

## Annual WGT Writer's Read-In

Our annual Writers' Read-In will be held on Monday, June 20 at 7 pm at the Richardson Public Library. This is your opportunity to bring us into the world you are creating through your writing.

WGT Vice President Julie Mendel will be chairing the event again. Seven writers will present their original work. Reading time is limited to a maximum of six minutes, which is approximately 1,000 - 1,200 words. Members can read their own work, appoint someone to read their work, or ask a WGT Board member to read it for you. (Should you want a Board member to read, you must provide it to that Board member no later than Monday, June 13).

Presented materials will be critiqued by the members and guests of the Writers Guild of Texas and will be evaluated on the following three areas: (1) What worked well? (2) What could use more development? and (3) Overall impression. To take advantage of this opportunity, email Julie at [julie.s.mendel@gmail.com](mailto:julie.s.mendel@gmail.com). Remember, we have seven spots available, and they tend to fill up quickly!

## In the Trenches with Author C.L. Stegall

Local author C.L. Stegall was the guest speaker at the March 21 WGT meeting. He addressed the techniques of plotting, explaining that basically the plot is the road map that a writer uses to take the story from Point A to Point B.

He suggested that you take the story in your head and write down keystone events; those events that if not included would cause the plot to fall down "like a tent without its poles." Next, as every writer understands, all stories have a beginning, middle and an end. When creating his plot, he writes three paragraphs detailing the three acts. He also gave an example of a mind map.

As a plotter, C.L. starts with a one or two-line summary of the chapter by chapter story. He determines the kind of story he's writing, the theme, where the story is taking place, who the story is about, what the main points/events are he wants to get across to the reader and in what order.

When considering plot, Stegall suggests the writer consider the order of events. What presents the most opportunity for drama and conflict, for a slow reveal of truth and detail? How best to build up emotions and create a powerful climatic scene.

He reminded members that what matters most is connecting with your readers. Create and solve conflict, then build as you go to create even more conflict. Keep a tight emotional reign on the characters, but let the story drive itself, using your story's prerequisites.

"The more detail you have in your back pocket," Stegall said, "the more you can use to pull in your readers." However, he also stressed not to waste too much time on the backstory before writing your actual tale.

For more information, visit C.L.'s website at <http://www.clstegall.com>. There you can visit his writing blog for free stories, reference material, and the latest information on upcoming events and book releases.

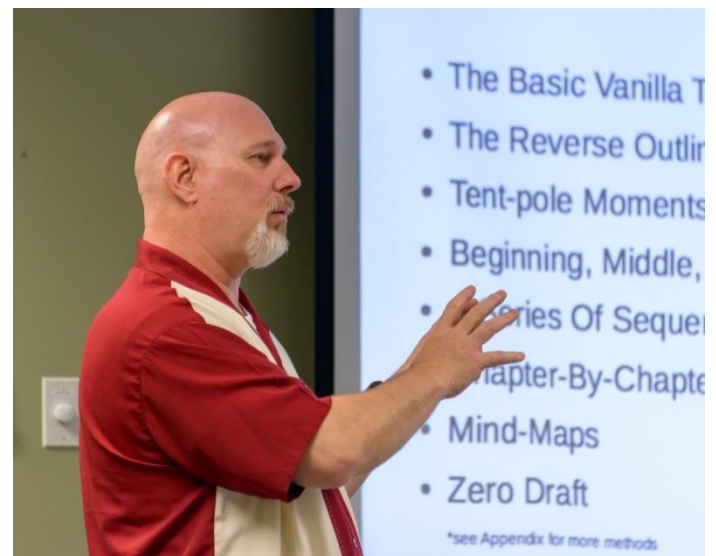


Photo by Gary Bowers



Photo by Gary Bowers

## Word Choice, Word Order Matter

Writer, educator, editor and designer, Joe Milazzo is multi-talented. Speaking at the April 18 WGT meeting, Milazzo shared techniques on how writers in all genres can add suppleness and variety to their sentences.

Using examples and encouraging member participation, he showed the power of rhythm in prose. "Every sentence has a musical quality to it," Milazzo said. By improving sentences and having a sense of voice, the writer can take the musical quality of poetry and improve their writing.

