

Eastern Idaho Writer's Ink

Newsletter for Eastern Idaho Writers League, Inc

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President's Message by Terri Robinson

Hello friends,

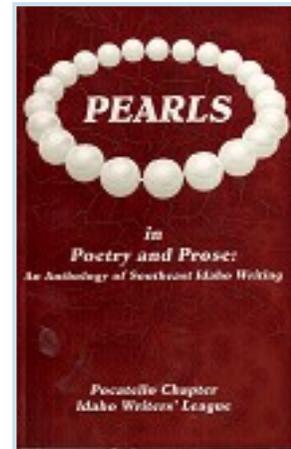
In the bleak of winter, be encouraged that spring is just around the next grungy snow berm.

Grungy and bleak is how I feel about my family history writing project right now. I spent President's Day weekend snowed under a computer full of research with my dad's side of the family. Several years ago, my aunt asked if I could look for a picture of John Henry Cassell who served in the Civil War. I jumped on the computer, plugged in Cassell and up popped a picture of the old Cassell House and Jacob Cassell with early Methodist preacher Robert Strawbridge. Not the picture I was looking for, but what a hit. I discovered a whole community of Cassells in Fredricks County, Md., easy, peasy.

The old Cassell house originally was built in 1753. With a little more research, I discovered the book *A Genealogical History of the Cassells in America*, that takes the family line back to the beginning of Germantown, PA, in the mid- to late 1600. Here was the whole the family, or so I thought. With more investigation through the years, lots of ship passenger arrival lists and Germantown, PA., history papers, I struggled to connect the dots. The name Cassell is so rare out West, that I started with the viewpoint that anyone with that name must be related. What I've found, is that many early Kassel members (early spelling) came from Germany, where there is a town called Hesse-Kassel. There are lots of Cassells, Cassels, Kassels and Kassells – all variants used by relatives, I'm told. And that's just the last name. Of the hundreds of people in the Cassell family, I think the men used just a handful of first names: Johannes, James, Jacob, Heinrich, William, and Henry. (I'm still looking for that military picture of John Henry, if you see what I mean.)

This weekend I came across a new ship – the Hermann that sailed from Bremen, Germany, (If that sounds familiar, keep in mind that the Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, were from Hesse-Kassel,) to New York with a family of Cassells on board with the same names that I've associated with my line. I celebrated the discovery, but soon learned the birthdates are about 50 years earlier than my connections.

I finally closed the computer late Monday night feeling as discouraged as that half-melted snow berm down the street, not sure if I was related to any of them. If you're feeling like that with your writing project, hold fast. Spring will come, we just have to keep writing and researching. Success, like sunshine, seems to evaporate frustration and despair, so I hope you, as am I, are celebrating your successes, no matter the size.



There are a few copies available of this collection by the Pocatello IWL Chapter. Please contact Amy at cowpirancher@aol.com if you would like a copy. \$10 payable to EIWL

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Special points of interest

- **Eastern Idaho Poets: Poems Wanted** for April Issue! 20 lines or less . (One poem per member please.) Members can vote for their favorite. High vote getter will receive a copy of John Drury's *Creating Poetry*.

Pocatello Writer's Event at Art Walk

This was shared by Chris Cole--trying to spread the word about the event:

"Hi all! David Hance in Pocatello approached me about having an event for First Friday Artwalk specifically dedicated to local authors. I thought I would share this several places and get this going. He's very excited and his contact information is below."

"Art Walk, March 4, 5pm-8pm. Up to 20 local writers to set up a table, bring their work (books, samples, anything really....) to talk about their work with the public.

My vision is to have Food O'clock (the newly revamped coffee kiosk) playing jazz in the building and on the sidewalk overhead, and have the public come through the space and engage with our authors.

I want to promote this as celebrating the Art of the Written Word."

His email is craftermarketstationsquare@gmail.com.

I'm sure he'd be able and willing to answer any questions. I'll be attending with my books to sign and sell, and I hope to see our local writers turn out in droves! I know it's a little short notice, but I hope folks can still make it.

Contest Opportunity for EIWL Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers

By Bret Wilson

Writers in South East Idaho should consider entering the "Writers of the Future" contest, the largest amateur Science Fiction and Fantasy contest in the world.

Established in 1985, Writers of the Future was designed to help aspiring writers reach their goals. Winners of the contest not only receive a cash prize, but are invited to an all expenses paid writing seminar taught by world class authors, including writers such as Tim Powers, Orson Scott Card, and more.

As a testament to the contest's success, many previous winners have become master authors in their own right. Some of these have even returned to the contest years later to serve as judges themselves.

The contest is open to amateur writers and welcomes all forms of Science Fiction and Fantasy. Winners are chosen quarterly, with the first place works each season competing at the end of the year for the prestigious Grand Prize. Writers are allowed to enter each quarter if they desire. All entry is free of charge.

Jody Lynn Nye, a New York Times bestselling author, recently accepted the position of coordinating judge, a position previously held by Algis Budrys, David Farland, and K.D. Wentworth. Nye has written over fifty novels and one hundred seventy short stories, including collaborations with Anne McCaffrey and Robert Asprin.

Those interested should visit writersofthefuture.com, the contest's official website. There they will find details on the contest's past and official entry rules. Even those who do not enter would do well to visit the blog and podcast which are both full of helpful writing advice.

Critique Group Guidelines: Another Piece of Witt and Wisdom from the IWL Archives by Gary Townsend (Jan 2010 IWL Leagazette)

#1. KEEP READINGS TO THE AGREED NUMBER OF MINUTES.

Minimize extraneous and/or introductory material, providing only essential scene-setting and background. Discussion of artistic process may be interesting, but it's rarely essential to a reading.

#2. BRING SOMETHING YOU'VE WRITTEN TO READ.

Hard to believe, but some people actually attend workshops just to hang out. Of course, if you're in a freeze—drop in, do the exercise warm up, and thaw out.

#3 Read Your Own Stuff

If your work product is editorial, read the edit-in-progress rather than raw material. Reserve entertainment ("puff") pieces, news clips, and similar items for the initial "sharing" period of the workshop.

4. PSYCHOTHERAPY NOT PRACTICED HERE.

You may find writing to be therapeutic; but the focus in the workshop is the writing. When necessary to bring the group back to earth, use Silvernale's "mantra".

#5. DO THE EXERCISES.

This may be the best chance a new writer gets to learn the craft—with the least at stake.

#6. KEEP WRITING, AND READING, AS YOU ATTEND THE GROUP.

For instance, as your style develops and matures you can begin to rid your writing of Latinisms. *Ipse dixit!* And, of course, be reading in your genre(s) of interest.

#7. PLEDGE YOURSELF TO HONESTY.

"The last thing a writer needs is insincere flattery." (—Tom Cook) Beware of "Groupthink," the phenomenon described by Irving Janis in which members of a small group think so highly of each other that no one dissents or offers critical thinking—only hopelessly optimistic estimates of literary merit or marketability.

8. DON'T DEFEND YOUR WRITING.

The tough one. But arguing is, of course, pointless and the worst use of precious time. Accept that you will sometimes get bad advice, learn to recognize it, thank the giver—and ignore it. It's *your writing*, after all. You needn't change a thing.

#9. EXERCISE YOUR FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS—AND COURTESY, TOO.

You can't please everybody; don't try. On any workshop day you may be facing unrepentant yuppies, un-reconstructed hippies, generation X'ers, country boys, city women, righties, lefties, and holy Joes. Expect to offend someone, someday. If your reading contains material which may be especially offensive to some, consider scheduling it late in the session and let people know what's coming—so they can choose to make an early departure.

#10. IT'S OK—USE THE AUDIENCE.

Try to record, or to have recorded, listener reactions to your work. Ask for clarification of critiques that are vague or ambiguous. Ask for *feelings* about what listeners have heard, as well as criterion-based criticisms (—Peter Elbow). When it's your turn, return the favor by listening actively. And while it may often be necessary to leave a meeting early, avoid the "read 'n' run" habit.

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Back Story: Eastern Idaho Writers—Part 2 of Meet Kirby Jonas

Southeast Idaho's Kirby Jonas: a Writer to Make Idahoans Proud

By Alice H. Dunn

If you haven't already read Kirby Jonas' books, you've missed some great entertainment. I suggest you get acquainted with him by reading his *Death of an Eagle*. Try your nearest library (Portneuf District Library in Chubbuck had a nice collection last time I looked), bookstore (new or used) or try Wikipedia. I stumbled across a long line of his Kindle editions there at just 99 cents each from Amazon! I snapped up three before the list disappeared. Good luck finding it again. I didn't find much when I searched for "Books by Kirby Jonas" on Amazon.

I consider Kirby Jonas' *Death of an Eagle* his best work. Maybe that's because I grew up in Marsh Valley. The first page relates a thrilling scare, and what follows accurately portrays geography and historical events of Caribou County, over the mountain into Marsh Valley, and on through much of what is now Bannock County. The characters and what they do, however, are strictly products of Jonas' highly imaginative mind.

Although *Death of an Eagle* takes place in the West, it is not your typical Western. It is an adventurous and exciting novel about people who lived in the West. However, many of his novels are Westerns, but more in the style of Louis L'Amour or Larry McMurtry (Lonesome Dove.) Take *Knight of the Ribbons* for example. The title may not sound western—a knight and ribbons?—but I guarantee, you will have new meanings for those two words by the time you finish reading this exciting Western.

Born in Montana and raised in Shelley, Idaho, Kirby was a shy child who found his voice through writing. His teacher was surprised when he did very well on a writing assignment. He hadn't been able to get anything out of him orally. Jonas is not averse to collaborating with another writer. He has collaborated with his brother as well as with the movie actor, Clint Walker, who also voiced the audio edition of one of Jonas' books.

Jonas has sold pets, sorted potatoes and moved irrigation pipe, tagged deer, been a horse wrangler and driven armored trucks. Those were only short term or even volunteer work. To earn a living for his beloved wife Debbie and their four children, he worked as a policeman between fighting fires for the BLM and, for twenty years before retirement, for Pocatello. He considers it a privilege to have fought fires in several distant places where emergency firefighters were needed.

Slow a writer as I am, I can't fathom how he found time to play the guitar and sing between all those jobs and publishing novels to exceed thirty. He can't remember exactly, for the number constantly increases. He and Debbie also run their own publishing company, Howling Wolf, out of their home. I bought books from them directly over the phone, others at his book signings, and have read at least eight of the following partial list of his works:

Death of an Eagle, The Secret of Two Hawks, The Dansing Star, Lady Winchester, Yaqui Gold, Dream of an Eagle, Knight of the Ribbons, Yaqui Gold, Russet, Samuel's Angel, A Final Song of Grace; and series: Legends of the West, Town Tamer, Legend of the Tumbleweed, Season of the Vigilante, Law of the Lemhi, Savage Law, Lehi's Dream, and Gray Eagle Books.

Critique Group Guidelines continued...

#11. FOCUS ON THE WRITING

To use a nonfiction example: don't attack the premise of the article or essay, but rather the patterns of argument used, or apparent abuses of logic.

#12 BE POSITIVE

You can constructively support fellow writers by pointing out "strength and opportunities" as well as "problems and weaknesses."