

JULY 2006
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Orange Blossom

ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER | ROMANCE WRITERS OF AMERICA | CHAPTER 55

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— CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF OPPORTUNITY, CREATIVITY & COMMUNITY —

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OCC in Atlanta—Join Us!

MINDY NEFF & SANDY NOVY-CHVOSTAL



As I'm writing this message, we've just finished one of our monthly board meetings and my mind is whirling as I try to assimilate all the brilliant ideas and information these wonderfully innovative, hard-working board members have conceived of, contributed to and implemented.

I am simply amazed at the opportunities this chapter offers – to both our published and unpublished members – the fabulous speakers like this month's Jan Burke, or our upcoming August speaker, David Morrell, or the superb Chris Vogler who will be presenting our one day Autumn Affaire in September.

There are so many great things to look forward to. This month, many of us are planning to attend to the RWA National conference in Atlanta. And for those of you who'll be participating in editor and agent appointments, I want to remind you that some of our published authors will be on hand at the July OCC meeting to help you hone your pitches. These are fun sessions and great practice to help you define the important basics of your story so that you can convey them confidently and easily. Check for details on page 17.

I'd also like to take a moment to praise our published authors, and to thank them for their absolute generosity to both our members and our chapter. When we mentioned that we'd like to have a champagne and chocolate party to celebrate the winners of our Book Buyer's Best contest, but that our budget didn't quite stretch that far, they stepped right in and offered to hold a raffle to raise funds for the ceremony! They've made donations of money, baskets and some fabulous critique opportunities. So, don't miss our July meeting and the chance to win an individualized critique by one of our exceptionally talented published authors.

In Atlanta we'll have our OCC hospitality suite again, hosted this year by our fabulous Michelle Thorne with help from Vice President Geralyn Ruane. One of the purposes of our suite is to provide a safe-haven for our members who need a place to unwind or a friendly face to turn to when the sheer number of people or workshops start

to overwhelm, a place to meet friends, party and have a great time.

Our incredible newsletter editors, Louise Ahern and Michele Cwiertny, will be interviewing editors, agents and authors in the suite, as will our brilliant podcast producer, Jina Bacarr. Stop by the suite and check the bulletin board for the scheduled times of the interviews and stay for awhile to chat with the interviewees.

Wednesday night will be our champagne and chocolate party where we'll announce the winners of our Book Buyers Best Award contest for published authors. Be sure and reserve 10:00 p.m.--after the literacy signing--for this great party, funded in part by our own published authors!

For those of you who don't have dinner plans Friday night, come on up to the suite and team up with a group for a pizza delivery or a night on the town. Then be sure to join us in the suite on Saturday night as we celebrate our RITA and Golden Heart finalists/winners after the ceremony.

On page 6, you'll find a great PAW article with tips on going to conference. My advice to you is to do your best to be fearless and friendly. Introduce yourself to the person sitting next to you and strike up a conversation. You could end up making a life-changing connection.

And if you find yourself in major angst over those editor or agent appointments, try to remember that these women and men are people just like us. They laugh, they cry, they have families and friendships and lives just like we do. They really do love authors and they love to buy our books. So try to put aside your nerves and go into those interviews as if you're meeting a professional friend. Be courteous, and be sweet. You never know. That editor might just become your future friend. And your editor!

XOXO
Mindy

Did you know that OCC's authors have published 1,887 books?

C O N T E N T S

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JAN BURKE AFTERNOON SPEAKER

Do you plan to include a crime in the plot of your next novel? What do you need to know about forensic science, even if your novel is set centuries in the past — or centuries in the future? Should you rely on what you've learned about police procedure, courts, and crime labs by watching *Law & Order*, *CSI*, *Crossing Jordan*, and other television shows? How can you research crime writing without getting arrested?

Edgar® Award winner Jan Burke, whose books have appeared on bestseller lists in *USA Today*, *the New York Times*, *the Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, will join OCC's July 8th meeting to present "Crime 101."

This entertaining introduction to the basics of crime writing will teach you how to incorporate accurate forensic science details into your work. Burke will also tell you how writers are changing lives through the Crime Lab Project. Informative handouts will be provided.

ABOUT JAN

National bestseller Jan Burke is the author of 11 novels and a collection of short stories, including *Bones*, which won Mystery Writers of America's Edgar® for Best Novel. Her short stories, collected in *Eighteen*, have won the Agatha, Macavity, and other awards. Her next book, *Kidnapped*, is the ninth novel featuring series protagonist Irene Kelly, a newspaper reporter in Southern California. *Kidnapped* will be published by Simon & Schuster in October 2006.

Jan is the founder of the Crime Lab Project, a member of the board of the California Forensic Science Institute, and serves on the Public Policy Committee of the American Society of Crime Lab Directors. She has taught writing for the UCLA Extension's Writers' Program and was the associate editor (with Sue Grafton) for MWA's *Writing Mysteries*. Learn more about her at <http://www.janburke.com>.



CRIME 101

JULY 8TH, 2006

CHARLOTTE MACLAY MORNING SPEAKER

A successful writer needs a toolbox full of techniques that go well beyond simply mastering POV. These skills build one on top of the other. The entire craft cannot be mastered at one sitting, or even after writing multiple books.

In Charlotte Maclay's workshop, "Advanced Tools of the Trade," participants will add tools to their creative arsenals including the use of images, using props/totems for emotional impact, creating gaps between (fictional) reality and the characters' expectations, and providing a satisfying ending. Layering, meaningful body language and multiple character scenes are also covered.

ABOUT CHARLOTTE

Since 1991 when she made her first sale, Charlotte Maclay has authored 39 category romance novels and three cozy mysteries for the inspirational market. Her first single title romantic suspense, *Make No Promises* from Leisure Love Spell, is a June 2006 release.

Her books have won the National Readers' Choice Award, the Orange Rose contest and various awards from *Romantic Times*.

To read an excerpt from her upcoming book, visit her Web site: www.CharlotteMaclay.com.



ADVANCED TOOLS
OF THE TRADE

JULY 8TH, 2006

JULY SIGNINGS

JAN BURKE

Afternoon Speaker

Bloodlines

Simon & Schuster Hardcover

Nine

Hocus

Remember Me, Irene

Dear Irene

Sweet Dreams, Irene

Goodnight, Irene

Flight

Pocket Books

Bones

Signet Books

Liar

HarperTouch

JACQUELINE DIAMOND

Dad by Default

Harlequin American

Please order Trade and Hardcover books in advance of the chapter meeting.
agreatreadoccrwa@aol.com (626) 968-3700

CHARLOTTE MACLAY

Morning Speaker

Make No Promises

Leisure

MAUREEN CHILD

Satisfying Lonergan's Honor

Silhouette Desire

JANET QUINN

The Irish Countess

Whiskey Creek Press

MICHELE SCOTT

Murder Uncorked

Murder by the Glass

Berkley Prime Crime

HAPPENINGS

Pitch an Author!

Join us to practice your pitches on several published authors!

See page 17 for more details.

Before the meeting: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in the PAW room

Want a published author to critique your work?

