Now more than ever, writers need community. The Beaufort Chapter has met this need by staying busy with virtual writing critique meetings (like many of you!) and a Zoom Open Mic held the second Thursday of every month in association with the Pat Conroy Literary Center. Generally, attendance has been good, averaging seven or eight writers per critique session.

Sixteen writers and poets read work at the virtual Open Mic. The event drew writers from all over Beaufort County including participants in Bluffton and Hilton Head. Jonathan Haupt, Executive Director for the Center and Brooke McKinney, Communications and Events Coordinator co-hosted the event with MC Vivian Bikulege (co-chair Beaufort Chapter).

The virus presents our SCWA community with challenges, but many Chapters are meeting those challenges, adapting and moving forward. If your Chapter needs assistance, please reach out to your Board. We’re happy to help!
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THE PETIGRUE REVIEW

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The full-face mask I’ve worn while biking for the past three months of pollen season has become part of my identity. Even my eyes, protected by sunglasses, don’t reveal me to neighbors and friends. I rather like the comfort of this anonymity.

I am a roadie, one of those guys on a racing bicycle wearing a sleek helmet, padded shorts, and feet locked in the pedals. I’m not fond of multi-colored racing jerseys though, so I tend to be shunned by the roadie snobs. I don’t have the svelte physique for the skin-tight look, and I prefer to be highly visible to traffic in my loose, fluorescent tee shirt while I quietly zoom along the roads. My stealth approach can often catch people by surprise so I try to alert pedestrians or casual cyclists as best I can. But when they look up and see the mask it’s not unusual for them to frown, maybe jump back, snarl like the dog they’re trying to reign in or, if they’re riding, frantically wobble their front wheel toward the curb. I’ve become an outcast in my own neighborhood. Vilified. Feared.

The coronavirus has made the necessity of face masks in vogue. These days, instead of a look of terror, I’m greeted with a smile, thrown a friendly wave or called out to stay safe. The speed of this societal change is remarkable. They no longer worry who I am—now one of the socially trusted, just another anonymous roadie trying to stay healthy. Accepted.

In my writing, I wear a mask, too, and find it particularly enjoyable to masquerade through my fictional characters. The freedom to act out behaviors, experience life vicariously, dream big, be brave, hide in the closet, all without the required courage of conviction or real consequences. I love wearing my virtual masks.

A common reason that readers give for enjoying fiction is escapism. It’s also my motivation. Not only can I escape the tedium of my life or the problems that I choose not to face, but I can go anywhere, do anything—things I wouldn’t consider in reality. Once I had a character kill my stepfather, retribution for me not being able to save my mother from his abuse. It wasn’t nearly as satisfying as I had imagined so I guess I should be happy I never actually did it. But the mask made it possible.

My final masquerade, when my novel is published, is my planned pseudonym—the ultimate mask. But should I remove it? Would the readers smile or snarl?

No matter what kind of mask you’re wearing, real or virtual, I hope it gives you comfort, protection and everything you need. Keep writing and stay safe.

Mike Lee
President SCWA Board of Directors
Submission Opportunities

CLOSING APRIL 30-JUNE 30

Wigleaf - I don’t know about you guys, but my brain is all over the place these days, which means it’s the perfect time to write flash fiction. Wigleaf is one of the best flash fiction magazines, and the work it publishes often ends up in the annual Best Small Fictions. Ends May 1st. https://wigleaf.submittable.com/submit

Four Way Review- Okay, full disclosure, I’m a fiction editor at this online magazine. We publish poetry, too. The magazine is well-known because of its affiliation with Four Way Books. Try us! Rolling submissions. http://fourwayreview.com/submit-3/

The Ghost Story- This publishing company of ghosts stories looks super fun! They’ve got numerous ghost story contests happening, from long and short stories to flash fiction, all about ghosts and the supernatural, of course. Ends April 30. http://www.theghoststory.com/tgs-fiction-award

Hub City Press Open Reading Period- HURRY! Twice a year, Hub City Press reads unsolicited, non-agented manuscripts. NOW is the time to submit your novel, nonfiction book, memoir, etc... Ends April 30, so get your query ready and send it to: https://hubcity.submittable.com/submit


