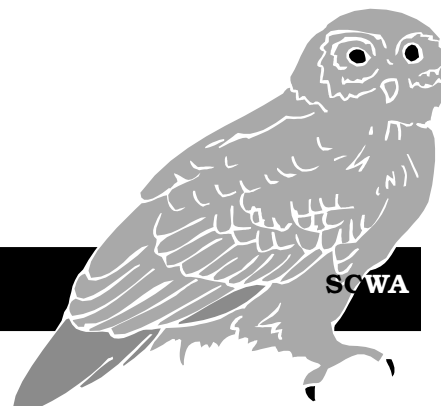


Southern California Writers Association Writers News

Volume 4, Number 10

October 2005



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October 15
Brian Alan Lane & W.
Reed Moran
screenwriters

Prose That's the
Talk of the Town



October 3

President's Message

This month, we will—I hope—be holding elections, and will be electing some new officers. To those outgoing members who have served so well on the Board, I say "Thank You!"

To all of you who have indicated they will serve on the 2006 Board, I say "Really, really thank you!"

I don't know why this year has been especially difficult to recruit. Perhaps the performance of this year's Board may have caused people to think, "Oh, I could *never* do the job that well..."

Whatever the reasons, the problem appears to be solved, at least until next year, so we can return to the business at hand.

One of the goals the 2006 Board will try to accomplish is to get more of our members involved in critique groups.

Continued on page 2, column 1

October Speaker

On October 15th, it will be our privilege to hear from two top local writers, famed for everything from script writing to article and book authorship. **Brian Alan Lane** and **W. Reed Moran** will teach us how to create prose that's the talk of the town, by using wit, wiles and humor.

Screenwriter **Reed Moran** has written for such popular television shows as *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *MacGyver*. His articles have been published in *USA Today*, and many publications across the country. Of his career, Reed says, "I was never asked to write for a legal show, although I'm a lawyer. I've never, not once, read a mystery novel, yet was plucked out of obscurity in suburban Virginia to write for a mystery series on CBS." He continues, "And, now, I want to share the secrets of writing 'hot' prose with the members of SCWA."

Brian Alan Lane has written and produced scripts for many popular television shows and feature films. His credits include *The Girl From Mars* and *Out of Time*, as well as series episodes for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Blue Thunder* and *Remington Steele*.

A Professor of Writing at the **College of The Arts, Department of Film and Electronic Arts**, at **Cal State Long Beach**, Lane's short stories are published in literary journals worldwide. He is a Contributing Editor to **Sweet Fancy Moses**, the quarterly **Journal of Fiction** and is the Founding Editor/Publisher of the soon-to-debut creative non-fiction website, *Tales Told*. Currently, Lane's day job is his best-selling book, *Cat and Mouse*, described as, "A masterpiece which could have been concocted by Vladimir Nabokov," by **The Boston Book Review**.

Lynnette Baum, V.P. Programming

President's Message, cont. from page 1

Those of you who heard Jill Shapiro speak noted her emphasis on finding a critique group that will help you. But if the group is going to help you, it is extremely important that you learn to do your part to help the group.

First, *remember that you are not looking at a finished product!* If the author felt it was ready, she would be submitting it to an agent, not to your group. She knows it's not perfect; that's why she's seeking input from trusted sources. Take this trust very seriously, and don't say anything to violate this trust.

Second, *remember that you are offering your opinion only, not fact!* A friend who is a former Toastmaster buddy once told me, "An opinion can be neither right nor wrong—because if it can be proven to be either, then it is no longer an opinion."

(This, of course, is an entire area of exploration in itself! When virtually everyone shares the same opinion, particularly in regards to matters of taste, does it then become a fact? The answer is "No, of course it doesn't." However, you can, and probably should, treat these cases as fact simply for ease in communication, e.g., it is better to be educated than ignorant, it

is better to be willing to put forth the necessary effort to achieve a goal than to cheat, etc.)

Third, remind yourself that *unless you can make effective suggestions how to correct the problem in the manuscript, you should not be saying there is anything wrong with it!* Yes, I know there are some occasions when you know something isn't working, but you just can't put your finger on it. And it's okay once in a while to tell the author that something just doesn't work for you. But do it tactfully, and be sure to apologize for not being able to offer a solution. We had one lady in our group whose suggestion how to improve what she didn't like was, "...Just fix it so it doesn't do that anymore!"

Fourth, and most important, *keep focused on the solution, not the problem.* Remind yourselves that you are all in the group for the same reason—to become better writers. You all will receive far more than enough put-downs from editors and agents. None of you need abuse from those who are supposed to be helping you.

Critique groups, when done right, can be immensely rewarding and beneficial. I encourage anyone who is the least bit serious about writing to get into one as soon as possible!

