



# WRITERSTALK

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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

## Challenges and Opportunities for Authors—An Editor's View

by Alexander Leon

In today's publishing jungle, full of challenges and opportunities, authors more than ever need and must seek out experienced guides to lead them to the El Dorado of publishing and pull off a best seller. Talent alone, no matter how abundant, will seldom be enough in today's complex and competitive publishing landscape, where great works and manuscripts easily end up lost in the pits of oblivion, or vanished in the desert of rejections. Thus, writers must seek out the intrepid and indefatigable guides that will lead them through the perils of the publishing jungle. But where to find them?

'Where?' South Bay Writers, of course—one of the best places to start! On point, the guest speaker at the SBW meeting on Tuesday, February 12, will be an iconic "active acquisition and development editor who has been on the job for 46 years." He comes as a daring authors' guide to share "insider information on the dynamics of publishing companies today, and a candid appraisal of the major changes in the process of becoming a successful writer." This is none other than legendary editor Alan Rinzler.

Writers must understand that "publishers are eager, even desperate to acquire new authors, especially less experienced writers with a promising future." Writers, "on the other hand, often feel bewildered and rejected by publishers, especially by the more commercial companies that are in the best-seller business." In his talk, Alan will tackle both sides of this publishing paradox.

He will cover many other topics, including "what publishers look for in the volatile and precarious world of the book business today"; how authors can present their work in the best light in order to deal with the publishing industry's culture of avoiding risk; and how to overcome competition by exploiting both new and traditional marketing channels and techniques.

He will also speak about why authors need to market themselves before, during, and after publication, even if they are reluctant about such activities, and to do so within a long-term plan for career advancement.

Regarding proposals he says, "It's not what you've been told." So come to find out "what kind of proposals authors need to prepare as a tool for selling their book." Further, he will give us a view of "how digital technology and the internet are changing the art of being an author, and the new opportunities for literary success



Alan Rinzler

## New Networking Committee

by Dave LaRoche

Our Board of Directors has a new member: Gary Dow. Gary is our Chair of a new Networking Committee. (You may have heard him talk about critique groups at one of our recent meetings.) The Networking Chair will foster, be aware of, and bring together those with interest and those with opportunity in the areas of creative critiquing, mentoring, reading, and education.

**Critique Groups:** Gary will know active groups' genres and contacts. He will know about open seats, the groups' operations, help with starting new groups, and solving old problems. He will point those interested in volunteering to help put together and publish a directory. You will find that directory on the Hospitality table, on the web, and, occasionally, in our newsletter.

**Mentoring:** Gary will assign to new members a mentor who will help integrate them into our club: its organization, operations, aspirations, and accomplishments. He will obtain a list of mentors (we need volunteers) and facilitate the assignments, note progress, and graduate the new members—no diplomas awarded.

**Reading Groups:** He will introduce/underscore the idea of established reading groups (reading is imperative to good writing). And, again, maintain a directory for our Hospitality table, web, and newsletter. He will know how they work, help with their beginnings and know openings, genres, and objectives. Want to start a reading group? Talk to Gary.

**Education:** He will be aware of and publish a directory of those in the club

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# President's Prowling

by Dave LaRoche  
President, South Bay Writers

## Prowling Among Programs

There are a couple of new programs I want to prowl through as they interest me semiprofoundly (that's somewhere between a sideways glance and obsession). One is the idea of reading groups and the other is mentoring new members. Both, it seem, have great value. Let me begin advocating with "groups."



Reading Groups. Some of you may belong to a reading group; I do not. I do know, however, that there are hundreds across the country dealing with different approaches to various genres, each seeking its particular outcome. So what's with these reading groups, you may ask. Well, first, it's fun getting another perspective about a book that you've read and giving your own, and it's motivating—an aperitif to stimulate your next read. It's enlightening to discover a point you've missed that may open the door to a new understanding. And for us writers who aspire to fame: after the tedious lecturing about grammar, word use, structure, and what so-and-so did, and the heaps of materials on those subjects, the most valuable advice we always hear is "READ!"

Let's have reading groups among us; some for fun, some to bring an awareness of what others are doing. And hey... how about finishing a good read to enter a discussion about style—what the author did to titillate our imaginations, evoke new curiosity, or keep us riveted on philosophy when the action just simply stopped. Or, have you ever stumbled through Lewis Norden and marveled at the fact that you kept reading a dialect that seemed a foreign language, or sat scratching your head over the first half of most Faulkner books? Reading with a group will lend insight into such matters and, moreover, further your skills as a writer.

Let either Gary Dow or me know if you're interested.

Mentoring. We're a large group and getting larger... and more complicated. We want, and are achieving, a broad interest base, and complexities come with that territory. Some of the people who join us are okay with a barrage of new challenges and have little trouble planting their feet, but others are less assertive. Are we a social bunch or a classroom of students? Do we know it all (well, most of it) or are we just chattering? And who's who and what's that? We are individually of various dress and have many "looks" as a club and we involve ourselves in outside activities in both garbs—all in the pursuit of the aspects of authorship and emissary. And in all of it, who's who and what's that? (Okay, I'm teetering on the gunwale here and soon will tip overboard—well, that's Dave.) BUT... many folks who come into our midst for the first time are a little bewildered and for those, we will bring in a mentor.

Last year thirty-nine members did not renew—most were here only a year. Were they disappointed in what they found or did they simply not find it? It took me a year to feel I knew what the hell was going on. (I could be slow.)

Anyway, we are looking for mentors, members who are willing to spend some time with "initiates" helping them plant their feet. Want to sign up? Talk to me or Gary Dow. **WT**

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### Join With Us

We have a membership category that fits you. Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee. Contact the Membership Chair, Marjorie Johnson.



## WRITERSTALK

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

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### Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. Suggested word limits are not absolute; query the editor. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com; or mail double-spaced, typewritten copy to

Richard Amyx  
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### Guest Columns

*Almost Anything Goes* (400 words)

### News Items (400 words)

### Letters to the Editor (300 words)

to Andrea Galvacs  
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### Creative Works

Short Fiction (1800 words)  
Memoir (1200 words)  
Poetry (300 words)  
Essay (900 words)

### Announcements and Advertisements

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

An announcement is information of interest and value to writers that does not provide direct economic benefit to its originator. Announcements are published free of charge.

Advertising is accepted on the basis of its interest and value to writers. Advertising rates for Club members, \$7 per column inch; non-members, \$10. We will assist or insist with layout.

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# Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx  
Editor

## Questions



Every month, the *WritersTalk* staff holds a powwow. We do a *post mortem* of the previous issue to identify things that might have gone wrong during production and then talk about ways in which we might improve future issues.

During our January meeting, we quickly agreed that we'd like to see more different bylines on articles; in particular, more opinion pieces (of which there have been none recently). So, writers, do you have opinions? If you're interested in writing an op-ed-type piece, I'd suggest a length in the 600-1000 word range.

A possible change or improvement that we couldn't define adequately was the question of how much material external to SBW we could or should publish. This question was hard to answer in part because there's an awful lot of material "out there," and in part because we have no idea what kind or how much of this information club members might want to see.

The material in *WT* falls into three general categories. The first two are internal to SBW: club business (reports on the past general meeting, announcement of the next general meeting, the president's and editor's columns, board minutes, etc.) and club members' creative works. The amount of this material that I receive during any month is usually no more than an issue of *WT* can accommodate. The third category is one I call "resources." Material in this category can be either internal (for example, Rich Burns's "The Education of a Fiction Writer" series or Lita Kurth's ongoing "The Journey of a Thousand Miles") or external (advertisements for classes or events, announcements of conferences or other branch meetings, and information about contests).

The January and February issues of *WT* included a total of three pages of information about contests, and this issue has about a page of information about conferences (spring seems to bring out writers conferences as well as new greenery). That represents about 20% of available space in the newsletter. Is that the best use of a limited club resource? How many SBW members are interested in contests and conferences?

If you looked over the contest and conference information, you saw that each of the items ends with a URL. In other words, about all we can carry in the pages of *WT* are announcements of contests, conferences, classes, and other events and refer you to the location on the web where full information can be found. We don't have the space to cover everything completely.

