

# Hampton Roads Writers Where Characters Connect

January 2014

## 2014 Writers' Conference Update



The 2013 Hampton Roads Writers' Conference, in its new digs at the Westin Town Center, was a rousing success. We had engaging presenters who spoke on a variety of topics encompassing different genres and aspects of writing, including the business side as well as the craft. The conference was well attended, bringing together experienced, published authors, people just beginning to explore what it means to be a writer, and folks in the middle. The new addition of our Friday night silent auction and social was a hit, and we were able to raise money for our future endeavors while having a darn good time doing it.

We'd like to rest on our laurels just a bit, but it takes a full year to put on a successful writing conference, so shortly after the lights were turned out on our 2013 conference, Lauran Strait, president of HRW, and other members of the conference committee were already planning for this year's conference on September 18-20, 2014. Our reputation has grown so much since we had our first conference five years ago that we

now have authors and agents calling, asking if they can be put on this year's schedule. Because of that, we have been able to put together a roster of presenters and breakout sessions with more to be locked in over the next few months.

We are indeed honored and excited that **Janet Burroway** has agreed to be one of our keynote speakers. Janet is the author of eight novels, including *Raw Silk*, a National Book Award runner-up, and most recently *Bridge of Sand*, silver medalist in the Florida Book Awards. Her novel *The Buzzards* was nominated for the 1970 Pulitzer Prize, and *Cutting Stone* was a *New York Times* Notable Book. Though her novels have won her wide acclaim, her greatest readership comes from her textbook *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. It is the most widely used creative writing text in America. Her poems, stories, and essays appear in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Mademoiselle*, *New Statesman*, *The Guardian*, *MS*, *Story Quarterly*, *New Virginia Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Prague Review*, *Five Points*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *Ninth Letter*, *Narrative and New Letters*, and in *Pushcart Prizes XXVII*. *Newsweek* said "Burroway is a subtle novelist with a gift for jolting surprises."



**Brad Parks** is our other keynoter and is the only author to have won the Shamus, Nero, and Lefty Awards for his mysteries and thrillers. A Dartmouth College graduate, Brad spent a dozen years with *The Washington Post* and the (Newark, N.J.) *Star-Ledger* before becoming a full-time novelist. His fifth Carter Ross thriller, *The Player*, was released in March 2013. Parks received the Shamus (for best first private eye novel) and the Nero (for best American mystery) for his debut, *Faces of the Gone*, the first book in history to take both awards. The Lefty (for best humorous mystery) went to his third book, *The Girl Next Door*. His mysteries have received starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and *Kirkus Reviews*. Shelf-Awareness has deemed the Carter Ross books "perfect for the reader who loves an LOL moment but wants a mystery that's more than empty calories." *Library Journal* has called the series "essential reading" and "a refreshing tonic for the mystery soul."

# Go Ahead, Throw That Pitch

You've been working hard on a particular piece of writing and think it might be time for you to approach someone about getting it published. But who do you approach, and how do you know if it even has merit? Sure, your husband or wife, or Grandma has raved about it. The neighborhood kids have sat through a reading without yawning or bursting into tears, but you think you'd like a more professional opinion. Have we got the people for you to talk to! At our 2014 writers' conference, we already have several literary agents on the roster. So polish your piece and perfect your pitch, and bring them along to our September conference. You have plenty of time to prepare. Here are the agents we have locked in so far:



**Emily Gref** is with Lowenstein Associates Inc. Besides being a literary agent for them, she is also the contracts and royalties manager and handles foreign and subrights. Her interests are wide and varied. In Young Adult and Middle Grade she is looking for all genres but has a weak spot for fairy tale, folklore, and mythology retellings. Emily is also interested in fantasy and science fiction, as well as literary and commercial women's fiction. In nonfiction she is looking for strong narratives and books by recognized experts with a wide-reaching platform, especially books that lend themselves well to digital mediums. Subjects of interest include popular science, linguistics, anthropology, and history.

**Kaylee Davis** is a literary agent at Dee Mura Literary. Kaylee received a B.A. in English Literature and a B.A. in Sociology from Miami University, and she is certified in copyediting from Emerson College. Recognized for her obsessive-compulsive attention to detail and crazy-fast reading ability, Kaylee joined the team as a professional copyeditor, proofreader, and administrative assistant. She has recently been promoted to associate literary agent. Her special interests are sci-fi, fantasy, speculative fiction, young adult, new adult, steam-punk, urban fantasy, social commentary, and counter-culture.



