

THE WRITE STUFF

SEE YOU TUESDAY
MAY 8TH

UPCOMING SPEAKERS:

June

**Robert
Weibezahl,**
Mystery Novelist

July

TBD

August

Lori Wilde
Romance Writer

Want to be more
involved with
VCWC?

Nominations for
next year's board
are coming up
soon. What
would you like to
do? Think about
it!

Please
welcome our
newest
members:
**Lauren Soffer
Phil Taggart
and
Goldie Shaw**

Note Our
Meeting Time
7:00 PM

Borders
125 W. Thousand
Oaks Blvd,
Thousand Oaks

Our May Speaker:

Colleen Cason, Ventura County Star Columnist



Colleen Cason, whose Sunday column, *Cason Point*, is a staple of the Ventura County Star newspaper, is a native of Chicago and a graduate of Indiana University.

In the early 1990s, she worked in public relations at Pepperdine University. She later was a features writer for the old Thousand Oaks News-Chronicle, and editor of the Ventura County Star's Time Out entertainment magazine. In 1998, she landed her current role as a local columnist for The Star.

Ms. Cason lives in Thousand Oaks with her husband, Mike Comeaux, a senior editor at The Star. Her hobbies include roses and reading.

At our regular meeting on Tuesday, May 8th, Ms. Cason will discuss her work as a local columnist, and tell us, among other things, how she comes up with such a remarkably wide array of subjects for her columns.

Our Own Writers Column

This month we begin a new section of this newsletter that will show off the short work of our members. So, if you have a personal essay, or a piece of short, short fiction, or perhaps even a short selection from a longer work—a vivid description of a character or a place, for example—send it to Greg Elliot at his e-mail address: MrkDurgent@aol.com. Those pieces that are selected will appear here in the newsletter. Please keep your submissions to 700 words or less, and include your name, contact information, and, if pertinent, tell us a little of the context of your piece. (Pieces may be edited for content or for space.)

This month's column features member Jody Avery-Smith.

Short Story Contest Committee Forming

Have you ever wondered how our short story contest comes about? Ever had any suggestions on how to improve it? Well, if you've ever had an interest in how the contest comes together, now is your chance to get involved. We're forming a committee that will lay out the next short story contest.

For more details, contact Bill Vietinghoff at (805) 358-7762.

From the President's Desk

If punctuation is the bane of your existence, if you can't remember when to use a colon or a semicolon, if you're just plain curious about where all those squiggly little marks came from, then you should definitely read Lynn Truss' *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*.

The title comes from a joke about a panda, which, of course, involves punctuation, and one I'll let you discover on your own. (You might guess the importance of the punctuation just from looking at the words.)

The book is fun, incisive, helpful, hardly stuffy, and very concise. My wife, when I showed it to her, couldn't understand how anyone could write 200 pages about periods, question marks and such ilk—but let it be said Ms. Truss does it and does it in a most charming way.

She informs us (but we should have known it) that without punctuation “there is no reliable way of communicating meaning,” and this she definitely proves.

She claims that her book doesn't instruct about punctuation, yet it most certainly does. However, she is quite correct when she states that her book “gives you permission to love punctuation.” It's a book that informs us about how we got the punctuation we have today and how important it can be.

We all know how one misplaced—or changed—mark can substantially alter meaning. From the Bible we have: “Comfort ye my people,” which changes quite a bit with a comma:

“Comfort ye, my people.” Remember the classic: “A woman, without her man, is nothing.” But change the punctuation and we get: “A woman: without her, man is nothing.” And that's quite a change—especially nowadays.

Confused about apostrophes? Ms. Truss will set you straight. Befuddled about colons and semicolons? She will provide humorous suggestions. Dashes? Italics? Hyphens? Help is at hand.

She does deal with aspects of subjectivity in using punctuation and how writers and editors often disagree—often almost coming to blows! She talks a great deal about contemporary trends in using those marks. I have to admit that even I disagreed with her in some of her statements, which only indicates how people can get emotional about the subject.

For a writer, however, the book is a goldmine of common sense and a great deal more fun than those high school grammar books or even *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.

So get a copy of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* and learn while you smile. You'll even discover why the great writer Umberto Eco didn't include one semicolon in his classic *The Name of the Rose*. When asked, he had to admit that the typewriter he used just didn't have that key!

Gerry Schiller



Poetry Corner	Writer's Conference
<p style="text-align: center;">Affected By Patricia Fry</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Swirling dates and hours, Life seems like a whirl. Somehow I am drawn to stop And let your words unfurl. You tell me I must work hard To publish and promote. Already life's a dizzy maze, But on your words I dote. Desire is what drives me on To publish or to die. Although it seems impossible With all my soul I'll try.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">By Beverly Needham</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Los Angeles chapter of <i>Sisters in Crime</i> announces its No Crime Unpublished Mystery Writers Conference on June 10, 2007. The morning speaker will be Rochelle Krich, SinC President and author of the Molly Blume series. Jacqueline Winspear, author of the Maisie Dobbs series, will deliver the keynote address at the luncheon banquet.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This year we move to a great new location: The Embassy Suites Hotel, 211 E. Huntington Drive in Arcadia, California; freeway close with free parking, expanded banquet facilities to host a larger number of attendees, and elegant accommodations for out-of-towners. The conference will offer three breakout rooms and a choice of twelve workshops/panels. New this year will be a Vendor Room.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The conference cost includes all panels, breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. A special price of \$125.00 is available for SinC members until May 31st, 2007. After June 1st and 'at the door,' the conference price is \$150.00. For more information visit www.sistersincri-mela.com and click on the No Crime Unpublished Conference tab.</p>

Am I Wise? Now That I'm Older . . .

I'm convinced that I'll never be "wise".

I've learned that life is all about choices. Oh how I wish I had learned that before. After a lifetime of yes, some good choices and yes some very questionable ones, life would have been so much simpler if only I had known.

I know now that the important thing is to learn from our mistakes. I only hope that sinks in by the time I'm 80.

I know now that there are many things that I knew better than to choose but did anyway, always thinking this time didn't count.

I know that family is very important, but maybe more important are friends. Without them I would be miserable because family (kids and grandkids) have their own lives and their own friends, as it should be.

I've learned that wars and arguments settle nothing.

I know that there are far more things I don't know than those I do know, and for the most part I'll never have time to learn it all.

I know that even though people age on the outside that's never how they feel, and they should never be treated or looked upon as old.

But then . . . what do I know?

Jody Avery-Smith

Newsletter of the Ventura County Writers Club

Writing workshops are free to members and for members only. Call the numbers listed for more information on meeting times, etc. The phone numbers listed are in the 805 area code unless otherwise specified. **KEY:** Ago=Agoura; Cam=Camarillo; OAK=Oak View; OJ=Ojai; Oxn=Oxnard; Simi=Simi Valley; TO=Thousand Oaks; Ven=Ventura; WLV=Westlake Village. Please call leader for location where alternating meeting place indicated.

All Genres: WLV Claudette Young 3 rd Tues 1:00 pm	Waiting List 495-8730	Fiction/Creative Non-fiction: TO Greg Elliot (818)991-0783 2 nd Tues 11:30-4:00 Opening: please call	Novels: Cam/Somis/Mpk/TO/Simi Debbie Tash 529-8108 Friday 7:00pm
All Genres: Cam Jim Vernon 2 nd Wed 1:00 pm	Waiting List 388-1891	Novels/Short Stories: TO Terri Goodwell 493-2717 4 th Wed 7:00-9:00 pm Opening: please call	Poetry: Ven/Oxn/Cam Elnora McNaughton 485-5425 Joyce LaMers 985-6336
All Genres: TO Theresa Schultz 4 th Tues 6:30-9:30 pm	Waiting List 492-6497	Novels: Ven Doug Spalding Every other Wed 12:00 pm	Non-fiction Books & Articles: Ven Andrea Bircher 642-4220 1 st & 3 rd Tues 6:30-9:30 pm Members Welcome
Children's/Romance/Memoirs: Ven/Oxn/Port Hueneme Danielle Brown 648-4165 1 st Tues 7:00-9:00 pm Members Welcome		Waiting List 658-6403	

Workshop Leaders Needed! Call Greg Elliot at (818)991-0783

Executive Board Meeting: First Monday of each month, 7 P.M. at DuPar's Restaurant, 75 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd., in Thousand Oaks. All members welcome.

Evening Meeting With Featured Speaker: Second Tuesday of each month at Borders Books, 125 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd. Exit 101 at Moorpark Rd., go north To Thousand Oaks Blvd., left to Borders. Program begins at 7:00 P.M. Members receive a 20% discount on items purchased at Borders on night of meeting from 5:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Meetings are open to public.

Writers Workshops: Specific interest groups meet one or more times a month to read and critique manuscripts and discuss the business of writing. Free to members.

Membership: If you'd like to become a member of VCWC, dues are \$45.00 the first year, with \$40.00 annual renewal. Call Cathryn Andresen for a membership package at (805) 491-3242.

Newsletter Contributions must be received before the 20th of the month to be considered for the next month's publication. Please email Danielle Brown at cdbdpb@yahoo.com. All contributions must be typewritten, double spaced. Submissions to *The Write Stuff* are accepted for one-time publication. Contributing authors receive no compensation and retain all rights. Reprinting or other use of materials appearing in this newsletter is prohibited without express permission of the author. The mention of any business or service in this newsletter does not imply an endorsement by the Ventura County Writers Club.

The following members are kind enough to volunteer their talents to our fine organization:

Gerry Schiller - President Greg Elliot - 1st Vice President
 Cathryn Andresen - 2nd Vice President
 Jody Avery Smith - Publicity Karen Gorback - Treasurer
 Tracey Semeling-Zabel - Recording Secretary &
 Newsletter mailing
 Historian - position open
 Danielle Brown - Corresponding Secretary & Editor

Check out our website:

www.venturacountywriters.com

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 Ventura, CA 93001

Deliver to: