



The Legend

West Florida Literary Federation, Inc.

www.wflf.org

December 2017

**CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF WFLF
OPEN MIC
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19**



Palafox Street (photo by Andrea)

Hope you have time to enjoy a few minutes looking through some of your old Christmas scribblings, prose or poetry, to share at **open mic December 19**. Or write something new! As we bring the year of WFLF's thirtieth anniversary to a close, let's reminisce with some writings from past *Emerald Coast Reviews* and old photos from the life span of our organization. Keep it merry!

**Bring a snack, a friend, and something to read.
Join us at 6:30 for refreshments with readings beginning at 7.
FREE OPEN TO PUBLIC**

December 2017 Legend

Pensacola Cultural Center, 400 South Jefferson, room 201, Pensacola, 32502

PRESIDENT’S LETTER

Season’s greetings to all. During this holiday time we think about the many things we are grateful for, and I am grateful for the members of the West Florida Literary Federation who continue to support us. Foo Foo fest has come and gone, and I received lots of good feedback from people who attended and enjoyed the event. See my recap in last month’s *Legend*.

There will be several board member and officer vacancies for 2018. If you are interested in serving on the board, please let me or Andrea Walker know. Board members meet once a month and since we have no paid staff, board members volunteer to fill in the gap.

Please join us for a special open mic December 19. This will serve as our Christmas Party and our birthday party as WFLF is now 30. We will have some memorabilia on display for you to see. Yes, we started back in 1987 and we are still going strong. Food and camaraderie at 6:30, program begins at 7 pm. Participants will have 5 minutes to read poetry, prose, sing, dance or do stand-up—do you have any idea how many jokes Henny Youngman could tell in five minutes?

2017 has been a good year for WFLF and I am looking forward to an even better 2018. Tell me what you think: 850-449-6771 or estanford@cox.net.

Ed Stanford

Writers Weekly Workshops

MONDAY PURE POETRY LOUNGE meets from 6 ~ 8 p.m. the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month.

susanlewisbooks@yahoo.com

TUESDAY WRITING FOR PUBLICATION 10 a.m. ~ noon. For seasoned writers and members of WFLF who are working on book-length manuscripts and seeking publication. Manuscripts and written critiques are emailed within members of the group and members discuss their comments.

The group is limited to seven writers ~ Ron Tew, tewsdays@bellsouth.net

WEDNESDAY PORTFOLIO & EXCHANGE SOCIETY ~ The Portfolio & Exchange Society Critique Group meets every Wednesday, 9:30-11:30, at the library of the First Presbyterian Church on Gregory Street in Pensacola. We're a lively group looking for writers who have a project for a year -- no matter the genre, memoir, poetry, fiction, nonfiction -- 12 months to complete a project. Since the conception of the group in January 2014, four members have published books and a fifth writer's manuscript is being finalized for press. Plus, the participants are notorious for exchanging writing tips, novels, paintings, and garage sale items. For more information contact dianeskelton@att.net

**WELCOME NEW MEMBER
LAURA RICHARDS!**

**Leisure Learning at UWF
Memoir Writing for Legacy or Publishing**

Instructor: Susan A. Lewis, Publisher and Educator
Date/Time: 8 Weeks beginning Jan. 18th, 9:00-10:30 a.m.

Description: Twelve years in the writing/selling/publishing industry gives Susan insight into all aspects of the process. Her experience watching would-be writers struggle and sometimes fail led her to help others. Memoir writing is unique - the writer already knows the story, who the characters are, etc. But the would-be writer can feel overwhelmed, confused and unsure of one's abilities. The purpose of the class is to help you: Gain self-confidence in your abilities; Determine your ultimate goal; Embrace imperfection; Understand alternate memoir structures; and Recognize and avoid the pitfalls.

Register online at UWF Leisure Learning

TAKE UP THE TORCH

WFLF needs someone to step up and direct the children’s poetry contest. After many long and fruitful

years, Susan Lewis is moving on. This project, begun by Ora Wills and Friends of the Library, would continue to flourish under the direction of a small committee who love to work with students from kindergarten through high school. Contact Andrea at Andrea48@aol.com or Susan at Susanlewisbooks@yahoo.com for more info.

WFLF 2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Several positions will be open on the 2018 Board of Directors. If you are interested in serving as an officer or as a director, WFLF can use your talents and skills in enhancing our writing community. Whether it's looking for young talented writers, helping with open mic, contributing your administrative efforts, or planning projects, the activities are fun and rewarding. Several current board members are ending their terms, so new directors and officers are welcome and needed. Please consider and let us know what position is calling your name. Thank you.

CREATIVE WRITING

Something Small

Witness the cold December sun
make shadows of oak limbs
that creep across the wooden porch
as the light of evening dims.
Gaze at the kitchen sink
stacked with empty cups and glasses.
Stand beside the decorated window
and wonder how the day passes.
Leave wrappings and ribbons on the floor,
the ornamental tree tilted toward the wall.
Stay in pajamas and drink coffee.

Make much of something small.

*Christmas Day 2016
Henry Langhorne*

What Some Grownups Remember

Some grownups remember Christmas
when childhood moments surface
in those quiet and empty rooms
where once parents, long dead,
struggled to bring them joyful surprise.
Doleful recollections are revived—
the career that never was,
the cancer, the broken marriage.

In the blur of work, food, sleep
they sigh such platitudes:
We have our health. We have
each other. Yet they know that even
these gifts will be snatched away as if
they were children wanting too much.
Their ration, randomly appointed—
to be an orange in a stocking
hung on the mantelpiece at Christmas.

*Christmas 2017
Henry Langhorne*

December 2017 Legend



Truman Capote's "A Christmas Memory" A Holiday Gem

Despite the bad rep of Christmas fruitcakes, I think they're gorgeous, tasty, and classy—like edible jewels in a little treasure chest! But my favorite association comes from Truman Capote's lyrical and moving story "A Christmas Memory."

Capote is probably best known for *In Cold Blood*, a masterpiece, when published in 1965, of a new genre, the non-fiction novel. It tells the true story of a Kansas family murdered by two drifters in 1959. Capote's experience in writing this book was explored in two movies released about the same time, *Capote* (2005), which earned a Best Actor award for Philip Seymour Hoffman, and *Infamous* (2006) with Sandra Bullock.

A character named Harper Lee plays big part in both films as Capote's real-life friend, and a writer who needs no introduction, having lived practically next door to us in Monroeville, Alabama. In fact, the character of Dill in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is based on Capote, who visited with Lee mostly in the summers when they were children.

I have both a soft spot and iron-clad respect for Southern writers, and Capote's, despite his knack with the literary journalism style of *In Cold Blood*, comes close to poetry in his fiction.

"A Christmas Memory," an autobiographical rendering of Capote's time with his 60-something distant cousin, who is, in the young narrator Buddy's words "still a child." Her first words in the story are "Oh, my, it's fruitcake weather!" and Buddy goes on to describe their annual project of getting the ingredients for (including illegal whiskey!), making, and mailing 31 fruitcakes to people they admire, like President Roosevelt.

The passage where they gather the pecans relays the excitement (the story is written in present tense) in charmingly expressed details that tell worlds about the unlikely pair's shared delights: "Together, we guide our buggy, a dilapidated baby carriage, out to the garden and into a grove of pecan trees. The buggy is mine; that is, it was bought for me when I was born. It is made of wicker, rather unraveled, and the wheels wobble like a drunkard's legs. But it is a faithful object; springtimes, we take it to the woods and fill it with flowers, herbs, wild fern for our porch pots; in the summer, we pile it with picnic paraphernalia and sugar-cane fishing poles and roll it down to the edge of a creek; it has its winter uses, too: as a truck for hauling firewood from the yard

to the kitchen, as a warm bed for Queenie, our tough little orange and white rat terrier."

The story and its companion piece "The Thanksgiving Day Visitor" (in which the cousin is called Sook) both were dramatized for TV in the '60s, with Buddy's cousin played by the fabulous Geraldine Page, an Emmy winner for the roles. Both can be found on youtube.

Living in rural Alabama in the 1930s, Sook and Buddy have little money, so for Christmas gifts, each secretly makes the other a kite. They can barely sleep on Christmas Eve: "The candle burns too short to hold. Out it goes, exposing the starlight, the stars spinning at the window like a visible caroling that slowly, slowly daybreak silences. Possibly we doze; but the beginnings of dawn splash us like cold water: we're up, wide-eyed and wandering while we wait for others to waken."

Later: "The wind is blowing, and nothing will do till we've run to a Pasture below the house where Queenie has scooted to bury her bone (and where, a winter hence, Queenie will be buried, too). There, plunging through the healthy waist-high grass, we unreel our kites, feel them twitching at the string like sky fish as they swim into the wind. Satisfied, sun-warmed, we sprawl in the grass and peel Satsumas and watch our kites cavort."

The ending is one of the most touching in literature. The two are soon separated, and one day, years later, he receives word of her death: "And when that happens, I know it. A message saying so merely confirms a piece of news some secret vein had already received, severing from me an irreplaceable part of myself, letting it loose like a kite on a broken string. That is why, walking across a school campus on this particular December morning, I keep searching the sky. As if I expected to see, rather like hearts, a lost pair of kites hurrying toward heaven."

Truman Capote's childhood held a lot of sorrows, but he wrote about certain treasured memories beautifully, and never so sweetly and powerfully as in "A Christmas Memory." You can read it online at <http://www.sailthouforth.com/2009/12/christmas-memory.html>.

Karen McAferty Morris

Review of Robert Okaji's *From Every Moment a Second*

Those who enjoy poetry that reveals much by saying little should check out Robert Okaji's new chapbook, *From Every Moment a Second*. Okaji masters white space, implication, presence and absence in this pithy yet brief collection. He mines themes of humans and nature, their adjacency and interdependence. He presents the cycles of life, of change and transformation, not only among beings themselves, but as they interact with the rest of the natural world. From this physical environment, he touches on metaphysical themes, spirituality, a heightened sense of natural order.

Suitably, he opens with "Magic," the seen and unseen, illusion. We cannot trust our eyes. Things are, but we doubt. "You give me nothing to hold, and for this/are blessed." So much going on here. Syntax befuddles logic, trips us up. "You" are blessed? We realize this "nothing" is not an absence, but an affirmation. Hence the blessing. Welcome to intangibility, the world beyond the physical. "Words conceal what the night cannot," Okaji's speaker continues, inverting perceptual convention. As if we're attending a magic show, Okaji signals that all is not as it might appear to the untrained eye.

So he trains us. In scene after scene, he reveals the hidden, lifting the veil of convention and language to uncover what words have concealed. "Mayflies" comes in couplets, like males and females, humans and insects, ability and inability, purpose and desire. The speaker witnesses death among the mating ritual, and wonders, "still I dream of flight." "Take Away" catches us off-guard with the near-realism of "the economy of dying." The speaker laments things taken away: "Grief enriches no one," yet closes with the agonizing image of a mother "cradling pain in both arms," while "The second shares her shadow." Relationships, comparative anguish – these are laid bare for us to interject ourselves, a masterful drawing in, literary magic. We begin to understand the sleight of hand, the craft.

The legerdemain twists like a tongue in cheek, particularly in "Runaway Bus," an unlikely treatment of a chest cold, ironically a fresh, light breath among deep inhalations. Even the chapbook title, excerpted from "Flame," is a bit of a pun. "Second" is not a portion of time. It is a descendant, progeny. This verbal game reminds us of the emphasis on relationships, cause and effect, development. Later, "Latitude" revisits the age-old conundrum about chickens and eggs, this time a playful tangent, complete with a frying pan, salt, and butter. "What Feet Know" reminds us at first of our childhood innocence, but compels acknowledgement of how darkness defines the light.

"To the Light Entering the Shack One December Evening" is the masterpiece of the journey, a study in light and darkness, life and death, presence and absence. Even the impermanent affirms beyond mortality. The speaker sees that "The pear tree's ghost shudders./Water pools in the depression of its absence." Following the heartbreaking "Bottom Falling,"

a tender study on the loss of death, this indirect piece reveals by questioning. "Will you leave if I open the door?" The speaker illuminates, partially, cloaking his revelation with, "You are not death, but its closest friend."

"The Resonance of No," with its ominous title, pairs the quotidian and tangible with the metaphysical and intangible. His speaker muddles through a day, unable or perhaps unwilling to shake himself of the relentless administrative demands of his father's death. Even the date he will visit the grave is unclear, but the speaker cannot escape this call. For all our daily cares consume, we must face truths, confront our mortality, feel the pit in our stomachs as we recognize the pull of the superordinate.

Breath, smoke, and breeze dominate "Every Wind." Those wisps come and go, as if cloaked and revealed, first fixed in our vision, then disappearing. Each breath is life-giving, but it must be followed by a "second." Okaji instructs, "Every wind loses itself/no matter where/it starts." If we fail the next breath, we perish. The speaker suffers, his "Grief ages one thread at a time," as he searches for someone. That someone could be anyone. No matter, the poem is about the pining. The deceased has lost itself like the wind. In "With No Mountain in View," the speaker reminisces, nearly luxuriating, then snaps back from his fantasy as "A crow flaps away." Departure, breezes, and motion resulting from wing flaps, the essential act of a bird, carry us away. We're not even sure where we're going, how the magician pulled off the trick. The speaker's moment is "seconded" by uncertainty, but seconded nonetheless. Even in departure and absence, we find ourselves in a new here.

"Privilege" clarifies Okaji's theme beyond doubt. "Every hour becomes another" opens the piece, a flag in otherwise shifting ground, as clarifying as "Strong coffee, books. A smile." We can rely on those, they're dependable. His speaker has found confidence, in the presence of a loved one, "as the lights go out/and we wonder when they'll return./not if." Here, the future looms, although Okaji steps back, realizing that, "Anything can happen, and frequently does." The title works hard, revealing the optimism and near-immortality the speaker expresses. Yet he's ready for uncertainty. The "second" is the privilege, no matter what it brings. The future is coming, unclear as it may be, it is. Even in times of loss and separation, we can rely on something to follow. With assertion, he and his loved one "open the door and step out, unhindered."

The work crescendos in the aforementioned "Flame," a study on the endurance of the human spirit amid hardship. "On the Burden of Flowering" pushes the envelope, straight from the title. The burden? The speaker's marigold had been dying. "Today it/stands tall./Yellowing." Is this life or death? Triumph or defeat? Why must the flower pursue its fatal duty? That is the burden of flowering, one the marigold assumes without hesitation.

"Two Cranes on a Snowy Pine (after Hokusai)" returns to the interdependence of things in nature. "Who knows where bird/begins and tree/ends" pulls us into a place of peace, of things and their environment. Like the marigold,

the cranes assume their own burden, amid the threat of winter. Yet there they are. Okaji then shifts from the pine to the oak, this time a rotting one in "Firewood," a seemingly immortal tree, huge, having survived burdens no man ever could. There, but soon to disappear – at the speaker's respectful hand. The human interprets his world, his humble place within it, bounded by things mightier than he could ever be, yet participating in their disappearance. Yet this respect, this near-reverie assures us that that moment will be followed by a second. The work closes with "To the Lovely Green Beetles Who Carried My Notes into the Afternoon," a study in acknowledgement and gratitude, a recognition of order, of how the speaker's words are carried off "never to be assembled./and better for it." There can be no doubt. Their impermanence is not futile. Nor have they perished. Nor are they mortal. "Such beauty should not be bound," we read, recognizing that their passing has left its mark. From that moment, a second has been born.

This brief work uncovers deep themes with a light touch, uplifting the physical to reveal the metaphysical, offering that things relate in place and time, with mortality not more than a breath, a wisp of smoke, here then gone as moments and things have seconds.

Jeff Santosuosso

Review of *Forbidden Star* by Richard Craig Hurt

ISBN 9781505682922

If you're looking for a sweet collection of short stories with great "moral of the story" impact, Richard Hurt's second collection *Forbidden Star* will fill the bill. Told with brevity, his stories are short enough to read in a few moments, ripe with insight, and fun enough to read over and over. He relates life lessons with vivid examples of real people.

Moods range from heartbreaking to hilarious, wise to foolish. Likewise, characters range from lovable to those you love to hate. Readers travel from homespun Pensacola to settings all over the country and the globe, including Honduras, Philippines, Korea, and Budapest.

A common theme that runs throughout is the aha moment. The reader, along with the character, realizes what must be or should have been done. In some cases, it's too late. In other stories, life is forgiving, and the character is given a second chance. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to teach the character his lesson.

One of the most compelling stories is the title namesake "Forbidden Star." Set during World War II, a story of love, risk, and a war of words begs the tennis question, "When should you hit a drop shot in doubles?" The answer is much grimmer than a tennis match.

My favorite humorous story is "Riding to Dinner with Uncle Edward," the story of a quirky vegetarian uncle and his sensitivity to double entendres in conversation with his niece and nephew.

The author adds texture to the book by including his poetry between the stories, giving the reader a change of tempo.

Hurt packs a great deal of human nature in an easy-to-read 220 pages. This thought-provoking collection told with gentle dignity is bound to strike a chord with readers of all interests.

Andrea Walker

Writing for the Legend

I know you like to write because you joined the West Florida Literary Federation. If you would like for other writers to read your work, please send it to me to share in the Legend. Life is entertaining, and we all have stories to tell and poetry to express. Email it to andrea48@aol.com by Jan. 1. Thanks!

**WFLF thanks Bingo Paradise
4469 Mobile Hwy, Pensacola, FL 32506
(850) 457-0067
for its continued financial support!**

December 19 – Christmas Open mic celebrating 30 years of WFLF

January 1, 2018 Membership Dues are due for 2018

January 16 - Patricia Edmisten reading from *A Longing for Wisdom* followed by open mic

January 18 – Susan Lewis' memoir writing classes begin at UWF

2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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Directors can be contacted at

WestFloridaLiteraryFederation@gmail.com

For submissions contact Editor: Andrea Walker
andrea48@aol.com

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Check out our website at www.wflf.org and “Like” us on Facebook, (under) West Florida Literary Federation.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/West-Florida-Literary-Federation-WFLF/255101747857712?ref=hl>

West Florida Literary Federation ~ Join or Renew ~ 2018

Memberships are good for one calendar year beginning January 1 and ending December 31.

Individual membership is \$30/year. New members joining after July 15, pay \$15 or may pay \$45 which also pays for the following year. Subsequent years are due annually by January 1.

One Year ~ Individual \$30 ~ Couple \$50 ~ Student \$15 ~ Two years ~ Individual \$50 ~ Couple \$85

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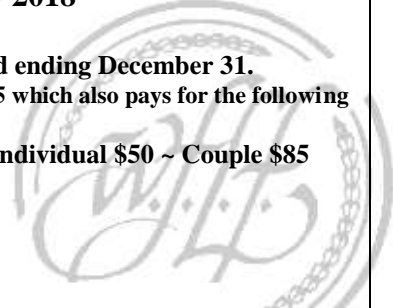
New _____ Renewal _____ Date _____

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Use PayPal at <http://wflf.org> and email this form to westfloridaliteraryfederation@gmail.com or mail your check and this form to

West Florida Literary Federation, 400 South Jefferson Street, Suite 212, Pensacola, FL 32502



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