

SIERRA WRITERS  
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**Special features:**

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# Summer 2014

July 2014

## President's Message

### *It's a wrap!*

Thanks to many wonderfully engaging speakers and workshop coordinators, Sierra Writers was able to offer a wide range of writing topics to our community and members over the 2013-2014 season. From website organization, to self-promotional activities, to writing for our local newspaper, we hosted it all at the Madelyn Helling Library Community Room. On top of that, we kicked off the season with a potluck and open mic night.

In case you couldn't join us, our last meeting of the year was **Jerri Glover**, who revved us up for the summer by giving us some tools—(*More than*) *10 Habits of Highly Prolific Writers*. Jerri is a Toastmaster speaker, and offers an online community for artists at [nevadacountymakes.com](http://nevadacountymakes.com). Get in touch with Jerri if you are interested in her monthly meeting about goal setting and motivation.

We also hosted two Open Reads this year, in October and March. As many can attest, these events are great opportunities to hear our writing read out loud—which can be very different than what we hear in our heads! Interestingly, these meetings are often attended by nonmembers, and bring new members to our group. Regardless of whether you are a member, I hope you'll take the time to attend these in the upcoming year.

### *Planning for the next year of events*

July and August bring our group's hiatus; our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 10. At the moment, our calendar for next year is wide open, so if you'd like to be involved in the planning of our speakers and event for the 2014-2015 season, please let me or another Board Member know. Most likely I'll be sending out an e-mail inviting members and others to provide input at a meeting for this purpose in the near future. Your ideas are important and needed!

For such a small area, I'm always amazed at how many creative and talented people are among us; in quite a few cases, I've even been able to help get a book or two off

*Either write something  
worth reading or do  
something worth writing.*

~ Ben Franklin

“Good friends,  
good books, and  
a sleepy con-  
science: this is  
the ideal life.”

— Mark Twain

## **President's Message *cont.***

the ground, and that's been really exciting. It's been my privilege, this past year, to serve as your President, and I look forward to helping our organization foster another year of speakers, critique groups, and many, many writing projects. Thanks for all you do to support our group.

Happy summer!

***Susan Gabrielle***

### **COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES**

Sierra Writers are invited to attend the COMMUNITY OF WRITERS at Squaw Valley. Check their web-site [www.squawvalleywriters.org](http://www.squawvalleywriters.org). Note that some events require reservations and a small fee.

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For an ongoing list of creative writing opportunities, consider joining the YahooGroups list CRWROPPS-B.

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*Sierra Writers* members may use this newsletter or the website to promote their book, classes, or other workshops. Organizations that serve the writing community of Nevada County may submit announcements to upcoming events. Send information to Linda Horning, [hornings2@gmail.com](mailto:hornings2@gmail.com) or Hock G. Tjoa, [hgtjoa@gmail.com](mailto:hgtjoa@gmail.com)

**“As you know, Sierra Writers offers several venues to support the writer on his/her journey.”**

### **Support the Newsletter**

Consider submitting **your** writing for the quarterly Newsletter. Perhaps you attended a notable workshop or class and it helped your writing blossom. Maybe some feedback on your own writing will help other writers. Or maybe you’ve always wanted to have a regular quarterly column offering tips from your favorite writers.

Submissions do **not** have to be long. Small “sidebars,” tips, publication notes, or snippets from your current work-in-progress are always considered.

Is there a Newsletter to which you subscribe that you eagerly await each month? Sierra Writers would like its Newsletter to be of benefit to the members, opened each quarter with the understanding that it will contain information valuable in the writing journey. Will you help?

### **HOW TO WRITE GOOD**

1. **Avoid alliteration. Always.**
  2. **Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.**
  3. **Avoid cliches like the plague. They’re old hat.**
  4. **Comparisons are as bad as cliches.**
  5. **Be more or less specific.**
  6. **Writers should never generalize.**
- Seven: Be consistent!**
8. **Don’t be redundant; don’t use more words than necessary; it’s highly superfluous.**
  9. **Who needs rhetorical questions?**
  10. **Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.**

**BONUS: Remember to always trust spellcheck when your righting.**

Downloaded/copied from Goodreads.com /Review Group/Discussion/General/Jokes, etc./post #216 (Feb. 25, 2014), on June 14, 2014.

