

## Agenda:

1. Announcements.
2. Self Introductions
3. Guest Speaker: Jennifer Grainger on the topic of Ghostwriting

Present: Beyers, Darrow, Fuller, Grainger, Holder, Hugman, Johnson, Kando, Loofbourrow, Marshall, Mendezona, Mitchell, Moy, Ortega, Pacholik, Russell, Thornton, Villa.

1. Announcements: President Michelle Hamilton began the meeting with some announcements. She gave the following publishing tips: August is always a slow month for book sales. So here are some ideas as to what to do:

a) advertise. You can try advertising on Twitter, Facebook and Amazon, but also on Kindle Nation Daily, Book Gorilla or Ereader News Today. The cost may be around \$50 for a 5-day run. You might also try giveaways on Amazon and other sites.

b) Publish, so as to keep your name in front of your readers

c) Send out a newsletter. You should have a mailing list to which you send out news about yourself, about anything that connects with readers and makes them see you as a person.

There was an announcement and a flyer about the upcoming Elk Grove Writers Conference, October 27, 2018. You can register now. For information: e-mail: [elkgrove.writersguild@aol.com](mailto:elkgrove.writersguild@aol.com) and website: [www.egwg.org](http://www.egwg.org)

Sharon Darrow announced that preparations for next year's book award contest are under way. Applications are already being accepted. For the first time, e-books may compete. For more information, e-mail Sharon at [Sharon@SharonSDarrow.com](mailto:Sharon@SharonSDarrow.com) or check out the Northern California Publishers and Authors' website.

2. Self introductions: The turn-out for this meeting being so good, individuals' self-introductions were brief (and to the point).

3. Guest Speaker: Jennifer Grainger is an NCPA member who is an editor and a ghost writer. She has been an avid reader all her life and she has a long history of writing in her family background. She helps others publish their own books, and she is also an author. Her non-fiction book, *Becoming Conscious: One Woman's Story of Spiritual Awakening*, was published in 2006.

Jennifer's presentation began with a few questions: What is a ghostwriter's primary task? What are some differences between writing fiction and writing about topical subjects? Jennifer herself ghostwrites primarily non-fiction materials, for example memoirs.

The author is the one who provides and starts out with the character(s) and the plot. The ghostwriter is the phantom scribe. The ghostwriter does not create the characters and the plot.

The first book Jennifer ghostwrote was about 140,000 words long. Ghostwriting is not cheap. In 2010, most contracts ranged from \$10,000 to \$50,000. However, many of them were between \$5,000 and \$10,000. And a one-year ghostwriting project might be for \$25,000, paid in 5 installments. And there is the concept of the skill fee: This is a partial and final payment made when a project is aborted.

Jennifer herself also does editing, charging \$450 to evaluate a manuscript of up to 75,000 words.

Her first ghostwriting job was an autobiography. She recorded the author, then transcribed the material.

A major challenge is due to the fact that the author does not tell his or her story chronologically. So the hardest part for the ghostwriter is to put things in order. In order to achieve this, Jennifer goes over the timeline with the author. She gets the facts straight. She distinguishes between sections rather than chapters.

Authors sometimes even cry while telling their story.

Jennifer was asked whether she ever turns down or refuses to work on a story. Not really. However, there are

sometimes language problems, for example obscene language. Also, there is a generation gap. For instance, a young author was describing a courtship situation, and when Jennifer asked her something to the effect that a man was courting the author's mother, the author didn't understand.

The person whose book is being ghostwritten is properly called the author, not the writer. The author then has the option to mention Jennifer's name and assistance in the book. Jennifer (the ghostwriter) *can* appear as the co-writer, or not. Her name does not have to be mentioned.

Questions were raised about possible falsehoods, legal liability, and related issues. Such matters can be addressed in the ghostwriting agreement between the author and the ghostwriter, an example of which Jennifer passed out.

Once Jennifer has a written manuscript, she runs it through an editing program, and she also uses a beta reader (a test reader).

Jennifer shared with us that she comes from a family of writers and editors, some of whom worked for *The New Yorker*.

The ghostwriter's special skill is not that she writes better English, but it is her ability to put together a *story*. In other words, the author usually only provides a *report*, but Jennifer turns that into a readable, enjoyable story. She gave the example of a mountain climber's story. All he had handed in, at first, was a mere report of some facts. Jennifer made that into a real story.

When a client causes problems, i.e. misses appointments, etc., the ghostwriter charges extra. These matters are dealt with in the contract. Also, she can go to the arbitration board and/or pursue legal action. Other resources include the *California Lawyers for the Arts*. An interesting legalism we learned was that e-mails are admissible as evidence in court, but text messages are not. The bottom line is this: Never start a project without a contract.

Another thing the ghostwriter does when someone submits a manuscript is to research the *facts*, e.g. what is a mountain's exact height, etc.

So Jennifer's job is not to sell books. It is to help write them. She gets her clients largely by word of mouth. Her website is not an ad.

Being a ghostwriter requires a lot of patience. Authors can ramble a lot. And you have to solve puzzles, something which Jennifer enjoys doing.

Jennifer concluded her very informative presentation with some resources and references on how to become a ghostwriter.

August 20, 2018,

Tom Kando, Secretary