



WELCOME TO OUR

Monthly Newsletter

Crime Happens

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sarah Golden

Stay afraid but do it anyway. What's important is the action. This is, essentially, my life motto. Stolen from one of my heroes, Carrie Fisher, I tell this to myself anytime I have to do anything new, and I say it to my children when they're facing a challenge. Cheerleader tryouts, a new gymnastics class, a graded solo performance for band the first day of school. Be afraid but do it anyway.

Anything worth doing is going to be a little scary and, odds are, we aren't going to get it right the first time. Or the second time. Maybe by the third time, you'll have a grip on things. Maybe not.

The only way to learn, I've found, is by failing. **But failure is scary.** Putting yourself out there is scary. Asking for help is scary. But the best things in life often happen on the other side of fear. (That's another famous quote, I am pretty sure, and if it's not I'm going to trademark it and put it on shirts.)

This is the energy I'm bringing into the new year, as well. I've never been the president of anything before. But I'd never written a book before, or queried



an agent, or sent a book out on submission to editors, or launched a book. All of those things were hard, and they were scary, and they were so worth doing.

In the year ahead, I'm going to try my best in this new role. I'm going to be afraid and I'm going to do it anyway. And I am so tremendously grateful for the support of the **CCW Board** and all its members.

I'd encourage all of you to take hold of that quote as you go about your writing for the year. **What we do is scary**, no doubt about that. Sharing art with the world is hard. You made it! You *created* something where before there was nothing. Then you send it off into the world for other people to have opinions about – and opinions they *will* have. It's okay to be afraid. The important thing is to **do it anyway.**

A Conversation with CCW Member – Cherisa I. Jerez



Cherisa's novel, ISLA MAGIC, a 2023 Gold winner in Women's Fiction from the Royal Palm Literary Award hosted by the Florida Writer's Association, was acquired by Lake

Union Publishing and is scheduled to come out in January of 2025.

I'VE LIVED IN MANY PLACES: I'm originally from Miami, but grew up in El Paso, Texas. After graduating from college, **I joined the Army to "see the world," and ended up stationed back in El Paso.**

After getting my MBA, I took a position in Puerto Rico building medical devices. I loved it! In 2020, I finished my academic journey, earning a DBA, International Business. Typical of an Army lifestyle, my husband and I lived in many years places: South Carolina, Philadelphia, back in Puerto Rico, and Ohio before finally settling down in Florida in 2020 where we started a cybersecurity firm.

WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW: I've had the opportunity to live among many different people and cultures. **Even though my protagonist in ISLA MAGIC is very different from me, she deals with many of the same themes from my own life.** She's a Puerto Rican, US Army veteran and tackles topics many female vets face like post-traumatic stress, motherhood, and the challenges of living in a home with a multi-generational family.

3RD TIMES A CHARM: My book, ISLA MAGIC, was my third attempt at getting a novel published. **With each manuscript I learned something new.** The first one taught me I had the ability to finish a manuscript. The second taught me how to use various techniques such as multiple POV and dual timelines. While writing the third, I focused on the craft

of writing. Those lessons, combined with my unrelenting persistence paid off.

ADVICE TO NEW WRITERS: Read books on craft! Then find a writers' group with people you trust and listen to what they have to say. I've seen where writers get feedback, but then their walls come up. They think the critics don't understand. They justify holding onto the very things that prevent them from getting traditionally published.

I learned from my military background to work as a team, listen closely, and gather feedback. Sometimes it hurts your ego. Most times, when I let feedback marinate, I see that they're right, even if I didn't see it at first.

FINDING AN AGENT: Katie Reed was not the first agent interested in my book. First, a very well-known agent in New York asked for a full, but when she got back to me, she declined representation, insisting that I make major changes I thought were not true to the core message of my story. This was very tough for me because of who she was, but I declined to make the changes.

When Katie got my full manuscript, it was a very different feeling. She said, "I cried," and "I have to have it." She understood the essence of the story. **It was like she and I were always meant to work together.**

PLOTTER OR PANTSER? I would say I'm a "plantser." I plot out the high points. And then pants my way through. In the end I follow the original plot about 50% of the time.

WHAT'S NEXT? I will be working with the Lake Union team this spring on edits for ISLA MAGIC, the Audible recording, and cover design. **I'm also nearly done with my newest manuscript, an FBI, Cyber-based thriller** featuring Special Agent Gracie Sandoval. I plan to share it with my agent at the end of January. Fingers crossed!

CCW Presents "Ask The Expert"

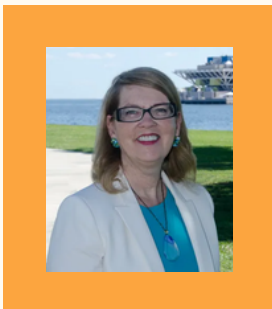
2024 CONFERENCES DISCUSSION

JANUARY 14TH AT 2PM

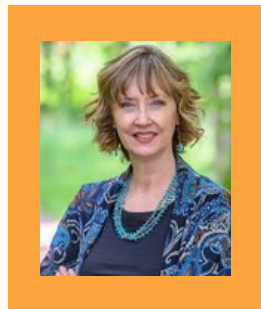
To kick off 2024, we'll have a panel discussion on **crime writing conferences** and other author conferences our members might be interested in. In January, four authors, Annette Dashofy, Cheryl Hollon, Carolyn L. Dean, and Lauryn Christopher, will join us for our **Ask the Expert** segment. They've been to more than a dozen conferences and they're joining us to share their experiences about all the major U.S. mystery author conferences including a few you may have never heard of. They'll share what they liked and disliked about conferences. And provide helpful advice we think you'll enjoy.

CCW continues to bring fresh content to support your writing journey. So Join us on **January 14th** for a robust hour of comments, questions, and answers to help you attend a meaningful conference in 2024.

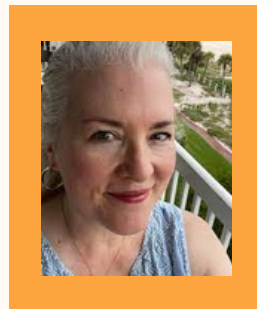
Prior to the meeting, please send any questions you may have about **conferences** to Alan at Schmad09@gmail.com.



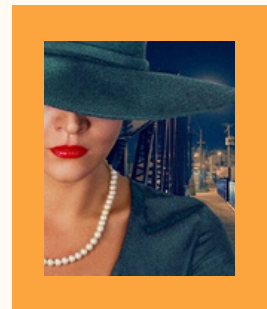
Cheryl Hollon



Annette Dashofy



Carolyn L. Dean



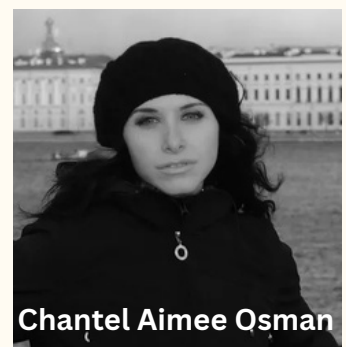
Lauryn Christopher



November's Expert

WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT IN PUBLISHING

Chantel Aimee Osman joined us in November to talk about everything publishing. The business of writing, publishing and selling books changes often, and we're always looking to learn more about where we as authors fit in the market. Chantel answered questions about contracts, social media, synopsis writing, premarketing, and a discussion about older protagonists with the popularity of books like *The Thursday Murder Club* and *Killers of A Certain Age*.



Chantel Aimee Osman



Announcements...

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2024 CCW OFFICERS!



PRESIDENT
SK Golden



VICE PRESIDENT
Nancy J Cohen



TREASURER
Martha Geaney



SECRETARY
Ruth Owen



Member News

BOOK RELEASES

S.K. Golden, author of the Pinnacle Hotel Mystery Series, has a new crime caper, **Stolen Pieces**, coming out on **May 7, 2024**.

OCEAN'S 8 meets Janet Evanovich! This fast-paced crime caper features one badass mother, with a certain set of skills who is forced to come out of retirement to protect her son, and teach a few men a few lessons!

Leslie Marshman's fourth book, **Resolute Bodyguard**, in her **Protectors of Boone County, Texas series**, will be released on **May 21, 2024**.

This novel follows up her three earlier books in the series, *Resolute Justice*, *Resolute Aim*, and *Resolute Investigation*.

Security expert Nate Reed hates returning to Resolute, Texas—almost as much as becoming assistant DA Sara Bennett's bodyguard. Their spring break fling years ago ended badly. A second chance can't happen ...no matter how much desire still simmers. But when a dangerous stalker's threats escalate to a deadly inferno, Nate will risk it all to keep his vulnerable, irresistible charge safe.



Member Guest Blog by Nancy Clements

Achieve Your New Year's Resolution to Write More

Each January and February, I avoid the gym like the plague because of the crowds. I don't get upset about it since I know, come March, the machines are available again, the weight room less crowded, and there's ample floor space in the yoga class.

We all know why. New Year's resolutions to exercise more, so hopeful and promising on the first of January, are soon lost forever like that one sock that went missing in the laundry.

Research suggests that only 9% - let me repeat that, 9% - of Americans who make resolutions complete them.

That's bleak if you want to turn your side hustle as a writer into a full-time gig like I did in 2023 when I became a book coach & writer. Because to be a full-time writer, you must write like your life depends on it, every day.

While making a resolution in 2024 to write more sounds like an excellent way to step up your game, the reality may be disappointing if you don't also put some basic ingredients in place to boost your success. Here are three suggestions I use for achieving my own goals to help encourage your 2024 goal to write more. Just remember these three Ss – **SMART, Schedule, & Support.**

1) Set SMART Goals: SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based. Therefore, when setting goals consider using quantity rather than quality. For instance, a goal may be, write one chapter per week, or three hundred words per day. Make sure these steps are relevant to your overall goal? If you're looking to write more, then the answer should be yes. The final step is setting deadlines. They may be daily, weekly, etc.

2) Schedule: Create a routine and block your calendar for that time each day. Set a recurring meeting. Then show up.

3) Support: Create an accountability pod with other writers who are supportive and will hold you (and them) accountable. Meet regularly to discuss goals and accomplishments. Set a recurring meeting in January for the rest of the year and then prioritize it. Finally, celebrate wins frequently. You completed an outline? Celebrate. You wrote 1000 words? Celebrate. You finished Act I? Celebrate.

New Years' resolutions don't need to be a drag. Though it may be hard to consistently show up in the early days, know that if you make it through January and February, like my friends at the gym, it is likely you've formed a habit, and the rest of the year will be a piece of cake.

If you need a little inspiration, I suggest you read *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* by Stephen Pressfield. Pressfield says, **"the most important thing about art is to work. Nothing else matters except sitting down every day and trying."**

Happy New Year and Happy Writing!

Nancy Clements is an Author Accelerator certified book coach, a retired civil engineer, and a member of SinC, CCW, Paragraph NY, and WFWA. Her WIP, *Dead End*, is about a Journalist who struggles with the truth.



More...



HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMEMBERSHIP YET?

What are you waiting for? Dues are \$20 for returning members, and \$25 for new members (not including the dues for SinC national). Chapter dues can be paid by check, made out to "Citrus Crime Writers", and sent to secretary/treasurer Ruth Owen by postal mail at Citrus Crime Writers, c/o Ruth Owen, P. O. Box 432, Winter Park, FL 32790 or online by clicking on the PayPal link on our CCW website and entering CCW's e-mail address, citruscrimewriters@gmail.com, as the payee/recipient, from your PayPal account.



WRITE A GUEST BLOG FOR THE CCW NEWSLETTER?

If you'd like to write a blog for an upcoming issue of the CCW Newsletter, please send a title, the blog (between 450 and 500 words), your headshot and an optional photo to appear in the blog to Nancy@SecondActBookCoaching.com. Deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month's issue, and is on a first come first serve basis.

BOOK EXPO 2024

Where: The Villages Eisenhower Recreation Center
3560 Buena Vista Blvd, The Villages, FL

When: Sunday, **January 28, 2024**

Time: from **11am to 4pm**

**The Expo is a great place to promote
your books and the Chapter!**

**BookExpo
2024**

Sunday, January 28, 2024 • 11am-4pm
Eisenhower Recreation Center

AUTHORS • BOOKS • FUN

Writers League of The Villages & The Villages® Recreation

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