



Hampton Roads Writers

Where Characters Connect

January 2012

New Opportunity Knocks for HRW Fiction

Have you felt squeezed by trying to fit your short story into 300 seconds or less during Open Mic nights? Well, you're not alone. We fiction writers like to have a beginning with a hook, tension and conflict built through a meaningful middle, and a satisfying resolution which can't be shared in three to five minutes.

HRW is pleased to present the new **Show and Grow** ten-minute open mic sessions for writers of prose, followed by five minutes of professional critique by established writers and/or university professors.

The **free and open to the public** sessions will be held at the Virginia Beach Central Library auditorium. Prior registration and text submis-

sion for readers is required, and the eight slots for reading will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Please e-mail by attachment in PDF or Microsoft Word format to: HRWriters@cox.net at least thirty days prior to the event.

Even if your work is not featured for reading and critique, there's still a lot to be gained from listening to the professional critiques of others' work. We all tend to make the same mistakes, especially at first. Learning how to critique prose meaningfully is one of the best ways to improve your own writing. HRW encourages all writers to attend these long form open mic sessions.

Please see the sidebar for the Show and Grow schedule.

Show and Grow Open Mic Schedule

Saturday, **February 25** from 10 A.M. to 12 P.M.
Please note: We are honored to have Dr. Dennis Bounds, screenwriting professor from Regent University, for our critiques. Therefore, screenplay synopses or scenes may also be presented within the ten minute limit of this session.

Wednesday, **March 7**, 6:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.
(Reviewer TBA)

Tuesday, **April 10**, 6:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.
Shonda Buchanan critiquing

Saturday, **May 26**, 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.
Bill Ruehlmann moderating

Saturday, **July 7**, 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.
Michael Kandelwal critiquing

Open Mic Nights Still Going Strong

Our new longer form of Open Mics for fiction writers does not replace our popular Open Mic Night events. All of our Open Mic events are open to everyone, writers, readers, and listeners alike. If you would like to present, please bring **3 -5 minutes** of material to share. Sign-ups begin at 6 P.M., and the readings run from 6:30 to 8:30. If you've never attended one of these events, you're missing out on a treat. Come join us!

Open Mic Spring Schedule

Wed., Jan. 25, 2012 at Pretlow Library, 111 W. Oceanview, Norfolk. Dr. Dennis Bounds will emcee the event.

Wed., Feb. 29, 2012 at Myra Oberndorf Central Library, 4100 Virginia Beach Blvd. Virginia Beach. Jack Callen will emcee.

Tues., March 27, 2012, at Pretlow Library, 111 W. Oceanview, Norfolk. Dr. Milt Saunders will emcee.

Wed., May 23, 2012, Pretlow Library, 111 Oceanview, Norfolk. Emcee TBA



Buying Amazon.com books and other products sold on the Amazon.com site (including gift cards) through our HRW website is a quick and painless way to financially support HRW. For each sale, our group earns a 4-6.5% referral fee. YTD we've earned **\$300.05** with 201 items sold at a total retail value of \$5,333.74. The more products sold through a referral from the HRW page, the higher the percentage referral we receive. You pay no more going through our site than you would if you went directly to Amazon.com. Look for the Amazon link on our HRW home page and start shopping today. Oh, and tell your friends and family about it!

The Future Has Arrived

If you thought writers who choose to self-publish their work will never be as successful as writers who send their work to traditional publishers, tell that to Amanda Hocking, the young novelist who became a millionaire in less than a year through her on-line sales. Recently, she became only the eleventh author to sell one million books for the Amazon Kindle, joining the likes of James Patterson and Stieg Larsson.

Though Amanda Hocking has made her name known through her self-published electronic books, traditional publishers have taken notice, and St. Martin's Press is publishing her Trylle Trilogy this spring as well as signing her to a four-book contract. In addition, her trilogy has been optioned for a film.

What once seemed like a passing fad is here to stay. If you doubt that, look for "ePublishing for Dummies," out on Amazon right now. More and more conferences are including sessions on self-publishing through eBooks, or an entire conference, such as the MOGO Media conference held in Chicago last fall, is dedicated entirely to digital publishing. Need I say more?

