



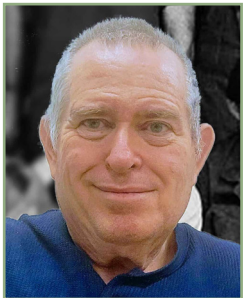
# Quills and Pens



Missouri Writers Guild

APRIL–JUNE 2025

## Message from the President



Warren Martin

I've always liked the saying, "April showers bring May flowers." As spring unfolds, we can eagerly anticipate the vibrant yellow daffodils and the striking red tulips that will soon grace our gardens. With the snow shovels finally stowed away, we can look forward to the joys of Easter, Passover, Cinco de Mayo, Memorial Day, and the warmth of the summer solstice in June.

As late spring approaches, our MWG Board will be immersed in planning the highly anticipated Annual Writers Contest.

Be sure to check our website for the contest rules and prepare to showcase your published writing for 2024 in the designated genre categories. This contest is a prestigious opportunity, offering not only cash prizes but also winner certificates to be awarded at our Annual Conference.

In this edition of the Quarterly MWG Newsletter, we feature Dr. Marilyn Hope Lake, the esteemed recipient of our top Walter Williams Award for 2024. She has graciously shared some inspirational and motivational insights with us. We hope you find encouragement and inspiration in her special interview.

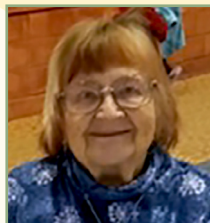
Remember to thrive in 25!

President Warren Martin, PhD

## Center Stage

### Interview with Dr. Marilyn Hope Lake by Jeanne Szarwinski

*Dr. Lake, may I call you Marilyn? I see your academic achievements as earning both your MA and PhD in creative writing from Mizzou in 1990. Your career as a faculty member in English and Business at the University is impressive, and you're also an accomplished painter. Did someone inspire you with the phrase "Shoot for the stars?" What drove you to excel academically and apply that knowledge in your career?*



When I was growing up there was an ad for the United Negro College Fund that read "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." That made a huge impression on me. I knew I was smart. Besides the fact that my parents told me I had to get scholarships if I wanted to go to college, I felt that I had to do

something with my mind. I wanted, and still want, to make a positive contribution to society.

*I see you are a mother and grandmother, Marilyn; how did you balance family time with the challenges of teaching and writing?*

I'm not a prolific writer. I had to work full-time most of my adult life. When my children were babies, then toddlers, most of my writing was journals and letters. I read a lot of children's books to my kids and wrote two during that time. In 2023, one was published as a children's story in Well-Versed. After my divorce, I wrote mostly professionally through my work in non-profit organization management and public information. My work required long hours and travel. My priorities when not working were quality time with my two

children and creative writing was whenever I could. All of my professional jobs required writing: newsletter, reports, news releases, a book on entrepreneurship, etc. Thus, most of my creative writing was done during writing conferences or graduate class workshops. Having my linked collection of short stories published is a dream come true. My children turned out to be great parents and people.

*So, you were born in Alton, Illinois, which I've read has a rich history as a river town, a crossroads for westward expansion, and a center of the abolitionist movement. Did you use any of this history or these cultural movements in your writing?*

I used Alton and Grafton Illinois, St. Louis and Columbia MO as the settings for my stories. I believe that setting should be an important element in any work of fiction, a character of sorts. I did not overtly write about Alton's rich history, but as the stories developed, a great deal of historical detail was included.

*Your latest book, "Our Mothers Ghost and Other Stories," (OMG) is a collection of thirteen connected stories that reveal shared hopes and dreams and the successes of ladies in one Midwest family throughout the 20th century. Sadly, we see you lost your own mother when you were 24 years old. How much did your mother's memories influence this very successful book?*

My mother's memories were not shared enough, or they were "beautified." Several of the stories in this collection are about my memories of her and my questions about her life. I wrote the "mother" stories to try to answer for myself why my mother did the things she did. I heard many family stories and anecdotes from my aunts, adult cousins, and my mother's friends.

*I see you have written several children's picture books, including Buddy and the Grandcats. You also write short fiction, poetry, drama, and memoirs. Which genre is your favorite to write in, and where do you get your creative ideas?*

My favorite is the short story. When well-written the short story inculcates all the aspects of the novel but in a "less is more" mode. My favorite writers are short story writers: Alice Munro, Raymond Carver, Kate Chopin, Sarah Orne Jewett, Gilman, and Wolf. I do like novelists too, especially Austin, the Brontes, Hardy and Hawthorne.

