

Norman Galaxy of Writers Formed in March 1969 • Affiliated with Oklahoma Writers Federation, Inc.

WRITELINE

Norman Galaxy of Writers, P.O. Box 5581, Norman OK 73070 Vol. 43, No. 1 • January 13, 2024

**“The less vague and more specific
you are (in your writing), the more
universal the story will feel to the
readers because they will
empathize...”**

**-- Tiffany Yates Martin,
author, editor, and
writing coach**

THE MISSION of Norman Galaxy of Writers is to provide a venue for published and non-published writers to develop and refine their writing skills through quality educational programs, mentoring, and networking with other professional writers.

JANUARY PROGRAM **CONTEST READINGS!**



January 13, 2024

10 a.m. — 12 noon

**“The Well” — 210 S. James Garner
Ave. (ZOOM available)**

For our January program, we'll recognize the winners of the 2023 Galaxy contest. The authors will read their winning entries aloud! Starting

with the first-place entries, we'll continue with as many manuscripts as time will allow. If you won any of the awards, please bring your entries . . . and prepare to be applauded! Zoom links will be sent out on Friday. Come join us. We look forward to seeing you!

JANUARY 2024 | WriteLine

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CHRISTMAS PARTY A SUCCESS!

Thanks to all our members and guests for making the 2023 Galaxy Christmas party a rousing success! We installed our new board members for 2024 and the winners of our annual contest received their certificates and cash prizes. A big thank you goes to Helen Duchon for printing our contest certificates. The list of winners can be found on page six. There was lots of great fun and wonderful camaraderie among our 20 fellow authors who were present. That's priceless! A bonus was the FOOD! It was all delicious. There are some great cooks in our group. (We should have gotten a picture of the table!) Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your 2023 president. It was an honor.

— Mary Payne



Judith Coker presented Mary Payne with Helen Duchon's Certificate of Appreciation for being the 2023 Galaxy president and Contest Chair. Judith invited everyone to sign the document. "Thank you, Helen and Judith. Our members are the best!" Mary said.

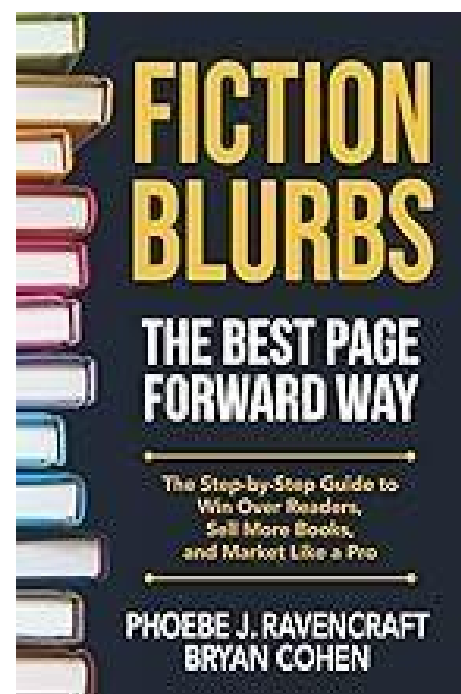
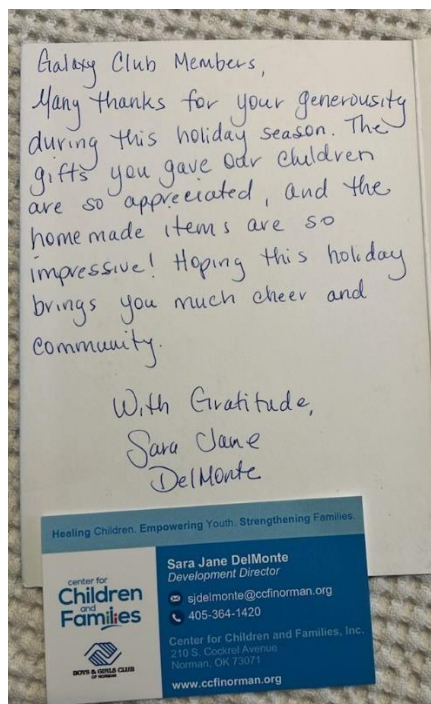
**NORMAN GALAXY OF
WRITERS
2024 BOARD MEMBERS
INSTALLED**



From left: Mary Payne, president-elect; Linda Basinger, treasurer; Judith Coker, secretary; Jennie Raney, program chair; and Bob Macfadzean, president.

CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Norman Galaxy of Writers received a thank you note for our donations to the center. There were many children's items and checks totaling \$330! Thanks to Jennie Raney and Mary Spaulding for collecting and delivering everything. A pat on the back for all our members who participated. We appreciate you.



BRAGS:

LISBETH L. MCCARTY won awards in the Oklahoma City Writers annual contest as follows: Humor, 1st, The Cat who Almost Ate a Canary; Short Story, 1st, DOA at the DMV; Feature Article, 1st, I was on Jeopardy! Eight Times; Juvenile, 3rd, Once Upon Aurora; and Nostalgia, 3rd, Unidentified Flying Ozzie. Lisbeth also was a speaker at the annual Sapulpa Library Oklahoma Authors' presentation. Four of her books were purchased by the Sapulpa Library.

CAROL SHEARER would like to send her poetry books to Blue Mountain Arts. One is called *Collages* and the other is *Kaleidoscope*. Her three children's books are *I'm A Winner*, *Tippy The Toad*, and *Promise Not To Tell*. She doesn't know where she'll send those. A third poetry book in progress is *Blue Illusions*.

THE WRITER'S BOOK CASE

*FICTION BLURBS: THE BEST PAGE
FORWARD WAY* by Phoebe J. Ravenscraft
and Bryan Cohen

“The Step-by-Step Guide to Win Over Readers, Sell More
Books, and
Market Like a Pro.”

Here’s another great writing book that will enhance
your writing and support your marketing efforts.

Not only does *FICTION BLURBS* explain all the
angles of blurbwriting, it also shares a number of
strategies that will make your writing “sing.” For
instance, blurbs require clarity and the authors suggest
minimizing the number of commas you use, because
extra clauses only confuse readers. They say, limit
commas to one per sentence, unless you’re listing a
series of things. Another suggestion is to finish strong
by putting the most powerful words at the end of your
sentences. That’s what readers will remember. Both of
these are great ideas for all our writing.

Ravenscraft and Cohen say that a blurb’s job isn’t to
describe a book—it’s to sell it. A summary of a book
doesn’t make a reader want to purchase it. What we
want in a blurb is to showcase the main character and
his/her emotional journey. That’s what draws in a
potential reader. The essential elements of a blurb are:
brevity, smooth copy, dramatic phrases,
character-driven, stakes, point-of-view/tense, and the
inciting incident.

Part textbook/part workbook, this book gives
authors the tools to make their own blurbs shine—and
sell! There’s a basic template and they explain what
needs to be included in every sentence. They lead the
reader through all the different elements with examples
and exercises to make our own stories leap off the
page. Readers also learn how to identify the inciting
incident and why it turns people into voracious readers,
as well as many other tricks of the trade.

Ravenscraft and Cohen’s team have written more than
5,000 blurbs for published indie authors over the last
seven years, so they are the perfect people to help us
craft our own! I’m ecstatic to have found this gem of a
book. It’s definitely a keeper.

A PROLOGUE! REALLY?

Are you thinking of writing a prologue? Most agents
and editors advise against it. However, if that’s what
you think your novel needs, there’s a great article in the
Jan/Feb 2024 issue of *Writer’s Digest* with all the ins
and outs.

If you don’t have a subscription, you can find a copy of
the magazine at the Southwest OKC Public Library,
2201 S.W. 134, OKC, OK. The Norman Central

Library also has it, but none of their materials are
available right now

OWFI NEWS

Representatives of eleven OWFI affiliates met on
December 3 for a board meeting to discuss the 2024
conference and other business of the organization.

Vickey Malone Kennedy was elected to lead the group
through the 2025 annual conference. Dion
Mays-Burnett was elected to be the 2024 conference
coordinator. Entries for the contest will open January 2
and close at midnight on February 1. The categories are
the same as last year. The list and their descriptions, as
well as the submission rules, can be found on their
website,

Kennedy announced the two-day conference (May 2-4,
2024 at the Embassy Suites on Meridian) will be packed
with 24 awesome speakers and an infinite number of
personal learning experiences. Speakers are listed on the
website. There will be a pre-conference masterclass
beginning at 6 p.m. on Thursday with a mixer and
volunteer appreciation reception following at 9
p.m. There will also be two luncheons, one being a
horror/sci-fi panel. If you choose to attend, there’s a
small charge for each luncheon and the masterclass in
addition to the conference fee.

The early-bird price for members is \$200 plus the add-ons, if chosen. After March 15, the price goes to \$225. Scholarships are available. The registration form will be on the website soon. The non-member price is \$250. Annual membership is \$25.

If you have never attended a conference, attending OWFI is a great way to jumpstart your writing. The speakers are terrific. While this particular conference highlights science fiction, all genres are represented. You can find descriptions of all the sessions, plus bios for the speakers, on their website, <https://www.owfi.org>. We hope to see you there!

OWFI'S 2023 CONTEST . . .

. . . AND MARCHING ON TO 2024!!!

The OWFI webmaster posted the winners of the 2023 OWFI contest on their website.

The Norman Galaxy of Writers sponsored Category 2 — the Essay. Our own Lisbeth L. McCarty won first place in that category with her essay, “Curl Up and Die.”

Second place was Nicki Rycroft from the Oklahoma City Writers with “Nine Lives.” Third place was Joan Gerling from the Tulsa Nightwriters with her essay, “In the Trenches.” There were also two honorable mentions.

The Norman Galaxy of Writers was well represented in the contest.

Besides the first place in the essay category, Lisbeth won a 2nd place, a 3rd place, and an honorable mention. Shelley Anne Richter won one 2nd place, two 3rd places and three honorable mentions. Judith Coker won 2nd place in unrhymed poetry—short. Barbara Shepherd won two 1st places and one 3rd place, although her primary club is ‘Hunt & Peck.’

If the math is correct, members of our club won 12 prizes. There would be 15 if we count Barbara’s. These four writers prove it can be done! Let’s stretch our writing muscles and see what we can do in the 2024 OWFI contest!!!



Don’t forget. The deadline is midnight, February 1. Good Luck!

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Watching Your Language

By

Kathleen Norris Park “Honing the Tools of

Our Trade”

The Noun String-a-Ling-a-Ling-a-Ling-aLing

Every level of government, other bureaucratic writing, and certainly Wall Street are rightly blamed for this practice of piling nouns one upon another, pressing them into service as adjectives. And squeezing meaning, like the last squirt of toothpaste, to the very end—where it might or might not serve the purpose. Those who stack nouns this way might claim it serves brevity, a kind of watchword in current usage. It’s true that our rich language admits of such flexibility; we can correctly bend one kind of word to the duty of another. It’s the overload that sabotages clarity.

Bruce O. Boston, in his *Language on a Leash** calls it “Modifier Madness.” Here is his example:

“By pooling the resources of many investors into a limited partnership, it is possible for individuals to benefit from the multimilliondollar data management peripheral equipment leasing industry.” Boston counted “eight modifiers; one article; one adjective-adverb combination (multimillion); two ‘pure’ nouns (dollar, data); two nouns derived from verbs (management, equipment); one verbal noun (leasing); and one borderline adjective-noun (peripheral).”

That last one, *peripheral*, comes from what Boston calls “computerese, as in ‘Our CPU supports 24 peripherals.’”

Don’t make your reader push aside boulder after boulder of such rubble to find the meaning of the sentence, presumably at the last noun, the bearer of all that weight.

Getting Comparisons Right

Comparisons should follow definite rules. Clarity fails when the writer doesn’t include the standard of comparison intended. Avoid such fuzzy writing by always comparing like with like.

- Incomplete: the manager blamed the chain store’s policy more than the clerk.

