



VALLEY BYLINERS NEWSLETTER



Our guest speaker for the January 14 meeting at the Harlingen Public Library. 1:30 pm will be Pat McGrath Avery . Her topic will be

“Keeping the Stories Alive.”

With her goal to bring real history alive, Pat will share some of the stories and storytelling techniques she has employed in writing, ghostwriting and editing biographies.



Pat McGrath Avery morphed from a high school English teacher and small business owner into a storyteller. In both her nonfiction and fiction titles, she focuses on the characters. In her extensive work in the military market, she has researched, interviewed and written about individuals who played a role in WWII, Korea, Vietnam and more recent wars.

Pat has authored or co-authored ten books. She is currently working on a biography of a noted nature cinematographer, John Bax. Her biographies include *They Came Home: Korean War POWs Tell*

Their Stories, *Letters from Korea*, *Sunchon Tunnel Massacre Survivors* and *The Sharon Rogers Band: Laughed Together, Cried Together, Crash & Almost Died Together*. She has written two mysteries: *Murder Takes a Ride* and *Murder is for the Birds*.

Pat McGrath Avery:

Author - *Murder is for the Birds & Murder Takes a Ride*

Co-author, *Role Call: Women's Voices and Sunchon Tunnel Massacre Survivors*

Author, *The Sharon Rogers Band; They Came Home: Korean War POWs Tell Their Stories & Letters from Korea*.

Outdoor/Travel Writer/
Book Reviewer

Blogs: iwritemyworld.com
and lukethedetective-dog.blogspot.com

Last Chance!
Register for the workshop before Jan. 1st And
save \$\$! ..send your \$35 check made out to the
Valley Byliners to Jose Alvarez, 130 Pizarro Ave.,
Rancho Viejo, Tx 78575



PUBLISH THAT BOOK!

Valley Byliners Writers Workshop

Harlingen Public Library
Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

AND YOUR ARTICLE TOO

Learn about:
Mainstream publishing
On-demand publishing
Physical self-publishing
E-books

Featuring:
Laurel Bill, award winning journalist and author

Early Registration: \$35
Mail checks payable to Valley Byliners, c/o Jose Alvarez, 130 Pizarro Ave. Rancho Viejo, TX 78575
After Jan. 1: \$40 by mail or pay at workshop, 8:30 a.m.

How to:
Choose your topic
Identify your audience
Research the Market
Make your prose sparkle
Find a great copy editor

Tips for:
Marketing plans
Book signings
Media networking
Press packages
Reviews
And lots more!

The Valley Byliners Writers Workshop presenter will be **Laurel Bill**

Who is Laurel Bill?

Third-generation Alaskan **Laurel Downing Bill** is author of the recently released Alaska history series, titled "Aunt Phil's Trunk." Volumes 1 through 4, which include about 350 historical photographs per book, feature lively stories about Alaska's colorful past. The series developed after Laurel inherited newspaper clips, research and rare Alaska history books from her Alaska historian aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson, who died in 1993. It started as a weekly newspaper column in The Anchorage Chronicle in July 2002. The column soon became one of the most popular features in the newspaper chain. She began developing the series in 2005 and published Volume 1, which covers the Great Land from early Native history up to the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, in 2006. The next three volumes appeared on the market during 2007, 2008 and 2009. With press reviews touting her work as "the most well-



researched, well-written and fun-to-read Alaska history available," the books now sell all across Alaska from stores like Barnes & Nobles and Wal-mart to small independent bookstores and gift shops.

Born in Fairbanks in 1951, Laurel moved to Juneau in 1959 after her father, Richard Downing, became the state's first commissioner of public works.

Eight years later, she began traveling when her father took a job with a company building roads and bridges around the world. She spent time in Cameroon and Liberia, in West Africa, Tanzania in East Africa, and Indonesia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

She graduated from an American high school in Mallorca, Spain, in 1969, and then attended one year of college in Leysin, Switzerland.

Laurel returned to Alaska in 1970, where she eventually met her husband, Don Bill, in Fairbanks. In 1974, the couple moved to King Salmon – a small village about 360 air miles southwest of Anchorage. There they raised their two children, Kim and Ryan, in the remote community while Don worked as area biologist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries Division and Laurel worked her way up to assistant general manager for the Bristol Bay Telephone Cooperative Inc.

After 24 years, they retired into Anchorage. That's when Laurel got a chance to go through her late historian aunt's papers. When she saw the quality of her aunt's work, she knew she needed to make it public. And she knew she needed tools to do the job right. So she enrolled at the University of Alaska to learn about writing. Laurel graduated with a degree in journalism and a minor in history in 2003.

During her junior year in college, she took an internship as a copy editor with Alaska Newspapers Inc., which published seven rural weekly newspapers. In July 2002, when the company started a new weekly paper called The Anchorage Chronicle, she became one of its main reporters – and birthed the column, "Aunt Phil's Trunk."

Other award-winning articles she authored include "Life or Meth," a Chronicle story that highlighted methamphetamine cooks, users and undercover cops in Anchorage. It earned sixth place in the nation in a William Randolph Hearst Foundation competition in 2004. "Condo Catastrophes," a four-week series appearing in the Chronicle the same year, covered the shady side of the building industry in Anchorage. It won first place from the Alaska Press Club in 2005.

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Who is Laurel Bill?

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“Blue Parka Bandit,” printed in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner in 2005, told about a gold-rush era highwayman in Alaska’s Interior and earned her second-place honors from the Alaska Press Club in 2006. That story appears in Volume 1 of her series.

Laurel is currently writing Volume 5, the last book in her “Aunt Phil’s Trunk” series, while she and her husband spend the summers in Alaska and the winters enjoying the sunshine of deep South Texas.

Her presentation will focus, among other things, on mainstream publishing, self-publishing, e-books, how to choose one's topic and identifying the book's audience, and on how to make the prose sparkle. She will also offer tips on marketing plans, book signings, press packages, book reviews, and much more.



The winner of December’s Writers Challenge was “Isadore” by **Joan Soggie**.

The other five entries were:

“Andres and Tia Sara” by **Jose Alvarez**

“An Act of Unrequited Love” by **Frank Cortazo**

“The Celebrated Jumping Flippit of Tau Ceti IV”

by **Hugh Barlow**

“Charlie (Hamburger) Galvan” by **Rudy Garcia**

“Birds, Rocks, Murder” by **Edna Ratliff**

Edna Ratliff has taken over as moderator of the Writers Challenge

Next Month’s Writing Challenge

For Valley Byliners Members

Send your short story, poem, reminiscence, essay etc., of not more than 1500 words, by Jan.11, to **Edna** at: **writerscontest2012@gmail.com**.

- Edna will re-send your entry, sans the author’s name, to the membership.
- Each member can cast his or her vote by sending an e-mail to Edna or by voting in person at the Valley Byliners meeting.
- The winning author will receive \$10.00.
- Many of the stories submitted for the challenge will be included in our next book.

Looking Ahead

Feb 7 -Narciso Martinez Cultural Arts Center Writers Forum

225 E Stenger St., San Benito on the first Tuesday of the month, 7-9 pm

Jan 9-Poetry Readings at the Harlingen Public Library

In the Auditorium on the second Monday of every month.

Readings may also include stories, not just poetry.

Jan 14-Valley Byliners 1:30 Harlingen Public Library

Speaker Pat Avery “Keeping the Stories Alive”

**Feb 11-Valley Byliners Work Shop
Get that Book Published!**

At Paragraphs On South Padre Island:

- **Saturdays** 1-3 pm— Literary Mercado

(call 956-433-5057 to confirm the event before going)

[Paragraphs Calendar](#)

For a list of more events that Valley writers might be interested in, check out **Edgar Clinton’s** website, [Writers of the Rio Grande](#).

Dues for 2012 are now due. Send your \$20 checkmade out to the Valley Byliners to Jose Alvarez, 130 Pizarro Ave., Rancho Viejo, Tx 78575 or bring it to the meeting.

Byliners are now members of the Harlingen Chamber of Commerce.

Wear your best bib and tucker to the Jan. 14 meeting. There will be a photographer to take our picture for the “Business Matters” insert in the Valley Morning Star.