

"In all my work what I try to say is that as human beings we are more alike than we are unlike." Maya Angelou

The Newsletter of the San Diego Writers/Editors Guild

www.sdwritersguild.org

February 2012

Your Chance to Ask An Agent : Jill Marr



February Speaker Jill Marr

Have you ever wondered if you needed an agent? How to acquire an agent? How to work with an agent once you had one? Jill Marr, acquiring associate agent at the Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency, will be the featured speaker at the February SDWEG meeting. Jill's particular interests are in commercial fiction, with an emphasis on mysteries, thrillers and horror, women's commercial fiction and historical fiction. She is also looking for projects in the areas of self-help, inspirational, cookbooks, memoir (she especially loves travel and foodie memoirs), history, sports, current events, health & nutrition, pop culture, humor and music.

Jill feels authors who have a realistic sense of the market and their audience are most likely to be successful. She knows how to find the "hook" and sell it. A selection of her current authors are being published by Oxford University Press, Random House, Graywolf, Coffee House Press, Beacon, University of South Carolina Press, Carroll & Graf, Seven Stories Press, Simon Pulse and Berkley.

Jill's background in the internet, media, literary magazines, ad and promotional writing for television makes her a knowledgeable resource for a question and answer session at the end of the evening.

Support Your Local Sheriff BoD

Do you like to be the first to see the news? Do you like to write? Contact people? Do your skills include layout? Are you a whiz at punctuation, grammar? Would you like to volunteer to assist with the SDWEG newsletter? To volunteer or discuss how you could contribute, call Ruth Leyse-Wallace, SDWEG President, at (619) 445-6656.

Request for a Writer

Better treatments keep cancer patients alive longer, but there is a hidden story that statistics do not tell. Many of these survivors are living on the verge of homelessness and/or are stressed daily with how to pay for basic necessities. If you would like to investigate and tell this story, please call Ann Thurley @ Cell Phone: 714-501-3049.

FYI: February 27th - 29th, **2012 Writer's Symposium by the Sea**, sponsored by Pt. Loma Nazarene University, Department of Literature, Journalism, and Modern Languages headed by Dean Nelson, PhD.

The next meeting will be February 27, 2012

They made a Difference

What do Plato, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry David Thoreau and Mary Wollstonecraft have in common? They are all writers who changed the world.

Imagine the effect of Plato's dialogues on the thinking of his students and their families and associates. Imagine how the story of Uncle Tom by Harriet Beecher Stowe affected attitudes during civil war times, a story which became the best-selling book of the nineteenth century. Henry David Thoreau's written reflections on nature, peace, and civil disobedience influenced many people, two of these being Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King. Mary Wollstonecraft not only wrote a treatise which became a cornerstone in the intellectual movement in the late 1700's to grant women equal rights with men, but was also the mother of Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*.

Look for future briefs on the influence of writers in a new column by Anne Casey.

Board of Directors

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The Fourth Monday of each month

3851 Rosecrans
San Diego County Health Services Complex

Visit our web site
www.SDWritersGuild.org

Membership: \$36.00 per year
Guests: \$5.00 per meeting

Mission Statement: The Guild shall promote, support, and encourage the writing art for adults and youth



Linda Loegel's Tip of the Hat to

Sam Warren, former president and former editor of our newsletter, who is now the editor of the monthly "San Diego ITEX Bulletin." ITEX, also known as the International Trade Exchange, is a national organization for business people who want to trade their services and products for those of others.

Richard Lederer, who was a guest of his celebrity daughter, Annie Duke, at a local Paws for Poker tournament at Harrah's Rincon Casino and Resort. How did you do, Richard?

Bernard Schermerhorn, for his new book, *King Cotton*, about a white nine-year-old boy being taught by a slave how to read, write, and cipher. This book is available as an e-book on Amazon.com.

What You Missed by Ellen Shaw Tufts

"I love stories," best-selling San Diego writer Dr. Carl A. Nelson told January 23 meeting, "and this is how I grew a book---with blood, sweat and tears." The book in question is about his love and respect for his lifelong mentor, the Reverend Henri Rabb Ferger, an American missionary who spent 50 years in India. Nelson's latest book, "The Message of the Puzzle Ring" (Infinity Press, 2011) explores the odysseys and destinies of the two who met at a summer religious camp in 1943 outside Pittsburgh PA where Nelson's mother sent her troubled 12-year-old son. The book is defined as both a memoir and a biography using a non-fictional narrative. Nelson learned from "Pop" Ferger love, trust and a "Four-square" code (MBSQS)--- a self-appraisal process linking four simple words--- Mind, Body, Social Qualities and Spirit.

"For me, India was as mysterious as the moon, but it quickly became real as Pop gave us all a nickname-mine was Lamba Singh. I would not see him again for 40 years," wrote Nelson, who finally tracked down Ferger in 1983 outside a retirement home in Dryden NY.

The "four-square" message has remained the center of Nelson's spiritual life throughout two happy marriages and several extraordinary careers. After 33 years as a highly decorated surface warfare officer in the U.S. Navy, Nelson has since written a war novel, along with two other novels, and has tackled playwriting, poetry and seven non-fiction books about international trade.



Work in Progress . . . Jarold Stratton

All the President's Men meets *The Three Musketeers* is in the beginning stages: an outline is taking shape, and I'm in the research phase, gathering information on journalism in Washington.

Sensing the pen is mightier than the rapier, Stephen Price Blair is a modern Musketeer, a "Don Quixote of twenty-four, Olympus in hand and number two pencil above the ear". His father, a Charlottesville reporter who once served with President York, sends him to DC to meet White House Press Secretary Bobby Trevor and join the White House Press Corps.

But Washington DC is not the Blue Ridge, and to prove his worthiness Stephen

must make a name as a journalist. Helping him are three new friends met in the lobby of Secretary Trevor: venerable print journalist Charles Shoat, talk radio host Simon Austin Rockwall, and documentary filmmaker Tucker Welsport. They must fight the machinations of House Speaker Janet Richardson, remain in the favor of President Bill Lewis, and protect the honor of Vice President Tom Anderson. "Truth is a precious resource; conserve it!"

Work in Progress . . Harry Huntsman

My read and critique group has three more months with Thomas Larson. By the end of March, with the group's help, I should know what to leave out of my long manuscript. By summer's end I expect to self publish an e-book.

I'm rewriting my memoir of growing up on a small farm in Arkansas during the Great Depression. I was born in 1925. Cotton sold for thirty cents a pound. Ten years later it sold for five cents a pound and many people were hungry. In the late 1930's, after the New Deal's Works Progress Administration built Mt. Pisgah's first all-weather road, it was possible for me to ride a bicycle four miles to catch a bus to high school. Until I was nineteen, on a warship headed for the South Pacific, I believed the earth was flat and I had rejected most theories in high school science books since they disagreed with the Bible.

Work in Progress Ruth Leyse-Wallace

Composing is near completion on the new book *Nutrition and Mental Health*. I like the new organization using mental health topics as compared to organization by nutrient in my previous book. I'm now working on getting numerous permissions to use copyrighted material – rather tedious and sometimes costly, I'm finding out. It is a challenge not only getting permissions, but keeping track of them!

What the Dickens . . . by Richard Lederer

Two centuries ago—on February 7, 1812—Charles John Huffam Dickens entered the earthly stage. Born into an impoverished family, his father having served a term in debtor's prison, Charles worked as a child slave in a London blacking factory. The rags-to-riches life of Charles Dickens was more remarkable than any of his stories. From such unpromising origins, he arose to become the best-selling writer of his time and one of the most enduring and quotable writers of all time.

1. In what Dickens' novels do each of the following characters appear?: (a) Sam Weller (b) Bill Sykes (c) Little Nell (d) Mr. Pecksniff (e) Mr. Micawber (f) Esther Summerson (g) Thomas Gradgrind (h) Sydney Carton (i) Miss Havisham

2. One signature of Dickens's quotable writing style is the great number of memorable opening sentences. Identify the Dickensian works that are launched by each of the following "button-holders":

(a) "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair"

(b) "My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip."

(c) "Marley was dead, to begin with"

(d) Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages will show."

(e) "Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small: to wit, a workhouse"

3. Dickens also bequeathed us some of the most whimsical and enduring names in all literature. Fill in the blanks for each of the following names: _____
Scrooge, _____ Marley, _____ Cratchit, The Artful _____,
_____ Magwitch, _____ Quilp, _____ Pickwick,
_____ Squeers, Uriah _____

Answers

1. (a) The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (b) The Adventures of Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress (c) The Old Curiosity Shop (d) The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit (e) The Personal History of David Copperfield (f) Bleak House (g) Hard Times for These Times (h) A Tale of Two Cities (i) Great Expectations

2. (a) A Tale of Two Cities (b) Great Expectations (c) A Christmas Carol (d) The Personal History of David Copperfield (e) The Adventures of Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress

3. Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley, Bob Cratchit, The Artful Dodger, Abel Magwitch, Daniel Quilp, Samuel Pickwick, Wackford Squeers, Uriah Heep

Revising Tip No. 26 by Laurie Richards

Over and Under Writing. There are some details the writer can presume will be filled in by the reader's experience and other details that the writer should **never** leave to the reader's imagination. A writer may choose to leave scenic values, minor or cliché characters and some action to be filled in by the reader's imagination. An essential emotional or mental response by a major character or by a minor character at a pivotal moment should always be directed by the writer with clarity in his or her prose.

Example: When Grandma walked into the living room, neither her grandson slumped in an armchair, nor her son noisily guzzling beer on the threadbare sofa, so much as glanced at her.

Nothing more needs to be said about the values of the household – poor posture, crude manners and rude behavior say enough to allow the reader to fill in a complete mental picture.

Example: Justin's dad strode across the living room and slapped him so hard he fell against the coffee table. "You're no son of mine if you marry her." Justin ducked when his dad raised his arm again.

The father's anger is clear, but what is Justin's emotional reaction? He's bound to have one, and it shouldn't be left to chance. Is he angry? So angry, he forms murderous intentions? Fearful that he won't be able to marry his love? Hurt? The attentive writer will not leave the result ambiguous for the reader. Justin's emotional response should be shown through his actions or dialogue or internally or even all three as long as the writing isn't redundant.

Tip: If a passage is difficult for you to write (you, the creator of all things in the story), it will also be difficult for the reader to fill in the gaps. Don't avoid the difficulty by leaving it to the reader's imagination.



Coming Soon to SDWEG

March 26th – Intellectual property (copyrights licensing, other legal aspects of the writing and publishing business) will be presented by Mark Reichenthal from Branfman Law Group, PC.

April 23rd - Peter Rowe, feature writer for the SD Union Tribune will share stories about writing as a journalist and changes in newspaper publishing in San Diego.

Watch for more details: Workshop for writing memoirs at Ghost Ranch in April led by Tom Larson.

Painting is silent poetry, poetry is eloquent painting.
Plutarch