



# WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch  
Writers Club Monthly

Volume 14, Issue 7, July 2006 Non-member subscription \$20 per year

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## East of Eden Conference SEPTEMBER 8 THRU 10, 2006

Whether it's getting started, the final editing, or seeking publication, you will find help in Salinas at the East of Eden Conference in September. Professionals and amateurs will gather to engage about writing. Workshops, panels, keynotes, face-time with agents; as well as open readings, contest winnings, networking and socializing will comprise this engagement and all are invited to attend. Come learn and enjoy at the home of John Steinbeck.

The South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club produces this conference bi-annually and, "This year's [East of Eden] promises to be the best ever," says Beth Proudfoot, Conference Director, who has been organizing and managing from its genesis. The following is only a smattering of what you will encounter and for registration, complete tracks, bios and more,

Visit our website: [Southbaywriters.com](http://Southbaywriters.com).



### SPEAKERS



Jean M. Auel, known first for her *Clan of the Cave Bear*, will open our conference with a Friday evening keynote. Her *Earth's Children*® saga, set in Ice Age Europe, has sold 34 million books worldwide. The most recent in the series, the #1 New York Times bestseller, *Shelters of Stone*, continues the story of her memorable characters, Ayla and Jondular.

(MORE EOE ON PAGE 9)

## WT Profiles Will Rahal

— By Una Daly



Una Daly  
Contributing Editor

"Writing, traveling, and winemaking are the top three things I love to do and my goal is to get each one to pay for itself," said member Will Rahal, who recently departed on a trip home to Pennsylvania and then on to Niagara Falls and Miami. Earlier this year, he visited Italy and stayed at a working vineyard in Tuscany among other wonderful spots.



Will Rahal

Will's first novel *Remmi* moved to the quarterfinals in a magazine contest last year and also was requested by Forest

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## SUMMER BBQ ON PAGE 3

### WIN AWARDS AND RECOGNITION WITH YOUR SHORT FICTION, POETRY, MEMOIR, ESSAY.

\*\*\* See insert on p 12 for "WritersTalk Challenge" and our masthead for submittal information \*\*\*

#### A Look Ahead:

- Aug 4, 18 Open Mic, see p19
- Aug 3 Board of Directors Meeting—Edie's
- Aug 6 BBQ at Edies, see p3 (no dinner meeting)
- Aug 18 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 10:00am
- Sep 8-10 East of Eden Conference—Salinas, see you there.

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## President's Prowling —Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin  
President, South Bay Branch

### (SEMI)-AUTOBIOGRAPHING

I'm back from my trip to Ohio and Pennsylvania; I even have two of my three rolls of film developed (the third roll has eight or nine shots left). People ask me how the trip went. I've shared some of the photos...

What do I say? Do I give a simple answer? Or do I spin a tale?

I spent two days in Pittsburgh with a love -- How do I describe or explain that? I saw the huge department store founded by my first cousin thrice removed (but does that accurately describe the relationship?), some of the many yellow suspension bridges of Pittsburgh (but why yellow and why suspension?), the stadium where the All-Star Game was to occur, and the Andy Warhol Museum (why do I have trouble imagining him growing up in Pittsburgh?). Significance of all this?

Then the web portal conference in Cleveland: Three days of getting up at 6 a.m. to discuss Internet programming all day. And the "infamous" conference party, where I drink four beers and dance with one of the staff.

Erie, Pennsylvania – home of my former fiancée. The mind manufactures wild stories around the house where she presumably lives, the church where she volunteers; since I was careful not to actually *encounter* her, of course.

Driving south again towards Pittsburgh, I find a radio station playing Hungarian folk-dance music (my ex-fiancée was Hungarian-American). The word "felesegem" (pronounced "FAILeshaygem") pops into my mind – I haven't thought of it for ten or twenty years (probably whenever I last listened to Bela Bartok's opera "Bluebeard's Castle") – "felesegem" is Hungarian for "my wife" – which this woman would have been if...

I arrive at Boswell, ten or fifteen miles south of Johnstown, city of the infamous floods. My aunt takes me in tow. We visit where Flight 93 crashed on September 11<sup>th</sup>. We visit the church founded by my great-great-grandfather. I talk with my aunt, my uncle, my three first cousins, plus their children, spouses, and friends. My aunt talks continuously, as far as I can tell, for eleven hours. We see the house where she lived near Johnstown, the house where my grandmother lived, the house where I lived with my family when I was five years old. Then I drive back to Pittsburgh, fly to California, and celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Christopher Isherwood (who wrote much "semi-autobiography") once remarked: "Why invent, when Life is so prodigious?" But what is the significance of your own life?

One thing is certain: Your life *will* provide you with material. If you want to "autobiograph", though, you will have to figure out how to use it.

***(But you can find expert help at our East of Eden Writing Conference, coming up in Salinas, Sept. 8-10!) WB***

## California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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Unless otherwise noted above, our email address is

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### Join in With Us

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

Contact our Membership Chair  
Marjorie Johnson

**DON'T FORGET**

Our Annual  
**Dot-Luck Bar-B-Que**  
will be held on Sunday, August 6, starting at 3pm.

Come join in the social event of the summer and a great opportunity to 'network' with club members. Except for an errant announcement or two, the time there is yours. The only official activity will be the award of the:

*WritersTalk*

**East of Eden Scholarship**  
to some high-style submitter.

**So here's the scoop:**

There is no charge but bring a dish.

If your last name begins with:

- **A-K** —Appetizer or Desert
- **L-R** —Main or Side Dish
- **S-Z** —Salad

**Meat and Drinks are provided**

The location is Edie and Jim Matthews' house at 917 Perreira Drive, Santa Clara — the white house with blue trim. From Lawrence Exp, East on Benton (stoplight), South on Pomeroy (stoplight) and hang a right at the first opportunity, Perreira. (Map on address page 20)

**See you there and don't forget:**

**NO  
DINNER MEETING  
IN AUGUST**



Dave LaRoche  
**Managing Editor**

*Editor's  
Itch*

This month I'm grinding my axe. It's been out in the shed growing rust and in need of an edge. And, that's how the following might strike some—edgy.

I joined this club two years ago 'cause I fancied myself a writer—the operative word being “fancy”. I thought: I like writing—for all sorts of reasons, the same that you harbor no doubt, but I'm lacking in whatever the stuff is that makes it a go. I mean, what I write isn't marketable, produces no cash and the Club, I imagined, would help me. So, I popped for the 65 bucks and joined up. (It's been worth every penny.)

I've been entertained: Peterson, Wilde, ben Izzy, Shillinglaw, BBQ's and Holiday Bashes; interesting journeys have been recounted by Dumas and Mattson. Lord knows, I've got the 'how-to-get-published' and 'how-to-market-my-book' down pat and, oh yes, great stuff about screenplays and which software to use. But... except for the workshop in January (I'm not counting the extracurricular biannual) there is little to help with my writing.

I want more workshops. I want more in our “monthlies” about writing. I want to become what I'm thought to be and need more of the substance of writing: the how-to's of holding my reader, creating characters, mapping action, developing scenes, building suspense, generating climax—making it flow and keeping it straight. I want to know how to create the product that I've learned well how to sell.

Since the second or third month of this year, new members have been asked to fill out a questionnaire and one of our queries relates to this 'learning-to-write.' To the person, the responses have been positive—they too want more workshop environment.

So what do you think? Let me know, let our leaders know. Do you want more of the basics of writing presented, in the meetings? added workshops? other ideas? Send your opinions to me here at [WritersTalk@comcast.net](mailto:WritersTalk@comcast.net) or to our PO box. You know, we can have what we want... almost. *DLR*

*WritersTalk*

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- Una Daly
- Jackie Mutz
- Andrea Galvacs
- Bill Brisko
- Anne Darling

**Submittals are invited:**

**Guest Columns**

*Almost Anything Goes* ≤300 wds

**Regular Columns**  
to Una Daly

**News Items** ≤400 wds

**Ltrs to Ed**—*In My Opinion* ≤200 wds  
to Andrea Galvacs

**Literary Work :**

- Short Fiction** ≤1500 wds
- Memoir** ≤1000 wds
- Poetry** ≤300 wds
- Essay** ≤700 wds

**Announcements and Advertisements**  
to Dave LaRoche

Submit as an attachment to email by the 16th of the month preceding publication.

[newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

or

[writerstalk@comcast.net](mailto:writerstalk@comcast.net)

**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.

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# What a Hoot — Our July Meeting

—Dave LaRoche



We were entertained! David Henry Sterry began his talk with big humor and it didn't stop. We laughed with him at his endless anecdotes and humorous perspective. "Putting Your Passion into Print" was Sterry's book and his message—putting it into life must certainly be his credo.

Ten years ago in Venice CA, his life was troubled and, upon the advice of his therapist, he wrote



David Henry Sterry

about it—a fictitious novel that slogged through his unsettling experience. By a coincidental series of lucky circumstances, and after a grueling attempt at sales on his own, he got this book into the bottom of an agent's in New York. With the (all-important) regular, flowery 'follow-ups,' his book reached the top and finally her desk. He

was called to New York. They met. They negotiated. They later married. But woe... the book, his therapeutic, soul-rendered vessel was set aside and with his new Ariel's suggestion and her help, he wrote a bio-picture-quote book about Sachel Page—a baseball player he was passionate about. (Was it the posters covering the walls, miniatures on the desk, the programs, brochures and signed memorabilia that got her thinking?) They then

piggy-backed this work-of-the-heart into a Yogi Brea-entranced market and garnered a 150K offer (Judith Regan). They had collaborated: his passion, her publishing awareness and worked night, day and in between for three months, he admitted.

Passion for your subject; the energy and imagination to pursue it without compromise; knowledge of the process and a perspective permitting setback without failure, seemed to be the Sterry formula for success. We bought it quite easily, along with his book.

Do it smart and persist, he told us. With difficulty in getting a signing event, they turned to a small bookstore in Colma (Colma, as we know, is a gas station with 'speedymart,' three condos, a post office and half the world's population of dead people). No one attended but, it *was* an event and with this one, others came. One qualifies you for others, he said—signings, interviews, presentations, tours and the rest. Rejection breeds dejection but keep in mind, "it's only business," quoting the Godfather, so don't despair.

He cited his three guiding principals:

- 1 **Research:** Research the subject matter and the market before you begin. Discover agents and publishers doing similar books and go to them first. Know that your book has not already been written (recently). Know the people involved in your process, their habits and home, and make a connection.
- 2 **Network:** Networking is the most important thing you can do, outside of writing. Join clubs and critique groups; go to conferences and signings—at signings buy the book and be last in the reception line. Ask the writer, "Do you like your agent?" If he grunts (or more), call the agent and say, "I've met your best-selling writer and he tells me he loves working with you." You'll be sur-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

prised at the reception. Always, wherever you shake a hand, pat a shoulder, be nice, be cordial, ask for help.

- 3 **Write:** Write and keep writing. Make time. Schedule it in and insist. Train loved ones (“like they’re dogs”). Don’t procrastinate. Write your passion, what you know. The Beer Lovers Rating Guide by psychologist Bob Klein, sold 350,000 copies. This book, about his passion, took the place of a book on psychology—which might easily have been rendered into grocery bags. It is crucial that your stuff is as good as you can make it before you send it out, said Sterry.



One of the jewels he left us: “Agents live in cold, black, abject, death-inducing fear of turning down the next JK Rowlings.” That may be you. And, he reminds, let every agent know that he is not the only one with your book in his stack. Finally Sterry suggests: Begin! Once you are in the pool, it’s a lot easier to swim.

**The statistics:** David Henry Sterry enjoyed 75 in his audience including 21 guests. The Raffle Lady took in \$127.

**Upcoming events** include:

- August 6—Sunday 3 pm, CWC BBQ (No charge, bring a dish) See page 3
- Sept. 8-10—East of Eden Conference
- Oct. 11—CWC Meeting, Speaker: Mike Cassidy, Columnist SJ Mercury News
- Nov. 8—CWC Meeting, Speaker: TBA
- Dec. 13—Christmas Party

Lets all stay cool...

## Meet New Southbay Members

By Anne Darling

Eight new members hail from as far away as South Korea, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Florida. Four are native Californians. In their questionnaires, half noted they have published: Robert Burns, Clysta McLemore, Jill Pipkin and Dotty Sieve. Interests vary from the environment, war-time experiences, and country song writing to event planning. Most members are attracted by fiction and non-fiction genres; four plan to write a memoir. Journalism and poetry appeal to several.



Anne Darling  
Contributing Editor

A former song writer, **Richard Burns**, holds a B.S. degree in electrical engineering from U.C. Santa Barbara, and a M.B.A from the University of Utah. Burns recently retired. “I wrote 35 country songs; have given up there and shuffled to stories.” He added, “I want to leave a recognized legacy and ‘income’ (royalties) wouldn’t hurt.” He recently published a short story in *The Sand Hill Review*.

**Hi-Dong Chai**, born in South Korea, is a retired professor of electrical engineering. He is interested in fiction, non-fiction and memoir. “Something deep inside has kept urging me to share my war-time experience through writing in the hope of promoting peace and brotherhood of mankind.”

Originally from Boston, Mass., Sabrina Hill is an artist and professional event planner. In fact, she and her business partner/ best friend are looking for an agent while completing their book on planning memorable events. Hill added, “I am excited about meeting with other authors.” Both non-fiction and journalism appeal as genres.

**Clysta McLemore** takes pride in being a fourth generation Californian. She is retired and has published articles in environmental newsletters. “I’ve kept a journal and written poetry for myself all my life...well, since I learned to write.” McLemore is drawn to fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

**Chuck Peradotto**, retired from the retail automobile business after working in Bay Area General Motors dealerships for over 40 years. Born in San Francisco, raised in San Bruno, Peradotto has been a Mt. View resident since 1960. “I like to write short stories, memoirs, non-fiction, have a novel working and am looking forward to improving my craft.”

From Florida, **Jill Pipkin** holds a B.A. degree in Math, a B.S. in Physics and a M.A. in physics from U.C. Berkeley. She also has a diploma and certificate in French from the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

(RAHAL FROM PAGE 1)

Whitaker's agency. His current writing project is *The Unofficial Guide to Beijing 2008 Olympics and board game*, which has been picked up by an agent and is actively being shopped around. Other projects include short stories, a sci-fi thriller, and children's stories.

Although Will runs his own general contracting business, now, he was previously in sales for a large purveyor of spirits. This job inspired him to pursue winemaking seriously and gave him the opportunity to taste wines from all over the world and meet winemakers such as Francis Ford Coppola, Robert Mondavi, Joel Peterson from Ravenswood as well as winemakers from CK Mondavi, Beringer, Château St. Jean, and many more.

"I'm also in the middle of redesigning my wine labels and entering my wines in competitions," said Will, reporting on a recent medal awarded to *Rahal Red 2004*, his own wine label.

"I'm originally from a small town called Northeast Pennsylvania - - ironically it is in the Northwest corner of Pennsylvania -- located directly on the great Lake of Erie." Will comes from a family of Lebanese and Welsh ancestry and is one of three siblings.

"The thing that has helped me the most in writing is my insatiable curiosity about the human condition," said Will. Through CWC contacts, meetings, and website, he is able to learn about other people suffering and succeeding in their craft.

Unfortunately, Will suffers from dyslexia and thus has not read as many authors as he would have liked to. He is a huge fan of Alfred Hitchcock and Francis Ford Coppola for their genius in telling stories and of course winemaking. *UD*

## NIPPER'S NITS

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



Pat Decker Nipper

Columnist

### Lesson 17. Lie/lay

This word pair is on the list of the ten most common English grammar mistakes. The reason could be because the words are so similar in both present and past tense.

"To lie" means to rest, repose, or simply exist in some place. For example: "The San Andreas fault lies under Stevens Creek." It can also refer to a condition or position, such as to "lie low" or "lie down." The word is often confused with lay because lay is also its past tense.

"To lay," however, means to put or place something somewhere, including a hen who puts forth an egg. Lay requires an object, such as, "Lay the paper down." No form of "to lie" needs an object. The past tense of "lay" is "laid."

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

*Dear Board of Directors*

*I want to express my appreciation for your efforts in producing the East of Eden Conference. I attended one before. I am proud to be a member of this club. I feel good about it and benefit from it and this conference is a major contributor. I am thankful for this opportunity to express my admiration and plaudits to all of you, especially Beth Proudfoot and her nucleus of fine workers.*

*Proud to be a Member*

A Platonic lover is a man who holds the eggshells while somebody else eats the omelet. - Crowninshield

It doesn't matter whom a man marries; he is sure to find, the next morning, he has married someone else. -Sam Rogers

(NEW MEMBERS FROM PAGE 5)

University Lausanne, Switzerland. Pipkin worked as a real estate agent from 1978-95 and returned to the field in 2003. She is intrigued with fiction, non-fiction and memoir writing. "Always a reader, I started writing seriously in the 70's after returning from one year in Tehran, Iran and Istanbul, Turkey. I wrote two novels in the late 70's and early 80's and started writing again in 2004..."

**Patrick Reilly** enjoys expressing truth through humor. Fiction and journalism also capture his interest. Reilly describes himself as an amateur linguist. Reilly is an intellectual property attorney who also notes he's a socialist, humanist, and spiritually inclined.

Author of three published short stories, **Dotty Sieve** loves fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Sieve showed a flare for humor in filling out the CWC questionnaire. "I was raised in Charleston, South Carolina. There, folks use a depictive style of language, as when my father first saw a hippie. He said in a fog-horn whisper, 'Maybe she's going somewhere to scare somebody.'"

As to how she came to be employed by her husband, she said, "In my youth, I didn't aspire to heal the sick or bleeding, since I'd become nauseous... My husband became an OB-GYN, and hijacked me to work in his office. There, I had 32 years of graphic detail and bookkeeping." AD

## Accolades

—by Jackie Mutz



Jackie Mutz  
Contributing Editor

This little column has been sorely neglected, as I have been teaching and traveling a bit here and there. In June, Andrea Galvacs was kind enough to give me a report from the June meeting. Looks as if I missed a lot! Several had the good news to share:

### Novels published:

*September Snow* by Robert Balmanno

*Queen of the Castle* by Lynn Bowen Walker

### Short Stories published in the Sand Hill Review:

*Mark and the Storm* by Richard Allan Burns

*When Are You Going to Cr*, by Robert Garfinkle

*The Leap* by Jim Keim

*Cold Awakening* by Dave LaRoche

*The Folks Upstairs* by Juliana Richmond

### Articles Etc:

Travel Article by Larry Pratt published in the Vacaville Reporter

*Growing Great Characters from the Ground up*, by Martha Engber, which will be published in September.

Two papers submitted by Marjorie Briknell-Johnson accepted by the International Conference on Fibonacci Numbers

### Novels Finished:

*Little Girls Should Ride Ponies* by Jeannine Vegh

*Paper Daughter* by Emily Jiang

A person goes away and all sorts of magnificent things happen! Will be gone two weeks out of this month, but I know you must have something grand to share with us. So, as I say almost every month, **send me your news**. Never mind if it's just a little something. We are all encouraged by the accomplishments of our fellow writers. Email me at: [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com) You won't be sorry. ~JAM

**LitPAC** proudly announces the Eighth Event in the Progressive Reading Series, a monthly literary benefit to support progressive candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives.

**When:** Monday, August 14 - 7pm

**Where:** The Make Out Room, 3225 22nd St., San Francisco. (415) 647-2888

**Price:** \$10-20, sliding scale

**Featuring:** Susan Steinberg, author of *Hydroplane*, Ann Packer, author of *The Dive from Clausen Pier*, Glen David Gold, author of *Carter Beats the Devil*, Justin Chin, author of *Gutted*, Bucky Sinister, author of *Whiskey and Robots*, with special guest, comedian Will Durst.

# The Next Draft

— Becky Levine



Becky Levine  
Columnist

*Becky is a writer and a freelance editor who is available for copyediting and manuscript critiques. Becky's column will give tips on ways to develop and strengthen your writing style. She can be reached at*

[www.beckylevine.com](http://www.beckylevine.com)

## To Plot or Write: *That is the Question*

I don't have a muse. Or, if I do, she's really good at hide-and-seek, because I sure haven't found her yet. I don't get hit with inspiration.

So...I plot.

It's like deciding whether I need a map. If I'm visiting a neighbor, I obviously don't bother. If I'm going to the grocery store, where I've been *way* too many times, I wing it. If, however, I'm meeting a client at a new coffeehouse (yes, life's rough), I hit Yahoo Maps, print map *and* directions, and even call ahead to verify my route.

I'm navigationally challenged.

I also don't do too well with a blank page.

Sometimes I outline. I've used that old standby—index cards. I work with a variation of Martha Alderson's Scene Tracker ([www.blockbusterplots.com](http://www.blockbusterplots.com)).

I scribble. Somehow, though, I get to the point where I know the basics of where I'm headed. For example, before starting on a new scene, I figure out:

- The setting of the scene
- The scene characters
- The protagonist's scene goal
- Obstacles to that goal
- The protagonist's response to the obstacles
- Whether the protagonist achieves the goal
- What the protagonist will do next

By the time I've got these elements down, I usually have some idea about the basic structure of the scene—who says what, who moves where, and when things happen. Along the way, I've also gotten a few steps closer to what my protagonist is feeling and thinking.

If I'm lucky, a good opening line has popped into my head and onto the page. Which isn't blank anymore.

Is that it? From that point on, do the words just flow easily and beautifully? I wish. Of course not. This is new territory, much farther away than any coffeehouse. I get lost, I backtrack, I make desperate phone calls for new directions.

I'm writing, though, and I get to keep writing.

Plot. Don't leave home without it.

BL

## A Child and War

—by Hi-Dong Chai

"You have not had a drink since this morning."

"I know."

"You have not eaten as all."

"I know.:"

"Come child. Come home with me," urged the worried old man. "You need a drink and some food in your tummy, and rest."

"I don't want to go," replied the child, sitting on a pile of broken beams, torn plaster, shattered glass and scattered furniture. "This is my home. My mom is buried down here. My dad is here. My sister is here. All under this pile."

"I know... But..." the old man paused. "Come up just for a few minutes. I will clean the cuts on your hands and face before they get infected. Look, your feet are badly cut from the broken glass. They need to be taken care of."

"I don't care," the child replied with empty weariness in his voice. "My family is here under the pile. I want to be close to them."

His round eyes show a deep fatigue. His eyes are emptied of tears. Weariness from the frantic, desperate search is etched in his tender face, covered with dirt and dried blood. His pajamas are torn from nails and the splintered beams. His hands are black, like those of coal miners, clutching onto his toy tiger, the only one he found in the pile. He sat on a fallen beam above his room, staring blankly into space. *HDC*

### Terse Verse

—by Pat Bustamante

AUGUST-Y

*The gusty summer breeze*

*Makes one want to sneeze.*

*It's hot! So time to plot*

*Some murder mysteries*

*That cause the blood to freeze....*

**(East of Eden) SPEAKERS —continued**



Speaking Friday evening is **Christopher Reich**, New York Times best-selling author, who has written five suspense thrillers published by Random House. His latest book, *Patriots Club*, links his trademark "high-concept espionage" with an ingenious conspiracy featuring insider deals, hidden cabals, and an astounding secret rooted in the dark history of the nation's founding fathers. Reich is a graduate of Georgetown University and the University of Texas and lives in California with his wife and children.



And for Saturday morning: film, television, and Broadway star, concert stage and recording artist, **Adrienne Barbeau's** career spans 40 years and is still evolving. It began with the role of Tevye's daughter in *Fiddler on the Roof* (Broadway), and continues through films like *Swamp Thing*, *Cannonball Run* and the soon to be released, *Wake in Providence*. Her Television credits are numerous and include Scott Turow's *Burden of Proof*, *Double Crossed* and the series *Carnivale*. She has just released her first book, *There are Worse Things I Could Do*.



After dinner at the Steinbeck Center, **James D. Houston**, author of seven novels and many books of nonfiction, will enlighten. His accolades include two American Book Awards, the "Californiana" Silver Medal, a Commonwealth Club Commendation and The California State Assembly; a Wallace Stegner Writing Fellowship from Stanford University, the Joseph Henry Jackson Award for Fiction in San Francisco and an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Drama. He has taught at UCSC, Stanford, U of Michigan, U of Oregon, George Mason, and in spring 2005, held the Lurie Chair, as Distinguished Visiting Professor in Creative Writing, at San Jose State



Another after dinner speaker, **Dorothy Alison** has been proclaimed "one of the finest writers of her generation" by the Boston Globe and "simply stunning" by the New York Times Book Review. Her first novel, *Bastard Out of Carolina*, was one of five finalists for the 1992 National Book Award and went on to win both the Ferro Grumley and Bay Area Book Reviewers Awards for fiction. Allison's second novel was a New York Times Best seller. *Cavedweller* won the 1998 Lambda Literary Award for fiction and was a finalist for the Lillian Smith Prize. It is currently being adapted for the stage by Kate Ryna.



**Betty Auchardis** is a retired art teacher who started writing after her husband died in 1998. Her memoir, *Dancing in my Nightgown*, won an IPPY Finalist award! "I'm obsessed with writing. Sometimes I jump out of bed in the morning, start jotting down thoughts and write all day in my nightgown." Betty's involvement with the Traveling Steinbeckians and South Bay Writers' open mic sessions helped launch her speaking career. She now gives talks around the South Bay and across the country. Betty will tell her story at the Saturday lunch.



**Tod Goldberg** is the author of the novels *Living Dead Girl*, a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and *Fake Liar Cheat*, and his short story collection *Simplify*. His short fiction has appeared in *Other Voices*, *Santa Monica Review*, and *The Sun*, and has twice earned Special Mention for the Pushcart Prize. Tod Goldberg teaches creative writing at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program, and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor in the MFA Program at the University of California-Riverside Palm Desert. Tod will speak Saturday at lunch and will also teach a workshop.

## AGENTS



ROBERT ASTLE, ARTISTS & ARTISANS, INC. **Robert Astle** is interested in representing new, unique or multi-ethnic voices in the genres of literary fiction, biography, suspense, thrillers, and arts related non-fiction. He is particularly attracted to projects that have unforgettable characters, well crafted and dynamic narrative, clear emotional arcs, and take readers into new territories. Robert also will have an ear-to-the-ground for fellow Canadian authors looking to break into the American marketplace.



**Andrea Brown** is the President of the ANDREA BROWN LITERARY AGENCY, INC. and represents fiction, non-fiction and children's book authors. Prior to opening her own firm, Andrea was an editor at Alfred A. Knopf, and worked in the editorial departments of Random House and Dell. Her literary agency has sold approximately 1,000 books to publishers, from toddler board books to serious, award-winning young adult and adult fiction. Andrea has had her own cable television show in New York City, and has appeared on C-SPAN'S "Book Notes" and public television's "Authors and Critics."



**Arielle Eckstut** runs the Bay Area office of THE LEVINE GREENBERG LITERARY AGENCY based in New York. Arielle is most excited by ideas that expand our consciousness, challenge our assumptions and seek to make our world more visually exciting. She has sold millions of dollars of books and mid-wifed dozens of authors through the publishing process. The Levine Greenberg Literary Agency represents a wide range of fiction and nonfiction clients. Arielle acquires in the areas of: narrative/creative nonfiction, alternative health, religion and spirituality, design, cooking, and others that happen to capture her attention.



**Zoe Fishman** is the Foreign Rights Manager at LOWENSTEIN-YOST ASSOCIATES INC. in New York and is also building up her own list of writers. She is looking for narrative non-fiction, literary fiction, young adult fiction, and popular culture. Zoe began her publishing career as a student in the NYU Publishing Program before moving to Random House Audio as the Assistant to the Publisher. She then moved to Dell as an Editorial Assistant. Though she left the publishing world behind for a bit to stretch her writing muscles, she returned as a Foreign Rights Associate at Atria/Pocket Books, where she has spent five years.



**Ashley Grayson**, from the ASHLEY GRAYSON LITERARY AGENCY represents fantasy, mysteries, thrillers, and Young Adult fiction. Mr. Grayson is a member of the Association of Authors Representatives (AAR), and Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA).



**Stephanie Lee** is a literary agent with MANUS AND ASSOCIATES LITERARY AGENCY, INC. (New York & Palo Alto offices). Her fiction list includes commercial literary fiction, women's fiction, multi-cultural fiction, dark/quirky fiction, and young voices. She also represents non-fiction, GenX/GenY issues, and popular science. Stephanie holds a degree in literature and fiction writing from Stanford University and studied at Oxford. An award winning writer herself, Stephanie is considered to be an "editorial agent", actively involved in the development and marketing of her clients' work.



**Carolyn Grayson**, from the ASHLEY GRAYSON LITERARY AGENCY , represents commercial fiction for adults, including romance, chick-lit, mysteries, women’s fiction, and some non-fiction, including true crime, parenting and self-help. She also represents fiction for younger readers. She has been an agent with AGLA since 1996. She’s interested in taking on more mysteries, thrillers, and nonfiction. Ms. Grayson is a member of the Association of Authors Representatives, and the Romance Writers of America.



**Sally van Haitsma** is an agent with the CASTIGLIA LITERARY AGENCY. The agency has successfully placed significant non-fiction and fiction titles with major publishers since 1993, many by first time authors. These sales have extended to film, audio, foreign, commercial and electronic rights where appropriate. Actively seeking new authors, Sally is interested in commercial and literary fiction, offbeat mysteries, narrative non-fiction, education, business, pop culture and current affairs.



**Michael Larsen and Elizabeth Pomada**, representing the LARSEN-POMADA LITERARY AGENCY in San Francisco have been helping writers launch their careers since 1972. Michael and Elizabeth worked for New York publishers before starting their successful agency. They have reviewed books for the San Francisco Chronicle, written books on writing and local interest, and are involved in the San Francisco Writers

## PUBLISHERS



**Charlotte Cook**, president of KOMENAR PUBLISHING, is the daughter of one independent bookseller and serves as consultant to another, her husband, owner of Sunrise Bookshop in Berkeley. Charlotte is a writer, editor, teacher, as well as a publisher. KOMENAR’s titles include *Over the Edge* by Marc Paul Kaplan and *My Half of the Sky* by Jana McBurney-Lin (CWC member).

A special thanks to KOMENAR Publishing for sponsoring our Novel Writing Contest.



**Hannah Clayborn** is an acquisitions editor for ARCADIA PUBLISHING’S TEAM WEST in San Francisco and, since 2003, has shepherded over 65 books into print with another 20 in various stages of production. Arcadia is best known for its popular *Images of America* series, which chronicles the history of communities from Bangor, Maine, to Manhattan Beach, California. Arcadia also publishes other series, including *Campus History*, *Images of Sports*, *Images of Baseball*, *Black America*, *Postcard History*, *Then and Now*, *Images of Rail*, and *Corporate History*.



**Carolyn Hayes Uber** is President of STEPHENS PRESS , which is partnered with Stephens Media Group (a newspaper publisher) in a start-up book publishing venture. Stephens Press publishes mainly non-fiction books on a wide variety of subjects, often collaborating with other media organizations. Their books vary from the history of boxing to an insider’s celebrity guide to Las Vegas, a photo-essay of the Grand Canyon and Lake Powell, and an examination of the sex industry in Nevada. The latter, *Skin City*, was sold to HarperCollins for trade paperback and international rights.

(EOE CONTINUED ON P13)

## WritersTalk Challenge

Creative Writing Awards are offered to those publishing in *WritersTalk*

### Genres:

Memoirs <1000 wds  
Short Fiction <1500 wds  
Poetry <300 wds  
Essays <700 wds  
Articles <400 wds

### Awards:

Twice yearly, Feb 15 and Aug 15

**First Prize - \$60**

**Second - \$40**

**Third - \$25**

**Honorable Mentions**

An **East of Eden Scholarship** will be awarded during the August BBQ for the most unique entry received through July 15, 2006

### Entrants:

All work in the genres above, published in WT during the period Feb 15 through Aug 15, 2006 is entered. WT Editors are excluded from participation.

**Judging:** Is to be done by genre-related critique groups (or individuals) of Club membership.

**Judging approach:** Ten points are available for each piece, to be allocated over several categories of grading in each genre. The allotments are available from *WritersTalk* Editors

**The three pieces with the highest scores will win (regardless of genre)**

When you submit to *WritersTalk* and are published in the genres above in the word allotment indicated, you are entered. You need do nothing else.

**Note: Publishing in *WritersTalk*, excluding ads and announcements, is limited to members of the Southbay Branch of the California Writers Club**

## The Internet Movie Database --Marty Sorensen

I highly recommend imdb.com, the Internet Movie Database. Anybody can go there, and see what's on, or enter whatever you want in the search box and look up movies, or actors, or directors. For instance, look up *The Devil Wears Prada*, and when that comes up, it shows you what theaters it's at, who's in it, plot summary, and much more. It has the list of all the actors, and you can link on any of them and see their entire history, including television shows, and lots of photos of them. So you can see the 57 movies Meryl Streep has been in back to 1977, and when you click on any of them you can do the same, endlessly, with all the other actors. You can put in a director's name and see the entire movie history. For this search facility alone it is worth more than the money (which is nothing, because it's free.)

What you should also do is register. All you need to do is give them your email address, and I swear you will not ever hear from them again, except in one case. That one case is this: once you are registered, you can vote on the film. And if you want, you can submit a comment. When you submit a comment, they will send you an email the next day saying it's posted. That's the only email you will ever get. What I like about this is that they then keep a record of all the films you see, and you can look them up whenever you want to. I know, I know, they have a record of your films, but there isn't any use to them. What they really care about it, is how many people have seen a movie, not what your preferences are. But you can look up how many people have seen a movie, too.

Another great thing is that you can edit your movie theaters, to include and exclude whatever theaters you want, in your order, so then when you search for a movie it will present the show times at your favorite theater first. You can also get tickets online, using Fandango, but I honestly don't see the point in that. Excuse me for editorializing.

Sometimes on Netflix a movie is missing. A case in point is *Uninvited*, 1941, with Ray Milland, a scary ghost story, back in the days when special ghost effects were done with smoke. It was recommended recently in the paper. Netflix doesn't have it because it's not in DVD, but you can find it at imdb.com and they even have a trailer for it, which was itself so scary I couldn't watch it to the end. More or less.

You owe it to yourself to try it, and see what an amazing website imdb.com really is. MS

### Writing and Publishing Short Stories:

Sunday, August 20, 6-9 PM. 826 Valencia St. \$100.

Hands-on workshop for adult aspiring fiction writers.

Panelists include

**ZZ Packer, Daniel Alarcon, Alejandro Murguia, and Jandy Nelson.**

Moderated by Eli Horowitz.

Sign up online at <http://www.826valencia.org/workshops/adult>  
or send payment to /or visit

826 Valencia's storefront at, 826 Valencia St., S.F., CA 94110.



**Phyllis Mattson's** and **Linda Joy Myers** don their publisher's hats as a part of our Self Publishing Panel and tell you of their publishing experiences ; Phyllis's memoir, *War Orphan in San Francisco*, and Linda's *Don't Call Me Mother: Breaking the Chain of Mother-Daughter Abandonment* and *Becoming Whole: Writing Your Healing Story*. have provided them knowledge that will benefit all who plan to self publish.

## EDITORS



**Donna Levin** has twenty years experience as a writer and ghostwriter, teacher, editor, book reviewer. Her philosophy is that almost anyone can write and publish a novel if they are willing to combine patience and persistence with hard work and an open mind. Donna graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of California and holds a J.D. from Hastings College of the Law. Her specialties are literary and commercial fiction, women's fiction, and mysteries and thrillers.



**Becky Levine** is a freelance editor who has been critiquing and copyediting manuscripts for over ten years. She works with authors to bring their writing up to the next level and to help them produce the story or book they want. Becky is supportive and encouraging, always remembering that the words on a page belong to the writer. Becky is a writer as well as an editor and is currently working on two mystery novels and several children's stories.



**Jana McBurney-Lin** writes, edits and critiques. She has worked for media around the world, including The Japan Times, Singapore Straits Times, The Saigon Times, Eastern & Oriental Express, Islands Magazine, Hemispheres (United Airlines) and KQED. My goal is to sidestep the writer's impatience, emotional attachment and political bias and help the writer see where the story is working and where it is not, she tells us. Recently, Jana received the 2005 Byline Short Fiction Award

## FACULTY



**Martha Stockton Alderson, M.A.**, is the author of *BLOCKBUSTER PLOTS Pure & Simple* and two award-winning historical novels. She teaches plot workshops privately and through UCSC Extension, the Learning Annex, and at writers' conferences. She offers plot consultations to writers anywhere in the world. Writers receive a personalized Plot Planner for their individual project. Martha will teach two workshops at the conference: **Sizzling Scenes** and **Blockbuster Plots**.



A journalist by profession, **Martha Engber** has had hundreds of articles published in the Chicago Tribune, Byline Magazine and others. She is the author of the forthcoming book, *How to Grow Great Characters From the Ground Up: A Thorough Primer for Writers of Fiction and Nonfiction*. Martha's fiction credits include a full-length play produced in Hollywood, a short story nominated for a Pushcart and myriad other fiction published in various literary journals.



**Kate Evans** has been nominated for Pushcart Prizes in Fiction and Creative Nonfiction and has been a finalist in two national poetry competitions. She holds an M.A. and an M.F.A. from SJSU, and a Ph.D. from the University of Washington. Kate is the author of a poetry collection, *Like All We Love* and books: *Negotiating the Self*, *For the May Queen*, and a collection of stories, *Flirting with Rosie*. Her stories, poems, and essays have appeared in North American Review, Indiana Review, Santa Monica Review, Cream City Review, Harrington Lesbian Fiction Quarterly and Seattle Review.



**April Kihlstrom** is the author of 31 published romance novels. Romantic Times has called her a “rising star” and a “diamond of the first water”. April also teaches online writing courses through community colleges in New Jersey and to gifted high school students in Pennsylvania, she also offers life coaching to fellow writers as well as classes and workshops in writing. In January 2006, April taught her "Write a Book in a Week" workshop for CWC South Bay Writers. That workshop was such a success, we've invited her back for this conference.



**Joyce Kreig** is the author of three mystery novels about talk radio host Shauna J. Bogart: *Murder Off Mike*, *Slip Clue*, and *Riding Gain*. Joyce is a CWC member, active in the Central Coast / Monterey branch and the state's Central Board as the editor of *The Bulletin*. Joyce will teach a mystery writing workshop.



**Lee Lofland** is a retired police detective and has solved cases including homicide, rape, robbery, ritualistic and occult crimes, and narcotics. He is the recipient of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police Award for Valor and the General Nathaniel Greene Medal for courageous conduct. Lee and his wife, currently live in the Midwest where he divides his time between speaking, consulting, and writing. His book *The Book of Police Procedure and Investigation* is scheduled for release by F&W Publications, Inc. in 2007.



**Jas Lonquist** is an award-winning writer and producer with credits in film, television, video, and print. She has 31 television programs and a feature films to her credit; her work has appeared on the Discovery Channel, Tech TV, Knowledge TV, Comedy Central, and more. Four of her comedies have been honored in the prestigious Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Nicholl Screenwriting Fellowships. Jas



**D.P. Lyle, MD** is a successful author and a cardiologist in Southern California. He has worked as a consultant on TV series: *Diagnosis Murder*, *CSI Miami* and *Peacemakers*. His books include novels *Devil's Playground* and *Double Blind*, and the nonfiction, *Murder and Mayhem: A Doctor Answers Medical and Forensic Questions*. His most recent book is *Forensics for Dummies*.



**Tom Mach** is the author of two historical novels, *Sissy!* and *All Parts Together*. He has held editorial positions for three national magazines. He taught copywriting at SJSU and writing for publication courses in workshops and community colleges. His novel "Sissy," set during the Civil War, won the J. Donald Coffin Memorial Award for the best Kansas novel. Tom currently teaches Writing Workshops at the University of Kansas. Tom will teach a historical fiction workshop.



**David Henry Sterry** is the co-author of *Putting your Passion into Print* with wife-agent Arielle Eckstut. Together they will teach a workshop of the same name. David is the author of bestseller, *Chicken: Self-Portrait of a Young Man for Rent*, the forthcoming YA novel, and *Travis & Freddy's Adventures in Vegas*. He has worked as a comedian, an actor (films, television, & theater; done 750 commercials—4 Clios. His one-man show, "Chicken," was named one of the Year's Best Shows in the San Francisco Chronicle.



**Penny Warner** is the author of over 40 published books for adults and children, both fiction and non-fiction. *Dead Body Language* was nominated for an Agatha Award and won a Macavity Award for Best First Mystery. Her *Mystery of the Haunted Caves* for middle-grade readers, featuring a Girl Scout Troop, won an Agatha Award and an Anthony Award for Best Juvenile Mystery.



**Maralys Wills** is the author of nine books, spanning six different genres. In fiction she's written four romances and a techno-thriller about airplane sabotage, *Scatterpath*. Her non-fiction works include a books about hang gliding and party games. Her memoir, *Save My Son*, deals with addiction. Maralys will be our featured keynote speaker at Saturday breakfast. She will also teach the workshop, "How to Write a Provocative Memoir."

## The Flying Lesson —Marjorie Johnson

"Cessna One Eight Echo, Cleared for takeoff."

Mixture, Alignment, Lights, Transponder.

Full power, right rudder, nose full up.

Lift-off. Too soon but I am alone so the plane is lighter.

Lower the nose . . . I'm not over the centerline!

Turning left! More right rudder! More right rudder! I cannot climb!

Circling left turns . . . so much fun . . . so beautiful up here . . .

Oh, no! I'm tied to a gurney. What am I doing here?

"Keep your head still, please. Only a few more stitches."

"Where's my airplane?"

"Everything's all right. You left it on the golf course."

Why would I do that? What happened? The tower cleared me. I couldn't have crashed. "Can I still get my pilots' license?"

"You've had a good bump to the head. We're admitting you."

I took a nap until I heard the door open.

"We're from Channel 2. Can we interview you about the accident?"

"Sure . . . I guess." Do I have to talk to these people?

A nurse escorted them out. "No visitors."

The crash on the golf course made the evening television news, but they let me go home in time for supper. I wore a hospital gown home because they cut my clothes off. I had ugly bruises on my leg and hip and eight stitches in my head.

Why did a petite grandmother like me decide to learn to fly? I was afraid of every landing after my husband learned to fly. When he bought an airplane, I took lessons to stay alive. What if the pilot gave out at 5000 feet and the airplane fell all the way to the ground? It took nine months for me to learn to land—the last fifty feet were just too close to the ground.

Three days after the crash, I went up with an instructor in a Cessna 152, a little smaller and slower than the 172 I had flown. The headset dug in and my head ached. My heart pounded, my stomach knotted, and my palms perspired on the takeoff roll. If these machines just didn't have to takeoff and land!

I went to see One Eight Echo in the salvage yard. It didn't look bad in the newspaper photo—*Birdie on the Green*—that showed its good side. One bent wing, twisted landing gear, the propeller turned outward at both tips. All the other airplanes at salvage had burned. Crashed and burned.

A week later, the FAA investigator called it a stall/spin accident. Uprooting a tree didn't seem to have much to do with it. "Have your instructor call me. I'm assigning ten hours of stall recovery practice."

Every time I did a stall and recovery, my heart would pound. Even on pussyfoot near-

stalls. Flight time to the practice area didn't count; each recovery takes only a few seconds. After two log-book hours of the same near-stall maneuver—reduce power, nose full up until the aircraft shudders, lower nose, increase power—my instructor quit. He said, "I always hated stalls."

The acrobatic instructor took me on.

The acrobatic airplane had 'throw away doors' for emergency egress. We wore parachutes—I seriously considered using mine. We entered stalls and spins from every conceivable direction—no more pussyfooting around. Hammerhead stalls, tail slides, butterfly spins, but the worst was stall recovery in inverted flight. Every maneuver turned into a spin, followed by a fast spin recovery. I loved every landing because it meant I could get out of that airplane.

With three practice hours left, the instructor did stall recoveries from every configuration possible for a Cessna 152. I flew a low airspeed rectangular pattern in a strong wind for an hour while the stall warning horn screamed in my ear; my right leg was stiff for a week from holding right rudder. We stalled and did steep turns at 11,000 feet, which was as high as it would go, followed by a simulated engine out . . . spiraling all the way down, stall horn blasting my eardrums. I had to wear a hood that masked out everything but the instrument panel; the aircraft shuddered and bucked, the engine roared in my ears. We stalled in turns, going up, going down, a roller coaster in the air.

Finally the ten hours passed. Now my fear of landings has been replaced by a fear of taking off. *MJ*

### Attention Writers in the Gilroy Area:

The Barnes & Nobles in Gilroy hosts a Writers Group the last Monday of each month. The next meeting will be July 31, at 7:00. Read your work and meet other writers. For more information, email Nancy Asay, at [crm2181@bn.com](mailto:crm2181@bn.com) or call her at (408) 846-5854.

## Brian —by Meredy Amyx

The package containing the Personal Life-Size Inflatable Latex Husband came on a Thursday morning when Frannie was home sick with lower-back pain and her husband Will was at work. Spacey with Vicodin, Frannie decided to try it out right away.

*Him.* Try *him* out.

He came tightly compressed in a convenient and discreet opaque vinyl pouch that he would never fit into again, together with a map-folded set of instructions and a credit-card-sized remote.

Frannie unfolded him, as wrinkled and misshapen as an infant fresh from the experience of being born, but exuding that airless toxic rubber smell. He was an unwholesome shade of rosy peach.

We must look very pink to the Asians, she thought.

And he was nearly transparent.

One of the selling points of the P.L.S.I.L.H. was the fact that the model was constructed in two separate airtight sections fused at the waist. This meant that the upper and lower halves could be inflated independently. Frannie was interested in the upper half. She found Ronnie's old bicycle in the garage, unused since he'd got his license at least a dozen years ago. The pump was still attached.

As the P.L.S.I.L.H. filled with air, the head began to show vague contours of a face. The manufacturer had wisely refrained from painting in features, better left to the imagination. It was a little disconcerting at first, the slight concavity of mouth, the slight convexity of nose, and two vacant depressions for eyes. I'll get used to that last one, though, thought Frannie. I've done it before.

The ears, now. That was a stroke of brilliance. The ears were separately molded, comparatively well articulated and somewhat oversize, and attached with glue. Frannie felt comforted already.

Frannie set the P.L.S.I.L.H. in the chair opposite her place at the kitchen table, uninflated abdomen and buttocks still compressed and boneless pink legs dangling in an undignified fashion like a pair of new pantyhose. The four AA batteries installed in the case incorporated at the waist joint provided a little ballast. The ad had said "anatomically correct," but she had not yet chosen to inspect him for completeness. Perhaps later she'd find a pair of Will's old shorts for him anyway, just for decency's sake.

## MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

—By Clarence Hammonds

People whom I have met, since being a member here, are so kind thoughtful, and true.

Ask anyone a question; you will get an answer, yes, that is why they are here, too.

All of the members love to write, read and share; if you don't believe it, try it.

People in general always love sharing, that's great, because, sharing can be, bit by bit.

There are non-members, who say they are friends, and indeed we welcome all.

They love and enjoy the branch and fellowship; telling others, surely, they had a ball.

Friends, later become members so, just wait, how the membership does grow.

Let us keep on being the largest CWC branch, we make that claim, and we glow.

Why bother? said the Vicodin.

Now she consulted the instructions, straining to make out the 6-point type. The remote consisted of an on/off button, a pair of up/down arrows for volume, and eight tiny numbered buttons. The list on the paper read like a telephone menu tree:

For a greeting, press 1.

For a complimentation, press 2.

For a felicitation, press 3.

For a harmonious listening, press 4.

For a sympathy, press 5.

For a query, press 6.

For a romance, press 7.

For a advice, press 8.

I will never press 8, thought Frannie. If there's one thing I don't need any more of.

She poured herself a cup of coffee and stared thoughtfully across the table at her new pink friend. With a here-goes-nothing sensation, she pressed 1.

"Hello, darling," said the P.L.S.I.L.H. in a robotic

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monotone.

He needs a name, thought Frannie. Definitely not Will, a misnomer if ever she heard one, her husband being more of a “won’t” kind of guy. Will’s mother had chosen his nickname, avoiding the alternative that would remind her of her debts. There, thought Frannie, is another of those mysteries of English that must just baffle foreigners, especially people like the ones who wrote the instructions she’d just been reading. Bill and sue, brad, clay, garret and gore, *rob*-what must those things sound like to English learners, people whose names have meanings like purity, beautiful song, gift of the goddess, exalted ruler?

Ah, well, who cares? said the Vicodin.

She thought of her high school sweetheart, the one with the enchanting blue eyes and the manly cleft chin. It had been nearly forty years, but she could still feel the power of that charm. His name, whatever its origins, had the advantage of meaning nothing at all in present-day English; but it was still magical to her.

“Hi, Brian,” she said to her latex companion, and smiled. And pressed 2.

“You looking lovely today, sweet thing,” he intoned, without inflection.

“Thank you,” she returned, preening a little in spite of herself, and resolving to overlook any other deviant grammar. She pressed 6.

“How you feeling today, dearest.”

Now, *there* was a question.

For the next two hours, Frannie poured into Brian’s articulated ears her pent-up tales of woe: the back pain, her job frustrations, the stresses of dealing with her aged mother, Ronnie’s divorce problems, her ongoing war with the neighbor whose gardeners blew leaves onto her lawn once a week, the dog that barked at five-thirty every morning and woke her when her back was hurting enough that she couldn’t get back to sleep. And Will. Most of all, Will. Brian listened as no one had ever listened to Frannie before. Each button press brought one of four randomized responses of the specified type, all delivered in a flat electronic voice. It didn’t take Frannie long to start filtering out the flatness, and soon after that she found that she could hear the words apart from the tone, ascribing to them all the tenderness, attentiveness, and sincerity for which she’d been so starved. She drank coffee, floated on Vicodin, mopped her eyes with Kleenex, and pressed buttons 1 through 6. In no time she had memorized the position of each by touch.

“I am sorry to hear that, peach blossom.” “You doing great, beloved.” “I hear you, special.” “Please tell me more, adorable.” “What good girl are you, sweet pea.” “I understand, honey.” “Please tell me more, adorable.” “Please tell me more, adorable.” “Please tell me more, adorable.”

Frannie had never been happier.

At length, feeling very wired and dreamy at the same time, Frannie was reckless enough to press button 7.

“Kiss me, rosebud,” said Brian.

Frannie watched herself in a dispassionate, out-of-body sort of way as she stood up, walked around the end of the table, and planted her lips on Brian’s featureless rubber face. His molded mouth was firm and yet pleasingly pliant. Frannie felt a surge of warmth such as her body had nearly forgotten.

Without looking, she pressed button 7 again.

At another time, on another day, in another state of mind, Brian’s next suggestion would have been ludicrous if not downright bizarre, baby. But getting all her sorrows off her chest had done wonders for Frannie’s mood. And her back didn’t even hurt any more.

Why the hell not? said the Vicodin.

Giggling, Frannie picked up Brian in one hand and the bicycle pump in the other. She went to her bedroom and closed the door. Locked it.

Air. Soft, yielding, invisible air. We take it for granted, don’t feel it, hardly notice it, rarely think about it. As long as we’re not deprived of it, it’s almost nothing to us. (That must be what I am to Will, thought Frannie. Like air.) But when it’s trapped inside something, it’s suddenly very solid. Firm. Even hard. Frannie floated on hard air, devoid of will.

When her moment had passed and her brain was returning, Frannie suddenly thought of her mother. “Never do it without a rubber,” she said to Brian’s pleasantly empty face, pressing button 4. “I’m with you on that, pumpkin,” droned Brian. He lay on his back, staring blindly at the ceiling, his anatomical correctness still fully inflated. Frannie pulled the sheet over him and laughed herself silly. She was feeling drowsy now.

Try number 8, whispered the Vicodin.

With a vague sense of misgiving, Frannie sat up on one elbow and aimed the remote at her latex lover’s median divider. The only utterances of Brian’s repertoire that she had not yet heard were the words of advice. She pressed the button.

“Let past be bygone,” said Brian.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 18)

## Networking Opportunities Writing Groups to the Rescue

By Anne Darling

Have you been sitting alone for months staring at your computer screen trying to launch or complete your manuscript? Is the solitude driving you crazy? You need guidance, feedback, and companionship, but how do you go about finding it? One good way is through writing critique groups.

Although this issue features such groups, other network opportunities will be detailed in future columns. They will include:

- Workshops, retreats, and conferences
- Professional associations
- Open mike sessions
- Book signings, book clubs, and fairs
- Critique groups

Most writing critique groups share common characteristics. They have fixed membership (usually 5-10), meet at a scheduled time and date and expect regular attendance and active participation. Generally individuals read their own work plus critique the work of others. Group members receive constructive, positive feedback, and usually the person being critiqued doesn't comment unless to clarify a point.

Some groups invite guest speakers or facilitators, hold practice writing sessions, and may go on planned fieldtrips. Often groups encourage a broad range of experience and varying genres. Other clubs accept only published authors or those with completed manuscripts. Fewer focus on the process of writing itself. More commonly, members encourage publication. Most share publishing opportunities and serve as a vital network.

"Everyone can benefit from being in a critique group," says Edie Matthews, former SouthBay programs chair and creative writing instructor.

There are many reasons writers join a group. Since writing is a solitary craft, many a would-be author needs companionship and guidance. Sometimes writers want feedback on a specific project, while others have a terrific story idea but are having trouble getting it down on paper. Most writers want to improve their craft, and an established writing group affords that opportunity. Writing groups provide a wide variety of networking prospects.

Southbay member Steve Lawlor has been attending a critique group for years. "Not only do you get valuable help writing your piece, but the number one benefit is the different markets and different genres you are exposed to."

Norma Faulkner, a new SouthBay member agrees. "I think critique groups encourage you to write."

Some writers finish their manuscript then realize and may wait several weeks or months to hear back from an editor. More often than not, writers seek personal, specific and immediate response, and belonging to a writing group helps them achieve that goal.

Donna Poppenhagen, member and a former columnist says, "The negative critique you get from a writing group makes you a better writer and the positive keeps you going."

According to Judy Reeves, author of *Writing Alone, Writing Together*, every writing group member should have an "Elements of Critique" checklist. They include: voice, tone, language/style, diction, characters, point of view, dialogue, setting/time, plot, and structure. Also on the list are conflict/tension, compelling or predictable/fresh or trite, transition, beginning/middle/end, arc, pacing, theme, research and authenticity.

Reeves suggests, "Keep your critique to what's on the page. Critique the elements of the craft, not the content. Be specific. Be honest, objective, and kind."

In next month's column, readers will learn how to form and run a successful writing group. I welcome reader input and can be reached at 408 354-7705. Future plans include a questionnaire for interested writers who are looking to start their own or join an existing writing group. *AD*

(*BRIAN FROM PAGE 17*)

Fortune-cookie wisdom, thought Frannie. Forgive and forget? or ditch it all and walk away? Frannie's thoughts drifted to the suitcase in the hall closet, and she began mentally composing a note: "Dear Will, I have decided to go away with Brian. . . ."

"Everything is not yet lost," said Brian.

That's right, thought Frannie. Now that I've finally remembered what I need. Maybe I could talk to Will. Maybe I could get Will to take lessons from Brian.

She giggled.

Maybe I could even take a lesson myself.

"Some things do not need to be done," said Brian.

And some things do, thought Frannie. For instance. For instance. For instance what? It was getting very sleepy in her room.

"Trust your intuition," said Brian.

That's canned remark number four, thought Frannie, eyes drooping. Now I've heard everything Brian has to say. Guess I'm on my own from here.

She threw her arm across Brian's life-size rubber chest and went to sleep. *MA*

*Announcements Announcements Announcements*

**Free Author/Book event for South Bay members**

In partnership with the Elk Grove Community Services District and the Elk Grove Library among others, a fine arts festival featuring authors, poets, artists and entertainers (100 authors will participate) will be held in Elk Grove on March 31, 2007.

The Military Writer's Society of America (MWSA) and "The American Authors Association" (AAA) are the forces behind this event and are extending an invitation at this time to SouthBay members – there are no fees or charges to register .

"New York Times Best Selling Authors" will be featured to help draw readers and book buyers to the event. A wonderful facility is secured. This will be the first year but it will be an annual event for authors .

**What:** "The Elk Grove Arts Festival 2007"

**Where:** The Barbara Morse Wackford Community Complex

**When:** Saturday March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007

**Who:** Community sponsored partnership with The AAA, The MWSA and others.

**Registration:** No fees for authors, artists, or poets. To register send an email (preferred) or a letter with the following information:

- Author name
- Email address
- Personal/ book website address
- Brief Bio for media presentations
- Phone number (not made public)
- Mailing address
- Titles of your books.

Email to:  
**Bill McDonald**  
 angelnet@surewest.net

Or send by mail to:

**Bill McDonald E.G.**  
 Arts Festival, Post Office Box  
 2441  
 Elk Grove, CA 95759-2441



**Write a column—**  
*Anything Goes (Almost).*  
 That's the name of the space. You may make it opinionated, informational, persuasive...Email it to Una Daly, by the 16th of the month.

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

**GOT NEWS?**

- Book Reviews?
- Committee Meetings?
- Critique Groups?
- Reading Forums?
- Book-store openings?
- Signings?
- Conferences ?

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

*Steinbeck Center*

**Mark Your Calendars:**

**East Of Eden Writers Conference**

**September 8 – 10, 2006 in Salinas, California.**

- Agents
- Editors
- Writers
- Teachers
- Contests
- Camaraderie

See our website for more information about Contests, Author Participants, Networking, Accommodations, etc.

www.southbaywriters.com

*Steinbeck Center*



**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  
**Barnes and Noble**  
 Pruneyard in Campbell

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. Contact Bill Baldwin

(408) 730-9622 or email  
 wabaldwin@aol.com

**Creative Writing Workshop**

with Jacqueline Mutz  
 Santa Clara Adult Education  
 1840 Benton St., Santa Clara

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**Eight week course beginning 8/28/06. Call 423-3500 for registration information.**

The **BOOK TABLE**  
 at Club Meetings

hosts experienced reads and new adventures

—o—

Bring in your seasoned books—pick up new readings por nada. It's a great deal and the return policy is lenient.

—o—

Every monthly meeting, the Book Table is set.



### California Writers Club

South Bay Branch  
PO Box 3254  
Santa Clara, CA 95055

[www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

Stamp(s)

### ADDRESSEE

Address Correction Requested

### Potluck Bar-B-Que

At

**Edie and Jim's**  
**917 Perreira Drive, Santa Clara**

#### *SAVE THESE DATES*

Board of Directors Meet  
Aug 3, Edie's

Potluck Bar-B-Que  
Edie and Jim's  
Aug 6

Open Mic  
Aug 4 7:30p  
Borders, Los Gatos  
Aug 18 7:30p  
B&N in the Pruneyard

*WritersTalk* Inputs  
Aug 16

Editors Pow Wow  
Aug 18 10:00am  
Orchard Valley Coffee

