

Write What Inspires You! Newsletter

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Volume 2, Issue 8

Donna M. McDine
Children's Author



Welcome to the August issue of my FREE newsletter:

Write What Inspires You!

Contents

Welcome	1
Author Interviews	2
Book Reviews	7
Reflections or Dreams	8
SFC Anthology	9
Virtual Book Tours	10
Proclaim Your Successes	11
Writer's Digest Best Of	11
Supporter Ads	11

With the ending of July and the beginning of August, brings the onset of Fall sport practices. It seems baseball and spring basketball have barely ended and now we are back into the mode of soccer practices yet again. Which means the beginning of the new school year is not too far off. My best laid plans for the summer were to edit, edit, and edit some more on my current work-in-progress, but it just hasn't panned out. However, I have written and submitted my CWCC assignments and continue to work on my marketing plan for my first book entitled, *The Golden Pathway*. So progress has been made, even if it isn't in the editing department. And I've learned to be content with what I've accomplished rather than being frustrated with what I haven't accomplished.

How is your summer going? I'd enjoy hearing how your summer writing plans are going and if you had to shift gears. And if you did shift gears, how did you best accommodate your changing schedule.

Best wishes for a remaining fun filled and safe summer!

It is my pleasure to present to you interviews with authors Patricia Shirra and Alan Jordan. Don't miss the goodies in the columns: Book Reviews, Reflections and Dreams by Beverly Stowe McClure, Virtual Book Tours, and Sponsor Ads.

If you are interested, please feel free to submit your name for an interview, an essay and/or your successes to: dmcldine@optonline.net

Please share this newsletter with your peers in the writing industry and encourage them to opt-in as a monthly subscriber.

Here's to your inspiration and continued success!

Donna

Quote of the Month:

"A person with a positive outlook views a closed door as an opportunity to strike out in a new direction."

~ Anonymous

AUTHOR INTERVIEW – PATRICIA SHIRRA

Patricia and I had the pleasure of being introduced by Gayle Jacobson-Huset early on in our writing careers when she placed us in the same critique group. It amazes me how quickly time has gone. It has already been 3 years. Phew! Patricia and I maintain an amazing ying and yang in our critique group, along with our third member (Hi Karin!) and it has developed into a wonderful friendship. Resulting in a closeness I never thought possible. Considering we have never met in person. It is a true comfort to have Patricia in my life both professionally and personally. And Patricia's writing career is progressing terrific, with her in the midst of the Institute of Children's Literature Advance Book Course and of course the balancing act of an outside job, mother, daughter, and dear friend. Come along and meet this dynamic author.

DMc: When did you decide you wanted to become an author? Do you have another job besides writing?

PS: It was about seven years ago. My daughter, then ten, had a voracious appetite for reading and she was heavily into Harry Potter and the Lemony Snickett 'Unfortunate Events' series. Everything she was reading was so depressing that I decided I would write not one, but a series of children's books that were more upbeat and optimistic. The protagonist I imagined was a young girl named Allicyn Ngart (pronounced "gart" the "N" is silent,) a champion for the shy and the disadvantaged. I pitched the idea to my daughter who didn't hesitate to tell me she thought the character and the idea were "sort of boring." The story line lacked the angst readers like to experience.

My first attempt at creative writing was actually a screenplay, which I wrote to enter into a screenwriting competition. It was quite a challenging undertaking, trying to adhere to proper screenplay format while getting the point of the story across. I didn't win the competition in fact I didn't even place, so I decided that I'd try writing a novel first. Eventually, I hope to write and have published both a novel and a screenplay. Fortunately I did, and still do, have a day job that pays the bills and provides health benefits for my family as I continue to pursue my dream of becoming a published author.

DMc: Were you an avid reader as a child? What type of books did you enjoy reading?

PS: I read a good deal when I was child but I wouldn't say I was an avid reader. The truth is, most of my reading was required, not pleasure, reading. But, I did enjoy detective novels, like Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys. I also enjoyed reading science fiction and futuristic novels.

DMc: Do you have a particular genre you prefer to write for? If yes, why?

PS: I enjoy writing coming of age fiction for young adults and teens. Living in the house with two teens I see the struggles that they go through and writing is a good way to impart advice without coming across as preaching ... if it's done right.

DMc: Describe your working environment.

PS: My work environment is typical of a single mom with two teens living in the heart of the city. It's chaotic, noisy, busy, cluttered, and filled with interruptions; a good environment to write the angst that readers like to read! I can be washing dishes and dialogue will pop into my head. I scramble to get it down – on paper, in my computer or Blackberry – then later pull all the pieces together into a draft of a cohesive manuscript. I used to think that a quiet environment is what I needed, and for some tasks it is, but for the most part, my chaotic work environment works fine.

DMc: Are you a disciplined writer?

PS: Yes. I write in the early morning between 4-5 AM, when my children are still asleep. Although they are my inspiration I do need quiet when I plan, edit or actually pull all the pieces together.

DMc: What is the best writing advice you've ever received

PS: The best piece of writing advice I received is to think about how I'll pitch a finished manuscript as I'm developing it. So, I think about my audience, key words and phrases, and I create and revise my synopsis and outline as I develop the piece. This helps to facilitate marketing efforts later on. Very often authors focus on the writing, not the marketing, of their manuscript.

The other excellent piece of writing advice I received is to complete a draft of my manuscript before making edits to it. It's true what they say, it's bound to change before you finish anyway, so this way you're changing it fewer times and in a more cohesive manner.

DMc: How do you balance your career with the demands of family?

PS: Sometimes it's challenging because I know I should be writing and I'll see the stack of clothes that need to be washed, or the dinner that needs to be cooked – although my kids would eat fast food seven days a week, if I let them – or the bathroom that needs to be cleaned. If the demands of my children and/or household are too much I can't focus on writing until the chores are done. On the flip side, sometime I welcome the simplicity of doing household chores when I struggle to bring closure to a manuscript, which is what I'm experiencing now. (My son finally got the room make-over that he's been asking for, but I'm no closer to finishing the last third of my current work in progress!)

DMc: What has been your experience with networking at conferences?

PS: I've attended only a few conferences but I've found them to be not only good places to learn but also excellent places to become inspired by other authors -- both accomplished and fledgling authors like me. You also get a much better sense of what works and what doesn't work from professionals in the industry, which, for obvious reasons, can have a huge impact on your work.

DMc: Please share with us your latest work-in-progress?

PS: I'm working on a teen fiction novel titled "Aspie," about a 16-year-old boy who struggles with an undiagnosed disorder, Asperger Syndrome. When Morgan learns that he has Asperger's he comes to understand why he has no friends, but he has a hard time accepting the diagnosis. The story takes us through Morgan's struggle to better understand what it means to be an Aspie, so he can manage his behavior and become more "normal."

DMc: A signature request I like to ask every author, illustrator, editor, etc., I interview is for the individual to share with us a tidbit from their lives that the reader will find either humorous or surprising. Patricia, please share one with us?

PS: My two children and I all aspire to be something exciting. I'm the aspiring author. My daughter, Olivia, is the aspiring actress. My son, James, is the aspiring wrestler. Well, Olivia was the first one to get published when her poem "A United America" was published in Excellence 2006 Poetry Collection (ISBN-10: 0-9773662-1-9.) James was the first to get cast in a commercial (for Bernie & Phyl's Furniture) that made it past the cutting room floor and onto TV. Wow, I wonder if this means that I'm going to make it into the wrestling ring? I'd better go workout just in case ... those body suits show every little imperfection!

Donna, thank you for taking an interest in my writing career.

