



WRITERSTALK

Volume 25
Number 12
December 2017

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

December Meeting South Bay Writers
Holiday Bash!



Sunday December 10, 2017, 5:00–8:00 pm

Jim Moore & Karen Sundback's house

Address given when you RSVP to respect privacy

Please RSVP

email Carole Taub: hospitality-meetings@southbaywriters.com

Come join your fellow writers for a wonderful and festive evening of food, drinks, and gift exchanging games!

Potluck – Bring a dish according to your last name:

A – G: Dessert or Appetizer

H – N: Salad or Side Dish

O – Z: Main Dish

Drinks & Beverages provided by the club.

Gift Exchange: Please bring a \$15-20 wrapped gift to participate.

There is no general meeting in December.

INSIDE

Member News: Staff	4	Art Statement: S. Wetlesen	11
<i>A Moment's Pause Gratitude</i> : K. Carroll	4	Too Many Winters: C. Donnell	11
The Alien in Your Future: A. Miller	4	Plurals for Poets: M. Johnson	11
Tighten Your Copy: M. Johnson	6	Homeless: J. Shernock	11
November Workshop: C. Donnell	7	Peace on Earth: K. Hartley	11
Escape from Honolulu: P. Cole	8	Contests and Markets: C. Donnell	13
The Sign: J. K. McDole	9	News from CWC & Conferences	14
Off the Shelf Cartoon: E. Matthews	9	Calendar	15

RECAP WORKSHOP: JORDAN ROSENFELD

Feel the Tension: Page-Turning with Jordan Rosenfeld

by J. K. McDole

Writing, as both art and means of communication, is a process. The question of *why* we write might have a variety of answers, but solving the *how* is a challenge universal to anyone who sits down to draft. At Jordan Rosenfeld's Page-Turning Tension workshop, the members and attendees learned the finer points of crafting strong, compelling work that hooks the reader and keeps them tuned in.

At the heart of Rosenfeld's workshop was tension: the juxtaposition of opposing forces throughout the text. "Tension is like a cord," said Rosenfeld, "and it pulls your reader through the book." She described tension as having multiple layers, levels, and categories; its different characteristics (e.g., emotional or physical) resonated with the attendees as Rosenfeld shared writing examples that showcased each type. Rosenfeld explained that, even though styles and conventions change over history, the most powerful writing shows a character demonstrating relatable emotion through their words and deeds on the page.

Later in the workshop, Rosenfeld tasked the crowd with a series of exercises on tension and feeling. Writers were encouraged to draft brief

Continued on Page 6

Between the Lines

Edie Matthews

President, South Bay Writers



Read

If you want to become a successful writer, you must read!

I don't always sit down to read; I often check out a book on CDs. I listen to it while exercising, cleaning the kitchen, and like a child who enjoys a bedtime story, many nights I lay in bed and let the story lull me to sleep.

If I'm particularly impressed, I also get the book from the library. When I hear a description or passage that is especially well written, I find it in the book and analyze it. Often, I type out the sentence or paragraph and add it to my book-excerpt file.

One of my favorite authors is award-winning mystery writer, James Lee Burke. He writes gritty tales featuring Dave Robicheaux, a Cajun cop and recovering alcoholic. With his loyal friend and loose cannon, Cletus Purcell, Robicheaux solves crimes, while encountering colorful characters in high and low places in Louisiana. Burke's compelling tales and lyrical prose have made him one of the few successful franchise writers like John Grisham, Stephen King, and James Patterson.

I'm always reading books on the bestsellers' list too, even if it's a genre I wouldn't normally be interested in, like young adult novels (YA). When *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyers became a sensation, I wanted to learn why. What was it that drew YA readers and also women? Was it the story, the vampires, the romance?

I want to determine what ingredients motivate a person to plunk down \$25, or in my case, go to the library and check out the book.

Although I write fiction, my selections also include nonfiction, especially memoirs. I was captivated by *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt about growing up in Ireland and coming to America, and *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls about a poverty-stricken childhood and parents who put the "D" in dysfunction.

I loved *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* by Laura Hillenbrand, a historic account of the championship racehorse and underdog who inspired Americans during the Depression era, and the three men who played a role in the horse's success.

In addition to contemporary books, I will seek out books written decades ago. While browsing through the shelves in the library, I encountered Daphne du Maurier and checked out *Rebecca*. It was so enjoyable that I quickly devoured all of du Maurier's work. Wow, I thought, these novels would be successful today.

A few years ago, after visiting Scotland, I read Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. What a thrill.

Books on CDs like those mentioned above provide a double bonus. They get me exercising in the morning and walking in the evening, so I can get to the next chapter, and, most importantly, these books, along with many others, improve my skills.

I don't want to just finish writing a book. I've done that. I want my book to be the best I can make it. — WT

Happy Holidays

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SBW Mission

Educating writers of all levels of expertise in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work.

Join Us

We have a membership category that fits you. Renewal dues are \$45 for membership through June 30, 2018. Dual membership, \$25; student membership, \$20. New member, \$65. Contact Membership Chair at a meeting or sign up online at southbaywriters.com or send a check to CWC-South Bay Writers, P O Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055.

WritersTalk

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Deadline

Submissions are due by the 15th of the month.

Submissions

SBW encourages writers at all levels of expertise to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. All submissions should be sent to the above email address in the form of text or an attached MS Word file (sorry, no hard copy submissions can be accepted). Please prepare your work as carefully as you would for an agent. Use Times New Roman 12-font; no tabs; no colors; no page breaks. Send graphics separately as jpg files, with separate instructions for placement in the submission if placement is important.

All submissions will be copyedited. Titles and headlines subject to change. Managing Editor reserves the right to selection.

Suggested word limits (less is more):

Member Achievement / News (200 words)

News Items (400 words)

In My Opinion (300 words)

Letters to the Editor (300 words)

Creative Works

Short Fiction/Memoir (1800 words)

Poetry (200 words)

Essay/Nonfiction (1000 words)

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Words from the Editor

Marjorie Bicknell Johnson

Managing Editor



A Change of Setting

Choosing the setting for your novel is as important as developing the characters. Indeed, sometimes the setting becomes a character, as in a man versus nature story.

Are you longing to set your next novel in Budapest, but the farthest you've been from San Jose is Lincoln, Nebraska? You can't afford a vacation in Europe? Don't despair.

Find ways to write an unfamiliar setting.

Here are six techniques for researching what you need to know.

1. Google is your friend. Travel with Google Earth and Google Maps. You can get a front door look at just about any building in the world. You can take a virtual walk and see everything from local cars and gathering places to street signs and house designs. You can find basic nature tips like types of common trees and weeds in the area — good details for your descriptions.

2. Make it up as you go along. Create your own neighborhood and superimpose it on reality. Draw a detailed map of what you think your town or county should look like. Pay no attention to actual street signs; make up your own and use them instead. Of course, use names similar to those in that country, such as *Strasse*, not street, in Germany.

3. Pay attention to details. Details make the setting seem real, but learn as much as possible to avoid glaring mistakes. Set a big romantic scene on a foreign bridge? Check pictures from multiple angles to look for railing designs, statues, traffic patterns, and even the surface of the road.

4. Read other books and blogs with your setting. Pick out details that other authors have found important enough to put in, then do research on them to find out their appeal.

5. Learn about local customs. Are there any special holidays in their community? Habits that are the opposite of what you experience every day? Something as simple as having your character tip a bartender in many European bars would be a glaring error to those who know the area. Find someone willing to vet your book with an eye toward cultural truisms. Perhaps, here is an actual use for social media?

6. Stay away from language. Unless you're a native speaker, stick to English, for the most part. Foreign words may add some flavor to your text, but triple check the meaning before you publish a word. Again, find someone who can vet your dialogue.

OK, I admit it: I dry labbed Antigua.

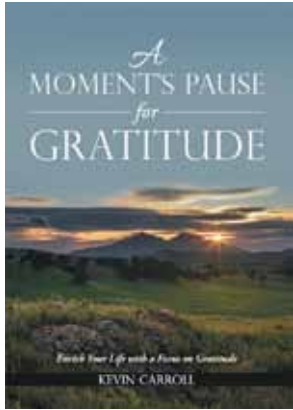
Parts of my novel *Lost Jade of the Maya* are set in Antigua, Guatemala, and several people have remarked upon how my description brought back good memories of their visits there. Although I have visited Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, I have never been to Antigua.

I want to see if Antigua matches the vistas in my mind. My daughter and I are going there soon after December 2017 *WritersTalk* is put to bed.

I am retiring as Editor of *WritersTalk* with this issue because it's time to pass the baton. J. K. McDole will reign as Editor, starting with the January 2018 issue. Please submit your creative work as usual to newsletter@southbaywriters.com by December 15. And keep sending your good news about your writing accomplishments for Member News. — WT

A Moment's Pause for Gratitude

by Kevin Carroll



I am pleased to announce that *A Moment's Pause for Gratitude* was published in October 2017. The book contains fifty brief stories of gratitude, each followed by a few questions that invite readers to consider their own experiences of gratitude and encourage them to express their gratitude to others more consciously and consistently.

A Moment's Pause for Gratitude is available online from Amazon and Barnes & Noble as well as from selected independent bookstores throughout the Bay Area.

A Note from the Editor: We all need reviews to interest readers in our books. You are encouraged to look up books written by members of SBW and, if you like a book, to give Amazon a review. After all, SBW is about writers helping writers.

Member News for December

Staff

Penelope Cole has received word that her nonfiction memoir, "Turtle Liberation," was a finalist in the 2017 Golden Quill Contest from SLO Night Writers. "Turtle Liberation" appeared in November *WritersTalk*. Also, her picture book, *My Grandma's Pink House*, was published in time for Christmas sales.

Please share news about your writing accomplishments and successes. All it takes is for you to write a paragraph and email it to *WritersTalk* at newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

—WT

ESSAY

The Alien in Your Future

by Arlene Miller, *The Grammar Diva*

bigwords101.com (Originally published March 7, 2014. Used by permission.)

I now believe that aliens exist. And I believe that these shriveled-looking, green/gray, big-eyed, long-fingered creatures are a more advanced life-form than we are. So, how do I know this? Read on....

I have been in the education field for 10 years. Many of my colleagues have been there much longer than I have and have seen many more changes than I. Generally, they say, the pendulum seems to swing back and forth, with this year's "new idea" being something that they saw 15 or 20 years ago.

Progress is a given. Well, I guess it is usually progress. Let's say that **change** is a given. We see our world speeding toward ever more technology. We have smart phones, smart TVs, computers that recognize our fingerprints and our voices, and technology that does everything for us—and therefore must be smarter than we are.

There have been many changes in education lately. Many. Now, I went to school quite a while ago. And while I live and teach in California, I was educated in Massachusetts. I feel that I got a good education. I think we might call the educations we got back then "classical educations," which was a good thing—back then. We knew things: facts, formulas. We could recite the Gettysburg Address and maybe a poem or two. We read classics. We were graded on our handwriting. And our spelling. And our grammar. And we knew about the explorers and the parts of the United States Government.

Enough reminiscing. Let's talk about what is happening now. Please note that I am not commenting on whether or not I like what is happening. I think some of the changes are good. Perhaps what I dislike most is what is being dropped, not

what is being added. And, contrary to the intention, which is to make curricula more rigorous, I think it is actually being dumbed down. And I guess, why not? Computers will be doing almost everything for us. So, our job is only to create the technology that can do these things for us. Who needs the Gettysburg Address?

So, let's see...what is changing in the schools?

1. Cursive is out. Although seven or eight states have voted to keep it in the curriculum, cursive writing is not mentioned in the new standards. It is not a "21st century skill." And where it is left in the curriculum, it is taught in elementary school for a year or two, and then left. Cursive really needs to be practiced.

SO? Well, research indicates that the process of cursive writing is good for brain development—better than either printing or typing. Cursive is also faster than printing, should your computer (God forbid) run out of steam or crash. Cursive is also a beautiful art. Back in the day, we learned printing, typing, **and** cursive. Now, students apparently cannot handle all three. Dumbing down?

2. Memorization is out. Math teachers agree that it is crucial for students to memorize the multiplication tables, although there has been talk of getting rid of that skill too. We have calculators! Forget memorizing any poems or historical documents—or the spelling of words. Facts? Who needs them? The standards concentrate on critical thinking. I personally think you need some background information to think critically, not to mention the writing and speaking skills (that seem to be currently lacking) to express those thoughts.

SO: I hope that my surgeon has memorized which bone is which, and which medications are for which diseases, and what other medications they interact with. I hope my dentist knows which tooth is which. I don't want to watch a Shakespearean play in which the characters have trouble memorizing their lines. I don't want to see a lawyer who hasn't memorized some aspects of the law.

Continued on Page 5

The Alien in Your Future

Continued from Page 4

And it is nice to be able to recite a famous poem or quote—just to feel educated. I asked my students to memorize something. Many of them were overwhelmed. They didn't even bother to try. Dumbing down?

3. Grammar is out. Diagramming sentences? Too difficult and who needs it, anyway? Parts of speech? Phooey! The standards say that students should know how to write using complex sentences and that they should know how to use clauses and correct punctuation. However, it doesn't really say how and when they should learn any of these things, at least in the grade I teach.

SO: People who actually grew up diagramming sentences know their grammar. Today's students don't. Both colleges and companies complain that writing well is a huge issue. I taught a group of accountants who said that about 90 percent of their jobs consist of writing! Diagramming sentences? Spelling correctly? Too difficult. Dumbing down.

4. STEM. This acronym stands for *science, technology, engineering, and math*. No, there is no *A* for *art*, and the *E* doesn't stand for *English*. This is the push in education today because this is where the jobs are: creating technology that can do the other stuff for us.

SO: All the great ideas in the world are meaningless if you can't express them understandably in writing and speaking. Besides, someone has to know spelling and grammar to program all these technological devices that are going to do it all for us. Writing? Too difficult. Dumbing down.

5. The SAT is being changed. In 2006 the Scholastic Aptitude Test, generally a requirement for applying to colleges and thought to be a predictor of college success, added a writing test to the math and English language bubble sections. Now, it is 2014 and the writing section is "optional." The scoring of the test is back to 1600 (800 for math and 800 for verbal) and the writing, if done, will be graded separately. Why is the writing not required? Who knows?

I guess we don't need writing. Bubbling is so much easier. This is a bit unusual because in the public schools K-12, bubbling is being removed in favor of short answers and essays on the standardized tests. Of course, a computer is going to score these essays. How? Who knows? In some of this writing, spelling and grammar won't count, anyway. In addition, guessing on the SAT used to be penalized. No more. **Guess** all those bubbles and you might just get a good score—perhaps the answer *is* always *C*, after all!

Oh, and the vocabulary is being simplified—no more of those big words you never use. Actually, I see those words used all the times in books. Oh, what's a book? Dumbed down.

Oddly enough, I also read yesterday that the ACT, another college entrance exam, is becoming more popular than the SAT, which strikes me as odd, since two weeks ago I read that the ACT was being discontinued.

Now what does this all have to do with aliens?

I thought you would never ask!



Look at the picture of the alien:

Gigantic eyes: We will be needing those eyes to stare at the computer screen all day doing our 21st century jobs, which will consist of developing newer and better technology to do everything else for us, giving us time to continue creating new technology. These big eyes will not get eyestrain from staring at a screen all day.

Long fingers: We don't need them to write, so we don't need five of them, with fingers that can grasp a pencil. These long fingers fit well around a mouse and can really work a keyboard!

Big head: I am not sure it is a big head so much as a small and shrunken body. Muscle wasting from no activity. Sitting in a chair all day in front of a screen won't do much for your physique. You won't really need anything more than eyes and fingers, anyway.

Greenish/gray color: Sun? What sun? You'd look greenish gray if you never got outside in the sun either! Your shrunken legs and body wouldn't have the strength to get you outside, anyway. And there's always Facebook if you need to see your friends.

So ... that is the alien in your future!

The march of science and technology does not imply growing intellectual complexity in the lives of most people. It often means the opposite. — Thomas Sowell

Arlene Miller is a member of CWC Redwood Branch. You can contact her at info@bigwords101.com. — WT

Computers are useless

Computers are useless—all they can give you are answers.



Giant bumblebee
hovers in dead branches maze
It finds no nectar

— Stephen C. Wetlesen

Page-turning Tension Workshop: Jordan Rosenfeld

Continued from Page 1

examples showing oppositional emotions, clashing characters, and subverted intentions. The warm, upbeat mood of the workshop kept the atmosphere positive, constructively insightful. Several members shared their work with the audience, while others conversed with their tablemates on strengths and weaknesses in their method.



Jordan Rosenfeld

—Photo by Carolyn Donnell

“There’s no wasted part of the writing process,” said Rosenfeld, whose candor cheered and engaged the crowd. “If you write a book and it doesn’t work, you’ve still got that. You learned something.” To the craft of writing, Rosenfeld considers: “I like to think of myself as a lifelong apprentice.”

You can read more about Rosenfeld’s approach to better writing by checking out her website at jordanrosenfeld.net, or purchasing her writing guides and novels on Amazon. —WT

WRITING TIPS

Tighten Your Copy

by Marjorie Johnson

Writers seldom spit out their best copy on the first draft. You revise it and take out the typos and then let your editor clean it up—right? Well, yes, if you have megabucks to hire an expensive editor, but most of us have to learn to edit our own work. So, grab your red pen and get to work with these tips to tighten your copy.

1. Split long sentences. Long sentences often contain several ideas, so they can easily lose the reader’s focus. From that comma-heavy sentence, give each idea its own sentence.

2. Axe the adverbs. Adverbs weaken your copy; these excess words are not descriptive. Change “the girl runs quickly” to “the girl sprints.” The screen door didn’t shut noisily; it banged shut. Replace the weak verb-adverb combo with a powerful verb. Delete “very” and “really”—they don’t say anything.

3. Remove extra punctuation. A powerful em dash here and a thought-provoking semicolon there can be effective. But a piece of writing littered with all sorts of punctuation—parentheses, colons, and ellipses—doesn’t flow well. Replace the litter with commas. Delete those exclamation marks.

4. Replace negative with positive. Change “You don’t want to make these

mistakes in your writing” to “You want to avoid these mistakes in your writing.” It’s more straightforward.

5. Replace stuffy words with simple ones. Good writing does not confuse readers. To get your point across, use words people are familiar with.

6. Remove redundancies. “Currently” is virtually always redundant. Brand new, advance planning, basic necessities ... Check out About.com’s 200 Common Redundancies and then start snipping.

7. Reduce prepositions. Prepositions need lots of friends. By removing a preposition and the words following, you can cut several extra words. Axe “in order to” because you never need it. Cut “start to.” Did you start to walk the dog, or did you walk the dog?

8. Nix “that.” Use “that” only if it makes your idea easier to understand. “I decided that journalism was a good career for me” reads better as “I decided journalism was a good career for me.”

9. Replace “thing” with a more descriptive word. Replace all generalities with more specific words. The right details will make your work sing.

10. Use strong verbs. Choose more active verbs than make, do, have, were, or was. Change “we were watching ...” to “we watched ...”

Poinsettia

The poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a commercially important plant species of the diverse spurge family (*Euphorbiaceae*). The species is indigenous to Mexico. It is particularly well known for its red and green foliage and is widely used in Christmas floral displays. It derives its common English name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, first United States Minister to Mexico, who introduced the plant to the US in 1825.



11. Ditch the passive voice. The ball was hit by the boy—oops! Write: the boy hit the ball.

12. Eliminate “there is” or “there are” at the beginning of sentences. This is lazy writing.

13. Use contractions. Contractions make your writing sound friendlier, like you’re (not you are) a real person. And that makes it easier to connect with readers.

14. Avoid the “...ing” trap. Get rid of were or was, then eliminate that ...ing with the past tense. “She was skiing toward ...” becomes “She skied toward ...” Prune excessive “...ings” to make your writing clearer and easier to read. Also, it will sound better when you read aloud.

15. Identify your idiosyncracies. No matter how good a writer you are, when you write a first draft, you have a tendency to spit out sentences in a certain way or to repeat certain words. The more familiar you become with editing your own copy, the more ruthless you can be to eliminate such repeated word patterns from your writing. —WT

Southbay Writers November 2017



Collage and Photos by Carolyn Donnell

Escape from Honolulu

by Penelope Anne Cole

From Honolulu, I boarded the plane to New York, then one to Madrid, and finally got the smaller plane to Jerez de la Frontera, Spain. I should have felt liberated, free to move on with the rest of my life. But one doesn't always feel "free" when dumped by one's Air Force Officer-husband.

It's kind of funny. I recalled what the Air Force community in Hawaii told us when we were reassigned from Washington, D.C. to Hickam Air Force Base, Honolulu. They said that people get married in Hawaii, retire in Hawaii, or get divorced in Hawaii. Well, we were already married, not yet ready for retirement, so I guess my husband chose option number three, unbeknownst to me.

I was totally unprepared for what happened when I arrived in Honolulu two weeks after my husband's arrival. I'd stayed behind in Virginia to complete the finish work on our basement recreation room. I mitered and framed basement windows. I laid vinyl tile floors. I installed acoustical ceiling tiles. All this I did with the help of my sixteen-year-old stepson, Will. Good family bonding time for us. But while I was working ten to twelve hours a day to get our house ready to rent for three years, my husband was being wooed by one of his subordinates—in violation of military fraternization policy. In the two weeks we were apart, my husband became involved with a thin, blond, jogging, golfing, and racquetball partner. One who daily walked up one flight of stairs to join his office's coffee klatch.

Our marriage was doomed from the moment my husband stepped foot in beautiful, laid back, hang loose Hawaii. He even said "I don't love you anymore. You're too fat."

When I realized what had happened, I did what any good officer's wife would do—I took up running 10K races on Saturday mornings, played daily tennis matches, and trained for the Tinman Triathlon: one half mile swim, 25 mile bike race, and a 10K race. I barely ate and quickly lost twenty pounds. I reconnected with my dear, supportive friend Barb, taught Sunday School, and dove hope-poised into marriage counseling.

Our first counselor told me, "Jack doesn't really want to be married. But as long as he is, he'd just as soon be married to you as to anyone." Ah, he thinks I'm as good a wife as any, eh? So I tried to be the perfect, supportive, devoted officer's wife. I even tried visualization and visualized winning him back to hearth and home every day for six months. When that didn't work, I got a new counselor.

The second counselor, Jennifer, said, "Since Jack doesn't want to be married and doesn't seem to be responding to joint counseling, I suggest we focus on you. It's time for you to figure out what you want for you. This is your life. How do you want to live it?"

I soaked up Jennifer's suggestion as I soaked up the hot Hawaiian sun. I worked hard in counseling. I realized I loved the military life, but was tired of being a patsy and a doormat. And that's how I ended up "liberated" and transferred by the Navy to Rota, Spain.

But, before I left Honolulu for my new adventure, I had Botox injections to remove the frown lines of two years of hurtful words, pain, and negativity. I bought a new wardrobe. Now I had a fresh new look for my new life.

I left behind our marriage bed and his not so subtle comments such as "Oh, I didn't think you wanted that kind of responsibility." And, "Really, I had no idea you could do that." Or, "No, I'm not going to do the Tinman with you—I'm going to my college reunion instead." It was totally time for me to fly away to freedom.

In Rota, I had only a week to find a place to live and learn about my new dual job as Training Officer and EEO Officer before our U.S. Navy professional office staff were off to Italy. We joined civilian personnel staffs from Navy bases all over Europe for a one week personnel conference. It was held at a destination hotel with three delicious meals a day. I had to skip one meal each day in favor of the gym to keep my hard-won athletic figure. My new free life was off to a great start.

I found a lovely white-plastered, red-tiled house a couple of blocks from the beach. It was completely covered by my overseas housing allowance. I had a maid, a gardener, and an on-call landlord. My staff and new boss were interesting and supportive. So I had time to explore Southern Spain. I tried the local cuisine. I walked on the beach. I even took flying lessons! All of this was liberating from my previous husband-focused married life, but lonelier.

With extra time on my hands, I searched for an after work activity to dull my homesickness. I offered my services to the local community college as an English as a Second Language teacher. There I met Kimmie, an American ESL teacher married to a Spanish Navy medic. She all but adopted me. She took me into her home, fed me every time I appeared on her doorstep, and kindly shared her family with me. My liberation from my ex was also a self-imposed exile from my family. I was so homesick I qualified as marginally dysfunctional. But Kimmie saved me.

For the three years I was in Rota, Spain, I worked my dual job, joined the Base Chapel Choir, taught ESL, and hung out at Kimmie's every spare moment. It helped with the homesickness and loneliness.

Oh, there were plenty of Happy Hours at the Officer's Club, official ceremonial dinners, monthly staff Welcome Hails and Farewells to attend on the U.S. Navy side. And on the Spanish side, there were spring and summer festivals called *Ferias*, grand religious holidays with parades, street markets, bazaars, dancing the traditional Andalusian *Sevillana*, and "tapas"—Spanish finger food to enjoy at Happy Hour. I had some brief, forgettable relationships with American servicemen and a couple of Spaniards. It was a freer life than I'd had before, but not the liberation I thought I'd enjoy.

My job trained me in EEO Counseling, which allowed me to travel to Sicily, Madrid, London, and Scotland to teach counselors. I was able to go home for Christmas.

