



GCWA Members - Exciting Programs

GCWA Meeting Updates

Saturday, September 19, is our next GCWA meeting. [Join us at 10:00 am at St. Hilary's Episcopal Church](#). We're excited to welcome award-winning author **Joni M. Fisher** as our featured speaker in September for an instructive writers' workshop. This workshop presents suspense and thrillers as carefully engineered experiences of anticipation, dread and uncertainty. It emphasizes that suspense works best when readers care deeply about the protagonist and explains how to deepen that emotional pull.



Member Spotlight: Joe Diorio

Joe Diorio has been a writer all his life. He wrote and (badly) illustrated his own comic books when he was in grade school, wrote for a weekly newspaper while in high school, wrote opinion pieces for his college newspaper, and worked as a daily newspaper reporter, corporate speechwriter, public relations professional, and freelance advertising copywriter. "I have one marketable skill," he says. "I can write a simple declarative sentence. And because I use the dictionary I almost always spell all the words correctly."

He is the author of two books, [*A Few Words About Words. A common-sense look at writing and grammar*](#), and [*Crisis Communications and the art of making nothing happen*](#). Both were published by Beaufort Books in New York.

Read Joe's [full interview here](#).

Petite Passage

Excerpt from [Music Business Stories, Book One](#) by Tom Cossie, published in 2025.

Tom Surman, also known as Tom Cossie, is a music industry veteran with more than fifty years of experience. At age twenty-six, he became senior vice president of RCA Records in New York City. After leaving the record industry in 2000, he became a vice president at Vantage Healthcare and worked as a photojournalist in Washington, DC.

To me, Dolly Parton was a unique artist that exemplified both charm and kindness, which when combined with her obvious attractiveness projected an aura of beauty. My introduction to Dolly took place in 1973. I was the director of National Album Promotion at RCA Records based in New York City, and Dolly's latest single, "Jolene," had made the jump from country radio to mainstream pop radio.

Elroy "The Country Son" Kahanek was RCA's director of Country Music Promotion based in Nashville. When Elroy would talk to you on the phone, he would start off by saying, in a long drawn out accent, "Son . . ." so I referred to Elroy as "The Country "Son." He always told me that Dolly was one of the best singers and songwriters in Nashville as well as one of the coolest young artists in the RCA family. Most of the legendary country artists on the RCA roster were at least fifteen to twenty years older than Dolly, so being as successful as she was in her early twenties was notable.

I had the chance to meet Dolly in person at the Plaza Hotel in 1973. She went on to be nominated for just about every award known to the record industry and walked away with more than ten Grammy Awards as well as ten CMA (Country Music Awards). I recently read a story about the top thirty best-selling country artists in the history of the music industry. The only two top country recording artists who both sold more than 100 million records were Garth Brooks and Dolly Parton. God Bless Dolly—she deserved all she worked for.

We're always looking for compelling prose or poetry to highlight our members' talent. Submit a 250-300-word excerpt from your work to: communications@gulfcoastwriters.org



Lay Down the Editor Hat and Enjoy the Story

By Julie Moore

Remember when you were just a reader? You allowed the characters to come to life and take you on a journey. Whether it was real life or make-believe, you entered the world within the pages. You surrendered to the writing. There was no red pen, no requirement to read objectively. Just the emotions of the story.

Before I became an author, I never wondered about character arcs, pacing, narrative structure, or whether a sentence could have been tightened. I just wanted to know what happened next. To be honest, I didn't know what any of that was until after I wrote my first book. I can't say that I've become an expert at editing, although my awareness has certainly been amplified. Yet, I sometimes find myself reading books through that editorial lens instead of simply getting lost in the story.

I've realized there is an occupational hazard to becoming a writer: we notice everything.

I have read about 25 books in the last year, and somewhere along the way, I caught myself comparing one author's writing to another's. I noticed sentence structure. Word choices. Pacing. I mentally rearranged a phrase here and there. Apparently, becoming an author also qualified me for a completely unpaid position as an editor.

Each time, I had to catch myself.

I wrote a book about the importance of giving voice to others who no longer had theirs. One day, a thought occurred to me: Who am I to take away someone else's that still has one?

Every story has a voice. And every author has one, too. Sometimes that voice follows all the rules. Sometimes it bends them a little. It may be polished and precise, conversational and casual, regional, humorous, raw, or imperfect. But before we begin mentally correcting someone else's work, perhaps we should first listen for the voice behind the words.

The mechanics can be corrected; that's the editor's job. As readers, perhaps our first questions should be: Did this make me feel? Think? Laugh? Remember? Did it keep me turning the page?

There is certainly a time to put on the editor hat. Writers need constructive feedback, good editing, and an understanding of the craft. But there should also be a time when we hang that hat by the door, pick up a book, settle into our favorite chair, and allow another writer to tell us a story.

Give yourself permission to be a reader again. You don't have to abandon good writing standards. Just remember that technically perfect prose isn't necessarily memorable prose.

