

Lawrence Jackson Outstanding Achievement Award Acceptance – Suzanne Boles

I should be standing up here thanking you all for this incredible honour. Instead I am writing my thanks with - yes - tears in my eyes and shaking hands.

This would be the year I don't attend the PWAC National Conference. But I had to make a choice and decided to go to Israel to attend a wedding and see the country I've always wanted to see. Bad timing on the part of the bride and groom. 😊

To "thank you" I need to steal parts of two of my friends' speeches.

One is Mark Kearney, when he received this award. At that time, I was completing my term as Past President of PWAC and the honour fell to me to announce this award. Standing next to the podium as he spoke, I saw that Mark was almost speechless (yes, it's true - at a loss for words!). But, seriously, he was overwhelmed by the honour and so gracious in his acceptance as he said something like this:

"I know everyone who received this award before me and I am humbled to be counted among them."

I too know all of those who received this award. I didn't know Larry well but did meet him and he was an amazing advocate for freelance writers and our profession. Yes Mark, I agree. It is such an honour to receive this award. I am truly overwhelmed.

Last year, when Doreen Pendgracs received her Regional Award, she spoke about the importance of volunteering and giving back. Ask for a volunteer and Doreen will raise her hand, or she'll just offer without someone asking. She knows what it is to be a good volunteer. She's even written a book on the topic! Doreen, I agree. You get back so much more than you give when you volunteer, and it's so easy to want to volunteer and help this organization, whether on your own, or when someone approaches you and asks.

And, finally from me...Most of my friends know that my mother passed away February 2009. My closest friends saw me when my grieving took hold and sucked me down into the deep vortex. I have bounced from grief, to crabby, to lost, and back and forth again as I try to find myself again. I hope that I will become a better person after I get through this, if there is an end that comes to grieving or that place of acceptance. Truly, I don't really think I've achieved the right to receive any awards right now being mired in confusion most days. But even in the worst of times, PWAC has always been there for me.

I have been a member of PWAC since I started freelancing in 1995. I have never looked back. I have found life-long friends, camaraderie, help in understanding this profession I took up late in life. PWAC - in its communal sense - has been my cheerleader, my shoulder to lean on, my mentor, and so much more. I felt compelled to volunteer for this organization and I am deeply honoured to receive this award.

I wish I could be here with you to show you how much it means to me. I hope that every member of PWAC will see how important this organization is for freelance writers and our industry and will support the organization when asked to, or even when no one asks. Just raise your hand.

Thank you,

Suzanne Boles