

Presenters and Moderators

2014 Virginia Writers Club Annual Symposium

Navigating Your Writing Life:

Finding Your Way

Saturday, August 2, 2014

The Dickinson Fine & Performing Arts Center at
Piedmont Virginia Community College, Charlottesville, Virginia



Betsy Ashton, born in Washington, DC, raised in CA, has spent more than 30 years working in marketing and information management consulting. She earned her undergraduate degree in Oriental Languages at UCLA in 1968, her first MA in Japanese Literature at Keio University, Tokyo in 1970, her second MA in Asian Studies at USC in 1972, and her doctorate in Comparative Literature at USC in 1977. Since she retired, she has devoted her life to writing fiction and helping others learn to write. She is a member of Lake Writers, the president

of the Valley Writers chapter of Virginia Writers Club, and the president of Virginia Writers Club. Her debut novel, *Mad Max Unintended Consequences*, is a favorite of book clubs.

[Publishing Workshop]



Mollie Cox Bryan writes the Cumberland Creek Mysteries, published by Kensington. *Death of an Irish Diva* is the third in the series. The first book, *Scrapbook of Secrets*, was nominated for an Agatha Award for Best First Novel of 2012; the next one, *Scrapped*, was published in January 2013 and *DEATH OF AN IRISH DIVA* was published in February. The next book, *A CRAFTY CHRISTMAS* will be out in October 2014. She lives in Waynesboro, Va. with her husband and two daughters.

[Mystery Panel & Mystery Workshop]



Austin S. Camacho is the author of five novels featuring Hannibal Jones, an African-American, Washington DC based private eye, plus four in the Stark and O'Brien adventure series. His short stories have been in six anthologies including *Dying in a Winter Wonderland* – an Independent Mystery Booksellers Association Top Ten Bestseller for 2008. He's featured in the Edgar nominated *African American Mystery Writers: A Historical and Thematic Study* by Frankie Y. Bailey. After a career in the Army Camacho now handles media relations for the Defense Department. He is active in several writers' groups including the Mystery Writers of American and International Thriller Writers. **[Mystery Panel & Mystery Workshop]**



Denise Camacho is the president of Intrigue Publishing. With over 10 years in the publishing business, she has a wealth of knowledge and expertise to those wanting to become published authors. She regularly attends seminars on what is new in publishing as well as attending conferences around the country sharing her experience. **[Publishing Workshop]**



Karen Cantwell is the author of the humorous, *USA Today* bestselling Barbara Marr Murder Mystery series featuring calamity-prone soccer mom, Barbara Marr. Like her heroine, Karen is a mother living in the suburbs, but thankfully, her life is far less chaotic. Karen admits that while she writes murder mysteries, she has a very hard time actually killing her characters. Her books include *Take the Monkeys and Run*, *Citizen Insane*, *Silenced by the Yams*, and *Saturday Night Cleaver*. She is currently working on her fifth Barbara Marr novel, *Dead Man Stalking*. **[Mystery Panel & Social Media Workshop]**



Stephen Cushman has published five collections of poetry, *The Red List* (LSU, forthcoming 2014), *Riffraff* (LSU, 2011), *Heart Island* (David Robert Books, 2006), *Cussing Lesson* (LSU, 2002), and *Blue Pajamas* (LSU, 1998), as well as two books of criticism, *Fictions of Form in American Poetry* (Princeton University Press, 1993) and *William Carlos Williams and the Meanings of Measure* (Yale University Press, 1985), and two books about the Civil War, *Bloody Promenade: Reflections on a Civil War Battle* (University Press of Virginia, 1999) and *Belligerent Muse: Five Civil War Writers* (UNC, forthcoming 2014). He is general editor of the fourth edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (2012) and Robert C. Taylor Professor of English at the University of Virginia. **[Poetry Panel & Poetry Workshop]**



Kimberly “Kimba” J. Dalferes is a native Floridian who has spent the past nineteen years pretending to be a Virginian. Her accomplishments have included successfully threading a sewing bobbin, landing a 35 pound Alaskan King salmon, and scoring a ceramic sangria pitcher at an estate sale for \$1. She sometimes writes books such as *I Was In Love With a Short Man Once*. Her humor column – *Dock Tale Hour* – is published by *Laker Magazine*. She is also often found hanging out on her blog *The Middle-Aged Cheap Seats*. A proud Florida State University graduate, she sometimes sings the Seminole fight song out loud for no reason other than she still remembers all the words.

