

# Whatcom Writers & Publishers

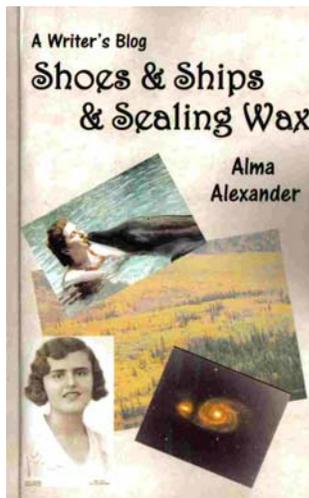
September 2011

[www.whatcomwritersandpublishers.org](http://www.whatcomwritersandpublishers.org)



**Our meeting place: Jalapenos Mexican Restaurant, Barkley Village  
Buffet - \$12.50 — Wednesday, September 21 ~ 6:00 p.m.**

**RSVP: by Monday, September 19, to Carolyn, 714-8901 or [cdleeper@hotmail.com](mailto:cdleeper@hotmail.com)**



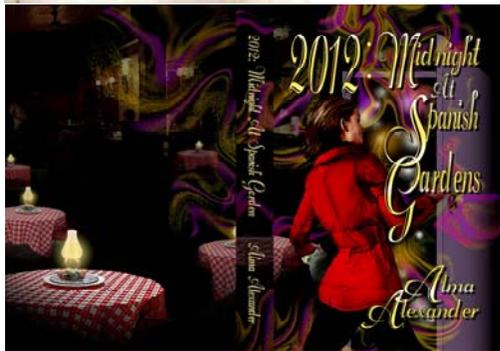
## Speaker: Alma Alexander

Author of *The Secrets of Jin-Shei*  
and the YA series *Worldweavers*

***“Through the Looking Glass:  
the New World of Publishing”***

*changes in the publishing world,  
the axis has shifted and is continuing to shift,  
trade publishing, self-publishing, e-publishing,  
where it all came from and where it's headed...*

[www.almaalexander.com](http://www.almaalexander.com)



Alma Alexander has been navigating the wilderness of the publishing world for over a decade as a full-time, internationally published writer. She is also a teacher, a blogger, and an anthologist. For the last eight and half years she has lived in Sudden Valley near Bellingham with her husband, two cats, and assorted visiting wildlife.

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## Women Writing the West conference

**Oct. 14-16 — Embassy Suites in Lynnwood**

Keynote speakers are Nancy Pearl and Ellen Waterston

The conference features workshops on writing, publishing, and marketing, panel discussions, a bookstore, and agent/publisher appointments.

All writers are welcome. For information and to register:

<http://www.womenwritingthewest.org>



# President's Message

## *Welcome back, everyone.*

Words. You know, those thingamajigs formed from the 26 letters of the English alphabet. Words that inspire, move, cajole, inform, entertain, persuade, dissuade, instruct, and even, yes, destroy. Words convey all that is human, all of the glory and all that is inglorious.

We are all writers. We have been since grade school. But, what separates the “writer” -- that is, someone who desires to make a profession of writing, even if it is only a one-time stab, from others -- is (1) an admission to friends and acquaintances, that, yes, I am writing something that I wish to sell, and (2) the desire to better one's writing before casting it out into the world. It is the world, the reading public, who will decide whether that piece of writing will survive beyond our existence. And, if we aspire to anything as writers, it is to be “a first-rate writer.”

Priscilla Long, author of *The Writer's Portable Mentor*, who spoke to us last May, labels the exceptional writers among us as first rate. She gives many examples in her fine book. Some quotes that stick in my mind are: “A good sentence alters the world,” by Jonathan Raban; “Writing is labor, shot through with delight,” Scott Russell Sanders; “When in doubt, or wherever possible, tell the whole story of the novel in the first sentence,” John Irving.

So, be sure to join us in as many meetings as possible, because we want you all to aspire to be first-rate writers.

Now, some business. As many of you know, we have had some difficulties with our previous venue, Giuseppe's. Because of those difficulties, we have changed our venue to Jalapeno's in Barkley Village. Time will tell if this is a good move, or if we have to reconsider yet again. We have resorted back to the banquet format where attendees pay upfront for the meal, as we did at the Bellingham Golf and Country Club. Luckily, the \$12.50 price tag at Jalapeno's for a Mexican buffet is much cheaper than a meal at the country club or Giuseppe's.

Sara Stamey is now the Meetings Planner. So, if you have ideas for future programs, please send them to her, [saras23@comcast.net](mailto:saras23@comcast.net).

