

News Words

A L A B A M A W R I T E R S C O N C L A V E

COMMENTS ON THE 2009 AWC MEETING:

Attendees to the 2009 AWC Annual Meeting had many positive things to say about the event this past July. Comments, like *knowledgeable, instructive, organized, practical, and entertaining* rang through the halls of the Hilton Birmingham Perimeter Park about the faculty presenters between sessions, at meal times and where ever attendees gathered. I heard several members remark that, "Actually all of them were great!" and say of the presentations, "Sessions were *extremely* helpful!"

Members told me that they found the meeting a terrific opportunity to mingle and network with their peers, published and unpublished writers, and the faculty and writer-in-residence — the latter were noted as especially congenial. They found everyone to be helpful and willing to offer useful tips and practical ideas on writing, as well as how to get your work before the public. Several attendees commented on the advantage of having the one-on-one critique of their writing by a faculty member. One upcoming writer said, "...now I'm able to see how I can use my characters more efficiently."

Comments from the evaluation sheets indicated general enjoyment of the meeting. The Open Mic on Friday and Saturday drew a crowd and well over twenty participants read their stuff each evening. Positive remarks like "Keep the Open Mic; It's great fun; Need more time," were made about this event. Open Mic didn't end until near midnight. Several individuals said that the bookstore had plenty of selections. Others felt that more titles on the craft of writing would be helpful. Evaluations indicated that most enjoy having the meeting at the Hilton in Birmingham. Comments such as "Great venue," and, "Easy walk to good restaurants and shopping," were expressed.

Friday evening's play preformed by the Mississippi Writes Guild was an unexpected perk to those in attendance and gave insight into the lives of several noted Southern Writers.

Ah, but everything was not peachy-keen, however. Speaking of peaches, someone felt that the peach cobbler should have been served with ice cream. Perhaps that would have been nice. Others thought fish would be better than BBQ for Friday evening's buffet. And a person at a nearby table at the banquet wanted to tell the chef that the food was too salty; another wanted more salt and pepper. Then the question, "What is this mystery meat we're eating? And the answer, "The other white meat." Well at this point I can express the old, over used adage, "Can't please everyone."

All in all, the evaluations of this past year's meeting were very positive. And, we all owe a debt of gratitude to the former Program Chair, Irene Latham, for setting up the excellent 2009 Annual AWC meeting. Thank you, Irene; I've got some tough shoes to fill.

Submitted by Richard Modlin, 1st VP and 2010 AWC Program Chair

D E A D L I N E S

April 20, 2010 Postmark for writing contest to contest chair,

Marian Lewis

June 10, 2010 Postmark for manuscript for critiques to Francesca Gross

June 25, 2010 Room reservations must be made by June 19th for AWC discount rate of \$114 plus tax per room night. Hotel rooms can become limited, so early registration is urged. Please visit the AWC website for information.

YOUR NEW AWC BOARD CHAIR

"You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club." - Jack London

Writers write. They don't sit around and think about how great it would be to be a writer. Writers put pen to paper and fingertips on the keyboard daily. Writers talk to their characters at traffic lights and in the grocery store checkout line. Writers do it everyday because they have to get it on the page and on the computer screen.

Writers have notebooks in the car, at their paying job, and on the nightstand to write down thoughts, lines, and brushstrokes to use when they fire up the computer and pull out the legal pad.

London's words speak to the discipline a writer needs to just do it every day. Workshops and conferences are wonderful events. But if you go home after a writer's weekend and don't write

for a week or a month, Jack London would probably ask in what closet you are hiding your club.

Write every day. Make an appointment with yourself to get it done. If you write 15 minutes a day for a year, you will have the first draft of a novel. Work on a poem a week for a year and you have 52 poems. (My math is amazing isn't it?) In many cases, a writer's talent doesn't prevent them from putting words on the page. What stops them is their work ethic. Don't put yourself in a position where ten years from now you think "I wished I had finished that draft, and that poem, and that play."

Don't be lazy. Write every day. It's important. You have a gift and don't deny the world what you have to say.

AWC Chair Greg Screws

News from the 2009 Alabama Writers' Conclave Annual Writers' Contest

"It was a great conference. It affirms my resolve to get my novel published."

Prizes for the 2009 Alabama Writer's Conclave (AWC) annual writing contest were awarded to winners in eight categories (Fiction, Short Fiction, Juvenile Fiction, Nonfiction, Traditional and Free Verse Poetry and First Chapter of a Novel) on Sunday, July 19th at the close of the conference at the Hilton Birmingham Perimeter Park Hotel. AWC awards four money prizes and four honorable mentions in each category and first through fourth place pieces (if authors choose) are published online in the 2009 edition of the *ALALITCOM* (www.alalit.com), the official journal of the AWC.

The AWC writing contest has become a nationally known and respected venue honoring the fellowship of writers. This year in addition to entries from Alabama, writers from 26 other states entered the contest.

Feedback from one 2009 winning writer: "I received my two certificates and check today and was so pleased. . . . affirms my resolve to get my novel published . . . (and confirms that) I'm on target with my target audience . . ."

Another winner says: "I invite you to read my latest publication. It appears online at www.alabamawritersconclave.com. . . . and I encourage you to read all the winning entries. Some are wonderful, and some are delightfully wonderful . . . 14 states are represented (among winners). . . . I am honored to be included in such a broad national group."

I, too, invite you to read the 2009 winning pieces at www.alalit.com where you will also find a list of the 2009 contest winners. And, mark your calendars; the entry postmark deadline for next year's AWC Writing Contest is **April 20, 2010**. The contest is open and submissions are being received between now and this deadline. Membership in the Conclave, though certainly welcomed, is not a requirement for entering the contest.

Happy Writing,

Marian Lewis

AWC Contest Chair and Alalitcom Editor

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'It is splendid to be a great writer, to put men into the frying pan of your words and make them pop like chestnuts.'

Gustave Flaubert

Send membership dues, conference payments and registration to:

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R E C O M M E N D E D W R I T I N G C O N T E S T S

The National Society of Arts and Letters invites aspiring young writers to participate in its 2010 Short Story Competition. NSAL's purpose in mounting competitions is to assist young people with career potential in the arts. Contestants must first compete on the Chapter level. The first award winner of the Chapter competition will automatically compete on the National level. The National competition will take place in Clearwater, Florida on May 21, 2010. In addition to the National first award of \$10,000, there will be other cash awards. All expenses for the Chapter winner to attend the competition will be paid by the Chapter. See the web site for application forms and submission guidelines. www.arts-nsal.org

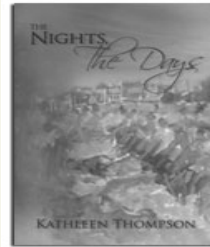


KATHLEEN THOMPSON

Board member Kathleen Thompson received both her poetry chapbook *The Nights, The Days* and her full-length poetry book, *The Shortest Distance* within three days of each other. *The Nights, The Days* won the 2008 Negative Capability Press Chapbook Award. It is a book of dream poems in the manner of Richard Hugo. The initial news

release said: "The book delves into the mystery of dreams and intertwines the activities of sleep and waking. The intrigue of journals provides the impetus for poems that encompass the wonderful particularities of life: butter nut squash and Christmas cheese cake...This ambitious and unified project on incorporating poetry and journal writing is masterful in its reach and scope, and Negative Capability Press is honored to launch a series of chapbooks with this book."

Thompson has a short story, "Finding the Lord," forthcoming in *Christmas is a Season! 2009* from Excalibur Press. Her short story, "Woman's Wait," has been accepted by *Muscadine Lines: A Southern Journal* for



The Nights, The Days

By
Kathleen Thompson



Quilt by Jessie
Pettkway b. 1929

Former AWC Program Chair and Alabama State Poet has published *Leaving Gee's Bend*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, January 2010.

Ludelfhia Bennett may be blind in one eye, but that doesn't mean she can't put in a good stitch.

IRENE LATHAM

In fact, Ludelfhia sews all the time, especially when things are going wrong. But when Mama gets deathly ill, it doesn't seem like even quilting will help. Mama needs medicine badly - medicine that can only be found in Camden, over forty miles away. That's when Ludelfhia decides

to do something drastic - leave Gee's Bend.

Set in 1932 and inspired by the rich quilting history of Gee's bend, Alabama, *LEAVING GEE'S BEND* is a heart-touching tale of a young girl's unexpected adventure.

To preorder:
www.irenelatham.com

TERESA THORNE

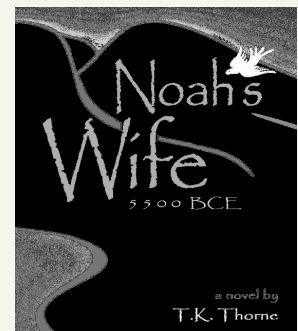
Teresa Thorne is the new AWC historian. This is her debut novel published by Chalet Publishers.

Noah's Wife is Na'amah, a beautiful young girl with Asperger Syndrome who wishes only to be a shepherdess on her beloved hills in ancient Turkey, a desire shattered by the hatred of her powerful brother, the love of two men, and a looming disaster that

threatens her world. Na'amah tells her story and sees the world through the unique lens of a condition known today as a high-functioning form of autism. Her savant abilities and penchant to speak truth forces her down a dangerous path in an age of change--a time of challenge to the goddess' ancient ways, when cultures clash and

the earth itself is unstable. When foreign raiders kidnap Na'amah, her journey to escape and return home becomes an attempt to save her people from the disaster only she knows is coming.