I've always been interested in the theater; in fact, I almost majored in theater rather than creative writing. I was Alton Senior High's "Best Thespian" of the 1960 graduating class. That dates me a bit. I was offered a scholarship to Illinois Wesleyan in theater. I took a scholarship to Northwestern University and dropped out after my first quarter. It took me 11 years to earn a BA in English because I married, had children, and moved around quite a bit. My first husband used to like to say, "My wife was educated at" and name the

many institutions. I finally got my BA degree at IUP and my other 3 degrees at MIZZOU, as well as a standard life teaching certificate.

My favorite playwright is Tennessee Williams. I wrote a couple of plays in high school and also wrote what I called "prose/poetry." I like poetry and have had some success, receiving the award for "Best Poem" in the 2024 MWG President's contests. Also, I've written a lot of personal essays and memoirs in the last several years. Again, my memoir, STORIES OF MY LIFE, won third place in the nonfiction MWG contest in 2023. Also, a number of personal essays have been published lately. I believe that prose writing such as autobiography, biography, and fiction are differentiated by the "art of selection." It's what the author selects to include that makes the difference.

My creative ideas come from my life experience. In OMG, each story has a kernel of truth, because each story started as an anecdote I heard about my family, or something I experienced, or knew someone who experienced it. I had to create the dialogue, show the setting, imagine the motivation, and imagine the scenes. The stories have a basis in fact, but are 90 percent imagined. Even with "A Special Family Sunday," the story of my younger brother's entrance into our family, his adoption, and the mystery surrounding it, I had to recreate the scenes and dialogue and produce a story arc that satisfies the reader's need for drama, conflict and resolution. The inspiration for my poetry may be the way the light falls on the carpet, the sound of the wind in a certain place, an experience that is too emotional to write in prose or the inspiration from a conversation I overheard. Anything that touches me deeply.

*Which of the four primary forms of writing, expository, descriptive, narrative, and persuasive, do you use the most?*

I haven't considered this before, but I would have to say descriptive and narrative. I'm interested in characterization and narrative time. Descriptive because I believe setting is central to storytelling, I also like to experiment with point of view. So again, narrative. I seldom write "persuasive" prose, though I recently wrote a chapter for a UK flip book anthology that was aimed at persuading folks to adopt a healthier lifestyle. I suppose you could say my stories are expository, in that they expose the harmful aspects of gender roles and racism in 20th century life.

*What words of inspiration would you give a new author, perhaps one who has failed after a few attempts?*

Write, write, write. Join as many writing groups as your budget and time constraints can allow. Enter contests that are free or reasonably priced. Nothing over \$25.00 unless you are certain your piece fits perfectly. Write what you like to read. Read, read, and read. Don't give up. You will find an audience. I didn't find mine until I was "elderly."

I see you used your creative painting skills to design the 2016 workbook, EKPRHASTIC WRITING WORKBOOK. After each artistic piece, the reader is invited to write a commentary or literary description meant to motivate, inspire, and entertain.. Do you care to comment?

I do. Ekphrastic writing is the practice of creating prose or poetry inspired by an image or three-dimensional object. John Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn" is a well-known example. As this style of writing became popular again, it relied on using well-known images such as old master paintings, thus not giving a totally new reaction. I had the idea to use original photos and paintings to create a workbook with completely new images, making the writer's reaction and resultant writing fresh. The workbook consists of an image, with room for first thoughts, in whatever form. From 20 original paintings and photos, (mostly my own work,) the writer could create 20 original pieces and have a collection of them when they finished. My audience would be those who experience writers' block, or any writer, professional or beginner, who could use a prompt to get started. I thought teachers of writing might use the workbook to inspire students. Very few sold, but I did receive two poems that were written because of one of my paintings. That is a reward in itself. The workbook is meant to be a tool to help other writers.

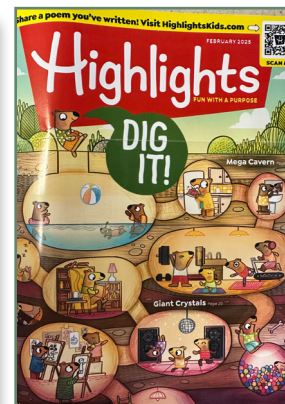
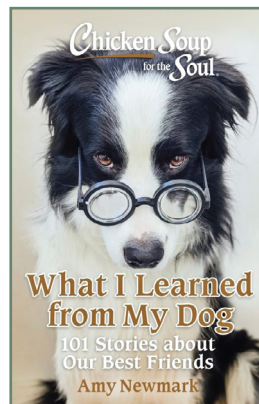
*Marilyn Hope Lake writes short fiction, poetry, plays, and children's picture books. Lake has won many awards for her writing, including First Place in the 2011 Doris Mueller Poetry and Prose Contest for children's stories. Second place in the 2017 MO Writers Guild (MWG) books for juveniles. Most recently, in 2023, Lake received third place in the MWG contests for a nonfiction book of memoirs. In 2024, she was awarded two top prizes for literary fiction, the MWG Walter Williams Award in Missouri and the Donald & Bertha Coffin Memorial Book Award from the Kansas Authors Club for OUR MOTHERS' GHOSTS and Other Stories. Dr. Lake has been published in Rock Springs Review, STIR, Well-Versed: Literary Works, the Gasconade Review, the Mizzou Alumni Magazine, and 105 Meadowlark Reader. Born in a Mississippi River town, Alton, Illinois, Lake's love of the river shines through her stories. She resides near her family in Columbia, Missouri, with her canine companion, Hugo.*



- Congratulations to **Warren Martin, PhD** for his Podcast Episode with British Audiobook narrator Graham Mack talking with him about *Surviving the Stroke* book – now available in Audio, ebook and Print.
- Applause goes out to a total of **10 Rockwood School District students** from fourth through eighth grade earned recognition in the 2024 St. Louis Writers Guild Young Writers Awards competition. Congratulations to these outstanding Rockwood student writers!
- Kudos go out to **George Sorios** for earning the Austin Revolution Film Festival .
- Congrats to **Larry Wood** on his blog: **Information and comments about historical people and events of Missouri, the Ozarks.**

*Larry Wood: I'm a freelance writer specializing in the history of the Ozarks and surrounding region. I've written twenty-three nonfiction books, two historical novels, and numerous articles. My latest books are Murder and Mayhem in Northeast Oklahoma, The Ozarks Spook Light, and Lady Rebels of Civil War Missouri.*

- **Billie Holladay Skelley** had a story published in the February 2025 issue of Highlights magazine, and she also has a story in the new *Chicken Soup for the Soul: What I Learned from My Dog* book that will be released on April 1, 2025.



# Summer 2025 Upcoming Events!

## Sikeston

- [Sikeston Hot Air Balloon Festival, June 21-23](#)
- [Sikeston Summer Concert Series, June 7,14,28](#)

## Hannibal

- [National Tom Sawyer Days, July 3-7](#)
- [47th Annual Samuel L. Clemens Arts & Crafts & More Festival, July 4](#)

## St. Louis

- [Shakespeare in the Park: As You Like It, May 29-June 23](#)
- [Tennessee Williams Festival, Aug. 8-18](#)

## Sedalia

- [Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival, May 29-June 1](#)
- [Hot Air Balloon & Kite Festival, June 7-9](#)
- [Missouri State Fair, Aug. 8-18](#)

## Kirksville

- [Festival of Butterflies, Powell Gardens, July 18–August 4](#)



## Tips for your Book Club

### How do I make my book club interesting?

Decorate to the theme of the book. Make a slideshow with topic questions. Make little menus with food from the book or quotes. Set the mood with lots of candles. Prepare a simple charcuterie board and provide drinks. Search the book on Spotify for a curated book playlist.

*And by the way, everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.*

– Sylvia Plath

## Cobb Salad



### What is Cobb Salad named after?

According to [Wikipedia](#), Cobb salad came about in the 1937 at the Hollywood Brown Derby restaurant, where it became a signature dish. It is named for the restaurant's owner, Robert Howard Cobb. The legend is that Cobb had not eaten until near midnight, and so he mixed together leftovers he found in the kitchen, along with some bacon cooked by the line cook, and tossed it with their French dressing.

## World Laughter Day

WORLD LAUGHTER DAY is celebrated on the first Sunday in May, this day emphasizes the importance of remaining happy.

### World Laughter Day Jokes

*What do you call a writer who doesn't follow the rules of sentence structure?*

A rebel without a clause.

*Why do writers hate the bible?*

It has terrible characters. Noah is the only one with an arc.

*What do you call an author who's well-slept and well-fed?* A content writer



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