



Vol. 3, No. 25 June 18, 2021

- New Release: *The Blue Dolphin*
- Writing Advice from John Steinbeck
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From the Editor

Happy Friday historical fiction readers and writers! Last week I had coffee (well, a lovely Starbucks pink drink for me lol) with an author friend. Somehow the talk turned to historical fiction (gee, how'd *that* happen?) and we got on the subject of John Steinbeck and one of my favorite books, *Grapes of Wrath*. We started talking about some of Steinbeck's other books that we've read, many of them well-known classics, and my friend asked if I'd read *Sweet Thursday*. I'd never even heard of it. Evidently there's a lot of Steinbeck humor in that one, in a different vein from some of his other works.

I still haven't read *Sweet Thursday*. In fact, remembering our conversation, I just ordered it last night. But in light of my Steinbeck thoughts, I pulled up an article I wrote last year about writing advice that came from the master himself.

This week enjoy reading about a new release, *The Blue Dolphin*, from an excellent author, Kathryn Gauci, who is a master in her own right. Then take a look at Steinbeck's writing advice before checking out our featured author of the week – Jeff Salter – who is a master himself when it comes to humor. He has an unusual take on plots as he travels through time, days current mixed with days of old.

Just a quick note – we've been a weekly issue since beginning over two years ago. But next month, July, we're going to back down to a monthly issue for a while. As my better half's journey with a Stage 4 cancer diagnosis is not responding very well to chemotherapy, I'm anticipating some rougher times ahead over the next six to twelve months. So, in preparation, I'm lighting my load where I can. We'll go monthly for a short time and will be published the first Friday of every month.

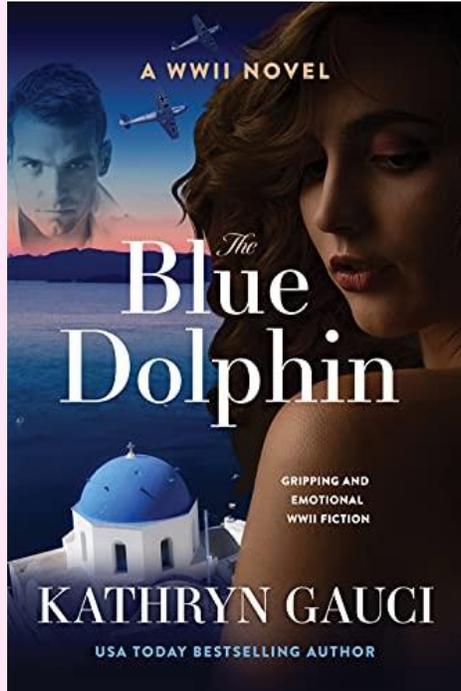
Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Rebecca Dharlingue, Gail Ward Olmsted, Malve von Hassell, Alexc Schulz, Mary Armstrong, and more!

Trisha

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New Release



[The Blue Dolphin](#)

Kathryn Gauci

Set on a Greek island in the Aegean during the German Occupation of Greece, *The Blue Dolphin* reads like a Greek tragedy. Rich with loyalties and betrayals, it is a harrowing, yet ultimately uplifting story of endurance and love.

1944 Greece: After Nefeli loses her husband during the Italian invasion of Greece in 1940, she ekes out a meager living from her Blue Dolphin taverna with the help of her eight-year-old-daughter, Georgia, their small garden, and Agamemnon the mule.

Four of Nefeli's close friends, who belong to the Greek Resistance, ask her to hide a cache of weapons, placing her in mortal danger from the enemy. When the Resistance blows up a German naval vessel filled with troops, three of them are killed, and the Germans start to make regular visits to the island. With the loss of her friends, Nefeli's dire circumstances force her to accept a marriage proposal arranged by the village-matchmakers, but what happens next throws everyone on the island into turmoil and changes the course of Nefeli's and Georgia's lives forever.

Writing Advice from John Steinbeck

In 1968, a well-known author drew his last breath. I'd never even heard of him. Yet, I was ten years old and spending inordinate amounts of time with my face buried in the pages of *Dr. Doolittle* and his exploits. I'd graduated from *Charlotte's Web*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *A Wrinkle in Time*. I hadn't yet progressed to *Grapes of Wrath*, a book that once I discovered it would become one of my top two favorite books of all time.

