

First Annual WGT Flash Fiction Contest Winners Announced

The Writers' Guild of Texas hosted its first annual Flash Fiction Contest this fall. The contest was open to both members and non-members. There was no entry fee for members; non-members paid \$25, which could be applied to membership in the WGT. Short stories had to be an original work of 500 to 1,000 words not previously published online or in print. All genres were accepted.

It was a blind judging with members of the WGT Board unaware of whose work they were reading. The Board was pleased at the quality of work received and wants to thank everyone who participated.

Winners were announced at the December Holiday Party:

- **First Place \$150**
Monalisa Foster, *"Collective Responsibility"*
- **Second Place \$100**
David Douglas, *"Bruised Banana"*
- **Third Place \$50**
Andi King, *"Sailor's Tale"*
- **Honorable Mention \$25**
Scott Bell, *"Always Something"*

Each month, one of the winning stories will be printed in the newsletter, beginning with the first place winner. The Board hopes members enjoy these stories as much as they did.

Congratulations to all the winners!

("Collective Responsibility" begins on page 3)



WGT President John Vance stands with the winners: David Douglas (center), Andi King, Scott Bell and Monalisa Foster (left to right).

REGISTER NOW FOR THE 2016 WGT SPRING WRITERS' WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 19 9 am – 12 Noon The Heights Room – Richardson Civic Center



Dr. Katherine "Kat" Smith, DHS will speak on "Interviewing Authority"

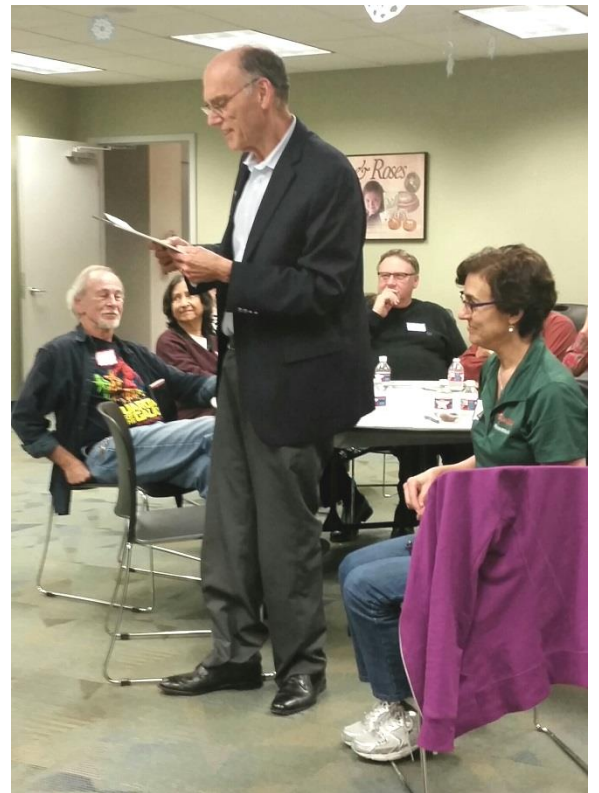
Learn the dos and don'ts of engaging in a media interview and how to deliver an interesting conversation about your book. Dr. Smith is the author of several books and formerly co-host of a four-year syndicated morning show.

Cost: \$25 WGT members / \$35 non-members

Contest Winners P1 / Holiday Party P2 / Flash Fiction Story P3 / Upcoming Events P5/ Taylor Stevens P6



WGT Holiday Party



*Food, Games, Prizes and a Good Time !
Here's wishing everyone a
Happy and Creative 2016!*

AUTHORS « WRITERS « INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

Collective Responsibility

by *Monalisa Foster*

First Place Winner

This was the place. Police cars. Crowd held back by yellow tape and a few uniforms who looked like they didn't want to be here — yeah, guys, me too. Reporters trying to push their way past the tape, earning scathing rebukes. Such language! I was envious. As a professional specializing in children, I'm not allowed to use such words. That doesn't mean I don't want to. Right now, I really want to.

In the two minutes it takes me to verify that I'm in the right place, the crowd has doubled and the media vans have managed to block off the fire lane. For the vultures, all that's missing is a red carpet — the buffet has been set and they are ravenous. Those poor badges. Thankless job.

Time to go inside, do my duty. It's an upscale place, brand new by the look of it, but my gown and tiara are still completely out of place. Stupid wardrobe department! A fireman's costume would have at least fit in, or maybe a superhero costume — a cape and a cowl are more my style.

I joined the gathering inside. Beautiful decor, an elegant setting ready to be enjoyed. I drifted past the crystal chandelier, the baby grand piano. Snags and snippets of conversation, some shouted, some whispered, some choked out between varying jags of emotion, trail behind me.

"I'm telling you, that's not how it happened! Look..." A responsible, pillar-of-the-community type of gentleman.

"We were playing just a few minutes ago..." Nice teenager, the kind you know is going on twenty-one in spite of just having turned thirteen.

"She was just here! I saw her!"

"I thought you were..."

"...Right there. In the front. That was the last place I ..."

"But it was your turn..."

"...No, no, it couldn't happen. We were all watching."

Commotion in the backyard caught my attention. I slipped through the glass door, somehow managing not to snag the dress. Tulle! Who wears tulle anymore? Really! As if the stupid tiara wasn't bad enough.

Rain was the norm here, even this late in the year and everything was still wet from the last storm. At least my shoes wouldn't be ruined — glass slippers, it turns out. I found Sarah sitting alone, past the boundary of just-laid sod, sitting, humming to herself. She was the reason I was here, dressed like a fairy princess. We made quite a pair. A leotard christened with cookie dough and icing, a tulle skirt that had seen better days, a pillowcase drafted into service as a cape, hair in adorable little pig-tails drowning in mismatched gossamer ribbons, red patent leather booties of the most fashionable kind worn on the wrong foot of course — a formal ensemble that only a three-year-old could get away with.

I joined her, sitting cross-legged on the freshly turned ground. Mud squelched out from under me with an audible squirt. It occurred to me that this was excellent use for tulle. Sarah was humming the alphabet song, and I was tempted to join in, it — along with a number of songs made famous by a variety of princesses and cartoon dogs — being part of my repertoire.

"You cold?" I asked.

She shook her head, still humming, legs kicking back and forth, dangling over the edge. It wasn't very deep. I guessed the neighbors were splurging on a basement — an expensive indulgence in this part of the country.

That odd sound, more felt than heard: a generator kicking in. It was time. Floodlights came on, illuminating the yard, casting unnatural shadows.

"Time to go sweetheart." I held out my arms.

"Can I say goodbye to Mommy?"

"Of course you can."

We stood and her fingers wrapped around mine.

"Who's been taking care of you, Sarah?"

She shrugged. "Everyone."

I lifted Sarah into my arms, carried her back inside, parting the crowd that had gathered by sheer force of will.

Mommy was seated on the couch inside, staring with unseeing eyes, numb, surrounded by loved ones, utterly and completely alone, her hands clutching a stuffed animal because her daughter's body was lying cold and lifeless at the bottom of a water-filled trench.

CONTINUED PAGE 4

"We were all watching her. It wasn't your fault." The words fell on deaf ears. I don't know who spoke them. I didn't care because it didn't matter. The only piece of comfort that would ever matter to this woman was in my arms and once my work here was done, Sarah would no longer be part of this imperfect world, where everyone and no one mean the same thing.

Sarah leaned forward, kissed her mother's head. "I love you, Mommy."

(773 words)

Local Author Pat Haddock 'Muddles' Through with Style

WGT member and author Pat Haddock was the feature speaker at the November meeting. Entitled "My Self-Publishing Journey: Muddling Through," Pat shared tips, the costs



involved, stumbling blocks to avoid and lessons learned (often the hard way) on her journey to self-publishing her first novel, *Dear Aunt Peggy, Emails from Petey Pup*. Taking what she learned, she published her second novel, *Amelia's Gift*, in 2015, and has several more currently in the works. In addition to writing novels, Pat's short stories have been published in the *Texas Writers Journal Annual Competition*.

With her unique sense of humor, trained eye for details, and love of Texas history and lore, Pat can spin a story around just about anything and is a requested speaker in the area.

Dear Aunt Peggy, Emails from Petey Pup and *Amelia's Gift* are available on Amazon.com. To learn more about Pat, you can visit her author page on Facebook.

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"Weiss-Cracking"

by Jerry Weiss



"I've published seven books so far, but that's not what I really want. What I really want is to sell some of them."

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday – February 15

Critique Groups

Liz Klein / John Vance / Kathryn McClatchy
WGT Critique Leaders

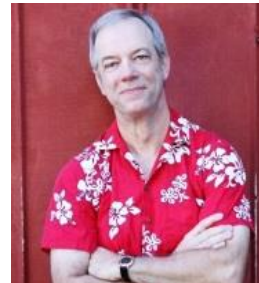
Sharing your work with others and receiving feedback is an integral part of any writer's journey. Join us in February for a lively three-part program that will consist of two demonstrations to acquaint members with our in-person and online critique groups, followed by a brainstorming session with the audience to gather ideas for future meetings.

