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Fall 2022 Newsletter

Welcome to the Spec Fic Writers Fall Newsletter. Follow along with our members who publish in many of the speculative fiction sub-genres including: science fiction, fantasy, horror, dystopian, weird west, fairy tales and more. Get to know our writers and our works. We also share our favorites in the speculative fiction genre and more...



Meet Our Member Mike Swain

TaleRider Hits the Road Again With Travels and Tales

What makes up author Mike Swain's brand? His "biker name," TaleRider, says it all. It reflects his love of teaching and spinning tales, as well as riding his baby-blue, 2008, Heritage Softail Classic bike.

An Oklahoma native, his youth revolved around 1930s classic monster movies; a fourth-grade, ten-page novel; and a developing love for classic literature and speculative fiction. At age eleven, Star Trek became important to him to show a somewhat hopeful future many were uncertain of. A console, color television reinforced journeys to new worlds. After his freshman typing class, his mom bought him a typewriter, the beginning of a collection.

At age 16, he became a professional writer as the sports editor of the Wyoming State Tribune. By then, he knew he wanted to be both a teacher and a writer, but he also had an interest in photography. The Vietnam conflict was raging, so he joined the Navy before being drafted, because not many Navy personnel went to Vietnam and that branch had the best photo schools. During his stint in the Navy, he had time to write and study the classics independently.

Mike subsequently became an English teacher, teaching the classics, ancient literature, and creative writing. In the 1980s, Mike made contact with the editors of the reconstituted Young Adult Hardy Boys books and became a ghost writer for them. Within these, he instilled Frank's love of computers and Joe's love of cars. Mike later developed and wrote a series of six books for Universal Studios, as they brought back the 1930s Classic Monsters he had loved as a

child. These were called “Tales of Terror for the Twenty-First Century.”

Their re-emergence was inspired by Brendan Fraser’s *The Mummy*, which in turn inspired a new generation of monster-lovers. In these offerings, Mike wrote under the pseudonym Larry Mike Garmon, and emphasized the stories behind the monsters, how and why they became what they were. He always tried to push the edge and maintain strong conflicts both within and around the monsters. For instance, *Dracula* is a vampire dentist who only works at night. Mike also contributed to the *Mapmonsters* series in England.

Much of his writing is under the pseudonym LMG Swain. When he’s not writing, he doesn’t read much fantasy, but prefers science fiction or true horror. He’s been on a long hiatus since 2016, which included recovery from a serious motorcycle accident. Currently working on novels in progress, his characters have resumed talking to him. To get fired up for this, he has literally jumped back in the saddle of his motorcycle. Mike says he finds traits for book characters from the people he meets during his travels. He attends writers’ conferences and workshops to renew his motivation.

A wonderful take-away after talking to him is his avowal, “I don’t write FICTION, I write FRICTION.” Writers will be well-served to remember that. But for Mike, nothing is better than assuming his biker name on his soft-tail motorcycle and meeting writers and people during his travels. They are all part of his brand: *miketalerider*.

Bio: LMG (Mike) Swain is the award-winning author of 15 YA novels from Simon & Schuster, Penguin, and Grosset & Dunlap. He spent 34 years teaching language arts, speech and drama, and writing in public education. In Altus, OK, he won Teacher of the Year 2010. Mike retired to write but has kept his “foot in the door” of education by teaching part time. Mike and his wife Lisa Bloom co-write and have four children and 12 grandchildren.

