



WOMEN Writing the West

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The Dreaded Reading Level Question

By Joyce B. Lohse

One of my favorite book-related activities is to attend trade shows with my publisher, Filter Press. When I work the booth and interact with readers, I feel the pulse and hum of the reading community generated by our series, “Now You Know Bios.” I meet librarians, booksellers, teachers, and readers, who share input and reactions. They all provide inspiration.

Most of the time, I experience a sense of happy satisfaction, until somebody asks the dreaded question: “What reading level is this?” Although I know the question will arise, I never know how to answer. After a decade of writing biographies for young adults, I should have a solid answer. But, no! I still fumble and mumble my way through it.

In general, my answer is that my books are appropriate for “all ages,” appealing to “history buffs of all ages”. Research goes

into my juvenile bios to write a solid publication for general readers. The manuscript is edited and sifted down to the nitty gritty, in a form which is easy to assimilate and absorb, regardless of reader age.

With a solid background in journalism, my style is direct. Little change is required to write for juvenile and young adult readers. The only concession is to simplify vocabulary into manageable terms, often with fewer syllables, and to break down complex sentences. When I worked in a school library, I attempted to treat young students with kind respect, and avoided talking down to them. This outlook carries over as a valuable asset for YA writing.

When unusual terms are used in text, they are highlighted and later defined in a glossary. Young readers mention that they appreciate and use this feature. Additional teachable elements in our series include

continued on page 2

Table of Contents

Articles

- 3** Juggling Plates a Colorado Reflection
- 4** What’s “Lost” Got To Do With It?
- 5** Words to Write By
- 6** Telling Stories
Learning a Second Language
- 7** Hello, Do You Like to Read?
- 8** At the LA Festival of Books
- 9** Recent WWW Awards and Events
- 11** It All Began: With a Turn in the Road

Business

- 2** Board and Committees
- 2** Advertising Policy and Rates
- 13** WWW 2010 Conference Info
- 17** Sustaining Members
- 17** New Members
- 17** Membership Form

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continued from page 1

historic images, timelines, bibliography, index, and callouts or sidebars. Providing educational components is valuable and infinitely rewarding.

Sometimes an answer to the dreaded reading level question is required. At those times, I usually say the book is appropriate for third and fourth grade, and on through middle school. A teacher who asks the question is usually seeking materials for fourth grade lessons about historical characters and regional history.

Although I avoid references to Flesch-Kincaid readability scores and related formulas, I confess that I peek at those statistics in MS Word from time to time. They can be set to appear at the end of a spelling and grammar scan. Mark it up to morbid curiosity.

According to F-K scores, my writing has changed from grade twelve in my first adult biography to a current range from grades seven to eight. This does not mean that a third or fourth grader is unable to read my text. Other factors and book elements enter into the equation. On that basis, I prefer to ignore scales altogether and defer to life experience.

Books fulfill a variety of needs. When a wild-eyed young teacher approached me at a conference, she divulged that she recently moved to Colorado from New York City. For her new job teaching fourth grade, she needed to learn about Western history and pioneers ... and fast! She had come to the right place.

An elderly man read biographies as part of his ongoing passion for new information about Western history. There is nothing like a biography, I told him, to bring the West alive. A foreign tourist struggling with English discovered our books as a great

tool for learning and enjoying local history.

A third grader wrote a letter to me in response to one of my books. This bright nine-year-old stated in simple terms, "It was a good book." She romped through it in one sitting. Some third and fourth graders devour these stories. Some readers struggle more than others.

You get the idea. A thinking person does not readily classify or accept readability. It depends on the reader's aptitude, capability, experience, and perception. Ideally, books challenge people of all levels to improve their skills and enhance their knowledge. How satisfying is that!

F-K reading level for this article: 8.5

Flesch Reading Ease: 58.1 (Ideally 50-60)

• Joyce B. Lohse writes biographies for "young adults" of all ages for the "Now You Know Bio" series from Filter Press. www.lohseworks.com and www.filterpress-books.com



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Juggling Plates a Colorado Reflection

By Nancy Oswald

Living rural, teaching rural, writing rural. It sometimes feels like juggling plates, or bouncing between the acts of the P. T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome. There are days when writing historical fiction for young people seems an unfathomable distance from the alien invasion of cell phones, iPod, and the social and family difficulties that dominate the lives of the fifth graders I teach. The distance from the classroom is measured in eons of mind-space from the tranquility of sitting in front of the computer in the peacefulness of our home where the cows graze outside on virgin spring grasses, the dogs yip at the arrival of the UPS man, and our cats yowl for their dinner on our deck. The two, no three, vocations often voice their displeasure at being sliced and diced, wedged in and jammed, or whirled away like dust in a violent windstorm.

The choice should be simple. Peacefulness trumps. But as I sit here in the silence of an April morning after a renewing rain, there are echoes, not only of the raindrops on our roof, but reverberations from the classroom. Not the sound of individual voices, which sometimes haunt me at night, but more the energy and urgency that kids bring to every waking moment of the day. In fifth grade, it's friendship problems, who's feeling left out, why is recess so short, and when is PE? Finding a way to meet the learning needs of a classroom full of individuals is always a challenge. Children are unrelenting in their curiosity, never passive, and live in "real" time. There's an immediacy that can't be ignored, and teaching pries me out and the "real" world on days when I might prefer to follow the lives of make-believe characters across the Colorado landscape, or hunt asparagus when it pokes up in the spring.

A few years ago, I had the perfect summer job: chief goat herder at our family's

ranch. My husband, grass farmer and cowman extraordinaire, purchased the goats to use as a natural control for brush and unwanted weeds. Goats live by the creed of "No borders. No boundaries. No limits." (Wahoo!) We weren't equipped to fence them at that time, so in order to keep peace with the neighbors, we decided they needed a chaperone.

