

Revise This! | January 2016

Pay It Forward

Introduced during the 10th Anniversary celebration of the Wilkes Creative Writing Program, *Pay It Forward* is a scholarship initiative for alumni and faculty to award new students entering our program. The \$2,500 scholarship is credited toward the student's first semester tuition expense.

Sam Chiarelli, MFA '16, was the first Wilkes alum to utilize *Pay It Forward*. "As a Graduate Assistant, I'd heard a lot about *Pay It Forward* and I thought it was a great idea. The Creative Writing program has been such a gift to me and I wanted to give that gift to others," he says.

"I taught a creative nonfiction workshop in the autumn of 2015 and I was fortunate to have an exceptional set of writers attend. They were a lively bunch," says Chiarelli. "Janine [Dubik] didn't make a lot of noise during our workshop sessions, but as I read through the submitted essays and exercises, her work struck me. She tapped into some really universal themes, some transcendent fragments of reality that resonated with me. She had moments of absolute brilliance on the page, and yet I could see she had so much room to grow and become an even better writer. That's why I chose Janine for my *Pay It Forward*. She was ready to take the next step in her development as a writer."

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Janine Pokrinchak Dubik, Wilkes '78, offers her perspective. "Until Sam's e-mail, I knew nothing of the *Pay It Forward* program, and I am honored he selected me. This was a deciding factor in why I applied for the creative writing program at this time. I have looked at the program for a number of years but hadn't applied until completing the five-week creative nonfiction workshop with Sam. If I hadn't taken the five-week workshop, I doubt I would have applied for the creative writing program now. I am grateful for the nudge from Sam to apply."

"The benefit for me will be watching Janine grow," says Chiarelli. "Joining the Wilkes Creative Writing program was a major turning point in my life - the people, the environment, the inspiration is absolutely priceless for someone who wants to harness their creative energies and push themselves to become a better writer. What happens in our program goes beyond degrees and publications. It's about taking your passion seriously, about pushing yourself to places you didn't know you could go. It's about finding people who not only understand you, but know how to get the best out of you, and help you excel. It's about being a writer, not just saying you're one or wishing you were one -- actually doing it."

"In writing, it's very easy to get down on yourself when things aren't turning out how you imagined. I think anyone who comes into the program through *Pay It Forward* will have some extra incentive in those difficult times. They can take solace in knowing that someone believed in them, and their work. This is a very special entryway into our community."

Photography with Jeff Talarigo

How did you get into photography, and how do you view it as part of your artistic life? Is it just something you do for fun, or do you take it as seriously as you take your writing?

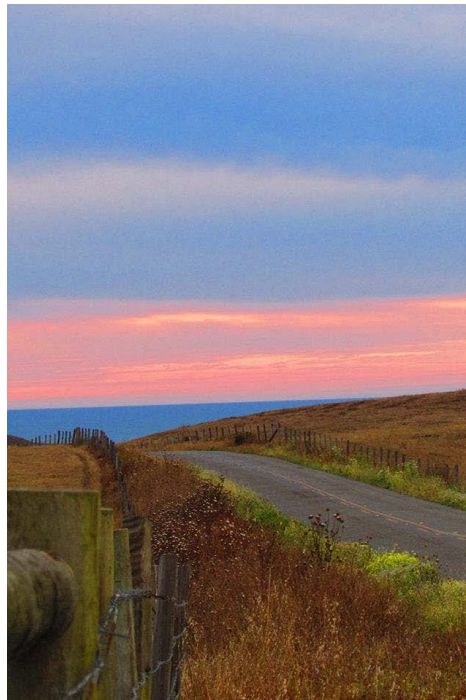
I have enjoyed photography on and off over the years. I had a camera with me on my research trips for my novels on Gaza, the China/North Korea border and to Nagashima Island, which was a leprosarium. I got away from taking photos mainly because of the expense of having them developed. A couple of years ago, after coming back to California from the winter Wilkes residency, I found a small digital camera waiting for me, a gift from my son. I started carrying the camera with me almost everywhere I went.

Is a talent necessary to take good photos?

I think a good photographer or writer sees everyday things differently, but I also believe that there must also be a great deal of passion and empathy for the project. This is what I hope comes out of my photos and sentences.

Are there specific things you like to photograph?

I love doing nature and wildlife photos, but also photos of people when I travel. Point Reyes National Seashore in Northern California is heaven for me, truly my favorite place on earth, a place that, when I am there, I feel that I am a better person.



Do you do anything with your photos beyond taking them for your own use?

At this point, I do it for the pleasure and as a way to create. I am mulling the idea of incorporating some of my photos into a memoir/family history/novel I am slowly chiseling away at. Or maybe a book of photos and writing.

Do you use a lot of equipment?

About five months ago I bought a 35 mm digital camera which is really sweet. I have two lenses: a standard 16-50 lens and a 55-210 lens, which has a bit of a zoom, but for wildlife photos I still need to get fairly intimate

with the animals. I think it is really good to learn on smaller lenses, much like when I began to golf when I was 12, I only carried three clubs with me: a 7-iron, a 9-iron and a putter. But photography, like golf, like writing, you always want that giant zoom lens, that new driver, to write *Moby Dick*.

Do you wait long for the “perfect” shot?

I have been known to wait quite a long time for that perfect shot, or, at least anticipating it, for it doesn't always happen.

How do you view your photography in the scope of your artistic life?

For the past year or so, photography has been a savior for me, allowing me some peace of mind and a way to express myself creatively while I try and figure out how to find some time and money to do my next book project, a novel on human trafficking.

How does photography affect your writing; do you think your photography brings things to your writing that you might otherwise miss?

About three times a month I drive the sixty miles up to Point Reyes, leaving a little before five in the morning and coming back home well after dark. When I am there things slow down for me and I try to tell a story with the photos. But I am also writing as I trek through the forest, along the beach, atop the mountains; in fact, last weekend while walking through a field trying to photograph a Harrier Hawk, the ending of the four act play on Gaza I have been working on came to me. In both photography and writing I am patient and I don't rush, allowing a scene to wash over me whenever it is ready.

Sara Pritchard: Thurber Writer-in-Residence 2016

The John E. Nance Writer-in-Residence program is an annual residency of four weeks where recipients are housed in a two-bedroom apartment in the family home of author and New Yorker cartoonist, James Thurber. The fellowship is designed to provide a writer with the gift of time to develop a work in progress. The writer-in-residence for 2016 is Sara Pritchard, faculty member in the Wilkes Creative Writing program.

What does a residency like this mean to you as a writer?

Pritchard says, “A conventional residency (like the Thurber House ones) provides a writer with a respite from his/her daily routine, an opportunity to steal away, be



alone, engage a bit with other writers, and just write. Residencies provide housing. Some also include meals. Many residencies provide a stipend (which varies wildly, anywhere from a few thousand dollars for a month, with some paying as much as \$60,000 for a full academic year). Some stipends are without any strings attached, while others are with the agreement that a writer give a public reading and/or teach something like a weekend workshop for members of the community or for an affiliated school. Some require the writer to teach a class all semester and work one-on-one with graduate or undergraduate students.

“Some residencies like VCCA (Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, vcca.com) ask their residents to contribute to their stay according to their own ability to pay. Residencies vary in length, generally, from a few weeks to a full year. The venues vary, too, from remote areas like ranches (New Mexico, Wyoming) to intercity (D.C.), to trains (AMTRAK: <http://blog.amtrak.com/general-faqs/>), ships and research stations, hotels (<http://www.theparisreview.org/standardculture>), and even shop windows (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/from-shop-windows-to-prisons-writers-in-residence-find-new-homes/article535465/>). Check this out: <http://www.aerogrammestudio.com/2013/10/10/9-amazing-writers-residencies-from-around-the-world/>”

For a comprehensive list of artist residencies, see the website of the Alliance of Artist Communities at <http://www.artistcommunities.org/residencies>. According to the AAC website, there are:

- an estimated 500 artists' communities in the US and more than 1,500 worldwide
- 30,000 artists are provided residencies each year (~10,000 in the U.S.)
- residencies in the U.S. provide an estimated \$40 million in support to

artists annually

- 70% are multidisciplinary, serving visual artists, writers, composers, filmmakers, choreographers, and others
- 60% are in rural areas and small towns, while 40% are in urban areas
- 90% have public programs that engage the local community

Do you go on writing retreats in general?

No. In general, I prefer to stay home. I live a quiet life without the demands that many of my colleagues and students face, so residencies for me at this point in my life (semi-retirement) are more about earning some extra income and taking a little vacation, meeting other writers and interesting people, and spending time in a different place (walking around, visiting cemeteries and museums, etc.). I've done one other residency—a semester-long one in 2012 as the Thornton Writer-in-Residence at Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, VA. I taught one workshop for three hours each week. I had great students, made some lifelong friends, lived in an apartment in an antebellum mansion, and loved exploring Lynchburg. Residencies are exciting, inspirational, rewarding, relaxing (for the most part), and yes, a bit stressful at first—like any adventure or travel. I'm really looking forward to spending a month in the "slightly haunted" James Thurber house in Columbus, Ohio. Stories always come to me when I'm away from home. The next one just may have a ghost (or two).

Wilkes Workshops in Mesa, AZ

In the spring of 2015, Austin Bennett MFA '15, under the direction of Dr. Culver, developed a series of low-cost, four-week continuing education classes in the genres of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and screenwriting at the Wilkes University Mesa Campus. The founding instructors included: Bennett, alum Rene Allen MA '15, and graduate assistant Mike Mortimer. These initial classes attracted beginning writers, journalists, self-published authors, and a *New York Times* bestselling children's author.

Primarily marketed through listservs, word-of-mouth, and Meetup.com, the classes averaged a 4:1 ratio which allowed for an intimate atmosphere to workshop student projects.

Consistent with the graduate program goals, the classes were designed to produce a community-based atmosphere where students sharpened their craft while being encouraged. Several highly motivated and talented workshop participants have gone on to apply and enroll in the Wilkes graduate program.

Children's author Nate Evans says, "This was an incredibly helpful series

of classes. I went in with a story idea that had been stalled for months and this workshop got me thinking in new ways, gave me a lot of inspiration, and got me writing again. It also gave me a more nuanced critical lens through which to examine my own writing as well as new strategies to deal with my weaknesses and build on my strengths as a writer.”

Now, with over 200 members on Meetup, Bennett notes, “We didn’t want to just be a resource, we wanted to break down those walls that divide writer from writer and writing group from writing group.” Through the program’s growing reputation, partnerships have formed with other local writing groups such as the Scottsdale Society of Women Writers where, this January, Wilkes alum Rene Allen will serve as the keynote speaker. This spring marks the program’s first anniversary and the third round of classes will feature two six-week long sessions in the most popular genres: fiction and memoir.

Faculty News

Faculty member Christine Gelineau has a new book in production: *Crave*. Gelineau's third full-length collection of poetry will be published in early February by NYQ Books.

Faculty member Nancy McKinley's short story “The Dog” was selected to be included in the upcoming *Dog Anthology*, published by Main Street Rag.

Faculty Member Sara Pritchard will be the 2015 John E. Nance Writer-in-Residence at the James Thurber House in Columbus, Ohio. Sara will be moving into the “slightly haunted” third-floor apartment of Thurber House for a month, beginning in mid-January, 2016.

Faculty member Jan Quackenbush's short play “Attack at the Pierre-Fontaine,” published by Blue Moon Plays, was recently produced by a newly formed senior drama group at the Perry County Opera House and Cultural Arts Center in Ohio.

Student News

Amye Archer, MFA '11 will have her memoir, *Fat Girl, Skinny*, published by Big Table Publishing this spring.

Jennifer D. Bokal, MA '10 is pleased to announce the February 9 release of *The Gladiator's Temptation*. It is the second book in *The Champions of Rome* series published by Montlake Romance. Jennifer's novella, *To Catch a Thief*, a Romantic Thriller, will also be released in February as part of the *Royals of Monterra Kindle World*. Jennifer is also

the head of the steering committee for Lady Jane's Salon of the Southern Tier, New York. LJSSTNY is a satellite of Lady Jane's Salon, NYC © which brings writers of romance together with readers in a monthly reading series. LJSSTNY is held at Endicott Performing Arts Center on the second Saturday of each month.

Tom Borthwick, MFA '09 has a flash fiction piece "You Belong to Me" appearing in *Perihelion Science Fiction Magazine*.

David R. Brubaker, MA '14 is publishing his thesis, *Liberace's Filipino Cousin*, in early 2016 with ThingsAsian Press.

Jim Craig, MA '10 / James Craig Atchison officially launched his first crime novel, *Blue Lines up in Arms*, in Wilkes-Barre December 4-5. Published by Sunbury Press, and featuring fictional "Wavy Ray Beck" of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins AHL hockey team, promotional events included a radio interview on WILK (Sue Henry's AM talk show), a Jumbotron announcement during a WBS Penguins home game Friday, December 4, and a book signing at the downtown Barnes & Noble.

Brian Fanelli, MFA '10 had his poem, "Lady Day Sings the Blues on YouTube," published in the winter issue of *The Museum of Americana*. Another poem, "What I Imagine My Parents Did After Dinner," was published by *The Lascaux Review*.

Patricia Florio, MFA '11 is returning to the Wilkes family as a student again, this time to get her M.A. in Fiction.

Gerald Gurka, MA '07 had his short play "A Christmas Card Portrait" recently produced and performed in Larksville, PA, as well as featured in various local media.

Dawn Leas, MFA '09 will have her full-length poetry collection, *Take Something When You Go*, published by Winter Goose Publishing in 2016.

Lori Myers, MA '09 short story "The Kindest Cut" will be published in the anthology *Bad Neighborhood* by Spooky Words Press.

Christoph Paul, MA '14 had his Bizarro Horror novel *Slasher Camp for Nerd Dorks* published by Eraserhead Press in November. It won the Black Book Award for best satire. The same month *Social Media for Anti-Socials: #HowToUseTwitter* was published by Riot Forge. Christoph Paul was also featured in a *Huffington Post* feature about The Miami International Book Fair: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/renee-lo-iacono/11-secrets-on-how-to-mark_b_8626322.html Christoph has

officially started the imprint New English Press with the help of hip-hop artist, bizarro author, and Navy man Grant Wamack. The press will focus on publishing Black, Hip-hop and Bizarro Fiction. The two titles planned for 2016 are *This Book Ain't Nothing to Fuck With: A Wu-Tang Tribute Anthology* and *Booty Holocaust* by Patrick Scott Barnes. Under the pen name Mandy De Sandra, Christoph published the political satire-erotica novella *Fox News Fuckfest* with New Kink Books, an imprint of Rooster Republic Press. It is Mandy's tenth book.

MA student Ronnie K. Stephens recently had an essay published in *Hippocampus Magazine* and two poems published in *Paper Nautilus*. He has another essay forthcoming in *The Good Men Project*. He will part of a poetry panel/reading discussing body dysmorphia and gender at the International Annual AWP Conference and Bookfair in Los Angeles, March 30- April 2.

Rachel Luann Strayer, MFA '12 is celebrating the East Coast premiere of her play, *Drowning Ophelia*, produced by Gaslight Theatre Company. *Drowning Ophelia* will be performed at the Theater at Lackawanna College in Scranton, PA, January 28-31.

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