



LEAGUE OF VERMONT WRITERS, INC.

League Lines

The League of Vermont Writers Newsletter

Join us!

January 27, 2018

8:30 am-3:00pm

Trader Duke's Hotel

South Burlington, VT

WINTER 2018 PROGRAM & ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

New Directions, New Journeys: Writing Resources for Vermont Writers

CONNIE JOHNSON HAMBLEY

PRESENTING:

Legal Constructs of a Great Mystery

Writing a legal thriller or creating a tight mystery have more in common than you think. Attorney and author Connie Johnson Hambley will talk about constructing a great thriller using a legal mindset where the discerning reader is treated like carnivorous opposing counsel—each word counts, and pacing matters. Oh, and are you going to write a legal thriller? Connie will give tips and insights to make sure you get your law right and sharpen the suspense through the use of facts and precedent. Don't worry about not going to law school; short cuts and resources will be provided to guarantee you're writing the best stories possible.



J MOULTON & NATASHA

PRESENTING:

Everything You Wanted to Know about Comic Writing But Were Afraid to Ask

J Moulton and Natasha from Vermont Comic Con will lead the discussion on the process of writing comic books. They will discuss how they have found the pros and cons, spanning the entire process from idea to completed project, followed by a question-and-answer session.



NEW DIRECTIONS, NEW JOURNEYS—A WRITING RESOURCES PANEL

In keeping with our theme, ***New Directions, New Journeys***, LVW has assembled a panel of representatives from local and regional writing organizations, including the Burlington Writers Workshop, Green Mountain Writers Conference, Green Writers Press, League of Vermont Writers, and Vermont Comic Con. Each panelist will provide a brief introduction and description of his/her organization. Following introductory comments, we will moderate a Q&A session, so come prepared with questions! This is a terrific way for writers to learn more about the unique writing resources Vermont and New England have to offer.

All speaker and panelists bios can be found on page 6 and 7

Letter from the President

Dear League Member,

It is hard to believe the end of the year is upon us—and what a year it's been!

I've heard from many of my friends and acquaintances that 2017 was a time of transformations and lessons learned, some of them lessons from the past that were re-presented, others new and unfamiliar.

It's been quite a journey for me as well, and I have learned a lot more than I anticipated. I am looking forward to continuing to learn throughout the new year.

The end of the year has me reflecting on all that I have accomplished during 2017. I choose to focus on my successes and use the mistakes I made as learning experiences in order to change the way I do things moving forward.

I find focusing my attention in this way keeps me in a positive frame of mind. (I prefer to be my biggest ally as opposed to my biggest critic!)

As with many people I know, time management will be one of my focuses for 2018. I definitely didn't take as much time as I would have liked for

my personal writing. Life happens, but learning to work with the flow of life makes the biggest difference in finding the way to meet my goals.

As we move into the next year, I invite you to reflect on your own goals. What do you want to accomplish? What are the steps you need to take to get there? How are you going to budget your time?

Great things can happen when you plan and visualize what you want to see come to fruition. The same can be said for our organization. The League's board of directors have worked hard this year covering gaps in volunteerism, planning, organizing, and setting up conferences, and maintaining high standards of professionalism within the League.

I want to thank every board member who has contributed his or her time and energy this year to help manifest the vision we see for our future. We have reflected on not just the past, but also the future of our organization. The saying, "The only thing that is constant is change," is true. We have been striving to not be left behind, but to lead the way.

Our goal for the League is to create positive change, and I encourage you to help us realize it. Talk to any board member if you are willing to be an active member of this organization, and they will be happy to call you when we need volunteers. With more volunteers, we will be able to offer more events and services.

Let's move into the New Year with vision and step toward our goals.

Blessings,

Bobbi Jo Davis, President



FALL 2017 PROGRAM RECAPS

J.W. OCKER: EMBRACE YOUR WEIRD

By J.P. Choquette

This phrase might best sum up the work of J.W. Ocker, author, popular blogger, and travel writer. Ocker led the LVW Fall Conference workshop titled, “So What Kind of Books Do You Write?” in the second presentation of the day, which was engaging, humorous, and filled with energy.

Ocker provided an overview of the variety of works that come to mind when asked, “What do you do for work?”

For many years, he has been blogging consistently at Odd Things I’ve Seen (www.oddtthingsiveseen.com), where he provides readers with first-person accounts of unusual and sometimes macabre landmarks that lie just outside our front doors.

Take, for instance, the corpse flower, which blooms infrequently and exudes a fragrance like a cadaver when it does. Or the abandoned insane asylum Ocker visited in New York, the clown museum, or the month he spent in Salem, Massachusetts, completing research for one of his books aptly titled, *A Season with the Witch*.

Ocker stated that the three tools that most increased the reach and development of his work were his conversational writ-

ing style, which resonates with an Internet audience, GPS/Google Maps, and a digital camera. Armed with these tools, one can “find stories anywhere with a tank of gas.”

Obviously passionate about his work and the process of discovery, Ocker noted five positives about travel writing.

1) Pitch air. Because of the nature of nonfiction work, agents and editors are looking for ideas, concepts, and potential more than a finished product at the beginning of the writing process.

2) Experience outweighs book. The author stated that the information he finds, the people he meets, and the experiences he has are often just as, or even more exciting, than the finished book to him.

3) Easy experience with readers. Unlike fiction, readers cannot question a nonfiction author’s experience with the information that he or she has gathered.

4) No writer’s block. This alone might be enough to sway a would-be novelist to the other side.

5) A built-in defense against criticism.

Of course, each of these perks comes with a downside.

For example, Ocker noted that while one can “pitch air,” the celebratory mood and the high of the amazing experiences you gained dwindle quickly once you realize

there’s still a whole book to write.

Also, while nonfiction writers may enjoy an easy relationship with readers, there is no “artist awe.” Unlike fiction authors who create characters, dialogue, situations, and sometimes entire worlds from thin air, nonfiction authors aren’t given much credit for style.

Likewise, while nonfiction authors don’t experience writer’s block, Ocker said, “You can’t just throw in a dragon” to add a jolt to the narrative. Plus, there are dead ends, research snafus, and other challenges awaiting a nonfiction writer.

Lastly, while nonfiction writers may enjoy a built-in defense against criticism, it’s also easy to get facts wrong, even with the assistance of one or more excellent editors and proofreaders.

While he believes that anyone can become a travel writer, it was clear that Ocker’s passion for his subject matters. His adventurous spirit and love of learning all come into play in his success—not to mention his affinity for embracing what others may consider just plain weird.

*J.P. Choquette loves thunderstorms, old graveyards, and writing Gothic-inspired suspense novels from her home in northwestern Vermont. Her newest work, *Shadow in the Woods*, has been released in October 2017. Learn more about her by visiting her website, www.jpchoquette.net.*

FALL 2017 PROGRAM RECAPS

LAURIE FOREST: A SPELL-BINDING SPEECH

by Bobbi Jo Davis

Laurie Forest's presentation at the LVW fall conference about the process it took to get her novel *The Black Witch* published was spell-binding in the truest sense of the word. Her journey began with a single thought—about the social injustice and prejudice that is so rampant today.

Laurie recalled a time when, at the urging of her children, she read the Harry Potter series. She felt inspired by the way J. K. Rowling was able to weave profound messages into the books by showing how her characters handled adversity. This inspired Laurie to do the same thing.

Laurie and her family are advocates of marriage equality, but they, too, encountered adversity. She mentioned an incident where a truck drove tore up their lawn taking out a couple of rainbow signs they had placed in their front yard. The family decided not to give in to fear and replaced the two signs with ten new ones.

Prejudice is a theme that became an essential part of her novel.

Like most new authors, she received many rejections before Harlequin Teen accepted her work. The astonished Laurie was thrown right into a whirlwind of tight deadlines for editing her novel.

One early obstacle was that Barnes & Noble disliked the origi-

nal book cover design Harlequin Teen had contracted out. B&N threatened to buy only a few copies unless the cover were changed. A flurry of activity ensued, and the end result was the current black cover with the white feather, which received many compliments from booksellers and readers.

Once the novel entered the pre-release phase, Laurie started to get the first raving reviews on Goodreads. However, this was short lived because a woman who had not even read the novel decided that *The Black Witch* was promoting prejudice. She not only gave the book a one-star review, but also persuaded others on Goodreads to join her "cause," which led to more than

(continued on page 5)

WILLIAM ALEXANDER: SPOOKY HISTORY LESSON

by Bobbi Jo Davis

William Alexander's presentation at the League of Vermont Writers' fall conference was captivating, and the information he provided on how to write ghost stories came from a perspective that I hadn't heard before.

William started his speech by introducing the audience to his thoughts about ghosts, as well as the differences between American ghost stories and those heard in European countries.

He mentioned that Europe possesses a history that reaches

back thousands of years, as opposed to just hundreds of years for the US. This is perhaps the cause of the differences how ghost stories are perceived. In Europe, with its old architecture, history is a part of everyday life, but it's not the same in the US where people came for a fresh start.

William compared the "Old World" and the "New World," and said, "We teach history as though it is over. History is happening. We are part of it."

