

Hampton Roads Writers Where Characters Connect

April 2013

Plans for the 2013 Conference in Full Swing



The 5th Annual Hampton Roads Writers' Conference will be held September 19-21 at the Westin Town Center located at 4535 Commerce Street in Virginia Beach. With this upscale venue and a program including 1 evening plus 2 full days of workshops, 2 best-selling keynoters, 2 first 10-lines critique sessions, 10-minute agent pitches, and cash prizes for short fiction, short non-fiction, and poetry, this conference adds up to an exciting experience for all participants. The workshops will cover fiction, non-fiction, screenplays, memoir, poetry, and the business of getting published. A book shop, book signings, and many opportunities for networking will be available. In addition, this year we will have a 2-hour social on Friday evening immediately after the day's sessions, featuring appetizers, beer, wine, and soft drinks, and a fabulous silent auction.



This year we again have an outstanding slate of presenters: Kevin Maurer, one of our keynote speakers, is an award winning journalist and *New York Times* best-selling author, best known as the co-author of *No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission That Killed Osama Bin Laden*. He has covered Special Operations forces for eight years while embedded with U.S. Special Forces in Afghanistan. Besides his book on the Bin Laden mission, he has written or co-authored several other books on the war in Afghanistan and a memoir of a Korean War veteran. More details of his books as well as specific titles can be found on our [website](#).

Our other keynoter is Lisa McMann, *New York Times* best-selling author of the *Wake Trilogy*, about a girl who gets sucked into other people's dreams, the *Visions* series, and the *Umwanted*s, a dystopian phantasy series, and other books with tween and teen characters, including two stand-alone thrillers. She says, "I like to cook, swim, read, and hang out with my kids. I also like watching reality TV shows, even the sappy ones that make me cry, and I'm not afraid to admit it."



Other presenters include fiction writers Clifford Garstang, Lydia Netzer, Jeff Andrews, and Chantelle Aimee Osman, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Mitch Weiss, author and Certified Public Accountant Jack Downs, poet Jeanne Larsen, and agents Ethan Vaughan and Jeff Ourvan.

For more details about our upcoming conference, including bios of all our presenters, our social, our early-bird tuition and contest deadline, visit us on our [HRW webpage](#).

2013 Calendar for SHOW AND GROW YOUR PROSE with Professional Critique Events

Don't miss an opportunity to read ten minutes of your prose to an audience, followed by a professional critique. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend, whether you are reading or not, but registration is required if you do wish to be a reader. Please go to our [website](#) and follow the instructions. We are looking forward to hearing you.

- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[April 13](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach, 9:30A.M.-Noon. **Michael Khandelwal**, who holds two masters degrees and is co-founder of The Muse Writing Center, and **Lauran Strait**, president and founder of Hampton Roads Writers, will offer the professional critiques.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[May 11](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach, 9:30A.M.-Noon. Critiquers to be announced.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[June 8](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach. 9:30A.M.-Noon. **Princess Perry**, professor at ODU, and **Lauran Strait** will offer professional critiques.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[July 13](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach. 9:30A.M.-Noon. Critiquers to be announced.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[August 10](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach. 9:30A.M.-Noon. Critiquers to be announced.

Only eight readings per session, so register early to guarantee your place.

Memorable Openers

Some works of fiction are so well-known that they can be identified by their effective opening sentences. How many of these do you recognize? Answers found on page 3.

1. It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.
2. All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.
3. "Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.
4. It was Wang Lung's marriage day.
5. The boy with fair hair lowered himself down the last few feet of the rock and began to pick his way toward the lagoon.



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.

"To know what you prefer instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to have kept your soul alive."

~Robert Louis Stevenson

Traveling Pen Series



The next workshop in the Traveling Pen Series will be held on April 27 at the Tidewater Community College campus in Virginia Beach in the Blackwater Building, room CW-134. The workshop title is:

Self-Publishing in Today's Market, facilitated by **Malcom Massey**.

Cost: \$10 for HRW members, \$20 for non-members

To take advantage of this workshop offering, send your name, address, phone number, and e-mail, along with the name of the workshop you are registering for, plus your payment (check or money order) to:

Hampton Roads Writers
P.O. Box 7607
Norfolk, Virginia 23509-0607

Payment is possible at the door, but we would appreciate an email from you ahead of time so we can assure a sufficient number of handouts for everyone. Our email address is HRWriters@cox.net

We also have the following dates and venues set aside for future workshops. Please check back with us on our [website](#) for updates on titles and facilitators.

June 22 at Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach

August 24 at Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach

September 7 at Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach

November 2, Portsmouth campus of Tidewater Community College

Nowhere else in Hampton Roads can you get such quality writing workshops at such bargain prices. We look forward to seeing you.

HRW Open Mic Schedule

Please bring 3-5 minutes of material to share. Sign-ups to read begin at 6 PM, and the readings run from 6:30-8:30. These open mics are open to everyone, readers and listeners alike. Please come out and support your local writers.

April 24 at the Pretlow Library, Norfolk

May 21 at the Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach

June 26 at the Pretlow Library, Norfolk

July 23 at the Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach

"I don't have a lot of respect for talent. Talent is genetic. It's what you do with it that counts."

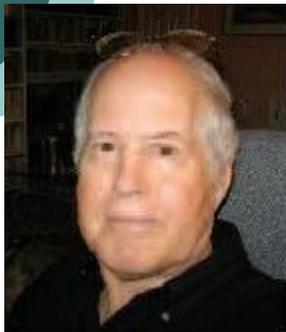
Martin Ritt

Answers to Memorable Openers:

1. *1984* by George Orwell
2. *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy
3. *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott
4. *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck
5. *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

Spotlight on Authors

By Susan Okaty



Richard Proescher, a member of Hampton Roads Writers, has recently published his first novel, *Natishma*, based on the research conclusions of David Beers, one of the foremost authorities of the Roanoke Colony in Virginia. Described on Amazon, “*Natishma, Shaman of the Chesapeake, Friend of the Roanoke Colony* is the story of the extraordinary adventure when, in 1585, the Roanoke Colony lives with the Chesapeakes for two decades before being killed by Powhatan.”

I asked Richard to tell me a little about the writing life for him and the inspiration for his novel. These are his answers in his own words:

“I wanted to write long before I learned the skills necessary for writing. My first critique in the 1960s by an accomplished writer was so devastating to me that I did not write again for three years. In retrospect, that critique was liberating. It taught me that if you come to writing for an ego massage, expect to be devastated. My first published article was on the transportation of nuclear waste materials, and after that I wrote about nuclear issues, the arms race, the environment, and occupational health hazards. I enjoyed writing poetry and short stories before beginning my novel.

“I’ve always had an interest in everything dealing with Native American cultures. I grew up near a small North Carolina town surrounded by woodlands and open fields. Whenever I picked up an arrowhead in a field, I felt transported to another dimension in time. Years later I learned this is called psychometry. The mystery of the Lost Colony was part of my DNA.

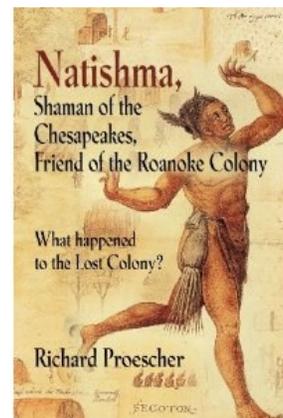
“I consider my novel to be a combination of two genres: young adult historic fiction and magic realism. I wanted to write a novel about the first contact with Native Americans in a form that showed them as intelligent and spiritually evolved human beings. I had read enough descriptions of the indigenous people as savages. I believe young adults can relate to my presentation, but older adults will appreciate the novel as well.”

I asked him what he learned from writing *Natishma*. “I discovered there is some of Natishma in all of us. Natishma endures bullying, comes through it to discover his true abilities, and has the relationship with his major abuser transformed into one in which his antagonist becomes his greatest supporter.

“I also learned the exceptional value of belonging to a writers’ group where you have an opportunity to hear what you write and can decide to make constructive changes.”

When I asked Richard what books had most influenced his life, his reply was, “After decades of reading, I answer this question by saying I have been influenced by books that speak to the human heart and the need for compassion, caring, and tenderness to all of life.”

Hampton Roads Writers congratulates Richard Proescher on his outstanding accomplishment!



Spotlight on Authors (cont'd)



Midori Bamba, a member of Hampton Roads Writers, has published thirty articles in several magazines, books, and *The Virginian-Pilot* newspaper. She also has just had her third book published. As described on Amazon, “*God’s Mountain* is set in a poor Samurai-era village in ancient Japan. Severe food shortages often forced older people to go to God’s Mountain to die so their children would not starve. By sacrificing themselves in this way, the aged ones showed their sincere love for their families and believed that the mountain was the gateway to a fertile and beautiful world.”

Midori had this to say about writing in general and *God’s Mountain*, in particular:

“When I came to America, I often wrote letters to my friends. Many of them said, ‘Your letters are very interesting to read. Why don’t you write about your experiences?’ When I read the *Writer’s Market*, I see that many publishers do not make it clear whether they are traditional publishers or self-publishers. Writers would appreciate it if self-publishers would honestly say, ‘We are self-publishers.’ There are too many books and not enough readers. It is hard to sell books.

“I like historical fiction, based on a true story. I always believe that a fact is more dramatic than fiction.” Midori said, through writing *God’s Mountain*, “I have learned wise lessons from older people, and I could pass on this to others through writing this book.” When she told Pocol Press that many older people would like her book, they made a large print addition. “He also gave me a Library of Congress Control Number. I am very thankful.”

I asked her what she found the most challenging when she was writing her novel. “Twenty years ago I started writing *God’s Mountain* as a short fiction, 2,000 to 3,000 words, off and on, off and on. Then a publisher encouraged me to write it as a book. So I made new characters and added stories. I made a short fiction piece into a novella. It was my first experience and it was challenging.”

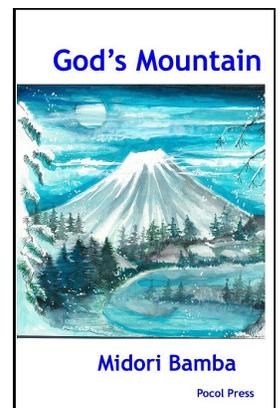
Midori first read her manuscript at a retirement home writers’ class. Most of her audience were in the fifties to eighties age group. “They love *God’s Mountain*,” she said. “I learned that spiritual people and historical fiction fans also like my book.”

Midori was inspired to write *God’s Mountain* because “Many Westerners don’t respect older people, but I gained much wisdom from them. I want to show the value of older people’s wisdom and experience, how important it is to listen to them. The Bible says, ‘Glory of young men is their strength, of old men their experience (Proverbs 20:29).’”

The tip Midori gives to new writers is for them to read many good books. “Good books are the best teachers.” She also said, “Ask someone to read your manuscript and then rewrite and rewrite until you feel satisfied.”

As far as the books she likes to read, Midori said, “I like to laugh, or to cry, or to learn when I read. I like to find something unforgettable in the books I read.”

It appears Midori has written one of those kinds of books! HRW congratulates Midori Bamba on the publication of her latest novel.



Spotlight on Authors (cont'd)



On Susan Payne's blog, [The Water Witch's Daughter](#), she says, "Writing is much cheaper and much more satisfying than therapy." This passion for writing has led to the publication of Susan's first book, *Stepping into the Wilderness*. As described on Amazon, "This is a book of self discovery offering sixty inspirational affirmations with quality photographs of nature's landscape. Each affirmation poses five questions for exploring self-truths through reflection or journal writing and includes five writing exercises/prompts for enriching the writing experience. With an offering of 600 questions and prompts, this is a great resource for writers, especially the journal or memoir writer, and anyone interested in promoting inner growth."

An interview with Susan, a member of Hampton Roads Writers, elicited the following responses:

HRW: When did you first consider yourself a writer?

Susan: I have a difficult time calling myself a writer because people automatically think you must make a living writing, and that I have yet to do. I consider myself more of a thinker who happens to pen her thoughts.

HRW: What inspired you to write *Stepping into the Wilderness*?

Susan: As a writer, I lacked inspiration at times and confidence in my abilities, and I wanted to provide these things to others. I enjoy reading books that stimulate me on a soul level. I've always been told people must write what they enjoy or know, but they must also make their book unique. I decided I could do this by using my love of photography and nature to encourage others to explore their lives by providing them with provoking writing topics.

HRW: How did you get interested in this particular genre?

Susan: It was completely by accident. I found a spiritual connection to nature through hiking and began posting nature photographs with short inspirational posts on my blog. I was surprised by the positive response I received. I found people need encouragement, and I enjoy encouraging them.

HRW: What did you learn from writing this book?

Susan: I learned there is such a thing as information overload. Originally, *Stepping into the Wilderness* contained 120 inspirations and photographs with 600 questions and 600 writing prompts. I ended up splitting it and creating a second book titled *Swimming the River*. I'm going to give book one a little time on its own before I throw book two into the world!

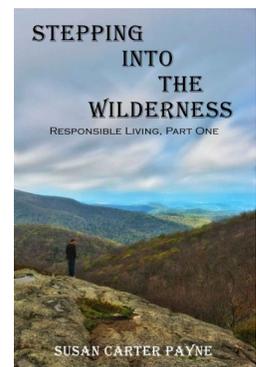
HRW: What did you find the most challenging when you were writing this book?

Susan: Organization. I went back and forth between paper and digital files. Computer windows just don't do the same thing for me visually as papers spread out on a desk. Digital formatting was also a challenge since my knowledge of code is limited.

HRW: What is your number one goal in publishing your book?

Susan: I hope to touch at least one life in a positive way.

HRW congratulates Susan Payne on this milestone that looks to touch many people in a positive way.



(Nonet - 9 lines of poetry - syllable count 9 through 1)

UNSHACKLED

A myriad of perfect phrases

Yearning to be liberated

Strong words of pain, love, fear, hope

Breaking free to spill out

Black ink on white page

Releasing me

This writer

From my

Block

~Sandy Patton

Sandy is a member of Hampton Roads Writers and shared her poem "Unshackled" at the March 9 Show and Grow.

