

## **Career Authors Writing Retreat: 2026 Agenda**

### **FRIDAY**

1:00 – 2:00 Welcome and Lunch / Career Authors Introductions

2:00 – 3:00 All About YOUR Book: The Foundation of the CA Retreat Experience  
**\*What Are You Writing and How Can We Help?**

3:00 – 3:15 Break

3:15 - 4:15

#### **Everything You Need to Know About Getting an Agent**

*Paula Munier, Talcott Notch Literary Agent and USA Today bestselling novelist*

Whether you're ready to submit or thinking ahead to your long-term goals, Paula Munier is your definitive source for strategizing your submissions, as she shares candid advice, best practices, and lessons learned from both sides of the desk.

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM First Page Critiques. **PART 1**  
**The Career Authors Discuss and Critique YOUR First Page**

BREAK

**6:00 PM – 6:30 PM** Cocktail Party with Faculty

6:30 -- 8:00 DINNER With the Career Authors

8:00 PM Writers Circles: *Time provided for informal gatherings of attendees to find critique/practice partners and writers in your genre*

### **SATURDAY**

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM Breakfast

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM **How to Tell a Story (and How to Know if You Have One)**

*Hank Phillippi Ryan, USA Today and Amazon #1 bestselling author and Emmy-winning television reporter*

You know you have a good idea--or do you? And if you do, how do you make that into a story? And if that works, how do you make it into a book? And then into a fabulous book? Hank will provide practical steps and news-you-can-use writing strategies to turn your gem of an idea into the fullness of a publishable novel.

BREAK

**10:15--11:15 "Shock & Awe:" How to write cinematic ACTION scenes that will have your readers' hearts pounding and turning pages.**

*Brian Andrews, New York Times bestselling author and co-founder of Andrews & Wilson Entertainment.*

"Shock & Awe" will provide insights and methods for aspiring authors, regardless of genre, to transform static prose into propulsive, cinematic storytelling. This class deconstructs what makes an effective action scene. You will learn how to create and choreograph action sequences—from close-quarters combat to high-stakes vehicle pursuits—using prose, POV, and pacing techniques that heighten the reader's pulse and drive the narrative forward with relentless momentum. Whether you are writing a military thriller or a novel of suspense, you'll walk away with the tools to turn every action beat into a white-knuckle, climactic experience that immerses the reader in a movie in their mind.

**11:15-12:00 First Page Critiques – PART 2**

12 :00 PM – 1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

**Take Your Manuscript From Promising to Publishable**

*Dana Isaacson, Big Five publishing veteran and independent editor and book doctor*

The ultimate publishing insider shares strategies—both big-picture and line-level—to elevate your writing and strengthen your story. In today's competitive market, publishers expect submissions to arrive nearly publication-ready. Even small technical missteps—those tiny points of friction—can slow a reader down. Enough friction, and an agent stops reading. Dana breaks down what quietly diminishes your chances and shows you how to fix it. From eliminating technical errors to tightening narrative structure and refining prose, learn how to present a manuscript that feels polished, purposeful, and professional.

BREAK

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM

**Manage Your Writing Life: Make More Time & Space**

*Jessica Strawser, USA Today bestselling novelist, Writer's Digest editor-at-large, and mom*

Whether your writing too often takes a back seat to your family and career responsibilities, or you've already developed a successful writing hobby that you hope to turn into your full-time dream, this workshop will help you rethink and restructure the way you prioritize writing in your life, while being both realistic and ambitious about setting writing goals that you can actually meet. Learn real-life strategies to adopt a more productive mindset, stay motivated through distractions and setbacks (big and small), harness the power of forward momentum, and persevere through rejection.

BREAK

3:30 - 4:15 **The Ins & Outs of Publishing Today: Your Questions Answered**  
Career Authors Panel

**4:15-4:45 First Page Critiques -- Part 3**

4:45 PM – 6:15 PM **YOUR Personal Manuscript Consultation**

**Assigned time slots: One-on-one critique/consults with a Career Author mentor.**

Each attendee will have their first five pages read and critiqued by one of the Career Authors, and get specific success-oriented book advice and career guidance!

6:30-9:00 PM Celebratory Cocktails and Banquet Dinner

9:00 PM Practice Your Pitch?

Informal gathering of attendees wishing to practice their loglines before the morning logline slam. (Attendees only; peer review opportunity.)

**SUNDAY MORNING**

8:00 AM Breakfast

**8:30 AM – 9:30 AM Logline Slam**

The Career Authors will listen, critique, and help take your logline to the next level

**9:30 AM – 10:30 AM Ask Us Anything**

The Career Authors tackle everything you wanted to know but didn't know who to ask. We'll have inside scoop, straight answers, and experienced guidance

10:30 AM – 11:00 AM Closing Remarks / Thank You

Book Signing