

Upcoming GWA Events

- ◆ Saturday, March 16: *The Truth About Butterflies*, Nancy Stephan, 2012 GAYA award winner.
- ◆ Saturday, April 20: *A History of Nursing*, Ann Webster, Celebrated poet and memoirist.
- ◆ Saturday, June 15: Georgia Author of the Year Awards banquet and ceremony, KSU Center in Kennesaw.



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The Georgia Authority

Monthly Memos from the Georgia Writers Association

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Obsessive Creativity Disorder

by Caren A. Stewart

Let's face it, writing is great when you're in "the zone" but not during the many hours of struggle it takes getting into that mystical spot. And if you're anything like me, you really have to be in the right place at the right time to feel the muse's inspiration.

Not only do the stars have to be in correct alignment, but also everything around me has to be completely clutter-free. In fact, just since I've sat down with the intention of writing this, I've folded two baskets of laundry, written a full-page "to do" list, and ran into the bathroom to tweeze a wayward hair—all in the span of about twenty minutes. Did I mention that a tidy workspace can really limit your distractions?

This brings me to the topic of mental clutter. It's bad enough that I'm a completely tangential thinker, but add Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) on top of that and you have

a recipe for procrastination. Speaking of ADD, did you hear the one about how many people with ADD it takes to screw in a light bulb?

Hey, wanna go ride bikes?



Exactly.

It's not uncommon for the same insignificant thought, like watering my plants or redecorating my entire house, to pop into my head over and over again. Rather than getting into a power struggle with my ego, I just write it down. You'd be amazed how quickly your mind can purge a thought once it's written down.

And what about all those interviews you read about successful authors? They always seem to say how they write at the same time every day, usually from like 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. But how many successful authors have kids at home and a "regular" job? I mean, it's definitely important to *try* to maintain some kind of a schedule, but sometimes we don't have the luxury of blocking off two hours at the same time every day.

Recently, I attended a writing workshop by a local author who told us about the Pomodoro Technique, developed by Francesco Cirillo. You set a timer and write for twenty-five minutes, take a five-minute break, then set the timer for another twenty-five minutes. Setting specific blocks of time for one task maximizes your time and keeps you better focused. The hardest part is stopping what you're doing when the timer goes off. But when you

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A Writer's Neglected Sense

by Marsha Maurer

Ah, that first morning in Paris! Coffee and croissants at a sidewalk café, purple lilacs in bloom, fashionable women clattering in heels on cobblestone, private glances with your new husband. What makes that scene memorable? Oh, oui! The sights of course, the sounds as well. But where are the fragrances that make the time and place indelible? Where is dark bitter coffee steaming over buttery crois-

sants; the elixir of lilac blossoms; passing women trailing perfume on a breeze; and that warm, newly-familiar scent that made you reach for your husband's hand?

Scent transports a reader with power that no other sense can convey. Comfortable writing tends to focus on the familiar and to convey impressions by relying on what readers might first identify—what we

hear and see. Writers bombard us with highly developed descriptions of sight and sound. But to conjure the unforgettable? Scent is the sense of choice.

Perhaps one of the challenges of writing about fragrance is the limited vocabulary writers have to describe it. In *A Natural History of the Senses*, Diane Ackerman points

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Is Goodreads in Your Toolbox?

by Donna Huber

Red Clay Writers Conference has been postponed.

The new date will be posted in the near future.

Please join our mailing list to receive important updates:
<http://bit.ly/WGnyG0>.

Donna Huber, owner of *GWR Publicity* (offering affordable marketing services to authors at <http://bit.ly/GWRPublicity>) is the founder and active book blogger of *Girl-Who-Reads.com*.

With more than ten million registered users, Goodreads (www.goodreads.com) should be in every author's publicity toolbox. Goodreads is a social media website dedicated to reading and books. It allows readers to catalog their books, keep track of books they have read or are/will be reading, post reviews, and interact with other readers. Through the author program, authors and fans can connect.

Follow these tips to kick-start your word-of-mouth campaign with Goodreads.

Tip 1: List Your Book

Goodreads uses a number of catalog sources (although not bookseller sites) to propagate book data. If a book does not appear on the Goodreads site, which happens occasionally for independently published titles, an author can manually enter the book. Any user of Goodreads may manually enter a book, so it's a good idea to check the book's data for accuracy. In addition to publication data, a sample or the entire e-book can be uploaded.

An author does not need to wait until the book is published to list it on Goodreads. A book should be listed on Goodreads at least a month in advance of the publication date. Goodreads sends out a newsletter each month with new releases. The top section is customized to the reader, showing new releases of books by authors on their shelves.

As soon as the book is added to the site, fans can add it to their shelves and vote for it on lists. Each time a user adds a book to a shelf or list, an

update is posted to his feed for his friends to see. The word-of-mouth campaign has begun.

Tip 2: Claim Your Author Page

Every author who has a book listed on Goodreads has an author page. To claim the page, an author clicks on his name in the book listing and then clicks the link "Is this you?" Users with librarian status can edit author profiles, so you may already have some information listed.



A blog's RSS feed can be connected to the author page. Fans receive a weekly email notifying them of new posts. It is a great way to remind fans to visit an author's blog without the author having to constantly contact them.

Widgets for websites and Facebook can be found on the author's dashboard. The widgets help direct fans to add the book to their shelves and leave reviews.

Tip 3: Advertise on Goodreads

Through the author's dashboard, an author can sign up for the Goodreads advertising program. They have a number of options, including custom-

ized book launch packages. If advertisements are in the publicity budget, Goodreads would be a place to consider.

Tip 4: Giveaways

If advertisements are not in the budget, offering a giveaway is a viable option to bring attention to a title. Goodreads will help advertise all titles being offered through their giveaway program. Digital-only published authors are not able to participate in the giveaway program as only print copies may be offered. Readers entering the giveaway are encouraged to add the book to their shelves.

Tip 5: Create a Q&A Group

Readers expect to be able to contact authors. A Q&A group can provide a forum for an author to interact with readers. Goodreads groups are popular and some are extremely active. Again, Goodreads can help in advertising your Q&A group. For best results, it is best to advertise when the author will be available to answer questions. If an author is doing a virtual tour, a Q&A group can add an extra layer of contact with fans.

Bonus Tip

Most authors are also readers, so get involved in the community as a reader. Adding the books an author reads to his shelf can connect him to other fans and potential readers of his own book. A number of online book clubs use Goodreads groups as their discussion forum and often invite authors to join them. Bloggers are active on Goodreads and an author can discover new blogs willing to review his books.

Obsessive Creativity Disorder (continued from page 1)

come back to your writing, you might just see it differently.

This reminds me of the "Spin the Kitty" technique I learned from watching *Animal Planet*. When you have a cat engaging in a destructive behavior, pick it up, slowly spin it

around a couple of times, then set it on the ground. The cat forgets what it was doing and finds another way to entertain itself. I've often used this technique with my kids and it really works.

The goal is to figure out what works

for you. Just find whatever little tricks and techniques you can use to get yourself into "the zone." Whether it's clearing up your clutter, writing things down, or playing "Spin the Kitty" with yourself, there's no wrong answer.

Caren A. Stewart is an artist and writer working in the Augusta area. You can follow her on Twitter [@goodwilljunkie1](https://twitter.com/goodwilljunkie1).

A Writer's Neglected Sense (continued from page 1)

out how many words we have for colors of every hue, but how few terms exist to describe the variations among scents. Consider the nuances of language for color. Red may be cherry, crimson, ruby, scarlet, wine, maroon, or rose. Now try to convey the smell of donuts at the corner cop stop or the dowager's worn sweater. A writer might attempt scent description in terms of a familiar resemblance. Steaming donuts could be described "like the smell of cookies baking" or with an overworked adjective like "sweet." As writers, we need to do better.

Readers' ability to recognize fine distinctions among odors is infinitely more developed than our limited lan-

guage devoted to the sense of smell. A writer can come at scent from other angles. In that dowager's pilled sweater, we might find remnant whiffs of cat boxes too infrequently cleaned, or a rancid perfume, a gift from her deceased husband. Introducing scent can be a means of character development, but a writer is not limited to using fragrance in fiction. Smell can be essential in memoir, travel, and food writing, among the many genres enhanced by aroma. Exercise olfactory descriptors. Try it yourself. How would you convey mildew in a motel shower or fear in a dentist's office?

Readers have a large bank of recognition with which aromatic descriptions will resonate. Marcel Proust captured

the power of our neglected sense: ". . . taste and smell . . . bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection." In my newest book, *Whatever is Lovely*, I encourage awareness of what surrounds us. It is worth the effort for a writer to hone the skills of fragrance detection and description. Visit garden nurseries, attend wine tastings, sniff the perfume counter, sample the spice aisle, raid your kitchen cupboards—and attempt to capture those enigmatic essences in words. The exercise will not only increase a writer's own pleasures, but will also enhance the impact of words on readers.

GAYA winner
Marsha Maurer's
newest book,
Whatever is Lovely:
Design for an
Elegant Spirit,
inspires women to
cultivate beautiful lives
and hearts.

Writing Contests

- **HUB City New Southern Voices Poetry Contest:** Deadline of April 1, 2013; prize of \$1000 and publication by HUB City Press in 2014. For more information and submission guidelines, please visit HUB City Writer's Project at www.hubcity.org/writersproject/contests/new-southern-voices-poetry-book-prize.
- **The Writers' Workshop 24th Annual Poetry Contest:** Entries must be postmarked by March 30, 2013. For more information, a complete list of prizes, and submission guidelines, please visit The Writers' Workshop of Asheville, NC at www.twwoa.org.

Around Georgia

- * February 11, **Lawrence P. Jackson**, *My Father's Name*, Decatur Library Auditorium. www.georgiacenterforthebook.org/Events/show.php?id=552
- * February 13, **Dave Barry**, *Insane City*, Carter Center Day Chapel. www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/events
- * February 14-17, **Savannah Book Festival**. www.savannahbookfestival.org
- * February 19, **Margaret Wrinkle**, *Wash*, Decatur Library Auditorium. www.georgiacenterforthebook.org/Events/show.php?id=554
- * February 21, **Colson Whitehead**, Georgia State University Speakers Auditorium. workshop.gsu.edu/events.php
- * February 22-24, **Springmingle Conference**, hosted by Southern Breeze Region of Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators, Atlanta. www.southern-breeze.net

Get Writing!

Start a story with the sentence "Alice could not remember who had given her the key."

.....

Write about a fashion model who refuses to have pictures in her house.

Prompts courtesy of creativewritingprompts.com

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Submissions

Please send your member news and events to *The Georgia Authority* editor by the 20th of each month.

If you wish to contribute an article to *The Georgia Authority*, please contact the editor for guidelines.

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GAYA Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient Ferrol Sams Dies at 90

By Melissa Roberson

Georgia author Dr. Ferrol Sams Jr. died Tuesday, January 29, 2013. A distinguished graduate of Mercer University, Dr. Sams authored eight novels exemplifying his Southern roots and sense of humor.

Dr. Sams received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgia Writers Association in 2012.

For more information on his life and works, please visit the full article at www.georgiawriters.org/index.php/category-table/1918-ferrol-sams.



Dr. Ferrol Sams Jr.
1922-2013

When Critics Attack

By Sudie Crouch

Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to be a writer. While other girls dreamed of being princesses and ballerinas, I wanted to see a book with my name on the front. I lived for research papers in high school and college because they offered one more chance for me to write. I wrote for pleasure, creating characters based on my friends and family members and their quirky habits, and I shared the stories with those people only.

A few years ago, I took a job as a sports reporter for a weekly newspaper. I also had the opportunity to write my own weekly column. I was giddy; this was a dream come true. I was getting paid to write and I saw my name on a byline. Within two weeks, I was sharing a byline with my publisher on front page stories.

I made mistakes, I admit it—tons of mistakes. And when your words are in black and white newsprint every week seen by over 3,000 subscribers, people are going to tell you all about your errors. I heard from parents and coaches on a weekly basis. I made note of their comments and made efforts to do a better job the next week.

Then one night after coming home from covering a game, I checked my work email. There was an email from a man I had never met, with just a few painful, hurtful lines. The gist of the email was that he thought my column was the most horrific diatribe he had ever read

and if he had to suffer through reading it again, he would cancel his subscription. He threw in a comparison to another Southern writer he didn't care for either, apparently thinking we were equally as rancid.

I called my publisher and sobbed—not cried, but sobbed—uncontrollably. How could someone be so cruel, so vicious? I had not done anything to him.

“For some people, it's so easy to hide behind the computer and fire off a nasty email,” my publisher said. “When you write something for public consumption, some people will feel the need to tear you down. We don't know what their motives are. It's just easier for people to be ugly and nasty than to sometimes say anything nice. For every one person who may say something critical, there are hundreds more who love what you are writing.” She reminded me that the other writer he compared me to was a best-selling author several times over.

Her words didn't stop the bitter tears that fell. “I know I have had nasty emails and phone calls from people about other things I wrote. Why does this hurt so badly?” I asked.

My publisher, ten years younger than me, was wise beyond her years. “Because your column is personal. It's something from your heart; it's a part of you. You are feeling like he is attacking you and

in some ways, he is. But you've got to get a thick skin. Honey, you can't let what one person says deter you from pursuing your dreams or you will never get there.”

But I did, briefly. I didn't write a column the next week. The following week, my publisher glanced across the newsroom and looked over her glasses at me questioningly. I shook my head again. No, I wasn't going to open myself up for another attack. And if this man hated me and my column that much, there may be others out there as well.

The day our paper hit the stands, I was working from home and checked my email. There were several emails from readers, asking me where my column was, telling me how they had missed it. I forwarded them to my publisher. “Told you, silly!” was her reply.

I learned something from that experience. Yes, you will have critics. Everyone does. You're writing not just for yourself but for your audience as well. And despite everyone who says they hate what you write, the ones you need to listen to are those who tell you to keep sharing the stories you want to share.

Sudie Crouch is an award winning sports reporter and humor columnist. She is currently a weekly lifestyle columnist with the Dawson Community News, vice president of Oconee Radio Group, and producer of *The Connection*.