

COLUMBIA WRITER'S GUILD

APRIL NEWSLETTER

MEMBER HIGHLIGHT: DONNA VOLKENANNT



Ms. Donna Vokenannt has been a member of the guild since 2012. She lives in St. Peters with her husband and black lab, and she also owns a "farm" in Osage County. Now a full-time grandmother, and a writer and volunteer besides, Donna used to be a retired Department of Defense analyst. Her first byline was achieved in high school for a local teen magazine. Her first national publication was a letter to the editor in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. She has numerous other publications since then, including *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Well Versed*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

Question and Answer

Q: What do you write?

A: I write short stories, personal essays, articles, interviews, and—with a few exceptions—anything I can get paid for. I also have two "drawer" novels which I hope to finish one day.

Q: Where do you find inspiration?

A: My favorite description of inspiration is "grace descending." I believe inspiration is all around us. Sometimes I have to reach out to find it, but other times it comes to me. No matter how or when the grace of inspiration descends, I am grateful.

Q: Who is your favorite author, and why?

A: I love reading beautifully written novels, stories, and essays that stick with me and make me think "I wish I would've written that." Some all-time favorite short story writers are: Flannery O'Connor, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Tim O'Brien, and Stephen King.

Q: How did you become interested in writing?

A: As an eighth-grade graduation project, Sister Mary Johanna assigned our class to write our autobiographies. Using my favorite fountain pen, which we were required to use back then, and in my best Catholic-school penmanship, I cleverly titled my autobiography "My Life". My autobiography was selected to be read to all classes in the school. After each reading, the other teachers told me what a good writer I was. I only wanted to get a good grade, but after getting praised by those teachers, I was hooked on writing. Looking back, I am struck by two thoughts: I'm certain the good Lord was giving me a nudge to become a writer, and I wonder, how in the world could a thirteen-year old know enough about life to write an autobiography?

Q: Is there anything else you would like to share about you as a writer?

A: I believe writing is a gift meant to be shared. Being able to express myself through my writing has not only been a creative outlet and a source of income, it has also helped me survive some challenging times. On days when I'm unable to write, I feel something is missing from my life.

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A RESOURCE FOR WRITERS

Character Charts

It can take a long time to get to know the characters you're writing. But it's essential if you want your characters to stand out, for you to know them well. What would they say in that situation? What's their sense of humor? Where are they from? Do they have a particular tick? Some kind of weird hobby? Educational background? What religion do they follow, if any?

All of this and more can shape who your character is and what they would do or say as they are going through whatever adventure you have planned for them. You can find a very detailed character chart, with all the questions you need to get to know your characters at:

<http://www.epiguide.com/ep101/writing/charchart.html>

UPCOMING GUILD MEETINGS

May 3rd: Keija Parssinen, *of a NYTimes article into a novel, with a focus on re-search.*
Author of *Ruins of Us*, and new release *The Unraveling of Mercy Louis*. Keija will speak on her transformation

June 7th: Launch of our 2015 Well Versed

July 12th: Critique Session

September 13th: Scott Dallymple, President of Columbia College to speak on his SciFi adventures

Killer Nashville

Where: Nashville, TN

When: Oct 29-Nov 1, 2015

Registration: \$159-\$250

Festival of Faith and Writing

Where: Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI

When: April 14-16, 2016

ORAcon2015

Where: Springfield, MO

When: September 19, 2015

ConQuest 2015

Where: Kansas City, MO

When: May 22-24, 2015

Arrow Rock Writing Workshop

Where: Arrow Rock, MO

When: September 11-12, 2015

Just Write It! (Formerly Write Direction)

Where: Mizzou Campus

When: November 7, 2015

More information to come!!!