

WLOV Newsletter - January 2020



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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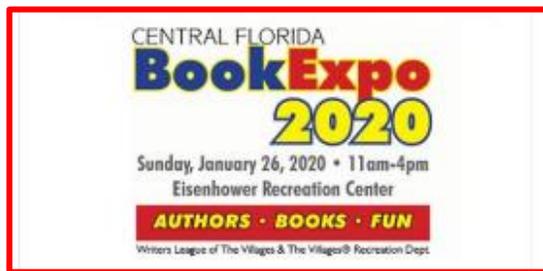
WLOV Calendar of Upcoming Events

➔ [Note Special one-time event on Jan 3, 2020](#) ←

Friday, Jan 3, 2020 – Get Ready to Sell Your Books at Expo 2020, from 12 Noon to 3:00 pm, in the Washington Room at Laurel Manor Rec Center. See details in President’s Message.

Wednesday, Jan 8 – General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 9 am – 11 am. “How to Hook Your Reader from Page One.” Interview via SKYPE with Terri Schlichenmeyer, Professional Book Reviewer. Bring your kids’ books to donate to area school children – see President’s Message for more info on this project.

Sunday, Jan 26 – Central Florida Book & Author Expo, Eisenhower Rec Center, 11 am – 4 pm



The advertisement you see here accompanies short bios of many of our Expo participants. Check them out on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Writers-League-of-The-Villages-162776817086391/>

Wednesday, Feb 12 – General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 9 am – 11 am. “Podcasting: What Every Writer Needs to Know.” Speaker: Diann Schindler, Ph.D., Professional Podcaster and Global Traveler.

Friday, Feb 14 – Love Story Public Readings, Canal Rec Center, 6 – 8 pm

Wednesday, March 11 – General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 9 am – 11 am. “Writing Romance Scenes: What's Permissible?” - Donna Jennings, presenter at 2019 FWA Conference under “Dr. J.”

Change coming to WLOV Newsletter

By Larry Martin
drlarry437@gmail.com

My assistants: Maya, Asher, and Jacob



Starting next month, this newsletter will be pared down to just the WLOV Calendar of Events and our president’s message, plus one or two other items. Basically, I am cutting back on its scope. This is due to time constraints on my part, plus the fact that we now have two Facebook sites, where pictures and member information can be posted. One of the FB sites, **Writers of The Villages Group**, allows any WLOV member to post information and pictures. You can reach it by entering “Writers of The Villages Group” in the FB search box, or by entering this link in your browser:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2456384291302772/>.

For more information on the two FB sites, see page 4. I would like to continue publishing at least two other items in this newsletter.

Printed news items about our members. These now frequently appear in local media. Diane Dean, our club historian, will continue to collect items appearing in local publications such as *The Villages Daily Sun*, *Villages Magazine*, *Village Neighbors Magazine*, and *Style Magazine*. If you have a print item published out of the local area (or a local item we missed), please send a readable photocopy of the entire item to her, at oldbooksaver@yahoo.com. Photos of print items are easily taken with a cell phone camera. Make sure the date and source are included.

Member interviews. While I will no longer be doing these interviews, others may want to. If you would like to interview another WLOV member about his/her writing career, please review the list of people already interviewed, and also my “Strongly Suggested Guidelines.” They are on the WLOV website at http://wlov.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/3/6/24362452/interviews-list___guidelines.pdf. Depending on member response, there may be a que. Before you begin, please give me a heads up so I can let you know when your interview might appear in the Newsletter.

President’s Message



Hello Everyone!

Twenty years ago, we were looking at Y2K. Remember that? The year 2000 was somewhat scary since we didn’t know if computers would handle turning the “19” in 1999 to a “20” in 2000. But it worked out just fine. Now, we’re in 2020 and who knows what will be the next scary thing? Enough reminiscing.

Let’s look ahead. 2020 is going to be another year of “firsts” starting with our January 3 ‘Extra’ program, **Get Ready to Sell Your Books at Expo 2020**. This event will last from noon to 3 pm, and take place at Laurel Manor Recreation Center. Come with one of your books. There will be opening comments from the Book Expo Committee members from noon to 12:30 pm, but you can show up any time before 3 pm. You will have opportunity to be interviewed by the Book Expo crew on video, where you will be asked to explain your book in one minute. After that you can view the recording to see how you appear to a potential customer. This exercise should help you identify ways to be brief and to the point, as shoppers only want to hear the most important part of your “pitch”.

Here’s another first: on Wednesday, January 8, 2020, we are going to have a presentation via Skype. Terri Schlichenmeyer will present “**How to Hook You Reader from Page One**” After I interview her via Skype, she will answer your questions. Terri has been a professional book reviewer for over 11 years. Her column appears every week in the Sunday edition of *The Villages Daily Sun*. She reads an average of 4 to 5 books a week, which calculates to over 2,200 books in the past decade. If anyone can talk about what grabs a reader’s interest from the first page forward, it’s Terri!

Also on Jan 8, Rita Boehm will be collecting your donation of kids’ books (K through fifth grade). This project was announced by Diane Dean at the December Holiday meeting. It is part of an Eagle Scout project, and the books will go to a local school. Bring one, bring more than one, and give them to Rita at the meeting.

On Sunday, January 26th we have our annual **Central Florida Book & Author Expo**, from 11 am to 4 pm at the Eisenhower Recreation Center. (Previous years it was always on a Saturday, which ended up conflicting with other Villages’ events.) Be sure to pass out the bookmarks and use the golf cart signs given out by our Expo Committee. Bring your neighbors, your friends. It’s going to be a great day for all!

We can always use volunteers for the event. If interested, please email me at WLOVwriters@gmail.com.

See you soon!

Reminder – WLOV has TWO Facebook Pages

Writers League of The Villages

Status: Only administrators can enter posts or pictures. Anyone can view contents and offer comments.

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Writers-League-of-The-Villages-162776817086391/>



Writers of The Villages Group

Status: Any WLOV Member can join and post pictures and/or text. Anyone can view posts and offer comments.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2456384291302772/>



Print News Items from Nov-Dec 2019

Village Neighbor Magazine November 2019



The Writing Bug

By Mark H. Newhouse

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

What makes me enjoy writing so much? It's a lot of work, with little chance of financial reward. The big five publishers make 95% of their income from only 5% of their authors. Despite the scattered stories about a few authors striking gold, most might be chasing rainbows. But what wonderful rainbows they are!

We have some wonderful writers here in the Villages. Their imagination is the gift that keeps on giving — to their families, friends, and to readers lucky enough to discover their creations. As 'Top Cat' of *Writers 4 Kids*, I've spent twelve years being 'juiced' by these imagineers, devoted to sharing their gift with children. Here are just a few examples of what happens when imagination takes flight.

ZOOK?

Have you ever heard of a Zook? Well, Linda Leggett's picture book, *The Zook in the Book*, introduces this green creature, who reminds me of my favorite critters from Dr. Seuss. When the Zook pops out of a book and gobbles up mook, children will also gobble up the Zook. Her imagination knows no limits as *Uptight* proves: "This is a line. Line is uptight. He wishes he could

be something other than a line." What child hasn't felt that wish to be someone special? What adult?

How about being a detective? Just like Sammy Sleuth, Linda's boy detective, (girls enjoy it too.) in the case of *That Thing in the Hole* and *The Case of Jeremiah Josephat Jeepeers Malone*, Linda is ready to solve the case of how to get reluctant readers reading with fun plots and her imaginative world.

CRACKLE, CHIRP, CHIRP.

Crackle, Chirp, Chirp. is the first book by Paula Feuerstein, and shows how imagination and a love for the environment can make children care. The cover shows diverse children staring up at a tree. What are they looking at? "Crackle. Chirp. Chirp.", a small bird caught in a plastic bag that inspires a group of children to learn how to help our animal friends. It is Paula's hope her

delightful picture book will inspire children to care about pollution.

