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Writers News

Volume 8, Number 4.....April 2009

April 18 Speaker

Dave Cunningham

Author/Journalist/Speaker

The Nuts and Bolts of Good Writing

“Good Writing is as Good Writing Does”



Dave Cunningham is an award-winning journalist, a published fiction and nonfiction author and a screenwriter. With the good fortune of Forest Gump, he has always been hanging around at the ideal spot to intersect with significant people and events. His professional history as a journalist includes interviewing four U.S. Presidents (Nixon, Carter, Clinton and George W. Bush), as well as entertainers that ranged from Aretha Franklin to Bob Hope to Frank Sinatra.

Cunningham also interviewed sports stars from Muhammad Ali to Reggie Jackson to the notorious O.J. Simpson. His journalistic coups include historic sporting moments, like the '84 Olympic Games, the '88 World Series of Kirk Gibson's ninth-inning game-winning home run, and the "Showtime" Lakers of Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

As author, ghost-writer and editor of 14 books, Cunningham has recently concluded his critically acclaimed nonfiction title, "Travel Within: The 7 Steps to Wisdom and Inner Peace." Two of his feature-length screenplays are now in production, and a third is under consideration by Paramount.

As president of the Orange County branch of the oldest professional writing organization in the nation, (the California Writers Club founded in 1909), Cunningham has won the 2004 Jack London Award, as well as six national and regional writing awards during his career as a newspaper journalist. An acclaimed columnist, editor and reporter, his writing has appeared in periodicals from coast to coast, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*.

In his address to the SCWA, Cunningham will teach how to know your audience, communicate clearly and find your voice. He will

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President's Message

How to Write Right...

Are you longing for a few specific suggestions to make your writing sit up and smile? Here are some tried and true methods that polish out the dross and buff up the beauty.

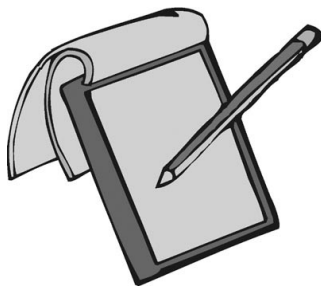


1) **The shorter the better.** Most authors know that shorter words bring “punch” to their writing. For example, I recently read an article that had the word *existence* sprinkled throughout the text. This article read much more easily when *existence* was replaced by the word *life*. As a rule, the shorter your verbiage (*words?*) the better the overall read.

2) **Focus on fresh phrases.** Go through your final edit with a red pencil. Scratch out phrases like *in spite of*, *in view of* or *the fact that*, and replace them with new, fresh language. Stock phrases like these can make your story or article sound canned, even if most of what you have written is unique or catchy.

3) **Vary your sentence length.** Following long or medium length sentences with a short phrase adds “pop” to your script. For example, in *Enders Game* by Orson Scott Card, we read: *Alai reached his bed and turned around to see Ender. Their eyes held for only a moment, locked in understanding. Then Ender left.* The fact that Ender left translates into heightened suspense, because of varied sentence length.

4) **Use natural language.** Mark Twain’s masterpiece *Huckleberry Finn* is a brilliant example of the use of natural language. Instead of super-cerebral verbiage, we read the dialogue with a backwoods drawl. Words are simple and heartfelt, the hallmark of classic literature. For example - *Not a sound, anywheres—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bullfrogs a-cluttering, maybe...you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up...and next you’ve got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going it!* Every word is clean and simple. Every sentence is fresh yet memorable.



5) **Trust your ear.** As a final test, read your work aloud. Does it sound prosaic? Pseudo-intellectual? Unintelligible? Reading your writing aloud is like examining it with a microscope. The tone or voice is magnified, especially when read by someone other than the author. So, spend an evening with friends who are honest enough to tell you the truth but kind enough to critique with a nurturing ear.

6) **Start in the kill zone.** Begin your tale at a key moment, when characters and plot are already in motion. Catch your reader with the hook of suspense. It works. Every time!

Lynnette Baum
President
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MARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

JARED KURITZ: *Publishing with a Purpose*

Jared Kuritz, co-president and creative director of Literary Strategies P.R., absolutely delivered on “Publishing with a Purpose” and interacted with SCWA members to help them decide which publishing path fits each writer and book: traditional, cooperative, self, vanity, or print on demand (POD).

In these troubled economic times, writers need to keep abreast of changes in the industry. Even before now, 96-97% of all books published by traditional publishers failed. However, if publishers are more financially involved in a specific book, they will increase their customary marketing. Kuritz thinks publishers today need to work harder or publish fewer. Some publishing routes will grow while others shrink. For example, 275,000 books are now on Kindle’s database. This electronic route brings \$7.99-9.99 each (not necessarily for the writer).

You, the writer, must first pinpoint the reason of WHY this book: personal; posterity; professional (to augment business); aim to achieve and profit as an author.

Secondly, understand the route and costs from your desk to the store bookshelf:

1. Writing the book with content and mechanics professionally edited, \$500-\$5,000
2. Cover designed, \$500-\$3,000
3. Interior designed, \$500-\$5,000, because of original artwork or photos
4. Costs of printing, \$1,500-\$10,000, varies with length, inside color, soft or hard cover
5. Distribution, \$500-\$2,500, includes blurb in catalogs for retailers, “hand selling” your book to individual stores, and convincing publishers to give/sell you advance copies before general publication
6. Advance copies of 1,000 for \$9,000, if

you can get them.

Learn the differences between expenses and efforts of production, printing, distribution, and marketing. (Subsequent print-runs are cheaper because initial costs are over.)

The five publishing routes share efforts and costs with the writer to varying degrees for a \$20 book:

A. Traditional: Can change your title, character, etc.: owns the rights until out of print for 18 months, can publish electronically; you must purchase books from them to do your own P.R.; wants a pipeline, does not like stand-alone books or an author to switch genres. You net \$1.36-2.04.

B. Cooperative (“fairly new”): Will share production costs but wants a book already well-edited and designed; allows author input; author gets more free books for P.R. and discounts for author’s back-of-the-room sales. You net \$1.80-5.70.

C. Self-publishing: Many components outsourced with author’s control; must pay all production and publishing costs; takes knowledge and much energy on author’s part; earns 100% of all net sales profits. You net \$6.00-11.40.

D. Vanity: Will package your material, print, and send it; will not promote/sell to retailers but will list on the dot coms. “They know the core ingredients but don’t know actually what the book stores want—such as where the ISBN number goes.” Kuritz summarizes them as not authentic or customary.

E. Print on Demand (POD): Can print single copies within two days but “low quality.” Distributors will not accept PODs. Kuritz suggests this route only when needing books before the official launch.

Critical questions after you decide WHY you

See *Kuritz*, page 7

SCWA News & Announcements

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

May 16

Lynn Price

Next month, we have the great good fortune to hear from Lynn Price, Editorial Director of **Behler Publications**. With many award-winning "book publication credits," like *Donovan's Paradigm*, *Godforsaken*, *Body Trauma*, *The Pacific Between*, *Elements of Recovery*, *Empress of Clouds* and *East Fifth Bliss*, Price has insider knowledge of what makes a manuscript appeal to a publisher and sell well. Her topic "The Writer's Essential Tackle Box" helps fresh authors get a hook on the writing industry. So, mark your calendars for May and bring your notepad...

Lynnette Baum
President
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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
VP, ProgrammingKathy Porter
VP, MembershipLinda Coyne
Secretary..... Charla Spence
TreasurerLarry Porricelli
Publicity DirectorLarry Porricelli
Webmaster Tony Stoklosa
Meeting Coordinator..... Charla Spence
Newsletter Editor Mary Michel Green
Tape Librarian.....Sharon Walters

Membership Information

Linda Coyne, VP, Membership
membership@ocwriter.com

Meeting Reservations

Charla Spence, meeting@ocwriter.com
or message (714) 375-5275

May “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.

E-mail to: contest@ocwriter.com with subject line: April 2009 “Will Write 4 Food Contest.” Put your daytime phone number or e-mail address in the message, along with the title of your story. Please attach the story without your identifying information, so the judging will be impartial.

Deadline: Stories must be received on or before 11:59 p.m. on May 6, 2009.

Winner: Attends their next SCWA meeting for free, a \$24.95 value! 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 Web site. Runners-up will also receive certificates and their stories will be on the Web site.

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, but you may receive as many honorable mentions you can win. At the end of the year, we will try to publish all winning stories in an SCWA chapbook.

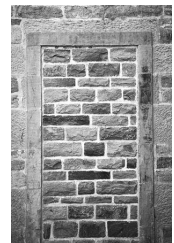


March First Place Winner:



The Devastating Insult

by Joyce Wheeler



Alanna had a penchant for attracting busboys to her bosom.

Cleavage was revealed long before the first three buttons of her cotton blouse slipped from their slits. Facially flawless, innocence glimmered.

Pinches created cheek color and stimulated a subtle hue in gently pressed lips. This Teen beauty seemed less complicated than a stream revealing partially scoured pebbles.

Music cacophony vibrated from the Drive-In & Cafe jukebox. The distracted Soda Jerk placed a rootbeer float. She strawstirred it before tasting. She had a profound look as if she had just ingested Tolstoy.

Two carhops skated near her to locate the manager. The prettier one glanced back as she hissed, “One day, I am going to get that Alanna 86’d.”

