



Manatee Musings



November 2024

New Schedule

Dear fellow writers,

After discussions and input before a couple of our critique meetings and learning what other writers groups do, we have a new schedule. The purpose is to be more inclusive and accommodate folks for whom 6:00 Wednesdays doesn't work.

STARTING IN NOVEMBER

We will be meeting twice a month instead of every week. This will give everyone more time to write and also time to digest the critiques.

SCHEDULE

Wednesday, October 30 - 6:00 - Zoom

**Saturday, November 9 12:30-2:30
Braden River Branch Library**



BRADEN RIVER BRANCH ([MAP](#))
4915 53rd Avenue East
Bradenton, FL 34203-4198
(941) 727-6079

THE MANATEE WRITERS SUNDAY BRUNCH - NOVEMBER 3

11 AM

**Riverhouse Waterfront Restaurant
995 Riverside Drive, Palmetto, FL 34221**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME !
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE !
Please RSVP to
micheleknudsen@aol.com**

Wednesday, November 20 - 6:00 - Zoom

Saturday, November 30, - 1- 3:00 Library (we may not want to meet Thanksgiving weekend - survey to follow)

December 11, 6:00 - Zoom

Saturday, December 21 - Library (again, holiday considerations)

It will probably take a little time to iron out our new schedule, especially with the holidays but we'll continue to press on. Perhaps January will go a little more smoothly. No more hurricanes and no blizzards to worry about either.

Every Good Wish,
Barbara
(barbara@barbarabusenbark.com)

WritersCon 2024 Takeaways

For those of you who couldn't make this years WritersCon, here are some of the takeaways from those who did attend.

Michele Knudsen

The FLA Writers Conference this year proved to be one of the best. Paul Iasevoli did a terrific job organizing the conference. He got a top-notch Keynote Address Speaker in Richard Blanco. Paul selected a marvelous array of delicious food, and kept busy working hard to make sure everything went smoothly. The conference ran without a noticeable hitch. Praise for Paul!

Barbara Busenbark buzzed around day and night to snap candid and posed pictures of everyone taking part and having fun. Thanks to Barbara for a job well done! We hope to see many of your pictures soon.

Four of our own Manatee Writers were selected for FWA's Collection, Volume 16. David Pearce for his story [Rotag](#), Michele V. Knudsen's short story [A Change of Heart](#), Jim Garrison's scary tale [Becoming](#), and Barbara Busenbark historical [Marguerite's Awakening](#) were included in FWA's Collection16, *Metamorphosis*. Each year many of our group are chosen for this honor. Our Critique Group Reigns!

The Royal Palm awards covered all the winning recipients in record time this year. Congratulations to our own David Pearce who not only won Silver in the Unpublished Book-



*Left to Right -
Michele signing
the collection, folks enjoying the Mixer, Paul, Mary Ann (FWA President), Anne (Board Member), brother of Mary Ann, Michele, Keynote speaker, Richard Blanco, Rick leading the panel discussion, Richard Blanco with President Obama, Bill in a workshop*

WritersCon 2024 Takeaways (con't)

Length Science Fiction Book Category for his book, *The Reality Rescue* but was one of the few books chosen as Book of the Year.

Lots of great memories from the Conference this year. Here's hoping if you couldn't attend this one, you will get to attend next year because it just gets better and better!

Bill Griffith

Writing is a conundrum. Creating worlds and toying with the emotions of readers is a personal high that has few equals from my personal experience. When we share our work with other "like-minded" souls a bond of camaraderie is natural and rewarding. It is fun listening about the imaginary worlds and/or the real places the minds of our colleagues etch into reality through the eternal process of combining words into sentences and paragraphs. Listening to their personal stories of how they struggle with grasping thoughts that sometimes evaporate faster than rain drops on asphalt in the July Florida sun confirms we are not alone. Our crazy lives aren't so crazy after all.