DREAMERS

Childhood without dreams? "J.J. pressed the gas pedal down hard to the floor. He heard the roar of the engine, smelled the burning rubber of the tires against the blacktop, and felt the steering wheel vibrating as he took the last turn..." Pennie Whitt's imagination takes children across the finish line in *Driving My Dream*, where car racing helps children see that they can reach their goals. The same theme sparks Larry Martin's, *The Boy Who Dreamed Mount Everest*, where children discover fascinating facts about the world's highest mountain, while they learn

that even trying to achieve a dream is an important accomplishment. Strikingly different leaps of imagination inspire children to achieve.

APPLES

Three boys visiting their grandparents learn how to work together to solve a problem in Jane Provick Jacob's *Thanksgiving Secret*. Jane's imagination, and a recipe for making apple cider, creates a book perfect for the Thanksgiving holidays.

Which brings me back to our theme.

THANKSGIVING

Among all the many things I am thankful for including family, friends, and living in The Villages, I have to include a thank you to the members of *Writers 4 Kids*, (Fridays,

9-11 a.m., Hibiscus Recreation Center), and the *Creative Writers Group*. (Wednesday, 11-1 p.m., Laurel Manor), for years of support, friendship, and sparking my imagination. Once you are bitten by the writing bug it is great to work with others who share your passion. On behalf of all the Villager writers, I also want to thank you, our friends, and readers, who encourage us to achieve our dream.

If you have the dream of writing, even just for the fun of it, please visit www.wlov.org for a list of our writing clubs, authors and their books. You will also be inspired by meeting our authors and checking out their books, at the **Central Florida Book & Author Expo**, (January 26, 2020, Eisenhower Recreation

Center). Books are wonderful holiday gifts. They don't pollute, don't require batteries and trigger the greatest gift of all: imagination. ■

Mark H. Newhouse is the author of the award-winning children's mysteries *Welcome to Monstrovia*; *The Case of the Disastrous Dragon*; *The Case of the Crazy Chickenscratches*, and picture books, *Dreidel Dog*; *Santa's Speeding Ticket* and *A Bite Before Christmas*. Founding president of *Writers League of the Villages*, founder and *Top Cat of Writers 4 Kids*, he is state chairperson of the *Florida Writers Association Youth Program* and a member of the *FWA Board of Directors*. Contact him at www.newhousecreativegroup.com.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019 | THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

VILLAGES AUTHORS



JAN MINARD
The Village of Polo Ridge



A chance encounter at a restaurant gave Jan Minard, of the Village of Polo Ridge, the impetus for a novel. "Coach in Cottage C," which is written with Oviedo resident Rosemary Imregi, is a novel inspired by Victor Prinzi, a former Florida state University quarterback who was the football coach and physical education teacher at the Dozier School for Boys

in Marianna in 1961. When Minard and Imregi met Prinzi 30 years ago, he told his story to them and asked if they would write it. "It just touched our hearts," Minard said. "We just felt immediately attached to it." With the help of Prinzi, the two wrote the first draft that year, but various reasons forced them to put the book aside. In 2013, they were contacted by a reporter from the Tampa Bay Times about the book. "We picked it up and said, 'Let's finish the darn thing,'" Minard said. "(The story is) real. It's something when someone tells you something from their heart and they're involved with it." The novel is available at amazon.com and at coachincottagec.com.

Print News Item from Nov - Dec 2019

The Villages Magazine, Nov 2019

The Villages Magazine, Dec 2019

VILLAGES AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

THE CASE OF THE CRAZY CHICKEN SCRATCHES
 by Mark H. Newhouse,
 Village of Virginia Trace

Middle-grade fiction

When teenager Brodie Adkins was sent by his recently divorced mother to live with his uncle, he had no idea he would be helping him defend the mythical monsters and fictional folk who live in Monstrovia — a secret sector of the United States where anything can happen. In this award-winning third sequel to Welcome to Monstrovia and The Case of the Disastrous Dragon, Brodie and his uncle must prove that a man who turned his house into a zoo isn't crazy, while also confronting his feelings about his parents' divorce.

Q: WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO WRITE YOUR BOOK?
A: I loved Perry Mason and Sherlock Holmes as a boy. Wanting to be a lawyer like Mason gave me a goal that helped avoid the problems many of my friends had. Later, as a classroom teacher, I began helping my students set life goals. I wanted to create a Perry Mason for kids today, one that would introduce them to the life of lawyers in a fun and unique series of mysteries. I loved the idea that uncle Jasper Doofinch and Brodie would be able to solve cases in a way that could make kids and adults laugh.

Q: WHAT DO YOU HOPE READERS TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOKS?
A: My hope is that this series will help kids learn about law and see how important it is to solve problems. Brodie faces the problems every kid has, especially children of divorce. He is angry, lonely and confused. My books use humor and fantasy to help children understand they aren't alone.

Q: WHAT CLUBS, ACTIVITIES AND HOBBIES DO YOU ENJOY?
A: I was the founding president of Writers League of The Villages and the originator and chairperson of more than a dozen author showcases, now called The Central Florida Book & Author Expo. I also founded the Writers 4 Kids club.




Available on Amazon

VILLAGES AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

**A GIFT TO THE NATION:
 FROM OHIO AND THE WAYNE
 NATIONAL FOREST**
 by Dan Kincaid, Village of Dunedin

In 1987, one of the smallest national forests in the country, located in the midst of the hardwood forests of southeastern Ohio, was selected to provide the Christmas tree, a Norway spruce, for our nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C. "A Gift to The Nation" tells how the Wayne National Forest came to receive that honor and how a small, dedicated group of forest service employees, local organizations, agencies, schools, businesses and citizens rallied around the project to make it one of the most successful in the history of the program.

Q: WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO WRITE YOUR BOOK?
A: I coordinated this project from start to finish: locating the tree, the actual tree cutting, the send-off ceremony and getting the tree transported to the U.S. Capitol. I wanted to capture the history of this event while I could still recall everything.

Q: WHAT DO YOU HOPE READERS TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?
A: How a small group of people from federal, state, county and city agencies can work together with local businesses, schools and individual volunteers to make a nationally significant event come together.

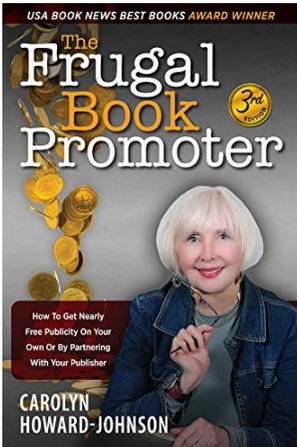
Q: WHAT CLUBS, ACTIVITIES AND HOBBIES DO YOU ENJOY?
A: Softball, billiards, warm winters and writing.




Available on Amazon

This Book Might Interest You

By Larry Martin



The Amazon Blurb: *The Frugal Book Promoter* assures your book gets the best possible start in life, whether your publisher assigns zero dollars or thousands to your book's marketing campaign. A former publicist, the author provides no-nonsense basics to build the essentials you need to build a time-saving social media campaign and knock'em dead lists of influencers that will be more effective than anything you could buy. Pick and choose from dozens of ideas for promotions that she developed or refined through extensive (and award-winning) book campaigns of her own. Several will match your pocketbook and personality.

<https://www.amazon.com/Frugal-Book-Promoter-publicity-partnering/dp/1615994688/>

Finding Publishers with Duotrope

Last month the FWA website published a blog post on Duotrope, a website for finding publishers – for just about anything you've written. It's also a way to keep track of all your submissions.

Per the blog post by author Shutta Crum (<https://floridawriters.net/finding-publishers-with-duotrope/>), Duotrope monitors over 7200 fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and visual art publishers and agents. "It includes a submission tracker for all my submissions, monitoring and reporting on a publisher's status (temporarily closed to submissions, defunct, open, contests, etc.), a calendar of deadlines for anthologies, various reports that group publishers by certain criteria such as fastest response times, most difficult to break into, fledgling publishers, etc., and a search function that allows you to search by genre, audience, publication medium (online/print) and other criteria. It also emails subscribers a weekly update of the deadline calendar and any new info about agents, and publications."

So, if you have items you've been aching to submit, but don't know where, check out Duotrope. You can do a one-week free trial (albeit with your credit card – you can cancel anytime). After the free week, the cost is 5\$/month, or pay \$50 if you subscribe for a year. The website is <https://duotrope.com/>.

Interview with Millard Johnson

by Larry Martin



Millard Johnson has been a key player in Villages' writing clubs and activities for several years. In addition to starting one critique group, he also created the popular Valentines' Day Public Readings and the Bulwer-Lytton worst-first-sentence contest. He is on the WLOV Board as our Communications Director.

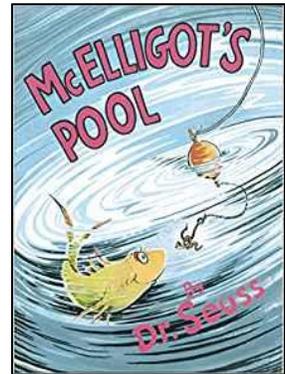
LM: What did you do before retirement?

MJ: After high school I joined the Air Force and spent four years playing saxophone in field bands in the US and Europe. I was a terrible airman and

the Air Force and I were both happy when my short career ended. I then attended the University of Washington, where I earned a BA in Psychology and a Masters in Librarianship. My idea was to spend my life in some backwater town with access to good fishing.

LM: Why fishing?

It may be impossible to explain the lure of fishing to someone not a fisherman. The best description I have ever seen is in Dr. Seuss's book *McElligot's Pool*. The narrator, sitting at the edge of a tiny pool with a line in the water, imagines all the fantastic creatures that might be down under the water. Fishing is not about the fish you catch. It is about the fish you might catch. Maybe fishing is a metaphor for life in that respect.



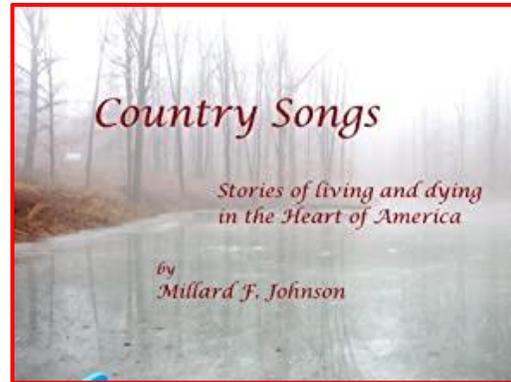
LM: So back to Librarianship.

MJ: Back in 1968 computers were just getting started and I was heavily into computing. The question on the Library Science Comprehensive Exam was "What is the future of libraries?" Anyway, I graduated with "Distinction" (go figure) and went on to a post-Masters fellowship year in computing. I worked in medical libraries and library networks for the next thirty years, helping to automate all the stuff libraries do.

LM: Were you a writer before moving to The Villages? If so, was anything published?

MJ: I wrote and published the usual research papers for the academic journals of librarianship. Those papers are never read by anyone, but they helped me keep my research job. I did have one notable success. I published a paper in the most prestigious journal of the profession. In 1971, the Journal of the American Library Association created a special "New Voices" award for a paper I wrote and gave me a \$250 prize. As far as I can tell, no one read that either. The paper was about how the library had to change fundamentally to accommodate a digital information environment.

After I retired, my wife and I lived on a hobby farm in Indiana. We raised sheep, dairy goats, cattle, chickens, turkeys, and horses. I learned a lot about farming and country living. Out of those few years, came a raft of short stories about country life. In 2011, I self-published them along with my photographs as *Country Songs -- Stories of living and dying in the Heart of America*. It's only available as a Kindle e-book. I am proud of the writing, but my sister-in-law was my editor. You will be appalled at the quality of the editing.



<https://www.amazon.com/Country-Stories-Living-Dying-America-ebook/dp/B005GLGBTC/>

LM: Why do you write, and why do you think it is a worthwhile activity for people in retirement?

MJ: Without trying to be a cliché, I ask myself, what is the meaning of life? Why are we put on earth? I think we are here for two purposes: to reproduce the species, and to make art. A person who spends a life without making art has, to a large extent, wasted the one opportunity they will ever have to fulfill that function. I also like the social aspects of the writing group, but my greatest joy is seeing writers write better from week to week.

LM: So, not to make money?

MJ: Definitely not. In the Introduction to my 2011 book *Country Stories*, I wrote: I long ago decided that I was not going to be a professional writer, but I DO want to be read." I still feel that way, and I think that is true for just about every writer in The Villages. I doubt no more than a handful "make money" writing. We just enjoy writing and want to be read.

LM: What made you decide to start Writers of the Villages?

MJ: I started out in TV as a member of Creative Writers [meets Wednesdays] and Wannabe Writers [meets Mondays]. I had quite a bit of formal college instruction in creative writing, and thought there was a better way to conduct a critique group. Also, Wannabees was getting too big. So, a few years ago I started another group further south. In my Writers of the Villages group, members are expected to seriously critique each submission before our meeting. The group is quite successful in improving the writing of members, several of whom have won writing awards.

After two years, our group grew so large that we split the winter of 2017; Phil Walker left the group to start Working Writers, the same morning as my group. We expected to reunite in the spring, but that never happened. Both groups are humming along and each has its own culture.

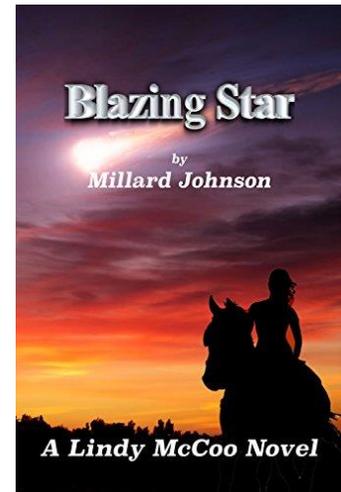
[**Editor's Note:** Millard's group, Writers of The Villages, meets at Bradenton Rec Center on Tuesdays, 9-11 am. Phil's group, Working Writers Workshop, meets at Canal Rec Center on Tuesdays, 8:30-11:30 am.]

I still attend Creative Writers on Wednesday, and Wannabees when I have something to share. I want to stay in contact with my friends in those groups.

LM: In addition to *Country Songs*, Amazon has two recent novels by you, *Blazing Star* and *The Heart Doctor*. What's *Blazing Star* about?

MJ: For my taste, the greatest American writer of all time is Raymond Carver. Carver wrote short stories in the literary fiction genre. That is the kind of writer I am. But, in old age my well of short stories is about dry, and, sadly, I will never be a Raymond Carver. I saw people in our critique groups writing detective stories, and they were having so much fun I decided to write a detective novel. My wife is into horses. We own four horses and I have quite a bit of horse knowledge, so I wrote a novel about an insurance investigator investigating livestock crimes and accidents. *Blazing Star* does have a serious subplot about a man's struggle with the guilt for having split from his wife and their baby seventeen years earlier.

<https://www.amazon.com/Blazing-Star-Lindy-McCoo-Stories-ebook/dp/B07CLSCWD4/>

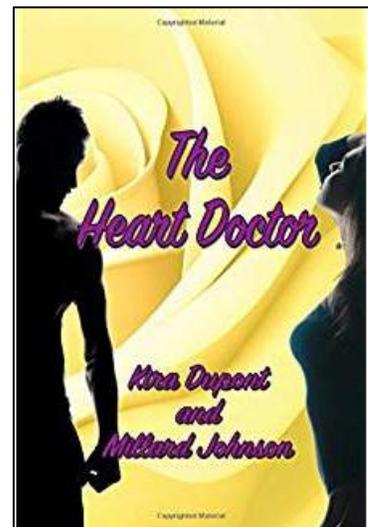


LM: And *The Heart Doctor*?

MJ: *The Heart Doctor*, I think, is a great romance novel. (How is that for humility?) The audience for *The Heart Doctor* is a woman age 20-50, who works at a job where she feels unappreciated. She comes home to housework, dishes, and a routine sex life. Through this novel, she can vicariously experience a wildly successful medical career, life-and-death medical drama, luxurious foreign travel, and fantastic sex.

My wife is a retired cardiologist, so I know the medical scenes pass muster. My listed co-author "Kira Dupont" is made up, fictional.

<https://www.amazon.com/Heart-Doctor-Kira-Dupont-M-D/dp/1983192724/>



LM: A fictional co-author? Why is that?

MJ: In one critique group where I read parts of the book, a woman kept telling me that, as a man, I couldn't authentically write the woman's perspective. I take all criticism very seriously. However, after careful consideration, I concluded this criticism was a subconscious sexual bias. Still, I felt I needed to list a female physician as a co-author, to get a perspective reader inside the cover.

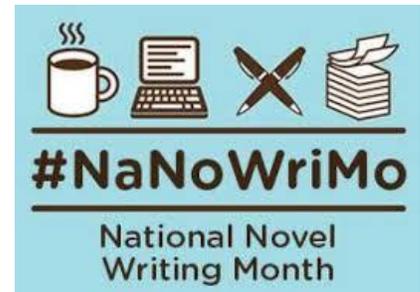
LM: How did you switch from horses to female romance?

MJ: It's an interesting story. Ann Heathman, a fine writer in Wannabees, wrote her first romance novel while I was attending the group. When she finished, she asked if she should write a sequel. I told her she should write a completely new novel. Being a typical woman, she listened to my advice and decided to write a sequel. To show her how wrong she was, I spent the next week outlining a plot for the world's greatest romance novel. Reading my great plot, she became

certain that her decision to write a sequel was sound. So, here I am, a man who basically can't stand romance novels, with a plot for one. My creative process kicked in and I decided to turn my plot into the world's first contributed romance novel. I wrote biographies of each character and included a picture copied from the internet. I wrote out exactly what was to happen to whom, in sixty-five chapters with sex scenes sprinkled among them.

Next, I contacted romance writers from all of the English-speaking countries of the world asking them to write a chapter. I got about thirty authors from ten or so countries in four continents to write from 1000- to 1500- word chapters. It was an absolute nightmare editing it together, but the worst part was telling some writers that their writing wasn't good enough. I just couldn't do that, so I abandoned the project and was back to step one.

About that time, along came NANOWRIMO – National November Writing Month. With the challenge to write a 50,000-word novel in the month of November. At the end of one month, *The Heart Doctor* was done except for about three months of editing.



LM: I notice *The Heart Doctor* has only 2 reviews on Amazon. What do you do to publicize or market your books?

MJ: Things are looking up. I didn't know I had any reviews at all. I'll have to read them. I hope the readers liked the book. Look, I love to write, but I hate to sell. Anyone reading this should get it through their head: THERE IS NO MONEY IN WRITING! Or, at least, the odds against making serious money are astronomical. I know some people make money, but, even if they are a first-rate writer, they are extraordinarily lucky to "go viral," or they spend a great deal of time and effort "marketing." The median annual income, from writing, for all people who call themselves professional writers, is something less than \$30,000. Frankly, if you want to make extra money in retirement, get a job as a Villages golf ambassador. The hourly pay is far better.

I also believe that most writers dreaming of big sales make small decisions to appeal to a buying public. I don't know if those decisions increase sales, but I think they hurt the quality of the art produced.

LM: A few years ago you created The Villages Valentine's Day Love Story Public Readings. The third annual event is next month, February 14, at Canal Rec Center. How did this come about, and has it worked out as you intended?

MJ: Five years ago, I wrote a love story in February that I read in my group. It was well received. So, the next year, I asked everyone to consider taking a break from their novel, to try to write a love story for Valentines' Day. This was so successful that the following year I asked WLOV to put on a Villages-wide program. This will be our third annual public love story reading and my last as producer. I am a little burned out, and have no more love stories in me. If readers missed the earlier events they should try to attend. It is worth the \$2.00 the Rec center charges to attend (it's for refreshments).

By the way, there is no reason we could not sponsor Christmas and Halloween public reading events if anyone were interested.



L to R: Millard with some participants in 2019 Valentines' Day Readings: Mike Doyle, Mark Newhouse, John Prince, Steve Burt

LM: Will this be the last year for the Valentine's Day readings, or is someone else going to take it over?

MJ: I don't know if the Valentine's Day love story reading will continue or not. It is not difficult to keep it going although it takes careful planning. The problem is content. Quite a few writers have one or two possible appropriate love stories on their hard drives. But after three years a lot of the best stories have been used up. I hope something like it continues. The program gave good writers an audience for some of their best work.

LM: What about the Bulwer-Lytton worst-first-sentence contest? How did that come about?

MJ: When I worked as a library computer systems researcher, I had to come up with projects every year to justify my grant money. That requirement engrained in me the habit of coming up with creative new ideas, which I have never lost. Love story reading, Bulwer-Lytton contest, and the Simplelists mailing list that notifies Villagers of this newsletter, are just three recent ones.

I have a dozen others that never came to fruition, including a letter to the developer asking them to create an endowment to fund a writer-in-residence. Some ideas work, some don't. You never know which ones will fly until you give them wings. Bulwer-Lytton was fun. Next year I would like to have a world's worst metaphor contest. How about: "He loved her the way a rat loves moldy limburger cheese"?

As for the Bulwer-Lytton contest: WLOV is always looking for programs of interest to members. I had read of other worst-first-sentence contests and thought we could put a program together for Villagers. Incidentally, about a third of the entries came from Villagers who were previously unassociated with WLOV.



Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), forever vilified for starting a novel with: "It was a dark and stormy night..."

LM: You are also working on a college-level seminar series for the summer months. Please explain how that will function.

MJ: Yes, that's my latest brainchild. Our critique groups get thin during the summer months. We need a way to attract writers who do not regularly attend. I wondered if we could get creative writing instructors from nearby colleges to come to The Villages and give a two-hour class during the summer months. It wouldn't be free, of course, we'd have to pay the instructors, but students would get the heart of an MFA term in Creative Writing for a fraction of the college tuition – without leaving The Villages. So far, the prospects look good, but there are some hurdles to be jumped. Stay tuned.

LM: What Villages activities do you do outside of writing?

MJ: Well, my library school masters never got me to the small town with good fishing nearby, but retirement did. I go fishing every month with the Deep-Sea Fishing Club, and I golf (badly.)



Millard with mahi mahi, caught off Port Orange, FL in 2019.

LM: If you could wave a magic wand, what would you like to see take place in The Villages in regards to writing activities?

MJ: I guess the Writer in Residence Program would be my magic wand idea. I vacillate between thinking we're either a bunch of old farts piddling with writing in our dotage, or we're the most vibrant, artistic community in the United States. It would take about a million dollars to buy a villa residence and give a modest stipend for a promising new MFA writer for five years. That person could give us inspiration and instruction, and might a novel that would put The Villages on the literary map. If anyone knows someone with a spare million, or someone looking to endow something as a memorial. I will be willing to work with them to set up the "YOUR NAME HERE" Writer-in-Residence Memorial Trust.

Historically, people who have accumulated great wealth have used some of that wealth to fund the arts and artists. So, it is doable. We only need one wealthy patron of the arts. A Writer-in-Residence program is no less worthy than an endowed chair in Sociology, a symphony orchestra, or a new wing of an art museum.

LM: Great ideas! Thanks, Millard.

Cartoons

In searching for writing-related cartoons, I came across these four, all with the same theme. Is there such a thing as cartoon cliché'?

