



WRITERSTALK

Volume 22
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September 2014

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

SEPTEMBER SPEAKER

Trends Shaping the Future of Authorship

by Dave LaRoche

We are writers. We know how to write. We may have our story wrapped, and the big mystery now is how do we get it in front of our readers. Which of myriad publishing paths do we take?

We know the physical attributes of a book. Conforming our text, while challenging, is not overwhelming and most printers can help. E-book publishers provide us a template. Marketing, distribution and sales are the conundrum; moreover, they're changing and a lot of it's new. Even the "new" is morphing, much of what's to come unknown. The entire process, downstream from writing, leaves most authors with blank stares on their faces.

But we can't leave it there. We've labored, sweat that virtual blood, and come to love our creation. We've experienced the frustration of rewrites and polishing, spent money on editing and time on peer reviews. We're totally invested, likely obsessed. We must dig in and go on. We need to see our book read, let others have the experience of knowing our story.



Mark Coker

But, let us not fret. There are things we can learn that will help us through the publishing maze; road maps to follow, knowledge of what's there today, and what's coming. Writing, they say, is a business. People in business know one thing: trends are important – what has happened, what's happening now, and what's likely to happen tomorrow. New technology, changing appetites and needs, ideas relating to time and priorities; all influence the market and the way people behave – in our case, the way people acquire and read books. Knowing these trends will help get our stories where we want them in an expeditious and efficient way.

Mark Coker is at the forefront of all this, and he knows those trends. Not only a successful publisher in the e-book part of the business, he is a publishing student *avant-garde* and today shapes some of the movement. At our next meeting September 8, he'll tell us about the industry today and what's expected tomorrow. We will learn how technology is driving that change and how we can best take advantage. He will give us insight into packaging our story and getting it in front of readers.

Mark is a graduate of the Haas School of Business at U.C. Berkeley, where he received his B.S. in marketing. In 2008 Mark founded Smashwords. In June 2010, *The Wall Street Journal* named Mark one of the "Eight Stars of Self-Publishing." In March 2012, *MediaBistro* named Mark one of the "Five E-book Experts to Watch." In June 2012, *Forbes* profiled Mark in a feature story entitled, "Apple's Biggest Supplier of E-Books." In both 2013 and 2014, *Forbes Magazine* named Smashwords one of "America's Top 100 Most Promising Companies."

AUGUST RECAP

Dance Brings Spirituality

by Pratibha Kelapure

"I stress the connections between dance and spirituality and suggest a return to arts as a spiritual connection anthropologically," Carla Walter says on her Google+ Site. Writing well is an art, and we welcomed Carla's wisdom on the topic of connecting writing and spirituality of dance at the South Bay Writers August 11 general meeting.



Carla Walter
– Dick Amyx

Carla Walter, PhD, has written and sold several nonfiction books spanning the arts, economics, and marketing topics. She received the 2014 Margaret Fuller Universalist Unitarian Woman's Federation Grant

for her project, *Dancing in the Spirit of Recovery*. Her novel, *Leaving Cuba by Stark Raving Married*, will be released in February 2015.

Carla said she was motivated to research and write about dance because she noticed several books written about music but not enough about dance. She also noticed the covert consumerism associated with dance in advertisements, and she hoped to return the dance to its spirituality.

Carla's postdoctoral study was conducted at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, where she researched consumer behavior and dance practices.

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President's Palaver

by Colin Seymour
President, South Bay Writers

Joke-telling presenter? It's a backup plan that might go full-frontal



In May 2011, during my first term as SBW's vice president, we had a dinner meeting disaster when our scheduled guest speaker fell ill at the last minute. The ad-hoc discussions I tried to generate in her stead ran out of steam long before 9 p.m. as our then-venue, the Lookout, started to get mighty empty.

I should have had some sort of backup plan, but I've never implemented one.

I can tell you there's no shortage of people inside and outside the club who are eager to be our dinner speaker, and I'm one of them. But many of the wannabes aren't sure what they ought to present.

So let me run some ideas past you and get you thinking about what you or I might present. Who knows, maybe you'll come to the rescue next time a speaker bales out on us.

The logical topic for me would be headline writing. That has been the newspaper skill from which I've gotten the most mileage. Surely many of you have to come up with headlines or other titles frequently as authors, and it's a rare, fair skill. I've got lots of principles and nuances to teach, and I've got a huge stockpile of my own published headlines, with lots of bragging by way of explaining how the headlines came about.

Here's a drawback: I have a huge metal chest full of my newspaper clips. There are multiple copies of about 200 of my favorite bylined stories, columns and reviews and there are stacks of my favorite designs from my layout-dominated 20s. There are copies of lots of the clever headlines, but some of the nuts-and-bolts headlines that might be more helpful to an SBW attendee are not clipped but lie within several stacks of intact sections.

It could take hours to pore through these, and I still haven't done it, though I will if I really start craving to be a presenter.

You need more than one topic, so let's see . . . I also got a lot of newsroom mileage out of my ability to write song lyrics, or specifically, song parodies. There are exacting standards for many forms of doggerel and (as I'll expand upon in a future President's Palaver), few people who attempt doggerel have mastered these standards.

They don't know how a limerick must scan, for example. I could present an hour on limerick writing itself, even without invoking the legendary "Man from Nantucket."

Alas, I'm not sure there's sufficient demand for the doggerel and limericks primers.

But there would be sufficient interest in this related idea: You may recall that I once said at an SBW meeting that I honed a lot of my writing skills, especially organization, by telling dirty jokes throughout my adolescence. I know precise punch lines, and I have a vast storehouse of those, but I don't remember all the details that lead up to each punch line. I have to concoct all those details every time I tell a joke, and that is a writing skill I can impart.

I have attended workshops on humor writing — and our own Edie Matthews presents on that topic — but I have never really seen the mechanics of joke telling — they don't have to be dirty jokes — fleshed out in workshop form.

I'll bet I could just bring a list of punch lines and the time would fly by. — 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—Maddie McEwen-Asker

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

Announcements and Advertisements
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by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson
Managing Editor

Write funny for money



Some writers write humorous columns for a living: for example, Dave Barry and Erma Bombeck. *Writer's Digest* (October, 2014) interviewed best-selling author Lisa Scottoline who writes a humor column for *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which undoubtedly helps her advertise her books. Now we can add humor columnist Marni Jameson, www.marnijameson.com, to that list. So how does

Marni do it? And what can we learn from her about writing humor?

Marni combines home decorating with humor in her weekly column, "At Home with Marni Jameson," which appears in more than 30 newspapers throughout the United States and Canada. In particular, her article "Designing—by the numbers" appeared in the *San Jose Mercury News* on August 9, 2014.

She begins, "When I first heard about the open lecture ... about design using math, I sensed a migraine coming on. ... I reserved two seats, hoping I would find someone nerdy enough to go with me who could elbow me to keep me from nodding off."

She follows with tongue-in-cheek remarks as she reports what she heard. "Some guy named Fibonacci ... Fibo-who-chee? He was some math wiz born back when the earth was cooling who had nothing better to do than add sequential numbers together ... 1 + 1 is 2; 1 + 2 is 3; 2 + 3 is 5, and so on. ... Fibonacci apparently did this math either into infinity, or until he bored himself."

Marni uses that same writing style to describe the rest of the lecture, then says, "But I left caring about how to apply this math magic at home," and gives five rules that relate the "Divine Proportion" (approximately 1.618) to art and home decorating. One example: "Be odd. ... The best designs aren't static. Three or five flowers in a vase look better than two or four." Her last remark: "And that is all the math for me for at least 1.618 decades."

So what can we learn? The tone used by all three humorists gives readers an "I've-been-there" point of view that they can relate to, combined with humor and advice. The humor comes from exaggeration and from the choice of words—humorous twists on the subjects discussed and distortion of reality, like the old expression, "pulling your leg."

Writing humor is looking at life through a funhouse mirror. The warped surface of the mirror distorts perception, stretching or shrinking parts of the image. Stretch your story out and warp it a bit, but keep 'em laughing.

This issue of *WT* had humor for its theme, so our advice (or lack thereof) comes late. However, a good story is welcome here anytime. For October, send us your spookiest. —WT

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View from the Board

Sylvia Halloran is on vacation.

The South Bay Writers Board has rescheduled its planning and brainstorming retreat to Saturday, September 6, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Any member of SBW who wishes to attend or to make suggestions must contact Colin Seymour at pres@southbaywriters.com — WT

And the winners are ...



Challenge Administrator Meredy Amyx with winners Steve Wetlesen, Pratibha Kelapure, and Judith Shernock. Camera shy: Richard Burns. — Photo by Carolyn Donnell

WritersTalk Challenge Contest Winners

by Marjorie Johnson

Meredy Amyx managed the second of the 2014 biannual *WritersTalk* Challenge Contests and announced the winners at the South Bay Writers August 11 meeting. The winners and their various categories are listed below; they each received a certificate and a check for \$40.

- Article/Essay: Pratibha Kelapure, "Classic California Writer — Lorna Dee Cervantes: Literary Analysis of 'Freeway 280'"
- Fiction: Judith Shernock, "Why OR-7 Left Oregon"
- Memoir: Richard Burns, "Bob and I Wrestling"
- Poetry: Stephen C. Wetlesen, "Koi Pond"

The Challenge is an ongoing contest in which submissions published in *WritersTalk* over the past six months are judged by *WritersTalk* staff and other writers/editors chosen by the contest administrator. Every time something you write is published in *WT*, you are automatically entered in this contest.

Congratulations to all, and a big thank you to Meredy and to the judges who gave their time: Sally Milnor, Karen Llewellyn, Edie Matthews, Mike Freda, Sylvia Halloran, Dick Amyx, and Bill Baldwin. — WT

SBW Member News

by Marjorie Johnson

We applaud your successes — published works, talks given, book signings — any small or large triumphs related to writing. To be included in this column, please send a short paragraph to news-letter@southbaywriters.com or fill out a form at a dinner meeting.

Robert M. Davis, *The Ticker*, **Marjorie Johnson**, *Jaguar Princess*, and **Helen Vanderberg**, *The Domino Deaths*, spoke at a meet-the-author event at the Fremont Main Library on August 16.

In July, **Robert Garfinkle** received the distinguished Ina Coolbrith Award from the California Writers Club, well-deserved recognition. Congratulations!

Marjorie Johnson spoke at the Sixteenth International Conference on Fibonacci Numbers and Their Applications in Rochester, New York in July on "The Fibonacci Association: Historical Snapshots." An article of the same name will appear in the conference proceedings.

Victoria M. Johnson was thrilled to have two poems accepted for publication. "Unwavering Blue Scarf" was published by *When Women Waken Literary Journal* and "Blood Moon" was accepted by *Em Dash Literary Magazine*.

Victoria M. Johnson participated in the Los Gatos Literary Fair on August 23. (Link: losgatosca.gov/literaryfair) The event, sponsored by the Los Gatos Public Library, featured 26 local authors and several local publishers. Participants included several other SBW members: **Betty Auchard**, **Robert Balmanno**, **Hi-Dong Chai**, **Jana McBurney-Lin**, and **Steve Sporleder**.

Dave LaRoche edited the Summer 2014 *California Writers Club Literary Review* — an outstanding publication by any measure. This was a huge job; two hundred seven submissions from all over the State were graded, each by three different editors, to choose the thirty-four published. Submissions from five South Bay Writers were included: **Catherine Dowling**, "Four Fields," and **Maddy McEwen-Asker**, "God's in Heaven," both fiction; and **Carolyn Donnell**, "Boudicca's Daughters," **Karen Hartley**, "Saturday's Light," and **Victoria M. Johnson**, "Unwavering Blue Scarf," all poetry.

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New Members

by Sally A. Milnor

I am happy to introduce our Club's eight newest members.



Sally Milnor

Rajesh Ananth – is a returning member to our Club. Rajesh writes children's books in the Chapter Books and the Middle-Grade genre. In

addition to his writing, he enjoys long-distance running. Rajesh can be contacted at author.ananth@gmail.com.

Carly Gelsinger – found us online. She is a former professional journalist and is now a stay-at-home mom. Carly's primary area of interest is memoir. In addition to her writing, she enjoys improv comedy. Her articles have appeared in the *Boston Globe* and the *Gilroy Dispatch*.

Susan Howard – is a retired attorney, an eternal student (continuing studies at Stanford), and she loves gardening. Ten years ago, she began collecting family stories, and, with her husband, set up a family history website to share with others. Susan began writing when she discovered a great story she believed should be told. As she researched, she

found additional fascinating characters who were largely overlooked in history. Susan is currently writing a biography, and she will soon be working on a book proposal.

Barbara A. Johns – writes children's books and inspirational poetry. She is an RN for Kaiser Permanente Hospice in Santa Clara. Three years ago, Barbara self-published a children's book, *Heart Adventures with Puppygirl, The Lake*. Just three months ago, she signed a contract with a Christian publishing company for that book and the three other books in the series: *Wrinkle Twinkles*, *Rock Gardens*, and *Nobby Star*. Barbara has also written over eighty inspirational poems – when she has written one hundred, she's thinking of publishing them.

Michael Lunsford – writes plays, poems, fiction and nonfiction. On his membership questionnaire, he writes: "Although I've always thought of myself as a writer, I spent 30 years in product management. I retired in May 2014 to devote myself 100% to writing, composing, and swimming laps at the 'Y'." He has published 14 nonfiction books on computer technology and a book of "wacky kids poems" that he plans to self-publish as an e-book. Michael has just received a contract from

Heartland Plays, Inc., to publish both musical and non-musical versions of his comedy, *Scary, Scary Night*, in their September catalogue.

Patrick McQueen – writes short stories and poems, and he wrote a novel during last year's NANOWRIMO. On his membership questionnaire, Patrick wrote that much of his writing is fiction, strongly inspired by personal experiences or feelings. We were pleased Patrick joined us at our August meeting at Harry's.

Sujata Talreja – is a former journalist, and she has had several articles published. Her primary area of interest is in writing novels. We were glad to meet Sujata personally at our August 11 meeting.

Sandi Taylor – writes short stories, memoir, and nonfiction articles and books. We were also very happy to meet Sandi personally at our August meeting at Harry's.

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. — WT

SBW Member News

Continued from Page 4

Margie Yee Webb's *My Not Your Mother's Book . . . On Cats* is the ninth book in the anthology series and officially due out in October. And the publisher invited her to participate in their booth on September 27 – 28 in San Mateo at the "San Francisco Ultimate Women's Expo," www.sfwomensexpo.com.

Stephen C. Wetlesen was commissioned to create poetic art as a memorial for a recently passed gentleman who, among many other honorable accomplishments in a long and inspiring life, was a decorated combat veteran as a US Marine, both at Iwo Jima in World War II and also in the horrific battle of Chosin Reservoir deep behind enemy lines in North Korea in 1950. This brave man was under ferocious enemy fire in both wars and battles. This is not Steve's first military or combat veteran memorial commission; it is hoped others will

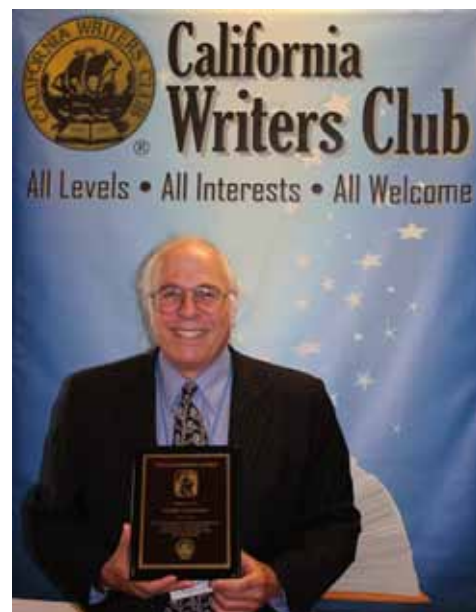
see the heritage value of poetic art for manly heroes of such noble quality.

Publication opportunities:

The *California Writers Club Literary Review* is accepting submissions for the 2014 – 15 issue from CWC members during the period September 1 through October 31, 2014. See the current issue for guidelines.

The *My Not Your Mother's Book . . .* anthology series is accepting humorous stories and essays for the current volume, *... On Sex*. Don't let the title turn you off. While *MNMB* will take something a little daring, they don't publish pornography or overtly sexual material. They like healthy, fun, irreverent.

Read about both of these publication opportunities on Page 17, Contest and Markets. — WT



July 21, 2014: Robert Garfinkle accepts CWC Ina Coolbrith Award
— Photo by Ray Malus

Trends Shaping Authorship

Continued from Page 1

In the six years since its launch, Smashwords has grown to become the leading e-book distributor. Over 80,000 authors from around the world publish and distribute nearly 300,000 books at Smashwords.

Join me on September 8 to welcome Mark Coker and to learn about publishing trends and how we can best cash in on this volatile, changing market and the processes that serve it. And please bring your questions. See you there. —WT

Dance Brings Spirituality to Writing

Continued from Page 1

Her approach is refreshing to those who are fatigued by the publishing and marketing frenzy surrounding artists and writers these days. We are told, daily by the writing web sites, hourly by the social media channels, about how to toot your own horn. But with so many blaring horns, is anyone really paying attention? To some, stepping



Carla Walter — Carolyn Donnell

back and focusing on honing the craft seems like a calm and respectable way to success. Carla's presentation was appealing to the contemplative side of authors.

She described her journey from researching to writing to publishing in great detail. Her learning arc about getting published through the traditional publishing houses is illuminating and inspiring. This was a useful approach because the writers got to live through her experiences and were able to identify with those. In the QA section of the presentation, someone asked her, "What drives you to succeed?" Her answer was, "Respect." Many writers nodded their heads in agreement.

Not only was her talk inspiring, but also it was informative. She outlined the five steps to success as a published author and how those steps are akin to a dancer's achievements. It is notable that she emphasized the practice and perfection of art, attributes which are in short supply in the "Get it to the market fast" world. She informed the audience on the importance of doing a competitive analysis, creating a professional prospectus,

enhancing the publisher's acquisition list, and writing an effective query letter. She weaved the information seamlessly into her narrative, so it wasn't just a boring bulleted list that people note down and forget.

South Bay Writers thanks Carla for speaking and Dave for inviting her. —WT

Errata: CWC Literary Review Summer 2014

by Dave LaRoche

Please include the following in your copy of the recently distributed CWC Literary Review Summer 2014, recently distributed.

- On page 1, in the Acquisition Editor's credits, change Elisabeth Tuck (Tri-Valley) to **Elisabeth Tuck (Mt Diablo)**.
- On page 2, in the table of contents, under the heading of Fiction, change Maddy McEwan-Asker to **Maddy McEwen-Asker**; under Poetry, change Alice Knight to **Alice Kight**, and "Unwaivering Blue Scarf" to **"Unwavering Blue Scarf."**
- On Page 10, change the attribution for the poem "If I Changed Places" from Emily Edding to **Alice Kight**.

For those affected, Alice Kight, Emily Edding, Elisabeth Tuck, and Maddy McEwen-Asker, please accept the editor's apologies. —WT

Your Digital Shadow

by Dick Amyx

The text below was written by a friend on a Yahoo Group I participate in. It would be a good idea to check it out if you're a Facebook user—and to pass it along to friends.

It is a game, developed to promote a game. Shows what you expose on Facebook. You are not an individual—you are a data cluster. <http://digitalshadow.com>

I read about it here: <http://www.thewire.com/technology/2014/05/digital-shadow-exposes-exactly-how-much-facebook-knows-about-you/361758/>

In the upcoming video game, *Watch Dogs*, you play a criminal hacker who exploits a citywide surveillance network to "inflict your own brand of justice." And to show that maybe this futuristic tech nightmare is closer than you might realize, Ubisoft (the game's maker) created a promotion called "Digital Shadow," that's actually one of the best ways to determine exactly what you are sharing online right now. While it may have started as a clever tie-in promo, it has turned into a red alert for many Facebook users, who realized the worth of their data and exactly how exposed they were. —WT

Digital deluge

Despite its promise to revolutionize society, the deluge of data gushing from credit card transactions, social media posts, and smart phones has gone largely unused because the gatherers haven't a clue on how to take advantage of it.

If analyzed properly, this information tsunami could greatly enhance our knowledge, allowing for more accurate predictions about everything—from our susceptibility to disease and natural disasters to our electricity needs and consumer preferences. However, much of the compiled material is ignored, mismanaged, or lost.

Data volumes are increasing at dramatic rates. Digital data produced worldwide in 2005 totaled 151 billion gigabytes—a stack of DVDs 26,000 miles high.

By 2020, International Data Corporation estimates 38.5 trillion gigabytes will be produced, enough for each of 28 DVD stacks to reach from Earth to the moon. (238,855 miles) —WT



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 - Event Photo Gallery. Or directly at <https://southbaywritersgallery.shutterfly.com/>

October

... is just around the corner.

Come to our SBW October 13 meeting in literary costume — favorite character, author, book, or?



Shelf Life

— Maddy McEwen-Asker



"Brilliant! Perfect! Don't change a thing."
"On the other hand, I'd challenge the whole premise."



Hang 'em High

by Tina Glasner

I, like so many of us, was called for jury duty in the County of Santa Clara. What a crazy week. My parents were visiting. I had also just gotten a new contract for a technical writing assignment; we (my agency and I) were holding our breath that I wouldn't get on a trial. "Can you still do six hours in the rest of the day?" my agency rep asked. "I'll try," I said. As it was, it wasn't until Wednesday evening, listening to the recorded message, that I heard, "Report tomorrow!"

And so I did. "You're on Panel 6," the clerk said, handing me a piece of paper. I'd get \$5 per day plus mileage at 15 cents per mile one way. Wow! At Silicon Valley pay rates, the Court gets quite a bargain. And natch, I've never had a job that paid me jury benefits. Oh well, civic duty awaits. I sit down in the jury waiting area. Half an hour early, it's already filling fast. By 9:15 am, the stated juror's time, there's standing (or leaning) room only, unless you want to be out in the hall. I debate a stroll, but maybe I'd lose my seat. "It's like a doctor's waiting room," a later arrival comments. *Yes. A huge, stuffy, claustrophobic doctor's waiting room, where you get to wait a half-day instead of 30 minutes.*

However, it's my lucky morning. "Jurors of Panel 6, you'll be called in 15 to 20 minutes. If you need a break, please take it now." They think of everything! *Your Honor, can I please please have a hall pass for the bathroom?*

The P.A. voice calls the first twenty-four names of Panel 6. What do you know, it's me — released from purgatory. Close-set rows of people are napping, reading all sorts of things, and trying not to poke each other with elbows. We head to the elevators, travel from floor 2 to 4, and then into the huge room known as Department 30. Judge Chang presides.

But we don't get to meet Judge Chang immediately. We twenty-four sit in the audience section. Then we're called, name by name, and directed to a seat in the jury box. Is that all there is to it? I'm on a jury. However, I'm still me, the tech writer, so I grab out a handful of papers and occupy myself. Meanwhile the rest of Panel 6, seventy-five others, are ushered in and roll is called. Pains are taken to pronounce all names correctly.

Off the Shelf

Edie Matthews & Marina Menendez-Pidal



Every thespian begins with a crappy role — look at Charlie the Tuna.

Sometime after this, the lawyers and defendant stride in, and the court reporter enters. The highly efficient clerk is front and center, aided by our trusty bailiff.

It's a relief when the judge appears, and may I say, with all due respect, that judges must either all be natural thespians, or their role hones this quality. The exercise of authority, the commanding of attention, the forced silence, and the change of atmosphere, affects all who are guests here. The momentum of the play belongs to the cast of bailiff, clerk, reporter, and judge. I'd say the lawyers hold themselves apart, with already a hint of an adversarial posture between these young attorneys and His Honor.

We guests begin right away with a swearing in and a refresher course on our laws — presumed innocent, interpreters of the facts, whether we believe in the system or not — sworn to tell the truth, although we may approach the bench if our answers touch on something we'd rather not state to eighty strangers, as the judge puts it. A surprising number of people take this option.

Otherwise, some pretty surprising facts are vocalized by my fellow twenty-

four. The topic was a violent crime of a sexual nature. Were we going to be bothered by that? How many of us are parents — a good 75 percent from what I saw. How many had girls? Had we ever discussed sexual violence with them? How many of us had been involved with a crime, convicted of a crime, or been the victim of a crime?

One fellow had a son and brother serving time for murder (You're excused). Another sweet-voiced woman stated bravely that she, her sister, and aunt had all been abused by her father.

How did we feel about the police? Did they treat us fairly? How did we feel about being a juror? Could we pass judgement on someone? Would we stick to our convictions, even if it meant a delayed verdict? Could we change our minds, even if we looked wishy-washy? On and on the probing went.

As we related tales of unsolved burglaries and car break-ins, none of us thought of traffic tickets. That brought a laugh when the judge brought it up.

Continued on Page 12

Make Them Laugh

by Edie Matthews

Ha-ha, he-he, yuk-yuk. People love a good laugh. It's therapeutic, it relieves stress, and it improves your mood. Consequently, the ability to add humor to your writing enriches your work and appeals to readers. But how do you do it? The easiest comedy to write is about funny personal experiences. However, this can only take you so far — how do you create more humor?

Most humor has an element of surprise, exaggeration or a reversal of expectation. Quite often, a joke is a combination of these ingredients, and ideally, it paints a funny image. Example: "When I go camping, bears put their food up in a tree." (Louie Anderson)

Aside from jokes, various forms of comedy include word play (*Taming of the Shrew*), role reversal (*Tootsie*), nonsense (*The Three Stooges*), slapstick (Charlie Chaplin), satire (*The Daily Show*), and farce (*Three's Company* and *La Cage aux Folies*).

Humor can also help your reader appreciate a point of view and make a sad story more palatable. In Eugene O'Neill's semi-autobiographical play, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, the depressing story is lightened in Act IV when Jamie recounts his escapade with a fat prostitute.

Humor often conveys an underlying truth. ("The worse time to have a heart attack is during a game of charades." —Metri Martin) Aside from his comedies, Shakespeare skillfully employed wit in his tragedies. Using puns, Hamlet insults everyone he's angry with. (To Gertrude: "Frailty, thy name is woman.") The cemetery scene with the gravediggers is laugh-out-loud. In *King Lear*, the Court Jester's comments border on treason, but since they're cloaked in mirth, his jabs and bluntness are excused.

The mixture of fear and humor both amuse and lure the reader. Herman Melville used this device in *Moby Dick*, when Ishmael first meets and must share a bed with Queequeg, a cannibal.



Edie Matthews accepts a bottle of wine from Colin Seymour. Thank you, Edie, for hosting the SBW July Picnic-BBQ.

The best comedy has elements of truth like in Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*. Not only is it filled with "black comedy," but he creates an outrageous plot line. (Not so farfetched considering military and governmental bureaucracy.) The dialogue is also clever and funny: "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you." And "Prostitution gives her an opportunity to meet people. It provides fresh air and wholesome exercise, and it keeps her out of trouble." Like Charles Dickens, Heller uses quirky names for his characters: Major Major, Milo Minderbinder and Lt. Colonel Korn. (Note the use of alliteration.)

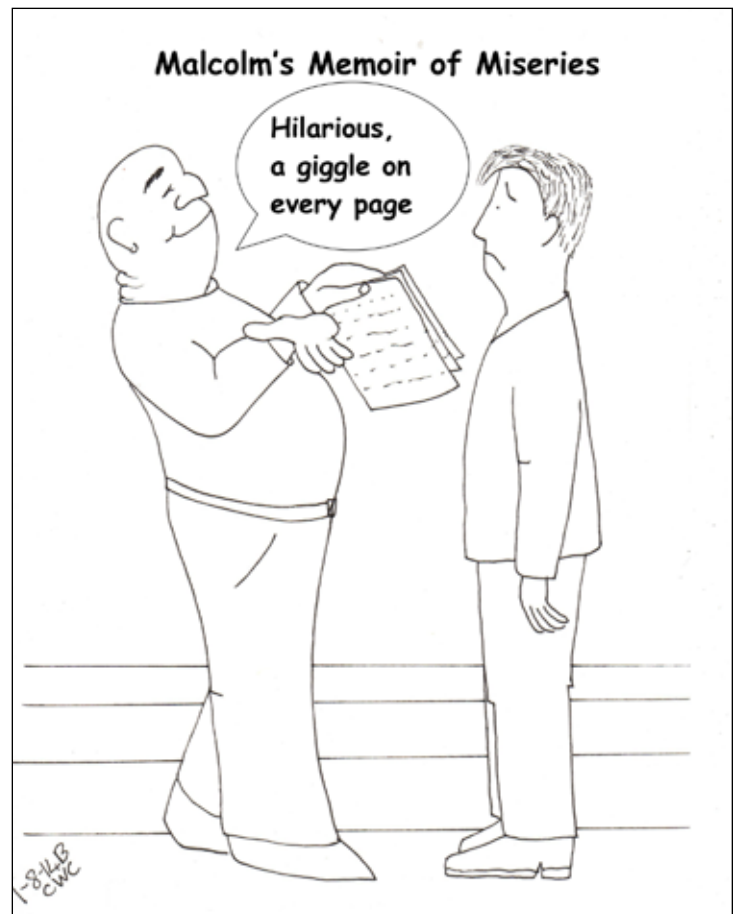
So how do you get started? To begin, select a topic and make a list of everything it reminds you of. Next, try to think of elements of surprise, exaggeration and reversal. In many ways writing comedy is like writing poetry — it takes thought, time, and tinkering.

Of course, comedy is subjective. What tickles one person may not appeal to another. Not everyone appreciates Lucille Ball, Bill Cosby or David Sedaris. In fact, it's said that the funniest jokes make ninety percent of the people laugh.

Finally, my advice is simply to write what *you* find funny, and hopefully readers with a similar mindset will enjoy it. If you write with kindness and warmth, readers may not always be rolling on the floor with laughter, but you will touch their hearts and make them smile. —WT

Shelf Life

— Maddy McEwen-Asker



Swimming Lesson

by Pratibha Kelapure

For years, I watched people jet ski, surf, kiteboard, row, and in general frolic in the water. Finally, I realized that there was more to the beach experience than immersing your fully clothed body waist high into murky seawater and walking home in sticky, salty and sweaty clothes from Juhu beach excursions as we had done as children in Mumbai.

I also realized that I had never witnessed any of the *sadhus* walk on water in spite of the fervent claims of such incredible feat. Around the same time, an irreverent friend had concluded that the parting of the Red Sea was a myth, dashing my hopes of a miracle. So, it seemed that if I was ever going to experience the ocean waves in their natural glory and reverence, I had better learn to swim. There was another motivation, my eight and four year old kids were swimming like fish, and I was getting bored with sitting by the poolside, serving juice and chips.

So one fine day, I signed up for swimming lessons at the local community college. The pool was deep blue, calm and quiet, a picture of serenity. "I could absolutely swim within a matter of two weeks," I said to myself. The idea of doing laps in that Olympic-sized pool excited me. After all, I watched the high school girls zipping past each other with so little effort. This was going to be so easy, I figured.

It would be a breeze compared to my one and only swimming lesson in my uncle's backyard well in suburban Mumbai. The well was wide, deep, and dark. It was so dark that the water appeared black as if it was hiding the secrets of the earth within its core. It was a residential well; women pulled buckets of water every day to wash clothes and floors. Young men pulled water buckets to bathe themselves. No water snakes slithered down below; no skeletons of murdered husbands lurked beneath the surface. My cousin Shama was known to jump in the well with her sari tucked between her legs and dive to the depths of it to retrieve a fallen bucket. My cousin Giri and his friend Raju were known to carry all the neighborhood kids on their back and



Fish don't know they're wet.

lap around the well for hours. Raju told me that if I ever sank to the bottom, he would dive in and fetch me in a flash. I was in safe hands.

The afternoon started when my Aunt pulled out an empty Dalda—the Indian cousin of Crisco—canister, the size of a large pumpkin. The container was vacuum-sealed, and a rope was tied around it. She then tied the ends of the rope around my waist. I was now equipped with a makeshift floater and ready for my lesson.

The boys jumped in the well one by one with a big splash. Three of them were holding on to the well wall, looking up and urging me to jump. I inched towards the edge; the wet stone beneath my feet was cold and eerie.

"Come on! Just jump! We are all here!" they shouted.

"Listen, I told you I will fetch you from the bottom of the well if you sink, I promise," Raju assured me.

"You have that Dalda tin on your back, you won't sink even if you tried," my Aunt comforted me.

After five minutes of coaxing, the boys were bored. They started playing among themselves—diving and splashing with a big racket.

"It's such a great opportunity. All of them are expert swimmers and divers; you will learn in no time. Shama learned in two days. What do you have to lose?" Aunt prodded me again.

One moment I thought I was going to jump in, but I caught myself halfway through the thought and kept my feet

firmly planted. "Yes, no, yes, no ... now, ummm, no, yes, no, mmm, maybe," I bought time, and finally, before everyone's stunned eyes, I dived in—well sort of fell in—to the water. The icy coolness of water pierced through my body. I went straight down, way way down. I was sure I was going to die—that was the last of the natural light I had seen up there; the last of the human sound that I had heard up there. Water was in my nostrils now and in my ears and my throat. In spite of all that, at the last moment, I started to float up again. The Dalda tin had done its job, and I was rising back to the surface. I could not believe my good fortune.

At that moment, I saw Raju and grabbed his arm and his neck and the rest of him. I was holding on to him for my dear life. Everyone applauded and waited for me to break free and enjoy my floating experience. So I let go, but I sank again; water came up to my chin. Shocked, I grabbed the back of Raju, who was just about to turn away and dive. At that moment, I knew there was no way on this earth that I would ever go in the water again. Survival instinct was greater than any shame I felt at my miserable failure. Needless to say, I never stepped into my uncle's backyard again.

So now years later, here I was facing water again. Water was blue and serene. There were orange, yellow, and blue floaters, flippers, goggles, and nice straight lanes. This was going to be easy. At least, so I thought.

So do I swim now? I am not telling.
—WT

Six Words Plus

by Meredy Amyx

The Scapegoat, by Daphne du Maurier (1957)

Six-Word Review

Identity theft transforms lookalike's stale life.

Expanded Review

What is there that fascinates us about the idea of meeting up with our double? Whatever the reason, any number of authors seem to have found the theme irresistible: an unknown actual or virtual twin, a mirror image, a Doppelgänger, a shadow self that no one else can see—in its many variants, it's a commonplace subject in literature. These examples happen to be the first few that sprang to mind:

"William Wilson" (1839)—Poe

The Double (1846)—Dostoevsky

The Prince and the Pauper (1881)—Twain

The Prisoner of Zenda (1894)—Hope

The Secret Sharer (1909)—Conrad

Despair (1936)—Nabokov

The Likeness (2008)—French

I was expecting nothing new when I picked up Daphne du Maurier's entry in this crowded field. In a familiar enough beginning, circumstances bring the identical pair face to face and then cause one to take the place of the other, sustaining the charade through many tense moments while attempting to master the details and relationships of the absent one's life.

But *The Scapegoat* isn't a simple story of adventure and suspense hinging on mistaken identity, fortuitous maneuvering, and political intrigue. Nor is it, as in the Doppelgänger tales, an exposure of the dark and sometimes twisted secrets of the soul. Rather, I see this story as a fable of atonement and

redemption. The title supplies the key: the Biblical scapegoat was literally a goat upon which were cast the sins of the community and which was then driven out into the wilderness as a sacrifice for all. Many mythic and religious traditions contain some version of this idea, the most obvious in Western culture being Jesus, called the Lamb of God.

In du Maurier's novel, John the Englishman is not forced to step into the life of the Frenchman Jean, who has absconded with all his personal effects and left him to fend for himself. He makes a conscious choice to attempt and then persist in the impersonation. In the process he discovers the many injuries done by his narcissistic counterpart to those around him, including some deep wrongs long past whose effects poison the present. The story of how John, in the role of Jean, deals with his double's culpability while clinging to his sense of himself as a separate being is a story of the growth of self-awareness, love, responsibility, and the search for meaning in life.

A recurring motif is that of windows: looking in, looking out, leaning out, curtains open, curtains drawn, shunning, revealing, enlightening, admitting, excluding. It would not strain interpretation to say that the author uses them symbolically, yet unobtrusively, to underscore how the focal character views, understands, and eventually opens the closed life that is given to him. We are a voyeur of him as voyeur, and when he becomes a participant, we follow and learn.

Right up until the suspenseful final pages, I had no idea how this story would end. And yet the conclusion has a satisfying rightness, a symmetry that echoes the symmetry of the beginning. If some questions are left unanswered, those are nothing other than our own answers to our own mystery: given what we know, what do we do now?

Rating: 4½ stars out of 5. —WT

Humor Happens ... Or Not

by Marjorie Johnson

Since humor is our theme this month, I decided to try my hand at writing a short piece. How hard could that be?

I could imagine looking at my subject through a funhouse mirror. The warped surface of the mirror distorts perception, stretching or shrinking parts of the image, just as I would stretch reality, bending and distorting it for comic effect. But I couldn't focus.

I needed to hold a pen.

When I picked up my pen to write my humorous piece, the red pen in my pencil cup leaked all over my hand and painted everything in the cup red. Such an omen should have warned me: everything funny I thought of depended upon context.

Humor happens ... or not. But funny things do happen to me every day. For example, I, a mathematician, once failed a test on the numbers one to ten.

Before Frank and I traveled to China, we took conversational Chinese at adult ed. We found four tonal levels for each vowel challenging, but surely we could learn a few polite phrases from our charming young instructor. The numbers one through ten—Yes! Right down our area of expertise. We practiced all week, ready for the test.

"Give me 7 yuan." Our instructor stood between us and put a \$5 bill and five \$1s on the table.

Neither of us could distinguish the number, spoken within a sentence. After two more failures, she put her hands on our shoulders.

"And you're both math teachers?" she asked.

I was glad we would travel in a group. When I tried to ask for the women's toilet, I ordered fried squid. —WT

Dialogue is ...
Conversation's greatest hits.

Hang 'em High

Continued from Page 8

Did we have any friends in the DA's office? Did we have any neighbors or relatives who were police officers? For every answer, the judge related it back to our ability to sit impartially, here and now, for this type of case.

"Yes, my neighbor is a police officer," I stated.

"Do you think someone in a uniform's testimony is better than anyone else's?" Judge Chang asked me.

"In the sense that I think a police officer is trained to observe facts and give testimony," I said.

"What if he only gives traffic tickets, or is having a bad day, or was at the end of his shift? Would you take his testimony as absolute fact?"

"I'm not saying that I would pass judgment, Your Honor, just saying that I think an officer is trained better to give evidence." *Thank you Dennis, for being my neighbor! Maybe this will get me out of jury duty.*

Amazing. The transformation from separate people into a cohesive group of high-minded citizens. I've changed my mind (almost) about hoping to get "off." After all, the court needs me to lend my worthy consideration here. I am getting so jowled and dignified sitting there I am growing sideburns. Hang 'em high!

On and on with the indoctrination. "You must not give any weight to the reading of the charges. You must not conduct your own legal research. You must listen to all the evidence until it is time to deliberate. We, the court, are the keepers of the law. But you, the jury, are the sole keepers allowed to weigh the evidence." I reflect on all the contradictions to regular human nature, we who love to buzz, fidget, and make snap judgments about our fellow man.

Had we ever served on a jury? Sure, several of us, including me. "I served as an alternate on a stabbing case." *All that listening and no satisfaction!*

"Did I resent the legal system?"

"I understand the reason for the alternates," I state, oh so sincerely.

Had we ever been a witness?

I get to raise my hand on that one also. A former payroll clerk, I had been a witness in a check forgery case. At the time I was working in an Oakland furniture factory. Our tractor-trailer driver would return over the weekend from his routes up and down the state. Therefore, our Friday arrangement was for me to leave Ray's paycheck resting under the hood of his car, on top of his carburetor. Pretty trusting, I know, in the middle of Oakland, but it worked most of the time. Upon my return one Monday, Ray told me he hadn't found his check and I had to cut a new one. I stopped payment and forgot about it. Several months later we got a call from a local grocery store. "We processed a payroll check from one of your employees and the bank is not paying."