Writers' Resources

Did you know that our Hampton Roads Writers [website](#) has a great list of writers' resources? From first tier literary reviews, writing venues for both adult and juvenile writers, to writing contests and educational opportunities, our website has so much information all in one place.

Are you looking for local writers' groups or blogs by writers worldwide? You'll find it right on our website. How about online games for writers and gifts for readers? Look no further. You'll find it on our website. Want to hear best-selling authors talk about their craft? Yep, you'll find that on our website, too. In fact, you'll be amazed at the interesting things and useful information you'll find on our [website](#). Why don't you start exploring today?

Why Join Hampton Roads Writers?

1. HRW members receive discounts on all of the Traveling Pen Writers Workshops and at the annual writers' conference in September.
2. HRW members receive a personal member's page on the HRW website on which they may display their writer's bio and their publication credits.
3. HRW encourages readers and writers of all talents and acknowledges and celebrates awareness of local and contemporary authors and their work.
4. HRW serves as a resource to our community by creating and supporting literary events throughout the Hampton Roads area.
5. All members' money goes to pay professional writers for their services during the Traveling Pen workshops and the annual conference, to maintain the website, to publicize our writers' conference, to offer partial and complete scholarships to HRW events to people who otherwise could not afford to attend, and to cover office supplies and liability insurance.
6. HRW is an all-volunteer group of writers eager to give back some of their time, treasure, and talent in order to help other less experienced writers grow in their writing craft and ultimately attain publication success.
7. Joining HRW is a great way to network.
8. Your contribution is tax deductible.
9. We want you.
10. We need you.

Writing Prompt: POV

Write a scene from the point of view of a knife nestled in a killer's pocket.



Grammar With Bernadette

Transitions: Smooth and Clear from Here to There

A long, long time ago, when people regularly listened to things called albums on devices called turntables, they would hear a few seconds of only the scratch of the needle on the vinyl, which meant one song had ended and the next one was beginning. English speakers, as they move from one thought to the next, use transitional words and phrases. These words and phrases help the listener or reader understand how the points are connected.

Transitions can signal many things., and many, many choices are available.

Transitions can add to the same thought: *also, again, likewise, moreover.*

They can connect cause and effect: *so, thus, therefore, consequently.*

They can compare two thoughts: *but, still, similarly, rather.*

They can stress a detail: *above all, primarily.*

They can illustrate a point: *specifically, namely, for example.*

Where would we be without transitions? At times, people use extra long transitions. Perhaps they are creating a dramatic delay for their listeners. But many of these long phrases can be trimmed down to just a word or two:

That being said (still)

Be that as it may (but)

With this in mind (so)

While it may be true (though)

On the other hand (still, but)

For the time being (for now)

Bernadette Kinlaw writes a weekly grammar column in *The Virginian-Pilot*. This column appeared in the March 11, 2013 issue. Our thanks to Bernadette for allowing us to reprint her work in our newsletter.

When Your Characters Start Talking to You

By Susan Okaty

I hate confrontation. I especially hate confrontation when it involves people I care about. I'm not usually one to air my dirty laundry in public, but I felt I needed to unload this particular episode, since it is still bothering me. The names are fictitious, except mine, of course. Here's how it went down:

Eric: I don't know what game you're playing, but I don't like it and you better cut it out.

Me: I don't know what you're talking about.

Eric: Drop the innocent act. You know perfectly well you're playing with my head. It's making me crazy.

Me: Believe me, Eric, that was not my intention at all. I'm sorry if you feel that way.

Eric: I thought I was likable, and you've made me into some kind of monster.

Me: Well, no, not really a monster. Maybe someone who is something of a tragic figure.

Eric: See, that's what I mean. Make up your mind, and then stick with it. This flip-flopping has got to stop.

Sarah: Stop your boo-hooing, Eric. You're getting annoying. At least you have a personality. I, on the other hand, feel like a goody-two-shoes. You're spicy salsa, and I'm just vanilla pudding. So stop complaining.

Me: I had no idea you felt that way, Sarah. What can I do to make you feel better?

Sarah: Give me some backbone, why don't you?

Eric: Stop the crybaby act, Sarah. You know you have a juicy role. You're her little pet.

Sarah: Shut up, Eric! I don't give a...

Me: Stop right there, Sarah! Watch your mouth.

Sarah: Oh, so sorry to hurt your delicate sensitivities. I don't give a rat's ass. Can I say rat's ass, or will that make you go ballistic?

Me: Please, do we have to do this right now? It's three in the morning.

Faber: Hi, gang. What are we talking about?

Me, Eric, and Sarah: Go away, Faber!