

## A Brief History of Carteret Writers

By

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The origin of Carteret Writers dates back to 1983 when five writers decided to form a writers' group. The names of all five are lost to history, but Kay Stephens was one of them. She is also the one who wrote our bylaws, one of the items required for us to be registered as a corporation. Under the leadership of then president Les Ewen, we applied for and received an IRS determination making us a 501(c3) nonprofit in March, 1998. Somewhere along the way, we also acquired a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number from Dun & Bradstreet. In case you are not familiar with the term, a DUNS number is required for certain government contracts and grants.

With nonprofit status, we applied for and received grants to sponsor a local children's writing contest as well as host workshop presenters and luncheon speakers we could not otherwise afford.

Membership grew over the years and has included award-winning writers as well as wannabes in every genre you can think of. Our ages have ranged from young teenager to nonagenarian. (No, we are not naming names.)

We've held luncheon meetings in various Morehead City locations over the years including Mrs. Willis' Restaurant which was located on Bridges Street, Bountiful Bagel which was located on Arendell, Captain Bill's Waterfront Restaurant, Ruby Tuesday, and Golden Corral. Smaller genre and critique group meetings are held wherever the members find convenient – library, coffee shop, or someone's home.

In 1991, we sponsored our first writing contest. Winners received accolades, but no cash. Still, winners were thrilled to be chosen. Awards banquets were held at the Clamdigger Inn in Pine Knoll Shores. People dressed up for those sit down dinners. At some point, we offered cash prizes for first and second place. A cash prize for third place was added while Dwight Rettie was president.

Our contest categories changed over the years. One year, we tried a screen/stage play category, but received too few submissions. For our 2009 contest, we combined novel/novella and short story into one fiction category to make room for a new flash fiction category, a hot trend then and still today.

In 1992, our first edition of *Shoal* appeared with the contest winning manuscripts. In those early years, our literary journal was a simple affair, sometimes nothing more than the original 8.5 x 11 submitted pages stapled together with a plain cover and a bit of artwork sprinkled between the entries. Later, entries were retyped or rekeyed so they would all be in the same font, but that extra manual effort created typos. The 2006 edition

looked more professional. We asked winners for electronic copies of their manuscripts. Those copies were consolidated and printed professionally in the same font with a semi-glossy cover photo of the Hatteras lighthouse. Each new edition had a new cover photo. By 2010, we started printing *Shoal* in paperback book format.

Dwindling membership in 2006 - 2007 made us realize sending a monthly newsletter to members and publicizing only our contest was not enough. Sending out monthly media releases about our programs and contests increased our visibility. Announcements on WCTI 12 and public radio brought five visitors who later became members to our next meeting. Some of our speakers were interviewed on our local talk radio station. Area newspapers started picking up our releases and giving us more space. Published writers began contacting us asking if they speak at a meeting! Contest submissions increased from 129 in 2008 to 182 in 2009.

In 2008, we dipped our toes in the waters of the Internet. We were unsure how worthwhile it would be. As an experiment, then president Janet Hartman gave us free pages on her web site to promote Carteret Writers and our events. Writers began to find us via online searches. Small publications and other online sites that could only give us a few lines of text could provide a link to more information. We increased membership fifty percent. Under the next president, Debra Kaweck, we acquired our own web site and URL to give us even more visibility and content flexibility. During president Richard Knowles' tenure, we experimented with electronic contest submissions as an optional alternative to print.

Today, Carteret Writers continues to encourage the novice and cheer the successful in our ranks. Some contest winners have told us we were the first to pay them for their writing. Other saw their work in print for the first time in our *Shoal*. That early affirmation in talent means a lot. Even after writers are published, they never tire of seeing their new words published, and they never tire of the comradery they find at luncheon and critique group meetings.