

SouthWest Sage

June 2009

www.southwestwriters.com

The Difference in Conferences

by Sandra Toro

By now those of you who are ardent readers of *SouthWest Sage* and regular attendees at our Saturday and Tuesday meetings know that we are planning a one-day (Saturday, August 15) conference on The Novel—all genres. Given the plethora of writers' conferences all over the country during the summer months, it behooves us to choose which ones to invest our time and money in, so I'm going to tell you what makes ours different from many others.

During the last thirty years I've attended The Bread Loaf Writer's Conference in Vermont, the College of St. John in Santa Fe, the Washington Romance Writer's Retreat in Harper's Ferry, WV (5 times), numerous one-day conferences and workshops in the Washington, D. C. area, as well as the last two conferences sponsored by SWW.

There is a significant difference between those conferences that specialize in literary fiction in contrast to commercial fiction. For example, Bread Loaf and St. John's focus on works of literary merit and choose their presenters, agents, and editors accordingly. By and large, the folks at these conferences look down their noses at those of us who write fiction that is actually purchased in large numbers by the public.

My experience at the Washington Romance Writer's Retreat in 1988 was exactly the opposite of what I experienced at Bread Loaf in August of 1989. In April of 1988, I met with agent Adele Leone, pitched to her, and a week later I had an agent. Two months later I signed a contract with Dell to

publish *Reach For the Dream*, a historical (WW II) family saga focusing on an illicit romance. That novel went through four printings, sold 100,000-plus copies. But the following summer at Bread Loaf when I explained to the professor what I was currently writing, his attitude was that it was worthless. And that same air of contempt for popular fiction permeated the conference. By the time I left that two-week, very expensive conference, I was ashamed of my writing. It took a while to recover my self-esteem.

Our conference this August will feature prominent popular authors in several genres: women's fiction including romance, mystery, historicals and family sagas; Western novels including thrillers, mysteries and police procedurals; science fiction, fantasy and horror.



Michael McGarrity
Western novelist

Photo by Jim Gautier



Jo-Anne Power
keynote speaker, publicist

Only 40 slots for pitches
are available.

Register now
to reserve your spot.
See form on page 11.

The agents and editors I'm inviting to participate are actively looking for writers who will produce popular, best-selling fiction. They will be looking for the next Tony Hillerman, Stephanie Meyers, Nora Roberts or J. D. Robb. They will be looking for the kind of novels our SWW members write!

Plan on attending. You won't regret it!

Send It Out

President's Message



Rob Spiegel

You can use the SWW critique services, send to a contest or gather with a critique group, but the best feedback you'll get on your writing is when you send it out to an editor or agent. The acceptance or rejection from a publication or literary agency is the ultimate feedback.

It takes guts. Chances are, you will receive a good many rejections before you even get a hand-written note that says, "This is good writing, but it doesn't meet our needs at this time. Try us again." A couple dozen more rejections later and you might actually make a sale.

Your writing is dear to you, but to the cold world outside, it's either "Yes, we want to publish it," or "No, get it out of here." The rejection stings, but it's part of the unavoidable path to acceptance, sale and publication.

Even published writers and authors experience rejection. Like me. Once you achieve some measure of acceptance – selling to local giveaways, small literary magazines or regional book publishers – you have to take the next step to larger, national publications or national book publishers. And you'll face more rejection.

You can avoid a good amount of rejection by doing your research and keeping your goals realistic. The *New Yorker* isn't going to publish your first short story. They rarely publish anybody's first short story. You still have to face it – rejection is part of growth.

So send it out, send it out, and send it out again. If you keep at it, you'll wear the bastards down and you'll finally get that wonderful note, "All right already, we'll publish it. Just quit sending us all of these fat manila envelopes!"

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Payment due with camera-ready ad copy.

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Student over 18: \$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

*Published monthly by the Board of Directors of
SouthWest Writers, a nonprofit, tax-exempt
501(c)(3) organization.*

Subscription is a benefit of membership.

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Worse Than Writer's Block?

by Rose Marie Kern

Hundreds of articles decry the woes of writer's block. You have a story to tell, you may even be halfway through, then the page turns white before your eyes and you know the muse has fled. For people who have daily, weekly or monthly columns there is a more insidious enemy: Topic Block.

When you first begin writing in your chosen field you have hundreds of ideas bouncing blithely from brain to keyboard. Words pour forth and you know you are brilliant. But somewhere along the line you realize that a deadline hovers close...and you have run out of inspiration.



As an aviation author and air traffic control specialist, my focus is teaching pilots the best way to use the system. I have been doing this for over three years now and have monthly columns in 12 aviation publications and websites. One month I sat down to write, and for the life of me I could not think of any topic not addressed in previous months. It is one thing to have a topic and not know how to approach it. It is quite another to not even have a topic to begin with!

There are three ways I have learned to overcome topic block: Rewrite, Expand, and Research.

One suggestion from a friend was to pull out a topic I had not used in a long time and do a rewrite to make it fresh. This has helped on several occasions when deadlines were stalking me. Changing "The Effects of Wind Shear" to "Wicked, Wicked Wind Shear" actually made for a better article than the original piece.

Another plan to bust topic block is to pull out a previous article that covered a broad category, select one section and expand. Notices to Airmen are messages from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to pilots warning them of unusual conditions en route - such things as runway closures or a frequency change, or places where a Presidential visit may require flights to reroute. I had written about these messages in a previous article, so for several subsequent articles I concentrated on specific types of Notices to Airmen.

When the idea door slammed shut one time, I reached way back to my training 25 years ago and pulled down a book that is considered to be the "Bible" of air traffic control (ATC) information. I traveled the dry and murky depths of this official FAA informational tome, and in the brambles of inscrutable governmentese I discovered my subject: How ATC determines its priorities. It was actually one of my more humorous pieces.

Because I work in the industry many of my topics arise out of the conversations around me at work. Comments on how terrain can affect wind flow led to a series of articles on low level flying conditions in various parts of the country. The frustration of dealing with student pilots spurred articles to Instructor Pilots on the best way to introduce their students to weather briefing and flight plan filing.

Using these methods and writing down any little notations that come my way during a day's work turn topic blocks into a writer's organic garden.

Rose Marie Kern has been an air traffic control flight service specialist for over 25 years. She writes monthly articles for 14 aviation publications. Though from New Mexico, she is currently stationed near Washington, D.C.

The Seven Deadly Sins of Writing Dialogue

by Kirt Hickman

Realistic dialogue is one of the most difficult things for some writers to achieve. Compressing your dialogue to as few words as possible will help. If you've done that and the dialogue still rings false, look between your quotation marks for these deadly sins.

Everyday Dialogue

Skip the pleasantries every reader knows occur at the beginning and end of a conversation:

"Hi."

"How are you?"

"I'm fine. How are you?"

It's boring. Start the conversation at the point where it becomes interesting.

Informative Dialogue

Never have a character say something that everybody in the conversation already knows.

Consider this passage from an early draft of my science-fiction novel *Worlds Asunder* in which Snider speaks with the manager of Stellarfare, a commuter starline:

"May I remind you," Snider said, "that NASA is your regulatory authority. I can revoke your license to fly from Lunar Alpha."

"Don't bully me. NASA is funded by taxation of the businesses that operate from its bases. Stellarfare alone supplies a third of that funding for Lunar Alpha."

Both characters know this and the only person who doesn't know this is the reader. That's who these characters are talking to, not to each other.

Informative dialogue can often be corrected by moving the information from the dialogue to the thoughts of your viewpoint character:

"I'll revoke your license to fly from Lunar Alpha." Snider's voice shook with forced civility.

"Don't bully me. Revoke our license and it'll be the last thing you do as director. When you're replaced, we'll return."

He was right. Damn it, the manager was right. Stellarfare provided a third of NASA's funding for Lunar Alpha. Snider's threat had only solidified the man's resolve.

Direct Address

Direct address occurs when a character says the name of the person he's addressing:

"What time is it, Jennifer?"

She consulted her watch. "Four o'clock, Tommy."



Notice how natural the dialogue feels when I remove the characters' names from the spoken lines:

"What time is it?" Tommy asked suddenly.

Jennifer consulted her watch. "Four o'clock."

Self-talk

Often, when a character talks to himself, the author is using contrived dialogue to relay the character's thoughts to, as is done in this passage from a critique submission (reprinted with the author's permission):

"I feel like I've been run over by a Mack Truck," he moaned. "Where am I anyway?"

He rolled his eyes from side to side and tried to think. "I can't see a thing," he said aloud and tried to sit up again. This time the ground moved beneath him.

"Oh oh," he said. "An earthquake?" He tried to concentrate. "Naw. It's not like that at all. It feels more like ball bearings rolling around under me."

Because your scene is written from your character's viewpoint, you can communicate his thoughts without having him say them out loud:

Luke's body ached like he'd been run over by a Mack Truck. He rolled his eyes from side to side in the darkness to clear his head.

The earth began to shake. Not like an earthquake. More like ball bearings rolling around beneath him. "Whoa." It was the strangest thing he'd ever felt.

Mismatched Dialogue, Actions, and Emotion

Consider the following passage:

Jorge slammed his fist on the table. "Well, you know, I really don't think that's such a good idea."

If the speaker's words are inconsistent with his actions, the reader won't believe whatever emotion you're trying to show. Make your character's dialogue match his emotions:

Jorge slammed his fist on the table. "Over my cold carcass."

Overuse of the Exclamation Point

Reserve exclamation points for when your character is genuinely shouting.

Neglecting to Read Out Loud

Once you've purged all of the sins described above, read your dialogue scene out loud for sound and pacing. Does it sound natural? Does it have the rhythm of speech? Is it tense and engaging? Have you achieved the desired pace? Only then will you know if it's effective.

*Kirt Hickman has Bachelor and Master degrees in Electrical Engineering from UNM, and leverages his knowledge and experience to enrich his stories. *Worlds Asunder* is his first novel.*

In Desperate Search of a Publisher

by Audrey Hansen

The effort of writing a book pales when compared to the task of finding a publishing house. However, after ten rejections and inspired by authors who had persisted after twenty or more such rebuffs, I continued to pursue a publisher for my book *Colorado Out Back: A Roadside Guide to the San Luis Valley*.

Nine of my rejecting publishers had indicated my book would not be profitable for them. The tenth, however, said he'd had success with "quick histories" and suggested I rewrite my work (which already includes brief histories of every town) into that format.



Mildly interested, I subsequently spent an afternoon reviewing San Luis Valley history at the library, where I discovered a small book I hadn't seen before: a narrative on the Sangre de Cristo land grant, which spills into the San Luis Valley just east of Fort Garland. Since I had once lived in the valley, I was aware Malcolm Forbes had purchased that 275,000-acre expanse in 1969 and I noted that he, in fact, had contributed the book's final chapter. His company, Forbes, Inc., best known for its financial magazine, was also the book's publisher.

That night in bed I seized on a crazy idea. The Forbes family, residents in the valley for over thirty years, just might be interested in publishing a guidebook for this area they know so well.

The next morning I called Forbes Trinchera, as the property is now known, in Fort Garland to double-check the ownership. Yes, I was told, the family still owns it and, in fact, each Forbes has a private residence on the property. I then bought a copy of *Forbes Magazine* to check the masthead; I had to direct my proposal to a Forbes. The president, CEO, and Editor-in-Chief was Steve Forbes; Tim Forbes was vice president. Not sure of the latter's role, I decided on Steve Forbes. (My inner voice cried out, "You're out of your mind!")

Nevertheless, I set to work on a proposal, which I felt had to impress immediately. I wanted the manuscript to *look* like a book. I single-spaced the pages and inserted color pictures that I had Kinko's reduce to size. I then encased all in a folder with a transparent cover and prepared a SASE.

The cover letter came last. I agonized over the first sentence. Why should Forbes, Inc. want to publish a book? (General distribution? A marketing tool for Sangre de Cristo Ranches, a development company that sells Trinchera ranchettes? A gift for current Trinchera landowners?) I also glued a copy of my 1975 photograph of the sleek

golden Forbes jet -- taken at the Alamosa airport -- to the bottom of the second page.

At long last, I took the proposal (addressed to 60 Fifth Avenue, New York City) to the post office. The date: Monday, September 10, 2001. The next morning, September 11, as I watched the World Trade Center collapse, my only comment was: "Oh, s - - t!" (*How's that for a sympathetic statement?*) Deep down I knew my proposal was dead.

On Friday, October 15, I received a FedEx envelope affixed with a Forbes label. I looked at it with some amusement. I knew it was a rejection, but I also reasoned that either the FedEx was a compliment, or Forbes, Inc. wouldn't be caught dead with my many-stamped SASE in its outgoing mail. Inside were my manuscript, the unused SASE, and a personal letter from Steve Forbes (in part):

The valley is indeed a wonder-filled place and one near to the hearts of the Forbes family.

Regrettably at this time, with so many other urgent demands on our resources, it is not possible to consider being involved in the publication of your excellent guidebook.

With regret and best wishes,

Sincerely,

Steve Forbes

Somehow, after all my work, I'm rather proud of that rejection. (Friends suggest that maybe I could sell the *letter*!)

Audrey Hansen, after a long career in news and TV, taught broadcasting and speech at the university level. She moved to her new husband's San Luis Valley (CO.) ranch, where her book *Coyotes Always Howl at Midnight* is set. Now living in Albuquerque, she has written articles for *Senior Times* and earned awards in several contests.

SouthWest Writers offers a free writing class at Bear Canyon Senior Center every Monday from 2:00—3:15 p.m. Taught by Larry Greenly and Rob Spiegel, classes are free to members of any Albuquerque Senior Center. Membership is open to anyone over 50 and annual dues are \$13. Bear Canyon is two blocks north of Montgomery, one block east of Eubank.

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

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

Kirt Hickman

Everything You Need to Know about Scenes

We will discuss the most important building blocks of your short story, novel, or memoir: your scenes. You'll learn the essential elements of a scene; how to choose your viewpoint character; how to write opening paragraphs and closing hooks; and how to create drama by showing (rather than telling) your story, by rendering your setting and characters effectively, and by infusing your scene with that ever-important adrenaline pump called tension.

Kirt Hickman, author of the 2008 science-fiction conspiracy thriller *Worlds Asunder*, was a technical writer for fourteen years before branching into fiction. He teaches self-editing classes through SouthWest Writers. He has been a mentor in the SWW mentoring program, has spoken at several conferences, and contributes a monthly column titled "Revising Fiction" to the *SouthWest Sage*.



Tuesday, June 16
7 to 9 p.m.

Bob Gassaway, Ph.D.

Interviewing -- Gathering Information and Using it Well

Interviewing is a critical skill for most writers, whether we write fiction or non-fiction. Very few of us know all the facts we need for an article, short story or a book. We have to ask other people what they know, what they saw, what they heard, and what they think about what they know. How do you find the right sources? How do you get them to tell you what they know? Interviewing is the answer.

Bob Gassaway became a television reporter at the age of 17 and worked more than 20 years as a writer and editor for newspapers, magazines and The Associated Press. After earning a Ph.D. in sociology, focusing on the symbolism of human communication, he began teaching journalism and conducting research as a sociologist. He is co-editor of the non-fiction book called *Dirty Work* published in 2007 and now is writing his second mystery novel.

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

Novel Extravaganza

A panel of novelists gives you the dirt on their genre markets. **Bob Gassaway: mystery, Melody Groves: westerns, Keith Pyeatt: horror, Sandy Toro: historical fiction.**

Bob Gassaway has worked as a writer and editor for newspapers, magazines and The Associated Press. He is co-editor of a non-fiction book called *Dirty Work* published in 2007 and now is writing his second mystery novel.

Melody Groves is the public relations chair for SouthWest Writers. She has published three historical novels and two non-fiction books and writes for *True West*, *New Mexico*, and *albuquerqueARTS* magazines.

Keith Pyeatt spent a decade living in an isolated log cabin he built in northeastern Vermont. He began that decade an engineer and ended up a novelist, writing horror. Keith has been a board member at SouthWest Writers for three years. He has published two novels.

Sandra Toro specializes in historical family sagas and contemporary thrillers. She has published two novels and is finishing a third. She has previously been a television producer and has also taught creative writing and English literature at the University of Nebraska in Kearney.

Tuesday, July 21
7 to 9 p.m.

Betsy James

Herding Words: Organizing the Novel

How the heck are you going to organize a novel? Especially when it involves illicit shenanigans in the State Department, or on Planet Blexx where they have eight legs and god knows they lose their socks. Betsy James, who writes extremely complex novels and rarely mislays her car keys, will present strategies for keeping track of fictional worlds, whether realistic or imaginal. She will bring examples of organizational tools, if she can remember where she put them.

Betsy James has managed to get it together to write and illustrate sixteen books for young adults and children. She will teach a SW Writers class on Imaginal Writing in June and July.

ADVANCED SCREENWRITING

Rick Reichman

Eight weeks: June 11—July 30

Thursday evenings 6:30-9:00 p.m.

SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris NE, Ste A

\$160 members

\$210 non-members includes a one-year SWW membership with online *SouthWest Sage*

Class limited to 14 students

Now that you have the basics, Advanced Screenwriting is the way to put them into practice. **Rick Reichman's** most successful screenwriting students have come from his rarely offered Advanced Screenwriting Workshop. If you have taken any of Rick's classes, have a screenplay you are working on, want to learn to hone, pitch, and market your script, this eight-week workshop is for you.

Rick Reichman, who graduated with an MFA from the University of Southern California, has taught screenwriting for a number of years. His students have sold to Warner Brothers, Fox, HBO, Showtime, and all the major networks. Rick has won screenwriting awards and optioned two screenplays. His book *Formatting Your Screenplay* has sold over 13,000 copies and his second book, *20 Things You Must Know to Write A Great Screenplay*, was recently a finalist in the *ForeWord* magazine's best book of the year for writing instruction.

**IMAGINAL WRITING:
CHALLENGES IN FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION**
Betsy James

Eight weeks: June 3, 10, 17, 24; July 1, 8, 15, 22

Wednesday evenings 6:30-9:00 p.m.

SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris NE, Ste A

\$150 members

\$180 non-members includes a 6-month SWW membership with online *SouthWest Sage*

Class limited to 10 students

Imaginal fiction—traditionally known as fantasy and science fiction—uses custom-designed cultures, earthly or otherwise, to illuminate the issues and visions of the world we live in. In weekly assignments we will experiment with the imaginal. Assignments will be appropriate to novel or short story, whether adult or juvenile. Clear and respectful peer critique will be taught and modeled.

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

TRAVELING THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF POETRY

Jeanne Shannon
Constance Hester**Saturday, June 20**

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

All prices include lunch

\$59 register by May 1 (early bird special)

\$69 register by May 31 \$75 register at door

Non-members add \$10

Location: New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE

We will look at the work of well-known poets and less famous poets and try our hand at writing in various poetic forms. Writing prompts will help free our imagination and stimulate the flow of creativity.

Jeanne Shannon has been writing poetry since childhood. She has published three full-length collections of her poetry and ten chapbooks. Her work has appeared in numerous small-press and university publications. She is currently the editor/publisher of The Wildflower Press, a small-press book publisher in Albuquerque.

Constance Hester has published many poems in poetry journals and anthologies and in 2004 published her first book, *Call Me Myriad*. She helped found Fresh Ink, New Mexico and has taught several all-day workshops.

REVISING FICTION: MAKING SENSE OF THE MADNESS

Kirt Hickman

Part I: How to Write a Great Story**Mondays, July 6, 13, 20, 27, 6:30-8:30pm**

\$65 members, \$75 non-members + \$15.00 materials fee. *Students who take both Part I and Part II need only pay the materials fee once.* Class Limited to 14 Students

World Building & Characterization, Plot, First Draft, Research, & Gross Problems, Chapter Breaks & Exposition

Part II: How to Write it Well**Mondays, August 3, 10, 17, 24, 6:30-8:30pm**

\$65 members, \$75 non-members + \$15.00 materials fee.

Class Limited to 14 Students

Scenes, Polishing Prose, Dialog, Finishing Touches, & Critiques

Each class will include a lecture, discussion, prepared exercises, and class time to work your own writing projects. You'll also receive a copy of the book, *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness*, a list of recommended reading, and a self-editing checklist.

Kirt Hickman, author of the 2008 science-fiction conspiracy thriller *Worlds Asunder*, was a technical writer for fourteen years before branching into fiction. His methodical approach to self-editing has helped many make sense of the mass of advice available to the novice writer.

Roads of Poetry at June 20 Workshop

by Jeanne Shannon

As we travel the roads of poetry in the June 20 workshop, we will be exploring a variety of approaches to reading and writing poetry.

We'll be reminded that we don't always have to understand what a poem "means" in order to appreciate it. As Archibald MacLeish said, "A poem should not mean, but be." Learning to listen differently—to hear the music of the language, for example—will free us from the notion that we always have to know exactly what the poet had in mind in writing the poem.

We'll look at a "silent poem." We'll practice writing in the future tense. We'll explore poetic forms including the triolet (pronounced tree-oh-lay), the quatrain, and the pantoum. We'll experiment with creating a poem using "random lines" derived from magazines or other sources.

Then we'll travel down the pathways of memory, looking at how poets have written about their personal past—how they *showed* us their past instead of just *telling* about it, which can be boring, boring, boring! And we'll wander through the natural world, looking at how poets, including a few local ones, have written about landscape, animals, plants, and country life. We'll look at a notable "country life" poem by a local poet—a poem that recently won a major prize.

We'll look at the Power Points of poetry—words that make poems stronger—and examine the value of critiques and belonging to critique groups. We will close the day by creating a myth or fable.

Constance and I are looking forward to having you join us in our poetic travels on June 20. Call the SWW office, 265-9485, to reserve your space on the tour.

Coming Soon

Membership Survey

We want to know your ideas
for speakers, classes and workshops.

Look for the survey at meetings,

on-line

and in the July Sage.

Newcomers Breakfast August 1



Join us before the regular first Saturday meeting on August 1 for the semi-annual newcomers breakfast. Arrive at 8:30 and enjoy a bunch of breakfast goodies provided by SWW board members. Anyone who has not already attended a new member breakfast is welcome. Board members will explain the range of services and benefits available through Southwest Writers. The location is New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE.

August Monthly Saturday Meeting

Saturday, August 1
10:00 a.m. to noon

Mark Rudd

Switching from Essay Writing to Storytelling
Four Years to Write a Short Memoir

Mark Rudd will discuss his process of writing "Underground: My Life in SDS and Weatherman," a memoir. He'll illustrate his editing and rewriting process with examples from drafts. He'll also read a passage from the finished work and answer questions.

Mark Rudd was one of the main leaders of the 1968 student strike at Columbia University. He subsequently became National Secretary of Students for a Democratic Society, SDS, and was one of the founders of the militant Weather Underground, which sought to overthrow the government of the United States using violence. He was a fugitive until 1977. His recent book, "Underground," covers this period 1965-1977.

In 1978, Mark moved to Albuquerque and was an instructor at Central New Mexico Community College (TVI) until he retired at the end of 2006. He's been active in a variety of struggles in New Mexico: anti-nuclear, Native American land rights, solidarity with Central America, union organizing, anti-war organizing, and environmental justice work.



Websites for Contests

<http://www.firstwriter.com/competitions/>

<http://www.writers-editors.com/Writers/Contests/contests.htm>

<http://www.placesforwriters.com/contests/>

Successes

Audrey Hansen's article about the widow of the owner of the Emperius Mine in Creede, CO, was published in the April quarterly issue of the *San Luis Valley Historian*.

Connie Harrington was solicited to write an essay on the short story as a literary form. "Short Story, Tall Order" will be published in the Spring 2009 issue of *Think Journal*.

Kathy Fraser's first novel, *A Journey, a Reckoning and a Miracle*, will be published in July 2009 by O-books. Visit her website at www.jrmstory.com.

Jim Thompson, author of the *Physics of Genesis*, announces publication of his latest book, *The St. Nicholas Solution*. The book presents stories from the life of the saint plus legends connected to Santa Claus, with ideas for celebrating the holidays and inspiring solutions for meeting life's challenges.

Barbara DuBois has a story, "The Photographer" in the May issue of *Word Worth*.

Shirley Raye Redmond's nonfiction book *The Jersey Devil* has been released as part of Kidhaven Press's creepy *Monsters* series. Her regency romance *Rosemary's Glove* will be released in hardcover by Avalon Books on June 23.

John Orman won two runner-up awards in the *Albuquerque ARTSFlash Fiction* contest for his essays "The Clock Strikes Midnight for the Captain" and "Devil's Workshop."

Sally K. Severino's memoir *Becoming Fire: A Freudian Psychoanalyst's Spiritual Journey* will be published by Epigraph Books, June 2009.

Announcements

Anna Redsand, author of the Young Adult biography *Viktor Frankl: A Life Worth Living* (winner of the Society of School Librarians International Honor Book Award as well as other awards), will speak to the **Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators** about the book's journey from idea to publication. The presentation is free and will be held on Tuesday June 9 from 7 – 8 p.m. in Room 5 in the Manzano Mesa Multigenerational Center at 501 Elizabeth St. SE. www.scbwi-nm.org,

Sean Murphy has started the Creativity and Consciousness Institute at the University of NM in Taos. The lineup of summer courses begins July 7-11 with a 5 day 'Sacred Activism' workshop led by internationally renowned author and mystic Andrew Harvey. During July 13-23 the Institute will be offering Reading & Writing with Taos Authors: A Writing Intensive featuring Sean Murphy who won first place for best novel in the NM Press Women's 2009 competition, John Nichols, Rick Collignon, E. Robert Arrellano, Mirabai Starr, and others. The cost is \$450. For additional information, see <http://www.cctaos.org>.

Winners of SouthWest Writers First Quarterly Writing Competition

A Memorable Event: Write a personal anecdote (where you were, how you felt, or how you were affected, etc.) about a memorable event in your life. Some examples: Pearl Harbor, JFK's assassination, 9/11 or other such important event.

First Place: Kathy Kuenzer, Albuquerque, N.M., *The Perfect Storm*

Second Place: Jacqueline Hayden, Hanford, Calif., *From the Seat of a Second Grader*

Third Place: Charles J. Garcia, Erie, Colo., *Right Here on this Stage*

Honorable Mentions

Laurel Burnett, Albuquerque, N.M., *Even Now*

Cathy Crenshaw Doheny, Charlotte, N.C., *Improvised Motherhood*

Gary Logsted, Albuquerque, N.M., *The Big Comedown*

Martha Miller, San Antonio, TX, *September 11, 2001, Rome Italy*

John Orman, Albuquerque, N.M., *Sputnik Conquers the World*

Barbara Ragsdale, Germantown, Tenn., *The Stain*

Justin H. Riley, Redding, Calif., *Finding the Face of God in Palestine*

SWW 2009 Second Quarter

Writing Competition

The Best Hook

Both fiction and non-fiction books and articles use a "hook" in the first paragraph or so to draw in the reader. Write the opening page of an article or book, using your best hook. The best ones to grab the judges will win the prizes below. Wind up your imagination and let 'er rip. Double-spaced, one-page maximum. Postmark deadline: Tuesday, June 30. All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail entries to SWW Quarterly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque, 87111.

The Good Job

by Sherri Burr

In April and May 2009, I was invited to speak at two separate events to University of New Mexico graduating students. I focused my comments on distinguishing between the good job, the so-so job and the bad job. It occurred to me that many of the same concepts apply to writers. Here are three tips.

Tip 1: Determining the Good Writing Job

The best writing jobs are the ones where you love what you are doing and you like the people who assist you, be they agents, editors, publishers and so forth. With a good job, you may not like all aspects of the job or all the people, but you like the overwhelming majority of the work and the people. You experience flow, which Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes as the kind of energy that so engrosses you that you lose track of time. You gain more energy with each word you write. You are happy. Your relatives and friends are delighted for you. This is the ideal world every writer should seek to create for himself or herself.



Tip 2: Tolerating the So-So Job

Some jobs start out as fabulous but eventually dissolve into so-so ones. The situation can evolve to where you either (1) love the work but dislike the people, or (2) dislike the work but love the people, or (3) love half the work and half the people. Some people survive this situation for years, if not decades, until retirement. If you get this feeling at the beginning of a job, look for something else. For example, several years ago I signed a contract to write a book that I was initially excited about. As I struggled to write chapters, I realized the topic was not for me. I called my editor and politely requested to be let out of the contract. He agreed, and I have since written six other books for him. Stay attuned to your feelings and honor them. It is much easier to write on a topic you love.

Tip 3: Flee the Bad Job

The final category is the bad work, where you hate most, if not all, of your assignments and most, if not all, of the people assisting you. You feel your edge slipping as your topic bogs you down. Your heart palpitates as you call your agent. Your steps slow down and become labored as you approach the post office to mail off material that you know is substandard. Your palms sweat as you open letters, fearing the next rejection letter, even though you know you did not do your

best work. Writers with bad jobs often lead what one author termed as a life of "quiet desperation." They sabotage their writing in hopes of getting a negative response. One writer told me she procrastinated to such an extent on an article that her editor finally called and offered \$50 to kill their contract. It's as if she walked around with an invisible stamp on her forehead that said "Fire me."

This is the kind of situation where the writer didn't like what she was working on, but was too lazy or frozen by inertia to get off her duff and do something about it. Don't be like this. Bad writing jobs can create the perfect storm in your life. They are soul destroying, damaging spirits and health, and sometimes making writers depressed and physically ill. Take your writing boat out of the water and find a satisfying job. Obtain work that puts a smile on your face when you arise early in the morning to begin researching and it is still there when you are typing late into the night.

