



# Writers News

Volume 6, Number 10.....October 2007

October 20 Speaker

## Lynn Price

*Publisher/Writer/Editor*

### *I've Written "The End," Now What?*



Lynn Price, principle for Behler Publications (Lake Forest, California) is an independent publisher with a growing list of impressive accomplishments. Lynn works with some of the most exciting new voices in American literature—from an intimate portrayal of a paralyzed man who impacted nearly all of the B-movie soundtracks of the Fifties and Sixties, to the amazing 60-year career of KTLA broadcast journalist Stan Chambers. Books that tackle medicine, aging, family issues, death, abandonment, love and prejudice are all part of the award-winning stable of Behler publications, in both fiction and nonfiction categories.

As a reputable small press, Behler pays advances to their authors, and employs real editors, not just “copy editors,” to work with novelists on final polish. Books are also printed by the run, not by individual copy or on demand. They energetically market the books they publish, and place them in bricks-and-mortar bookstores, with industry standard returns policies.

“Behler is a small press with a growing reputation for excellence,” said Richard Taylor. “Some of their books have been reviewed by Publisher’s Weekly...”

In October, Lynn will share insider information with SCWA members, on topics like: *Writing Your Synopsis, How to Write a No-Snooze Cover-Letter, Understanding Your Readership, the Importance of Paying Attention to Submission Guidelines, Questions Every Writer Should Ask their Publisher*, and much, much more! Don’t miss these insider secrets from a publisher with 11 award-winning titles, including the 2007 IPPY Gold Medal for *Donovan’s Paradigm*, the IPPY Silver Medal for *Body Trauma: A Writer’s Guide to Wounds and Injuries*, and the Ben Franklin Winner of *Popular Fiction* for *East Fifth Bliss*. If you want to publish your book, hear Lynn Price at the next meeting of the SCWA!

Lynette Baum  
VP, Programming  
therightwriter@cox.net

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

<i>October Speaker</i> .....	1
<i>Editor’s Message</i> .....	2
<i>Critique Committee</i> .....	2
<i>September Meeting Highlights</i> .....	3
<i>SCWA News &amp; Announcements</i> .....	4, 5
<i>Writer’s Corner</i> .....	5, 6, 7

# Editor's Message

## We Miss You! Come to the Meeting!

If you weren't able to come to last month's meeting, you missed a fantastic presentation by Brett Battles and Robert Gregory Browne. I'm not a thriller writer, but they shared all kinds of insight into the writing process that's common to all of us and I learned a great deal. When I first joined SCWA, I only came to meetings when the speaker specialized in my areas of interest. Then a friend dragged me to hear a screenwriter and I realized I had been cheating myself. Now I come every month if I can, and I've never been sorry.

VP, Programming Lynnette Baum slaves for countless hours every month e-mailing, writing and calling to make arrangements for our presenters. The experts she scores speak at seminars that cost hundreds of dollars to attend; at SCWA we pay a mere \$20 and also get a tasty Claim Jumper lunch!

Meeting Coordinator Brennan Harvey feels the same way. He's written an appreciation for the speakers he's heard, which is published on page 4. Many thanks to Brennan for taking over the new position.

Publicity Director Larry Porricelli has added another member incentive to attend meetings. If you come and bring a guest, you'll receive two free tickets to a Regency movie theater of your choice.

Mary Michel Green  
Editor  
green.mary@cox.net

**HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!!**



## SCWA Critique Committee Open to Members of SCWA

### Nonfiction & Fiction

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This position is open.

### Poetry

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#### 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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## SEPTEMBER HIGHLIGHTS:

### Robert Gregory Browne and Brett Battles: *Anatomy of a Thriller*

“We were where you are—a couple of years ago,” said Robert Gregory Browne and Brett Battles, as they presented “Anatomy of a Thriller.” Internationally published, both are rocketing to the top ranks of thriller writers. Browne’s rocket was *Kiss Her Goodbye*, his first novel! Battles was able to publish his third novel, *The Cleaner*, which lifted off in 2007 with a series contract for two more. The duo presented their insights elbow-to-elbow.

A sub-genre of mysteries, the thriller is “now the biggest selling genre.” However, other fiction genres may become thrillers. The crucial difference? In a mystery, the problem occurs before or at the beginning and must be solved. To be a thriller, the problem will occur in about two weeks and must be *stopped*. Not only the readers but the writers feel the sense of urgency and tension. One referred to it as a “creative orgasm,” during which he has “to pull back from writing and take a deep breath.”

