

Spotlight: *We're pleased to present...*

Margo Dill-Balinski



WORKSHOP: "Creating Success--Steps Designed to Take Your Work More Seriously"

Saturday, March 3, 2007

10 am until noon

at Barnes & Noble, 9618 Watson Road, Crestwood, MO 63124

Get map and directions

All are welcome. This event is FREE to SLWG members. \$5 charge for non-members may be fully credited toward dues within 30 days.

Please register in advance. For complete details and our online advance registration form, see our Calendar page.

Margo Dill-Balinski, from Champaign, Ill., is an experienced teacher, speaker, editor, and freelance writer. Her articles, stories, lesson plans, essays, and poetry have appeared in publications such as *Missouri Life*, *True Love*, *Grit*, *SuccessLink*, *On the Line*, *Pockets*, *ByLine Magazine*, *God Allows U-Turns Vol. 4*, *The Mailbox Magazine*, and *Living by Faith*. Her on-line picture book, *Operation Color Change*, has been accepted by Reading A-Z. She is currently a news correspondent for The Champaign Illinois News-Gazette as well as the conference chair and first vice-president of the Missouri Writers' Guild. She is also known as Editor 911: "Your projects are my emergency!" Margo can help with any editing,

critiquing, proofreading, and typing. See her flyer or visit Margo's website at www.margodill.com.

Here's an interview with Margo Dill-Balinski:

SLWG: Where are you from originally?

[Author]: I was born and raised in St. Louis, MO—South County.

SLWG: How has your environment/upbringing colored your writing?

[Author]: I'm not sure if living in St. Louis has colored my writing, but I know my parents and family have. They always taught me to be open-minded and explore issues from all sides. I do that in my writing. They also gave me a wonderful sense of humor, which I hope comes out in some of my short stories and essays.

SLWG: When and why did you begin writing?

[Author]: I began SERIOUSLY writing after I answered an ad in a magazine for the Institute of Children's Literature in 1999. I have always enjoyed writing stories. I have some "books" I wrote and illustrated as a teenager. After I took the ICL's correspondence course, I decided to join a critique group in St. Peters, MO called Liar's Ink. This critique group taught me so much and also helped me to expand into writing more than just children's. Now, I write for both children and adults—fiction and nonfiction.

SLWG: When did you first consider yourself a writer?

[Author]: Probably when I won 3rd place in a contest with one of my short stories back in 2000.

SLWG: What inspired you to pen your first book?

[Author]: I have not published my first book yet. But what inspired the manuscript was a Social Studies lesson on Vicksburg, Mississippi during the Civil War. I taught it to my 5th graders and then decided it would make a great story for middle grade readers. Currently, two publishing houses requested this manuscript. Now the waiting game starts.

SLWG: Please describe the research process, if any, that went into the writing of your book.

[Author]: I went to Vicksburg, Mississippi for a week. I visited places that centered on the Siege of Vicksburg. I researched in the vertical files at their library. I also read several books and two diaries of women who lived during the siege.

SLWG: Which genre are you most comfortable writing?

[Author]: I write a lot of nonfiction because I write for the newspaper, and I enjoy writing magazine articles. I also am comfortable with middle grade or young adult fiction.

SLWG: Have you written, or do you ever plan to write in other genres? Which ones?

[Author]: Some day I would like to write a mystery.

SLWG: What are your current writing projects?

[Author]: I am working on a young adult novel with the working title, MIRACLE TODDLER.

SLWG: How did you come up with the title for your book(s)?

[Author]: I come up with the titles as I am writing the manuscripts. I never start with a title. After I have written a few chapters or pages, then a title usually pops in my head.

SLWG: What books have most influenced your life?

[Author]: I don't know if these books have "influenced" my life per say, but I love Harry Potter. I also enjoy Philip Gulley's Home to Harmony series. I like

Artemis Fowl and The No. 1 Lady's Detective Agency books. I enjoy humor and fantasy because I like to escape everyday life when I read.

SLWG: What are you reading now?

[Author]: Philip Gulley's latest Harmony novel.

SLWG: Name one entity that you feel supported your writing goals outside of family members.

[Author]: My Thursday Writers' critique group.

SLWG: How do your family and/or friends feel about your book or writing pursuits in general?

[Author]: They are very supportive and proud of me when I get my work published. I think sometimes my parents are surprised. My dad recently read an article I had published in MISSOURI LIFE and he said, "She is a real writer."

SLWG: Do you regard your writing as a long- or short-term career?

[Author]: LONG TERM CAREER

SLWG: What is the one piece of advice you would give to someone who seeks to write a book?

[Author] Write it first and then try to make it perfect. You can't edit something or send something to publishers if it isn't written down. Also, know where you are going with the book. Maybe even plan the end.

SLWG: What is the one piece of advice you would give to someone who seeks a publisher for a book he or she has written?

[Author] Do your homework. Find out what the publisher publishes. Go to writing conferences and meet editors and agents face-to-face.

SLWG: If you had to do it all over again, would you change anything?

[Author]: NO

SLWG: Tell us your latest news?

[Author]: I recently had an article, "Best Pizza in Missouri," published in *Missouri Life*. I also accepted a position as a news correspondent for the News-Gazette, which is the newspaper for Champaign, IL. I do mostly features and board meetings. It has been fun and interesting so far as well as a great learning experience. I also am the conference chair for the 2007 Missouri Writers' Guild conference, which promises to be a great experience for all writers!