Suggested readings include Virginia Tuftes' *Artful Sentences*, a guide for improving sentences and sense of voice, and Robert Pinsky's *The Sounds of Poetry*.

For more information, please visit Joe Milazzo's website at <http://www.slowstudies.net/jmilazzo/>.

### The Board of the Writers Guild of Texas 2016-2017

<b>President / Cartoonist:</b>	Jerry Weiss
<b>Vice President:</b>	Julie Mendel
<b>Secretary/Newsletter Editor:</b>	Marsha Hubbell
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Rainer Bantau
<b>Membership Chairman:</b>	Julie Mendel *
<b>Program Coordinator:</b>	Rainer Bantau *
<b>Communications Chairman:</b>	Gary Bowers
<b>Website Chairman:</b>	David Douglas
<b>Photographers:</b>	Gary Bowers; Rainer Bantau
<b>Critique Group Coordinators:</b>	Rainer Bantau *
<b>E-Critique Coordinator:</b>	Kathryn McClatchy

\* Those currently holding these positions will remain in place until replacements are confirmed.

## Mark the Date – Upcoming Events (Meetings held Third Monday of the Month)

June 20	<b>WGT Writers' Read-In</b>
July 18	<b>Brian W. Smith</b> "So You Wrote a Book – Now You Have to Sell It"
Aug. 15	<b>Scott Bell and Pat Haddock</b> "Power Up Your Prose"
Sept. 19	<b>Monalisa Foster</b> "Making Scrivener Work for You"
Sat, Oct. 15	<b>Fall Workshop with Tex Thompson</b>
Oct. 17	Stay Tuned
Nov. 21	<b>Drema Hall Berkheimer</b> "Writing Memoir: A Cautionary Tale"
Dec. 19	<b>Annual Holiday Party</b>

"You know you're a writer  
when you talk about your characters  
as if they were real people."  
-Buffy Andrews

## "Weiss-Cracking"

by Jerry Weiss



"Now, Ms. Rawling, We think your book *may* find a few readers, but 'Harry Potter'? That title will never sell!"

## Always Something

By Scott Bell

Honorable Mention, WGT Flash Fiction Contest

I meant to give it back.

At least, I think I did. But maybe I didn't. Some decisions start out in the brain's basement, right? That nasty-dark cellar of the mind, crawling with spiders and stinking of all the dead bodies buried there. When the dusty overhead light sputters out, bad notions slither around, evil shit you'd never in a million years let crawl up into the kitchen and see the sunlight. Sometimes these things—these ideas—they thump on the door and you can hear them, trying to get in, itching to take over and make you do the stupid things you know you shouldn't.

There was a bank bag, partly hidden near the front tire of my ten-year-old Suburbavan, aka Honda Odyssey, like it was kicked there. It looked like a lady's evening purse, except with a zipper instead of a clasp.

And it was stuffed.

I snagged it while my two sons were piling into the back and stuffed it down the center console as they played with their phones. Should I say something or not? Around me, iridescent soccer jerseys pinballed through the gravel parking lot: kids chasing balls and tagging after their moms and dads, who carried coolers and lawn chairs. Nobody gave me a second look. Nobody searched the ground, scrabbling around for a missing bag of money.

*Was it money?*

Could be a bag full of coupons. I wouldn't know until I checked. I popped the console long enough to peel back the zipper a bit. Hell to the yes, it was money. A lot of it.

Sixteen thousand dollars, I found out later, after the boys disappeared into their rooms and Alexa zoned into America's Got Idol Dancing Talent, or whatever. I slipped out to the garage and counted that money under the Honda's dome light.

Why so secret? I mean, an honest guy all my life, why was I acting like a criminal all of a sudden? I didn't steal the cash. It was found money. Like the Lotto Fairy left it for me, or I went straight to Go on my personal Monopoly board.

Instead of two hundred dollars, the payday was sixteen large. Inflation, right?

Deep down, I knew if I showed what I had, somebody would take it away. Alexa would make a big stink about it, for sure. Call the cops, she'd say. Maybe it was evidence, like from drug dealers. Hell, she'd say, maybe it's counterfeit and you'll get arrested just for having it.

