

# OKLAHOMA CITY WRITERS, INC.

## March Speaker:

*Nancy Hartney*

Topic: Short Stories Set in the South

Nancy Hartney writes about the Deep South. Her roots dig into sweat-soaked hardscrabble farms with slice of life tales. Her characters struggled with living, grasping for understanding and doing the best they know how.

Her second book, ***If the Creek Don't Rise: Tales from the South*** follows her award-winning debut collection, ***Washed in the Water: Tales from the South***, both from Pen-L Publishing.

She writes nonfiction for *The Chronicle of the Horse*, *Sidelines*, *Horsemen's Roundup*, *DoSouth*, and other publications. Her short stories have appeared in *Big Muddy: Journal of the Mississippi Valley*, *Seven Hills Review*, and various regional anthologies. She has penned western tales for *Cactus Country*, *Best of Frontier Tales*, and *Rough Country*.

## President's Message

Shelley Pagach

As I try to figure out my column this month, I have elephants on the brain. Have you ever heard the phrase: you can only eat an elephant one bite at a time? What about: the elephant always arrives on time, or best of all: the elephant in the room?

An elephant is a fantastic way to picturing an enormous circumstance that needs to be addressed. It can seem so gigantic that it is impossible to complete. That's why you take "one bite at a time." When you know a deadline is coming, it is like an elephant slowly walking toward your house. Do you wait for the elephant (deadline) to arrive at your doorstep, or do you work on it before it's too late? And we cannot forget those awkward moments when someone or something needs to be confronted, but no one wants to admit it is even a problem.

My only advise is try to find a way to make friends with your elephants and realize they are not as big as they appear. It never hurts to ask for help when you need it. No one said we had to eat a whole elephant by ourselves.

The OWFI conference is fast approaching and I'm taking care of my elephants one bite at a time. My goal is that they'll be gone before they are supposed to end up on my doorstep and I won't have to explain to my husband why they are sitting on my couch.

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May you have the hindsight to know where you've been, the foresight to know where you are going, and the insight to know when you have gone too far.

~~Irish toast

"Indoors or out, no one relaxes in March, that month of wind and taxes, the wind will presently disappear, the taxes last us all the year."

~~ Ogden Nash

## Elected Officers

**President: Shelley Pagach,**  
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**Secretary: Lorelei Sawtelle,**

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## Appointed Officers

**Newsletter: Inez Phillips,**

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## 2016 OWFI Delegates

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## 2016 OWFI Alternates:

**Carolyn Leonard,** 740-1632,

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## MEMBER NEWS

**Carolyn Wall** appeared in a Sunbeam Family Services ad on television.

**Margy Pezdirtz's** book *Who Will Kill the Spiders?* is now available on Amazon. She has 2 other books which will be available there soon.

**Lorelei Sawtelle** had her first book signing at the Enid Public Library on March 4. Her book *A Place to Belong* is available from her or Amazon.

## Dues are Due

*Please pay your \$20 to Nelda Paden, our treasurer, as soon as possible so you can be included in the Membership yearbook.*

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## OWFI NEWS

**IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE THIS SPRING , YOU CAN SAVE \$25 BY REGISTERING BEFORE MARCH 15. FEES WILL BE \$200 FOR A FULL CONFERENCE BEGINNING MARCH 15.**

## You might be Interested in~~

### March Holidays and Special Days

- 1 National Pig Day
- 3 I Want You to be Happy Day
- 5 Multiple Personality Day
- 8 Be Nasty Day
- 9 Panic Day
- 10 Middle Name Pride Day
- 15 Everything You Think is Wrong Day
- 16 Everything You Do is Right Day
- 20 Extraterrestrial Abductions Day
- 22 National Goof Off Day
- 26 Make Up Your Own Holiday Day
- 30 I am in Control Day

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

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

**Saturday, March 18, 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.

**February Speaker:**    *Nancy Hartney*

**Topic: Short Stories Set in the South**

## February Meeting Notes

by Lorelei Sawtelle, Secretary

This month's speaker, **Eric Reitan (ray TAHN)** writes a little bit of everything. He has a PhD in Philosophy. Speculative Fiction deals with "Big Pictures." His presentation was entitled:  
WRESTLING WITH BIG IDEAS.

Story Theme = The human problem, values controversy, or philosophical/ theological question your story sheds light on. (There can be—and probably are—multiple themes.)

A Human Problem—we must find a way to cope with, move past, or solve the issue. We have to shed light on the problem, not necessarily solve it. Perhaps a friend (character) is stuck in a loveless marriage. You can help them see the situation for what it is and what it can become, but they are responsible for resolving the situation for themselves.

A Values Controversy—a value-laden issue about which people persistently disagree. Shed light on it. A controversial subject like abortion will not be solved by you being preachy.

A Philosophical or Theological Question—a question about what it means to be human or about the fundamental nature of reality, etc.

Focus on telling a good story—not on getting your viewpoint across.

Stories are about people trying to solve their (or someone else's) problem.

What is the problem?

Who is the main character?

What is their opinion of the problem?

How are they going to solve the problem?

**His Initial Advice for Fiction:** Focus on telling a good story, not on telling the reader your view on a thematic question. Stories are about people trying to solve problems in their lives. Their struggles can and should shed light on larger thematic issues; but as soon as the story becomes about answering some thematic question the story has become swamped. The main character must solve the problem—not simply to passively absorb the author's wisdom.

### Themes and the Creative Process:

1. Reflecting on thematic questions can help turn a scene or character into a story idea.
2. Thematic questions can inspire a high concept premise, or can motivate world-building decisions in a science fiction/fantasy story
3. The central story conflict may turn on competing answers to a difficult thematic question.
4. Story theme can shape character arc.
  - a. Sometimes the theme can give you guidance
  - b. In most stories the character grows/matures/changes. In the best stories the change is instrumental in bringing about the resolution of the conflict.
  - c. Sometimes we hide from our guilt/limits.
5. Sometimes theme become clear after 1<sup>st</sup> draft is written. Conscious awareness of theme can help deepen the story's power during the rewriting /revising stage.

### Dos and Don'ts of Wrestling with Big Ideas:

1. Live the questions, not the answers.
2. Find a question whose answer isn't obvious.
3. Until you can appreciate opposing perspectives, don't write a story about it.
4. If characters represent opposing views, give positive and negative qualities to each.
5. Show, don't tell (especially if you have a moral to your story.)
6. Don't let your story become window dressing for a Socratic dialog.
7. Don't so firmly presuppose one answer that you alienate everyone with a different view.
8. The greatest light should shine from what your characters do, not what happens to them.

You may mail your \$20 dues to the treasurer's home or hand it to her at a meeting.

Nelda Paden, Treasurer  
621 NW 32<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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