

Brazos Writers News

February 2008 • <http://brazoswriters.org> • P.O. Box 4025 Bryan, TX 77805

Next Meeting

7 p.m. Wed., Feb. 13 • Arts Council Building

Author Kathi Appelt on the Writers League of Texas

Award-winning and prolific local writer **Kathi Appelt**, a member of the board of the [Writers League of Texas](http://www.writersleagueof texas.org), will tell us about the league, its contests and conferences, and the benefits of being part of a large writers association.

Kathi is best known for her books for children and young adults. Her first novel, *The Underneath*, will be released in May. For more on Kathi and her books, go to <http://www.kathiappelt.com/>



Internationally acclaimed romance author and Brazos Writer **Linda Warren** pauses between signing copies of her 19th novel, the Harlequin Super Romance *Texas Bluff*, at Carousel Paperbacks in Bryan on Feb. 10. For more on Linda and her best-sellers, go to <http://www.lindawarren.net/>

From the President

Mark Troy

Last month mystery fans learned the sad news that Ed Hoch had passed away. He was 77. The news spread rapidly through the blogosphere. So many writers who had contact with Ed and so many others who didn't revered him.

Here are the pertinent facts. Ed sold his first story in 1955. Since then, he published over 940 short stories and eight novels. He had a story in every issue of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine for 35 years. He created, among other enduring characters, Nick Velvet, a professional thief who was commissioned to steal a bewildering array of things, Dr. Sam Hawthorne, a family practitioner in the era between the world wars, and police captain Jules Leopold. He was a past president and a Grand Master of the Mystery Writers of America.

Meeting the short-story master

Many writers remember him as a mentor and cheerleader. I met Ed Hoch once. Four years ago, I was privileged to participate in a short story panel with him at Bouchercon. He was the star attraction, of course, but he was kind and gracious to this fledgling writer.

We talked about the craft and his passion for it. "Writing a short story is a pleasure one can linger over, with delight in the concept and surprise at the finished product."

To what did he attribute his success?
Writing every day, reading widely, and
enjoying the work.

Ed Hoch will be missed.

What's new for Brazos Writers?

We were very pleased with the success of the mini-conferences last year. Conferences, however, require so much effort and expense to put on we were only able to do two last year. The board decided to try to do more frequent but smaller workshops so more of our members could benefit. These would be two- or three-hour events with a single leader and a single topic. Members would not have to commit as much time to attend will have a wider choice of topics.

Next workshop: March 8

Our first workshop for 2008, "Writing and Selling Confessions," will be Saturday, March 8. The speaker is Michael Bracken, author of 11 novels and many shorter works, 150 of them confessions. According to Bracken, the confession genre is the only one that is truly open to new writers. Even if you never write for the confession market, the techniques that make a good confession apply to any short fiction. So save the date. More details will follow soon.

Although many attendees told us how much they got out of last year's conferences, the board thought that there are many other conferences within easy reach of the Bryan-College Station area, which, because of their size, can better serve the needs of our members.

The Agents, Agents, Agents conference hosted by the Writers League of Texas annually is a prime example. To find out

more about that conference and about the Writers League of Texas and what it can do for you, don't miss the meeting this Wednesday with our guest of honor, noted author and WLT board member, **Kathi Appelt**.

Some of our programs will change this year. We will continue to have open readings on the odd numbered months, but this year we encourage everyone to write on a theme.

March open-readings theme: Lions and Lambs

The theme for March is Lions and Lambs. You may interpret it any way you wish. You do not have to write on the theme in order to read. Readers who do write on the theme, however, will have a chance to win a prize.

Our even-numbered months will feature a variety of formats from discussions, to exercises, to presentations by invited speakers.

Roundtable discussion set for April

For April, we plan a roundtable discussion of how writers fit writing into their schedules and if they use any specific methods in their writing to make them creative and productive. Come and participate in what we expect will be a lively and informative discussion.

Does participation sound like a theme here? We want to encourage everybody to get involved in the meetings, so this year, we are using writing topics as the icebreaker. Everybody will have a chance to speak about the topic of the month without pressure.