As writers, we cannot afford to ignore the trends, lest we go the way of Borders Books who jumped on the bandwagon too late. New technology is developing so quickly that the publishing industry is having a difficult time keeping up and figuring out the answers to questions about contracts and rights. Along with new job opportunities, new markets are opening up every day. Take the time to stay informed.

2012 Writers' Conference Shaping Up

It's not too early to be thinking about this year's writers' conference which will be held in Virginia Beach September 20-22. We have several confirmed presenters with experience in many genres. For starters, **Rick Mofina**, award-winning author of thirteen thrillers, will be joining us from Ottawa, Canada. The International Thrillers Writers, Private Eye Writers of America, and the Crime Writers of Canada, have cited his novels as being the best in the genre.



We've been listening to what our conference attendees have said they want more of, and in keeping with that, we are pleased to announce that Patricia Hermes, author of nearly fifty books for readers from middle grades through young adults, as well as two nonfiction adult books, will be our second keynote speaker. Her books have won many awards and recognitions, and she has been hailed as a superb lecturer and speaker, engaging her audience with her lively presentations. Patricia hales from Fairfield, Connecticut.



In addition to our two keynote speakers, several agents have already committed to our conference. Molly Jaffa, a literary agent with *Folio Literary Management*, has an extensive background in editing and e-publishing in addition to her experience as an agent, and is looking to develop and nurture YA and children's authors. She is aggressively building her list of clients. Join us for the conference and you might just make her list!

Rachel Dugas, literary agent with Talcott Notch Literary Services, represents authors of cookbook and young adult, middle grade and adult fiction. She would love to see more cookbooks, especially ones written from a unique perspective, as well as beautifully written historical or literary fiction, terrific memoirs, and fun, contemporary YA and adult fiction.



We have too many other presenters to mention them all here, so hop on over to our website, hamptonroadswriters.org, and get all the details. One evening plus two full days of workshops, two best-selling keynoters, numerous other fabulous presenters, two first ten lines critique sessions, panel discussions, ten-minute agent pitches, and three cash prize contests for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Clear your calendars in September for a writing conference you don't want to miss.

How Gender Stereotypes & Other Arbitrary Rules Crush Creativity

By Terri Giuliano Long

The recent firestorm surrounding the J Crew ad that showed a mom painting her son's toenails hot pink appalled me. Set aside the repulsive homophobia—Ms. Lyons, one naysayer complained, is “[exploiting \[her son\] Beckett behind the facade of liberal, transgendered identity politics](#)”—*really?* Never mind feminist politics—would these same critics be appalled by a photo of a five-year-old girl collecting rocks or digging up worms? I doubt it.

As an artist, I'm aghast.

Creativity demands that we stretch boundaries, break rules. William James said, “genius . . . means little more than the faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way.”

As writers and artists, we rack our brain trying to figure out how to “perceive in an unhabitual way,” break out of habit, loosen inhibitions, free our minds of all the nasty, judgmental detritus. We play tricks on ourselves—read, meditate, listen to music. Some drink or use drugs. With all these activities, healthy or not, we attempt to escape the restrictions forced upon us by our upbringing, our education, by a world that distrusts the original, disparages rule-breakers.

Rules are necessary, of course. Civilizations require adequate means of controlling their citizens. Without rules to prohibit rape, thievery, murder, we'd live in mayhem, in constant fear for our lives. Yet rules can also be arbitrary, the product of superstition, outmoded beliefs. For thousands of years, people associated left-handedness with the Devil. My kindergarten teacher had this rule, demonstrated rather than spoken: you wrote, cut, and colored with your right hand. By implication, without ever

aggressively trying, she transformed me, a natural leftie, into a right-hander—no big deal, except that it set me up for a lifetime of directional confusion. Not all rules are righteous or good.

For artists and writers, rules create structure. They provide a way to frame our ideas, give us a place to begin. Following rules helps to eliminate confusion, ambiguity. For patrons or readers, rules serve as a guide; they provide accessibility, offer a way in, a means of understanding the work. Strict adherence to form, though in certain ways restrictive, can produce works of great beauty. Creativity, originality, though—this demands a break from the rules.

