



Writers News

Volume 7, Number 8.....August 2008

August 16 Speaker

Michael Steven Gregory

Writer and independent filmmaker

From Books to Movies to MySpace: Writing for Today's Transmedia Marketplace



Filmmaker Michael Steven Gregory is president of Random Cove, an independent producer of original entertainment. An accomplished screenwriter of material ranging from mainstream drama to animated action-adventure to videogames, he has scripted series for Fox, UPN and HBO, directed television and features in a variety of genres, and has been involved as a writer, producer or director in more than 150 short films.



His recent longform projects include *A Valentine Carol* (Lifetime) and the award-winning doculogue *We, The Screenwriter*, as well as 2K Sports' next-gen videogame, *Don King Presents: Prizefighter*. In addition to current film projects, including *Border Badge: Crossing the Line*, a documentary, and *Fist in the Eye*, a romantic comedy written and being directed by fellow WGA members, Michael is executive director of the

Southern California Writers' Conference, which has facilitated nearly \$4 million worth of first-time author and screen deals over the past 22 years.

Random Cove is "Alternative entertainment for the active intellect." For more information, visit www.RandomCove.com.

Kathy Porter
VP, Programming
kathy@grayguardians.com

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President's Message



The Best Writing Tips for the Best Writers

Whatever your genre, certain absolutes shine like beacons to guide your writing. The following tips cross all writing boundaries. Whether you specialize in marketing writing, novel writing, short stories, biographies, essays, poetry, children's literature or fantasy, keep these tips in mind when putting your pen to the page.

- 1) Know your audience. When you know the readers you are writing for, your work will skew toward their wants. This will prevent you from writing an exquisite piece that has no appeal for your readership. Instead, your text will glow with enticing phrases and language.
- 2) Use key words. Whether you are focused on fantasy or nonfiction, language acts like a compass for readers. Make sure that the words you use appeal to the age-range and educational level of your audience. This will make reading your work pleasurable, and attract editors and readers, alike.
- 3) Start with a twist. Bring a new idea, concept or flair to your subject or story. This kind of uniqueness catches the imagination of your audience. And, nothing sets an author's feet more firmly on the pathway to success than readers that clamor for more!
- 4) Write what you like. There will always be a group of self-conscious, elitist critics that insist upon genius before awarding accolades. Unless pseudo-intellectual writing appeals to you, ignore them. Write the kind of text you enjoy reading. As you do so, words will flow easily onto the page and your own authentic voice will evolve and shine.
- 5) Focus on the beginning and the end. Readers will forgive a great deal of muddling in the middle when the introduction and conclusion of your work has heart.
- 6) Use your intuition. Every piece should be organized, but too much logic irons your language flat. Enjoy the adventure of writing and your audience will enjoy the adventure of reading.
- 7) Have fun! Enjoying the process of writing is like riding a wave-runner on a sunny day. Everything else fades away, until you are only aware of the vibrant moment.

Yes, you've heard this advice before. There is nothing new or earth shattering in these writing tips. But, how often do you practice what you know? The challenge is to take this knowledge and apply it to your writing, every day! Good luck...

Lynnette Baum
President
lynnette@the-right-writer.com

SUSAN ARNOUT SMITH: *Webisodes, Episodes and How to Market a Bestselling Thriller*

“You have a book inside that only you can write,” says Susan Arnout Smith, essayist, award-winning playwright, scriptwriter, and author of *The Timer Game*, which sold 16,000 copies in its first three weeks. Ms. Smith’s presentation centered on the creation of *The Timer Game*, which she began when her son was three and finished when he was 26. In between its ups and downs, she had success in other writing challenges.

Smith relayed how many times she ripped this novel apart to make qualitative changes throughout. To keep track, she color-coded each major revision. Along the way, she learned many things:

- A. A. “Don’t write ‘on the nose’—nothing the audience gets right away. The viewers [or readers] need to work it out later for themselves.”
- B. In a story with potential, “there is something in the core of the book that keeps calling you back.”
- C. Go deep into the character. Examine where he or she needs to react to cause and effect. “What’s the deepest thing my character would be saying to herself?” “Where in her body does she feel—throat, gut?”
- D. Writing a novel is like “talking to an octopus you’ve put to bed for the night. When you leave, one of the arms comes crawling out of the bed” and latches onto you again.
- E. Above your computer, put words to live by. Hers were “*The Timer Game* is going to be an international best seller. I’ve nothing to fear.”
- F. From your rejection letter file, pull out the best sentences of each and who said them. Smith’s compilation became “Everybody is talking about *The Timer Game*. And these are just the rejection letters.”

