

FALL 2019



The Quarterly Magazine of the Women's Fiction Writers Association

WRITEON!

**WRITING
WITH A
LITTLE
HELP**

**THE
VALUE OF
"WRITER"
TIME**

**+ GET TO KNOW
YOUR 2020
WFWA BOARD
CANDIDATES**

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AUTHORS REQUEST

In the Writing Community, who doesn't want to know more about the personal journeys of published writers? In our next issue, we're planning a Q&A with WFWA authors on their successes (and setbacks), and we want to interview you. From querying, full requests, agenting, and finally publication, our readers would love to hear your answers to some of the questions that keep us up at night – hopeful and enthusiastically ready to attack our word count. If you'd like to participate, please send your contact information to kdarthur@yahoo.com.

WRITE FOR WRITE ON!

You love reading Write ON! Now write for it! If you're interested in being a Write ON! contributor, pitch your one-time features articles (2,000 words) or your regular column idea (750-1,000 words) to Managing Editor Kay Arthur at kdarthur@yahoo.com.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I have not been well this year. I have been battling extraordinary stressors at work, had mental illness surges that left me climbing out of my own pit of despair, plus daily life with three teenagers and work and such.

I'm certain I'm not alone. We all have things that sneak into our lives and disrupt how we intended our day to go. And as if that weren't enough, we have stories and characters that we were certain were going to go one way, and then they deviate, making us rethink and replot (both our stories and our decisions to be writers).

While we'd all like the excuse to run away to Albuquerque once a month, our realities insist we work with what we've got. You may have the advantage of dedicated time to write each day or you may constantly strive to squeeze it into the margins of life. But we can create that in different ways, via the #5amwritersclub or even inviting others to sprint with you wherever you may be.

The writing reality for each of us is as varied as we are. While many of us have the opportunity of receiving critiques from an agent, editor, beta reader, or critique partner, sometimes that feedback can derail us. The purpose of WFWA is to provide a place where you can come, talk about this, share how the editorial letter feels overwhelming, wondering if you have what it takes to keep going, and get confirmation that all of us have been working on this for a while, and we all keep at it, doing our part to help and accepting the generosity of others' help.

In this issue, we offer content to provide support and guidance. We also have the chance for you to meet the people running for WFWA board positions next year, who are committed to continue supporting this organization designed to educate and support each of you. Because while writing is hard and often solitary, leaving us feeling isolated and alone, belonging to an organization where we can ask the less public questions and get comfort allows the writer to dive back into the work with the assurance that others are doing this work too.



Tasha Seegmiller
WFWA President



REALITY FOR EACH OF US IS AS VARIED AS WE ARE. WHILE MANY OF US HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF RECEIVING CRITIQUES FROM AN AGENT, EDITOR, BETA READER, OR CRITIQUE PARTNER, SOMETIMES THAT FEEDBACK CAN DERAIL US. THE PURPOSE OF WFWA IS TO PROVIDE A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN COME, TALK ABOUT THIS . . .

ABOUT THE WFWA

We began this organization in 2013 with the idea to create a safe, nurturing place for writers of women's fiction. The publishing industry is morphing—with new opportunities and, as yet, unknown futures. The founders of the Women's Fiction Writers Association wanted somewhere to amass and disseminate information to and about our chosen genre.

Defining women's fiction has proven as subjective as the types of books we read. For that reason, our guiding statement is broad and comprehensive: Stories that are driven by the main character's emotional journey. Our stories may have romance. Or they may not. They could be contemporary. Or historical. But what binds us together is the focus on a main character's emotional journey.



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#womensfictionwritersassociation

Join the closed WFWA Facebook group by sending an email to: membership@womensfictionwriters.org

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LIKE WHAT YOU'VE READ IN WRITE ON?

Send us a letter! We'd love to hear your feedback and reactions on the stories and features. Email them to writeon@womensfictionwriters.org. Submitted letters are considered for publication and may be edited for clarity or space.

STAFF

Managing Editor

Kay Arthur is a retired healthcare administrator who is now enjoying early retirement and writing full-time. She lives both in Phoenix and a cabin in the mountains of Arizona with her husband and dogs – a Griff and a Doodle of Some Kind. Kay is a featured writer for *Sixty&Me*, an online publication and is currently querying her debut novel, *Beautifully Strange* while working on her second novel. Visit her at www.kdarthur.com



COPY EDITOR

Brooke Williams is a novelist, childcare provider, fitness instructor, and Girl Scout leader. When she isn't writing or devouring stacks of good books, she's helping out at the local elementary, working on her MFA, or haunting her favorite local taco joint. Her short story, *Another Time*, was published in The Orange Writer's Group Anthology. She lives in Ohio with her husband and four children.



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Patricia Friedrich is Professor of English at Arizona State University. She is the author/editor of six nonfiction books including *The Sociolinguistics of Digital Englishes* (Routledge, 2016), the award-winning *The Literary and Linguistic Construction of Obsessive-compulsive Disorder* (Palgrave, 2015), and several published short stories. She is currently working on revisions to her first novel-length manuscript, *Artful Women*.



LAYOUT EDITOR

Sheri Taylor-Emery is an art director who longs to be a novelist. She's still in awe that her Rising Star manuscript, *The Fifty-Week Wife*, landed her an agent. When she's not grinding her teeth from stress, she's rejoicing in seeing her son and daughter turn into amazing young adults, working at a dog rescue once a week, and corralling a one-eyed dog and three cats at home. She lives with her husband outside of Atlanta. She's repped by Carly Watters of P.S. Literary. Visit her at writeonsister.net



2020 WFWA BOARD CANDIDATES

By Aly Walker, WFWA Elections Committee Member



Almost six years ago, after winning my first NaNoWriMo, I joined WFWA. I was excited to get involved, but the truth is, I love to volunteer. Giving back helps me feel connected. WFWA is remarkable because of our volunteers and growing membership. Working in and being a member of this organization has strengthened my friendships in the writing community and built my confidence as a writer.