Just print your **first** chapter and bring it to the monthly meeting! Then add your name to the list of critique hopefuls to be placed in a drawing.

Our July critique author is:
SHANNON DONNELLY

FEATURED ONLINE CLASS

TRAUMA 101

A FOUR-WEEK ONLINE CLASS FEATURING:

DR. CATHRYN J. LYONS

July 10 to August 6, 2006

ABOUT THE CLASS

Your character has been shot, stabbed, beat up... What happens now? Here's a hint: It's not like TV, where medics miraculously appear, ER docs immediately assess and whisk the patient to the OR in the 30 seconds before a commercial break. How to make it real and yet keep the story moving along? Let award winning medical suspense author CJ Lyons be your guide.

In TRAUMA 101, you will intimately explore the world of trauma from the initial injury to prehospital assessment to what really goes on inside a Trauma Center's ER. You will learn ways to make medical terminology and lingo understandable to readers without diluting your medically savvy character's POV.

ABOUT CJ LYONS

Award-winning author CJ Lyons has lived most of her life on the edges of the bell-curve. As a physician trained in Pediatric Emergency Medicine, she has assisted police and prosecutors with cases involving child abuse, rape, homicide and Munchausen by Proxy. She has worked in numerous trauma centers, on the Navajo reservation, as a crisis counselor, victim's advocate, as well as a flight physician for Life Flight and Stat Medevac.

Winner of the Golden Gateway and a Golden Heart Finalist in Romantic Suspense, CJ is a member of Mystery Writers of America, the International Thriller Writers, Romance Writers of America, Sisters in Crime and Kiss of Death. Her medical thriller, *Blink of an Eye*, will be published by Tor Books in 2006. Contact her at www.cjlyons.net.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT MARIANNE DONLEY AT MHDONLEY@AOL.COM

Members: \$20 · Non-Members: \$30 · Register online at www.occrwa.com or at our July meeting.

GOING TO CONFERENCE? TIPS YOU WON'T GET ANYWHERE ELSE

Anyone who has ever attended an RWA National conference knows that the more prepared you are, the better your experience. So to help you get the most of that non-refundable registration fee, we've gathered the best tips we could find from the conference-veteran authors in OCC.

We won't bore you with tips you could find just anywhere. These are the things no one else will tell you. So here are some seriously silly suggestions, and a few not so silly ones, too.

Take your bathing suit. "I generally forget that 2,000 women in the same room is a sound I generally associate with the seventh level of hell," says multi-published author and conference veteran Shannon Donnelly.

How does she unwind? She hits the hot-tub with her roomies.

"There is something wonderful and bonding about staying up until two a.m., giggling, or heading off to the hot tub at 10 at night and sharing war stories."

Take food. Now, don't make fun of her for this, but prolific author Jackie Diamond once packed a can of lima beans to eat. Hey, she was hungry, OK?

Even if dried veggies aren't your thing, she recommends that you pack a snack that works for you. Just be prepared, because the days are long, and you might be tempted to skip meals for the chance to hang out with agents and editors.

Be prepared to sell yourself. (Not like that. Are your minds always in the gutter?) More excellent advice from Jackie Diamond: "If you're published, make up a press kit. If unpublished, an updated fact sheet about yourself," she recommends.

Items to include in a press kit: a bio, fact sheet, recent cover, photo, review quotes and possibly a press release.

"Give several kits to your agent and one to your editor if she agrees (she may not have room in her suitcase), as well as any members of the press you meet," Jackie says. "Don't overstuff your press kit, though. As a former reporter, I can tell you that nobody wants to spend hours reading it."

Wear comfortable shoes. Not sure what this means for the condition of our authors' feet, but several recommend you pack comfy shoes. 'Nuf said.

Hang out at the bar. This is from OCC author Karen Kay: "If you want to meet an editor or agent on a personal basis, hang out in the bar," she says. "Many editors and agents meet their clients or authors or even each other in the bar. Plus, many authors use the bar as a meeting place. I wouldn't carry it too far and get drunk, however." Now, where's the fun in that?

Schmoooooze. Never ignore advice from a *New York Times* bestseller. OCC's own Debbie Macomber has this to say: "I encourage those yet to be published to use the time to meet with their favorite writers and seek career advice. No one knows better than someone who's been there. Have the questions ready. Offer to buy the author a cup of coffee, tea, wine, whatever and ask for 15 minutes or a half hour of their time. For the most part the author will be flattered and the unsold writer has an

opportunity to gain some valuable and insightful advice."

Schedule time with your agent and editor. The key phrase here is "one on one time," says OCC author Susan Mallery.

"Even if a meal isn't to be had, or you're offered a group meal, say yes to that, but then ask for coffee alone," she recommends. "You need the time to bond. Have a couple of career-based questions ready, but also leave time to just chat. A healthy working relationship takes time and this is a great place to build that time.

"But, don't get too personal. Your editor and/or your agent isn't your friend. She's your business partner. So this isn't the place to discuss your problem with your kids/husband/in-laws unless you have a great, funny story that doesn't give away too much info about you and your life."

Decide before you leave what you hope to accomplish. Some good, practical advice from Charlotte Maclay: "Decide ahead of time what you want to accomplish – learning craft, networking, tips for marketing/promotion, etc," she says. "If you know why you are at national, you're less likely to get distracted by all the excitement and incredible energy you'll experience."

And for more great tips... Check out OCC'S blog, A Slice of Orange, at www.occrwa.com/a_slice_of_orange. Harlequin's Associate Senior Editor Natasha Wilson and Executive Editor Mary-Theresa Hussey offer even more great advice!



JULY'S TOP STORIES

by MARY CASTILLO

HARPER COLLINS GOES HOLLYWOOD

Harper Collins closed a deal with Fox Television Studios (both owned by News Corp.) to get programming based on its mystery and thriller titles. According to the *PW* article, ("Harper Inks Tube Deal with Fox", May 25, 2006), the programs will be developed and distributed through Fox Television Studios' various platforms, which include TV, DVD, online and wireless. Lisa Scottoline's Rosato law firm series and Elizabeth Noble's *The Reading Group* are under option. An in-house liaison will be meeting with all Harper Collins' editors to see what titles will be suitable for development.

AVON LAUNCHES E-BOOKS

Last month, Harper Collins Avon Books produced two epilogues to titles from Julia Quinn that were released exclusively as e-books on the Avon Romance website. (*PW Daily*, "Avon Romance E-Books" by Jim Milliot, June 6, 2006) Priced at \$1.99 each, the 30-page epilogues are compatible with all e-book formats.

"Romance readers are really tapped in online and we think this is another way to connect with them," Avon publisher Liate Stehlik told *PW Daily* about the e-book experiment.

CIRCLET PRESS SEEKING EROTIC STORIES

Cynthia Sterling announced in her Market News e-newsletter that Circler Press issued a call for submissions for *Best Fantastic Erotica, Volume 2* to be edited by Cecilia Tan. The anthology will be a compilation of erotic stories of all the types with a sci-fi or fantasy twist. *Best Fantastic Erotica Volume I* will be published this summer; Volume 2 is scheduled for the summer of 2007. To submit, each story must be accompanied by a \$5 contest entry fee. The first place winner of the contest will receive a \$500 prize, second place \$250, and the remaining runners up will be published in the anthology for the regular payments (between \$50-\$100 depending on length). Every person who pays the \$5 fee will receive a \$5 coupon/credit good for buying anything Circler publishes. Stories may be 1,500 to 10,000 words, though the ideal length is 5,000 to 7,000 words. Deadline for submissions

is Aug. 15, 2006. For more information about the anthology and Circler Press, go to <http://www.circler.com/GL1997.html>.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT IN BOOKS?

Crossover marketing partnerships are becoming popular in promoting YA and chick lit titles. Shelf Awareness reported on June 12 that Running Press teamed with Procter & Gamble's Cover Girl to promote *Cathy's Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233* by Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman. While Cover Girl products are mentioned in the September release, Cover Girl did not pay for the placement. Cover Girl will promote the book on www.Beinggirl.com.

BOOK SIGNINGS NO LONGER JUST FOR BOOK STORES

USA Today published a story about chick lit authors signing books at high fashion retailers such as Saks, Ralph Lauren, Ferragamo and others. ("What's In Store For Chick-Lit Lovers? Authors" by Carol Memmott, June 7, 2006)

"It's tough these days, especially in the major markets, to get a big turnout for bookstore events," Joanna Pinsker of Broadway Books told the paper. Broadway Books published *Wolves in Chic Clothing* by Carrie Karasyov and Jill Kargman. "There are so many competing events, and unless you are a famous author, it's very hard to draw a lot of people to bookstore events."

Many of retailers send invitations to VIP customers. "It hits our target market," Marleah Stout of Harlequin was quoted. "They like hip clothes, cosmetics and shoes, and they may not go to bookstores." Harlequin has had success with such events and plans to do more.



MARY CASTILLO is the author of *Hot Tamara* (Avon Trade) and has a novella in the anthology, *Friday Night Chicas* (St Martin's Griffin). Her newest novel, *In Between Men* (Avon Trade), is out now. You can find out more at www.MaryCastillo.com.

LINKS WE LIKE

The lazy days of summer are upon us, tempting us to kick back and relax. Even your brain needs a break now and then. So enjoy these mindless guilty pleasures. And, hey, you never know where the inspiration for a book might come from.

- **Dead Body Guy** - www.deadbodyguy.com - Struggling actor-wannabe Chuck Lamb decided his shot at stardom would only come if he were dead. It worked. This website featuring pictures of him playing dead in various poses has landed him national press and a few film roles. If only we'd known it was that easy.
- **Fashion Police** - www.eonline.com/Gossip/Fashion/index.html?fdflashpol - Go ahead. Hate them because they're beautiful. The staffers at E!Online take wonderful pot shots at celebs and their often unfortunate fashion choices. Guaranteed to make you feel better about yourself. Or at least give you something to do when your boss isn't watching.

AN IN DEPTH CHAT

DAVID MORRELL WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

WHY YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS OUR AUGUST MEETING.

He's been called the "mild-mannered professor with the bloody minded visions" and the "father" of the modern action novel. His first book, *First Blood*, gave birth to a pop culture icon. (Ever heard of Rambo?) The press kit for his latest release, *Creepers*, features promotional quotes from the likes of Stephen King, Michael Connelly and Robert Ludlum.

But even with 28 books to his name and a spot among the top echelon of fiction writers today, former professor and bestselling author David Morrell is still a teacher at heart. And OCC is thrilled that he will join us in August to teach some of the lessons he has learned in his 34-year career.

Orange Blossom co-editor Louise Knott Ahern recently interviewed Morrell to get a taste of what we'll hear in August. Trust us. When David Morrell boasts that his workshop will be life-changing, *believe him*.

Photo: Jennifer Esperanza

Q: After 28 books, does it get any easier? Or is every book as difficult as *First Blood*?

A: I decided long ago that to have a long career, I dared not repeat myself. I try constantly to find new ways of pushing the envelope of what a thriller can be. I'm now working on my 29th book, and I'm amazed by what it wants to do. Action galore but with other elements in it. It's like the book is inventing a new way to tell the thriller.

Q: You talk about your books as if they are living, breathing things that make decisions for you.

A: The story always knows better than the author. With *Creepers*, the unique thing is that it's an eight-hour plot written in real time. Every second, every breath, every word of dialogue is accounted for in those eight hours. No cuts. No leaps forward. No summaries in the sense of "five minutes later." It had a momentum of its own. It literally was a ticking clock. But the book forced that approach

on me. Not that there isn't a lot of conscious craft. Still, the craft is at the service of the story, rather than being imposed on it.

Q: The title of your August workshop at OCC is "Platforms, Viral Marketing, and Other Seismic Shifts in Modern Publishing," which you have described as "life changing." Can you give us a taste of what we'll hear?

A: I'm going to talk about major shifts in publishing in the last five years and the ways in which editors and agents expect us to present our work to them. I'm sure there will be authors who have been following this, but for those who haven't and still operate in pre-2000 mode, this is going to be a mind-opening talk.

First, editors and agents don't want to hear about plot. They want to know what the book's platform is. They want to know how they're going to sell the book, what its market is, and its audience. After we write the best, most honest

book we can, we then need to think about how to present it to the toughest audience in the business—the publisher’s marketing department.

I’ll be using *Creepers* as an example. I spoke very little about the plot of that book, which is about what happens when a group of “urban explorers” break into an abandoned hotel. Instead, when I presented the book to my publisher, all I talked about was “urban explorers.” When you go online and do a Google search for “urban explorers,” you get 300,000 hits. That’s enough to convince any marketing department that a book can be promoted. Every book has a subject apart from its plot. That’s its platform, and I’ll talk at length about how to make that work to your advantage.

I’ll also talk about promotions. More and more, authors are required to do their own promotions. I published *First Blood* in 1972, and in those days the author did nothing. You just waited to see what would happen and hopefully you got the reviews. But today, more and more publishers have downsized their promotion departments. So you need to get out there and do it yourself. I know of some first-time authors who took their \$20,000 advances and spent the money on promoting their books. In my talk, I’ll discuss viral marketing and other new ways to get the attention of readers.

Q: After 34 years, are there any downsides to success?

A: In today’s market, editors want you to deliver a book every year. Success breeds a kind of schedule that initially is exciting and then becomes, let’s say after five or six books, a burden. So I would say that is the biggest downside. I have a friend, a very successful author, who told me, “I can’t talk long because I have half a novel to finish in six weeks.” It’s not that he’d been lazy. A lot of his writing time was sacrificed to promoting his previous book. Plus, he has a young family, and he wanted to spend time with them. Meanwhile, the deadline for the next book was ticking. The schedule can be brutal.

Q: What do you hope your legacy will be?

A: I’m 63 now, so I’m getting to that age when one starts to look back over his career. I know people will talk about Rambo, of course. I also hope they’ll talk about a book called *Brotherhood of the Rose*, which was very influential in the espionage genre.

But when I taught, I used to say, “You might not remember everything I’ve said, and you might not remember the books, but I hope you’ll remember my attitude.” I hope that readers remember that I approached the books honestly with a keen desire to be creative and to evolve and try new things, and to explore the thriller in ways that hadn’t been done before. So if that could be my legacy, I would be really, really happy.

ABOUT DAVID MORRELL

The father of the modern high-action thriller, David Morrell is the award-winning author of *First Blood*, the novel in which Rambo was created. He holds a Ph.D. in American Literature from the Pennsylvania State University and taught in the English department at the University of Iowa. He’s co-president of the International Thriller Writers Association and recently penned a book on writing called *Lessons From a Lifetime of Writing: A Novelist Looks at His Craft*. You can find him at WWW.DAVIDMORRELL.NET.

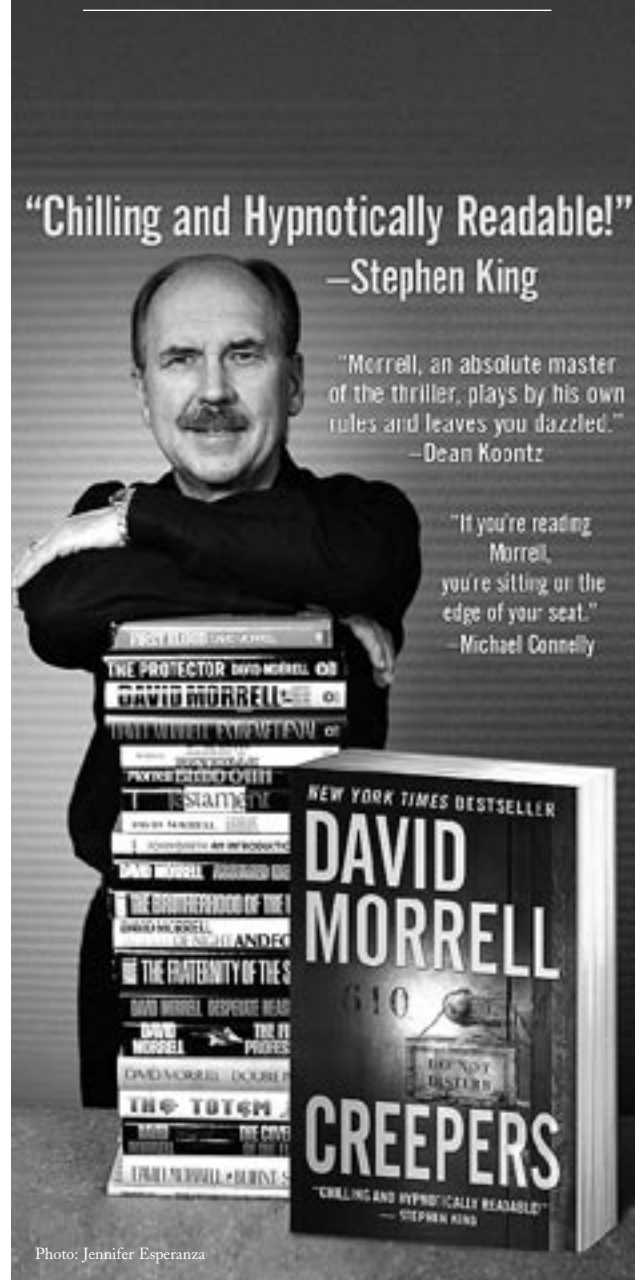


Photo: Jennifer Esperanza

WE KNOW HOW IT IS...

You dream at night of the day when someone will call and say, "Hey, we like your book." And when that call finally comes, you're tempted to agree to anything they say just to see your name on a bookshelf. But that naïve eagerness can lead to disastrous mistakes. Here, OCC past president Marianne Donley tells you how to sell your dreams with sound business savvy.



The Price of Dreams

DON'T LET THE PIXIE DUST CLOUD YOUR VISION

WE ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF SELLING DREAMS.

Dreams that we have created out of snatches of overheard conversations, funny or compelling news items, chance encounters in the grocery store, gabfest with friends over coffee, hours of hard work and a sprinkling of pixie dust for good measure.

Dreaming is what makes us good writers, but it can also leave us susceptible to costly errors and, worse, predators that prey on our eagerness to be published.

Being creative is no excuse for a lack of business savvy. We must be as knowledgeable about the business side of this industry as we are about the creative. The best way for you to protect yourself is to be armed with information.

So, here are five questions to which you should know the answers. And if you don't know the answers, we'll tell you how and where you can find them.

WHERE DO I START?

Your manuscript is done! You are one step closer to seeing your dreams come true. Now what? Three words: Do your homework. Wait. Writing requires *homework*? You bet, and not just to find out what type of wood was used on the ballroom floor of the Titanic. You need to know the names and addresses of agents and editors, and you need to know the type of books they want.

The best place to start your homework is RWA National website Members Only page. From this page you can click on the Industry Resources link. Here you will find Agents Update as printed in the May 2006 RWR, Markets Update as printed in the June 2006 RWA, and RWA position papers on Contracts and Interminable Agency Clause.

Agents Update is a handy list of names, addresses, and websites for more than 50 RWA-approved agents. Each agent lists the types of material in which they are interested, who they are willing to represent, and how to query their agency. Similarly, the Market Update is a list of 27 RWA-recognized publishers, including contact and guideline information supplied by the publishers.

WHAT IF I'M INTERESTED IN AN AGENT WHO ISN'T ON THE RWA LIST?

Most of the people in the book business today are honest, hardworking people. But not all of them. The romance industry's \$1.2 billion in annual sales is like a huge neon sign attracting

unscrupulous people who will blow your dreamy pixie dust back in your face if you're not careful.

If you choose to query an agent or editor who is not on the RWA approved list and you can't find anyone who has personal experience with this person, there are several websites you can check. The most well known is Preditors and Editors, <http://www.anotherealm.com/preditors/>, hosted by *Anotherealm*, the magazine of speculative fiction. This site lists, among other things, publishers and agents they recommend and ones they don't, based on author complaints.

Another excellent site is Writer Beware <http://www.sfw.org/beware/about.html>. Like Preditors and Editors this site has links and warnings for writers. Their list of "questionable" practices is concise and informative. It should be considered required reading.

In the course of writing this article I did quite a bit of web searching. With every search that listed *writing, editors* or *agents*, up would pop ads with enticing tiles like, "Publish your book TODAY," or "Fed-up with Rejections –Consider Our Editorial Services," or "Top Agents Seeking Authors." Every one of these ads brought me to the website of an editor or agent listed on either Writer Beware or Preditors and Editors.

Will you be targeted by an unscrupulous agent or publisher? If you've made a point to pay attention to your business, probably not.

SHOULD I READ EVERY WORD IN MY CONTRACT?

I know. I know. The print is small. The words are big. The sentences are convoluted. So what. Buried in all the legalese are important things that could make or break your book – and your career.

"I would tell anyone who ever gets a contract to a) read it yourself – your signature, your tail on the line – and b) ASK everything you even think you have a question about before you sign," says OCC member and multi-published author Shannon Donnelly. "If you don't feel brave enough to ask your editor, then ask someone with a legal background."

