

Happy New Year



Valley ByLiners

Volume 2, Issue 1

January 2007

Valley ByLiners

***Tales Told at Midnight Along the Rio Grande* has arrived!**

January 13 Meeting

Book Signing

Our first 500 copies of *Tales Told at Midnight Along the Rio Grande* have been ordered. Verne will announce a pick up date at the meeting.

We will finalize our marketing plans for the book, so bring more of your ideas on venues.

Please be prepared to make commitments for signings and readings.



Also . . .

Brenda Nettles Riojas, who handles public relations for the Diocese of

Brownsville, will talk about her experiences marketing her book .

She is also involved in a new quarterly Catholic magazine that is looking for volunteer writers.

Come explore your opportunities.

Come celebrate with us!

2007

MEETING

Dates

Jan 13

Feb 17

March 10

April 14

May 12

June 9

July 14

August 11

Sept 9

October 13

November 10

2nd Saturday
of the Month

1:30 pm

Harlingen
Public Library

Join Us!

Valley Byliner's Annual Workshop—Feb. 17th

Mark your calendar for February 17, the date of the annual Valley Byliners Workshop. This year author and publisher **Joan Neubauer** will teach and motivate writers in two half-day workshops. Joan will guide us to tell it like it was in *Writing the Snippets Memoir*.

If you think a beginning to end memoir is more than you want to tackle, Joan offers techniques to encourage and inspire you to get writing.

For fiction and non-fiction the elements of a story are the same. Joan, who has published biographies, fiction, anthologies, essays and investigative non-fiction, will also lead a humorous and engaging workshop using Goldilocks and the 3 Bears as a model for constructing any piece of writing. **Cost:** \$40 for whole day, \$25 per half (subject to change) At the Harlingen Public Library 9-4 pm.. More details as the event approaches!

**Mark
Your
Calendars**

Byliner Focus Interview—Arpad Gergely

by Marianna Nelson

In October, 1956, when Arpad Gergely was 20 years old, Hungarians began to revolt against Communist oppression of their country. The dissidents fought bravely with sticks and Molotov cocktails but they were no match against Russian tanks brought in to crush the uprising. To escape retaliation, over 200,000 Hungarians fled to Austria. Arpad was one of the ones lucky enough to get to America. Now, 50 years later, he has written and published a novel based on his escape and has committed himself to writing the sequel.

Even though he claims he's "still fighting English," writing the book was comparatively easy. The hard part "is getting your work to readers," Arpad says. You have to "find . . . a publisher, have a hard copy to show, squeeze it onto crowded shelves in bookstores, have rave reviews, and finally, sell a bunch of copies. My car trunk is full of them, but . . . I have to shake every bush, turn over every stone in my path to find the elusive reader."

Arpad's quest to find readers is a story

in itself. "I give away a lot of books to libraries, to media people, even to our First Lady. Would you believe in BARTERING? A friend picked up a loaf of cheese for me and I gave her a book for it. Someone else found me a cherry-pitter I needed, there goes another book. Then I had a computer problem. The Good Samaritan who helped me out received a copy. But on the top of my list is the friendly lady last summer who traded a bunch of garage-sale items for my novel."

Back in 1974 after Arpad and his wife had settled in Connecticut, his enterprising ways helped him to start a writing career. One day when he happened to drive past a house that was on fire, he wrote a report and submitted it to the Hartford Times. He says, "When I walked into [their] offices to get a job as a part time reporter, they hired me. I asked the editor to give me a 'typed' sample on how to submit my stories. He didn't know that was my Journalism 101."

Arpad's part-time writing career took

off from there. "I interviewed Joe Lieberman when we were both very young. I wrote about Private Detectives, Winter Texans and everyone in between. The most difficult writing to do," he says, "is the opening paragraph. Once I have that, the rest is a piece of cake, especially if you are writing about cakes," he adds.

If anything keeps Arpad from writing, "it's "procrastination, but I'll tell you about it some other time," he says. "I'm a talker! The more I talk, the less I write. My advice, if you are like me, [is to] shut up and write!!"

