



Hampton Roads Writers Where Characters Connect

January 2016

This past year I finally completed a short story. I started it a little while back—okay, twelve years back—and knew the ending. I just couldn't figure out how to get there. I ruminated on it every few years or so without actually picking up my pen or going to my computer to write anything down.

But this past year I was fired up about my writing. Yes, I know I get fired up slowly. You don't need to point that out. I put my backside in a chair and wrote like a crazy fool. At one point, the piece was over five thousand words, and I whittled it down to 2400, a much better length to submit for contest consideration.

Proud of myself, I took my story to my critique group, and they loved it. After some suggestions from them and some editing, I was ready to submit it to a writing journal or writing magazine contest.

And that's when I hit a snag.

Every journal and magazine I went to wanted to be paid for reading my fabulous story. We're talking about a story that could be turned into an Oscar-winning movie. I was already thinking which actor I wanted for the starring role. And these people wanted to charge me for the pleasure of reading my amazing work?

I'm not talking about a dollar or two. I'm talking big moolah here. Fifteen and twenty dollars a pop. Even though I'll be rolling in dough when the movie deal comes through, right now, I can't afford to shell out a hundred dollars or more in case the first few places I send my story to reject it. They'd be dang fools, of course, but there are a lot of fools out there, believe you me.

Anyway, there is one place I found that doesn't charge a penny to read your work, and their prize money is quite appealing, especially considering their judges give you professional feedback, even if your piece doesn't win. These are intelligent people.

The place is the Hampton Roads Writers annual conference held every September. Go to the [HRW website](#) and check out the details of this past year's conference and writing contests. Then get busy with that fiction, nonfiction or poetry piece you've been working on, polish it up, and submit it for consideration in this year's conference. The deadline will be here before you know it, so don't lallygag.

I'll see you on the Walk of Fame at a future Oscars' ceremony.

Traveling Pen Series

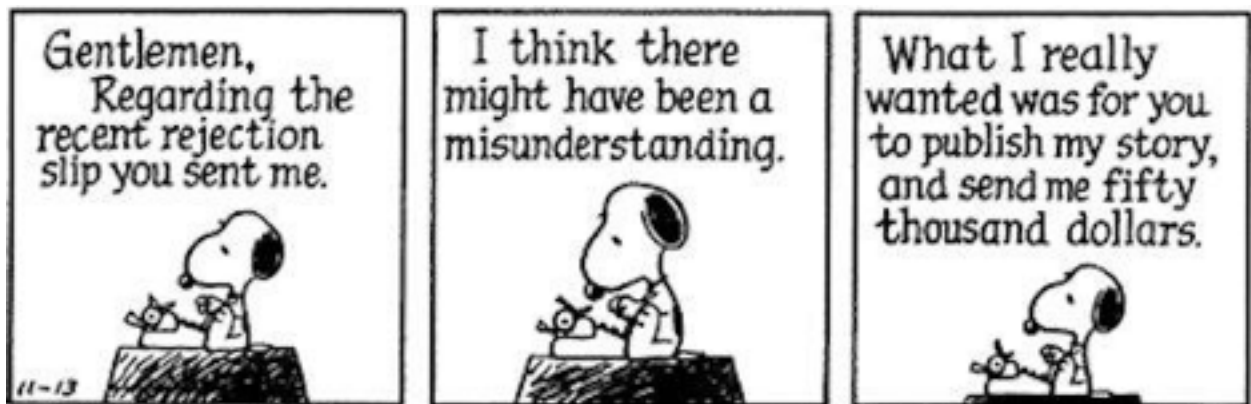
These 2.5-hour workshop sessions on different aspects of writing are \$10 for HRW members and \$20 for non-members. All workshops are held at the Virginia Beach Tidewater Community College campus in the Blackwater Building, Room CW-134. Our first of the new year is already scheduled for January (see details below). We are currently developing other topics and securing our presenters for 2016, so stay tuned.

