



# The SouthWest Sage

Vol. 21, No. 9

*The Voice of SouthWest Writers*

September 2006

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

## Not Writing in Hawaii

by Terry Wilson

Well, here I am in Hawaii and I can't write. For months I've been saying that as soon as I go on vacation in Oahu and the Big Island I would be writing so much I'd barely have time to go to the beach.

But how can I stay in the hotel room and write with these dirty towels in here and old mango, pineapple, and banana peels from the fruit feast last night? Besides, I have tennis elbow and all this typing is not good for me. But swimming would help. I can leave this mess for housekeeping.

So I walk down Kalakaua, the main street in Oahu. There are so many people on the boardwalk: men in thongs, women in bathing suits much smaller than mine. I hope that there aren't too many men on the beach sunning in their thongs. How can I concentrate with all that skin around?

My boyfriend works too much and I'm lonely, but I'll do all my writing with the turquoise ocean and the palm trees for company. Which brings up another reason I'm having trouble writing: he keeps trying to buy me a new bathing suit that "shows more leg." Who wants a tiny bathing suit anyway? I mean, aren't enough of my thighs showing already? Besides, I get anxious just thinking about it. I hear the nuns from my childhood inside my head, "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, so cover it up!"

As I walk to my favorite nearby beach, Sans Souci, I decide I better smooth some suntan lotion on my lips; yesterday my lower lip got sunburned and swollen. A Rastafarian strolls by and then drops to his knees in front of a banyan tree, praying loudly. I wonder if he's a writer with the same problem I have. I consider joining him.

I'm going to write so much on the beach that the sun will set. My boyfriend will get back to the hotel and wonder where I am. That makes me and my swollen lip smile. Finally I get to the beach and settle in on my red towel that says HAWAII across the front (in case I forget where I am). I lie down facing the sun. No, I'm not writing

yet, but I'm easing into it. But those palm trees overhead are really too loud, rustling and crackling like that. How can I focus?

That's when I notice the surfers out on the far waves and recall my one attempt at surfing. My bathing suit top fell off. I don't think I'll try surfing this time, but how glorious to watch them gliding over the waves.

Now I'm getting too hot to write. I decide to go in for a swim so I can cool off. I swim until the wind picks up and the waves are carrying me away from the shore. It'll be hard to write if I'm dead, so I follow the current and paddle in.

I stand under the cold shower on the beach to wash off the ocean salt. I think of how my hair stylist is going to be upset at me for ruining my color. It was such a nice shade this time. The night before I spent hours in front of the bathroom mirror, plucking grey hairs out of my head. If I used those hours each night writing instead, I'd have a book by now. On the other hand, if the ocean didn't pull the color out of my hair, I wouldn't have to pluck them out. I'd have much more time to write. If Hawaii didn't have an ocean surrounding it, I would be a lot more productive.

Back in the hotel room my boyfriend is snoring, getting his beauty sleep for another day of work tomorrow. I dial room service and order a salad, even though it's ten at night. I could write for a half hour while they prepare my food, but in only ten minutes, room service is at the door. I pay them. If room service were only a little slower, I could have gotten down this idea I had about that hunky Hawaiian who winked at me today. Instead, all I typed was the first line, "She was in Paradise with time to kill." But now I have to eat my salad before it wilts. I can't write while I'm eating.

I pick up my mystery paperback by Dana Stabenow, and before long I'm lost in it. My screen saver is the only thing happening on the computer. The next time I look up it's midnight and my boyfriend is scratching himself. In Santa Fe, where I live, it's four in the morning. Much too late to do any writing. Tomorrow on the other hand....

**NEW DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES:** the 10th of each month. 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 a Word 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. Send submissions to [editor@southwestwriters.com](mailto:editor@southwestwriters.com).



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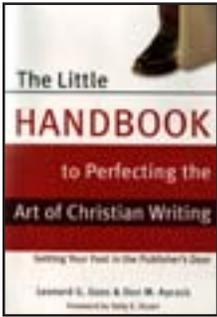
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**Is it time for you to renew your SWW membership?**

SWW dues are \$60 per year (or \$100 for 2 years).  
 Two individuals joining or renewing together get a special rate of \$50 each.  
 Full-time students under 18 with proof of status and current 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](http://www.southwestwriters.org).



### The Little Handbook to Perfecting the Art of Christian Writing

Reviewed by Fred A. Aiken

Audiences are hungry for high-quality, spiritually uplifting books and articles. The authors of *Perfecting the Art of Christian Writing* said the purpose of the book is to share their excitement regarding Christian writing on an intimate, personal basis. They have accomplished that purpose by crafting a book that most students of writing should find of immense value and would benefit from reading.

The real business of Christian writing and publishing is promoting ideas, of offering answers to readers in the same way the Gospel tells us Jesus offered answers to his hearers on the vital religious, political, and social issues of his day. Accomplishing the will of God is the overall goal of most Christian writers. For a Christian writer to truly honor God and be truly effective, he or she needs to develop a clear and sharp Christian mid-set. Goss and Aycock write that there is no one way to do it, but there are some generally accepted principles and methods of going about the writing of books and getting those books published.

This is a balanced book about what it takes to be a writer. The authors use uplifting personal accounts by established Christian writers to convey the universal truths about the business of writing and publishing.

The personal accounts of successful writers are intriguing. Two chapters are devoted to what writers do and why do they do it. The realism of the writer's life is forthrightly expressed, especially in the area of financial matters. For instance, Ken Walker stated, "Survival is the main objective. One can't write well while worried about paying the mortgage, utilities, and grocery bills."

The relationship between writer and editor is presented in several chapters, as is the publishing process. In addition to a sample contract for the reader to examine and study, a simple style guide also adds value to the book.

*The Little Handbook to Perfecting the Art of Christian Writing* by Leonard G. Goss and Don M. Aycock, Boardman & Holman Publishers, 2006, \$14.99

### Brett Nielsen: Launching a Writing Career at Age 10

by Rob Spiegel

One of our newest SouthWest Writers members is also our youngest. Brett Morgan Nielsen of McIntosh, New Mexico is a fifth-grader at Estancia Elementary. She started writing fiction and poetry before age 10, or even before her age reached two digits. This past summer she launched what would be a major project for any writer, a chapter book or middle-grade novel.



While Nielsen turned to SouthWest Writers to learn more about writing and to meet other writers, she also received mentoring at her elementary school. "My fourth-grade teacher helped me with writing tips," says Nielsen. "She encouraged me and made me feel really good about myself."

Nielsen tries to write regularly, but she makes sure she still has time for childhood. "My goal is to write every day for at least two hours, but I can't keep track," says Nielsen. "I still want to have time to play outside."

Asked what was easy about writing, Nielsen points to the ease of creating fiction. "You can do what you want with fiction. That's the easy part." As for the difficult part of writing, she says it's managing multiple projects. "The hard part is trying to keep track of three or more things that I'm writing at a given time," says Nielsen. "Plus sometimes it's hard when I have to think for days of an idea that is really good." As for her favorite author, Nielsen was quick and clear: "L. Frank Baum who writes the *Wizard of Oz* books."

### Free Professional Email Address for SWW Members

You can give editors, agents, and booksellers an address like JoeSmith@southwestwriters.com and their messages will be automatically forwarded to your existing address.

Send an e-mail message to LorettaHall@southwestwriters.com, including your choice of SWW address and your existing e-mail address.



The SouthWest  
Sage



*Eileen Stanton is an award-winning author, co-founder and past president of SWW, and long-time teacher at three universities, including the University of New Mexico. She has honed her interviewing talents over 15 years on the radio and in thousands of articles. She brings this expertise to the Sage's Markets column each month.*

*Let her know what questions you want answered.*

*Her email is estanton@cableone.net.*

## Advice from Best-Selling Author and Emmy Award Winner Steven J Cannell

by Eileen Stanton

Stephen J. Cannell is the bestselling author of eleven novels, including the critically acclaimed Shane Scully series. The sixth installment, *White Sister*, published by St. Martin's Press, came out in August, the same month he came to Albuquerque to sign books. He has received numerous awards, including the Saturn Award - Life Career Award in 2004, the Marlow Lifetime Achievement Award from Mystery Writers of America in 2005 and the WGA Paddy Chafsky Laurel Award for Television Writing Achievement in 2006. You may recognize his name from the 40 different television shows he created. He also wrote 450 television episodes and produced 1500.

Because of his dyslexia, Stephen Cannell offered to answer my questions on the phone. He is an articulate, modest, down-to-earth and generous person. I received an early copy of *White Sister* and it is a great read!

**Q.** You wrote eleven best-selling novels and 450 episodes for the 40 shows you created or co-created. What's the difference in your approach to each form?

**A.** In a novel, you can get in a character's head. You can't in a screen play. The viewer must get information from the dialogue and reaction of the characters. Other than that, plotting in three-act structures, as in all dramas is similar. The second act is really important because he's tested and devastated by the end of the act. Plots have to go deeper before the resolution in the third act.

**Q.** Why do you think readers love Shane Skully?

**A.** I don't know. It's important not to try to figure it out or worry, so I write what I like, and if the readers like him, I'm satisfied.

**Q.** Unlike Phillip Marlow and other famous detectives who fell under the spell of a different woman in each book, you've created a wonderful character in Alexa, who became Scully's wife. What was your reasoning? And do you think it brought in more women readers?

**A.** The idea of male detectives [being promiscuous] is cliché. I've been married 42 years. They met and married in book two. In *White Sister* I'm writing a love story where Alexa is missing. It pleases me to raise the stakes and emotions.

**Q.** You have produced or executive-produced more than 1,500 episodes for television and the big screen. Since you're an Emmy award-winning writer and producer, do you think you intimidate the author of the episode and do you feel free to make changes?

**A.** I'm a very easy person to work with. My studio was the third largest in Hollywood. I wanted to run a studio for writers. I hired 25. I've never re-written the writer's script, but I would give copious notes. With six shows on the air at one time, I developed a bulletproof process.

**Q.** Early in your career, you wrote an *Adam-12* script between Friday and Monday for a producer who was in a crunch. How did you approach writing a new script so quickly?

**A.** The characters already existed. I'm a disciplined writer. I'd already been writing five hours a day while working in my father's manufacturing company.

**Q.** When you're writing fast for characters you know or created, for *The Rockford Files*, *The A-Team*, *Riptide*, *21 Jump Street*, *The Commish*, or *Silk Stalkings*, how do the main characters personalities and flaws factor in?

**A.** I tried never to repeat myself. I had severe dyslexia, and flunked three grades before I got out of high school. I knew not the biggest title wins, but the best idea does.

**Q.** What's the worst and best thing about being a writer?

**A.** The worst is when you don't reach your own goals as a writer. It's happened in screen plays. Your stomach knots up. The best is when you write ten pages a day and it feels good. I evaluate my work on a scale of 1 to 10. I never compete with other writers.

**Q.** What's the best advice you have for novelists and screenwriters.

**A.** Life is a journey. If you think you're best, you won't learn to push yourself. Really good writers encourage other writers.

*You can meet Stephen J. Cannell in Albuquerque for an exclusive engagement at Bookworks on Thursday, September 21st at 7pm.*

Events/Workshops

**\*9/2, 3 pm: Self-Publishing and Local Author Fair.** Authors are invited to bring their books to promote independently and sell at Page One's Self-Publishing Fair. First Saturday of every month in the Page One Café. Page One Bookstore, 11018 Montgomery NE, Abq. (505) 294-2026.

**\*9/6, 7 pm: Democracy for America.** A talking and action group that meets in the Page One Café every first Wednesday. Everyone is welcome. Page One Bookstore, 11018 Montgomery NE, Abq. (505) 294-2026.

**\*9/10, 2 pm: Katherine Kagel,** book signing, *Cooking with Café Pasqual's*. Kagel shares her favorite recipes, along with an extensive source list for purchasing special ingredients. Page One Bookstore, 11018 Montgomery NE, Abq. (505) 294-2026.

**\*9/11, 6:30 pm: Judy Ballard,** Writers to Writers Presentation, *Vivid Verbs*. Westside Hastings (corner of Coors Rd. and Montano), Albuquerque. (505) 898-0624, corwell@hotmail.com.

**\*9/14 & 9/21, 6:30-8:30 pm: David J. Corwell,** Writing Course, *Writing Short Stories*. Los Volcanes Senior Center, 6500 Los Volcanes NW, Albuquerque. \$25. (505) 836-8745, (505) 898-0624, dcorwell@hotmail.com.

