

THE JOURNAL *of* HIGH COUNTRY WRITERS

President's Column

Been thinking about being a member of High Country Writers...why did I join and why do I stay? I looked into “group membership” to get some ideas of why people join groups. I found some interesting things and reasons that required specific interests in order to be part of a particular group. But there are some basics that apply to us — *to me and to you* — in the High Country Writers group.

Points that I’ve chosen are:

- ◆ Increased exposure to many other people.
- ◆ Increased referrals in all aspects of the craft.
- ◆ Participation in up to three “networking meetings” per month each year.
- ◆ Monthly Journals with material on monthly meetings, stories and poetry written by members, and articles of interest to writers.
- ◆ Participation in tradeshow, craft fairs and book signings (where you'll have an opportunity to market your work).
- ◆ Free workshops on “How to” by our own members.
- ◆ And much, much more!!!

Did you notice the words “*participation*” and “*exposure*” in the listing? When you join, you make a statement that you want to be part of what is happening in our meetings and in our networking. If you don’t attend, how can you “*participate?*” If you attend, but don’t do anything but hold down a chair, what more could you do to “*participate?*”

Think on this and decide to become a “*participant.*” I challenge you!

Anita

February 4 Workshop: Leslie Anne Perry Poetry Forms

Workshop at ArtSpace

Leslie Anne Perry will conduct this workshop featuring basic, easy-to-use poetry forms. Some of the forms can be expanded to create longer poems; others stand alone and are complete in themselves. This is the third in a series of workshops that Leslie has so graciously facilitated.

Leslie began the series in 2014, utilizing handouts and giving some time to try the various poetry forms. In the last two workshops, she has used PowerPoint slides. After each form is presented, sufficient time will be allowed for participants to experiment with the form and to share their created poems. The writing and sharing of poems will be optional!

Regular workshop attendees have found these experiments both instructive and fun. It's a time to stretch your knowledge and see what is possible for you.

Come join the fun at ArtSpace on Thursday, February 4 at 10 am.



*Happy
Valentine's
Day*

Dr. David Spiceland Reveals Secrets of the Tweetsie Railroad February 11



Online archive photo

Engine of the TWEETSIE Railroad



Photo provided

Dr. David Spiceland



High Country Writers welcomes Dr. David Spiceland as guest speaker on Thursday, Feb 11 at the Watauga Public Library at 10 am. The program is free and open to the public. Dr. Spiceland has been researching ETWNC, Tweetsie, which was a part of Boone history for 20 years. He has uncovered rare artifacts and details that have been “right in front of our eyes,” says Spiceland. “I love history, and I love railroads. I hope I can answer questions about the railroad and find others who agree that this is a story worth telling.”

Since coming to Boone and Appalachian State 24 years ago, Dr. Spiceland had many interests including the FCC’s “Fairness Doctrine” (his dissertation topic) and the railroad that came to Boone and left too soon after a major hurricane barreled through North Carolina. Surprisingly there are railroad stories connected with the “Tweetsie” that can still be discovered.

David Spiceland is an Associate Professor at ASU in the Department of Communication in Electronic Media and Broadcasting. His future plans include a video detailing the abandonment of the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina railroad (Tweetsie) and a book on the John Wayne Western, “Red River.”

Lissa Brown has been writing since she learned how to form letters and put them on paper. She's been a columnist, a speechwriter, a ghost writer for elected officials and corporate executives, and a media relations specialist for gubernatorial and state legislative campaigns.

After successful careers in teaching, public relations and marketing she retired to her present home in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. There she discovered the joy of writing for herself and quickly published *Real Country: From the Fast Track to Appalachia* as Leslie Brunetsky and *Family Secrets: Three Generations* under her own name. *Another F-Word*, her novel about bullying, provided an opportunity for her to speak to a wide variety of groups on that topic. *Family of Choice* continues the story of Rory Calhoun Wilson.

Contact Lissa Brown through her website, www.lissabrownwrites.com to arrange readings, book club visits and signings.

Material for Lissa's critique will be e-mailed to the HCW membership two weeks before February 25th.



Photo provided

Lissa Brown



Watauga County Public Library February Programs

Cook the Books: Mystery Book Club
[White Heat](#) by M.J. McGrath
Tuesday, February 2nd at 3:30 pm

High Country Lifelong Learners
Movie: [Nebraska](#) (R)
Monday, February 8th at 2:00 pm

Third Thursday
Movie: [A Patch of Blue](#) (Unrated)
Thursday, February 11th at 6:30 pm

Book Brewers Book Club
[Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking](#) by Susan Cain
Wednesday, February 17th at 6:00 pm
Pepper's Restaurant

Book Bunch Book Club
[One Plus One](#) by Jojo Moyes
Tuesday, February 23rd at 1:30 pm

High Country Writers
Thursday, February 11th at 10:00 am
Thursday, February 25th at 10:00 am

Cook the Books: Mystery Book Club
[The Husband's Secret](#) by Liane Moriarty
Tuesday, March 1st at 4:00 pm



Kindle Singles

Compelling Ideas Expressed at Their Natural Length

Editor's note: During the HCW meeting on January 28th, our attention was drawn to Kindle Singles, a form of publishing that came about in 2011. Most attendees at the meeting did not know of this manner of publishing. So, Leslie Anne Perry provided some information for us. The following are statements from an article by Julian Gough, the author of the Kindle Single "[CRASH! How I Lost A Hundred Billion And Found True Love](#)"

New formats in literature are rare, and disruptive. They usually accompany a change in technology. Amazon was the first big player to realize that digitization would allow for a new literary format. In January 2011, it quietly launched a substore on its US website to sell something it called a KindleSingle: Compelling Ideas Expressed At Their Natural Length, as a press release headline blandly put it.

"Typically between 5,000 and 30,000 words, Kindle Singles are editorially curated and showcase writing from both new and established voices – from best-selling novelists and journalists to previously unpublished writers."

Any writer can approach Amazon directly, as Stephen King did in January with *Guns*, a non-fiction essay too long, at 8,000 words, for most newspapers or magazines. If King had given *Guns* to his usual publisher, it might have come out in a hardback collection of essays in about eight years' time. He offered it to Kindle Singles on a Friday; they read it over the weekend, and it was published within the week. It has 1,654 reviews on Amazon.

And King may have made significantly more money per word from his Kindle Single than he makes from his mainstream published novels. Amazon pays authors who go directly to it 70% of revenue on Singles. It pays promptly every month, and allows you to retain the rights to your work.

A traditional print publisher will pay you, at best, 15% of retail on hardback books and 8% on paperbacks. For Kindle Singles? At best, a disgraceful 25% of the 70% Amazon gives. (The new digital startups often split that 70% 50/50 with authors.) A traditional publisher pays those royalties only twice a year, six months in arrears, and will potentially own the rights until you've been dead for 70 years.

To get more information Kindle Singles:

Kindle Singles Submissions Policy: <http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?ie=UTF8&docId=1000700491>

More info on Kindle Singles: <http://www.amazon.com/b?node=2486013011>

2016 HCW Leadership

President	Anita Laymon
Vice President	Judith Geary
Secretaries	Bill Runyan/ Frank Thomas
Treasurer	Trixie McGee
Membership	Ree Strawser
Journal Editor	Anita Laymon
Press Liaison	Danielle Bassone
Webmaster	Tony Rankine

HCW

High Country Writers is an organization fostering the growth and creativity of writers of all genres, offering its members support, constructive criticism, and professional development.

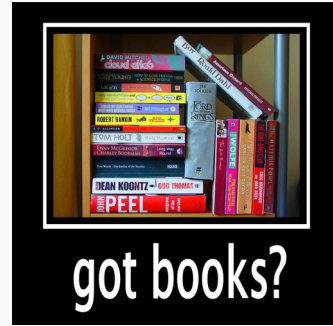
The meetings are at 10 AM at the Watauga County Library on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. On the 1st Thursday there is a Workshop at ArtSpace on Shadowline Drive.

Guests are welcome.

Meetings are cancelled when the Watauga County Public Library is closed for inclement weather.

THE HIGH COUNTRY WRITERS BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Judith Geary, VP



High Country Writers' goals have always included supporting the members' efforts toward publication.

By 1997, our third year, Jean Shoemaker (B.J Foster) presented the idea of the **Book of the Year Awards**. Jean served as Vice President, President and Journal Editor in those early years, and has always been a stalwart promoter of all our books. Her idea was that the awards were intended as a confirmation and recognition of the commitment and participation of our members in the process of striving for excellence in our writing as well as of the achievement of finishing and publishing a book.

It isn't a contest; it is a valid recognition of an important achievement. It is an honor to be cherished. Books recognized in 2016 were published by our members in 2015.

Criteria (from our current website.)

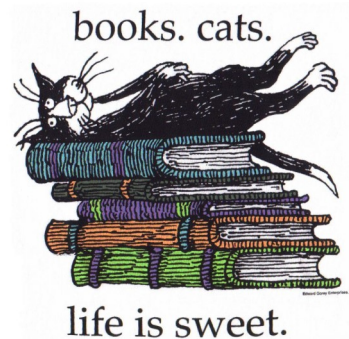
To be eligible for a **Book of the Year Award**, the author must be an active member of HCW and have joined by January 31st of the year the book is published or copyrighted; the author must have attended at least 6 meetings during that same

year; the author must complete a submission form and give 2 copies of their book to the committee chair by the 2nd meeting in January; and the book must have a registered ISBN and bar code, be in digital text and bound, and must be in English and nationally available.

It seems to me that these criteria could be more clearly stated and that, in fact, our practice has changed somewhat since they were written. I propose the following change of wording – to be voted on at our next meeting.

Criteria (from the website, edited and modified by our current practice.)

To be eligible for a **Book of the Year Award**, the author must be an active member of HCW and have attended at least six meetings during the year the book is published or copyrighted. The book must have a registered ISBN and bar code, be available either in digital text and bound, or as an e-book from a recognized distributor. It must be in English and available nationally. The author must complete a submission form and give 2 copies of their book to the BOY committee chair by the 2nd regular meeting in February.



Wedding Cake Dream

For Beth Sampson and Eric VanDemark

My eyes are birds darting into Treasure Island, past
a pink Charcuterie pig painting.
Across the room I see diminutive, bald, Paul, hiding
behind mounds of red-blushed mangos.

Smelling excitement in the air, like carnival, the Fourth of July.
I try to reach, to catch him
bumbling past apricots, plums, pears stacked high, precisely
pyramids blocking my view.

I only catch sight of him bounding up the stairway and
follow soon seeing floor to ceiling
cereal boxes, terrific tony tigers in my way, cardboard
barricades, until jumping up I see him.

Bald Paul is bounding up the next flight of stairs to a
floor filled with Warhol brillo boxes and
laundry detergent promising fresher, whiter whites.
But I arrive, he's not here.

I pass through the open door of a tiny top floor room.
There he is lying
in bed coyly, with the covers thrown back, winking.
I wake up

My bed is on fire.

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Scene Openings

Scene specialist Jordan Rosenfeld likes to refer to the opening of scenes as scene launches. I will follow her wisdom here. Recall, from an earlier note, that Rosenfeld tasks writers with the imperative to *engage* their readers. She cites several approaches (launches) in which this can be done; briefly they are:

- Character launches
- Action launches
- Narrative launches
- Setting launches

If you will take your imagination to the beginning of “To Kill a Mockingbird” you may note that the author, Harper Lee, uses all four of the above launches to engage her readers.

Her work starts out as descriptive *narrative* that brings the reader into the *setting*. The dialogue and *action* gives the reader insight as to the *character* of the people and their society. Lee involves her readers in the lovely opening scene of her novel with grace and speed. The movie does as good a job as the book. I’m secure in saying that many of us in our writer’s group likely have scenes from the movie indelibly imprinted in our memory, e.g. “Stand up, child, your father is passing by.”

I wish that Rosenfeld had included *dialogue* as one of the scene launch techniques because that is what I find most useful to engage the reader. However, dialogue can be shown to cut across all of the above four launches in one way or another; perhaps this is why she neglected to list it as a separate entity.

Identifying the what of a thing is a first step, and often engenders the question how? The how of scene launches is critical: Yes, you know where the Devil is. . .

Following are some of the characteristics of strong scene launches:

Character Launches:

- Bring your characters in early and lead the reader to the desires and needs of your characters.
- Let the reader become aware of the elements that will aid or impair the characters.
- Make your characters multi-layered and complex.
- Test your character’s mettle with challenges, difficulties and obstacles.
- Show how your character responds to conflict.
- What are his or her strengths and weaknesses?

Action Launches

- Go straight to the action, generally avoid narrative.
- Dynamic action tends to pull the reader into the scene.
- Act first, contemplate later.
- Remember, today’s readers are very accustomed to the dynamic actions seen in movies and TV.

Narrative Launches

- Narrative launches are often useful in communicating a lot of information quickly.
- Narratives can be useful in setting up the scene for action and dialogue.
- Narrative can describe the inner needs, motives, fears and feelings of characters.

Setting Launches

- Use sensory details: visual, tactile, auditory. Use specificity and richness.
- Allow the environment and surroundings to dictate the tone of the scene.
- Use setting to compliment and accent the mood and feelings of the characters.
- Remember: Scene openings are *invitations* to the reader. You can do this only if you are willing to extend yourself into the details of the fabric of your inventions. Recall the Hindi quote: “There is no force on earth superior to the focused human mind.” Scene development gives you the opportunity to exercise that focus.