



### GCWA is on the Move

Word of Life Church is remodeling, so July was our last meeting at this location. To accommodate our growing membership, we are scouting a permanent home for 2025.

The August meeting on Saturday, 8/17 will be at the Fairfield Inn, 7090 Cypress Terrace, Fort Myers, Fla.

Check the [website](#) for the most up-to-date information.

### **GCWA 2024 Writing Contest Celebration**

Winners of the Gulf Coast Writers Association (GCWA) 2024 Writing Contest have been notified and names will be formally announced at the August meeting. A celebration is planned during our September monthly meeting (9/21/24) where award-recipients will have the opportunity to read their prized stories. [The Lakes Regional Library](#) has been secured for September.

We hope to see you there!

### **CHILL OUT!**

August 15 is National Relaxation Day! Put on (or stay in) your most comfy clothing and get cozy with a favorite pet and a good book. We recommend anything written by our [GCWA members](#).

According to [Wikipedia](#), National Relaxation Day is an annual event, proposed by nine-year-old Sean Moeller of Clio, Michigan in 1985. Don't forget, members are encouraged to upload your [book\(s\)](#) if they are not already on the GCWA website.

### **Lee Library is a Writer's Best Friend**

Lee Library System regularly presents live and online events and programs and participates in a **collaboration of online author talks**. Join New York Times bestselling author Shelby Van Pelt as she discusses her impressive debut novel "Remarkably Bright Creatures." You don't want to miss this deep-dive exploration of friendship, reckoning and hope! Catch this Online Author Talk, Aug. 21 at 7 PM. [Register](#) and see additional information [here](#).

Other September Online Author guests include Garrett Graff, Nate Klemp, and Liane Moriarty. Upcoming and previously broadcast events can be found at the [Online Author Event website](#).

Doing **genealogical research** for a book? Take advantage of this presentation: Online Genealogical Research Using U.S. Census Records, [Sept. 7](#).

**Live workshops** generally require advance registration. Check with the Library branch holding the event. Some seats may still be available for these two live events at [the Fort Myers Regional Library](#) downtown: [Creative Writing Workshop](#), Sept. 3 and [Public Speaking Workshop](#), Sept. 12.

### GCWA Monthly Meetings

Mark your calendars for the following meeting dates @ 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

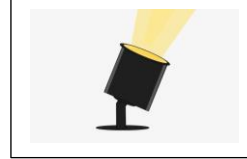
**Saturday, 8/17/24** – [Craig Handel](#) & [Dave Kratzke](#) reveal marketing tips to help sell your books.\*\*Meeting to be held at the Fairfield Inn\*\* at 7090 Cypress Terrace, Fort Myers

**Saturday, 9/21/24** – Celebrating GCWA Contest Winners

**Saturday, 10/19/24** – Publishing Essays to Build an Audience – [Sheryl Stillman](#) & Cheryl Lynn Dratler

**Saturday, 11/16/24** - TBA

Visit [www.GulfWriters.Org](http://www.GulfWriters.Org) for the latest info!



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT Jeanne Meeks

*Editor's Note: The Member Spotlight is a regular feature that celebrates our members' journeys and their accomplishments. Jeanne Meeks has five books and is excited about number six.*

### Using AI to Write a Story

By ChatGPT and Sheryl Stillman

In Mary's [August's President Letter](#), she shared the value of reading and in participating in book clubs. So, for fun, I prompted AI to "Write a 250-word article on the benefits of reading for writers." Here's what came back in less than two seconds. What do you think? How would you have approached the article differently? Are there ideas you can use and still make the story your own? Share your thoughts in our [new member chat forum](#).

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*Reading is a cornerstone of a writer's development, offering a multitude of benefits that enhance their craft. Engaging with diverse literary genres and styles provides writers with a wellspring of inspiration and insight. Exposure to different voices and perspectives broadens their understanding of narrative techniques, character development, and thematic exploration. By analyzing how other authors construct their stories, writers can learn to refine their own methods, experiment with new structures, and find their unique voice.*

*Moreover, reading helps writers build their vocabulary and improve their language skills. Encountering varied sentence structures and rich descriptions in literature exposes them to new words and ways of expression, which can enhance their own writing style. This linguistic growth is crucial for crafting compelling prose and dialogue.*

*In addition to technical skills, reading fosters empathy and emotional depth. Engaging with characters' experiences and emotions allows writers to better understand human behavior and motivations, enriching their own characters and plotlines. This deeper emotional connection helps in creating more authentic and relatable narratives.*

*Furthermore, reading regularly keeps writers mentally stimulated and motivated. It provides a sense of continuity and connection to the larger literary tradition, reinforcing the importance of storytelling. By immersing themselves in the written word, writers can stay inspired and passionate about their own projects, fueling their creativity and perseverance.*

*In summary, reading is an indispensable tool for writers, enhancing their technical skills, broadening their emotional range, and keeping their creative energy vibrant.*

### **From Rim to Writing Books)**

I never intended to write a book.