Does the writer mean that the manager blamed the policy more than he blamed the clerk? Or that the manager blamed the policy more than the clerk did? Recast to make the meaning inescapable.

- Incomplete: The cry of the coyote is scarier than the wolf. [wrong because *wolf* is not the same as *cry* or *howl*].
- Complete: The cry of the coyote is scarier than the howl of the wolf.
- Complete: The coyote’s cry is scarier than the wolf’s.

Parallel Structure Equals Balance

We write to convey meaning from the writer’s mind to the reader’s. Parallel grammatical structure helps that meaning slip home as cleanly and gracefully as possible.

Here are some rules to make that happen: •

Make sentence elements in a series parallel in structure.

- After correlative conjunctions, use exactly the same grammatical structure.
- If sentence elements are not parallel in thought, do not make them parallel in structure.
- Use parallel structure in lists. **Examples**

Faulty: Jojo wants to make pancakes, hot cocoa, marmalade, and considers warming up last night’s pizza.

Parallel: Jojo wants to make pancakes, hot cocoa, marmalade, and to warm up last night’s pizza.

Faulty: Lulu’s four favorite activities make up her weekend:

1. Going shopping with Arabella
2. Watch dance videos
3. Making pancakes with Jojo
4. Nothing that requires going out in the rain.

Parallel:

1. Going shopping with friends
2. Watching dance videos
3. Making pancakes with Jojo
4. Staying home out of the rain.

Note here that these items can just as correctly start with lowercase words and bullets instead of numbers. You might also omit punctuation after all but the last item. Think of the whole thing after the colon as one long sentence, needing only final punctuation. That works best, of course, with brief items but certainly makes for easier reading when you can do it. ###

CRÈME-DE-LA-CRÈME — “Pantoum for Tarague Beach” — Judith Briggs Coker

ADULT SHORT STORY

- 1st Place — “A Matter of Perspective” — Judith Briggs Coker
- 2nd Place — “Pages of Death” — Barbara Shepherd
- 3rd Place — “Finding a Husband at a Funeral” — Mary Flowers Brannon
- Honorable Mention — “Half-Baked” — Lisbeth L. McCarty

CHILDREN’S FICTION

- 1st Place — “Stampede!” — Barbara Shepherd
- 2nd Place — “Listen to the Grandkids!” — Mary Brannon
- 3rd Place — “Drag the Dragon” — Lisbeth McCarty

FLASH FICTION

- 1st Place — “Don’t Be That Guy!” — Barbara Shepherd
- 2nd Place — “The Key to Memory” — Lisbeth L. McCarty
- 3rd Place — “Dangerous, Delusional, or Just a Man Tantrum” — Mary Flowers Brannon

NONFICTION FEATURE STORY

- 1st Place — “V Is for Victory, or Vomit” — Mary Brannon
- 2nd Place — “Who Is Robert and Why Is He Making Up All These Rules?” — Lisbeth McCarty
- 3rd Place — “Do you want to be Right, or Married?” — Mary Spaulding
- Honorable Mention — “Game Day Hosting Tips” — Barbara Shepherd

NOSTALGIA

- 1st Place — “The Packing Tape Fiasco” — Lisbeth L. McCarty
- 2nd Place — “Always My Hero” — Mary Flowers Brannon
- 3rd Place — “Tuna Salad” — Judith Briggs Coker

NOVEL

- 1st Place — “Tall, Green, and Gorgeous” — Linda Basinger
- 2nd Place — “Surviving Summer” — Mary Payne
- 3rd Place — “The Sword of Justice” — Lisbeth L. McCarty

RHYMED POETRY

- 1st Place — “The Storm” — Judith Briggs Coker
- 2nd Place — “One More High School Reunion” — Barbara Shepherd
- 3rd Place — “To Buy Or Not To Buy” — Lisbeth L. McCarty
- Honorable Mention — “Foreign Food Fun” — Mary Flowers Brannon

UNRHYMED POETRY

- 1st Place — “Pantoum for Tarague Beach” — Judith Briggs Coker

2nd Place — “Lost at Sea” — Barbara Shepherd 3rd
Place — “Hummingbirds” — Jim Nichols

NORMAN GALAXY OF WRITERS' JANUARY 2024 WRITELINE

ANN CHAMPEAU
1932 — 2023



SAD NEWS FOR OUR GALAXY FAMILY

Ann (Anita Louise) Champeau, 91, an honorary lifetime member of the Norman Galaxy of Writers, passed away in the early morning hours of December 30, 2023. She was an integral part of Galaxy for many years. Over her career, she wrote for more than fifty publications, including *Byline*, *Women's Circle*, *The Lion's Club Magazine*, and *Nursing Homes Magazine*. Although Ann was never braggadocious when it came to her accomplishments, she won over 350 writing awards.

In 1994, she won the Oklahoma Writer's Federation's prestigious Crème-de-la-Crème Award for her story, "Why Couldn't She Hear Me Crying Through the Night?" A story about child abuse. In 2012, Ann sold a minimystery to *Woman's World*—not the easiest thing to do.

She was generous with her time, talent, and wisdom. She facilitated Friday Writers, Galaxy's weekly critique group, for over eight years. She mentored many writers there and in other workshop settings. In the 1990s, Ann taught writing classes at the Moore/Norman Vo-Tech. Linda Basinger was a student. "Ann had a knack for telling writers, in plain, no-nonsense language how to improve their writing without hurting their feelings or being mean about it. Working with Ann was like a breath of fresh air, because she was so positive, down-to-earth, and unpretentious." That's a true gift!

Ann was elected Galaxy president for the year 1999. She also served as historian, keeping scrapbooks of Galaxy events. She was a bright light in our midst. We will miss her sunny smile and the quiet way she encouraged all of us to be our best. We were blessed to call her friend.

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*"I am saddened to hear about Ann's passing. I met her in 1990 at OWFI. The year I became a member. She bought one of my chapbooks of poetry. Two hours later she returned with a camera and tape recorder. To my amazement, she said, 'I want to interview you about how you became a poet.' After the interview, I spent \$10 in quarters calling every person I knew. I credit Ann with all my writing success." — Shelley Anne Richter*

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“Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.”

— Robert Frost

Fencing has been erected around the Norman Central Library, 103 W. Acres, as workers remediate mold. The \$39 million building opened in 2019, but water leaks persisted. Mold was even found in the Pioneer Room where we meet. On January 5 Veronica Tracy, the Norman Parks and Recreation Dept’s public relations director, said the remediation is ongoing. A definite date to reopen hasn’t been set, but she will update us as more information becomes available.



OUR NEW “DIGS!” — THE CLEVELAND COUNTY WELLNESS CENTER  
210 SOUTH JAMES GARNER AVENUE



## DECEMBER TREASURER'S REPORT

by Linda Basinger

**PREVIOUS BALANCE:** **\$1,280.01**

### INCOME

|                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Basinger, '24 Dues   | 25.00        |
| Botner '24 Dues      | 25.00        |
| Brannon, '24 Dues    | 25.00        |
| Coker, '24 Dues      | 25.00        |
| Hester, '24 Dues     | 25.00        |
| MacFadzean, '24 Dues | 25.00        |
| Park, '24 Dues       | 25.00        |
| Payne, '24 Dues      | 25.00        |
| Raney, '24 Dues      | 25.00        |
| McCarty, '24 Dues    | 25.00        |
| Anonymous Donation   | <u>20.00</u> |

**TOTAL INCOME** **\$270.00**

**SUB TOTAL** **\$1,550.01**

### EXPENSES

|                                                                 |                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Contest Awards, Cks #1576—1600                                  | 260.00                  |
| Lutheran Church TY, Ck #1601                                    | 50.00                   |
| Helen Duchon, Contest Awards and<br>Creative Expenses, Ck #1602 | 66.81                   |
| Mary Payne, Microphone Head Set,<br>and Luncheon Décor          | Set-up,<br><u>33.97</u> |

**TOTAL EXPENSES** **\$410.78**

**CURRENT BALANCE** **\$1,129.23**

### Membership Dues!

Galaxy dues for the membership year 2024 are \$25 and they become due on **January 1, 2024**.