**\*9/15, 4pm: Melody Groves,** book signing, *Ropes, Reins, and Rawhide: All About Rodeo*. Melody Groves offers a behind-the-scenes look at the workings, workers, and animals of the heartstopping world of rodeo. Hastings, 4315 Wyoming Blvd NE, Abq. (505) 299-7750

**\*9/15, 5pm: Richard Peck,** book signing, *Philly Amateurs*, Car heists and colorful characters set the stage for mayhem in Philadelphia. Casa de Avila, 324 San Felipe St NW, Abq. (505) 242-3753

**\*9/16, 3pm: Richard Peck,** see 9/15 listing. Borders, 10420 Coors Bypass NW, Abq. (505) 792-3180.

**\*9/17, 12pm: Richard Peck,** see 9/15 listing. Fiesta Market (In the ABQ Sunport, pre-security) 2200 Sunport Blvd SE, Abq. (505) 243-3100.

**\*9/18, 7pm: Richard Peck,** see 9/15 listing. Page One Bookstore, 11018 Montgomery NE, Abq. (505) 294-2026.

**\*9/19, 7pm: Mike Coltrin,** book signing, *Sandia Mountain Hiking Guide*. The most complete and up-to-date resource for Sandia Mountain hikers, this guide presents information on fifty-seven trails, covering a total distance of about 175 miles. The book will encourage novices and veterans alike to experience the many inviting trails of the Sandia Mountains. REI, 1550 Mercantile Ave NE, Abq. (505) 247-1191.

**\*9/24, 12pm: Raymond Shewnack & William Frangos,** book signing, *49 Trout Streams of New Mexico*. Discover the state's beautiful streams and rivers. Fiesta Market (in the ABQ Sunport, pre-security) 2200 Sunport Blvd SE, Abq. (505) 243-3100.

**\*9/24, 1pm: Melody Groves,** see 9/15 listing. Treasure House Books, 2012 South Plaza NW, Abq. (505) 242-7204.

**\*9/24, 3 pm: Terry Brooks,** book signing, *Armageddon's Children*. Plagues and weapons of mass destruction have few survivors and a siege mentality. Descriptions of ruined cities and the battles are mesmerizing, and the ending leaves readers salivating for the sequel. Page One Bookstore, 11018 Montgomery NE, Abq. (505) 294-2026.

**\*9/28, 7 pm: Chris Mooney,** book signing, *The Republican War on Science*. Does the Bush administration ignore or deny mainstream research to please its conservative base? Mooney is very readable, and understandably partisan. This volume is the first to put the whole story, thoroughly documented, in one place. Page One Bookstore, 11018 Montgomery NE, Abq. (505) 294-2026.

Events/Workshops

**\*9/29, 5pm: David Stuart,** book signing, *Guaymas Chronicles*. This memoir of a young gringo anthropologist's assimilation into the exotic street life of a bustling port on Mexico's Sea of Cortez is also an account of the area's working-class life in the late 1960s. Casa de Avila, 324 San Felipe St NW, Abq. (505) 242-3753.

**\*9/30, 3pm: Raymond Shewnack & William Frangos,** see 9/24 listing. Borders—West Side, 10420 Coors Bypass NW, Abq. (505) 792-3180.

**\*10/1, 2:30 pm: Jeanne Shannon** will read poems from *Angelus* at Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank NE (Eubank and Constitution in the Princess Jeanne Shopping Center).

**\*Every Tuesday, 10-11:15am: Craft of Writing Workshops** Taught by author/essayist/poet Linda Sonna. \$10, Drop-ins welcome. Wired Café, Taos, (505) 737-9092.

Authors Wanted

**\*Blogger John Knudson** has a weekly poetry post. He wants poems by local poets. Contact him if you'd like to post a poem at johnknuds@ix.netcom.com or see his blog at: <http://albbloggerque.blogspot.com>.

**\*Cezanne's Carrot,** a Santa Fe-based literary journal is accepting submissions of fiction, nonfiction, poetry and visual art. Find current and past issues and full submission guidelines at the website, [www.cezannescarrot.org](http://www.cezannescarrot.org).

**\*Steffanie Gibbons** 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. [editor@newathome.com](mailto:editor@newathome.com).

**\*Lester Libo** is looking for a critique group in the fiction genre. [lesterml1@comcast.net](mailto:lesterml1@comcast.net).

**\*Local Book Clubs and Published Authors** wanted for the Author Book Club Connection (ABCC). When the information is put together it will be put on a web site so book clubs can contact the authors. If you are in a book club or a published author and would like to be part of ABCC contact Scott at [alley0412@msn.com](mailto:alley0412@msn.com).

**\*The Million Pound Story,** an online writing project, is seeking loose plot outlines for a story of the fantasy genre. The outline will offer writers a starting point and should define a timeframe, basic information on characters, world & environment and loosely define the story. Go to [www.millionpoundstory.com](http://www.millionpoundstory.com) for more information. Send submissions to [story@millionpoundstory.com](mailto:story@millionpoundstory.com).

**\*A New Forum** for all things poetry is up at [abqslams.org](http://abqslams.org). Go there and poke around, join, and post.

**\*Photo Journal** is a monthly newspaper with distribution all over New Mexico. They are looking for reviews, interviews, and articles on fine art photography. Contact [tomg@photojournalsw.com](mailto:tomg@photojournalsw.com) for more information.

**\*The Writers Room** is for writers to write, read, use the free wireless internet or reserve the space for a class or event. Upstairs at 826 Camino de Monte Rey, between St. Francis and Pacheco in Santa Fe. (505) 577-1125 or email [litcenter@recursos.org](mailto:litcenter@recursos.org).

Odds and Ends

**\*Copier Technical Services** (aka JT Tech Services) repairs printers, copiers and typewriters, sells supplies and new or reconditioned equipment. The business participates in the SWW Membership Perk Agreement: members receive a 10% discount. They have temporarily moved to 2520 La Charles NE, Abq. Bruce, (505) 296-6331.

**\*Seeking History of SouthWest Writers** The SWW Board is compiling a historical archive of the beginning and early development of SouthWest Writers. All members who can contribute information, please send email to [judyducharme](mailto:judyducharme@southwestwriters.org) or [sandyschairer@southwestwriters.org](mailto:sandyschairer@southwestwriters.org).



## Contest Connection

### The Writers' Contest Awards Banquet is Almost Here

by Joanne Bodin, 2006 Contest Chair

Remember, the SWW Contest Awards Banquet will be **Saturday, September 16 at 12 noon** at the Marriott Hotel, 2101 Louisiana Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico (Louisiana just north of I-40). There is a form you can fill out and send in with your reservation in this issue of the *Sage*. We hope to see you there to celebrate our winners. All of the contest winners were notified by letter during the first and second weeks of August. The rest of the manuscripts, with critiques, were mailed the second week of August. If you did not receive your manuscript or if you received it and have questions about what we returned, here are some possible reasons:

- Some manuscripts did not have enough postage or were metered mail. If so, you may be charged extra postage when it is delivered to you.
- Some manuscripts were returned with the critique, but nothing from the judge. That happened because most of our judges opted to return only the top three winning manuscripts. Since they were not supposed to make any comments on the other manuscripts, they decided to save postage by returning only the top three.
- Some of you received hand-written notes from SWW stating that you were disqualified from judging because you had your name on your manuscript. Please refer to the rules of the contest, which specifically state you will be disqualified if you put your name on the manuscript. But we did send in your manuscript to be critiqued, after removing your name.
- Some manuscripts contained extra papers that were not requested, such as pictures, letters of explanation to our SWW about your manuscript, etc. We returned those extra items in your SASE. We did NOT send them in to be judged or critiqued.

Thank you for taking the time to enter our contest this year. Please fill out the evaluation form so we get your feedback for future contests. If you have any more questions, please email me at drjsbodin@hotmail.com. GOOD LUCK on next year's contest. We will post all of the winners in the October issue of the *Sage*.

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*Joanne Bodin, Ph.D., is the 2006 SWW Writer's Contest Chair. She is a retired teacher of the gifted in Albuquerque. Her book, Step By Step Storytelling: A Narrative Language Curriculum, is used throughout the school district. She is currently working on a novel and is learning jazz piano.*

## Pet Anecdote Contest Winners

CONGRATULATIONS to the winners of the June 2006 SWW International Monthly Writing Competition.

**1st Prize: K. Stein**, Albuquerque, NM for *Ellie*.

**2nd Prize: James H. Brooks**, Abilene, TX *The Christmas My Dog Treed Santa*.

**3rd Prize: Jerry R. Davis**, Albuquerque, NM for *The Mourning Doves*.

**HONORABLE MENTIONS** (alphabetical order):

**Winifred Smith Erickson**, Scottsdale, AZ for *Oreo*.

**Catherine Ford**, Redwood Valley, CA for *Rock Hound*.

**Rose Marie Kern**, Albuquerque, NM for *The Easter Goat*.

**Gary Ness**, Albuquerque, NM for *Recycle Cat*.

**Jane Santoro**, Scottsdale, AZ for *Whiskers, My Special Friend*.

**Cora Gail Trent**, Sandia Park, NM for *Frisbie*.

We received so many well-written entries it was difficult to choose the winners, which is why there are so many honorable mentions. The stories were invariably interesting and heart-felt. Overall, the quality was good and, with some additional polishing, many are publishable. Remember, just because you didn't win doesn't mean your anecdote wasn't good; it just means some anecdotes were better (cream floats to the top, but the milk is good, too). Keep writing and try again!

While we weren't real hard-nosed about it, a pet anecdote is defined as a "short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident," not a description of the entire life of a pet.

The following list contains some of the more common errors that every writer should learn to overcome:

- "For awhile" should be "for a while."
- Make sure your pronouns and nouns agree.
- Dates referred to as decades, etc. should be '70s, not '70's.
- Don't wander around in tenses from present to past to future, for example.
- Paragraphs should be indented. It's difficult to read a ms without indentations (and make them five spaces, not one).
- Manuscripts should always be double-spaced, without a double-double space between paragraphs.
- Use Courier or Times New Roman font.
- Don't use all caps and bold every word.
- In general, spell out *inches* instead of using the symbol (").
- There's no such word as "alright," it is "all right."
- Except for ages, numbers are usually spelled out if they're ten or below.
- Except for colons and semicolons, punctuation goes within quotation marks.
- Learn the difference between "eager" and "anxious."
- The possessive of "it" is "its," not "it's."
- Semicolons should be used sparingly and correctly—and there are no semicolons in speech.
- Each person's dialogue gets a separate paragraph.
- An overabundance of exclamation points sounds like the writer is yelling.
- Manuscripts should be printed on one side only.

## The Gift of Unlimited Interest: Bob Julyan

Interview by Lee Ross

Reporter, outdoorsman and avid researcher Bob Julyan is cashing in on the fodder for imagination he finds in New Mexico. Julyan is known as a non-fiction writer, in part, for his book *Place Names of New Mexico*. An author who has truly learned to follow his bliss, Julyan said he is interested in place names because they combine his great love of history, geography, language and the weird and quirky.

Julyan was a reporter in Vermont, an editor-manager in New Hampshire, and in New Mexico, he is currently a columnist for the *Albuquerque Journal* and does freelance work. He is the author of seven books, including *The Mountains of New Mexico*, recently published by UNM Press.



**Q.** What is your education and background?

**A.** I was born and raised in Boulder, Colorado, and received a BA in English Literature, at a time when one could actually expect to get some kind of a job with such a degree. Following a stint in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone as an English teacher, I taught in Philadelphia, where I met my future wife, Mary. After teaching in Vermont, I studied Natural Resources Conservation at Cornell and received an MS, whereupon I returned to Vermont and became a cub reporter at a little daily newspaper. I was editor of a weekly newspaper in northern New Hampshire for four years before returning to the West and New Mexico 25 years ago, where I have made my living as a writer and editor ever since.

**Q.** You clearly know New Mexico very well. What drives you to research and write about the Southwest?

**A.** New Mexico is an amazing state. It has everything that piques my curiosity: wilderness, interesting history, archaeology, geology, natural beauty—and lots of places I've never visited. If one has a wide-ranging curiosity, then New Mexico is a never-ending source of discovery and delight.

**Q.** What is the greatest tool in a writer's arsenal?

**A.** I've always believed that one of my greatest gifts as a writer is that I have a very low excitement threshold. I can become intensely interested in almost anything. The one-word answer is curiosity. I also am grateful for having been a newspaper reporter, because I learned that sometimes one can write even when one doesn't want to. This also was an antidote to perfectionism. Sadly, I've seen countless writers put off their important project until they get everything in order, have done all possible research, which is impossible. Newspaper writers learn early to do the best research you can, then let go and make do with what you have.