Dalferes divides her time between Fairfax and Smith Mountain Lake, Virginia with husband Greg, dog Taz, Bonz the cat, and occasionally her son Jimmy, when he is home from college. **[Nonfiction Panel]**



Phyllis A. Duncan A former commercial pilot and retired FAA safety official, Phyllis A. Duncan lives and writes in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. A graduate of Madison College (now James Madison University), she has degrees in history and political science. Her first print collection of short stories was the 2000 paperback, *Rarely Well Behaved*, which, in 2012, became two separate, reissued books, *Blood Vengeance* and *Fences*. In December 2012, she published *Spy Flash*, a collection of espionage flash fiction stories. Other short stories have appeared in *eFiction Magazine* in 2011 and 2012 and in *Prime Number Magazine* in 2014; and in the following anthologies: the 2013 *Blue Ridge Anthology*; *1 Photo x 50 Authors x 100 Words* in 2013; and *Skyline* in 2014. A short story, “Marakata,” submitted for WriterHouse’s 5th Anniversary Short Story Contest, won third place. Her short story "Man on Fire" was a finalist in the Press53 AWP Flash Fiction contest. A short play, "Yo' Momma,"

won the Ampersand Arts Bar Hopping Contest and was staged in April 2014 in Staunton, VA. Her as yet unpublished novels involve spies, current and past events, and general mayhem. **[Moderator, Mystery Panel]**



winner, and *Seeing Red*, a novel set immediately after the Civil Rights era that questions who we were then and who we are now. **[Keynote]**

Kathryn Erskine spent many years as a lawyer before realizing that she'd rather write things that people might actually enjoy reading. She grew up mostly overseas and attended eight different schools, her favorite being the Hogwarts-type castle in Scotland. The faculty, of course, did not consist of wizards, although . . . how did the headmistress know that it was “the wee redhead” who led the campaign to free the mice from the biology lab? Erskine draws on her life stories and world events to write her novels including *Quaking*, an ALA Top Ten Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers, *Mockingbird*, 2010 National Book Award winner, *The Absolute Value of Mike*, a Crystal Kite



co-founder and editor of *PrimeNumberMagazine* and the editor of the forthcoming short fiction anthology, *Everywhere Stories*. **[Short Fiction Panel]**

Clifford Garstang began writing fiction after a career in international law with one of the world's largest law firms and with the World Bank in Washington, DC. His first book, the story collection *In an Uncharted Country* won the Maria Thomas Award for Fiction, and his second book, the novel in stories *What the Zhang Boys Know*, won the 2013 Library of Virginia Literary Award for Fiction. His work has appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Blackbird*, *Cream City Review*, *The Tampa Review*, and elsewhere, and has received Distinguished Mention in the Best American Series. He was a 2010 Walter E. Dakin Fellow at the Sewanee Writers' Conference. In addition to degrees in Philosophy, English, Law, and Public Administration, he holds an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte. He is the



contest, and appear in prize anthologies. She has enjoyed fellowships at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and has conducted writing workshops in area schools for students from third to twelfth grade. **[Short Fiction Panel]**

Jody Hobbs Hesler lives and writes in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Her fiction, feature articles, essays, and book reviews appear or are forthcoming in *[PANK]*, *Steel Toe Review*, *Valparaiso Fiction Review*, *Prime Number*, *Pearl*, *Potato Eyes Journal*, *A Short Ride: Remembering Barry Hannah* (VOX Press), *PhoneFiction.com*, *Charlottesville Family Magazine*, *Skyline 2014*, *Stealing Time: A Literary Magazine for Parents*, and other places. One of her stories was a Pushcart Prize nominee and several have won regional contests, including the Virginia Writers Club Golden Nib award and UVA's Writer's Eye



Bruce Holsinger a fiction writer and award-winning literary scholar, is Professor of English at the University of Virginia, where he teaches courses on medieval and modern literature. His debut novel, *A Burnable Book* (William Morrow/HarperCollins), is set in the alleys and halls of medieval London, where the poets Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower spent much of their lives. *The Washington Post* has called him “a graceful guide to the 14th century, lacing his thriller with just the right seasoning of antique words and all the necessary historical detail without any of the fusty smell of

a documentary.” *The New York Times Book Review* hails the novel’s protagonist John Gower as “the perfect narrator and amateur sleuth,” noting that Holsinger “delivers up a world where even the filth is colorful,” while a starred review in *Publisher’s Weekly* hails *A Burnable Book* as “a first novel whose zest, breadth, and color evoke *The Canterbury Tales*.” He has appeared on National Public Radio’s *Here and Now* and *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, and lectures regularly on literature and fiction writing to audiences around the world.

Holsinger is a long-time and dedicated teacher of medieval and modern literature in all its forms. He has taught historical fiction to students from around the world in a massive open online course (or MOOC) called “Plagues, Witches, and War: The Worlds of Historical Fiction,” which in fall 2013 brought together prominent authors, scholars, and over 20,000 students to consider the genre and craft of the historical novel from the eighteenth century to the present. Aside from his fiction writing, Bruce is also the author or editor of six nonfiction books, which have garnered major awards from the Modern Language Association, the American Musicological Society, and the Medieval Academy of America. His scholarly work has been recognized with a Guggenheim Fellowship, and he is the recipient of research fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Council of Learned Societies.

[Historical Fiction: Place, Voice, Character Workshop]



Linda S. Johnston was born in England and has lived in several states, including Kansas. She received a B. S. in horticulture from California Polytechnic University in Pomona, California. She has worked as an environmental educator and field interpreter for George Mason University and the local school district. With a keen interest in history, she has served as a docent at several historic sites, including the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm in Olathe, Kansas, where she began twenty-five years of research in Kansas history, and George

Mason’s home, Gunston Hall, where she wrote and illustrated a children’s guide that was published by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each June, she teaches illustration as part of the Young Writers Workshop at Gunston Hall and has also led programs in nature journaling, encouraging the relationship between art, writing, and nature. She is a member of the Authors Guild, National Association of America Pen Women, Women Writing the West, Kansas Authors Club, and Virginia Writers Club. She is a member of the Kansas Historical Society and was recently awarded the Edward N. Tihen Historical Research Grant by the Kansas Historical Foundation. She is the author of *Hope Amid Hardship: Pioneer Voices from Kansas Territory* (2013). **[Journal & Memoir Panel]**



Dianne Hennessy King is a memoir writing teacher at George Mason University’s OLLI program, a cultural anthropologist, and public television producer. Dianne is a guest lecturer on preserving personal history across cultures for venues such as the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. She recently served on the Board of Governors of the Virginia Writers Club and for several years directed an annual “Writing Your Personal History” Symposium in Vienna, VA. She is the former editor of Pillsbury Publications, a former writer and editor of Funk & Wagnalls Encyclopedia, and currently is editor of the Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C. She is co-author of the forthcoming book, *Memoir Your Way*. **[Journal and Memoir Panel]**



Jeanne L. Larsen has published two books of poetry—*Why We Make Gardens [& other Poems]* and *James Cook in Search of Terra Incognita*—as well as two of literary translations (*Willow, Wine, Mirror, Moon: Women’s Poems from Tang China* and *Brocade River Poems: Selected Works of the Tang Dynasty Courtesan Xue Tao*), an e-novel (*Sally Paradiso*), and three print novels (*Silk Road, Bronze Mirror, Manchu Palaces*). She is Professor of English at Hollins University, where she has just finished a term as Director of the Jackson Center for Creative Writing. Roanoke County is where she usually hangs her hat. **[Poetry Panel]**



Kristen-Paige Madonia is the author of *FINGERPRINTS OF YOU* (Simon & Schuster BFYR, 2012) and was recently named the D. H. Lawrence Fellow. Her short fiction has appeared in or is forthcoming in such publications as the *Greensboro Review*, *Five Chapters*, *New Orleans Review*, and *American Fiction: Best Previously Unpublished Short Stories*. She was awarded the 2011 Sewanee Writers’ Conference Tennessee Williams Scholarship and the 2010 Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival award. She has received fellowships from the Hambidge Center, the Vermont Studio Center, Juniper Summer Writing Institute, Virginia Center for Creative Arts, Hedgebrook, Millay Colony for the Arts, and the Studios of Key West; in addition, she was granted the Marianne Russo Fellowship to attend the 2008 Key West Literary Seminar. She holds an MFA from California State University, Long Beach and teaches creative writing at the University of Virginia and James Madison University. **[Young Adult Panel]**



Deborah M. Prum is the author of the young adult novel, *Fatty in the Back Seat*. Deborah has won six awards for her fiction. Her short stories have appeared in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, as well as in many other journals and literary anthologies. *First Kiss and Other Cautionary Tales* is an audiobook collection of her essays which have aired on NPR-member stations. Her essays have also appeared in *The Washington Post*, as well as other magazines and newspapers. *Czars and Czarinas*, is her interactive book (iBook) on Russian history. She collected the material for and edited the interactive poetry anthology, *Back Talking on the Mountain of God*, (words, sounds and images from six artists). She's written on writing for *Writer Magazine*, *The Writer's*

Handbook, and the *Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators Magazine*. **[Young Adult Panel & iBook Workshop]**



Sara M. Robinson, founder of the Lonesome Mountain Pros(e) Writers' Workshop and Instructor of a course on Contemporary Women Poets at UVA-OLLI, is poetry columnist for **Southern Writers Magazine** and poetry editor for the premier issue of **Virginia Literary Journal**. In addition to publication in various journals and anthologies, including *We Grew Wings and Flew* (2014), she is poet and author of *Love Always, Hobby and Jessie* (2009), *Two Little Girls in a Wading Pool* (2012), *A Cruise in Rare Waters* (2013), and *Stones for Words* (2014).

[Moderator, Poetry Panel]



Michael Signer is a Virginia-based author and attorney. He wrote *Demagogue: The Fight to Save Democracy from Its Worst Enemies* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009), a book on democracy, American history, and national security. In *Foreign Affairs*, Professor John Ikenberry wrote that *Demagogue* "echoes Tocqueville's contention that liberal mores and traditions within society are the bedrock of democracy." *Kirkus Reviews* praised the book's "muscular narrative," and *Publisher's Weekly* wrote that the book "signals the need for a new direction in foreign policy." He has been interviewed on NPR, MSNBC, the BBC, C-SPAN's Book TV, and Fox News.

Signer is currently at work on the sequel to *Demagogue*, the coming of age story of James Madison and his rivalry with Patrick Henry over America's future, currently titled *Becoming Madison: The Making of an American Statesman*. The book will be published by PublicAffairs in 2015. In 2014, Signer was the keynote speaker at the Montpelier Foundation's annual celebration of the birthday of James Madison. Signer has published articles, essays, and book reviews in the *The Washington Post*, *The New Republic*, and the *Daily Beast*, among others. In 2006, he wrote an influential article on progressive American exceptionalism titled "City on a Hill," in the inaugural issue of *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*. He teaches nonfiction writing at

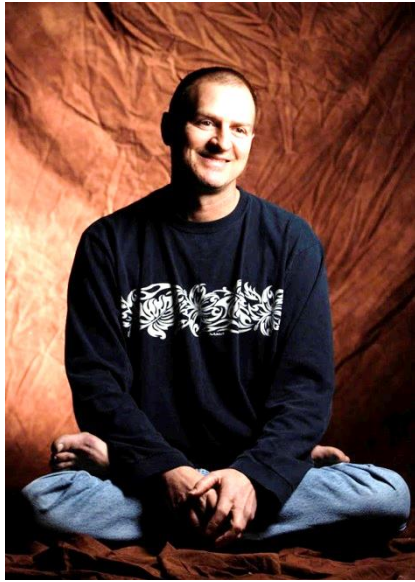
Politics and Prose in Washington, D.C. Signer is also a prominent Virginia attorney. He is the founder and managing principal of Madison Law & Strategy Group, PLLC, where since 2010 he has practiced corporate and regulatory law. He teaches an advanced undergraduate seminar titled "Leadership, Statesmanship, and Democracy" at the Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics at the University of Virginia and is Visiting Full Professor at Virginia Tech's Master's Program in Public and International Affairs Program. In 2009, Signer was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Lieutenant Governor of Virginia. Signer graduated from Washington-Lee High School in Arlington, Virginia and *magna cum laude* from Princeton University. He earned a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California, Berkeley and a J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law. He lives in Charlottesville with his wife. **[Nonfiction Panel & Nonfiction Workshop]**



Lisa Russ Spaar is the author of many collections of poetry, most recently *Vanitas, Rough* (Persea, 2012). She is the editor of numerous anthologies and author of a collection of essays, *The Hide-and-Seek Muse: Annotations of Contemporary Poetry* (Drunken Boat, 2013). Her awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rona Jaffe Award, the Carole Weinstein Poetry Prize, an Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Library of Virginia Award for Poetry, and the 2013-2014 Faculty Award of the Jefferson Scholars Foundation. She writes frequently for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and elsewhere. She is Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Virginia. **[Poetry Panel & Workshop]**



Leslie Truex is an ideaphoric writer, speaker, entrepreneur, social worker, fitness instructor, and mom trying to do it all from the comfort of home. She's the owner of WorkAtHomeSuccess.com and author of *The Work-At-Home Success Bible*. By day she's a freelance writer and blogger. By night, she's a fiction novelist writing under a penname. She's the author of the sexy Valentine Mysteries featuring Tess Madison, a chocolate and French lingerie connoisseur and Jack Valentine her handsome, flying-phobic love interest. The first book, *Deadly Valentine* reached the quarter-finals in the 2013 Amazon Breakthrough Novel award. **[Social Media Workshop]**



Steve Watkins is an award-winner author, yoga teacher, and former college English professor. His published works include three young-adult novels, a short story collection, and *The Black O*, a nonfiction account of the largest racial class-action job discrimination lawsuit in U.S. history. His most recent YA novel, *JUVIE*, which came out in 2013, is a stark exploration of the world of juvenile incarceration. He is currently working on the first two books in a series of paranormal war history novels for Scholastic, and another YA novel, *GREAT FALLS*, for Candlewick Press, all three scheduled for publication next year. **[Nonfiction Panel]**