



# WRITERSTALK

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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

AUGUST SPEAKER

## Dance Your Way Through Publishing and Purchase

by Dave LaRoche

We spend time, grueling time for some of us, writing and rewriting our prose and poetry. We rearrange and exchange our ideas and words. I've heard it called a slog; that we shed tears and blood, are never finished, and only quit from exhaustion. Moreover, we can't get away, we can do nothing else – it's a compulsion.

Then comes the publishing trek, a thoroughly distasteful journey, because as a rule, we're both ill-equipped and disinterested. We are writers – creative, whimsical, and out of the box – not people of business. If we think writing's a challenge, getting our work through a publisher is no less than getting up from our desk and running a marathon set up like an obstacle course.

Carla Walter, PhD, knows all of this is but a dance; that with the grace of Fred Astaire, we can glide our way through with a smile. I looked up "dance" and found: "to leap or skip about excitedly; to appear to flash or twinkle; to vacillate with glee." She has my attention.



Carla says she will explain the dance and get publishers to dance with us: "From crafting an idea, to a winning query, to a provocative proposal, through published and purchased. The process and phases, and how dancing with writing creates the flow so needed in generating published work."

"Inspired by a passion and love of dance," she says, "I have written and published nonfiction titles with Palgrave MacMillan and McFarland & Company, Inc. In April, I received the Margaret Fuller Award for *Dancing in the Spirit of Recovery: 365 Daily Dance Meditations*." Carla also dances with literary fiction, and her work, *Leaving Cuba by Stark Raving Married*, will be released in spring 2015.

A full time author – and workshop leader at locations such as San Diego Writers Ink and Sunrise Ranch in Colorado – Carla spends her time talking, writing, and lecturing about writing as she cultivates the inspiration one can find through dance. She has three decades of experience helping hundreds of people and is a tenured professor here and in France; she earned her PhD from University of California at Riverside.

Join us on August 11 and dance with Carla all the way through to publishing and purchase. –WT

JULY RECAP

## South Bay Writers Annual BBQ

by Marjorie Johnson

The annual July South Bay Writers Barbecue, hosted by Edie and Jim Matthews in their park-like backyard, provided fun, food, and frolic as evidenced by Carolyn Donnell's photos on Page 7 and on <http://southbaywritersgalley.shutterfly.com>.



Hostess Edie Matthews  
–Photo by Carolyn Donnell

This year's theme, since the party occurred on the July Fourth weekend, was red, white, and blue. And we had live entertainment from Bob Orr and Frank Johnson, playing classical guitar.

A big THANK YOU to Edie and Jim.

–WT

## WritersTalk Challenge

Winners of the *WritersTalk* Challenge Contest will be announced at the SBW dinner meeting August 11.

# President's Palaver

by Colin Seymour  
President, South Bay Writers

## Club's ambience shouldn't be etched in stoniness

Last year about this time, a newcomer attended a South Bay Writers meeting at which none of us went out of our way to welcome her upon arrival, and no one sat with her at dinner or during the program.

That, in a nutshell, is why nothing about SBW is sacrosanct in the eyes of your president or his advisors. We want to avoid seeming immature or disrespectful, but we are admittedly getting a bit like a high school pep squad in our efforts to wake up our membership, which was in a decline not long ago that was both numerical and spiritual.

We're getting particularly shrill in our efforts to increase participation in the club's administration, which is perennially in the hands of too few people. We're not apologizing for it, because a more benign approach has not worked.

I went so far as to issue a warning July 1 to the membership that calls for grooming a new set of administrators to take over next year. A nonprofit organization like ours is required to have a board of directors that meets monthly. Thus, the club was in danger of extinction when I became president in 2013 because no one had run for president or vice president, and the same was holding true this year.

One person's rather legitimate objection to my July 1 proclamation was that it was ill-timed, coming as it did on the first day of the 2014-2015 term. A few days before that, an aggressive pitch toward locating a new hospitality chairman met with disapproval from an important long-time member of the club who felt we were becoming downright tacky in our efforts to rouse our staid membership, as though we were using masking tape to affix our announcements to the club's mahogany-paneled walls.

At the very least, we were in danger of making the club's many introverts uncomfortable. The club's dignity was at stake, all right.

That's not how I see it, obviously. Here's why: If I were more introverted, I would have suffered the same fate as the aforementioned newcomer at my first SBW meeting, in 2008. I was only 10 months removed at the time from my copy editing job at the *Mercury News*, and, although the *Merc* newsroom wasn't the friendliest I've encountered in my newspaper career, it had become increasingly convivial over the decades, and therefore I had and have a network of newspaper friends that dwarfs my alliances in SBW.

I realized we could greatly enhance the talent level of SBW if I could lure my journalist friends, but mostly, I joined SBW to form new alliances, so I was dismayed by the low level of personal interaction in SBW. Fortunately, I have been able to forge many relationships since then, but the level of friendliness in the club still needs improvement.

If that means backthumping introverts out of their shells, so be it. Introverted tendencies, like negative high school memories, can be a boon to your writing, but the more publishing becomes an independent venture, the more important it is to come out of our shells and interact with other people.

Joining the administration of the club is the very best way to interact, I've learned, and might be of most benefit to those uncertain of their social skills.

It's ironic that even the faint camaraderie evident among the administrators of the club a few years back was seen as a clique by some. That feeling of being left out became a target for reform that has been rather successful.

If we sound too much like cheerleaders in the process, so be it. This club always seems to need a bit more good cheer. —WT



California Writers Club  
South Bay Branch  
www.southbaywriters.com

— o —  
Executive Committee

President—Colin Seymour  
pres@southbaywriters.com

Vice President—Dave LaRoche  
vp@southbaywriters.com

Secretary—Sylvia Halloran  
secretary@southbaywriters.com

Treasurer—Bill Baldwin  
treasurer@southbaywriters.com

Members-at-Large—Nader Khaghani,  
member-at-large1@southbaywriters.com  
Michael Hahn,  
member-at-large2@southbaywriters.com

Central Board Rep, Norcal Rep—Dave LaRoche  
dalaroche@comcast.net

### Directors

Programs—Dave LaRoche  
vp@southbaywriters.com

Publicity and Public Relations—Kim Malanczuk  
publicity@southbaywriters.com

Hospitality—Vacant Position

Membership—Sally Milnor  
membership@southbaywriters.com

Outreach—Edie Matthews  
outreach@southbaywriters.com

Open Mic—Bill Baldwin, WABaldwin@aol.com

Web Presence Chair—Pratibha Kelapure  
webpresence@southbaywriters.com

Webmaster—Media Designs  
webmaster@southbaywriters.com

Workshops—Dave LaRoche and Nader Khaghani  
workshops@southbaywriters.com

### 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 at southbaywriters.com.



## WritersTalk

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

### Managing Editor

Marjorie Johnson  
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

### Contributing Editors

Pat Bustamante  
Carolyn Donnell  
Victoria M. Johnson  
Pratibha Kelapure  
Sally Milnor  
Brenna Silbory  
Karen Sundback

### 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. Shorter submissions are given preference. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com. Send graphics separately as jpg files.

**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)

**Member Achievement and News:** newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson  
Managing Editor



## Does your writing scream Amateur?

You've studied many aspects of craft and you've cleaned up the typos. Your grammar is pretty good so now you feel ready to tackle agents, but you've heard that agents often make decisions on whether to represent your work after reading only one page. How can that be? You work for years on your novel—they spend

only five minutes?

Perhaps your writing screams *Amateur*.

Even though you have crafted a fascinating story with twists and turns, appealing characters, and snappy dialogue, an amateur-looking manuscript will shoot you down. Here at *WritersTalk*, I can often determine if you are an amateur by looking at how you formatted your submission—if you have used the tab key or the spacebar to indent paragraphs, or chosen colors or special styles and fonts. I also can tell if you have copied something from a web page or an email and changed its font using Word.

Professionals present a clean copy, using the given fonts and manuscript set-up required by the recipient. They do not use tabs or extra spaces; they never use the “enter” key at the end of each line. Instead, they use one space between sentences, no spaces before paragraph indents or to “make it look right,” and “enter” only at the end of paragraphs. They set paragraph indents at about half an inch and use the same paragraph style throughout your manuscript. Professionals refer to a style guide for such rules as “Put punctuation within the quotes.” Notice that the period comes *before* the quotation symbol.

Another common frailty sneaks in if you overuse weak words. In early drafts, many of us tend to overuse weak verbs, especially “was.” Instead of stretching to use something more powerful, if you rely upon weak verbs, you scream *Amateur, amateur, amateur*.

To compound the issue, you may link “was” to verbs that end in “-ing,” such as “John was running.” This deadly combination can result in the immediate banishment of your query or manuscript to the circular file—unless you resuscitate your work with active words. Write, for example, John ran, John sprinted, or John hurried.

Industry professionals are overwhelmed with hundreds of query and manuscript submissions on a daily basis. They reason that, without an understanding of basic writing mechanics, the writer won't possess the necessary skills to write a full book with publishing and sales potential.

However, your formatting doesn't have to be perfect to submit to *WritersTalk*. Just send your work as a Word document (but not too wordy). — WT

**Flash — Fiction, that is.** The theme for August *WritersTalk* is flash fiction.

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## Books by Members

To add a book to the Books by Members page, or to submit or update your bio for our Member Gallery & Bio page, go to [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com) and click on membership, member data update.

Advertising yourself and your books on our web page is one of your benefits of membership in South Bay Writers. — WT

## New Members

by Sally A. Milnor



Sally Milnor

I am pleased to introduce our Club's four newest members.

**Mark Dooley** – found us online. He and his wife **Chris Knoblauch** have a tutoring business (Dancing with Words Tutoring). Mark is currently working on a novel.

**Chris Knoblauch** – is a fifth grade teacher. She writes genre novels for her students, and she teaches essay writing. Chris has written chemical monographs for *Toxicology Magazine* and chemical trial summaries for medical databases, as well as functional specifications for information products used by U.S. Videotel, Lexis/Nexis and Dialog Information Systems. In addition to her writing, she enjoys cooking, gardening, reading, making crafts; and she is active in several professional societies (ISTE, NCTE, and IRA). Chris is currently writing a "how to" book to use with her students.

**Tejashri "Teji" Pradhan** – is working on her first novel. On her Membership Questionnaire, Teji says: "I don't remember a time when I didn't write. Anything can inspire me to write." It has been her goal to be a writer since her sixth grade teacher told her she should consider becoming a novelist. In addition to her writing, Teji absolutely loves to dance. She is currently focusing on hip-hop, contemporary, Korean pop, and belly dancing. Dance is also a big part of the novel she's writing.

**Lili Xie** -- is in the MFA Program at Texas State University. She is working on her first novel, which is set in 1960s to 1980s China. On her Membership Questionnaire, Lili says: "I've always loved writing. Sharing stories with others is fun and inspiring." We were very glad to meet Lili personally at our annual Barbeque July 6.

**To Our New Members:** We wish you each a warm welcome and hope your membership brings you inspiration and enjoyment. **To All of our South Bay Writers:** Thank you to those of you who have renewed your memberships for the 2014-2015 fiscal year, which began July 1. We appreciate and need your continuing presence and support. **And to those who haven't yet had a chance to renew:** SBW's 2013-2014 fiscal year Memberships will lapse on September 1, so please renew as soon as you can for continuation of all of your membership benefits, including receiving and contributing to *WritersTalk*. (Also, an extra \$20 initiation fee will be imposed for lapsed members to rejoin.) Please help us keep our Club flourishing. — WT

## Member News

**Bill Baldwin** joined Poet Carolyn Grassi to present an evening focused on sacred places and spaces at the San Jose Unitarian Church on Thursday, July 10. Carolyn began with thirty minutes of her poetry, and Bill concluded with a half-hour reading from his novel *Soul Flight*. There were refreshments, music, and a sacred dance.

**Audry Lynch** has won an Honorable Mention in the Hollywood Book Festival for her book, *Two Rebels With a Cause: John Steinbeck and James Dean*, in the Biography category. The Festival was held on July 26th at the Roosevelt in Hollywood. — WT

## News from WritersTalk Staff

We will award prizes to the winners of the spring *WritersTalk* Challenge Contest for work printed in WT February through July, 2014. Having your work published in *WritersTalk* and being a contestant in the Challenge Contest are two more benefits of membership in South Bay Writers.

August is flash fiction month, featuring pieces of 450 words or fewer. Why bother? — you're writing a novel. The most important words you write will appear on your book's back cover — often less than 300 words. And what do you say, when someone asks what your book is about? If you are pitching an agent, you better have a one-minute answer. Both good reasons to practice on flash fiction. But the best reason is that it's challenging and fun. — WT

## View from the Board

The South Bay Writers Board will have an all day retreat on Saturday, August 9 to "regroup" and discuss ideas for the next year. If you would like to attend or have suggestions, contact Colin Seymour, [pres@southbaywriters.com](mailto:pres@southbaywriters.com) — WT

## Shelf Life

— Maddie McEwen-Asker



No, Rex. Flash Fiction —  
not Shaggy Dog Stories.

**Scenes from South Bay Writers July BBQ**  
—Photos by Carolyn Donnell



**Where did all the  
photos go?**

To view pictures from South Bay Writers meetings or activities, look under the Events Tab on our web page [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com) - Event Photo Gallery. Or directly at <https://southbaywritersgallery.shutterfly.com/>



# The Home Buying Frenzy

## An auction process gone berserk

by Jill Pipkin

Some people may wonder why we are seeing the extreme escalation in home prices. One reason, of course, is the shortage of available homes for sale. Another is that the process of selling and buying a home is now an auction, skewed to the seller's extreme over-the-top profit, with no protection for the buyer.

When I became a real estate agent in the late 70s, the rule for presenting an offer was "Time is of the Essence." This meant that, as the buyer's agent, if I wrote an offer for my client for a home, I immediately contacted the seller's agent to set up an appointment to present my offer. This immediacy was understood without question and the offer would be presented at the earliest possible time, sometimes within a few hours. I would go to the seller's home and meet with the seller and his agent. I presented the offer and information about my buyers and their appreciation for the home. If the seller accepted my buyer's offer and signed the contract, the house was thereby sold. If the seller wanted to change any terms, a formal "Counter Offer" would be written. Until the time that my buyer accepted the counter offer, in writing, the home was still on the market.

At that point I would immediately contact my buyer, who waited anxiously to hear from me. If the buyer accepted and signed the counter offer, I informed the seller's agent and rushed to deliver the signed counter. The house was then deemed sold.

These days, no such process takes place. The buyer's offer will not be presented for at least a week, sometimes only after two open houses have been held by the seller's agent. This delay is to encourage as many offers as possible—and hopefully, from the seller's point of view, get a higher price. Delay is now the norm, and dozens of offers may roll in. Sometimes buyers offer hundreds of thousands of dollars over the list price when it is known that many offers are on the table.

So the house is sold to the highest bidder, the auction winner. The tricky part now becomes how to get a loan based on the higher, very inflated price. This is actually impossible. The lender will only lend against his own appraised property value, not on the inflated value created by the auction process. And this appraised value will be calculated using **closed** sales of like homes in the same area. Since these closed sales were used to establish the asking price of the house now being discussed, it is impossible to establish a justified price for the inflated value that has been offered by the highest bidder. To cover the surcharge, so to speak, the buyers must find the money over and beyond the 20% down the lender requires based solely on his appraisal value, not the inflated sales price. Where does the extra money come from?

In the old days, only the buyer was permitted to put up the down payment; gifts from family were admissible, borrowed money was not. Now, there is not this restriction.

*Continued on Page 16*

## Housing Crunch

*San Jose Mercury News (July 2014)*

Bidding wars aren't limited to those who want to buy homes; developers are caught up in fights for land.

Land costs have gone up 50 percent in the past three years, ranging from \$3 to \$4 million an acre in San Jose to \$5 million on the Peninsula. These land costs will translate into greater densities and more expensive housing. —WT

## Proper Grammar

### Vital in Real Estate

by Marjorie Johnson

Recently, the firms Redfin and Grammarly jointly examined spelling and grammar errors in more than 100,000 luxury listings (homes priced at \$1 million and up), as reported by Leah L. Cutler in a March 4 blog on redfin.com.

Home listings with perfect spelling and grammar were more likely to sell above the list price, sold for 10 percent more, and sold three days faster than those with poorly written descriptions.

These findings reflect the implied fact that the listing agent who took the time to make sure his listing was perfect also did everything right in terms of pricing, staging, and marketing. Errors in the property description make a bad impression on the prospective buyer, who may wonder what important facts were overlooked or omitted.

Surely, members of SBW would never write: "Master bedroom with walking closet," "Low grime area," "Curve appeal," "Fresh pain and carpet," "Oak bra with brass accents," or "This is a real germ!" —WT

## What would Thoreau think?

by James Zheng, Student

Recently, I read the *San Jose Mercury News* headline, "Bay Area home prices hit 6-year high." I wonder what Thoreau would think of that news and today's world, where there are more buyers than sellers, more people working longer hours, and more commuters getting stuck in traffic.

Today, I, a high school junior, wake up at 7 a.m., grab my morning smoothie, eat cereals in the car as my mom drives me to school, go to seven classes, play

basketball, study for AP tests, craft my psychology essay "Being Normal," chat on Facebook, and go to bed at 11 p.m.

It's more evident than ever before that we face more pressures from school, society, peers, and ourselves. It's not possible to slow down as wholesomely as Thoreau did—to just wiggle our toes in the sand, hear the roars of the wind, or retreat into the woods. As I read the news, I wonder about what I can do to not simply surrender myself to today's headlines.

Thoreau lived in a different time, but his philosophy to "live deep and suck out all the marrow of life" resonates with me.

