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Southern California Writer's Association

The Perennial Writer's Conference

President's Message for April 2020 from Larry Porricelli

What a Wonderful Week!

Thank you, SCWA members and friends.

In the midst of the most perilous period in our lives, creativity blossoms. Writers throughout history have recorded in truth and fiction the epic adventure of the human experience. Our work is a record and confirmation of the great eras we have lived through and how we faced them.

Visit our new website, southernCalwriters.org, and you will be blown away! I promise. Sharon Goldinger has spearheaded this effort and you will be pleased. Make sure you enter your own member profile and writer information there, for it is growing!

SCWA has grabbed hold of the moment. But though bursting with news, perhaps our greatest moment is at hand. Visit our website, southernCalwriters.org, where every \$1 you contribute can buy 3 meals for the neediest in our community, with 100% of funding going to food through Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County.

We have blossomed into a tree of knowledge, albeit in a literary Garden of Eden, and the Spring has brought forth delicious fruit to nourish our writing through many efforts by SCWA. We are reaching out and brought not only literary tools to share but also the camaraderie of fellowship that has made SCWA a family.

The SCWA Board has presented several opportunities for writers to hone their craft amidst the joy of seeing each other again through the wonder of Zoom. Every Friday afternoon at 4:30 pm, there is a Zoom Happy Hour for SCWA, hosted by **Diana Pardee** and **Maddie Margarita**, which has been so well attended, and where we can once again hear the successes and efforts of our fellow writers.

SCWA has also expanded to bring valuable teaching, labeled Pub Shop and Craft Chat, shifting to Zoom for the duration of the stay-at-home orders.

Our first SCWA Craft Chat and last in-person meeting was on Cozy Mysteries hosted by **Karen S. Walker**. It was so much more than that. Just as much a crash course in author branding, marketing, networking and getting reviews!

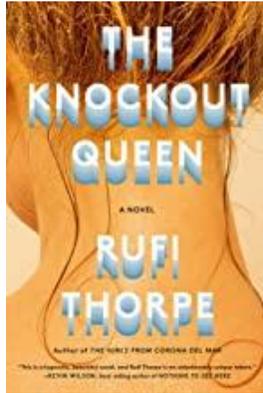
We had our first Zoom seminar, where **Steve Jackson** gave us an MFA-level course on Next Level Editing to a Zoom-room full of members scribbling like crazy to catch every valuable tip. And Steve beautifully shared information and methods that surely will be employed by all who attended. That seminar would be taught at a writer conference or held at USC for a hefty fee but SCWA presented it free. SCWA is, as stated on our website, “The Perennial Writers Conference.”

We will have another shortly from **Joe Anzenberger**.

Zoom is like manna from heaven; it has been here all along but now opens the shut off world to exciting ideas.

Coming up, we are presenting a seminar titled **Living Room Chat with Wendall Thomas**. Wendall is a successful writer and has taught at the Graduate School for Film at UCLA for over twenty years. She will share The Three Act Structure with us in two 90-minute webinars on Saturday, April 18th and 25th. This is so important for us, and what a gift!

Every story needs a great opening, a clear moment when the central plot begins, significant decisions by the protagonist, obstacles and reversals, surprises, and a satisfying ending. Mastering the Three Act Structure can help you create those elements intentionally and more successfully in your books. Two Saturdays, for 90 minutes each time! This seminar is priced at UCLA at more than \$1000, but SCWA presents it to us for only \$25, which includes both seminars. Sign up today on our website, **southerncalwriters.org**.



An amazing opportunity!

Ruffi Thorpe, critically acclaimed bestselling author who grew up in Orange County, will be doing an SCWA-Lit Up Craft Chat on Zoom with Maddie Margarita, to speak on her new novel, “*The Knockout Queen*,” debuting at the end of April. Ruffi’s theme and style is so humorous and compelling and has written a story of the urgency and complexity of best friendships with an unlikely duo. She was a finalist on the Long List for the prestigious Dylan Thomas Literary Prize with her last novel, “*To Fang With Love*.”

And again, there is so much more to share, the most important item is on the SCWA website, southerncalwriters.org, you are able to assist those in need within our local community. For each \$1 donation you buy 3 meals for those in greatest need; all money goes to food. Look us up on the web, be a part, share your ideas, we are all in this greatest adventure together!

It’s a pleasure to share all this good news and a joy to be with you!

SCWA EVENTS THIS MONTH, APRIL 2020

- ❖ SCWA ZOOM HAPPY HOUR—Join us with your funny hats and Coronatinis for good news and good cheer. Every Friday at 4:30. Sign up on the website and we’ll email you a link and password.
- ❖ Saturday, APRIL 18th and APRIL 25th, “Living Room Chats with WENDALL THOMAS.” Sign up on the website
- ❖ Ruffi Thorpe—MAY 16th Virtual Book Tour. Bestsellers *The Girls From Corona Del Mar* and *Dear Fang, With Love* have astonished reviewers and won fans across genres and generations. STAY TUNED for more information.

WRITE
Without fear
EDIT
Without mercy



Special Virtual Event for April 2020

SCWA Presents: “Living Room Chats with Wendall Thomas”

If you're a writer or aspiring writer, you will love this workshop with Wendall. She makes the content both empowering and entertaining, with the use of film references we are all familiar with.

For a perfect Saturday morning, bring your coffee and bagel, plus your desire to up your writing game, and you won't be disappointed!

Lee Child, Maria Semple, Lee Goldberg, Bill Fitzhugh, Daniel Pyne, and Kellye Garrett are just a few examples of top film and television writers who have used the Three Act Structure techniques to become successful novelists.

Every story needs a great opening, a clear moment when the central plot begins, significant decisions by the protagonist, obstacles and reversals, surprises, and a satisfying ending. Mastering the Three Act Structure can help you create those elements intentionally and more successfully in your books.

Based on 24 years of teaching in the Graduate Film School at UCLA, Wendall Thomas discusses the Three Act Structure and successful storytelling in two 1.5 hour sessions. You must register by 9:00 am, April 15.

When: Saturday April 18 and April 25, 2020

Time: 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Where: Zoom webinar

Cost: \$25.00 for members \$40.00 for non-members (Cost includes both sessions) [RSVP on the website](#)

Underwritten by the Southern California Writers Association

From the SCWA Speaker Archives

While our monthly meetings are temporarily cancelled, we have a chance now to mine the riches of the highlights from our Speaker Archive. So many fine speakers, many who have become friends have shared their experiences and their knowledge. Let's revisit some of them!

SCWA presents Highlights from one of our favorite speakers, DOUG LYLE, who joined us in August of 2019.



“Introducing Characters: The Good, The Bad, and The Quirky”

What would you do if you had a child who slept only four and a half to five hours each night and was up for the day at 4:30 a.m.? The family of this young dynamo in Huntsville, Alabama, definitely were upset but somehow learned to live with their unique Douglas P. Lyle and help him thrive. And thrive he has. D. P. Lyle went on to become a cardiologist and a forensic scientist. In addition, while the rest of us sleep, at night he writes.

Lyle has published seventeen non-fiction and fiction books and is currently working on books 22 and 23. These have made him an Amazon #1 Bestselling author and winner of many awards. He has three series going: one about Samantha Cody, Dub Walker, and his Jake Longly thrillers. Some of his non-fiction is *Forensics for Dummies*, *Forensics: A Guide for Writers (Howdunit)*, and *Forensics and Fiction*. He's also worked with many novelists and writers of popular TV shows such as *Law and Order*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *CSI: Miami*, *Monk*, *House*, etc.

All that writing led to seventy blogs, hosted and co-hosted radio shows on his website for listening, and a podcast series (“Why people kill each other”) of twenty-five shows, each 20–30 minutes long. His newest book, *Skin in the Game*, comes out Oct. 8, 2019, and he's currently working on *Sunshine State* (A Jake Longly comedic Thriller #3) and *Rigged* (Jake Longly #4) appearing May 19, 2020.

Even with forty-plus years of cardiology behind him, Doug Lyle, M.D. is still in his Laguna Hills office two days a week seeing his cardiology patients. Whew!

Writing seems to come naturally to Lyle. He says if you live in the South, “(y)ou have to be able to tell a story.” In fact, if you can't, “they won't feed you.” You learn to develop subplots and “funny” situations. (He adds, “You have to understand football to understand the South.”)

How to get into a character: “If I were describing myself to get my character, what would I have this character thinking?” Lyle says you have “one chance to make an impression and hook the reader.” We want characters people like. All fiction seems story driven. “Few movies develop character. Today stuff just blows up.”

Lyle read from several books to show how their authors indicate setting, the time frame, and the character's "take on life." He read the openings by Raymond Chandler from *The Long Goodbye* ("What made this guy so cynical?") and *Trouble Is My Business* that demonstrates the attitude of the female protagonist. "Sometimes you can introduce a character through another character," as Burke does with characters Clete Purcel and Wesley Potts in *The Neon Rain*. In reading from his own *Skin in the Game*, Lyle demonstrated how to make a character part of a theme. *Method 15/33* by Shannon Kirk is the story of infant traffickers who capture pregnant women and then kill the mothers after their babies are born. However, those agents don't realize that one of the women is a "brilliant sociopath."

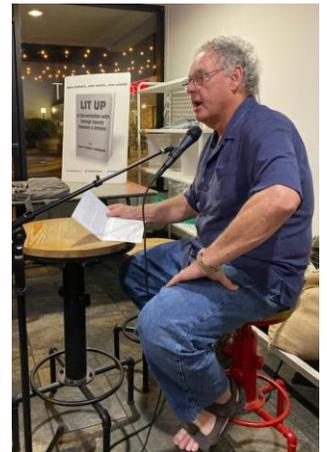
Lyle also read from Lee Child's first Jack Reacher novel, *Killing Floor*, saying that in a series, you "introduce characters that you can use in later books." Further along, he said, "You're a slave to what you did in book #1." However, Lyle doesn't care about character arcs. "In a series, the character couldn't stay the same." He also thinks too much is made about story structure. "At the end of the day, there is no one-way to do it."

As to physical descriptions, Lyle says, "Raymond Chandler has none but yet describes a character's inner world." If everyone read the same novel and then saw the same film made of the novel, Lyle declares that the feeling would be that we all saw the same movie but read a different book. "Sometimes the character you see in a movie is not the character you 'saw' when you read the book." So describe people's inner character, "not what they look like. Don't have them staring in a mirror." Lyle remarked that actor Tom Cruise is much shorter than protagonist Jack Reacher, but Cruise "nails the character."

Harper Lee did all the research for *In Cold Blood*. Then Truman Capote took that non-fiction story and added fictional characters. Lyle thinks it's one of the best books written. It also created "a new genre."

When Lyle met author Elmore Leonard, he asked about the "the scumbags" that Leonard creates. Leonard said, "Once I've got the name, I know the character." The two seem to agree that authors need to write the story fast and not worry about the minutiae because they don't know the characters yet. "Once you get the first draft, then you know the characters. Live with these people but don't be rigid."

To develop the settings for places you've never been, Lyle says to go there and then write down the first three things you notice. Next, write the next six visuals that catch your eye. Is there a pattern there for a visitor? "It's hard to write about a place you know well because what was interesting to you once is no longer."



When asked if readers' expectations have changed because of media games, Lyle's answer is Yes. "James Patterson writes short paragraphs because they are cinematic." Very important for thrillers. "People's attention-spans are so much shorter now." ("E-books is where the money is now in books.")

In answering when to put in flashbacks and backstory, Lyle says when you put those in, they determine the pace. "If it's too much too soon, the readers don't understand." If those elements seem to stop the story, they aren't needed at that time. "Readers don't need the whole data dump."

Our speaker was very specific about his own writing habits. He stopped outlining because it “bored him to death.” He feels he writes dialogue best. When going over a manuscript the second time, he cleans up the dialogue and also adds “more internal stuff and information.” He has no set time to write. “If I don’t feel like writing, I don’t.” He also researches data for his settings. Does that little town have a coroner? What’s the business section like? What’s the traffic flow? He loves using Scrivener at www.literatureandlatte.com. It organizes your writing and can even color-code it. “You always want your work in two different places: Scrivener and in Pages or Word. He keeps lists of his characters with notes about who has guns, what kind of cars, the streets they live on, etc.

Our speaker left us with hope. “Writers get discouraged that you can’t write as well as someone else—but after a while, you say, ‘Well—maybe.’”

With all these accomplishments behind him while he’s tackling new ones, Douglas P. Lyle does admit that the sleeping habits of his childhood have changed. These days he needs close to six hours of sleep a night.

See www.dplylemd.com and <http://writersforensicsblog.wordpress.com>.

Glenda Brown Rynn, Reporter

CELEBRATE GOOD NEWS !

Darlene Quinn has a supply of hardcover and paper editions of her Web Series. Get signed copies of her books while supplies last for \$5 which is the price of postage. Contact Darlene at darlenequinn.net.