Further, whereas *WritersTalk* can be published only once a month, a website can be updated on a whim, so there's an issue of timeliness of the presentation of information. And it only makes sense that the proper place for web-based information (that is, lists of links to other web-based information) is on the web.

What this implies, whether we like it or not, is a close connection between the (old fashioned, space-limited, and slow) paper medium of *WT* and the (new, space-unlimited, and immediate) electronic medium of the web. The primary questions are how close that connection should be and the degree to which SBW members might be expected to use the website as a regular source of information in conjunction with *WritersTalk*—if at all.

I'll conclude this discussion of print vs. web in the next issue of *WritersTalk*; in the meanwhile, I'd be happy to hear your opinion about the relationship between print and web as it might affect SBW, and I'll give you a homework assignment: check out southbaywriters.com/resources.html and southbaywriters.com/webcalendar/month.php **WT**

# The Education of a Fiction Writer #2

by Richard Burns

## Harpoon the Reader Early

### I. Start Faster than Moby Dick

Once your book is in a store, your first few paragraphs will sway many people. The prospective buyer will either buy your novel (Yay!) or will pick up a different book to scan through (Boo!). Melville's opener, "Call me Ishmael," in *Moby Dick* just would not cut it today.

Three years ago, I read my first chapter to my critique group. They were nice about it, but the conclusion was I should drop my first five pages. I sort of got a sneaking suspicion about it when Jack Smith yawned and fluffed up his pillow while I read it to the group.

Increasingly, publishers want a novel to start in the middle of a transaction, an action sequence, or at a spot when tangible plot-progression occurs. Pique your reader's curiosity. It's no secret. At the publisher's, the "bad" and "average" manuscripts are culled out before the first half-page of Chapter 1 is read. You'd better have something going on.

My latest novel opens thus:

Sagebrush Charlie stepped down to the second wood slat, gripped the rope, and sat on the saddle aboard the roiling, restless stallion, Sidewinder. Twelve-hundred pounds of snorting, untamed fury suddenly jerked to the left. The young Shoshoni Indian rider leaped back onto the top slat of the chute's railing, grabbing hold of the flag pole. Something was wrong. The boisterous Reno Rodeo crowd grew hushed. The horse reared. He slammed against the side of the chute railing....



Richard Burns  
Contributing Editor

Don't you want to know what happened next? What kind of kid would attempt such a fool thing? Does he get thrown?

Besides the promise of action, we discover Sagebrush is an expert horseman. The fact that he is an Indian may intrigue us. The paragraph implies a rough and tumble western setting. Action verbs abound; count them. Hopefully, the readers have become invested, intense, almost as intense as the Indian youngster. They have been transported somewhere else.

I'm not saying the above is a perfect opening (my project is still in progress), but I think you can see that the above is more *compelling* than my first draft's clunky startup:

Sagebrush Charlie was a Shoshoni Indian from the sprawling, arid country south of Elko, Nevada. His home was on the Southfork Reservation not far from a creek. By 1948, he had dropped out of tenth grade and had already grown very tall, six-foot-two. His straight, black hair under his soiled and sweat-stained ten-gallon hat was combed down and ....

Reading this version, the reader is transported nowhere. He's still quietly reading some thick book in the library.

Beginnings matter. Brevity, compression, and action grab us. We've evolved. Hey, we need to be grabbed now that we have become, for better or worse, part of this "sound-bite" society, toting around our wireless phones and tiny attention spans. "Cut to the chase" is not just a cliché.

### II. It Isn't in Concrete

However, here is another pearl I also learned from my heartless critique group: As I write and rewrite my fabulous story, I may find my original beginning chapter(s) work best as a backstory, basically a history of the characters and the setting, necessary for me as the story's creator, but not essential for the reader to slog through sentence-by-sentence. Indeed, while developing my novel, I may even

change the entire focus of the story, and the first chapters may become completely irrelevant and get dumped. So don't fuss too much early on, meticulously crafting the opening, until you are very sure you will keep the opening chapter(s).

### III. Fun Quiz

1. There is good information in the second (rejected) version of my rodeo scene above. How should I make sure the reader does not miss out on some of this information?

2. We find out shortly that my protagonist is a tenth-grade dropout and that his father is watching from the grandstands. Considering those facts, what might be at stake for my youthful hero, Sagebrush?

### IV. Rule of Thumb

"Hook early; keep it strong." -James Dalessandro, Screenwriting Seminar, Oct. 21, 2007 WT

Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.

—E.L. Doctorow

## 7th Annual Pleasanton Poetry, Prose & Arts Festival

Saturday & Sunday, April 5-6, 2008  
Pleasanton Senior Center, 5353 Sunol Blvd., Pleasanton, CA 94566

Join us for a weekend celebration of poetry, prose, and visual arts. One or two day workshops offered. Sponsored by the Pleasanton Cultural Arts Council (PCAC) and the City of Pleasanton.

Contest entry deadline:

Saturday, March 08, 2008

Early registration deadline:

Saturday, March 08, 2008

Last date to register for Festival:

Tuesday, March 25, 2008

Festival information, registration, or brochure:

Michelle Russo (925) 931-5350,

mrusso@ci.pleasanton.ca.us

Kirk Ridgeway,

PleasantonPoetry@comcast.net

Info: pleasantonarts.org

# Nipper's Nits

by Pat Decker Nipper

## Lesson 34. Odds 'n' Ends



English is a quirky language, as we all agree. However it becomes even quirkier if we use it incorrectly. Take the following common errors for example.

1. Don't take me for granite. (should be "for granted")
2. and etc. (you don't need both words)
3. irregardless (the correct word is "regardless")
4. you welcome (should be "you're welcome")
5. equally as (drop the "as")
6. have another thing coming (should be "another think")
7. step foot (as in step foot in a store) (should be "set foot")
8. meet up with (you don't need the "up")
9. It's his own default. (should be "his own fault")

Admittedly I've only heard some of these once, others all too often.

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

Imagination grows by exercise, and contrary to common belief, is more powerful in the mature than in the young.

—*W. Somerset Maugham*

## Central Coast Writers Spring '08 Contest

for poetry and short stories.

Awards for winners in each category: \$250 and publication (print and online) in the spring '08 *Homestead Review* (Hartnell College, Salinas).

Entry fees: \$15 per short story and \$5 per poem.

Submission period: February 1, 2008, through March 31, 2008.

Complete info at [centralcoastwriters.org/2008-spring-contest-rules.htm](http://centralcoastwriters.org/2008-spring-contest-rules.htm)

RESOURCES FOR WRITERS

# The Journey of a Thousand Miles

by Lita Kurth

## Janet Burroway's Classic Creative Writing Textbook, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*

Taking a creative writing course at a university can be costly (at least hundreds, possibly a thousand) and inconvenient (the time you want may fill quickly or be reserved for majors; there may be no time that works ... and then there's parking). The next best thing might be to order the textbook most used in four-year college fiction-writing classes, Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction: a Guide to Narrative Craft*. For a textbook, it's amazingly cheap (as little as \$27, including shipping for the sixth, i.e., latest edition, if you order a used copy through Amazon partners).

When I was beginning to write fiction, this book gave me some immediate practical pointers away from beginners' mistakes. Here's one tip that made me say, "Aha!" It's about a practice called filtering. Burroway spends two pages showing what filtering is and how to edit it away. (Once you recognize it, getting rid of filtering is very easy.) Essentially, when writers filter, they put an unnecessary layer between the events of a story and the reader, like this: *Susan stepped out into the chilly air and smelled the scent of moldy leaves. She noticed that the neighbors had put up a seventy-foot, lighted Statue of Liberty. It seemed to her that they used LED lighting and she remembered that the year before their house had caught on fire. She noticed that the new decoration was leaning toward the telephone wire.*

Readers are trying to experience the story for themselves, but Susan keeps blocking their view. Unfiltered, the passage would read like this: *Susan stepped out into the chilly air that smelled of moldy leaves. The neighbors had put up a*

*seventy-foot, lighted Statue of Liberty. They used LED lighting, apparently. The year before, their house had caught on fire. The new decoration was leaning toward the highline wire.*

Those sentences could be further perfected, but can you notice the difference when the filters disappear?

It is significant that Burroway put the word "craft" in her subtitle. This book is all about the practical side of putting together a working story. Here are some of the sections I found very valuable: "clustering (as a way to generate a story)," "significant detail," "indirect methods of character presentation," "direct methods of character presentation," "creating a group or crowd," "flashback," "slow motion," "who speaks (first, second, third person, omniscience, limited omniscience, opaque character, objective narrator)," "metaphoric faults to avoid," and "revision questions."

The book is beautifully organized. Each chapter includes several classic short stories, usually fairly recent, to illustrate whatever is being taught. Each section ends with fun writing exercises to do alone or with others such as the following: "Draft a three-to-five page story in which a single impossible event happens" (115) and "With a partner, choose a picture of a distinctive character from an ad... Invent a name and background... and give the character a dominant trait" (253).

Burroway's book is not one of those encouraging and well-written books that you can get through in a couple days. If you tried to do every exercise in it, you could easily use up a year. And that would be a year well spent if growth in fiction writing is your aim. And when you've finished Burroway, if you still hunger for more, her book includes an excellent appendix of 51 more books on writing, ranging from Rollo May's *The Courage to Create* to Brenda Ueland's *If You Want to Write*. (Hey, does that ring a bell?) Alas, Burroway refers to Brenda Ueland as *Barbara Ueland*—which just goes to show that nobody's perfect, and nobody has to be. **WT**



Lita Kurth  
Contributing Editor



# On Critique Groups: Hurt Feelings

by G. Wayne Dow

Hurt feelings are—or should be—a major concern for critique group members. When we create something, especially if it is intended for the enjoyment of others, we are naturally sensitive to the feedback that we get as to how others view our work. For writers of memoirs this is an even greater problem. It is certainly a disappointment to find that another person views a portion of your life (that you thought of as meaningful enough to set down in words) as distasteful, or worse than that, uninteresting.

It seems that sensitivity to how people view our writing and how people view our life are in fact the same thing—the need for social approval. Although this may be true, there is a difference in magnitude worth considering. During the writing process we struggle with exactly what we want to say and how best to convey our ideas. We search our souls and sensitize ourselves to discover how to generate the proper emotions in our readers.

After going through something this intense, criticism can be devastating. For myself, if I find that others are dissatisfied with my art, I am bummed. I can't help this feeling because my writing is important to me and I intend for it to be pleasurable to others. I also believe that this is the way we all are. Hopefully, you will agree that this is a positive thing; it takes sensitive people to make good writers.

So, how do we become better writers without getting beat up? First of all, no matter how meticulous you are in your wording, and no matter how much time you spend crafting your story to amuse your audience, there will come a time when you need feedback. Critique groups are a way to receive that feedback and also a way to become a better writer. But most important, if critique groups are working properly, they're fun!

For a critique group to function correctly, there needs to be a proper foundation. All members need to know what they expect from the group and what the other members expect from them. It will help to discuss this as a group, which will also aid in getting to know one another. As a critique group

develops, the trust in one another and an understanding that the criticism is meant to be constructive will negate the damaged ego effect and allow us to focus on the benefits of the insight offered by trusted friends. Hurt feelings will become secondary to the joy of seeing your writing improve.

To get to this point, members need to be sensitive to when their criticism steps on toes. Ask yourself before you present a critique: is this an example of the way I would like to be treated? Harsh criticism is hard on relationships, and the critic should be ready to go into "building friendship mode" when it is detected that the person being critiqued is becoming defensive.

One more thing: don't be afraid to say something nice about another's work; if you read something you like, talk about it! There is nothing like a little flattery to grease the workings of a critique group. This goes double if you are critiquing my work.

So, with a little work and consideration for others, a critique group can become a positive and rewarding experience for all its members, and, eventually, members will be able to kick each other's literary works around pretty good without incident or crisis. **WT**

## BOOK REVIEW

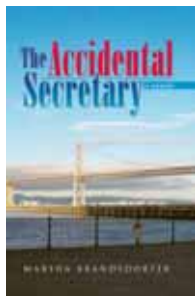
### *The Accidental Secretary:* A Memoir

by Marsha Brandsdorfer

Reviewed by *Una Daly*

Hired by a lawyer upon graduation from college with an English degree, Marsha Brandsdorfer began an unexpected career as a legal secretary. Her memoir *The Accidental Secretary* recounts more than two decades of working in the ego-bruising legal field. Although hers is a career journey with as much job searching as actual work, she brings to life the attorneys, clients, and friends made along the way.

Starting out as a file clerk in New York City, Marsha worked for a personal



injury lawyer with political aspirations and a few quirks. "The yelling always came unexpectedly ... because he seemed like a patient person," she confessed. Mr. Meyers was a Queens city councilman and when vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro moved her office next door, it was like watching history being made. After the election, all the Secret Service agents left, and Ms. Ferraro took on a hardened look, but still she paved the way for other women, noted Marsha.

Low salaries and a need for change drove Marsha out to the West Coast. In San Francisco she found jobs with attorneys who expected her to devote evenings to typing up their briefs without extra pay and who inquired about her marital status at job interviews. Surviving the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989, she settled in for a period of stability with a decent attorney and some good friends until she lost the job due to a prolonged infection

and bout of weakness.

On a chance vacation to New Orleans, Marsha met some kindred spirits and was inspired to try living in the party town. "Since I had to look for work again, why not do it in a different place?" But time moved slowly in N'awlins and paid work was hard to find, allowing her to take a writing class at Tulane University. She also met Jean, a young black man who worked at a bookstore, and they began a deep friendship that outlasted her stay.

Looking for steady work and adopting a few stray cats lasted for about a year but a precipitously shrinking bank account and another job loss propelled her back to California. The job prospects in Los Angeles proved to be no better but Marsha learned to drive a car while residing with a friend and this provided her with much needed transportation options.

*Continued on page 7*

## The CWC Literary Anthology Wants You!

The CWC literary anthology is in the planning phase. This quality publication will be a venue for showcasing our members' essays, fiction, poetry, and art. Interested in working with a talented and motivated committee of members to make the next CWC literary anthology a reality?

Contact I.D. Levy at  
textractor@yahoo.com



## The Agony of Anxiety

Churning, burning  
Tossing, turning  
Fear grips my gut  
Thoughts in a rut  
Going round and round  
In a circular motion  
I give up the notion  
of peace.

—Suzy Paluzzi

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### *Accidental Secretary, continued from page 6*

You find yourself hoping with each job change or relocation that Marsha will find the security that she so sorely needed. Eventually, she ended up back in the San Francisco Bay Area with a steady job at an insurance company and was able to pay off her debts and reconnect with old friends. Although her boss turned out to be abusive and she eventually left, Marsha continued to find well-paying jobs.

The narrative ends with a return visit to New York City to see her family and to reconcile herself to the city post September 11. After a pleasant but emotion-filled trip, she heads back to California once again, but this time she is feeling strong and knows that she has the skills to survive.

To learn more about *The Accidental Secretary*, visit [accidentalsecretary.com](http://accidentalsecretary.com).

WT

SHORT STORY

## Bomber's Moonlight

by Helen Vanderberg

A predatory enemy plane scouted above the English coast, riding behind a roll of fog that summer morning. When the plane reached the Sussex Downs the fog thinned and disappeared. Still unobserved, the Junker swung to orient towards London now at his northeast. Far below in East Grinstead, and surrounded by a canopy of trees, young girls played rounders.

The game was being played out under the watchful eye of a young nun, Sister Hazel. Kate at bat gave the ball a mighty wallop, and streaked for first base. Exuberant, the seven-year-old ran on to second, but hesitated a moment before dashing onward. Her way was blocked. On third base, Anne stood rooted to the spot. Kate would miss her chance of a round-in-one, unless she orchestrated a deliberate collision to wake her up. Anne still squinted at the circling aircraft overhead. A second plane, a Spitfire, had risen to the attack.

When Kate slammed into her, Anne crashed to the ground wailing, jolted out of her concentration.

The popping of machine gun fire made Sister Hazel, the young nun in charge, scan the sky. Kate looked around and frowned. She'd heard no siren, so how could the enemy be here?

"Run," cried Sister Hazel. "Run for the trees," and she spread the wings of her sleeves like an enormous bird, scooping them along. The children stumbled, confused, a few still gripping rounders bats, feet a blur, racing at top speed. Machine gun fire grew louder; the whine of plane engines rose and fell. The dogfight continued above their heads. The children shed their bats now, and dashed beneath the trees, plunging through underbrush and nettles. Rough going—fallen branches everywhere, the ground lumpy and soft with leaves.

Kate sprinted ahead, reached the trees and turned to watch. Sister Hazel brought up the rear, a small child clinging to each hand, their toes skimming the ground. Between them came the stream of others, Anne amongst them. The racket from above reached a crescendo, and then died for an instant as a crashing, breaking object tumbled from the sky.

At that very moment Anne tripped over a fallen log and fell full length. Just in front of her a smoking piece of shrapnel came smashing through the branches to land less than two feet away. Tea-tray size, gray and smoldering along its jagged edge, it smelled peculiar. Anne screamed and hid her head beneath her arms. Kate raced over and got to Anne first.

"Come ON," she yelled. "Don't be such a BABY," and yanked Anne to her feet. "It's only shrapnel." Kate spun Anne around and brushed her down. "A little scrape, that's all. Let's go." Ignored were Anne's gasping sobs, her red and dazed face. Together the two girls resumed the clumsy run. They reached shelter just as the warning siren sounded. It was followed almost at once by the all-clear. Things were not behaving as they should.

All that summer sirens sounded, mostly at night, although as August progressed the enemy grew bolder and daylight raids began. By the end of August there were five or six raids a night until, at last, the sirens wailed at dusk and the all-clear didn't sound until dawn. Wave after wave of bombers were announced by muffled bumps of anti-aircraft guns and the far-off crump of falling bombs. Whispers of invasion reached the convent.

In the darkened countryside no searchlights blazed. Masses of silver barrage balloons floated like airborne whales above cities, their forest of cables protecting London and Croydon. Kate had seen them from the train, knew they were for defense. Out in Sussex countryside the best defense was to go to ground like a badger or a vole.

*Continued on page 8*

Those summer nights the sisters gathered the orphanage children on mattresses in the cleared refectory, large and small girls all together, and sisters too. Blackout material hung in funereal swathes across the windows, interior hall doors stood open. A faint blue light shone from the warden nun's desk. The heat was stifling.

One night Sister Vivian asked Sister Hazel to throw back the doors to the garden, and the scent of roses wafted into the hall. Girls bundled pillows beneath their heads and some actually fell asleep. Kate lay staring into the open garden, a faint dusky light falling like pale silk across everything, reminding her of fairies, toadstools and magic. Then Madeleine, an older girl, whispered "Bomber's moon," and all magic evaporated. Even Kate realized a full moon lit the enemy's targets perfectly.

That was the night Anne leapt up screaming from her place, beating her head, shaking it, treading in wild high leaps among the sleep-stunned children until Sister Hazel came and folded her in her arms, muttering, "Hush, now, hush." Soon a whisper came down the rows: "A bat, a bat in Anne's hair. So she says."

Fidgeting began to stir in a rising tide amongst the rows of refugees. After a whispered conversation with Sister Vivian, Sister Hazel took eight of the children, together with a chamber-pot, into the tiny cellar box-room, half-underground. A small area, no more than 12 feet in the long dimension, stretched back behind dusty trunks and luggage. Along one wall, ochrish and grimy portholes were set high, one tilted an inch to allow in a small current of garden air. The bare gray planked floor had been hastily swept in front. No other provisions had been made. Sister Hazel sniffed, then turned to pass each child before her, touching each lightly on the crown of the head, her lips moving. Maureen, dragging her pillow, made for the corner where she arranged herself in a small ball; Anne followed, then Mary, Alice and all the others. Kate came last, glancing behind her, a blanket slung across her shoulder, dragging her pillow into the small space. Eight of them, just the population of the junior dorm, packed in the cellar room of St. Margaret's that night.

Kate hadn't wanted to leave the lofty refectory. The sense of space, the soaring gothic windows, all bestowed a sense of peace and hope. The cellar box-room felt unbearably close, the ceiling pressing down on them. She thought of how, when they played Robin Hood among the trees, the little ones would crouch behind even leafless bushes to hide from the Sheriff of Nottingham. If you made yourself small enough, might you be overlooked? If the enemy invaded, the cellar room might not be found at first, might even be overlooked. But if the building fell, they would be crushed, no matter how small they made themselves.

The insult also rankled, of being sent below with the little ones and those like Anne who still trembled. Anne was a bit of a coward. She was always frightened. The girls huddled around the walls like mice, leaning against each other in little balls, one or two lay a head on another's lap. Anne sighed, and cautiously lowered her head to Sister Hazel's lap, a fragile smile on her lips. Another small child did the same, while the rumbling overhead increased.

At some point Kate fell asleep, stunned by the noise, by the constant need to keep a watch. She awoke and sat up abruptly, surprised to find the room still in darkness, and to hear more bombers. Where did they all come from?

Sister Hazel saw her startled head, and mouthed the words, "Going home." Satisfied, Kate lay there counting, thirty-one, thirty-two. . . five, six, seven. That one sounds heavy, the engine burdened. The load must still be there. Then that silence, that hushed waiting silence, as the earth heaves up and splits and receives unto itself death, destruction and the end. And the opening of the gates of heaven. **WT**

### Feb-Brewski

Who needs to celebrate? I do.  
Who needs a pint of bracing cheer?  
We crave the optimistic view.  
Look what you wrote:  
It's fresh, sincere!  
So set 'em up, The Gang's All Here.

—Pat Bustamante

## Foothill Authors Series for Students and Book Lovers

As part of its 50th anniversary celebration, Foothill College is hosting a series of guest readings and book signings by best-selling authors. Admission is free and the public is invited to attend.

Guest author-comedian Brian Copeland, of San Francisco, will present a reading of his book, *Not a Genuine Black Man*, followed by a book-signing session Tuesday, February 5, from 3 to 4 p.m. in the Campus Center Student Lounge.

In 2004, he premiered his one-man show, *Not a Genuine Black Man*, at the Marsh Theater in San Francisco. The show deals with the lingering effects of Copeland's childhood spent as an African-American in the then 99.99-percent white Bay Area suburb of San Leandro, considered in the 1960s and 70s to be one of America's most racist enclaves. The show's themes of isolation, racial identity, and redemption struck a central nerve with audiences. The show ran for more than two years, becoming the longest running solo show in San Francisco theatrical history. The production went on to acclaimed runs in Los Angeles and off Broadway. Developed by avowed bibliophile and new Foothill College President Judy C. Miner, Ed.D., the Foothill College Authors Series features a variety of writers, including:

- Louann Brizendine, M.D., author of *The Female Brain*, March 18 at 3 p.m., Campus Center Student Lounge;
- Michelle Gagnon, author of *The Tunnels*, on April 10 at 3 p.m. in the Campus Center Student Lounge;
- Firoozeh Dumas, author of *Funny in Farsi* and the upcoming *Laughing Without an Accent*, on April 24 at 3 p.m., Campus Center Student Lounge;
- T. C. Boyle, author of *The Tortilla Curtain*, *Tooth and Claw*, *The Inner Circle* and many others on May 14 at 3 p.m. in Appreciation Hall (Room 1501);
- Julia Flynn Siler, author of *The House of Mondavi*, on May 29 at 3 p.m., Campus Center Student Lounge; and

*Continued on page 13*



# Escape from Paradise

by Beth Proudfoot

## Chapter 1

After Emily nearly drowned, I worked hard to avoid dreaming. My strategy involved sleeping only in short, deep spurts. I told my kids I was taking naps, but they were more like brief comas, which came on suddenly whenever I allowed myself to relax. The thought of falling asleep while driving scared me to death, but it was easy enough to put the baby into the stroller and walk to the grocery store. I hated the impatience of Silicon Valley drivers anyway. Pedestrians in my neighborhood tended to be around eighty years old and kind enough to give excellent directions when I forgot where I was going.

