



Twin Cities Chapter Newsletter ~ December 2007

Inside this issue: The writers strike – what’s really on the line for writers; Biz Tech is back, a call for volunteers.

Note **deadlines** for available grants listed in the Classifieds section, new downloadable, revised contract information, a savvy reply to a bad contract.

Upcoming workshops and readings in the Calendar of Events section within or visit www.nwu-tc.org

Letter to Twin Cities Writers

Called the ‘strike that closed down Hollywood,’ and now in its seventh week; the Writers Guild strike is really about whether collective bargaining can withstand the creation of the new media. The new media of course, is the internet – and other technological wonders now available for viewing or capturing just about any form of entertainment at the touch of a button.

The challenge for the Guild is to create a contract that would ‘stipulate a percentage of Internet-show revenue, rather than a flat fee for writers. The Guild’s message is: ‘If they [the studios] get paid, we must get paid.’

Worth a visit, go to www.hollywoodstrike for more information. At first glance, this website appears as entertainment – but for writers whose livelihood is on the line it is serious business. In a website article, by Harold Meyerson (November 26, 2007), Meyerson wrote: “Nations with more high-tech economies than our own, such as the Scandinavian states, have upgraded technology and increased productivity in ways that have enhanced, rather than diminished, the bargaining power and lives of their workers. In the United States, by contrast, our corporate elites, sometimes using technological innovation as a pretext for their power grabs, have destroyed workers’ bargaining power and kept for themselves almost all the revenue from technologically driven productivity increases. The picketers at Paramount and Disney may look to be a chorus line of wise-asses, but their

struggle is a deadly serious test of whether any American workers retain the clout to strike a deal with the unchecked greed that is the modern American corporation.”

There is another ongoing battle against corporate greed with an organization that will bring this battle and their presence to our own Twin Cities at the Convention Center, in June of 2008. Please visit www.freepress.net to read the latest on issues such as media consolidation and net neutrality.

In closing, I would simply offer these comments written by Mark Connor, a steering committee member and delegate, who as a trainer/boxer and writer likened the strike issues to “how revenue(s) should be shared can be found in professional boxing. Admittedly most fighters don't make much money or handle their careers that effectively, but management can't legally take more than 33 1/3 percent of a fight purse, and the trainer gets 10 percent...’ Imagine if the writer, the original creator of a work, always got a minimum of 56 and 2/3 or a maximum of 66 2/3 percent for every project... it seems to me that any approach to organizing should be based on the belief that the individual writer (or writing team) creating a work should have control of the money it generates. I know that's not the way it's generally perceived, and the publishers etc. we deal with look at it much differently, but psychologically it helps us to see ourselves as the important players we are and to conduct ourselves with that kind of confidence, no matter how tough the fight is or how insurmountable the odds may seem.”

Unless one is content working as a writing hobbyist – “organizing should be based on the belief that the individual writing (or writing team) creating a work should have control of the money it generates.”

Makes sense to me.

In Solidarity,
Jan Alan, NWU-TC Chair

First Things First ~ The article written by NWU-TC member Jane Gilgun, and featured here as an invitation for an open dialogue on writing for e-publishers that don't pay much received nary a response nor blip in my email inbox. Hmmm, I may address the possible assumptions of no response later in a future editorial. In the meantime, please note the following announcements:

- Moving forward: Biz Tech is back - Michael Kelberer, newest member of the Steering Committee, has agreed to coordinate efforts for the comeback of this once viable division of our chapter. Provided there is sufficient interest; the interested members would define the group dynamics of regular meetings, inviting guest speakers addressing biz tech concerns. Michael will take the lead to

coordinate efforts and schedule meetings. Interested? Please contact Michael at Michael@write-point.com regarding your interests/concerns with Biz Tech.

- Interested in growing the National Writers Union?

A volunteer is needed to represent our chapter. This is a unique opportunity to interact with writers across the country as part of an Organizing Committee that includes representatives of each NWU chapter.

The committee will meet through teleconference calls, and eventually break into smaller committees. This is an excellent opportunity to de-mystify the inside workings at the National level, to partake in the ongoing resolutions and in decision-making for other issues affecting writers nationwide. Please let me know if this opportunity interests you. Please contact jangigi@earthlink.net

- Save Your Home Hotline: According to a national survey, nearly half the homeowners who have adjustable rate mortgages don't know how their ARM(s) adjust or reset, and most don't know how much their monthly mortgage payments will increase when they do. To provide quick, accurate information, the AFL-CIO has set up a new Union Plus Save My Home Hotline: 1-866-490-5361.

