



University of Pittsburgh Greensburg

Creative & Professional Writing Alumnus Testimonial

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Karen Weyant

Class of 1995

I always knew I wanted to be a writer. When I was a child, I used to draw picture books to give to my family and friends. As I grew older, I tried to take advantage of what little writing could be involved in a Blue Collar/Rust Belt town, including taking writing classes through the local arts council.

Still, I did not think that writing could be part of a serious career choice until I attended the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. It was during my composition class, taught by Judith Vollmer, that I really fell in love with writing, and during my four years at UPG, I took advantage of many of the writing classes including Fiction Writing taught by Stephen Murabito and two poetry workshops taught by Dr. Richard Blevins. I also worked on the campus newspaper. Finally, I worked as tutor in UPG's writing center where I was given the opportunity to work with student writers one-on-one. I believe that it was during this time that I seriously fell in love with the teaching of writing, as this experience followed me to two other campuses. When I was a graduate student at Clarion University I was the assistant director of the writing center, and later, as an adjunct in the Penn State system, I also worked as a tutor at Penn State DuBois's learning center.

Since graduating from UPG in 1995, I have been employed in numerous capacities where writing was important. I was a reporter for The Ridgway Record, a small daily newspaper out of Elk County, Pennsylvania, for two years. I also was an Assistant Editor for Pennsylvania English, the official literary journal of the Pennsylvania College English Association.

In 2001, I accepted a tenure line position at Jamestown Community College in Jamestown, New York. In many ways, I consider this a dream job because not only do I get to pass on my love to writing and literature to my students (I teach a variety of classes including College Composition, Writing About Literature, American Literature, Advanced Prose, and Creative Writing), but I also have time to write. I have had poems published in the following journals: 5 AM, Barn Owl Review, Caesura, Cold Mountain Review, Harpur Palate, Fourth River, Flyway, Lake Effect, Spillway, and River Styx. I am the author of two poetry chapbooks, Stealing Dust (Finishing

Line Press) and Wearing Heels in the Rust Belt (which won Main Street Rag's 2011 Chapbook contest). My poem, "The Summer I Stopped Catching Bees" was honored by Sundress Publications as a 2011 Best of the Net poem. I have also recently learned that my poem, "Yellowjackets" has been chosen by Ted Kooser, former Poet Laureate of the United States, as a featured work in his American Life in Poetry column. (published in March 2015)

Recently, I have started to explore the world of prose, and my essay, "Compromising Chiroptophobia or Why I'm Giving Up and Learning to Love the Bat" won Nassau Review's 2014 Writer Award for Prose.

I have also been honored with a New York Foundation for the Arts poetry fellowship and the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities.

I credit UPG for nurturing a beginning writer and teaching me not only to love literature and writing, but the ups and downs of the writing world, including the daily mundane tasks and frustrations of the writing life, the many rejections that come as being a writer, and of course, the bits of good news, whether this good news comes in the form of an acceptance note or a high school poetry reader who finds your work lurking around the Internet and sends the poet a big of fan mail!