Sometimes the best thing we can do for another writer—and ourselves—is put down the red pen, turn the page, and listen to the voice telling the story.

~ Julie Moore

Julie is the author of [I Am Their Voice](#): *A Guide for Caregivers and Advocates* available on Amazon



Rejection Hurts Because Your Work Matters

By Laura Fuller

I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and clicked Send.

When I heard the swoosh, I opened one eye and looked at the screen for a second.

It was as if I had pulled the lever on a slot machine. I was sure this could be the one. Maybe I could overcome the one-in-a-million odds.

It was my first submission. I just wanted to believe I could.

By day twenty-two, checking my email had turned into a ritual. As they say, twenty-one days are enough to form a habit. I got out of bed, went to the computer, and checked my inbox once again.

Nothing. No message.

I can't pretend; I was disappointed for a moment. Perhaps for five minutes. That's all.

Tomorrow was a new day.

Day twenty-three.

Oh my! My heart skipped more beats than it should

Dratler Literary Agency right before my eyes.

That was my yes. My everything.

I clicked.

It would have been a suitable choice for your book another time, but right now I'm only interested in memoirs. Please keep trying.

My eyes blurred. I closed and opened them, but they didn't clear.

It could have been the tears or maybe the pain of rejection.

Either way, all I could see was what the message hadn't said.

I wasn't good enough, and I know that they hated it.

I never should have sent it. I should quit.

I lost twenty-three days of hope in one sentence.

And for that moment, I forgot something important.

They rejected my submission, but I rejected myself.

Most of us know the force of rejection. You pour yourself into your work; you are a writer, and when it is finally finished, you send it out into the world. The world sends it back.

"Thank you for your query; however, we do not feel your work is a good fit for us."

You poured your entire life into that work; you wrote those words from your heart, and you spent hours, days, perhaps years, writing and shaping them into a story.

You are a fighter. Failure is in giving up before you start. You showed up, ran the race, and finished it.

That matters. It is clear that you are not a failure.

You are a person of value, and you dare to put your words to paper for all to see. That alone is something to be proud of.

A rejection is not a judge and jury over your work. There are billions of people in this world, and one rejection represents the opinion of only a handful.

So how do we handle rejection with dignity? Maybe we start by changing how we see rejection.

Remember that if someone took the time to respond to your submission, your work made it into their hands. That alone means your hard work is paying off.

When you see a "no", smile because every "no" brings you closer to your "yes."

Often it is not all about you or your writing. Maybe your rejection was bad timing, not the quality of your writing.

Do not let rejection stop you. It is an opinion, not a verdict.

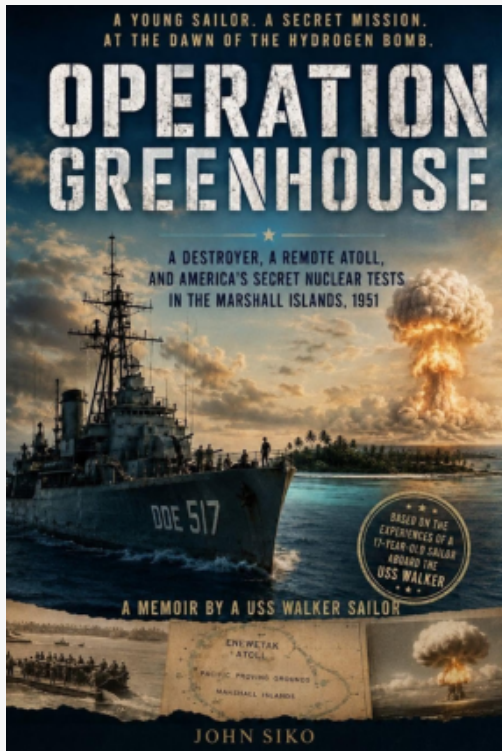
A rejection doesn't get to decide whether you are a writer; you do.

Keep going, persevere, and stand tall. You got this!

~ Laura Fuller

Laura is the author of *Beneath the Silence*. She is actively querying for her book.

Celebrations



Let's Celebrate John Siko

I am one of the few remaining participants who witnessed a milestone in thermonuclear weapons testing. I played an active role in the largest nuclear bomb tests ever conducted and saw the detonation of four nuclear bombs, including the first-ever hydrogen bomb. The book explains why I was there.

The book was released to the public on September 8th and is available on [Amazon](#) under "John Siko Operation Greenhouse."

We are always looking for milestones to celebrate with our GCWA community. If you would like to have a milestone posted on the website under '[Let's Celebrate](#),' please sign in to your members-only area and complete the accomplishments form.

GCWA IS SEEKING COMMUNICATIONS VOLUNTEERS

We are looking to secure multiple volunteers to take on small, even "byte-sized" Communications roles and tasks. If you are interested in helping once or regularly with a small role for the newsletter, media contact, or social media, please email: communications@gulfcoastwriters.org.

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**GCWA**

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