

THE Penn Writer

The Newsletter of Pennwriters Inc.



July-Aug. 2009

www.pennwriters.org

Vol. XVII No. 4

In This Issue

President's Column ..	2
New Pilot Program.....	4
Pittsburgh Airport Group Strikes Gold at Convention	4
Round Robin Partnerships Sought..	5
Area 1 Report	5
Tackling the BEA.....	6
Area 2 Report	7
Area 5 Report	7
A Look at Conference 2009	8
Market News.....	10
Area 3 Report	11
How to Write a Great Query.....	13
Area 4 Report	13
A Brief History of Pennwriters.....	14
Member Accomplishments ...	14
Area 6 Report	14
2009 Conference Award Winners	15
Area 7 Report.....	15
Conference Chatter.....	16

Lessons Learned After 50 Published Books

by Nancy Springer, Area 7

Awhile back I realized that THE CASE OF THE CRYPTIC CRINOLINE: AN ENOLA HOLMES MYSTERY, would be my fiftieth published book, and I called my agent about it. I kind of hoped she would want to hold a tea party in her New York office, inviting my editors, but no such thought crossed her mind. Instead, she suggested I should write an article.

What she wanted was something for *Publishers Weekly*, but all I could think of when writing to an audience of editors, agents and publishers was "take this job and shove it." So I guess it's just as well they didn't throw me a party.

However, writing to fellow writers, I find myself in a much more balanced and friendly frame of mind. To you, I can tell it like it is.. So here's one thing I've learned: you and your product of genius are way, way, way less important than you think you should be in everyone's eyes but your own and possibly your mother's. Your local newspaper won't run articles after the first few books. Even your literary agent (and I've had good agents) doesn't value your career the way you do. The people at your publisher are infighting. Your editor has problems with his or her significant other. Everyone you know socially believes real authors don't live in their area. I forget who said publishing a book is like throwing a leaf into the Grand Canyon, but it's true.

Such being the case, I expect that most of you, quite properly, don't know who I am, so I'll supply basics. I have been a Pennwriter for many years, was author advocate for a while,

was a fairly inept president for a term, ran (badly) the first annual convention to take place in the eastern part of the state, edited the newsletter (much better) for a number of years with Jim Hilbert as indispensable managing editor, and even though I now live in the Florida panhandle, I'm still a Pennwriter, being a lifetime member. There is nothing like Pennwriters down here. I miss you guys.

Okay, so that's another thing I've learned: other writers aren't usually your competition; they're your friends. When I was a beginning writer, experienced writers generously gave me their advice, invited me to submit stories to their anthologies, introduced me to their editors, encouraged me in every way. Most writers can't give back to the writers who helped them, so they give forward to newcomers. When professional writers get together, they don't talk about how to structure a plot, or handling dialog, or anything like that. Instead, they talk with great candor about good agents and bad agents, what publishers pay and which ones pay faster than others, editors and what they're looking for and whether they're just slow or truly glacial..

Oh, yeah, there's another thing. I've learned: TTT. I suggest you make a big poster and put it up on your office wall: Things Take Time. When I hear aspiring writers complaining about how hard it is to get published, how they worked months on something and now they've waited weeks to hear back from an editor, I want to grab them and shake them.

See Learned, Page 3

President's Column

by Lisa Kastner, Area 6, President



Another amazing conference has just passed. I hope everyone who attended gleaned as much as I did from the incredible workshops and gatherings. Lisa Scottoline's keynote speech engaged the audience with laughter, sighs, and great insights into the wonderful world of publishing. I had the honor of attending Tim Esaias's luncheon speech and he had the pleasure of attending the general meeting. I am sure our

tête-à-tête will become infamous. If you do not know what I am talking about, feel free to email me or Tim for the details. Great kudos to Annette Dashofy and her team for ensuring another great Pennwriters Conference.

The annual conference is only one of the many ways we provide service to you, our members. Next year the conference will be held at the Eden Resort in Lancaster, PA. This is a new location for us and I am sure you will be impressed by it. To check out the hotel, go to <http://www.edenresort.com/>. Ayleen Stellhorn did a fantastic job of negotiating for Pennwriters to have the run of the hotel. Our conference will be the only conference at the hotel and we will be using all of the conference facilities. Great job Ayleen! Our keynote will be James Rollins. If you are not familiar with James Rollins I encourage you to go to his website at www.jamesrollins.com. He's accomplished in fiction and non-fiction. Better yet, he is a huge advocate of the struggling writer. I had the pleasure of seeing James and our own D.L. Wilson speak at a local bookstore. What a treat!

In addition to the conferences, we have a fabulous line up of online courses coordinated by Nate Hardy. A sampling of the teachers include Nancy Martin and me. Note: my class, "How to Be Your Own Editor" will not be a line editing class but rather a class on how to analyze your own writing for key elements of craft, such as POV, character, setting, and tone. I will be drawing from the masterful authors I have had the pleasure of meeting and learning from as well as leveraging bits from my favorite craft books.

As if this wasn't enough, the Pennwriters Board of Directors has been working diligently to identify new ways to help you get what you need. As a part of this effort, we

are piloting a compliment to our organizational structure. The key to this structure is enabling all members to have the opportunity to form their own chapters. That's right, if this pilot is successful, you can submit to the Board of Directors a form to be recognized as a Pennwriters chapter. For more information on this, read Jade Blackwater's article regarding the pilot. If want to start a chapter right away, please contact me, Jade or Carol Silvis for more information.

This is an incredible and exciting time for Pennwriters. I hope you have the chance to leverage what we have to offer on your path to success.

MYSTERY AUTHOR WANTED

Assistant Professor of English, full-time position, tenure-track starting Jan. 2010. Applications accepted until position filled.

Seton Hill University seeks published novelist of popular fiction (preferably mystery/suspense), to teach and to mentor novel-length theses in the graduate low-residency.

Send a letter, C.V., official transcripts, statement of teaching philosophy, sample publications, and three letters of reference to Michael Arnzen, Ph.D., Seton Hill University, Greensburg, PA 15601. Contact: arnzen@setonhill.edu.

Have you changed your address or e-mail address?

If so, please notify Shelley Giusti, PW secretary.

We need your help to keep our member roster current.

Thanks from the newsletter staff.

Notice: Publication herein of articles, interviews, and news concerning markets, contests, seminars, classes, etc., does not imply an endorsement, recommendation or any warranty given by Pennwriters. Readers are urged to determine for themselves the reliability, integrity, and financial responsibility of those with whom they deal.