Some sad news. Ken and Dorothy Morrow, longtime WWP members and, respectively, former co-president and treasurer, have moved to Seattle to be closer to their son. They were instrumental in helping me steer this organization through some very lean times. We wish them the best of luck in their new home. We will miss them. Send farewells to them at [sproatlaked@comcast.net](mailto:sproatlaked@comcast.net).

Finally, Alma Alexander, one of the first-rate writers among us, will speak this month on the new world of publishing. Be sure to join us.

*Fred Su*

# Stone Soup

## *Miki Gilliland*

### Writing History

Neill Mullen, former Whatcom Historical Society president, once said that time has a way of twisting and embellishing actual facts. He's right. If you didn't see it, it may not be the way it went. History is that six blind guys and the elephant thing: a person is his own best source. Each person has his own rendition of a story. Each teller adds his own presentation based on his socialization

The first thing needed when writing history are primary sources, documents that were created at the time of the event by people who were observers of or participants. This would include letters, manuscripts or maps of the items, music and if anyone still remains, oral tales from survivors of the period. It includes objects, buildings, films, paintings, or cartoons. What makes the source valid is the time it was created. The best place to find this sort of material is in the archives at Western. The archives personnel will let a person read old material and even furnishes gloves to touch these objects. No one can just waltz in there. Members of the general public wanting to make a public records request should contact the University's Public Records Officer or Google them to see how to make an appointment.

There are two main hindrances when trying to write history. The first is the difficulty of finding accurate evidence. Most governmental documents are destroyed. Only about two percent are preserved. Governments are adept at hiding substantial secrets. They give carefully packaged versions of the past. In the private sector, people destroy letters or other evidence

which might have offered clues to what the letter-writer might have been thinking, as well as the telling of an event the letter-writer witnessed. Years ago, when many people were only semi-literate, Dirty Dan Harris left no personal letters to examine. People burn old memories, keeping them private, losing what is past forever. Lack of physical data and the inability to give an absolute meaning to the event often leads to supposition. A mistake or an outrageous lie told often enough becomes belief.

The second obstacle is understanding that the opinions a person has are the result of years of paying attention to information which confirms what one believes while ignoring information which challenges preconceived notions. This alters how a reader receives what the historian is trying to tell. People receive information by reading mostly what they already know, just as writers look for information that which re-enforces previously held beliefs. Previous history books sometimes tell untruths for some. There is nothing written that is not slanted.

It's a phenomenon called confirmation bias, collecting or interpreting evidence to support a view. Psychology and cognitive science call it a tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions. Memory biases may either enhance or impair the recall of memory or they may alter the content of what people remember when reporting an incident.

Ask any policeman  
interviewing several witnesses!

# **Book Review**

**Nanette J. Davis**

## ***The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey*** **by Walter Mosley**

Meet Ptolemy Usher Grey, a 92 year-old black man and Los Angeles ghetto survivor. Named after a kingly figure from Egypt, Ptolemy spends his last days afflicted with dementia, living in squalor—even his toilet has succumbed to ruin and refuses to flush—with both classical music radio and 24 hour television new blasting at once.

Life is precarious. Coy, his mentor as a child, and a professional thief, had died by a lynching party who struck the match to the straw that sent the poor victim dancing into death. Now, adrift most of the day, the old man wakes up to find that Reggie, his great-grandnephew and sole caregiver, has been killed in a drive-by shooting. Whenever Ptolemy attempts to leave his apartment, he is invariably assaulted by a raging alcoholic woman who rants at him: “Where my money, bastid?: -- and proceeds to manhandle him as she goes through his pockets. Even his relative, Hilly Brown, recently send to help “Papa Grey,” proves unreliable—a thief who rips off part of his modest retirement check.

Plagued by poverty, jailings, poor education, irresponsible parenting, drugs and alcohol, Ptolemy’s extended family members are locked into the troubles that daily beset these black urban residents.

In the nick of time a great-grandniece intervenes by sending 17-year old Robyn, an adopted daughter, to help sort out Ptolemy’s life and finances. She proves to be the first of two miraculous persons who rescue him from mental and physical deterioration. The other is a physician, “Dr. Devil,” with an experimental drug that relieves him of the infirmities of old age—in exchange for his body after death.

Accepting the Faustian bargain, Ptolemy sets out to pursue Coy’s legacy by preparing himself for dying and his family for surviving. He turns over his sizable buried treasure from Coy’s precious gift of stolen gold coins to Robyn. This young girl, he “knew,” would take care of his family members, as she had so lovingly taken care of him.

