



WRITERSTALK

Volume 18
Number 4
April 2010

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

April Speaker

Jordan Rosenfeld: Say Yes to Opportunity!

by Bill Baldwin

Have you been wondering how to get yourself into print? Come hear how Jordan Rosenfeld did it!

Jordan will tell us about “My Wild and Woolly, Stumble and Bumble My Way to Success Story, or How Anyone Can Publish by Saying ‘Yes’ to Unlikely Opportunities.” She will describe the variety of odd and unexpected avenues she took that got her published, helped her network, and so on.

Jordan is a fiction writer, freelance journalist and editor; the author of *Make A Scene: Crafting a Powerful Story One Scene at a Time* and *Write Free! Attracting the Creative Life*, with Rebecca Lawton. She also edited *Zebulon Nights: An Anthology of LiveWire Readers*.

A contributing editor and columnist for *Writer's Digest* magazine, she has had her work appear in such diverse publications as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, and the *North Bay Bohemian*. Her book reviews are featured on *The California Report* on KQED radio (NPR).

For three years, Jordan hosted *Word by Word: Conversations with Writers* on KRCB radio (NPR), interviewing T.C. Boyle, Aimee Bender, Louise Erdrich, and other authors.

She holds an MFA in fiction and literature. Her essays and stories have appeared in the *Dickens Literary Journal*, *Night Train*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *The Summerset Review*, and other journals. Her fiction has been performed in *Page on Stage* in Santa Rosa.

She is currently knee-deep in the second draft of a novel titled *Little Alien*.

How can *you* achieve such success? Come hear Jordan at the dinner meeting on April 13 and ask! wt



Jordan Rosenfeld

March Recap

Nina Amir

by Lisa Eckstein

The March 9 meeting featured new SBW member Nina Amir, an accomplished nonfiction writer, editor, and speaker. In high school, Amir dreamed of being a novelist, but an inspirational journalism course set her on a different path.

After graduating from college with a degree in magazine journalism, she hoped to work at a glossy, high-profile magazine in New York City. “I discovered in order to get a job on a magazine like that, you had to start at the bottom of the ladder, but the bottom of the ladder was actually a receptionist.” Amir instead joined a regional magazine, where she could write and edit right away. She worked in several cities on various magazines and corporate newsletters. “I wrote about clinical lasers and about outpatient surgery, which goes to show that a good writer can write about anything. That’s my motto.”

Amir’s career as a book editor began when a friend asked if she could edit a book he’d written. “When I was in college, my magazine journalism professor told me that a book is just a series of articles strung together all on the same topic, so if you can write an article, you can write a book. I said, ‘Can I edit a book? Well, I can edit a magazine, so I can probably edit a book.’” That author recommended her work to a friend, and the second book Amir edited was published by Simon & Schuster. This gave her the credentials to establish herself as a book editor. Again remembering the advice of her professor, she also started writing

East of Eden is warming up: see pages 5, 6, and 7.

May is Memoir Month: submit a 600-word excerpt from your memoir by April 16.

Elections: it’s time for SBW elections. See page 7.

Poetry: April is National Poetry Month. Plenty of poetry throughout this issue.

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President's Prowling

by *Dave LaRoche*
President, South Bay Writers

A Dilemma Becomes an Opportunity

While we are sorely disappointed with the waning of hard cover and paperback, the hidden message is that readership is growing and with it the opportunities for writing. As even the big booksellers teeter and fall, e-publishing and e-distribution grow mightily and the demand for content along with them.



Technology offers new ways of doing, and just as we, when young adults and teens, danced to the tunes that our parents resisted, today's crop of visionary youth is following the same piper. And that presents a dilemma: do we adapt to the digital model or die with old methods?

Today's kids from 10 to 45 are fully engaged in the digital world, now mostly portable. They do their work and socializing; find entertainment and instruction; do research and find an awareness, all on digital devices. And yes, they read their stories on cell phones, Kindles, and iPads. But we elder writers, with arthritic creaking and anguishing moans, only sluggishly consider a response to their demands. E-books—e-gads and argh!

But look: write, upload, and sell. Wow! What a simple new paradigm. Forget the rejection of agents and publishing editors. Don't be concerned over distribution and fulfillment. Dismiss interviews, book signings, and those speaking engagements that rouse you at four in the morning to catch the next flight into Podunk, and fire your publicist. How refreshing the notion that writers may once again write. Slush pile, what's that?

Do you know that you can wrap your book in its own application at no cost to you, and sell it through the app store at a price that *you* specify and be returned 35% of the sales; and that "app wrapping" permits reading on any device from iPhone to desktop; and that, unlike a PDF, the text and graphics may be sized and formatted to fit any screen? And the kicker: the planet earth is your market.

That's only one process of many now available through e-publishing. There are also, for example, Mobibook, Kindle, Scribd, and your personal blog or that of another.

This universe of e-publishing and reading is exploding—every day a new form is advanced—and instead of the pittance we might get from trade publishers, we authors receive the larger slice of the pie. The dog has begun wagging the tail.

I used to wonder why writers hadn't organized like actors so that they might engage in the process of bargaining. Well, we are a scattered lot, I surmised, nose in our manuscripts, and generally eschew organization. But with the advent of e-publication, we *are* bargaining, if inadvertently. We have an alternate outlet—more

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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

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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

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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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Change of Address: Send changes of address to the Membership Chair at membership@southbaywriters.com

Subscriptions: Nonmember subscriptions are \$20/year; send a check payable to South Bay Writers Club to the Membership Chair.

Circulation: 200

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Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx
Editor

Rules is rules



A few days ago, SBW member (and Treasurer) Rich Burns sent me George Orwell's rules for writers, along with note that said, "Thought you'd be one who'd appreciate this. Succinct." And Rich was right: I am one who appreciates such reminders of some of the basic elements of good writing. The more I mused over Orwell's rules, the more I got a certain sense of déjà vu and at the same time gained appreciation not just for the succinctness of Orwell's expression but the clarity and precision of what he said.

No, I hadn't read Orwell's rules before, but at least one of them looked very familiar. Whereas Orwell said, "If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out," E. B. White, in *The Elements of Style*, said, "Omit needless words! Omit needless words! Omit needless words!" (My first thought there was that White won the succinctness award for that rule. My second thought was that he could have omitted six words.) Likewise, on the "For Writers" pages of his website barryeisler.com, Barry Eisler said, "Everything you write has to be in the service of the story. If it doesn't serve the story, cut it."

I suppose it could be a conspiracy of meanies who are trying to badger us into letting them have all the good words, but it's hard to argue with the success of those three writers—and if they practice what they preach, well . . . It's kind of like the old (Dutch, the way I heard it) saying that if three people tell you you're drunk, you'd better go home and lie down.

The Orwell rule that impressed me most for its clarity and precision is number 4: Never use the passive where you can use the active. We've all been cautioned just about to death about passive voice—but note that Orwell didn't say never use the passive. He said never use it if you can use active voice. I *do* think that our apparent hyperaversion to passive voice is the result of a conspiracy among ill-informed eighth-grade English teachers who bludgeoned a generation of students into wrong thinking. There's absolutely nothing wrong with passive voice, and its use is absolutely called for when it's the subject being acted upon. Consider this one example: "I was born." (Thank you, Meredy.) To make that active, you'd have to say "My mother bore me." That not only sounds a little pretentious but also rockets your style a century or two into the past.

(I also think it was that same conspiracy of eighth-grade English teachers, perhaps themselves having been beaten senseless by political correctness, who relentlessly insisted that we put ourselves second when speaking of two—you know, "Bobby and I thus and such" to such a degree that a generation of younger people have forgotten all about objects of prepositions and say things like "Marcia gave it to Bobby and I." But that's a rant for another time.)

Rules or no rules, we all do the best we can when we sit down at our keyboards. E.B. White also said, "English usage is sometimes more than mere taste, judgment and education—sometimes it's sheer luck, like getting across the street." WT

George Orwell's Rules for Writers

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

The eBook Bandwagon: Myths, Realities, and News

by Marjorie Johnson

On Saturday, March 13, Dave LaRoche and I attended a one-day workshop in San Rafael on independent publishing and book marketing given by BAIPA, Bay Area Independent Publishers Association.