This year, we are fortunate to have so many new faces and a Board veteran stepping up to volunteer for our 2020 Board of Directors. Thank you for your willingness to help WFWA continue to grow.

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE YOUR 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES:

President
Christine Adler

Vice President, Communications

Vice President, Programs
Jacki Kelly

Vice President, Finance/Treasurer
Kathy Dodson

Secretary
Becky Taylor



2020 WFWA BOARD CANDIDATES: CHRISTINE ADLER/PRESIDENT

ABOUT THE POSITION: The President shall serve as spokesperson for the Association; call, set the agenda for, and preside over all meetings of the Board and the members; appoint, with Board approval, such committee chairs as may from time to time be necessary; serve as a nonvoting ex-officio member of all committees (or assign another Board member to do so); execute Association business as specified by the Board; appoint, with Board approval, qualified members to fill any officer or director vacancies; and coordinate all activities and fulfill any other obligations designated by the Board.

WHAT CHRIS HAS TO SAY:

■ **How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?**

I joined WFWA in September of 2013, as soon as I learned it existed. At that time, I'd had my graduate writing degree for a few years, and was editing a regional parenting magazine. I wanted to write a novel. I had the idea and the characters, but nothing else. Connecting with other writers, learning about the publishing industry, the processes of editing, querying and improving my craft, and having a community to talk to about the fiction-writing life was a revelation.

Personally, I've gained many friends who understand not just what it means to be a writer, but who understand me. They've helped me get to know myself on a deeper level, and bring out my best, both of which have helped me improve my characters, craft and life.

■ **What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?**

I think the most important benefit of membership depends on the individual member. When I was a new member, I needed different things than I need now, as I'm further along on my writing journey. As President, I will keep in mind that we have many members at different stages of their writing careers, and I will work closely with the Board and Committee members to make sure we are doing the best we can to provide quality benefits for everyone at every level.

■ **What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?**

I've watched WFWA change and grow over the years from a group of professional writers who wanted to meet and help others who wrote Women's Fiction into an international organization whose backbone is one of community. As we continue to grow, I'm excited to work with the other leaders to forge our path toward becoming recognized in the publishing industry and the writing community as a world-class organization for WF writers.



■ **What about your background makes you uniquely qualified to handle this position?**

I served as WFWA President in 2017 and 2018, and as VP Programs the year before that, so I understand how the different Board positions work, both separately and as a team. And this past year, I experienced the organization as a member and committee volunteer only (not on the Board). This gave me a better look at its operations from the outside, and has helped me understand how invisible much of the work that goes on behind the scenes is to most members.

■ **What do you see as WFWA's strengths and what ideas do you have for further promoting those?**

All of our strength lies in our members. The supportive community they've created makes WFWA a place for writers of all levels, one where every member can find the help they seek, whether it's tips on their

craft or guidance for navigating the challenges of the writing life. Our amazing and generous volunteers are the ones who make all of our excellent programming possible and resources available. Our reputation for these strengths is what draws in new members every day. But the bigger we grow, the more volunteers we'll need to maintain those benefits, and continue bringing members all the things they love about WFWA. I'd like to create a structured volunteer program that will make it easier for people to raise their hand to help, and the support they need to succeed in the positions they step up to fill. Retaining a strong volunteer force means we can continue to be proactive.

■ **What's one thing you would like to see change for WFWA in the coming year?**

Many members this past year have organized their own meet-ups with other members, which is a great way to build community and have face-to-face time with others who you might only know from the Facebook group. There's a value in those interpersonal interactions that can't be achieved online. I'd like to develop a more formalized method for organizing those meet-ups, so that members can make the most of the gatherings, and then share their experiences, lessons, revelations and ideas with us so we can incorporate them into the larger organization. The more we put our heads together and pitch in, the stronger WFWA becomes. That's what community is all about.

ABOUT CHRIS: *Chris Adler is a past President of WFWA and a member of the Historical Novel Society. She's also a former Editor-in-Chief of the literary magazine Inkwell, and of the regional NY parenting magazines Westchester Parent and Rockland Parent. Chris's articles, essays, poems, and book reviews have appeared in various print and online publications throughout the Northeastern United States and Canada, and she has a Master's degree in Writing from Manhattanville College. She's a Pitch Wars 2017 alum, newly agent-free, and at work on her second book of historical women's fiction. She lives in the suburbs of NYC with her husband and two sons.*

2020 WFWA BOARD CANDIDATES: SHARON RITCHEY/VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS

ABOUT THE POSITION: The VP of Communications is responsible for the overall communications strategy and messaging of WFWA including the development, review and execution of the Communications Plan; maintaining consistency in all internal and external communications; coordinating all communication vehicles including the quarterly magazine and newsletters; assisting the social media and web site teams with message and program opportunities; promoting appropriate successes of WFWA members, including Star Awards and Rising Star awards; assisting in managing any other messaging opportunities for WFWA. The VP of Communications will work closely with the President in all messaging and promotion opportunities, as well as fulfill any other obligation designated by the Board.

WHAT SHARON HAS TO SAY:

■ **How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?**

In 2016, I was in the messy middle of writing my first novel. I had determined that I was writing women's fiction and hoped that I could find a community of like-minded writers who could help me see the project to completion and help me understand and navigate the next steps in publishing. I was thrilled to find WFWA.

I'm a firm believer that you get out of an organization what you put in. I took advantage of the Facebook forums, online seminars, and participated in my first WOW challenge and Rising Star award.

In 2019, I became WFWA's Director of External Communications. I've had the opportunity to develop Women's Fiction Day as well as develop a robust media list for developing and sending press releases.

Earlier this year, I participated in my first WFWA-sponsored online pitch event. I worked with other WFWA members to perfect my pitch, posted my revised and improved material, and crossed my fingers. I landed two agent offers and signed with an agent. I attribute my success to the support and guidance of WFWA and our members.

In addition to moving ahead with my writing goals, I have formed deep friendships both online and in real life. The sense of community and common passion have been one of the most positive developments in my life.

