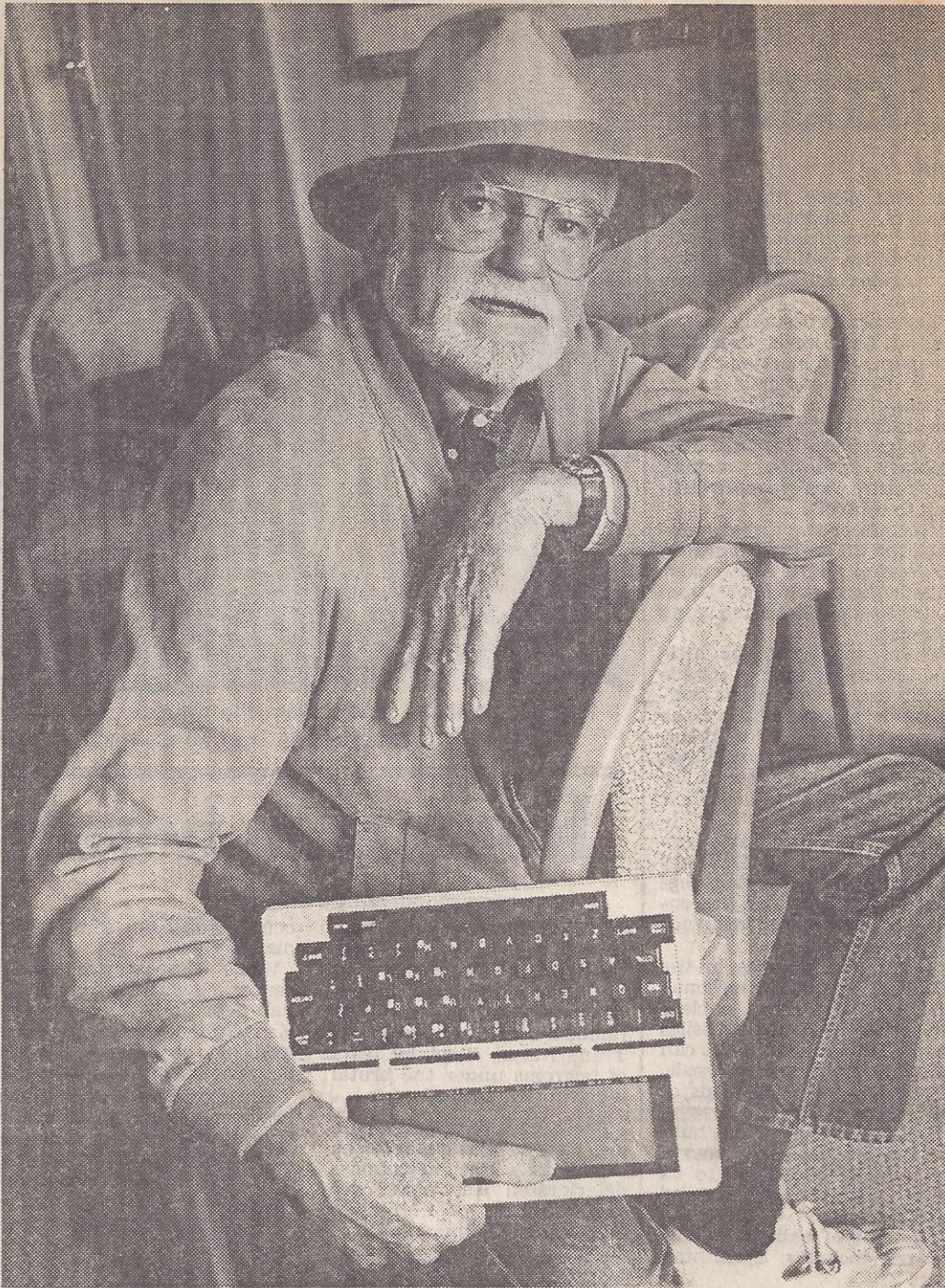


# Cool Hand Frank's secret



Screenwriter Frank Pierson in Sydney yesterday — Picture: SIMON BULLARD

By BERWYN LEWIS

**HOLLYWOOD** screenwriter Frank Pierson carries his word processor like a six-shooter. His keyboard — a handy weapon in the hands of the Oscar-winning writer of the screenplay of *Dog Day Afternoon* and the invisible hand behind *Cool Hand Luke* and *Cat Ballou*, as well as television series such as *Naked City*, *Route 66* and *Dr Kildare* — will be in big demand as he conducts writers' seminars at the Australian Film Television and Radio School in Sydney.

He and other international experts will be passing on secrets about how to write for film, television, radio and comedy. The seminars will run until the end of August and are open to the public.

Pierson, a former combat infantryman in the US Army in the Pacific and journalist for *Time* and *Life* magazines, says he is happy to pass on trade secrets, tricks and professional "lies". Disgusted by "corporate journalism", he says he "arranged to get fired". That was 30 years ago, ever since he has been making use of his life experiences as a scriptwriter. Pierson will be talking about a secret he lives by, "a system of writing that works for me".

"Writers drive everyone around them crazy because all they talk about is what time do you start? Do you drink a lot of coffee? Do you write by hand or word processor?"

"Everybody basically has one story they tell." So what is Frank Pierson's "one" story?

"I seem to write about outsiders who are in trouble with a society one way or another. *Cool Hand Luke's* secret was not caring about whether he's in jail or not. Either way he's free." And "either way" *Cool Hand Frank* goes on making up some very lucrative "lies".

Among the international visitors conducting seminars are Hollywood script rewriter Linda Seger; Alan Plater of *Z-Cars*, *The Virgin* and the *Gypsy* and *The Beiderbecke Tapes*, who will be the AFTRS writer-in-residence for three months; and award-winner Mary O'Malley. And from the local scene there is dramatist David Williamson; Geoffrey Atherden, creator of *Mother and Son*; Sue Ingleton, best known for her comic work, *Australia You're Standing In It*; Kit Denton; Tony Morphett and others.