



WRITERSTALK

Volume 18
Number 7
July 2010

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB SOUTH BAY BRANCH



ANNUAL POTLUCK BARBECUE

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2010, 3 PM

(There is no July General Meeting)

It's time for our annual Potluck BBQ. Since there's never enough time to chat at the regular meetings, this month South Bay Branch is hosting its Annual Potluck Barbecue. Come and enjoy good food and good company. Visit with old friends and make new friends and contacts.

POTLUCK DINNER

Please bring a dish according to your last name:

- A-K Salad
- L-R Appetizer or dessert
- S-Z Main dish or side dish

The club will provide meat and drinks.
There is no charge.



LOCATION

Edie Matthews' residence
917 Perreira Drive
Santa Clara 95051
Please RSVP at (408) 985-0819 or
RSVP@southbaywriters.com

June Recap

Dr. Andrei Aleinikov

by Carolyn Donnell

After a few announcements to a packed house, Bill Baldwin introduced our speaker of the evening. Dr. Andrei Aleinikov is a world-renowned keynote speaker, author, workshop and seminar leader who also holds the Guinness World Record for the fastest written, printed, and published book, set with *Making the Impossible Possible*, a start-to-finish project that took 16 hours.

"Good evening." I heard the Russian accent, flavored with British overtones, and looked up, almost expecting to see the flourish of a black cape. Instead, I saw a man in a dark suit and white shirt holding up his hands and voicing the salutation. When the response from the audience was lukewarm, he scratched his head. "You are all writers, all in communications. I am opening my arms and opening my heart to you all." He paused. "Y'all," he added. "But you are sitting with locked arms and blocked legs."

Dr. Aleinikov tried again with arms outstretched and another enthusiastic, "Good evening." Most of the audience responded better to the request this time. He continued, saying that communication is 93% nonverbal. Words are not as important. Your nonverbal body language can say one thing and your words another. Trust, he said, is also nonverbal—by 91%.

"I'm here to teach you how to communicate. Here is how nonverbal communication works." Coat off and sleeves rolled up, he walked to the nearest table and began picking at his fingernails and saying in a small voice, "I am here to teach you communication." He pointed

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President's Prowling

by Dave LaRoche
President, South Bay Writers

Wrap-Up

I feel the wind blowing, a sailor's wind, a Jack London wind. A wind that brings increasing vitality, interest and growth, one that fills our canvas with energy. I am happy to be a part of it, in front of it." That was the opening salvo of my final "Editor's Itch" in *WritersTalk* after stepping up to lead this club in 2007, and today, three years later, that same wind is a-blowin' and here's what I see.



Our club has grown and continues to grow. The most obvious is in membership—our current count puts us at 223–226, the largest ever. We have for some time now been the largest branch, but during the past several years, a time when most branches have faltered, we have continued to expand. Membership is a mark of vitality. It brings money, which increases opportunities for allowing us to pursue our interests.

We have quadrupled workshops from one to four per year. One, the Young Writers Workshop, is a boon to our aspiring teen writers as well as a plume in our altruistic caps. Thanks to Marilyn Fahey and Jamie Miller in 2009, and then to Karen Sweet and Suzette Gamero this year.

Our treasury has grown. Not by leaps, but moderately, as we hold our meeting fees steady while our costs at the Lookout have risen.

Our meeting attendance is up. A peak of 68 in June, with recent averages in the mid fifties. And while we cry out for more about craft from our programs, we have been adjusting our pre-speaker format, as suggestions come in to allow more networking and social interchange.

We have a "View From the Board" each month in *WritersTalk*: a look at the machinations that take place on the first Wednesday of each month, providing visibility into governing and permitting a leg up on forming your influence.

Our recent bylaws change brings two additional (elected) directors to our board, offering familiarization for potential execs while broadening board perspective through increasing representation from membership. Dale King and Carolyn Donnell are our first elected members-at-large. We have generated and adopted "Policies and Protocol" that complement those bylaws and give an insightful continuum for the leaders who follow those who are now here.

We have instituted an accolades program bringing members' successes to the fore, both at meetings and in our newsletter, thanks to Jackie Mutz and Dick Amyx. And complementing that is the Mathews-Baldwin award, started two years ago last February, named for two SBW stalwarts, and presented to recognize those in our branch for their salient service.

A core interest is present. While other branches struggle to fill offices, we have small trouble, and I attribute that to commitment, which spawns from a healthier

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California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— 0 —

Executive Committee

President—Bill Baldwin
pres@southbaywriters.com
408 730-9622

Vice President—Colin Seymour
vp@southbaywriters.com

Secretary—Sylvia Halloran
secretary@southbaywriters.com

Treasurer—Richard Burns
treasurer@southbaywriters.com

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Dave LaRoche (acting rep)

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Open Mic—Bill Baldwin
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Webmaster—Rosanne Davis
webmaster@southbaywriters.com

Workshops—Bill Belew
workshops@southbaywriters.com

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.



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WRITERSTALK

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

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Submissions

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

Richard Amyx
994 No. 2nd Street
San Jose, CA 95112

Guest Columns

Almost Anything Goes (400 words)

News Items (400 words)

Letters to the Editor (300 words)

to Andrea Galvac
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Creative Works

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

Accolades

accolades@southbaywriters.com

Announcements and Advertisements

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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

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

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Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx
Editor



The September 2010 issue of *WritersTalk* will mark the end of my third year as its editor, and it's time for me to step down. My decision to release the reins of *WT* has nothing to do with last month's elections; quite to the contrary, I had originally agreed to two years' service but let myself get talked into just one more. Moreover, it's my plan to do the October issue as well to give an incoming editor a break because East of Eden will come right in the middle of the *WT* production cycle. Unless, of course, the new editor wants to jump right in.

The duties of the managing editor of *WritersTalk* are to produce an issue of the newsletter monthly, chair a monthly editors' powwow, and attend meetings of the SBW board.

How you carry out production of the newsletter is completely up to you. Both Dave LaRoche, my predecessor as editor of *WT*, and I chose to do the layout and make-up of the issues as well as making selections for publication and overseeing the editing of submitted materials. If you want to do the layout and make-up, you'll need a desktop publishing program such as Microsoft Publisher, PageMaker, InDesign, or QuarkXPress or some other tool for the Mac. If you use a Windows PC, SBW will provide you with Publisher; presumably, a price-equivalent package for the Mac would also be possible.

The output of each month's work is an Adobe PDF file that's delivered to the printer by email, along with a mailing list in Excel format provided by the Membership Chair. The printer takes everything from there, and all you have to do is sit back and wait for your copy to arrive in your mailbox.

You don't have to start absolutely from scratch. You'll inherit a staff of seven contributing editors who copyedit material, write some of the ongoing columns and features, and proofread final copy, and who will train you well. There will also be some amount of carried-over and evergreen material, and if you're using PageMaker or InDesign, you'll be able to make use of my templates, if you wish. The lingua franca for manuscripts is Microsoft Word or Open Office Writer. Between now and October, there's plenty of time for you to sit in on the production of an issue and watch the current process at work.

If you're interested, let Bill Baldwin know (see the inset on this page). If you'd like to talk to me about details, you can write to me at newsletter@southbaywriters.com or call at 408.297.4438. WT

Editor wanted

Our Board Needs You (or Someone You Know)!

Our new SBW board will take office on July 1, minus a Treasurer.

Danita Craft, our Treasurer-Elect, has unfortunately decided to step down.

We also need a managing editor for *WritersTalk*. Dick Amyx, after three years of service, has asked for a well-deserved rest, starting in the fall.

The treasurer is responsible for managing our bank accounts, reporting quarterly to the CWC Central Board, and ensuring that payments are collected at our events.

The managing editor is responsible for production of the monthly *WritersTalk* (coordinating its staff of editors and writers).

If you are willing to serve in either of these capacities or can suggest someone, please contact Bill Baldwin: WABaldwin@aol.com or (408) 730-9622. Thanks!!

Volunteering for Fun and Discounts

by Bill Belew

There was a hunter who had a dog that could count. He took a friend out to show off his canine. Woof! Woof! Woof! Three birds flew out of the brush. Four woofs and four birds. And so on. The friend offered \$1000 for the dog and the hunter took it.

A month later the friend came back angry as can be, "Your dog went crazy on me!"

"What do you mean?" was the puzzled reply.

"He came back with a stick in his mouth and stood there shaking it violently."

"What'd you do?"

"Well, I shot him."

"You what!? The dog was trying to tell you there were more birds out there than you could shake a stick at!"

In a couple of months there will be more writers, publishers, presenters, and agents than you can shake a stick at when the East of Eden Writers Conference rolls around from September 24-26.

We need volunteers to help the program run more smoothly.

Do you want to introduce a speaker, pick up an agent, escort a publisher, sign in a favorite writer, or direct traffic to pitch sessions (while listening in, of

course)?

Volunteers are privy to the inner goings-on of the conference and get to hang out with anyone and everyone, and I have a budget (teeny tiny) that I can use to help offset some of the costs of your conference fee (depending on how much you help out).

Got time?

Volunteering can be fun, and a discount is there for the getting, too.

Please contact Bill Belew at wcbelow@gmail.com with your availability. First come, first served. Not everyone will get to volunteer. WT

View from the Board

by Jackie Mutz

June 2, 2010 SBW Board Meeting

Present: Dave LaRoche, Bill Baldwin, Bill Belew, Richard Burns, Dick Amyx, Marjorie Johnson, Loureen Giordano, Danita Craft

Announcements

- Place announcement flyers on the table at general meetings
- Dave needs signatures on the service agreement for EOE

President's Report

- Bylaws vote proceeding as prescribed—opens two new directors slots
- Election plans in place—Lisa and Suzette officiating in place of Meredy at meeting
- Slate is staffed, if not overflowing: Bill Belew—President, Bill Baldwin—President; Colin Seymour—Vice President, Nina Amir—Vice President; Sylvia Halloran—Secretary; Danita Craft—Treasurer.

Vice President's Report

Reported the upcoming events: Andrei Aleinikov (motivational speaker) on June 8; Summer BBQ at Edie's on July 18; Patricia Volonkis Davis (author of *Harlot's Sauce*) on August 10; possibly Larry Wilde on how to get published on September 14.

Treasurer's Report

General Meeting attendance was at 63, with 56 members and 7 guests. Net Profit = minus \$147; Speaker—Wendy Nelson Tokunaga = \$100; Lookout Bar & Grill = \$992. SBW Assets Balance as of May 31 stood at \$21,991.

Central Board Report

- Meeting on July 11 preceded by July 10 picnic in Oakland's Joaquin Miller Park on the 10th—announcements on Tuesday.
- Elections in July – Bob Garfinkle only presidential nominee at this time
- P&P changes up for vote at or before elections

NorCal Report

- Meeting on Saturday in Oakland 11:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. All welcome.
- Big topic: concern over support from the branches, are we of value?
- Writers retreat repeat in the making, independent of NCG
- Website up and running, data populating begun—cwcncalwriters.org

Committee Reports

Membership

- The club is up to 223 members, including both renewed members and new members who paid thru June 30, 2011. New, 17; renewed, 13. Includes 10 dual members. Renewals

are slow. New roster in mid-June; make members aware of importance of renewal process in timely fashion.

- Discussed outline of voting process for June 8 election.

Publicity/PR

- Reported the press release sent out as usual; copy provided for Board
- Mistaken days/dates were noted.
- Meetup membership is up to 115; requested \$25 for the Meetup renewal on June 5.

Open Mic

- Number of readers at May's open mics: May 7 (Almaden) 12; May 14 (Santana Row) 11; May 21 (Pruneyard) 11; May 28 (Sunnyvale) 11.
- Interest in Open Mic growing. Sunnyvale Borders nicer location. Comment that Open Mic promotion should be under PR.

Newsletter

- Reported four-page Bylaws Special Edition was printed and mailed on May 17, only to the 215 dues-paid members, except for one in Germany; fifteen extra copies directly to Dave LaRoche. Total cost: \$140.53.
- June issue printed and mailed on May 26. Press run 221 dues-paid members, 12 comps, and 15 extras for a total of 248. The cost of the June issue was \$277.73. Bill for \$295.73

Continued on page 8

SBW Election Results

The results of the election of officers by SBW members at the June 8th general meeting are as follows:

Number of ballots cast: 49

Vote for officers:

President

Bill Baldwin	30	ELECTED
Bill Belew	19	

Vice President

Colin Seymour	26	ELECTED
Nina Amir	23	

Secretary

Sylvia E. Halloran		ELECTED
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Treasurer

Danita Craft		ELECTED
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Vote for members at large:

In accordance with the new bylaws, passed by unanimous vote earlier in the meeting, candidates for the two newly created posts of member-at-large came forward and were declared elected without opposition:

Carolyn Donnell
Dale King

Under the new bylaws, the term of office for the newly elected Board commences July 1.

Many thanks to Lisa Eckstein and Suzette Gamero for carrying out the balloting process in my unavoidable absence. Thanks too to all candidates, and congratulations to our new officers.

Meredy Amyx
2010 Nominations and Election Chair



The elected SBW board 2010–2011: Carolyn Donnell, Member-at-Large; Dale King, Member-at-Large; Danita Craft, Treasurer (who has since withdrawn); Bill Baldwin, President; Colin Seymour, Vice President; Sylvia Halloran, Secretary



Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

On June 9 I attended the graduation ceremony of the alternative high school and adult education program where I am employed as a part-time independent study instructor. It was a



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

glorious morning—not glaring so that it hurt the eyes, and a breeze gently stirred the canopy overhead. Slowly the procession of graduates moved to the rhythm of “Pomp and Circumstance,” the standard graduation song. Once they were seated, the opening ceremony welcomed all attendees, high school and adult students, parents, friends, teachers and administrators.

Then it began. One at a time, each graduate made his or her way up to the podium and addressed the audience. Each expressed their thoughts and feelings about having finally arrived at this point in time. Each “talk” was poignant, filled with lessons learned and excitement for new adventures to come now that high school was a *done deal*.

As each student read, I was struck by their written words. Each piece was unique—the voice expressive, brimming with hope and anticipation of good things yet to come. The tone invincible, the writing exemplary, the talks were as fresh as the young faces (one not so young) before us.

Thinking back to that moment makes me wonder as I often do: what is it that makes us write? What makes us sit and spit out words on a blank screen or notebook—a very lonely job, as many seasoned writers will tell you. There are as many reasons as there are writers—some are universal, others individual, which is why it is so very important to acknowledge those milestones along the writer’s path as we do here in “Accolades” every month.

Keep writing and do not be discouraged. And send me your news at accolades@southbaywriters.com. No accomplishment is too small or large to share with fellow writers in *WritersTalk*.
WT

South Bay Writers Critique Groups— Part 6

by Carolyn Donnell

This month's critique group series features The Arm Wavers. (What kind of name is that for a critique group, you ask? Read on and find out.) They meet near downtown San Jose on alternate Wednesdays from about 7:30 to 9:30. Genres read are fiction, memoir, and nonfiction. This group is closed to new members at this time.

Participants include Luanne Oleas, Sarah Bobson, Andrea Moran Brown, Katie Bonn and Georgia Platts. (They always sit in this order around the table.) Luanne and Georgia are South Bay members. Sarah is an ex.

Luanne's novel—chick lit—*Old Husband's Tales*, features a group of co-workers who are saved from a life of crime by lottery winnings and go on to star in a reality TV show. An earlier novel, *Shedding Cats*, was a quarter-finalist in the Amazon Novel Break-through Award Contest. See her website at luanneoleas.com.

Sarah's current novel features seniors who want to make a difference in the world—social commentary set in a mystery. Sarah is an ex-journalist who worked for the *Ojai Valley News* and the *Ventura Star* in Southern California, and ANG (Alameda News Group) now renamed Bay Area News Group, in the East Bay. Her stories and articles have been published in the above papers as well as the *Oakland Tribune*, the *Marin Independent Journal*, the *Contra Costa Times*, and the *Vallejo Times*.

Katie is putting together a series of short stories with a hopeful take on mental illness. Katie's most imminent production is a baby boy who was due in two weeks at the time of the interview. (Siddhartha—Sidd for short—was born Saturday, May 29.) See katiebonn.com for latest developments in both writing and family.

Andrea's story is about two sisters dealing with the death of their father from opposite viewpoints on faith. She has published poetry and articles in the college literary magazine and newspa-

per at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Georgia is currently working on a nonfiction study of moms who "want to have it all without doing it all." This includes both stay-at-home moms and those who have to or want to work outside the home. She has had an op-ed published in the *San Jose Mercury News* under two titles: "Obama must keep promise on global education," July 13, 2009; and online, "Educate world's children; match their courage with dollars," July 12, 2009.



The Arm Wavers: Luanne Oleas, Sarah Bobson, Andrea Moran Brown, Katie Bonn, Georgia Platts. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Although this group formed only a few months ago, the personalities seemed to fit really well. Members come prepared to give an in-depth discussion of what they thought worked and what didn't. (This is possible because members email chapters ahead of time.) The energy was wonderful. They played off each other like a well-tuned orchestra. Each author played her own instrument: one detail-oriented and able to see where a word or a phrase or the placement of a phrase could make a difference, another able to see the big picture and spot overall plot gaps or deficiencies in character development.

Some of the qualities of the group that the members liked were an outside perspective that can't be found anywhere else, an excellent combination of personalities (good chemistry) who work well together and dive in to help each other, motivation to keep writing on a regular basis, and great feedback where they can learn if their characters, plot, and scene development are effective. Members also like how they brainstorm off each other to come up with several creative ideas/solutions for the work being critiqued.

This group also uses a checklist to try to keep everyone on the same page.

- What specific passages stand out and why?
- What is the main idea of the story?
- What do you want to hear more about?
- Is anything too obvious or too explicit?
- What is the best feature of the work?
- Brief suggestions on the best revisions.

Oh yeah, the name: The Arm Wavers. The lights in the clubhouse where the group meets are on an intermittent switch—the light goes out if no motion is detected. Evidently talking about writing doesn't generate enough physical activity, as the lights dimmed a couple of times. Someone has to get up and move around (wave her arms) to reactivate the light. Since Georgia leads this group, she usually fills this role and lives dreams of emulating Anna Pavlova.

Want to find or start a critique group? Email networking@southbaywriters.com. You don't have to limit yourself to one group.

It is still my goal to write something about every critique group with South Bay member participants. So if you're currently in a critique group and have not already been contacted about appearing in *WritersTalk*, please send a note to the email address above. Thanks again to everyone for helping to make lessons learned from critique groups available to members. WT

East of Eden September 24–26

Register and reserve
your room now!

See the pale green insert
in this issue.

Full details and
online registration at
southbaywriters.com

2010 East of Eden Writers Conference

September 24 - 26, 2010 Salinas Community Center Salinas, California

Improve your writing

Learn from the pros in 48 workshops in 5 tracks: General fiction, Mystery, Nonfiction, Poetry, Publishing/Business.

Andrei Aleinikov	Craig Lancaster
Lisa Alpine	Becky Levine
Nina Amir	Antoinette May
Kevin Arnold	Jana McBurney Lin
Sally Ashton	Indigo Moor
Bill Belew	Linda Joy Myers
Kendra Bonnett	Nils Peterson
Robert Gregory Browne	Diane Lindsey Reeves
Robin Burcell	Thomas B. Sawyer
Matilda Bulter	Linda Kay Silva
Sue Campbell	Geri Spieler
David Corbett	David Henry Sterry
Selden Edwards	Terri Thayer
Martha Engber	Wendy Nelson Tokunaga
Tanya Egan Gibson	Carolyn Hayes Uber
Leslie Hoffman	Luis Valdez
Carla King	Penny Warner
Joyce Krieg	Maralys Wills

Registration Fees

Includes all conference events, workshops, pitch sessions, and meals

Full Conference: \$435

(Friday, Saturday, & Sunday)

Saturday Only: \$239

Students, anytime (under 24 yrs, present valid ID at check-in):
Full conference \$275, Saturday Only \$151

Group rate: Save \$60 (pay by check only)
Full Conference \$375 per person for groups of 4 or more.

Discounts for larger groups available. Contact the conference director,
Dave LaRoche at eastofeden@southbaywriters.com

Enter the Writing Contest

\$1000 Grand Prize!

\$200 1st place / \$100 2nd place each category

4 categories:

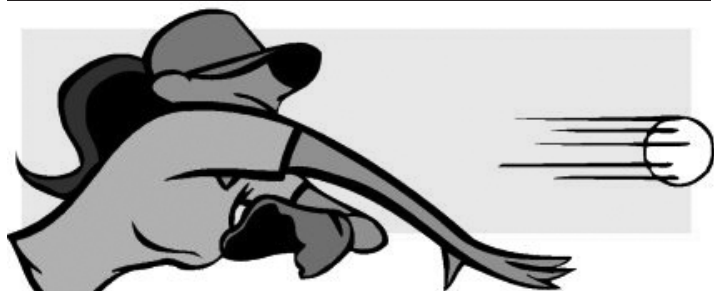
Short Fiction, Novel, Poetry, Nonfiction
Entry fee \$20 Deadline July 15, 2010

Get your manuscript critiqued

Pro editors critique your work
8 pages for only \$35

Fee includes a 15-minute review session
with the editor at the conference.

Deadline August 15, 2010



Pitch your work

Pitch your book-length project to literary agents and publishers.
Sign up for as many appointments as you like at the conference,
as available. No extra charge!

Andrea Brown	Elizabeth Pomada
Amy Burkhardt	Alan Rinzler
Michael Larsen	Andy Ross
Laurie McLean	Gordon Warnock

Be Inspired by these speakers:

Selden Edwards, David Corbett, Nils Peterson, David Henry Sterry, Andrei Aleinikov, Linda Kay Silva, Wendy Nelson Tokunaga, and Saturday evening keynote address by **Luis Valdez**

For registration and details go to www.southbaywriters.com

PRE- CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

ARE YOU ATTENDING EAST OF EDEN THIS YEAR?
ARE YOU
ATTENDING ANY WRITERS CONFERENCE SOON?
IF YOUR ANSWER IS YES TO EITHER, READ ON!



CRAFT, HONE, AND PRACTICE
THE PITCH YOU'LL GIVE TO LITERARY AGENTS AT THE CONFERENCE.

Join Ro Davis and the gang for a day of fun and tips to get the most value out of East of Eden or any writers conference. Those who attended this pre-conference workshop in 2008 raved about how much it helped. Useful whether you're ready to pitch to agents or not.

At this workshop, we'll work on:

- Your conference strategy
- Navigating the conference workshops
- Dealing effectively with agents and publishers
- Crafting your pitch.

PRACTICE YOUR PITCH IN ONE-ON-ONE PRACTICE SESSIONS

Location: Lookout Restaurant, 605 Macara Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA (at the Sunnyvale Golf Course)

Cost Includes Workshop and Lunch:

- \$20 for CWC members
- \$25 for non-members

When: Saturday July 31, 10 am to 3 pm

REGISTER ON LINE OR DOWNLOAD TO MAIL IN AT
WWW.SOUTHBAYWRITERS.COM

Writecraft: Thickening the Plot

by Lisa Eckstein

The first novel I wrote is packed with events. Throughout the lengthy manuscript, my protagonist goes places, meets people, and encounters challenging situations. What's it about? Well,



Lisa Eckstein
Contributing Editor

there's this guy, and after high school he stays at home while his friends go off to college, and then . . . some stuff happens. The story contains well-developed characters in realistic scenarios, but it wasn't until several years and novels later that I recognized it has no plot.

Plot isn't just a series of events. This is far from obvious. Even though I'd read countless novels before writing one of my own, I hadn't taken much notice of the way a sequence of linked episodes propels a story forward. I set out to capture an important year in a character's life (a reasonable topic for a novel), but I wrote it too much like reality, in which incidents occur mostly at random and with little connection or reason. That doesn't make good fiction.

A plot is a structured progression of selected events that build to a resolution. Goal-oriented characters struggle against increasing complications until they succeed or fail, usually changing in the process. In retrospect, a tipoff to the plot trouble in my first novel is my uncertainty over when the story should end. My poor hero doesn't have any particular desires or avenues for change, the conflict doesn't intensify, and there's no conclusion to reach. Why would anyone keep reading if it's arbitrary what happens next?

A strong story arc compels readers to turn the pages. A book with a weak plot will be put down and never picked up again, even if the sentences are elegant and the descriptions full of rich detail. As a writer, you owe it to yourself and your work to study and understand the components of a plot. Plotting is as important for memoirists as it is for fiction writers—and it's trickier because real life rarely follows a natural arc. But

whatever you write, you can learn to choose and order events to punch up the momentum of the story you're telling.

I first grasped the concept of plot when I read *Save the Cat!* by Blake Snyder. This guide is targeted to screenwriters, but most of the script advice is just as relevant to books. Snyder identifies 15 "beats," or sections, that he advocates putting into screenplays, and I've solved major plot problems by thinking about my novels in these terms. For example, plots hinge on a catalyst early in the story that alters the main character's situation and sets off the chain of events. "In the set-up you . . . have told us what the world is like and now in the catalyst moment you knock it all down. Boom!" Snyder says.

Watching movies is a great way to study plot. Since films are shorter than novels and necessarily have less complex plots, it can be easier to spot and analyze the story. Look for the scenes that make life harder and easier for the

characters, and consider how they're arranged. Snyder writes, "I have found, in reviewing hundreds of movies, that a movie's midpoint is either an 'up' where the hero seemingly peaks (though it is a false peak) or a 'down' when the world collapses all around the hero (though it is a false collapse)."

Another book that clearly lays out essentials of a good plot (and also uses examples from movies for convenience) is *GMC: Goal, Motivation, and Conflict* by Debra Dixon. One fantastic tool I gained from this book is a single sentence: "A character wants a goal because he is motivated, but he faces conflict." Replace the generic elements in the sentence with specifics from your novel to figure out whether you have the foundation of a compelling plot. Dixon applies the technique to *The Wizard of Oz*: "An unhappy teenager wants to get home to Kansas because her aunt is sick, but first she must fight a witch to win the aid of the wizard who has the

Continued on page 9

Renew Your Membership Now

Dear South Bay Writers Member,

It's that time of year again.

Renewal Reminder: The 2009–2010 CWC South Bay membership year ends June 30. Renewal dues of \$45 keep you a member in good standing through June 30, 2011. Save \$20 by not letting your membership lapse.

Benefits of Membership:

- Savings on dinner at regular meetings
- Savings on conferences/seminars
- Networking and fellowship with other writers
- Getting your creative work published in *WritersTalk*
- Getting a free web page on the SBW website
- Free advertising for writers on the SBW website

Please send your basic information with your check for \$45 to
CWC South Bay, P. O. Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055, Attn: Marjorie

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

Genre _____

To pay by credit card, click "How to renew" on southbaywriters.com.

Write on!

Marjorie Johnson,
Membership Chairman

View from the Board

Continued from page 4

includes \$18 for printing 60 copies of the two pages of candidate information in *WritersTalk* for distribution at the June meeting.

Young Writers

Written report provided. 25 students attended workshop, speakers paid, church received \$275. We lost \$234.

East of Eden

- All effort in place and proceeding on schedule
- Registration has hit lull at about 60—some concern here, quantitative analysis in process
- Costs are within a reasonable margin of initial projections – no significant hard commitments to date
- Programs Coordinator Werges resigned, Mullenberg considering
- Workshop presenters and speakers recruited—all slots filled

Learning Center:

- On May 13: 7 attended (DVD lessons 21 & 22); May 27: 5 attended (DVD Lessons 23 & 24).
- DVD Series on Great Sentences was completed May 27, about 14 classes, 1.5 hours each.
- Other programs being considered (perhaps for Sep startup): a) Analysis of novel-writing styles (titles & authors contemporary, off the Best-Seller List). b) Interactive sessions reviewing “ready-for-prime-time”

works by club members. c) Another DVD series on famous fiction by famous authors. d) Novel writing improvement, intermediate level: plot & story, importance of beginnings, character creation, conflict, dialog, getting early feedback, editing, upping motivation, publication, selling your work & yourself.

- Suggested having class meet once a week and bump up PR.

Workshops

- Reported that pitch workshop preparations are preceding well. Ro is leading this workshop.
- A November workshop will take place early in the month.

Old/New Business

No old business. Topic of change in dinner fees but no action taken.

Improving the Club

Decided to discontinue passing mic around tables to guests, instead providing a Welcome Table with club info and a person to talk with as they begin their evening with SBW.

Adjourned at 9:23 p.m. WT

Hi July

Off we go
Into the summer doldrums,
Writer's block: watching the clock.
In the mind
Finding new plot conundrums.
Take a walk or vacation:
Book a tour—that sparks creation!

—Pat Bustamante

President's Prowling

Continued from page 2


club. We like what we are doing, we find benefit: this speaks well of plans and direction.

At South Bay we are *writers*, intending to push the phenomenon of creativity to its limits—every month a *WritersTalk* issue invites our words. We have a learning center and a conference that deals with genres and motivation as well as opportunities to publish and sell. Am I forgetting our anthology? Thanks to Dick Amyx, Ro Davis, and Meredy Amyx and her crew, we are one of a handful who have published, and this our first of many, I imagine. We bring programs intending to supplement our education, and the half-dozen or more active critique groups sharpen our creative edge. Interest in Open Mics is at a high as ten to twelve gather four times a month to read from their original work, much due to a Meetup site started and run by Bill Belew. Yes, we have thrived in our recent several years.

Our influence with the state board and the newly organized NorCal Group has grown. We may not be aware as yet, but due to SBW's efforts, state fees may be reduced; and with the energy for our mission corralled in regional associations, a more effective use of resources and better results are probable. The recent Pema Osel Ling retreat and the next in the fall are evidentiary, and a leadership conference is coming in late summer. There is a NorCal Writers website now, supporting branch interaction and including speakers' program evaluations, branch operations information, and event notification. See cwcncorcalwriters.org for details.

Well, there it is—what I see as I feel that same wind a-blowin'. I thank you for the opportunity to serve and offer my thanks to the other officers this term—Rich Burns, treasurer; Loureen Giordano, secretary; and Bill Baldwin VP and Programs. We have enjoyed and benefited, and encourage our new officers to listen and to act. We have a healthy group, full to the brim with potential, and with good decisions and the will to execute, we will continue to grow our writing skills and achievements, and our club—and that, by the way, is why we are here. WT

A Picnic with Joaquin and Friends



Saturday, July 10, 2010 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.
The Fire Circle at Joaquin Miller Park
in the beautiful Oakland Hills

Join your fellow CWC members for an afternoon of food, fun, fellowship and exploration of our 100-year legacy.
Hosted by Fremont, Berkeley and Mt. Diablo

*Paper goods and meat for grilling will be provided. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share, plus drinks for your party.
Directions to Joaquin Miller Park may be easily found on Google, Mapquest, etc.
Free parking is available on Joaquin Miller Road (closest access to the Fire Circle) or in the lot at the park entrance.
The Fire Circle includes picnic tables. If you prefer, bring your own lawn chair or blanket.
Dress for gentle-to-ambitious hikes as we visit Joaquin Miller's home, the CWC Centennial poster in the Ranger Station, Woodminster Amphitheater, the Cascades, and Writers Memorial Grove.
Admission is free. RSVPs are requested. See your Central Board representative.*

Recap

Continued from page 1

at a member at the table. “Do you believe me?”

She said no.

“Why not?” he asked.

“You’re talking to your fingernails,” someone said.

“That’s right,” he said. Then he said, “I love you,” this time with his hands in his pockets and chewing as if he had gum in his mouth. “Do you believe me?” he asked again.

The audience responded with a resounding no.

“You are right. Hands in pocket, hidden agenda—somewhere in pocket.”



Andrei Aleinikov opens his arms and his heart to South Bay Writers. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Laughter came from the audience.

“Also my eyes are not looking at her,” he added. “And the foot—the free foot points to another person. Dear ladies, note that the free foot of your date or husband points to the real interest.” He then cited several other examples.

- How children up to 5 years of age are powerful learners. Why? Children are open. He crossed his arms and legs. “Name me one child that sits like this.”
- About a boy in juvenile detention who changed his life by learning to sit properly and look attentive. His teacher saw the difference immediately.

Sitting with your body leaning back, according to Dr. Aleinikov, shows that you are evaluating. Arms crossed denotes safety and protection, but this blocks the flow of information. Sitting up straight is a neutral position. The body bent forward and the head to one side is a natural posture of attention and curiosity. You get 98% of the information in this position.

Professors are people too, he says. If they feel you are listening to them, you will do better in their class. So don’t block yourself. Teachers don’t help students by standing with their arms crossed over their chest. That posture blocks them from the students. He says, “If teachers open their arms, children will open their hands and hearts.”

Then he changed the conversation from communications to metaphors. There are two ways to form metaphors. The first—delete “as” and “like” from similes. He gave an example—“She is like the sun” changes to “She is the sun of my life.”

The second is based on a technique of two rows of nouns combined in the form “noun of noun.” The first row lists tangible objects and the second, abstracts—emotions, ideas. Combine one noun from each row. An example: “I remember my house with lots of old portraits.” Using metaphors changed it to “I open the door of my dream [door is tangible, dream is abstract], and enter the room of my memories [room—memories and so on]. Here on the walls of the past, I see the canvases of my loves and sorrows painted with the strokes of doubt and exaltations. These canvases state the monuments of lost dreams, the sculpture of events that no longer exist.”

At the end of the talk, he passed out pens and paper and asked the writers to participate in an exercise using metaphors. “Today you will be published,” he said. “Do you want to be published today?”

The writers responded with a resounding yes.

The topic was “The Writing Genius in You.” Quiet descended on the room. Writers wrote on the tabletops, briefcases, their laps. Someone’s cell phone went off. Andrei gave everyone 4 minutes and 28 seconds (to beat out

Monterey). When the time had elapsed, he took up the papers.

The writings will be published in a booklet similar to one he made for the Central Coast Branch in Monterey last March. Look for the book at the next South Bay meeting.

Dr. Andrei Aleinikov is the founding president of the International Academy of Genius. *MegaCreativity: Five Steps to Thinking Like a Genius* was a best-seller in Asia. Other accolades include nomination for the President’s National Medal of Science, the 2005 George Washington Honor Medal and the 2003 Outstanding Educator Award for Innovative and Creative Teaching. At Troy University he was nominated for U.S. Professor of the Year and the Robert Foster Cherry Great Teaching Award. Dr. Aleinikov works for the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey developing Russian language curriculum. More information can be found at academyofgenius.com. WT

Writecraft

Continued from page 7

power to send her home.”

The art of plotting can be learned. I’m no master yet, but I’m now writing manuscripts that my critique partners say they can’t stop reading. That plotless first novel is hidden away in the proverbial trunk, but maybe someday I’ll pull it out again and discover what my main character really wants.

Those recommendations again:

- *Save the Cat!: The Last Book on Screenwriting You’ll Ever Need* by Blake Snyder. Snyder passed away in 2009, but blakesnyder.com is still maintained and offers downloadable beat sheets.
- *GMC: Goal, Motivation, and Conflict: The Building Blocks of Good Fiction* by Debra Dixon, available through debradixon.com WT

“The king died and then the queen died” is a story. “The king died and then the queen died of grief” is a plot.

—E.M. Forster

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, Blogging

Bill Belew
wcbelow@gmail.com

Astrology, Singing

Sara Aurich
saraaurich@comcast.net

Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net

Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.
ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net

Counseling

Dr. Audry L. Lynch
GLYNCH7003@sbcglobal.net

Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg
geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net

Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber
marthaengber.com
marthaengber.blogspot.com

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

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

Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold
maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net

Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/ Psychology

Dave Breithaupt
dlbmlb@comcast.net

Library Science

Molly Westmoreland
mulcaend@hotmail.com

Marketing and Management

Suzy Paluzzi, MBA
jomarch06@yahoo.com

Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson
MarJohnson89@earthlink.net

Philosophy, Religion, Evolution, Construction, Crafts, Norse

Darwin Mathison
olddinosaur@comcast.net
510-471-8944

Profile Writing

Susan Mueller
susan_mueller@yahoo.com

Real Estate, Horses, Remodeling, Southwest History

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

Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard
Btauchard@aol.com

Television Production

Woody Horn
408-266-7040

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

Writers' Salon

Meets in Santa Clara
Contact: Edie Matthews—
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
All genres; 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.
Contact: Marjorie Johnson—
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

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 DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 204, 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

Work in Progress Group

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>JULY 2010</h1>					1 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	2 3
4	5	6	7	8	9 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	10 11A Editors' Powwow
11	12	13	14	15	16 WritersTalk deadline 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	17
18 3P Annual BBQ Edie Matthews' home See front cover	19	20	21	22	23 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Future Flashes		August 10 6P Regular Dinner Meeting Patricia Volonakis Davis				

Stay Informed!

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

East of Eden September 24–26

Secure your place now!
Details at
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



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

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.

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



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

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

There will be no regular
monthly meeting in July.
Instead, come to the

Annual SBW BBQ and Picnic

Sunday, July 18, 3 p.m.

See front cover for details.

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.

