



WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

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Page 1

Contest Winner and Mystery Writer Joyce Krieg — Gets Published



Edie Matthews
Programs Chair

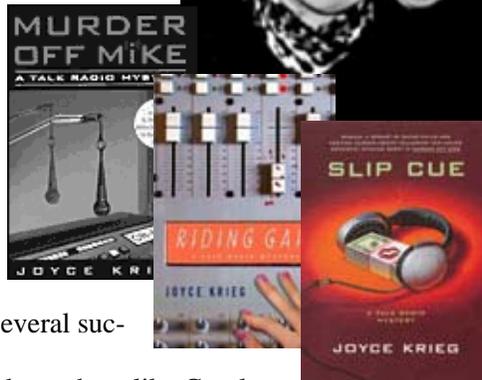
AN INTRODUCTION BY EDIE MATTHEWS

After an eight-year struggle to get published, agents clamored after Joyce Krieg when her book won the St. Martins Press First Novel Contest.

Joyce was so fed up with trying to get her mystery novel, *Murder Off Mike*, published, she nearly blew off the contest and went to the beach. Several years before Joyce had been with an agent, who was unable to place her book with a publisher. So the hard copy lay under her bed collecting dust. But instead of enjoying the sand and surf, she re-wrote 20 pages, spent the afternoon printing off 350 pages and mailed it off, barely making the postmark deadline.

Even though St. Martins Press planned on publishing her mystery, Joyce decided to accept the offer from one of the many agents eager to represent her. She wanted someone to help her maneuver the convoluted contracts that include provisos for the rights to action figures and video games, so she selected an agent that was already representing several successful mystery writers.

As a child, Joyce devoured books by authors like Carolyn



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WT Profiles Jacqueline Mutz

— By Una Daly



Una Daly
Contributing Editor

“Even as a child, stories came easily to me. Of course, they were always about horses,” said CWC South Bay Hospitality Chairwoman and *WritersTalk* Contributing Editor, Jackie Mutz. A creative writing teacher in high school encouraged her to keep a journal: it is a practice she continues today, using it to jot down thoughts and bits of description that may be worked into a poem later.

Jackie currently teaches English at Mission Community College and is an instructor in the Independent



Jackie Mutz

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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:

- May 5&19 Open Mic, see p15
- May 4 Board of Directors Meeting—Edie’s Sweets Shop
- May 10 Gen meeting/Krieg—Lookout Bar & Grill
- May 22 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 7:30 pm
- Jul ?? Potluck BBQ—Edie’s
- Sep 8-10 East of Eden Conference—Salinas

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President's Prowling —Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Branch

Who *Are* These People??

At our monthly open mikes in Los Gatos, the books surrounding us on the shelves lure or confront me – language books, wedding books, writing books. But I seldom get to look at them – I'm hosting the readings.

One of the books I admire from afar is about "leading the literary life." I'd like to "take it out" sometime. It could "be a good date" – it could "lead to something." I'd be curious to hear what the author considers "the literary life."

Meanwhile, I read about well-known writers. Currently I'm reading about Somerset Maugham and Gore Vidal – which also tells me something about the people they knew, met, loved or hated. In addition to personalities like the Kennedys, I learn more about Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Anais Nin, Tennessee Williams, Graham Greene, and so on.

Does this help my own writing? Well, I'm *reading* something. I can ask myself how I like the *style* of the book, how I like the structure. And – what issues did these well-known writers have with their own writing? What happened to Capote while writing *In Cold Blood*? How did it affect his ability to continue writing? How did fame (or notoriety?) destroy Jack Kerouac? Are writers, more than non-writers, vulnerable to debilitating excess or general bizarreness?

More to the point of the "literary life": What did writing mean to these people? What kept them writing – or not?! I learn something about the writing process, editing, publishing, movie making, literary feuds, stupid mistakes.

And it's fun. I like picking up biographies or memoirs of writers I'm interested in: Skipping around the books randomly, or looking up favorite topics or people in the index. It's entertaining and educational. I recommend it – another way to stay motivated and energized. *WB*

(KRIEG FROM PAGE 1)

Keene (*Nancy Drew Mysteries*) and Laura Ingalls Wilder (*Little House on the Prairie*). As an adult, she was still an avid reader, but too often she'd finish



Another's View

the last page of a novel and think, "I could have done better."

Joyce began honing her writing skills at San Jose State University, where she majored in journalism. Her first job after graduation was at the *Woodland Daily Democrat*, located in a suburb of Sacramento.

Joyce credits her reporting experience as an asset for meeting deadlines. "You learn to produce readable copy and deal with chaos in the newsroom."

But Joyce longed to fulfill a childhood fantasy and work in radio. For many years broadcasting was a man's domain. Thanks to woman's lib and changes in

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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

Contact our Membership Chair
Diana Richomme

(Krieg from page 2)

the social landscape during the mid 70s, many stations began hiring women.

Joyce began hanging around Earth Radio 102 and studied for a First Class Radio-Telephone License. She finally finagled a news anchor position at Sacramento's KFBK NewsTalk 1530. During the next 20 years, she stated, "I did it all," eventually, becoming the Promotions Manager. Then corporate mergers came along, and she found herself out of a job. It wasn't all bad. She received a generous severance package and moved to one of her favorite locations, Monterey Peninsula. Now she finally had time to write!

Her stint in radio and Sacramento provided the setting for her protagonist, Shauna J. Bogart, a radio talk-show host. Those who remember the late-night howls of Wolfman Jack will find a kindred soul in Shauna.

After *Murder Off Mike* was published by St Martin's, it was short-listed for the Agatha Award.

"Once you've been published," said Joyce, "your confidence soars."

Her first books was followed by *Riding Gain* and *Slip Cue*. Joyce is currently working on the fourth mystery in the series.

In addition to her own writing, Joyce teaches a popular mystery writing class for UCSC Extension.

Join us at the next meeting when Joyce Krieg will discuss her experience and how the principles of crime fiction can add zest to any story. *EM*



Dave LaRoche
Managing Editor

Editors Itch

Although not well publicized, elections are coming and for the next year we will delight in or endure the executives we select. It isn't an earth-shake, but there may be a difference in the way our club is managed—or not.

In June we will cast ballots for the President who presides, and a Vice President who assists in the presiding. There is the Treasurer who accounts for our money and recommends (or not) the expenditures we make and a Secretary who keeps an historical account of proceedings. Much more than that, however, is the leadership they provide. As a body, they staff the main boilers with committee heads and, from the bridge, they steer our writers' ship.

We enjoy a smooth ride and good weather. Our ports of call are exciting, well attended. But is there an island out there on the horizon, we might enjoy visiting—an addition or change that solicits and stimulates, a new view, a head-turning experience?

On the other hand, our club is successful. We are the largest, we acclaim, and our programs are far above norm (that trip with Steinbeck's Shillinglaw was spectacular). Our EOE Conference is the envy of the state. And our monthly "chew" comes to mind—well attended and, as pointed out by our prez: networking enriched.

As a new writer, I have needs that could be addressed with more instruction and would like to see quarterly workshops—three more like the one held in January. But I don't know that any candidate has such a plank or that there are platforms or candidates.

The final point here and first step: Our president, Bill Baldwin, is organizing a nominating committee and looking for interested people—that's us. Call Bill or tap out an email. Tell him you *are* "interested" and want to help develop a slate of candidates who offer a platform with planks in it—maybe one with quarterly workshops. *DLR*

WritersTalk

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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

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Announcements and Advertisement

to Dave LaRoche

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

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

or

writersstalk@comcast.net

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Contact Dave LaRoche

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ReCap — April Meeting

—Dave LaRoche

It's hard not to rave. I may have been sitting too close and assumed the trip through Steinbeck's California was just for me... or it may have been Susan Shillinglaw's superb articulation of her crisp and colorful recollections... or it may have been the subject itself—the man we admire, emulate, and aspire to be... whatever it was, those three or more, it was exhilarating and certainly



insightful. There were 44 in the great Look-Out hall Wednesday night, including 12 guests who mostly arrived with friends, observed Vicki Miller at the door. Our raffle, in Cathy's absence but with help from Jackie Mutz, turned in a respectable \$88 and of course... announcements around.

Upcoming Programs:

- May is Mystery Month with m-writer Joyce Krieg from the Central Coast Branch.
- June will bring Tom Barbash, novelist and short-story writer extraordinaire.
- July again promises warm summer and our annual BBQ pot-luck at Edies.
- August brings us Mike Cassidy from the San José Mercury News.
- September hosts our EOE Conference during the 8th thru the 10th with early-bird specials available to SouthBay members.

Other Announcements:

- Volunteers for the EOE Conference are still needed – Beth Proudfoot.
- Romance Writers of American workshop – Bill Baldwin.
- Talks and other “good things” at Martin Luther King Jr. Library – Bill Baldwin.
- Associates of Stanford University Library host third annual *In the company of Authors*, Apr 22; a presen-

tation open to the public and free – see Stanford's web site for details.

- Martha Alderson's Scene Tracker Workshop will be held on May 13 – see Martha's website.
- Steve Wetlesen is successfully using poetry to lift the spirits of seriously ill people, does anyone know someone who might benefit – see Steve.
- If you're not getting email reminders—meetings and occasional offers of entertainment freebies—and want to – see Edie.

Susan Shillinglaw, SJSU Professor, Scholar in Residence at the Steinbeck Center in Salinas,

author of *A Journey into Steinbeck's California*, and Steinbeck scholar *sans pareil*, was introduced and for an hour told of writing her book and her impressions and insight into the man and his places. In addition to Susan's expressive and fluid prose, we were treated to her photos (projected), which she used to underscore the story.

Steinbeck was inspired, perhaps fueled, by the ocean, she told us, and even while a voluntary émigré to New York, where *East of Eden* was penned, kept a Pacific-mimicking bowl of gold fish nearby to remind him.

Steinbeck wrote in layers, he once confided, but would not elaborate on his meaning. From her observation of his life and his books, Professor Shillinglaw developed her own theory, which went something like this: The first layer of his writing, and indeed perhaps his soul, was the place—its physicality, location, culture and character. The next would be the “people on the land” and



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

(RECAP FROM PAGE 4)

their work, dreams and relaxations. Then the history of the place of the people on the land was layered in, and the final layer, the people's spirituality or "the universality of life" completed the variegation.



From the age of 14 he thought himself a writer and in 19 years after several unheralded attempts he "hit pay dirt" with *Tortilla Flat* – published in 1935. His final major work, in 1961, *The Winter of Our Discontent*, prompted the Nobel Prize for Literature and in 1968, at age 66, he passed as a long-threatening heart finally failed

him. And as we know, there was much, so much in between.

But this night Susan Shillinglaw's look was to the man and his places, not his biographical rundown, and she gave us the little pieces of his life and perceptions encountered as she researched and wrote of her *Journey*: His wife, painter Carol Henning, did his manuscript typing and first-cut editing for ten years while he repaid with casual walks on the beach. He loved flowers and their colors and wrote in *East of Eden* of a deep purple view, "edged with white, so that a field



of lupines is more blue than you can imagine". He was a man of the land and had many colors and descriptions for his California hills, its rivers and valleys. And he saw his characters in terms of place: strong as buttressed mountains or vulnerable, needing protection on the valley side of a river. While he

is celebrated there today, he didn't care for Salinas or the worker hierarchy that prevailed in his time, pitting sugar people against lettuce against carrot against cauliflower people to the exclusion of others, "... not a pretty town and we know it," he had written.

Steinbeck's people (as well as all life) were pushed back into and part of the environment and Susan contrasted that to Hemingway, who "was always on the hunt" with each conquest the largest—his characters and animals much bigger than life. When in Pacific Grove, Steinbeck wrote every day for a committed amount of time and when finished would walk down by the beach on a path to Ed Ricketts's lab where he would talk with his good friend for hours. Ed Ricketts, a practicing biologist, is credited with influencing Steinbeck's philosophical perspective by way of these talks of life and writing at his lab.

Prof. Shillinglaw paid tribute to those who helped with her book: Steinbeck's third wife, her book's photographer, her husband-editor and the people along the way in places, who invited her into their recollections and stories of "short-handled hoes." Participation was a hallmark of Steinbeck's that seemed also to work well for Susan.

Endings are the hardest part of a book, she com-



mented, as she recounted her progress with the scenes in her book. And as I saw her presentation winding down, I thought this ending too will be difficult... but for us. DLR

(MUTZ FROM PAGE 1)

Study program of Los Gatos-Saratoga Adult Education while fitting in a creative writing class at Santa Clara Adult Education. "I can truly say that I love what I do. Mentoring those who need to know how to write, or whose wish it is to write is what I enjoy most."

A native Californian, Jackie graduated from San Jose State University with a BA in English, and later, an MA in English, with a concentration in Literature. She worked as an Engineering Associate at Underwriter Laboratories for 15 years. During this time, she married, had a daughter and eventually became a stay-at-home mom, while tutoring middle schoolers and substitute teaching. After receiving her Adult Education credential, she began her teaching career in earnest.

"Being a member of CWC has motivated me in ways I never imagined," said Jackie, who credits friend and mentor CWC South Bay Vice-President Edie Matthews' gentle prodding, with helping her to be where she is professionally and creatively today. A member for about six years now, she enjoys meeting fellow writers and hearing speakers share their stories about writing and publishing. It makes her want to go home and write.

Poetry and poetic prose are Jackie's main interest; and if she harbors one dream, it would be to have a book of poetry published. She also enjoys editing the works of other writers and does this part-time if anyone is interested.

"Teaching, mentoring and seeing my own words published in *WritersTalk* are exciting, but I am as happy with the process of writing

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 14. Spelling Pairs

Because English grammar changes constantly, new words are created, words are used differently, and word order changes. Spelling can be affected.

Often two words become joined into one. One example is "awhile" as opposed to "a while." "Awhile" as one word is an adverb, which is probably a shortened form of "for a while." "A while" as two words is the original use and consists of the article plus a noun. It is usually used after the preposition "for." Examples: I thought the job was finished "awhile" back. I had to think for "a while" before telling him what he wanted to know.

Another double word pair is "all ready" and "already." "All ready" means prepared; "already" means previously.

A few spelling errors to watch out for as you write:

"All right" means everything is OK; "alright" is not a legitimate word.

"A lot" means many; "alot" is incorrect. (In fact, a good spell checker should catch this one.)

Contact Pat at pat@patdeckernipper.com for comments or questions.

\$2000 AWAITS WINNERS OF LORIAN HEMINGWAY SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Entries are being accepted for the 26th annual Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition, created to recognize and encourage the efforts of writers who have not yet achieved major-market success. Stories in all genres of fiction are welcome. Maximum length is 3,000 words, writers retain all rights to their work. Final deadline is May 15, 2006; winners will be announced at the end of July.

For complete guidelines, visit www.shortstorycompetition.com,

as much as the end result," she reported.

Jackie admires many writers and believes that reading improves your writing. Favorite classic authors: Thomas Hardy, DH Lawrence and George Eliot; contemporary authors, Barbara Kingsolver, Sue Monk Kidd, Alice Seybold and Toni Morrison, to name a few.

Come join Jackie's next creative writing class starting May 22nd through Santa Clara Adult Education. Motivate yourself and Jackie as you both participate in the writing exercises. Contact her at j_mutz@yahoo.com, (underscore after the j) for more details. *UD*

Peppernell Lake II

By Toni Pacini

It was preferred that children were neither seen nor heard in our family, especially girl children. Momma had moved us back in with Grandma and Grandpa in the mill vil- lage (again) and they were obviously not happy about it. I tried to be as in- visible as possible (without actually disappearing as I often felt in danger of doing) and I kept my mouth shut, maybe then I would be safe, maybe I could escape the worse of it.

It was a scorcher of a day in Ala- bama, too hot to do much of anything, so I was thrilled when Grandma sug- gested we go fishing at Pepperell Lake. We all loaded up in Grandpa's old car with our cane poles sticking out the window. Pepperell lake was less than a mile up the highway so in no time, we were unloading our poles and gear from the car. As usual, we spread out along the bank and chose our own sure-fire lucky spot. We did- n't dare speak above a whisper, and then only when absolutely necessary, be- cause Grandpa insisted the fish could hear you and would go to the other side of the lake. This was ok with me, if no one talked, no one fought. I ambled off by my- self to find "the place" to catch "the big one."

I found a sunny spot where there were big boulders. The rocks were tiered and I easily climbed down them to a large rock shelf that jutted out over the water. Per- fect! I sat down and swung my legs over the edge, my feet dangled about a foot above the lake. I unhooked the hook from where I had it secured to my cane pole, fished a big wiggly night crawler out of the sweet pea can I had my bait in, and proceeded to bait my hook in preparation to catch a big one.

That's when I heard him.

It was so low, so quiet at first I wasn't sure I had heard anything at all, so I listened very closely to be sure. The next time there was no doubt, a faint but clear rattle. I froze and then forced myself to turn very slowly and look over my left shoulder in the direction of the rattle, louder now.

Accolades

—by Jackie Mutz



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

“Hope springs eternal,” as they say. At our last meeting, we had a few people speak of their accomplishments and others shared by email.

- Our own poet Steve Wetlesen (sp?) told of his new approach to poetry—that of moral raiser for those suffering from debilitating illnesses. His poems help others to feel better—thank you Steve!
- Last month we spelled Rich Burns’s name incorrectly—accept our apology Rich. His short story, *Mark and the Storm*, is part of a larger novel in progress, *Mark and Abdul*.
- Lastly, our own Betty Auchard, critically acclaimed author of the book, *Dancing in my Nightgown: The Rhythms of Widowhood* has been asked to speak at the Gerontology Academic Program Graduation Ceremony of 2006 at the University of Nevada, Reno. Her topic, *The Celebration of Aging*, tackles the serious subject of bereavement with humor and grace. Congratulations Betty!

Please be sure to send me your news for next month’s column at newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

Until then, enjoy our semi-spring weather and hold a good thought that “April showers” do indeed “bring May flowers.” *JAM*

There under the rock, just above the one I sat frozen on, was a big ole rattler, coiled and fretful. I almost fainted. I didn't move. I sat perfectly still, my pole in one hand and a wriggling worm in the other. I smelled the water, the sun and the earthy smell of the worm (still in my left hand). I sat barely breathing. It seemed an hour passed although it was only a handful of minutes I'm sure.

My body was aching due to the twisted position I was forced to maintain. My skinny butt was numb, but I continued to sit, afraid to even blink. The long, fat night crawler I held between my thumb and forefinger strug- gled and wiggled in an attempt to escape my grasp, where he was subjected to the noon day suns hot rays, he longed to return to the safety of the cool, dark earth. At that moment, I wanted to go with him. I considered squeezing him so he would be still. I feared his wiggling would be enough to make the snake decide to still me.

That ole rattler was looking right at me with sleepy, lazy eyes. Occasionally he would start to rattle again,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

reminder



Becky Levine

Columnist

Becky Levine is a writer and a free-lance editor who is available for copy-editing 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

Giving Your Lovable Characters Some Not-So-Lovable Traits

How many times have you heard this at a writing workshop or a conference: "Give your protagonist a flaw."? So you think about it for a while, and you decide your hero has a limp. Or you make your heroine not *quite* so pretty. Then you keep writing.

Deep down, though, you know that isn't it. It's not enough.

You need a personality flaw.

You take another shot. You hand the main character a temper, then watch them fly off the handle at the smallest irritation. Or you make them a bit of a braggart, and suddenly all the other characters are knocking each other over on their way out the door...and you're afraid your readers will, too.

How do you give your protagonist some negative traits, without turning them into a real pain?

You've got a few guidelines to play with.

- *Make the quality believable. Don't suddenly give a shy boy a dose of loud sarcasm.*
- *Base the flaw on a strength. Vulnerability is okay, but weakness in a hero is something few readers tolerate. In other words, rudeness is usually more acceptable than timidity.*
- *Include a reason for the flaw. Nervousness makes people talk too much; injustice produces anger, bossiness pushes most of us into stubbornness. If you make it clear why your character is acting badly, you not only add that layer that hooks your reader, you're going to catch them with sympathy as well.*
- *Make your character self-aware. If your protagonist has a lousy day and yells at the pizza guy, let them see what they're doing. Make them feel guilty, even if they can't stop shouting. At the last minute, let them apologize, maybe with a dash to their wallet and a \$20 tip.*

Superman had Kryptonite, but he didn't have any flaws. And, as wonderful as Superman is, you can only read about him for so long without needing a nap. If he'd yelled at Lois...just once, for always getting herself in trouble; if he'd tripped a couple of times coming out of the phone booth; if he'd let just one bad guy get away...

Myself, I always liked Clark Kent better. *BL*

Santa Cruz County Book Fair

Our infamous bon vivant and author, Betty Auchard of *Dancing In My Nightgown*, encourages your participation in the "First Annual Schools Plus Santa Cruz County Book Fair." Should you sign up she will be at your side, which in itself is a worthy consideration. The following is a synopsis of their press release:

Since 1984, Schools Plus has raised half million dollars plus in the furtherance of grants for Santa Cruz and Santa Clara County teachers who drive creative and innovative classroom projects.

In continuation of this work, The Schools Plus Grant Program will be holding its first annual Santa Cruz County Book Fair this May:

- When: Saturday, May 20th
- Where: Shoreline Middle School, Santa Cruz
- What: Get great deals on great books. Meet the authors. And support a worthy cause.

They are actively looking for authors, publishers, and bookstore vendors to participate in this sure-to-be-popular event. Join in and discover the wealth of literary talent, community spirit, and educational resources in and around our community.

For more information on participating authors, vendors, et al, and how to join Betty Auchard in her support of this project, visit the Santa Cruz County Book Fair web site at:

www.schoolsplus.net/BookFair/BookFairPage1.htm

Or contact

Bernard "Barney" Bricmont, Schools Plus
Phone: 831/476-0504

Terse Verse
—by Pat Bustamante

May See

**Daisy, or Maisie,
Give me your answer, do.
Though my new manuscript
Is "crazy"--
Let it stick in Publishers/Editors/
Agents;
memories like glue!**

(PERPERNELLAKE FROM PAGE 7)

low and slow, raising one octave at a time until I was certain he was about to strike only to relax once again, quiet himself and continue to observe me (and the worm) with disdain.

Finally, convinced that I was of no threat to him, or merely unworthy of anymore of his attention, he turned and slowly disappeared into a crevice in the rock, and I got the hell out of there. Once on top of the boulders I turned and looked back at my perch above the lake. There sat my sweet pea can full of worms, I didn't consider going after it, not even for a moment. Then I remembered the night crawler in my hand, he was still alive, I was afraid I had crushed him by accident in my scramble to scale the tiered rocks, but he was still wiggling, oblivious to our narrow escape. I knelt by a bush near the rocks and released his back to the earth, thinking,

"For now, little one, we are both safe."

Today, forty years later, I live over two thousand miles from that lake. I occasionally go back to the area to see family, but I no longer call it home. Two months ago I took my friend Walter to meet my brother and his family who still live there. We (my brother, his wife and my nieces and nephew, myself and Walter) all set out to go see what was left of Pepperell Lake.

The dirt road was fenced off and the lake was no longer open to the public. My brother being the sort of man who usually finds a way especially if it's important to his big sister, led us on despite all obstacles. We parked in the back parking lot of the super Wal-Mart that now lays claim to many of the small towns in the south, and cut through a small field to where the road resumed behind the locked gate. We strolled casually up the familiar road, each of us quiet, almost reverent, lost in our own memories. I whispered to Walter as I told him how it once was. It seemed right to be quiet, respectful, as if the place had recently passed away.

The lake looked considerably smaller, maybe because I was so small back then and maybe due to the lack of care given it. It looked swallowed up by waste, choked on rotted wood and time. I couldn't find the boulder area and we saw no snakes, but my mind recalled, my heart remembered and my nose reminded me of all that once occurred, when I was a little girl, my butt numb and frozen in that place. I knelt by the trail and picked up an handful of the rich soil from beneath the blanket of kudzu that now covered almost everything, I sniffed the earth in my hand and remembered, a smile crept onto my face and I thought, "for now, little one, we are both safe." TP

Magnificent
 Commanding
 Glittering
 Distinguished
 Aureate
 Preeminent
 Superior
 Grand
 Meritorious
 Wonderful
 Smashing
 Peerless
 Exceptional
 Legendary
 And Wildly Cool

Well, maybe not aureate, but the East of Eden Conference, produced by the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club is a solid, not to be missed, writers conference presenting esteemed authors, accomplished teachers, successful and interested agents, renowned editors and publishers, contests, great accommodations and California-fresh edibles.

Salinas, Salinas... lettuce growing capital of the Central Valley—a big town on its own—will host this complementing affair and, while it's not the Black and White, it's big doin's in Monterey County and **you** can be part of it.

If you're a writer... if you're interested in becoming one... if you're looking for new plot ideas, how to run old ones better, character coloring tips, dazzling descriptions, or if you're just hanging that weekend and need something to do, this is it!

September 8th, 9th and 10th

Sign up and get your money to Vicki. You say, "I wanna but how?" I say, "Check the website for details!"

www.southbaywriters.com.

ANDREA'S WEBSITES

An ongoing listing of helpful websites will be updated each month to reflect interesting finds

Getting published in WritersTalk is very rewarding but, let's face it, the readership is rather small. To help you disseminate your work to a wider audience, we will let you know of contests, magazines, or anything else where you can submit your work. Organizations from the AARP to Writers Digest are requesting articles and stories in every kind of writing, including poetry. Here is a list of places where you can submit your work; please let us know when it is published. Also, we will let you know of conferences and websites helpful to writers.



Andrea Galvacs
Contributing Editor

SHORT FICTION

- http://www.dirtpress.com/dirty_main.asp?id=4185 -until May 31

ALL CATEGORIES

- www.willamettewriters.com/kaysnow.htm -until May 15
- www.fanstory.com -various deadlines
- www.oncewritten.com/writingcontests.php -various deadlines

CONFERENCES

- www.writing.shawguides.com/wd.cgi -various dates
- 2006 Juniper Creek Writers Conference, July 14-16, Carson City www.junipercreekpubs.com/events

SFV Writer's Conference— June 3rd and 4th

The Writers' Journey, The Mystery of Writing

The San Fernando Valley Branch of CWC presents their 2005 Writers' Conference at the Poverello Assisi Retreat, 1519 Woodworth St, San Fernando—\$85 for CWC members (\$10 more for non). Lodging is available at the Retreat, only steps from the conference, for \$65/person— double occupancy.

Over a dozen speakers and instructors include Lee Goldberg, Jacqueline Winspear, Tess Holthe, Madeline DiMaggio, Kate Gale, Andrea Beard, Paul Levine, Lee Lofland, Cathleen Roundtree, David Zuckerman, Penny Warner and Betty Auchard.

Writing contest fee is \$5. Enter: Novel, Short Story, Screenplay, Nonfiction/memoir and Childrens/Juvenile Fiction or Nonfiction with winners in each genre— open to CWC members only

Play who-dun-it with retired detective and author Lee Lofland and rub elbows with the dignitaries Fri night.

Get the details and sign-up instructions at
www.CalWritersSFV.com
or call 818 985 5632

Betty Auchard Selected to Speak

At the University of Nevada Reno, in a celebration of aging, Betty Auchard will kick off the *Gerontology Academic Program Graduation Ceremony for 2006*. She will present a light-hearted talk that tackles the serious subject of bereavement with humor and grace. Known for taking away the fear of growing old, she is living proof that life does not have to end after losing a partner as portrayed in her book, *Dancing in my Nightgown: The Rhythms of Widowhood*.

The graduating Gerontology Students are fortunate to have Betty represent that phase in the upbeat and optimistic manner that is genuinely her. The expected graduation formalities and festivities will follow her kick-off and except for Betty, Champaign for attendees is limited to one magnum each—well, it is Reno. DLR

Me Calling Me

Carolyn Donnell

Nobody ever calls me but me.
When I look on my caller ID
mostly the number that I see
is my own phone number, one of 3.

A lot of unknowns
anonymous groans.
A few from my family
or numbers unknown.

But by and large the majority
Is me calling me just to see
if anyone's out there that cares to be
really in touch with me.

IMMIGRATION —In My Opinion

Andrea Galvacs

The latest issue politicians have to disagree about is immigration. For once, I can't blame them because the problem is very complex and whichever legislation is enacted, it will please some and anger others.

I don't pretend to have or even dream of finding the solution, but this certainly doesn't prevent me from having an opinion. I will limit my comments to the Mexicans who came illegally to California, because they are the majority of illegal aliens in this state and in my job as a court interpreter I worked with them for thirty years.

I have no doubt that there are many Mexicans who came here legally. Even though I met them in court, I respect their desire and intention to make a better life for themselves and their families in the "land of opportunity." The desire and intention of those who came illegally are the same, except that they could not make it lawfully. All were poor and had many siblings; many had alcoholic fathers who beat them, their mothers and siblings; and many were illiterate.

Regardless of immigration status, most of them, if they are not on welfare or in prison, contribute to our economy and form part of the workforce as janitors, gardeners and dishwashers; all jobs that purportedly Americans do not want to do. Some make it to better jobs. Having all these factors in mind, the problem seems to be with Mexico, not the USA.

It could be argued that the Mexican government approves and tacitly promotes the exodus of the poor people because it does not provide the assistance and social services needed for a better life. Also, the financial aid the poor receive from their relatives in the USA allows them to spend money they would not have otherwise. This strengthens their economy. The Mexican government's biggest sin is that it *does not require* children to go to school; attending classes is *not* mandatory. If illiteracy among the poor could be reduced, the entire country would benefit in the long run.

Congress is now considering building a fence

along the border between the USA and Mexico and increasing the number of agents in the Border Patrol. Instead of pouring billions of dollars into these projects, we should give the money to the Mexican government with the proviso that it be used to build schools, hire teachers and enforce mandatory schooling at least until the eighth grade. These measures, besides building up the infrastructure, would create jobs badly needed now. Our government's representatives should then periodically go to Mexico to determine the progress made; if satisfactory, all is well; if not, sanctions should be imposed.

However, once the children of poor people would enter the job market with some education, their economy would improve, and in this way, the desire or need of many to leave for a better life would not exist. The influx of Mexican people

coming over the border would probably not stop, but it certainly could be reduced

All of this, of course, is a pipe dream. Members of Congress would very quickly agree that they would not venture to spend their constituents' tax dollars financing social services in a foreign country; especially in an election year and with many social services being slashed here, at home. Anyway, this is just my opinion.

AG

I have no doubt that there are many Mexicans who came here legally. Even though I met them in court, I respect their desire and intention to make a better life for themselves and their families in the "land of opportunity."

Black As Deepest Night

— by Carolyn Donnell

Hatred is a beetle, black as deepest night.
A scorpion whose poison stings the hater's heart.

Revenge is the brother, leaving trails of acid slime
heaped with devastation, inside the hater's life.

Even if the vengeance is earned or well deserved,
Hatred pulls the hater down to the enemy's world.

The hater drowns in his own blood.
The hated one goes on unharmed.

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 meeting for the 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

CounterCurrents — A Place for Bill's Fiction



Bill Brisko

Contributing Editor

The Rocky Mountain Way

"What are we going to do with it?"

"I dunno, Mark. I don't know what we're going to do with it."

"But what *should* we do with it? Should we give it to a Cop?"

"What? Give it to a Cop? What are you, some kinda snitch? He'll only arrest us! He won't believe where we got it..."

"I wish we'd never have found it. I wish that bag never had come our way!"

*"Spent the Last Year
Rocky Mountain Way..."*

They were outlandish words to a strange song. Vague and obscure, it's a wonder they made any sense at all. The Rocky Mountain Way, written by Joe Walsh and his band Barnstorm, would become their biggest hit. But things are not always as they seem, and the obvious isn't always clear. Were the words all that dumb and meaningless? Did the song really tell a story? Was there actually intelligence at work here? And was it coincidence that it shared a similar name to John Denver's Rocky Mountain High?

John Denver was a big deal in those excessive times of the '70's, for reasons that still aren't clear to me. He boasted about the beauty and splendor and wonder of Colorado and the Rocky Mountain backcountry; things that would make any ordinary back-alley street-freak like me sick. It was the promise of purple mountains, clear water, powdery snow, and virgin girls. It was the promise of righteousness - the promise of a happy ending. But his epiphany ran afoul one night, right there on the television set before millions of viewers. "Come visit," he said, "but don't everyone move here, you'll destroy the natural beauty of the State" or words to that effect.

