



WRITERSTALK

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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

APRIL SPEAKERS: A PANEL FROM SOUTH BAY WRITERS

The straight scoop— publishing stories we can trust

by Dave LaRoche

Trust provides confidence in the integrity and honesty of the message. We want it in our personal and professional relationships and in our transactions with the rest of our world. We eschew a slippery “bill of goods;” we want the straight scoop and we want it related to publishing.

Over the past several months, professionals have talked to us about preparing our manuscripts and publishing. We’ve heard about promotion: platform, networking and publicity. We’ve also surfed the web for appropriate opportunities. We find purveyors of services we need by the dozens, each offering big satisfaction and wanting money up front. Yet, which will we trust? There are stories that question this industry’s integrity.

Most of us live frugal lives. We don’t spend foolishly and tend to conserve—will not abide a careless loss or an empty promise. When facing the costs and the services we might employ, which shall we choose? Offers abound, and, while we may know something of our need, we know little of the companies offering. It can be a paralyzing conundrum; still, we want to publish and sell our books. What path to take? Who do we trust? Where is the straight scoop?

I have been in this game for several years, and yet have heard few trusted specifics about the economy of writing and publishing books. How much should I pay an editor for copy, for line, for content? How much does a publicist make and is it a function I need? What does it cost to print a book and what about distribution? How do I self-publish and sell, and what is my net? We all have these questions.

On April 13, we will hear the truth from seven published authors we know. They are not selling a thing; they are ours—members of our Club, South Bay Writers. Bob Balmanno, Dave Breithaupt, Hi-Dong Chai, Valerie Frankel, Marjorie Johnson, Victoria M. Johnson, and Helen Vanderberg will tell us their stories of publishing, promoting and sales. They will relate their experience from a business perspective: what they did, what it cost, and their returns. They will be honest and frank and we will become enlightened. Join me and the panelists on April 13 for the straight scoop related to publishing. —WT

The Straight Scoop Panel: South Bay Writers April 13



L to R: Bob Balmanno, Dave Breithaupt, Hi-Dong Chai, Valerie Frankel, Marjorie Johnson, Victoria M. Johnson, Helen Vanderberg

RECAP: MARCH SPEAKER, JILL LUBLIN

Build momentum

by Linda M. Judd

Our guest speaker on March 9th was the energetic and jubilant Jill Lublin, a strategist and confident speaker on the topics of publicity and networking. She presented a refreshing point of view about networking and promoting ourselves, while we are writing and promoting our books.



Jill Lublin

Jill sees every book as a message and each writer as an expert on his message. The “first value of a book is content,” the source of our sound bites for publicity and promotions leading to the sale of our books.

Jill mentioned, “It takes a village to write a book, and multiple villages to sell it.” That’s a lot of people.

Underlying Jill’s talk are the elements of building the momentum that gets writers and their messages widely known and compels readers to buy their books.

“Your publicity starts now.” Jill said, “Be effective in getting your story out, networked and sold.”

She introduced the idea of carrying around a “Fake Book” to use to introduce your upcoming book. It certainly is an ice-breaker, and great for an e-book.

Continued on Page 6

President's Palaver

by Colin Seymour
President, South Bay Writers

The *Chronicle* or the *Merc*? Well, both



My experiences working for the *San Jose Mercury News* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* lo these many years are not comparable, although the two newspapers themselves certainly are.

I worked 23 years at the *Merc*, full-time the first 15. A copy editor primarily, I wrote countless headlines, worked ceaselessly with reporters, assembled thousands of wire stories worthy of my byline with considerable freedom to be imaginative, and wrote about a thousand stories indeed bearing my *Mercury News* byline.

Since late 2011, I have worked four fall-winter terms at the *Chronicle* comprising about 250 editing shifts, with all of three bylines.

However, the *WritersTalk* editors have asked me to discuss the Bay Area portion of my journalism career, implying hope for comparisons, so here goes.

It took a couple of years in the early 1980s to get the *Merc* to hire me from afar, but I was destined to end up at Knight-Ridder's Bay Area newspaper from the time I entered the University of Missouri's prominent journalism school in the 1970s. Knight's chain was the happening thing in our business, with Pulitzer prizes galore. And we Missouri grads were well-connected.

About the time I graduated, Knight merged with San Jose's *Ridders*, and the *Merc* brought in a lot of talented people to become one of the world's most admired newspapers, give or take a lapse or two. I'm from the West Coast, so I was likely to end up here. I turned 30, though, before I arrived in San Jose from the *Dallas Morning News*, which was even more a 1980s up-and-comer than the *Merc*.

But Silicon Valley was the place to be. Thus the *Mercury News* had the top talent pool in Knight-Ridder (although those with *Miami Herald* backgrounds were overly worshipped), as well as the most productive advertising sales. A lot of us were bound to be disappointed by where we stood in that talent pool. Copy editors were pigeonholed because we're hard to replace, so we were particularly likely to be short-changed in the long run. That short-changing was even worse for copy editors in the sports department, where I worked from 1983 to 1998. It turned out the higher-ups had no idea how well-regarded I was in the trenches.

It didn't help that our newsroom was known through the corporation as "the snake pit of Knight-Ridder."

As for this century, I truly enjoyed my nine years on the features desk, having a significant effect on the tone of the Silicon Valley Life sections despite working only three days a week. I finally had evenings and weekends off, and the ever-thinner staffing helped me gain my niche as a frequent theater and classical music critic for about 10 years, well beyond my copy editing tenure.

The *Chronicle* sought me out in 2011, and the mutual limitations to which the *Chronicle* and I have agreed make me a more docile employee. I don't care where I stand in the pecking order, and I don't mind the preponderance of sports department work. My work at the *Chronicle* has been less brilliant but no less professional than my more frenetic past. I interact with reporters daily, and I seem to fit in with the patrician ambience.

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WritersTalk

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Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. Please prepare your work as carefully as you would for an agent. All submissions will be copyedited to uphold our publication standards. The Managing Editor decides which submissions to publish.

Submission deadline is the 15th of the month.

Suggested word limits are not absolute; query the editor. Shorter submissions are given preference. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com. Send graphics separately as jpg files.

Anything Goes—Almost (300 words)

News Items (400 words)

Letters to the Editor (300 words)
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Creative Works

Short Fiction (1500 words)
Memoir (1200 words)
Poetry (300 words)
Essay (900 words)

Member Achievement and News: newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Announcements and Advertisements
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson
Managing Editor



True blue: poetry's real deal

To me, poetry is color. I know, I know: I'm supposed to hear the beauty of the words, feel their rhythm, experience emotion. I do, eventually, but for me, first and foremost is color. I should have called this piece, "Color: Poetry's Real Deal," but in the small space available, I decided to focus only on blue.

Blue, said to be the favorite color of all people, is nature's color for water and sky, but is rarely found in fruits and vegetables. Egyptians favored the blue of lapis lazuli; the Maya, indigo from the añil plant. The Maya used the same word for green and for blue and placed blue-green at the center of their Cosmos.

We embrace blue as the color of heaven and authority, denim jeans and corporate logos; blue is cold, wet, and slow as compared to red's warmth, fire, and intensity.

Blue's complex meanings make it, after red, the color of poetry. Dark blue denotes trust, dignity, and authority; bright blue, cleanliness, strength, and dependability; and sky blue, peace and serenity, logic and infinity. On the other hand, blue has evolved as a symbol of depression in American culture. — WT

Blue, blue
Without you
My life is blue

Ultramarine, phthalo blue
Azure, cobalt, cornflower blue
Periwinkle, lapis, Egyptian blue
Turquoise, indigo, Mayan blue
Midnight, navy, royal blue

My life is blue
Without you
Blue, blue

— Marjorie Johnson

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New Members

by Sally A. Milnor

I am happy to introduce our three newest members. We wish you a warm welcome and hope your membership brings you inspiration and enjoyment.



Luisa Balestrieri joined us at our March meeting at Harry's Hofbrau. Luisa is interested in writing non-fiction books.

Jac Fitz-enz: Dr. Jac, as he is known worldwide, is acknowledged as the father of human capital strategic analysis and measurement; he developed the first HR quantitative reporting system in 1978. He has published 13 books and over 400 articles on measurement, analytic and strategic HR management. Two of his books, *Human Value Management* (1991) and *The ROI of Human Capital* (2001), were given the Book of the Year Award by the Society of Human Resources Management. Dr. Fitz-enz has a B.A. in political science from the University of Notre Dame, an M.A. in organizational psychology from San Francisco State, and a Ph.D. in organizational communications from the University of Southern California. In 2014, he published his first novel, *Rough Waters by Dr. Jac: The life of a naval intelligence officer*. The sequel, *Grace Under Fire*, is ready to go to the editor.

David Zeltzer – writes poetry. He has been writing poems since grade school. On his membership questionnaire, David says: "I have to build things with words. I've published nearly two dozen poems in small press journals over the years, won a poetry prize from *Echo Magazine* in Canada; and while I was living in Eugene, Oregon, I co-founded and was on the editorial collective that published *10 Point 5: A Magazine of the Arts*. I just e-published *Realtime Babies* as my digital chapbook, available for pre-order on Apple iBooks, smashwords.com and Barnes and Noble. It goes on sale starting May 20." After earning a Ph.D. in computer science, David was a professor at the MIT Media Laboratory. He has worked in industry and academia for nearly thirty years, designing and implementing human computer interfaces. In addition to writing, David loves music, hiking, performing poetry, reading, writing letters, and learning new technologies. – WT

Membership drive April through May

by Kimberly Malanczuk

Dust off your phone books and search your smart phone contacts. South Bay Writers will sponsor a membership drive April through May 2015. For every new member that you bring into our club, you will enjoy one free meeting on us!

Everyone benefits! New members receive wisdom and knowledge from our insightful monthly and workshop speakers. Moreover, South Bay Writers obtains a fresh, new perspective on how best to serve our professional organization of writers.

To take advantage of this special deal, be sure to first contact membership chair Sally Milnor at membership@southbaywriters.com –WT

View from the Board

by S. Halloran

Eight board members – President Colin Seymour, Treasurer Bill Baldwin, Newsletter Editor Marjorie Johnson, Membership Chair Sally Milnor, Publicity Chairman Kim Malanczuk, Members-at-Large Mike Hahn and Nader Khaghani, as well as two Apprentice Leaders, Patrick McQueen and Jenni Everidge, met in Santa Clara Wednesday night, March 4, 2015.

We welcome Jenni and Patrick, our first officer apprenticeship program participants. Please feel free to join Jenni and Patrick as they become familiar with Board workings.

Kim is combing the website to clean out any "tangles." Check out the new membership page – and invite your friends to join!

During April and May, our membership drive will feature a special deal for the sponsors of newly joining members: when your guest joins, you will be given a free dinner.

Special interest groups within the branch are springing up. Talkshop, an ongoing educational writers' workshop, and The Underground, a small group based on the legacy of the Beats are already active. Watch for a published authors' consortium coming soon!

A fresh and harmonious board of directors can help the South Bay Branch progress and succeed as never before. What are your wildest dreams for the club? The return of the East of Eden Conference? Regular writing workshops with top talent? General meetings held in posh surroundings? Jump into the talent pool and help make your dreams come true! –WT

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

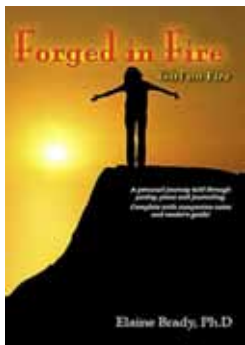
Forged In Fire

by Elaine Brady

California therapist and South Bay Writers Club member, Elaine Brady, Ph.D., in her new book, *Forged in Fire – Girl on Fire*, offers many revelatory insights into the challenges that victims of childhood abuse experience throughout their lives and vividly demonstrates the courage and strength many show in transcending those challenges.

Through the fictional character of Sammie, her voice heard through the vehicles of poetry, prose and journaling, Dr. Brady weaves a compelling story of tragedy and triumph, as a young girl struggles to survive her dangerous home environment, escape it, and then make her perilous way through a world often warped by both the times and her own inner demons.

Forged in Fire – Girl on Fire is a book written for adult survivors, the people who love them and the therapists who try to heal them, with accompanying *Companion Notes* that explain in layman's terms the psychological impact certain experiences have on the development of Sammie's personality and behavior. Dr. Brady's book is available through her website: elainebrady.com. –WT



Chronicle or the Merc?

Continued from Page 2

The *Chronicle* is one of the few truly excellent newspapers left. The Hearst Corporation was bleeding red ink keeping it that way until the tide turned a couple of years ago. So now you can't help admiring what's going on there.

There were times in the '80s and '90s that the *Chronicle* was the better paper, and just as many periods in which the *Merc* was winning the spirited competition. I identify more with the *Merc* even now, but I'm grateful to have seen both sides up close and, yes, personal. — WT

Member News

WritersTalk Staff

We applaud and celebrate your writing successes. Please send news for this column to newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

Carolyn Donnell won first prize for fiction in the 2015 San Francisco Writers Contest for "Deeper Colors — I'm French," the first chapter of her novel in progress, *Deeper Colors*.

Clarence Hammonds had a poem published in *Great Poets Across America*.

Tom Mach (tom.mach@yahoo.com) writes: I am a member and founder of the South Bay Writers. I invite you to share YOUR fondest memory on my blog: www.MemoriesAreForever.net. After appearing there, your memory may appear in a future issue of *The Senior Monthly*.

Steve Wetlesen received yet another poetic art commission — while in a hospital bed with a potentially life threatening condition. He wrote the first draft while hooked up with IV drips and wired with medical sensors. His customers liked it so much that they gave him a bonus. Steve says, "In the most dire of times, art can be created."

Audry Lynch announced that her books have won recognition this year in many book festivals — five honorable mentions! *Steinbeck Remembered*: San Francisco Book Festival; *Ruben's Tales of the Amazon Jungle*: Los Angeles Book Festival; *The Development of Roy Simmonds as a Steinbeck Scholar as Evidenced Through His Letters*: London Book Festival; and *The Rebel Figure in American Literature and Film: John Steinbeck and James Dean*: both the Hollywood and the London Book Festivals. — WT

ANYTHING GOES ESSAY

Fake Book

by Linda M. Judd

You know the phrase, "toot your own horn." March's guest speaker, Jill Lublin, related moments when she took advantage of publicity and networking opportunities. How many SBW writers know when to take advantage of these opportunities? Would doing so be out of their realm of comfort and experience?

In my recap article of Jill's talk, the one thing I tried not to do was put my opinion in the article — I just wanted to report the event. Usually at the end of a news article, the journalist will put in his two cents; I didn't. So here's my two cents.

From what a member of Monday night's audience stated on SBW's meetup.com site, her Fake Book idea sounded extreme. Knowing what it's like to be out there tooting my own horn, I'd say, you have to almost be two people, the writer and the promoter all rolled into one, and know when to change hats. And if you aren't comfortable with public speaking, then using a fake book is a great ice-breaker.

In her enthusiasm, Jill was on a roll. She was confident, and she had the energy of a TV personality with something to sell. She was engaging and compelling — what it takes to sell books, lots of books.

Surprisingly, while I was writing Jill's article, I was reminded of my yearlong experience putting on a four-day science fiction convention as a writers chairperson. There was a subtle build up of momentum over that year. Two months before opening day, I felt the convention take on a life of its own, that if I died, the convention would live on. After that milestone moment, ticket sales rolled in.

Jill shared the things that go into the momentum of creating a message that sells. But she didn't say it that way — just talked about her experiences, using publicity and networking to build an audience to buy her books. She left it to us to look at the bigger picture and emphasized that the steps to promoting a book need to be distinguished from the steps of promoting a writer.

After reading about her career experience in the early days of the music business, I got the sense that every author with a first book is like a garage band, scraping for attention, especially free attention. — WT



Moab petroglyph

Valley of Fire

Silver etchings of cumulus clouds tower above Mesozoic sandstone

vermillion waves wash across an ancient sea, spherical ripples blown by Mojave winds against sun-baked cliffs where

wisdom of the Ancient Ones carved through desert varnish

tells the story of hunters, the big horn and antelope life sacrificed

for collective survival.

Shamans chant around sacred hoop sculpted from gathered stones cleansed by sage,

warmed by juniper, a spiral sun carved into the petroglyph tableau shines down on cholla, prickly pear and maize

life sustained for the Anasazi.

— Leslie E. Hoffman

Accepted for publication in *300 Days of Sun*, a journal of the Nevada State College Humanities Department.

Writers

Writers write and argue,
Write and argue;
Share no tastes in common;
Cut each other off over a comma,
An ellipsis;

Driven mad by reality,
Chasing the vision within.

— Bill Baldwin

Linda Judd is an Adobe software expert. If you wish to have a "Promo" book cover made for free, contact her at lindyjudd@yahoo.com and write "Fake Book" in the subject line. Offer good for first three requests and expires May 1, 2015.

Build momentum

Continued from Page 1

Jill showed us how to make face time by holding one of her books next to her face, at face level, and never covering her name or the title. So if you don't have a book written yet, you can use a fake book; make a book cover to represent your "work in progress" and put it on an old book. I can see holding my fake book in the crook of my arm, and when asked about it, moving it right next to my face before I rattle off the title: "I am the author of the upcoming *How to Climb Mount Everest While Giving Birth*."

Jill's promotion and publicity career started in the 1980s in the music industry, where she was "helping exploit—a term used in the music business—artists so their image can get more known and their names can be more visible." I found this tidbit in the handouts she provided, along with a list of notes on networking. Most of her talk came from one of her three books, *Networking Magic*, *Guerrilla Publicity*, and *Get Noticed... Get Referrals*.

According to Jill, it's important to distinctly state a problem and give real steps for solutions. She presented the problem of "promoting your book without undue expense," my paraphrase.

Jill said, "Use everything you've got." You need to create powerfully effective and precise sound bites. Write in five-year old language, and use two-word titles. So, my

fake book title should be *Everest Birthing*.

Jill's solutions for promotion include real activities. Share an ooh-ahh moment from your life. Produce face time so people can experience that feeling of "you look familiar." Show up a couple of times a year in your community. As a regular participant in a big yearly event, a lot of people will get the opportunity to remember you. Be the grill guy—confidence is appealing.

Your potential readers already like you and trust you. Now they need to know your name. Put your message out there for people to buy. Jill said that 80% of book purchasers don't read what they buy. That means they buy your book because they like your message.

There are many promotional opportunities in the community. Cable companies and television stations all offer free airtime to the community; for example, Comcast and KTEH. Make book videos for YouTube—it's a free place to share media.

Every time you get a chance to write an article promoting a service or community event, you can mention your books as a part of introducing yourself. Jill states that six announcements a year lead to "I know you from somewhere."

Always have copies of your book with you. Know the right place to sell your

book. And say "Yes!" to anyone who wants to buy your book, even if it hasn't been published yet. Pre-sales are a part of promotion and definitely help pay the bills along the way.

Jill said she can listen to a person's message and figure out how to promote it, so it can be seen and heard in the public eye. She pitches books at Book Expo America in May and to major publishers. Currently, Jill is promoting her upcoming book, *Messages That Matter*. She's interviewing a writer for each chapter and will include their ooh-ahh moment.

Read more about Jill and her classes on www.jilllublin.com. —WT



Jill Lublin, captured within a rare moment of stillness, holds her book next to her face.

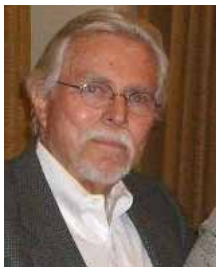
—Photo from Marjorie's iPhone

New from SBW: Beta Readers Exchange

by Dave LaRoche

You have finished a book or a story. It's had the benefit of critique, perhaps an editor's look. The technical bases are covered, all aspects of craft considered, but is it a good read? Will the publisher's editor pass it on through the process or dump it into the slush as they ask the question: will readers appreciate and enjoy, will they promote this book to their friends?

The Alpha readers are those looking for



Dave LaRoche
SBW VP

chinks in the craft; the Beta reader is looking at story. While your critique group and your editors have ferreted out flaws in the writing, your Beta reader is finding story distortion, missing and excessive passages, and looking for that certain appeal that keeps pages turning. The Beta reader's only interest is story. Is it a compelling read through the arc to the end?

So, where do we find a Beta reader? I am starting a Beta Reader Exchange—a place in the newsletter for the names and contact information of those who will read and those who need.

I will want your email address, your genre(s) of interest and whether you will charge a fee or offer one, and if requesting, the size of the read.

As a guide, the Beta reader is expected to provide a one-page commentary, naming likes and dislikes, strengths and weak-

nesses, specific passages needing work or outstanding as is. The reader and author might expect a "coffee-shop" sit-down where the comments are discussed.

Finally, reader and author will establish all of the above between themselves. *WritersTalk* and the SBW will provide only the Exchange and a modicum of guidance. Address questions and send your interest in participation to me, dalaroche@comcast.net. —WT

We plan to make the Beta Reader Exchange a regular feature. See Page 18 this month.

Backlit spider thread.
Subtle shimmer in soft breeze.
Duchamp calls it art.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

How to Hide

by Ann Nomynut

Many veteran writers who are published and praised use a pseudonym because privacy and quiet hours to write are important. The product is one our author is extremely proud of.

Some writers use social media, but only after their fame is set in cement. You don't see hired editors or proofreaders or advertising companies with these unless the epitome of the "quiet author" has reached very high income levels.

Suppose you have a desire for a private life, and you use a different name as author of stories that do not reflect well on your family. You do not carry a batch of author-parasites around with you; you do not pay anybody to read your words. Some popular authors have been known at the beginning of their careers by a completely different name. The publishing houses don't mind; they have their sights set on what is worth reading, not on the gaunt face of a struggling writer.

Just ask any celebrity what it's like to belong like a toy to every Tom, Dick and Jane: never go anywhere without major problems arising; not every snapshot is flattering. Okay, so prizes are given out for excellent books: you do not have to put your soul up for sale! A short tricky "fake-name" can carry all the burden of fame if your published book jumps to the top of the list.

Save your best hours for continuing with book after book, story after story – THIS is what writing is about! Nobody else is you. You may give away some of your unique words, but the game goes like this: you wrote it, it is your striving effort, it is your voice, it is your desire to let the world know important things that you know. The "emperor" trusted the wrong people about his wardrobe – that dope! Hide, with many good reasons! – WT

Note: The SBW member who wrote this rebuttal to our March speaker wished to be anonymous, as is fitting for this piece.

WritersTalk welcomes hearing from SBW members in Letters to the Editor or Anything Goes essays.

Wetlesen's Big Dud

by Stephen C. Wetlesen

As I noted at one recent SBW meeting, you can't win them all. This excerpt and the poem, "The Fire of Heaven," come from my failed flop book that will never be, *Letters to Karla*, about my four years writing to a death row inmate in the 1990s as part of a human rights program.

No doubt many readers of all faiths – or none at all – will agree with the Christian publisher that my work is "not compelling," yet perhaps they'll learn how NOT to write. In any event, see for yourself and decide whether or not you agree with this editor.

The Fire of Heaven

The stars remind me
that
their beauty
caused me to seek
the One behind them
the One beyond them
the One who made them
and come to know Him.
The stars remind me still
of
Heaven's fire:
the speech of God,
thought patterns and
linguistic forms
so utterly
beyond our
imagination
but
so beautiful,
so lovely in sound
that
a fraction of them
would drive us
incurably
insane.
Yet,
the stars remind me
of my
lifelong quest,
since my
conversion and
poetic awakening
to bring
but a tiny spark
of God's language
to earth
to glorify Him
in my
poems; to Him be
unspeakable praise.

– Stephen C. Wetlesen

Excerpt from *Letters to Karla*:

Chapter Twenty: The Card

One day, the De Anza College bookstore suddenly and unexpectedly had the wonderful Sierra Club desert night star scene card I had long sought back in stock. Here is what I wrote in it.

September 27, 1996

Karla – at long last, I found the card for which I've searched for so long. As for my poem, it is only a preliminary to the poetry I've sought to bring down, just a tiny bit, from God.

God love you, Steve

P.S. Show me just a microscopic bit of your consciousness, oh Lord. Try as I might, I just can't imagine infinity or eternity, but blow my mind anyway! – WT

Stay

do you tremble
when you stand at the edge of the rooftop
suffocating
as you breathe in the morning chill?
do you feel the weight of the sky
sitting atop you shoulders
and how the empty air
refuses to push you back?
if so, then stay a little longer; please stay
wait 'til the sun climbs over the city
so you can see the houses awake one by one
and the changing hues of the sky
do you close your eyes
when you stand before the railroad
or do you turn to look
at that leering, yellow light in the distance?
do you hear the pandemonium
of metal grating against metal
when the looming bars lower and the lights
start flashing, the horns start blaring?
if so, then please, step off the tracks
wait for the train to rumble by
for when it passes and the world reopens
it'll look more beautiful than ever; promise
so don't leave, don't leave
please, don't leave
you, who brought us
more than you'll ever know
there are many who will miss
the sound of your laughter
the curve of your smile
the world is so very incomplete without you
– Chelsea Cheng

A Ghost Story

by Carole Taub

A ghost had come for a visit. And though I had no previous such experience, there was no doubt about its presence. *It* shed an air of unease. Not with every step, but certainly in what became *its* quarters. All of which were mine. Strictly hanging around my bedroom, bathroom, and patio was *its* area of choice. *It* was rather like an invisible web, and I kept tripping over the latent stickiness.

Of course, I knew who *it* was. No question. There was no concrete evidence. Still it was from that special place way down in my gut. You know the shouting that goes on when the answer's clear and it feels like lightning's striking you in the heart. So there was nothing to debate. As soon as I saw the lights flickering, I knew. I stood at attention and watched them, sputtering like they were firecrackers.

Funny how this sudden ghost-guest was sort of taking things over and somehow communicating to me that this wasn't a meet and greet, outta here relationship. But this ghost was making itself too comfortable for my blood, and further was the fact that I had no say in the matter. *It* could outlive *its* welcome for as long as *it* wanted. And this ghost's behavior typified what I remembered.

Last time I saw her was in the mortuary. "You must identify her," they told me.

"But I watched her die," I explained. "I know it's her." Still the law states such and I had no say. Furthermore there was no one else. And so I did the deed, like a good daughter should.

But I was no longer under her radar as she slowly prepared for her passage, watching with curious wonder if each breath would be the last.

Her memory, though not fresh, has stayed with me. It's convenient and easily attainable, if I choose. But most of the time I stick it to the rear of my *bank*. However, *it* came out in living color as soon as the lights began to shimmy.

There was no doubt she was back. Not letting go just yet. Still able to wedge her way into my life. As if she could actually make a dent? No can do.

My feelings on the matter — about having a ghost — were rather embracing. I was

feeling slightly giddy. More comforted though, as she actually was being nice. As if she suddenly was the kind of mother I always longed for. You know the kind: calming, supportive, loving? And it gave me a strange feeling of satisfaction knowing she was with me.

I felt her presence a lot. Little things like moving a figurine, or taking an earring and returning it the next day. One night an outside hanging light was swinging. Back and forth. It wouldn't stop. There was no wind that night. Not even a leaf moved. Her essence flourished. I tried to see her, convince myself that I could find her reflection in the glass. But it was only the residual evidence that revealed itself.

My dog did have the satisfaction though. She'd stand for hours staring at nothing, like a statue. Standing at the glass door. Watching. And then she'd bark. Seemingly at nothing. I attempted to console her. Asked her what it was? Stroked her coat. She was relentless. Wouldn't break her gaze or stance.

And it left me with a feeling of jealousy. I tried looking at the glass in hopes I could see her reflection too. I thought maybe I could replicate what power my dog had. If I wished for it enough. Perhaps I could?

One day *she* was in the shower with me. Watching. Hanging out. Had she nothing better to do? But it was the shower curtain that gave *her* away. It waved like the crowds sometimes will at a baseball game.

I was obsessed. Thought I was losing my mind. And though she was confined to my bedroom area, I began looking for her signs in the rest of the house. But it was my dog that I depended upon. Talking to her, asking if she saw anything? Looking for something that resembled a code. Mindfully making mental notes of how things were constricted. Taking mental pictures of exactly what was where, how much of it was left, and was it even there to begin with?

Always on guard. The flickering lights would come and go. I never knew when. I decided she was gone when it stopped. But then it returned. Researching was of no avail other than the fact that ghost-visits are reality. Especially if you believe. But I witnessed the facts, had an accomplice. Research or not, what difference did it make? But when I discovered that cats too have the ability to see a ghost, I began feeling cheated.

I sat on the floor. Crossed my legs. Intuitively I knew I was alone for the moment. Tried meditation. Rid my mind of any thought. Listen to my breath. Focus on nothing. Every attempt was futile. I took a cleansing breath. My dog lay down beside me. I stroked her soft coat. The repetitiveness enabled me to reach a sweet sense of peacefulness, soothing, nearly hypnotic. I knew however, it was time. And I had to take action.

And control. Even though our relationship had always been a mass of angst, I longed for her. *Hey, how are you anyway? Yeah, that's kind of what I thought. Well, it's one of those things that happen, right? I wish I could have talked to you beforehand. You know, had one of those heart to hearts when you actually communicate. I wish you could have seen the goodness in me. Told me so. Said, hey, good job, and all that shit. But you know, I think we kind of understand each other, and I'm real glad you stopped by for this brief visit. It's time though, that you leave. You'll be fine. Now, please go. Be safe, and who knows, maybe I'll see you again.*

I wondered if ghosts have egos? If they have lingering feelings? Possibly desires? My mind really took off at that point, on a whirlwind. Full of questions, like why hadn't my father stopped by to say hey? He took his leap before she did. But then, maybe he's on his way. — WT

Caption Contest

Send your caption to newsletter@southbaywriters.com Prize awarded May 11.

Cartoon by Maddie McEwen-Asker



Counting Sheep

by Chess Desalls

I entered Sheep World through the real world on a sunny afternoon. Crossing my legs in front of me, I leaned back against a tree. Fluffy gray-white balls of wool lazily sauntered past me, some stopping to sample the grass before continuing on their way, others intent on following the single-file line up ahead. I counted sixteen sheep, all of identical size and color, wondering whether this year's flock had a black sheep, an animal unique among the rest.

My mouth stretched into a yawn. Three more sheep, soft and ordinary, passed by — seventeen, eighteen and nineteen — before my counting took a turn for the worse. The black sheep never showed. A red one did. Its scarlet fleece curled like a barrister's wig and shined like the sun.

I squinted and pulled my cap down to the tip of my nose. Was it a trick of the eye? Surely the sun hadn't brightened as the afternoon wore on. I lowered my eyes, then rubbed them with the tips of my fingers. When I looked up again, the sheep were no longer walking in a line. They'd gathered into groups, assorted by color and size.

The largest sheep, as tall as horses, sat back on their haunches. These sheep were green, shades of lime and sour apple. I trembled at their massive proportions as I counted them — six green giants who appeared to be engaged in conversation. Instinctively, my body pressed backward, harder against the tree, my hands skimming the ground. If the animals weren't peaceful —

Loud bleating from my right quickened my already pounding heart. My breath left me. The single red sheep I'd seen earlier had friends, all covered in fleeces of fire. They wrestled and butted with heads and hooves, sending each other flying and falling to the ground. Clutching my hands to my chest, I counted them as they fell, until seven red sheep lay quiet and the eighth stood bleating, as if ordering the beaten to get up and fight again.

I looked over at the group of green sheep who'd silently watched the massacre take place. The largest of the green sheep sat pointing a cloven foreleg at the bleating sheep of red, and then tilted its head back and laughed. That's when I knew I had to leave.

Slowly and as quietly as possible, I lifted myself from the ground. I held on to the tree for support, drawing strength from its weathered bark. Keeping my eyes on the hulking green sheep, I stepped to my left. When my hands broke free from the tree, I spread my arms at my sides to maintain my balance as I tiptoed lightly once again to my left.

I bobbed my head up and down, feeling more confident. It was working. I was getting farther and farther away from the large green sheep and the red sheep massacre, as well as a group of docile blue medium-sized sheep which had grazed the whole time. I had not counted the blue sheep; there wasn't enough time. I had to go —

My next step was met with a loud shriek. I shuddered as I looked down at my foot, which I'd firmly planted on something soft and spongy. Buttery yellow cotton balls spread out underneath my shoe. I lifted my foot. Blood drained from my cheeks. A miniature teacup-sized yellow sheep stared up at me with sad eyes.

Off the Shelf

— Edie Matthews



"You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say may be in my novel."

"No," I whispered, panting. I was no better than the alpha red who'd destroyed its brothers. "Please, little one," I said, kneeling down. "Breathe." As I tried to comfort the yellow sheep, I looked around, panicked. Was it the only yellow sheep? Had it separated from its group? I shook my head. I hadn't seen a flock of yellow sheep, just green, red and blue...

As I hovered over the yellow sheep, wringing my hands and fretting over what to do, I felt a gentle thump on my back. I looked behind me to see another tiny yellow sheep clinging to me. "I'm sorry about your friend," I said. "I should have paid better attention to where I was going. It was an accident."

I pulled the yellow sheep from my back and set it down next to its injured brother. Immediately, it started bleating. Whether it did so in rage or in sorrow, I didn't know. I hadn't time to think. Soon after the yellow sheep started bleating, I felt thump after thump against my head, shoulders, back and legs.

I looked up. Tiny hooves poked and pecked at me as sheets of yellow sheep fell from the tree's overhead branches. The bleating multiplied. My guilt and panic increased, icing my blood.

"It was an accident," I said, standing up and backing away.

The small sheep formed a circle around me and rushed in, biting and kicking my shins. My legs were covered in a blanket of buttercup-colored cotton. The sheep shredded my trousers and drew blood from my skin, but I didn't dare kick them away.

I looked to the green sheep for help. But all of them were pointing hooves and laughing. Their taunts rang in my ears. I covered my ears with my hands and moaned, trying to muffle the sounds of the bleating and biting and laughter.

With one loud knock, everything went quiet and dark.

Continued on Page 12

Readability: Online Story Calculators

by Linda M. Judd

If you want to know the ease of reading your story, or if you want to know what grade level your story is written for, I found a number of online calculators in one location.

At Readability-Score.com you can find out a lot about your story: Readability Ease, Grade Level and Statistics. The site has numerous grade level testing methods. When you copy and paste your story sample into their website, in the blink of an eye you'll see the results for everything. No buttons to click. The seven statistics displayed can be used in the formulas found on Wikipedia, mentioned later.

Previously, I had heard about the Flesch-Kincaid method for testing reading ease and grade level, so when I saw it listed in their offerings I used my story, "Morning Chatter," for the test run. The site has four other testing methods used to calculate grade level. The Coleman-Liau Index and Automated Readability Index can be used for most European languages. Scores for all methods are shown in the results.

On Wikipedia I learned about the Flesch-Kincaid method. Rudolf Flesch devised both systems while J. Peter Kincaid developed the latter for the United States Navy. The F-K formula, later used by the United States Army, became the Department of Defense military standard. In Pennsylvania, insurance companies were required to write auto insurance policies at ninth grade level or below. For our math aficionados, Wikipedia has the F-K formulas used by the calculators at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flesch-Kincaid_readability_tests.

At Readability-Score my story, "Morning Chatter," seen below, scored 90.4 on Reading Ease; a score of 90 is like a comic book. Hmm, should I make it into a graphic novel? And it scored 2.5 on Grade Level. So if I put in some legalese, I would expect to see scores like 10 on ease, and maybe 22 on grade level. I wonder: did my story pass the five-year-old language test? — WT



Spell-checker is not infallible.

Morning Chatter

by Linda Judd

This morning I heard crows chattering outside my window. I must be dreaming. Only roosters are supposed to make enough noise to wake a body up. I had been asleep facing the window. I opened one eye and looked directly out my window. All I saw was empty blue sky.

My ears told me that something was going on. I sat up, saw nothing, stood up and saw what I heard. Three old bats screaming and yelling over a box.

Three grown women argued in the road outside my second story window. Dressed for the great outdoors, the tallest one had ratty red hair. The one next to her had gray hair and was shorter than the other two. The last, a blond, had curly hair turning gray. They looked related, with the same crooked nose.

The sisters argued over a box, pulling it away from each other. The box ripped as they argued. The side of the box facing me was torn enough to show something yellow. I went downstairs to get a better look out of my front windows. I heard more of their argument.

Curly shouted, "I got it for me, not you! Give it back!" Red and Shorty argued the same way and they kept tugging and pulling the box.

No matter how much they argued, it didn't matter, because suddenly the box popped open. A yellow object with ropes attached started coming out. The three women were fighting over a yellow raft. My eyes opened wide with surprise. The raft started inflating. The box tore completely apart, fell to the ground with a thud, and turned on its side. A red canister, labeled Hydrogen, rolled out of the box. It was attached to the raft by a long tube.

As it got bigger, the raft started to lift off the ground. I was mesmerized.

The old bats tugged and pulled at the ropes, and shouted. "This is mine!" "No, this is mine!" "No, give it to me." Their shouts woke up more neighbors.

The raft rose higher into the air, bobbing from side to side as the arguing women tugged and pulled on the ropes. Their arms lifted up as the raft went up. Pretty soon, Shorty was on her tiptoes trying to keep the raft.

The yellow raft was large enough for eight people. It lifted higher, and Shorty held onto the ropes with a final claim, "This is mine, let go, damn it!"

Continued on Page 12

Monochromatic

I was listening to a critic
just back from a museum visit.
Those paintings;
just solid colors
over the whole canvas.

So simple.
Boring, even.

He didn't get it.
He didn't feel
as the artist intended.

He criticized those painting
while lounging with me beside his pool
staring up at the clear blue sky.

He stopped complaining
long enough to exclaim:

"What a beautiful day!
Not a cloud in sight!"

I looked up
at monochromatic sky.

I looked at him—
at his giant grin.

He got it.
He was not bored
nor critical.

He felt exactly
as the painter intended.

— Patrick McQueen



Fantasy Café

I'm honored
I got to teach you
how to dream—
how to ask the universe
and demand an answer,
even if the answer is "No!"

I'm blessed
I get to watch you
bake your future
in imagination's kitchen
and flavor your world
in sweet delicacies.

I'm overjoyed
I get to sit with you
at this pie counter
in your fantasy café
and taste your dreams
one slice at a time.

— Patrick McQueen

WTC PERSONAL ESSAY

The Spirit of Poetry

by Patrick McQueen

As the spirit wanes, the form appears.
— Charles Bukowski

Before writing my first poem in nearly two decades, I asked my best friend about the rules governing poetry. Her reply surprised me. I was expecting a lecture about pentameter, rhythm and rhyme. Instead, she encouraged the words beneath my surface. Poetry is not adherence to rules of form, she told me, but the spirit of the poet singing across the page.

As I mentioned, I avoided poetry for nearly two decades. In high school, I read "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," by Randall Jarrell. I don't know if it was just the ignorance of youth, but I could not understand that poem. I remember thinking it was humorous. I had no concept of the imagery. I simply couldn't grasp why it meant anything to anyone. My frustrated instructor walked me through each line, slowly explaining it to me, all while I swore to myself I would never again read or write poetry.

Almost twenty years later, as my friend led me into the poetry section of Powell's bookstore in Portland, Oregon, I told her I liked the way poetry sounded, but couldn't understand any of it. While she opened book after book, I brushed my fingers over the bindings, indifferently perusing the titles.

That was how I stumbled across "Eyelid Lick" by Donald Dunbar.

Dunbar's id running every which way across the page piqued my interest. After reading only a few lines, I was hooked.

In the months following our trip to Powell's and my friend's spirited answer about the rules, I wrote dozens of poems, all the while wondering if I was doing it right. I doubted my friend's advice about form when we walked into City Lights Books in San Francisco. Upstairs, in a rocking chair beside a window overlooking an alley, I cracked open a copy of Charles Bukowski's *Betting on the Muse*. I had never read anything like it, and I became an instant fan.

If you are familiar with Bukowski, you know why I never again doubted my friend's advice about form and spirit.

— WT



Painting by Carolyn Donnell

Where Is The Green?

My heart is lonely for a tree,
a lawn that flows down green and gray
to a stony brook,
a meadow of grass and flowers
with deepening woods behind.

A place to walk
in solitary contemplation
of sights and sounds
obliterated by this urban noise
and polluted crowding.

Free from the roaring whoosh
of cars racing by,
motorcycles,
rock music cacophony,
loud voices,
outside after midnight.

Where is the cooing of the doves,
the chatter of the squirrels,
the lark's song floating
on a clean river breeze,
the rustle of fresh green leaves?

Oh to live outside of sardine cans,
these cardboard shoeboxes
we have to call home.
Even the howl of a mountain lion
in a backyard tree
would be better than this.

— Carolyn Donnell

Walpurgis Night

Walpurgis Night—
The goons roam out,
Fly over mountain tops,
Cackle their crazy laughter,
Dance on the peaks,
Giggle ecstatically,
Glide down to love the burbling river
Sprites gleaming love-eyes
In the dewy German night;
In the mountain air
Drawing down
Moons and starlight,
Calling forth love and ecstasy.

— Bill Baldwin

Counting Sheep

Continued from Page 9

I started and opened my eyes. A large stick, a shepherd's staff whipped past my head, up above me, and crashed into the tree behind me with a magnificent crack.

"Wake up, Sir," the Shepherd said. "You've fallen asleep watching the flocks again. It's best you get back to the house for your dinner."

I sighed and rubbed my eyes. "Ah, thank you." I stood up, brushed myself off and looked the Shepherd in the eye. "It's best to count sheep after dinner in one's own bed. Sweet dreams can't be had out here."

The Shepherd looked at me, his bewilderment well-masked. "Yes, Sir," he said. — *WT*

It Happens Again

The same birdcall, half past seven

This time, fog curls around my ankles like a chilled cat as I step onto the pavement to greet the sound.

The cable-knit of my sleeves wrap my own embrace my shins ache still with sleep and it happens again.

The same balloon in the sky, just after dawn, the air pink and yawning, the heat unpresent.

The speck inside the balloon opens and closes the mouth of the envelope making muted banshee sounds of hot air. The speck of thrush flies below the basket — optical illusion thrush — supporting a miniature hot air balloon and it happens again.

The swing creaks under my weight, groaning like a day laborer with aching knees, my coffee dribbles over the lip of my cup my flicking tongue missing a drop that singes my skin and bleeds into my knee, wrapped underneath. I'm ready to open a new book inhale the birdsong, invoke the balloonist to wave at me and it happens again.

You are the home I slept in when ill, the thrush call coming through your open window before you embraced me in your sweater to keep out the chill.

You are the early bird, waking to show me the magical specks in the sky the recreational hoppers who sail to Oz every morning and exclaim to me how you have always wanted to fly.

You are my swing companion, always spilling your coffee on your shirt

telling me corny jokes as the day cracks its knuckles and throws its beauty onto your face.

I open my book and inhale the wind, and you happen again.

— *Jenni Everidge*

Morning Chatter

Continued from Page 10

When Shorty's feet dangled in the air, the raft detached from the canister and took to the skies with all the women hanging on for dear life.

Higher and higher they went. As they passed the neighbor's house, the wind blew them in a southerly direction. Where would they go? Would they sail over the river, a mile away?

I recalled a story in the newspaper and chuckled softly to myself, "Latest Craze: Helium River Rafting." But the red canister was marked Hydrogen.

The yellow raft had floated above the trees about three houses down when I started to worry and called 911. "Hello, 911, this is 128 South Canyon River Road. There's a yellow raft with three old women dangling from it, floating in the sky, and heading south."

A few minutes later, I heard sirens heading toward Canyon River. Help was on the way. — *WT*

Fire Eve (for Petere)

We aged by the firelight with the velvet night
In its struggle against the dawn
Your eyes whispered ashes into tongues of fire
Cast like skipping stones into lost ripples
Echoing in the glass drops of rain rat-a-tat-tat
While the ribbon of my soul unwound
By the light in the palm of your hand
As I saw the present through the lens of long past
And I kissed your living memory
Into the rib of bone

Courting us hereto forevermore

— *Jack R. Knutson*



Discussing Options

Can't see together, let's talk about action
Yes discussing it we may find an option
The option to stay or leave from here, okay?
We deliberate or debate, to leave or to stay
We go back to action, consider any reason

Being seniors, shortly, a discount is chosen
Chew over, hammer out they say discussing
Options would be elective even volunteering
Introduce, chew over could be an alternative
Options will be discussed; it may be positive
If negative; it was discussed with a choice
The good part is, we listened to each voice

Discussing options, of anything, is great
Options must be discussed and with a debate

— *Clarence L. Hammonds*

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April Terse on Verse

by Pat Bustamante



Pat Bustamante
Contributing Editor

April: I-Are-Stress!

April is a taxing time--
If we've set about to make a rhyme
That cheers us up today:
I have to admit, I have to say
I much prefer to laud "April showers"
Which we know, of course, bring May-Day flowers.
But my wallet just turned shades of grey!

— Pat Bustamante

What is your occupation? The IRS requires it be listed in the report you file. A relative who is an expert on taxes used to help me every April. She insisted on listing my occupation as "office worker" or "typist." I switched to tax professionals—worth their fee, because they allowed me to proudly proclaim, "I am a writer." Since my retirement from being a wage-slave, a nice chunk of my income is from writing.

I am the author of three self-published books, have sold numerous short stories to magazines, and sold two poems last year. I am a writer! This has been my pride for many, many years—got my first poem published when I was 9. I write a poem every day as recommended by my mentor in college (didn't say it had to be a good poem, "just a poem.") I am working on seven novels. I am not writing for the money, nor for a Pulitzer or Nobel Prize—though I wouldn't turn any of that down! I write because I love to write. I write and re-write until it pleases me. I enjoy learning more and more about the art of creative writing: I read tons of books also. My first adventure in reading was in a *Funk & Wagnalls Dictionary* that was about the same size as preschool me. Words! I didn't know all the words then—nor do I now, reading in three languages. A new word is as precious as a new jewel in a jewel collection. "Grey" (or gray?) has "many shades" I just found out. And at least two spellings. You learn from reading; you learn from writing. You are a comrade of mine in this occupation and I wish you great success, April being—oops—Email message coming in: "Your book has just won Pulitz..."

Oh, darn! April Fool! —WT

Time and Money

I'm starting a rental business, Dad,
I know you'll think it's funny,
But I'm renting two things you always
wanted:

A little more time, and money.

You want to try it? It's really great,
I'll give you an illustration.

Just step right into my time machine,
And I'll set it for "Demonstration."

Comfy? Okay, now take this hammer
And pulverize the clock.

Then all you do is sit right there
And make like you're a rock.

Oh, you're waiting for the *money* part.
Well, you see that piggy bank?
Just hold it in your lap a while
And let your mind go blank.

Of course, you're allowed to jiggle it,
And listen to the sound,
Or imagine it's a really lucky
Fortune you just found.

And there you have it, time and money,
That didn't seem too hard.

— Now how will you be paying me,
By cash, or credit card?

— E. Michael Lunsford



Forward Time, Backward Time

A clock, which is what the universe
may be
Ticks away to remind us
There is late, there is early,
There is end for all things, do you see?
Minutes can turn into years with no
fuss.
For some of us time is so hurly-burly
So unforgiving, our clocks we mistrust.
On occasion we turn the hands back
So chimes in the air flower
(wrong time, oh it must
be; dawn has yet to crack)
Say: "obliterate one whole hour."
Should I care to carve out a year of my
life
Then place it again near the end
When I need it:
Can this sort of magic knife
Help us all to extend
Our time? Please, universe, heed, I'm
here to plead it!

— Pat Bustamante



Reunion

The colors of our
together times
are not unlike
a rainbow:

pastels and profusions

Warmed by the joy of
this reunion
as if through a mirror
in each other's eyes
we see reflected hues
and we smile

Our separate journeys may
take us miles apart
yet the reflections will
never fade
we are connected
at the heart

And the colors of our
together times
will always remain
not unlike
a rainbow:

pastels and profusions

Reunion

— Karen Hartley

Kitchen Window

My mother's kitchen window
frames the dream of her days
a view of lake and green
and yellow topped finches fight
for a place to eat.

Her hands in water
brown eyes lost in
the mist of meaning
or a thought of dinner
or of a child's call
only her voice can calm.

Now she rests upon the mantle
watching over the kitchen
while fire lights a glow
of her domain
softness greets the evening
we embrace the loudness
of her silence.

And yet when I stand at
this same window and
watch the next generation
of those fighting finches
I see what she saw and wonder
as I move and cut
and prepare a dinner
not quite as good, but
surely filling not just the stomach
but a bit of soul as well.

As I stand with my hands
In water and the morning mist
breaks a streak of sun
I feel her
my mother's arms
wrapped around me
showing and guiding me still
and I feel comfort in that.

– Jackie Mutz

Love Awakening

I will awaken with my beloved in the morning
He makes the vermilion roses praise and sing
He waters the meadow's impeccable spring
Along the knots of clouds and heaven's sweet rising.
I will seek my beloved in the fullness of the sun shining
His stature an armory of thirty kinsman's shields and swords
His voice a battlefield of valiant chariots rushing
And roar of victorious armed men marching!
Whither my beloved dwell past noon?
Amongst the fairest lilies and iridescent ocean pearls of June
Around the most Fertile Crescent of Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile rivers
Among my garden's dearest swiftest glorious honey blooms.
Oh, how he leaps the seas and conquers the wilderness in the evening
In fullness he vaunts not; in beauty he envies naught
He sets his eyes upon me faithfully day and night
He shines and settles my wearied days and nights apart
Like a pure sweet wine poured into my lean fleshed crimson heart.

– Elinel Rabara

Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch

I'm allergic to pineapple, you know.
The juice beckoning me with its tropical promise
infiltrating my brain through my nostrils
and flashing me bedroom eyes.

I've learned over the years to resist that siren,
the fleshy tang of inevitability on my tongue
giving way to irritation, an allergic declaration
delivered straight to my windpipe

now plumper than melon
and constricting my air.
You laughed a bit at me
when I described my prickling fear of fruit
but you're not laughing now.

– Jenni Everidge



Today on 237

Axle deep in the midst of Milpitas
Thousands of us tucked into our boxes
With wheels
Inching through sheeting rain like a slow freight
Cars not connecting
Traffic jam mind coursing through the vast line
Of endless cars like some mutant snake

We all ooze west
As I crank these tunes and you clench
Your wheel
Your teeth
Your clutch
As she plasters makeup and he reads his phone

I hear it, then

The rain

The rain is calling

Endless moist voices the rain is falling through me

Then . . . I see him
No hat no shoes, nothing
But old eyes in a young face
Dirty pants and old blanket
Grinning
As he walks toward me
No one else walking, no one else quite as wet,
no one else so poor

And no one else saw
When he looked at me
And winked
Between wiper beats
And he wandered through us all
A loose urban salmon
Leaping
Through our empty
horizontal
river

– Michael Hahn

Buddhist Poem

"I suppose this sounds terribly Buddhist,"
I told the Poetry panel,
"But all these criteria you use for judging poems
Are mental constructs – crap –
Not tending towards Enlightenment –
Distracting you from your purpose –
I simply don't like your poems,
More honest to say.
Let the words come.
Just let the words come.
And let them flow into a beautiful bird,
A woman,
A man,
A flower,
A child –
Your Salvation.
Your Being.
Welcome your Being with open arms.

– Bill Baldwin



Flirting With Fire

I know I flirt
with disaster
in the form
of a beautiful
woman

And yet
her eyes shine
with promise
desire
possibility

Were there ever drugs
more potent than these?

So we sit
gazing into each other's eyes
and let the tension
hang
heavy
in the air
between us

Neither daring
to reach out
and release it

Like a wild animal set free
no telling
what damage
it might do

Separated

Five socks and not a pair.
My mate is gone, O where?
In the washer, under the bed,
Behind the fridge, where has he fled?

What does a single sock do?
Wait for a man with only one shoe?
Do I become a cleaning tool?
Fall apart, look a fool?

My partner's gone into space.
Can't stand to be in one place.
While I and other singles wait
Worried sick about our fate.

Oh, no, no! How rotten!
Thrown away, forgotten.

– Judith Shernock

For we both see
the warning signs
flashing there
before our leery eyes

WARNING
DANGER UP AHEAD
ROAD OUT
BRIDGE DOWN
DETOUR
ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK

And we have each traveled down
this Dead End Street before
racing to our own destruction
without caution
without care
mad with hope
and longing

Racing madly
toward heart wreck
and ruin
and worse

So we just sit here
gazing into each other's eyes
stoking the building tension
watching the flames of desire
slowly growing

Hotter
and higher
with each
passing moment

Both of us wondering
which one
will reach out and touch it
first

– Elaine Brady

Annihilation

All abide another afternoon,
absent and alone
among ashes astray
atop air aswirl.

Agitated and askew,
aging anticlimactically,
appallingly apathetic
about adolescence,
adults act archaic.

All adjunct applications
antiquating astride an altar,
awaiting absolution,
anticipating abandonment,
accepting abject apathy.

Armageddon ascends
as an aftershock.

– Patrick McQueen

Power of Creation

A spire reaches
for the sky
a rocket soars
beyond the eye

Yet nothing
could ever reach so high
as the flame we light together
with every glance
every sigh

At first a glowing ember
nesting in our hearts
quietly smoldering just as
every wildfire starts

But soon blazing
toward the treetops
devouring reason
in its raging

Now I lie here in your arms and
wonder
will we leave the world in cinders
raze all within our path

Like two shooting stars colliding
with the power of creation
a new galaxy is formed
revolving round each other
Sammie and Kath

– Elaine Brady

Excerpted from *Forged in Fire – Girl on Fire*, 2015, Robertson Publishing.

Harlem Blues

In 1953
Harlem jammed.
Not rocked, baby,
Jammed.
As in close together
Making sweet, red jam music.

I, a little white girl
Adoring long, brown fingers
Tapping silver drums.
Pink mouths
Blowing brass trumpets
Planting rhythmical seeds
In a fallow heart.

Today, when down and out blues
Invade my soul
I conjure up red jam seeds
Sprouting an elixir of sound.
Music, which mixed with blackness

Forces the sun out.
So yellow, so warm.

– Judith Shernock

Celebrate California Bookstore Day on May 2, 2015

by Margie Yee Webb

Vice President, California Writers Club

Jump on the bandwagon and celebrate California Bookstore Day (CBD) on May 2, 2015! After all, other states throughout the country will be going along for the ride on that date. Except for those states, the day is called Independent Bookstore Day (IBD). The success of the inaugural CBD last year has spurred indie bookstores all over the country to join the BD party and everyone is invited.

What is CBD? CBD is an event to celebrate books and independent bookstores with exclusive books and art pieces available on that day only and is a joint project by the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association (NCIBA, nciba.com) and Southern California Independent Booksellers Association (SCIBA, scibabooks.org). The idea was conceived by Pete Mulvihill, co-owner of Green Apple Books in San Francisco and NCIBA board member. He along with Hut Landon, executive director of NCIBA, and Samantha Schoech, event director, are the key people organizing the event.

Last year, over 90 bookstores participated with 13 exclusive books and art pieces crafted for and sold on that day, Saturday, May 3, 2014. Items included a California Classics Box Set, "The Bookish Life" print by Lemony Snicket, and "A Literary Map of California." (See cabookstoreday.com/2014-items)

This year, the CBD and IBD celebrations are on Saturday, May 2, 2015. Over 400 bookstores will be joining in with 16 exclusive books and art pieces offered that day. Items will include a Books About Books Box Set, a Funny Ha Ha Joke Book for Kids, A Literary Map of the Seas, and several limited-edition original prints. See cabookstoreday.com/for-bookstores

Is your favorite indie bookstore participating? For more information, visit cabookstoreday.com and indiebookstoreday.com. To find your nearest participating bookstore, visit indiemap.bookweb.org.



Be sure to "Like" CBD and BD on Facebook (facebook.com/californiabookstoreday and facebook.com/BookstoreDay) and "Follow" on Twitter (twitter.com/bookstoreday).

Spread the word to promote books, reading and literacy. Then join the party by visiting your participating indie bookstore on CBD! – WT

Note: Margie retains the copyright to this article and she is providing the same/similar article to the various writing groups of which she is a member: California Writers Club – South Bay and Sacramento Branches; Cat Writers' Association; Women's National Book Association – San Francisco Chapter; Northern California Publishers & Authors; and Bay Area Independent Publishers Association.

Social Media for Authors and Poets

Saturday, April 18, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Los Gatos Adult Recreation Center

Social media has become a crucial element for authors and poets in promotion and branding and finding opportunities. But those new to social media may not understand what platforms are best for them and what they can do once they are up and running. Some don't understand the benefits of social media while others have opened accounts but don't know what they're doing there. This workshop will discuss social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, YouTube, websites and more!

For more information or to register go to Adults, Potpourri, on: <http://www.lgsrecreation.org> or call (408) 354-8700. – WT

Poetry Festival

by Leslie E. Hoffman

Editor-in-Chief, *Caesura*

caesura@pcsj.org

San Jose Poetry Festival

Sunday, April 12, 2015, 9am to 5pm at Le Petit Trianon, 72 N. 5th St., San Jose. Tickets available on-line at: sjpoetryfest.wordpress.com/

Morning workshops offered include "Prompt Parade" conducted by Nils Peterson, Santa Clara County Poet Laureate Emeritus, and "Metaphor Mastery" conducted by Erica Goss, Los Gatos Poet Laureate. Afternoon readings feature Jennifer Swanton Brown, Cupertino Poet Laureate, and Parthenia Hicks, Los Gatos Poet Laureate Emeritus.

SBW member **Victoria M. Johnson** is scheduled to discuss her Purple Passion Press during the "Small Press/Journals" presentation.

Poets are encouraged to sign-up for reading their work in the closing Open Mic sessions. – WT

San Mateo County Fair – Literary Arts

Go to <http://sanmateocountyfair.com/contests/departments/literary-arts> and check out all of the Literary Events we're offering for 2015. You have missed the submission deadline for entering our writing contests, but we will have many other events for writers: workshops, speakers, actors, poetry readings, and an authors' day for writers to advertise and sell their books.

The Literary Stage runs all week. Last year, they had "The Running of the Poets," very cool. The San Mateo Literary Stage is better than a writers' conference! Plan to attend with a friend from SBW.

This year's San Mateo County Fair dates: June 5 – 14. – WT

Workshop May 9

CWC SF-Peninsula is sponsoring a workshop with Simon Wood: "The 21st Century Author," 10am to 4pm, Saturday, May 9, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Foster City. Connect with an ever-changing publishing industry; build an audience; utilize social media. More info at www.cwc-peninsula.org/SimonWood.html – WT

April is National Poetry Month – Again

by Carolyn Donnell



Carolyn Donnell
Contributing Editor

Here are some sites offering a poem-a-day prompt and other events for National Poetry Month:

- NaPoWriMo 2015 30 Days of Poetry Writing – will provide a different prompt each day. (Like NaNoWriMo only for poetry (No = novel, Po = poetry) Sign up at napowrimo.net
- 2015 Writers Digest April PAD Challenge. PAD stands for Poem-A-Day. writersdigest.com/whats-new/2015-april-pad-challenge-guidelines

- Poets.org list their suggestions for 30 ways to celebrate this day at poets.org/national-poetry-month/30-ways-celebrate-national-poetry-month
- Poetry Super Highway Sign up to receive daily prompts at poetrysuperhighway.com/psh/a-poetry-writing-prompt-a-day/

Find out more about local events at some of the area Poet Laureate's blogs:

- Santa Clara County Poet Laureate <http://poetlaureateblog.org/>
- Los Gatos Poet Laureate - Erica Goss ericagoss.com/index.php?page=events
- Cupertino Poet Laureate <http://cupertinopoetlaureate.org/tag/poetry-kitchen/>

Don't forget to check out what's happening at the San Jose Poetry Center: www.poetrycentersanjose.org – WT

Contests and Markets

by Carolyn Donnell

If you hear about intriguing writing contests, markets, or events, please share the information by sending it to newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

Ongoing list of contests and other monetary opportunities: Be sure to check all deadlines and follow all rules.

- awpwriter.org/contests/overview (Assoc. Writers and Writing Programs)
- *Poets & Writers*: pw.org/grants
- Fan Story: fanstory.com/index1contest.jsp
- Writer Advice: writeradvice.com/markets.html
- Funds For Writers: fundsforwriters.com/contests/
- *Writer Magazine*: writermag.com/writing-resources/contests/
- *Writer's Digest*: writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions
- Winning Writers: winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests
- 10 Literary Journals That Pay Their Writers: authorspublish.com/10-literary-journals-that-pay-their-writers/ – WT

CWC Sacramento 2015 Short Story Contest

Contest open to all writers. Awards: First, \$100; second, \$50; third, \$25.

Length of short short story: up to 750 words. Explicit instructions include: type-written, double-spaced, Times Roman 12, standard 1" margin, page numbers in upper right hand corner and printed on one side of paper only. Writers may submit multiple entries; original and unpublished in any media.

All submissions must be postmarked by Thursday, April 30, 2015. \$10.00 per entry, payable by check to CWC Sacramento Branch. Send 4 copies (no author's name on any page) with cover sheet (title, author's name, address, phone number, and email address) for each submission to: CWC Sacramento 2015 Writing Contest, Contest Chair, P. O. Box 582138, Elk Grove, CA 95758.

Contact Margie Yee Webb at mywebb@sbcglobal.net with any questions. – WT

WRITERSTALK Challenge

What is it?

Twice a year, in February and August, awards are given to contributors to *WritersTalk*. You need take no special steps to enter this competition; if your piece in one of the designated genres is published in *WritersTalk*, you are a contestant in the Challenge.*

Genres

- Fiction, 500 – 1500 words
- Memoir, 500 – 1200 words
- Essay/Nonfiction, 500 – 1200 words
- Poetry/Haiku

Judging Periods

- January 16 through July 15
- July 16 through January 15

Prizes

One winner will be selected from each of the eligible genres. Each winner will be awarded a cash prize of \$40.

Judging

Judging will be done by *WritersTalk* contributing editors and other Club members whom the contributing editors may ask to assist.

* Eligibility for the *WritersTalk* Challenge is limited to members of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club. – WT

Writers Conference

Focus: Self-Publishing, Marketing, and Craft

The Tri-Valley Writers Conference is a full day event on the art and business of writing for writers. Held Saturday, April 18, 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, at Four Points by Sheraton, 5115 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton, it will feature three tracks of speakers, events, writing contests, and networking opportunities for people who share a passion for writing. The event is organized by the Tri-Valley Writers Branch of the California Writers Club. Our speaker lineup includes authors, editors, marketing experts, and innovators in e-publishing. Visit www.trivalleywriters.org – WT

Breaking news

Check *The Writer Magazine* website for a short short story contest.

Submission period: April 1 – 30.

Directory of experts

Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? Send a message to newsletter@southbaywriters.com and we will add your listing to our directory of experts.

Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle ragarf@earthlink.net

Banking

Pam Oliver-Lyons polpap@prodigy.net

Curriculum Development

June Chen junech@gmail.com

Counseling/John Steinbeck

Dr. Audry L. Lynch

glynch0001@comcast.net

Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber martha@engber.com

Internal Medicine/Addiction

Disorder/Psychology

Dave Breithaupt dlblmlb@comcast.net

Book Formatting

Linda M. Judd lindyjudd@yahoo.com

Marketing and Management

Suzy Paluzzi, MBA jomarch06@yahoo.com

Mathematics/Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson marjohnson@mac.com

Private Investigator/Police work/Crime

M. J. Hahn mirror3314@mypacks.net

Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard Btauchard@aol.com

Telecommunications Technology

Allan Cobb allancobb@computer.org

Television Production

Woody Horn 408-266-7040

Beta Reader Exchange

The following are those who will read and those needing a reader. Please contact using the email address provided and work out details between you.

Members needing a reader:

David Strom: Action heros

dave.strom@gmail.com

(Caroline Cocciardi: Romance (script),

monalisarevealed@hotmail.com, and

Hans Hansen: sci-fi/crime, shamough@yahoo.com are pending members)

Members willing to read:

David Strom: anything

dave.strom@gmail.com

Expect more names next month.

CWC around the bay

These are published meeting locations and times for other CWC branches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. If you're thinking about attending one of their meetings, be sure to check the website first for details.

Berkeley: 2:00 third Sundays, Oakland Public Library Main Branch. cwc-berkeley.com

Central Coast: 5:30 third Tuesdays, Point Pinos Grill, 77 Asilomar Boulevard, Pacific Grove. centralcoastwriters.org

Fremont Area: 2:00 fourth Saturdays at DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 120, Fremont. cwc-fremontareawriters.org

Marin: 2:00 fourth Sundays, Book Passage in Corte Madera. cwcmarinwriters.com

Mendocino Coast: 6:00 third Wednesdays, Mendocino Hotel. writersmendocinocoast.org

Mount Diablo: 11:30 second Saturdays, Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. mtdiablowriters.org

Napa Valley: 6:30 second Wednesdays, Napa River Inn. napavalleywriters.net

Redwood: 2:30 first Sundays, Flamingo Conference Resort & Spa, 2777 Fourth Street, Santa Rosa. redwoodwriters.org

Sacramento: 11:00 third Saturdays, Cattlemen's Restaurant, 12409 Folsom Blvd., Rancho Cordova. cwcsacramentowriters.org

San Francisco/Peninsula: 10:00 third Saturdays, Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont. sfpeninsulawriters.com

Tri-Valley: 11:30 third Saturdays, Four Points by Sheraton, 5115 Hopyard, Pleasanton. trivalleywriters.com

Ongoing critique groups

Our Voices

Meets at Le Boulanger in the Pruneyard in Campbell every other Sunday 10 am. Genres: Fiction, nontechnical nonfiction, memoir. Contact: Dave LaRoche – dalaroche@comcast.net

Valley Writers

Meets at Valley Village Retirement Center, Winchester Blvd. in Santa Clara, Mondays 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Contact: Marjorie Johnson at marjoriej358@comcast.net

Emperor's Mystery Circle

Meets at Emperor Norton's, 7508 Santa Teresa Blvd, San Jose, 1:30 pm., first Mondays. Mystery genre. Contact Pam Oliver-Lyons, polpap@prodigy.net

Riders Do Right

Meets at Vallco Shopping Center, second floor, Food Court near Burger King, Noon, second Thursdays. Any genre. Contact Pat Bustamante, patatat@hotmail.com

Your Critique Group

For consideration, send information to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Ongoing open mics

South Bay Writers Open Mic: Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen, first and third Friday evenings. See calendar for schedule. Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622 or email WABaldwin@aol.com

Ongoing writers discussion groups

Talkshop: Discuss topics of interest to writers – challenges, problems, and tips. Meets last Tuesdays, 6 – 9 pm. Contact Carole Taub at 777777ps@gmail.com

SBW Underground: Come to exchange ideas on non-mainstream art and writing, past and present. Meets at Coffee Society, Stevens Creek Blvd, across from De Anza, 7:30 pm, third Tuesdays. Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622 or email WABaldwin@aol.com

TalkBooks: New SBW discussion group focusing on books written by our SBW members. We will read and discuss and promote our books. First meeting was March 25. Look for meeting times here next month. For information, email: newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Check out all these opportunities and others available from CWC and SBW.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2015</h1>			1	2	3 7:30P Open mic Barnes & Noble Almaden, San Jose	4
5 10:00A Our Voices	6 1:30P Mystery Circle 2P Valley Writers	7	8 7:30P SBW Board Meeting	9 Noon Riders Do Right	10	11
12	13 2P Valley Writers 6:00P SBW Dinner Harry's Hofbrau	14	15 Deadline <i>WritersTalk</i>	16	17 7:30P Open mic Wil- low Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave	18
19 10:00A Our Voices	20 2P Valley Writers	21 7:30 PM SBW UNDERGROUND	22	23	24	25
26	27 2P Valley Writers	28 TalkShop 6 - 9 PM	29	30		
Future Flashes: SBW Board May 6 — SBW Dinner Meeting May 11						

Your ad could go here
\$7 per column inch for SBW
members, \$10 for nonmembers



Send WT your ad for something
of interest to writers.

Poetry readings

Poets@Play: Meets at Markham House History Park, 1650 Senter Rd., San Jose, Second Sundays, 1 - 4 pm

Poetry Center San Jose: Meets at Willow Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave., San Jose, Third Thursdays, 7 pm. www.poetrycentersanjose.org/calendar

Words Drawing Music: Ongoing open mic opportunity at Works San Jose, 365 South Market Street, on second Thursdays, 7 to 9 p.m. Enjoy inspirational poetry and music while exploring artistic creativity.

Last minute contests with April deadlines

Flash prose contest: The e-zine *Writer Advice* wants flash fiction, memoirs, and creative nonfiction, 750 words max. Prizes \$200, \$100, and \$50; honorable mentions also published. Deadline: April 21. Visit writeradvice.com.

Fiction/essay contest: Tom Howard/John H. Reid Fiction & Essay Contest sponsored by *Winning Writers*. Cash prizes increased to \$4,000. Winning entries published on winningwriters.com and receive prominent exposure. Deadline: April 30.

CWC bags: Sale Price \$5



Offered during our monthly meetings.
Collect yours before supplies run out!

South Bay Writers Anthology



Sale Price: \$5 at meetings

South Bay Writers Coffee Mugs



Sale price: \$5 each



California Writers Club
South Bay Branch
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055
www.southbaywriters.com

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

**South Bay Writers
April Regular Meeting
6 p.m. Monday, April 13**

Harry's Hofbrau
390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose

The Straight Scoop: Publication Successes

April Panel: 7 Speakers
Come early – Meet a New Friend

WritersTalk deadline is always
the 15th of the month.

Regular dinner meetings are
second Mondays 6 – 9 pm



Harry's Hofbrau

From Highway 280, take Saratoga Avenue North.
Harry's is on your right near Stevens Creek Blvd.