The Newsletter of The San Fernando-Valley Branch The Newsletter of The San Fernando-Valley Branch The Newsletter of The San Fernando-Valley Branch Che Palley Branch Valley MICON

Vol. 8

"Our 2Dembers' Doless"

December, 2014 Next Meeting: December 6th, 1:001 Speaker: David Stifel Seasons Greetings, All.

December's Speaker: David Stifel Producing Your Own Audio Book.



(Submitted by Speaker) David Stifel was born and raised in Denver, Colorado. Bitten early by the acting bug, he studied his craft at the Yale School of Drama. After graduation, he found

himself in the usual array of interesting day jobs such as casino porter at Lake Tahoe, ESL teacher in Iran and Egypt (one year apiece), video games programmer in the Atari/Intellivision era. While working his day job, concurrently he worked in many film and TV projects for such directors as Steven Spielberg (*Minority Report*), Danny Boyle (*A Life Less Ordinary*), and Joel Schumacher (*The Number 23*).

David entered the audiobook field in 2011, when he launched a long term podcast of serializations of the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs read as audiobooks. He very quickly started booking narration work through audible's <u>acx.com</u>, leading to collaborative connections with producers and publishers such as BeeAudio, Audio Realms, Crossroad Press, Deyan Audio, and Audible.com. He has 40 full-length audiobook titles completed, is an "Audible Approved Producer", and is beginning work on a horror title for Audio Realms, It Waits Below. His favorite 'home' genre is horror and sci-fi, which is fitting, for his boyhood idol is Boris Karloff. His listing of published narration works is quite eclectic in genre, including vampire and zombie epics, classics, international thrillers, historical biography / memoir, and most recently, British romance. Look him up at audible.com or at <u>vww.dstifel.com.</u> 🗆

Usually, I would not intrude on your reading (and certainly not on the front page), but several of the submissions for this month didn't show up (I reckon the reindeer et 'em). And I didn't want to cram in two hundred words of the review Catherine Pelonero's excellent November presentation — and then send you to page six for the rest. (Honestly, I tried it. It was awful.) So I thought



proliferating... and besides, it just caused controversy.

But the fact is, at the time of year between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, each of us celebrates *something* (If you're smart, you celebrate *everything*, and make up additional ones), and it's a time to gather family around you.

So, from all of us on the board, and all of us the staff of the *Scribe*, to all of you in the seats our extended family, a heartfelt, joyful, and very neutral, "YA-HOO!"-=rm=-



No. 5

Next Meeting: OPEN MIC! Sign up for 5 minutes of FAME. 12:30 SHARP!

November Review

Pelonero Delivers Ray Malus

In 1964, Kitty Genovese, a twenty-eight-year-old bar manager, was stabbed to death outside of her apartment house in Kew Gardens, Queens, New York.

Quite a story!

In 2014, Catherine Pelonero, completed seven-years' work, and published a book dealing with that murder.

Quite another story!

In this day, when most authors consider a speaking engagement just one extended book-signing and sale, it would have been acceptable — even expected — if Pelonero had spent an hour telling the first story. To her enormous credit, she chose to adhere to her topic and tell the second. In doing so, she gave marvelous insights into the process of writing a true story; into the task of finding a path to publishing that story; and into an author with great focus, intelligence, and compassion.

I say 'focus', because, in spite of family obligations, she devoted seven years to researching and writing the story.

I say 'intelligence', because she largely drew her own 'roadmap', delving into, and analyzing, other works of True Crime non-fiction.

I say 'compassion', because of her belief that the writer (even of non-fiction) must be passionate about her subject, and make the reader 'connect' with her characters. "What made the story resonate?" she asks. Her answer is definite, "Character building." (No easy task from a distance of two decades.) It was obviously her devotion to Genovese herself that propelled Pelonero.

Originally a playwright, Pelonero became fascinated with Genovese's story. She wanted to know more — especially since there were rumblings that it was mostly 'urban legend'. In exploring the subject, she discovered that there had never been a major book devoted to the tragedy. She felt compelled to write, "... the book I wanted to read."

To do that, she had to enter a completely different literary world: the world of non-fiction narrative. It was this journey she shared with us.

Those of us who are strangers to non-fiction tend to think of it as dry, flavorless — Ikea assembly instructions, computer manuals. If it is narrative at all, we envision newspaper copy.

Not so, says Pelonero. Good narrative non-fiction uses the same tools as narrative fiction — character,

empathy, plot, dialog, story arc — and tries to achieve the same goals. Its main difference, she says, is that the writing process is 'inverted'. The fiction writer starts with nothing, and creates a reality. The nonfiction writer starts with reality as it already exists and amasses a huge amount of facts. The task then is to winnow this mountain into a meaningful, accurate, and graceful story.

The process of *publishing* non-fiction is also very different from that of novels or plays. Plays are published after they are performed (or not, depending on reception). Novels are published after they are completed (or not, depending on reception). Nonfiction is accepted by a publisher before it is ever written. This acceptance is negotiated through a 'proposal'.

Pelonero covered the basics of the proposal, but (quite rightly) referred us to the Internet and books for details.

She also highly recommended the Internet for research into your subject, background color, and possible sources for interviews.

She counsels, "Vet who you deal with..." (using the Internet again), and, "...use an attorney!"

Even so, she admits to a poor (but kinda funny) experience with her first agent.

She strongly advises writers to ask friends for help and advice. (She credits her landing a publisher to a friend who recommended her.)

Once published, the writer will bear much of the onus of publicizing the book. This is where all that 'discarded' research becomes useful. Her best piece of advice for interviews? "Keep talking. Make them shut you up."

Content is only half of a program; the other half is presentation. At this Pelonero excels. Confident and attractive, she manages to combine enthusiasm with calm. Instead of dominating the room, she draws the crowd to herself. Her audience listened because they *wanted to*, because she was interesting, and because they genuinely liked *her*.

During a short 'Q & A' Pelonero displayed charm (She has no idea of how many books she's sold.), erudition (A very insightful commentary on Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*), and candor (She burned up a 401k financing trips to New York to interview people.).

All this is a very large order. Catherine Pelonero delivers.

We are extremely pleased to announce that Dave Wetterberg has agreed to become a regular contributor with his column, "Review and Refresh." Dave, a retired English teacher, will review the 'ground rules' of writing on a rotating basis. This will be a boon to us all, and will scare the be-jeepers out of our proof-readers.

WELCOME ABOARD, DAVE.



The Sentence

The sentence is the basic unit of thought. The Victorians liked them long and smoky. Our English teachers taught us to write sentences like them. In today's world, however, the professionals like their sentences simple and clear.

Simple, not Short

The simple sentence is the most popular sentence among professional writers. But simple doesn't necessarily mean short. It means one subject and one predicate (verb).

The following is a simple sentence: The explorers moved on.

But so is this: Their food and water depleted, hampered by the lack of oxygen in the cave, the explorers, fearless and dedicated to their mission, moved on into the darkness.

The Loose Sentence

The last example in the previous section above could be revised into a "loose" sentence, wherein the subject *explorers* and the predicate *moved* lead off:

The explorers moved off into the darkness, out of food and water, hampered by the lack of oxygen in the cave, but fearless and dedicated, nevertheless.

The Periodic Sentence

The example above could also be written as a "periodic" sentence, wherein the subject and the predicate end the sentence.

Fearless and dedicated, out of food and water, and hampered by the lack of oxygen in the cave, the explorers moved off into the darkness.

The Cumulative Sentence

Both *explorer* sentences above are "cumulative," that is, they are simple sentences expanded by the use of various word-clusters. Each cluster is separated by a comma. None contain a subject/predicate combination.

Tarzan stood on the cliff. (no clusters)

Tarzan stood on the cliff, dagger in his hand. (simple sentence, one cluster) Tarzan stood on the cliff, dagger in his hand, steely-eyed and defiant. (two clusters) Tarzan stood on the cliff, dagger in his hand, steely-eyed and defiant, his faithful chimp Cheeta at his side. (etc.)

Tarzan stood on the cliff, dagger in his hand, steely-eyed and defiant, his faithful chimp Cheeta at his side, his loinskin flapping in the morning breeze.

The Wasted Sentence

Good writers try not to waste sentences. That is, they combine smaller elements into longer ones. In the combination *The chairman congratulated us upon hearing the good news*. *His name was Theo Wallington*, the second sentence is wasted. It would be better combined with the previous one: *Theo Wallington*, *the chairman*, *congratulated us upon hearing the good news*.

A sentence beginning with "It is" can usually be better combined with another. *His home rests in the Loire Valley. It is on a beautiful fifteen acre wine orchard. (combined) His home rests on a beautiful, fifteen acre wine orchard in the Loire Valley.*



As always, please check the websites for more information before submitting. When you see "ms" or "mss" this means manuscript and nanuscripts respectively. Best wishes and good luck to all!

MATURE LIVING - Lifeway Christian Resources 1 Lifeway Plaza,

Nashville, TN 37234

Phone: (615) 251-2000. E-mail: <u>matureliving@lifeway.</u> com. Website: <u>www.lifeway.com</u>.

Contact: Rene Holt.

"Monthly leisure reading magazine for senior adults 55 and older. Mature Living is Christian in content and the material required is what would appeal to 55 and over age group: inspirational, informational, nostalgic, humorous."

90% freelance written. Submit seasonal material 1 year in advance.

Nonfiction

Needs: General interest, historical, how-to, humor, inspirational, interview, personal experience, travel, crafts.

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Columns/Departments: Cracker Barrel (brief, humorous, original quips and verses), pays \$15. Grandparents' Brag Board (something humorous or insightful said or done by your grandchild or greatgrandchild), pays \$15. Inspirational (devotional items), pays \$25. Food (introduction and 4-6 recipes), pays \$50. Over the Garden Fence (vegetable or flower gardening), pays \$40. Crafts (step-by-step procedures), pays \$40. Game Page (crossword or word-search puzzles and quizzes), pays \$40.

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Contributors Notes in each issue. No kill fee. Queries accepted by mail, online submission form. Sample copy available online.

Publishes ms an average of 3 months after acceptance. 100% freelance written.

Nonfiction: Contact: Claudia Sternbach, editor-in-chief (nonfiction only). Needs: essays, personal experience, poetry, photography, graphic memoir. Buys 40-80 mss/year. Send complete ms. Length: 50-10,000 words.

Does not pay for assigned or unsolicited articles.

Poetry: Needs: Avant garde, free verse, haiku, light verse, traditional. Max Number of Poems: 5.

Buys 20-40 poems/year.

NEW LETTERS

University of Missouri-Kansas City

5101 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, MO 64110.

Phone: (816) 235-1168 . Fax: (816) 235-2611. E-mail: <u>newletters@umkc.edu</u> . Website: <u>www.newletters.org</u> .

Contact: Robert Stewart, Editor-In-Chief.

"New Letters continues to seek the best new writing, whether from established writers or those ready and waiting to be discovered."

Quarterly magazine. Submissions are not read between May 1 and October 1.

Established: 1934. Simultaneous Submissions: Yes. Guidelines available online.

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accepted by mail. Sample copy for \$10 or sample articles on website. Responds in 1 month to queries, 5 months to mss. Publishes ms an average of 6 months after acceptance. 100% freelance written.

Submit seasonal material 6 months in advance. Editorial lead time 6 months.

Nonfiction: Needs: essays. No self-help, how-to, or nonliterary work. Buys 8-10 mss/year:

Submission Method: Send complete ms. 5,000 words maximum. Pays \$40-100.

Fiction: Contact: Robert Stewart, editor.

Needs: Ethnic, experimental, humorous, mainstream contemporary.

No genre fiction. Buys 15-20 mss/year. Send complete ms. 5,000 words maximum. Pays \$30-75.

Poetry: Needs: Avant-garde, free verse, haiku, traditional. No light verse. Max Number of Poems: 6. Buys 40-50 poems/year. Pays \$10-25.

"We aren't interested in essays that are footnoted or essays usually described as scholarly or critical. Our preference is for creative nonfiction or personal essays. We prefer shorter stories and essays to longer ones (an average length is 3,500-4,000 words). We have no rigid preferences as to subject, style, or genre, although commercial efforts tend to put us off. Our only fixed requirement is on good writing."



Confession

Recently, a fellow CWC member (and one of our finest writers) asked a guest speaker a question: "When I read my writing, I cry. Yet one of my readers says she has trouble 'attaching' to my characters. How can that be?"

What a truly stunning question!! We'll get into why I use the word 'stunning' next month. First, let's try to find an answer.

All this is (of course) only my opinion, but I can think of only two reasons for this:

- 1. The 'reader' is an insensitive beast who is internally dead and despises the entire human race.
- 2. The writer knows/understands things about his characters that his reader doesn't.

(If you can think of a third, please write me - c/o General Delivery, Juneau, Alaska.)

Since I think I can guess who the reader is, I can avow she's actually a sensitive and caring person, so number one is probably not the answer. That leaves us with number two.

The situation is not hard to understand. The characters of really *good* writers take on a life of their own. The writer gets to know them intimately. During the process of writing the story, these characters are often the writer's best friends, and his preferred company. It's easy for him to assume you know them as well.

And how does he judge what you need to know?

And how does he tell you? There's far more to 'attachment' than just understanding a character's traits and history. Let me illustrate. Since it's the Christmas Season, I'll use two familiar Holiday characters: Santa Claus, and The Little Drummer Boy.

The question is, "Which of these characters do you have sympathy for?" "Which do you love?" "Which do you 'attach' to?"

Well, we all love Santa. I mean, who wouldn't? He's cute, jolly, and he brings all that great stuff. (Hell!! He's Fed-Ex with a beard!)

But do you really 'care about' him?

Ever worry about him? ...conjecture on how he feels about things? ...wonder if he feels hurt when he has to leave coal in a child's stocking?

Probably not. Santa's self-sufficient. Powerful. Mythical.

He is strong. He is invincible. Dammit, he's freakin' *Santa Claus*!

We don't really even know what he looks like. Actually, he's preposterous! Did they even have drummer boys in Biblical Judea? And if they did, would it make sense for him to pound on a drum in front of a newborn baby? Rubbish!

...and yet, we feel for him.

Why?

It goes back to one line in the song. The boy is talking about playing for the baby, and he says, "Then he smiled at me...," and in that sentence, we come to understand how important this event is to *the boy*, how urgently he needs the baby's approval — and we're hooked!

In his script, *House of Games*, the playwright David Mamet has one of his characters say, "It's called a 'confidence game'. Why? Because they give you their confidence? No. Because you give them *yours*."

There is something inside all us mammals that embraces vulnerability. It's a Darwinian survival mechanism. As a group, we could not endure if the *alphas* among us constantly killed off the rest just because they can. So when a creature shows submission, vulnerability, that mechanism says, "No threat here. Comfort that creature! Nurture it. Make it yours." *Attach!*

So, as storytellers, we reveal intimate details about our characters. And the ones that draw the reader are the vulnerability, the pain, the *humanness* of the character.

There are several sources within the story for supplying these details: the narrator, another character, the character in question.

Let me give an example:

Several teen-age girls are at a swimming hole. They all decide to strip down to their underwear and go swimming. They take off their shirts. Here are three different versions of what happens next:

> The others could plainly see the parallel white scars across Nora's back — the result of the frequent beatings her father had administered.

or

or

The others could plainly see the parallel white scars across Nora's back. "Her father's a real bastard," Nancy whispered to Julie.

The others could plainly see the parallel white scars across Nora's back. Nora quickly turned and smiled an embarrassed, "My dad wanted a boy."

So, the question is, which version draws you to Nora? Maybe none. But if any does, I'm bettin' it's number three.

In all the versions, we have been given the same information. But in number three, Nora herself has shared her secret with us. (In Mamet's words, she's 'given us her confidence'.) She's shown vulnerability. How can we not embrace her?

Brain (cont. from pg 5.)

When a character opens herself to you like this, it's almost impossible not to reciprocate.

And that is attachment!

This is not to say that the character herself must reveal the details. If I hadn't included alternative three, you would have probably chosen number two — because it adds human feeling to the mix. And even number one would have probably provoked some connection. However, there is tremendous power in having the character 'confess' the information. Having started as a playwright, I find it easy and natural to have characters reveal themselves in dialog. Hell, that's really all plays are about. But even without dialog, you can create empathy by showing your characters' weaknesses, their vulnerabilities, their fears, their yearnings, ...their humanness. And it is this empathy which inspires reader attachment.

Next month, we'll discuss why this is important. ('Vital' might be a better term.) It will put a nice *coda* on this whole *opus*.=rm=-

That Man Leslie Kaplan

Rain does a tap dance on my window pane. I remember those rainy days. We made love.

I sleep alone now, but the scent of my man still lingers on his pillow. It's on the empty side of my bed. It smells of Old Spice after-shave and sweat.

Oh ... That Man!

I still feel him beside me. The one who left his mark on this pillow. That man had a tenderness to his touch. A tenderness that moved across my breasts like a warm summer breeze, caressing my heart.

Kisses like chocolate... chocolate kisses still linger on these lips. Although a thousand and one nights have passed since that man laid his head on his pillow ... still ... to me ... it is but yesterday.

Your scent still quickens me! I am wild and untamed as follow your scent no matter where it may lead. I smell ... I feel ... I see ... I hear ... I touch ... and ... I TASTE that man coming home as he calls out in his baritone voice ...

"Honey, I'm here." I run to the door ... but no one is there.

I sleep alone now, but the scent of my man still lingers on his pillow. \Box

6

WHAT ABOUT JUDGING OTHERS? Norman Molesko

It is so easy to do, to judge others. Let me explain. He's good. She's bad. He is good because he always agrees with what I say. She's bad because she argues with me, never agrees.

She's good. He's bad. I feel great every time I'm with her on a date. He's bad. He's a mopey guy. He's dull. He's gloomy. Doesn't want to give me a smile.

And yet he's good. He is younger than me. He's not able to win any arguments with me.

I feel that she's bad. Very bad. How can you say that? "OH, I don't like her. No particular reason why. I just know. I don't like her. How sad it is for anyone to play that game.

Each one of us for reasons unknown to us judges some people as good and some people as bad.

We are of different makes, different ways of looking at those we meet, at those we greet.

What I hope you will remember is to appreciate your fellow man, your fellow woman. Appreciate each one without pre-judging them. Share warm-fuzzies with them whenever you can. **Three Haiku** Michael Edelstein

One man, face forward His way is the path. Perhaps He knows all the truth.

Gray hair denotes age It does not confer wisdom Was his time wasted?

Widows weep, willows Suspend their boughs by water Eternal circle.



Memories of Long Ago Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

The minutes of life open Revealing old memories Pushing me to catch them all Before They trip and fall into nothingness-My memories Sleep inside boxes holding gloves Handkerchiefs, buttons and pale old photographs Crushed dry flowers Resting between pages of old books-In one box A bit of lace from my wedding day Moist still with bashful tears... Blushing, I remember dusting rice off my shoulders Cheating birds of their meal-Yes, I remember... Rushing to new beginnings... A moribund sunset in the dark The sound of train whistles in the night Noisy rails Sparking yellow-blue lights Lampposts like steel soldiers Moving fast-I remember... Holding close to my face A handkerchief in neat folds Smelling of wild flowers Mom's scent Lingering in my space-A cigar box... Kipping Dad's photograph Wearing a red bow tie With dots of blue, yellow, and white-He is sitting on a park bench Reading old news of foreign Sad Argentinean days... Life rushes by Anxious hours escape without notice Leaving in a hurry as if to catch the wind Like a runaway train with no destination-I am the keeper of family memories The writer bringing them back Giving me time to restore it all Making room for spring, autumn, and fall Before the storms of winter begin-

She Ray Malus

She envelops me In helix of ecstasy Drowned in sensation.

Fluid falls of wheat Hot honey gently flooding Pale meerschaum shoulders.

Proud puff-pastry lips Liquid tongue and fervid mouth Hunger for suckling.

> Ivory pillar Pulsing with expectation Cringing at my breath.

Time-ripened apples, Swollen sway with syruped cusps Enticing my kiss.

> Warm rounded hummock Fragrant silky pillow-swell Pregnant with promise.

Ash golden sea grass Lush lips of plunging chasm Sweet viscous fountain.

Pliant opal boughs Vaguely veined with sapphire Yielding Entrapment.

Sculpted columns tense, Delicately contorting Soft extremities.

Long, she lies with me, And full I am enfolded, For brief forever. Corner 2



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The Fine Print

San Fernando Valley Branch of California Writers Club meets at:

Motion Picture & Television Fund Katzenberg Pavillion 23388 Mulholland Drive Woodland Hills, CA 91364

Directions:

From the 101 Freeway exit on Mulholland Drive South. Proceed to Steven Spielberg

Drive and turn right into the campus. (If questioned at the gate, tell the official that you are attending a CWC meeting.) At the 'T', turn left and follow the road to the large parking lot on the left for Villa Katzenberg.

Parking is free in any of the lots. (Please do NOT park on any of the streets. You will be ticketed!) Interactive maps at: <u>http://cwc-sfv.org/Meetings/Location.php</u>

The Valley Scribe

The Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch of California Writers Club

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LOTS of great information at our Website: <u>www.cwc-sfv.org</u>