



The Art of Storytelling with Cleo Justus

By Valerie Gawthrop

All writing tells a story and the best writing comes from the best storytellers. That's what our September meeting is all about. Cleo Justus has been spinning her yarns since she was 13 years old and was asked to tell a story to her church youth group. She was "practically born in church," Justus says, and attended her first services before she was one week old.

Since that first foray into storytelling, Justus has become a sought-after speaker and was a regular presenter at Wolfe Creek Elementary School in Broken Arrow. She is currently busy making a hobo purse to complete the bag lady persona she's donning for the American Cancer Society where she's putting on a program about the hobo code. She also became an "accidental clown" when she decided to paint her face as a lion rather than wear the uncomfortable mask she used during her shows for students. She would dress as a lion and tell the first part of a story and then let the children finish the tale. Now as Tulip the Clown she does balloon art and clowns around at various venues.

The church remains central to her life and she was married to a minister for 43 years. The CDs she's recorded reflect this influence as they revolve around mission trips, odd things that happened in church, miracles, and the down-right unusual. "To be a successful storyteller or writer," Justus says, "you have to believe in what you tell. The story has to be a part of you."

September's meeting will restore your faith in the ability to tell your story and tap into the writer inside while sharing an evening of memorable entertainment.

The Prez Sez by Bob Avey



As I sit here, trying to come up with yet another President's Column, I begin to reflect on things, writing in particular. I seem to be doing a lot of that lately. Perhaps it's my age.

I often ask myself why I keep writing, why I continue to put myself through the late nights, the struggles with plot, setting, and character, and the disappointments—especially the disappointments. I could go into some long, philosophical diatribe, but I'll try not to. I keep writing because I am a writer.

When quizzed about the matter, 80% of the population—perhaps the rate is much higher given the advent of Kindle—professed they wanted to write a book. (With 80% of the world writing and 20% reading, it's no wonder we have trouble selling books!)

Being a writer goes beyond the desire to write. A writer also needs to be read. Writers harbor a desire to record their thoughts, and a deep-rooted need to share not only those thoughts, but the feelings and experiences behind them. We want to communicate, to express ourselves, indeed to even effect changes in the thoughts and behaviors of our readers.

It is this attribute that brings us together each month, bonds us like a band of alcoholics confessing our habit. I joined this band of misfits in 1990. Some of you have been on the wagon even longer.

Are you a writer?

As Tom Bodett says, "We'll leave the light on for you."

Our members have brags



Tony LoPresti has signed a contract with 4RV Publishing for a children's picture book, tentatively titled *My Cat*. The book will show how to care for a cat and has a release

date of January 2013.



Sally Jadlow has four poems in *Tallgrass Voices*, a collection of poetry written by Kansas poets. Visit this link for details: http://www.amazon.com/Tallgrass-Voices-Mach-other-poets/dp/0974515930/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1314803837&sr=8-1.



Carol Lavelle Snow just learned that the online magazine *Writers Haven* has accepted two of her poems, "Hush" and "Seoul 1960: The Secret Garden."



J. Houston-Emerson read a scene (in preparation for a YouTube shoot) and signed copies of *The Myth Makers* at the Robbin's Nest Bookstore in downtown Tahlequah on Saturday, Sept. 3, during

Cherokee Holidays. She will be one of the featured writers at the Chisholm Trail Book Festival in Duncan, Sept. 17-19.



Chuck Sasser has sold three new books; two will be published before Christmas. One is a political thriller, *A Thousand Years of Darkness*; and the other is his second SciFi novel, *Sanctuary*. He

has also contracted with St. Martin's to write the story of the Army Ranger who lost his leg in Iraq and remains a Ranger. In November, he'll have articles in *Oklahoma Magazine*, *Oklahoma Living*, and *Lost Treasure Magazine*. His western short story, "The Train Robber," will appear in an Old West anthology by Cactus Press. Also in November, his piece on Ludmila Pavlichinko, Russia's famous WWII female sniper, will appear in a Frontline Book in England.



Carol Johnson recently learned that *Foliage Oak*, an online publication of the University of Arkansas at Monticello, has accepted one of her stories. The story is scheduled to appear

online in October.

Upcoming Classes

Chuck Sasser will be teaching "99 Ways to Improve Your Creative Writing" at TCC this fall, from September 15 thru September 29, 2011.

TNW Treasurer's Position

Sadly, **Brad Smith** will be stepping down as Treasurer due to other time commitments. So, TNW is looking for a new treasurer. Brad said the duties are pretty simple and he'll be available to help train his replacement. Anyone wishing to take on the role, please let Bob Avey know as soon as possible –you can reach Bob at novelyes@cox.net.

Brad has done a terrific job and everyone appreciates the time and effort he's contributed as TNW's treasurer over the years. Thank you Brad!

2012 OWFI Contest

The rules and category descriptions for the 2012 OWFI writing contest have been posted to OWFI's Web site (www.owfi.org). You can also find them in OWFI's Fall Report, which is coming out this month. The contest will be open from December 1 through February 1.

Fall 2011 OWFI Report

The electronic version of OWFI's Fall 2011 Report has been posted online at the OWFI Web site: www.owfi.org. Go to the "Member's Only" area and click in "View The Report". You'll find news about all the chapters and details about the writing contest.

OWFI Category Chairs Needed

Sonia Gensler, OWFI's 2nd VP, emailed saying they need 7 category chairs for the 2012 writing contest. "Category chairs are not judges. Their job is to receive contest entries in the mail, look them over to make sure the rules have been followed, and then send the entries on to the judge. After the judging, the category chair mails the entries to the 2nd VP." If you're interested, please email Sonia for more information at 2ndvp@owfi.org.

Missouri Review Contest

The Missouri Review's 21st annual Editors' Prize Competition is accepting submissions in fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. The first-place prize in each category is \$5,000, plus a feature in its Spring issue and paid travel to its gala reading and reception. Contest finalists receive cash prizes and have their work considered for publication as well. The contest is open to both emerging and established writers. Submissions are accepted online or by mail. The postmark **deadline** is October 1st, and winners will be announced in January of 2012. For details visit: <http://www.missourireview.com/tmrsubmissions/editors-prize-contest/>.

TNW is on Facebook

Did you know you can join other TNW members—Bob Avey, Brad Smith, Jim Laughter, Gloria Teague, Carla Stewart, Bill and Pam Wetterman, and many more—on Facebook? You can find out what other members are up to and let them know about your events, classes, book-signings, blog posts! Be part of the conversation! It's easy! It's free! It's fun! Login to Facebook and search "Nightwriters" or click here: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=65584661400&ref=ts>.



Are You Virtually Likeable?

By Joan Rhine

I love advice columns—figuring how to answer before I read the “expert’s” advice. Recently, I’ve noticed an uptick in questions relating to the Internet.

Dear Amy: One of my friends ‘unfriended’ me on Facebook, but when I’ve seen her since she hasn’t said anything about it. Why would she do that? Should I ask her?

Briefly, Amy’s advice centered around the fact that we’re inundated with people wanting to connect with us 24/7, and many people are finding it necessary to “unfriend” and “unsubscribe” to escape the deluge of info.

To me, this wasn’t just good advice to the questioner, but excellent advice to writers wanting to market online. When I got on to the Internet for the first time way back in 1994, I could go days with just a handful of emails. Now, I not only get emails sent to my various (yes, more than one) Internet addresses, but also messages from people in several Yahoo Groups, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. And like a lot of folks, I unsubscribe, automatically delete, and build filters to weed out people who only send emails telling me how I can help them be more successful.

Now, I’m not saying don’t tell me your good news or market your next book—but for me and the rest of America, don’t ONLY contact me when you want to brag or to sell.

For example, I’m on one writers’ loop that offers the writers weekly prompts to tell what they’re reading, what their goals are for the week, what music they’re listening to as they write—essentially, ways to get people to send a quick email to everyone saying something that can start and keep a discussion going relating to our craft. We have a NYT bestselling writer who drops in offering resources she’s spotted on the web, blogs her agent mentioned that give insight into the current publishing world. I own all of that author’s books, and books from other members who speak up and let us get to know them on a regular, relationship basis. Now, when I say “relationship” that doesn’t mean I know their kids’ names—or even if they have kids. These are professional relationships—not personal ones. If I learn a little about the members personally, that’s fine—but they don’t just slide out of lurkdom to say “Hey, buy my new book” or “Hey, attend my new online workshop.”

However, we do have exactly that problem with a really great workshop teacher (I’ve attended a couple of her classes). She no longer gets any attention from the group because she ONLY comes in to promote her new online classes. She used to chime in on things, but now is too busy for us. Unfortunately, that makes us too busy to attend her classes.

On another loop a few weeks ago, we had a discussion about a related issue. We’re always getting people who want to join our loops, but who are really spammers. Spammers are dropped. Harder to get rid of are spammers who don’t fit the typical profile. These spammers are people who take the long strings of email addresses from other emails (not the loops) and send out sales emails promoting their own work. One way around this is for everyone to use BCC (blind carbon copy) when sending out original group emails. Our group’s consensus was that the smart writer never appropriates another person’s group list without first asking—for that writer risks coming off as a spammer.

In the end, be positive and courteous, and whether it’s email or Facebook, make sure people have an interest and reason to read your email and pay attention. Let us know you’re interested in what we’re doing—not just what you want us to know about you.

Kristin Lamb wrote in the book *We Are Not Alone: A Writer’s Guide to Social Media*, “I see far too many writers just concerned with blitzing their announcements out to as many people as possible.”

Guard your reputations, friends. Don’t give people a reason to ignore your next email or friend request—give them something of value beyond your book, and you won’t have to worry about why they blocked you. But if they do, don’t bother writing Amy; she already answered that letter.

Meet TNW Member
Specifically Paula Esposito

by Carol Johnson

One of the things I look forward to at every Tulsa NightWriters meeting is seeing Paula Esposito. I may not get to talk to her or even get on the same side of the room with her, but I know she'll be smiling, and that smile really does light up the place. Or would, if it weren't for those pesky fluorescents.

That smile seems to be who Paula really is, too. I've never heard a bad word about her (and we are kind of a gossipy group sometimes, you know) and I've never heard a negative word come from her mouth. She just sits there and smiles, her self-effacement covering a host of accomplishments and talents about which I would never have known had I not asked her *specifically* to tell me about herself.

She's been with us since the spring of 2008 when her first article was accepted in *Oklahoma Magazine*. While turning the pages to see her own article, she says she "ran into the fearsome faces of Tulsa NightWriters." Besides that, I know exactly what she means, because just about 21 years ago I came to my first meeting, and it can be extremely intimidating. However, after taking a few classes from Peggy Fielding, Paula began to feel at home, so I guess we get to keep her.

Since then, Paula has published a short story in *Distinctly Oklahoma*, numerous nonfiction articles about interior design, and, in 2009, won second place in the screenplay/film/play division at OWFI. In her spare time (what there is of it), she helps her parents with Web design, print graphics, and marketing for their small business.

Her goal is to start her own residential interior design firm, an endeavor for which she's well-qualified with a BS in Design, Housing, and Merchandising from OSU. As if that weren't enough, she's also a fine arts photographer, the results of which can be viewed at the Beauty Loft Salon and Spa in the Columbia Building near Utica Square. She will also show her work at Utica Square's "Art in the Square, 2011" art show on October 1.

Coupled with her interest in interior design is an interest in health and wellness, not only her own but that of others. She emphasizes health in her interior design and helps families to replace synthetic and potentially healthy-inhibiting everyday household products with natural, beneficial alternatives. I'll bet if you find her at the next meeting and tell her hello, she'll tell you about that. But remember: you'll have to ask her *specifically*.