



November 2020

Issue 10

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers Newsletter

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Newsletter Editor: Rachel Dye

Central Ohio Fiction Writers (COFW) <http://cofwevents.org> is a non-profit professional association for romance writers and a local chapter of the Romance Writers of America® (RWA) organization that offers monthly meetings. Since 1987, COFW has promoted excellence in fiction writing, encouraging writers to grow and gain knowledge in their craft. Members provide a networking system to share knowledge and support the goal of becoming published.

2020 Leadership

Board

President: Janice Beckett.

Secretary: Sandy Kachurek

Treasurer: Stacy McKittrick

Non-Board Positions

Newsletter Editor: Rachel Dye

Programs Chair: Vacant

Education Chair: Erin Novotny

Social Media Chair: Gina Smith

Incentives Coordinator: Julia Blaine

Ignite the Flame Contest Chair: Shari Heinrich

Monthly Meetings Facility Coordinator: Vacant

Equipment Inventory Coordinator: Robin Gianna

Meetings

First "Teen" Saturday of the Month. Social: Noon to 12:30. Business: 12:30. Guest Presentation: 1:30. Location: Check www.cofwevents.org

Dues

New Members: \$35

Renewal before January 31: \$30. After January 31: \$35.

- Dues run January to December
- Membership with Romance Writers of America required.

Follow COFW

Twitter <https://twitter.com/COFWriters>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/COFWriters>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cofwriters/>

Closed Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/177462723049177/>

Next Meeting: December, 5 2020; Christmas party

To be held via Zoom 12 to 1:30.

COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly - East

Need a boost with a story idea that has yet to see words on a page? Can't get your protagonist out of a hole you've written her into? Not sure whether the antagonist is antag-ging enough? Consider stopping by the COFW Fiction Plotters group. We meet the first Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Panera Bread in Taylor Square in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, 43068.

If you have questions, contact:

Andrea McConnell: fyrefly93@gmail.com

Saralee Etter: saralee_etter@yahoo.com

COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly - West

All the same fun as above but located in Huber Heights. We meet the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Panera Bread off I-70 exit 36.

If you have questions contact:

Jeanne Estridge: jeanneestrIDGE@gmail.com

Rachel Dye: juliette.r.hyland@gmail.com

Minutes of the COFW Meeting via Zoom

November 14, 2020

I. Welcome.

II. Attendance/WIP:

Approximately, eight members in attendance.

WIP Highlights:

~Shari Heinrich is on chapter 55 of 59 in her revision of Queen of Wands and hopes to be done with this seventh pass before Thanksgiving and has reduced her word count to 92,865.

~Linda Rice is thinking of a series romance incorporating a family reunion of 100 members as a central focus.

~Janice Beckett w/a Kimberly Beckett has paid her narrator for the audio version of her latest and it is now in review by Audible.

~Bernie Miller w/a Jordan Riley Swan's first release The Heart's Bidding has been made into audio by his favorite narrator Xe Sands. He said, "When I heard it narrated, I wept and fell in love with it all over again. He also adjusted its category from sweet to "gentle romance," which is more fitting.

III. Minutes from October were accepted as posted and approved by all.

IV. Reports:

1. President Janice Beckett:

A. Vivian Award Now Open for Submissions and Still Looking for Judges.

Janice submitted her recent release, Her Forever Love, for the Vivian in "Contemporary Mid-length" and signed up to be a judge. Stacy McKittrick submitted Biting the Curse under "Paranormal Long." Submission is free and everyone is encouraged to enter and judge.

2. Treasurer Stacy McKittrick:

Current Assets as of October 31, 2020:

~Checking: \$6108.24.

~PayPal: \$758.17.

~Available Cash: \$6866.41 adjusted to \$6803.44 when taken into account the differed incomes

and expenses received for January 2021's online class, which will be recorded

Significant Changes in account balances in October:

~\$30 in Program Income: contributions were from non-members attending October's meeting presentation.

~\$165 in Program Expense: speaker fees for balance payment to Patricia Sargeant, guest presenter in August.

~\$135 in Website Maintenance to Rachel Conner for October-December 2020.

~Audit of 2019 has been submitted to RWA National.

