

Gold Country Writers Dispatch

Our Mission is to Support Local Writers

Meeting Location
Auburn City Hall,
Rose Room: July 19
& 26



July
2017
Issue

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Picking Your Beta Readers

By Rachelle Gardner, Literary Agent, Editor, Writing Coach, downloaded from her Blog.

One of the most common pieces of advice writers are given is: **Get outside feedback**. Published or not, writers typically show their work to beta readers, critique partners, friends, family members or anyone who will read it, to get feedback before submitting to an editor, agent or publisher. I'm one of those who frequently gives this advice.

But here is a caveat:

All readers are not created equal.

Getting feedback from the wrong readers can be more than simply unhelpful — it can steer you in the wrong direction. Worse, you may not even realize the input you're receiving is bad. I can't tell you how many times authors have lamented about the contradictory, unhelpful or confusing feedback they're getting from readers, only to unpack it and realize they're simply not showing their work to the right people.

So how can you determine who should read your unpublished work prior to submission? Here are a few questions you can ask yourself, keeping in mind that qualified readers should probably fit **at least one** of these criteria:



Above, on the left, Club Secretary Michael O'Haver hands the gavel to the new President Betsy Schwarzentraub, signifying the transfer of leadership for Gold Country Writers, while Susan Korn waits to take over her role as VP of Internal Affairs.

Above, GCW Secretary Michael O'Haver conducts the installation ceremony for new GCW Officers. The terms for the two positions of President (Skip Michael) and Vice President of Internal Affairs (Chery Anderson) were up. They are not running for new positions. But Betsy Schwarzentraub, previously Vice President of Internal Affairs was elected President, so her position needed to be back-filled.

The new VP of Internal Affairs is Susan Korn. The new VP of External Affairs is Joyce Rule, (Not shown).

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PROSE



FROM THE PRES

Over these past years we've seen many changes in Gold Country Writers which have strengthened the group, deepened relationships, and offered services for so many talented and collaborative writers! I'm honored to be your new President, particularly with such artistic, committed participants and leaders!

Our range of resources for one another has expanded greatly, as different folks have stepped up to lead various initiatives. New spin-off critique groups have formed, the Writer's Platform Group meets monthly, and a community-wide book club is now taking shape. The quality of third-Wednesday presenters continues to be outstanding, and we're thrilled to welcome visitors and new members.

Summer is an excellent time to further our writing. One opportunity is the Writing Retreat Day on Thursday, July 27, from 9 to 2 at my home in Garden Valley. Bring a bag lunch (snacks provided), your own writing project to work on, and laptop or tablet if you like. This is country: wear walking shoes and meet the horses if you want. The house has Wi-Fi, and we'll have a reading session or critique group after lunch. It's open to members plus one guest each. Please RSVP to: 530-333-0852. We'll give you directions.

Betsy

GCW Meeting Schedule

Join the **Gold Country Writers** each Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 1279 High St., Auburn 95603. Our regular monthly schedule is:

First Wednesday: Business Meeting to discuss club business. All are welcome to come. This is followed by a closed meeting of the Lead Team.

Second & Fourth Wednesday: Drop-In Critique. This is the time when members present samples of their writing to the group (a maximum of five pages, double-spaced), and everyone gets to offer his or her critique.

Third Wednesday: Special educational programs of general interest to the club members. Topics change each month. See Page 6 for the Speaker of the Month. These are open to the public.

Fifth Wednesday: On the rare occasion that there is one, we have a special program at the church or meet at a local restaurant for brunch. Join us for fun and socializing with other members.

Writer's Quote

*And as imagination bodies forth
the forms of things unknown, the
poet's pen turns them to shapes
and gives to airy nothing
a local habitation and a name.*

*– William Shakespeare (from A
Midsummer Night's Dream)*

Writing Contests

Voices of Lincoln is holding a poetry contest. Entries can be in traditional rhyme, free verse, Haiku or other accepted poetry form.

Select up to three of the following categories and submit one of each: *Love is all around us*, *Dreams do come true*, *On the street where I live*, *Gone but not forgotten*, or *A second chance*.

Youth 18 and under have a separate category. Submission deadline is July 22, 2017. First, second and third-place awards in each category will be presented. Go to www.libraryatlincoln.org for entry form and

Santa Fe Writer's Award Deadline:
July 7, 2017, Entry Fee: \$25 E-mail address: info@sfwfp.com Website: <http://sfwp.com/2040-contest>

A prize of \$1,000 and publication by 2040 Books, an imprint of the Santa Fe Writers Project, will be given annually for a short story or essay collection, a novel, or a memoir.

Site for GCW Writer's Retreat in Garden Valley, for details see Special Events page 4



Too many writers are buried in plots.



Donna Levin, June GCW Guest Speaker

- ❖ Readers want to know what happens next.
- ❖ The difference between popular novels and literary novels:
 - Popular novels are predictable and always have happy endings
 - Literary novels are unpredictable and don't always have happy endings.
- ❖ Most writers don't follow an outline.
- ❖ Remember outlines can be revised.
- ❖ Serious writers write regularly every day.
- ❖ Even 4 hours a day can be serious writing.
- ❖ Don't stop and rewrite the beginning of your book. It's better to keep on going until you're done, because you learn so many things along the way.
- ❖ **The building blocks of a plot are the conflicts, internal and external.**
- ❖ If you are in a class or seminar where everyone is tearing you down, get another class.
- ❖ Remember to escalate the tension as much as possible.
- ❖ The stakes should increase with time.
- ❖ Good example of building tension: Cinderella.
- ❖ **If you're stuck on a scene, go back to what the characters would want.**

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Special Events



← **July 13, 2017, Off-Site Yearly Planning** →
Meeting for Lead Team at Susan Korn's, 10 am – 2 pm

← **GCW Special Guest Program** →
July 19, 2017, 10-Noon at Auburn City Hall Rose Room, Betsy Schwarzentraub – Writer's Platform

← **GCW Writer's Retreat** →
July 27, 2017, at Betsy's home in Garden Valley, 9 am to 2 pm, bring bag lunch; bring your writing to work on.

← **Open Mic for the Spoken Word** →
4th Sat. of each month, 1 PM, at Auburn Library, **July 29, 2017.**
Contact: Taleteller2@gmail.com **Not a GCW Event**

← **Placer's Gold Toastmasters** →
Every Tuesday, Noon-1 PM at Placer Co. DeWitt Justice Center, Richardson Dr. & B Ave., Auburn, Contact: Michael O'Haver,
Not a GCW Event

← **Local Author Fair, Sacramento Tsakopoulos** →
Library Noon-3 PM, Aug 27, Apply by July 10 at:
<http://www.saclibrary.org/LocalAuthorFairApplication>

Specialty Spin-off Critique Groups

Coordinator - Pauline Nevins -530/637-9163

Books: Contact Betsy Schwarzentraub 530/333-0852. They meet the 2nd and 4th Wed., 12-3 p.m. at Depot Bay.

Historical Fiction: Contact Michael O'Haver – 530/268-2490. They meet once a month on the 4th Thursday, 11:00 a.m. at The Daily Egg, 844 Lincoln Way, Auburn

Children's Lit: Contact Norma Lehr 530/878-8421. They meet at Norma's home on the 4th Thursday, 2-4 p.m.

Science Fiction/Fantasy: Contact Skip Michael 916/601-1044

Memoirs: Contact Susan Thompson 530/941-3778. They meet at Northridge Restaurant, 21515 Higgins Rd, off of Combie Road between Auburn and Grass Valley, the 3rd Thursday of each month, at 2 PM.

Novel: Contact Ann Reh 530/823-1870. They meet every other Monday, 2:30 – 5:00 p.m. at member's office, call for directions.

GCW Officers, Board Members & Committee Chairs

President: Betsy Schwarzentraub
530/333-0852 Genre ~ Christian Nonfiction

V P - Internal Affairs: Joyce Rule
916/521-5177 Genre ~ Short Stories

V P – External Affairs: Susan Korn
530/888-9971 Genre ~ Self-Help & Corporate Culture

Treasurer: Joy Hemp
650/799-5828 Genre ~ Self- Help & Inspirational

Secretary: Michael O'Haver
530/268-2490 Genre ~ Christian Children's Books & Poetry

Assistant Secretary: Kathleen Ward
209/704-0719 Genre ~ Short Stories

Mentor Coordinator: Susan Korn
530/888-9971 Genre ~ Self-Help & Corporate Culture

Marketing GCW & Events Joyce Rule
916/521-5177 Genre ~ Short Stories

Author Opportunities: June Gillam
530/820-3020 Genre ~ Suspense Thrillers & Poetry

Membership & Guest Speakers Margie Yee Webb
916/213-0798 Genre ~ Gift Books

Newsletter Editor: Michael O'Haver
530/268-2490 Genre ~ Historical Fiction & Memoirs
Submit newsletter material by the 15th of each month to GodsScribeMike@aol.com