To read the first chapter or for ordering info-
www.tkthorne.com



Noah's Wife by Teresa Thorne

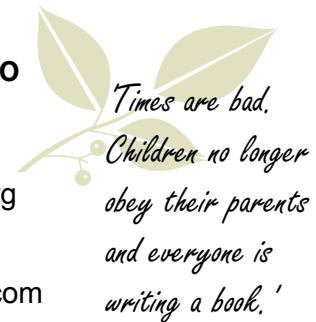
A MEETING WITH HELEN NORRIS

In September my husband and I visited with a former Poet Laureate of Alabama, Helen Norris, at a retirement farm in Black Mountain, NC. Helen had been stripped by a stroke of the use of her right hand, and of her renowned sense of humor. She was elated to have an audience, but she is still terribly homesick for Alabama, for her friends, and for Alabama's trees. Some uses of her hand and her sense of humor have been regained. We took her some McIntosh apples which led to a lively discussion of their benefits. She had received some pills by mail that day "for the brain." Like the apples, she assured us, they would increase the amount of acetylcholine which would improve memory and slow mental decline. So when we convinced her we simply must leave, she wheeled her chair over to a bookshelf near the door, and demanded, "What are *you* doing for *your* brain, Kathleen?" And I replied, "Not a single thing, Helen." This tickled her. "Here," she said. She held out two bars from a gift package of European dark chocolates. "These will help," she said, flashing her wry and knowing smile.

-Kathleen Thompson

RECOMMENDED CONFERENCES 2010

- Alabama Writers Conclave, July 16-18 www.alabamawritersconclave.org
- Tennessee Mountain Writers, January 15-17 & March 25-27. www.tmwi.org
- West Virginia Writers, June 11-13. www.wvwriters.org
- Southeastern Writers Association, June 20-25. www.southeasternwriters.com
- Tennessee Writers Alliance, June 19. www.tn-writers.org



Cicero, circa 43

BC

NEWS FROM STATE POET
LAUREATE—SUE WALKER

Sue Walker is the Regional Coordinator of the National Poetry-Out Loud Program, a Board member of the Alabama Writer's Forum, and on the Alabama Literary Trail Steering Committee.

She and her students recently conducted a series of workshops for the Homes at 15 Place in Mobile, published a chapbook of the poems written by the Homeless, and organized a poetry-reading for the Homeless in which over 70 people attended -- from the community as well as Homes at 15 Place.

Recent publications include:

Poetry

- "Meniere's" *Journal of the American Medical Association*, May 27, 2009. P. 2074
- "Trotting Sans Sabot" *Orbis* 148, Summer / Autumn, 2009 p. 14-15.
- "Grandfather's Thumb" *Persimmon Tree* (1st Place in the National *Persimmon Tree* competition.)

www.persimmontree.org/articles/issue11/articles/SouthernPoetry.php

- "Ever and Ever" and "Impossible" *Oracle*
- "And It Is Still A Matter of Law" *Midstream*, Fall 2009 p. 20
- "No Kidding" *The Sampler*, Vol. 41 (Fall 2009), 1

Drama Publication:

- Cognac in Coffee, Oysters in Champagne *Midway Journal*, Vol. 4, Issue 1:
www.midwayjournal.com/Oct09_CurrentIssue.html

Readings—Read a poem about Helen Keller in Washington, DC at the Helen Keller Unveiling.



AWC FOUNDED 1923

**A L A B A M A W R I T E R S
C O N C L A V E**

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**The oldest writers' organization in
continuous existence in the United
States. Founded 1923.
www.alabamawritersconclave.org**

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B I T S A N D P I E C E S

2010 Meeting Returns to Birmingham

We will again be at the Hilton Birmingham
Perimeter Park from 16 - 18 July, 2010.
We have a block of discounted rooms set
aside for our meeting. Lodging this year
is \$114/night + tax.

Faculty:

Jo S. Kittinger - Childrens' Literature
Thomas Lakeman — Fiction/Screenwriting
Susan Luther — Poetry
Kathy Rhodes — Creative nonfiction
Sonny Brewer — Writer-in-Residence

Go to the web site for more information:
www.alabamawritersconclave.org

Publication by AWC member

Our longtime member, the author Mrs.
Renate Carter, has her eighth book out in
print. It is a collection of multi-cultural short
stories set in southeast Asia—Bali, Java,
Singapore, Cambodia. To purchase, contact
the author 205-594-3299 or email
harder07@windstream.net

Cost \$46.00
including S&H.