Danny O. Snow, senior research fellow at The Society for New Communications Research (SNCR.org), spoke on ebooks, trends in publishing, and the future of books. He predicted the demise of Borders Books and discussed the competing formats of ebooks. While ebooks are growing and “tree-books” are declining, he doesn’t see electronic books making traditional books obsolete. In fact, scholarly studies suggest that there are inherent physical/cognitive differences between the way readers interact with paper and the way they interact with a computer screen and conclude that ebooks will be slow to supplant tree-books. He showed a page from a contract for authors with Amazon for ebooks on Kindle, a nightmare page in which the author gives up all rights to the book in perpetuity and throughout the universe (yes, when you are reincarnated on Mars in 3010, Amazon will still own your book and all the rights to it). He looks forward to Apple’s iPad (coming out on April 3) and predicts the development of a “smartibook” that will be complete with web browser, camera, ebook reader, and telephone. His talk is summarized on at UnlimitedPublishing.com/baipa

Scott James, columnist for *The New York Times*, gave advice from the front lines of the future of books. He discussed tablets, ebooks, Scribd, Kindle, and print on demand. He sees Apple’s iPad as the “game changer.”

David Mathison, the founder and CEO of Kenecta Corporation, who raised \$30 million in less than two years, discussed how to use social media like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to build your base, sell more books, and gain invitations to speak. He said to engage your fans in virally spreading

30 Ways to Celebrate Poetry Month

by Carolyn Donnell

Inaugurated by the Academy of American Poets in 1996, National Poetry Month is now held every April, and Poets.org has suggested thirty ways to celebrate the month, one per day. The list includes reading poems, reciting poems, promoting poetry in the community, learning about poetry, teaching poetry, and even drawing poetry.

The first activity, on April 1, is to read a book of poetry. April 2 is designated as “Memorize a Poem” day. The 3rd is a day to revisit a poem. Dust off an old volume and become reacquainted.

April 6—attend a poetry reading. Because the 6th is on a Tuesday this year, you can fulfill this goal literally by going to Poetry Center San Jose at Art Object Gallery in San Jose. Readings from featured poets begin at 7:30, followed by an open mic. See pcsj.org/calendar.html.

Doldrums

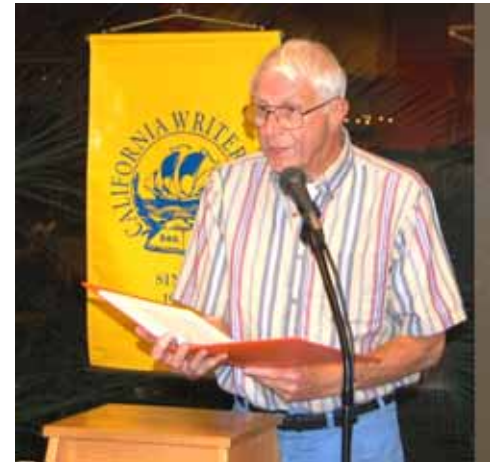
Meandering Maze,
Listless moments melt away—
Disappearing Days.

—Sally A. Milnor

your message. He sold 5,000 copies of his new book *Be the Media* in just eleven days via his website and blog, Twitter, and Facebook.

Lin Lacombe, whose book *A Semicolon is not a Surgical Procedure* was released to take advantage of National Punctuation Day (in September), spoke on marketing. She gave so much rapid-fire information that I couldn’t get it all down. She said to carry book and sales information with you *all the time*; she advocates a press kit containing a sell sheet, author photo and bio, Q and A, postcards, bookmarks, clips, a press release, and business cards. She also recommends author website and blog, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Her most valuable advice was that everyone judges a book by its cover. She recommends hiring a specialist for cover design and an editor for cover copy. She says to write your cover copy before you write your book. WT

Or you can juggle this activity to another day and attend one of South Bay Writers’ Friday night open mics instead. Read your own work or someone else’s poetry. (See the calendar page at the end of this newsletter. Other open mics are also listed in the latter part of the newsletter.)



Jack Hasling reads one of his poems at an SBW open mic. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Emphasize poetry in your community on April 9 by supporting literary organizations. On the 13th you can subscribe to a literary magazine and on the 23rd, Poets.org suggests that you buy a book of poems for your library.

Start your own journal either as a commonplace book (personal anthology) on April 24 or online at Poets.org on the 25th. (Poets.org lets users build their own personal commonplace book on the site.)

Finish up the month with what Poets.org calls “Poem in Your Pocket Day.” Inspired by the poem “Keep A Poem In Your Pocket,” by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers, the City of New York designated April 28, 2006 as Poem in Your Pocket Day. (Poets.org has this activity now on day 30.) New Yorkers were encouraged to carry a poem in a pocket and share it with friends and family. Public schools there were encouraged to feature poetry on this day. *The New York Times* would print selected poems during the week of April 26–30 and the mayor would read a poem on the radio.

Sounds like a nice thing to do. San Francisco? San Jose? How about taking up the gauntlet? Celebrate National Poetry Month any way you want, but do celebrate. WT

As Our East of Eden Theme, “Why Am I Writing?” Proves Exciting

by Colin Seymour

A Seattle literary agent was furious with me the other day. Our rock-bottom budget is a turnoff for many would-be contributors. Writers club colleagues are breathing down my neck. Still, my East of Eden job from hell has many redeeming qualities.

The most important is our “Why Am I Writing?” theme. I think of it as a prayer.

Fortunately, this prayer has been answered many times since I assumed the duties of staffing coordinator last summer. This theme resonates with most who have accepted invitations to speak, present, edit, or field pitches at our Sept. 24–26 writers conference in Salinas. “Why Am I Writing?” offers our best hope of pulling off our best East of Eden in these worst of times.

We have a difficult act to follow, because East of Eden has gotten bigger and better during its eight years of biannual existence. We’re determined to maintain the foundation. By copying

what we’ve done previously, I emulate my staffing predecessor, the fabulous Edie Matthews. I also lean on the wisdom of our SBW leadership and the people I’m recruiting.

“Why Am I Writing?” has guided us at every milepost, from the enrichment of Kent Werges’s workshops lineup to my recruitment of speakers, and not just returning 2002 keynoter Luis Valdez. When opening-night speaker Selden Edwards details his 35-year quest to publish his novel *The Little Book*, he will inspire us all to persevere.

Many of us have been persevering as writers largely on faith for some time. In my case, my two books—my only children!—remain unpublished, yet I’m sure they’re even better than most of my published work. You can see why this new access to agents and other valuable contacts seems worthwhile.

At an even more pragmatic level, my wife points out, human resources directors will see my East of Eden role

as “project management,” a status they (wrongly) don’t ascribe to my newspaper editing background.

But I’m mostly an idealist. Although 20 years of shopping my books informs my staffing role, and 30 years’ worth of professional skills, notably writing speed, have also been crucial, there’s plenty of room for creativity, as there always has been in my career.

That’s why I’m writing an East of Eden correspondence diary that at 7,000 words and counting is longer than any of my thousands of published writings. Some of the letters I’ve written on SBW’s behalf have rivaled my best work. One of them nearly scored us Michael Chabon as keynoter.

Chabon didn’t answer my prayers, but in his 2009 book *Manhood for Amateurs* he did brilliantly answer our rhetorical question about why we’re writing:

“I can’t help it.” WT

Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

It seems as if I write about the seasons; it must be that Spring is representative of renewal and rebirth. And so it goes with the writing process. How often I wish I could sit down and write at will, with no thoughts of how good or bad the words are, and only see the accomplishment in the act of writing itself.



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

Each month I roll out this column as a way for SBW writers to share their writing accomplishments. Some are huge—a book has been published, a short story has been selected to appear in a literary journal. Or it could be something as small as having completed a story or poem. Three people emailed Accolades with their news:

- Audrey Lynch has been busy on the local lecture circuit. On March 3, she spoke at the Loma Prieta Club in the

Santa Cruz Mountains; March 5, at Louise Webb’s memoir writing group at the Saratoga Senior Center; and March 12 at the Santa Clara Sierra Club. She also has three upcoming events in April: April 1 at Gamma Omega Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma Society in Santa Clara; April 7 at Valley Women’s League in Los Gatos, and April 27 at International Chapter of P.E.O. Sisterhood in San Jose.

- Carolyn Donnell had her “Finding Family” article published in the March *Story Circle Journal*. You can purchase a copy at storycircle.org/journal.shtml (only members of the Story Circle Network can read it online). Her two poems mentioned in last month’s column are being considered for the next SCN anthology.
- Luanne Oleas’s novel *Shedding Cats* has advanced to the quarterfinals in the Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award contest. Check it out at amazon.com/b?node=332264011. There’s also a downloadable excerpt at tinyurl.com/yg43dj3.