Donna Levin Continued

- ❖ Make a list of what each character would do, his or her personality traits, goals, wishes, desires, etc. List at least ten for each character.
- ❖ Brainstorm frequently, but with the right people – those not relatives or close friends.
- ❖ Ideally these should be fellow writers or writing coaches or teachers.
- ❖ The difference between a story and a plot:
 - Story – The king & queen died
 - Plot – the king and queen died of grief
- ❖ A plot is a series of casually-related events that proves a premise.
- ❖ Just because a book is published or popular doesn't mean it is good.
- ❖ When stuck ask, "What if...?"
- ❖ Outline the plot of a favorite book or movie.
- ❖ **Success is all about persistence.**
- ❖ Often you won't find the beginning until you get to the end.
- ❖ Brainstorm frequently but with people who are writers and know your genre.
- ❖ Handy Internet prompts:
 - @writingprompts
 - @WritingPrompts
 - @DailyPrompt
 - @RPWritingPrompt

This last one is Twitter. You can also look for writing-related #s, such as #writingtips

Picking Your Beta Readers, Continued

1. *Is the reader an experienced writer or editor who understands the requirements of your genre?*
2. *Is this reader a member of your target audience?*
3. *Is this person well-read in your genre?*
4. *If you're writing non-fiction, is the reader an expert in the subject of your book, or does he/she at least have significant familiarity with it?*

Recently an author told me that one of her readers suggested a major change in her memoir, but the change seemed completely wrong. Trying to determine why the reader would have made that suggestion, we figured out that the reader never read memoirs and wasn't in the target audience for whom the memoir was written. In other words, *she didn't get it*. The suggestion she made would have been exactly wrong for the intended audience of the book. This led to a terrific conversation with the author about carefully choosing those beta readers (and this blog post).

A couple of notes:

- If your reader is related to you by blood or marriage, proceed with caution. Even if they fit one of the criteria above, their ability to give you valuable feedback may be compromised. Don't allow them to be your only reader until their input has been proven reliable.
- If you're contracted with a publisher and your habit is to use readers before delivering manuscripts to the publisher, ask your in-house editor if they want you to do this. Some editors would rather see your own original work rather than a workshopped manuscript.

Do you use beta readers or critique partners? If so, how do you choose them? Do they fit the above criteria?



Gold Country Writers

Third Wednesday Meeting

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

10 a.m. to 12 noon

~ Gold Country Writers proudly presents ~

Rev. Dr. Betsy Schwarzentraub

*Helping Readers Find You: Taking Action
To Build Your Writer's Platform*



You have the passion and skills to write. Your readership is already out there. Even if what you write about is considered a niche, with the Internet it's a huge number of people! Come hear what Rev. Dr. Betsy Schwarzentraub and some folks from the Writer's Platform Group at Gold Country Writers are discovering about building and strengthening their writer's platform. Get some pointers on how you can help your potential readers find what you have to say.

Betsy founded the Writer's Platform Group inspired by Coach Teresa LeYung-Ryan's recent presentation "Where Are You on Your Writer's Platform-Building Journey?" and workbook *Building Your Writer's Platform & Fanbase In 22 Days* (WritingCoachTeresa.com). The group, which started meeting in April, meets on 3rd Wednesdays after the speaker presentation. Members are invited to join in for encouragement and accountability to strengthen their platform.

Despite many contacts and years of blogging, **Rev. Dr. Betsy Schwarzentraub** is new to intentional platform building. She has sold 8,584 copies so far of her two nonfiction books on generosity, *Afire With God*, and *Stewardship: Nurturing Generous Living*, and is a contributor to thirteen more. She has published more than 1,000 articles, was a newspaper Religion Editor, and writes newspaper concert reviews. Over 36 years she pastored churches, was Director of Stewardship for 400 United Methodist congregations in Northern California and Nevada, and served as the U.S. Director of Stewardship for her denomination. She is nearing completion of a book called *Growing a Generous Soul: Shaping Our Lives as Stewards of God's Grace*. For more, visit her blog at <https://generousstewards.wordpress.com/>.

Join us! Meetings are free and open to the public. Note July meeting location.*

***Auburn City Hall, Rose Room, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn CA 95603**

(parking in back; Rose Room is downstairs)

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**Gold Country Writers: "Writers Working Together To Promote and Improve Their Work"**

Meetings are held every Wednesday of the month. **Third Wednesdays:** guest speaker presentation. **First Wednesdays:** business meeting. **Second and Fourth Wednesdays:** "Drop-In Critique" for members to get feedback on their work. For months with **Fifth Wednesdays:** social event. See website for details.

<http://GoldCountryWriters.com/>