



Detroit Working Writers

DWW Member Profile

Award-winning historian and author, Virginia Parker, is a past president of DWW (1995-97), who earned a B.A. in history at Michigan State University and an M.S. in historic preservation, with a concentration in heritage interpretation, at Eastern Michigan University. She has written three books. Her novel, "The Water's Edge," a saga of seventeenth-century England and the New World, won two national awards, including a Book of the Year Award from ForeWord Magazine. She has also written two books of local folklore with the most recent being, "Ghost Stories from Canton, second edition."

Parker has written many articles for magazines and newspapers. She began her professional career as a high school history teacher. As a professional speaker, she appears frequently at universities, at writing and history conferences on the state and national levels, and at meetings with professional and community organizations.

Parker is the owner of Snowy Creek Press, LLC, a company that publishes books and offers a wide variety of writing and editing services, professional development seminars, and special projects that include writing company histories.

Why do you love being a writer?

In addition to being a writer, I have always been a teacher. For me, writing and teaching are two sides of the same coin. The ability to share knowledge, encourage thoughtful reflection, and to use the written and spoken word to help others understand themselves and the world around them is what drives me. Hearing from readers is a delight.

What writers have helped you become a better writer?

The manuscript critique workshops with other professional writers in Detroit Working Writers (DWW) have been the single greatest influence. I benefited not only from the perspectives offered about my writing, but I also developed insights from the process of critiquing other professional writers' work.

What are your top three to five tips to help writers hone their ability?

Read a wide variety of both fiction and nonfiction.

Participate in manuscript critiques workshops with other polished writers and be open to the constructive criticism.

Read your work out loud to others because you will become aware of rough spots you did not see or even hear when reading out loud to yourself.

Accept gracefully the need to cut material you may love but that either slows the pace or does not move your story forward.

The rewriting phase requires patience because the editing process involves gradual pruning.

Each time you correct obvious problems, new issues are able to rise to the surface that you did not see before. The reward is that you produce skillful writing that appears to have flowed effortlessly!

What attributes do you think are absolutely essential for writers to have?

Writing for writers is like breathing; it is something you must do. Writers must be highly self-disciplined, patient and able to persevere undaunted by rejection slips.

What prompt(s) inspires you to write?

Probably too much! Everything around a writer prompts him or her to say, "Now, there's a story!" For that reason, on projects of my choosing, I focus on the topics about which I care deeply and can live with for a long time. Whether writing fiction or nonfiction, I care about the human experiences that drive the story. However, as is the case with most writers, I take on a considerable amount of contract-writing projects, which reduces the time available for the creative projects.

Where/how do you like to write (on a computer, longhand on tablets, with music, with snacks?)

I write on a computer. Although I put in full work days and can write for long hours, my most creative time is in the morning. When I need to clear my mind, I gaze out the window at my garden for a few minutes, sometimes with a cup of coffee or tea, and that refreshes my creative spirit.

What are your current and upcoming writing projects?

I have a number of contract projects underway. On the creative side, I am working on a book about time and stress management, which complements a series of workshops that I give. In addition, I'm working on the sequel to "The Water's Edge," which begins with the Salem witchcraft trials.

Web posted by Bethany Broadwell on Dec. 6, 2005.