



San Gabriel Writers' League

SIGNAL

September 2026

M/S Word

- *You can still register for Part 2 - Advanced M/S Word class. Please see the Day 2 Contents on the last page. Visit our website to enroll. The cost is \$30. If you use M/S Word regularly, you don't want to miss this!*

Shout Outs -

- *Aaron Courts* conducted a livestream author reading and Q&A for his debut novel, *Refusal to Obey: A Novel of the Massacre at Sand Creek*, before its official release later this month. The event was conducted on Substack on September 19th. We'll be hearing more from Aaron in the future!
- *Janice Airhart* will be leading writing sessions at Lioness Bookstore, 208 N. Gabriel St. in Leander on Oct. 28 and Dec. 9 at 6:00 pm. Each meeting will include writing instruction and exercises, with feedback from the group. Writers of all genres are invited.
- *Carla Smith* conducted a meet-and-greet and story time event at Lark & Owl on September 13
- *Caryn (C.C.) Hawk* joined fellow authors Sandra Jackson-Opoku and JoBeth MacDaniel for a two-week Writer's Residency at Write On, Door County from August 30-September 12, 2026. The sanctuary sits on nearly 59 acres of woods, orchards, and meadows, nestled between the waters of Green Bay and Lake Michigan. There, Caryn worked on her second book of short stories.
 - Caryn and MacDaniel joined Jackson-Opoku, the inaugural recipient of Write On, Door County's Theodore B. Olson Fellowship, in a Conversations and Coffee Community Program on September 1.

- *C. C. Hawk* is one of the 14 winners of the Texas Authors Museum Short Story Contest. Her entry, entitled *Check-In Time is 3:00 p.m.*, will be published in the 11th Annual Short Stories by Texas Authors, Volume 11 anthology. Published by Texas Authors Press, the anthology is scheduled for release on October 1, 2026. The collection brings together stories spanning The winning stories become part of the Museum's ongoing effort to document and preserve contemporary literary voices connected to Texas.

Congratulations to all of you, and I hope that your accomplishments both educate and motivate others!

Opportunities -

- *Stephanie Cao* is looking to start or be part of a Critique Group. She is currently working on a children's chapter book for ages 6-9. If you are interested in joining or are currently accepting new members, please email sgwlcontacts@gmail.com, and we'll connect you.

Upcoming Events -

- Nominations open October 1 for officer elections in November. The offices of President and Treasurer need to be filled as the incumbents have reached their term limits. If you are interested in running for office or need more information, please email sgwlcontacts@gmail.com

Special Announcement -

- *Robin Reimund* has volunteered to be our new webmaster. She has experience in maintaining and managing other sites and is looking forward to working on ours. Our thanks also go to *Teresa Lynn* for her many years of service as our former webmaster. The two will be working together on the transition.

Scam Alert Scam alert Scam Alert

I know of two members who have recently been scammed. I've also heard from members and writer friends who received scam messages.

Previously, based on our Anthology, we received a scam message through our email.

The other day, I received a scam message in our SGWL email. Interestingly, it was addressed to one of our members, Lance Lemanski.

Lance and I put some things together that we hope help you identify these dangerous messages.

Here's what a typical message looks like.

The 2026 Author Spotlight Program From Shadows to Sunlight: A WWII Novel

Brandi Reads <brandireads1@gmail.com>

Sep 22, 2026,
10:11 AM (1 day ago)

Dear Lance,

I hope you are doing well. My name is Brandi Reads, and I am from the Goodreads community called The Book You Like Most. We are a growing reading community with over 50,000 members who love finding books that stay with them long after the last page.

I was introduced to your work and was genuinely impressed by what I saw. I want to be honest with you. We do not reach out to many authors. But your book stood out to me immediately.

From Shadows to Sunlight: A WWII Novel is a thrilling and romantic World War II story inspired by the remarkable life of your grandfather, Robert Amidon. Robert was the disowned grandson of one of America's wealthiest and most privileged men. He left home with nothing but a new suit and \$1. He made his own way through the Great Depression and eventually found his purpose in the US Navy aboard the famous NO boat—the heavy cruiser USS New Orleans. He believed his luck had changed for the better when he married Tony, a beautiful and hot-tempered redhead from Texas. They would finally be together in the tropical paradise of Honolulu, Hawaii. It was November of 1941, and the entire world was about to change.

That is not something we see every day. And it is exactly why your work stands out. You are not just writing historical fiction. You are crafting a beautiful, memorable and deeply personal tribute that brings to life the triumphs and trials of an ordinary man navigating an extraordinary era.

The way you honor your grandfather's story is elegant and meaningful. After discovering his handwritten World War II memories in a spiral-bound notebook tucked away in your mother's safe deposit box, you chose to preserve not only his story but the stories of countless ordinary men and women whose

courage and sacrifice shaped history. As you wrote, every man dies twice: once when he takes his last breath, and again when his name is spoken for the last time. Through these pages, his voice and the voices of those who served beside him will continue to be heard for years to come. Told with raw honesty, capturing the beautiful, the heartbreaking, and the indelible moments that defined a generation, *this is a book* that will be cherished by readers who care deeply about World War II history, family legacy, and the quiet courage of ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances.

Right now, The Book You Like Most is preparing for our 2026 Author Spotlight Program. This is a 12-month experience where we select a small group of authors to feature across our entire platform. We are only selecting 12 authors for this cycle. The goal is simple. We want to help more readers find *From Shadows to Sunlight*. We want to give your work a dedicated space where it can be seen, talked about, and shared.

We are not talking about a simple social media post or a one-time email. That is not what we do. We build a full presence for your book inside our community. This includes a featured author page, reader discussion threads, monthly spotlights, and direct introductions to our most active members who read in your genre. Our team also works with you to understand your book's themes and strengths so we can present it to our community in the right way.

Many authors write great historical fiction but struggle to get consistent attention. Readers are busy. There is too much noise. The regular way of promoting books does not always work. That is why we built this program differently. We focus on deep engagement over time. We bring your book to readers who are already looking for something new and meaningful. And we stay with your book for a full year, not just a few weeks.

We have done this before with other authors. The feedback has been consistently positive. Authors tell us they feel seen, supported, and connected to readers in a way they did not expect. Some of them have sold more books. Others have built a loyal reader base that follows their future work. But more than anything, they say it feels good to know someone is working hard to get their book into the right hands.

I want to be clear. We are not a traditional publisher. We do not ask for your rights. We do not change your book. We simply act as a bridge between you and a community of readers who trust our recommendations. We have spent a long time building this community. And now we want to open the door for a select few authors to step in.

We are currently finalizing our list of authors for the 2026 program. A few spots are still open. When I came across *From Shadows to Sunlight*, I felt strongly that you should be considered. You have written a stunning and important work about resilience, honor, and the quiet courage of ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. That kind of beautiful and meaningful work deserves to be read by more people.

Are you open to me sending over a one-page overview of how our system works for Official Selections? Just a quick reply is all I need, and I will get it over to you.

Looks enticing, doesn't it? Whoa. Hold on there! This sounds like a pretty sweet deal. Right?? Let's count all the fantastic reasons this must be legit:

- 1. She doesn't have a business account Email nor a website address*
- 2. She didn't bother to send it through my official email account that filters spam*
- 3. She mentions GoodReads, but is not actually affiliated with them*

4. *She claims to have read my book, but only uses info commonly available in the Blurb for my book online*
5. *She thinks I'm extremely talented and a rare find (okay, she may be truthful here. :-)*
6. *My book has the potential to be sent to 50,000 readers. Wow*
7. *Only a few spots are open, so I better act fast or I'll miss out*
8. *They have made other authors incredibly famous and rich, but they don't bother to give any references.*

"It's all a scam!"

Oh Wait! You might be right. Maybe this is just too good to be true??

Lance writes...

"In all seriousness, this email is a great example of unethical business practices. You can add that I receive similar offers weekly. They are VERY GOOD.

Here's an example of how sophisticated these folks are. I once followed up on one especially realistic and professional solicitation because it provided references for some very successful authors. I asked for the author's contact info, which they provided. I contacted two of the authors directly and received a wonderful and very warm, personal reply. Luckily for me, I didn't stop there. I still suspected fraud because it was too good to be true. My next step: I then forwarded those author responses to each author's actual contact email I found independently online. I received a reply from both authors saying they were, in fact, themselves victims of this scam, and the email addresses I was originally provided along with the replies attributed to them were fabricated and totally false.

These people are slick, and they are clever."

Advice... If you receive any unsolicited offers, be wary. And DO NOT REPLY! First, check out the website, email address, etc. If you're still not sure, contact a trusted member of SGWL.

Don't become a scam victim!

When in doubt, check it out!

Next meeting is:

Our next regular meeting is **October 1**

“Hybrid” Meeting*

Thursday, October 1 7:00 – 8:00 P.M.**

Cham Baird
will present

“My Journey from Refugee to Writer”

In 1975, Cham left her homeland, Vietnam, on a military aircraft empty-handed but with the clothes she wore. She arrived in America as a refugee with no money, no home, no future. All Cham knew was that she had escaped communism, and that somewhere, somehow, she would find safety and freedom.

Over the decades that followed, Cham rebuilt a life from the ground up, piece by piece. She learned resilience not from books, but from living it day by day, just trying to survive, assimilate in this new life, and overcome challenges. Many beginnings, many starting overs. Between full-time work and night school, Cham earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and business. After almost two decades at Corporate America, Cham traded a management position and took risks to pursue an independent lifestyle, becoming a business owner. In the first two years, she attended school to earn a Master's degree (MBA).

Cham had loved, lost, and found love again, a companionship that brought steadiness and peace into her life. She has begun to heal and understand identity and belonging, shaping her into the person she is now.

After over two decades running her business, Cham retired and stepped into writing. Her story is one of resilience, healing, and transformation - shaped by the experiences that carried her from Vietnam to America, from a refugee with no voice to a woman who finally found hers.

Cham writes to turn memory into strength, a voice through written words that she once had to leave behind.

Everyone is welcome! Meetings are appropriate for writers at all levels, from beginner to advanced. Attend two meetings before becoming a member.

*Contact the Zoom Administrator at sgwlcontacts@gmail.com in advance for an invitation to the meeting or attend the in-person hybrid meeting in the Community Room in the Parks Administration Building located at 1101 North College Street in Georgetown, Texas.

**Social time and refreshments begin at 6:30.

If transportation is needed, please contact sgwlcontacts@gmail.com

If you do not receive an email ZOOM invitation by September 29, please send an email to sgwlcontacts@gmail.com

(Bring a copy of your books, articles, blogs, etc for display to let members know what you write!)

Microsoft Word for Writers – Day 2
By Sam Arunachalam, Sun City, Georgetown TX

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