



Valley ByLiners

Volume 1, Issue 9

October 2006

Valley ByLiners

Celebrate National Novel Writing Month

NEXT MEETING

**Saturday,
October 14th
1:30 pm**

**Harlingen
Public Library**

Program:

*The New Byliner's
Website
With Jeff Harris*

Join Us!

What is NaNoWriMo?

National Novel Writing Month is a fun, seat-of-your-pants approach to novel writing. Participants begin writing November 1st. The goal is to write a 175-page (50,000-word) novel by midnight, November 30th.

Valuing enthusiasm and perseverance over painstaking craft, NaNoWriMo is a novel-writing program for everyone who has thought fleetingly about writing a novel but has been scared away by the time and effort involved.

Because of the limited writing window, the ONLY thing that matters in NaNoWriMo is output. It's all about quantity, not quality. The kamikaze approach forces you to lower your expectations, take risks, and write on the fly.

Make no mistake: You will

be writing a lot of crap. And that's a good thing. By forcing yourself to write so intensely, you are giving yourself permission to make mistakes. To forgo the endless tweaking and



editing and just create. To build without tearing down.

As you spend November writing, you can draw comfort from the fact that, all around the world, other National Novel Writing Month participants are going through the same joys and sorrows of producing the Great Frantic Novel. Wrimos meet throughout the month to offer encouragement, commiseration, and -- when the thing is done -- the kind of raucous celebrations that tend to frighten animals and small children.

In 2004, we had over 42,000 participants. Nearly

6000 of them crossed the 50k finish line by the midnight deadline, entering into the annals of NaNoWriMo superstardom forever. They started the month as auto mechanics, out-of-work actors, and middle school English teachers. They walked away novelists.

What: Writing one 50,000-word novel from scratch in a month's time.

Who: You! Let's write laughably awful yet lengthy prose together.

When: Sign-ups begin October 1, 2006. Writing begins November 1. To be added to the official list of winners, you must reach the 50,000-word mark by November 30 at midnight. Once your novel has been verified by our web-based team of robotic word counters, the partying begins.

Still confused?

Just visit the www.nanowrimo.org



It's Time to Renew Your Membership

Please Send your \$20 check or money order to: **Byliner Membership c/o Jeff Harris 15859 Perkins Rd. Harlingen, TX 78552.**

All memberships are DUE—please don't wait to send it in!

Focus on Byliner Hernan Moreno-Hinojosa by Marianne Nelson

“Always have a pen handy,” says new Byliners member, Hernan Moreno-Hinojosa. Hernan follows his own advice.

In his career as a Houston policeman--his pen writes reports (and summons, we assume)--but also gets use in writing non-fiction tales.

Hernan learned about the Valley Byliners when Sandra Vela invited him to join after reading about his participation in the 2006 Latino Book and Family Festival in Houston. Although he resides in Houston, he says his heart is in the Valley. He has a ranch in Hebronville west of Falfurrias.

Hernan's first paying work was a brief article about rabid coyotes published in South Texas Sportsman in 1992. Then in 1994 *Candelaria's Sorrow*, a true ghost story was published in the Houston Chronicle's Sunday magazine, Texas, as

the cover story for the Halloween edition. “It was my first big break,” Hernan says. “For a year I got calls from people, and I was invited to speak at several schools.”

Hernan's next goal is to publish *The House That Robert Built*, a short, non-fiction novel. It's a true story of a man who came from Germany to an isolated, desolate region of South Texas during the Great Depression. Robert told anyone who would listen that Adolph Hitler was a mad man who would plunge the entire world into war. He also said that he was a personal enemy of Adolph Hitler, and if Hitler won the war, he would come to South Texas to kill him. So he built his house like a fortress, because there he was going to make his last stand.

Hernan says, “I write mostly non-fiction. Even my ghostly stories are reported to be true. I have written some

fiction for fun. In 2003, the University of Houston Press published my first book, *The Ghostly Rider & Other Chilling*

Stories. The Virtual Bookworm in College Station published my second book, *The Night the Moon Came*

Down. It centers on a reported UFO and tells of growing up in the 1960s, in the Valley, in fear of the Cold War.”

When Hernan retires, he wants to craft a time-travel novel in which the protagonist finds himself in the 1920s and 1930s. In the meantime, Hernan is contributing stories for the Byliners upcoming book, *Tales Told at Midnight on the Rio Grande*, and would like to attend Byliners meetings, both for fellowship and critique.



September Meeting Highlights by Sandra Vela

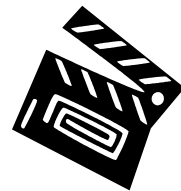
The September meeting was a good opportunity to mingle with fellow Byliners, catch up on the latest with the book project, and dabble in a little screenwriting.

Mona Sizer related the Byliner book project progress. Stories are due by the end of the month in September, then the fun of bringing the project to publication and marketing begins. Mona explained that there is still a lot to do on this project. There will be plenty of opportunities for our members to be a part of bringing *Tales Told At Midnight On the Rio Grande* to our adoring public. Mona prepared a display of artwork for the group's consideration for a book cover design, and encouraged us to keep an eye out for possible local artists whose work could be used. Verne suggested that a cover “mock up” be

Hollywood, Here We Come!

done to give the group a better visual representation of how the book would look. Mona and Sandra were going to work on getting this ready for the next meeting.

READY. SET. ACTION



Byliner, Ruth Harris, shared some screenwriting tips she learned at a seminar she attended in Alpine, Texas. She led the group through the process of developing a Log Line, which is the premise of the story—the basic idea of what the movie is about. This line captures the essence of the story and is used to “pitch” the idea to

the “powers that be” in the movie industry. The group came up with some impressive movie ideas. I think we have some closet screenwriter's in our midst! In essence, Ruth explained, a screenwriter puts the protagonist up in a tree and keeps throwing bigger and bigger rocks at him. She provided a 21 questions handout by Neil Landau for processing the screenplay's development and keeping it on track. She also shared an example of a screenplay “Beat Sheet” which is an outline to keep the writer on track while developing the story line. Included in her handouts were some notes for how to format a screenplay for submission.

Eileen asked members to suggest future program topics of interest or to volunteer to put on a program for the group.

Poetry Section

Nigh Watch
by Prenda Cook

So many things I'm grateful for ,
My family, my friends,
A loving spouse, good health,
Some wealth.
My list—it never ends!
But when I wake up thirst in the middle of the night,
And everything is dark and cold,
With not a speck of light,
of all my many blessing,
There is one that fills my head:
It's that little glass of water
On the table by my bed!

The **Narciso Martinez Writers Forum** meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Narciso Martinez Cultural Arts Center in San Benito at 7 p.m. Readings are limited to 10 minutes. Works of fiction, poetry, essays, music and performances in Spanish or English are welcome. Contact Beto Conde, 350 3905, or Gene Novogrodsky, 548 1926, for more information.



Inspiration submitted by Bidgie Weber

Don't Be Afraid To Fail

"A message as published in the Wall Street Journal"

You've failed many times, although you my not remember. You fell down the first time you tried to walk.

You almost drowned the first time you tried to swim, didn't you?

Did you hit the ball the first time you swung a bat? Heavy hitters, the ones who hit the most home runs, also strike out a lot.

R.H. Macy failed seven times before his store in New York caught on.

English novelist John Creasey got 753 rejection slips before he published 564 books.

Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times, but he also hit 714 home runs.

Don't worry about failure. Worry about the chances you miss when you don't even try.

Bidgie wrote, "My most important accomplishment was to make it through my life with a minimum amount of terrible mistakes and a maximum amount of enjoyment." She said she's enjoying the newsletter and hoping things will "slack up" in her life so she can attend more meetings.

Hope to see you soon, Bidgie!

Finding Time to Write

"Nobody has time to be a writer with the millions of other things we have to do. Time to write must be squeezed from housecleaning, lunch hours, or sitting in traffic. If writing is something you truly want to do, you make the time to do it."
-Debbie Dadey

No one has more than 24 hours in a day. It's how we partition those hours, minutes, and seconds that determines our life's devotion.

An appointment with yourself to write is an appointment you need to make and keep!

Just Write!

More Writer's Resources: Local and On-Line!

“Spoken Word” is a monthly series that is presented from 7 – 9 on the 1st Friday of each month at Harlingen Arts and Heritage Museum. This event is set up to provide an easily accessible venue for artistic expression of prose, poetry, or lyrics from novice or the professional. Host is Roberto Cruz Jr. (956)216-4901

McAllen Writer's Guild Meets at 1:30 pm every Wednesday on the 3rd floor of the Main Library in McAllen. All poets or writers new or published are invited to attend (956)994-1255

Writers Forum meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at the Narciso Marti-

nez Cultural Arts Center, 225 E. Stenger San Benito. It is a forum for new writers in the Rio Grande Valley. Writers in all genres are invited to bring their original material to share with the group. Selections may be written in English, Spanish or both (956) 361-0110

Valley Fiction Writer's meets on Fridays from 1-3 pm for 8 weeks at 1001 S. 16th Street, McAllen, TX (McA2 Creative Incubator, Old Sam Houston Elementary School, corner of Jackson & 16th . Advanced class meets Wednesdays from 3 – 5 PM for 9 weeks. Call Jan Holmes Frost (Ascher) 956-358-1763 for more information.

Online Workshops

writersonlineworkshops.com

Online instruction in fiction, nonfiction, business writing, grammar and more. Write at home, set your own schedule and get one-on-one feedback from a professional, published writer.