Good luck and good writing!

Roy King, President

The Writer's Life: How to Succeed in an Online Writing Workshop

by Victory Crayne

Reprinted with permission

Have you ever wondered how to get started in one of those writing workshops you hear about so much? Are you afraid of being the new kid on the block and not knowing what to do?

Relax. We were all in your boots at one time. Here's the real scoop on how to get started and succeed in a new writing workshop on the Internet. Many of the ideas here also work well in workshops where writers meet in person.

Pick a workshop that appears to have other writers who write the kind of fiction or nonfiction you like to write. But if such a group is hard to find, join an active group anyway. You will get valuable feedback even if no one writes the kind of stuff you do.

Join a writing workshop that has participation requirements. Such a workshop will have more active and helpful people than one where people can just lurk and make comments without having to work hard, i.e., do some actual writing of their own.

Study any workshop guidelines or FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) file. Read the submissions and the critiques of others for about a week to get a feeling for the culture of the group.

Continued on page 3, column 1

Membership Information

Pauline Bent V.P. Membership
pchavezbent@hotmail.com

Meeting Reservations

Roy King H (760) 955-5027
3kings@urs2.net

2005 Executive Committee

President	Roy King
V.P. Programming	Lynnette Baum
V.P. Membership	Pauline Bent
Secretary/Treasurer	Joan Cordova
Publicity Director	Kat Tewksbury
Webmaster	Pamela Rocke
Newsletter Editor	Pamela Rocke
Associate Editor	Nancy Darnall
Tape Librarian	Sharon Walters

www.ocwriter.com

SCWA Critique Committee

Open to members of SCWA

Nonfiction & Fiction Roy King 3kings@urs2.net

Roy will take any amount of writing for critique. He prefers to see the entire ms at one time. *Mail* your ms to Roy at 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394.

Poetry Dr. Joyce Wheeler

Joyce will critique up to five poems. Please *mail* your work to Joyce at 3801 Chestnut Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90807.

How to Succeed..., cont. from page 2

Critique three pieces submitted by other writers. This gives you practice in critiquing and will help you become more aware of weaknesses in your own writing. It will also establish you as willing to be an active member of the group. Remember: the best way to GET critiques is to GIVE them.

In addition, you may wish to read some critiques prepared by others to learn more about how to write your own critique. Authors are interested in your fresh look at what they've written, so I recommend you write a critique of a piece before you look at any other critique of that same piece.

When preparing a critique, remember to focus on the written words, not the author behind them or the author's viewpoint.

If you would like some help in learning how to critique, you may wish to read my article "How to Critique Fiction". If you write nonfiction, there are some valuable pointers on general writing in there for you too. If you have web access, point your browser to <http://www.crayne.com/> or ftp from "www.crayne.com/download/howcrit.txt"

Take the plunge - write something or polish a previously written piece of your own.

Clean it up for grammar, spelling, etc. before you submit it. Submit in ASCII text format only, not in word processor format. Keep your margins to 65 characters or less, single spaced.

Try to get one live person near you to review it for such simple things as: Did they understand it? Do they feel your paragraphs are too long? Did you miss a word in a sentence or two (easy to do in the heat of creative writing)? Did they enjoy reading it? If you can't find someone, don't lose any sleep over it. Just go to the next step.

Submit your piece to your critique Writers News, October 2005

group; then wait for feedback. Give the others a few days to read and critique your submission. We're all busy people. Some folks can only find time to critique on weekend and others may take a week to respond. If you need fast feedback in order to meet a deadline, it is best to mention that in the opening paragraph of your submission.

Thank all critics via private email for their critiques, even if you disagree over some points. Send your thanks to them privately, not to the whole list. Thank them for taking the time to look at your work. Show some appreciation. Most important: don't critique their critique. In other words, don't argue.

The great majority of the critics mean well for you and try to help by pointing out what they believe are weaknesses. Occasionally you will receive a critique that tears your piece apart. You be the final judge. Others may have different viewpoints and nobody is 'god' here. However, ask yourself: would you rather have friendly critics find the weaknesses in your piece or an editor who might reject it because of them?

Fix up your piece with some of the ideas from the critiques which you thought were helpful. You don't have to agree with everything everyone said but it is amazing what a second look can do. Most good projects were not done perfectly the first time.

You may wish to resubmit your revised piece, but I suggest you do so only if you made a lot of changes. Don't bother if you just fixed grammar, spelling, or other minor changes.

Now take the big plunge - send it in to a publisher! (Query letters, submission formats, etc. are beyond the scope of this article.)

Try to submit something original to your critique group at least once a month. Don't let your writing skills become rusty.

