

SouthWest Sage

August 2010 www.southwestwriters.com

September Conference: Emerging Multi-Cultural Voices

by *Sandra Toro, Conference Chair*

In the recently published summer fiction issue of *The New Yorker*, the editors chose "20 under 40" authors to publish in that and subsequent issues. Though all of these writers now live in North America, the geography of their origin is illuminating: Nigeria, Peru, Latvia, China, Ethiopia, Yugoslavia and Russia, as well as those who claim their ancestry in North America for generations.

Having been originally told of this phenomenon by several New York editors a year ago, when I began to plan the September conference for SouthWest Writers I thought about those students who have attended my classes at both SWW and the University of New Mexico. It was a surprise to me to see that among the most accomplished writers in my classes, and those who pitched to me at conferences, were authors with completed novels and short stories dealing with sociopolitical conflicts thousands of miles from New Mexico and with cultures they were not personally part of.

From this wealth of talent, I've chosen three literary novelists to present part of their work, as well as discuss the motivation behind it, at our September Conference. In my opinion, these three writers are on the verge of being published by a major New York publishing house.

Karima Alavi, born in Ohio of Protestant parents, attended Kent State University where she met her husband, an Iranian from a prominent family in the Shah's Iran. Having converted to the Muslim religion, she returned with him to Iran for his father's funeral at exactly the time the revolution was taking place. A dangerous place for an American woman to visit! Her novel, *In the Shadow of the Tombs*, while not taking sides between the Shah's government and the revolutionary forces, explores the violent situation in human terms sympathetic to both sides.

Sylvie Larimore de Lara, born in France but educated both in Paris and the United States, and married to a Hispanic professor of literature, has written *Guanacolia*, a novel of the civil war in El Salvador set both in that country and in France. Though this is also a saga of family love and betrayal, the dramatization of gang-rape and torture used as a weapon of intimidation provides the major emotional impact of the book. Two additional SWW authors, **Deborah Rice** and **Kathleen McLaen** are currently writing

about this same issue in their novels set in the Balkans.

Kathleen McLaen, an American writer of Irish extraction, writes poignantly not only of the "Irish troubles," but of the atrocities in Albania and Yugoslavia from the point of view of an Irish historian/professor conducting in-person research. Her novel, **Midnight Wind**, is notable for its extraordinary use of dialect and language to define character.

These three authors will present a most interesting and relevant program immediately after lunch at the Conference on September 11.

For additional information about the conference speakers and registration information, please see the registration page in this issue of *Sage* and consult the SWW Web site.

PROGRAM—SEPTEMBER 11, 2010

- 8:30-9:00 **Registration and Coffee**
 9:00-9:15 **Welcome and announcements:**
 Sandra K. Toro, Conference Chair
 9:15-10:15 **Creating a Western Mystery Series:**
 Aimee and David Thurlo
 10:15-10:30 Break
 10:30-12:00 **Editor and Agent panel:**
 Eric Raab, Editor, Tor and Forge
 Chelsea Gilmore, Agent, Maria Carvainis Agency
 Peter Rubie, CEO, Fine Print Literary Management
 Lauren MacLeod, Agent, Strothman Agency
 12:00-1:30 Buffet Lunch at La Fonda del Bosque
 1:30-2:30 **Literary Fiction:**
 Emerging Multicultural Voices
 Karima Alavi, *In the Shadow of the Tombs*
 Sylvie Larimore de Lara, *Guanacolia*
 Kathleen MacLean, *Midnight Wind*
 2:30-2:45 Break
 2:45-3:45 **Trends in Historical and Women's Fiction**
 Paula Paul, Melody Groves, and Sandra Toro
 3:45-4:45 **Trends in Children/Young Adult Literature**
 Lauren MacLeod, Agent, Strothman Agency
 Penny Durant and Paula Paul, Authors

The authors' books will be for sale and autographing throughout the day. This program is subject to change, pending acceptance by additional speakers.

What Kind are You?

So I'm sitting here, staring at a blank screen, wondering what to write. Then it dawns on me—we've all "been there, done that." Don't you hate when those words won't come no matter how many times you take a stretch break, powder your nose, or even do the dishes? I'm willing to admit that my kitchen sparkles! But eventually, something pops into the ol' brainpan and out comes magic. I think that's one of the amazing perks of being a writer—the sense of instant creativity.



President Melody Groves

What other job allows you to put words together that paint pictures, describe someone, inflame emotions and tell a story? We are truly the lucky ones.

And we're even luckier by belonging to SouthWest Writers. It's a direct result of SWW—the connections and education—that I've published many magazine articles, three novels and one non-fiction book (more on the way). I'm firmly convinced it's networking, that face-to-face, one-on-one communication, that makes or breaks careers.

And speaking of careers (notice the clever segue here), I'd like to pass along something that made me think and then decide about why I write. Many years ago at a SWW meeting, a local published author was giving a talk and a question he posed has stayed with me. Back then, I was a fledgling writer, not sure why I was at that SWW meeting. All I knew for sure was that some tug in my subconscious compelled me to put ink on paper. He said there are two kinds of writers...those who just want to write and are happy penning the local church bulletin or

long letters to loved ones, and those who want to get published in magazines and books. He asked, "What kind are you?"

Right then and there, like a bulb over my head switching on, I realized I wrote to be published. I have no doubt that was a defining moment in my writing life. Since that day, I have hunkered down and worked really, really hard. So, friends, I ask that question of you. If you haven't decided, what kind are you?

See you in September (hey, that phrase is kind of catchy. They should write a song like that).

Melody

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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 Donald T. Moran
 Ed Isenberg
 William Fulcher
 Edward Goodman
 Robin Perini
 Robert Sadel
 David L. Brown
 Barbara Sanchez
 Ken Puckett
 Gloria Hathaway

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
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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
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE,
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SouthWest Sage

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Annual Awards Banquet

by Andy Mayo, Annual Contest Chair

SouthWest Writers Annual Awards Banquet will celebrate good writers and their writing September 10 beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Ortega Salon at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, 1701 Fourth Street SW, in Albuquerque. To make your reservation for the banquet, please use the form on page 11.

Awards will be presented to:

- Writers placing first, second, and third place in each contest category;
- The writer judged as the best storyteller among all first place winners—the Storyteller Award; and,
- The individual SouthWest Writers member who has achieved a published body of work while devoting extraordinary effort to encourage other writers in support of the SouthWest Writers mission—the Parris Award.

The banquet will also serve as the first event of this year's annual novel conference—Emerging Multi-Cultural Voices.

Peter Rubie, chief executive officer of Fine Print Literary Management, the banquet's keynote speaker, will describe the kinds of work publishers and agents are looking for today. He will join two other literary agents from Strothman Agency on Saturday to take pitches from conference registrants. The conference will feature panels on mysteries and thrillers, literary, historical and young adult fiction.

The annual contest is sponsored by SouthWest Writers, but writers entering this year's contest hailed from around the country and the globe.

Writers judged in the top 20 in each category were evenly split between New Mexicans and those from other states and countries, although New Mexicans preferred the Poetry, Personal Essay/Column, Nonfiction Book, and Memoir Article categories. Out-of-staters predominated in the Middle Grade/YA and Literary/Mainstream novel categories, and the Children's Picture Book and Screenplay categories.

Entries in the Mystery/Suspense/Thriller/Adventure, Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror, Historical, Memoir Book, Short Story and Nonfiction Essay/Article categories were more evenly split.

"I've just finished my initial reading of the entries. For the record, I'd like to say that this will be very hard. These are... skilled writers and I am far from figuring out the top three. I'm relieved that I'll have plenty of time with these pieces, because I will be splitting hairs to find the winners."

Chris Cottrell

editor of The Portland Review, and
SWW annual contest's Short Story
category judge

A World of Historical Newspapers at Your Fingertips

by James McGrath Morris

Like a private eye, a gumshoe, a flatfoot, a shamus, a roper, a shoofly, or a sleuth, I spend my days pawing through private diaries, letters, bills, and cancelled checks, staring at photographs or drawings, reading newspaper articles, and if I'm lucky, asking questions of people who knew the target of my investigation. That's usually rare. The folks I investigate have long been dead.

Unlike a PI who is hired by angry and suspicious spouses, my clients are readers. I'm a biographer and my paycheck comes from book sales. Our jobs aren't that different; a lot of research and then a report to type up.

Ever since Boswell took on Johnson, the work we do hadn't changed all that much until the Internet came along. But as neat as Google is, the real revolutionary change in my line of work was the advent of digitized newspapers. These new electronic records provide what we biographers, as well as historians and writers of historical fiction, have long dreamed for—a means of finding a needle in the haystack.

Let me explain. For years folks like me have been using the great newspaper collections—either in bound formats or on microfilm—in our nation's libraries, archives, and other repositories. The contemporaneous accounts are like gold. But as with the pursuit of this precious metal, we have not been able to mine all of it. In fact, using our previously inadequate research tools, many of the best veins have remained untapped.

Essentially our choice was to read every page of a newspaper's run or guide our research with dates. So, for instance, if I wanted to read what was said about Georgia O'Keefe, I might have looked at issues of a newspaper around the opening of one of her exhibits. But if an art critic wrote an article several weeks later, the likelihood was that I would miss it.

Lacking dates, I could alternatively turn to a newspaper with an index such as the one produced by the venerable *New York Times*. However, unbeknownst to many researchers, this index is not complete. In keeping with the newspaper's motto "All the News Fit to Print," its indexers only included those items they judged fit to be indexed. A lot never earned a reference.

So without a date or without an index entry, the millions of pages of newspapers have remained as inaccessible to writers as the Manhattan white pages would be if one had little more than a first name; a lot of great information, but un-

reachable.

Digitized collections, such as America's Historical Newspapers produced by Readex, have turned what was once a research nightmare into a writer's dream. Now, with the stroke of a few keys, we can unearth valuable information.

Some of this can fill the simplest of needs. As a biographer, I share a problem similar to the kind that frequently frustrates detectives. They have a suspect and motive but can't place the person at the scene of the crime. In my case, I knew the subject of my research, Joseph Pulitzer, had the means and the desire to acquire a New York newspaper. But I wanted to know when he was in the city so I could document his pursuit.

In his time, newspapers published lists of people staying in prominent hotels. Subscribers loved this feature because they could learn that an old friend was in town and they could stop by the hotel to leave a calling card. But newspapers chose not to index what seemed to them an inconsequential fact. Digital collections of papers unlock these hotel listings in a few seconds. Now I could place my guy at the scene and document his pursuit of a New York newspaper thereby disproving a myth that he had bought the paper on the spur of the moment on the eve of a vacation.

I also learned that Pulitzer frequented New York's Fifth Avenue Hotel, thereby revealing something about his taste in hotels. In his age, where one stayed said a lot about oneself.

Here's what I did with this minor bit of information:

By the 1870s, however, newer hotels eclipsed the Fifth Avenue. "The hotel, for all its sober state, was no longer fashionable," lamented Edith Wharton in her novella *New Year's Day*. "No one, in my memory, had ever known anyone who went there; it was frequented by 'politicians' and 'Westerners,' two classes of citizens whom my mother's intonation always seemed to deprive of their vote by ranking them with illiterates and criminals."

This is the kind of color we dream of being able to offer readers. In another instance, I was searching for news about Pulitzer and the Jefferson Davis family. I learned from the *Macon Telegraph* of August 19, 1888 that Winnie Davis, known as the "Daughter of the Confederacy," was staying with the Pulitzers in Bar Harbor, Maine through October. Adding her to the backdrop of my book was a wonderful element on a canvas depicting Pulitzer's many meetings with important Yankee politicians and editors who journeyed to Maine for an audience with this powerful



Photo by Michael Mudd

Historical Newspapers, continued from page 4

newspaper publisher.

Notice which newspaper I cited in the previous paragraph. Not to cast aspersion on Macon, Georgia, but its newspaper was not a giant of the era. Yet it is for that very reason that the inclusion of these kinds of newspapers in American Historical Newspapers makes the collection so valuable. They often contain valuable news accounts not found elsewhere.

The major newspapers of the time often trimmed Associated Press dispatches because of the competition for space. The pressure on the so-called "newshole" in a prosperous urban newspaper was considerable. But the smaller papers were often eager to fill their columns and regularly ran the entire wire dispatches. For that reason a smaller newspaper can turn out that the only place one can read an entire, unedited AP account of an event in New York or Chicago.

But aside from locating hidden information, providing color, and giving us access to complete AP reports, the digitization of newspapers is also altering our interpretation of the past in other consequential ways. For years researchers have been making the anachronistic mistake of presuming that today's dominant newspapers were the dominant ones of the past. This is a mistake. The *New York Times* had a smaller staff and covered less news than its rivals a century ago. And the *Washington Post*, famous for bringing down a President in the 1970s, played second fiddle to the *Washington Star* prior to the 1960s.

In short, the digitization of newspapers opens up a wealth of previously untapped accounts and will get folks away from quoting the usual suspects—read that as the *New York Times*. In a sense, this new technology levels the playing field by bringing forth more accurate and complete first drafts of history.

So head over to your computer or the library and tap into this wonderful new world of digitized newspapers. To get you started, here is a Baedeker's Guide to what's out there.

There are, currently, four major national sources for newspapers:

Chronicling America: Historic Newspapers on the Library of Congress website. This can be tapped from your home and is free of charge. (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>)

Proquest Historical Newspapers: Near complete runs (recent years are found on a different Proquest product) of major newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* or the *Boston Globe*, as well as important Twentieth Century African-American newspapers. It is available only on terminals in major public and university libraries. Also be careful, as many libraries sub-

scribe only to some, not all, of the Proquest Historical Newspapers. (For information about the company and its holdings see: <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/pq-hist-news.shtml>)

Readex: Unlike Proquest, this company offers a huge collection of newspapers from all parts of the United States. In fact, it currently has 2,000 titles from 50 states. Again, be cautious; libraries do not always purchase the entire collection but limit it by historical periods. (For information about the company and its holdings see: <http://www.newsbank.com/readex/?content=96>)

Newspapersarchives.com: This is a fee-based provider of extensive collections of small and large newspapers that you can access from your own computer. While it maintains an extensive collection, there are frequently gaps in its holdings that are hard to spot. (<http://www.newspaperarchive.com/>)

In addition, there are now countless smaller collections of digital newspapers that are maintained regionally. You can find many listed at <http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/hist/onlinenewspapers.html>

James McGrath Morris spent five years working on Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power. His previous book, The Rose Man of Sing Sing: A True Tale of Life, Murder, and Redemption in the Age of Yellow Journalism, was selected as a Washington Post Best Book of the Year for 2004 and was optioned as a film and released as an audio book. He is the editor of the monthly Biographer's Craft and one of the founding members of Biographers International Organization.



"It is not the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language."

Brian Friel, 1929-, Irish playwright and short-story writer



SWW 2010 Third Quarter Writing Competition Poetry

Enter a poem of any form, any topic, but no longer than 2 pages, double-spaced. Postmark deadline: September 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 August 7, 8:30 AM New Member Breakfast

New and prospective members are invited to attend a free breakfast just before our regular meeting. SWW board members host this session to introduce you to the benefits of membership. Bring your favorite dish if you like. Everyone is welcome!

Saturday, August 7
10:00 a.m. to noon

Jonathan Miller

Writing in the Age of the I-Pad

Writing a novel, short story, column, you-name-it in this technological age presents new challenges. As bookstores close, the internet provides us with new opportunities to market our books, but has the writing process itself changed? Jonathan will talk about his own transition, and answer questions on how you can use your computer to write and sell your books.

Jonathan Miller is an attorney, author and gossip columnist in Albuquerque. His new novel *Conflict Contract* was just released. From New Mexico, he's a graduate of the American Film Institute screenwriting program as well as a criminal defense attorney in Albuquerque, often taking high profile cases. His column "Celebrity Legal Issues Examiner" at www.facebook.com/1/f300b; examiner.com is frequently one of the most read columns in the nation.

Tuesday, August 17
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Christopher Boone

When Vision Meets Reality: Writing a Short Script for the Duke City Shootout

The Duke City Shootout celebrates its 10th Anniversary, July 23-31, 2010. As the world's first script-to-screen competition, DCS receives short screenplay submissions of 12 pages or less from all over the world, then has to select scripts with both the best content and the best possibility of being shot and edited in exactly 7 days. Writing a great 12-page screenplay is no easy task, and producing a 12-page screenplay in exactly 7 days is almost impossible, but DCS has produced over 70 films to date with its unique film competition and festival. Learn what makes a good Shootout script from someone who has worked on both sides of the Shootout -- as a winning writer/director and as a submissions manager.

See **Boone** bio on page 12.



Saturday, September 4
10:00 a.m. to noon

Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez

Music and Writing: How Lessons of a Music Education Fostered a Fiction Career

Though many of us think of reading and writing as silent endeavors, for me they are raucous aural experiences. Language was never meant to be silent. It was meant to be heard. I have found music to be not only crucial to my own writing process, but also a deft destroyer of writer's block. In this presentation I will share some basic musical concepts, and demonstrate how writers can use them to enhance their own flow, creativity and enjoyment of language.

Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez is the NY Times bestselling author of six published novels. Her seventh novel, *The Three Kings: A Christmas Romance*, comes out November 9, 2010, from St. Martin's Press. Alisa is working on a three-part young-adult series for HarperCollins, called *The Kindred*, set to launch in 2011 and in development as a feature film. A graduate of Berklee College of Music in Boston and Columbia University, Alisa is a saxophonist, and former award-winning staff writer for both *The Boston Globe* and *The Los Angeles Times*. Her first novel, *The Dirty Girls Social Club*, is in development for a TV series with George Lopez.

Tuesday, September 21
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Ray Collins

Characters that Can Stand the Test

Ray Collins discusses characters from both an internal and external development perspective. He is currently writing a book on Character Development for Fiction. "Characters have to be real because it is their job to carry the plot. They carry the plot to the reader and carry the reader through to the last page (and then back to the bookstore for your next novel)."

Ray is an award winning writer and noted editor. He is a published author of mystery, Western, and Sci-fi novels along with a collection of short fiction in those same genres. He and his wife, Darlene, are educators and coaches in many areas including writing. They have recently started a new publishing house, RayDar Books, to help new writers find their voice and enhance their talents. Ray is looking for new talent, but character counts above everything.

Classes and Workshops

BEFORE YOU PUBLISH

Kirt Hickman

**August 16, Monday Evening - 1 session,
6:30 pm -8:30 pm**

\$20 members, \$30 non-members.

Limited to 14.

SWW Conference Room, 3721 Morris NE



Let's face it, most writers don't get picked up by one of the big-five New York publishers the first time out. So unless you hit the jackpot, you'll be faced with some serious publishing decisions. Should you settle for a small traditional publisher? Should you self-publish? If you self-publish, should you use an author-services company or should you publish independently?

In this class Kirt Hickman will explore the various publishing avenues. You'll learn the pros and cons of each publishing option. Kirt will dispel the myths and misconceptions about traditional and self-publishing. He will present the marketing considerations and the dollars and cents of each option. And you'll learn to avoid the common pitfalls, whichever route you choose. Don't make a decision about how and where to publish until you know the facts.

Kirt Hickman, author of adult-length fiction, non-fiction, and children's fiction, has taught classes on writing and marketing through SouthWest Writers, UNM Continuing Education, and numerous writing conferences. He was awarded the SWW's 2009 Instructor of the Year Award. His no-nonsense approach has resulted in consistently sold-out classes and workshops, so reserve your seat early.

REVISING FICTION

Kirt Hickman

September 13– November 1, Monday Evenings , 6:30-8:30 pm

Two-part series: \$69 members, \$79 non-members for each part. Limited to 14.

SWW Conference Room, 3721 Morris NE

Part 1 of this series, "How to Write a Great Story," will run from September 13 through October 4. Part 2, "How to Write It Well," will run from October 11 through November 1.

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

TRADE SECRETS: HOW TO BOOST YOUR CAREER BY WRITING FOR LOW-PROFILE MAGAZINES

Loretta Hall

September 25, Saturday 9 am-1pm

(lunch is NOT included, but we have snacks)

\$35 members, \$45 non-members

New Life Presbyterian Church,
5540 Eubank, just north of Spain

"Trade Secrets," is a half-day workshop covering the topic of trade magazines, the mainstay of many professional writers' careers. Writing for them produces income, generates clips, and develops professional experience. Thousands of trade magazines are published in this country. This workshop will help you identify potential markets, focus your article ideas, and offer information on what trade magazine editors want. **Loretta Hall** is the author of four non-fiction books and more than 250 articles. She has been writing for trade magazines for more than fifteen years. Visit her web page at www.subsurfacebuildings.com/

ARTFUL WEAVING: INTERMEDIATE FICTION WRITING

Lisa Lenard-Cook and Lynn Miller

October 23, Saturday 1 pm to 4 pm

(lunch is NOT included but we have snacks)

\$49 members, \$59 non-members

New Life Presbyterian Church
5540 Eubank, just north of Spain

This is a half-day hands-on workshop. Topics that will be covered include: style and voice, structure and context, plot, character, critique, strategies for generating new writing, and revision.

Lisa Lenard-Cook is the author of *The Mind of Your Story: Discover What Drives Your Fiction*, *Dissonance*, and *Coyote Morning*. See her web page at www.lisalenardcook.com.

Lynn Miller, Ph.D. is the author of novels, *The Fool's Journey* and *Death of a Department Chair*, and co-editor of *Voices Made Flesh: Performing Women's Autobiography*. See her web page at www.lynnmiller.com. For more detailed information, visit their NEW website at www.abqwriterscoop.com.

COMING SOON!

Information on Rick Reichman's weekend introductory screenwriting class on October 15, 16, and 17. Watch the October Sage and the SouthWest Writers website at www.southwestwriters.com.

Successes and Announcements

David J. Corwell's latest short stories include: "Conqueror of Shadows" in *Tales of the Talisman Magazine* (Volume 6, Issue 2 - Autumn 2010); "Susto" in *Día de los Muertos* (Elektrik Milk Bath Press, Fall 2010); "The Harvest" in *Daily Flash: 365 Days of Flash Fiction* (Pill Hill Press, December 2010); and "Gremma's Hands" in *Voices of New Mexico* (LPD Press/Rio Grande Books, early 2011). He is also a reviewer for Reading New Mexico, the proofreader for *The Sandoval Signpost*, and the New Mexico sales rep for Fantasist Enterprises (the company that published "Legacy of the Quedana," his Southwestern-style fantasy story, in *Cloaked in Shadow: Dark Tales of Elves*).

Mark David Gerson was invited back to the Conscious Life Expo in October for a return speaking engagement. He spoke to a full house at February's Expo on "Birthing Your Book with Ease."

Nancy LaTurner's haiku "Moonrise on the Beach" was published in the July issue of *The Rag*. Nancy and **Ruth Friesen** are co-contributors to a new blog exploring perspectives on life. Visit at <http://doorknobsandkeyholes.blogspot.com>.

Ruth Friesen won first place in the National Federation of Press Women's annual communications contest for her essay in *Going Green: True Tales from Gleaners, Scavengers, and Dumpster Divers*.

Jeanne Shannon's short story "A Little Sweetness in the Noonday Light" was published in July in *Moon Milk Review*. She has poems scheduled for publication in *Tule Review* and *Adobe Walls*. Two of her poems will appear online in a future issue of *Midway Journal*, and she will have a prose poem posted this summer on Prose-Poems.com.

Michelle Holtby will host an all-day workshop entitled "Living in Recovery: Bipolar No More" at the Spiritual Renewal Center on July 31, 2010 from 9 am- 3 pm. Author of *Bipolar No More: A Memoir of Hope and Recovery*, Michelle will be introducing new material in this, her second workshop here. To register please call #877-4211. For more information, please see the flyer for the event on the Spiritual Renewal Center website: www.src-nm.org

SWW Officer Candidates for 2011

The nominating committee has named four candidates for officers of SouthWest Writers for 2011. They are Melody Groves, President; Rob Spiegel, Vice President; Kathryn Peralta, Treasurer; and Larry Greenly, Secretary. The election will be held at the first Saturday meeting in October. Mail-in votes and email votes will be accepted and must be received at the SWW office by noon on October 1. Candidate bios were published in the July Sage on page 8. Read them online at www.southwestwriters.com under the newsletter link. Ms. Peralta's bio is on page 12 of this Sage.

The New Mexico Book Co-op and **Reading New Mexico** have announced the search for the **100 Best New Mexico Books** to celebrate New Mexico's Centennial. Nominations are accepted for the best New Mexico books written and published in or before 2000. Books nominated must be written by New Mexicans, published by a New Mexico publisher, or be about New Mexico. The competition will end January 6, 2011 and be announced in the Spring of 2011. For more information go to the New Mexico Book Co-op website at <http://nmbookcoop.com/Projects/Best-Books/Best-Books.html>

Novelists are invited to a **Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Working Writers' Retreat** at Hummingbird Music Camp near Jemez Springs October 15-17. This annual retreat has been a popular event for almost 20 years. For the first time, **SouthWest Writers** is cosponsoring the retreat and adult novelists are invited to participate in a critique group just for them. The enrollment deadline is September 10. Complete information, including the names and bios of the critique group leaders, will be available at www.scbwi-nm.org by July 25.

Duke City DimeStories is a monthly open mic event in Albuquerque dedicated to prose. DimeStories are 3-minute prose pieces read by the author. Performances are recorded and the best pieces of the evening are posted online at DimeStories.org. The event is held every third Thursday at The Source, 1111 Carlisle Ave. SE (south of Central at Anderson). 7pm. Authors' sign up begins at 6:45 pm and the event begins at 7 pm. For more information about DimeStories, email ukecity.dimestories@gmail.com, visit <http://dimestories.org>, or call 505-503-1380,

An author's showcase listed upon **AuthorForSale.com** exposes literary talent to a global market. A showcase can depict a proposal for a new novel, a working draft, or a completed manuscript. Annual membership is \$225.

Frank Carden will attend a book signing for his debut novel *The Prostitutes of Post Office Street* (Galveston '54), winner of the Eric Hoffer award for best in general fiction. The Way Out West TX Book Festival is in Alpine TX, July 29-31.

SouthWest Sage Wins National Award

The National Federation of Press Women has awarded second place in their 2010 annual communications competition to the *SouthWest Sage* and Ruth Friesen, *Sage* editor, in the category for publications regularly edited by entrant - newsletters (not internal or public relations).

Revising Fiction: Building Tension

by Kirt Hickman

Take every opportunity to increase the tension in your scenes. In an early draft of my science-fiction novel, *Worlds Asunder*, I came across the following passage, in which the hero, Chase, tumbles from the back of a flatbed cargo truck driven by the villain:

The truck sped forward. This time he rolled off the back into the dirt, and the truck raced ahead without him. The crack in his visor was now a hand's width long. He checked his suit's pressure gauge. It was holding, but not for long, and his air was almost gone.

He pulled the rifle to his shoulder and took aim at the departing truck. It was several hundred meters away, but that wasn't far. With two shots, he took out the left rear tire. The right rear went three shots later. The drive wheels sank into the fine sand and the truck ground to a halt.

This scene is supposed to be exciting. It's the climactic scene of the story: The hero is on the Moon, he's been thrown from the back of a truck, his air is almost gone, his oxygen tank is leaking, his faceplate is cracked, he's in the middle of nowhere, he has no transportation, and the bad guy is getting away. Yet all I had to say was, "He pulled the rifle to his shoulder and took aim at the departing truck."

Worse, when I said the truck was several hundred meters away, I downplayed the problem by adding, "but that wasn't far." Never downplay the problem. Build it up. Make everything a big deal.

I'm writing from Chase's point of view. The reader must feel his desperation. She must feel the tension:

Chase's vision narrowed to that tiny fracture, his leaking O₂ tank suddenly minor compared to the threat of an immediate loss of pressure. The truck lurched forward and Chase rolled off into the dirt. When he hit the ground, the crack in his faceplate grew several centimeters in length. With Chase in a near-panic, his sight flew to his suit's pressure gauge. It was holding, but his air was almost gone.

Acting purely on instinct, he brought the rifle to his shoulder, forced his focus past his cracked faceplate, and squeezed the trigger. His target was a vague shape through a swirling cloud of dust. Two rounds. Three. The truck continued.

The O₂ alarm sounding in his ear fragmented his concentration. He forced it out of his mind and squeezed the trigger again.

The left side of the truck sagged as a bullet ripped

through the rear tire. The dust screen thickened as the wheel began to drag.

Chase shifted his aim to the other side and fired again. The right rear popped three shots later and the truck ground to a halt.

This example illustrates the difference between a scene that's about the action and a scene that's about the character. The original version tells you what's happening in the story. The revised passage emphasizes character viewpoint. It shows you what Chase is going through.

Notice also that everything Chase does makes his situation worse. He rolls off the truck and the crack in his faceplate grows. When he shoots a tire to slow the truck, the dust screen thickens, making his target harder to see. Each of these developments increases tension.

In another example, Chase and his team are in a truck, fleeing enemies who are chasing them on all-terrain cycles. The truck has crashed and the cycles are approaching. The lives of the good guys depend on whether the truck starts. Here's the early draft:

Chase pulled himself into the driver's seat, restarted the transport, and pulled away.

Yawn! Never make anything easy. How about:

Chase pulled himself into the driver's seat and tried the ignition.

The transport was dead.

Already it's better. You can feel the tension that's lacking in the original version. The revised passage goes on:

Chase turned up the O₂ bleed and tried the starter again. The motor roared once and died. More O₂. He cranked up the fuel intake as well. The transport came to life and he pulled away.

This version makes the reader believe, if only for a few paragraphs, that the truck's not going to start. It builds tension.

One last piece of advice: When you describe something that threatens your hero, describe it in a way that makes it sound scary.

Kirt Hickman, author of *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness and Worlds Asunder*, has sold nearly a thousand books at signings in the past year. He won *SWW's "Instructor of the Year" award in 2009*.

Turning up the Summer Heat

by Lydia Parks

If you're thinking about writing the hot stuff—erotica or erotic romance or even just spicy love scenes—there are a few things to consider before you start. Writing good erotica is no less difficult than writing anything else. In some ways, it's perhaps more difficult. Our society's attitude towards sex often leaves erotica authors feeling isolated or shunned. It's okay to chop off heads and limbs, but start describing body parts below the waist and adults run screaming from the room.

First of all, if writing sensual romance or erotica makes you incredibly uncomfortable, maybe you shouldn't do it. It's better to come to that realization up front than regret your decision later.

So, what's the difference between sensual romance, erotic romance and erotica? Sensual romance is a romance where the physical contact takes place "on stage," but much is left to the imagination, or euphemisms are used. In erotic romance, sexual contact is described in explicit terms, but the story is still a romance focused on a couple overcoming major conflict on the road to an emotionally satisfying ("happily ever after") ending. Erotica involves frankly described sexual contact and doesn't necessarily follow a romance storyline.

If you've decided to proceed, consider each love or sex scene you want to write as you would any other scene. Who is your audience? What purpose does the scene serve? Whose point of view should you use? What emotions do you want to evoke and how do you do that?

Erotica is aimed mostly at women, but there are many sub-genres for a variety of audiences. Different publishers are open to different pairings (male/female, male/male, female/alien, groups, etc.). Do your research; visit Amazon and read the synopses. And, as with any other fiction, read before you try to write. If you don't enjoy reading erotica, you definitely won't enjoy writing it, and you probably won't sell what you've written.

No matter what you're writing, a good love/sex scene should serve the same purpose as any other scene; it should move the plot along, or reveal something hidden about one of the characters (other than previously hidden flesh), or—preferably—both. Please note: erotica is not just another story with a lot of sex thrown in for good measure. If sex isn't integral to the story, your reader won't be your reader for long.

If you have a choice in point of view (POV) for any scene, it's usually best to choose the POV of the character with the most to lose. This is no less true of the spicy scenes. If the hero is risking his heart for the first time since his wife died, his POV is likely to be the most powerful. But if you're not sure, try writing the scene from each POV and see which offers the

reader the most emotion.

And emotion is the whole point here. Forget the technical stuff. We don't need to know where the hero's left hand or the heroine's right foot is. We need to know what emotions they're experiencing so we can experience them, too. Sensory input is important, but only as it relates to the emotional result. Tell us what she sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels, and then show us what's going on in her head as a result.

Remember your first kiss? Remember how your belly quivered with excitement? Make the reader remember that excitement, too, and you'll have a fan for life.

How about a few technical hints (rated PG)?

Love scenes can be funny. It's okay for the characters to laugh, and it's great if the reader laughs, too. Don't go overboard and make every encounter funny unless you're writing comedy.

Don't cut to the chase too quickly. Focus on the journey instead of the final destination. I'm keeping this clean, so enough said.

Avoid ridiculous euphemisms (again, unless you're writing comedy). Language depends on the genre of fiction and the character whose POV you're writing in. Men and women often use different terms for body parts and actions. That's a great way for readers to distinguish the voices of your characters and to get inside their heads.

Imagery and metaphors are wonderful, but, as in other scenes, make them appropriate to the time and character, and follow through. If your heroine is equating the experience to an ocean setting, the culmination shouldn't suddenly become a volcano or a thunderstorm. And is there a reason for your heroine to think of the ocean? She isn't a farm girl who never left Kansas, is she? You get the picture.

My pet peeve? In general, women don't reach the finish line immediately or multiple times without real effort. And we won't appreciate it if your heroine does every time she's with the hero. Granted, it is fiction, but there are limits to suspending disbelief.

A last thought: if you want your scene to make a real impact, it should have consequences later in the story. Now that your hero and heroine have dropped their defenses, what's the price they'll have to pay?

I'm off to enjoy a hot August afternoon with a good, steamy read. I hope you get to do the same.

Sarah Baker writes romance as *Sarah Storme*, erotica as *Lydia Parks*, and mystery as *S.H. Baker*. Her latest erotica from Kensington's *Aphrodisia* is *Devour Me*, and her *Dassas Cormier Mystery Series* is being recorded by *Siren Audio Studios*.



Registration Form for the SouthWest Writers' Conference
EMERGING MULTI-CULTURAL VOICES

Saturday, September 11, 2010

National Hispanic Cultural Center, Fourth and Cesar Chavez Avenue SW, Albuquerque, NM

Registration includes conference presentations, a buffet lunch, and refreshments during the day.

Check in from 8:30-9-00 Saturday morning, Conference from 9:00AM – 4:45 PM

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ email: _____

I would like a pitch session ___ YES ___ NO. My genre is: _____

Are you a member of SouthWest Writers? ___ YES ___ NO

Conference Cost:

___ @ \$120 SWW member cost = \$ _____, includes free pitch session

___ @ \$150 non-member cost = \$ _____, plus a \$20 charge for pitch session

___ @ \$35 Friday night awards banquet SWW member cost = \$ _____

___ @ \$45 Friday night awards banquet non-member cost = \$ _____

Meal Choice: ___ Beef ___ Chicken ___ Vegetarian

Indicate method of payment (the only credit cards we accept are MasterCard and Visa)

___ Check or money order made out to SouthWest Writers

___ MasterCard

___ Visa

If paying by credit card:

Cardholder Name: _____

Card Number: _____

Security Code: _____ (the last 3 digits of the number near your signature)

Expiration Date: _____

Billing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

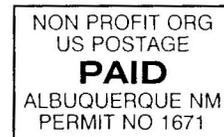
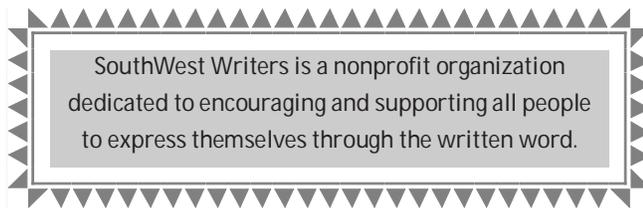
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For an update on speakers, check out our website: www.southwestwriters.com

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August 17 Meeting, continued

Christopher Boone is an award-winning screenwriter and filmmaker, or so he claims. Boone's 2008 Duke City Shootout film, *Preschool's a Bitch*, won the Audience Award, Best Editing, and Best Score. *Preschool's a Bitch* also won Best Comedy Short at the 2009 New Mexico Filmmakers Showcase, and has been an Official Selection of LA Shorts Fest, DC Shorts Film Festival, Santa Fe Film Festival, Woods Hole Film Festival, and Philadelphia Independent Film Festival. *Preschool's a Bitch* was also a finalist of the USA Film Festival National Short Film & Video Competition. Boone has directed and produced short films that have screened at several film festivals across the country, and has written feature-length screenplays that have been named a top-30 finalist out of 4,100 scripts for Scriptapalooza and requested for review by the Sundance Screenwriting Lab twice. His latest short, *We're Having a Baby*, can currently be seen on a YouTube near you.

August Noon
by *Jeanne Shannon*

zinc music
of traffic
on the boulevards

and paisley dahlias
catching fire

Desire
By *Nancy LaTurner*

August yearns for cool
Like February craves beach
Margarita dreams.

Kathryn Peralta, SWW Treasurer, Bio

Kathryn is a native New Mexican who has documented her family origins as Genizaro, French and Crypto-Jewish as far back as the 1720s in what was then a colony of Spain. She is an aspiring writer who holds degrees in urban studies (planning focus), education and law. Her love of books and writing led her to SouthWest Writers. Kathryn has been a member of SWW since January 2010 and is the current Treasurer.

