



WRITERSTALK

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March 2009

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

March Speaker

Ellen Sussman

by Bill Baldwin

“All-American with a touch of France.”

That’s one way to think of Ellen Sussman, our March speaker.

“New Jersey meets California” would be another.

Or “Literary, but spicy.”

Born in New Jersey, now living in California, Ellen has published essays and short stories in literary and commercial magazines. She has been awarded fellowships from a number of institutions, including the Ragdale Foundation, Wesleyan Writers Conference, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

She was awarded the Mabel Daniel Prize for the most distinguished student in the arts at Tufts University, and studied with John Barth at Johns Hopkins.

She has taught at Pepperdine, UCLA, Rutgers, and Berkeley.

Her anthology, *Bad Girls: 26 Writers Misbehave*, a collection of literary essays by 26 women writers, became a *New York Times* Editors Choice and a *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Seller.

Her novel *On a Night Like This* was also a *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Seller as well as a best seller in France (where she lived for 5 years).

Her latest book, *Dirty Words: A Literary Encyclopedia of Sex*, received critical acclaim last year.

I had the pleasure of hearing Ellen speak at the 2008 San Jose Book Group Expo—a delightful and entertaining experience.

Whether you are interested in essay or short story, novel or (entertaining) reference work, you will enjoy hearing Ellen Sussman. Join us for her talk on March 10. wt



Ellen Sussman

February Recap

Esther Erman and Janet Miller

by Victoria M. Johnson

President Dave LaRoche started the meeting off by sharing some of the hilarious entries of the San Jose State Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. After the laughter settled down he then presented *WritersTalk* editor Dick Amyx with the Matthews-Baldwin Award for his work as the managing editor of the club’s monthly publication. Cathy Bauer introduced a fun “Let’s Make a Deal” nonraffle for attendees who bought raffle tickets.

Romance and mischief were in the air as attendees were introduced to two romance experts—speakers Esther Erman and Janet Miller. Erman announced that at the Reno Romance Writers of America (RWA) Conference she was known as a sex goddess, and what they both know a lot about is e-publishing and getting started in writing. Erman’s first book was a fictionalized memoir. After she wrote it and it was published by a small press, Zumaya, she found out her mother had not been entirely truthful. She was grateful she published it as a novel. The small press published it simultaneously in print and as an e-book. To protect her royalties (to get royalties an author must sell a specified minimum number of copies) she decided to write for their erotic line to improve her chances of getting paid. At the time she had no idea if she could do it. She dared herself to write an erotic romance. Erman clarified that an erotic romance is not erotica. An erotic romance, by definition, has a plot, character development, and a happy ending. “*Romeo and Juliet* is not a romance by RWA definition.” Miller adds, “It is a story with romantic elements. A romance has an emotionally satisfying ending.” Erman invited attendees to visit the RWA web site for more information at RWAnational.org.

Erman showed her first erotic romance novel, saying it came out better than expected so she decided to try a better publisher, thinking that if they didn’t buy it she could go to her second choice. But her first choice, Ellora’s Cave, bought it. Ellora’s Cave is currently probably the most successful e-publisher. A book starts with e-publishing and goes to print at some point after. Once Erman began writing for Ellora’s Cave, she kept going. She chose her pseudonym, Mardi Ballou, for better shelf space. “Erman would have landed all my books at toe level. Whereas Ballou lands my books at eye level.” She added that her real name, Esther Erman, didn’t evoke a feeling of romance.

**The SBW Anthology has been released!
See story on page 5; copies available at the
March meeting.**

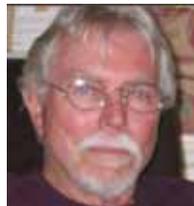
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President's Prowling

by *Dave LaRoche*
President, South Bay Writers

February Is Love (Well, that's when I wrote it)

Love in February? It's the coldest month in the freaking year and we're gonna make love? Try that in Schenectady or Montpelier. Okay, so it is that love has many facets and frankly I'm now most familiar with the love between partners. People who've been extolling and consoling one another for decades, accommodating each other's individual values and using that to further a relationship and boost one another's interests and goals. It's the "Value-pak" of love that comes with arthritis and fixed incomes.



There's the poetic kind of love, a dreamy love; a hand-wringing, shut-in, unrequited love—a missed love. This love is more of a yearning that's experienced best from a distance. Mightn't be more than the window across the street or could be on the other side of the country. But wherever, it can't be touched, so poems are written: "I love you more than the sky is blue / the roses bloom; more than my mom or my dog Shep / I'm enveloped in your essence / the very thought of you, the smell of you..." Geez, is that the rutabaga burning?

Then there's the back seat love—hot fiery not-to-be-interrupted love that starts with the long-anticipated kiss and moves quickly to a breathless conclusion. Once, as a kid, I was in a situation—a local parking spot, sparsely populated, ill-lit, and only occasionally patrolled by police—when a cop pulled up on his motorcycle, stuck a flashlight in the window and said, "Hey you . . . kid! This is not lover's lane . . . I'll hafta haul ya down to the station if ya don't get outta here . . . right now. MOVE!" Without missing a beat, I said, "Jesus man, give us a minute will ya?" A to B by the most direct route.

There's the love of family and the like—kids, husbands, wives, and the neighbors; birthdays, confirmation and soccer. We love our jobs, Coors beer, our new lawnmower, and that crazy morning bustle; the flowers in the parkway just blooming, it's spring. We're early into adulthood, love it all, and celebrate continuously.

And there's the love of silence, for being all alone—kids in college, wife's at the grocer's, and the dog's asleep in the late morning sun. I nod over the paper. It's the affection for routine and predictability—knowing what's for breakfast, who visits on Sundays, and where you're off to on the second Tuesday of the month. Life is laid out sans unpleasant surprises, and we love it cause it's all on the calendar.

There's the obsessive love of golf—lush fairways and smooth greens, the well smacked ball rising straight off the tee, a perfect chip, and the sound of it falling in the cup after one putt . . . Oooh, I can't go on or I will cry. WT

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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 the Membership Chair, Marjorie Johnson.



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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

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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)

Accolades

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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.

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Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx
Editor

Colorless Green March Grump



Over Saturday dinner, Meredy and I were discussing the editorial I hadn't written yet. "Did you ever consider that editorials don't have to be admonitory or scolding?" she asked. Then, before I could answer, she went on, "Write an editorial without a single imperative verb in it."

Sunday morning it was clear that I was taking possession of the cold that Meredy had just finished using. Stuck between a wracking cough, a throat full of ground glass, and the need to write an editorial that neither admonished nor contained an imperative verb, I found "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously" popping to mind, and I started tossing over the possibility of working Noam Chomsky and grammar into the recount of a fevered dream. In a literary sort of way, of course.

So it was with colorless green ideas in mind that I happened onto this sentence in an online political magazine to which a friend had sent a link:

One would think Matthews' irritations would have doubled rather than subsided—if only he weren't himself one of the ranch hands delivering the Kool-Aid-flavored milk to a mouth-watered public via the airwaves of the establishment news media.

I'm telling you, folks, you can't read writing like that just anywhere. I think that sentence should have come with a rimshot.

I've noticed in amateur fiction I read on the web that the same kinds of errors appear over and over, the most common being the dangling participle:

After sleeping for some time, a distinct musky odor incorporated itself into her dream.

Also common is the dangling participle's cousin, the misplaced modifier:

When he walked into the Second City Lounge her smiling face was like a beacon from a bistro table just right of the bar.

There are a lot of homonym errors, rein/reign being a popular one. This example came not from amateur writing but a Yahoo news article:

On Wednesday, a leaked company memo revealed "bold steps" to reign in Wal-Mart's employee benefit costs.

Mangled metaphors usually produce interesting results (the sentence from the political article should be up for a prize). I can't cite just one:

But there was something about her smile; once she flashed it she could rend hearts around her finger like rubber bands.

I made sure I threw it up in your face when you came home too.

And there's the ever popular run-on sentence:

By the time the elevator opened on the fifth floor of the parking garage, he had his hat on his head along with his gloves.

I have more—sadly, far too many more—but here you go: no admonishing or scolding, and no imperative verb (except for that one of Meredy's). I haven't attempted to tell you how you should write. I've only shared with you some amusements and disappointments that the writing of others has brought me; followed my own advice from last month, even, and read some bad stuff.

"May the lion of March not eat your lamb of April showers," he said, in the darkly subjunctive mood of a grey winter day. **WT**

Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

The premise of the “Accolades” column is pretty simple: I write what you send me in a condensed version about your writing success stories. Sometimes it is a huge success when somebody has had their novel published. And sometimes it is someone who stands up and says they wrote for fifteen minutes every day this month. Is one more important than the other? In my opinion, each deserves a standing ovation. Any writing accomplishment deserves applause. Here are this month’s writing success stories:



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

- **Claudia Arndt’s** supernatural suspense novel-in-progress placed in the quarter finals of the 2008 Writers Network Competition.
- Bill Belew is giving a talk on Chinese

characters and the stories they tell. This will be in three languages: Chinese, Japanese and English. This should be interesting as Bill lived in and is considered an expert on Asia.

- **Pat Decker Nipper** just published the article “Wells Fargo’s Treasure Box Was Full of California Gold” in the April issue of *Wild West* magazine, now on newsstands.
- **Carolyn Donnell** had a poem and photograph of her kitty published February 20, 2009 on radio station KDFC’s “Pet of the Week.” See kdfc.com for details.
- **Bob Garfinkle** has had another book review published in the local *Tri-City Voice* and one in *Sky and Telescope* magazine. Any new/local authors who would like their book reviewed, contact Bob at ragarf@earthlink.net.
- **Silvia Halleran**, who teaches Creative Writing at MVL A Adult Education, announced that her student and friend Joni Ratts is having a book signing for her novel *Fade to Black*. Interesting note: the book was written in just nineteen days during the NaNoWriMo event.

- **Marjorie Johnson** and **Marilyn Priel** were interviewed on *Come Fly with Me* on cable Channel 15.
- **Phyllis Mattson** was a speaker at the Zonta Club of Silicon Valley on Wednesday February 11, 2008. Her topic was *Women in China, Past and Present*.
- **Edie Matthews** started two new sessions of her creative writing class on February 23, 2009. See scae.org for details.
- **Jana McBurney-Lin**, author of *My Half of the Sky*, was a speaker March 11, 2009 at the Foothill College Author’s series, held on Wednesdays at 12 noon in the Student Lounge/Campus Center.
- **Louise Webb** has an ongoing memoir class that she teaches on the first and third Friday of the month at the Saratoga Senior Center from 10 – 11:30 a.m. Location: 19655 Allendale Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070.
- **Valerie Wong** sold an article “The Year of the Ox,” to an Asian newspaper in the Midwest and submitted

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Journey of a Thousand Miles: Natalie Goldberg’s Books on Writing

by Lita A. Kurth

How, one asks, can someone write not one but four, five, six books on writing and still have something good to say? Natalie Goldberg answers this question indirectly by producing book after book of intriguing depth and interest. If you’ve never read her, you might want to start at the beginning with *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Others I’ve read include *Wild Mind: Living the Writer’s Life*, *Long, Quiet Highway*, and *Thunder and Lightning*.

If it sounds New Age, it is (she lives near Santa Fe, a New Age epicenter), but there is good New Age and bad New Age; *Writing Down the Bones* stands with the former. For one thing, Goldberg wrote and published a decent, though not famous, novel, *Banana Rose*, so she’s talking from experience—she’s not just another hack with a contract. For another, influenced by Zen Buddhist practice, she has considered deeply a number of writing-life questions and writes about them with

personality and originality. Consider some of her chapter titles: “Elkton, Minnesota: Whatever’s in Front of You,” “Don’t Use Writing to Get Love” (damn!), “A Big Topic: Eroticism,” and “Writing in Restaurants.” And finally, she had already taught writing for eleven years in a stunning variety of venues before she penned this first how-to book.

Goldberg is forthright and personal; for some readers, perhaps too personal, taking readers into the kitchen where she makes ratatouille and into her ex-husband’s comments: “You look ugly... Ahh, now that I have your attention.” I was bemused to learn from book to book that she was divorced, then lesbian, then bisexual, perhaps something else in her latest book.



Lita Kurth
Contributing Editor

Her instruction is clear, plain, and honest, worth some thought: “To do writing practice means to deal ultimately with your whole life.” She states simply, “A few years ago, after every reading I gave, no matter how much everyone appreciated my work, I felt lonely and terrible.” Her conclusion? “It wasn’t my work . . . I was going through a divorce and had low self-esteem. I needed support, not my poetry. I confused the two.” Some will find these personal reflections the very reason they buy the book; others will find them irritating digressions, but one knows when reading this book that one is in the presence of a real person who has written with her whole self. A writer could do worse.

I know at least two of our members are both visual artists and writers. In recent years, Goldberg has written two books that include reproductions of her

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SBW Anthology Is Released

by Meredy Amyx

First-off-the press copies of SBW's first book of collected works began landing in Bay Area writers' homes on February 17th, culminating an effort that began more than a year ago with SBW president Dave LaRoche's proposal to the Board. *Who Are Our Friends? and Other Works by South Bay Writers* is a 160-page compilation of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and memoir by members of South Bay Writers. The club is the publisher.

Following the Board's approval of his proposal in February of 2008, Dave appointed a team consisting of Dick Amyx, project lead; Meredy Amyx, editor-in-chief; and Ro Davis, production assistant. The team set its own process and schedule, with Dick overseeing plan and budget, handling all arrangements with the printer, and reporting on status monthly to the Board.

Thirty-five SBW members saw their work selected from a large field of potential contributions that included 429 items in three and a half years' worth of *WritersTalks* and 40 direct submissions. An editorial team of nine volunteers handled the challenge of selection by an iterative process that spanned two months in the second half of 2008, resulting in a list of 54 finalists. Contributors were kept informed of status by extensive correspondence and were all asked to submit back-of-the-book biographical statements to complement their entries.

Over another two months, a team of four editors edited and polished the chosen pieces, working directly with the authors through as many rounds as were needed. The selections were then compiled and handed over to Ro for formatting into press-ready pages according to an agreed-upon design. That was the work of a month. Finally, seven editors tackled the indispensable task of thoroughly proofreading the page proofs, and Ro incorporated all corrections, changes, tweaks, and fine-tunings into finished PDFs ready to send to the printer.

Meanwhile, Damon Amyx, a one-time student of typography and graphic design and amateur photographer, took time away from his law studies to create the cover design and supply the photograph.



Editorial lead Meredy Amyx proudly displays a hot-off-the-press copy of SBW's anthology, *Who Are Our Friends? and Other Works by South Bay Writers*.

It is worth special mention that at every single stage of this lengthy process, every volunteer met every deadline on time, enabling us to hold to our committed date of February release. The book was handed off to the printer in January, right on schedule.

Contributors and advance orderers received the first printed copies directly from the printer. Future orders will be fulfilled from the bulk inventory. Copies will be available for purchase (by cash or check only) at SBW monthly meetings, and they can be ordered online with a credit card through PayPal at the club's website.

At the March monthly meeting, contributors will be recognized, and members will be encouraged to have keepsake copies signed by their fellow SBW authors. Proceeds from the sale of copies benefit South Bay Writers.

SBW Anthology Team

Richard Amyx, Project Lead

Meredy Amyx, Editor

Rosanne Davis, Production

Editorial Panel: David Breithaupt, Lisa Eckstein, Andrea Galvacs, Suzette Gamero, Kathryn Madison, Phyllis Mattson, Susan Paluzzi, Juliana Richmond

Content Authors

Meredy Amyx

Betty Auchard

Sara Aurich

Cathy J. Bauer

David Breithaupt

William Brisko

Richard A. Burns

Pat Bustamante

Hi-Dong Chai

Anne Darling

Carolyn Donnell

Robert A. Garfinkle

Jack Hasling

Forrest "Woody" Horn

John Howsden

Marjorie Johnson

Dave LaRoche

Swann Li

Karen Oliver Llewellyn

Kathryn Madison

Darwin Mathison

Edie Matthews

Jamie Miller

Susan Mueller

Jacqueline Mutz

Luanne F. Oleas

Toni Pacini

Suzu Paluzzi

Donna Poppenhagen

Beth Proudfoot

F. Srmek Schorow

Helen Vanderberg

Jeannine Vegh

Stephen C. Wetlesen

Vicki Wynne

WANTED

Contributing Editor for

WRITERSTALK

Lend your journalistic hand to the creation and production of *WritersTalk*.

As a contributing editor, you'll have the opportunity to write articles on topics of interest to you, report on activities within the writing community, take on occasional writing assignments, proofread or edit copy, hone your writing skills, AND enjoy a monthly powwow with the *WritersTalk* staff. If you're interested, drop a note to Dick Amyx at newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Blogging Network

by Bill Belew

My son is an artist type. He paints and plays the piano and, for what it's worth (despite my being his dad and being expected to say as much), he's really good at both. He does framing to help pay his rent. But he really just wants to paint and play the piano. He thinks that if he just paints and plays well, all will be right with the world. I encourage him to pursue his dreams *and* to get out once in a while to make friends, leaning heavily at times on the get out more often part.

Just this past month, he finally listened to his old man and got out a bit. He wandered in to a café that allows artists to put up their work. There was a piano in the corner so he sat down to play it. Before long, the owner came over to talk with him. Then a woman from across the street wandered in, "Is that Bach I hear?"

The woman invited him to follow her to the old folks' home she came from to play for them. He went. Another woman at the home asked, "Can you play for us at our church?" The church called. He went. Now he will play for the church regularly and be paid for it. The owner of the café asked, "Can you come here and play more regularly? Will you put up your paintings, too?"

I tell that story because I am of the firm opinion it does no good to be good at what you do if nobody knows you are doing it—including writing, and in my case, blogging.

It's all about networking. Not only does the writer/blogger need to sit and type, he needs to get up and out, at least virtually, to build a network. Don't get me wrong. If the content is lousy, it still won't get read, or at least not widely. But even if the content is good, it can still go by unnoticed. However, if the content is good and you have a good network, chances of being read are much better.

Bloggers have options. A blogger can



Bill Belew
Contributing Editor

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Betty's Words Danced for Sanger

by Toni Pacini

Tuesday February 10, 2009 we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Sanger Open-Mic Group.

When I moved to Sanger from Sunnyvale almost two years ago I felt so disconnected. As a fairly new member of the South Bay Writers Group and having recently attended my first East of Eden conference, I had just begun to feel a part of the writers' world. I especially enjoyed the numerous open mic groups in and around Sunnyvale. Prior to moving south, I wrongly assumed that since Sanger is close to Fresno, there would be a chapter of the California Writers Club nearby. Not only is there no chapter in Fresno but without roomy coffee shops in Sanger to beg space from, I was hard pressed even to start an open mic group. Fortunately the head librarian at the Sanger Library saw the value of an open mic.

The night of our first group meeting in February 2008, my hope was to meet a few like-minded creative people to share with, but what I have received is so much more. We are still a small group. We average ten to twenty people a meeting, but the content, laughter, passion, and tales of local history fill the Sanger Library conference room, and as we leave one another after each group, we take those things with us into our community, our lives, and our town.

As we approached our one-year anniversary I started to think about our future. I believe we can grow our group large enough to form a chapter of the CWC here in Sanger. I emailed Betty Auchard. Betty is an author I respect, a woman I admire, and a fellow member of the SBW. I told her about our group and my vision for our future. I asked if she would consider coming to Sanger for our anniversary meeting to help motivate folks to join our open mic. We have no dues or fees, so all we could offer Betty was a room in my home, a full stomach, gas money, and our sincere gratitude. She agreed, and we were so stoked. We managed to enlist cosponsorship from the Sanger Library and the Sanger Eagles Ladies Auxiliary, and the ladies of the auxiliary allowed us to have our event in the Eagles Hall.

The event was an inspiring success. Approximately seventy-five people attended. We socialized over wine and cheese, cake and coffee, then Betty wowed us. I have been wowed before by the raw energy of this amazing woman, but Betty took Sanger by the heart and didn't let go. We had trouble getting people out of the hall over an hour after the event so the generous



Betty boffo in Sanger: Diane Pickering, Madam President of the Sanger Eagles Ladies Auxiliary (holding a copy of Betty's book, *Dancing in My Nightgown*); Betty Auchard; Toni Pacini; Lupita (Lou) Padilla; Madlyn Esquer, Chairman of the Sanger Tree & Landscape Commission Photo: Toni Pacini

ladies who sponsored the night could go home. I have no doubt that Betty's visit will increase our member numbers, and I believe we will soon have the membership necessary to start a chapter of the CWC.

Writers must be dreamers. I dream of the day my manuscript hits the shelf at Borders, I dream of the day I am asked to sign my book by an aspiring author, as I did with Betty and others. I dream of being a part of forming a chapter of the greatest writers' club in the world, and with the help of people like Betty Auchard, I know my dreams will come true.

I will always remember the night Betty's words danced for Sanger.

We thank you, Betty. wt

APRIL IS POETRY MONTH

Help celebrate by sending a poem to *WritersTalk*.

Writers' Gigs: Making Money or Spending Money

by Lita A. Kurth

I admit I have a bias. It galls me when innocent beginning writers pay good money for information they could get for free and in more detail elsewhere.

This month I venture once again into the sector of for-profit writer websites, where we find FundsforWriters.com, a site I like better than WritingforDollars! (the exclamation point is theirs), but much less than NewPages.com, which has a focus similar to that of the non-profit Poets and Writers organization. (Incidentally, a number of sites include the words "Funds for Writers" in their titles; I refer here to the one associated with the name C.Hope Clark.)

The for-profit sites remind me of how AOL used to be. Yes, they provide information, but they shield you from knowledge they haven't preselected, pushing you toward those organizations with whom they have a financial relationship. Similarly, C. Hope Clark lists a number of resources for writers, and darned if fifty percent of them aren't published by *Writers Digest*, the for-profit giant (which is not to say it's worthless, only that it's a tiny sliver of the writing world and in, my experience, the quality varies).

Looking over the FundsforWriters.com site, we find a number of ways C. Hope Clark can definitely benefit from you and some ways you might possibly benefit from her. You can be a FundsforWriters affiliate partner, for example, and earn a commission by selling C. Hope Clark's e-books on your own website (one hand washes the other!). You can also purchase a \$100/hour telephone consultation with her or pay \$50/week to get a daily email. Oh, if only I had one hundred extra dollars. How I'd love to send two different emails, pretending to be two different writers, and see if I get similar cut-and-paste email advice. But perhaps I am jaundiced, biased, and wrong. In fact, I know I'm jaundiced. What turns my face yellow when I read some of these sites is their wide-eyed "Gee whiz, you mean I could help writers and make money at the same time?" attitude.

Now let's turn to something a lot more

uplifting, the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. What's exciting about this membership organization is that they are international, with chapters as far flung as South Africa and the Philippines, and as nearby as San Francisco. Even without being a member, you can find extremely useful and detailed information from their websites. For example, on the website of the San Francisco chapter, scbwisf.org, I discovered that their upcoming sold-out conference in Asilomar will feature Emma D. Dryden, who is vice president and publisher of both Atheneum Books for Young Readers and Margaret K. McElderry Books (those are autonomous imprints of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, a respected publisher). In addition, Kaylan Adair, an associate editor at Candlewick Press, another major publisher of children's books, will be there. The conference blurb even goes so far as to give details on what kind of work she likes to see and not to see!

Among authors speaking at the Asilomar conference is Jacqueline Woodson, who has published more than a dozen children's and young adult books. Her website jacquelinewoodson.com is a delight to read. Two other keynote speakers are Betsy and Ted Lewin, who separately and together have written and illustrated such books as *Elephant Quest* and *Gorilla Walk*. Jacqueline Woodson's website does not have an easily found PayPal button. Must be an oversight.

A few Google searches on any of these speakers is a mini-education in children's book publishing of the 24-carat kind. But there's more! I learned from reading *The Acorn*, a regional newsletter for a chapter of The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (available free online), that each year some 900 people gather at the Los Angeles annual conference of the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Reading further, to see where *their* members published work, one could well find a place for one's own work. You can read the Fall 2008 issue at scbwnorthca.org (click the

South Bay Writers Matthews-Baldwin Service Award

by Carolyn Donnell

South Bay Writers established the annual Matthews-Baldwin Award for Service in August 2007 when the CWC central board changed its schedule for the Jack London awards to every other year. The award was named to honor the dedication to the club of two long-standing members: Edie Matthews and Bill Baldwin. Every year the South Bay Writers board selects a branch member who has provided substantial service to the club, either for a special event or a "personal dedication of time and energy over a duration." The award acknowledges the club's appreciation of the outstanding service of a member and hopefully encourages more volunteers in the future.

In February of 2008 the first award—an inscribed desk set—went to Cathy Bauer for her dedication and work. This year the award goes to *WritersTalk* editor Dick Amyx, who, in Dave's words "with his team, puts out our newsletter every month and runs the Challenge."



Congratulations to Dick for all his hard work. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Acorn Newsletter Fall 2008 link). If New York is your preferred venue, there's an annual conference there too, and many, many regional and international ones.

So compare for yourselves, dear writers, and may your boat of writing glide safely past the pirate seas and on to discover new worlds. WT

Year of the Ox

by Valerie Whong

Happy New Year Gung Hay Fat Choy

Lunar New Year, the Year of the Ox, began on Monday, January 26, 2009. The omnipotent ox—routing last year's rat—will assume lunar supremacy, dominate the heavens, and direct man's fate until February 13, 2010.



Valerie Whong

Those born in 1901, 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, and 2009 are talented, strong-willed introverts. They are even-tempered, home-oriented, and in need of a stable environment at work and at home. Intense, their strong positive regard for home and family can be mistaken for possessiveness. They are friendly, peaceable and accommodating, and despite their quiet nature, they do like to entertain, have parties, and get involved in social activities.

Conservative and cautious, they like stability, so they frown upon moving from one location to another. They take particular pride in beautifying their home with equal attention to comfort and pride. Not particularly status-conscious, they can be eloquent when so inclined. These attributes, combined with the gift of inspiring confidence, make them natural leaders.

The collective noun for genus bovines—cow, steer, ox, bison, etc.—is pronounced *ngow* in Cantonese and *nieu* in Mandarin. The *ngow* is the second in the 12 animal sequence. The Chinese identify these years in accordance with a complicated system of chronology dating back to 2637 B.C.

According to legend, the ox once resided in heaven as a star deity. Disturbed by man's pitiable struggle against starvation, the great Buddha dispatched the ox to tell his subjects that if they worked unstintingly, they would receive sustenance every third day.

However, the ox became confused and informed them that their diligence

would be rewarded with three meals a day. The almighty, in exasperation, stripped the ox of his divinity and sent him back to earth to help man produce the necessary food. Thus the ox, once found only in heaven, became earth-bound.

The advent of the Chinese Lunar New Year will have its biggest impact on Chinese all over the world because this is by far their most important holiday. It's like all the birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter celebrations rolled into one. During the first two weeks the Chinese spare no expense on food such as chicken, duck, meat, fruit and vegetables, and drink for their families.

Three days preceding the appointed date, new clothes are bought for everyone in their household, houses are cleaned, and debts are paid because everyone wants to start off with a clean slate. This holiday was celebrated for a full month in the past but today celebrations last about two weeks, and some Asian businesses close for three days.

On New Year's Eve the family gathers together for a large feast consisting of fish (*yu*) because it has the same sound as the word for abundance and implies that the family will not want in the coming year. Extremely important at this particular time is family unity and abundance for all.

On the first day of the New Year, everyone dresses up. Relatives and friends bring food gifts—food is inextricably tied to the concept of prosperity—signifying that there will always be plenty to consume in the coming year.

Red money envelopes (*lai see*) are given to younger children and unmarried people by older folks. Many visit the Buddhist temple in order to bring good luck to their families. Firecrackers and incense are burned to chase away evil spirits. To encourage good luck, red banners are hung on front doors.

In major large cities crowds will gather to see the parade that offers the traditional and colorful dragon dance. But what is Chinatown without eating delicious traditional dishes prepared for just this occasion, bringing to life the old Chinese proverb that during the first part of this celebration, no one goes hungry? Meals are prepared in ad-

vance because cooking on that special day is taboo.

The most popular New Year's dish is *jai*, or monk's food. This dish originated with the vegetarian Buddhist monks and is still being served today. Monks went begging door-to-door and were given meager portions of vegetables. From this, the Chinese, being inventive cooks, came up with the delicious meatless *jai* dish.

Ingredients of *jai* are a play on Chinese words, especially those symbolizing good luck. *Fat choy* (hair-like seaweed) is wealth; *fun see* (cellophane noodles) and *chin ngee* (fungus) are longevity; *foo jook* (dried bean curd sheets) means blessing every household; *bak ko* (ginkgo nut) means 100 grandchildren. *Ho see* (dried oysters) means good tidings and successful business, *gum choy* (dried flower) means gold and good luck, and *hua sing* (peanut) means deceased ancestors.

Candied preserved fruits and vegetables together with melon seeds are symbolic of Chinese New Year and signify something—melon seeds mean many children, and the long vines of squash and melon mean a long line of descendants; lotus seeds mean production of sons; carrots, tangerines, and kumquats are also prized because, being round and golden, they signify prosperity—*kum* or *gum* in Chinese means "gold," thus golden wealth. Coconuts are hopes for a strong relationship between father and son.

While many will enjoy special foods, events and festivities, it is no secret that the Chinese are superstitious, especially about New Year's Day. Knives and scissors are put away so that no one can cut the continuity of luck for the year to come. Loans are not negotiated that day for fear that they might be loaning money for the rest of the year.

Brooms are stored away and should also be avoided as they sweep away good luck.

The outgoing year represented the beginning of a new era or, in Chinese terminology, "the opening of the sky." The bovine eminence is associated with "the settling of earth."

In 2009, we will face trials and tribulations and the Ox year will be a good

Expansion

by Pat Bustamante

Last night I visited Titan. No “orange smog” was present, but a huge expanse of sky was dominated by that glowing whitegold balloon, planet Saturn.

Titan’s hills and mountains are quite earthlike. It takes some getting used to that the ever-present huge “moon” bulges so close: Titan is really the moon and Saturn its planet, but on Titan the roles appear reversed.

Our (Earth’s) reporting satellite “Cassini” tells us only part of Titan’s story. Titan is half the size of Earth, so while twirling just as Earth does, a cycle goes by quickly. It’s also easier to get around. There is no major difference between night and day. The actual sun-star shines smaller than our moon though still not safe to stare at. Saturn’s gases radiate more light and warmth than the faraway sun does. It is always “late afternoon in winter,” even when the crescent alone of gigantic Saturn hovers across the horizon of the dark side.

Of all our solar system, Titan is closest to what we experience here on Earth. That is why “the spirits” choose it. There are familiar (but “spirit”) roads and homes—similar to a large retirement/resort community. When one’s energy ceases to be tethered to a living body, that energy seeks to recreate one’s prior existence. That is what I was told on Titan.

For obvious reasons a spirit hanging on to Earth can become very frustrated. So far Titan has no interfering living people and is not overcrowded or spoiled or anything less than a paradise. It’s what people on Earth who go camping search for: beauty and relaxation with little effort.

I met up with my parents—so glad to see them! They had recognized my “energy signature” and immediately asked me to stop trying to solve my “Earth (living) problems” and to come tour their lovely new home (I was so obviously wrapped up in meaningless occupations). I’m used to automobiles, so my father provided one and drove us, assuring me there would be no problem getting back. I could return to Earth before morning.

How I wish I could recall each precious word of that conversation! I met many spirits who were having discussions, gatherings (similar to festivals: if you wanted the satisfaction of food or drink you had that, without the necessity of eating or drinking). One created one’s own reality on Titan. I heard many languages, and there is a gamut of emotions available, yet with an overriding pattern of harmony.

My father explained that everyone was regretting, but resigned to, the coming invasion of “living” Earthlings which would inevitably occur: if not this century then next. Mars is a far less beautiful place but does have some earthlike qualities. A few spirits go there.

Other spirits will have to migrate, inconveniently, outside the solar system (without bodies you can go anywhere) when life expands.

But . . . that’s death. WT



Ox, continued from page 8

time to settle domestic and world affairs and put our own house in order. There will be many things needing our attention and the list of what needs to be done will seem endless, but we will prevail as the Year of the Ox favors discipline.

There will be more conflicts this year due to a lack of communication and refusal to give in; however, everything will be sorted out, but we need to hang on and be patient.

This is the Ox year so it may be worthwhile to point out that even though the stoical Ox is soft-spoken, this year will no doubt bear fruit because the motto is “no work, no pay!” Time waits for no one: if we are too lazy to sow, we can blame no one but ourselves if we have nothing to reap.

Chinese oracles evaluate the Year of the Ox as a period of productivity, a time to cultivate practical pursuits and carry past projects to fruition. WT

Journey, continued from page 4

paintings, *Living Color* and *Top of My Lungs*. She has also published memoirs (*Long Quiet Highway* and *The Great Failure*) and a book on how to write memoirs, *Old Friend from Far Away*.

Let me leave you with a nugget that may be useful for your own writing career. Goldberg, a meditator, started out publishing through Shambhala Press, which focuses on Zen spirituality in its many aspects. If meditation hadn’t already been her avocation, she might never have thought of approaching that publisher and might not have been appealing to them. (Now that’s she’s bigtime, she’s with Bantam, but I think she still publishes one or two works through Shambhala.) It might be worth considering which specialty presses focus on what you love to do besides writing. You might have more success beginning with them than by flinging your manuscript into the twenty-foot-deep slush pile of a major publisher. WT

Call for Submissions

Fogged Clarity aims to transcend the conventions of the typical literary review by incorporating music, the visual arts, interviews, and political exposition. Our ambition is to form a community of artists whose interaction is not constrained by medium, but broadened by a collective love of expression. Our network is extensive, and our passion for ventilation intense.

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MARvelous

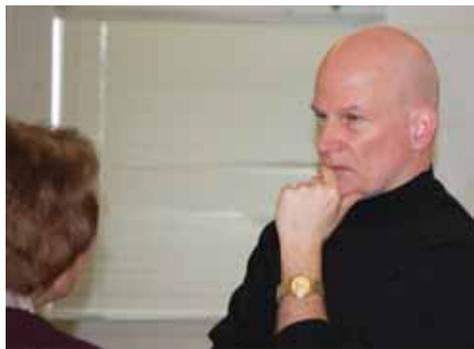
March madness incites writers
And their hares—
Our rabbits and our Ms.'s are breeding.
Gone are winter carefulness and cares:
More hours in a day to write we're
needing!

—Pat Bustamante

Corbett Character Workshop

by Carolyn Donnell

Sunday, January 25, 2009, found 58 writers gathered at the Lookout Inn in Sunnyvale for David Corbett's workshop on creating characters effectively. The top handout on the table began "I eat in pink restaurants, which are better for the skin. Yellow ones turn you yellow. I actually spend time thinking about this. Vanity is becoming a nuisance, I can see why women give it up eventually. But I am not ready for that yet." (Margaret Atwood, in *Cat's Eye*.)



David Corbett pays close attention to a question from one of the attendees at his character creation workshop. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

This was the first thumbnail on David Corbett's three-and-one-half-page list of illustrations of how to describe a character in a few words. David, complete with all black outfit and shiny shaved head, took the podium and opened the workshop "Developing Vivid Characters." He began with his Key Guiding Principles.

Principle number one: Do Not Judge Your Characters. In fact, you must love them—even the villains—especially the villains. The antagonist must have some characteristic that allows the reader to emphasize with him. Likewise the protagonist needs a weakness or a self-defeating defense.

David continued with the second principle: Resist the Obvious. Give the readers what they want, but not in the way they expect it. Make strong, specific choices, but always connect with simple, honest truths. In other words, David recommends a KISS approach.

Another critical principle is to generate text. In agreement here with a bit of

NaNoWriMo advice, David points out that you can't revise what you haven't written. Turn off that internal editor and write the story.

David continued to instruct us in how to build a character—what does your character look like, what is her psychological state (love, hate, fear, etc.), what is her social standing and does she have any contradictions?

Participants asked David where he finds characters. One way, he said, is to choose from one's own life—describe real people and draw on "emotionally charged events." Inspiration could also be derived from music, paintings and nature.

The afternoon session focused on dialogue and scene. What is dialogue? It is action, a contest of wills between characters. Dialogue can show the "physical, psychological and sociological roots of the character" and differentiate characters through their speech patterns and behavior.

Scene structure layout includes the objective of the scene, the obstacle, and the action. Determine who wins the scene. Start the scene as late as you can and exit as close to the crest as possible. This is the crucial point and the setup for the next scene.

Comments from attendees showed their feeling about the value of Corbett's insight into characters.

- Jerry Mulenburg—I love it. When I read, the most important thing I find, besides the story, is the characters and how they are developed.
- Molly Westmoreland—I'm finding it very stimulating I'm taking a lot of notes . . . new insights to improve my characters.
- Jackie Mutz—I find it incredibly insightful because he is focusing on how characters feel as opposed to the story line.
- Marilyn Priel—Fantastic! Far better than I imagined it would be. I think that he has gone over so many things so well and given us so much insight into character development. . . .
- Judy Wirzberger—This is great. I am so glad you got him because he was able to put things into a different context . . . With this, when you transfer your character into your

book, your character is true.

David brings a number of years of writing experience in everything from stand-up comedy to private investigation. Novels include *The Devil's Redhead*, nominated for both the Anthony and Barry Awards for Best First Novel of 2002, and *Done for a Dime*, acclaimed "best in contemporary crime fiction." He has since gone on to write one more and is currently working on his fourth, with a fifth already in the planning stages. With many awards to his credit and reviewer descriptions like "Human characters and tragic consequences," "Poetic, romantic, hard-eyed and brutal . . ." "Brutal and heartrending, eloquent . . ." and "Gripping, powerful, and beautifully written" one can agree with the attendees. See David's website at davidcorbett.com. WT

Dream Embers

Lost in dark shadow
Evanescent memory
Past dream embers glow.

—Sally A. Milnor

Accolades, continued from page 4

her book *The Jade Rubies*, to *Writer's Digest* International Self-Published book awards last year. She didn't win, but the judge sent an encouraging comment about the book saying that it was a remarkable tale that will keep the reader on an emotionally charged journey from the first page to the very last. Congrats, Valerie!

- **Gisela Zebroski**, author of the novel *The Baroness*, is giving a presentation March 25, 2009 at the Foothill College Authors series, held on Wednesdays at 12 noon in the Student Lounge/Campus Center.

In writing this column, sometimes the information is "lost in translation," especially if I do not make an SBW meeting. If ever the information about your writing success is not correct, please email me at accolades@southbaywriters.com so that we can run it in the next *WT*. May the rain be your inspiration for all things writing—and don't forget to share your writing success stories. Remember, when you succeed, we do too. WT

Writer Well-Being: A New Month, a New Beginning

by Rita St. Claire

It's March already, and by now I'd intended to get so many things done. Have I? Hah!

More often than not, things don't go as intended. Life is like that.

In January, we feel like we have a clean slate. Possibility sparkles before us. Fresh from celebrating year-end holidays, we start on a high, formulating goals for the year. With at least a modicum of confidence, we begin to take steps to achieve.

Then reality taps us on the shoulder. We get a cold or flu. Our kids get sick. Our spouse works late, has stress on the job, or is looking for a job. Or *we're* the ones working, stressing, or looking. We



Rita St. Claire

can't seem to find time to finish the book, *and* to exercise, *and* to buy, prepare, and cook food for healthful meals. McDonald's drive-thru, anyone? Or is your style pizza delivered to the door?

We each have our story of life in this Valley, so often one of overabundance—of deadlines and pressure, of too many choices, of too much to do. No wonder we skip the exercise. No wonder we grab that candy bar or cookie bag or ice cream tub. One action leads to another, and they feed on each other. Soon we're on a downward spiral.

But hang in there! Solution lies partly in attitude. Let us realize that every month, every week, every day can be a mini New Year. Every day is a day we begin again.

We now may be in the year's third month, but I'm redefining its meaning—today is merely January 1st + *n* days, and the perfect day to recommit to goals! No focusing on what wasn't accomplished in the past two months. *Remember what we've done right, instead.*

I'm going to look at my goals again, my goals for writing, exercise, and nutrition. My goals for my wellbeing as a writer. Would it help you to do this, too?

In closing, to help inspire nutritional well-being, here's a poem by a South Bay Writers colleague. It's catchy, so keep it next to your computer.

March Mart-Smart

Shop for healthy but tasty snacks
To fend off those junk-food-ACK!
attacks.

If you crouch by a keyboard and face
deadline fears:

Have handy nutritious nibbles, my
dears!"

—Pat Bustamante

View from the Board

by Dave LaRoche

While the South Bay Writers Board did not actually meet in February due to various schedule conflicts and illness, reports were submitted—our usual practice. The following is a synopsis of those reports.

President Dave LaRoche: Will head up a bylaws review committee and anyone interested in participating should contact him.

VP and Programs Director Bill Baldwin: Speakers for upcoming meetings will be March, Ellen Sussman (*Dirty Words, A Literary Encyclopedia of Sex*, nonfiction); April, Frances Dinkelspiel (*Towers of Gold*, nonfiction); April, unscheduled; and May, Michelle Richmond (*The Year of Fog*, fiction)

Secretary Rita Horiguchi St. Clair: Theme poems dealing with her "writers-well-being" project will be written each month by Pat Bustamante and presented at meetings.

Treasurer Richard Burns: The Corbett workshop netted SBW \$815; the Jan meeting, including raffle, netted \$26; our asset balance remains about the

same and sufficient. (Those needing numbers beyond this may contact him.)

Marilyn Fahey: Attended the first quarter Central Board meeting, reported the following:

- High Desert Branch is now fully reinstated from membership probation with 11 new members.
- SFV Branch is officially suspended (selected association with the CWC denied). The SFV officers have resigned their branch's affiliation with CWC, presenting their declaration at the meeting.
- SBW member Jerry Mulenburg has forwarded a proposal to Casey Wilson, CB President, to honor selected California writers with a proclamation from the governor, said event to occur at the two principal writers conferences in alternate years.
- The state anthology is due out in October.
- An overhaul of the state website is in the offing.
- Next meeting will be held in Oakland, in April (these meetings cost the state treasury about \$15K

annually, roughly one-half of its revenue).

Membership Chair Marjorie Johnson: Membership has now reached 201.

PR Chair Edie Matthews: Meeting press announcements went out to thirty media outlets.

Open Mic Chair Bill Baldwin: January open mics were attended as follows:

- Jan. 9 (Santana Row)—5
- Jan 16 (Pruneyard)—11
- Jan 23 (Sunnyvale)—7

Newsletter Chair Dick Amyx: The February issue of *WritersTalk* was 16 pages, printed and mailed on January 28. The press run was 202 dues-paid members, 24 comps, and 15 extras for a total of 241. Total cost for the issue \$249.71.

Webmaster Ro Davis: Renewed two of EoE domain names at a cost of \$20 to prevent them from being hijacked.

Hospitality and Networking Chair Cathy Bauer: A "Let's Make a Deal" like game will replace the raffle in February to add some variety; the Carrows' critique-group exploration

Continued on page 14

Erman-Miller, Continued from page 1

Janet Miller started writing nine years ago. After she wrote a couple of books, she sold to a small press. She got her first royalty check and thought that was nice. Then a friend showed Miller her royalty check from Ellora's Cave and it was pretty good. So Miller decided to try them. "But I had a problem. My sex scenes sucked," Miller said. "Mine didn't," Erman chimed in. "My husband said the problem was I was too repressed," Miller continued. "So I wrote an over-the-top sex scene to get past my repression problem. I figured I wouldn't have to show it to anybody. I could just break through the ice." She did and thought it was a good enough job so she put it in a book about a statue coming to life. The editor at Ellora's Cave said she really liked it but the book still needed more sex. Miller thought it was as out there as she could make it and was surprised it needed more sex but she edited it, taking some tips from her editor, and the book was published as *Violet Among the Roses* by Cricket Starr. Miller took a pseudonym for "plausible deniability" because of her day job in a large software company. Cricket was the name of a guinea pig she had as a child. Stardust didn't look right so she changed it to Starr. Little do her colleagues know that her alter ego writes hot, sexy books. She also writes other romances under her name Janet Miller.

Erman says she's a Scorpio and has never been asked to have more sex in her books. "It's usually punctuation or something like that." Actually Erman teaches English, but her editor asked her to write a sexy blurb for her novella cover. "That's not easy, she says." Miller adds, "Sometimes our publisher uses bad puns, like *Legendary Tails*, and they were going to put the rear ends of the men on the front cover. But the bookstores said no." Erman concurs, "Some covers of e-books are changed for the print book." More recently the publishers started using a calm cover to allay the bookstores' concerns.

Erman explained some of the advantages of e-publishing. "Print royalties are often about 8% of the cover price whereas e-book royalties are 35%-40% and e-publishers pay royalties

monthly." It used to be that an e-book appeared a few months after it sold but that's gone by the wayside as more people have gotten into it. The current typical purchase prices of romance e-books are short stories, \$2.99; novellas, \$3.50; novels, \$5.99; and anthologies, \$7.99 to \$10.99. "The shelf life of a series romance novel in a bookstore is one month. E-books are available until the contract expires or the e-publisher folds." Miller's contract includes the phrase that the book will be "in print" for 70 years past the life of the author. She laughed that her great grandchild



Esther Erman and Janet Miller inform and entertain Silicon Valley Writers with inside information about romance writing.

dren will get royalties from "grandma's dirty books." Erman says her stories will outlast cockroaches. "I recently read a Harlequin author I really liked and it's almost impossible to get her backlist." That doesn't happen with e-books. There are also no print runs on e-books and no shipping costs. However, Erman adds, "It is a volatile market and e-pubs do go out of business."

"Hot sexy books have been around a long time," Miller says. Initially they were all print books like *Black Lace* and *Red Sage* until the year 2000 with Ellora's Cave. The owner of Ellora's Cave, Tina Engler, a single mom on welfare, started writing romance stories with very explicit love scenes and tried to get them published. She received rejection letters saying, "We don't think this is the sort of thing that will sell." Engler knew she liked to read this type of story so she launched a web site and started the business with her own self-published e-books under the pen name Jaid Black. In 2002 Ellora's Cave grew from e only to print books. In 2007,

with 400 authors, Ellora's Cave sales reached \$6.7 million. Larger publishing houses like Harlequin and Kensington took notice and have launched their own erotic romance electronic publishing line. Most of these are English speaking e-books with a fairly large market in England. "Anybody who reads English can download from anywhere in the world an Ellora's Cave story from the Internet," Miller says.

Responding to questions about their editorial processes, Miller says she just sold to a new publisher who loved her story but had several "suggestions" for changes. Erman believes editors are underpaid, overworked people. "Everybody needs an editor. There's always a character who changed eye color and the book is not a paranormal." Erman has a Ph.D. in language education and had an editor take her final edited manuscript and run it through Microsoft grammar check and changed it. "It got really ugly," Erman said. Miller confesses she's an engineer so she'll make any grammar changes that are requested.

Erman and Miller explained that paranormal romances are things that go bump in the night; fantasy, futuristic, or mystical stories; or stories that include werewolves, vampires, or witches. Both make money in this subgenre. Miller just sold a futuristic romance with science-fiction overtones in which both the hero and heroine are synthetic people. Erman wrote a contemporary that takes place in Princeton that's almost a fantasy. She's also written a romance about vampires.

Miller says she loves Regency romances. These are books that take place during a 15 year period in England. It was a time of great change. Regencies are very much a comedy of manners, elegant language, and the people all taking part in a very strict society that has lots of rules. Of course, the people are breaking the rules because they're falling in love.

When asked if they ever write mainstream, nonromance books, Erman said that she's working on a mainstream novel with romantic elements. And there's her family story she mentioned earlier. Miller said, "If the mood struck me and I had an idea for a really great story, I would probably write it. Except

it would be really hard for me because I just love it when everything works out okay." Erman laughed, saying she tortures her characters a bit more. "I modeled some of them after my ex-husband."

The two offered advice for breaking into romance: enter RWA contests to get your work in front of an editor or agent and to get feedback on your writing. Go to RWA meetings and conferences. There is a lot of information out there. They mentioned an upcoming Silicon Valley Conference in May. Finally, read romances.

Yes, there are men romance writers. Some male writers pair with women writers. Some use initials or women's names. Are men's styles different? Some say so.

When asked about writing a juicy scene, the two elaborated. Sex scenes have to have a reason to be there. Every scene needs to have a reason for being there. You never want to have gratuitous sex in your book. Sex is part of the character arc. It's part of the developing story. Sex changes things for people, it changes the dynamic.

Who should writers read in the genre? "It's a matter of taste," says Erman. She also recommends a book *52 Invitations to Great Sex*, by Laura Corn. It's along the lines of raising your awareness about the feel of linens or clothes, the fragrance of something, and that all contributes. It's just really having a sensual experience. Ask yourself how would I write about that. It varies with individuals.

Erman commented that Stephanie Meyers has an incredible grasp of teenage girls and clueless parents and the bad boy boyfriend. Her books are sensual but not erotic. Miller is hopeful Meyers' readers will go to their books when they're older. Miller says it's something to make monsters into sympathetic people who find redemption through love.

Someone asked about writing body parts in love scenes. "It depends on the publisher and the house style," Erman says. Authors get a style sheet that says what the publisher will allow and what they won't allow. "Don't worry about it. If you're using the wrong word it won't be a deal breaker. That will be

edited out." Some publishers like strange euphemisms. "Scenes should be more emotional, not anatomical." Remember you're writing for a women's market.

The two agreed that short stories were a good way to start. Shorts, also known as quickies, can be anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 words, including three love scenes. To avoid a preachy ending, they recommend ending the story fast, right after the black moment and climax. Novellas are anywhere between 18,000 to 30,000 words. Check the word count with each publisher. Keep to the point and limit yourself to two to four characters. Limit the time scope to a few days. When in doubt, simplify. Write big, and then shorten.

If you're writing erotica, you need to leave room for sex. If it's another genre, leave room for those elements. The sex should be tightly integrated to the story. They need to be organic to developing the characters or the plot.

Miller read Aristotle's unities: unity of action = one plot, unity of place = one place, unity of time = restricted to the length of the story.

To build your plot around the love scene, use these love scenes:

Getting to know you
Getting to like you
Couldn't live without you
I'll always love you

Writing short is a way to get your name out, to see results, and to break in quickly. Erman stressed entering competitions with a short story to get the attention of agents and editors. More information at the Silicon Valley Romance Writers web site: SVRWA.com
WT

SCAM WARNING

Beware, O Ye POD and Self-Published Writers

by Marjorie Johnson

I almost fell victim to a scam.

My telephone rang at 7:30 a.m. on Friday. Eric from Book World was interested in my book, *Bird Watcher*, and his company wanted to promote it for me; Book World had marketed books on the Internet for five years. He asked me how many I had sold.

Of course, 300 isn't impressive, but I am not a salesman-type. He said he could promote the book to three million targeted persons and asked me who would read my book, genre, etc. Eventually, he said he would send publicity on my book to 200,000 email subscribers who had given permission to receive advertising, and that recipients would click on a link to buy my book on Amazon.com (*Bird Watcher* does appear there).

All this for \$300, but with his special first-time offer, \$259, and I could put it on my credit card.

My brain, fully awake by then, sounded alarm bells. I asked how I could read about Book World and said I had to do some research. The domain bookworld.com showed itself not to be a real website, and a whois search on bookworld.com quickly led to the conclusion that Book World would not be a good place with which to do business.

Eric called me back, as he said he would; he seemed amazed when I said, "No, thanks." WT

Silicon Valley Romance Writers of America presents its

All Writers All Weekend! Conference

May 1-3, 2009, Crowne Plaza San Jose/Silicon Valley, in Milpitas

\$100 for SVRWA chapter members; \$125 for nonmembers (Payable by check or PayPal), Registration Fee includes 3 meals on Saturday.

Keynote speakers, Agent appointments, Fun, Goodies, First-Line contest, Author Book signing open to the public on Saturday!

Friday Night Kick-off: cheese and fruit hors d'oeuvres, no-host bar.

Full details at svrwa.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, send a message to networking@southbaywriters.com or to the club post office box. We will add your listing to our directory of experts.

Asia, Japan, China, Russia

Bill Belew
belew@panasianbiz.com

Astrology, Singing

Sara Aurich
saraaurich@comcast.net

Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net

Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.
ArLyne@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

Counseling

Dr. Audry L. Lynch
GLYNCH7003@sbcglobal.net

Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg
geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net

Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber
marthaengber.com
marthaengber.blogspot.com

Hiking, Backpacking, Scuba, Bicycling, Classic Cars, Running

Rick Deutsch
MrHalfDome@gmail.com; 408-888-4752

Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold
maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net

Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/ Psychology

Dave Breithaupt
dldbmlb@comcast.net

Library Science

Molly Westmoreland
mulcarend@hotmail.com

Marketing and Management

Suzy Paluzzi, MBA
jomarch06@yahoo.com

Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson
Marjohnson89@earthlink.net

Philosophy, Religion, Evolution, Construction, Crafts, Norse

Darwin Mathison
darwinunioncity@aol.com
510-471-8944

Police Procedures

John Howsden
jwhowsden961@yahoo.com

Profile Writing

Susan Mueller
susan_mueller@yahoo.com

Real Estate, Horses, Remodeling, Southwest History

Reed Stevens
reedstevens@earthlink.net ; 408-374-1591

Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard
Btauchard@aol.com

Television Production

Woody Horn
408-266-7040

How to Make Your Pitch Workshop

The Central Coast Writers branch of CWC is offering "How to Make Your Pitch" for writers of screenplays and books. It will be held May 2, 2009, at the Sunset Cultural Center, Carmel-by-the-Sea. The workshop will be presented by Hollywood insiders Cari-Esta Albert and Monika Skerbelis.

Full details and a registration form are available at centralcoastwriters.org.

View, continued from page 11

was well attended and the ideas obtained will take "networking and critique" forward

Anthology lead Dick Amyx: The South Bay Writers anthology, "*Who Are Your Friends . . .*" is in press, with 200 printed so far. Advance sales are at 88 copies.

Marilyn Fahey and Jamie Miller, co-chairs of the Young Writers Workshop: West Valley Presbyterian has been secured as the venue for Saturday May 23; poetry will be included in the lineup.

The next meeting will be at Dave's on March 4th. WT

Blogging, continued from page 6

get his own domain, (I have billbelew.com), download WordPress and go at it. A blogger can go to blogger.com, create a blogspot blog and go at it. In either of those events, the blogger will eventually have to create his own network by visiting technorati.com to learn who else is writing about his topic or do a Google blogsearch to find the same. Then the blogger writes to those folk or links to them and ask them to link back, thus creating a network. The more links (the stronger the network), the more credibility a blogger has: findability by search engines = wider audience. It's not who you know, but who knows you.

A blogger has another option. He can join a network. There are a lot of them, some good, some bad. I own a network, cosmofair.com (it's good) and I belong to another, b5media.com (it's, well, um . . .). A blogger can find many options at blogcatalog.com. A ready list of paid options for bloggers can be found starting at problogger.net. There are applications to fill out and hoops to jump through. The general wisdom is that if the network is easy to join, it can't be worth that much.

A blogger with a network has a much better chance of being read. It's true in the real world, it's true online. Still, you have to have content worth reading. WT



Flash Prose Contest

Writer Advice is searching for flash fiction, memoir, and creative nonfiction that grabs, surprises, and mesmerizes readers in fewer than 750 words. If you have a story or memoir with a strong theme, sharp images, a solid structure, and an unexpected discovery, please submit it to the *Writer Advice* Flash Prose Contest.

Deadline: April 15, 2009. Full details at writeradvice.com.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	7
8	9	10 6p Monthly Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn, Sunnyvale Ellen Sussman	11	12	13 7:30p Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	14 10:30A Editors' Powwow
15 <i>WritersTalk</i> deadline	16	17	18	19 7p Open Mic Barnes & Noble 3900 Mowry, Fremont	20 7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 7:30p Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	28
29	30	31				
		Tuesday, Apr. 14 April Eberhardt				Future Flashes

Stay Informed!

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

www.southbaywriters.com

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

For Fremont Open Mic contact
Jeannine Vegh
ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net

or

Bob Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net

SBW Poets

The San Jose Poetry Center is turning its eyes toward SBW with an interest in showcasing our poets at its monthly readings. PCSJ's host and member of South Bay Writers Linda Lappin is making a personal request. Are you a poet? Would you like to read your work? If your answer is yes, contact Linda by email at captainlappin@netzero.net and have a look at PCSJ's website, www.pcsj.org

SBW Writers' Forum

Events
Conferences
Contests
Networking
Resources
SBW Author Events
and News at

southbaywriters.com

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

Poetry Center San Jose Readings

First Gallery downtown
Willow Glen Books

Cosponsored by the
Creative Writing Department at
San José State University

Free admission.

See www.pcsj.org for featured guests and details.



California Writers Club
South Bay Branch
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055
www.southbaywriters.com

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

Next Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, February 10, 6:00 p.m.

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

Ellen Sussman
author of

On a Night Like This,
Bad Girls: 26 Writers Misbehave,
and *Dirty Words: A Literary*
Encyclopedia of Sex

Anthology Released!

See story on page 5; copies for
sale at the March general meeting

