



Photograph by Nancy Godbout Jurka

## WOMEN Writing the West

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Sponsor of the WILLA Literary Award  
[WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org)

### Women of the West—Willa Cather

By Jana Bommersbach

(A reprint from *True West* magazine with author's permission)

Her writing is so vivid you can see the yellow jam made from the ground cherries that grew prolifically on the prairie; you can almost hear the rustling of the red grasslands that once stretched forever across Nebraska.

On the pages of her novels we first learned that she and her neighbors never went to their gardens without their “rattlesnake canes,” and quickly learned the difference between those killers and the harmless yellow and brown bull snakes that kept the gophers down.

Willa Cather chronicled the American West and its pioneers — from Eastern transplants to immigrants from abroad — bringing their experiences into the conscience of America.

It propelled her into the ranks of one of America's greatest novelists.

“Willa Cather was the first writer able to portray Westering as a significant and universal human experience,” writes Dorothy Gray in “Women of the West.” “She was the first to use Western people as major fictional characters. . . . Suddenly, not only had the West found a literary voice but American writing had become authentically American.”

Until Willa Cather, literature in America was dominated by perspectives and writers from New York and Boston. Until her, immigrants were either ignored or portrayed as objects of derision. Until her, strong women characters didn't exist. This one woman changed that.

Although born in Virginia on De-

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ember 7, 1873, Willa's family moved to a Nebraska farm when she was 10 and soon after to the small town of Red Cloud. Her neighbors were immigrants: German, Swedes, Czechs, Russians, Scottish-Irish. All these people, their lives, hardships and dreams, would eventually be explored in novels such as 1913's "O Pioneers!" and 1918's "My Antonia".

"At first, Cather missed the mountains and trees of Virginia, but as she rode her pony across the miles of tall prairie grass, she came to understand and love this new land," writes Judy Alter in "Extraordinary Women of the American West."

Cather was never a conventional girl, cutting off her curls and dressing like a boy, declaring she wanted to be a doctor and tagging along as the doctor in Red Cloud made his rounds. Her family valued education and she was first taught at home by her grandmother who declared the local country school inferior. Then she went to Red Cloud High School, where her "eccentric" behavior included dissecting animals. She found small town life and the prairie too constricting.

In 1895, she became one of the few women of her time to get a college education, as she graduated from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. She helped put herself through school writing for the Nebraska Journal. After graduation, she took a job writing for a Pittsburgh magazine and five years later, began teaching high school English, publishing her first poetry and collection of short stories while she taught.



Willa Cather

The talent shown by her short stories attracted the attention of the editor of McClure's magazine, then one of the most important in the nation. He lured her to New York and in 1906, she moved to the literary capital as a McClure's editor. In 1912 she began publishing novels, eventually penning 12. Several had a common theme of heroic womanhood in the face of great hardship.

Her "One of Ours" (the story of a Western boy in World War I) won a Pulitzer Prize in 1922, while in 1933 she won the Prix Femina American in France for "distinguished literary accomplishments." She was the first woman granted an honorary degree from Princeton University, and also had honorary degrees from seven other colleges. She was the first woman voted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

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## Advertising Policy and Rates

pdf or jpg email files preferred

\* Minimum of 300 dpi resolution, and b/w or grayscale only.

Ad Sizes:	W	x	H
Full pg	7.5"	x	9.75"
Half pg	7.5"	x	4.75"
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Small size	\$75

Contact  
Doris Gardner-McCraw,  
e-mail:  
renawomyn@gmail.com  
or dorismccraw@yahoo.com

She's also been inducted into the Hall of Great Westerners in Oklahoma City; the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca, New York, and the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame in Ft. Worth.

Although some debate the issue, it seems clear that Willa Cather was a lesbian. She lived with Edith Lewis in New York City for 40 years. She liked to dress in black, mannish clothes and had been a "tomboy" since childhood, although during her lifetime she not only would never acknowledge her homosexuality, but insisted her private life remain just that. (She reportedly hated telephone calls as too intrusive on her writing and destroyed most of her papers before her death, leaving a will forbidding publication of her letters.)

As she aged, she became increasingly distressed with the world around her, finding it too materialistic and spiritually decaying. In 1922, she joined the Episcopal Church and soon her writing took a new turn. "*Death Comes for the Archbishop*," arguably her most famous novel, was published in 1926. It is set in the American Southwest where nature and Christianity is opposed to modern urban life.

She saw one of her novels made into a movie—twice: "*A Lost Lady*" was first a silent film starring Irene Rich in 1925 (it premiered in Red Cloud) and then was remade in 1934 starring Barbara Stanwyck.

She left her mark on literature and especially, women in literature. As Gray notes: "Willa Cather was the first to create in her women characters of substance, capable of carrying the action of her story. Until her novels, women in American literature had almost uniformly been creatures of romance, their dimensions limited by the literary conventions of gentility and sentimentality. Those few women placed in a Western setting in books were the weak sisters and sweethearts in a world of strong Leatherstocking types who were always on hand to rescue the poor creatures. It was also virtually a rule that if a woman was a major character in a novel she was only as part of a love story."

Instead, as one critic put it, Willa's women were "not the darlings of heroes but heroes themselves."

Willa Cather died on April 24, 1947 in her New York City home. She wasn't buried in Nebraska, but in New Hampshire where she'd often visited during her lifetime.

The World Book remembers her as "one of America's finest novelists," and notes, "She expressed a deep love of the land and a strong distaste for the materialism and conformism she saw in modern life. She showed a genuine devotion to traditional values and the importance of family."

Her obituary in the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegram noted, "She was an artist in telling a story simply."

Today, the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation at Red Cloud is preserving her childhood home, her writings and her legacy. Established in 1955, the foundation has saved seven 1880's buildings associated with her life and offers a "country tour" that takes visitors to sites made famous by Cather's novels.