I split the job with our then teen-aged son and took the afternoon shift, leaving after lunch with my water bottle, journal, and cassette player. After getting directions from my son, I'd locate the goats, (if they hadn't already gone to Kansas) and trail along behind them, listening to a book on

The goats, too, taught me lessons that could be applied to the classroom. Or at least helped me ask the appropriate questions. Where do limits need to be set? Where is the equilibrium between learning and exploration? How can energy be channeled into focused and productive learning?

tape or my favorite music. When the goats deigned to stay in one place, I'd settle myself in the shade of a Gambel oak and let my mind wander. Sometimes, I'd read or take out my journal to catch ideas as they floated by like clouds in the summer sky. All this time I worked on my writing in the literal sense, but at the level where a little plot point gets worked out, or a character's actions suddenly become clear.

I didn't realize it, but I was also working on my teaching. Following along with the goat herd and me were our livestock guardian dogs, our border collie, Squeak, and sometimes the bottle-baby calf that hadn't yet figured out its identity. Squeak, big-hearted, energetic, and loyal, was still young, and just getting the hang of herd-



ing. She knew a few verbal commands, but often had to be called back to restart or to stop with the command of "DOWN!" to ward off a complete disaster. If I lost my patience, I learned quickly that my sensitive, beginning student would shrink back and become confused making it harder for her to complete a task. Patience and praise paid off. After she completed her job successfully, she'd waggle back for an ear scratch and a pat. With time, this method paid off. It didn't take long before she worked for joy and the desire to please. While she learned, so did I.

The goats, too, taught me lessons that could be applied to the classroom. Or at least helped me ask the appropriate questions. Where do limits need to be set? Where is the equilibrium between learning and exploration? How can energy be channeled into focused and productive learning?

Somehow these worlds overlap, this teaching and ranching and writing. It's natural for me to write for the age I teach, but while my own students are immersed in pop culture and all of the newest technology, it's a place I can't fully enter with my heart. My own imagination tends to wander to the wide plains and rolling hills of a time and place when life and death could hang on the thread of an unexpected thunderstorm, and where hours were measured by the movement of the sun across the sky. In the days of instant gratification and Touchpad, I'd like my students to understand that failure does not always mean the end of the world, and that experiencing success after a long struggle is well worth it.

continued on page 4

This is the province of story and perhaps the job of teaching. As fiction writers, we try to connect our readers to something that goes beyond plot and individual events. As a teacher, I try to get my students to think and process their actions and to dig below the surface of facts. Regardless of the differences in age, there are still universal things we strive for and need. It's these things that tie the generations together and make writing and teaching about them worthwhile.

On the first morning back to school after my summer of goat herding, the alarm clock sliced the silence like an air-raid siren warning me to run for cover. I wrenched

myself out of bed, rueing loss of my unregulated time and the freedom to roam the ridges of our ranch and ride the rivers of my imagination. Like the tugging of the moon on the tides, the shoreline shifted, signaling the return of the school season and a new group of students, buffed and freshly shod, tingling with anticipation.

Each year, the first blank page fills as the students enter the room. The rest of the story follows as the characters interact throughout the year, bringing life to the narrative. It's not always easy weaving the pieces of my life into a consistent whole, but I've been blessed with the struggle, and blessed with the opportunity to discover that finding the heartbeat in a story, the

heartbeat of a classroom, and the heartbeat in a herd of goats connecting the realm of writing.

• Nancy Oswald lives on a family ranch near Co-topaxi, Colorado. She writes Colorado-based historical fiction and was a 2005 WILLA Winner. Her book, "Hard Face Moon," involves the events of the Sand Creek Massacre, and "Rescue at Poverty Gulch," set in Cripple Creek, is planned for a late fall release by Filter Press Books. www.nancyoswald.com



What's "Lost" Got To Do With It?

By Alice Trego 2010 WWW President

I am a "Lostie" – vernacular for those dedicated to watching the recently ended drama/romance/sometimes science fiction/sometimes paranormal TV series, *Lost*. I became a vigilant viewer of all of the regularly broadcast programs from beginning to end, including the last Sunday marathon. For me, this series was unlike any other. I loved the way the weekly shows threw out challenges to analyze and scrutinize. Is this based on mythology? What is the relevance of the Smoke Monster? Is there a parallel universe going on here? What year is it now? How are the characters ever going to get out of their current situation?

Consequently, I was drawn to a story line that induced me to watch the succession of programs to see what happens.

The idea of six major characters surviving a plane crash on an unknown island, each one carrying internal and external "baggage," experiencing the effects of island electromagnetism, seeing dead people from their present, or past, having fantastical adventures on a weekly basis, culminating into an ending with a satisfied twist, caused quite a hubbub when the series ended.

Before the Sunday "Lost" marathon, I

read with great zeal the various pundits' theories about the whole series. I wanted to absorb every feature of the show I could. One valuable tidbit caught my attention – the executive producers of "Lost" had planned a beginning, middle and an end before the show aired six seasons ago. They knew every phase of the characters' lives. They knew every plot twist and sub-plot. They knew every turning point of their extraordinary story.

They had created a story arc from the get-go.

What an epiphany I had when I discovered this!

Granted, I had already known about story arc because the term frequently popped up in many writing workshops I've taken over the years. But when I learned that "Lost" was conceived via a story arc, the concept of this writing tool made sense to me. Finally!

Story arc is defined in many ways, depending upon which writing books you have on your bookshelf. The most succinct definition I recognize is the direction a story and its characters follow from beginning to end in order to effect change. This is the pattern used in "Lost" – a striking beginning, an edge-of-your-seat middle and a

satisfying ending. My interpretation would be a well-plotted story with well-rounded characters the audience either loves or despises, and following them on their journey of trials and tribulations to reach their destination of redemption.

Even though "arc" is mostly a term reserved for television series or comics or anime, in writing circles the bell curve reminiscent of a high school math graphics assignment takes on other names. The words "plot" and "structure" are more apt to describe the arc when discussing elements of novel writing. Incorporating different components within the arc – inciting incident, point of view, scene and sequel, resolution, climax – to bring stories to fruition, are vital to the overall story so that our readers will read from the beginning. No sagging middles to deter them from reading to the end.

Like any well-written story, I want to make sure my readers don't become "lost." Like any other writer, I need to be reminded of some basic writing rules once in a while. Like any good book I keep on my "keeper" shelf, the "Lost" DVDs are at the top of this year's Christmas list!

• Alice Trego makes use of the television medium to derive her own unique themes for a few of her stories.



