



Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

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Volume 9, Number 3.....March 2010

March 20 Speaker

Terry Whalin

Former Book Acquisitions Editor and Author

“Jumpstarting Your Publishing Dreams” Insider strategies for success

Please join us March 20th for an opportunity to hear about publishing from a man whose career has put him on both sides of the editorial desk. This gives him a unique insight into the publishing industry, an insight he will be sharing with us. Throughout his 20-year career, Terry Whalin has been both an author and an editor. For over five years, Terry was an acquisitions editor in the book divisions of David C. Cook and Howard Books. He has written extensively about Christian fiction and reviewed numerous fiction books in publications such as *Faithful Reader.com* and *BookPage*. Whalin is the creator and webmaster for *Right-Writing.com*, a web site filled with how-to information, proven tools, and methods for writers of all types and genres.



Whalin’s work has appeared in over 50 magazines, including *Writer’s Digest* and *The Writer*. He has written extensively about Christian fiction and reviewed numerous fiction books in publications such as *Faithful Reader.com* and *BookPage*. His regular blog *The Writing Life*, offers readers a glimpse of his work inside publishing.

He has written more than 60 books through traditional publishers in a wide range of topics from children’s books to biographies to co-authored books. Several of Terry’s books have sold over 100,000 copies. His newest book, *Jumpstart Your Publishing Dreams, Insider Secrets to Skyrocket Your Success*, is now available. Terry is a popular speaker and teacher at numerous writers’ conferences and an active member of the American Society of Journalists and Authors.

Whether you are unsure how to start on the path to publication, have a published book, or want to take your publishing career to the next level, Terry Whalin’s appearance at the SCWA is something you can’t afford to miss.

Neil Young
VP, Programming
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President's Message

Writing Down the Bones



Rarely we discover a book about the craft of writing that shines. *Writing Down the Bones*, by Natalie Goldberg, is such a book. Like a ray of brilliance, the text parts the murk of boring and repetitive trade manuals on writing, and introduces readers to the rarified air of hard won knowledge. It's refreshing to read and enlightening to understand.

"Like a white snail, the toilet slides into the living room, demanding to be loved," Goldberg writes, quoting a reading. "...In the book of the heart, there is no mention made of plumbing...The toilet slides out of the living room, like a white snail, flushing with grief."

The humor and originality of this quote discomfits readers while stirring their humor. And, where is the creative lodestone awaiting our touch to shed its magic onto the page? It can be as simple as relaxing, as genuine as a catnap in a patch of sunlight.

"...without thinking, begin to write..." she continues. "This means letting go and allowing the elm in your front yard to pick itself up and walk over to Iowa. Try for good, strong first sentences...play around. Dive into absurdity and write!"

Every writer is a budding writer, whether their works have been published or never seen the light of day. In *Writing Down the Bones* we experience the childlike awe that led us to believe that a knight could ride down the lane at noon or a monster crawl out of the closet at midnight.

"Writing is 90% listening," Goldberg states. "You listen so deeply to the space around you that it fills you, and when you write, it pours out of you. If you can capture that reality around you, you need nothing else."

How often, instead of listening to the space that surrounds us, do we beat ourselves against the polished text of the masters? When did they come up with that opening line? How did that exquisite meter evolve? What did they do to create such matchless rhythm and symmetry? The answer to these urgent questions may be as simple as relaxing, listening and letting the muse within express in its own unique way.

"So while we are busy writing, all the burning life we are eager to express should come out of a place of peace," she concludes. "...someplace in us should know the utter simplicity of saying what we feel."

Relax into writing. Rejoice into writing. Refresh yourself through writing. Leave all judgment, critiquing, fearful anticipation and comparison behind. Let the wellspring of creation, alive in children and Spring and stars, pour out of you. As you do, you will taste the joy of...writing down the bones!

Lynnette Baum
President
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MICHAEL CASSUTT

Why We Write (Especially When We Don't Get Rich)

Michael Cassutt, television executive, scriptwriter, and novelist, is powerfully conflicted when speaking to writers' groups. He wishes not only to share his joy of writing but also to encourage writers. However, his honesty will not allow him to sugarcoat a writer's chances of getting work published or filmed today. "First we depress you and then encourage you. In Hollywood, we leave out the *encourage* part." The last portion of his topic, "Why We Write (Especially When We Don't Get Rich)," would be more accurate as "...When We Can't Earn a Living."

In spite of it all, Cassutt still writes 500-1000 words a day.

In his hometown of 3,000 in Wisconsin, Cassutt began writing science fiction at 15-16. His first sale was to a magazine during his college freshman year. He says a writer has to have some ambition **for the ego**, which is not the same as ambition for money. Many stories, articles, books, TV scripts, and TV executive work later, Cassutt calls himself a "Jack of All Trades but Master of None." He shares his knowledge through the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California.

First, the bad news: Cassutt explained how the chaotic shift from print to the Internet/electronic

world has made differentiating between good and bad markets more difficult, made creators lose control of their work, and drastically hurt profitability. (Note: Because the complex technology of 3-D films "cannot be pirated easily," those producers can better control their copyrights.)

Stephen King, for example, used to make 6-12% profit; now there's argument over what percent publishers and novelists should/can make. Inflation has played havoc: Jack Williamson [who coined "genetic engineering" and was called "Dean of Science Fiction" after Robt. A. Heinlein died] earned one cent a word in 1928. Decades later, Cassutt says he earned one cent a word. "There's less money to be made than there used to be."

Successful writers incur dangerous problems when they become lazy and "phone it in" or "make mistakes that drive readers away." Also, the "audience gets tired of you." Cassutt's example was the Aubrey/Maturin series by Patrick O'Brien's. "Brilliant," he termed the first half-dozen; "interesting" were the following ten; and "running out of gas" described #19 on. Like athletes, it's "hard for writers to know when to walk away."

The good news: Cassutt elaborated on Robert Silverberg's codification of why people write: 1.

For the satisfaction of the shaping impulse, to take things from one's own life and figure them out. 2. To codify the writer's own thinking, to force one's self to examine his/her own views. 3. For emotional catharsis ("Writing is torture but having written is joy), to explore emotions without living them. 4. For stimulation of thought, to see things in a new light, and to practice one's craft. Motivating, too, is the passion of knowing someone out there is waiting for that writer's next book or story.

Commentary on getting books and scripts produced: "Ideas are common, but how they are



See *Cassutt* page 4

SCWA News & Announcements

Writing for Love of the Work

Cassutt, from page 3

done differs.” For information about selling to TV, subscribe to *Daily Variety*. If someone wants to turn your book into a script, “say ‘No, I want to do the first two drafts.’” If your name is on the first draft, it cannot be removed.

To **break into** screenwriting, you need a “great pilot example and a good script for an established show.” To become **established**, you need 13 episodes written and produced. Jump ahead of the crowd by finding out who in a studio, agency, or network bought a novel to convert into screen—and submitting to that person. Sometimes, however, a studio buys a script to take it off the market. Only one of 10 properties gets filmed. Do not bother to register with the Writers Guild. “If someone’s going to rip you off, they’re going to rip you off.” Writers need an

agent from either California or New York. Only four agencies represent 80% of network and cable films: Creative Artists Agency (CAA), United Talent Agency (UTA), International Creative Management (ICM), and William Morris Endeavor Entertainment.

Glenda Brown Rynn
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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

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Membership Information

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Meeting Reservations

Sonia Marsh, meeting@ocwriter.com
or message (949) 309-0030

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:
April 17, 2010

Marisa Silver

Former Book Acquisitions Editor and Author

The Devil in the Details: How the Universe Creates the Specific in Fiction

Our speaker for April 17th will be award-winning author Marisa Silver, who will be sharing with us the creation of complicated casts, dynamic plots, and realistic settings.

Marisa Silver made her fiction debut in *The New Yorker* when she was featured in that magazine's first "Debut Fiction" issue. W.W. Norton published her collection of short stories, *Babe in Paradise*, in 2001. That collection was named a New York Times Notable Book of the Year and was a Los Angeles Times Best Book of the Year.



In 2005, W.W. Norton published her novel, *No Direction Home*. Her latest novel, *The God of War*, was published in 2008 by Simon and Schuster and is a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for fiction. Winner of the O. Henry Prize, her fiction has been included in *The Best American Short Stories*, *The O. Henry Prize Stories*, as well as other anthologies. Her new collection of stories, *Alone With You*, will be published by Simon and Schuster April, 13th, 2010.

Neil Young
VP, Programming
programmer@ocwriter.com

New Mailing Address!

The SCWA Post Office box has changed to:

SCWA
P.O. Box 861
Lake Forest, CA 92609



Member News

Neil Young had his short story, "Four Bullets," published in the February issue of the Gothic Horror Magazine, 69 Flavors of Paranoia. <http://69flavorsofparanoia.com/CREATIVES/issue4volume1/Four-Bullets-by-Neil-V-Young.html>



Pat Wilson's story "Paper Dolls" is tentatively scheduled for publication in the August issue of Good Old Days magazine.

Kathy Porter will be signing copies of her book, "Earth's Ultimate Conflict," in New York City in at Book Expo America, May 25-27, 2010. <http://www.grayguardians.com/appearances.html>

Mariana Williams is a finalist in the L.A. Moth GrandSLAM Story-telling Competition. It will be held March 2, 2010 at the Echoplex Theater, in L.A. <http://www.themoth.org/events/?month=03&year=2010&eid=9>

Victory Crayne will speak at Leisure World in Seal Beach on Friday, March 26, 2010 on "Ingredients for a Novel to Sell Well." This is the same talk Victory gave to SCWA in December, 2006. <http://crayne.com/Events/Speaking-events.htm>

Brennan Harvey
Reporter
goodnews@ocwriter.com



**March Meeting:
Saturday
March 20**

TERRY WHALIN

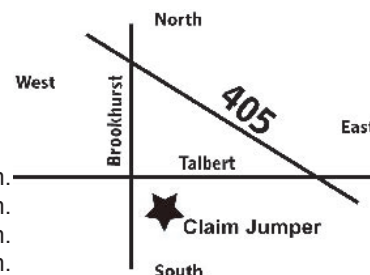
Former Book Acquisitions Editor and Author



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—\$35 AT DOOR; \$30 WITH RSVP
MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$30 AT DOOR
MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$25