For a decade, Red Cloud has hosted an international seminar on writing; it sponsors an annual writing competition in Cather's name for junior and senior high school students, and each April, sponsors the Willa Cather Spring Festival.

While Cather would undoubtedly have been pleased that her work continues to inspire new writers, Nebraska has also given her an honor that seems most appropriate: In 1974, the Nature Conservancy purchased 210 acres of native grassland south of Red Cloud, now known as the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie.

• **Jana Bommersbach** is an Arizona journalist and author who writes for **True West** magazine.

She has been Arizona's Journalist of the Year and honored with two lifetime achievement awards. Her book on Winnie Ruth Judd was the 2010 selection for ONEBOOKAZ. She is writing an historical novel on the life of Ella Watson, known to history as "Cattle Kate."



# Thank You Willa Cather

## A 2010 WILLA Awards Wrap Up

By Sheila Wood Foard

If you have wondered why WWW's annual competition is named after Willa Cather, consider what the author said in an interview.

"When I was about nine, father took me from our place near Winchester, Virginia, to a ranch in Nebraska. Few of our neighbors were Americans .... I

grew fond of some of these immigrants, particularly the old women, who used to tell me of their home country. I used to think them underrated, and wanted to explain them to their neighbors. Their stories used to go round and round in my head at night. This was, with me, the initial

impulse (to write)."

Willa Cather wanted to explain "underrated" women to their "neighbors." She wanted to tell women's stories. That is what winning books in WWW's annual contest do.

Our winning books are set in the American West, a region that Willa Cather loved to travel. For the purposes of WWW competitions, that means west of the Mississippi River.

Each year when the seven category coordinators in our annual competition receive the book entries (deadline February 1), they check to make sure

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that the entries are eligible. Does the book (whether fiction or nonfiction) tell a woman's or girl's story? Is the book set in the American West? Was the book published in the previous year? If "Yes" is the answer to all three questions, the book is deemed eligible. (Please note that entries do NOT have to have been written by a woman or by a WWW member.)

All eligible books in a category are then read by three people, whom we call first readers or screeners. These three readers, like all who are involved in our annual competition, are volunteers. They are knowledgeable readers. They include published writers, historians, writing instructors, librarians, poets, publishers, professors, editors, or experts in many fields. They are all book lovers.

The three first readers (or screeners) score the books, using our rubrics, which were developed by a committee of WWW members. The rubrics use a point system to help readers objectively compare elements including voice, characterization, setting, plot, and qualities unique to specific categories. Our rubrics are posted on the WWW website.

The scores are tallied by the category coordinators. The top five books in each category are preliminary finalists. (The number of preliminary finalist books may vary, depending on the category. In some categories, only two books may rise to the preliminary finalist level. In others, the number may be higher than five.)

These preliminary finalist books are then sent to the next level of judging; that is, to our librarian judges, who are not affiliated with WWW. These librarians hold positions at universities, public libraries, and various schools across the country. They are knowledgeable in the category in which they judge. They may specialize in poetry, for example, and judge the poetry category. Or they may know children and young adult books well and request or are assigned to judge in that category.

These librarian judges score the pre-

liminary finalist books, using our rubrics. Here is what one judge wrote upon completing her task in 2010. "This has been fun for me. It did turn out to be more work than I expected because all the books are good, each in its own way. It took several readings of each and lots of deliberation. Having said that it is also true that I didn't find any without some flaw. Using the rubric for each category was a great help, and I am grateful to the person or persons who drafted them. Nevertheless at some point it's still a personal call. I know I won't see the other judges' decisions, but I'll be very curious about the final results. I wish it were possible to give all the authors recognition for their worthy efforts.

Encouraging authors for regional work is such a fine purpose for Women Writing the West. I congratulate you."

Upon completion of their work, the librarian judges send their scores to the WILLA Chair, who tallies the scores to determine the winners and finalists. One winner is chosen in each category. And up to two finalists may be chosen. WWW considers both winners and finalists to be WINNERS!

Winners, who receive crystal trophies, and finalists, who receive engraved plaques, are recognized at an awards luncheon and a banquet held in October each year during our annual conference. In 2010, these ceremonies were held at the historic Rancho de los Caballeros in Wickenburg, Arizona.

As the Women Writing the West 2010 WILLA Literary Award Chair, I want to thank our members for the opportunity to be a part of our annual competition. It was, as the saying goes, "a piece of work," for me, our coordinators, first readers, librarian judges, our accountant, our WILLA secretary Jan Olsen, who served for many years without enough recognition, and all our volunteers. (Note that the WILLA competition begins in January when entries arrive, but the work does not end until October.) I also want to thank all who wrote, edited, published, and entered books.

I was thrilled to serve as WILLA Chair in 2010 and be able to pay back, in small part, the reward I was given when my young adult novel, *Harvey Girl* (Texas Tech Press) won a WILLA in 2007. Thank you all!

And thank you, Willa Cather. In that same interview mentioned above, the author said, "I like riding, going to operas and concerts, travel in the West; but on the whole writing interests me more than anything else. If I made a chore of it, my enthusiasm would die. I make it an adventure every day."

May all WWW members as well as other writers continue the writing adventure. May an award-winning WILLA book be in your future!

• **Sheila Wood Foard**

continues her writing adventure every day in the office of her Missouri log home. Her WILLA trophy for **Harvey Girl** sits on a shelf near her computer.





# Just Around the Corner

By Suzanne Lyon  
2011 WWW President

As I write this message, I am looking out my front window at a wintry scene. Snow covers every visible surface, with the exception of our shoveled driveways and sidewalks. Yesterday's high was three degrees below zero. Today we'll be lucky to get into positive digits. And my part of the country isn't alone in suffering through this deep freeze. Weather reports are full of news of the "storm of the century" in the Midwest and East. Schools and offices are closed. People are burrowing in, waiting it out.