**Q.** How do you suggest a new writer break into writing guidebooks? How did you go about getting the book published?

**A.** With writers, as with natural species, success often depends upon finding an unfilled niche and then filling it. My first book, *The Place Names of the White Mountains* (New Hampshire), resulted from realizing, to my surprise, that no one had ever bothered to tell the

stories behind the interesting names in that region. The unfilled-niche approach is especially true with guidebooks, but it applies to all genres, especially as publishers also are always alert to unfilled niches.

**Q.** Do you work multiple projects and articles at a time, and do you overlap queries/proposals for new books?

**A.** At any given time I'm usually working on several projects, often too many, and my poor wife has spend countless hours listening to me grump about how fragmented and over-committed I am. I don't intend this, and I usually don't overlap proposals, but when something drifts by, as things do, I rarely can say no.

**Q.** Do you maintain contacts with other writers?

**A.** Over the years I've been blessed with the friendship of several other writers, who have provided much-needed criticism and support. The key word is "friend." Critique groups can be invaluable, but they also can be toxic, which is why I emphasize "friends"—writers whose character and judgment I know and trust, who know me, and who care enough about each other to tell the truth in a truly supportive way. It isn't easy to find such friends, but it's worth the effort.

**Q.** How do you feel about keeping a journal?

**A.** I've kept a journal/daybook for decades and am never without it. I recommend this highly for writers, but I also recommend tailoring the journal to your individual needs and personality. If I'd felt obliged to produce a profound mini-essay every day, I'd have stopped years ago. A journal should be a friend, not a taskmaster, but as a friend it can be a valuable and faithful one.

**Q.** What is your favorite thing about being a writer? What do you hope to share with your audience?

**A.** Being a writer allows me to explore the wide range of my interests. I would make a terrible academic in this world of extreme specialization. And what I hope to share with my readers is some of my enthusiasm for discovery. On a deeper level, writing is the venue through which I come to understand more fully myself and the world in which I find myself.

**Deadline Extended**

We've extended the reservation deadline to September 11. This year John Candelaria will be master of ceremonies and Michele Buchanan will play her Gaelic harp during the meal. Then, for a special treat, one of our own members has volunteered to provide a chocolate fountain from her business, Chocolate Amor in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The banquet will be held on Saturday, September 16th at noon at the Marriott Hotel on Louisiana north of I-40.

**SouthWest Writer's Awards Banquet**

*Come lend your support and share this exciting moment when the first, second, and third place winners of our Annual Writer's Contest will be announced.*

**The Marriott Hotel**

2101 Louisiana NE  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110  
(just North of I-40)

**Saturday, September 16, 2006**

**12:00 noon**

**\$25.00**

*(price includes drink, tax, gratuity)*

Reservations are payable in advance. Please mail in bottom portion of this form by **September 11<sup>st</sup> to reserve your place.**

Please return this portion:

We **accept checks only.**

*Your canceled check is your receipt.*

**Make checks payable to:**

SouthWest Writers  
3721 Morris St. NE, Suite A  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87111-3611

**Entrees** (please check one)

       **CHICKEN CARDINALE:** Assorted baby field greens with Italian vinaigrette dressing & ranch dressing; Boneless breast of chicken seasoned with lemon pepper, lightly roasted in bread crumbs, pan sautéed and served with lemon butter sauce, topped with julienne of sweet red & yellow peppers. Amaretto cheesecake with Kahlua crème for dessert.

**or**

       **VEGETARIAN PENNE POMODORI:** Assorted baby field greens with Italian vinaigrette dressing or ranch dressing; Penne pasta tossed with fresh grilled vegetables in a Roma tomato, olive oil and basil sauce. Amaretto cheesecake with Kahlua crème for dessert.

**Reservations for** \_\_\_\_\_ **people. Names, please print.** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone where we can reach you \_\_\_\_\_

**If you decide to come here from out of town we can offer you good rates at the Marriott Hotel. Call our SWW office between nine in the morning and one in the afternoon, Monday through Friday for more info. (505) 265-9485.**

For office use only: check # \_\_\_\_\_

date received \_\_\_\_\_

**SouthWest Writers Critique Service**

A thorough critique and assessment of your manuscript by published writers, teachers, or agents. Books, articles, short stories, stage plays, and screenplays. Even poetry! Turnaround of approximately two weeks. Query letter up to three pages: \$15, Synopsis up to three pages: \$25, All other manuscripts up to ten pages: \$35 Thereafter: \$3.50/page

















