

# Written Word

... An E-newsletter  
for Writers and Readers in the Florida Panhandle  
"Panhandle Proud"

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.  
Biblical Proverb

Type in Panhandle Writers & Follow us on Facebook

February  
Coming Attraction  
Panhandle Community Theatre  
*Steel Magnolias*

Opening Night: Bring Your Best Friend(s) Night

(Shows: Feb. 9, 10, 11 & 16, 17, 18 @ 7:30. Matinees 12 & 19 @ 2:30  
Reservations @ 221-7599: Limited Seating



Director Candy Culberson gives instructions to actors who auditioned for parts in PCT's upcoming *Steel Magnolias*.

GOT GAME? Interested in writing and having your one-act play produced? *Writing for BlackBox2012 Seminar*, Thursday, January 26, 7:00 @ 4744 Woodbine Rd. PACE (in Storage Master Complex) **You MUST sign up in advance for this free seminar.** Email your intentions to



Lauren's most recent PCT stage appearance was in 2011's "Dinner Party".

**Lauren Sutton** has been elected the new president of the Panhandle Community Theatre Board for the 2012-13 seasons. Lauren is well known in the area for her many roles on stage and her community involvement. She is a director and has served in several capacities on the Board. A creative and innovative leader, Lauren brings to the position enthusiasm and lots of ideas for the upcoming seasons.

**The Editor's Written Word...** Myra Shofner  
myrashofner@aol.com



First Comes THE WRITTEN WORD...

Before audiences viewed **Steel Magnolias** for the umpteenth time on their television set...before they flocked to the movie in 1989 to laugh at Dolly Polly (Truvy) & company and to wipe away their tears when Julie Roberts (Shelby) died, even before *Steel Magnolias* hit Broadway for the first time in 1987, *Steel Magnolias* appeared as written words in a short story when, as a means of coping with his personal tragedy, Robert Harling penned the story of the death of his younger sister, a diabetic.

From his short story grew the beloved stage play, **Steel Magnolias**, in which Harling employed humor and lighthearted conversation as vehicles for showing the depth of emotions of the six women in the play, including their sincere friendships.

Since **Steel Magnolias** was first presented Off-Broadway on March 28, 1987 and, because of its becoming a hit movie (1989), Robert Harling's play has remained popular and is a favorite of community theatres.

Unlike the movie, the stage play takes place on one set, Truvy's beauty salon, and there are only six (female) characters. The other characters in the movie are only referred to in the dialogue of the play.

Out of his deep passion, Robert Harling's written words have moved audiences to tears and laughter for over 26 years and, without doubt, will continue to do so for many years to come.

Let's hear it for the WRITTEN WORD!

**Panhandle Writers...**meetings in January are the 12th & 26th. 2012 membership fees of \$50 are due in January.



## 4 Things That Bog Down a Scene

So, you have a great idea for a story or novel. You ponder where and how to start. You decide to start on the morning after Matilda's break up with Dilbert. It's the first day of the rest of her life without Dilbert. So, you begin writing.

The alarm clock startles Matilda into wakefulness and she opens her groggy, swollen eyes and brushes her matted blond hair from her chubby cheek. She throws the covers back and slips her chunky tootsies into her puppy dog slippers, the ones he gave her three months ago on her thirtieth birthday. As she stumbles toward the bathroom, she catches her reflection in the mirror Dilbert had fastened to her closet door only a few days ago. She notices her sagging breasts, paunchy stomach, thunder thighs and her foggy pale blue eyes, not to mention her unruly hair. "*No wonder he told me to stuff it,*" she thought. "*I have put on a few pounds this past year.*"

She continues to the bathroom cluttered with discarded clothing and used towels and flops down on the commode, wondering what's going to become of her. How is she going to make it through the day? She contemplates going back to bed. She pulls herself up and leans against the sink trying hard not to look in the mirror. She nearly gags as she brushes her teeth using her favorite toothpaste, rinses her mouth with mint flavored mouthwash for two minutes as recommended, spits it out and runs the water. She continues dressing, preparing and eating breakfast, down to brushing bread crumbs from her lap.

*Then comes the scene of her getting in the car, backing out of her drive and cruising down the Boulevard to work noticing everything along the way.*

Five pages later she finally gets to work fifteen minutes late. If you haven't lost your reader yet, the next fifteen pages of back story will surely do the trick. Of course, you realize this is too much information and your reader still doesn't know what's going on other than lover boy kicked her to the curb possibly because she had let herself go to pot.

### 1. Begin at the beginning

Where does one start? Well, at the beginning, silly. To begin with, the above beginning is not the proper place to begin this story. Remember, a story should start at a moment of change in the life of the main character which, in this story, was the night before when lover boy Dilbert told her to stuff it. This is slap in the middle of their heated argument where she is scratching his eyes out and spitting in his face. Or, maybe she fell into a state of shock and couldn't utter a word and you have to describe everything that's going on in her head while Dilbert rants on about every wrong aspect of their relationship leaving out all the good parts. The above beginning requires back-story right off and back-story of more than a sentence or two slows down a story. **(continued next page)**

#### ***Writers: Need Technical Help? Cover creation? Etc.***

Contact Connie at [www.wordslingerboutique.biz](http://www.wordslingerboutique.biz). Need help in preparing the HTML file required by Kindle. This is one of the many services she offers. *Check out what Connie has to offer the writer. She'll make your life easier.*



[wsboutique@cox.net](mailto:wsboutique@cox.net)



*Heaven's Harmony...*

*Suspense Novel*

*By Myra Shofner*

*Available at Amazon.com*

*Or order directly from author  
(myrashofner@aol.com)*

*\$12.00 includes postage.  
\*Limited # of publisher's  
copies available through  
author.*

**4 Things That Bog Down a Scene (continued)****2. Too much detail**

What else is wrong with the above beginning? It gives a second by second account of everything Matilda is doing. You may want to do this if you are trying to show a scene going in slow motion. Don't let this lapse into more dreary details. Put it down and get on to the next part where Matilda meets handsome man, Bruce, at a party that night where she is well on her way to getting wasted.

Unless something is germane to the story, leave it out. If Matilda is unkempt and a sloppy housekeeper and it plays a big part in the story, you might want to show this. But, if you are just showing how she got to the bathroom, all this does is bog down the story.

**3. Clichés**

The whole morning routine scene above is a tired cliché, as is a character looking into a mirror or any other reflective surface and describing her physical self. If you feel obligated to describe a character, try it in another fashion like her becoming disgusted because she no longer fits into her jeans. Then again, what is a cliché? I've looked at list after list of them. There are even books full of them. If you took all of them out of your work, you might end up with a See-Jane-Run book. However, some are more tired than others. You'll have to decide this for yourself. Look it up. Try using fresh ways to get across what you are attempting to say.

**4. Watch those phone conversations.**

Matilda heard the phone ring. She was clear across the room and had to navigate around the coffee table to get to her pink phone sitting on the dusty end table. She managed to pick it up on the fourth ring. "*Oh please let it be Dilbert,*" she prayed. "*Please, please, please, I'll beg him to forgive me, even though I've done nothing wrong.*"

"Hello, this is Matilda. . . . Oh, hi Ruth. I was hoping it would be Dilbert."

"Are you, really?"

"No. I don't think so. I wouldn't be good company tonight. It's just that Dilbert and I have broken up."

She goes into a long rendition of the whole breakup, hangs up the phone and wanders back to flop down on the couch. Wow that hurt just typing it.

You could have put it in one sentence. Ruth called to invite her to a party, but she begged off.

*Are you still with me? I'm worn out. I just wanted to make sure you got the point about putting in too much information and bogging down a scene. Until the next time when I have more to write, so long, goodbye, see you around. Have a pleasant day.*

*Ray*

*Ray's story about his life as a dyslexic is utilized in his book, Runt. Do yourself a favor, buy his book and read it. You will never forget it. (Myra)*