This, he said, is the biggest difference in how ghost stories are perceived in the different societies. The magic that permeated European ghost stories did not translate to those told here in

the US.

In American ghost stories, he said, the ghost is always driven out of the house, exorcised, and banished. In countries like England or Japan, ghosts are often viewed as the spirits of ancestors that need to be honored and appeased.

He posed some interesting thoughts to consider: Why go into a house thinking you can (or must) un-haunt it? What if ghosts shouldn't be banished? What if ghost stories are a part of history meant to be remembered?

William ended his presentation explaining a few writing exercises he uses to develop his
(continued on page 5)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

(Laurie Forest, cont.)

700 negative reviews. Laurie felt her novel was going to fail before it even was released to the general public.

Thankfully, her agent and publisher stood by her, and once the book was released, the good reviews started rolling in. Vocal fans of *The Black Witch* stood up for the book and made it known how it had been unfairly reviewed by people who hadn't read it.

Laurie's presentation was awe-inspiring to hear about the challenges this incredibly talented author went through and to hear the emotion in her voice as she described her journey with *The Black Witch*.

You and Your Credits

Lisa Halvorsen's recent credits include travel articles on a Tanzania safari, Hans Christian Andersen's Denmark, and North Carolina's Sonker Trail for AAA Home and Away Magazine; birding in Palmer Hay Flats wildlife refuge in Alaska for Harbors Magazine; and 5 spots to go gem hunting and winter ranch vacations for NEA Travel.

Annalisa Parent published *Storytelling for Pantsers: How to Write and Revise your Novel without an Outline*, released October 1, 2017. She has been on book tour in Vermont and New England, and leaves for an expanded book tour of the West in January. Her next fiction writing retreat will be in London in May 2018. Email her for more information. annalisa@datewiththemuse.com

(William Alexander, cont.)

story and characters. The one I found fascinating was one he adapted from a parlor game called "Smoke." You ask yourself the question, "If my character were a kind of smoke, what kind would they be?"

William's speech was followed by a short question-and-answer session, in which, among other things, he shared a real-life ghost encounter of his own. There's no doubt that he has thoroughly researched the topic of ghosts and ghost stories—a truly entrancing presentation.

**TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THE LEAGUE!
HAVE THEM VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
www.leagueofvermontwriters.org**

Slate of the Board of Directors

The Winter Program on January 27, 2018 at Trader Duke's Hotel (formerly known as the DoubleTree) will feature our annual business meeting where we will vote on the slate for Board of Directors. As such, we would like to share with you the individuals who are nominated to remain on the Board.

The candidates to fill At-Large positions with three-year terms are:

Bobbi Jo Davis and Julia Hoover

Those nominated to hold Officer positions include:

Bobbi Jo Davis - President

Shawn Anderson - Vice President

Ron Jensen - Treasurer

Julia Hoover - Secretary

We would like to thank members of the nominations committee for taking time to build this year's slate: Joy Choquette, Pat Esden, and Joan Grant.

2018 Winter Program, Speaker and Panelists Bios

Dede Cummings is a Vermont poet, literary agent, and publisher. At Middlebury College, she won the Mary Dunning Thwing Award, attended the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and published in *Mademoiselle*, *The Lake*, *Vending Machine Press*, *Connotation Press*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Figroot*, and *Bloodroot Literary*. She was a Discover/The Nation poetry semi-finalist. Dede was awarded a partial fellowship and writer's grant from the Vermont Studio Center in 2016. Her first poetry collection, *To Look Out From*, won the 2016 Homebound Publications Poetry Prize and was published by Homebound in 2017. Her second book of poems, entitled *The Meeting Place*, is due out in fall 2018 from Salmon Poetry. Dede is the founder and publisher of Green Writers Press in Brattleboro, Vermont, a global press devoted to environmental activism, social justice, and sustainable publishing.



Connie Johnson Hambley grew up on a dairy farm, and all would have been idyllic if an arsonist hadn't torched her family's barn. Bucolic bubble burst, she began to steadfastly plot her revenge against all bad guys, real and imagined. After receiving her law degree from Vermont Law School, she moved to Boston and wrote for *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, *Nature*, and other wonky outlets as she honed her skills of reaching readers at a deep emotional level with great research, laser-sharp focus on detail, and persuasive writing.

Her high-concept thrillers feature remarkable women entangled in modern-day crimes and walk the reader on the razor's edge between good and evil. Connie delights in creating worlds where the good guys win—eventually. Her short stories, *Giving Voice* and *Black Ice* won acceptance in *New England's Best Crime Stories: Windward* (2016) and *Snowbound* (2017), respectively, published by Level Best Books. The third book in *The Jessica Trilogy*, *The Wake*, joins *The Charity* and *The Troubles*. Connie is a two-time winner of Best English Fiction literary award at the EQUUS International Film Festival in New York City and is a board member and featured speaker of the New England chapter of Sisters in Crime.

Deena Frankel is by day a communicator and facilitator in the electric power industry where she energizes words, images, and people to evolve Vermont's power grid for a brighter, greener future. In her other life, she is a freelance writer, editor, and designer. She tells Moth-style stories at venues around New England and recently appeared in the Boston Women in Comedy Festival. Deena is the co-producer of Storytelling VT, a monthly event in Burlington, and leads the Burlington Writers Workshop oral storytelling workshops. She has served as an assistant editor for *Mud Season Review*, nonfiction editor for the *Best of the Burlington Writers Workshop 2015*, and designer for the past three volumes of *The Best of the Burlington Writers Workshop*. (Bio photo credit: John Alderman)



Yvonne Daley is the author of six nonfiction books, founder of the Green Mountain Writers Conference and Verdant Books, a small nonprofit publishing collaborative, an educator, gardener, wife, mother, and grandmother. As a longtime journalist for the *Rutland Herald*, *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, and dozens of other publications, she balanced investigative reporting with profiles of ordinary people whose lives provided lessons in generosity, determination and delight.

For 17 years, she divided her time between Vermont and San Francisco, where she was a professor of creative nonfiction and journalism at San Francisco State University. Her sixth book, *Going Up the Country: When the Hippies, Dreamers, Freaks and Radicals Moved to Vermont*, will be published in late spring by University Press of New England. The book blends the stories of 119 people and Yvonne's own experience to chronicle the impact of the "hippie invasion" on Vermont and, as important, the ways in which Vermont values and sensibilities transformed the young people who moved to the Green Mountain State during the late 1960s and '70s. She lives in Rutland with her husband, the writer Chuck Clarino, and two Maltese dogs.



J Moulton is the founder of Moulton Conventions, which owns Vermont Comic Con, Green Mountain Comic Expo, and VT Horror. J Moulton lives in Vermont with his fiancé, Natasha. Together, they run Moulton Conventions, a business dedicated to bringing a wide range of pop culture entertainment to the

Registration Form

LVW 2018 Winter Program & Annual Business Meeting

Register online at www.leagueofvermontwriters.org or fill out the form below and mail with a check to: **PO Box 5046, Burlington, VT 05401.**

Make check payable to: *LVW Winter 2018 Program*

Registrar: info@leagueofvermontwriters.org

DATE: Saturday, January 27, 2018

TIME: 8:30-9:00 arrival and registration
9:00-3:00 program

LOCATION:

Trader Duke's Hotel (formerly known as DoubleTree)
1117 Williston Rd, South Burlington, VT 05403
Visit their website for directions:
www.traderdukeshotelburlingtonvt.com/

Schedule at a glance:

8:30–9:00	Registration and morning refreshments
9:00–10:15	Legal Constructs of a Great Mystery by Sisters in Crime New England
10:30–11:45	Everything You Wanted to Know About Comic Writing But Were Afraid to Ask by Vermont Comic Con
11:45–12:30	Annual Business Meeting
12:30–1:30	Lunch
1:30–2:45	New Directions, New Journeys— a Writing Resources Panel with members of Burlington Writers Workshop, Green Mountain Writers Conference, Green Writers Press, League of Vermont Writers, and Vermont Comic Con
2:45–3:00	Closing Remarks

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Members: _____ @ \$45 ea. registration = \$ _____

Nonmembers: _____ @ \$55 ea. registration = \$ _____

Students: _____ @ \$22.50 ea. registration (bring a valid form of student ID) = \$ _____

Tax deductible donation: \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Check # _____

Do you have special dietary needs? _____

(speaker and panelists bios, cont.)

Green Mountain State since 2013.

Natasha began her career as an event coordinator for Vermont Comic Con. After getting engaged to J, she took on a more involved role as co-owner and also helped develop a Moulton Conventions-sanctioned all-inclusive cosplay group. She helps encourage cosplayers of all ages, genders, and ethnicities by forming a welcoming cosplay community. Together with J, Natasha is contributing to the expansion of the entertainment that Moulton Conventions brings to Vermont.

LVW Board: Bobbi Jo Davis, president; Shawn Anderson, vice-president; Julia Hoover, secretary; Alyssa Berthiaume, past president; Ron Jensen, treasurer; Wendy Heilig, Annalisa Parent, Tammy Hetrick, Shannara Johnson and Lisa Halvorsen at large.

Membership: Tommy Walz

League Lines is published four times per year, in January, April, July, and September. Questions or information can be emailed to us at lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org

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