There are others seeking the joy and pain we treasure. The sense of accomplishment when the story has been captured. The blood, sweat and tears that come from editing. The sharing of the midnight hours when



Author showing spreadsheet of agent queries

Dave Pearce

WritersCon2024 provided some insight about the importance of building an email list to promote sales and how to go about it. I also interacted with some new folks during the networking periods. Every year is a positive experience.



we fellow authors wake and grasp for a pen and any form of paper to capture elements of a dream that will only be real if we record it now. Groping for lightning bugs and carefully placing them in a bottle and hoping they will be alive in the morning. The best thing about the FWA conference is that we authors come together and discover our bizarre life is shared. As Shakespeare said "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

The hard reality from our conference is the mortality rate of authors

WritersCon 2024 Takeaways (con't)

reaching their publishing dreams is lower than the survival rate of stage IV Pancreatic Cancer. Self publish and the book is real and will likely be purchased by no more than 200 people (friends and family). Traditionally published authors are not just rare. They are revered and placed on podiums. Less than 1% of queries achieve traditional publication. As an amateur golfer, I would have a better chance of making the PGA tour.

Barbara Busenbark

As the official photographer for WritersCon2024, I didn't get to spend a lot of time in any particular workshop. If a topic interested me, I'd run around taking pictures of the other ones and then settle into the workshop I found most pertinent to my situation.

Without meaning to stay any length of time I sat in on a talk about publishing contracts. With all the pitfalls that can lead to disaster and the fact that



you'd still need to do a lot of your own marketing, I was glad I self-published. Since I spent my working life as a graphic designer, I have definite ideas and preferences about design. It would truly be a difficult situation for me, if I were offered a contract and had no say on the cover design or the interior of my book.

The less than meager percentage of folks that get contracts as stated by two authors and an agent only reinforced my sense of the futility of pursuing the agent/publishing company route. One author wrote to eight-hundred agents. I don't have the patience for that.

I did set aside time for a marketing workshop and got some good ideas. A session on choosing the right word caught me off guard. I didn't think it sounded like a top choice for me but as I was taking pictures, I wished I could have stayed for the whole lecture.

There were valuable courses for people at different points in their writing/publishing journey.

Since I am embarking on writing a second book while also marketing my first there were quite a few that sparked my interest and gave me some great ideas. Throw in some inspiration and I'm once again starting to put some words down.



Manatee Writers Group

INTRODUCTION FOR NEW MEMBERS

And a refresher for existing members

The following guidelines provide information on both the technical aspects of joining a meeting and the formatting recommendations. New members usually need so time to get acclimated to the process and existing member can provide guidance if needed.



Guidelines for the Manatee Writers Group

1. Sandwich Method. Try to start and end your critique with something positive about the writing. Be professional, courteous, and objective.
2. Critique the Writing, Not the Person. A critique is about improving the writing. Critiquing the person will only lead to acrimony.
3. No Arguments with Person Giving a Critique. Remember that the person giving the critique may not understand your work the way you do. You are free to implement or reject whatever comments you receive about your work after the meeting.
4. No Interruptions of Reader or Other Speakers. Unless you're lost as to what page the reader is on, try to avoid interrupting the reader. Save your critique until it's your turn.
5. Try to Avoid Bringing Back the Same Piece More than Once. Please polish your piece as much as possible on your own before bringing it to group. If you've completely overhauled your piece, such as changing the point of view, then it is acceptable to bring it back to the group.
6. Be Aware of Personal Preferences. Everyone has their own tastes in genre. Try to critique a piece as though you are a reader of that genre.
7. Avoid Unhelpful Vague Generalizations. Try to be as specific as possible with a critique. Give examples where possible.
8. Minimize Critiques of SPaG. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar do not need to be emphasized during an oral critique. There are tools to help a writer improve these mechanics. If you spot a missing comma, mark it during your reading and move on. This will help move the meeting along.
9. Be Aware of Style. Try to avoid rewriting for the writer. Examples are fine but rewriting whole paragraphs can destroy an author's voice.
10. Be Sensitive. Recognize that sometimes your writing may stray into certain avoidable stereotypes or lead to cultural appropriation, racial appropriation, etc, which may offend some readers. Be self-aware of these situations to avoid losing readers unnecessarily.
11. Be Patient. We cater to all levels of writing skill. Use whatever knowledge you have of writing to help and encourage those who are just starting out.

Manatee Writers Group (cont'd)

12. **Summarize Your Work.** Remember to give a brief summary of your work before you read. Tell the group if the piece is a part of a novel. Let us know genre. Let us know what the story is about.
13. **Thick Skin.** Remember that you're here to improve your writing. There will be times when a critique stings your pride. Remember that the critique is YOURS. Do with it what you will. Avoid the temptation to give a "revenge" critique.
14. **Be Curious.** Ask questions when needed about any comments that you don't understand. This will help foster your learning and improve your writing.
15. **Keep Complaints Private.** If you have concerns about your fellow writers

CRITIQUE MEETINGS

All our meetings are conducted on Zoom as well as in person. The schedule of in-person meeting locations is listed in the newsletter. If there is a change in venue it will be posted online via our social media pages.

A few words for those new to Manatee Writers on how to participate in our weekly critique sessions. We hold hybrid

ZOOM LOGIN INFORMATION

To join via Zoom click on the link below. **Zoom Link**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/99604842495?pwd=TFZPOE9lc1RhYW4vOVFPMUxPSDRwUT09>

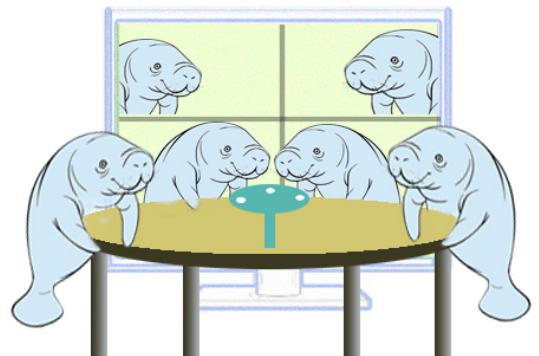
Meeting ID: 996 0484 2495

Passcode: punctuate

LINK TO GOOGLE DOCS FOLDER

FWA Documents

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1y3gZZDbS89Acl2JwAFgMf8SXYfc-YUIJ>



JOIN US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/manateewriters>)



Scribophile (<https://www.scribophile.com/groups/manatee-writers/>)

Manatee Writers Group (cont'd)

meetings the last Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm and the second Saturday. They can last from two to three hours depending on the number of submissions being critiqued.

An in-person group gathers at various locations depending on availability, and those who cannot attend join via Zoom. Occasional technical glitches aside, this approach has been very successful.

Members seeking feedback on their work upload them to our shared Google cloud storage here - <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1y3gZZDbS89Acl2JwAFgMf8SXYfc-YUIJ>. Details for how to do that can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CCtHXr1HVIv54fdeXLeezK34tlyNe6AT/edit>

Writers joining the in-person sessions also provide hard copies of their work to distribute to others during the meeting. Attendees can also provide their own hard copies. Check our social media pages for last minute information.

We encourage authors to use the following formatting when submitting documents.

- Times New Roman, 12 points.
- Double spaced.
- No spacing between paragraphs.
- Indent the first line of each paragraph $\frac{1}{2}$ " using the horizontal ruler (no tabs or spaces).

Please limit your submissions to 2,000 words or less (as rendered using the suggested formatting).

Each author reads their work to the group, then the members in attendance (online and in person) offer their comments and suggestions.

The order in which submissions are read is based on the order in which they are submitted to the shared Google Docs folder.

Hopefully, this answers any questions about how our meetings are organized. If not, feel free to reach out to us. Happy writing!

