Mother Wilson’s Wise Words for The Writers Guild of Texas

Barbara Wilson, professionally known as Mother Wilson, spoke at our March membership meeting flooding the audience with information on a plethora of topics. In case you missed it, her practical advice included taking breaks, reading in your genre, learning your craft, practicing your writing and participating in critique groups. She went on to speak to the importance of editing, including your layout and art work, ensuring your covers are not too busy, the importance of reviews and the “blurb” on the back of the book to draw in your potential readers.

In speaking on elevator pitches Mother Wilson emphasized including the answer to the questions: **Who** is your character? **What** do they want? And **What** are they willing to sacrifice to get it?

Prior to marketing your book Mother Wilson advised writers to set a budget, create a plan that fits that budget, be flexible with your plan and be prepared to self-promote at all levels. Including “always having a copy of your book with you, at all times, she said. “It is not always necessary or appropriate to talk about your book but there is no harm in making it visible!”

The presentation wrapped up with a brief discussion on the importance of having a blog, blogging regularly, guest blogging and always promoting!

For additional information about Barbara Wilson, visit her website at [https://motherwilsonswisewords.com/](https://motherwilsonswisewords.com/).

### KATHRYN MCCLATCHY FLASH FICTION CONTEST

The honorable mention winner of the 2017 Kathryn McClatchy Flash Fiction Contest, “Tiny Steps” by Steve McCluer is in issue. You may download this April issue as well as recent issues of the Mentor on our website, [https://www.wgtonline.org/news/](https://www.wgtonline.org/news/).

### Tiny Steps by Steve McCluer

**Friday, July 3, 1964.**

I’m working the day shift at McDonald’s because I have night duty at the base. President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Bill yesterday. We’re about to open the place and Marty calls us all together. Marty is a lifer from Mainside. He’s been a cook in the Navy for 20 years but he’s only a second-class petty officer. ‘Not real bright, but he can cook four dozen hamburgers in under two minutes. So, he’s the number two guy at this McDonald’s.

(continued at www.wgtonline.org)
“Look,” he says. Y’all know that Johnson passed the bill that allows coloreds to eat at white restaurants. It’s the law, so we have to obey it. We expect there’ll be a whole bunch of darkies wanting to try out McDonald’s for the first time. We can’t refuse to serve ‘em, but we don’t have to be nice. I don’t want to see any of you smiling, calling anybody sir or ma’am. And they can only get what’s on the menu. No ‘hold the pickles’ or ‘hamburger with no mustard’. Just standard fare. You got it?” We all nod our heads. As luck would have it, I am manning register number one today.

Sure enough, Marty is right. My second customer is a black man with his family. His kids are all looking up at me with big eyes like it’s time to open Christmas presents. I flash ‘em my biggest smile. “Hi, welcome to McDonald’s. How can I help you?” He gives me his order for a bunch of burgers, fries and drinks, all standard stuff. As I’m handing him the change I smile again. “Thank for your coming to McDonald’s, please come again.” I see Marty looking at me like he wants to strangle me, but lines are forming and he has to start turning burgers real fast. We’re too busy for him to pull me off the window.

Eventually a black lady comes to my widow asks if she can get a cheese burger with no onions. “Sure,” I say, and I holler the order back to Marty. “One cheese burger, no onions.” Marty looks like he could chew nails, but he knows he can’t make a scene, so he scrapes the onions off of a burger and throws it to me. It’s a really busy day. We serve about twenty five percent more customers than we usually would. I see some of the white customers giving dirty looks, but nobody causes any trouble.

When it’s time to check out, I hand my cash drawer to Marty, who’s now sitting at the desk in the office. “Here ya go. I’m sorry I messed up. I tried to keep all the black dollars, separate from the white dollars, but the drawer wasn’t set up for it. I’m sure you’ll be able to tell the difference.”

He turns red and is about to bellow at me, but then he says, “Ah screw it. Just punch out, and don’t let me see you acting like that again.” I hear later that the owner is happy as a pig in slop that we made a bundle of money that day. After that we don’t get any more lectures about how to treat dark skinned customers.

**Saturday, July 4, 1964**

It’s a holiday. A bunch of us head for the beach. We’re all white. We think, what the heck, all beaches are open now, so we decide to see what it’s like to visit a black beach. ‘Turns out the sand and the water and the seaweed look exactly the same. There are surprisingly few people on this beach, especially for a holiday. I don’t see any other white people. The black people stare at us, but they keep their distance, not sure what to make of us.

After a couple hours we decide to get something to eat. There are no concession stands at this beach so we head to a sit-down restaurant about a mile down the road at a white beach. The place is fairly crowded, but we get a table. We’re about half way through our lunch when all of a sudden, the waitress and some other guy – I guess he’s the manager – start running around and closing all the window shades. She flips the ‘open” sign on the door to “closed.” The light is dim in the place now. It gets real quiet. All the babble from the other tables has stopped, and everybody is looking toward the door.

The venetian blinds are closed, but I still can see through the slots that a car has pulled into the parking lot, and a black family is pouring out of the doors. It looks like a mom, a dad, maybe a grandma, and three little kids, all under ten years old. They get to the door and it’s locked. The man rattles the door. The waitress points to the sign and hollers, “We’re closed.”
The parking lot is full of cars. The man looks through the door window. “I see it’s full of people,” he says. “Private party,” she says.

I’m torn about what to do. This is just wrong. My stomach is turning into a knot. I know somebody should challenge this, but I look around the room full of white people who are all grinning at each other. My buddy Dane gives me a stare, like he knows what’s going on in my head. He shakes his head ever so slightly, warning me, “Don’t you go doing what you’re thinking.”

The black family looks real disappointed. They finally turn around and go back to their car, all of them looking at the ground. They drive away. Inside the restaurant the blinds open back up, the sign goes back to open, and the noise returns. There’s a lot of laughter. They know. The black family, these white folks, they all know. I know. The law can change overnight. But a culture? That takes generations.

2018 SPRING WORKSHOP

This workshop is ideal to fix your manuscript or discover book-level problems from your draft outline. Register Now to reserve your seat for this three-hour writer’s workshop with author Annie Neugebauer. She will walk you through how to use your own query pitch to troubleshoot problems in your novel. This workshop includes hands-on application and handouts to help you get to the heart of many issues. Annie doesn’t promise a secret sauce, but it’ll come pretty darn close.

**Online Tickets:** $35 / $25 WGT Members
**Tickets at the Door:** $40 / $30 WGT Members
Saturday, April 28, 2018 9:00 AM-12:00 PM
Richardson Civic Center, 411 West Arapaho Road Richardson

Annie Neugebauer is a novelist, short story author, and award-winning poet. She has work appearing in over 70 publications, including magazines such as Black Static, Apex, and Cemetery Dance, as well as anthologies such as Bram Stoker Award® finalist The Beauty of Death and #1 Amazon bestseller Killing It Softly. She’s an active member of the Horror Writers Association, webmaster for the Poetry Society of Texas, and a columnist for LitReactor and Writer Unboxed. Visit her website for blogs, creative works, free organizational tools for writers, and more. (@AnnieNeugebauer)

Texas Book Festival Submissions
Open Now Until June 1, 2018

The Texas Book Festival presents approximately 250 authors, from Texas and beyond. All authors who are invited to participate will be featured in a panel or solo session, although the Festival does not feature authors for book signings. The 2018 Texas Book Festival takes place October 27-28 in Austin, Texas.
What types of books are considered?

While we review all books that are submitted, our main goal is to provide an excellent and diverse mix of literature for all visitors and participating authors featuring books from the following genres:

- Fiction - including all genres, thrillers to Westerns
- Narrative nonfiction — history, biography, memoir, and essays. Nonfiction books are considered from a variety of perspectives that encourage and engage in fair, respectful discussions of history, figures and ideas.
- Graphic novels
- Cookbooks and food-related titles
- Poetry
- Children’s and YA literature
- Art and architecture titles
- Titles with a Texas focus and titles written by Texas authors

What types of books are not considered?

The Texas Book Festival focuses on the promotion of literature and Texas literary culture; books on the topics of self-improvement, how-to, or books strictly of academic or religious interest will not be considered.

Should a self-published/printed author submit?

Self-published titles will only be considered if they meet the following criteria:

- The title is bound
- Printed copies can be available for our book seller to sell
- A professional has edited the work
- An established marketing plan has been made and is submitted with the title
- A functional author website exists

The consideration for self-published titles that meet the above criteria will be the same as traditionally published books, outlined above. For additional information go to [http://www.texasbookfestival.org/submit-book/](http://www.texasbookfestival.org/submit-book/)