Gulf Coast- I’ve been trying to get into this magazine forever. The work they publish is always SO GOOD. They’re currently accepting work for their online journal, fiction and nonfiction (including lyric essays) 3000 words or less, and poetry. https://gulfcoastjournalofliteratureandfinearts.submittable.com/submit

the tiny journal- Very short poems, stories and nonfiction, fiction under 1500 words or less, poetry 30 lines or less. Ends June 1. https://thetinyjournal.org/submitwork

Fiction Southeast- Submit all kinds and lengths of fiction here, as well as reviews, essays on writing, a "why i write" series and more. There’s SO MUCH for short stories writers in this magazine. Lots to read and lots of opportunities to publish. Rolling submissions, except for a couple contests that end April 30. https://fictionsoutheast.submittable.com/submit

Split Lip Magazine- This is a voice driven magazine, and as someone who has read lots of SCWA writers’ work, I’d say we’re full of voice-driven stories and authors. Open to all kinds of fiction, memoir and poetry. Ends June 30. https://splitlip.submittable.com/submit
Cola II News: Secrets Never Told, a mystery novel written by Raegan Teller, was awarded honorable mention in the 27th Writer’s Digest Self-Published Book Awards. All winners were announced in the March issue of Writer’s Digest magazine. Secrets Never Told is the second book in the Enid Blackwell series to receive honorable mention in this annual competition that attracts thousands of entries. Available in paperback at Amazon or anywhere books are sold. The Kindle version is sold exclusively by Amazon. Learn more at http://RaeganTeller.com.

Virginia Rafferty from the Aiken Chapter recently received a favorable review for her novel, The Road to Lattimer, from the Historical Novel Society.

Amber Wheeler Bacon of Surfside published a short essay about listening to Hank Williams as a child in Post Road Magazine. Also, she is Assistant Fiction Editor at Four Way Review and they just published their latest issue at: http://fourwayreview.com/issue-17/.

You can support local bookstores struggling right now by purchasing books at Bookshop.org. They ship faster than Amazon!

Check Hub City Press’s Facebook page each week for online programming and workshops they're providing for free. They've had author chats, writing prompts, workshops on editing poetry, mindfulness and writing, and more. Look for Hub City Writing Project on Facebook and check it out!
MEMBERSHIP
We’re focusing on our membership. In addition to Membership Chair, Bettie Williams, we’re happy to announce that Vivian Bikulege is appointed as Chapter Liaison and Barbara Evers as Chapter Liaison Advisor. Thank you to the over 200 members who have renewed their membership. For those who haven’t please do so at myscwa.org.

GENERAL MEETING
Our 2019 Annual General Meeting that was scheduled for April 26 as part of the conference has been rescheduled to May 19, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. by video conference. If you would like to join in the May 19 meeting please contact Mike Lee at: scwritersassociationpresident@gmail.com.

BOARD MEMBERS
We say goodbye to Ann Chaney and Dana Ridenour who have relocated and can no longer serve SCWA. Thank you, Ann and Dana, for all you’ve done for the association. We look forward to seeing more of your work out in the world.

And we are happy to announce the return of Barbara Evers as an Advisor to the Board and the addition of two new Directors, Gail DePriest and Nancy Allen-Mastro. Read their bios here: http://www.myscwa.org/board-of-directors/

CONFERENCE
Members will soon be asked to complete a survey to help shape the 2021 conference, led by Josie Olsvig, our new Conference Director. Please participate in the survey so that the annual conference meets your needs.

NEW WEBSITE AND LOGO
We're getting a new logo and website! As part of a new branding program we'll have a new look for SCWA and a much-improved website! Please send in photos you have of SCWA events or critique meetings to scwapublications@gmail.com.

WE'RE HIRING!
The board plans to hire a part-time Administrative Assistant who will support the board in secretarial and administrative duties. This will be a paid position that will likely be based in Columbia. Candidates require proficiency in supporting the board in a variety of activities such as website updates, membership, communications and conference planning. Interested candidates should contact Mike Lee at: scwritersassociationpresident@gmail.com.

Until next month— stay safe, and...