

# THE WRITE STUFF

**SEE YOU TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 14TH**

## UPCOMING SPEAKERS

### January

#### **Stephen Lodge**

Author of  
*Nickel-Plated  
Dream*

inspired by time  
spent as a  
cowboy stuntman  
for B-Western  
movie star  
Ray "Crash"  
Corrigan

**HELP!  
Volunteers  
Needed for  
Board &  
Committee  
Positions  
Keep Your  
Club Going!  
Call**

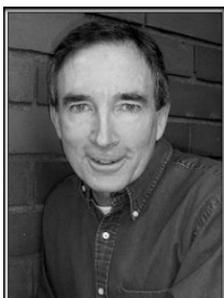
**Gerry Schiller  
805 499-8921**

### Welcome New Members

Duncan Smith  
Julie Littman  
Claire Peterson

**Note Our  
Meeting Time  
7:00 PM  
At Borders  
125 W. Thousand  
Oaks Blvd,  
Thousand Oaks**

## Our November Speaker: Ed Klodt Author of *The Jonah Factor:* *13 Spiritual Steps to Finding the Job of a Lifetime*



November's speaker will be **Ed Klodt** (last name rhymes with boat), the author of *The Jonah Factor: 13 Spiritual Steps to Finding the Job of a Lifetime*. The book tackles

the problem of Americans' growing dissatisfaction with their work, and it outlines steps that will help them realign their skills and passions with fulfilling vocations for which God uniquely created them.

Ed describes himself as having been "unhappy in my work until I, like Jonah, finally embraced God's call." A corporate communications manager at several Fortune 500 companies for almost 30 years, Ed's most recent responsibilities included those as Vice President of National Sales Campaigns for one of the top three mu-

tual fund firms in the U.S. He left the corporate world in 2004 to develop a national writing and speaking ministry aimed at helping individuals find fulfilling work, using the same steps he had developed to take the Jonah Factor leap of faith into his new endeavor.

At our meeting on November 14<sup>th</sup>, Ed will tell us how he undertook the spiritual journey that led him to find the work he believes he was called to do.

A newspaper reporter and photographer early in his career, Ed is currently a lay minister and adult education instructor at the 2,500-member Ascension Lutheran Church in Thousand Oaks, and is currently working toward a Master's Degree in Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. He lives in Thousand Oaks with his wife of 27 years, Lyn.

### Maxine's Literary Café Reading

Members of Maxine Landis' VCWC writers group invite you to join them for a reading. We will be reading excerpts from our chapbook, *Maxine's Literary Café*, which was recently featured in "The Art of the Book" show at The Artist's Union in downtown Ventura. The reading will take place at the Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, 4260 Main St, Ventura, CA on November 7th; 7 - 8:30 pm.

Have anything for the newsletter?

Contact: **Danielle Brown**  
☎ 805 648-4165 ✉ [cdbdpb@yahoo.com](mailto:cdbdpb@yahoo.com)  
Submissions Deadline: 20th of the Month

### ✕ SPECIAL NOTE ✕

**THERE WILL BE  
NO NEWSLETTER AND  
NO MEETING IN DECEMBER**

## Elmore Leonard's Ten Rules of Writing

Easy on the Adverbs Exclamation Points and Especially Hooptedoodle,  
from the *New York Times*, Writers on Writing Series.

*Being a good author is a disappearing act.*

By ELMORE LEONARD

These are rules I've picked up along the way to help me remain invisible when I'm writing a book, to help me show rather than tell what's taking place in the story. If you have a facility for language and imagery and the sound of your voice pleases you, invisibility is not what you are after, and you can skip the rules. Still, you might look them over.

1. Never open a book with weather. If it's only to create atmosphere, and not a character's reaction to the weather, you don't want to go on too long. The reader is apt to leaf ahead looking for people. There are exceptions. If you happen to be Barry Lopez, who has more ways to describe ice and snow than an Eskimo, you can do all the weather reporting you want.
2. Avoid prologues. They can be annoying, especially a prologue following an introduction that comes after a foreword. But these are ordinarily found in nonfiction. A prologue in a novel is backstory, and you can drop it in anywhere you want. There is a prologue in John Steinbeck's "Sweet Thursday," but it's O.K. because a character in the book makes the point of what my rules are all about. He says: "I like a lot of talk in a book and I don't like to have nobody tell me what the guy that's talking looks like. I want to figure out what he looks like from the way he talks. . . . figure out what the guy's thinking from what he says. I like some description but not too much of that. . . . Sometimes I want a book to break loose with a bunch of hooptedoodle. . . . Spin up some pretty words maybe or sing a little song with language. That's nice. But I wish it was set aside so I don't have to read it. I don't want hooptedoodle to get mixed up with the story."
3. Never use a verb other than "said" to carry dialogue. The line of dialogue belongs to the character; the verb is the writer sticking his nose in. But said is far less intrusive than grumbled, gasped, cautioned, lied. I once noticed Mary McCarthy ending a line of dialogue with "she asseverated," and had to stop reading to get the dictionary.
4. Never use an adverb to modify the verb "said" . . . he admonished gravely. To use an adverb this way (or almost any way) is a mortal sin. The writer is now exposing himself in earnest, using a word that distracts and can interrupt the rhythm of the exchange. I have a character in one of my books tell how she used to write historical romances "full of rape and adverbs."
5. Keep your exclamation points under control. You are allowed no more than two or three per 100,000 words of prose. If you have the knack of playing with exclamers the way Tom Wolfe does, you can throw them in by the handful.
6. Never use the words "suddenly" or "all hell broke loose." This rule doesn't require an explanation. I have noticed that writers who use "suddenly" tend to exercise less control in the application of exclamation points.
7. Use regional dialect, patois, sparingly. Once you start spelling words in dialogue phonetically and loading the page with apostrophes, you won't be able to stop. Notice the way Annie Proulx captures the flavor of Wyoming voices in her book of short stories "Close Range."
8. Avoid detailed descriptions of characters. Which Steinbeck covered. In Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" what do the "American and the girl with him" look like? "She had taken off her hat and put it on the table." That's the only reference to a physical description in the story, and yet we see the couple and know them by their tones of voice, with not one adverb in sight.
9. Don't go into great detail describing places and things. Unless you're Margaret Atwood and can paint scenes with language or write landscapes in the style of Jim Harrison. But even if you're good at it, you don't want descriptions that bring the action, the flow of the story, to a standstill.

And finally:

10. Try to leave out the part that readers tend to skip. A rule that came to mind in 1983. Think of what you skip when reading a novel: thick paragraphs of prose you can see have too many words in them. What the writer is doing, he's writing, perpetrating hooptedoodle, perhaps taking another shot at the weather, or has gone into the character's head, and the reader either knows what the guy's thinking or doesn't care. I'll bet you don't skip dialogue.

My most important rule is one that sums up the 10: If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it.

Or, if proper usage gets in the way, it may have to go. I can't allow what we learned in English composition to disrupt the sound and rhythm of the narrative. It's my attempt to remain invisible, not distract the reader from the story with obvious writing. (Joseph Conrad said something about words getting in the way of what you want to say.)

If I write in scenes and always from the point of view of a particular character—the one whose view best brings the scene to life—I'm able to concentrate on the voices of the characters telling you who they are and how they feel about what they see and what's going on, and I'm nowhere in sight.

What Steinbeck did in *Sweet Thursday* was title his chapters as an indication, though obscure, of what they cover. "Whom the Gods Love They Drive Nuts" is one, "Lousy Wednesday" another. The third chapter is titled "Hooptedoodle 1" and the 38th chapter "Hooptedoodle 2" as warnings to the reader, as if Steinbeck is saying: "Here's where you'll see me taking flights of fancy with my writing, and it won't get in the way of the story. Skip them if you want." *Sweet Thursday* came out in 1954, when I was just beginning to be published, and I've never forgotten that prologue.

Did I read the hooptedoodle chapters? Every word.