Saturday, January 30, 2016 -- MS Word for Writers presented by [Rick Eley](#)

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION -- Deep within the electronic catacombs of Microsoft Word lie marvelous hidden treasures. Riches beyond compare will impel the most hardened writers to quiver with delight—and issue forth wondrous, beautiful prose. Okay, perhaps not...but many great-but-latent features of MS Word are often overlooked by the casual user. This workshop will explore lesser-known helpful tips and processes to help streamline your workflow and ease writing tasks. From quick keyboard shortcuts to strange esoteric symbols, from automatic word counters to customized manuscript templates, we'll venture into the hidden mysteries of the beast we call "Word." Join us, if you dare. Attendees are welcome to bring their own laptops/tablets and follow along with examples.

***This workshop assumes users have a basic knowledge of Word, as it is not an introductory course. Some features discussed may not be applicable to all versions.

PRESENTER BIO: -- [Rick Eley](#) is an IT professional, author, and was using MS Word before the first Windows operating system existed. He writes mainly sci-fi, has been known to dabble in literary fiction and non-fiction from time to time, and is hard at work on a new novel. To avoid writing, he organizes the Tidewater Writers critique group, and is a member of both Virginia Beach Writers and HRW. The Tidewater native's editorial on light rail was recently published in the *Virginian-Pilot*, and one of his short stories garnered an honorable mention in *Issues in Science and Technology* magazine's first sci-fi contest.





Who Are We?

Our members come from all fields and professions. The only things we all have in common is love of the written word and the desire to get better at our craft and help others along the way. Here are snippets about some of our newest members.

Phyllis Stewart-Ruffin is a former Army JAG who retired from the practice of law as a civilian Navy attorney a few years ago. She is currently revising her memoir and a novel as well as writing short stories. She attends the *Virginia Festival of the Book* in Charlottesville and joined HRW to network with the local writing community. Her passion is assisting service members, which she does as the volunteer employment director for Virginia's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

Erin Beaty hails from Indianapolis, Indiana, which means she can't drive a tractor, but she won't eat veggies from a can. She graduated from the US Naval Academy where she studied Aerospace Engineering (Astronautics) and German, then went to the fleet as a weapons officer and later a leadership teacher. After almost six years of service, she resigned her commission to pursue her side hobby of populating the Church of Rome.

Once all the kids were finally in school, Erin sat down at the the computer and started writing out one of the stories floating in her head. The next thing she knew, she had a full-length novel and came out of the closet as a writer to her friends and family. As with most of these admissions, no one was really surprised. She sticks mostly to young adult fantasy stories but dabbles in some non-fiction writing as well.

She is represented by Valerie Noble of Donaghy Literary Group and lives wherever the Navy sends her husband, currently the Hampton Roads area.

Kimberly King is a child-development professional, certified early-childhood educator and speaker. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood development and family studies from University of Maine and a Master of Science degree in early childhood education. She is the author of *I Said No!*, a best-selling children's book about sexual-abuse prevention, and *When Your Parents Divorce*, a kid-to-kid guide to dealing with divorce.

Kimberly is a busy mom of three children, yoga teacher, and trained "Steward of Children Facilitator" with Darkness2Light.org.

King lives with her family in the Coastal Virginia region and is available for media interviews.

HRW Keeps Growing

Hampton Roads Writers welcomes the following new members who have joined since the last newsletter:

Phyllis Stewart-Ruffin
Loftin McLamb
Jane Decker
Aaron Bertram
Diana Dirle
Katherine Bavuso
Eliana Bavuso
Michelle Johnson
Cathy Archambeault
Diana Miller
Konrad Winter
Alicia Dekker
Samantha Shannon
Cari Foreman
Esther Dornin
Erin Beaty
Dr. Erwin Thomas
Kay Stone
Dr. Vance Ross, Jr.
Kimberly King
Alexander Brooks

When I Met My Muse

I glanced at her and took my glasses off—they were still singing. They buzzed like a locust on the coffee table and then ceased. Her voice belled forth, and the sunlight bent. I felt the ceiling arch, and knew that nails up there took a new grip on whatever they touched. "I am your own way of looking at things," she said. "When you allow me to live with you, every glance at the world around you will be a sort of salvation." And I took her hand.

William Stafford



Who Are We?

(Continued from page 3)

Dr. Erwin Thomas is interested in programs for senior citizens. He would enjoy working with seniors as he is a member of ILR-Old Dominion University, Higher Ed Center, Virginia Beach. Dr. Thomas taught at Norfolk State University in Virginia, the State University of New York at Oswego, and the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee before retiring to Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he lives with his wife, Mary Barta Thomas. His latest book, *A Weekly Encounter: 52 Meditations of Hope*, joins inspirational quotations by world-renowned personalities throughout history with Bible verses to offer a year's worth of thought-provoking weekly meditations.

Dinner Meeting Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique

Don't miss this opportunity to read ten minutes of your prose (short story, memoir, or a chapter of your novel) to an audience, followed by a brief professional critique by our guest critiquer. Only one or two readings per session.

Anyone may listen as part of the audience, but if you want to share your work, registration is required. Detailed instructions for registering can be found on our [HRW website](#). The reading spots are filled on a first come, first served basis and are expected to fill up quickly. The event is FREE and open to the public, but if you wish to eat dinner, you must purchase your own food.

Our first Show and Grow dinner meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 11, 2016 from six to nine p.m. in the back meeting room at Gus and George's Spaghetti and Steak House at 4312 Virginia Beach Blvd. in Virginia Beach. Try to arrive as close to six as you can so you can get your order in and readings can start promptly at seven. Friends and family are welcome.

Has your writing life stalled?

Do you find yourself with stacks of unfinished manuscripts? Or do you feel you haven't created anything new in months or years?

You need a good kick in the pants, and a critique group might be happy to oblige. Belonging to a critique group makes you write. You don't want to show up empty-handed when it's your turn to share with your group.

Besides compelling you to write, a critique group will give you excellent feedback on what you need to do to end up with a stellar piece of writing. Just make sure you find a group that is willing to say the tough things and not just pat you on your back.

For a list of groups to consider, go to the [HRW website](#).

New Writer's Group Forming

Are you a healthcare professional wanting to write and publish articles about healthcare? A new group has recently formed to help you do that. It is called [Healthcare Authors of Hampton Roads](#). Their mission is to provide an opportunity for members to network with other authors and to develop their writing and publishing skills. For more information, visit their [website](#).

"The road to hell is paved with adverbs."

— Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*



Grammar School with Bernadette:

Some words and phrases run out of steam as technology advances

ONE STRANGE side effect of technology is that words and phrases become outdated, sometimes while we're watching.

Here are a few phrases losing their timeliness:

Broken record

Yes, records and albums still are around. But they're not as common as they were in 1940, when the phrase became popular. The original "broken record" sound occurred when a phonograph needle got stuck in a record groove, and a brief segment would play again and again. If you have a kid, a broken record might sound like this: "Can we watch Dora now? Can we watch Dora? Can we watch Dora now? Can we?"

Carbon copy

This one is both current and old. I don't think many people use that messy blue carbon paper to get a duplicate. But the phrase is used in the email world. You ask a co-worker to "cc" you on an email. Isn't it crazy that it's short for "carbon copy"?

Rolling up the car windows

My husband told me the other day that he wanted to roll up the windows, and I couldn't remember the last time I had used a handle rather than a switch to lower or raise a car window.

Dialing the phone

Few of us dial a phone anymore. But we still hear people say they dialed a phone number.

Blackboard

I've been in a classroom only a few times in the past 25 years. I am always amazed when I see that the blackboard has been replaced by a whiteboard. Does this mean the demise of "chalk" will soon follow?

Run out of steam

This phrase is from the age of steam engines, when no steam meant no power. I don't think anyone uses it in the literal sense anymore.

Tapes are not faring well in the 21st century.

Cassette tapes are all but dead. Some TV promos may tease with something that has been "caught on tape." Rewinding a VHS tape is an old concept.

Film is still used on many movies, but not as much as it once was. I rarely hear, "Film at 11!"

This process of words and phrases dying off is often random, but it sometimes gets a push. Abridged dictionaries in book form say they need to remove words to make room for new ones. Some people were dismayed when Oxford University Press revealed some words that would be removed from the Oxford Junior Dictionary. The editors said the words had lost their relevance to today's children. Some of the words surprised me: acorn, ash, beech, bluebell, buttercup, dandelion, fern, ivy, otter, pasture and willow. Some of the words replacing them are understandable but still sad: attachment, blog, celebrity, chatroom, MP3 player and voicemail.

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. Thank you, Bernadette, for allowing us to print portions of your column.