■ **What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?**

WFWA provides a safe place for writers of all levels and experiences to ask questions. It doesn't matter if a question has been asked once or 100 times. I watch and participate in conversations that provide guidance and support on all writing related subjects from agents, rejection, copyright, marketing, and more. As Communications VP, I see my role as providing greater support to keep these conversations strong, provide answers, and work with the board to develop meaningful programs to support all authors.

■ **What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?**

WFWA is experiencing steady growth and recognition in the publishing industry. I want to help ensure that WFWA is the go-to source for people seeking information about women's fiction. In my role as External Communications Director, I've had the pleasure of working with all of the association's talented volunteers. I feel with my communication's experience, I can help move many of the organization's ideas and initiatives forward to improve our offerings and value to members.

■ **What about your background makes you uniquely qualified to handle this position?**

I am the current Director of External Communications and for the past three years, I have chaired the yearly WOW challenge. Additionally, for the past two years, I have been a Star Award judge and this year as an agented author, I became a mentor.

I helped to create and launch Women's Fiction Day with plans to expand this day and outreach to our members and the publishing community.

I am the owner of Home Row Editorial, a marketing and branding firm where for the past twenty years I have created a variety of publications, websites, brochures, press materials, and programs such as competitions and product launches.

■ **What do you see as WFWA's strengths and what ideas do you have for further promoting those?**

WFWA's strength comes from our members. This open and accessible community cheers for one another, supporting successes, softening the



WFWA'S STRENGTH COMES FROM OUR MEMBERS. THIS OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY CHEERS FOR ONE ANOTHER, SUPPORTING SUCCESSES, SOFTENING THE BLOWS OF REJECTION, AND KEEPING OUR COLLECTIVE WRITING GOALS ALIVE AND FOCUSED.

blows of rejection, and keeping our collective writing goals alive and focused. I want to improve member engagement and that will come from finding better ways to reach out to members beyond Facebook.

■ **What's the one thing you would like to see change for WFWA in the coming year?**

I would like to see improved member engagement. This may come from education or social programming, regional meet-ups, improved publications, or WFWA only benefits such as online pitching events or agent access.

ABOUT SHARON: Sharon Wishnow-Ritchey, owner of Home Row Editorial, has been involved in the publications industry for over twenty-five years. A proficient writer, editor, and manager, she has worked for trade journals, magazines, international corporations, non-profits, universities, and public relations firms. Her expertise includes writing and editing feature-length articles, books, corporate profiles, bios, press releases, marketing materials, newsletters, bios, advertisements, marketing collateral, website content, blogs, and developing product and company names. Sharon has an MFA in creative non-fiction writing from George Mason University, holds a publications certificate from George Washington University, and has a BA in government and international relations from Clark University. She serves as Director of External Communications for the Women's Fiction Writers Association.

2020 WFWA BOARD CANDIDATES: JACKI KELLY/VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAMS

ABOUT THE POSITION: The VP of Programs shall assume the duties of the President and preside over all meetings of the Board and members in the absence of the President; be responsible for planning and overseeing all program-related activities undertaken by the Association, including those at regular meetings, workshops, and conferences; and fulfill any other obligations designated by the Board.

WHAT JACKI HAS TO SAY:

■ **How long have you been a member of WFWA, and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?**

I've been a member of WFWA for a year and a half. During my membership, I have taken on the responsibilities of Volunteer Coordinator and Mentor. These positions allow me to have a better understanding of the organization and provide help and guidance to an individual. The organization has helped me to identify agents who are interested in women's fiction, which has been valuable.

■ **What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?**

There are several benefits in being a member of this organization such as the ability to interact with other writers who write and enjoy women's fiction and working with other writers that are on the same journey. Also, the number of programs the organizations provides to aid writers along this journey has been very valuable. If I have a question, I have a place to turn for answers. If I'm elected as the next VP of Programs, I'd like to foster the current programs and look for new programs or avenues to continue to aid in learning for our members.

■ **What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?**

One of the exciting things about this position is the ability to help grow WFWA. WFWA has so many exciting programs, and I'd like to see every member take full advantage of everything the organization offers. I'm excited to get the current membership more involved by addressing their needs and help the writing community in general find out about this wonderful organization and what it has to offer.

■ **What about your background makes you uniquely qualified to handle this position?**

I worked for a large chemical corporation for over thirty years as a financial manager. As a trained Six Sigma Specialist, I led several projects which required input from a variety of sources and precise detail mapping. I also have excellent organizational and management skills. As the Volunteer Coordinator for WFWA, I see how important volunteers are for this organization. All the wonderful work that WFWA provides is possible because of the hard work of our volunteers.

■ **What do you see as WFWA's strengths, and what ideas do you have or further promoting those?**

The number one strength of WFWA has to be the volunteers that keep the organization moving forward. They provide their time to aid others. The organization also provides opportunities for members to connect with agents and editors who are interested in women's fiction. This is a valuable tool for individuals that may be struggling alone. The yearly retreat is especially nice since it provides an opportunity to learn new tools, write and interact with other writers.

■ **What's the one thing you would like to see change for WFWA in the coming year?**

I'd like to see WFWA become more visible in the writing community, to become the go-to organization for all things women's fiction.



I'M EXCITED TO GET THE CURRENT MEMBERSHIP MORE INVOLVED BY ADDRESSING THEIR NEEDS AND HELP THE WRITING COMMUNITY IN GENERAL FIND OUT ABOUT THIS WONDERFUL ORGANIZATION AND WHAT IT HAS TO OFFER.

ABOUT JACKI: *I have been writing since my fourth grade teacher made me keep a journal for a grade. Now I do it to keep track of all the fascinating and heartbreaking moments that life throws my way. Poetry, personal essays, short stories and novels have all occupied space in my heart and my hard drive. I love to read almost as much as I likes to write. When I'm not reading or writing, I'm walking my adorable cocker spaniel or I'm on the golf course. My idea of bliss is squeezing all this stuff into one day.*

2020 WFWA BOARD CANDIDATES: KATHY DODSON/VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE/TREASURER

ABOUT THE POSITION: The Treasurer/VP of Finance handles all accounting and financial transactions including managing bank and PayPal accounts, issuing payments, reviewing PayPal and merchant account transactions, updating the annual budget, and entering data into Quickbooks Online. The position also includes monthly bank reconciliations, quarterly financial statement generation and review, and annual tax return filing. Finally, this position makes suggestions/recommendations to the WFWA Board based on financial status and budget projections.

WHAT KATHY HAS TO SAY:

■ **How long have you been a member of WFWA, and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?**

I have been a member of WFWA for about eighteen months. I have gained so much from the organization. My writing has improved because of my participation in workshops, contests and last year's conference. More importantly, I feel like I've found my tribe. Fellow members have been incredibly supportive, and I've made lasting friendships. One example is from when I went through a book coaching certification program last year. I needed three volunteers to let me critique their work as part of the course requirement. I posted a request on one of the WFWA Facebook pages, and boy did the membership show up! I not only found my three writers, but was able to match WFWA authors with other coaches in the program.

■ **What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?**

I love the conference, and I think it is one of the most important benefits of the organization. Writing can be isolating, and having the opportunity to connect with other writers in person is incredible. I attended for my second year in 2019 and can't imagine missing the conference in the future. One way I am supporting the conference is by providing two silent auction items.

■ **What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?**

I'm excited about the Treasurer position because it plays to my strengths. I have an MBA, and I spent over twenty years as an executive in for-profit and nonprofit businesses and government agencies. I'm good with numbers and feel I will be able to have a positive impact on WFWA in this position.

■ **What about your background makes you uniquely qualified to handle this position?**

I have had financial responsibility for several nonprofits, as an employee and as a volunteer. I was President/CEO of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce for five plus years, President and Treasurer of an art foundation for ten years, and served on the boards of other nonprofits. This background, plus my financial experience, qualifies me to be WFWA Treasurer.

■ **What do you see as WFWA's strengths, and what ideas do you have for further promoting those?**

The strength of WFWA lies in its members. I hope to help promote the programs that are working today and learn more about what the membership wants from the organization.

■ **What's the one thing you would like to see change for WFWA in the coming year?**

I'm not sure I'm ready to answer this question. I'd like to become more involved and learn what the organizational needs are. I do want to make sure that the membership has plenty of opportunities to engage with WFWA.



I'M EXCITED ABOUT THE TREASURER POSITION BECAUSE IT PLAYS TO MY STRENGTHS. I HAVE AN MBA, AND I SPENT OVER TWENTY YEARS AS AN EXECUTIVE IN FOR-PROFIT AND NONPROFIT BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

ABOUT KATHY: *I am an aspiring author who has finished three novels and is working on a fourth. I am also an Author Accelerator Advanced Certified Book Coach. I was an English major with a creative writing specialty in college (SMU) and have earned an MBA and PhD. I worked as an executive in for-profit, nonprofit and government organizations for several decades before seriously picking up the pen again. Originally from Texas, I've had the good fortune to live in Spain, Mexico, Tanzania and several US states and the good sense to end up in Carlsbad, California. Things I love include travel, fiery food, hanging out with my neighbors on the front lawn, and reading everything from management books to magical realism. My greatest accomplishment may be raising a son who loves to read.*

2020 WFWA BOARD CANDIDATES: BECKY TAYLOR/SECRETARY

ABOUT THE POSITION: The Secretary shall be responsible for recording the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors and the membership; keeping Association records, including copies of newsletters, communications, Association business correspondence, committee reports, and all other official documents; mail notices; and fulfilling any other obligations designated by the Board of Directors.

WHAT BECKY HAS TO SAY:

■ **How long have you been a member of WFWA, and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?**

I joined WFWA in March of this year; somehow I didn't know about the organization until then. Since March, I have made several connections to other writers working in the genre and feel like there have also been real friendships developing, which I love! I enjoyed attending the WFWA retreat for the first time this year and hope to meet even more amazing people working in this market.

■ **What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?**

I believe the personal connections, support, knowledge sharing, opportunities to get members' work into the hands of agents and editors, and access to other successful self-publishing are all important benefit. I'd have a hard time picking just one. As a member, and hopefully future board member, I plan to continue sharing what I know about both the self and traditional publishing businesses based on my experiences, as well as grow those personal connections to other writers in the genre.

■ **What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?**

The opportunity to learn more about the organization, how it is run, and what I can do to contribute and help us grow together.

■ **What about your background makes you uniquely qualified to handle this position?**

I have developed a pretty varied resume with regards to my own writing and publishing paths over the years. I have had two agents, worked for one agent, self-published books, and published with a small publisher. Now I will be publishing with a traditional house, Sourcebooks Landmark, in 2020. All of it has taught me so much about the business of writing. Now I would like to expand upon that experience by coupling it with a deeper involvement in this amazing organization.

■ **What do you see as WFWA's strengths, and what ideas do you have for further promoting those?**

One of the greatest strengths I see, so far, is the community of wonderful supportive writers and the way they are always willing and actively working to lift each other up. I look forward to a deeper involvement in the day-to-day operations and investigating other ways in which we can grow and connect with even more writers.

■ **What's the one thing you would like to see change for WFWA in the coming year?**

I think there are many wonderful programs and outreach efforts already in place; I look forward to learning more about the specific programs available and if there are ways to expand on educational opportunities and access to publishing professionals for members.



I BELIEVE THE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS, SUPPORT, KNOWLEDGE SHARING, OPPORTUNITIES TO GET MEMBERS' WORK INTO THE HANDS OF AGENTS AND EDITORS, AND ACCESS TO OTHER SUCCESSFUL SELF-PUBLISHING ARE ALL IMPORTANT BENEFIT.

ABOUT BECKY: Rebecca Taylor is the author of *Her Perfect Life*, available from Sourcebooks Landmark on June twentieth of next year. Winner of the Colorado Book Award and a finalist for the RWA RITA award, Rebecca lives and writes in sunny Colorado with her husband, two teens, and two tragically spoiled dogs.



The Value of “Writer” Time



By Orly Konig

Years ago, my husband gave me the best piece of advice of my writing career. He said, “If you don’t take yourself seriously as a writer, why would anyone else? Don’t compromise your writing time.”

And for years, there was a permanent “meeting” scheduled on my calendar for weekday mornings. I wouldn’t schedule anything during that block of time. Afternoons were for association work, client work, life work. But mornings were for writing. Period (okay, exclamation mark)!

Confession ... that permanent writing time fell off my calendar somewhere in the last couple of years. It was replaced with book launch marketing and volunteer projects and life chaos and more to-dos than I should have taken on. Don’t get me wrong, I was still writing, but writing was becoming something I was fitting into the schedule rather than the thing that dictated what else I could take on. I’d scan through Facebook posts from authors going on writer retreats with a not-very-minor twinge of envy. And the less time I was devoting to my actual writing, the less it felt justified to demand that time from the universe. Typical catch-22, right?

2019 was the first year I didn’t organize the WFWA retreat. I may have even been one of the first to register, giddy about the prospect of going as a “civilian” for once. Every year since we first started the retreats in 2015, I’d look longingly at the writers hunkered down on the patio typing away. Sure, I’d manage to squeeze in a bit of time but an hour here or there didn’t quite fill the creative-needs jar.

As life got more chaotic, though, and the retreat time barreled down on me, I admit I had second (and third) thoughts. It felt like an indulgence I couldn’t afford. But this was my opportunity for dedicated writer time. Something I’d never given myself. I pushed aside the doubts and went to Albuquerque. I wrote. I talked to other writers. And I remembered what it felt like to take myself seriously as a writer.

Continued on page 12

FEATURE

I came home energized and hungry for more writer time. My calendar, once again, is centered around writing – that morning block of time for word count, workshops and webinars, the WFWA Just Write retreat in the spring, and I'm in planning mode on a couple of other writer-get-togethers.

For anyone else who's fallen/falling into that mind-doubt that your writing and writer time isn't vital, here are some thoughts to noodle:

WRITING IS HAPPINESS.

Remember why you started writing? For me, it's about the sense of peace. Sounds crazy, I know, considering the angst that goes into the process and the accompanying doubts. But still, when I can lose myself in a story, connect with my characters, I'm much more content. Writing is a release, and I need that regular release.

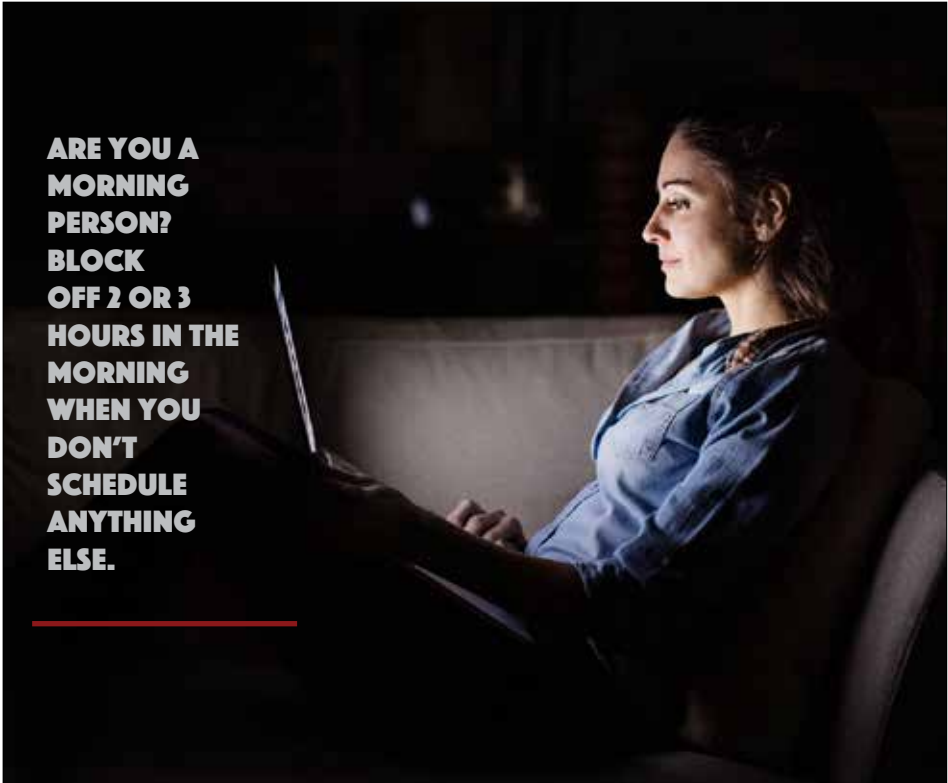
SPENDING TIME WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE IS THERAPY.

Our friends and family may be supportive and enthusiastic, but they don't necessarily understand. How can a non-writer understand that insane sense of betrayal when your imaginary friends are snubbing you? Or the pure elation of getting a request on a query? Or that a-ha moment when a fellow writer reveals a marketing or process tidbit that feels like the missing link to success.

HOW TO FILL YOUR WRITER WELL:

■ UNAPOLOGETIC WRITING TIME.

Schedule time in your calendar that's yours and only yours. Are you a morning person? Block off 2 or 3 hours in the morning when you don't schedule anything else. If you do better away from house/family needs, take yourself to a library or coffee shop for those hours. If you need your private space, turn off distractions like email and text notifications.



**ARE YOU A
MORNING
PERSON?
BLOCK
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ELSE.**

Take advantage of any retreat opportunity. Schedule a few days away at a creativity-inspiring location with a couple of writer friends. Look for other writers who organize small retreats. Or if you can't afford the time to go away, create your own stay-retreat (see sidebar for tips).