Visit Patricia at:

<http://patriciashirra.blogspot.com/>

<http://home.comcast.net/~patriciashirra/psmainpage.htm>

AUTHOR INTERVIEW – ALAN JORDAN

Alan Jordan is not only an established author he is the brainchild of Lets Be Creative. Alan has created a safe haven for children of all ages and adults to venture into the world of interactive learning. Alan took time out from his busy schedule to grant me the pleasure of an interview and with his technology knowledge he recorded the interview into an .mp3 file. Tune in at: <http://donnamcdine.com/authorinterviews.html>. Come join me on this colorful adventure with Alan.

DMc: Please tell us about your wonderful interactive website:

<http://www.LetsBeCreative.org>.

AJ: LetsBeCreative.org is designed to inspire children, adults and businesspeople to employ creative solutions in life.

People discover in different ways. In addition to the sense of sight, LetsBeCreative.org invokes the senses of hearing (audio content and e-books) seeing (video content and e-books.)

DMc: What inspired you to develop such a website?

AJ: Our world is evolving. Children today need to understand that English is not the only language, and that other cultures are every bit as beautiful as ours. Children also need to discover. I have a background in programming, so I put together a site that lets them do this.

DMc: How did you come up with the idea of *The Monster on Top of the Bed*?

AJ: The impetus for the idea came from wanting to write books for my future grandchildren. The specific idea came from a challenge that was presented in a writing course. I was working on conveying some the inherent worth and dignity of every person as well as helping children discover how to allay bedtime fears.

DMc: Your book *How EVERYONE Can Get Great Job Interviews* is the first book that I've ever seen that literally is designed to help someone figure out to say what's needed to get a job, and then copy-and-paste that presentation into a word processing document or PowerPoint show. How did you get the idea for that book?

AJ: I started the project a long time ago, when I was out of work and needed to create a survival manual for myself. Recently, with the downward trend in the economy, I pulled my notes out of the file, and updated the manual for the 21st Century. I thought that by creating it as an e-book, it be easy to use. The .pdf format makes it easy to do a search for a topic or phrase, and it only takes a few minute to copy a dialogue from the book into a document or PowerPoint show.

DMc: Who's buying this book?

AJ: It varies. We have some libraries that are the rights for their patrons to use, college students like it because it helps them to pinpoint their saleable value. We have people who are buying it to help them get ahead in their present company, and people who are buying it because they're out of work and need a job.

DMc: At what age did you become interested in writing?

AJ: Age 12. I used to write a newsletter for a club that I belonged to. I used to write it using a typewriter, and "spirit masters," which ran on a duplicator machine. You could have green, red, blue, black and purple, and I used all of the colors.

DMc: How many hours do you devote to writing and how long does it take you to write a book?

AJ: It varies. Some days I spend 12 hours. Some days, a half-hour. It all depends what I'm doing.

DMc: Are you working on a new manuscript right now?

AJ: I'm working on two children's books and an e-course: Integrity-Based Selling, Marketing and Jobseeking.

DMc: That seems like a strange combination.

AJ: Actually, if you stop to think about it, applying for a job is selling yourself as a resource to a business. It's a business-to-business sale.

DMc: How does this e-course work? What does it cost?

AJ: People get an e-mail 2-3 times a week. The email contains tips and techniques. It can also contain a link to a video or an audio file. They also get the ability to download PowerPoint shows and a database that they can use to keep track of sales or job prospects. From time-to-time there are webinars and teleconferences where people can ask questions and get immediate answers. It costs \$10 a month.

DMc: You've done a wide variety of writing. Everything from business to children's books. What advice would you convey to aspiring writers?

AJ: Read. The more you read, the more you are convinced that you can do as well as someone else, or better. When you feel that you can do better, write. (Not before that.)

DMc: Describe your working environment.

AJ: I have several. I have an upstairs office in my home, which is quiet. I also have a laptop computer that I take with me. Sometimes, I'll work in an airport or a hotel.

DMc: What do you do when you're not writing?

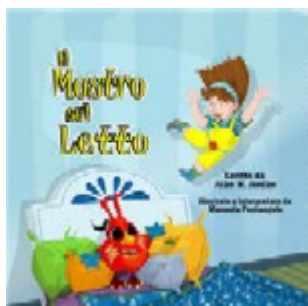
AJ: I like to go bike riding and snow shoeing. I also like to go to plays, concerts and out to dinner. I enjoy computer programming and designing websites.

DMc: What would your career be if you weren't a writer?

AJ: That's easy. I have a composite career. I'm also a Management Analyst and a computer programmer.

Visit <http://www.LetsBeCreative.org> to learn more about Alan and his interactive website. Beware, you will find yourself visiting for hours on end.

BOOK REVIEWS



Title: The Monster on Top of the Bed
Written by: Alan H. Jordan
Illustrated by: Manuela Pentangelo
Performed by: Virginia Castleman
Soft cover: 32 pages
Ages: 3-9 (Older children also like to use the book/CD and e-books with their younger siblings, and to help make e-books using the related My Monster on Top of the Bed e-book into which children's drawings may be uploaded.)
Publisher: LB Creative, LLC Press
ISBN: 978-0-9726318-0-8
Published: June 2008

"The Monster on Top of the Bed," by Alan H. Jordan, illustrated by Manuela Pentangelo and accompanied with a CD performed by Virginia Castleman, is sure to become a new bedtime classic. All the components are perfectly intertwined to make the story jump off its pages and come to life. And in fact it does, in several different versions that are available on the <http://www.LetsBeCreative.org> web site.

Whether a child follows along with the CD or an adult reads with them, the vibrant illustrations will immediately pull the reader into the world of Suzy and her unexpected roommate. "You're welcome to stay until I say 'Nay!' Then it's time to go and you can't say no." What's a little girl to do when she learns all is not as it seems? Immerse yourself and travel along with Suzy as she learns not to judge a book by its cover.

Visit <http://www.LetsBeCreative.org> to learn more about this interactive website and as an added bonus when you purchase the book and CD you receive a one year free access to LetsBeCreative.org.

Reviewed by: Donna M. McDine

REFLECTIONS OR DREAMS

LESSONS FROM THE CAT

By Beverly Stowe McClure

Day after day, my cat crouches in the bushes and waits patiently for the bird to come just a little closer. One day it does. She pounces and catches the bird. Proud of her skills in achieving her goal, she brings it to me. Through the glass door she looks up at me, the bird dangling from her mouth. Her eyes say, "Look at me, Mommy. See what I've done."

But all I see is the dead bird, not the praise she seeks for her accomplishment. So I refuse to let her bring the bird inside. For days after that she has nothing to do with me. I have wounded her fragile ego. I have crushed her spirit. A week or so later, she forgives me, however, and now waits patiently for another bird. Perhaps the first bird was not right for me and I'll accept the next offering.

What does the cat story have to do with writing? I'm glad you asked. In a way we're like the cat.

Day after day, we crouch in front of our computers and wait patiently for our characters to come closer and tell their stories. One day the main character lets us in on her secrets. Then other characters speak up, and we type the words they give us. Finally, their stories take shape, and we have a book or a story for a magazine. Proud of accomplishing our goal, we print out the manuscript, stuff it in an envelope, and with a hug and a kiss and a prayer, send it to that wonderful editor or agent who will accept our offering with open arms.

Months later, we find the return envelope in our mailbox. We eagerly rip it open, hoping for good news. A familiar-looking letter addressed to Dear Writer (Do we even know who we are anymore?) wounds our fragile egos and crushes our spirit. So we mope around the house, drowning our disappointment in chocolate and ice cream, and vow we'll never send another story to that editor or agent again. What do they know, anyway?

But our fingers start itching. We can't stay away from our story. So we read it again, correct some silly blunders we should have caught the first time, and hunt for another editor or agent. Perhaps the first one was not right for our story. The next editor may be the one to accept our offering. And this editor loves it. Our spirit soars. Our goal accomplished.

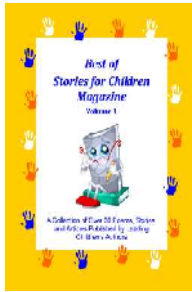
Visit Beverly at:

<http://beverlystowemcclure.wordpress.com>

<http://beverlystowemcclure.blogspot.com>

<http://rebelinbluejeans.wordpress.com>

<http://justbreeze.wordpress.com>



Stories for Children Magazine Announces Its First Annual "Best of" Anthology!

Stories for Children Magazine is proud to announce the release of its first annual anthology, Best of Stories for Children Magazine Volume 1. Come take an adventure in the World of Ink and let the SFC Contributors and Stanley Bookman show you how your imagination can be your guide.

There has always been an enchantment about reading a good children's story. Children take pleasure in having a story read to them anytime or anywhere - whether it be around a campfire, under a starry night, in their beds wrapped up tight in snugly blankets, beneath a shady tree on a hot summer's day, or in front of a roaring fireplace on a cold winter's day. Children love to listen to a story being read and this can go as far as adolescence. Best of Stories for Children Magazine Volume 1, is a collection of over 20 poems, stories, and articles published by leading children's authors.

At Stories for Children Magazine the World of Ink is a place where imagination is everything and everything is only your imagination. Stories for Children Magazine has been inspiring children, parents, librarians, and teachers for well over two years with their monthly online magazine. Now with the release of the Best of Stories for Children Magazine Volume 1, children, parents, librarians, and teachers can enjoy the top stories, poems, and articles from Stories for Children Magazine's first year of publication over and over again.

The Best of Stories for Children Magazine Volume 1 can be purchased nationwide from any bookstore, or online through several internet websites including Amazon.com, LuLu.com at <http://www.lulu.com/content/4892856>, and the SFC Bookstore at <http://www.storiesforchildrenmagazine.org>

Come visit the SFC Team and SFC Contributors in the World of Ink at Stories for Children Magazine! There are many wonderful articles, stories, and interviews with leading Children's Authors or Illustrators in each monthly issue.

To learn more about Stories for Children Magazine visit:
<http://www.storiesforchildrenmagazine.org>

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Phone: 800-670-4416

VIRTUAL BOOK TOURS



VBT – Writers on the Move

Well, it's that time again...another month here and just about gone. The VBT – Writers on the Move August tour begins on Saturday, August 1st and the second post will be on Monday, August 3rd.

I would like to mention that we have one member, Virginia Grenier, who, for unforeseen circumstances, cannot post on the 1st. She will host her guest on August 3rd and 5th. We're sorry for this inconvenience.

And, we're pleased to add a new member to our merry band of authors: Stephen Tremp.

The August VBT – Writers on the Move Schedule:

[Dianne Sagan](#) is hosting Karen Cioffi
[Harry Gilleland](#) is hosting Virginia Grenier
[Karen Cioffi](#) is hosting Heather Paye
[Kathy Stemke](#) is hosting Dianne Sagan
[Lea Schizas](#) is hosting Carolyn Howard-Johnson
[Nancy Famolari](#) is hosting Linda Asato
[Vivian Zabel](#) is hosting Katie Hines
[Margaret Fieland](#) is hosting Crystalee Calderwood
[Crystalee Calderwood](#) is hosting Helena Harper
[Katie Hines](#) is hosting Mayra Calvani
[Dorothy Massey](#) is hosting Marvin Wilson
[Liana Metal](#) is hosting Gayle Trent
[Carolyn Howard-Johnson](#) is hosting Harry Gilleland
[Virginia Grenier](#) is hosting Stephen Tremp
[Helena Harper](#) is hosting Dorothy Massey
[Gayle Trent](#) is hosting Kathy Stemke
[Mayra Calvani](#) is hosting Liana Metal
[Marvin Wilson](#) is hosting Lea Schizas
[Anita Yasuda](#) is hosting Nancy Famolari
[Linda Asato](#) is hosting Vivian Zabel
[Heather Paye](#) is hosting Margaret Fieland
[Stephen Tremp](#) is hosting Anita Yasuda

Please be sure to join us on this fun and informative tour! And, be sure to leave a comment you may be the lucky winner of our Mystery Site Giveaway! You may win a book from one of our award winning authors.

PROCLAIM YOUR SUCCESSES!

Linda Wilson - I'm very happy to announce that my second story, "Tall Boots," based on a true story that happened to our eight-year-old neighbor, has been accepted by Stories for Children Magazine for the September 2009 issue. My first published fiction story, "Cradle in the Wild," appeared in the SFCM May 2009 issue.

Writer's Digest

WRITE BETTER GET PUBLISHED

If you appreciate Write What Inspires You Newsletter, please consider nominating us for the "Writer's Digest Best Newsletters for Writers." Send an email to writersdig@fwpubs.com with your comments and nomination and be sure to note "Writer's Digest Best Newsletters" in the subject line. Thank you in advance if you are so inclined.

SUPPORTER ADS

Award-winning author of the HowToDoItFrugally Series of Books for writers, including USA Book News' award winners

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If you'd like to become a published children's book author yourself, join the Children's Writers' Coaching Club like I did, at the National Writing for Children Center and get the help you need to succeed - <http://www.cwcoachingclub.com>



[Lea Schizas](http://leaschizaseditor.com), is a multi-published and award-winning author and editor. Her commitment is to help you tighten your manuscript before it's submitted to agents or publishers. She will stick with your manuscript until we are both satisfied of the conclusion ~ <http://leaschizaseditor.com>

SFC Newsletter for Writers



At SFC Newsletter for Writers, we believe writers naturally want to help along those starting out. I know you will enjoy this monthly newsletter loaded with helpful information, fun stories about the writing life, and the successes of fellow writers.

Voted one of the 101 Best Websites for Writers by Writer's Digest 2009

<http://storiesforchildrenpublishing.com/SFCNewsletterforWriters.aspx>



Need A Manuscript Critique?

Do you have a wonderful story, but need a second pair of eyes to look it over?

VS Grenier will look for grammar, spelling, setting, plot, character development, and so much more. Critiques are designed to help us become better writers. We all need our stories looked at by others who have experience in the writing world. VS Grenier was voted one of the Top Ten Editors ~ Preditors & Editors Readers Poll 2007. To find out more about VS Grenier's critique services visit: <http://vsgrenier.com/critiques.aspx>



Serenity Promotions' mission is to help today's authors utilize the internet as a promotional vehicle to get their work seen by more readers—all while taking the burden of online promotions off the authors' shoulders, leaving them more time to do what they do best: write. Serenity Promotions is a new venture founded in 2009. Because SP was created by an author for authors, we have a unique approach to online promotions and an understanding of the obstacles small press and self-published writers face in getting their books before an audience. We go above and beyond to get your book the attention it deserves and to remove the stress from online promotions.

To learn more about what Serenity Promotions has to offer, visit us at:

<http://serenitypromotions.wordpress.com>



Parents, grandparents and caregivers often hear these familiar words: "I'm bored, there's nothing to do." And the most famous of all while traveling - "Are We There Yet?" Now -- There's an App for that.

iKids Play™ by Shering Solutions LLC, is the perfect creative play activity developed by educators and now available for iPhone/iPod Touch through this new App. Sue Thurman's, *Maybe We Are Flamingos*, is now available in this innovative format, at the Apple Store in the iTunes section.

Your child can use the Rub 'n Color activity, which is perfect for small fingers providing the ability to magically reveal pictures. The Touch 'n Color allows children to select one of many colors, then use their finger as a crayon to color the illustrations. This is the perfect way to color without breaking or misplacing crayons on a long trip. The iRead Aloud function will let your child read the story and record it in their voice, or listen to Storytime read by Safari Sue Thurman. Adults also love these fun activities, when they can get their children to share.

Read more at: <http://www.examiner.com/x-2174-Arizona-Family-Examiner>

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We DETEST spam and we do not share or sell our mailing list
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