If you don't want to speak, you don't have to. For February, we welcome your opinions

on whether writing is an innate talent or a learned skill.

Do you have topics to suggest for a workshop or a discussion at a meeting? If so, let me or **Rhonda Brinkmann** know about it. As the schedule of workshops and meetings develops, we will post updates on the website so check that site often:
<http://brazoswriters.org>

Finally, I leave you with this quote from Edna St. Vincent Millay, whose birthday we celebrate this month: “A person who publishes a book willfully appears before the populace with his pants down. If it is a good book, nothing can hurt him. If it is a bad book, nothing can help him.” ■

Question of the Month

Do you think that writing talent is innate (a product of “nature”) or learned (a product of “nurture”)? To find out what Brazos Writers think, we will begin our February meeting with a short discussion of this question. What you’ve said so far:

- “I think there are techniques that can improve one’s writing, but no amount of technique can make up for a lack of innate passion for the written word and storytelling that makes for successful writing.”
- “I think the real question is about developing a love for reading. I don’t know if that’s innate, but it certainly helps if it’s developed during childhood.”

March Question of the Month

What time of day do you find most productive for writing? If you’d like your thoughts on this to be included in the next newsletter, please e-mail **Ann Kellett** at newsletter@brazoswriters.org



Brazos Writers board members held a half-day retreat at the home of President **Mark Troy** in January to develop 2008 programs and ideas for better serving our members. For a summary, see the From the President column. Pictured are (standing, left to right) **Rhonda Brinkmann**, **Susan Adams**, **Helen Sheffield**, **Mary Troy**, (seated, left to right) **Fidel Fernandez** and **Roland Schweitzer**. Not pictured: **Ann Kellett**.

Website of the Month

Black Facts Online

<http://www.blackfacts.com/index.asp>

February is Black History Month. Black Facts Online is an excellent online searchable database of Black history facts and information—the world’s largest free database on this topic. Black Facts Online is a collaborative project, much like Wikipedia, so use this site as a starting point rather than one that you would cite.

Member Kudos

- Congratulations to **Jean Marie Linhart**, who has a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Chicago and just got word that her latest scholarly research paper has been accepted for publication.
- Welcome to new members **Herb Nowell** and **Amy Sharp**.

Revisions a Problem? New Book Gives Practical Advice Mark Troy

Elizabeth Lyon's sixth book for writers, *Manuscript Makeover: Revision Techniques No Fiction Writer Can Afford to Ignore*, is the most comprehensive and economical how-to book on revising fiction, at 368 pages and \$14.95. It provides practical advice on topics such as, What can go wrong? And How can you fix it?

If ordered from www.Amazon.com prior to **April 1**, the discount slashes the price to just a bit over \$10, plus shipping.

Get free shipping by ordering the whole set of Elizabeth's books on fiction craft, including *A Writer's Guide to Fiction* and *The Sell Your Novel Tool Kit*. Perigee Trade Paperback Original. \$14.95. 368 pgs.
ISBN: 978-0-399-53395-2

Contact information: Elizabeth Lyon,
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www.elizabethlyon.com

Elizabeth Lyon, a regular speaker at writing conferences and retreats nationwide, has been a contributor to "The Writer" and "Writer's Digest" and is a mentor, editor, and writing teacher.

The author of *The Sell Your Novel Tool Kit*, *A Writer's Guide to Fiction*, *Nonfiction Book Proposals Anyone Can Write*, *A Writer's Guide to Nonfiction*, and *National Directory of Editors & Writers*, she lives in Springfield, Oregon.

For more information, see
www.elizabethlyon.com ■

2008 Brazos Writers Officers

President, Mark Troy

President-Elect/Program Chair, Rhonda Brinkmann

Past President, Roland Schweitzer

Treasurer, Fidel Fernandez

Corresponding Secretary, Susan Adams

Recording Secretary, Helen Sheffield

Newsletter Editor, Ann Kellett

Contests from *ByLine Magazine* Mark Troy

ByLine Magazine, which has given many writers their first publication, is accepting entries in the following contests.

For all *ByLine* contests: "Type your name, address, phone, and contest category on the first page of the manuscript (no cover sheet). Prepare in standard manuscript format. Entries will not be returned, so there's no need for SASE. You may send multiple entries to any contest, but each entry requires an entry fee. Entries should be unpublished when entered."

The mailing address for all entries is P.O. Box 111, Albion NY 14411. For more information about any of the contests, go to <http://www.bylinemag.com/>

Listed in order of deadline:

New Talent Short Story Contest

"Open to any writer who has never won a cash prize in a *ByLine* fiction contest." 3,000 words maximum. 1st, \$40; 2nd, \$30; 3rd, \$20. Entry fee \$5.

Deadline: March 22, 2008.

Poem of Guilt Contest

P.O. Box 111, Albion NY 14411

“Yours, someone else’s, or the feeling itself. Think creatively; be original—fanciful even.

Keep your poems to no more than two pages. Any style.” 1st, \$35; 2nd, \$20; 3rd, \$10. Entry fee \$3 or \$5/3 poems.

Deadline: April 5, 2008.

Opening Line Contest

“Story, any genre, that opens with the line:

“There was a knock at the door and . . .”

3,000 words maximum. 1st, \$40; 2nd, \$30; 3rd, \$20. Entry fee \$5.

Deadline: April 12, 2008.

General Poetry Contest

“Any style, subject or length. Just remember that shorter poems more likely to be published.” 1st, \$35; 2nd, \$20; 3rd, \$10.

Entry fee \$4.

Deadline: April 19, 2008.

Personal Memoir Contest

“Any first-person incident or reminiscence from your own life that left a lasting impression.” 1,000 words maximum.

1st, \$35; 2nd, \$25; 3rd, \$15. Entry fee \$5.

Deadline: April 26, 2008.

New Talent Form Poem Contest

“Any form poem from an acrostics, haikus, and limericks to sonnets, ballads, or pantoums. Any poem that has a specified form in terms of rhyme, syllables, or repeated lines. Open to anyone whose poetry has never been published by *ByLine* or who has never won a cash prize in a *ByLine* poetry contest. Keep length to that specified in form's guidelines.” 1st, \$35; 2nd, \$20;

3rd, \$10. Entry fee \$3 or \$5/3 poems.

Deadline: May 3, 2008.

Column/Op-Ed Contest

“Suitable for a newspaper column. Topic and style of your choice (humor, political,

satire, slice of life).” 500 words maximum.

1st, \$35; 2nd, \$20; 3rd, \$10. Entry fee \$5.

Deadline: May 10, 2008.

Heavenly Poem Contest

“Write a poem about Heaven, whether that is the concept of an afterlife used by many religions and spiritual philosophies or a personal place/condition of utmost happiness without any religious associations at all. Unrhymed or skillfully rhymed (slant rhymes, half rhymes, internal rhymes).

Avoid ‘perfect’ end rhymes.” 30 lines maximum. 1st, \$35; 2nd, \$20; 3rd, \$10.

Entry fee \$3 or \$5/3 poems.

Deadline: May 17, 2008.

Juvenile Short Story Contest

“Fiction for ages 5–8; 9–12; or 13–16. State targeted age group on manuscript.” 2,000 words maximum. 1st, \$40; 2nd, \$30; 3rd, \$20. Entry fee \$5.

Deadline: May 22, 2008.

Water Poem Contest

“Poetry or verse that is about or contains a strong water image whether as a tear, ocean, rain, river, flood, or bead of sweat.” 30 lines maximum. 1st, \$35; 2nd, \$20; 3rd, \$10.

Entry fee \$3 or \$5/3 poems.

Deadline: June 7, 2008.

Inspirational Article Contest

“An uplifting nonfiction piece aimed to motivate or inspire. Includes but is not limited to spiritual topics.” 1,500 words maximum. 1st, \$40; 2nd, \$30; 3rd, \$20. Entry fee \$3.

Deadline: June 13, 2008.

Time to Rhyme! Contest

“Rhymed poetry on any topic. Use rhyme skillfully. Try for multi-syllabic rhymes, slant rhymes, etc. Length two pages max.”

1st, \$35; 2nd, \$20; 3rd, \$10. Entry fee \$3 or \$5/3 poems. Deadline: June 21, 2008.