



Writers News

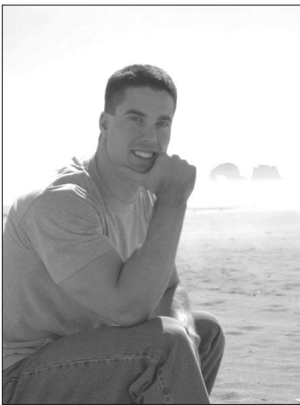
Volume 7, Number 6.....June 2008

June 21 Speaker

Eldon Thompson

Fantasy Novelist & Screenwriter

How to Land a Three-Book Deal!



Eldon Thompson, signed by HarperCollins and nominated for the Rupert Hughes Writing Award, shows us the write stuff!

Weaned on great fantasy like *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, Eldon Thompson took to writing fantasy adventure almost as soon as he learned to read. When at age nine he read Terry Brooks' *The Elfstones of Shannara*, his goal of becoming a fantasy novelist went from childhood ambition to hopeless obsession. Yet, his parents stressed the importance of a "safe" career path, so Thompson accepted a scholarship and went off to college. Along with his English, writing, and mythology courses, he played quarterback and defensive back in football, with dreams of being drafted by a popular professional team. The NFL off-season was, he thought, long enough in which to write books...

Instead, cursed by injuries and limited talent, upon graduation he hung up his cleats and rededicated himself to writing pursuits, moving to Los Angeles in 1998 to study postgraduate screenwriting at UCLA. He also began attending the *Maui Writers Conference*, where, among bestselling novelists such as John Saul and Elizabeth George, he studied with his lifelong idol, Terry Brooks. Though it might not have shown early on, Thompson was taking good notes and even learning a thing or two. By his third year, he went home with a nomination for the Rupert Hughes Writing Award.

In the fall of 2003, Thompson's

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President's Message

Write What's Right for an Editor's Eye



When your manuscript is completed and ready for submission, when your dreams of publication seem within easy reach, stop! Every editor looks for standard layout principles in each manuscript submitted. If you don't abide by these principles, your work will be judged as amateurish even before it is read. So, before you address your envelope, pay the postage, or print your manuscript, review your masterpiece and apply the following:

Check your title page for proper text placement. The title should start at least 1/3rd of the way down the title page, with contact information included below the centered title, usually in either the right or left corner.

Always print in black. Colored inks are a huge "No! No!"



Make sure that your cover letter is written in English and is only one page in length. It should outline (briefly) both the objective and subjective goals of your work, as well as your professional accomplishments. (These can and should include your membership in the SCWA, a big plus for editors as it means you are serious enough about your career to invest both time and money in a professional organization.)

Double-space your manuscript.

Use Courier font at 12-point pitch size.

Lay out your document so that there are one inch margins all around each page.

Make sure that each page is "paginated" at approximately 25 lines per page. This makes it easier for editors to guesstimate the page length of either hard copy or paperback book runs.

Place a single page number in either the upper right or lower right hand corner. There should be nothing else in these areas—no copyright information or ID information that may be required when entering a writing contest.

Start every chapter by chapter title halfway down the page. This makes it easier for editors to scan backward or forward through your manuscript, or find a specific scene.

If a synopsis is included, it should also be only one page, double-spaced, and should read like an impressionistic painting of your entire work. (Don't fail to include plot twists and the ending. Editors count on these details to determine whether or not to read your manuscript or toss it into the round file. For example: "To Kill a Mockingbird is a sin...the story of a young girl called Scout in the 1930's South, as she is swept up in the trial of a black man accused of molesting a white woman.")

Remember, editors have three piles of manuscripts on their desks...one from writers they know, another from agents and another from everybody else. If you want to move from the anonymous pile onto a reader's desk, submit a professional manuscript!

Lynnette Baum

President

lynnette@the-right-writer.com

MAY HIGHLIGHTS:

ANTOINETTE KURITZ: *Successful PR - From Book to Best Seller 3!*

Antoinette Kuritz, that whirlwind of literary public relations and founder of the La Jolla Writers Conference, whooshed into SCWA to demonstrate how being mindful of public relations before, during, and after writing your book pays off. This was her third SCWA appearance.

Although you need to write the best material you can, awareness of PR should begin when you choose your topic. Young adult fiction and “cutting-edge, kick-ass nonfiction” are the best fields now. Chick-Lit of the twenty-and thirtysomethings is dead. Avoid fads. (However, if you do hit a fad, certain publishers specialize in warp speed timing, taking pages as you finish them.)

While the book is only a gleam in your eye (yes, that early), create a timeline of how to position yourself as an authority at each stage. You create a wave of interest for your book that rises before you, picking up an agent, publisher, and publicity in its momentum before hitting the shore of alerted buyers.

After research and planning but *before* writing, focus your vision by composing the book proposal, which you can refine later. A complete proposal contains a biography built around your motivation for this book, a table of contents, a synopsis of every other chapter, your PR marketing plans, a list of 8-10 similar books doing well and why, and a list of 8-10 similar

books NOT doing well and why.

Ask yourself, “What am I putting into my book that makes me an expert?” Who needs this information? “Does it lend itself to weekly or monthly topics on programs?” Plan how to position yourself to write, speak, and/or appear on behalf of that special content: radio (drive-time programs?), local TV, newspapers, associations, clubs, etc. Showcase your expertise with a professional website.

Along the way, obtain media training. “Learn how to give a great answer in less than 20 seconds... how to front-load your answers to grab your interviewer and your audience.” For each appearance, take a CD and videotape and ask if you may copy the show. Your best sound bites will make an excellent montage. Check the news to see where the day’s hot topics overlap your expertise and which media are covering them. You are building “a platform for yourself as an expert” and publicity for your forthcoming book.

By the time you complete your book, your momentum has pulled in an agent. Get endorsements from other experts in your field. Once you have a publisher, you need to power your PR wave even more. Timing is critical.

The bookstores buy from distributors’ catalogues in January, May/June, and September. Six

months before your printing, prime the distributor pipeline. Immediately have the cover designed and learn the book’s size, whether a soft or hardcover, and its price; all these go on the sales sheet with an outline of content. You want your sales sheet in a catalogue *before* your book is printed, *not after*. Also get your book listed on Amazon at least three months before it’s out. Submit articles to associated trade magazines well in advance.

To make awareness in your niche market, ask your publisher for 1,000 advance free copies or some at cost, around \$2.50 each. Give a complimentary copy to a store manager for a staff person or personalized copies to other bookstore workers. If your book becomes a staff recommendation, it will spend up to 16 weeks on a prized center table. A signing in a bookstore means your book may be there four weeks ahead. See if you can get a local TV appearance shortly before the signing.

To secure TV and radio exposure, have 20-25 interview topics you can cover. If you submit interesting, tightly organized content to producers, “you’re going to jump to the top of the slush pile.” First, call a secretary for the producer’s name and e-mail address of your target show (published information changes too rapidly to be accurate). E-mail him or her a “producer sheet” with three to four

See *Kuritz*, page 7

SCWA News & Announcements

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

July 19

Susan Arnout Smith

Author, Playwright, Screenwriter

Susan Arnout Smith is our guest speaker for July 19. Smith is the author of *The Timer Game*, a medical thriller. Well known for her work as an award-winning playwright, Smith's work includes being the scriptwriter of many television movies seen on the Lifetime Network, ABC, and CBS.

John Lescroart (*The Suspect*) calls *The Timer Game* "A highly entertaining, intelligent, original yet classic medical thriller."

Smith will be discussing "The Making of a Thriller" and how she made her fascinating journey from screenwriting to books.

Please take a look at Susan Arnout Smith's original book trailer for *The Timer Game* at: <http://www.thetimergame.com/>

Kathy Porter

Co-VP, Programming

Kathy@grayguardians.com

Contact Writers News Editor Mary Michel Green at (949) 361-6581 or green.mary@cox.net.

SCWA Critique Committee Open to Members of SCWA

Nonfiction & Fiction

This position is open.

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

PresidentLynnette Baum
Co-VP, Programming.....Lynnette Baum
Co-VP, Programming.....Kathy Porter
VP, MembershipLinda Coyne
Secretary..... Linda Shortell
TreasurerDarlene Quinn
Publicity DirectorLarry Porricelli
Webmaster Tony Stoklosa
Meeting Coordinator.....Brennan Harvey
Newsletter Editor Mary Michel Green
Tape Librarian.....Sharon Walters

Membership Information

Linda Coyne, VP, Membership
membership@ocwriter.com

Meeting Reservations

Brennan Harvey, meeting@ocwriter.com
or message (714) 375-5275

Members Report Good News!

Correction: Dr. Marge Crandell: CSPAN 2 (Cable satellite Public Access Network #2) shows "Book TV" every weekend for 48 hours: Saturday 4 a.m. Pacific time through Monday at 4 a.m. Pacific. The schedule can be found at www.booktv.org/schedule.aspx every Friday evening.

Victory Crayne: She won second place in a short story contest in Laguna Woods Village, and she'll be on their local TV program June 13.

Janet De Marco: Thanks to SCWA member Gerri Seaton, Janet has been invited to speak with the Creative Writers of Seal Beach Leisure World on May 23 and sign her book, *Beyond Appearances*.

Toni V. Sweeney: Two weeks ago, Toni signed three contracts with Wild Rose Press under her pseudonym, Icy Snow Blackstone. One is for a novel, *Three Moon Station*, and two for short stories: *Love, Vampire Style*, and *Demon in Blue Jeans*. Wild Rose Press distributes through Barnes and Noble & Borders.

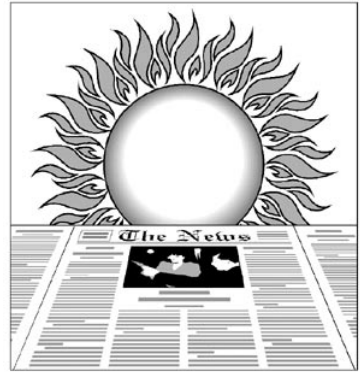
Sinbad's Wife, the sequel to *Sinbad's Last Voyage*, is scheduled for a June release from Double Dragon Publications.

Dick Vaughn: He has a second short story collection, *Rapture Runner*. This follows last year's *Childhood Country*. He published two novels the year before: *Soldier Boys & Mesa Beach*.

Dr. Joyce Wheeler: Her two prize-winning poems were published in the *Chaparral Poets Anthology*. She received honorable mention and her poem read at the Lakewood Iacobonni Library. Her poem, *Wimple the Elf*, is currently placed in the library's glass case.

Members are welcome to e-mail or phone achievements to Janet De Marco at jdemar39@msn.com or (714)963-3708 before the next SCWA meeting, so they can be announced at the meeting.

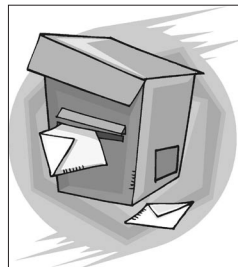
Many thanks for all of Janet's hard work compiling all this inspirational information!



New Meeting Reservation Address

We have a new P.O. box to send checks for RSVP's.

P.O. Box 1585
Huntington Beach, CA 92647-9998



Please make checks payable to SCWA.

Thanks,

Brennan Harvey
Meeting Coordinator
meeting@ocwriter.com

Writer's Corner

Member Samples Book Expo America 2008

I attended the Book Expo America (BEA) on May 30, on only one of the four days of this fantastic event. This is the largest book exposition in America and had more than 4,000 booths. Even though some publishers, distributors, etc. had more than one booth, there must have been over 3,000 exhibitors present in two large halls of the Los Angeles Convention Center. BEA comes to Los Angeles only once every few years and is mostly held on the east coast, so I didn't want to miss the opportunity to find out what this well reputed event was all about.

I came away impressed. This is the major meeting of the book publishing industry all year. Firms came from all over the world.

You'd think a book exposition would have lots of books for sale, right? Wrong. You can't buy a book at BEA. The only books there were either for display purposes or were advanced reader copies. This is where people make and reinforce contacts in this very dynamic industry.

I was told (sorry, I didn't get the source) that America publishes more books every year than the next four largest publishing countries in the world—combined. I can believe it. Now do you see why BEA is so big?

If you ever attend BEA, the most important advice I can give you is the same that is mentioned on their website—wear comfortable shoes. How far can you walk and how long can you stand in your shoes? There were very few places to sit at the exposition and most of them were in the booths where private meetings were taking place. I must have walked more than two miles of aisles and another mile of hallways and parking garages.

If you attend one of the early days, you don't need to bring a bag for collecting stuff. You can get a very lightweight cloth bag from a table near the entrance to the halls. At the registration desk, you

get a thick and heavy directory of all the exhibitors. I added two books and gobs of papers, so my bag got heavy by the end of the day. I was there from noon to five p.m. and that was tiring enough for me. Guess I'm out of shape. Oh, don't bring one of those carts on wheels either. The aisles can get crowded and anything on wheels is prohibited, for safety reasons. I did see one guy on an electric wheelchair, though.

The variety of exhibitors was mind boggling. I saw reader glasses, book designers (they put together the cover art, book jacket, etc.), book display cases, and other ancillary products. A long line formed to get the autograph of Billie Jean King, the tennis star. She's a small lady! I missed Alec Baldwin, Michael Moore, Dean Koontz, and Ted Turner, to name a few of the big names. To see all the well known writers and industry big wigs, you have to attend breakfasts, dinners, and the parties, which I missed on my short one-day visit.

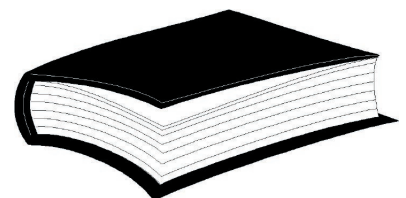
The price of admission varies. I got in as a Rights/Editorial person and had to pay \$90 for one day. Parking was \$12. The food is high priced like at airports and of medium quality. Captive buyers, right? But I did get two glasses of wine and a free bottle of water at some booths.

If you go, be sure to bring lots of business cards. I made six useful contacts that I will follow up on next week.

Will I go again when BEA comes to Los Angeles? You betcha and I'll be there for two full days, at least. Unfortunately, I may have to wait five or six years. Bummer. Wait! I could write a best seller and attend with my publisher or distributor. Hmm, guess I better get to work.

My new mantra: Yea, BEA!

Victory Crayne
Member
victory@crayne.com



PR Planning Strategies Revealed



Kuritz, from page 3

bullet points on your selected topic with statistics affecting at least 80% (the magic number, Kuritz avows) of the population or special group. Include a few lines of your insights on each point. Then give five tips. Your subject line says “Guest Expert.” Use NO attachments.

After practicing with a script but not using one at the time, follow up a few days later by calling the producer. Kuritz

modeled this interview with several SCWA members while stressing *respect for the producer’s time*. “I just sent you an e-mail “Guest Expert” pitch. Is this a good time to talk?” If negative, ask when to call back. If all right, be ready to give statistics (80%) with visual imagery of the problem you can solve or ameliorate. Besides making his job easy by organizing your segment, “your enthusiasm translates.” After your appearance,

send a thank-you note. Be friendly with producers because their interest spots may be picked up by bigger markets.

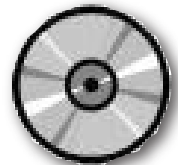
Not only an author herself, Kuritz is president of strategies for Literary Public Relations and the host of *Writers Roundtable* radio show.

Glenda Brown Rynn
Member
grynn.mary@cox.net

Don't Forget to Shop!



You can buy recordings of previous speakers on both cassette tape and audio CD for the member price of only \$5 each! This is such a valuable resource if you miss a meeting. Our Southern California Writers Association pens are also available for only \$7.50. Just go to ocwriter.com and click on “Make a Purchase.”



Three-Book Deals Dissected

Thompson, from page 1

efforts resulted in a three-book deal with HarperCollins for his *Legend of Asahiel* trilogy; *The Crimson Sword* was launched in May 2005, followed by *The Obsidian Key* in July 2006. The concluding volume in the trilogy, *The Divine Talisman*, is slated for an August 2008 release. Also making strides in the screenwriting arena, Eldon inked an option agreement with Warner Bros in 2007 for his adaptation of his childhood favorite Terry Brooks’ *The Elfstones of Shannara*, with the script currently in production.

With this and other projects vying for his attention, Thompson spends most of his time chained to his writing desk. Already committed to act as a presenter and reviewer for the *La Jolla Writers Conference 2008*, Thompson has agreed to speak to Southern California Writers Association members about how to land a three book deal. So, if you’ve ever wanted to get a big contract with a top publisher, come to our June meeting and learn what this successful author knows about how to get your manuscript published!

Lynnette Baum
President
lynnette@the-right-writer.com



**June Meeting:
Saturday
June 21, 2008**

ELDON THOMPSON

How to Land a Three-Book Deal

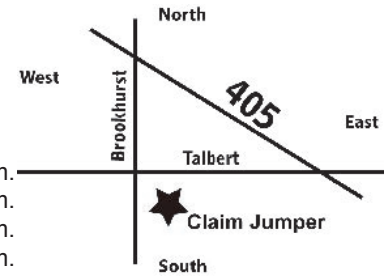
(See inside for more on Eldon Thompson.)



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:	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

BE SURE TO RSVP WHENEVER POSSIBLE!

RSVP before June 13:

Brennan Harvey, Meeting Coordinator, P.O. Box 1585, Huntington Beach, CA 92647-9998. Check payable to SCWA must accompany reservation. Our PayPal online account is temporarily out of commission.

After June 13: E-mail Brennan at meeting@ocwriter.com or message (714) 375-5275



Writers News

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