

Well-written character's power

Write On!

MERLE DAVENPORT
Tulsa NightWriters president

When I was a boy, I used to tie a beach towel around my neck and jump off my bed. It was great to “fly” like Superman. A few years later, I wore a coonskin hat like Daniel Boone. When I was raising my own boy, he suddenly started ninja-kicking everyone and everything. He was Michelangelo, defending the world with his awesome martial arts! I literally had to get rid of the Mutant Ninja Turtles VHS tapes (yes, I’m really that old) to get him to stop delivering ninja kicks to anyone and everyone.

The power that these characters had on me and my son was amazing. Somehow, we identified with these characters so strongly that it affected our behavior. We didn’t just “like” the characters, we wanted to “be” them. We started to talk the way they talked, walk the way they walked, and do the amazing things they did. In short, we wanted to become the fictional characters that we admired.

In 2012, Kaufman and Libby published a fascinating article in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. The article, “Changing Beliefs and Behavior Through Experience-Taking,” discusses how readers will alter their own behavior to mimic a character in a story. In their research, 82 college students read a story of a student from a university who overcame a number of obstacles in order to vote in an election. When the character was from their own university, 65% made the effort to vote in the 2008 election. In contrast, when students from a different university read the same story, only 29% voted.

Kaufman and Libby stated that reading the story resulted in a number of students identifying so closely with the main character that they altered their own behavior to imitate the actions of the character. The

notion that someone would subconsciously alter their own beliefs and or personality based on a story is known as “experience-taking.” The researchers also noted that the effect of experience-taking is temporary, though they were unable to state just how temporary it was.

The research also showed that “experience-taking” happened more often when the story was written in the first person. For some reason, it was easier for the reader to immerse themselves in the character when the character is speaking and thinking their own thoughts.

So, what is “experience-taking” and what does this mean?

Experience-taking is when a person identifies with a character so strongly that they change their own behavior. When a person gets completely immersed in a character, they begin to feel the thoughts and emotions of the character. When they identify with the fictional person, they may say, “He’s just like me!” or “I can totally relate to that!” Before long, they lose themselves into the story enough that they subconsciously adjust their own thoughts and behaviors to mimic the fictional character in a story.

When readers do this, the writer has accomplished his goal of creating something that impacts the reader on a visceral level. The writer has conceived of a character that connects with others. These are the characters that live ... breathe ... talk to us. For the reader, our stories begin and end with great characters. Without great characters, it’s just another story.

The challenge is to create characters that are so vivid and unforgettable that our readers fall in love with them. When that happens, “experience-taking” will happen and our readers won’t want to wait for the sequel.



Merle Davenport

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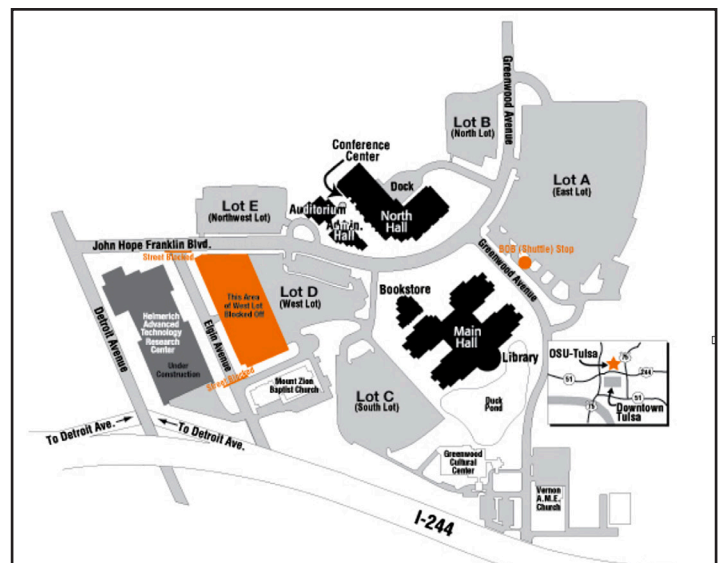
Tulsa NightWriters to meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023

Directions

Take the I-244 to downtown Tulsa, and exit on Detroit. If you are coming from the west, the exit for the OSU campus is on the LEFT.

From Detroit Ave., turn right onto JH Franklin Road. You will see the Auditorium and Conference Center (North Hall) on the left. You can park in Lot E (first parking lot on left), or across the street in Lot D. We meet in Room 140. Look for signs posted at both entrances.

Parking is free and open to the public. It is a very short walk, and handicapped accessible. Campus security patrols the parking lots regularly.



Deniece Adsit Copyediting Services

I have completed a months-long course in copyediting through Writers' Digest University. In October, I passed the final certification exam. If you are looking for a certified copyeditor for your work, I would be happy to do a free sample edit of up to five pages to see if we are a good fit. Rates will vary depending on the degree of editing required.

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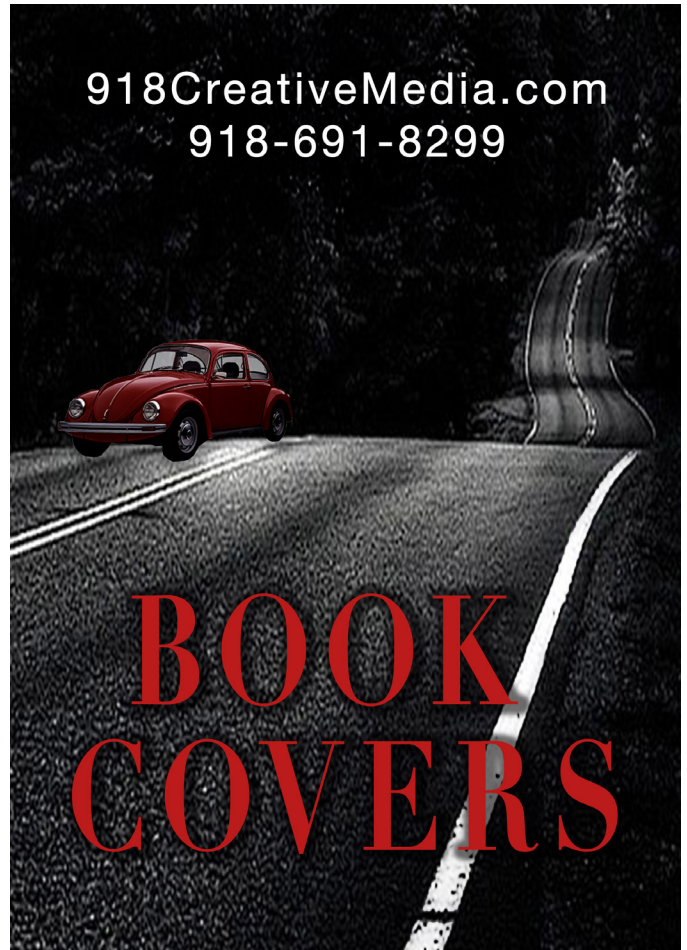
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Bob Avey elected to TNW's Hall of Fame

Bob Avey is a long-time member of the Tulsa Night-Writers Club. He is also a member of the Oklahoma Writers Federation, the Oklahoma Mystery Writers, and Mystery Writers of America. Bob is a past nominee for the Tulsa NightWriter of the Year award and has also served as club president.

Bob is the author of the Detective Elliot mystery series, which includes *Twisted Perceptions* (2006), *Beneath a Buried House* (2008), *Identity Theft* (2020), *Footprints of a Dancer* (2021), and his most recent best-selling masterpiece, *Sandcastle for Pegasus*. He has also published several short stories and non-fiction

articles.

When Bob isn't writing, reading, or researching crime and crime scene investigations, he spends his time roaming through ghost towns, searching for echoes from the past. Through his writing, which he describes as a blend of literacy and genre, Bob explores the intricacies and extremities of human nature.



Bob Avey

Baker, Goodman discuss author partnering

Joy Don Baker and Terri Goodman, nursing students in the '70s like their fictional characters in their Nurse-keteers series, have both been writers in professional nursing literature. They met in the '80s and have remained friends for years. As co-authors their mission is to share enjoyment, writing, and learning through meaningful stories about diverse nursing characters.

Both are well established leaders in perioperative nursing. Dr. Baker teaches at the University of Texas at Arlington and served as the editor-in-chief of AORN Journal. Dr. Goodman is an entrepreneur and an approved provider of continuing education as the principal at Terri Goodman & Associates.

Baker and Goodman have produced the award-winning book A, B, & Cs of Author Partnering the definitive how-to guide that leads readers through creating a partnership, establishing a productive work environment, and producing a work of fiction, non-fiction, or journal article.



Joy Don Baker, left, and Terri Goodman will be the speakers at the Jan. 17 meeting of the Tulsa Night-Writers.

Team Writing

Explore with Joy Don and Terri what it is like to author as a partnership for writing. Significant steps are involved in undertaking the process of writing with a partner. Join the fun as they share their experiences of

aligning their work, balancing obligations, reflecting on contract expectations and contributions. As with any partnership, communication is paramount to success and celebrating the milestones with loads of fun and creativity and solidify the writing partnership.

Target your market before you start writing

Kat Lewis, an up-and-coming thriller author, discussed marketing strategies at the Nov. 15 meeting of the Tulsa NightWriters. She suggested pre-determining the audience you want to reach before starting on your next novel.

She readily admitted that she “did everything wrong writing my first novel,” she said. “I spent way too much money and way too much time.”

Target a specific group of people who act in a specific kind of way, she said. “Don’t reinvent the wheel. Spend your energy bedazzling the wheel.”