3. Programs Chair Jeanne Estridge:

Today: "Building Stronger Scenes" with member Jeanne Estridge.

December 5, Noon-1:30: Holiday Party via Zoom.

January 2021: "Motif and Metaphor" with NY Times Best-Selling Author of 20 novels, Jenny Crusie. For further info: <https://jennycrusie.com/>

4. Education Chair Erin Novotny (absent):

We wish Erin only the best as she recovers from COVID-19.

January 1-30, 2021: "The Book Writing Checklist" with Linnea Sinclair and Stacey Kade.

5. Incentives:

~Janice Beckett w/a Kimberly Beckett won the Alaska Romance Writers of America's "2020 Midnight Sun Cover Contest" for her third release, Lionel's Leap of Faith.

~Shari Heinrich was copy editor and contributor of three story selections for Writing Alone and Other Group Activities, made up of team-written stories done in 72 hours.

6. Social Media:

~Spreadsheet Winner for October: Shari Heinrich.

~MWF Sprints on FB and 2nd Monday Plotting Group on Zoom still meet.

7. Newsletter Editor Rachel Dye (absent):

Sandy Kachurek volunteered to write the recap of today's program with Jeanne Estridge.

V. Unfinished Business:

1. Voting for COFW Board 2021:

Nominating Committee Chair Sandy Kachurek submitted the following candidates and asked for

any other nominations from the floor in addition to
Bernie Miller w/a Jordan Riley Swan for President;
Michelle Orloff for Treasurer; and
Shari Heinrich for Secretary.

There being no other candidates for these positions other than those presented, Bernie Miller has been elected President, Michelle Orloff has been elected Treasurer, and Shari Heinrich has been elected Secretary of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers for 2021.

Congratulations to the Executive Board of COFW 2021.

A transitional meeting will occur at a later date.

2. Holiday Party, Saturday, December 5, Noon-1:30 on Zoom:

Janice asked Sandy to preside over activities for the Holiday Party via Zoom. Linda Rice will help. Member of the Year and First Published Book awards will be presented.

3. Locations for in-person meetings in 2021:

~Columbus area: Becky Barker will look into availability at the Grove City Library. Bernie Miller/Jordan Riley Swan offered The Forged Tavern, which is closed to the public on Saturdays, noon-3.

~Dayton area: Janice will take a look at what's possible.

VI. New Business:

1. Member of the year candidates:

~Janice Beckett w/a Kimberly Beckett.

~Jeanne Estridge

~Erin Novotny w/a Tobi Doyle

Voting will be done via Google. Winner announced at Holiday Party, December 5.

There being no other business,

Adjournment at 1:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandy

Sandy Kachurek, Secretary

Jeanne Estridge's Building Stronger Scenes Closes the Year of Zoom Programs

By Sandy Kachurek

COFW member Jeanne Estridge had never completed a manuscript until she took advantage of an inaugural, one-year certificated program, partially funded by Nora Roberts in 2012-2013. The result was Jeanne's *The Demon Always Wins*, which not only became a finished novel but also won the 2015 RWA Golden Heart and the 2019 GDRWA Booksellers' Best Award.

Filtering through all she's learned about writing, Jeanne presented "Building Stronger Scenes," illustrating her material with movie samples from *Toy Story* and *Moonstruck*.

She opened with a disclaimer that everyone writes differently. If something she says works for you that's fine. If not, that's fine, too. What she was about to present works well when applied after the first draft of a work is finished. "Make this information a part of your revision process," she suggested. "What I have here are guidelines only."

One point she did insist upon, however, is to never get in the way of your Muse. She referenced a quote on the Muse from Stephen King, "Never get in the way of the Boys in the Basement," and Jenny Crusie's variation, "Never get in the way of the Girls in the Attic."

Jeanne's first tool was the Conflict Box, which separates the protagonist and antagonist, marking each one's main goal, the actions to take to achieve that goal, and the conflicts that will stand in the way of reaching the goal. Jeanne said interlacing the goal and actions of the protagonist and antagonist and their conflicts will enrich the story. Her use of Dorothy Gale and the Wicked Witch of the West from *The Wizard of Oz* helped explain the necessary parts of the Conflict Box.

The second tool involved Building Blocks of Story delineated into acts, sequences, scenes and beats. Jeanne explained the necessary ingredients in a scene, which in a major way, still reflect the ideas of Aristotle, where a scene has a place, a continuing block of time, something needing to be different by the end of the scene, and a buildup in that change where one can't go back. A very effective demonstration of this information was a clip from *Toy Story* where protagonist Woody meets antagonist Buzz for the first time.

Eliciting answers from the listeners, Jeanne reinforced the elements of scene in the movie clip before moving on to sequences, their definition, and use in a scene. *Toy Story* also helped illustrate the terms.

Beat is a term of varied meanings. The definition used by Robert McKee, author of *Story*, is a series of escalating changes in behavior where the protagonist and antagonist each try to gain control.

Jeanne used a scene from *Moonstruck* to show beat in action. Cher's character, the protagonist, is trying to discover why the antagonist, Nick Cage's character, won't attend his

brother's wedding to Cher. These are their beats: Cher wants an answer; Nick doesn't want to talk. The scene escalates from talking to shouting to physical passion when Cage's character tosses over a kitchen table, takes Cher into his arms and carries her off to the bedroom. Jeanne took apart the scene, showing how the beat for each character served to escalate the emotion, tension, and conflict to make for a riveting story.

The added benefit with beats is in repairing a story. "If a scene works, it works," said Jeanne. "But if it's not working, try examining the beats in the scene. Again, beats are the changes in behavior."

Story by Robert McKee is Jeanne's source for understanding beats and making them applicable to strengthening a story.

Moving on to the effectiveness of turning points in building stronger scenes, Jeanne compared turning points to clothesline poles that prop up a story when it's gone monotone. Jeanne explained, "Turning points move the story in a whole different direction. Use them between scenes and acts. They become more clear cut as the story progresses."

A romance novel has five major turning points in its four-act structure.

Act I. Inciting Incident (a turning point) and at the end, Change of Plans (a turning point)

Act II. Point of No Return (includes a turning point as the midpoint, also a preview of the ending)

Act III. Crisis (turning points of dark soul moments and penultimate decisions)

Act IV. Climax (turning points resolving conflicts)

Another tool Jeanne believes strengthens her work is in the basic act of storytelling itself. She referenced an episode on Comedy Central featuring the writers of the animation series South

Park, Matt Stone and Trey Parker. The clip can be found by Googling "Stone Parker NYU."

Aspiring writers tend to fall into the repetitive mode of "and then this happened and then this happened and then" Stone and Parker suggest replacing the "and then" with "but" and "therefore." Jeanne said using scenes that connect with other via "but" and "therefore" rather than "and then" pulls the reader forward because there's little chance of the storyline becoming repetitious. Also, she added, "The next event in the story is inevitable."

A famous example of the inevitable event is in Star Wars where antagonist Darth Vader tells his son, protagonist Luke Skywalker, "Luke, I am your father." Viewers might not think they saw it coming but it was inevitable when they examine the "but" and "therefore" throughout the movie.

Jeanne concluded her presentation by telling how often she applies these methods to her work. "I use them all the time. When I'm stuck, I take out paper and ask 'What does this one want? What does that one want?' and it works."

Party Plans for COFW Holiday Party, December 5, 2020.

Noon-1:30 via Zoom

It's true that folks are experiencing "Zoom-fatigue" as we've spent the last few months (actually, half a year!) away from physical meetings and reverting to online face times.

The current COFW Board, President Janice, Treasurer Stacy and Secretary Sandy appreciate all those who tuned in every month to COFW meetings.

Wrapping up the year, COFW is meeting online for its holiday party as well. We're hoping attendance is good, but whoever comes is going to have a good time. Sandy is organizing things. BYOB, of course.

Here are some of the activities planned:

1. Before we meet: Ideal Dish for a Sweet Moment in Time:

Email a recipe of your favorite food dish (appetizer, entree, side, dessert, drink, snack or anything in between) that would make a perfect "Meet Cute" moment. Something that you or a loved one has made before would be perfect.

Sandy will compile and share them with all COFW members. She'd like to read the dishes to the members at the party. If the cook/baker is there, she/he can tell the story of why this recipe was chosen.

