

SouthWest Sage

February 2010

www.southwestwriters.com

Are You Ready for An Agent?

By Sandra Toro

As you plan for your attendance at the February 20 SWW Conference on the business aspects of being a writer, consider whether you are ready to pitch to an agent. If you are working on a book-length project, fiction or non-fiction, you will probably want to hire an agent to represent your work to the publishing industry. In today's economic climate, the major publishing houses are more than ever using agents as the gate keepers, the first filters for manuscripts by debut authors. In other words, they will not consider your manuscript unless it is submitted by an agent.

This places an unpleasant burden on agents. It means we must base our reputation with the publishing houses on the manuscripts we agree to represent. By thus raising the bar, the publishing houses have forced us to choose only a few authors, and only superb writing, to represent.

At the last three conferences the agents and editors have complained to me that many of the persons pitching to them had only an idea and had not yet written even the first chapter of their proposed book. This wastes the time of the agent and editor as well as the person doing the pitching. With this criticism in mind, I make the following recommendations to those of you who are considering pitching to an agent at the February conference.

Fiction books: You should have written a complete novel (60,000-200,000 words), revised it, made certain the spelling, grammar and punctuation are perfect, and you have a synopsis of between 2-5 pages. You should be prepared to transmit the novel electronically to the agent, who will then forward it to editors he/she believes will be receptive to it.

If you have progressed to this point with your novel, ask for a pitch session when you register for the conference, or if you've already registered, send me an e-mail at storo32567@aol.com and tell me what genre your book is so I can place you with the best agent for your work. (You will have this opportunity again in September, if you are not ready for this conference.) Prepare a ten-minute pitch and rehearse it as if it were a speech. Bring your synopsis to the conference and leave it with the agent if she requests it.

Non-fiction books: Prepare a book proposal that includes a chapter outline, at least 50 pages (2-3 chapters) and a

statement of your qualifications to write this particular book, including past publishing credits. If the book is to be illustrated, include samples of illustrations. A marketing plan that details who the audience for this book would be, their demographics, how you would promote the book, and potential blurbs are helpful. If you plan to pitch this book, bring the proposal with you. Prepare a ten-minute pitch, rehearse it, and project confidence and credibility.

February 20 Conference Schedule

- 8:30-9:00 Registration and Continental Breakfast, Lobby of Wells Fargo auditorium
- 9:00 Welcome and introduction of Master of Ceremonies—
Sandra K. Toro
Master of Ceremonies, Gregory Lay
- 9:15: Non-fiction freelance writing: magazines and books
Rob Speigel, author of articles and books
Bob Gassaway, author of articles and books
Rob Hart, Publisher and Editor, Gaon Books
Patricia Shapiro, freelance author, magazines and books
- 10:00 Legal Issues of a Writing Career
Sherri Burr, Attorney
Deborah Peacock, Attorney
- 10:45 Morning Break
- 11:00 Panel of Agents
Irene Kraas, Kraas Literary Agency
Liz Trupin-Puli, Jet Literary Agency
Sandra Toro, The Toro Literary Agency
- Noon: Buffet Luncheon
During lunch and throughout the afternoon, books by speakers and SWW authors will be for sale, and authors will autograph their books in the lobby.
- 1:00 Jane Lindskold, Fantasy
1:30 Chris Eboch, Young Adult
2:00 Celeste Bradley, Romance
2:30 David Morrell, Thriller:
Lessons From a Lifetime of Writing
- 3:15 Break
3:30 Steven Havill, Mystery:
Tarpits for Beginning Writers to Avoid
- 4:00 Sarah Storme, Romance
4:30 Keith Pyeatt, Paranormal Suspense

REGISTRATION FORM IS ON PAGE 11

"Busting My Buttons" With Pride



President
Melody Groves

Ahhh... February. Spring is right around the corner. Days grow longer and plants push their way out of the cold ground, culminating in riots of blooming color. Not only is it time for blooming, it's also time for our semi-annual conference. And this one promises to be a doozy! I'm looking forward to a day of panel discussions and individual lectures about the various genres. Sandra Toro has been planning this event for months, and her attention to detail always amazes me. She tirelessly looks for the best venues, the best speakers, and the best topics that pertain to writing. Join Sandra and me on February 20 at the National Hispanic Cultural Center for a full day of networking, learning and good old camaraderie. Our next conference in September also takes place at the same venue. More specific information is available at meetings or on our website.

Our first meeting of the year, January 2, was attended by over 150 people. That number falls about thirty short of a record when Tony Hillerman spoke, but this is one time being second is fine. With so many people putting pen to paper, SouthWest Writers is the perfect place to be. We're pleased to be able to offer twice-monthly meetings and twice-yearly conferences, plus a multitude of workshops and classes.

We're already full-steam ahead with workshops and classes. Shirl Brainard presented a terrific workshop on creative writing using visual material, and currently, Betsy James is teaching a class on peer critiques. Rob Spiegel and I are also teaching a class on how to get non-fiction work published. Look for more classes and workshops in the coming months.

Like a new parent, I am just "busting my buttons" over SouthWest Writers' members, board members, and all their accomplishments. I couldn't be more proud.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



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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
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE,
Albuquerque, New Mexico



SouthWest Sage

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Your Children's Book Manuscript: Set the Stage for Success

By Shirley Raye Redmond

If you've recently sold or purchased a home, you may be familiar with the hottest trend in moving real estate. It's called "staging" and involves demonstrating creative combinations to attract potential buyers. Many real estate agents even hire professional "stagers" to make properties for sale more attractive to potential buyers. They rearrange furniture to create flow and energy. They de-clutter dens and bathrooms. They might brighten a black coffee table with a vase of white roses to make the living room "pop."

Why go to all this trouble? To make a sale, of course and to help clients see the potential in a particular property. Staging works! By modifying the techniques, I've sold children's book manuscripts on topics that have already been covered pretty thoroughly—including one about fairies (yes, another book on fairies!) to Random House in December of last year.

Here's how it works: after you've written the best possible manuscript you can produce, it's time to do your business homework. If you've been reading *Publisher's Weekly*, you'll know that the cutbacks in children's publishing have been pretty scary. Editorial retirees are not being replaced. Some houses are laying off employees. Both schools and libraries—top markets for children's books—are pinching pennies. Publishing houses solely dependent upon these institutional markets have called for hiring freezes and budget cuts.



What does this mean to children's book writers? It means times are tough. Editors are not buying as many manuscripts as they have been in the past. And when they do buy, they will trim down the size of both your advance and the publicity budget, if any, for your book. Here's where staging techniques come in handy. Show the editor that you're market savvy. When I pitched my picture book manuscript about a blind horse that helped build the transcontinental railroad, I pointed out that there were no other kids books about Blind Tom on the market. I mentioned that the title would appeal to horse lovers and "trainiacs." I provided contact info for approximately 300 railroad museums in the U.S. with bookstores or gift shops.

I also consulted a calendar for other staging ideas. Calendars can be a writer's most valuable marketing tool. From editorial calendars to Hallmark calendars to specialized calendars that provide information, such as movie production dates: all of these can be used by savvy writers to sell their children's book manuscripts.

I knew that the 140th celebration of the Golden Spike Ceremony would be observed in 2009, the same year as the Lincoln Bicentennial. The transcontinental railroad was one of Lincoln's dream projects, but he never lived to see it. Knowing that the nationwide bicentennial celebration would provide many opportunities to promote the book through a variety of venues, I used this information to set the stage for success with my manuscript.

Leslie Dendy, the author of *Guinea Pig Scientists: Bold Self-Experimenters in Science and Medicine* (Henry Holt Publishers), co-written with Mel Boring, also staged her children's book manuscript for success. She provided a fascinating and detailed book proposal about the scientific young rebels. She mentioned that both

Continued on page 9

Revising Fiction: Ten Tips To Tighten Your Narrative Style – Part II

by Kirt Hickman

Last month we looked at several ways to tighten your narrative style. To recap, we've learned to:

- Eliminate Filter Words
- Eliminate Thinker Attributives
- Minimize Use of "Not" and "n't"
- Eliminate Unnecessary Use of "That"
- Eliminate Repeated Elements

Try these tips as well:

6. Eliminate Adverbs

In general, delete your adverbs. Adverbs tend to signify lazy writing. The author uses a descriptor to avoid finding the right verb. I once heard a writer recommend deleting *all* adverbs from a manuscript and reading it without them, then putting back only those that are absolutely necessary. I would add: For those that remain, strengthen the verb rather than reinsert the adverb. For example, *stared grumpily* might become *glared*, *glowered*, *scowled*, or *frowned*.



7. Eliminate Repeated Words

The following passage from an early draft of *Worlds Asunder* takes place immediately after a lunar building explodes. A construction worker drives his oversized bulldozer up a damaged truck ramp and spots two wounded survivors trapped on a damaged framework of trusses above him:

He depressurized his compartment and climbed out. **He** found the distance that he had to jump to be greater than he'd expected. **He** heard the men above him now, coming in loud and clear on his comm system, urging him to hurry. **He** looked up and saw their catwalk swaying and beginning to sag under their weight.

Every sentence in this passage starts with *he*. This draws the reader's attention away from the story and onto the text. Restructure your sentences to avoid repeated beginnings. Include more sensory details. Show your viewpoint character's emotions. The following revision doesn't have a single sentence that begins with *he*:

Once in place, he depressurized the compartment and climbed out. His heart sank when he saw the distance he'd have to jump.

The men called to him through the comm, urging him to hurry. Suddenly, a support buckled and the whole catwalk began to give under their weight.

Similarly, don't repeat the same uncommon word, or forms of the same word, within a short span of text. Consider the following example excerpted from a critique submission:

Jamie, Leah, Camille, and Lawrence **passed** the platter around, fast and deliberate, like a quarterback **passing** off a football.

Substitute synonyms to avoid repeating words.

Jamie, Leah, Camille, and Lawrence passed the platter around, fast and deliberate, like a quarterback handing off a football.

8. Eliminate Excess Adjectives

Don't string a bunch of adjectives together to describe a single noun:

... a hot, dry, sunny, summer day.

The use of multiple adjectives gives the reader too much information to catalogue, especially if you do it often. If you must use an adjective, limit yourself to one per noun. Pick the one that describes the characteristic most important to the viewpoint character. For example, a construction worker laboring outside would probably describe the day as hot. A farmer, concerned about another year of drought, would characterize the day as dry.

9. Eliminate Unnecessary Prepositional Phrases

Chase stood **among the clues in the cockpit** and let them tell their story.

If the reader already knows Chase is in the cockpit, write this as:

Chase stood **among the clues** and let them tell their story.

Challenge each prepositional phrase in your manuscript. If it doesn't say something that's both new and necessary, delete it.

10. Don't Put Questions in Your Character's Thoughts

Minimize the number of questions that appear in your character's thoughts. Similar to telling, questions in a character's thoughts do your reader's work for her. They tell her what to wonder. Let the reader come up with her own questions.

Consider the following passage from a critique submission, in which Luke has ventured into a sugarcane field that has always frightened him. There, he meets a boy named Antonio.

Continued on page 9

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.

ENTRY FORM IS ON PAGE 10.

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

Free Newcomer Potluck Breakfast
Saturday, February 6, 8:30 a.m.– 9:30 a.m.

Welcome to all current, new or prospective members who have never attended a newcomer breakfast. Meet SWW board members and hear about the many benefits and activities of SouthWest Writers.



Saturday, February 6
10:00 a.m. to noon

Johnny D. Boggs

Dialogue, Frankly Speaking

A conversation on how to make your characters talk naturally and not sound forced or staged, while at the same time moving your story. Tips for talking, and pitfalls to avoid.

Johnny D. Boggs has won three Spur Awards and the Western Heritage Wrangler Award for his historical Western fiction. His novels include *Northfield*, *Camp Ford* and *Kill-straight*. He lives in Santa Fe, and is president of Western Writers of America.

Tuesday, February 16
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Harry H. Haines

Six Factors That Got Me Published

Character Motivation (verisimilitude), Point of View (careful), Passive Verbs (how to avoid "to be"), Adverbs (taking suggestions from Stephen King and Elmore Leonard), Your Agent (choosing the right one at the right time), and LUCK (perseverance).

Harry H. Haines is a former music teacher and author whose first novel, *Orphan*, was published in 2008. A second novel, *Texas Panic!*, was released in October, 2009. While working at West Texas A&M University, he authored or co-authored fifteen books, all non-fiction, most related to music. One of them, *The Division of Beat*, sold over 400,000 copies. Learn more at www.harryhaines.com.

Starting in 1982 Haines turned to fiction, attended the Iowa Summer Writers festival four times, the Maui Writers Conference/Retreat three times and several dozen writers' workshops/conferences located all over the country. Among the latter were five trips to Albuquerque to attend the SW Writers Conference and the Tony Hillerman Writers Conference. During this time his novels remained unpublished, yet they won four big national contests.

Saturday, March 6
10:00 a.m. to noon

Don Bullis

Adventures in Writing: A 50-year Odyssey

How and when I got started, what I wrote and how it was received: from non-fiction to fiction and back again.

Don Bullis has worked in public relations, educational projects and business. After a 20-year career in law enforcement, he is currently concentrating on historical research and writing and giving talks on historical subjects.

He's been a columnist for *New Mexico Independent* newspapers and the *Rio Rancho Observer*, and has written for *The New Mexico Magazine*, *The New Mexico Stockman* and *Tradicion Revista* magazines. He is also the author of 8 non-fiction books and two novels: *New Mexico and Politicians of the Past*; *Duels, Gunfights & Shoot-outs*; *The Old West Trivia Book Revised*; *New Mexico: A Biographical Dictionary Vol II*; *New Mexico: A Biographical Dictionary Vol I*; *Bull's Eye*; *99 New Mexicans...and a few other folks*; *Bloodville*; *New Mexico's Finest: Peace Officers Killed in the Line of Duty, 1847-1991* (2nd edition, 1996 and 3rd edition 1999); and *The Old West Trivia Book*.

Tuesday, March 16
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Jeanne Shannon

The Poetry Family: The Poem, the Prose Poem, and the Lyric Essay

What's the difference between a poem and a prose poem? What is a lyric essay and what does it have in common with poetry and some types of non-fiction such as the memoir? What is a haibun and why is it considered poetry, not prose? Are prose poems sometimes found hiding (or not) in the pages of novels? How does the genre (if that's what it is) called "fragmentary writing" relate to poetry and the lyric essay? And did you know that you might have written something in the form of fragmentary writing called *zuihitsu*? We will explore answers to these and other questions, recognizing that in contemporary writing the boundaries between genres are sometimes very blurred.

Jeanne Shannon holds an M.A. in English/Creative Writing from the University of New Mexico. Her work has appeared in numerous small-press and university publications including *Quarter After Eight*, a journal focusing on work that blurs the boundaries between prose and poetry.

FIVE EASY STEPS: GET YOUR NON-FICTION OR FICTION BOOK PUBLISHED**Rob Spiegel and Melody Groves****NON-FICTION****January 28 – February 25, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

Thursday evenings 5 weeks
 \$79 members, \$89 non-members
 Class limited to 14 students

FICTION**March 11 – April 15, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

Thursday evenings 6 weeks
 \$89 members, \$99 non-members
 Class limited to 14 students

A series of two classes. Register for one or both

SouthWest Writers Conference Room
 3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

Ready to get your non-fiction book published? Want someone to buy your novel? Rob Spiegel and Melody Groves will teach two sets of classes to propel you on your way to fame and fortune.

The first series of five classes addresses issues of non-fiction and will cover finding markets, writing queries (these will be critiqued by Rob and Melody), writing proposals (also critiqued and shared with the group), attending conferences (why that's crucial), and finding an agent. The six fiction classes will address markets, the submission process (proposals), writing the synopsis (critiqued in class) as well as suggested conferences (why you should attend) and finding an agent.

Rob Spiegel is the author of six published non-fiction books. **Melody Groves** is the author of one published non-fiction book and three fiction books.

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

WORKING FICTION: CHALLENGES AND PEER CRITIQUE**Betsy James****January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17, March 3, 10 (note 1 skipped week)** Wednesday evenings, 6:30—9 p.m.

\$150 for members; \$180 for non-members which includes a 6-month SWW membership and online *SW Sage*
 Limited to 10 students



SouthWest Writers Conference Room
 3721 Morris NE, Ste A (NW corner of Comanche and Morris)

One of the best stimuli of fresh work is the challenge of an outside idea, followed by respectful peer critique. In seven weekly assignments we will write to various aspects of fiction—voice, description, dialogue, point-of-view, and so on—and bring our work into the conversation of critique. The skills of peer critique will be taught and modeled. Assignments—each a maximum of 1000 words—will be appropriate to any fiction form: novel/short story, realistic/fantastic, adult/juvenile. Come prepared to work hard.

Betsy James is the author of 16 books for young adults and children. Her most recent title, *Listening at the Gate* (Atheneum 2006), is a James Tiptree Honor Book and a New York Public Library Best Book for the Teen Age. Visit her on the web at www.betsyjames.com.

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

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.

Class

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 "Learning the Movie Way," 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. One of his former students is currently Co-executive Producer for the CBS hit "The Mentalist." In addition to his successful film students, 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 has won several screenwriting contests *and optioned two screenplays*. His 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 by the New Mexico Book Awards as best non-fiction book of year.



SWW 2010 First Quarter Writing Competition

Your Funniest Winter Memory

Send us an essay about your funniest winter memory. Double-spaced, up to 500 words. Postmark deadline: Wednesday, March 31. 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.

Successes and Announcements

John L. Orman placed in the *Albuquerque Journal's* Photo Caption contest, for the photo shown on December 15, with winners printed in the *Journal* on December 22. His winning caption: Santa and a doctor high-five after being informed that the government is taking over both their jobs.



Elsie Karr Kreisher, one of the founders of SouthWest Writers, is celebrating her 90th birthday on Saturday February 6. Friends, students and fans are invited to an open house from 2 - 5 p.m. at 7223 Galinas NE, Albuquerque. Please RSVP to Joyce Perz, feb2elsie@gmail.com.

Northern New Mexico Poetry Teachers & Writers Symposium, a free event open to the public, will be held Saturday, February 28 from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Building 2 at UNM-Los Alamos. Panelists include Jon Davis, Institute of American Indian Arts; Michelle Holland, Los Alamos High School, Poets-in-the-Schools, and Youth Slam Coach; Joan Logghe, UNM-LA and Ghost Ranch Abiqui; and Miriam Sagan, Santa Fe Community College. For further information, contact janelin@unm.edu.

Michelle J. Holtby will hold a workshop entitled "Living in Recovery" on Saturday, January 30 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Cost is \$35.00 per person/2 for \$60.00 and includes lunch. For more information, visit www.bipolarnomore.com. To register, contact the Spiritual Renewal Center: 877-4211 or e-mail at www.spiritualrenewalretreats.com.

Nominations for the **William Saroyan International Prize for Writing** will be accepted through January 31, 2010. This award, given by Stanford University Libraries in partnership with the William Saroyan Foundation, recognizes newly published works of fiction and non-fiction with a \$5,000 award for the winner in each category. The prize is designed to encourage new or emerging writers and honor the Saroyan literary legacy of originality, vitality and stylistic innovation. For more information visit <http://library.stanford.edu/saroyan>. Deadline for entries: January 31.

The **Moriarty Authors for Literacy Event 2010**, an all-day event, will be held on Saturday, February 20. Speakers are on a first come, first serve basis. For more information, contact Cyndi Waite at 505-832-2513.

The deadline to enter the **"To a Wild Rose" Poetry Contest** for the best poems about a flower, any flower, is June 30. For more, visit www.thewildflowerpress.com.

Crested Butte Writers announces **The 2010 Sandy Writing Competition** with five genres and five final judges eager to find new talent. Find more information at www.thesandy.org. The deadline is February 15.

Set the Stage for Success, continued from page 3

librarians and teachers were enthusiastic about the topic. She pointed out that there were plenty of books profiling women scientists and black scientists, but none on self-experimenters, who did weird things to their own stomachs, lungs, limbs, eyes, and ears.

Staging can be used for grown-up books too. When Anne Hillerman pitched her eating guide, *Santa Fe Flavors* (Gibbs Smith Publishers), she mentioned that she'd been eating her way through Santa Fe, Taos, and the Espanola Valley for half a dozen years. The downturn in the economy means that people will be cooking at home more and will be more cautious with their dollars when they eat out, so her book meets a need.

Anne also suggested the affordable \$10 price and the small format, making the book easy to stash in a purse, backpack or diaper bag. Anne's husband Don even offered to provide a photo of each restaurant's sign/logo. The book is now sold as a counter top item at the restaurants that are mentioned in the guide, as well as gift stores, specialty food stores, farmer's markets, as well as traditional bookstores.

So, before mailing off that next query letter or completed book manuscript, take the time to do a little savvy marketing, and set the stage for YOUR success.

Shirley Raye Redmond is the author of numerous books, including Blind Tom, the Horse Who Helped Build the Great Railroad (a New Mexico Book Award finalist), which is now for sale at the Union Pacific Railroad Museum and other sites around the country.



The Oregon Coast Children's Book Writers Workshops will be held on July 12-16 and July 19-23 in the Oregon coast town of Oceanside. For more information, visit www.occbww.com.

Websites for Contests

www.firstwriter.com/competitions/
www.writers-editors.com/Writers/Contests/contests.htm
www.placesforwriters.com/contests/

Tighten Your Narrative, continued from page 4

The dark-haired Mexican kid was standing with a finger over his lips. Luke frowned and opened his mouth. The boy shook his head and made a waving motion.

He wants me to go away? That's what I'm trying to do. Why did he stop me? Luke studied Antonio. He's trying to hide something. But what? Himself? This kid is confused, Luke thought. Antonio must be an illegal. What else could he be hiding?

The last paragraph puts direct questions into Luke's thoughts. There's almost always a more effective way to show what questions your character faces than to pose them so blatantly:

The dark-haired Mexican kid stood with a finger over his lips. Luke frowned and opened his mouth. The boy shook his head and made a waving motion to shoo Luke away.

All Luke wanted to do was run, to get as far from this creepy cane field as possible by the time the dying sun faded from the horizon. Yet he studied Antonio. Nobody would enter the sugarcane, especially at night, unless he was hiding something. He must be an illegal.

The reader still knows what questions Luke has. Now, however, the reasons for them are clear as well.

In summary, minimize your use of these ten grammatical devices. Doing so will increase the pace of your narrative and the tension in 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.

Revamped Website for SouthWest Writers

For those readers who are compulsive internet junkies, here's another site to check out every few minutes. Our revamped site should be live in late January or early February. Whoever guesses the exact moment it goes live will win a stack of old National Geographics that are out in my garage.

Our updated look will still feature the storyteller but the rest...well, you'll just have to see it. We've improved the navigation and eliminated a lot of redundancy. Let us know how you like it. The address is still the same: www.southwestwriters.com or www.southwestwriters.org.

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
 (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

Registration Form for the SouthWest Writers' Conference

THE BUSINESS OF BEING A WRITER

AND

SHOWCASE: NEW MEXICO NOVELISTS

Saturday, February 20, 2010

National Hispanic Cultural Center, Fourth and César Chávez Avenue SW, Albuquerque, NM

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

Conference times: Check in from 8:30-9:00 Saturday morning

Conference from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

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

How did you learn about this conference? _____

Conference Cost (non-member registration includes a six-month membership to SWW):

___ @ \$99.00 SWW member cost = \$_____

___ @ \$129.00 non-SWW member cost = \$_____

___ @ \$149.00 cost (registered at the door) = \$_____

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: _____

E-mail (SWWriters@juno.com) or mail this registration form to: SWW, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111

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

We look forward to seeing you at the conference!



SouthWest Sage

SouthWest Writers

3721 Morris NE

Albuquerque, NM 87111

www.southwestwriters.com

SWWriters@juno.com

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

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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

Mystery

www.croak-and-dagger.com

Duke City Screenwriters

Every other Thursday,

Flying Star on 7th and Silver.

Marc Calderwood 505-897-6474

skatingkokopelli@hotmail.com

Land of Enchantment Romance Authors

Second Saturdays at noon.

leranm.com

Fantasy Writers

Borders Books, ABQ Uptown

Every other Saturday 4 PM

Ron Harrison, harrison653@hotmail.com

Western Writers of America

Johnny Boggs, wwa@unm.edu

Albuquerque Press Club

201 Highland Park Cir. SE

Second Tuesdays 7 pm

Samantha 505-401-1561

sclark.abq@earthlink.net

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 Book Co-op

505/344-9382

LPD_Press@msn.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

New Mexico Press Women

www.newmexicopresswomen.org

Open to males and females

Women in Communications

www.nmawc.org