



REMINDER!

Writing Contest Update—Extended!

Great news! [The Annual GCWA Writing Contest](#) has been extended by one month from May 31 to **June 30, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. EST**. If you've already entered successfully, use this bonus time to submit another piece!

Winners will be announced in August and will have an opportunity to read their submissions at our September 2024 meeting.



Let's Party Like It's...1995!

GCWA was founded in April 1995. We have ten months to plan a grand 30th Anniversary celebration! What is the most fitting way to recognize and celebrate this special occasion? If you have ideas, share them with: Executive@GulfWriters.Org.

Photo by [Daniel Huniewicz](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Member Good News!

GCWA celebrates members' successes! Submit yours at Communications@GulfWriters.Org to be included in the following newsletter.

The Fort Myers, FL, Barnes & Noble location recently featured two of our GCWA members:

- ◆ Under the pen name C.P. Tertius, Curtis Ayers had his three books displayed, including *Every Man Truly Lives Alone* and a two-book anthology series, *Tales from Home & Around the Globe 1 and 2*.
- ◆ Charley Valera's book, *My Father's War: Memories from our Honored WWII Soldiers*, was also displayed.

Volunteers Needed!

The Communications Team is looking for volunteers!

We need one person to assist with Social Media engagement and multiple folks to take photos during our member events (one person per event).

Thank you for your support!

Email: Communications@GulfWriters.org

GCWA Monthly Meetings

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

Saturday, 6/15/24 – Laura Tichy-Smith, moderator for the Florida Weekly Writing Challenge, will be sharing the contest's history and pointers on submitting entries.

Saturday, 7/20/24 – GCWA Member, [Judy Pearson](#), will share insights on the importance of accuracy and research in your stories.

Saturday, 8/17/24

Saturday, 9/21/24

Saturday, 10/19/24

Saturday, 11/16/24

Visit www.Gulfwriters.Org/Calendar for current info and other local events.



Editing: Your Secret Weapon

By Claudia Volkman

Consider editing your secret weapon. Editing is like an invisible hand that polishes rough drafts into gleaming gems of clarity and coherence. Whether you're a seasoned wordsmith or a fledgling writer, honing your editing skills is essential.

Editing doesn't happen at the beginning, though; it's later in the process. You don't want to edit your piece too soon because that's a sure way to derail your creative juices and cause paralysis. But once you've written your first draft, then it's time to step back from your work and gain a fresh perspective. First, consider the big picture:

- Does the story flow logically?
- Is your message clear and concise?

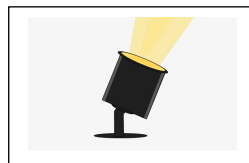
Next, dive into the nitty-gritty details. Check for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. You want to make sure what you've written is as pristine as possible. It helps to read your manuscript out loud; you'll often catch mistakes or awkward sentences this way.

As you edit, ask yourself some probing questions:

- Are my arguments well-supported?
- Are my sentences varied and engaging?
- Does each word serve a purpose?
- Don't be afraid to trim excess fat; concise writing is often the most powerful.

Your part as an "editor" is now finished; but the editing process is not over yet. Now it's time to invest in a professional editor. This is an important step in the writing process. When seeking feedback, be open to constructive criticism. Embrace the opportunity to refine your work further. A good editor is a valued collaborator.

Editors come in various flavors, each with its own expertise. Developmental editors focus on structure and content, helping shape the narrative from conception to completion. Content editors concentrate on each and every line to ensure that your message comes across compellingly and concisely, always reflecting your voice and tone. Copyeditors sweat the small stuff, fine-tuning grammar and style. Proofreaders have a keen eye for detail, catching those pesky typos that slip through the cracks. But all editors share a common goal: to elevate your writing to its fullest potential.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

John Siko

Editor's Note: The Member Spotlight is a regular feature that celebrates our members' journeys and their accomplishments.

A Writer's Tale: Self-Published to Signed Contract

By John Siko

This is not a *Good News* story. This story follows the suffering and death of my wife due to a healthcare provider's medical malpractice.

