

**January 2015
Volume 3, Issue 1**

**The Writers of Kern
PO BOX 22335
Bakersfield, CA**

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***January Speaker~
Dr. Alton Gansky***



Be at the Clarion on Saturday, January 17, as we kick off a new year of motivational and

information-filled meetings with award-winning author and featured speaker Dr. Alton Gansky.

In his talk, "Moving from Inspiration to Publication ~ An Insider's View," Gansky will provide insights into the working of a professional writer's mind and will discuss what makes for a great idea and how to shape that idea into print worthy material. The author of over 40 books, novels and nonfiction, all published with traditional houses, he said, "I've been selling my writing for twenty years."

Have you been wondering how writers take the necessary steps that lead from idea to publication? Would it help you to learn how writers face and conquer the challenges of publication? Dr. Gansky will answer those questions and more as he draws on his experience to

help us progress "From Inspiration to Publication."

Alton Gansky (BA, MA, Lit. D.) has served as keynote speaker and faculty member at writers conferences around the country and Canada. He directs the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference held each year in North Carolina. See

www.altongansky.com to learn about Dr. Gansky and his books.

The Write Way is published monthly in Bakersfield, California. The deadline for submission of news articles is the first day of the month of publication. Send to newsletter@writersofkern.com



The Writers of Kern website seeks and welcomes submissions of members' writing for the website blog. Prose, memoir, poetry, essays, and book reviews should be sent to submissions@writersofkern.com

Happy New Writing Year!



As we jump into January, I envision Writers of Kern providing essential

tools as we each move forward through our writing projects this year. Whether you're preparing the foundation for a new story, completing a rough draft on your memoir, or putting the final touches on a novel, we have a guest speaker for you.

Our speaker line-up, now and through June, is phenomenal. We'll continue our theme of "From Inspiration to Publication" with this month's guest speaker Alton Gansky as he shares an insider's view on the writing process. In February member favorite LeeAnne Krusemark will reveal insights on query letters. In March, we'll learn how to increase tension in our novels with Nancy Curteman. April will feature four gifted, inspiring speakers during our day-long Spring Conference. May brings our annual WOK Honors Dinner for members and their guests. And in June, Victoria Zackheim will impart her knowledge about personal essays.

I'd love for everyone to learn from these well-known, respected speakers. You never know whether one of them might lay out a nugget that changes your writing life forever.

Make a commitment to yourself and take your writing to the next level by attending our monthly meetings. We're at the Clarion the third Saturday of each month, except for April because of the conference. If

monthly meetings are a challenge due to work or life events, then attend the Spring Conference on April 25, 2015. It will make a difference, I promise.

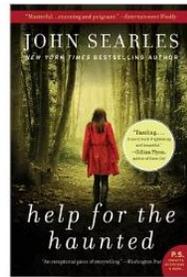
~ Joan

Book Review **help for the haunted** by John Searles

Sylvie Mason has always tried to be the good daughter, the one her parents don't have to worry about, the one they can rely upon. In the aftermath of their murder, the pressure only increases. The police have a murder suspect. They have fingerprints and motive and, with Sylvie, they think they have an eye witness.

Unfortunately, figuring out the right thing to do isn't as easy as it used to be. Struggling to reconcile the secret of her sister's involvement in the events leading up to the murder, the murder suspect's alibi and the truth of her parents' unusual profession as experts of the paranormal, Sylvie's first person narration takes us on a journey through the events leading up to the murder and the months leading up to the trial as she tries to uncover the truth.

With suspects that include her own sister-now-guardian, a truant uncle and a caged doll in the basement, this book is full of suspense and mystery while simultaneously exploring the nature of family, of faith and the choices we sometimes make in relation to each.



I enjoyed this book very much. The first person narrative immediately pulled me into this young girl's world, her insecurities, her desperate need to think the best of those she loves, the fear that her love and faith are somehow misplaced. Add to that the mystery of the light burning in the basement, the doll that remains caged there and the mysterious work her parents did in offering help to the haunted.

I was hooked beginning to end and finished the book in two days which is a rarity. If you're looking for a quick read, a good mystery and maybe a few shivers, this book is for you.



Anna Stewart

The LULU Experience Terry Redman



Remember that moment when you realize a web site you used now has your email address? Remember the daily flood of emails announcing yet another great deal? Remember how much you want the mail to end?

I have good news. After Thanksgiving I investigated LULU.com to see if I wanted to use them to publish my memoir, *Collected Memories of a Blessed Life*. I also checked with Office Depot to see what they'd charge for printing 20 copies. Both offered good deals.

The memoir is a 63-page book intended to be a gift to my daughters

and GIVE to other relatives and friends.

LULU correctly assumes that a writer wants to sell his book so they have options for ISBN and other services baked in.

I decided to go with Office Depot because of the format and one-day turn around. By then I was getting daily emails promoting the discounts available at LULU. After deleting my account the email kept coming. I wrote to LULU expecting the email to simply fall into some dark hole and the overtures from the site to continue.

Not so! Whitney replied to my email, confirmed my account was closed and assured me she would end the emails. After another email exchange Rachel wrote to confirm my name was off their email service. Really, I have not gotten a single email from LULU since.

My point is LULU is a well-run, company, offering competitive prices for publishing that book in your hard drive. I encourage you to consider LULU for your future publishing efforts.

Whitney and Rachel, you are excellent representatives for LULU.com. Thank you for showing such concern and professionalism.

Meet Kathleen Ellis Faulkner



January 1, 1946, a Southern Pacific passenger train pulled into the Bakersfield station at Sumner and Baker. Aboard was the

Ellis family, my father, my mother, my brother and I, from New Orleans, Louisiana. At three years of age, I was thus uprooted from an old world and replanted into a bright new one, post war California.

In 1964, I married Jim Faulkner and together we worked and went to school in San Francisco. We were on the front lines of the radical social changes of the 1960's.

Back to Bakersfield in 1968, I slowly earned an A.A. degree in 1972 while raising three children. The next year I took, and passed, the private investigator's exam. I became the second woman licensed as a private investigator in California and opened my own business.

I decided to commute to Los Angeles to go to law school. I finished the first year and passed the first year Bar Exam. I went to work with my husband, who'd started his own law practice in 1974. Re-entering college at Cal State Bakersfield for a B.A. degree in political science, I graduated with honors in 1981. I attended law school at Southwestern University of Law and passed the Bar in 1987.

In those days, women were excluded from professional organizations. I broke gender barriers, demanding inclusion in the all-male Kern County Adjustors Association, Toastmasters, and the Petroleum Club. I am proud that women are now provided with more opportunities than ever.

During my 25 years of law practice, I wrote appeals in appellate court cases. I have articles published in legal periodicals and often post articles on our web page. The local newspaper occasionally prints my

submissions in the "Another View" column.

I have kept a personal journal for most of my life. I have also written my own speeches on social issues.

Now, I feel like I have so much to express to others. This is why I write and why I want to be part of the Writers of Kern.

The Kern County Challenge

Thrown down by **Donna McCrohan Rosenthal** of the SoCal Writers Showcase, here it is: Challenge for WOK and East Sierra branches: Write a 100-word story, fiction or nonfiction, set in Kern County. Use either a recognizable landmark or land feature, or an historical event or figure from Kern County's history.

- Send your submissions to submissions@socalwritersshowcase.com
- Put "Kern County challenge" in the subject line
- State that you are a member of the WOK branch
- Deadline: February 1, 2015

Donna says, "We will publish the best on socalwritersshowcase.com and if they're cute or clever or good enough, we'll offer them to Bakersfield Magazine for publication."

Let's go, WOKians! Show our stuff!

Fall 2014 Writing Contest Winner
“Life, Death and Modern Day Jalopy” by **Louis Medina**



“When history repeats itself, and we know it often does, it likes to mix things up a bit, maybe to teach us something,” the Art Institute of Chicago senior docent said. He stopped next to the large black and white gelatin silver print photograph of three empty swings--one of them broken--that had become an iconic image of California’s Great Drought of the Twenty-Teens.

A group of about thirty brightly dressed summer tourists stood in a crescent around the wispy white haired volunteer, whose faded clothes clearly had once hugged a taller, fuller frame.

“Who’d have think we would experience another Dust Bowl in less than a century?” he said to shaking heads and rueful laughter from the crowd.

An ancient looking woman in a guest wheelchair, wearing a flower print cotton dress and straw hat, raised a knotted hand.

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“I’m from Bakersfield.”

“Mee-Maw!” Her twenty-year-old hipster great-grandson, standing behind her, pulled back the wheelchair a little, in embarrassment.

“So you lived this experience?” the docent asked.

