



# WRITERSTALK

Volume 18  
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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

## August Speaker

### Patricia Volonakis Davis—Harlot's Sauce

by Colin Seymour

You wouldn't name your daughter Puttanesca if you knew what it meant. Salsa Puttanesca is a pasta sauce so simple that a prostitute has time to cook it between assignments. But identifying your book with Puttanesca apparently can give it a good reputation.

For Patricia Volonakis Davis, our August guest speaker, Salsa Puttanesca was the secret ingredient to the success of her memoir, the kind of secret sauce that might put your own memoir over the top. *Harlot's Sauce: A Memoir of Food, Family, Love, Loss, and Greece* is the book, inspired by her seven years living in Greece mismatched with a Greek-American husband. Harlot's sauce is also what ties the other elements of her subtitle to the Greek motif, and she'll tell us how and why on August 10.

The Greek motif may be what draws the reader, the distinctive element a memoir needs to attract attention. Volonakis Davis probably could entertain us the entire hour by regaling us with details of life in Greece, where she knew she was a fish out of water from the get-go. That's where the focus was well into the project. *Amerikanaki* was the working title. "If a Greek calls you an Amerikanaki, you're small and little," says Volonakis Davis, 54, who lives in Marin County.

That's how she felt then, but there was much more to the book than that. And that's where her Southern Italian grandmother's Salsa Puttanesca became the impetus. "I realized," says Davis, "that the sauce was a character in the story."

It seems the grandmother's second husband had died, quite coincidentally, after eating some. The Greek connection was that Patricia's husband wouldn't eat harlot's sauce because it had killed the step-grandfather.

Harlot's sauce had a more universal impact than that, of course. "I realized that those women had limited choices, but they made something delicious with it. When I went to Greece, that was my option. It was up to me whether I was going to make something delicious out of it."

A delicious metaphor, but for a whole book? "The sauce was already there," Volonakis Davis says, "but I didn't (originally) think of it as the theme of the story." Once she realized it could constitute such a broad theme, it still required artistry to slather it throughout the book. We can gain a lot of insight for our own memoirs when she tells us how she did the slathering.

That's not usually Volonakis Davis's approach as a speaker (although there's a video on her website in which she shows how to prepare harlot's sauce). She



Patricia Volonakis Davis

MEMOIR

## Taking My Imagination for a Ride

by Marjorie Johnson

*A Missouri mule from Arkansas went down to Tennessee*

*Hee Haw, Hee Haw, Hee Haw  
Took one look at the folks down there  
Said, "It ain't no place for me."*

*"Hee Haw," sang he, "Haw Hee Haw Hee  
Haw Hee."*

*The old mule sang, "Hee Haw."*

The song was recorded on one side of a thick disk the size of a dinner plate but twice as heavy, a flat platter that would shatter if dropped. My father had several albums and a three-foot stack of loose records piled under his workbench. He would take a record out of its paper sleeve from a six-inch thick album of singles, hand-crank the phonograph, put the record on the felt turntable, and carefully place the needle arm into a groove at the outside of the disk. The polished oak box under the turntable showed a dog listening to a gramophone horn, "His Master's Voice," the RCA trademark. The 1910 phonograph didn't use electricity and it didn't have high-fidelity sound or a volume control. With a more modern phonograph in the living room, my mother had banished it to the garage.

The garage in Nevada City evolved, during the twenty-five years that my father was retired, into a long and narrow structure with two step-down rooms added behind, a bay window bulging out on the south side, and a funnel through a knothole on the windowless north side only three feet from the neighbor's fence. The funnel

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# President's Challenge

by Bill Baldwin  
President, South Bay Writers

## Between the Conference and the BBQ

I'm a day behind writing this, but so much material lay on the horizon, I couldn't bring myself to start writing until now. And even now—the BBQ isn't until this afternoon—what sort of material will gush forth there? Still, I have to actually write sometime—but isn't life always a work in progress?

I've just (well, last night) returned from the first annual Capitol City Young Writers Conference in San Rafael (it was actually in San Anselmo—close enough!). According to its website, "Capitol City Young Writers (CCYW) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education and inspiration of young writers. CCYW's goal is to educate members on the art and craft of writing and to provide opportunities for young writers to pursue their writing and literary dreams."

Much like the California Writers Club: "Our organization is dedicated to educating writers of all levels and disciplines in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work."

Details of the sentence jump out at me: Educating. Writers of all levels. All disciplines. The craft of writing. Marketing. I intend to keep these goals in mind during my tenure as president (which you have again honored me with by electing me).

Here we are, as T. S. Eliot said in "The Four Quartets." (If you haven't read it, think of finding it. If you don't want to actually read it, consider skimming through to get an idea of what's in there. Reading stuff you don't usually read can be a real eye-opener.) "Here we are," he says, "in the Middle Way." And here *we* are.

Last Wednesday our new board held its first meeting. This afternoon, the club will meet for its annual summer BBQ. Our East of Eden Conference is scheduled for the end of September. What will South Bay Writers and the California Writers Club do in this coming year? What will *you* do with your writing? What are you going to *write*? Not only that: What are you going to *market*?

I heard some great talks at the Capitol City Young Writers Conference. I heard a great talk from Paul Kaufman about (among other things) working for good causes and celebrating the human spirit. I heard David Corbett talk about the emotional impact of writing. Don't be afraid of your failures or the emotions they evoke—they are your material. Embrace them!

If we only learn writing by writing, then how do we learn to write? How do we keep going when we don't write as well as we want to? What do we want? Why do we write? How can we make a difference with our writing? We (and the CWC) do not exist only for ourselves. We also exist for our community. How can we serve that community? What can we do for you—and them? WT



## California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— 0 —

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### Join 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.



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

### 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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# Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx  
Editor

## I got it



It's kind of embarrassing to say this right out loud in front of a bunch of people, but I long ago learned that if I'm having trouble with something, then probably somebody else is, too. So here goes:

It used to be virtually impossible for me to make characters do anything wrong or stupid. It doesn't matter that in nearly every movie or book some character does something wrong or stupid in the first few minutes or the first few pages, and then, instead of

trying to set matters right, he lies, tries to get out of the situation by devious means, or denies that he might be subject to consequences for his actions. Everything goes downhill from there. And so a story unfolds.

From speakers at SBW meetings, in textbooks, in classes, and in critique groups, I've been urged to torture my protagonist. Put him in the worst possible situation, they say, and then make things even worse still. Get your character stuck up a tree, then have somebody come along and throw rocks at him. I've heard it I don't know how many times, but I still couldn't do it.

A few weeks ago I was rereading a story I had started writing several years ago. I still thought the idea was good, but the writing was deadly boring. I'd sit down at the keyboard and the engineer-technical writer part of my mind would immediately overpower the creative writer part, and I'd logically and dully plod along from Point A to Point B and maybe even to Point C, with my characters turning left when they should turn left and turning right when they should turn right, before I realized that nothing was happening. A character who never got into threatening or dangerous situations, who never did anything wrong or risky, and who couldn't even turn left when he should turn right didn't have much of a story to tell.

At one point in that dreary story the main character gets into a situation in which he faces risk of embarrassment—not threat or danger, mind you, merely embarrassment—and you know what I did. Of course I made the character able to get out of the situation without being embarrassed. But when I read those words *this* time, I got it. I stopped dead in my tracks and said to myself, that isn't right. He has to be embarrassed.

I went back to the keyboard with a fresh copy of the story and this time, possibly for the first time in my life, I let a character get into a spot. Larry was embarrassed—and guess what! The character having suffered even the smallest of misfortunes, a number of things could happen. Suddenly all those words got more interesting, had the makings of a story, and became a lot more fun to write.

One man's enlightenment is, they say, another man's fishwrap, and I understand that my bugbear may not be yours. But having a small "Aha!" experience at long last was satisfying and encouraging, and it gives me hope for even more improvement in my writing. WT

## It Takes Only One Little Click

Renew your membership in South Bay Writers online. It's easy, easy, easy.

Go to [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com) and click on "How to renew" on the right-hand side of the home page. User-friendly prompts lead you all the way to membership through June 30, 2011.

If you dislike online business, send a check for \$45 to CWC South Bay Writers, P. O. Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055, Attn: Marjorie.

**Deadline: August 10!**

## What Page Are We On?

### Probably More Than One

by Colin Seymour

VP and Program Chair

We may settle humbly for self-publishing or publishing online. But we'd still greatly prefer to score the powerhouse agent who can sell that wrongly neglected manuscript to a prestigious publisher who gets it displayed in the window of Barnes & Noble. Chasing that dream has led us almost invariably to the *Writer's Digest* nexus, where we learn how to turn agents and publishers on, or more cogently, how not to turn them off.

I discovered South Bay Writers because of a listing for our East of Eden writers conference in a *Writer's Digest* reference book. There may be other writers groups and seminars in Silicon Valley, but the *Writer's Digest* tie-in clearly stamps SBW as a group for writers who have tapped into that world of big-time publishing and may still be hung up on it.

However, the extent to which that nexus is SBW's focal point is now up for debate. If there are reasons that mindset is spoiling the club for a significant number of members, particularly as it pertains to the guest speakers lineup at our monthly meetings, we ought to discuss them.

As I take on the task of lining up monthly speakers, I'm keeping in mind that there should be an instructional angle to presentations more often than there has been recently, although I think that *WritersTalk* and our workshops perform that role better than our meetings can. Others may be dissatisfied with the club's thrust in ways that have yet to surface.

I don't want to be seen as a shill for the status quo in SBW. Both the intellectual and social climate at our meetings are milder than they ought to be.

Our recent election was comparatively rousing, although in a more divisive way than we would have liked. We clearly have disagreements among us. These need to be enunciated clearly and enumerated accurately if we expect change for the better.

## What Writers Can Learn from American Idol

by Victoria M. Johnson



Victoria M. Johnson  
Contributing Editor

Here's what writers can learn from watching *American Idol*.

1. Most of the people who want to be singers have absolutely no talent. Watch the audition episodes if you don't believe me. While those contestants deserve kudos for having the courage to chase their dreams, they are clearly not ready for the big leagues. They thankfully get weeded out rather quickly. It's the same with writers. Most people who claim they want to be writers lack the talent. I'm not saying that to be mean. You know people who boasted that they whipped out their novel over their two-week vacation. Everyone thinks they can write a novel and there are those who send out their work before it's ready. The publishing system weeds out most of them.

2. If you believe the contestants in their backstage interviews, successful singers sing to improve their craft. They didn't just drop out of a turnip truck. They practiced the art of singing. Hmmm . . . surely you've heard the phrase, writers write. Writing is how writers practice their craft.

3. Idol contestants, through the course of the episodes, also take risks; they challenge themselves with their song choices and they listen to the experts brought in to offer tips. Writers should take risks, too. Write outside your comfort zone once in a while and see

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My contention that we are notably attentive to the publishing establishment and my contention that we are artistically bent regardless of publication success, are starting points for that discussion. Let's have at it. WT

what happens. It never hurts to bring in experts of your own, either by going to a conference or workshop or reading an article or writing book. Then put what you learn into practice. See item #2.

4. It's obvious that singers need more than talent. Just as with writers, they need that something extra to make them stand out. I think it is creativity, a unique talent, and self-knowledge that give both singers and writers that spark.

5. Cream rises to the top. It really does. Just as you watch one contestant after another sing and you think they're pretty good, along comes one who knocks your socks off and you're surprised and you're thrilled. Suddenly the other singers don't seem all that good anymore. Readers want to be surprised and thrilled, too. It's not enough to write a good book. You have to knock their socks off.

6. When judges say you have no talent or you should quit, you need to shake it off and persevere. Three of the most popular *American Idol* contestants did not win on the show! Jennifer Hudson went on to win an Oscar for her singing and acting in *Dreamgirls*. Chris Daughtry came in fourth but has the third-highest record sales of any Idol contestant. And Clay Aiken has starred on Broadway and enjoyed multi-platinum success with his debut album. What if these contestants had given up after the judges sent them packing?

What the *American Idol* contestants can teach us writers is that no matter what happened on the show, they continued to pursue their dream. Just as some of them will never have a hit record, some of us will never get published. But in this day and age we have options. Singers can upload their songs on iTunes or YouTube. We writers can self-publish or e-publish. Let America decide, rather than a few judges or editors. WT

When you are in a fury, it is a wonderful time to write. It will be brilliant, provided you write about what you are furious at.

—Brenda Ueland

# Good Friends, Good Food, Good Fun: Hospitality at East of Eden

by Cathy Bauer, Hospitality Chair

The East of Eden Conference doesn't happen overnight. A lot of preplanning is involved. Caterers must be secured, menus planned, arrangements made for books to be sold, and, of course, little things that make the conference more enjoyable, like flowers on the tables, afternoon snacks and the raffle.

Good food makes a good conference. Food falls in line of importance right after keynote speakers and presenters. It is also the most expensive part of the conference. We spent several weeks and made several trips to Salinas to locate who we thought would be the best caterer. We sampled food, always a hard job, talked with the providers, and

even solicited reviews to ensure the attendees got the most for their money.

Everyone wants books at the conference. Authors want to sell their books. Attendees want to purchase and have them autographed. Barnes & Noble has been contracted to set up a bookstore in the lobby, and we're in the process of supplying them a list of books the authors requested to be sold. This year we are making it easier for self-published presenters to sell their books by providing a table and a sales person to handle the transaction.

In the past, we have had a raffle and donated the proceeds to the Salinas Public Library and other organizations.

A variety of items have been offered, books, jewelry, electronics and even a quilt. This year's raffle is still under construction.

It is little things that make the conference more pleasant. Presenters and keynote speakers receive goody bags upon their arrival, snacks are provided to supply energy to get through the afternoon, and the tables are decorated with flowers and candles just for the ambience.

It is the goal of the Hospitality Committee to make the East of Eden Writers Conference a pleasant environment for learning and an enjoyable experience. WT

## New Members

by Jackie Mutz

Sometimes we cannot keep up with our new members; they join so quickly. These are some interesting new members who became part of SBW during the last month or so.



Jackie Mutz  
Contributing Editor

**Allan Cobb** joined South Bay Writers after members of Karen Hartley's critique group encouraged him to attend the monthly meetings. His writing focus is "superhero romantic suspense novels, screwball contemporary romance novels, and off-the-wall poems." He also a self-described "reluctant cartoonist" and professionally is an expert in telecom preparedness during catastrophic events. In his spare time, Allan is active in Toastmaster's, a public speaking organization. Email him at [allanquill@gmail.com](mailto:allanquill@gmail.com).

**Richard Robbins** became a member of South Bay Writers because his wife **Cathy** had joined and she took him to one of the meetings. Two meetings later, he has enjoyed meeting and talking with other members. While teaching Russian History at University of New Mexico for almost 40 years, he spent much time in the Soviet Union and Russia doing research beginning in

1967. As an historian who is a specialist in Russian history, Richard "has written several monographic works on Russian institutional history," and is currently writing a biography of Vladimir Dzhunkovsky, Governor of Moscow 1905-1912, an important individual during the latter part of the 19th and 20th centuries. The book is more than just a biography of one man's life; it encompasses the "history of Russia from the 'Great Reforms' of Alexander II to the 'Great Terror' of Joseph Stalin." It is meant for those interested in Russian history from a nonacademic standpoint. He is also interested in "participating in a critique group that focuses on the problems of writing non-fiction and especially biography."

**Don Redmon** and his wife, **Jackie**, have attended one meeting (the election one) and attended an open mic—he writes poetry/prose when the mood strikes. And is currently "working on graphic novels, a real novel, and some other things." He has also published technical articles on "internal combustion air flow and general IC engine tech and history articles for various magazines." See his website [replikamaschinen.com](http://replikamaschinen.com). A thirty-five-year veteran in the motorcycle and automotive fields, in racing and now vintage restoration, he has an impressive racing background. You can contact Don to learn more at [replikad@gmail.com](mailto:replikad@gmail.com).

**Inga Silva** came to South Bay Writers after receiving good feedback from friends who belong to other CWC chapters. She is currently finishing up a mystery novel, the beginning of a series, and enjoys writing humorous pieces as well. A part-time Trauma/Emergency Room RN, she also teaches freshman composition at SISU, an interesting combination. Inga is also part of a mystery writing group that meets in Oakland twice a month.

Make sure to introduce yourself to a new member or guest at the next meeting. We are an interesting bunch, growing all the time—what stories we have to share in the oral and written tradition. WT

## Odd August

Periodically look ahead.  
It's strange but  
While the days are hot:  
Submissions you write  
Are for months that are not.  
There's a lag  
Till a mag.'s "put to bed."

—Pat Bustamante

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## Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

Hard to believe summer is more than half over, with lazy lounging on those hot days and spending time with fellow writers at the annual South Bay Writers BBQ at Edie Matthews' home. Hope everyone enjoyed themselves.

Because there was no regular meeting, writer success stories are thin this month:

- **Victoria Johnson**, contributing editor to *WT*, recently received word that Avalon Books has bought her first romance novel, tentatively titled *The Doctor's Dilemma*. The book is set for publication in early 2011. Congratulations, Victoria!
- **Carolyn Donnell's** short story "For You, Franz" won an honorable mention at the Frontiers in Writing 2010 June conference in Amarillo, Texas.



Frank's the one in the middle.

- On a different note, member SBW **Frank Johnson** made a debut of sorts during the San Jose Repertory Theater's presentation of *The Marvelous Wonderettes*. He was recruited from the audience to play high school teacher Mr. Lee, and remained on stage during both acts. He even danced with one of the Wonderettes.

Summer is also a reminder of how quickly time passes even as the days are longer. Remember to keep up that writing regimen and send an email to [accolades@southbaywriters.com](mailto:accolades@southbaywriters.com) telling me about your writing successes. It doesn't matter how large or small—whatever you as writers share encourages others to persevere. Looking forward to hearing from you! WT

## Foothill Writers Conference: Gone But Not Forgotten

by Carolyn Donnell

"The Foothill Writers' Conference did not take place in 2010 due to budget issues. Please check back for updates regarding a possible conference in 2011." The sad news from Foothill College is posted at [foothill.edu/la/conference/](http://foothill.edu/la/conference/).

The conference is always an excellent opportunity for learning new skills and making contacts among fellow writers and mentors, especially for the money.

Money. That is why it didn't fly this year. I was looking forward to going again.

I wrote an article about my experiences last year—"Foothill College Writers Conference: Advice and Inspiration"—that was published in the August 2009 *WritersTalk*.

Al Young, California Poet Laureate from 2005 through 2008, conducted one of the workshops I attended. "Your Own Fake Book: Composing and Writing to Music" used listening to various types of music to coax inspiration onto the paper: a Chopin nocturne that softened the mood; a Latin piece with visions of blazing, sun-scorched deserts; a tango played by Yo Yo Ma with Astor Piazzolla; something with violin and guitar; and a rock band that reminded me of the music from Austin City Limits.

I called my resulting verses Raw Data From an Al Young Workshop. They are not polished, although my *Tango* was published on a blog ([cafegirlchronicles.wordpress.com/2010/05/27/the-poetry-of-tango/](http://cafegirlchronicles.wordpress.com/2010/05/27/the-poetry-of-tango/)).

The blog owner was kind enough to comment on the poem: "Those of you who dance tango will know that she has captured the essence of the dance. And those of you who have yet to tango will have an inkling how it feels when you do."

I want her to be my publicist. That made me smile, and I owe it all to Al Young and the conference (and a little to Yo Yo and Astor). I will definitely miss the conference this year. I will try

## Railspace

by Steve Wetlesen

RAILSPACE: My newly minted and coined down-to-earth, practical, higher dimensional word (yet embedded within our three dimensional mundane world) referring to:

(1) The strange sense of place, position, location, and connection that railroad commuters and riders get wherever everything and everywhere within about a half mile, walking distance, or a brief bus or tram ride from any station up and down a railway corridor seems "close" and "connected," whereas things farther away from the tracks seem distant, even though, as the crow flies, they are actually much nearer than some faraway station points on the tracks. Thus, for instance, from the perspective of the Mountain View commuter train station, most of San Jose, being detached from significant rail connection, seems like the back side of the moon, whereas portions of San Francisco, several times farther away, appear to be part of your intimate neighborhood.

(2) The otherworldly Universe you seem to have entered when familiar locales such as Mount Shasta and the Central Valley north of Sacramento and up to Chico look like utterly different and alien places to passengers on the Coast Starlight as opposed to what you see when you're driving up nearby freeways such as Interstate 5—actually, it is everything observed from a quite novel (to observers) angle and vantage point that hurl the viewer into an entirely foreign way of perceiving the same places. (Also, you go past structures that the freeways like to conceal, such as agricultural silos, which exude a totally different atmosphere!) WT

To Johanna Friessen

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First, find out what your character wants. Then just follow him.

—Ray Bradbury

to keep the lessons learned fresh in my mind and hope that 2011 will be kinder to all of us than 2010 has been. WT

# Writecraft: Seeking Feedback

by Lisa Eckstein

Critique, like revision, is an essential part of the writing process and one that many writers dread. It's scary to share your carefully crafted words for the explicit purpose of learning



Lisa Eckstein  
Contributing Editor

what's wrong with them. But there's no way around it: if you dream of the day when thousands of people will read your book, you have to start by letting a few people read your manuscript.

It's not trivial to find readers who can give you honest, useful feedback. Family and friends may be eager to read your work in progress, but don't expect to hear more than a few (biased) compliments when they do. Most people, even frequent readers, don't have experience reacting with much more than an "I liked it" or "I didn't like it." You may be able to coax out a more detailed opinion with questioning, but when sharing with people close to you, it's often better to accept the ego boost gratefully and then look for real critique elsewhere.

Other writers are a natural choice for feedback. They're already accustomed to analyzing stories in great detail and they understand that when you hand them a manuscript, it's not going to be as polished as a finished book. You can join a critique group or find a writing friend to trade manuscripts with one-on-one. An added benefit of mutual critique is that as you practice responding to the work of others, you'll get better at evaluating your own writing.

You may also know nonwriters who have experience thinking critically about stories. Anyone in a book club is a good candidate. Or ask that friend with a book review blog or the one who has lots of opinions whenever you watch movies together. Remember that reading for critique and offering thoughtful comments takes time. If you won't be reciprocating the favor with a critique of your own, consider treating your reader to a meal while you discuss their feedback.

Some writers prefer to develop early drafts without any outside interference, delaying critique until they feel the manuscript is as perfect as they can make it. There's nothing wrong with this, but I'll argue the value of seeking feedback sooner. A critique after the first draft or the initial revision stage may point out broad plot or character problems that it's better to discover before you fine-tune your story. Just as you should expect to go through several rounds of revision, prepare for critique at multiple points and line up enough readers that you can keep getting fresh eyes.

When giving anyone a manuscript for critique, tell them what you'd like feedback on and how much detail would be useful at your current stage. If you already know about areas that need work or that will change drastically in the next draft, state that up front. You could even present your readers with a few written questions to respond to, such as "How did you feel about the main characters?" and "Was there anything that confused you?" Agree in advance whether you'll receive the feedback in conversation or in writing, on the manuscript or in a separate document. Keep it as easy as possible for your reader to do you this favor, and be sure you're on the same page (as it were). You usually can't expect a line-by-line edit; make certain your reader knows that's not what you're asking for.

Feedback isn't easy to take, especially when it's a new experience. It helps to keep in mind that every piece of criticism you hear is a chance to make your

manuscript better. That doesn't mean you'll revise according to all the feedback you receive. You have to use your judgment and knowledge of your story to decide which changes are appropriate. One indication of a real problem area is that multiple readers call it out. Another sign is a comment you really hate hearing: chances are, it's confirmation of something you already suspected was wrong.

As the author of a work, you can't know what it's like to read it as someone who didn't write it. But if the intended audience is people who aren't you, start finding some of them and asking what they think. Your first readers should never be agents, editors, or contest judges, because if they are, you've wasted an opportunity by sending out work that is less than the best you can make it. When you seek and pay attention to feedback, you move toward the goal of a perfect manuscript.

More critique assistance:

- Writer Anne Mini offers advice about finding first readers and soliciting useful feedback in a series of articles: [annemini.com/?p=2697](http://annemini.com/?p=2697), [annemini.com/?p=2719](http://annemini.com/?p=2719), [annemini.com/?p=2868](http://annemini.com/?p=2868)
- *The Writing & Critique Group Survival Guide* by SBW's own Becky Levine covers all aspects of giving and receiving feedback.
- For help finding or starting a critique group, email [networking@southbaywriters.com](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.com). See Carolyn Donnell's series in recent

*Continued on page 13*

**East of Eden  
writers  
Conference**

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Salinas Community Center  
Join us in Steinbeck Country

One low price includes:  
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# SBW Annual Barbecue and Picnic



Apala Egan and Roy Mize.



New SBW President Bill Baldwin.



Audry Lynch and Sarah Mandel.



Betty Auchard, Molly Westmoreland, and Frank Johnson.



Marjorie Horn and Marjorie Johnson.



Colin (new SBW VP) and Marcie Seymour.



Dave LaRoche and Jerry Mulenburg.



Newly elected CWC Board President Bob Garfinkle.



BBQ hostess Edie Matthews and Valerie Whong.



Karen Sweet, Sylvia Halloran (new SBW Secretary), and Andrea Galvac.



# Cutting Words

by *Meredy Amyx*

Some writers are sparing with words. Ernest Hemingway is the acknowledged master of the minimalist style:

Nick looked on at the moon, coming up over the hills.

“It isn’t fun any more.”

He was afraid to look at Marjorie. Then he looked at her. She sat there with her back toward him. He looked at her back. “It isn’t fun any more. Not any of it.”

She didn’t say anything. He went on. “I feel as though everything was gone to hell inside of me. I don’t know, Marge. I don’t know what to say.”

—“The End of Something” (1925)

Thirteen sentences, 79 words. I don’t know whether that kind of economy came naturally to Hemingway or he had to work at it, but that’s not me. This description of a sudden recollection is the sort of thing that comes naturally to me:

Perhaps a shoebox on a remote shelf in the closet of a deserted room in the sprawling mansion of her memories had tipped under the accumulated weight of arachnid passages and fallen with a thump on the closet floor, attracting the attention of the memorybot, who trundled it forward for her surprised inspection.

One sentence, 53 words.

At least I deleted it later.

Academic work probably brought out the worst in me. All those papers with the minimum required length were never a problem for me; ask me for ten pages and I’d write thirty. Here’s a selection from a college term paper in philosophy of language:

Now, if the expressions in a particular category at the highest level (level *m*, in Chomsky’s scheme) are mutually substitutable, and if the categories at each level are refinements of the categories at preceding levels, then it follows that all the elements of a given category at level *m* occurred together in a single category with other elements at all lower levels; and therefore that any given expres-

sion in a category at some lower level *g* may be mutually substitutable with some of the other elements in that category but not necessarily with all.

One sentence, 94 words. Practically enough for an entire Hemingway short story.

So I’m not the one to model concision for you. Give me a good old complex-compound sentence any day, one with subordinate clauses and multiple modifiers and serial predicates and parenthetical expressions and relative clauses and maybe even a couple of phrasal verbs, something big enough to expand your lungs like a fresh gust of salt-laden sea air, not some string of choppy sentences so short you keep tripping over periods and come up gasping.

That’s fine—until you suddenly want brevity. You’re looking at an *upper* limit. A short story contest. A publication with strict space requirements. A genre definition. Flash fiction may not have an absolute maximum—some say 300 words, some say 500—but 6000 isn’t it.

When something compels you to cut words, you may make an interesting discovery. I did. Here it is: cutting words improves your writing. Why?

1. Tightness requires greater focus. Focus helps you clear away the mush.
2. Brevity enhances your style, just like toning muscles.
3. Disciplining your verbosity also helps discipline your thought and aids clarity.

Moreover:

4. If you have a word limit, you can stay within it.
5. You increase your chances of holding your audience to the end when the end comes sooner.

And for me, the kicker:

6. To parse one of those magnificent long, complex, convoluted sentences, a reader must have as good a mastery of grammatical structures as the author of the sentence, and that is simply not a safe assumption to make about a general audience. In other words, if you don’t simplify, you won’t be understood.

Until a few years ago, I evaded length

restrictions wherever they threatened. If my story was too long for a given journal, I didn’t submit it. If a newsletter editor asked me for an article of 1000 words, I’d say, “Here, I got it down to 1600. Is that okay?” Flash fiction? Forget it.

What really forced me to get out the hatchet—and then the scissors, the scalpel, and finally the tweezers—was the 24-hour short story contest ([writersweekly.com/misc/contest.php](http://writersweekly.com/misc/contest.php)). I signed up for it on a lark and, at the signal, plunged in. The rules were firm and the maximum was nonnegotiable: 1100 words. My first draft was over by 600. Here’s a sampling of my cuts from that story.

**BEFORE** No one had to know she was going to go home and hide out with a handful of DVDs and a bottle of wine until it was safely over. (29)

**AFTER** No one knew she was planning to hide out with rented movies and a bottle of wine until it was safely over. (22)

**BEFORE** Growing up in a rundown tenement on the east side of town, subsisting through her young adulthood in a derelict rented trailer while she worked part-time at a coffee shop and carried a full course load, spending her first ten years of clinical practice living like a pauper while she repaid her student loans—she had been closer to such dreams than she ever would be again, no matter how affluent she became. (74)

**AFTER** Growing up in a rundown tenement, subsisting through college and graduate school on a part-time income, living like a pauper through her first decade of clinical practice while repaying her student loans, she had taken delight in little besides her brother. (41)

**BEFORE** Instead she had worked out her demons through her years of professional training, first her bachelor’s and then her master’s and finally her three thousand hours of clinical experience before licensing, in hopes of finding healing for herself even as she counseled her clients. (44)

**AFTER** She had battled her demons through her years of education and professional training in hopes of healing

*Continued on page 10*

## Uh-Oh

by Pat Bustamante

Maybe you have seen this guy. He panhandles by the 280 ramps.

On Moorpark Blvd. there was a bar next to a restaurant. Both burned down the year before my 73-year-old neighbor put her mind to the mystery. One poor soul, an assistant cook, perished in the roaring blaze.

Let's call the middle-aged homeless man "Edd"—he who strolled across the parking lot of that strip mall one year later. Myrna May recognized him as the prodigal son of longtime neighbors among the Rancho houses; now his home was under the freeway bridge where pigeons also roosted and cooed to a murmuring creek.

Edd was well known to the police as "volatile mental patient at large," but the pigeons never cared as long as he fed them crumbs. He had an income. Myrna May had never thought much about that until she watched, from her car parked in front of the drug store, as he walked past. His clothes looked neat and clean for a change, his auburn and gray hair unmussed, sleeked damply flat. He was smoking and had a satisfied air. No slouch, no shifty paranoid looks.

Easy to figure: it was midafternoon and the now-refurbished bar was open: he'd come from that direction. Was it possible he had emerged with pockets more full than when he entered? It was.

When Edd was angry, fires sprouted around him. Myrna May had personally doused one in a lumber stack, part of the years-back "Barrington Bridge" housing development which subtracted from Edd's turf, the old county dump (now nonexistent) along the stream.

A clean, shiny face Edd sported today under wet shiny hair. He had been in the men's room and washed. Maybe he had been in that bar's men's room for a long while? Maybe he had business there, earning his income: not unheard of for a man in his homeless situation.

The fierce fire had started at the bar, not in the restaurant kitchen next door as

*Continued on page 15*

## Cutting Words

*Continued from page 9*

herself even as she counseled her clients. (24)

**BEFORE** A bronzed windsurfer leaning into his sail as a plume of spray arcs against the blue, blue sea. (18)

**AFTER** A bronzed windsurfer leaning into his sail through an arc of glistening spray. (13)

**BEFORE** And then the baby came, and their joy was complete. Little Lucy, child of sweet smiles. Yes, here was her picture, a being from heaven, surpassing all hopes, the embodiment and concentration of all that was magnificent in the universe. Chloe stared at the photograph. (45)

**AFTER** And then came Lucy, child of sweet smiles, dearest baby ever born. Chloe stared at the infant's photograph. (18)

From 210 down to 118, a cut of 44% in just those five examples.

In the end I tallied 1099 words. I could have stopped exactly on 1100, but I went one more just as insurance.

The lesson of that experience was profound. All the preaching I'd ever heard on the virtues of conciseness suddenly made sense. Nothing brought it home like watching the effect on my own work. So many of what I'd thought were precious, essential words were superfluous. They were blubber. They were loose, lazy, sloppy excesses, wanting the bracing tautness of rigor. Even in this throwaway story, conceived, executed, and completed in 24 hours without time for reflection, a dull surface began to shine as I scrubbed away the sticky residue of useless words.

I didn't lose prolixity overnight. But I did warm to the exercise. I set myself the challenge of writing stories in exactly 100 words, no more and no less. The discipline of telling a story so briefly and to a precise word count was excellent practice in weighing each word and eliminating everything nonessential. Here are two examples:

### Late

Exhausted from working late, Sandy overslept and got up groggy. She

burnt herself with the curling iron and dropped it reflexively. It fell on her glasses, popping out a lens. She couldn't find the repair kit, so she drove to work without glasses and missed her exit.

Rushing onto the elevator, she fumbled her coffee. The woman she splashed swore at her, and Sandy burst into tears. The nice man who comforted her turned out to be a VP. They got married and lived happily ever after.

What if Sandy's repair kit had been in the drawer where it belonged?

### Tennis Racquet

Sheldon ordered the gear online using an account that Liz didn't know about: trim shorts and tee, \$79; cool footwear, \$109; powerhouse racquet, \$209. Rush delivery, \$84.92. Palms sweating, he called the pro shop and made a date with Caitlin.

He'd show that little gal what kind of juice he still had in him, you bet. That swinging blond ponytail, those muscular thighs: he felt the juice surge.

Sheldon donned the outfit. Set the timer on his camera. Posed, grinning.

Oh, dear.

Stuffed it in a Goodwill bag, tennis racquet and all.

Homeless guys could probably use a good workout.

I haven't lost my tendency to write a Mississippi of a sentence when a running brook would do. But I have learned that I can probably surrender a third of the words that I think I positively need. I've also learned that it can take three times as long to shorten a draft as it did to write it in the first place.

Thank goodness I'm out of space now, or here's where I'd have to place that terrible quote by either Mark Twain, Blaise Pascal, T.S. Eliot, or Samuel Johnson about writing a shorter letter if he'd had more time. Instead I have to say this:

Dear Editor: You gave me 1000 words. It's 1600. Is that ok? WT



# View from the Board

by Sylvia Halloran, Secretary

Outgoing and incoming board members met 7/14 at Bill Baldwin's: Dave LaRoche, Marjorie Johnson, Rosanne Davis, Colin Seymour, Dick Amyx, Bill Baldwin, Sylvia Halloran, Dale King, Carolyn Donnell, Loureen Giordano.

Meeting began 7:15 p.m.

Approved minutes of 6/2/2010 as corrected.

Approved minutes of 6/8/2010.

## Retiring Officer Reports

### President (Dave LaRoche)

SBW 2009 accomplishments:

- Executive Board agendas set annual objectives.
- Membership growth reached record 226.
- Quadrupled annual workshops including first two annual Young Writers Workshops.
- Meeting attendance up, hit 68 at June meeting; speaks to energy and interest.
- Policies and Protocols developed—nine preserving ideas and process for ordinary events and activities.
- Bylaws change added two Members-at-Large to board.
- Matthews-Baldwin Award inaugurated, presented three times.
- Contested offices (energy and interest).
- First anthology published.
- Maintained newsletter.
- Preserved healthy treasury.
- Maintained robust, active website and ancillaries. Thanks, Ro Davis!

### Vice-President (Bill Baldwin)

- Speaker 8/10 is Patricia Volonakis Davis, author of *Harlot's Sauce*. "Writing memoirs with an attention-grabbing angle."
- Future program suggestions sent to Colin.
- General desire for fewer success stories and more process of craft.
- Pitch Workshop 7/31, 10 a.m to 3 p.m. at Lookout.

### Treasurer (Richard Burns)

- Submitted by email.

- Richard Burns will continue with the books until the August transfer.

### Secretary (Loureen Giordano)

2009 Accomplishments:

- Wrote and distributed minutes, made corrections.
- Sent monthly notices of board meetings, requests for reports and RSVPs from board.
- Compiled reports as submitted, presented them at board meetings in absence of the reporters.
- Placed monthly Board meetings on the online Calendar.
- Participated in August's Executive Committee meetings to establish club priorities, plan coming activities.
- Provided new Secretary with past minutes.

### Central Board (Dave LaRoche)

Met July 11:

- Approval of Policy and Procedure changes:
  - ✓ Delayed until branch boards review as currently rewritten.
  - ✓ CB wants consolidated opinion from each branch before advancing the recommended changes. Dave needs board input.
- Agreed to fund 2011 LA Book Festival with \$550, SoCal branches to pay \$400 balance. Discussion questioned return compared to expense.
- Time Capsule items to Donna McCrohan-Rosenthal due by 8/31 - PO Box 484, Ridgecrest, CA 93556. mccrohan@ridgenet.net
- New state website in development
- Elections (by acclamation):
  - ✓ Pres—Bob Garfinkle, Fremont (new)
  - ✓ VP—David George, Mt Diablo (re-elected)
  - ✓ Sec—Carol Warren, High Desert (new)
  - ✓ Treas—Kathy Uban, TriValley (re-elected)
  - ✓ Casey Wilson appointed member-at-large on the exec committee and Scholarship Chair

## Committee Reports

### Membership (Marjorie)

- 66% of members renewed membership. Waiting for remaining 86.

- Considered lifetime memberships, calculated how long to live to break even.

### Newsletter (Dick Amyx)

- July issue of *WritersTalk* was 12 pages, printed and mailed 6/29. Press run was 226 dues-paid members, 12 comps, and 15 extras for a total of 253. Cost of July issue was \$264.11. The bill for \$296.30 includes \$32.19 for printing 453 copies of an East of Eden flyer, 303 copies of flyer for the preconference pitching workshop, and inserting copies of flyers into the *WritersTalks* (printing, \$17.01; inserting, \$15.18). Cost of flyers and insertion should not be charged to the *WritersTalk* account.
- Anthology: No action

### Programs (Bill Baldwin)

Included in VP report

### Conference (Dave LaRoche)

Tabled until Old Business

### Publicity (Edie)

No report.

### Hospitality (Cathy Bauer)

Dave reported that Cathy has resigned from hospitality to pursue writing.

### Webmaster (Rosanne Davis)

Announced resignation for October. Carolyn Donnell will take over after EoE conference.

### Open Mics (Bill Baldwin)

- Counts for open mics since last SBW Board meeting:
  - ✓ 6/4 (Almaden)—7
  - ✓ 6/11 (Santana Row)—10
  - ✓ 6/18 (Pruneyard)—11
  - ✓ 6/25 (Sunnyvale)—9
  - ✓ 7/2 (Almaden)—14
  - ✓ 7/9 (Santana Row)—10
- We average 10 readings per event
- No Knew Books on California Street, Palo Alto, is interested in hosting an event—an open mic?

### Workshops (Bill Belew)

No report.

## Old Business

### 2010 East of Eden Conference

Community Center status remains undecided, Steinbeck Center coalition with bid on the table. Rates could triple

*Continued on page 12*

# Just Add an “S”

by Mike Freda

Why is it that we make plurals so hard in this country? When I first started school, the teacher told us it was simple. “If you want to make the plural just add an ‘s’ at the end. One tree. Two trees. One book. Two books.” I ran home to tell my mother of my new-found knowledge, and she was very happy. We went outside and I excitedly spouted, “One horse, two horses. One pig, two pigs. One sheep, two—” as my mother gently interrupted. “I’m sorry, but it’s two sheep.” My enthusiasm began to waver as my education, little known to me, was just beginning.

In class the next day, we learned about the body. We have two eyes, two ears, two hands and two knees. My excitement returned, and I looked forward to telling my mother of my latest skill. “One eye. Two eyes. One ear. Two ears. One hand. Two hands. One foot, two—” as my mother calmly interrupted me once again. “I’m sorry, but it’s two feet.” My enthusiasm was dealt another blow.

Barely a week later, we were shown a movie explaining the importance of dental hygiene. “Look at all those teeth,” I thought to myself. But I was quickly confused by a whole new concept: teeth! Determined to make sense out of this information, I repeated it over and over to myself, committing it to memory.

By chance, the following weekend the fair came to town. Walking hand-in-hand, my mother and I approached a ticket booth. In the distance, there happened to be a second booth. As the latest lesson in plurals came into my mind, I excitedly cried out, “Look Mom, two beeth!” My mother was getting perplexed.

A month later, we went on an outing to the nearby woods. Forgetting my previous disillusionment, I happily demonstrated my knowledge. “Look Mom! Two squirrels. Two owls. Four blue jays. Two—” once again being mildly rebuked by that woman. “It’s two deer, sweetheart. There is no ‘s.’ Deer is already plural.” Although I knew that could not be possible, I pretended not to notice, because we had fried chicken in the picnic basket, and I

was hungry.

That evening, my mother surprised me with a special treat. “You are quite grown up now, you will like this fairy tale,” she cooed to me while we settled down for a new adventure. She was barely into the story; I was following along, pointing out the words with my finger, when a second wolf appeared upon the scene. “The two wolves,” my mother stated. I was certain there had been a mistake, because the plural of wolf must be wolfs, and I began to wonder if my mother might be in a conspiracy with the book company. This was confirmed in short order when we came upon fairies, not fairys. The final straw was the two-headed monster, as I recalled my very first lesson in plurals—one head, two heads! I closed my eyes and pretended to be asleep.

Not quite trusting my mother in these matters any longer, I found myself in the barber’s chair the very next Saturday morning. “This man looks trustworthy,” I thought, seeing that he was dressed in ironed shirt and slacks. Immediately trying my luck, I pulled one strand of hair out of my head. “One hair,” I said to the man, who smiled. Pulling a second strand out of my head, “two hairs” came out of my mouth as the barber murmured, “Very good.” When he finished his labor, my mother said, “Look at all that hair on the floor. You look clean and neat.” I was then fairly certain that my mother was going out of her mind, which was immediately confirmed when she exclaimed, “Oh, be careful with those scissors.” It was evident to all present, save my mother, that there were many hairs on the linoleum and the barber was clearly holding only one implement in his hand.

At a family gathering shortly thereafter, I saw aunts, uncles, and grandparents. I regaled them with my knowledge. I was still a child, as were my cousins. Although my mother referred to us as children, I knew she was not to be trusted; we were surely children. I said to my aunt, “One woman.” Standing next to each other my aunts were certainly two womans, continuing my discourse as I completely ignored my mother’s protestation.

I’m grown up now. I have seen west-

*Continued on page 13*

## View from the Board

*Continued from page 11*

if NSC does not prevail and CC operated by city (apparently current reservations will be honored). Should NSC succeed, however, we are promised support and to be charged the previously quoted fee. This seems likely.

- Promotion continues at high level, new brochure ready for distribution.
- Group rate: 4 or more at \$375 inaugurated.
- Jerry Mulenberg now Programs Coordinator; Danita Craft (Sponsors and Grants) resigned.
- Workshop and speaker slots filled, focus on agent acquisition.
- At last count (7/12) we are at 75%; 87 enrolled, 116 needed re estimated profile.
- Venue remains a question, as does enrollment. A decision re continuing with our effort will be made 8/24/2010.
- Thayer dropped from the Mystery Panel.

### NORCAL Group

- Next meet 8/7
- Leadership Seminar planned for 8/22
  - ✓ Steering committee working out details
  - ✓ Intended for new officers and potentials
  - ✓ Professional facilitator retained
- Writers Retreat at Pema Osel Ling planned for 10/20–22
- We need a process for updating and using speaker evaluation info available on NorCal Writers website.

### New Business

#### Current Vacancies

- Approval of Dale King as treasurer: Colin moved, Dave seconded; unanimous.
- Need replacement member at large.
- Dick defined qualifications for new editor of *WritersTalk*.

Next Meeting 8/4

Adjourned 9:05 wt

NOTE: *Dale King subsequently resigned as treasurer.*

## ***Taking My Imagination***

### ***Continued from page 1***

was a secret delight for three grandsons, who used it for a urinal. The twenty-foot long workbench held treasures such as quartz crystals and gold ore samples acquired during Dad's gold mining days. Under the workbench, a chest five feet long, three feet wide and three feet deep held replaced faucets and scraps of pipe, all things "perfectly good" that you might need someday.

The garage was so narrow that Dad's truck and Mom's sedan parked one behind the other. The vehicle in front had to be moved sixty feet along a narrow drive to the street to allow the one behind to drive out; Dad always parked in the front. My eighty-year-old father liked to sit in the cab of his Ford pickup, drink a beer, read the paper, and listen to his portable radio, but his driving was limited to moving the truck out to wash and polish it. He spent hours just sitting there, wishing he could still drive.

One day I climbed in beside him and asked, "Where are we going?"

He said, "I'm taking my imagination for a ride." And, no, he didn't want me to drive his big truck, The Green Giant, but I could ride with him if I didn't talk too much.

We sat silently. I remembered wonderful places Dad had taken me in years past: an abandoned apple orchard with a bramble of blackberries taken over by a black bear, a secret fishing hole with a three-foot trout. He loved to take his family—my mother, my younger sister, and me—for long rides. One day we drove across a wooden covered bridge spanning a deep river canyon along the old stagecoach route from Alleghany to Downieville with thousand-foot high hand-fitted stone walls supporting the road. On another trip, with red dust boiling out behind, we lurched along a rutted washboard road miles from anywhere, and he showed us brilliant and barren red clay banks reflected in a cyan blue lake, a remnant of hydraulic gold mining. My father knew every back road in Sierra and Nevada Counties, and he knew deserted gold mines and ghost towns from Timbuktu to Red Dog.

Dad especially liked stories about

rattlesnakes. He had once happened upon rattlesnakes hibernating in a cave, a hundred or so snakes tangled together in a ball. They come out in the spring to mate and to eat small rodents. Rattlesnake eggs hatch within the mother; eight to ten babies are born at once. The snakes' rattles are dried, hollow segments of skin, which, when shaken, make a whirring sound. If a snake warns you with its rattle, you will hear it, and you will run. So when I found a can of "rattlesnake eggs" in a souvenir shop in Reno, I mailed it to Dad. He called me to say that he put the eggs in the cellar and checked them every day to see if they had hatched. "But, Dad," I said, "don't you remember that rattlesnakes bear live young? You taught me that yourself. It's just a joke; you don't need to check it every day."

Dad's strokes left him a little unpredictable. He broke every clock in the house when he tried to reset them after a power failure, and he snapped off every knob on the television set because he would forget which way to turn things. But Mom took loving care of him, and he adored her. For fifty-three years, Dad never forgot their wedding anniversary, and he always bought Mom a heart-shaped box of chocolates for Valentine's Day. When my mother died unexpectedly from a sudden heart attack, it broke my father's heart. With Valentine's Day approaching, he couldn't stand the pain. He taped a picture of my mother onto the dashboard of The Green Giant and took her for a ride.

Melody, Dad's young next-door neighbor, heard the truck running in the garage. When she opened the small door on the south side, the hot gases knocked her down. The fire truck came too late to save Daddy. If he had not put a section of garden hose from the exhaust into the cab, you might have thought it was an accident. The garage didn't catch fire, but the wooden floor under the truck was charred to a depth of two inches by the heat from the truck's overheated exhaust system.

The pile of platters remained, but the old phonograph no longer worked. The newer records on top of the pile curled and stretched into sculpted art forms, never to be heard again.

In my mind's eye, Dad and Mom are

driving still in The Green Giant looking for Valhalla or wherever Welsh gold miners go, maybe a rift valley with lots of blackberries, trout, and black sand for gold panning. WT

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## ***August Speaker***

### ***Continued from page 1***

applauds our efforts to steer her in such a constructive direction.

"What's your memoir hook? I think that's really important. Everyone we talk to has an interesting life. Anybody can write a memoir, but how can you make it stand out? There's got to be something that makes it universally appealing."

And maybe you'll find your something on August 10, with a bit of Salsa Puttanesca on your breath. WT

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## ***Writecraft***

### ***Continued from page 7***

WT issues for profiles of the groups that SBW members belong to.

Finally, I'm always seeking feedback! I'd be happy to hear what you think of "Writecraft" and what topics you'd like to see in future columns. Email me at [lisa@lisaeckstein.com](mailto:lisa@lisaeckstein.com) with ideas. For even more of my thoughts about writing and revising, visit my new blog at [lisaeckstein.com](http://lisaeckstein.com). WT

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## ***Just Add an "S"***

### ***Continued from page 12***

erns that showed one or more buffalo, sometimes referred to as buffaloes. One, two, or more bison. I now understand that the plural of potato is potatoes, but that the plural of piano is pianos. I understand about fish (plural) and mice (also plural). I know that more than one person makes people. When I cut my pie into four pieces I have four quarters. If I cut it in half I have two halves. Eight pieces, I have eighths. I could continue but I will spare you. You may consider it quite unpleasant.

My dear mother is now departed and I no longer hold any delusions toward that person. She no doubt was quite unable, as I am still unable, to comprehend what exactly is the criterion, or should I say are the criteria, that creates plurals in this country. 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](mailto: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, Blogging

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### Astrology, Singing

Sara Aurich  
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### Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle  
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### Character Development

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### Counseling

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### Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg  
[geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net)

### Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber  
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[marthaengber.blogspot.com](http://marthaengber.blogspot.com)

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

Rick Deutsch  
[MrHalfDome@gmail.com](mailto:MrHalfDome@gmail.com); 408-888-4752

### Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold  
[maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net)

### Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/ Psychology

Dave Breithaupt  
[dlbmlb@comcast.net](mailto:dlbmlb@comcast.net)

### Library Science

Molly Westmoreland  
[mulcarend@hotmail.com](mailto:mulcarend@hotmail.com)

### Marketing and Management

Suzy Paluzzi, MBA  
[jomarch06@yahoo.com](mailto:jomarch06@yahoo.com)

### Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson  
[Marjohnson89@earthlink.net](mailto:Marjohnson89@earthlink.net)

### Philosophy, Religion, Evolution, Construction, Crafts, Norse

Darwin Mathison  
[olddinosaur@comcast.net](mailto:olddinosaur@comcast.net)  
510-471-8944

### Profile Writing

Susan Mueller  
[susan\\_mueller@yahoo.com](mailto:susan_mueller@yahoo.com)

### Real Estate, Horses, Remodeling, Southwest History

Reed Stevens  
[reedstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:reedstevens@earthlink.net); 408-374-1591

### Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard  
[Btauchard@aol.com](mailto:Btauchard@aol.com)

### Television Production

Woody Horn  
408-266-7040

### USMC and NASA/Ames

Terry DeHart  
[tdehart@earthlink.net](mailto:tdehart@earthlink.net)

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## Ongoing Critique Groups

### The Arm Wavers

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

### Writers' Salon

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

### Le Boulanger Writers

Meets at Le Boulanger  
Pruneyard Shopping Center, Campbell  
Contact: Karen Hartley—  
[Sew1Machin@aol.com](mailto:Sew1Machin@aol.com)  
All genres; open to all

### Northpoint Critique Group

Meets in Cupertino  
Contact: Valerie Whong—  
[valeriewhong@att.net](mailto: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](mailto: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.  
Contact: Marjorie Johnson—  
[marjohnson89@earthlink.net](mailto:marjohnson89@earthlink.net)  
All genres; 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](http://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](http://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 DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 204, Fremont. Contact: Richard Scott, [rikscott@yahoo.com](mailto:rikscott@yahoo.com); (510) 791-8639

**Marin:** Meets on the fourth Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera. [cwcmarinwriters.com](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://sfpeninsulawriters.com)

Check out the new  
South Bay Writers  
**Blog**  
[southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com)  
Click SBW Journal—Blog

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 Regular Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn Patricia Volonakis Davis	11	12	13 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	14 11A Editors' Powwow
15	16 WritersTalk deadline	17	18	19	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	<h1>August 2010</h1>			
<b>Future Flashes</b>		<b>September 14</b> 6P Regular Dinner Meeting			<b>September 24-26</b> East of Eden Writers Conference Salinas	

## Uh-Oh

*Continued from page 10*

originally thought. It was such a fast fire that the poor cook-assistant working late at night was caught unaware, smoke overcoming him as he worked with the fryer. This would be an unintended by-blow in revenge against a cruel universe by an angry, cheated man who knew how to get even, all right.

Mystery solved. WT

## 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

## East of Eden September 24–26

Secure your place now!  
Details at  
[southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com)

## South Bay Writers Anthology



\$10  
At the meeting.  
On the website.  
[southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com)

## Other Open Mics

### 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](http://pcsj.org) for details.



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

## MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

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

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

**Patricia Volonakis Davis**

Author of *Harlot's Sauce: A  
Memoir of Food, Family, Love,  
Loss, and Greece*

*This will be your last  
issue of WritersTalk*

if you don't renew by August 10.

