



NWU-TC Newsletter February 2007

Letter to Twin Cities Writers ~

It's time to demonstrate the value of your connection to the National Writers Union.

I am continually amazed at how many members work together to make this union a success. As the Twin Cities Chapter gears up for local Steering Committee elections, now is the time for you to help make our chapter stronger!

NWU members benefit from career advancement and job leads, grievance assistance and contract advice, peer support and solidarity with other writers. If it's time to renew your membership- or you haven't yet joined... please consider the following excerpts from some of our members and their experiences with the union, our union and why it's an advantage to YOU to be part of the action.

"Membership in the union has advanced my writing career tremendously. My contacts with the other experienced writers in the union have given me the inside scoop on the publishing game; helped me know what to charge for my work, how to avoid problems with clients, and where to turn if things go wrong."

"A client sold ten of my stories to another publication without my permission and without paying me. Thanks to the great advice of our grievance officer, I was able to collect \$1,000 from the client. Most of the time, things go smoothly--but I gladly pay my dues for those unexpected times when things go 'bump in the night'."

"I've worked as a freelance writer for more than 15 years and owned my own business. I've learned more in one year with the NWU than with any other professional association I've belonged to. From how to negotiate a book contract to what to charge for magazine articles, from how and where to promote my book, the NWU has helped me in dozens of ways."

"I first joined the NWU because I wanted to learn how to get my fictional works published. What I didn't expect was the remarkable feeling, when I walked into

my first NWU event--that I'd come home to a group of people who truly understood what the writing life was all about—the additional bonus came when my Writers Union friends had also provided me with my very best leads for business and technical writing projects. It is the one organization I know of that helps me keep my book-publishing ambitions alive, while simultaneously helping me earn my daily living as a business writer."

"When I moved to the Twin Cities, I joined the Writers Union. When I went to my first membership meeting, I felt at home. The union provides valuable services, but what kept me paying my dues is the people--talented writers in a variety of fields who generously share their expertise, camaraderie, and humor."

"My reasons for joining the NWU did not particularly focus on one thing that I felt they could do for me, but rather my belief that we are stronger as a group. We're going through a time now, with the onset of electronic publishing, where authors need the services of NWU even more--we can't begin to know which way to turn! . . . This is the one membership that I feel a writer cannot do without."

"The original NWU constitution, written in 1981, made the point about solidarity: The strength of the National Writers Union rests in the solidarity of its members. The Union's effectiveness depends on its success in democratically translating the individual energies of writers into collective decision and action."

Watch for more information about steering committee opportunities in the coming weeks and make the decision to be part of the action! If you have questions about membership, leave us a message at 612-879-5572 or write to me at suegrieger@earthlink.net.

With best wishes for your writing success,

Sue Grieger
Chair, National Writers Union, Twin Cities chapter

About Our Members ~

Joining the august company of many other NWU members, Alicia L. Conroy was named as a finalist in the Minnesota Book Awards for her 2006 story collection, *Lives of Mapmakers*, published by Carnegie Mellon University Press. The book is available in the Metro area at Micawber's, Common Good Books, Amazon Feminist Bookstore Coop, and Magers & Quinn, and online at Amazon.com, Powells.com and BN.com.

Congratulations Alicia!

Just another note of interest: All the fiction finalists this year were with small presses!

FEBRUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, February 13, 1 p.m., please join us at the Resource Center of the Americas (RCA) as novelist Stanley Gordon West shares insights about character, plot development, the use of historical sources, in story development as well as the issues related to book production and distribution.

West, described recently by the *Billings Outpost* as “Montana’s purest writer,” has written a number of popular novels including *Finding Laura Buggs*, *Blind Your Ponies*, *Until They Bring the Streetcars Back*, and the recent *Sweet Shattered Dreams*.

The Resource Center of the Americas (RCA) is located at **3019 Minnehaha Avenue South** in Minneapolis, half a block south of East Lake Street, right behind Minnehaha Liquors. Contact John Toren jhtoren@comcast.net or Cary Griffith Cary.J.Griffith@ceridian.com with any questions.

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NWU members are cordially invited to attend the upcoming event(s) hosted by the Midwest Independent Publishers Association, (MIPA). Both presentations (March event listed in Mark Your Calendar section) are free and will be held at the St. Anthony Park Library (lower level), **2245 Como Avenue**, in St. Paul. **Wednesday, February 14, 7-9 p.m.**, features a panel with St. Paul Pioneer Press Book Reviewer, Mary Ann Grossmann and designers from the nationwide award-winning company, TLC Graphics.

The topic: the Changing Role of Reviews and the All-Important Cover Design.

Grossmann will discuss the changing role of reviews in the ever-evolving world of publishing, especially the expanding independent publishing market and the explosion of self-published/subsidy-published books.

In the area of aesthetics; research has shown that the interior as well as the cover design is equally important. With so many books being published, the question of how-to catch the eye of a reviewer and, ultimately, a customer will be addressed by the representatives from TLC Graphics; including ‘before and after’ examples. TLC provides editorial, printing and consulting services for clients nationwide.