**“How can you promote Sierra Writers? Do you know of others who write and might be helped by what we have to offer?”**

**Babbette Donaldson** on being traditionally published

Like all writers I dreamed of being published traditionally and anticipated the experience as one of “having finally arrived”. I’m of an age to suffer the old prejudice that being only self-published still equated with shades of vanity and failure, even though my self-publishing projects have been interesting and challenging. So, when I was finally asked by a major publisher to write a non-fiction book in one of their series, I was excited. But it wasn’t quite like I anticipated.

I was on vacation when the editor phoned. I was on the short list of writers they were considering. The basic outline was set but I was given five days to return a full proposal for developing each chapter. There would be twenty chapters plus appendices and some very specific introductory content. Each section had a set word count, tone and format. Each chapter would be between 3000 and 5000 words. The final word count had to be approximately 85,000 words. There were a minimum number of H1 headings. Each H1 needed to be supported by several H2 headings so that there would not be large blocks of text. Sidebars (shaded boxes) had to follow the same formula that branded all the books in the series. Bullet points, numbered lists and quotes were also structured into the writer guidelines. I was given two months to provide them with a nearly-final draft, including adding the code to each content element; indicating normal flush, style of headlines and sidebars, etc.. This spanned much of the holiday season – including flu season, power outages and family crises. Deadlines were firm because the production team had an equally tight schedule to complete the catalog and provide material to the sales team.

The book is now in print. It was posted for pre-sales on Amazon before I saw the cover. The Bookseller called to say that their order was in two weeks before the official pub date and then my case of author copies arrived on my doorstep a few days later. There are many things I love about working with this process – especially the feeling that I’m part of a large team. I enjoyed the structured writing as an entirely new style. The pressure of deadlines made me feel that I survived and finished a marathon. But I also feel that I’ve come to a place where I value the traditional and independent publishing equally. I think that having published and marketed on my own gave me skills that are valuable to my team on this book, Everything Healthy Tea and that working with their protocols has disciplined me a publisher.

### Promotional Aphorisms for Self-published Authors

By **Lawrence W. Gold, M.D.** (who is converting his books into audio format)

#### EMOTIONAL BARRIERS:

If self-promotion doesn't come easy to you, get over it. Unless you're a celebrity, a felon, or a politician caught with his pants down, self-promotion is the only way that readers will get to know you and your work.

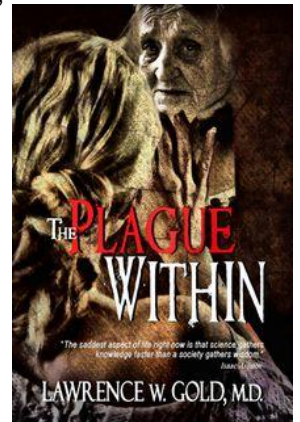
Love writing, and especially grow to love editing.

#### NUTS AND BOLTS:

If it takes more than ten minutes to review your creative writing/promo emails, unsubscribe to all but the most important. Spend your time writing.

Writing is a craft; learn it, and use it. "It's none of their business that you have to learn to write. Let them think you were born that way."— Ernest Hemingway. Look up what Hemingway said about 'first drafts'.

After you've learned the writing craft, it changes the way you read others. You'll note immediately that many popular and successful writers break all the rules. They can get away with it; you can't.



#### LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND PROCRASTINATION:

If you never get it down on the page, neither you, nor anyone else can tell if you have talent and/or what steps are needed to improve.

If you're not a celebrity or someone in the public eye, assure that your book is well-written, topical, and emotionally satisfying to the reader.

Avoid grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors (translation: get an editor). Readers of good-will may ignore these errors, but to many, such mistakes ignite the flames of criticism. Why let a good book suffer needlessly?

