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## **Writers Digest Awards Bay Area Author Top Prize**



Mill Valley resident, author of *Kingdom of Simplicity* and founder of Skywriter Books Holly Payne wins Grand Prize for the 19th Annual Writer's Digest Self Published Books Awards for her novel written as a response to a letter from a drunk driver who struck and her and left her unable to walk for a year

Payne—chosen from 2,280 entrants over the course of three rounds by 50 judges—to be flown to New York in January to receive award as well as featured in March/April issue of *Writer's Digest*

**Nov. 7, 2011, San Francisco** -- Writers Digest magazine announced that Holly Payne's novel, *Kingdom of Simplicity*, won the grand prize for the 19th Annual Writers Digest Self-Published Book Awards. The author's novel, *Kingdom of Simplicity*, was chosen from 2,280 entrants and went through three rounds of judging and 50 judges. This is the 19th annual Writers Digest Self-Published Book Awards and Payne joins a list of recipients that represent excellence in independent publishing, including 2011: Weldon Long, *The Upside of Fear: How One Man Broke the Cycle of Prison, Poverty and Addiction*, 2010: Daryl Pinksen, *Marlowe's Ghost: The Blacklisting of the Man Who Was Shakespeare*, and 2009: Amelia Saltsman, *The Santa Monica Farmers' Market Cookbook*.

Initiated in 1992, The Writers Digest Self-Published Book Awards is given for achievement in independent publishing and in recognition of self-published books that meet the highest standards of the publishing industry—and embody the entrepreneurial spirit of authors who launched their writing careers through self-publishing. Many works now considered classics were originally self-published including the original writings of William Blake, Virginia Woolf, Walt Whitman, William Morris and James Joyce.

Notable modern best-sellers that were originally self-published include *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles, *Chicken Soup for*

*the Soul*, by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, *The Christmas Box*, by Richard Paul Evans, *Spartacus*, by Howard Fast, *In Search of Excellence* by Tom Peters, *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield and *The Joy of Cooking* by Irma S. Rombauer to name a few.

"Payne's book stood out among the competition because of its compelling characters," said one of the judges, Melissa Wuske, former Associate Editor, *Writer's Digest Books* and *Writer's Digest Magazine*. "Readers are drawn into an impeccably researched Amish community where they learn what true loss and true forgiveness really mean. Payne draws on the power of loss and forgiveness in her own life to create a powerful narrative for readers. She is truly deserving of the honor that comes with this award."

Payne's own story of forgiveness is inspired by the young man who wrote her a letter six months after striking her and two other young men with his truck on a mountain road in Colorado, leaving her unable to walk for nearly a year and one of the young men in critical condition. It took Payne fifteen years to respond to the driver's letter asking for forgiveness—but she eventually answered directly in a letter she wrote after the book was finished.

"I knew I had to release this book on the 15th anniversary of the accident," Payne said of her decision to self-publish. "It was a timing issue. My gut kept telling me I had to have it available by June 6, 2009, and a month later, I found out I was pregnant—so my gut was right."

### **About the Grand Prize**

Payne will receive \$3,000 cash and a trip to the *Writer's Digest Conference* in New York City, January 20-22, 2012. The author and her book will be featured in the March/April issue of *Writers Digest* magazine with a circulation of 110,000 subscribers.

Additionally, the editors of *Writer's Digest* will endorse and submit 10 copies of *Kingdom of Simplicity* to major review houses. *Brian Jud & Book Marketing Works, LLC* will provide a one-year membership in *Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)*, guaranteed acceptance in a special-sales catalog giving Payne's novel national representation through 1800 salespeople selling to non-bookstore markets, guaranteed acceptance by *Atlas Books*, a top distributor to wholesalers, chains, independents, and online retailers, six hours of book shepherding from *Poynter Book Shepherd Ellen Reid* and a guaranteed review in *Midwest Book Review*. She will also receive promotion on the *Writer's Digest* web site, a copy of *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing, 4th Edition* by Tom and Marilyn Ross, \$100 worth of *Writer's Digest Books* and a *Notable Award Certificate*.

There is One Grand Prize Winner, 10 First-Place Winners, and Honorable Mentions for mainstream/literary fiction, genre fiction, nonfiction, inspiration (spiritual, new age), children's/picture books, middle-grade/young adult books/reference books and poetry. The competition is open to all English-language self-published books for which the authors have paid the full cost of publication, or the cost of printing has been paid for by a grant or as part of a prize. All books published or revised and reprinted between 2006 and 2011 were eligible for the 19th Annual *Writers International Self-Published Digest Book Awards*.

### **About Kingdom of Simplicity**

Based on a true story and inspired by the Amish practice of forgiveness, *Kingdom of Simplicity* invites readers into the life of Eli Yoder, a misguided Amish youth in *rumspringa* faced with forgiving the person who destroys his family.

"*Kingdom of Simplicity* tells a story about scars, literal and metaphoric," says acclaimed novelist Joyce Maynard. "Like the culture of the Amish she has chosen to explore, Holly Payne tells a gripping story with quiet grace, economy and contained (but never absent) emotion. It's a gem."

Payne is a native of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where the second largest community of Amish people live next to Holmes County, Ohio. While writing the book, Payne witnessed the Amish practice of forgiveness during the tragic Nickel Mine School Shooting, in which ten Amish girls were shot in a one-room school house, five of which died, along with the shooter who killed himself the same day Oct. 2, 2006. It was the first premeditated act of violence against the Amish since they arrived in North America nearly two hundred years ago.

Fred Luskin, Director of Stanford Forgiveness Projects and author of *Forgive For Good*, said of Payne's book, "Holly Payne has graced us with a guide to forgiveness through the mechanism of an enjoyable and well-written story. Rich characters and compelling insights allow us to understand and hopefully use the peace her protagonist struggles to find."

"It wasn't enough for me to write the book," Payne says. "I had to complete the process. The driver asked for my forgiveness, and while I dedicated the book in part to him, I had to face the final step by actually writing him a letter, which I did in 2009. This time, it was me who asked for his forgiveness for waiting to do something that would have helped us move on years ago. But I didn't know how important forgiveness was then. I was too young and too angry."

### **About Holly Payne**

Holly Payne is an internationally published novelist, screenwriter and writing coaching living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her most recent novel, *Kingdom of Simplicity*, based on a true story of forgiveness, won the Benjamin Franklin Award for Best First Book from a new press, received a Marin Arts Council Grant and was recently translated into Dutch (Callenbach, The Netherlands) and will soon be published in Chinese (Spring Publishers, Taiwan).

Payne is also the author of *The Sound of Blue* (Dutton/Plume), inspired by a Serbian refugee she met and befriended while teaching English in Hungary, and *The Virgin's Knot* (Dutton/Plume), her debut novel published in nine countries and selected as a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers book and a Border's Original Voices book. Payne is the founder of Skywriter Books, a publishing consultancy and independent press and Skywriter Ranch, an annual writing retreat held in the heart of the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

She received a MFA from University of Southern California and has served on the faculty of the Academy of Art University, California College of the Arts and Stanford. In 2009, University of Richmond honored Payne with a Distinguished Alumni Award. Her forthcoming novel is a medieval, mystical coming-of-age story about an orphaned girl on a quest to find her true home.

Payne has a young daughter and lives in Mill Valley with her husband, Daniel Weaver, principal architect for 361 Architecture and Design Collaborative.

### **About Writers Digest**

For more than 90 years, the experts at Writer's Digest have been publishing books, magazines, competitions, conferences and distance education materials for writers who want to polish their skills and hone their craft. Their charter publication Writer's Digest literally "wrote the book" on writing and getting published. Since 1920, Writer's Digest has chronicled the culture of the modern writer and continues this great tradition through relevant first-person essays, interviews with bestselling authors and profiles with emerging talent. Writer's Digest also features practical technique articles, and tips and exercises on fiction, nonfiction, poetry and the business-side of writing and publishing. Their website [WritersDigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com/) is the one-stop shop for information, resources and writing community. Writers can connect with other writers on their forum, visit their blogs and sign up for a free weekly e-newsletter. They'll also find weekly writing prompts, contests and competitions, conference listings, and online exclusive articles. <http://www.writersdigest.com/>

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