---by Janet Washer



RMFW Colorado Gold Conference 2022

We want to help you “lift up and lift off” your writing career at 2022’s Colorado Gold Conference with a smashing line-up of keynotes, super-star agents (including for film adaptation), workshops for a variety of topics and genres, and networking galore. (Did someone say Bar-con?). We’re bringing back Round Table Critiques, Pitch-Prep Coaching, and One-on-One Mentor appointments, as well as keeping the Saturday Publishing Professionals Panel Luncheon and the Sunday Gold Rush Winners Reading Brunch. See <https://rmfw.org/conference-2022> for details. Held at Hyatt Regency, Aurora, CO. Last Minute Registration, September 1 – 5. Member: \$549, Non-Member: \$599

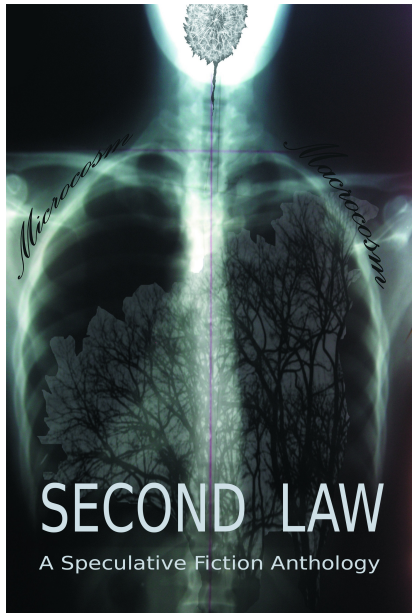
Our Anthologies



First Encounters Anthology

First encounters with the unknown call forth exciting stories full of magic, horror, humor, and suspense. What happens when aliens, fantastical creatures, or strange objects in the sky interrupt ordinary life?

[Read First Encounters](#)



Second Law Anthology

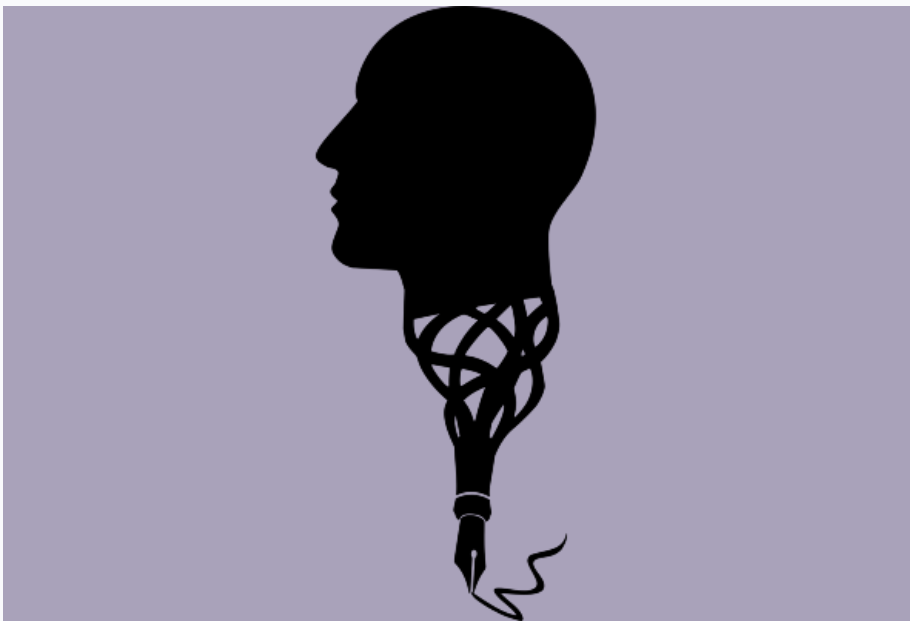
Laws, framed by unscrupulous leaders, diminish freedom. They can also be just, superfluous, or downright wrong. Second laws are (by design) less important than primary decrees. But depending on how regulations are ordered, the second law might be imperative for social stability, morality, or survival.

[Read Second Law](#)



Announcing Third Wave

Third Wave, our third anthology, is an interesting mix of a number of topics. It will be published in November, so stay tuned for additional news about upcoming events.



Disabled? Differently Abled

Your job. Your social life. Your kid's soccer tournament. Only a major overhaul

can fix your WIP's* character arc. And the last story you submitted for publication got a flat rejection. How do you stay motivated to write when the universe is against you?

Two of our members keep writing in spite of challenges. Or maybe because of them?

