

 Chattanooga
Writers' Guild

News & Updates

Greetings, fellow writers! Last week I had to give my 9-year old son a little pep talk. For about a year now he has been trying to design a trading card game, in the same vein as Pokémon. He has started, and quit, about five different versions, and during a conversation about why he had not cleaned his room all month (a story for another time), he confessed to me that he was worried that no one else would ever want to play his game, much less buy his cards. He told me that he couldn't finish designing a game because halfway through, he'd start thinking about how his cards didn't compare to what was already out there, and he was worried that he would spend all his time working on something that wasn't marketable.

I listened to him, and then I said, "Buddy, just do what makes you happy and don't worry about if it will sell or not."

But what I was thought was, *Buddy, I feeeeel you.*

On my computer, I have *dozens* of unfinished stories that I gave up on because 100 or 1,000 or 10,000 words in I became mired in the swamp of *No one is ever going to want to read this*. And sometimes when I pull them up, even I don't want to read them. Because they are not good. I was writing for some future agent or publisher, and not for myself, and it shows.

I also have dozens of finished stories on my computer that I love. Sometimes I come across one I haven't read in a long time and I think, *I wrote that? Dang, I'm pretty good*. Whether you're published or not, I imagine many writers struggle to keep writing what they want to write without overly focusing on what readers want to read, or what contracts and agents demand they produce. But if we only write for others, our quality suffers. So make sure that when you are writing, you're writing for yourself. Don't focus on your writing's bankability; it turns creative writing into toast. Everyone likes toast, sure, but no one gets *excited* about toast. Toast is safe, but it's dry. Let your story be the thick, creamy, frothy, luscious, sinful, savory, briny, spicy, or taboo tale it was meant to be.

Pep talks can be had at newsletter@chattanoogawritersguild.org

Tonight's the Night!

Our Monthly Program tonight will be led by poet Susan O'Dell Underwood. Dr. Underwood's program will focus on *Writing the Sacred*. To set the stage for this talk, this is what she says:

"[E]very single day we...need music. We need photography and journalism. We need art. We need poetry. Every single day. And in that way, the arts are vital. And the creative people in society, though overlooked and underestimated, are vital to our lives in all sorts of ways every day."

Dr. Underwood directs the creative writing program at Carson-Newman University. Besides two chapbooks, she has a full collection of poetry, *The Book of Awe* (Iris Press, 2019). Her work has appeared in a variety of literary journals



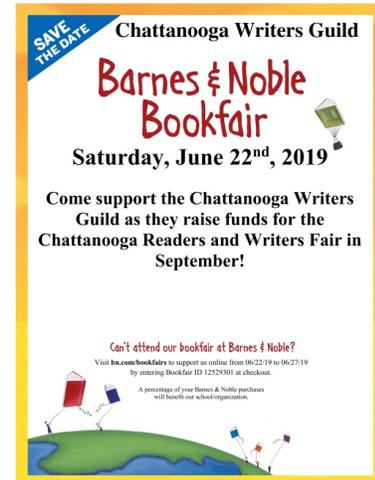
and anthologies including *Oxford American*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and *Tar River Poetry*. For more information, visit her website at www.susanodellunderwood.com.

The program will be held tonight from 6 - 8 PM at the Downtown Library, 1001 Broad Street, in the Auditorium. Street parking is free after 6.

Fundraiser for the Chattanooga Readers and Writers Fair

Announcing the Chattanooga Writers' Guild, Barnes and Noble Book Fair. On June 22 when customers refer to CWG, a portion of sales will be donated to our organization to support the Chattanooga Readers and Writers Fair. We will have CWG member authors read from and sell their books between 2 and 4 p.m. We will also read in the children's area at 11 a.m. Members may come as volunteer participants or as shoppers.

If you would like to be one of the authors and you have a published book for sale (indie published is ok), you can apply by sending your application to: readnwritefair@gmail.com. Deadline is April 30. Include your name and contact info, a link to your work, a one-paragraph bio, and why you think people would like to come to hear you read and purchase your book. This is an opportunity for CWG members only.



Our SPRING WRITING CONTEST is open! Send us your fiction, non-fiction, and poetry! Prizes include cash and publication in our anthology. Contest ends May 15. Details at chattanoogawritersguild.org.

CWG Taboo

The Prompt Word for March was *Wilderness*, and the Taboo Words were *lost*, *forest*, *vast*, and *camp*. Thank you for playing, North Georgia Writers Group! My favorite submission is below, but you can read the other terrific entries [here](#). If you would like to play CWG Taboo, ask your critique group leader how!

