



The SouthWest Sage

Vol. 20, No. 12

The Voice of SouthWest Writers

December 2005

SouthWest Writers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging and supporting all people to express themselves through the written word.

SouthWest Writers presents
a three-hour workshop

Re-Vision means Re-Seeing

by Lisa Lenard-Cook

Saturday, January 7

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

New Life Presbyterian Church

\$20 for Southwest Writers members, \$30 for non-members

When asked if writing can be taught, National Book Award winning novelist John Casey responded, "I can't teach you to write. What I can teach you is to rewrite."

If you think that the prose of the pros starts out more polished than yours, think again: Revision and rewriting are at the heart of all good writing. Learn how to be the best editor you'll ever have.

Honors for Lisa Lenard-Cook's first novel *Dissonance* (UNM Press, 2003) include the Jim Sagel Prize for the Novel, short-listing for the PEN Southwest Book Award, and selection by NPR Performance Today's Summer Reading Series and the Durango-La Plata Reads countywide reading program. Her second novel *Coyote Morning* (UNM Press, 2004) was, like *Dissonance*, a Tucson-Pima County Public Library Southwest Book of the Year. Also the author of ten trade nonfiction books, a contributing editor to the website www.authorlink.com, and a teacher, editor, and mentor of other writers, Lisa lives in Corrales, New Mexico.

WRITER'S GUIDELINES The SouthWest Sage welcomes articles about the craft and business of writing. Articles should be 250 to 750 words long, plus a 40-word bio. Submissions are preferred by e-mail in an RTF attachment with 11pt. Times New Roman font and single-spaced. Bylines are given. No payment. The editor reserves the right to edit articles for length and content. Published articles will appear on the SWW website. Send submissions to SWriters@aol.com.



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SWW dues are \$60 per year (or \$100 for 2 years).
 Two individuals joining or renewing together get a special rate of \$50 each.
 Students with current proof of attendance can enjoy a special \$40 rate.
 At the \$60 rate, that's only \$5 a month to belong to a great organization!
 You can now pay your dues securely online at www.southwestwriters.org.

Happy, Happy Holidays...

by Tom Gibbons

The season has officially changed, the weather has grown cold, and the few leaves we have here in New Mexico are already falling. The chilly atmosphere is reflected by many of our articles this month. Stories of rejection, negative feedback, and other cathartic experiences are common in the world of creative writing, and you can see a bit of all three in this issue. Just as winter is bound to give way to sunshine, though, there is a glimmer of inevitable hope to go along with each dreary and dismal tale.

Jonathan Miller, our own "Rattlesnake Lawyer," has such a story in "Luna comes Alive," which tells of his experiences trying to publish and sell his second novel. I have contributed with my own harrowing tale of the hazards of technical journalism: "The Importance of being Accurate." Taken together, these articles make fine cautionary tales/morality plays for the ambitious writer. Others can just laugh and satisfy their crueler natures.

Not all of this issue is about dark and dire predicaments, fortunately (well, maybe unfortunately, as far as any sado-masochists are concerned)—our "It Happened" column continues to spread the light and joy of our twice-a-month meetings. Our meetings are always informative, encouraging, and fun—a great way for our members to get together. If you still haven't come by, I urge you to check it out. You won't regret it.

Also, from now on we'll be giving our in-house workshops more press in every issue. There's really no better way to support the organization and to get in touch with other writers. It's important to stay active in the community, especially in these winter months when most writers have the natural tendency to stay indoors. Our meetings and workshops are an excellent way to keep from going stir-crazy.

Peace,



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Jennie

Continental Cuisine from the Heart

If you missed out on the wonderful Continental cuisine at the SWW 2005 Contest Banquet, now is your change to experience one of the best restaurants in Albuquerque!

Show your SWW membership card to Nelly or Elena at Baciú's Bread & Wine Restaurant, 2740 Wyoming NE (corner of Wyoming and Candelaria) and receive a 10% discount (cash only).

Now open for lunch 11am–4pm; dinner 4–9pm. Beer and wine available.

New SWW Email Address is Here

SouthWest Writers has retired its old AOL address, SWriters@aol.com, and has replaced it with SWWrtiers@juno.com. We are using both email addresses concurrently until we pull the plug on AOL. Please make note of this fact in your email address book.



The SouthWest Sage

For twenty-four years, SWW has been bringing editors and agents from the very best publishing houses and agencies in the country.

Eileen Stanton, a co-founder and past president of SWW, has honed her interviewing talents over 15 years on the radio and in thousands of articles. She brings this expertise to the Sage's Markets column each month.

Let her know what questions you want answered.

Her email is estanton@cableone.net.

Markets

by Eileen Stanton

Sha-Shana Crichton is President of Crichton & Associates, Inc. She has promised to attend and take five-minute pitches from writers at *From Start to Sales*, a one-day mini conference sponsored by The University of New Mexico and SWW on April 29, 2006.

Q. You have an impressive background and education. You earned a degree from the University of the West Indies (B.A. Hons.), and the Instituto Benjamin de Tudela, in Navarra, Spain. You also graduated *cum laude* from Howard University School of Law, and are licensed to practice law. You're also a member of the Litigation and Arts, Entertainment and Sports sections of the DC Bar. How does this legal and multi-cultural background help you in your agency, Crichton & Associates Literary Agency?

A. Being a lawyer has been very helpful in negotiating contracts, and much else in the scope of what I acquire.

Q. What genres of books are you looking for?

A. We are currently accepting—

Fiction: Women's Fiction, Contemporary Fiction, Chick-Lit, Fiction for the 20-30 crowd, Mainstream Fiction, African-American Fiction, Multicultural Fiction, Latino/Hispanic Fiction by Latino/Hispanic authors, and romance (Category, Contemporary, Historical, Inspirational, African-American, Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Multicultural, Romantic Comedy, Romantic Suspense, Paranormal, Medical, Military Romance, and Romance novels set in exotic locations.)

Nonfiction: English and Spanish Nonfiction by expert authors covering Health, Beauty, Parenting, History, Historical Nonfiction, African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Law, Lifestyle, Sports, and Women's Issues.

Q. What gets your attention when you begin to read a manuscript?

A. A clear voice and well-developed characters.

Q. What turns you off the most when you receive a manuscript you've asked for?

A. If the first three chapters have been doctored, and the rest of the manuscript is all over the place.

Q. What are your submission guidelines?

A. For Fiction: A one to two page synopsis; the first three chapters of the manuscript; and a biography of the author, including previous publications (if any,) awards, and publicity information.

For Non-Fiction: A one to two page overview of the book; table of contents; two sample chapters; analysis of the target market (who will buy the book and why); list competing titles (6-10 books) and state how your book is different/better; and a biography of the author.

Please include your name, address, telephone and fax numbers, email address and a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Do not send original documents.

Q. Do you accept email queries?

A. Yes, we do. Send to cricht1@aol.com. Please do not send attachments.

Q. Anything else writers need to know?

A. We respond to all queries in 3-5 weeks. We do not charge reading or editing fees.

Q. What books do you recommend?

A. For proposals and queries for Non-Fiction books:

- *Write the Perfect Book Proposal: 10 That Sold And Why* by Jeff Herman and Deborah Levine Herman

- *Nonfiction Book Proposals Anybody Can Write* by Elizabeth Lyon, Natasha Kern

- *How to Write a Book Proposal* by Michael Larsen

- *On Writing* by Stephen King

- *Do The Write Thing: 7 Steps to Publishing Success* by Kwame Alexander with Nina Foxx.

Q. What's the best thing about your job?

A. I love to represent and sell a well-written book I believe in. Most are from first-time writers. It should be a writer's best work. Sometimes I get a diamond in the rough. I like writers who will take direction.

Is it time for you to renew your SWW membership? Check the website.
It is now secure for online renewals and new memberships.

Charlotte Balcomb Lane: Developing a Column Writing Style

by Tom Gibbons

One of Albuquerque's better known writers, Charlotte Balcomb Lane has been a food writer, restaurant reviewer, movie reviewer, gossip columnist and retail reporter, both at *The Albuquerque Journal* and *The Orlando Sentinel*. During her talk, the emphasis was on writing in a conversational style that keeps the reader involved. According to Lane, columns are Question-and-Answer sessions in which the writer should anticipate what unspoken questions the reader might have about the subject. The article is essentially a series of answers, one that leaves the reader informed with no nagging questions left behind.

Since an article should be imagined as a conversation, Lane said that the writer shouldn't be afraid of having an opinion. People are rarely impartial and objective in everyday conversation, and an article should be no different—it's an "essay with an opinion," Lane said.

Following this comparison, Lane emphasized the importance of having each sentence represent a single, complete thought. It's a writer's job to keep the reader interested, so sentences should be clear, short and focused. In journalism, there is rarely room for fluff. Separate thoughts string together and take the reader every step of the way. When you get stuck, Lane said, go back to the top. The foundation for the article and its argument lies there.

Just as we all have a distinct voice in life, the writer also must have a voice. A writer's voice is, essentially, *how* he or she writes. Each individual voice has all sorts of characteristics, and in different quantities. Lane lamented her perceived lack of laugh-out-loud humor, but we all found her entertaining nevertheless. One doesn't have to fire off rounds like Dave Barry to engage the reader.

Lane also stressed the most important unspoken question: "Why is this important and interesting?" The theme, or "hook," represents a single point that the article is trying to make. The reader should be hooked as soon as the first paragraph. For articles that take more explanation, Lane said, the third paragraph is the limit. If the reader hasn't been caught by then, they won't hesitate to flip to the funnies.

It isn't hard to develop a good idea for an interesting article, Lane says. Find what is interesting to you, and others will be interested as well. Sometimes all it takes is a drive (or walk, or motorcycle ride) around town to see where the action is. The rest is simply relaying the information to the reader as if they were sitting across from you and sipping a skim latte.

Joe Badal: On Writing a Novel

by Sandy Schairer

Joseph H. Badal, author of *The Pythagorean Solution* and *Terror Cell*, spoke Saturday, November 5, at SouthWest Writers. Joe said that while there is much that is wonderful about writing, there is also much agony. The author told the eighty-plus members and guests it's important, if not essential, that writers exhibit certain attributes. Writing is a journey, involving talent, skill and a certain amount of luck, but he included five basic fundamentals that all writers *must* have.

Passion—Have passion about writing. Since there's much pleasure as well as pain in the act of writing, you must *need* to write. In fact, he said, you must be "unable to not write."

Discipline—Hone your craft by writing every day. Writing is not simply a job; if it's your passion, you will find the time within a busy, active life. "Practice, practice..."

Emotional Toughness—"Have a thick skin or you might end up with low self-esteem." You must accept that everyone is a critic—family, friends and professionals. Realize not every reaction to your writing is going to be positive.

Be Realistic—While you dream BIG, gain satisfaction in every day achievements wherever you can find them. Keep your focus on finishing, and the little achievements will develop into big achievements.

Writing as a Business—Writing isn't just about the artistic, creative expression. Treat the transition from writer to published author as a self-employed business. If you open *any* business you will expect to spend a good deal getting established, therefore a writing business is no different. Be prepared to spend a great deal of time, energy, money, and effort becoming established as a writer.

Some highlights of the question and answer period include the author testimonial on the cover of *The Pythagorean Solution*—he asked mutual friends for an introduction to Tony Hillerman, then asked Tony to read his manuscript. After contacting a small publishing firm recommended by a friend, Joe promised the publisher he would sell at least 3,000 books—he then sold over 5,000. Most weekends the first year of publication were spent traveling to book-signings all over the country—2 or 3 every Saturday, and 3 or 4 every Sunday. About rewriting—read and revise your work until you "can't stand it anymore" before submitting. For more, visit josephbadal.com.

Sandy Schairer, PhD, is the current and 2006 Secretary of SWW Board, also member of RWA/LERA and ARE-Edgar Cayce Foundation. She is the author of Extremely Short Stories for Busy People, now available.

Luna Comes Alive!

by Jon

Crater County, my second novel, was always Rattlesnake Lawyer's darker and slightly sluttier step-sister. I had thought that once your first novel was published and sold out, selling the second novel would be easier.

I was wrong.

Luna's story (at first a screenplay) began in Albuquerque in 1997 while I was still practicing law full time. In the course of three days during a trial, I wanted to prove that I could write a character that was clearly not myself. I decided to go for it and create a Latina. I also wanted to explore dark "what if" questions in my life, as well as create a sympathetic prosecutor with a heart. In my daily criminal law practice that often seemed like fiction.

In developing Luna, I wanted a character who didn't realize her own strength. I immediately remembered a woman who worked out at my gym who became the model for Luna's triathlete's physique. This woman indeed had a "butt worth getting disbarred for," although let's just say I still have my law license. I have subsequently met a half-Latina prosecutor who ran track at a football school, was on the other side of a first degree felony, dated a cop, lived with her mother and also had Luna's physical stature, but I have not managed to convince her to fall in love with me...yet.

A friend saw much of me in Luna—her insecurity and loneliness at the start, for instance. No writer can avoid that, I guess. I also gave her a drive, a heart, and a spirit that I could only dream of. Over the course of her story, she made far worse mistakes than I ever did, yet she learned from them and ended up a better person and a better lawyer than I would ever be. I had fallen in love with Luna, but to paraphrase Woody Allen, she was fictional, I was Jewish. Just think what the children would be.

I showed an early draft of the script to someone in Hollywood. He said that it indeed looked like it had been written in three days. I kept Luna locked away in the bottom of my computer for the next few years.

Luna stayed that way until I returned home to New Mexico from film school and resumed my legal career. *Rattlesnake Lawyer* had been published to some success in 2000. It was now clear that I had become a novelist rather than a screenwriter. I had to prove that I was no "one hit wonder," like Mary Shelley, although I had hardly written something as famous as *Frankenstein* the first time around. Feeling a bit like a mad scientist, I looked at a pile of old scripts and tried to decide which one would make the transition from 90 pages of script to a novel of 300 pages. I remembered how easy it was to write Luna's character.

By the way, a mythical "Crater County" received a mention in *Rattlesnake*, supposedly a stand-in for Carlsbad. I

liked the alliteration. Living in a Crater seemed like a perfect metaphor for my life at that time, barren and airless. I moved the town to a freeway, a cross between Tucumcari, Moriarty, Grants and Gallup. In reality, Crater really was all of New Mexico for me at that time. As the characters often joke in Crater, there really wasn't a crater in Crater County—it was only a state of mind.

I started the novel in December 2002 while handling traffic tickets for disgruntled truck drivers and promoting *Rattlesnake* every weekend. I waited to hear from a new and more lucrative legal job that would allow me the money and flexibility to truly promote my books. I vowed I'd stop writing the novel the instant I got the offer for a real job. Unfortunately, no one offered me anything, grunted or otherwise. At the end of the year, I had 75,000 words that had a beginning, a middle and end that I didn't like. On New Year's eve, I realized that I had to make Luna the heroine. She had to go and rescue her love, rather than vice versa, from the throes of the killer.

By the first week of January 2003, I managed to finish the book. I did de-sex Luna's character from the version I had submitted to Playboy, so her bikini stayed on in the hot tub. Other than that, Luna was still the character I had created over the span of three days.

When I had finished the novel *Crater County*, I signed with a new agent, who sounded enthused about the project because of all the success I had had selling *Rattlesnake*. It would be easier this time, right? Unfortunately, there was no Luna landing over the course of 2003.

I fired the agent and finally sent Luna out on her own. I might as well have sent the submission to a PO box on Pluto. The response was existentially brutal. One publisher would not take the book even if I paid him a couple of grand for the printing. He said something along the lines of no one wanted to read about a depressed lawyer, and that it wasn't realistic. A reader at another agency said that I obviously had no idea about the legal system whatsoever. I actually took that criticism to heart and added a few paragraphs of legal gobbledey-gook before I resubmitted it.

After much more rejection, my existing publisher agreed to publish *Crater*. I felt it was Luna's last chance to live. This was the lightning storm that would spark her into existence. He also said he'd publish the paperback of *Rattlesnake* and *Amarillo in August*, my non-fiction collection about life as a writer on the road. Luna would now have a family.

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The Importance of Being Accurate

by Tom Gibbons

I've been working in Albuquerque for about a year now, writing freelance articles and conducting interviews. Now I've landed myself a job at a local publisher as a *bona fide* editorial assistant. The newspaper *Photo Journal* was my first major project. I helped write and revise articles, and put it all together on layout—not unlike the work I had done for SouthWest Writers. It didn't matter that I knew next to nothing about professional photography. I had the advice of recent SWW talks in one hand, and my meager journalistic experience in the other. As long as I wrote clearly and asked the right questions, what could go wrong?

The new issue of *Photo Journal* had been out for a few days when the Boss waved me into his office. It turned out that there was a factual error in one of my articles. The article covered a photo development lab that was only a few blocks away. I walked over, not knowing any details, only that my throat was squeezing shut and my skin itched. My face was probably bright red as well. I sat down in the lab's waiting room, picked up an issue of Newsweek from a few months back and pored over images of the London bombings, wondering what the problem was.

The answer was a single word. The hard-working woman I had interviewed spotted it shortly after the new issue arrived in her office. In one paragraph, I wrote that the lab was "the only color negative developer in town." It took me a minute for my mistake to sink in. It should have read, "the only color *transparency* developer in town." I remembered understanding that there was a distinction, and the proof was in the last paragraph: I stated the correct information, but too late. Any one of the other color negative developers in town, or even an employee at the photo division at Walgreens, would have already thrown the paper aside in anger and disgust.

I'm the first to admit that it was a slight mistake, and most of the people who would catch it would be understanding. This didn't slow my breathing down, however. I was already thinking of the correction I would have to make, and the way it would flash on the next Table of Contents page like a Broadway marquee. If that weren't bad enough, I also realized that I had not only damaged my own credibility, but that of the entrepreneur I had interviewed as well. The best expression of my feelings came later, as one of the loudest uses of a four-letter word ever to come out of my own mouth.

A couple of days later, the Boss waved me in again.

Another article I wrote—for the same issue, no less—covered a contemporary photo gallery in Santa Fe. After checking each name with what seemed like such professional scrutiny, I managed to miss one. There is no Photo-Op Gallery in Santa Fe, by the way. This time, instead of frustration, all that occurred was sadness. My first outing editing a real publication, and I had realized that my sense of confidence was unfounded. In some way, I had always anticipated the let-down in my subconscious mind.

In a normal situation, I could have felt a small consolation by blaming an editor. No dice this time—I was in charge of editing my own article, with all of the fact-checking it entailed. As ridiculous and trivial as this stuff might seem, I should have caught it nonetheless. My credibility had been injured—there was no getting around that. Big publications like *The New Yorker* might have teams of fact-checking savants on their payroll, but I couldn't rely on any such guardian angels.

The moral of the story: information is key. No one is perfect—not writers, editors, or sources. Always double check. Always get a second opinion. If you're writing an article with anything technical at all, show it to your source. Do anything you can to be one hundred percent sure. No one can take responsibility for a writer's mistakes except for the writer. I'm not likely to forget it anytime soon.

Tom Gibbons is, inexplicably, the Managing Editor for Photo Journal and the Sage Editor for SouthWest Writers. He received his Bachelor's in English Literature from the University of Washington in 2004.

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The Write Way

by Penny Rogers

Being a writer does not automatically give you a handle on English grammar and punctuation. Many of us dislike using the terms that English teachers love to throw around, but editors are sensitive to mistakes in grammar, particularly in non-fiction articles and books as well as in proposals and query letters. Naturally, in dialogue, an author uses levels of grammar to reveal the speaker's character and background. This column will discuss some basic rules to be used or ignored at your pleasure.

"Is it" or "Does it"?

The other day a friend said, "I feel badly because I broke the vase you gave me for my birthday." She was trying to use an adverb form with the *-ly* ending, but I wanted to ask if she had cut her fingers and that was why they were not able to feel things very well. If she had dropped the vase but not broken it, would she have said she felt happily?

Learn to recognize verbs that are followed by an adjective that describes the subject, not by an adverb that tells how the action was done. Take, for example, the verb "seem." Would you ever say she seemed gladly to see me? The verbs "appear," "look," "feel," "smell," "taste" and "sound" have to do with the five senses or with an emotion. They are often followed by an adjective, but they can also express an action requiring an adverb. Let's try a few:

- The stars appear distant when they appear slowly in the evening sky.
- The child felt feverish—the adjective describes the child. However, I felt feverishly for the aspirin that had fallen to the bottom of my shopping bag—that's what I did and how I did it.
- The soup smelled delicious, not deliciously—it doesn't have a nose.
- It also tasted delicious, not deliciously, since it doesn't have a tongue either.
- The sunset looked beautiful, not beautifully—it doesn't have eyes. However, it set beautifully—that's what it did and

how it did it.

- The soloist sounded wonderful, not wonderfully. Of course, the soloist sang wonderfully—that's what she did and how she did it.
- An ice cube feels smooth and cold. You can slip it smoothly into your mouth.
- Sometimes an adverb modifies or intensifies an adjective. Thus we can say the weather felt wonderful or the weather felt wonderfully cool.

And now we come to "good" and "well." "Good" (or "bad") is the adjective that describes something. "Well" is the adverb that tells how it was done unless you are describing someone who is not sick. "Badly," the adverb, describes how something is done.

- The soup smelled good. It had been prepared well.
- The sunset looked good.
- The piano sounded good. The pianist played well.
- The feverish child felt bad. Let's hope he soon is well and feels good.
- When an actor performs badly, the performance is bad.

Road signs have been shortened for convenience. SLOW means drive slowly. There is no such word as "fastly." "Fast" is both an adjective and adverb. A car that is fast goes fast. On the other hand, "lovely" or "ugly" is always an adjective describing something. You must *not* say "she sang lovely"—instead, say she sang in a lovely manner.

Yes, adverbs and adjectives are necessary grammar terms. The examples above can be used in dialogue to show that your fictional characters are either educated or not, but when your writing is representing you as an author, think twice and do it right (two adverbs without *-ly*.)

Penny Rogers has a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. She has taught English for eighteen years including three years at the Centro de Estudios Norteamericanos in Valencia, Spain, and ten years at Albuquerque T-VI.

Would You Like To Be Published Here?

We need articles for the Sage!

The articles need to be saved as an .rtf (Rich Text Format) file and attached to an email.

We prefer the font to be 11pt Times New Roman, and we like single-spacing.

Please send something on a writing-related subject to SWriters@aol.com.

Thank you so much!

Continued from Page 7

I asked friend and very talented graphic artist Amy Turner to design the cover. After many attempts we were lucky to find a woman's head out of a directory who looked vaguely like a cross between Penelope Cruz and Salma Hayek. She had a Mona Lisa smile and her eyes were cast downward as if looking at a crime scene. I swore that she was Luna. I have made it a point not to learn the model's name. I found what I thought was a picture of Shiprock in Western New Mexico to be the backdrop, but people pointed out it was Monument Valley in Utah or Arizona. Don't tell anyone.

I had lost the law job and now had a struggling solo practice. I pushed to publish as soon as possible, and *Crater County* came out in trade paperback in March 2004, along with *Rattlesnake* and *Amarillo* in the same week. I took three very deep breaths. Unfortunately, in space, no one can hear you scream, especially at the bottom of a crater. The silence was deadening.

I did not receive a single review, not from the Albuquerque Journal, Tribune, Weekly Alibi or even Crosswinds. I only had a write-up in the widely read Cibola County Beacon in Grants, New Mexico which mentioned that Luna, like many athletes, totally shaved the rest of her body. I don't remember anything else about the review after that.

I didn't have time to gasp for air. My first signing on *Crater* and the other books came at the Second Judicial District Court in the restaurant. The signing went surprisingly well, even though I didn't want to use the hard sell on Judges with whom I had pending cases. It was clear that Luna was outselling her siblings, although I had to give them attention as well, cutting into her total sales.

I had hoped that I wouldn't have as many interesting stories as I had in *Amarillo in August*. The sales would come in as if by magic. Yet, again, I was wrong.

I concentrated on those who had read the book and loved it. That's what kept me going. Then more people wrote. Then more. I also had tremendous support from my friends at Southwest Writers, First Fridays, and a screenwriting group that met at the Golden West saloon.

When Luna's first anniversary arrived, I still hadn't got money or even an accounting from my publisher, but I finally received a decent review from rebeccasreads.com from a reviewer in India. I was "the new voice of contemporary legal fiction." He thought the cover looked like something from Harlequin, however. Despite that one complaint, I finally felt vindicated, and I realized that every time I sold a book, Luna came to life just a bit more.

I checked my sales every day at my distributors. The books kept selling, sometimes even when I wasn't on the road. I was down to my last hundred at the printer by the summer of 2005. I used every chance I could to sell—I did a signing

during the release of the latest Harry Potter book and did great numbers. I also did one during an outdoor avante garde arts fair where I felt like I was signing on the surface of the sun in the hundred degree heat. I even sold books during my High School reunion. It was especially gratifying to sell a copy to the bully who threw my lock into the toilet in eleventh grade.

Eventually, I finally recieved my reward—New York. Albany, New York. For the first time, a major law school agreed to fly me out and put me up at a four-star hotel. I knew I could sell out there. Because Hollywood types were hovering around the projects, I knew I had to.

As I arrived at the Law School, I was surprised that all the students were outside to greet me. Luna was big, but she wasn't that big. Then I heard that someone had called in a bomb threat. I was flattered, but then I realized that the same person had also called in a threat to the Pharmacy and Dental Schools at well. I was heartbroken. I had let Luna down.

A Dean of the Law School came up with a great idea to salvage the evening. The students were gone, but I could still give the speech to faculty members. At first they tried the other buildings on the campus, but all of them were under bomb threat as well. They finally decided on a rather seedy bar. I sat at the head of the table and gave my standard speech over the glare of jukebox that played classic rock. I almost wondered if the bikers in the other room could hear my talk. Luckily one person on the faculty bought me three shots and the others bought the rest of the volumes. There, in Albany in October, I had finished my journey.

As I got up to leave the bar, my load much lighter as I left the books behind, I saw an athletic looking Latina on the other side of the bar room. I couldn't make her out clearly. At first I thought it was my friend from the gym, or perhaps my neighbor, or the prosecutor in Albuquerque. But it wasn't any of them. The woman waved at me shyly, and then ducked outside before I got a really good look at her.

When I made it out of the bar to catch up with my driver for the night, I saw the woman walk away into the damp upstate air and then vanish. I couldn't help but think one thing—she really did have a butt worth getting disbarred for.

Jonathan Miller is a graduate of the Albuquerque Academy, and has earned a BS from Cornell University, a JD from University of Colorado and an MFA in Screenwriting from the American Film Institute. His first novel, Rattlesnake Lawyer, was published in 2000, and Crater County was published in 2004. Both are now in their second printing. His collection of non-fiction, Amarillo in August, made the master list of Southwestern Books of the Year. His next novel, Volcano Verdict, is due out in 2006.

Very rarely are SWW programs cancelled, but it is possible should the weather become fierce. Please remember, if you have doubts about whether a program will happen, or about the time or topic, call the SWW office number (505) 265-9485 during business hours, M-F 9am - noon.

Program Location:
New Life
Presbyterian Church
5540 Eubank NE,
Albuquerque

Saturday, December 3, 10 am–noon

Three Mistakes Writers Most Frequently Make

Drawing from his three-and-a-half decades as an author, New York Times bestseller David Morrell, analyzes the three main roadblocks to a successful career. Morrell is the award-winning author of *First Blood*, the novel in which Rambo was created. He holds a Ph.D. in American Literature from the Pennsylvania State University and taught in the English department at the University of Iowa. “The mild-mannered professor with the bloody minded visions,” as one reviewer called him, Morrell is the author of 28 books, which include such bestsellers as *The Brotherhood of the Rose* (the basis for a top-rated NBC miniseries), *The Fifth Profession*, and *Extreme Denial* (set in Santa Fe, where he lives).

Tuesday, January 17, 7-9 pm

How to Improve your Writing Style

You may know how to construct a plot and build a character, but if your writing style is flat and colorless you probably won't sell your novel. Award-winning novelist Madge Harrah presents ten ways to spice up your writing style so that an editor will sit up and take notice. Madge Harrah has published five novels for adults, five novels for middle-grade and young adult readers, over two hundred articles and short stories, a book of plays, a biography, and has had plays produced. She has won twenty-six state, national and international writing awards. Her latest book, a biography called *Blind Boone, Piano Prodigy*, received First Place for Best Juvenile Book in the 2005 state-wide competition sponsored by New Mexico Press Women. This entitled it to be entered in the national competition, sponsored by the National Press Women Association, where it competed against the First Place winners for Best Juvenile Book from the fifty states. At the national level it won Third Place. Madge Harrah lives in Albuquerque and is a member of SWW.

Have a Happy Holiday!

Donations of refreshments at the regular SWW meetings will be gratefully accepted!
Please consider providing this valuable service to our organization.

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Thereafter: \$3.50/page

We request that you e-mail your announcements about writing-related activities to SWWriters@juno.com no later than the first day of the month preceding publication. Please limit the announcement to 60 words or less.

- ***Seeking History of SouthWest Writers** The SWW Board is compiling a historical archive of the beginning and early development of SouthWest Writers Organization. All members with memories of SWW to share, please send them to sandyschairer@southwestwriters.org.
- ***Craft of Writing Workshops** in Taos, NM. Every Tuesday, 10-11:15 a.m. at Wired Cafe. \$10. Drop-ins welcome. Taught by author/essayist/poet Linda Sonna. 505-737-9092.
- ***Stories of Strength** The proceeds of this new anthology will go to disaster relief charities such as the Red Cross, Operation USA, and the Salvation Army. Visit storiesofstrength.com for details.
- ***Book Talk & Signing** with Gene Guerin, author of *Cottonwood Saints*. December 2nd, 2005 at Borders Bookstore on Wyoming, and December 6th at Borders Santa Fe. 505-797-5601.
- ***Chama Holiday Gift Weekend** The New Mexico Book Co-op is working with the Elkhorn Lodge in Chama to sponsor this holiday event December 3-4. Visit <http://nmbookcoop.com> for details.
- ***Land of Enchantment Romance Authors** meets *second Saturday of each month* at noon. Potential members can attend three meetings to see if they would like to join. www.leranm.org.
- ***Steffanie Gibbons** is the editor of *New At Home*, a magazine for people who have just bought a house in Albuquerque or Santa Fe. They are looking for writers for assigned feature topics. steffanieg@aol.com.
- ***Plot Magic for Children's Books** Saturday, December 3, 2005 from 1pm to 4pm. New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE, Albuquerque.
- ***The First Annual Children's Book Festival** First weekend of December 2005 at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM. 505-522-4100.
- ***Rumi and Friends** The Lensic Performing Art Center in Santa Fe presents this benefit for the Scherer Institute of Natural Healing on December 5, 2005. A celebration of the mystic Rumi and the works of Antal, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Mirabai, Hafiz and others. Call 505-988-1234 or visit lensic.com for details.
- ***Bookworks Reading Groups** Meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm. All are welcome! Come to the meetings and get 10% off these book titles. On December 14, 2005: *Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts.
- ***Nimrod International Journal** is currently accepting quality fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction for publication in the spring 2006 issue. Deadline for submissions is December 15, 2005. Send to: Nimrod, The University of Tulsa, 600 S. College Ave., Tulsa, OK 74104.
- ***Signing and Discussion with Victoria Dye**, author of *All Aboard for Santa Fe*. December 17, 2005 at Southwest Book Roundup, 123 East Smokey Bear Blvd, Capitan NM. 505-354-1045.
- ***The Second From Start to Sales Seminar**, headed by Eileen Stanton, at UNM Continuing Education. Call 277-2527 for the catalog in January 2006.
- ***Endorse your writing on the radio** Airleaf Publishing and Book Selling Services offers the opportunity to talk about and sell books on 32 radio stations. For details, call Brien Jones at 1-800-342-6068 or email brien@airleaf.com.
- ***The Language of Liars** is a four week interactive course taught by a former federal agent. Learn to write authentic deceptive dialogue and spice up your interrogation scenes. Log on to rwamysterysuspense.org and click on "Murder One."

Note: Do not send your entry without writing to the sponsor or checking a website for guidelines and entry fees, and always include an SASE!

Deadline varies: *ByLine Magazine*, monthly contests, varying topics. See the current issue or www.bylinemag.com/contests.asp.

Deadline 12/15/05. Pen/Martha Albrand Award for First Nonfiction. awards@pen.org. Offered annually to American citizens or permanent residents. No entry fees.

Deadline 12/15/05. Malice Domestic Grants for Unpublished Writers. For details, visit malicedomestic.org. Offered annually and designed to help the next generation of malice authors get their first work published and to foster quality malice literature. No entry fees.

Deadline 12/20/05. Writer's Digest Poetry Awards. Visit writersdigest.com/contests/poetry/index.asp.

Deadline 12/30/05. The Santa Fe Writer's Project presents the 2005 Literary Awards. Reading fees are \$25 for students, \$30 for non-students. To enter, visit sfwp.com/entry.php.

Deadline 12/31/05. Sydney Taylor Book Award. jewishlibraries.org.

Deadline 1/5/05. 8th Annual Scriptapalooza Screenplay Competition. scriptapalooza.com.

Deadline 1/15/06. *Literal Latte* Fiction Award. literal-latte.com. Offered annually to any writer "to provide talented writers with three essential writing tools for continued success: money, publication, and recognition."

Deadline 1/30/06. Writers' Journal Fiction Contest. Send to: "Fiction Contest" Val-Tech Media, PO Box 394, Perham, MN 56573-0394.

Deadline 1/31/06. The Cornelius Ryan Award. www.opcofamerica.org. Offered annually for excellence in a nonfiction book on international affairs. Entry Fee: \$125.

Deadline 2/18/06. The Land of Enchantment Romance Authors present The Rebecca Contest 2006. Visit leranm.com.

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For those members wishing to receive an e-mail notice of SWW Events and Meetings,
please send a request to be placed on the E-Alert system.
Send the request to Gail Rubin at publicity@southwestwriters.org.

Send information by e-mail in rich text format (.rtf) to SWWriters@juno.com. Please be brief.

Albert Noyer's latest novel, *The Cybelene Conspiracy*, was published in a Spanish edition, *La Conspiracion Cibelina*, on Sept. 5 by Via Magna: editionviamagna.com.

Cliff Gravel & Melody Groves & Judy Avila have been awarded an Honorable Mention in this year's Writer's Digest Screenwriting Contest for "Love Your Local Ghost," a romance/comedy screenplay.

John Candelaria won Honorable Mention for his poem about New Mexicans in the Writer's Digest Writing Contest.

George Terrell's stageplay/musical "Wings Are Only for Show" will be presented Apr. 22-23 in Socorro.

Tom Gibbons was made Managing Editor of *Photo Journal*, sister publication to *Camera Arts Magazine*.

Nancy King's new book *Self-Discovery Through Stories* has just been published by Champion Press.

Your successes could be on this page and our worldwide website to be seen by agents, editors, publishers, producers, and search engines. But you have to do more than just talk, you have to e-mail your successes to SWWriters@juno.com. Don't miss this unique chance for free publicity and fame...and your right to brag!

Everyone Spread the Word to:

Writers, Publishers, Sales, Reps, etc.

SouthWest Writers has office space for rent.

\$250/mo. gets you/them NE business location with private lockable space, conference room, five cent copies, Internet access, local number fax machine, kitchenette.

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Critique Groups

Submit addition or deletion requests or changes to
SWWriters@juno.com.

**Wanting to Start Groups/
Looking for a Group**

Poetry:

Billy Brown
(505) 401-8139
welbert@aol.com

Short Nonfiction:

Suzann Owings
(505) 867-0567

Any Genre,**Rio Rancho area:**

Winnie Keith
(505) 771-8059
w.leone@giftsbyleone.com

Any Genre,**Rio Rancho area:**

Alice Harpley
riograndema@cableone.net

Any Genre,**Rio Rancho area:**

Bob Harpley
(505) 867-1408
quasiburro@cableone.net

Historical Romance:

Leah Dodd
(505) 890-0210
patandleah@peoplepc.com

SF/F:

Joel Holt
(505) 265-1938
loki265@hotmail.com

Fantasy/Romance:

Heidi Punke
(505) 271-9772
heidiandmitch@yahoo.com

Any Genre in Santa Fe:

Mary Mazza-Anderson
cmmom@zianet.com

Fantasy/Poetry:

Janet Belovarsky
(505) 891-9529
royalbloodseries@aol.com

Groups Seeking Members

Any Genre:

Tina Ortega
2nd and 4th Thursday 6 pm
at Moriarty Library
(505) 832-2513
jleksutin@hotmail.com

**The Santa Fe Screenwriter's
Group:**

Susan Burns
(505) 474-8268
thursday51@aol.com

Novels/Short Stories:

Saturday afternoons at
Albuquerque Main Public
Library on Copper
Jack Phelan
(505) 292-0576
(505) 256-3500

Albuquerque Nonfiction:

Meets weekly at the old
Albuquerque Press Club
Marianne Powers
(505) 892-4990
drifty@aol.com

**Westside Scribes,
Screenwriters:**

Every other Thursday
Flying Star on Rio Grande Blvd.
Marc Calderwood
skatingkokopelli@hotmail.com
897-6474

Mystery/SF:

Fred Aiken
(505) 856-2145
FredAiken@southwestwriters.com

Novels/Short Stories:

Janeen Anderson
(505) 899-5624
janeen@janglya.com

Fiction & Nonfiction:

Paula High
(505) 271-0837
plhigh@abq.com

Any Genre:

Meets once a month
Sunday afternoons
Michael Franco
MDLindell@aol.com

New SWW Members

Kellie Doyle

Kate Mulqueen

Charlotte Balcomb Lane

James McDonough

Louanne Johnson

Noel Fletcher

Linda Tindall

Beth Donahue

Don McIver



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SWW members contact:

Cheri Eicher
INDEPENDENT MEANS
Group Benefits
(505) 299-5919
(800) 883-4310

SWW Board Meeting will be held at the
SWW office on Tuesday, November 1, 2005, at 6 pm

Here we are:

3721 Morris St. NE Suite A
Albuquerque, NM 87111-3611
phone: (505) 265-9485 fax: (505) 265-9483
e-mail: SWWriters@juno.com
web: www.southwestwriters.org

Recent Board Meeting Highlights

♦The board voted to approve two new board members: Joanne Bodin, who is the new contest chair, and Ron Schultz who is the new volunteer coordinator.

♦The Nov. 19 conference is seeing increased advanced sign-ups. Book Works will be providing books for the book sale during the conference.

♦Joanne Bodin has lined up all the critiquers except the romance category for the 2006 Contest. The contest will have a new category: article/essays written in Spanish.

♦The board has approved a monthly writing competition with prizes but no critique; to start in Jan. 2006. Details will be available on the website.

♦Workshops will be presented after the SWW meetings in the months there is no all-day conference. January, February and March are in the works. February will be about web logs. March will feature screenwriting.

♦Reports for the 2006 Budget from all committees will be submitted by Nov. 11 to the treasurer & budget committee.

♦Member links are now available on the website for a \$5.00 one time fee if membership does not lapse.

♦The SouthWest Writers Critique service has done exceptionally well this year.

♦A board member has donated SouthWest Writers pen to sell for fund-raising at meetings for \$5.00 each.

Board meetings are open to members as non-voting guests.

Members may see the complete minutes for the year (and previous years) on file in the SWW office. Office hours: M-F, 9am-noon.

President

Larry Greenly

(505) 293-8550 · LarryGreenly@southwestwriters.com

VP/Office Coordinator/Parliamentarian

Rob Spiegel

(505) 275-2556 · RobSpiegel@southwestwriters.com

Secretary

Sandy Schairer

(505) 281-0546

·SandySchairer@southwestwriters.com

Treasurer

Loretta Hall

(505) 764-9906 · LorettaHall@southwestwriters.com

Membership

Lila Anastas

(505) 797-5452 · LilaAnastas@southwestwriters.com

Public Relations

Melody Groves

MelodyGroves@southwestwriters.com

Critique Service

Edith Greenly

(505) 293-8550 · EdithGreenly@southwestwriters.com

Policies, Procedures, and Audit/Historian

Lela Belle Wolfert

(505) 899-2952

Volunteer Coordinator

Cal Coates

(505) 323-4929 · CDCoates@southwestwriters.com

Members At Large

Judy Ducharme

(505) 256-9659 ·

JudyDucharme@southwestwriters.com

Writer's Contest 2005 Co-Chairs

David Corwell

(505) 898-0624 · DavidCorwell@southwestwriters.com

Joan Marsh

JoanMarsh@southwestwriters.com

Nomination Committee Chair

Fred Aiken

(505) 856-2145 · FredAiken@southwestwriters.com

Other Key Positions

SWW Sage Editor

Tom Gibbons

sageeditor@southwestwriters.com

E-let Mistress

Gail Rubin

publicity@southwestwriters.org

Speaker Coordinator

Larry Greenly

(505) 293-8550 · LarryGreenly@southwestwriters.com

Interim Conference Chair

Lela Belle Wolfert

(505) 899-2952



SWW is happy to announce the enormously expanded list of
writer's resources website links is now on the SWW website.
Check it out.



December 2005

The SouthWest Sage

The SouthWest Sage

SouthWest Writers

3721 Morris NE

Albuquerque NM 87111

www.southwestwriters.org

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