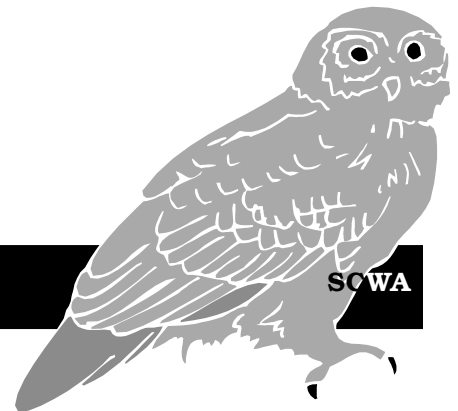


Southern California Writers Association  
**Writers News**



**Volume 4, Number 7** **July 2005**

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**July 16**  
**Mike Sirota**  
 sci-fi and fantasy novelist,  
 award-winning journalist

***Making Your Book  
 Better Than Good  
 —Because Good Isn't  
 Good Enough***



**President's Message**

We had another great meeting and another great speaker in June. Terrific job Lynnette is doing, lining up top quality speakers. We had a fairly good turnout, and we're all confident that is symbolic of things to come.

We do need to start thinking about the 2006 Executive Board. Please help us out by volunteering. Not all those of us on the existing board will be able to serve another term.

Which brings me to my present thought:  
 Should I run for President again?

I have always maintained that the President of any organization should have both a vision for that organization, and a plan for making it happen.

Whenever I look inward, I have trouble seeing any sort of goal for SCWA, any sort of plan for achieving those goals.

But when I listened to the speaker, and the questions some of the members had, I realize I do have a goal.

*Continued on page 2, column 1*

**July Speaker**

If you've written a book or are in the process of writing one, you need to hear **Mike Sirota** speak on **Making Your Book Better than Good – Because Good Isn't Good Enough!**

As a published author of nineteen novels and an award-winning journalist, **Sirota** knows that writers need an edge to make a fiction or non-fiction novel shine. At our July SCWA meeting, **Sirota** shares what literary agents look for, structural quality that is a must, and other secrets that can cause your work to stand out in the competitive marketplace of professional authors.

Praise for **Mike Sirota** includes quotes from both authors and literary agents:

"Dear Mike: Thank you for referring *The Stepwives*. I've sold

their book to **Simon & Schuster** and I know they will be successful."

—**Angela Rinaldi**, Literary Agent

"Dear Mike: You have my undying gratitude for sending me Diane Lee Wilson, a former student in your writing classes. **Diane's** widely praised young adult novels, *I Rode a Horse of Milk White Jade* (Orchard, 1999) and *To Ride the God's Own Stallion* (DK Ink, 2000) have made her my star client!"

—**Patty Campbell**, Literary Agent

"Mike - Without your unbelievable support and guidance, I wouldn't have gotten passed GO, so I shall sing your praises to my death bed."

—**Neva Sullaway**, author of *Chasing Dreamtime* (Brookview Press, Spring 2005).

*Lynnette Baum, V.P. Programming*

## President's Message, cont. from page 1

To help our members learn to *enjoy writing!*

Sure, we hear the horror stories of all the rejection slips the great masters had, all the classics that were almost trashed. And we hear professional author after professional author tell us we need to spend several hours a day writing if we hope to make any money at it.

Well, you know what? No matter *what* our profession, we have to spend several hours a day at it if we expect to make any money!

But have you seen the NCAA commercials? The ones that go, "...There are around 160,000 NCAA scholar athletes—and just about all of us are going professional in something other than our sport?"

My vision is to help the members of this organization learn to *enjoy writing.*

You don't have to make a ton of money at it. You don't have to spend eighty hours a week, sixty hours a week, or any more than you want to in

Would you like to contribute to the *Writers News*? Comments? Contact the editor at [webmaster@ocwriter.com](mailto:webmaster@ocwriter.com).

### Membership Information

Pauline Bent V.P. Membership  
[pchavezbent@hotmail.com](mailto:pchavezbent@hotmail.com)

### Meeting Reservations

Roy King H (760) 955-5027  
[3kings@urs2.net](mailto:3kings@urs2.net)

### 2005 Executive Committee

President	Roy King
V.P. Programming	Lynnette Baum
V.P. Membership	Pauline Bent
Secretary/Treasurer	Joan Cordova
Publicity Director	Kat Tewksbury
Webmaster	Pamela Rocke
Newsletter Editor	Pamela Rocke
Associate Editor	Nancy Darnall
Tape Librarian	Sharon Walters

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

order to derive the social and psychological benefits of putting the words on paper.

You don't have to be a Pulitzer Prize winner to create something that others will enjoy—and for which they will both thank and praise you.

