



May 2015
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The Writers of Kern
PO BOX 22335
Bakersfield, CA

The Writers of Kern Executive Board

President & Program: Chair
Joan Raymond
president@writersofkern.com

Vice President & Webmaster:
Dennis VanderWerff
webmaster@writersofkern.com

Treasurer: *Clarissa Kae*
treasurer@writersofkern.com

Secretary: *Janet Skibinski*
secretary@writersofkern.com

Membership: *Jason Brown*
membership@writersofkern.com

Newsletter: *Annis Cassells,*
Terry Redman
newsletter@writersofkern.com

Member-at-Large & CB Rep
Southern California District Rep
Dan McGuire

Hospitality/Sunshine:
Annis Cassells
sunshine@writersofkern.com

6th Annual Spring Conference is a hit



“Is the agent here yet?” Dave Congalton asked, referring to the next speaker, Toni Lopopolo. “When she comes, mob her.” His point? Make connections with people who could potentially help us -- one of his “rules of the road” of a writer’s journey.

WOKians and visitors arrived early at the 6th Annual Spring Conference. Purposeful volunteers prepared for setup. Excited member authors displayed their books. Eager participants mingled with fellow writers over an abundant continental breakfast. We filled the meeting hall and overflowed into the conference room for registration and book sales. The four speakers inspired, taught, coached, amused, reminded, and encouraged. Each, in their own way, connected with the audience of sixty.

In addition to teaching us the difference between “blond” and “blonde,” Toni Lopopolo told us what publishers are buying now: non-fiction (women and health), narrative non-fiction, memoir, and “cozies, feel good stories, containing no blood and guts.”

Allison Crotzer Kimmel put us through several writing exercises that help develop strong characters, making us look at protagonists and antagonists with more depth.

“Don’t spend a lot of time waiting to start. Just get in as fast as you can.” Herb Benham advised, “Put notes and outlines away and go with whatever comes to mind. The first couple of paragraphs are usually thrown out.”

Evaluations showed our fabulous foursome struck a chord with participants.

“Very inspirational talk, useful for a neophyte writer like myself!” “Great handout on a writer’s journey.”

“What super tips! Thank you! Very useful information -- I’m going back home to edit my writing.”

“Thank you for the writing exercises -- gave me a start on a book I have been thinking about.”

“Very funny. Very insightful. Showing how life can produce so many stories.”

Thanks to the board members and volunteers who put this stellar event together. With attendees’ suggestions and comments in mind, the conference planning committee has already begun the ground work for making the 2016 Spring Conference even more successful.

See more Spring Conference photos on page 4 and on the website at www.writersofkern.com/photo-gallery/

President's Message May 2015



Many thanks to our amazing Board and numerous volunteers for making this year's Spring Conference so exciting. Bonds between writers. Fabulous food. Spectacular speakers. Everything was great!

As you know, our theme "Inspiration to Publication" weaves through every event we plan. From conference speakers to honoring active members I keep you in mind. This month, I look forward to our WOK Honors Dinner, coming up on May 16, 2015. See page 7 for more information. We'll recognize our own members along with up-and-coming writers in our community.

Events such as the conference and dinner are critical to keep us encouraged and motivated. I understand your struggles. Conveying abstract thoughts and middle-of-the-night ideas to words on paper. Editing and more editing (and more editing). Removing beloved characters and anguishing over chopping a 1400-word story to less than 400 words.

I did just that with my picture book. Many things didn't make it

to the final edit. Characters removed. Names replaced. Action, tension, and dialogue changed. The final result barely resembled my first draft from 15 years ago. My story inspiration, forgotten in a file far too long ago, revived and renewed. Will it be published? I really hope so. Only time will tell.

But, no matter what happens, I'll keep working on it. Because I, like you, am always in the process. The process of crafting abstract into concrete. Whether you blog. Or write memoir. Or poetry. Or screenplays. Or carve out time and find a quiet place to journal about your day. Whether or not anyone else ever reads your creation, we all go through the same process of putting thoughts to paper. Inspiration to publication.

Please join us for WOK Honors on May 16. Let's celebrate who we are. And what we do. As writers. Together.

WOK Elections

Board Elections happen in June when we vote for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Contact Dennis Vanderwerff, Nominating Committee Chair, if you wish to run.

The positions of current elected Board of Directors are open for 2015-16.. All incumbent board members have decided to run again for their current seats. You may apply for any of the seats during the next WOK meeting or by contacting

our Nominating Chair, Dennis Vander Werff.

"From Inspiration to Publication"

Writers of Kern Calendar

May 16, 2015
WOK Honors Dinner
Hodel's 6:00 PM
Members and Guests only

Young Writers of Kern Competition
Peggy Connelly Scholarship
Pinning Active WOKians
Robert Hargreaves Award unveiling

June 20, 2015
TBA

July 18, 2015
Judy Salamacha
"A Novel Way
to Write a History Book"

August 15, 2015
Mike Hancock
"Into the Wild"

September 19, 2015
Robert Price,
The Bakersfield Californian

October 17, 2015
Heather Lazare,
Freelance Editor/Publishing/Pitching

November 21, 2015
Mark Bagby
"Mark Twain"

December 12, 2015
(2nd Saturday)
Winter Dinner @ Hodel's

WOK Honors Dinner

Reserve and register by May 8th at <http://writersofkern.com/wok-honors-dinner/>

Member Profile

~ Meet Karen Sallee



I am a wife, mother, grandmother, and evolving writer. I've been married to Michael Sallee since 1975. We are retired from careers in education, filling time with Michael's music-related activities, our paradise, two acres we call Rancho de Sallee, and, above all else, our family. We feel fortunate to live minutes away from our two children, their spouses, and our five charming grandchildren. I volunteer every Tuesday at my grandchildren's school, selfishly receiving more than I give. It keeps me thinking young - or at least thinking.

I attended my first Writers of Kern meeting in August 2014 and was accepted as a member the following September. I'm meeting new friends and learning so much.

I've written poetry for 20 years and non-fiction essays since 2008. Most recently, though, I've been inspired to answer the call of writing challenges and contests and to explore children's literature.

I began writing memoirs when my grandkids developed a

curiosity for stories of my childhood. One such story, *Progress and Memories*, and *Never the Twain Shall Meet*, appeared in *The Bakersfield Californian*, September 2014.

My great, great grandfather inspired my answer to the 100-word challenge from SoCal Writers Showcase. *Jerky Johnson Kills a B'ar* was the result. It appeared on the SoCal website last February. My essay entitled "I Told You Last Night: *Gilead*" was recently accepted for publication in the Summer 2015 issue of *The First Line*. Marilynne Robinson's novel, *Gilead*, inspired me.

Written for children, *Laurel's Runaway Day* honors the feisty spirit of three generations of my grandmothers. I hope this little story with a stubborn attitude finds its place.

Writing is like an uneven country road, shifting and bumpy and tickling the senses. I'm sailing over each whoop-de-do with childlike abandon.

Welcome New WOK Members

Sandra (Sandy) Essary, Jennifer Wood, Robert E. Birchfield, Anke Hodenpijl, Rose Lester, Jennifer Highfill Barker, Ruth Paulden Raney, La Verne Lovelady, and Cesar Gonzalez are our most recent members. Many joined at the Spring Conference. Cheers and Welcome!

The Critical Corner

Terry Redman

At the recent conference three people approached me about joining a critique group. This means the demand continues and people involved in the critique groups are making progress.

~~Why join a critique group?~~ Writing might be the second most private act in America but our writing must be read. Writing begs for an audience. A critique group will serve as the first audience, aside from your mother who loves everything you write, and can objectively point out strengths and weaknesses in your writing. *The real question is, why not join a critique group?*

May is consumed with graduations, end of school, the WOK Honors Dinner, summer plans and the last month of NBA basketball. There are a few openings now and I will be launching new groups in the fall.

If you are interested in joining a group send the following information to me at critiques@writersofkern.com. Name, genre(s) you write, email address, phone number and assurance that you are a current member of Writers of Kern. Only WOKians can participate in our critique groups.

CRITIQUE GROUP: a regular gathering where people enthusiastically point out what's right and wrong with your writing. Food, friendship and trust are served in abundance.



Writers of Kern Get Ink on SoCalWriters Showcase

Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, of the Southern California Writers Showcase writes:

“We’ve selected posts for the May socalwritersshowcase.com, and **WOK** is very much in evidence:

Under Fiction - “Miracle on the Circle” by **Louis Medina** and “The Sign” by **Mikie DeLong Pyle**

Under Poetry - “Limericks” by **Mary L Morton**

Under Writer’s Life - “Why Writers Like Prompts” by **Debbie Spohn**

I still have more that I haven’t used. What a joy, and I’m so glad WOK has gotten in on showcase.

We run the piece the first month as a feature, then archive it for about six. It will not be up forever, and after that we only keep it as a Word document.”

Now archived from the April pages: **Larry Darnell’s** 100-word memoir piece, “Highlights of my Last Six Days of 2014...”

<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/Memoirs/>

Dan McGuire’s “Writing Creative Non-Fiction” is published under the *Craft* tab at

<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/craft/>

More Spring Conference Photos

(photos by Dennis VanderWerff)



Blog of the Month *Bako Heat* by Dan McGuire



Hello fellow WOKians, or is it WOKtoids? Maybe WOKadoodles, whatever.

I joined this fantastic group of fellow writers in 2010 when I was thinking it might be fun to write a short story, a novel...maybe a poem? Writers of Kern inspired me to get serious about writing something. So I entered the National Novel Writing Month Contest (www.nanowrimo.com) and wrote a novel. I did it for four straight years. Last year I couldn't wait till November to write Novel #5 so I wrote it in July. Writers of Kern helped me get into a critique group and learn about creating great characters, building suspense and proper sentence structure. They couldn't do much with my grammar, I'm from Indiana.

