**Change of venue coming for the winter Ozark Writers’ League (OWL) conference**

College of the Ozarks has surprisingly pulled out of being the host of the winter Ozark Writers' League (OWL) conference scheduled for Feb. 21, which was to feature Women in Writing and nationally recognized keynote speakers Parris Afton Bonds and August McLaughlin.

The venue had choice objections to some of the conference topics in addition to one of the speakers. The separation ends a nearly 30-year relationship between OWL and College of the Ozarks. The February conference is set to celebrate Women in Writing, and to highlight the discrimination they face in the publishing industry today.

“College of the Ozarks has never objected to our speakers or topics before," said OWL president Casey Cowan. "We've had an excellent relationship with them since 1985. They have never had an issue, or told us that they need to approve anything. They cancelled the conference without notice two weeks out. No discussion involved, even though we offered to modify the conference schedule, they still objected to the presence of August McLaughlin and Velda Brotherton."

McLaughlin has written for the Huffington Post, DAME Magazine, LiveStrong, eHow, and others on topics regarding women and body image. Among those are help topics "6 Ways to Keep Porn from Damaging Your Life and Relationships" and multiple articles on fighting eating disorders. She has interviewed celebrities like Margaret Cho and experts like Dr. Jane Greer to expose the self-esteem and body image issues women face in our society. McLaughlin speaks from a place of personal experience as a former international model and anorexia survivor. She is slated to speak at the Ozarks Writers League conference with tips on speaking publicly with confidence.

Brotherton author of historical westerns, contemporary romances, westerns, and non-fiction, she has decades of experience cultivating and mastering her craft and has been speaking about writing and related topics for years. She’s an active member of 8 writing organizations. She has won 10 awards for her work, including the 2008 Willa Literary Award from Women Writing the West. Drawing on her vast experience writing novels (particularly romances), Brotherton will be discussing love and sex scenes in fiction at the OWL conference. Her latest release, *Beyond the Moon*, is the story of a Vietnam veteran suffering from PTSD and a woman, psychologically-damaged by the loss of her husband, who found comfort and healing in each other. It has been entered for Pulitzer Prize contention for fiction in 2014.

 It includes a slate of accomplished women authors from around the country, including keynote speakers Bonds and McLaughlin, and writing workshops conducted by successful women authors like Brotherton, Jan Marler Morrill, Kay Lawson, Sylvia Dickey Smith, KD McCrite, Pamela Foster, and Ronda Del Boccio. Ironic that they now face the same discrimination when they attempt to speak about it.

Cowan said the conference is still on as planned and is currently looking to secure a new location.

The event is open to the public as attendees will enjoy presentations on the writer’s craft and the publishing industry.

Cost is $10 for attendees or $30 member dues for OWL. Membership will grant admission for all four annual conferences, with opportunities for entering writing and art contests, meetings with agents and editors, and special events like open-mike nights and member luncheons.

Visit [www.ozarkswritersleague.com](http://www.ozarkswritersleague.com) for more information.

The Grand Victorian in Branson will serve as the official hotel of the event.

Pre-event festivities will take place with dinner at Denny’s next door to the Grand Victorian and will retire at the inn following the meal. Reservations are limited so visit [hotelgrandvictorian.com](http://hotelgrandvictorian.com) or make reservations at 417-336-2935 and tell them you’re with OWL.

Tentative Schedule of Events

9:00-9:15 -- Welcome, New Business

9:15-10:45 -- Session I

            • Parris Afton Bonds & August McLaughlin -- Q&A

            • Critique Group I in Classroom A -- Dusty Richards (1st Half)

            • “Has Anyone Seen My Mojo?” -- KD McCrite (2nd Half)

10:45-11:00 -- Break

11:00-11:45 -- Session II

            • “The Ancient Art of Cursing” -- Kay Lawson (Plaster Auditorium)

            • “You’re Never Too Old for Sex” -- Velda Brotherton (Classroom A)

            • Ronda Del Boccio “The Social Media RIPPLE” -- Ronda Del Boccio (Classroom B)

11:45-1:15 -- Lunch (Chili cook-off)

1:15-2:00 -- Session III

            • Plotting -- Parris Afton Bonds (Plaster Auditorium)

            • Critique Group II -- Pamela Foster (Classroom A)

