

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

Patsy Zettler



WORKSHOP: "Quotes and Anecdotes: How to Get Them, Use Them, and Not Abuse Them"

Saturday, April 7, 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.

PATSY ZETTLER has been writing ever since she won the award for best Penmanship in the fifth grade. After receiving both academic and journalism scholarships, she attended Webster University and became the arts and entertainment editor for the college's newspaper, *The Journal*. She was also the editor of the School of Communications newsletter and won five of the college's "Webbie" awards. She graduated Cum Laude and went on to get her Master's in Media Communication with an Emphasis in Media Literacy. These days Patsy is an Opinion Shaper columnist for the Suburban Journals, writes fiction for fun, mentors other writers, and continues to help nonprofits and entrepreneurs with their marketing. She is a member of SLWG.

An Interview with Patsy



SLWG: Where are you from originally?

P.Z.: My teen-aged mother gave birth to me in a small town in the Ozark hills of north-eastern Arkansas. She, a genuine hillbilly who wanted to save me from that life, threw me on her hip, jumped a Greyhound and arrived in St. Louis in the early '60s. I've been here ever since. And her plan worked, I'm not a hillbilly. But I'm still proud of my roots.

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

P.Z.: My mother was poor, her mother poorer. They grew up uneducated in a tough world. I lucked out and got an education. In turn, I look out for the underprivileged and the underdog in everything I do and write.

SLWG: When and why did you begin writing?

P.Z.: The first time I was asked to write for an audience I was in the fifth grade. The teacher asked me to write a funny play for the class based on the television show "Leave It to Beaver." I don't remember how it turned out, I just remember the feeling I got from being pulled aside and asked to write. People still ask and I still write. And I still get that feeling.

SLWG: When did you first consider yourself a writer?

P.Z.: It happened in college when I wrote a story for the college paper. Sometime after turning it in I walked into the production room where the editors were working to see if they needed anything else for the story. One of them asked, "Did you write this?" When I nodded, expecting to be told to re-write it, they started clapping. "Finally someone can write," said the editor-in-chief. Then she asked, "Do you want to join the newspaper staff?" After that, I put "writer" on my resume. Then I added "editor," "photographer," "graphic designer," "ad salesperson," "paper delivery person," "person who runs for carry out and pays."

SLWG: What inspired you to pen your first book?

P.Z.: After contributing an essay to academic book written by a professor, he asked me to co-write another book with him. I was elated and started on it. Alone. After many months, many chapters and many meetings (where he'd change my commas), I shelved it. I couldn't see doing all the work just to see my name in a smaller font size than his. But I haven't given up. I submitted a proposal for a completely different book. This time, I'd be the only author, no matter the font size of my name.

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

P.Z.: The book was based on my master's thesis which at 135 pages also had to have at least 300 sources, so I started with those. Then I interviewed parents--since it was a book for parents about raising their children in a media-saturated world--by starting a chat group made of homeschooling parents. I also signed up for online newsletters pertaining to any media watchdog activities. Although the book's been shelved, I still got a lot a research practice.

SLWG: Which genre are you most comfortable writing?

P.Z.: Creative nonfiction and domestic humor.

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

P.Z.: I've dabbled in fiction and entered some recent contests. But so far nobody's knocking down my door with prize money. What's the deal?

SLWG: What are your current writing projects?

P.Z.: I write a column that focuses on living (and surviving) with teens for the Suburban Journal of St. Charles County. And there's the book proposal I mentioned earlier. If I get that gig, I'll be a writing fool for at least another year.

SLWG: What books have most influenced your life?

P.Z.: Shirley Jackson is my favorite author. "The Haunting," was a good read and the 1963 film version is my favorite horror flick. I relate to the story's lonely female protagonist, Eleanor, and how she was so happy to be invited to Hill House, even if it meant hanging out with ghosts. And I relate to Tess Hutchinson, who in Jackson's short story "The Lottery" was the one chosen to be stoned to death. I understand these women's feelings of fear and frustration. Oh, and don't even get me started on Sylvia Plath and "The Bell Jar."

SLWG: What are you reading now?

P.Z.: For a long time I've been studying women's literature from the 1920's through the 1960s. I'd like to write a dissertation titled--now don't steal this--"Stealing Their Stories." But I took all my books back to the library. The fines were mounting. I didn't finish the gigantic volume of "The Complete Short Stories of Flannery O'Conner," but what I read, I liked. Especially, "A Good Man is Hard to Find."

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

P.Z.: Webster University and the School of Communications. Everyone was so cool there. But I'll never forgive them for making me give the last speech at graduation. I was left standing on the stage like an idiot when they handed out all the diplomas. Somebody forgot mine.

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

P.Z.: After hearing I had another assignment my daughter, who was waiting for a ride to the mall, said, "Mom, don't do it. You've got deadlines all over the place." My husband supports me--literally. He's waiting for me to do something that pays.

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

P.Z.: Writing will always be a part of what I do no matter what "career" I may have. When I was a waitress, I wrote. When I was an executive, I wrote. When I become a grandmother, I'll write. The St. Charles County Suburban Journal calls me a homemaker, but that doesn't stop me. I still write.

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

P.Z.: Find a quiet place where nobody can ask you, "Hey, what's for dinner?"

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?

P.Z.: Publishers are people, too. People with jobs and goals and bosses. Don't be afraid of them. But prove to them that you can deliver a product that will sell. They can only do their job well if you do yours well.

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

P.Z.: I would have read more and eaten less.

SLWG: Tell us your latest news?

P.Z.: Recently I read one of my short stories at the Guild's Open Mic. Being sensitive to criticism, I was afraid to put myself out there. My knees shook so hard I was afraid I'd collapse and on the way to the floor I'd hit my head on the mic. But when the audience responded with laughter and applause, I felt really good. A little embarrassed, but good. It's true when the Guild says, "You've got friends here."