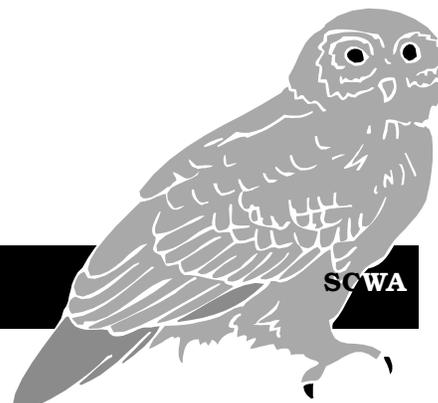


Southern California Writers Association Writers News

Volume 4, Number 3

March 2005



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Linda Friedman

Secrets of Self-Promotion: Your Genie in a Bottle

MARCH 20



VERNAL EQUINOX

President's Message

What should a writing group be? Should we be involved in politics? Religion? Social causes? Should we organize, mobilize, and politicize to promote our cause?

Whether we like it or not, we *are* involved in politics, religion, and social causes. The very nature of our business/avocation would not exist without these. Whenever we write, whatever we write, we feel the shadow and yet the support of all society's influences.

One thing that has always been a difficult area for the writing profession to identify just what its position should be is the area of quality control. What constitutes good writing? What differentiates it from bad writing? And how do you decide what should be published, what should not? And how do we keep editing from becoming censorship?

A few years ago, it was suggested that if Guiseppe Verdi had lived today, his operas would have been much more "spicy." And when we consider musicals written under late 20th Century standards such as *Hair*, *Grease*, and the play *Corpus Christi*, we certainly see a change in the amount of explicit vs. implicit sexuality.

Remember the Cole Porter musical *Anything Goes*? Incredibly tame by today's standards, isn't it? And yet, at the time, it was regarded by many as living up to its name.

So what do we think about Verdi's operas now?

Continued on page 2, column 1

March Speaker

Linda Friedman, co-owner of **Chevalier's Books** in Los Angeles and founder of **Book Events & Authors Unlimited**, will present *Secrets of Book Self-Promotion: Your Genie in a Bottle* to the Southern California Writers Association on March 19, 2005. Friedman's extensive experience includes assisting authors, publicists and publishers for more than a decade. Seasoned in press writing as the head of the field office for **Congressman Anthony C. Beilenson**, Linda went on to earn a *Bachelor of Arts* from **UCLA** in English, and a *Masters of Arts in American Literature* from **Georgetown University**. . An honored guest speaker at various elite writers' conferences, Linda Friedman was recruited as a guest instructor by UCLA's *Writer's Extension*

Program. Her presentation to the SCWA includes the following topics:

- Teaching authors and prospective authors how to promote books through "alternative" routes.
- Using your "speaking" talent as a book self-promotion technique.
- The "nuts and bolts" of getting books into bookstores, on amazon.com and to other distributors.
- The truth about hosting a publication party!

We welcome Linda, and look forward to learning how to successfully promote our own books in today's competitive market.

Lynnette Baum, V.P. Programming

President's Message, cont. from page 1

For that matter, what was Shakespeare's true intent in *Macbeth*? We now know that real witches performed their ceremonies nude, and yet, when we watch the play, we do not generally see this. When one of the modern theaters actually had the witches nude, was there any significant impact to the play?

Writers are no different from any other social group in that we are charged with moving society forward. We hope to keep old ideas that work ("conservative") while promoting new ideas that also work ("liberal.") This applies to social mores just as well as it does to writing.

Writers are probably no more "liberal" or "conservative" than any other cross-section of the general population, although it could be argued that one of the characteristics of a good writer, i.e. the ability to "see the possibilities" (as opposed to "seeing the realities") lends itself better to the liberal mind than the conservative. Even so, there is no lack of genuinely talented conservative writers.

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

Membership Information

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

Meeting Reservations

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

2005 Executive Committee

President	Roy King
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www.ocwriter.com

I think that, as writers, we need to be faithful to our genre, but this is more out of practical than philosophical considerations. We must not be afraid to stretch the limits of either our imagination or the censor's rules, but at the same time, we must ask ourselves if we want our work to be remembered for its quality, or for its boldness.

Wouldn't we rather have our *Cleopatra* be remembered for something besides the (semi-) nude scene of Elizabeth Taylor's? Or our *Song Without End* being remembered for something besides skirting around the reality of sexuality by broadbrushing over it?

In both cases, we'd have done ourselves greater justice by being faithful to our art.

Good luck and good writing!

Roy King, President

Happy Spring



SCWA Critique Committee

Open to members of SCWA

Nonfiction & Fiction Roy King 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.

The Writer's Tool Box: Writing Your First Novel

by Victory Crayne

Excerpted from *Writing Your First Novel*

You finish reading another great novel and daydream about being the hero or heroine in the story. And sigh. "Some day," you promise yourself, "I'm going to write a novel of my own."

Maybe now is a good time. This article will give you the key steps to get started.

With the aging of the Baby Boomer generation, many folks are turning to thoughts of self-achievement, which may include writing a novel. Many are reaching out to see what it takes to write the novel they have held inside as a dream for years.

Many find, as I have, that having some creative writing project for their spare time is a good way to unwind after a demanding day or week at work. Most of our time is spent using our left-brain analytical skills. Spending some time using our right-brain creative skills can be a wonderful way to balance our lives. It will help you live longer too.

I have been enjoying writing part-time since 1995 and have participated in several critique groups and writing discussion groups.

Continued on page 3, column 1

Writing Your First Novel, cont. from page 2

My genre is science fiction, no surprise if you know I have a bachelor's in physics and math. I have written several short stories, have finished one novel, and am working on my second. It's been a great trip. Yours will be too.

Short story or novel?

Some start out with a short story, one that can be completed in a couple days. A novel takes years of effort on a part-time basis to complete 70,000 to 140,000 words. If you opt for a novel, you will find that the long time it takes is one of your greatest challenges. Of every hundred people who start a novel, only three finish. If your goal is to see if you can write that book you've been dreaming about, then by all means, give it a try. You won't know how you feel until after you're into it. It took me six years to finish my first novel. Read that as six years of pleasure.

When to write?

I recommend you find your best time of day and time of week to write, free from stress. Get up early and write before you go to work, go to a quiet room after dinner, or spend several hours in a burst of writing in seclusion on the weekend. Pick the time and place where you will be free of interaction with others. Turn the television off. Some enjoy writing with a glass of wine or instrumental music. Avoid music with lyrics—you want the words in your story to come from inside your own head, not the words of the songs. The key is to find a "place" where you can be free of life's distractions, where you can go freely into your creative mood.

Where to start?

Most novels begin as an idea, which may be a special character, a setting, a conflict, or a challenge for a character. Some folks start with a daydream. But a daydream is not a novel or a story unless it has conflict between characters, a change of events or relationships over time, and a

resolution. In other words, it has to have a plot, not just a wonderful feeling.

Buying books on writing fiction

You don't have to invent creative writing on your own; many have gone before you and many of those have written books. You can learn a lot by reading some of them. But I caution you against buying too many books right away. Many writers' bookshelves are crammed full of books, most of which they have not read. You can't learn how to write fiction just by reading a 'how to' book. They help, yes, but to learn how to write you must WRITE.

After you have read a few books and started your story, you will learn where you need the most help. That's the time to look for additional 'how to' books.

I also suggest you read some books in the genre of book you are thinking of writing. This will give you an idea of what others have done and what readers may expect in that genre.

Resources

The local bookstore is full of books on writing. The Internet is another great source. You may want to read my articles on writing fiction at www.crayne.com. These include "How to Grow Your Fiction Writing Skills", "Career Plan for Fiction Writers", and "How to Succeed in an Online Writing Workshop". My "How to Critique Fiction" article is used in universities and critique groups around the world, is very popular on the Internet, and is read by about 10,000 people every year.

© 2003, Victory Crayne.

To read the complete article, please go to www.crayne.com/victory/WritingYourFirstNovel.htm.

Victory Crayne, victory@crayne.com, is a prolific writer of science fiction novels and short stories, as well as nonfiction articles. Please visit her website at www.crayne.com.

February Contest Winner The Spinning of Tales

by Glenda Rynn

Dear Cousin Beauty,

Yesterday when I was looking for herbs deep in the woods, I saw an old, old woman spinning wool on a wheel in front of her cottage. Although she seemed to smile at me, I was afraid and stayed off at a distance.

Our village priest says witches used to live in villages but gradually moved away into the dark forests so they could work their wicked spells and eat babies and children. (You heard about Hansel and Grethel, didn't you?)

But today when I told Grandmother about the Old Spinner, she looked around uneasily and spoke in a low voice. She said the ones the priests call witches are really just persons who practice the old religion that everyone used to before the priests came. To make people change to the new religion from Rome, the priests said all the old practices are evil and the work of devils.

Beauty, I'm all mixed up. I love Granny, but, yet, the priest is so sure he's right! He also talks about a terrible place of punishment where people go who do not follow what he says.

I look forward to seeing you soon. If you have the courage, we can explore the woods and look for flowers and mushrooms. But don't you even think of going near that spinning wheel if we see it!

Love,

Rose Red

Honorable Mention

Polly Dunn - *A California Spin*
Mike Dunn - *Fruit of the Loom*
www.ocwriter.com/willwrite.html

February Highlights

An “exploitation” film is understood to be opportunistic or timely and not as one bordering on real-life cruelty, Dr. Beverly Gray explained in her presentation, “Fast and Cheap: Writing the Low-Budget Screenplay.”

The master of the low-budget commercial film, Dr. Gray emphasizes, is Roger Corman. When Russia shocked the world in October 1957 by sending up Sputnik, the first satellite, it was soon followed by Corman’s film, *War of the Satellites*. Written in two weeks and shot in four, the film even beat America’s launch of its own satellite, which had been in production. “Ripping a topic from headlines” is Corman’s speciality.

Dr. Gray, who teaches screenwriting at UCLA Extension, has six screenwriting credits. Originally an “academic writer” who also did film criticism, she found her career took an “unexpected” path in 1983 when she became story editor for Roger Corman. His 1950 classic *Little Shop of Horrors*, filmed in two days and one night, is still celebrated. She learned firsthand how the Independent film industry works. In January 2005, Thunder’s Mouth Press released her expanded paperback biography, *Roger Corman: Blood-Sucking Vampires, Flesh-Eating Cockroaches, and Driller Killers*.

Commonalities among low-budget films: A. Present day (cheaper) B. Usually fewer than 20 locations and in urban sites such as N.Y. or L.A. C. Lots of camera moves to counterbalance the low number of locations D. Small cast E. Director often a cast member because “actors don’t always show up” F. Frequent use of voice-overs G. “Going to the limit on sex or violence or in a strange community” H. Titles often odd or confusing I. Subject matter “on outskirts of conventionality,” tough-minded, frank.

Dr. Gray quoted filmmaker Robert Rodriguez as saying, “Make the movies Hollywood can’t make. Make it fast and make it yours.” Gray says “low-budget” means a \$5 million production and under but adds that Corman’s films always come in under \$1 million. “Without money, you learn to be a one-take director.” Although members of the Writers Guild are entitled to different levels of pay, in general the scriptwriter’s fee for a low-budget screenplay is \$35,000 [\$34,740].

In the Q and A portion, Dr. Gray said that writers do not need to get permission to write about public figures. Are contests worthwhile? “Yes. Often the prize in a contest is getting your script read by an agent.” As an aside, Dr. Gray remarked that Christine Vashon, Co-President of Killer Films Co., reads non-agent scripts. In fact, “she has helped many get started.”

To protect script ideas, contact the **Writers Guild of America** to register your treatment of an idea. (Officer Lynnette Baum also suggested National Creative Registry, which is online and “will walk you through the process.”)

To protect script ideas, contact the Writers Guild of America to register your treatment.

We also unexpectedly learned another critical rule in low-budget filming: You may not have to pay some of the actors or crew, but “you certainly have to feed them!” Dr. Gray warns, “You cannot scrimp. . .” or offer only fast-food hamburgers. Good food may be your best special effects.

Glenda Rynn

Members may purchase taped copies of this presentation from SCWA Tape Librarian Sharon Walters. Contact Walters at swwaltz@surfside.net.

Dr. Gray’s Rules for Writing Low-Budget Films:

1. Constantly evaluate the costs. What you want for aesthetics or the backstory may be too expensive.
2. Keep it short—under two hours. One script page equals one minute on screen. No longer than 100 pages, even 70-80.
3. Need a strong opening, the grabber.
4. Keep the action up; it’s better than talk. “You need strong visuals because the actors may not be very good.”
5. In the US, know the ratings. “If you get an R, then let it all hang out. Put it all in so that if pressed, you can take stuff out.”
6. Use no more than 20 actors.
7. If a setting is small, “the film will feel claustrophobic.” Night shooting is expensive, and the production will not rent sound stages.
8. “Delay the appearance of the monster as long as possible.” You can even utilize the monster’s viewpoint.
9. Do not give speaking parts to children or parts to trained animals because California has strict laws regarding these.
10. Create a part “for a good, well-known but kind of over-the-hill kind of actor. You’ll get the benefit of star power, but the actor doesn’t have to put in long hours.” As an example, Dr. Gray played a clip from Corman’s 1993 film *Carnosaur* (which he got into theaters purposely before *Jurassic Park*). The main character, a scientist, is played by Diane Ladd, mother of Laura Dern.
11. Think about appealing visuals for the film posters and “what also looks good on the video box.”

Glenda Rynn

SCWA News & Announcements

Classes

University of California, Irvine Extension

Autobiography, Memoir or Fiction

This 10-week workshop guides you through the process of uncovering material, crafting and honing an autobiographical memoir or piece of fiction.

March 30-June 1, 2005

Room 206, Extension Bldg. B

UCI Campus

\$345

Instructor: Martha Fuller, M.F.A.

Advanced Novel Writing Workshop

Have you reached a slump in your current novel? Need a writing schedule to keep you on track? Are you feeling out of step with the writing world? Sign up for this powerful workshop facilitated by prolific novelist and past SCWA speaker Louella Nelson.

March 31-June 9, 2005

Room 162-163, Extension Bldg. B

UCI Campus

\$495

Instructor: Louella Nelson, M.A.

Private Classes

Finding the Writer Within— Big Bear Writer's Retreat at Sea, A Writer's Cruise to Alaska

Mike Foley's popular annual writer's retreat will be held on an Alaskan Cruise, July 3 through 10, 2005.

Mike Foley is a past presenter at SCWA. He is a writer, editor, and educator based in Big Bear, California.

A few seats remain for this exotic, educational program.

For more information, go to Foley's website at www.writers-review.com.



The March 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.

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

Subject Line: *March 2005 "Will Write for 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 March 16, 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

April 16, 2005

Diana Johnson

Author, musician

Shaking Stories from Your Family Tree



Memoirs are a top-selling, popular format, yet success can be elusive. Join us Saturday, April 16, when Diana Johnson talks about how to write a memorable memoir.

Johnson is the author of *Destiny's Godchild*, *Pepin's Bastard*, *Quest for the Crown*, and *Publishing Step-by-Step* (Superior Publishing Co.).

To learn more about Diana Johnson, visit her website at <http://mysite.verizon.net/~billndi/>

**Happy
St. Patrick's Day**



March 17

Happy St. Patrick's Day



March 17

March Meeting

Saturday, March 19, 2005

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

Linda Friedman

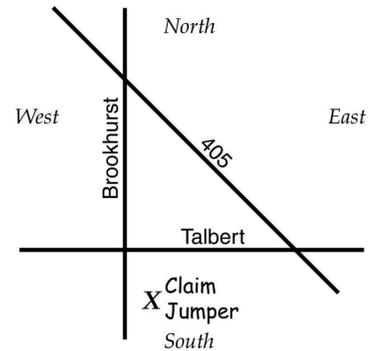
Secrets of Self-Promotion: Your Genie in a Bottle

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 March 14: Roy King, 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394. Check must accompany reservations. Make checks payable to SCWA. **After March 14:** 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!*

Or register online at www.ocwriter.com/meetings.html



Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

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