- The National Writers Union has a variety of list serves to share information and ideas among members. There may be one that fits your particular interests.

NWU-Activists to discuss Union issues, subscribe by sending an email to nwu-tcactivists-subscribe@topica.com Members should be aware that this discussion is for union leaders and activists who often fiercely debate NWU issues and decision making. Members at times express strong opinions, which may be difficult for some to hear, but this is done in the spirit of the Union, democracy and free speech.

For academic/publishing issues, send a blank email to nwu-AWC-subscribe@topica.com, NWU-BizTech send a blank email to NWU-biztech-subscribe@yahoo.com for work-for-hire issues related to business and technical writing.

Steering Committee meetings are open to interested members. The next SC meeting is on Tuesday, January 22, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. at the East Lake Library in Minneapolis. The address is 2727 East Lake Street.

Among the discussion at the November SC meeting, was the invitation by Ian Graham Leask (the November 6, 2007, workshop on public readings) to provide future coaching classes specifically for NWU-TC members for personal enrichment and professional growth. This would require some cost per session. Budget concerns require that members be advised of this cost before accepting this offer. For those members interested in these sessions, please contact me at jangigi@earthlink.net or come to the SC meeting for further discussion.

There is a revised contract guide available in PDF form that can be down-loaded and referred to without sitting in front of a screen – clicking away, page after page. Kudos go to Chris Ammer, and Miryam Williamson for all their efforts. Members can get to it by logging in and going to http://www.nwu.org/nwu/index.php?cmd=showPage&page_id=1.5.1.5.

This guide is a treasure-trove of information to every member inquiring about book contract advice.

While the contract Go-Ca division has worked tirelessly in assisting members with advice and/or by writing the necessary correspondence; on this one occasion, a member took matters into their own hands to write the following exemplary letter to a publisher. The member has given permission to share the following with members and staff alike:

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking the time to consider my proposal for a book about [subject]. After reviewing the contract you have sent, I have decided that it is not an agreement I feel comfortable signing.

While I appreciate that you would work hard to produce a book that I would be proud of, and that as an established company you do indeed pay your authors, I too work hard at my writing and would also work hard to insure the success of the book. The return you offer for my part of the work quite simply seems much too small.

Given that no part of your contract is negotiable, I see no other option than to return it unsigned.

Again, I appreciate the time you have taken to consider my work and your willingness to publish it.

Sincerely,

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Please mark your calendars for the following workshops and activities confirmed for the coming months. Notices will be sent out just prior to each event. For additional or new information regarding the time, date and the featured topic will be posted on the NWU-TC website, www.nwu-tc.org

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January Workshop: Finding an Agent; Two Agents' Advice for Writers

Wednesday, January 9, 2008 at **NOON**, (please note time change), literary agents Bill Dorn and Bill Hammond will advise writers about how to find an agent and how agents can help writers market their work.

Bill Dorn and Bill Hammond founded Minneapolis-based 2Bills Literary Agency LLC in 2006. Both agents are veterans in the publishing field. Bill Hammond is a writer and former publisher; Bill Dorn is the founder of Dorn Communications and also the founder and CEO of Publishing Advisers International.

This workshop takes place at the Washburn Library, 5244 Lyndale Avenue South, in Minneapolis. The library phone number is 612-630-6550. Please join us for this FREE event!

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NWU-TC Series Readings ~

Back by popular demand, the next NWU-TC Free Form Reading is scheduled for Thursday, January 17, 2008 at 7:30 at Magers and Quinn independent book store in Uptown, 3032 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis. The event is FREE and open to the public.

Please join us with emcee, Mark Connor, and the following writers who will read from their books and/or works in progress:

Kate Dayton, her novel, *Available Light*.

Virginia L. Martin, a nonfiction account and history of the destruction done by the freeway and urban renewal. The working title is *Summit-University: Razing and Raising a Neighborhood*.

Paul Zerby, his novel in search of a publisher, *The Grass*.

Jane Gilgun, her new book called *On Being a Shit: Unkind Deeds and Cover-Ups in Everyday Life*.

*If you are not already familiar with Magers and Quinn independent bookstore, check out their web site at <http://www.magersandquinn.com/>

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Note: Gilgun's book, *On Being a Shit: Unkind Deeds and Cover-Ups in Everyday Life*, is now available on line at www.stores.lulu.com/jgilgun and other on-line bookstores.