Words to Write By

By Susan J. Tweit



Last August, on the morning my husband and I were to begin a two-week joint artist-writer residency at a remote cabin in Colorado's San Juan Mountains, he began seeing birds — hundreds of them. Birds crowding fence lines and utility wires; birds perched on every blade of grass, shrub, and road sign. Instead of the peaceful "time out" we had imagined, those hallucinations sent us to a Denver hospital for weeks of tests, followed by surgery to remove a tumor, and a brain cancer diagnosis.

As the weeks wore into months, I searched for tools to help me keep my mental and emotional balance. I remembered an exercise I teach in my creative writing and life-path workshops, "Words to Write By," using key words on a ring. It's a simple and effective way to harness the power of intentions and remind yourself of the values you want to express in your writing and life. I adapted the idea from an exercise my friend artist Sherrie York uses. The words I found in this exercise steadied me in our unexpected journey.

Here's how it works: You'll need a notebook ring or key ring about two inches in diameter, a stack of one-inch by three-inch cards or manila tags with a hole punched in one end (see photo), and an assortment of fun writing and drawing tools including colored pencils, markers, glitter pens, and stickers.

Gather your materials at your writing space, and you're ready to listen for your words. Sit comfortably, take a deep breath, close your eyes, clear your mind, and be attentive. What word emerges that exemplifies the values and aspirations you want your writing to express?

As you write that word on a card, let your inner artist out. Play with the letters, use a bright color, find a glitter pen, and embellish the card any way you choose. Make it something that'll catch your eye and remind you of what that word means to you.

Then sit back, close your eyes and listen for the next word. Write it on another card, embellishing appropriately. Continue until you've got at least half a dozen words.

Put the cards on your ring, and hang it where you'll see it every day, as a reminder of the words you've chosen. Some people clip them to a purse or pin them to a bulletin board. Mine hangs from one of the pens in the pen jar on my writing desk.

Use these words to inspire your writing, and to remind yourself of why you write. I look at my word ring as I begin my day, and turn it so the word that speaks to me most that day is outward. To keep that word from becoming rote, to renew its power, I speak it aloud, savoring the sound. Or I look up its definition and etymology, considering its meaning and origins anew. Or I write in my journal about why I picked that particular word and what it means to me.

What words are uppermost on my ring now?

- **Courage**—because I need courage to walk with my husband on his journey through brain cancer and to take my writing wherever it needs to go

- **Tenderness**—to remind me to balance strength with the tenderness of honesty
- **Patience**—toward myself, as I struggle to find a writing routine in a life that is much too full of worry and distraction
- **Heartful**—as a reminder of my vow to write "with my heart outstretched as if it were my hand," paraphrasing a line in a song by Mary Chapin Carpenter
- **Generous**—so that my words and stories embrace the community of life
- **Restorative**—for me and those whose hearts my words touch.

The word "courage" was uppermost on my word ring for months. But as we shift from crisis-mode with Richard's brain cancer to long-term treatment, and as I begin work on a proposal for a new book on growing a healthy and meaningful life, I've flipped the ring over so that "restorative" hangs outward.

Words have great power: They guide us through difficult times, remind us of who we are and what we've experienced, they summarize lessons learned and aspirations not yet realized. They are the symbols we use to tell our stories, sing our songs, entertain and inspire—to communicate our lives, feelings, concerns and wisdom.

What words will you put on your Words to Write By ring?

• Award-winning writer Susan J. Tweit is the author of 12 books and hundreds of magazine articles, stories, radio commentaries and essays. She teaches workshops on reclaiming your creativity and life's meaning in inspiring locations around the continent. Her next Words to Live By workshop takes place on Isla Espiritu Santo off Baja California, Mexico, this winter. Details on her web site, susanjtweit.com and her blog, susanjtweit.typepad.com



Telling Stories

Learning a Second Language

By Lori Orser

If you've learned a second language along the journey of your life, consider how you did it. You probably had books, workbooks, possibly tapes or CDs to listen to and practice with, and a teacher who spoke both your language and the language you were learning. Now imagine trying to learn a language that is spoken but not written down, and to a large extent, being replaced by English instead of being passed down to the future generations.

I first encountered Michif, a mixture of French and Cree that linguists say is "impossible" because of the way it's mixed, in an undergraduate class that was a survey of Native American languages at the University of North Dakota. The professor was John Crawford, but the actual Michif teacher was a lovely Michif lady with the unlikely name of Roseann Swenson (her last name came from her husband, a Norwegian farmer). We learned a little; mostly "How are you?" and "What is that?" "This is a pen." Or paper, or book. The second encounter was an entire semester of Michif, with John and Roseann both working with us. The language fascinates me still: the noun phrase is (a dialect of) French, complete with masculine and feminine gender in adjectives and articles; the verb phrase is Cree, in all its complexity with animate and inanimate subjects and objects, as well as a host of tenses (and if I went further you'd doze off).

So when I went to graduate school in linguistics, I knew what my thesis would be about: some aspect of this amazing language. In the summer of 1982, I went to the Turtle Mountain Reservation, a Chippewa reservation where Michif is the primary spoken Native American language. I was armed with the 100-word "Swadesh" list, a list compiled donkey's years ago by Morris Swadesh, a linguist who felt these were words every language would have. Roseann was good enough to introduce me to a number of people on the Reservation who spent time and shared knowledge with

me. Some of them were working, at that time, on the first ever Michif dictionary, with the assistance of John Crawford of UND and some of his graduate students. It was released in 1983 and is now out of print.

The Swadesh list fell flat very soon, so soon, in fact, that I couldn't get them all. So how to get people talking? One of the things I learned quickly was that most of my informants, middle-aged and older women, loved to tell stories. They delighted in the stories of a Cree legendary character called in Cree "Wisakayjak" (that's an approximation of the Cree pronunciation, and rather than use the phonemes with diacritics, I'm trying to write the words so you'll get how they sound), but who, in Michif, was "chi-Jean" (that's "chi-zhan," French for "Little John"). He is something of a trickster figure, but in many of the stories, the tricks are on him. In one particularly funny one that loses a lot in translation, he's hunting a partridge in a tangle of brush at the top of a hill, but the partridge sneaks up behind him, makes a sudden squawk, and 'chi Jean rolls down the hill, hearing the laughter of Monsieur Partridge all the way.

After hearing and recording a few of these stories in English, I asked if I could hear them in Michif. I could not have made these ladies happier. They told me three or four stories of 'chi Jean, and some about the Roogaroo, a shape-shifting monster/demon whose name is from the French loup garou. I managed to get each story from at least two different informants, and I learned not only new words and how Michif sentence structure works (which in short is "complicated"), I also learned that there are two ways to say almost anything in Michif.

One way is mostly French; Kaykwy tt nt (where the ~ indicates a nasal vowel; this is also said as "kaykwy to no" without the nasalization by some speakers) for "What's your name?," for "It is red," "ili [eelee]

ruzh," and "zhe ["je"] pVs nipaw" for "He must be sleeping" (a word for word translation would be "I think he's sleeping" but that's not what it means in Michif). The other way uses more Cree: "Tanshee kishinihkashun?" for "What's your name" (lit. "how are you called?"); "Mishikitiw," for "it is red" (this single Cree word is a "verb of being," with the subject marked in the verb; Cree has no adjectives per se); and "Neepaw etikway," for "He must be sleeping." "Etiwkay" is a "dubitative particle; it's used in place of a much more complicated verbal structure, which none of my informants used, though most used "etikway" ("must be, probably, I think") frequently. Both "etikway" and the dubitative verb form are used in modern Cree.

It seems, and I'm not sure how valid my assumption is, that more educated Michif, those who went to the old Catholic school especially, use more French and less Cree in their Michif than those who are either less educated or have closer ties to Métis in Canada. In 18th and 19th century Manitoba, the middle-class Métis used French in public and business transactions, Cree when speaking with Cree, and Michif, or Métis, at home, while the "free men" or traders for fur companies generally used Cree or Michif at home. My informants told me that Métis in Winnipeg speak French, while those on the Saulteux and Rocky Boy reserve speak Michif.

But without those stories, I never would have learned how Michif sounds, how it's spoken, and what it means to the people who speak it. Learning words piecemeal is not truly learning language. Language is at its best in story, and story is the best way, at least in my opinion, for languages in danger of being lost forever to touch the youngest learners and help them learn without even knowing they're learning.

• Lori is a native North Dakotan whose career included archaeology, teaching, and environmental science. She has a BA in anthropology from the University of North Dakota, and an MA in linguistics (Native American languages) from Kansas University. Her first book, [Spooky Creepy North Dakota](#), will be released in fall 2010.



Hello, Do You Like To Read?

By Gwyn Ramsey



Craft Fairs and Bazaars are a challenge to work, but they are great for your business. You never know what the outcome will be. All you can hope for is a good day, lots of people and that your legs hold out. The presentation is important—nice table cloth, brochures, business cards, bookmarks, several books, a guest book, pen, and a poster of your book cover. With the money bag hidden, the doors open....

Stepping around to the front of the table, I'm armed and ready with tri-folded brochures. The craft fair is crowded as people begin to mill about the area. A little nervous, but this isn't my first craft fair or bazaar so I settle down. I vow no one will pass my table without talking to me.

"Hello, my name is Gwyn Ramsey," I say politely to a passerby. "Do you like to read historical fiction?" He nods but before he can answer, I open a brochure and begin my spiel. "I'm a local author and I write a series like *Little House on The Prairie*, *Lonesome Dove*, *How the West Was Won*. An excerpt from my book is in the middle of this brochure, which you might like to read."

I continue on, as he takes the brochure, telling him all the good qualities of my

book and the story to keep him interested. He listens attentively. "I'm a researcher at the Library of Congress and spent three years writing and researching my book," I continue.

The man and his wife listen as I pick up a book, open it to show the white paper and the larger print, then I hand it to him to see for himself.

When he leaves, my book is in his bag. I breathe a sigh of relief and check my guest book to be sure he signed it. One book sold. One name for my contact list. Money in my pocket. Now only the rest of the box to go.

"Hello, do you like to read?"

• Gwyn Ramsey was raised in St. Louis, Missouri, attended Florissant Community College, and now resides in sunny Florida. When not writing, she enjoys researching genealogy, tap dancing, and marketing. Gwyn is the author of the *Anderson Chronicles: Journey to Tracer's Point* (2008), *Winds of Change* (2009), and *Bound for Texas* (2010).



The Walls Talk: Historic House Museums of Colorado, Patricia Werner, Filter Press

Pat Werner was a member of WWW starting the first year, 1994, missing only a couple of years while she fought illness. She died from cancer in November 2007, a month after attending the WWW conference in Colorado Springs. At that conference, she met Doris Baker from Filter Press. The result was a contract to publish her work. As a result of Pat's writing skill and passion for her book, and the expert-

ise, dedication, and sensitivity of Filter Press, *The Walls Talk* has reached fruition. It is a real treasure, and a tribute to the magic which often takes place at Women Writing the West. For those of us who miss Pat, she lives on through this beautiful publication.

For more about Pat Werner and her published work, go to: <http://werner-writer.com/index.htm>



At the LA Festival of Books

By Various Attendees/Volunteers



Pam Tartaglio, 2010 WWWW Secretary, is ready to greet festival attendees at the WWWW Booth # 652.

By Pam Tartaglio

The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, North America's largest public literary festival, attracts more than 130,000 adults and children over two days. This is the fifteenth year of the event, which is held on the UCLA campus, taking place on the weekend of April 24 and 25. The weather was perfect.

By marketing itself in Los Angeles, Women Writing the West hopes to raise awareness of the American West among Southern California book buyers and also in the film and television industries. Although our tented booth had an Old West theme, visitors were told that our members write about the American West, past and present, which includes writings about contemporary California. Two members' book covers were enlarged and displayed to highlight the experiences of Asians and Hispanics in the West.

WWW members and Board members, some wearing cowboy hats, handed out newly designed bookmarks featuring a southwest landscape and information on our organization, the WILLA, and our catalog. Many festival attendees took printed catalogs, which included flyers announcing LAURA-winning stories.

Since I live near Los Angeles and am the

WWW Secretary, the weekend of the festival was the culmination of months of preparation. Mara Purl, WWWW VP Marketing, and I met last fall and planned the booth. Mara suggested having our tables along the tent's walls, inviting visitors to enter, rather than having one table set across the tent's opening with our members sitting behind the table. We also discussed ways to make the booth eye-catching.

We purchased a few attractive posters from Western museums, including reproductions of historic prints. Scarlet tablecloths to go with the red and brown posters also were acquired for the festival. A "Saloon Piano" CD from the Autry National Center online store was selected to give our booth an Old West ambiance. I received 5,000 bookmarks I'd helped design along with boxes of catalogs. The month of April brought the delivery of an eighty-pound trunk of members' books, along with a sample WILLA trophy, to be displayed in the booth.

Everything the team needed had to be planned for and brought with us - a stepladder and string to hang posters, a dolly, parking permits, the stereo, and much more. Once we arrived at UCLA, there would be no place to purchase supplies.

I bought my first-ever cowboy hat before picking up WWWW President, Alice Trego, at the airport and taking her to the fabulous Huntington Library, Art Collection, and Botanical Gardens. Early the next morning, we brought everything to UCLA in a minivan, waiting in a line of trucks filled with books. Liz Simmons met Alice and I, and the three of us set members' books on the new tablecloths, hung posters, and set up the stereo.

I enjoyed talking about our organization. Many of the vendors are book publishers

or booksellers, so our visitors were interested that we are a group of writers and publishing professionals. I like raising the profile of the Old West in my hometown and telling people that L.A. is part of the American West, too. I hope my efforts make Western books and movies more popular, as well as bring in new members to WWWW.

By Suzanne Lyon

I'm no stranger to book festivals. Like most of you, I've attended many over the years, either staffing a booth on behalf of an organization like WWWW, or as an author promoting my own books, or simply for fun as a member of the public. But the LA Times Festival of Books was different. To begin with, it was HUGE. Countless booths, several stages, and numerous food courts sprawled across the beautiful UCLA campus. Unlike other festivals I have attended there was no way to visit every single booth in one day. Well, perhaps if one race-walked by without stopping it could be done, but that isn't the point, is it? The point is to amble and browse and poke your head in and engage, and there was



Kathryn Roll & Suzanne Lyon take a few minutes to pose in the WWWW booth at the April Los Angeles Times Festival of Books.

continued on page 9

continued from page 8

plenty of that going on at the WWW booth.

Another way in which LATFOB is different is in its diversity. There was truly something for everyone to enjoy, from the mainstream to the far-out. From booths like *Angry Little Girls* to MacMillan Publishers to Yiddishkayt. Festival-goers were a diverse bunch, too. Old and young, black and white (and every color in between), well-dressed and barely dressed. I was particularly pleased at the number of young people who stopped in to the WWW booth.

One of these young people was April. April is enrolled in a masters writing program at USC, and she had recently attended the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference in Denver. She told me how she had happened upon the panel presentation “The WILLA Literary Awards and a Women’s West,” presented by WILLA Winners including Sheila Foard and Jane Kirkpatrick. “It was such a break,” she said, “from the intense focus of the rest of the conference, to simply listen to the beautiful words of these women. When I saw that Women Writing the West had a booth at LATFOB, I had to come see you.” Although catalogs and WILLA information had been available at AWP, she had not picked them up. You can be sure she did not leave the booth at LATFOB without both, as well as information about our upcoming Arizona conference. I have a feeling we may be seeing more of April in the future. Once again, I was reminded of how important events like LATFOB are for making connections. www.suzannelyon.com

By Harriet Rochlin

Had I known that I’d be asked to write about the fifteenth annual L.A. Times Festival of Books on the UCLA campus, I would have saved the multi-page program listings in the Times.

I’d scrutinized the events to decide which of the dozens (hundreds?) of programs -- authors’ panels, keynote speakers, featuring Jane Smiley, Dave Eggers, Michelle Hun- even, Ann Lamott, Louise Erlich, et al., I

could attend when not on duty in the Women Writing the West booth #652. I include the number of the booth to give you an idea of the size and incredible diversity of this two-day event, and range of the organizations, institutions, and authors represented. The majority had to do with authors, publishers, books and writing A to Z.

I greatly enjoyed spending Saturday, April 24, from 1:00pm to 3:00pm, in the Women Writing the West booth. Fran Noble, who handled the Barnes & Noble Bookstore for the WWW 2009 LA Conference, relieved me at 3:00pm so I could attend one panel before I had to leave.



Harriet Rochlin, center, speaks with a festival-goer outside the WWW booth.

As to the WWW booth, Pam Tartaglio and Mara Purl, our 2010 book festival stalwarts, had completed the heavy lifting, including the suitcase on wheels and had handsomely arranged the WWW members’ new books, the postcards and catalogs on the display tables. When I arrived Alice Trego, Elizabeth Simmons (a new member), and Mara Purl were greeting visitors. As a veteran of eight previous Times book festivals, three in charge of a WWW booth, I’d say the crowd was bigger than any I’ve seen. We were well placed and hosted a constant flow. Almost everyone listened to our WWW pitch, and took bookmarks and catalogs.

Ever in search of new members, I always asked visitors if she, occasionally he, was a

writer. The majority were readers. I especially enjoyed the writers who came with particular questions. One wanted help researching Greek camel drivers in Arizona in the 1850s and 1860s. Another writer was a woman who had completed a book and needed a publisher. I suggested she study the catalog and list publishers buying books set in the West. Also, several friends dropped by, including a librarian and two writers. Overall, I was high as a kite on people and book talk by the time I left.

For those of you who have never experienced a book event of this size, diversity, information, and downright pleasure, I suggest you volunteer for 2011.

By Kathryn Roll

I have attended all the yearly Los Angeles Times Festival of Books in association with UCLA since they began in 1996, thoroughly enjoying myself talking to people and purchasing unusual books to enjoy in leisure at home. It is a two-day festival devoted to books, authors, pre-authors and readers. There are panels and speaker sessions, stage events, and several food courts enticing one to take breaks from collecting books and other merchandise.

