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In a lifetime of ups and downs, a love of reading has kept me from many a mistake. Sooner or later, people who read start hitting word-processing keys to write. I've done my share of dabbling in fiction and published a chapbook of poetry while residing in California. Since then I have concentrated on nonfiction and hope to publish a collection of my writing by next year.

Meanwhile I've begun to serve on the board of Wyoming Writers, Inc., a group that is celebrating its 50th annual conference and is making sure of a variety of festive anniversary activities. This year the conference site is in centrally-located Casper at the Ramkota Hotel from Friday, May 31, through Sunday, June 2nd. I encourage any would-be writers to join us—all ages and skills are welcome. You'll learn from industry professionals, sit at a critique table, or pitch your manuscript to a publisher.

Brochures have been distributed at various businesses and libraries in Cheyenne, Laramie, Casper, and elsewhere; plus, anyone interested can register and find pertinent details on our website,

<https://wyomingwritersinc.wildapricot.org/2024-Conference>.

I am happy to report, I recommended to the Board my writer friend Laura Pritchett, who writes and resides in Northern Colorado, has published seven novels and several nonfiction books, has won many prestigious awards, and tends to give voice to working-class individuals in her writing. She directs the MFA in Nature Writing at Western Colorado University.

In addition to her keynote address on Saturday, Pritchett will offer two workshops. The first is on experimental writing in mainstream; the second, on composing effective and respectful sex scenes.

Another conference faculty I recommended is Rodger McDaniel, a friend and one-time Wyoming lawyer, Wyoming State Senator and Wyoming State Representative. He earned a Masters in Divinity in Colorado and retired last year as pastor of Highland Presbyterian Church in Cheyenne. In 2013, McDaniel published a book on the relationship between Joseph McCarthy and Lester Hunt, "Dying for Joe McCarthy's Sins: The Suicide of Wyoming Senator Lester Hunt." His many books include "The Sagebrush Gospels," a book that retells the Gospels in a modern, albeit Western, voice. In Casper he'll offer two separate workshops, "A Recovering Lawyer's Guide to Nonfiction Storytelling," and "A Theologian's Guide to Nonfiction Storytelling."

Other workshop individuals include children's book authors and authors who've been successful writing fantasy. Poets, adventure writers, and article writers round out the offerings. We also have agents to whom to pitch and publishers from several disciplines.

The “Paddle Panel” is a perennial favorite. You may submit anonymously a first page from your writing that will be read aloud to a faculty panel. When one faculty or several faculty hear something that will make them stop reading, they hold up their paddle. Then the panel discusses what worked or didn’t work for them in that one-page offering.

If you’ve ever thought of putting pen to paper or honing something you’ve tucked away, we’d love to see you in Casper.