My book, *Anatomy of a Wrongful Death Lawsuit*, describes my four-year journey through the halls of justice-seeking redress from a healthcare provider whose medical malpractice contributed to my wife's death. It was written in real-time leading up to my wife's demise and was written as therapy after her passing.

I wrote the book not only to document flagrant medical malpractice but also to educate the citizens of Florida, especially residents of Lee County. I can summarize that education in four words: FLORIDA'S SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY STATUTES. In my attempt to educate, I submitted several editorials to the newspaper, all of which they elected not to print.

I asked myself what genres this book would fit and who would purchase it. It is a book in which good does not triumph over evil. It does not speak highly of specific healthcare industry segments or complement some of the legal profession. It also contains information that could have legal ramifications, resulting in a cease-and-desist order.

I had 102,000 words describing the journey that started in May 2017 and ended in September 2022. What do I do with them? Should a writer novice attempt to write a book or go on with his life? I chose the former and started editing, reducing the script to 98,000 words. I reviewed it once again, asking myself if I was spending too many words describing the legal system when the reader is probably more interested in the personal side of the story. I got it down to 94,000 words.

Now, what do I do with these words? Should I go on an ego trip and self-publish on Amazon to tell my golfing buddies that I published a book?

(continued)

A Writer's Tale: From Self-Publishing to Signed — *continued from previous page*

What the hell, go for it. So, in 2022, I self-published my first edition. After reviewing the book, I edited it to 92,000 words and reissued it. It sold 43 books on Amazon, which I understand is a best seller. I then forgot about it until Writer's Digest asked for unpublished manuscripts. In the final editing, I reduced the script to 90,000 words and submitted it. Not getting a response for six months, I decided my publishing career had ended. Not to be.

In January 2023, I got the following letter from Austin Macauley: Publishers. The Publishing Board has reported favorably on a piece of work that you submitted for their consideration; please see the attached letter. The letter was from the Board of Editors at Austin Macauley, which read in part, "Your work was found to be a captivating, thought-provoking read offering a unique and personal perspective on the medical system in this country"

Then, there was contract signing, book cover reviews, and their edited version of my manuscript. I submitted their revised script for review by Grammarly, an exercise Austin Macauley was not too happy about. Grammarly identified over 1,000 corrections and suggested changes. The final script of 89,600 words was approved and sent back. That version was issued to the public on April 26, 2024.

This was a David versus Goliath story, but Goliath had bigger stones in this case. So, how do I market this book to the Davids out there? Stay tuned for news on my marketing endeavors.

WRITING – IN A FLASH

Flash fiction (and even flash nonfiction) is rising in popularity. Publishers and organizations use guidelines ranging from fifty to one thousand words. We will occasionally publish a GCWA member's work of 250 words or less. Flash fiction and nonfiction generally emphasize a "story" with beginning, middle, and end (as opposed to a reflection or vignette). Do you have a piece you'd like to share? Or perhaps a short poem?

Even if it doesn't fit a specific genre, sometimes brief is better, and always challenging. Take a look at Ginger's 'short and sweet' bakery copy below to see just how much reader interest a few words can generate.

Are you bold enough to try to convey a compelling message in 250 words or less? Share it with us at Communications@GulfWriters.org

SHORT AND SWEET

By Ginger Wakem

Mrs. Rabbit's Creamy Carrot Cake

Faithful Mr. Rabbit goes home every night because he knows Mrs. Rabbit will delight him with another of her special treasures! Yes, we're talking about her delicious, heavenly carrot cake with an amazing dripping cream cheese frosting that always sends Mr. Rabbit over the moon! So be like Mr. Rabbit and don't just think about it, do it. And take a couple of extra pieces home for breakfast in the morning. Mrs. Rabbit says it's the perfect vegetable to share with your hunny bunny over your morning coffee.

Chocolate Blond

If you are into blonds, but are attracted to chocolate, look no more. This cake will fulfill all your crazy desires and dreams. The blond buttercream frosting's on top and the dark rich chocolate's on the bottom, just like you like it. Prepare to conjure up all the fantasies your little heart desires because this one wants to go home with you. This one wants to stay for breakfast and enjoy a cup of coffee with you in the morning. How can you say no to a delicious proposal like that?

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