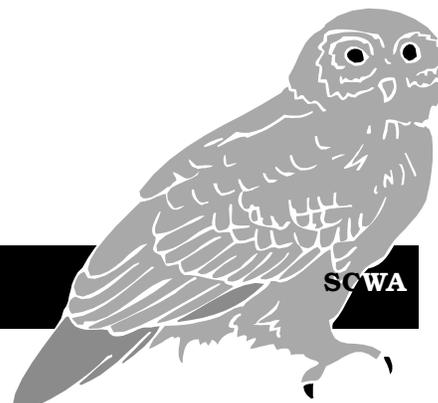


Southern California Writers Association Writers News

Volume 3, Number 2

February 2004



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February 21

Walter Hunt

science fiction writer,
novelist

*A Foot in the Door: Getting
Published and Making It a
Career*

Happy Valentine's Day



February 14

President's Message

Well, the Super Bowl is upon us with all its hype and commercialism. By the time this column reaches you, the 2004 Lombardi Trophy will be awarded to one of the Super Bowl contestants, either the New England Patriots or the Carolina Panthers.

Do you wonder what this has to do with writing? (Of course you do!)

Maybe we should take a look at the man after whom the Super Bowl Championship Trophy is named, Vince Lombardi, legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers during the 1960s. The amazing results Lombardi obtained with his players—five world championships in only nine years, starting with a team that had won all of one game the year before he took over—are often overlooked because of his legend and personality. These can both be summed up in his most famous quote, a quote he never actually made: “Winning isn’t everything; it’s the only thing.” (Of course as writers and as logicians, we know this makes no sense; if something is the only thing, then it must ipso facto be everything by definition!)

Continued on page 2, column 1

February Speaker

Science fiction writer, novelist, and Freemason, **Walter H. Hunt**, will be flying out from Massachusetts as part of book tour. He will present, *A Foot in the Door: Getting Published and Making it a Career*, at our February 21 meeting.

Tor Books has published two of his titles, *The Dark Wing* (2001) and *The Dark Path* (2003). Two additional books of his are under contract – *The Dark Ascent* (to be published in 2004) and *The Dark Crusade* (to be published in 2005).

The Dark Wing and *The Dark Path* have received excellent reviews. Critics have compared them to *Babylon 5*, the *Horatio Hornblower* adventure series, and the works of **Orson Scott Card**.

Hunt, a history major, has successfully incorporated a sense of history into his own writing. “This is a theme and character which is regrettably often lacking in works of this genre,” he says.

For the past two years, since the publication of his first novel, **Hunt** has been speaking about the business of publishing and the realm of speculative fiction. His talks at colleges, bookstores and public libraries have been very well received. He has participated in numerous panels and group discussions at science fiction and book conventions. **Hunt** has also been a member of the **Masonic Fraternity** since 1988.

*Catherine Singer, V.P. Programming,
2003*

President's Message, cont. from page 1

What Coach Lombardi actually did say was: "Winning isn't everything—but wanting to win is... The object of any competition is to win fairly, squarely, and within the rules—but to win." In his famous *What it Takes to be Number One* speech, he said, "Winning isn't a part-time thing, it's an all-the-time thing... Running a football team is no different than running a successful business—or any other type of organization."

Starting to see the connection yet?

One quote Coach Lombardi doesn't get nearly enough recognition for is, "True glory lies not in never falling—but in getting up, and forging ahead."

Oh, how that hits us writers!

Perhaps even more important, "Anyone can have discipline, the desire to put in the effort, when you're already at the top, when you're Number One. You have to have this discipline when you're still on the way up, when you're not yet a champion."

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

Membership Information

Pauline Bent V.P. Membership
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Meeting Reservations

Roy King H(760) 955-5027
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And as one speaker after another reminds us of the rigorous long hours it takes to be a successful writer, how many of us tune them out?

How many of us figure that, "Hey, my story is so great, the editors won't be able to resist even my first draft?" Or, if you're like me, you tell yourself, "Well, once I get established as a professional, it will be easy to force myself to sit at my terminal, and crank out the words."

See the quote above.

Whether or not we like football, and whether or not we like Coach Lombardi, he certainly gave us some classic advice that we, as writers, should take to the deepest level of our hearts. Let us resolve to apply these teachings to our own literary efforts, at whatever skill level we write, and strive to improve so that we can all be champions at our craft.

Roy King,
SCWA President



February 18

The Writer's Toolbox: Writing the Travel Article: A Simplified Way To Write

by Bert Millsbaugh

Before traveling, do a little research on your destination, especially some of its history. Make copies of the material and drop them into an accordion organizer to take with you. If you find any brochures of the area, put them in the folder and make a list of any points of interest you've found during your research. If you've found sufficient information, make an agenda of what you will see first and so on. Put a small notebook and pen in your folder.

When you arrive, stop at a visitor's center first and gather all the brochures you can find. You will also find them at campgrounds, in lodges, in restaurants, in hotel and motel lobby racks, and in museums. Refine your agenda, then follow it, filling your organizer with the pamphlets as you go sightseeing to visit all or most of the points of interest in the area.

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.

Writing the Travel Article, cont. from page 1

“When you arrive, stop at a visitor’s center first and gather all the brochures you can find.”

At each point, enjoy your sightseeing. Use your camera to record some of what you see. Write a few words in your notebook, but remember the brochures have a wealth of information.

At each stopping place, talk to someone. Ask museum docents, park rangers, hotel or lodge doormen, or waitresses what unusual occurrence has happened here, or what is unusual about this place. At a desert museum, I asked the curator about her strangest exhibit. She showed me a headless skeleton of a person found in the desert sands with two rusted knife blades in its ribs.

Also at each stopping point, use your five senses to add color to the article: sound, sight, smell, touch, and taste. Hesitate for a moment. What do your senses notice? Then record them in your notebook. These will make your article come alive.

Sound

Do you hear any unusual sounds or is it the silence that affects you. Once, I stood on the edge of a mountain lake in Alaska and heard a loon call from across the fog shrouded surface, then I heard his mate answer.

Sight

While walking through the primeval forest into the presence of California’s redwood trees, I saw this huge forest giant so tall I couldn’t see the top and so wide the edges disappeared in its surroundings.

Smell

As I walked through the door of Schat’s Bakery in Bishop, California, the aroma of fresh baked bread touching my nostrils reminded me of the loaves my mother baked when I was a child.

Touch

Professor Filburn, curator of the **BLM Discovery Center** in Barstow, California, laid a stone tool in my hand. It wasn’t the touch of that sharp edged implement that affected me. It was the tingling sensation I felt as I held a knife made by another human 50,000 years ago.

Taste

At **Yogi Bear** campground in Wyoming, I shared the unusual flavor of huckleberry ice cream cones with two excited grandkids who watched Yogi trying to steal the cones.

When you get home, make an outline to follow. Item number one will be a summary. The last item will be the conclusion. In between, will be the individual points of interests you visited. Most travel articles follow a path, such as a roadway, a river, streets in a city, historical route, etc.

“When you get home, make an outline to follow. Item number one will be a summary.”

Write each outline item on the top of a blank sheet of paper. Separate the brochures by outline items. I do this by cutting the brochures into pieces and taping them to the sheets of paper. If you took sightseeing and interview notes, cut them apart and add them to the sheets. History can be added to each point of interest or as one outline item. These bits of paper will form the backbone of your article. Leave item one and conclusion sheet blank.

“History can be added to each point of interest or as one outline item.”

Next, enter these pages into your computer. If you have an OCR scanner, it will speed up the entries. This is your first draft. Edit to your personal writing style and cut to length. Add the color at this time. Several edits may be required until you are satisfied. The pictures in the brochures and photos will help you to “see” the place as you edit.

Read through your exciting article and write a summary directly to your expected reader. This will be the first paragraph. Then tell them in a short paragraph what they experienced and why they should come back. That is your conclusion.

Following these steps, you will be amazed at how simple it is to write the travel article. Most magazines would like photos, primarily in the form of slides, but that’s another story. The query letter is your next step.

*Bert Millspaugh is a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in numerous magazines during his 30-year career including many travel articles using the technique outlined in this column. Most recently, Millspaugh’s work was published in the winter and spring issues of **RV Journal**. His two-part article is titled *Along the Mojave River*. Millspaugh can be reached via e-mail at bnbntroutrout@aol.com*



January Highlights

Over 65 people attended **Martin J. Smith's** January presentation, *Writing and Submitting Feature Articles*. He explained the requirements of each section of the Los Angeles Times Magazine that are open to freelancers.

There are only 12 magazines like it in the country. Boasting 3.1 million readers and published 48 times a year it focuses on stories relating to California and the West. "We have an eclectic group of readers with lots of interests," says Smith. It's a good market for freelancers to pitch to.

The **Los Angeles Times Magazine** offers a mix of stories: newsmaker profiles, investigative exposes, photo essays, and stories that illuminate social issues.

Smith's greatest concern, as Senior Editor, is quality of story, not the writer's credentials. "Good stories cross the boundaries of gender and age. And that's how we edit the magazine. It's geared to the eclectic sensibilities of Southern California." He wants a good story well-told and relevant to 3.1 million readers.

Smith's greatest concern, as Senior Editor, is quality of story, not the writer's credentials.

The psychographics of the West are adventurous and weird. "A lot of people have taken a chance to get here," says Smith. "Key into this in terms of developing ideas. Don't think national. Think in terms of the audience." 99% of the readers reside in the four counties of Southern California.

"The psychographics of the West are adventurous and weird."

Smith prefers to receive queries through e-mail. Protocol for the LA Times e-mail address is first(name).last@latimes.com. For example: marty.smith@latimes.com

Stories need to be smart, important (timely), fun or all three to succeed in the magazine. Give it a hard focus. "The more successful story ideas focus on a very compelling character whose story illuminates some kind of broader social issue," says Smith.

Pitch your idea from two levels: It's about a character or a place. Then, explain what the story is really about. "It must have some broader appeal. That's the difference between a newspaper feature story and a magazine story." Begin with an argument and a very solid point. Be clear with this and your point of view.

"Pitch your ideas from two levels: it's about a character or place. Then explain what the story is really about."

For example: A story starts out saying home prices for LA and Orange County are higher than they've ever been. What does that mean? The end of the American Dream for most people. It acknowledges the reality that home prices are out of reach for many. The broader theme: It's the end of the American Dream for California. No one knows where it will go from here.

Profiles are the best way to get a feature story into the **Los Angeles Times Magazine**. Pitch a compelling character whose story represents a

broader subject. He or she must be powerful and interesting. Stories about women have the edge, now. The magazine has three feature stories in each issue. "The big profiles, issue stories, things like that," says Smith.

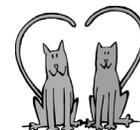
"Pitch a compelling character whose story represents a broader subject."

Personal essays run in the front of the magazine. They must be between 1,000 to 1,200 words, no more. When pitching, and feel free to pitch them directly to him, it has to work on the two levels described earlier. It must be intensely personal and universal. "The universal can be just one paragraph that broadens it and then you go right back into the narrative of the personal."

Features are also in the front of the magazine. "**The Chat Room** is a 600 – 800 word question and answer with an interesting character. No Q and A." Send your pitch to Christina Dalton.

Passing Through is another one of her departments. A writer focuses on a fixed point in the universe. "Those can be all over the map: Star Trek conventions, a fixed camp site for the weekend," says Smith. "They are passing through a certain point. Ask what people are doing and why they are doing it." It must be less than 600 words with four pictures. Get their name and age and ask three or four questions regarding their profession.

Continued on page 4, column 1



January Highlights, cont. from page 4

Fixations is another department. The person featured must be fixated on something that makes them odd, interesting, weird, and different.

The more generic sections are short 250-word bright snapshots. “We call it Snap Shots from the Center of the Universe; life in Southern California,” says Smith. The front of the magazine is very oriented to Southern California. It must be fun and interesting.

Heather John edits the **Entertaining** department. “This is a tough entry point,” says Smith. “She works with a regular group of writers but is open to new ones.” It’s a small personal essay with a recipe attached. “Talk about growing up in your grandmother’s kitchen and the things you learned there.” She also does fashion topics.

Smith very generously donated our honorarium back to SCWA as a scholarship.

Catherine Singer, V.P. Programming, 2003. To purchase tapes of this program, contact Catherine at: southern_ca_writers_association@cox.net

SCWA News & Announcements

SCWA Newsletter Editor and Webmaster **Pamela Rocke** has redesigned and relaunched her business website: www.cavecat.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 Rocke at kashka@compuserve.com

Southern California Writers Association

Schedule of Speakers January — April 2004

January 17

Martin J. Smith, mystery novelist, Editor at Large—Orange Coast Magazine, Senior Editor—LA Times Magazine
Writing and Submitting Feature Articles

Journalist and author of *Time Release* (Jove, 1997) and *Shadow Image* (Jove, 1998), Smith has won more than 40 newspaper and magazine writing awards. He was nominated four times for the **Pulitzer Prize**, and his first novel was nominated for the **Anthony Award**. Smith is currently working on the third novel in his “Memory Series.”

February 21

Walter H. Hunt, science fiction author, novelist
A Foot in the Door: Getting Published and Making It a Career

Walter Hunt is author of two published novels—*The Dark Wing* (Tor, 2001) and *The Dark Path* (Tor, 2003). Two additional novels are under contract—*The Dark Ascent* (Tor, 2004) and *The Dark Crusade* (Tor, 2005.) Hunt is a lifelong student of history, and seeks to incorporate a sense of history into his own writing. Hunt speaks about the business of publishing and speculative fiction.

March 20

Laurie Thomas, writer, editor, educator
Writing the Short Story

Laurie Thomas’ work has been published in the **National Women’s History Project News**, the writer’s magazine **Futures**, the **Orange County Register**, and **Orange County Woman** magazine. An experienced award-winning instructor and writer, Thomas currently teaches at **Saddleback College**.

April 17

Tina Tessima, Ph.D., author, psychotherapist
Promoting Yourself and Your Nonfiction Book Proposal

Tina Tessima is author of *It Ends With You: Grow Up and Out of Dysfunction* (New Page, March 2003), *How to Be a Couple and Still Be Free* (New Page, 2002), *The Ten Smartest Decisions a Woman Can Make After Forty* (Renaissance, 2001), and others. Dr. Tessima has appeared on **Larry King Live**, **Oprah**, **CNN**, and **ABC-TV** news. She is quoted regularly in **Glamour**, **Marie Claire**, **Cosmopolitan**, **Redbook**, **Ladies Home Journal**, **TimeOnline.com**, and is published in fourteen languages.

Catherine Singer, V.P. Programming, 2003

Happy Valentine's Day



February 14

February Meeting

Saturday, February 21, 2004

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

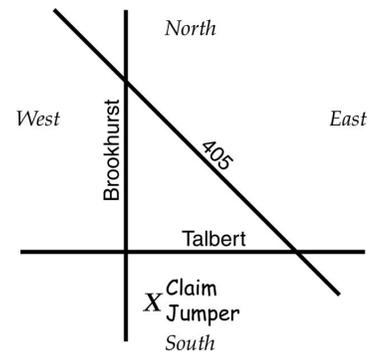
Walter Hunt, science fiction writer,
novelist

A Foot in the Door: Getting Published and Making It a Career

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

RSVP before February 16: Roy King, 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394. Check must accompany reservations. Make checks payable to SCWA.
RSVP on or after February 16: 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!



**Walk-ins & Guests
always welcome**

Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

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453

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