To order Arpad's book, *This Face Behind I Hide*, send \$13 to Arpad J. Gergely, 275 Winter Haven Lane, Brownsville, TX 78526; phone (956) 831-4569.



December Meeting Highlights

by Marge Johnston

The Byliners early Christmas Party provided an early opener for the Holiday Season. The attendance was good, the food fabulous, and the fellowship great.

Thanks, Eileen, for opening your home one last time for us to enjoy a special time together.

For those who don't know, the beautiful home and grounds that Eileen and Guy have enjoyed for 13 years is "on the market" and they have bought a smaller home nearby which they are improving to their liking. Last word is they have some good bites on the property and another family may soon

Christmas Party Opened the Season

enjoy its spacious rooms and surroundings. Good luck on finding just the right new occupants – and on getting into your new home early in the New Year.

The meeting was more than eating and socializing. Jeff Harris reported on the publication plans for *Tales Told at Midnight Along the Rio Grande*, which are on schedule.

Plans for marketing the book

were discussed. Mario Munoz of KMBH-TV and KHID/KHID Radio wants to do interviews for later broadcast

Others plan book-signing events. There are lots of possibilities.

We anxiously await the time when we actually have a copy of the book in our hands.

Best wishes to all Byliners for a Happy 2007.

Writer's Needed

We need members to submit articles for the newsletter. Send your submissions as an attachment in Word. to mommymanager@yahoo.com

Writer's Inspiration

150 words

This is a section for an inspirational quote or a few sentences to inspire us to keep on writing. Share your original thoughts. Share a tidbit that's kept you on the writer's path. Share a story about how you or someone else handled rejection. The key to this column is to fulfill our members' needs to be inspired and motivated to keep on writing, no matter what!

Short Feature(s)

(inside stories) **150-200 words**

These can be on anything of interest to our members. Personal observations, personal experiences in the world of writing, short report on a topic of interest to our members, report on something new you learned about that would interest our members.

Byliner's 2007 Writing Goals

I surveyed the membership about their 2006 accomplishments and 2007 writing goals. The responses I received represent several stages of a writer in progress.

There are those that want to write just for the fun of it, and something as concrete as writing down a goal seems to suck all the joy out of the process for them.

There are also those that avoid setting goals for fear they won't reach them. They are discouraged, fearful, and struggle with self-doubt. Some are further along on their writer's path.

They are comfortable with the goal setting process and have learned to set more realistic, attainable goals which motivate them to reach ever higher.

They've seen how setting and meeting an attainable goal gives them a boost of self-confidence that can propel them to their next milestone. Finally, there are those that no longer need the goal setting process to move them forward. These writers are "in the flow", and are much too busy writing and publishing to set goals, except to do more of what they are already doing, or at least get more in royalties!

Here are some of the responses I received from you . . .

- *Attend a writer's conference*
- *Learn to use the Writer's Market*
- *Finish a novel I began researching twenty years ago.*
- *Start the novel I've been thinking about.*
- *Publish the story I've written.*
- *Submit more stories for publication.*
- *Finish my book outline*
- *Enter a Writer's Digest short story contest.*
- *To speak and sell Tales Told at Midnight.*
- *Get more submissions from members for the newsletter.*
- *To find an editor for the Byliner's Newsletter (guess whose goals these are?)*

To all of you who took the time to do this assignment and sent in your responses, I thank you! For those of you who are "still thinking about it" keep at it!

I hope you will ALL put "submit article to the Byliner Newsletter as one of your goals for 2007!"

- SANDRA

Writers WRITE!

Reflections on Nanowrimo

Nanowrimo has come and gone. Three of our fellow Byliner's participated this year, Ruth Harris, Jeff Harris, and Sandra Vela. This was Ruth's 4th Nanowrimo, and Jeff and Sandra's first.

Jeff Writes:

I had never written any (fiction) piece longer than about 2,500 words before Nano 2006. What really surprised me was that I was actually able to put over 3,000 words down on paper in a single day a couple of times. Of course what I have is only a first draft, and I'm not even sure if I will ever do anything with it, but it certainly was an experience.

Some of the things I learned during the process were;

Don't fall behind - 1,667 words a day is not too bad, but missing a few days really drives up the minimum daily word count.

PLOT! - I had written a very sparse outline prior to starting and it helped greatly. I see now that I should have done a LOT more plotting prior to the start. I broke my plot into eight chapters of about ten scenes each. That made each scene a comfortable 625 words.



Don't give up - Towards the end of the month, I had more than one thought of quitting. Ruth helped me a lot with her words of encouragement (Thanks Ruth)

This is truly an experience EVERY writer should try at least once. I am looking forward to Nano 2007 and hope to see more Valley Byliners on the roster next year.

Sandra Writes: This was a very good experience for me. I did the best I could to prepare, but ran out of plot points mid-way through the process. It was a challenge in self-discipline, and putting my word-count where my mouth was. Focusing on the daily word-count goal was an important technique to force me to "just get it down". I didn't allow myself to go back and read anything until it was all over.

When I'd get stuck, I tried one of the techniques they recommended

on the website. I read a line from one of my favorite novels and use it as a springboard for moving my story forward.

I appreciated the support of my family through the process. They knew I was focused on accomplishing my goal, and they always asked me how it was going. My sixteen year old, Danny, asked me in the same tone I use to check on his school progress. "Have you finished your word count today?" When I was struggling and wanted to hide or avoid my commitment, he'd gently re-direct me back on task. It was funny how our roles reversed during this time. When I hit my weekly goal, we'd celebrate with some Jerry Garcia's frozen yogurt and "savor the taste of success."

He was very proud of me for completing my goal, and I think he learned a very good lesson about not giving up. I know I did!

When I finally reached the 50,000 word count, I stood up and did the "happy, happy, joy, joy dance". I printed out the pages, so I could see the results of my hard work. Now I have a novel I can edit and revise.

I definitely want to do this again next year, and my son Danny is interested in doing it with me, too!

WANTED

We NEED your Shameless Plugs

1-2 sentences highlighting a recent accomplishment.

Topics can include announcing a recent publication, contests you've entered, contests you won, contests you almost won, personal writing goals you have met, or are continuing to struggle with.

This is where you should "Toot your own horn" and let us celebrate your successes with you!

I know we've all been taught not to brag, but that's a pile of hooey, if you ask me. Brag away! We're all dying to know what others are accomplishing. Maybe it will motivate us to shoot for the stars!

When a member of the Byliners accomplishes a goal, that gives us ALL hope that we, too, can make it! Don't keep these events, no matter how tiny, hidden from our fellow members.

As we hear more from our members about their goals, successes and frustrations, we learn more about how much we have in common as a group.

Send them by email to mommy-manager@yahoo.com!

Seeking 2007 Newsletter Editor

Are you Creative?

Training Included

Knowledgeable and experienced writers on staff.

Lay Out and Organization already in place.

Qualified Candidates are reading this ad.

Yes, You!

Isn't it time you tried something new, something challenging, something different?

Apply Today!

Writing Contests

Northeast Texas Writers' Organization (NETWO)

2007 Short Story Contest

- Between 1,000 and 2,500 words
- Entry fee is \$8 for each adult submission
- Entries must be postmarked between January 1 and February 20, 2007
- Mail entries to: NETWO, P.O. Box 411, Winfield, TX 75493
- First Place Award is \$100
- First Place winner will be published (with author's permission) in *The Story Teller*, a magazine dedicated to helping writers.
- For more information
<http://www.netwo.org>

Thanks for sharing, Eileen!

"Keep thinking. Listen. Cut out articles from the newspaper that might have good ideas for articles and plot lines."

- Mona Sizer



Shameless Plugs (Send us yours!)

Robyn Cate was commissioned to write a poem for the Harlingen Museum of History and Art.

The poetic essay she wrote, put into words the events that have brought the museum back to life.

Eileen Mattei is writing the copy for a photo book that being published with pictures from the Valley.

Jeff Harris, Sandra Vela, and Ruth Harris completed 2006 Nanowrimo in November! (see related story)

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, January 13
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.

2007 is the
Year of the
Writer



Valley ByLiners

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: