



THE OWL'S HOOT

Official Newsletter of
The Ozarks Writers League 501(c)(3)
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Newsletter Editor: Margarite Stever

OFFICERS:

President – Larry Wood
Vice President – Mary-Lane Kamberg
Secretary – Margarite Stever
Treasurer – Ron Smith

It's 2026 and time to pay your \$30.00 OWL dues. You may use the PayPal link on our website (ozarkswritersleague.info) or mail a check to:

OWL Treasurer, Ron Smith

2772 S. Loma Linda Dr.

Loma Linda, MO 64804

**Our New OWL Website Is Live! Check it out at
ozarkswritersleague.info**

Special thanks to our new webmaster, Lynn Combs, for a great job!

OWL's Spring Conference is May 2, 2026
at Best Western Inn and Conference
Center in the Branson Room
8514 State Highway 76, Branson West, MO



**CALL (417) 338-2141 TO MAKE YOUR RESERVATION. BE SURE TO
CHOOSE THE FRONT DESK OPTION AND SPEAK WITH SOMEONE AT THE
BRANSON WEST LOCATION TO GET THE SPECIAL OWL ROOM RATE.**



Contact Margarite Stever at
authormargarite@yahoo.com
to reserve your 1/2 book table.
Please put "book table" in the
subject line.

A Few Words from President Larry Wood



When I became president of OWL in the fall of 2024, I did so with the understanding that our conferences did not have to be held in Branson, where we had traditionally met. So, I moved the 2025 conferences to Joplin, where I live. However, I also pledged when I became president that I would not completely abandon Branson; so, for our spring 2026 conference, we are going back to our ancestral home. This year, we're bringing back our art contest, and judging of entries will take place on the spot at the spring conference. We'll also kick off our 2026 adult writing contest season at the spring conference with an announcement of the categories and guidelines.

In addition, we have a good lineup of speakers. David Harrison, author of over 100 books for children, will give a two-hour workshop on writing for children. Bonnie Tesh and Margarite Stever, longtime OWL contest sponsors and judges, will provide helpful tips for entering contests. Greg Stout, author of almost 30 traditionally published books, will describe how he went about finding his publishers. Lia Wu, publisher and editor of Ozark Hollow Press, will offer tips on editing and on reading publishing contracts. I hope to see many of you in Branson on May 2 at the Branson Best Western Inn and Conference Center.

Larry Wood

OWL is in need of a Social Media Chairperson and a Fundraising Chairperson. If interested, please see a board member. We would love to have you join us!





**Get ready for a fun and
informative conference!**

Conference Agenda



9:00 a.m. Registration and book table set up.

9:25 a.m. Welcome and announcements.

9:30 a.m. Children's Book Workshop. David Harrison, author of over 100 books for children, will present a two-hour workshop on how to find a publisher for your children's book.

11:30 a.m. Break for lunch. There might also be a short break during David's presentation, but we'll play that by ear.

1:00 p.m. OWL's 2026 Adult Writing Contest. Contest chair Linda Runnebaum will announce this year's contest and tell us about the categories.

1:10 p.m. Tips for Entering Writing Contests. Margarite Stever and Bonnie Tesh, longtime sponsors and judges of one of OWL's contest categories, will provide tips on how to improve your odds of winning or placing in writing contests.

2:00 p.m. Ten-minute break.

2:10 p.m. A Path to Publication. Greg Stout, author of 29 traditionally published books, will describe how he went about finding his publishers (four different ones).

3:05 p.m. Five-minute break.

3:10 p.m. You Have a Manuscript. Now What? Lia Wu, publisher and editor of Ozark Hollow Press, will provide tips for editing manuscripts and for reading publishing contracts.





Conference Speakers



David Harrison

David Harrison's first book for children (*The Boy with a Drum*) was released in 1969 and sold over two million copies. The first of his long list of awards came in 1972 when he received the Christopher Award for *The Book of Giant Stories*. Since then, David has published over 100 original titles that have sold millions of copies. David and his wife, Sandy, live in Springfield, where an elementary school is named after him.



Bonnie Tesh

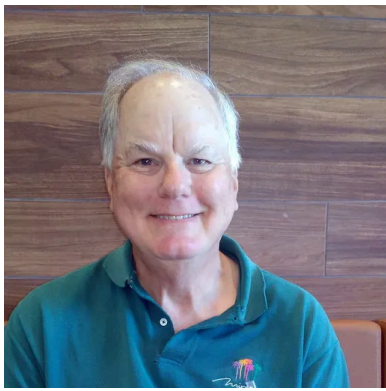
Author of suspense novel *Monarch Moon*, Bonnie K. Tesh was raised in the heart of the Missouri Ozarks. She is coauthor of the inspirational book, *I'll Push, You Steer; the Definitive Guide to Stumbling Through Life with Blinders On*. Her work has appeared in anthologies, regional magazines and newspapers. She has won numerous awards for her short stories, poems and essays.



Margarite Stever

Margarite Stever is an award-winning author who grew up in Asbury, a tiny Missouri town of just over 200 people. Though she now lives in a much larger city, she stays true to her roots. She has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Missouri Southern State University. She is a member of Joplin Writers' Guild, Missouri Writers Guild, Sleuths' Ink Mystery Writers, and serves on the boards of Ozarks Writers League and Ozarks Romance Authors.

She has published two books, *Sally's Secret Legacy*, and *Moonbeams and Ashes*. Her work has appeared in several journals, magazines, and anthologies including: *Romance, Poetry, Mystery and More: An Anthology* by Ozarks Romance Authors Members, *Chicken Soup for the Soul: It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas*, *Seasons of the Four States*, *Anthology 2019 Sleuths' Ink Mystery Writers*, *Missouri's Emerging Writers*, *Legends: Passion Pages*, *50-Word Stories* website, and *Writer's Digest: Show Us Your Shorts*. You can visit her website at www.margaritestever.com. Her seeds of wisdom and joy can be seen on her blog at <http://ozarksmaven.com>.



Greg Stout

Greg's background includes 27 years as an executive in the automotive industry and twelve years as a teacher of American history, language arts, reading, drama, film criticism and Latin in the public school system in suburban Chicago. He holds a BA in economics from the University of Kansas and a Master of Arts in education from Aurora University.

Greg has published 22 books on the history of American railroads, a logical outcome of having grown up in a family of professional railroaders. His first title, *Route of the Eagles*, a history of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, was released in 1995. He has also published two YA novels and five Jackson Gamble PI mysteries. His first work of fiction, a YA novel entitled *Gideon's Ghost*, was drawn from actual experiences that took place during an extended visit with relatives in a small town in Missouri during the mid-1960s. Greg's mystery novel, *Lost Little Girl* recently won the prestigious Private Eye Writers Shamus Award. Keeping company with Mickey Spillane!

Retired from the day-to-day work force, Greg still writes for at least two hours every day, and his advice to aspiring writers is, "Keep reading, keep writing, and if your dream is to one day see your name in print, never, ever give up."

Greg resides with his wife and two cats in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.



Lia Wu

Lia Wu describes herself as half-Chinese, wholly ADHD, and hopelessly nerdy. She taught middle and high school English for three years, then was called crazy when she told her students she missed writing essays and was going back to graduate school to get her doctorate degree. Born in Kansas and raised in Missouri, Lia earned her M.A. in publishing under New York Times bestselling author Kevin J. Anderson at Western Colorado University, and she is currently a PhD candidate in English at the

University of Arkansas with a focus on rhetoric and composition. Her stories "Tail-End" and "The Ties That Bind" have appeared in the anthologies *Feisty Felines* and *Other Fantastical Familiars* and *Chaotic Cupids: When Love Goes Awry*. Editor and publisher with Ozark Hollow Press, Lia has had the honor of working with many wonderful authors, including the Ozarks Writers League's own Rochelle Wisoff-Fields, Stephen L. Brayton, B.L. Thoma, Nancy Hartney, and Linda Laughlin (and more forthcoming).



THE OWL ART CONTEST RETURNS!

Calling All OWL Artists—Let's See Your Best Work This Spring Conference Art Contest

As we gear up for the 2026 Spring Conference on MAY 2ND in Branson, Missouri, I want to send out a friendly nudge—or maybe a gentle Hoot—to all our creative members. Our Spring OWL Art Contest is open for entries, and we'd love to see far more of your talent on display.

Whether you paint, sketch, photograph, collage, or any mixed mediums in ways only you can, this is your moment to shine. We have three categories this year:

There are three categories in which to enter your original work. You may enter up to two items in each category. There is no entry fee this year, but please let us know what you are bringing. No generated art.

Category Descriptions

1. **Drawing/Painting/Paper**—You can include any two entries from the following: Drawings and Paintings Pen, Ink, Pencil, Charcoal, Watercolor, Acrylics, Oil, Liquid Art and Flow Painting, Scrolling, Greeting Cards, Embellishment, Origami, Kirigami Quilling. Painting on things other than paper: Rocks, Blown Eggs, Wood, Tools, etc.
Drawing/Painting/Paper

1st Place \$25

2nd Place \$15

3rd Place \$10



2. **Photography**—Can include any two entries from the following: Matted 4X6" photo, Matted 8X10" Photo.

1st Place \$25

2nd Place \$15

3rd Place \$10

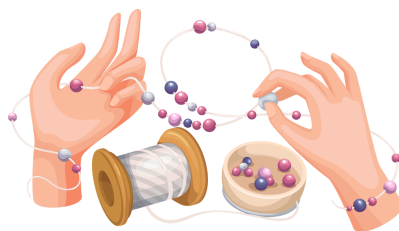


3. **Dimensional Art**—Can include any two entries from the following: Tie Fishing Lure, Leather, Wire, Rope, Basket Weaving, Bamboo, Corn Cob, Leaf Art, Walnut Shells, Macramé, Carving, Whittling, Woodworking, Woodburning, Engraving, Weaving, Glass Itching, Epoxy Resin Art, Chainsaw Art, Duct Tape Art, Wine Cork, Stained Glass, Bird Feeder, Fidgets, Mosaic, Wind Chimes, Coasters, Enamel, Marble Art, Sand Art, Shell Art, Silk Screening, Solar printing, Paper Making, Candles, Foil, Dried flowers, Sand, Cloisonne Enamel, Magnets, Filigree, Pinecones, Acorns, Ceramics, Suncatchers, Polymer Clay, Clay Pots, Floral, Popsicle Sticks, Paper Embroidery, Sewing, Buttons, Punch, Aluminum Can, String Art Center Piece, An Ornament, Quilt Block, Crocheting, Embroidery, Jewelry, Needle Point, Sewing, Cross Stitching, Buttons, Punch, Aluminum Can, Center Piece, Quilt Block, Crocheting, Ceramics, Jewelry, Knitting. Any handmade article, Etc.

1st Place \$25

2nd Place \$15

3rd Place \$10



Instructions Summary

1. You may enter up to two items in each category.
2. Do not have your name showing on any item entered.
3. Turn in your items at 8:45 upon arrival, before the meeting.
4. Pick your entries up at the end of the meeting or make arrangements with a friend to get them for you. Your items will not be mailed to you.
5. If your item needs special support for viewing, please provide it.
6. Any piece that has ever won first place in the past may not be entered again.
7. To enter your piece, or questions, **email Rose Heaser at 2rose.heaser@gmail.com** with the below information. Incomplete entries will not be accepted for voting. (Let Rose know of your problem.) Include the following information in your email:

Entry Form to be emailed for each entry:

- a. Your Name
- b. Phone Number
- c. Category
- d. Description of submission with approximate dimensions



Around the first of each month, we post members' news of sales, acceptances, contest wins, and other writerly good news on the website.

Send a brief notice to veda@vedaboydjones.com by the 25th of each month about your news. Remember, the deadline is the 25th of each month.

To keep it simple, write your news in third person, such as: Your name sold a short story, "short story title," to magazine—issue dated XXXX, 2026." If you've sold a book, be sure to mention the publisher and when the book will be released.

Our goal is for members to develop a community of writers who celebrate and are inspired by each other's good news.

March Kudos

John Crawford has been on the contest circuit. Fall Poetry Contest honors: Mississippi Poetry Society, 2nd and 3rd places; Missouri State Poetry Society, 2nd place; Pennsylvania Poetry Society, 3rd place; Arizona State Poetry Society, 1st place; Ohio Poetry Society, 4 honorable mentions.

In Monthly Member awards: Mississippi Poetry Society, 2nd and 3rd places: Arizona State Poetry Society, 1st place in traditional, 1st place in rhyme, and 1st place in theme of beauty. His work "It Had to Be," was published in California Quarterly, winter 2025; "Ode to Spam" was published in Peninsula Poets, fall 2025; and the Hot Springs Sentinel-Record published his lyrical poems bi-weekly in fall 2025.

Lauri Mays' middle grade novel, [The Dragon's Foot](#), launched in January. This is her first work of fiction, but she also has two devotionals in print.

Kelly Reddin has good news. She'll be the featured author in the April Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) newsletter for the KS/MO region. Additionally, her books will be recorded for the Wolfner Library for the reading impaired in Jefferson City. She will be reading them as the author.

Larry Wood's latest nonfiction book, [Gangster Queen Bonnie Parker and Other Murderous Women of Missouri](#), was released by The History Press in early February.



Mary Cambron-Collard's action fantasy novel, [Another Bigfoot Tale: Swamp World](#), was published in January.

Veda Boyd Jones's mainstream Lost Creek Novel series is now three books strong with the release of [One Block Down Main](#). Book one, [The West End of Main](#), and book two, [309 Main Street](#), are all available on Amazon as e-books.

Cassandra Jordan has two stories, "To Have and To Hold" and "The Flip Side," in the Raven's Inn Press anthology, [The Vault of Terror, Tales to Tell](#). Both stories had previously won in the White Rivers Writers Contest. "The Flip Side" was last year's First Place winner and also appeared in Del Garrett's online magazine.

Albert Morrow's short story, "The Priest with No Name," was just published in [Under the Cold Prairie Moon](#), an anthology published by Saddlebag Dispatches magazine. Albert recently was interviewed on the Authors Edge radio show of KXOK 102.9 in St. Louis.

Ron Smith finished first in the annual Joplin Writer's Guild Valentine/Romance Short Story Contest, and took third place in the Always Buying Books Historical Fiction Article Contest

Lonnie Whitaker's memoir, [The Way We Were: Personal Reflections on Life in the Ozarks](#), Scrivener Oak Press, a collection of 50 essays, was reviewed and recommended by the editors of Missouri Life magazine newsletter. They wrote, "The easy-to-read remembrances will delight not only other Ozarkers but also others interested in Missouri in the 1950s and '60s." Lonnie's three-part newspaper article, "An Ozark Skeptic Journeys to a UFO Conference," won first place in the MO Writers Guild annual contest. This is the third consecutive year that he has won this award.