Web sites:

Many educational websites are excellent for the beginner, but beware of the ones that promise you the world, or ask for money.

Social Networking: You don't have to like social networking to make it an effective promotional tool. Get to know them first and then choose which ones to use and which to avoid.

#### PREPARING TO PROMOTE:

Book promo sites will all ask for similar information: book's name, author's name and email address, genre, ASIN number, link to book, publication date, brief synopsis 100-250 words (sometimes a maximum number of characters) etc. Imagine doing this fifty times. How difficult and tedious this will be unless: 1. You let (pay) someone else do it i.e. ebookbooster.com, or 2. Use tools that save each piece of information so that you can enter them with keyboard shortcuts i.e. Autohotkey (Windows) or TextExpander (MAC).

## ABOUT OUR CRITIQUE GROUPS

## Sierra Writers Non-fiction Critique Group

By

Jan Westmore

Serious writers meet once a month to read their work and critique. Over 15 years ago, John Skinner and I started the current non-fiction critique group at my home. At first, we could only count on the two of us, but we swapped input and marketing ideas. We shared opportunities and worked on honing our skills. At the time, we had both begun to write articles for *Sierra Heritage* and *Parents Resource Guide Magazines*.

Today we have 10-15 active participants in the critique group. Many have become published for the first time during their membership in Sierra Writers. Some of the original group still participates for the fellowship and the opportunity not only to perfect their own work, but also to contribute to the growth of others. Of course, each writer has the obligation to listen to the group feedback, but also the prerogative to ignore the recommendations. With 8-10 people at every meeting, there are always different takes on each individual work. Often, we see our own vagaries or technical flaws just through the exercise of reading our work aloud.

Understanding the business of writing becomes as important as creating the words. In the non-fiction world, it is critical for salability to clearly define the audience and carefully scope your work to that market. That often determines salability. Frequently, we must give up favorite phrases, even paragraphs or whole pages, to tighten the work and meet the expected word count. The lay public has no idea that published work is not just a product of jotting down words. Creative writing and appropriate structuring of each piece, no matter how lengthy, requires often painful fine-tuning with numerous drafts — too many to count.

Today, the breadth and depth of our collective work spans from memoirs and feature articles to Op-eds and books. Subject matter ranges from mental health, fly fishing, teaching in China and Gold Country history to humor and travel — just to name a few. Our oldest member, a dear friend and prolific writer, will turn 100 this year. Our youngest may be forty-something, though no one would dare ask.

We now meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at my home in Nevada City. Current membership in Sierra Writers is required in order to participate in the critique group. For more information, contact me at [jwestmore@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jwestmore@sbcglobal.net).





## Reviews

Writers looking to get reviewed should consider joining Goodreads.com. One of the many groups that are helpful in getting one's book(s) reviewed is called just that — the Review Group (over 1200 members to date). Basically, you join a Review Round (currently forming Group 42) in which there are ten writers and you review four of them within about three months and four of the others review your book. The idea is to avoid having authors reviewing each other's work (i.e., no reciprocal reviewing). Books are exchanged in various electronic formats with Kindle and pdf being the most popular. (Questions? Ask Hock.)

## Groups

Note: Critique and writing support groups are open only to members of *Sierra Writers*

### Poetry Critique Group

Contact Susan Gabrielle

[s\\_gabrielle@sbcglobal.net](mailto:s_gabrielle@sbcglobal.net)

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### Fiction critique group

For information, contact Ron Cherry (530)

478-5616; [romuluswolf@comcast.net](mailto:romuluswolf@comcast.net)

This group is actively seeking new members. Critique includes editing comments as well as structural and narrative suggestions. We hope you'll join us!

### Nonfiction critique group

For information, contact Jan Westmore (530)

265-0718; [jwestmore@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jwestmore@sbcglobal.net)

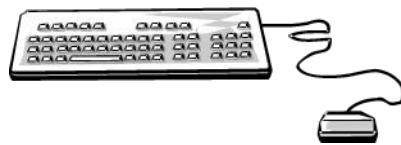
**The Non-fiction Group** meeting in Alta Sierra no longer meets. We wish to thank Tracy Deliman for hosting this group.

