



April 15, 2006, Speaker

ANTOINETTE KURITZ

Secret Tips from Famous Writers & How to Write for Success!

Antoinette Kuritz is the Founder of the *La Jolla Writers Conference*, the host of the *Writers Roundtable Radio Show*, and President of *STRATEGIES Literary PR*. Her clients have reached the *NY Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller lists. She has received the *International Reading Association* award, hosted a nationally syndicated television show, appeared on *CNN*, *Dateline*, *Larry King*, *Fox & Friends*, *MSNBC* and been featured in *Ladies*



Home Journal, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *People Magazine* and *The NY Times*.

Because of her guidance, *STRATEGIES* provides clients with a unique perspective and knowledge of how to best develop and promote nearly any project.

“Secret Tips from Famous Writers & How to Write for Success!” are the themes of Antoinette’s presentation in April!

Lynette Baum, V.P. Programming



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President’s Message

SHAKEUP!!

Sometimes its gotta happen.

We’ve all been through it at our places of employment from one time to another. The boss announces things are gonna be different from now on. And we worry and fret we’re gonna lose our jobs, we’ll all hafta take a pay cut; lose our vacation, sick benefits, on and on.

Usually, after a week, we look back and say, gee, we should’a done that a long time ago.

So it is time SCWA has our first major shakeup in some time.

Ready, members?

Here is what we decided at the Executive Board Meeting (I’m absolutely not going to take us off in a different direction without getting input from well-

qualified experts):

1. The price of meetings is going up from \$20 per meeting to \$25 per meeting as of April 2006. The good news: ***You can still get the \$20 by a) being a member, and b) RSVP’ing!***

Why are we doing this? So we can get an accurate head count and give the Claim Jumper, which has been such a wonderful host for all these years, a reliable estimate of how much food to prepare--and so we don’t guarantee ninety and end up with only sixty, and have to eat the cost of those extra thirty meals.

2. Unless you pay your annual dues, you will stop receiving the Newsletter effective May 1!

Why are we doing this? Because our printing and mailing expenses--not to

mention the time and effort it takes to fold, stamp, and address the newsletters--is getting out of hand. We have tried to be “good guys” and keep everyone in the fold who may have innocently forgotten that the services SCWA offers do cost money, and as a result, the other members--who **have** paid on time--have ended up subsidizing the large number who haven’t. This is not fair to those members who have taken the step to support the organization.

3. Dorrie Lloyd, as Treasurer, will now be taking the meeting reservations.

This is the way we should have done it all along, with the treasurer being in charge; but we have had so much trouble

(Continued on page 2)

President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

finding a treasurer whose schedule allowed her to attend meetings regularly that good ol' Prez has taken on the chore.

4. Victory Crayne, who has been appointed Vice President of Membership since Gerri Seaton has resigned, will now be taking membership checks.

In the past, the treasurer has done this, passing the member information

on to the VPM and the newsletter editor. However, since all three must get the information, and of the three it is most important that the VPM have all the information, we are rearranging the way we do this. (BTW, thanks, Gerri, and we'll miss you!)

Any complaints?

Hey, how many times have I pleaded with you at meetings to join the Board? How many times have I

coaxed, badgered, sweet-talked, cried on your shoulders, or otherwise tried to convey the message that NO organization, including SCWA, can run by itself?

We made some tough decisions that needed to be made. In the end, I'm sure that SCWA will be much the healthier for it.

Good luck and good writing!

Roy King, President

AND INTRODUCING . . .

DORRIE LLOYD, *Treasurer*

Who is **Dorrie Lloyd**?

Like many writers, Dorrie has tried as many paying careers as she's had time for. It's included being a house editor for a major New York publisher, a freelance editor for major publishing houses, a market researcher for one of the world's largest advertising agencies, a public relations assistant, a teacher for 15 years, and a tortured technical writer for 5 years. As an associate producer for the New York Fold Festival staged in Carnegie Hall, she was responsible for booking Johnny Cash.

She has written a produced children's play on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dorrie's primary writing focus has been on adult mystery novels, women's fiction, and children's picture books and young adult novels. She's had humor published in *Reader's Digest* and various newspapers. She's currently shopping the first in her Lizzie and Zeke's adventure series as well as a young adult novel.

Contact Dorrie at dorrielloyd@yahoo.com. You must include the Re: line "SCWA Questions."

VICTORY CRAYNE, *V.P. Membership*

Who is **Victory Crayne**?

Some of you have seen my brochure for my independent fiction editing services. Over the past ten years, I've critiqued millions of words of more than 100 fiction writers. See www.crayne.com.

I've written two science fiction novels and more than a dozen short stories. Since 1997, I've been the President of SFNovelist.com, an internet group for science fiction writers.

But I'm most famous for writing the article, "How to Critique Fiction", which has been used in writing classes in colleges around the world.

If you have not yet paid your dues--*it's time!* Send your check for \$25, made out to SCWA, to Victory Crayne, 15731 Pasadena Avenue — No. 15, Tustin, CA 92780. If you wish to pay using PayPal, see our web site link, but do remember to send your address to me so that I can make sure you get our newsletter.

- Victory (victory@crayne.com)

2006 Executive Committee

President Roy King
V.P. Programming Lynnette Baum
V.P. Membership Victory Crayne
Treasurer Dorrie Lloyd
Publicity Director Larry Porricelli
Webmaster Pamela Rocke
Newsletter Editor Laura Sheridan-Long
Associate Editor Nancy Darnall
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Membership Information

Victory Crayne, VP Membership victory@crayne.com

Meeting Reservations

Dorrie Lloyd, Treasurer dorrielloyd@yahoo.com
..... (949) 581-9528

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. Please *mail* your manuscript to Roy at:

15772 Heatherdale Road, 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

March Highlights:

Dave Cunningham, freelance writer

Expressing his creativity is the personal passion of writer Dave Cunningham, the current president of the Orange County Chapter of the California Writers Club. Although Cunningham started by covering baseball for newspapers, this passion has fueled his career through other news subjects, business writing and consulting, editing and ghosting, novel writing, college teaching, etc. In short, anywhere a need exists for the written word, Cunningham's multifaceted business can fill it.

Before a writer quits his day job for full-time freelancing, DC suggests he/she take one-half to a full year to prepare, as he did. First, he had saved enough money to live on for almost a year. Next, he gave himself a crash course in consulting by studying the field. Knowing he needed an original name and website, he investigated possibilities and web hosts. The result was www.neocommunicating.com.

To get work, DC made the decision to go "where the opportunities opened up." That path became consulting, especially with businesses to improve their business correspondence including emails; writing speeches; and media coaching in all its variety. That first year he doubled the income goal he had set. Very importantly, he learned to use Quicken for business to track his invoices and estimate taxes, etc.

Here is his current typical day:

DC arises without an alarm around 7:30-8:00. Once in his "dedicated" room, out of doorbell range, he checks, cleans out, and responds to emails. Although he listens to incoming telephone messages, he doesn't take them during working hours.

Next, he checks job opportunities

online. At guru.com and craigslist.com, DC bids on one or two jobs daily. Some clients gained through this venue become permanent, and 80% he's never met. Also, 60% send their work to him over the Internet.

In the Bid Box on each, DC generally "nails down" a project at \$75 an hour until he learns more. If longer than a one-day project, he'll offer a flat fee but stipulates seeing the manuscript first. Once having seen it, he'll estimate his time, including revisions and the invariable extra requests. DC honors an agreed-upon flat fee, no matter what.

For large projects, payments may be in increments or in lump sums up to \$1000. If the fee is large, \$10,000 for instance, he asks for one-half up front and one-half at completion.

Having edited or ghostwritten eight books, DC notes that "ghost writing pays upfront whether it sells or not." His very first fee was \$2,500 and then progressed to \$10,000, \$15,000, \$21,000, and now is "whatever the market will bear." Sometimes he negotiates whether he'll be paid on speculation or royalties. Another consideration is whether he wants co-author status. Occasionally he declines recognition, especially if the book is controversial.

After bidding, DC turns to his current projects: a suspense thriller, a memoir of a woman who had an abused younger relative, a book of world class business practices, plus assorted smaller commitments. Jumping into the fiction first, he happily creates for the next four-to-five hours.

After lunch, he spends the next several hours on nonfiction and

business writing. Sometime between 4-9:00 PM, he turns to sports writing, like a dependable dessert.

During the week, in addition to the CWC, his passion may carry him to the Pure Fiction League's critique group, which meets at 7PM Thursdays at the Irvine/Tustin Marketplace Barns & Noble; a screenwriter's critique group; the Professional Communications Exchange, a network of Communication freelancers; and California State University, Fullerton's extension program.

At Fullerton, DC has instructed "Before You Write Your Story," the techniques he learned the hard way when he attempted a novel after years of nonfiction. Around chapter five in two different novels he found his momentum and inspiration inexplicably evaporated. Thus, he learned that passion has to be supported by a plan.

"Before you put a single word on the page," Cunningham stresses preparing a background: detailed protagonist and character developments; a detailed beginning, middle, and end; and something in each scene to trigger the next plot development. These "signposts along the way" keep the story from going "into a blind alley" before it "develops a life of its own."

Writing is "a noble calling," declares Dave Cunningham.

Glenda Rynn, Member
glenda-rynn@cox.net

MEMBERS may purchase taped copies of lectures from SCWA Tape Librarian Sharon Walters: swwaltz@surside.net

Seeking an Agent: The ~~Ten~~ Twenty Commandments

(PART II of II, continued from March 2006 Newsletter)

By David Isaak

Editor's Note: In the first half of his article, David gave ten tips on what not to do to get an agent. This month he focuses on his list of ten things you should do.

- 1. Do have a reason for writing to each agent...and tell them.** "I'm a writer and you're an agent" is an insufficient motivation. Mention any point of contact ("We met at the Hog Wallow Writer's Conference...") or recommendation ("John Grisham and Susan Sontag both insist you are the ideal agent for this novel..."). Referring to the agent's client list helps, but you should go deeper if you can: reference deals the agent has done, interviews they've given, articles or books they've written. An agent is more likely to take you seriously if you show you've done your research.
- 2. Do try to figure out what the agent wants in the query package.** In a reasonable business, this would be easy. In publishing, this is hard. Some agents do indeed itemize (on their websites, or in interviews, or in guides to agents) what they would like to see in a query package, ranging from query letter only to query plus synopsis plus sample chapters plus notes on the suggested audience. Some even tell you what your query letter should and shouldn't contain. But the majority of them are silent on the subject. What you hear about ideal query packages from speakers, or articles, or workshops, will not suit everyone. Try to find out what your target agent prefers.
- 3. Do keep professional and organized.** I treasure two form rejections from major New York agents where the form has been photocopied off-center, and is so light that the print can hardly be read. The fact that agents are often non-professional and incompetent doesn't give you the license to behave likewise; unfair as it is, they're the ones with the power. An unpublished writer needs to make everything as perfect as possible in their submissions. Track your submissions—keep a spreadsheet of what was submitted, to whom, and when; tabulate the responses; keep your rejections, especially if they are personal notes. If nothing else, all the mailing and e-mail addresses will be useful to your writing friends.
- 4. Do learn to pitch.** Most authors hate pitching. Yet be prepared: I have heard too many agents say, "If you can't grab me and hold my attention for five minutes of speech, or for the length of a query letter, then why should I assume that you can write a good novel?" It's an intrusion of Hollywood tactics into the world of literature, and tends to bring with it the same high level of intelligence and quality that we've come to expect from the movies. Pitches, high-concept log-lines ("It's *Bridges of Madison County* meets *Jaws!*"), and sales handles ("It's Thackeray with a Gen-X spin") are at best stupid and annoying, and at worst are probably corrosive, eating at the foundations of the novel. Tough. Learn to do it anyway.
- 5. Do avail yourself of advice or help offered by agents.** As mentioned in the Don'ts, you shouldn't immediately start revising based on observations made by an agent (especially if they haven't asked you to revise and resubmit); but if they've taken the trouble to offer advice or observations, you should certainly try them on for size. In addition, if they say admiring things about your work—especially if they've read an entire manuscript—but say that it's outside the list of what they think they can sell, feel free to write back and ask whose list it might be right for. (I did this with one agent, and she actually recommended the book to three other agents.)
- 6. Do say thank you if you receive a personal reply.** Any personal note from an agent—even one scribbled on the margin of your query letter—deserves a thank-you letter in response. Reading time is at a premium for agents, and writing time is an indulgence that most of them expend only with reluctance. Thank them for it—after all, you may be coming back to them some day. Thank them for it despite the fact that their comments seem off-target, or even on the nasty side; in fact, you should thank them *especially* if their comments are on the nasty side. Novelist Carolyn See calls this response "emotional jiu-jitsu," and she's right; it gets that oppressive feeling off your chest and, with a little luck, dumps it back on its source with interest.
- 7. Do get involved with the literary life, such as it is.** Don't let classes, workshops, or conferences become substitutes for writing, but don't avoid them, either. [Y]ou owe it to yourself to [attend] at least a few conferences where you can talk to people—agents, editors, and fellow writers. Meeting agents face-to-face improves the chance that they'll read your query letters; and editors sometimes invite you to submit directly to them, bypassing the entire agent system. (You still probably want an agent—but it's easier to get one if you've already got a publisher.) Fellow writers are an underestimated resource; they can give you leads on agents, and they can also warn you who to avoid. Get embedded in the writing community.
- 8. Do build up your fiction resume.** Win awards, contests, prizes, or fellowships, if you can. Publish short stories, or, if you can't manage that, publish magazine articles. Attend retreats, or, if you can, get into a writer's colony. These things may or may not help your writing, but they do add to your credibility.
- 9. Do stay optimistic.** This is far, far easier said than done. Rejection is to be expected—relentless, ego-crushing, soul-draining rejection. Unless you're psychotic, it's hard to avoid despair. Give into it if you must, but don't send out queries when you're at the bottom of the pit. Wait for your brief psychotic breaks, those moments where you are nutty enough to believe there's hope, and send your queries out then.
- 10. Do move on with your writing.** This is what distinguishes a writer from someone who has written. There are a surprising number of people out there who finish their first novel and then spend years trying to market it, assuming they shouldn't move ahead with their writing until they've successfully marketed their first book. The truth is, most 'debut novels' aren't first novels, though they are often presented as such; there are usually two or three earlier works stashed away in drawers.

