

1962 Class support of the Dartmouth Writing and Rhetoric Program as a 50th reunion project inspired me to touch base with a few of our classmates who have “lived by the pen” as writers of fiction.

Steve Geller, former *Jack-O-Lantern* editor and subsequent novelist, screenwriter and Cannes Film Festival prizewinner for his screenplay of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, now lives with his family in Savannah, Georgia, where he writes novels and teaches screenwriting at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Steve reports, “I’m polishing a novel about a crazy Jew who thinks he’s Moses and so tries to stop the Civil War (story of my life!). It’s nearly 1,000 pages. I’ll need a publisher and probably an agent soon—as soon as I’ve finished the polish. I think it’s the best piece I’ve ever written.”

Steve credits Dartmouth with contributing to his career by offering “the time and opportunity to write, with elegant professional writers and men of theater to guide me along—Alex Laing and Henry Williams, especially. Furthermore, the opportunity to direct theater and film and to develop an intellectual and artistic idealism enabled me to break out of the gate earlier than most, and thus have more time to make trouble in publishing, film and theater.” About student writing today, Steve philosophically muses, “My job as a professor is not to complain, but to teach what I love, and to convey my passions to the classroom.”

As a student at Dartmouth **Bill Carpenter**, author of *The Wooden Nickel* and sundry other novels and poems, studied creative writing with Noel Perrin and Arthur Dewing. He now makes his home in Stockton Springs, Maine, and teaches writing at the College of the Atlantic. Bill regrets that “the writing life” kept him from our 45th reunion. “This summer and fall,” he says, “I cancelled everything in order to wrap up a long-term, much-procrastinated project, a novel set in Boston and on Cape Cod in 1943—the home-front years as perceived by a 12-year-old narrator. I ‘overwrote’ this novel and sent it to my agent last year at 700 pages. She wisely sent it back demanding some serious liposuction before she tried to sell it to publishers.”

Bill, like Steve, is fairly optimistic about the future of writing. “My favorite activity,” he says, “is tutorial work with four or five students who are writing novels for their senior theses. I could never have conceived of such a thing as an undergraduate, and I have to admire their focus and tenacity. Everyone talks about the death of reading and writing at the hands of faster-paced media, but in my teaching experience narrative is very much alive, and these students know that nothing can replace fiction as an instrument for examining human experience. I take more from these tutorials than I give.”

Novelist and screenwriter **William “Gatz” Hjortsberg** lives in McLeod, Montana, but I suspect at present he is traveling. He has a splendid animated homepage (www.williamhjortsberg.com) containing an amazing photographic autobiography. It is well worth a cyber-visit.

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