Here, too, RWA provides convenient online help. The RWA position paper on Contracts located under Industry Resources offers updates on industry contract trends and a glossary of common contract terms.

If you don't understand any of the terms listed in your contract or on the RWA site, there are three books I can recommend. The first is *How to Be Your Own Literary Agent* by Richard Curtis. This book is easy to read and covers things like option clauses, royalty statements and ancillary rights.

The second book, *Literary Law Guide for Authors*, by Tonya Marie Evans and Susan Borden Evens includes explanations, definitions and a CD with sample contracts.

The last book, *The Writer's Legal Companion*, covers much of the same material as the first two but has a chapter on "The Legal Relationship Between Writer and Agent," complete with a sample agency agreement.

And don't forget to look for simple mistakes. Chelley Kitzmiller, charter OCC president and published author, learned the hard way that a clerical error in a contract can be disastrous. The title of her second novel in a two-book

series was wrong in her contract. The result?

"When the book was released, I couldn't find it in any bookstore," she said. "By the time I was able to get it fixed, six weeks later, it was too late and the numbers on the book were set. Clerical errors can destroy an author's career. Once the book is out, no one but you cares."

IS THIS A FAIR PRICE?

When I took a series of creative writing classes, our instructor always gave us the writing prompt, "How true is the writer whose pen has been sold?"

The idea that writers had to be starving artists always annoyed me. If everyone else can make money from publishing books, why in the world can't the author? Remember, \$1.2 billion is sales? So how do you know if your advance is a starving artist kind or fair? Regency author Brenda Hiatt to the rescue! Her 2006 National RWA conference workshop "Show Me The Money!" and the companion piece on her website, <http://brendahiatt.com/>, give a compilation of 45 different publishing houses or lines.

This information includes average advances for first books, average advances for subsequent books, advance ranges (i.e., the lowest to highest advances paid by that house or line), standard royalty percentage and the average earn-out.

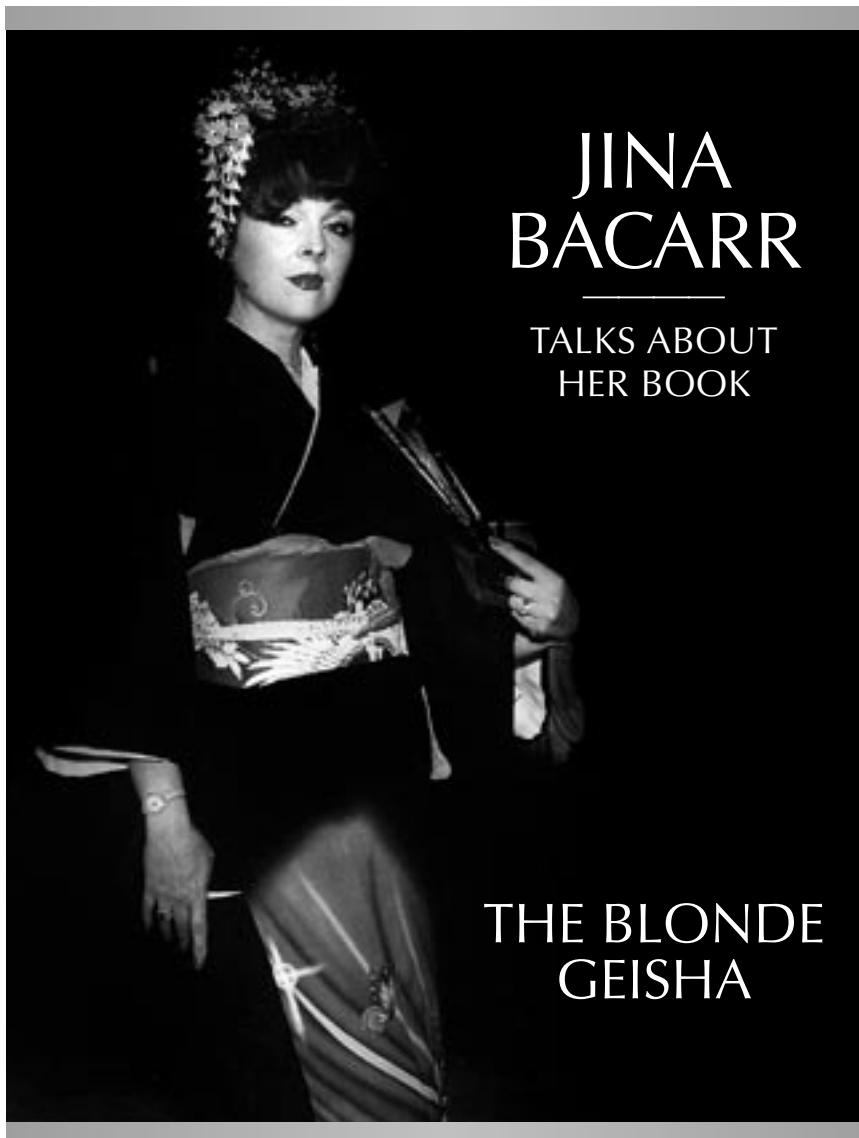
AM I IGNORING WARNING SIGNS?

What if you find a newbie agent or a brand new publishing company who seem perfect for you? How do you know they are not carrying pixie dust and plan to take you for every thing you've got? In the end, there are some easy red flags to watch out for that will let you know if you're being scammed:

- Legitimate agents and publishers do not advertise, not in writers' magazines, not on the web, not anywhere. It is not necessary for them to do so, even if they are brand spanking new.
- Legitimate agents and publishers do not refer writers to freelance editors or book doctors. Writers are never expected to pay for editing, especially if such services are performed by the agency or publisher themselves.
- Legitimate agents and publishers do not charge a reading fee.
- Legitimate agents and publishers are not secretive about sales, authors, or titles – most especially bestsellers.
- Legitimate agents and publishers are not secretive about their address, phone numbers or other contact information.



When not writing murder mysteries, MARIANNE DONLEY teaches math at California State University, Fullerton. She is also a past president of OCC/RWA and is currently the chapter's webmistress.



DID YOU PLAY DRESS-UP WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE GIRL?
I did. I had this long red velvet cape with a hood that belonged to my mother. I'd wrap the soft velvet around me, smear on pink lipstick, and shower my hair with gold glitter. Then off I'd go into the woods to play out my fairy tales. I'd pretend I was a dancing princess in search of lost treasure to win back my kingdom--and the prince.

When I discovered the world of geisha (thanks to an old book printed in the early nineteenth century I found in a used bookstore), I was enchanted by this tale of beauty and grace, duty and love lost.

I imagined I were a geisha, wearing a lush, silken red kimono, a heavy gold and silver embroidered sash, and sparkling hairpins, my long sleeves swinging through the air as I glided across wooden floors. I became convinced these beautiful women lived in a fairy tale world with misty plum rain, fields of pink cherry blossoms, and gleaming white castles with sloping tiled roofs.

I had to see for myself...so I wandered through the maze of streets in Kyoto, the alleys, winding passages, and covered footpaths, scurrying after the geisha and *maiko* (apprentice geisha), setting off for their evening's work.

I was intrigued by the charming way the geisha had of glancing backward, her peony red mouth with a dollop of gold sparkling on her lower lip, drops of perspiration sliding down the back of her painted white neck like cool ice, and tilting her head at just the right angle to engage the interest of anyone watching her and drawing them into her world.

I had to find out the truth about this world of geisha. A truth rumored to be fascinating but scandalous. The night air surrounding the teahouses smelled not only of camellia oil but was heavy with sex. I was in unfamiliar territory, but it was a journey I was willing to take.

Japan and all its mystery had welcomed and nurtured me for many years, had always been a place of peace and spiritual comfort to me. But now for the first time, I was filled with a rising excitement that these beautiful and seductive creatures of the night were calling out to me in the darkness.

I followed the geisha to the dark wooden teahouse, the foggy mist seethed in slow motion, taking me back decades, centuries. These beautiful creatures in silk kimonos appeared to form out of the mist, scurry past me, and then dissolve.

Resisting the urge to look over my shoulder, I quickened my pace and wandered the narrow backstreets and alleyways of Japan's past, searching for answers. What if a young blonde girl was hidden away in a geisha house? Could she become geisha? *Could she?*

That question led me to write *The Blonde Geisha*, the story of an American girl who becomes a geisha in the Teahouse of the Look-Back Tree in Kyoto in 1895. I hope you enjoy the journey as much as I did.



JINA BACARR is the author of *The Blonde Geisha* (Spice Books, August 2006) and the award-winning book *The Japanese Art of Sex*. Jina's ability to speak Japanese helped her find jobs acting in Japanese television commercials and

working as a companion girl for a Japanese company in California. She's also a successful playwright and has written over 40 scripts for daytime television (including 30 animation scripts). To read an excerpt from *The Blonde Geisha*, go to www.JinaBacarr.com

HARLEY JANE KOZAK

WHAT SHE LEARNED IN HOLLYWOOD

Interview by
DANA DIAMOND

When actress and author Harley Jane Kozak wrote her first book, she came out swinging. *Dating Dead Men* won numerous awards and drew comparisons to Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum. But all that "overnight success" came from 10 years of hard work and lessons learned from a career in Hollywood. Here she talks about Wollie Shelley, writing faster, and what she learned from Tinseltown.

Q: Is it true that Harley is a nickname? If so, who gave it to you?

A: No, it's my legal name, but not my birth name (which was Susan Jane Kozak.) I changed it in my early 20s in a moment of youthful impulsivity.

Q: Wollie is a great nickname for a unique character. What inspired it?

A: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, author of *Frankenstein* and her mother, the famous 18th century feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft – both strong women with intensely dramatic, even tragic lives. Wollie would not have picked this name for herself, but it gives us insight into her mother.

Q: Aside from the loveable Wollie Shelley, you're known for your strong cast of quirky secondary characters. How do you keep them all straight?

A: I don't! I have cheat sheets all over the place. Half my files are about names and identifying features and I have notes all over the side of the manuscript pages, telling me to check on whether I've ever assigned Uncle Theo a height or given Fredreeq's daughter a specific name. I live in horror of making mistakes.

Q: Your novels are also known for your humor. What do you think makes your stories so funny?

A: I don't like to look at this too closely. My humor comes from my voice, which is a tricky thing to talk about. I love it when people find it funny, but humor is an extremely personal thing. I don't want to claim funniness, because I'm often disappointed when someone assures me I'll laugh my head off, and then I don't.

Q: Are there any words of inspiration on your computer, in



Dating Dead Men, the first in HARLEY JANE KOZAK'S Wollie Shelley series, won numerous awards and was hailed as the west coast Stephanie Plum. But her second book, *Dating Is Murder*, is even better. Don't miss it!

You can find more about Harley at www.harleyjanekozak.com

your office or in your mind when you write?

A: I have inspirational messages by the dozens taped up everywhere in the house, but "Conflict on Every Page" comes to mind.

Q: You've spent most of your professional life with actors, also storytellers. How is your approach to writing different because of that?

A: I'm comfortable with the idea of being a storyteller by profession, of living with uncertainty, rejection and criticism. Even when I waited tables, I knew I was on an artistic path, and I was never burdened with the need to justify that, or attain a degree of financial stability. I meet a lot of people who are living second-choice lives, who always wanted to do something more creative, but were scared off. On the flip side, I meet a lot of people in jobs I formerly thought of as dry or dull, which now occur to me as creative and exciting and fulfilling.

Q: How is talking shop with writers different than talking shop with actors?

A: Actors don't have deadlines, but writers don't have to worry about their weight or getting their roots done. Actors are always worrying

about their next job, and writers are always looking for ways to write faster.

Q: Are there any lessons from Hollywood you apply to writing and publishing?

A: Hang in there. If you stay long enough, someone will say "yes" to you.



DANA DIAMOND has one chick lit completed and a YA paranormal chick lit on the way. She also serves as secretary on the OCC board and is a contributor to *The Writers Vibe*. For more on Dana and her interview with Harley Jane Kozak, be sure to check out Dana's blog at: www.danadiamond.blogspot.com.

JULY'S FEATURED RELEASES



CAIT LONDON
Avon Romantic Suspense
Silence the Whispers
Determined to end the nightmares that haunt her, the Somerton heiress Cameron must uncover the secrets of her past. Intent on clearing his father's name, Hayden views Cameron, a childhood playmate, as the key to his needed answers. After they become lovers, an evil stirs—one that believes murder is a small price to keep secrets buried

JINA BACARR
SPICE Books
The Blonde Geisha

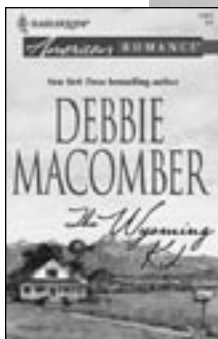
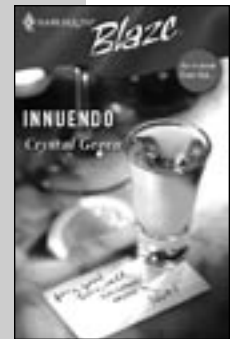
During her years of training in the sensual art of pleasuring men, Kathleen's desires are awakened. The man willing to pay for her virginity, Baron Tonda, is not the man for whom Kathleen carries a secret desire, but he is the man who will bring ruin to the Teahouse of the Look-Back Tree and danger to Kathleen, if disappointed.



KAT MARTIN
MIRA Books
Scent of Roses
Family counselor Elizabeth Conners is concerned for her pregnant, terrified client, Maria. She seeks the help of Zack, owner of the cottage, to look into the house's history. Unexpected desire draws them close, but they feel something dark and disturbing. Elizabeth is sure something terrible has happened, something that has its roots in murder.

CHRIS MARIE GREEN
(w/a CRYSTAL GREEN)
Harlequin Blaze
Innuendo

When Tam Clarkson is stood up for a blind date, straight-laced Murphy Sullivan steps in as her intended good-time man for the night. But when he ends up assuming her date's wild identity, the fun gets hotter "and more serious" than he ever bargained for.