The elements of a thriller may be expressed anatomically: the **heart** is the event which must be arrested; the **brain**, a big and complex story line; the **eyes**, multi-viewpoints; the **hair**, growth of the conspiracy; the **nose**, perhaps the immediate identifying of the “bad guy”; the **ears**, a ticking-clock sense of urgency; the **legs**, action-filled aspects of a journey; and the **skin**, the settings which color the plot.

Each author isolated four important aspects. Browne’s process starts with attitude, his protagonist’s dominant “state of being,” although it can change. The second is emotion, which can be “a melding of attitudes” to show depth. “Every person who’s shy or an egotist isn’t so for the same reason.” Third comes the “through-line” of the story filled with obstacles. Thus, a formidable antagonist must be motivated by his own goal. Action is the fourth ongoing process, organically demonstrating the protagonist “being the character traits.”

The four interlocking spheres Battles advocates begin with observing life: Be aware of the details and dynamics of everyday life to be woven in for effect. Experiencing life by doing is next: Attend lectures, go to the shooting range, or ride along with the police. You’ll mine these empirical data some day. Reading widely fills the third sphere: “Learn about pacing and structure” and to spot stilted dialogue and wooden characters. “It’s part of your job to read.” Not the least is the commitment to writing: “A little every day is better than a lot in one day.”

Overlapping in their methods, Browne and Battles write books they’d like to read. Browne writes organically, no outlines, and discovers characters as he writes. “A minor character inexplicably became a main character.” “[Characters] assert their will.”

Before writing dialogue, he tests it orally to check for naturalness but says the written is “sort of an imitation of the spoken.” Not a believer in writer’s block, Browne said, “Put your ass in the chair.” He feels blocked only if he hasn’t prepared for a particular aspect of his novel. Then he administers a hot shower or takes a drive.

Battles’ drive gets him up at 5 a.m. and writing by 6 or 7 a.m. for at least two hours. “I cannot let not-writing take over.” Although he prefers writing organically, his contract is forcing him into outlining. Every six months he must feed the paperback pipeline with a new caper of *The Cleaner*. He names his characters after friends and laughs, “I’ve killed a lot of friends.” After declaring he never writes with the audience in mind, he added, “Oops, now I write with my editor in mind.”

For a thriller plot, Browne said to “tease your readers. Give a little information and let them hang for a while.” Sometimes these authors overturn assumptions set up in their characters because twists evolve and the character must adapt. The duo do advocate building in some reversals and refer to when Darth Vader in *Star Wars* says, “I’m your father, Luke,” and when the spawn of the alien bursts from the body of John Hurt in *Alien*. Because “less is more,” do not use lots of description. Keep the action level up and let readers “fill in the rest.” Never interrupt an action scene with

See *Highlights*, page 4

## SCWA News & Announcements

### *SCWA Speakers Entertain and Educate*

I'm a writer focusing on science fiction short stories. Upon joining this organization and reviewing the speakers, I did not think this group was a good fit for me. I am pleased to say that I was greatly mistaken in my first impression.

Last month, Robert Gregory Browne and Brett Battles humorously demonstrated beginner mistakes regarding dialogue. They were both writers of thrillers, not science fiction, but their lessons applied to my work as well.

In August, Jerry Simmons explained the changing face of publishing and how the "Big-Six" publishing firms are still manufacturing the equivalent of buggy whips. He offered a number of alternatives to these publishing houses. Again, I learned that anthologies are published by independent and literary publishers. That helps me

market my stories.

Before that, Terry A. Whalin explained secrets editors DO want writers to know. When I write that novel, I'll be more prepared to sell it.

And so on.

In fact, if I had picked-and-chosen which speakers to listen to this year, Ray Bradbury would have been the only one that I believed had something to say to me. As it turned out, every single speaker gave me information that was worth far more than the twenty dollars I spent.

Remember, the board is trying to invite engaging speakers and I believe they have excelled each and every month. I encourage everyone to come out and see what experiences these speakers can share with you.

*Brennan Harvey*  
Meeting Coordinator  
[Meeting@ocwriter.com](mailto:Meeting@ocwriter.com)

### Browne and Battles Autopsy Thrillers

*Highlights*, from page 3

description. Sustain suspense by using "a button, a line, a reversal, or a teaser" at the end of chapters.

Readers must care about the characters. Battles said all the flaws of *The Cleaner* protagonist are his own but not the good points. "Every character is me, plus my imagination" sums up Browne. Both warn not to include all the characters' history. "It's that iceberg thing."

Viewpoints must be consistent. Browne uses third person omniscient, wherein the reader knows only what that character knows. Make changes

of viewpoints from one character to another very clear with a page break or double spacing, etc.

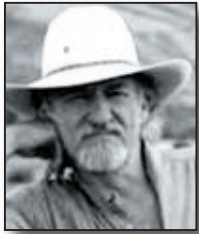
All dialogue needs to be informative. Demonstrating that no character should tell the obvious to another, Battles said, "Well, Rob, as you know, we drove down here this morning." To this, Brown replied, "Your car sucks." Big laughs. The tag "Well, Rob" also shows over-clarity. Friends don't need to address each other by name. Eliminate "on-the-nose" dialogue "where people say exactly what they're thinking. Talk around things a little. The reader

must listen for subtext."

The enthusiasm of Browne and Battles was infectious. "We're living proof you can do this. We didn't give up."

For more, see [robertgregorybrowne.com](http://robertgregorybrowne.com), [brettbattles.com](http://brettbattles.com), and [battlesandbrowne.com](http://battlesandbrowne.com).

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**NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:**  
*November 18 – W.C. Jameson*  
*Author/Environmentalist/Musician*  
***The Writer's Life***



W.C. Jameson, an environmentalist, geographer, folklorist, and musician, grew up in west Texas and has lived in Oklahoma, Arizona and now Colorado. He is a prolific writer, having written 12 books in his *Buried Treasure* series, more than 200 magazines articles, and a book about Billy the Kid. He is a past president of the Western Writers of America and has twice been awarded is prestigious *Stirrup Award*. He was a consultant on the film *National Treasure* and currently records and tours as a musician, both solo and with Ghost Town Council, an alternative country band out of Austin.

Join us in November for this outstanding speaker!

Lynette Baum  
VP, Programming  
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## Writer's Corner

### Quotes on Writing

“Everywhere I go, I’m asked if I think the university stifles writers. My opinion is that they don’t stifle enough of them. There’s many a bestseller that could have been prevented by a good teacher.”

—Flannery O’Connor

“Every author really wants to have letters printed in the papers. Unable to make the grade, he drops down a rung of the ladder and writes novels.”

—P. G. Wodehouse

“It was once projected that a million monkeys with a million typewriters could, by random typing, eventually reproduce the works of Shakespeare. Now, thanks to the Internet, we know that this is not true.”

—Unknown

“What! Another of those damned fat, square, thick books! Always scribble, scribble, and scribble, eh, Mr. Gibbon?”

—The Duke of Gloucester to Edward Gibbon

“Writing is the only thing that, when I do it, I don’t feel I should be doing something else.”

—Gloria Steinem

“Every journalist has a novel in him, which is an excellent place for it.”

—Russel Lynes

“One hasn’t become a writer until one has distilled writing into a habit, and that habit has been forced into an obsession. Writing has to be an obsession. It has to be something as organic, physiological, and psychological as speaking or sleeping or eating.”

—Niyi Osundare

# Writers Are the New Storytellers

By Patricia L. Fry

Once upon a time, children sat at grandpa's knee and listened intently to the wonderful stories that had been creatively told through the generations. Children were also encouraged to tell their own stories. In fact, storytelling was a form of sharing, of communication, of entertainment and education. It was through oral family histories that children learned about their roots. When children know about their ancestors, they feel more connected—they have more of a sense of belonging. And when families share through story, their bonds grow deeper.

I grew up with radio. Families during the 1940s gathered around the RCA or the Motorola for their entertainment and their connection to the world and each other. In the early 1950s, many homes also had TVs. We no longer relied on one another for our entertainment; now we turned to the "set." But TV programming was not a 24-hour-per-day, 300-channel proposition. Families ate dinner together and then assembled



around the TV for their favorite evening show.

Today, we have home entertainment centers, computers and other electronic gadgetry designed to separate family members in many creative ways for even longer periods of time. We come home only to go our separate ways in order to experience our individual mode of entertainment. When traveling or even on short errand jaunts, each family member has his own electronic device designed to hold his attention. Mom is talking on her cell phone, sis is text messaging, brother is engrossed in sounds coming from his iPod and Dad is working on his laptop. Where has our need and our opportunity for personal communication gone? What has happened to our human (let alone family) togetherness? Is the lovely art and tradition of storytelling—the activity that once built strong bonds—a thing of the past?

I don't think so. Although storytelling is fading as an oral tradition in households, it is alive and well among this country's writers. Sure, establishing family togetherness is a challenge today, but I urge parents and kids to make family time a priority and to use that time to relate, support and share.

There is an enormous upsurge in the number of authors emerging in America today. Of course, part of the reason that so many more people are writing books is because they can—because technology has made it possible. But many of them are also writing because they have stories to tell—stories of their struggles, stories of their ancestors, stories they've made up in their heads. Storytelling is back, baby and in a big way.

Writing is the new storytelling. Since people no longer have the time to sit and listen to our stories, we are writing them down and seeking large audiences. We are disconnecting from people in order to write in solitary. Ironically, it is because we want to be heard. We want to make an impression—to make a difference. We want to touch people emotionally—to make them think, cry and laugh.

Yes, once upon a time, children and adults were treated to stories handed down through the generations and told by a beloved family member. Today, our stories come in book form. Writing is the new storytelling. And being a writer, I certainly support the buying of books. But maybe we should concentrate on sharing these stories. Let's bring back a greater sense of family and make reading a togetherness activity. How?

- Parents: read to your young children and read with your older kids.
- Grandparents, mentors, teachers and others: buy the children on your gift list interactive books and books with messages or educational themes. Take time to explore the books together.
- Start a book discussion group through your church, office, neighborhood or family, for example. Have everyone read good, controversial or thought-provoking books and then meet to discuss them.

- Act out a book. Bring readers together for an evening of fun reenacting a story theater style. Or have everyone come to a dinner party masquerading as a character from your book-of-the-month.
- Launch a mother-daughter, father-son or couples book discussion group.
- Form a club for readers. Invite authors to speak to the group once a month or so.
- Set up a circulating library related to your interests. Pool books with others who have the same reading, hobby or work interest. This could be a fiction library or a reference book library for folks who are interested in writing/publishing, crafts, gardening, marketing/promotion, mechanics, woodworking, photography or raising Abyssinian cats, for example.
- Challenge every family member to read a book each week and then have an informal gathering during which each reader must report on the book. Encourage creativity. This might be a good extended family activity.
- Volunteer as a family to read to kids in a homeless shelter or take books to a shelter and encourage the parents to read to their children.
- Likewise, read to a shut-in neighbor or someone who resides in a nursing home. Even older folks like to hear a good story.

While I am a strong advocate of the written word and I love it when people buy and read my books, I also believe deeply in the importance of togetherness. Use some of the ideas above to come up with creative ideas of your own to encourage and to initiate methods of using books and reading to connect with others. Reach out. Draw people in. The old tradition of storytelling may be lost in many families, but let writing be your new storytelling tradition. Use books to come back together in a meaningful way.

—Patricia Fry is a full-time freelance writer and the author of 27 books. Ten of her books are writing/publishing-related. They include the newly revised *The Right Way to Write, Publish and Sell Your Book*, (366-pages) and her BRAND NEW *Author's Workbook*.

## A Web Site to Watch



Holly Lisle runs one of my favorite writer sites. It's full of great articles on any number of writing topics. Here are a few questions from her questionnaire "Are You Right for Writing?"

You're writing and the phone rings. You:

- Finish your sentence, and then answer it.
- Let the answering machine get it.
- Have no phone access in the room where you work.

You read:

- A. The occasional newspaper, magazines, and remember having read books . . . but not recently;
- B. You read in your free time if you don't have something better to do;
- C. You invented the term multi-tasking because reading IS your "something better to do -- you usually have a book in hand no matter what else you're doing at the time;
- D. Your house doesn't need insulation; the triple-stacked shelves of all your books will serve quite nicely, thank you.

Where is the weirdest place you've ever written?

- A. Your desk . . . maybe, in a crunch, at the kitchen table;
- B. In bed. (An extra 10 points for this one if you were on your honeymoon at the time);
- C. On the toilet;
- D. Don't ask.

Of course, Holly says the correct answer is D. This page, with her discussion of the dedication required in writing can be found at <http://www.hollylisle.com/fm/Articles/feature11.html>.

Mary Michel Green  
Newsletter Editor  
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**October Meeting:  
Saturday  
October 20, 2007**

## LYNN PRICE

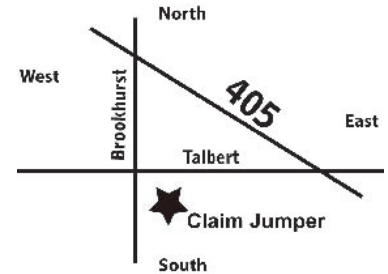
*I've Written "The End," Now What?  
(See inside for more on Lynn Price.)*



### LOCATION: Claim Jumper Restaurant

Banquet Room Entrance, rear of building  
1805 Brookhurst St., Fountain Valley, CA  
Restaurant telephone: (714) 963-6711

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



*GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME—\$30 AT DOOR; \$25 WITH RSVP  
MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$25 AT DOOR  
MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$20*

**RSVP before October 13:** Carolyn Kimme Smith, Treasurer, 630 Harbor Island Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660  
Check must accompany reservation. Make checks payable to SCWA.

**After October 13:** Brennan Harvey, Meeting Coordinator [meeting@ocwriter.com](mailto:meeting@ocwriter.com)

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



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