**Monday – March 21****In the Trenches –
Techniques for Plotting**
with Author/Speaker
C.L. Stegall

Once you have your basic outline and want to begin detailing your plot, there are a myriad of techniques one can use. WGT member and author C.L. Stegall will discuss a few of those techniques and also provide examples and a template to get started.

**Monday – April 17****Syntax, Style and
Making Meaning with
Prosodic Elements**Writer, Editor, Educator
and Designer
Joe Milazzo

Word choice matters. But so too does word order. In this interactive program, Joe Milazzo will lead participants through an overview of what prosody is and share techniques on how writer sin all genres can add suppleness and variety to their sentences.

**Monday – May 16****Idea Organization and
ways to Collaborate**with Author,
Consultant/Speaker
James Gaskin

Technology for Writers: Learn better ways to write your book and get it noticed, including how to leverage Google Search, three different ways to power your Instagrams and Tweets, and use other social media tools to stand out from the crowd. A handout and links to all products and tools discussed will be provided.

Annual WGT Writers Read-In
Monday – June 20

Writers will present their original materials in a timed reading. This is an opportunity to share with others and receive feedback.

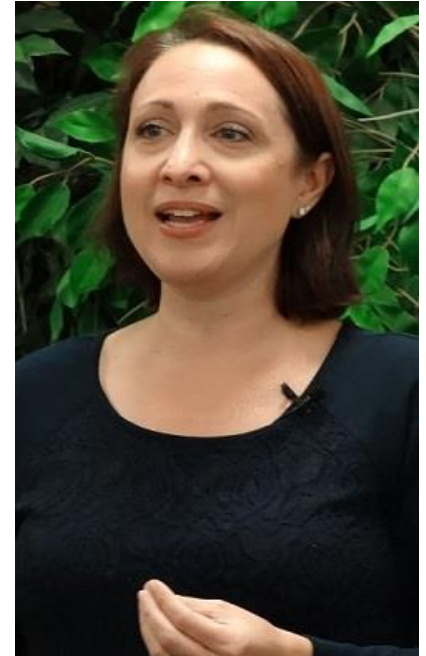
Fall Writers' Workshop a Success

Best-Selling Author Taylor Stevens Takes Participants on an Insider's Walk

At the Nov. 14 workshop, Taylor Stevens pointed out key elements for anyone who writes:

- Have to know why you want to write. It's a long-term commitment without immediate gratification.
- Other people's priorities can get imprinted on yours.
- Must know end goal after first book published.
- Have to be willing to stretch.
- Don't worry what others think.

Biggest issue facing aspiring writers is wondering "Am I good enough?" This handicaps many writers. "No one comes into this work good enough as a writer," said Stevens. "No one is born gifted. You become good enough through skill, from doing."



"Every reader has a reading river. Every genre has a river," Stevens said.

"Your goal is to get into as many rivers as possible. Remember, readers care about the story."

How Do I Get Published?

- Finish it! There is so much power for an author to finish a book. You can always go back and make it better.
- There is power in the first draft. Clarify comes from that finished story. Then go back and give it life.
- When something is hard, we tend to not want to do it. Make time! Make writing a priority.
- People around us find ways to get what they want. So should your story. Be an addict to your writing.
- Recognize procrastination – put goals to paper. When you leave your desk or paper with an idea of what you want to work on, write it down. You then have a goal ready to start up the next time.

Inciting Incident:

- Every story has a moment that ties everything in together; the single cause that ignites the story.
- When a writer knows the "single cause" the story orbits around, you understand what drives the plot forward.

Why Would Someone Want to Read Your Story?

"Only one answer," Stevens said. "We read to feel. We read to experience. We read to live vicariously. What makes us feel? The characters!"

What Makes a Character Interesting?

- The conflict they're dealing with. Without conflict, the reader doesn't care about the characters or story.
- We read for what's not wonderful – we want that kick in the gut.
- The hero is always defined by the villain.
- To connect with the reader, feel it, so they can feel it.

Two Key Concepts that Elevate Storytelling:

- **Perspective.** Stories are built off scenes. If something doesn't fit in the scene, reader feels it.
- **Point of View.** Whose eyes seeing the story through? Regardless if first or third person, that's voice. Try not to break POV in same chapter. Remember perspective is not point of view.

"Readers make movies in their heads," Stevens said.

"Good reading allows us to watch scenes unfold; we feel as if we're part of a living movie."

For more information on Taylor Stevens, visit her author page on Facebook and sign up for her tip-filled newsletters.