■ DEDICATED WRITER TIME.

Attend conferences, workshops, gatherings, any opportunity that connects you with other writers. Personally, I stink at this. I live in an area with lots of opportunities, and yet I rarely take advantage of them. Why? Because life. There's always something I need to be doing, somewhere I need to be going. But then I do make the effort, and I'm once again reminded how valuable time is with

people who understand what I'm working on, what I'm celebrating, what I'm beating my head on the table over.

Check the member database on the WFWA website and search for other folks who live close to you, then set up a meet-and-greet. There are numerous local groups who meet on a regular basis (a lot even have their own private Facebook groups to coordinate). These aren't formal events, just an opportunity for like-minded writers to share ideas and be inspired by each other.

Also keep an eye on Inside WFWA, the WFWA Community Facebook group, and the WFWA website for updates about retreats in 2020.

You've joined a professional writing organization; now don't forget to treat yourself like a professional writer.

5 TIPS FOR A DIY WRITING RETREAT

I read once that a writing retreat is to creativity, what a good night's sleep is to physical well-being. We can't all go to the secluded cabins or fancy resorts of our dreams, and for some, that solid night of sleep is even harder to achieve. But with a little creativity and a lot of flexibility, you can have your own private writing retreat (sleep not necessarily included).

■ REDEFINE YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

My ideal retreat is a house with a porch overlooking mountains and a lake or a beach, where there's no one around except maybe a writer friend or two (and maybe someone to keep us fed and hydrated). But time and finances dictate what's doable. During a recent weekend alone, I used the front porch and sunroom at my house as my retreat locations, both are places I don't usually write so the change of scenery was welcome and made it feel less like "work."

■ COMMIT TO YOURSELF.

Whether your DIY retreat is for a set amount of hours during a day (while the kids are at school, for example) or a weekend when you have the house to yourself, make sure whatever you schedule is for you. This isn't the time to have your teeth cleaned or have the HVAC serviced or take the cat for a nail trimming (although scheduling a mani-pedi for yourself is legit).

■ SET YOUR GOALS.

Write down what you want to accomplish within the time you have. Be realistic and specific. Don't set yourself up for overload or failure. You shouldn't need a vacation to recover from your retreat.

■ BE PREPARED

Make sure you have what you need handy before you embark on your writing retreat, even if it's only to a different part of the house. Don't spend your precious



writing time running to the store, or up and down stairs (unless one of your goals is to get in some exercise, in which case, leave a notebook or pen in a different room, and have at it). Plan ahead, and get whatever supplies you need – pens, highlighters, sticky notes, notepads, gummy bears. Charge your laptop the night before if you'll be writing outside, or make sure your power cords are handy if you're writing in a different indoor location (again, no scrounging around looking for things).

■ UNPLUG.

Seriously!! Remember what I said about this being your time to dedicate to your writing. Set yourself a timer if you must, but close your browser, turn off email notifications, silence your phone.

If you can't survive without a Pinterest or Instagram fix, use that as a reward for AFTER you finish writing.

If you have a writing buddy who lives nearby, you can invite them to your DIY retreat. Spend an hour first thing setting those goals, discussing what you're working on, then split to different parts of the house. Come back together for lunch and talk about what you've accomplished and where you go from here.

Or if you have a writing buddy who lives across the country, you can schedule your DIY retreats at the same time and connect via FaceTime or Skype for those check-ins.

Whatever you do, however you do it, don't forget why you're doing this ... dedicating time for your writing.



Orly Konig is one of the founding members and founding president of WFWA. She's an escapee from the corporate world who now spends her days chatting up imaginary friends, drinking too much coffee, and negotiating writing space around her cats. She is a member of the Tall Poppy Writers, a writing coach, and the author of *The Distance Home* and *Carousel Beach*. You can find her online at <http://orlykonig.com/index.html> or on Goodreads, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

I get by with a little help from my ...
book coach, editor, class, CP, beta readers!



Writing With a Little Help

By Sarahlyn Bruck

There are many moments in an author's career when she finds the need for a little help. She might be stuck midpoint in her manuscript and need to develop a way to become unstuck. Beta readers may come away from reading her novel bored or upset or even offended. She may even be staring at a blank page, not knowing how to start. Whatever it is, the solution is clear: Help!

Does this sound familiar? No matter where you are in the writing process, you can reach out for help. Brainstorming, outlining, drafting, editing, pitching – these are all occasions that stymie a writer from time to time. So who do writers turn to when they need assistance? It depends on what kind of help they need as well as their time and their budget.

1

BOOK COACH

A book coach is someone a writer can work with throughout the writing process. A book coach can help early on as the writer brainstorms the shape of the story and turns it into an outline. They can hold writers accountable during the drafting stage with weekly deadlines, consistent feedback, and sometimes a little cheerleading. Writers often benefit from a coach's advice while editing and pitching as well. These relationships can be long-term or temporary. Many writers work with the same coach for multiple books. Working with a book coach is a significant investment, however, so careful consideration and research are necessary beforehand.

2

EDITOR

Editing comes in a few different forms, and each can help when a writer has a specific need. For writers needing a critique of the their novel's big picture – story arc, characters, stakes, continuity, etc. – a developmental editor may be the right person to provide that commentary. For writers who feel they have their story down but could use help on a sentence and phrasing level, a copy editor may be just the ticket. Like book coaches, editors are an investment, and writers must do their research to find the right editors for their work.

3 CLASS OR WORKSHOP

Classes and workshops are often an economical way to learn new skills, develop and stretch as a writer, and get feedback on a work-in-progress. The instructors are usually seasoned authors themselves with perspective and knowledge about what works in this industry and what doesn't. Not only that, but writers often get the opportunity to provide feedback to and receive comments from other authors. Local universities, community colleges, and writer organizations are great places to start when searching for courses.

