



The SouthWest Sage

Vol. 20, No. 5

The Voice of SouthWest Writers

May 2005

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

Two Screenwriting Book Reviews *by Cliff Gravel*

Screenwriting from the Heart

by James Ryan

Soft cover, 186 pages, \$16.95

ISBN: 0-8230-8419-1

Billboard Books

Copyright 2000

Subtitled: The Technique of the Character-Driven Screenplay

The cover describes this book as, “An indispensable guide to developing dramatic and passionate screenplays based on compelling characters.” So it is. So many of the numerous books on screenplay writing stress the same familiar strategy of using a formula as a guide. This book takes a different approach. That of relying on unconscious imagination to create complex and interesting characters.

Ryan uses examples from dozens of screenplays to illustrate his technique of using the characters to generate the story.

The second half of the book offers a step-by-step method of crafting the script. Also addressing: preparing an outline, free-writing, developing the pitch, and other practical matters.

The book contains many exercises. Thankfully, Ryan avoids being abstract or academic. Instead, he gives insights to the “rules” of Hollywood with the aim of selecting the ones to break.

Peter Franklin, VP of the William Morris agency, describes the book as, “Superbly written and very entertaining. A necessity for the aspiring screenwriter...”. Having read several dozen books on screenwriting, I agree. This is one of the best.

James Ryan is an Adjunct Professor of Playwriting in the Actor’s Studio Master of Fine Arts program at the New School University in New York.

The Writer’s Guide to Selling Your Screenplay

by Cynthia Whitcomb

Soft cover, 195 pages, \$16.95

ISBN: 0-87116-192-3

The Writer Books

Copyright 2002

Subtitled: A Top-Selling Hollywood Writer Tells You How To Break Into the Business-And Stay There

Cynthia should know. She has sold more than 70 feature-length screenplays, 25 of which have been filmed. Making her millions of dollars for her work. Her award nominations include: The Emmy, Cable Ace, Edgar Allan Poe, Humanities, and Writer’s Guild of America. That alone should make this book an essential resource for all aspiring screenwriters.

Linda Seger, internationally renowned script consultant, describes this text as, “Essential to any writer who dreams of writing for the movies.”

An overview of the book’s contents identifies Whitcomb’s proven techniques, including:

- How to get the right people in Hollywood to read your script.
- What top agents and producers look for in a script and in a screenwriter
- How to market a calling-card “spec” script.
- What kind of deals you can expect to make.
- How to handle yourself at a high-stakes pitch meeting.

The book also includes extensive appendices of very practical resources and contact information.

All sections of the book are expressed in a straight-forward “easy-read” manner. A critical addition to the library of every screenwriter.

Cliff Gravel is a screenwriter and story analyst.

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



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*Editor:
Cliff Gravel*

*Assistant Editor:
Larry Greenly*

*Editorial Staff:
Nicole Schairer*

*SWW Office:
3721 Morris St. NE
Suite A
Albuquerque, NM
87111-3611
phone: (505) 265-9485
fax: (505) 265-9483*

*E-mail: SWriters@aol.com
Website:
www.southwestwriters.org*

**Office hours:
Monday-Friday
9 a.m.-Noon**

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

Screenwriters Read This All-Day Screenwriting Seminar Dr. Linda Seger

Dr. Seger is an internationally known speaker in the area of screenwriting and has lectured in over 24 countries around the world. As the author of eight books, Dr. Seger has appeared in more than 60 radio and television shows. She has consulted on more than 2,000 scripts, including 40 produced films and some 35 produced television projects with ABC, CBS, NBC, Disney, and Turner Network. Her clients have included TriStar Pictures, Ray Bradbury, William Kelly, Linda Lavin, Suzanne dePasse, and Tony Bill, as well as production companies and writers from six countries.

“I found Dr. Seger’s *Making a Good Script Great* so helpful, specifically the section on Central Question and on creating scene sequences, I’ve used those concepts on my films, starting with *Apollo 13*.”

Ron Howard, Academy Award winning director

The seminar will include a discussion with screenwriters, Cliff Gravel, and Melody Groves about team writing.

Saturday, May 21, 2005 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM
~Registration opens at 7:30 AM~
Howard Johnson Hotel, on Hotel Circle off Lomas
North of I-40 at the Eubank exit
Albuquerque, New Mexico
\$99.00 for SWW Members \$159.00 for Nonmembers
Box Lunch Included

The special room rate at Howard Johnson’s is \$44.00 per night for SWW Seminar attendees (as available). Attendees who wish to come early or stay beyond the one-day conference will get the same rate. Phone (505) 293-9072.

Be sure to mention the SWW Seminar.

For Further Details and a Registration Form:

www.southwestwriters.org. Or pick up a copy at the SWW office or a SWW meeting.

Or call the SWW Office at (505) 265-9485 to register by phone.

Everyone Spread the Word to:

Writers, Publishers, Sales, Reps, etc.

SouthWest Writers has office space for rent.

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

local number fax machine, kitchenette.

Call 265-9485, M-F, 9 am - noon.

Markets

by Mary Lynn

A conversation with award-winning Dr. Linda Seger, script consultant, author, speaker, seminar leader. Meet Dr. Seger at the SWW Scriptwriting Workshop on May 21st.

Q: What makes working with Hollywood and TV movies exciting?

A: I love working with creative people and with fascinating stories. The film business can be exciting — i.e., many of the producers and directors and actors and executives are highly creative people, and working collaboratively with the best in the business can be very fulfilling work. Of course, to get this kind of work, the writer needs to be very skilled in screenplay writing and in marketing. So, the first step is to find out what makes a great script and how to write one.

Q: Please tell us what we can expect to learn in your workshop presentation.

A: That's what I'll be discussing in the seminar, using film clips to illustrate the points, and discussing the most important areas of structure, storytelling, themes, and characters.

Q: What kind of stories make good movies?

A: Any kind of story can make a good movie, if told well, and if it has something to say to us. The best stories are the ones that live inside the writer and are aching to get out. The best stories are in the genre the writer loves...whether comedy, sci-fi, action-adventure, or thriller.

Q: What kind of characters make good stories?

A: The best characters are active. They have to push at the story, change the direction of the story, and are people that make things happen. Other than that, great characters need to be dimensional and multi-layered. We'll discuss some of that in the workshop.

Q: Is the hero-in-myth still the gold standard for story structure?

A: The hero myth was never really the gold standard, just one of many myths that can be the underlying story idea. But the hero myth is a good one, and writers gain extra knowledge by reading Chris Vogler's book on *THE WRITER'S JOURNEY* and learning about the hero myth. But also read Pamela Smith's new book (due out about the time of the conference) on *INNER DRIVES* which are also about myths beyond the hero myth.

Q: For beginners, what are the most important things we need to know about the scriptwriting business?

A: The same thing they need to know is what advanced screenwriters need to know — how to tell a story for the screen. And, of course, they have to know what a script looks like — formatting, etc. We won't be covering that in the seminar, but it would be a good idea for any new screenwriter to get David Trotter's book, *THE SCREENWRITER'S BIBLE*, as well as my first book, *MAKING A GOOD SCRIPT GREAT*.

Q: And we can't leave without asking... what kind of money's involved? And can you make a living selling words and services to this market?

A: At the beginning, not much. It's not unusual for a writer to sell or have his/her first script optioned for \$1000, \$5000, or \$10,000 before doing well with a six-figure deal. And that can take years. Can you live on it? Not at first. Eventually, some do. But many of the writers who make a living are writing many forms — Training and Development Films, features, maybe television episodes — to get started. At the beginning, don't turn anything down.

Thank you, Linda. We're looking forward to meeting you on the 21st.

Learn to do your own market research! Mary Lynn would like writers to contribute to the Markets column, and she'll help you get started!

Mary is willing to share the column with guest market columnists on a regular basis, or she will accept market items you have gleaned in your research.

This is a wonderful opportunity to learn how to do your own market research, share that knowledge with others, and be published in The SouthWest Sage.

*Send your items to:
Mary Lynn
c/o SouthWest Sage
or e-mail her at:
mary@writerscenter.com*

The highly recommended new edition of Mary Lynn's *Every Page Perfect* is available through SWW for \$19.95, plus postage.

The Amazon link button is now on the home page of the SWW website. Remember, using that link to buy books generates a commission to SWW.

A Conversation with Pat LoBrutto

by Raquel Troyce, Guest Columnist

Patrick LoBrutto, Editorial Consultant and Master Class Instructor for authors, is also an Acquiring Editor for Tor/Forge and Quill Driver Books/Word Dancer Press and as a scout for the Trident Media Group.

Pat has been an editor, author and anthologist for over 30 years. He has worked in all areas of Fiction and Non-Fiction specializing in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror, Thrillers, Historical Fiction, Westerns, Military History and Mysteries.

“Making the choice to become a writer is a courageous and serious decision. Writing, by its very nature, has to do with our individual stories and what it means to be human. There can be no meaningful instruction unless the writer’s craft is honored, unless writer and editor respect discipline, dialogue and growth. My job as an editorial consultant and Master Class instructor is to help you write the best book possible. In today’s increasingly tough publishing market, first impressions are vitally important and can make or break a writing career.” -- *Patrick LoBrutto*

Q: What would you recommend to a writer to look for when hiring a book doctor?

A: To start, an author wants to know that they are working with a reputable professional. Make sure the editor provides freely and fully both recommendations from former clients and a letter of agreement that clearly spells out what the writer can expect for the fee. The writer should do a Google search on the editor’s name as well as checking the Editors and Predators website. The author will want to have at least one conversation with the editor to determine that they agree on working conditions and other subjects important to the writer. The author is entitled to work with a reputable professional who will help the writer with the novel in question. It’s all about helping the writer create the best work possible.

Q: What could be the signs that a book doctor is not the right one to choose?

A: If the editor will not provide recommendations from former clients, or won’t provide a letter of agreement, or wants the whole fee up front, the author can usually be sure

that the editor is not a reputable professional. Beware ANY editor who promises to get a client an agent or publishing deal. Experienced, reputable editors will want to discuss the book in question with the author. If the editor feels that he or she lacks interest or experience in that particular genre, or has no interest in the subject matter, he or she will usually refer the writer to another professional.

Q: At what stage of the book would you recommend to start working with a book doctor?

A: That will depend on the writer and the work. Some will benefit from working with an editor as early as the conception stage but that is the exception. Generally, it is best to engage an editor when the book is finished or when there is enough written so the editor can make judgments about which directions to take.

Q: Have you experienced significant changes in the way publishing houses do business today? If so, what are they and where do you see these changes leading?

A: Absolutely. It has become much more difficult for authors to find publishers, or even agents. Publishing houses have increasingly structured their business towards making a lot of money from a few titles—as opposed to making a little money from a lot of titles, or a mixture of the two philosophies. Obviously, this makes life difficult for new writers, mid-list writers and most genre writers.

Q: What would be the main reasons why you would refuse working with a writer?

A: I can’t think of many reasons why I would refuse to work with someone—if the author’s expectations were impossible or the writer wanted me only to “rubber stamp” their work...if I felt that I couldn’t help...if the author was obviously deranged. In almost all other cases, I take the “doctor” part of “book doctor” very seriously and feel I can and should help anyone with their writing. I’m a professional, that’s what I do. I’m blessed in this enterprise because I’m fascinated by the art and craft of writing, find almost all writers interesting (especially on the subject of their book) and am addicted to stories.

Need a new book?
Save Money and Support SWW!
Go to www.southwestwriters.org
and click on the ‘amazon.com’ box.
You save money & SWW receives a commission

SWW Contest Connection

by Joan Marsh, 2005 Contest Co-Chair

What's New

The lineup of Judges for the SWW annual writing contest is exceptional. Contest entries are pouring in. The competition is stiff this year and will make the contest awards banquet especially exciting. The authors of the top three selections in each category will be notified by mail prior to September 3rd, but the ranking will be unveiled at the banquet. John Candelaria will MC the event.

Please join us; everyone is invited to attend this celebration. Following the Saturday membership meeting we will dine at Bread and Wine, 2740 Wyoming Blvd. NE. Reserve a seat at the table by notifying me at joanmarsh@southwestwriters.com. The cost is \$19.95 for any one of six entrees, desert, coffee/tea/soft drinks, tax, & tip.

Category

Judge

Credentials

Novels

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Mainstream and Literary | Michael Homler | Assistant Editor at <i>St. Martin's Press</i> |
| 2. Mystery/Suspense/Thriller/ Adventure | Kristen Weber | Editor-in-Chief at <i>The Mysterious Press</i> |
| 3. Romance | Erin Cartwright-Niumata | Editorial Director at <i>Avalon Books</i> |
| 4. Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror | Liz Scheier | Editor at <i>ROC Books</i> |
| 5. Historical/Am. Frontier/Western | Tom Colgan | Senior Editor at <i>The Berkley Publishing Group</i> |
| 6. Middle Grade/Young Adult | Sarah Sevier | Associate Editor at <i>Margaret K. McElderry Books</i> |

Short Stories

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|
| 7. Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror | Elizabeth Monteleone | Editor/Publisher of <i>Borderlands Press</i> |
| 8. Mainstream/Literary | Brock Clarke | Fiction Editor at <i>The Cincinnati Review</i> |
| 9. Mystery/Romance | Andrew Gulli | Editor at <i>The Strand Magazine</i> |
| 10. Other Genres: Historical, Western, etc. | Christopher M. Cevasco | Editor/Publisher of <i>Paradox: The Magazine of Historical and Speculative Fiction</i> |
| 11. Middle Grade/Young Adult | Daniel Lee | Editor at <i>Jack and Jill Magazine</i> |

Short Nonfiction

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|
| 12. Article or Essay | C. Michael Curtis | Senior Editor at <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> |
| 13. Children's Article | Kim T. Griswell | Coordinating Editor at <i>Highlights for Children</i> |

Other

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 14. Nonfiction Book | Amy Cherry | Senior Editor at <i>W. W. Norton Co., Inc.</i> |
| 15. Children's Nonfiction Book | Caitlyn Dlouhy | Executive Editor at <i>Atheneum Books for Young Readers</i> |
| 16. Children's Picture Book
(Fiction and Nonfiction) | Jennifer Rees | Associate Editor at <i>Scholastic Press</i> |
| 17. Screenplay | Brian K. Schlichter | VP of Development & Production at <i>Lancaster Gate Entertainment</i> |
| 18. Poetry | Fred Sasaki | Assistant Editor at <i>Poetry (The Poetry Foundation)</i> |

New Writers Need GUTS

by Julie Matherly

The journey of a million copies sold begins with one published book. Becoming a writer is taking the first monumental step, but staying on a clear path to publication can be difficult without planning. Are you feeling overwhelmed, wondering how to best manage your time in this age of information overload? Are you trying to do too much, and getting nowhere?

During this early stage it's important to focus your energies wisely. With so many publishing directions tempting you, it's easy to lose your way and become discouraged. Try concentrating on four areas to help you simplify, persevere, and maintain balance. In the beginning, all you need are GUTS (Goals, Unity, Training, and a System).

Goals: *Keep them simple.* Achieve some writing credits, and block out time to write, and do it. Make ongoing article/story submissions while you work on your novel or nonfiction book. Don't worry if you're not published in national publications at first. Remember that having something published will be better than nothing when you query an agent or publisher about your book. Submit to smaller publications and enter writing conference contests. Read marketing guides like *WritersMarket.com* or writers magazines to locate market listings and conference information. To earn that first credit, be like Winston Churchill and never give up.

Unity: *Don't be a hermit.* It's lonely at the bottom, and you'll need reinforcement when you want to give up. Inspire and feed your creative soul. Network with other writers and join some writing organizations like SouthWest Writers or the National Writers Union. Subscribe to a writing e-zine like *WritersWeekly.com* and read magazines like *Writer's Digest* or *The Writer*. Staying in touch with a few key organizations will provide valuable resources, keep your energies juiced, and remind you that writing is a real career.

Training: *Become as professional as possible before you meet that first agent or editor.* Join a local writing workshop to network and get feedback. Or, study online

with a well-respected school like Writers Online Workshops sponsored by *Writer's Digest* (writersonlineworkshops.com) where you can improve your skills and learn how to write book proposals. I found the Writers Online courses to be a blessing while I studied there via my home computer, and met some wonderful instructors and students.

System: *Have one, and back it up.* Without organization, you'll lose track of your submissions and important files, and miss deadlines. Create a submissions tracking table and keep it within eyesight. Enter every article/story you submit on it. You can type it in an MS Word table document or a database so that you can sort your list alphabetically by titles to track their history (date submitted, where sent, whether rejected or published, rights sold, etc.). Don't ever get caught in an embarrassing spot between two editors when you sell an article to them simultaneously because you weren't a professional. Also, use a tracking table for agent/publisher queries. Develop a system for backing up your documents onto computer discs, including an additional off-site copy in case of fire. Better safe than sorry, you'll never be able to duplicate that 80,000 word novel again if it's destroyed.

Remember, you don't need to set the publishing world on fire at first—just keep your new career moving forward with realistic steps. Don't worry about comparing yourself to other writers. Like Katharine Hepburn's character said in the classic film *Pat & Mike*, the only person she wanted to compete with to improve her career was herself. With Goals, Unity, Training, and a System you'll have a user-friendly formula to help jumpstart your writing dreams.

Julie Matherly is a member of SouthWest Writers. Since taking the leap of faith to become a writer over two years ago, she's written two novels and published articles in *American Writer*, *The Happy Times* newspaper, *WritersWeekly.com*, and *The SouthWest Sage*. Before that, she worked in book promotion.

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

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

Bulletin

BOUND TO BE READ bookstore now gives a 20% discount on book purchases to SWW members who show their current membership card. Also, on Sundays, customers get a free cup of coffee with the purchase of a newspaper.

Rejected?

by Page Erwin

You have to learn to love those rejection letters that you get from publishers and agents. The other option is to read them seriously and become terminally depressed. Of course, if you're a masochist, you can reach a state of ecstatic pain after just the first couple of years.

Page Erwin went through their fat folder labeled "Yellow-Bellied Rejects" in honor of those too cowardly to take on their work.

"Please forgive the impersonal note..."

"We're not the right match for you..."

"We feel we must decline..."

"It's just not right for us..."

"Better luck elsewhere..."

"We'll have to pass, the mystery doesn't engage us..."

Then there are the more humble, indecisive and guilt-ridden phrases:

"Though it is an intriguing concept, unfortunately it's not quite right for us."

"It just doesn't fit our list."

"We don't feel confident in our ability to place your manuscript." Well, if you don't feel confident, why would we want to hire you to represent us?

Personally we like the positive conclusions that give us reason to hope. Phrases like: "Good luck in placing your project well," and "We hope you're not discouraged by our decision," and "Another publisher may have room for your work," and "Your material does not fit the list we're publishing, but we wish you well."

One thing is for certain, not much reading of manuscripts, or front matter, or even, in some cases, cover letters is taking place. The fact is that 99 percent of all rejects have not one personal aspect to them, not a single drop of ink, no hint that personal attention has been paid to the material sent.

The word "REJECTION" according to the dictionary, carries with it a sense of the following: To refuse, to act or throw away, to discard. Worse yet, to repel, to refuse to consider, to spew out (ouch!) or to forsake. Put that definition in the balance, and most of our reject letters amount to a rejection of the notion of even considering a rejection of our work. Nearly always what has been rejected is the idea of even reading your work.

Where has courtesy gone? Why do many agencies reject you in twenty-five words or less? Is there a paper shortage? Low on ink? There's certainly enough rudeness to go around.

That leads us to the more prickly question: Who's turning your work around? Probably it's neither a publisher or an agent; it's Kristy-girl, age twenty-three, with a degree

from Barnard in English lit and a lifetime of playing Game Boy, while watching rapid-fire TV programming and listening to her I-Pod. She's thrilled to have a job in New York publishing, even if it mainly entails sending rejects after barely glancing at queries, getting double latte with cinnamon or Chai tea for the boss, handling his or her appointments, running interference, and, once in a great while, going to lunch at a swell place with a prospective author and the boss. Usually, her desk is as far as your package gets.

Back when we were publishers, several of our assistants moved up to bigger houses, Boston and New York. Ironically, two of them were the poorest interns we ever had, solipsistic druggies with masters' degrees. They went on to become little Kristys.

Back to Kristy: she's not making quite enough to pay for the grubby basement apartment in East Fourteenth Street that she's sharing with her roomy who works at The Gap, and she's spending most of her time completing her own chick-lit masterpiece. Is she going to bother to sign her name as "first-reader." Shut up! No way!

Hers is not an easy job. It's tedious, repetitious, and sometimes downright boring. There's sorting, filing, and that grotesque stack of queries, even complete manuscripts from those fools who think they're going to get published. And there's the housekeeping. Did they include an SASE? Is there adequate postage on the manuscript box? Many publishers keep the boxes and never return the mss.

Then there are the phone calls. Imagine, writers want to know, after waiting a year, what the action step is. The nerve! Word is, "Don't ever call the publisher. They don't like it." Just because the author probably put his life on hold and wrote for two years, doesn't mean you should reveal to her whether or not it has gone to the second round of readers. Keep her in the dark. Make her grovel!

How did such a system come to be?

As former editors of an award-winning small press that we operated out of a Maine farmhouse for twelve years, we have great respect for editors, and we know how manuscripts can pile up. Once our press had established itself, we received almost fifty pounds of queries per month, and during competitions it was ten times that amount.

We have to admit that not every query or submission deserves a reply. There are crazies out there who think they can write. Editors and agents shouldn't be expected to reply to queries without SASEs, or to queries from crazies filled with wild claims either. Lots of writers have the nerve to

Continued on Page 9...

"Rejected?" Cont'd from Page 8...

send messy, coffee-stained, refolded and re-used manuscripts. We used to don our rubber gloves and drop them into the nearest wastebasket. Some queries do not deserve a reply.

However, in our twelve years of serving the world a pile of paper angst proves to the IRS that you are a serious writer and that you are seriously seeking publication. The second is that you can examine the few personalized rejects, looking for patterns and common threads of complaint. Not much consolation in that kind of salvage work, is there? A bit like the crow picking through a cow paddy for a few kernels of corn.

Much of being successful as a writer has to do with attitude. Use those rejects as a cheer-me-up when your car gets totaled. (Everything's relative, even joy and sadness.) Those innocuous pieces of correspondence are the writer's badges of honor. They represent commitment, dedication and belief in oneself. So keep them in a safe place for that day when you luck out, and that envelope with a "yes" in it arrives in the mail. They will mean so much.

The Pen or the Vocal Cord

by Charley Mulvey

Writing is different than talking. With the exception of letter writing, most writing requires a different process than speaking. A writer has the benefit of time to go back and rephrase for added interest, add or subtract a word here and there to alter an aggressive or too passive tone. During revision, a writer's thoughts deepen. An inquiry about what's the right word might become "what's my underlying theme?" Writing encourages deep thinking. That's why books and libraries will be important no matter how far and fast our information technology takes us. In conversation, we seldom have time for deep contemplation, so writers appreciate the time spent in solitude. Most people sitting alone at a computer, however, will have little to write about. Only the most imaginative of writers can do without human interaction.

A science of communication is developing that brings some of the writer's reflection into dialogue and makes talking a good tool for writers. One phenomenon of a structured conversation is that the talker, as well as the listener, is learning from his own conversation. A writer can try to imagine a reader's reaction as we are putting words down on paper, but it isn't the same experience as actually speaking the words to another human being. In dialogue, ideas can be tested, other input can be incorporated, and the speaker's message can be fine-tuned beyond what his solitary musings would produce. It's no coincidence that

great writers of the last century met at coffeehouses and taverns to share ideas. These salons brought artist and patron together, writer and subject together, painter and writer together, and fostered innovation in art as it fostered courageous new expression in print.

Thinking together can stimulate the creative process. Dialogue gives the talker feedback that, when combined with his own thoughts, allows him to reflect and refine his thinking. Often in deep conversation new inquiries spring from the discussion that nobody would have questioned had the conversation not led them there. Collaborative thinking is creative. Put several gifted thinkers together with an unanswered question and miracles occur. If we are curious, if we are interested, if we are respectful, we can sharpen our thinking and our ability to communicate our ideas.

Going into a conversation having already figured things out is futile. As a writer, you do not enter a conversation to convince. You save that energy to reach your publisher and your reader. You do not participate in group dialogue to show how brilliant you are. Your time would be better spent mailing out queries or sharpening your pencils. What you bring to a conversation in order to improve your craft is curiosity. Even if you've researched the topic thoroughly, you join a conversation with at least a pretence that you don't know but you intend to learn. You are seeking deeper understanding. You are there to inquire, test out theories, and uncover new insights.

In deep, thoughtful conversation, the talker, as well as the listener, learns from his own conversation. Deep conversation presumes that the talker is discovering what she thinks, even as she speaks. This happens when someone takes the time to express herself precisely. This is possible if, at the first pause, she is not interrupted, but people simply wait for her to complete the thought. Creative conversation demands patient listening, which is difficult but not impossible, even for people who finish each other's sentences.

Socratic dialogue encourages thinking. That's why it is subversive. But why are we so afraid to confront uncertainty? Why is it so hard to sit for a while with a paradox? Why do we latch onto a position before we've accumulated all the facts? What if we trained our brains to ask questions about everything? Wouldn't that help our writing? Grappling with challenging questions is good exercise for writers...and fun.

Charley Mulvey is a member of SWW, a mediator with Metropolitan Court and facilitator of the Conversation Cafes in Albuquerque. She is available for comment and questions at 261-8885. More information on dialogue is available at www.conversationcafes.org.

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

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

Saturday, May 7, 10am-5pm

New Mexico Book Fiesta at Cottonwood Mall in Albuquerque

The New Mexico Book Co-op, a coalition of small and independent book publishers and authors in New Mexico, is sponsoring this event. Publishers and authors are invited to participate in the book fair. There will be a fee of \$70.00 for each booth/table. Booths/tables can be shared by more than one author or publisher. Any sharing of booths/tables must be arranged by applicant. The organizers of the book fair will not handle any such sharing. For additional information, info@nmbookcoop.com or call (505) 344-9382.

Tuesday, May 19, 7 pm - 9 pm

Title To Be Announced

Dr. Thomas E. Chavez, former director of the National Hispanic Cultural Center, historian and author of numerous books, including *Spain and the Independence of the United States* and *An Illustrated History of New Mexico* will give a presentation (title to be announced).

Saturday, June 4, 10am-5pm

Title To Be Announced

Renowned author Nancy Varian Berberick, writer of Dragonlance fiction, historical fantasy, translator of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and student of mythology, folklore and legend will give a presentation (title to be announced).

Tuesday, June 21, 7 pm - 9 pm

Revealed Writing: Tapping Your Inner Scribe

Nancy Ava Miller, M.Ed., CHt, will present Revealed Writing: Tapping Your Inner Scribe. Via a relaxation, meditation and hypnotic exercise—easy and enjoyably—facilitators (Nancy Miller, Melissa Larntz, and Sarah Azizi) will guide the audience toward that infinite reservoir of powerful creative intelligence tucked deep and silent within everyone. Immediately following this restful writing endeavor, the audience will receive instructions for a brief, fun writing assignment. Papers will be collected, shuffled, redistributed, and (some) read aloud for discussion. There will be a discussion about the meditative journey and how it might further benefit writers. (Might it eliminate writer's block, for instance?)

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

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In an attempt to open the announcements section to include all SWW members' writing-related activities (classes, book signings, etc.), we request that you e-mail your announcement to the editor no later than the first day of the month preceding publication. Please limit the announcement to 3 lines/40 words. Submitted material may be edited for publication.

- * **Land of Enchantment Romance Authors** meets *second Saturday of each month* at noon. Potential members can attend 3 meetings to see if they would like to join. www.leranm.org.
- * **Storytellers of New Mexico** will be meeting at La Siringitu, 1501 Mountain Rd. NW, just east of the Explora Museum. *3rd Sunday of each month*. www.thestorybird.com.
- * **Rob Spiegel and Larry Greenly teach a free weekly class** at Bear Canyon Senior Center from 3 to 4:15 p.m. *every Monday*. Half lecture, half discussion of student writing. Covers fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and memoir. Free to members of any Albuquerque senior center (senior center yearly dues: \$12.50).
- * **University of New Mexico Press** seeks exciting work about American Indians, anthropology, art and photography, Chicano/Chicana studies, area history, Judaea, Latin American studies, and New Mexico and the Southwest. They publish biographies, fiction, poetry, and literature. www.unmpress.com.
- * **SphinxBooks.com** is a new e-book publishing company that is accepting book-length submissions in Mystery, Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Horror.
- * **Write on Four Corners** NPR radio program in Farmington, NM is looking for authors to interview. Contact Connie Gotsch at gotsch@sjc.cc.nm.us.
- * **Stephanie Hainsfurther** is the editor of *New At Home*, a magazine for people who have just bought a house in Albuquerque or Santa Fe. They are looking for writers for assigned feature topics. Please forward your résumé and a list of publications in which your work has appeared within the last two years to Stephanie at words13@osogrande.com. She will send back writer's guidelines and the editorial calendar. No phone calls, please.
- * **Lynn Drake** is looking for a writer for Paula Paul's story. (248) 354-4470 or (248) 459-1648.
- * **New Mexico Book Fiesta** Cottonwood Mall. *May 7*. www.nmbookcoop.com.
- * **Colorado Christian Writers Conference** *May 11-14*. www.writehisanswer.com/Colorado.
- * **The New Mexico Historical Records Advisory Board** is currently accepting applications for projects that improve the preservation of and access to New Mexico's historical records, as well as scholarships for training that improves the preservation of and access to the state's historical records. *May 13* is the receipt, not postmark, deadline. www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmhrab/nmhrab_hm.htm.
- * **National Latino Writers Conference** National Hispanic Cultural Center. *May 19-21*. www.nhccnm.org.
- * **Croak & Dagger Distraction** James Swyer Memorial Substation, 12700 Montgomery NE. *May 24, 7pm*. (505) 281-5765.
- * **7th Annual Screenwriting Conference** Santa Fe. *June 1-5*. www.scsfe.com.
- * **BookExpo America** New York. *June 3-5*. www.bookexpoamerica.com.
- * **Santa Barbara Writers Conference** *June 17-24*. www.sbwc.org.
- * **Chenango Valley Writers Conference** Hamilton, NY. *June 19-25*. www.cvwv.net.
- * **Frontiers in Writing Conference** Amarillo, TX. *June 23-24*. www.panhandleprowriter.org.
- * **Jackson Hole Writers Conference** Jackson, WY. *June 23-26*. www.jacksonholewriters.org.
- * **National Society of Newspaper Columnists** Grapevine, TX. *June 23-26*. www.columnists.com.
- * **The Sin Fronteras/Writers Without Borders Journal** is soliciting writers for its tenth annual issue. *June 30*. (505) 521-7311 or (505) 522-1119.
- * **2005 Taos Summer Writers' Conference** to be held *July 9-15*. Register online at www.unm.edu/~taosconf.

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

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

Deadline 5/01/05. Nuestras Voces Playwriting Competition. Spanish or English. www.reportorio.org.

Deadline 5/01/05. Robert R. Lehan Playwriting Award for One-Act Plays. jshea@wsc.ma.edu.

Deadline 5/01/05. Whip City Radio Drama Award. jshea@wsc.ma.edu.

Deadline 5/01/05. Script P.I.M.P. Writing Competition. www.scriptpimp.com.

Deadline 5/01/05. Field Poetry Prize. www.oberlin.edu/ocpress.

Deadline 5/05/05. New Talent Short Story. www.bylinemag.com.

Deadline 5/15/05. Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition. www.shortstorycompetition.com.

Deadline 5/15/05. 2005 Science Fiction Writing Competition. www.eurisy.asso.fr.

Deadline 5/18/05. New Letters (poetry, fiction, and essay). www.newletters.org.

Deadline 5/31/05. Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. www.ugapress.org.

Deadline 5/31/05. Telluride IndieFest. www.tellurideindiefest.com.

Deadline 5/31/05. Hidden Talents Short Story Contest. www.talltalepress.com.

Deadline 6/01/05. Children's New Script Contest. www.southwest-theater.com.

Deadline 6/01/05. Chicano/Latino Literary Prize for poetry. www.hnet.uci.edu/spanishandportuguese/contest.html.

Deadline 6/01/05. Christopher Brian Wolk Award. www.abingdon-nyc.org.

Deadline 6/01/05. Actors' Playhouse National Children's Theatre Festival. www.actorsplayhouse.org.

Deadline 6/01/05. 2005 Juniper Creek/Unnamed Writers National Poetry and Short Story Competition. www.junipercreekpubs.com/events.

Deadline 6/01/05. *scr(i)pt* magazine's Open Door Contest. www.scriptmag.com

Deadline 6/01/05. Actors' Playhouse National Children's Theatre Festival. www.actorsplayhouse.org.

Deadline 6/01/05. Ears XXI Script Contest. info@earsxxi.com.

Deadline 6/01/05. Jackie White Memorial National Children's Play Writing Contest. cec.missouri.org.

Deadline 6/25/05. 2005 Erie Horror Screenplay Competition. www.eeriehorrorfest.com.

Deadline 6/30/05. Delacorte Dell Yearling Contest for contemporary or historical fiction. www.randomhouse.com/kids.

Deadline 6/30/05. Musical Theatre Development Program. www.wcensemble.org.

Deadline 6/30/06. Siena Coll. International Playwrights Competition. www.siena.edu/theatre.

Deadline 6/30/05. Century City Screenplay Competition. www.centuryfilmfestival.com.

Deadline 6/30/05. Centre Stage-South Carolina! Playwrights Festival. www.centrestage.org.

Deadline 7/01/05. Henrico Theatre Company Playwriting Competition. www.co.henrico.va.us/rec.

Deadline 7/01/05. Maxim Mazumdar New Play Competition. www.alleyway.com.

Deadline 7/15/05. North Carolina New Play Project. www.playwrightsforum.org.

Deadline 8/01/05. Vital Signs. www.vitaltheatre.org.

Deadline 8/31/05. Ten-Minute Musicals Project. www.tenminutemusicals.org.

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All other manuscripts up to ten pages: \$35

Thereafter: \$3.50/page

Send information by e-mail in rich text format (.rtf) to the SouthWest Sage editor at SWriters@aol.com. Please be brief.

Mary Lou Dellafiora had a small article titled “Spirit Blue” published in the February issue of FATE Magazine published out of Lakeville, Minnesota.

Jonathan Miller, self-proclaimed ‘Rattlesnake Lawyer,’ kicked off the sixth annual career fair at Mountain View Middle School.

Nancy West’s “Nine Days to Evil” received The Blether Gold Award.

Albert Noyer’s second novel of the Toby Press series, A Getorius and Arcadia Mystery, is published. The Cybelene Conspiracy smuggles two products from China into 5th century Italy that could restore a dying Western Roman Empire. “...Two attractive protagonists: a smooth narrative packed with fascinating historical detail.” Kirkus Reviews 4/1/05

Peggy Swager’s new job hunting book Conquering Today’s Changing Job Market, Solutions for Job Hunters and College Students was just released.



2005 Marty Award Contest

Excellence in High School Journalism

New Mexico high school students may compete for the Martys in two areas of journalism:

- Opinion or Editorial Essay
- News Article

For more information, go to:
www.southwestwriters.com



Critique Groups

Submit addition or deletion requests or changes to
SWriters@aol.com.

*Wanting to Start Groups/
Looking for a Group*

Poetry:

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

Short Nonfiction:

Suzann Owings
(505) 867-0567

**Any Genre,
Rio Rancho area:**

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

**Any Genre,
Rio Rancho area:**

Alice Harpley
riograndma@cableone.net

**Any Genre,
Rio Rancho area:**

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

Historical Romance:

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

SF/F:

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

Fiction/Poetry:

Dianne Boles-Scott
(505) 299-0026
dboles-scott5@msn.com

Fantasy/Romance:

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

Any Genre in Santa Fe:

Mary Mazza-Anderson
cmmom@zianet.com

Groups Seeking Members

Any Genre:

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

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

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

Novels/Short Stories:

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

Albuquerque Nonfiction:

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

**Westside Scribes,
Screenwriters:**

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

Mystery/SF:

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

Novels/Short Stories:

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

Ficiton & Nonfiction:

Paula High
1st Monday 5:30 pm
at Bound To Be Read
(505) 271-0837
plhigh@abq.com

New SWW Members

Kathleen Padgett
Megan Feldman
Holly Seward
William Skees
Martha Mardrand
Elizabeth Appell
Jean Bareis
Cathy Strasser
Marlene Leach
Carolyn Neeper
Carole MacFarland
Barbara Jacksha
Rick DeMille
Suzanne Mazzone
Jacob Appel
R. Danielle Hinesly
Nancy Sanders
Terry Harmon-Colbert
Rosemary Alberts
Len Hecht
Ruth Romero
Barbara Johnson
Robin Gomez
Nina Knapp
Susanna Hill

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

SWW Board Meeting will be held at the SWW office on Tuesday, May 3, 2005, at 6 pm

Here we are:

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

Recent Board Meeting Highlights

- ◆ SWW purchased the copy machine it had been renting. Dues, new members, and Critique Service showing increases while the fund-raising from raffles and workshops held at the SWW office need help. Please check with the office to see about holding a class or workshop. Also, consider running a writing-related ad in the Sage. Since it is web-based now you would have international exposure.
- ◆ The website has been redesigned to be more user friendly and now has a secure server for paying dues and registering for events from the website. Please check it out: www.southwestwriters.org
- ◆ SWW Conference Scheduled May 21 to feature Dr. Linda Seger, who will speak on all aspects of writing from characters to plot and will be of interest to all writers not just screenwriters.
- ◆ Contest entries must be postmarked April 30th since the deadline of May 1st is a Sunday. The critiquer and judge list will be complete at the time of publication of this issue. The Awards Banquet is Sept. 3rd at Bread and Wine for a minimal fee. Keep an eye out for additional information about reserving your place.
- ◆ The Board is nominating Parris Award 2006 candidates. The vote will take place in July.
- ◆ Nominations are being sought for the 2006 board elections.
- ◆ Complete minutes of every board meeting are open to members at the SWW office after approval. Feel free to come in and read them during office hours.

Minutes of all Board meetings are available at the SWW Office during office hours: M-F, 9am-noon.

President

Rob Spiegel

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

VP/Office Coordinator/Parliamentarian

Larry Greenly

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

Secretary

Sandy Schairer

(505) 281-0546 · SandySchairer@southwestwriters.com

Treasurer

Loretta Hall

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

Membership

Lila Anastas

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

Public Relations

Melody Groves

MelodyGroves@southwestwriters.com

SWW Sage Editor/Website Coordinator

Cliff Gravel

(505) 888-1747 · CliffGravel@southwestwriters.com

Critique Service

Edith Greenly

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

Policies, Procedures, and Audit/Historian

Lela Belle Wolfert

(505) 899-2952

Volunteer Coordinator

Cal Coates

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

Members At Large

Judy Ducharme

(505) 256-9659 · JudyDucharme@southwestwriters.com

Writer's Contest 2005 Co-Chairs

David Corwell

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

Joan Marsh

JoanMarsh@southwestwriters.com

Nomination Committee Chair

Fred Aiken

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

Other Key Positions

E-lert Mistress

Gail Rubin

publicity@southwestwriters.org

Speaker Coordinator

Larry Greenly

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

Interim Conference Chair

Lela Belle Wolfert

(505) 899-2952



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



The SouthWest Sage

SouthWest Writers
3721 Morris NE
Albuquerque NM 87111
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SWriters@aol.com

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