

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

Jane Kolar



**SLWG Member Since 2006
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Jane [Kolar](#) joined [St. Louis Writers Guild](#) in the [spring](#) of 2006. Her identity as a writer is just as important as her identity as a wife and mother but that wasn't always the case. She hopes the below interview will appear in *Writer's Digest* or an Oprah Book Club episode one day.

Is it true it took you six years to finish your first novel?

[blushes] Yes, it's true. I wish it was a rumor but... Besides [it](#) being a major undertaking for a first try at writing, I've moved [three](#) times and helped hospice two parents while raising [three](#) daughters and a husband during those years. Unfortunately, life doesn't stop when you write.

So both your parents are deceased?

Yes. My dad passed on in April of 2004 from heart disease due to diabetes, and my mother in September of 2007 from inflammatory breast cancer surrounded by her four

angels (that's what she called my 3 sisters and me).

You lost both parents by the age of 42? How do you feel?

| Like an orphan. Thank goodness for my husband, [three](#) daughters, and [three](#) sisters.

And you moved three times? How far?

| Yes, three moves in [three](#) years. My husband, infant daughter, and I had moved to Baraboo, Wisconsin in October of 1989. After 13 years and two more daughters, we had the opportunity to move back home to Missouri so we took it. We first moved to Warrenton but after only a month, we couldn't wait to relocate. In the summer of 2003, we moved to a rental home in Saint Charles, where we remained for a couple of years. One day my youngest daughter told us about a house she saw for sale a few blocks over. We looked at the house and made an offer on it that very day. My sister says our home reminds her of the old blue and yellow Fisher-Price house from way back, only there's no blue, just yellow and brick.

What was your childhood like?

| I grew up in Florissant with [three](#) sisters (one older, two younger). My father worked hard to support us and was home every evening but not involved. Our mother was a stay-at-home mom who filled our lives with fun and humor. I think my mom might possibly have been the long lost sister of Erma Bombeck.

Where'd you go to High School?

I graduated from Hazelwood Central High School in 1984 then attended Florissant Valley Community College for a year before enrolling in Hickey Business College (secretarial program).

What kinds of jobs have you had?

My first job was at Pizza Hut as a waitress. That was in the years of the red and white polyester dress uniform (back when your only options were either to dine in or carry out). When I grew sick of the smell and sight of pizza, I quit to work at General Cinema behind the concession counter. It still amazes me how I was able to add the concession items in my head, as we didn't have cash registers. The four screen cinema was torn down years ago but it sat in the Northwest Plaza parking lot where the Bedroom Store is now.

Bet you saw lots of movies?

Lots. And mostly for free too. We'd even sneak friends in through the back door. But something better happened to me at that cinema. In December of 1985, I became friends with a handsome, savvy coworker named Paul, who grew up in University City, smoked, and drove a cool blue convertible Triumph Spitfire (complete with a hole in the passenger floor). My parents thought he was a bad influence. So needless to say, within a few months, we became more than friends, but we kept it from our bosses and fellow coworkers. Paul and I would secretly rendezvous in the parking lot after work.

Why keep it a secret?

Because my best friend at the time had a major crush on Paul. I eventually got the guts to 'fess up and tell her. Surprisingly, she was okay with it.

Where's Paul now?

After a year of dating and a nine month engagement, Paul and I were married on May 2, 1987 at St. Sabina Catholic Church in Florissant by my father, who was a Deacon in the Catholic Church. A week prior to our wedding, I graduated from Hickey Business College, and began working as a secretary as soon as we returned from honeymooning in Florida and continued working as a secretary until I delivered our first child in October of 1988. I then became a homemaker.

How many children do you have?

We have three tolerant, intelligent, and talented teenagers, who are developing into self assured, empowered women.

Three teenage girls?

You make it sound so bad. My girls are great, especially compared to hearing the things my sisters say about their boys, my nephews. [winks].

Was writing always your dream?

No, I've wanted to be many things: a nurse, a teacher, an FBI agent, even a nun but that was my mother's influence, not my idea. She thought I'd make a nice, pretty nun. And anyone who's gone to Catholic School back in the '50's knows what my mother is insinuating.

Your book is fabulous! Were you always a good writer?

[blushes] Thank you, that's very nice of you to say. Unfortunately, in my mind, I was a good writer but not so much on paper. I would turn in essays that I thought were pretty good but teachers (and my parents) were never impressed. Pretty soon, neither was I, and I lost interest. Subsequently, I barely passed an English class until I got to Hickey.

What do you think the problem was?

Mostly within me. I've always concocted stories in my head but never had the courage or motivation to write them down. No one told me I could or should but then, I didn't share that side of me with anyone so... Also, I didn't have encouraging parents, nor did I believe in myself. Separately, maybe I could have overcome my fears and self confidence issues, but combined, both factors turned me into a scared, unambitious girl for many, many years. Although, now at 42, I will say there is truth to the theory that woman become more aggressive and outspoken with age. [laughs] I guess there *are* positives to getting older.

Were your parents really discouraging?

More so when I was younger than when I was older and more my father than my mother. One time, after I moved back to Missouri, I was helping out at their house when an idea for a chapter hit me. I was busily scribbling down the idea before it was faded away when my father asked what I was writing. I said, "jotting down an idea for a chapter... for my book ("Complicated Woman)". He stared at me a moment, then chuckled, as if he thought I was teasing. When it became obvious I wasn't, his smile faded. He grimaced and said, "A book?" After I nodded, he grunted and went on his way as though nothing happened. It bothered me but I was used to it. I had enough self confidence by then to not let it get me down. Besides, I knew I was on to something.

What kinds of stories did you concoct?

Always a romance with a touch of thriller or suspense. And I was always the MC, bold and beautiful, (of course), much different than I am in real life. And my love interests were always my latest heart throb: any boy on the current cover of Tiger Beat, Bruce Boxleitner, Richard Hatch, Lee Majors, Shaun Cassidy, Greg Evigan...

When did you decide to start writing?

The day I read this line: "I want to possess you completely" in a romance novel. It was the last straw. I was already tired of pancake characters and thin as chicken broth plots. I wondered how difficult it really was to create and write believable characters and plots. So...one muggy August morning in 2002 after my daughters had left for school and husband had gone to work, I hesitantly sat down at the computer and began typing the first words to "Complicated Woman" (all while looking over my shoulder and glancing out the front picture window, embarrassed for anyone to find out). I even hid the chapter in my personal folder and slapped a password on it. I kept it a secret from everyone.

Why?

Oh my gosh, what if I wasn't a good writer? What if it was horrible? What if no one liked it? What if a million things. Those very first words are difficult and humbling for a novice writer. I don't think it was that way just for me.

Is it still a secret?

No. It was only a secret for a few weeks. I think I told my oldest daughter Emily about it after a couple of days-after she asked. And because she knew, the younger two had to know. My daughters surprisingly kept it a secret until the evening my husband inquired why I was typing on the computer every night.

How'd he take it?

He was surprised but he didn't laugh as I feared. He was very supportive. And six years later, he's still supportive and my biggest fan. Matter of fact, it was his idea that I should treat writing like a full time job, working on it during the day while the girls were away at school.

And how did your daughters take it?

They thought it was cool. Well, at first. Now it's old news. They make fun of me when they don't think I'm listening... "Mom's lost in her world of make believe again".

Do any of your daughters write?

My oldest (Emily) is a natural writer. (She's one of my idols.) She began writing poetry in grade school then dabbled in fiction in middle/high school, but has now found her niche as a lyricist and composer. She's amazing with words and music-she gets it from my husband, who is also a great lyricist and composer. Only he's a lil' bit country and Emily is a lil' bit rock'n roll. Emily plays the guitar in a band she and her best friend started a few years back called Mondair. Their first gig is set for late June at the Creepy Crawl. My second daughter (Samantha) is a great technical, theory writer and wants to be a General Internist. My youngest (Kate) is smart as a whip and is great at texting on her cell but she hates school. She wants to quit at sixteen to work at McDonald's

but fingers are crossed it's just a phase.

That explains why the teenagers in *Complicated Woman* are so believable. And speaking of that, how did you come up with the title "*Complicated Woman*"?

My mother thought of it a few weeks before she passed on. Before that, the book had been untitled for 5 years. For now, it's working but I will probably change it as *Complicated Woman* doesn't seem to fit the story 100%.

For those who haven't read it, what's "*Complicated Woman*" about?

"*Complicated Woman*" is a Women's Fiction with a bit of romance and thriller. The main character is Ailey McGowen, a small town girl from rural Missouri whose aspirations extend beyond the white fence surrounding her family's horse ranch. She hits some major obstacles while coming of age, which carry over into her adulthood, and is the journey of her struggle to overcome. I hope to have it completed by fall. The story has changed dramatically since I began writing it but then, so have I.

How have you changed? Have you lost weight?

I wish! [laughs] In the beginning, I had no idea what I was doing. I just wrote. After a couple years of writing but never nearing an end, I realized I needed to define my plot. The only problem was, I didn't know how. So I read any "How to" writing book I could get my hands on, searched the internet for advice and tips, and even joined a writing group. When I felt confident to write again, I did so with new eyes and eventually found my voice. A couple of years ago, I took the plunge and asked for critiques outside my comfort zone. Shawn McDonald's critique helped me immensely, not only with the technical aspects of writing but his encouragement came when I was about to give up. For that, I will be forever grateful to him and the Guild.

The Guild?

[St.](#) Louis Writer's Guild. In the Spring of 2006, I spied an announcement in the *Suburban Journal's* calendar section about a workshop [SLWG](#) was hosting. I don't remember the topic but I was definitely interested. I debated attending for a few days, then summoned my courage and attended the meeting (but I forced my sister to go with me for moral support). Since then, the Guild has helped and inspired me so that now, when people ask what I do for a living, I no longer keep my secret to myself but instead reply with pride, "an [aspiring](#) novelist." One day, I hope to say, "a best selling author of Women's Fiction."

If you could write a book to your younger self, what would the title be?

[thinks] "Wishing Back The Years" or possibly "Things I'd Teach Myself."

Are you regretful then?

Wiser more than regretful. I've learned that regretting only keeps you stuck in heartache and guilt. Instead, learn from your regrets and apply what you've learned to your life so that you move forward.

Who inspires you?

My daughters, Jane Austen, Stephen King, Judith McNaught, Louisa May Alcott, Mark Twain, L.M. Montgomery, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Rosamunde Pilcher, Oscar Wilde, J.D. Robb (Nora Roberts), Joe Hill, Helen Hooven Santmyer, Sue Grafton, Carolyn Keene

(Mildred Wirt Benson and Harriet Adams), Agatha Christie, Dawna Ferreira, Maxine Jones... just to name a few.

Complicated Woman is still a work in progress and Jane's first writing endeavor. It has been a huge undertaking (as well as time-consuming) but hopefully with a bit of luck, it will be finished this [fall](#). You can read an excerpt at:
<http://Writing.Com/authors/jmpdk3>