Some of you might be worried about the economy and thinking "good job vs. bad job: what is she talking about? I'd be happy with any job." Even in this economy, there is writing work available with corporations, ad agencies and on the Internet. With young people focusing on the art of texting, employers need writers who can not only put two sentences together, but also author an entire newsletter, and write ad campaigns or web pages. Keep your attitude positive and attract the best writing work. Everyone deserves the good job.

Sherri Burr is a long-time member of SouthWest Writers and the author of 11 books. She is a tenured professor at the University of New Mexico where she teaches Entertainment Law. This column "Minding Finances for Writers" recently won first place in the New Mexico Press Women contest for advice columns.

On-Line Resources

www.mediabistro.com caters to non-fiction professionals and lists job openings and freelancers' profiles. For a membership fee, you can browse their listing of publications and how to pitch to them.

The Fundsforwriters newsletter, \$12/year, gives you 80+ markets, grants, contests, publishers, jobs, agents and careers for your writing career. Every two weeks, receive one source that lists dozens of paying opportunities.
www.fundsforwriters.com.

Looking for a writing conference? Browse **http://writing.shawguides.com/**. ShawGuides describes 940 programs worldwide. Puerto Vallarta, Ghana, Italy, Hawaii, anyone?

Registration Form for the SouthWest Writers' Conference

THE NOVEL—ALL GENRES

Saturday, August 15, 2009

CNM Workforce Training Center, 5600 Eagle Rock Ave. N. E., Albuquerque, NM

Registration includes conference presentations, a box lunch Saturday, refreshments, and the possibility of a 10-minute pitch session with an agent or editor. The number of pitch sessions is limited and will be assigned on a first-come basis. Not everyone will get a session, but the earlier you register, the better your chances. **Register by July 15 (postmark date if mailed) to take advantage of the early bird rate.**

Conference times: Check in from 8:30-9:00 Saturday morning. Conference from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

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

How did you learn about this conference? _____

Conference Cost (non-member registration includes a one-year membership to SWW):

_____ @ \$99.00 SWW member cost (registered by 7/15/09) = \$ _____

_____ @ \$129.00 SWW member cost (registered after 7/15/09) = \$ _____

_____ @ \$149.00 non-member cost (registered by 7/15/09) = \$ _____

_____ @ \$179.00 non-member cost (registered after 7/15/09) = \$ _____

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

☐ Check or money order (made out to SouthWest Writers)

☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa

If paying by credit card:

Cardholder Name: _____

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

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

Billing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

I'd like a ten-minute pitch session with:

☐ an agent ☐ an editor

Saturday lunch preference (check one):

☐ Italian Chicken Focaccia ☐ The Awesome Veggie ☐ Ham and More Adventure ☐ Albuquerque Turkey

Special diet requirements or allergies _____

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

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



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

SouthWest Sage

SouthWest Writers

3721 Morris NE

Albuquerque, NM 87111

www.southwestwriters.com

SWWriters@juno.com

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Label shows your SWW Membership expiration date.

Renew promptly to retain your membership benefits.

Wanting to Start Groups/Looking for a Group

Any Genre, Albuquerque NE Heights

Meet every other Friday
Krys Douglas 505-830-3015

Poetry

Billy Brown 505-401-8139
welbert53@aol.com

Nonfiction

Peggy Spencer 505-270-8914

Screenwriting

G. Hathaway 505-249-7957

Nonfiction, Santa Fe

J. James Cunningham
grandpajimsf@peoplepc.com

Nonfiction, Valencia County

Karen Keese 505-261-0040
skywriter@wildblue.net

Children's Books Santa Fe

ldiemand@cybermesa.com

Groups Seeking Members

Any Genre

Estancia Valley Writers Group

Moriarty Community Library
2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.
Tina Ortega 505-832-2513

Any Genre

Albuquerque Press Club

201 Highland Park Cir. SE
Second Tuesdays 7 pm
Samantha 505-401-1561 or
sclark.abq@earthlink.net

Any Genre, Rio Rancho:

Alice Harpley and Bob Harpley
505-867-1408
riversedgebob@cablone.net
riograndema@cablone.net

Mystery

www.croak-and-dagger.com

Critique Groups

Submit requests to
SWWriters@juno.com

Duke City Screenwriters

Every other Thursday,
Flying Star on 7th and Silver.
Marc Calderwood 505-897-6474
skatingkokopelli@hotmail.com

Land of Enchantment Romance Authors

Second Saturdays at noon.
leranm.com