The Women Writing the West booth was very attractive with colorful western posters on the walls. The tables were covered with red tablecloths. Prominent book displays were arranged. Bookmarks, catalogs, and flyers were placed so they were easily accessible to those who desired them. We had something to offer everyone from cookbooks, to romance, mystery, biography, history, fiction and non-fiction. People appeared at first to be surprised, and then delighted with the variety of books that Women Writing the West member authors offer.

In the past I always enjoyed finding booths that offered some type of specialty and talking to the people working the booth. This time, being on the other side of the table and inside the booth, it was pleasurable to talk to the people passing by, to hear about their interests and experiences,

continued on page 10

what they are reading and in many instances what they are writing. We met writers, librarians, and readers who were interested in our information and also wanted materials to share with friends who did not attend the festival. The writers were invited to attend the October conference in Wickenburg and were given brochures if they were interested.

I was not able to meet everyone that worked the booth over the two days but I feel very fortunate to have shared time with Mara Purl, Pam Tartaglio, Liz Simmons, Suzanne Lyon, and Alice Trego. As a new member of Women Writing the West, I am very appreciative for being able to spend time with this inspiring group of women. As a delightful consequence, I am looking forward to volunteering again next year.

By Alice Trego

The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books was my third endeavor of wo-manning a booth for Women Writing the West. Each singular experience over the years has been a great thrill for me, and each time I have gleaned something of import. From meeting Cheryl Rogers-Barnett, daughter of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans and a former WWW member, to participating at WWW's first time at an arts festival to being interviewed for BookRadio.

The fourth weekend of April, 2010, brought sunshine and gentle breezes, a throng of people, young and old, and an opportunity to discuss Women Writing the West's authors and membership with those who were unfamiliar with our organiza-

tion.

Wearing my new black cowboy hat, I extolled the mission and goals and the importance of WWW in the grand scheme of writing and writing careers. Some people came to the booth with bulging book bag in hand to scrutinize our authors' books, some sought answers to their questions about the West. I handed our new book-marks to readers, writers, and to little readers and writers who may become future WWW members. I also gave several to the teen "poetry slammers" who occupied the booth next to ours and drew phenomenal crowds with their verse.

This book festival weekend gave me the



3-year-old Khaia Dosta couldn't resist touching the WILLA trophy on display - Future WILLA Award author?

chance to become acquainted, and re-acquainted, with fellow WWW'ers – Pam Tartaglio, Mara Purl, Liz Simmons, Kathryn Roll, Suzanne Lyon, Harriet Rochlin and Fran Noble – who scheduled some of their free time to be there. Pam

and Mara offered their hospitality to me, and Pam treated me to "High Tea" in the Rose Garden at The Huntington Library. I met many people including Lauren Roberts, Editor at BiblioBuffet (www.bibliobuffet.com); Director/Author Andrea Buchanan (www.notetoselfbook.com); Carolyn Burns Bass of Lit Ch@t (www.litchat.net); Pikke Allen, Chief Creative Officer of Acme Creative (www.artifice-artificium.blogspot.com); Director of Development Brian Sheridan at Heritage Square Museum (www.heritagesquare.org) and Kari Moran, host of BookRadio Show on KFWB News/Talk 980 (www.kfwb.com). Kari interviewed me

about Women Writing the West during the final 15 minutes of the Festival — a grand summation to a wonderful weekend!

I wouldn't have missed the chance to be at the LA Festival of Books.

By Elizabeth Simmons

I had a great time at the LA Times Festival of Books on the UCLA campus. I love talking about books and literature. It was empowering to see so many women and men stop by the Women Writing the West booth, and show a genuine interest in literature of the West and our organization.

I admit that I am a shy author, so getting the opportunity to promote other peoples' books was good practice for me. I know that when the time comes, I'll be ready to promote mine, and I'll be ready to speak to large crowds.

Writing became such a process of discovery that I couldn't wait to get to work in the morning: I wanted to know what I was going to say.

- Sharon O'Brien



It All Began: With a Turn in the Road

By Doris McCraw



Doris McCraw as Helen Hunt Jackson at the Carnegie Library, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Most of us have had moments where our lives have taken a turn in a completely different direction than expected. Perhaps we were going to be a great doctor, lawyer or actor. Maybe we planned to win the Pulitzer or a Nobel Peace Prize, then something happened to change everything.

As an example here is a section of Elaine Long's memory of how her life was changed.

My first novel, *Jenny's Mountain*, won the Spur for Best First Novel (22 years ago.) Because of that award, I became a member of Western Writers of America. Through WWA, I met an editor who was interested in doing the large-print editions of my first two novels. It was at a WWA convention that I met the publisher who accepted my third novel, *Bear Ridge*. Two of my short stories appeared in anthologies edited by WWA members. I was offered an opportunity to serve the organization by becoming a Spur judge, then Spur chairman, and then serving a term on the WWA board. And it was at a WWA convention that I joined with Sybil Downing, Jerry Hurd, Irene Bennet Brown, and others to become a founding member of Women Writing the West. And it all began with that Spur award.

An interesting note: My agent urged the publisher to submit my book. No one told me anything about the submission until the Spur chairman notified me that I was a finalist and then the winner. To this day I've had no greater surprise than that letter from the chairman.

Another example. I intended to be a performer, you know, a famous actor. What changed? A school trip to the Iowa state penitentiary and a request to portray Helen Hunt Jackson for an event at a local history center. The trip to the penitentiary created a need to work in the criminal justice field, a career of twenty years. In the case of Portraying Helen, a writer I knew about, appeared to be an easy 'acting' job. From that first simple request, Helen Hunt Jackson has become a major fac-

tor in my life, as a writer and in my performances. Who knows where this may lead, but it is a path full of wonderful surprises, without a doubt.

If one were to ask if the memories are accurate, some would say yes, others no. Memory is personal, the thing that propels you forward. It is the catalyst for movement. Movement is what creates the path. Sometimes the path will meander and sometimes go straight. Occasionally on the path, you become the instrument of change for others.

The common denominator is being out and about. Create the environment in which people can say yes to you and your dreams. Become a member of organizations that fulfill your needs. Get to know people in the organization. Attend events that interest you. Attend conferences, go up and say Hello, my name is...I do. If you cannot achieve your desire (goal) through any of the above ways, find like-minded people and create your own organization. Recently I found a wonderful interview in the *Denver Post* from November 1998. In the interview, Sybil Downing discussed the beginnings of Women Writing the West and her turn in the road.

What is your turn in the road? How many were missed because you were busy looking for the sign post? Elaine is now writing and recording music. I have written my first full length novel and continue my passion of bringing Helen Hunt Jackson to life for others.

Elaine ended the above communication to me: Blessings along the way include all the friends I've made in both organizations.

Take the turn, and blessings along the way.

Doris McCraw is the current newsletter editor. When not working on the current or upcoming issue, Doris is busy performing as Helen Hunt Jackson. In her spare time she is the casting director of Red Herring Productions, writes on her novel, short stories and blogs.

Recent WWW Awards and Events



Heidi M. Thomas wins EPIC Award (Electronic Publishing Internet Connection) for *Cowgirl Dreams* in Young Adult category.



Joyce B. Lohse was honored in Denver at the Colorado Authors' League banquet Tuesday, May 11 for her book, *General William Palmer: Railroad Pioneer*. It won the 2010 award for Book Length YA/Juvenile Nonfiction. WWW member/publisher Doris Baker, Filter Press, and award finalist Susan J. Tweit were also in attendance.



Heidi Thomas and Mary Trimble recently participated in a fun promotional event at A Book for All Seasons in Leavenworth, WA.



Sherry Monahan received the coveted Wrangler Award from the the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. The award honors and encourages the legacy of those whose works in literature, music, film, and television to reflect the significant stories of the American West. Sherry won her award for her on camera performance in *Cowboys and Outlaws: The Real Wyatt Earp*, which aired on the History Channel in 2009.



WWW member Leslee Brene and Susan Sutherland, event coordinator at the Colorado Colorado Cowboy Classic fundraiser for the Colorado Horse Protection League on May 16, at the Lakewood Cultural Center. A percentage of the sale of Leslee's book "Heart on the Wind" were donated to the League's work.



October WWW Conference Planning Continues

By Marcia Melton

The organizers of the October Conference have been busy assembling a program which we hope will provide a good and meaningful time for all attendees. With many details still to be solidified, but with many others beginning to fall in place, a peek at the preliminary program brochure will give an idea as to what is in store. As additional information becomes available it will be published on the WWW website and listserv and in mailings. As the people at the Ranch say, "Come on out Wickenburg way."

Rancho de los Caballeros
Wickenburg, Arizona
October 15-17, 2010

Friday, October 15:

- 7:00-9:00amBreakfast Buffet
- 9:00am-12:15pm....."Morning in the Desert" tour to Hassayampa River Preserve and Desert Caballeros Museum. Lunch in Wickenburg and return approx. 12:15
- 8:00am-1:00pm.....Registration Desk at Rancho de los Caballeros for welcome of attendees arriving during the morning
- 12:45-1:00pmConference Welcome by Alice Trego, WWW President
- 1:00-2:00pm "What Acting Can Teach Us About Writing" Presented by Randall Platt
..... "How to Commit Murder" Presented by Donis Casey
- 2:00-2:15pmBreak
- 2:15-3:15pm "Creating a Series Character" Presented by Betty Webb
..... "A Conversation about Writing for Children & Young Adults"
Presented by Sheila Wood Foard
- 3:15-3:30pmBreak
- 3:30-5:00pm "Adventures in Freelancing" Presented by Joyce Lohse and Mary Trimble
..... "Infinite Possibilities: A Journaling Workshop" Presented by Laurie Wagner
Buyer
- 5:00-5:30pmGreen Dots Meeting for first-time WWW conference attendees
- 6:30pm "Cookout and Campfire under the Stars" with WILLA Readings

continued on page 13



Saturday, October 16:

- 7:00-9:00 a.m.Breakfast Buffet
 8:00-10:00Registration Desk for Saturday arrivals
 9:00-10:00“The Editor-Author Relationship” Presented by Doris Baker and Authors from Filter Press: Laurie Wagner Buyer, Mara Purl, and Nancy Oswald
 10:00-10:15Break
 10:15-11:45“Perspectives from the Bookstore World” Presented by Gayle Shanks, Past President of the Amer. Booksellers Assoc., Changing Hands Bookstore owner and Brandon Stout, PR Director of the store
 12:00-1:45Luncheon WILLA FINALISTS announced. Luncheon Speaker: Jan Cleere. “Elizabeth Hudson Smith: Early Wickenburg Entrepreneur”
 2:00-3:00Panel of Editors and Agents attending on “Publishing Trends: Into the Future”
 3:15-3:30.....Break
 3:30-4:30“The Story You Came To Tell” A Discussion in poetry and prose of the responsibility of the writer to the story they tell and to their audience. Presented by Ellen Waterston
 4:30-6:00Book Signing Party
 6:00-7:00Social Hour with Cash Bar
 7:00 p.m.Evening Banquet with WILLA WINNERS announced and Keynote Address by Jana Bommersbach, 2010 OneBookAZ Author

Sunday, October 17

- 7:00-9:00 a.m.....Breakfast Buffet
 9:00-10:00“Author Newsletters: Your Dynamic Marketing Tool” Presented by Mara Purl, WWW VP Marketing
 10:00-11:00WWW Business Meeting
 A Conference Bookstore will be available for sales and signing throughout the conference.
 Editors attending are from: Filter Press, Globe Pequot Press, Poisoned Pen Press, Treble Heart Books, and True West Magazine. Additional Editor/Agent confirmations pending.

Extra time has been allowed at breakfast each morning so guests can watch “The Running of the Horses” – a special ranch treat each day at 8:00 a.m. when their 100 head herd of horses runs from a distant pasture to the corrals.

