

SouthWest Sage

July 2010 www.southwestwriters.com

September Conference: Emerging Multi-Cultural Voices

by *Sandra Toro, Conference Chair*

The publishing world has caught up with the global revolution facilitated by the Internet. When I picked up Carrie Feron, the vice president of William Morrow, at the airport last spring she quickly told me she was looking for new "women's voices from all around the world." The readiness of novelists to embrace socio-economic and political issues thousands of miles from their home has become increasingly evident to me in my writing classes at SWW and at the University of New Mexico. All the major publishers are now welcoming debut books by authors like Khaled Hosseini and Stieg Larsson.

In keeping with past SWW tradition, we have invited agents, authors and editors to participate in our September writer's conference which will lead off Friday night, September 10, with a banquet honoring those authors who have won our annual contest. Following a gourmet dinner catered by La Fonda del Bosque, and the awards ceremony, we will hear from Peter Rubie, the chief executive officer of Fine Print Literary Management, a New York agency with eleven agents in addition to Peter.

For those of you working on non-fiction projects, Peter is your guy. He specializes in narrative non-fiction, popular science, spirituality, history, biography, pop culture, business and technology, parenting, health, self help, music, and food. He also represents fiction: literate thrillers, crime fiction, science fiction and fantasy, military fiction and literary fiction. In addition to speaking at our banquet, he will participate in a 90 minute question and answer panel on Saturday morning and will take pitches from conference registrants on Saturday afternoon.



Peter Rubie

The conference will feature two additional agents: Chelsea Gilmore from the Maria Carvainis agency and Lauren MacLeod from the Strothman Agency. These two agents specialize in young adult and kidlit as well as mysteries, thrillers, women's fiction and historical fiction.

On Saturday, September 11, the conference will feature

panels on Western mysteries and thrillers, literary fiction, historical fiction, and young adult fiction.

The conference and banquet will be held at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in the Salon Ortega. We encourage you to register as soon as possible, either by mail or e-mail, so you can take advantage of the opportunity for a pitch session. The registration form is on page 11 of this Sage. Watch future issues of the Sage and check out our web site for additional information about the program and speakers.



Betsy James Named Storyteller Judge

by *Andy Mayo*
Annual Contest Chair

Award-winning author-illustrator Betsy James will judge the \$1,000 Storyteller Award for the SouthWest Writers annual contest. While first, second and third place prizes are awarded by agents and editors in each of these 14 categories, only the first place entries compete for the Storyteller Award, the "best of the best" of all categories.

Betsy's work ranges from picture books to young adult novels, realistic fiction to fantasy. Her most recent novel, *Listening at the Gate*, was a Tiptree Award Honor Book in 2006 and named a New York Public Library Best Book for the Teen Age in 2007. An earlier novel, *Long Night Dance* was a Voice of Youth Advocates Best Fantasy in 2005.

The Red Cloak, which she both wrote and illustrated, was featured in the 1995-96 exhibition "Brave Little Girls: Courageous Girls in Children's Picture Books" at the National Museum for Women. Her illustrations have appeared in 34 books ranging from *The On and Off the Road Cookbook* to *The Short Stories of Fray Angelica Chavez*. Original artwork is on exhibition at the Palace of Governors in Sante Fe and the Coronado State Monument.

She has taught fiction-writing classes at the San Miguel de Allende Writers' Conference and for SouthWest Writers and has co-led an elementary school writer's workshop at Zuni Pueblo for several years.

President's Message



**President
Melody Groves**

Happy 4th of July! This month is always a good time to sit back and reflect on the blessings we have (I know...this sounds like a Thanksgiving spiel, but it isn't). Whenever I watch the fireworks, I think about the freedoms we take for granted—because we've always had them. (Thank you, founding fathers.) One of the freedoms that hits us writers hardest is the one of free speech. Can you imagine having to choose your words so that no one comes knocking at your door in the middle of the night? Or writing something with words approved by the government? The only words we write that need approval are by our editors and moms. How wonderful to live in a country that supports freedom of speech.

Thinking about speech (notice the clever segue here), I'm not sure how many SWW members know that offering classes and workshops is a relatively new occurrence for us. It was Rob Spiegel, Larry Greenly and me sitting together, talking about ways to strengthen SWW when we came up with the idea of classes and workshops. That was about five years ago.

And now look at the wide range and variety of classes—screenwriting, publishing, writing—in general and specific, poetry, critic groups, children's fiction, magazine writing, website creation...the list goes on. If you haven't taken a class or attended a workshop, plan to do so. The cost is minimal. SWW is picky about who we have in front of the class and all instruction is taught by published writers who know what they're talking about.

If you have a need and don't see a class listed, let a board member know and we'll see what we can do. That's how the upcoming class on dialogue (July 7-21) came about. Just ask.

Have a Happy and Wonderful...and FREE July.

Melody

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Cheryl K. Ahrndt
Toni Peinado
Shannon Moreau
Teresa Civello
Sharon Skinner
Robert Sullivan
Chaplin Reynolds
Tammy S. Phillipe
Verona J. Winn
Verona L. Winn
Greg Payne

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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SouthWest Writers – The Place To Be

by Rita Herther, Membership Chair

I returned to SouthWest Writers in the summer of 2005 after a 20-year hiatus. I sipped a cup of hot coffee, inhaled its rich aroma and chatted with the others sitting around the white, round table. It was good to be back. Larry Greenly brought the meeting to order and immediately told a dozen jokes. Then announcements were made. A lot was going on in the writing community. How could I have stayed away so long? Then, one by one, members stood up to share their writing successes. Each one attributed his/her success to being a member of SWW. Eighteen members shared their successes.

Everyone clapped, but the clapping was not the polite, obligatory clapping. No. The clappers' faces radiated enthusiasm, their eyes smiled and their entire faces smiled. Everyone I could see appeared to be genuinely happy for the successes of their fellow members. When I left I remained in awe for the rest of the day. The next week I rejoined SWW as a lifetime member.

I took a class taught by Melody Groves. I had one of those aha moments when Melody said, "That's what we are here for."

I took a class taught by Bob Gassaway. I wanted more critiquing of an article that was beyond the scope of the class. I told Bob I would pay him for his extra help. Yes, he would help me at no extra cost. Wow. What wonderful, helpful instructors in SWW. I called the office with an article submission question. Larry Greenly answered it with no hesitation.

I continued to meet more members. Beginners, intermediate, advanced writers. Everyone was welcome in SWW. Everyone belonged. Writers who have published a plethora of articles and authors of many novels – all were pleasant and willing to assist. I have never seen an egotistical attitude. Rather, I have seen, and continue to see and experience, an atmosphere of camaraderie. SouthWest Writers is the place to be for aspiring, for beginning, for intermediate and for advanced writers.

Annual Contest Entries

This year's annual contest received 684 entries from 33 states plus Australia, Canada, Great Britain and Spain:

Mainstream/Literary Novel	68 entries
Mystery/Suspense/Thriller/Adventure	64
Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror	27
Historical	38
Middle Grade/YA	49
Memoir Book	32
Memoir Article	41
Mainstream/Literary Short Story	92
Nonfiction Essay/Article	12
Personal Essay/Column	18
Nonfiction Book	11
Children's Fiction/Nonfiction Picture Book	44
Screenplay	29
Poetry	159

Revising Fiction: Character Viewpoint

by Kirt Hickman

Every scene must be shown from the viewpoint of one of your characters. In general, you should show the events from your hero's point of view. The more you show from her viewpoint, the better your reader will get to know her and the more your reader will care about what happens to her. Choose an alternate viewpoint character when:

- Your hero isn't in the scene.
- Another character is in the hot seat. Show the scene from the viewpoint of the character who has the most to lose if events go badly.
- You must convey some overwhelmingly important piece of information your hero doesn't know.

Viewpoint Violations:

Make sure your scenes don't express something your viewpoint character wouldn't know, like what's happening someplace else or the cause of a phenomenon he doesn't understand. Don't express the thoughts, emotions, or motivations of other characters, except as they are interpreted by your viewpoint character.

When you must convey pure information, include only facts being observed, heard, or considered by your viewpoint character. Doing so makes the information immediate and important. If you provide information your viewpoint character is not experiencing, it creates either a viewpoint violation or a digression. Your reader will recognize both.

Viewpoint, however, is not just about what your character knows or doesn't know. 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.

To do this, you must know your character's likes and dislikes, hobbies and interests, attitude, age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic circumstances, and background. The more you know about your character, the more real she will be to you and to your reader.

Setting

Describe your setting in a way that reveals your viewpoint character's attitude and emotional state. Is the room cramped, or cozy? Is it cluttered, or lived in? Consider this passage:

General Chang reclined in the womb of his stronghold with his feet propped on the conference table.

What does the word *womb* tell you about how Chang feels when he's in the control room of his stronghold? Later I describe this room from the perspective of my hero, who has been brought there as a prisoner. He's not going to think of it as a womb. Your word choice must reveal the

attitude and emotional state of your viewpoint character.

Let character viewpoint define how many and which details to include in your descriptions. A character who's interested in architecture would drive down a street and notice the buildings. A character who's more interested in cars would notice those. A cop looking for a suspect or informant would focus on the people.

When Chase, an accident investigator in my science fiction novel *Worlds Asunder*, approaches a crash site, he has time to take in the details that are important to his case:

Chase's first view of the *Phoenix* was a mere glint of sunlight on the horizon. As he drew closer, the fuselage came into view, jutting skyward from the flat terrain like a solitary tombstone in a field of glittering metal. The effect gave a surreal beauty to the desolate scene.

The pod came to a stop at the boundary of the debris field. The ship was close now. The fuselage, largely intact, rested at an odd angle at the end of a long scar in the landscape. A debris field stretched out to the northwest. Dents and cracks that marred the hull suggested that the ship had tumbled into its final resting place. The aft section, the cargo hold, was mangled.

Chase not only notices the details but also assesses what they tell him about the crash. Contrast this with the following passage, which takes place during a gunfight inside the enemy stronghold:

Two terrorists moved before them as they wound their way through the labyrinthine passages. The defenders stopped at each intersection to fire a few odd rounds, which slowed Chase and his party, but the men never stayed in one place for long. Twice the terrorists fired through a window to bring down isolation doors and seal off part of the complex.

Here you get only a vague sense of passages, windows, and pressure doors. I left out the details because Chase has neither the time nor the inclination to notice them.

Vocabulary

Character viewpoint should also determine the language you use. People from different age groups, regions, countries, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, levels of education, time periods, and even genders speak differently. Write your narrative in your viewpoint character's natural voice.

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.

A Precious Process

by Charlotte A. Shroyer, Ph.D.

I write and I paint. Writers and painters tell stories, stories in different genre that interpret and give form to the universals of humanity. " ...what we tell is not nearly as important as the telling itself." ¹ (Miller) The beauty of it all is that we do tell—we do create.

We filter and extract the core of what we create from the murky mines of the unconscious where every word, every sight, every smell, every experience from birth to the present is stored, the place where dreams are made. Just one tiny snippet of life can expand to become the heart of a creative work. Henry James (1936) called it "the precious particle."² Janine Antoni (2009), a contemporary visual artist, describes the same place as a spot where intuition rules, where one has to get out of the way, let go of control, and trust to intuition so that something happens on "the periphery of thought."³

The periphery may be a single word "so saturated with sense [so] that many words would be required to explain it in external speech."⁴ (Vygotsky). Or maybe it's a visual image that will not let memory rest. The British writer Joyce Cary on a boat trip noticed a young girl with a wrinkled forehead. Not an earth-shaking event in itself, but an image that lingered until weeks later when Cary woke from sleep with a new story line about a girl with a wrinkled forehead. The wrinkles might just as well have become images on a canvas.⁵

For me, whether writing or painting, it is the "naked itch" that picks, gnaws, and begins to nibble away on its own time table until it is heard and brought alive. Triggered, but still not blossomed into final form, indefinable, but still there. Existent and nonexistent, floating and sinking at the same time—at first a verbal jumble or a visual jumble or just an amorphous mass with no form or definition. My unconscious finds places I have never been, people I have never known, and times in which I have never lived. The magnitude and number of these images amaze me—they never seem to end, with always another on the horizon. Color, line, form, verbal and nonverbal images take off in all directions, but there is always the same passion of soul: unending, reaching deep, and finding its own expression.

Finding inspiration is only the beginning—daring to continue the conversation of work on either canvas or paper is the most difficult part of this creative process, defying logical explanation or quantification in spite of the desire by artificial intelligence researchers to chart and reproduce the creative path. At this juncture it is almost as if an invisible partner choosing to be married for the duration of the process has just wandered into the "whirling vortex and creative

chaos"⁶ (Wolfe, 1936). There is no going directly from point A to point B. The tortuous twists, ascents, descents, switchbacks, detours that any artist encounters are the only constants. The amorphous blob still looks for its identity on the canvas or on the page and will not let its creator be still until the last period of the pen or the last swish of the brush.

If only we could allow this energy more of its own path as in Timothy Wilson's new model for the conscious/unconscious matrix in which the unconscious has the upper hand while the conscious is relegated to a position of managing forms or just operating as a word processor.⁷

Consciousness no longer rules the creative process—it is only the pompom atop of unconscious workhorse. But as writers and artists, haven't we always known that? The work of creating can be "as hard as quarrying rocks"⁸ (Hemingway), but it must be sustained and nurtured through all the gullies, highs, and detours of the process. It is this passion for the work that drives us to the finish line and keeps us telling stories.



Self-portrait
Charlotte Shroyer

1. Miller, H. *Reflections on Writing. From Wisdom of the Heart, New Directions*, 1941.
2. Cited in John-Steiner, V. *Notebooks of the Mind: Explorations of Thinking*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985, 178.
3. Janine Antoni in *Conversation with Douglas Dreishpoon. Art in America*, October 2009, 123.
4. Cited in John-Steiner, V. *Notebooks of the Mind: Explorations of Thinking*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985, 113.
5. *Ibid*, 127.
6. Wolfe, T. *The Story of a Novel*. New York: Scribner, 1936.
7. Wilson, T.D. *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious*. (2002). Cited in Hickey, D. Revision Number Eight. *Unconscious. Art in America*, May 2009, 39.
8. Cited in John-Steiner, V. *Notebooks of the Mind: Explorations of Thinking*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985 136.

Charlotte Shroyer, formerly a college professor with specialization in language disorders at the University of Maryland, has been an art columnist for the Sierra Sage, Carson City, NV; writer and editor of Taos Today. Currently she shows her paintings at Open Space Gallery on the historic Taos Plaza and writes free lance. www.charlotteshroyer.com

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

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

Irene Blea, Ph.D.

When Genealogy is Not Enough

Dr. Irene Blea took an interdisciplinary approach to writing her first novel, *Suzanna*. She will discuss what she did when genealogy was not enough while exploring family history. She visited northern New Mexico villages on the Santa Fe Trail, conducted research in libraries, historical societies, the Fort Union archives and talked with people in villages where the Trail entered New Mexico territory.

Dr. Irene Blea, a native New Mexican, graduated with a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Colorado-Boulder. For twenty-seven years she wrote textbooks for university classroom use on race and gender relations. She retired from California State University-Los Angeles, as a tenured full professor and chairperson of the Mexican American Studies Department, the first and largest department of its kind in the nation. Blea has written seven textbooks and over thirty articles on U.S. Hispanics. Visit her at www.Facebook.com.



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

Partnering with Bookstores -- a Professional Panel

You can learn tons about what's selling in your market by searching the bookstores and talking with the stores' book buyers. You can also benefit from a close relationship with stores when your book arrives. In this program three bookstore professionals will discuss effective ways writers can work with bookstores. The panel will include Harold Burnett, John Hoffsis and Laura Kuechenmeister.

Harold M. Burnett -- SouthWest Writers Treasurer -- has decades worth of experience as a bookstore owner in Los Alamos.

Laura Kuechenmeister is the event promotions director and marketing professional at Bookworks.

John Hoffsis has owned and operated Treasure House Books & Gifts in Old Town Albuquerque since February of 1999.

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 7.

WRITING GREAT DIALOGUE**Melody Groves****Wednesdays, July 7, 14 & 21, 6:30-8:30 pm**\$49 members/ \$59 non-members. Class limited to 14.
SWW office, 3721 Morris NE

Ever wonder how writers get their characters to sound like they're really talking? How to get each character to sound different? This class is for fiction and non-fiction writers who desire to bring their characters to life. Writing good dialogue is listening to the voices in your head.

Melody Groves is the author of two non-fiction books (*Ropes, Reins and Rawhide: All About Rodeo*, and *Praising the Bar: Historic Bars of the Southwest 2011*), four Western novels (*Border Ambush, Sonoran Rage, Arizona War, and Kansas Bleeds (2011)*), two screenplays, and numerous magazine articles. She is the president of SouthWest Writers, publicity chair for Western Writers of America, and a member of the New Mexico Gunfighters Association. Her website: www.melodygroves.com.

HOW TO FORM AND MAINTAIN CRITIQUE GROUPS**Melody Groves****Saturday, July 17, 1:00 pm-4:00 pm.**\$25 members/ \$35 non-members (snacks are included)
Workshop limited to 14
SWW office, 3721 Morris St.

Does your novel contain enough sub-plots? Is your non-fiction article or book clear? Is your poem saying what you think it should? And does your screenplay contain enough reversals? If you're not sure, you need a critique group.

Critique groups, usually 4-6 people, serve as junior editors, pointing out strengths and areas needing improvement in writing. You read theirs and comment; they read yours and comment. It's truly a symbiotic relationship. And the input is invaluable. However, forming or finding one, maintaining one is harder than it seems.

Through this workshop, we'll practice a quick critique, discuss the mechanics of critique groups, and hopefully, form a few on the spot. Kind of like a marriage made in Heaven.

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

BEFORE YOU PUBLISH**Kirt Hickman****August 16, Monday Evening - 1 session,
6:30-8:30 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.

**August 17 Meeting, continued**

Christopher Boone is an award-winning screenwriter and filmmaker, or so he claims. Boone's 2008 Duke City Shoot-out 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.

Successes and Announcements

Frank Carden (Las Cruces) announces that his novel, *The Prostitutes of Post Office Street*, was the winner of the 2010 Eric Hoffer Award in general fiction. U.S. Review says, "Love is a central theme, though furtive, such as the love between a black madam and white boyfriend. Carden shows without saying and the effect is stunning." The novel is available as a paperback from Amazon or ebook for the Kindle, iPad, iPhone, Mac, and PC.

Barbara DuBois has a memoir published online, "Grandma," Honorable Mention, by *Wordworth World Magazine of Ideas and the Arts*, May issue.

Shirley Raye Redmond's regency novel *Rosemary's Glove* was recently selected as a finalist for the Golden Quill Awards, sponsored by the Phoenix Desert Rose chapter of Romance Writers of America.

Lois Duncan's new book, *Movie for Dogs*, (the third book in the *Hotel for Dogs* trilogy), has been published by Scholastic.

The College of Santa Fe will host a writers workshop July 8-11 in Santa Fe on the CSF campus. Seven writers including Mark Behr, Percival Everett, Bill deBuys, Greg Glazer, Pam Houston, Michael McGarrity and Malena Morling will lead workshops in fiction, non-fiction and poetry. For more information visit http://csf.edu/summer_workshops/writers.

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.

SWW Officer Candidates for 2011

The nominating committee has named three candidates for officers of SouthWest Writers for 2011. They are Melody Groves, President, Rob Spiegel, Vice President, and Larry Greenly, Secretary. 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.

An SWW member for eleven years, **Melody Groves** is the current SWW President. A native New Mexican, born and raised in Las Cruces, she uses the West as the focus of her two non-fiction books and four novels. She also writes for *New Mexico Magazine*, *True West* and *albuquerqueARTS*, and critiques and reviews manuscripts and books for UNM Press and individuals. Her awards include the SWW 2008 Parris Award, the 2008 New Mexico Book award for Historical Fiction Novel (*Arizona War*), and numerous other awards. She is active in Western Writers of America.

Rob Spiegel has been a member of the Southwest Writers board of directors since 2002, holding positions as president and vice president. Beginning his involvement with SWW in the mid-1980s, he has been a contest judge and frequent speaker at SWW meetings.

Rob is a full-time journalist who writes for trade publications. He also teaches journalism part-time at UNM and CNM. The author of five books published by major publishers such as St. Martin's and Dearborn, he is also widely published in fiction and poetry. Rob is the former publisher of *Chile Pepper*, a national consumer publication, which he launched in 1987.

Larry W. Greenly, current SWW secretary and SWW office

manager, has been a member since 1992, and has held every position on the board except treasurer. Greenly is a recipient of the Parris Award and several SWW Service Awards. He has published hundreds of magazine articles and has won state and national awards as an editor. He teaches writing classes with Rob Spiegel at SWW and Bear Canyon Senior Center. Greenly, a three-time SWW president, has been instrumental in improving the financial status of SWW.

New Treasurer and Book Table Coordinator

Harold M. Burnett has served as SWW Treasurer for 18 months and has decided to simplify his life so he resigned his office effective July 1. Thank you, Harold, for keeping our finances organized. Kathryn Peralta agreed to step in and fill his term for 2010. Thank you, Kathryn.

Fred Aiken will fill Harold's spot as book table coordinator. Thank you, Fred.

SWW 2010 Third Quarter Writing Competition Poetry

Enter a poem of any form, any topic, but no longer than 2 pages, double-spaced, in length. 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.

Pitching a Life Saver

by Jonathan Miller

I went to a Hollywood pitch meeting as a writer and emerged as a criminal defense attorney.

In my pre-Hollywood life, I had counseled over a thousand clients as a lawyer, on charges ranging from first degree murder to trespassing at school. I used the same deep, slow voice for nearly all of them. My clients often suffered from some kind of attention deficit disorder, so I rarely used big words, repeated the key points over and over again, and emphasized the positive as I explained the difference between a deferred and a suspended sentence in the plea agreement.

My "Hollywood pitch voice" was sort of my lawyer voice on crystal meth. Hollywood producers also have attention deficit disorder, so I rarely used big words, repeated key points over and over again and never talked for more than five minutes straight. I just talked much faster and never mentioned anything remotely negative. Again, the ultimate goal was often getting to an agreement, but this time I wanted it to be a "pay or play."

This meeting was at a producer's home on the west side. As I pulled into this meeting, I was happy enough to find parking on the street near the three story modern-looking apartment complex. Inside, the home was a collection of artsy artifacts and the Producer reminded me a bit of my own mother. She had a nice quality about her in the way that she offered me tea and cookies that would remind anybody of their mother, or perhaps the mother they never had. I swore I could smell last night's apple pie in the air.

The home was immaculate, yet all the other doors were closed. If it had been my home, all the dirty laundry would have lurked behind one of those doors, but I figured that all the rooms were probably just as clean as the living room. She seemed that kind of a mom...

The pleasantries over, we started off on a good note. The producer informed me that her assistant had read my legal thriller script and she wanted to hear about all of my other potential projects.

I talked about my various experiences as a lawyer and how I wrote about "law and life."

"So you really were a lawyer, then?" She asked. "So do you have any true stories?"

"Uh yeah..." It was time to switch from a curve to a change-up. "As a matter of fact, I based most scripts on my real experiences. For instance when I used to represent juvenile delinquents on murder charges..."

She stopped me in mid sentence. "Then you should talk to my son." She paused for a moment. "Not about scripts, but

about law."

Before I could regain my balance, she hurried over to one of the closed doors and produced her son. Perhaps she did have dirty laundry after all. On first glance, he was hardly my vision of a juvenile delinquent, but was indeed on probation for various minor charges. Yet the charges were getting progressively worse, and his six months probation kept getting extended until it now stretched for two years. Some of his friends had been busted on weapons charges, so his mother was justifiably alarmed.

He sat down and was surprisingly polite. He reminded me of the nice kid that I represented on the trespassing at school charge, who had graduated to murder...

I told the boy my standard stories about staying out of trouble, yet I somehow managed to make them seem both "commercial and edgy." It was weird, but I seemed to be talking to the son, yet pitching to the mother...

After about 20 minutes of cautionary tales about the juvenile justice system, she stopped the meeting to take her son to therapy, and told me to meet her to continue the meeting. We played the second half of our double-header in a coffee shop as we waited for her son to "talk through his issues" and get his court-ordered urine test. The mother was tense, but she still seemed eager to hear my ideas -- both legal and literary. One moment we were talking about "setting something up at Showtime," and then the next we were talking about "alternative sentencing" for her son.

After an hour or two, the boy came back from therapy and apparently had filled the specimen jar with no ill effects. As his mother got up to buy him a caramel frappuccino for his troubles, I talked with him some more. Now I was totally in lawyer mode, yet he seemed to want to hear the funny story I had about the criminal who...

I thought about Samuel Goldwyn's famous quote about "if you want to send a message, use Western Union." The fact that the boy was opening up to someone at all was a good first step. So I told him about the time I met a female killer with my zipper down. He laughed...

His mother returned...It was getting late, so we called the meeting on account of darkness and they went on their way and I went on mine. I felt confident that the boy would be all right, after perhaps a few more detours outside his mother's friendly confines.

I may not have sold a script, but perhaps I had saved a life.

Jonathan Miller is an attorney, author and gossip columnist in Albuquerque. His new novel Conflict Contract was just released. Attend the August 7 meeting to hear him speak.

Ruffling the Waters

by Bonnie Hayes

We could not hide our glee and giggles. My little friend, Linda, and I were wearing our fancy new ruffled panties, and nothing else. We were being naughty and - being almost four years old - we knew it. That was the fun.

My grandmother, Nanny, had set the revolving sprinkler up in her tiny front yard under her special lacy-leaf red maple tree. She was letting us play in its cool circle of spray on a hot, sticky, Sunday morning in New Jersey in 1952.

The naughty part, we thought, was that - while we were *supposed* to stay in the yard - instead, we were dashing out the front gate onto the sidewalk on the other side of Nanny's little white picket fence. There, where the sprinkler water was pooling in the low spots on the sidewalk, we were swishing our ruffled, pastel pink and blue bottoms in the puddles.

Then we scampered and pranced back into the yard to hide from the tattletale neighbor kids and grown-ups by crouching, giggling, under the hydrangeas next to the house.

In truth, we were always under a watchful eye. The proof is in the 8mm home movies my mother took through the living room window. They are a little blurry, probably because she was laughing too hard to hold the camera steady.

Busy filming out the window, my mother did not see the morality committee of one coming down the street, marching home from church.

Dressed in her uniform, the self-appointed town Enforcer wore a high-collared print dress with a brooch pinned at her scrawny throat, a fussy hat and gloves, and shiny, black shoes laced high and tight.

She spotted us on the sidewalk from way up the block, rushed up on us, and chased us back into the yard. Our terror did not deter her. She scared us right out of the hydrangeas with her shrieking.

We thought she was scolding us for getting our new panties muddy in the puddle, but that was not it.

The church lady was carrying on about "naked girls" and "shameful behavior" and "sin" and calling our mothers some names we didn't understand. She demanded that we should cover our chests with our hands and get inside immediately.

Her shrill voice attracted many of the neighbors from their weekend gardening to the adjoining fences to hear her tirade.

All the commotion caused my grandmother, Nanny, to come bounding down the front steps. She stood her large self between the mean-faced woman and us.

"What are you saying to these children?" my grandmother demanded.

"Sinful" and "shameless" the church lady called us and several other words that Linda and I didn't understand.

"Sinful! Sinful! They are babies! What is the matter with you? You think they will go to Hell for playing in a sprinkler?"

"This is the Sabbath and they are naked! What if my husband were to walk by here and see them like that?"

"What! Your husband lusts after little girls.. after BABIES? How disgusting! You should lock him up if he is so sick in the head. What kind of man is that? "

"No, No, I didn't mean ...he isn't ...he doesn't...."

"I am telling you now, woman, if that nasty husband of yours ever comes near this street or tries to speak to these innocent children, I will have the constable on *your* doorstep. *AND*, I will tell that officer *exactly* what you said about your disgusting man. Now you get away from my house and you take your filthy mind with you. If you *ever* come bother my family again - you will have to answer to *ME*, you stupid, silly woman."

With all the neighbors watching and nodding and grinning - the town's self-righteous, meddling minister's wife choked out a pitiful "harrumph" noise, did a wobbly turn on one shiny black heel, and scurried away in a big, big hurry.

It was a fact that she avoided patrolling Center Street for years afterwards, making my Nanny the heroine of the neighborhood.

Bonnie Hayes won first place with this essay in the August 2008 monthly contest "Memoirs." She lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico with her husband, Jim. Currently she is writing "The Mother-in-law Chronicles," stories which document the war waged by Jim's mother against invading ants, untidy pigeons, incompetent clerks and indifferent doctors.



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: _____

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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 = \$ _____

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

___ Check or money order made out to SouthWest Writers

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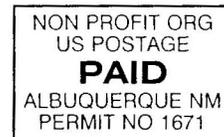
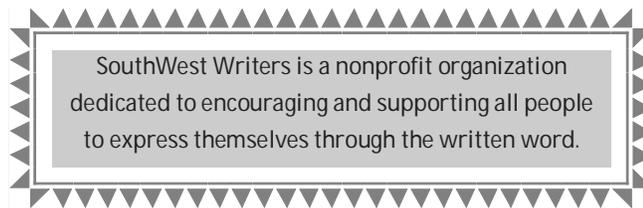
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The Pitch Session
by Stan Rhine

Given an opportunity to pitch a novel at a writing seminar not long ago, I reviewed the brief pitch bios and selected one of the literary agents. As the time approached, I reviewed, tweaked and printed the first three chapters and a summary, and jotted down some notes on what I wanted to say. Pleased with my efforts, I sat back and smiled. I could imagine the agent leaning forward on her chair as I laid out the premise of the novel, and eagerly reaching for the envelope in my hands.

"Wonderful!" she would say. "Is your e-mail address in here?"

"Yes."

"I'll be back to you shortly!"

Then, a week or so later, I would get an urgent e-mail from her, panting for the rest of the clever, masterfully written manuscript...

On the appointed day, as H-hour and M-minute loomed ever nearer, that confidence began to erode and when my time came, I approached the just-vacated and still warm chair in front of Madame Agent with trepidation. Nonetheless, I launched into my pitch, giving her the title, the genre, the premise, and a 60-second summary.

She interrupted my presentation. "Has your manuscript been professionally read?"

"Um—no."

"I see," she said, leaning forward slightly on her chair. She could not touch it (not even with gloves) without assurance that it had been professionally vetted and carefully revised. Then she launched into a lengthy monologue, pointing out the novel's manifold weaknesses. It was too long and would have to be reduced by half, she said. Moreover, it was obvious to her that since I had not previously published a work of fiction, I could not write my way out of an unlocked room. I would have to practice, practice, practice the craft hoping to master at least some of the subtleties of the English language. It was clear to her that this manuscript was weak, inadequate, poorly conceived and poorly executed, and that the paper I had wasted on it thus far should best be employed to line the bottoms of birdcages.

I was astounded at her expertise. Without reading a single word, she had somehow managed to divine with deadly accuracy every fault line that lay hidden beneath the placid surface of my poor, battered novel. It was only later that I began to more fully appreciate what a wonderful talent this was, a clairvoyance beyond the abilities of mere word-weavers.

The agent glanced at her watch. The ten minutes had expired. My pitch session was at an end. I thanked her for her insights, and resolved to take up an activity less fraught with angst, say, knitting. Or stamp collecting.

Retired after decades of looking at bones, Stan Rhine took up writing for pleasure and profit. Score so far: pleasure 100%, profit 0%.