

WITH PEN IN HAND

A PUBLICATION OF NETWO - NORTHEAST TEXAS WRITERS' ORGANIZATION

Next NETWO Meeting is
Thursday, Dec. 8th at 6:00 pm
at Applebees's in Mt. Pleasant

December 2011
Editor: Gay Ingram
gaymingram@gmail.com



**THE WORD
WAS
MADE
FLESH...
AND
DWELL
AMONG US.**

**Joyous Christmas Wishes
to each and everyone of you.**

NETWO November 2011 Monthly Meeting

Ten members of the Northeast Texas Writers Organization and four guests met October 13, 2011 at AppleBees in Mount Pleasant, Texas at 6:00. New members, Mike Barclay, Caryl and Ron McAdoo and guests Margarette Combs were introduced. The fund balance for NETWO is \$11,090.20.

Old and New Business:

- Reminder that our website is still in need of someone to serve as assistant webmaster to Jim Callan who has done such an excellent job.
 - Skip Hughes wanted input on holding his annual poetry workshop in January. Jim suggested offering a tentative schedule and see how it is received. (*See announcement within*)
 - Patti Ball informed the group about confirmed speakers for the 2012 Conference and shared topics scheduled for the event. Our caterer has been booked. The Chamber of Commerce has agreed to provide 'goodie bags' for the conference. Registration cost will be \$5.00 more this year to cover additional expenses derived from our move from former venue to the Mt. Pleasant Convention Center.
 - Patti also announced there would be at least seven NETWO authors participating in Deck The Halls in Mt. Pleasant on Nov. 18-19. Two area authors have become members as a result of desiring to take part in this event: Patty Wiseman and Jeannie Barber.
- The Conference book table this year will be made available to our speakers only. Any NETWO authors who wish to sell their own books will need to set up their own tables and provide their own salespeople. Lengthy discussion over whether to offer table space at the conference to associations related to writing. This could be additional revenue for conference expenses. Discussion ended without decision once we realized there were areas that needed more information before deciding.
- Business meeting adjourned.

Readers for the evening included:

Mike Barclay - **Confessions of a Lost Soul** and an excerpt from the novel, **Asylum Earth**; Bill Carl - excerpt from **For The Love of a Stranger**; Skip Hughes - **Whither, Forward To The Past, Every Precious Thump, An Answer** and **Life Is a Part of Death**, a selection of poems.

Life Is Part of Death?
(for Lynne)

I have faith. My faith is strong.
I don't remember ever lacking faith.
But could my faith move a mountain,
Actually make it go from here to there?
My faith is strong, but it's not that strong.

My God is real, as real as life is,
As real as the sky, the sun, the stars.
I see these things and many more besides,
Beyond all possibility of comprehension,
And I'm wonderstruck. My God is every-
where.

I have faced death down a time or two.
I remember being reminded then
That some things are not so important.
Now and again, I need such reminders.

Why cannot that awareness remain part of me?

Now death draws near once more.
This time, I shall not face him down.
Indeed, I must go with him this time,
Upon the pale horse when he rides away.

For now I'm just myself, only me and nothing
more.

As nearly as I know, I am as real as anything
else,

As real as any other person is or ever was.

What shall I be then? What am I to become?
I must not fear. What have I now to fear?
My God! My God! Why am I afraid?

November 11, 2011
Floyd E. "Skip" Hughes
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BITS & PIECES

NETWO CONFERENCE UPDATE

MARY SUE SEYMOUR, founder of the Seymour Agency, will be presenting on Saturday: Romancing Religion; How to Write a Christian Romance. She accepts christian romance, secular romance and nonfiction. She will accept 3 writing samples/ 10 pages each.

from Pattie Bell, 2012 Conference Chair

FIRST SATURDAY IN DEC.

Skip Hughes will be presenting on Jan. 7, 2012

*Ed.'s Note: I failed to attribute last month's story, **Could You Do This?**, about member Allen Smith to Skip Hughes.*

NEW MEMBERS

Michael Barclay
200 Crystal Drive
Longview, TX 75604
817-235-6134
TMB Barclay@aol.com
<http://www.asylumearthmb.blogspot.com>

Patty Wiseman
P.O. Box 120
Woodlawn, TX 75694
patty_wiseman1966@yahoo.com

Jeannie Faulkner Barber
487 FM 3053
Kilgore, TX 75662
dragracers2@yahoo.com

BOOK SIGNINGS



Marvin Meyer, Whit Gentry, Mrs. W. Carl, William Carl, Lynn Hobbs, Pattie Ball, Caleb Pirtle III, Patty Wiseman, and Maryann Miller. missing from the picture was Stephen Woodfin.



Gay Ingram's story, *Christmas Quilts*, is included in the anthology **Celebrating Christmas With...Memories, Poetry and Good Food.**



Deck The Halls, Mt. Pleasant on Nov. 18-19. Galand Nuchols, Jeannie Barber, Gay Ingram, Patty Wiseman, Pattie Ball and Lynn Hobbs.

MARKETS

WHITE CAT PUBLICATIONS

http://www.whitecatpublications.com/?page_id=225

Short Stories - Up to 5,000 words in length, 5 cents/word; up to 2,500 words. Reprints at 1.5 cents/word.

Flash fiction - Up to 1,000 words. \$25 per story.

Interviews - Query first. The rate is \$25 per interview.

Reviews - Query first. The rate is \$25 per review.

We are interested primarily in good quality writing, and, although we lean heavily towards stories with a strong element of suspense, are open to stories in all genres save erotica.



STRAND MAGAZINE

http://www.strandmag.com/html/strandmag_guidelines.htm

We are interested in mysteries, detective stories, tales of terror and the supernatural as well as short stories.

Stories can be set in any time or place, provided they are well written, the plots interesting and well thought.

We are interested in stories of almost any length, but preferably the 2,000-6,000 word range. However, we may occasionally publish short shorts of 1000 words, and sometimes we may consider even a short novella. At the moment, our payment rate for stories is \$25-150. No submissions accepted by e-mail.



ERMA BOMBECK WRITING COMPETITION

<http://www.wclibrary.info/erma/index.asp>
\$15 ENTRY FEE

Choose one category for entry: Humor or Human Interest. Write a personal essay of 450 words or fewer. Be sure to use the online entry form. All ages may enter (all entries are judged together).

Entries are accepted from anywhere in the world. English only. Only one entry allowed per person. This year, the writing competition is charging \$15 for entries, but is also awarding a prize of \$500 in each of four categories (one entry per person for Humor either in the Global or Local (Dayton) category and for the Human Interest either in Global or Local), PLUS a paid registration (value \$350) to the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop which will be held in April. Winners are also recognized at the Workshop luncheon. Entries accepted beginning January.



CHICKEN SOUP THEMES OPEN

<http://www.chickensoup.com/>

Think Positive for Kids - deadline Dec. 31, 2011

Finding My Faith - deadline Dec. 31, 2011.

Hope/Healing - Breast Cancer Journey - deadline Dec. 15, 2011.

New Friends - deadline March 31, 2012.

Parenthood - deadline June 30, 2012.

If the story or poem you wrote is published by us, you will be paid \$200 upon publication of the book plus you will receive ten free copies of the book your story or poem appears in. Limit 1,200 words.

This month we share with you an 2011 Contest Honorable Mention story by Donna Paul. -Ed.

Growing Pains

I was excited at living with Dad and his new family for the second semester of seventh grade. Until reality set in. The sunny farmhouse—just right when I’d stayed with Dad last summer—suddenly seemed cold and crowded. I found myself sharing a room with a little stepsister, tolerating two pint-sized brothers, and forced to endure the incredible theatrics of an insecure stepmother. Like hungry puppies, every one of us vied for my father’s attention. Pronouncements of hierarchy and grubby elbows flew to ensure a spot next to him on the couch, at the table, or in the prized front seat of the car. I never won.

All that spring I’d tried hard to be likeable. I’d smiled at the appropriate moments, cleaned my plate of tasteless meals and stumbled zombie-like through homework and schedules of chores. I missed Mom every day. She never supervised homework, slammed doors, or posted reminder notes. I missed her cooking, her touch, and her laughter. Most of all, I resented having a stepmother who bossed me around. Even though endless days of summer stretched ahead, their allure didn’t entice me to read my favorite books, play with my regal collie, Prince, or even beg my father yet again for a horse.

Leaving Prince whining inside, early one Saturday morning I slammed the kitchen door as hard as I dared. I yanked up the zipper of my windbreaker and set off at a good clip. Even for the mountains of New York, it was a cold July. Hands clenched inside my pockets, head down, I kicked angrily at loose stones along the driveway. She might be married to my father, but she had no right to tell me what to do. It’s not fair! Oh, how I wished I could talk to Dad. Alone.

I turned right at the dirt road encircling the mountain and began to follow an old logging trail. Walking here with my father last fall I’d stumbled over a rotting log. He caught my arm and laughed aloud when a startled warbler flew close to my face. We’d taken long, shirt-soaking drinks from a century-old stone reservoir. Dad worked harder than ever before. He was far too busy to take summer walks with me.

As I focused on the narrowing trail my anger evaporated. I slowed to a leisurely pace. At the reservoir I stuck my face over the edge and plunged in both arms, dissipating my reflection. Drizzle ran into my cuffs while I slurped the cold water. Listening to the wind, I rested and picked at lichen stuck to the rocks.

Farther down the hill fallen pine needles cushioned my footsteps. Giant trees loomed overhead, and despite narrow shafts of silvery light, gray gloom persisted. The trail had almost disappeared. I practiced walking quiet as an Indian; toe, heel, toe, heel. My foot struck a protruding root and the pain forced me to limp a few steps. Enough playing Princess Summer Fall Winter Spring.

The silence felt spooky. I began to sing one of Dad’s favorite songs to break the eerie stillness. *“But come ye back in sunshine or in shadow, oh, Danny Boy, oh Danny Boy, I love*

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you so.” I could see my father’s thick, callused fingers dancing over the ivory piano keys. I felt the slick bench beneath me, heard his deep baritone voice and exaggerated consonants. I longed for the warmth of his shoulder next to mine. The notes reverberated through me until my throat closed around the pain of sudden tears. Somewhere in the distance a screeching jay objected.

I smiled at the bird’s brashness, picked up my pace, and rejoined the stillness. As the sun struck the side of the mountain dots of light brightened sumac and mottled the forest floor. I’d walked a long time. The river seemed farther away than I remembered. Brushing a trickle of sweat from my eye, I turned around to look back. The hillside rose high above me, dark and still. I noticed patches of pale green clinging to a nearby tree.

“Moss grows on the north side.” Dad’s quiet teaching voice filled my head. “Always orient yourself honey. The sun comes up from the east and sets in the west. Rivers twist and curve within their boundaries and flow down to larger bodies of water. They might even flood over their banks for a way. Sometimes nature—or man—creates huge obstacles in their courses and the river makes a new route, but they’ll always find their way downstream.”

I peered downhill again, straining to get my bearing. I licked my dried lips. A stubborn fleck of toothpaste in the corner of my mouth captivated my tongue. My thighs burned, and sweat trickled into my waist band. Slipping off my yellow jacket I cinched it tight about my waist. I shuddered as a fresh breeze slipped up from behind and wrapped my damp shirt in a cold embrace.

I heard a faint rumble and held my breath. It had to be the river. Perhaps I’d find my father there, waiting with arms held wide. It was one of our favorite places.

I took several tentative steps. Yes, there it was again; an urgent, insistent roaring. I began to run down the steep hillside. My ears filled with the swish, swish of nylon sleeves brushing my legs. I saw myself racing, not as an awkward, pubescent chub of a girl, but lithe and graceful. I flew, full out, past branches snagging my hair, scraping a shoulder against the pitted bark of a pine, and clawing at a spider’s web molded to my cheek. Louder now, the unmistakable booming sounds of water arose to cover my crashing descent.

Gasping, wild, I burst out of the wood into dazzling light reflected off the river. Skidding to regain my balance, I flung up an arm to shield my eyes. In the distance deep water turned in a dark emerald chute, shoving and tumbling its way along. The torrent skirted monstrous boulders and erupted into great long streaks of foam. It called out, begging me to come close.

I crossed a spit of glistening black shale to a place where the rock yielded to lush vegetation and crystalline water. I inhaled the scents of crushed grass and pungent wild onion from the wet earth. As I sank to my knees tiny fish scattered before me, then darted back and forth in noiseless, unending missions.

I stayed still, watching, listening, and feeling the powerful force before me. I’d never seen the real beauty of the river. At last I understood why my father fell silent when he’d brought me here. I knew it was useless, but I scoured the far shoreline one last time. He was nowhere to be seen.

Quick as the darting minnows, sad, clear thoughts raced in reckless patterns. I could never be Daddy’s youngest or his only daughter again. I wouldn’t hear him whisper, “Good night my little Chickadee” just to me. We wouldn’t take private walks in the woods. These

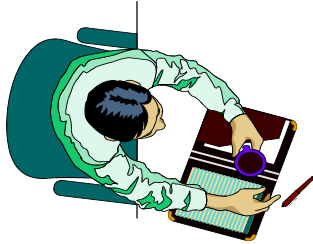
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things were my past, delivered like comfort food at the pleasure of the cook. For reasons yet to be understood by a girl of thirteen, they'd been snatched away that awful afternoon when he left Mom. Since then I'd caressed the stones below the surface, skittered around the twists in our family's course, even eddied in place, but Dad no longer seemed to notice.

That day by the river it remained uncertain whether I might ever feel secure or anticipate a golden future again. Like the rushing river, my time as Daddy's little girl had flashed by in the kaleidoscopic shapes and colors of childhood. Rocking slowly back and forth, I sang again, softer now, keening for what I'd lost. *"But come ye back in sunshine or in shadow, oh, Danny Boy, oh Danny Boy, I love you so."*

I stretched forward, lowered my arms and cupped my hands. Letting icy water fill my palms until my flesh turned to stinging alabaster, I found my way into my teens.



Online Critique Group

We welcome new member, James Babb jasub1017@yahoo.com, to the online critique group. The online critique group are NETWO members interested in critiquing/evaluating the writing of other members via email. When reading a piece at a meeting, the feedback of one's writing is rather limited due to time constraints and insufficient ability to fully digest the work and offer solid critiques. By reading pieces online, a person is able to spend more time reflecting on the work and offer a much better critique. The group has grown to over 25 members and seems to be very popular. If a member wants a critique, he should contact the entire group in a single email and describe the genre, the manuscript length, and the goal of the critique (evaluate scene, characters, plot, etc). The writer should also specify a deadline for the feedback (in 2 days, 1 week, or take your sweet time). Interested critiquers will respond to the request and the writer can send his piece to the appropriate person(s).

Submitted by Paul Paris

Members involved in Online Critique Group

David Colley adacolley@hotmail.com
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Susan Johnson sgjohnson@nol.net
Gail Reed mgailreed@yahoo.com
Gale Gill galegill@sbcglobal.net
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Choose the right words to write!

This is the essence of writing.

Join the NETWO 2012 January Writing Seminar!

**The emphasis is on writing poetry, but don't let that throw you.
Writing poetry well is writing distilled to its essence.
Poetry can be enjoyable, powerful, and fun!**

**The seminar will be led by N.T.C.C. Adjunct Professor,
prize-winning, nationally published poet and journalist,
(and NETWO president) Skip Hughes.**

Attend BOTH sessions:

**Saturday, January 14th at 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and
Saturday, January 21st at 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.,
At the Pizza Inn, north of Pittsburg on U.S. Highway 271.**

Space is limited!

**Register early by e-mail or phone to Skip
<diffdrumr@gmail.com>, (903-572-2793).**

For early-registration tuition rate,

**when registration is confirmed,
send check or M.O. by snail-mail to
2700 East U.S. Highway 67
Mount Pleasant, Texas 75455**

Tuition

**Early Registration: both sessions \$35; one session \$20.
“At the door” (space available): both sessions \$50; one session \$35.
Students (w/ I.D.) free with paying teacher.**



A RED NECK CHRISTMAS POEM

by
BRYAN FREEMAN

Da misses an me was standing by our Christmas tree
Decorated wit lights an tinsel an disco balls for all ta see.
“Dats good” she said, now lets go to bed,
Least we scare the fat man in red.
I was proud of my beer bottle star,
An da beer can air a planes, hanging from a cheese whiz jar.
For the man in red, some leave cookies an milk.
I left him a double bourbon, peanuts n pretzels, on my bandana of silk.
As I snuggled next to my wife in our bed,
Flashes of hunting gear danced in my head.
The misses woke me and said, “there’s some one in the house.”
I replied, “It’s just a mouse.”
She kneed me in my rump,
And I fell to the floor with a thump.
As I went down the hall, I stepped on ole Blue an he gave a yelp.
Da misses yelled, “You need help?”
When I reached the living room,
It was dark as a tomb.
When I put on the light, I gasped “Well flick mah bic, it’s ole St. Nick.”
He was light as a deer on his feet.
I saw the hunting gear under the tree, I said, “oh how sweet.”
The glass was empty, the peanuts and pretzels he ate.
“I gotta go,” he said “its getting late.”
He staggered, as he picked up his sack,
And through the roof he went, an never looked back.
He yelled, “thanks for the shot, see you next year”
I went to the fridge and got a beer.
Through the hole in the roof, I felt the night dew.
I raised my beer to the man in red, and said “Peace on you.”

NETWO
P. O. Box 411
Winfield, TX 75493
www.netwo.org

NETWO MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

YES! I want to join NETWO. I understand I will receive *With Pen In Hand* every month along with enjoying the fellowship and help of members of NETWO.

Membership in NETWO also entitles me to discounted registration for the Writers' Conference. Annual \$20 dues are payable in January of each year.

Send check (or join at a meeting) payable to NETWO along with completed form to:

NETWO

P. O. Box 411

Winfield, TX 75493

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Email Address _____

Phone # _____