



WRITERSTALK

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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

NOVEMBER SPEAKER

Learn how CreateSpace might be the right place for your creations

by Dave LaRoche

Among the hordes of publishers swarming about and seeking an author to sting – we find CreateSpace. CreateSpace is one of the tentacles of Amazon; a company aptly named as it reaches into every aspect of our lives. (You may detect a bias here.) The truth is: while my VISA account is overly involved with Amazon, I don't know a thing about CreateSpace. I do hear the name bandied about in the circles I roam, but that's as far as I go.

I plan to publish someday. I have three books in the queue, and like most author aspirants, I'm a bit short of cash. I look for a process that's not too expensive, yet provides what I need. A service I can trust; one that tells me flat out what it costs and what to expect. Could CreateSpace be that publisher? Again, I don't know.



Dick Yaeger

The good news is, as they say, I'm gonna find out. A cohort I know and respect has used CreateSpace a couple of times, and has promised to spill the beans – all of them. This guy is more than a user of tools, like CreateSpace, he is a student. He has that curious, discovering orientation, and looks deep into things that affect him. He knows nuts and bolts.

Dick Yaeger is an SBW member of less than a year but, as is his way, is digging in and getting acquainted. He has two novels out via CreateSpace: *Niki's Discovery* and *Niki's Touch: One Man's Quest for Answers*, and given his curiosity for the workings of things, has a lot he'll help us explore.

What is CreateSpace? What do they do? Why choose them and why not? What do I need to begin? How do I navigate the site? Format, cover design, editorial services – do I use theirs, why and why not? What about marketing and distribution, they offer that too. Writing tools, support, and communications; what are the costs to authors? Does all of this sound familiar? It's the story of expectations – disappointment or success. If we know where we step, our destination will not be a surprise.

While Dick has used CreateSpace, "it doesn't make me an expert," he says, "but it does give me that relevant experience to share." He has no vested interest in any particular platform, and will share that personal experience with us – unrestricted. To broaden that perspective, he'll encourage other CreateSpace users in the audience to join in with their own nuts and bolts. Be ready, please.

Dick Yaeger is a retired physicist, former U.S. Marine, and active rower, much of which percolates into his novels. If not writing, he's likely found at his forge creating artwork from iron. He's a self-taught student of Latin, a 49er and Sharks fan, and plays the bagpipes.

Join Dick on November 10 and become apprised of the ins and outs of CreateSpace, one of the more popular publishing platforms. – WT

OCTOBER RECAP

Publishing— We need it

by Carolyn Donnell

You've finished your book. Hooray! Now what? Traditionally publish or self-publish? What about an agent? What type? Where to find the right one. What to expect? And what about contracts?

On October 13, 2014, South Bay Writers packed the meeting room at Harry's Hofbrau in the hopes of finding answers from Elizabeth Kracht, agent with Kimberley Cameron & Associates.



Elizabeth Kracht

First on the agenda: Do You Need an Agent? Elizabeth showed where one is required (some major publishers won't accept an unrepresented author) or recommended. Self-published authors

don't have to have an agent, but they will have to do everything on their own.

What kind of agent is best for you depends on what you want from your book. Authors must investigate agents/agencies thoroughly. An agent is a bridge between the author and the publisher. You want yours to be strong. Elizabeth listed authors Chuck Sambuchino and Jeff Herman as examples of resources of help in finding an agent.

Continued on Page 6



December Program

No regular dinner meeting in December. South Bay Writers will hold its annual holiday party on Sunday, December 14.

President's Palaver

by Colin Seymour
President, South Bay Writers

'Incubator' is a nice berth for our club



Contrary to the belief of a few members, South Bay Writers is not where the elite writers of the Santa Clara Valley tend to congregate.

There. I said it.

Fortunately, several members of SBW beat me to it, and even made it official. At a September brainstorming retreat, we confronted this very issue and concluded that SBW is an important incubator for developing writing enthusiasts in the valley. We help one another write better and gain readership and other public exposure. We provide more than one publication for our members' short works. We share more than our hopes and dreams, although we share those, too.

I've always acknowledged those attributes, but I felt the not-elite part was a snotty thing for me to think and that I'd best keep it to myself.

I said it privately. It was easy for me to say. After all, I had to come to terms with the elitist reasons for which I joined in 2008. That was about a year after I was laid off after 23 years at the *San Jose Mercury News*, where I was primarily an editor but did amass more than 900 bylines. It's safe to assume that most of those stories were read by thousands of people and some were read by hundreds of thousands.

I had drafted two books that I was itching to sell, and SBW, with its elite writers conference East of Eden, seemed like the best vehicle - which it probably indeed was.

Many of my ex-newsroom colleagues had written acclaimed books that sometimes also sold well. Three or four have won Pulitzer Prizes in post-newspaper work.

I felt I could lure 15 or 20 to South Bay Writers and that we could all piggy-back on their success and contacts. I even know of a Bay Area agent who's always looking for non-fiction projects from such qualified authors.

Although I have brought in a couple of *Mercury News* columnists as dinner speakers, I have persuaded none of my newspaper friends to become members.

They're not the ones who NEED South Bay Writers. WE are the ones who need South Bay Writers. It can be the foundation of books by each of us that attract hundreds of readers, which we are learning to perceive as success.

I know this is true, because the readership I had at a 9,000-circulation daily in Vermont was actually the most intense of my career.

Yes, I still aspire to the old model. I want to send a query about my novel to an agent who loves the idea and knows where to find me a publisher who will invest a few thousand dollars in it.

But the reality, as my projects fail to interest the right people, is that self-publishing, whether hard copy or online, is the avenue available to me. It's the avenue that can enable me to reach hundreds of readers who, if I prod hard enough, will lead to still more readers.

And who is teaching me the most about these trends? It's my network of contacts in South Bay Writers and the many friends of South Bay Writers with whom I have dealt in my five years or so of working to bring talent to our club.

It's a world that has changed every year I've been in the club, and it would be not only snotty of me but also stupid of me to fail to take advantage of what we've got here:

An incubator for our growth as writers. —WT

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— o —
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Join Us

We have a membership category that fits you. Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee. Dual membership: \$25. Contact the Membership Chair, Sally Milnor, or sign up online at southbaywriters.com.



WritersTalk

is the monthly newsletter of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club.

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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



Home again, time to edit

I've written my novel, checked its structure, and proofread it once. I let my mind rest. Now it's time for rewriting and to look for those elements of style that make or break good writing. My secret weapon: I own a copy of *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White.

- Write in the active voice. Stories written in an active voice are more thrilling than those written in a passive voice. For example: "Katie divorced Tom" (active) as opposed to "Tom was being divorced by Katie." The weak verb "was" often points a finger at a weak section.
- Search for was with -ing, a deadly combination that ruins a fascinating story. Change "The writer was quickly revising his sentences" to "The writer plunged into sentence revision."
- Look for tense consistency. Choose a tense and stick to it. Randomly chopping and changing between present and past tenses disrupts your skill as a storyteller.
- Eschew obfuscation. Write to express, not to impress. Write in a clear and simple manner.
- Use paragraph breaks. In addition to breaking up dialogue, paragraphs separate individual topics with each new one getting its own. In addition, a page containing some white space is more attractive to the eye and easier to read than a page completely filled with unbroken text.
- Watch subject-verb agreement. Subjects and verbs have a number, singular or plural. When they don't agree, the sentence doesn't work. For example: Gary and Lisa are married, not Gary and Lisa is married.
- Avoid clichés. A cliché is an expression or phrase that everyone has heard before. For example: strong as an ox. Rewrite with fresh words.
- Avoid common grammar mistakes. Review with guidance from Strunk and White. *Elements of Style* is short—85 pages of text—and easy reading.

Now that many glitches are weeded out from the 90,000-word manuscript, it's time to attend to dialogue. Dialogue needs its own reading of the complete manuscript, coming next month.

Home again. Out of the box, I found way too many uses of "was." Is the whole thing a *weak section*? What about other short words: got, took, made, had, or set? Yikes!

Stay tuned, and keep sending those stories, articles, and poems to us. —WT

INSIDE

Club News		Personal Essay	
New Members, S. Milnor	4	Neighbors, J. Miller	10
Members News, Staff	4	Poetry/Haiku	
SBW Meeting Photos, D. Amyx	7	Four Walls and a Roof, C. Donnell	10
Contests and Markets, C. Donnell	13	Haiku for Noah, S. Wetlesen	10
Calendar and Classified	15	Nov. Terse on Verse, P. Bustamante	11
Short Fiction		Can We Dance? B. Johns	11
Requiem for a Patriot, J. Miller	8	The Wedding Silver, Karen Hartley	11
What a Waist, C. Desalls	9	Painter without oils, S. Wetlesen	11
Essay/Article		If I were ..., C. Donnell	11
SELF-e For Authors, V. M. Johnson	5	The Spheres, S. Wetlesen	13
About SBW, K. Malanczuk	5		

New Members

by Sally A. Milnor



Sally Milnor

I am pleased to introduce our three newest members.

Chelsea Cheng—writes poetry and fiction. On her membership questionnaire, Chelsea says that books, movies and historical events inspire her to write short stories; and, for poetry, the driving forces are mainly art and nature. She says, “English was not my first language. I struggled with it a lot in the beginning. I gradually came to love the language, and it has remained my favorite subject at school, from middle school to now.” In addition to her writing, Chelsea enjoys

playing the guitar and piano.

Maryam Karson—joined us at our October meeting. Maryam is an Employment Law Attorney, and she is interested in writing novels. On her membership questionnaire, she says that she became a member of South Bay Writers because she wants to learn about the art of writing fiction. In addition to writing, Maryam loves to travel, attend plays/theater, read, or watch a good movie.

Candace Lowe—writes fiction. Candace says her writing interests are fueled by “anything to do with realistic space travel and planetary exploration. I also enjoy stories with good characterizations and voicing. My varied background as a newspaper reporter, airline pilot and deputy sheriff has provided lots of inspiration for my stories.” Candace has recently retired from Stanford University in IT. In addition to writing, she enjoys performing experimental electro acoustic music with her husband. Candace also volunteers as an ESL tutor in the community. Among her publications are: *The Black Hole Project*, by C. Sanford Lowe and G. David Nordley; “Kremer’s Limit,” “Imperfect Gods,” and “Small Pond,” all with G. David Nordley.

To Our New Members: We wish each of you a warm welcome and hope your membership brings you inspiration and enjoyment. **To all of our South Bay Writers:** We appreciate and need your continuing presence and support. Thank you, again, for helping to keep our Club flourishing. See you in November! —WT

SBW Holiday Party Announcement

South Bay Writers will again have a potluck holiday party—beginning at 3:30 pm on Sunday, December 14. We will provide the location and potluck details in the December issue of *WritersTalk*. —WT

SBW Literary Costume Winners

The South Bay Writers annual literary costume contest, popular again this year, had winners Chess Desalls, H. G. Wells’ Time Traveler; Luanne Oleas, Mad Hatter; Edie Matthews, Harpo Marx; Donna Fujimoto, Cinderella; and Andy Mitchell as the renowned Scottish poet, Robert Burns.



Winners, left to right: Chess Desalls, Luanne Oleas, Edie Matthews, Donna Fujimoto, and Andy Mitchell
—Photo by Carolyn Donnell

Members News

collected by WritersTalk Staff

Maddie McEwen-Asker writes that her Halloween short story, “Not on your Nelly,” was published in *Kings River Life* online, <http://kingsriverlife.com>

Barbara A. Johns reports that *Adventures with Puppy Girl* has a publisher. Nine years ago, she wrote a manuscript, a Christian children’s book, and found the perfect illustrator. After six years, she self-published through Authorhouse, but working fulltime as a nurse relinquished few hours for her passion. Nonetheless, she started contacting publishers, and now she has a contract in hand with Tate Publishing.

Victoria M. Johnson is pleased that Silver Birch Press published her poem, “Derek Jeter’s Regrets.” Victoria was the guest author at the Saratoga Library in October for their popular Author Series program.

We applaud your successes—published works, talks given, book signings—any small or large triumphs related to writing. To be included in this column, please send a short paragraph to newsletter@southbaywriters.com —WT



Letter to *WritersTalk*

from Bob Garfinkle

I want to thank all of my fellow writers who expressed their best wishes for my speedy recovery from my stroke. Much appreciated.

I also want to thank the South Bay Branch for the lovely flowers. They brightened my dark days during the time I was unable to move my left hand. Slowly, I am regaining the use of my writing hand.

I am home now after spending three weeks in Kaiser hospitals in Fremont and Vallejo. While in the hospitals, I discovered the greatest diet—hospital food. I lost 14 pounds in those three weeks. I also do not recommend being incapacitated on a bed on wheels during a 6.0 earthquake.

Take care. Bob

SELF-e For Authors

by Victoria M. Johnson

I first heard about SELF-e while participating at a literary festival. Our town's librarian was handing out SELF-e flyers to everyone, and I was intrigued about this new platform.

SELF-e

According to the *Library Journal* website, "SELF-e is an innovative collaboration between *Library Journal* and BiblioBoard that enables authors and libraries to work together to expose notable **self-published e-books** to voracious readers looking to discover something new."

Many people already know that *Library Journal* is a highly respected periodical used by librarians across the country. You may not know that BiblioBoard is a platform for libraries to license and deliver digital content for **unlimited multi-user** access. So upon hearing of this collaboration, I was eager to learn more about it and how it can benefit authors and readers.

What is SELF-e?

Currently libraries pay a high fee to publishers for an e-book, and only one user can have it checked out at a time. As you can imagine, it is costly to libraries; and readers may have to wait weeks, and sometimes months, to read a new release. The SELF-e collaboration will provide **vetted** self-published e-books to readers who are hungry for more content. Also, any number of readers can check out the e-book at the same time.

Who will do the vetting?

Library Journal will curate the collection, selecting those e-books they believe represents the best in that book's genre. If your e-book is selected, your e-book will be part of *Library Journal's* curated modules for each genre; and you'll have a potential nationwide audience. If your book is not selected, you have the option of submitting for the statewide modules with other local authors.

How does SELF-e benefit authors?

There is no cost to authors, but authors will not make any money when their books are selected or read. Authors gain readers and exposure. They get their e-book in a curated collection promoted by a journal that has national recognition. It's an opportunity to be discovered. I asked Los Gatos Town Librarian, Henry Bankhead, his thoughts about SELF-e. "It's a pathway to get your self-published writing read by professionals in the industry and possibly being included in a curated collection for your entire state or the country," he said. "If you're in the state modules, California readers will have access to California material, while Massachusetts readers can access Massachusetts material, and so on." (Use the BiblioBoard link below to see authors who endorse SELF-e).

How do readers access SELF-e?

It's not available yet. When it becomes available readers will access SELF-e through their library, using their library card--the same way you get e-books from your local library now. Your library subscribes to it. (You might ask your local library if they will subscribe or if they are collecting self-published e-books



from local authors for this project).

How do authors submit their e-books for consideration or find out more?

Library Journal site: <http://reviews.libraryjournal.com/self-e/>

BiblioBoard site: <http://biblioboard.com/authors.html>

FAQs for libraries and FAQs for authors: <http://reviews.libraryjournal.com/self-e/self-e-faq/>

Submission Page: <https://library-journal.biblioboard.com/>

If, after checking out the websites, you decide this opportunity is right for you, it looks like it will only take a few minutes to submit your e-book for consideration. Have your metadata handy (keywords).

The only deadline information I found says: **Submissions through the Fall.**

If you're wondering if you should submit, don't take too long to decide, or the first round submission period may be over. Who knows when the next period will come? Also, don't stall if you're not sure if your e-book is among the best in the genre. The *Library Journal* website says, "All that is required is an engaging story, and your e-book file."

BiblioBoard's website says, "We believe indie authors, libraries and patrons will work together to play a major role in the future of publishing and the culture of reading." — WT

About South Bay Writers

by Kimberly, Malanczuk

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass. — Anton Chekhov

We are writers.

Like the great sculptors of verse before us, we bleed upon the page (*Ernest Hemingway*) and indulge ourselves in the drunkenness of writing so reality cannot destroy us (*Ray Bradbury*). We savor words to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect (*Anais Nin*). And we jump from cliffs, developing our wings on the way down (*Kurt Vonnegut*).

Some of us are born with pen to paper and fingertips to keyboard; others of us unfold to inspiration's latent spark. No matter your path, you will find comrades-in-arms at South Bay Writers.

Continued on Page 6

Publishing – we need it

Continued from Page 1

Next Elizabeth talked about the agent's role and author/agent relationship. Items discussed included expectations: editing, career goals, contracts and advocacy. Emphasis was placed on long-term relationships. Trust is the key word. Communication and trust are pivotal and it works both ways.

When you receive an offer of representation, one of the things you need to think about is author platform – Elizabeth pointed out that an agent is not a publicist. They can help with social media, but they will not be social media specialists for you.

Agency contracts as well as help with a publishing contract brought a lot of questions from the audience: what to look for in a contract when signing and afterwards, red flags to watch for, when to call a lawyer (or not), as well as commissions and royalties, typical amounts, and what to expect (and when) from publishers.

Elizabeth said she finds it a joy to represent other writers. She said if their agency believes in an author, they basically never give up. They even started a small publishing group to publish books for authors who haven't been acquired by larger publishers. Now that's dedication.



October speaker, Elizabeth Kracht

–Photo by Dick Amyx

She has not only been an agent since 2010, but also has experience as an acquisitions editor, freelance publisher and writer, not to mention time spent as a paralegal in the contract arena.

This well-rounded expertise and dedication certainly showed in the presentation that went into overtime and still had attendees begging for more.

We thank her for the wonderful talk

and hope to hear more from her – maybe a workshop? Hint to the Vice President.

See kimberleycameron.com/submission-guidelines.php for full submission guidelines. If emailing Elizabeth, put **San Jose** in the Subject line. She can be reached at liz@kimberleycameron.com. (She does not take Fantasy, Sci/Fi or Children's with the exception of YA. Those can perhaps be addressed to Kimberly or Mary.) –WT

About South Bay Writers

Continued from Page 5

Chartered in 1987 by a small group of wordsmiths, South Bay Writers is the South Bay Branch of the 100-year-old California Writers Club. Today, our flourishing branch includes members from every major literary genre, including fiction, nonfiction, journalism, poetry, memoir, romance, children's, YA, essay, screenwriting, literary critique, and playwriting, as well as editors, booksellers, and those in related fields. It is our mission to creatively inspire, support, and educate our members in writing and publishing, and our ongoing programs demonstrate South Bay Writers' intrinsic commitment.

Our monthly General Meeting Speaker Series features experienced authors, publishers, agents, and literary-related experts, as do our workshops and retreats.

We draw knowledge from the deep well of our heritage, conceived in the early years of the 20th Century when California author, journalist, and social activist Jack London and his literary peers gathered for picnics and conversation at the Oakland hills home of poet Joaquin Miller. The Alameda Press Club, led by California poet laureate Ina Coolbrith, held nearby meetings at the Shattuck Hotel in Berkeley. In 1909, after various mergers and spin-offs (now lost to history), these informal literary salons became the California Writers Club.

Today, California Writers Club comprises 19 branches and an estimated 1600 members throughout the state – from Silicon Valley to the High Desert and from redwood forests to Orange County beaches. (www.calwriters.org)

We welcome you to join us here at South Bay Writers. We don't wait for inspiration. We go after it with a club (*Jack London*). –WT

Editor's note: The previous "About" statement appears on southbaywriters.com. Kimberly Malanczuk is working with our Webmaster to update pages and features on the South Bay Writers web site. We invite you to visit and check out the "work in progress." Also, don't forget that members can feature their books and websites online in our Members Books and Members Gallery. –WT



More Literary Costumes

– Photos by Dick Amyx



Where to see more photos?

More pictures from South Bay Writers meetings and activities appear under the Events Tab on southbaywriters.com and at <https://southbaywritersgallery.shutterfly.com/>



Requiem for a Patriot

by Jamie Miller

It was never an easy life, being married to a secret agent. I was never supposed to talk to anyone about his work, not even Vernon, but now that he's dead, it can't hurt, can it? I mean, Dick Cheney outed that poor Valerie Plame, and they had to go into hiding and get new identities. Vern told me all about it, and reminded me of how dangerous it could be, even if I didn't get us assassinated, but what can it hurt now? After all, that Snowden fellow outed practically everyone.

It's not that I was frightened, really. Not for myself. But I'm actually glad that he couldn't have children. They would've just added to the worries.

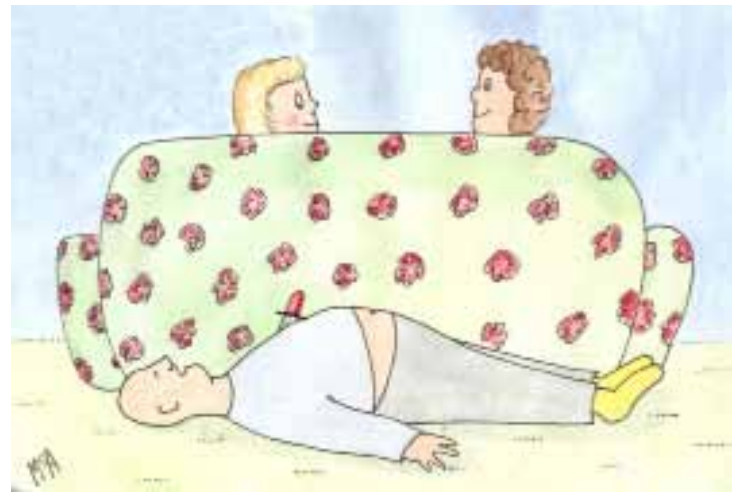
But I have to admit that life with him was terribly exciting. I remember the times when we were driving somewhere, and he would tell me, "We're being followed! Slide down in the seat and don't look back. Don't look around!" We'd go racing down streets against the traffic, dodging cars, and whip into alleys, and he'd finally relax. "Well, we lost them this time. Oh, I was frightened that time. God, I don't know what I would do if I lost you!" And we'd end up making love, right there in that alley. Life with Vernon was like being in a thriller movie.

Vernon could be so funny, sometimes, like those occasions when he accidentally left the newspaper folded, so a story about a foiled bomb plot or the killing of an enemy agent showed when I picked it up. If I asked, Vernon always gave the same answer: "I can neither confirm nor deny that I had anything to do with that," and he would have such a mischievous twinkle in his eye and shy little smile on his lips that I'd know, and we would both end up just laughing hysterically.

I didn't like his travels. I mean, they took up so many weekends. But until terrorists agree to respect weekends off, that is the life of a secret agent, I suppose. He would leave me a message on the answering machine on a Friday afternoon, about going away on a job, and I wouldn't hear any more until I woke up beside him on Monday morning. But, oh, what wonderful stories he would tell about what he had seen in Istanbul or Benghazi or Cairo. I think that's one of the things I loved about him, the way he made my mundane life seem really exciting, just seeing the world through his eyes. I only wish we could have talked more openly. I would have loved sharing the dangers as well as the beauties of his life.

His death was a terrible shock. Here one day, gone the next, as they say. But, somehow, I always imagined it would happen in Baghdad or some such place, rather than in a motel in Pacoima. It must have been a poisoning or something like that, I suppose, but I have to feel sorry for that poor woman, even though she must have been a counterespionage agent or some such. I can only imagine how she felt when Vernon expired right at that most wonderful moment. And he was a big man. I feel so sorry thinking about her trying to get out from under all that dead weight. (If you'll excuse the expression.)

She sent me a lovely note, but somehow she thought that Vernon was my son, instead of my husband. Perhaps that's understandable, but I still don't like the idea of that woman going through Vernon's things while he was lying there dead.



My therapist suggested writing down all his faults. Somehow it grew into a whole murder mystery.

Well, no doubt happenings like that are just a regular part of the life of a counterespionage agent, and I should be grateful for the thoughts she sent me, instead of being angry.

I know Vernon must have had a lot of life insurance, considering what a dangerous job a secret agent leads, but I can't find anyone to talk to about it. I've tried calling the CIA, and the NSA, and the NIS, the Secret Service and every other agency I can think of, but none of them will even admit to knowing about him. Isn't that always the way with things like this? The men get all the glory and excitement, and the women are left to carry on with nothing but memories. Plus, of course, the hope that his last check will arrive soon.

And, speaking of memories, I can't help feeling some sympathy for that poor woman who was with Vernon when he departed this vale of tears so suddenly. Even if she was an enemy agent dedicated to the destruction of my country, she is still just a woman like me, and we have both experienced the same loss. So, considering the nice sympathy card she sent me, I believe I will send her a note, and perhaps we can connect. I surely do want to explain to her that Vern was my husband, not my son, and we'll find where our friendship may go from there. —WT

Author's note: This story had its origin as I waited one day at the bus stop for my ride home. An acquaintance from my group sidled over and asked in a conspiratorial voice, "Did you hear about how X died?" (I've referred to "X" as "Vernon" in this story to avoid any possible embarrassment or lawsuit.)

"Yeah, I heard about it," I replied. "Too bad. He was a heck of a nice guy."

"I heard he died in a motel. At lunchtime. Out for a nooner."

"X? Naah! No way. He wouldn't have done that."

My informant shrugged and drifted back into the crowd. But rumors began circulating around the group, hinting that X had lived a very exciting life, at least so far as he admitted to his wife. There was sniggering about how he had expired, mixed with a certain admiration at how deftly he had carried it off. So I took what I had heard and elaborated on it. —WT

What a Waist

by Chess Desalls

Sneaky Snackers would be different.

Mira craved success more than chocolate fondue. She was well-educated and had a top notch career. Her two daughters were bright, and her husband was the smartest man she knew.

“Success is important. Goals are important. I will lose 28 pounds,” she said as she brushed and pulled her bushy dark hair into a tight twist.

She looked at herself in the mirror and smiled. True, she was heavy, but not unattractive. At age 43, Mira had a creamy complexion with the slightest hint of wrinkles. Her cheeks were round, much like her deep-set dark eyes and overall figure. She smoothed down her blouse, tugging at the unforgiving fabric that bunched and wrinkled at the seams.

“If other business women can fit exercise into their daily routines, then I can too.”

Mira marched over to her home office and sat down at her desk. She inhaled deeply. The office smelled of musty books and wood oil. It resembled an old world study, except for the bright red laptop that adorned the refurbished writing desk she’d jammed up against the bay window.

The laptop, more than the window, was her means to the outside world, a world of goal-makers who embraced anonymity and the pursuit of trimming waistlines. Mira powered on her laptop and wriggled her fingers. Then she signed in as *Fit_4_Life*, the login name she’d chosen to remember her goals. She vowed not to fail to lose weight the way she had during past attempts with other online dieting websites.

Sneaky Snackers would be different.

Mira uploaded her favorite avatar: a cupcake bursting out of an angry red circle with a diagonal line slicing through it, and completed her profile questionnaire. Then she scanned a list of potential dieting buddies with whom she could be virtually matched and held virtually accountable.

“Bubbles013,” she read from the top of the list. “Highly energetic, festive diner who enjoys cooking and is ready to pop off the pounds.” Satisfied, Mira sent Bubbles013 a message invite: *Let’s meet our goals by popping off the pounds together.*

oO oOo *POP* oOo Oo

“Ooh, this will be so much fun,” crooned Bubbles013.

Blond, bubbly and vivacious, Bubbles013 thrived on good times. She considered herself healthy enough and full of energy — just like in her cheerleading days. But, she had to admit, working fulltime as a pastry chef at the age of 36 had packed on a few unwanted pounds.

She clicked “accept” from her mobile phone and then set it down, taking care to avoid a dusting of loose flour. With deep-set dark eyes, she scanned a cookbook index for a low-carb cake.

oO oOo *POP* oOo Oo

After several weeks of relentless goal meeting, Mira showed up at her sister’s apartment for Thanksgiving dinner, five pounds lighter and with a hankering for pie. She’d earned a treat — real



“1001 Uses for a Cornucopia: Certain to be a best-seller.”

food with real butter. Fat and sugar. Flavor and fun. Her younger sister, Alna, never disappointed.

Mira smacked her lips as she dug into a mound of mashed potatoes smothered in gravy. Her eyes bugged out with the first bite. She reached for her napkin and covered her mouth as she choked down what tasted like creamed sawdust stewed in sauerkraut.

“I mashed cauliflower and quinoa instead of potatoes this year,” said Alna, her deep-set dark eyes glowing. “Doesn’t it taste just like the real thing?”

Mira nodded politely and looked around the table at her husband and daughters who sat with their eyes fixed on their plates. She would promise them pizza delivery later that day, for the disappointments did not end there. The gravy was fair, but the turkey was drier than beef jerky left to dry in the desert sun. More quinoa had gone into the stuffing, along with a cubed super food substitute that Mira couldn’t pronounce if she tried. Where was the butter? Where was the salt?

Mira excused herself and headed for the guest bathroom — away from her daughters’ miserable little faces and Alna’s Thanksgiving experiment. On her way back to the dining room, she wandered down the hallway that led to Alna’s bedroom. Alna’s desktop computer was left on, her screensaver flashing photographs of what Mira guessed were of Alna at her heaviest weight ever. She sat down and wriggled her fingers, figuring that her sister wouldn’t mind a quick email check.

Still, Mira took a peek over her shoulder before typing in the web address to her dieting site. When the page loaded, she jumped backward. Her mouth hung open.

Continued on Page 12



Matthew: "Do you think anyone will appreciate our work?"

Luke: "At least my mother will want a copy."

Four walls and a roof

Four walls and a roof
keep me dry
and warmer
than out on the streets
at least.

Safe from harm
at least physically
Sanctuary of body
but not for my soul.

Shelter is not
the same thing
as home.

Home is
where the heart belongs
and mine still roams.

– Carolyn Donnell

Haiku for Noah

God crafts deep rainbows,
emeralds, rubies and sapphires.
Let faith paint likewise.

– Stephen C. Wetlesen

WTC PERSONAL ESSAY

Neighbors

by Jamie Miller

We were hurrying through unknown territory in Detroit when we saw them, standing together on that abandoned block, facing the departing storm. It had been a hard deluge, and had stopped us before we could even get away from the Detroit Museum of Art, much less find the way out of the city toward the airport. We fretted and waited for 35 minutes while torrents flowed down the windshield. Even if we had known how to find the way, we couldn't have driven in this. So we sat while flight time drew nearer. But finally we were in motion and trying to find the way to I-94 and DTW. So when I noticed the two old-timers standing and looking toward the departing storm clouds, there was nothing we could do but keep going. But the images I saw stay with me to this day.

We have spent quite a lot of time in Michigan since our son and grandkids moved there, becoming well-acquainted with the area centered on Ann Arbor, but we had never gone into downtown Detroit. We had been downstream on the river, following our grandkids' competitions in crew (rowing) events, and seen the tall buildings in the distance, but this was the

first time we had taken an extra half-day just to sightsee. Downtown was a long-postponed project, and the famous museum was our number one destination. But we had approached this with some trepidation. We knew about Detroit. We had seen all the news items and videos about the abandoned and trashed blocks, all the empty and gutted houses, all the businesses that had gone away and left nothing but a hint that once there had been a city there, complete with neighborhoods full of people. And there was the crime, of course. The TV news never said it directly, but this seemed to be a place where drivers should keep their doors locked and keep rolling.

So there we were, hurrying along the damp streets, when I saw them, off to my right and a little way down the desolate and abandoned street. Old, they may have been, but they had never lost their dignity. One had a young tree growing alongside the front steps. It was planted too close, and the branches half-overhung the steps. No problem: it just needed some careful pruning. But there had been nobody there to prune it since the great foreclosure frenzy drove the people out. Both homes looked good. No graffiti, no broken windows, no disrepair, even after the harsh years since the great crash. Paint and roof in good condition. The old gentleman's neighbor looked as good. But

they stood as alone as the buildings in the photos of the devastation of Hiroshima or Dresden, as their street disappeared into the haze left from the torrential rain-storm. What the hell had happened to my America? If there were homeless people, wouldn't it make more sense to offer these houses to them as zero-interest write-offs, rather than to bulldoze them like the rest of the neighborhood had been? What economic advantage did the bankers gain by destroying places like this, as if they had been al-Qaeda hangouts caught in the sights of some drone cruising above? But it made sense to someone, to devastate the street and leave these two houses standing. But still they stood.

We rushed by and finally found the exit to I-94 and DTW and settled into our cramped, tortured airplane seats for the trip home. But I have never forgotten.

Somebody had planted that tree too close to the front steps. Didn't they realize that it would grow too big for the place it was planted? It must have been in a better time, when the family took pride in their home, and the kids played in the yard. The house looked neat and well-kept, even after all the years since the mortgage companies decided there was more money in vacant lots than in livable

Continued on Page 12

November Terse on Verse

by Pat Bustamante



Pat Bustamante
Contributing Editor

Know November

Two months away it all starts again.
Your resolutions of this year end when
The horns and whistles blow "Happy New Year!"
I look at my promises: not all kept I fear.
We also give thanks during this thirty days
For all the great gifts received. And always
Should gratitude overbear worry.
Besides, we have time. Get going, and hurry!

— Pat Bustamante

November is the time when we give thanks. I give thanks for all the poems in the world — sonnets, haiku, free verse, blank verse, acrostic, ballad, ode, and all the other charming poetry formats.

Rather than play as a teacher of poetry, I would like to send you to the Internet, where Google has several poetry sites worth investigating. One of them might even show you a poem of mine, just submitted to shadowpoetry.com, in case you had not heard of it. That website has information on all the forms poetry can take.

By the time you read this, if you were at the SBW October dinner meeting, you would know what I mean when I say, "pyramid poem." You also saw one in WT last month with my name on it. So far as I know, I invented that kind of poem. A major problem is that, in print, it's difficult to center a 2-letter word under a 1-letter word. Handwritten: no problem. Also, punctuation marks do not count, nor spaces between letters. You start with a 1-letter word, such as "A," and go down to 13 letters in words on one line, the final line. So far, I have poems started with A, B, O and C.

Tell WT if you have invented a special kind of poem yourself, please!

November is the time to try na-no-what-is-it-called, write a novel in a month. I cannot pass up a contest. Hope you, reading this, are primed to try it, too. Perhaps submit a bit of it, as well, to WT. And do not worry too much about next year: in spite of my poem above, there is still plenty of time. — WT

Painter without oils.
Photographer with no lens.
Words form my pictures.

— Stephen C. Wetlesen

Can We Dance?

If the phrases of our past
are but a voice harmonious
are we to flow into music
that only we can hear?

Or, can we dance with others -
their rhythms treasured,
each one pleasing to our hearts,
drawing on soft chords to chime?

To dance from joyous ways
and sadder times the same
is the beautiful expression
of our spirit deep inside.

Let us always share the cadence
with an entourage
to the end of perfect peace.

— Barbara A. Johns

If I were ...

If I were the person
I was supposed to be
Who would I see?
My parents said
In fantasy I tread
I wasn't a girl who
Liked to clean or cook.
They said don't read a book.
Music's not important enough.
If I had become
Who I should have been
Musician or writer
Or artist within
Would live in this skin
Instead of rusty bits and pieces
Of what I might have become
Leftovers - life left undone
Whatever happened to me?

— Carolyn Donnell

The Wedding Silver

In the middle drawer
Of the bureau
Rests a shiny cherry wood box
Surrounded by women's things:
Slips and scarves and boxes
Of pearls on strings
And lace handkerchiefs
Softly laying next to it
As if they all are protecting
The wedding silver

One can only imagine the guests
Whose fingers caressed the
Embossed rose point filigree
Year one it was used for
Family brunches
Year two it graced the table
For ladies lunches
By year five it still survived
But now the wedding silver was
Only used when the parents arrived
When year ten came it
Wasn't the same
For the wedding silver

Tarnish had tinged the rose point
Couldn't see the intricacies
Through the blackness
What was to become of this
Cherished tradition?
Would not another meal be graced
With the wedding silver?
Would its gleam and glow slip
Into oblivion?

Then one day the cherry wood box
Was in her daughter's hands
Soon the wedding silver would
Have another chance
To shine

— Karen Hartley



Neighbors

Continued from Page 10

homes. It must have been a really good paint job! There was a family, once, and somebody planted that tree. It would overwhelm the steps and take a careful pruning job every year to make it livable. Didn't they know that? And what would happen when it got so big it crowded the steps and threatened to break them up? Who planted that tree? And how did the conversation go?

"Sweetheart, we can't plant it there. It's too close to the steps. There isn't room for it to grow."

"But I really, really want it there, daddy. So I can touch it when I go to school in the morning. It's MY tree, and I really need it there."

"OK, sweetheart, but it's going to get big, and we are going to have to cut it back sometimes or we won't be able to get down the steps. Is that OK with you?"

How old was she then? Didn't she think ahead to the time when that tree had grown tall and strong and too big to live alongside the steps? Where is she now? Does she ever think of her tree and the day she planted it? Or has she forgotten her tree and her house and her room and the dreams she had there? Does she ever think of them?

I try to. I remember, even if she forgets.

So we fled Detroit, headed for home. Will the city survive? Well, obviously, the National Football League will assure that the Lions survive. Maybe the Tigers. But the Museum of Art? There's talk that the collection may be sold off in bits to keep the city alive. And the Detroit Symphony Orchestra? Not much there to sell off. Just memories and copyrights. So long, Detroit, it's been good to know you.

California ahead. Thank God. I'd like a decaf coffee and a double dose of chips, please. —WT

Fifteenth Annual Writer's Digest Short Short Story Competition

Write a story with fewer than 1500 words to win \$3,000 in cash, publication in *Writer's Digest Magazine*, and a paid trip to the ever-popular *Writer's Digest Conference*.

Early-Bird Entry Deadline: November 17; Final Entry Deadline: December 15, 2014.

Enter online at writersdigest.com/competitions/short-short-story-competition?et_mid=697974&rid=234742223 —WT

What a Waist

Continued from Page 9

Somebody else was already logged in.

"Welcome, Bubbles013," Mira read.

Mira looked over her shoulder again and quickly closed the browser. Then, as she crept out of Alna's bedroom, Mira mulled over what she had just seen. Her furrowed brow deepened with each stride back toward the dining room.

"Surely she'll at least serve a tasty dessert," Mira muttered. "She's a pastry chef. Pie is her specialty. Last year she made pumpkin *and* pecan. There has to be pie."

Mira entered the dining room and sat back down at the table. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw that her dish had already been cleared.

"Where's Alna?" she asked.

"In the kitchen," her husband said, worried. "She said she'd be right back with dessert."

Mira rubbed her hands together. "Now, don't you worry. Alna outdoes herself with her desserts every year."

The door between the kitchen and dining room flung open. Out popped Alna with a tray of desserts. Heads turned. Necks stretched.

"Is it pie?" asked Mira.

Alna set the tray on the table. "No pie this year. I made something better for us."

Five small custard dishes, filled with brownish orange goo, stared back at Mira and her family.

"Well, what is it then?"

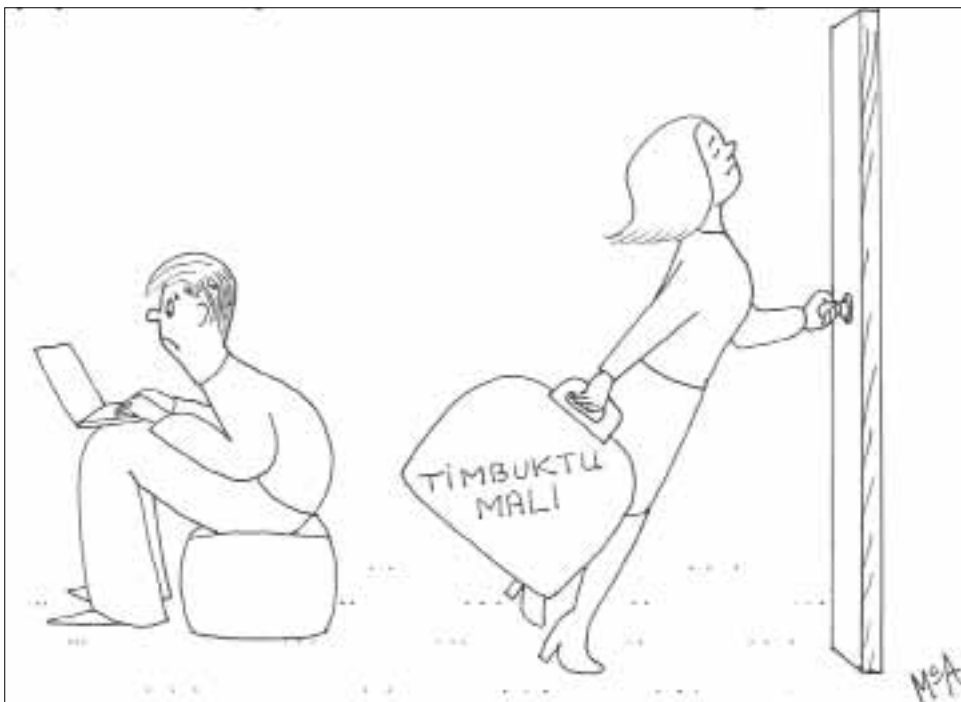
"Pumpkin sorbetto!"

Mira frowned.

Sneaky Snackers sure was different. —WT

Nanowrimo

— Maddie McEwen-Asker



Nelly left for the whole month of November to avoid the Nanowrimo nightmare.

The Swerve: How the World Became Modern

In *The Swerve*, Stephen Greenblatt investigates how Lucretius' work was saved from oblivion by a 15th-century book hunter.

Written in the first century B.C., Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, or *On the Nature of Things*, is a 7,400-line poem covering philosophy, physics, optics, cosmology, sociology, psychology, religion and sex. His poem influenced Newton and Darwin. —WT

Contests and Markets and Other Activities: Something For Everyone

by Carolyn Donnell



Carolyn Donnell
Contributing Editor

Want to write that novel? National Novel Writing Month for 2014 starts on November 1. Write-ins have already started at nanowrimo.org/ See forum - South Bay - after you sign in at nanowrimo.org/regions/usa-california-south-bay

If you are into non-fiction then try Write Nonfiction in November (WNFIN), also known as National Nonfiction Writing Month (NaNonFiWriMo) – Nina Amir's answer to NaNoWriMo. Read about it at writtenonfictionnow.com/about-write-nonfiction-in-november/

There's even something for poets in November: *Writers Digest* November 2014 PAD (Poem-a-Day) Chapbook challenge. A prompt-a-day challenge similar to last April, but concentrating on building a chapbook. See guidelines at writersdigest.com/whats-new/2014-november-pad-chapbook-challenge-guidelines

Ongoing lists of contests and other monetary opportunities. (Some are free to enter, some are not. Be sure to check all deadlines and carefully follow all rules.)

- *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/
- *Writer's Digest*: writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions
- Winning Writers: winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests
- 10 Literary Journals That Pay Their Writers: publish.com/10-literary-journals-that-pay-their-writers/

Other resources:

- *Poets & Writers* say you can use their Small Presses database to research publisher interests, contact information and submission guidelines. See www.pw.org/small_presses
- *The Writer Magazine* keeps an ongoing list of publishers at <http://www.writermag.com/market-directory/publisher/>
- *Writer's Digest* has Writers Market, but it is a paid service. See writersmarket.com/PaidServices/
- Vermont Studio Center has some resources listed for writers. See vermontstudiocenter.org/ to check out their fellowships and resource list.

If you receive an opportunity in your email to enter a contest, by all means check it out on its website. Find out if it is a true contest, or a publisher's promotion, or – sad to say – a scam.

Good luck, and be sure to let us know if you have any good news. – WT

Call for Submissions: Purple Passion Press

Purple Passion Press has a call for their first anthology on the topic of the dead: ghosts, spirits, and the afterlife. They are seeking literary flash fiction and poetry. Deadline December 1, 2014. For more details visit: <http://purplepassionpress.com/>

Writing Coach: Now hiring

Ivy Climbing Education Services (www.IvyClimbing.com), an education consulting company located in Sunnyvale, is currently recruiting two talented writing coach/college admission advisors (combined positions) to work with high school students. For more information, send email to: hello@IvyClimbing.com

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

The Spheres

Even silence –
the deep vacuum of space –
is music.

– Stephen C. Wetlesen

Words Drawing Music

Words Drawing Music is an ongoing open mic opportunity at Works San Jose and it's at a time SBW doesn't have one – second Thursdays, 7 to 9 p.m. They advertise a friendly environment where artists and others can enjoy inspirational poetry and music while exploring artistic creativity. They provide paper and drawing materials or you can bring your own (no paints please). An open mic is open to all! They invite all you artists, poets, musicians, and comedians to show your talents at Works, 365 South Market Street (downtown San José on the Market Street edge of the San José Convention Center). – WT

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 dlbmlb@comcast.net

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

**Come to meetings.
Stay informed.**



The portable bulletin board keeps us up-to-date on news about publishing or other topics important to writers.

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 204, 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. mtdiablowlriters.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 writing groups; Open Mic

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

Writing Group: A Chapter at a Time

Needs a SBW sponsor.



Happy Thanksgiving

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 2014						1
2	3 1:30P Mystery Circle 2P Valley Writers	4	5 7:30P SBW Board Meeting	6	7 7:30P Open mic Barnes&Noble Almaden, San Jose	8 1:30P Editors Powwow
9 10A Our Voices	10 2P Valley Writers 6:00P SBW Dinner Harry's Hofbrau	11	12	13 Noon: Riders do Right	14	15 Deadline <i>WritersTalk</i>
16	17 2P Valley Writers	18	19	20	21 7:30P Open mic Wil- low Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave	22
23 10A Our Voices	24 2P Valley Writers	25	26	27 Thanksgiving	28	29
30						
Future Flashes						
Holiday Party 3:30 Sunday, December 14						

Poetry readings

Poets@Play

Second Sundays: Check for times
Markham House History Park
1650 Senter Rd., San Jose

Poetry Center San Jose

Willow Glen Library
3rd Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.
1157 Minnesota Ave., San Jose

For more info, contact Karen Phan
at phan_karen@yahoo.com or go to
poetrycentersanjose.org/calendar

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www.southbaywriters.com

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

**South Bay Writers
November Regular Meeting
6 p.m. Monday, November 10**

Harry's Hofbrau
390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose

Dick Yaeger

**Learn how CreateSpace
might be the right place
for your creations**

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.