John Steinbeck was a Pulitzer Prize winner and Nobel laureate, but it would be many years before I discovered the joys of reading his written word. The 1930s is my favorite era to read and write about. I'm not sure if it's the influence of reading *Grapes of Wrath* or hearing the stories from my mom and grandmother about life in those difficult days. I'll give them equal fault.

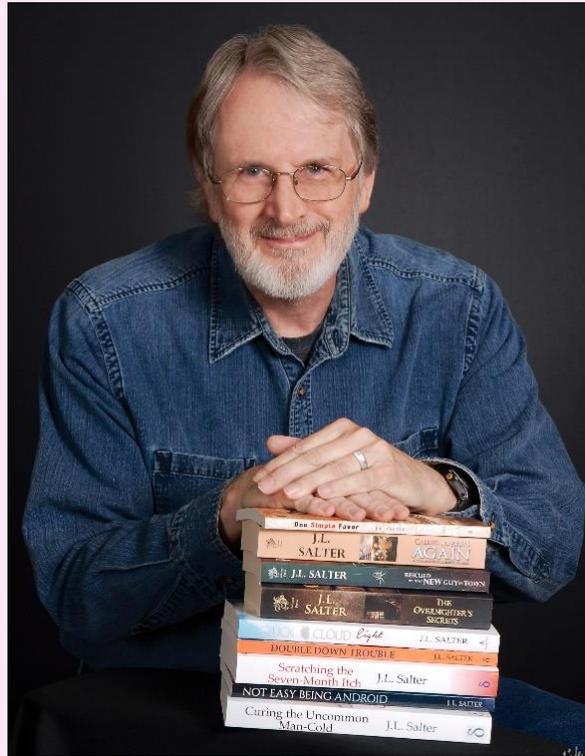
Fortunately, in 1962, this master author shared precious writing advice in a letter to actor and writer Robert Wallsten. This, along with other letters, appears in [Steinbeck: A Life in Letters](#). Thanks to the legacy he left in written form, here is some writing advice from John Steinbeck.

- 1) Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish. Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day, it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are always surprised.
- 2) Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper. Never correct or rewrite until the whole thing is down. Rewrite in process is usually found to be an excuse for not going on. It also interferes with flow and rhythm which can only come from a kind of unconscious association with the material.
- 3) Forget your generalized audience. In the first place, the nameless, faceless audience will scare you to death and in the second place, unlike the theater, it doesn't exist. In writing, your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person—a real person you know, or an imagined person and write to that one.
- 4) If a scene or a section gets the better of you and you still think you want it—bypass it and go on. When you have finished the whole you can come back to it and then you may find that the reason it gave trouble is because it didn't belong there.
- 5) Beware of a scene that becomes too dear to you, dearer than the rest. It will usually be found that it is out of drawing.
- 6) If you are using dialogue—say it aloud as you write it. Only then will it have the sound of speech.

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Author Spotlight: Jeff Salter



Hello Jeff Salter! We're excited to chat with you today about your writing. You have writing credits in a wide range of genres, from articles and some non-fiction, to poetry, romantic suspense, romantic comedy, and some time-travel too. What started your writing journey?

JLS: Thanks, Trisha, for this opportunity to meet your newsletter readers!

I can't remember a time when I didn't write. My earliest creative efforts – little rhymes – were apparently verbal, which were written down by one of my parents in 1959 when I was about eight years old. After that, I did my own writing of the things composed in my noggin... basically dabbling in poems and stories. During 10th grade, with the encouragement of my perceptive English teacher, I experienced an "outburst" of poems, finally including free verse (instead of solely utilizing rhyming couplets and/or quatrains). Also had my first "publication" – a short, short story – that year in the school anthology. In 12th grade, one of my poems won an award in a university-sponsored regional writing contest... and that poem appeared on the front page of our local paper. I was hooked! Another big outburst of poems in fall of 1969, and a huge leap in poetic quality during my overseas year in the Arctic (1972-73). A few months in 1991 was another very creative period (over 90 poems), as was the summer of 2006 (around 175 poems). In all, I have some 1200 completed poems, of which about 120 have been published in various places. Those have garnered about 30 contest awards, including several cash prizes and some national competitions.

How did your writing progress through all the different forms you've written in?

JLS: From simple rhymes to free verse... and back again (in poetry). In several years of photojournalism, I had some 150 bylined articles – and about 100 bylined photos – published in various newspapers. Along the way there were articles and book reviews in professional library journals. For a few years, I collaborated with my brother in producing two monographs with one of the three most prominent (at that time) publishers of books for library professionals. We also co-authored a signed chapter in a book published by American Library Association... and a signed article in a specialty encyclopedia. It was only after I retired from librarianship that I ventured into book-length fiction.

I see that your writing has won many awards, including several in national contests. Have the awards you've won affected your writing habits in any way?

JLS: Oh, yes, indeed. It's one thing to have a parent, a teacher, or a colleague offer praise for your creative expressions. But awards – whether through contests or by other means of selection – are almost always objectively granted (by individuals whom you don't know and who often aren't even aware of your identity). Having judges / experts objectively select MY creative expression for honors is precisely the type validation I've needed... and valued. And in those dark days when one receives a new rejection slip, looking back on a wall full of award certificates can be great tonic.

Since *Pages of the Past* celebrates historical fiction, we're going to look a little closer at some of your time-travel books that vary in a few different eras. *Duchess of Earl*, *Cowboy Out of Time*, *Hid Wounded Reb*, and *Cowboy Ambushed in Time* (am I missing any?) all vary current day plotlines mixed with time from the past. What drew you to writing these time-travel stories?

JLS: Well, for one thing, I study and value past generations... and honor them for what they handed down to us. Setting a story – in part – during the Civil War era was an homage to my wife's ancestors who courageously "took in" a badly-wounded Rebel after a local battle in 1863. He died from his wounds during the night and was buried before dawn. Had that family been caught harboring a Reb in Yankee-occupied Pulaski County, they would have been prosecuted for treason (and likely had their farm confiscated). But most of the novel's content occurs in present day (2007)... though both main characters are diligently researching "cold case" events of 144 years prior.

In the *Duchess* story, that time travel is only in the mind of the young teacher who adores *Pride and Prejudice* (and its author, Jane Austen). The teacher has a horrific accident and awakens believing she lives in the Regency period (200 years ago). I thought it would be enjoyable to explore the relationship of an amnesiac female who thinks she lives in 1813 England and a no-nonsense Tennessee rancher in 2013 who's struggling to keep the deed to his property. [*Of course, there are several external complications in addition to the basic disjointedness of two people who essentially "exist" 200 years apart.*]

It's the *Rose Roamer, Time Traveler* series in which I finally get to deal with REAL time travel... beginning with a cowboy from 1885 who falls asleep on Native American Sacred Ground and awakens in 1985 — 100 years later. I found it fascinating to research how his life was in late 19th century Texas... and how he might (or might not) be able to adjust to the late 20th century Alabama. In the second installment Hunt Weston and Rose Roamer travel TOGETHER through time... to a place and period that is unfamiliar to both of them. And the reader gets to see how well Rose can adapt to being propelled across time and space.

As a foundation, I suppose, to what I've detailed here, I should state that I've been fascinated by time travel ever since – as a kid – I saw the really cool film version of H.G. Wells' *Time Machine*. That movie hit the theaters in 1960, when I was a very impressionable age 10... and I thought, how cool it would be to select a year and zoom to it. In the case of that film version, however, the traveler moved only in time, but not in space — centuries in the future, he was still on the same turf which had held his London home in Victorian times.

When you're writing a story where portions of it occur in past eras, how much research is necessary for you to write the book?

JLS: Quite extensive. For the first of my two Rose Roamer titles, I read numerous western novels – some by the acknowledged great western authors and some by newbies – as well as doing a lot of research on clothing, food, weapons, etc. For the second title, I delved deeply into the campaign of the battle which Rose and Hunt have landed in the middle of. I won't mention any details – so as not to spoil the first chapters of that story for readers – but it's a biggie. And even though I already possessed a considerable array of knowledge about that period and place and campaign... I still had to sync my timelines and check my details.

Are there any challenges in writing books that occur in two time periods, as opposed to a story that strictly happens in one era?

