

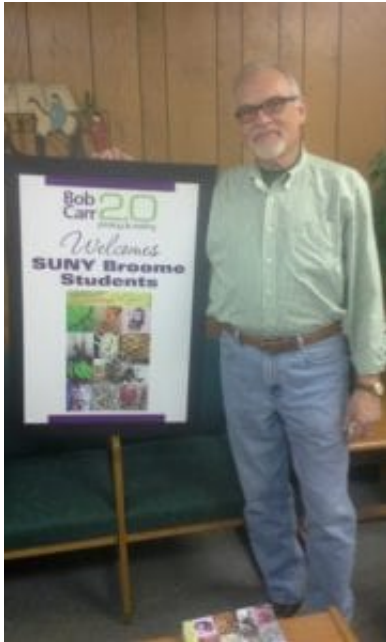
10(ish) Questions with the Chief Editor of Breaking Ground

May 18, 2015

By John Miller

Professor Chris Origer has been the chief editor of SUNY Broome's literary magazine for the past nine years. The creation of the magazine, from start to finish, is a big part of Origer's ENG 175 Creative Writing class. Starting Sept. 1, 2015, he will be the Chairperson of the English Department. I sat down with him to talk about his experiences as a writer and as the man behind *Breaking Ground*.

The theme of this year's edition was juxtaposition. It received more than 250 submissions and can be found on tables in every building on campus.



John Miller: How long have you been a professor at SUNY Broome?

Professor Origer: 22 years. I was hired in 1993 and have always worked as an English instructor.

Do you have any published stories or poems?

Most of my published work is creative nonfiction. I've had stories appear in *Fourth Genre*, *The Writer's*

Chronicle and *The Father's Book*.

What was your first published piece?

Birth of a Father in 1986. It was about the birth of my first child.

What projects are you currently working on?

I haven't had a chance to work on anything [outside of school] this semester just because I invested all my energy into the magazine. But this summer I have two that'll receive some attention. One is *Extreme Ok*; the idea started when I was watching one of those makeover reality shows (which aren't actually reality). The story is about a character who is fine with who he is. I read it [at a literary reading] up in Norwich but it still needs some work.

What is your favorite story?

I like stories that have a lot to say. Specifically, I like *The Guest* by Albert Camus, *Cathedral* by Raymond Carver and *The Death of Ivan Ilych* by Leo Tolstoy. They give a world view on how we should behave towards others... they provoke a conversation about how a character is aware of himself and/or society.

Moving on to *Breaking Ground*, how would you describe it to a student who has never seen it before?

It's a real book. I remember one year, a student submitted a poem on the day of the deadline on a ripped up, wrinkled sheet of loose leaf. Because of the condition and the way that it was submitted, we didn't read it. But I knew a professor who had this student in their class and when the magazine came out he said, "I didn't know it was a damn book!" But this is a professional publication and we invite everybody to submit their best work.

What was your favorite piece from this year's edition?

Royal Crown by Virginia Shirley. It really set the theme.

What do you want contributors to learn from this?

Confidence, delight, enthusiasm for work, professionalism and to encourage people to get stuff out there! For the [ENG 175] class, I wanted them to show them the whole process, from getting the word out to drafting rejection letters.

I'm sure you've had your work rejected before; do you have a message for people whose work was not accepted this year?

Yes, I used to have all my rejections pinned up all over my study. But I'd tell them not to lose heart. Don't lose your vision and don't get discouraged. Good works always make it into print.

The theme for the 2016 edition of *Breaking Ground* is "Feast or Famine." All fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, memoirs, artwork, photography and graphic novels must be submitted to Professor Origer, origerac@sunybroome.edu, by Monday, March 21, 2016.

Writer John Miller is a SUNY Broome student – and a contributor to 'Breaking Ground.'

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