In college, I took a poetry class; I dove into poetry and loved expressing myself with a minimum of words. While self-employed for twenty-eight years, I wrote the best, most effective business letters.

Later, I journaled daily, keeping a record while backpacking across the Grand Canyon. At Phantom Ranch, nine-thousand feet below the north rim, we heard rumors about a medical emergency; a death; an injured woman; a medical evacuation. It turned out, a four-year-old had tumbled off the south rim to her death. Her daddy jumped down, ledge to ledge, to get to her, breaking both his legs.

That tragedy haunted and compelled me to write about the canyon's danger and unpredictability, but I couldn't steal that family's story. Instead, I used my notes describing my five days in the canyon as the framework for my first book—fictionalizing characters, embellishing events, and throwing in bad guys and a murder.

When I started "Rim to Rim," I joined a writing group and a four-person critique group. We exchanged ten pages or more each month for written comments. That process kept me accountable and motivated to get it done. I followed up with a second novel, "Wolf Pack-Mystery on Isle Royale," but "Rim to Rim" remains my best seller.

Experienced authors tell you to get to know your characters, because you'll live with them for a long time. I started using a spreadsheet to keep track of each character's physical attributes, their background, their quirks, and habits.

My latest book is my favorite. "The Neighbor's Wife" is a gentle story about Henry, an elderly WWII veteran who still has nightmares about the war. He mourns his wife but neglects her garden until an abused young woman moves in next door. Henry becomes her protector and the hero he was always meant to be.

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### ***From Rim to Writing Books***

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I like to picture a specific person playing the role of my main character. My Dad was a curmudgeon like Henry in "The Neighbor's Wife." His war stories and nightmares were the inspiration for the story.

My work-in-progress, "Runners," is a middle-grade novel about a sixth-grade boy who is called a freak at school because he can't sit still and runs through his town looking for people to help. To his dismay, he discovers a superpower— whenever bullies get too close to him, they puke on their shoes.

The Young Adult genre is new to me, so I've read a stack of middle-grade books to familiarize myself with the expectations for that genre. I was also more serious about an outline for "Runners" to keep me on track. My outlines boil down to having a starting scene and an ending. Then I connect one to the other with action, conflict, and character development.

Along the way, I ask questions of myself in the mirror: What would that character say? What happens next? What makes the character do that? As the fill-in scenes pop into my head, I type them up real fast, cut, paste, and edit until they fall into a plot.

All my books are fun, fast reads. If I was smart, I'd stick to one genre and build up a loyal following, but I write whatever excites me. That excitement gets me into a zone where I lose myself in the writing process. That's where the joy is.

I self-publish my books, because I'm too impatient to search for a traditional publisher. However, there's still a lot of work to creating a quality book. It's important to get an outside editor, but otherwise, I've taught myself the other publishing tasks: formatting, cover design, and uploading to Amazon. With a little determination, anyone can do it.

### Petite Passages

#### **We love printing GCWA members' short works!**

Do you have a 250-word excerpt from your work? Maybe you are adventurous enough to write a Flash story of 250 words (brief fiction or nonfiction pieces that tell a whole story). Perhaps you have a poem that fits the bill.

Let us Share Your Petite Passage. Share it with us at [Communications@GulfWriters.org](mailto:Communications@GulfWriters.org)

#### **Member Good News!**

GCWA wants to share and celebrate our members' successes. Please submit yours to: [Communications@GulfWriters.org](mailto:Communications@GulfWriters.org) to be included in The Gazette's next edition.

#### **Volunteers Needed!**

The Communications team continues to request additional support.

Do we have any Social Media experts who would like to promote GCWA on Twitter (X), Meetup, LinkedIn, and Facebook?

Ginger Wakem has become our sole (and wonderful!) photographer. We want to ensure we have backups, if and when the need arises. Thank you!