



Southern California Writers Association

Writers News

www.ocwriter.com

Volume 9, Number 5.....May 2010

May 15 Speaker

Steve Boyett

Author

Digital Media, Authorship, and the Future of Publishing

Please join us on May 15 for one of the most high-energy renaissance men in the publishing industry. He comes to speak to our group about the monumental technological changes in the marketplace and how it affects us as authors.

Steven R. Boyett was born in Atlanta, Georgia, grew up all over Florida. He attended the University of Tampa on a writing scholarship. Steve began his first novel Ariel during the summer after his freshman year. Steve quit college after his sophomore year to finish the novel at age nineteen. Eighteen months later, Ariel was finished, and a year after that it was sold to Ace Books.

Ace published Ariel as their lead fantasy title in 1983. Spurred by positive reviews, a strong Barclay Shaw cover, the novel went through four printings in its first few months, earning a notable mention in the *New York Times Book Review* and appearing on several chain paperback-bestseller lists.

Soon after Ariel was published, he moved from Florida to Los Angeles, California, where he continued to write fiction and screenplays as well as teach college writing courses, seminars, and workshops. He has published stories in literary, science fiction, fantasy, and horror anthologies and magazines, as well as publishing essays and comic books.

In the early Nineties his imprint Sneaker Press published chapbooks by the poets Carrie Etter and the late Nancy Lambert. Boyett has also been a martial arts instructor, professional paper marbler, advertising copywriter, proofreader, typesetter, writing teacher, DJ, Website designer, and editor. He writes and speaks frequently on New Media and the changing roles for writers in the 21st century. He produces three of the

world's most popular music podcasts (Podrunner, Podrunner: Intervals, and Groovelectric), and was among the first people to make a living in that medium.

So please join us May 15 for a glimpse into the future, of which we all hope to be a part.

Neil Young
VP, Programming
programmer@ocwriter.com

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President's Message

Your First Line of Attraction



The most powerful “hook” in a book is the first line. A first line should encapsulate the core message without giving plot secrets away. It must capture the imagination of the reader with the tantalizing promise of revelations to yet come, while hinting at the main thread of the storyline.

Steven R. Boyett’s best selling novel *Ariel* starts with, “I was bathing in a lake when I saw the unicorn.” After reading that line who could put that book back on the shelf? This one simple sentence makes it clear that the hero is a boy...not a man. He is innocent, not guilty...pure not corrupt, and faces a world that is a crucible of experience destined to strip away childhood and leave...what? All this is conveyed in less than a dozen words, the first words in the first line of a brilliant literary work.

“Man,” said Terl, “is an endangered species.”

This is the first line of L. Ron Hubbard’s classic *Battlefield Earth*. After reading that sentence, I devoured the first half of the book in one fell swoop, practically without breathing. Why was humanity an endangered species? Who was Terl? What had humankind done to set the feet of their descendants on such a fatal course? Perhaps, my opinion is skewed by my love for fantasy and science fiction, but I believe this single sentence is one of the best first lines ever written.

Hugo and Nebula award winner Orson Scott Card wrote a landmark book titled *Ender’s Game*. “I’ve watched through his eyes, I’ve listened through his ears, and I can tell you he’s the one.” What does this first line do to your heart rate? If your heart doesn’t speed up, your mind doesn’t gear up and your imagination doesn’t steam up, you’re probably dead! What a great “hook,” and what a wonderful first line.

In my paperback copy of *Life Expectancy*, Dean Koontz wrote, *Boo!* And, signed his name. This is my favorite of all of Dean’s multitudinous works, because the entire storyline is foreshadowed in the first sentence. “On the night that I was born, my paternal grandfather, Josef Tock, made ten predictions that shaped my life.” The predictions were more nearly curses and our protagonist had to survive each impossible event to carry the story forward. What a brilliant book. What a great first line!

From classical first lines like, “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...” to contemporary first lines such as, “My mother drove me to the airport with the windows rolled down,” the first sentence of a book is the very real “hook” that allows an author to reel the reader in. How do successful writers come up with these first lines? Where do they get their inspiration? Through intuition and clarity.

You don’t have to know each twist and turn of your story to be aware of its karmic values. Some writers plot out the storyline, while others make it up as they go along. Both have a general direction, an inner compass that points the way to fate, to challenge, to the adventures through which their characters must pass to reach safe haven. If you are really in love with your story, with your characters, with writing, the first line will come to you. It may not come clear until the entire tale is on the page, but when it does it will “hook” your reader, opening doors of wonder to readers and writers, alike.



Lynnette Baum

President

lynnette@the-right-writer.com

MARISSA SILVER

Secrets to Building Character



According to Marisa Silver, characters must jump off the page. Readers buy into the storyline if characters feel real. Using detail to build characters develops this sense of reality.

For example, superficial visual cues lead to increased believability, and may foreshadow judgments, emotional swings and pivotal decisions made by the characters. Attitude and behavior, either conventional or contrary, come forth as we write about how the character reacts to events and problems. Choices embody attitudes, and can be reflected in environment, family dynamics, social mores and the home that the character has built.

The vital question for each author to ask is Why? Why? Why? Why does the character react or pro-act in various situations? Asking this question develops characters that entrance readers, leading them onward into the deeps of plot and storyline.

There are several ways in which characters

can be discovered. Logical plotting of character is one way. Another is to allow intuition to guide your writing. When you write flowingly, allowing free association, the genuine bones of character are unearthed. Such free association allows the writer to go back after a section of work is completed and add telling detail.

Sometimes the subconscious expresses itself with eloquence. Sometimes actions belie dialogue. We can take examples from our relationships. Silver knew a free, earth-lover, incense-burning type. Inexplicably, she owned a gun. We all have mythologies scripted deep within us, circles within circles. Which is why peeling away ideologies of family, work, church, hobbies and culture always reveals fascinating character.

“I never know my characters fully in advance,” Silver said. “Always, I question who he or she is while writing, starting with only a shred of an idea.”

Point-of-view, pacing, event placement, etc. all reveal essential elements of character. Although setting is pivotal, action often reveals distinctive details. Keep in mind that plots, especially in short stories, often don’t resolve a multitude of issues. Instead, they explore past history and reveal present motives.

“Be prepared to change direction all the time,” Silver concludes. “Be prepared to discover your characters as they reveal themselves. To maintain an authentic tone, your first pass should always be written in a dream-state, keeping in mind that you are the first reader of both character and plot.”

Lynnette Baum
Substitute Reporter
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SCWA News & Announcements

New Mailing Address!

The SCWA Post Office box has changed to:

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



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, ProgrammingNeil Young
VP, Membership Charla Spence
Secretary..... Charla Spence
TreasurerLarry Porricelli
Publicity DirectorLarry Porricelli
Webmaster Tony Stoklosa
Meeting Coordinator..... Sonia Marsh
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Tape Librarian.....Sharon Walters

Membership Information

membership@ocwriter.com

Meeting Reservations

Sonia Marsh, meeting@ocwriter.com

or message (949) 309-0030

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

June 19, 2010

Sheila Finch

How to Become a Fiction Writer and have Fantastic Adventures

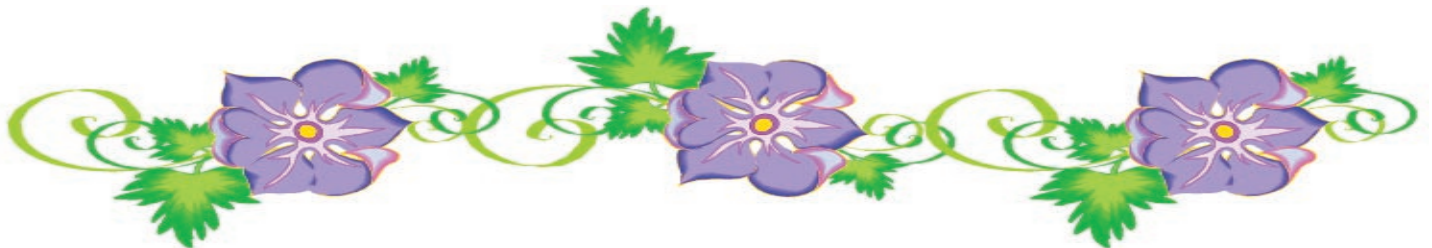
Building worlds and fleshing out every detail from the very largest to the most miniscule has proven to be a major challenge for any fiction writer. Indeed, what do you do if you are writing a crime novel and never been a cop? How about science fiction if you're not an astrophysicist? There are times a writer can just feel overwhelmed. That is why we are overjoyed to feature Sheila Finch, the award-winning author and writing instructor to share her knowledge with us.



Sheila Finch is the award winning author of eight science fiction novels. Her novel, *Infinity's Web*, recieved the Compton Crook award and her young adult book, *Tiger in the Sky*, won the 1999 San Diego Book award for best juvenile fiction. In 1998, she won the Nebula Award for her novella, "Reading The Bones." Sheila's work has been collected in numerous anthologies and she's a regular contributor to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Sheila spent many years as a teacher of creative writing at the college level in Southern California as well as at conferences and conventions around the world. A large number of her students have themselves become published authors. Now retired from El Camino College, she continues to teach through many venues.

Neil Young
VP, Programming
programmer@ocwriter.com



June “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: June 2010 “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 June 13, 2010.

Winner: Attends their next SCWA meeting for free, a \$25 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:

Big Hand on the Clock

By Polly Dunn



Steve was a worrier. He claimed it was his only fault. Julie agreed with that assessment and so, after a year of dating, they moved in together. But, as time passed, Julie began to reassess the full scope of Steve’s worrying. Julie was more carefree. Steve loved to fret. They were almost totally opposites. One Sunday morning, Julie decided an extra hour or two of sleep sounded pretty inviting. She convinced Steve to come back to bed with her and forget the cares of the world for a while. Steve was always willing to join Julie in bed.

Yes, there was a little romance – after all, they were young and in love – but then Steve’s constant worrying went into action.

“What time did we have to be at your Mom’s for dinner today?” he asked.

“Did you bring in the newspaper off the porch?”

“Is the coffee pot turned off?” And with each question, Julie answered calmly, but her patience was wearing thin.

“Can you please set the alarm? What’s the hour now?”

“Six and counting,” came Julie’s reply.

Steve had become a questioning vortex, nevertheless he continued, “The clock, babe, what is the big hand on?” Julie was smiling as she answered, “One big hand is reaching for the clock, Steve, and my other big hand is going to cover your mouth!” Steve did not say another word. It was time to be quiet.

Honorable Mention: *Delay*, by Joyce Wheeler

Conferences

Plan ahead for the Southern California Writers Conference Exclusive Discount! Mark your calendar for September 24- 26, 2010 Michael Stephen Gregory is offering **Southern California Writers Association members** an exclusive discount!

SCWA members will receive a **\$100.00 discount** if you register for the Los Angeles Writer Conference before June 1, 2010!
Receive your discount by using the code **SCWA**

The Los Angeles Writers Conference is located a mere minutes away at the Hyatt Regency Newport, 1107 Jamboree Road, Newport Beach, CA 92660, (949) 729-1234. **So close you won't have to pay the added expense of hotel cost!** However discounted lodging rates are available to SCWC*LA conferees, information at <http://newporter.hyatt.com/>.

Further details can be found on: www.writersconference.com

Kathy Porter
Administrative Assistant



Greetings from the 2010 La Jolla Writers Conference!

As we celebrate our 10th anniversary this November 5-7 at the beautiful Paradise Point Resort & Spa, I wanted to let you know some of the great things we have in store for our attendees.

We are very excited to announce our 2010 Keynote Speakers, to include NY Times bestselling author, John Lescoart; #1 British bestselling novelist, Linwood Barclay; and NY Times bestselling author, James Frey.

Our 2010 faculty is starting to take shape and already includes 4 NY Times bestselling authors, an acquisitions editor from a prominent publishing house, 5 agents, and the regular assortment of fantastic teachers.

We have announced our Private Read & Critique participating faculty members, with whom full

conference attendees can schedule a private session to have their work reviewed.

For those of you interested, we have started a Twitter account for the LJWC. You can follow us at <http://twitter.com/ljwriters>. Followers will be privy to conference news and information as well as special offers and activities only available to Twitter followers.

Please remember that our conference is strictly limited to the first 200 attendees to ensure small class sizes. We have reached capacity each of the last two years and are already at about 50% capacity.

For more information about this year's conference, visit <http://www.lajollawritersconference.com>

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Ambassador's Reports

As ambassadors for SCWA, Jeff and I visited two writing groups during our first month.

Pens on Fire, Speaker Series, meets in Corona Del Mar in an art gallery annex on PCH. T. Jefferson Parker was the guest author, interviewed by hostess Barbara De Marco Barrett. The cost to attend is \$20 per person and includes light snacks. Held on the last Tuesday or Thursday of each month (depending on the author's schedule), you can find a list of their upcoming events at:

<http://www.barbarademarcobarrett.com/speaker-series.html>.

Pre-registration to attend is requested.

The **Long Beach Branch of The California Writers' Group** is held in the Los Altos Library in Long Beach. This free event features informative authors, agents, editors, publishers (Lynn Price will be presenting there in June) and/or open mic nights. Their current schedule is posted at <http://www.calwriterslongbeach.org/>.



On April 22, Jeff and I attended Library Live at the Newport Beach Public Library featuring authors included in the anthology, Orange County Noir. Gordon McAlpine, Robert Wood and Mary Castillo each read from their short stories and then answered questions from a moderator and the audience. The readings were delightfully dark and the panel discussion informative on many writing topics especially on the noir genre, past and present.

This was a very well-attended event. Their other author events are listed on their website: http://www.nbpfoundation.org/categories/librarylive/library_live_events.htm and you can request to receive email notification. Our own Sonia Marsh was there, volunteering. How nice it is to get out and see a friendly face. They request a \$10 donation per attendee. There are light snacks and opportunities for socializing before and after the event.



This month Jeff and I visited the **Orange Branch of The California Writers' Group** which is held in the Orange Public Library. What a nice venue and group of people! It was fun seeing Sonia Marsh there. This group meets on the second Saturday of each month and presents speakers and/or open mic. Their schedule is found at <http://www.calwritersorangecounty.org/index.html>. There is a small fee of \$8 for non-members.

Have you visited a local writing group you'd like to tell us about?

Jill Q. Weiss
Jeff Michaels

Writer's Corner

Palettes & Quills 2nd Biennial Poetry Chapbook Competition

Open to All Writers

<http://www.palettesquills.com>

Prize: A \$200 cash award plus 50 copies of the published book. Additional copies will be available at an author's discount. All finalists will receive one free copy of the published book. All contest entrants will be offered a special discount on the purchase price of the published book.

Entry: Manuscript page length should be between 15- 40 pages. Poems must be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" paper and bound with a spring clip. Use a standard 12 pt font, such as Garamond, Arial, or New Times Roman. Do not include illustrations. Do not include photocopies of poems from magazines or journals. Please submit only one copy of your manuscript. Please do not submit your only copy.

A complete submission should include:

A cover sheet with the contest name (*The Palettes & Quills 2nd Biennial Chapbook Contest*), your name, address, telephone, email, and the title of your manuscript. **You must also include a statement that all poems are your own original work.** Your name should not appear anywhere else in the manuscript.

A title page with just the title of the manuscript.

An acknowledgements page. Poems included in your manuscript may be previously published, but please include an acknowledgements page listing specific publications.

A complete Table of Contents.

Payment of a \$20.00 non-refundable entry fee (check or money order payable in U.S. dollars made out to **Palettes & Quills**). Please do not send cash. Multiple submissions are accepted, but we require a separate entry fee for each manuscript you submit.

Self-addressed stamped post card for confirmation of receipt and a **self-addressed envelope stamped** (please use a Forever Stamp) for announcement of the winners. (International submissions must include an IRC.)

Manuscripts by multiple authors will not be accepted. Translations will not be accepted.

Place the coversheet on top of your entry and mail to **Donna M. Marbach, Palettes & Quills**

See *Palette & Quills*, page 10

Contest Entries Due September 1

Palettes & Quills, from page 12

Chapbook Contest, 330 Knickerbocker Avenue, Rochester, NY 14615. Winners will be announced on the Palettes & Quills website in December 2010. Manuscripts will not be returned. No electronic or faxed submissions will be accepted. **Note:** If your manuscript is accepted for publication elsewhere, you must immediately notify Palettes & Quills.

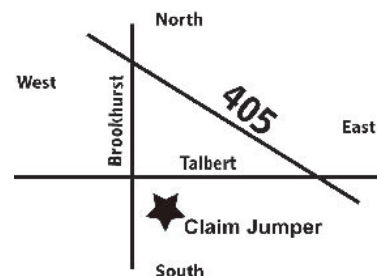
Deadline: September 1, 2010. Manuscripts postmarked after September 1 will not be read.

Judging: Final judge is **Dorianne Laux**, author of *Facts About the Moon* (W. W. Norton, 2005), which was the recipient of the Oregon Book Award and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her other collections include *Smoke* (BOA Editions, 2000); *What We Carry* (BOA Editions, 1994), finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; and *Awake* (BOA Editions, 1990, and reissued by EWU Press, 2007), which was nominated for the San Francisco Bay Area Book Critics Award for Poetry.

LOCATION: Claim Jumper Restaurant

Banquet Room entrance, rear of building
18050 Brookhurst St., Fountain Valley, CA
Restaurant telephone: (714) 963-6711

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|----------------------------|------------|
| 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