Mail dues to: Galaxy Treasurer, P. O. Box 5581, Norman, OK 73070.

If you have any questions, please contact Treasurer Linda Basinger at [beammeuptoo@icloud.com](mailto:beammeuptoo@icloud.com)

**FEBRUARY'S WRITELINE DEADLINE:**  
**JANUARY 26, 2024; marpayne@netscape.com**



IF YOU FEEL  
SOMETHING  
CALLING YOU TO  
DANCE OR WRITE  
OR PAINT OR SING,  
PLEASE REFUSE TO  
WORRY ABOUT  
WHETHER YOU'RE  
GOOD ENOUGH.  
JUST DO IT.

Glennon Doyle Melton

tinybuddha.com

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## MORE BRAGS . . .

**Barbara Shepherd** placed 1<sup>st</sup> in Poetry, 2<sup>nd</sup> in Short Story, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Feature Article, Inspirational, and Humor categories in the Oklahoma City Writers, Inc. annual contest, was a Finalist in a publisher's Get Pubbed contest, and received a 1<sup>st</sup> HM in the La Viness Short Story Contest.

She won the title of Artist of the Month at the Edmond Art Association.

She presented awards in OKC for the Poetry Society of

Oklahoma and signed books and sold paintings at the Pumpkin Harvest Craft Festival in Yukon. Two of her oil paintings, a watercolor, and a photograph were accepted into an art exhibition at the Edmond Public Library.

*MURDER IN TORNADO ALLEY*, an anthology by

Sisters in Crime mystery authors and published by Dark Force Press, includes a short story and a truecrime poem by Shepherd.

## NEW TORNADO ALLEY PODCAST

Award-winning Oklahoma author Rilla Askew, who received the 2009 Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, will be featured on Episode 28 of the Tornado Alley Mystery Writers' podcast to be published January 12, 2024. You can find the podcast on Buzzsprout, Spotify, Google, or Apple.

Askew is the author of five novels, a book of stories, and a collection of creative nonfiction, as well as plays, articles, and essays. In this interview, Rilla reads from and discusses her novel about the Tulsa Race Massacre, *Fire in Beulah*, which received the American Book Award. She also talks about her most recent novel, *Prize for the Fire*, the harrowing tale of the Early Modern

Reformist and writer Anne Askew, who was burned as a heretic in 1546.

For more information, contact Melissa Hearn at [noirhoor@gmail.com](mailto:noirhoor@gmail.com).

## INDUSTRY NEWS

HARPER/COLLINS Young Adult imprint Magpie has launched their Midnight Collection for new adults. The books are termed 'spicy,' a euphemism meaning the books will have a strong focus on sex and romance. One of the first authors to be featured in the collection will be Elizabeth Helen who wrote the Beast of the Briar Series, which was originally self-published.

QUERYTRACKER.NET is a great way to research potential agents for your awesome manuscript. The site lists 1,786 agents. You can explore agent data and organize and track your queries. If you choose to pay an annual fee of \$25, you can post the date of your query and the site will track where your manuscript falls in each agent's cue with updates. It's a wonderful resource for writers!

AUTHOR REBECCA YARROS snagged the #1 and #2 slots for top selling books in USA TODAY's January 3 poll, with her two Empyrean novels, *The Fourth Wing* and *Iron Flame*. "Dragon riders make their own rules." USA TODAY publishes sales figures every Wednesday for the previous week. You can check out the top 150 sellers at <https://www.usatoday.com/booklist>.

## BIG NAMES SLID INTO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

ON JAN. 1, 2024

Lady Chatterley's Lover — D. H. Lawrence

Orlando — Virginia Wolff

Peter Pan — J. M. Barrie

The House at Pooh Corner — A. A. Milne

"Steamboat Willie," the original Mickey Mouse  
And more . . .

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**NEXT GALAXY**  
**MEETING**  
February 10, 2024  
at "The Well"  
at "The Well"

**210 South James Garner Ave.**

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[www.facebook.com/Norman Galaxy](https://www.facebook.com/NormanGalaxy)

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