

Save the Dates!

JUNE 19–23, 2012

ST. DAVIDS CHRISTIAN WRITERS' CONFERENCE:
WRITERS UNDER CONSTRUCTION



Award-winning authors **Austin Camacho**, **MaryAnn Diorio**, and **Jim Watkins** are among the experts scheduled to present during "Writers Under Construction," June 19-23, at Grove City College in Grove City, Pa. Members of the St. Davids Writers Association chose "Writers Under Construction" as the conference theme because we are all under construction as the Master Builder shapes us for His use and smooths out our rough edges.

AUSTIN CAMACHO (www.ascamacho.com) is the author of the 5-book Hannibal Jones mystery series and the 2-book Stark and O'Brien action-adventure series. He also has had numerous short stories published in anthologies.



poems that have appeared in over 100 national magazines, newspapers, and journals, including *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Decision* magazine, *The Atlantic City Press*, and *Human Events*. She also served as head writer for the television series *Teen Machine*.

JIM WATKINS (www.jameswatkins.com) has authored or contributed to more than 30 books, including the Why Files series for young people, and more than 2,000 articles. He is the acquisitions editor for Wesleyan Publishing House and editorial adviser for ACW Press.



MARYANN DIORIO (www.maryanndiorio.com) is a poet and the author of fiction and non-fiction books. She has written several hundred articles, short stories, and

Watch our Web site (www.stdavidswriters.com) and follow us on Facebook (look for St. Davids Christian Writers Association) to learn about other speakers and about registration, which will begin early in 2012. At that time, you'll also find information about the conference scholarships.

THE UPPER CASE

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOS FOR A PITTANCE!



St. Davids board member and professional photographer **Tonya Wilhelm** is offering a special deal to a limited number of 2012 conference attendees! For just \$129, Tonya will provide a brief indoor and outdoor photo session that includes 4 to 8 poses. Tonya will professionally edit and retouch all poses and put them on a CD for you. She will also send you a link to an inexpensive but high-quality printer to provide you with easy access to prints. You cannot beat this rate! Other professional photographers will charge you \$500–\$1,000 for this service. Online: www.wilhelm-photography.com

Because Tonya will also be attending the conference as a writer, availability is limited. First come, first served. Sign up when you register for the conference. Watch www.stdavidswriters.com and our Facebook page for registration dates.

From the Director: Of Art and Abstractions

This past summer I spent a leisurely afternoon at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Laying aside my internal debate over much contemporary art (“Now, what exactly makes that painting/sculpture/photograph, art?”), art museums serve an important purpose in my life.

I visit them to see big ideas communicated through symbols. I need to experience art to identify with artists who try to render abstractions, virtuous and ungodly, through the concrete imagery of art.

A few years ago, I visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and stood in a large crowd contemplating Rembrandt’s *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer*, one of the monumental works of Western art. The painting was “bigger” than I was, than any of us standing there, bigger because of the ideas it portrayed through concrete imagery.

When I walked out, I felt enlarged because I had encountered biblical truth through that work of art. I hope that in our art, our writing, we find ways to communicate truth to our readers and invite them to see the world in new ways. Why else do we write? – *Lora Zill*

ABSOLUTE POWER? ABSOLUTELY NOT!

I’m not your typical firstborn. I’m no Type-A personality, and although I hold my beliefs with an iron fist, I don’t always possess the self-esteem to defend them ... unless they concern grammar or punctuation. Such is the life of a writer who makes her money as a proofreader.

Having found myself president of the board of the SDCWA, I struggle with being a leader when I’d prefer to be a follower. I was comfortable as a sheep in this flock – an analogy not lost on most Christians. I know why Christ chose that animal to teach us more about ourselves, because I live that way every day: quiet in public, preferring to blend in than to stand out. It’s why I write stories instead of directing them or starring in them: I’d rather be behind the scenes.

As your president, I hope I can rise above my own fears and angst and do what needs to be done. God calls us to step out of our comfort zones for His Name’s sake, and He’ll meet me when I feel weakest and least able to do the task at hand. Handing me a gavel and writing my name in the minutes won’t give me the self-acceptance I’ll need to do this job. Only Christ can give me that.

Please pray for St. Davids – the conference, the board, and your humble (and petrified) president. We are here to serve you, but more importantly, to serve Him, our great Shepherd.

– *Linda M. Au*

THE WRITERS' RETREAT: IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?



Are you looking for intensive peer critique of your writing? Or maybe you need a place away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life to finish a manuscript. St. Davids may be just the place for you!

The Writers' Retreat, facilitated by former *Writer's Digest* Editor Melanie Rigney, is limited to four people. "Retreaters" meet for six 50-minute sessions. In each session, two participants read three to five pages of a work in progress and provide specific questions on which they want feedback from the other participants.

Retreaters attend other classes during the rest of the day and pay the regular registration fee. They are eligible for scholarship assistance. Participants typically have a history of publication or of winning writing competitions or of being active in a writers' critique group.