She offered tips for getting your name out in the market.

“Start a weekly newsletter,” she

said, sharing interesting facts you learned during your research. work around key words used to market your work. “Give people a little taste of what you write.”

Use hash tags, and clickable links to things that mean something to you.

Lewis has served as the president, vice president, and social media manager for the Oklahoma Christian Fiction Writers (OCFW) and is an active volunteer with WriterCon. When not writing the next installment of her Lethal Nannies series, she can be found browsing for cute shoes, practicing Krav Maga, or searching for her pet rock. Connect with Kat on her website at katlewisauthor.com.



KAT LEWIS
... speaker for November

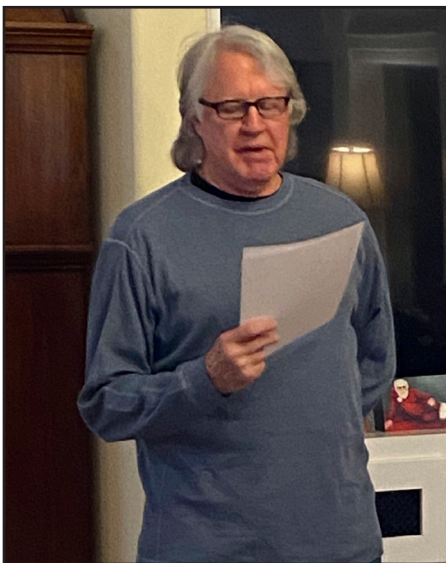
Good food, camaraderie, awards abundant at 2022 Christmas party



Connie Dodson, received the Tulsa NightWriter of the Year award from Merle Davenport, TNW president. Photo/Mary Lou Montgomery



Friends gathered around the table to enjoy a shared dinner with fellow Tulsa NightWriters on Dec. 6, 2022, at the home of Kathlyn Smith Litterer. Regina Mullenix, pictured at left, won second prize in the TNW's annual writing contest, with her entry, "The Urn."



"Hello Brainerd," an essay by Steve Gerkin, pictured, was the first-place winner in the 2022 NightWriters Flash Writing Contest: Second place, "The Urn," was written by Regina Mullenix. Third, "Anybody Out There" by Steve Gerkin. The awards were presented at the TNW's annual Christmas party, Dec. 6, 2022. Photo by Mary Lou Montgomery



Merle Davenport, left, starts the evening off with one of his popular jokes about writing. The Tulsa NightWriters held their annual Christmas party on Dec. 6, 2022. Photo by Mary Lou Montgomery

Fiction contest draws interesting entries

By CONNIE DODSON

Challenge accepted. That's what the eleven entrants of the contest said with their entries.

The story had to use all 10 words (squabble, nature, leaves, giggle, exposed, power, clear, trust, intrude and pompous) and contain no more than 100 words.

We had some really good entries and the decision was tough, but Mary Lou Montgomery and I were able to agree on our first, second and third place winners.

First place

The first place winner is Joy Don Baker for her chilling story, "Jack Hammer."

"The pompous ass expanded his chest attempting to wield his power over the teenagers in front of him. How dare they intrude on his reverie. Their giggle, squabble, or rolling in the leaves, depending on which of the small groups he focused his attention, pounded his

mind as an unwelcome jack hammer. The clear evidence exposed the teenagers in direct contrast to the natural beauty of nature surrounding the normally serene park. He could no longer trust his ability to prevent the violence from erupting once again. He zeroed in on the couple and walked down the alley toward them."

Second place

Terry Goodman earned second place for "Hidden Powers."

"I watched the wind whip crystal snow into fascinating cyclones that engulfed the stately oak. I giggled at the invisible power of the air that cleared the last leaves, exposing gnarled branches and transitioning the majestic tree from pompous stateliness to a skeletal outline of its majesty. It is pointless to squabble with nature; you must take what you get. While nature wins all arguments, it is safe to trust that she is a fickle arbiter with the power to intrude on our world

with abandon, but can (and usually does) turn right around and restore the loveliness she stole."

Third place

James Harwick won third place for his story, "Agonizing Regret."

"Foot-soldiers on leaves of absence, we intruded on the liberated village, pompous and intoxicated with power, even before being met with cheer, and young women bearing bottles of wine.

Attending to her flower cart, her beauty and grace enchanted me. Pretentiously, with mixed languages, I squabbled over the price of a bouquet. Then I offered the full price, took the bouquet, and presented it to her on bended knee. She giggled delightfully and trusted to invite me to her modest home for the evening.

"Misinterpreting intensions as clear, I eposed my boorish nature, and contracted yet another agonizing regret."

*Joy resounds in the hearts of
those who believe in the miracle
of Christmas*

Kathryn

Kathryn Helstrom's popular column,
"The Write Touch," will return next month.



Kathryn Helstrom