Yet by the time you read this, chances are the scene out my window will be different. Oh, there may well be snow on the ground, but it'll be gone in a day or two. The morning breeze will feel a bit softer, and the crocuses may even be peeking out. The full blossoming of summer will be right around the corner.

WWW has its seasons, too, which tend to mirror those in nature. Winter is a time of planning, of preparation, and, yes, of waiting. Your Board of Directors and Committee Chairs are lay-

ing the foundation for all the exciting activities coming up throughout the year: the Tucson Book Festival, the WILLA Literary Awards, the LAURA Short Fiction Contest, the 2012 Catalog of Books, and the 2011 Annual Conference, West by Northwest, in Lynnwood, Washington.

As we move into spring, things start to percolate. WWW will bring its message of celebrating the best in the literature of the women's West to the Tucson Book Festival, March 12 and 13. Members will be fine-tuning their short stories as they look forward to the May 15 deadline for the LAURA Short Fiction Contest.

Summer brings a burst of activity. Conference planning starts to move into high gear as registrations start pouring in and final details are worked out. The 2012 Catalog of Books comes out, and the WILLA Winners and Finalists are announced.

Our year culminates in the fall with the Annual Conference. This year we visit the Northwest, during what is typically its most beautiful season. We will

announce the LAURA Short Fiction Contest winners, and honor the WILLA Winners and Finalists. We'll hear from a slate of interesting presenters, have the opportunity to meet with editors and agents, and spend two glorious days renewing friendships and making new ones.

A word about the conference. After careful deliberation, the Board of Directors approved a slight increase in registration fees. It has been four years since the last increase, and I'm sure I don't need to tell you that costs have gone up significantly in that time. The good news is that the increased registration fee will most likely be offset by lower room rates, and the complimentary hot breakfasts and afternoon happy hour beverages and snacks. VP Mary Trimble and her committee have put together a dynamite program with a focus on alternative publishing, and multiple opportunities for networking. We're confident the 2011 conference, West by Northwest, will provide lots of value for your dollar. Please join us!

On this mid-winter morning, as I watch another bank of snow-laden clouds roll in over the mountains, I take heart. Great things are just around the corner!

• **Suzanne Lyon** is a long-time member of WWW and the author of several Five Star Historical Westerns. Her short story "In The Flesh" was the 2008 LAURA Short Fiction Contest second-place winner, and may be read in the WWW LAURA Online Journal at [WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org).



# Marketing on the Move

## ON THE ROAD with Thelma and Louise Act II

By Gwyn Ramsey and  
Virginia Czaka (Crane)

Our trip to Huntsville was relatively uneventful—unless you count the horrific rain storms around Montgomery, which is always a thrill when you are driving through a huge metropolitan area with no clue where you are going. Then there was another situation that I had never experienced before, namely the blinking red light warning you that there is a stop sign ahead. I thought it meant that there was a fire station close by and ended up sailing through the stop sign. I thought for sure that a camera took my picture and would send me a letter with a nice fine included. Either that or Thelma and Louise would be spending time with the local authorities in the hoosegow.

Our time in Huntsville was short, two days, but lovely. The hospitality was warm and friendly. Our host, Jackie, invited several guests and it was great to spend time with them over dinner...even better when they bought books.

On June 3rd, we were up and on the road again headed for a visit with Gwyn's daughter, Dana, and her family in Glen Carbon, Illinois., the town where most folks don't lock their doors! Welcome to small town Middle America! At this point we were still waiting for a drop shipment of our new books. We had high hopes that the books would arrive ahead of us and be available for our book signing the next

day. No such luck.

Dana's friends and family visited us requesting copies of our books. We met the Bible class, people at restaurants, and Gwyn's family who came to see us, all buying our books. It was a lovely time to meet and greet new and old friends.

The next day, we headed to the book signing at the Mother-In-Law House Restaurant in St. Charles, MO on June 4th and made do with the stock we had packed in the car. We stood outside, under a table umbrella in an old brick courtyard, west of the Missouri River. It's a quaint place in old town and the atmosphere was pleasant. The temperature was hot enough to melt butter. But that didn't stop us. Since we were outdoors no one got by us. We passed out brochures, our business cards and even wangled an invitation to stay in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Maybe next year, new friend. We warned her not to extend the invite if she didn't mean it because we just might show up on her doorstep one day. She was tickled pink we would even think of stopping by let alone stay a day or so.

The following day we were at another lovely restaurant in St. Charles, Miss Aimee B's. A very old haunted house—the restaurant on the ground floor and crafts available for sale on the second floor. The ghost occupies the third floor. Woooooo! This time we were not only indoors, but our new books finally arrived. We had the same format—talk to everyone, hand out brochures, and smile a lot. You never know if they will come back after we're gone. So just in case they did, we left books to be displayed on the hallway counter. Ah, what a business venture.

During our stay in and around St. Louis, we visited several local libraries. The Edwardsville Library (Illinois) bought our books outright. At the O'Fallon Library (Illinois), we intro-



duced ourselves and let them know that our books were available through Baker and Taylor. Another lovely purchase. One evening we spoke to the Jennings's Historical Society (Missouri) and had a book signing. Several people remembered Gwyn from back in the good old school days. You just can't take her anywhere and remain anonymous.

Bottom line, if they would have us, we went. It didn't matter if they were friends or family or businesses or librarians. We did not play favorites. It takes work to get your name out there. Not everyone was receptive to seeing us in the libraries, some were even rude, but you have to tell yourself it's their loss.

Sounds like all we did was work and sell—not true. We also took time to visit the museum under the arch in St. Louis. Actually Gwyn had to use the old time vaudeville hook to get Ginny to leave. The general store at the museum is worth visiting with candy from the '40's and '50's, toys from pioneer days, aprons, hats, you name it. There were taffy bins and barrels (fake insides) of candy we didn't even recognize. What a fabulous place. We could have spent hours there but alas we had other commitments.

Our time was drawing short in this area and we had to get back on the road. There were more adventures to be had, more bookstores to be visited, more librarians to see as well as visiting with friends and family. So until next time, we'll be seeing you on the road again with Thelma and Louise as we

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make our way north toward the Canadian border line. Yahoooooooooo.

• **Gwyn Ramsey** grew up in Jennings, Missouri. She attended Florissant Valley Community College in Missouri, pursuing a Computer Applications Associates Degree. Her outside interests include tap dancing, bowling, and researching genealogy.

Gwyn is a member of a writer's critique group, Tampa Area Romance Authors in Florida (TARA), Romance Writers of America, and Women Writing the West. She has participated in workshops, seminars, and classroom presentations. She writes full time and resides in Florida with her husband.

Her first three novels, **Journey to Tracer's**

**Point, Winds of Change**, and **Bound for Texas** were published by Treble Heart Books. She is currently working on her fourth historical fiction of the Anderson Chronicles and a contemporary mystery, **Dusty Rose**.

• **Virginia Czaja** grew up in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. She and her husband moved to the Southwest Coast of Florida to experience a slower-paced lifestyle and pursue her love of reading which evolved into writing.

Virginia is a member of Romance Writers of America, T.A.R.A. (Tampa Area Romance Authors) and Women Writing the West. Her two books, **Emeralds on Wednesday** and **Gently Generous** were published by Treble Heart Books. She has

participated in writer's workshops, seminars and classes. She has served as a judge in the First Impressions Contest for several years.

Because of the difficulty in pronouncing her eastern European name, Czaja (chi-ya), she has opted to use the pseudonym, Virginia Crane.



## WILLA Fund Donors 2011

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## What WILLA Winners and Finalists are saying...

I was a WILLA finalist in 2004 for "*The Scout*," in the Original Soft-cover category. For me it was a really significant event because it changed how I viewed myself as a "writer" knowing that other experts in my historical era accepted my work.

This gave me the confidence to plunge on...

Lynna Banning  
Carolyn Woolston  
writing as Lynna Banning  
[www.lynnabanning.com](http://www.lynnabanning.com)

My book, "*Justina Ford: Medical Pioneer*", was a WILLA finalist in 2005. As the first book in the "Now You Know Bio" series from Filter Press, this national award gave us a real boost as a tribute to our book about the first African American female doctor in Colorado, and as a validation of my writing. Mostly, I felt proud and affirmed to receive this honor in the presence of my peers and associates in Women Writing the West.

Joyce B. Lohse

Not winning a WILLA helped my next book become a finalist.

Judges' comments about "yet one more male protagonist" encouraged me to do what I wanted to do in the next book anyway — change from a male to a female protagonist for the third book in my Santa Fe Trail Trilogy. A strange decision? Probably. Strange, too, to write the third book as a parallel novel to the first two, but it seems to have worked. Judges smiled on "*Meadow Lark*" and gave her a WILLA.

She was happy to receive a Colorado Book Award, too.

Mary Peace Finley



# GET TO KNOW Agents Editors Publishers

Hints to get you started

By Doris Baker and Erin Turner

One of the greatest benefits of belonging to Women Writing the West is the access that members get to editors and publishers at the annual conferences. At the 2010 Women Writing the West conference in Wickenburg, Arizona, Doris Baker, publisher of Filter Press, and Erin Turner, editorial director at Globe Pequot Press/TwoDot books, had the privilege to talk with several writers about their work and careers. The pitch sessions sponsored by the conference were beneficial to us as well as, we hope, to the authors. And we'd like to take this chance to share some thoughts on how to make it even more beneficial for everyone.

Editors, agents, publishers come to writers' conferences because we want to meet with authors. We're always looking for

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fresh talent and new ideas. Take a look at our bios in the conference program—we're serious about what we do and we share those details so that you can know about what we're doing ahead of time. Maybe you've secretly been working on a project about the cowgirls of the West, like Heidi Thomas, and didn't know if there was a future for it. Perhaps you have a YA novel drafted and shut in a drawer. A conference pitch session is a safe and easy way to explore possibilities for your work with a publishing professional.

Even knowing that the agents, editors, and publishers are present at the conference because they want to meet with you, it may be daunting to sit down across the table from someone who has what feels like awesome power, especially if this is your first

**"...it may be daunting to sit down across the table from someone who has what feels like awesome power, especially if this is your first book."**

book. To help you prepare, we offer these few hints on getting the most out of your experience.

First, you'll need to know something about the editor to get the best results from your time. Start with those bios in the conference program that we mentioned before. Then spend some time online at the publisher's website paying particular attention to the guidelines for submissions. While at the site, you'll be able to gauge how many titles are published each year, if and how they use social media, and perhaps find other authors published by the firm that you know or admire. Do a Google and an Amazon search for reviews and comments about the firm and on their publications. Check LinkedIn pages for the company and the editor. This research will help you determine if there are other projects on their list similar to what you want to talk about. You will learn if there are books on their list that spark a creative idea with you. You'll be amazed what you turn up. And you may discover either that meeting with a publisher of

nonfiction might not be helpful to you as a writer of fiction or that you have an idea for a book sitting in a drawer that might be a good fit that you never thought of before. In the interview, you'll be able to point out the similarity and how you feel your work would fit in the publishers' line.

From this research you will also learn: Who is the person you're going to meet with and what is the person's role with her company? How does the material that you're proposing fit in with the company's existing list? If it's different, can you see a way that it might be complimentary? What are

their submissions guidelines—do you have questions about them? Keep a written record of all your questions and bring it to your meeting.

Your time with the editor at the conference will be limited. At WWW it is usually 15

minutes. If you are given the option of submitting materials beforehand for review, do it. It never hurts to ask the conference organizers if that is a possibility. If submitting a proposal before the conference is not an option, bring it to the meeting. Then, at the meeting, tell us about your book using the proposal, but don't read it. If, in the meeting, the editor has indicated some interest, be prepared to leave your proposal or first chapter or other material so that we can mull it over.

At a minimum, please bring clips, a resume, or (especially) a business card. If we're lucky, we'll have engaging meetings with several writers. Bring something that will help the editor remember who you were and which project was yours.

After the conference, follow-up promptly. You will go home exhausted and with a list of to-do's that ranges from 'get new business cards printed' to 're-write my novel from a new POV', but if you're asked to send a proposal, do so promptly. You'll never catch an editor at a better time—while they're

enthusiastic about having met you in person. Maintain a friendly, positive tone in your follow up correspondence. It leaves a good feeling about you and about your work.

Even if the project turns out to not be a good fit for any editor you pitched to, do not be discouraged. It's a marathon not a race—another door may open because you've had that face-to-face contact and followed up on it. Approach the meeting knowing that all editor/writer sessions have take-aways. It is rare that some bit of information or some knowledge is not gained by both the editor and the conferee. For instance, ask for a suggestion of other publishing firms that might be interested in your work.

Step number one is to put the 2011 WWW conference on your calendar. All the details are posted. It's time to make plans for Seattle in October. Other conferences are abundant. Google the phrase 'writers conference' with your state name and be impressed.

The highly regarded Pikes Peak Writers Conference is held each April in Colorado Springs and the SCBWI summer or winter conference is important for children's writers. There are so many good conferences, but we WWW members know that we have the very best. See you in Seattle and bring your business cards.

• **Doris Baker** is editor and publisher at Filter Press, LLC, a Colorado company since 1957. Filter Press [www.Filter-PressBooks.com](http://www.Filter-PressBooks.com), publishes middle-grade historical fiction and biographies of the heroes of the West. Reach Doris by email at [Doris@Filter-PressBooks.com](mailto:Doris@Filter-PressBooks.com).



• **Erin Turner** is the Executive Editor at Globe Pequot Press in Helena Montana [www.globepequot.com](http://www.globepequot.com)

# Metamorphosis

One Writer's Journey

By Gabrielle Burton



**"Impatient with Desire"**, a novel by WWW member Gabrielle Burton, was recently awarded the Western Heritage Award for "outstanding Western novel" of 2010. Here, in her own words, Gabrielle lets us in on her process for writing and publishing this book.

I've been writing off and on about Tamsen Donner, the pioneer heroine of the 1846 Donner Party for more than thirty-five years. Then in one year, I published two books about her.

Of course I didn't work on her story consistently for thirty-five years—a lot of other writing and life intervened.

In 1972, I published a nonfiction book, *I'm Running Away From Home But I'm Not Allowed To Cross The Street*—the story of a traditional housewife and mother joining the Women's Movement—for my five daughters' sakes and found out it had come in time for me.

I was writing a lot of poetry then, but I started writing a short story that turned into a novel about a modern woman, but it had a small fraction of Tamsen Donner, the pioneer heroine of the 1846 Donner Party, and her lost journal woven into it. I worked on that novel for years, during which I traveled with my five daughters and husband to nearly every place Tamsen Donner had been, including retracing the CA/OR trail. (Even our dog was named Tamsen.) After seven years, I finally decided that the raised and dashed hopes connected with the novel were taking too large a toll on me and my family, and I put it away. By the end of this period—we're up to '79—my sensibility, my eye, my whole take on things, had completely changed from poetry to fiction.

My next novel, *Heartbreak Hotel*, took another seven years and twenty-eight rejections before being published by Charles Scribner's in 1986.

In 1987-88, I was living in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and in between taking wonderfully exotic trips, I transcribed all my tapes from my family's retracing the CA/OR Trail ten years before, and wrote a nonfiction book. My editor wanted more personal revelations than I was willing to write, so I put that one away, too.

In the mid 90's, I was in film school in L.A. and, after my family badgered me to attend the Donner Party Sesquicentennial, I wrote a screenplay about the Donner Party. Now there are 87 characters in the Donner Party, and countless drafts and some years later, I realized that I didn't want to write about the Donner Party, but about Tamsen Donner, and not in a historical way, but to be true to her spirit. Easier said than done. I kept at it, and also wrote other screenplays, articles and reviews.

In 2002, my daughters' film production company, Five Sisters Productions, made my screenplay, *Manna From Heaven*, and I was heavily involved in the filming and editing. Our family traveled with it for nearly a year from Branson, MO to Juneau, AK.

In 2006, feeling the pressure of age and time, I got out that nonfiction draft of our Donner Trail trip, and was horrified to see that my editor had given me notes in 1988! I was sick that so much time had passed and I felt sorry for myself and quite despairing. Then I talked sternly to myself—you are the only one who can do something about this, G—and made a plan, working like crazy with a laser focus on rewriting that book. After 19 rave rejections by agents—"love it, but who's the niche?"—the part history/part memoir, *Searching for Tamsen Donner*, was published by U. of Nebraska Press in 2009. While that had been going through the rigorous screening process of a university press—outside readers, committees, boards, a rewrite—I wrote the novel, *Impatient with Desire*, which Hyperion bought (March, 2010).

So ultimately, my writing about Tamsen Donner went through as many metamorphoses as I did and, of course, they all informed the book. Probably a half dozen women wrote those two books, and I'm glad I'm alive to see them come to fruition.

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• **Gabrielle Burton** is the author of the novels, **Impatient with Desire: The Lost Journal of Tamsen Donner**, and **Heartbreak Hotel**. Her nonfiction books are **Searching for Tamsen Donner** and **I'm Running Away From Home But I'm Not Allowed To Cross The Street**. She lives in Venice, CA.

On a brisk but bright March day, eleven Colorado members of WWW met for a planned and long anticipated gathering. As a new member to the organization, it was my first time to be among a few of the members of WWW. Let me say right off-it was the best afternoon I have spent in a very long time! And there are several reasons I say that. Not the least of which is that I could tell in an instant everyone else there felt exactly the same way. There was energy in that large room at a local Denver area restaurant, (which we had all to ourselves,) that only a group of women with a common interest, strong commitment, purpose and desire can produce. From the first "Hello," there was support, exchanges of ideas, and a real interest in each other's work.

Of the women attending, including our president, Suzanne Lyon, Cynthia Becker, Leslee Breene, Carol Devlin, Gayle Gresham, Joyce Lohse, Doris McCraw, Pamela Nowak, Fairlee Winfield, and Christie Wright, I reconnected with an old friend, shared interests and great conversation with a recently made new friend, met members whose works I have admired, and made new friends. I also learned a few things. I learned during a conversation with a couple of fiction/creative nonfiction writers, that what they do is nothing short of extraordinary. From setting, and character development, to sentence structure, flow of story and dialogue, all is a balance these writers must deal with to produce the great work they do. I hold my writer's pen in high salute to them.

And I learned of the delightful array of talents these women have. Carol Devlin captivated us all with her magnificent examples of beadwork. The work is amazing, from credit card holders to purses of all shapes, the delicate and intricate designs are just beautiful. She then told her amazed audience that her hobby of beadworking and design led to a bestselling pattern book. Now, Carol is an award winning author, and so I didn't have have the chance to ask which came first, the writing or the beadwork. Then again, it doesn't really matter, for she managed to turn one talent into the other-and that's capitalized talent of the first order!

I was so impressed with this group of women, and so glad I attended this local get together, I could not have asked for more. But I was in for the surprise a history writer and researcher dreams of.

Another talented writer in our group, Gayle Gresham, gave me a sneak peak of a portrait painting that has been in her family for decades. I gasped in astonishment, as I instantly recognized the old fellow. Gayle beamed with delight and then described her journey in researching the provenance of this 1904 painting. She told the group that the signed painting was handed down to her and her husband, John, by John's grandparents. The frame for the painting was made by John's great grandfather, Roland "Roy" Morton, who lived in Colorado Springs, and owned a framing shop. Gayle then became curious; who was this man in the portrait? She began her search by tracking down the artist. She dis-

covered that the young artist, Carl G. Lotave, was in Colorado Springs, taking art classes from Charles Craig, in January of 1904. It just so happened that Craig was a friend of Morton, who had made the frame. Armed with this information, Gayle tells us she went to the Penrose Library in Colorado Springs, where she eventually located an old photograph of a man who greatly resembled the man in the portrait. She had the portrait appraised, including the photo she had obtained. While the appraiser was fairly sure the man in the photo was the man in the portrait, Gayle continued her research, this time focusing on the man in the portrait.

The surprise to everyone listening to Gayle's journey in researching this painting, was when she revealed that the man in the portrait was Robert "Bob" Miller Womack—my great great uncle, who found gold in Cripple Creek, Colorado in 1891. Yet no one was more surprised than me! I had tears in my eyes, and Gayle later said, "I knew it for sure when I saw your expression when I showed you the painting. What a great moment!" It was a great moment I will treasure forever.

And quite the unexpected surprise for my first attendance at a group of women writers of WWW. It was a great local get together, and thanks go to Cynthia Becker and Carol Devlin for taking the lead in putting together this first local WWW event in Colorado. Everyone was in agreement to continue the local meetings.

I encourage everyone to get together and plan your own local meetings. If you have a friend interested in joining, bring them to a meeting. Expose them to the great women and talent included in our organization. While we can't always attend the yearly convention, we just might make huge strides in local meetings.

I know first hand you will make a friend or two, and you just might stumble upon a surprise.

A quick explanation as to why my name has 2 m's and Bob's has 1m. My great grandfather added an M to the surname when filing for his homestead in Greene County, MO in 1862.



WWW member Gayle Gresham shows the painting of the author's great uncle. Linda is seated to the right of the photo along with Cynthia Becker to the left.

# WOMEN Writing the West

## Member Happenings



Colorado members of Women Writing the West at their March get together in Denver. Pictured above are L to R: Joyce Lohse, Leslee Breene, Christie Wright, and Suzanne Lyon



Michelle Black models the latest in 'Steampunk' fashion at Steamcon II: The Weird Weird West, where she was a presenter.



Michelle Black at the signing for her book **"The Second Glass of Absinthe"**, after demonstrating the absinthe ritual.

# The LAURA Contest

2011 LAURA Short Fiction Contest

Entries due by May 15, 2011

Check the LAURA page on the WWW website:

[WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org)

for a complete set of rules including story length, content and format requirements

Below are some comments on what the LAURA award has done for WWW members.

“Although now primarily a novelist, my first love and early writing /craft-learning memories honed in on the short story. Perhaps the sometimes under-appreciated short story is even more challenging to write well. The focus all important. Many thanks go to the WWW LAURA Short Fiction Contest Award judges for bestowing a 2009 Honorable Mention to my historical, coming-of-age story, “The Caretaker”. This story was the kernel, taken from my father’s Scandinavian Midwestern roots, from which my third novel, “*Hearts on the Wind*” - Five Star Expressions, emerged.”

– Leslee Breene

“Winning the LAURA was a huge thing for me. I won Third place for the 2009 LAURA award for my short story “The Second Time Through The Door” about the old hotel in Evergreen, CO.

Becoming a member of WWW was overwhelming when I came face to face with the members who are famous, talented authors known throughout the world. When I entered my story in the contest, I was playing around, acting like I knew what I was doing - timidly sticking my toe in the ocean to test the waters - trying to be a part of WWW. Not only did I not expect to be a finalist, I was afraid of being booted out for writing a ghost story. I held my forehead in my hand after hitting the send button and thought, “What am I doing? These women are serious about the part played by our female ancestors taming the west.” So am I, though, and my clumsy, successful first attempt stood me on my feet and got my attention. Winning the award changed my life and goals. Gave me an unexpected boost of confidence to reach out, learn something and risk failing. Since then, I’ve had a couple of small successes with my stories and am getting involved in an organization I admire and of which I’m proud to be a member.”

– Carol Devlin

“The introduction of the LAURA Short Story contest in 2008 became my personal boost into a new writing direction. I had been working in nonfiction for ten years, while scribbling notes for fictional pieces and tucking them away in a drawer on top of my first short story—written in eighth grade. A contest with a deadline was just the motivation I needed and Women Writing the West felt like a safe place to start.

“One particular story kept pecking at my mind. It was based on a real person and a real event and required research into life in 1918 Denver, Colorado. It seemed a perfect transitional piece for my long delayed return to fiction. I was surprised but thrilled when “Working Girl” received the LAURA third place award.

“Since that time, I completed more than a dozen short stories and saw the first one published last year. In 2009, I received the LAURA first place award with a story adapted from my middle grade novel-in-slow-progress. “Working Girl” has undergone major revision, with coaching from my critique group, and is now ready to enter the marketplace.

Thank you to the women who created the LAURA Short Story contest. You made a difference in my life.” – Cynthia Becker



# 2012 WWW Catalog Advertisement Guidelines

Please use one form for each ad. Forms must be received by June 1, 2011.

Email inquiries to – [ladmorton@aol.com](mailto:ladmorton@aol.com)

Two ways to apply:

\*Visit the WWW website at [WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org) and click on Catalog. Fill out the form and submit. Online payment can be made using PayPal.

\*Or, copy this form and fill out, using a typewriter if possible, and mail along with a check to:

Women Writing the West Catalog  
LaDene Morton, Editor  
PO Box 30583  
Kansas City, MO 64112

- Only Women Writing the West members are eligible to list their books or place ads.
- To join, visit our website: [WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org)
- A member publishing company may submit any book ad by one or more of their authors.
- Advertisements may be submitted by mail or by email attachment. If sent by email, please submit a printed version to address above for comparison printing clarification.

## AD ORDER INSTRUCTIONS & SPECIFICATIONS

- On CD. Grayscale. 300 dpi. All fonts must be embedded. pdf or jpg files. Plus one hard copy.
- The designer will be using Quark 7 to design the catalog.
- No magazine or newspaper clips. Clippings will not be accepted for printed ad submittal.
- Submit advertising copy as an electronic file in GRAYSCALE ONLY. No RGB, CMYK or PMS colors.
- Advertisements may be sent by regular mail. Use a CD only. (CD-R/CD-RW.) We do not accept floppies, 3-1/2" disks, nor zip disks.
- Ad order may be emailed as long as the file is under 10 MB.
- Grayscale only.
- Ad must be in high-resolution electronic format (300 dpi).
- The ad fonts must be Mac compatible — only MAC Postscript fonts. No true type fonts, which cause printing problems for us. NO PC FONTS - the catalog is built on a Mac and PC fonts do not transfer. Embed ALL fonts. If not, then default substitution may occur. No faux bold or italic fonts. If a PC file is sent, the file must be a .tif, or .pdf AND the fonts MUST be converted to paths or embedded in the file for the Mac to read it.
- pdf or jpg files are preferred, however, make sure it is high resolution (300 dpi). Web site jpg files (72 dpi) are not suitable for print.
- No gif or bmp files.
- A hard copy proof in black & white must accompany the CD for comparison. May be faxed directly to catalog designer Jenny Hancey at (303) 838-2645.
- It is the sole responsibility of the sender to check ad copy for correctness of information.
- If an ad needs to be built, design services will be billed at \$60/hr. Please inquire to Jenny Hancey at 303-816-0396 or [Jenny@HanceyDesign.com](mailto:Jenny@HanceyDesign.com) for a quote on ad design services.
- If you wish your CD to be returned, include a self-addressed, stamped CD mailer.

# 2012 WWW Catalog Advertisement Form

DEADLINE JUNE 1, 2011

- Ads must be in good taste and in keeping with the mission of the organization, which is to promote the writing of the Women's West.
- WWW reserves the right to refuse any ad.
- Ads will be placed in the Catalog as space allows. We will try to place ads in the requested category section in the Catalog; however, this is dependent upon the number of ads received and layout requirements.

## ADVERTISING RATES

FULL PAGE .....	7.5" x 9.75" .....	\$400.00
HALF PAGE .....	7.5" x 4.75" .....	\$275.00
QUARTER PAGE.....	3.625" x 4.75" .....	\$175.00
SMALL AD.....	3.625" x 2" .....	\$75.00

**Note: Different forms and fees are required for Book Listings and for Member Focus Listings**

Author is a current WWW member    Publisher is a current member

CATEGORY (Check One)	Children/Young Adult:	Nonfiction: __	Fiction: __	Anthology: __	Poetry: __	Other: __ (Describe)
	__ Nonfiction __ Fiction					
Author's Name						
Submitted By						
Contact Info						
Contact Name:						
Address:						
Phone:						
E-mail:						
Website:						

Check payment method:

PayPal    Check

Enclosed is my check # \_\_\_\_\_ which totals \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Total number of listings and/or ads paid with this check: \_\_\_\_\_.

### Remember!

- Please use one form for each ad you want listed.
- Keep copies for your records.


### Women Writing the West Catalog

LaDene Morton, Editor

PO Box 30583

Kansas City, MO 64112

**AD DESIGN SERVICES:** Jenny Hancey at (303) 816-0396 or Jenny@HanceyDesign.com for a quote on ad design services.



# 2012 WWW Catalog Member Focus Listing Form

Member Focus provides a space for Women Writing the West members to list talents and skills related to writing such as Editing Services, Speakers, Classes, Workshops, or Writing Retreats.  
Please use one form for each listing. Forms must be received by June 1, 2011.  
Email inquiries to – [ladmorton@aol.com](mailto:ladmorton@aol.com)

**Two ways to apply:**

- Visit the WWW website at [WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org) and click on Catalog. Fill out the form and submit. Online payment can be made using PayPal.
- Or, copy this form and fill out, using a typewriter if possible, and mail along with a check to:

Women Writing the West Catalog  
LaDene Morton, Editor  
PO Box 30583  
Kansas City, MO 64112

- Only Women Writing the West members are eligible to list their books or place ads
- To join visit our website: [WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org)
- The fee for each Member Focus Listing is \$30

**Note: Different forms and fees are required for Book Listings and for Advertising**

The Member Focus Listing is featured on a special page. Maximum character count for the Member Focus Listing is **140 characters, including spaces**. The text should include name, specialty & contact information.

I am currently a WWW member

**LISTING TEXT**

**MAXIMUM 140 CHARACTERS including spaces.** Please print clearly.

**Member Name:**

**E-mail:**

**Website:**

**Mailing Address:**

**Home State** (if different than mailing address – used for index)

Check payment method:

- PayPal
- Check

Enclosed is my check # \_\_\_\_\_ which totals \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Total number of listings and/or ads paid with this check: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Remember! Please use one form for each listing. Keep copies for your records.**

# 2012 WWW Catalog Book Listing Form

Please use one form for each listing. Forms **must be received by June 1, 2011.**

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PO Box 30583  
Kansas City, MO 64112

- Only Women Writing the West members are eligible to list their books or place ads

- To join visit our website: [WomenWritingtheWest.org](http://WomenWritingtheWest.org)

- The fee for each Book Listing is \$50

**Note: Different forms and fees are required for Advertising and for Member Focus Listings**

I am currently a WWW member

<b>CATEGORY</b> (Check One)	Children/Young Adult:  __ Nonfiction __ Fiction	Nonfiction: __	Fiction: __	Anthology: __	Poetry: __	Other: __ (Describe)
<b>Author's Name:</b> (last, first as it will appear in catalog)						
<b>Book Title:</b>						
<b>ISBN#:</b> (include dashes)						
<b>Book Publisher:</b> (imprint/publisher if applicable)						
<b>1st Copyright Year:</b>						
<b>Description:</b> ( <u>maximum</u> 30 words)						
<b>Mailing Address:</b>						
<b>E-mail Address:</b>						
<b>Website:</b>						
<b>Home State:</b> (if different than mailing address – used for index)						

Check payment method:

PayPal  Check

Enclosed is my check # \_\_\_\_\_ which totals \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Total number of listings and/or ads paid with this check: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Remember!**

- Please use one form for each ad you want listed.
- Keep copies for your records.

## Sustaining Members

Baker, Doris  
 Bartimus, Sonja  
 Bommersbach, Jana  
 Dallas, Sandra  
 Duckworth, Liz  
 Emory, Lee

Empie, Sunnie  
 Farmer, W. Michael  
 Fitzjerrell, Karen Casey  
 Goeres-Gardner, Diane L.  
 Harris, B.J.  
 Hill, Laurel Anne  
 Johns, Sherry  
 Kouris, Diana

Lyon, Suzanne  
 Maine, Priscilla A.  
 Massey, Cynthia Leal  
 Mead, Jean Henry  
 Melton, Marcia  
 Morton, LaDene  
 Olsen, Jan Falke  
 Purl, Mara  
 Rickman, Sarah Byrn  
 Robbins, Eastern Cowgirl Fern  
 Rochlin, Harriet  
 Roll, Kaye  
 Sandell, Cindy (Irene)  
 Schonberg, Lani  
 Stewart, Jodi Lea  
 Tartaglio, Pam  
 Trego, Alice D.  
 Trimble, Mary E.  
 Tweit, Susan J.  
 Wade, Mary D.  
 Weinberg, Florence M.  
 Weston, Julie



### New Members • Winter 2010 -11

(\* = joined at the sustaining member level)

#### November 2011

Patricia A. Frolander • Sundance, WY • pfrolander@rangeweb.net  
 Lynn Downey • Sonoma, CA • clio1954@yahoo.com (rejoin)  
 Lois Ruby • Albuquerque, NM • loisruby@comcast.net

#### December 2010

Teresa Hernandez • Springfield, MO • tkhernandez@gmail.com  
 Gwendolyn Morgan • Vancouver, WA • zambra@easystreet.net (rejoin)

#### January 2011

Q Lindsey Barrett • Bellevue, WA • lindsey@qlindseybarrett.com  
 \*Sherry Johns • Penrose, CO • penrosehistory@yahoo.com  
 Barbara Dills, Fishtrap Inc. • Enterprise, OR • director@fishtrap.org  
 Valerie Brooks • Leaburg, OR • vjbrooks51@earthlink.net (rejoin)  
 Karen Mendenhall • Falcon, CO • karenm52@Q.com

#### February 2011

Andrea Downing • East Hampton, NY • andidowning@gmail.com  
 Mary Anne Tolar • Portland, OR • mtolar@pacifier.com (rejoin)

## Women Writing the West® – Membership Form

Please return to: Women Writing the West  
 8547 E. Arapahoe Rd., #J-541  
 Greenwood Village, CO 80112-1436

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonyms \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP+4 / Country \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Web site \_\_\_\_\_

- Annual Dues \$60     Publisher Annual Dues \$60     International Dues \$70
- Sustaining Member \$100 These members who support WWW above the active membership level receive an elegant enamel "WWW hand" logo Sustaining Member pin, and are recognized by name in our catalog and newsletter publications throughout the year.
- Book Seller Name of Store \_\_\_\_\_
- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reader/Fan         | <input type="checkbox"/> Librarian           | <input type="checkbox"/> Published Writer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished Writer | <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Agent            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Screenwriter       | <input type="checkbox"/> Editor              | <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewer/Critic  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicist          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____         |   |

**Membership dues extend through December 31 of the current year. New members who apply mid-year receive a packet of materials to bring them up to date with current activities. New membership applications processed after September 1 extend through the following year.**