NOTE: All Programs are subject to change



16th Annual Women Writing the West Conference Rancho de los Caballeros, Wickenburg, Arizona

**"A Write Retreat: Reconnect, Re-inspire, Rejuvenate, and Relax at the Rancho"
October 15-17, 2010**

Place: Rancho de los Caballeros is an historic Arizona landmark Guest Ranch and Resort. Surrounded by high Sonoran desert, the Rancho's 20,000 acres welcome guests with abundant amenities offering chances for riding, swimming,

hiking, golfing, tennis, a spa, — and plenty of places for WWW attendees to enjoy the desert beauty and each other's company. See the Rancho website for a preview www.sunc.com. Please note booking information in the center box on the Registration form. Transportation from Phoenix Airport will be provided by the Rancho, or, if driving, the Rancho is approx. 60 mi. NW of Phoenix.

Program: For this gathering of members from all facets of the writing community, this year's program seeks to offer workshops and presentations on the creative side of writing as well as discussion of marketing tools, publishing trends and changes which impact all writers. If attendees wish, there is also room to roam and write on their own. The Conference begins on Friday afternoon.



Additional programs (with more in the works) include a panel of Authors and Editors discussing Working Relationships, a Marketing Update by WWW VP of Marketing, Mara Purl, a Panel on New Directions in Publishing, opportunities to "meet and pitch" with editors and agents (TBA), Friday evening "Cookout and Campfire Under the Stars" with music and readings, Saturday Luncheon honoring WILLA Finalists and Banquet honoring WILLA Winners, and Bookstore. Please check website, Newsletter, and mailings for more news or contact Marcia Melton, Conf. VP, melton.marcia@gmail.com (480-244-9343)





Registration for the 16th Annual Women Writing the West Conference Rancho de los Caballeros, Wickenburg, Arizona

**"A Write Retreat: Reconnect, Re-inspire, Rejuvenate, and Relax at the Rancho"
October 15-17, 2010**

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

If available, would you wish to schedule an editor/agent appointment: Yes () No ()

Please contact me about selling my books in the conference bookstore: Yes () No ()

This will be my first time attending a WWW Conference: Yes () No ()

Make guest room reservations directly with the Rancho de los Caballeros www.sunc.com (1-800-684-5030). The WWW room rate is \$150/single/double, \$35/each addl. person (max. 4/room). A one night deposit is required. Reservations must be made by August 15, 2010. Deposits received after this date will be accepted on a space available basis. Transportation is available through the Ranch from the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, \$30 round trip per person. Ask the reservations department for details. Confirmations will be sent upon receipt of your deposit. Any cancellations after October 1st will forfeit deposit.

CONFERENCE FEES: (Registration includes two breakfasts, one luncheon, and two dinners. You may request vegetarian or vegan meals at the conference registration desk.)

- **Early Registration**
\$195 – WWW member (postmarked by June 30, 2010)
\$220 – Non-member (postmarked by June 30, 2010)
- **Registration After June 30, 2010**
\$215 – WWW member
\$245 – Non-member
\$165 – Registration at the door (Saturday only; no meals included)
- **Guest Meals**
\$50 – per guest Friday evening Cookout # guests ____
\$40 – per guest Saturday WILLA luncheon # guests ____
\$50 – per guest Saturday evening WILLA banquet # guests ____
- **Friday Morning Desert Adventure (NOT included in registr. fee)**
\$20 – per person; guests welcome # persons ____

TOTAL REGISTRATION
\$ _____

TOTAL GUEST MEALS
\$ _____

TOTAL TOUR TICKETS
\$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED
\$ _____

Make checks/money orders payable to Women Writing the West
To make payment via PayPal www.womenwritingthewest.org/conference.html
Copy and send this form to: Ann Parker, P.O. Box 1164, Livermore, CA 94551

REGISTRATION DEADLINES:

Mail-in Registration must be postmarked no later than October 1, 2010. Pay Pal accepted through midnight, October 10. Refund Deadline is October 4. (No refunds after this date for any reason.)
No meal changes after October 10.
Conference questions: Marcia Melton, VP Conference, melton.marcia@gmail.com 480-244-9343



Sustaining Members

Doris Baker
 Sybil Barnes
 Teresa Bodwell
 Jacque Boyd
 Elizabeth Crook
 Sandra Dallas
 Liz Duckworth
 Heather Durham
 Lee Emory
 Sunnie Empie
 Michael W. Farmer
 BJ Harris

Jane Kirkpatrick
 Beverly J. Lionberger
 Priscilla Maine
 Cynthia Leal Massey
 Vickie McDonough
 Diane Noble-Tefft
 Trudi Peek
 Mara Purl
 Paige Ramsey-Palmer
 Shirley Raye Redmond
 Sarah Byrn Rickman
 Eastern Cowgirl Fern Robbins
 Harriet Rochlin
 Kaye Roll

Irene Cindy Sandell
 Karen Stevenson
 Jodi Stewart
 Lynda K. Bundrant Taylor
 Alice D. Trego
 Mary E. Trimble
 Susan J. Tweit
 Louise L. Wallace
 Julie W. Weston
 Nancy Wisgirda



New Members • Spring 2010

(* = joined at the sustaining member level)

Monica Devine • Eagle River, AK • monicadevine@gmail.com (rejoin)
 Sheila MacAvoy • Santa Barbara, CA • macavoy@cox.net
 Elsa M. Carruthers • Bakersfield, CA • elsacarruthers@yahoo.com
 Dena Mercer • Ventura, CA • denamercer@sbcglobal.net
 Ruby Murray • Cathlamet, WA • rmurray228@centurytel.net
 Marilyn Findley • San Jacinto, CA • razyrose@yahoo.com
 Ruth McLaughlin • Great Falls, MT • ruthmclau@bresnan.net

Women Writing the West® – Membership Form

Please return to: Women Writing the West
 8547 E. Arapahoe Rd., #J-541
 Greenwood Village, CO 80112-1436

Name _____

Pseudonyms _____

Address _____

ZIP+4 / Country _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

E-mail _____ Web site _____

Membership dues extend through December 31 of the current year. New members who apply mid-year receive a packet of materials to bring them up to date with current activities. New membership applications processed after September 1 extend through the following year.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Dues \$60 | <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher Annual Dues \$60 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charter/Sustaining Member \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> International Dues \$70 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book Seller Name of Store _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reader/Fan | <input type="checkbox"/> Librarian | <input type="checkbox"/> Published Writer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished Writer | <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Agent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Screenwriter | <input type="checkbox"/> Editor | <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewer/Critic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicist | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |