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Writers News

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May 16 Speaker

Lynn Price

Publisher/Speaker/Author

The Writer’s Essential Tackle Box



Lynn Price is editorial director of Behler Publications. Along with their *Get It Write* series, Behler Publications has produced poignant, award-winning personal journeys in both fiction and nonfiction - books that tackle medicine, aging, family issues, death, abandonment, love and prejudice.

Her latest book, *The Writer’s Essential Tackle Box*, is a unique parting of the clouds for the confusing and often contradictory information circulating in writers’ boards, conferences, blogs, and how-to books. Her distinctive point of view from behind the publisher’s desk helps authors better understand the frustrations and *Halleluiah* moments for agents and publishers, as well as educating writers as to what makes a great query, why some manuscripts are rejected, and the pitfalls to avoid when submitting a manuscript to an editor.

“Oh, boy!” Lynn says, when talking about the reactions many writers have after purchasing a book on the craft of writing. “This particular lament is akin to a loaded gun with a rusty safety...I’ve lost count of the writer’s “*How To*” books on the market, but having done some serious market research on the category, I can attest to the fact that we could end world hunger if everyone took to eating paper.”

When Lynn speaks to the Southern California Writers Association, she will shatter the myths promoted by Shallow-Hal-type “*How To*” writers that just want your money. Want to learn submission guidelines that appeal to editors and publishers? Just what are the differences between print on demand and

commercial publishers? In addition, Lynn will cover *The Writers Emergency Style Guide* and share tried and true methods that work as shared by industry professionals, like Wilda Williams from *Library Journal*, agents Rita Rosenkranz, Andrea Brown, Laurie McLean, and Peter Cox, *Absolute Write/Writer Bewares* Victoria Strauss, ABA President and *Changing Hands* bookstore owner Gayle Shanks, *Book Shepherd* Sharon

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President's Message

The Creative Art of Storytelling



Imagine the first story. Was it told around the fireside, with smoke dimming the flame-lit faces of an eager circle of listeners? Was it about the hunt, the kill, the tracking of the enemy, or the discovery of a cache of furs that would warm a struggling tribe through the winter? Was it a history of parentage passed from parent to child, a genealogy woven of words or a poem recording the passing seasons?

The stories within us have roots in an ancient and worthy past, a hidden history etched in chromosomes and individual cells, the heritage passed down from ancestors through blood and brain and breath - as elemental as the earth, as glorious as a fall of meteors. Yet, these stories will die, unwritten and unread, unless we allow our creativity some air, some space, some breathing room.

Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way*, said, "No matter what your age or your life path, whether making art is your career or your hobby or your dream, it is not too late or too egotistical or too selfish or too silly to work on your creativity."

Creativity is the wellspring of storytelling. We feed it when we use it. We use it when we tell a friend about our day, when we play hide-and-seek with the neighborhood kids, when we scribble in our journal...or, write a story.

Every story is about a hero or heroine overcoming hidden flaws in pursuit of the brass ring. In *A Few Good Men*, Tom Cruise discovers that he is not the slick operator he thinks he is, but a legal shyster, who has failed to exercise the courage to stand up for what he believes. In *Erin Brockovitch*, Julia Roberts learns that beauty alone does not make a firm foundation for an abundant or happy life. In *Galaxy Quest*, Tim Allan realizes that he is a fraud, a papier-mâché hero that everyone laughs at behind his back.

With these painful realizations comes the opportunity to deny or embrace truth, and thus either to continue to make the same mistakes, or exercise the courage to change.

Tom Cruise chooses to become a man and stand up for what he believes. Julia Roberts learns to fight for those that can't fight for themselves. Tim Allan finds that beneath his façade of fakery is a foundation of leadership that guides his crew safely home.

So, take your hero, give him a flaw, and make him face it, however painful. Add the kind of creative voice that attracted you as a child and your tale will take flight. Storytelling can be plain or flowery, direct or twisted, but as long as it is true to your heart, your mind and your heritage of creative discovery, it will enthrall and entertain!



Lynnette Baum
President
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APRIL HIGHLIGHTS:

DAVE CUNNINGHAM: *The Nuts and Bolts of Good Writing*

In a takeoff of *Forrest Gump's* "Stupid is as stupid does," Dave Cunningham, award-winning journalist, screenwriter, and fiction and nonfiction author, says "Good writing IS as good writing DOES." In other words, "If it works, it's good writing; if it doesn't, it's poor writing." However, successful writing is no accident.

You must first decide the message you want to communicate, Cunningham says, and then how: through a memoir, an autobiography, a screenplay or a novel. Within these forms are more choices, such as stream of consciousness or story as metaphor as in *Animal Farm*, etc. For example, Cunningham is currently publicizing *Travel Within: The 7 Steps to Wisdom and Inner Peace*, a self-help book, which he ghostwrote for a man whose insights resulted from a near-death experience. For a sequel, however, Cunningham will incorporate his client's other metaphysical inner truths into a novel with "counterpoint characters" to the protagonist.

Know the rules of your format or genre—mystery, sci fi, fiction, romance, etc. (By what page do you need a dead body?) Also, understand why you specifically need to break the rules here or there. To "know your roadmap," use scene cards or outlines before writing. Without a plan, you may fall into the trap of overwriting: "You can't get past chapter five because you don't know where you're going so you keep rewriting the earlier part." Remember too that less [detail] is more.

Find *your* voice. Voice represents the distinctive way you think and speak, the originality that comes from "baring your soul," your word choices, and sentence structures. "Voice is more than just technically well done." Consider the difference between "I spackled butter on my toast" versus "I buttered my toast." Think of how vocalists such as Sinatra or Mel Torme imprinted songs with their own style.

Cunningham assessed well-known voices as to distinctive style: **Strong** voices: Mark Twain, the "voice for his time and place"; Jamie Lee Burke, genre detective voice; Capote, Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, and Annie Lamott. **Medium** voices: Charles Dickens, J.K. Rowling, Dean Koontz, Stephen King, Stephanie Meyer. **Weak** voices (but good storytellers): Dan Brown, John Grisham, Tom Clancy, Robert Ludlum, Barbara Cartland.

Dialogue means not only differentiating the characters but advancing the plot. You "must listen to British, Southern talk, etc., region or personality specific." When writing dialogue, "go over the top. Then you can pull back." Think of how these single lines changed a plot: "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" from *Gone with the Wind*. "They call me MISTER Tibbs!" from the film of the same name. "You can't handle the truth" from *A Few Good Men*.

Using historical background from James Bonnet's *What's Wrong with the Three-Act Structure*, Cunningham refuted today's dogma of structuring stories into three acts. Greek plays were one long act. Romans divided a play's three hours into five acts to provide breaks for the audience. Television movies have seven acts with a hook at the end of each to accommodate commercials. If you are pitching an idea to someone who perceives only in the three-act format, then do so. Otherwise, use Aristotle's basics: conflict, complications, crises (turning points), climax, and resolution.

Several nuts and bolts came from Alex Keegan's *The Ten and a Half Commandments of Writing*. Tackle ideas that energize you; create stories that have a point; "seduction not instruction"; remove all explanation and replace with action and dialogue, be oblique and subtle if need be; read your work aloud for flow and lyricism. A "misbehaving character" may be "the author's higher, hidden self telling the materialistic, prejudiced, conforming parts to step

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SCWA News & Announcements

SCWA Members Darlene Quinn and Lynn Price to Speak at the LA Southern California Writer's Conference

You won't want to miss this great opportunity to show our support the growing number of accomplished SCWA members. Darlene Quinn and Lynn Price, long time members of SCWA, are two of the many excellent workshop leaders & speakers featured at the Los Angeles Southern California Writers Conference, September 25-27, 2009.

Don't Miss Out on Savings

I contacted Michael Steven Gregory, founder of the Southern California Writer's Conference's, and he has authorized a special discount for SCWA members! "I'll extend a \$100 discount for SCWA members who register before June 1 (not applicable with any other discounts). Anybody interested will need to enter "SCWA" as the coupon code upon registering between May 1 to May 31. I'll come up with another discount for afterward." Additional information and registration can be found on line at: www.writersconference.com.

Kathy Porter

Member

Kathy@grayguardians.com

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

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membership@ocwriter.com

Meeting Reservations

Charla Spence, meeting@ocwriter.com
or message (714) 375-5275

June “Will Write 4 Food” Contest

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

Submit: One entry per member per month.

E-mail to: contest@ocwriter.com with subject line: May 2009 “Will Write 4 Food Contest.” Put your daytime phone number or e-mail address in the message, along with the title of your story. Please attach the story without your identifying information, so the judging will be impartial.

Deadline: Stories must be received on or before 11:59 p.m. on May 6, 2009.

Winner: Attends their next SCWA meeting for free, a \$24.95 value! 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 Web site.

Runners-up will also receive certificates and their stories will be on the Web site.

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, but you may receive as many honorable mentions you can win. At the end of the year, we will try to publish all winning stories in an SCWA chapbook.



29-04-2009 posted by [mcbuddha](#) on flickr - used under Creative Commons license

May First Place Winner:

The Raggedy Man

By Lynnette Baum



“We shouldn’t be here! Rocket 3B leaves in 3.78 minutes,” Bunkie grumbled.

“In case no one’s told you, you’re a lousy human,” Sparky snapped.

“But, Peaches will be furious if we miss launch...”

Sparky snorted.

“Peaches smeaches!”

In child form, the aliens skipped across the park to an empty picnic table. As usual, the Raggedy Man was underneath, taking his afternoon nap. Bunkie hissed as Sparky crawled under the rain-stained planks.

“One and a half minutes! There’s no more time,” Bunkie gasped.

Carefully, Sparky pinned a comet insignia to the homeless man’s rags. Suddenly, the scent of pinesap and dandelions grew stronger. The fragrance of cut grass and warm dust filled the air. Over his heart, the comet thrummed like a huge bee. The smell of cool rain on hot pavement, of pollen sifting through cherry blossoms, of homemade ice cream melting on a spoon, wafted through the simmering air.

With a yelp, Sparkie and Bunkie ran for it, slipping into the ravine and onto the transfer post just in time. A thunderclap was followed by a thin silver streak, arcing across the sky. Safe in the decontamination chamber, Sparky poked Bunkie in the gut with a damp tentacle, just as the Raggedy Man appeared at their feet, dreaming of grandma’s picnics and homemade bread.

“We’re gonna get in so much trouble,” Bunkie bubbled.

“Not if he’s hidden in my Super Secret Souvenir collection,” Sparky blurped.

Lost in Elysium, the Raggedy Man burped, happily.



NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

June 20, 2009

Jerry D. Simmons

Retired VP of Marketing for Time Warner Books

How to Get Past Readers & Secrets to Developing Your Writing Voice

The hard cold facts are that readers are overwhelmed with manuscripts. Whatever doesn't fit on a busy editor's desk gets shuffled to a reader. And, even more discouraging, many readers are amateurs in the publishing business, college students or unpublished hopefuls looking for a way into the publishing industry. So, how do you get past readers and onto the editor's desk? Jerry Simmons shares his personal list of insider secrets, as well as how to develop a writing voice that is authentic and attractive. So, mark your calendars for June!

Lynnette Baum

President

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The Nuts and Bolts of Good Writing Described

Cunningham, from page 3

aside and let the real writer out." Before attempting a novel, Keegan says to write 50 short stories to "discover your voices and burn-out the excesses of autobiography" as well as eliminate the "plain vanilla." Read widely, the best and some junk. Most importantly, "...write, first of all, for yourself. Don't lie, don't cheat, don't be a hypocrite."

Rejection is often associated with these five fiction mistakes, isolated by Moira Allen: **bad beginnings**; **wordiness** from too many adjectives and adverbs, "big words when simple ones would do," unnecessary detail or backstory; **undeveloped characters**, ones we can't care about, those who do not grow or learn, and stereotypes; **poor plots**, which include trite, hackneyed, flimsy ones or those with no plot; and **no point**, "no unusual take on the subject, "no core reason to be."

Cunningham believes that "fiction rules apply to nonfiction" and itemized the scope of professional

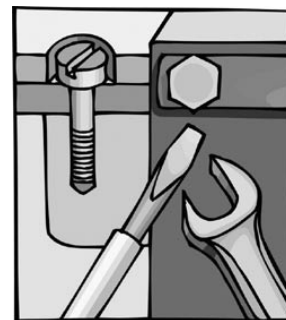
writing markets today: newspapers, magazines, ad copy, corporate writing (technical and creative), marketing copy (PR, product copy, catalogues), Webzines, website copy, poetry, short stories, non-fiction books, novels, stage plays, industrial film scripts, screenplays, teleplays, and computer game scripts.

Dave Cunningham is certain that the "power and value of storytelling will never go out of style. It's part of what we are."

Glenda Brown Rynn

Reporter

grynn@cox.net



Author's Corner!

Want to get published? Build your portfolio of published articles by submitting articles about the craft of writing to Mary Green for publication in the *Southern California Writers Association's* monthly newsletter. Any topic is welcome, as long as it is about writing. All articles must be written by an SCWA member and will be posted online as part of our newsletter. A limit of 250 - 300 words is suggested. Mary Green will approve any and all submissions and determine when and if they qualify for publication. (Send to green.mary@cox.net). These articles are short and sweet, so jump in and write one!

Speaker Will Open Writer's Tackle Box

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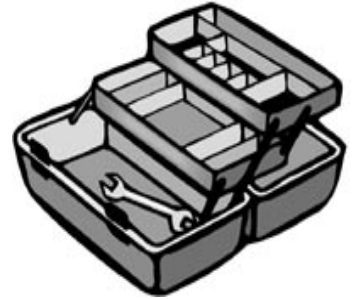
Goldinger. Although there are no golden bullets for writing a great book, there are wonderful facts that make writing successfully more likely.

Find out how to create the winning combination that reviewers and buyers want and enjoy, and discover that formulating high quality literature is a close as your fingertips when you know how to incorporate into your works what is both timeless and touching.

Lynnette Baum

President

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Writer's Corner

Quotes

Most writers can write books faster than publishers can write checks.

—Richard Curtis

Writing is turning one's worst moments into money.

—J. P. Donleavy

Stories may well be lies, but they are good lies that say true things, and which can sometimes pay the rent.

—Neil Gaiman

There's no money in poetry, but then there's no poetry in money either.

—Robert Graves

Writing for a penny a word is ridiculous. If a man wanted to make a million dollars, the best way would be to start his own religion.

—L. Ron Hubbard

I never had any doubts about my abilities. I knew I could write. I just had to figure out how to eat while doing this.

—Cormac McCarthy

Writing is its own reward.

—Henry Miller

Writing is the hardest way of earning a living, with the possible exception of wrestling alligators.

—Olin Miller



**May Meeting:
Saturday
May 16, 2009**

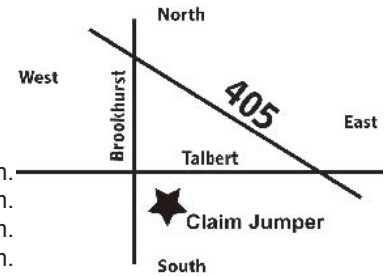
LYNN PRICE
The Writer's Tackle Box
(See inside for more on Lynn Price.)



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--\$34.95 AT DOOR; \$29.95 WITH RSVP
MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$29.95 AT DOOR
MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$24.95

BE SURE TO RSVP WHENEVER POSSIBLE!

RSVP before May 12:

Charla Spence, 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 May 12: E-mail Charla at meeting@ocwriter.com or message (714) 375-5275



Writers News

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