Today, when I go to my English class, I will defy the social stereotype that Chinese Americans are only good at math and science. Today, when I volunteer at the Full Circle Farm, I will use my green thumb to pull weeds hinged around the cauliflowers. Today, when I enjoy tea with friends at Panera Bread, I will savor every ounce of aroma on my tongue. Today, when I play basketball, I will appreciate the joy and laughter I share with my teammates.

Today, I will live my life with fullness, despite life's highs and lows. —WT

# Writing is Hard

by Charlotte Cook

"Writing is hard!"

How many times have I heard people say that? How many times have I said that myself? And each time I've heard that writing is hard, I watched people smile. And each time I've said those same words, I've felt my own smile stretch into my cheeks. Then my mind goes to the pleasure of the work, the wondrous surprise of what I've written.

You bet writing is hard. It's the best hard work there is. To write is to empty one's self of ideas, words, rhythms and inspiration onto a page. Then we read what we've written. Yes, the first drafts have more problems than glitter. But within the unwelcome is the miracle of a character, the twist of conflict or tension, the wording that brings forth a world of feeling, texture, color, sound and sometimes aroma. Something of the promise of talent, some unspecified and as yet to be known inkling of what flows through us to the page.

I remember the first phrase of mine that caught my eye: "The unfamiliarity of wearing high heels made the depth of the reception area's carpet a challenge to maintaining her dignity." Not a great piece of writing by any standard, but the first time I felt the satisfaction of capturing my character's predicament. Wow, I liked it. And then the workshop to which

I submitted the piece all agreed that line showed a bit more talent and voice than I'd shown previously.

I also remember a writing teacher--my hero--say to me that we--WE--would work through my habit of beginning sentences with these long dependent clauses, a carryover from my years of academic essay writing. He showed me that transitions weren't meant to keep the reader thinking, but allow for movement from one story element to another. And there I was, writing sentences that carried a reader deeper into the story. Wow, another breakthrough as I committed more to my writing abilities and craft.

Recently I wrote: "Now the nights too brought her to the foamy edge of salt water tugging her toes and sucking sand at her heels." It's only one line of a story, but I love it. I'm so glad I've stuck with my writing. Even in the face of others who might pick at a line, reject the work as a whole, or even wonder why I even attempted such a project. The efforts I need to make to accomplish my work, the translation of the story in my head to words on the page, the very breathlessness of making a paragraph work satisfies me like little else. I feel like the musicians I always admire who bring me melodies on which I can drift into places I've never been before. Now I know I can go places with my own inspiration, craft and talent by **writing**. — WT

## Haiku for Tibet and Mount Shasta

You seek Shangri La?  
You have found it already.  
It is you who seek.

— Stephen C. Wetlesen

## The Enduring Mother

by Pratibha Kelapure

Living on the edge of the world meant living in the twilight, watching dawns and dusks melding into one red blur, submitting to the whimsy of the tiny green men who yielded unfathomable power over us. We were the vestiges of a bygone era, cursed to a life on the edge.

I hopelessly waited for a sign, perhaps a letter from the Mother.

"Quit staring at the mailbox, Steve!" An exacting voice resounded.

I meekly began pouring the acid into the tiny vials. Paying my unpaid dues! The Petroleum Plant was long gone, leaving this vermin as its legacy. The green alien men mocked us with this acidic green. The soil was unyielding; the lush leafy green was just a memory. I dreamt of Mother, but my reveries had always ended harshly.

Today I looked up and saw the bluest sky and the shadows under the sun! A wisp of cloud appeared. "Mother?" I called out.

Gradually, the rains came. — WT

## Shelf Life — Maddie McEwen-Asker



Alan found his new, calming, creativity conducive,  
designer water-chair — wasn't.

# The Nuptials of OR-7

By Judith Shernock

MEDFORD, OREGON. Three months ago my report "Why OR-7 Left Oregon" appeared in this journal and promised further updates of the banded vegetarian wolf.

When an article on the web announced that my hero had married, it was obvious that a second interview was imperative. How had he met his mate?

Since Romulus (OR-7) had been in California when I interviewed him (he called it the Promised Land), I was shocked that he had returned to Oregon.

I drove to Medford, the place of the pair's last sighting. After hours exploring the deepest woods and some help from the forest rangers, the mewling of pups reached me. It was April, the month wolves give birth. Hurrying to the spot, I found a den, and Romulus guarded its entrance. I was overjoyed but a bit nervous as well.

"Your scent is unforgettable," he said with an infectious, wolfish grin. Feeling safe and certain that he remembered me as fondly as I remembered him, my body relaxed. He invited me to sit down next to him.

Realizing that this was his special space, I waited to see what he would do.

He called out "Loopy, come meet our visitor."

A beautiful red wolf shyly put her head out of the cave and looked startled to see a human.



"Don't worry," he told her. "This is the woman who wrote about me, took my photo and introduced the world to the first vegetarian wolf. She came from the Promised Land to meet you and the kids. Nothing to fear."

"How do you do, Loopy?"

She slowly raised her front right paw and put it in my hand. It was auburn and the fur was long and soft.

"Would you like to show me the pups before we begin the interview?"

Romulus and Loopy's faces were suffused with parental pride as they padded into the den.

"These are the boys," he said and pointed to three reddish babies. "Loki, Geri and Freki. The last two are named after Odin's wolf pets, who were of good omen. The girls, all grey furred, are Cannini, Mammala and Lupdalup."

"Lupdalup? Strange name," I blurted out.

"She was the last born and the smallest. She kept rolling over herself and thus the name. You'll get used to it."

We went outside into the fresh, delicious scent of pine needles. Facing the pair, I began the interview.

"Tell me about your wedding."

Romulus motioned for his wife to answer.

Her voice was low and pleasant. "It was a small affair with my husband's twin, Remus, and my two siblings in attendance. You may have heard of my brother, Wolfgang. He managed to get here even though he was still recovering from a wound he received from the ax of Woody Woodsman, Little Red Riding Hood's paramour.

"My sister, Marcella, who got entangled in that nightmare business with the three pigs, also attended. She was so traumatized by her experience that she is considering trying vegetarianism, which she learned about from my husband."

"Who officiated?"

Loopy glanced quickly at her husband who gave a little nod.

"We couldn't agree, so we had two preachers. He wanted the Owl and I the Raven. Owls are a California thing but the true Oregonian faith is raven-based. We had them both come. We were doubly blessed."

Not wanting to pry too much, I let that one go and went on to my main inquiry.

"How did you meet?"

Unspoken signals passed between the two. Romulus then verbally encouraged her to tell me. Still she hesitated and hung her head low.

"Trust this white two-foot. She wants the world to know us because she thinks if they do they will love us and stop putting bands around our necks and shooting us."

"If you think she'll help us I'll tell her, but not ALL the details."

In a low wispy voice Loopy began.

"On the border of OR and CA there is a cave with electric Oracles. They whirr and show photos of mate searchers. My friend Whistler brought me there when I mentioned I was lonely. He frequents this place often since he has a situation."

"What's a situation?" I asked.

"Don't tell me you don't have two-feet with situations."

"Please tell me."

"Whistler looks at photos of Hes and Shes. He can't decide. If he chooses a He the Ravens will disavow him."

"Oh, yes, I understand."

"More to the point, when I was watching the screen in the Oracle cave, a huge sleek grey wandered in. Every female stopped looking at the screen and looked at him. He came over to me without hesitation. The rest is history."

Romulus added, "I was lonely, and when I asked Remus the genius what to do, he sent me there. I had never seen a red wolf before. Isn't she gorgeous? Her folks didn't blink an eye when I told them about my vegetarianism. Just said 'welcome to the family.'"

"Last question: how will you raise the kids?"

Again he deferred to his mate.

*Continued on Page 9*

# Write As If You Are a Flash Fiction Writer

by Pratibha Kelapure

Every kind of writer will benefit from practicing the art of brevity. Julian Gough, an Irish novelist, writes,

“My generation, and those younger, receive information not in long, coherent, self-contained units (a film, an album, a novel), but in short bursts, with wildly different tones. (Channel-hopping, surfing the Internet, while doing the iPod shuffle.) That changes the way we read fiction, and therefore must change the way we write it. This is not a catastrophe; it is an opportunity.”

The snippets of words, images, or sounds, randomly coming to us present an inherent danger. The hurried mind and eyes catch the flashing snippets. If these snippets are not self-contained units, they will misinform the audience. As the channels of communication expand, so do the numbers of (online or print) voices. How do you make sure people notice yours?

Five things to consider before you begin writing:

1. Have a fresh point of view.
2. Know your audience.
3. Tailor your tone to suit your audience.
4. Start with a vivid image.
5. End with the same image to make sure that you have made your point.

Remember these five guidelines during writing:

1. Write short and clear sentences.  
Start with simple sentences. Combining them will be easier later.
2. Avoid redundant words.  
If the same word appears in your sentence two or more times, rewrite it. Don't state the same idea more than once.  
Redundant: “Do not repeat yourself over and over again.”  
Better: “Do not repeat yourself.”

3. Avoid adjectives. Use vivid nouns.  
In his book *On Writing*, Stephen King writes that adjectives and adverbs should rarely be used.  
Examples of superfluous adjectives: **Added** bonus, **Close** proximity, **Direct** confrontation, **Free** Gift.  
Vivid Nouns: “Gina ate a Mango.”  
Nouns with adjectives: “The little girl ate a messy fruit.”
4. Avoid adverbs. Use action verbs.  
Action verb: “He sprinted to the door.”  
With adverb: He **hastily** ran to the door.”  
Circle adjectives and adverbs in your sentence. Prune superfluous or vague ones. Don't shun all adjectives and adverbs.
5. Avoid unnecessary phrases or clauses:  
Unnecessary: This is a subject I have talked a lot about.  
Better: I have talked about this subject.

Three things to do after writing:

1. Revise for content.
2. Edit for brevity.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until you are satisfied.

Practice these simple steps when you write your next story. Your readers will thank you. —WT



## Nuptials of OR-7

Continued from Page 8

“They’ll see us eating different foods and that will make it easy for them to choose for themselves,” Loopy replied with pride.



Driving home my thoughts centered on the wolves. They were the nicest couple I had ever interviewed. Would they, or could they, continue to be so idealistic? What awaited them?

Keep Posted. —WT

Ed.: OR-7 is a real person – er, wolf – who stars in the recently released 67-minute documentary, *OR7 – The Journey*, produced by Clemens Schenk. OR-7 crossed mighty rivers and wild mountains in his twelve hundred mile trek.

On June 4, Matt Weiser reported in *The Sacramento Bee* that OR-7 is raising a litter of pups just over the state line in Oregon. Also in the news, the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park has helped ecosystems regain balance and health – and even changed the course of a river. See [filmsforaction.org/watch/how-wolves-change-rivers/](http://filmsforaction.org/watch/how-wolves-change-rivers/) —WT

# Snake in the Grass

by Calvin Howes Stevens

My ancestors emigrated to southeastern Montana from Massachusetts in 1880, becoming the first Caucasians to settle in the area. They initially put down roots on the Tongue River but later relocated to a place called Otter Creek, which they considered better for raising cattle. My grandfather, Levi Howes, was eight years old at the time and at that young age one of his major concerns was running into snakes in the grass. He once asked his father, "Does there always have to be a snake in the grass?"

Six years later, when Levi was fourteen years old, tension developed between the settlers and the Indians. Despite his age, he was assigned by his father to watch part of the family's herd of cattle, which were grazing across a creek from an encampment of Indians. Levi admitted to me some years ago, that, on his first evening there, he became frightened by the sounds of drums and incantations on the other side of the creek. So he packed up his bedroll and took off to spend that night, and succeeding ones, at a friendly ranch farther from the Indian encampment. Fortunately, no trouble ensued.

Sometime later, Levi's father made friends with one of the Indian chiefs called Wooden Leg. As far as my family and the other ranchers in the area were concerned, peace had been established. Later, however, tensions developed again, and in 1897 an Indian uprising was anticipated. This resulted in the construction of a small primitive fort composed of irregular slabs of sandstone on the crest of a barren hill at my family's ranch. This "fort," now a Historic Site called Fort Howes,

consisted of one room large enough to accommodate a dozen men, with openings in the walls left for observation and shooting, and a roof composed of rough planks. The women and children were evacuated to Sheridan, Wyoming, about 70 miles away, while the men gathered and planned to retreat to the fort to fight, if necessary. Again, nothing transpired.

In the following years, famines struck the Indian communities. I remember my mother talking about how Indians would come to the ranch. They never knocked at the door but instead pressed their faces against the windows, indicating their hunger. My grandmother always provided food and sometimes clothing when necessary. After the food was distributed, our family watched those sad, hopeless, displaced people disappear over the hills, only to return during the next famine.

The last interaction between a family member and an Indian took place many years later when my mother, Levi's daughter, answered a knock on her front door in Sheridan, Wyoming. She was met by an old Indian warrior who said he was destitute and had heard she was a friend of the Indians. My mother replied she was willing to help and walked back to her bedroom to retrieve her purse. When she turned around she was startled and alarmed to find the Indian had followed her unnoticed through the house. Somewhat shaken, she quickly handed him a few dollars. He smiled and simply said, "Thank you," and left.

Frightened as she was, like Levi, she discovered that there doesn't always have to be a snake in the grass. —WT

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# Blue

by Chuck Peradotto

The umpire was short and stocky, made more so by the thick chest protector he wore under his dark blue shirt. His gray slacks were pressed to a T with razor sharp creases and cuffs. Black old-style shoes were polished to a high gloss to start the game. A perfectly formed cap with the proper arch of the bill sat atop his head over black hair neatly trimmed to his collar.

"Play ball!" he shouted as the last notes of the national anthem floated away on the hot July breeze. Turning his back to the field he slowly brushed off the plate. Although this was just a Pony game, little league, minors or the majors all started the same way. The smell of mustard and hot dogs, salted peanuts, and sweat permeated the dusty old green wooden grandstands.

The ump quickly proved he was more than fair and called the game just like the pros. His deep voice boomed out balls and strikes, then, punching the air with his fist, he held up thick fingers showing the count.

He wasn't afraid to touch and talk to the emotional young players. His eyes twinkled and a small smile was always on his mouth. This man thoroughly enjoyed what he was doing and took a great deal of pride in his craft. You could sense in him a genuine concern for the competitors and a great love of the game. Perfect for his job, he showed compassion and

many times a great patience while always moving the game along briskly.

There was not one word of criticism or any cat calls from the enthused crowd of excited parents and fans or opposing coaches. He called an honest, fair contest, and all present knew it.

Although he took his charge of umpiring very seriously, he colorfully added to the spectator's enjoyment of the game.

"Strike three, game over — nice effort, men," he bellowed.

While the shouts of joy echoed and tears of defeat faded across the dusty and empty field, an occasional "Good job, Blue" was called back over departing shoulders.

This meant more to him than any award they could ever bestow. —WT

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## San Jose Municipal Rose Garden

White moth near fountain —  
chaotic sunlit flight path.  
Ethereal heat.

— Stephen C. Wetlesen

# The Incarcerated Woman's Child

by Karen Sundback

Helen parked her old Chevy for her weekly visit with Elizabeth at the federal prison. Considering everything, it was a nice place, pretty trees and modern buildings. It reminded Helen of the local community college. Elizabeth was imprisoned for breaking through a CIA computer firewall. The Federal Agents treated Elizabeth with respect and gave her work that she found engaging. Surprisingly, Elizabeth was happy, but she was also pregnant.

Helen was spooked as she sat behind the screen waiting for Elizabeth. Next to her, a woman her own age tried to shush a miserable toddler. The child screamed with all his tiny power and clung desperately to the hard metal screen for his mother as she disappeared behind the steel door. When his mother disappeared, the toddler gave up without a fight to the older woman's arms. Helen was haunted by the defeat of this child, so early in life. Would it be the same for Elizabeth's child? Is this the fate of an imprisoned woman's child—always to be left behind?

Lost in her thoughts, she didn't see Elizabeth enter.

"Hey, why such a long face?" Elizabeth asked with concern. "But cheer up Mom, I've got great news! The Feds are working on a deal for me. I could be out in no time, complete with one cool ankle bracelet. And you know what status symbols those are among us hackers. I just wish I could saunter back to work wearing that baby; they'd all be green with envy. But it's not to be. The Fed won't allow it.

"Mom, how did you sleep at night when you were pregnant? This is killing me. Sure will be glad when this is over."

As Helen made small talk with Elizabeth, she wondered how in heaven's name Elizabeth could be pregnant, surrounded by only women for close to a year now? Elizabeth wasn't telling and Helen was done asking, for she was facing more urgent issues. As Elizabeth approached the end of her pregnancy, Helen worked to keep the child out of foster care—Elizabeth was not her daughter and, as matters stood, Helen could not take it as her own grandchild.

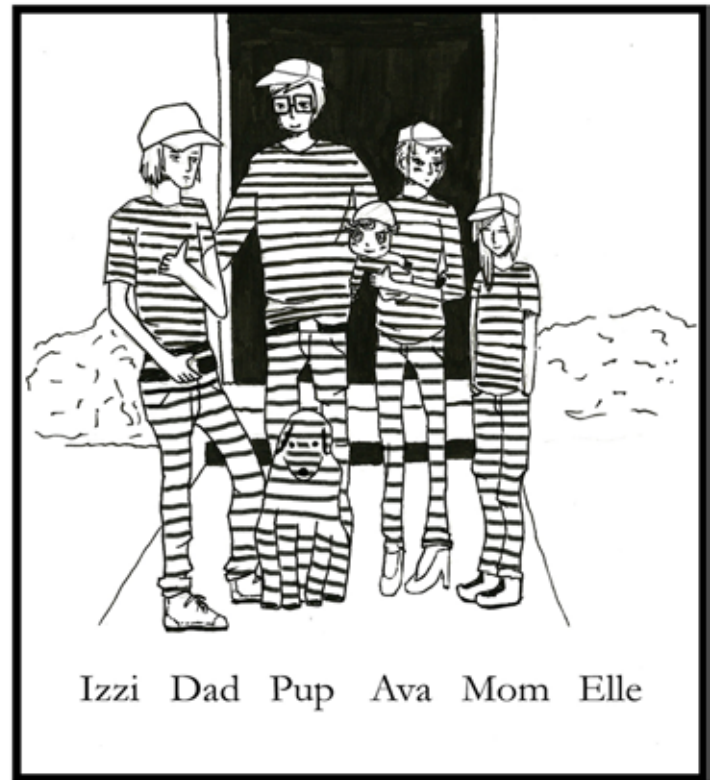
Elizabeth's father was a nearby neighbor of Helen's, who abandoned her after her mother died. Before selling his house and leaving his daughter behind, his last brutish act was to deny Helen and her husband's request to adopt Elizabeth. Helen and Frank were baffled, but it sparked within Elizabeth the fires of outrage. Her clearest memory of him was that he worked for the CIA and now here she is sitting in a federal prison camp getting her revenge. Only she wasn't sure it was working; it seemed to Helen that she herself was the only one suffering.

A week passed and Helen was preparing for her weekly visit when she got the news. Friday night after supper, the warden called and after a short greeting, got down to business, "Mrs. Sommers, Elizabeth gave birth to a healthy boy this morning. But it was a difficult birth and the doctors tried real hard, but they couldn't save the mother. The boy is safe in foster care now."

Helen stormed at the warden, but it did no good—Elizabeth was gone and her son was lost.

# Off the Shelf

Edie Matthews & Marina Menendez-Pidal



**The Palindrome Family**

Bad luck was bullying her again. Whenever she was at wit's end since her husband's death last year, she turned to her son. Helen's only son Jeff was in medical school, on his obstetrics and gynecology rotation. Doctors and medical students have the uncanny ability to slip behind locked doors. So, if anyone could find Elizabeth's child, Jeff could.

She spent Saturday staring at the fishing lake, steeped in numbness, and staring ahead to many more such days before the funeral. It's here she fell asleep.

Sunday breaks clear. A low mist rolls across the verdant grounds freshening the morning air. In the enclosed veranda, she wakes with stiff joints and matted hair. But she can't understand—how can today be her birthday? How can her son Jeff and his fiancé Judy burst in for breakfast with laughter and outrageous stories? As much as she hated the idea of laughter, she roused herself to get ready for them because Jeff will have news of Elizabeth's son.

From the kitchen, she hears the car pull up and waits impatiently for their calls. But when the front door opens, the only sound is a baby's cry. In the entryway, the three of them stand—Jeff holding the bundle, trying to look happy, but waiting restlessly for relief from the incessant howling, his fiancé holding a baby bag, and Helen gaping at the restless newborn with the thin mewl. Finally Helen comes to her senses, her voice quavers as she asks, "May I hold the baby?"

*Continued on Page 16*

# Cliff Soaring

by Jamie Miller

"Luke, this is crazy! You can't fly a hang-glider in this weather. This is IFR, Instrument Flying Rules! And you have no instruments. The base is only 100 feet above the beach, and you'll be totally in the fog with this onshore wind."

"Naah! What's to worry about. There aren't gonna be any power planes flying down in this stuff, not down around these cliffs." I was busy buckling into my hang-glider harness and didn't want to stick around and listen to Matt hassling me. The breeze was picking up and I sensed a great flight.

"So maybe I get vertigo. Hey, this is a hang-glider! It's stable. I just hold it steady and ride it down to the beach. What's the worst that can happen?"

"What can happen? You bust your ass, that's what. You turn into the cliff and I'll be identifying you by tattoos and teeth. After someone scrapes up the remains, that is."

"C'mon! I don't need instruments. You know I can feel altitude change in my ears, and I'll hear the surf at the base of the cliffs, so it's gonna be cool." I rechecked my harness and jumped up and down a couple of times to make sure that everything felt right, then took a few steps toward the cliff and stepped off.

"I'll send you a postcard!" I yelled as I turned parallel to the cliff to pick up the lift where the onshore breeze turned abruptly upward. I knew my hang-glider. In calm air, we would descend about 300 feet per minute. These cliffs, towering above the Pacific and barely inside the San Francisco city limits, were nearly 300 feet above the beach. The slope-lift should be good and strong. But even if it wasn't and the lift was dead, I could glide northward and settle gently onto the sand. It would be a long walk back to where I had left Matt and the car, but I had my cell phone. What could go wrong? Matt would pick me up. That's what friends are for.

I had plunged into grey indecipherable stratus. I had never flown in anything like this. Hang-gliders never go here, but here I was, floating in a world that was invisible, marked only by the muted sound of the surf below. I turned carefully, guessing what ninety degrees would be, and for the first time, I felt fear. The cliff face should be to my right, but where? My world had shrunk to a small white luminous ball with me in the center. I worked north along the unseen cliffs, feeling the altitude in my ears and sensing, rather than hearing, those cliffs alongside. No, I *was* hearing the cliffs, the sound of the surf below to one side, soft and diffused by the cloud, and the hard-edged echo from the cliffs on the other.

As I worked north and south, sensing altitude change by the faint pressure in my ears, I heard traffic sounds. Highway 1! I was above the cliffs. Yes! This was working! Where is the borderline between exhilaration and madness? I was riding it. Enough. I was shaking from the tension. This was enough. I turned seaward and let the altitude play out for a moment, while I regained my senses. I would fly a "racetrack" pattern and relax for a few seconds. The grey fog below darkened and shapes flowed by.

A ship took form out of the mist. A sailing ship, a square-rigger, four masts. Sails set but damp-looking and hanging limp. It was

stranded on the narrow beach, listing to seaward, hull already settling into the sand.

"Hello!" I called, but the sound was swallowed by the fog. There was no answer but the restless surf. "Hello!" I called again.

Time to turn back to the cliffs and their lift. Forget the ship, I didn't want to land on the beach. I turned parallel to the cliffs and the changing pressure in my ears confirmed my ascent as I worked back and forth, north and south, there in the stillness of the fog. A half-dozen passes along the cliff and I could hear the traffic on Highway 1; a couple more passes and I was sweeping down the headland looking for Matt and the parking lot. There they were! I turned a graceful circle, killed some altitude and settled to the ground.

"Where the hell have you been?" Matt asked.

"Where can you go in a hang-glider?" I answered. "Seriously, I saw something. There's a ship down there. Stranded. Like something from a Tall-Ships event. I need to tell the Coast Guard."

The steady, unhurried voice on the hang-glider's radio listened, then passed me on to the next level. "Yes," the voice said. "Sounds like Carrier Pigeon."



"Huh?"

"You're lucky. She's seen rarely, maybe once or twice in most years. Usually in foggy conditions, but seldom this far north."

"Wait, what ...?"

"Sails set, but no wind filling them? Right. Anchors stowed? Was anyone on deck?"

"Yes ... No ... I don't know!"

Shouldn't you go rescue them?"

"I'm guessing it's the clipper ship Carrier Pigeon. It went aground in a heavy fog in 1853, 129 days out of Boston. Pigeon Point Lighthouse was named for her."

"1953? Like 60 years ago?"

"Eighteen-fifty-three."

"But ... But it's there *now*!"

"Yes, sir. In a heavy fog, your eyes can play tricks."

"No, it was *there*!"

"We'll wait to see if there are other reports. Thank you for your report. Is there anything else?"

I slipped out of my glider harness in a daze and stumbled to the edge of the cliff. The fog was clearing. The beach was empty, except for the driftwood and kelp fronds thrown up by the last storm.

"Well?" Matt asked, as he caught up with me.

"You were right. You can't fly a hang-glider in a fog like this. A person shouldn't even try. It's the fog. The fog plays tricks on you, you know. I'm through for today." — WT

# The Witness of Two Stones

by Meredy Amyx

From cabin 10 of Fern River Resort in Felton, California, I can hear the soft, rushing sound of the river. The cabin porch and a graveled area in front of it, about 15 feet to cliff's edge, look down over a relatively broad, shallow stretch of the San Lorenzo River, eminently wadable here, where a slight but perceptible drop in level adds contour and sound to the flow of the water. The river is small, barely more than a creek, and the rainy season is past.

Directly across the river is Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Through gaps in the shrubs and trees, we can see occasional hikers passing along the River Walk trail. We followed that trail last time we were at the park. It was most unremarkable from the park side, without much of a river view. Much better from here.

The descent to the river from the cabin is an easy flight of steps of packed earth shaped by wooden retainers and crowded on both sides by creeping plants and ground cover. A vine of blue bell-like flowers resembling small morning glory blooms hugs the hillside. The drop is no more than 30 feet, but it is enough to create a sense of imaginable separation from civilization to wilderness. The sounds of Highway 9 are muffled here. Beside the river, if I don't look back and up at the row of guest cottages on the cliff, I am in a landscape that is probably different in no significant way from what my hominid ancestors saw when they came here and stood at this small sandy clearing with its narrow beach of water-rounded rocks.

To my untrained eye, many of the rocks look like granite. I see the familiar black-speckled gray rocks like the granite of Yosemite. But there are many variations on this theme in amber, brown, pink, blue-gray, and white. The yellow-amber ones in particular are flecked with quantities of silvery material that I label pyrite without any actual knowledge of whether pyrite is found in this form or not.

In addition to the granite-like rocks, I see stones of other character and all colors: small, black, and smooth; purple with white striations; brown with tiny yellow flecks, resembling bird eggs; gray shale and orange shale, some of it recently broken, layers separated but all still lying together like a book with a broken spine; pure white quartz; ordinary generic gray gravel; and a small number of agate-looking flat rocks with layers of green and pink and umber and lavender and cream. When wet, these stones will show a bright paintbox of colors. I see from the shape and texture of this small beach and the line of vegetation that in rainy seasons most of these rocks will be under water.

When my hominid ancestors stood here, the beach might have been wet. The river might have been fuller. The rains of winter might have been falling. The colors of these rocks might have been as deep and varied as the wildflowers and the blossoming trees. Perhaps some of the rocks even stood out as more attractive than the rest—clear, or bright, or sparkling. Perhaps someone picked up a pretty rock to carry it away, at that moment discovering in himself some aesthetic discernment.

The four-year-old hominid knew just what to do with a rocky beach by a river. He picked up a rock and threw it in the water.

Behind him on the beach, his father picked up one hefty stone and set it upon another. Just two stones, one firmly placed atop

## Shelf Life — Maddie McEwen-Asker



*Malcolm adjusted his desk to fit his expanding writing career.*

another, and a message is born, a symbol is created. It says, "Man here." It says, "I was here, I did this." Perhaps soon it will also say "Mine" and "Keep away" and maybe even "Sacred place: God, notice me here." But for now it is only the assertion of presence of a being that is not a bear or a deer, a fox or rabbit or wolf or any other kind of mammal, and certainly not a bird or reptile or amphibian or insect. Perhaps a manlike creature is not the only thing that could construct the first rudimentary cairn, but it is the only thing that would.

I know this by my belief in the endurance of the essential traits of living beings and in the felt commonality with my ancestors.

While hominid pater is constructing a monument to his humanity above the high-water mark, hominid mater has her four-year-old by his mop of hair down at the water's edge and is burnishing his hide with a small, thick branch of a fallen tree that has enough bark clinging to it to make a good scrubber.

His older sister has already begun to gather other branches, and soon the family will construct a small lean-to shelter here, on the strip of sand just above the rocky beach, protected by the cliff, where they will sleep peacefully to the soft, rushing sound of the water.

If the family of hominids turn and look above them, they won't see the steps. They won't see cabin 10 on the cliff, and they won't see me beside them, watching with affectionate interest as if they were my own family. But because they are there, I am here.

I pick up a large stone and place it upon another stone.

Man here. — WT

# Dead (Not) In The Water

By Pat Bustamante

Shelley liked having her 6-year-old granddaughter Tania over for the weekend. Because Shelley dyed her hair blonde and had great ancestors, people mistook her for Tania's mother; Tania actually did have blonde curls, lucky kid. She's gorgeous, thought Shelley, watching the girl build houses out of the dozens of books her Grandma had bought her.

She and Tania enjoyed all the wild creatures that inhabited the quarter-acre yard and the Saratoga Creek next to it, bees to buck-deer. For a house so close to Freeway 280 it boasted a miracle wildlife population.

The trouble with babysitting an active 6-year-old was that she could vanish like smoke. The gate in the redwood back fence was supposed to be locked but when Shelley searched the yard, the padlock was on the ground.

"Tan-Tan? Where are you?"

Where is Tania! Shelley kicked musings out of her mind and ran to the gate that led to Saratoga Creek. Tania had promised not to go near the rushing waters without Grandma. Shelley pushed her way through the gate and stopped dead.

Three lots down the small bridge, which she called The Golden Grate after its rusty-orange color, connected a path to Lawrence Expressway and a long hiking trail across the creek. Rows of oaks and sycamores lined the trail and down by the creek, willows interspersed with grasses and bushes at the edge. But there was no water.

Her side of the creek, once slippery mud from gate to water, was dry and dotted with dead weeds and baby trees that would never grow.

"Tania! Tania!"

There was no answer to her call but Shelley heard faint sobbing. She threw herself down the slope. When she landed on the streambed pebbles she saw two desiccated dead frogs. What was that other skeleton? Oh, the salamander! The salamander hadn't dodged Shelley and her glass jar when she had shown what endangered species meant to kindergartners at Sedgewick School. Afterward she had released the pink salamander at the edge of the water, the water that was now gone.

"Tania!" Shelley yelled, heading toward the faint sobs.

"Grannnmaaaa." Her granddaughter, face soaked with tears, knelt on dry rocks by the creek bed and held something on her lap.

The yellow ducklings had only recently perished. Mama mallard was gone. She could fly — ducklings could not. Shelley and Tania had tossed breadcrumbs to mallards nesting here in summer, when large duck families proudly swam up and down in the middle of the creek.

Shelley soothed Tania. How could she explain that drought meant humans claimed water that animals needed? She coaxed the child into creating a burial for the baby ducks and then to leave the dry creek. — WT

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## Trolls

by Karen Hartley

At six I learned trolls lived underneath the ground. I wanted to talk to them. One day I went to the edge of the grass. Something pulled me through a portal. Frightened, I told myself, *This is what you wanted -- to talk to the trolls. Don't be afraid.*

A gentle voice softly whispered. I understood everything.

"My name is Aharu. I am the troll queen. Welcome. I know you've wished to see our underworld and to talk to us." Aharu knew my fear, so this first time, she soon led me back out of the portal.

Back on the grass, I felt comforted, remembering my other friends and how, like normal children, we rode bicycles, skated in the schoolyard, and went to each other's houses. We had milk and cookies. But *I* knew I would no longer *be* normal. I sensed my difference now!

Weeks later, I went back again. Whisked through the portal, but this time, not frightened. Aharu greeted me with a warning.

"You must promise never to tell anyone you come here. We know you're special, so whenever you visit, we'll let you ask us whatever you wish. Remember, you must promise to always keep our secret, like we've kept yours. We've told no one you come here."

Each time, she spoke first. Then the others spoke. I listened very carefully. Every day I spent hours there, while the trolls

told me about living under the ground — their secret underworld. The trolls knew I understood.

I always brought a notebook. Surprisingly, I wrote their words in their language. My hand moved automatically. They told me I should be good, obey my parents, and always be kind.

I promised.

One day twenty years later, I went back. Aharu still lived there with her troll subjects. This time she came to me, placed her soft hand on my head and said, "You cannot come here anymore. It is now time for you to live your life without us. We know how you have loved coming here, and we have loved sharing our underworld with you. But now, you must pass through this final time, and go back to your life. We shall forever know where you are. We will protect you because you kept our secret. Take these words with you: *Always remember, live your life with charity, kindness and above all, love.*

Then for the last time, Aharu gently guided me out through the portal. A soft breeze blew across my face and she disappeared. Back in the yard, I stood alone.

Today, the magic of Aharu, the trolls, and the underworld remains with me.

I am still different. — WT



## August Terse on Verse

by Pat Bustamante



Pat Bustamante  
Contributing Editor

### Aw, Gust of Wind

So tired of the drought,  
So sad for many deaths  
Of creatures who don't understand about  
The water we humans steal, lest  
Our toilets, washing machines, et cetera,  
Cease pouring into sewers. Our need's the better of  
Anyone else's need on Earth: so we say.  
Wind and my anger blow hot today.

— Pat Bustamante

August, short month, long month? If you are locked into a school system, August is either too long, being one of the 31-day months, or too short, with September looming on the horizon. Depends on how much you love being in school.

Short stories, long stories. Whether or not you have already chosen the publisher for your writing, getting a short story published is the best advertisement for you. It could be a chapter from your life, a story from your memoir, or a signature event that matches the lines of your longer work.

Yes, there are many magazines that still publish short stories; some pay handsomely, some don't. If this is a busy month for you, writer, you still should be able to fit in a short or short-short story and pass it around to editors and readers.

If your book is poetry, it won't hurt to condense emotions into a story, which of course tends to be longer than a poem and shows off some characters who need more space than a poem. Get revenge on that bully from your childhood! Or let the world know about some saints or sinners in your family tree or in your neighborhood.

A short story, a poem, a chapter from a memoir or your novel--each can feed the other forms. Try them all. And let *Writers Talk* editors see a sample. You can also put that into your resumé or portfolio, so, "good gust of luck" to you! —WT

### Unequal Fractions

We lived with one half or one third  
We measured it out in batches  
Of need we would not say a word  
And so we treasured the snatches  
Of giving and taking and more  
The pleasure not to stall  
Tread softly when we need to shout  
Illusions, we watched them fall  
To give out one third or a fourth  
Preserving our caution  
We watched for the light and the dark  
Collecting our ration  
Of fractions cut fine and cut small  
The knife cut in strict portions  
While making a tall person small  
The knife causes contortions  
To cooper two into one  
Adjusting the angles  
One third doesn't mesh with one fourth  
And thus unharmonious tangles  
To force odds into evens  
Avoiding causing pain  
Is a cause way beyond achieving  
Cutting cannot equal gain  
Lessons learned from pain  
Cutting away can never equal gain

— Tina B. Glasner

### The Pleasure is All Mine

What makes a pleasure all mine? It's one's delight  
It could be, things of joy, or something just right  
Look at the pleasure; it's one of good satisfaction  
Such satisfaction is all mine, and is my expression  
We express what we feel; mine could be a feeling  
Does it matter what kind? What kind are you asking?  
A kind of delight, it pleases your buddy or friend  
The pleasure is all mine; do we add, 'till the end?

Not really, a friend is usually for life. We mean it  
A friend is mostly one also, that friend is your hit  
Now when we say pleasure, it is like any treasure  
Treasure says, the pleasure is all mine, is for sure  
We can express it all, say, pleasure is enjoyment  
The enjoyment is what we want, need, it is sent  
Keep trusting, do good to all a **pleasure** to you  
**Pleasure**, joy, and peace are from me. It is true.

— Clarence L. Hammonds



### On Defining Poetic Art

#### Poetic Art, another definition:

Writing a canvas.

#### Faux Tanka defining Poetic Art:

The vast invisible  
Dark Matter  
surrounding  
every single painting —  
well over 90% of the whole Creative Cosmos!

#### Faux Haiku On Haiku:

On a deep level,  
Haiku are a form of painting.  
I feel so wealthy.

— Stephen C. Wetlesen

## Home Buying Frenzy

*Continued from page 6*

If the winning offer is from an “all cash” buyer, there is no need to involve a lender.

When the purchase is completed, i.e. escrow has closed, the inflated value will be used as a benchmark for appraisals on other homes as they come on the market. The new sellers will of course demand that their asking price equal (or exceed) the inflated value. Now the whole auction process gets underway again, the process that pushes up prices. It is like a positive feedback system that will eventually spiral out of control and crash.

What will make it crash? Prices reaching the level where buyers cannot come up with even the 20% cash down required by their lender, let alone the extra cash required due to the overbidding process. Or it could crash because lenders could decide to monitor the source of the extra down, putting some restrictions on it. But of course cash buyers will not be subject to any restrictions. They will continue to drive the market until there are no more cash buyers.

So, who are the winners here? The SELLER is the Number One winner, of course. Thousands of dollars over the asking price: he’s smiling all the way to the bank. The agents may win 6% of the overbid. On a hundred thousand, this comes to a higher commission, perhaps as much as \$6000. Mind that this commission is split two ways, and then two ways again. The agents may walk away with \$1500 - \$2000 extra in their pocket for every hundred thousand over. But the seller’s agents have had to work harder than before, because they must field and analyze all the offers, and present them to the seller, because the buyer’s agent is no longer invited to present his clients’ offers – there is no face-to-face meeting as there used to be.

Presenting all these offers in person, to the seller and the seller’s

agent, could take all day! So the home seller’s agent picks which of the many offers look the best and the seller can pick the winner. The winning buyer’s agent wins the extra cash, while of course all of the rejected buyer’s agents must again start finding a property for their buyer. They may never be able to “win” a house for their buyer. All of their work has been for naught.

Is THE winning buyer a winner? Yes, because the buyer now has the house. But the buyer has paid far more than the appraised value and ponied up thousands of dollars over the asking price. If there is a crash, all this extra cash put down is at risk. It is often lost, as was seen in the last bubble.

Is this a good process? If you believe in auctions, it certainly is. If you think that this process is getting out of control, you are right. Essentially the SELLER takes all – the agents a little, and the buyer has been taken to the cleaners.

Buyers beware! You are buying at your own risk. There is no protection for you. The process is no longer win-win, as in a healthy negotiation. Not only have you overpaid, you have most likely signed away all your protection: The house does not have to appraise at the sales price; and you may have given away other contingencies, such as that you the buyer has to qualify for the loan – i.e., if you don’t qualify because the lender has some unknown requirement, you can lose your deposit. Also, you may have given away the “right to inspect” and you may be forced to buy even if an inspection (which you pay for) shows considerable costly damage, such as a leaky roof, water damage, termites or a bad furnace. You are buying a house “as-is.”

Yes, buyers take care. Realize your risks in this seller-skewed process. He’s got the treasure and you want it, no matter what the cost. — WT

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## Incarcerated woman’s child

*Continued from Page 11*

It wasn’t until the fretful child is in her arms and she sees Elizabeth’s catlike eyes skewed on his face that she is sure that Jeff had found him. She hugs both Jeff and Judy.

Encouraged, Helen asks, “Where was he?”

“At the hospital nursery, acting just as cranky as he is now,” Jeff laughs.

“Does he have a name?” She holds the tender bundle to her shoulder and burps him.

“My namesake. What do you think?” Jeff grins as he watches the child quieting.

As Jeff reaches for the quieted child, Helen stiffens. “There’s still the problem of adoption. Elizabeth never signed the papers.”

Jeff offers nothing more and the breakfast conversation turns to the funeral. After breakfast, he carries Jeffy to the veranda’s wicker settee, where he lies with the child on his chest. As Helen watches them sleep, she says to Judy, “Dear, help me with the dishes.”

As the women carry the dishes into the kitchen, Judy closes the door and says, “Helen, it’s been tough caring for Jeffy.

Jeff’s on a 30-hour shift starting tonight and I don’t have anyone to watch him while I’m at work tomorrow.”

Helen continues with the dishes as she thinks of the days ahead with those vultures at the funeral home planning for Elizabeth’s remains. If Jeffy will cry whenever they start in with their high-pressure sales tactics, she’ll have a good chance of dealing with these carrion-feeders. Helen is confident in her new accomplice as she says, “I’d love to have him stay with me.”

At the front door, with Jeffy in one arm, Helen waves to the disappearing car carrying the young couple away. Helen wonders if medical students, who can disappear behind locked doors to retrieve lost babies, can also comfort lonely friends behind bars? She looks at Jeffy again to see if she can see her own son in him. She hides a smile as she closes the door. It’s not the best day, but it’s a good day. — WT



# Contests/Markets: Some Website Listings

by Carolyn Donnell



Carolyn Donnell  
Contributing Editor

Here's a list of major sites that keep an ongoing list of contests and other monetary opportunities. Some are free to enter; some are not. Be sure to check all deadlines and follow all rules.

*Poets and Writers:* [pw.org/grants](http://pw.org/grants)

*Fan Story:* [fanstory.com/index1contest.jsp](http://fanstory.com/index1contest.jsp)

*Writer Advice:* [writeradvice.com/markets.html](http://writeradvice.com/markets.html)

*Funds For Writers:* [fundsforwriters.com/contests/](http://fundsforwriters.com/contests/)

*Writer Magazine:* [writermag.com/writing-resources/](http://writermag.com/writing-resources/)

*Writer's Digest:* [writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions](http://writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions)

*Winning Writers:* [winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests](http://winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests)

If you receive in your email an opportunity to enter a contest, by all means, check it out on its website. Find out if it is a true contest, or a publisher's promotion, or — sad to say — a scam. The sites in the list above give vetted competitions.

**Small Presses Database:** Whether you're pursuing the publication of your first book or your fifth, *Poets & Writers* say you can use their Small Presses database to research publisher interests, contact information, and submission guidelines. See [www.pw.org/small\\_presses](http://www.pw.org/small_presses)

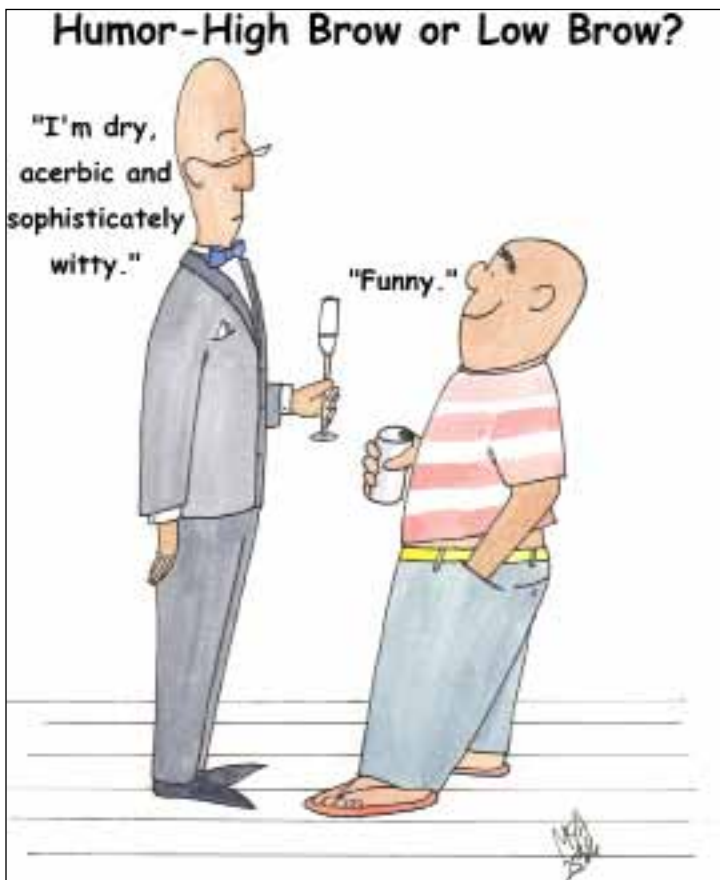
Good luck and be sure to let us know if you have any good news. — WT

## Make it funny

The theme for September's *WritersTalk* is humor. Write a vignette about the funniest thing that ever happened to you, or your most embarrassing moment — if it made you laugh. Write an article about what makes us laugh or how to tell a joke. But keep us all laughing. — WT

## Shelf Life

— Maddie McEwen-Asker



## How to write a contest winner

Try out your short fiction and poetry in *WritersTalk*. The WT staff copyedits your submissions and the editor growls if you format improperly, so, you'll be ready to submit for a contest in the spring. SBW members had extreme success at the San Mateo County Fair this June. Guess what? All of them have been published in *WritersTalk* multiple times. — WT

## Market for funny stories

Write a really good funny story and submit it to *Reader's Digest* online at [rd.com/submit-joke](http://rd.com/submit-joke). *Reader's Digest* says: "Everyone's got a funny story. Just send us your contribution, and if we publish it in *Reader's Digest*, you'll be laughing all the way to the bank. Here is how it works: We pay \$100 for original jokes, cartoons, comics, fillers and anecdotes we print in the *Reader's Digest Magazine*. Original contributions, which should be less than 300 words, become our property upon payment. Previously published items must include the name, date, and page number of the source. Contributions will not be acknowledged or returned." — WT

## Contests/Conferences go hand in hand

If you hear of an interesting conference or contest, please send information to *WritersTalk*. Note the Central Coast Conference announced on the following page. — 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/Haiku

#### 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. — 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)

### **Curriculum Development**

June Chen [junech@gmail.com](mailto:junech@gmail.com)

### **Counseling/John Steinbeck**

Dr. Audry L. Lynch

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

### **Engineering: Mechanical, 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 [dlbm1b@comcast.net](mailto:dlbm1b@comcast.net)

### **Marketing and Management**

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

### **Mathematics/Fibonacci Sequence**

Marjorie Johnson [marjohnson@mac.com](mailto:marjohnson@mac.com)

### **Private Investigator/Police work/Crime**

M. J. Hahn

[mirror3314@mypacks.net](mailto:mirror3314@mypacks.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

## Central Coast

### Writers Conference

At the 30th Central Coast Writers Conference, scribes will learn from a bounty of authors, editors, and literary agents who teach dozens of workshops aimed at every type of writer—from aspiring teenage novelists to experienced authors.

The conference takes place September 19 – 20, 2014, at Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo. Read about it in September *Writer's Digest* or at [cuesta.edu/communityprograms/writersconference/index.html](http://cuesta.edu/communityprograms/writersconference/index.html) — WT

## 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:** 2:00 third Sundays, Oakland Public Library Main Branch. [cwc-berkeley.com](http://cwc-berkeley.com)

**Central Coast:** 5:30 third Tuesdays, Point Pinos Grill, 77 Asilomar Boulevard, Pacific Grove. [centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)

**Fremont Area:** 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)

**Mendocino Coast:** 6:00 third Wednesdays, Mendocino Hotel. [writersmendocinocoast.org](http://writersmendocinocoast.org)

**Mount Diablo:** 11:30 second Saturdays, Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. [mtdiablowriters.org](http://mtdiablowriters.org)

**Napa Valley:** 6:30 second Wednesdays, Napa River Inn. [napavalleywriters.net](http://napavalleywriters.net)

**Redwood:** 2:30 first Sundays, Flamingo Conference Resort & Spa, 2777 Fourth Street, Santa Rosa. [redwoodwriters.org](http://redwoodwriters.org)

**Sacramento:** 11:00 third Saturdays, Cattlemen's Restaurant, 12409 Folsom Blvd., Rancho Cordova. [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)

**Tri-Valley:** 11:30 third Saturdays, Four Points by Sheraton, 5115 Hopyard, Pleasanton. [trivalleywriters.com](http://trivalleywriters.com)

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## Ongoing critique groups

### **Our Voices**

Meets at Le Boulanger in the Pruneyard in Campbell every other Sunday 11 am. Genres: Fiction, nontechnical nonfiction, memoir. Contact: Dave LaRoche — [dalaroche@comcast.net](mailto:dalaroche@comcast.net)

### **Valley Writers**

Meets at Valley Village Retirement Center, Winchester Blvd. in Santa Clara, Mondays 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Contact: Marjorie Johnson at [marjoriej358@comcast.net](mailto:marjoriej358@comcast.net)

### **Emperor's Mystery Circle**

Meets at Emperor Norton's, 7508 Santa Teresa Blvd, San Jose, 1:30 pm., first Mondays. Mystery genre. Contact Pam Oliver-Lyons, [polpap@prodigy.net](mailto:polpap@prodigy.net)

### **Karen's Critique Group**

On sabbatical. Fiction, non-fiction or memoir only. Contact Karen, [Sew1Machin@aol.com](mailto:Sew1Machin@aol.com)

### **Riders Do Right**

Meets at Vallco Shopping Center, second floor, Food Court near Burger King, Noon, second Thursdays. Any genre. Contact Pat Bustamante, [patatat@hotmail.com](mailto:patatat@hotmail.com)

### **Your Critique Group**

For consideration, send information to [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

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## South Bay Branch Announcements

### **Writing Group: A Chapter at a Time**

Mondays, 9 a.m. to noon, Barnes&Noble Almaden. Contact Nader Khaghani, [workshops@southbaywriters.com](mailto:workshops@southbaywriters.com)

**Open Position: Networking Chair, committee members.** Network with social media. Contact SBW President.

**South Bay Writers Open Mic:** Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. See calendar for schedule. Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622 or email [WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com)

**Need a critique group? An article on finding or founding critique groups appeared on page 9 in May *WritersTalk*, available online at [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com). Contact Dave LaRoche at [vp@southbaywriters.com](mailto:vp@southbaywriters.com) or at [dalaroche@comcast.net](mailto:dalaroche@comcast.net)**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>August 2014</b>					1	2
3 11A Our Voices	4 9A Chapter at a Time 1:30P Mystery Circle 2P Valley Writers	5	6 No August SBW Board Meeting	7	8 7:30P Open mic B&N Almaden, San Jose	9 SBW Board Retreat
10	11 9A Chapter at a Time 2P Valley Writers <b>6:00P SBW Dinner, Harry's Hofbrau</b>	12	13	14 Noon: Riders Do Right	15 <i>D e a d l i n e WritersTalk</i>	16
17 11A Our Voices	18 9A Chapter at a Time 2P Valley Writers	19	20	21	22 7:30P Open mic Wil- low Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave	23
24	25 9A Chapter at a Time 2P Valley Writers	26	27	28	29	30
<b>Future Flashes</b>						
September 3 SBW Board meeting	September 8 SBW Dinner Meeting					

### 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 Karen Phan at  
phan\_karen@yahoo.com or go to  
poetrycentersanjos.org/calendar

### Los Gatos Literary Fair

Saturday, August 23, Noon to 3 p.m.,  
Los Gatos Civic Center Lawn

More information about this first-time  
Los Gatos Public Library event appears  
online at [losgatosca.gov/literaryfair](http://losgatosca.gov/literaryfair)

### Your ad could go here

\$7 per column inch for SBW  
members

\$10 per inch for nonmembers

### Stay informed

Read Constant Contact notices in  
your email for meeting and event  
announcements. SBW members are  
listed automatically; nonmembers  
who wish to be listed go to [http://  
southbaywriters.com/wordpress/  
mailling-list/](http://southbaywriters.com/wordpress/mailling-list/)

### CWC bags: Only \$10 each



Offered during our monthly meetings.  
Collect yours before supplies run out!

### South Bay Writers Anthology



\$10

At the meeting or on  
[amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

### South Bay Writers Coffee Mugs

Available at Meetings



**\$10 each or three for \$20**



**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**  
**August Regular Membership Meeting**  
**6 p.m. Monday, August 11**

Harry's Hofbrau  
390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose

**Carla Walter, PhD**  
**Dance Your Way**  
**Through Publishing**  
**and Purchase**

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

Regular dinner meetings are  
second Mondays 6 – 9 pm



### **Harry's Hofbrau**

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