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# OKLAHOMA CITY WRITERS, INC.

## President's Message

Shelley Pagach

### January Speaker:

Connie Armstrong

**Topic:** Oklahoma Center for the Book and especially, the Oklahoma Book Awards.

Connie Armstrong is a native Oklahoman, an avid political historian, and lover of books. She holds advanced degrees in political science and history, and began her career as a professor at Redlands Community College, where she continues to teach adjunct history classes. Although her favorite period of history is the 1930s and World War II, Connie has conducted honors courses and seminars on the John F. Kennedy assassination.

In 1999 she went to work at the Oklahoma Historical Society, where she served as the associate editor of the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*. She also served as editor for exhibits featured at the Oklahoma Museum of History. Since 2005 Connie has been employed at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries as the editor of the Oklahoma Almanac and executive director of the Oklahoma Center for the Book. Her duties with the Oklahoma Center for the Book include promoting Oklahoma authors and books about our state as well as reading for pleasure by all age groups. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, traveling, and spending time with her grandchildren.

I love New Year resolutions. You can set all sorts of goals—big or small, outrageous or conservative, anything you want. The only pressure involved is the pressure you put on yourself.

A quick google search shows the top 10 New Year's resolutions are as follows:

1. Lose Weight
2. Getting Organized
3. Spend Less, Save More
4. Enjoy Life to the Fullest
5. Staying Fit and Healthy
6. Learn Something Exciting
7. Quit Smoking
8. Help Others in Their Dreams
9. Fall in Love
10. Spend More Time with Family

If you throw in: Read more books and write every day, you get the gist of my own list.

Another quick google search shows that only about 8% of the people who make New Year's resolutions keep them. Although that is not surprising, it also doesn't deter me from setting them. There is something empowering about the tradition of setting a new goal on the first day of a brand-new year.

—A new beginning. A fresh start. A do-over.

—I can't help myself.

—I must set the bar just out of reach so I have something to strive for.

—What is your New Year's resolution?

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## MEETING ROOM CHANGE

Room 130

## Elected Officers

**President: Shelley Pagach,**  
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## Appointed Officers

**Newsletter: Inez Phillips,**  
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**Nominating Chair: TBA**  
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## 2016 OWFI Delegates

**Bill Boudreau,** 946-6588,  
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**Shelley Pagach,** 496-8749,  
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**2016 OWFI Alternates:**  
**Carolyn Leonard,** 740-1632,

## MEMBER NEWS

**John J. Dwyer's** book *The Oklahomans: The Story of Oklahoma and Its People*, was #6 on the Oklahoma Best-sellers, nonfiction list.

**Linda Shelby's** new book, *A Splinter in Time*, is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and thewildrosepress.com. Linda had a book signing at Full Circle Books on Saturday, December 17 from 3 to 5.

**Nelda Paden** won Third Place in Short Story for "A Top Coat's Life" and **Lorelei Sawtelle** for an Honorable Mention in Poetry for "Autumn Haiku" in the 2016 Art Affair Annual Literary Contests.

**Barbara Shepherd** won the following in the 2016 Norman Galaxy of Writers annual contest:  
Third place, Unrhymed Poetry - The Journey  
First place, Nonfiction Article - How to Turn Ninety in Style  
First place, Children's Fiction - Granny's Gift  
First place, Nostalgic Essay - Fighting Wildfire  
First place, Short story - Daffodil Waltz  
Bonnie Speer – Crème de la Crème - Daffodil Waltz

**Shelley Anne Richter & Nancy Vineyard** sold a short story "Double-Leashed" to *Lutheran Message* for 2017. Richter also sold short poem "untitled" to *Mature Living* (2017). She also signed a contract with Edge of Imagination Entertainment for an unnamed screenplay to be completed 2/15/17.

## Attention Paid OCWI Members

If you have a presence on the Internet— website, blog, books listed in online book providers, publishers, etc., and you want OCWI website, "Member Links" to activate the link, please email URL address to Bill Boudreau, billboudreau@flash.net and Lorelei Sawtelle, lsawtelle@cox.net.

**Inez Phillips  
6200 N. Quapah Avenue  
Oklahoma City OK 73112**

## **Oklahoma City Writers, Inc.**

**Saturday, January 21, 2017**

**Coffee at 9:45      Meeting at 10:00**

We meet in the St. Luke's Methodist Church at NW 15<sup>th</sup> and Harvey, Oklahoma City.

