

WriteLine



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May 9th Meeting by Sherry Bynum

“Contract Publishing: Advantages and Disadvantages,” Mary Stanaszek

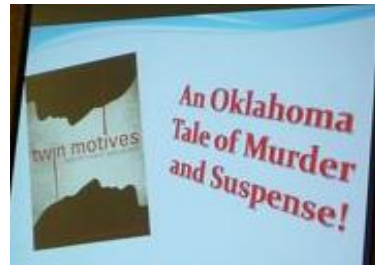
Mary Stanaszek, Assistant to the Outreach Director, University of Oklahoma Religious Studies Program is our guest author for our May 9th Galaxy meeting. Mary has several professional publications; however, along the way she also became interested in writing children’s books. It is our good fortune that she is willing to share her experiences with contract publishing with us. You will have the opportunity to hear first-hand the process she took in acquiring a publisher for her first book, *Sara Wants to Know*. If you have ever thought about contract publishing, Mary will be able to walk you through the contract publishing process: project management, editing, book production services, (illustration, cover design, typesetting, proofreading), registrations and fulfillment services. She will also be able to explain some of the differences between mainstream and children contract publishing. Mary will be able to share her perspective as to the advantages and disadvantages of contract publishing.

You won’t want to miss our May 9th guest speaker, Mary Stanaszek; author of *Sara Wants to know*. Be sure to come with your questions.

Thanks for all your messages of condolences for our son Peter. I am blessed to have such wonderful friends. — Helen Duchon

Speaker Notes by Kathleen Park

On April 4th, writers Phil Kemp and Mark Robinson gave us an hour of insight into the elements of a murder mystery, technical



information about murderous means—especially poison—and the joys and challenges of collaboration. With wit and humor, the two “home-school dads” talked about how they met weekly at dawn for five years in whatever McDonald’s or Braum’s that was open to write *Twin Motives*, published by Tate Publishers here in Norman.

Robinson said he came up with the plot and then wished he could find a serial killer to help him with the details, “But the closest I could come to that was Phil.”

Kemp, with a 25-year career as the chief forensic toxicologist in the Oklahoma medical examiner’s office and a doctorate in Pharmacology, gave examples—often humorous, if a bit grisly—of drugs, poisons, and real cases of murder by poison. Before writing this novel, his usual writing tasks were of a technical and scientific nature.

The two talked about the journey of writing, about how they came to work together, their writing styles, and different areas of expertise. “We think alike,” Robinson said. “We both tend to think out of the box—crazy—and we have a similar sense of humor.” cont’d. on p. 3

Markets by Ann Champeau

(From "Eight Article Enhancers to Boost Your Bottom Line" by Jennifer Brown Banks in November, 2008 issue of Writing for Dollars newsletter www.writingfordollars.com)

Banks writes that you can give your work a winning edge with these eight tips:

1. PHOTOGRAPHS...add visual variety.
2. QUIZZES...provoke thought and self-analysis.
3. STUDY RESULTS...can help support your position on a topic.
5. ANECDOTES...help to connect with readers.
6. BULLET POINTS...provide...an easier read.
7. POETRY OR LIGHT VERSE...evoke(s) emotion.
8. AH-HA Moments...helps enlighten...audience and win loyal fans

Jennifer Brown Banks is an award-winning poet, columnist, editor, instructor and author of *A Paradox In Pink*, available at AMAZON.COM. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for Chicago Writers Association. E-mail: JenniferWriter@Yahoo.com

Brag Sheet

Sales and Acceptances

AMY TREADWELL: Sold "Audition for Evil" to an annual science fiction anthology, the 2009 Triangulation Anthology, Pittsburgh, PA.

FRANCES SEARCEY: Sold Untitled poem to *Mature Living*.

KIETH EATON: Sold short story to OCCC literary magazine in April the *Absolute 2009*.

KATHLEEN NORRIS PARK: Produced monthly newsletter for Bahá'ís of Norman; various work-for-hire pieces.

Quick Tips from Hither, Thither, and Yon:

- for screenwriters; check out www.storylink.com/event/554
- Southwest Writers Conference on THE NOVEL, Saturday, Aug. 15, 2009. See www.southwestwriters.com.

- Look at www.MaryBuckham.com
May 3 - 16, 2009
MASTER SYNOPSIS Two-week online Workshop. For more info visit
<http://www.writersonlineclasses.com/>

Grammar Column by Jill Case Brown

The Ugly Verb Contest

Some verbs are ugly because of their meaning: lynch, vomit, spit. For others, unattractiveness is more a function of how the word sounds when spoken aloud: gullet, asked, crepuscular. Others seem ugly only to those who have to conjugate them—i.e., writers. From this last category, if Galaxy members held a contest to choose the ugliest verb in the English language, my guess is most would vote for the evil twins "lie" and "lay."

I've seen them misused in newspapers, books, and magazines. One speaker, reading his work aloud at a Galaxy meeting, confidently intoned a "lay" that should have been "lie." Even those of us who believe we've thoroughly memorized the conjugations of these two verbs find our fingers hesitating over the keyboard and our lips moving in a kind of grammatical incantation.

The basic difference between "lie" and "lay" is that the latter requires an object. In the present tense we **lie** down; we **lay** down our burden. Clear enough. But when we shift to the past tense, we discover that these twins are conjoined and **lay**'s present is **lie**'s past: yesterday we **lay** down; yesterday we **laid** down our burden. Present perfect isn't user-friendly either, but at least it doesn't change sides: we have **lain** down; we have cont'd on p. 3

Grammar, cont'd.

laid down our burden.

