

The Writer's Life

"News is only the first rough draft of history." . . . Alan Barth

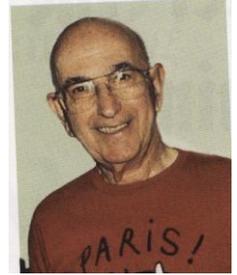
San Diego
Writers Editors
Guild
Since 1979

www.sdwritersguild.org

March 2013

Dave Feldman to Cover All Angles at March 25 Meeting

At our March meeting, longtime Guild member Dave Feldman will speak on "A Journalist's Journeys to Far-Flung vistas, including Douglas, Arizona". He will offer a few tips on editing, on writing, and on creating titles for books. Dave will also discuss three of his favorite authors who he interviewed during his career: Pulitzer Prize winners Herman Wouk, James Michener, and a third author he suspects may be new to you. Dave, who served as copy editor at the San Diego Union Tribune, will also reminisce about formerly working as the only reporter on one of the country's smallest daily papers and about interviewing one of the most notorious con men in the nation! He will clarify a longtime circulating rumor that he was once a foreign correspondent . . . "Not true unless you count 10 days in Turkey". Don't miss this evening with our distinguished speaker who'll also riff on his dual careers as a newspaperman and college professor.



Read and Critique Groups

by **Caroline McCullagh**

A writer can do without love, but not without a read-and-critique group. And finding the right group is a little like finding someone to love. You're probably going to try a number before you find the right one for you.

What should you be looking for? First, you want people who encourage you. These people can help you move your writing up several notches, or they can leave you so discouraged that you consider giving up writing. Before you do that, give up that group.

As in every part of life, tension will sometimes occur. These things happen. But if you find yourself leaving the group irritated and dissatisfied several times in a row, it's time to break up.

Second, you want a group of people who are knowledgeable about the craft of writing. It's not good to be the best writer in the group. You want to be with people who challenge you to do better.

Finally, do your part. If you don't care enough to read and edit your first draft, why should they? They shouldn't be cleaning up your typos.

Here are three read-and-critique groups of the many in San Diego: (1) Coronado Senior Center, Tuesday – 9:15 a.m. to noon, Caroline McCullagh, leader (858) 274-8832; (2) Wesley Palms in Pacific Beach, Lola Sparrowhawk, leader (619) 554-6575; (3) Oasis, (for people 50+) 3rd floor, Macy's in Mission Valley, Caroline McCullagh and Lola Sparrowhawk, leaders. For a catalog, call Oasis at (619) 574-0674.

The Prez Says . . .

The 2013 Membership Directory may be in your hands by now. I hope you find a contest to enter, a conference to attend, and an advertiser who has just the service you need to boost your writing and publishing endeavors.

Paper vs digital? Your Board of Directors will soon be discussing members' preferences for the monthly newsletter and annual membership directory coming to them in paper form and/or in digital form. If you have a preference or an opinion, (paper, digital, both?) please let a board member hear from you. Do you read the newsletter on the website? Would you mind if your name, address, telephone number and email address were posted on the SDW/EG website? We would also like to hear from you on this issue.

If you attended a writing conference, have expertise of interest to other writers, or read an article or quote that other members might be interested in, please consider contributing to your newsletter. Thank you to Catherine Barr and Caroline McCullagh for their recent items. Items of 100-200 words fit well in our newspaper format. The deadline for time-sensitive material is the first day of the month.

Ruth Leyse-Wallace
rthlys@cox.net

The next meeting is March 25th, 2013

Networking 6:30. . . Business meeting 6:45. . . Program 7-8:30

A Tip of the Hat To . . .

Gary Winters, whose poem, *Chuy's Café*, will appear in the Spring issue of *Whisperings*, a literary quarterly published in Julian.

Larry Edwards, who published *On the Road With Phyllis Diller* by Robin Skone-Palmer through his Wigeon Publishing Company. Release date is set for April 1, 2013.

Ruth Leyse-Wallace PhD, RD, for a presentation on *Nutrition and Mental Health*, (the title of her new book), to students at Pt. Loma Nazarene University on Feb. 5th. *If you, or someone you know, has published a book, scheduled a book signing, or some other accomplishment to share, please contact Linda Loegel at noirons@cox.net to be included in our next newsletter. Let your light shine!*

What You Missed . . by Ellen Shaw Tufts

Creating Books for Kids—With Joy

(Mash-ups, board books and *Captain Underpants*)

From the start of her lively PowerPoint talk at our February 25 meeting, children's author and award-winning journalist Patricia Morris Buckley made a heartfelt pitch for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (www.scbwi@scbwi.org) national and local chapters as indispensable networking groups.

Why write for children? Mrs. Buckley, a mother of three, works part time at the La Mesa Dale Elementary School Library, and believes the genre is still a strong literary category, matching eBook sales even for 'tech-savvy' readers. She defined nine various kids' book categories including Board Books, Beginning Chapter Books (including the popular *Captain Underpants* series), Young Adults, and a hot new genre, Mash-Ups, featuring books such as *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

A few tips: Your main-character kid must change in the plot line. Narratives should take place over a short time span to ratchet up the tension! Write your character a little older than your intended reader---kids like to "aspire up."

Debunking a literary-agent myth, our speaker noted that 60 percent of all book publishers still read unsolicited juvenile manuscripts, "but you may still want to use an agent for marketing, contracts and costs."

Hit the bookstores, not libraries, to keep on the quiver for what's selling big time in the juvenile market!

She urged authors to season their web sites creatively with gimmicks such as recipes and crossword puzzles.

Coming Soon to SDW/EG

April 22, 2013 David Brin, scientist, futurist, and award-winning science fiction author, will speak on his genre(s) and writing experiences.

May 20, 2013 (3rd Monday) due to Memorial Day holiday) Karla Peterson, feature writer at UT San Diego will share her experiences.

Writing as a Hobby or a Business?

Before, during, and after writing, a writer might want to investigate issues related to taxes. If you are in the business of writing, accurate and complete record-keeping is essential. The deductible expenses of a writer may include ink cartridges and other office supplies, copying and printing, postage, equipment and reference books, dues, conference fees, business travel, etc. Income may include royalties, speaking fees, licensing income, etc. Co-authoring and ghost-writing income needs to be explicit. Expenses related to home offices, entertainment, depreciation, and retirement plans might well require consultation with a CPA or attorney.

Hobby writers may be able to deduct writing expenses UP TO the amount of income from hobby writing. Your rejection letters are indication of your "profit motive" or your intent to be in the business of writing—save them.

The legal structure of your writing business influences which tax forms you need to file. IRS Schedule C is needed for sole proprietorship and LLCs (limited liability companies), and SE (Self-Employment) forms are related to social security and Medicare tax. Section B of Schedule C requires entry of a "business code": writers are classified as 711510, "independent artists, writers & performers."

Many web sites and books serve as resources for writers in all stages of the writing business. For example see

<http://www.publishlawyer.com/carousel8.htm>,
<http://taxesforwriters.com/book/> and *Business Tips and Taxes for Writers*, by Carol Topp.

Words and Style

Words have to be crafted, not sprayed. They need to be fitted together with infinite care.

Norman Cousins

The greatest possible mint of style is to make the words absolutely disappear into the thought.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

source: *Advice to Writers* by Jon Winokur

American Trivia

by Richard Lederer and Caroline McCullagh

SDW/EG members Richard Lederer and Caroline McCullagh are the proud co-authors of *American Trivia: What We All Should Know About U.S. History, Culture & Geography* (Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2012). Over a span of three years, Rich and Caroline will share with you their journey through American history.

Fascinating Facts about Our Presidents, Part II Has any President run as the candidate of a major party in a presidential election and come out third?

In 1912, President William Howard Taft ran as a Republican for re-election against the Democratic nominee, Woodrow Wilson. Former president Theodore Roosevelt said of his successor, "Taft meant well, but he meant well feebly," so Roosevelt also entered the fray, as a candidate for the Bull Moose Party.

Roosevelt and Taft split the Republican vote, and Wilson won handily. Taft placed third with an abysmal 23 percent of the popular vote, the lowest ever for an incumbent president. Unremittingly good-humored, Taft sighed, "I have one consolation. No one candidate was ever elected ex-president by such a large majority."

When Taft was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court eight years after his presidency, he became the only man ever to have headed both the executive and judicial branches of our government. At their inaugurations, Taft swore in both Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover.

Have we ever had a president who was never elected to national office?

Richard Nixon resigned from the White House on August 9, 1974, the only president to do so. Spiro Agnew, his vice president, had resigned earlier. As a result of these actions, Gerald Ford was, for two years, the only man who served as both vice president (replacing Agnew) and president (replacing Nixon) without having been elected to either office. The only elected office Ford ever held was a Western Michigan congressional seat. Ford's vice president, Nelson Rockefeller, who had previously served as governor of New York, was also never elected to national office.

What is "Tecumseh's Curse"?

Seven presidents elected in years that end with a zero (intervals of twenty years) died in office—William Henry Harrison (elected in 1840), Abraham Lincoln (1860), James A. Garfield (1880), William McKinley (1900), Warren G. Harding (1920), Franklin D. Roosevelt (1940), and John F. Kennedy (1960).

First noted in a Ripley's *Believe It or Not* book published in 1934, this string of untimely presidential deaths is variously known as the Curse of Tippecanoe, the Zero-Year Curse, the Twenty-Year Curse, or Tecumseh's Curse. Tecumseh was the Shawnee chief defeated by William Henry Harrison at the battle of Tippecanoe, Indiana Territory, in 1811. Ronald Reagan, elected in 1980 and shot by John Hinckley, Jr., almost continued the deadly >>>

Revising Tips . . . by Laurie Richards

Sans Articles

An earlier revising tip discussed an author's choice of using the definite article "the", or the indefinite articles "a" or "an". What meaning is created if an author omits an article? Notice the difference between:

- A) *Crowds lined the streets for the boisterous parade in London. The Americans attended the event waving flags.*
B) *Crowds lined the streets for the boisterous parade in London. Americans attended the event waving flags.*

In the first example, a reader could conclude that The Americans refers to a specific group of Americans, not just all Americans who attended. If that's the meaning the author intended, the sentence is clear. Without a previous setup, the reader is in the dark about what Americans are involved. In that case, using the article "the" makes the sentence ambiguous: the author appears to be referring to a particular group of Americans, but maybe not.

Upon reading the second example, most readers will assume that all (or most) Americans who attended waved flags. If that's the meaning the author intended, the sentence is clear.

Tip: Using an article can single out a group, while omitting one does not. The definite article "the" should be used if a particular group is intended and has been previously identified. **Be aware of the impression created in the reader.**

Tip: Some languages (such as Japanese, Hindi and Russian) do not have any articles, and some (such as Arabic and Hebrew) do not have definite articles. A character's dialog might show his origin by omitting the articles his native tongue would omit. A Wikipedia entry on "Articles" has a good discussion.

The Diamond Sutra is believed to be the oldest surviving printed book in the world. It was written in 868 AD in Chinese and was discovered in 1907.

Fascinating Facts . . . continued

sequence but he survived and broke the "curse." Despite being our oldest chief executive, Reagan was the only sitting president to survive a bullet wound. **When Barack Obama was inaugurated this past January, it was only the second time that three consecutive presidents – Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama – have served two terms.**

When was the first?

From 1801 to 1825, our third, fourth, and fifth presidents, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe, all Virginians, each served two terms.

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