

FEATURES

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All the places you can write

AKeyla Walker

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Nancy Lanthier Carroll is a self-proclaimed natural writer. Beginning with short stories at the age of nine, Carroll recalls using story-telling as a means to her entertainment. Without television, the 70-year-old Duluth, Minnesota native reminisces on her childhood; reading books and playing games with her parents. Through reading, Carroll recognized that writers had a creative ability – using wordplay to express themselves. Inspired, Carroll set out to discover where writing could lead her.

I met Nancy at a local bagel shop. The afternoon sunlight poured in on just one side, leaving the shop dimly lit. The uncared-for tables told me that I had just missed the morning rush. Looking at all of the seating choices, I quickly realized I was nervous.

Sitting down in a wide and low armchair, I pre-occupied my anxiousness by thumbing through emails. “You must be AKeyla”, a very large and eager smile met my eyes as I looked up from my phone. Greeting me with a firm and warm shake of the hand, Carroll began cleaning her chair before making herself comfortable alongside me. Confident in leading, she came prepared with notes and even started out interviewing me.

Impressed with her demeanor, I was stunned when Carroll revealed, “I never thought I could be a writer so I went into theatre. I wanted to be Betty Davis or Joan Crawford – they were my idols

because they were character actors.”

As a University of Wisconsin-Superior student, Carroll sought out another creative outlet that would intertwine her love for literature and acting – writing. Fifty years ago, the major was not seen as suited for women, as Carroll noted, “there were three things that a woman could go into: nursing, secretary, or teacher.” Carroll quickly realized that her enrollment into theatre would not lead to a stable source of post-graduation income. Carroll knew she could not be a caretaker or nurse, and “refused to be a secretary to some egotistical man.”

“**Writing is like breathing for me, something I have always done and something I couldn’t see myself without**”

Changing her major to English and speech with the hopes of securing a job in a classroom after graduation, the 19-year-old Carroll found herself at a crossroads. After a semester as a student teacher, Carroll felt she was forcing herself into careers that were suited for women, but not for her as an individual. However, Carroll noticed a difference after going through English and speech courses. “I was now writing in a very different way than I ever had



Nancy Carroll

Photo provided by AKeyla Walker

before and, in my generation, there were not many options, so I decided to make a place for myself.”

Leaving school to pursue a career at 19, Carroll began writing for the Fashion Wagon, a family owned clothing company that provided Carroll with opportunities to write highlights in newsletters and sales ad. This led to a second job at KDHL radio in Faribault, Minnesota. At KDHL, Carroll was able to write radio commercials and learned about writing differences across mediums. These two experiences gave Carroll the confidence to pursue jobs that expanded her technical writing skills.

Carroll began working alongside her husband as an editor at a publishing company where she claims, “I truly found my niche.” Continuing as an editor at Argosy University for doctoral dissertations, Carroll was inspired to finisher her Master’s degree at 40-years-old. Carroll was able to find

ways for writing to pay the way, despite the challenges facing her as a woman. Finding her way back to creative writing, Carroll has written for the University of St. Catherine’s alum magazine, short stories for an anthology, and has published several poems.

Struggling with a family history of suicide, Carroll chooses to deal with her depression and anxiety by keeping a daily journal. “Protect yourself. As an artist we are often very vulnerable due to our sense of awareness about the world,” said Carroll when asked for advice to aspiring writers. She credited local writing groups, like Lake Superior Writers, as areas of support. These groups allow Carroll opportunities for creative outlets through workshops, networking, and professional work. “Writing can become dark if you don’t seek out the things that caused you to love it.”

I was not at all surprised by Carroll’s response

when asked what was next in life, “I have grown to appreciate a life where I no longer plan anything. Writing has led me many places, and I know it will lead me somewhere else. I am open to wherever it takes me next.”

Sharing with Nancy the similarities that I see in myself from her journey, I was reassured that writing could also take me many places. Through Nancy’s experiences I was reminded that writing is limitless and serves those individuals like Nancy and myself the opportunities to do many things we set out to accomplish while leaving room to explore new ones. For all the places that writing can take you, I believe that this is one place that many writers and all artist alike aspire to reach. A life in which the focus is in the craft, not on the value in pennies but it’s worth the quality of our lives.

Visiting writer offers new perspective

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Wisconsin author Chris Fink appeared at the Jim Dan Hill Library for the second time as part of UW-Superior’s (UWS) Visiting Writer Series, an on-campus organization that, since 2011, has brought regional authors to UWS to speak to students and read from their publications.

Fink, a college professor from Beloit, Wisc. drove through the aftermath of the recent snowstorm to the UWS campus on Thursday, Dec. 5 to guest speak in Dr. Jayson Iwen’s Advanced Fiction Writing course. Fink also read an excerpt from his new book, “Add This to the

List of Things that You Are: Stories.” This was followed by a short question and answer session and book signing.

“It’s definitely nerve-racking doing readings in front of people, but when you have a new book out you try to drive around and get as much publicity as possible. And, of course, I love meeting with college students and seeing an old friend,” said Fink.

Fink previously did a reading through the Visiting Writer Series in 2013 after the release of his first book, “Farmer’s Almanac: A work of Fiction.”

Fink’s inspiration for his collection of short stories was the idea of “Midwesterners abroad,” focusing specifically on couples and human relationships. During his reading, Fink read a scene from his short story, “Barrel Riders,” about a couple at a bar who talk with a stranger.

“I’d never been to [a reading] before, and I thought it was cool to get the author’s perspective. It gave me a lot more insight on what the book was actually about,” said junior writing major Elise Ertl.

