1 (I have to be careful with this question: I know some RVers are 'allergic' to this word - **WORK**).

Do you pick up jobs occasionally as you travel?

Does Workamping' work for you?

Can you work out of your RV, maybe on the internet?

Do you volunteer every now and then? (We know every little bit counts.)

What lucrative/fun/interesting positions have you held in the past?

#2 Who are your traveling companions? People? Pets? Plants?

Your writers' challenge is to address these questions.

Do you have a question of interest for PWers? Please send it to me.

joalexakis@earthlink.net

A maximum of 100 words please. We print them in an upcoming issue.

Response From the Winter Issue Challenge

#1 What if it is time to 'Hang Up the Keys'?

From **Debbie Phillips**: Hanging up the keys will be a new chapter in my life. I just started the monthly traveling chapter and it is going well. I hope to have many new chapters before I have to hang up the keys for good. I have discovered new talents and built new skills in each chapter of my life. It has surprised me what I can do. When I try to envision a chapter, it turns out different than expected, but I enjoy the dream and how reality turns out differently. I will let God write each chapter and enjoy where they lead.

***Debbie, Thank you so much for your writers' challenge response. A 'beginner's' perspective is always delightful!*

From **Lewis Leistikow**: Hanging up the keys? Have you wondered about it? Some say, "We'll travel for a couple years, then settle down." Then they find that life on the road becomes an adventure, a very special lifestyle. Sadly, the day must come to hang up your keys. Reasons vary. For me, it was to establish permanent doctors. Too many years of one here, another there, and none get to know you.

So, be it your favorite SKP co-op, Care, a condo or house; when that time comes to 'park it', treasure the memories . . . travel those roads in your mind.

**** Thank you, Lew, for contributing. We appreciate your voice.*

From **Joanne Alexakis SKP# 19367**: Nick & I have pondered this question for a few years now. Still no decision. Arizona sunshine (or Texas/Florida) in wintertime and back to our home state, Minnesota, in summertime for family/friends, doctoring/reconnecting. Fortunately we have seen most of the USA in our 25 years of full-time RVing. However that 'age thing' is catching up with us and hauling our 5th wheel back & forth across the nation has become a chore. We have no children; our parents passed long ago - most of you would say our lives are sooooo easy.

#2 How did you get your nickname?

From **Lew Leistikow**: I was a young, junior enlisted sailor in the Navy's aviation branch. I was stationed in the Boston area when I got orders to Hawaii. A couple of weeks after arriving in Hawaii, I was sent on to the Philippines to join a crew operating there as a radio operator. On arrival, as I was leaving the plane, a man on the ground, holding a copy of my orders tried to read and pronounce my last name, Leistikow. He stumbled and stuttered, "La . . . , Les . . . , Lents . . . , Aw forget it! We'll call you Gus."

Braggin' Rights

The Jan/Feb 2021 issue of the Escapees magazine features **Gerri Almand SKP#159441** in the *From the Bookshelf* column (on page 28). Gerri's book, *The Reluctant RV Wife*, which highlights how this ex-social worker and Master Gardner becomes an experienced RVer was reviewed in the *Winter 2020 Pen-wheels Newsletter*. Her second book, *Home is Where the RV is*, continues with her humorous and fulfilling RVing adventures.





Words Matter

Ellen Behrens

If you've ever wondered whether what you write counts, if words actually matter, you have all the evidence you need in the events of January 6, 2021. The insurgents who swarmed our nation's Capitol had been listening to spoken words, reading written words.

They believed those words, words that have been proven false. Nevertheless, they were moved by those words. They fashioned their ideology because of what they read and heard. They acted on those words; they carried American flags because they claimed to have the Constitution and Bill of Rights on their side.



Probably no more important nor more debated documents have ever been created than the *United States Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*. If you've never read an account of how a few brilliant men created the framework of our country, you should. (I recommend "The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution" by David O. Stewart; see my review on Goodreads.)

Thankfully, none of us is under the incredible pressure the framers of the *Constitution* carried. (And, hopefully, none of us harbors dreams of stirring insurrection in the hearts of our fellow citizens through our writing!)

Instead we can celebrate the power of words to conjure in our readers our imagined worlds, characters, and plots. We have a lot more elbow room than the framers of the Constitution had. Even so, if we really want our readers to fall into the magic of our stories, we must choose the *best* words.

The good news is we don't have to find the best words the first time through. We can let the draft be a fun trip through the wonderland of a new novel or story, leaving our scavenger hunt for words for later drafts. Writing is a process, and the more you follow the process, the easier it will become for you.

On the other hand, not choosing the best words means your readers will misunderstand you. They won't be able to summon the scenes, hear the dialogue, smell or taste the world you want them to experience.

We're writers. Words are our tools. Plying our trade, using our tools, requires care and responsibility. Because words matter. Words really, really matter.

*Ellen Behrens' short stories have been widely published. Her third Rollin RV Mystery, **Superstition Victim**, is now available, and she's completing a guide on reading to improve your writing. If you'd like a free e-book of either one for review purposes, please e-mail ellenbehr@aol.com with your request; please note your Penwheels membership and the format needed.*



From the Editor



10th Annual Kindle Book Awards

When: Submissions accepted January 15, 2021 and end May 1, 2021.

Who: Any Independent or Small Press Author

Qualifications: Books published on Amazon between May 1, 2018 - May 1, 2021 (Must have Amazon Link to qualify).

MINIMUM WORD COUNT?: 25K words (to allow for novellas in all categories)

COST?: \$29

AWARDS?: \$650 in cash & prizes to 8 category winners, plus promotional award to "Book Cover Award Winner"

<https://www.thekindlebookreview.net/10th-annual-kindle-book-awards/>

Finding Your Story's Core

Every story has a core—that concept at the center that pulls all of the story elements into a cohesive whole, establishes meaning and message, and provides the story with an overall identity.

There are four fundamental kinds of cores, though each has endless variations.

Which of these four kinds of cores best describes what you want your story to be about and how you want it to feel?

By picking a core, you will have a central defining vision for your story that will keep it on track during development, and your completed story will come across with a powerful unified impact on your readers or audience.

[Read on ...](#)

What's in a Name

So far, we've been dealing with characters primarily by their jobs, vocations or roles since we derived them from your plot. Now it's time to start building some personality into your characters to see if they really have potential for your story, and we'll begin by giving them names.

Few people (other than performers, artists, and writers) get to choose their own names. But as a writer, you have the power to choose the names of all your characters. And with this power comes the opportunity to say something to your readers or audience about a character's inclinations, accomplishments, or outlook.

A name could convey military service, religious affiliation, or status. A nick-name might illuminate a major character trait, some event in a character's past, or the way other characters feel about him or her. Names can add to comic value, hint at danger, or flirt with mystery.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)

Success and Failure

A story without a clear indication of success or failure is a failure with your readers or audience. You need to work out exactly how the audience will know the goal is achieved or not.

This might seem obvious in an action story, but may be much more difficult in a story about character growth.

Success and Failure don't have to be binary choices; they can be matters of degree. For example, the effort to bring back a treasure may fail, but the adventurers discover one large ruby that fell into their pack. Or, someone seeking true love might find love but with someone who is rather annoying.

Whether either of these examples is a partial success or a partial failure depends largely on how you portray the characters' attitudes to the imperfect achievement. To ensure a sense of closure in your readers/audience, make sure they know exactly how things end up on the success/failure scale.

[More . . .](#)

World of Publishing

Just for fun, I thought you might like to take a look at the terms of a publishing contract featuring a prominent political figure that authored (?) a non-fiction book.

This gives you an idea of what main stream publishers are currently offering:

- ◆ Complete a manuscript in exchange for publication
- ◆ \$325,000 in compensation, payable in installments (most likely an advance on future earnings)

The contract also provides for royalty payments in the following manner:

- ◆ 15% of the retail price for all hardcover editions of the book sold
- ◆ 7.5% to 10% of the retail price for all trade edition and mass market paperback copies sold
- ◆ 25% of the receipts for e-book edition sales

If our readers have other examples of contracts to share, please let the Editor know, [Margo @ Themaxwellgroup.net](mailto:Margo@Themaxwellgroup.net)

6 Online Publications that Pay for Freelance Submissions

These publications are responsive and pay reasonably well

[Read on . . .](#)

Attack of the Fake Literary Agencies

Much of what Victoria Strauss is going to talk about in this post, is not breaking news. But she is getting so many questions about these two scam "agencies"--both of which seem to be super-active right now with solicitations—and providing so many warnings about them, that I think a broader warning is in order.

First, though--because it's relevant to what follows--some tips on evaluating a literary agency's website.

1. There should be a website. A pretty basic starting point.
2. It should be grammatically correct, and free of spelling errors and typos. Also very basic points, but as you'll see from what follows, their lack can be an important clue.
3. It should feature recent sales (this is how you can tell whether an agency is successful), with verifiable info (title, author, publisher) so you can assure yourself that the publishers are reputable (no vanity presses or "hybrids") and the sales really are recent (you want an agency that's selling books *right now*, no matter how successful it's been in the past).
4. Not all reputable agencies' websites include a client list, but many do; it's an additional way to verify bona fides.
5. The agents should be named--with bios, so you can verify their backgrounds and experience.
6. There should not be any kind of upfront fee.
7. Also helpful: an agency history, including how long it's been in business; clear submission guidelines; disclosure of commissions (standard is 15% for domestic sales, 20-25% for overseas and film [the extra is for co-agents' commissions]); and recent media coverage.

[More ...](#)

Amazon New Hard Cover Print Option

Amazon is introducing case laminate hardcover books on KDP in a private, confidential beta.

Hardcover on KDP offers you a new way to publish your work, increase your readership, and drive more sales.

Hardcover is an addition to paperback and eBook formats, and you can choose to publish new or previously published titles as a hardcover book. We're looking for your help to trial this and provide feedback on your experience.

Sign in at Amazon to participate.