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Learned (cont. from Page 1)

Good gosh, it took me six years to get my first book written, accepted, and published, and a lot of that time was spent typing, on a clunky old Royal, a final draft with two carbon copies. (The book, by the way, is pretty awful. Looking back, I'm amazed it was accepted.) Including revisions with editorial help, I must have typed about 16 drafts of that book, published in 1977. And that's how I did the first five or six books, before I got (WOW!) an electric typewriter. Then a word processor that required learning a secret code in order to use it. Even when I finally got a real computer, I would still make hard copy, erase the computer files, and retype, because writing invariably needs to be done over. Computers make writing look better than it is, and they seduce a lot of talented writers into submitting half-finished manuscripts. Ask Liana Laverentz how many drafts she did of her first novel.

What else have I learned? That no matter how well-published you are, every time you try something new, it's like starting all over. I always feel panicky between books; am I going to be able to write another? Will it be good enough? I really don't know, because, even after all these years, I still write duds. I don't keep track, but I estimate I've written perhaps 20 books that will never be published. Sometimes they were sent back to me by my agents. Now, that's humbling. Or sometimes the agents tried to sell them and they just weren't marketable.

A book can have many merits and still not be marketable..

Which is why you should not spend your whole life reworking that one pet novel. Write the thing to the best of your ability, send it off, then move on. Forget about the book that's out there struggling to get published. It must speak for itself. **START YOUR NEXT BOOK.** If the first one doesn't sell, the next one might, because whether you know it or not, you are a better writer now.

Suppose your work gets accepted? Great, but don't hold your breath waiting for the check. TTT. Go about your business—in other words, **WRITE.** Get more stuff out there and keep forgetting about it. That way you don't waste energy being impatient. A few years ago, an educational publisher contracted for a poem of mine for a ridiculous amount of money. Fine. Cool. The check arrived last week, a very nice surprise, as I had forgotten all about it.

Do I sound negative about the publishing process? I don't mean to. Murphy's Law works for me as much as against me. Editors disappear to leave my book orphaned, publishers stop printing the first volume of a trilogy before the third volume comes out, disastrous covers happen, et cetera, but also editors inexplicably buy things they've rejected before, big sales fall into my lap from foreign

See Learned, Page 5

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Pennwriters Online: Your Internet Connection

Web site = www.pennwriters.org

Yahoo Group = www.groups.yahoo.com/group/Pennwriters/join

LinkedIn Group = www.linkedin.com/groups?about=&gid=67420

Facebook Group = www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid=9428111505

New Pilot Program: Local Groups Form the First Pennwriters Chapters

by *Jade Blackwater, Coordinator of Area Representatives*

Consider this: you're a member of a local group of writers who meet, exchange information, and help each other to become better writers. If you're also a member of Pennwriters, you now have a new opportunity to improve the growth and success of your group.

The Board of Directors is researching and developing a new model within the Pennwriters structure which will allow small groups to form Pennwriters Chapters. These groups might be local, regional, or even genre-specific, whose members share the common goal of collaboration. Chapters can be formed by existing Pennwriters meetings, or by members who want to form a brand new group.

Pennwriters represents over 400 members engaged at all levels of the writing industry. We currently rely on our Area Representatives to deliver Pennwriters information and services across large regions. By empowering small groups to form Chapters we

will improve our ability to extend Pennwriters resources to meet the needs of local writers.

Chapters will be able to support our growing membership by providing local leadership. While Area Representatives will continue to administer oversight and support for their region, Pennwriters Chapters will acquire autonomy to organize members, gather resources, and generate activities in their area.

We have two groups that are already piloting a Pennwriters Chapter in their region:

In Area 3, Annette Dashofy and the Bridgeville Writers Group will formalize their proceedings to create the As-Yet-To-Be-Named Pennwriters Chapter. The Bridgeville writers have a solid history of collaboration and outreach in their area, and are currently seeking a new location for meetings as they formalize their Chapter.

In Area 7, yours truly will be teaming up with Anita Marie Moscoso and other Seattle-area writers to form the Pacific Northwest Pennwriters Chapter. We will be reaching out to writers in Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and beyond. Our primary goal will be to encourage great writing and creative collaboration in the Pacific Northwest.

Ready to get involved? If you would like to be among the first to launch a Pennwriters Chapter in your area, we invite you to contact your Area Representative for more information. We can provide you with an application as well as our preliminary handbook to help you get started.

Want to join a local Pennwriters Chapter, but don't want to be a leader? No problem! No matter what your level of interest, be sure to let your Area Representative know how you would like to participate, what you need, and what you can contribute. Every writer has something to share – thank you for supporting Pennwriters.

Pittsburgh Airport Group Strikes Gold At Convention

by *Fred Connors, Area 7*

Several members of the Pittsburgh Airport Area Writers Group struck gold at this year's conference.

Group members practiced their agent pitches on each other and took notes as the group critiqued each presentation. The group compared notes and continued their encouragement during the convention

It paid off. Four members of the group were asked to submit chapters or proposals for their works. One member was discouraged after her collection of children's stories was sharply criticized at the Read and Critique session, but fellow group

members pushed her to pitch it to an agent the next day. She did and was given a personal reference to another agent who may be interested.

Group member William Loeffler said the conference gave him a crucial glimpse into the writing industry. "It provided a reminder that writing is a business" he said "just as it was when Daniel DaFoe wrote novels centuries ago. The critique sessions provided writers with a crucial element - an audience."

Group moderator Meredith Cohen was very pleased with the group's fortunes.

"The last two meetings were devoted to preparing, practicing and honing our pitches. This energizing group of writers runs the gamut in terms of literary interests—from "true crime to children's literature and everything in between—and each writer brings a unique perspective to the table. It's wonderful that so many of our group members experienced such success!"

The group meets from 7-8:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month in the Cafe area at Barnes & Noble at The Pointe at North Fayette. All members and friends of Pennwriters are welcome.

Learned (cont. from Page 3)

countries I never heard of, or belated gifts like the poem purchase I just mentioned, or sometimes movie options, which so far have never turned into movies, which may be just as well. What I'm trying to say is that the beauty and glory of being a writer is not found where most people think it is. Not in publication parties, book tours, headlines, writing your autograph, and heaven knows not in fast money.

But there is beauty and glory and great happiness in being a lifelong professional writer, and it is all about the writing itself. Writing enriches your life. It lets you see rather than just watch, listen rather than just hear; it lets you touch, smell, taste, feel everything more intensely. And writing ensouls your mind. Instead of focusing on the grocery lists of life, you may find yourself contemplating the names and symbolism of colors, imagining a news event from several different viewpoints, or dreaming up a place where you've never been and where maybe nobody can ever go unless you take them there. Even when you're not actually writing, being a writer adds an ineffable quality to your consciousness. It magnifies the most ordinary aspects of your days. I am of retirement age, but I will never stop writing. If I did, I'd feel as if I'd

stopped living.

But the real joy, I've learned over forty years and fifty books, the main thing, really the only thing, is the writing itself. The flow. The poetry of prose. The process. When you are writing and you're really into it -- well, we all know how that is. There's no better fix this side of controlled substances, and there are no harmful side effects except occasional family friction or an irrational urge to quit the day job, both of which can be dealt with. Meanwhile, the beneficial side effects range from satisfaction to egoboost to actual paychecks.

I wouldn't self-publish if I were you. TTT. Go through the process. There's nothing like a paycheck to validate your arrival and ability as a writer.

I've learned a lot of other stuff, too, over the past 50 books, such as when to listen to advice and when not to, and -- and -- heck, I forget. So if you want to ask me something, look for my Web site: www.nancyspringer.net. My e-dress is on there. Feel free to contact me; I love to write, and that includes e-mail. And, when you're published, I want you to remember to give forward to other people who love writing.

Round Robin Partnerships Sought

by Catherine E. McLean, Area 1, Round Robin Coordinator

Currently Pennwriters are seeking Round Robin critique partnerships for:

- * Historical Fiction
- * Science Fiction-Futuristic-Space Opera
- * Literary-Women's Fiction (not romance)
- * Christian-Women's Fiction (not romance)
- * Christian Inspirational
- * Biography-Memoir (nonfiction)

Use the form on page 5 of the May-June issue of *The Penn Writer*, or request a form via e-mail at mouserun@certainty.net.

www.pennwriters.org

July-August 2009

Area 1 Report

by David Szymanowski

Area 1 Representative

Catherine McLean just lead an 8 session on-line class, "THE PROJECT BIBLE: The All-In-One Writer's Course for Creating Stories from Start to Finish" with 27 attendees. Catherine McLean, Round Robin Coordinator, is looking for Round Robin partnerships from any area.

The Shenango Valley Pennwriters (SVP) meets every 3rd Saturday of the month from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Community Library of Shenango Valley. Catherine is also the leader for the Meadville group that meets the first Saturday of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Tellers Row Coffee Bar, in @The Bank, 940 Park Ave., downtown Meadville. The MVP group devotes the last part of the critique time to sci-fi/fantasy. After the meeting, the reward is often a short trip to the Creative Crust for pizza. She may be reached at mouserun@certainty.net.

The Fellowship of the Quill, a writer's fellowship group, meets every Thursday evening at the Presque Isle Gallery Coffeehouse at 7:00 pm. The Fellowship sponsored "Critique 101" presented by Catherine E. McLean on Sunday, April 19 with about 15 people in attendance. For further information contact Todd Main at Todd_Main@steris.com.

The other Erie meetings are critique groups and meet on the 2nd Saturday group at the Erie Book Store and 4th Saturdays at Barnes and Noble from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. The other evening group convenes at 7:00 pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Mercy Center for the Aging. The 2nd and the 4th Saturday is. In the past few months, the Saturday afternoon groups have had 15+ Pennwriters in attendance representing all genres and modes of writing. Contact Dave Szymanowski for further information at daveszy@verizon.net.

Contact Dave at (814) 838-6870; daveszy@verizon.net

Attending a Mega Conference—Tackling the BEA

by James Buescher, Area 5

It bills itself as one of the largest events of its kind, and is perhaps best known for its two-hour “pitch slam”: a chance for writers to connect with agents and editors from across the publishing industry.

Attending Book Expo America’s Writer’s Conference in New York City, however, isn’t for everyone—and it raises important questions about what, exactly, writers might be looking for in a writing conference.

Held on Wed. May 27 at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center along 11th Avenue in Manhattan, the writing conference is sponsored by Writer’s Digest Books and, conservatively, draws about 1400 writers, some of whom come from as far away as Los Angeles, Australia, and Great Britain.

However, because the conference also takes place during part of the four-day BEA book trade fair, it can do something that many other writing conferences only dream about: bring in dozens of agents and editors (this year there were 68) to listen to writers’ three-minute pitches about their novel or children’s book.

Though some writers (like myself) chose to only come in for the day-long writing conference, many signed up for the entire four-day BEA event, giving them a chance to meet some of their favorite writers plus learn about which books publishers are preparing to promote.

One of the most important aspects of the conference, however, begins before participants even leave home: upon completing their on-line registrations, conference-goers are asked to

print out a page containing their assigned participant number and bar code, information that is then scanned in at special e-kiosks.

Once participants have received their nametag and conference guide, they’re directed toward a massive ballroom to listen to conference organizers give a welcoming address, as well as to hear a brief speech from the

conference keynote speaker (who, this year, was American crime writer Karin Slaughter, author of books like “Blindsighted” and “Faithless”, who spoke about her journey from being a Georgia sign painter to selling more than 16 million books worldwide).

From there, the conference falls into what seems like a familiar rhythm to anyone who has attended

a Pennwriters conference: a series of workshops covering everything from character development to pacing, along with topics like networking, writing query letters, or even tips on how to write grant and sponsorship proposals to fund writing endeavors.

Following an address from former publishing journalist Sara Nelson (who spoke about ways that the publishing industry is changing in response to the sour economy), as well as another round of workshops, the main focus of the conference begins in earnest: the pitch slam, which allows every registered attendee three minutes of face time with an agent or editor to try and explain the concept for their book.

The pitch slam is like a study in controlled chaos: divided into a dozen ballrooms throughout the Javits Center complex (which itself stretches for three city blocks), agents and editors are seated behind long conference tables while writers sit in front of them in rows of chairs.

As the room’s stopwatch keeper gives the signal, the

Five Tips For Navigating BEA

1. Dress Up—With only three minutes to pitch, first impressions count.
2. Network—Don’t be shy, and remember that everyone else is looking to make a connection, too. And, though there were plenty of different kinds of writers there from all over North America (and the world), it seemed to me that the conference drew a very large number of authors working on a memoir, as well as many writers from Boston and Washington, DC.
3. Count On Getting Lost—Show up with plenty of time to find the 7:30 a.m. registration area (which, in 2009, was located on the second level near the exit to West 37th Street). Also, remember that if you see people who look like writers, they probably are—so don’t be afraid to ask for help.
4. Claim A Seat—Though you might be tempted to hang out around the refreshment table between workshops, don’t do it: figure out your next room and get in early to grab a good seat.
5. Have Fun—This is New York, after all, where dreams really can come true. Agents and editors need us as much as we need them, so this kind of thing is perhaps best looked at as being like speed dating—and if you’re talking to someone who just isn’t getting your novel, take heart: after three minutes you can switch to a new person, someone who might turn out to be the one to take your book to the top if the bestsellers’ lists.

See BEA, Page 7

BEA (cont. from Page 6)

first writer moves to take a seat in front of the agent or editor and then has three minutes to explain their novel—and, hopefully, receive a business card. When the timekeeper calls time, the first writer then leaves the chair and a second writer takes their place, while the five or ten (or in some cases, more than 100) writers behind them all move up a seat.

Any writer can see any agent or editor they want within the two-hour window. Some writers said they were planning to meet with all 68 agents and editors—but personally, it's hard for me to see how that would be possible: some of the "star" agents had very long lines, and it seems to me that many folks spent their pitch sessions waiting in line to see two or three people, rather than meeting with agents from smaller houses who didn't have any wait-time at all.

Because the event is held in New York, and because so many agents and editors are attending BEA anyway, it's very easy for them to find time to participate; on the other hand—unlike at a Pennwriters Conference—there is no time to network outside of the pitch slam: BEA draws just too many people to allow any extra "schmooze time." For that matter, it's also something of a challenge to talk with other writers who are also attending the conference: the workshops run on precise schedules, and once you've found your room and claimed your seat there's almost no time to gab with the smart, interesting people sitting beside you.

Of course, it all boils down to size: whereas a Pennwriters conference might draw 20 or 30 writers to a workshop, BEA's workshops pull in 200-300. Also, because there are so many writers, it brings out the agents and editors that smaller conferences might have trouble landing.

If nothing else, though, attending BEA helps bring things into perspective: talking to writers at lunch from places like Missouri or Michigan made me realize just how lucky we are to be a part of Pennwriters. It would appear that most authors don't have any kind of writing group in their home state or province and, in fact, many of the writers I spoke with told a similar story: because they had no previous conference experience, they simply purchased a Writer's Market, chose the BEA conference at random and then started saving up for the airfare and hotel costs in New York City.

Also, even those writers who did belong to writers' groups back home complained about how difficult it was to get agents and editors to come to their conferences. Because of Pennsylvania's nearness to New York City, Pennwriters has the luxury of being able to host perhaps a dozen or so agents or editors at our conferences and events—while other groups might have trouble landing just one.

But in the end, the choice to attend a writing conference like BEA is a personal one: because BEA draws more attendees than some high schools' entire graduating classes, some conference-goers might find themselves walking through the Javits Center feeling a little lost and overwhelmed, wondering how they can make a human connection in a building so large that its lobby alone could hold the entire Statue of Liberty.

Others, however, might see the size of BEA as liberating, drawing in an incredibly diverse group of industry insiders, all of whom are looking forward to hearing hot, new ideas and land next year's breakthrough book.

For more information, visit www.bookexpoamerica.com.

Area 2 Report

by *Katie Yelinek*

Area 2 Representative

It was good to meet a number of Area 2 members at the conference. Always nice to put a face to an e-mail address.

Any member who has not received a copy of the new Area 2 newsletter or otherwise heard from me, please contact me. I have several e-mail addresses that bounce back. I want to send you information, but I need correct contact information. If you do not use e-mail, call me to arrange alternate ways to receive the newsletter.

According to the Pennwriters Web site, there is a writing group forming in Beach Lake, I've been unable to find out additional information about this group. If you have any information, please contact me.

Contact Katie at 570-784-2112;
kyelinek@hotmail.com

Area 5 Report

by *Walt Honsinger*

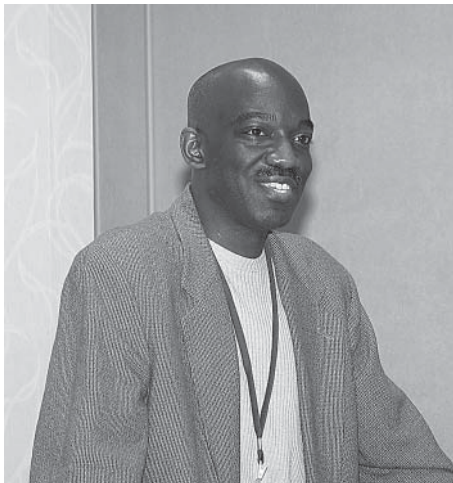
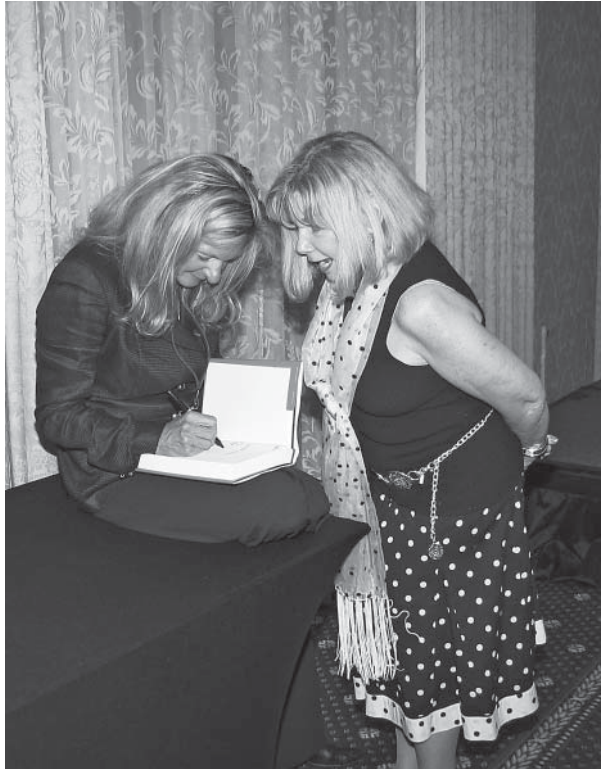
Area 5 Representative

The 2009 conference is now history but it will take months to digest all the information I received. My favorite memories of the conference? Where do I begin? Meeting fantastic writers from across the country? Tim Esaias's classes? D.L. Wilson's speech at the luncheon? Don Helin's advice? Learning that everything I thought I knew about copyright law was wrong? Meeting with fantastic agents? How about the beach party? Maybe it was the Friday night dinner? I purposely sat way in back, and then was asked to move up front. The table I sat down at seemed to play a version of musical chairs for a while and then Lisa Scottoline sat next to me for dinner. My feet haven't touched ground since!

Our local writing groups are in Lancaster, York, Bainbridge, Camp Hill, Harrisburg, Pottsville and Carlisle.

Contact Walt at 717-560-9641;
walthonsinger@hotmail.com

A Look at Conference 2009





From left, Row 1: CJ Lyons presents “Break Free From the Slush Pile;” Lisa Scottoline autographs a book for Area 3 member Mary Jane Roth; Conference Coordinator and Area 3 Rep Annette Dashofy pauses at the keynote dinner for a picture with Martha Reed, Area 3; President Lisa



Kastner addresses members at the Saturday morning breakfast; A Writer’s Tool Chest; Timmons Esaias delivers the keynote luncheon address. Row 2: Internet Activities Coordinator Nate Hardy, Area 6, delivers a “Marketing Made Easy: Success Strategies for Writers;” Keynote speaker Lisa Scottoline addresses members; Members enjoy Saturday morning breakfast; Sandi Hahn (Area 3), Carol Silvis (Area 3), Bobbi Porter (Area 7), and Mona Papoutis



(Area 4 Rep) share a laugh at the Saturday night beach party; Row 3: Agents Colleen Lindsay (FinePrint Literary Agency), Becca Stumpf (Prospect Agency), and Lucienne Diver (Knight Agency) conduct a panel discussion; Annette Dashofy addresses members at the Saturday morning breakfast; beach party spread; Area 5 members smile for the camera.

Photos by Annette Dashofy and Doris Dumrauf, Area 3



Market News

by Jim Lee, Area 4, Associate Editor, Market Reports

We've got a couple unusually lucrative (but extremely short deadline) contests to lead off with. Both are annual, so even if you can't submit this time (as seems likely, alas) you might want to plan ahead for next year.

The Bard Fiction Prize is awarded annually to a published yet still emerging writer (US citizen, age 39 or younger at time of application). The winner gets \$30,000 (not a misprint) and serves as writer-in-residence at Bard College for one semester. While there, he or she will work on a writing project of his/her own choosing, give at least one public lecture and meet informally with students. The recipient is not expected to teach formal classes.

To apply, write a cover letter describing the project you plan to work on and submit a C.V., along with 3 copies of the published book you think best represents your work. No work in manuscript form accepted.

Now the bad news: Applications for the 2010 prize must be received by July 15, 2009. For further info, you can call 845-758-7087, visit their website (www.bard.edu/bfp) or write to Bard Fiction Prize, Bard College, PO Box 5000, Annandale-on-Hudson NY 12504-5000.

The annual contest at **Narrative Magazine** is for unpublished poetry. Send up to 5 poems with a \$15 entry fee by July 15. The winner gets \$1,500 and publication in the magazine. Their poetry editors serve as judges and all entries will be considered for publication. Visit their website

(www.narrativemagazine.com) for detailed guides. Submission address for the contest: Narrative Magazine, Poetry Contest, PO Box 29272, San Francisco, CA 94129.



While on the subject of that rarest of literary creatures (the market that pays serious money for poetry), don't overlook the still-spry granddaddy of the field. **Poetry Magazine** has been around 97 years, is a steady monthly, has a circulation of 30,000, reads

work year-round and pays \$10/line for poetry, \$300 minimum (!); \$150/page for prose and 2 copies of the issue. Christian Wiman, the eleventh editor in the mag's long history, says they actually favor new writers—so don't be intimidated by their lofty rep or the number of subs they get. Visit their Web site (www.poetrymagazine.org) for guidelines and follow them! Be neat. Don't worry about elaborate cover letters, don't name-drop and send only your best work—two or three sub packages/year (4 poems max per mailing). You can send work by mail (444 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1850, Chicago IL 60611-4034) or via e-mail (editors@poetrymagazine.org). They also use essays about writing poetry and reviews (the latter are solicited, so query them before sending).

Clarion Books (a branch of Houghton Mifflin) is a major player in the fiction market for young readers. They publish hardcovers—picture books, fiction and nonfiction for all ages up through grade 12. For fiction, they need adventure, historical,

humor, mystery, suspense and strong character studies (highly selective in areas of historical fiction, fantasy and SF). Submit complete fiction ms to just one of their editors (215 Park Ave. S., New York NY 10003). But for nonfiction (biography, children's/juvenile, photo essay), they need a query w/SASE or proposal package w/sample chapters. Pay includes minimum \$4000 advance and 5-10% royalty on retail price. Check their guidelines before submitting by mail (address as above) or online (www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com).

A much smaller and more specialized children's book company, **Playhouse Publishing** is an Akron, Ohio-based publisher that puts out novelty board books for kids from birth to first grade. Their two imprints are Picture Me Books (with photos) and Nibble Me Books (yes, they include edible material). Be advised: Their contracts are work-for-hire (a onetime payment, no future royalties and they take All Rights). They no longer will look at unsolicited mss. Check their guides online (www.playhousepublishing.com), then query w/proposal (webmaster@playhousepublishing.com). All copy must be in body of e-mail—no attachments!

Paradox is a magazine specializing in historical fiction (including SF/F/H if firmly grounded with historical themes) and related nonfiction articles. Any past time period is possible, but editor has special fondness for stories of the ancient world and Middle Ages (and wants work about all areas of the world). No vampire/werewolf stories, gratuitous erotica or children's stories. Nothing lacking real-world historical, mythic or historical-religious contexts! They pay 3-5 cents/wd on pub, as well as 4 contributor copies of issue.

See Market News, Page 11

Market News *(cont. from Page 10)*

Fiction up to 15,000 wds (but 2,000-9,000 strongly preferred; nonfiction, circa 4,000 wds. Open to subs during following schedules: June 1-Sept. 30 and Dec. 1-March 31. Send for detailed guides (PO Box 22897, Brooklyn NY 11202-2897).

Players Press, Inc. (PO Box 1132, Studio City CA 91614-0132) publishes hardcover and trade paperback “support books” for the entertainment industry: theater, film, TV, dance, and technical. Currently emphasizing play scripts for all ages, theatre crafts, monologues and short scenes for ages 5-9, 11-15, and musicals. They offer advances and royalty on wholesale price. Ms guides for #10 SASE, then query.

Due to “massive budget cuts,” the venerable men’s magazine *Swank* is no longer buying freelance writing.

The Bloomsbury Review is a magazine about books (mostly reviews, but also essays, poetry, interviews and other book-related articles). They have very detailed and rigorous needs, so send for their guidelines (PO Box 8928, Denver CO 80201) before even considering a submission. Pay is modest (\$10-15 for reviews, 600 wds or more; poetry \$5-10; other nonfiction \$20-50), but this is a high prestige market.

Thema pays \$25/short story (over 1000 wds), \$10/poem or short-short (under 1000 wds) for works on issue themes. Upcoming is their “Math & Music” issue, with a Nov. 1, 2009 submission deadline. Important that you send for guides before submitting (PO Box 8747, Metairie LA 70011-8747).

Main Street Rag is seeking short fiction (10,000-wd max) for three theme anthologies: “Coming Home,” “Food,” and “The Commute.”

Deadlines for all are October 1 (or sooner, if they get enough suitable material). Details online (www.mainstreetrag.com).

Mail subs to Main Street Rag, PO Box 690100, Charlotte NC 287227-7001.

Comstock Review sponsors the **Jessie Bryce Niles Chapbook Competition**. Winner gets \$1,000, publication and 50 copies. Mss of 25-34 pages with \$25 entry fee accepted August 1-September 30. All rules must be followed or entry will be disqualified. Check their website (www.comstockreview.org) or send SASE to Comstock Review Chapbook Contest, 4956 St. John Dr., Syracuse NY 13215.

A monthly trade magazine from McFadden Performing Arts Media, **Dance Teacher** wants well-researched how-to pieces (teach, health, business, legal) for professional dance instructors, business persons and related professionals in the dance world. No PR or puff pieces! They do seasonal theme issues, too. They pay \$100-300 on pub for articles of 700-2,000 wds. Also a limited photo budget for images. Query by mail (110 William St., 23rd Floor, New York NY 10038), e-mail (jtu@dancemediacom.com), or fax (646-459-4000). Guides online (www.dance-teacher.com). They advise you read several issues, especially the seasonal ones before querying.

Bicycle Retailer and **Industry News** uses articles (1200 wds max) on employee management, employment strategies and general business subjects for bike manufacturers, distributors and retailers. They put out 18 issues/year and pay 20 cents/wd (more for assigned pieces) on acceptance. Queries are preferred.

See Market News, Page 12

Area 3 Report

*by Annette Dashofy
Area 3 Representative*

Welcome to all the new Area 3 members! If you have any questions about events and activities in the area, contact me (details below).

The Second Tuesday of the Month Group meets at Barnes & Noble in North Fayette at 7 p.m.. For details contact Meredith Cohen at mcohen61@hotmail.com.

The Bridgeville Group is on the move. While we still meet on the last Thursday of each month at 11:30 a.m., we are trying out some new locations during the summer. Contact me to learn the location of the current meeting. Also, this group has decided to become one of the first chapters in Pennwriters. (See Jade Blackwater’s article)

The Pittsburgh East Writers have moved to the Monroeville Public Library’s large downstairs Program Room. Please e-mail Ellen for membership application into this group. Check out www.EllenSpain.com for workshops scheduled for 2009. They meet on the second Saturday of each month at 10 a.m..

The Critique Group North now meets on the second Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. at the King’s Restaurant off the Wexford Exit of I-79. The piece that you bring to the meeting can be of any length and at any stage of writing. For details contact Madhu B. Wangu at m.wangu@comcast.net.

A South Hills daytime critique group is open to new members. Genres are a mix. We swap critiques and also discuss markets, books, and anything literary. The group meets on alternate Tuesdays from 10:00 to noon at Westminster Presbyterian Church (room 231) on Route 19 in Upper St. Clair. Contact Meredith Cohen at mcohen61@hotmail.com for further details or directions.

Contact Annette at 724-255-7955;
adashofy@yahoo.com

Market News (cont. from Page 11)

Contact Marc Sani online (msani@bicycleretailer.com) or by mail (NBDA Services, Inc., 25431 Cabot Rd., Ste. 204, Laguna Hills CA 92653).

A trade mag for retailers of country-oriented gifts and accessories, **Country Business** uses articles on new products and trends in the giftware markets, providing business and marketing advice. They come out 7/year. 800-1,800 wds. Pay varies, but is on acceptance. Guides are online (www.country-business.com), Unsolicited subs are also considered. Queries and subs via e-mail (cbiz@sampler.emmis.com) are “the best option.” But you can also contact them by mail (Country Business, editor, Emmis Publishing LP, 707 Kautz Rd., St. Charles IL 60174).

A monthly on pharmacy news, issues, trends, products and marketing, **Drug Topics** is a monthly that pays only for commissioned work, so definitely query! They pay on acceptance

QUOTES CORNER

“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

- Albert Einstein

“What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.”

- Samuel Johnson

Compliments of Nate Hardy and www.AIRequation.org. For weekly quotes, visit the Pennwriters online group at www.groups.yahoo.com/group/pennwriters

(amount not given, but with a substantial circulation base it should be good). Check their guides online (www.drugtopics.com), then query and then submit via e-mail (drugtopics@advanstar.com) or on computer disk (Editor, Drug Topics, 123 Tice Blvd., Woodcliff Lake NJ 07677).

Human Resource Executive needs profiles and case studies for senior execs in the human-resource profession at mid-size to large companies. They publish 17/year. Articles (1,000-1,500 wds) get variable pay on acceptance. “Authoritative bylined submissions should offer information at a strategic HR level, not a nuts-and-bolts approach.” Guides online (www.hreonline.com) and also probably available by mail (LRP Publications Co., 747 Dresher Rd., Ste. 500, PO Box 980, Horsham PA 19044). Queries (mail or e-mail) preferred. Contact person is apparently Terri Garrison (tgarrison@lrp.com).

A quarterly, **The Bear Deluxe Magazine** is an environmentally focused outfit that uses reporting, creative nonfiction, poetry and fiction. Fiction: 750-4,000 wds, nonfiction: 400-4,000 wds—both paid at 5 cents/wd. Poetry (send batch of 3-5), 50 line max, \$20 plus subscription. Guides online (www.orlo.org) or by mail (PO Box 10342, Portland OR 97296). E-mail subs (bear@orlo.org) are accepted, but they prefer by-mail subs (address as above). Queries preferred, but not required.

Another significant publisher of children’s books, Henry Holt & Co., Books for Young Readers differs from its parent company, in that they want to see complete mss (Henry Holt & Co. itself will not read unsolicited queries or mss). This children’s publisher puts out picture books,

chapter books, middle grade and YA novels. Minimum advance against royalties of \$3,000. Guides online (www.henryholtkids.com). Another oddity: They only respond to subs they want to publish, so don’t bother with a SASE (but make sure your sub had contact info, of course). Address subs to Submissions Editor, Henry Holt & Co., Books for Young Readers, 175 Fifth Ave., New York NY 10010.

Over My Dead Body (www.overmydeadbody.com) is a mystery ezine that publishes mystery short stories “from cozies to hard-boiled and everything in between.” Stories should be 750-4000 words. Payment is one cent a word for first North American Serial Rights. Find their writer’s guidelines at www.overmydeadbody.com/wguide09.htm

Leisure Books is partnering with Rue Morgue magazine in association with horror fiction Web site ChiZine, to present “**Fresh Blood**,” a new writing contest specifically for unpublished horror authors. The winner will receive a contract for publication in Leisure’s 2011 lineup, as well as a contract from ChiZine Publications for a limited-edition hardcover release in 2011. Leisure is looking for finished horror novel manuscripts, either supernatural or non-supernatural, of 80,000–90,000 words. Entries should be sent to Submissions@dorchesterpub.com by Sept. 30. “Fresh Blood” must appear in the subject line of the e-mail. For full entry details, visit www.dorchesterpub.com or www.chizine.com.

[Thanks for info this time from 2009 Novel & Short Story Writer’s Market (Writer’s Digest Books), issues of The Writer (Kalmbach Publishing Co.), and Poets & Writers (Poets & Writers, Inc.), my inquiries, 2009 Writer’s Market (Writer’s Digest Books) and Marsha Johnson.]

How to Write a Great Query

by Tamara Girardi, Area 3

Writers are so often searching for the golden formula or phrase that will guarantee a perfect query.

It doesn't exist.

Reading queries is just as subjective as reading books.

One agent may prefer you start a query with the genre, title and word count while another prefers you jump right into the heart of the story or the hook.

There's no one right way to write a query letter, but there are a million ways to write a good one.

Steps to writing a great query:

Research the art of the query letter.

The following Web sites have been particularly helpful for me in learning about queries.

- Miss Snark, misssnark.blogspot.com
- Literary Agent Nathan Bransford's blog, nathanbransford.blogspot.com, pay particular attention to the Query posts under The Essentials and Labels and "Be an Agent for a Day" under Labels
- Query Shark, queryshark.blogspot.com

I've learned what has helped me the most in writing my query letter is figuring out what I should NOT be doing, and I learned that from these sites. That said, there are several other resources on the Web, including several agent blogs.

Research the agents you're

querying. A good Google search may yield a blog post or interview given by your agent of choice that highlights his or her preference in query letters. Look for specifics such as: "I prefer writers open the query by hooking me with a great story in a few sentences," "I never want to know the ending of

the story in the query," "Please don't open your query with a rhetorical question," or "Begin your query by telling me the genre of the book, so I can get in the right frame of mind as I continue to read."

Tailor the query to individual

agents. Once you know what the agent likes, give him or her exactly that. Be sure to address the letter to the agent. Never send a mass email to 20 agents beginning with the line, "Dear Agent."

To personalize the query even further, research the agent's recent sales on Publishers Marketplace or elsewhere and say something like, "I've decided to query you with my project because you represented xyz. My project is similar in that..." and go on to explain the similarities.

Caution - if you say you've read a book the agent represents, be sure you did!

Read jacket copy. In workshops, I've heard agent after agent after agent say to learn how to write great queries, read the back cover copy of the books you like. In many cases, good query letters attract agents who use them to attract editors who use them to sell your books. In other words, good query letters eventually become jacket copy. The intrigue created by the jacket copy is exactly what agents want to see in your query.

Query widely. As I mentioned, agents want to know that you selected them among the hordes of literary agents out there, but you're not married yet. Agents DO NOT expect you to query exclusively, wait weeks or months for a response (mathematically, the response will likely be a rejection), and then query another agent. You want to score representation and sell your book, right? So query, query, query!

See Query, Page 15

Area 4 Report

by Mona Papoutsis
Area 4 Representative

The Writers Conference May 14-17 was a great success. I'm really pleased I was able to be there. If you didn't make it, try to plan for next year; it's already sounding like a huge success as well. A lot of hard work went into making it happen. There will be much already said in this newsletter, so I'll not go into detail.

The basket made up by Area 4 critique group here in Chambersburg was won by Julie Swope of York.

If you looked at the most recent Pennwriters roster, you know there were approximately 33 members in Area 4 plus those members that joined during the writers conference. I'll try to give you the correct, up-to-date figure in the next newsletter.

If there is any other interest in starting a Critique Group in your area, please let me know.

Area 4 Critique Groups currently active are as follows:

First – we have our group located nearest to me, of which I am a member. We meet at Wilson College here in Chambersburg the first and third Thursdays of the month, 6:30 pm. You may contact me at 717-263-1109 or monap2005@comcast.net.

Second – we have the Works in Progress Writers Workshop in Somerset. Contact Barbara Purbaugh at 814-443-9541 or go to her web site, www.barbarapurbaugh.com. Their meetings are held twice a month on Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Third – the Southern Alleghenies Writers Guild meets monthly in the Johnstown area (usually the third Saturday of the month – 12:00 noon until 3:00 p.m. Contact Ruth Rice at 814-535-2202 or email her at storyteller3@verizon.net.

Contact Mona at 717-263-1109;
monap2005@comcast.net

Area 6 Report

by Robert Michalsky
Area 6 Representative

Area 6 continues to hum along and we are hoping to not hit a bump in the road with the 'official' departure of our ace rep Jade Blackwater who is settling into the misty rain that is life in the greater Pacific Northwest. Jade we thank you for your past efforts on our behalf.

Back in the southeastern part of PA, we are pleased to report adding an additional twenty members over the 2008 count. This growth has fostered increased participation in our twelve critique groups who continue to maintain an active schedule. Current groups are located in Bry Mawr (group under formation), Lehigh Valley, Northeast Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pottsville, Reading, Valley Forge / King of Prussia, Springfield, West Chester (two groups), Willow Grove and Yardley.

Details on the group activities and the times and days of the various meetings can be found here:

<http://pennwritersarea6.wordpress.com/critique-groups/>

All the group coordinators would like to encourage our new members to become an active critique group member. Your writing will thank you for it. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like more information on set up or other logistics.

Thank You and as our Philadelphia native Keynote speaker Lisa Scottoline told us, never give up your writing dreams.

Waiting for info from Robert

A Brief History of Pennwriters, Inc.

by Denise Meyers and Lisa Kastner

We began modestly. Author Nancy Martin spoke at the Pittsburgh University of Johnstown in 1985. Susan Anderson, a romance writer who had landed her first sale, accompanied Nancy. They invited seminar attendees to meet and discuss starting a chapter of RWA (Romance Writers of America). Susan Anderson became the first president of the group, then called Romance Alive. Margie Fusco, Fran Himes, Suzanne Gindlesperger, Susan Anderson and Nancy Martin originated the organization. These women were joined by our current past-president Susan Meier, and former Board of Directors members Edie Hanes and Vicki Thompson. In the process of growing and adding new members, our founders realized that many people who attended their conference and workshops worked in numerous genres and didn't want to join a romance-focused writing organization. The members of Romance Alive decided to form a stand-alone, multi-genre writing group for the purpose of helping each other break into the world of traditional publishing. This purpose became Pennwriters mission.

Romance Alive became Pennwriters, Inc. Liana Garwig, Nancy Springer, Martha Johnson, Polly Moran, and Susan Dzgingeleski were instrumental in the organizations early growth and have contributed significant time and effort over the years.

Today, Pennwriters mission remains the same – to help the novice to the award winning and multipublished to learn and to succeed in the craft of writing. We have approximately 450 members that span the United States including Alaska, Maine, Washington, California, Florida, New Jersey, Delaware, and Virginia to name a few. Our conferences attract attendees from as far away as England, Canada, and Puerto Rico. Our membership includes USA Today best selling authors, Edgar award winners, and Brahm Stoker award winners. Our writers delve in journalism, creative non-fiction, poetry, satire, short stories, long form, Romance, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Literary, Erotica, Mystery, Thriller, Horror, screenplays, children's books, and young adult to name a few.

Member Accomplishments

NANCY HOKE, Area 4, had a short story, "Miracles on the Other End of the Leash," accepted for publication in upcoming LaChance Publishers anthology,

PAT PARKER, Area 2, received a first place 2008 Granny award for her story, "Emelda Emerson Knew How to be Pretty." The award is in the fiction for 7-9-year-olds category and is presented by the editors of online Stories for Children Magazine. (The

Granny is a humorous takeoff on word Grammy.) Emelda Emerson Knew How to be Pretty will also be included in the magazine's Best of Stories for Children Volume 2 print anthology. The story was originally published in the January 2008 issue of the magazine.

JON SPRUNK, Area 5, has received a multi-book deal with Pyr Books. His debut novel, SHADOW'S SON, is scheduled for release in Summer 2010



Query (cont. from Page 13)

Be patient. Take some time to perfect your query. Take some time to research your agents of choice. Take some time to rewrite the query 15 times to 15 different agents (keeping in mind the core paragraph(s) about your story as well as the bio paragraph will stay the same, but the order of said paragraphs and/or the snippet detailing why you're sending to that particular agent will change).

And remember, sending out a query

before it's ready is like burning a bridge to the mainland.

Query again? Since I've gone and thrown out the "burning bridges" cliché (I've slapped my hand for that one), I'll add that there's a debate for whether you can re-query the same project to an agent if he or she has rejected it once.

If you change your query significantly, agents may not notice. I've even heard

some agents say, "Go ahead. I'll never know the difference." Yet, I attended a Backspace workshop at the conference where an agent recalled a query she had seen from a writer in the group nearly a year ago. A year!

So, query again? Do so with caution.

A resident of Natrona Heights, Pennwriter Tamara Girardi is seeking representation for her YA paranormal book about a 17-year-old ghost hunter. This article is an abbreviated version of her blog post Everything You Ever Wanted to Learn About Queries... You Can Learn Online. The full version can be found at thegirardidiner.blogspot.com under the "Queries" label.

2009 Conference Award Winners

Meritorious Service Award: Jackie Werth

Fiction:

A Breed Apart by Donald Jodon, Pittsburgh , PA
What About Bob? by Bobbi Porter, Anchorage , AK
The Project by Colette Garmer, Brackenridge , PA

Nonfiction:

Lessons for Bobby by Kristine Latham, Lemoyne , PA
Trish by Mona Popoutsis, Chambersburg , PA
Before We Were a Family by Gina Sestak, Pittsburgh , PA

Poetry:

There Once Was a Church With a Cat by J.R. MacKenzie, Cape Elizabeth , ME
To Life by Gina Sestak, Pittsburgh , PA
Screams of Silence by Julie Swope, York , PA

Area 7 Report

by Bobbi Carducci
Area 7 Liaison

Regretfully, I had to miss the Conference due to family issues. I hope everyone from Area 7 who attended came away as inspired and pleased by the efforts of the organizers as I always do. Members are invited to share their experiences and impressions on the Area 7 e-loop.

If you are not already communicating through the e-loop, please consider doing so. It is a great forum for announcing your successes and working through any problems that arise.

Jade Blackwater and Anita Moscoso are teaming up to launch the Pacific Northwest Pennwriters Chapter out of Seattle , Washington . Their chapter application is before the board for approval at this time. As the representative for members living outside of Pennsylvania , I fully support this application and once again ask members living in other locations to consider forming chapters in their local areas.

Contact Bobbi at 540-338-5064;
bcarducci@comcast.net

Mark your calendars now for the 2010 Pennwriters Conference.

WHEN: May 14-16, 2010

WHERE: Best Western Eden Resort, Lancaster, PA

FRIDAY KEYNOTE: Best-selling adventure thriller author James Rollins (HarperCollins)

PLUS

- agent/editor pitch appointments
- 30-plus 1-hour workshops on writing, marketing, and selling
- all-day intensive writing classes the day before the conference
- read and critiques with agents, editors, and published authors
- genre networking lunch
- writing contests in poetry, article, and novel beginnings

WATCH the Web site for more information: www.pennwriters.com

The Penn Writer
1800 Eastern Ave.
Erie, PA 16510

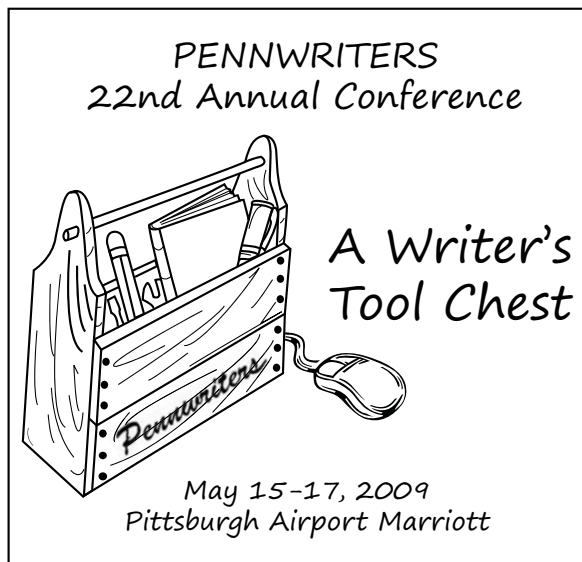
Return Service Requested

Conference Chatter 2009 Conference Wrap-Up

by Annette Dashofy, Area 3, 2009 2009 Conference Coordinator

The 2009 Pennwriters Conference is now in the history books and I'm thrilled that it was such a huge success. What a joy to meet so many of you there and to see so many smiling faces. It was an honor to have put the event together and from what I've heard, just about everyone enjoyed themselves and came away inspired and motivated.

Lisa Scottoline was a hit, as I knew she would be. What a treat to be able to offer her latest book as part of the registration packet, too! Tim Esaias offered us humor and wisdom during his Saturday lunch speech. At every Pennwriters gathering I've been to since the conference, folks have been quoting back to me the bits and pieces of his talk that resonated with them.



We were fortunate to have such a wonderful group of agents and editors participating this year. And you should all pat yourselves on your back because several of those agents came up to me to comment on the high quality of pitches they were hearing. Perhaps those Friday workshops on the subject helped!

And once again, I want to thank my incredible team for their hard work. It took a village to pull it off and make it look relatively effortless.

It's been nothing short of an honor to be involved with the planning of this conference. Thanks to all who

came and participated.

See you in Lancaster in 2010!

What is Pennwriters, Inc.?

Pennwriters, Inc. is an independent network of writers with more than 450 members from Pennsylvania and beyond. Established in 1988 as a networking organization for published and aspiring writers of all genres, Pennwriters, Inc. has continued to grow. For more information, contact secretary Shelley Giusti at cricketgirl33@yahoo.com.

Submitting to *The Penn Writer*

Have a submission for ***The Penn Writer***? Contact Editor Lori Morris via e-mail at lorimorris@verizon.net or via mail at 1933 Elmbrook Lane, Pittsburgh, PA 15243.

Deadline for the May-June 2009 issue is April 1...no joke! The theme is "Breaking Into a New Market." The theme for the July - August 2009 issue is "Reflecting." We hope to hear from you!