



Published Writers of Rossmoor

February 2025

Message From the President

Dear PWR Members and Friends:

Welcome to the resurrected Newsletter of Published and Aspiring Writers of Rossmoor! This tour de force is the product of members Twila Slesnick and Phyllis Wachob, who are to be congratulated for their initiative and their hard work. The Newsletter speaks to the myriad possibilities that PWR offers. But transforming them into realities depends on you--your ideas and your efforts. Whatever your talents (and we know you all are first and foremost writers), PWR can use them. Please step forward to keep PWR thriving!

Dick

News

Upcoming Events



March 1, 2025: Reverend Christie Hardwick will speak at the March PWR meeting at 10:00 a.m. in the Fairway Room at Creekside Clubhouse. Her new book, *To What End* explores the existential question: *To what end am I living? To love deep or to love wide?* Visitors are welcome for a \$5 fee.



Deadline June 15, 2025: PWR members are invited to enter the first annual PWR Fiction Writing Contest. Here are the details:

- Topic: A fictional story about Rossmoor, or a story that is somehow inspired by Rossmoor or a Rossmoor event.
- Word limit: 1,000 words or fewer.
- Entry deadline: June 15, 2025
- There will be prizes. Small prizes, so please enter for fun and glory. Lots of publicity and glory will come your way.
- Send entries to: twila@comcast.net

Other News



□ Ron Wren and Channel 1083 (Rossmoor's TV channel) are looking for (that's right, *looking for*) authors who would like to be interviewed about their books. You will need to bring a friend to the recording session — someone who is willing and able to conduct the interview. It's a great opportunity to spread the word about your book. Contact Ron at ronwren@aol.com or (925) 464-7497.



□Mystery writers Rae James and Dianne Emley entertained and educated PWR members at the February meeting, tackling such questions as “What does drama look like?” and “Which comes first, character or plot?” They offered tips, too. James revealed that she writes the end of her mysteries first so she knows what clues to provide. Emley advised writers to add drama to every page. Then she passed along some wisdom from Raymond Chandler. “When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand.”



□With this issue, PWR is resurrecting the PWR newsletter. It is to be a living document, with content provided by PWR members. We welcome your feedback and we hope members will contribute to all sections of the newsletter. Here are our current submission guidelines for each section:

News

Let us know about upcoming events, including member book launches, TV interviews, bookstore talks. Please include date, time, location and a short description (one or two sentences).

We also welcome other writing-related news that might be of interest to members.

Tips

Send us your favorite tips about writing, publishing, or marketing. Submissions should be 250 words or fewer.

Forum

The Forum is a place for members to speak out, whether about the newsletter, the club, or the publishing world. Submissions should be 200 words or fewer.

Within the Forum will be a "Personals" section where members may solicit information or services from other members.

From Our Authors

Member authors may submit a piece of short fiction, an essay, a poem, or an excerpt from a book. Submissions should be 800 words or fewer.

Send all submissions to twila@comcast.net.

Tips

Book Formatting

- Many self-published authors make margins as narrow as possible to save money on paper and printing. But think how annoying it is for readers when they must constantly press on an open book in order to read the words tucked into the gutter (the inside margins). Set your margins wide—around .75" to 1.0".
- In the same vein, avoid single spacing. Spacing of 1.2 - 1.5 is so much easier on the eyes, and your readers will thank you for it.
- Make sure the font you choose is not too light. If you are wedded to a particular font but the regular font is too light, consider semibold.
- Start a new chapter on a new page, and begin the text about a third of the way down the page to make a clean break from the previous chapter.
- You will want a header and footer to appear on most pages of your book. The header for the left-hand page is often the author's name, or else the name of the book. The header on the right-hand page is usually the name of the book (if it's not in the left-hand header) or the name of the chapter. The footer is typically a page number.
Headers and footers do not belong on the front or back matter (title page, acknowledgements etc), nor on the first page of a new chapter. And definitely not on blank pages.

Book Cover Design

Your self-published book needs a polished, engaging cover. That can easily cost you \$500 - \$700. And if you want classy artwork, you might be looking at \$1500 or more.

To save some money and still end up with a cover you like, consider a crowdsourcing service. Two of the best known such services for book cover design are DesignCrowd and 99Designs.

A crowdsourcing service is a network of professionals who bid for your work. In the case of a book cover, you would post the parameters of your project, including your budget. Before long you will have graphic designers sending you ideas. You communicate with the ones who seem most promising and in the end, choose (and pay) the designer whose product you like best.

Forum

On Artificial Intelligence

We came across the following comments by public figures about the use of AI in writing. We are wondering what our readers think. Let us know.

Creativity can't happen without sentience, and there are now arguments that some AIs are indeed sentient. I view this possibility with a certain dreadful fascination. Would I forbid the teaching (if that is the word) of my stories to computers? Not even if I could. I might as well be King Canute, forbidding the tide to come in. Or a Luddite trying to stop industrial progress by hammering a steam loom to pieces.

— Stephen King

He goes click, click, click, and like 15 seconds later he shows me my speech, written so beautifully. I said, 'I'm gonna use this.' I've never seen anything like it. It comes out with the most beautiful writing, so one industry I think that will be gone are these wonderful speechwriters. I've never seen anything like it, and so quickly. A matter of literally minutes, it's done. It's a little bit scary.

— Donald Trump

I've been designing questions that AI can't answer: things that are tied directly to class discussion or that need specific evidence from a text (AI still fails at that). Kids hate it, but they're being forced actually to learn in my class. However, it's exhausting, and when I see younger colleagues bragging about how they let AI write their assignments, I'm glad I only have five years left. We are becoming a nation of idiots in the USA, and it's terrifying that these kids will be taking care of me in my dotage.

— Bethchangeyouwanttosee

From Our Authors

Lost & Found by Twila Slesnick

My grandmother could cut you out of her life faster than shit slides through a goose. She was also subject to fits of pique and pouting that might last a few weeks or months, possibly even years, but then dissolve. Although some behaviors might lead to a temporary shunning, others were what I like to call broken-plate transgressions. If you committed a broken-plate transgression, you were dead to her.

She had this address book in which she wrote the names, addresses and phone numbers of all the people in her life. All of them. When she was done with you, she took a pair of scissors and cut you out of her book. That was before White-Out. Once she discovered White-Out, you weren't dead to her, you never existed. No hole marked your passing. She simply wrote a new name right on top of where you used to be.

Worst of all, transgressions that merited delisting were maddeningly hard to predict. Take my poor teenage cousin, for example. She had the audacity to start her period in the middle of the night while sleeping in my grandmother's guest bed. Blood all over the mattress. Upon waking in the morning and seeing all the blood and knowing about the address book and not knowing how my grandmother would react to a forthright confession, my cousin flipped the mattress and fled the scene.

I'm not sure how my grandmother discovered the mattress was blighted, but she did, and my cousin was delisted post haste. Forever. And I mean forever; my cousin was even banned from my grandmother's deathbed decades later.

Sadly, I also transgressed. I married without my parents' permission (or knowledge), which was a capital offense in my grandmother's book. She stopped calling, stopped sending me birthday cards and letters, and, I would learn, she purged her photo albums of my visage. I stewed and fretted. Was I now one of the disappeared? Or was this a temporary banishment? Because I was persona non grata, I was unable to sneak into her desk drawer to look in her address book and confirm my delisting. And I was too mortified to ask someone else to do it for me.

My approach to the situation was to pretend that nothing was amiss. I would write chatty letters from time to time, never receiving a response, but never expecting one either.

Then, about ten years or so before she died, she wrote me a letter inviting me to visit. Of course I immediately made plans to do so.

Just before my visit, she called and, somewhere between “Hello” and “See you soon,” she “reminded” me that she had mailed all my photos to me years ago. She “knew” I would want them for my own albums. I had received them, hadn’t I? she asked. No? Well heck! She supposed they had been lost in the mail. What a shame.

She hadn't fooled me, though. Her call was a preemptive strike on her part. She knew very well that it was my habit to pore over old photos whenever I came to visit. And she knew that this time I would find no photos of me.

When she died, each of us who loved her laid claim to a keepsake that reminded us of the special relationship we imagined we enjoyed with her. And while searching for that keepsake, every last one of us was also searching for the address book. We rifled through underwear drawers, through the papers in her desk, through shoeboxes in the closet. We peeked into the secret compartment of her special wooden puzzle box, and we even lifted her mattress.

For many years I assumed that my grandmother, in her wisdom, destroyed the address book before she died. I was outwardly chagrined but inwardly grateful for that final act of compassion.

When my mother died, it fell to me to sort through some of her papers. I was poking through a box of files, when a little book caught my eye. I pulled it out slowly and opened the cover. There on the first page was my grandmother's name and address, written in her own hand. I had found her address book.

As I held it, I could feel sweat begin to coat my armpits. I had no thought of tossing out the book, though. I felt compelled to learn its truth. I knew I might not like what I found, and for a brief moment, I considered what effect the knowledge I was about to gain would have on me.

Then I turned to my page.

I didn't find a hole where my name belonged. Instead I saw smears of White-Out. And written neatly on top of that White-Out, in black ink, was my name and address.

