

Revise This - August 2009



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Norman Mailer's Home Transformed to Writer's Colony



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Prior to Norman Mailer's death in 2007, his friends and colleagues, J. Michael Lennon and Lawrence Schiller, wanted to do something to honor his legacy.

Lennon and Schiller, both advisory board members of Wilkes University's Graduate Creative Writing Program, contemplated having a chair at a university endowed in Mailer's name. But when Mailer seemed uninterested in the proposal, Lennon, Schiller and Mailer's family decided to launch the Norman Mailer Writers Colony at Mailer's house in Provincetown, Mass.

Mailer, the first advisory board member of the creative writing program, and his wife, novelist Norris Church Mailer, started coming to Provincetown in 1983. They spent much more time there throughout the 1990s, according to Schiller, executive director of the colony.

"The house had become part of the town's cultural heritage," Schiller said. "Norman often said that Provincetown had become for him what Key West and Cuba were for Hemingway."

The colony is fitting to Mailer's legacy because he regularly provided guidance to beginning writers and always wrote back to them if they sent him a letter, according to Lennon, Mailer's biographer. Writers will now have the chance to stay at his house and work one-on-one with well-published writers and editors through the fellowship program and workshops.

"He always felt that as a writer, he had to give back and should never ignore an emerging writer," said Lennon. He added that when Mailer's house was cleaned out last summer, hundreds of manuscripts by other writers were found.

The first seven fellows accepted to the colony will arrive at the house on July 5. William Kennedy, also an advisory board member of the creative writing program, Don DeLillo, Doris Kearns Goodwin, and editors from *The New Yorker*, *Playboy*, *The New York Review of Books* and Random House Publishers will be there to offer writing advice and discuss their careers.

The workshops are a separate program from the fellows and require a payment from participants. These short courses are geared towards intermediate and advanced writers and have specializations such as writing biographies and new journalism.

What the workshops have in common, however, is that they all incorporate Mailer's work or different aspects of his life in the curriculum. They will be taught by people who knew Mailer, including Lennon and Kaylie Jones, a fiction faculty member of the creative writing

program.

“I loved Norman and I am proud to be involved in this project,” said Jones. “I’ll be teaching a week-long workshop on memoir writing. I have wonderful students and am looking forward to the experience.”

In addition, the colony will also give annual awards to emerging writers. In association with the Provincetown Arts Press, the colony presented the first ever Norman Mailer Cape Cod Writing Award for Exceptional Writing to Salvatore Scibona on June 6. Scibona is the author of *The End*, a finalist for a National Book Award. The colony, in collaboration with the National Council of Teachers of English, will also sponsor the Norman Mailer National Writing Awards for college and high school students.

For more information about the colony, visit www.nmwcolony.org, or www.wilkes.edu/creativewriting.

Lawrence Schiller Joins Advisory Board



Lawrence Schiller

Novelist, photojournalist, screenwriter and director Lawrence Schiller is the latest member to join the Advisory Board for the Graduate Creative Writing Program of Wilkes University.

Schiller grew up outside of San Diego, Calif. and has worked for *Life* magazine, *Paris Match*, *The Sunday Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and other publications as a photojournalist.

He was also a close friend to Norman Mailer, the program’s first ever advisory board member, and is currently the executive director of the Norman Mailer Writers Colony in Provincetown, Mass. He was asked to join the advisory board by program co-founder and advisory board member J. Michael Lennon.

“Mike Lennon, who has been a close friend of mine for a number of years, introduced me to this aspect of education, which I was not

involved in first-hand,” said Schiller. “As time went on, Mike thought my ideas could aid the university, even though I don’t come from a strict education background.”

“In all ways, Mr. Schiller represents the ideal Advisory Board member,” said Program Director Bonnie Culver. “Our program is designed for working, producing writers. Mr. Mailer advised us at the beginning of the program to make this program less about a degree and all about the craft and business of writing. Our graduating students have their theses read by outside readers who are agents, editors, publishers, or producers such as Mr. Schiller. It is that industry hands-on learning that makes our M.A./M.F.A. unique.”

Along with writing his own novels, Schiller has worked with other writers on their novels, including Mailer’s *The Executioner’s Song*. He has also directed seven motion pictures and miniseries for television. The adaptation of *The Executioner’s Song* and *Peter the Great* won Emmys.

He is also a consultant to NBC news and has written for the *New Yorker*. In addition, Schiller serves on the executive board of the Norman Mailer Writers Colony.

Jeff Talarigo Makes Notable Book List



Jeff Talarigo

Wilkes-Barre, Penn. — Jeff Talarigo, a fiction faculty member of Wilkes University’s Graduate Creative Writing Program, landed on the American Library Association’s Notable Book List of 2009 for *The Ginseng Hunter*, his second novel.

The winners were chosen by the Notable Books Council, which includes librarians and academics from across the country. The award makes available to readers a list of 25 books of fiction, nonfiction and poetry that the council considers to be well-written and important.

“I would say five out of my ten favorite novels are on past lists. Having my

name even mentioned amongst these people is a great honor,” Talarigo said.

Authors of the selected titles will be invited to speak at the Library Tastes Breakfast at the ALA Annual Conference in July. Talarigo, a resident of Boston, says if he is invited, he will definitely attend.

The Ginseng Hunter takes place in contemporary China, along the Tumen River, which separates China from North Korea. The book follows the plight of North Koreans who have escaped their country by crossing the river.

Talarigo visited the river in 2003 for research, and was surprised at how rural the area is. “It’s the most accessible place for refugees to cross,” he said. “It’s dangerous, but very barren. There are so few people there.”

His next book will focus on Lebanon during the civil war in 1982 and the story of a Palestinian woman who becomes a nurse in Beirut. The story will also focus on the Gaza Strip, where Talarigo visited in the early 1990s. Talarigo hopes to complete a solid draft by the end of the year.

Student Profile: Alysha Haran



Alysha Haran

Most of the students enrolled in the Graduate Creative Writing Program of Wilkes University have the luxury of completing their school work in a comfortable room. But for Alysha Haran, a Navy lieutenant, her writing is often produced while onboard her ship in the middle of the ocean.

Haran works as a surface warfare officer onboard the USS Pinckney, home ported out of San Diego. Many nights, she stands watch as fleet officer of the deck; otherwise, her job consists of driving the ship in a battle formation as part of the NIMITZ Strike Group.

Haran is responsible for the safety of navigation, engineering, and weapons employment for air and surface/subsurface defense. Haran also serves as the ship’s electrical officer and assistant chief engineer.

She heard about the graduate program through a simple Internet search for online degrees. Originally from San Rafael, Ca., she has experience working in the film business. She worked as a line producer in Los Angeles for eight years where she mostly worked on commercials, but her role expanded into feature work at the end of the career.

During that period, she was scheduled to board one of the flights that crashed into one of the World Trade Centers on September 11, 2001. The attack encouraged her to join the Navy. "It was a last minute change of travel plans that kept me from being a passenger on one of the planes that struck the towers on September 11th," she said. "It was the impetus for joining the Navy; I raised my right hand thirty days later."

While other students have fewer challenges completing an online graduate degree, Haran often has to deal with sluggish technology. "Most of the time I'm doing school work I'm literally in the middle of the ocean," she said. "We are dependent on satellites for connectivity, and it's slow at best."

But Haran stresses her job has been an incredible inspiration in her writing. She plans to use her experience, including deployment to the Arabian Gulf and the Horn of Africa, as material for a book.

"The six to seven month deployment will give me the structure and frame of reference I need to be able to talk about the story of sailors, how we come together to form a crew and what we go through collectively and individually during a combat deployment," Haran said.

She has also been deployed to the Philippines and port visits have included Chennai, India, Kota Kinablu, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. She will return from deployment shortly before the January residency.

Faculty/Staff Notes

Philip Brady's memoir, *By Heart: Reflections of a Rust Belt Bard*, has been chosen as *Foreword Magazine's* Book of the Year for 2008 in the category for essays.

Christine Gelineau's manuscript, *Appetite for the Devine*, has been selected as the Editor's Choice in the McGovern Series of the Ashland Poetry Press. The manuscript is slated to be published in April 2010, and will be her second book with Ashland.

Kaylie Jones' memoir, *Lies My Mother Never Told Me*, has been named one of the hottest summer reads by the website *The Daily Beast*, www.thedailybeast.com. The book will officially be released on Aug. 25.

Assistant Director Jim Warner has joined the staff of Etruscan Press and will serve as the business manager and associate editor. The press is housed in the offices of the creative writing program and has published two National Book Award finalists – *Chromatic* by H.L. Hix and *Shoah Train* by William Heyen.

Student/Alumni Notes

M.A. student Chris Bullard's poetry manuscript, *You Must Not Know Too Much*, has been selected by Plan B Press, www.planbpress.com, as the winner of their 2009 chapbook contest. The press, based out of Philadelphia, also plans to publish the book.

M.F.A. student Richard Fellingner was awarded the annual Beverly Hiscox Scholarship during the June residency. The scholarship was established by Hiscox's children to honor her service to Wilkes University. The student's recipient is a non-traditional student who demonstrates need and writing talent.

Alum Andrea Janov had three poems accepted for publication in the all-punk rock issue of *Chiron Review*. The issue will be out in December.

M.A. student Carol MacAllister will have an article published in the boating magazine *Living Abroad*. The article, "Boating Superstitions," will be published in the September edition.

M.F.A. student Taylor Polites was awarded the annual Norris Church Mailer scholarship at the June residency. The scholarship is given to promising, emerging writers enrolled in the program.

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