

# April 2020 Newsletter

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## President's Column

By Leah Hinton

Hello chickadees,

I can't believe this is my second letter to you all in this state of sheltering in place. It is a strange time to be sure.

Your WGT Board is working hard to continue to bring you quality programming in this new digital format. Thank you to those who joined us on Facebook for our program featuring Danny Dunn. They were phenomenal. This month we will have Lauren Vanderburg as a digital presenter. Again, these digital programs are offered to you on Facebook and membership in WGT is not required so watch and

enjoy. If you weren't able to catch Danny's program, from the WGT page, click on photos and the video will be there and you can watch it in full.

In the past I have challenged you with writing exercises, but this time I'd like to challenge you something a little more complex. This will be good practice for you when our flash fiction competition comes around this fall.

Michael Noll's book *Writer's Field Guide to the Craft of Fiction*, which I highly recommend, is filled with great exercises for writers of all skill levels. The following exercise is modeled after some of those found in his book and on-line.

Write a story, no more than 2000 words. You will need to include any one item from each column. Your choice. Then you will take your three items and write a short story from any POV.

Place	Character	Miscellaneous Item
Funeral home	Doctor	handkerchief
Hockey arena	toddler	Band-aid
Under the High-Five	schoolteacher	fruit basket
Grocery store	First Responder	balloons
City park	clown	folding chair
Cave	robot	magical elixir
Spaceship or other planet	dragon	sword

Now attack the biggest issue your protagonist must face in your story. Remember this is short fiction so you need to hit all the same beats you would in a full-length novel but in only 2000 words. Then, if you are so inclined, send it to [authorlmhinton@gmail.com](mailto:authorlmhinton@gmail.com) I will put together a file where we can all read the submissions and load it onto our Facebook page. Standard rules regarding

excessive violence, and sexual situations apply. Since our page is accessible by those under 18, let's keep the hard core stuff out of this project.\* Let's set the due date as May 8th. This gives you two weeks of quality sheltering-in-place time to work on your stories.

For fun, I wrote one about a clown at a funeral carrying balloons from the point of view of the deceased. So get creative. Go outside your comfort zone.

I wish everyone well, and if you and yours need a thing, please don't hesitate to contact me or any of your board.

Happy reading and joyful writing. Remember, you deserve your art.

Leah

\*WGT reserves the right to omit a submission from the online file for any reason.

## WGT Board Members

President	Leah Hinton
Vice President	Courtney Larsen
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If you're interested in volunteering, please email us at [writersguildtx@gmail.com](mailto:writersguildtx@gmail.com) or ask at the next general meeting!

## Online Meeting Reminder



Join us Monday, April 27, 7:00pm, on the WGT Facebook Page for a Facebook Live Presentation:

"The Montpelier Job: A Study in Heist Novels": by Lauren Vanderburg.

What makes a heist novel tick? What turns all those moving parts into a rollicking adventure where you root for the bad guys to score the loot? We'll explore what a heist novel is and what a compelling crew should look like.

Lauren Vanderburg earned her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults at Vermont College of Fine Arts. She is currently working on her very own heist novel, and she lives in Arlington with her wife and seven kids.

This will be the second in our series of exciting, intellectually stimulating, socially distant virtual monthly meetings. We'll be looking for you.

**Note:** Due to copyright limitations and Facebook's content algorithm, Lauren's presentation won't include some copyrighted materials she normally includes. If you'd like to see those, email us at [writersguildtx@gmail.com](mailto:writersguildtx@gmail.com) and we will make them available to you.

## March Meeting Recap

The monthly meeting on March 23 featured Danny Dunn presenting a lively, evocative talk on slam poetry titled "The Art of the Slam."

Still viewable on our Writers Guild of Texas Facebook Page, "The Art of the Slam" lays out what you need to know to write and perform slam poetry. An interesting tie-in to the February program on writing for the stage lies in the notion that, for both, you're writing something to be performed before a live audience. Thus the slam poet has to consider not only the sound and meaning of the words on the page, but how to perform them such that the meaning is driven home most effectively to a live audience. The possibilities are practically endless for use of the voice and body to evoke that meaning, as Danny illustrated with examples. Danny covered the essentials of slam and then, assisted by JoAnne Turner and Leah Hinton, delivered powerful examples of their poetry in action.

**Flash Fiction Contest**  
**First Place Winner - David Galewsky**  
**"Leaving"**

*Winners of the 5th annual, 2019  
"Kathryn McClatchy Fall Flash Fiction Contest"  
sponsored by the Writers Guild of Texas*



1st -- "Leaving" by David Galewsky  
2nd -- "New" by Joel Jackson  
3rd -- "A Dragon's Hoard" by JoAnne Turner  
HM -- "My Summer Job" by Brenda Guyton

They brought him home in an ambulance with no lights or siren, the urgency was gone. They gave him his fate with detached reserve. He accepted it, his daughters weeping by his side. There was no surprise in it for him. He had spent weeks in the hospital, miserable, his feet and fingers burning, his guts and bowels roiling and revolting. After a month he said, "No more. I want to go home." They loaded him into the ambulance, his daughters holding his hands and helping him up and promising to follow right behind.

