



Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

www.ocwriter.com

Volume 10, Number 10.....October 2010

October 16 Speaker

Mark Sevi

Screenwriter

Writing for Film

We all dream of writing that best seller. That breakthrough novel can make you famous, respected, and hopefully, rich. But what happens after the New York Times Bestseller list? For most of us, that would be a movie deal. Following in the steps of authors like John Grisham, Michael Crichton, and Stephanie Meyer, we all hope to see our novels on the big screen.

This October, we have a guest who has made a career developing novels into screenplays. Mark Sevi is a professional screenwriter with nineteen produced feature films and several in various stages of production. He has also sold pilots for television and is currently shopping the book series "Warlord" to Story and Film Productions as a pilot for a series on SyFy Channel. He is the founder and president of the Orange County Screenwriters Association (OCSWA) a not-for-



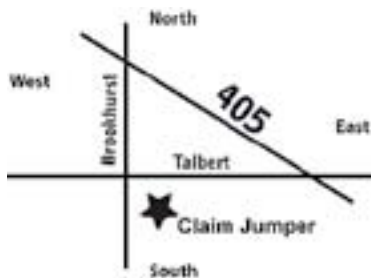
See *Sevi*, page 5

Meeting 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.



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President's Message



How to Make Your Writing Room

Everyone needs a writing room, a special place that nurtures creative endeavors. Your room will reflect your personality, but should also include, 1) An ambiance that helps you create, 2) Soothing colors and sounds.

Start with your ambiance. Do you like to be surrounded by sound and activity when writing? If so, your writing room could be the kitchen. In between meals, family members still congregate in the kitchen. It is a place not just for eating but for whispering secrets and sharing the trials of the day. If you are inspired by this kind of ambiance, set up your writing computer or station in the kitchen, or in at local coffee shop. The diversity of a constant stream of varied personalities and their interactions can inspire your creative efforts.

Does your ideal ambiance include a window? For some writers a view is essential to the writing process. To others it is a distraction, a prospect of visual cues that constantly derails their writing process. Personally, I love a view, but a view from the second floor. As long as the window is not directly behind my computer, a view is refreshing, especially when not invaded by noisy passersby.

Next, make sure that your room has colors that harmonize with your personality. Deep creams and jewel tones are my favorites. My room has cream-colored walls, with jewel toned tiffany lamps and a soft-toned tapestry. A forest green-and-gold runner, combined with cherry wood furniture completes my ideal writing retreat. Yet, this room is very small...even tiny. You don't need a large room to write in, just an appealing one.

Every writing room should have a current dictionary, thesaurus, and Writers Market. Other favorite resources (which I draw upon regularly) include, *Six Figure Freelancing* by Kelly James-Enger, *Eats Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss, *The Writers Essential Tackle-Box* by Lynn Price and *If You Want to Write* by Brenda Ueland. Inspiring fictional works also empower my vocabulary, so favorite paperbacks also have an important place on my writing room shelves...these range from *Fruitflesh* by Gayle Brandeis to *Ariel* by Steven R. Boyett, from the *Solaris Book of New Science Fiction, vol. 2*, edited by George Mann, to *Mystic Quest* by Tracy & Laura Hickman. When my mind is fatigued picking up one of these books can renew my creativity and re-sharpen my focus.

Shelves and files support your writing efforts with an organized system. However, I make sure that everything that could distract is neatly tucked into a drawer. No hanging wires or messy papers for me! That would just drive me into a cleaning frenzy, which would distract from my writing time. So determine what supports you, what appeals to you and what inspires you. Your writing room can be an Eden, as long as you include what you want and need.

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

September Highlights:

GAYLE BRANDEIS

The Art of Humor

“Hey, haven’t we metaphor?” “How does a poet sneeze? Haiku!” Gayle Brandeis, author of six books—novels, poetry, and nonfiction--loves wordplay. “Writers are my tribe,” she says. Ms. Brandeis focused primarily on how writers need awareness of the senses and body as much as of the mind.

Brandeis taught herself to read at three years old—and even read newspapers. Although she was excessively shy, words and writing became to her “a source of connection, transformation, and social change.” In high school she was drawn to poetry because it challenged her to express her “big emotions” in its “economy of language.”

Contrary to those emotions, Brandeis “lived for the heady world of ideas.” Feeling that the body was “too messy,” she believed words were removed from the corporal. Then during her senior year in high school, a strawberry-tasting experiment conducted by a teacher changed her life. The red fruit became like a small heart beating in her mouth. “My senses emerged from their coma.” She wondered if the whole world were “this richly complex.” Understanding at last that writing is not always about the “big issues,” she felt free to create.

And create she did. But while writing her fourth novel, Brandeis realized she lacked enough knowledge of the craft of writing and subsequently focused on gaining more skills. She loves the opportunity that fiction allows to slip into the skins of others. She warns that self-censorship limits a writer’s creativity. A model writer for her is Barbara Kingsolver who meshes social issues with personal ones.

Unexpectedly, Brandeis became intimidated by the quick publishing success of *Fruitflesh* (200), *Dictionary Poems* (2003), and *Book of Dead Birds*, which won the 2003 Bellwether Prize for fiction. She worried that her writing had to be perfect. Then she was preoccupied with the commercial issues of publishing. However, she broke through these fears by participating in NaNoWriMo, a web-based movement started in 1999 by Chris Baty [who spoke at SCWA in May 2005]. Each year National Novel Writing Month challenges writers to write a book during the month of November. The sequel Brandeis wrote to *Book of Dead Birds* remains unpublished but served as a reconnection to her own writing sensibilities.

To find the right agent for a book, Brandeis suggests that writers study those listed in the acknowledgment section of a book they like. Reading how profusely the author has thanked the agent, the writer will be able to personalize his or her comments in his letter to the agent.

Brandeis’s other books are *Self Storage* (2007), *My Life with the Lincolns* (2010), and *Delta Girls* (2010).

Glenda Brown Rynn, reporter
grynn@cox.net

SCWA News & Announcements

Member News

Shirl Thomas is one of the founding members of SCWA, and a professional editor and "book doctor." She lost her husband on September 19th. She will now have to work for a living, instead of editing for "fun money," as she has enjoyed doing the past 16 years. Shirl has esteemed credibility in the industry, along with references. For her bio and rate sheet, please visit www.shirlthomas.com. Shirl is happy to offer SCWA members a 10 percent discount. She edits everything except Screenplays and Children's stories. She will appreciate your business. Contact her: shirlth@verizon.net; (714) 968-5726

Karin Klein is proud to announce her September 2010 book release, "50 Hikes in Orange County," published by Countryman Press, a division of W.W. Norton. It's carried by the usual online booksellers, as well as local Barnes & Noble and various other brick-and-mortar retailers. Karin is an SCWA member, editorial writer at the Los Angeles Times, and a volunteer naturalist who leads interpretive hikes at several Orange County parks.

David Pastrana has published his book latest book, "Divorce Stress Syndrome." It is a resource for those desiring emotional health, whether they are facing divorce or looking back on one. He tackles a serious subject with delicacy and welcomed wit. Drawing on legal and academic expertise, the book includes Tiger Woods, Charlie Sheen, Mel Gibson and dozens of other celebrities. For more info visit www.mydisso.com

GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME—\$35 AT DOOR; \$30 WITH RSVP
MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$30 AT DOOR
MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$25

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

President.....Lynnette Baum
VP, ProgrammingNeil Young
VP, Membership.....Charla Spence
Secretary.....Charla Spence
Treasurer.....Larry Porricelli
Publicity Director.....Larry Porricelli
Webmaster.....Tony Stoklosa
Meeting Coordinator.....Sonia Marsh
Newsletter Editor.....David Meacham
Tape Librarian.....Sharon Walters

Membership Information
membership@ocwriter.com

Meeting Reservations
Sonia Marsh, meeting@ocwriter.com
or message (949) 309-0030

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:
November 20, 2010
Elizabeth Sims



We are happy to feature Elizabeth Sims as our November 20 speaker. Elizabeth is a Contributing Editor at Writer's Digest Magazine, where her craft-of-writing advice has appeared since 2006. Elizabeth is the author of seven popular novels, most recently, "On Location: A Rita Farmer Mystery from St. Martin's Minotaur" (August, 2010). Booklist calls it "Crime fiction as smart as it is compelling." Two other Rita Farmer Mysteries, "The Extra" (2009) and "The Actress" (2008), were also praised by the critics. In addition to hosting writing workshops, Sims also individually coaches aspiring writers.

Neil Young
VP, Programming
programmer@ocwriter.com

This Month's Speaker (cont.)

Sevi, from page 1

profit organization conceived to be a connective resource of creative energy and real-world materials for professional and amateur writers and filmmakers (www.ocscreenwriters.com.)

Mark has taught screenwriting in Southern California for over a decade and a half through Irvine Valley College's community education department (123getsmart.com.) He has written articles on the business and craft of writing for Salon.Com, Writers Digest, and many other online and print periodicals. Besides sitting as president on the board of directors of OCSWA, Mark is also a board member of The Media Alliance of Orange County (MAOC) which includes the OC film commissioner, Ms Janice Arrington. His current film project "Shadow Bay" is in pre-production with director Josh Eisenstadt and Spector's Rock Productions.

So please join us on October 16 as Mark shares with us his knowledge for making that big transition.

Neil Young
VP, Programming
programmer@ocwriter.com

Writer's Corner

How to Discover if Your Book Project is a Good Idea

By Patricia Fry

How do you know that your nonfiction book idea is a good one? Have you thought it through? Or have you become attached to writing and publishing this book no matter what? Perhaps you've never thought about checking the validity of the book before writing it—you planned to wait until it was published to find out if it was a good idea. If people buy it, then yes. If it sits on the book shelves or in boxes in your garage, then no.

Producing a book can be an expensive way to discover whether it is a worthwhile project. And if you just forge ahead without appropriate study, you may miss the opportunity to create a book that will actually sell and that will actually make a difference. Doesn't it make sense to do a little research prior to the writing and publishing? For example:

- Identify your target audience and determine how extensive it is. This is no time to use wishful thinking. Consider only those people who would most likely need or want this book.
- Study books similar to the one you have in mind and find out what is missing from them.
- Read readers' comments on these books' pages at Amazon to discover what readers are asking for—more case histories/anecdotes, a stronger self-help aspect, more resources, etc.
- Locate book reviews for these books and see if you can get a sense of what improvements, additions the reviewers would like to see.
- Study reader testimonials at the books' websites to learn what they appreciate most about these other books.
- Visit forums on this topic and "listen" to what your potential audience needs/wants.
- Sign up for discussion groups dedicated to this topic and participate.
- Go out and speak to your audience and present workshops. You'll soon discover what information and resources your readers desire/require.
- Write articles, a newsletter and a blog on this topic and encourage feedback.
- Get involved in other websites dedicated to this subject and pay attention to what visitors are asking for.
- Create your own interactive website focusing on the theme of your book idea.
- Develop or locate an opportunity to write an advice column related to this subject. You will attract just the sort of questions and comments you need to help you design the right book for the right audience.

How to Discover...

Discover, from page 6

In this incredibly competitive publishing climate, it makes no sense to rush a book into being or to wish a book toward success. The fact is that more books fail than succeed and the reason for this is often lack of preparation on the author's part.

Before you finish writing your nonfiction book, follow these 12 tips. With the knowledge you'll gain from these exercises and a total understanding and acceptance of the major task that follows publication—book promotion—you just might be one of the few who experience a measure of success with your nonfiction book.

Patricia Fry is the Executive Director of SPAWN (Small Publishers, Artists and Writers Network) www.spawn.org. She is the author of 31 books including several on publishing and book promotion. She also works with other authors on their book projects. www.patriciafry.com. www.matilijapress.com. Visit her informative blog often: www.matilijapress.com/publishingblog.

Critique Groups

A reminder to our members that critique groups can be a valuable forum to improve one's craft. Hailed "a safe place to fail...and succeed" by many published authors, critique groups (should) lend themselves to honest, encouraging criticism you won't hear from your mom, or many of your friends.

SCWA member Victory Crane points us to local groups on her website: www.crayne.com/critique-groups

If you are interested in starting your own critique group and publishing in our newsletter, contact SCWA newsletter editor, David Meacham - david@euphonypress.com



La Jolla Writers Conference 2010!

The La Jolla Writers Conference welcomes writers of all levels of experience. This three-day event, now in its 10th year, always boasts exciting, interactive workshops, lectures, and presentations by an outstanding and freely accessible faculty comprised of best-selling authors, editors from major publishing houses, and literary agents, all of whom value meeting and working with a diverse group of creative people passionate about writing.

This Southern California based writers conference is proud to offer more than 75 classes on the art, craft, and business of writing. With a faculty base of literary agents, New York Times best-selling authors, incredible editors, and leading industry experts, the La Jolla Writer's Conference of San Diego is recognized as one of the premier writers conferences in the country.

With class sizes averaging less than 25 people, the LJWC is designed to be a completely non-commercial environment. Attendees have acquired an agent who subsequently landed a three-book deal with a major publisher; received cover blurbs from four NY Times Bestselling authors; been mentored for an entire year by one of the keynote speakers; and the list of accomplishments goes on. The LJWC promises to be an invaluable experience for any writer.

La Jolla Writers Conference dates are November 5 - 7, hosted at Paradise Point Resort & Spa

www.lajollawritersconference.com