Which was exactly what Joe Walsh did, for reasons of his own. Story has it he moved to Colorado (I have tried to confirm this with him, but have been unable to do so at this time) and was neither impressed nor welcomed, and put the story to song. It was a cryptic message to anyone who would listen that they were not wanted in this State: We have tried the Rocky Mountain Way, and it was just barely better than the way we had.

*"Well he's telling us this
And he's telling us that..."*

So when tickets went on sale for Joe Walsh at Winterland Arena in The City, it was imperative I score a few. I would have my younger brother Mark in tow; a certified scrounge, authenticated pack rat and monster B-movie fanatic. It would be the perfect 'trip' for a coupla teenagers - an evening in the magic and psychedelic City of San Francisco; cruise the avenues downtown, spend time with weird people, see a concert

for \$4.25, listen to a blues musician with a sick mind. We're in.

The 'trip' started out like any of the others to Winterland: Late afternoon start, 1 PM arrival, park in the Mt. Zion Hospital Physicians lot (which you could do after 1 PM), sit in line, watch all of the girls, freaks and weirdoes, eat whatever you could eat, drink whatever was being drunk, drop whatever was being passed around, maintain, get thru the doors intact, show starts at 8 PM, listen to all the potent music, continue to *maintain*, finish up the evening, try to make it home without incident. So everything started out just fine when I pulled the big '64 Chevy convertible into the Hospital parking lot.

We strolled up into line and parked our lazy asses on the sidewalk on Post Street. It was a normal sort of thing to do, the line started at the front doors on Steiner and wrapped around the corner to Post Street. As we sat there waiting, several guys formed in after us carrying a big cooler of beer and other refreshment, offering us each a red and white bullet (Budweiser) for the hell of it which we drank graciously while waiting to get inside. It was a long, tiring wait and the sun beat down on us relentlessly - proving the alcoholic refreshment totally necessary. Beside us was the constant stream of traffic down Geary Avenue, and the constant parade of hippies was ever present around Winterland. Some would bring small phonograph players and play records while in line while others (like me) would just sit there and engage in some sort of time-wasting activity. There was always something going on in line - the constant tang of weed in the air or someone up ahead puffing blow off of a mirror. It was the end of the Hippie generation - the end of an era. But they were not giving up on anything so fast.

It was always trouble to eat around Winterland. Many concertgoers, as they sat in line waiting, would bring their own food. Many did not. There were places you could get something there in Japan Town, or any of the countless delis in the area. But they came with a San Francisco price tag, often rivaling the \$4.25 cost of admission. No, the meal of choice for *our* crowd was laying in wait across the treacherous traffic of Geary Avenue. Colonel Sander's Kentucky Fried Chicken. Nothing else would do.

Because of this, it was not that uncommon a sight to see the streets nearby littered with chicken bones. They were everywhere. Everyone knew where they came from. Everyone knew why they were there. They were in trash cans. They were in boxes. They

were in the gutters with the beer cans and whiskey bottles, with used needles and soiled condoms, with newspapers and disposable diapers (from all the I-didn't-really-want-to-get-knocked-up free-love moms). Yes, stacks of chicken bones. It had that mean reminiscence of a genocide exhibit from Cambodia Lowlands! Bones as far as the eye could see... Some day, in the near future, a scientist is going to excavate the ruins of this Great City and it will be totally unknown as to why this section of town is completely strewn with chicken bones. Especially after the memory of Winterland is torn down, long gone and forgotten (which it is now). But *we'll* know...

*"Bases are Loaded and Casey's at Bat
Playing it play by play..."*

As the day pushed on into late afternoon, our line out front began to get impatient, ugly. As many people as there were lined up were attempting to cut in, figuring the long wait was for everybody but them. There were a lot of "F--- you" and "Get to the back of the line." Yes indeed, the Summer of Love was long past. Just about 5 PM, everybody stood up and started pushing forward in anticipation of the doors opening, fattening up the line. It was very much like swine moving through a packing plant. All we needed was the gang boss out front with a black hood on his head, a sledge hammer and a big .45 pistol for the tough ones. Just outside the main doors they had a big dumpster and several goons shaking everybody down. They were mostly looking for the obvious; beer and whiskey bottles, needles, tape recorders, whores, and flagrant stashes of drugs. If you were discrete and had a fiver hidden in your hand and slipped it to one of the goons on time, you got the easy treatment. For many, making a few bucks off of sex, drugs or bootleg rock and roll right there on the Winterland floor was a couple weeks pay!

We both continued our push forward in line. As the sun was receding, I put on my sweatshirt and hung my camera around my neck. It was back in the day when you could take your own pictures at concerts, before the poster concessions put a halt to it. In fact, many a photographer made a living by taking pictures at concerts and selling them off at a later venue.

Now it happened all of a sudden and came out of nowhere. We were pushing forward in line when, unannounced, without warning, something whacked me upside the head. "Jesus", I muttered, throwing it to the ground. It was a big brown paper bag filled with gar-

bage. What asshole would do a thing like that; just throw his trash at somebody in line? No more Love left in this crowd! My brother picked it up and began pawing his way through it.

“What the hell are you doing? Throw that damn bag in the gutter there. And don’t touch anything! You don’t know what’s *in* there! You might jab yourself on some junkie’s needle or catch something they haven’t worked out a cure for yet.”

“What? Huh? I just want see what’s inside, man,” he said, rummaging around the bag of debris. After all, he was a scrounge! We continued to be pushed forward in line, not too far from the front doors and the searching goon squad.

“Well, what’s in there?”

“Let’s see. Yes, just garbage. And lots of chicken bones, too” he said. “Shit, looks like nothing but chicken bones.” Then he pulled out something that was incredibly amazing, awfully familiar, and waved it in front of my face. “What’s this?”

*“Out to pasture
 Couldn’t get much higher...”*

Well, in all of my experience from growing up in the ‘70’s - the Rock and Roll band, the Vietnam War, what was left of the Beat Generation, the Hippies, the Yippies, Eldridge Clever and the Black Panthers, George McGovern and everything else, it was just the *biggest* lid of marijuana I had ever seen in my entire life! It was simply huge! The bag was literally a mid-sized Ziploc bag PACKED full of dope. It had bud, shake, stems, seeds, roots...hell; it mighta had a goddamn dead body in it for all I knew! There were also what appeared to be three long fingers of black Moroccan hash wrapped carefully in silver foil and several large Bob Marley-sized joints. And it just came falling out of the sky in a brown paper bag and hit me square on the top of the head.

Which was strange, when you come down to thinking about it. Here we were a couple of kids in line at a concert, minding our own business, then hit in the head by a big brown paper bag full of dope. And what was even stranger was...nobody seemed to be looking for it - nobody even noticed we *had* it. Peculiar. I mean, you’d think someone would be walking the street checking out where it may have gone, and who had it. I mean, if I had just accidentally threw away my massive lid of marijuana in a bag full of chicken bones - I’d be looking for it! I peered around discretely, checking for inquisitive

eyes or staggering bodies that might be looking for it, sizing us up. But nothing doing. Nope, none at all. Strange...nobody. So you know what that means...it was OURS! All ours! Ownership is property, and the property was now ours.

“Mark, this is the biggest lid of dope I’ve *ever* seen!”

“What do you mean *dope*?”

I eyed him eerily, sizing him up from head to toe.

“Dope, man. It’s *marijuana*!”

My brother reeled back away from me in terror; his face white and full of fear. “Mary - wana?” he shrieked.

“What are we going to do with it?”

Continued next month...*BB*

I WISHED

By Richard R Burns

Sometimes I dream I’d have anything I wished.
 When Christmas came I wouldn’t need a list.

I’d have my own golf course,
 A great recipe for Borsht,
 I’d own a prancing horse,
 I wished.

Sometimes I dream I’d have anything I wished.
 I’d catch a big one every time I fished.

They’d be a foot from eye to eye;
 I’d never have to lie;
 We’d have one fine fish fry,
 I wished.

Sometimes I dream I’d have anything I wished;
 That starving people never did exist.

That curing the HIV disease,
 Like doing taxes, was a breeze,
 And my children all said, “Please,”
 I wished.

Sometimes I dream I’d have anything I wished;
 That I’d calm down and take everything life dished.

My walls I’d never climb.
 (Why waste my precious time?)
 I’d always feel sublime,
 I wished.

Sometimes I dream I’d have anything I wished.
 I’d have your love and every kiss you kissed.

I’d take back all I said,
 Wouldn’t be alone in bed,
 Wouldn’t wish that I was dead,
 I wished.

Richard A. Burns © 2005

Announcements Announcements Announcements

Basil Stevens Memorial Writing Contest

What: previously unpublished essay, article, story, or poem, 750-word maximum, sports theme.

Prize: Scholarship to the East of Eden Writers Conference, September 8-10, 2006, Salinas, CA. \$500 value (includes extras).

Entry: No Fee! One entry per person, please. Open to all except previous first place winners are not eligible to enter.

Deadline: June 1, 2006 (postmarked). Winners announced July 1. All entrants will be notified.

Submittal information: www.southbaywriters.com (California Writers Club, South Bay Branch) or Robert Garfinkle (510) 489-4779 (after Noon)

And Don't forget the Dan Niemi Memorial Fiction Writing Contest Open to working or retired law enforcement officers

PRIZE: A scholarship to the 2006 East of Eden Writing Conference plus a cash award (total value \$500).

ENTRIES: Unpublished fiction only (as of the date of submission).

- For a Novel, send the first 20 pages and 2 page synopsis,
- For a Short Story, send the complete story up to 3,000 words.

FEES: \$15 per entry (no Limit).

DEADLINE: Entries must be postmarked no later than July 1, 2006

DETAILS AT:
www.southbaywriters.com



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

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 Scholarships, Contests, Early-Bird Discounts, Accommodations, etc.
www.southbaywriters.com

Steinbeck Center

GOLD RUSH WRITERS RETREAT

Stake your claim to writing success May 5, 6, 7 at the historic Leger Hotel in picturesque Mokelumne Hill where writing pros will steer you to a publishing bonanza through a series of break-out sessions, panels, specialty talks, workshop intensives, and celebrity lectures.

www.goldrushwriters.com/

The Gold Rush Writers are a group of published authors who retreat for three days monthly in Mokelumne Hill and meet twice a month in Palo Alto.

GOT NEWS?

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

newsletter@southbaywriters.com



South Bay Writers Open Mic

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

Third Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm
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

The BOOK TABLE
at Club Meetings

hosts experienced reads and new adventures

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

Every monthly meeting, the Book Table is set.



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
PO Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055

www.southbaywriters.com

Stamp(s)

ADDRESSEE



Address Correction Requested

**General Membership Meeting—2nd Wednesday
At**

**LookOut Restaurant
605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale
(Sunnyvale Golfcourse)**

See Map Below

SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors Meet
May 4, Edie's

General Meeting
Joyce Krieg
May 10

Open Mic
May 3 7:30p
Borders, Los Gatos
May 19, 7:30p
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Inputs
May 16 (party please)

Editors Pow Wow
May 22, 7:30pm
Orchard Valley Coffee

Take 237 to
W Maude to Macara

