

# The Georgia Authority

Monthly Memos from the Georgia Writers Association

Volume 1, Issue 3

April 2012

## Upcoming GWA Events:

- Saturday, April 14: *The Art of Story*, Margaret South, screenwriter and producer.
- Saturday, May 12: *Telling the Truth and Keeping It Real*, River Jordan, memoirist and novelist.
- Saturday, June 16: Georgia Author of the Year Awards (GAYA) banquet & ceremony

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## Insights into Independent Publishing

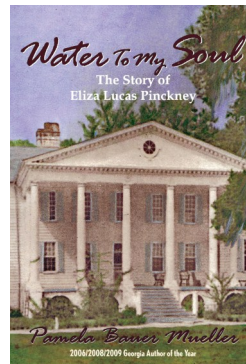
*From Three-time GAYA Winner Pamela Bauer Mueller*

By Karen Pickell

Pamela Bauer Mueller has been publishing on her own terms since 1999. Many years after she and her daughters moved from Mexico City to the U.S. following the end of her first marriage, Mueller wrote them a thank-you note in the form of her first children's book, *The Bumpedy Road*. Thinking it would be her only book, she decided to self-publish, and after receiving advice from several other authors who had formed their own publishing companies, Mueller and her second husband, Michael, founded Piñata Publishing.

Mueller knew from the start that she wanted to do things her own way. "Even though I planned to be a one-book author, I wanted to own the rights to the book and make all the decisions on publication." She did not, however, want to print her book on demand—partly due to the high cost, but also

because she overheard a community relations manager at Barnes & Noble Booksellers say that the store did not schedule signings of print-on-demand books.



Pamela and Michael printed 1,000 copies of *The Bumpedy Road* in the first run. Within six months, they sold every copy in local bookstores and schools, after which they printed another 3,000 copies. "I didn't know then what I know now," Mueller

says. "My marketing consisted of school visits and getting local bookstores to agree to sell it. When I finally met my publicist and learned the marketing ropes, I had just published my fourth book, *Hello, Goodbye, I Love You*."

These days it takes a small team of contractors to produce, distribute, and market Mueller's books. Once a manuscript is completed, it goes out to a professional editor (formerly of Simon & Schuster) who edits it for content. Subsequently, the manuscript is reviewed by two other editors and two proofreaders. Next, a bookmaker converts the manuscript into book form, including covers created by a separate cover artist. A print broker finds the best printer for the book. Publicist Sharon Castlen "showed us the importance of making galleys and getting industry reviews

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## Second Saturday Sneak Peek: Margaret South

by Natasha Larivee

As writers, we all love to tell stories. After all, that's why most of us chose this profession, isn't it? However, sometimes the desire to tell a story does not always translate as smoothly as we would like into the actual process of storytelling. Sometimes, our meanings become lost in the translation from imagination to page. Some-

times, we can't help but wonder if there is any meaning at all floating around the ideas bursting out of our own minds. However, Margaret South, screenwriter and acclaimed producer of films such as *Man of the House* and the timeless hit *Beaches*, is joining the GWA Second Saturday Speakers Series for the month of April to

provide us all with some direction in her workshop, "The Art of Story."

Margaret South's philosophy regarding the art of storytelling has not only shaped her own career, but has influenced scores of young writers and students as well. She became the co-founder of the produc-

(Continued on page 3)

## National Poetry Month

April 2012

Check out these links for celebration ideas

[Poem in Your Pocket Day from Poets.org](#)

[April Poem-A-Day Challenge on the Writer's Digest Poetic Asides blog](#)

[Muses and Metaphor, a Twitter poetry challenge sponsored by NPR](#)

[Poetry activities for children from Crayola.com](#)

**Brenda Sutton Rose**, a writer and artist, lives in Tifton, Georgia.

## Love Affairs Begin with Opening Lines

by Brenda Sutton Rose

I'm a sucker for opening lines of books. Take me to a bookstore, and I'll flip open one after another, books that are complete strangers to me, simply to read the first words from the author's pen. If I'm intrigued, I'll take the book home with me, take it to bed, and hope it doesn't let me down.

Some authors hook me by writing about the land, the soil.

"My mother and father were born in the most beautiful place on earth, in the foothills of the Appalachians along the Alabama-Georgia line," writes southern author Rick Bragg in *All Over but the Shoutin'*.

"My people live among the mobile homes, junked cars, pine plantations, clearcuts, and fields." Janisse Ray made the land appear to me as stanzas of poetry in *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*.

Other authors make me laugh, and I know I'm in for a good southern read.

"Aunt Catfish didn't look right in her casket," writes Niles Reddick in *Lead Me Home*.

And there are those that take me by surprise. Tell me more. Tell me more.

"Captain Ahab was neither my first husband nor my last," writes Sena Jeter Naslund in *Ahab's Wife*.

"I still remember the day my father took me to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books for the first time." Carlos Ruiz Zafon wrote that first line in *The Shadow of the Wind*. The book kept me reading all night. I could not put it down. It was a whirlwind love affair between that book and this fifty-something-year-old woman.

The first line of my most recent short story, "Sleeping

on Paul's Mattress," is, "From my crouching position under the house, I watch a hearse back into the yard and stop right short of the front porch."

Some writings go straight to the comatose places in my



mind, stirring up old memories, as Jeff Newberry often does in his poetry.

In "Cleaning Fish," a poem, he writes, "My father scrapes the mullet with a butter knife."

And in another poem, "My Father, Fishing," Jeff writes, "Dawn knives through cypress & pine, / casts slatted shadows over Depot Creek."

I can picture it. Fishing. I nearly taste it as though I've been there before, maybe fishing with my own father at a pond in southern Georgia, maybe at Whiddon Mill Pond on the Whiddon Mill Road where my grandfather ran a grocery store owned by the Ross family. The water is deep and I'm scared, but my father is nearby. Jeff's words pull up memories stashed and long forgotten in the corners of my mind.

"Mother spooned the poisoned corn and beans into her mouth, ravenously, eyes closed, hands shaking." Barbara Robinson wrote that line in her memoir, *Change Me into Zeus's Daughter*, and dragged me through the book in one day. I read it twice.

First lines are first impressions to me. If I have to read

the first page twice to get the gist of it or if my mind drifts while reading the first paragraph, I'm not taking the book to bed with me.

I'm presently reading, *True History of the Kelly Gang*, a novel. It begins like this: "I lost my own father at 12 yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences my dear daughter you are presently too young to understand a word I write but this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false."

Whoa! The author of that book is Peter Carey.

I wonder if you recognize the following without searching for them on Google?

"When he was nearly thirteen my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow."

"The dark man fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed."

"It was the day my Grandmother exploded."

"My mother and father should have stayed in New York where they met and married and where I was born."

"When I was little I would think of ways to kill my daddy."

"After eight months spent in the obscurity of our mother's womb, my brother, Shiva, and I came into the world in the late afternoon of the twentieth of September in the year of grace 1954."

Tonight, I'm reading something by Bret Lott.

*This article first appeared on the blog [Sweet Tea in Southern Georgia](#).*

## Second Saturday (continued from page 1)

tion company All Girl Productions with Bette Midler and Bonnie Bruckheimer. South admits that having a bustling Hollywood career is “exciting, fast-paced, with high-pressure and high stakes,” and that she most enjoyed helping people tell stories, but after so many years of this fast-paced environment, South decided to take it easy and moved to Hawaii with her husband and children, where she founded the government-sponsored Kid’s Talk Story: an extremely successful after-school program that encourages young students to get involved with the writing process.

South’s passion for helping writers to tell their stories led to the development of a unique workshop, “The Art of Story.” This workshop aims to help writers bring a higher sense of focus to their stories and to develop a strong story structure. South argues that it is this structure which helps to identify and strengthen the meaning in an individual’s writing. That’s what this workshop aims to do: identify the hidden meaning in a story and to shape the structure of the story in a way

which best conveys that meaning. South asks writers to come to the workshop with a working idea for a story, whether the idea be simply something floating around in their mind or a work already in process. However, coming prepared with a story isn’t a necessity; South urges anyone to attend, hoping that everyone will leave feeling revitalized and ready to write.

### The Art of Story with Margaret South

April 14, 2012 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM KSU Center

- An intensive workshop for those writers who want to deepen their understanding of story structure.
- Bring your story - whether it's a screenplay, or a novel-in-progress, or better still, if it's just a one sentence idea.
- Margaret will help you craft a solid structure based upon the true meaning of your work.



Margaret South, a screenwriter, formed a production company with Bette Midler.

Georgia Writers Association



2012 Second Saturday Speakers Series

Click [here](#) to register for the April 14th workshop!

*Natasha Larivee will receive her Bachelor of Arts in English from Kennesaw State University this coming May before moving to London to pursue a career as a novelist and screenwriter.*

### Get Writing!

Use the first line of a nursery rhyme to start a story.

Write a story about an empty glass.

Prompts courtesy of [creativewritingprompts.com](http://creativewritingprompts.com)

## Around Georgia - April 2012

- ◆ April 3, Poetry Atlanta Presents..., Decatur Library Auditorium, [www.poetryatlanta.blogspot.com](http://www.poetryatlanta.blogspot.com)
- ◆ April 10, Bret Lott, Mercer University, Macon, [apps.mercer.edu/calendar](http://apps.mercer.edu/calendar)
- ◆ April 14, David Sedaris, Lucas Center for the Arts, Savannah, [www.gpb.org](http://www.gpb.org)
- ◆ April 14, author Jennifer Arnold, Roswell Library, [www.forl.net](http://www.forl.net)
- ◆ April 19, poet Jake Adam York, Kennesaw State University, Social Sciences Bldg. 1019, 7 p.m., contact Tony Grooms at [tgrooms@kennesaw.edu](mailto:tgrooms@kennesaw.edu) or 770-423-6440
- ◆ April 19, syndicated columnist, author, and Georgia native Rheta Grimsley Johnson, Scott’s Bookstore, Newnan, [www.newnangaonline.com](http://www.newnangaonline.com)
- ◆ April 25, screenwriter & author Delia Ephron, Atlanta History Center, [www.atlantahistorycenter.com](http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com)
- ◆ April 26, Townsend Award Evening, Atlanta Botanical Garden, [www.georgiacenterforthebook.org](http://www.georgiacenterforthebook.org)
- ◆ April 28, The Poets of Sibling Rivalry Press, Decatur Library Auditorium, [www.georgiacenterforthebook.org](http://www.georgiacenterforthebook.org)
- ◆ April 30, syndicated columnist, author, and Georgia native Rheta Grimsley Johnson, Jimmy Carter Library & Museum, Atlanta, [www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/events](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/events)

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### Submissions

Please send your member news and events to The Georgia Authority editor by the 20th of each month.

Please contact the editor for guidelines if you wish to contribute an article to The Georgia Authority.

### The Georgia Authority

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## The 48th Annual Georgia Author of the Year Awards

June 16, 2012

<http://authoroftheyear.org>

### Sponsor a Banquet Table

**\$100** Receives Advertising Space & Professional Membership to GWA

**\$150** Receives All of the Above Plus Two Banquet Tickets

Contact Lisa Russell for details: [lmrussell@georgiawriters.org](mailto:lmrussell@georgiawriters.org) or 770-420-4736

Individual tickets on sale May 1st

## Independent Publishing (continued from page 1)

for each title. She encouraged us to participate in the large book shows, helped me write press releases and flyers and seek presentation opportunities, and even found our distributor for us."

Partners Publishers Group helps Piñata Publishing distribute Mueller's books throughout the world. "They are sold in traditional bookstores, independents, museums, historical societies, gift shops, and anywhere else books are sold." Several titles have been translated into other languages, and two are available in Braille. Some were printed in both hardcover and trade paperback, others only in paperback. Most titles are available in e-book form, sold through Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and other sites. "I believe e-books are here to stay," says Mueller. "Yet, we realize there are many people who still love to hold and smell paper books. I am one of those. I really think that printed books will always be around as well."

Despite having so many hands to help with the publishing process, Pamela and Michael put in many hours themselves. "I could never have established a publishing company without Michael," Mueller says. In addition to a full-time

job with the U.S. Government, Michael "easily puts in 15-20 hours weekly on the business. When I'm researching or writing, he does even more (including making dinner). I generally spend 6-8 months researching a title, and about 8-10 months writing, editing, and getting the book ready for publication."

During a book launch, they also take on a college intern who assists with sending out books for interviews, obtaining reviews, and booking Mueller for presentations. Each title requires a different marketing strategy. "We decided to launch my latest book at the Southern Independent Book Alliance (SIBA) Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. *Water to My Soul* is the story of Eliza Lucas Pinckney, a woman of true grit who lived in Charleston during the colonial times, so this conference was the perfect venue."

Mueller's books have been successful despite Piñata Publishing not having the contacts or wallet that larger publishers enjoy. "We are very happy to be independently published," Mueller says. "We enjoy owning our company, making the decisions on our cover artwork and book contents, the when, what, and where to publish,

how many books to print, our prices, and how long we want to continue printing each book." According to Mueller, traditionally published authors receive anywhere from 6-15% of total book sales, while Mueller often receives 100%. She has the freedom to decide whether to accept the percentage offered by bookstores and distributors. Piñata Publishing strives to keep its book prices low in comparison to similar titles—for example, after 2008 they began publishing Mueller's historical novels with a French flap, "a very elegant presentation of the trade paperback—beautiful books that allow us to keep prices affordable to our readers."

Her readers feed Pamela Bauer Mueller's soul. "Knowing that we are teaching history through the novel form to many who would never read about these people otherwise is our reward." Her advice to other writers is to "write what you love, and the rest will follow." Against the odds, Mueller has found success in two genres—middle reader and historical fiction—by following what she loves and doing it her way. "Like anything else, you must believe in yourself and your abilities to run a publishing company."