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Thursday, February 8, 7:00 p.m., Nuruddin Farah, celebrated Somali author will be reading at the Loft Literary Center, Marshall Field’s Performance Center, 1020 Washington Avenue South in Minneapolis. This free event is sponsored by the College of St. Benedict, Graywolf Press and the Loft.

Farah is the winner of the 1998 Neustadt International Prize for Literature. He is the author of eight novels, including, most recently, *Knots*. Farah states that his intention is to 'keep his country alive by writing about it.' His novels strip bare the political and social horror of a country wrought by civil war. Salman Rushdie calls Farah, 'one of the finest contemporary African novelists.'

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Allen and Linda Anderson will offer heart-rending and inspiring rescue stories of animal survivors of Hurricane Katrina. They will also provide suggestions on how to keep your pets safe from natural disasters.

As founders of the Angel Animals Network, the Anderson's have written numerous books on the deep connection between humans and animals.

This Hot Reads for Cold Nights event is on **Tuesday, February 13, 7:00 - 8:00 pm**, at the Galaxie Library, 14955 Galaxie Avenue, in Apple Valley. For more information, please call 952-891-7050.

Mark Your Calendars ~

Don't miss this chance to see Minnesota's foremost private collection of 20th Century art and collectibles – tickets are now on sale for the First Annual 20th Century Americana Tour.

Join WomenVenture from **6 to 10 p.m. on Thursday March 1, 2007** for a rare look at this museum-quality exhibit of art and collectibles reflecting the art, events, people and culture of the 20th Century. This intriguing collection located in Bloomington, Minnesota features sixty separate collectible categories, with highlights including:

- Babe Ruth's 52nd home run bat (circa 1921)
- The world's most valuable music poster from The Beatles' 1968 concert at Shea Stadium
- Rare autographed photos of Al Capone, Marilyn Monroe, Lucille Ball, Elvis Presley, and Jim Hensen
- Original comic strip art by Charles Schultz, Winsor McCay and others
- Original 1950's cover paintings from the Saturday Evening Post
- A valuable collection of antique duck decoys, Tiffany glass, American art pottery, Coca-Cola memorabilia, posters, and paintings.

Experts will be on hand throughout the evening to answer your questions about this unique collection.

The 20th Century Americana Tour also will feature a silent auction with unique items related to the collection. As a fundraiser for WomenVenture, a portion of your ticket price is tax-deductible. Tickets are \$125 per person or \$100 each for two or more. To register, visit www.womenventure.org or call 651-646-3808, ext. 205.

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Please join us on **Tuesday, March 13 at 1-2:30 p.m.** for a co-sponsored event featuring panelists on the topic of 'Launching Your Web Site'. The presentation will be held at the Resource Center of the Americas (RCA), Lower Level, 3019 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis.

Whether you are considering hiring a computer person or doing the work yourself, you will be given down to earth, user-friendly advice for writers/editors using or considering a web site for marketing their talent. The presentation will focus on the nuts and bolts of the decision to build a web site and discuss how to actually get started. Speakers will provide handouts.

Sponsored by the National Writers Union, Twin Cities Chapter (NWU-TC), and the Professional Editors Network (PEN), the speakers are **Barbara K. Mednick** and **Mark Levine**.

Barbara K. Mednick, is president of BKM Consulting, Inc. where she provides PR/marketing communications consulting, writing, and training to Fortune 500 companies, mid-size companies, educational and nonprofit organizations. Twenty-five years of marketing communications experience, Mednick has conducted training workshops from all aspects from PR tips to sales proposal writing. A regular columnist writing on sales/marketing topics for Star Tribune JOBS and Mednick has garnered industry awards for marketing and writing work done on behalf of clients. She is a member of the Minnesota Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators, Minnesota Interactive Marketing Association, and past president of the Association for Women in Communications-Twin Cities Chapter.

Mark Levine is the president of Click Industries, an ecommerce company that operates more than 30 websites that provide products and services for small business owners, writers, musicians, and other creative individuals. Mark is also the CEO of Mill City Press, a book publishing company that helps authors harness the power of the Internet to sell and promote their books. Mark is the author of three books – most of which are successfully marketed online. His book, *The Fine Print of Self-Publishing*, is one of the top selling books about self-publishing on Amazon.com. Mark helps companies build or retool their websites in order to drive more qualified traffic, and he designs customized online advertising programs for these businesses.

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Learn what it takes to be an alternative travel writer, from pre-trip research and note taking to selective observation.

Alternative Travel Writing, taught by Deborah McLaren, begins Tuesday, March 13 and runs through April 17, from 9:30 -11:30 am at Open Book, Winter/Spring 2007. Enrollment is open for this six-week class (M49-2). Participants will discuss story ideas; create structure for your story; and turn recollections into a draft travel piece. Be prepared to write in class: choose a past trip or a familiar travel destination for your topic; bring notes, travel guidebooks, photos, postcards, journals, promotion material, clippings, and any other source materials. Be prepared to discuss ethics in travel writing as well as various forms of “alternative travel,” such as ecotourism, volunteerism, cross-cultural exchanges, off the beaten path.

Deborah McLaren has more than fifteen years of experience writing about alternative travel. Her book *Rethinking Tourism and Eco-travel* (Kumarian Press, 2nd ed. 2004) is a best-seller in its genre. Deborah is a contributing writer and editor of *Transitions Abroad* magazine. In addition to writing, Deborah has worked in community tourism development with Indigenous peoples from the Amazon to the Arctic, and as a consultant to UN programs in Bhutan and northern India. She has just completed a series of articles about community recovery after the 2004 tsunami in southern India.

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Wednesday, March 14th 7-9 p.m. at St. Anthony Park Library, 2245 Como Avenue, in St. Paul is the second panelist presentation offered by MIPA. The topic, **Trends in Publishing**, features *Publishers Weekly* representatives; **Matthew Hurley** and **Louisa Ermelino**.

Their discussion includes; the emerging role of independent publishers' vs the Big Seven, which book categories are doing well and which are tanking, the book review process, issues related to book distribution and the changing roles in all steps of the publishing process including wholesaling, returns and other factors that influence business.

Matthew Hurley is celebrating his 18th year with Publishers Weekly. Recently appointed sales director, he shares responsibilities in the U.S., Canada and Europe. He has a strong passion and commitment to the success of the independent publisher. Louisa Ermelino joined PW as Reviews Editor in April of 2005. She had been a reviewer for trade and consumer magazines, most recently chief of reporters at *In Style* magazine. She is the author of three novels, and teaches creative writing at Columbia.

CLASSIFIEDS ~

The “Smoking Gun”, a reference to the February 2, 2007, report on global warning and the conclusions offered was the topic discussion aired (February 4)

on **The Connection**, hosted by NWU-TC member and radio commentator, Jim Wishner. A CD of this and previous programs are available by request. Please email Jim, with your address or contact information, to jim@citilink.com for your own personal copy. It's free and according to Wishner, 'a labor of love'. Air America Minnesota airs every week after the 5 p.m. Sunday News Weekly on KTNF AM 950. It also streams live online at www.airamericaminnesota.com If you have suggestions about future guests or topics, a news tip for the Minnesota News Connection statewide broadcast service, please also contact Jim Wishner at 651-578-1967 or 888-692-9358.

The February 4 show included the report's details and ramifications were discussed with help from Monique Sullivan, Minnesota field organizer for the Public Interest Research Group.

In addition, Sunday's show offered directions to the best place to kick a field goal (hint: you don't have to build a taxpayer-funded stadium to get there.). It is hot radio for the cold weekends to come.

The Employee Free Choice Act (aired, January 24), with guest Eric Lehto, AFSCME Council 5, representative, the bill that previously languished in the past Republican congress. The bill would strengthen protection for workers' freedom to choose and require employers' recognition of a union.

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Professor Curt McNamara, speaker at the January 24, **Writers for Change** meeting, has sent a PDF file of his PowerPoint presentation on mapping (radiant thinking) for distribution. If you would like a copy please write to Jackie Mosio at this email jbmosio@aol.com and I'll send you the attachment.

Marginal Notes from the Editor:

Valentine's Day took on a new meaning for me the year I exchanged cordialities on the behest of my dog, Abbie, to the opposite gender of her canine persuasion. The recipient of Abbie's love note could neither read nor write. But that didn't alter the fact that she also received what could only be described as a 'disturbing' offer of unrequited love and commitment – complete with a hand-drawn heart and bleeding tears.

Abbie's paramour and she were unfazed by that exchange and have since 'grown apart' but on the occasion (when fate brings them together at the local dog park), they seem to be agreeable and occasionally frolic as only dogs on friendly terms seem to do. Responsible dog ownership with concerns of not adding to the pet over-population was the decision made by myself and the other dog's owner; so

conjugal rights never played a part of any intended 'visit'. Neither dog seems to know what they are missing.

This brings me to the point of Valentine's Day today. It is the one day that truly allows for that kind of silliness so long ago exchanged by two dog loving friends. It was the shared event that was memorable.

One need not suffer over the lack of receiving all those 'marketed' messages and gift offerings of someone's proven love; that once per versed Valentine's Day. Neither should the 'spirit' of this day be ignored, buried with misguided analytical 'neurosis' or disdain.

It is a day to take comfort in being comfortable around the persons that have meaning for you. As writers, it may also be the opportunity to share (perhaps in creative verse) with your co-worker, boss, mentor or friend; whatever, however that relationship has meaning for you. An exchange of kindnesses laced with a little silliness makes for a lovely memory.

The deadline for the March newsletter submissions is February 28. Please send them to Jan Alan, NWU-TC Editor, jangigi@earthlink.net Thank you.

In solidarity,

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"Friends are those rare people who ask how we are and then wait to hear the answer."

- Ed Cunningham -