

	<h2>The Write Way</h2> <p>A publication of The Writers of Kern April 2015</p>
	<h2>A Branch of The California Writers Club</h2>

### You Are Attending the Conference, Right?

Mandy Wallace

**The 6th Annual Spring Writing Conference is finally (almost!) here.** And if you're like me, you've already got your pens aligned and a fresh notebook set for this all-day event. Speakers at this year's conference cover four major writing fields: screenwriting, editing, fiction, and journalism. Thanks to WOK, they'll share their best writing tips and insights at the conference.

Master the editing skills every writer needs for a polished manuscript with editor and agent, **Toni Lopopolo**. *Bakersfield Californian* columnist, **Herb Benham**, offers tips to balance writing and family life. *Authors Anonymous* screenwriter, **Dave Congalton**, shares his writing success roadmap. And local fiction author, **Allison Crotzer Kimmel**, reveals the building blocks behind every great story.

I was so worried I'd miss out on the conference, I accidentally bought tickets twice (it's a long story). Tickets are going fast. So claim your conference seat before it's gone.



Mandy Wallace

**REGISTRATION:** \$50 for members/non-members, \$25 for students. Catered box lunch by Sequoia Sandwich Company, add \$5.00. **Seating is limited - Register today at [www.writersofkern.com](http://www.writersofkern.com)**

WRITERS OF KERN ANNUAL SPRING WRITING CONFERENCE  
 APRIL 25, 2015, CLARION HOTEL AT 3540 ROSEDALE HWY, BAKERSFIELD

8:30-9:00 Sign-in, Social Time, Snacks

9:00-9:15 Welcome. Writers of Kern President, Joan Raymond

All Day Door prizes, book sales and signings, networking, a cornucopia of learning opportunities



**9:15-10:15** -- DAVID CONGALTON, Author, Screenwriter

“The Writer’s Journey: Rules of the Road”

No two routes on writers’ journeys are ever the same, but the experienced writer understands that a good map, a clear sense of destination, and knowing when to ask for direction can often determine creative success or failure. Learn some basic rules of the road and how to apply them to your own writing. *David*

*Congalton is a screenwriter, nonfiction author, freelance writer and radio talk show host. His first movie Authors Anonymous was released last April. A second film, Seven Sisters, is in production.*



**10:35-11:35** -- TONI LOPOPOLO, Editor, Agent - “Mastering Editing Skills”

Techniques that help the writer learn the all important skill of self-editing: Avoid The 10 Most Common Mistakes First Novelists Make. Insights you’ve not heard before from an agent or an editor. *Toni Lopopolo worked 20 years in New York publishing, from Bantam Books to executive editor at Macmillan and St Martin's Press, before opening her literary management company in 1991. She conducts a*

*popular workshop, Tea With Toni, for writing fiction and narrative non-fiction.*

**11:40-12:30 LUNCH**



**12:35-1:35** -- ALLISON CROTZER KIMMEL, Middle Grade Author - “Finding Your Fiction: Building Blocks of a Great Story”

This workshop takes writers through the essential parts of crafting a quality story with exercises devoted to strengthening characters, creating setting, building plot, and finding theme. *Allison Crotzer Kimmel published her first Middle Grade non-fiction book January 2014 with Capstone and has two additional titles coming out*

*this spring. A former teacher, she now serves as the SCBWI Kern County regional advisor.*



**1:55-2:40** -- HERB BENHAM, Columnist - “That was Easy”

Favorite stories through the years, the great people I've met, the balancing act of writing about one's family, and some “million dollar”-writing writing tips. *Herb Benham has been writing columns for almost 30 years for the Bakersfield Californian, “I've written probably close to 5,000 columns. The hope is that one*

*day I might get it right.” Most recently, he’s published That Was Easy, his third book of collected columns.*

**2:45-3:00 Wrap-up & Acknowledgements**

## Vice President's Column

### Dennis Vanderwerff



Exciting times for WOK! Much is happening. Following close on the heels of WOK's first ever, daylong writers' conference is the WOK Honors dinner, Saturday, May 16. The WOK Honors dinner is an annual gala celebration honoring member achievements and achievements in WOK sponsored programs.

For the second year in a row, WOK will honor winners of the Young Writers of Kern Competition (YWOK). Competition judges selected 12 winners in grades 6 through 8. Presentation of monetary awards and WOK student memberships are part of the honors ceremony.

New this year is the WOK "pinning" ceremony. Members who have achieved "Active" status will be presented with pins in celebration of their achievement. The Active membership level reflects a member's publication status. Active status requires meeting publication standards set by the California Writers Club, WOK's chartering organization. WOK takes pride in acknowledging and celebrating its members' accomplishments.

Other awards include the Peggy Connelly Scholarship Award, Young Writers of Kern 2016 kickoff, and announcement of the establishment of a new award.

Don't miss this important celebration. The dinner will be held Saturday, May 16, 2015, 6:00 p.m., at Hodel's Country Dining, 5917 Knudsen Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93308. Reservations can be made online at [www.writersofkern.com/events/](http://www.writersofkern.com/events/).



### WOK Members published in February

L. to R. **Joan Kerr, Terry Redman, Sue Speake, Kathleen Faulkner, Kelsie Gates, Karen Sallee, Renee Geffken, Andy Roth, and Dan McGuire**

Writers of Kern entries in the Kern County Challenge 100-word stories continue.

### ***Murder on the Mojave 1978***

**Kathleen Faulkner**



Dressed in a black cloak brandishing a scythe, a film student stalked a make believe motorist stranded in the desert: A film project for college.

Coincidentally, David Murtishaw, 19, was out target shooting. His car broke down. In a rage, he shot up his car. He spotted the four film students and they offered to take him into town when they finished filming.

As the light was fading away at dusk, the students started loading up their equipment. Murtishaw shot and killed 3 of them and took their car.

He died on death row at age 54 of natural causes.

### ***Miracle on the Circle***

**Louis Medina**



“A homeless man known as ‘Garces Joe’ was found dead in front of the monument on the Father Garces Traffic Circle. He had been cited by police repeatedly for loitering, as he would spend hours talking to the statue of the Franciscan missionary. When coroner’s officials arrived, pigeons appeared to be guarding the man. Crews had to step around the birds, which only dispersed after the body was gone. Officials also noticed stains like tear tracks etched on the statue’s cheeks. Bakersfield locals call it a miracle.”

The officer stopped reading the newspaper, threw down his citation book and cried.

### ***My Last 6 days of the Year 2014 ~ The Grand Finality***

**Larry Darnell**



**Friday, December 26:** Living a few miles West of the Kern County’s land fill (dump), I discovered the bath room’s water heater’s supply pipe was leaking. I turned the water off at the water tank.

To flush the toilets, we used buckets of water.

**Saturday:** I cut the pipes out.

**Sabbath Day**

**Monday:** Screen door dead bolt broke.

**Tuesday:** While reinstalling deadbolt, I found a part under the gas dryer. Soon I began to smell gas.

**Wednesday:** Installed the new flexible gas line and PVC piping with no leaks.

I am glad God is on my side. *HAPPY NEW YEAR.*

## ***Riding Kern Canyon*** **Annis Cassells**



A huge green ‘KEEP OUT!’ sign heralded the entrance to the Kern River Canyon. Eight of us, newly-graduated motorcycle officers, headed for Kernville on our standard-issue white Harleys. I was the group’s lone woman. Our captain confidently pressed forward. We had to keep up.

*Slow. Look. Lean. More throttle!* I recalled the instructor’s words. Approaching the last hairpin curve, I spoke, “Chin up. Stay up.”

At our destination, we pulled up to park, backing in, rear wheels at the curb. A yelp erupted down the line. Next, the crash and the scramble. Someone had forgotten to lower his Harley’s side-stand.

## ***Ming*** **R. Geffken**



My preschool daughter had difficulty pronouncing new words. When mad at me, she’d say, “You’re ming.”

While drinking lemonade at the Food Court before photos of her and Santa, she stared at the painted cloudy blue sky and asked, “Momma, what’s this place called?” “The Ming Plaza.”

“No, no no!” she shouted and ran to the exit. I grabbed her as she tried to wiggle from my grasp. “I want to go home!” she yelled.

“Don’t you want to meet Santa Claus?”

“No! He will be ming to me!”

“Honey, nobody will be mean to you.”

## ***Jerky Johnson Kills a B’ar*** **Karen Sallee**



My great, great granddad, Jerky Johnson, with his legendary appetite for life in the late 1800s, was a Kern County sheriff’s deputy, a hunter, a bigamist.

Old Clubfoot was a she-bear with an appetite for livestock, her hide bounty-rich.

With rifle, hounds, and kisses from his sweethearts, Jerky rode to Grapevine Canyon.

Trapped, Clubfoot stood in defiance receiving Jerky’s killing shot through her skull.

Bounty collected, Jerky, now the target of his most feared adversary, wife Melvina, escaped to the Hermitage Saloon. Melvina found him drunk on whiskey and the killing of the last grizzly ever seen in Southern California.

## The March Meeting Phil Berling



**Joan Raymond and Nancy Curteman**

The speaker for our March meeting was award winning international mystery writer, **Nancy Curteman**, who talked to us about “**Tension in a Novel**”.

It immediately became clear to all of us that Ms. Curteman knew her stuff and every head descended to take notes on her ideas. (Looked like an SAT testing room!)

Nancy Curteman graduated from San Francisco State University with a degree in History and eventually took a post as an elementary school principal for seventeen years.

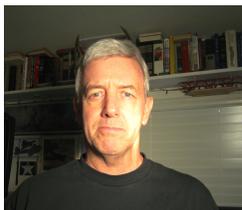
She also studied at the University of Nice in France and picked up a Masters in French Lit. and has also taught that language at the college level. Her passions are writing and travel and she combines both in her novels and blog.

While France is, indeed, the setting for her latest novel, “*Murder on the Seine*” she has employed even more exotic settings like Australia and South Africa in her work.

Her insights about creating tension were so juicy I found myself, over and over, thinking how they could spice up specific situations in my own work. I had to keep reminding myself to take notes for this piece—but vowed I’d ask her for a fuller text when the talk was over. By the time I reached her at the end of the meeting, I had several other writers at my elbow wanting the same information!

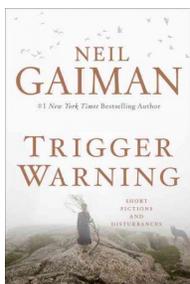
Nancy suggested we go thru her site at *Global Mysteries*: ([nancycurteman.wordpress.com](http://nancycurteman.wordpress.com)) which holds a trove of ideas.

Scroll to the bottom where there are links to her “Older Posts” in various categories. I clicked on “Improve Your Writing” and navigated through dozens of short cogent pieces (note the very light “next page” tab at the bottom) to find “What is Tension in a Novel”. That will lead to other posts on the same topic from which our 3/21 presentation was derived. Check them out!



Phil Berling

## Book Review: *Trigger Warning* Anna Stewart



A man solicits his daughter's murderer as a guide to a magical cave full of treasure. A little boy tells a scary story to his babysitter. A young man meets his imaginary high school girlfriend. A connoisseur of unusual tourist attractions seeks out the remnants of a burned out maze. A great detective discovers the secret of eternal youth. And masked figures take over the world, one purchase at a time. These are tales of revenge and horror, mystery and nightmare, fantasy and fun. Some I read with a shortened breath and a shiver (Click-Clack the Rattlebag), while others delighted for the unexpected turnabout (The Thing About Cassandra).

They say that, if one wishes to write short stories, one must read short stories. I found this collection of short stories, *Trigger Warning* by Neil Gaiman, to be entertaining for the most part. Given the title, I expected a few more shivers than I got but, overall, was pleased with the variety and quality of the selections. Not every story stood out. There are stories I'll read again in an effort to understand them better (The Return of the Thin White Duke) and some which failed to catch my attention at all. But that, I think, is the nature of a short story collection and, in the end, I enjoyed it.

Honestly, it's worth the read. I enjoyed the majority of the offerings. And, if you appreciate stories of the odd, strange and/or horrifying, you probably will too.



Anna Stewart

### *Blog of the month* Blogger, Mandy Wallace

#### **Exclusive Perks You'll Get From a Writers' Group Membership**

Are you a member of a writing group like this one?

I love my writing group, Writers of Kern. I had no idea the awesomeness that would come from membership with this local and very active writing group. Sure, I get to network with other writers. And, yes, they offer writing tools I didn't even know I needed.

But that doesn't cover half of why I recommend that you find a writing group of your own.

No matter your genre or writing field, you need a network of writers to help you navigate the business and craft of writing.

*Yeah, yeah.* I can already hear you saying. *Writers group. Networking. Blah, blah, blah.* So lemme drop some knowledge on you right 'ere. Here are 7 reasons why you can't afford to miss out on a writing group of your own. Any. Longer.

#### **Seriously Awesome Writing Tips and Insights (The No-Duh Reason)**

Every month, Writers of Kern invites a publishing professional to speak at their meeting. It's a behind-the-scenes look into what makes other writers successful.

Often, the topics these writers cover is exactly what I need to get my WIP unstuck. Take this month's speaker, for example. As a mystery author, Nancy Curteman understands suspense. So she covered more than a dozen ways to ratchet up the tension in your story.

Even her definition of tension clarified the topic so well, I can't believe I ever didn't know it.

After these key insights into tension and how it works to draw readers into stories, my Writers of The Future contest story may actually win. Huh.

### **Meet Successful (Maybe Even Famous) Authors**

Writers of Kern is where I met Dave Congalton, the intrepid screenwriter who wouldn't take "No" from Hollywood for an answer.