He descended over the next few weeks, each new malady and pain falling into place as messy and naturally as it had for every man before him since the beginning of men. The day that his oldest daughter had helped him lift his feet off the floor and eased him back onto the bed he felt that he would never leave it.

He woke up the next morning feeling as good as he could remember. The house was silent. His girls had left him for the night. Returning home to their husbands and kids, their homes full of noise and happy chaos. The sun was only a white glow lightening the low hills to the east. It was cool but he knew it would warm quickly.

He padded into the silent kitchen in his socks to switch on the percolator and stood watching out the window at a pair of scissortails swooping and diving, at the mesquite and prickly pear, and the grass waving. He poured a cup of coffee, added three big spoons of sugar and drank it and watched the country come alive.

The sorrel mare nickered at him from the pens when she heard the screen door crash, her red head bobbing above the grey cedar pickets. She was the best horse he had ever had, the kind that made a man a better cowboy. The kind that seemed to melt into you when you sat on her and gave you a thrill of life and passion, joy and connection. She was old now, like him, but she felt good today. She bumped him gently as he poured a little sweet feed into an old hubcap and he curried her while she ate, the loose red hair falling about them both as he combed her, shining and smooth. He struggled to swing his daddy's saddle onto her but she stood patiently while he buckled both cinches, front and back. She took the bit easily and when he swung his leg over her back groaning she stood perfectly still.

They trotted first past the giant stone water tank. A huge ancient reservoir fed by a clanking windmill. There was an electric pump now that he could turn on when the wind stopped, but the cool spring breeze was blowing the windmill and the gears and sucker rod rose and fell, the cold ancient water from within the limestone earth splashed out of the pipe in spurts. He remembered swimming in this tank as a child with his brother, now long dead, and later with his wife as newlyweds, naked and

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shaking with excitement and fear. She too was dead. Only a year but the hardest year of his life.

They trotted on crossing the dry creek and he remembered the years it had run, when it had flooded and the flowers had bloomed bright as to almost hurt his eyes so used to the browns and yellows of the drought years. He smiled remembering his girls when they were small, catching tiny frogs by the dozens after one of those floods. Where the little gray creatures had come from after three years of the worst drought in thirty he couldn't fathom nor where they went when it dried up again. The mare climbed the hill easily and he let her pause at the top, the chips of thousands of flint arrowheads scattered about. He had spent his youth searching this hill for arrowheads. Each one stretching back to before his grandparents had staked this place, back to the empire of a people long gone, their spirits haunting it now in gauzy, hazy miasmas. He had thrilled at each point he had found and the connection it brought to those ancient people. He patted the mare's neck and she turned back to the west.

The three girls came into the house loudly, as they always did, their false cheer and shouts of "Daddy are you up?" knowing that he was almost gone. Knowing the soiling they would have to clean from the night. He had eaten nothing nor spoke a word in several days. The hospice nurse came twice a day to change his fluid bags and inject his medications. His oldest came into his room and gave a small cry, her middle sister came in behind her, her voice wavering, "Is he gone?" "No... I thought he was for a second, but he's still here."

The air had the barest whiff of rain, a smell that excited him, made him vibrate with the anticipation of the continuance of life here in this hot old country. The mare felt his excitement through his legs, through his hands on the leather reins. Her slow trot picked up, breaking into a lope he felt a brief fear of falling, of breaking something but it whipped away with the wind. The rhythm of her pounding hooves beating along with his ragged and dying heart. The heart that had carried him over the years, that wouldn't let go despite the rest of his body rotting slowly away. He bent over the saddle horn, pushing his hands forward and letting the reins droop as he placed his hands along her heaving neck. She lengthened her stride, straining

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and finally breaking into a gallop, stretching forward, their hearts beating together, running.

## Notes From the Editor

The WGT Critique Group, online version, had its inaugural meeting April 16. It was our first time to use Webex to read and comment on each other's work, trade ideas about writing, and catch up socially. Despite an initial issue with audio on the host's part, we were able to view the text of works in progress on-screen, register our reactions, ask questions, and engage in thoughtful, helpful discussion.

We'll take up where we left off next month and hope you'll be moved to join in. All you need is your current work-in-progress pulled up on screen ready to share and a good internet connection. It may sound complicated but really it isn't. Webex is a great tool, and meeting online actually makes it easier than ever to get together, sip a drink, and talk about writing.

Till next time, happy storytelling.

—Gary

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