



April Speaker - David Rasch

Kick That Block: Deep-seated trait sideline writers who most need counselor's help

By Colin Seymour

"Why Am I Writing?" was our South Bay Writers catchphrase last year at this time. This month, though, we focus on "Why Am I NOT Writing."

We declare that we intend to write when we join SBW, don't we? Yet there are so many obstacles. They range from "this &*%\$\$ club is taking up too much of my time" to "sometimes I just can't."

The latter is what David Rasch will address as guest speaker for our April 12 dinner meeting. He is a psychologist and writer (president of California Writers Club's Central Coast chapter) who has become increasingly interested in writer's block and the reasons would-be writers procrastinate or avoid writing altogether.

Your neuroses might provide your writing inspiration, but they can easily cause inhibition, Rasch has found, or even anxiety and depression.

"If you're writing and you're feeling vulnerable or uncertain, doubt can come in, especially if it's a habit to be self-critical," Rasch says. "And then people will either avoid writing because it's so stressful, or it can mean obsessively rewriting and rewriting and doubting and never feeling something's good enough."



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Martha Strikes a Chord

Recap of the Martha Lucke Workshop

by David LaRoche

What comprises good fiction? If we didn't know the answer at the beginning of this workshop, we certainly did at the end, if we were listening. "We know it when we see it," I've heard; and yes, we do know some of the reasons it's "good" — and we surely know crap. But the detailed specifics of difference and how to achieve them and remain on the promising end of the scale were divulged by Martha in Saturday's workshop.

Lucke is pronounced "lucky," she told me after I'd heard a dozen different pronunciations, and I think now, after spending the day with her and 25 others, lucky

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6 Things Before You Blog a Book

by Nina Amir

Anyone can simply begin blogging. Blogging a book, however, that's a different story. If you want to blog a book, approach the endeavor like you would any other book project you might undertake.

Here's a list of 6 things you need to do before you start blogging your book.

1. Choose a topic: You can choose just any old topic and start writing, but it's better to choose a topic that attracts readers. You also can—and should—choose a topic that interests you and that interests a lot of people. If possible, choose a topic you feel passionate about since you'll be writing about this subject for a while. You don't want to choose a topic you'll dread blogging about each day. You want writing and posting

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Nora Profit

Recap of March Meeting

by Rik Scott

If you did not attend the March 8 South Bay Writers dinner meeting, and you've never heard Nora Profit speak before, you've missed a wonderful opportunity.

Nora is well-spoken, confident and knowledgeable. She speaks with warmth and a genuine sense of humor. She greeted those assembled and warmed up her audience with a story about how she mistrusted herself in the

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Richard Burns Matthews-Baldwin Service Award

by Dave LaRoche

It takes time, vision and “fire-in-the-belly” to keep our ship moving at cruising speed and at least a few folks of that caliber stoking flames in the engine room. Richard Burns is such a man.

Several years back on the cusp of recent growth, the South Bay Board inaugurated a recognition and appreciation award. The Matthews-Baldwin Service Award, named for two who have made significant contributions, was created to recognize branch members performing outstanding service for the club.

This year’s Matthews-Baldwin award was presented to Richard Burns at our last meeting, March eight, in recognition and appreciation of his continuous exemplary work in the several positions he has performed in over the past several years.

Richard is into his third year as treasurer, a job dependant upon continuous involvement, meeting rigorous milestones, including attendance at every event. As treasurer he reports; not only to us, but quarterly to the corporate treasurer, and in-turn to the IRS and FTB. His transactions on behalf of the club must be penny-accurate and unmistakably visible.

Richard also heads our Learning Center. On the first and third Tuesdays of every month he sets up, runs, and leads discussion related to DVD lectures of interest to writers; Mark Twain’s life and work currently showing.

Publishing Pathways, a NorCal committee developing a program to assist members with their publishing needs, also benefits from Richard’s interest and effort. As a member of that team and a video enthusiast, he will film training sessions to be given to Mentors who, in turn, will carry the Pathways message to branch members. Cameraman, producer, and director, he is committing his skills and equipment to this project.

Richard Burns is truly a friend of the CWC and a deserving recipient of the M-B Award. We at the South Bay Branch are delighted to extol his merit and thank him for his efforts. WT

Craft on Craft - Emotional Impact in Writing

by Danita Craft

At the March meeting, WT asked writers what techniques you use to create emotional impact with readers. Here are your responses.

Every dialogue should be essentially a fight, if not explicitly, at least in the subtext of the dialogue. Subtext is things characters think, but don’t say outright.

Exaggerate the trouble, conflict, hurdles you have created. Make them two or three times as difficult as ideas that pop into your head in the first draft.

Reduce the number of words in sentences by half. This will often require reshuffling words, picking more powerful nouns and verbs, and eliminating redundancies.

Shock readers. Surprise them.

Try getting characters to occasionally make their point only with body language. Figure out what motions and behaviors would communicate more effectively than the best words.

The dialogue, and every line in it should be related to the theme or plot. All of it should advance the story.

Write from a close-third person point of view instead of omniscient. You shouldn’t observe the action from above, but see it happening from the character’s point of view.

For example, “the plane was landing,” isn’t visual or emotional. Describe the how the runway looked: “like a road traveling to infinity.” This adds perspective and viewpoint. Here’s another example: “He watched the ground come closer until he could distinguish the pebbles at the edge of the runway.” You can also describe how the sun felt on your character’s cheek or how the controls felt through his leather gloves. You can mention the vibration of the seat.

Use all of the senses, sight, touch, smell, sound, and taste, to describe character’s responses.

Use specific adjectives, like jagged, instead of pointed.

Use proper punctuation.

Eliminate unnecessary dialogue tags that slow down the flow of your writing.

Create contrasting characters like a Navajo warrior and a conservative politician.

Add humor when it fits the scene.

Dialogue is a great place to show emotion.

Tone and atmosphere help build mood. Twists and turns in a character’s fate help add tense moments for characters to respond to.

Imagine yourself inside a character’s skin – as opposed to being behind a camera lens, watching a character.

Keep in mind that each character in a scene wants something that they may or may not get. That tension propels the scene.

Our March speaker, Nora Profit, says each scene should convey a specific emotion to the reader. She reiterates “one” emotion, not two or five, “one.” Don’t put anything nice in a scary scene: no blooming, sweet scented flowers or thoughts that take the reader to a happy place. Keep your words and sentences consistent with the mood you want to convey.

Thanks to all of you for sharing your observations with your peers. WT

South Bay Writers Anthology



\$10

At the meeting.

On the website.

southbaywriters.com

SAGE ADVICE - Getting Your Astronomy Right

by Robert Garfinkle, FRAS

You might wonder why a writer needs to get astronomy right in their fiction. After all, fiction is make-believe. Make-believe or not, you have to get factual things right or you risk losing your readers. The answer is rather simple; many authors have no clue about astronomy, but they try to include astronomical references in their work. This is nothing new. Chaucer and Shakespeare used lots of astronomical references in their works. Chaucer at least wrote a book about using an astronomical instrument—the astrolabe. He knew astronomy. Shakespeare was up on his astronomy and even added rare astronomical events into his plays. The use of astronomical references can lend your story some factual credence, but only if used carefully and if you have your astronomical facts right.

A case in point is “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald. He used astronomical references in place of just saying the story began in June 7th. In the opening scene, Fitzgerald has his character, Nick, tell us that it is “two weeks before the Summer Solstice.” The Summer Solstice occurs on June 21. Fitzgerald gets his astronomy right through most of the book, until one night late in the book Gatsby is out early in the evening. The light from the crescent Moon illuminates Gatsby’s suit. First, the light from a crescent Moon is rather weak and would not illuminate someone’s suit unless that person was at a very dark location away from city lights. On another front, the crescent Moon sets early in the evening. Hours later, well past midnight that same night, the suit is again illuminated by a crescent Moon. This could not have happened. The astronomical mistake kills the realism of that scene for anyone who knows that the Moon would have set long before the second illumination of Gatsby’s suit.

I have also read such mistakes as the Moon rising earlier each night. No, actually because of our motion around the Sun, and the Moon’s motion around the Earth in the opposite direction, the Moon rises on average approximately 54 minutes later each successive day. As you look toward your southern sky,

the Sun appears to move from your left (east) toward your right (west) at a rate of about 15 degrees per hour. The Moon, on the other hand, appears to move from west to east at a rate of about 10 degrees per hour. If you stretch out your hand and make a fist, from your thumb to the edge of your fist at the little finger equals about 10 degrees of sky. Hold out your fist and sight along it to get an idea of how much of the sky is 10 degrees.

Without taking a college course in astronomy, how can you be sure to get your astronomy right? There are hundreds of online sites where you can find answers to your astronomical questions. Just Google your questions, or you can purchase used astronomy texts from online booksellers, such as Amazon.com or ABEbooks.com. (Be aware that if you purchase from ABEbooks.com with a credit card, you might be hit with a “foreign transaction fee” from your credit card company, even though you bought the book from a USA bookseller. ABEbooks.com is located in Vancouver, Canada.)

There are also several good planetarium programs for both PCs and Macs. These programs allow you to set the sky on your computer for any date past or into the future. You can see when there will be a lunar or solar eclipse, which could add drama to your scene. If you want to know more about the Moon, you can download the free program called the Virtual Moon Atlas (VMA) at: www.astrosurf.com. I use VMA a lot and find it very easy to use. You could show the passage of time by telling your readers that it is, say, a first quarter moon out tonight, then a week later in your story it is a full moon casting a glow for your lovers to bask in, but don’t let two weeks go by from the first quarter and still have a full moon on your set. A program like VMA will help you to avoid such a lunar mistake.

Give your readers some astronomical realism in your writing, but just double check your information before you publish.

Bob Garfinkle is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society

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.

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blogs to feel fun and interesting. You want your subject to motivate you to post.

2. Hone your subject: Get clear about what you are blogging about, why you are blogging a book, and how you are going to move forward both with your book and blog. You can do this by developing a “pitch,” or elevator speech, for your blogged book. The pitch constitutes the starting point for your book. Once you can tell someone in a short, pithy statement what your blogged book is about, everything falls into place. You know what your book is about, for whom you are writing, what benefit they will derive from your book, and what you must deliver in its pages.

3. Map out your book’s content. You need to know what content will go in your book. The best way to discover this involves creating a “brain dump” of all the subjects you might cover in the book. If your brain dump creates a huge pile of topics, you know you have a book inside you. If, however, you end up with a tiny pile, you may realize you are only ready to write an article. Take the related topics you “dumped” and grouped them into chapters. This exercise is most-commonly called “mind mapping.”

4. Break your content into post-sized pieces. Blog posts are short – between 250 and 700 words. The related topics from #3 that you grouped into chapters each constitute one or more posts. By organizing them further, possibly under subheadings, you continue mapping out your book’s contents.

5. Create a business plan for your book. Every book needs a business plan of its own. Every author needs to function as a business person. Everyone who wants to write a book – blogged or otherwise – needs to go through the book “proposal process”; this is how you create the business plan for both book and author. You don’t necessarily have to write the proposal, but you do need to go through the steps of compiling the information necessary for a proposal.

Plus, if your blogged book gets discovered by an agent or publisher, you might be asked to submit a proposal. Therefore, you want to be ready to write one.

6. Set up a blog. You will, of course,

need a blog. If you don’t know how to do the techy stuff yourself, get help. You can start with a free blog, but I recommend a hosted one. Wordpress.org offers the best and most accepted platform for blogging a book (or blogging).

About the Author:

Nina Amir, Your Inspiration-to-Creation Coach, inspires writers to create the results they desire – published products and careers as writers and authors. She is an author, freelance editor, and writing and author coach who blogs at Write Nonfiction NOW and How to Blog a Book and writes the National Jewish Issues and the National Self-Improvement columns for www.examiner.com. Find out more about her services at CopyWright Communications. WT

A New Publishing Opportunity Knocks

by *Dave LaRoche*

The California Writers Club will launch the publication of a literary review late this spring and thereafter three issues a year – spring, fall, and winter. Our magazine-style publication – think New Yorker, but yet to be named – will host writing from members through a blind selection process, and include fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Unique graphics and photography may also sneak in on a limited basis. Your co-editors, Joyce Krieg of Central Coast Branch and former CWC Bulletin editor, and Dave LaRoche of South Bay, solicit your work for inclusion – published or fresh from your vivid imaginations, and of course sent with this single-use rights.

The CWC Lit-Review (working title) will be mailed out to all members in hard copy and, in time, made available for non-member subscription. We intend a prestigious publication, both shining light on the included authors and bringing cachet to the club. You will want to be included.

Submission requirements and deadline dates will be repeated in each issue and apply to the next. For our first issue the following applies:

* Submissions in email attachment, MSWord, doc or rtf format, space and one-half with one inch margins, New Times Roman 12pt – no tabs or special formatting.

* Maximum length is 2500 words, fiction; 1500, nonfiction; and 50 lines of poetry. These may be adjusted in future issues

* All Work must be error free and “camera ready”; and must include a separate cover sheet with authors name, email address, number of words, and title. The remaining pages to be free of all ID except title: upper right, and page number: lower center.

* Submissions for the first issue must be emailed not later than April 15

* Include in your transmittal email the statement, “I own and convey the right to publish this work (name it) one time in the CWC Lit-Review.”

Our first issue, will include the rules for a Name-the-Lit-Review Contest – and identify a prize for the member whose title is chosen.

We are excited about this venture, another value in club membership, and have aspirations that see the review on shelves in bookstores and in e-distribution. Of course you are a big part of it, so join in and have fun. Send your work, limit 2 on a given submission, to Dave LaRoche dalaroche@comcast.net by April 15, then sit back and watch our CWC Lit-Review grow. WT



Nora Profit

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early days and delayed the start of her writing career by a good many years. Following are some of the highlights of her talk:

While she had much to say, the crux of her speech was what she calls the TF Principle. In brief, the TF Principle is: What do you want the reader to THINK; what do you want the reader to FEEL?

She suggests that it is the job of



fiction writers to get an emotional response from their readers, and that every piece needs to make that emotional connection. She went on to suggest that this is true for nonfiction writers as well, but did not spend much time on that.

"I create emotional responses in my writing in order to get paid," she said, "no matter what the topic."

The process, she went on to say, starts with deciding what you want the reader to think and what you want reader to feel. Next, look to see if what you wrote is capable of drawing those thoughts and feelings from your reader. If the answer is no, you haven't gotten it yet.

A member of the audience asked her how this was done. She explained that "to do this you need to sit in the reader's seat, not the writer's seat. Read

as though your work was written by someone else, and test it. Every sentence should deliver on the promise."

Nora moved on to pacing next.

"You need the 'I want to know more' feeling with everything you write," she said, and explained that tempo and rhythm makes all the difference. In order to check, read your work back very slowly and listen for the pace.

She suggests that pace is important because while a piece can be grammatically correct, it can be rhythmically wrong, causing readers to stop, wonder,

and sometimes go back to re-read a selection. Certain readers will simply quit rather than make that effort, and that is the last thing an author wants.

Changing the subject, Profit went on.

"Do not," she commanded, "tell everything you know all at once." According to Profit, writers, especially those new to the craft, tend to get excited and want to spill all the beans at once. Letting your reader discover the facts of the story a little at a time helps keep the reader's interest piqued.

"Don't put too many ideas in one sentence," she suggests. "It is OK to say just one thing in a sentence."

"Kill the adjectives," she said. "Kill the adverbs. Look for alternatives." Don't say the man had "very big feet," or even "big feet." Look instead for a description that does the job for you. "He had feet the size of shoe boxes," for example. Adjectives rob from the story.

"Kill the attributes in dialogue."

Practice creating dialogue that can stand alone without attribution. Instead of "he said," or "she said," find ways to differentiate your characters through their style of speaking, their disparate vocabularies.

Practice by writing a full page of dialogue without attributes or description. Dialogue only.

She went on with a list of suggestions:

- * Get someone to read your work, preferably aloud, and listen carefully to where the reader stumbles.

- * How long should a chapter be? When you finish talking, shut up. The same is true for the length of a book.

- * Get into the habit of writing scenes rather than chapters.

- * Keep your writing lean. "Never use two words where one will do." -- Abraham Lincoln.

- * If you give Nora Profit a novel, she says she'll turn it into a pamphlet.

- * Use the "So what?" factor. Do not use unnecessary description.

- * The first sentence doesn't need to describe the story. In fact, it should not. The first sentence should be used to pull in the reader. Each sentence needs to have a rhythm. No sentence stands alone.

- * Readers don't just read words, they hear them, and they see the inherent pictures.

- * Ask yourself how many words you can eliminate from a sentence and still retain its meaning.

- * Put brackets around a section of your story, and state what it is you want your reader to think and feel about the section. Test it. Does it deliver?

And finally, she proposed, be able to finish the sentence, "I am writing this book to prove that (finish in three to five words)."

Nora Profit's talk was fun, fast-paced and informative, and she received a resounding round of applause.

Nora Profit can be reached through her organization, The Writing Loft, at www.thewritingloft.com.

Any errors or omissions are mine and should not reflect upon Nora Profit.

WT

Richard Scott blogs about writing at: UphillWriting.org. He is the president of Fremont Area Writers Club a branch of CWC.

Kick That Block

Do you suppose we have anyone like that in our club?

It happens in the best of places, as Rasch learned at Stanford when he became director of the counseling service for university staff and encountered many stalled writers.

"Despite being very talented and capable," he says of those clients, "I noticed they were not particularly easy to treat. It wasn't as simple as telling them they needed to write more."

He detected patterns that had "a different agenda than writing" and began to give talks at Stanford about "writing blocks and procrastination." His mission became "the value of blocked writers coming together, seeing that they're not alone, that it's not a social flaw or flaw of character. . . . It cuts through the isolation that goes along with a writer who's really stuck."

Some can't even get started, and Rasch suggests "it can be very useful to talk to somebody and find out why that is. Some people are unaware of specifi-

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cally what's stopping them."

Those problems all seem more serious than what I had in mind last year when I lobbied for a writer's block workshop on the East of Eden roster. I want my level of inspiration to be more consistent, preferably without dependence upon mind-altering substances.

But I never found a presenter (and of course we didn't stage the conference) and I concluded that there wasn't much call for that topic.

Then Rasch, currently the ombuds at Stanford, approached the club a couple of months ago, and now he diversifies our speaker lineup this season.

He does address the consistency issues, which tend to be more of a quandary for those of us who must write to meet a tight deadline, and he concedes that coffee, cigarettes, alcohol and other substances help some writers marshal their forces.

"There's no one answer for this kind of thing," Rasch says. "We learn in school to write to deadlines, for better

or worse. The fear of failing a class or doing an assignment will help us overcome our resistances."

And with "resistances" Rasch makes his transition to more serious ramifications of his topic.

"There's many different ways that barriers can come up. The internal ones are generally fear or resentment . . . something uncomfortable that's associated with writing." External ones "may have to do with specific relationships with people associated with your writings, (teachers, family). Sometimes that needs to be looked at and managed."

So that's why they say writing is therapeutic.

"In working with writers, especially those who are struggling," Rasch says, "I stress the importance of writing in their lives. For someone who feels the inclination but is not doing, there's often a lot of pain associated. . . . Even if it's a drag to do it, you pay a price for not doing it if you really are someone who's a writer."

<http://davidraschphd.wordpress.com/WT>



July 28-30, 2011

by Maureen Eppstein

Located where summers are temperate and the seascape spectacular, this intimate conference at College of the Redwoods in Fort Bragg emphasizes craft and community.

Our faculty, all excellent writers who are also outstanding teachers, meet for three mornings with workshop participants in various genres.

John Dufresne will lead a juried master class on the novel.

Other workshop leaders are Stephanie Elizondo Griest (nonfiction), Michael David Lukas (short fiction), Camille Dungy (poetry) and Kathleen Alcalá (emerging writers: fiction and memoir).

The afternoon program includes faculty readings; panels and workshops with editors, publishers and agents; and craft lectures by morning faculty and screenwriter Toney Merritt.

The fee, \$495 until June 15, \$545 thereafter, includes continental breakfast, lunch, and two evening meals.

Scholarships and limited financial aid are available.

Download a brochure and registration form at www.mcwc.org.

For more information, email info@mcwc.org, write to Barbara Lee, Registrar, at PO Box 2087, Fort Bragg, CA 95437, or phone (707) 937-9983.

Martha Strikes a Chord

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indeed is appropriate – not for her but for us. After a few insightful comments in overview – “writing is not a logical linear process, play with it” – she revealed her seven secrets to creating good fiction, each with supporting rationale, example and exercise.

We have been asking for hands on instruction, in-depth examination, and tangible, meaty, take-home information – all to improve our creative literary output. We got it. We got it in spades and we got it in hand-outs, and we thank Martha for sharing her experience and wisdom in a well-organized, easily-absorbed presentation.

Okay, enough praise for the event, and while it’s not possible tell all in this brief article, I’ll spill at least some of her secrets.

Secret 1. Above all, fiction is a story, and a great story describes a journey, a series of connected events that changes someone emotionally, physically, or ideologically; all or some of them. The cripple atheist visited a temple where he was healed and became a priest. Of course there are obstacles, interruptions, and doubts, but you get the picture.

Secret 2. A great story comes from several (never one) ideas and consists about one-third each of the writer’s experience, witnessing, and imagination. An idea to a writer is like flour to a baker, and before it becomes much of anything, is run through a process requiring additional ingredients, imagination, structure, tasting, and some change.

Secret 3. Great characters are the basis of great fiction. She gave us each a couple photos of people and a list of questions to ask them, such as: who are you, how do you feel about your life to date and your present circumstances, what led you into this story, what are your significant relationships, and how and why do you behave? And there wasn’t a question about shape of your legs or square of your jaw.

Secret 4. What keeps people reading is the desire for answers to questions you’ve posed in the situation you’ve created. First you make them care (for the answers), and then you make them

wait. The situation induces your character’s need for change – directly in that death is imminent, or more subtly as in continuing gambling losses are taking their toll. Why? Who? Where? And there is always, or not always, an inciting incident: “...his wife got a call from a hood at the casino.”

Secret 5. The purpose of fiction is to give the reader an emotional experience in a vivid story world. Immediacy is key. That is, we want to plant the reader into the here-and-now of the story. As E. L. Doctorow is known to have said, “We don’t want the reader to know that it’s raining, but to feel he is being rained upon.” Here the setting is critical, providing obstacles, resources, mood, social pressures, and expected behavior.

Secret 6. Great fiction is written by writers who have developed a strong narrative voice. We’ve heard about voice, but what does it mean? Martha offers this: it’s the sound the words make and the rhythm that comes from their joining. It’s the effectiveness related to the precision of choice and a vocabulary that’s understood by your reader. It’s readability: the length of a sentence, number of thoughts, how divergent they are, and where the punch lies. Above all, it’s the degree of simplicity.

Secret 7. There is no such thing as good first-draft writing. It all happens in rewrite. Writing is an iterative work, and the more you go over it the better it gets. First is the story, the characters and dialog, second, the “how” of it all is reviewed and made clear, next a bit of polish followed by set-aside. After this comes another read and does it hang together, where are the holes and risks of misunderstanding. Lastly with the Simonize.

I believe that learning is also an iterative process and that each time a writer hears and works one of these secrets, they learn to do it better, and better, and better. Some attending this workshop may have heard much of what Martha presented before, and some maybe never at all, but we all came away enhanced as writers of fiction – the principles better explained, more entrenched and present, and now finding their way into our work. WT

Publishing Opportunity

Reed Magazine has been San Jose’s literary journal since 1947.

An upcoming issue will be featuring the winners of the John Steinbeck Award for the Short Story and the Edwin Markham Prize in Poetry.

The judge for the Steinbeck award for issue 64 was International Literature Award winner, Daniel Alarcon, who has been published in *The New Yorker*.

The winner received a \$1,000 cash prize and will have the opportunity to be published in the Salinas based newspaper, *The Californian*.

The Edwin Markham winner also received \$1,000 cash prize and was chosen by Stegner Fellowship winner, Marilyn Chin.

Reed Magazine provides a wonderful opportunity for budding writers to have their works published!

Submissions for the 65th issue will be accepted beginning June 1, 2011.

Fiction, nonfiction, poetry and art submissions are accepted.

\$1,000 prizes are awarded to the best pieces of fiction and poetry.

See the website for further details:

(<http://www.reedmag.org/drupal/>)

At a Long Beach Bar

Part 3 of 3

by Richard Burns

Previously, two strangers are talking at the bar in Long Beach. Ron gets to telling Wayne about his crazy brother, Paul. Wayne recalls from the old days a guy who lived in his rest home just like Paul. It is a coincidence these two men know the same person. Wayne, who owns or manages the rest home, tells Ron about something interesting occurring in the office, back in '93, with Ron's deceased twin brother, Paul, as a key character. It is told in first person, Ron's point of view. The last few lines from Part 2 are as follows:

I felt him nod and he continued: "Your brother was in the office of Pacific Haven, needing a match for his cigarette, a little gruff and pushy that day."

Wayne's speaking accelerated. "Jack, the manager, shoved him back. 'No matches here,' he said. But really, Jack didn't want him burning down another damn room."

(continued...)

"Paul took it okay, wheeling himself out of the office. Then this guy, a weight lifter, came running up, another patient, used to be Paul's boyfriend. 'You swiped my shirt, you muthafucker,' he said to Paul."

I blew out a lungful of air, an odd kind of laugh.

"The guy, your brother in that wheelchair, legs up, kicking. The other guy landed a blow or two.

"All of sudden, Paul was standing up, no crutches, no wheelchair, ready to swing punches, tall as a building, but, jeez, skinny and out of shape.

"We ran to yank them off each other. Paul, in his bathrobe, turned to us--it was kind of peculiar--and said in his put-on British accent, 'I say, old chap, he speaks-not the truth.'"

Wayne laughed, doubling over. "Swear to God, Paul, he wore this imperious smile. His timing was smooth, a perfect Jack Benny. Everybody but Tom laughed. You know, Paul could be cocky as hell.

"Then your brother said, 'If you think you can impugn my integrity, Tommy, love, you got another think coming,' and he shoved that big Tom

guy back to the hallway and pounded the living daylights out of him. Torn fabric flew. It was something. Tom bounced off the wall, knocked down a huge picture. It fell down and clobbered his head." Wayne laughed as he spoke. "Broken glass all over. Paul gripped and twisted up Tom's shirt tight under his chin. 'Say you're sorry, Tommy, love. I'd hate to have to knock out your teeth.' Damn, he was a cyclone, just for that minute. We all pulled at him. He wouldn't budge.

"Then Tom shouted, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry!'" Wayne mimicked a guy crying. "'Okay, you didn't do it!' Tom blubbered. Blood rolled over his broke-open lower lip, down his chin. Shit, half of his shirt was gone. He had a physique and we knew he was strong, but that day, he was nothing.

"Then, letting up on pressure under that guy's neck, your brother said, quietly, 'That's better, Tommy, love.' He let go completely and stood up. Tom got out of there.

"At that, Paul laughed in that good-time way he had. You couldn't not join in, even Jack. And then..."

"Yeah," I said. "And then?"

"Paul edged back toward his wheelchair, and, oh, Jeez, he grabbed his chest, groaned real loud, staggered, man, and he fell. His shoulder banged off the door jam."

Wayne looked down and shook his head. "You could hear his skull hit the floor. It was distinct, like a hammer on this counter. He had to be dead."

I let it sink in. "I always suspected there was more, more than a simple heart attack; a fall."

"When the coroner came, we kind of protected Tom. We hinted at stuff, but the whole truth wouldn't have done Tom any good, and it wasn't exactly his fault."

"No, it wasn't." I tipped the last drops out of my mug, not cold anymore. I breathed in that vaguely sinful beer smell.

Wayne finished his drink.

"You okay?" he said.

I nodded.

For a brief minute, I had the swooping, unreal feeling I get when I get real anxious or over-excited. "Actually, he was kind of tough, huh? I knew it." I said. "I knew it."

I put my empty glass down and we left.

"One last victory for my brother," I thought, and the tavern door shut slowly behind me. WT



South Bay Writers Board March Monthly Minutes

by Sylvia Halloran

South Bay Writers Board meeting, 3/2/2011 7:32 p.m.

Present: Bill Baldwin, Colin Seymour, Richard Burns, Marge Johnson, Nina Amir and Sylvia Halloran.

Approval of January Minutes and Agenda

MOTION: (D. LaRoche/ R. Burns): *To adopt 2/2/2011 minutes.* Unanimous.

NOTE: emailed minutes are still arriving in all caps; new methods of emailing will be explored.

OFFICER'S REPORTS

President's report — B. Baldwin

- Matthews-Baldwin award recipient will be announced at March general meeting.
- Listen to feedback from general membership regarding the dinner price increase 3/8/2011.
- Upcoming board member elections – consider ways to serve the club in the upcoming year. Scout and encourage members interested in serving on the board or committees.
- Let's continue promoting the upcoming workshop and retreat.

Vice-President's report — C. Seymour

Upcoming programs:

- February's program was reviewed. Colin's efforts were appreciated.
- Speaker evaluation forms will be made available for 3/8/2011 meeting. D. LaRoche and C. Seymour will process.
- March: Nora Profit, Think/Feel Principle
- April: David Rasch, Writer's Block & Other creative impediments
- May: Alice LaPlante, Fiction process and the reliability of PoV.

Treasurer's Report as of February 28, 2011 — R. Burns

- Feb 8, General Meeting Summary: 42, [48, 60] attendees; 40, [36, 53] members; 2, [12, 7] guests; Net Profit = -\$235; Speaker: Clare Mullin = \$100; Lookout Bar & Grill = \$731; Cookies = \$21.
- SBW Assets Balance: \$20,476; [\$23,667; \$21,864].
- Lucke Long & Short Fiction Workshop, Mar 19 having little popularity so far with only 7 signed up.
- General meeting ticket prices increase for to \$18 for; \$22 for guests, starting March 8.
- The proposed Sept. Retreat nominally would cost minimum fee, about \$8,300. \$2,910.60 of that up-front, and is due to UCCR (United Camps, Conferences, & Retreats) Mar 11. \$582.12 of the latter is non-refundable if we cancel 6/3 or before, all \$8,300 is non-refundable after 6/3*. If sign-ups meet target (30), this is net no issue, but if attendance is very low and we cancel after 6/3, it's could be large dent in our assets. Taxes on food will be added to the bill. (* If UCCR can find a replacement at the same rates on the same days, the GUARANTEED MINIMUM FEE requirement will be waived by UCCR.)

Learning Center, Mark Twain DVD Series

Attendance: Feb 1 was 7; Feb 15 was 7. We finished *Huck Finn* (re-showing Huck Finn I & II by popular demand). The class is now moving on to

Connecticut Yankee, one I've never read. Lessons 17 & 18 to be shown Mar 1, Lessons 19 & 20 are Mar 15. (Lesson 20 covers *Puddin'head Wilson*.) Please join us at Westmont.

Secretary's Report— S. Halloran

Office and committee reports need to be emailed previous to the day of the board meeting. Thanks.

Central Board— D. LaRoche

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Apr '12					1 7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza	2
3	4	5 7:30-9:30 Mark Twain Westmont	6	7	8 7:30p OpenMic Borders Santana Row, SJ	9
10	11	12 Monthly Meeting	13	14	15 7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard	16
17	18	19 7-9pm Meetup - San Jose 7:30-9:30 Mark Twain Westmont	20	21	22 7:30p Open Mic Borders Sunnyvale	23

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@sbc-global.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

No 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

New Critique Group forming in Campbell

62. S. San Thomas Aquino

Mondays 6:30pm

Contact: Danita - blue2eternity@gmail.com

What's a Meetup?

A meetup is a weekly, sometimes twice a week meeting for SBW members and other writers who want to discuss and learn about writing and blogging related topics.

The topics, places, and times can be discovered in detail at:

<http://www.meetup.com/South-Bay-Writers/>

&

<http://www.meetup.com/Silicon-Valley-Bloggers-and-Writers/>

&

<http://www.meetup.com/nonfiction-writing-concept-to-publication/>

In Between Monthly Meetings

April 31

Gemini Magazine Short Story Contest
www.gemini-magazine.com/contest.html

April 31

CWC Sacramento Short Short Story Contest
marshar@quicknet.com

April 31

Tom Howard/John H Reid
short story contest
www.winningwriters.com/tomstory

April 2

Redwood Writers
Spring into Publication Workshop
www.redwoodwriters.org

April 9

Reno Writers Conference

April 15

6th Annual Flash Prose Contest
www.writersadvice.com

April 15

California Writers Club
Literary Review
dalaroche@comcast.net

April 16-17

Writers Retreat in Half Moon Bay
www.wildmindwriterpresents.vpweb.com

April 29-May 1

Words in Bloom Writers Conference
UC Davis Extension Sacramento
www.extension.ucdavis.edu/wordsinbloom

May 20-21

Antelope Valley Christian Writers' Conference
www.avwriters.com
info@avwriters.com

June 30

19th Annual Senior Poets Laureate Poetry Competition
50+ or older
www.centralcoastwriters.org

July 1

Scare the Dickens Out of Us
Ghost Story Writing Contest
www.clarklibraryfriends.com

July 6-9

Thriller Fest VI
www.thrillerfest.com

July 11-15

Peninsula Writers Branch will host
Oregon Coast Children's
Writers Workshop
www.occbww.com

July 28-30

Mendocino Coast Writers Conference
www.mcwc.org

July 31

Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest
www.dreamquestone.com

September 15

Central Coast Writing Contest
www.centralcoastwriters.com

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: Richard Scott, 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

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

President's Challenge

by Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Writers

"Gambatte Kudasai! (Japanese: "Chin Up!") Keep Writing!"

A few months ago, a friend loaned me a novel written by one of her friends. I've just finished it. An interesting novel; I enjoyed it.

It's interesting reading a novel by someone I have a connection with. On one hand I feel a little obligated to like it (or at least say I do). On another hand, since I have a connection to it, I really am rooting for the author to succeed. Even if I don't like everything about it, I feel a kinship with the author because I've written novels myself and have an idea of the challenges inherent in the form. When I read *Oliver Twist*, I'd already watched one of the film versions, so I knew how the story ended. Halfway through the book, I became acutely aware that I was in the middle of the book. I remembered how the story began, and I remembered the ending of the film. But there, in the middle of the book, I suddenly felt lost. How did the middle part of the book connect to either the beginning or the ending?

The book I've just finished reading presented different issues for me. I breezed into the book and it swept me right along for about 80% of the way. Only then did it show signs of floundering. In fact, I didn't quite like the ending. But those are typical challenges of writing novels: How to begin? How to end? How to keep things going in between?

When I was done, I went online to read five or ten reviews of the book. My reaction surprised me. First I saw the glowing reviews, the ones that suggested this book had changed a reader's life, that they were sad it had to end, that this was one of the best novels to have appeared recently. Since I had issues with the book, I slightly recoiled.

But then I read the negative reviews and felt they were unfair. I enjoyed the characters and found them interesting and entertaining. How dare reviewers call them one-dimensional, flat, and clichéd?! Did the characters lecture? Were some of them too "perfect"? Well, maybe, but I still liked them! I felt the reviewers were picking on my friends!

What lesson here? First: Different people have different tastes and different wants. From that it follows: Your book may be well-written, but it probably won't appeal to everyone. What seems complex to one reader may seem one-dimensional to another.

My experience drove home to me how thick-skinned you really have to be to publish (or do any kind of public performance). The characters you love, the passages you adore: Someone else may find them totally dull. But what can you do? You can keep in mind that some people will criticize, even mock your work. And their analysis may turn out to be right. Then again, they may be wrong. Keep writing! WT



Bill Baldwin

California Writers Club
South Bay Branch
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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.



WritersTalk

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

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Jackie Mutz
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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

Bill Belew
111 W. Arques Ave
Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Guest Columns

Sage Advice (400 words)

News Items (400 words)

Letters to the Editor (300 words)

to Bill Belew
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.

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Something's Missing

by Bill Belew



There is a lot of 'stuff' in each issue of WritersTalk.

Danita Craft and **Lisa Eckstein** rotate articles on how to improve the craft of writing.

Nina Amir scratches the itch of the non-fiction writer.

Bill Belew and **Rik Scott** fuels the fires for the on-line champions.

Pat Bustamante keeps the poet's page purring.

Benjamin Belew's ongoing graphic novel series provides something for the younger crowd.

The experts in our directory take turns to help us turn...it up a notch in our writing by providing valuable insights. This month **Bob Garfinkle** contributes.

Colin Seymour always whets our appetite for the upcoming monthly meeting.

Bill Baldwin, our president always encourages us to keep writing.

And our team of contributing editors provide recaps of each monthly event so members can stay informed when they cannot be present.

There are announcements, **Richard Burns** is an award winner!, of upcoming workshops and recaps of past gone by, this month by **Dave LaRoche**.

There is a full calendar of monthly events (meetups, critique groups, open mics, schedule of other CWC branches) to keep the active writer occupied and a long list of upcoming conferences, retreats and publishing opportunities, some bigger than others.

Select articles from WT will be published to online sites with 10,000+ monthly visitors....and more.

Still something is missing.

Care to guess?

Twelve of our members contributed to making this issue full.

Still something is missing.

That's your contribution.

Of those 12 members who pitched in for this issue 10 are regular contributors. Only Valerie Lee, Poet's Page, and Richard Burns, *At a Long Beach Bar* 3rd

part of 3 wrote something just for submitting here to WT.

WritersTalk gives an award every six months to the writer of the best piece, as chosen by the regular contributing editors. This award is left wanting for lack of submissions.

I recently spoke at a conference in San Miguel, Mexico. One of the speakers spoke quite frankly to the participants, "You say you are writers. But when was the last time you wrote something new and submitted it for consideration? Most of you have written something but are not actively writing now. You are not writers. You are 'wroters.'"

SBW branch is one of the largest in the CWC network. But when I read the newsletters from other branches, I find that our members offer up the fewest submissions per member.

Let's not be accused of being 'wroters.' Besides, how cool is it to be recognized as one of the best AND get paid for being so?

Send your submissions for consideration by the 15th of each month.

I, we (the contributing editors), the club look forward to seeing what you got. 8-) WT

Did you know? 4 presidents contributed to this issue.

That's right. There were four presidents who contributed to this issue. I wonder how many other clubs can make that claim.

Can you name them?

- .
- .
- .
- .

Dave LaRoche - former SBW prez.

Bill Baldwin - former and current prez.

Bob Garfinkle - former prez of Fremont Club and current prez of CWC.

Rik Scott - current prez of Fremont.

Poet's Page

TERSE ON VERSE

by Pat Bustamante

(but first, a poem for April)

"Aper-Rules"

by Pat Bustamante

"1. Have a mentor (alive or dead)
Some super-writer in whose head
You place yourself to copy the best.
2. Do not give up and do not rest
Until you're sure
In great footsteps you tread..."

APRIL FUEL:

Your mentors may be many.

In selecting a genre or a specific written message recall reading something that "sang" even if the language and the times were long ago and far away. A mentor may be sitting near you in a writers group: or in some anthology of "best writers/poets."

Remember there is no arguing with "dead poets." You like/you don't like! You memorize what seems finest to you.

Satires and parodies are not so much disrespectful as they are symbols of interest in something that LASTED. Ernest Hemingway is parodied in contests which actually are a tribute to a writer who succeeded with a VOICE unmistakably and fearlessly his own. (Imitation is still the best flattery.)

Keep trying. Don't be afraid that your first "copy" of a great master might look foolish. After all--this is the month for April Fools! SHARE THE MOMENT. WT

The Wasteland

by T.S. Eliot

"April is the cruelest month
Breeding lilacs out of the dead land
Mixing memory and desire,
Stirring dull roots with Spring rain..."

NOTE that this 'wisdom' goes against what most people think of Spring and April; contrast gets attention. The mood is "a wasteland of disappointment" harshly critical of changed values in modern times. WT

A Humbling Game

by Richard A. Burns

"The golf tournament I'm going to win this year!"

I bragged until shortly after,
When I counted my whacks at that evil white sphere--

"I played this one purely for laughter."

WT

Call Me Strange

by Valerie Lee

Okay,
call me strange,
call me superstitious
call me whatever,
It's true,
I do like
the color red,
it's bright,
it's vibrant
and symbolizes many things

Did you ever consider
what it really represents

It's the color of life -
blood
something
we need to survive

Red also means
many things to the Chinese
for example:

A colored red egg
given to guests
at joyous celebrations -
seen
accompanied by red ginger
brings good luck
and long life
a strong beginning to
a brand new life
at Chinese baby banquets
and elders' birthdays

Red
is the color chosen
for all important functions
parties, celebrations, meetings, banquets
Red envelopes
known as lai see
or hoong bow
bring people joy

This little gift
a welcome sight,
not
only sends a message
of congratulations,
good luck or happiness
enclosed inside is
something all of us need
- money
in any denomination
that the sender
generously
wants to give

Okay,
call me strange,
call me superstitious,
but
never call me ungrateful
Who among us
will turn away
a generous gift
and frown upon
the considerate person
who
comes bearing not only goodwill
but
offers a little something
in a red envelope

Accept it graciously,
regardless
of what station
we are in life
because
it comes from an area
that pumps
the precious essential red blood
into the
muscle
we need to survive
- the heart WT

The Adventures of Wilby
in
BRINGING DOWN THE WALL

episode#4 Whispers of the KGB

The KGB were good but apparently they had a short memory. Once refused the opportunity to teach in the Soviet Union for taking pictures of their headquarters, a second application was approved and I found myself working as a visiting scholar.

November, 1989
University of Khabarovsk,
Far East Russia

Story by WCB, Art by BB

It is hard to hear a whisper sometimes. But when 20 or more people all whisper the same thing at the same time, they can be heard. I heard all my students say under their breath "KGB...KGB...KGB." I was quite excited to see them...or at least I thought I should be. After all, they came out from hiding and revealed themselves directly to me.

Hi, Wilby.
I am agent Galya. It was, ahem, specially revealed to a 'friend' of ours that you have some unique knowledge that could be very beneficial to us.

Our white witch friend and we would like for you to come with us to help counter a dark magic movement that is happening in our city.

Witches and KGB agents and magic, oh my!

First, the Soviet Union's secret police. Then appearing in a revelation of a white witch. Followed by an 'invitation' to travel with them under the cover of night to help fight black magic. Just how far was I willing to go for the Truthgiver. I would learn really quickly.



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055

Mail To

Monthly Meetings

Every Second Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.

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

April Speaker
David Rasch

Kick That Block:

Deep-seated trait sideline writers
who most need counselor's help

