



# WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch  
Writers Club Monthly

## Mitch Berman, Author & Professor The ABCs of Publishing Short Stories by Edie Matthews



Eager to find an agent or publisher? One avenue is to get a short story published in a literary magazine. Many writers, including Amy Tan, Catherine Ryan Hyde and Melissa Banks landed representation and clinched book deals after their stories were published in literary magazines. So even though the pay from smaller magazines can sometimes be as low as \$25 and two copies of the publication (Zoetrope pays \$1000), the exposure is worth the effort.

So now you've written a short story, or perhaps one of the chapters in your novel could be a short story, and you want to get it published. But what's the next step? And most importantly, where should you send it for maximum exposure?

Mitch Berman, writer, editor and English Professor at San Jose State University will explain it all. Mitch has had numerous stories published in literary journals like *Triquarterly*, *Conjunctions*, *The Southwest Review*, *The Michigan Review*, *Agni*, *Omni* and *Boulevard*, and on four occasions his work has been nominated for the Pushcart Award.

Mitch has developed a system. He researched which magazines have printed stories that went on to be collected in the *Best America Short Story* Anthologies or win the most literary honors, e.g., Pushcart Awards, O'Henry Awards, etc. These are the journals he submits to first. At our next meeting, he will not only explain his strategy, he will also distribute a detailed hand-out.

Being submitted for literary awards is not new for Mitch. Putnam nominated his novel, *Time Capsule*, for the Pulitzer Prize and PEN/Hemingway Award.

However, Mitch didn't start out to be a writer. Initially he planned on becoming an attorney. Yet ever since he was in high school, he felt confident about writing essays or persuasive speeches. (He was part of the high school debate team.) He even founded an underground newspaper called *Letters from the Earth*. (The name came from a book by Mark Twain, which Mitch

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## Success!

An Interview with Kathryn Madison  
by Danielle Fafchamps

Congratulations to Kathryn on the release of her novel: *Woman's Sigh, Wolf Song*.

### Synopsis:

Alexandra Verazzano flees to the Canadian high country, where her



recovery from a brutal divorce mirrors the struggle of a timber wolf against the challenges of his environment. From the darkness of the Seattle underground, through the depths of

(Continued on page 4)

### NOTICE! NOTICE! NOTICE!

Our next  
**GENERAL MEETING**  
will be held at the  
**Lookout Bar & Grill**  
**605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale**  
**(Sunnyvale Golf Course)**  
**6 PM, Wed. Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>**  
Members \$14, Guests \$17  
(includes Dinner)

### A Look to the Future:

Mar 2	Board of Directors Meeting	
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Mar 9	Gen Meeting, Mitch Berman	p1
Mar 18	Open Mic, Barnes and Noble, Pruneyard	p11
Mar 25	Editors Meeting, 1:30p, Main Street Cafe	

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## President's Prowling—

a monthly treat from our Pres, Bill Baldwin will return next month

(Berman from page 1)

considered “pure genius.”)

Still, aside from all of this writing, Mitch wasn't certain he could create literature. Then during his second year at Cal-Berkeley, he turned in his first story to his Creative Writing professor, noted poet Ishmael Reed. Reed wrote, “I think there's some brilliant attention-getting rambling going on here.” Mitch admitted, “A young writer's want for praise doesn't hear anything but the word ‘brilliant’.” Under Reed's tutelage and encouragement, Mitch became convinced his destiny was to become a writer.

Mitch completed his degree at Berkeley and eventually moved to New York and earned an MFA in Creative Writing at Columbia University. While at Columbia, he was mentored by another influential talent, acclaimed writer, Russell Banks. Later when Banks was asked to suggest a promising new writer for the PEN American New Writers Reading, he recommended Mitch.

At the ceremony, Mitch read an excerpt from his MFA thesis, *Time Capsule*, and knocked them dead. Afterward, the Master of Ceremonies, Faith Sale, a powerful New York editor who worked with Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut Jr., asked to publish Mitch's novel. The same evening, Sterling Lord, Jack Kerouac's agent, sprang up out of the audience and asked to represent him.

In addition to his writing and his teaching duties at SJSU, Mitch is the director for the Center for Literary Arts and has been instrumental in bringing to campus—and interviewing in public conversations—such authors as Russell Banks, Studs Terkel, W.S. Merwin, Robert Bly, Simon Winchester, Tobias Wolff, Ishmael Reed, and the first sitting Nobel Laureate in the eighteen-year history of the Center for Literary Arts, J.M. Coetzee.

Join us on Mar 9<sup>th</sup> at the Lookout Bar & Grill when Mitch Berman will give us the inside track to short story publishing. *EM*

## Signs of Getting Old

Sketch by Dave LaRoche

Only the elderly may excuse a defect in behavior with the utterance, “senior moment”—it's often done for us. There is deference to age... offers of seating when space is limited; discounts everywhere; help with crossing streets, negotiating steps, carting groceries, counting change...

