



News & Updates

Greetings, fellow writers! Let me tell you the story of how I met my husband. It starts 16 years ago with a turtle and a trip to Target.

I went to college 100% on student loans. Even my apartment rent, food, and utilities were paid for through loans. So when I got my check at the beginning of the spring semester my junior year, I figured out, like I did every semester, how much I could spend each month so that come May I wouldn't be totally broke. Well, in March I messed up. I had a little extra pocket money from my part-time job in the school library and I decided I could spend it on two things I'd had my eye on for some time: a new desk and a baby turtle. First stop was Target, where I found the perfect desk that fit my budget. Next I went to the pet store. The baby turtles were cheap - \$25. However the tank, heating lamp, filter, heat rock, food, and other accessories that I had forgotten to factor into pet care, were *not*. But I'd already fallen in love with the little red-eared slider that fit in the palm of my hand, so I told myself I'd make the money up somehow and brought the little guy home.

I got my turtle squared away in his aquarium and set to work putting my desk together. But when it was all done, it did not look like a desk. The only way it could have functioned as a desk was if I put it over my lap while I lay in bed. I looked at the box. I looked at my desk. I looked at the box. I realized what I had was the *hutch* for the desk on the box. I'd already gotten rid of my old desk, so I had but one choice now. I headed back to Target, and came home \$100 lighter, but with the rest of the desk.

I was now in a pickle. My "little" spending trip had ended up devouring May's rent. If I was going to stretch out my student loan check, I'd have to get a second job. Here's where the story picks up: To make rent, I ended up getting a job at a restaurant in the next town over. I worked there for four years, even though the pay was terrible. So terrible, in fact, that after I graduated, instead of getting a real job, I continued to stay there, making less and less money until finally I was evicted from my apartment. (You might call me aimless at this point.) My stepdad, God bless him, somehow managed to get me a job in his field of work, but it meant I had to move up to Kentucky. My turtle had run away from home the year before, and with nothing going for me, I agreed.

All was well and good for the first few months, and then they moved me to West Virginia. And then winter came. And then I was alone in my slum apartment. There was Astroturf instead of carpet in one room and the ventilation was so poor mold grew all over my clothes. I had a blowup bed and no TV, but I did have the internet, and one cold, lonely night, I used it to sign on to eHarmony.com. I paid for a month subscription and on the third day I matched with John. And that was it. He lived 7 hours outside of the 1-hour bubble I'd requested, but we made our long distance relationship work until we finally moved to Knoxville together 8 months later. We'll be married 10 years next April.

Now *you* tell *me* a story. I'm Kate Landers and I answer the emails sent to newsletter@chattanoogawritersguild.org.

August Program to feature Lana K.W. Austin

Poet-novelist Lana K. W. Austin will be presenting work from her novel and poems at our upcoming program on August 13. Author of the novel *Like Light, Like Music* (West Virginia University Press 2020), Lana K. W. Austin's poems and short stories have recently been featured in *Mid-American Review*, *Sou'wester*,



Columbia Journal, The Pinch, Appalachian Heritage, etc. Austin currently resides in Alabama, where she teaches writing in the English department at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Visit her website at www.lanakwaustin.com.

Join us in the Auditorium of the downtown library, 1001 Broad Street, from 6 - 8 PM.

*****Mark your calendars!*****

The Chattanooga Readers and Writers Fair is a free event taking place on Saturday, September 7 from 10 AM to 4 PM at the Downtown Library, 1001 Broad Street. There will be:

- *Author readings in the Auditorium
- *Open mic stage for multiple genres on the library plaza
- *Vendor tables, book sales, workshops, a Flash Fiction contest, and children's crafts on the 4th floor
- *Food carts, games, and more!

It's a celebration of all things literary, for and by the entire community! For more information visit www.crwfair.org.

If you applied to be a presenter, decisions will be announced August 10.

If you would like to be a vendor, please email Sherry Poff.

If you are a CWG Member and you would like to sell your books at the Fair, but are unable to mind a table all day, we invite you to consign your books through us! More details about consignment sales coming soon!

Also coming up in September is our **Annual Party and Board Elections!**

This event will take place on Tuesday, September 10 at The Edney Innovation Center downtown. We will have a potluck dinner and say good-bye to departing board members, including John C. Mannone, who has been our president for 3 years.