DEBBIE MACOMBER
Harlequin American Romance
The Wyoming Kid
Ex-rodeo cowboy/rancher Loony Ellison recognizes Joy Fuller is different. She doesn't seem to notice him, plus they argue constantly. Some say their arguments cover a stronger feeling. Suddenly he has to convince Joy that marriage to the Wyoming Kid will be as exciting as an eight-second bull ride and as sweet as the cookies she bakes.

LINDA CARROLL-BRADD
(w/a LAYLA CHASE)
Amber Quill Press
Stagecoach Capture
Former prostitute Jazzy Morgan, seeking a new life and livelihood, is kidnapped by bandits and rescued by a stranger she knows only as her partner in a night of passion. When US Marshal Slade Thomas locates the kidnapped women, he must choose between capturing the bandit and saving Jazzy. A choice between his duty and his heart.



BOOKSHELF SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

First submission per calendar year free. Five dollar charge for subsequent submissions. Do not pay in advance for unsubmitted covers. Send as a jpeg file to [lindakcb@yahoo.com] or write member name and release month on back of the cover with a check (made out to OCC/RWA) for submission fee to:

**Linda Carroll-Bradd, 2523 Turkey Oak,
San Antonio, TX 78232-1820**

AUGUST PREVIEW

Jill Marie Landis · *Heartbreak Hotel*
Judy Duarte · *The Perfect Wife*

HEARTS AND FLOWERS

Charlotte Lobb, writing as Charlotte Carter, has sold another cozy mystery to Guideposts Books.

Dee Ann Palmer sold a novella entitled, *Lure*, to Amber Quill Press.

Writing as J.M. Jeffries, **Miriam Pace** and her writing partner Jackie Hamilton sold a novel and a novella to Harlequin's Kimani line.

LOOK AT OUR MEMBERS

Barbara Ankrum will teach "Writing the New Love Story" at UCLA again this fall semester. Classes will be held on Tuesday nights from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. beginning Oct. 10 and ending Dec. 12.

Jen Apodaca's book, *Batteries Required*, is a finalist for the Daphne Du Maurier award for excellence in Mystery/Suspense!

Linda Carroll-Bradd's prairie historical, *Hanna's Promise*, finished in the Hearts Through History

Chapter's Romance Through the Ages contest.

Jen Crooks' manuscript, *A Bit Of Intrigue*, is a finalist in the Utah RWA's Great Beginnings contest in the Mystery/Suspense category!

Susan Squires' book, *The Companion*, is a finalist in the Prism contest!

Congratulations to **Nellie de la Cruz, Dolores Else and Andrea Baker** for earning their PRO Pins!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars for these upcoming meetings and special events with OCC/RWA.

For more information, please visit www.occrwa.com.

July 8: Afternoon Speaker · Jan Burke

Want to know how to research crime without getting arrested? Join OCC as Jan Burke presents "Crime 101."

July 10 to August 6: Trauma 101 · Dr. Cathryn J. Lyons

In this online class, learn what really happens after a person has been beaten up, shot, stabbed, run-over or whatever other form of trauma you put your characters through.

August 12: Afternoon Speaker · David Morrell

Join us for our regular chapter meeting where bestselling author David Morrell, creator of Rambo, will share his life-changing career advice.

August 14 to September 10: Stealth Query Letters · Liz Maverick

Join author Liz Maverick's online class to learn the fine art of query letters that get attention.

September 9: All-Day Speaker: Tor Editor · Anna Genoese

Learn what captures an editor's attention as Anna Genoese selects query letters from the attendees to critique!

September 11 to October 8: The Art of Writing a Joke · Charlotte Maclay

Think you're funny? Find out how to turn your sense of humor into laughter on the page in this online class.

October 14

Happy Birthday, OCC! Join us for our 25th Anniversary celebration, featuring as our special guests Rita Clay Estrada and the past OCC presidents, as well as our speaker, the bestselling author T. Jefferson Parker.

BOOK BUYERS BEST RAFFLE

Don't miss this fabulous opportunity to win a critique by these authors! This is just a sample of the donations raffled by OCC's PAW members at the **July** meeting. Proceeds will fund the BBB Award's Chocolate and Champagne party in Atlanta on Wednesday, July 26, at 10 p.m. in the OCC hospitality suite.

JILL MARIE LANDIS

2 critiques (3 chapters & synopsis)--1 contemporary & 1 historical or paranormal.

MERYL SAWYER

3 chapters & Synopsis

REBECCA FORSTER

Double Dip Critique -- 30 pages, plus she'll re-read those same 30 pages again if necessary.

GAIL SELINGER

1 chapter

DIANE PERSHING

2 critiques of 30 pages, including the synopsis.
(i.e. can be 28 pages and a 2 pg synopsis, or 15 pages and 15 pg synopsis)

CHARLOTTE MACLAY

3 chapters and a synopsis

LINDA O. JOHNSTON

3 chapters and a synopsis

JACKIE DIAMOND

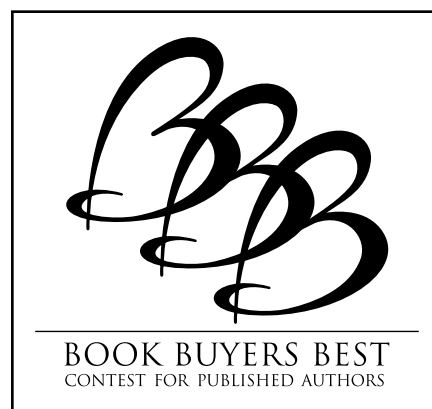
50 pages including the synopsis

JANET QUINN

2 critiques--50 pages including synopsis--historical or paranormal

CHAR CHIN

1 critique-3 chapters and a synopsis--no more than 50 pages



JULY ANNOUNCEMENTS

PITCH AN AUTHOR

Planning to pitch at conference? Then don't miss a chance to practice with a published author at our July meeting! In place of our regular Ask an Author session, several OCC authors have agreed to listen, encourage, advise and offer feedback to help ready you for your editor/agent appointments. Please email Marianne Donley at mhdonley@aol.com if you'd like to participate. Pitching begins at 9:30 a.m. in the PAW meeting room.

ORANGE ROSE CONTEST

The finalists for the 2006 Orange Rose Contest for Unpublished Writers will be announced at the July meeting. Don't miss it!

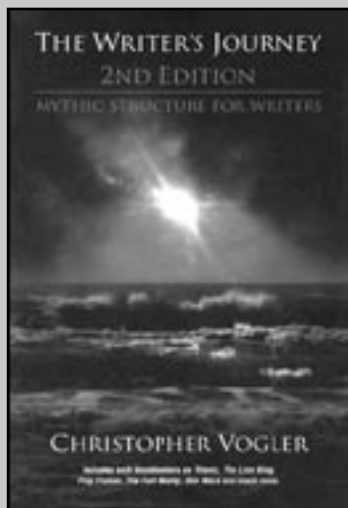
PUT YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

Come to the July meeting prepared to bid in the silent auction to "Put Your Best Face Forward." You'll enjoy a facial/spa treatment offered by Facial Aesthetic Concepts, a doctor-owned spa. Plus the basket will contain facial products, an aromatherapy candle, an aromatherapy CD for relaxation, and other items. For those of you attending Conference, this is a great way to prepare to meet that editor or agent. For those who are unable to attend, what better consolation prize than a facial? Bidding starts at \$50.00.

ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER OF ROMANCE WRITERS OF AMERICA PRESENTS

AUTUMN AFFAIRE 2006

Featuring



CHRIS VOGLER

Author of the international bestseller,
The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers

Saturday, Sept. 30, 2006

Embassy Suites

900 E. Birch St.

Brea, CA

"Hearing Chris Vogler speak at OCC years ago helped change the way I plot my books. Many published novels and seven RITA finalist nominations later, I still find his material and presentations invaluable."

Jill Marie Landis

Heartbreak Hotel

(mass market, August 2006)

**JOIN US FOR THIS ONE-DAY WORKSHOP THAT WILL CHANGE THE WAY
YOU APPROACH YOUR WRITING!**

What you'll learn:

**The elements of "The Hero's Journey," adapted from Joseph Campbell's
"The Hero With A Thousand Faces"**

Step by step guidelines for structuring plots and creating realistic characters

Innovative exercises to help you troubleshoot and improve your work

About Chris Vogler:

Christopher Vogler is a motion picture producer and story consultant whose clients have included major film studios, theatrical producers, screenwriters, novelists, and Fortune 500 companies. Chris studied film-making at the USC School of Cinema, where he encountered the ideas of mythologist Joseph Campbell, who had a profound effect on him and a whole generation of movie-makers, including George Lucas. Chris developed Campbell's concept of "The Hero's Journey" into a structure guide for writers. It began as a legendary seven-page memo that he wrote for his own amusement while working at Disney in the mid-1980s. It soon became required reading for young executives in Hollywood.

To register:

Hurry! Early registration ends Aug. 12.

\$100 – members

\$125 – non-members

Registration forms are available online at www.occrwa.com/affaire2.htm

You can pay via Paypal, or send a check along with your registration form to:

OCC/RWA Autumn Affaire Conference · PO Box 8999 · Brea, CA 92822

OCC/RWA HOSPITALITY SUITE

A T L A N T A 2 0 0 6

Join your fellow OCC members at the 26th RWA National Conference in Atlanta!
Not only will you have the chance to further your career and network with other writers,
you'll also see what it's like to celebrate OCC style!

HANG OUT

OCC/RWA has once again reserved a hospitality suite so our members will have a spot to gather, relax, and celebrate!

And if you're staying in another hotel, the suite is a great place for you to store your things during the day.

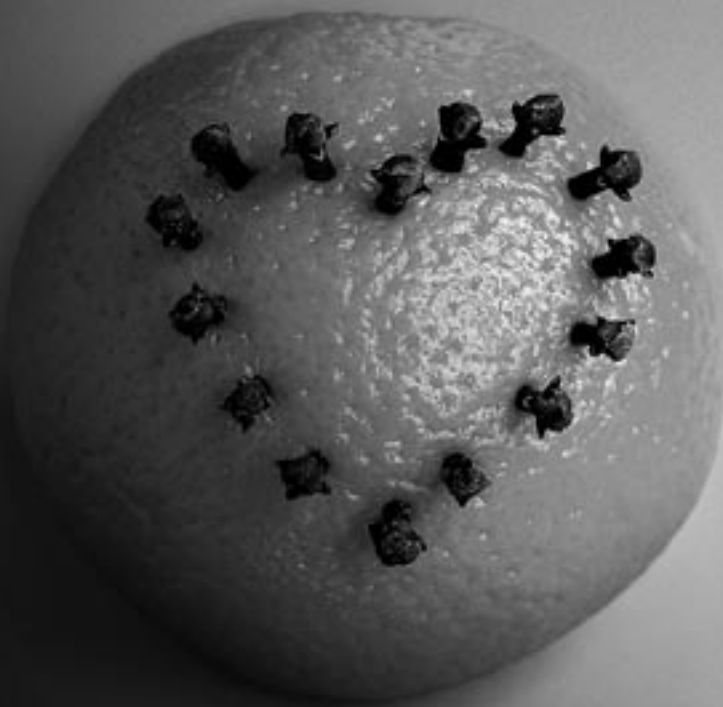
For more information on the location of the suite, please check the message board at the registration site.

PLAY BINGO

Show your support for our OCC/RWA authors during the Wednesday night literacy signing!

Pick up an OCC bingo card at the entrance to the signing. Whenever you visit an OCC author's table, get their signature on your card.

Then, take your completed card to the OCC suite for a chance to win cool prizes! And don't forget to stay for our 10 p.m. announcement of our Book Buyers Best award winners and help us celebrate with champagne and chocolate.



MEET EDITORS

Continuing a tradition we started two years ago, we've invited editors and agents to take a coffee break in our suite for a quick interview with the Orange Blossom. This is your chance to listen in for all the good tips.... Check the suite for a list of which editors will join us and when!

CELEBRATE!!!

Join us in the suite for a party in their honor immediately following Saturday night's RITA and Golden Heart Awards ceremony.

OCC/RWA
ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER
ROMANCE WRITERS OF AMERICA

MEET YOUR EDITORS

Co-Editor:
Louise Ahern



Co-Editor:
Michele Cwiertny



Orange Blossom co-editors Louise Knott Ahern and Michele Cwiertny are proud to roll out this new-and-improved version of the newsletter in honor of OCC's 25th year.

Co-Editor Louise Knott Ahern is an award-winning journalist and PR professional with more than 10 years of experience in the news media, strategic public relations and romance fiction. But those just pay the bills. Her real passion is writing contemporary romances featuring kick-butt heroines and Alpha heroes. Follow her adventures as a new work-from-home mother on her personal blog, *Opting Out: A Career Woman's Guide to Going Home Without Going Crazy*, at www.optoutguide.blogspot.com.

While earning her B.A. in English, with a focus in creative writing: fiction, Michele Cwiertny knew she wanted to write in the romance genre. Now a member of OCC/RWA, she focuses her writing on stories set in the late nineteenth century, but she's been known to write contemporary romantic suspense as well. To learn more about her, please visit www.michelecwiertny.com.

Come meet Louise and Michele during an Orange Blossom open house in OCC's hospitality suite in Atlanta at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 27. Hope to see you there!



2006 CHAPTER MEETINGS

OCC meetings are held the second Saturday of every month throughout 2006.

Member Admission is \$10 · Non-members are welcome; admission is \$20

MEETING TIMES FOR 2006 (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED):

9:30 AM Doors Open/Ask an Author

10:30 AM Morning Workshop

11:30 AM Lunch Break

12:15-12:45 PM Signings

1:00 PM Afternoon Program

ORANGE BLOSSOM
Attn: Orange Blossom Editors
Louise Ahern & Michele Cwiertny
P.O. Box 8999 Brea, CA 92822
louise@theworkingwriter.com
cwiertny2@verizon.net

Next Meeting: July 8, 2006
At the Brea Community Center
695 E. Madison Way Brea, CA 92822
714-284-7331