

Spotlight: *We're Pleased to Present...*

Peggy Haldeman



**Poet, Essayist,
SLWG Treasurer (2005-Present), SLWG Membership Chair (2005-2006);
Former President of the St. Louis Poetry Center;
Wearer of Many Career Hats; Human Resources Professional**

SLWG Member Since 2005

PEGGY HALDEMAN, a south-city girl who recently moved north, began her writing career in first grade when her poem about a little bird happy to return to its mother and father was published on that purple mimeographed paper (you remember it...the distinct smell coming off “the press”). She won an essay contest later in grade school (writing on the history of rock music) and was included in the contest’s anthology. She later won awards in high school for journalism, interviewing baseballs players and former news anchor Julius Hunter, and she has written poetry her whole life and kept a journal for more than half of it.

Peggy continued writing during her 17-year college career. She tells us she was on the “20-year plan” and actually graduated university 3 years early. She studied art/photography, nutrition/dietetics, early childhood education and, in between, attended Beauty School (if you can believe that, she says), and was a licensed cosmetologist for a

time. She completed her BSW (bachelors in social work) from the University of Missouri-St. Louis in 1994.

“The problem was I liked everything I studied and did well as far as grades go, but I was afraid that choosing one particular field would confine me for the rest of my life. I couldn’t stand the thought of being unhappily stuck somewhere.”

So, it’s no surprise she switched jobs faster than she switched degree programs. You would think she was an actress with all the ways she supported herself through the years. Besides cutting hair, she worked in a card shop, a deli, gourmet grocery/café, as a school counselor for 3- and 4-year-olds, as an artist’s model, courier and transcriber, mail room clerk, receptionist...until she eventually ended up with a 15-year career in Human Resources/Employee Benefits (not all those years were with the same employer, of course.)

Peggy enjoys reading, listening to music, hiking, swimming, and bike-riding. Her taste in literature is as varied as her taste in music. “From the Beatles to Wagner and from Maeve Binchy to Virginia Woolf, there’s not much I don’t like – it’s just difficult to find time to read and listen to it all.”

Her favorite authors are Anne Lamott, Lauren Winner, May Sarton, C.S. Lewis, D.H. Lawrence, Margaret Atwood, Barbara Kingsolver, and Nikki Giovanni, among many others. Peggy realized years ago that not taking literature since high school resulted in her missing out on a lot of the classics, “...so I’ve been trying to do some catch up recently; I’ve started with Fyodor Dostoevsky and Flannery O’Connor. I love the drama of Dostoevsky and O’Connor’s styles.”

“I’ve always loved words – the play of word combinations, the rhythms. While doing some research for an art project in college, I found Andy Warhol’s Pink Disaster series in a magazine and just fell in love with those words, “pink disaster.” I created all sorts of things from those words...3-D art, poetry, photographs, annual parties. Later, I came up with “blue turmoil” and fed off of that for a few more years. These days I’m driving in the direction of orange.”

Peggy is a past-president of the St. Louis Poetry Center and currently serves as Treasurer of the SLWG (after a year of a joint-role as Membership Chair and Treasurer). “I used to think I was getting too hooked into the administrative work of the literary groups I joined and that it was keeping me from actually writing. But I was recently organizing my Word documents, and found I have over 15 essays in progress and a number of poems—all written while juggling administrative work for organizations. So, I guess that’s not true. If you’re a writer, you write...and I do write. My goal this year is to be more methodical about it and take a workshop or two.”

“Currently, I’m working very part-time for a small employee benefits/HR consulting firm, volunteering with the SLWG, trying to read and write a little bit each day, and being open to wherever God leads.”

Peggy lives with her husband, Jeff, (a writer himself) and her cat, Stella.

Sample two of Peggy's poems:
["Asheville Afternoon"](#)["Filling the Well"](#)

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