Why can't an American boy have painted toenails? What's the big deal? Egyptian men applied henna to their fingernails as a cosmetic. In 19th century Afghanistan, hennaed fingernails were a sign of victory and prestige. Or is the *real* problem, the detail that drove the detractors so crazy, that Ms. Lyons painted her son's toenails hot pink?

Circumscribed gender roles, among the most stereotypical and arbitrary of rules, put kids in a box. Reining kids in—forcing adherence to arbitrary roles for the sake of social acceptance—bridles their imagination, teaches them to conform. If we hope to foster creativity in our children, we need to give them room to breathe, space to imagine.

We need to let them dig up their worms. Or paint their nails pink.

Terri Giuliano Long is the author of the acclaimed first novel, *In Leah's Wake*. Follow Terri at <http://tjlong.com>. The preceding article was published on April 15, 2011 and used by permission.

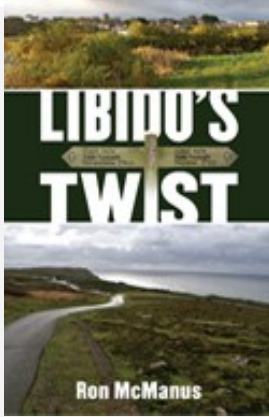
Stay Tuned for the New Traveling Pen Series Workshop Schedule

Hampton Roads Writers' Traveling Pen is a series of writing workshops on a variety of topics. Each 2-hour session costs \$10 for HRW members and \$20 for non-HRW members (another great benefit of joining HRW!). We are in the midst of making our 2012 schedule and lining up our presenters. Check back with us periodically on our website, hamptonroadswriters.org to see what we've designed for you for this new year.

“A writer needs three things: Experience, observation and imagination, any two of which—at times, any one of which—can supply the lack of others.”

William Faulkner

Ron McManus Wins Honorable Mention



We are proud to announce that Ron McManus, one of our members of Hampton Roads Writers, had his novel, *Libido's Twist*, win Honorable Mention in the Genre Fiction category of the 19th Annual Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards (2011). The award will be formally announced in the April 2012 issue of Writer's Digest.

Ron is a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, and a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His pharmaceutical research and development career spanned over 25 years, including an expatriate assignment in England where he and his wife worked and maintained a residence for several years.

Ron is a former U.S. Navy lieutenant, having served aboard the U.S.S. San Marcos and with the Naval Advisory Group in Vietnam where he led a group of men providing operational and logistical support to the Navy's riverine units.

Ron and his wife, Mildred, reside in Virginia Beach where he is currently working on his second Jake Palmer novel. *Libido's Twist* is available at Ron's website, <http://ronmcmanus.net>, or from Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, and

Macular Degeneration and E-Readers by Dr. Tom Cheezum

Due to the aging of the population in the United States, an eye condition called Macular Degeneration is becoming more prevalent. The macula is the part of the retina in our eyes which is used for reading and detailed vision. Macular Degeneration is a condition which destroys the light receptors in this part of the retina and, depending on the level of severity, may make reading very difficult.

There are two type of Macular Degeneration, dry and wet. There is no current treatment for Dry macular Degeneration except for close monitoring by an optometrist or ophthalmologist and taking a recommended mixture of certain supplements orally. In most

cases this form of degeneration progresses slowly and its effect on vision may be minimal to moderate. On the other hand, Wet Macular Degeneration usually has devastating effects on central vision and may cause a person to be considered legally blind. Currently, there are certain medications which may be injected into the eye by a retinal specialist which may help slow down or stabilize the Wet Macular Degeneration. However, these treatments will not reverse the damage already done to the macula's light receptors.

On many cases, E-readers, with their ability to easily change font sizes, have allowed patients with Macular Degen-

eration to be able to read again without having to use cumbersome magnifiers or closed circuit TV reading devices.

If you know someone who has given up reading due to Macular Degeneration, have them try reading with an iPad, Nook, or other e-reader to see if they will be able to enjoy the pleasure of reading once again.

Dr. Tom Cheezum has practiced optometry in Chesapeake, Virginia for over 30 years. Visit him on his HRW Members page.