Smith says the right agent who loves your work “will find a home for it.” To locate an agent, she suggested examining with Google the agents who will be at upcoming writers conferences. See if any of the books they’ve represented fall into your category. Sign up ahead for a slot of time with “an individual fit.” That agent will read and discuss a certain number of your pages with you.

Knowing that “lots of luminous books with zippy plots disappear every year,” Smith and her agent comprehensively primed the market by creating a “brand” that would *cross over* from the Internet to books. They designed an online game based on the plot with prizes by mail. Not only did Smith have auctions and drawings for the book but also created logo pens and postcards.

One big innovation was the making of webisodes, also called “book trailers,” that are one-to-two minute episodes on Web sites like YouTube and MySpace. Make at least four. Find dramatic moments in the back-story, small cliffhangers, that beg for close-up, character interactions. The purpose is to direct viewers to your Web site. Include all webisodes in your Web site’s archives.

Cast these webcam pieces with actors from Hollywood or local acting groups with a daily rate of \$50 for a four-day shoot. Use directors from community theaters and a composer to write music. For the webcam work, hire one of the video companies that produce graduation montages, or partner with a high school or college video production class and donate \$500 to their budget. In the webisodes, list the names of all involved with links to their own Web sites—excellent publicity for them.

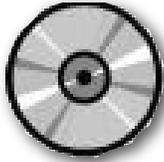
Earlier, learn how to break into Hollywood by getting a “coverage” job reading scripts. “They farm this stuff out—to be ‘graded.’” You gain familiarity with agents and build business relationships. Get access to the *Hollywood Creative Directory*, published every three to four months at \$75. It lists production company personnel with a description of their

See *Susan Arnout Smith*, page 4

SCWA News & Announcements

If You Can't Make the Meeting:

You can buy recordings of previous speakers on both cassette tape and audio CD for the member price of only \$5 each! This is such a valuable resource if you miss a meeting. Our Southern California Writers Association pens are also available for only \$7.50. Just go to ocwriter.com and click on "Make a Purchase."



The Art of "Webisodes" Explained

Susan Arnout Smith, from page 3

preferred work.

Smith also suggests marketing to film channels such as Lifetime, a Hearst Corporation. It works with production companies who buy scripts and produce so many movies annually. But on your way to contacting the president, VP, or executive producer, Smith stresses, "Be kind to the assistant. In three months, the assistant will be running the place."

Smith says her son views writing as "the only profession where grownups stay in their pajamas all day talking to their imaginary friends."

Glenda Brown Rynn,
Member
grynn@cox.net

Contact Writers News Editor Mary Michel Green at (949) 361-6581 or green.mary@cox.net.

SCWA Critique Committee Open to Members of SCWA

Nonfiction & Fiction

This position is open.

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

Executive Committee

PresidentLynnette Baum
VP, ProgrammingKathy Porter
VP, MembershipLinda Coyne
Secretary..... Linda Shortell
TreasurerDarlene Quinn
Publicity DirectorLarry Porricelli
Webmaster Tony Stoklosa
Meeting Coordinator.....Brennan Harvey
Newsletter Editor Mary Michel Green
Tape Librarian.....Sharon Walters

Membership Information

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membership@ocwriter.com

Meeting Reservations

Brennan Harvey, meeting@ocwriter.com
or message (714) 375-5275

In Memorium

SCWA lost a remarkable person last month. Carolyn Kimme-Smith was our treasurer 2006-2007.

Carolyn's family will be hosting an open house to celebrate her life on Saturday, August 9 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sharing memories will be from 3 p.m. to 4p.m. It will be held at the Smith family home at 630 Harbor Island Dr. in Newport Beach. RSVP to Karl and Cheryl Kimme at (949) 642-7131.

Here is how she described herself:

Carolyn Smith received her BA in mathematics in 1953 from the University of Minnesota and a MS in numerical analysis (there were no computer science degrees in those days) at NYU in 1960 (after having two children). She then worked as a computer programmer at Bell Labs (now Lucent) in New Jersey for five years.

After moving to California and having a third child, she programmed in the UCI Engineering Department until (after a divorce and new marriage) she went back for a PhD in Medical Physics at UCI. After obtaining her degree in 1982, she joined the faculty of UCLA and

retired in 2001 from the Radiology Department as a full professor.

Since her retirement, she has written two mysteries, the first of which has been retired to a deep dark drawer for ripening. She is seeking an agent for the second novel and has begun a third one.

SCWA President Lynnette Baum wrote:

One of the most ardent members of the SCWA was Carolyn Kimme-Smith, who recently passed away. A professor at UCLA, Carolyn was a math-genius, a wonderful writer and a strong supporter of our association. A member of the Candid Critique group, Carolyn helped developing writers with her generous feedback and encouragement. A long-term member of the SCWA, she served on the board and her influence and brilliance will be sorely missed.

Our empathy goes out to family members during this difficult time. As friends and peers of Carolyn Kimme-Smith, we will all miss her vibrant spirit. May her memory continue to inspire us in the days and years ahead...

Former SCWA President Victory Crayne wrote:

Many were the times when I relied upon her advice to help me make decisions when I was the president of SCWA. Most of you never knew how much I relied

upon her to keep my feet anchored firmly on the ground, despite my lofty ambitions to change almost everything. I was an eager puppy who needed a guide. When I was frustrated, Carolyn soothed my nerves. When I was strong minded, she pointed out the needs of others over my own. When I was hesitant, she helped me see the way through the choices for the good of the organization.

Behind many leaders is often someone who sits calmly on the top of the mountain and offers advice. I was fortunate to have Carolyn as my guru-in-residence. SCWA was blessed to have her as our treasurer and an active member. I know I was blessed to have her as a friend.

The world is a little more quiet and dark with her passing.

SCWA member Glenda Brown Rynn wrote:

Many of you may not know, but Carolyn, Bill Blake, and I had formed a critique group that Carolyn had been hosting every other week at her Newport Beach home for many months. The last time we met was Tuesday, July 1.

Carolyn was working on a murder mystery, lacing her considerable scientific, technical, and corporate knowledge throughout. I'm glad she was doing something she enjoyed.

I arrived early the last time, and she talked candidly with

See *Carolyn Kimme-Smith*, page 6

A Good Friend is Remembered

Carolyn Kimme-Smith, from page 5

me about her emphysema. She said she wasn't afraid to die but didn't know if she had a year, six months, or maybe even two years left. She had been on oxygen full-time for quite a while—with long plastic tubes running to her tanks. She was having difficulty getting her breath even then. However, as the others came and she sat with her feet up, I noticed she was breathing more easily—and definitely enjoying the interaction of the group.

She had come out of the hospital the week before. What a determined person and friend,

feisty—right to the end!!

**From your Writers News editor
Mary Michel Green:**

I was supposed to be in the critique group Glenda mentions above, but my health posed quite a few obstacles. Carolyn was one of the most valuable members of my support system during that difficult time.

Once I raged in our e-mail correspondence about having a hip replacement postponed because I flunked a cardiac stress test and had to have an angiogram instead. It turned out that nothing

at all was wrong with my heart and I was frustrated beyond words.

Carolyn told me that she had gone through the same thing, except that her angiogram showed severe blockages and she was taken directly to surgery for a multiple bypass! She had to recover from that and then have her hip replaced.

I learned to count my blessings and hold up with grace under pressure from her example time and time again.

Members Are Publishing!

MEMBERS' ACHIEVEMENTS, July 2008

Darlene Quinn: has a novel, *Webs of Power*, coming out on Sept. 3. Her book launch will be in Long Beach at Barnes and Noble at Marina Pacifica, 6326 E. Pacific Coast Hwy, (PCH near 2nd Street) on Saturday Sept. 6 at 4 p.m.

For members who live further south, Darlene will be at Bay Book, 1029 Orange Ave. Coronado, CA 92118, for a talk and signing on Wed. Sept. 10 at 7 p.m.

Dixon Hearne: is the co-editor of the new book, *Teacakes and Afternoon Tales*, a collection of short stories, available at Barnes & Noble, Amazon.com, and Gulf Coast Writers Association.

A collection of her short stories & poetry, *Touchstones and Threads of Change*, has also just been published.

Darlene Quinn: had fliers re: Southern California Writers' Conference in Irvine to be held Sept. 26-28. A 50% discount is available to SCWA members who register by September 1. Members can go to the Web site at <http://www.writersconference.com/la/lamain.html>, e-mail Darlene (jack1703@aol.com) or call the SCWC office at (619)303-8185 for more information and cost of the conference.

Glenda Rynn: has had her short story, *Rewinding Snoopy*, accepted for publication in the Jan/Feb/Mar issue of *The Storyteller*.

Richard Vaughn: completed his fourth book: *Rapture Runner and Other Short Stories Sentimental and Irreverent*. It was featured in the Orange County Register. See www.RichardVaughn.blogspot.com Richard offered free copies during the meeting of *Dan River Anthology, 2008* which included Richard's short story, *Fractal Relations*.

You're welcome to e-mail your writing achievements to Janet De Marco at jdemar39@msn.com. Your good news will be announced during the SCWA meeting and included in the newsletter.

Writer's Corner

Editor's note: I am including the information below since two of the sessions, while not in Orange County, are free. I know it is very short notice, since you'll be receiving the newsletter by mail on the same day as the first talk, but it sounds interesting.

A book editor and Agatha-Award-winning author of books for writers is coming to Southern California to share with writers the inside story of how the manuscript submission process really works.

You will discover why 90 percent of manuscripts are rejected quickly without being read past page 1 or 2 and, most important, how you can raise your odds of surviving this brutal initiation rite for becoming commercially published.

INVITATION

You and your fellow writers are invited to learn what Chris Roerden believes you should know if you are seeking an agent and publisher for your book.

Chris is presenting workshops, open to the public, at the following locations:

- Burbank Public Library (Aug. 4 at 7:00 PM) (FREE)
- San Bernardino Public Library (Aug. 5 at 6:00 PM) (FREE)
- Brea Community Center (Aug. 9 at 10:00 AM) (\$20 to Romance Writers of America)

Enjoy one of these interactive workshops of insight and instruction led by this knowledgeable 44-year veteran of niche publishing, former president of a Midwest trade association of 250 commercial publishers and university presses, and member of Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, Romance Writers of America, Publishers Marketing Association, and Mensa.

Chris Roerden has also written the highly acclaimed *DON'T MURDER YOUR MYSTERY* and its expanded all-genre version, *DON'T SABOTAGE YOUR SUBMISSION*. Copies will be available after the workshop.

DON'T MURDER YOUR MYSTERY is the winner of the Agatha Award for best nonfiction book, Anthony Award finalist for Best Critical Nonfiction, Macavity Award finalist for Best Nonfiction, finalist for ForeWord Magazine's Reference Book of the Year, and is a Writer's Digest Book Club Alternate Selection.

Quotes

We read five words on the first page of a really good novel and we begin to forget that we are reading printed words on a page; we begin to see images.

—John Gardner

First, find out what your hero wants. Then just follow him.

—Ray Bradbury

The best way to send information is to wrap it up in a person.

—Robert Oppenheimer

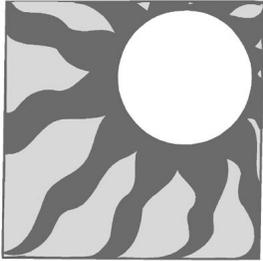
Don't worry about people stealing your ideas. If your ideas are any good, you'll have to ram them down people's throats.

—Howard Aiken



**August Meeting:
Saturday
August 16**

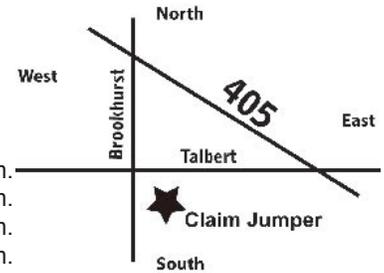
MICHAEL STEVEN GREGORY
**From Books to Movies to MySpace: Writing for Today's
 Transmedia Marketplace**
(See inside for more on Michael Steven Gregory.)



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:	10:00 a.m.
Lunch:	11:30 a.m.
Afternoon Program:	12:30 p.m.



GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME—\$30 AT DOOR; \$25 WITH RSVP
 MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$25 AT DOOR
 MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$20



BE SURE TO RSVP WHENEVER POSSIBLE!

RSVP before August 8:

Brennan Harvey, Meeting Coordinator, P.O. Box 1585, Huntington Beach, CA 92647-9998. Check payable to SCWA must accompany reservation. Our PayPal online account is temporarily out of commission.

After August 8: E-mail Brennan at meeting@ocwriter.com or message (714) 375-5275



Writers News

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