The Chattanooga Writers' Guild is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) run by its members. In order to continue, we need volunteers to step up for board and officer positions, various committees, and annual events throughout the year. If you would like to find out more about what we do and where your help is needed, please read through our [BYLAWS](#) and [JOB DESCRIPTIONS](#).

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.

**Hen terse came
Pill heap hud, sale oar
Has sigh laid eyeing**

Word to Know: **Indolent**, adj.

Wanting to avoid activity or work.

The twins could not have been more different; one was industrious while the other was indolent.

Member Spotlight with **Devereaux Chivington-Stebbins**



When did you first consider yourself to be a writer? I've wanted to write for as long as I can remember. I began jotting things down and putting together scenes when I was around ten. My teacher had given me an 'F' on a creative writing assignment. It was a silly little thing, really, but my father read what I wrote and was so angry about the grade that he stormed down to the school and gave my teacher a piece of his mind. It was the first time he'd ever supported me on anything—and it opened the door for the possibility that I could use my over active imagination for something creative and fun. However, I didn't begin to take myself seriously as a writer until a few years ago. Now, I write every day; it's as important to me as the air I breathe.

What is your favorite book on writing? There are several. My genre of choice is memoir and historical fiction so my favorite books deal with those subjects: *The Truth of Memoir* by Kerry Cohen and *Writing Life Stories* by Bill Roorbach are two very good ones. An excellent book on writing dialogue is simply called *Dialogue* by Gloria Kempton. She categorizes characters into enneagrams and shows the reader how people fall into nine basic types. For me, she made writing dialogue easy. Stephen Wilbers' *Keys to Great Writing* helps a writer find his or her voice.

Tell us about a book that influenced your life. Having grown up in

Alabama, everything Truman Capote ever wrote blows me away. *The Grass Harp* took me to a world my grandmother used to tell me stories about. When I read Capote's biography, I saw him in that story, as I do all his stories. *In Cold Blood* was the clincher. I knew after reading that book that I wanted to write about other, real people and places.

What writing project are you working on now? I've spent the last two or three years writing a historical fiction saga, *Snowbird Mountain*, about a family who live in the mountains of western North Carolina during the Civil War. My protagonist is a Cherokee Indian. The story focuses on his involvement in the war from a personal point of view and details how it affected him and other people living in the dense mountainous regions of the Southeast. Some of the characters are real people, others are fictional.

What does your writing area look like? It's a creator's mess of papers and stacks of books accented by art and plants, dogs, and cats. One wall is covered by a bookcase filled with books. Presently, I have a magnificent view from my windows of the tops of blooming pink and white crepe myrtles, roof tops in the distance, and Lookout Mountain beyond. From there I watch the sky change throughout the day and seasons transform the landscape month to month. It is one of my greatest sources of inspiration and my favorite place to spend my day.

Tell us about your muse or source of motivation. My muse is a collective of alternate voices of inspiration who speak to me as I write. They are valuable, irreplaceable, and one of my fears is that my muses will leave if I don't constantly exercise the creative side of my mind.

What was your first job? I was a canvasser for the Birmingham City Directory. In those days we were required to ask residents a series of what today would be considered invasive questions. I sometimes accomplished that by sitting with elderly ladies and letting them entertain me with conversation about themselves and their neighbors. It not only saved me a time going door to door, it was fodder for my imagination. In my teens, as much as now, I loved listening to tales about times before my own and getting varied perspectives on life. Some of their stories were tempered by memories and perceptions of the past; it was a slice of life that is hard to find.

Who is your favorite character from a novel? Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. He's the quintessential strong, all-knowing father, voice of morality, and savior who grounds everyone around him, yet is flawed himself.

What object in your life have you had the longest and why do you hang on to it? A box that belonged to my grandmother. Its sides are lined with ostrich feather quills, rosewood, and mother-of-pearl. It has a lock, the key to which was lost long ago. She gave it to me when I was a girl and I cherish it, as I do her memory. I keep old letters and mementos in it and it sits inconspicuously in my office bookcase among other keepsakes and books.

What is something you are looking forward to? I am in the final stages of finishing my first two books in the *Snowbird Mountain* series, *Dust in the Wind* and *When the Catbird Calls*. I am so looking forward to publishing them and beginning the next book.

Who do you nominate for next month's Member Spotlight? Kenyon Henry.

STAY CONNECTED

