

Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project



Spring/Summer 2007

Director's Corner



Check out SLWP's Upcoming Events:

- Creative Nonfiction: Workshops with Kim Stafford"

MONDAY, JUNE 11, 9AM - 3:30 P.M.
SLWP is pleased to announce that Kim Stafford, author of "The Muses Among Us," will

be leading a day of workshops on writing and teaching "creative nonfiction" for Writing Project teachers on SLU's campus. Registration for the event for SLWP members and new Fellows is \$25, and that covers a full day of workshops AND lunch. Participants will be given a certificate at the end verifying that they have received 6 hours of professional development.

Pre-registration is required, and space is limited, so register ASAP. To pre-register, contact Richard Louth <rlouth@selu.edu>.

Checks should be made out to the SLU DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, and can be mailed to DR. Richard Louth at SLU 10327, Hammond, LA, 70402. Or, you can pay at the door if you pre-register by email.

- Advanced Writing Marathon Opening Night "Kick-off" SLWP Social Event:

TUES, JUNE 12, 5:30 PM.
VIP Suite, Le Richelieu Hotel, 1234 Chartres St., New Orleans
To kick off the

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SLWP TO PRESENT AT NCTE IN NOV IN NYC!

TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS: A NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT MODEL FOR STUDY GROUPS

Richard Louth, George Dorrill, Tracy Ferrington, Mary Koepp, and Margaret Westmoreland will speak at the NCTE Conference in New York City in November.

They will lead a panel discussion that describes and analyzes the implementation of the Writing Project model in the following types of study groups: an Invitational Summer Institute based on teaching demonstrations and writing response groups; a teacher inquiry project to generate "teacher stories" leading to a book

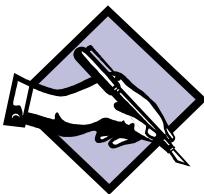
and radio program, in the words of Kim Stafford, about "tearing down the Berlin Wall dividing professional and personal writing"; a "New Orleans Writing Marathon" for a group of 14 K/College teachers who lived and wrote together for three days in the cafes, bars, and streets of the French Quarter; a junior high/

high school group that met in a university Writing Center at night to study the question "Why Write?"; a parish mandated high school "Literacy Study Group" for both Writing Project and non-Writing Project teachers that examined student work and teaching strategies through structured protocols and charettes.

SUMMER INSTITUTE AND PRE-INSTITUTE DINNER



The Southeastern Writing Project 2007 Summer Institute fellows were honored at a special dinner at Jamels in Hammond. The new fellows were greeted by SLWP staff and provided with information in preparation for a summer filled with writing opportunities. Director Richard Louth began with a welcome and told each new participant that they were about to immerse themselves in one of the “best professional development opportunities,” Co-director Tracy Ferrington continued by emphasizing the writer within, and Mary Koepp rounded out staff introductions with a focus on the network that develops through participation in the Writing Project. Teacher Consultants from previous institutes discussed how participation in SLWP changed them and their classrooms. Following dinner new fellows, introduced themselves to each other and the staff and were given a sneak preview via a video presentation of 2006’s Summer Institute.



2007 *Summer* *Fellows*

Mary Ann Cousin	Lee Road JHS	2nd grade
Mary Reneau	W.L. Abney Elem. (Slidell)	4th grade
Pamela Blanchard	Angie JHS	6-8 grade English/Reading
Leina Ball	Fontainebleau JHS	7th-8th grade
Carly Zeller	Lutcher HS	8th grade English
Tabitha Bankston	Sumner HS	9th grade
Eugenie Martin	Covington HS	9-10th grade Gifted
Kelley Silvey	Sumner HS	10-11th grade Civics, English III
Kenita August	Franklin HS	11th grade
Sonya Willie	Covington HS	11-12th grade
Deana Simmons	Sumner HS	12th grade
Roman Keller	St. Joseph's Abbey	College English
Pete Barisco	SLU	College Writing Center

Writing Marathons for Your Students

by Tracy Ferrington

One of the highlights of the Summer Institute is our French Quarter Writing Marathon. We relish the uninterrupted writing time and the feeling of seeing a place through a writer’s eyes. So why not provide this experience for our students?

For the past two years, I have taken my Creative Writing Club on a field trip to downtown Baton Rouge for a “Writing on the River” marathon. We pack a picnic lunch, a cooler of drinks, grab our journals, and head downtown for a day of writing, art, and history. The downtown area provides perfect spots for writing, while

also taking in the significant moments in history by visiting the Old State Capitol, the new Capitol, the Pentagon Barracks, and the USS Kidd. There are also art galleries and a planetarium, all within blocks of each other. And then, of course, there’s the Mississippi River. The kids love the idea of writing on the levee, and for a higher vantage point, there is the ter-

race on top of the Shaw Center.

Another style of writing marathon is to do one at school. I take my kids around campus for a class period, just walking, stopping to write, and moving on, then doing a read-around when we get back to the room, or even waiting until the next day for the reading.

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BOOK RELEASE PARTY



Attendees listen as Melanie Plesh reads her selection from SLWP's *Katrina* book. (Jacmels, March 2007)

SLWP held its first "Book Release" party at Jacmel Inn on March 3 to celebrate the printing of three anthologies. Authors of the 2006 Summer Anthology (*I'm a Writer Now*), the 2006 Advanced Anthology (*Teaching Lives*), and *Katrina: In Their Own Words* gathered with friends, family, and fellow SLWP supporters to

celebrate the release of these books. Celebrants enjoyed wine and a buffet, listened to a live broadcast of the new SLWP radio program *Teaching Lives*, featuring the writings of six teacher consultants, and heard readings by Melanie Plesh and Angela Corkern.



Advanced Marathon

Members of the Advanced Institute met on May 12 in Covington to write together during a Covington Marathon and to hold a pre-institute dinner at Vineyards, where participants exchanged books of "creative nonfiction" with each other to be read in conjunction with the Institute. The focus of this year's institute is "Teaching and Writing Creative Nonfiction." Members of the Institute,

which meets June 10-21, include:

Tracy Ferrington
George Dorrill
David Jumonville
Vicky Tangi
Patsy Koksal
Dayne Sherman
Annabel Servat
Robert Weathersby
Jeralyn Spiehler
Brant Osborn
Christie Atkins
Leigh Comacho-Rourke
Beth Calloway

YOUNG WRITERS CAMP



The YWC will be coordinated by Mary Koepp and India Babin, and will take place July 23-27, Mon.-Fri., in the Lab School at SLU. Cost is \$100, and application materials are available by going to the SLU main web page and clicking on "Summer Activities."

"TEACHING LIVES" RADIO SHOW

KSLU general manager Todd Delaney hit another home run for the writing project with his recent production of *Teaching Lives*, a program of teaching stories based on the writings of 2006 Advanced Institute members. Todd had previously produced award-winning programs on SLWP's Writing Marathons as well as a program entitled *Katrina: In their Own Words*, which contained writing and music by SLWP TC's and

their students. Todd's newest program, broadcast on March - , contains readings which detail the struggles and joys of teaching by Mary Koepp, Margaret Westmoreland, Tracy Ferrington, Annabel Servat, and David Jumonville. A copy of the program was inserted into anthologies of the same title. Listeners can hear any of Todd's Writing Project programs by going to the KSLU website, which is located on the SLU main webpage



Advanced Marathon participants gather at the Covington Farmer's Market. (May 2007)

Things That Crawl Around Hammond Not Directly Related to Insects (On the Hammond Marathon – March 3, 2007)



by Terry O'Mara

Note: The events that follow may or may not have happened exactly as described due to memory failure and ecstatic brain malfunctions.

The morning kicked off about 9:30 AM at PJ's Coffee in the old town. I continued writing on a piece of short fiction until friendly writer life surfaced. The piece about a society lady is still only about a page long, perhaps a summer project. George sur-

faces. Where did he come from? He always seems to be quietly waiting. A newcomer arrives...nice to meet you Dayne, a librarian slash author. We talk briefly. Richard arrives and soon the rest of the crew. Maps and brochures are distributed, and we proclaim ourselves writers once again. Was there ever any doubt? Don't answer that. I went with Angela, Beth, and Vicki (I think) to Garrison's Coffee on Cate St. where we sat and conversated outside and

then inside. We moved inward because I had forgotten a hat, and bald, in addition to being beautiful, burns quite nicely. Inside we sat at some unique tables, seemingly sprouting. I wrote a poem which began, "Metal vines pine away up table trunks and branches." It ended up being about the paradox of growth under stark restraint. We read around. From there I ate lunch with marathon walkers at a little Italian restaurant, Il Giardino. George, Brant, Jeralyn, and I went to Red, White, and Brew soon after for beer, wine, and chocolate. The girl working there, I discov-

ered, is a former student of mine. We wrote there for a time. I wrote a piece entitled simply "Life" exploring the topic using three quotes about life as a collective vessel which went nowhere in particular. We then meandered to the read-around meeting place. At Brady's we sat on the outside patio on wrought iron in the shade of a beautiful blonde waitress who I unsuccessful asked to join us at Jacmel's that night. I dare say, she kicked London's butt. That's life. I read the "Life" essay, and we drank and read our thought of the day, a good day with good people.



SLWP Teacher Selected as Educational Ambassador

SLWP Teacher Consultant Beth Meyers was recently selected to participate in the Toyota International Teacher Program. Beth, along with forty other teachers

nation-wide, will travel to Japan as "Educational Ambassadors" to study Japan's educational, economic, cultural, and governmental systems. Beth will use her ex-

periences in Japan to implement an impact plan for her school, dis-



from page 1, Director's Corner

Advanced Writing marathon and welcome out-of-town guests, participating writers, SLWP Teacher Consultants, and friends of the Writing Project, we'll host a party in the VIP Suite of Le Richelieu Hotel. Come meet authors Kim Stafford and Sondra Perl as well as other special guests from across the country and SLWP Teacher Consultants. Please send Richard an email if you are thinking of coming.

- Advanced New Orleans Writing Marathon: JUNE 13-15 (Wed-Fri.)

Le Richelieu Hotel,
1234 Chartres St., New
Orleans
Come Any day, or



Every day!
SLWP is inviting all its TC's to join members of the Advanced Institute for the Advanced Writing Marathon in New Orleans. As usual, we are operating out of the Le Richelieu Hotel. You are invited to join us for any day of the event, or for the whole 3 day marathon. Writing starts at 10 AM, Wed., June 13, in the VIP Suite, and there will be readarounds/socials on Wednesday and Thursday afternoon at 5 pm. We end Friday with a final readaround around noon. Feel free just to drop in for a day or writing, or if you would like to spend the night, reservations are available by calling Le Richelieu (504-529-2492/800-535-9653). Tell them you are part of the Writing Project to

get their special rate (about \$80/night for a double, and free parking!). Joining us on the marathon will be the members of the Advanced Institute, writers from across the Louisiana Writing Project network and from the National Writing Project, and also special guest authors Kim Stafford ("The Muses Among Us") and Sondra Perl ("Writing True: The Art of Creative Nonfiction"). There is NO registration fee, but participants are asked to contact Richard by June 7 so we will know they are coming. Participants will receive a certificate verifying their participation and hours of professional development received.



Report from DC



Writing Project leaders and consultants converged on the Capitol in March to lobby for continued funding for the National Writing Project.

Teacher Consultant Beth Meyers, representing Southeastern Louisiana University, joined representatives from both Northwestern University and University of Louisiana at Lafayette in visiting legislative representatives for Congressmen Baker and Jindal and Senators Landrieu and Vitter. Mary Landrieu signed the support letter circulated by the National Writing Project office.



Noteworthy

- SLWP will have a presentation about "Study Groups and the National Writing Project" at the NCTE in NYC in November. Presenters are Richard Louth, Tracy Ferrington, George Dorrill, Mary Koepp, and Margaret Westmoreland.
- Jeff Wiemelt and Tasha Whitton are co-editing a new anthology for SLU's freshman English program. Essays by Richard Louth and George Dorrill written during Summer Institutes are included in the anthology, which will be used by about 3000 freshman each year.
- Richard's short story, "Growing Pains," was selected to appear in the June fiction issue of Country Roads and received a \$200 award from the magazine as one of three featured stories in their annual fiction issue. Copies of the magazine are available across the Northshore at stores, coffeehouses, and even on the street.

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from page 5, Noteworthy

- Two pieces that Louth wrote during Writing Marathons were recently published in Louisiana in Words, an anthology edited by Josh Clark for Pelican Press released in March 2007. The anthology is a series of non-fiction pieces, each capturing a minute in a Louisiana day. One of Louth's essays captures a New Orleans cop talking about "meter Nazis" in the Croissant d'Or coffeehouse one the morning while the other describes a waiter's reaction when he receives a bad tip at Pat O'Brien's one the evening. Louth states about that second piece: "I wrote it about 20 years after the actual incident while I was sitting with Kim Stafford and a writer from Acadiana one morning during the 2003 Writing Marathon. We had visited Pat O'Brien's for a cup of coffee during our first round of writing, and I had a flashback about something I had seen in that same courtyard many years before. We published a version of that piece in our Advanced anthology that year, but I revised it heavily for Louisiana in Words in order to fit their specifications, cutting out all reference to myself as well as all my philosophizing. It was a real learning experience rewriting that piece of Louisiana in Words, and it was one I learned from, as a writer, and can take back to my classroom. I learned that there is a lot of difference between pure description (taking out the "I") and reflection, and also how to edit and polish for a particular audience and purpose. I think revising and publishing this piece in particular is what turned me on to my current interest in Creative Nonfiction."

INSERVICES

SLWP recently completed a year of inservices with Covington High School as well as a series with Fontainebleau Junior High. In the Covington High series, we conducted two different faculty study groups on "Literacy" over the course of the 2006-07 year. We're now in negotiations with CHS to form a partnership in the 2007-08 year that would expand our study group offerings. Also, Tracy Ferrington (formerly Tracy Amond) took over the position of Inservice coordi-

nator, and coordinated a series of five inservices at Fontainebleau Junior High School in the fall and winter. George Dorrill, Lynne Vance, and Mary Koepp all presented as part of this series.



From the Road

by Tracy Ferrington,
SLWP Co-Director

Oak Creek Canyon

I'm leaning back in a chaise lounge with my cup of tea just like at home, but other than, the similarities end. Instead of my cardinals and squirrels at

my feeders and humidity already searching out its maximum, and the lush, damp South Louisiana flora closing in around me like a hot shroud, I am bundled up against the cold dry desert air just outside of Sedona, Arizona. I am a bit unsettled by the raw beauty of the green below me on the banks of rocky Oak Creek and **continued on page 7**

from page 2, Writing Marathons for Your Students

When they see their own campus through the eyes of a writer, they see and hear things they never noticed before.

This year I changed the format a bit to fit the campus marathon into our poetry writing. I took my class on what I called a Word Walk. This was a silent walk through the campus during which they were to look for and listen for words and phrases as fodder for poetry. We brought our

notebooks and strolled the campus silently, slipping into empty classrooms where teachers on their planning period were grading papers, eavesdropping on teachers' lectures outside their doors, and grabbing words off posters throughout the campus. We returned to the classroom and spent the next day writing found poetry using the words from our walk. The students were excited to hear some of the same words they had written down in classmates' poems.



from page 6, From the Road

the backdrop of the sun striking across the red rocks towering over me. I suppose if I lived here I would grow accustomed to the painful beauty and cloying exhilaration that borders on panic that I get from scenes such as the one before me. It is more than just beautiful scenery; it is a gentle, insistent shushing from Nature that says, “Be quiet. Be still. I was here before you, and I will be here when



you are gone.” And suddenly nothing else seems important except adjusting your senses to take in beauty almost impossible to perceive, and then your plane that didn’t take

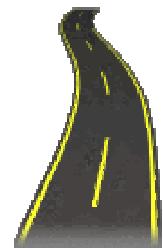
off on time, and your cramped journey surrounded by crying children and cranky stewards, the pain in your back from the long drive from Phoenix, the work you didn’t complete before you left this morning—all of it dissipates, as the red rock and blue sky pierce through the haze of your petty problems, eclipsing them until you feel small again, and you recognize that something much larger than you is in control, and you relinquish your illusion of power, your heart almost weeping with relief.

Winslow

For the record, after I checked in to La Posada (an historic boutique hotel that reminds me of Le Richelieu and where all the rooms are named for the famous people who stayed in them), I walked a couple of blocks down, put my camera on a window ledge, set the timer, and took my picture “standing on the corner in Winslow, Arizona.” Some things just have to be done. Like turning the convertible around yesterday after passing a sign that said, “Dinosaur Tracks!” But that’s another story.

After posing for my corner picture, I was tempted by the fine menu and beautiful ambience of the Turquoise Room, but instead I opted for a supper out of the cooler in my car. I prepared it curbside—a pita sandwich with baby greens, carrots and celery sticks, some sesame pretzels, and fresh strawberries—and

carried it up to my room, where I dined in the dim quiet. Indoor lighting seems subtle here in Arizona. I’ve had a hard time finding adequate light to read and write by. Maybe they need a rest from the brilliance of the sun and the impossibly blue sky and the landscape that stretches before you for days. In south Louisiana, it’s hard to find a long horizon, and the dark, lush landscape around my house makes me throw open the blinds and turn on all the lamps. Here everything is still and ancient and silent. At home it creeps in around you, tries to take over the small lawn you’ve carved out for yourself, imposes its will on you. We fight the privet hedge, the honeysuckle vine, the weeds. The wide open vistas of the Painted Desert and the unfathomable depths of the Grand Canyon have been a welcome respite for me on this trip.



This morning, though, I am having my tea in the courtyard and I feel like I am back home, perhaps on a writing marathon in the French Quarter. Doves are cooing from the roof and fluttering down noisily to splash in the large center fountain. A path leads to pink and yellow flowers and herbs, the adobe walls of the hotel providing shade. My fingers still bear the scent of the lavender and rosemary bushes that I caressed as I strolled by. I sat on one of the warm stone benches to take in the garden and looked across to see a statue of Mary. This is a beautiful place to just sit for a while and be grateful.

In a bit I’ll have to say goodbye to this place and vacate the Mary Pickford room with its little roll top desk where I wrote last night, and get back on the road. I’m headed to Santa Fe and then to Taos, where I’m spending a couple of days at Ojo Caliente. I have plans to soak in the ancient mineral springs there, to revel in the mud baths and then bake in the sun, letting the native clay pull the last remnants of stress from my body and cleanse my heart and soul. On my way there, I’ll have Jack Kerouac’s On the Road playing on the CD, the top down on the Mustang, and a beautiful summer of writing to look forward to. It’s a good life. As a lady in the courtyard told me, “In this life, you have to learn that ultimately, it’s just you. You have the right and the left, and the rest is just grace.”

[http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/
programs/slwp/index.html](http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/programs/slwp/index.html)

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Call for Technology Leadership Team

Are you interested in the effects of technology on your classroom teaching? Do you look for new ways to interest students in the same topics using online or ancillary resources? How do you think about technology in relationship to your writing? Are you more comfortable at a computer or with a pen? Why do these differences exist? What do they say about you as a writer? Why is technology such an important part of the National Writing Project? How does it bring together the members of the Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project? What technology initiatives could we plan to maximize the potential of our community?

If you would like to participate in ongoing conversations to answer these questions or offer your own, consider applying to be a member of the Technology Leadership Team for SLWP. Leadership team members will not be expected to meet frequently in person, but will use online and asynchro-

nous means to plan events and coordinate programs for SLWP. For more information, contact Tasha Whitton at nwhitton@selu.edu.