Unhappy grocery store manager, but careless too, to cash such an old payroll check. Months later I was called as a witness. The forger was on trial, with prior convictions. Waiting

to testify, I chatted with another person there as a witness. His payroll function had been to carry checks around in his trunk. The trunk had been broken into. Every time one of the checks came through the criminal system, this weary man showed up again to witness, that yes, these were originally his checks. I bet he wanted to add, "And your Honor, I swear never again to carry payroll checks in my trunk!"

Back to today's court scene. We get to the part where the lawyers can excuse a certain number of jurors, no reason given. They call my name. Oh relief, mixed with a little chagrin. I tried to find out about the trial in the newspaper later, but I didn't find it. Not everything makes the news, I guess.

The judge surveys the few who are excused as we file out. "Let the doors close behind you first if you are going to jump for joy."

Down on floor one I visit the bathroom again. In one of the stalls I hear incredibly loud sobbing. "Can I help you, maybe get you a glass of water?" I venture.

She opens her stall door enough for me to recognize one of the jurors who had approached the judge and been excused for whatever was said in confidence. My offer is refused with a mumbled thank you and I go on my way. And that's another matter that I'll never know about, one that was obviously very painful.

Quite a day. And it was a lot more interesting to take notes on jury duty rather than work on tech writing, after all. — WT

Shelf Life

— Maddy McEwen-Asker



Don't worry, Dick. We're writing LGBT and hard-core, urban, steampunk fantasy, whereas you're writing a cozy.

Snot What You Think

By Patrick McQueen

Gilbert rubbed the outside of his nose, and felt the pressure of a dried booger in his nostril. Arid desert dried out his snot regularly. He didn't mind. He preferred plucking the hard glob of a dry booger from his nose to sniffing back flowing liquid snot.

Gilbert was sitting on the highway. Of the four lanes of traffic, the slow lane moved the fastest. Gilbert had gotten way over to the left, and was kicking himself for it. His tires weren't rolling, and the cars in that right lane just kept passing him by.

It didn't matter that a car was a small room with windows on every side, surrounded by a bunch of other people in little windowed boxes that have nothing better to do at the moment than look in on you. Gilbert needed to extract that booger for his own comfort. He stuck his thumb in his nostril, applying pressure from the outside with his pointer finger. He caught the edge of the booger and pried.

The booger breaking free from the inside of his nostril was pleasurable in the same way that sipping CapriSun juice through that itty-bitty straw is pleasurable. If you pour the contents of a CapriSun pouch into a glass and chug it, much of the flavor and enjoyment is lost. Likewise, if there was an endless supply of boogers, and Gilbert could just sit all day and pry them off the inside of his nostrils, he probably wouldn't take quite as much pleasure from it. The scarcity of the need increased his enjoyment.

The hairs in his nostril clung to the booger. Snot had accumulated around those hairs before drying. Now, pulling on the booger to extract it meant pulling on nose hairs. But, this wasn't disappointing. It was not like accidentally jabbing the CapriSun straw through the back of the pouch. That's disappointing. Maybe a bit masochistic, Gilbert actually enjoyed plucking his own nose hairs.

Unsuitable Couples

by Pat Bustamante

"Mommy, please, please let me go out! She's waiting!"

In my family there appears to have been a tradition of falling in love with the wrong person. My two sisters and I fell deeply in love with romantic, wild and crazy men, and for each of us, a divorce was waiting at the end of twenty years.

My parents did not believe in divorce, but my private opinion is that their personalities were unsuited for each other. To get back to my little boy--actually a darling black cat (my real children live in other states; they phone regularly, I am happy to say, but they don't cuddle or purr!). Poor baby Frankie-cat is in love. Neutered, middle-aged, not supposed to happen, but "she" comes to call on him every darn night. Pest!

It must be because her fur is black. Because there is a drought and I put cans of water in my back yard. Because Frankie is coal black and beautiful and sings like Sinatra. He thinks she's a cat. She thinks he, like herself, might be a skunk!

I call her Pola-Never-A-Cat, and though I have not gotten a good look at her because she's nocturnal, I respect skunks. Her scent

Shelf Life

— Maddy McEwen-Asker



Grabbing with both thumb and forefinger, Gilbert pulled swiftly. Hairs popped out at their roots. Euphoria ensued.

The booger, though, was only the tip of the iceberg. As Gilbert pulled it from his nose, partially dried snot trailed back deeper into the nasal passage in his skull. This was all pulled out with that booger. It was the tail of a comet that extends for miles behind the flying rock, but must inevitably go wherever that rock goes. This tail of snot slithered along the inside of his head, just under his eye, before plopping out and dangling from the booger he clutched between his fingers.

He leaned forward and wiped the booger and its semi-liquid tail on the floor mat under his seat. His fingers bounced over the graveyard of dried boogers that had been smeared there in the past month or so. This one would dry there among its fallen brethren, only to be cleaned out the next time Gilbert needed an oil change. —WD

is on the back yard plants, also on Frankie after his nights out. I hope Pola protects him from hungry coyotes. Frankie is begging and crying at the door. What if a coyote gets him? We live near the hills. What if a neighbor shoots him? It's not that long since July 4 when gunfire echoed all over the neighborhood.

"She's not for you!" I tell him. He's scratching and scratching the door, frantic. OK, I'm a sucker where love is involved. I finally open the door and Frankie charges out into the black night.

Darling cat, I know the feeling. Life is too short. —WD



Zyzyva: The Last Word

Zyzyva is a genus of tropical American weevil. Also, it is the last word in some English-language dictionaries.

However, the place name Zzyzx would follow zyzyva. Zzyzx is in the Mojave Desert near Barstow and appears on California road maps.

Is Zzyzx the last place on earth?

Tourist

by Karen Hartley

Ten-year-old Sally had a precocious side and never let an opportunity pass to show it. In the summer of 1958 she took a vacation trip with her family from California to New York.

The day soon arrived. Walking along the streets of Manhattan, Sally chattered on.

"Gee Mom, what fun this is. Look at all these tall buildings! I can't wait to ride the merry-go-round in that big park I've heard about. What's it called again?"

"Central Park, honey. But you know, first we're going to see where your uncle works. Remember, he's very busy, and it's very nice of him to take us to lunch after the tour, so don't act impatient, okay?"

"I'll just be myself!" Sally answered, laughing.

"That's just what I'm afraid of!" Her mother laughed too.

Like her mother had explained, arrangements had been made with her brother that when they finished the tour of that large building, he would come from his office and meet them. Sally felt glad that she had worn a pretty yellow dress and her new patent leather shoes.

Sally loved her uncle, and even though she felt very excited, she couldn't wait for the tour to be over so she could sit next to him in the restaurant and learn about what he did in that big building.

Finally Sally, her mother and father walked into the lobby, and the ten-year-old immediately looked all around her. There were glass display cases everywhere. Some were large, others somewhat smaller.

Sally eagerly waited in the line behind two people in front of them, while her parents spoke to each other.

Becoming impatient, Sally pulled on her father's hand. "Looks like the high wood counter thing our minister stands behind at church," Sally said, laying her head back as far as she could in an effort to see him.

"Yes it does," her father answered, patting her on the head.

Finally the line moved, and Sally and her parents were next.

"Hello and welcome," the man behind the counter greeted them.

"Please sign here. The tour will begin shortly."

"What's the charge for the tour?" Sally's mother asked.

The man looked curiously at them. "Well, that depends. Let me ask, are you folks from any foreign country?" He smiled. "If so, there's no charge for the tour. It's our way of welcoming far-away visitors."

Sally's mind worked quickly. Before her mother or father could answer the question, Sally stepped back and away from the desk, so he would be sure to see her. Faking a cough to be certain he would also hear her, she struck a pose by placing her hands on her small hips.

When the man looked down at her, Sally took a breath, then in all her ten-year-old seriousness, and hoping to garner her parents' praise, she looked up at the man and let go her question.

"Well, we came *all the way* from California. Is *that* foreign enough?" she asked, smiling up at him as if daring him to deny her reasoning.

"Oh my. I guess you surely could say it is!" The man chuckled and motioned Sally and her parents through the turnstile.

The crowd clapped, roaring with laughter. — WT

My Daily Walk

Lend me your hand
To guide me on my daily walk

Fill my heart with love
To sprinkle on everyone I meet

Charge my body with energy
To pursue life's daily surprises

Challenge my imagination with questions
To shape the way I present myself

Focus my mind on the present
To savor every delicious moment

Soften my spirit with kindness
To lighten life's daily burdens

Enrich my muse with words
To inspire all who come my way

Open my eyes with appreciation
To see the beauty of everyone and everything

Enable my ears to listen
To others as they tell their stories

Sharpen my nose to savor
The deliciousness that fills the air

Lift my voice with courage
To say what needs to be said

Strengthen my arms with compassion
To embrace all who seek comfort

Enhance my song with sweetness
To heal whatever ails us

Lighten my aura with gentleness
To attract like-minded spirits

Arouse my dreams with visions
To march to in my waking hours

Lift my soul with gratitude
To appreciate life's overflowing abundance

Expand my words with sensitivity
To reach all who want to hear

Lend me your hand
To guide me on my daily walk

— Esmarelda Alderete

Ostentatious Artwork

Blobs of paint, boisterous globules
Three-story canvas with lines akimbo
Jerky, helter-skelter edges

— no rhyme or reason —

— no logic or sentiment —

HARSH,

It admonishes my eyes.

MEMORABLE,

I cannot erase the visual damage.

No modern-day Monet,

My eyes are raped.

— Chris Knoblaugh

Rub every bottle. You never know where the genie might be hiding.



September Terse On Verse

by Pat Bustamante



Pat Bustamante
Contributing Editor

Sept.-Temper

Too hot, too dry, so why am I
Sitting here endlessly waiting for the sky
To rain a bucket of charisma, charm,
Good luck and tons of readers? While my arm
Supports a hand that can type or pound or grab a pen
For such gracious words – best-seller aint gonna happen
Unless I get off my pity-pot,
Rewrite. Rewrite. Rewrite A LOT!

– Pat Bustamante

What if it all looks very funny? Go, go, run with this! If your words seem to trip and stumble sometimes do look on the funny side of the street. Everyone who's ever gone to school and had a teacher who looked and acted like a pompous fool knows humor jumps out of too much self-importance.

I can take my talents out for an exercise and if I then fall flat on my face (or on another part of my anatomy) I could cry – or I could laugh it off. Example: it is an election year. I sit on a board of directors that came about because of a tangle of economic disasters and broken promises. My subdivision neighborhood wanted a park, got a park, then had to pay for it (small percentage on homes/property tax) and manage it! Every four years I am up for re-election and the County takes it very seriously.

I had to get renewal papers, stand several times in very long lines, convince the world that I am a good citizen as well as having to make five long drives back and forth to achieve all this (my car is not air-conditioned). Temper was fueled and the red line of impatient anger rose faster than a fever thermometer. It's hot! I am exhausted; my back hurts! I am dealing with idiots! (That last part is unfair. They KNOW, I don't, and I am a slow learner.)

Then I had to deal with the question on the candidate questionnaire, "What is your Chinese name?"

What the heck, do I have one? I had to choose between "Stubborn Mule" and "THE Director." You can call me "Wei-Yuan," my new name. I am officially one of five directors of the Board, but I am named THE Director. Wait until the others find out! – WT

Tongue Twister

The sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep:
Say it quickly six times. Or even once!

Winter in Oregon

The wispy fog was translucent.
Creeping over the landscape, it spread.
Slowly thickening, cloying
... vibrant greens and golds ...
transformed to gray, sodden shapes
Winter in Oregon drips.

– Chris Knoblauch



Spiritual Holiday Celebrations

I heard a Canadian born
Evangelical pastor
of Dutch extraction
explain that,
when he left the Toronto area
for the last time,
heading well south of
the 49th parallel,
on July 1,
everybody
in the Land of the Maple Leaf
expressed their deep joy
by shooting off fireworks.
He further declared that,
a few days later,
when he arrived in my beloved
northern California,
intending eventually
to take up
United States citizenship,
everybody here
did exactly the same.

– Stephen C. Wetlesen

Typical Complaining Spouse

(How I Imagine It Was)

I've had it, Albert!
I'm leaving you!
You'll never get anywhere!
You'll never amount to anything!
You're a total loser!
You've got no future at all.
I just can't take it anymore,
you wasting all your time
on that ridiculous theory of
Relativity!

– Stephen C. Wetlesen

A Tribute to Tolkien

Twice-told tales
Form a quaternary count
Oft involving shield, and lance, and mount.
All fine rhymes have a tale to tell
And all who can should listen well
To the songs of the elves and Galadriel

– Chris Knoblauch

September: Back to School

WritersTalk has received information on several writing classes in session this fall.

Creative Writing Workshop:

Jill Pipkin leads a Creative Writing Workshop at Santa Clara Adult Education on Monday mornings 10 – 12, beginning September 8 and lasting four weeks. Jill is the author of *Under the Spell of a Dragon in Istanbul*, a personal memoir. This class is about writing about whatever interests you, be it your stories, real and/or imagined, your memoirs, or? Teacher provides prompts as necessary. Your work is read aloud to class members and constructive and enthusiastic comments abound! Come, be inspiring or be inspired. Class is held at the Santa Clara Senior Center -- all ages are welcome.

Memoir/Creative Writing Classes: Mountain View Los Altos Adult Ed has both morning and afternoon Memoirs writing classes and a Wednesday morning Creative Writing class. The teacher, Sylvia Halloran, is knowledgeable, funny, loud and appreciative of writers' work, and we insist on a warm, supportive atmosphere and kindness from fellow students. The price is reasonable and the term goes for ten weeks, September to December. Contact (650) 940-1333 or see catalog and register online at mvlvae.com.



Creative Writing and Fiction Writing:

Although it might be filled, Lita Kurth is teaching EWRT 30, Intro to Creative Writing, at De Anza College this fall, Tues/Thurs from 10:30 to 12:20, starting the week of September 21. Also at De Anza: EWRT 40 Fiction, Tues/Thurs from 1:30 to 3:20.

Anne and Mark's Art Party:

Lita Kurth also reports that a **huge art and literature event** will be happening at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, September 20, 7 PM to 1 AM: **Anne and Mark's Art Party** (artpartysj.com). There will be a Spoken Word Lounge including a special Flash Fiction Forum.

Upcoming Class: Write Your Novel in Two Weeks

"Write Your Novel in Two Weeks" with published author and filmmaker Victoria M. Johnson. You'll discover techniques to write fast and get your first draft written in two weeks. Beginners or pros: this motivating workshop will help you improve your storytelling skills. Saturday, September 20, 9 AM – 2 PM, Los Gatos Adult Recreation Center, (408) 354-8700, www.lgsrecreation.org. — WT

Writer's Digest Conference Report

by Sylvia Halloran

*Writer's Digest Novel Writing Conference
Hyatt Regency Century Plaza, Los Angeles
August 15 – 17, 2014. Only \$299.*

The advertisement captured me, and flush with a tax refund, I took the plunge to attend my first big writer's conference. Of course, it ended up costing more than \$299. Even though a student of mine came along and we split expenses, three nights at the conference hotel cost a bundle. I tacked on a pre-conference boot camp led by Bob Morrell (*First Blood*) for another fifty bucks, too. Just like in the MasterCard ads, all the extras caught me — parking, meals, coffee, books, tips. But the experience was priceless.

I finished the rough draft of my historical novel this summer, and the timing of this cascade of invaluable information — how to tighten up the plot, empower the dialogue, revise the draft, seek out a "ghost" editor, contact the exact right agent, discern which publishers might best move the project along — couldn't have been better.

The conference ran Friday from 4 PM until Sunday at 1 PM and was crammed with sessions, meetings, pitches, books, recommendations, websites, links, writers, editors, agents and — free continental breakfasts, too? It was three days of nonstop inspirational exchange with friendly, engaging folks who love the power of words as much as I do — priceless.

Reviewing the agenda and my thirty-six pages of notes, three aspects of the conference stand out:

- Successful authors have the exact same writing problems as we've run into — and they're willing to share the stories of how they moved past them to succeed.