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Seeking an Agent: (PART II of II)

(Continued from page 4)

Hemingway said the way to learn to write was to “Write a million words.” (That’s ten to twenty novels-worth.) Even Stephen King, who seemingly can sell anything up to and including his grocery list, completed four novels before he managed to get one published. “Courage,” Rollo May says, “is not the absence of despair; it is the courage to move ahead *in spite of despair.*” If you want to be a writer, write.

Somewhere out there, I’m sure, is someone who, in recent years, wrote a good novel and then found an agent and publisher on the basis of nothing more than a solid query letter; that someone did this without awards, or a publications list, or recommendations, or contacts, or even good research on agents.

Somewhere out there, too, is the winner of the State Lottery. For most of us, it’s more complicated than that. The rules presented above will at least keep you from getting in your own way. The rest is up to your writing...and a whole lotta luck.

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The April 2006 “Will Write 4 Food” Contest!

Write: Look carefully at the photo (center) and write a short-short story (maximum 250 words) about what is happening.

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.

Deadline: Stories must be received on or before April 14, 2006.

Revised Requirements: To facilitate fair judging, put the story title on the top of the page with your **name** and **day-time phone number** underneath. Only the winning author will be contacted.

Subject Line: April 2006 “Will Write 4 Food Contest” with your daytime number or e-mail address. (For snail-mail put this information on the outside of the envelope.)

Warning: without the subject line, submission may not be read in time.

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 contest submissions. Only one **winning** entry per member per year.

Lynnette Baum, V.P. Programming



March Contest Winner:



Arrow and Coyote By Joyce Wheeler

Deep in the mineshaft area of New Mexico, the bronzed brothers discovered an ancestral fire pit. Digging around it disclosed a slightly shattered and blackened turquoise ring, mounted in silver. A hummingbird hovered.

They argued amicably about its final ownership then agreed it would become part of their mutually owned Indian crafted merchandise. A New Mexico highway was their merchandising area, set up in a teepee to lure traveling motorists. Turquoise jewelry was displayed on leather strips.

Once evening’s chill settled on the highway and headlights became scarce, Arrow and Coyote slept inside. These brothers sold out each week due to authenticity. They would barter for whores and whiskey, despite the risk that their cherished women would reject them if they sensed either violation.

A gaggle of Teens spilled out of a van and ransacked the teepee, but departed with knife wounds. Arrow and Coyote were armed with bow and arrows after that incident, which created more sales and enhanced their mystique. Bloody knives and pottery filled with arrowheads were displayed.

They staged dramatic knife fights, routinely. When each bloody show was over, warrior knives were purchased. Life was simple, until an addicted motorist grabbed a feathered hatchet and split open the head of Coyote. Arrow stereotypically scalped the motorist, and displayed it on a leather strip near the jewelry. He buried the man and his brother in the desert. Arrow never spoke of Coyote, but wore the tribal ring from the fire pit. A hummingbird hovered near the teepee.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Tent – Carol L. Gandolfo, Psy.D.
Lost and Found – Donna Holland
The Restless One – Glenda Rynn

www.ocwriter.com/willwrite.html



**April Meeting:
Saturday
April 15, 2006**

ANTOINETTE KURITZ

Secret Tips from Famous Writers & How to Write for Success!

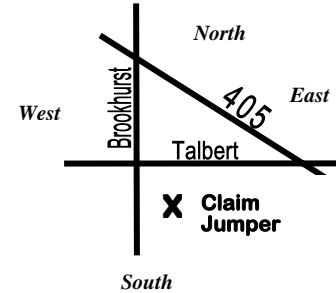
(See inside to learn more about Antoinette Kurtz.)



LOCATION: Claim Jumper Restaurant

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

Registration & Networking:	9:30 a.m.
Meeting & Program:	10:00 a.m.
Lunch:	11:30 a.m.
Afternoon Program:	12:15 p.m.



WALK-INS & GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME — \$25.00 AT DOOR

MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$25.00 AT DOOR

MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$20.00

RSVP before April 10: Dorrie Lloyd, Treasurer, 764 Calle Aragon—Unit C, Laguna Woods, CA 92637

Check must accompany reservations. Make checks payable to **SCWA**.

After April 10: Dorrie Lloyd, Treasurer, (949) 581-9528; e-mail: dorrielloyd@yahoo.com—and be sure to include the **RE LINE: "SCWA RESERVATIONS."** — **THEN YOU MUST 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

Laura Sheridan-Long, Editor
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