### Featured Workshop of the Month

Terri Goodwell, a veteran of several VCWC workshops, has recently begun her own group in Thousand Oaks. Her group has established its own method of working: group members exchange submissions via e-mail a week in advance of each meeting, and they come to the meetings prepared to critique each writer in turn.

Writing tips garnered from books, articles or conferences are shared as well, time permitting. Meetings are held the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month, beginning at 7:00 pm and lasting approximately two hours. Terri is currently looking for writers of both novels and short stories. If you are interested in learning more about joining this group, please call Terri at (805) 493-2717.

### Poetry Corner

Have you written a poem you would like to share?

If so, please email it to Danielle Brown at [cdbdpb@yahoo.com](mailto:cdbdpb@yahoo.com) by the 20th of the month. No epics! It must fit in a box approximately this size, or be 100 words or less. All poems will be reviewed for suitability, and printed in the order they are received.

### Anthology Still Available

If you haven't yet picked up *Out of Thin Air*, the anthology of our best short stories and poems from last year, copies are still available. The cost is \$10.00, and they can be purchased at the monthly meetings, or you can mail-order copies (buy several—they make great gifts!) by calling Bill Vietinghoff at (805)495-7865. A small shipping/handling fee will be added.

Bill is also looking for help in marketing the anthology. Any members with a background in marketing who would like to help or who can offer suggestions are invited to call Bill at the above number.

### Wanted: Readers, Writers and Planners for the Club's Anthology Committee

We will have our first meeting in January to discuss the publication of our next anthology, which will include the work of the winners of our poetry and short-story contests AND lots more great writing from our members. Contents, production, finances and marketing possibilities will be explored. If you would like to learn more about it and/or help in the project, please call Cathryn Andresen, Committee Chair, at (805) 491-3242.

## 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.

<b>All Genres: WLV</b> Claudette Young 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues 1:00 pm	<b>Waiting List</b> 495-8730	<b>Fiction/Creative Non-fiction: TO</b> Greg Elliot 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tues 11:30-4:00 Opening: please call	<b>Novels: Ven</b> Doug Spalding Every other Wed 12:00 pm	<b>Waiting List</b> 658-6403
<b>All Genres: Cam</b> Jim Vernon 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed 1:00 pm	<b>Waiting List</b> 388-1891	<b>Fiction: Ven/Oxn/Cam</b> Lynne Moore 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed 7:30 pm	<b>Novels: Cam/Somis/Mpk/TO/Simi</b> Debbie Tash Friday 7:00pm	529-8108
<b>All Genres: TO</b> Theresa Schultz 4 <sup>th</sup> Tues 6:30-9:30 pm	<b>Waiting List</b> 492-6497	<b>Novels: Ven/Oxn</b> Esther Cole Every Tues 7:00 pm New Members Welcome	<b>Poetry: Ven/Oxn/Cam</b> Elnora McNaughton Joyce LaMers	485-5425 985-6336
<b>Childrens/Romance/Memoirs: Ven/Oxn/Port Hueneme</b> Danielle Brown 1 <sup>st</sup> Tues 7:00-9:00 pm New Members Welcome	648-4165	<b>Novels/Short Stories: TO</b> Terri Goodwell 4 <sup>th</sup> Wed 7:00-9:00 pm Opening: please call	<b>Non-fiction Books &amp; Articles: Ven</b> Andrea Bircher 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues 6:30-9:30 pm New Members Welcome	642-4220
			<b>Copy Editing/Proof Reading: Ven</b> Sue Newton Flexible meeting time	649-8148

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

**Executive Board Meeting:** First Monday of each month, 7 P.M. at Borders 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 - 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Cathryn Andresen - 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Jody Avery Smith - Corresponding Secretary  
Tracey Semeling-Zabel - Recording Secretary & Newsletter mailing  
Karen Gorback - Treasurer  
Historian - position open  
Danielle Brown - Newsletter Editor  
Katinka Baltazar - Newsletter Layout Editor

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Deliver to: