



Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

www.ocwriter.com

Volume 10, Number 4.....April 2011

April 16 Speaker

Mariana Williams

Storyteller

Winceworthy Tales Comes to SCWA!!!

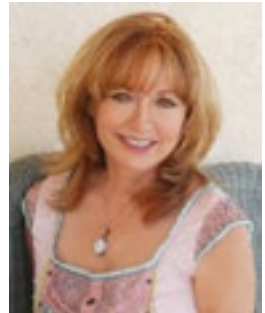
This month, we ask the question: Who will be the best story-teller? Author, poet, and singer, Mariana Williams brings storytelling to the monthly SCWA brunch meeting in April and things will never be the same!!! Mariana, a winner of similar contests at the Moth, came up with her own way of getting people to share special stories about their lives with others. And for everyone to decide which one wins the prize!

The concept: 40-50 in a room for brunch. At least 5- 10 need to have true stories that are valuable, happy, sad, hilarious, perhaps ribald, or even downright embarrassing. The more surprising, the better! Mariana will start it off with a couple of great tales, and then it's up to us, as writers, to take it away!

Please visit Mariana's website, <http://www.marianawilliams.net> and see for yourself.

If you want to be one of the tale bearers, let us know, send a few lines of the story to: <mailto:lorenzo212@yahoo.com> or ceotalent@aol.com.

Join us on April 16th for the hottest thing to hit the literary world in years!!!



continued on page 4

Meeting 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.



IN THIS ISSUE:

April Speaker.....	1
President's Message.....	2
March Meeting Highlights.....	3
SCWA News & Announcements.....	4
Writers Corner.....	7

President's Message

How Much Work Is It?

Hopefully, if you are attempting to make a business out of writing, you have started your business plan. Remember, this does not have to be a novel length plan just enough information in each of the components to help you think through all the known realities of your project. If you are only writing for pleasure, just like the information from the speakers at our meetings, you might find something you can modify to help with your project.

The next step is Design (Project Planning) as it relates to the project management (not the creative design) perspective of your writing. In this phase, you will design the way you will get the work done. This is the goal development portion on your project. It is important that you set reasonable and attainable goals and expectations for yourself in order to keep the project moving and not get discouraged. For our purposes in this area, I will define goals as the broader major milestones in your project and steps as the finer tasks needed to complete the goal. Design in this context is different than developing a creative outline for your book. It is deciding things like:

- How much time can you devote to you writing each day, week, month? Remember, you have to allow time for your family, day job and other commitments.
- Outlining the goals and steps you need to take to research your book. This is important in helping you establish reasonable deadlines and making fewer time consuming mistakes.
- Making deadlines for yourself that are reasonable. You probably won't be able to have a finished product on the shelves or on the internet in a year much less in a couple of months. It usually takes a long time to get through the whole publishing and distribution process not to mention writing and editing process. Another reason you 'don't quit your day job.'
- Other Design Components specific to your project. Each project is unique and each of the design steps will be different. One way to flesh out the components is to find a mentor to help you think through all of the possible goals and steps for your project. Find another writer, critique group, class, etc.
- List the goals: I like to use an excel spreadsheet for to chart my goals and steps. I first list the goals (major milestones) in a logical sequence in the far left column and list the dates by week or month across the top. Goals should include, but are not limited to, key elements and a reasonable approximate date when in you should logically begin working on that goal. Goals should include: research, identifying the editor(s), graphic artist, agent or no agent, printer or publisher (traditional, self-publish, small press, e-publish), PR (public relations) plans, marketing and advertising plans, establishing an ISBN and other goals specific to your project.
- Identify the timeframe: Under each goal, I list the steps it will take to achieve the goal. After the list is complete, I go back the place an 'X' under the goal week or month that I am 'targeting' the goal or step for completion. Make these dates reasonable given your other priorities. Many goals and steps can happen simultaneously. A note here about goals and target dates; the assumption is that you are writing for yourself and while goals and targets should be thoughtfully developed and sincerely sought, life happens and I feel life balance is needed. So don't be so hard on yourself if you slip a bit. Just revise the date and keep moving. It provides a

continued on page 6

March Highlights:

MARK SEVI

“Developing Novels into Screenplays, Part Deux”

The difference between writing a novel and writing a screenplay is analogous to telling someone, “Here are the keys to the car; you have to be in New York in a month” versus “You have to be in New York in three days,” says Mark Sevi, screenwriter, teacher, and president of the O.C. Screenwriters Assoc. He presented “Part Deux” of Developing Novels into Screenplays.”

Mark Sevi, who’s written hundreds of scripts, sold 25, and had 19 produced, is realistic with his Irvine Valley College students and other hopeful screenwriters. “All I want to do is sell a script. I won’t put up with stuff that won’t sell. Nobody wants your dead grandmother’s cat.” A screenwriter must focus on creating only the dialogue. Set and costume designers take a statement such as “Interior, banquet room, day,” and create all the rest. Not your problem.

Sevi continually has to explain why scripts do not exactly follow their original sources. It would take four scripts of 120 pages each to cover a novel. Each page uses a minute of screen time. Those 120 pages get cut to 97-100 during filming. Production costs per page are \$100,000-200,000. (The main actor or actress earns \$15-20 million.)

Also, establishing the truth of a story is almost impossible. Later, more information may surface, or “the real truth may never come out.” Sevi noted that a WWII story written by a German would differ from one by an American. “Even documentaries have a viewpoint.” The non-fiction book *A Beautiful Mind* had 500 pages. For the film a romance was written in to balance the factors of John Nash’s being bi-sexual, paranoid, and schizophrenic. But the script stayed true to the book’s theme: “The human spirit can conquer all.”

While a script may deviate from a book, it must be true to its essence—also called theme. A screenplay is to a novel as a snapshot of a statue is to the sculpture itself—the essence.

Second to theme is structure; in fact, a screenwriter needs to write first from the ending where the theme can be clearly portrayed and then structured backwards. For example, in *The Social Network*, built around Mark Zuckerberg, the theme is “You can be a social success publically but a social failure personally.”

“The plot engine is the framework of the story.” Ninety percent of all scripts fall into this structure of 120 pages: In the first half after the beginning, there is Plot Point I where the protagonist’s life path changes. It is followed by Plot Point II a. By the 60-page midpoint, success looks apparent. Soon after halfway, however, Sevi says the rug is pulled from under the protagonist and the stakes change. A little later comes Plot Point II b, and the story ends with Plot Point III.

Big news: “The demographic for most American films today is fifteen.” The demographics for European films are different. Sevi says French movies drive him crazy because their focus is not on themes of a greater truth but on stories, usually smaller ones, on a budget. Their films are “less slavish to the box office” because they’re often government-funded.

Mark Sevi’s Must-Watch list: 1. TV’s *House, M.D.* series 2. *Glee* 3. *The Verdict* with Paul Newman 4. *The Girl with the Dragon Tatoo* 5. Anything written by Aaron Sorkin.

Miscellaneous:

-You can almost always get one chance in Hollywood, but you must be very sure of your product.

All external journeys are internal journeys.

For tweener scripts, use only a couple of linguistic terms that mark the age, not the whole dialogue.

continued on page 6

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER: SHEILA FINCH

May 21, 2011



Please join us in May, when the SCWA welcomes back Sheila Finch. Sheila has been a creative force and teacher to many award-winning writers, and is often cited as an influence in many a writer's speech. In fact, she recently retired from 28 years of teaching at El Camino College in Torrance, where she taught everything from fiction writing 101 to advanced workshops.

At the request of her students, she continues to conduct writing seminars, critique groups and workshops. She has even been invited twice to teach fiction writing for Oxford University Discovery Programme aboard the Queen Mary 2.

For her SCWA appearance in May, Sheila has promised us an interactive morning "All You Ever Wanted to Know About Writing Short Stories in About an Hour." In this speech, Sheila has asked that everyone in attendance bring writing paper and be ready for an in-depth discussion on getting those creative juices flowing!

Neil Young
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GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME--\$35 AT DOOR; \$30 WITH RSVP
MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$30 AT DOOR
MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$25

Williams, cont. from page 1

Winceworthy Tales at SCWA, April 16, 2011.
A prize of \$50 for winner!!!!
Do play! Have fun!
SCWA - where the literary action is!!!

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Writer's Corner

Are You Doing Your Dream Job?

By Victory Crayne

I watched a video recently about an entrepreneur. In it he was asked why he selected that type of business and he replied that he had listened to a guy talk about selecting what line of work you should be doing.

Take out a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle. On one side, you put down what you love to do. On the right side, put what you're good at. And stare at it until you come up with your dream job.

Are you doing your dream job?

When I went through that simple exercise, I realized that I was heading in the right direction. I've known that it is very important to focus on your goal so you know when you are being distracted. It's the old the Urgent versus the Important battle. Sometimes the Urgent grabs all your time and you don't spend enough time on the Important.

Once I realized what my main goal should be, I asked myself, "What am I doing that is preventing me from getting what I want in my life?"

And whammo! I saw that the distractions I was allowing each day were gobbling up all my time to the point where I was spending only a few weekend hours on my dream job. When I realized that it would take me decades to make enough progress, it dawned on me that not only I was wasting valuable time, but I could instantly see what was distracting me.

I would have to spend more time each day on my dream job.

Now I spend the first two hours (sometimes many more) on activities that directly move me forward to my dream job. After that, I get to my daily to do list. Spending the first two hours of each day on my dream job has an added benefit of keeping that goal in my mind all day, so I can more clearly see what is a distraction.

So let me ask you, "Are you doing your dream job?" Or are you allowing yourself to be distracted?

Victory Crayne
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President's Message, continued from pg. 2

feeling of accomplishment when you see the goals begin to be achieved and motivates you to continue.

The Development phase will not be discussed in great detail which is why I combined it with the Design phase. The Development phase, from the perspective of the project plan, is the creative phase. This is where you consult the numerous creative resources available for guidance with this phase. It is the phase that most writers enjoy.

For your next project planning assignment, take an hour or two to establish goals and target dates for your project and then try to stick to the plan. You will be surprised how far you will get.

Next month we will discuss Delivery and Evaluation.

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Sevi, cont. from page 3

In Sci-fi Channel creature features, "someone has to die every 8 minutes." But the script cannot say "s—t" and cannot kill dogs.

For Hard PG14 ratings, one "f" word is allowed.

"Jumped the shark" comes from a series where Fonzi jumps a shark at the ocean. It means "out of ideas so put in anything stupid."

A hundred scripts have already been written on Bernie Madoff.

Glenda Brown Rynn, reporter
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