

Southern California Writers Association Writers News

Volume 3, Number 4

April 2004



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April 17
Susan Perry,
Ph.D.

author, social
psychologist, and Internet
advice columnist

*Promoting Yourself and Your
Non-Fiction Book Proposal*

SPRING

President's Message

One of the primary services we as writers perform is by helping our fellow writers. Usually, this comes in the form of a critique of their work. We may do a great job or a not-so-great job, but we never completely fail unless the person puts the book down forever.

That failure is inexcusable.

As a former Martial Arts instructor, I'm intrigued by the parallels between teaching in the two disciplines. But I'm often more fascinated by the difference in student perception of what Martial Arts instructors and literary instructors do.

No Martial Arts instructor would dream of telling a white belt "... You have no skills. You have no business competing with black belts..." A true Martial Arts instructor would never tell a beginner how poorly he measures up against the masters, nor ridicule and laugh at his unpolished technique.

Continued on page 2, column 1

April Speaker

Susan Perry, Ph.D., author, social psychologist, and Internet advice columnist will be presenting *Promoting Yourself and Your Non-Fiction Book Proposal* at our April 17 meeting.

Dr. Perry wrote the **Los Angeles Times** bestseller, *Writing in Flow: Keys to Enhanced Creativity*. She interviewed 76 highly successful and award-winning novelists and poets for her book.

Dr. Perry has taught writing at **UCLA Extension's Writers' Program**, **UC Irvine**, **CSU Fullerton**, and other extension divisions, and regularly teaches courses for **Writer's Digest Online Workshops**.

Loving in Flow: How the Happiest Couples Get and Stay That Way is the latest of **Dr. Perry's** six nonfiction books. She interviewed three dozen exceptionally satisfied long-term couples. The book is based on their lives

as well as her personal experience.

She is a **Love Advice** columnist for AOL's **Netscape.com**, the **Second Time Around** columnist for **CouplesCompany.com**, and writes columns for two other relationship sites. She's been featured as an expert on many radio and TV programs, including **Inside Edition** and **KCBS News**.

She is also the award-winning writer of more than 800 articles, essays, and advice columns, having written for and been quoted as an expert in **Psychology Today**, **The Writer**, **Writer's Digest**, **Cosmopolitan**, **Family Circle**, **Us Weekly**, **Ladies Home Journal**, **USA Today**, **The Los Angeles Times**, **Los Angeles Magazine**, and many others.

Her site is www.BunnyApe.com.

Formerly scheduled Tina Tessina will not be able to present at this meeting.

Catherine Singer, V.P. Programming,

President's Message, cont. from page 1

Instead, he would help the young karateka with his stance, his punches, his blocks, with all the skills he needs to advance in the world of Martial Arts.

So why should we treat writers differently?

Well—believe it or not, there may be at least one legitimate reason. It seems as if every “rope belt” in the writing profession imagines himself to be a best-selling author! These people submit their material to us for help, then refuse to listen to our suggestions. Many actually believe they know more about the craft than those of us who have made a lifetime of it!

Why is that?

No one imagines that he can be a top-quality Martial Artist without putting in many years of training, of learning, of studying the techniques of the masters, of practicing, of developing one's own strengths, of finding one's own personal style.

Would you like to contribute to the *Writers News*? Comments?
Contact the editor at
kashka@compuserve.com

Membership Information

Pauline Bent V.P. Membership
atarque1@yahoo.com

Meeting Reservations

Roy King H (760) 955-5027
3kings@urs2.net

2004 Executive Committee

President	Roy King
V.P. Programming	Catherine Singer
V.P. Membership	Pauline Bent
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www.ocwriter.com

So why do these people expect it should be any different with writing?

No, my friends, one does not become a black belt overnight, nor does one become a writer overnight. It takes weeks, months, years to master even so much as the basics for beginning the journey to the intermediate level. But to those who do it—just as for those who study Martial Arts—the results are worth it!

So keep with it. Learn the basic forms. Learn the literary “blocks,” “punches,” and “kicks.”

And above all, don't ever let a literary “white belt” discourage you! Good luck and good writing!

Roy King,
President



The Writer's Reference Desk: Speaking for Writers

by Pamela Rocke

What do Dan Brown (*The Da Vinci Code*), Billy Collins (Library of Congress Poet Laureate, 2001), Walter Hunt (*Dark Wing, Dark Path*), Arthur Agatston (*The South Beach Diet*), and T. Jefferson Parker (*Cold Pursuit, Where Serpents Lie, Laguna Heat*) all have in common?

If you answer, “they're all writers,” you're right...almost. You see, there's one more thing that links them together. They are also public speakers.

Some are writers who speak to promote their books, novels, and poems. Some are speakers who write books to promote their topic. Either way, they all get up in front of rooms full of people and speak. They present their topics and promote their books.

Are you still wondering what public speaking has to do with the Southern California Writers Association?

Continued on page 3, column 1

SCWA Critique Committee

Open to members of SCWA

Fiction Jan Bailey jbay77@aol.com

Jan will review up to three chapters. Your manuscript should be double-spaced. *Mail* your mss to Jan at 15522 Aulney Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92647.

Nonfiction & Fiction Roy King 3kings@urs2.net

Roy will take any amount of writing for critique. He prefers to see the entire mss at one time. *Mail* your mss to Roy at 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394.

Poetry Dr. Joyce Wheeler

Joyce will critique up to five poems. Please *mail* your work to Joyce at 3801 Chestnut Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90807.

Speaking, cont.

Unless your name is “Stephen King” or “J.K. Rowling,” you may someday find yourself in front of a room full of people, giving a speech and promoting your book or novel.

If you attended the March 2004 SCWA luncheon meeting, you were treated to a wonderful public speaker. Laurie Thomas spoke about the art and craft of writing short stories. Her enthusiasm and ease made the two-hour presentation a pleasure to hear. Here was an example of a wonderful public speaker.

How did Thomas come to be such a talented speaker? Of course, teaching community college certainly helps. In other words, she practices often.

Do we need to start teaching classes in order to practice our public speaking skills? Not necessarily, although it wouldn't hurt. Here are several things you can do to gain more practice and expertise:

Join **Toastmasters International** (www.toastmasters.org). Toastmasters is an international non-profit organization dedicated to helping people develop their speaking skills. I've been a member of Toastmasters for several years, and couldn't ask for a more supportive group of people.

Take a speech class. Most universities and community colleges, including Saddleback Valley (www.saddleback.edu), offer a variety of classes in public speaking.

Practice at SCWA meetings. Write a two-minute blurb about yourself and your work. Practice it. At the next meeting, when the president asks if anyone has something to say, stand up and give your blurb—to a room full of people.

Pamela Rocke is a freelance writer and website designer. She has been a member of Toastmasters Challengers Club 734 for three years. Her website is located at www.prrocke.com.

Writers News, April 2004

March Highlights

Laurie Thomas, author and teacher at **Saddleback Community College** in Mission Viejo, explained the structure of a short story and how it differs from other fiction.

Short stories are the most concise of fiction with a word count of 20,000 and under. The most marketable short stories are under 10,000 words. Two subcategories of this are flash fiction or sudden fiction 250 – 1,000 words and instant fiction at 250 words or less.

Thomas recommended writers first tell their story and worry about their market later.

Thomas recommended writers first tell their story and worry about their market later.

Magazines, newsletters, trade publications, and the Internet are just a few of many purchasers of short stories. **Women's Day** publishes a 500-word mystery and a 1,000-word romance every week. The public loves short stories.

Thomas quoted William Faulkner, “In a novel you can be more careless, put a lot of stuff in it, be excused. But in a short story almost every word has got to be almost exactly right.” A story's brevity requires a careful choice of words.

A short story uses the same structural elements of fiction but differentiates by dramatizing many of these elements, as will be explained later.

The Standard Structural Paradigm

The Inciting Incident gets the story moving. Progressive Complications, obstacles arise that

your protagonist must overcome. He or she makes a Crisis Decision regarding what to do in the face of the final obstacle. A Climactic Action invoked by the Crisis Decision leads to Resolution.

The reader must be engaged by a Hook immediately. Only occasionally do the Hook and the Inciting Incident happen simultaneously. An Inciting Incident can be used as a Hook but they are not the same.

The Inciting Incident is a single event that gets the story moving, launches the character on a quest. “Think fight or flight,” Thomas says. “It doesn't always happen immediately but it better happen very fast.” It happens “offstage.” The protagonist's goal is expressly stated. The character's core need creates tension.

The Hook is a description, setting, something about the language or situation that is unusual. It piques the reader's curiosity, pulling them into the story. It can suggest themes and complications that will run throughout the story, and ironic endings. The opening lines in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Gone with the Wind* are excellent illustrations.

A short story writer rarely shows the Inciting Incident. Readers are only told about it.

A short story writer rarely shows the Inciting Incident. Readers are only told about it.

Dramatization

Progressive Complications, the “meat” of any story, are dramatized. The ante is raised and becomes more difficult every time your character does what seems to be required to reach his or her goal.

Continued on page 4, column 1

March Highlights, cont.

The character's action also illustrates the Crisis Decision.

After the Climactic Action and Crisis Decision, the Resolution is often left up to the readers.

After the Climactic Action and Crisis Decision, the Resolution is often left up to the readers. They should be given enough information in the story to decide how it ends. Do not leave the reader confused.

Short story is one of the most interactive mediums in fiction. It invites the reader to fill in the blanks and think.

A story must have structure. Old fairy tales have obvious structure. The message or lesson, usually culturally specific, fleshes out the story.

Backstory is used to increase tension.

Repetition can be a good device when used wisely.

The use of three delineates another hallmark of short stories. Always used in fairy tales, it breaks ties and resonates with readers.

Many short stories have an element of surprise.

Coming Full Circle

The opening scene is a panorama shot, which complications throughout the story distill in the end.

As an aside, Thomas begs, "Don't open with a dream." Too many people do this. "At least wait until you've sold your first book."

Catherine Singer, V.P. Programming,

To purchase tapes of this program, contact Tape Librarian Sharon Walters at: swwaltz@surfside.net.

Laurie Thomas' Books for Writers and Short Story Lovers

The Portable Dorothy Parker, by Dorothy Parker. More fabulous one-liners for writers. "I hate writing but I love having writ." A great observer of the human condition. Says Thomas, "Read her stories out loud. You will learn about subtext."

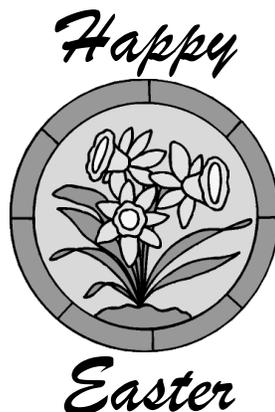
James Garners, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*.

Twisted classic tales.

Unflowered Aloes - *Why literary success is a product of chance, not destiny*, posted on the Boston Review site <http://www.bostonreview.net/BR25.2/bissell.html>

For story structure read Jack Zipes' book, *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm: Third Edition*. He translated all 250 tales by the Grimm brothers and added 29 rare tales not included in the German collection. Zipes is a professor of German at the University of Minnesota and one of the world's experts on children's literature.

Catherine Singer



Los Angeles Times Festival of Books

April 24 and 25, 2004
UCLA Campus

For more information, go to www.latimes.com/extras/festivalofbooks/ticketing.html



The Festival of Books features 95 panels and 7 stages. Panel and stage information for the 2004 Festival was not available until at press time.

Authors:

Clive Barker
T.C. Boyle
Ray Bradbury
Iris Chang
Sandra Cisneros
Mary Higgins Clark
Carrie Fisher
Elmore Leonard
Anna Quindlen
Laura Schlessinger
Jane Smiley
Henry Winkler
Terry Wolverton
and many, many more...

SCWA News & Announcements

Connie Nanasy - *Love and Betrayal in Texas: A Novel About a Trusting Woman, Her Lovers, Children, Controlling Parents and Their Devastating Secrets* (Tafford Publishing) was published in January 2004.

Nanasy is a long-time member of SCWA. Nanasy, author of *Roamin' Around Planet Earth*, a travel adventure book based on travels in 60 countries, was published in 1998. She is also author of *Growing Up in East Texas* (her memoirs) and *Life, Laughs, and Love*.

New Critique Group Forming

New member **Veronica Zerrer** is launching a critique group in the City of Orange area. Zerrer is looking for fiction writers. All genres are welcome. The group will grow to approximately ten writers.

Zerrer is an experienced critique group member, having participated in a group for 14 years facilitated by the late Leonard Bishop.

Anyone interested in joining should contact Zerrer through e-mail at vzerrer@earthlink.net.

Club Business

Catherine Singer is taking over SCWA's Director of Public Relations position for Linda Coyne, who is unable to continue her duties. Thank you, Linda, for the time and effort you've given to the club.

By-Laws Committee

A committee was formed during the February general meeting to review and rewrite the club's constitution and bylaws. All feedback, suggestions, and advice are welcome from SCWA members.

Please forward them to Roy King so that he may pass them along to committee members.

The committee will present the revised document to club members at an upcoming meeting. Members will have ample time to review and discuss the new document before being asked to vote upon it.

Seminars

Navigating Hollywood: Producing Your Career.

Storyworks Entertainment has designed a new seminar for writers, actors, and directors who want to expand into production.

The three-day event will be held at the Sheraton Universal Hotel in Universal City, Los Angeles, May 21 - 24, 2004. The cost is \$495.

Hotel room fees are not included. Special rates of \$149 per night are available. Call the hotel at (818) 980-1212.

For more information on this program, please visit www.StoryworksEntertainment.net.

Do you have news to share? The *Writers News* wants to know. Please e-mail news about your writing career successes, failures, and in between to Pam Roche at kashka@compuserve.com.



SCWA Presents...

Gayle Brandeis

Wake Up Your Writing, On and Off Line

Saturday, May 15, 2004

Write from the senses for print publication and e-magazines.

The online magazine market grows by leaps and bounds every year. Learn more about this expanding market.



Join Gayle Brandeis as she talks about expressiveness, creativity, and the art and business of writing for e-magazines.

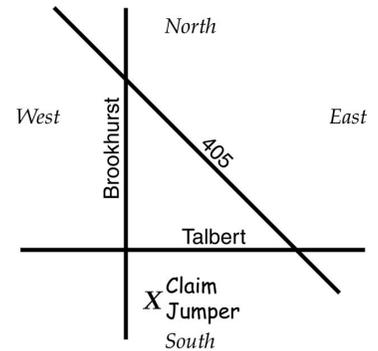
Gayle Brandeis is author of *The Book of Dead Birds* (HarperCollins), *Fruitflesh: Seeds of Inspiration for Women Who Write* (HarperCollins).

Her e-writing has been published at **i-breathe.com**, **salon.com**, **cleansheets.com**, and **desires.com**.

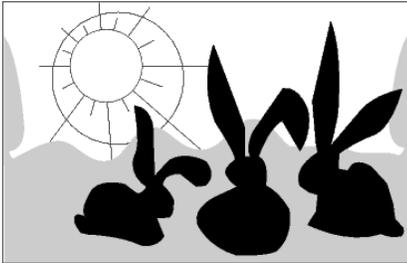
April Meeting

Saturday, April 17, 2004

Claim Jumper Restaurant
Banquet Room Entrance, rear of building
18050 Brookhurst St., Fountain Valley, CA
For directions, call (714) 963-6711



Susan Perry, Ph.D., author,
social psychologist, and Internet advice
columnist



Promoting Yourself and Your Non-Fiction Book Proposal

Registration & Networking: 9:30 a.m.
Meeting & Program: 10:00 a.m.
Lunch: 11:30 a.m.
Afternoon Program: 12:15 p.m.
Members & Non-Members: \$20.00

**Walk-ins & Guests
always welcome**

RSVP before April 12: Roy King, 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394. Check must accompany reservations. Make checks payable to SCWA.
RSVP on or after April 12: Roy King *home* (760) 955-5027; *e-mail* 3kings@urs2.net – bring check to door. For more information, go to www.ocwriter.com.

Be sure to RSVP whenever possible!

Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

Pamela Rocke,
453

23016 Lake Forest Dr., Suite A
Laguna Hills, CA 92653