If you're interested in the retreat, e-mail Melanie (editor@editorforyou.com) with ten pages of your work-in-progress and a brief description (two-three sentences) of your goals for it by May 15. Selections will be based on the quality of work and on participation in past retreats. For example, if one slot remains and two people submit work of comparable quality and one has been in the retreat for several years, the person who has not participated in the past will be selected. Notifications will be made by June 1.

PAST PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID:

- "The retreat gave me other perspectives on character names, plot ideas, tightening, and developing my voice. We didn't just

make changes that suited one person's voice or ideas. We accepted the originality and characteristics that make up each of our voices. As always, we listen to any suggestions, but it is up to us to make the changes we see fit. Getting others' perspectives helps us to see the trees in the forest." – *Janyce Brawn*

- "I found the sessions to be helpful, encouraging and constructive. ... The most important thing I learned was no matter how much one is enamored with the words we string together—they can always be better, clearer, more specific, and more true to the original intent." – *Rita Scheidt*

- "Melanie's rule about having each writer sit quietly and listen, while the rest of the group talks about his/her work, has proved to be a good one. We can all defend what we've written. But if it doesn't communicate as it should, obviously something needs to change. And other experienced writers who aren't as tied to the story as it is can usually identify the problem. I always benefit greatly from their feedback and support." – *Audrey Stallsmith*

- "For me, the experience was excellent in that I understood the weakness of my novel. When I had to print out chapters I saw the plot weakness. And because I have been in the group for a few years, you all nodded at my discovery, reminding me of the manuscript I put on the shelf, which I now know is my best. ... The faithfulness of a few tried-and-true writers challenged me to finish my better novel." – *Bobbi Updegraff*



THE WRITERS' COLONY: ST. DAVIDS HAS A NEW TWIST

The Writers' Colony is aimed at more experienced authors who just need some time away from the demands of everyday life to concentrate on a manuscript. Those interested in participating must have a proven track record with significant publishing accomplishments, and must have attended the conference as a full-time conferee at least once in the past three years. Participation is limited to three to five fellows per conference.

Fellows do not attend classes during the day (they may attend evening activities), and therefore pay only room and board plus \$50. Scholarship assistance is not available.

To apply, send a six- to eight-page manuscript and a list of writing credits, participation in critique groups, conferences attended, and any other information that illustrates your commitment to the writing craft. Do NOT put your name on the manuscript. Put your name and contact information on a cover sheet, along with the name of your manuscript, and mail to: **Lora Zill**, Writers' Colony Application, PO Box 149, Conneaut Lake, PA 16316. Applica-

tions must be postmarked by April 30, 2012. If you have questions, e-mail Lora at timesing@zoominternet.net or call 814-382-8667.

Here's what one fellow had to say about the experience:

- "Three days at the St. Davids conference to devote to my chosen writing project! That is what the Writers' Colony offered me—and I aimed for it in 2011. My three days turned out to be only two because I had board duties on the third—most importantly, judging the Thistle Contest. But in those two days I wrote three new poems—a record for me—revised at least two other poems, and had a very productive tutorial consultation with the poetry instructor, Karen Blomain. (I was permitted to pay the separate fee for the tutorial.) My work in my dorm room yielded a five-poem cluster, part of a longer series I have been working on for years, and Karen advised me how to proceed with the series and perhaps turn it into a book. I heartily recommend trying this 'different' way to learn and write at St. Davids!"

— Nancy E. James

ST. DAVIDS NOW POWERED BY



Do you order books, music, electronics, or anything else at Amazon.com? Next time you're ready to buy, visit www.stdavidswriters.com/bookstore.html and click on the "Powered by Amazon" button. You'll be redirected to Amazon.com to make your purchase—and St. Davids will get a small percentage of the total, even though you won't be charged a penny more than if you'd simply gone to Amazon.com. *What a deal!* Don't forget to update your Amazon.com bookmark while you're there!

Another cool thing—you don't have to be a SDCWA member to use the button, so please encourage your friends, family, coworkers, and strangers on the street to visit our site to place an Amazon order. *Thanks!*

Names in the News

- **JILL MAISCH** had a devotion accepted by *The Upper Room* (www.upperroom.org), a leading devotional guide.

- **LORA ZILL** had an editorial on educational issues published in the *Meadville Tribune*.

- **NANCY E. JAMES** and **SHIRLEY STEVENS** participated in a program of poetry reading on the theme "Chaos and Order" at a Pittsburgh art gallery.



- **MICHELE HUEY** and **NANCY E. JAMES** were among the Writing Academy tutors who served as mentors and critique group leaders during the W.A. Writers' Retreat weekend (www.wams.org).

- **EVELYN MINSHULL** was added to the Pennsylvania Center for the Book's Literary and Cultural Map of Pennsylvania (www.pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Minshull_Evelyn.html).

- **NANCY E. JAMES** has had two poems, previously published in *Christianity and Literature*, selected to appear in an anthology, *Imago Dei: Poems from Christianity and Literature*, to be published by Abilene Christian University Press in 2012.