Today I bought bananas, fifty-five cents worth. I dragged a handful of change from my pocket, picked two quarters and a nickel and gave them to the cashier, leaving seven pennies among miscellaneous coins – not wanting to bother with them. With my coin hand still open she asked, “Wouldn't you like to get rid of those pennies, sir?” I nodded agreeably (we do that), and while I watched, she reached into my hand and from the rest of the change, counted out five pennies and re-deposited the nickel.

Now, would that happen to a 35 year old?

## California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— o —

### Execs

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408 730 9622, pres@...

**Vice President**—Edie Matthews

408 985 0819, vp@...

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secretary@...

**Treasurer**—Susan Mueller

650 691 9802, Treasurer@...

**Central Board Rep**—Bob Garfinkle

ragarf@earthlink.com

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408 985 0819, vp@...

**Historian**—not filled

**Hospitality**—Jackie Mutz

jacqueline.mutz@verizon.net

**Publicity**—Edie Matthews

408 985 0819, vp@...

**Membership**—Diana Richomme

membership@...

**Roster**—Vickie Miller

roster@...

**Raffle**—Cathy Bauer

secretary@...

**Conference**—Beth Proudfoot

eastofeden@...

**Open Mic**—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

## Niles Peterson Entertained and Enlightened

By Dave LaRoche

Following an announcement that we were "out of the Houf-brau" for our next meeting and the accompanying murmur-from-the-crowd, Nils Peterson began his marvelous presentation with this observation: *Dreary place, this meeting hall. Cast such a pall... hard to imagine inspiration sneaking in at all*

—o—  
*Dirty Bathwater  
 Where to throw it out  
 Insects singing in the grass,*

by the Japanese master, Baksho, and a discussion pitting our revulsion of insects against our love of the song, began an extraordinary journey into poetry, both narrative and lyrical. *Never ask what a poem means, but how does it mean?* he suggested with humorous admonition. *Or you might ask,* he added, *what is it the author is saying?* Narrative poetry for the most part, tells a story. Lyrical, again in the main, portrays a feeling—*though little in definitions is absolute.*

A tall, angling man with an imposing voice and irresistible humor, he led us along paths of everyman's journey using poetry and humor as his vehicle. A professor of English emeritus and the Chair of the Humanities Department at SJSU, Nils had warmed his student-protégés with his insight for thirty-six years and this night we fortunate were privy to the rich distillation. He currently appears at the Poetry Center of San Jose, located, he said, ... *somewhere close to a fire house in Kelley Park.*

He had a cold, he explained as

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## Editor's Itch

Every month for about four years Carolyn Downey singularly pulled together a newsletter and published it. This means that for about a week every month she was composing and for the preceding week she was anticipating and planning, thus a good chunk of her life for those years was spent in forming and facilitating the Club.

Carolyn would have asked: Will submittals come as promised, is there space for this construction, will they be of appropriate character, is it this announcement or that? And of course there were the technical concerns of software malfunction, crashes and lock-ups—data loss. And the human problems of misses in understanding and interpretation associated with transactions and changes. My gosh Carolyn, how did you persevere for those years? Of course you did—and with magnificent aplomb.

We understand fully that the newsletter brings cohesiveness to the group. It imparts common purpose, broadcasts club character and establishes our Branch among its peers. It is a venue for publication for our members (some not otherwise published) and a forum for opinion, a bulletin board for announcement and a platform for our leaders. Overriding all of this is its reflection of our club to its constituents and if the image is good, our club grows in prestige and size as favorable attention is brought, association endowed and new writers sign up and participate.

Yes, Carolyn Downey, these characterizations are present and growing. You have brought our newsletter successfully into its role and it's a pleasure to follow. DLR

*WritersTalk* is a monthly newsletter published by the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club.

### WritersTalk Staff

#### Managing Editor

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

**Profiles and Columns Editor** Una Daly  
 unatdaly@mac.com

**Copy Editor** Jackie Mutz  
 jacqueline.mutz@verizon.net

### Submit:

**Guest Columns**  
 — *Almost Anything Goes*  
**Regular Columns**  
 to Una Daly

News Items to Dave LaRoche

**Literary Work**  
**Announcements and Advertisement**  
**Letters to Ed**—*In My Opinion*  
 to Dave LaRoche

Submittals may also be sent to our website at [www.southbaywriters.com/newsletter/newsletter-main.html](http://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.

### **Help Wanted**

News Editor

Will cover events of interest: Meetings, Open Mic, Book signings, etc. (see p. 11).  
 Call or email Dave LaRoche

(Madison from page 1)

Monterey Bay, into the wilds of the Canadian Rockies, these two stories twist and weave, as woman and wolf rely on their solitary courage and familial bonds to survive.

**How do you write? Do you have rituals?**

During the research, characters take on flesh and blood with voices and opinions. I let them talk inside my head until I sense the structure of a story. If my pulse starts to race, then I write -- fast, visually, and in scenes. I still struggle with the process: to outline or not to outline. I even tried, unsuccessfully, to chart a novel using a spreadsheet.

When I am in the moment, I cannot type fast enough. Between those rare moments of creative gush, however, are the long hours of plain work when I hear Mark Twain whisper, "Oh writing is easy, just open a vein." At the end of each day I edit fanatically. As far as rituals - I do collect "writing music" - CD's that evoke my current story's place, or one of the characters' personality.

**How was your journey to publication?**

Long and circuitous. Writing used to be my therapy during business trips. But my husband encouraged me to applied to the Squaw Valley Writers Conference. With great fear, I drove to the Sierras to offer my child. Other attendees were creative writing students, all very serious and confident. I wanted to go home, but when I called my husband he convinced me to stay. At the end of the week my novel got more praise than criticism. I was encouraged to finish it.

Then I started the gauntlet of query letters to agents and publishers. This is a particularly exquisite sort of torture: I collected many rejections and tried to keep breathing. After a few years, I admit, I lost hope. My break came from an unexpected source. A friend of my mother asked if I'd found a publisher because her granddaughter was in publishing and had expressed interest in my manuscript.

**What were the three most crucial contributors to your success?**

First, growing up in a family that just refused to accept failure. Stamina and persistence are the MOST important characteristics of a writer - talent can be shaped. Second, attending the Squaw Valley Writers Conference. Third, my mother, whose confidence in me never flagged, even when mine did. *DF*

**THE SECRET LOVE AFFAIR**

By Rosalie Mangan

On the far horizon, mountains appear  
as if God lay down upon the land,  
their rolling slopes becoming  
contours of His muscle and bone.

The sky above, given shape  
by His powerful form,  
displays Her ever changing  
mysterious essence.

She warms Him with Her sun,  
caresses Him with Her clouds.  
When daylight slips away,  
She glows with the  
brilliant colors of their union.

Then, He, draped in the  
soft blanket of Her dark night,  
rests in the gentle smile  
of Her moonlight  
and billions of stars  
tell of their love.

They join, these two,  
in a secret love affair.  
He with His mighty form  
and She with the power  
of Her mystery

Rosalie Mangan is a student in one of Edie Mathews' writing classes.

**View from the Board(s)**

by Danielle Fafchamps

The local South Bay Board meets monthly, the State's Central Board meets quarterly.

The South Bay Board met on February 2. Selected highlights from the meeting include:

- \* Five new members joined our club for a total of 153 members.
- \* About *WritersTalk*: Jacqueline Mutz is now on board as copy editor. A suggestion was made to handout at meetings a thumbnail list of member's books and to publish mini profiles of new members. The column on members' profiles has received positive feedback.
- \* Edie Mathews reported that 53 persons attended E. Lyons's workshop on "Mapping your novel." Attendees gave enthusiastic feedback.
- \* Beth Proudfoot has already received inquiries about the date of the next East of Eden conference.
- \* Participants who wish to read at "Prose and Poetry Open Mic Nights" are now able to make reservation via our web site. Go to: [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com) then click on "meetings" then on "open mic."
- \* Phyllis Mattson's membership was upgraded from Associate to Active status following the publication of her novel: "War Orphan in San Francisco - Letters Link a Family Scattered by World War II" *DF*

### Member Profile

**Julie Di Napoli Publishes Husband's Crime Novel**  
By Una Daly



“Asking how much a book costs to publish is like asking how much a car costs; specifications range from the size of the book, to the ink on the paper, and whether or not it will be hardcover or soft bound,” said member Julie Di Napoli. Julie started her own company, Bungalow Publishing to publish *Long Road Home*, a fiction crime novel set

in San Jose and Los Gatos and written by her husband, Rick Di Napoli.

Julie recommends independent publishing to those who want to maintain control of the project and reap the benefits of having produced a book of their own. There may also be significant tax benefits if you own a business. Hiring others to do the typesetting or cover design, as she did, requires getting commitments for timely completion of the tasks. After having been through the process once, she now feels better equipped to produce a book with faster turnaround.

“The book is out and now the fun begins with trying to place it in stores,” said Julie recently. Several review copies are out at Willow Glen Books and Borders in their local author section. The first printing of five hundred books will also be sold through family, friends, and business associates and available for download over the internet to prospective buyers. A local magazine is considering a story about the Di Napolis for a spring issue.

Born and raised in San Jose in a close-knit family of six children, Julie's family home was within five minutes of O'Connor Hospital, where her father maintained a busy obstetrics/gynecology practice. She attended Presentation High School and graduated from California State University, Chico with an M.A. in Speech Pathology, before getting married and staying at home to raise her three children.

