

## Keynote Speakers



**Margaret Coel** is the award-winning author of the Wind River series of mystery novels set among the Arapahos on the Wind River Reservation. *Winter's Child*, the 20<sup>th</sup> novel in the series, was published in September 2016. In addition, she is the author of two novels set in Denver. Her novels have appeared on numerous bestseller lists, including the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and the Denver Post.

Margaret is also the author of *Watching Eagles Soar*, an anthology of short stories. Her non-fiction articles have been published in the New York Times, American Heritage and many other publications. In addition, she is the author of five non-fiction books, including the national award-winning biography of an Arapaho chief, *Chief Left Hand*, published by the University of Oklahoma Press, and *Goin' Railroadin'*, published by the University Press of Colorado. The Colorado History Museum has included both books among the 100 best books on the history of Colorado.

She is a six-time winner of the Colorado Book Award as well as the recipient of the Colorado Humanities Lifetime Achievement Award, the High Plains Emeritus Award for a Lifetime of Outstanding Work, and the Frank Waters Award for Exemplary Writing and Literary Success. She was inducted into the Colorado Authors Hall of Fame in 2019.

A fourth-generation Coloradan, Margaret lives in Boulder.

### **Kathleen O'Neal Gear and W. Michael Gear**

will serve as duo-keynotes at the LAURA Award and DOWNING Journalism Award Banquet. They are the authors of seventy novels and over two-hundred non-fiction articles. They have seventeen-million copies in print in twenty-nine languages. Kathleen is a founding member of Women Writing the West and was inducted into the Women Who Write the West Hall of Fame in 2005. They received the "Literary Contribution Award" from the Mountain Plains Library Association in 2008. Kathleen is an award-winning archaeologist who was honored by the United States Congress in 2015 with a "Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition." Their co-authored book, *PEOPLE OF THE RAVEN*, won the Spur Award from the Western Writers of America. In 2019, Michael's novel, *THIS SCORCHED EARTH* was a finalist for the Spur Award and Kathleen's book, *MAZE MASTER*, won the International Book Award for "Best Science Fiction



novel." Their books have received numerous other recognitions, including BOOKLIST'S EDITOR'S CHOICE for Best Adult Book for Young Adults, and their mysteries have twice been selected as one of the Top Ten Southwest Books of the Year.

## Special Feature Session Guests

**Bob Boze Bell** is the president and executive editor of **True West** magazine, currently celebrating his 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the magazine business. His work has appeared in "Arizona Highways," "Playboy," "National Lampoon" and the "Arizona Republic" magazine. For ten years (2002-20012) he did a video version of "True West Moments" which ran on the Westerns Channel. Bell can currently be seen on the series "Gunslingers" which runs on the American Heroes Channel. He has also written a dozen books on Old West characters like Billy the Kid, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Wild Bill Hickok and a three-part series (so far) on Classic Gunfights which appear in True West. As for retirement, BBB says, "Work is only work if you'd rather be someplace else. And I'm exactly where I want to be." Bob will present the Downing Journalism Award as well as present a special workshop session.



Bob Boze Bell, president and executive editor of True West magazine, is the judge for the 2020 DOWNING Journalism Awards.



**Ryan Warner** is the senior host and editor of **Colorado Public Radio's** daily interview program "Colorado Matters." He regularly reports on the most important issues facing Colorado – from the state capitol, which includes a monthly interview with the Governor of Colorado – to topics concerning health, education, business, energy and the environment and arts and culture. He holds Bachelor's degrees in political science and French and a Master's degree in broadcast journalism. Ryan came to CPR from WGNU in Fort Myers, Florida where he was the founding host of that station's daily call-in talk show, Gulf Coast Live. Ryan served as assistant news director and local host of NPR's "All Things Considered" and filed stories for NPR during Hurricane Charley in 2004. Ryan previously hosted "Morning Edition" on WYSO Public Radio in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and co-created a weekend news magazine there. Prior to that, he served as news director of KOPN Community Radio in Columbia, Missouri. For two years, Ryan left public radio to report and anchor weekend news at KTIV-TV, the NBC affiliate in Sioux City, Iowa. Ryan has won numerous

awards from Public Radio News Directors Incorporated for his interviews. He's also been honored by The Associated Press. The editors of 5280 Magazine voted Ryan Top Radio Talk Show Host of 2009.

## Guest Editors and Agents



**Lauren Bridges** is the **Associate Editor at Wolfpack Publishing** and has been with the company for over four years. Along with being a part of Wolfpack she is the Managing Editor for their Christian Imprint, CKN Christian Publishing.

CKN Christian Publishing currently has 16 authors and we have published new work along with various back listed titles.

As Managing Editor for CKN she is always looking for new authors and intriguing manuscripts. We like to see authors who have multiple titles, new or back listed, and are currently working on new projects. We do publish specifically Christian work, but we accept a variety of genres.

Lauren will be acquiring manuscripts for both Wolfpack Publishing and CKN Christian Publishing. Wolfpack Genres: Series, contemporary and historical westerns, back-listed libraries. Christian Genres: Series, Romance, Amish, Historical, Mystery, Contemporary, and Inspirational. At this time we are not accepting non-fiction of any kind.

**Artie Crisp** is **Senior Acquisitions Editor with The History Press**. A native of Charleston, SC, Artie split his college education between the College of Charleston and the University of Montana, focusing on Environmental science, political science and history. After shying away from the idea of law school loans, he found his way to publishing at the behest and encouragement of his wife Jordan, Arcadia Publishing and The History Press National Sales Manager. Thanks to her intuition, Artie has spent the last five years enthusiastically commissioning and managing local and regional, nonfiction titles in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, Idaho and the Dakotas. With a particular love for music and culinary histories, he has worked on a diverse array of projects including fly fishing essays, women's histories, political retrospectives, military histories, true crime, and folklore among many others. He lives in Charleston with his wife and two sons, Arthur and Rivers. Panel session only.



**Deni Dietz** is **Developmental Editor for Five Star Publishing**. When Deni was in grade school she tried to hide her mom's hardcover *Gone With the Wind* inside her Dick and Jane reader. She got caught, learned her lesson, and hid her Mom's *Forever Amber* paperback, instead. Deni says she feels a sense of joy and



discovery when she reads a non-clichéd, character-driven novel. She wants to BE THERE, in the scene. For example, she doesn't want to know that General Santa Anna was captured in 1836. She prefers to know that he was naked except for his underpants. Deni also runs a free-lance editing service: Stray Cat Productions. Many of her clients have received starred reviews as Indie-published authors and quite a few have contracted with traditional pub houses. A former Senior Editor for Five Star's Mystery line, Deni is now a Developmental Editor for their Frontier Fiction line. Frontier Fiction genres include Historical Romance, Women's Fiction, Young Adult and Traditional Westerns, all set in the American West prior to the 1920s. A USA Today bestselling author, Deni is often asked what she likes best: writing or editing? The answer is both. After 17 published novels as **Denise Dietz** (mysteries) and **Mary Ellen Dennis** (historical fiction), Deni is still over the moon when one of her novels is contracted. And when one of her clients is offered a juicy contract she does a Snoopy dance. Frontier Fiction is temporarily closed to submissions due to COVID.

**Shannon Hassan** is a **Literary Agent with Marsal Lyon Literary Agency, LLC**. She brings a depth of business and editorial experience to her role as agent, having worked in publishing and law for more than 15 years. She represents authors of accessible literary and commercial fiction, young adult and middle grade fiction, and select nonfiction. With respect to fiction, she is drawn to fresh voices, compelling characters, and crisp prose, and enjoys both contemporary and historical settings. For nonfiction, she is interested in exceptional narratives from authors with strong platforms. Based in Boulder, Colorado, she is also eager to hear from authors with a unique perspective on the West. Before becoming an agent, she was the Acquisitions Editor at Fulcrum Publishing, and prior to that, a corporate attorney at Arnold & Porter in New York. She received her JD from Harvard and her BA from George Washington University, and she serves on the board of The Dairy Arts Center. Follow Shannon on Twitter: [@ShannonHassan](https://twitter.com/ShannonHassan).



Shannon represents MG and YA and is open to a range of stories as long as they have authentic, memorable characters: Contemporary stories with humor and heart; Magical realism and fantasy (with one foot grounded in reality); Diverse and #ownvoices stories; Thrillers and mysteries, Page-turning historical fiction. For adults, Shannon is seeking: "Book Club" reads that hit the sweet spot between literary and commercial; Literary and upmarket suspense novels that are *not* espionage-based; Multicultural stories, Immigrant stories; Historical fiction of all stripes, especially if offering a new perspective, or even a genre twist; Women's fiction that is heartfelt or humorous; Stories of the American West.



**Angie Hodapp** is the **Director of Literary Development at Nelson Literary Agency**. She holds a BA in English and secondary education and an MA in English and communication development, and she is a graduate of the Denver Publishing Institute at the University of Denver. The author of *Do You Need a Literary Agent?*, Angie has worked in language education and professional writing, editing, and publishing for more than twenty years. She is passionate about story and loves helping authors hone their craft and learn about the ever-changing business of publishing.

At Women Writing the West, Angie will be taking pitches on behalf of all four agents at Nelson Literary Agency (NLA): Kristin Nelson, Danielle Burby, Joanna Mackenzie, and Quresa Robinson. Before signing up for a pitch appointment with Angie, please visit [nelsonagency.com](http://nelsonagency.com) to find out more about what each agent there is looking to represent. Angie will not be taking pitches for screenplays, nonfiction, memoir, picture books, short-story collections, poetry, or work for the Christian/inspirational market. At this time, NLA is interested in novel-length fiction across all genres for middle grade, young adult, and adult readers. They are most interested in literary or upmarket voices in commercial packages, wonderfully realized characters, untold stories from underrepresented communities, immersive world building, and complex narrative approaches.

**Becky LeJeune** is an **Associate Agent at Bond Literary Agency**, a Denver-based agency run by Sandra Bond. Prior to joining the agency, Becky spent time working as a bookseller, a freelance cookbook editor, and an acquisitions editor for a small, regional press. She is a graduate of the Denver Publishing Institute.



Becky is actively building her client list, and is interested in cookbooks and YA and adult submissions in the following genres: horror, mystery/suspense/thriller, historical fiction, sci fi, fantasy, and general fiction. She enjoys plot driven narratives with unique settings, strong world building, and well-developed characters.



**Erin Turner** is the Editorial Director for **TwoDot Books** and **Pineapple Press**, both imprints of **Globe Pequot**, and a senior editor for **Rowman & Littlefield**, acquiring books for trade imprints including Globe Pequot and Lyons Press. For the past twenty years she's been acquiring and editing books on the American West, cookbooks, and other titles covering subjects from Maine to Hawaii and desserts to historical true crime. Recently acquired books include tales of the famous sharpshooter Annie Oakley, the scoundrel Ned Buntline, Wyatt Earp and his paramour Big Nose Kate, and the great 1903 western tour of Theodore

Roosevelt. Erin lives and works in Helena, Montana.

Currently seeking: Nonfiction, especially history and biography on the American West; cookbooks with a western theme; regional-interest titles that highlight unique features of states, national parks, or other areas; historical true crime with a strong regional focus. Very limited acceptance: historical fiction based on true events. Not accepting: general fiction, poetry, contemporary true crime, or memoir.

**Mona Neeley** has been publisher and editor of **Colorado Country Life** magazine for 26 years. She came to magazine publishing from newspaper, where she was a writer, associate editor and then editor for several small town weekly newspapers in Minnesota. She has her bachelor's degree in photojournalism from the University of Minnesota Hubbard School of Journalism. Mona works with writers on a regular basis as her small communications staff depends on freelancers each month. This gives her a great opportunity to bring a variety of writing styles and perspectives into the magazine, which is a general interest magazine published by the Colorado Rural Electric Association with a focus on Colorado lifestyles along with local electric co-op news. She is married to Bob Clifford and enjoys their two children and four grandchildren. (Attendance yet to be confirmed.)



## Guest Entertainers



**Dr. Linda Allen** is a songwriter, performer and educator who has been a voice for women since the late 1960s through songs, concerts and workshops. She has done research and presentations for the Washington Women's Heritage Project, the Women's History Consortium, the Humanities Commission, the Washington Centennial Commission and multiple museums, schools, libraries and other venues. Her songs, workshops and multi-media presentations on women's work, history, spirituality and current challenges span twelve CDs of original songs and tours throughout Washington and beyond. Linda's 53-minute film will be presented after the DOWNING Journalism Award and LAURA Short Fiction Award ceremony. She will be available for discussion after the film.

**Wes Hamil** and his wife **Victoria** are long time travelers of the Music Trail, with careers spanning four decades. Their journey has provided them the opportunity to collaborate with Oscar and Grammy winners, legends and brilliant unknowns, and appear on stages from Los Angeles to New York, Austin to London, South Africa to New Zealand, France and Holland. Wes has cowritten with Academy Award winner Paul Williams among many others, while Victoria has lent her inspired harmonica style to projects directed by Robert Altman. She has recorded with Johnny Cash and had the honor of playing harmonica on Roy Rodger's last recording. They have worked in legendary recording studios that include Royal Studios where Al Green recorded all his hits, and have appeared onstage with songwriting legends Townes Van Zandt, Lucinda Williams, BW Stevenson and more. Their recording projects feature musicians from Rod Stewart and David Bowie's bands as well as members of Eric Clapton and Al Green's bands.

**Wes Hamil**  
Singer-Songwriter

Wes has co-written with Academy Award and Grammy winner Paul Williams and his songs have been featured in movies from Sony Films and appeared on records with Juice Springsteen, Bob Dylan, and John Lennon.

Join us for an evening of story telling, and intimate, inspiring music.....

**Victoria Hamil**  
Harmonica

Victoria has recorded with Johnny Cash, Roy Rodger, and performed in and TV work including several times on the legendary Film Director Robert Altman.

[www.weshamil.com](http://www.weshamil.com)

As a duo, the couple perform relaxed acoustic based music, which is interspersed with storytelling and often wry humor. Their concerts feature Wes's award winning song writing, which is introspective yet optimistic, and Victoria's unique and expressively soulful harmonica playing. Wes possesses a soulful tenor voice and while he takes his craft and song writing quite seriously, he resolutely takes himself less so. A Wes and Victoria show promises to be relaxed, soul stirring, story filled and infused with the decades long experience and perspective of two lives spent together traveling a cultural and musical path that has quite literally taken them around the world, in service to music and the audiences they have shared with.

*White Man Red Road* is Native American infused music based on Wes's thirty years' experience with Native ceremonies and Elders' teachings, which reflects his journey from apprentice to Sundancer. The CD was honored as Record of the Year by syndicated talk show The Colorado Wave. They will perform for us after the WILLA Literary Awards ceremony and keynote.