- **JAN SADY** had an essay on 9/11 accepted by the *Times-News* in Burlington, N.C. Her story "Only in America" was published in *She Has a Big But!* by Jean Bailey Robor. Her poem "Where Was God on 9/11?" was published in the *Jefferson Democrat*. An essay, "911 Reflection," appeared in the *Punxsutawney Spirit* and the Jefferson Co. Neighbors papers. Jan will fill the pulpit at St. Peter's UCC in Punxsutawney, Pa., until December.



- **VICKIE PRICE TAYLOR** placed third in the Tampa Area Romance Writers (TARA) contest in Women's Fiction for her work-in-progress, *Restoration*, a piece that won first place in fiction at St. Davids in 2009.

- **NANCY E. JAMES** placed first and Shirley Stevens finished third in the Pittsburgh Poetry Society's bridge-themed contest.

- **MELANIE RIGNEY** was featured in the August issue of *Every Day Catholic* (www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/EDC/preview.aspx?id=243) and was interviewed for an article in the Paulist Evangelization Ministries' *Evangelization Exchange* (www.pncea.org/broadcast/default.aspx).

CHECK OUT BLOGS BY SDCWA MEMBERS!

- **Linda M. Au**, *The Other Side of the Desk*: www.lindamaubooks.com

- **Roberta Brosius**, *Wit, Words, & the Word*: www.robertabrosius.blogspot.com

- **Angie Dilmore**, *The Trials and Triumphs of a Transplant...from 'Burgh to Bayou*: www.angiekaydilmore.blogspot.com

- **Michele Huey**, *God, Me, and a Cup of Tea*: michelehuey.com; *Christian Writers Page*, offering information, instruction, inspiration and insight into the world of freelance writing: www.christianwriterspage.blogspot.com

- **Jessica Johnston**, *Memoirs of a White Trash Mom*: www.memoirsofawhitetrashmom.com

blogspot.com

- **Susan Lower**, *Tender-Hearted, Life Changing, Wholesome Fiction*: www.susanlower.com

- **Fara Reed**, *Fair to Middlin'*: www.faratomidlinn.blogspot.com

- **Melanie Rigney**, *About writing, faith, and life in the '50s*: www.melanierigney.com

- **Jan Sady**: www.jansady422.wordpress.com

- **Anne Siegrist**, *Meanwhile, Back at the Farm*: www.annesiegrist.wordpress.com

- **JoEllen Smith**: <http://cococoncreations-gallery-joellen.blogspot.com/>

- **Vickie Price Taylor**, *Write Along the Way*: www.vickiepricetaylor.wordpress.com

SHARPEN THOSE KEYBOARDS!

The writing contest is an important part of the St. Davids conference, and the 2011 edition went very well. With the new guidelines posted on the Web site and the change to require submissions before the conference, it was much easier for the judges and me as the coordinator. The changes also allowed conferees to get their entries in before the conference so that they could focus on classes once they arrived. *Thank you* to the judges for their time and efforts judging and to everyone for following the rules!

Now, it's time to think about what you'll enter in 2012. Watch the Web site and the *Upper Case* for any rule changes and the deadline date in the spring. In the meantime, start writing; take the piece to your critique group; and then rewrite so you'll be ready! I look forward to seeing more entries!

– Janyce Brawn, Contest Coordinator

2011 WINNERS:

Devotionals: 2nd Place: Janet Sady, Child-like Faith; 3rd Place: Janyce Brawn, Forgiveness Is at Hand

Children's Picture Book: 1st Place: Anne Murphy, Sail Away

Humorous Poetry: 2nd Place: Anne Siegrist, A Bit More Than I Wanted to Know; 3rd Place: Don Hasselman, Ode to a Haitian Outhouse

Serious Poetry: 1st Place: Anne Murphy, At the House of a Friend; 2nd Place: Anne Siegrist, I Hold On; 3rd Place: Janet Sady, Shattered; Honorable Mention: Robyne Parrish, Blue Ribbons

Flash Fiction: 2nd Place: Don Hasselman, The Other Side of Darkness

Fiction (Adult, YA, Middle Grade) First Chapter: 2nd Place: Helen Zanone, Skydiving, and Susan Lower, Residence of Her Heart; 3rd Place: Janyce Brawn, Alicia and the Buzzard of Whiz; Honorable Mention: Bonnie Hudson, Lost in Laos.

Humor: 2nd Place: Anne Murphy, Creatures From the Brown Lagoon, and Deanna Baird, What's Good for the Lips; 3rd Place: Don Hasselman, From the President's Desk; Apathetics Anonymous.

Persuasive Nonfiction: Honorable Mention: Janet Sady, Critique Can Kill Your Voice; Rick Nowlin, Vouchers: Still a Bad Idea.

Personal Experience: 1st Place: Susan Lower, A Mother's Intuition; 2nd Place: Deanna Baird, Remembering Renee; Honorable Mention: Sharon Stoika-Smay, The Things I Did Not Know.

Informative Nonfiction: No winners this year.

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Former conferees and members who have been receiving the newsletter by snail mail will continue to receive it by e-mail, as long as we have a current e-mail address. To update your address, e-mail Linda Au at:
linda@lindamaubooks.com.

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