Free Magazine

Get a FREE issue of Writer's Digest Magazine. Packed with plenty of must-know info like how to polish your writing, submit your manuscripts successfully, break into hot, new markets, hook an agent, and more.

New Byliner's Website

www.rgvbyliners.org

Site is up and running now, but still very much under construction. Jeff Harris will show us how to use it in October!

Your Author's Bios are DUE

by Sandra Vela

All Byliners should get their Author's bio to Mona ASAP!

Monwriter@aol.com

Mona suggested the following outline for the Bio.

1. Name and where you live.
2. Credentials including what you are currently working on.
3. What your next project is going to be.

Example: 50 words

*Sandra Vela is a Rio Grande Valley native currently living in Weslaco although she'd rather spend more of her time on the beach! She is currently working on her first novel set in the South entitled, **Women Well Seasoned**, which she hopes to complete by the end of the year.*

The Directory Project

These bios will also be used for our Membership Directory Project. We're hoping to provide our members a directory of our membership, list of their published work, area of expertise, and level of experience. It's hoped that this director will be a useful resource for networking and future collaborative projects.

Writer's Activity



Last month we listed some writing exercises for you to try. Byliner, **Bidgie Weber** sent in her efforts. Bidgie said she found the activities challenging and fun. She said she was willing to try the hardest ones, but keeping to the word count was a challenge. One of the assignments, "Write your Obit" is something Bidgie had been planning to do for several years. "All I needed was the encouragement to do it. Thanks for the push." She described her bedroom and "overshot the word count by 39 words." She admitted in her intro letter, "I've always been a bit "mouthy." By her third exercise: describe a place without using the sense of sight, she was really in the flow. Here is a clip from her submission:

"There is this place I have kept safely stored in a quiet little corner of my heart. It is a time, long since lost to me. It is a feeling that stirs such longings deep in my soul. It is the aroma of orange blossoms, summer days, approaching rain showers and the scent of freshly plowed dirt. This place is "childhood". Growing up with the innocent freedom of not only feeling safe but being safe to explore orange groves, to tell ghost stories in the dark of night, and knowing it's safe to be angry at your parents and they still love you no matter how angry you are. . . . Sight is not a requirement for a visit to my little corner, all you need is heart."

Submitted by Bidgie Weber

Resources

Talk the Talk

When developing characters in your story, it's important for them to sound authentic. To help you get it right, Writer's Digest Books offers *Talk the Talk*, a guide to the unique vernacular of 65 subcultures.

From hip-hop to punk rock, from surfers to hunters, author Luc Reid introduces each subculture and its key characteristics—including more than 3,500 slang terms—to give you an informative insider's peek at culture and diversity in America.

Writing Contests

FATHERS & SONS:

Submit letters from your father containing profound understanding, thoughts, stories or wisdom for a chance to be published in *A Father's Message in a Bottle*.

<http://www.tylerhayden.com>

FUNNIEST FAMILY MEMBER:

Send stories about your craziest family member to Reading Writers for a chance to be published and win \$100. The deadline is July 31

<http://www.tylerhayden.com>

MYSTERY CONTEST:

La Belle Lettre is offering a contest in the mystery genre for pieces under 1,000 words.

The deadline is August 1.

<http://www.labellelettre.com>

"The worst walls are never the ones you find in your way. The worst walls are the ones you put there—you build yourself. Those are the high ones, the thick ones, the ones with no doors in.

-Ursula K. LeGuin



Shameless Plugs (Send us yours!)

Successful Book Signing

Mona Sizer had a successful book signing at the Nuevo Santander gallery in September. She also made some contacts for future marketing opportunities for our Byliner book.

New Members :We want to welcome several new members

to Byliners: **Susan Johnson** and **J.L. Worman**, from Harlingen, and **Anthony Covacevich** from Weslaco, **Tommy Labastide** from San Benito.

NEXT MEETING

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at 1:30 pm

Harlingen Public Library

Writer's Wanted

The newsletter, like any other publication needs writers to fill white space. Currently, we are looking for short and long feature articles. Share your ideas for future features. If you can't think about what to write, I have LOTS of ideas. . If you want to Volunteer for an assignment—Call me!

Sandra Vela at mommymanager@yahoo.com or telephone (956)638-7203.

Official Objectives of the Valley ByLiners

- to enhance and encourage writers in their professions of writing
- to provide technical aspects and information on writing and marketing
- to provide fellowship opportunities to the membership. - from the files of R.Harris

Submit your writer's fairy thought.

You Learn to Write
by Writing.

Old Spanish Proverb



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Valley ByLiners
1011 W. 6th
Weslaco, TX 78596

Sandra Vela, Editor
Phone: (956)638-7203
E-mail: mommymanager@yahoo.com

Writing is like breathing, you don't have to do it well, but you do have to do it.

Don't Forget to
Write!



ByLiners

TO: