



# Writers Talk

Volume 20  
Number 7  
July 2011

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

## JULY POTLUCK & BBQ:

by *Colin Seymour*

SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2011, 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-H Main dish**  
**I-R Salad or side dish**  
**S-Z Appetizer or dessert**

The club will provide meat and drinks.

There is no charge.

### Location

Eddie Matthews' residence  
917 Perreira Drive  
Santa Clara 95051

Please RSVP at (408) 985-0819 or [RSVP@southbaywriters.com](mailto:RSVP@southbaywriters.com) WT

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## Pitfalls of Writing Memoir

by *Victoria M. Johnson*

Zoe Fitzgerald Carter says though she appreciates the genre, she is a reluctant memoirist. Author of the memoir, *Imperfect Endings*, Carter says she would have preferred fictionalizing the incidents from childhood and adding the drama from adulthood to them. Once she decided not to fictionalize her book she took out the fiction but she still wanted her book to read like a novel.

There is an intense interest in memoir and reality shows. Reality is so popular that we question fiction. Carter offered this explanation from Mary Carr: "Memoirs are tales of survival. They are about people who have survived whatever their book is about and gone on to find a way forward."

She discussed the many pitfalls a memoirist may encounter: being sued, being hated, and being judged, to name a few. Carter also struggled with the possibility of exposing her parents to scrutiny. With the process of writing her memoir Carter felt anxiety of telling

*Continued on page 6*

## How to Write Books That Sell

by *Nina Amir*

Many aspiring nonfiction authors see book proposals as a necessary evil. This document serves as a means to an end. They must write one so their agent can present their book idea to publishers or so they can do so themselves.

In fact, both nonfiction writers who plan independently publishers their books and those who seek traditional publishing deals should consider composing a nonfiction book proposal as a necessarily process. By going through all the sections of a nonfiction book proposal and at least composing a draft document, writers not only hone their book ideas, they figure out if their proposed book has any market potential, if it needs to be re-crafted or re-angled to make it more saleable and readable, or if it needs to be thrown in the circular file – the trash can. Additionally,

*continued on page 8*

## 2011-2012 SBW Board Elected

At the June general meeting, in accordance with the bylaws, members of South Bay Writers returned the four principal officers for a second term. Two new members-at-large were seated. Unopposed candidates were declared elected.

Results of the formal election proceedings are as follows:

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# View from the Board

by S. Halloran

Six of us—president Bill Baldwin, treasurer Richard Burns, secretary Sylvia Halloran, webmaster Rik Scott, Central Board liaison Dave LaRoche, and workshop chair Nina Amir—met in Sunnyvale Tuesday night, June 7, 2011.

Main topics for the evening were:

- Concern over scarcity of registrations for upcoming workshops and retreats
- Desire for better use of website for publicizing events
- Consideration of newsletter editorial changes
- Possibility of finding a new membership chairman
- Raising enthusiasm among members for barbeque July 10 and picnic July 30
- Upcoming elections and appreciation for retiring slate
- Direction of club and most desirable meeting format

Passed motions included:

- Approval of 5/4/11 minutes. (La Roche/Burns)
- Approval of up to \$75 to secure permanent ID badges for officers (LaRoche/Amir)

South Bay Writers is at a crossroads; board members engaged in lively discussion of what SBW's purpose for meeting is, what sort of activities will be of most value, and how we can pursue them for the good of the organization.

We adjourned without resolution or motion at 9:35. WT

# The Other Side of Blogging - Commenting

by Rik Scott

An important part of growing your blog is reaching out to other people, to other bloggers, that is, and making both a good impression, and building a strong relationship.

I can think of no better way of doing that, than by commenting on blogs which share your topic or point of view.

There are any number of ways to find like-minded bloggers, but one of the quickest ways is to go to Google.com, and type your subject into the query field. Once you get your response (very likely to be in the hundreds of thousands. look on the left side of the Google results page. Depending upon the popularity of your choice, you may see the word BLOG in the vertical menu there. If not, click on the word MORE and it will show up. Then, click on BLOG and go shopping for new friends.

So, great! You've found some people who care, and write, about some of the things that you think about every day. Now what?

If I gave you the impression that this would be a stroll in the park, I apologize. It will take some work, but if the topic is, indeed, one you love, it won't be too stressful.

Read. Read every post you can find. If you find a blog you really like, or one with a lot of readers that you'd like to have come visit you, subscribe to it. Get a notification as soon as that blogger posts, and get there to read and comment immediately, if not sooner.

If the blogger says something that you agree with, say so in a comment. However, an "I like this" or a simple "LOL" won't help your cause. Get verbose. Say why you like it. Fold in some of your own ideas if appropriate. Demonstrate your knowledge of the topic a bit.

If you disagree with the blogger, that's OK, too. As long as you do it in a sportsmanlike way. Calling the other guy an idiot won't usually bring you traffic. (Actually, and sadly, it does, sometimes, but you need to decide what kind of reputation you want out in the Blogging world.)

This is great! You've found people who like what you like, who blog about it, and best of all, who have their own following. Wouldn't it be nice to get some of those readers to come and visit your blog? Dern tootin'.

So, the next step is reading all of the comments on those blogs. That's a lot of reading, you say? Yep, but it is also what you want to do if you wish to get some of those commenters to visit you.

Yes, some will come by reading your comments to the main post, especially if your comments show up near the top, but an even stronger technique is to reply to the comments!

Engaging with your fellow blogger's commenters is strong magic. People thrive on recognition, and if you show that you've read another person's comments, and you are positive and supportive, you can win over those commenters.

Are there more tricks to this trade? Yep, and we'll look at them some time in the future, but for now the trick is READ, COMMENT, READ SOME MORE, and... well, you get the point.

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## Did You Know?

"Oh say can you see, by the dawn's early early light..

What so proudly we hailed, at the twilight's last gleaming?

Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thru the perilous fight

O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming.."

Francis Scott Key's poem "Defence of Fort McHenry", 1814.

A poem first; later put to music..now memorized by millions!

CWC South Bay

# Summer Writers Retreat

Westminster Manor, 512 Hemme Avenue, Alamo, CA 94507

Thursday September 1 – Sunday September 4  
Check in at 9am      Check out at 3pm



Price includes shared lodging, meals, all workshops, linen service, swimming, volleyball, ping-pong, hiking, horseshoes, meditative garden and labyrinth. Meal options with registration. Hours of writing time.

Members \$324  
Non-members \$379

## Workshops

Perfect Pitch  
World Building  
Birthing Your Book  
The Hero's Journey  
Blogging A Platform  
Writing A Book Proposal  
Character Archetypes  
Behind The Scenes  
The Profit Puzzle

Register at  
[www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

Register by mail with checks payable to  
CWC, South Bay Summer Retreat  
PO Box 3254  
Santa Clara, CA 95055

Reserve now; prior retreats sold out. \$174 holds your spot. Cancellations: prior to 07/28/11 receive a full refund less \$24; prior to 08/18/11 receive a refund less \$150; Cancellations after 08/18/11 are non-refundable.

# Write and Rewrite: Plot

by Lisa Eckstein

Plot is arguably the most important art of any story. Even complex characters in a richly detailed world won't hold a reader's attention if they don't do anything significant. A plot can be subtle and compact, as in a short story consisting of a single tense conversation, or it can burst with exciting incidents that build to a revelatory conclusion, as in a thriller novel.

To discuss plot, let's consider a highly simplified outline that could serve as the basis for either a short story or a novel:

1. Married couple Ella and Art have both lost their jobs and can't afford to pay their mortgage.
2. They put their house on the market and move in with their grown son, Mike, and his family.
3. Living in Mike's house leads to tension and arguments.
4. Art finds a new job, and the couple is hopeful that they can get their house back before it sells.
5. Ella also secures a job, and they're able to reclaim their house just in time.

The outline opens strong: The characters are in a tough situation that they will have to struggle to get out of. This can be a great way to begin a story, but only if things get worse from there. In this plot, life does become more difficult for Ella and Art. However, the additional problems follow as a direct consequence of the starting situation rather than arising from new obstacles, so while the first half of the outline has promise, it could be better.

Perhaps as the story opens, only Art been laid off, and the couple worries over money. This change leaves room for conditions to deteriorate. It also provides an opportunity to hint at what the worst case will look like so the reader can hope it doesn't happen. If Ella then does something at work that gets her fired, not only has their situation worsened, but Art can blame her for it, leading to all sorts of new

conflicts. Remember, the more your characters suffer, the more interesting the story becomes for the reader.

After the midpoint of the example outline, the couple's circumstances steadily improve. That's nice for them as people, but it doesn't make for an absorbing plot. To add tension, just when things are looking up for your characters, snatch away their good fortune and leave them unhappier than before. In a longer story, create a number of obstacles that pile up, and craft a sequence of high and low points.

For the sake of a compelling story, Ella and Art can't simply find new jobs without any trouble. Employment possibilities might be dangled tantalizingly and then withdrawn right as living with Mike becomes more stressful. Or even better: In order to get out of financial hardship, Art must face the tougher challenge of making peace with his son and going to work for him. A plot is stronger when there are connections between the events and threads, so look for ways that these links could test your characters more.

A good resolution unites all the story elements that have been presented so far. If the couple is rescued by a windfall inheritance from a relative Ella never knew she had, it won't be very satisfying for the reader because the happy ending comes out of nowhere. Similarly, if Art is suddenly diagnosed with cancer late in the story when there has been no previous discussion of health, the complication will feel disconnected from the rest of the plot. To write an ending that works, set up all the contributing factors near the beginning of the story. Add an extra layer by introducing a character flaw that will have to be overcome on the path to success.

It could be that Art has always been too proud to take a lower-status position, particularly from his son, but he learns Mike has always admired him and will continue to do so regardless of his job. A source of income may not be enough to save Ella and Art, who are headed for divorce due to all the conflict they've dealt with since Ella was fired. Maybe she's been insisting she was dismissed due to a misunderstanding

and has been trying to clear that up. When she makes her case and gets her job back, Art regrets not believing her, and the story ends with a hopeful outlook for the recovery of their marriage. It's not necessary for every thread of the plot to reach a conclusive ending, but make sure they are all addressed.

Here's a revised outline incorporating some of the new ideas:

1. Art has been laid off. He and Ella worry over their financial situation and the thought of having to live with Mike.
2. Mike offers Art a job, but he is too proud to accept.
3. Ella is fired. She claims she's done nothing wrong, but Art doesn't believe her.
4. The couple is barely speaking as they put their house on the market and move in with Mike.
5. Ella discovers evidence of her wrongful dismissal and is excited to share it with Art.
6. Art dashes Ella's hopes by rejecting the evidence and continuing to blame her.
7. Mike tells Art that before this incident, he always admired his father for standing behind his family no matter what.
8. Art realizes he's been focusing on the wrong priorities. He tells Ella that he'll support her in presenting the evidence and that he'll take a job working for Mike.
9. Ella makes her case and gets her job back. The couple is able to reclaim their house and expects to heal their marriage.

Of course there are many other possible variations for this basic outline. Don't commit to the first version of a plot that you come up with, even if you've already written an entire novel draft to develop it. While some writers are skilled at advance plotting, most of us have to write our way through a story to figure it out, and only then can we start to consider how it could be better. Rewriting at the plot level takes time and effort, but improving a story's plot is the most important thing you can do in revision.

*Lisa Eckstein blogs about reading, writing, and revising at [lisaeckstein.com](http://lisaeckstein.com).*  
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# Don't Forget

By *Cliff Hui*, Membership Chair CWC Berkeley Branch  
(Appeared in *Write Angles*, June, 2011)

She emerged out of the shadows, walking towards me in a black leather mini-skirt, her hips swiveling like well-oiled ball bearings. She stood next to me at the bar while I drank in her blond curls brushing her shoulders and the buttons on her fiery red blouse staining to stay closed. She turned to me and fixed me with her baby blues. I was struggling to think of an opening line when she said, "Time's up."

Was this a password? Did I miss the coded message drop? At the risk of blowing my cover, I responded, "Time's up?" "It's time to pay your writers' club dues for 2011-2012. Just bring a check to the next meeting." She looked me up and down and with a slight smile added, "Or check the website if you prefer." She turned to the bartender. "I'll have what he's having." I was stunned. "Dues?"

"For active, associate, and supporting members it's forty-five dollars. For dual and student members, the rate is twenty dollars."

My eyes narrowed to mere slits. There's more to this code than the usual. I racked my brain for the right response. Finally, I asked, "So?"

She smiled, her eyes twinkling in the glow reflected from the mirror over the bar. "So if you get dropped from the rolls because you're late, it's gonna cost you an additional twenty bucks plus your dues to get back on the rolls. That's the word from the big boys at the Central Board."

I raised my eyebrows. Now we're getting somewhere. Her drink arrived. She held it up to eye level and examined the ice still swirling inside. She locked her eyes on mine as she took a sip. She uttered a soft purr. I gave up on trying to find the code and searched my brain for a good opening line but stopped searching when she pressed the glass to her cleavage and asked, "Is it hot in here, or is it just me?"

I could feel my eyes getting big. My pants felt tighter. "How about ..."

She pressed her finger to my lips and leaned forward. Her warm breath caressed my ear as she whispered, "Don't forget." Then she left, walking back into the shadows. Her drink remained on the bar with a perfect impression of her lips on the rim.

\* \* \*

(See page 9)

While South Bay cannot promise as much as Berkeley Branch, you can send your dues to CWC-South Bay Writers, P. O. Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055, attn: Marjorie, or you can renew online. Don't forget to take care of your renewal during the July grace period. WT

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California Writers Club Annual

# PICNIC

**SATURDAY,  
JULY 30, 2011**

**1:00 - 4:00 P.M.**

**JOAQUIN MILLER PARK  
OAKLAND**

Join your fellow CWC members for an afternoon of food, fellowship and literary readings in the beautiful and historic park where CWC was born over a century ago. Open to all CWC members and guests. Hamburgers will be provided. Bring a salad, appetizer, side dish, or dessert to share, plus drinks for those in your party. Optional - bring a sample of your writing to share during our "open mic."

For directions and details, go to [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org)

The poster features a large, stylized green 'PICNIC' title. To the right is a photograph of a park with a fountain and a winding path. In the top right corner is the California Writers Club logo, which includes a circular emblem with a tree and the text 'CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB'.

## June Recap

### *Continued from page 1*

personal stories. Parts of her book were hard to relive and write. It's not easy trying to capture and record memories and emotions.

Another danger is falling in love with your words and events in your life. Edit! Learn to throw things out. Find others to read your manuscript. Have them look for scenes that don't belong. Even profound things you wrote need to go if they don't belong in the book. The reader expects each scene and each chapter to matter to the book. The reader expects emotion and physical details. Dump the autobiographical tone and don't overwrite. However, get the first draft out. Then decide if it belongs. Trust your instincts. Avoid the 'this happened' and 'then this happened' style of writing. You'll be judged on your journalistic chops as well as everything else.

"Write an honest and inclusive disclaimer," Carter recommends. "Read other memoir disclaimers and borrow from them." Think who would have issues or concerns with your book and put that in the disclaimer.

Carter discussed the difference between liable and defamation of character. Defamation is damaging the reputation of someone. To avoid liable, obscure identities or prove charges in court of law. Carter changes not only names, but also what they look like, where they live and where they work. "Protect the people in your story, not just yourself."

Invasion of privacy is the wrongful intrusion of private citizens. It includes causing embarrassment and impacting their ability to make a living. Carter recommends letting those in your book read it before it's published. "It's the right thing to do," she says. "If anything really bothers someone, take it out." Remember it is your version of the events, your perspective.

Using pseudonyms for the people in her memoir freed Carter to separate herself from the real person; which gave her more control. However, disclosing private and personal moments may give you a sense of loss of control. You may feel like you sold yourself or monetized your life. "Don't disclose more

than you're comfortable with," warns Carter.

You'll learn much from the process of recollecting events from your life. Before long, the page takes precedence over the real memory. If you tell your story in a memoir, get down to the bone. Carter didn't make herself a shining star.

Finally, remember the original reason you wanted to write the book. Carter wanted to comfort others going through the same end of life issues. She wanted to grapple with the question on what it is to be a good daughter. She wanted to go back and reconsider her choices: should she help her mother commit suicide or should she talk her out of it?

Carter answered questions from the audience and someone mentioned that if the writer doesn't have a big publisher with attorneys to advise them that they can hire a lawyer on an hourly basis to read their manuscript and offer advice. Someone else asked about adding fiction and selling the book as a memoir. Carter replied that she made her memoir funnier than real life, more emotional, and more interesting. She enhanced the true story. WT



## Meetups

Did you know that there are more than 200 members at SBW Meetup? Some of these are CWC members, many are not.

This Meetup is also connected to other writing/blogging related groups that number nearly 1,200 members! And the Meetups meet in physical locations several times a month.

### Got interest?

[www.meetup.com/South-Bay-Writers](http://www.meetup.com/South-Bay-Writers)

## Directory of Experts

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

### **Astrology, Singing**

Sara Aurich  
[saraaurich@comcast.net](mailto:saraaurich@comcast.net)

### **Astronomy, History of Astronomy**

Bob Garfinkle  
[ragarf@earthlink.net](mailto:ragarf@earthlink.net)

### **Banking**

Pam Oliver-Lyons  
[polpa@prodigy.net](mailto:polpa@prodigy.net)

### **Character Development**

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.  
[ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net](mailto:ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net)

### **Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace**

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

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

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

### **Hospital and Nursing Environment**

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

### **Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/ Psychology**

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

### **Library Science**

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

### **Marketing and Management**

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

### **Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence**

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

### **Music, Art, Graphics**

Benjamin Belew  
[mephistoape@hotmail.com](mailto:mephistoape@hotmail.com)

### **Teaching and the Arts**

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

### **I am an expert, too...in...**

Your name and email address here

## 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

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## Stay Informed!

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

southbaywriters.com

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### 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

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## Prose and Poetry Prizes 2011

from *The New Writer magazine*

**Closing date 30 November**

Established in 1997, one of the major annual international competitions for short stories, microfiction, single poems, poetry collections, essays and articles; offers cash prizes as well as publication for the prize-winning writers in *The Collection*, special edition of *The New Writer magazine*.

*Continued below*

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### South Bay Writers Open Mic

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen.

Contact Bill Baldwin  
(408) 730-9622 or email  
wabaldwin@aol.com

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Back copies of recent issues of *The Collection* are available at the TNW website as well as single copies of the latest issue (current copy) TNW 106 - see below:  
<http://www.thenewwriter.com/subscribe.htm>

Further information on the annual Prose & Poetry Prizes including guidelines and entry fees at: <http://www.thenewwriter.com/prizes.htm>

Writers can enter online at our secure credit card server at: <http://www.thenewwriter.com/entryform.htm>

Or, the entry form can also be downloaded from that page on the website and sent in the post with your entry.

The winners of the 2010 Prose & Poetry Prizes are listed on this webpage:  
<http://www.thenewwriter.com/prize-winners.htm> WT

## CWC Around the Bay

Published meeting times and locations for the other CWC branches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Be sure to check websites first for details.

**Berkeley:** Meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month, except for July and August, at 1:30 at the Oakland Public Library Main Branch.

[cwc-berkeley.com](http://cwc-berkeley.com)

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

[centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)

**Fremont:** Meets (except in July, December, and on holiday weekends) from 2-4 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of the month at DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 204, Fremont.

[cwc-fremontareawriters.org](http://cwc-fremontareawriters.org)

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

[cwcmarinwriters.com](http://cwcmarinwriters.com)

**Mount Diablo:** Meets the second Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Hungry Hunter Restaurant, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette (corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Highway 24).

[mtdiablowriters.org](http://mtdiablowriters.org)

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

[redwoodwriters.org](http://redwoodwriters.org)

**Tri-Valley:** Meets the third Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Oasis Grille, 780 Main Street, Pleasanton.

[trivalleywriters.com](http://trivalleywriters.com)

**San Francisco/Peninsula:** Meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon at the Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont.

[sfpeninsulawriters.com](http://sfpeninsulawriters.com)

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## Books that Sell

*continued from page 1*  
they get a handle on the market, the competition, and on what they need to do not as writers but as business people to help promote and sell their books.

Once finished with the proposal process, aspiring authors know if they have a book idea with any potential of becoming successful in the marketplace and if they have what it takes to make that book successful. Armed with that knowledge, they then can begin writing a book that should, indeed, succeed.

If you are thinking of writing a nonfiction book, begin by going through the book proposal process before you write one word. You won't regret it. In fact, you'll be grateful. In addition to giving you clarity on what your book is about, the process also offers you the chance to detail the contents of every chapter. Coupled with the "overview" of your book, a proposal section that provides a book pitch, word count, and a description of your book's benefits and special features, you create an outline perfect for guiding you through writing your book.

Thus, when you've completed all the steps of the proposal process, you'll be ready to write a book that sells to publishers and to readers—one that succeeds.

### About the Author

Nina Amir, Your Inspiration-to-Creation Coach, is an editor, author, and writing and author coach who blogs at [www.writenonfictionnow.com](http://www.writenonfictionnow.com) and [www.howtoblogabook.com](http://www.howtoblogabook.com) and writes two national columns for [www.examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com). Her blogs also appear at [www.vibrantnation.com](http://www.vibrantnation.com) and [www.redroom.com](http://www.redroom.com). She is the founder of Write Nonfiction in November. Writers and authors hire Nina to help them write and edit their manuscripts and book proposals. She specializes in inspiring people to reach their goal of turning their passion and purpose into careers as writers and authors and producing publishable and published products. [www.copywright-communication.com](http://www.copywright-communication.com) or [www.ninaamir.com](http://www.ninaamir.com).

Follow Nina on:

<http://www.twitter.com/ninaamir>

<http://www.facebook.com/ninaamir>

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/ninaamir> WT

# Inland Empire California Writers Club

2011 Short Story, Poetry, Nonfiction Contest

Prizes \$100, \$50, \$25

*Theme: Lost and Found*

Your short story, poem or nonfiction must touch on the theme Lost and Found in some way. The 2011 Inland Empire California Writers Club writing contest is open to all writers. Membership in the California Writers Club is not a requirement.

### Prizes

1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes of \$100, \$50, and \$25 will be awarded in each of the short story, poetry and nonfiction categories.

### Word/line length

Short story and nonfiction entries may not exceed 2,500 words. Poetry may not exceed 100 lines (including stanza breaks). Do not include title in the word or line count.

### Entry format

Entries must be in English and previously unpublished. Please type entry using black 12-point Times New Roman font. Short story and nonfiction should be double-spaced. Poetry may be single-spaced. All entries should be on one side only of white 8 ½ by 11 paper.

On a cover page, type your name, address, phone number, email address, category entered, entry title, and word count (for short story and nonfiction) or line count (for poetry). Include a separate cover page for each entry. Please put no other identification on your manuscript. Entries may be mailed to the address below, or emailed to [lhoopes@pomona.edu](mailto:lhoopes@pomona.edu).

### Fees

Send a check or money order made payable to Inland Empire CWC, \$10 (U.S. funds) for each short story, poem or nonfiction piece. You may enter as many categories and send as many entries as you wish. Entries will not be considered until entry fee has been received.

### Deadline

All entries must be postmarked or emailed no later than June 30, 2011. Payment for email entries must be postmarked no later than June 30, 2011.

### Winners

Winners will be announced at the September 24, 2011 IECWC meeting at 10:15 a.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore in Montclair, CA. Winners will be notified in advance and asked to email their winning entry for publication. Winners do not have to attend the meeting to win. All winning entries will be published in IECWC's journal, Fresh Ink, and on the Inland Empire CWC website for up to one year. All entrants will receive a PDF file of the contest issue of Fresh Ink. Authors retain all rights.

Submit to: IECWC Writing Contest  
California Writers Club  
310 N. Indian Hill Blvd. #318  
Claremont CA 91711



## Renew Your Membership Now

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The new term of office commences July 1.

Meredy Amyx  
Nominations/Election Chair WT

## Open Mic Schedule

1st Fridays  
Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza

3rd Fridays  
Barnes & Noble Pruneyard

4th Fridays  
Borders Sunnyvale

7:30pm - Cows go home

## Summer Retreat Registration Now Open

If you are already registered, make sure your writing buddies and critique pals register or reserve a spot.

Dear South Bay Writers Member,

It's that time of year again.

Renewal Reminder: The 2010-2011 CWC South Bay membership year ends June 30.

Renewal dues \$45 keep you a member in good standing through June 30, 2012.

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

Write on!

## Fault Zone: Stepping Up to the Edge

### Short Story Contest - Call for Entries!

Fault Zone: Stepping Up to the Edge, an anthology of stories, will be published January 2012 by the San Francisco & Peninsula branch of the California Writers Club. We encourage you to submit your short stories to our 2nd annual contest. Your piece should relate to the anthology's theme in some way. Interpret as you wish and have fun. We can't wait to see it!

Word count should not exceed 2,500 words.

Entries will be read blind. Do not put your name anywhere on your manuscript. Put your title on every page of your manuscript, along with the page numbers.

Include two 3 x 5 cards with your name, address AND EMAIL. We might need to contact you!

Send to: CWC Fault Zone Contest, PO Box 853, Belmont, CA 94002-0853.

First Prize is \$300 and publication in Fault Zone.

Second Prize is \$100 and third prize is \$50.

Third Prize is \$50

Postmark deadline is September 30, 2011. Entry fee is \$15.

Previously published work will be considered. Novel excerpts must stand on their own.

# Open Call for Stories

New and Pre-published Stories, OK PRINT: Deadline #1 - 7.15.11 Call for Submissions: HandPrints On My Heart®

A New Paradigm: Short Story Anthology Series - Web, Print, e-Book & Video

True, personal, uplifting short stories to create a unique anthology book series to be shared in multiple media, HandPrints On My Heart®.

Your story with your bio, photos, and links to your website, blog, and other writing will be available and easily searchable on the handprints site. If your story is chosen for the print series, you will be paid a fee comparable to other established anthology book series. See [NEW handprintsonmyheart.com](http://NEW.handprintsonmyheart.com) for Guidelines, story themes, deadlines and submission details.

## Blog Novel Entries

### Escape

by Katherine Mills

He was nervous and only a few years older than I, his patient, his client whatever shrinks call their...He moved away to another city before, perhaps, the inevitable might have happened.

The next one was older and a good deal more sure of himself. On my third visit he offered me pills—and himself. I left before the subtly phallic sculpture in his office gave me the giggles.

At twenty-five, there was an M.F.C. She would interrupt me, pat my knee and say, "Now, now. Your mother is crazy, not you." She saw me with my middle-aged husband who used to smoke in the bathroom with the water running so I wouldn't know.

Then I discovered the psychodrama center, where it was still, that is permanently, 1968, where you could wrestle your mother to the ground and tell her what you think. And once I did that, I went back to college.

I left out the doctor who kept pushing medication while criticizing me for being over-dramatic, the woman's group (after the first marriage and before the second) where the unifying principle was complaining about men, and the self-help books I collected, read, studied.

Then one day the woman who worked upstairs came down to meet me because she'd heard her birthday and mine were the same day. She told me in arresting detail about my struggles over the last several years and how they would be over on November 10th of this year when Pluto moves out of Venus. WT

### Kiss Me Quick or Else

by Allan Cobb

Fred zeroed in on his favorite office enemy target, Suzy, at their company party's dessert-line.

Suzy Wellington never seemed to learn. She never seemed to suspect any of Fred's silly little pranks until it was too late. Fred cut into line ahead of Suzy. He whispered down into her ear, "Kiss me quick, Suzy! Quick, or I will uncurl your Betty Boop curls with a cup of custard." She responded by standing up on her tiptoes and closing her eyes. She aimed her puckered lips upwards. Suzy now resembled, to him, a gullible baby-bird. Fred smeared a two-stroke chocolate pudding mustache underneath her nose.

He avoided kissing her, though she looked rather cute. No sense in giving his biggest headache at work the wrong idea.

Suzy's eyes were still closed. "Tastes sweet," she whispered. "Are you playing an erotic game here, Freddy?"

"Suzy," he said, "you keep saying the only way a woman could become a Fortune 500 CEO would be if she grew a mustache. I just grew you one. Thank me, please." Their dessert-line colleagues laughed.

"Ho, ho, but get with it, Freddy. I love your dessert, but my lips do not deserve to be deserted un-kissed."

"Sorry," Fred said. "I told you to kiss me quick, but you were too ugly and not nearly quick enough. Here's a napkin to shave off that ugly mustache, sir... ma'am."

"Freddy Bostich, you've just played one prank too many."

Fred escaped quickly, out to his green Corolla. WT

### The Shack

by Pete MacLaren

I am drinking a hot chocolate, gazing into a roaring fire, while standing in my parents' living room on a cold January night.

I think of the first time I looked upon the whitewashed shack across the street from my family's house. I was 10, lonely and anxious. There was a woman who lived there with one child, a daughter. No man ever appeared there during their time in the shack. The daughter had lost eyes and a detached manner. The shack was narrow and barely furnished; when open, you could see through the front door right on through to the back. After about two years, they moved and disappeared. My second girlfriend had lost eyes and always somehow stood apart from me. I am standing in my parents' living room, drinking a hot chocolate, my eyes following the flickering flames.

A middle-aged man, little more than a derelict, moved in. He made a small effort to clean up the place, and then gave up. None of my family ever spoke to him. Sometimes he held all-night card games in the shack with his few friends. One night, he was fatally stabbed at one of those games. The police arrested one of the card players. I was 16 when he died.

I am drinking a hot chocolate, standing in my parents' living room, looking out the front window onto the burning shack across the street. Tomorrow I leave for college down south. WT

# Blog Novel Entries

## Akio and Mrs. Yamashita

by Richard A. Burns

Akio is so glad it's Friday. His father is to pick him up at school in fifteen minutes. His family plans a train trip tomorrow to his grandmother's house. She usually serves nice snacks, whereas his father works hard at the Port of Sendai and has little money for such luxuries.

"Okay, pencils down," Mrs. Yamashita says. "Pass your quizzes up." Akio has one more math problem, but Mrs. Yamashita is strict. No sneaking in last-minute writing on the paper. Kiyomi, the girl behind him, hands him finished quizzes.

A violent rumbling rips through the quietness. Akio's desk jumps and the papers he took fly all over the room. The shaking increases. The blackboard flexes and cracks. Desks and kids slide in all directions. Jolt after jolt hit. A massive wooden beam crashes through the front wall. Screaming students grab at desks. Large windows crash in. No time to duck. No time to think.

A jagged split in the wooden floor opens up. It almost swallows Kiyomi. Akio pulls her up and away from the dangerous gap.

Mrs. Yamashita dives for her desk, but it slides toward the windows, and she misses it.

Later, Akio is drenched and shivering, high in a tree behind the playgrounds. Kiyomi has managed to climb up nearby.

He watches his teacher in her flowery, silk dress, floating face down in the receding wave of seawater, foam, and mud. The mighty wave has just tumbled upside-down trucks, rooftops, even big boats, onto the schoolgrounds. WT

## Women, Guns, and Yellow Airplanes

by Luanne Oleas

Stealing airplanes is a federal offense. That fact got cropduster Tony Damascus out of the airport bar and behind the wheel of his '72 ragtop. Bill, a young wannabe with an untarnished pilot's license, rode beside him. Both had the hots for a yellow Stearman parked behind their boss's hangar. Della the douchebag, Tony's latest squeeze, and Cindy, Bill's girlfriend of six months, sat in back. Tony parked, grabbed his .44 Ruger from the floorboard, and stuffed it in Della's purse.

"Hey," she protested. He silenced her with a rough kiss and a pinch on the ass. "Hey," she repeated, but smiled.

Across the dark tarmac, the bi-plane sat parked, nose pointed at the sky. Bill entered the open cockpit and Tony propped the plane. The girls turned away, but the prop wash battering Tony's face felt gentler than his mother's touch ever did. The plane broke ground, and Tony watched its WWII-like silhouette against a planetarium sky. After one circuit, Bill landed. Tony started the car with Della riding shotgun. In his rearview mirror, Tony saw Bill dive into the back seat beside Cindy.

They hit the freeway, singing Bad, Bad Leroy Brown and drinking beer, until the sirens started. Tony turned and fired, not meaning to hit a gas tanker. It burst into flames and killed the cops. For six months, they robbed banks. Tony and Della died in a caper gone wrong. Cindy and Bill escaped to France, forever haunted by the night of the stolen Stearman. WT

## Jaguar Princess: A Novel

by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson

Chanla "Pesh" Pex, a descendant of the Maya jaguar-king B'alam, is destined to be a shaman; the gods will punish her if she refuses. She learns to read the symbols carved onto the "stone trees" at a nearby ruin and is offered a college scholarship. Hoping to fool the gods by never spending the night in a sacred cave, she leaves her childhood behind to join the modern world.

Pex works as an aide at another ruin, B'alam Witz, where she finds an ornate box containing an ancient Maya manuscript, its pages stained with blood. In a vision, she learns that King B'alam concealed the book during the Spanish Inquisition and hid a treasure from the Spaniards.

Intent upon her search for the treasure, Pex enters the cave behind the temple, slips, and slides far below to the bank of an underground river. She surprises an intruder who binds her wrists and ankles and leaves her to die in the dark. Pex curses him to death by crocodile. She escapes from the cave with a jaguar talisman, a gift from the gods.

The looter returns and chases Pex to the river, where a crocodile snatches him. Pex traces the looter to Villareal, who has a gold model of the jaguar throne at B'alam Witz. Pex gives Villareal a replica of her jaguar talisman and with it, a spell causing nightmares that drive him berserk. Villareal slits his own throat and wills everything to Pex. She repatriates the stolen Maya artifacts. WT



# FORMAL vs INFORMAL

by Pat Bustamante

Mostly, formal poetry (following a formula) rhymes (blank verse is the exception). "Triplet" is one very old form: iambic pentameter, 8 lines, the first line (the "trio") repeated exactly word for word as the middle line and the second-to-last line. Second line repeated as the final line; two lines use rhyming words to match first line..

Sounds complicated? Yes. Here is an example (for July's 4th) of one of my triplets..

"Say You See"

Now blown to bits and joyous noise has gone;  
Red smoke fades swiftly. All that's left is blue.  
July's brief rockets hail, salute a dawn--  
Now blown to bits and joyous noise has gone--  
While he and I watched handheld on the lawn  
When love, like tattered red-white-blue still flew,  
Now blown to bits and joyous noise has gone.  
Red smoke fades swiftly. All that's left is blue.

----

If like myself you enjoy a challenge, inventing and improvising (SOMEBODY had to make up all those formal poetry rules) -- do it!

I call this next form "Decolet." Three lines times four. It reveals something (decolletage?) and though December is rooted (dratted Romans!) in "ten" it IS the "twelfth month."

# Poet's Page TERSE ON VERSE

by Pat Bustamante

..so..July and a poem:

"Jul.: 'Jewel I'..

A jewel I wrote, just yesterday.  
Let's celebrate, hooray, hooray!  
Until sad news, from online hunt:  
'Unmeant plagiarism', to be blunt.."



continued from 1st column

## "Winter Break"

Light candles,  
Count blessings,  
Welcome home the scholar.  
Get a grip or two (love's seasonal handles)  
Since somebody's cooking a turkey with dressing--  
Johnny's home from college. And he's taller!

Candles alight  
Blessings counted  
Scholar stretched out in the domicile.  
Small tamed fires with fierce shadows fight  
Reflect past troubles to molehills amounted.  
Your heart's aglow from that "AT-HOME" smile..

# FRUSTRATION

By Valerie Lee  
Author of The Jade Rubies

This is something I know very well  
Look how it destroys the mind  
Leaving behind only more pain  
Of things that can never be

Try as I may, will it happen  
Can I lick this poisonous emotion  
Can I rise above the dark mood  
So I can shine in my own eyes

After all, who else can experience  
This feeling of worthlessness,  
Feel its strong arm strangling me

I do not need to be reminded daily of my failures  
Nor do I need constant dabs at the heart  
Or be inflicted by everyday rejection

It visited me more than I can count  
This ugly, torturous longing that has  
Kept my spirit from soaring

But it will not win because endurance,  
Hope and faith will keep me strong  
Yes, frustration will become a thing of the past

## South Bay Writers Anthology



\$10  
At the meeting.  
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# Rescuing Braveheart

by Helen Vanderberg

The VHF radio splutters, a passenger translates from the Turkish: Flash Notice: Large vessel, restricted in ability to maneuver at 32.38N 29.47E. The Turkish Coast Guard is commandeering us to assist in a rescue.

I arrived in Istanbul in midsummer, heading for the Dalaman peninsula and a cruise aboard the *Avrasya*, a small Turkish 65-footer. On this small boat, we sleep on deck, looking at the stars and listening to disco music. Turkish music has a sad wailing nostalgia with Arabic overtones. Lying on deck, I would try to identify the smell wafting from the land. Purely Asiatic, almost like dung, with smoky head-notes that clear the sinuses, it stirs memories of the souk in Cairo, dark-brown and camel-like. Definitely Arabian. Such weighty matters.

The food on board is magnificent. Fresh fruit and vegetables, beautifully arranged and a great deal of everything. Besides stuffing myself with lovely vegetarian food, I swim and write. The radio is on, and a Turkish voice proclaims the news, but I have no idea what it might be. Aside from weather, of which there has been none, whatever else can they be talking about? Sunny, fair and windy.

The chop increases as we round the point of an island, and the crew has readied the staysail to steady the boat. A line of rocks comes less than a boat-length on our starboard beam. Spray flies. Three sloop-rigged boats on our port have only main sails up, and a motorboat flying the British flag has passed ahead. Our boat surges as she vigorously rises to meet the challenge. The wind has increased to 20 knots as we round the point. Last night everyone was very relaxed and jovial, dancing and making jokes. The captain this morning sits on a stack of white plastic chairs and steers with bare feet. The weather mounts. We are powering along in rolling seas, among other boats, just short of another rocky outcrop. It is not yet 8:30 in the morning. A sloop has struck sail and makes way under power. One of our party has become unwell. She staggers to go below. The captain takes a firmer hold on the wheel.

We notice a large steel boat painted a somber gray cut across the channel in front of us, then turn at 90 degrees. He comes about, and does it again. We're puzzled. What in the world is he playing at? Does he intend to sink us? The red Turkish flag with rising moon and star reminds us we are foreigners off a strange shore.

The VHF stutters. We are being commandeered by the Turkish Coast Guard.

The ship *Braveheart*, a 65-footer like ours, is foundering on the rocks. She had raised a triangular red-striped sail to signal assistance is required. Her VHF is out of commission. Her boarding ladder is broken, all passengers have been taken off. On the tilting deck, a sole panicked sailor clad in life jacket--her captain perhaps--is preparing her to be driven on the rocks. She is sinking. Our captain now standing alert, mop-hair flying in the breeze, glances around at his passengers and shrugs his shoulders. Despite his easy-going nature, we trust him to take us closer. Messages are shouted back and forth to the *Braveheart*, then relayed to the Coast Guard by VHF, who is standing safely off in deeper water. Between them it was decided we should try passing the sinking ship a line.

The first throw by Ali, falls short. Both boats are pitching, the wind is strong, the waves and current unpredictable this close to a lee shore. For the second throw, Omar, our valiant cook, goes out as far as he can on the pitching gangplank, and while the captain maneuvers us dangerously close between the sinking ship and crashing surf, he throws the line to *Braveheart*. The line, made fast at either end, snaps taut. A tremendous surge of power from *Avrasya*, and *Braveheart* turns her prow away from certain disaster and into deeper water.

Whereupon the Coast Guard, in fine white, gold-braided uniform, stands by in a dinghy to receive the line. The big official ship would now take *Braveheart* under tow.

The chop, the danger, the rolling seas, has several passengers seasick, and one of the crew. My sole portion of the rescue consists of hanging onto a passenger who is relieving herself of her too-late-administered Dramamine.

WT

# Brief Residency MFA Writing Program

Spalding University's four-semester, brief-residency Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing combines superb instruction with unparalleled flexibility and offers studies in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, writing for children and young adults, screenwriting, and playwriting. At the beginning of each semester, students and faculty study together at a 10-day residency (in Louisville or abroad), after which students return home to study independently with a faculty mentor through an exchange of 5 packets of original writing. Semesters begin in spring, summer, and fall.

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Spalding University has been around since 1814 and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The MFA Program is a member of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP). The MFA program began in 2001 and has 363 alumni and 155 students. Our students and alums have published or produced more than 200 books/plays/films. We offer flexible scheduling where students may begin their studies at different times of the year and take up to 10 years to complete the program. The program includes a summer residency abroad (London/Bath 2008; Barcelona,

# President's Challenge

by Bill Baldwin  
President, South Bay Writers

*"Let's Get The Party Started"*

Our club elections are over and summer is here! Now we can all trot off to the beach and read trashy novels, right? Maybe not. Some of us have to write those novels—or edit them or submit them. And some of us would perhaps rather hole ourselves up in a hotel room typing, when we could be out on the beach tanning! Such is the life of a writer!

And some of us—sad to say?—have to run writers' clubs and plan activities for them. No—not sad to say. It's an honor for all of us who have been elected to serve on your board of directors. And it is your board. South Bay Writers belongs to you. The board wants to help you succeed as writers. The purpose of the California Writers Club is to promote the art and business of writing; to quote from our founding documents, to educate "writers of all abilities in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work." And we on the board of South Bay Writers need to know what you need to become more successful as writers. What do you want?

We have a variety of interests. Some of us want to write novels, some of us want to blog. We have poets among us, and playwrights, and screenwriters; non-fiction writers and memoirists; journalists and editors and perhaps people developing new forms and talents: Slam poetry, podcasts, audio books, graphic novels, social networks, websites.

Some of us have been writing many years; some of us are still learning. Some of us have agents and have published books; some of us are still shy about even saying "hi" to an agent.

But we're all members of this endeavor called South Bay Writers, California Writers Club. Let's help each other out. People are looking for critique groups; let's create them. People want opportunities to promote their works in public; let's create them. Bring your ideas to the board. Volunteer to help run this club. If you have the time and energy, contact me—Bill Baldwin, [WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com). Let's make the coming year an exciting one for South Bay Writers. Step up to this adventure! WT



California Writers Club  
South Bay Branch

— o —

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We have a membership category that fits you. Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee. Contact the Membership Chair, Marjorie Johnson.

## 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

Bill Belew

111 W. Arques Ave.

Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Guest Columns

Almost Anything Goes (400 words)

News Items (400 words)

Letters to the Editor (300 words)

to Bill Belew

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Creative Works

Short Fiction (1800 words)

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Accolades

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*by Bill Belew*  
*Editor*





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South Bay Branch

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See front cover for details.

WritersTalk deadline is always the 15th of the month preceding the month of issue.