Written in dialect, this extraordinary storyteller writes of humans under duress, but who are never defeated; of people with few resources, but who sacrifice themselves that others may live on. Ptolemy’s life and times will linger in your memory.

New York: Riverhead Books. 2010

# Member Announcements

## ***Nancy Canyon: Wild Mind Writing***

Spend five fall evenings beginning October 4th, discovering the power of "wild mind writing"!

Based on Natalie Goldberg's book, ***Writing Down the Bones***, this intriguing class frees the mind through a unique practice that eliminates writer's block.

Instructor Nancy Canyon will lead new and experienced students through a variety of exercises--rewarding participants with a daily practice-style and fundamentally changing one's writing forever.

Ms. Canyon holds an MFA in Creative Writing and has studied with Natalie Goldberg.

1. PHONE IN: Call Community Education at 360-383-3200

2. ON THE WEB:  
[www.whatcomcommunityed.com](http://www.whatcomcommunityed.com)

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## **Taimi Dunn Gorman**

will be teaching Introduction to Public Relations at WWU Fall quarter. It is her first teaching job at WWU. She previously taught community education seminars at WCC in publicity, marketing and business. She owns Gorman Publicity in Bellingham and is a freelance writer for Whatcom Magazine and others.

[www.gormanpublicity.com](http://www.gormanpublicity.com)

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## **Ken and Dorothy Morrow**

Ken is planning his next book: ***If You Don't Walk, You Won't Walk.***  
They are now living in Seattle. New address and phone number: (260) 457-4487

Dr. and Mrs. Ken Morrow  
450 - N.W. 100th St., Apt. 602  
Seattle, WA 98125-8025

Email addresses will remain the same:

for Ken: sproatlake@comcast.net - for Dorothy: sproatlaked@comcast.net

## **Mary Michaelson**

My band, ***Travelin' Light***, will be performing at Bobby Lee's Pub & Eatery on Sunday, September 11th, 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.

This is a one-time only event and will be a

***"Mega Jam Session"***

with a number of well-known local musicians joining us for the fun.

***No cover charge.***

***Good eats available!***

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## **David Michaelson**

My second cookbook is finished and is at the publisher. It is titled, **HAS BEEN** and features 300 B&W photographs of old, derelict buildings, homes and machinery in rural E. Wa. It contains over 275 recipes, both old and new. The book is 450 pages. It also contains many of my restaurant's best recipes (from Cozy Cafe).

My first cookbook, **The Burntwater Cook's Kitchen Guide** is in the process of being converted to an eBook.

Both novels are now listed with online booksellers for hard copy and as eBooks.

# Member Announcements

## Lorraine Wilde

is excited to announce that her essay, *Finding My Way*, will appear in the forthcoming anthology, *Easy to Love But Hard to Raise: Real Parents, Challenging Kids, True Stories* (DRT Press, Feb. 2012).

The anthology shares the stories of parents of children impacted by: ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), SPD (Sensory Processing Disorder), PBD (Pediatric Bipolar Disorder), OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder) and many other situations that add to the challenge of parenting.

Lorraine is also a contributor on the blog that accompanies the book, [www.easytolovebut.com](http://www.easytolovebut.com), that supports and connects tired parents, and allows them to share stories, commiserate, and give tips in a safe haven. [www.lorrainewilde.com](http://www.lorrainewilde.com)

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**Heidi M. Thomas'** novel, *Follow the Dream*, has received the WILLA Award. This is a national award given by the Women Writing the West organization and named in honor of Pulitzer prize-winning author, Willa Cather. Entries are judged by a panel of independent professional librarians.

*Follow the Dream* is the sequel to award-winning *Cowgirl Dreams* and both books are based on the author's grandmother who rode bucking stock in rodeos during the 1920s and '30s. <http://www.heidimthomas.com>

## Janet Oakley

August 28, I attended the first ever Waterfront Book Fair in Everett.. Good networking.

September 3, 1:00 p.m.. I'm going to be at the Writers' Cottage in Issaquah. A gathering of writers from the group promoting their books.

I'm being interviewed on KMRE for my writing and how stories come to me, in particular, *Sons and Streams*, published in *Cup of Comfort for Mothers and Sons*. I'll be reading that and some fiction. More interview news will come later

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## JoAnn Roe

Caxton Press is ready to announce the estimated date of publication to be October 24th for JoAnn Roe's new book entitled *The San Juan Islands, Into the 21st Century*

JoAnn has been chained to ferries and hostels since the first of January doing the research. The mss was due June 15th. Since then, JoAnn said she was a "free woman" for the summer.

The Blakely Island Book Club named her book, *Blakely Island in Time*, as their August book, and JoAnn is the club's September 1st speaker. She also is scheduled as the speaker about railroads for the monthly meeting of the Bellingham Railroad Museum September 23rd (book: *Stevens Pass*).

# Member Announcements

**Susan Colleen Browne**

## **Fall Writing Workshop at WCC Self-Publishing: A Writer's Guide**

Even best-selling authors are self-publishing these days.

Why not you? Join Susan Colleen Browne for

***“Self-Publishing: A Writer's Guide,”***

**Whatcom Community College**

**Tuesdays, Oct. 4 & 11, 6:00 – 8:30 pm.**

In this candid overview of self-publishing, we'll discuss in detail the self-publishing process, including how to keep your costs down, where to sell your book, how you get paid, marketing strategies, publishing print books versus ebooks, and more—the information you need to get your novel, memoir, or other project into book form.

### **Handouts include:**

Sample Press Releases

Publishing Industry “Boot Camp”

Real-life publishing numbers like costs, sales and revenue

Sample invoice

Susan is the author of a memoir, *Little Farm in the Foothills*, which was selected for the Washington State Library's Summer 2010 Book List, and a new novel, *It Only Takes Once*.

[www.susancolleenbrowne.com](http://www.susancolleenbrowne.com)

The class fee is \$55. Any questions about class content, feel free to contact Susan at [susanbrowne77@gmail.com](mailto:susanbrowne77@gmail.com).  
To register: [www.whatcomcommunityed.com](http://www.whatcomcommunityed.com) or call 383-3200.

# Member Announcements

## **Betty Scott, *For the Love of Poetry***

**4 Sessions begin Thursday,  
October 13 through November 3, 6:30—8:30 p.m.,  
Whatcom Community College**

Poetry awakens, mystifies, and renews our spirits.  
Join us in celebrating expression, favorite authors, and  
our poems in process...all while exploring words,  
their images, sounds, and rhythms.

Betty Scott is a published poet with an MA from WWU.  
She'll inspire you toward daily poetry practice and  
welcomes writers of all skill levels.

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**Across the border in Richmond, BC,**  
the World Poetry, Vancouver Tagore Society and The City of Richmond  
are presenting 150 years of Tagore:  
The Life Celebration of Rabindranath Tagore.

**The fun begins at 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Saturday, September 10th**  
at the Richmond Cultural Centre. Featured speakers include:  
Dr. Stephen Gill, Dr. Jianhua Zhang, Leena Chatterjee,  
Ashok Bhargava, Lee Tan, Santanu Mitra, Ananda Lee Tan.  
Presentations will include information on Tagore's work  
and vision of Universalism, Rural Reconstruction,  
Women's Emancipation and Crisis of Civilization Today

Music and dance are always included in World Poetry events!  
Thanks to the sponsors and The City of Richmond  
refreshments are included and admission is free!  
It is a great way for Americans to learn about our neighbors!

# Poetry

## Job Rejection

He didn't get the job today  
O yes, they've turned him down.  
His heart was burst in pain today ...  
My world is upside down.

He worked so hard, he knew he could  
Do better than the others!  
Why oh, why can't THEY see that?  
I watch him as he smothers .....

He walks a little shorter now  
His shoulders drooping just a little  
He tries to be so kind to us,  
But, God, His temper's brittle!

He ranted, raved; said he would fight  
The system and its giants.  
Alas, he now sees there's no way  
Even if he's in compliance!

So he compromised his thoughts  
Retreated and regrouped .....

He tried to circle round and up  
He thought he had me duped!

...

But I can tell the mended heart  
Is leaking badly still.  
The only thing that sent him back  
Is his determined will ....

To provide for wife and kids, yes us!  
We're chains around his ankles ....  
Forcing him to compromise ....  
O God, it really rankles!

I hope in some great lofty plan  
There is a kindly God ...  
Who used heartbreak, shame and loss  
As a pruning rod.

And that this pain will somehow help  
The two of us grow stronger ....  
If that is so, then maybe we  
Can stand a little longer.

And maybe something better, greater  
Will have formed from inner sorrow ....  
So we can, hands together, go  
On and face tomorrow.

Written in the seventies but may be  
appropriate for these difficult times.

**Marion Spicher**

# Poetry

## Jazz Zone

Began the primitive jimjam day  
In a cramped-sulk way.

The bedroom windows upped downed,  
Not contrary to my ridiculous mood.

This eye catching view remained  
Rain streaked glass, but  
A delicious-fragment parted my don't.

Thus, string notes uncut  
Pushed aside the weathered gloom.

My similar-don't got washed  
By a primary deluge of divine water.

Jumped into unbound play  
Until fault zones went away.

© Sandra F. Lucke

... During the summer, I attended a poetry workshop by Whatcom Poetry Series in Bellingham. James Bertolino, well-known poet, instructed the writing workshop *The Contrary Heart of Poetry*. The reference poems were written in the mid to late 1960's. *Jazz Zone* is a result of one exercise assembling contrary components of writing.

**Sandra Lucke**



In June, Sandra Lucke donated art to an annual fundraising auction at Museum of Northwest Art in LaConner. This year's acrylic painting titled *Rainbow*, is a portrait of a young girl standing in a green landscape. <http://www.museumofnwart.org/>

# Member's Websites & Blogs

**Alma Alexander:** [www.AlmaAlexander.com](http://www.AlmaAlexander.com)  
Blog: [www.anghara.livejournal.com](http://www.anghara.livejournal.com)  
[www.heritageofclan.wordpress.com](http://www.heritageofclan.wordpress.com)  
**Wendy Allex:** [www.indexpert.com](http://www.indexpert.com)  
**Pamela Beason:** [www:pbeditorial.com](http://www:pbeditorial.com)  
[www.pamelasbeason.com](http://www.pamelasbeason.com)  
**Janey Bennett:** [www.palesurfaceofthings.com](http://www.palesurfaceofthings.com)  
[www.janeybennet.com](http://www.janeybennet.com)  
**Dina Berry:** [www.dinaberry.com](http://www.dinaberry.com)  
**Sandra Bowens:** [www.apinchof.com](http://www.apinchof.com)  
**Susan Colleen Browne:**  
[www.susancolleenbrowne.com](http://www.susancolleenbrowne.com)  
[www.littlefarminthefoothills.com](http://www.littlefarminthefoothills.com)  
[www.littlefarminthefoothills.blogspot.com](http://www.littlefarminthefoothills.blogspot.com)  
**Nancy Lou Canyon, MFA:**  
[www.nancycanyon.com](http://www.nancycanyon.com)  
<http://canyonwriter.blogspot.com>  
**Nanette Davis:** [www.nanettejdavis.com](http://www.nanettejdavis.com)  
<http://nanettejdavis.blogspot.com>  
**Jo Dereske:** [www.jodereske.com](http://www.jodereske.com)  
**Sara Geballe:** [www.memoircrafters.com](http://www.memoircrafters.com)  
**Barbara Gilday:** [www.BarbaraGilday.com](http://www.BarbaraGilday.com)  
[www.ghanatogether.com](http://www.ghanatogether.com)  
**Lawrence Goolsby:** [www.thebuttonboy.com](http://www.thebuttonboy.com)  
**Taimi Gorman:** [www.gormanpublicity.com](http://www.gormanpublicity.com)  
**Richard "Dick" Harris:**  
[www.richardleeharris.net](http://www.richardleeharris.net)  
<http://blog.richardleeharris.net>  
**David Jones:** [www.bigrivermeadows.com](http://www.bigrivermeadows.com)

**Jack McKee:** [www.woodshop4kids.com](http://www.woodshop4kids.com)  
**Dave Michaelson:** [www.emjayspublishing.com](http://www.emjayspublishing.com)  
**Mary Michaelson:** [ww.travelinlight.weebly.com](http://ww.travelinlight.weebly.com)  
[www.auntphoesbescorner.blogspot.com](http://www.auntphoesbescorner.blogspot.com)  
**Dorothy Morrow:** [www.TheGiftofRoots.com](http://www.TheGiftofRoots.com)  
**Jennifer Mueller:** [www.jennifermuellerbooks.com](http://www.jennifermuellerbooks.com)  
**Chuck Robinson:** [www.villagebooks.com](http://www.villagebooks.com)  
**Janet Oakley:** [www.historyweaver.wordpress.com](http://www.historyweaver.wordpress.com)  
**Curt Remington:** [www.curtremington.com](http://www.curtremington.com)  
**Chuck Robinson:** [www.villagebooks.com](http://www.villagebooks.com)  
[www.facebook.com/villagebooks](http://www.facebook.com/villagebooks)  
**JoAnn Roe:** [www.joannroe.com](http://www.joannroe.com)  
**Jennifer Karuza Schile:**  
[www.commercialfishingmom.com](http://www.commercialfishingmom.com)  
[www.jenkaruzaschile.com](http://www.jenkaruzaschile.com)  
**Carol Cline Schultz:** [ww.CrossingTheVoid.com](http://ww.CrossingTheVoid.com)  
**Marion Spicher:** [www.marionspicher.com](http://www.marionspicher.com)  
Blog: [www.marionspicher.wordpress.com](http://www.marionspicher.wordpress.com)  
**Sara Stamey:** [www.SaraStamey.com](http://www.SaraStamey.com)  
[www.BookProsNW.com](http://www.BookProsNW.com)  
**Mary B. Stanton:** [www.siamwasourhome.com](http://www.siamwasourhome.com)  
**Fred Su:** [www.bytewrite.com](http://www.bytewrite.com)  
[www.stepbystepvolvo.com](http://www.stepbystepvolvo.com)  
**Peggy Sullivan:** [www.love-prescription.com](http://www.love-prescription.com)  
**Heidi M. Thomas:** [www.heidimthomas.com](http://www.heidimthomas.com)  
**Keith Turley:** [www.imagineds.com](http://www.imagineds.com)  
**Jerry Watson:** [www.JerryLWatson.wordpress.com](http://www.JerryLWatson.wordpress.com)  
**Kate Weisel:** [www.weiselcreative.com](http://www.weiselcreative.com)  
**Lorraine Wilde:** [www.lorrainewilde.com](http://www.lorrainewilde.com)  
**Susan Witter:** [www.mysoundideas.us](http://www.mysoundideas.us)

## Member Favorites:

**Dina Berry:** (Literary Agents) [www.jetreidliterary.blogspot.com](http://www.jetreidliterary.blogspot.com), [www.pubrants.blogspot.com](http://www.pubrants.blogspot.com),  
[www.guidetoliteraryagents.com/blog](http://www.guidetoliteraryagents.com/blog), [www.cba-ramblings.blogspot.com](http://www.cba-ramblings.blogspot.com);  
(For Writing) [www.fictionmatters.com](http://www.fictionmatters.com), [www.storyfix.com](http://www.storyfix.com);  
(Editors) [www.editorialanonymous.blogspot.com](http://www.editorialanonymous.blogspot.com); (Misc.) [www.mediabistro.com/galleycat](http://www.mediabistro.com/galleycat)  
**Deck Deckert:** [GoodReads.com](http://GoodReads.com), [LibraryThing.com](http://LibraryThing.com), [RedRoom.com](http://RedRoom.com), [SheWrites.com](http://SheWrites.com),  
[WorldofBooks.com](http://WorldofBooks.com), [Bookazine.com](http://Bookazine.com), [Bookarmy.com](http://Bookarmy.com), [BookGlutton.com](http://BookGlutton.com), [BookBuzzr.com](http://BookBuzzr.com)  
**Judy Kleinberg:** [www.fridaville.com](http://www.fridaville.com)  
**Carolyn Leeper:** [www.poetry4kids.com](http://www.poetry4kids.com)  
**Mary Michaelson:** [www.writersdigest.com/101BestSites/](http://www.writersdigest.com/101BestSites/), <http://bloodredpencil.blogspot.com>  
**Carl Steiner:** <http://www.maxbarry.com>

# Conference Report

*Susan Colleen Browne*

## Chuckanut Writers Conference Inspiration into Action

**“I had a real energy shot in the arm after attending this conference. To say that I'm inspired and rejuvenated is an understatement. As I return to writing my non-fiction work on *Love's Last Measure: Caregiving Our Elders*, I have a new term to add to my repertoire of skills: ‘Creative’ as in ‘creative non-fiction.’ I have entered an entirely new domain.”** Nanette J. Davis, author of *Blessed is She*.

In my twenty years of attending writers' conferences, the Chuckanut Writers Conference was the most exceptional conference experience I've ever had. The CWC was a feast for writers, readers, and those who love language and literature—but that was only the beginning.

At most conferences, the main focus seems to be “how can I get published?” and you often catch a whiff of desperation in the very air. But at the CWC, with its theme, “Inspiration into Action,” I saw dozens of attendees scribbling in notebooks in between sessions, heard lots of spirited discussions in the common areas, and listened to so many eager questions and comments in the workshops. For the first time at any writer's conference, I sensed a real passion and commitment to the writing itself.

As a CWC faculty member, I had a number of opportunities for one-on-one with my fellow authors. But what was also unique about the CWC was that the guest authors were so friendly and accessible to all attendees, treating them as genuine peers.

In terms of the conference takeaway, here's what I found to be the most beneficial comments and advice:

**Jim Lynch's keynote speech, “How to be a Writer and Keep Your Sanity,” and Q&A Session, “The Craft and Business of Writing.”**

\*Even if you don't put in actual writing time, Lynch, the author of *Border Songs* and *The Highest Tide*, suggests that you “think about your story every day. Spend time with your project every day.”

\*Re-read books you loved, and try to figure out why they spoke to you so deeply. Also, identify and write down your favorite sentences. Lynch provided a handout of his favorite books, and how they contributed to his craft.

\*Writing a book takes time, he says. “The first draft is a train wreck—it's unnerving, and you need to go over and over and over it.” His outlines are basically notes and ideas, then he improvises from there, and trusts that better ideas will come.

\*In terms of production writing, Lynch concentrates on the times when he's “in the zone,” which is about twice a week.

\*It takes Lynch two or three years to write a book. He spends about a year on research, and one year writing and rethinking the story. He doesn't share early drafts; he waits until he believes the story is “as good as it is in my head.”

\*Before you sign a contract with an agent, “ask why they want to represent you. Is it passion for your book? Or just that they think they can sell it?”

\*Lynch says he's “allergic” to Facebook and blogs, but he's becoming resigned to the necessity of doing more marketing in the future.

# **(cont.) - Conference Report -**

## ***Susan Colleen Browne***

### **Non-Fiction Author Panel**

I was a participating panelist, but I encountered some terrific advice from fellow panelists Dawn Groves, Brenda Miller, and Priscilla Long.

\*Miller suggests that you type up your notebooks. In tackling some simple, everyday topics, she believes you'll find the small and mundane leads to bigger truth.

\*How to get out of a rut? Groves points out that "we write what's easiest, and we tend to stick with it." It's fear that keeps us in a rut, so "it's time to face the fear," by shaking up our writing practice and habits. To get her writing done, she works at a coffee shop two hours a day, "because life's too interesting at home."

\*Long suggests that writers try new forms, do lots of experimentation.

\*Groves believes "blogging is critical—people are hungry for relationships. It's a great writing practice, and good communication." She says that blogging is also beneficial for you in terms of search engines. "Google likes lots of content, and lots of posts."

### **Kurtis Lowe's Session**

"It's a sacred thing, buying a book," says Lowe, a publisher rep for Book Travelers West. Now that some of the big-box bookstores are flailing, he predicts the rise of the independent bookstore. Even if e-book sales are taking off in a big way, Lowe believes the physical book is important, and should be part of the mix. He emphasizes that self-publishers should begin pre-publication promotion at least nine months prior to their publishing date. Even those contracted with a big NY publisher are not off the hook. "Authors are expected to do a lot [of marketing]."

**Literary Agent Panel:** A few tips from visiting agents Amy Burkhardt, Kate Folkers, Andrea Hurst, Vickie Motter, and Bree Ogden:

\*When you're creating your marketing plan to submit with your book proposal, don't include your intention, but your accomplishments. Not, "I'll start a website, blog, etc." You need to show that your site and blog is up and running, and that you've already built an audience.

\*All the agents (all of whom are based on the West Coast), stressed that West Coast agencies offer the same opportunities as those in New York City or the East Coast. They also all agreed that all authors these days are expected to vigorously market their books.

\*When you're pitching in person, don't simply read your query. Show your passion, like you're telling your best friend, and create a conversation.

"After the conference I felt full, like after a Thanksgiving dinner; a little stuffed but equally satisfied. I loved the author readings. I hope some of their brilliance rubbed off on me. I would do it again in a heartbeat." Lori Nelson-Clonts, essayist and short story writer.

The "**Spotlight Author Readings**" were a revelation. Weary after a long day of conferencing, I was nonetheless riveted by the poetry and stories the authors shared. Samuel Green's two poems, about the love of family, were the most powerful I'd ever heard, and Brenda Miller's essay illustrated how a simple ritual leads to profound insight. Nancy Rawles read a passage from her novel, "My Jim," in which a female slave's son is sold away from her. Delivered in a pitch-perfect vernacular, as if she was channeling a slave's voice, Rawles' reading was heart-rending in a way that went too deep for tears. For me, the evening was the highlight of the conference.

# **(cont.) - Conference Report -** *Susan Colleen Browne*

**Post-conference, I've been motivated to put the "inspiration into action" theme to work.**

After going long stretches between writing sessions (July and August, our little farm is a full-time job), I'm starting the revision process for a short story and a novel. Thanks to Dawn Groves, I've resuscitated my Little Farm in the Foothills blog. After neglecting it for months, I re-launched the blog with a new design and written three posts in the last month, a record—with tons of ideas for future ones. I recently obtained a copy of Priscilla Long's book, *The Writer's Portable Mentor*, and embarked on a revived writing practice. After most conferences, my creative boost lasts a couple of weeks. But more than two months after the CWC, my creativity and inspiration are still going strong.

**The keepsake program booklet provided for each attendee** (including full bios of all authors and agents as well as fifty blank pages), was the icing on the cake. Instead of my usual habit of using any handy spiral notebook for my notes (which then get interspersed with random story ideas and other workshops and conference notes), this stand-alone booklet guarantees I'll have easy access to all the wisdom I gleaned at the Chuckanut Writers Conference.

**"Right out of the gate, the Chuckanut Writers Conference got off to a great start.**

Having worked at Maui Writers, PNWA and Surrey International Conference, I was impressed with how all scenarios for attendees, agents and presenters were thought out in advance. I really enjoyed Priscilla Long's session on sentences, but Nancy Rawles really inspired me with her historical fiction work.

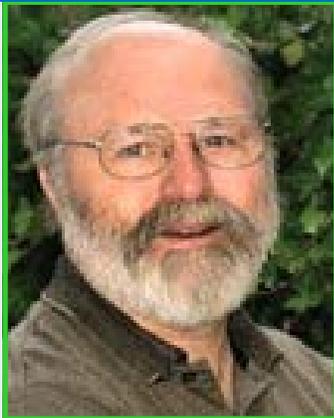
**The planning for conference is happening right now. Take a chance and sign up for next year.** "It will stir your inner writer and help propel your book to published form." Janet Oakley, author of *The Tree Soldiers* (writing as J.L. Oakley.)

**The 2012 Chuckanut Writers Conference is slated for Friday and Saturday, June 22-23!**  
[www.chuckanutwritersconference.com](http://www.chuckanutwritersconference.com)



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**Note: WWP maintained a vendor table at the conference,** providing information and brochures and collecting names and email addresses from almost 100 attendees. Several of those people have already signed up for WWP membership.



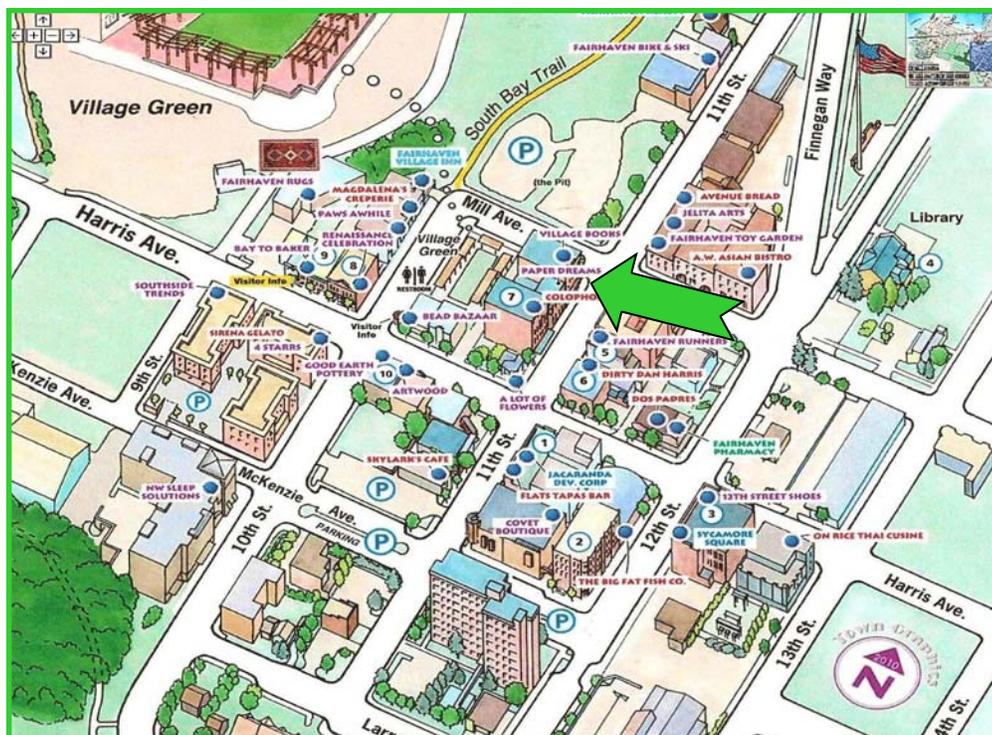
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