Continued on page 4, column 3

September Contest Winner

The Painter

by Carol Gandolfo

From under the bill of a Dodger's baseball cap, he watched as a young woman exited the McDonalds on Vine Street. She found a yellow, plastic bench and stuffed fries into her mouth. The painter studied her. She appeared older than she probably was and her clothes were worn and dirty. She carried an old backpack, stuffed with her belongings. She had potential. "Miss," he said softly. "I wonder if you would be interested in a job? It pays \$100."

He looked down at her and smiled. She eyed him warily, noticing his kind eyes. After some of the guys she had blown in dark alleys, he looked harmless.

When he asked her to sit for a painting, she agreed. After showering and dressing in the long, white dress he had provided, she wandered about his studio. Every wall was covered with portraits of young people in various costumes. Each painting was vibrant and lifelike. When he had set up the canvas, paints and brushes, he helped her pile her hair under a large hat and carefully wrapped a long, brown coat around her shoulders. Then he began to paint an outline of the girl.

An hour later he gave her \$20 for food and a bed for the night. He promised her the rest when they finished the painting the next day. He directed her to a hostel where she could spend the night. Later, in the darkness, he stared at the canvas. It was time to finish his work. He took a sip of red wine, breathed in deeply and closed his eye. Slowly, the colors began to emerge. The painting came alive. Soon, it was complete, but the brushes remained untouched.

In the hostel, a rumpled bed lay empty. Another runaway had mysteriously disappeared.

Honorable Mention

Gerri Seaton - *Who is That?*

Dr. Joyce Wheeler - *Madeline*

Awaiting Madness

www.ocwriter.com/willwrite.html

September Highlights

It's our obligation as writers to send our words out into the world. "We need to give a voice to those who can't..." says writer and novelist Julie Ann Shapiro. Having published over forty stories in the last two and one-half years as well as business articles, Ms. Shapiro presented **How to Write and Sell Short Stories**.

"I believed magic lived under the family hats" is the hook that begins Shapiro's story "Hats on a Bench," which she read aloud. Shapiro advocates using hooks for short stories because they "get you immediately into the story without a setup." Each hook needs to be well selected so that its compelling launch does not "fail later."

Your "core who's" should not be more than one to three characters whom you love. They need to embody life's heartaches and joys, which you provoke the readers to feel. "Take your characters on a journey" of discovery for the one thing you wish your readers to know. If you accomplish that singular purpose, your reader will be satisfied.

Shapiro compares the *what* of a story to looking through a peephole or having tunnel vision. Opening the door for the reader by showing what is there, not just telling, is the *how* of a story and can be accomplished by use of inner monologue, dialogue, and responses to others. "If you're afraid of emotions, you need to work on that."

Overall, "get out of your comfort zone" and take risks. One way is to discard your weekly outlines and write about annoyances and what fascinates you. "Whichever one stays with you the longest, write about it," Shapiro advises.

Take another risk and jail your inner editor. Finish all stories, even drafts. Try writing a story in 20 minutes. Shapiro has

had two stories from her experiment file published. She advises the approach one of her business clients uses: "I need it to be good enough; I don't need it to be great."

And, of course, be true to your writing and risk rejection by sending your work out. Decide if you are "a patient or an impatient submitter." Because Shapiro tends to be the latter and getting published is a high priority, she often submits to magazines that are not famous. "It's fun to be 'Googlable'!" She suggests dedicating some stories to the fast responders and others to the slow ones.

Often Shapiro submits a story to six publishers at once. When one accepts, she sends out letters of cancellation to the others. She tracks her activity with a spreadsheet that includes story title, date of submission, editorial comments, and time frame.

The topic of critique groups evokes strong feelings from Ms. Shapiro: they "can be your best and worst friends." Some "suffer from gang warfare and you become the poster child for everything that's wrong." Quick onset of no feedback can mask petty jealousies that have arisen because you're becoming good. On the other hand, all silence or all praise may mean you've outgrown this group and need to move up. One way to tell the difference is to do an internal energy audit. If "your energy is sapped," Shapiro says you need to leave. "You need to trust the persons you're asking for feedback."

When asked if she likes specialized critique groups, Ms. Shapiro thinks that short story writers and novelists who use chapters can mix well; however, other novelists and poets may need other combinations.

by *Glenda Rynn*

Members: You may buy taped copies of lectures from SCWA Tape Librarian Sharon Walters: swwaltz@surfside.net.

How to Succeed..., cont. from page 3

Critique the works of other writers occasionally.

For every person who took the time to critique something of yours, write a critique of something of theirs in return. As I said above: the best way to get critiques is to give them.

Remember that everyone in your workshop is a peer. No one walks on water.

The most important step of all - WRITE! You will learn more by doing than you will by reading and 'getting ready to write some day'.

Remember to enjoy yourself while you're writing. Writing may seem like hard work in the beginning, but if you focus on enjoying yourself in your writing sessions it will come through in your choice of ideas and words. Your readers will pick up on your enjoyment and enjoy themselves also.

Last of all, keep on writing no matter what obstacles get in your way. Eventually you will wake up one day and find yourself writing materials that many people will enjoy. Whether you sell it or not, it will be such an exciting reward that you will thank yourself for sticking it out.

People ask me frequently for a recommendation on which online writing workshop to join. Here are some pointers on finding one to meet your needs.

Continued on page 5, column 1

Halloween



All Hallows Eve

How to Succeed..., cont. from page 4

I've discovered a number of useful websites for writers. You will find them listed at www.crayne.com. Click on *Writing Resources*.

Browse the newsgroup *misc.writing* and ask for some suggestions.

If you are a member of an online service like America Online, Compuserve, Genie, Prodigy, etc., look for a writing workshop there.

Use the web search engines. You can look under 'Internet' on my home page at <http://www.crayne.com/> for dozens of search engines.

Visit the web sites by and for writers. My web page has dozens of them under 'Writing Resources'. **That's enough reading about them. Now get online and go for it!**

Victory Crayne, victory@crayne.com, writes science fiction stories and novels. Her website, www.crayne.com, is a haven for sci fi writers and a springboard to numerous helpful writer's sites. For additional articles on writing, visit Victory's website.

SCWA News & Announcements

Board Elections—2006

Elections for the 2006 Board of Directors will be held at the regular October meeting. Several members have stepped forward to run for office. But we still have vacancies.

SCWA members are encouraged to volunteer for any Board position. Current vacancies include V.P. of Membership, Secretary and Newsletter Editor. We are also looking for a Webmaster.

For more information, contact Roy King, 3kings@urs2.net, or Bill Thomas, BillJohnthomas@aol.com.

Writers News, October 2005

The October 2005 "Will Write 4 Food" Contest!

The contest is open to members of SCWA. Look carefully at the photo (right) and write a short-short story (maximum 250 words) about what is happening. To facilitate fair judging, put the story title on the top of the page with your name and daytime phone number underneath. Only the winning author will be contacted.

Write: A short-short story (maximum 250 words)

Submit: One entry per member per month, via e-mail: Lynnette Baum, therightwriter@cox.net.

Via snail mail, L. Baum, 17595 Harvard, Ste. C-144, Irvine, CA 92614.

Subject Line: *October 2005 "Will Write 4 Food Contest"* (Warning: without this subject line, the e-mail or snail mail may be deleted or tossed) with your daytime number underneath. Remember, no author name, please.

Deadline: Stories must be received on or before October 12, 2005.

Winner: Attends their next SCWA meeting for free. He or she will also be presented with a winner's certificate. The winning story will be featured in the club's newsletter, *The Writers News*, and on the organization's Website.

Criteria: Contestants must be members of SCWA. The story must be 250 words or less. No evaluation or comments will be offered on stories submitted for the contest. Only one winning entry per member per year.

Lynnette Baum, V.P. Programming

Yom Kippur

October 12



November 19, 2005

Alan Russell

Mystery Writer & novelist

Killer Mysteries: Making Money with Murder!

Russell is the author of eight novels. The **New York Times** says, "Mr. Russell has a gift for dialogue."

Publisher's Weekly says, "He's one of the best writers in the mystery field today."

Russell has won **The Lefty**, the **Critic's Choice Award**, and a **San Diego Book Award**.

Russell's novels include:

- *Political Suicide*
- *Exposure*
- *Shame*
- *Multiple Wounds*

Visit Russell's website at www.AlanRussell.net.

Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

Pamela Rocke, Editor

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**Columbus Day
October 10**

October Meeting

Saturday, October 15, 2005

Claim Jumper Restaurant
Banquet Room Entrance, rear of building
18050 Brookhurst St., Fountain Valley, CA
Restaurant tel.: (714) 963-6711.

Brian Alan Lane

screenwriter

Prose That's the Talk of the Town

Registration & Networking: 9:30 a.m.
Meeting & Program: 10:00 a.m.
Lunch: 11:30 a.m.
Afternoon Program: 12:15 p.m.
Members & Non-Members: \$20.00

**Walk-ins & Guests
always welcome**

RSVP before October 10: Roy King, 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394. Check must accompany reservations. Make checks payable to SCWA. After **October 10:** Roy King *home* (760) 955-5027; *e-mail* 3kings@urs2.net — bring check to door. For more information, go to www.ocwriter.com. **Be sure to RSVP whenever possible!**

Or register online at www.ocwriter.com/meetings.html