**Kimiko Nakamura** is also a literary agent at Dee Mura Literary. Her career started in the publishing houses of Boston where she fostered her talent for sales. At Dee Mura Literary, she found another passion: helping writers build successful careers. Kimiko works with new and emerging writers. She looks for page-turning fiction and nonfiction that leaves people inspired and offers readers a full range of emotions—laughter that slips out while reading in public, tears that splash onto our e-readers, and an aha of connection on the page, reminding us that books are more than something we simply hold in our hands. Her special interests are contemporary fiction, young adult, new adult, women's lit, romance, upmarket literary, mystery, urban fantasy, satire, memoir, narrative nonfiction, mind and body, cookbooks, spirituality, and health.

**Linda Epstein** has been a literary agent at The Jennifer DeChiara Literary Agency since 2011. Before that she interned and read manuscripts at some of the top agencies in New York. She is actively seeking Adult, Young Adult, and Middle Grade fiction as well as picture books. She likes quirky, character-driven stories that don't skimp when it comes to plot, including realistic contemporary, historical, fantasy, and science fiction, both literary and commercial. She is drawn to stories that touch upon questions of identity and social issues (without being too heavy) and particularly appreciates a distinctive narrative voice.



In addition to these literary agents we will have **Dr. Philip Brady**, Executive Director for Etruscan Press, an independent press publisher. Etruscan Press publishes books of poetry, literary novels, creative nonfiction, literary short story collections, literary criticisms, literary anthologies, and translations. All manuscripts must be a minimum of fifty pages book length. The mission of Etruscan Press, a national literary publishing house founded in 2002, is to produce and promote books that nurture the dialogue among genres, achieve a distinctive voice, and reshape our literary and cultural landscapes. Etruscan produced two National Book Award Finalists, earned four NEA grants, and had work reprinted in *Best American Poetry, 2007*. Dr. Brady is professor of English at Youngstown State University where he directs the Poetry Center. He is the author of three collections of poetry and has published a memoir and has edited a book on James Joyce.

## Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critiques

Do you ever wish you could get a professional opinion about your writing? Have you ever checked into what it costs for a professional critique service? It ain't cheap. Oh, wait! It is cheap, *as in free*, if you bring that short story or novel chapter to one of Hampton Roads Writers' Show and Grow your Prose sessions. Don't miss an opportunity to read ten minutes of your prose (short story, memoir, or novel chapter only) in front of a very accepting audience of your peers, followed by a brief professional critique by our guest critiquer and by the moderator (usually Luran Strait, founder and president of HRW). Even if you don't want to read a piece, sitting in the audience and listening to what the critiquer has to say can help you with your own writing. We have only time for six or seven readings per session, so go to our [website](#) for detailed information on how to share your work. Registration is required for those who wish to read.

Here is the schedule for the next sessions, all of which will take place at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library in Virginia Beach from 9:15 to Noon.

**February 8, 2014:** **Dr. Bill Ruehlmann** will offer the professional critiques. Seven slots remain.

**March 8, 2014:** Author **Jeff Andrews** will offer the professional critiques. Seven slots remain.

**April 5, 2014:** Author **Valerie Wilkinson** will offer the professional critiques. Seven slots remain.

### Winchester in October

by Eric Forsbergh

*Like honey on a ripened pear, a glow  
upon today remains. Let's walk, not brace  
for winter yet. Each unkempt orchard row  
will stiffen, cold, the frost like sharpened lace  
on this Winchester farm. Now, littered on  
bent brown-tipped grass, lie unkept apples, warm,  
half brown, and sweet. Across this tangled lawn  
like blurry stars the yellow jackets swarm.  
Moved on, we wish the sinking sun to hold  
its place. Let's lie within this autumn space.  
Stretched out, I close my eyes yet see bright gold  
illuminated lids. Across my face  
your shadow falls, and I confess to this:  
I've lingered forty years in our first kiss.*

<http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org>



Eric Forsbergh lives in Reston, Virginia, where he practices dentistry. He wrote poetry in high school and college before taking a 25-year hiatus to attend to family and career. After attending a Hampton Roads Writers' conference several years ago, he resumed writing poetry in 2010. His first book of poems, *Imagine Morning: Poems of Companionship & Solitude*, has just been published.

## Puzzler

### This May Be Initially Hard

The titles of many famous literary works follow the formula of *noun of a noun*. For example, Shakespeare's The M of V is *The Merchant of Venice*. How many of these encrypted titles can you figure out? The answers are on page 4.

1. The A of HF by Mark Twain
2. H of D by Joseph Conrad
3. The H of M by Edith Wharton
4. The S of K by Ernest Hemingway
5. The S of OT by Thornton Wilder
6. The H of ND by Victor Hugo
7. The C of MC by Alexander Dumas
8. The B of the V by Tom Wolfe
9. The C of the CB by Jean Auel
10. The I of BE by Oscar Wilde

# Traveling Pen Series

These 2-hour workshop sessions on different aspects of writing are \$10 for HRW members and \$20 for non-members. Check out one or more of the upcoming ones:

**Saturday, February 22, 2014, 9:30 a.m.—12:00 noon** **Your Book in Print** presented by **Jeff Andrews**, author of *The Freedom Star* and *The Gandy Dancer*. This workshop will take participants step-by-step through the process of building a quality paperback book on CreateSpace. We'll begin with a discussion on how to set up your CreateSpace account and initiate a new publishing project, and then delve into book layout, formatting and design, creating a marketable book cover, and the marketing options available through CreateSpace. Participants will come away with a clear understanding of what is involved in turning their manuscript into a finished product. Participants are asked to bring a trade paperback book with them, as we will go through examples of industry publishing norms.

**Saturday, March 22, 2014, 9:30 a.m. — 12:00 noon** **Eliminate the Excuses: You can *learn* to be a creative and productive writer!** presented by author **John Robert Mack**. Is the sight of a blank sheet of paper or a blank computer screen terrifying to you? Are you jealous of people who were born lucky enough to write a lot who seem to have creative juices oozing out of their pores? Do you hate writers who never suffer from writers' block? Guess what: it's not genetic, you can learn to be creative and you can learn to write something the moment you sit at your desk. The goal of this workshop is to stop you from acting as your own worst enemy. A series of guided exercises will teach you how to bring spontaneity and fun into your writing. We will focus on two skills: writing creatively and producing pages. Please bring whatever medium you prefer for writing: notebook and pen, laptop, tablet, or crayons and a coloring book. Participation in the exercises is not mandatory and you will not be asked to share with the class. There, we just eliminated the first two excuses!

**Saturday, April 26, 2014, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon** **TBA**, presented by author **Ginger Marcinkowski**.

All workshops are held at the Virginia Beach Tidewater Community College campus, in the Blackwater Building, room CW-134. Please send your name, address, email, and phone number along with a note about which workshop you're registering for and payment (check or money order) to:

**Hampton Roads Writers  
P.O. Box 56228  
Virginia Beach, VA 23456**

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

For more detailed information about these workshops, including more about the presenters, please visit our [website](#).

## BRING A BIG NAME TO VB

An anonymous donor will gift Hampton Roads Writers 1K to establish a keynote speaker fund with the condition that an additional 2.5K is raised during our **Bring a Big Name to Virginia Beach** fundraising drive. We are asking for donations *in addition* to your **regular** yearly membership. Make sure you designate what portion of your check or money order is for our fundraiser. Remember, all donations are tax deductible.

## Answers to page 4 Puzzler:

1. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
2. Heart of Darkness
3. The House of Mirth
4. The Snows of Kilimanjaro
5. The Skin of Our Teeth
6. The Hunchback of Notre Dame
7. The Count of Monte Cristo
8. The Bonfire of the Vanities
9. The Clan of the Cave Bear

## Spotlight on Authors by Susan Okaty



**John Robert Mack** was inspired to write *That Dance Book* after talking with literary agent Brooks Sherman at the Hampton Roads Writers' Conference in 2012. "We chatted at the cocktail party, and I told him about my dance experiences. He asked why I'd never written a novel for dancers. With all the movies and TV shows, he thought a novel would have a market, yet nothing existed. I'm mostly a sci-fi/fantasy guy, so it never occurred to me. I'd used dance in novels before, but never as a central concept." Speaking with a professional agent at our conference changed that, and *That Dance Book*, now available on Amazon, was the result.

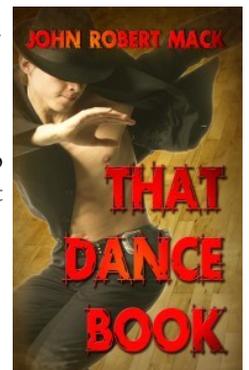
One of Mack's biggest questions is how he would pitch his book to an agent. "It's a book about dancers and about dance, but it's also a mystery/thriller. The mystery/thriller aspect was injected because I figured 230 pages of dance routines would be boring, but the mystery sort of took over the process. I was adamant that it would *not* be about a competition. I firmly believe that the contemporary need to turn everything in the arts into a competition is killing the creative process. So I've been shopping it as a YA coming of age story about dancers, but I may need to redefine it in my own mind. As more people read it, I am forced to accept that my "baby" isn't the cute little dance novel I thought it was."

In order to get a feel for the approach to take for his novel, Mack did some research. "I watched a hell of a lot of *Glee*. And *Teen Wolf*. That's my market. All kidding aside, I read all the YA novels published in 2012 I could find to see how stories are being told. I watched TV shows and movies to see what was in the public consciousness on the subject of dancing. I think novel writers make a huge mistake when they don't acknowledge that storytelling is dominated by the visual arts. If the vast majority of your readers get their concepts of storytelling from movies and TV, then you have to tell your story the way those media do." The most challenging part about writing this novel was keeping it in the real world. "I mostly write speculative fiction, and I always want to have aliens and monsters jump out of the shadows."

The toughest criticism of his writing came from one of Mack's teachers. "When I was in High School, I gave a notebook full of teenage angst poetry to an English teacher who seemed cool, contemporary, and hip. She kept it for a week. When I asked her what she thought, she said only, 'Stick to fiction.' It crushed me." After writing *That Dance Book*, Mack sent it to some parents to determine the appropriate age for the novel. "One mother sent me an email telling me that she, in fact, had a teenage son with a gay dad. She said the relationship between that son and his dad was very different from the relationship between her other sons and their straight dad. She said she kept getting weird déjà vu when reading the novel; I had completely nailed the way the relationship works between her son and his gay father. It had made her cry. Her email made me cry."

John went on quite a journey to get his novel published. "I shopped it a few places and had little success. Well, that's normal. Then a few folks whose opinions I respect suggested I use my dance connections and try to self-publish, which was not my first choice. I spoke to Luran (Strait, president and founder of Hampton Roads Writers), hoping she would automatically dismiss the idea as ludicrous. Yeah, didn't work. She was the one who convinced me to self-pub. I might be able to sell copies through my connections. That might seem attractive to traditional publishers. In the end, I might be able to turn my connections into a decent following or generate enough interest to attract an agent/publisher, so I decided to self-publish to see what happened. I wrote the novel in three months at the end of 2012. I workshopped it for nine months through the Muse in Norfolk, and a critique group I met through HRW. Then I had two professional editors attack it. I spent a huge amount of time researching self-publishing, designed the cover and formatted the manuscript for both print and Kindle. Bam. I held a soft release on Black Friday 2013."

Right now Mack is working on the sequel to *That Dance Book*. "It's tentatively called *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*, and I'm about 180 pages into it. I started it shortly before Christmas. I hope to have it done by the end of January. I'm also working on a Steampunk novel called *A Consequence of Folly* as well as several short stories based on *That Dance Book*." HRW congratulates John Robert Mack on the publication of his novel and wishes him continued success as he works on the sequel. John's book is available on Amazon. He says, "If you go through the HRW website, the organization gets a kickback, so do that."



# Spotlight on Authors

by Susan Okaty



*The Devil's Season*, **Donna Kenworthy Levy's** third book, was published in August by Booklocker.com, Inc. Although the devil is an important character in the book, Kenworthy says the book is not a typical horror story. "Granted, the storyline includes interplay between light and dark forces, but the thrust of the book is psychological and spiritual." She feels her book is unique in that it is the only novel she knows of in which the main character is an atheist and in which a near-death experience is featured. I think it is a timely topic, particularly with the publication of Dr. Eben Alexander's memoir about his own near-death experience. His book has been on the *New York Times* best seller list for over a year."

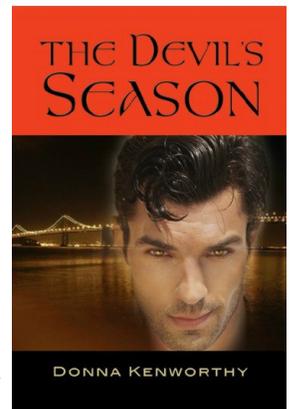
Donna's previous books were memoirs about her psychic and mystical experiences and what it is like to work as a professional psychic. Because she is an unknown author, she decided to self-publish and take on the job of marketing the book herself. As for her thoughts on the publishing world today, she says, "The modern world of publishing is in a state of tremendous flux. Electronic publications are taking over the market, while the demand for print media is lessening. I believe the trend will continue."

Writing *The Devil's Season* required Kenworthy to do some research. The novel takes place in the Tidewater area, and in her book the Hampton Roads Bay-Bridge collapses. "I researched the collapse of other bridges and also conferred with the local police regarding procedures to clear traffic that would be backed up in such a scenario. I also delved more closely into Virginia highways and looked into how electronic slot machines work for the chapter that takes place in a casino in Atlantic City."

Donna said she has been influenced by author Sue Grafton's style. "She is easy to read, and her characters are quirky and interesting. Also, she moves the action along at a good pace." Since Donna was teaching herself how to write a novel as she wrote it, she had much to learn. "I had to rewrite the book at least thirty-six times. Each time I edited it, for some reason I only saw some of the errors. For a while, I didn't even notice I had events occurring in the wrong order!" Kenworthy worked with a very loose outline. "Regardless of my intention for a chapter, the characters took over. My writing process is more akin to channeling. Bless them, for the devised twists and turns I could never have concocted with my conscious mind."

Kenworthy uses criticism to motivate her. "I had two professional editors go over the manuscript. One of them, who had been well impressed with my writing ability exhibited in my earlier book, was mightily disappointed in what a poor job I was doing on the novel. I was devastated but had to acknowledge she was right. I dug in my heels and set about to improve it. The best compliment I have received from many of the people who have read it is: It's a real page turner."

Donna's book is available online at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, iBooks, and booklocker.com. Hampton Roads Writers congratulates Donna Kenworthy Levy on the publication of her first novel.



Award-winning children's author Paul Fleischman shares his thoughts on keeping a writer's notebook: "I do keep a notebook. In it I have sections devoted to ideas for stories, characters, descriptions, scenes, titles, names (male, female, last), as well as facts picked up from books and newspapers that might serve me someday. I'm always adding to it. When I'm finished with a book and thinking of starting another, I go through it and select the ideas that give me the most voltage. Often I've forgotten that I've written an idea in the notebook, and will later find that it appears two or three times; those are the ideas that usually become books, ideas that tug at your sleeve for years."



## Spotlight on Authors by Susan Okaty

Congratulations to Hampton Roads Writers member **Dr. Michael Owens** for publishing his first novel, *The End of Free Will*. Owens was inspired to write this work after becoming interested in meme theory some years ago. “The idea that these little information bits (memes) enter our brains and influence our behavior, for better or worse, fascinated me. This concept overlapped with the question raised in one of my favorite literary works, *The Grand Inquisitor* by Dostoyevsky. The Grand Inquisitor maintains that free will is the source of great unhappiness for mankind. It simply can’t cope with it.” In *The End of Free Will*, Karin Kurtz, the main character, knows how and why to take free will out of the human equation.

Owens said his work began as a standard plot-based thriller. He developed it further during his MFA studies at ODU, and, from the input of the ODU faculty, it became much more character-based. “I must say, writing it more from Karin’s perspective, not just as the protagonist, but as a ‘real’ person, was much more enjoyable.”

Before writing his novel, Owens read a number of books on meme theory, Dawkins, Blackmore, Dennet, and Brodie, to name a few. He developed some of the basic science concepts from discussions with the virology department at Eastern Virginia Medical School. “I almost expected them to laugh when I put forth my fictional ideas about getting memes into the human brain, but instead they got excited about it and gave me some great ideas to boot.”

I asked Dr. Owens if he writes an outline first before he begins a major work, or does he just sit down and start writing. “The writing world is apparently divided between plotters and plungers. The plotters outline, while the plungers simply forge ahead, not knowing what happens until they get to the end. My initial drafts are plunges. Only after I have a nearly final draft in hand do I outline. I do that as a part of the editing process, to make sure somebody that I killed off in Chapter 3 doesn’t magically reappear in Chapter 12.”

Owens recognizes the importance of criticism. “Over my years of writing, I have committed just about every blunder in the book, so criticism has been a big part of the learning process for me. That doesn’t mean I enjoy it, only that I realize how essential it is.” The most challenging element of writing *The End of Free Will* was cutting away parts of the manuscript which caused him “something akin to outright agony.” Mostly at the insistence of the ODU faculty, he let a lot of “stuff” fall by the wayside. “I see now that this was all for the good, but at the time, it was like lopping off my fingers and toes.”

About the publishing world today, Owens said it is “clearly in a state of transition. The bricks and mortar components of the book world are contracting, while e-books and self-publishing are exploding. I do not expect print literature to go away. I use a Kindle but still love the feel of a book in my hands.”

Owens has not been idle since publishing his latest work. “I have one book, *The Threshold*, under review by a publisher now. It’s about a young man who survives cold water drowning in a frozen lake in Upstate New York. He becomes an unwitting subject in an experiment to prolong human life span, but the side effects of the process prove too much for him. I have another manuscript in its final stages about a young woman who is torched in an explosion. Her only wish is to be left alone to die, until she meets a therapist who shows her an alternative. It is called (tentative title) *All Burned Up: A Love Story*.”



Blake Snyder, who became one of the most popular writing mentors in the film industry, had this to say about loglines, a one-sentence summary of a script: “I talk to lots of screenwriters, I’ve been pitched by experts and amateurs, and my question when they prematurely drift into the story of their movie is always the same: ‘What’s the logline?’ Oddly, this is often the last thing screenwriters think about when writing a script. Believe me, I’ve been there. You’re so involved in your scenes, you’re so jazzed about being able to tie in that symbolic motif from *The Odyssey*, you’ve got it all so mapped out, that you forget one simple thing: You can’t tell me what it’s about. You can’t get to the heart of the story in less than 10 minutes.

Boy, are you screwed!”

## Grammar Lesson With Bernadette

### Jive versus Jibe

I recently saw a sports story (in another paper, of course) that used the word “jive” where “jibe” should have been.

Wrong: *“Renewing commitment between the most powerful people in the organization would require a total forgiveness on all sides that doesn’t jive with the personalities of men who carry grudges to their graves.”*

“To jive” is to talk deceptively, to kid around or to dance to jazz music: *Tell me the truth. Don’t jive me.*

“To jibe” is be in accord with something. If it doesn’t jibe, then it doesn’t make sense: *The princess stayed awake because of a pea under the mattress? That doesn’t jibe with reality.*

I found examples all over the Internet that incorrectly used “jive” instead of “jibe”: *Mayor’s recollection doesn’t jive with facts, committee members say.*

*Mint report doesn’t jive with actual bank balance.*

*High-end brunch doesn’t jive with the service, some of the food.*

The English language, word by word, is changing all the time. In the case of “jive,” the incorrect usage is so common that the American Heritage Dictionary has added the definition “to be in accord” after its other definitions of the word. The dictionary adds an important note about the usage, however, acknowledging that “jive” is often used where “jibe” should be.

Then it drops in this curious nugget: “The Usage Panel views this as a mistake. In our 2004 survey, 93 percent of the panel rejected the sentence, “The two accounts of the incident didn’t quite jive.”

What is this Usage Panel? It’s a group of about 200 writers, professors and even diplomats who vote on the acceptability of words and grammatical usages. I can’t express how much I would love to attend one of their parties.



Bernadette Kinlaw has been writing for the *Virginian-Pilot* since 1988. Her column, “Grammar School,” appears once a week in the Daily Break and online. She may be reached at [bernadette.kinlaw@pilotonline.com](mailto:bernadette.kinlaw@pilotonline.com). Thank you, Bernadette, for allowing us to print portions of your column.

“Substitute ‘damn’ every time you’re inclined to write ‘very’; your editor will delete it, and the writing will be just as it should be.”

Mark Twain

## “Group” Therapy

by Sandy Patton

Every Tuesday from Ten till Noon  
I stand before you, friends and peers  
Hoping to touch you with my words  
To make you laugh or shed a tear

It’s with a trace of trepidation  
I bare my soul for you to see  
With small poems written from the heart  
I offer bits and pieces of me

And each of you, unique, so gifted  
A weekly wealth of skill and style  
Keeps me a spell bound, willing captive  
With words that shock, surprise, beguile

We are all so different, yet the same  
United by our common thread  
High regard for the written word  
Our need to write, our daily bread

It feels like home, our convivial group  
We share our words, our private treasures  
Offer helpful comments and advice  
Critique and praise, in equal measure

Sandy is a member of HRW and attends a writers’ group on Tuesday mornings. She wrote this poem mainly because she wanted to let the other writers in her group know how much she appreciates them. She also says, “I would love it if it could, in a small way, encourage some beginning writers to take the plunge and join one of the great groups that are in the Hampton Roads area. Sometimes all they need is that little push to get them started.”

For a list of local writers’ groups, look for the link on our Hampton Roads Writers [home page](#).



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. 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. Why not start by purchasing a book or two written by one of our conference presenters, then bring them to the next conference and get them signed! Oh, and tell your friends and family about our link to Amazon!