            • “If I Tell You a Hen Dips Snuff...” -- Sylvia Dickey Smith (Classroom B)

2:00-2:15 -- Break

2:15 to 3:00 -- Session IV

            • “How to Appear Publicly with Confidence for Enhanced Writing Success” -- August McLaughlin (Plaster Auditorium)

            • “Interviewing Your Characters” --Jan Morrill (Classroom B)

            • “Go Deep” -- Pamela Foster (Classroom B)

3:00-- Board Meeting

 **Ozark Writers League**

In February of 1983, a group of writers, photographers, and artists proposed the formation of an organization for the purpose of preserving Ozarks history and heritage, and fostering the literary and visual arts. Among them was Jim Martin, owner of the Branson Book & Card Shop, Jory Sherman, novelist and heartfelt writer about the Ozarks, Edith McCall, children’s and education author, Dan Saults, former editor of the Missouri Conservationist, and Cliff Edom, the father of American photojournalism.

 Amidst the grandeur of the Ozark Mountains, this band of seasoned and aspiring writers crafted a new entity that would endure for more than 30 years… inspiring, encouraging, mentoring, and celebrating the creativity of the Ozark people.

 From the beginning, members wanted to showcase their work, and the annual anthology “Ozarks Panorama” achieved this beautifully. The first edition printed 2,000 copies. By August of 1983 the first Charter member meeting was held, and OWL was born!

 OWLs were progressive from the start, eagerly listening to a demonstration from Mark Koenig about personal computers and word processors. Buzzing with new ideas, an informal gathering met on Fridays at the Red Lion Tavern in Hollister, Missouri. Dubbing themselves the Friday Afternoon Round Table Society (or FARTS), their tradition continued for more than 10 years, and laid the foundation for today’s Friday night events.

 As the seasons changed, the press began to take notice of this prolific group of writers and artists. Articles appeared in the Springfield News Leader and Branson Beacon as word began to spread about this exciting educational organization. The public was interested to know about the innovative topics speakers shared… like this new thing called “Self-Publishing”. Early lectures included editing and marketing advice, journalism tips, and playwriting for the theater, photography techniques, and genre writing.

 At the August meeting of 1985, an exciting new addition was announced… an annual Writing Contest for OWL members … which is celebrated each year by honoring the participants and winners at a November awards banquet.

 The next few years brought wider recognition to the League. Dwight Swain visited as the first nationally-acclaimed guest speaker, and Dean Shapiro of Pelican Publishing was the first visiting editor to share tips from the publishing world. With the grand new vision of the League, it was necessary to raise member dues to $10 per year in 1989, which all agreed was a good value for broadening their writing horizons.

 In 1990, the first literary agent from New York City, Nat Sobel, graced the membership, and a weekly column began to be run in the Branson newspaper to highlight member profiles. The additional publicity raised community awareness of the group, and in its 2 year run, boosted member numbers. The year closed with an unprecedented success at the November meeting – Four OWL authors sold novels in one day to guest speaker and publisher Barbara Brett of Thomas, Bouregy, and Company! More achievements followed, with publications by Ellen Gray Massey, Susan Ledbetter, Townsend Godsey, and others. And before they knew it, OWLs were celebrating 10 years of writing advancement.

 The 1990s were a time of growth and excitement, as the Echoes of the Ozarks Anthology began to be published each year to showcase member work.

 More innovation was on the way, with the introduction of a Book Fair, panel discussions, and breakout sessions. An Open-Mic night was introduced for the Friday dinner, and in 2006, OWL achieved status as a non-profit organization, and a book signing of OWL writers was held at the Ozarks Mountaineer Magazine offices. The 25th anniversary also saw OWL showcased in an exhibit at the Ralph Foster Museum, the institution of the annual Art and Photo Contest, and the publication of a member calendar.

 The new millennium brought technology changes as well, with OWL’s first website on the internet in 2004 – still maintained today, and in 2010 the member newsletter went digital. Over 200 members could now receive their meeting news and articles instantly via email, and save a few trees in the process.

What sets the Ozarks Writers League apart from others of its ilk is – and always has been – its members. They are people who care about their craft and are willing to give of their time and talents to help others and to make OWL a better organization. They are the experienced and the beginner, the famous and the aspiring.”

 May the Ozarks Writers League continue many years into the future as a source of inspiration and growth to this wonderful craft we call the Art of Writing.