

The History of Pinawor

PINAWOR is the largest writers' group in Pinellas County. It was organized April 25, 1987 at a meeting at the Largo Library called for the purpose by founders Jean Vanderplas and Janice Fletcher.

Concerned about the absence of a writers' group serving all Pinellas County and wanting to remedy that lack, Jean Vanderplas contacted Jan Fletcher, reference librarian at the Largo Library. Jan caught Jean's enthusiasm for the project and arranged for the group to use the library conference room on Saturday mornings. More than 25 people attended the organizational meeting, and the group was born. At its next meeting, on May 2, the fledgling group chose for itself the name Pinellas Authors and Writers Organization, shortened to PINAWOR.

For the first two months the meetings were sporadic. Beginning June 27, the group, already numbering 30, agreed to meet every week except on holiday weekends. Most meetings featured a guest speaker. On that same date the first newsletter was distributed, edited by Deno Kapas, who later shared the editorship of the newsletter with Paul Denniston through November 1988. Betty DeBate and Elenora Sabin became co-editors of PINAWORNews in January 1989, and Betty designed the PINAWOR logo. Elenora has been sole editor since May 1991.

From its inception the group preferred an unstructured organization, with meetings conducted by volunteer moderators and business handled by a steering committee. Members of the first steering committee were Paul Denniston, Jean Vanderplas, Deno Kapas, Chris Cook, and Janice Fletcher.

During its first months, PINAWOR charged no dues, but in September 1987, the group decided that annual dues should be assessed to cover newsletter expenses. Odell Zimmerman was elected the group's first treasurer. Though the dues amount was set at \$12, it was decided to offer a 50% discount to those who paid promptly, charging them only \$6. Actually the \$6 assessment remained in effect until May 1988, when the "discount" on the \$12 fee was changed to \$3, so that new members paid \$9, though the renewal charge remained \$6. In June 1989, dues were changed to a uniform \$8 for new and renewed memberships. It was not until June 1991, that rising postal rates forced the group to charge the full \$12 originally recommended. In October 1995, dues were raised to \$15 to compensate for a rent increase and another rise in postal rates. In 2005 it was raised to \$25.

In September 1990, PINAWOR lost its meeting place in the Largo Library due to renovations and reorganization of library facilities. After several intermediate moves, we settled into our present "home" at the Highland Recreation Complex in June of 1991.

In 1991 the group voted to limit the number of guest speakers to no more than one per month, in order to devote most of our meetings to reading and critiquing members'

writings. This step was necessary because of increased attendance and the fact that most of those attending were bringing material to read. Volunteer moderators still led the meetings, but PINAWOR had gone for some time without a governing board, and business discussions were cutting into time for readings.

To solve this problem, in February 1993, a seven member Board of Directors was elected to handle most of the business. Those seven members were Barbara Harrington, Marilyn Russell, Roy Williams, Evelyn Erlandson, Ben Levin, Elenora Sabin, and Don Sheldon. Board members including the treasurer were elected for a period of one year until the adoption of our current by-laws, which provide for three-year terms. These terms are staggered so that an annual election is still required. The Board elects annually its own chairman and secretary.

Our first Bylaws were drawn up by Ted McLane, amended by the Board, and adopted on December 16, 1995. Article VII, Quorum, was amended by majority vote of the general membership on March 4, 2000, to eliminate the need for a quorum in Board of Directors meetings.

Our membership has now passed 150 members, with an average attendance of about 40. We have become more professional both in attitudes and in accomplishments. We are serious about our writing, and our membership includes a large number of published authors. We are a member of the Pinellas County Arts Council and cooperate with and encourage other area writers' groups. We join with the St. Petersburg Writers Club to hold an annual picnic for all Bay Area writers. Each year as both a fund-raiser and a service to the community, we teach creative writing classes at the Highland Center. The classes have been well received and have brought us many new members.

We look forward to an ever more productive future as a vital and nurturing part of the Bay Area writing community.