From **Devereaux Chivington-Stebbins**

Every Cherokee boy lived for his rite-of-passage into adulthood—Vision Quest. Sparrow was no different. By tradition, on his thirteenth birthday his father would take him far into the Nantahala wilderness, to an area unknown to him, and leave him with nothing but his wits to guide him. For the next four days he would fast, meditate, and sing the ancient prayers. If he was fortunate, the Great Creator would show him a vision of his life-path. And then he must find his way home.

Hunted by wolves or attacked by bears, some boys never made it back to their village. Sparrow was determined, he would find his way home and join the tribal circle of men.

Mad Blab

How to play: Say the following nonsensical sentences aloud and try to guess the name of the famous literary work you're saying. Answers at the bottom.

There head bad shove cur rage
Thug if fur
Took hill am hock king purred

Word to Know: **Belie**, v.

To misrepresent. To show to be false.

Her gentleness *belie*s her pretense of toughness.

Writers Boot Camp

Serious Writer Inc. is hosting a one-day writers boot camp in Nashville on June 8. Buddy passes and early bird tickets are available with reduced pricing. Here is a link with more information: <https://www.seriouswriter.com/nashville>.

Member Spotlight with Ray Zimmerman

What was your first job? Berry picker, age 14 at 10 cents per quart.

What does your writing area look like? I have several writing areas. The table in my bedroom serves well when I wake up at 4:00 AM with sudden inspiration and must get those ideas down and can't stop writing until I finish a piece. Since I love to be outdoors, I frequently take my laptop out to a table on the deck and work on revisions and editing where I can hear the birds singing. Sometimes they distract me, and I start a new passage, but my writing tends to try to go in several directions at once anyhow. It is not unusual for me to have an essay, more than one poem and a power point presentation open on my screen all at the same time. I also carry notebooks in my backpack while hiking and frequently stop to sit on a log or rock to write or read. A clipboard comes in handy for these excursions I participate in a nature journaling group. We hike and write in journals and discuss nature topics and recent readings.

When did you first consider yourself to be a writer? I first considered myself a writer, as opposed to someone who sometimes writes, in October of 2007 when I went to Nashville and read my poem "Glen Falls Trail," at an awards ceremony of the Tennessee Writers Alliance. Fortunately, a neighbor drove me there. I had undergone heart surgery ten days earlier and was full of pain medication. Though I did not bob and weave like an owlet, I did accelerate and slow the pace of my reading randomly. The audience applauded and I was



certain of my identity.

What is your favorite thing about living in Chattanooga? [The] natural beauty of the mountains and rivers.

What is your process for planning out a story or poem? Chaos.

Tell us about a book or poem that had an impact on your life. *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey, sometimes known as “The Desert Anarchist,” truly impressed me with its lyric descriptions of the beauty of the American West and angry polemics about the misuse of land in general and National Parks in particular. Abbey has received criticism, particularly from the ecofeminist faction, some of it deserved. I merely see this as part of his persona to be considered, but not reason to disregard the quality of his work. Terry Tempest Williams is another author I truly admire, particularly for her book *The Open Space of Democracy*.

What writing project are you working on at the moment? My current project is to combine visual elements with my writing. Since poetry isn’t profitable, I decided to have fun with it. I started in this direction a few years ago when I created a few poetry broadsides (posters), each of which combined a nature photograph with a poem. I also produced some postcards with a color photograph on one side and a haiku on the other. I had the images digitized from film I had shot years ago. I then made a booklet, *We Are Water*, in which facing pages featured a haiku paired with a color photograph. My latest book, *Healing and Conflict* combines longer poems with color photographs created with a digital camera.

I moved this project to electronic media a few months ago when Chattanooga’s Pechu Ku Cha group invited me to do a presentation with twenty slides which ran for twenty seconds each as I narrated. They hosted several presenters at the Moxy hotel and broadcast the show live on their Facebook page. I still have the power point of my photographs and am reworking the order of the slides and poems for future presentations. I am normally not a big fan of power point because most of the presentations I have seen do not use the medium to its full capacity, just showing an outline of the speakers talk on the screen with bulleted points, with no strong visual images. I am, however, excited about combining pictures with words, as opposed to just projecting written words to accompany the spoken words. I am also putting up video presentations of my poetry on a YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel>.

What are your writing goals for the next 12 months? 1,000 subscribers to my YouTube channel.

What’s something you’re looking forward to? I look forward to participating in Open Mic at the Well every Monday night.

Who do you nominate for next time? Janie Watts Spartaro.

Mad Blab answers: *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Giver*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

STAY CONNECTED