I also started a blog three times a week. A blog about nothing and everything. Mostly useless information for people who have lots of time to waste. This week I will be posting my 600th blog. It's amazing how much of people's time I've wasted.

Once in a while life happens and my blog is serious. A few weeks ago my 99 year-old Mother passed away. I wrote about it. Here is that blog. Thanks for reading. I hope you get serious about writing, too.

SMALL TRIBUTE



Her 95th Birthday Photo

My Mom won the battle but lost the war. She finally out-prayed her myriad of friends. They would come to visit her in the nursing home and always leave by telling her, "I'm praying for you, Dorothy." They just didn't understand that Dorothy had her own prayer, "I'm ready, Lord, please let it be tonight. Just let me close my eyes for the last time. Please."

Her final prayer was answered yesterday morning. She didn't have to open her weak eyes that could only see three or four feet in front of her. She didn't have to have help getting into her wheel chair because her legs had stopped working. She didn't have to depend on anyone for anything anymore. And she finally didn't have to question why her prayers were going unanswered.

Just 29 days before her 100th birthday, Dorothy, my Mom, proved me wrong. I had been telling people she was immortal. I thought she was. She was the strongest one hundred pound ball of fire I ever knew.

We each are unique. Our lives have been incredible adventures filled with great times, shitty times, hard times, fun times and just getting by. My mom led a simple life, but her uniqueness was special.

She did stuff for people. All the time. She tried to make life easier for everyone she knew. She sent cards...Christmas cards, Easter cards, Thanksgiving cards, birthday cards, anniversary cards, get well cards and sympathy cards. Hallmark should send her a card, she helped them succeed.

She loved my Dad. My Dad loved her. They were married 63 years till Dad passed in '01. She loved my brother and I, in fact she thought we might be the best representation of the male species ever created. She loved her grandkids. My daughter Joy was more of a daughter to my Mom than a grandkid. They were great buddies.

She was very ornery. She loved telling and hearing jokes. In her younger days she liked playing practical jokes. Many friends were victims in her home by getting one of her "dribble cups" or a "worm" in their food or whatever the latest gag she found.

Those who knew her are nodding their head now, remembering that great lady at 18th and Underwood who drew people to her like a magnet.

I'm lucky to have had such a great Mom for all these years. I'm lucky to have known her.

I wish you could have, too.



Check out Dan McGuire's Blog here: www.bakoheat.com

WOK National Poetry Month Project 2015

The Write Way co-editor, Terry Redman was the catalyst for this fun foray into poetry. Terry's open invitation asked all members to write new poems, or dust off old ones, and submit them to the website blog during the month of April. WOK poets graced us with a poem for each day.

It was a privilege to read poems by Writers of Kern members **Anke Hodenpijl, Annis Cassells, Caroline Reed, David Kettler, Joan Kerr, Karen Sallee, Kathleen Ellis Faulkner, Kelsie Gates, Mary Morton, Portia Choi, Reggie Ridgeway, Terry Redman, Virginia Bush.** Read all the poems at <http://writersofkern.com/blog/>

Short takes

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THE BACK PAGE



Editors' Inkwell by Annis Cassells

I was delighted with this year's Writers of Kern Spring Conference. The dynamic and inspiring speakers gave us much to think about -- and do -- as we continue on our writing journeys.

One thing I love, no matter what genre or field a speaker specializes in, I always learn something useful. Allison Crotzer Kimmel writes books for middle grade youngsters, but she made me look at my characters, what they want, and what they can't live without. That's when I realized my antagonist should be my protagonist. That's going to do wonders for my story.

The next item of delight? Attending the WOK Honors Dinner on May 16. It's Awards Night! And, it's our privilege to value and inspire young writers from our county, in addition to honoring our own Writers of Kern members. Winners from the Young Writers of Kern Competition will receive prizes and recognition for their award-winning essays. WOKians whose status is "Active Member" will receive a distinctive pin, specially designed for Active members.

Dennis VanderWerff, the Peggy Connelly Scholarship chair, will present the scholarship.

We'll unveil a new honor, the Robert C. Hargreaves Achievement Award, and announce the criteria members can strive to meet over the next year. The first presentation will be made at the WOK Honors Dinner in 2016.

And, to complete the evening, we will reveal this year's recipient of the CWC Jack London Award for service to the Writers of Kern branch.

Before the May 8th deadline, go online to register at <http://writersofkern.com/wok-honors-dinner/> The WOK Honors Dinner is for members, their guests, and designated invitees.

A Matter of Membership

WOK Memberships expire June 30, 2015.

To renew your membership for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, you may pay at the June 20th meeting by cash, check, or credit card.

Or pay online on our website www.writersofkern.com after June 1st.

Exception: new members who joined and paid during April, May, or June are covered for the coming fiscal year.