

## June 17, 2006, Speaker

# Barbara DeMarco-Barrett,

Writer, Radio Host & Instructor

## *Igniting the Writer Within*



Barbara DeMarco-Barrett was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and at 11 moved to Lansdale, just outside Philadelphia. She attended Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, where she earned a bachelor's degree.

She has published fiction, poetry, articles and essays in such journals as the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Writer*, *Poets & Writers*, *Sunset*, *Westways*, *Orange Coast Magazine* and the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Her work has been

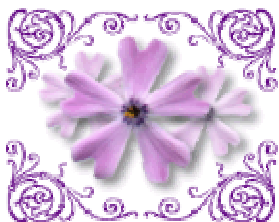
anthologized in two books: *The ASJA Guide to Freelance Writing* (St. Martin's Press, 2003) and *Conversations with Clarence Major* (University Press of Mississippi, 2002).

She is a host of *Writers on Writing*, a weekly radio show that airs on KUCI-FM (88.9) and at [www.kuci.org](http://www.kuci.org) and teaches creative writing at the University of California, Irvine Extension and through Gotham Writers Workshop in NYC. She lives in Corona del Mar, Calif.,

with her jazz and blues musician husband, her 11-year-old son, two tanks of fish and two cats.

Her first book is *Pen On Fire: A Busy Woman's Guide for Igniting the Writer Within* (Harcourt/Harvest, October 2004), which was honored in New York City in April with the 2005 ASJA Outstanding Book Award, for Self-help/Service.

Lynnette Baum, V.P.  
Programming



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## President's Message

We have all heard over and over how the Internet is changing our lives. Of course, it was the same way with answering machines, television, transistor radios, pocket calculators (which, of course, we wouldn't have without the transistor), and so on.

Nowadays we get irritated when we place a telephone call only to get an answering machine. Okay, that's only natural. But how often do we dial a number only to have the phone ring and ring without getting any answer machine? Now *that* is irritating!

Progress. Still, we wonder if all of it is good. The concrete barrier rail is one of the great life-saving discoveries in the history of automobile transportation. Only problem is—you never see America's beautiful rivers any more, unless you're lucky enough to travel on an old road whose bridges have steel railings. Television. Great for entertaining people in their own homes—but what does it do for our collective psychology? Whereas we used to join a little theatre group, or a semipro baseball team, or an organization where we had a chance to compete and experience frequent successes, now all we do is stay home and watch the top actors and athletes in the world—against whom we can't help but compare ourselves negatively.

But anyhow—back to the Internet and the way it affects our lives.

Most of you are like me, and receive daily stacks and gobs of forwarded e-mail messages. Some of them we like, and we send on to our other friends.

Herein often lies the problem.

Remember, we are writers. What is the first responsibility of a journalist?

To verify the authenticity of the material they have written. (This includes re-printed material.) I have gotten so many e-mails (typically on controversial subjects) which fall so pitifully short of the minimum standards of ethical journalism I start to feel queasy about the future of our country. Aren't the schools, to say nothing of professional organizations, teaching us anything about the ethics of communication; the responsibilities of passing along information?

Here are three excellent rumor-diffusing sites: [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com), [www.hoaxbusters.com](http://www.hoaxbusters.com), and [www.truthorfiction.com](http://www.truthorfiction.com).

Please, ladies and gentlemen, as professional writers, make a pledge to verify the authenticity of the e-mails you forward!

Good luck and good writing!

*Roy King, President*

### 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.

Please mail your manuscript to Roy at:

15772 Heatherdale Road, 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

### Executive Committee

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#### **Membership Information**

Victory Crayne, V.P. Membership  
[paypal@ocwriter.com](mailto:paypal@ocwriter.com) or [membership@ocwriter.com](mailto:membership@ocwriter.com)

#### **Meeting Reservations**

Roy King, President .....15772 Heatherdale Rd.,  
Victorville, CA 92394

..... H (760) 955-5027

## MAY HIGHLIGHTS

### Paul S. Levine: *HOW TO MAKE AN AGENT'S MOUTH WATER, PART II*

Wearing either his literary agent hat or his entertainment lawyer hat, Paul S. Levine gave SCWA members the formidable facts about the pipeline to Hollywood and also copyright law. Having spoken last August at SCWA, Levine presented "How to Make an Agent's Mouth Water, Part II."

An agent's mouth doesn't water when a writer presents an excellent script for a film because that's not the best—and most lucrative—opening to the pipeline. In addition, "the spec market [in screenplays] is glutted." A writer should make a "reverse adaptation" and write a book first. He recommends Michael Larsen's *How to Write a Book Proposal*.

