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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Freelance Writing. What a gig!

The Southwest Festival of the Written Word, September 27-29 in downtown Silver City NM, is *the* place to learn about the agonies and ecstasies of writing in just about any literary genre.

On September 29th, Jim Kelly, Ron Hamm, and Elan Head will discuss their writing lives and experiences at the Festival panel, "Winging it or swinging it: How to survive as a freelancer".

Jeannie Miller, publicity chair for the Festival, sat down with Kelly and Hamm and everybody's dogs for coffee and conversation about freelance writing.

Ron Hamm's day jobs over the years included print journalism, teaching English, and higher education academic administration. His freelance writing career began in his college days when he worked for the newswire services and local newspapers in Florida. Undeterred by his full-time jobs, he continued freelancing because, he says, "...I enjoy the feeling of achievement and (truth to tell) the kick of seeing my name in print."

Hamm's many articles include *Robert C. Martin: "Rancher a jack of all trades in Gila Country."* New Mexico Magazine August 2006, and *An Old Dog Learns New Tricks: How Lightweight Technology Keeps Me on the Trail at 70,* for BackpackingLight (ISSN 1537-0364). He's written for Mature Life in New Mexico and his Interview with Tony Hillerman appeared in Clues: A Journal of Detection, Vol. 21.2, Fall/Winter 2000.

Recently, Ron turned to writing books rather than articles; he considers it to be more of a challenge. His first book, *The Bursums of New Mexico: Four Generations of Leadership and Service*, published by Manzanares Avenue Publishing in Socorro NM, was the result of a request he received to write it based on several of his published freelance articles. His *New Mexico Territorial Era Caricatures* will be published in



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late Fall by Sunstone Press.

Hamm's current project is a biography of Ross Calvin who was the Rector of the Good Shepherd Church in Silver City. He is seeking help in locating copies of any documents that Calvin produced such as manuscripts, poetry, or sermons in order to be able to produce a robust telling of Calvin's story.

When Miller asked him to summarize his thoughts on freelancing as a career, Hamm replied, "Get a day job. Keep your day job-or some day job--and keep writing."

Jim Kelly's freelance career was ignited when he was recruited by his college president to write the greeting for the football season's opening game; it's been burning brightly ever since. As he writes in his Festival bio, "While regular work as a newspaper reporter, actor and teacher fed the family, freelance writing fed (my) voracious interests in subjects ranging from astronomy to xylophones."

In the '60s, Kelly was in the Bay area where he got fired from his writing job for an ultra-conservative Bay area newspaper because of his less-than-conservative sense of humor. Not one to let that stop him, he went on to write jokes for TV sitcoms and scripts for soap opera "moments". "In fact," he told Miller, "while still in high school, I got my first paid freelance gig when I wrote a joke and sold it to Sid Caesar for seven dollars."

Jim has written jokes for stand-up comedians other than Sid Caesar, features for major magazines, speeches for assorted bigwigs, radio and print product ad campaigns, and has contributed bits and pieces to a wide range of publications. As he puts it, "My work has been both praised and rejected by some of the best in the writing business."

Kelly is a connoisseur of Broadway musicals and many things theatrical. He practices what he preaches, which is that a freelance writer should "get interested in all sorts of things. Try lots of stuff. Write about it."

Miller asked him for his opinion of freelance writing as a career. After some thought, he answered in a serious tone, "Freelancing is a good niche for writers with ADHD, of which I am one. I don't have the attention span to write a book." He also recommended, again quite seriously, that there are times when you should put some



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of your failed jobs on your resume because it can open a conversation and often get you the job you're looking for. It worked for him.

The Southwest Festival of the Written Word happens September 27-29 in downtown Silver City NM. Fifty-four writers and publishing professionals offer insights into the writing life. All sessions are free and open to the public except for the Ana Castillo Memoir Workshop and the Festival Banquet with Denise Chavez as keynote speaker. Visit www.swordfiesta.org for full schedule information and for information on costs of the Memoir Workshop and Festival Banquet.