



Writers News

Volume 7, Number 3.....March 2008

March 15 Speaker

Stephen J. Cannell

Author, television writer/producer

How to Hit the New York Times Best Sellers List!



Stephen J. Cannell, the New York Times best selling author of 12 novels, including the critically acclaimed Shane Scully series, which includes *White Sister*, *Cold Hit*, *Vertical Coffin*, *Hollywood Tough*, *The Viking Funeral*, *The Tin Collectors*, and the latest installment, *Three Shirt Deal*, is the SCWA's scheduled speaker for March 15. The author of *Runaway Heart*, *The Devil's Workshop*, *Riding the Snake*, *King Con*, *Final Victim*, and *The Plan*, Cannell is a creative icon in the world of novel and television writing. His feature film, based on the book *King Con*, is currently in development, with the motion picture rights to *Riding the Snake* currently optioned, as well as the rights to his unpublished manuscript, *Love at First Sight*.

An Emmy award-winning writer/producer and the Chairman of Cannell Studios, Steven J. Cannell overcame severe dyslexia to become one of America's most prolific writers. In a highly successful career that spans three decades, he has created or co-created more than 40 television shows, of which he has scripted more than 450 episodes and produced or executive produced more than 1,500 episodes. His hits include *The Rockford Files*, *Greatest American Hero*, *The A-Team*, *Hunter*, *Riptide*, *Hardcastle & McCormick*, *21 Jump Street*, *Wiseguy*, *The Commish*, *Profit*, and the hit syndicated shows, *Renegade* and *Silk Stalkings*.

See **Cannell**, page 7

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President's Message

Stephen J. Cannell

You absolutely *must* come to this month's meeting! I heard Stephen talk several times at the La Jolla Writers Conference in January, always to a room full of people. Quite simply, what I learned from him has changed how I write my novels and how I advise my client writers. Don't miss him! We expect a lot of people to show up. This meeting will be well promoted, so if you hope to get a seat, send in your reservation check right now!

Annual dues renewal time

If you have not yet paid your dues for 2008, you will receive this March newsletter in electronic PDF format and *this is your last issue*. Renew today while you are thinking of it. Visit our Web site at www.ocwriter.com and select the "Membership" link. At only \$30, your dues go to help us provide you with:

- this monthly newsletter
- monthly luncheon meetings
- speakers who are experts in their fields, such as having written bestsellers or winning scripts, or are agents, editors, or publishers
- our Web site where you can obtain information on upcoming meetings, past newsletters, and purchase recordings of past speaker presentations
- opportunities to network with other members and learn more tricks of your craft, whether you write fiction or nonfiction
- vitally needed support in your dream of success as a writer. As you know, writing is a solitary activity. Membership and attendance at meetings of the Southern California Writers Association is an excellent way to rekindle that beautiful flame of your dream. Don't let it die. Renew today!

You have two ways to pay dues:

1. With a check or cash at the next luncheon meeting. or
2. Mail your check for \$30 made out to "SCWA" to SCWA Membership, P.O. Box 3192, Huntington Beach, CA 92605-3192.

Victory's last month as your president

"The time has come, the walrus said
to talk of many things,
of shoes and ships and sealing wax,
of cabbages and kings."
—Lewis Carroll

And the time has come for me to take my leave as your president. I really didn't want to resign, but the demands of my business and my personal life have far exceeded my expectations. In addition, I've had to put off my writing for over two years, and after all, SCWA exists to support writing, not supplant it.

Per the bylaws, Lynnette Baum will become your new president, effective the first of April.

See *President*, page 7

FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS:

Deborah Halverson: *Writing for Kids of All Ages and How to Catch an Editor's Eye!*

Ever think writing for children would be easier than struggling with your book for adults? You're on the wrong planet. The ten worlds of children's literature overlap by age ranges and formats. Each world has genres. When Deborah Halverson, former editor for ten years with Harcourt Children's Books, wanted to enter through the author's door, she marshaled all her expertise and ingenuity to score two for two. The secret, she repeats, is to "think like a child but strategize like an adult."

Children's lit demands skill in the same elements: original voice, unique hook, satisfying story arc, showing not telling, etc. But a children's author must "incorporate specific themes appropriate for target age groups with their own needs."

Avoiding slang, which will date a book, an author must work with vocabulary lists structured into half-grade increments for all ages. These lists, available from publishers, include recommended sentence lengths. Picture books require the sparest language of "dynamic words, rhyme, rhythm, and a repetition chorus line that gets funnier every time."

Children too old for picture books want books "free of adult sensibility" and can sniff out any whiff of adult preaching or language. A writer must consider how children's understanding is filtered by their maturity levels.

Absolutely self-centered, these readers perceive the world "as only related to them."

If the author has mastered these challenges, s/he now finds that one-half of his story will be conceptualized by the illustrator matched to him by the publisher. The illustrator, or "picture turner," embroiders upon the author's dialogue and action with his own tools, drama, and colors. His perspective not only determines the place and time and how the story is laid out, but "may add whole new story lines."

Once published, the book must get through a minefield of gatekeepers: reviewers, librarians, and parents. Finally, a child opens the book. But children aren't "forgiving" and automatically read on. Immediately, "you get them or you don't."

Halverson reviewed each bracket, particularly picture books and the explosion in teen fiction due to the Harry Potter phenomenon. With its "edgy psychological development" and off-beat humor, those story lines are "between comfort and looking over the edge—and pulling back."

Because Halverson's only time to write was during her triplets' nap time, she strategized. Knowing that publishers' only interest is selling in big numbers, she positioned herself as "an extreme writer," one who "takes a normal thing and pushes it" with a farcical, contemporary voice. "It's

not pretty, it's not romantic, but to be published, you have to be a little more hard-nosed, hard core about it," she asserts.

Aware of reluctant readers, children's short attention spans, and that "kids are big on making direct assumptive statements," Halverson knew the hook is all critical. Adult strategy took charge again. In *Big Mouth* (in stores June 2008) the hook does not indicate the greater depth to come, about boys' eating disorders. Thinking like a kid, she wrote a hook (which she read) graphically describing a boy throwing up over a toilet bowl after a hog-dog eating contest.

Halverson's debut teen novel, *Honk If You Hate Me*, took the Gayle McCandliss Literary Award. At present, she's writing a "momoir" about mothering triplet sons.

For more specifics, contact either SCWA's tape librarian, Sharon Walters, for a tape or Judith Wagner for a two-CD set of Halverson's talk.

Notables: *Dancing on the Edge*, *Tangerine*, *M Is for Music*, *Harvesting Hope*, *The Journey of the Wooden Man*, *The Whale Rider*, Jane Yolen, www.scbwi.org, and www.deborahhalverson.com.

Glenda Brown Rynn
Member
grynn@cox.net

SCWA News & Announcements

Members Accomplish!



Announcements of members' accomplishments during the February general meeting:

Brennan Harvey: Received Honorable Mention for his novellette, *The Song of Masha*, in the first quarter *Writers of the Future* contest.

April Miller: 1. Her humor piece *Getting a Mammogram* was published in the *Tribune Review* in Pittsburg, PA, and,
2. Her article *Grandma Goes Nuts Over the Peanut Allergy* was published in the December Orange County Register.

Victory Crayne will be speaking May 20, 2008 on *What Writers Want to Know About Using an Independent Editor for Their Novel* at the Murrieta Public Library, Eight Town Square, Murrieta, CA 92562. Phone: (951) 304-2665. For more information, visit <http://www.crayne.com/Events/Speaking-events.htm>.

Janet DeMarco
Member
jdemar39@msn.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

President Victory Crayne
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



Time's Up!

If you haven't renewed your SCWA membership for 2008, this will be the last issue of the *Writers News* that you will receive.

Remember, there are two ways to pay your dues:

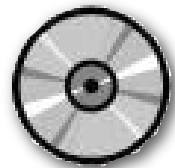
1. With a check or cash at the next luncheon meeting. or
2. Mail your check for \$30 made out to "SCWA" to SCWA Membership, Post Office Box 3192, Huntington Beach, CA 92605-3192.



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."



NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

April 19

Lynn Wiese Sneyd

Literary Publicist/Former Community Relations Manager for Barnes & Noble

How to Get Published—Now!

A literary publicist with Russell Public Communications (www.russellpublic.com), Lynn Wiese Sneyd coordinates national, regional and local publicity campaigns for authors of non-fiction and fiction books. Formerly a community relations manager for Barnes & Noble Booksellers, she scheduled and hosted author events, sponsored book groups and workshops, and initiated partnerships with community organizations to promote literacy and support the arts. The author of many books and articles, Sneyd has been published across the country, and has earned a bachelor of arts in English from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Currently, she resides in Tucson with her husband, Gregg, and two daughters, Hannah and Elle.

Lynnette Baum
VP, Programming
lynnette@the-right-writer.com

Writer's Corner

Announcing Literary Orange 2008!

Orange County Public Library, UC Irvine Libraries, and California Center for the Book are holding the second annual Literary Orange Festival of Authors to celebrate literacy, while providing authors the opportunity to interact with their fans in an intimate setting. Attendees will have the opportunity to interact with an award-winning panel of authors, have their books signed, ask their favorite authors questions, and learn more about the writing and publishing processes.

The all-day affair will feature speeches from keynote authors, morning and afternoon discussion panels, and book signings.

The featured author is Elizabeth George. Her first novel, *A Great Deliverance*, won the Anthony Award, the Agatha Award, and France's Le Grand Prix de Literature Policiere and was also nominated for the Edgar and the Macavity Awards. She has also been awarded Germany's MIMI for her novel *Well-Schooled in Murder*. In 2004, she was awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters by California State University at Fullerton.

The afternoon keynote speaker is novelist Janet Fitch. In addition to her novels, she publishes short stories in literary journals. Her novel, *White Oleander*, was first published as a short story in *Black Warrior Review* and was named as a distinguished story in *Best American Short Stories 1994*. Her journalistic experience provided her with a vaccination against writer's block. She learned that she could always write, just that she could not be too perfectionistic about it. She found the poetics of the literary craft under the mentoring of poet and novelist Kate Braverman. Poetry still plays a major part in her preparation.

Additionally, 34 other authors will hold discussions on a number of topics, including screenwriting, children's literature, romance, mystery, literary fiction, science fiction, journalism, non-fiction, and publishing.

Literacy Orange will be held all day on Saturday, April 5 from 8 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Orange County in Garden Grove. The cost for the festival is \$75. The price of admission includes a catered breakfast, snacks and a luncheon featuring a keynote speaker. Parking is \$8.00 for the whole day.

Registration information is available at www.literaryorange.org and all OCPL branches.

Brennan Harvey
Meeting Coordinator
meeting@ocwriter.com

Letter to an Editor

I came across this several years ago at a writer's conference in England.

Dear Editor:

Thank you very much for your recent rejection slip. As it does not quite fit my present requirements, I am returning it. This in no way reflects upon its merits.

Don't be discouraged. I read your rejection slip with great interest, and I hope you'll continue reading my work.

I appreciate your thinking of me and wish you the best of luck in placing your rejection slip elsewhere.

Literally,

Just Another Writer

P.S. Please forgive me for this printed note. I'd like to comment on each rejection slip, but the large number I receive makes it impossible to answer each one personally.

Darlene Quinn
Treasurer
jack1703@aol.com

Baum to Assume SCWA Presidency

President, from page 2

I'm not disappearing! I'll remain as an advisor to the board for a while. I have one last large project to complete—that of getting SCWA officially recognized by the IRS and the State of California as a non-profit organization.

You'll see my face at luncheon meetings as I continue to support this great group and learn from its excellent speakers, just like you do. But I've done my duty and worked hard to develop a great team of board members. Keeping the good ship SCWA afloat and on course takes more than one person at the helm. It takes a whole team of volunteers working well together. I shall always cherish my memories of the times I spent working with everyone on your board. And, of course, of all my times of interacting with each of you.

Victory Crayne
President
victory@crayne.com



Speaker to Spill Secrets to Writing a Best Seller

Cannell, from page 1

During the past few years, Cannell has received numerous awards, including the Saturn Award—Life Career Award, the Marlow Lifetime Achievement Award from Mystery Writers of America and the WGA Paddy Chaefsky Laurel Award for Television Writing Achievement. An unstoppable creative force, Cannell is also a savvy businessman, and the president of his own independent production company, Stephen J. Cannell Productions, as well as The Cannell Studios. Having surpassed the \$1 billion mark in production outlays, Cannell still owns the worldwide distribution rights to more than 1,000 hours of Cannell-produced series and TV movies.

And, if you've ever dreamed of writing a novel or screenplay, Cannell offers a FREE five-part writing seminar online that takes you through the process step-by-step. So, learn from the best at the March 15 meeting of the Southern California Writers Association!



Lynnette Baum
VP, Programming
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**March Meeting:
Saturday
March 15, 2008**

STEPHEN J. CANNELL

How to Hit the New York Times Best Sellers List!

(See inside for more on Stephen J. Cannell.)

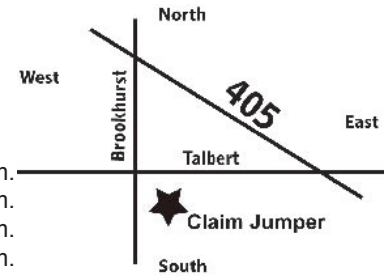


HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

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:	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 March 10:

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 March 10: E-mail Brennan at meeting@ocwriter.com or message (714) 375-5275



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