



October 2023

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Message from Your Newsletter Editor

Larry Martin
drlarry437@gmail.com

Transition



If you've heard the rumor, it's true. I will be stepping down as newsletter editor at the end of this year.

I started the WLOV newsletter in September 2016, and have put out ten issues each year since then. It's been a labor of love, and now I plan to retire from this position. I'll continue producing the newsletter for November and December.

When I started the newsletter back in 2016, it was only a few pages, but its size quickly grew to more than a dozen pages per issue. This is because I chose to put in many pictures of members from book events (B&N, W&W, ABU), news items about our members (which have increased significantly over the years), writing cartoons, and short articles about the craft of writing. For several years I also published in-depth interviews of our members; if you've been a member from before the pandemic, you probably remember reading those.

It will be up to the new editor how he or she crafts the newsletter. The most important aspects are to make it interesting to our members and provide useful information, especially about writing-related activities and upcoming events.

Whoever opts for this position, I will be happy to work with that person, on issues of picture formatting, internet links, or anything else to help the transition. If you are interested, please reply to our president, Frank Lancione (see President's Message, [page 4](#)).

This issue continues the tradition of pictures and text about our members, several of whom have achieved recognition in Florida Writers Association and other contests; [see pages 10-11](#). The [Appendix](#) this month is a brief essay on Ayn Rand's fiction. I am giving a PowerPoint talk on this subject October 13, at the Philosophy Club, Lake Miona Rec Center, 4 to 5:30 pm.

Upcoming Activities

October 2023

Thursday, Oct 5, 6:30-8:30 pm – Wine and Words, Riverbend Rec Center, 6:30-8:30 pm; Book presentations by Dan Varelli and Tom Labaugh

Tuesday, Oct 10, 11 am-2 pm – All Booked Up book signings, Colony Plaza. Authors Ann Heathman, Bill Pullen, and Chris Tolos.

Wednesday, Oct 11, 9-11 am – WLOV General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 9-11 am
Presentation: "Audiobooks: Options and Insights," by Rita Boehm and panelists.

Friday, Oct 13, 4-5:30 pm – "The Fiction of Ayn Rand, the Nation's Most Controversial Bestselling Author": The Villages Philosophy Club presentation by Larry Martin, 4-5:30 pm, Lake Miona Rec Center. ([See Appendix](#))

Saturday, Oct 14, 2 pm – B&N Kick-off event for fourth quarter, first group of 6 authors for the quarter, Lake Sumter Landing

Saturday, Oct 21, 11 am-2 pm – Wildwood Antique Mall book signing: Francesca Boroden and Anne Dobkin

November 2023

Thursday, Nov 2, 6:30-8:30 pm -- Wine and Words, Riverbend Rec Center, 6:30-8:30 pm; book presentations by Spencer Langford and Fran Szarnicki

Saturday, Nov 4, 2 pm – B&N Kick-off for fourth quarter, second group of 6 authors for the quarter, Lake Sumter Landing

Wednesday, Nov 8, 9-11 am – WLOV General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, Presentation: Meet Your Character, organized by Paula Howard

Tuesday, Nov 14, 11 am-2pm - All Booked Up book signings, Colony Plaza

Saturday, Nov 18, 11 am-2 pm - Wildwood Antique Mall book signing: Bill Hade and Scott Ives

“Emotions of Love” Writing Contest

**Get Published: WLOV and *Village Neighbors* Magazine’s Valentine Contest
By Mark Newhouse**

Deadline Thursday, October 12, 2023. Be a winner! Enter your new, original, poem or prose. For poem, 50 lines maximum. For prose (short story, essay, etc.), 800 words maximum.

Theme: “Emotions of Love,”

Only one entry per member: Poem or prose

Send your entry to mark@newhouse.net. The top three winners in each category will be published in *Village Neighbors* magazine, February 2024. A writing contest should stimulate your creativity, so think about love and all of its emotions, and send in your entry. Use the subject line “WLOV Contest 23” and include the following in your email submission.

- Your full name and phone number
- Prose or Poem/Title of your work
- Pledge: I am a paid-up WLOV member. My entry is original and unpublished.

The entry should be sent as an attachment, and not contain identifying information. Please send it as a Word attachment without your name on the entry itself. If you win, note that *Village Neighbors* Magazine is only taking first rights, so you may publish it elsewhere after it appears in the magazine. Due to space limits, we may publish just excerpts, so please edit carefully. This contest is co-chaired by me and WLOV president Frank Lancione; we hope it becomes an annual Valentine tradition. **Share your love and touch hearts.**

President's Message

Frank A. Lancione



Do You Remember Where You Were When You Heard That. . .

Being a member of WLOV and living in The Villages is a wonderful life. There are announcements of new things starting up all the time. However, because most Villagers are also in the last phase of their lives, sometimes the announcements we receive are of cherished things coming to an end. I had one of those announcements recently from our colleague, Dr. Larry Martin:

I started the WLOV newsletter in September 2016, and have put out ten issues each year since then. It's been a labor of love, but now I plan to retire from this position in January.

My response to Larry was upbeat and thankful:

Kudos to you and Ruth for planning to take full advantage of your next decade! You have much to look back on with pride and a lot to still look forward to! . . . Thanks for everything you have done for the club through the newsletter over the past seven years!

For Dr. Larry, the WLOV newsletter was a labor of love. Other clubs' newsletters are usually 1-2 pages, hastily prepared, haphazardly produced listings of upcoming events. Under Larry, WLOV's newsletter was a comprehensive collection of articles, announcement, interviews, tips on the art of writing, and even entertaining cartoons. It was something to look forward to, learn from, and enjoy each month. It was not something Larry had to do. It was something he enjoyed doing. His effort and enthusiasm showed, and we all benefited.

As is our duty, the WLOV Board will explore options for communicating with club membership going forward. If you are interested in getting involved in whatever comes after Larry's newsletter, we have all enjoyed so much over the past seven years, send me a note at flancione@verizon.net.

One thing is certain. Something will come after the WLOV newsletter that Larry has so diligently and successfully produced over the past seven years. Thank you, Dr. Larry!

Help Needed for WLOV Library

By Frank Lancione, WLOV President

WLOV Librarian Pete Shianna is searching for one or two members to manage the library once a month when he can't attend the meeting. Pete would be happy to teach you the library protocol, which is simple and would take only a few minutes to explain. If you are interested, please email me, at flancione@verizon.net.

Nominations Open for 2024

By Frank Lancione, WLOV President

flancione@verizon.net

The following members are running for leadership positions for 2024. If you are interested in any of these positions, let me know as soon as possible.

Current Members Expressing Interest in Elected Leadership Roles for 2024

Role	Individuals Expressing Interest as of September General Mtg
President	Jeanne Rogers
Vice President	Phyllis Walters
Treasurer	Mark Witmer
Secretary	Julie Feingold

The nominating period is still open. If you are interested in being considered for an elected or appointed club leadership position in 2024 please contact Frank A. Lancione.

WLOV General Meeting Sept 13, 2023



Another great meeting with large attendance. New members introduced themselves and discussed their books.

Then Paula Howard (left photo) presented a talk on "Becoming A More Effective Book Promoter." The presentation was



excellent and informative. Our next general meeting will be on October 11th. The presentation will be on "Audiobooks: Options and Insights," by Rita Boehm and panelists. See you there!

Communications from Rita Boehm



Communications Director Rita Boehm has several updates for this newsletter: Expo24, Barnes & Noble, our new Sunshine Committee, and WLOV Book Promotion Opportunities.

Update on Expo2024

Sunday, January 28, 2024, Eisenhower Recreation Center

It's a sellout! For the first time ever, BookExpo was completely filled by mid-September—and we have an extensive waiting list. Over 100 authors have signed up.

We've also selected a phenomenal key-note speaker. At 12:00 pm Dr. Donald Wyman, who spent 22 years working for the CIA and is a much in-demand speaker, will present: **THE JFK ASSASSINATION: WHY IT HAD TO HAPPEN.**

BOOKEXPO BACKGROUND: For the benefit of our newer members: BookExpo is the premier promotional event for local authors. This annual Writers League event is one the community looks forward to attending. Thanks to effective media advertising and all of the folks who helped get the word out, over 3500 people visited BookExpo2023.

We look forward to another successful event for BookExpo2024. Our major marketing activities take place throughout December and January. Please sign up to assist our core committee with distributing bookmarks and flyers. Sign up at the next General meeting, or at wlovwriters@gmail.com.

Committee Members: Rita Boehm, Chair, Dan Varalli, Co-chair, Manijeh Badiozamani – Registrar, Penny Thomas - Program, Julie Feingold, Mark Witmer – Marketing and General Support.

Barnes & Noble Update

Our first kick-off event for our Q4 authors will be on Saturday, October 14th at 2:00. Please join us for this event and for our second event on November 4th.

Q4 authors: Ann Marie Acacio, Steve Camp, Chris Coward, Jack Davis, Julie Feingold, Robert Frister, Martha Geaney, Dave McKeon, Roger Neff, Nancy Pflum, JD Trapp, and Barbara Walz.

If you are a new member and haven't yet been featured at one of our B&N events, please contact me at wlovwriters@gmail.com and I'll make sure you're on the list for a future event. If you've already been featured, you'll be contacted as your name cycles back into the mix.

Sunshine Committee

Know of a fellow WLOV member who has been hospitalized or is under the weather? Or, perhaps they are dealing with the loss of a family member? Please let us know so we can reach out with a get-well or sympathy message.

Contact our Sunshine Committee Chair, Kathy deMaCarty at hitherapy@outlook.com. Be sure to put "SUNSHINE COMMITTEE" in the subject line of the email. If you can't remember Kathy's email, contact us at wlovwriters@gmail.com and we'll forward your message to Kathy.

WLOV Book Promotion Opportunities

ALL BOOKED UP BOOK STORE, Colony Plaza, Hwy 466A

Coordinator: Bill Pullen, billanita@att.net

Six (6) books in a variety of genres are randomly selected to be featured in the store for 2-month periods, including an opportunity for a book signing on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. If you have NOT YET BEEN FEATURED, forward the following information to Bill: Name, email, telephone number, book title, book genre. If you've already been featured, your name is already on the list for a future repeat opportunity.

WILDWOOD ANTIQUE MALL, 364 Shopping Center Drive, Wildwood

Coordinator: Tom LaBaugh, tom@labaugh.com or wlovwriters@gmail.com

This event was on summer hiatus for the last couple of months. On the 3rd Saturday of every month, from 11:00 – 2:00, two members have an opportunity to share a table to promote and sell their books at the Antique Mall. If you are interested, please send your contact information to Tom so that he can add your name to the list to be scheduled.

BARNES & NOBLE, Lake Sumter Landing

Coordinator: Rita Boehm, ritab1423@gmail.com

Twelve members are featured for a 12-week period. Well over 100 members have been featured to date. If you have NOT YET BEEN FEATURED, provide your contact information to wlovwriters@gmail.com. If you've already been featured, your name is already on the list for a future repeat opportunity.

➔ Pictured: WLOV author books in Barnes & Noble for the past quarter.



(Continued)

WINE & WORDS, Riverbend Rec Center, 1st Thursday of the month, 6:30 – 8:30 pm.

Coordinator: Frank Lancione, flancione@verizon.net

On the first Thursday of every month, Frank interviews two authors who then have an opportunity to address a friendly group of fellow writers and book lovers. Contact Frank if you are interested in being part of this fun event.

VILLAGE NEIGHBORS MAGAZINE – Writing Bug Column

Coordinator – Mark Newhouse, mark@newhouse.net

Contact Mark to learn how you and your book(s) can be featured in his monthly column.

CORKSCREW WINERY, SPANISH SPRINGS –

An exciting new local author venue in Spanish Springs. More information will be provided as fall events are scheduled. Picture below: WLOV members at recent Corkscrew Winery event.



SENIOR-LIVING FACILITIES:

This summer WLOV authors have expanded their reach, and outreach, to include senior-living facilities. More information will be provided as opportunities develop. A win-win for our authors and the residents! We are continuing to reach out to senior-living facilities. So far, we're working with two facilities.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

THE VILLAGES MAGAZINE – Author Spotlight Column

Coordinator: Francesca Boroden, franceboroden@gmail.com

This monthly magazine features WLOV authors in 10 of the 12 issues they publish in a year. As noted in past newsletters, our cut-off was May 31st for receipt of member submissions and we received more than enough submissions to cover the next year. We will send out request for new submissions next spring.

If you know of any stores, restaurants, senior-living facilities or other businesses that may be interested in holding local author events, please contact me at wlovwriters@gmail.com.

NEWS ARTICLES ABOUT MEMBERS – FACEBOOK ALBUMS

WLOV members continue to make news. Here are the links to find news articles written about members over the last 3 months – and some writing event pictures. Snippets below.

JULY 2023 -- FACEBOOK NEWS ARTICLES POSTED

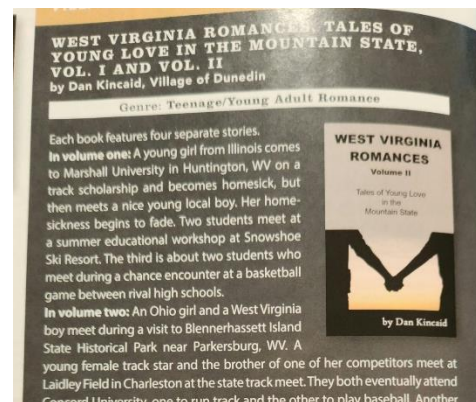
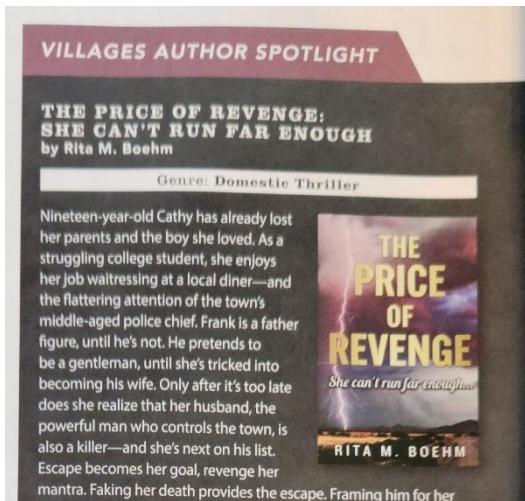
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.678987717602222&type=3>

AUGUST 2023 -- FACEBOOK NEWS ARTICLES POSTED

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.688439953323665&type=3>

SEPTEMBER 2023 -- FACEBOOK NEWS ARTICLES POSTED

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.711103761057284&type=3>



WLOV Authors: Recognitions, Awards

FWA-RPLA

Five WLOV Members are finalists in Florida Writers Association's Royal Palm Literary Award Competition. Winners will be announced at the FWA Banquet Saturday, October 29, in Altamonte Springs.
RPLA finalists and the title of their entry



Keith Abbott, THE SPILL
Manijeh Badiozamani, A YEAR IN MIDDLE AMERICA
Rita M Boehm, THE PRICE OF REVENGE
Doc Honour, NOT LIKE US
John Mallon, MARQUIS JAMES, A BIOGRAPHER'S LIFE
Peter Shianna, A SET OF NICE DISHES

FWA-Collection

Three WLOV members have stories in the 2023 FWA Collection anthology. FWA Collection is a separate contest from RPLA. Any FWA member can submit a story, which must be based on a specific theme. Judges select the 60 best for the anthology. The theme for this year's book is "secrets."

Larry Martin, "A Well-kept Martian Secret"
Mark H. Newhouse, "The Hearing: Inspired by a True Event"
Barbara Rein, "Wine and Words"

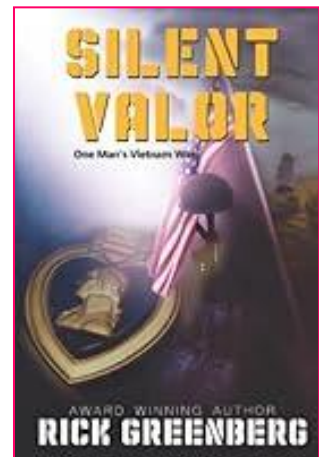


Silent Valor Win's Readers' Favorite Award

"Silent Valor" is a 2023 Readers' Favorite Silver Medal Winner in the Non-Fiction - Military genre!



Silent Valor also won a Royal Palm Literary Gold Award winner for 2022. Available in print, Kindle, or audio through Amazon.com, or www.rickgreenbergauthor.com



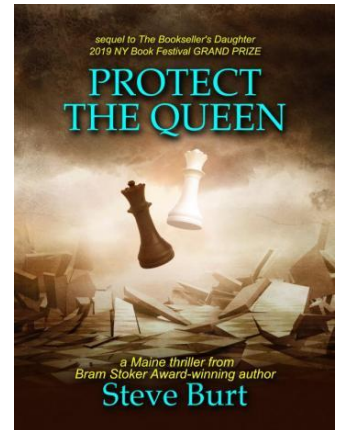
Maine novelist wins Hollywood Book Festival award

<https://www.wiscassetnewspaper.com/article/maine-novelist-wins-hollywood-book-festival-award/178064>

Sat, 09/02/2023 - 12:00pm



“When the Hollywood Book Festival Awards were announced in Los Angeles on Aug. 29 (www.hollywoodbookfest.com), Maine author Steve Burt’s novel won big. “Protect the Queen,” a southern Maine thriller, won top honors as Best Sequel of 2023.”



All Booked Up, Colony Plaza

Bill Pullen, billanita@att.net, 352-430-3006



All Booked Up book signing Sept 12, 2023
L to R: Roger Neff, Judi Taylor, Bev Meyers

Books On Sale for October

Fiction

Beverly Ann Meyers - “Go to the Wish Monger”

Judi Taylor - “The Heart Pen”

True Crime

Ann Heathman - “Liv to Tell”

Non-Fiction/Memoir

Bill Pullen - “It Started at The Savoy”

Non-Fiction

Chris Tolos - “Fall Prevention for All”

Children’s Book

Roger Neff - “Seven Colorful Cats”

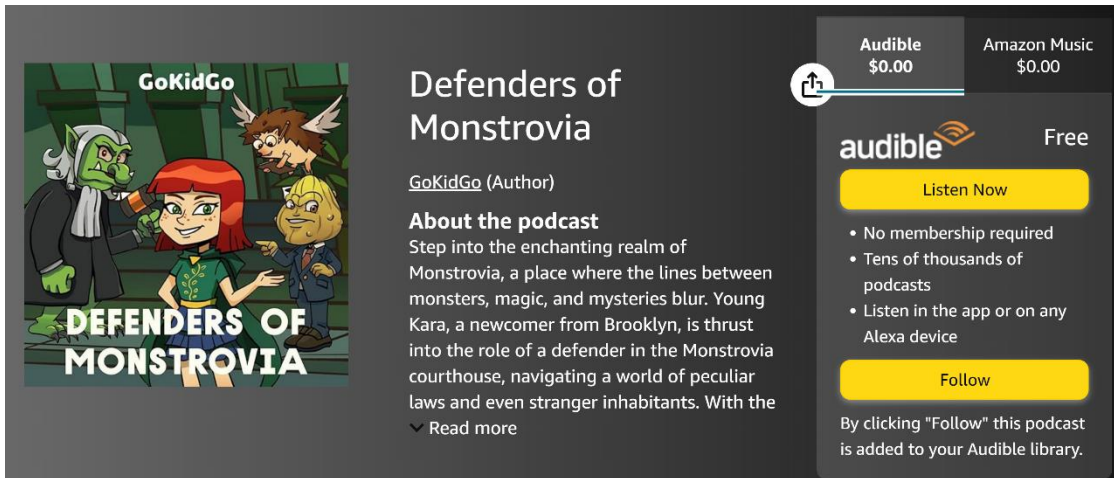
Next Book Signings at All Booked Up

Tuesday, Oct 10, 11 am-2 pm – Authors Ann Heathman, Bill Pullen, and Chris Tolos.

Tuesday, Nov 14, 11 am-2pm – “Holiday”-themed books, authors to be announced.

Defenders of Monstrovio Now Available as Podcasts

By Mark Newhouse



GoKidGo

Defenders of Monstrovio

GoKidGo (Author)

About the podcast
Step into the enchanting realm of Monstrovio, a place where the lines between monsters, magic, and mysteries blur. Young Kara, a newcomer from Brooklyn, is thrust into the role of a defender in the Monstrovio courthouse, navigating a world of peculiar laws and even stranger inhabitants. With the

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Defenders of Monstrovio is here!

Like many of our members, I'm always on the lookout for a new challenge. Usually, it's helping others with their dream of getting published as 'Top Cat' of the Writers 4 Kids Club, or as co-owner with my son of Newhouse Creative Group (newhousecreativegroup.com). These podcasts are my 'craziest' project yet; they are based on my 4-part middle-grade fiction, *Welcome to Monstrovio*.

The podcasts are produced by GoKidGo, the company that also produces podcasts by R.L. Stine, famous for Goosebumps podcasts. You can access them quickly on Amazon.com; just type in "Defenders of Monstrovio" and you'll reach the screen shown above. Then, "Listen Now," for free. You can also listen to the podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, Google Podcasts, or iHeart Radio.

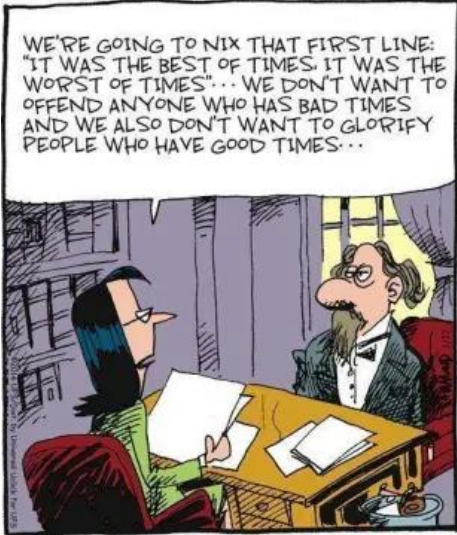
The podcasts introduce children to law and the life of lawyers in a secret sector of the USA where danger is everywhere. It features a girl protagonist searching for her missing uncle while solving fantasy cases that can only happen in Monstrovio. It's a thrill hearing my words being acted out by others. I encountered a huge learning curve in this endeavor, but it was well worth the effort. My hope is the podcasts may eventually become a television or movie series.

Besides working on the *Defenders of Monstrovio* scripts, I've also completed ten chapter books to accompany the podcasts, which the producers intend to submit to publishers. I'm also working on ideas for games and educational materials to help children explore the new world of Monstrovio.

One thing I've learned: writing can mean exploring new opportunities to share our creativity. Please listen to the Defenders of Monstrovio podcasts and consider if this, or some other 'new way' to share your work with others, may be for you.

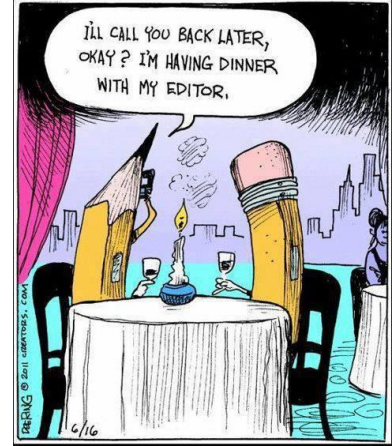


Some Old Cartoons Revisited



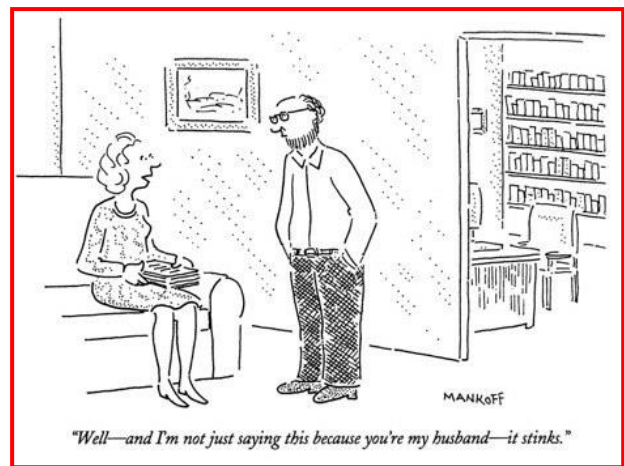
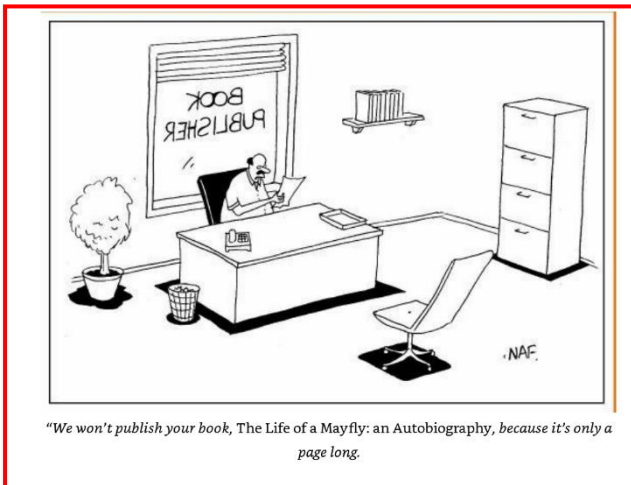
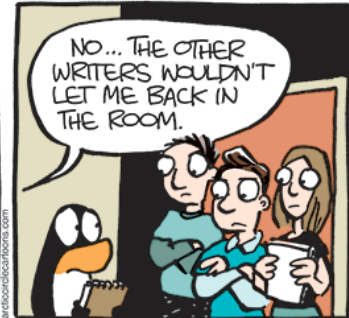
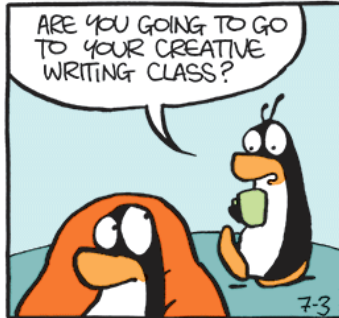
©2007 Debbie D'Arath. URL: debbiechi.com. Twitter: @theelbows.

"I do appreciate the offer of a party dress, but any chance of getting a published book contract instead?"



ARCTIC CIRCLE

ARCTICCIRCLECARTOONS.COM



Appendix: The Fiction of Ayn Rand

By Larry Martin

On Friday, Oct 13, I will be giving a PowerPoint presentation at The Villages Philosophy Club, on “The Fiction of Ayn Rand, the Nation’s Most Controversial Bestselling Author” (4-5:30 pm, Lake Miona Rec Center). Below is some of the information I will be presenting about her most famous work, *Atlas Shrugged*. These paragraphs are part of a longer chapter on Rand’s fiction, from *My Writing Life: With Advice for Beginning Writers*.

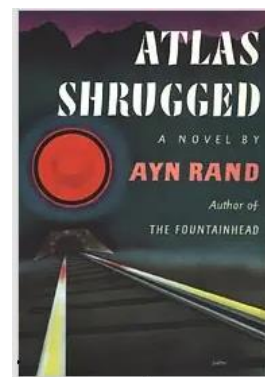
www.lakesidepress.com/MyWritingLife.pdf



Ayn Rand (1905-1982) began work on *Atlas Shrugged* in the mid-1940s, after publication of *The Fountainhead*, her first bestseller novel. The hero of *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt, rejects the socialism taking over the country and decides to call a strike of the industrialists and capitalists-- the people without whom society would fall apart.

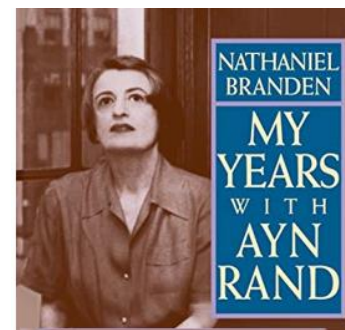
Rand’s writing style, with emphasis on individuality, heroism, and anti-collectivism, resonated with many readers. Despite the critics’ mostly negative reviews, *Atlas* reached number three on *The New York Times* bestseller list in December 1957 and has continued its popularity. To date, it has sold over nine million copies.

In one scene (Chapter X, Part 2), Rand’s hero John Galt states what could be called the tagline of *Atlas Shrugged*. As a young engineer in Wisconsin’s Twentieth Century Motors, Galt attends a company-wide meeting where the owner announces a new policy to its 6000 workers, a policy in line with what is taking place all over the country. Henceforth, all Twentieth Century employees will work according to their ability but be paid according to their need. Galt stands and announces he will put an end to such nonsense once and for all. As he starts to leave the meeting, the company’s owner cries out, “How?” Galt turns and replies calmly: “I will stop the motor of the world.”



Atlas Shrugged showcases Rand’s philosophy of Objectivism, which she defined as “the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.” Beginning in the 1950s, she formalized this philosophy with books, essays, speeches, and courses offered to the public. She also appeared on many TV talk shows, including the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson on 3 occasions in 1967 (can view on YouTube).

Objectivism attracted many followers, and between 1954 and 1957 she had an affair with one of them, Nathaniel Branden, a Canadian twenty-five years her junior and, at the time, her most avid supporter. (He would later set up the Nathaniel Branden institute to teach and promote her philosophy). The affair was carried on with the consent of Branden’s then spouse Barbara, and also with Rand’s husband.



From the mid-1950s onward, Rand’s life and career unfold like a complex soap opera. Branden, an early and strong advocate of Rand’s philosophy, had a major falling out with Rand in 1968, when she found out he was having an affair with another woman not his wife, Patrencia Scott. Rand castigated Branden publicly, and he responded, criticizing her *and* her philosophy. His 1989 book, *My Years with Ayn Rand*, offers a devastating critique of the woman he once loved, philosophically and sexually. The book’s front cover blurb states:

The shocking story of the intimate relationship between a literary genius and a young man twenty-five years her junior—a relationship that over eighteen years, went from student and teacher, to friends, to colleagues and partners, to lovers, and ultimately to adversaries. A memoir that reveals the truth behind the myths. The story only one man can tell.

After Nathaniel Branden, Leonard Peikoff (b. 1933) became Rand's philosophical torch bearer. She appointed him her legal and literary heir, and after her death, he set up the Ayn Rand Institute. New editions of her novels all have an introduction by Peikoff.

When advocates of a philosophical system begin fighting over the system's construct (as did Branden and Rand), and academicians weigh in with detailed, opposing views (google "Objectivism Debates"), the mind of the non-philosopher (me) likely opts out. It is not necessary to "understand" objectivism to enjoy and/or be inspired by her novels. Their sales before anyone even heard much about "objectivism" prove this point.

As I began to write fiction shortly before retirement, and read more about American literature, I became aware of the vitriol heaped upon Rand and *Atlas Shrugged*. In a 1999 book, Rand scholar Mimi Gladstein, wrote: "reviewers seemed to vie with each other in a contest to devise the cleverest put-downs; one called it 'excruciating claptrap,' while another said it showed 'remorseless hectoring and prolixity.'" Below are some excerpts from critical reviews.

Los Angeles Times:

["Atlas Shrugged"] is probably the worst piece of large fiction written since Miss Rand's equally weighty "The Fountainhead." Miss Rand writes in the breathless hyperbole of soap opera. Her characters are of billboard size; her situations incredible and illogical; her story is feverishly imaginative. It would be hard to find such a display of grotesque eccentricity outside an asylum.

New York Times

It has only two moods, the melodramatic and the didactic, and in both it knows no bounds.

Newsweek

Conversations deteriorate into monologues as one character after another laboriously declaims his set of values.

National Review

"Atlas Shrugged" can be called a novel only by devaluing the term. Out of a lifetime of reading...its shrillness is without reprieve. Its dogmatism is without appeal.

Though in a minority, there have also been some very positive reviews.

Hedda Hopper

Atlas Shrugged runs 1,168 pages, and you won't want to miss one word. I couldn't put it down, neither will you be able to once you've started reading. You'll say it can't happen here — but it's happening every day and we sit still while watching our rights as humans being whittled away.⁶

Richard McLaughlin

He called it a "long overdue" polemic against the welfare state with an "exciting, suspenseful plot", although unnecessarily long. He drew a comparison with the antislavery novel [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*](#), saying that a "skillful polemicist" did not need a refined literary style to have a political impact.⁷

John Chamberlain

Newspaper critic Chamberlain found *Atlas Shrugged* satisfying on many levels: as science fiction, as a “philosophical detective story,” and as a “profound political parable.”

Ronald E. Merrill

Overall, the plot of *Atlas Shrugged* is one of the greatest accomplishments of world literature. Not only is it a masterpiece of logic in itself, but it integrates perfectly the needs of the story with Rand’s exposition of a series of philosophical principles.

It’s noteworthy that the 2018 PBS *Great American Read* television series found *Atlas Shrugged* rated number 20 out of 100 novels, based on a YouGov survey “asking Americans to name their most-loved novel.” (*To Kill a Mockingbird* was number one.) If *Atlas* is so well loved, why the critical calumny? Probably as many explanations as there are critics, but here are four main reasons.

Politics. She was against any political philosophy that even hinted at socialism or collectivism. If you are inclined to favor, or not find major fault with, welfare, handouts, unions, regulations, government bureaucracy, higher taxes, or any socialistic tendency, you will likely place the book somewhere between anathema and trash.

Religion. She was a confirmed atheist and considered all religions as antithetical to reason. This belief turned away religious conservatives, who otherwise generally agreed with her pro-capitalism philosophy.

Plot. Notwithstanding Ronald Merrill’s high praise (quoted above), many aspects of her plot are highly unrealistic, such as the economy folding because just a relatively few key people quit their jobs, or a U.S. government with no mention of Congress, or a Colorado valley that no one can see from the air. The plot of *Atlas Shrugged* is highly contrived to allow Rand’s heroes to win the battle, and this contrivance is called out by critics who don’t like her message.

Characters. Rand avoids subtlety. Her good people are portrayed as smart, creative thinkers, independent and self-sufficient. Their enemies are stereotypically evil, incompetent, power-hungry socialists. If you are looking for literature whose theme and message are subject to interpretation, or a story with complex, ambiguous characters, you can easily find fault with the novel.

Atlas Shrugged is not literature like the works of William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, or Ernest Hemingway. Of course, it is also not anything like the output of Stephen King, Robin Cook, or Tom Clancy, just to mention three hugely popular novelists whose books, far from being considered great literature, are not subjected to the calumny heaped upon Rand. But then, their novels don’t advocate unbridled capitalism, condemn altruism, or give a sixty-page rant by the main character espousing the author’s philosophy.

As a mostly self-published author, I think I can speak for the legions of self-published authors in regard to the criticism of her work. We would welcome this criticism if our books sold like Rand’s novels. She knew how to write in a way that appeals to millions of readers. Critics who wish to vilify her fiction seem to miss the point. They seldom (if ever) address *why* her books, particularly *Atlas Shrugged*, are so widely read.

Write a great story that people want to read and you can ignore the critics.