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VOLUME 1, ISSUE 10
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September Workshop

Writing Contests: Friend or Foe?

When: Wednesday, September 24, 7–9 p.m.
Where: Village at Skyline, 2365 Patriot Heights
Colorado Springs, CO 80904
(I-25 to Cimarron, west to 21st Street. South
on 21st to Lower Gold Camp Road. Village at Skyline will
be about a mile ahead on your right.)
Cost: Free for PPW Members; \$10 for non-members

Writing contests can be mysterious beasts and the Paul Gillette Memorial Writing Contest sponsored by Pikes Peak Writers is no different. Join Angel Smits, Contest Coordinator, in September as she demystifies the Paul Gillette.

Whether you're a newbie to the contest world or a contest junkie, bring your questions, concerns and even a copy of your entry to take notes on during this interactive workshop. Angel will cover the following topics:

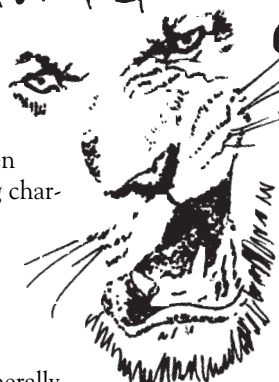
Contest Guidelines: What are they and how can you use them to your benefit? You will not only receive the answers to these questions but you will be able to review samples of entries and see why following (or not following) the rules can make or break your entry.

Judging: What criteria do our judges use? Take a close-up look at the judging form and learn what categories your entry will be critiqued on and the basics of what each one means.

The Dreaded Synopsis: "You want me to tell you my whole story in how many pages?" Condensing 300 pages to five can drive a writer crazy. Angel will touch on why it's important to have a strong synopsis and what resources are out there to help you.

Contests can be both exciting and stressful, but ultimately, win or not, the experience can be a true benefit to your writing career. For more information or to register, visit us at pikespeakwriters.org or call 719.531.5723.

**Characterizing
Amid the Roar
of Action**



By Michael Waite
past director, PPWC

I recently read an interview with Australian writer Matthew Reilly, a true hair-on-fire action writer, in which he said: "I want to write about action and thrills and adventure, and if developing characters slows down

the action, then developing characters gets the chop!"

Say it ain't so, Matt.

The generally accepted and practiced convention is that a story that runs hot—an action-fueled page turner—must burn at the expense of engaging characterization. I have to ask why. Is it because the writers who write action adventure lack the story-telling

skills to work characterization into their speeding prose? Or is it that they simply don't bother, figuring it's not expected or needed? I happen to think that you can have it both ways—story-sweetening characterization can be skillfully woven amid the firestorm of action. Like this:

Use the scene sequels

Use the down time between the battles and the chases—when the characters regroup, discuss strategy, lick their wounds—to characterize. While the

“The trouble with young writers is that they are all in their sixties.”

~ W. Somerset Maugham

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from the editor



Greetings! Just wait until you see what we have on tap for you this issue. Think Francis Weaver. Francis who, you say? Francis Weaver, woman extraordinaire. Author, national celebrity, public speaker, you name it. PPW assistant editor Maxine Davenport spent some time recently with Francis at her Pueblo home and came away with an interview that will change the way you look at your life, your writing, and your career.

You'll learn everything you ever wanted to know—the real deal—about POD, print on demand, from author and PPW Secretary Paul Carhart. He's been there and done that, and has some surprising, and extremely helpful, information to impart.

I have a confession to make. A literary agent at the Pikes Peak Writers Conference expressed interest in seeing my nonfiction proposal and the first 30 pages of my manuscript. That was, oh, four months ago? I, ahem, uh, well, haven't quite sent it to him yet. Procrastination is not my friend. I could provide a handy list of legit excuses, like I sold my house and moved 15 years' worth of belongings, like my son rolled his new pickup, like I got busy with freelance projects, like I transitioned to a new position at work, like the cat ate my story.

I have a feeling I'm not alone in this procrastination predicament. I've heard tell of countless others who have yet to smack down the postage on that 9x12 envelope and send it packing. And I've heard of those who, experiencing rejection from the agent/editor they really wanted to connect with, haven't sent out a single thing since.

So, here's the deal. This month, September, let's mail out our projects to at least three, yes three, agents or editors. This means we cannot spend 52 hours on the query letter alone, we must put down the pencil! Three submissions, this month. Deal?

Send us the details when you ink the deal, and you'll be our next Sweet Success story!

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The Wonder Years

By F. P. Dorchak

I remember the summers of my youth, in upstate New York, in the late '60's and through the '70's, how I couldn't wait until school was out, and for the next three months, there would be no more pencils, no more books, no more teacher's dirty looks. There were four of us kids, two other brothers and a sister, and once chores were done, we had all the time in the world to do ... *anything*.

Out behind our c. 1860s house, there used to be this one, big boulder offset in the middle of the graveled driveway my dad had created, and my brothers and I (my sister wasn't exactly into this) would pretend we were in the Civil War, dodging imagined minié balls and cannon fire. Or, when we were giving our toy weaponry a rest, we'd be beating each other up with a pair of thickly padded, maroon-colored boxing gloves. An uppercut here, a well-placed haymaker there. Or, while snorkeling in the lake across from our house, exploring a rusty and shredded sunken barrel, we were intrepid underwater explorers. I especially loved those magical, early evening dips dad used to take us kids on during those hot-and-muggy summers. Or we'd go canoeing through the countless what-appeared-to-be-shallow chan-



nels, quiet streams, and cat-tail-filled bogs and swamps ... but I knew better. These "shallows" were actually filled with terrifying monsters and serpents, lurking about in their dark, abysmal depths. One memory that still stands out had us all silently slipping homeward during a particularly buggy, hot summer night amidst the chirping cicadas and glows and woodsy scents of crackling campfires on

either side of a creek's banks. Imagined drumbeats echoed in my hyper head as I envisioned us as mighty, 1700s wilderness explorers, the first white settlers to touch and map the myriad of wild, untamed, north country waterways.

During Hallowe'en, I became one of the living dead, when I'd actually dressed up as my favorite monster, the mummy. Mom was gracious enough to allow me to tear into thin, two-inch strips an entire, clean, useable bed sheet or two to create the correct and proper creature. I had also created a whole slew of fake grave stones, which I'd placed in one of our now-tilled-up gardens, facing the road. What neither my parents—nor anyone else—ever knew was that one creepy Hallowe'en night, as the dreaded and fearsome mummy, I'd stalked the railroad tracks (where I'd occasionally played "were-

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POD Publishing and Me



By Paul M. Carhart

What is POD? It's a question I get frequently. POD stands for Print On Demand. Put simply, it is the use of digital technology

to create books as needed. That said, an industry has sprung up around POD that perhaps needs to be distinguished from the technology. POD publishers are companies that will take a manuscript and make a book out of it, most often for a price.

Those who are aware of the "POD movement" either love it or hate it. In some ways, the technology is a blessing. Instead of taking years for a book to go to press, it can now be done in months (or weeks, in some cases). Think about what this means for nonfiction of a timely nature. Think about how much money could be saved in warehousing overages if books were simply printed in shorter runs. Or what about the idea that a book can never go "out of print?" These are only a few factors that POD technology improves upon the way things are

traditionally done.

However, for many published authors, editors and agents, the POD publishing trend is a time bomb waiting to go off. In most cases, there are no editorial gatekeepers so the manuscript goes to press as submitted. Many POD publishers have been relegated to vanity press status by the publishing industry because anything can now be published for a small price. Published authors are also sometimes resentful because some POD authors come along and present themselves as "published" without having to do all of the hard work that puts a published author on shelves.

"I discovered that there are actually people outside my circle of family and friends who enjoy the stories I tell and the characters I create."

And perhaps that is where the primary misunderstanding about POD publishing lies. Please take note: POD publishing is not

the same as being traditionally published. It simply isn't.

Perhaps one thing that distinguishes me from many other POD "authors" is that I am not content to remain POD published. I have not tricked myself into believing that being POD published is the end of the journey. I have not deluded myself into believing that I have somehow achieved the same thing that a published author has achieved.

The first of my POD books made many rounds through the usual agent gauntlet. Eventually, I hit a dead end. I got tired of the game. I gave in. A friend told me about POD and I decided to give it a go.

Physically, my POD books look great. I also took it upon myself to design my own covers, which is something that would most likely not have been an option through a traditional publisher. On the other hand, my books are grossly overpriced. Few POD publishers allow author input on cover price. POD publishers never offer returns as traditional publishers do. They sell at low discounts both to booksellers and to the author. Even when I do a book signing, it is nearly impossible to make any money, which defeats the purpose. If I didn't think I was expanding my readership at all, I wouldn't even do it.

And readership is the crux of the matter. With my first POD book, I gained a small underground following. Indeed, the only reason I opted to POD the second two books

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The Wonder Years

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wolf" during the summer and fall), which were between a field in front of the house, yet just before the lake, and with eerie, green fluorescent paint, graffitied rocks and "other structures" with a terrifying phrase I'd read in a horror novel: "Denn die Todten Reiten Schnell." ("For the dead travel fast," in German.) One year, in a different role, I even acted out my own mini-creepshow in the dark atop a dirt pile. With one of my grave-stones canted prominently atop that mound, I dug my fiendish grave, enacting a scene that was worthy of any, real, ghostly haunting.

In spring Dad would take us all out deeper into the Adirondack woods on quite the regionally unique adventure...that of making maple syrup. We'd manually tap all the trees, and hang all the tin buckets (some missing covers), then snowmobile and trudge through still knee-deep snow in some places, tree to tree, collecting all that sap. My hyper head ran wild, imagining all sorts of things

from exploring ancient Ice Age landscapes (curiously ignoring all the trees) to wistfully finding my true love emerging from behind acres and acres of said maples (hey—hormones!). When all was gathered for "a run," we'd assemble in the Sugar House huddled about the hot, wood-fired stove, beneath the baffled syruping pans, as dad meticulously labored over what was truly not much more than water, yet which magically morphed into the much-coveted, highly-prized, and expensive liquid.

Also with spring came cleaning out the chicken coop. This was without a doubt *The Most Dreaded* job, ever. In those days, we didn't worry about toxic anything. We just gutted stuff out while shoveling up sometimes two feet of pure, unadulterated, steaming chicken shit. Every spring. We'd catch our breath, the four of us, dart in the coop, shave up a couple slivers of the compressed and heinous substance, then dart back out, laughing and gagging all the way, seeing who could stand it the longest—or at least act like it. But hey, we were tough. We

were young. We were kids. And this was the most *magical* time of my life.

Make that time, the present, *The Most Magical* time of your lives. Of your readers'. By all means, learn the craft, but never, never, lose sight of the fact that it is the heart, the very soul of a tale that truly makes for great, unforgettable, stories. Put that into your work, drawing in your readers, and have them forget for just a little while, anyway, their woes, their bills, their daily drudgery...and why it was they even started reading your piece in the first place. Relive the fascination and escapism we all crave. I'm still running about those childhood woods, that Lake Clear House, dodging minié balls and canoeing those mysterious, fire-lit creeks every time I sit down behind the keyboard....

F. P. Dorchak has been writing supernatural/metaphysical fiction for almost 20 years, and is published in the U.S., Canada, and the Czech Republic. Dorchak self-published his first novel, Sleepwalkers, through 1st Books Library (www.1stbooks.com), in 2001. He loves running through woods and fields, and flushing bird life.

A Fascinating Web She Weaves

An Interview with Frances Weaver

By PPW Assistant Editor Maxine Davenport

The lady is 50 years old. She's been a house wife for 30-some years. Her children are grown. She has grandchildren. Suddenly she's a widow, on her own.

What's a girl with a grandmother face to do?

The answer to that question made Frances Weaver a star on the NBC *Today Show* for three years, an expert on kite flying, a college student, a columnist who self-published before it became a hot item, an author of eight or more books (she's lost count), an entertainer on the fabulous Crystal Cruise lines and finally, an "older woman" who lights up the eyes of Bryan Nease, an "under 50" Broadway star, as they cavort intellectually on stage in a dialogue they wrote titled *Ageless Friends*. Oh, and they also cavort off stage as travel companions and best of friends.

The next question is: How did she do it? Her answers in this interview conducted at her Pueblo home should bring encouragement to all who dream of writing creative nonfiction or of self-publishing.

Davenport: How did you get your break into publishing?

Weaver: My first publication was an article about six older women who tramped out to meadows near Buelah, Colorado and learned to fly kites. The article was published in *Vogue Magazine* and I got \$200 for it. Then I began an advice column which was published in the *Pueblo Chieftain*, *The Colorado Springs Sun*, and a newspaper in Saratoga, New York. People kept asking me for past issues of the columns, and I decided to publish them in a soft-cover book. Friends in my college classes helped me find a local printer. I chose the bindings, did the layout and drew stick figures for visual interest. I called the book *Midlife Musings* and printed what I thought was a life-time supply of 2,000 books. From that beginning I developed a company named Midlife Musings Publishers.

Davenport: How did you market those first self-published books?

Weaver: Judy Madison, a friend in my writing class, looked in the newspaper and

began calling garden clubs, Rotary Clubs—any organization that needed speakers. She told them I would speak without payment if I could sell my books. After the first month she no longer had to call organizations, because word of mouth brought as many invitations as I could handle. After those small town meetings, I began being invited to national meetings. I charged two or three dollars a book and sold them all. There have



been several reprints. A side benefit to marketing my books that way was the creation of a career in public speaking. I now get \$1,000 to \$4,000 per speech.

Davenport: What is your advice to writers who are considering self-publishing?

Weaver: Do it. But understand that you have to sell yourself. Invest time and effort in making your name known. No one else can do it for you. Self-publishing started my career as a writer, speaker and world traveler. The sales from my self-published books so impressed Hyperion publishers that my agent got a \$100,000 down payment on my first hardback, *The Girls with the Grandmother Faces*. My next book, *I'm Not as Old as I Used to Be*, brought \$75,000, all because I had marketed my books so well.

Davenport: How did you find an agent?

Weaver: I've been going to the Santa Barbara Writer's Conference in California since 1986. I met an agent there from San Francisco who looked at my little self-published soft backs. She told me if I'd write a "real" book, she'd be my agent. I wrote *The Girls with the Grandmother Faces*, and she sold it to Hyperion, a division of Disney, for \$100,000.

Davenport: How did Hyperion market your books?

Weaver: They sent me on a month-long book tour, coast to coast. The tour started it in New York City on the *Today Show*. Bryant Gumble interviewed me, and it was ho-hum until I ended the interview by saying, "At any age we have one decision to make every day. Am I gonna' be the statue or the bird?" This broke up Bryant and the whole crew. The next day I was invited to appear on the show once a month, and I did that for three years. The rest of the tour I read my books, signed autographs and got many invitations to come back and speak.

Davenport: When and how did you start working on cruise ships?

Weaver: I was taking a cruise on the Royal Viking, and I noticed that there were authors present who were talking up their books. I asked the man in charge whether I could talk about mine. He allowed me to participate and the audience liked my presentation so much the director hired me to go on six cruises a year. He later moved from Viking to Crystal Cruises, which is a much more luxurious ship, and he took me with him. I've been cruising since the mid-eighties.

Davenport: Where did you meet your friend, Byron Nease?

Weaver: I met him on one of the cruises. He is an opera singer and has starred in Broadway shows for years. He was singing on the cruise. We sat across the table from each other one evening and happened to be rolling our eyes at the same boring comments we heard from participants. That led to conversations where we discovered we had a lot more in common. The new stage show we have developed is showing great promise, which thrills me.

Davenport: Let's admit it. You have a marvelous sense of humor and the ability to make people like Bryant Gumble laugh. How much weight do you place on humor to get your serious points across?

Weaver: I feel that humor is the one universal means of communication. It gets the attention of your audience. Most of my stories are real incidents in my life that just happened to be funny. Usually I'm making fun of myself. I try to put the deeper message into as few words as possible, so as not to sound preachy. So far my inherent sense of humor has worked well.

Davenport: What would you say is your greatest motivation as a writer and speaker?

Weaver: I was a surgeon's wife and, believe me, surgeon's wives feel like second class citizens. Surgeons are by nature strong, active heroes. They make all the decisions, and their families are just attachments to their careers. I loved John and regret his early death, but I would never have accomplished what I have, had he lived. I said after his death, "Now it is my time." I looked around and knew that whatever I chose to do, I had to do myself. I decided I liked writing so I set off across the country by car and enrolled in a creative writing class at Adirondack Community College in New York State. That was a first big step toward directing my own life. I remember another—the first car I bought by myself. I was driving my old junker down the street when I saw a beautiful Chrysler convertible in a dealer's show window. It was brown and tan with wood on the doors. I pulled over through the traffic, walked in and told the salesman he had my car in the window. He said they'd been saving it for me. I bought it, and it was a grand feeling to know that I could make big decisions on my own.

An interesting sidelight to that story was the reaction of a male neighbor. He sneered in disgust at the new car and asked why in the world I bought a convertible. I told him I looked all around the lake where we lived, and I didn't find anyone who would buy it for me.

Davenport: That's one of the great examples of your ability to put an unexpected, hilarious twist to your responses to questions. Tell us about the light bulb.

Weaver: Well, on the cruises they have all kinds of interactive programs between the staff and passengers. One night they started a game asking the old question of how many "whoevers" it takes to change a light bulb. I was pretty bored with it, so one of the staff turned to me and asked how many Coloradans it took to screw in a light bulb. I suppose because I was challenged by the question, I answered, "I don't know. In Colorado we screw in hot tubs." I got a lot of laughs.

Davenport: Most of your books are filled with advice to the elderly on how to live with "rapture" or "bliss" as Joseph Campbell described it. What advice can you give to writers who could use a little rapture or bliss in their lives?

Weaver: It is important to keep your imagination and curiosity alive. Get out of the house every day, meet people, and when you come home bring a new idea, something you learned that day. Take good care of your

health and vitality. Don't buy into the myths that teach us to feel limited by our heredity. The lifestyle you're creating today will determine how long and how well you live. Don't ignore the messages in your head and heart.

Davenport: In one of your articles you tell the story of your three-year-old son who was fascinated by the sounds of his new puppy lapping water. As a busy mother you were annoyed by the same sounds and wanted to kick the dog out of your kitchen. Your son asked if you know what the puppy was saying when he rhythmically slurped the water. The noise that bothered you was interpreted by your three-year-old child as "God's love, God's love." Are these the kinds of messages you urge writers to hear in their daily interaction with the world?

"At any age we have one decision to make every day. Am I gonna' be the statue or the bird?"

Weaver: I included that story about my son Chris because his remark showed me how children approach the "Greater Meaning of Life." Also, it shows how often I miss such messages by being so wound up in the everyday cares of the world. I use such stories to show that we can learn from children, and that by listening to children, we can widen our own appreciation of the world.

Davenport: Many of your readers point to you as a role model for how to live a rewarding life after 50. How would you evaluate the life you've lived since the death of your husband?

Weaver: I've had a very fulfilling life as a widow. I had the opportunity to remarry, but frankly it didn't appeal to me. I find my life exciting. Just this week a man who went to my husband's high school in Concordia, Kansas, contacted me and said John's class wanted me to come speak at their class reunion. You have to realize that John was a big shot in high school. He was a champion swimmer. He was on the state football team. He was a star in the school's drama presentations. After our marriage I was just John's wife. Now they want me, author and speaker, to entertain at their class reunion. It is thrilling to be recognized in my own right, for my own accomplishments. I think John would be proud of what I've done with my life.

Let me mention also that I meet every

Monday with a group of five women my age who are interested in writing. We choose one word each week and everyone has to write some piece using that word. We get poems, journal entries, articles, whatever. I am amazed at the talent exhibited by these people who have not written professionally. This is a very worthwhile activity for any writer, especially for older people.

Davenport: Is there anything you would change if you had your life as a writer to live over?

Weaver: I don't think so. I suppose I could have started earlier and made more of a career of it, but that would not have afforded me the full-time rewards of motherhood. Also, I don't think I would have given myself the time and freedom to write while my husband was alive. I feel I have profited by waiting until it was my turn to launch out on my own. From my housewife role I gained a better understanding of life in general and family life in particular, which has been most useful in my writing years.

Davenport: Are you busy writing another book?

Weaver: I am busy re-thinking a book I started called *Runaway Grandma*. The problem I've run into is that I don't want to repeat myself. So I'm throwing away the three chapters I've written and starting over. Writing is re-writing.

Davenport: The books we've talked about are in the genre called creative nonfiction. Have you written fiction?

Weaver: One novel called *Golden Roamers*. It was a lot of fun to write, but I do better with nonfiction. *Golden Roamers* is the story of residents in a retirement center in California who "steal" a bus and travel the country, visiting the home territory of each person. They become better friends, share some adventures, and return home determined to become involved in the lives of each other and the world they live in. That is, they begin to focus on life beyond their aches and pains.

Davenport: What are your goals for the coming years?

Weaver: I hope to keep on keeping on until I'm no longer in the band. I will continue to write as long as my books and articles are useful. I'm leaving tomorrow for Alaska on a Crystal Cruise where I will make speeches and sell my books. I have no thoughts of retiring as long as people keep inviting me to speak.

Davenport: I want to welcome you as a new member of Pikes Peak Writers. We look forward to your participation.

Characterizing Amid the Roar of Action

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characters—and readers—are catching a breath, characterizing words and thoughts and details can be carefully laced into the discussions and thoughts of tactics, strategies and situation analysis.

And by all means, make good use of the powerful emotions stirred up by danger and stress: turn up the heat on the attractions and clashes and growing tensions between the characters. Note how they relate to one another; how they deal with the pain, the fatigue, the death.

Character POV

The use of point of view to characterize happens on a couple of levels: through the perspective, opinions and perceptions of the POV character, and in the way the narrative is delivered.

It's in the details—the details you, as author, choose for the viewpoint character to notice, the opinions he expresses, the jokes he tells, the emotions he experiences, the thoughts thought: it all adds up to characterization. Careful work here will deliver a lot of characterizing for very little page real estate.

As for the second level, pay attention to the way the prose is delivered to the reader. It should not be the same for all viewpoint characters. Perhaps one uses a lot of quick, fragmented thoughts. Another is continually surprised by the speed or violence or unrelenting nature of the action surrounding them—you would style such prose with italicized words, exclamation marks and expansive adjectives and adverbs...things are absolutely huge or incredible or unbelievable when this character is telling the story.

Yet another delivers the viewpoint in a running string of prose; a breathless account that piles up across the page, hardly allowing the reader to catch a breath.

Another character might deliver his piece of the tale through a sort of detached isolation, the prose flat and workman-like, his emotional involvement carefully aloof (for any number of reasons).

Such prose-shaping viewpoints need to run consistent with any dialogue (even out of POV) that these characters deliver. It needs to reflect in their words and their

thoughts, and in those outward signs on display to others...wide eyes, little to say, battle-field lust, frantic thought, dialogue questions.

Telling Details

These are the carefully selected details that you must cull from scores of options. Seek the details that speak the loudest, the ones distinctly unique and telling.

First, as covered earlier, through viewpoint character. The details the POV character chooses say much about the character making the observation...what is noticed as well as the emotional, thought and dialogue reactions to those details.

Second, by the details specifically about a character or his personal effects that the author chooses for the narrative.

Third, the details that color the interaction between the story characters—their dialogue, their emotional reactions to the stress of the action—all seen through the unique filter of the POV character. These characterize the secondary characters, and in reflection, the POV character.

“The emotions unleashed by the stress of action are a rich field to plow for characterization.”

Emotional Reactions

Too often, the emotional content and consequences of the action are left hazy or unplumbed. Quick, telling glimpses inside the emotional furnace—revealed in a number of different ways—can do wonders for characterization.

It's the little things: a brave smile in the face of danger that signals confidence in self or leader; grim determination that signals steadiness; wooden responses to critical orders that telegraph leaking or spent hope; muddled decision making that reveals indecision and inexperience. The emotions unleashed by the stress of action are a rich field to plow for characterization.

Vital Back Story

Handle with care. To be effective and non-intrusive, back story has to be bled into the stream of the story, carefully placed, skillfully presented. Long, story-choking info dumps are a bad thing.

Set up the need to know so strongly in the mind of Joe Reader that he won't mind the slowing of the action for a bit of information—a bit of characterization. Set up the need to know by making sure the back story is important to the now story. Set up the need to know by creating dramatic questions. Some can be introduced/voiced by other characters in the story. Some can be laid into the prose by a careful assembly and delivery of the exposition, dialogue and setting.

Consider anecdotes—one character telling a story to another to illustrate a point or offer explanation. Characters can discuss, gossip, and speculate on the back story of another. Questions answered. Scars explained. Opinions expressed.

Don't overlook interior monologue. Feed quick bites of information hung on current events that dredge up crippling or distressing emotions or trigger remembrances of similar circumstance...then make it relevant to the story, maybe through a recycling of tactics or avoidance of past mistakes.

When the memory or emotion is particularly powerful, the back story can run deeper, the brief let-off of story speed salved by vital understanding of what makes that character tick. The writer must pay off such departures from the action with significance and relevance later.

The role of back story is especially important when the reader will need convincing motivations later as the character chooses or reacts outside accepted norms. Then, instead of an incredulous grunt from Joe Reader or the use of the author's name in vain, that previous back story-coated setup will bring a nod of understanding.

With a careful mixture of these techniques added to the engine of determination, you can pump plenty of characterization into an action tale and still keep the bam, pow and whap roaring at red line.

Resnick Workshop a Hit



What, you ask, is the deal with the ball? Had to be there, but it had something to do with “catch and release.” Catch the ball, release (come up with) the next line of the story.

“Putting It Together (Even If It Kills You),” novelist Laura Resnick’s July workshop held at the Red Lion Hotel in

Colorado Springs, was an all-day affair that included breakfast, lunch, beverages, and snacks! Not to mention an excellent writer’s offering that included plenty of fun, movement, motivation, and creativity. You didn’t miss it, did you? On the off chance that heck or high water prevented you from attending, here are your ten gold nuggets:

1. Your best bet for making a first sale is to send it to an editorial assistant—she’s new so she’s hungry.
2. Remember, you don’t have to show anyone the bad parts. Others will only see the final product.
3. This business requires you to say “Yes, I can” to new projects even if you have no idea how to do it.
4. Readers love a well done plot reversal,



Laura Resnick

providing it is logical in hindsight.

5. Stuff happens in real life, but in fiction it has to have a reason.
6. There is no one right way to write; do what’s best for you.
7. The writer

- should serve the story, not vice versa.
8. You can learn a lot from reading bad books—what not to do.
9. To connect with 100,000 people who have never met you, keep the tension tight in every scene.
10. For good characterization, play the inconsistencies.

POD Publishing

continued from page 3

(and I almost didn’t do the third one) was to satisfy my readership. So I ended up with a POD-published trilogy, even though I actually have rough outlines for another five books in the series and hope one day to publish the series traditionally.

Publishing via POD has not been a waste of my time, effort or money. Although I had to hire them myself, I learned to take criticism from outside editors. I learned to meet deadlines. I learned to discipline myself to writing every day. I also made some mistakes and I learned from them as well. Perhaps most importantly, I discovered that there are actually people outside my circle of family and friends who enjoy the stories I tell and the characters I create. That encouragement is sometimes all there is between giving up

and moving forward.

But, much like an independent rock band that makes its own CD, I don’t expect to remain self-published, which is essentially what the current form of POD publishing amounts to. Neither did Mark Twain or Tom Clancy, both of whom I understand self-published early works.

I quickly realized that merely seeing print was not what I was ultimately seeking. POD publishing is not a shortcut. It is not the same as being traditionally published. There are never advances. Although my books are listed at Amazon.com, B&N.com and other online booksellers, there is no real promotion or distribution. There’s only so much one can do on a personal budget. Even though I’m guaranteed a 20% royalty on sales, if no one knows about the book, none will sell. At the end of the day, 20% of nothing equals nothing.

That is why my latest novel is not part of the series of books that I PODEd. The time

has come once again to pitch something fresh and new to agents and editors. At the same time, I continue to read every book I can on writing craft, agents, self-editing, the market, and promotion. I go to every local book signing and workshop I can squeeze into my schedule and meet as many people as I can. I now subscribe to several market-related magazines and e-mail newsletters. I’m an active member of Pikes Peak Writers and a volunteer for the annual conference.

POD technology is probably here to stay. What form it will finally take is anyone’s guess. I’m pleased to have been a pioneer on this new publishing frontier but for me, POD publishing has only been the first step down a long path to publishing success.

In the meantime, I continue to write. I also continue to learn.

Paul M. Carhart, PPW secretary, is a local SF writer who has just finished his first young adult offering. His POD published Fairlight novels are available online at www.paulcarhart.com.

PIKES PEAK WRITERS REGISTRATION FORM

Interested in joining us? If you’d like to become a member of the Pikes Peak Writers, just fill out this form and mail it to PPW, 4164 Austin Bluffs Parkway 246, Colorado Springs, CO 80918, along with your membership dues of \$25 good through May 31, 2004. For more information, visit www.pikespeakwriters.org.

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Hot Topics

We've Moved!

Well, actually, no we haven't. But our post office box has. You can now reach PPW at Pikes Peak Writers
4164 Austin Bluffs Parkway 246
Colorado Springs, CO 80918

Election News

The Pikes Peak Writers Board of Directors voted to appoint Paul Carhart as PPW Secretary and Jennifer Webster-Valant as Treasurer. Congrats to you both!

PPWC Registration

Pikes Peak Writers Conference registration begins January 1 for members and February 1 for nonmembers.

Booksigning

Romance authors Karen Fox, Jodi Dawson, and Carol Umberger will sign their latest books at *Author, Author!* bookstore on Saturday, September 6, 12-2 p.m. Karen

will sign *A Touch of Charm*, Jodi will sign *Their Mircale Baby*, and Carole will sign *The Mark of Salvation*.

Author, Author! is located at 5975 N. Academy Blvd., Suite 206. Hope to see you there!

Help Wanted (and greatly appreciated!)

The Pikes Peak Writers Conference every April is run by volunteers. A core planning group, called the Steering Committee, begins planning actions in the Fall. Immediately prior to and during the Conference, a host of other folks join in to pick up faculty at the airport, act as workshop moderators, log writers into appointments with editors and agents, etc. Attend this month's meeting of the Pikes Peak Writers to find out how YOU can volunteer to assist the conference. The meeting will be held at the Celebration Place in the Citadel Mall, Tuesday, September 9, at 6:30 p.m. See you there!

Pikes Pique, or . . .

Here's one for you word people:

This is an unusual paragraph. I'm curious how quickly you can find out what is so unusual about it. It looks so plain you would think nothing was wrong with it. In fact, nothing is wrong with it! It is unusual though. Study it, and think about it, but you still may not find anything odd. But if you work at it a bit, you might find out. Try to do so without any coaching!

(see answer below)

"There are no e's in the paragraph."

Answer to Pikes Pique: