

# KWA

Kansas Writers Association

all genres. all formats. ALL WRITERS.

OCTOBER 2010

## OCTOBER WORKSHOP

Saturday, Oct. 16  
1:30-4 p.m.

Rockwell Library  
5939 E. 9th St., Wichita



**GUEST SPEAKER**  
Children's Author  
Debra Seely

## Kid Stuff

Writing for children and young adults (or "YA," in industry parlance) is something many of our members are curious about.

What's the appeal of telling stories for young people? Perhaps it comes from memories of our own youth, when we were first transported to a place that existed, intimately and exclusively, between the book in our hands and the imagination in our heads.

This month we welcome local children's author **Debra Seely**, to discuss her experiences as a writer of children's fiction. Debra has written two books: *Grasslands* and its sequel, *The Last of the Roundup Boys*, about a teenager in the frontier days of the Great Plains. She is a lifelong Kansan who grew up loving stories about young people in the past, such as Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series. She wanted to be a writer, but also a nurse, an actress, and a journalist. She

became a teacher instead, and later worked at a children's book store while getting her MFA in creative writing. Her website is [www.debraseely.com](http://www.debraseely.com).

## Sponsors and judges needed for KWA Contest

Show your support for KWA and emerging writers! Sponsor a category in our annual contest for just \$150, and have your business or your name mentioned on all contest materials. Donations of any amount will also help with other contest expenses, like postage and prizes. We also need contest

judges. Volunteer now to get your choice of categories. We provide a guide with judging criteria. Contact Contest Chair Ray "Grizzly" Racobs at [contest@kwawriters.org](mailto:contest@kwawriters.org) to become a sponsor or a judge. And don't forget to submit your own entries by Nov. 30! Get all the details at [kwawriters.org](http://kwawriters.org).

Volume 14, Issue 10

Editor: Erin Perry O'Donnell

## Inside this issue:

President's Remarks	2
Member News	2
Conference Dispatch	3
Storytellers Seminar	4

## Calendar

- Oct. 16: **Regular Meeting.** Writing for Children & Young Adults
- Nov. 30: **Deadline for KWA Contest**

**Our mission:  
to inform,  
support,  
encourage,  
and promote  
the writer.**

# President's Remarks: Getting Past Distraction to Discipline

By A. Lisette Walker  
KWA President



To those who don't write, writing can seem to be an incredibly self-indulgent activity. Those who have attempted to write, however, understand that it takes an incredible amount of discipline. There are days when writing is easy, when words flow faster than you can capture them, and there are the days where coming up with 10 words is laboriously painful. There may be no obvious progress to observers, no bright, changing splashes of color to indicate work.

There's the incredible discipline of making yourself sit down in spite of lovely weather, family activities, or any other distraction that comes along. Or, as the case may be, anything you chose to make a distraction. If the work's going well, I can't tear myself away. If it's dragging, though, it's so hard to make myself sit down and write, and that is when I most need to.

I find that I'm much better off if I can manage to write every day; eventually the writing becomes easier even if I'm feeling bored, and tired, and uninspired. Once I

get started, I find out that it isn't so bad—and the writing that often surprises me the most happens when I make myself write, when it's not easy and I'd rather be doing anything else.

I suspect I'm thinking about discipline because I've been so bad at it lately, and I would like to establish some sort of routine. Time management is not a genetic strength—I can't recall ever having a bedtime, even as a young child—but I know if I can get to a schedule things seem to fall into place a lot more easily.

What about you? Do you have writing routines? Methods? Special indications to yourself—and others—that you are writing and must not be disturbed unless the house is on fire?

One of the reasons I originally joined KWA was because I figured that, if I belonged to a writing organization, I would be an incredible fraud unless I actually

wrote. Maybe it's not the best inspiration, but it's motivation, and at least I know I'm not the only one who had that reason for joining. The other reason was so that I could meet fellow writers and commiserate over our particular choice of craft. I've been on the Board for three years now and have had great fun getting to know my fellow Board members and deciding how best to improve KWA for everyone.

We are looking to fill several Board positions next year, including: Vice President, Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Historian, and Scene Conference Co-Chair. Current Board members will be glad to answer questions about what is required of each position, or email us at [info@kwawriters.org](mailto:info@kwawriters.org).

This month's meeting topic will be Young Adult literature. I hope to see you there.

Keep writing!

## *Member News*

**Tom Mach**, author of *Sissy!* and *All Parts Together*, has a new book of short stories. *Stories to Enjoy* includes some selections that have won writing contests. Highlights are online at [www.TomMach.com/short\\_stories.htm](http://www.TomMach.com/short_stories.htm).

**B.D. Tharp** will have a reading and signing for her book *Feisty Family Values* at 7 p.m. Nov. 11 at Watermark Books.

# Agents and advice aplenty at SouthWest Writers Conference

By B.D. Tharp  
KWA Member



Sept. 11 I attended the SouthWest Writers conference at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, N.M. We started the day with a moment of silence to remember those who were lost in 2001. It was a sobering way to begin the day, but truly necessary for one and all.

## Team Effort

John Candelaria, a local poet and well-known orator, began the conference by introducing Aimee and David Thurlo, a husband-and-wife writing team. Their genre is romantic suspense and mystery, and they've written 70 books together. They are still married. They have a system where each writes to their own strengths. Aimee is great at character and plot development, and David does the technical parts and action scenes. "I'd probably have an exploding IUD instead of an IED," Aimee said.

The couple's process begins with an outline that they work together, then they take turns filling out the story. White boards line the room and they each have their own writing desk, a system they've developed over the last 15 years.

## Agents Roundtable

Next was a very informative panel discussion with such notables as Peter Rubie, CEO, Fine Print Literary Management; Chelsea Gilmore, agent, Maria Carvainis Agency; Lauren MacLeod, agent, Strothman Agency; and Eric Raab, editor, Tor and Forge. They discussed the current market, dos and don'ts when you query, the growth of e-publishing, and the types of stories they were looking for. These professionals represented the majority of the genre spectrum: mystery, suspense, historical, women's, Western, fantasy, science fiction, and children's fiction.

After a fabulous lunch of authentic Mexican food, the agent and editor consultations began, as well as readings from "Emerging Multi-Cultural Voices." Karmia Alavi, Sylvie Larimore de Lara, and Kathleen McLean shared moving stories about their native cultures, traditions, and turmoil.

## 'Make It Your Own'

We heard from local authors about trends in historical and women's fiction. The benefits of research and ways to find out about other times and places. This is a quote I captured from one of the speakers that really impressed me: "We all get what we work for. Learn what you can and make it your own."

The last workshop focused on

trends in children's and young adult literature. The most important message shared was, "Don't try to follow trends. Write the best story you can write. Then follow the guidelines for submission." They did say there is a surprising lack of books for boys at this time.

I overheard from one of the agents that they give writers they meet at conferences more immediate attention than a cold query. They also pay attention to writers who are referred to them by their colleagues. The 10 minutes I spent with the agent flew by in what appeared to be seconds. I was nervous, even though I've done this many times before. It's still too much like a job interview to be comfortable. But she did ask to see my entire manuscript. That made it all worthwhile.

## Conferences a Good Investment

I highly recommend attending writer's conferences whenever possible. The Kansas Author's Club has one coming up in October, OWFI has one in Oklahoma City in the spring, and there are others in the region at various times. Check the kwawriters.org website and Shawguides.com for one that will work with your schedule and budget. It's a great way to meet new people and learn something new about the craft or industry.

Invest in yourself. You're worth it.

# OCTOBER 2010

## Kansas Writers Association

P.O. Box 2236, Wichita, KS 67201

### Newsletter Submissions

Submit articles and member news by the 20th of the month to Erin Perry O'Donnell at [newsletter@kwawriters.org](mailto:newsletter@kwawriters.org) or to our address above. Put "KWA" in the subject line for emails, and send information in the body of the email, not as an attachment.

### Join KWA

Get a membership through Dec. 31, our monthly newsletter, and a discount on our programs and seminars. Prorated dues for the rest of 2010 are \$5 for a mailed newsletter, \$4 for emailed newsletter, and \$3 for a youth membership (under 21). Membership forms are online at [www.kwawriters.org](http://www.kwawriters.org). Renewals are due Jan. 1. Send your check to **KWA, P.O. Box 2236, Wichita, KS 67201**

*The Kansas Writers Association is a not-for-profit  
501(c)(3) organization.*

**[** <http://www.kwawriters.org> **]**

## Seminar Takes Storytellers from Start to Finish

Gordon A. Kessler is back with another day of interactive exercises and inspiration for the fiction writer.



**Gordon A. Kessler**

**The Everybody Loves the Storyteller/Novel Writing Made Simple Seminar** takes place Saturday, Oct. 30, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Kansas City in Lenexa. Registration is \$35 in advance and \$45 at the door (if available). Meals are not included.

Kessler says the workshop will

“get your prose flowing and your passion burning.” He’ll also take writers through getting your story started, writing it effectively from beginning to end, and getting it published. Bring your notebook and story samples to work on writing dynamic:

- Characters and characterization
- Conflict, action, suspense, and plot
- Setting, imagery, and description
- Dialogue and internalization (thought)

- Narration and exposition
  - as well as queries and synopses
- The new “Weekend at Gordy’s” mini-retreat includes a Friday night Buzz Session, Saturday’s seminar, a Novel Mechanics critique session, and a workshop Sunday on computer skills (including Microsoft Word). Weekend cost is \$50 preregistered or \$65 at the door (space available). Discounted rooms are available. Visit [www.writersmatrix.com/NWMS-Seminar-KC-KS.html](http://www.writersmatrix.com/NWMS-Seminar-KC-KS.html) for registration and all the details.