On a personal note, my creative writing workshop through Santa Clara Adult Education has been extended for four weeks (3/22–4/19), and a new four-week workshop begins April 26 at the Santa Clara Senior Center. Visit www.scae.org if you’re interested.

Keep writing, and please email accolades@southbaywriters.com when you have some good news to share about your writing. It can be any aspect of writing: planned events such as workshops, book tours, speaking engagements, etc., in addition to the usual. Let us know what you are up to—we want to know! WT

Pressing Issues

Gardenia scent muzzles my mind, months of nosing around in memories. What’s the big deal about a corsage? Bury it with gnawed-on bones. But first snip the silk ribbons for the new day.

—c. seney

Five Characteristics of a Good Blog Consultant

by Bill Belew

So you have it in you to start blogging, eh? Perhaps you want to create a platform and you want a blog or two to be part of that platform. You understand the basics, but you'd like a bit of advice now and then from an expert or someone who has been there and done that. Maybe you are looking for a blog consultant?



Bill Belew
Contributing Editor

To be sure, these days it is not all that difficult to find a blog “expert.” Anybody with a blog who has been blogging for a year or so might consider himself an expert. And indeed, a few bloggers may know some things. They might have been to conferences and workshops and meetups and coffee-houses and done due diligence at a Search Engine Optimization meeting or two. They may even have attended a BlogExpo. They may also be able to tell you the best plug-ins, the best analytic tools, the very best place to get templates and how to optimize them. These

folks will also know quite well about keywords and good title structure, tags, categories, images and the like, and can use words like SEO—Search Engine Optimization—in a sentence and know what it means. It is really important to me to know whether the would-be blog consultant has applied what he has learned and has a blog or two to show for it. Or does he just know how?

I am reminded of a teacher who worked for me in Japan. He knew how to do most everything. He knew how to rock climb, water ski, knit, bake, shine, grow, color, repair, build, break, hem, and so forth because he had read how in a book and had a good memory to go with it. But he could not do the things himself. He had the head knowledge but not the kind of know-how that comes from experience.

Do you want advice on your blogging? How will you decide who you will listen to when it comes to blogging? Following are five qualities of a good blog consultant.

1. A good blog consultant has put in his or her time.

I am in my fifth consecutive year as a blogger, earning a living wage from my blogging revenue. Ask your blog consultant how long he has been blogging and how many posts he has

written. Ask your consultant how many of those posts have received how many views? Ask your consultant what he has tried that did *not* work? I have published more than 12,000 posts. I have a couple thousand articles/posts that have *each* received more than 1000 views. It's not all that remarkable to write a post and get a lot of views for that one post. It is remarkable to write a lot of posts and have each get a lot of views. How does your blog consultant's resume look in this regard? I also have some posts I am embarrassed about. I can tell you what doesn't work, when I have compromised for the sake of traffic, what I have done that I regret. Find a blog consultant who will be honest with you.

2. A good blog consultant knows how to get readers *and* has done it.

My very first month of blogging I got 2,209 page views. The second month, 4,595 views. Last month, my network of blogs got 1.6 million views. As of the Ides of March, the network has 20.9 million total hits. Can your blog consultant say she has practiced what she preached and it worked for her? Can she show you? And has she taught someone else how to do it and it worked for that person as well?

Continued on page 16

\$10000

East of Eden Writing Contest

Join us this year at the East of Eden Writers Conference (Sept. 24–26 in Salinas) and enter the East of Eden Writing Contest.

First Prize in each category is \$200; Second Prize is \$100—and there will be a Grand Prize of \$1,000!

There's no limit on number of entries—so why not take a shot at that Grand Prize?

Categories are Short Fiction, Novel, Nonfiction, and Poetry.

For prose, submit up to 3,500 words per entry (plus a synopsis for novels); for poetry, submit up to 3 pages per entry.

Just be sure to get your entries in by the contest deadline of July 15.

Winners will be announced at the conference and awarded their prizes Saturday evening, and will be invited to read from their winning entries at a special night-owl session.

You must be registered for the conference to enter the contest (which means that your competition will be limited to conference attendees). And you can win BIG prizes!

For complete details, see southbaywriters.com/EastofEden2010/writing_contest.html

Script Frenzy April 1–30

by Lisa Eckstein

This April, join thousands of writers taking on the dare to write 100 pages of scripted material in a month. The challenge is called “Script Frenzy,” and it’s instigated by the organization behind National Novel Writing Month, the November contest to write a novel in 30 days. The April event focuses on scripts of all kinds: screenplays, stage plays, and scripts for TV, radio, and comic books.

Even if you don’t think of yourself as a script writer, give Script Frenzy a chance. I spend most of my time on novels, but the screenplays I’ve attempted have taught me a lot about storytelling, plot, and dialogue. Writing outside your comfort zone is a fabulous learning experience and can even lead to a new passion.

Don’t be intimidated by script formatting. The Script Frenzy web site at scriptfrenzy.org explains the formats for different kinds of scripts (all simpler than you might imagine) and suggests free software that handles layout automatically. If you’re used to writing prose, you’ll be pleasantly surprised to discover how fast a page of formatted script fills up.

As with NaNoWriMo, much of the fun of Script Frenzy comes from the cama-

New Members

by Jackie Mutz

Meet new member **J. Marie Lucero**, formerly a lawyer and now an English teacher of Mythology and Humanities. She is, as she notes, “currently working on a fictionalized memoir of my last year in law, which I was inspired to start after taking a seminar with Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston,” author of *Farewell to Manzanar*. She joined South Bay Writers because of her welcoming experience at her first meeting. In her own words, she “met so many positive, encouraging and helpful people, I just had to join.” Upon completion of her first draft, she may be ready to join a critique group. You can reach J. Marie at mythteacher753@yahoo.com. We at SouthBay writers welcome you! WT

raderie of undertaking a demanding task along with other writers. Visit the forums on the web site to discuss your script with participants around the world, and join the SF South Bay region to find out about local events. You can also choose to write in collaboration with a partner. One year, I cowrote a screenplay with my younger brother on the East Coast, which added a whole new dimension to the challenge.

Go to scriptfrenzy.org for all the details of the event, and sign up there to get in the Frenzy! WT

WritersTalk Challenge awards are made in February and August of each year. All pieces published in *WritersTalk* are included in the Challenge. WT



Victoria M. Johnson and Meredy Amyx, winners of the spring *WritersTalk* Challenge.

SBW Election Announced

by Meredy Amyx

In accordance with the bylaws of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club, the club’s annual election of officers takes place in person at the June meeting, to be held on June 8, 2010. Nominations may be made in advance and may also be made from the floor at the meeting. Prior to that date, nominations must be published in the newsletter and presented at the May general meeting.

Nominations are now open for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer of South Bay Writers.

You may nominate yourself. You may nominate someone else, provided that the nominee consents. You may contact nominating chair Meredy Amyx to propose candidates for recruitment.

To place your name or that of another consenting member in nomination for office, send the candidate’s name, position for which nominated, statement of consent to nomination, and candidate’s contact information to Meredy Amyx by e-mail at meredy@amyx.org, or by phone afternoons and evenings at 408-297-4438.

Service as an officer of SBW and participation on the Board permits members to support the club and help guide its activities and events. Work on behalf of the club provides opportunities for learning and exposure in a friendly, collaborative setting. You can gain valuable experience while offering your talents in service to the club for the benefit of all members. WT

Volunteer Your Help at EoE

We’re looking for volunteers to help out at the East of Eden conference in September. Tasks include lending a hand with registration, shepherding speakers, and providing transportation to and from the airport.

Email Bill Belew: wcbelow@gmail.com

WritersTalk Challenge Awards

The *WritersTalk* Challenge winners for the spring judging period were announced at the March meeting.

Article/essay: Victoria M. Johnson for “How to Write Scary Stories.”

Fiction: Meredy Amyx for “Gallery of Memories.”

The winners received a certificate and a check for \$40.

Because there were only three entries in the memoirs category and six in poetry, no awards were made for those genres. Those entries will be carried over for judging for the fall awards.

On a Train Called The City of San Francisco

Westbound out of Salt Lake City, a moonless 2 AM.
The Vista Car is mine now, the last young lovers gone,
Only long-lost spirits and homeless souls await the dawn.
Windows curve from overhead to floor beneath my toes,
And out of shadows of lanterns long snuffed, a pale fluorescence glows.
Before me, dark, the dark I saw the day Earth was called forth,
Before the sun glowed and marked the path that divides south from north.
That day I wrote “. . . and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”
That day I watched as the universe paused, waiting to be called from sleep.
Westbound across a dry salt sea, on a moonless 2 AM.
Once this was water. In black silent depths, life suckled from Earth's powers.
Trilobites burrowed, nautiloids swam, great reptiles prowled the nights' hours.
Then Earth labored and lifted. Mountains rose.
My cat's-eyes see them lit by starlight glows.
A million years passed, ten million, a hundred,
New eyes searched, saw, wondered.
Now headlights flash, then disappear.
My kind are here.
Westbound from Salt Lake City. Moonless. 2 AM.

—*Jamie Miller*

South Bay Young Writers Workshop Saturday, April 17, 2010

If you have a middle-schooler or high school student in your family or a young protégé who might benefit from an inspiring day with a select group of professional writers, sign them up. Patterned on an event sponsored five years ago by the Peninsula Chapter of the California Writers Club and our own East of Eden conference, our workshop offers four topics.

Morning Workshops (participants will choose two of the following three):

- **Telling Tales: Writing for Oral Storytelling** with Debra Ting, Master Storyteller.
- **The Importance of Powerful Dialogue** with Joe Cannon, Aspiring Playwright and Literacy Tutor.
- **Blogging: Writing for Your Readers While Staying Safe** with Bill Belew, Professional Blogger.

Afternoon Workshop (all participants):

- **Make Them Laugh!: Comedy Writing** with Edie Matthews, English Professor, Comedian & Author.

Each topic will fill a 90-minute workshop. Space is limited to 45 participants, first-come, first-served. The cost is \$20, including lunch; hardship scholarships may be available. Registration is available online at southbaywriters.com. The workshop will be held Saturday, April 17, from 9 to 3, in McHattie Hall at West Valley Presbyterian Church, 6191 Bollinger Road (at Miller Avenue) in Cupertino.

Karen Sweet and Suzette Gamero are co-chairing this event. They are looking for club members to assist in getting the word out, distributing flyers, and to participate on the day of the workshop. You can contact them at kidswrite10@gmail.com.

Please join us in presenting the joy of writing to young people in Silicon Valley.

Little House on Young's Hill

by *Betty Auchard*

The summer before I enrolled in kindergarten, our rent was raised. Dad was kind of down in the dumps when he announced, "Girl, we gotta move to a smaller place."

"You mean smaller than *this* house?" Mama said. "I don't think that's possible."

"It's possible," said Dad. "I've found a little house on Young's Hill."

So my parents packed our meager belongings into the back of a borrowed truck and drove to the south side of town where the houses were far apart. It was in the country, with no sidewalks where a kid could skate. Behind our house was a steep hill that looked perfect for sledding in the winter...if we stayed that long. We were always moving somewhere new, and sometimes it was exciting to be in a different place.

When my mother walked into our one-room dwelling, her mouth dropped open and her eyes bulged. "Butch, is this a cabin or a shack?" she asked. Dad ignored the question and went about unloading the truck.

Mama was the boss of where things would go. She persuaded Dad, with the help of Uncle Cullen's fine carpentry skill and professional tools, to build a simple wall to separate the space into two rooms. Behind the divider were our parents' bed, a large dresser, and a three-gallon paint can that served as our nighttime toilet. The *real* toilet was in the backyard on the steep slope. In the front part of the house were a small wood-burning stove, sink, table, chairs, and icebox, along with a bed that Bobby and I shared.

At night our light came from kerosene lamps, but we usually went to bed early to save on lamp fuel. That's when I snuggled next to my two-year-old brother and told him stories about going to school. He loved hearing about "cool," as he called it, and I loved telling him all about it even though I didn't really know much about it myself. I was looking forward to kindergarten more than anything in the world.

Not long after we moved to Young's Hill, Bobby and I woke up whiny and red from scratching. Mama had a look at us and said, "Good grief! I believe you've caught your cousin's measles."

"Oh, no, Mama. They won't let me in school with the measles." My disappointment was terrible.

She tried to reassure me. "Don't worry yourself, Betty. By the time school starts, those prickly red spots will be gone." I hoped she was right.

To keep us happy while we were sick, Auntie Marge appeared at our door and said, "I hear there are two sick kids in this house." In a silly voice she called out, "Where are you hiding? Come out from under the covers."

We couldn't get up fast enough to see what Auntie Marge had brought. She never showed up empty-handed, and lots of times she emptied her purse so the coins that rested at the bottom would tumble out. I was sure Auntie Marge was related to the Christmas fairy because she brought gifts to us whenever she showed up.

Playing with our new toys helped take our minds off the itches we wanted so badly to scratch, and owning a handful of pennies, nickels, and dimes made me feel lucky to have such a rich aunt. On that visit, Bobby got a miniature dump truck that he could push around on top of the sheets, and I got a set of paper dolls featuring the famous Dionne quintuplets, who had just been born.

We recovered from the measles before the birth of our real baby, which was supposed to happen in July. But our sister couldn't wait that long and arrived on May 24.



Betty Auchard

Aunt Edith took me to the hospital to see Patricia Ann. When we found my mother's room at Mercy Hospital, several of my aunts were paying her a visit. Mama was sitting up in bed holding a tiny bundle wrapped in pink flannel blankets.

"Come close, Betty, and see Patty, your sister," she said as she pulled the cloth away from a dark, wrinkled face. Aunt Edith lifted me up so I could have a better look at our baby, and all I could do was gawk. She was strange looking, a newborn bird without feathers. I couldn't stop staring.

Aunt Edith's voice was all smiles as she asked, "Betty, what do you think of your sister?"

I didn't hesitate and told her the truth. "She looks like a monkey," I said.

In unison, my three aunts sucked in their breath. "Shame on you, you naughty girl," they scolded. "That's not nice."

Mama laughed and said, "Well, you asked her."

But the truth was not always what grownups wanted to hear. After that, I learned to weigh carefully whether an answer should be honest or a fib.

My parents didn't have the money to keep our Patty in the premie ward for as long as she needed to be there. So my mother had a serious talk with Dr. Victoreen, who had helped when Bobby and I were born.

"Doctor, I know that I can keep my baby alive because I've always been a nurse at heart. I've kept birds breathing that were halfway out of eggs that had fallen from the nest."

"Well, I don't know, Waneta. It's a terrible risk."

Mama wouldn't give up. "I've practiced on pets all my life, and our daughter is about the size of the kittens and dogs I nursed back to health."

Dr. Victoreen couldn't resist my mother's strong desire to take care of her own infant, so with his instructions to guide her, she created a cozy nest for Patty. It was a cardboard box filled with soft blankets and two bricks that had been warmed on top of the woodstove and then wrapped in towels. My

Continued on page 16

April Workshop

Saturday, April 24, 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lookout Inn, 605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale (at the Sunnyvale Golf Course)

Bill Belew

Complete Hands-On Blogging

A hands-on workshop that explains in detail the how-to of blogging, from the nitty gritty of setting up a blog to the added perk of possibly earning six figures while building your platform. Registration fee includes continental breakfast and lunch.

The session will be divided into four parts. Participants are encouraged to bring a laptop or be prepared to take copious notes.

1. Creating a blog—finding a domain name, choosing software, picking a template, going public.
2. Putting up quality content—inserting images, creating internal and external links, finding hot topics, establishing a voice.
3. Building a network—Creating links to other writers, adding links to your books, making some money.
4. Q&A.



Bill holds a PhD in Education and an MFA in Creative Writing. In the four years that he's worked as a professional blogger, his pages have seen more than 20 million views. He has taught numerous other bloggers the principles he has learned. When participants of this workshop leave, they will **know** what it takes to achieve their blogging goals as well.

Early Bird Special—Register by April 1, 2010:

CWC members \$35; nonmembers \$45

After April 1 or at the door: CWC members \$45; nonmembers \$60

Students (24 and younger) \$25 with student ID

Registration fee includes continental breakfast and lunch

NOTE: cancellation in full, less \$10, before Apr. 17. No refunds after the 17th. (Hardship exceptions may apply. Contact dalaroche@comcast.net.)

Register online at southbaywriters.com

or clip and mail this coupon (or a copy of it) to

SBW Blogging

PO Box 3254

Santa Clara, CA 95055

Make check payable to South Bay Writers

Name _____

Street address _____

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CWC Members \$35
Nonmembers \$45

Regular Registration
After April 1 or at the door
CWC Members \$45
Nonmembers \$60

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\$25

2010 EAST OF EDEN WRITERS CONFERENCE

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Lisa Alpine & Carla King, *Self-publishing Boot Camp*
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Martha Alderson, *Blockbuster Plots*
Tanya Egan Gibson, *How to Buy a Love of Reading*
Martha Engber, *Growing Great Characters From the Ground Up*
Craig Lancaster, *600 Hours of Edward*
Kendra Bonnett & Matilda Butler, *Rosie's Daughters*
Linda K. Silva, *Across Time, Tory's Tuesday*

... and more!



All EoE 2010 events and sessions will be held at the Salinas Community Center and the adjoining Sherwood Hall.

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\$200 1st place each category
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General Registration: \$435 from July 1, 2010 until sold out
Special for CWC Members: \$325 — offer ends April 15, 2010

Saturday Only option:

Early registration \$206 through June 30. General registration \$239 from July 1 until sold out
Special for CWC Members \$179, offer ends April 15

Students, anytime (must be under 24 yrs, present valid ID at check-in):

Full conference \$275, Saturday only \$151

For Registration, info, and updates go to www.southbaywriters.com

Art Appreciation

by Juliana Richmond

I tested the corners of my mouth with my tongue, checking for leftover crumbs from the sandwich I'd eaten in the car on the drive to the San Jose Museum of Art from my home in Santa Clara. The whole morning, from a session of bill-paying to an hour of swimming, had been one of carefully choreographed time chunks in order to attend the docent tour that was slated promptly at 12:30. But here I was, reasonably dressed, even lipsticked, with my bright red docent training folder and evaluation sheets in hand.

I stood looking at the small woman dressed in tights and a voluminous silk blouse who tentatively approached me in the echoing lobby of the San Jose Art Museum. "Are you looking for a tour?" she asked, her eyes sweeping the space behind me for other prospective art appreciators.

"Well, I am," I said. "I'm in the docent training program and we're supposed to audit some of the tours in order to get a better idea of what's involved—I'm sure you've been through that." I wondered if she hated the idea of being evaluated, as I was sure I would in her position. I certainly didn't want to make her nervous.

"Oh, yes!" she laughed. "I've been through it! I'll take you on a tour even if no one else shows up."

She didn't have to make good on that promise, however, as several other women approached. I clutched my folder under my arm as unobtrusively as possible, and set off with the small entourage to the first room of the Whitney exhibit. As I expected, the guide began with the Georgia O'Keeffe rendition of a white camellia, subtle and pale in comparison to the artist's often dramatic style, and then proceeded to expound on the other paintings in the room. She did not ask for questions or comments, a fact I checked as a minus for her technique. So much for that, I thought, and resolved just to listen and observe.

By this time, a number of others had joined our group—enough so that we made an impressive sweep as we trailed obediently from one painting to

another. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a fellow docent training class member, a young woman named Seville. I knew she was from Turkey, and that she spoke with a slight and charming accent. Her straight-cut black hair and casual attire marked her more as a student than the carefully turned-out older women in the group. We smiled at one another and continued to listen attentively to the group leader.

In our training sessions, the technique of drawing the audience into the discussion of art works was emphasized: "What do you think the artist is saying in this picture? What colors are used in the painting that you see people here in the group wearing today?" This docent used none of those questions, but marched resolutely from one painting to another, telling us what the artist meant, what had been attempted in the picture, what period of time and influences had been brought to bear.

This works well too, I thought. Maybe we aren't interacting, but I'm learning quite a few new things, and she's hitting the major points about each picture. I wished she'd talk a little more about the Edward Hopper watercolors, because I knew more about that technique than anything else. But people weren't there to listen to me, and I couldn't imagine myself retaining all the facts that our docent had at her disposal. Her confidence was assuring; her diamonds glistened in the light as she gestured and pointed at first one painterly surface and another.

In brief conversation with our docent after the tour, we expressed our thanks and admiration, which she dismissed with a shrug. "Oh, I've had *lots* of art history classes—it comes easy to me!"

Seville and I agreed to have coffee at the museum gift shop. We settled ourselves at a small round table, she with herb tea and I with a cup of frothy cappuccino. We quickly agreed on the merits of the tour, and led into the real question—how were we going to measure up when we had to perform in the same way?

"How long have you been in this country, Seville?" I asked, wondering if her limited English would hamper her effectiveness before a group.

"Seven years," she said, and I noticed

how warm her brown eyes were, how genuine her smile. "I came here with my husband, and I like it very much. I admire very much you American women, always learning new things and doing so much. In my country this is not so, and in my profession I did not meet such women."

"What was your profession?" I asked, hoping the question was not too forward. I had no idea what Turkish women did for careers.

"I was a doctor—a neuropsychiatrist. I was in practice for sixteen years. But now I don't want to do that anymore. I want to communicate more about medicine. And so . . ." She gave a small, self-deprecatory shrug. "I will practice this way, but I have so much to learn. Tell me about yourself."

"My husband died last year," I said, "and I thought it would be a good idea to have something new to think about, an activity I'd never done before. I've painted, but I've never had a real art history course, and I'm finding it very interesting. But I worry that I won't be able to remember all the things I'll need to know when I take a group around the museum for the first time. I forget names a lot."

"And I think—what if I can't say the right word!" she said, laughing.

"I'm sorry you lost your husband. How many years were you married?"

She'll be fine, I thought. Her charm and sensitivity will see her through any challenge. Out loud, I said, "Thirteen. It was a second marriage for both of us. We were very happy together."

"I, too," she smiled. "I am married ten years to my husband—the first one, we divorced. Now I am having a very good marriage. My husband is an electrical engineer and he likes living and working here too." Omar Sharif came to my mind, and I wondered if Seville's husband looked like him, but I didn't ask. Instead we talked about her family in Turkey, and those of mine in the eastern states.

"I'll be going to visit them soon," I said.

"Alone? American women are very brave, I think. You think nothing of such a trip by yourself."

"Well, there are all sorts of challenges,

Continued on page 16

Wetlesen's Poetic Theories on Higher Dimensions

by Steve Wetlesen

We need not dwell on the first three dimensions: length, width, and depth (spatial), or the fourth (time). Rather, let us directly attempt to picture higher dimensions; that is, movements and directions the first four cannot describe adequately, but we can all, in fact, readily imagine in the mind's eye.

5. Reversibility (inside out). Some things can be reversed, sometimes partially, sometimes 100% (infinitely). Picture a reversible sports jacket. The side I wear shows the viewer my school colors, blue and gold (Cal, Go Bears!), but the coat can be reversed to show red for Stanford. This forms another dimension. Some jellyfish or mollusks can partially turn inside out and show another topographical surface. A few might reverse all the way.

Sidebar Query: Can the whole Universe turn itself inside out spatially? Like Lewis Carroll, I sometimes make up nonsense words, so I name the whole cosmos so reversing itself in such a manner a flurbjurbit, and imagine a well known Scottish Highlands engineer complaining that a flurbjurbit is overloadin' his engines, and he hasna any power for the shields!

6. Möbius. One twist means the object has only one surface rather than two, as before. See a Möbius Strip, or make one. Easy to do.

7. Squid. The undulating motion a squid or octopus makes in order to compress a jet of water to propel itself is another dimension. Call it squidding, which NASA also calls improperly deploying parachutes when they malfunction by undulating and compressing (in failed Mars lander probes). In the alternative, call it pulsating and throbbing. Yes, it's a three-dimensional movement, but its overall Gestalt involves far more. It is greater than the sum of the movements; thus, another dimension!

9. Artistic. That strange X factor with certain artistic canvases where observ-

ers feel they are "alive" and ready to "jump out" at the viewer. Jackson Pollocks are often like this, but other painters so present as well. Something in the *composition* causes this, and it is yet another dimension. It is the mark of genius. This hidden dynamic dimension may also appear in sound/music: Mozart. Or literature: the Bible or Shakespeare, seeming to be new every time one reads it.

10. Causality. That paradox one sees in many transactions in this life where we can't be sure whether A causes B or B causes A, which came first, chicken or egg, or, in high theology (see John Calvin's endless speculations), are we predestined to have a free choice?

11. Fractals. Again, these patterns are greater than the sum of their parts. Fractals make up practically everything in our physical world.

11a. If you don't buy fractals as higher dimensional structures, try chaos or randomness, the factor that makes weather impossible to predict beyond about a week or so at most.

There you have it. I got *eleven* dimensions down, and two more, according to one whiz whose name escapes me, may be the following: *temporal* dimensions: (A) alternative lines of history from Big Bang to present and on the end of the universe (we shot the Japanese down at Pearl Harbor and saved the U.S.S. Arizona!), and (B) all possible different alternative history lines leading from many different Big Bangs of alternative cosmic worlds.

One issue of these time dimensions might be the old science fiction grandfather paradox, where you shoot your grandfather before your were born, thus preventing you from being born to go back in time and shoot him.

It all makes my head spin, but I can just barely imagine it all. I think. I hope. Can you? wt

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April Pill

Drizzle-fizzle . . . April showers . . .
Appreciate sneezing at all the flowers?
Don't mind me. I'm blue, I'm blocking.
Wait. Submission sold?
NOW we're talking!

—Pat Bustamante

An Insight a Huge Elegant Photo Book Inspired in My Mind's Eye the Spring Day My Local Library Reopened

Butterflies:
tiny fragile
floating
fluttering
intricately shaped
Tibetan Mandalas,
each, in their beautiful chaos,
a minuscule,
delicate
self-contained
cosmos,
or do all their myriad aerial swarms
constitute
a greater, far more vast
flying Universe,
a Calder sculpture
without the need for ceilings
or metallic wires?
Their fleeting ephemeral
lifetimes
are infinitely longer
than the mountainous rooftop plateau's
vibrant multicolored
but forlorn,
transitory
sand paintings.
No angelic winged insect
is ever
swept away
by distant dragons.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

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Another Moment

Another dry moment
chapped thoughts
curse my lips
like lemon sweat
it beads on and in
my head until
Gravity pulls from
my heart—
a water of emotion.
I look into the labyrinth
of my soul and
see you.

—j mutz

White Water

The stream spreads out here, placid, deep, and slow,
Then gathers strength, turns inward, piles up, pauses,
Preparing to assault those impudent rocks.
It climbs their faces, slides over their sides, is lost
In swirls, in eddies, in vortices carried along
Past tumbling white water cascading
Through chutes and gaps, and finally grows calm
And spreads again, placid, deep and slow.
I push aside the brush that blocks my trail
And a startled egret flies.
A dozen wing beats and it settles again.
It watches me, wary, and I turn to leave.
This is egret's place, not mine.
Seventy steps take me back to my base,
Three steps more would cross the stream.
No SUV wilderness, this, no great national park,
Just a forgotten square on a giant board.
But perhaps not quite forgotten.
A fraying rope hangs from an ancient limb
Where, years ago, our son would slip away,
Turn aside, take the long way home from school.
We worried, yes, as parents must,
Wondering what unseen dangers might wait here by the
creek.
Now I wonder, was it this peaceful then,
With egrets and little white water chutes
Calling to him? He never said.
But it's time now, time to return, to climb
20 paces up the trail, up to the east rim, where
Roar of turbulent traffic drowns
The whisper of tumbling white water stream.
Ten thousand people live within an hour's walk,
In this neat organized world. But where shall I find
An egret up here? No, only where we have left
A tiny square of wilderness.
I must remember to look.

—*Jamie Miller*

Setbuilding

The stage set rises silent
Above the patient, waiting cast.
There on the practice room floor
The men stand unfinished, in
Jeans and jackets and worker's coveralls,
Pausing as the director relives a line.
But the stage set rises silent,
Waiting, unfinished and meaningless
As an instant snipped out of the play.
Days pass, the transformation goes on,
Words and layers of fabric change,
Setpieces once a ballroom or ship or farm
Metamorphose, silent as cocooned chrysalis,
As players metamorphose below.
Canvas becomes a shimmering sea, wood
Is marble, women rest on its coolness.
The stage set rises silent, as tempers flare.
A player complains "I can't get it!"
From another, "Then practice, Goddamn!"
Move-in. Hell week. A tenor falls in love with the alto,
Bauerlein und Czardas Princess laugh together,
Sweet and soft in the wings.
"Five minutes!" calls the speaker in the green room,
And the stage set lives.
Lives for an evening, then two, then ten,
Then "Strike!" and a kingdom slides into a truck.
Tenor and alto pause a moment to ask
"So what're you gonna be in next?"
Say "See you then," and instantly forget.
But on a random day, a word or chord or phrase
Brings back the song and the moment,
And he remembers his Princess again.
And beneath layers of paint, the sea shimmers,
Unseen but forever there,
There where the stage set again rises silent.
Above the patient, waiting men.

—*Jamie Miller*

Just Wondering

When did time begin?
In an infinite, lusterless night—
Before that spectacular explosion of atoms, strings or merging membranes—
Or a tiny spark sped faster, expanding majestically then bursting,
Becoming a billion points of brilliant living light.

What Inspiration energized a silent glow to thundering—
Causing a glorious cosmological cataclysm,
Creating the space-time continuum—
Perhaps by quiet Meditation in a vast, Eternal Now.
Just Wondering.

—*Sally A. Milnor*

Old Husbands' Tales

by Luanne Oleas

Synopsis: A 50-year-old widowed receptionist and nine of her quirky high-tech co-workers play in the office lottery poll and win millions, which leads to a reality TV show.

Chapter One—The Road West

Years and years and years ago. That's how Alice Hopkins' grandfather started every story. Maybe he wasn't very good with dates. She could still hear him saying those words, even now, at 50 in her big office with its oversized desk. That, and "How about a highball?" He would pour amber liquid into a crystal glass and smile as he handed it to a guest. There was another phrase she could remember him saying too. "I hear screams of death."

That last line came from her favorite story her grandfather told her as a young girl. She worked at a high tech company now with people from all over the world, but that favorite story from her grandfather was uniquely American. His tale and others from her family had helped her stay grounded in the mad, mad world of Silicon Valley.

The story started with the Garrison family of Michigan loading their belongings into a Conestoga wagon and heading for Missouri. On May Day, 1857, her grandfather said, the family (his great grandparents and two daughters) left St. Louis for California. Somewhere between St. Louis and Salt Lake City another daughter was born. They never could say exactly where, just in the plains.

Later, Alice would wonder how difficult that birth must have been, after she had had a child of her own. But when she was young, she just imagined three young girls on the adventure of a lifetime. Maybe they had dirty blond hair, like her, and the same slight gap between the two front teeth, barely noticeable.

The story was full of wonderful details about Indians and sharing a meal with Buffalo Bill Cody. He ate Grandma Garrison's biscuits and traveled for a time with the wagon train. Alice's grandpa always digressed at this point

in the story to tell how he and his grandmother, years later, visited Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and went backstage, where Buffalo Bill Cody had remarked, "Them was the best biscuits I ever et."

Alice used to hate it when her grandfather got off track on that story. She wanted to hear the part about "screams of death." But he always had tall tales from his youth in San Francisco about sneaking into the 1915 World's Fair or flying with the stunt pilot Wiley Post.

"They trusted the Indians more than the Mormons," her grandfather would say, when he finally returned to the story. They weren't real Mormons, though. He called them "Jack Mormons." At the time, Utah was a territory, making it an ideal hideout for anyone avoiding federal marshals.

The phone rang, disturbing Alice's recollections. She answered it, redirected the call to Tech Support. Her long curving desk, wide windows, and overstuffed leather chairs in the lobby meant she had the biggest office in the building. But it was empty now, and she soon returned to hearing her grandfather's words.

The wagon train made it to Salt Lake City in September. The intended route was to head south, across the desert and eventually to southern California. But her great-great-grandmother had a change of heart.

"I won't go that way," she said. "I hear screams of death." Alice's grandfather said she must have been very convincing because her husband and four other wagons from the train split off and took the Oregon Trail, landing in Portland around Christmastime. The rest of the train headed south without them, where all but the children were killed in the Mountain Meadow Massacre on September 11, 1857. WT

May is Memoir
Month: submit a
600-word excerpt
from your memoir
by April 16.

Email This!

There's no food in the fridge
The bathroom's a mess
I must get a flu shot &
Take the dog to the vet

I've been working from home
I've been working from work
I need a comp day
Before I go berserk

So, I won't be in Monday
I won't check email
The IM will be off
I'm ignoring voicemail

If it's really critical
You can call my cell
But it better be urgent,
Or I'll be madder than h_ _ _

—Luanne F. Oleas

Unfinished Business

Don't sneeze
Please

I must
dust.

Don't slip,
trip.

Clutter,
clean . . .

I'm in
be
tween.

—Suzy Paluzzi

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Thanks to an outstanding organizer, S. Paxton, this no longer applies.

Life is Full of Small Unexpectancies

Southbound
Peninsula train.
A woman raises
her left
pant leg
to reveal
no fewer than
five
varicolored
butterfly
tattoos,
then points to
and starts to describe
the one on
her left breast.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

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Summer Sums

One bonus:
Classrooms can be cooler than cooked
days
But that won't pay back hours stolen
From sweet idling summer dreams,
Aimless play.
The schooled one loses recess
From dread math, word problems,
Piles of homework.
That child never sums
Nor numbers summer's swarmed
delights:
Magic clouds of moths or fireflies
Hovering among hot stars . . .
—Pat Bustamante

A Man of Taste

I once heard about
a Navajo
artist
who was worth
at least
thirty million
dollars
and yet
lived in
a tiny
wooden shack
with
no power
or running
water.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen
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Faithful Ghost

New tires knocked away
That heap of fur
That once had been a Sheltie sheepdog,
Tossed like garbage at the dairy's
driveway.
When you are older you are slow.
New car, new tires fast as thought:
And what's an old dog worth?
They never even stopped.
A spirit stands alert
Shaggy brown and white, waiting
On an asphalt berm
Where old bones crawled to die.
Look with your heart.
Slow down.
Salute.
—Pat Bustamante

Memories of Our Garden at Dusk

Trees laden with ripening fruit, juice pushing against almost splitting skin,
Filling the air with the heady aroma of nature.
An ever-present salt shaker, sitting atop its fence-post perch like a sentinel,
Alert and waiting for the perfect moment.
Bushes hanging with live ornaments of every size and shape: red, purple, green,
orange, yellow, raspberry.
Corn-stalk teepees, and
Musty, dark-brown furrows, inviting the visitor to grab a warm handful.
Mounds, pregnant with hidden treasures.
Dad hunting for the perfect vine-ripened tomato, reaching for the salt shaker—
A bite, juice running down his chin and fist,
He offers the savory treat to me.
Mmm, the taste of warm sunshine bursting in my mouth!
And then, digging in those warm mounds, forcing them to give up their riches, life
speaks to me from every corner:
Unexpected phosphorescent sparks in the disturbed earth, mimic the twinkling
stars above.

—Mary Tomasi-Dubois

Together Great

Let each mortal man Earth bound.
See and understand each water drop.
Possessed in you or torrents found.
Minute bits rains, rivers, oceans crop.
Liquid most moist this you and me.
Intertwined mixed so blended together.
These drops rivulets lakes wending to the sea.
Each molecule tenaciously held to one another.
As we by example, should you and me.
Not ethnic far-flung clan, only brother.
Creator's great drops conglomerate eternal sea.
Only drops apart, no race or color diversity.
A like alike universal eternal cosmic Mother.
Blend brother and Brother, or evaporate away.
Such as rose petal's dew upon summer's day.
Together bound we are one Great Sea.
Your Drop My Drop "You" and "Me".

—D. Mathison

Come with Me to Paris

Oh, come with me to Paris, please, someday before I die.
We'll soar above each cloud and then into De Gaulle we'll glide.
We'll walk down halls with art on walls—look!—Mona Lisa's smile.
Real Burgundy is fine with me; we'll dine outside in style.
From Arch Triumph, where cupids romp, we'll stroll Champs-Élysées;
See Lamborghinis stop to park and flashy starlets play.
We'll have such fun at Eiffel's tower; take its lift up high;
Just you and me in gay Paree together in the sky.
—Richard A. Burns

Blog Consultant

Continued from page 6

3. A good blog consultant has been through the best of times and the worst of times.

I started blogging for the KnowMoreMedia blog network in March of 2006. I was with KMM until it peaked out at about 2 million views monthly, at which time it fell out of love with Google (long story) and slowly died off. I wrote a lot for a lot. I put up a lot of content and was paid fairly to do so. I have also written a lot for nothing. In fact, I have written more with no promise of pay than I have for promise of income. Ad revenues have been quite pitiful of late, but not as bad as they once were. Even so, I kept on blogging. My philosophy—when times are good I'd better work hard: blog a lot to stay ahead of the competition. When times are bad, I'd better work hard: blog a lot for when good times come back so I'll be ahead of the competition. Is your consultant a fair-weather blogger, or does he do it through thick and thin?

4. A good blog consultant can apply his/her principles across topics.

I have taken eight different topics to more than 1 million views each. A couple to more than 2 million and a couple more to more than 5 million views. *Each!* India, China, Japan, Education, Christian, Cricket, Environment, and Bollywood. Some bloggers know what works for them, their blog and their niche, but do they know what works across the various topics? Can what they have learned be applied to any topic? Can they show you what they have done?

5. A good blog consultant will be there when you need him.

Here is my email address: wcbelew@gmail.com. And you can find my phone number and home address if you go to my site billbelew.com. Search blog consulting from the Silicon Valley area and click on maps and see who comes up. I am reachable. I answer the phone. I answer emails. And if you are in the area, you are welcome to come by. I'll be there. Can you get hold of your blog consultant when you need to? Is he accessible?

Perhaps you have heard it said that "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." But I say "The best are those who can do *and* can teach you how to do so as well." WT

Little House on Young's Hill

Continued from page 9

brother and I were allowed to peek at our sister, but only with a grownup's supervision.

Everything was going well until Bobby and I caught whooping cough. We coughed so hard and so often that we spent our days gagging or throwing up. Again I whined, "I'm not going to kindergarten, am I?" My mother was too preoccupied to put my worries to rest because Patty had also developed a fever that turned into whooping cough.

Mama became a full-time nurse to us three kids while Dad went to his job so that he could bring home a paycheck each week. When Dad was home, he and our mother talked about things I didn't understand, and they didn't laugh very much. When I was feeling better, I tried to make my mother smile by showing her the Dionne quintuplet paper dolls all dressed in their paper clothes. I patted her hip over and over, repeating, "Mama, Mama, Mama. I want to show you something."

When I couldn't get her attention, I gave up and buried my face against her pudgy stomach instead. Through her cotton dress, her stomach was as soft as a pillow. I was so filled with affection for her that I had to do something. I tried pressing my face even harder into the soft bulge, but that wasn't enough. So I opened my mouth and bit her.

"Why did you *do* that?" she yelped.

I was shocked. I had not meant for the bite to hurt. I bit her because I *loved* her. My mother did not understand my explanation at all, but it was the truth. She and Dad continued to have serious talks and they never played cards anymore, but I began to get used to it. Auntie Marge still dropped by now and then with coloring books and extra groceries, which helped our family a lot. Then, out of nowhere, she brought a new dress for me to wear to school.

After we three kids recovered from whooping cough, Dr. Victoreen came to our house to see how everything was going. He was very pleased with our progress and asked Bobby and me what we thought of our sister. Bobby didn't know what to say, so he picked his nose.

"Betty, what do *you* think of your new sister?"

"She's very pretty," I lied.

His eyebrows went up as though asking, "*Really?*" Maybe he was one of the grownups who let kids tell the truth. I had no idea how to tell that kind of grownup apart from the others until it was too late.

Dr. Victoreen then turned his full attention to my mother. "Waneta, I must admit that I felt certain your baby would die in that container. Anyone who could keep a premature infant with whooping cough alive in a cardboard box is a genius. You are, indeed, a miracle worker."

Mama finally smiled. I was so relieved. She was a good nurse and I wanted to tell her so, but I was too shy to say such an adult thing. So I just thought about it. I would have given her another love bite, but I was pretty sure she wouldn't understand it any more than I did. WT

*In memory of
Patricia Ann Reffel
1935-2010*

Art Appreciation

Continued from page 11

aren't there? I don't think I could go to a new country and learn a new language, especially when you have to speak in front of a group." I replied.

Our cups were empty; the rain had stopped. Thoughts of homeward-bound traffic loomed. All the time-juggling of the morning had been worth the result, and as I settled into my car I thought that there is more than one kind of art appreciation—there's the art of living too. WT



Recap: Nina Amir

Continued from page 1

books of her own, exploring topics in spirituality and mysticism.

When Amir learned about National Novel Writing Month, she gave fiction another chance. She wrote and edited a novel that she pitched at the San Francisco Writers Conference, winning the pitch contest. This gave her access to agents who said that her fiction had promise but showed the signs of how long she'd been writing nonfiction. Amir returned her focus to nonfiction, and the next time NaNoWriMo rolled around she founded the parallel challenge Write Nonfiction in November.

Though Amir has many articles in print, she has not yet published a book, and she raised the logical question: "Why should I be telling you how to get published?" Her answer is that she has contributed to the success of many books as editor, consultant, and coach, and her clients get agents and contracts. Additionally, she says, "I'm just like you. I'm also trying to get my books published." She has spent a lot of years trying to figure out how to publish successfully, and she wants to pass her accumulated knowledge on to other writers. This is what she's learned:

What Every Writer Needs to Get Published

1. A Great Idea. Every book originates with an idea, and for a book to sell, the idea must have strong appeal to an audience beyond the writer. Amir listed these elements that contribute to the quality of an idea:

- **Market.** Who are your potential readers? A book has to be targeted to a specific large market, or to many markets, or nobody will buy it.
- **Theme.** Do you have an original, focused angle? Before you write your book, be clear on what your topic is and know that your take on it hasn't been written about before. Make sure your theme is appropriate for your market.
- **Uniqueness.** Have you assessed the competition? You want your book to have a special spot on the bookstore shelf without being the

same as the books already there.

- **Purpose.** What do you want your book to do? For example, a self-help book guides readers in solving a particular problem.
- **Value.** What will your book add to the lives of those who read it? Maybe it will inform, make readers laugh, or take them on a journey.



Nina Amir tells her SBW audience what every writer needs to get published.

2. A Great Pitch. The pitch is the elevator speech that describes your book in a concise, enticing way. Figure out how to explain your book in under 50 words (or even 25) with a pitch that gives a sense of the book's story, market, and the other components of a great idea. The pitch is what you'll use to hook agents and editors. It also helps you clarify for yourself what your book is really about, so Amir suggests composing it before you begin your manuscript.

3. A Great Platform. Your platform is the audience that will rush out to buy your book as soon as you publish. To build a platform, you'll have to promote yourself, and Amir acknowledges that this task makes most writers cringe. "I didn't want to do this either," she promises, but she now has a strong platform thanks to the time she's invested in blogs, speaking engagements, and workshops. Do whatever you can to get your name out there, including participating in social networking sites, giving interviews, and writing articles on the subject of your book. For a nonfiction writer, establishing a platform is essential for getting published; a preexisting audience doesn't hurt fiction writers either.

4. A Great Proposal. Nonfiction books

are sold with only 25 pages of manuscript written—accompanied by a fantastic proposal. A proposal performs several jobs: it persuades an agent or editor to take on your book, it guides you in researching and writing, and it forms the basis of the publisher's business plan for marketing the book. Amir recommends writing a proposal even if you self-publish, because when you're the publisher you need to understand your business plan, marketing strategy, and competition, all of which you'll lay out in a proposal.

5. Chutzpah. This Yiddish word has many definitions, and Amir read several, including "nearly arrogant courage," "over-the-top self-confidence," and "gutsy audacity." She considers this the final necessity for getting published because "you have to be willing to do whatever it takes, no matter how silly you look or how brazen you have to be." Nobody else is going to sell your book for you, so ask yourself how far you're willing to go to attract an agent, an editor, and readers. Think and act outside the box.

Amir concluded by pointing out what she didn't say a writer needs to get published: great writing. Skill certainly helps, but it's possible to be published without it if you work with a good editor or ghostwriter. "However, in a group full of writers, I would assume most of you can write, so that gives you a leg up on the rest of the world."

To learn about the services and advice that Amir offers to writers, visit copywrightcommunications.com. For her writings on spirituality and religion, visit purespiritcreations.com. WT

Prowling

Continued from page 2

lucrative at that—and with it gain leverage and direct access to market. As we join in this revolution, trade publishers will note a diminishing resource, and who knows, they may recognize they actually need us and become more solicitous. And we content providers may yet edge into the driver's seat of traditional publication, should we choose, or at least become part of the navigation. WT

Directory of Experts

Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? Send a message to networking@southbaywriters.com or to the club post office box and we will add your listing to our directory of experts.

Asia, Japan, China, Russia

Bill Belew
belew@panasianbiz.com

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Sara Aurich
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Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

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Betty Auchard
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Television Production

Woody Horn
408-266-7040

USMC and NASA/Ames

Terry DeHart
tdehart@earthlink.net

Ongoing Critique Groups

The Arm Wavers

Meets downtown San Jose on Wednesdays
Contact: Georgia Platts—
gplatts@comcast.net
Closed to new members at this time

Edie's Group

Meets in Santa Clara
Contact: Edie Matthews—
edie333@sbcglobal.net
Closed to new members at this time

Le Boulanger Writers

Meets at Le Boulanger
Pruneridge Shopping Center
Contact: Karen Hatley—
Sew1Machin@aol.com
Open to all

Northpoint Critique Group

Meets in Cupertino
Contact: Valerie Whong—
valeriewhong@att.net
Closed to new members at this time

Our Voices

Meets in Santa Clara
Meets every other Tuesday
7:15 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Genres: Fiction, nontechnical nonfiction, memoir
Contact: Dave LaRoche—
dalaroche@comcast.net
Two openings at this time

Valley Writers

Meets: Valley Village Retirement Center,
Santa Clara
Mondays 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
All genres
Contact: Marjorie Johnson—
marjohnson89@earthlink.net
Open to all

CWC Around the Bay

These are the published meeting times and locations for the other 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 on the third Sunday of each month, except for July and August, at 1:30 at the Oakland Public Library Main Branch. cwc-berkeley.com

Central Coast: Meets on the third Tuesday of each month except December at the Casa Munras Hotel, 700 Munras Avenue, Monterey. The dinner hour begins at 5:30 p.m. and the program begins at 7 p.m. centralcoastwriters.org

Fremont: Meets (except in July, December, and on holiday weekends) from 2-4 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of the month at Mountain Mikes Pizza, 35760 Fremont Blvd., in the Brookvale Shopping Center, one block south of Decoto Road in Fremont. Contact: Bob Garfinkle ragarf@earthlink.net or (510) 489-4779

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

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). mtdiablowriters.org

Redwood: Meetings are held on the first Sunday of the month (except for holiday weekends), from 3-5 p.m. at Copperfield's Books, 2316 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. redwoodwriters.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. sacramento-writers.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

Vampires

Meets: Orchard Valley Coffee House
Meets on Tuesdays
Genre: Full length fiction, screenplays
Contact: Danita Craft—blueize@me.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2010</h1>				1	2 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	3
4	5	6	7 7p Board Meeting LaRoche residence	8 7:30P Learning Center Westmont 1675 Scott Blvd. Santa Clara	9 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	10 11A Editors' Powwow
11	12 6P Regular Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn Jordan Rosenfeld	13	14	15	16 WritersTalk deadline 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	17 9A Young Writers Workshop
18	19	20	21	22 7:30P Learning Center Westmont 1675 Scott Blvd. Santa Clara	23 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	24 9:30A Blogging Workshop
25	26	27	28	29	30	
Future Flashes		May 11 6P Regular Dinner Meeting				

Stay Informed!

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

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

Check out the new
South Bay Writers
Blog
southbaywriters.com
Click SBW Journal—Blog

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

South Bay Writers Anthology



\$10
At the meeting.
On the website.
southbaywriters.com

Other Open Mics

Thursday Gig

Third Thursday, 6:30–9:30 p.m.
411 E. Campbell Ave., Campbell
Stone Griffin Gallery

10Ten Gallery

Last Friday, 6:30–10:00 p.m.
1010 E. Taylor St., San Jose
Al Preciado's home

Poets@Play

Second Sunday 1 p.m.–4 p.m.
1650 Senter Rd., San Jose
Markham House History Park

Poetry Center San Jose Readings

Art Object Gallery
1st Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.
(September–May)
592 North Fifth St., San Jose

Willow Glen Library
2nd Mondays, 7:00 p.m.
1157 Minnesota Ave., San Jose

Free admission.

See pcsj.org for 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, April 13, 6:00 p.m.

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

Jordan Rosenfeld

Author of *Make A Scene:
Crafting a Powerful Story One
Scene at a Time*

WritersTalk deadline is *always* the 16th of the month preceding the month of issue, and is *always* listed on the calendar inside the back cover.