Without a publishing contract for a book, Levine knows it's useless to approach filmmakers. "In the past three-to-four years, 65-85% of all successful movies have come from books, comic books, and graphic books." The perfect time window is "1-1/2 years between book and film." If Levine appears in that window, those Hollywood eyes glitter.

Indeed, the agent's mouth does water now—and so does the writer's because of the potential domino chain. First, the writer would have received a \$10-50,000 publisher's advance with royalties to follow. A sharp agent may also have secured a bonus agreement for each week the book makes the top lists of best sellers. Next follows movie rights, selling for \$20-200,000, which may include bonuses for each week the film is a top box-office draw. The third domino is selling the TV rights. If the book

becomes a series, the author is paid for each derivative [episode]. The last domino is the author's speculative screenplay, which can bring \$100,000. Because of this screenplay (which will surely be re-done by others), the author may be "hired as a producer in name only and pull in another \$25-50,000." The author (and agent) makes money each time the story passes GO.

On the film credits, the author's name will be listed under "Story by \_\_\_\_." Several screenwriters will have produced the final version, not all of whom get billing. If the film credits show "Smith & Johnson," the ampersand indicates they "worked as a writing team." But if the credits say "Smith and Johnson," that's code meaning Johnson revised Smith's script.

Exchanging his agent's hat for the lawyer's, Levine explained copyright basics. "You have a copyright in your work as soon as you put pen to paper." The key term is *tangible*. Is the treatment of the work, not just the idea, fixed in a tangible medium?

However, Levine suggests two safeguards. A) To indicate copyright, the author should put the year and his/her "full legal name at the bottom of the title page." B) The author should register his manuscript or performing arts creation with the U.S. Copyright Office for \$30 and **re-register** each subsequent revision that changes 10% or more of the original.

This cautionary registering may save the author enormous penalties if questions arise later about infringement or statutory

damages whether "innocent" or "willful and knowing." Since the author's expression of an idea is protected but not the idea by itself, Levine says to take away all paperwork on an idea after a pitch meeting with producers. "Theft of ideas is not normal but does happen." The writer should also document specifics about the meeting for his records.

To prove infringement, a plaintiff must show that the infringer had access to the work in question and/or that "substantial similarity" exists between the supposed original and the infringement. Levine says if Shakespeare were alive when *West Side Story* came out, he "couldn't have sued" because the treatments do not match up enough.

"If there is any merit to a charge, it often gets settled the day the complaint is filed," because all legal hell breaks out. A federal judge will issue an injunction against all sales of the work in question, issue a seizure order for the reproduction and business records, even secure printing mechanisms and the hard drives from the computers used and freeze company assets. Breach of contract cases go to state courts.

After lunch, agent Levine listened to pitches from SCWA members and advised. His talk left no doubt how important a good agent is.

*Glenda Rynn, Member*  
[grynn@cox.net](mailto:grynn@cox.net)

# Writer's Corner

## The Usage Zone

by Glenda Rynn

Have you ever written a line you liked but felt something was a bit off? You checked the grammar—fine. Then you checked word choices—accurate. But you still had a sense of a subtle mistake somewhere, as if one note were off in a melody.

If you are not a native English speaker, you might suspect misuse of an idiom or idiomatic expression, an expression everyone uses whose meaning is not what the words seem to indicate, such as “must be out of her mind,” “takes after his father,” “struck a bargain,” and others. However, your English is fluent. What then?

Your problem is most likely a mistake in idiomatic **usage**. Check the prepositions. For example, try to hear the “flat” note in this line: “Don’t be frightened of the barking dogs.”

The flat note is “of.” You may be **afraid** of the barking dogs, but you are frightened of **by** the dogs.

Read aloud to find the problem. Train your ear for correct idiomatic usage.

1. A cop accused the suspect a) with b) of having been armed.
2. Why are you angry a) at b) with me?
3. Why are you angry a) at b) with the change of speaker?
4. John wanted the privilege a) to object b) of objecting at any time.
5. Did the boss agree a) to b) with the revised plan?
6. Everyone must comply a) with b) to the requirements.
7. Did she compare you a) with b) to a gorilla?
8. Compare Bradbury’s latest stories a) with b) to his earlier ones.
9. When did Vidal a) graduate college b) graduate from college?
10. Just tell the speaker a) to continue on b) to continue.

Answers: 1. b, 2. b, 3. a (*with* for persons, *at* for things), 4. b, 5. a, 6. a, 7. b, 8. a (*to* when one is like another, *with* when comparing specifics), 9. b (“graduate college” is a regional usage, mainly around New York), 10. b

Don’t allow your teenagers to say, “I’m bored of [whatever].” They may be **tired of** something but are **bored by** it.

## SCWA News & Announcements

*July 15, 2006, Speaker*

**Jerry Simmons**

former Editor-in-Chief for Time-Warner Books

***Publishing Secrets that Publishers Don't Want Writers to Know***

## The June 2006 "Will Write 4 Food" Contest!

**Write:** Look carefully at the photo (right) and write a short-short story (maximum 250 words) about what is happening.

**Submit:** One entry per member per month.

**Via e-mail:** Lynnette Baum, [therightwriter@cox.net](mailto:therightwriter@cox.net)

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

**Deadline:** Stories must be received on or before May 19, 2006.

**Revised Requirements:** To facilitate fair judging, put the story title on the top of the page with your **name** and **day-time phone number** underneath. Only the winning author will be contacted.

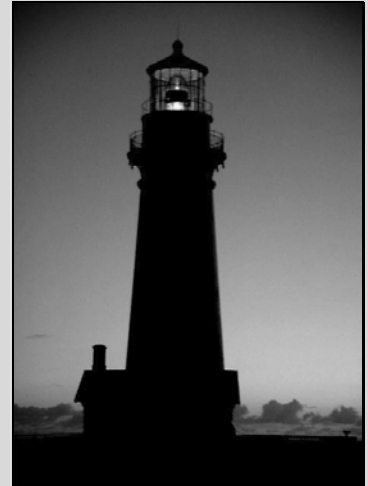
**Subject Line:** *June 2006 "Will Write 4 Food Contest"* with your daytime number or e-mail address.

(For snail-mail put this information on the outside of the envelope.) **Warning: without the subject line, submission may not be read in time.**

**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 contest submissions. Only one **winning** entry per member per year.

*Lynnette Baum, V.P. Programming*



### May 2006 Winner

#### HORRORS!

by H. Henry Minick

Homer Frank did not move from his slump against the door, not even when I showed him my press credential.. His face never changed and I saw a dull look in his eyes, as though his mind was lost in another dimension. "Hello, Homer. My name is Don Blast from OKIE TV. I came down here to Dangville to interview you. We have learned that you have information regarding Molly's death. Can we interview you?" "Yup." "When did you last see Molly?" " I seen her about six last night," Homer said in his deep hillbilly drawl. "Where was that?" "In the hay barn." "Who killed her?" "I don't rightly know. Seems to me it was the farmer.." "Were you present when she was killed?" "Yup." Don Blast turned his head away, winked at his cameraman, and continued. "Won't you tell us in your own words what happened?" "Wull, I seen the boss with a

sledge hammer, an' he whopped her on the haid, an she flopped over on her side an' he slit her throat." "What did you do?" "I got the forklift, took it to him, and hoisted her high." "What do you think will happen now?" "Well, I guess we're gonna have some fresh beef steaks for dinner." Homer shifted his weight, got to his feet saying, "gotta go milk now," and he walked away..

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

*Cotton* – Carol L. Gandolfo

*Circus* – Mike E. Dunn

*Waiting for Grandpa* – Joyce E. Wheeler

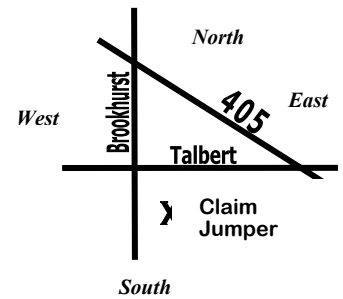
[www.ocwriter.com/willwrite.html](http://www.ocwriter.com/willwrite.html)

**HAPPY  
FATHER'S  
DAY!**

**LOCATION: Claim Jumper Restaurant**

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

Registration & Networking:	9:30 a.m.
Meeting & Program:	10:00 a.m.
Lunch:	11:30 a.m.
Afternoon Program:	12:15 p.m.



**WALK-INS & GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME — \$25.00 AT DOOR**  
**MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$25.00 AT DOOR**  
**MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$20.00**

**RSVP before June 15: Roy King, President, 15772 Heatherdale Rd., Victorville, CA 92394**  
Check must accompany reservations. Make checks payable to **SCWA**.

**After June 15: Roy King, President, (760) 955-5027**

**BE SURE TO RSVP WHENEVER POSSIBLE! . . . Or register online at [www.ocwriter.com/meetings.html](http://www.ocwriter.com/meetings.html)**

Electronic payment also available via Paypal – see our Website above.

**Southern California Writers Association**

# Writers News

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