

Working writers reading a sweaty success

By Jordan Laws
Staff Writer

Katie Crawford, Ken Chamlee, and Jubal Tiner presented their written work to an overstuffed crowd of students and faculty in MG 125 last Thursday, proving the community cares about The Working Writers.

The room busted at the seams with people. Extra chairs were brought in, some students sat on the floor, and the temperature reached 115°F. But everyone politely sat in their own sweat to listen to the amazing stories produced by BC's own Triumvirate of Creativity; this doesn't mean other faculty members don't produce great works—I just haven't been familiarized with them yet.

Festivities began with Crawford reading an excerpt from her work-in-progress historical novel titled "The Year of Josephine Scott" and it focusses on a female character named Jo who is in Massachusetts with her brother when the Civil War breaks out. Jo and her brother are from South Carolina and their parents write letters to them, begging them to come home due to their philosophical difference with Lincoln's Union. We were all transported to that place and situation with the description Crawford employed, sitting with Jo and her brother at a table in a bar. With appropriate lexical choices indicative of the time period, Crawford caused us all to suspend our disbelief long enough to experience what Jo saw and felt in the scene; and we believed that all of it actually happened.

That's powerful writing.

She closed her portion of the presentation with a humorous article about a rest area mishap involving red ants that dissolved her decency long enough to save her legs from the onslaught of microscopic bites that was published for the Greenville News. It was a tale of humility, of family, of doing what you have to do when everyone is watching, even her own daughters. It started as travel stories do when parents tell them: they were on the road, finally making progress, and then her daughter had to pee. They just stopped fifteen minutes ago, Crawford says. But I have to go now, her daughter replies. They ramp off to a

rest area. After bathroom breaks are finished its playtime and Katie jumps on a stump pretending it's a stage and it is but one set with thousands of angry red props. Then ants, taking this as a sign of war, return fire. All of us in the audience could relate because this has happened at one point or another and Crawford's comedic timing had us all in stitches.

She also has a book titled "Keowee Valley" and a review has been published in the Times-News.

With Crawford's funny bone enticing story at a close, Chamlee took center stage to enlarge our hearts with poetry.

Before I attended Chamlee's Literary Criticism class, my view of poetry was unfavorable. I limited it to angsty Emo stanzas about how parents suck but Chamlee proved me wrong; and continues to do so with his work.

He read two poems from his second collection titled "Logic of the Lost." The second poem stays with me because we get a glimpse of Chamlee's love for his son. In it he describes his son asking if he'll learn magic in school and asking why the water from a river doesn't go over a bridge. With heartwarming clarity, Chamlee describes snapping the river over the bridge for his son and in this instant the audience realizes the extent of his love. It is so immense that he would physically displace a river if he could. We all saw Chamlee how he truly is and were invited to steal a glance at his heart.

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His following recitations were from his book in progress about Albert Bierstadt, the American landscape painter; its working title is "Nowhere on Heaven or Earth." With these poems Chamlee proves his mastery of form and concept. In these poems the audience understands how poetry can be utilized to capture the essence of artwork. Chamlee re-paints the landscapes captured by Bierstadt with his words and the audience could see it as he spoke, we could envision this landscape with mountains stretching beyond sight.

Tiner came up to the podium to bring the presentation to a close with a piece from his story called "Ursa Major."



Photo Courtesy of Brevard Media Relations

One of the working writers professor Jubal Tiner

This story is a shining example of what words can do to the imagination; it's an ancient magic that has been perfected over time. Tiner transported us into the mind of a father who has a crying baby named Claire and no matter what the father does the baby doesn't stop crying. Upon the advice of a cashier at Kroger's, the main character visits the meat slicer who has this mystical cure for crying babies—sounds promising, right?

The father is advised to take the baby outside at night under the full moon and undress the baby completely; hold it up in the light and reveal a deep secret that hasn't been told to anyone. This is a sure-fire cure, the meat slicer says. The father does exactly what he's advised to do and instead of a silenced baby he summons a giant bear instead; great cure. But the bear doesn't harm him but rather beckons to the father. Tiner delivered truisms about the awkwardness between cashiers and people buying condoms; parenting; and life.

The Working Writers were awesome that day and they continue to be a source of inspiration for students and faculty.