

SouthWest Sage

April 2010 www.southwestwriters.com

Winning SouthWest Writers' Annual Contest Brings Visibility to Writers

By *Andy Mayo*

Taking a step forward in your writer's life can be as simple as entering SouthWest Writers annual writing contest. These past winners describe why entering the contest was important to them.

Gary Ponzo, 2009

For Gary Ponzo of Arizona, entering the contest in 2009 was "a great experience." Not only did he win first place in the Mystery/Suspense/Thriller/Adventure Novel category for his first novel, *A Touch of Deceit*, but he also landed his first agent.

Like everything in this business, it wasn't automatic. After receiving his award, Gary emailed the agent who had judged the category to thank him for picking his novel and to ask if the agent would like to read the whole manuscript.

The agent, Robert Brown of Wylie-Merick Literary Agency, agreed and shortly afterward sent Gary a personal letter of praise for his writing and a contract. "He believes in my work and that's great encouragement," Gary said. He had worked on the novel for eight years and completed it just before entering SWW's contest.

Gary is now working on two novels, a sequel to *A Touch of Deceit* and a psychological thriller based on his short story "Saving the World," which was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 1999.

Mark Halperin, 2006

Even when that first agent doesn't work out, winning the contest is solid encouragement, according to Mark Halperin of North Carolina. His 2006 entry, *October Man*, won first place in the Mainstream/Literary Novel category and that year's Storyteller Award as well, but his agent was unable to find a publisher for it.

David completed another novel, changed agents, and sold *Journal of a UFO Investigator* to Viking. Translation rights have already been sold in Germany and Italy.

Tanya Ward Goodman, 2008

Another winner of the Storyteller Award, Tanya Ward Goodman of Los Angeles, has had a similar experience as David's: her agent has thus far been unable to sell the memoir, *Mighty Fond of You, Too*, which won first place in that category in the 2008 contest. However, portions of the memoir have been published in several "Cup of Comfort" anthologies.

Tanya is now working on a novel. She's also been asked to appear as a weekly contributor on the parenting website, www.thenextfamily.com, as an "urban parent" expert. She blogs at <http://youdearestyou.blogspot.com>.

Melodie Starkey, 2008

Melodie Starkey of Illinois won first place for her young adult novel, *View from the Closet Doorway* in 2008. Since then, she has completed two other novels: a literary novel, *Sunflowers*, and a family saga, *Eaton House*.

Too busy writing to deal with agent rejections, Melodie self-published her first novel through CreateSpace. She called it a "fabulous process" and has sold several hundred copies of the book without any promotion on her part. Was winning SWW's contest an important part of her sales success? Just check out Amazon.com and read the Editorial Review: "This award-winning first novel . . ." Yes, that award was SWW's.

Susan Kosar Beery, 2008

Susan Kosar Beery, Los Angeles, won first place in the Mystery/Suspense/Thriller/Adventure Novel category in 2008 for her novel, *The Rosary Maya*. Last year, an anthology of stories written by members of Sisters in Crime/Los Angeles titled *Landmarked for Murder* was published. It was originally conceived by Susan, who also contributed one of the stories.

Hometown Winners

Sandra Toro, who has been responsible for putting on SouthWest Writers successful conferences this year and last, won first place in 2009 for her memoir, *The Gilded Cage*. It's now called *Loveknots* and is making the rounds with Big Apple agents.

Other hometown winners include **Rob Spiegel**, SWW's vice president, in 2007 for his MiddleGrade/YA novel, *The Angels and Mackenzie's Weird Brain*, which is currently being considered by Trident Literary Agency. **Robin Perini** won with *Truth and Consequences* in 2008's Romance category, which was also a finalist in the Golden Heart and Kiss of Death Daphne du Maurier contests. Currently, Robin is on the speaker's circuit. **David J. Corwell** won with *Dead Man Breathing*, in 2007's Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror category.

Entry form and rules are on page 10 and 11 of this issue or at www.southwestwriters.com. The entry deadline is May 1.

President's Message

We're into full swing with spring...flowers blooming, wind whistling, noses blowing. Spring is a time of renewal, and yes, allergies. But fear not! SouthWest Writers is just what you need to blow dust off your computer and spring into action—at last writing that novel you've had noodling around in your head. Join us, or at least attend a few meetings, take a class or workshop. We have some doozies coming up in April.



**President
Melody Groves**

A few years ago, SWW didn't offer classes or workshops. Nope. Nary a one. But then, a couple of enterprising members got together and decided that offering classes from certain members' expertise was a good idea. The rest, as they say, is history. Now we have so many classes and workshops that it's hard to keep track of them all. And not only do the attendees learn about the topic, but they also meet other writers and sometimes form critique groups and/or friendships. At the very least the students walk away inspired. It happens time and time again.

Listings of our classes and workshops are available on line. Please check out our brand new website with an updated home page (thank you Ruth Friesen and Bob Gassaway). It's always a pleasure to see the results of hard work come to such a glorious completion.

Our Saturday meetings grow crowded—in January, 150; February, 158. Be sure to come, but come early to get the best seat. We're in the process of revamping the "business" meeting that starts at 10am, so bear with us while we figure things out. Hopefully, you'll find there is more time for successes and meeting new members than previously.

Tuesday meetings are calmer than Saturday's, although 60 people can make a lot of noise. Come visit—better yet, join us. See you there.

Melody

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You can tear a poem apart to see what makes it tick.... You're back with the mystery of having been moved by words. The best craftsmanship always leaves holes and gaps... so that something that is not in the poem can creep, crawl, flash or thunder in.

*Dylan Thomas
Poetic Manifesto, 1961*

SouthWest Sage Advertising Rates Worldwide Internet Circulation

The SWW website receives thousands of page requests every month.

Business card size: \$20 1/4 page, vertical: \$40 1/3 page, horizontal: \$50
15% discount for 3 mos. 20% discount for 6 mos.

Deadline: 1st of each month for the following month.
Payment due with camera-ready ad copy in .jpg format.

Annual Membership in SouthWest Writers

Individual: \$60 (\$100 for 2 years), Two people \$50 each,
Student 18 and over: \$40, Under 18: \$25

Requires proof of student status

Outside U. S.: \$65, Lifetime Membership: \$750

Download the Sage from www.southwestwriters.com

Join us first Saturday: 10 AM-Noon: Third Tuesday: 7-9 PM
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SouthWest Sage

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April is National Poetry Month

Afterward

For Richard

By Karen McKinnon

What can you write

about love, after all the words

have followed each other

for eons? After deer drawn

in the mouths of caves,

after speech unraveled

from thought.

after hieroglyphics

carved into clay

after paper was made

to last until words

could be pressed

by print and passed

from you to me.

Love, meaning the dog

at our feet, meaning

your life in

its measured

likeness

to mine.

By permission from *Set in Motion*, The Wildflower Press, 2009.

Karen McKinnon placed third and Sylvia Ramos Cruz won honorable mention in SWW's 2009 Third Quarter Contest.

Poetry Reading

In celebration of National Poetry Month, SouthWest Writers will hold a poetry reading session, organized by Billy Brown, on April 10 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m..

The reading will be held at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 114 Carlisle SE, Albuquerque, in the Fellowship Hall. Please enter using the street-level door on the east side of Carlisle, near the northern end of the church building—do NOT go up the steps to the main entrance.

Billy Brown encourages all poetry lovers, whether listeners or readers, to attend. Contact Billy at 401-8139, or welbert53@aol.com to reserve a spot to read. If you'd like to offer your help to organize, Billy says, "I need all the help I can get." Please call or email him to volunteer. A poetry book exchange will also be available at the reading.

READ ME

By Sylvia Ramos Cruz

Words ride the citybus;

talk to rider-readers all day long.

Today they catch Santiago's eyes—

rows of block letters he recognizes

and Grandma deciphers as they

sit on the way to kindergarten.

Some day he, too, will read

and turn hieroglyphs into

pictures for a boy.

Revising Fiction: Render Your Setting Effectively

by Kirt Hickman

Every scene you write will take place somewhere. In other words, every scene will have a setting. You must transport your readers to that setting. How do you do that effectively?

Determine Setting Elements

First, ask yourself: What impression do I want to make? That the place is desolate? Opulent? Filthy? Dangerous? Foreign? Something more subtle? Choose details that can be experienced by each of the five senses, that will promote the impression you want to make. Work these details into the action of the scene.

Second, find ways for your setting to *meaningfully* affect your characters and plot. I'm not talking about having your character sit on the beanbag chair, lean on the granite countertop, or walk across the plush, forest-green carpet. I'm talking about using the fountain pen on the desk as a murder weapon, encoding a message that your hero must decipher into the wall tapestry, or shooting a hole through a window that looks out upon the vast vacuum of space while your characters are standing nearby. These kinds of elements will force your characters to interact with their setting. It will make the setting an integral part of your story.

Describe the Setting:

When a character first walks into a setting, don't stop the action to describe every nuance of the place. Better yet, don't stop the action at all. The original prologue of my science fiction novel, *Worlds Asunder*, could have begun:

The traffic control room was small. It had two rows of computer terminals. Behind them sat the traffic controllers, facing a central holographic display that showed the current traffic patterns. Two federal agents stood behind Director Snider. The smell of sweat hung in the air. Suddenly, an alarm sounded.

Find a way to work these details into the action of the scene:

Director Jack Snider pulled at the collar of his jump suit in the **sweat-fouled air of the traffic control room**. He would have paced the **aisle behind the second tier of computer terminals** if it wouldn't have betrayed his nervousness. As it was, he felt trapped. **The federal agents who stood behind him**, looking past his shoulders, made him uneasy, claustrophobic.

"Something's wrong," Chavez, the controller, said. Her voice, edged with tension, carried in the **small room**.

Snider's heart surged. **Trajectory traces criss-**

crossed the holographic display that dominated the front of the room. The muted voices of the controllers speaking into their comm links died into silence as the trajectory displayed for the *Phoenix* turned red and separated from the green line of the ship's assigned flight path. **An alarm sounded**, reverberating off the walls and ringing in Snider's brain.

Enhance the Description

Find opportunities to show how the day-to-day life of your character differs from that of your reader, who wants your story to carry her away from her mundane world. Bring out the setting elements that are specific to your setting's time period, country, or culture. If your story takes place in the present day, show setting elements that are specific to your character or his situation. If he's a cop, show him cleaning his gun or escorting handcuffed prisoners through the police station. Make him sweat in his Kevlar vest. Include the sounds of sirens and the clanging of iron doors, and have him say something only a police officer would say. Now the reader has a sense of what your character's world is like.

Consider this excerpt from the opening scene of *Worlds Asunder*:

Chase sucked the last of the coffee from his **seal-pak mug**, then checked the date for probably the fifth time that day. Just two more weeks to retirement. Then he could **go home to Earth** and what was left of his family.

In this paragraph, Chase holds not just a mug, but a seal-pak mug. The reader doesn't know exactly what this is, but with a reference to the slight lunar gravity a few sentences later, she can fill in the blanks. The reader also knows from this paragraph that Chase is not on Earth, which certainly makes his setting different from the reader's here and now.

Describe from your Character's Viewpoint:

Finally, make sure you've described your setting in a way that reveals the viewpoint character's attitude and emotional state. Is the room cramped, or cozy? Is it cluttered, or lived in? Are the furnishings antiques, or are they just old and outdated?

Do all of these things and you will immerse your reader in your character's world, which is where she needs to be if she's going to buy into your story.

Kirt Hickman, author of Worlds Asunder, a science-fiction conspiracy thriller, and the 2009 self-editing guide Revising Fiction, teaches "Revising Fiction" courses through SouthWest Writers.

On Writing My Memoir

by Sally Cisney Mann

Once I retired from teaching, I began recalling memories of my unusual childhood and writing them down to share with my family. I made an outline of the early years of my life, placing those vignettes of memory in the appropriate order. As they evolved into a story, I expanded on them, including more and more details: history, feelings, descriptive settings and characters. I was having fun with it, and the more I wrote, the more I remembered. After several years, I had 600 single-spaced pages that captured events of the first thirty years of my life – the years I was yearning for family.

My computer's search engine was helpful in getting my facts straight. I Googled to get exact locations, song lyrics, the years some major events took place, and the history of the home for children where I'd been sent when I was three. I documented the schools and companies along my mother's career path that kept her from me all those years. I also researched the timing of events as the Vietnam War was coming to an end – with my husband still Missing in Action. I wanted my story to be an accurate account, but not sound too factual and autobiographical.

For legal reasons, my publisher recommended I contact the main characters in my memoir for permission to write about them. I got the go-ahead from each of them. For privacy reasons, however, I did change the names, descriptions, and locations of forty-six other people because "getting permission" wasn't feasible after so many years.

Documenting my childhood memories felt like rescuing family photo albums from a house fire. It comforted me to know that they wouldn't be lost forever. In writing my memoir I gained a new and enormously valuable perspective on people and events in my life. My disappointments and hurts gradually faded as I became aware of the frailties and vulnerabilities of the others. Now I understood they were dealing with difficulties and challenges in their own lives. I no longer saw everything from only my own point of view. The larger picture was revealed to me as I revisited the past.

Each writing morning, after my husband left for work, I looked at my story outline to see what I was going to write about that day. At 8:30, I sat down at my computer, opened up Microsoft Word, and put my fingers on the keyboard. Hours passed as words poured out of me. I remained in what seemed to be a fugue state, hardly aware of what I was writing. I usually stopped typing around 3pm, having missed lunch. Then, I would sit back to relax and read what I'd written – and as I read, I cried. I cried hard for the child I'd been. I cried for my children. I cried for my mother, my

sister, my missing husband, and for other people in my life that I now saw with new understanding. It was a cathartic, healing experience.



It took twelve years to complete my memoir. With the help of my editor, I cut the original 600-page manuscript down to 300 more story-worthy pages. *Yearning: A Memoir* was finally published in August, 2009, and has garnered encouraging reviews.

Having met the goal of writing my story and getting it published, I felt tremendous satisfaction. When my high school and college reunions were being announced, and the email addresses of my classmates were being posted on the web, I sent individual email fliers con-

taining a picture of my book cover, a brief biography, and a review of my book to each of my classmates, along with a personal note. I received phone calls and emails from many I'd not heard from since we'd graduated.

I loved spending my writing days in pajamas at the computer. When my book was published, however, I had to step out of my comfort zone to promote book sales. It's been challenging and rewarding to move through the whole process. By allowing readers to tag along on my life's journey, I have freed myself from the sadness of the past.

Sally Cisney Mann, a member of SouthWest Writers, now spends her time promoting Yearning: A Memoir. It can be purchased at The Air War Museum in Big Spring, Texas, in many book stores, through Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com, and through her webpage: <http://yearningamemoir.com>.

SWW 2010 Second Quarter Writing Competition

Short Fiction

Now here's a challenge. Write a fiction story, 500 words limit. It MUST contain a man or a boy (any age), a dog, and a pair of scissors. The setting is your choice. Don't forget--all stories have a beginning, middle and end, and contain conflict. Postmark deadline: June 30, 2010. Please note if you grant publication permission. All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail entries to SWW Quarterly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

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

Saturday, April 3
10:00 a.m. to noon

Rick Reichman

Big Screen Writing Techniques--that can even make your novel better!



Write the page turner; intensify the plot. By understanding dramatic protagonist and antagonist and how they affect the structure and major turning points of your narrative, you will significantly enhance how you shape and write whatever story you are trying to tell.

Rick Reichman's students have sold numerous scripts to Hollywood, both film and TV. One of his students is currently Co-Executive Producer on the CBS hit *The Mentalist*. Many of his students have taken what they learned in his classes and have become published novelists, mystery, western, and memoir authors, and playwrights.

See **Rick Reichman's** bio on page 7.

Tuesday, April 20
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Chris Eboch

Theme: the Soul of a Story



Theme is the soul that truly brings a story to life. But often writers don't put as much energy into developing theme as they do with the more obvious elements of plot, characters and setting. The result can be a weak or obscure theme. In some cases, the reader may even get a completely different message than what the writer intended. Learn to identify what you really want to say, and bring it out in writing.

Chris Eboch's *Haunted* series follows a brother and sister who travel with their parents' ghost hunter TV show. The kids try to help the ghosts, while keeping their activities secret from meddling grownups. The *Haunted* series includes *The Ghost on the Stairs*, *The Riverboat Phantom* and *The Knight in the Shadows*.

Chris Eboch is also the author of *The Well of Sacrifice*, a middle grade Mayan adventure novel that is used in many schools, and eight other books. Chris is the New Mexico Regional Advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Learn more at www.chriseboch.com.

Saturday, May 1
10:00 a.m. to noon

Kirt Hickman

Your Character's Pervasive Viewpoint



You've probably heard that all of the basic plot lines have been taken, that all of the variations of story line have been written by someone before. Maybe you believe this, maybe you don't. What matters is, if you write your story from the viewpoint of a unique character, the reader will experience it differently than he's experienced any story before. Here's the catch: You must truly write your story from your character's viewpoint. This entails more than just choosing a character through whose eyes the reader will view the events. And it entails more than just choosing a first-person or third-person narrative. Your character's viewpoint must permeate every aspect of your writing, from the portrayal of her thoughts and emotions, to setting descriptions, level of detail and specificity, narrative tone, and even your word choices. "Your Character's Pervasive Viewpoint" will explore every aspect of viewpoint and the many ways it must influence your writing.

See **Kirt Hickman's** bio on page 7.

Tuesday, May 18
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Sarah H. Baker

Prepare for Impact!



How do you make your writing stick with readers long after they've finished your book or short story? We'll discuss ways to tighten your writing, pare down your plot, choose the right POV, and add in emotion, using examples from different genres of fiction.

Sarah H. Baker, author of fifteen novels and numerous novellas, writes romance as Sarah Storme, mystery as S. H. Baker, and erotica as Lydia Parks. Since her first book hit the shelves in 2001, she has written for a half dozen publishers including Kensington and Silhouette, and has served as president of the Land of Enchantment Romance Authors. Sarah enjoys speaking at conferences and events where she can share lessons she has learned with other writers.

THE SECRET(S) TO A SUCCESSFUL BOOK SIGNING**Kirt Hickman****Monday, April 5, 6:30-8:30pm**

SouthWest Writers Conference Room
 3721 Morris NE, Ste A
 (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)
 \$20 members, \$30 non-members
 Class limited to 14.

If you've ever tried to sell books at a signing, you've learned this: Selling a few books may be easy, but selling a lot of books is much more difficult. According to *Guerrilla Marketing for Writers*, the national average for books sold at a signing is four, but your signings don't have to be that way. There are secrets to selling books at signings (and they don't have anything to do with talking your family and friends into coming to the store to buy your book). In "The Secret(s) to a Successful Book Signing" you'll learn when to sign, where to sign, what to bring, what to do (and not do), and what to say (and not say). This one-night class can transform your signings from lonely and depressing, to fun and profitable.

Kirt Hickman, author of *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness* and the award-winning science-fiction thriller *Worlds Asunder*, has sold nearly a thousand books at signings in the past year. He has been teaching classes for years and was awarded SWW's "Instructor of the Year" award in 2009. His down-to-earth, no-kidding-here's-what-you've-got-to-do teaching style has resulted in consistently sold-out classes, so reserve your seat early.

GET YOUR NOVEL READY TO SELL! NOVEL REVISION**Chris Eboch****Wednesday Evenings, May 5-26, 7:00-8:30 pm**

\$85 SWW members, \$95 non-members
 Class limited to 14
 SouthWest Writers Conference Room
 3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

You finished the first draft of your novel. Congratulations! But now what do you do with it?

Bring a first, second or third draft of a novel. Learn how to take it apart, and put it back together again -- a whole lot better! We'll use in-class exercises to analyze what you have, find trouble spots, and plan how to fix them. If you have an unfinished novel that you are struggling to complete, you can also benefit from this class.

See **Chris' bio on page 6.**

LEARNING TO WRITE THE MOVIE WAY**Rick Reichman****Friday evening, April 16, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.****Saturday, April 17, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.****Sunday, April 18, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

SWW Office: 3721 Morris NE at Comanche
 \$175 members, \$185 non-members
 Class limited to 14 students

"Learning to Write the Movie Way" is about understanding structure and approach and technique. The course is mostly designed for film writers, but is also helpful for writing any type of fiction.

There is a structure to film writing that anyone who writes can learn and use. In this weekend course we start with the construction of the basic element of the scene, then delve into character creation, move to the three-act structure and its major turning points, focus on movie speak (dialogue), and then learn how to write the great opening. Marketing and pitching are also taught.

Rick Reichman's students have sold screenplays to many Hollywood studios and have sold teleplays and been on writing staffs of numerous TV shows. In addition, a number of Reichman's students have used what they learned in his film writing classes and gone on to sell novels, short stories, and plays.

Rick's first book on screenwriting, *Formatting Your Screenplay*, has sold over 14,000 copies and his second book *20 Things You Must Know To Write a Great Screenplay*--published this past year--was nominated by *Foreword* magazine as best instructional book of the year and won the New Mexico Book Award as best non-fiction book of year.

Workshop**WRITING CHILDREN'S BOOKS****Chris Eboch****Saturday, April 24, 9:00 am - 4:30 p.m.**

\$79.00 for members, \$89.00 for non-members, (includes lunch)
 New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank just north of Spain.

In this **hands-on workshop**, Chris will explore the children's book markets, discuss the elements of writing for kids, and brainstorm appropriate ideas. She will review the requirements for different genres, age ranges, and markets. Each participant will start developing a story and will leave this workshop with an article or story in progress and a list of ideas for future development.

Successes and Announcements

A feature article in the March/April edition of *Countryside Magazine* was written by **Rose Marie Kern**. "Going Solar in the Land of Enchantment" highlights a couple in Albuquerque who installed a solar array on their home. It included the cost breakdown and government incentives available.

Sharon Kilmer's poem was published in *The Wishing Well, Reflections* as a result of submission to the National Amateur Poetry Contest. It was inspired by Elsie Karr Kreisler, who gave a class assignment to write something about a black rainbow.

Ruth Friesen's essay "Just Imagine," published in the anthology *Going Green: True Tales from Gleaners, Scavengers, and Dumpster Divers* won first place in the New Mexico Press Women's annual contest in the non-fiction book category, essay appearing in a book not written by entrant. Her essay will proceed to the national competition.

Dodici Azpadu read from her third novel, *Living Room*, on March 14 at Casa Clara Community Space in Albuquerque. Visit www.dodici-azpadu.com for more information about her work.

John Orman has written several winning captions recently in the Albuquerque Journal's Photo Caption contest.

Shanti E. Bannwart is a winner in the 2009 national competition of the National League of American Pen Women, Inc. San Francisco Branch. She received third prize in international essay for "Reflecting on Dragons and Angels," honorable mention in fiction: "April Fool's Day" and in memoir: "Appointment With History."

The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators' Conference will be held Saturday April 10 from 8 AM –5 PM at the University of New Mexico's Student Union Building. SWW is a co-sponsor of this event. The conference includes presenter's overviews, editor's panel and intensive, craft-based workshops. An early bird discount is available with a deadline of March 26th. See www.scbwi-nm.org for details.

Writing the Rockies will be held July 22-25, mid-way through the two-week summer residency of Western's new MFA in Creative Writing. Conference attendees will be able to mix and mingle with the programming of the master's program activities. For details, visit www.western.edu/writingtherockies.

The **Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP)** will hold its annual conference and bookfair on April 7-10 in Denver. For details, visit www.awpwriter.org/conference/index.php.

The **Pikes Peak Writers Conference** will be held April 23-25 in Colorado Springs. Visit <http://ppwcon.org/> for details.

The second annual "**Scare The Dickens Out of Us**" ghost story contest offers \$1000.00 first place, \$500.00 second place and \$250.00 third place prize money for a new, original ghost story up to 5000 words. Full rules are available at www.clarklibraryfriends.com. Entries will be accepted from July 1 to October 1.

The deadline for the **Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition** is May 15. For complete guidelines, visit www.shortstorycompetition.com.

The deadline for the **2010 HILLERMAN MYSTERY COMPETITION** is June 1. Visit http://wordharvest.com/novel_contest.php for complete rules.

The Sixth Annual **UNM Writer's Conference** will be held on Saturday, April 24 at the Continuing Education North Building. This conference, co-sponsored by SWW, will feature a keynote address by **Lois Duncan**, Three editors and four agents will take pitches from registrants. The cost is \$150 per person. For more information visit dce.unm.edu and look for the 2010 Writer's Conference.

The **Latino Writers Conference** will be held May 19-22 at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. For details visit www.nhccnm.org.

Want new ideas and stimulation for your work? **AZ Futurists Chapter of the World Future Society** welcomes new members. Visit www.AZFuturists.org for more information.

Keith Publications, new to e-publishing, is looking for writers, editors and artists. They are open to all romance genres and sub-genre, including erotica, poetry, fiction and non-fiction. Erotica will be published by Wicked Ink Press, and poetry, fiction and non-fiction on D' Ink Well. Visit www.keithpublications.com, www.wickedinkpress.com, or www.dinkwell.com for more information.

The **University of Iowa Summer Writing Festival** is a noncredit writing program for adults and offers 145 week-long and weekend workshops. There are no requirements beyond the desire to write. The Festival runs from June 13 through July 30. Visit www.uiowa.edu/~iswffest.

A poetry reading, "**A Sheaf of Women Poets**" will be held at the Tony Hillerman Library from 1-3 pm, Saturday, April 17th. Featured readers include Renny Golden, Teresa E. Gallion, Maria Leyba, and Elizabeth Ann Galligan. Chapbooks will be available for purchase. The library is located on the southwest corner of Wyoming and Menaul NE behind the Hoffmantown Shopping Center.

Script Frenzy is an international writing event in which participants take on the challenge of writing 100 pages of scripted material in the month of April. Visit www.scriptfrenzy.org for full details or contact Kathy at nanowrimokathy@gmail.com for the Albuquerque group.

Blog Yourself to Writing Success

by Rob Spiegel

Julie Powell may do for blogs what Frank McCourt did for memoirs. McCourt wrote *Angela's Ashes*, his memoir about growing up in Ireland. At a time when memoirs were not common for the unfamous, McCourt's book skyrocketed to the top of the bestseller list and won a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Critics Circle award. Not only did he perk interest in memoirs, he created an entirely new genre of nonfiction.

Julie Powell may have done the same thing for blogs. Her blog turned into the book, *Julie & Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen*, which turned into the movie *Julie & Julia*.

Julie Powell was a creative writing graduate going nowhere. She hated her temp-to-perm clerical job and dreamed big about being a writer. She wasn't a foodie, but she decided to get some writing practice and some cooking practice by launching a blog based on her commitment to cook every recipe from Julia Child's classic, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

She launched her blog on Salon (she now blogs at Blogger.com) to a handful of readers, mostly friends and family. But the blog caught on. More readers showed up. *The New York Times* did an article about her blog. A literary agent called.

Julie Powell did a few things right. She picked a tightly focused subject, French cooking. She picked a well-populated site, Salon. She developed a friendly, witty and engaging writing style.

Blogs can cover almost anything, but to draw an audience of readers who return again and again, the subject should fill a need for the reader. Say you want to promote your books about the Old West. You may be tempted to blog about your newest book and all of the book signings you have on your calendar. Your mom will love it. But readers would probably be more interested in a blog about the odd

and cool things you've learned about the Old West during your research.

I get paid to write a blog for Design News, where I've been a contributing editor for many years. I can write about anything I want – as long as it's about environmental issues in the electronics industry. Tightly focused topic – lightly written prose.

The blog is the internet's version of a column or personal essay. Like a strong and successful column, the subject is disciplined and the writing is relaxed. We get to know the opinions of the author, but the author still needs to substantiate opinions with decent journalistic research.

You can launch a blog in about 10 minutes for free at any number of sites, from Salon to Blogger.com. There are 133 million blogs in the internet ether, give or take a few million. I would guess 132.9 million are unreadable because they offer nothing for the reader – or, the prose is boring.

Here's the trick. Find a blog on a subject that feeds your passion. Read it regularly. If it's dull, move on to another blog on the same subject. Read it and study how it holds your attention. Is it the humor? Is it the understanding of the subject? Julie Powell had both, so she was able to create an audience based on writing about her odd cooking project – because the readers learned from Julie's experiences. And they were entertained by her prose. Bring those two elements together and you'll have a blog worthy of an audience.

Since there are 133 million blogs, you have to learn how to find readers. Most bloggers don't know how to promote their blogs to potential readers. In the next issue of Sage, look for the second article on blogging: "How to Find Readers for Your Blog."

Rob has decided to take up the challenge of his own column and launch a blog on writing. In next month's column, he'll give you the link.

www.southwestwriters.com

We have experienced some technical difficulties with our new website's interface with the browser Safari. If you have trouble viewing the site properly and are using Safari as your browser, we suggest trying another browser. Our apologies for inconveniencing you. If you have other problems, please contact Larry at swwriters@juno.com or Ruth at ruthsww@comcast.net.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Dixie Boyle	Lois Manno	Marynell Callahan
Rachel Killebrew	Rick Huff	Margery Addams
Sandra Benn	Mary Ryland	Ray Ayles
Rhonda Smith	Irene Chitwood	Pamela Baltimore
Stephanie Hurd	Pete Zlonkevich	Stanley Ames
Dodici Azpadu	Leandro Gonzales	Jean Nevin
Amber Morrell	David Scrase	Jerry Self
Jennifer A. Ortiz	Karen Higgins	Lori Sam
Bob Julyan	Marcia Pfeiderer	Alicia Sanchez-O'Toole
Nora Sanders Curran	Blanche Griffin	

SouthWest Writers' 28th Annual Writing Contest

The SouthWest Writers' 28th Annual Writing Contest encourages and rewards excellence. Cash prizes are awarded to the top three entries in each of 14 categories. In addition, first-place winners in each category compete for the \$1,000 Storyteller Award.

The contest is open to all original, unpublished work by English-language writers. **Deadline:** Postmarked no later than May 1, 2010. **Late entries:** Postmarked no later than **May 15, 2010** (late fee applies).

Contest Categories & Submission Requirements

1. **Mainstream/Literary Novel**
2. **Mystery/Suspense/Thriller/Adventure Novel**
3. **Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror Novel**
4. **Historical Novel**
5. **Middle Grade or Young Adult Novel**

For the above five categories, submit the first 20 double-spaced pages of the manuscript plus a single-spaced synopsis, two pages maximum.

6. **Memoir Book.** Submit the first 20 pages.
7. **Memoir Article.** No more than 1,500 words.
8. **Mainstream/Literary Short Story.** No more than 5,000 words.
9. **Nonfiction Essay/Article.** No more than 1,500 words.
10. **Personal Essay/Column.** No more than 750 words.

For the above five categories, manuscripts must be double-spaced.

11. **Nonfiction Book.** Submit the first 10 pages plus a book proposal of no more than 10 double-spaced pages plus a one-page, single-spaced query letter.
12. **Children's Fiction or Nonfiction Picture Book.** Submit the entire manuscript, maximum 10 pages.
13. **Screenplay.** Submit the first 20 pages in industry-standard format plus a one-page synopsis.
14. **Poetry.** Submit one poem per entry of no more than three pages, any format.

For the above four categories, follow the category-specific instructions.

Contest Rules

1. Each entry must be in a separate envelope accompanied by a completed Entry Form and Entry Fee. No certified mail. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard if you want notification of receipt.
2. Write the Category Number you are entering on the outside of the envelope below your return address. Be sure to circle the Category Number on the entry form.
3. Your entry must be original, written in English, and unpublished or un-optioned at time of submittal.
4. If your manuscript previously won 1st prize in a particular category, it is ineligible for that category.

5. Using standard manuscript formatting, your manuscript must be printed on one side of 8-1/2 x 11 or A4 white paper in 12-point Courier or Times New Roman, double-spaced. Synopses and query letters must be single-spaced. Poems have no spacing requirements. Screenplays should follow industry-specific standards.

6. Your name **may not** appear anywhere on the manuscript, synopsis, book proposal or query.

7. Submit two (2) copies of the manuscript, synopsis, book proposal or query as specified for the category you are entering. Manuscripts will not be returned. Manuscripts will be shredded or otherwise destroyed by October 31, 2010.

8. If your Entry Fee includes the cost of a Critique: Submit **three (3) copies of your manuscript** plus a large, self-addressed envelope with enough postage stamps affixed for return mail (i.e. a large SASE). **NO METERED POSTAGE.** The critiqued manuscript will be returned in your SASE in August, 2010.

9. All First (1st) Place winning manuscripts in each category are sent to the Storyteller judge in consideration for the \$1,000 Storyteller Award.

10. Winners in each category will be notified in August, 2010. Prizes are as follows: 1st Place: \$150; 2nd Place: \$100; 3rd Place: \$50.

11. Contest judging takes place in two phases. A qualified panel of writers and editors selects the top 15 entries in each category. Those top 15 entries are then judged by an agent, editor or publisher appropriate to each category. The top three winners in each category receive a critique from the commissioned judge. Contacting any judge during the contest period about an entry is an automatic disqualification.

12. The professional editors, agents and/or publishers commissioned as judges are not employees of SouthWest Writers (SWW) and their opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinions of SouthWest Writers.

13. As part of the annual SWW Novel Conference, a banquet will be held September 10, 2010 to announce and honor the top three (3) winners in each category. Winners will also be posted on the SWW website.

14. SouthWest Writers reserves the right to disqualify any entry if contest rules are not followed, in which case the entry fee will not be refunded. Common mistakes include: (1) Writer's name is on manuscript. (2) Incorrect fee is enclosed. (3) Incorrect number of manuscript copies is submitted (See Rule 7).

Critique Service

You may request a critique by another professional agent or editor (judges critique only first-place winners) by circling the appropriate fee on the Entry Form, submitting three copies of your manuscript instead of two, and enclosing the correct fee with your submission.

ANNUAL WRITING CONTEST ENTRY FORM

A. Your CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
 Phone _____ E-mail _____
 If other than United States:
 Country _____ Postal Code: _____

B. Please circle the appropriate ENTRY FEE:

ENTRY FEE FOR ALL ENTRIES EXCEPT POETRY				
Postmarked	Members of SouthWest Writers		All Other Entrants	
No later than	Contest Only	Contest & Critique	Contest Only	Contest & Critique
May 1	\$20	\$45	\$30	\$55
May 15	\$25	\$50	\$35	\$60
ENTRY FEE FOR POETRY				
First Poem	\$10	\$35	\$20	\$55
Each Additional Poem: \$5				

C. Please circle the appropriate CATEGORY:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 Title: _____
 (A separate entry form must accompany each submission)

D. Indicate METHOD OF PAYMENT:

Check or Money Order (no cash) in US\$ payable to SouthWest Writers
 Visa MasterCard Exp. Date _____
 Card Number: _____ Security Code Number: _____
 Signature: _____

E: Sign Entry Form:

In consideration for SouthWest Writers (SWW) acceptance of my work for review in the SWW Contest 2010, I hereby submit my entry and fee and agree to be bound by all contest rules. I understand that questions regarding the interpretation of these rules and any matters relating to the contest which are not specifically covered by the rules, will be decided solely at the discretion of contest officials. I will accept as final and be bound by all judges' decisions. I understand and agree that my manuscript will be subjectively evaluated, and SWW cannot accept liability for consequences arising from any opinion expressed. I hold harmless and indemnify SWW, its agents, employees, and volunteers for any and all losses, costs, or expenses incurred from any dispute arising from my participation in the contest. I acknowledge by my signature below that I have read, understood, and agree to be bound by these rules. I understand that my contest submission will not be accepted without my signature below.

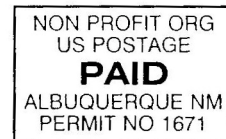
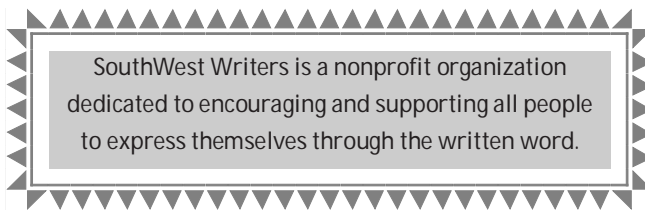
Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Co-Author's signature (if applicable) : _____ Date: _____

F. Mail COMPLETED ENTRY FORM & FEE to: SouthWest Writers Contest 2010, 3721 Morris Ave. NE, Suite A
 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87111-3611

SouthWest Sage

SouthWest Writers Workshop

3721 Morris NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111
www.southwestwriters.com
SWWriters@juno.com



Change Service Requested

Label shows your SWW Membership expiration date.
Renew promptly to retain your membership benefits.

Area Writing Groups

SCBWI: Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

www.scbwi.org
Chris Eboch
chriseboch@blarg.net

Duke City Screenwriters

Every other Thursday,
Flying Star on 7th and Silver.
Marc Calderwood 505-897-6474
skatingkokopelli@hotmail.com

Fantasy Writers

Borders Books, ABQ Uptown
Every other Saturday 4 PM
Ron Harrison, harrison653@hotmail.com

Albuquerque Press Club

201 Highland Park Cir. SE
Second Tuesdays 7 pm
Samantha 505-401-1561
sclark.abq@earthlink.net

New Mexico Press Women

www.newmexicopresswomen.org
Open to males and females

Estancia Valley Writers Group

Moriarty Community Library
2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.
Tina Ortega 505-832-2513

International Women's Writing Guild

www.iwwg.org
Diane Schmidt
dianeschmidt22@hotmail.com

New Mexico State Poetry Society

2nd Saturday 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Manzano del Sol Independent Living
Karin Bradberry, karinbradberry@msn.com

Land of Enchantment Romance Authors

Second Saturdays at noon.
leranm.com

Women in Communications

www.nmawc.org

New Mexico Book Co-op

505/344-9382
LPD_Press@msn.com

Mystery

www.croak-and-dagger.com

Western Writers of America

Johnny Boggs, wwa@unm.edu

Register for classes and workshops online at www.southwestwriters.com or call the SWW office at 265-9485