“Twice,” she answered. “I was five when my daddy took us west from Oklahoma in 1935, and eighty-seven when we had to leave California three years ago in 2017. Both times people should have seen disaster coming but they didn’t.”

“This last time, weren’t Californians bothered over not being able to water their lawns at first?”

“A drought wasn’t as life-and-death then as for people in the thirties, when a lot more of the country relied on growin’ crops for a living,” she said. “But one year without rain turned into two years, and two years turned into several years. It happened in the Great Plains first, and it happened in California’s Central Valley eighty years later. The Phoenix dust storms should’ve been a hint of what was coming but Californians--including myself--were in denial, being used to buying up water from somewhere else whenever we needed it. Not this time, though: Forty million is too many people with too many needs to sustain.”

“And what do you think about this photo?” the docent asked.

“It could’ve been taken at the park in my neighborhood,” she said.

The group was listening intently, standing at the arc between art and the life it reflected.

“It was a shame when they had to shut down the parks but it was necessary. The spray parks went first; then the public pools; then they let the grass get all brown and die. Trees, too. Finally, they just stopped maintaining the parks altogether ‘cause people weren’t using them. They weren’t spending time outdoors ‘cause they feared Valley fever and dust pneumonia, which hand’t been seen since the Dust Bowl. Eventually, the homeless took over the parks. Helped themselves to playground chips and dead tree branches and used them for cooking in the barbecue grills.”

“Desperate times,” a man in a baseball cap remarked.

“Entire families ended up living in tent cities like the Hoovervilles I’d seen as a child. Agricultural workers lost their jobs, their homes. People in oil, too, because there was no more water for fracking. Hard to watch. We were doin’ okay, but when the rationing of water for household use got too strict, that’s when I told my granddaughter, his aunt,” she said, pointing back to her great-grandson with her chin, ““We’ve gotta go somewhere where there’s rain. Snow, even. I don’t care.””

“So you live in Chicago now?”

“With him and his maw,” she said. “I hear it’s started raining again over there and people are even going back. Not me. Didn’t look back when we U-Hauled it here like millions of others who went north or east. Like that photo there.” She pointed to another glossy black and white print to the right. It was of a hungry, dusty looking family, Mom, Dad and small twin boys, eating sandwiches. They were sitting on the ground in front of a U-Haul cargo trailer hitched to an SUV and parked within a stone’s throw of a cross on the side of the road. “Modern day jalopies, they

called them, ‘cause people filled them up with all their belongings just like the Dust Bowl migrants packed their trucks.”

“The title of this photograph is actually ‘Life, Death and Modern Day Jalopy,’” the docent said, peering at the signage on the wall.

“The cross in the picture isn’t a grave marker, is it?” Mee-Maw’s great-grandson asked, putting a hand on her shoulder.

She nodded, patting his hand. “I first thought, when we kept passing all those crosses on the I-40, that there sure were a lot of car accidents on that road.”

“Certainly, some of them were roadside memorials for victims of vehicle accidents,” the docent said, “but folks migrating east were so poor, the last thing they could afford was a funeral and proper burial for a loved one who died along the way.”

“Just buried them where they keeled over on the Wilderness Road,” the woman said.

“The what?” the man in the cap asked.

“That’s what Interstate 40 ended up being called,” the docent explained. “In the 1930’s, Route 66 was the main road used for migrating west, so people called it the Mother Road. In this last migration out of California, religious folks associated the 40 in that highway’s name with the number of years the people of the Bible spent wandering in the wilderness. So Wilderness Road stuck.”

“California,” the old woman said with a sigh. “The land of milk and honey done got tapped out. The Central Valley is like a sieve. It used to be marshes. But they turned it into fields for large scale agriculture. Need a lot of water for that.”

“Just like they needed a lot of water in the Great Plains when they cut down the prairie grasses and planted crops,” the docent remarked. “Water is simply not an endless resource.”

“And when the heavens don’t precipitate, folks tend to overcompensate,” the woman said, drawing laughter from the group and an amused smile from her great-grandson.

“They dug wells, lowering the water table,” she went on, “causing the Central Valley floor to sink. They couldn’t buy any more water from nearby states because the entire Southwest was bone dry. The Valley became just like the Great Plains during the Dust Bowl. Black blizzards not seen since the 1930’s stripped the topsoil away.”

For endless, awkward seconds, nobody said a word. Mee-Maw’s great-grandson caressed her shoulders.

The docent broke the silence. “There are quite a few photographs in this gallery that depict California’s Reverse Dust Bowl Migration. And around the corner there,” he pointed, “there are photos juxtaposed with ones from the 1930’s. The similarities are striking. I’ll give everyone time to look around before we continue.” Then, addressing the woman, he said, “Thank you for your insights, Ma’am.”

“Something I wish I hadn’t experienced,” she said. “Twice. But people are people. We’ll find something else to mess up before too long. But at least we’ll take photos of it for posterity.”

Congratulations, Lou!



Official WOK Email Addresses

Go to the website, or email to the following addresses. Thank you.

Events: events@writersofkern.com

Information: info@writersofkern.com

Membership: membership@writersofkern.com

Newsletter: newsletter@writersofkern.com

President: president@writersofkern.com

Submissions: submissions@writersofkern.com

Sunshine Committee: sunshine@writersofkern.com

Treasurer: treasurer@writersofkern.com

Webmaster: webmaster@writersofkern.com

Critique Coordinator: critiques@writersofkern.com

CWC Webmaster Needed
Ray Malus of CWC

The California Writers Club is looking our next state webmaster.

In terms of skills, we need somebody who has the ability to follow directions, to work cooperatively with others as well as independently, the ability to solve technical problems, familiarity and experience with Word Press, general knowledge of 'Dynamic Webpage' architecture, and familiarity with web technology (HTML, FTP). Experience and familiarity with CSS, mySql, and PHP is a plus.

Contracted monthly compensation will be determined based on experience, skills, and the Club's ability to pay. The estimated workload is 2-4 hours per month barring (separately negotiated) major upgrades.

Interested web masters should contact Ray Malus for the job description and task list at rmalus@roadrunner.com. We look forward to hearing from you. **Deadline February 15.**

Welcome New Members

We are pleased to welcome new Writers of Kern members, **John Harrer** and **S. Larry Stewart**.

“From Inspiration to Publication”

Writers of Kern Calendar

January 17, 2015
Guest Speaker
Dr. Alton Gansky
“An Insider’s View”

February 21, 2015
LeeAnne Krusemark
“How to Write an Irresistible Query Letter”

March 21, 2015
Nancy Curteman, Mystery Writer
“How to Increase Tension in Your Novel”

April 25, 2015
WOK Annual Spring Conference
9 AM to 3 PM
Featured Speakers:
David Congalton
Toni Lopopolo
Allison Crotzer-Kimmel
Herb Benham

May 16, 2015
WOK Honors Dinner
Hodel’s
Young Writers of Kern Competition
Peggy Connelly Scholarship

June 20, 2015
Victoria Zackheim
“Writing the Personal Essay”

December 2014 Winter Dinner

Phil Berling



A wonderful time was had by all at the Writers of Kern Winter Dinner on the night of Saturday, December 13th. The scene was Hodel's Country Dining, which is always a delightful, but dangerous, restaurant choice as endless plates of delicious food have a way of manifesting themselves before the eyes of weak-willed diners—like me.

My wife, Zoila, and I were prescient enough to sit next to Dan McGuire (whose birthday was being celebrated that night) and so also got a share of his chocolate cake while listening to some of his adventures from back in the Midwest. **Dan McGuire**, along with **Annis Cassells**, **Donnee Padgett-Harris**, **Jasmine D. Lowe** and **Mandy Wallace**, were the five bloggers recognized that night for completing the 2nd Annual Blog Challenge. 26 blog posts over 13 weeks is quite a regimen so our hats are off to all of them.

After dinner came the announcement of the winners of the WOK Annual Members-Only Writing Contest. Taking 3rd Place was **Donnee Padgett-Harris** who received a certificate and \$50 for her story “**Battlefield**” while President **Joan Raymond** took 2nd Place and \$75 for her narrative “**Broken**”.



Joan Raymond, Donneé Padgett-Harris, and Louis Medina

The **Grand Prize** and \$200 went to **Louis Medina** for “**Life, Death, and the Modern Day Jalopy**”. Louis will also get his name on the Perpetual Plaque honoring winners back to 2010. So, congratulations Louis Medina!—our 2014 winner. Look for his entry reprinted on page five in *The Write Way*.



Dennis VanderWerff



Catherine and Glen Pruett



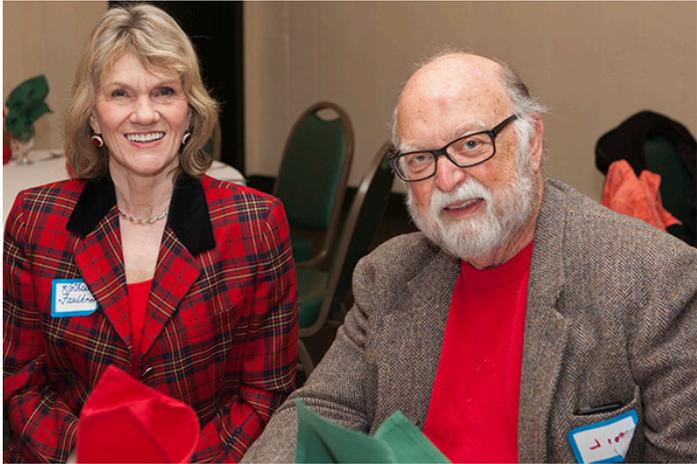
Chandler Wright, Dennis VanderWerff, Donneé Harris-Padgett



Chandler Wright and Janet Skibinski present blog challenge certificates



Joan Raymond welcomes the crowd



Kathleen and Jim Faulkner



Sue Jennings



One of the contest judges, Charlotte Abrams, and husband Al

Most photos by Dennis VanderWerff; others by Jim Faulkner and Annis Cassells

THE 90-DAY SCREENPLAY WORKSHOP

**Saturday, February 28th, 2015
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

**Apple Valley Spirit River Chamber of Commerce
16010 Apple Valley Road, Apple Valley, CA**

A one-day workshop with instructor
ALAN WATT



**Author of *The 90-Day Screenplay*
Sponsored by
The High Desert Branch
of the California Writers Club**

Covering the fundamental tools necessary to take your screenwriting to the next level: including integrating theme, character, structure and dialogue. This workshop will provide a process that works.

**California Writers Club Discount Price: Only \$75
(Regularly taught in Los Angeles for \$195)**

Reserve Your Place Now! www.hdcwc.com

In Memoriam~

I will miss **Robert Hargreaves**
Terry Redman

Writers of Kern is made up of interesting, talented people. but the most intriguing amongst us has gone away. Our friendship began in 2009 when Dana Martin launched the first critique group. Robert and I were charter members, and he did not like the story I was writing.

His autobiographical narrative about his experiences in Vietnam helping farmers improve their chickens and crops taught lesson after lesson. This is how he became *Chicken Doc*. He was in the American Field Service before there was a Peace Corps, before JFK and Sargent Shriver formalized AFS into The Peace Corps.

Food, crops, livestock, weather, the Viet Cong, Vietnamese foods and customs, the Civil Rights era in Mississippi, inspecting agriculture and livestock for California, and a hundred other topics showed up in his writings or comments around the table. He introduced us to experiences and worlds we never imagined. At times I suspected he'd been doing good everywhere.

"I learn something every time I read your submission," each member of The Classic Critique Group remarked at one time or another about his works. Over the past year, no member of Writers of Kern has had as many submissions published. And none of us has submitted so many. When we asked about rejections at the monthly meeting, Robert's hand always went up.

He was honest, sometimes dismissive of our advice, and reluctant to critique poetry. "I don't do poetry so I have nothing to say," he said about my poems. Along the way he published and published, often saying, "I've learned a lot from this group."

I looked forward to his submissions, remarks, and commitment to the group. One time, he showed up a few days after a heart attack. The world could use more people like **Robert Hargreaves**. *Via con Dios, my friend.*



THE BACK PAGE

Editors' Inkwell

Annis Cassells



I'm excited about the upcoming Writers of Kern Annual Spring Conference! We have a dynamite program lined up, with speakers who will inspire us to new heights and teach us valuable, thought-provoking lessons: Author, Screenwriter, David Congalton; Agent, Editor, Toni Lopopolo; YA Author, Allison Crotzer-Kimmel; and Columnist, Herb Benham.

This year's conference will be a marvelous, motivational day out with "your people" -- other writers. Prepare to up your writing game.

***Writers of Kern
Annual Spring Conference
Saturday, April 25, 2015
9:00-3:00 at the Clarion Hotel***

*Four Fabulous Speakers
Lunch, Door Prizes
Friends, Fun
Book Sales*