Email your recipe to Sandy Kachurek: sandrajkachurek@gmail.com

2. Show up on Zoom with a Snack and a Drink:

Bring a drink and a snack to the Zoom Party, even if it's a glass of water and an apple. When you're introduced, you'll let us know how you're partying, virtually.

*Holiday sweaters, hats, pins and boas are a bonus.

3. During the Party: Ice Breaker Questions:

Possibilities are endless. A small sample includes:

1. Do you have a dedicated office space at home?
2. What's your number one tip for combating distractions when working from home?
3. How do you stay productive and motivated in writing?
4. How many cups of coffee, tea, or beverage-of-choice do you consume while you write?
5. If you could learn one new writing skill, what would it be?
6. What is your most used emoji?
7. What was the worst haircut you ever had?
8. You have your own late night talk show, who do you invite as your first guest?
9. What was your least favorite food as a child? Do you still hate it or do you love it now?
10. Teleportation or flying?

2. Arm's Reach Romance:

Grab a random object at arm's length from where you are sitting. Come up with an on-the-spot romantic story using it. The wilder, sweeter, crazier the better. No object within reach? Imagine you're holding a generic sponge in your hand.

You have five minutes to tell your story.

4. Special Presentations:

At this time, the COFW President will announce the recipients of

1. First Published Sale of 2020.
2. COFW Member of the Year 2020.
3. Congratulations, COFW Executive Board for 2021.
Bernie Miller w/a Jordan Riley Swan, President.
Michelle Orloff, Treasurer.
Shari Heinrich, Secretary.

Hope to see you at the Holiday Party via Zoom on Saturday, December 5.

Introducing COFW President for 2021:
Bernie Miller w/a Jordan Riley Swan

A rather new chapter member, Bernie Mark Miller has accepted the responsibility of being president of COFW for 2021, taking charge along with board members Treasurer Michelle Orloff and Secretary Shari Heinrich. As we head into 2021, let's get to know Bernie w/a Jordan a little better.

Bernie heard about COFW while attending 2018 RWA National Conference in Denver where he was looking for a local support group for "everything writing related." Living in Thornville, Ohio, COFW became the group for him.

He is actively working as a published writer and is a recipient of this year's First Published Sale Award for *The Hearts Bidding*, released in September 2020 under the pen name Jordan Riley Swan.

Not able to label himself a morning person or night owl, he's more of a spread-across-the-day sort of writer. He said, "I usually do mid-morning writing, take an extended break, then hit it again in the afternoon. Of course, there is also some writing throughout the day and evening as ideas come and go."

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, Bernie no longer can write in his favorite places, which were restaurants during breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Now he has a little writer's loft "where I sojourn myself into so I can write without interruptions." His goal in 2021 is to "knock out at least four novels on my own."

Romance isn't his only writing and reading genre of choice. Fantasy fills his reading list as well. His favorite author is Naomi Novik. A few of his favorite books include *The Name of the Wind* by Patrick Rothfuss, *Spinning Silver* by Naomi Novik, and *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman and is currently reading Backman's *Bear Town*.

He credits his mother for inspiring his love for the art form. "Mom used to read to us kids growing up and that has a lot to do with my love of reading." Out of that love came the sense of creating, which he applies to his writing. "I love taking an idea and making it a story."

COVID-19 has not only affected his writing habits but it has caused his main livelihood to close down. He once owned an antique shop, but for the health and safety of his employees and of the public in general, he has closed it down. Hopefully, it won't be for long. "Once Covid is under control, I will be reopening."

Bernie said "yes" when asked to be president of COFW. Without a president, COFW would no longer exist. Now that he had a group where he could polish his writing and expand his publishing, he didn't want to see it disappear.

"I'll do my best to keep COFW going as I finally have found a group I love. I don't want

to see anything happen to it," he said.

He's hoping present and future members see COFW the same way he does. He believes that local chapter members, such as those in COFW, are a major influence on the national RWA level, too.

"I think RWA is really doing its best to turn RWA around and make it the organization we need it to be."

On both the local and national level, we welcome 2021 COFW President Bernie Miller w/a Jordan Riley Swan.

For more information:
JordanRileySwan.com
JordanRileySwan@gmail.com

