

Local Writer's Success Story

Erin Beaty, a member of HRW's Board of Directors, recently finalized a contract for her first book. THE TRAITOR'S KISS will be available May 2017. In this part one of two, Phyllis Stewart-Ruffin interviews Erin, who shared her road to success through obtaining an agent.

Phyllis : Your life has recently become exciting, or should I say even more exciting. As a former U.S. Navy weapons officer, a mother of five, and a navy spouse, how did you make the time to write?

Erin : I began writing THE TRAITOR'S KISS in May 2014. My husband was working the night shift, and I had a hard time sleeping when he wasn't there. I did a lot of overnight writing and completed my first draft in six weeks.

Phyllis : Was the draft your first writing project?

Erin : #Outside my family blog, I never considered myself a writer. I always thought of myself as an engineer. One day I finally said, okay I'm going to write this idea down. And it came out.

Phyllis : Did you network with other writers while writing your first draft?

Erin : Not until it was completed. I did a search for critique partners and found a wonderful on-line writer's community. A few websites run chat rooms where I posted a summary of my story to see if anyone was interested and met another woman who wrote in my genre. I shared my draft with her writer's group on Facebook and received a lot of really good feedback. One of the best tools for fixing my own writing was to critique other people's work. I'd see the mistakes they made and was then able to see them in my own writing.

Phyllis : Why did you decide to utilize traditional publishing?

Erin : I'm terrible at self-promotion, so I need a traditional publisher, and to get a traditional publisher, I needed an agent.

Phyllis : And to get an agent?

Erin : I had to query. I started querying in October, which was too early.

Phyllis : Five months after completing your first draft. Why do you say it was too early?

Erin : The manuscript wasn't ready, and my query letters were terrible, so I got a lot of rejections. I did get one partial manuscript request, but my submission was rejected a week later. Then I got one full request in late November. The agent let me know she wouldn't be ready to start reading until spring. Meanwhile, I joined Twitter, which has a lot of contests for writers. Agents look at those, and if they like a Tweet, they ask for a query. I got a few requests, one from a small press that started to pan out. I had a few queries pending, but after my last rejection around Christmas, I realized my book needed a ton of work. So I spent two months revising.

Phyllis : Some writers hire an editor. Did you?

Erin : No. My critique partners were very good at editing in terms of plot. I considered hiring a friend who's a copy editor, but my husband reminded me that others ask me to edit their work for grammar, spelling, and phrasing. He convinced me I could do without one.

What Works Are Eligible for Copyright Protection?

by Michael D. Rigg

Ideas cannot be copyrighted; images can. — Mary Klotz, artist

I suppose you can stop reading after the first sentence, because the quotation set forth above lays out the legal cornerstone of copyright. Stated in the language of the federal laws we've discussed in earlier articles, copyright protects "original works of authorship" that are fixed in a tangible form of expression. But that fixed, tangible form of expression need not be directly perceptible, so long as it may be communicated with the aid of a machine or other device. In layman's terms, a song by your favorite performing artist can be protected by copyright, even though you need a smart phone — or for those of us old enough to remember such things, a record player — to listen to it.

And although the law talks about "original works of authorship," copyright protection is not limited to books or other written works that are generally associated with an "author." Thus, for purposes of copyright protection, James McNeill Whistler's famous portrait of his mother would be an "original work of authorship." Works that are subject to copyright — so long as they are in a fixed and tangible format — include:

- literary works
- musical works, including any accompanying words
- dramatic works, including any accompanying music
- pantomimes and choreographic works
- pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works
- motion pictures and other audiovisual works
- sound recordings
- architectural works

Moreover, the law construes these categories broadly. For example, computer programs and most "compilations" may be registered as "literary works"; maps and architectural plans may be registered as "pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works."

But not everything can be copyrighted. Among the categories of material generally not eligible for federal copyright protection are:

- works that have not been fixed in a tangible form of expression — for example, choreographic works that have not been notated or recorded, or improvisational speeches or performances that have not been written or recorded
- titles, names, short phrases, and slogans; familiar symbols or designs; mere variations of typographic ornamentation, lettering, or coloring; mere listings of ingredients or contents. A trademark or service mark generally is more appropriate for this category of creative expression.

(Continued on page 4)

Read What People Are Saying about the HRW Conference

Sharon Poch: Exhausted and in info overload coma, but what an exciting conference! Such a wide variety of presenters—from police detective (thank you, Lt. Lovely) to poets (thank you, Charlotte Matthews), best selling authors (thank you, Mary Burton and Robert Crane), inspirational jack-of-all-literary-trades (thank you, John Robert Mack)—all exceptional. And those are just the presenters whose workshops I attended. Keynote speeches, first line critiques, Friday night social, etc.—perfect coming together of hard work and months of planning. Lauran and company, you are the absolute best, and I thank you most of all!

Lyn Jo :#You know a conference is amazing when choosing which sessions to attend leaves you frustrated and annoyed because you can't get to them all! Well done, guys.

Robert J. Crane: Fantastic conference! Well done, Lauran, on putting it together! Had a wonderful time at the Hampton Roads Writers Conference this weekend in Virginia Beach. It's a great organization, the conference went as smooth as silk, and I met some fantastic people. Thanks, #Lauran, for putting it all together and everyone who attended my talks! Thanks for having me. It was a wonderful conference, and based on feedback from other speakers, any others I do in the future will be far less well-organized or enjoyable. Very much a perfect first conference speaking experience on my end. You've got a marvelous group there.

Sally Parrot: What a fabulous event.# Learned something in every session.# And had a ball meeting other authors. Gold stars all around for you and your crew!

Mike Owens: Great conference! Gets better every year.

Bria Quinlan: Just wanted to send you a quick note thanking you for having us down to speak. Honestly, if you're not running the world with those organizing super powers by 2020, I'm going to worry about the future. Jeannie and I had a wonderful time. It was, BY FAR, the most organized, well-run conference I've been to in a decade. You really do have a lovely and talented group of writers down there. Thank you for all your hard work!

Frances Aylor : Great conference. Lots of good information. Enjoyed meeting so many people.

Alyssa ONeal :#Awesome conference and wish I could have gone to even more sessions. Thank you for all your hard work.

HRW Keeps Growing

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

Don Knickles
Joan Knickles
Stephanie Austin
Jeanette Finnegan Torok
Hope Dahmen
James Hill
Richard Hulbert
Rekaya Gibson
Harry Holmes Jr.
Ignacio Ripoll
Roetina Green

Copyrighting

(Continued from page 2)

- ideas, procedures, methods, systems, processes, concepts, principles, discoveries, or devices, as distinguished from a description, explanation, or illustration. For ideas, procedures, methods, etc., think patent, not copyright
- works consisting entirely of information that is common property and containing no original authorship (for example: standard calendars, height and weight charts, tape measures and rulers, and lists or tables taken from public documents or other common sources)

Remember this bottom line: a copyright is designed to protect something concrete— a novel, poem, painting, song, or even an architectural blueprint—something that is a fixed and tangible form of expression. In other words—images, not ideas.

Next installment: Do I have to publish my work to get a copyright?

About the Author: Michael D. Rigg is a writer, who happens also to be an attorney— or maybe it's vice versa. Regardless, he doesn't practice intellectual property law and this article is neither legal advice nor a solicitation of business. You should seek competent legal counsel for advice and guidance on how the law affects your poem, short story, novel, or other creative work.

Retired FBI Agent Jim Healy announces release of his newest novel, FBI Code Name: DEADLY DECEPTION, Murder in Monterey.

Fictional Special Agent Del Dickerson, known for unorthodox behavior and phenomenal luck, now studying Korean at the Foreign Language Institute in Monterey, California, finds himself in the middle of a Chinese Communist plot to assassinate his professor.

DEADLY DECEPTION, Murder in Monterey, is now available on Amazon.com and as a Kindle e-book, along with previously published Del Dickerson novels, FLYING HIGH, FBI vs.The Mob; LUCKY DAZE, FBI vs.The Mob-Rematch; FBI Code Name: SHARKS, Fighting Washington Corruption; and FBI Code Name: CULTURED PEARL, Smuggled Terror.

Dennis Slavinsky is pleased to announce the publication of his first novel. Killer Teacher is a humorous, but suspenseful account of fictional teacher, Dabney Dazabny. The tongue-in-cheek story takes jabs at bullies and their victims, education reform, and overly-zealous news media. He has self-published it on Amazon in both print and e-book formats.

Have Pen, Will Travel

HRW's Traveling Pen Series are workshops taught by outstanding prose and poetry writers for the ridiculously low fee of \$10 for HRW members and \$20 for nonmembers (makes membership even more attractive). Where else could you find high quality writing workshops at such reasonable costs other than HRW? They take place once a month on Saturday mornings at Tidewater Community College's Virginia Beach campus in the Blackwater Building, room CW-134. Check-in is at 9:15. Workshops begin at 9:30 and end at noon. 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

Here are the upcoming workshops. For a full list of our 2017 workshops as well as more in-depth details about our presenters, check out our website: <http://hamptonroadswriters.org/tps2017.php>.

February 11, 2017

WORKSHOP TITLE: Writing Historical Fiction, presented by Jeff Andrews

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: History books point to bygone eras; well-written historical novels take us there. What are the keys to writing good historical fiction? How do authors make the past come alive? What should take precedence, historical accuracy or a compelling story? This workshop will explore ways to captivate readers with authentic characters and absorbing plots while staying true to the essence of historical detail.

PRESENTER BIO:

Jeff is the author of two historical novels, *The Freedom Star*, and *The Gandy Dancer*. His short stories have appeared in *Combat Magazine*, *The Goblin Reader*, *The Binnacle*, and *Whistling Shade*. He is a member of The Hampton Roads Writers, where he was a founding member and served on the board of directors.

March 11, 2017

WORKSHOP TITLE: Point of View and Character Voice, presented by Erin Beaty

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: Point of View can be likened to the camera that records your story. Voice is how the lens is focused. Choosing the right "camera" and "lens" are essential to making a clear picture. So how do you do that? This workshop will identify all the choices writers have for POV, as well as the advantages and limitations of each, and show how to unite POV with a voice narration that grabs ahold of the reader and doesn't let go.

PRESENTER BIO: Erin Beaty is a Navy veteran who studied engineering in college and only recently realized she was a writer (long after everyone around her did). She is the author of *The Traitor's Circle* trilogy, a young adult fantasy series to be published by Macmillan starting with *The Traitor's Kiss* in May 2017.

Traveling Pen Series (continued from page 5)

April 15, 2017

WORKSHOP TITLE: Outlines, Treatments, & Synopses (Oh, My!), presented by Dr. J. Dennis Bounds

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: Some writers love to plan their stories, while others just like to see what happens every time they put fingers to keyboard or pen to paper. Whether you are a Pantser, a Planner, or somewhere in between, at some point—before, during, or after you've finished—you must have a way of presenting your story in a shortened form.

In this workshop, Dr. J. Dennis Bounds will teach you several different ways to plan a story or plan a rewrite with a basic **OUTLINE**. Another planning method is the **TREATMENT**—long a staple of the screenwriter. In this workshop, Bounds will explore the way a treatment is used to tell your story through broad strokes, peppered with interesting details, that can even serve as a pre-First draft. The final part of the workshop covers the development of the single- and multi-page **SYNOPSIS**. Agents and publishers clamor for them, producers and actors depend on them.

PRESENTER BIO: Dr. J. Dennis Bounds has taught in the areas of cinema and TV history, aesthetics, and writing both nationally and internationally. At Regent University, Bounds developed and was the first director of the Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting. Bounds is currently an adjunct professor in Film at Virginia Wesleyan University when he is not working with his wife as a media specialist and freelance writer.

May 20, 2017

WORKSHOP TITLE: Online Marketing 101, presented by Tracy Wainwright

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: This session is for writers on the verge of getting published (either traditionally or self), those who've recently published, or those who just want to increase their sales. Book promotion that utilizes social media and free resources will be highlighted. See the HRW website for a list of the various strategies that will be included.

PRESENTER BIO: Tracy Wainwright has been writing for more than ten years. She has self-published nine of her own books, co-written and published two books, and published two additional books by other authors. She also has a mystery, contracted by Prism Book Group, due out in 2017. She has facilitated writer seminars, has spoken at women's groups, women's conferences, and writer's conference, and gave a visiting author presentation at an elementary school.

Show and Grow Your Prose with Professional Critique

Don't miss this opportunity to read ten minutes of your prose (short story, memoir, or novel chapter ONLY) to the audience, followed by a brief professional critique by our guest critiquer. Four readings per session for the dinner meetings and six readings at Saturday morning sessions.

The Show and Grow dinner meetings will occur on select Thursday evenings, from 5:30 - 8:30 PM, at Gus and George's Spaghetti and Steak House, 4312 Virginia Beach Blvd, Virginia Beach, VA 23454. If possible, please join us at 5:30 for Happy Hour and/or 5:45 for dinner prior to the S&G event. Whether you plan to read or not, if you want to attend dinner, please email HRWriters@cox.net so we can make sure we have a large enough wait staff on hand to accommodate all the diners. All events are FREE and open to the public, but, with regard to the dinner meeting Show and Grow events, if you wish to eat dinner, you must purchase your own food. It's perfectly fine to arrive a few minutes prior to seven and not eat dinner at the venue.

Other Show and Grow events will occur on Saturday mornings, 10 AM - 12:30 PM, at either the Muse Writers Center, 2200 Colonial Ave #3, Norfolk, VA 23517 or at the Slover Library, 235 E Plume St, Norfolk, VA 23510.

Anyone may listen as part of the audience, BUT if you want to share your work, e-mailed registration is required. Registration is accomplished in two parts when you (1) email your work as a .doc or .docx file, and (2) when you receive confirmation that a slot is still available.

When sending your work, please indicate the date of the event at which you would like to share your work. The reading spots are filled on a first come/first served basis and are expected to fill up quickly. Please visit hamptonroadswriters.org to learn how to format your document correctly for presentation.

Dinner Meeting Schedule:

January 19, 2017

March 23, 2017

May 11, 2017

July 27, 2017

October 19, 2017

Slover Library Schedule:

February 25, 2017

November 4, 2017

Muse Schedule:

April 29, 2017

June 3, 2017

August 12, 2017

Phyllis : Other than the online writing community, did you have any interaction with writers?

Erin : I attended a writer's conference in February 2015, and I beat the crap out of my book based on what I learned. Finally, in March I started sharing it with people. The reaction was more positive than before. By the end of April, I felt I was ready to begin querying again. Right away I started getting full requests.

Phyllis : What do you mean by full requests?

Erin : Every agent wants something different with a query: the first three chapters, a certain number of pages, a synopsis, a scene chart. I sent out queries in batches of ten or twelve. If agents liked what they saw, they would ask to see the full manuscript. I started getting rejections on those, but they were nicer ones, so I felt I was on the right track. Then I got an email from that first agent who had requested way back in November.

Phyllis : The one who told you she wouldn't start reading your work until spring?

Erin . Exactly. She wrote, "I'm finally ready to start reading your story." I asked her to give me two weeks to send her an updated version. She would have rejected what I had sent before. She agreed and once she had it, she told me I'd hear from her within the next week. Three days later, I got an email saying, "Oh my gosh, you kept me up until 3:00 a.m. Can we talk?"

Phyllis : Did you notify the other agents to whom you'd submitted?

Erin : I contacted the agents who hadn't responded yet to let them know I had an offer of representation. They all came back saying either to send them the full manuscript or no thanks but good luck. I got more than one offer, but in the end I went with the first agent. You know what was hard? Writing rejection letters to agents. Weirdly painful.

Phyllis : How many rounds of editing did you do with your agent before your manuscript was sent to a publisher?

Erin : We went through two rounds of revision before she submitted it to publishers, and in about ten weeks we had an offer. They wanted to tighten it and eliminate certain things, so we kept that in mind as my agent then contacted the publishers she hadn't heard back from and let them know she'd gotten an offer. We actually had a choice between publishers. My head was spinning.

Phyllis : That sounds wonderful. I met you at the 2015 Hampton Roads Writers Conference. With a book contract in the works at that time, what motivated you to attend the conference?

Erin : It's important to be a part of the writing community. Other writers inspire and encourage me, and I'm still learning. At the 2015 conference I met other writers and received an invitation to join HRW's Board of Directors, which I've done.

Phyllis : And personally, I'm benefiting from knowing you, a new writer who's had recent success in selling her book. Tell me about THE TRAITOR'S KISS.

Erin : It will be shelved with the fantasy books, but there's no magic in the story. A girl lives in a society where the vast majority of marriages are made through a third-party broker, called a matchmaker. Sage is completely unsuited for marriage herself, so she becomes the matchmaker's apprentice, and a big part of the job is spying on people. They're headed to a national marriage conference with a group of specially selected brides when Sage gets romantically involved with one of the soldiers in their ceremonial escort. The problem is, she has to lie about who she is, but so does he. In the middle of all this secret-keeping from each other, they uncover a treasonous plot that threatens to plunge the whole kingdom into civil war. My publisher calls it Jane Austen with an espionage twist. I can't wait to share it with the world!