Sometimes, too much emphasis is placed on excelling, and the real enjoyment of not just writing but any endeavor, the work and preparation that goes into improving yourself, is overlooked.

My goal for this club is to help every one of you become a better writer—but more important, to enjoy writing!

Now get out the pens and pencils, and have some fun!

Good luck and good writing!

*Roy King, President*



## The Writer's Tool Box: Speaking of Books...

by Pamela Rocke

Robert McKee, Earlene Fowler, Suzanne Forester, Jennifer Leo, Martin J. Smith. They're all writers. But they have more in common than the craft.

They've all of them, at one time or another, been featured speakers at SCWA's monthly meetings. But more than that, each one of these writers, whether they write mysteries, non-fiction, or magazine articles, are public speakers. You see, public speaking isn't limited to the Harvey MacKays and Anthony Robbinses. Or the Pamela Rockes, for that matter.

In today's publishing world, it is increasingly necessary for authors, even novelists, to speak up. Yes, fiction writers *can* be published without ever making a public appearance. But if we want to sell our books and novels, we have to talk them up. Book store appearances, radio and television interviews, networking events, specialty groups, and speaking to other writers—all require speaking skills.

Kim Dower, literary publicist, trainer, and SCWA's June meeting presenter gave specific, in-depth advice for writers pitching books—the who, when, where, and why.

*Continued on page 3, column 1*

## SCWA Critique Committee

Open to members of SCWA

### Nonfiction & Fiction **Roy King** [3kings@urs2.net](mailto:3kings@urs2.net)

Roy will take any amount of writing for critique. He prefers to see the entire ms at one time. *Mail* your ms 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 of Books..., cont. from page 2

What I am going to talk about is *how*: techniques I've learned through my experience as a Toastmaster and speaker, guaranteed to make any presentation a success. Here is the greatest secret of public speaking:

### Your Brain

Most people dread giving a speech. When I gave my first speech, I was so terrified I hyperventilated. My hands shook. But I *appeared* to the audience to be far more comfortable than I felt. *Most speakers appear more comfortable than they feel.*

### Dress Accordingly

Dress for your audience and your genre. Your appearance needs to reflect the respect you have for your audience. Neat, clean, tucked in, coifed. Is your book about investing? Marketing? Dress professionally. Is your novel a western? Perhaps cowboy boots.

### Make Eye Contact

You wrote your book partly because you wanted to connect with an audience. When you speak to your audience, connecting is equally important. The best way to connect is by making eye contact. If you are a creative type, like me, you might find yourself staring into space as you speak.

Make very sure you keep your gaze at your audience's eye level. Make eye contact with someone, hold it for two or three seconds, and move on. Cover the entire room equally.

### Say It With Energy

I have a problem. When I have a conversation with a close friend, I am lively and animated. But when I speak in front of an audience, I struggle to avoid sounding stiff and monotone.

The best speakers sound as if they are having a conversation with a close friend. Their voices punctuate,

dramatize. Have a personal conversation with your audience.

Keep your presentation alive with emotion, enthusiasm, and variety.

### Speak Clearly

You can have perfect grammar and a great vocabulary, but if you do not enunciate, you'll lose your audience. Or worse, you'll irritate them. "Gonna" and "Dont'ja" grate most nerves.

### Stand Up Straight

Picture this: you walk into a room, spy a man...or a woman whom you've never met, and you just *know* you don't like them. Malcolm Gladwell, in his book *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (Little, Brown; 2005) calls it thin slicing, and body language may play a role.

You can help your audience like you by creating great body language and using effective gestures. Stand up straight, use warm, inclusive gestures, don't clasp your hands or touch your face and you'll have the audience in the palm of your, well, you know.

### In Conclusion

Practice, as they say, makes perfect. In fact, frequent practice dulls the pain of speaking in public. And that's the best advice of all. Find ways to learn and practice speaking. Work with a coach such as Kim Dower ([www.kimfromla.com](http://www.kimfromla.com)). Join an organization such as Toastmasters ([www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)) where you can learn and practice public speaking.

Whether you're appearing at a bookstore, pitching to an editor or agent, or presenting to a group of writers, speaking sells.

*Pamela Rocke is the author of Behind the Scenes: Managing a Trade Show Without Losing Your Mind (Cave Cat Press, 2004). She is a member of Toastmasters International and is Area G-3 Governor. Contact Pam at [pam@prrocke.com](mailto:pam@prrocke.com).*

## June Contest Winner Lost or Found?

by Polly Dunn

It seemed awfully dark to the young boy and he was afraid that he was really quite lost. He knew his mother would be worried and very angry with him for wandering off like this. He saw a tall man with glasses and a railroad cap standing looking at his watch. He thought he might as well go ask this stranger for help as wander around in the dark.

"Sir," questioned the young boy, "can you help me. I think I'm lost."

"Are you Mark?" the man asked in return.

"Why, yes, I am...do you know me?" replied the boy.

"I've been waiting for you. Now we can go." And the conductor closed the cover on his pocket watch and tucked it into his pocket.

"My mother would be very mad if I went with you. I can't do that, sir."

"Your mother has known for some time now that you would be taking this trip. She won't be mad. Besides, she will be on my train soon herself." The man put out his hand for the boy to hold.

"I'm not very well, sir, and I need to take medicine...I don't have it with me."

"You won't need any medicine ever again and that's a promise, Mark."

"Is this the little engine that could?" asked Mark.

"This is definitely the little engine that could and we are bound for Glory. I will even let you blow the horn." The two walked off together and boarded the train.

### Honorable Mention

Last Train - Victory Crayne  
Paul Halewijn - Last Call  
[www.ocwriter.com/willwrite.html](http://www.ocwriter.com/willwrite.html)

# June Highlights

“Lots of my clients don’t believe they know what they know,” says literary publicist Kim Dower. Not the same as a lack of confidence, this impostor complex inhibits authors in the publicity phase in addition to the “notorious” shyness of fiction writers. Kim Dower’s mission in life is to prepare writers for the spotlight and to publicize their books. Her program, *Publishing Is a Series of Presentations*, explained the steps.

**First you, the writer, present to yourself that you have not a problem but an opportunity, a reason to write.**

The process is on-going, Dower emphasizes. First you, the writer, present to yourself that you have not a problem but an opportunity, a reason to write. Next you present to an agent, who then presents to a publisher. The publisher’s sales force in turn presents to book stores to persuade them to stock this new book. At this point, the responsibility returns to you, who must now go public. For success, “no one can break the chain,” she says.

“The work has to speak for itself,” Dower stresses, and in a perfect world, agents wouldn’t be needed. However, to secure one, you need to be not only likable but able to impassion the agent with your mission—why people need to read your book. Present yourself as “able to step up to the plate and not be a problem.” Your agent, like Dower, must be motivated to go into “passionate tirades three times a day” as she does.

Unfortunately, being a great writer is not synonymous with being a great speaker. “Promoting a book is a

performance,” Dower says. This is where her organization, Kim-from-L.A. Literary & Media Services, steps in with pre-media coaching and filming to “turn you around.”

**Have ready a one-minute description of the book and three points you want to make “no matter what you are asked.”**

Mental readiness before an interview is the key: Have ready a one-minute description of the book and three points you want to make “no matter what you are asked.” Question: “Why did you pick that title?” Answer: “I’ll answer that in a minute. I wrote this book because ....” Dower also recommends keeping a “life-saver” line for when you feel stuck.

**If you are put on the defensive, however, Dower recommends you say, low-key, “This is what I know.”**

“Always come in on a high.” Dower related seeing Billy Crystal jumping around and breathing deeply in a waiting room before an interview so he could shoot out “like a cannon ball onto the stage.” Carry your book with you while wearing comfortable clothes that make you feel attractive.

During the session, do not be defensive or argumentative. If you are put on the defensive, however, Dower recommends you say, low-key, “This is what I know.” Let your passion show, be humorous, and honest about what you don’t know. Avoid rushing through responses and remember to breathe. If the audience likes you, they will buy your book.

The on-going Eight Essential Presentation Practices are from *Life Is a Series of Presentations: How to Inspire, Inform, & Convince Anybody at Anytime* (Fireside, 2004) that Kim Dower wrote with Tony Jeary and J. E. Fishman. She does publicity for many publishers, who are listed along with her author clients and other information at [www.kimfromla.com](http://www.kimfromla.com).

Reported by Glenda Rynn

**Members:** You may buy taped copies of lectures from SCWA Tape Librarian Sharon Walters: [swwaltz@surfside.net](mailto:swwaltz@surfside.net).

## **Eight Essential Presentation Practices**

**Involve Your Audience**

**Prepare Your Audience**

**Research Your Presentation**

**Explain “Why”**

**State Management...**

*Achieve Proper Mental States*

**Eliminate Unknowns and Turn Them Into Knowns**

**kNow Your Audience**

**Tailor Your Presentation Throughout**



# SCWA News & Announcements

## August Speaker: Special Assignment

Our August speaker, Brian Alan Lane, has given us a special assignment. Should you accept the challenge, follow the instructions below and bring your story to the August meeting. Be ready to share!

### *The ABC Love (and Lust) Story*

A loves B.  
B loves C.  
C loves A.

A, B, & C are people or “its” or whatever you want them to be in time and space. (Live folk? Dead folk? Inanimate objects? Sure, why not.)

Ideally, their story is told in three short chapters, one is A’s, one is B’s, one is C’s, in consecutive, serial progression. (Okay, if you must intercut, that’s up to you, but try not to re-hash.)

**At the end**, the three characters *must* find an active, brilliant, unique, twisted way to resolve things. The story must end dramatically, not just fade away.

**Chapters/Voices:** Interior monologue. First person. Each character tells his chapter in a distinct voice. Emphasize sense words in descriptions, prose, and thoughts. Be wary of over-using dialogue. Give us sight and sound and smell and feel and taste, and well, go where you need to. Sexy is fine, but it doesn’t have to be — just be sensual. Make this come alive and be full and flowery — don’t give your reader much room to move, although seek emotional resonance and connection. Go for full-blown literary prose.



*Photo & Sculpture by Sherri McEuen, www.sherrimceuen.com*

## The July 2005 “Will Write 4 Food” Contest!

The contest is open to members of SCWA. Look carefully at the photo at the top of this column and write a short-short story (maximum 250 words) about what is happening. To facilitate fair judging, put the story title on the top of the page with your daytime phone number underneath. (*No names, please!*) Only the winning author will be contacted.

**Write:** A short-short story (maximum 250 words)

**Submit:** One entry per member per month, via e-mail: Lynnette Baum, [therightwriter@cox.net](mailto:therightwriter@cox.net).

Via snail mail, L. Baum, 17595 Harvard, Ste. C-144, Irvine, CA 92614.

**Subject Line:** *July 2005 “Will Write 4 Food Contest”* (Warning: without this subject line, the e-mail or snail mail may be deleted or tossed) with your daytime number underneath. Remember, no author name, please.

**Deadline:** Stories must be received on or before July 13, 2005.

**Winner:** Attends their next SCWA meeting for free. He or she will also be presented with a winner’s certificate. The winning story will be featured in the club’s newsletter, *The Writers News*, and on the organization’s website.

**Criteria:** Contestants must be members of SCWA. The story must be 250 words or less. No evaluation or comments will be offered on stories submitted for the contest. Only one winning entry per member per year.

*Lynnette Baum, V.P. Programming*

### **Back by Popular Demand:**

August 20, 2005

**Brian Alan Lane**  
MFA, JD, author,  
screenwriter, educator

## **Prose That’s the Talk of the Town!**

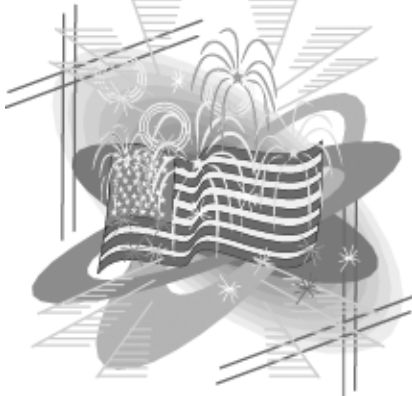
Prolific writer, Brian Alan Lane is a Professor of Writing at **Cal State Long Beach’s** prestigious **College of Arts, Department of Film and Electronic Arts.**

He is the author of the acclaimed *Cat and Mouse: Mind Games With a Serial Killer.*

Lane’s screenwriting credits include the films *The Girl From Mars* and *Out of Time*. He has also written for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Blue Thunder*, and *Remington Steele*.

His short stories are published regularly in literary journals, and he is a contributing editor to *Sweet Fancy Moses*.

July 4th

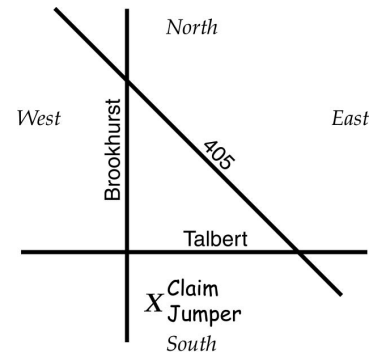


Happy  
Independence  
Day!

## July Meeting

Saturday, July 16, 2005

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



## Mike Sirota

sci-fi and fantasy novelist, award-winning journalist

## Making Your Book Better Than Good

*Because Good Isn't Good Enough*

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 July 11:** Roy King, 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394. Check must accompany reservations. Make checks payable to SCWA. **After July 11:** Roy King *home* (760) 955-5027; *e-mail* 3kings@urs2.net — bring check to door. For more information, go to [www.ocwriter.com](http://www.ocwriter.com). ***Be sure to RSVP whenever possible!***

*Or register online at [www.ocwriter.com/meetings.html](http://www.ocwriter.com/meetings.html)*

Southern California Writers Association

# Writers News

Pamela Rocke, Editor

# 453

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