If you want help starting a critique group, or want to be in touch with members with similar genres, information may be found at: <http://sierrawriters.org/events/critique-groups/starting-a-critique-group>

## Get involved with *Sierra Writers*

**Sierra Writers** Sierra Writers in looking for Board members and volunteers to help with publicity, programs, and a variety of other opportunities. The publicity position is a great way to strengthen your PR skills as well as to help our organization grow. All of our board and volunteer positions are rewarding and without a huge time commitment.

**Members may have their own web pages**, which can be used in a variety of ways. Members may use their page to introduce themselves, to link users to information on how to purchase their books, or to link back to their own website. A new feature of the *Sierra Writers* website is a page listing links to our members' blogs. To add your info, contact Babette Donaldson, [babettedonaldson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:babettedonaldson@sbcglobal.net)



## Our Board

President, Susan Gabrielle, [s\\_gabrielle@sbcglobal.net](mailto:s_gabrielle@sbcglobal.net)

Treasurer, Marty Austin, [homebookkeeper@yahoo.com](mailto:homebookkeeper@yahoo.com)

Membership Coordinator, Nichole Renee Bowden, [nov-nika@msn.com](mailto:nov-nika@msn.com)

Publicity, Amy Rutten--[amy\\_rutten@yahoo.com](mailto:amy_rutten@yahoo.com)

Webmaster, Babette Donaldson,

[babettedonaldson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:babettedonaldson@sbcglobal.net)

Program Coordinator, Jan Fishler, [janfishler@gmail.com](mailto:janfishler@gmail.com)

## Newsletter Staff

Please send all newsletter submissions to

Linda Horning, [hornings2@gmail.com](mailto:hornings2@gmail.com)

Hock G. Tjoa, [hgtjoa@gmail.com](mailto:hgtjoa@gmail.com)

Fall Issue Pub. Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, Deadline – Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>

Theme: NaNoWriMo, Fiction. (Theme is suggestion only at this time.)

Submission guidelines can be found at [www.sierrawriters.org](http://www.sierrawriters.org)





“Be yourself;  
everyone else is already  
taken.”

— Oscar Wilde

We're on the web.  
[www.sierrawriters.org](http://www.sierrawriters.org)

If you want to join our members-only Yahoo group, visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sierrawriters> and click on the button, “Join this Group.”



## COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES

"The **Wildwood Literary Review (WLR)** is an on-line publication produced by the Wildwood Writer's Workshop, an activity sponsored by the Lake Wildwood Recreation Committee under its Life-Long Learning Program. The community of Lake Wildwood is located in Penn Valley, CA. The WLR is located at this internet site: [www.theWLR.org](http://www.theWLR.org).

The Editorial Board of the WLR invites members of the Sierra Writers Group to look at the WLR site frequently and to join in the quest for **Publication and Mutual Esteem**.

The purposes of the publication are to:

1. Provide a low cost and easily accessible forum for Nevada County, CA writers to display and distribute their work.
2. Encourage creative writing and thoughtful community discourse.
3. Encourage more reading of a variety of material for all visitors to the site.

The WLR publishes pieces of short fiction, memoirs, essays, poetry, and book reviews or book excerpts that are no more than 3,000 words long. The literary works displayed in the WLR are certified by the authors to be original work.

The WLR was established in Feb. 2011 and publishes a new issue four times a year with issues dated Feb., May, Aug. and Nov. Contributors are encouraged to submit suitable material by the following dates: Jan. 15, April 15, July 15 and Oct. 15. Material posted to the WLR is screened and approved for publication by an Editorial Board. See the guidelines for submission of material in the section of the web site entitled "Submission Guidelines."

Writers can submit their work in electronic form via E-mail to this address: [EdBoard-wlr@att.net](mailto:EdBoard-wlr@att.net). You can also contact the Editorial Board at that address with questions and comments.

Have some good reading, everyone. And let us see some of your work!

Mike Lambert, Publisher – Wildwood Literary Review"