I held a bill up to the yellowish-tinted dome light. Nope. Not counterfeit.

The battered metal toolkit I'd used throughout high school and college still lived on a bottom shelf in my garage. It had been replaced by a shiny-new Matco chest, but I kept the old one to

store oddball nuts and washers and whatnot. I stuffed the money in the box, closed the lid, and shoved it under some spare vinyl tiles.

Truth was, I wanted that money. Make no mistake, I didn't say it out loud at first, but I wanted it. There's never enough, is there? The Honda's brakes squealed like a train sliding to a stop. Cha-ching, Mr. Mechanic, here's your eight hundred dollars. Built in 1982 of the cheapest materials available, our house wiring was a fire hazard waiting to burn us all to bacon. I'd been meaning to replace it, but there was always something, right?

And now I had a way to tide me over. Smooth out the rough bits. Maybe make some investments, or have some seed money for the kids' college tuition, which was rising faster than an explosion at a yeast factory.

So I kept it.

And after six months the money was gone. No investments. No college fund. Where the fuck did I spend it all? This and that. Toys. A vacation. How did I burn through that much cash and have jack-nada to show for it? It's still a mystery to me. One, single hundred-dollar bill rested in my pocket. I had to buy a new tent for a Boy Scout trip and I was hoping to find a good one on sale.

On the way, I ran into Glenn McAllister, the coach of my kid's soccer team at the coffee shop. We jabbered all the usual crap: how're you, how're the kids, how's the team look this year...all that happy horseshit.

"You hear about Marshall's dad?" Glenn said to me.

A vague memory of a dumpy guy with a bowl haircut surfaced. "Kind of."

"Poor guy," Glenn said. "Shot himself. Seems he took a withdrawal from his kid's college fund to pay off some gambling debts, then lost the money."

"Lost it? No shit?" The blood left my face in a rush. I touched the counter for balance.

"Yes shit. The loan sharks got after his ass, and I guess he couldn't handle it." Glenn went to the condiments' bar and started doctoring his coffee. I followed him after I got my cup from the pimple-pierced kid behind the counter.

"You say it was gambling?" I asked.

"Yeah, can you believe it? A guy like that, into loan sharks for over fifteen grand." Glenn shook his head, re-capped his coffee cup. "You just never know, do you?"

"No," I agreed. "You never do."

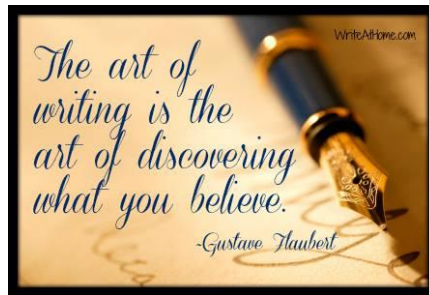
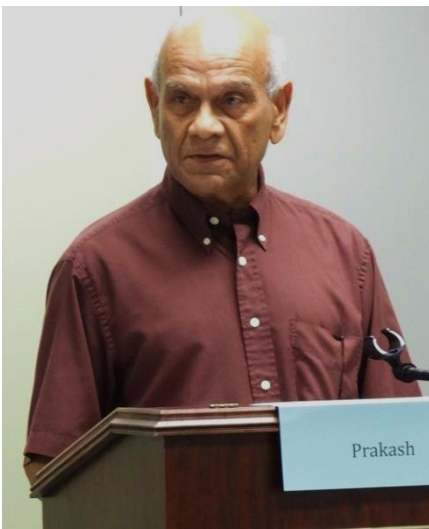
Ah, shit. If I had reported the money, would Marshall's dad still be alive? I shoved that thought in the basement and slammed the door behind it. Twisted the lock tight. It wiggled around a bit before settling down. "Well, see you around, Glenn. Buying a tent for the boys."

"Jeez, it's always something, ain't it?"

"No kidding. Always something."

I walked into the sun, my hand wrapped around the money in my pocket.

## Faces of the Writers Guild of Texas



Photos by Gary Bowers