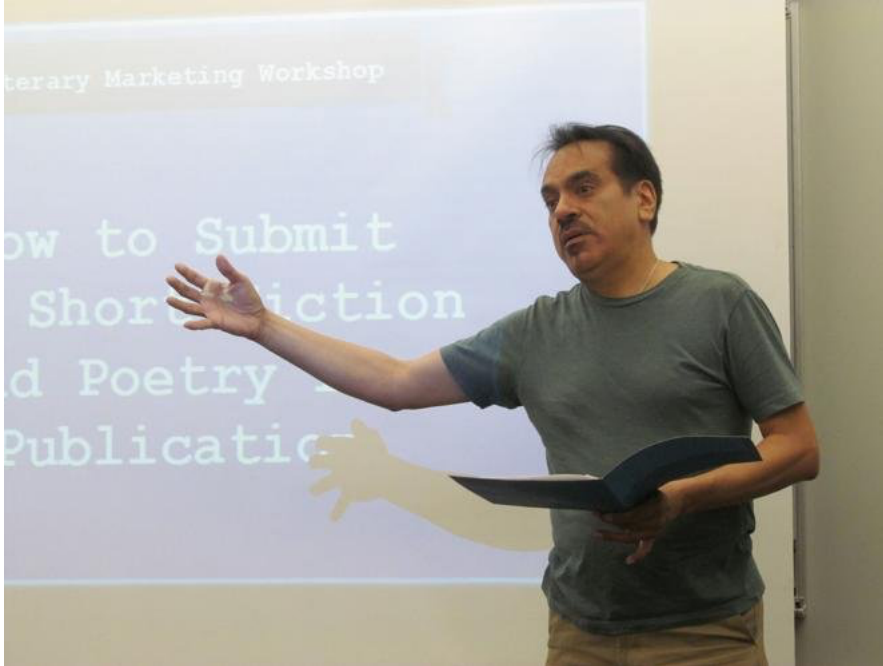


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MONDAY'S MAN A Kentucky Bard's Tale

By SETH DUKES THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE
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Robert Villanueva discusses preparing manuscripts for submission during a workshop he held at the main branch of the Hardin County Public Library in Elizabethtown on May 26, 2018.

Photo submitted

Getting to know Robert Villanueva

Favorite movie: "It's a Wonderful Life"

Favorite color: Blue

Favorite food: Doughnuts

Favorite book: "To Kill a Mockinbird"

Robert Villanueva knew from an early age that he was meant to be a writer.

"I can remember back in middle school just enjoying the process of writing and creating," he said.

He said he can remember writing everything from poems to short stories, even starting a novel his junior year of high school. He started submitting works for publication when he was 16 years old.

Villanueva kept that passion as he grew and graduated from Western Kentucky University with a journalism degree. He quickly found himself working for newspapers like The Meade County Messenger, The Greensburg Record-Herald, The Kentucky Standard, and The News-Enterprise.

He said he was drawn to writing feature stories for newspapers because they allowed him to exercise more creativity than the other topics like crime and government.

Villanueva's initial stint as a staff writer at The News-Enterprise lasted from 1989 to 1993. He came back to work for the publication a second time beginning in 2008, this time focusing specifically on features writing.

"I had made up my mind that, if there was an opportunity to work as a features writer, I felt like I shouldn't pass that up," he said.

For the next nine years, Villanueva wrote features for The News-Enterprise, evolving his writing style to the point where he felt like he needed a change.

"I felt like I had done pretty much anything that I really wanted to do in the world of features," he said.

He decided to leave the newspaper in 2017 to focus on his other writings like short stories and poems. Although leaving behind a steady paycheck requires careful planning, Villanueva said it was a challenge he felt he had to undertake.

"If you really feel like you are a writer, then you'll find a way," he said.

Even though he doesn't have a traditional boss these days, he says he still tries to hold himself accountable, acting as his own human resources manager. He even gives himself vacation time and sick time.

"If I wouldn't do it in the office, I don't do it here," said Villanueva. "Every now and then I'll work in my pajamas, but for the most part, I'll get up, get dressed, get my coffee, the whole thing."

Villanueva is also the founder of The Bard's Corner Writers' Group, a group for other writers in the area to exchange feedback and share ideas.

He said he had no intention of starting a writers' group at first. When he made up his mind that he wanted to join a group in the late 90s, he had no luck finding one locally and had to travel to Louisville. Barnes and Noble's eventually announced they'd be opening a store in Elizabethtown, and Villanueva saw his opportunity. He called, and he was told to call back in two weeks; one of the employees was thinking of starting a group. Villanueva did, only to find out that the employee had changed their mind.

He was told that if he wanted to start one, they would host it, so he decided to take the plunge.

"Labor Day in 2002 was our first meeting, and there was nobody there," he said.

Attendance started to grow and get steadier over the years according to Villanueva, with the group eventually moving to the Hardin County Public Library to host their meetings, which take place on the first and third Thursday of every month.

Since the pandemic, they've been meeting virtually via Zoom. He said they usually average between 10 and 12 writers in their meetings.

When Villanueva isn't writing, he also enjoys karaoke, playing guitar and fishing. He says he can't remember the last time he felt bored.

"There are too many things to fill my days for me to actually feel bored," he said.

For more information on Villanueva and his work, visit his website at akentuckybard.wixsite.com.

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