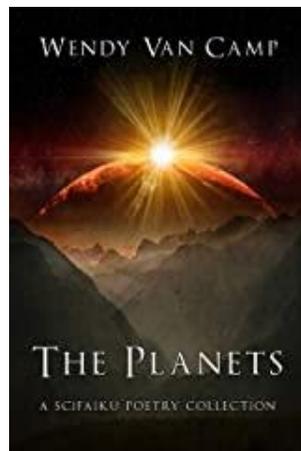
Wendy Van Camp’s first poetry collection has been nominated for an Elgin Award by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association.

Tami Shaikh has more than 20 (and counting) episodes of her moving series, *Faces of Quarantine: One Virus, Many Faces*, on Medium and Thrive Global. Read, follow, and be sure to applaud with lots of “claps.”

Richard Miller Morgan is getting great reviews for his *Last Train to Danville*. On Amazon now.

Find **Marjorie Miles’** *Haiku finds Wabi-Sabi* online at Nowastedink.com for the backstory of her remarkable recovery from cancer with the help of her daily haiku poems.

Two of **Lillian Nader’s** poems will be published in the Spring/Summer edition of *Arts of Poetry* magazine.



A Very Special Invitation

Since SCWA is a group of writers who mentor and support each other, we asked ourselves, what more can we do to help those in need during this pandemic?

We invite you to join our food drive to support Second Harvest as a way each of us can make a difference. Someone said, "Many hands make light work." Together, each giving a little, we can feed hundreds of people in need.



Your contributions to our food drive will provide more fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy and proteins to our neighbors in Orange County who face food insecurity. Thanks to the food bank's buying power where **\$1 helps provide 3 meals**, we can make an immediate impact!

Each dollar raised through this Virtual Food Drive goes directly to Second Harvest and will be used to buy nutritious food for our community. Every dollar can make a huge difference. No donation is too small. Help us spread the word and reach our goal of 3000 meals.

On the Second Harvest Food Bank website, click on Find a Food Drive and search SCWA. Or click this link: <https://www.yourfooddrive.org/drive.php?SCWA-Food-Drive>

Every dollar can make a difference. No donation is too small. Help us spread the word and reach our goal of 3000 meals. Thanks for your support!

The SCWA Board

Benefits of SCWA Membership



WELCOME, WELCOME, WELCOME!

- ❖ Active members receive a 30% off admission to SCWA meetings including all-you-can-eat lunch and a speaker.
- ❖ Scholarships to local writer's conferences including SCWC and La Jolla Writer's Conferences.
- ❖ Members are eligible for a Free 30-minute consultation from book shepherd Sharon Goldinger on any publishing contract.
- ❖ Discounts are available for active SCWA members for registration for the La Jolla Writer's Conference, and for early registration for the Southern California Writers' Conference, which is held twice annually in San Diego and Orange County.
- ❖ Critiques of your first 20 pages by an SCWA Board member for \$50.00.
- ❖ Access to professional network of publishing, business consultants and editors.
- ❖ Monthly networking with other published, unpublished authors, and writers in all stages of the writing journey.
- ❖ Participation in SCWA marketing platforms on **southernwriters.org** and SCWA social media platforms.
- ❖ Access to up-to-date and cutting-edge articles on craft and the business of publishing.

Attend a mini-writer's conference every month and improve your craft and learn from bestselling authors and highly sought-after instructors

SCWA Board of Directors

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Southern California Writer's Association
Southerncalwriters.org

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The SCWA communication sites should only be used for dialogues related to the craft of writing. Non-writing related topics should be done via other forms of personal communication. Please review the content disclaimer located in the newsletter via the SCWA website www.southerncalwriters.org or on the About page of the SCWA Facebook page. The SCWA does not endorse individual opinions placed of any of its sites.

The SCWA receives information on various services, writing contests, and events. As a courtesy, we will forward the information to our members. Unless otherwise indicated, the SCWA does not discourage, encourage or recommend any of the services, contests or events. Many of these services, contests and events cost money; therefore, we recommend that you evaluate the opportunities based on your individual situation and interest. Because of our membership email protection policy, please do not forward information to the general membership directly. **We request that all members forward any information to the SCWA President for approval and forwarding to the membership.**

SCWA members wishing to share appropriate writing-related information and resources are welcome to do so via the SCWA Facebook page. The SCWA Board members and Newsletter Editor will determine the information to be contained in the SCWA on-line newsletter, which is primarily used for official SCWA information.