- Writing is not easy, not immediate, not dependable and not solitary, in spite of how we feel at three in the morning. But it is a passion that burns deep, and there is only one way to satisfy the fire.
- Hearing the right advice at the right time can change our world.

The most blatant realization I had during the weekend (besides the discovery of my fondness for luxury hotels in the heart of Beverly Hills) took me by surprise. Membership in CWC South Bay Writers has really laid the foundation for me to appreciate and benefit from this larger experience. I'm afraid I've been taking our local branch for granted. I had no idea how important it's been to my growth as a writer. — WT

Shelf Life

— Maddy McEwen-Asker



Unfortunately, I am unable to offer an objective evaluation of this subgenre, chick lit.

Contests and Markets

by Carolyn Donnell



Carolyn Donnell
Contributing Editor

California Writers Club Literary Review: Submission period for the 2014-15 issue is Sept. 1 - Oct. 31. CWC members can submit a maximum of two works per member per issue year — published or unpublished. Fiction, memoir or essay can have up to 2500 words; poetry, no more than 30 lines. Author must be able to convey rights for this one-time use by CWC. Send submission(s) as an email attachment to Dave LaRoche at dalaroche@comcast.net with "CWC Lit-Review" in the subject line. Find complete guidelines at calwriters.org/?s=literary+review or on the inside

back page of the current issue. Guidelines are the same as last year's.

The annual **Writer's Digest Popular Fiction Awards** are here: Enter a short story (4000 words or less) in six genres: romance, thriller, young adult, sci/fi, crime and horror. Save \$5 an entry by entering before September 15, but you have until October 15. Winners in each genre will receive \$500 and one grand prizewinner will get \$2500, publication in *WD* magazine, and a trip to the 2015 *Writer's Digest* Conference. See details and enter at writersdigest.com/popularfictionawards.

Other Writer's Digest competitions with fall deadlines include the following:

- **Short short stories!** Yes, that's two "shorts." Less than 1500 words. Win \$3000, get published in *Writer's Digest* magazine and a paid trip to the *Writer's Digest* Conference! Early-Bird Entry Deadline: November 17, 2014. Entry Deadline: December 15, 2014. Details at writersdigest.com/competitions/short-short-story-competition
- **8th Annual Writer's Digest Poetry Award.** All styles, including free verse, haiku, and more — 32 lines or less. Prizes range from \$1000 and publication in *Writer's Digest* to a \$50 gift certificate. Early-Bird Deadline: October 1, 2014. Regular Deadline: October 31, 2014. See details at writersdigest.com/competitions/poetry-contests

Ongoing lists of contests/markets: Here are a few sites that have ongoing lists of contests and other monetary opportunities. Some are free to enter, some are not. Be sure to check all deadlines and carefully follow all rules.

- *Poets and Writers:* pw.org/grants
- *Fan Story:* fanstory.com/index1contest.jsp
- *Writer Advice:* writeradvice.com/markets.html
- *Funds For Writers:* fundsforwriters.com/contests/
- *Writer Magazine:* writermag.com/writing-resources/
- *Writer's Digest:* writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions
- *Winning Writers:* winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests

Other resources:

- *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
- The *Writer Magazine* keeps an ongoing list of publishers at www.writermag.com/market-directory/publisher/
- *Writer's Digest* has Writers Market, but it is a paid service. See www.writers-market.com/PaidServices/

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

Haiku for Fitzgerald Marine Reserve

(Composed in my mind while sitting on a granite boulder on the shore)

Line of black seabirds –
second squadron follows close.
Annual southward.

– Stephen C. Wetlesen

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

Write Funny for Money

Write a really good funny story and submit it to *Reader's Digest* online or buy a copy at a newsstand and read its rules of submission. They pay well.

Not Your Mother's Book ...

Publishing Syndicate is resending this call-out for *Not Your Mother's Book ... on Sex* because they need 25 more great stories to fill the book. Don't let the title turn you off; Publishing Syndicate is a bona fide company, looking for healthy, playful, amusing stories. Go to www.PublishingSyndicate.com and click on the "Not Your Mother's Book" tab for story guideline information. The NYMB series includes *Not Your Mother's Book ... on Cats*; *... on Dogs*; *... on Family*; *... on Being a Mom*; *... on Travel*; *... on Being a Parent*; *... on Being a Woman*; *... on Being a Stupid Kid*. Each of these books is an anthology of humorous stories and essays on the announced topic. — 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 and we will add your listing to our directory of experts.

Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle ragarf@earthlink.net

Banking

Pam Oliver-Lyons polpap@prodigy.net

Curriculum Development

June Chen junech@gmail.com

Counseling/John Steinbeck

Dr. Audry L. Lynch

glynch0001@comcast.net

Engineering: Mechanical, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg

geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net

Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber martha@engber.com

Internal Medicine/Addiction

Disorder/Psychology

Dave Breithaupt dlbm1b@comcast.net

Marketing and Management

Suzy Paluzzi, MBA jomarch06@yahoo.com

Mathematics/Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson marjohnson@mac.com

Private Investigator/Police work/Crime

M. J. Hahn

mirror3314@mypacks.net

Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard Btauchard@aol.com

Telecommunications Technology

Allan Cobb

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 — 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

Central Coast: 5:30 third Tuesdays, Point Pinos Grill, 77 Asilomar Boulevard, Pacific Grove. centralcoastwriters.org

Fremont Area: 2:00 fourth Saturdays at DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 204, Fremont. cwc-fremontareawriters.org

Marin: 2:00 fourth Sundays, Book Passage in Corte Madera. cwcmarinwriters.com

Mendocino Coast: 6:00 third Wednesdays, Mendocino Hotel. writersmendocinocoast.org

Mount Diablo: 11:30 second Saturdays, Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. mtdiablowriters.org

Napa Valley: 6:30 second Wednesdays, Napa River Inn. napavalleywriters.net

Redwood: 2:30 first Sundays, Flamingo Conference Resort & Spa, 2777 Fourth Street, Santa Rosa. redwoodwriters.org

Sacramento: 11:00 third Saturdays, Cattlemen's Restaurant, 12409 Folsom Blvd., Rancho Cordova. cwcsacramentowriters.org

San Francisco/Peninsula: 10:00 third Saturdays, Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont. sfpeninsulawriters.com

Tri-Valley: 11:30 third Saturdays, Four Points by Sheraton, 5115 Hopyard, Pleasanton. trivalleywriters.com

Ongoing critique groups

Our Voices

Meets at Le Boulanger in the Pruneyard in Campbell every other Sunday 10 am. Genres: Fiction, nontechnical nonfiction, memoir. Contact: Dave LaRoche — 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

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

Karen's Critique Group

On sabbatical. Fiction, non-fiction or memoir only. Contact Karen, 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

Your Critique Group

For consideration, send information to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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

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, first and third Friday evenings. See calendar for schedule. Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622 or email 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. Contact Dave LaRoche at vp@southbaywriters.com or at dalaroche@comcast.net

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 9A Chap at a Time 1:30P Mystery Circle 2P Valley Writers	2	3 7:30p SBW Board meeting	4	5 7:30P Open mic B&N Almaden, San Jose	6 SBW Planning Retreat All Day
7	8 9A Chap at a Time 2P Valley Writers 6:00P SBW Dinner Harry's Hofbrau	9	10	11 Noon: Riders do Right	12	13 10:30 A Powwow WT Editors
14 10A Our Voices	15 9A Chap at a Time 2P Valley Writers	16 Deadline for <i>W r i t e r s T a l k</i> was yesterday	17	18	19 7:30P Open mic Wil- low Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave	20
21	22 9A Chap at a Time 2P Valley Writers	23	24	25	26	27
28 10A Our Voices	29 9A Chap at a Time 2P Valley Writers	30	September 2014			
Future Flashes						
October 13: Ir-Regu- lar Dinner Meeting Literary costumes	SBW Board Meeting October 8					

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
poetrycentersanjose.org/calendar

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

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

**South Bay Writers
September Regular Meeting
6 p.m. Monday, September 8**

Harry's Hofbrau
390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose

**Mark Coker:
Founder of Smashwords
Trends Shaping the
Future of
Authorship**

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.