



# WRITERS' NOTES

## Women Who Write, Inc. Newsletter

### December, 2023

Women Who Write, Inc.

Since 1988



*"What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much though."*

J. D. Salinger

*"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."*

Toni Morrison

*"Write with the door closed. Rewrite with the door open."*

Stephen King



### WWW 35TH ANNIVERSARY by Kim Crumrine

On October 7, members of Women Who Write gathered at the Madison Community House to celebrate our 35th anniversary. It was a bright and sunny day, perfectly matching the festive mood inside, where there was a lot of happy chatting, catching up and good energy.

Published members set up their books for purchase, many of them giving the proceeds to charities of their choice. The impressive selection of books, ranging from romance and historical fiction to children's works, was fun to browse around and many took home books from cherished friends and newer members alike.

Members sat in a cozy circle to listen to President Ginger Pate share her experiences with writing and Women Who Write. In her wonderful supportive style, Ginger encouraged everyone to submit to the next issue of Goldfinch and attend the conference and to keep writing. She was excited to discuss Members' Pages, a brand-new benefit of membership, where members pay a fee to have a personalized website set up.

After a celebratory toast of sparkling apple cider, members sang happy birthday and of course, enjoyed...a birthday cake! It was a wonderful afternoon of good cheer with plenty of reminiscing and much excitement for the future of Women Who Write.



### NEW WWW MEMBER BENEFIT by Maria Dewaik

Today, many agents and publishers ask to see an author's online presence. Don't have one? Fear not. With WWW's Members' Pages, you can have your online presence.

Women Who Write has arranged for Maria Dewaik, an author, past Secretary, past editor of Writers' Notes, and long-time member, to assist in assembling pages for its members. There will be a fixed charge of \$75 for creating and publishing a page. This fee will be paid directly to Maria, who will act as an independent contractor and not as an employee of Women Who Write.

Any member whose dues are paid in full and is a member in good standing may purchase a member page. The page will remain online for as long as the membership is in good standing. If the membership lapses, the page may be removed.

To help get things rolling, Maria and our Webmaster have created an online questionnaire that will list the elements your page should include, and hopefully guide members to consider adding news and other elements that make their space most rewarding for them.

Before starting your questionnaire, consider gathering a headshot, book cover images, logos, home screens of any blogs or other online resources, social media links, and other necessary information. The questionnaire is designed to accommodate multiple updates, so you can return to it to make changes as many times as you need.

When you're ready, submit your payment, and Maria will begin assembling your page. Within 7-10 days, your page should be published and you're on your way!

For additional information, go to <https://www.womenwhowrite.org/memberspages>. For more information available to members only, go to our website at: <https://www.WomenWhoWrite.org> and click on "Private" under the "More" tab. This information is password-protected. The password will be emailed out in the future but is also available upon request.

## FEEDBACK FOR AUTHORS By Mary Olmstead

Authors seek out feedback from many sources depending on their goals. Do they want to self-publish a few legacy books for family and friends to enjoy, or do they want to become a career writer? Whatever a writer's goals are, a good starting point for critique may be non-paid opinions from fellow writers and friends. We will look at these sources of feedback first:

*Alpha Readers:* These most closely describe the fellow author-readers found in Women Who Write Critique Groups. They may be the first readers of an author's chapters. The work exchanged may be raw, and group members will make allowances. At this beginning stage, the author is usually open to suggestions for change. It is then up to the author to decide which comments are the most beneficial. In WWW critique groups it may take upwards of a year to critique an entire novel. This type of critique has some drawbacks. The disadvantage may include feedback that would have been different if the book was read in a few days. An advantage is the author receives immediate, detailed feedback and perhaps can make plot or character changes early in the work and save time.

*Beta Readers:* When a novel is finished and in draft form, the next line of valuable feedback comes from Beta readers. The work may be sent out to be Beta readers when the author feels the book is at about 80%, meaning it is finished but may not be polished or the author is cautious about some aspect of the book. Beta readers will read the entire novel in a short period of time and give feedback. The readers may include family and friends, but the most valuable feedback may come from other writers or strangers who read in the same genre that the book was written in. Feedback is general and usually does not include detailed specifics on each page. Most authors will seek out Beta readers before sending the novel to either a paid editor or their agent.

*Advance Reader Copies (ARC):* These copies are given to readers when the novel is complete and printed. No more editing is expected. These are given out for hopefully good pre-release multiple star reviews.

Whether traditionally or indie published, an author may want to engage the services of a professional editor. All serious indie writers (writers who self-publish) will have an editor review their work before self-publishing. A traditionally published author may have an agent who helps edit their work and may not have to have their work professionally reviewed before sending it to the agent.

Paid editors will not be able to do a complete an edit of a novel in one pass. Almost always, suggestions for changes are made for the author to review. These editorial suggestions are started with an overarching review of the book and eventually taken down to the proofing of each individual word. There are generally three layers, which then can be broken into more layers:

*Developmental or Content editing:* An editor reads the entire novel and gives feedback about its overall success. Is the story complete? Are there fully realized characters, themes, and story arcs? Is the story clear to the reader? Is the story satisfying? Are story elements organized? Some editors will break out a separate structural layer of editing.

*Line editing:* This is a level down from Content editing. Here, sentence structure, word choice, plot cohesiveness, inconsistencies, and many other elements are examined. Some editors may recommend various layers of Line and Copyediting to get to the best version of the novel. Some books may require a sensitivity editor's services.

*Proofreading:* Checking for any errors or inconsistencies that may have occurred before publishing.

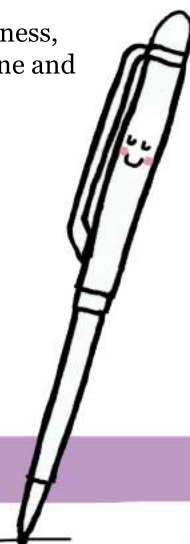
An indie author wanting a self-publish a novel may want to approach feedback in this order:

Alpha Readers

Beta Readers

Paid editorial services: Developmental Editing, Line Editing, Proof Reading

ARC readers.



## WWW'S CONFERENCE by Kim Crumrine

Women Who Write's yearly Conference was held on October 21 at the Madison Community House. After a full day of workshops, speeches, conversations, and tasty refreshments, I walked away pumped up and ready to keep on writing and writing... and writing!

After a warm welcome by member and trustee Joan Freling, author Mally Becker started off the day with an inspiring keynote speech about her writing experiences. She provided three tips to consider as we all follow our individual writing journeys. First, you are never too old to start (or keep) writing. Create a personalized writing habit that works for you and remember "you can edit a bad page, not an empty page." Second, hone your courage and say yes to opportunities that come your way. Third, she advised us to remember why we write, because it will help sustain you through your successes and failures. I wanted to give her a standing ovation, I was so moved.

After that, I attended the workshop on pitching your book to a literary agent, presented by Eric Smith, an agent with P.S. Literary. He discussed what makes a good pitch, "the hook, book and cook," a clever mnemonic I will be sure to remember, and provided helpful examples. He discussed voice, what makes a good book, comps and genres and stressed the importance of polishing your work as much as you can before submitting to an agent. I had the chance to "pitch" my middle grade manuscript to Eric later in the day, and I hadn't been that nervous since...come to think of it, another pitch I gave about ten years ago. Needless to say, I made it through (phew). It was a great experience and all of us participating learned how important a good pitch is.

I also attended Roma Panganiban's presentation on what it means when your agent is on submission. Roma, with Janklow & Nesbit, gave the glamorous and not so glamorous scoop on the role of being an agent. She humorously compared being an agent with being a matchmaker and spoke of the risks, calculations, and process of getting the right publisher for the right author. It was extremely interesting to hear the behind-the-scenes process and just shows how much work it takes from the point of accepting a manuscript to getting it published.

The sessions I didn't attend were all just as wonderful and informative. I heard from friends that the workshops on poetry and querying as well as the first pages sessions were lively and inspiring.

Just as the conference began with inspiration and encouragement, Sharona Wilhelm, Publisher at Scarsdale Publishing, finished off our day with warm and genuine words clearly showing her love of books and publishing. She discussed the pros and cons of traditional and self-publishing, and the importance of good editing in the process of getting a book published. And how sweet is this paraphrased quote from Sharona: 'Books are readers' best friends; their authors hold a dear place in readers' hearts as well.'

As both readers and writers, we all know exactly what she's talking about. I can't wait for next year's WWW Conference.



*"You can edit a bad page, not an empty page."  
--Mally Becker*

## BLOGS MATTER by Vivian Fransen

You never know what can happen after your book is published. Even more amazing is how blogging about your book can be part of your marvelous adventure.

Like many of you, I've heard many successful authors and literary experts at writing conferences over the years who encourage us to "create a blog about your book" and "write blog postings" to spread the word about our creative work. It turns out they know a thing or two about the impact of blogging.

Putting our work "out there" can lead to unexpected surprises, such as my landing an interview remotely with the producer of BBC Soul Music from her studio in London, England, in March 2023. Then came the thrill of listening to the mind-blowing results when the radio program was released in June 2023 (and will probably be available for decades to come in their archives).

Started in November 2000, BBC Soul Music is a music documentary series heard all over the world that focuses on the emotional impact of famous pieces of music—chosen from classical, popular, jazz, or religious genres. Each episode features a montage of interviews interspersed with clips of the chosen work, with usually three to five contributors who share a personal story connected to the piece of music.

Totally out of the blue in early March, I received a comment on my book website (<https://straightspousememoir.com>) from this producer. I almost dismissed it, thinking it was someone trying to sell me something or scam me. But then it occurred to me: This comment could be real.

She wrote: "I came across your blog about your memoir whilst researching a radio show about the song I Only Have Eyes For You. And I noticed you include a lot of music in the story as a soundtrack to the time." She then invited me to talk with her and explore the possibility of participating in an upcoming program.

That's all I know about the details of her finding me. I do know I have tremendous respect for the detective work such producers do to seek out fresh content for their programs.

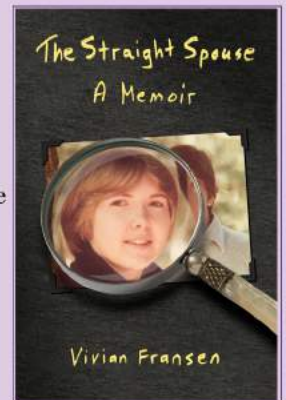
The rest is history. I invite you to give a listen when time allows to the full 28minute program at this address:

<https://straightspousememoir.com/2023/06/10/i-only-have-eyes-for-you/>

Oh, and I've received unsolicited fan mail via my book website from **BBC Soul Music** listeners, including this comment: "Out in the tomato garden, 90 degrees,...listening to BBC's Soul Music. I'm shoring up those uncooperative shoots that want to pull these magnificent plants down. And then you come on with your story....I just sat down on the ground, between two rows, and looped the track on repeat. So powerful [and]...generous of you to share your love, and your fathomless gratitude with the world." Some people can learn about our stories while weeding their garden! Such feedback means a lot to me.

The key takeaway: Add details to your writing. If I had not named "I Only Have Eyes for You" as our love song in my memoir *The Straight Spouse: A Memoir*, the producer of **BBC Soul Music** would've never found me.

So blogs about your book really do matter.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR OF GOLDFINCH

The time is approaching for accepting submissions of Prose or Poetry for Goldfinch 26. Members may submit two Prose submissions and two Poetry submissions for consideration to be published.

The dates for submissions are as follows:  
January 24 - First day for submissions  
February 28 - Deadline for submissions  
April 2 - Acceptance notifications to be sent out



Guidelines for submissions will be available on the WWW website. These guidelines along with the judging process, helpful tips, and why to submit, will be discussed in a *Goldfinch 101* Zoom meeting open to all. (date to be determined)

As you may know, being published in Goldfinch makes you a published author. I am looking forward to reading your submissions.

Best wishes,  
JoAnn D. Jackovino, Editor

## OPEN MIC by Prachi Jain

Besides some great life-affirming stories, camaraderie and candid conversations pervaded the afternoon at our most recent Open Mic event on November 5th.

It took place at the Martinsville Community House and was well attended by both new and established writers who read their work, and audience members who were completely involved and engaged in listening.

The 4 minute pieces ran the whole gamut of literary techniques and devices including satire, hyperbole, and anaphora and covered many genres such as poetry, novel excerpts, and memoirs.

Stay tuned for the next Open Mic event information!