Julie started writing seriously after the death of her mother as a way to work through the grief. Keeping a journal of this period helped her to realize that she loved writing and always had. A member of South Bay CWC, Julie credits the club with keeping her in touch with other writers and connected to the

(Continued on page 6)

### Member Profile

**Pirjo Polari-Khan Publishes Book of Short Stories**  
By Una Daly



“Bookstores are reluctant to take self-published books because they can't be returned to the publisher,” says member Pirjo Polari-Khan, “and there's hardly anything left if the author provides the books and gives a percent of sales to the store.” Pirjo published a collection of twenty-six short stories, *Blueberry Pieway and*

*Other Short Stories* last year. The stories are a playful protest against our society's blatant use of “sex” to grab attention.

Pirjo, who wrote her first book at fifteen growing up in Finland, and currently writes a column for a newspaper back home, decided to self-publish after receiving thirty five rejection letters, many of which cited the difficulty of selling a book of short stories not previously published. An on-line self-publishing company, 1st Books.com was recommended, that charged a flat fee to manage the printing process and provide marketing assistance. In addition, a per book wholesale printing price was determined based on royalties.

The entire self-publishing process took a year to complete. Hiring a friend to edit the book, her husband formatted the text, and Pirjo designed the cover featuring her own artwork. It took two months to get an acceptable color for the book cover. In the end it wasn't the color she had wanted but it matched the blueberry in the title. After the book was printed, Pirjo discovered that she was basically on her own in terms of advertising. None of the newspapers contacted by her publisher were interested, so she has had to organize her own book signings and advertisements through local newspapers.

“It was common to hear the sounds of three typewriters throughout the house,” recalled Pirjo, growing up in a family where both parents were published authors. After graduating from high school in Finland and apprenticing at a regional newspaper, she went to England to get her Bachelor's degree in Art from Wolverhampton Polytechnic and met her husband there. They moved to the United States twenty-three years ago where Pirjo has been pursuing her other passions, sculpture and freelance writing. Her sculpture explores the same themes of male-female relationships as she writes about.

(Continued on page 6)

*(Di Napoli from page 5)*

writing community. The sharing of knowledge is especially helpful and she is willing to give advice to other authors thinking about self-publishing.

If she was to pick her all-time favorite book, it would be *Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton. She believes that reading great works develops a writer just as daily writing does.

Julie and her husband are raising three teenage children. Besides writing and publishing, she spends time enhancing her public speaking skills with Toastmasters. She is also a member of Rotary International, Los Gatos Morning Rotary Club, and the Family Selection Committee for Silicon Valley Habitat for Humanity. *UD*

*(Polari-Khan from page 5)*

A favorite childhood author was John Steinbeck but today, Pirjo enjoys contemporary humor writers: David Sedaris and Joe Frank as well as classical French novelist Guy de Maupassant.

Currently, Pirjo is writing stories for publication in magazines and getting ready for her big annual art show this summer. She has participated in the Palo Alto Clay and Glass Festival for the last twenty-two years as a member of the Association of Clay and Glass Artists of California (ACGS).

Pirjo Polari-Khan has her home and studio in San Jose, where she resides with her husband and teenaged son. *UD*

**Seeking persons interested in forming a critique group (fiction) in the Cupertino area.  
Contact Cathy Bauer at 408-252-4479 or [cathy@bauerstar.com](mailto:cathy@bauerstar.com)**

*This column introduces a series of brief grammar lessons by Pat Decker Nipper, a writer, a former English teacher, and a member of CWC...*

## Nipper's Nits

By Pat Decker Nipper

### Lesson 1. Number Agreement Between Nouns and Pronouns

This lesson suggests how to make noun and pronoun agree in number. Because many writers are concerned with being politically correct—namely to avoid the pronoun “he”—they mix a singular noun with a plural pronoun. For example, “A *writer* [singular] must use *their* [plural] creativity to avoid plagiarism.”

- One approach to avoiding this mistake is to make the noun plural: “Writers must use their creativity...”
- Another approach is to leave out the pronoun altogether: “A writer must use creativity...”
- A third approach is to use second person, the technique used by technical writers: “As a writer, you must use your creativity...”

Contact Pat at [pat@patdeckernipper.com](mailto:pat@patdeckernipper.com) for comments or questions.

### TIP TAP

A Poem by Pirjo Polari-Khan

Mrs. Watersedge feels like jumping from a ledge  
a dripping tap drives her round the bend; she's almost at her wit's end  
She carries a bucket in and out, whining and moaning out loud  
her husband drives her crazy but don't get me wrong, he isn't lazy  
at work, he is just too busy to fix things at home for the missy  
One day Mrs. Watersedge couldn't take it anymore  
the tap has become a festering sore  
She seeks a psychic's advice, she's sick and tired of all the lies  
The psychic places some cards on the table  
promising her client's life will soon be stable  
She also sees a tall and handsome newcomer  
Mrs. W cries out, "It must be the plumber!"  
It can also be a lawyer, police or priest, if you will  
You need them all if you're planning to kill  
Anyone at this point is heaven sent  
she just wants to know how it all will end  
The psychic draws the final card, "Your life isn't really that hard—  
"if you look at it eyes open wide and try to see the positive side  
your husband is going to be famous and great  
you'll just have to put up and wait  
Advisedly, he'll go down in history  
I would say, a real scorcher, the inventor of modern water torture."

## On the Web

by Webmaster, Ro Davis

### Writer Beware -- Posting your Work Online



The days of the Internet "home page" -- that glimpse into someone's personal life in a vastly public place -- are more or less gone. You still see them out there: "Welcome to Fluffy's online Litter Box. Here is a picture of her people, Marge and Fred Dipplestipple, on vacation." Invariably there's a visitor counter on the bottom of the page that looks like an LED alarm clock from the eighties and a line that says "we'd be tickled pink (in pink) if you'd sign our guest book."

Now, particularly in techno-savvy Silicon Valley, our individual websites are more sophisticated. We have Flash. We have streaming audio, if not video. The pictures of our kids are posted in a password-protected area. We use our sites to tout our pet cause, not our pet gerbil.

As writers, we want to post our work on our websites. We long to be read. We want others to tell us we're as good as we think we are. And, we've all heard the rumors that literary agents comb the web for potential clients. It could happen. You could also get hit by a meteor.

At last summer's East of Eden Writers Conference, agents and editors told us the hard truth: anything you publish on the web is considered published. It doesn't matter if the piece was posted only on your own site and your visitor counter has been stuck on 22 for months. Most writers' markets and even most contests will not look at any previously published work. Publishers can't take the risk. You may think only 22 of your closest friends have read

*(Continued on page 8)*



*(Peterson from page 3)*

he coughed and drank often from water—though his wife, "who doesn't believe in germs," had suggested it was in his mind and not his throat. For just over an hour, Nils fought his voluntarily *Sudafed-stilted* tongue and read his and others' poetry—entertaining and enlightening us. "*The Miller's Tale* by Chaucer", he said, *is the finest example of the work, done precisely in couplets of perfect rhythm and rhyme. Moreover it tells a fascinating story with all appropriate themes of conflict, suspense, predicament, escape ...and the rest.*

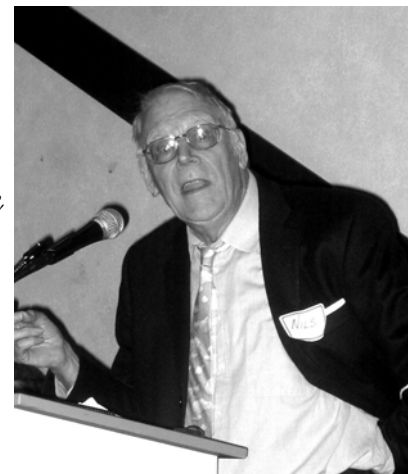
He spoke poetically of love—of Roger and Elaine pitting oil change against life change, of mountains not caring much about women, about Nils himself missing his (love) boat—several times during his youth (which I surmise has not ended), and about *The Faithful Wife* by Barbara Greenberg, who if she would, knew exactly how not to be.

"The poet needs to ask questions... and more questions," he said. Concerned about a reluctance to do yard work in the winter, he lie on his Sunday couch, some distance from the lawn mower, and began asking. In the end he theorized: it wasn't that he was tired or feeling ill... or, being from the East and not accustomed to mowing lawns in January. He simply wanted to hibernate—like a bear. Somewhere, deep in the base of the tap root of his family tree, was a bear with a dominant gene, he concluded, and rather than trim the lawn, he wrote a poem.

His great-great-great-great Scandinavian grandmother, it began, living through the most-northern seasons and bored silly with the longer summer days of repetitive and mesmerizing housework, set off into the dark woods behind the house to seek relief and adventure. And she found it, he versed for us, in the earth-fragrant, damp feel and warm breath of a large lonesome northern bear. Frightened only for a moment, she became "one with the bear", was fulfilled, and the rest of her summer passed easily. In her time, the next winter, she brought forth and licked clean a new "Bjorn"—a wonder to her husband and the beginning of a long-lasting Peterson compulsion of winter relaxation.

Suffice it to say, while this imagery emerged, the Nils Peterson mower remained cold in the garage.

The Southbay Writers enjoyed a particularly wonderful night on Feb 9<sup>th</sup> as Nils charmed us with his human-





(On The Web from page 7)

your online work, but a stranger may have crept onto your site and, being the non-clever, dastardly type, copied off your words and sold them his own. Or another person might have stumbled onto your inspirational poem or your hysterically funny short, and thought it so wonderful, she shared it via e-mail with several of her friends, who sent it to their friends, and so on. Remember the poem Nils Peterson read to us at the February meeting on the difference between men and women? He told us he got that as an email, a circulated joke by an unknown author.

Imagine opening your inbox one day and seeing your own words in a many-times forwarded email, words that you have been trying to sell to every consumer magazine editor in Writers Market. Imagine getting a rejection slip where an editor has scrawled, "Was not born yesterday. Heard this on Leno a month ago." Sure, you can now say you've been read and a lot of people think you're good, but who's going to believe you wrote it?

The moral of this tale: use your website to market your work, by all means. List what you've published legitimately and what pieces you have available. Titles, summaries, teasers, you know, query letter stuff. Then, one day, when Jane Agent is online searching for the next Nora Roberts or Steven King, your professional web presence will be there, waiting, hoping, and holding its virtual breath for that life-changing click. It might happen. RD

It took me fifteen years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous.

*Robert Benchley*

## Thoughts on the Old/ New Year

By Jackie Mutz

Someone usually has a way to sum up the old year, before the new one comes into play and we begin our dance all over again, marked by holidays and important events, some milestones only significant to us. One thing, the holiday frenzy of Christmas "shop 'til you drop" for the perfect material representation of your love for those special peoples (you know, family, friends, the guy with the "will work for food" sign tugging at your guilt strings): It all came to a grinding halt for me this year. Here's why, jotted in the Christmas email to friends because there was no time to send cards by snail mail (New Year's cards going out after January 1, ha ha).

It's Christmas Eve and the presents are not "wrapped under the tree with care" just yet, dinner is not ready, I still have Kramer hair from this morning, but in this moment, I am thinking of you and how lucky we humans are to have each other. What greater gift can there be?

I went to the kitty shelter where I volunteer and spent a couple of hours with forty or so adult cats and two regular volunteers, Judy and Sherrie, doling out bits of turkey deli meat to soft little mouths waiting patiently for their little bit of Christmas heaven. They watched and waited for their turn; there was no fighting. I have never seen anything like it before. Maybe we could learn a thing or two from our putty-tat friends. Me? I felt like the Pied Piper of kitties instead of rats, The Bible says, "ask and ye shall receive." At that moment I could have asked for nothing more: such a simple act gave me so much comfort and joy. And these little guys got a little well deserved attention. (You can apply this concept to humans as well.) May they find warm and loving new homes soon. All creatures, two and four legged; deserve a place to call "home." Or better yet, share a little bit of yourself. Home is where the heart is, is it not?

Christmas Day, still have my Kramer hair, am in my kitty cat lavender jammies slurping up my third cup of coffee, waiting for the half-caf to kick in. Soon my micro family will be off to join the festivities with two thirds of the macro family unit, fifteen or so at my brother's house, as he is the only one who can house our brood. Of course, I will be dressed and coifed, i.e., no Kramer hair, just frizz and ringlets. The rest of my family we see tomorrow, after a bleary-eyed 6:00 a.m. flight to Portland (what was I thinking?).

After Christmas, Mom and Dad's place is where we go to rest, eat, laugh and cry, (mostly from all the hilarity) and then begin it again the next day. We are lucky to have such a family, California's version of *My Big Fat Geek Wedding*. When we are all together, four generations are running around, ranging from five years to something up there (we don't specify Grama's years if we know what's good for us). Hard thing to fit us all under one roof, but we manage.

This brings me back to my original thought: how lucky we humans are to have each other. I heard someone say recently that we are all connected; a stranger is only someone whom we have not had the opportunity to meet. Yet, is it a random experience when somebody important comes into our lives? Is it just a coincidence when we have a life changing experience? Or when we have an "aha" moment or an epiphany where everything makes sense? I am not sure. But I had that "aha" watching the shelter kitties as they each waited for their turn to taste turkey nectar. Feeding them a treat on Christmas Eve day gave me oh so much more – it is in the giving that we receive the most and that having each other the greatest gift,

(Continued on page 9)



(Thoughts from page 8)

every day of the year.

So savor the old before you bring in the new. Hug those “near and dear” and whisper sweet sugar plum nothings of love in their ears. And remember, the greatest gift you can give is you. Even commercial jingles have their warm and fuzzy truth. Do “reach out . . . and touch someone” – scratch that kitty, pat that doggie, smile at that stranger, hug your child. Share the wealth that is you. You won’t be sorry. *JM*

Excerpt From my memoir:  
**MY DECADES OF ENDURANCE AND  
 SURVIVAL**  
**A POST WAR TRAGEDY - 1945**  
 By Clarence Hammond

I was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, a son of a minister, nothing prepared me for my army experiences of 1943 to 1945.

*A true story as it happened; all names have been changed, except Faison’s and mine.*

- 1) 1943, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania I became a soldier of the United States Army. I was sent to my permanent outfit, **1903<sup>rd</sup> Ordnance Ammunition Company** in Orlando, Florida 1944, an all-Negro outfit, this proved to be an important change in my life. I went into the ministry here on February 6<sup>th</sup>.
- 2) I sailed from Wilmington, California on the **USS Mount Vernon**, my home at sea for more than 30 days, seeing nothing but sky and water.
- 3) April 1<sup>st</sup> 1944, my ship arrived at Bombay, India. The people were dressed like Bible characters, the streets of Bombay were crowded with people and cows.
- 4) At the beginning of 1945 I was still in India however, the summer, of this same year, Tinian was my new home. This is where my story begins.

Sunday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, aboard the **Battleship Missouri**, the Allies and the Japanese signed the **Treaty** ending World War 2. At 3:PM we had a time of worship, the war was over we had not lost a man of our original outfit. It was a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s protection. My long time friend, since Orlando, and I strolled along the dirt road.

“Clarence!” said Faison, “How long do you think they will keep us over here? The war has ended, what more is there to do?” I replied,

“Well Faison, only God knows the answer to that question but I feel good to know the war is over. I am

wondering, also what do we do in the meantime?”

We soon found out, they organized us into Details of twelve to perform demolition work. We didn’t have to “fin and fuse” bombs any more. A bomb has a fuse and a fin for guidance to explode. We carried old bombs onto a ship, dumping them into the water. We had to lift them manually; neither cranes nor lifters were available at that time. I had great respect and love for the men in our Detail. We had been through so much together, we were like biological brothers. Each Detail had “X” amount of bombs that had to be destroyed each day, which was better than fining and fusing. The bombs were armour-piercing, general purpose and incendiary.

We were 19 and 20 year old young soldiers looking forward to being discharged. All of us had plans of going home to begin a new life and possibly get married, have a family and a career. We could not refrain ourselves from being jubilant after the tedious work in India for a year and a half. It felt good to laugh again and wish each other the best as we looked forward to returning home. During those days it was no problem for the men to meet at our Chapel Service on Sunday; they were thankful to be alive.

My Detail met in front of my hut (I was not in charged), they were waiting for the truck to arrive. Anticipations were high we to shared our futures. I looked at one soldier.

“Tommy,” I said. “You told me once you wanted to be a professional boxer, why?” He stared at me and in a conscientious voice, began to talk.

“When I was a kid in DC, Joe Louis, The Brown Bomber, happened to be my idol. I want to be another Joe Louis.” I replied,

“Tommy you are too small, to be another Joe Louis. Perhaps, you could be like Joe Louis, by winning but not by size.” Tommy interrupted saying,

“I meant to say, I want to mo ‘em down in my weight division.”

I began to think about India and how good Tommy was there. I thought, he may get into boxing and become a World Champion, in his division. There was Jim who wanted to be a fireman or policeman, he weighed 200 pounds and he looked right for either job. I said to them,

“Look! I see the truck arriving, I guess I’ll see all of you later.”

Since I mentioned the three of us, I’ll mention the others. The other nine were: **Barry, John, Charlie, Ben, Al, Victor, Randy, Flem. and Richard**. They had hopes of returning to the States, no one could think of anything that would keep them from fulfilling their dreams after all the war was over. All of the men were now on the truck, except me. Being in charge of the Post Exchange, (PX) I had to complete my paper work; I would

(Continued on page 10)

(Tragedy from page 9)

join my Detail an hour two so later, it would take a long time to destroy the bombs.

After I had finished my report, I started walking toward the ship. I heard an explosion, not too loud, only a muffled sound. Moments later a soldier, ran toward me saying,

“Our men were lifting and throwing the bombs into the water. Suddenly one of the incendiary bombs exploded while they were lifting it, killing them.” I thought: *All of them dead, in an instant. I could not stand it and didn’t want to believe it.*

I was stunned and began to cry. That was my Detail I am suppose to be with them. My comrades, my buddies, my brothers, gone. Their hopes and dreams shattered in just a few minutes. Eleven soldiers had lost their lives after the war.

Many days past, before we were able to return to work and get into the swing of things. Our Commanding Officer did not want us to go back to work any time soon. All kinds of nightmares followed me for months and years, even now in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002, I still feel the pain. These soldiers were heroes killed in the line of duty.

Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup>, a few days after the tragedy, our company met in the chapel for another Memorial Service, we were still in a somber mood. At 3:PM we worshipped outdoors, Faison and I served communion. Soldiers from 240, 190 and 1934 Ordnance Outfits met with us, two quartets sang. It was a great day, after we had finished mourning for our fallen comrades. Faison said to me, “Now what will they ask us to do next? I don’t think they will ask us to do more demolition work, or will they?” CH

— IN MY OPINION —

Dear Editor

I've been in this CWC for 10 years. We've hosted at seven different restaurants. Each had merits and problems. Each met our needs at the time.

Recently a few people have complained about Harry's Hofbrau. The atmosphere is dark, the lines are long, the food is too rich. Ambiance, flowers and service are missing. So are the dollars to support that.

As I sit at the registration table and see 90% of our attendees pass by with fully loaded trays—my sympathies for the complaints wane.

The lines are long because we contribute an average of 75 people to them! Grab another writer and chat along the way. The atmosphere is dark because it is like a European beer garden—you didn't need airfare to get there. The choice of foods is so broad that a very healthy meal is available. Maybe some people are struggling with self control.

Worse case scenario. Take the \$10 voucher through the line and get a drink and lots of change. I am glad so many writers come, enjoy and benefit from the programs. Lots of the faces are familiar; I know we are seeing returnees. The board checked out a couple of other places with big rooms. In one the menu was bland; the other had a serious noise, but good food. The board is open to ideas.

Harry's offers us a gigantic room and reasonable prices. Personally I am impatient with whining.

Susan Mueller, Treasurer

**Attention Published Southbay Authors**

Again this year, April 23 & 24, the CWC booth at the popular LA Times/UCLA Festival of Books will be decorated with a montage of book covers from the Clubs published authors. If you want to participate, send dust cover(s) or a color photocopy of the book(s) cover or cover page of your published book ASAP to

**Allene Symons  
2373 North Flower  
Santa Ana, CA 92706**

For contact, email at: [asymons@earthlink.net](mailto:asymons@earthlink.net) and mention CWC in the subject space or for more encouragement and info, Bob Garfinkle, our Central Board Rep at: [ragarf@earthlink.net](mailto:ragarf@earthlink.net)

**The Saturday Poets** present their reading series featuring: klipschutz followed by an open mike on Wednesday, March 16, at 7:00 p.m. and...

Geri Doran followed by an open mike on Wednesday, May 18, at 7:00 p.m.

Il Piccolo Caffè, 1219 Broadway, Burlingame.  
Contact Amy MacLennan at  
[amy.maclennan@saturdaypoets.org](mailto:amy.maclennan@saturdaypoets.org)  
650-631-5732 or [www.saturdaypoets.org](http://www.saturdaypoets.org).

National Writer's Union's presents 1st Thursday meetings on how to make your writing better.

**THE WRITER'S ROUNDTABLE**

6 :00 - 7 :00 PM  
Santa Cruz Central Library  
224 Church St.  
Upstairs Conference Room.  
Free.

Published writers describe their processes. All are invited to present and to learn

Announcements Announcements Announcements

**Reminder**

**Our March Meeting will be held on Wed, Mar 9th at the Lookout in Sunnyvale**

**Bring your appetite and your interest in publishing and listen to Mitch Berman tell us the "HOWS" of the game**

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. Keep them less than 1200 words... but we're negotiable. Dave LaRoche at  
**writerstalk@comcast.net**

**The San Fernando Branch of CWC presents their Writers Journey Conference**  
June 3rd and 4th.  
The focus this year is on the Mystery of Writing. Writer Contest - Prizes \$100, \$50, \$25 Fee: \$5, Deadline May 3rd. Check out the details on our website - **www.CalWritersSFV.com** For more, Contact Carol Wood at **pres@hazelst.com**



**Write a column—**  
*Anything Goes (Almost).*  
That's the name of the column space and we mean it. Your ski down Mount Everest, your first PGA tournament, your thoughts on the "book table" or the Arts Community in SJ or Nepal. 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  
—o—  
Clean off your shelves and bring in your old books—those you've read a dozen times or won't read at all. Bring them to the book table and give others a fresh opportunity ...  
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".  
—o—  
Every monthly meeting, the Book Table is set

**GOT NEWS?**  
Know of an event that needs reporting—one coming up or happening now. Email our news editor—he/she'll hop on it or appoint one of our many staff members.  
**Book Reviews**  
**Committee Meetings**  
**Critique Groups**  
**Reading Foursms**  
**Book-store openings**  
**Conferences**  
If it's of interest to writers we want to publish it.  
**writerstalk@comcast.net**



**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**  
or reserve at **www.southbaywriters.com**



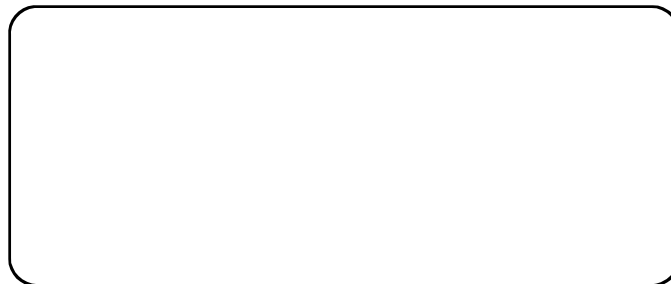
California Writers Club

South Bay Branch  
1125 Miguel Ave  
Los Altos, CA 94024

www.southbaywriters.com

Stamp(s)

MEMBER



Address Correction Requested

**NOTE-  
CHANGE!**

General Membership meeting—2nd Wednesday

— 0 —  
**Lookout Bar & Grill**  
605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale  
(Sunnyvale Golf Course)

See Map

**SAVE THESE DATES**

Board of Directors  
Mar 2, 6:30p

General Meeting  
Mar 9, 6pm  
Lookout Bar and Grill

Open Mic  
Mar 4 7:30 p  
Borders, Los Gatos  
Mar 18, 730p  
B&N, Campbell

WritersTalk Deadline  
Mar 16

Editors Pow Wow  
Mar 25, 1:30p  
Main St Cafe