Outside, in the car service area there was a shed containing stacked bricks. These were the remains of an outside restroom which had crumbled twenty years earlier in the 1933 California earthquake. Utilizing the original plumbing was a wooden replacement.

Alanna paid for the float, left change, and walked swiftly past hamburger devouring, hormonal teens in pastel cars toward the restroom. She tried to glide so her breasts wouldn’t bounce Captured by tiny bows on each side of her face, a river of strawberry blonde tresses flowed on her erect back.

The stacked shed reminded her of a horrific insult she had endured when she had been told by a desired athlete, “Girl, you are built like a brick outhouse!”

Contest Cancelled Due to Lack of Interest



*No one entered our
spring longer-form story
contest.*

*We'll try again later
in the year.*



Member Good News

Darlene Quinn is going to be on "San Diego 6 in the Morning" TV show (XETV) on Thursday April 16 at 7 a.m.

Two days later, Saturday April 18, she will be at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 2615 Vista Way, Oceanside, CA 92054.

Saturday, April 25, Darlene is at the LA Times Festival of Books held at:

UCLA, 405 Hilgard Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90095.

This event features two of our SCWA authors Darlene Quinn will be in ***Webs of Power*** booth 606 and Tom Kirkbride will be next to her in ***Gamadin: Word of Honor*** booth 605.

She is continuing with her book tour on the east coast once it gets a little warmer there. In the meantime, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Womens Wear Daily* want to do reviews for her book.

Pauline Chavez Bent was interviewed on a Farmington, New Mexico radio station on a program called *Write on Four Corners* which highlights authors in Colorado, Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. Her program will be aired on Friday, April 24 at 2:30 PM mountain time on 90.9 FM but can also be heard on the archived programs of *ksje.com* on the internet.

Glenda Rynn's short story is due to be published at the end of the month. She got her payment check and was shocked to find that her name was misspelled. She immediately called the publisher and was assured that her name would be spelled correctly on the byline.

Larry Porricelli has been asked to write a treatment for a movie based upon a book that is about a woman who was abused.

The A's, B's & C's of Getting Published

Kuritz, from page 3

are writing:

- a. What role does the book play in your business?
- b. From where will the majority of sales come?
- c. How vital are the book's characteristics to your goal?
- d. How much time can you devote to this?
- e. Do you have the skills to multi-task and delegate?
- f. Do you understand all aspects of publishing and the timeline?
- g. If you do not have a built-in market place, do you have a plan to create one?

Kuritz believes many publishing venues will shrink but that cooperative publishing will increase.

Obtain a CD of your book whenever possible in case the publisher goes out of business.

Another tip: "At talks, take pre-publication orders right there on your computer for Amazon.com. Then, for sure, your numbers will show up on Amazon"—even though book dealers deny watching the two-month, ongoing demand for a forthcoming book.

After hearing members read aloud their 25-word synopses and asking their purpose for writing, Kuritz advised each which publishing route to follow.

Antoinette Kuritz, Jared's Co-President and mother, was too ill to attend. For more of his comprehensive material, check ocwriter.com to order a CD.

Glenda Brown Rynn
Reporter
grynn@cox.net

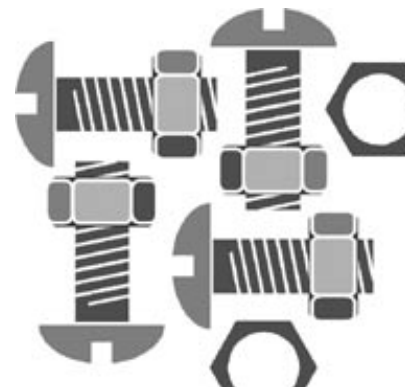


“Nuts and Bolts” of Story Construction Described

Cunningham, from page 1

also cover the 3-act story structure and how to define plot, character, setting, point of view, dialogue and style. So, don't miss this one-time visit from a brilliant author. Join us on April 18 to learn from a wonderful writer how to write at your peak!

Lynnette Baum
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**April Meeting:
Saturday
April 18, 2009**

DAVID CUNNINGHAM

The Nuts and Bolts of Good Writing

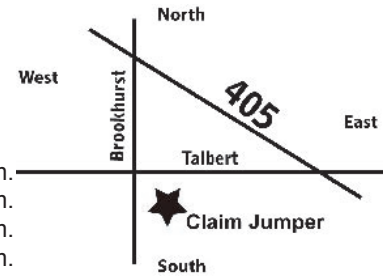
(See inside for more on David Cunningham.)



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--\$34.95 AT DOOR; \$29.95 WITH RSVP
MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$29.95 AT DOOR
MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$24.95



BE SURE TO RSVP WHENEVER POSSIBLE!

RSVP before April 14:

Charla Spence, 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 April 14: E-mail Charla at meeting@ocwriter.com or message (714) 375-5275



Writers News

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