

Manzanita Writers Press

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Workshop Speaker: Scott Thomas Anderson

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### **Muckraking for Gold: A workshop and journalism crash course for writers of all genres**

When asked about his secret to unmasking the real life skeletons behind “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil,” John Berendt said, “The secret is not to make an interview seem like an interview to the people you’re interviewing: You want them to tell you something, so you have to tell them something and amuse them – it has to be a conversation, and then out comes everything you wanted to know.”

Berendt started his career as a reporter for *Esquire* and *New York Magazine*. Later, arriving in the alien landscape of Savannah, Georgia, the journalist immediately set to using the craftier techniques in his tool kit to prompt strangers to confide the city’s hidden quarks and inner demons to him – ultimately consigning those tales to the pool of his writing material. The result was “Midnight,” a pinnacle of creative nonfiction that spent a record-breaking 216 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. But Berendt is hardly the first author to channel journalistic prowess into a successful book. In the United States, the tradition goes back at least to a young Samuel Clemens spinning his interviews from *The Virginia City Enterprise* and *The Sacramento Union* into his groundbreaking travelogue, “Roughing It.” Modern examples range from David Simon using his skills from *The Baltimore Sun* to create his celebrated crime tome “Homicide,” to Christopher Hitchens relying on his experiences writing for *The Nation* and *Vanity Fair* to put the punch in his critically acclaimed memoir, “Hitch 22.”

Journalism’s legacy in fiction is equally impressive: Stephen Crane, George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn, Truman Capote, Joan Didion and Gabriel Garcia Marquez all started in – and frequently returned to – the world of newspaper writing. The clear narrative thinking, careful attention to detail and subtle awareness of history that lives within the fiction of such giants is directly connected to their training in journalism.

On May 23, award-winning journalist Scott Thomas Anderson will teach writers how to bring a professional reporter’s arsenal of interview and research techniques to broader genres, including memoirs, histories, creative nonfiction and hyper-realistic fiction. The workshop will be held at the Calaveras County Arts Council Gallery at 22 Main Street in San Andreas, California. The venue is on San Andreas’s historic avenue, at the center of the rolling hills Mark Twain made famous in “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” Tuition for the workshop, which runs from 10 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. with a break for lunch, is \$35 and includes a copy of Anderson’s newly released book of literary journalism, “The Cutting Four-piece: crime and tragedy in an era of prison overcrowding.” For information or registration, contact [mrosemanza@jps.net](mailto:mrosemanza@jps.net).

**About the speaker:** Scott Thomas Anderson is a California journalist who’s currently the Chief Editor of *The Roseville Press Tribune*, *Rocklin’s Placer Herald* and *The Granite Bay View*. He has written for publications such as *The Sacramento News & Review* and *Sierra Lodestar magazine*, and he’s also worked as a foreign correspondent for Radio Kerry in Ireland, and been published in

The *Irish Independent*, Dublin's largest daily newspaper. He is the winner of four California state journalism awards and a national journalism fellowship. His first nonfiction book, "Shadow People: how meth-driven crime is eating at the heart of rural America" was published nationally in 2012.