Enter through the north door by handicap parking and go to Room 130.

**January Speaker:** *Meg Welch Dendler*

**Topic:** Oklahoma Book Award

**John Biggs** introduced this month's speaker, **Meg Dendler**. Her presentation was titled *Writing Children's Books*. She has also written adult books, movie reviews, etc. and has a Masters in Early Childhood Education

"Good writing is good writing regardless of the genre. You must have good characters, plot, and setting."

1. **Why is it a book for children?** You will still have all the same genres.

a. **Picture Books**—500 words or less (hard, hard, hard to self-publish.)

b. **Early Readers**—simple drawings simple vocabulary 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Very few writers can do this.

c. **Middle Grade**—3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up to about 8<sup>th</sup> grade. (This is a hard market to break into.) Much darker than it used to be, but not as violent or bloody or sexual as YA. (30,000 words or so—unless you're famous) Large words should be avoided. Watch your vocabulary—avoid verbose sections and multisyllabic words. Keep sentences shorter. Boy mentality is different than a girl's. (Boy books need to have stinky sections.)

d. **Young Adult**—may overlap middle grade genre. These may have drug use, sex, violence. YA books tend to be dark. Age of main character determines whether it is YA or adult.

e. **Do not talk down to kids** (or adults). The most important issue is who solves the problem. Grown-ups must not solve the problem. Adults cannot come and rescue anyone (think Charlie Brown's teacher—wah wah, wah, wah.)

f. When writing for kids, **avoid long descriptive paragraphs. (At the Corner of Magnetic and Main.)** As adults, we want more description. Kids don't care.

g. **Subject Matter** children learn what they read. Dark books are winning Newberry Awards. **The One and Only Ivan, Walk Two Moons, The Giver, A Snicker of Magic.** The classics are out. (*The powers that be are shifting away from white male writers.*)

h. You *can* get pulled out of a slush pile; be willing to edit.

2. **How are you going to sell it?** Are you willing to sit in front of 200 kids and talk in a school gym or auditorium? No publisher will sell it for you—unless you're good and in the 4<sup>th</sup> book in a series. As an author, once you have a book in your hand, it will be about 6 months before it sells so that the reviewers have a chance at it.

3. **Currently DIVERSITY is the hot topic.**

4. She gave us a list of resources:

a. Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators SCBWI.org

b. <http://www.dummies.com/education/language-arts/writing-children-books-for-dummies-cheat-sheet/>

c. <http://www.writersbureau.com/writing/writing-for-children.htm>

d. <http://www.slaphappylarry.com/differences-between-writing-for-children-and-adults/>

**Provided by Lorrelei Sawtelle, Secretary**

## **MEETING ROOM CHANGE**

**Enter by the door closest to the Handicapped parking on the north side of the building.**

**Room 130**

*I forgot to mention this in the print edition so you will probably see part of it next month.*

*Inez*

Dear OCWI Members,  
Re: **January-February Editing Offer**

Now is the time for writers to start new projects – new stories, chapters, poems. Time to begin, or revamp, those pieces you’ll want to enter into competition next fall and winter. Don’t wait until it’s too late, then worry if your writing is the best you could have made it.

January and February are my slow months, so I’m making you an offer: the going rate for editing is \$3 a page (unless it’s gone up since I last looked!), but I’ll cut that in half.

Offer #1: Until March 15<sup>th</sup>, I will edit your work for \$1.50 a page, with a minimum of \$20. For that \$20, I’ll edit, advise and encourage you regarding up to 13 pages, double-spaced. Additional pages are \$1.50 each. *This is an amazing offer!*

Offer #2: If you’d like to send me a few pages then book 45 minutes at my kitchen table to talk about structure and other elements of your work, the cost is \$40.

Offer #3: Arrangements can be made for longer works such as book manuscripts. (No scripts, please.)

All offers expire March 15, 2017.

Wishing you powerful writing,  
Carolyn Wall,

Author, *Sweeping Up Glass*, Poisoned Pen Press and Random House,  
*Playing With Matches*, a Target Summer Read  
*The Coffin Maker* and *The Eighteenth Word*, Kindle online  
Recipient of Oklahoma Book Award for Fiction and twice recipient  
OWFI’s Crème-de-la-Crème.