Lie, lay, lain.

Lay, laid, laid.

You can also **lay** yourself down, or part of yourself, as long as you name it, as in, “He **laid** his head on the pillow,” or the childhood prayer: “Now I **lay** me down to sleep.”

As for me, I now **lay** down my commitment to write these grammar columns, because in June I’m moving to Colorado. I want to take this opportunity to say that I will miss you all . . . and to do a little sniveling self-justification.

If over the past year you’ve found parts of these grammar columns confusing, blame it on technology. In the transfer from my computer to the WriteLine, italics have often disappeared, and it took me this long to realize it. I’ve used italics generously to set apart words or give examples, and their obliteration makes for confusing reading. Here’s an example from last month:

A generation ago, a novelist would have written, “He thought that her eyes, glittering with tears, were the most beautiful that he’d ever seen.” Today we would simplify, twice chopping that out to get, “He thought her eyes, glittering with tears, were the most beautiful he’d ever seen.”

Try italicizing each ‘that.’ Makes more sense, doesn’t it?

I apologize for any and all confusion and—okay, you’re right—some of it might just be bad writing. That you can **lay** at my door.



Robinson & Kemp, cont'd.

They agreed that it takes compromise, willingness to be flexible, able to accept criticism, and honest enough to say what you think. They counted the advantages: accountability, meeting the dates for doing the work, and sharing expenses—they split everything 50-50. Collaboration can be a cure for writer’s block, too.

“One of the pair might be in the ‘go mode,’ while the other isn’t, and you can help each other move forward,” Kemp said. Of course, there’s the possibility that one can slow things down, too. Together they had a larger pool of ideas, served as a sounding board for new ideas, and found their complementary skills and expertise. Kemp can write one scene, Robinson the other, but most readers cannot see the seams.

There can be disadvantages to writing together as well. They laughed about sharing the so-far meager profits and those meeting schedules (sometimes 5:30 a.m.) There’s the danger of damaged friendship, but they reported it didn’t happen with them.

Robinson called Tate Publishing a “high-end publisher.” Both were satisfied with their experience and generously answered our questions. Tate has design and marketing departments, and a careful editor. The publisher set up Mardel, Hastings, distributors like Ingram, and made marketing phone calls suggested by Kemp and Robinson. The men liked the editing job that Tate did. Tate provided the initial 125 copies. After that, the authors buy the books; and when they do the selling themselves, **cont'd. on p. 4**

Robinson & Kemp, cont'd.

they earn the highest profit. When book sales go to 5,000 copies, Tate refunds the initial investment. The book is available online and in a number of bookstores.

“We learned a lot.” Kemp said. “And I see it all as an investment.”

Twin Motives is a tale of murder and suspense involving twins, the Vietnam War, and has scenes at Thunderbird Lake and other OK locations.

What makes a good murder mystery?

The mystery, like other novels, must have conflict. What causes conflict? Conflict arises when something bad happens. Robinson enumerated the types of conflict: with another character, an institution, nature, or with himself.

Suspense is the state of uncertainty. Collateral stories are the result of an event; other events flow out of that.



Kemp

Third component is the murder. There must be one, of course. Considering means, they showed several examples of common items that can be poison, depending on dose.

Fringe characters can take the reader down different paths and can strengthen the “meat” of the story. They can also strengthen the reader’s “emotional ride,” and create suspense.

The final component is a strong ending! You must satisfy the reader’s uncertainty, treat the reader’s anxiety; you don’t want the reader to feel cheated. The ending must be believable, must make sense and have a logical connection with the plot. Good to throw in an unexpected twist to make the reader say, “I didn’t expect that! I didn’t see that coming.”



Robinson

Substitute Editor’s Note

Friends, please excuse the several lapses (lost reports, etc.) in this issue. We can all hope and trust that the newsletter’s usual excellence will return with Helen next month. —Kathleen Park

OWFI Keynote

Free attendance at Tess Gerritsen’s Keynote Speech, May 1, Friday evening banquet. Anyone may attend this program; call or e-mail Marcia Preston to be on the reservation list. Phone 405.348.3325; e-mail Marcia@marciapreston.com.

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Mail to Lynn Wendelbo, Treasurer
4103 Northhampton Dr. Norman, OK 73072

Kathleen Norris Park, Editor, 405-310-6512
1901 Oakcreek Dr, Norman, OK 73071
E-MAIL: knpark@yahoo.com
President Madelaine Culp 405-872-8973
VP-Programs Sherry Byum 405-364-7818
Secretary Dion Mayes 405-321-4506
Treasurer Lynn Wendelbo 405-364-7383
Editor Helen Duchon 405-329-2485
Cheer/Members Ann Champeau 405-364-0232
Friday Writers Frances Searcey 405-321-6404
Markets Ann Champeau 405-364-0232
Publicity Marilyn Fleeer 405-321-8834
Grammarian Jill Case Brown 405-447-0577
Grammarian Kathleen Park 405-310-6512
NAC Roundtable Helen Duchon 405-329-2485
OWFI Delegate Dion Mayes 405-321-4506
OWFI Delegate Ann Champeau 405-364-0232
OWFI Delegate Judith Evans 405-329-4138
OWFI Treas. Linda Basinger 405-366-0123

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