4 CRITIQUE PARTNERS

Critique partners can be economical allies for a writer. They're fellow writers who read your work with a critical eye and whose work you critique in exchange. Their feedback can be invaluable, as long as they are a good fit. This is the tricky part. It helps when the CP writes and reads in the same genre. Writers are also better off working with a CP who is at the same skill level or above. It's important to make expectations clear right up front by determining the desired turn-around time to read and critique each other's work and establishing a desired critique style—ruthless, kind, heavy line edits, light line edits, etc. Starting with three chapters or fifty pages with a “no hard feelings if it doesn't work out” approach is a good way to see if the CP is a good fit or not.

5 BETA READER

Once a writer is at a certain point in their WIP, they'll want typical readers – different from someone coming from a craft POV – to read and comment on what they think from a reader's perspective. Beta readers can catch some of those all-too-important aspects of a book such as whether the beginning grabbed them or if they started to get bored by the middle or if this or that character rang true. Writers can find beta readers through book clubs, social media, and friends (the ones who won't just tell you what they think you want to hear). There are also paid services available.

6 QUERY, PITCH AND SYNOPSIS ASSISTANCE

Once a writer has their manuscript in good enough shape to pitch, it may be time to seek help from someone who specializes in crafting queries and pitches. There's nothing like having to boil an entire manuscript down to a few pages or paragraphs. It can strike fear in the hearts of even the most seasoned writers. Book coaches and editors often offer this service, which can be a good way to go if you're already working with someone since they're familiar with your story. Pitch contests typically feature guidance and feedback before jumping in, which is a great way for writers to get a draft of their query/pitch/synopsis in front of readers who can offer critique.

These are just a few ways you can get help at any stage in the writing process and at any budget. If you're stuck, don't hesitate to reach out.



WFWA RESOURCES: DID YOU KNOW ...

- You can search the Member Directory and find fellow women's fiction authors who offer professional writing-related services?
<https://wfwamemberclicks.net/member-directory-main>
- There are Toolboxes with valuable resources for writers at any stage of their publishing career?
<https://wfwamemberclicks.net/toolboxes>
- You can find a critique partner or group via the WFWA Critique Program?
https://wfwamemberclicks.net/critique_programs
- You can find fellow WFWA members to swap pages for critiques, beta reads, or gain feedback on your query letter in the WFWA Critique Forum Facebook group?
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/629203690551764/>



Sarahlyn Bruck grew up in the Bay Area, and as an adult bounced around the country a fair bit, finally landing in Philadelphia the summer of 2007, where she lives with her husband, daughter, and dog, Jazzy. Sarahlyn's latest novel, *Daytime Drama*, is set to launch in 2020 with TouchPoint Press. Her debut, *Designer You*, was released by Crooked Cat Books in 2018. The novel won the Indie Star Book Award for 2019 and was included on the 2018 “35 Over 35” list. Some of her short fiction can be found in publications such as *Flash Me Magazine*, *Daily Flash Anthology*, and *Boston Literary Magazine*. When she's not writing, she teaches writing and literature full-time at Bucks County Community College. She likes working there quite a bit and feels pretty lucky to have the opportunity to help student writers express themselves. She also coaches writers for Author Accelerator, an online program that helps authors draft, revise, and pitch their books. Want the latest updates? Follow along for news, events, and announcements at <http://sarahlynbruck.com>. You can sign up for her monthly newsletter there, too.



DID YOU KNOW?

Today, I will focus on some linguistic curiosities of commonly used phrases.

HEAD OVER HEELS

The expression didn't start that way. Originally, it was "heels over head," a picture much more indicative of chaos, being out of control, or being upside down. The original expression dates back to the thirteen hundreds but changed to its current form in the eighteen hundreds. The notion of it meaning deeply in love is also from the nineteenth century. While in terms of meaning, "heels over head" makes much more sense, the cadence of "head over heels" might explain its appeal.

COULDN'T CARE LESS

The expression, which means to be utterly unconcerned, has seen some change in recent years, as it started to show up as "could care less." As with the example of "head over heels" above, being nonsensical or illogical does not necessarily mean an expression will not be widely used or changed. All it takes is buy-in from users of language for prescriptive values themselves to be modified (i.e. you will find "head over heels" in the dictionary as such). While I will continue to recommend "couldn't care less" as the expression to use, time will tell which version will survive.

LITERALLY

Very much like the examples above, "literally," which was originally used for emphasis, is often used in present colloquial language to mean "metaphorically." More and more does one find people saying "I was literally floored," when in reality they did not fall to the ground in that manner (but rather felt very confused or overwhelmed). Whether you will have your characters using the traditional meaning or the extended meaning will likely be a feature of who they are and how you believe your audience will react to the use. Will they understand if you use it knowingly?

HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

While some might think that the expression originated at some field with grapevines where people were gossiping, it is actually a reference to the telegraph with its many miles of cables in the beginning of the twentieth century, cables that ended up looking like vines. It is certainly not an expression to be used in historical fiction that takes place before that era.

FIT AS A FIDDLE

In this expression, fiddle is a violin. Fit, which for many of us is now associated with being "in shape" or "healthy," originally meant "suitable." Therefore, in historical fiction (the phrase dates back to the sixteen hundreds) it might be more useful in a scene about a new employee ready for work than someone who comes back from running and announces their fitness status (which historically many would not do anyway).





FORTITUDE



Last spring in Glastonbury, my partner picked up a book at a used bookstore called *The Daily Stoic*. It's something of a joke between us that he's a stoic, and I'm the opposite. But because we were traveling, I asked him to share the readings every day so we'd have something fun to discuss. I thought I'd oppose the readings, find the stoics dry and boring, and we'd be able to debate the merits of our opposing philosophies.

In fact, I found that I love these readings and this philosophy, which isn't at all about what I thought it was. What did I think? That it would be a dinner of boiled vegetables at five pm and judgments and a thin, narrow life. (Maybe I was mistaking Stoicism with Calvinism.)

Stoics are a solid lot, with a core of personal responsibility. They believe in the four virtues of wisdom, morality, courage or fortitude, and moderation. That sounds a bit stodgy, I know, but at the heart of what they offer is a way of living that centers on becoming a good person, and focusing on becoming the best person you can be. If you want a better world, be a better person. If you want happiness, make yourself happy.

It sounds so simple. As we all know, it's not.

As writers, all of the stoic virtues can be helpful, but one in particular is on my mind after attending the WFWA retreat in Albuquerque – fortitude. It sounds a bit stuffy, like a Pilgrim in a weird hat, enduring grueling tests on the shores of a new land. (Okay, maybe I really am confusing the Stoics with the Calvinists.)

Fortitude, however, is a powerful tool in the arsenal of a writer. It is defined as the ability to face difficulty with steadfastness, which can also be defined as courage, or grit, a word that comes up a lot these days. I think of it as something that comes from the belly and spine, an immovable force of will. It is made up of commitment and focus.

It means having the will to stay the course and do what's necessary in the face of the things that make most people give up and throw in the towel.

You will need fortitude at every stage of your writing career. In the early days, when no one believes you'll pull off this feat of madness, you'll need it to stick with your early, sometimes terrible efforts. It's fortitude that will drive you to the computer early every morning, even though everyone else is getting another hour of sleep, because you've made a commitment to yourself and the dream of becoming a writer.

GUIDING SCRIBE

As time goes by, fortitude will be your calming companion as you endure submission after submission... and rejection after rejection. Your grit will hold the line and keep you in the game long enough to publish that first book. It can take a long time, but you have the guts to stick with it.

When you're publishing and under deadline, fortitude is what will stand beside you as you write every day, even when you'd rather go to the movies with your friend. It will bring you the courage to ignore the haters and bad reviews and keep your eyes on the power of your own voice. It will give you the courage to tell your own stories.

How do you develop this mental toughness? Through discipline, self-control, and persistence, which are, by the way, also great guides to building a creative life. In some career arenas, the external world will guide our actions, but in writing, it is up to the writer herself to first define the path, then set goals and develop the discipline and persistence to pursue that path.

The Stoics love to remind us that we are in charge of our happiness and our lives, but they also recognize that life is not predictable or easy. What then? How do you maintain fortitude in the face of endless rejections, doubts that creep into your own mind or lackluster sales?

Through acceptance – facing what is, instead of what you want. That might mean you want to land a particular agent, but she rejects you outright. Go ahead and feel that sting, but don't raise your fist to the sky in frustration. Simply accept it, and move on to the next thing.

My father was a great one for that advice. I'd be there wallowing and whining over some loss, and he'd listen, then shrug and say, "Move on."

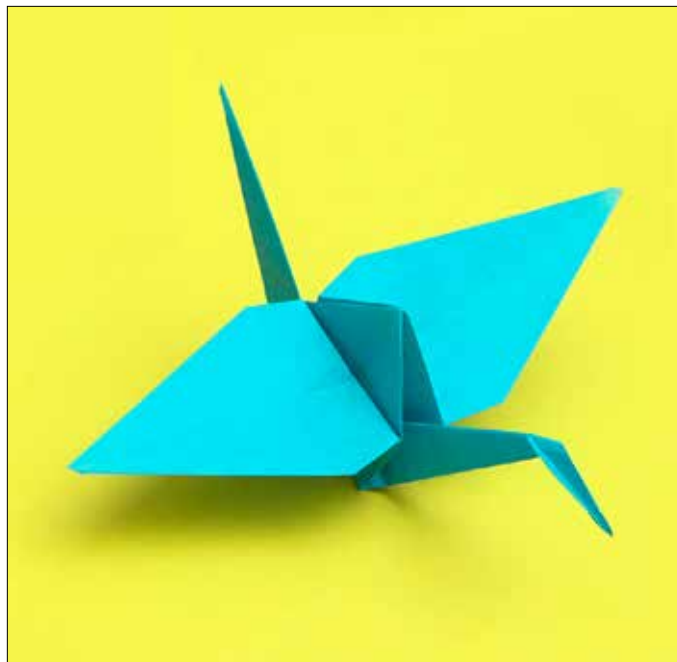
Move on. Accept it, and move on to the next step.

Another aspect to that mental toughness is to keep your compass facing your own goals. Don't be distracted by something shiny or new, someone else's input or critical feedback not meant to help. Stay the course.

There is much, much more to the philosophy of the Stoics, even for someone with a lavish approach to pleasure (that would be me). It's an intriguing philosophy, and I highly recommend exploring it.

But in the meantime, try on the idea of fortitude in relation to your writing, and share what you learn with others. Mental toughness will stand you in good stead through all manner of things, but it can be a true friend in regard to your work. It can mean the difference between persisting long enough to see your dreams through or stopping just shy of them.

Be tough. Be persistent. Get the job done.



YOU WILL NEED FORTITUDE AT EVERY STAGE OF YOUR WRITING CAREER. IN THE EARLY DAYS, WHEN NO ONE BELIEVES YOU'LL PULL OFF THIS FEAT OF MADNESS, YOU'LL NEED IT TO STICK WITH YOUR EARLY, SOMETIMES TERRIBLE EFFORTS. IT'S FORTITUDE THAT WILL DRIVE YOU TO THE COMPUTER EARLY EVERY MORNING, EVEN THOUGH EVERYONE ELSE IS GETTING ANOTHER HOUR OF SLEEP, BECAUSE YOU'VE MADE A COMMITMENT TO YOURSELF AND THE DREAM OF BECOMING A WRITER.



Barbara Samuel (O'Neal) has won the highly prestigious RITA award from Romance Writers of America 7 times and has been recently inducted into the RWA Hall of Fame. She has written eleven novels of women's fiction, about dogs and food, families and second chances. She is the WFWA Guiding Scribe for 2019.

FINAL THOUGHT

Totally stolen from Laura Drake

Anyone who thinks
fallen leaves are dead
has never
watched them
dancing on a
windy day.



– SHIRA TAMIR

