



# WRITERSTALK

Volume 21  
Number 1  
January 2013

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

JANUARY SPEAKER

**Beth Barany**

## Jumpstart your writing When are you going to finish your book?

by Rita Beach

How many of us have brilliant pieces of unfinished narratives or writing projects lying around? Are we waiting for someone or something to motivate us to finish what we started weeks, months, perhaps even years ago? What are the essential tools for getting your book done?



**Beth Barany**

That is precisely what Beth Barany, our speaker for the January meeting, will help us navigate through. She is a Master NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) Practitioner and Certified Creativity Coach who has guided authors for over 12 years with their books from written to edited and then published. Five of her clients' books have been bestsellers.

Ms. Barany is an author, a writers' coach, a keynote speaker, a creative consultant, and a marketing advisor for authors and publishers. She is also the editor for the monthly digital magazine, *Author Entrepreneur Magazine*,

which is available to download or to view free online at [www.author-entrepreneur.com](http://www.author-entrepreneur.com). Beth Barany is the author of the bestselling books *The Writer's Adventure Guide: 12 Stages to Writing Your Book* and *Overcome Writer's Block*. Her young adult epic fantasy, *Henrietta the Dragon Slayer*, is the first of a three-book series.

**Does your writing need a jumpstart?** There you are enjoying this beautiful writing experience, cruising along with your creative juices flowing, and then it happens – you stop; you're stuck somewhere in the middle of a great beginning with no end in sight. Do you give up, start another book, or remain hopelessly lost? Our speaker will share a step-by-step process to help you regain your clarity and passion for your book by revisiting the core purpose and motivation for your writing. You cannot move ahead until you uncover the stumbling blocks that keep you from completing the finished product.

**What are you waiting for?** The holidays are over. Now is the time for all of you serious writers to return to the tasks at hand. Start the year off right by joining us for this inspiring presentation by Beth Barany. You will find some personal solutions to writing problems and discover hidden gems for use in future projects. See you Wednesday, January 9, 2013 at Harry's Hofbrau for our monthly meeting. – WT

## Holiday Bash 2012

South Bay Writers Club gives a heartfelt thanks to Gisela Zebroski for hosting our 2012 holiday party in her lovely home hidden in the dark hills of Los Altos. See photos on pages 7 and 8 and on [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com) – WT



**President Bill Baldwin and Hostess  
Gisela Zebroski**

– Photo by Carolyn Donnell

## January Resident Expert

by Rita Beach

*If No One Can Find It, How Will They Know How Good It Is?*

The challenge after you finish a book is to create a market for your product and keep interest growing. Sherrie Johnson, our January resident expert, will discuss why authors need two important tools – a fan-based mailing list and an elevator pitch – to promote their books. Readers come to your website because they enjoyed your book and want to know what else you have to offer. You can use this opportunity to strengthen your fan-base.

*Continued on Page 4*

**FLASH: Blockbuster Plots Workshop**  
See Page 9

**Preparation for workshop**  
Read *Tale of Two Cities* by Dickens

# President's Challenge

by Bill Baldwin  
President, South Bay Writers

## Who's Coaxing You Into 2013?



Do you have a favorite author? Maybe I should say, do you *realize* you have a favorite author? Do you realize that you may have a *different* favorite author than you did five or ten years ago? You may have a different favorite author than you did at X-moment in the past: in high school or college or when you lived on the East Coast or before you retired. Have you *thought* about it? Do you know who your favorite authors were or are? Are you even now discovering a new flame?

Have you thought about *why* you like this author, these authors; what interests you or moves you about them? Is it simply their writing, or is it also something about their personal lives; perhaps their backgrounds or their experiences?

If you've heard me read at our open mics, you probably know my current favorite authors. I love Christopher Isherwood for the way he combines his sexual orientation with his spiritual quest. I first heard of him when I learned that he inspired the musical *Cabaret*. Later, I read his co-translation of the Hindu *Bhagavad-Gita*. Now he's led me to other gay writers like Edmund White, Andrew Holleran, and Felice Picano.

I also love Jack Kerouac, for reasons less clear. He speaks from his own experience. He's determined to *be alive*, to face life head on. Again, he's honest about his sexuality and his spirituality.

But this is *now*; I've loved others. I grew up with Mark Twain and H.G. Wells. In high school and college I discovered James Joyce, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn (yeah – it got a little heavy!).

And though I love Isherwood and Kerouac, I step out sometimes with Phillip Roth, Gore Vidal, John Steinbeck, and others.

And poets. So many Russian and French poets (Baudelaire, Pasternak, Mayakovsky)! Goethe. Allen Ginsberg. And playwrights – Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill.

It's good to have writers you not only *like* but *love*. And that means knowing them well enough to know what you *don't* like, knowing what annoys you; dare I say, knowing *what you would do differently*; writers you learn from *in both ways*.

So think about these people now, over the winter; think about whom you love to read. They sustain you and guide into the future.

Here's to an inspired 2013! – WT

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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, Sally Milnor, or sign up online southbaywriters.com.



## 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*. Please prepare your work as carefully as you would for an agent. All submissions will be copyedited to uphold our publication standards. The Managing Editor decides which submissions to publish.

Submission deadline is the 15th of the month. Suggested word limits are not absolute; query the editor. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

**Anything Goes—Almost** (300 words)

**News Items** (400 words)

**Letters to the Editor** (300 words)  
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

### Creative Works

Short Fiction (1500 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 and is published free of charge.

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by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson

Editor



## December 21, 2012 Not the end of time but a time of spiritual renewal

### Guest Editorial: West of Eden

From: the Hermit's cave, somewhere West of Eden:

To: Writers Of Kern, Friends, and Associates of the Editor:

I found the Editor wandering the deserts again, looking, he said, for "a lost shaker of salt." The reference eludes me. He has suffered a mental aberration due to exposure and deprivation. He keeps raving about being "depraved on account-a I'm deprived," another reference for which I have no frame. Needless to say, he is in an unstable state of mind, a mild form of schizophrenia coupled with manic-depressive tendencies and occasional paranoia. Mostly he sits with a dazed expression and chants random lyrics from Broadway musicals.

The Editor is under my tutelage and care for the time being. His current mental state is in precarious balance; despite my efforts, he lingers in the desert even now. So I am keeping him in continued isolation. The therapy includes both mental and physical exercise, and controlled diet. (He seems to believe that peanut butter cookies are a basic food group.) I expect him to achieve a more stable, integrated condition in eight to twelve weeks, but full recovery of Self after one of these incidents is always in doubt.

Until that time and utilizing his electronic communication identity, I serve as his spokesman and liaison. As such, I can assure you that when he returns to his Self, he will return to society and apologize to all for his failure to meet obligations, responsibilities, and duties. For now, I say it for him.

As ever your servant,

The Hermit, for M. L. "Marty" Gorsching

Editor, *The Write Way*, CWC Writers of Kern

\* \* \*

Marty has expressed the feelings of an exhausted editor, including the editor of *WritersTalk*, especially after attempting NaNoWriMo followed by attending an archaeological seminar at several Maya ruins in Mexico. I celebrated the end of the Maya calendar, December 21, 2012 at Uxmal. Of course, only the calendar ended that day. The Maya began the next 5000 year cycle on December 22 with a period of spiritual renewal.

I hope to renew my writing spirit on January 27 by attending Martha Alderson's workshop, "Blockbuster Plots." Such an opportunity comes but seldom — don't miss her workshop. I hope to see you there. WT

**Be sure to catch the Early Bird!  
Sign up for the January workshop today. See Page 9.**

# View from the Board

by Marjorie Johnson, pinch-hitting for S. Halloran

Six of us met in Sunnyvale Tuesday night, November 27: President Bill Baldwin, Vice President Rita Beach, Treasurer Mike Freda, Newsletter Editor Marjorie Johnson, Central Board Liaison Dave LaRoche, and Webmaster Rik Scott.

The minutes of the October 30 board meeting were approved. Dave LaRoche noted that, while the SBW Board gives the Matthews-Baldwin Award for service to the club, any member is eligible to receive the award, not just a Board member. Bill Baldwin chose the recipient of the 2013 Matthews-Baldwin Award, to be announced at the February SBW meeting.

Dinner meetings—times and locations—were discussed. Harry's Hofbrau is reserved for the second Wednesday night of the month for 2013. We are still searching for the perfect venue: centrally located, lots of parking, moderate cost. Good food is also desirable, but has lower priority; we need to keep cost to a minimum. Eléna Martina has checked out many venues; if you know of one with moderate cost, please contact her at [networking@southbaywriters.com](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.com).

Dinner meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of the month, and SBW Board meetings on the Tuesday night of the preceding week (eight days before the dinner meeting.)

Marjorie Johnson announced that, in light of the SBW meetings now occurring on second Wednesdays, *WritersTalk* will return to the more sane submission deadline, the fifteenth of the month.

Without a report from the Online Presence Committee, President Bill Baldwin appointed Marjorie Johnson to serve as Web Editor by sending information on SBW events to Webmaster Rik Scott.

There will be no SBW Board meeting in January. The next Board meeting will be on February 5.

*If you read something of interest here that you'd like to have a say in, please contact any board member for further information. It's YOUR club! – WT*

## Resident Expert

*Continued from Page 1*

***If You Can't Tell Me What Your Book Is About, Who Can?***

Once you have written the book, you might have a chance to meet with a publisher. These people are busy and aren't going to stand around listening to some unknown author go through a lengthy dissertation about their latest endeavor. Maybe you'll attend a writers' conference with publishers willing to listen to what you have to offer, or maybe you'll have twenty seconds to talk to a major publisher; if opportunity knocks, you need to be ready. Sherrie will offer tips on how to develop a one-to-two sentence elevator pitch, priceless under these circumstances.

Sherrie will speak at the first part of the meeting, so try to arrive early enough to finish your meal and hear this informative resident expert. See you January 9th! – WT



**SBW Holiday Bash**  
Liana Bekalos, Bill Baldwin, and Hostess  
Gisela Zebroski

–Photo by Carolyn Donnell

## NorCal Group News

by Dave LaRoche

Branch representatives met again at the Bellevue Club in Oakland on December 1, all but Mendocino attending. The venue was perfect, if somewhat expensive: a stone-quiet meeting room with ambiance and appointment fit for the uppermost crust—that's us—and a view overlooking Lake Merritt. Lunch was elegant: broiled salmon, roast red potatoes, green beans, all concluding with a chocolate decadence and sherbet. All of this quelled our tendency to disagree, I believe, and arranged, if not intentionally designed, by our Chair, Joyce Krieg. As I recall, we conducted some business. Hold on—I'm thinking.

To the business end, the subject of CWC presence at the SF Writers Conference in February held our foremost attention and brought forth refining ideas that moved us forward with a detailed plan. Paula Chinick, prez of Tri-Valley, is chair of this effort. Money is in hand, a schedule for staffing the table is out, and sign-ups are in progress. While we will display book-cover images from branch authors, the focus of this event is the promotion of the club at large with an opportunity for visitors to leave their names and locations.

Publishing Pathways was also on our minds and Elaine Webster, president of Redwood, presented a plan for rejuvenating the program. An energized discussion ensued. Elaine is likely to assume a pivotal role in both Pathways and the NorCal Group.

The NorCal and Pathways websites were discussed with interest in lessening expense. Our current webmaster, Rik Scott, will step down with appreciation and applause for his work on Pathways. Elaine Webster will assume that role on a voluntary basis, saving the Group the cost of professional assistance. We can expect some changes in content and procedures.

Our meetings never lack enthusiasm and a willingness to work. Ideas, once finding consensus, are followed with planning and execution. The Group is imbued with a collaborative spirit directed at building and promoting the CWC through its branches, a gratifying experience for those involved. – WT

# Writing for Life Workshops

## Come to Silicon Valley

By C. S. (Susanne) Lakin

It all started with a conversation. Writing coach and novelist C. S. (Susanne) Lakin was at a writing conference talking with best-selling author Davis Bunn, saying how great it would be if someone would put on multiday writing intensives with authors like Davis. No venue anywhere in the San Francisco Bay Area held such events, despite the fact that thousands of serious writers live there. Sure, there are some annual conferences in which great authors/instructors teach for an hour or two, but nothing *intensive*. Davis then expressed with excitement his interest in doing such a workshop.

When Susanne told another author friend, James Scott Bell, who is also an outstanding writing craft instructor, about hosting these multiday workshops, he got excited and said, "Count me in." She spoke with both authors and set some dates, and Writing for Life Workshops was born.

Susanne has teamed up with Geraldine Solon of CWC Fremont Area Writers with enthusiasm over this new year's lineup: a three-day workshop June 28-30 with James Scott Bell; two days with Davis Bunn September 13-14; and two days with Hollywood consultant Michael Hauge October 19-20. Everyone is very excited to be diving into this venture.

The venue is centrally located – The Courtyard Marriott in Newark, next to the Dumbarton Bridge, allowing for easy access from all parts of the Bay Area. Susanne's aim is to provide a high-quality event in a comfortable, inviting setting, with attendance between 60 and 100 to keep a feeling of intimacy. It's been her long-held dream to host writing workshops featuring best-selling authors and those acclaimed in the writing world as the best instructors – for fiction, nonfiction, and screenwriting. These three events are planned as the first of many

C. S. Lakin is the author of thirteen novels and works full-time as a writing coach and professional freelance copyeditor for the book publishing industry. She joined South Bay Writers in 2011 and has taught workshops on the writing craft for both SBW and FAW as well as across the country.

Information on these events can be accessed at the Writing for Life Web Portal, where writers can be put on an email list for news and updates. Registration opens January 14 and Writing for Life will be throwing a weeklong registration party from January 14 – 20! Everyone who registers for any of the events will be entered into a drawing to win a whole lot of great prizes. See page 14.

The best part? California Writers Club members get the best discount on rates. Space for these events is limited, so be sure to mark your calendars AND go to [www.writingforlifeworkshops.com](http://www.writingforlifeworkshops.com) to sign up for the newsletter and to be kept up to date on all new events and news. You can also contact Susanne at [writingforlifeworkshops@gmail.com](mailto:writingforlifeworkshops@gmail.com). WT

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## On Blockbuster Plots

by Dave LaRoche

Of all the gin joints – er, creative writing teachers in the world, and I've had some – Martha Alderson has provided me value. She knows her stuff, and I listened, and my stuff has advanced. Plot is the spine of story without which you have piddle. Nuanced progression over interesting terrain, through dark places into brilliance, shady mystery and clues, hard escapes, breathless endings into startling new beginnings – well, you get my drift. It might be the way in which you bring two lovers together or a family out of old communist Hungary. It might be a raft trip down the Mississippi (whoa, I think that's already been done) or a weekend visit to grandma's place. Any and all can be dreary and dull or exciting and magnetic, depending on how the story is told. Martha will help us make it the latter. Join us on January 27 at Harry's Hofbrau. See ya there. – WT

## Networking Log

SBW Book Exchange/Review

by ElénaMartina

Every author knows how difficult it is to get someone to write a book review for them. Most writers go months, even years, with just a few reviews written about their books, but this could soon change. How? A new program was accepted by the club's board members and announced during November's gathering at Harry's Hofbrau: our very own Book Exchange/Review Program, in which authors pair up to exchange books for a review.

When books are finally traded, notify me so I can announce it in this column. This is a fantastic way to support our members and gather readership, future sales, and of course, reviews!

There is a catch. You both must write a review. There is no time limit as everyone is busy working, doing things, or reading other books, but we would like to see reviews done sooner rather than later. The rule is not to forget or decide later not to write one. I must say that I experienced this sticky situation with an author who later refused to give my book a review. I was in total shock, especially after I gave her novel a fine assessment. So what did I do? The review I had provided was promptly taken down. Did I write something bad afterwards? No.

All club members deserve respect and mutual understanding. Refusing to write a review after agreeing to do so is unprofessional, and unkind, in my opinion. And don't fret if you receive a not-so-great review from someone; it happens to the best, and it is certainly not an opportunity to give a bad evaluation in exchange. Accept that not everyone will love your story.

This program is not for folks to judge books by cutting their storylines apart or being a grammar Nazi. We all write differently and make mistakes. The books exchanged might not be Pulitzer Prize winners so reviewers should offer kind (but true) words.

Questions? Contact ElénaMartina at [networking@southbaywriters.com](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.com)

– WT

# Amazon Reviews

by Blake Webster

Years ago when I published my first few books I used to head over to Fiverr ([www.fiverr.com](http://www.fiverr.com)) and buy a few reviews in order to develop the momentum. Fiverr is a website that allows visitors to purchase almost any type of service for \$5.00. I would make sure to purchase from American reviewers, with unique IP addresses and legitimate Amazon accounts. In fact, I would send them a PDF copy of the book, ask to see sample reviews, and ask for a five star review. That worked fine for a few years until word got out that Amazon actually had employees running offers for reviews, and when unsuspecting authors signed up, Amazon would pull the titles from the catalog.

Another rule of thumb is to never write your own reviews. Amazon tracks the IP address of your Internet connection and will more than likely pull those reviews. Now I follow more legitimate approaches in setting up the first few reviews.

It's always nice to ask your friends to write some reviews, but I like to spread my reviews around the country, or throughout the world, so that the reviews are not so localized.

I have always suggested that authors

try to set up an Author Network. This would involve finding other authors in writing forums, Kindle groups, etc. and forming a small network of about seven to ten members, who are willing to purchase copies of one another's books after they are released. Provided your title is available in both paperback and Kindle, the network members can purchase the cheaper Kindle version, post their review, and the review will be made available for both versions of the title. When someone purchases your title and then posts a review, the reviewer will be listed as a Verified Purchaser, which lends more weight in the Amazon search algorithms.

There are also Facebook Kindle groups that are set up to assist Kindle authors in developing their eBooks. These groups also make reviews available from the members. It's also a good idea to ask to see the review before it's posted to make certain the reviewer has a command of the English language.

Due to recent changes at Amazon, it appears that authors with titles in the Amazon catalog are not allowed to review books. Forbes magazine recently published an article on the confusion surrounding the issue at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/suwcharmananderson/2012/11/07/amazon-tackles-review-problem-deletes-wrong-reviews/>

Amazon has been approached for clarification, but to date has refused to comment.

Perhaps the best approach for the time being would be to develop a network of non-authors to purchase and review your titles. Another approach is to gift a Kindle title to someone in exchange for a review. Gifting a title will not classify the reviewer as a Verified Purchaser, but it still carries legitimate weight in the review process.

We always go exclusive with Amazon for our Kindle titles by signing up for Amazon's KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) Select. One of the advantages of KDP Select is that you are allowed to make your title available free for twenty-four hours, five times in a ninety-day period. As soon as our title is active in the Kindle catalog, I make it available free for twenty-four hours. This helps to develop momentum in the Amazon search engine. This is also a perfect time to alert people in your group or network so that they can download a copy and provide a review.

Blake Webster is a web developer and publisher, SEO consultant, Internet marketer, CreateSpace and Kindle developer. He can be reached at [blake@mediadesign-mds.com](mailto:blake@mediadesign-mds.com). Reprinted from the December 2012 *Redwood Writer*, [www.redwoodwriters.org](http://www.redwoodwriters.org). —WT

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# Peril in Istanbul

by Richard Burns

The following review of *Under the Spell of a Dragon: A Memoir* by Jill Pipkin appears on Amazon.com:

Jill Shannon, a former physics major co-ed at Berkeley, attractive and adrift, decides to seek adventure in a treasure hunt for Turkish mosaic art she'd read about, including the famous blue mosque. She packs her thrift-store clothes, short pink skirt, and puts on her Dr. Scholl's sandals and flap-flaps her way onto a bus in Bulgaria. It's summer of '72. The communist border officials, leering at the obviously American morsel with no male escort, require bribes or other less appealing favors. Oblivious to the dangers, she's steadfast on her journey, slapping the faces that ask for it, winding up in a broken down hotel in Istanbul. She finds she

can't safely navigate the streets. It's all crowded with staring, bearded men of a vastly different culture. She's aghast.

A local architect befriends her. He's attuned to her welfare--or so we think--helping greatly in the search for the city's art treasures. While getting around the dangerous poor side of town, he becomes her dragon, the man who is polite, doesn't smoke, and has a huge nose. They become passionately entangled.

It's a great road story and a love story. I'm a slow reader, but I read this one amazingly fast. Her true-to-life directness, impatience, and rush to her goals is so American. Yet she has her own unique ways. The memoir is written with style and includes details so vivid, she must have made meticulous entries in her diary, that is, on those nights she wasn't with her dragon, up until dawn knocked out by Turkish tequila.

Alas, she learns her man is hiding something. Through Pipkin's writing, I feel I am there, the heat of emotional turmoil, the breezes of exotic big cities, discovering a culture with one foot stuck ten centuries back.

*Editor's Note:* "Peril in Istanbul" is an outstanding example of *how to write a good book review*. Notice all the action verbs and how Richard chooses specific details and tells how the book affected him. He has zoomed in on the heart and soul of the book with his penetrating and humorous insight. Also, he does not try to write a synopsis, and as in good flash fiction, every word matters.

Writing good reviews for others' books is one way that we writers could help one another. But if you cannot, in good conscience, give a fellow writer four or five stars on an Amazon review, it is better to write nothing. —WT



White Elephants at the gift exchange



*All about food  
and good fun*



**2012 SBW  
Holiday Bash**

*— Photos by  
Carolyn Donnell*





**SBW Holiday Bash as viewed from Frank Johnson's iPad**



# CWC South Bay Writers Presents

Martha Alderson, The Plot Guru

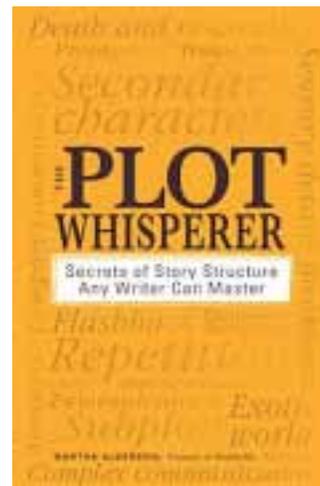
Author of *Blockbuster Plots* and *The Plot Whisperer*

Blockbuster Plots Workshop

Sunday, January 27, 2013

9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

A great plot can turn your stories into reality.



What does it take to go from a story to a novel?  
From a computer screen to a movie?

Martha Alderson, M.A., is a writer of historical fiction, a writers' coach, and a plot consultant. Learn plot-planning intensives: techniques of story structure including character development and dramatic action.

Workshop includes lunch and morning snack

Location: Harry's Hofbrau, 390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose

Registration: Member \$55; Nonmember \$65

Early bird registration Member \$50, Nonmember \$60 thru December 31

Register and pay by credit card (PayPal) at [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

If you want to pay by check, please use the form below.

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Mail this portion to: SBW Workshops, P O Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055.

Check payable to South Bay Writers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ CWC Branch \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Paid \_\_\_\_\_

## The Gift

by Pat Bustamante

She was 89 years old, a neighbor, and my best friend. When she broke her hip I didn't hear about it until her family had her hospitalized. Too late for me to help—I'll never forgive myself.

"Gen, why are you tied up like this?" I sat by the bed trying not to show my horror at all those ugly tubes attached to her. I hate hospitals. I hope I die at home.

"Oh," she quavered, "they tell me I have a brand new metal hip. If I'm a good girl, everything will be fine."

Gen was short for General, not Jennie. This had been one tough adventure-some lady all her life. That little-girl weak voice was not the Gen I knew.

"Alzheimers," she muttered.

When a nurse came in with a tray: Jello, some kind of salad, and a tiny sandwich, Gen turned her head away. The nurse shrugged and left.

"Wait!" I followed her. "What's going on here?" It seemed Gen was on a hunger strike, hence the tubes, and she was

tied to the bed so she couldn't rip out the tubes. Gen looked so tiny, shriveled, unlike the dynamo I loved. I was sure she'd made out her will, including no unnecessary resuscitation or whatever the term is for I want to die on my own terms. Where was Gen's doctor? On vacation; he was impossible to reach.

Gen was being tortured; she did not deserve this. No senility, no Alzheimers; perhaps she reacted to some medication? I was furious.

I made a point of leaving my workplace early every day so I could get to the hospital during evening visiting hours. That is how I heard her last story.

"It was Afghanistan." Gen never said what government agency she had worked for in the 1960s, about the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Whether she was a spy or not she was identified as one during that visit, and the Taliban was making things difficult even then. Gen, a lady of means, was visiting something like a palace; her voice was hard to hear.

"They kept gorgeous thoroughbred horses," she said dreamily. "One horse, a mare, I will never forget.

"I called her Arabesque, Bosky for short, though she had a different Afghan name. She was black, stormy, and difficult. Remember Walter Farley and The Black Stallion books? I was living that kind of story. First imprisoned in an underground dungeon, escaped with my friend Selim—tell you about him later—Bosky was the mare I stole and rode south with Selim until we reached Turkey."

The details of this terrifying gallop across rugged Afghanistan were almost too wild to believe. She swam rivers, hid in caves, and begged for food in the smaller villages.

Heroic then, and heroic now: I will not accept that she was senile. She was disoriented and in pain; the nurses would kick me out and claim that I got her agitated. And this is bad?

Her desperate desire was to pass the story on to me. I finally reached her doctor, and when he came to the hospital he was flabbergasted! What was this about a hip operation, about restraints? And if they thought she was senile, then why the expensive hip replacement?

*Continued on Page 12*

## The Moaning

by Marjorie Johnson

When I was fourteen, my best friend Dorothy and I collected secret places. We picked apples behind a deserted log cabin, its walls anchored with square nails and wooden pegs. We made rubbings of carved nineteenth century tombstones and sketched the weathered wood frame towering over rusted ore cars at a closed gold mine.

One day we hiked to a pine tree that stood above a field of mounds and depressions. Along the path were several funnel-like holes in the loose soil.

"Ever see a doodlebug catch an ant?" I dropped an ant into one tiny sandpit; it tried to climb out but only slipped farther down until the red sand quivered and it disappeared.

Dorothy knelt for closer inspection and asked, "Where'd you learn that?"

"From my dad. He tells me everything."

We resumed our walk to my pine tree and sat overlooking a pine-needle-filled sunken place about twelve feet across, bowl-like but deeper in the center and

ringed with rocks and rubble. Between bites of sandwich, I said, "That might be an abandoned mine shaft."

"Looks normal to me." Dorothy threw a fist-sized rock into the center of the sunken place; it dropped through and disappeared. "What's so special?"

"Well, it moans."

"Oh, come on. I don't hear anything."

"But I heard it moan last week."

"Then you should go down there." She pitched some crumbs to a squawking blue-jay. "Find out why it moans."

"I can't do that! What if I fell in?" Secretly, I wanted to do just that—go there, not fall in. "My dad'll kill me."

"Then your dad wouldn't have to kill you, because you'd already be dead."

We laughed insanely and agreed that we had to do it.

When we returned to the sunken mystery, I wore my oldest pair of jeans. As a precaution, we tied a long cord around the tree and to one of my ankles in case the gravel slid down like in a giant doodlebug trap.

"Careful, now," Dorothy said from her perfectly safe seat under the tree.

Close to the center of the pit, I used my hands to dig through three feet of matted pine needles that smelled of warm pine pitch and stuck to my fingers. Cold air rose against my face.

Dorothy shaded her eyes with one hand. "What do you see?"

"Nothing, just darkness. Roll down that flashlight." Lying with my chin directly over the hole, I started to sweat; it was hot down there in the pit.

"OK. I'll throw you some string."

I lowered the flashlight, attached to a long string, but when I shifted myself for a better view, it slipped through my fingers. The metallic sound of the case hitting rock echoed, but Dad's flashlight didn't break—it illuminated a yellow-gray object. "A skull!"

"You have to go get it," Dorothy urged.

"You want to try?" I knew I'd get stuck if I went down there. If I fell in head first, I'd break my neck; feet first, both legs. And that skull's smile gave me the

*Continued on Page 12*

# January Terse on Verse

by Pat Bustamante



## January Janissary

Writer for hire, quite a live wire,  
Any atmosphere helps to inspire!  
I'd even work for free, you see.  
Help ghost your stuff? Or a penny a word?  
That's practically free, though it sounds absurd.  
If I sound desperate, that's what you heard!

-Pat Bustamante

JANUARY is a clean slate. I hope we all get new things published this year!

I used to ghost write quite a bit. But now that I have deadlines for several novels to finish, I am no longer "for hire." I always found it interesting and inspiring to collaborate. As it turns out, there are some successful fiction-series writers who keep a stable of helpers. Another alternative is to have a relative or a spouse who can take over when needed—lucky for both. Sometimes the job of producing finished work alone is just too difficult.

At our meetings we find resource people in fields that are new territory. Also, fellow members have particular talents and will offer to share. My contributions to group-writing these days are strictly in the advice category (take it or leave it!). I do sometimes miss those days when I was sprucing up a masterpiece for someone else. Writing can be a lonely occupation.

Recently I was asked to do a poem on commission for a particular and unusual subject. Hooray! That spurred me into a spouting of words I had so much fun with! My suggestion: share your writing talents when you can. For pay or not, it's a stimulation that benefits you and your friend. And that's my "try something new for New Year's" advice: find a partner and brainstorm something written using your special skills. Enjoy! WT

## Encouragement is

**Invigorating**, the art of cheering up, or excitement  
On the art of buoy up, is to show to you my, sentiment  
Be good, show your kindness, to all, do the embolden  
And move along showing your good wishes, be enliven  
Encouragement has with it, reinforcing and assurance  
The assurance that gives one a boost and reassurance  
Encouragement, you making an attempt, I say hopeful  
Encouragement, in vigor, try to persuade one be joyful.

**Stimulating**, my. One word must be, heartwarming  
It is arousing a strong desire, an action or strong feeling  
Stimulating is, an urging, and to making a thing favorable  
Whatever, it is now it's all right. Stimulating, is possible  
Stimulation, about giving life to a body, brings about stir  
Action, to stir up the slothful, to act, that's in him or her  
Stimulating, impulse even to provoke, for the very, best  
And, the best is always sort out. Stimulating of the rest.

**Inspiring**, is this way. Fill, with purpose, by courage  
Inspiring, looking at it for encouragement, at any stage.

**Encouragement is, invigorating, stimulating, inspiring**  
Go and encourage one who needs it. Make it exhilarating  
So, people love to hear things that are inspiring, Oh! Yes  
They will know that **GOD gives**, and never has to guess  
Last, but not least, at times you must encourage yourself  
Someone needs help, **now** give it. Never put it on a shelf.

—Clarence L. Hammonds

## Mourning

Sometimes I wonder  
how you can  
leave ...

Do you know  
how I grieve  
when you  
do?

—Karen Hartley

## Blue Moon Haiku

Orb beacon, dark sky.  
Contrast preternatural  
shine with all else – Art!

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

## Luna

Sunday ripples  
with evening  
Wind ...  
She hangs  
her love  
On nights of  
churning  
Sound ...

Does the moon  
share  
her  
Desire?

—Karen Hartley

## 12/5/12

Each and every  
dull insignificant weed  
needs its own haiku.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

To Mozart, who died on this date in 1791, and to "Take Five" jazz composer/pianist genius Dave Brubeck, age 91, strong supporter of civil rights, who also died this morning, of heart failure on the way to a cardiology appointment one day before he was to turn 92.



## The Gift

*Continued from Page 10*

She only lasted about a week past that, but the restraints were removed and a hospice-trained nurse was brought in to help Gen through her last moments.

I wasn't there. But my final memory was a visualization of this heroic woman on a wild black mare, mane and tail streaming, dodging when a rifle shot was heard. Bosky didn't want to be captured either; the mare would hide in the trees at night and come when called. Whatever information Gen carried out of that country, she was unstoppable and her mission was a success. Maybe her family believed her to be raving mad; I had known her as the most intelligent, articulate person I had met. Some day I will write her story for publication, when I can verify all the details. Her story was the last gift this unique woman gave me. Something I will never forget. — WT

## Resurrection

*by Karen Hartley*

The old house stood in the field of heather and white lily of the valley. She wore a long green dress and a straw picture-hat with a green bow. He wore khakis and a blue chambray shirt. She skipped through the field laughing; then she took her hat off and waved it at him. He ran to her and they kissed. He loved her. She loved him. They were deliriously happy.

The house was destroyed; torn down to make way for a road. They moved. There was no flower field at the new place. Nowhere for her to run and wave her hat at him. They still loved each other. She fell into despair. He became distant. Sadness pervaded their days. They were unimaginably sad.

They had been told the road had not been built. One day they returned to the field. They built a new house. They planted new heather and white lily of the valley. She bought a new blue dress and a blue ribbon for her hair. He bought new jeans and a new oxford shirt. They ran through the field together. He pulled her hair ribbon and it blew in the breeze. They kissed. He still loved her. She still loved him.

They were happy again. — WT

## The Moaning

*Continued from Page 10*

creeps. I hauled myself out and bent over to untie my ankle.

"We better tell somebody."

"No!" That sounded like the worst idea I ever heard. "They'll find Dad's flashlight with the skull. He'll know I went to the edge of the shaft."

Because there was no body, only bones, we decided not to report it.

Later, I told my dad, "You know your big flashlight, with four batteries? Well, I lost it, so I bought you a new one."

"I thought it looked too shiny. So what's the rest of the story?"

"I dropped it." I stared at my coffee cup. "It's at the bottom of one of those mine shafts you told me about."

"What were you doing?" He slapped down his cup, spilling coffee. "I told you, never go near those. You could get yourself killed!"

"I know. I should've told you sooner."

"Don't go there again," he said.

"I won't. Not ever." When I got as far as the skull, he said someone had to cap off the shaft. I didn't mention the moaning.

On the appointed day, I rode next to

my father in a fire truck on a bulldozed trail to my pine tree and watched them lower a net for gathering bones. The sheriff wore a khaki uniform like my dad's, except he had a silver star. He pointed at me. "We need a small person to go down and get the bones. Looks like you're it."

"Me?" I stared at my dad, who said nothing but nodded with a strange smile. I swallowed hard; what if I fall? Why me?

I wore a harness and entered the shaft headfirst, a flashlight in one hand. With my free hand, I kept myself from bumping the ragged edges of the hole. Part way down, I squeezed past tree-roots and my heart pounded. Even though there was ample clearance, the walls closed in, the air felt heavy, and the skull's smile broadened. Filling the net with bones was easy enough, except, the skeleton came apart. Had he held himself from falling farther until his arms failed him? Was he murdered?

There was only the one skeleton and my father's light. They pulled me out feet first and I stood in the sunlight and let the blood drain back out of my head. After they hauled out the net, the sheriff reported that he had no way to pursue a hundred-year-old crime. And no one knew what caused the moaning. — WT

## Off the Shelf

*by Edie Matthews & Betty Auchard*



*"I don't care WHO you are! You need a library card!"*

# Conferences, Workshops and Contests

## Contests and Conferences

Please send announcements of contests and conferences to newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

## Ongoing Contests

An extensive list of contests appears on predatorsandeditors.com.

Some other websites with ongoing lists of writing competitions include *Poets and Writers* at pw.org/grants; and *Writers Digest* at writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions – WT

## San Francisco Writers Conference February 2013

Major names in publishing attend the SFWC and take interest in your projects. Featured speakers include R.L. Stine, Barbara Taylor Bradford, Robert Dugoni, Meg Waite Clayton, David Corbett, Ellen Sussman and literary agents and editors from major publishing houses.

It all happens February 14-17, 2013 at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, San Francisco. Visit [www.SFWriters.org](http://www.SFWriters.org) – WT

## CWC Sacramento Branch 2013 Nonfiction Contest

This writing contest is open to any member of the California Writers Club.

**Category and Subject:** Personal Essay: The Most Influential Person in my Life. Length: 750 words or less.

**Awards:** First: \$100; Second: \$50; Third: \$25, to be presented at the June 2013 CWC Sacramento Branch Luncheon. Winning essays will be published in the June 2013 newsletter.

**Entry Fees:** \$10.00 per entry, payable by check. Writers may submit multiple entries; entries must be original and unpublished.

**Submissions:** Three copies of each submission must be mailed with payment to CWC Non-fiction Writing Contest, Liz Allenby, Contest Chair, 5408 Stanmore Way, Elk Grove, CA 95758. If you have questions please email Liz at [LizAllenby@appearancesdeceive.com](mailto:LizAllenby@appearancesdeceive.com)

**Manuscript preparation:** Name must NOT appear on manuscript, only on cover sheet. Entries must be typewritten, double-spaced in 12-point Times Roman font, and on one side of paper only, using standard 1" margin. **Deadline:** Submissions must be postmarked by March 30, 2013. Failure to comply with the rules will cause the entry to be disqualified. – WT

## WRITERSTALK Challenge

### What is it?

Twice a year, in February and August, awards are given to contributors to *WritersTalk*. You need take no special steps to enter this competition; if your piece in one of the designated genres is published in *WritersTalk*, you are a contestant in the Challenge.\*

### Genres

Fiction, 500 – 1500 words  
Memoir, 500 – 1200 words  
Essay/Nonfiction, 500 – 1200 words  
Poetry

### Judging Periods

January 16 through July 15  
July 16 through January 15

### Prizes

One winner will be selected from each of the eligible genres. Each winner will be awarded a cash prize of \$40.

### Judging

Judging will be done by *WritersTalk* contributing editors and other Club members whom the contributing editors may ask to assist.

\* Eligibility for the *WritersTalk* Challenge is limited to members of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club; judges may not judge in any category in which they have an entry. – WT

## Start with the Hook

by Donna McCrohan Rosenthal,  
CWC PR director  
[pr@calwriters.org](mailto:pr@calwriters.org)

Most press releases open with a grabber. The public most likely does not care that your branch holds its monthly meeting next Tuesday, unless you announce the news with something that captures attention. A hot topic, a fascinating speaker, how to get published, and free food tend to work well, especially in combination.

But sometimes you need more to snap people out of their mind-numbing doldrums. In such cases, try finding the hook first, then deciding what to do

with it. Consider the lipogram, a written work composed of words chosen to avoid the use of specific alphabetic characters. For instance, the German poet Gottlob Burmann wrote over 100 poems without employing the letter "r" and for 17 years omitted it from daily conversation, and American author Ernest Vincent Wright's *Gadsby* has no "e" in it.

Hmm. Silly. Arguably, pointless. Yet quirky enough to elicit at least a "Wait, what?" Perhaps your branch could have fun with a lipogram contest, or maybe just have someone read a few pages of lipogram and award a prize to the first person who catches on to what makes it

unique.

Or maybe not a lipogram, but something equally offbeat. Did you know that the first crossword, invented by Arthur Wynne, appeared in *New York World* on December 21, 1913? How about throwing an impromptu Arthur Wynne day at a local coffee shop and having some puzzle book door prizes?

Remember the old adages about "sell the sizzle, not the steak." Once in a while, we have to break out of our ruts and add an extra oompf element to keep our branches in the public eye.

Good luck and sail on! – WT

## Directory of Experts

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

### Astronomy, History of Astronomy

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

### Banking

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

### Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.

[ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net](mailto:ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net)

### Counseling/John Steinbeck

Dr. Audry L. Lynch

[glynch0001@comcast.net](mailto:glynch0001@comcast.net)

### Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg

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

### Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber [martha@engber.com](mailto:martha@engber.com)

### Internal Medicine/Addiction

#### Disorder/Psychology

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

### Marketing and Management

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

### Mathematics/Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson

[marjohnson89@earthlink.net](mailto:marjohnson89@earthlink.net)

### Teaching and the Arts

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

### Telecommunications Technology

Allan Cobb [allancobb@computer.org](mailto:allancobb@computer.org)

### Television Production

Woody Horn 408-266-7040

### Thanatologist: Counseling for Death, Dying, and Bereavement

Susan Salluce [susansalluce@yahoo.com](mailto:susansalluce@yahoo.com)



We live in a fractal universe.

## CWC Around the Bay

These are published meeting locations and times for 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:** 1:30 third Sundays, Oakland Public Library Main Branch. [cwc-berkeley.com](http://cwc-berkeley.com)

**Central Coast:** 5:30 third Tuesdays, Bay Park Hotel, 1425 Munras Avenue, Monterey. [centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)

**Fremont:** 2:00 fourth Saturdays at DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 204, Fremont. [cwc-fremontareawriters.org](http://cwc-fremontareawriters.org)

**Marin:** 2:00 fourth Sundays, Book Passage in Corte Madera. [cwcmarinwriters.com](http://cwcmarinwriters.com)

**Mount Diablo:** 11:30 second Saturdays, Hungry Hunter, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette. [mtdiablowriters.org](http://mtdiablowriters.org)

**Redwood:** 3:00 first Sundays at Copperfield's Books, 2316 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. [redwoodwriters.org](http://redwoodwriters.org)

**Tri-Valley:** 11:30 third Saturdays, Oasis Grille, 780 Main Street, Pleasanton. [trivalleywriters.com](http://trivalleywriters.com)

**Sacramento:** 11:00 third Saturdays, Tokyo Buffet, 7217 Greenback Lane, Citrus Heights. [cwcsacramentowriters.org](http://cwcsacramentowriters.org)

**San Francisco/Peninsula:** 10:00 third Saturdays, Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont. [sfpeninsulawriters.com](http://sfpeninsulawriters.com)

## SBW Honor Roll

Those members whose books appear on our webpage are listed below. If your name is listed, congratulations; writing a book is a major accomplishment. If you have a published book and your name is not here, you are missing an opportunity to publicize your book. Submit your information at [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com).

Betty Auchard

Dale Aycock

Robert Balmanno

David Breithaupt

Martha Engber

Valerie Frankel

Robert Garfinkle

Jack Hasling

Marjorie Bicknell Johnson

Sherrie Johnson

Victoria M. Johnson

C. S. (Susanne) Lakin

Audry Lynch

Tom Mach

Lynda Marcum

Eléna Martina

Jana McBurney-Lin

Evelyn Preston

William Craig Reed

Wilma Reiber

Catherine Robbins

Mary Tomasi-Dubois

Beth Wyman

### Your ad could go here

\$7 per column inch for SBW members

\$10 per inch for nonmembers

### Writing for Life Workshops Registration Party!

All registering **Jan. 14 – 20<sup>th</sup>** will be entered in a drawing to win great prizes!

#### *Writing intensives with:*

**James Scott Bell, June 28-30**

**Davis Bunn, Sept. 14-15**

**Michael Hauge, Oct. 19-20**

**Courtyard Marriott Newark**

CWC discounts available

**[www.writingforlifeworkshops.com](http://www.writingforlifeworkshops.com)**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<h1>January</h1>		1	2	3	4 7:30PM Open mic Barnes & Noble Almaden, San Jose	5	
	6	7	8	9 6:00PM Regular Dinner Meeting, Harry's Hofbrau	10	11 Editors' Powwow 10:30 AM	
	13	14	15 <i>WritersTalk</i> Deadline for submissions	16	17	18 7:30PM Open mic Willow Glen Library San Jose	
	20	21	22	23	24	25	
	27 Martha Alderson Blockbuster Plots Workshop 9:30 AM	28	29	30	31	<h1>2013</h1>	
	<b>Future Flashes</b>						
February 5: SBW Board Meeting 7:30p	February 13: SBW regular dinner meeting	Open Mics Feb 1 and 15					

**South Bay Writers Open Mic**  
Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. See calendar for schedule.  
Note third Friday location: Willow Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave, San Jose  
Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622 or email [WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com)

**Your ad could go here**  
\$7 per column inch for SBW members  
\$10 per inch for nonmembers

**Poetry Readings**

**Poets@Play**  
Second Sundays: Check for times  
Markham House History Park  
1650 Senter Rd., San Jose

**Poetry Center San Jose**  
Willow Glen Library  
3rd Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.  
1157 Minnesota Ave., San Jose

Free and open to the public. For more information, contact Dennis Noren at [norcamp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:norcamp@sbcglobal.net) or go to [www.poetrycentersanjose.org/calendar.html](http://www.poetrycentersanjose.org/calendar.html)

**Ongoing Critique Groups**

**Our Voices**  
Meets in Campbell every other Thursday 7:15 p.m. Genres: Fiction, nontechnical non-fiction, memoir. Contact: Dave LaRoche – [dalaroche@comcast.net](mailto:dalaroche@comcast.net)

**Valley Writers**  
Meets at Valley Village Retirement Center in Santa Clara, Mondays 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Contact: Marjorie Johnson – [marjohnson89@earthlink.net](mailto:marjohnson89@earthlink.net)

**Members Books**  
Go to [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com) to see the members' gallery and members books. Add your book to our website.

**South Bay Writers Anthology**



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



**Stay Informed**  
Read the Constant Contact notices in your email to receive meeting and event announcements. If you are not receiving those announcements, send your name and email address to [webmaster@southbaywriters.com](mailto:webmaster@southbaywriters.com)



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

## MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

### South Bay Writers

**January Regular Monthly Meeting**  
**6 p.m. Wednesday, January 9**

Harry's Hofbrau  
390 Saratoga Avenue  
San Jose

**SPEAKER: BETH BARANY**

**Jumpstart your writing**  
**Essential tools for**  
**finishing your**  
**manuscript**

*WritersTalk* deadline is always  
the 15th of the month.

Regular dinner meetings are  
second Wednesdays 6 – 9 pm



### Harry's Hofbrau

From Highway 280, take Saratoga Avenue North.  
Harry's is on your right near Stevens Creek Blvd.