He got his pet project, *Authors Anonymous*, onto the big screen. You know that movie where *Big Bang Theory*'s Kaley Cuoco-Sweeting plays a successful writer? Yep, that's Dave's screenplay.

Without Writers of Kern, you wouldn't have read Dave's inspiring Hollywood success story on my site. Which leads to the next perk of being in a writers group.

### **A Gold Mine of Blog Post, Article and Story Ideas**

The writers who share their insights. The monthly meetings where I pick up story ideas. All of that makes great material to share with readers on the blog.

With that at my disposal, how can I ever run out of things to blog about? "Where To Get Story Ideas So Good They Practically Write Themselves" and "Dave Congalton's interview" came out of Writers of Kern meetings.

Just think of the blog topics at your disposal.

### **Motivation to Write**

When you're around other writers, it's easier to write. Maybe it's the enthusiasm. Or just seeing other writers take this as seriously as you do. Maybe it's the drive to keep up with your peers and to have a reason to call yourself a writer.

Either way, being around other writers makes it easier to write.

It was Writers of Kern's Blog Challenge that gave me the push I needed to finally jump into blogging. And I never looked back. Those Writers of Kern blog challenge posts are what took me from zero to 1k daily unique readers in just a few months.

What writing endeavor could you accomplish with just a little push?

### **Publication Opportunities**

Writers of Kern shared one of my articles before I had a blog or published anything. Why? Because I'm a member, and I had something to share. Maybe your local writing group can help you get your start too.

As a member of their publicity team, I went on to claim my first newspaper print credits too, press releases for Writers of Kern's monthly speakers.

If you join a local writing group, you might publish a piece on their newsletter or blog. And be the first to hear about calls for submission. Just for being a member. And that's just what they offer beginners.

### **Being Around Other Writers (You Aren't That Crazy After All)**

Sometimes being a writer means being a hermit. Holed up in your writing nook for days at a time. And when you are around people, they have no clue why you agonize over the right phrasing or squeal in delight when you find just the right word. Or why you talk to yourself in your characters' voices (maybe that's just me).

Either way, it's nice to be around people who get it. And who support your brand of crazy.

### **Access to Professional Writers (Free Critiques!)**

Need a pro to spot typos before you submit your work? Need some insight into a genre you have never written in before? You'll find someone on the members list who knows how to solve your writing problem.

So get on it, writer! You can't afford to miss these benefits of joining a writing group anymore. And if my tiny town has a writing group as great as Writers of Kern, yours will too. Start looking and join up, writer!

Reprinted from [mandywallace.com](http://mandywallace.com). Read the original at [mandywallace.com/writing-group-benefits/](http://mandywallace.com/writing-group-benefits/)



Mandy Wallace

## The Last Page

### From the Inkwell Terry Redman



**April is National Poetry Month**—do we know where your poems are? We are looking forward to reading poetry by WOKians. See the ones posted on the WOK website, [www.writersofkern.com/blog](http://www.writersofkern.com/blog) and/or Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/95572300558/> . To post your own poems submit it to the Writers of Kern site, [submissions@writersofkern.com](mailto:submissions@writersofkern.com). Dennis VanderWerff will post it on the blog and automatically post it to our Facebook page. Be sure to include a nice mug shot so we can all identify the poet.

Earlier in the newsletter we mentioned the upcoming conference. We look forward to seeing you there. I am excited about the cast of presenters and the whole schedule. I've had some trouble getting to recent meetings so if you see me, take a moment to say, "Hi." I'll be excited to be there, hey; I'll be excited to be anywhere.

Get thee to the **Awards Dinner** in May. Check back to the Vice President's column to learn the key details of the May Awards Dinner. Kind of like the Academy Awards, but less cleavage.

Now that you plan to send Dennis a few poems I have something for you to send to the co-editors of this newsletter. The current issue of *Writers Digest* features 101 blogs of special interest to writers. At the same time I have introduced a new feature, "The Blog of the Month," and hope the **new co-editors** continue the tradition. **Mandy Wallace** is an energetic, prolific writer whom I first met via her blog. Read the blog here and visit her site.

The question I have for you is, **WHAT BLOGS DO YOU LIKE TO VISIT?** Share your best blogs with us by sending the links to [newsletter@writersofkern.com](mailto:newsletter@writersofkern.com) .

**Did we mention that we need a couple of editors because we are retiring?** Annis Cassells and I plan to publish a newsletter in June and then fade away. If you have an interest in keeping *The Write Way* alive, then step up and establish your credit as a publisher. Send your name to [newsletter@writersofkern.com](mailto:newsletter@writersofkern.com) .

I'll see you at the conference.

*Terry the Scribbler*