

V E N T U R A C O U N T Y

IT'S T A R

Partly sunny

High of 74 at
the coast, 89
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Thursday, July 24, 2008

Ventura
Edition

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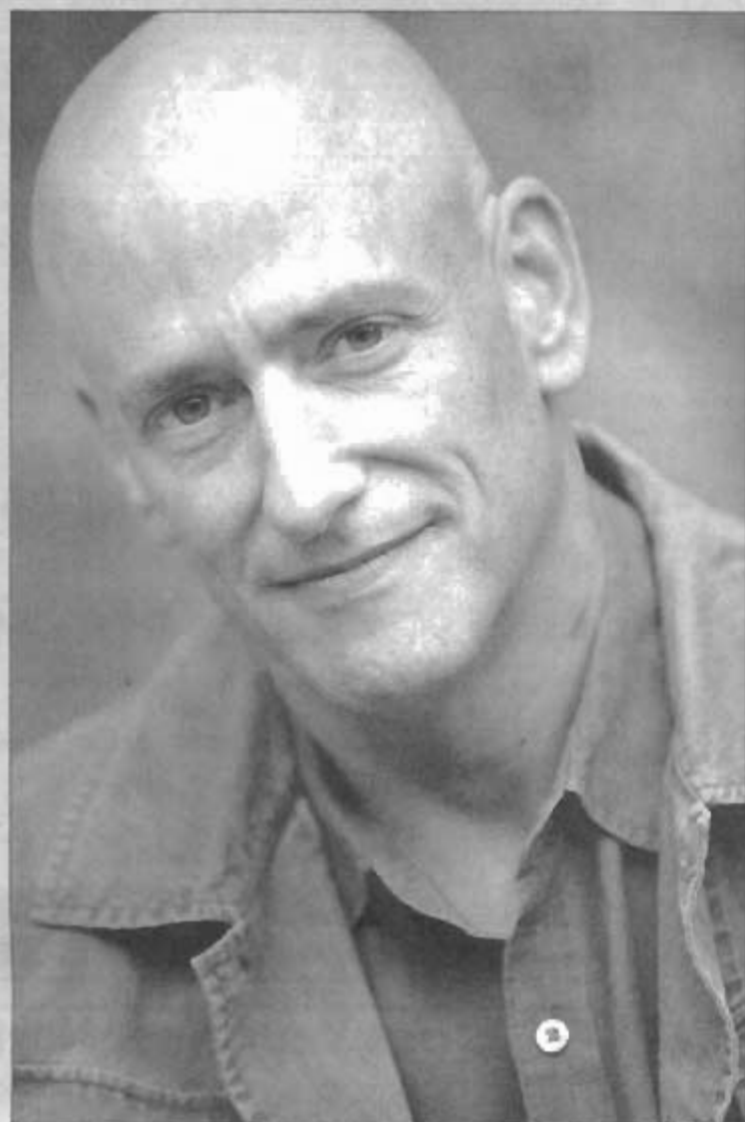
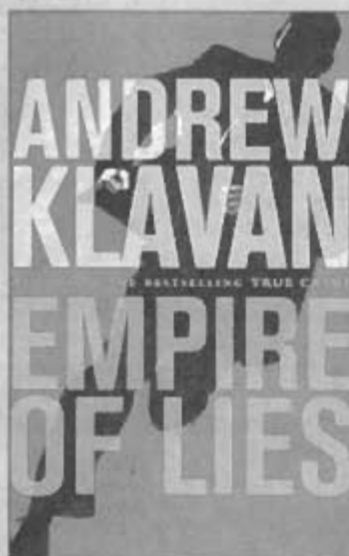
Community Focus: Get involved

Monday
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Says festival participant author Andrew Klavan: "You step out of your door and there are all these brilliant and talented authors waiting to entertain you virtually on your front lawn."



Courtesy photo

Author Mara Purl, who serves on the advisory board of the California Literary Arts Society, will discuss the differences between men's and women's fiction with Andrew Klavan.

Festival a celebration of books

Popular event includes writing seminars, story time, signings

By Alicia Doyle

Correspondent

Though Ventura County has hosted book festivals for certain genres over the years, Mary Embree noticed a lack of large-scale festivals for books of all kinds.

"I believed there should be and hoped to find some organization that would produce it," recalled Embree of Ventura. "Since that didn't happen, I produced the first one in my church, which had a large facility and a congregation that would help with the production."

Unexpectedly, the event was so popular, Embree and fellow church member Tom Berg formed a nonprofit organization to produce yearly book festivals with proceeds designated toward children's reading and writing programs, adult writing workshops and other events that supported the group's mission: "to promote the art of writing, the joy of reading, and the value of the written word."

Such is the goal of the third annual Ventura Book Festival, presented by the California Literary Arts Society from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday at Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach Hotel.

As in previous years, entrance to the festival and admission to programs are free and open to the public.

The family event will include a story time for children, with rhyming storybooks read by professional actors. Other events include writing seminars, readings, book signings and a discussion of women's fiction vs. men's fiction by award-winning authors.

'Focus is on the family'

"What is unique about the Ventura Book Festival is the fact that the focus is on the family," said Embree, founder and executive director of the California Literary Arts Society.

A published author, book editor and literary consultant, Embree will conduct a seminar titled "The Seven Secrets of Successful Authors."

"Most book festivals draw adults and very few children because there isn't much at the event to interest children," she said. "But if children are exposed to a celebration of books at an early age, they are more likely to see the value of them. They will probably be lifelong book lovers."

The important thing about an event like this is that it's local, said Andrew Klavan of Santa Barbara, author of "Empire of Lies," who will discuss the differences between men's and women's fiction with author Mara Purl of Los Angeles.

"You don't have to go to L.A., you don't have to go to San Francisco. You step out of your door, and there are all these brilliant

Event details

The third annual Ventura Book Festival will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach Hotel, at 450 E. Harbor Blvd. Entrance to the festival is free to the public.

Previous festivals have featured up to 50 exhibitors and attracted hundreds of visitors. Exhibitors include book sellers, authors, publishers, library groups, book clubs, nonprofit organizations and vendors.

The festival includes hourly seminars (see below), as well as panels, readings and book signings by authors. Also scheduled are hourly drawings for prizes, from gift certificates and gift baskets to books and artwork. Festival-goers can purchase raffle tickets as they enter.

For more information, call 643-3385 or e-mail marye@literaryarts-ca.org.

Book festival seminars

10 to 11 a.m.: Writing for the Ghost Market. Author Richard Senate, Ventura's resident historian and ghost expert over the past 22 years, will talk about the many problems linked

and talented authors waiting to entertain you virtually on your front lawn," Klavan said.

"I think it's great Ventura is doing this," he said. "You can't just allow the space between San Francisco and L.A. to become a cultural wasteland. The more smaller cities sponsor cultural events, the more the culture deepens and grows."

Behind every great book is a writer, and attendees will have a chance to hear authors speak, ask them questions and hear some of their secrets, Purl said.

"I am especially looking forward to the two-person talk I'll be doing with Andrew Klavan," said Purl, author of the Milford-Haven Novels series, who will discuss "Child Secrets," book three in the series, which delves into the background and childhoods of her characters, showing how childhood experiences imprint people's lives and influence adult behavior.

"Both of us write fiction; both of our works have been presented in other media — mine in radio, his in film," continued Purl, who serves on the advisory board of the California Literary Arts Society.

"I've discovered I'm actually writing women's fiction. What's that? I'll share that secret at the event. We approached Andrew to speak about men's fiction. Is there such a thing? That's what we'll debate. ... It's going to be argumentative, inspiring, intriguing."

The California Literary Arts Society conducts writing groups and publishes the stories in a paperback book that is sold at the book festival and other venues to help

to writing about the paranormal.

11 a.m. to noon: Women's Fiction vs. Men's Fiction. Award-winning authors Mara Purl and Andrew Klavan will speak briefly, then stir the pot, adding audience comments and questions.

Noon to 1 p.m.: Children's Hour: from Mother Goose to Dr. Seuss.

Actors/storytellers/grandparents Raymond and Marshelline Purl will read selected rhymes and rhyming books to children of all ages.

1 to 2 p.m.: The Seven Secrets of Successful Authors. The seven-part writer's workshop given by author/editor Mary Embree is condensed into an overview of the process of writing a book from first draft to publication.

2 to 3 p.m.: Rumi: Soaring to Ecstasy. These selected readings celebrate Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), one of humanity's most passionate and exalted mystic poets. This presentation is in collaboration with the Rubicon International Theatre Festival.

3 to 4 p.m.: The Way of Story: the Craft and Soul of Writing. Award-winning writer Catherine Ann Jones presents an integrative approach to writing narrative, illustrated with insights from the author's own professional journey.

fund more children's programs, Embree said.

"Children who become authors at an early age are also more likely to enjoy writing, and this can enhance their lives in many ways, most certainly academically," she said. "The goal is to promote books and reading, to help raise funds for children's writing programs, and to bring the book-loving community together."

'Writing a grossly neglected art'

Less than 4 percent of public funding for the arts goes to literary arts organizations, Embree noted.

"Writing is a grossly neglected art in the U.S.," she said. "Books are underappreciated, and reading is on the decline. With the distractions of television and the Internet, fewer people are reading books."

Reading also enhances creativity — an important asset for all ages, Embree added.

Purl added that, while some may be tempted to take books for granted, they should remember that books are doors that open into different worlds.

"I fervently want attendees to come to the festival as though they were Indiana Jones on a quest for treasure; let the festival ignite a spark of curiosity and adventure," she said. "Also there's the practical angle: You can do your holiday shopping way in advance, get signed copies and great deals at the book festival."

For more information, call 643-3385 or visit <http://www.literaryarts-ca.org>.