

Celebrating  30th Summer Gathering

Conference 2008

www.wvwriters.org

Workshop Presenter Bios (UPDATED 6/10/08)

BELINDA ANDERSON-- Mentoring of other writers earned Belinda Anderson a Just Uncommonly Good (JUG) award from WVV. Her own writing earned her a spot on the first Literary Map of West Virginia. Belinda's third book, a short-story collection titled Buckle Up, Buttercup, is due this summer. One of its selections won first place in the short story competition of the 2007 Westmoreland Arts and Heritage Festival. Belinda will present three workshops: "Story Starters," "More Story Starters" and "Finishing Touches."

JERRI BELL grew up in Hurricane. An active duty naval officer, she volunteers as a teacher of creative writing at Plum Point Elementary School in Huntingtown, MD, where she lives with her husband and two sons (9 and 7). Her nonfiction has been published in the Charleston Gazette-Mail and Southern Maryland Parent Line, and her fiction has won prizes in the 2007 WVV Annual Contest and the 2006 WVV Conference People's Choice Awards. She is working on her Master of Arts thesis in the Johns Hopkins University Fiction Writing program.

BRUCE COOK-- Currently publisher of websites Author-me.com, ReserveBooks.com, InnisfreePoetry.org, Enskymnt.org, and others. President World Writers Resources, Inc. Employment history: USAF, David C. Cook Foundation, Chicago Sun-Times. Teaching experience since 1990 for Columbia College (Chicago) and DeVry University.

DR. VICTOR DEPTA is the publisher of Blair Mountain Press, established in 1999. The emphasis of the press is the environment, such as the recent issue, *Coal: A Poetry Anthology*, edited by Chris Green. Dr. Depta has published nine books of poetry and mysticism, and over two-hundred poems in magazines and journals. He has a Ph.D. in American literature from Ohio University, an M.A. in English from San Francisco State University, and a B.A. in English from Marshall University. A retired professor of English from the University of Tennessee at Martin, he is currently teaching part-time at Marshall.

KRISTA FINK started out writing vignettes about her previous abusive marriage in the Central West Virginia Writing Project in 2001. She began entering those vignettes in writing competitions, gaining momentum with each success. Krista immersed herself in writing communities, networking and drawing on the energy of others, and met her publisher at the WV Writers' Conference in 2005. A few short years later, her book *Silent No More: Speaking Out About Domestic Violence* was published, and is used as a resource in domestic violence programs across the state. Krista has a B.S. in Education from Concord University, an M.A. in English from Marshall University, teaches English and Journalism at Hurricane High School, and is a spokesperson for domestic violence awareness. She is also a new mommy to Dylan Thomas Fink.

ETHAN FISCHER writes mystery plays for radio and poems for teething grownups. He helped found and still produces the popular Rumsey Radio Hour (starring his detective Johnny Dime, Poet of Crime). Ethan has published poetry, reviews, and interviews in many periodicals and this spring was visiting poet at Bluefield College. His latest book, *Beached in the Hourglass*, was published by The Bunny and Crocodile Press. Ethan Fischer is an editor of *Antietam Review* and teaches writing and literature at Shepherd University.

MARC HARSHMAN was raised in Indiana, but has lived his adult life in West Virginia with his wife, Cheryl Ryan (author of *SALLY ARNOLD, Cobblehill*, 1996), and his teenage daughter, Sarah. The author of ten picture books for children, he is also a poet and storyteller. His children's book *THE STORM* was a Junior Library Guild selection, a Smithsonian Notable Book for Children, a Children's Book Council Notable Book for Social Studies, and a 1995 Parent's Choice Award recipient. Mr. Harshman was honored in 1994 by receiving the Ezra Jack Keats / Kerlan Collection Fellowship from the University of Minnesota for research on Scandinavian myth and folklore. He was also named the West Virginia state English teacher of the year by the West Virginia English Language Arts Council in 1995. More recently he was named the recipient of the WV Arts Commission Fellowship in Poetry for the year 2000. He holds degrees from Bethany College, Yale University Divinity School, and the University of Pittsburgh. His newest children's books are *RED ARE THE APPLES* (Harcourt, 2001), co-authored with his wife, Cheryl Ryan, and *ROADS* (Cayendish, 2002). His third chapbook of poems, *LOCAL JOURNEYS* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2004 and his eleventh children's book is forthcoming from Dutton/Penguin.

RICH KNOBLICH-- Author of the tall tale collection, *Talking 'bout the Relatives*, Rich Knoblich's original work reflects the gentle spirit of Appalachian folk and the hilarious events surrounding their lives. Rich brought home eight ribbons from the WV Liar's Contest with a first place win in 2002. His creative tall tale writings have been published in various national and regional magazines. Rich has performed at every WV Storytelling Festival. He has also entertained audiences in Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

GRETCHEN MORAN LASKAS-- An eighth generation West Virginian, has written and published essays, short stories and articles about West Virginia for more than 15 years. She is the author of two novels, including *The Midwife's Tale*, winner of the Weatherford Award for Fiction, and the Appalachian Book of the Year. Her second novel, *The Miner's Daughter*, is for young adults and has been selected as recommended reading for students in Kentucky and Texas.

GEORGE LIES a short story writer and journalist, has years of experience working collaboratively with writers of West Virginia. In the 1990s, he led editorial teams to publish limited editions, entitled *Janus '95* and *Pokeberry Days*. He coordinated the publishing of *Promontory*, written by late Poet Joe Gatski; and, collaborated on an anthology, *Agent Orange: A Festschrift*, in memory of Patrick Badger. His story, "Trailer Dogs Barking", is in *Mountain Voices*; and, "Keys to Heaven", in the anthology, *Mist on the Mon*, was translated and published in *Steneau*, a literary journal in Romania. Before serving as President of West Virginia Writers (1999-01 and 2003-04), he directed the Golden Rod Writers Conference (1983-2001). He brings a hard-knocks style to manuscript critiquing, drawing on his experience working with such fine writers as Gail Adams, Mark Brazaitis, Ken Craven, Geoff Fuller, Ed McClanahan, and Meredith Sue Willis. This past year he's been tackling an historical novel; well, he's really grappling with an octopus of twists, tangles, and tangents. Contact him at email George.Lies@mail.wvu.edu

DR. JOHN MCKERNAN was born in 1942 and grew up in Omaha Nebraska. He moved to Huntington in 1967 to teach at Marshall and has lived there ever since. He has won many awards for his teaching and his poetry. The author of seven books and chapbooks, his most recent is a collection of his selected poems, *Resurrection of the Dust*. He is the editor of the annual publication *ABZ: A Magazine of Poetry*. The press he edits also sponsors an annual First Book Poetry Contest, which awards a prize of \$1000 and book publication to the winner.

LLEWELYN MCKERNAN is a poet and children's book writer who has lived and worked in Huntington, WV, for over twenty years. She has an M.A. in Creative Writing from Brown University and an M.A. in English from the University of Arkansas. She has had poetry and prose published in over 66 magazines, newspapers and journals. Her poetry and prose have been published in 30 anthologies. She has received 11 grants, including ones from the American Association of University Women, West Virginia Humanities Council, the West Virginia Commission on the Arts, and Poets&Writers. Her work has received 75 awards/prizes in state, regional, and national writing contests. Three of her poetry books have been published for adults and four for children: Short and Simple Annals, West Virginia Humanities Council Publication Grant, 1983. Many Waters, Mellen Poetry Press, 1993. Llewellyn McKernan's Greatest Hits, Pudding House Press, 2005. More Songs of Gladness, Concordia, 1987; Bird Alphabet, Standard, 1988; This Is The Day and This Is The Night, C.R.Gibson, 1994.

SUZANNE MCMINN is the award-winning author of over two dozen novels including contemporary paranormal romance, romantic suspense, and contemporary romantic comedy as well as a medieval romantic trilogy. She lives in a farmhouse in the mountains of West Virginia where she is plotting her next book and enjoying the simple life with her family, friends, and many, many cats. Check out her new series from Silhouette Romantic Suspense at: www.suzannemcminn.com.

JIM MINICK teaches at Radford University and farms in Wythe County, Virginia. His most recent work includes *Finding a Clear Path*, a collection of essays from West Virginia University Press, and “Maybe It’s Time,” an Op-Ed on invasive species for the Bay Journal News Service, serving the Mid-Atlantic region. His poems and essays have appeared in many publications including *Shenandoah*, *Orion*, *YES! San Francisco Chronicle*, *Natural Home*, *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, *The Sun*, *Appalachian Heritage* and *Wind*. Since 1996, he’s written a monthly column for *The Roanoke Times New River Current*.

JUDITH ANN MIRAMONTEZ-- After a four year stint as a legal assistant and dealing with contracts, Judith Ann joined Book Cents Literary Agency in 2007 to pursue her dream career and her love of books. She is currently building her nonfiction list and is actively seeking great stories with unforgettable characters.

KEITH & JOAN PITZER are known and respected West Virginia musicians. Sharing music and marriage for over thirty years, they have performed at numerous fairs and festivals, coffeehouses and listening rooms across the mid-Atlantic states. Based out of Kingwood, they’ve appeared as part of the Voices of West Virginia touring group with songwriters John Lilly, Kate Long and Todd Burge. Their song "Underneath a Blackened Moon" is included in the Mountain Whispers adaptation of William Blizzard’s, “When Miners March.” Their musical style is a blend of contemporary style with Appalachian and Celtic music.

CATHY PLESKA holds a BA in English, an MA in Humanities, and an MFA in Creative Nonfiction Writing. When she’s not teaching university writing classes, she works as a freelance writer and editor. She regularly writes for *Wonderful*, *West Virginia* magazine and writes/records essays for West Virginia Public radio. In her spare time, she teaches Tai Chi Chuan, a martial art.

CARTER TAYLOR SEATON is a Huntington artist and author who is currently the marketing director for Goodwill of KYOWVA visited with us to talk about her writing and her other passions. Her first novel, *Father’s Troubles*, was published in October 2003, and named as a finalist in the historical fiction category in ForeWord Magazine’s 2003 Book-of-the-Year awards. She is currently working on a non-fiction book, entitled *Cash Crop*, about the impact of the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 70s on the cultural climate of West Virginia.

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ROBERT TINNELL is a screenwriter, director and author whose works include the film *FRANKENSTEIN AND ME* and the graphic novels *THE BLACK FOREST*, *THE LIVING AND THE DEAD*, and *SIGHT UNSEEN*. His book, *FEAST OF THE SEVEN FISHES* was nominated for an Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album – Reprint and is currently being adapted for the silver screen—a process in which Robert is heavily involved. Robert is also the author of *THE CHELATION KID*, a webcomic dealing with his son's autism, and *EZ STREETS* in collaboration with Mark Wheatley as well as various screenwriting and directing projects. Robert lives in WV with his wife and two children.

SANDY TRITT is a writer, editor and speaker. The founder and CEO of Inspiration for Writers, an editing and critiquing service for aspiring writers, she has edited hundreds of manuscripts. Sandy's fiction has been published in literary magazines and local journals; she has also published nine nonfiction books: *Everything I Know* (Headline Books); *Inspiration for Writers Tips and Techniques Workbook*; and seven technical manuals (Phoenix Software, Atlanta, GA). But more than anything, Sandy loves to teach the craft of writing.

POPS WALKER has been entertaining a small but ever growing group of avid fans for some twenty years. He's been part of several duos/trios, but now performs solo as a performing songwriter, with a penchant for "acoustic blues". And while up-tempo blues is his favorite style, it's only part of his repertoire. Listening to any of his recordings, one can hear dashes of folk, jazz, country, and a tidy little genre called **Southern Fried Zen Mojo**, a phrase coined just for him. Pops is an independent artist who has forged his own unique approach to the music industry. He releases his recordings independently via his own publishing company, Icknob Publishing. He rarely, if ever, plays bars or lounges, but instead has targeted acoustic listening rooms and the performing songwriter circuit, especially house-concerts. Pops also hosts the [Shenandoah River Songfest](#), a large annual event for performing songwriters. He has six CDs to his credit, the most recent being his collaborative project with Ross Ballard and Lee Maynard in the upcoming audio book adaptation of *Screaming with the Cannibals*.

ROBERT W. WALKER is the author of over 40 published novels and a graduate of Northwestern University. Rob earned a Masters in English Education from NU Graduate School after he did his undergraduate work there. He is currently working on his new City series – *City for Ransom*, *Shadows in the White City* and in December, *City of the Absent* –which are gaslight era HYstery novels with the Chicago Worlds Fair as backdrop to mayhem. A second series he is currently working on is the Rae Hiyakawa modern day psychic detective series with *PSI Blue* and *Deja Blue*. While Robert was born in Mississippi, he grew up in Chicago, IL. However, he has resided in Charleston, WV, with wife Miranda and their children for several years. Three of Rob's titles, *City for Ransom*, *Psi Blue* and *Absolute Instinct* have been juried and accepted at Tamarack. He currently teaches at Mountain State University and at Mountain State Academy.

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DOLLY WITHROW-- Dolly Withrow has unfortunately had to cancel her workshops for the 2008 conference due to health concerns. (She's all right, but her hip is slightly fractured. She expects to recover fully, but her doctor advised her to rest.)

CHRISTINE WITTHOHN-- Before pursuing her dream of becoming a literary agent, Christine studied biology, chemistry and medicine. A hopeless overachiever, she re-dedicated all her time and efforts in becoming a 'super literary agent' and networking goddess. In 2006, after researching the industry, the market, and the craft for more than four years, as well as establishing an impressive contact list of industry professionals, Christine opened her own agency - Book Cents Literary Agency. She loves a great story, but more importantly wants to be the one to sell it! She feels lucky to be able to share her enthusiasm and love of books with so many creative writers, fellow agents and dedicated editors.