"My biggest fear is being pigeonholed," says Paul Martz of Erie, Colorado, who has been effectively blind since 2014. A 2022 Roswell Award winner, Paul serves as the group's RMFW Spec-Fic Group's New Member Liaison and Website system Administrator. "I don't want an editor to think I'm only good for writing blind memoirs. That's not a problem in my critique group. They treat me like a science fiction writer and help me improve."

Another member, Bonnie McCune, has a comparable situation, but hers is height. Breaking the yardstick at four feet, ten inches, throughout her life she's struggled against people's stereotypes that shorties are less mature, less competent, and, dare we think it?, less attractive. "People literally talk over my head, so discussions leave me out. That's why I try to have conversations seated at a table."

Speculative fiction encompasses science fiction, fantasy, and horror. Do any of these speculative genres present challenges to disabled writers? "If I were sighted, it would be much easier for me to watch the latest science fiction film or streaming series, or read the latest print books," says Paul. "But I write science fiction because it's not limited by what I can see, only by what I can imagine."

"My writing always starts with a what-if question. I write in several genres, but the query is the jumping-off point," Bonnie says. "This can throw content into lots of soul-searching, most of which I have to edit out. Boo-hoo."

Painful, yes. An ache all writers must accustom themselves to. But a way to grow, both as a person and a writer. Disabled or not, many writers face similar challenges, and the world is a hard place. How can a writer stay motivated when the writing industry seems geared toward rejection for writers with disabilities?

"Present yourself as a writer first," Paul says. "If your disability isn't an issue for you, people will see that and respond accordingly."

"Remember ALL writers get rejected," says Bonnie. "It's part of the process. Keep in mind if you never try to get published, the answer to you is always NO."

How does experience influence writing? "Blind stereotypes are easy to spot, and I try to steer critique partners away from them," says Paul. "I'm planning my first novel at the moment, and the setting is a technology-dependent world where technology has become too complex to maintain. It's based on real experiences I've had with the assistive technology tools that are supposed to make smartphones and websites usable by the vision impaired."

Bonnie thinks back. "A writer friend of mine always reminds me, 'Everything is material.'" Whether you have a disability, a friend with one, or simply are interested in writing from that perspective, you may find your creativity enhanced by that point of view. "I think I incorporate unexpected points of view because my physical world consists of that," she adds.

Writing is one area in life, one skill, in which the playing field becomes leveled. Writers are evaluated ultimately by their writing. An incentive, an energizer, to keep on keeping on.

---by Paul Martz & Bonnie McCune



Live Well and Prosper: SpecFic in the News

RMFW Anthology!: The latest edition of our mother ship's award-winning series dropped in September on Amazon. We're thrilled to announce two of the Spec—Fic writers are included. The 2022 Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers' Anthology, entitled Bizarre Bazaar, a competitive collection of 17 stories of recreation and renewal, old tales refreshed, worlds and cultures re-imagined, includes:

- "The Clay Bride," V.C. McDowall revises Pygmalion in the tale of newly married Gayatri, who is looking forward to starting the next stage of her life—until her husband announces that they will be moving far away

from her homeland. Desperate to stay in her magical land, Gayatri embarks on a dangerous task: building a clay version of herself and entreating the greater spirits to bring it to life. Even as a storm ominously brews overhead, she works steadily on her project.

- In "Opera Without Arias," L.V. Ditchkus re-tells the opera Carmen by placing the story in the distant future. Instead of an 1820s soldier, José is a sentient AI character in an Augmented Reality Program at an arcade called Men for Rent. He's deeply in love with a demanding human customer named Carmen, who taunts him into increasingly risky behaviors. Can he stay within his prescribed safety protocols or will he follow her down a destructive path?

Bonnie McCune's flash fiction, "King of the Class", about young love gone right, appears in a July issue of Every Day Fiction. You are invited to read it. Please comment if you wish. See <https://everydayfiction.com/king-of-the-class-by-Bonnie-McCune>

Matthew Cushing is a finalist in the RMFW's 2022 Gold Rush competition in the Science Fiction, Fantasy, Speculative Fiction category, for his manuscript *The Osect Indiscretion*.

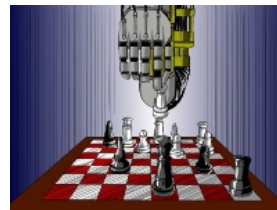
TALES BY MOONLIGHT NOVELLA CONTEST: NO ENTRY FEE. Deadline September 15, 2022. All stories submitted for the competition must be in the genre of fantasy. Stories must be written on the theme of Magic. The Community Award is \$1,000. The Editor's award is \$500. Submissions must have approximately 15,000 - 20,000 word length and be separated into chapters of reasonable length. <https://ankaracircle.com/>

Kayelle Allen released the science fiction/romance boxed set *Complete Set Antonello Brothers: Immortal*. It includes three full books, a novella, and access to two short stories. Characters inhabit other books in the author's story universe. <https://books2read.com/abi-complete>

Lynde Iozzo received an Honorable Mention in the first quarter of 2022 of Writers of the Future Contest, for her short story "Ghost Riders." She credits the critique group for helping her sort out the draft. The story is based on a historical incident of the massacre at Fort Wingate after the Navajo protested a crooked horse race.

Robot Chess Incident Sparks Debate

Asimov's First Rule of Robotics:
A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

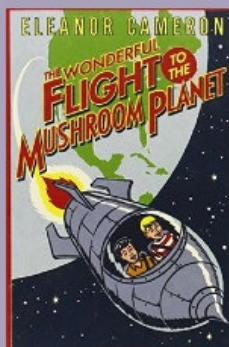


News Item:

Chess robot grabs and breaks finger of seven-year-old opponent!
The Moscow incident occurred because a child 'violated' safety rules by taking a turn too quickly, says official. Article continues to detail numerous other incidents over the years in which robotics were responsible for harming humans.

"This is of course bad," said the president of the Moscow Chess Federation.

(Other apparent violations are listed in the article.) See <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/jul/24/chess-robot-grabs-and-breaks-finger-of-seven-year-old-opponent-moscow>



Odds and Ends:

Books, Videos and Others

The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet, by Eleanor Cameron, has been in print since the 1950s. It features the adventures of Chuck and David, two boys who travel to the alien planet Basidium in their homemade spaceship. This classic, primarily for children, is fun for adults, too, and you'll get a surge of pleasure as you return to a youthful perspective of space travel, published in 1958, well before humans got to the moon. It was my introduction to sci fi and turned me into a fan.

The book is set in Pacific Grove, California, and on Basidium, a tiny habitable moon of Earth, invisible from the planet in its orbit 50,000 miles away. When two boys find an ad in a newspaper asking for two young boys to build a spaceship, they quickly construct one out of old tin and scrap wood and bring it to the advertiser. This man is the mysterious Mr. Tyco Bass, an inventor and scientist. Using his marvelous stroboscopic polarizing filter he shows the boys a previously undetected satellite of the Earth, which he calls Basidium-X. He refits their spaceship, giving them some special fuel to power it, and tells them to fly to the mushroom planet (after getting their parents' permission).

Upon arrival, they find the planet of Basidium to be a small, verdant world covered in soft moss and tree-size mushrooms. Residents of the mushroom planet, small people with large heads and slightly green skin like the mysterious Mr. Bass, all are slowly dying of a strange sickness. The boys meet the king of the planet, the Great Ta, and end up solving the natives' problem before returning to Earth.

Created pre-women's or anyone else's rights, the book proves fiction breaks down all mental barriers about science and adventure and writing. Thoughts about the need for oxygen or hurtling asteroids are nil, and any one can dream, as I did decades ago.

--- by Bonnie McCune

Historical Dictionary of Sci Fi

chronoscope n. (1936)
a device for viewing events in the past or future

chronoscopy n. (1956)
viewing past or future events

Find more at sfdictionary.com



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Speculative Fiction Writers Group
A Rocky Mountain Fiction
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Based in Denver, Colorado, with
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