JANE GILGUN is a professor, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She based this book on years of research, professional experience,

and personal observations.

“A humorous look at a serious topic,’ “It’s smart, provocative, and I’ll never take that phrase for granted again.”

Contact: Jane Gilgun at 612-925-3569, or email jgilgun@gmail.com

COMING IN FEBRUARY

A **Workshop** entitled, **Writer’s Best Response to Writing Resistance**, on Tuesday, February 19, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. at the East Lake Library, 2727 East Lake Street in Minneapolis.

The presentation is given by Rosanne Bane, M.A., a Creativity Coach and the author of *Dancing in the Dragon=s Den: Rekindling the Creative Fire in Your Shadow*. She is a renowned speaker on creativity and change. She is the owner of Imagination Ink, a small business dedicated to releasing human potential to transform the world, one creative person at a time. Rosanne has over 17 years experience as a trainer, coach and speaker. Her interactive workshops are always informative, engaging and encouraging.

CLASSIFIEDS

Please note the **deadlines** on the following grants and for the upcoming Midwest Book Awards for 2007.

Progressive Artists Supported - Puffin Foundation
<http://www.puffinfoundation.org/>

The Puffin Foundation seeks to open the doors of artistic expression by providing grants to artists who are often excluded from mainstream opportunities due to their race, gender, or social philosophy. The Foundation makes grants that encourage emerging artists in the fields of art, music, theater, dance, photography, and literature whose works might have difficulty being aired. The Foundation is interested in supporting creative and innovative initiatives that will advance progressive social change. Proposals for 2008 grants will be accepted until **December 30, 2007**. Visit the website listed above for more information.

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Artist and Writer Residency Programs at Banfill-Locke

All Visual Artists and Writers living in the Twin Cities metro area are invited to apply for these positions. Please contact the Art Center to receive Application Guidelines.

The Artist & Writer in Residence at Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts provides a small studio space, stipend and opportunities for public presentation of creative work. Residencies typically take place during a 12-18 month period. 2008 residencies will begin in February.

The Residency Artist and Writer are considered an integral part of the Art Center's programming. Residents are expected to work on site, interface with the community and serve as windows into the creative process for interested individuals.

Deadline for the application is **Friday, December 21, 2007 at 4:00 p.m.** All prospective applicants are encouraged to visit the Art Center and grounds during open gallery hours. We welcome any questions about the Residency Program. Contact Lia Rivamonte at 763-574-1850, or visit info@banfill-locke.org and enter Residency in the subject line.

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18th Annual Midwest Book Awards

Presented by the Midwest Independent Publishers Association (MIPA) – **Call for entries.** Publishers and authors are invited to enter the 18th Annual Midwest Book Awards competition for excellence in books published in 2007. **The deadline is February 1, 2008.**

For more information on MIPA Midwest Book Awards, contact www.mipa.org

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The People's University, a program offering free lectures taught by professors and cultural experts, will host three new classes this winter:

- "Backstage at Peer Gynt" presented by the Guthrie Artistic Staff (1/24)
- "Hmong in Minnesota" presented by Dr. Chia Youyee Vang (1/31)
- "Inside Altered Books: Unbinding the Book" presented by Dr. Betty Bright, book arts historian, and Chip Schilling, book artist and printmaker (2/7)

Space is limited for these FREE lectures, registration is required. Contact BUT SPACE LIMITED. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: 612-630-6155 OR FRIENDSOFMPL.ORG.

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Make the Connection with NWU-TC's own Jim Wishner – once again inviting Twin City listeners to tune into his show, "The Connection" on Saturdays, 7:00 a.m. on KTNF 950 AM aka, Air America-Minnesota.

Note: Just a reminder to colleagues that Jim is always looking for writers to interview. Preference would be non-fiction, musings or thoughts – for on-air discussion with Jim. Contact information, dejim@prodigy.net or 651-578-1967. The station also streams live online at www.airamericaminnesota.com

Marginal Notes from the Editor

May all of you have a wonderful Holiday, however you celebrate. This column will resume next year.

“Be obscure clearly.”

~ E.B. White ~

The deadline for the January issue is December 30. Articles, comments and items of interest can be sent to the editor at, jangigi@earthlink.net

In solidarity,

Jan Alan, NWU-TC Editor/Chair