JLS: One of the challenges – which (if done well) can be a treat for the reader – is how words / phrases / morals have likely changed from one period to another. Another, of course, is not to allow anachronisms. I tried my best to be certain the items I worked into my story had actually been available during the time I'd set that part of my story. One of the details I researched a lot was jeans... whether they would have been widely available when my cowboy, Hunt Weston was still in 1885 Texas. [*As I write this, I can't recall how that affected my story, but I do remember that Hunt's britches are canvas.*] I also researched things like how playing cards were designed back then — they didn't have numerals... just the number of clubs / spades / hearts / diamonds. And the corners were square.

Of all the genres you write in, which is your favorite to write and why?

JLS: Gosh, this is a toughie. It's like being asked which of your children is your favorite... or which pet. I love humor (and try to use it to some extent in nearly every story I write). While writing various humorous stories, I found I most enjoyed the screwball comedies — *Curing the Uncommon Man-Cold* and *Scratching the Seven-Month Itch*. [If writing a scene can make the author laugh out loud, that bodes well for the reader's experience.] But I'm not always in the mood for comedy — whether reading it or writing it. So, sometimes, my temporary "favorite" might be romantic suspense, or romantic action. I've also dabbled in ghost stories and science fiction (other than time travel)... and found both of those quite enjoyable as a change of pace.

What I most often fall back on – when asked a question like this – is to say that I write "hybrid" or "blended" genres... so that there's almost nearly always a bit of humor, a bit of action, a bit of suspense, a bit of romance (as I focus my story on characters, dialog, and plot).

One component that follows through many of your books is humor. I see a lot of your humor on a daily basis through your Facebook Possum Trot posts, which are responsible for some of my daily giggles. What are your thoughts about humor and the importance of it in our lives?

JLS: There is so much misery and sadness in so many lives today. It's within families, in relationships, in our jobs (or joblessness), in our finances, in our communities, in our states, and in our nation. Indeed, all over the world. While many people seem to prefer to wallow in that misery and sadness, I choose instead to try to find some fragment that I can share with others and make them smile. If they laugh... even better. Laughter is vital to a person's well-being... it's medicine for the soul. What I've often done is take a situation that might otherwise be frustrating and exasperating — and report it in a fashion that allows me to chuckle (instead of *fume*). Hopefully, my readers chuckle as well.

Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?

JLS: Well, like most authors who are NOT currently on the "A" list at one of the big NYC publishing houses... I could use more *sales*. Most of my books (in digital form) are less than one cup of designer coffee. I wish more of my friends / relatives / acquaintances would invest that \$3 or \$4 in one of my stories and give themselves a chance to be entertained (or amazed). And I'd love for people who've read (and enjoyed) one of my stories to recommend that title to a friend. Or better yet: Buy another copy and GIVE it to your friend!



You can find some of Jeff Salter's books here:

Yuletide Capers — <http://ow.ly/KgTR50Cpu7C>

Cowboy Ambused In Time — <https://tinyurl.com/AmbushedTime>

Double Down Trouble — <https://tinyurl.com/dbldwtrbl>

You can find Jeff Salter here:

Amazon author page: <http://tinyurl.com/AuthorJeff>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AuthorJLSalter>

Twitter: [@AuthorJLSalter](https://twitter.com/AuthorJLSalter)

BIO: Writing has been my driving interest since about fourth grade... and I've never stopped. I love creating believable characters and turning them loose with interesting and/or humorous situations. The result has been romantic comedy, screwball comedy, romantic suspense, time-travel, and other science fiction. I've worked with three royalty publishers in releasing sixteen novels and four novellas.

I'm co-author of two non-fiction monographs (about librarianship) with a royalty publisher, a signed chapter in another book, and a signed article in a specialty encyclopedia. I've also published articles, book reviews, and over 120 poems; my writing has won nearly 40 awards, including several in national contests. As a newspaper photojournalist, I published about 150 bylined newspaper articles, and some 100 bylined photos.

Before I worked nearly 30 years in the field of librarianship, I was a decorated veteran of the U.S. Air Force (including a remote tour of duty in the Arctic, at Thule AB in N.W. Greenland).

Married, I'm the parent of two and grandparent of six.



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