



# Hampton Roads Writers Where Characters Connect

September 2013

## Going, Going...Gone



Panel discussion at last year's conference

If you haven't already registered for this year's HRW conference being held September 19-21 at the Westin Town Center Virginia Beach, then you are about to miss a great opportunity to further your writing career or to get it started. Talk to many of our past attendees, and they will share with you how hearing a particular keynoter or sitting in on one or more of our workshops gave them ideas that spurred them on to more and better writing and gave them access to a



Keynoters Kevin Maurer and Lisa McMann

vibrant writing community they had been only barely aware of. Come to meet struggling writers needing a little confidence and support, come to meet successful writers who can share their expertise, come to enjoy the camaraderie of other writers. Come to spend one evening and two full days of workshops and break-out sessions, first-ten-lines critiques, agent pitches, socializing, networking, and great lunches. Autumn is nearly upon us and kids are heading back to school. Why not look at this as a chance to renew your enthusiasm for your writing and get a jumpstart on a new season of productivity?

## SHOW AND GROW YOUR PROSE with Professional Critique Event

Our last Show and Grow event for the year will be held on **November 9** at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach, 9:30 a.m.- Noon. Author Valerie Wilkinson and Lauran Strait will offer the professional critiques. Only a few spots are left for readers who want to share a longer piece of writing. Don't miss an opportunity to read ten minutes of your prose, 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 look forward to hearing from you.

# Traveling Pen Series



Traveling Pen Series workshops are held at the Tidewater Community College campus in Virginia Beach in the Blackwater Building, room CW-134, from 9:30 a.m. to noon, unless otherwise noted. Check-in is at 9:15. The cost of workshops is \$10 for HRW members and \$20 for non-members

To take advantage of workshop offerings, send your name, address, phone number, and email, 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 56228  
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456

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](mailto:HRWriters@cox.net)

These are the last two workshops for this year. Check back with us later to see what we have to offer for the new year.

**September 7: BEGINNING AND ENDING WITH STYLE** presented by Valerie Wilkinson at Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach. Description: This workshop is designed to help writers construct beginnings that grab attention, create expectation, and establish tone, voice, and perspective. In addition, it will help writers develop endings that leave the reader with a sense of completion and hint at meaning without overtly stating theme. The class will include lecture, group discussion, and writing exercises.

**November 2: WRITING FOR MAGAZINES** presented by Bill Glose. Description: This workshop will cover everything a freelancer needs to know about how to build a writer's resume and get published by magazines. Bill Glose will speak from both the editor's and writer's perspectives on such things as seeking out appropriate markets, crafting the perfect query letter, and landing interviews with celebrities and notable personalities. An in-class workshop and feedback will be included. For the past 11 years, Bill Glose has been a contributing editor with *Virginia Living* while also writing hundreds of articles that have appeared in publications across the country, from *Army Times* to *The Writer*. He is the winner of numerous writing awards (F. Scott Fitzgerald Short Story Award, *Daily Press* Poet Laureate, Virginia Press Association First Place Award for Sports News Writing, etc.) and is author of *The Human Touch* (San Francisco Bay Press, 2007).

## WRITING By Cecelia Robbins

Take nothing: a dream, a wish, a thought, a whisper on the wind. Pluck the last red rose petal of summer, find the iridescent wing of a cicada, collect care-worn stones. Out of such, spin a tale, craft a story that can bear the weight of the world in its pages.

People the dream, give it drama, love, hate: let it live. The results will astound you. Stories will go in directions you never anticipated. Characters will sass you, act in ways that, sometimes, you wish they wouldn't.

Writing is like raising children. You use all of your knowledge, your experience—and the people around you insist on going their own way. You have to allow them that freedom. Free them to grow, to learn, to make their own mistakes. Your characters will go in ways you never planned. In freeing them to do so, you learn more about life and writing. Your characters can become your teachers.

# Spotlight on Authors

## By Susan Okaty



Google Jeanette Cheezum and the first thing that comes up is her blog, *Cavalcade of Stars*, on Wordpress. According to Jeanette, her blog is “a place to read fiction and poetry from some of your favorite online writers.” A member of several writing communities, including Six Sentences and Helium, Jeanette has published many e-books which can be purchased on Amazon and Barnes and Noble. I asked her what the impetus was for starting [Cavalcade of Stars](#), and she said, “I felt so much excitement when published that I wanted to give others the chance to feel the same. My thoughts were to give the reader a variety of things to read. Cavalcade gives writers a chance to showcase their poetry, short stories, flash and nonfiction. As time has gone by, I decided to add e-chapbooks.

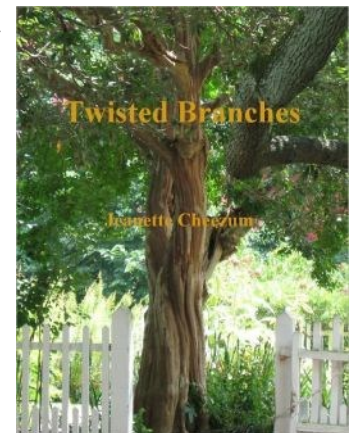
Jeanette told me that she has had submissions from both established writers and closet writers who have written for awhile but never tried before to get their work published. Many of her submissions have come from other countries, such as Poland, Ireland, Mexico, and Australia. After having written and commented on similar blogs, Jeanette decided to design her own site that would be simple and easy to read, a place where people could get involved. “So far, it has worked quite well,” she added.

Jeanette advertises *Cavalcade* on Facebook, and last year she had the pleasure of being contacted by the award-winning writers’ resource, Duotrope, asking her if she would allow them to advertise her blog on their site as well. Once she publishes a piece on her blog, she leaves each piece up for a week to give authors more exposure than they do on many other sites. E-chapbooks she will leave up for a month.

When deciding what to publish, Jeanette tries for a mix of genres so she will have something for everyone. “Not only do I want *Cavalcade* to shine, I want the authors to do the same,” she said. *Cavalcade of Stars* is currently accepting poetry and short story submissions up to 1,000 words. E-chapbook submissions may be up to 5,000 words. Submissions should be sent along with a short bio. For more details, check out her [blog](#).

Jeanette is in the middle of her fifth novel. She’s written two children’s books, a short story book, four novels, three of which are part of a trilogy, but each of those three stands alone. “I have also been lucky enough to be published in thirteen anthologies and four poetry books,” she said. “I can’t suggest enough how important it is to get out there!”

Jeanette plans to attend this year’s Hampton Roads Writers’ conference in September. She likes the mix of workshops on craft and the business side of writing. She especially likes the first-ten-lines sessions. “Every year I come away with something,” she says. Going to the conference “reinforces what I’m doing that is right and also teaches me something new.” Look for Jeanette at this year’s conference and meet her in person.



# Who Is This Muse We Speak Of?

By Susan Okaty

While listening to NPR one day, I heard a writer declare, “Unless you’ve had a tragic life, you can’t write anything truly interesting.” Since I’ve led a remarkably happy life with no more than the usual amount of sorrow and tribulation, I would have thrown down my pen and paper right then and there had I believed one word of that. However, since I believe he was spouting a bunch of poppycock, I ignored him.

I do have to admit that I’m at a loss at times to find something interesting to write about. It’s particularly troublesome because I write a blog, *Coming East*, and need to come up with topics on nearly a daily basis. I want to write something big, something important, something monumental—something that will sweep my readers off their feet, tug at their heartstrings, make them want to print my post and stick it on their refrigerators.

Instead, I write about the impossibility of figuring out how to operate my new video camera based on reading the 112-page manual I had to download from the Internet. I write about the difference between men and women, how my grandfather could sing like George Beverly Shea, and about how some of us survived without hi-tech toys. I write about autumn on Plum Island, my love-hate relationship with driving, and my flirtation with running. I make connections with my readers. I make them laugh. I make them cry.

One of my favorite poems from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* is “There Was a Child Went Forth.” The opening lines are: “There was a child went forth every day/And the first object he look’d at, that object he became/And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day/Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.” Then Whitman goes on to describe all that the child became: “the early lilacs, the third-month lambs and the sow’s pink-faint litter...the mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the suppertable...the hurrying tumbling waves...the doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time.” The poem, two pages of luscious imagery, comes down to one essential, irrefutable truth: we are made up of hundreds of thousands of experiences, filtered through our unique senses. No one else has experienced life exactly as we have.

You are filled with stories to tell. Dig deep. Who is this Muse we speak of? It’s you!

## Writing Prompt

“Run!” he yelled.

Why would your character yell this? To warn his buddy so they won’t get caught by the cops? Or perhaps to escape marauding, famished zombies? Maybe a coach is urging on a promising track star by telling him to run faster.

Can you write a tale of 1000 words or less for this prompt? If not, try a vignette of at least 200 words. Vignettes can trigger ideas that lead to stories as well as complete novels. Vignettes can begin anywhere and end anywhere.

Have fun!

“The great advantage to being a writer is that you can spy on people. You’re there, listening to every word, but part of you is observing. Everything is useful to a writer, you see—every scrap, even the longest and most boring of luncheon parties.”

Graham Greene

“No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.”

~Robert Frost