After almost a year, however, the no-sleep solution was becoming a problem. It was well past five o'clock on a February afternoon when I jerked awake from one of my "naps" and sat up, blinking, struggling for focus. The thick recipe book that had been my pillow on my kitchen table was open to "Chicken Cacciatore." I had no tomatoes in the pantry, I remembered, and no chicken. Now I had no time.

Dinner was supposed to be one of the easy jobs.

The house was quiet. That meant Baby George was still sleeping, and the big kids were playing peacefully in the backyard. I closed the cookbook. We had some macaroni in the pantry. Tuna casserole, then. Or I could just close my eyes again.

The patio door slid open with a crash, jumpstarting my heart. Blake, my seven-year-old, leaned in with his skinny arms braced on the jamb. His hair was plastered to his forehead in curly auburn snakes, and his polo shirt had a rip in the sleeve.

"Mom!"

"Blake, I can't keep buying you school shirts."

"It's a 'mergency," he said, whistling through the opening left by his missing front tooth. "You've got to come."

I pushed myself up so fast I knocked my chair over. Blake had been the one to call the paramedics while I gave Emily mouth-to-mouth a year before. He was big enough to know what a real emergency was.

"What happened?" My voice came out in a strangled whisper.

"Come on. Quick." He turned and raced out of sight.

I ran after him. My eyes swept automatically to the right as I cut across the redwood deck, my breath coming in panicked bursts.

But the pool was gone. Of course. We'd filled it in, planted some azaleas. I leapt down the three steps to the lawn, pulled up short, and scanned our soggy, winter-bleak backyard. My heart was making dents in my rib cage. Where was Emily?

Blake stopped at the bottom of the oak tree whose bare branches cascaded over most of the yard. The redwood picnic table and several pieces of outdoor furniture were piled against its wide trunk. The children had, apparently, been playing fort. Helga, our dachshund, rushed out from behind an upturned deck chair, yipping.

"Emily?" Was she under the picnic table? I pushed an aluminum chaise lounge from the top of the pile onto the lawn. "Are you hurt? Where are you?"

"I'm here, Mommy," a thin voice called from high in the tree.

I looked up and saw my daughter's pale hand waving at me from the crook of the lowest branches, just below the peak of our second-story roof. She was okay. She was alive.

I put one hand to my leaping chest and closed my eyes to send up a little prayer of gratitude.

"Is your heart okay, Mommy?" Blake stood next to me, his eyebrows knit in

concern. He was starting to get a wrinkle there, above his sweet, freckled nose, from worrying about me.

I put a hand on his shoulder. My bones suddenly felt so heavy I could barely stand upright. "I'm fine, Sweetheart."

Helga started whining around my feet. I forced myself to reach down and pick her up.

"Blake, Honey," I said, "how did Emmie get up there?"

He frowned, his eyes downcast. "I told her not to follow me."

"Yes, but you know it's not okay for you to climb the tree either."

"I was just going to go up for a minute. I wanted to slide down the cable."

I turned away so Blake couldn't see my pained expression. I'd told Alan we should take down the planks nailed into the trunk and the stupid cable slide, but he'd been too lazy to do more than pull off the bottom few boards of the ladder. Obviously, his theory about how the kids wouldn't be able to reach the new bottom rung until they were teenagers was grossly wrong, as I had pointed out, more than once. I should have bought some bolt cutters and a crowbar and done the job myself.

"She wanted me to go down first," Blake continued, "but then she couldn't reach the rope that makes the slide come back up. She won't come down the ladder, neither. She says she's stuck."

"Mommy," Emily called, opening and closing her hands. "Ca-a-a-tch me."

"No!" I held out my hand like a traffic cop. "Stay right there. Do not budge." I put Helga down and backed toward the fence until I could get a better view. Three big branches framed a tight nest at the top of the trunk. Emily stood in this niche, still dressed in her kindergartener plaid jumper and tights.

"I tried to climb back up," Blake said, following me, "but I can't reach the rope with her in the way." He took my arm and waited until I looked down at him. "I think we need to call the fire department."

His face was grim and turning paler every second. What did I expect? By looking to him for every little decision, I was turning my second-grader into an

old man. This had to stop. I was the grownup. Right.

"We don't need the fire department, son," I said. "I'll go up."

"They've got a net, though," Blake said. "And a really tall ladder."

This was true in the cartoons. In reality, though, they also had forms to fill out. They had been very careful, when Emily nearly drowned, not to assign blame. I couldn't call them with her in danger again, though. What excuse did I have this time? I'd fallen asleep.

"I can do it." I swiped the sweat off my upper lip, then walked over and patted the gray bark, trying to look confident. "I'm coming to get you, Emily," I called up. "Hug a branch, now, Honey, and wait for me."

I climbed on top of the picnic table, catching my breath when it tilted slightly to one side under my weight. I spread my feet apart, tightened my knees, and looked up. There were thirteen rungs to climb, kind of an ominous number.

"Should we call Daddy?" Blake asked.

"No, no, Honey, I'm a good climber." This was a lie. I had been an athlete, long ago, B.C.—Before Children. However, climbing trees probably required different muscles than the 500-meter backstroke. Not that I was in shape for any kind of physical activity after years of breeding, lactating, and couch-potatohood.

I grabbed the first board of the make-shift ladder. The previous property owners had nailed it to the trunk at least ten years ago, and the wood was damp from all the rain we'd had this January. Don't look down, I reminded myself. Don't look up. Look at the nice, solid tree.

"Mommy!" Emily's head was visible as she leaned out precariously to peer down at me.

"Don't watch me, Emmie," I said. "Hang on tight. I'll count the boards as I come up, okay?" I forced one foot at a time to the first rung and started climbing. "Here we go. My hands are on rung number three, now, Sweetheart. Count with me."

I looked up to see what she was doing. Bad idea. I pressed my cheek against the trunk and closed my eyes. No, that

was worse. I planted my forehead, opened my eyes and focused on an ant crawling in a crevice in the rough bark.

"Four!" Emily called down.

I inched my hand up to the next rung. "Right. Four." I felt my biceps strain as I pulled myself up another couple of feet. I'd been lifting children for seven years. You'd think I'd be a little stronger. "Five. Six. Seven."

"Eight," Emily said joyfully. "Right, Mommy? Isn't it eight? Are you coming?"

"I'm still at seven, Sweetpea. This next board feels kind of squishy." Holding onto Number Seven with one hand, I slowly transferred my grip to Number Eight. It held. All right. "Nine. Ten."

With both hands on Number Eleven, I stepped on Number Eight with my full weight. It disintegrated with a pop. Splintered pieces dropped to the ground, and I was hanging from Eleven by my fingertips.

Emily screamed. Helga started yapping up a storm.

"Mommy," Blake shouted up, "Don't break it."

My right toe found an irregularity in the bark. I flailed with my left foot until it caught on the single nail that was left from Number Eight. Okay, don't stop, Mary. Curling awkwardly at the waist, I inched my feet up to a wobbly perch on Number Nine. I slid my right arm upward, grabbed another rung, and pulled my cramped body upright. I couldn't do this.

"Are you okay, Mommy?" Blake's voice broke, on the verge of tears.

"No problem," I shouted, between shuddering breaths.

Helga's barking diminished, and I heard our doorbell ringing. Lovely. I pressed my cheek harder against the tree trunk, unable to stop shaking.

"Why don't you go see who's at the door?" I called to Blake.

"I can't, Mommy. Remember? It could be a Stranger."

Helga's barking picked up another few decibels.

"It's probably the mailman," I said. "Maybe he can help us."

"What? I can't hear you. Shut up,

Helga, you old dog."

"Go get the door!"

"What?"

Oh, forget it. I reached for the next rung. And couldn't find it.

"You're almost there, Mommy," Blake yelled. "Grab that branch."

What branch? I inched my hand up a little further and felt the contour of the trunk change. A three-foot-wide branch forked off to my left. I started chanting, under my breath, the old swim team cheer, "Go, go, go-baby, go!" Perspiring freely now, I stretched up to curl my elbow over the branch and was able to finally step up to the last rung, lucky Number Thirteen.

"Hi, Mommy." Emily squatted down and gave me her pixie smile. She was my sky child. Her eyes were the palest blue, and her hair was so blonde, and so thin and curly, it wisped around her face like a cloud.

"Hi, Sweetheart. Can you just climb up that branch a little way? Hold on tight. That's good." I scraped both knees as I shinnied up, then turned and hoisted my hips onto the narrow crotch of the tree. Made it. Unbelievable.

I pulled Emily into my arms, and she allowed me to hold her, rocking. She must have been very frightened. The accident, and the coma that followed, hadn't changed her personality one bit. She never sat still for long, just ran on her tippy-toes, heedless of danger, wherever the wind blew her until, like now, she realized she couldn't go any further.

"That Stranger is still ringing the doorbell," Blake called up.

It was uncomfortable sitting wedged between the branches, the bark cutting into my thighs. I wasn't moving very soon though. Perhaps it would be possible to stay up here forever. "I can hear it, son. Let's just sit here quietly and let Mommy rest, okay?"

"Okay, but I think I hear Georgie. You want me to go get him?"

"No, Sweetheart. He's safe in his crib." I sighed deeply. It wouldn't be too long before George would be walking. I'd just have to hope he didn't hit the ground running like Emily had.

"Are you stuck, now, Mommy?"

"I'll be down in a minute, Blake."

Surveying the situation, I realized I should not have climbed all the way into the tree. There wasn't enough room to maneuver here. How the hell were we going to get back to the ground? I couldn't even see the top rung of the ladder, let alone the open space around the now-broken Number Eight. My gaze slid down to the picnic table, and my vision suddenly turned screwy. The table seemed to boomerang farther away and then closer, and then farther again, like an old Roadrunner cartoon. I closed my eyes and suppressed a dry heave.

There was no way I was going to be able to climb down this tree. I was a weakling and an idiot and a fraud and a failure. How many near-death experiences did you have to have in a family before the mother qualified as Failure of the Year?

"Mommy," Emily said in her sing-song, tattling voice, "Blake's climbing the tree."

"What?" I held on tight and looked down. Blake was already up to Number Six. "Stop," I yelled. "Blake, get down right now."

"But, Mom—"

"Now!"

Helga's barking became hysterical. The side gate flew open with a crash. "Don't you people ever answer your door?" a woman's voice called.

"Aunt Joanie," Blake cried. He jumped down onto the picnic table with a creaky thud.

My body slumped with relief. Joanie'd been making dramatic entrances in my life ever since she showed up at my freshman dorm at two in the morning and announced she was going to be my roommate. Usually, these surprise visits annoyed the heck out of me. Just now, though, I was pathetically grateful.

"Hey, Mary," she called up from the patio. "Whatcha doin' up there?"

I only caught a glimpse of her before my vertigo started acting up again, and I had to close my eyes. "Oh, just having fun. We're kind of stuck, now, though. Go in the house and call 911, will you?"

"Right."

Thirty seconds later, I felt a tap on my

knee and nearly took off to orbit the moon.

"You're okay, Mary," Joanie said very gently. "Open your eyes, now, Honey." She held onto the first branch with both arms, her feet on the last rung of the ladder. An oak leaf had caught in her hair. She'd cut it short since the last time I'd seen her, and dyed it light brown. The style, though amazingly conservative for a woman who'd once sported a purple Mohawk, became her. With her heart-shaped face and green eyes, she looked like Peter Pan up here in the tree—except for the elegant and expensive silk blouse. I, of course, was wearing the latest in Mommy gear: a faded navy sweatshirt with baby slime on the shoulders.

"Do I get three guesses?" she asked, smiling.

I sighed. "For once in your life, could you just do what I ask?"

"But that would be so predictable!"

"Look, we need help, here."

"No we don't. Jeez, Mary, didn't you grow up in the country?" She swung her legs past me and shinnied onto the branch above my head, ruining her sleek wool pants. "Hi, Emmie," she said, "This looks like a great slide. How do I get the handle up?"

Emily shrank back, suddenly shy, refusing to answer.

"Pull on the orange rope," Blake yelled from below.

"I can't go down the slide," I said.

"Of course you can," Joanie replied.

"The only hard part is you have to swing your legs around to the other side of this branch."

"I can't move. I mean it, Joanie."

"Mary, we've known each other for twelve years. Have you ever won an argument with me?"

Actually, I hadn't. Which was why I'd nearly flunked out my freshman year at Stanford. Fortunately for both my academic career and my scholarship, we only had that one year together. Joanie's father, a senator from one of those tiny New England states, made her return to the East Coast when we were sophomores. We'd remained best friends, and kept up an intense email correspondence, but had only physi-

cally been together nine or ten times in the last ten years. Each visit, though, she'd charmed me into getting into some kind of mess. I wasn't complaining. Joanie's impetuous spirit was part of what I loved about her. And she seemed to have as much of a knack for getting out of trouble as she did for getting into it. If she thought she was going to sweet-talk me down from this tree, though, she was sadly mistaken.

"I'm having a problem with my vision," I said through clenched teeth.

"You can close your eyes on the ride down. Grab onto this, now."

She held the handle of the slide in front of my face. It was a simple, homemade device: a cable, a pulley, and a set of bicycle handles. Every part was liberally covered with rust.

"No way."



Illustration by Betty Auchard

She pursed her lips. "Way."

"What about Emily?"

"I'll come down with her next."

"Take her first."

"Mary, I'm counting to three. Then I'm pushing you out of this tree. It will be better if you're holding on."

"You wouldn't."

"One. Two. Two-and-a-half." She levered her foot under my backbone and started to apply the pressure.

"Three."

*Continued overleaf*

# Even More Contests

by Carolyn Donnell

Was one of your contributions to *WritersTalk* published in an issue from last September through this month? Stay tuned. Winners of the *WritersTalk* Challenge will be announced in March.



Carolyn Donnell  
Contributing Editor

See the January issue for contests with deadlines in January and February. Following are a few additions with deadlines through the end of March. Note the youth contests at the end.

## CWC CCW 2008

### Spring Writing Contest 3/31

Poetry and Short Story  
[centralcoastwriters.org/2008-spring-contest-rules.htm](http://centralcoastwriters.org/2008-spring-contest-rules.htm)

## *Escape, continued from page 11*

She took her foot off my back.

I turned to give her my meanest scowl—which had absolutely zero effect, as usual.

She looked down at me like a schoolmarm peering over her glasses. “Alan’s going to be home soon, isn’t he?”

My teeny bubble of defiance collapsed. Alan already thought I was a dingbat. I didn’t need to have him coming home and finding the house a mess, the dinner unmade, and me in a tree.

“If you’d just go down with Emily,” I said, “and get the ladder out of the shed—”

She lifted each of my hands and placed them on the handlebars. “You’re stronger than you think, Mary. And you’ve got three kids who are going to be very upset if they have to see their mommy’s guts splattered all over the lawn. So hang on. One, two, three.”

I barely had time to firm my grip before she pushed, hard, and I flew out of the tree on the slide. The lattice roof of the patio loomed toward me at stomach-liquefying speed. Hang on, or jump? Hang on, or—the slide jerked to a stop

## *ByLine Magazine*

Several poetry and short story types including ghazal—Arabic form poem, written in couplets.  
[bylinemag.com/contests.asp](http://bylinemag.com/contests.asp)

## *Glimmer Train*

Very Short Fiction—February  
Fiction Open—March  
[glimmertrain.com](http://glimmertrain.com)

## AWP Award Series 2/28

Creative nonfiction, novel, Donald Hall Prize in Poetry and Grace Paley Prize in Short Fiction  
[awpwriter.org/contests/series.htm#02](http://awpwriter.org/contests/series.htm#02)

## James Jones First Novel Fellowship

3/1  
[wilkes.edu/pages/1159.asp](http://wilkes.edu/pages/1159.asp)

## Word Works Washington Prize 3/1

Poetry Manuscript  
[wordworksdc.com/washington\\_prize.html](http://wordworksdc.com/washington_prize.html)

**49th Parallel Poetry Award/Annie Dillard Award for Creative Nonfiction/Tobias Wolff Award for Fiction**  
3/15

with about a yard to spare. My feet kept going and slammed against the post. Ouch. I let go of the handles and dropped to the ground.

Blake ran over and tackled me. I scooted both of us out of the way, and we watched from the ground as Joanie zoomed out of the tree with Emily clinging to her neck, squealing.

They landed safely. I exhaled a fervent thank you. Emily jumped onto me and Blake and the three of us lay back on the grass in a group hug. Helga joined us, licking all of our faces, her lips pulled back in what could only be described as a delighted smile. This was what I loved about dogs. Either they were happy or they were sad. They never wasted even a moment reliving the past.

I looked up at Joanie, who stood over us like Superwoman with her hands on her hips.

“Another boring day in suburbia?” she said, smiling.

I sat up. “Yep. This stay-at-home-mom job is pretty routine.”

“Well, get ready,” she said, “Because things are about to change.”

I’d learned long ago to dread that little glint in her eye. **WT**

[ac.wvu.edu/~bhreview/contests.htm](http://ac.wvu.edu/~bhreview/contests.htm)

**Campbell Corner Poetry Prize** 3/15  
Sponsored by Sarah Lawrence College  
[pages.slc.edu/~eraymond/ccorner/pcontest/submit.html](http://pages.slc.edu/~eraymond/ccorner/pcontest/submit.html)

**Nelligan Prize for Short Fiction** 3/15  
[coloradoreview.colostate.edu/NPSF](http://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/NPSF)

**Prairie Schooner Book Prize Series**  
3/15 Poetry or Prose  
[prairieschooner.unl.edu/prizes](http://prairieschooner.unl.edu/prizes)

**Four Way Books Intro Series Prize**  
3/31 Poetry Manuscript  
[fourwaybooks.com/contest.php](http://fourwaybooks.com/contest.php)

**Glasgow Prize for Emerging Writers**  
3/31

Individual Poems Short Fiction & Creative Nonfiction  
[shenandoah.wlu.edu/glasgow.html](http://shenandoah.wlu.edu/glasgow.html)

**Indiana Review Poetry Prize** 3/31  
Individual Poems [indianareview.org/general/prizes/poetprizelines08.htm](http://indianareview.org/general/prizes/poetprizelines08.htm)

**L. Ron Hubbard’s Writers of the Future Contest** 3/31  
[writersofthefuture.com/index2.htm](http://writersofthefuture.com/index2.htm)

**WOW! Women on Writing Winter 2008 Flash Fiction** 2/28  
[wow-womenonwriting.com/contest.php](http://wow-womenonwriting.com/contest.php)

**Montana Prize in Fiction/Montana Prize in Creative Nonfiction/Patricia Goedicke Prize in Poetry** 2/29  
[cutbankonline.org/](http://cutbankonline.org/)

**Tom Howard/John H. Reid Short Story Contest** 3/31  
[winningwriters.com/contests/tomstory/ts\\_guidelines.php](http://winningwriters.com/contests/tomstory/ts_guidelines.php)

## Contests for Youth

**CWC Berkeley Branch Annual Fifth-Grade Story Contest**  
3/15  
[berkeleywritersclub.org/youth.htm](http://berkeleywritersclub.org/youth.htm)

**Wick Poetry High School Competition**  
2/1  
[kent.edu/wick/Scholarships/highschool.cfm](http://kent.edu/wick/Scholarships/highschool.cfm)

**Newsweek “My Turn” Essay Contest**  
2/1 [newsweekeducation.com/about/resources/myturn/myturn2008](http://newsweekeducation.com/about/resources/myturn/myturn2008)

**Anthem Essay Contest for High School Students** 3/20  
[aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=education\\_contests\\_index](http://aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=education_contests_index)  
**WT**

*Rinzler, continued from page 1*

that are now available in this brave new world.”

Alan has edited and published such authors as Toni Morrison, Hunter S. Thompson, Tom Robbins, Shirley MacLaine, Robert Ludlum, Jerzy Kosinski, Andy Warhol, Bob Dylan, Irv Yalom, and Clive Cussler.

Alan Rinzler's rise to the status of legendary book editor began as Editorial Assistant to the respected Robert Gottlieb at Simon and Schuster in 1962. He has since worked as Senior Editor for Macmillan as well as for Holt, as Director of Trade Book Publishing for Bantam Books, as Associate Publisher and Vice President for *Rolling Stone Magazine* when it began in San Francisco, and as President of the Rolling Stone Book Division Straight Arrow Books. He has also been West Coast Editor for Grove Press, Editor of the *Berkeley Monthly* and, for the past 15 years, Executive Editor of Jossey-Bass, a subsidiary of John Wiley & Sons. He is also the Academic Director of Trade Book Publishing for the annual Stanford Professional Publishing Courses at Stanford University.

Be sure to join us and get a jungle compass from legendary acquisitions editor Alan Rinzler on Tuesday, February 12, 6 p.m. at the Lookout Bar Inn in Sunnyvale. Miss this talk at your peril and risk of being swallowed by the jungle. **WT**

## 2008 San Francisco Writers Conference

February 15th–17th, 2008  
InterContinental Mark Hopkins Hotel  
Keynoters:

Clive Cussler, the “Grandmaster of Adventure”

Tess Gerritsen, *The Bone Garden*, *The Sinner*

Daisy Maryles, Exec. Editor, *Publishers Weekly*

April Sinclair, *Coffee Will Make You Black*  
Kevin Smokler, *Writing in Unreaderly Times*

Plus a boatload of authors, publishers, editors, and literary agents.

SFWriterscon@aol.com 415-673-0939  
1029 Jones Street, San Francisco, CA 94109

Info: sfwriters.org

*Networking, continued from page 1*

who teach writing, local workshops, classes, speakers of interest and their locations; and other educational venues that promise interest to South Bay writers. Instructors and students, talk to Gary.

Success in this role, for him and for us, will depend largely on collaboration. Those engaged in these activities, or wishing to become engaged, will need to approach and fill him in. If you run a group, would like to start a group, or would like to join one, talk to Gary. If you are willing to participate as a mentor, talk to Gary. If you teach a class, know of an educational event, or will be giving a workshop or a talk at the library, talk to Gary. In all of these areas, he will make your information known in the ways that are mentioned above. His best information will come from us. Let's give him a hand and he will return it manyfold.

At our Hospitality table (the one where Jeremy hospitably collects your money), there will be a raft of blanks called “Networking Blanks.” Use these to announce your particular interests and offers. When they are filled out, please deposit them back in the basket. Of course, talk to Gary in person or drop him an email at [networking@southbaywriters.com](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.com), and expect him to say more about this new Chair at our next meeting. **WT**

*Foothill Authors, continued from page 8*

- Kemble Scott, author of *SoMa*, on June 9 at 3 p.m., Campus Center Student Lounge.

The presentation this spring by author T.C. Boyle is part of Foothill's One Book, One College, One Community initiative to encourage students, faculty, staff and community members to read the same book and participate in events related to the work.

All books featured in the series are available for purchase at a 20% discount in the Foothill College Bookstore. Foothill faculty and staff can earn PGA/PAA credit by attending any of the series presentations. For more information, call (650) 949-7408, e-mail [CaseyMia@foothill.edu](mailto:CaseyMia@foothill.edu) or access [books.foothill.edu/home.aspx](http://books.foothill.edu/home.aspx) **WT**

## View from Our Board

*by Dave LaRoche*

There was no Board meeting in December. On January 9, your Board of Directors met and the following actions were taken:

- A bookselling table was established. Beginning in February, South Bay members may display and sell their books before and after the formal meeting, and during breaks. The Club will not engage in the transactions.
- A networking chair was established with Gary Dow as the incumbent. This chair will be a resource for reading groups, critique groups, mentoring for new members, and educational opportunities. Gary will know, in time, the who, where, and how of getting involved in any of these activities. He will know status, content/interest, contacts, and directories will be published.
- In August of 2007, a Branch Service Award to be given annually to a member was established by your Board.

At our January 9 meeting, we elected to call the award the “Matthews-Baldwin Service Award” in honor of Edie Matthews and Bill Baldwin, who have, over the years, spent enormous amounts of energy and interest in service to the Branch and both winners of the Jack London Award. The award will be presented in February to a person selected by the Board.

- Consent to an annual South Bay Writers anthology was given, and the Board named an exploratory committee to look into the idea and report with a plan for achievement. Those interested in serving on this committee should contact the Prez.

Your Board maintains a positive outlook for 2008. This is the year of our East of Eden Conference, by far our largest, most challenging event. We plan another workshop, likely in June, increased movement toward supporting the youth of our community in their interest in writing, continued excellence in meeting speakers, broadening our membership, and our traditional events.

**WT**

# WRITERSTALK

## Challenge

### What Is It?

Twice a year, in March and September, awards are given to contributors to *WritersTalk*. You need take no special steps to enter this competition; if your piece in one of the designated genres is published in *WritersTalk*, you are a contestant in the Challenge.\*

### Genres

Fiction  
Memoir  
Essay  
Poetry

### Judging Periods

February 16 through August 15  
August 16 through February 15

### Prizes

One winner will be selected from each of the eligible genres. Each winner will be awarded a cash prize of \$40.

### Judging

Judging will be done by *WritersTalk* contributing editors and other club members whom the contributing editors may ask to assist.

\* Eligibility for the *WritersTalk* Challenge is limited to members of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club; judges may not participate in the competition.

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## Third Annual Gold Rush Writer's Conference

This year will be bigger and better than ever—fourteen workshops to choose from, ten workshop leaders, award-winning novelist Karen Joy Fowler as a speaker (and workshop leader), plus many more extras.

We're offering a special early bird rate of \$135 if you sign up before March 30. Hurry because several great workshops are limited.

Sign up now and let us hear what you've been doing.

Antoinette May and the Gold Rush Staff  
Toni@goldrushwriters.com

Info: goldrushwriters.com

# Directory of Experts

*Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? If you are willing to share your expertise, let us know. We will add your listing to our directory of experts.*

### Character Development

ArLyne Diamond Ph.D  
ALyne@DiamondAssociates.net

### Character Traits

Jeannine Vegh M.A. M.F.T.I.  
ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net

### Computer Dingus and Full-Time Nerd

Jeremy Osborne  
jeremy\_w\_osborne@yahoo.com

### Doctors' Office Environment, OB-GYN

Dottie Sieve  
pdrsieve@yahoo.com

### Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold  
maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net

### Police Procedures

John Howsden  
jwhowsden961@yahoo.com

### Profile Writing

Susan Mueller  
samueller@worldnet.att.net

### Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard  
Btauchard@aol.com

### Television Production

Woody Horn  
408-266-7040

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## San Jose Library Event: Meet Author Bo Caldwell

Almaden Branch Library  
6445 Camden Ave.—Community Room  
Saturday, February 16, 3:00 p.m.—  
5:00 p.m.

Join Bo Caldwell, the Silicon Valley Reads featured author of *The Distant Land of My Father*, for afternoon tea and treats, a discussion, and book signing. For further information, call the Almaden Library at (408) 808-3040, or ask at the Information Desk.

Info: sjlibrary.org

# CWC

## Around the Bay

These are the published meeting times and locations for the CWC branches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. If you're thinking about attending one of their meetings, be sure to check the website first for details.

**Berkeley:** Meetings are held from 10 a.m. to noon on the third Saturday of each month, except for July and August. Unless otherwise noted, our meetings are held at Barnes & Noble bookstore, in Jack London Square, Event Loft, Oakland.  
berkeleywritersclub.org

**San Francisco/Peninsula:** Meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon at the Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont.  
sfpeninsulawriters.com

**Central Coast:** Meets on the third Tuesday of each month except December at Buzzard's Backyard BBQ, adjacent to the Travelodge, 2030 N. Fremont, Monterey. The dinner hour begins at 5:30 p.m. and the program begins at 7 p.m.  
centralcoastwriters.org

**Mount Diablo:** Meets the second Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Hungry Hunter Restaurant, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette (corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Highway 24).  
mtdiablowlriters.org

**Tri-Valley:** Meets the third Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Oasis Grille, 780 Main Street, Pleasanton.  
trivalleywriters.com

**Sacramento:** Meets at 11:00 a.m. the third Saturday of every month, except July and August, at Luau Garden Chinese Buffet, 1890 Arden Way, Sacramento 95815.  
acramento-writers.org

**Marin:** Meets on the fourth Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera.  
cwcmarinwriters.com

**Redwood:** Meets the first Sunday of the month, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Marvin's Restaurant, 7991 Old Redwood Highway, corner of William St., in Cotati.  
redwoodwriters.org

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>February 2008</i>					1	2
					7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			7P Board of Directors LaRoche residence San Jose		7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
		6p Monthly Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn, Sunnyvale Alan Rinzler			7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	11A Editors' Powwow  <b>WritersTalk deadline</b>
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
				7:00P Open Mic Barnes & Noble 3900 Mowery, Fremont		
24	25	26	27	28	29	
<b>Future Flashes</b>		March 11 General Meeting Matilda Butler				

## Stay Informed!

Sign up for the SBW Email List to receive meeting and event announcements.

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

## Skyline College's WOW! Women on Writing

A one-day writing conference, March 1 from 8 to 5-ish.

Keynote by Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D. "Becoming a Blessing"

Workshops on monologues, writing from everyday life, a primer on publishing, women in transition and the power of writing, first person writing that sells, storytelling as medicine, mystery writing, travel writing, making a graphic novel, your life as story, and others.

\$60 by January 31

\$85 if by February 22,

\$100 at the door, if room exists.

Lunch is included and a nice tote besides.

Call (650) 738-4324

College credit is available. Details at

[www.smccd.net/accounts/skywow/about.htm](http://www.smccd.net/accounts/skywow/about.htm)

## San Jose Poetry Slam (Est. 1998)

8:00 p.m., \$6.00

First Tuesday: Open Mic with music by Rebelskamp

Second and Fourth Tuesdays: Poetry Slam with music by Jay Rush

Third Tuesday: Head-to-Head Poetry Bouts with special guests.

At The Britannia Arms

173 W Santa Clara

Downtown San Jose

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

## Poetry Center San Jose Announces the Poetry Lounge at The Blue Monkey

Poetry reading and discussion most Tuesdays • Cosponsored by the Creative Writing Department at San José State University  
**FREE ADMISSION**

The Blue Monkey Bar and Taquería  
1 East San Fernando Street  
San José, CA 95113 [www.pcsj.org](http://www.pcsj.org)

## South Bay Writers Open Mic

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. See calendar for schedule.

Contact Bill Baldwin  
(408) 730-9622 or email  
[wabaldwin@aol.com](mailto:wabaldwin@aol.com)

For Fremont Open Mic contact  
Jeannine Vegh  
[ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net)

or

Bob Garfinkle  
[ragarf@earthlink.net](mailto:ragarf@earthlink.net)



**California Writers Club**  
South Bay Branch  
P.O. Box 3254  
Santa Clara, CA 95055  
[www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

## MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

### TUESDAY

February 12, at the Lookout Inn  
**Alan Rinzler,**  
Executive Editor of Jossey-Bass  
“Challenges and Opportunities  
for Authors—  
An Editor’s View”

### Next Monthly Meeting—TUESDAY, Feb. 12, 6:00 p.m.

Lookout Inn  
605 Macara Avenue, Sunnyvale  
At the Sunnyvale Golf Course

Mark your calendars  
**NOW**  
During 2008  
**ALL**  
general meetings will be  
held on the second  
**TUESDAY**  
of each month

