



WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

Nils Peterson Romantic Poetry and More

by Edie Matthews

Nils Peterson is known for making poetry accessible and especially fun. His Valentine's Day performance with the Choraliars, the award-winning San Jose State University choral group, is an annual Valentine's Day favorite for many. However, CWC members and guests can get a sneak preview of his talent (sans the Chorliars) and pick up a few tips on poetry at the February 9th meeting—just in time to impress the one you love—or/and enhance your own writing.



FROM PAINTING BY JUDITH PETERSON

Peterson's poems have been published in poetry journals and small presses, and he is the author of two books of poetry, with a third collection of poems, *Driving a Herd of Moose to Durango*, coming out shortly.

In addition, he has also written science fiction, as well as articles on subjects ranging from golf to Shakespeare. This year he has been nominated for a 2005 Pushcart Prize.

Recently retired, Nils Peterson is Professor Emeritus at San Jose State University, where he taught creative writing, Shakespearean literature, and coordinated the creative writing program. During his SJSU stint he was honored, as professor of the year, by the Tower Society.

Nils Peterson grew up in Plainsfield, New Jersey and Mount Vernon, New York. Initially, he planned to become a chemist. But when his freshman English instructor invited him to join the upper division creative writing class, a new destiny was forged.

"In those days freshman English was an introduction to literature," said Peterson. "I can still quote some of the Dylan Thomas I read in that class." And Peterson recited a few lines from "Twenty Four Years."

*In the groin of the natural doorway I crouched like a tailor
Sewing a shroud for a journey
By the light of the meat-eating sun.
Dressed to die, the sensual strut begun . . .*

(Peterson Continued on page 5)

Member Profile & Congratulations Beth Proudfoot MFCC

By Una Daly



Beth Proudfoot, director of the East of Eden Conference and our own South Bay Hospitality VP, was

one of nine recipients of the Jack London award at the annual California Writers Club meeting in October. This once in a lifetime award is conferred on individuals for outstanding service to their branch. When the Central Board discontinued the popular Asilomar Writer's Conference four years ago, Beth and the rest of the South Bay board were disappointed but decided that they had all the necessary talent to run a writers' conference themselves. They held the first conference in 2002 and proved they could do an even bigger and better one this past August.

A "Professional Speaker" in her paid job, Beth gives talks to schools,

(Proudfoot Continued on page 4)

A Look to the Future:

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President's Prowling—

a monthly treat from our Pres, Bill Baldwin



“Zen and The Art: ‘Focus... De-Focus’...”

My chiropractor displays, on his walls, those “magic” pictures that become three-dimensional once you “de-focus” your eyes properly.

I’ve been hesitating, these past few weeks, about using an online gift certificate to purchase an unabridged audio recording of *Swann’s Way* –

the first volume of Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*. I spent about seventeen years reading this book, most of the time spent on the first section. The narrative seems to wander aimlessly (Yes: Proust influenced Joyce and Woolf).

Proust once described his writing as “looking through the wrong end of a telescope.” As an astronomer, I admit that metaphor puzzles me. However, pondering my online gift certificate, my struggles reading Proust, and my chiropractor’s three-dimensional pictures, I recalled that the first time I really listened to Wagner, I was bored and fascinated at the same time. Eventually my ears “de-focused” – and I was hooked.

Last month, at our December Open Mike, I read the famous “madeleine” episode from Proust. “Someone” (“out” yourself if you wish!) told me: “I was so annoyed with you for reading that – but towards the end it all came together.” As Marcel dips a madeleine cake into a cup of tea, he suddenly remembers, with total clarity, his childhood; whose memories had been vague and incomplete until then. Marcel has “de-focused.”

Now I must tell you, I have sometimes discussed with my friends the possibility that I have some kind of “attention deficit.” In any case (was it the Zen training?) I am able, sometimes, to de-focus – and thereby appreciate Wagner and Proust and three-dimensional pictures (and Joyce? And Woolf?).

Which leads me (at last?) to my point, and your homework: How do you figure out whether something very different is well-done – or garbage? It took me months to get hooked on Wagner; and seventeen years to get hooked on Proust. (I’m semi-hooked on Joyce; and Woolf? “Still working on it”. I enjoy Schoenberg’s music – but am not hooked).

If I stare at Jackson Pollack paintings a bit longer, will I de-focus?

Charles Ives, the American composer, once asked: “Are my ears on right?” They were – he just heard music differently. When Schoenberg ventured into atonal music, he quoted a poem: “I feel air from other planets.” Some people hear differently or see differently or read differently. *That* doesn’t make them artists. They’re *artists*, I think, if they can manage somehow to guide *us* to hear, see, read, perceive, ... extra dimensions we’ve been unaware of before. If that doesn’t happen, we’re stuck with the eternal question: “Is it *me*? – Or *you*?”

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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Execs

President—Bill Baldwin

408 730 9622, pres@...

Vice President—Edie Mathews

408 985 0819, vp@...

Secretary—Cathy Bauer

secretary@...

Treasurer—Susan Mueller

650 691 9802, Treasurer@...

Central Board Rep—Bob Garfinkle

ragarf@earthlink.com

Chairs

Programs—Edie Mathews

408 985 0819, vp@...

Historian—not filled

Hospitality—Jackie Mutz

jacqueline.mutz@verizon.net

Publicity—Edie Mathews

408 985 0819, vp@...

Membership—Diana Richomme

membership@...

Roster—Vickie Miller

roster@...

Raffle—Cathy Bauer

secretary@...

Conference—Beth Proudfoot

eastofeden@...

Reading Forum—Bill Baldwin

408 730 9622

Webmaster—Ro Davis

webmaster@...

Unless otherwise noted above, our email address is
...@southbaywriters.com

Join Up

We have a membership category that fits you, dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee.

For the details contact our membership chair, Diane Richomme at

Membership@southbaywriters.com

Member Profile Steve Wetlesen J.D.

By Una Daly

“Against all odds, I have managed to create a small part time business creating poetic art on demand for all kinds of needs, events and occasions, notably weddings, birthdays, memorials and even a little poetry for medical and emotional recovery,” said member Steve Wetlesen. Steve creates his poetic art like fine artists who paint and sculpt on commission. He longs for a return to the Elizabethan age when poetry was ubiquitous and even the lowliest business invoice was written in verse.



Steve with Gandalf Walking Stick

Steve was invited to write a poem for the 1999 dedication of the Mexican Heritage Plaza in San Jose through his association with the Cesar Chavez family. His poetry has brought tears to the eyes of recipients and he even received a hand carved “Gandalf” walking stick from an appreciative docent at Henry Cowell State Park, whom Steve memorialized in a poem about old growth redwoods.

Prior to his poetic art business taking off, Steve spent four years corresponding with Texas death-row inmate turned devout Christian, Karla Faye Tucker. The fin-



Editor's Titch

Like some others, I have a dream... I imagine a literary quarterly akin to Zoetrope's *All Story*, wherein those of us not on an agent's list or having a drink with our publisher, can see our work in a book store... maybe for sale.

I envision editors from our club selecting, for publication in this quarterly, from our diligently done but here-to-fore unrecognized work. These editors wouldn't be captive to profit, and quality would instead rule their day. And I visualize them commenting helpfully on the work that didn't quite make “that cut”, with the whys and wherefores and, if appropriate, how to improve— maintaining a distance from the dreaded impersonal letter.

I picture contests and awards— recognition for all writers. I think of including members first and, when things are going well, inviting Valley locals. I fancy distributing this quarterly through venues like galleries, coffee shops and bookstores and in time through subscriptions. In my dream, I call this anthology *Expressions*.

I also see a growing reception in the Valley for visual art and theater, and its sponsorship from industry that has rooted here and blossomed. And why not our local written art, I ask? In my mind's eye, I see this evolving support touching us, and our creative writing increasingly recognized and rewarded. *DLR*

ished opus, entitled “Letters to Karla” including a final moving letter to Steve written just prior to her execution, has not yet found a publisher.

Raised in Cupertino, Steve attended Monta Vista High, UC Berkeley and received his law degree from the University of Santa Clara. Steve admits to having been an intense child who found his outlet in writing about

(*Wetlesen Continued on page 4*)

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WritersTalk Staff

Managing Editor

David LaRoche (408) 729-3941
newsletter@southbaywriters.com
writerstalk@comcast.net

News Editor

Danielle Fafchamps
Bastogne@mac.com

Profiles and Columns Editor

Una Daly
unatdaly@mac.com

Copy Editor

Jackie Mutz
jacqueline.mutz@verizon.net

Submit:

Guest Columns

— *Almost Anything Goes*
Letters to Ed—*In My Opinion*
to Una Daly

News Items to Danielle Fafchamps

Literary Work

Announcements and Advertisement
to Dave LaRoche

Submittals may also be sent to our website at www.southbaywriters.com/newsletter/newsletter-main.html.

Announcements are accepted on the basis of interest and value to writers, have no economic value to the originator and are published free of charge.

Advertising is accepted on the basis of its interest and value to writers and is charged \$7 per column-inch for members and \$10 for non members. Ads will be limited to three column-inches. Contact the Managing Editor.

All Submittals must be to an editor no later than the 16th of the month preceding publication. *WritersTalk* is published on the 1st of the month.

(Wetlesen Continued from page 3)

meteors and other astronomical phenomena. Although he regards himself as a writer first, his day job remains the practice of law, at least, until the big deal comes along.

Some years ago, sister Sheila Bailey, a renowned illustrator and writer of children's books encouraged Steve to find a writing group. "CWC is constantly exposing me to new ideas and ways of seeing the world," said Steve, "but the most important thing they do is keep me extremely humble."

Recently, Steve created a poem for the new CD from Peruvian panpipe musical group Karumanta, whose name translates to "From Far Away" in the Quecha Indian language. Steve was also General Counsel and Public Affairs Officer for a local hydrogen fuel cell business. Using his poetic art, he promoted the worldwide technological revolution from fossil fuels to hydrogen until the company's untimely demise.

Pablo Neruda and the Japanese haiku masters are the poets that Steve counts among his favorites although he admits to finding Neruda enigmatic at times. He also enjoys the "deep cosmic truths" in the writings of Douglas Adams, CS Lewis, and JRR Tolkien. Kurt Vonnegut is another favorite. *UD*

DARK MATTER, DARK ENERGY
A poem by Steve Wetlesen

Halo without an angel.
Wings without a bird.
Great waves without an ocean.
Delicate petals without the most
fragrant deepest red rose.
Bright glittering light without a
pure emerald
nor an intricate coats of arms
stained glass window
in a palace or cathedral
nor even a flickering giant star.
Fins without a mile long whale.
Thunder without operas.
A gold ruby crown without a
monarch.
What do we look for
when we see
nothing at all,
yet all is
exploding,
pregnant
suggestion?

(Proudfoot Continued from page 1)

conferences, churches, and parent groups on parenting issues as well as time and money management. She has just released a new CD: "Go to Your Room! Stress, Anger, and Children" which covers her most popular talk.

Originally from Santa Rosa, Beth met her husband of 25 years as an undergraduate at Stanford. She went on to earn her MS in Clinical Psychology and worked for many years as a Marriage, Family, and Child Counselor (MFCC) before a difficult third pregnancy followed by a new baby, and two small boys kept her home for five years. Changing diapers and running after toddlers during the day, she discovered writing and its therapeutic effects in the wee hours.

"One night, I was nursing the baby in the dark and the first page

of a novel came to me," said Beth. "After the baby fell asleep, I went upstairs and put it on the computer." The resulting book "Escape from Paradise" written over the next five years featured a Mommy Hero who saved the world. By the time her youngest was in kindergarten, Beth found CWC and began her apprenticeship as a writer.

When Beth joined the South Bay club more than seven years ago, it was still a small group. She signed up to be Raffle chair when she realized that she could utilize her "garage sales" talents and improve the lackluster prizes consisting of a couple of used books and a plant. "For me the CWC has provided an intensive post-graduate course in the art and business of being a writer," says Beth. "In addition, I've made some wonderful friends—and you know what they say, it's not what you know, it's who you know."

Beth is working on a second novel and although "Escape from Paradise" won several awards, it has not yet sold. The latest book is another suspense offering with a theme of embracing non-violence in a world that is full of violent stalkers and killers. Beth hopes that her second novel will be so successful that the first one finally sells. She also writes non-fiction for her speaking business and actually gets paid for that.

Writers that Beth enjoys include Diana Gabaldon, Elizabeth Peters, and Laurie R. King in the historical fiction genre. Michael Connelly and Tobias Wolfe are

Chapbook Poetry Contest

First Place \$500.00

24 to 30 text pages with \$15.00 reading fee to:

Poet's Corner Press
8049 Thornton Rd.
Stockton CA 95209
Deadline March 1, 2005

www.poetscornerpress.com
For more detail

Advocate and writer, Teresa LeYung Ryan will be signing her new mother-daughter novel, *LOVE MADE OF HEART* on the 9th of February at the Monticello Inn, 127 Ellis St. San Francisco. Come for the wine tasting.

On the Web

by Webmaster, Ro Davis



Since we revamped the website last October, we've added lots of features. The latest new thing is the SBW Message Board. Check it out -- this is a great way for our members and potential members to communicate. The board is pretty easy to use, but if you get stuck, contact me and I'll do my best to help.

We now have a "Resources" page on the site with info about writing contests, conferences, critique groups, workshops, market information. Your contributions are most welcome, and not limited to the current categories. Any event or info of interest to writers is fair game.

We also have a new area for *WritersTalk*. The newsletter's submission guidelines are there with a handy online form by which you can submit work to the columns: Anything Goes (Almost) and In My Opinion, and another form for submitting literary pieces. In the works: more submission forms for ads and announcements and a past issue archive.

We aim to pack as much content into our site as we can, to make it useful and interesting and fun! Ideas, com-



See you on the web

(Peterson Continued from page 1)

Peterson wrote some poetry in college, but didn't get into it until graduate school where he was inspired by the other creative people in his classes.

In 1963 after receiving his MA from Rutgers, he came to California to work at San Jose State University. He had never been to the West Coast, and figured he would return home after a few years and then start his serious academic life. "Which hasn't happened yet," quipped Peterson.

Now Peterson feels very lucky to have ended up in California. "The East Coast is rigid—here there's an atmosphere of saying yes."

Even after being retired, Peterson continues to mentor, conduct workshops and perform readings. He says the act of writing poetry will enhance your other writing. "It makes you concentrate. Working on the small helps you with the large."

Join us and Nils Peterson Feb 9th at our general meeting and celebrate an early Valentine's Day with an evening of romantic poetry and a dash of humor. *EM*

View from the Boards

by Danielle Fafchamps

Local Board

The South Bay Board met in Santa Clara on January 19. Highlights from the meeting include:

- Edie Matthews has secured an exciting list of speakers for our Chapter meetings (Nils Peterson, Mitch Berman, Larry Wilde, Paul Douglass, as well as agents and publishers). Check the website regularly for updates (www.southbaywriters.com).

- Diana Richomme, our Membership Chair, clarified the membership: Affiliates: 45; Associates: 35; Active members: 63; Life member: 1; Out-of-State: 4.

- Our branch has a total of 148 members with 102 Active and Associates reported to the Central Board. Two new members joined South Bay in 2005. Check our website to find out more about the different kinds of membership.

- Jackie Mutz joined the Newsletter team as Copy Editor starting next month.

- Following the assertive lead of Beth Proudfoot, the Board is already planning the 2006 East of

Eden Conference.

In response to growing comment, your Board is looking into alternate venues for general meetings. Location, ambiance and cuisine are the considerations—improvement in all, the goal.

Central Board

Bob Garfinkle, our Central Board representative, brought back interesting information from his trek up I-880 to their meeting in Oakland.

- Four groups may become new local CWC chapters: one in Sonora, and three in Southern California. Each group is in the process of meeting the requirements for establishing a new branch which includes: meeting monthly for at least 6 months with a minimum of 15 members— of which 8 are required to be published authors.

- The Central Board is establishing a CWC Scholarship fund. All members are eligible to serve on the committee that will oversee this activity. If you are interested, contact Bob (ragarf@earthlink.net) and include CWC in the subject area.

(Boards Continued on page 6)

Reminder

(Boards Continued from page 5)

■ The Peninsula branch started a Young Writers Club for 8-18 year olds. Following their successful experiment, the Central Board approved a new category of membership aimed at young writers.

■ On April 23 and 24, CWC will have a booth at the popular Festival of Books, an annual event sponsored by the LA Times and UCLA, held on university campus.

■ How is membership distributed? As of December 31, 2004, there are 881 members statewide in CWC: The largest branch is Mt. Diablo (114) ... the smallest, High Desert with 24 members. Members are encouraged to check the redesigned main site of the CWC: www.calwriters.org *DF*

Elizabeth Lyon's Mapping Your Novel By Una Daly

Over fifty attendees crowded into Elizabeth Lyon's "Mapping your Novel" workshop on a recent Saturday in Sunnyvale. Judging by my table, over half had not yet discovered the California Writers Club although most had completed a draft of a novel or were well into the process.



Lyon urged us to first understand our characters at an emotional level, particularly their yearnings because "Yearning propels the plot overtly or covertly

on each page." We then examined our characters' fears, strengths, and weaknesses to see how this would dictate their behavior in different situations.

Scenes, the events that happen at a certain time and place, move a character closer to their goal and most novels consist of 75% scenes. More action-packed novels contain 90% scene work with more psychological ones weighing in at 60%. It is the author's job to reveal a character's goal in a scene even as we may thwart their reaching that goal through any number of obstacles.

Each obstacle in a scene creates tension and "Writers should hold readers in suspense until they decide to let them go," said Lyon. Subtexts such as stormy weather or sexual attraction can be an effective way to build suspense in a scene. These elements may bubble along beneath the surface foreshadowing future events or may erupt unexpectedly.

A character reacts to events from a previous scene in a sequel. A character should respond emotionally in a sequel and the author should not neglect building this connection with the reader. A decision is made and the course of action embarked on before the sequel is over.

Foreshadowing previews the larger than life scenes known as set pieces. For example, the preview to a major love scene may be a meal where the lovers are feeding each other and looking deeply into each other's eyes. Surprise should not be used to introduce a set piece because it robs the reader of the emotional buildup to the big scene.

TRY THIS

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CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP Beginning the week of Feb. 14th

Fictions, fables, facts, memoirs, mysteries and more!

Learn the elements of creative writing, invent fascinating characters and compelling plots. Enhance your writing skills. Write your memoirs, preserve the stories in your family.

This class focuses on getting a short story published in the San Jose Mercury News!

INSTRUCTOR:
EDIE MATTHEWS

Weekly on-going classes at 3 Santa Clara locations.

Register at class or online at

www.scae.org

or call Santa Clara Adult Education at
408 423-3500

Good authors "generate movement line to line using shortcuts," said Lyon, where scene, subtext, and sequel are merged. Physical and emotional movement in a short chapter can expedite the plot and ending your chapter with a hook will keep your reader engaged.

Author, editor, teacher, and mentor, Lyon has lived in Eugene, Oregon for the past twenty years raising two children. All the tips mentioned above, and more, are covered in her book "A Writer's Guide to Fiction" published in 2004. The earlier "The Sell Your Novel Tool Kit" is also available. She is also the president of Editing International, LLC, a partnership of three editors. *UD*

Announcements

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Announcements

Reminder

Our February Meeting will be held on Feb 9th as scheduled.

Bring your appetite for Harry's cuisine as well as your sentimental side and listen to Nils Peterson talk about the language of love

A new South Bay novel critique group has formed in the Milpitas to Hayward area. If you are interested in joining us for our monthly sessions, please contact Jeannine Vegh at:
ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net

**Get Published in WritersTalk
Earn a bit of Prestige**
Send your *literary work* to the editor—poetry, essays, short fiction. When we publish, we will announce your inclusion at our next meeting. Keep them less than 1200 words... but we're negotiable. Dave LaRoche at
writerstalk@comcast.net

SF/peninsula writers will meet on Feb 19, Saturday, from 10 til noon at Hobee's, 1101 Shoreway Rd, Belmont (near Ralston and 101).
Make reservations at **reservations@sfpensulawriters.com** or call Rick at (650) 852-9700. Members: \$12; nonmembers: \$15, includes continental breakfast. Speaker to be announced—watch the web site



Write a column—

Anything Goes (Almost). That's the name of the column space and we mean it. Your climb up Everest, your first pair of roller skates, your thoughts on the "book table" or the Arts Community in SJ or London. Make it opinionated, informational, persuasive, with attitude... we can take it. Email it to Una Daly, our columns editor, before the 16th of the month. Should you want guidance, she'll call you—leave a phone number in your email.

unatdaly@mac.com

BOOK TABLE

Hosting old reads from some, new adventures for others

Clean out shelves, bring in your old books—those you've read a dozen times or wont read at all. Bring them to the book table and give others an opportunity to catch up... and all you TV couch potatoes, come pick up new readings por nada. It's a great deal—and the return policy is far more than "lenient".

Every monthly meeting, the Book Table is set

GOT NEWS?

Know of an event that needs reporting—one coming up or happening now. Call us, we want to cover it. Email Danielle, our news editor—she'll hop on it or appoint one of her many staff members.

- Book Reviews**
- Committee Meetings**
- Critique Groups**
- Reading Fournms**
- Book-store openings**
- Agency openings**

If it's of interest to writers we want to publish it.

fayenbois@mac.com



South Bay Writers' Open Mic

First Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm
Borders Books
50 University Ave, Los Gatos

Third Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm
Barns and Noble
1875 So Bascom, Campbell

Read from your own prose or poetry, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. It's good experience and great fun—and if your knees wobble a little, we won't notice.

For a spot at the podium, contact Bill Baldwin beforehand.

408 730 9622 or email **wabaldwin@aol.com**



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
1125 Miguel Ave
Los Altos, CA 94024

WWW.southbaywriters.com

Stamp(s)

MEMBER



Address Correction Requested

SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors
Feb 2 6:30
Sonoma Chicken Coop

General Meeting
Feb 9 6pm
Harry's Hofbrau

Editors Pow Wow
Feb 18 Xpm

General Membership meeting—2nd Wenesday

— 0 —

Harry's Hofbrau
390 Saratoga Ave at Keily Blvd
San Jose

See Map