Continued on Page 10

The Sign

by J. K. McDole

"Ab-so-lute-ly eff this weather," Catherine said. "Good God. It's so cold."

Hector, who always drove, *liked* to drive even when he was tired or the trip was long, said, "it's colder than hell. Cold as balls."

"Colder than a witch's tit in a brass bra."

They laughed. Their breath fogged out in cotton clouds. They were both twenty-three, an age Hector considered mature, respectable. He had just paid off the rickety Honda, which needed maintenance; the heater ran so tepid that condensation swirled on the windows in translucent puffs.

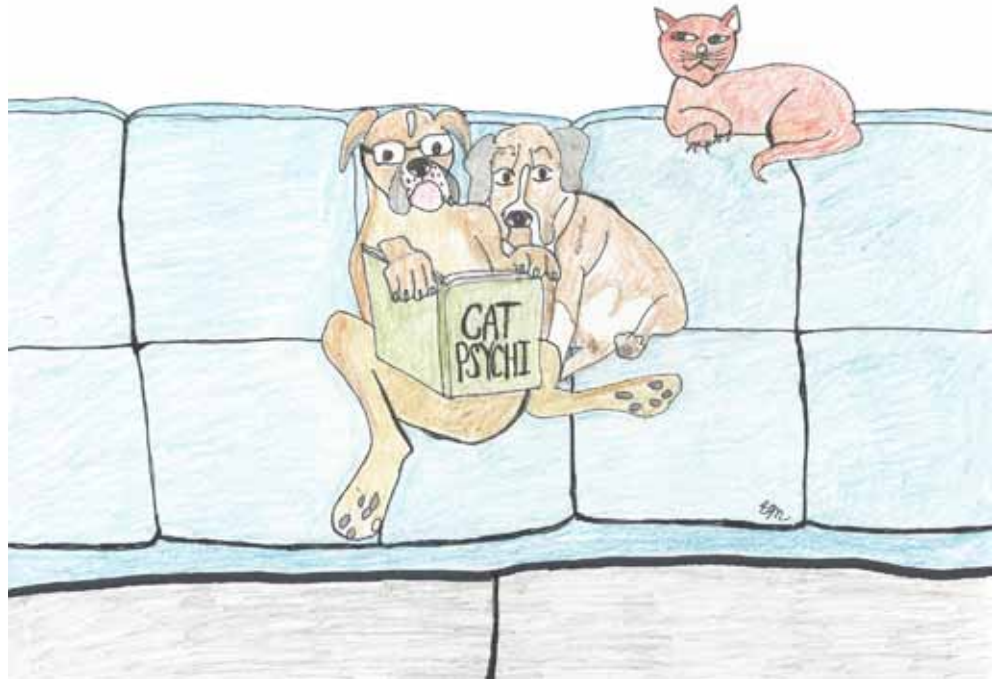
"My grandma used to say that," said Catherine. "One of those old Southern sayings."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah. She was real Alabama. She had six kids, my aunts and uncles and my mom. She was really active in church, did socials, that kinda stuff. She used to sell Mary Kay. She had this thing about having a better life than her parents, which is why she married my grandpa. Like, trying not to be poor white trash."

Hector stole glances at Catherine while she talked. She had china-blue eyes behind black-frame glasses. He had known her since June, long enough to learn what parts of her he disliked: her voice, because it waxed careless and loose, and her nails, because she gnawed them to stubs. But her eyes got him. When they were first dating, he had solicited them to visit, come closer, wander inside and get a good look; by October, he put stock in them wholly. Other girls had scalpels for glances, quick with stares that left him raw, sliced like a fish. Not Cathy.

Now it was December, one of those nights where, as they drove up through Georgia, past snoring towns and pit-stops and stark, leafless woods, the word *cold* came alive. Cold was the grey highway, a concrete stretch illuminated by the car's bluish headlights. Cold was the sky, pitch-black like the belly of a tent, no hope of moon or stars. He thought about cold holidays, the drive up to Nashville—the upcoming dinner with Catherine's lean Methodist family,



who placed bets on college football and believed school shootings were in direct correlation with weed and violent video games—and shivered.

"My grandma was a witch," he said, tapping his thumb on the steering wheel. "A *curandera*. Did I ever tell you?"

"No, you didn't," said Catherine. She drew a spiral on the foggy window with her pinky finger. "That's not like the goat sucker, right? The thing that they found in Texas?"

"Pssh. Wow, no." Hector snorted. "That's the *chupacabra*, and that's *way* not the same thing."

"So what's this one?"

"A *curandera*, well, they're like a healer. They heal sick people and know all these prayers that bring about good luck."

"Really?" Catherine's seat creaked as she sat up. "How did she do it?"

"Do what?"

"Heal people. How did your grandma heal them?"

"You really wanna know?"

"Duh, of course."

"If I tell you, you gotta promise to be open-minded, and not think it's weird," Hector warned. "Because, while it is kinda weird, it's not, like, weird-weird.

Weird to other people, but not to us."

"I promise."

Hector stretched. A green sign blinked by: *Athens, 17 miles*. Still a long way to go.

Finally, he said, "She would use blood."

"Blood?"

"Chicken blood," Hector added. "What she would do is, people would come to her and tell her, like, 'oh, my brother or my mom's sick,' and she'd pray over them. Then she would do some stuff where she communed with the spirits and the saints, and consult her books for the right cure. Then she'd find a chicken, a *healthy* chicken, and do a ritual to use its blood."

"A *live* chicken?"

"Yes."

Catherine chewed her lip. Hector glanced at her once, twice. Outside, the woods streaked by in illuminated flashes, each tree like a tall white skeleton.

"You promised you wouldn't think it's weird," said Hector.

"I wasn't expecting that."

"The blood?"

"No." Catherine hugged her arms, digging her fingers into the sleeves of her pink pullover. "I was thinking, like,

Continued on Page 12

Escape from Honolulu

Continued from Page 8

I traveled to the States for a couple of training conferences and visited my family, too. I even adopted my gorgeous Samoyed dog, Nicky.



My mother came to Rota to visit and traveled with me to London and Scotland. And then my father came to visit me and we Eurailed to Italy, Austria, Germany, France, and back to Spain.

I began to enjoy my new life until my nice boss, Joseph, made a strategic error and was transferred back to the States.

My new boss, Ms. Carly Sheridan, was hell on wheels. She mistreated women. She took every opportunity to put women down. As Carly's official point of contact, I was called upon to become her on-call companion.

At first it was okay, since I understood how lonely and homesick it can be serving in a foreign country. Then Carly tried to fire her secretary for telling the truth to the Commanding Officer that Carly wasn't at work instead of lying to cover for her. Then I was done with being her gal pal.

I had no respect for a boss who belittled women, made them lie for her, and used her position to bully others.

I chose not to spend time outside of work with my boss. I did my job and nothing more. That was political death. From then on Carly questioned my every action, even routine operations and ongoing programs.

The men on staff could flatter her and deflect her from micro-managing their programs, but I couldn't and wouldn't.

So my days were numbered. It was time to find a new job. It was time to be liberated from another bad relationship. It was time to go home to California and my family.

Three years wasn't quite long enough to grieve a failed marriage. It wasn't long enough to forge a new independent life. But it did give me time to heal, time to be independent, and time to experience a different culture. I learned about the lonely side of independence. My overseas tour helped me sharpen my focus, develop a new life plan, and prepare for a new kind of liberation—mid-life as a divorcee. — WT

Kernza

Staff

General Mills Bets on Kernza,
The Mercury News, "Business + Technology" Section, March 12, 2017

A sweet, nutty tasting new grain called Kernza is getting a big boost from food giant General Mills.

Kernza, a drought-resistant plant with long roots that doesn't need to be replanted each year, has potentially big environmental benefits.

Kernza is the trademark for the grain, which comes from the perennial intermediate wheat grass plant. Its dense roots extend over 10 feet—twice as deep as conventional annual wheat. Farmers who grow Kernza don't need to till the soil and replant it each year. And Kernza seeds contain less gluten than wheat.

Long Root Ale is brewed from Kernza in Portland, Oregon. — WT



Long roots of Kernza

Shelf Life —Maddie McEwen



*Elf Games: An Unabridged
Expose' From An Insider*

Reprinted from December 2015 WT

Art Statement

I do not see
language
as a form of
literature
but as
painting.

– Stephen C. Wetlesen

Too Many Winters

Too many winters
lasting too long
Springtime never
fully arrives
or if it does
bulbs still don't bloom
Stunted from
too much cold
freezing negligence
so even when
spring's warm rays
reappear
they are no longer able
to receive warmth
and regenerate

– Carolyn Donnell



P
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Homeless

Mister Nobody came my way
This is what he had to say

Give me some soap
I'll have me a shower
Buy me some dope
I'll dream I'm a flower

Hand me a beer
I'll drink it all down
Shed me a tear
Cause soon I will drown
A shadow most cannot see
Now, is visible to me

– Judith Shernock



Let There Be Peace on Earth

If men could just be men
instead of giants
If today could just be
today
and tomorrow could wait
to come
If people would love those
whom they were meant to love
here, now, in the moments
they were meant to love them
There would be peace on earth

If pride could be forgotten
and only smiles remembered
If the touch of another's hand
could mean more than the touch
of money
If the laughter of someone dear
could drown out all hate and
anguish
There would be peace on earth

If grief could build strength
instead of bitterness
If people would reach for
goals they could reach
instead of those they know
they can't
If happiness could touch the
hearts
of those who reach out for it
There would be peace on earth

How long before men will be
content as men?
And today will wait for tomorrow?
How long before people will love
while there's still time to love?
How long before there will
be no pride?
And laughter will echo
all about?

Not long, I hope:
for the world needs
Peace on Earth
– Karen Hartley

Plurals for Poets

Grammar is hard, plurals make no sense
English money has one penny but five pence,
But five boys called Denny are not five Dence.
We can't say two child's if we have two children;
They may be wild but wilds is not wildren.
If the plural of mouse is mice,
And the plural of louse is lice,
Why aren't two houses, two hice?
If the farmer may have a team of oxen,
Why can't I have a pile of boxen?
I hold out my foot, I have two feet.
Why aren't my two boots, two beet?
Or, a pair of old coots, a parakeet?
If one is a tooth and a mouthful are teeth,
Shouldn't two booths be called two beeth?
If a goose is one of a gaggle of geese,
Is a moose one of a herd of meese?
Is a caboose one of many cabese?
Always remember, the plural of this is these,
But the plural of kiss is never keese.

– Marjorie Johnson

From *WritersTalk*, April, 2014

Humor, glamour, and grammar

WritersTalk could use humorous poems
or articles about grammar. Did you
know that glamour and grammar are
derived from the same root word?

The Sign

Continued from Page 9

magic spells? Charms? A flying broomstick, maybe, I don't know. Not *blood*."

"I don't see why you're so weirded out."

"It's inhumane," Catherine said. "It's gross. It's almost satanic, that's what it is."

Right then, right at the word *satanic*, a prickle stung beneath Hector's ears. He itched the moment she said it in that loose, slippery voice, the one he did not like. He kept his eyes on the road because the road was easier to stare at. It was easier to digest the highway than the conversation, light and airy as egg-whites but still too dense, too infuriating, to be chewed.

"I don't know how you can say that," Hector said, "when your dad owns, like, ten guns."

She froze. "What does that mean?"

"He owns so many guns," Hector said. "He has a gun safe. He's part of a gun club. Last year he donated to the NRA."

Still frigid, Catherine said, "So?"

"If you ask me, *that's* inhumane," Hector said. "Who needs that many guns? No one hunts that much, no one needs that much protection."

"This has nothing to do with that. It literally has nothing to do with it."

"It's just weird you think chicken blood is satanic," Hector said, "when a gun can blow off somebody's head."

"That is a really backwards way of looking at it," Catherine said.

"Is it?"

"Yes? I can't even *believe* you went there. That's just ridiculous. That's just —"

A shape rushed in from the right, Catherine's side, and blunted the windshield with an opaque *whack*. Catherine screamed; Hector braked, slung the wheel, veered off onto the gravelly side of the road. The shape was pale and livid. It rolled off the car in a feathery mess.

On the glass, a jagged crack spidered its tendrils across the dash.

Catherine grabbed him by the arm. Her eyes were two blue sirens.

"What was that?" she cried. "Was that a bird?"

"I think it was a bird!"

"Hector, holy shit," Catherine gasped. "Are you okay?"

"I'm okay," he panted, "I'm okay, I'm okay. We hit something. It's okay."

They crept from the car in a panic, and in doing so they forgot the cold: the dark, living cold that permeated the night air. Traffic whipped by sparsely; in the passing headlights Hector saw the bird dithering in front of the car. It bobbed like a drunk on fuzzy white legs, its wings knifing out at mismatched angles. It hacked and hissed.

"It's an owl," he said, trembling.

"Are you kidding me?"

"No, that's an owl," he said. "I think it hurt its wing."

"It messed up your windshield," said Catherine. She clutched her arms. "Sheesh! Is it gonna be okay?"

"I don't know."

"Can we call someone?"

"Who the hell would we call?"

Suddenly the owl beat its wings and lifted, winging off the ground and into a roadside tree. Catherine stepped back; Hector looked up; his mouth fell open, and he froze in awe.

The sky was *full* of owls. Pale, avian shapes swooped low, arced high through the starless expanse. The traffic lights brightened their foreign outlines; he could see fine details—the beaks, talons, ticked bellies and coal-black eyes—and map the glow of their silhouettes.

He gasped. The cold rushed into his lungs and filled them, sealed them, crystallized the fringe of his blood. Dark as magic.

"Hector," he heard Catherine say. "Hey, did you see that?"

"Yeah," he said, shaking. "Yeah, I see them."

"It just flew off," she said, distant, as if she were a hundred feet away instead of three. "The owl, it got up. It must be okay, then, right?"

"Yeah."

"Hector?"

He looked down. Catherine was there. In her blue eyes, he saw streaks of grey, radiating under the dark like a grainy glaze.

"It's starting to snow," she said, pointing. "Look, the flurries."

Hector looked up. The owls were gone. Where there had been hundreds, thousands of birds, there was nothing. Just fledgling snow.

Flurries, not owls. But a moment ago, he could have sworn ...

He put his hand on the car hood, the cracked dash. The warmth radiating up from the engine.

"Are you okay?" asked Catherine. "Hector, seriously, you're kinda freaking me out."

"I'm good," he stammered, walking back to the car. Thinking of his grandmother, her face and her voice, her warm kitchen. Her soft brown hands. "Let's go. It's too cold." —WT



DeAnza Class on editing *Red Wheelbarrow*

From Lita Kurth: Starting in January 2018, there will be a class in editing the De Anza campus literary magazine, *Red Wheelbarrow*. The course is EWRT 65, meeting 4:00 – 5:30 Monday afternoons. The online option is EWRT 65AX. —WT

Contests and Markets

by Carolyn Donnell



Are you looking for contests or other places to submit your work? Here you go!

- **Ingram Spark and NoNoWriMo.** Did you do NaNoWriMo this year? As a special part of the NaNoWriMo celebration, Ingram Spark is offering a special discount. Use promo code NANO17 to upload your print or ebook (or both!) to IngramSpark for FREE. Offer expires 03/31/18. Read about it at <http://tinyurl.com/ya5hmj9l>
- **Literary Nest.** A local publication. Theme for Winter 2018: Fear. Submit through December 30, 2017. <https://theliterarynest.com/submissions/literary-submissions/>
- **The Writer Magazine.** Essay contest: Your Writing Life. Write a 2,000-word essay about any aspect of the writing life. Deadline: January 1, 2018 Word count: 2,000 words or fewer. Grand prize: \$1,000 and publication in our magazine. However, every essay we receive will be considered for paid publication in *The Writer*. Read guidelines below in full before you submit. <https://writermag.submittable.com/submit/98922/your-writing-life>
- **SPR (Self-Publishing Review) Book Awards 2017.** Deadline: March 1, 2018. Book must have been first published between December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2017; no second editions allowed. Winners announced March 25. Reading fee: \$20. Prizes include a Gold Amazon Reviews Package and a Lead Story Editorial Review on SPR (worth \$299). All entrants get a one-year listing on SPR to help promote their Amazon book pages. See all the details at <http://www.selfpublishingreview.com/spr-book-awards-2017/>
- **WNBA Women's National Book Association.** The 2018 Writing Contest is open for submissions. A new category this year: Young Adult Fiction. \$250 cash prizes for the winner in each category and publication in *The Bookwoman*. <http://www.wnba-books.org/contest/>
- **Children's & Young Adult Book Awards.** Early deadline 01/01/18; final deadline 04/15/18. Must be published no more than three years prior to the deadline for Literary Classics International Book Awards and two years prior to deadline for all Top Honors Awards and Young Author Awards. See guidelines at: http://www.clcawards.org/CLC_Award_Guidelines.html
- **Second Annual Water Sedge Poetry Chapbook Contest.** U. S. residents only. Deadline: January 31, 2018. Entry Fee: \$20. Page count: 24 – 48. \$500 cash prize; publication of the poetry chapbook in both print and e-book formats; Amazon distribution for Kindle and print; and 25 free print copies. See guidelines at <http://writersrelief.com/watersedge-poetry-chapbook-contest/>

- **Tom Howard/John H. Reid Fiction & Essay Contest.** Accepts published works! Fiction and nonfiction. Deadline April 30. Total prizes \$5,000. <https://winningwriters.com/our-contests/tom-howard-john-h-reid-fiction-essay-contest> Also signup for their free literary contests listings at <https://winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests>
- **Speculative City.** Publishes provocative works that are centered within a cityscape. Unpublished fiction, poetry and essays: \$20 – \$75 according to category and length. Prefer fewer than 7500 words. Deadline Dec. 15. Submit at <https://greensubmissions.com/1024/speculative-city/index.php>

SBW Facebook Group. Are you on Facebook? Have you joined our group? You can request to join at South Bay Writers Club <https://www.facebook.com/groups/5486894361/>

Below are a few Facebook Groups and Pages of interest to writers. Always check out a site carefully before submitting.

Facebook Groups: Writers Post Call for Submissions; National Association of Memoir Writers; National Poetry Month

Facebook Pages: WOW! Women On Writing; Smart Author Podcast (with Mark Coker); Poetry Center San José; Poets & Writers; The Academy of American Poets; Winning Writers; The Writer's Circle; The Writer Magazine; Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market; Freedom With Writing; Authors Publish; Writer Beware.

Sites that list contests:

Freedom With Writing.

<https://www.freedomwithwriting.com/freedom/uncategorized/19-free-writing-contests-with-cash-prizes-up-to-10000/>

Writers Post Call For Submissions.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/58414389316/?fref=nf>

Poets & Writers. www.pw.org/grants

The Writer Magazine.

<https://www.writermag.com/writing-resources/contests/>

Let us know if you find interesting contests, publishing opportunities, or marketing venues. Be sure to share your successes with us in Member News. — WT

North State Writers Anthology

CWC North State Writers is accepting poetry, memoir, and short story submissions (published or unpublished) for its 2018 Anthology. This is an opportunity for unpublished writers to be published and published writers to add to their resume. Entrants must be a member of the North State Writers or one of the CWC NorCal Branches (SBW qualifies).

Deadline December 31. Stories 750 – 5000 words, poetry 30 lines or fewer; maximum three submissions. Entry fee \$15 for each submission. See <http://www.northstatewriters.com/nsw-anthology.html> for details of what, where, and how to submit your entry and payment. — WT

News from California Writers Club

Ads in CWC Bulletin

by Bob Isbill (760) 221-6367

Want to increase your visibility? Sell your service? Promote your book? Increase speaker engagements? Pump up your web traffic? Or just send a greeting?

Each issue of *The CWC Bulletin*, published three times a year, reaches 2,000 published and aspiring writers in 21 CWC branches throughout the state and is published on www.calwriters.org

Now we are accepting writing-related advertising from businesses, CWC members, and individuals who wish to reach our target market at reasonable prices. See calwriters.org for details and how to format your ad. -WT

You may advertise in the CWC Literary Review or The CWC Bulletin

Go to www.calwriters.org for details

CWC Around the Bay

Published meeting locations and times for other CWC branches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. If you want to attend one of their meetings, first check their websites for details.

Berkeley: 2:00 third Sundays, Oakland Public Library Main Branch. cwc-berkeley.org

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

Fremont Area: 2:00 fourth Saturdays at Round Table Pizza, 37408 Fremont Blvd., Fremont. cwc-fremontareawriters.org

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

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

Mount Diablo: 11:00 second Saturdays, Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. cwcmtdiablowriters.wordpress.com

Napa Valley: 7:00 second Wednesdays, venue is changing. napavalleywriters.net

North State: 6:00 third Mondays, Butte County Library-Chico Branch. northstatewriters.com

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, Sequoia Yacht Club, Redwood City: check website <http://cwc-peninsula.org/>

San Joaquin Valley Writers: 12:30 second Saturdays, University of Pacific community room

Tri-Valley: 2:00 third Saturdays, Four Points by Sheraton, 5115 Hopyard, Pleasanton. trivalleywriters.org

Wanted: Information on Conferences

Send information on conferences and other events of interest to writers to newsletter@southbaywriters.com for consideration for inclusion on this page.

Current Conference Information

sent by Margie Yee Webb

Sierra Writers Conference, January 20, 2018, Grass Valley CA

<http://www.sierrawritersconference.com/>

"Writers all ... join us for a day of learning, sharing, growing and being inspired to craft your words into the stories, articles and books that only you can write. Also, get the information you need to market yourself and your work."

Auburn Winter Storytelling Fest, January 27, 2018, Auburn CA. Children's Hour - Workshop - Open Telling - Liar's Contest - Evening Tellers Showcase - presented by Foothill. www.foothillstorytellingguild.com

San Francisco Writers Conference, February 14 - 18, 2018, San Francisco CA

<https://sfwriters.org>. They also have a Writing Contest, <https://sfwriters.org/2018-writing-contest-overview>. The 2018 SF Writing Contest is accepting submissions! All fees and entries must be received by 5:00 pm PST on January 12, 2018. This one's a biggie - look into it today.

The Belize Writers' Conference, (Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, and Memoir),

April 23 - 28, 2018, Ak'bol Yoga Retreat on Ambergris Caye, Belize

<http://www.joeygarcia.com/events/>



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
December 2017					1 7:30P Open mic Barnes&Noble Almaden, San Jose	2
					8	9
3 10A Our Voices	4 2P Valley Writers	5 No December Board	6	7	8	9
10 SBW Holiday Party 5 – 8 P	11 2P Valley Writers	12	13	14 D e a d l i n e W r i t e r s T a l k tomorrow	15 7:30P Open mic SJ Rosegarden Library	16
17 10A Our Voices	18 2P Valley Writers	19	20 7:30P Open mic SF Peninsula, Reach/ Teach, San Mateo	21	22	23
24	25 Christmas Day	26	28	Happy Holidays. See you next year.		

Future Events:

SBW Board, 7 PM Tuesday, January 2, Edie's house
SBW dinner meeting, 6 – 9 PM, Monday, January 8

SBW/CWC Events
appear on this calendar page.

Ongoing Events

Critique Groups

Our Voices: Meets at Bel Bacio Coffee in San Jose every other Sunday 10 AM. Genres: Fiction, memoir, nontechnical nonfiction. Contact: Dave LaRoche at dalaroche@comcast.net

Valley Writers: Meets at Valley Village Retirement Community, Winchester at Dolores, Santa Clara, Mondays 2 PM. Marjorie Johnson, marjoriej358@comcast.net

Your Critique Group: Send info to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Do you belong to a critique group? Please send details to *WritersTalk*.

SBW Board Meetings

Board meets on Tuesday, 7 PM, in the week preceding the dinner meeting. Exception: No December Board meeting. Contact Edie Matthews at pres@southbaywriters.com.

Open Mics

South Bay Writers Open Mic: Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. First Friday evenings, B&N Almaden. Third Friday evenings, Willow Glen Library or Rosegarden Library. See calendar for schedule. Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622 or email WABaldwin@aol.com

CWC SF Peninsula Open Mic: Third Wednesday of every month, 7:30 PM at Reach and Teach, 144 West 25th Ave., San Mateo

Ongoing discussion groups

Facebook Group: Members of South Bay Writers can join our Facebook group—South Bay Writers Club.

Add your discussion group here.

You may advertise in the
CWC Literary Review or
The CWC Bulletin

Go to www.calwriters.org for details

Poetry Readings

Poets@Play: Meets at Markham House History Park, 1650 Senter Rd., San Jose, Second Sundays most months, 1 – 4 PM. poetrycentersanjose.org

Poetry Center San Jose: Meets Willow Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave., San Jose, 7 PM Third Thursday, 408-808-3045 www.poetrycentersanjose.org

Well-Red Poetry Reading Series: Second Tuesdays, 7 – 9 pm, at Works San Jose, 365 South Market Street. Featured reader followed by an open mic, if time allows. www.pcsj.org

SBW Recommends ...

If you know of a regularly occurring event for writers, send an email to newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

**California Writers Club**

South Bay Branch

P.O. Box 3254

Santa Clara, CA 95055

www.southbaywriters.com**MAIL TO**

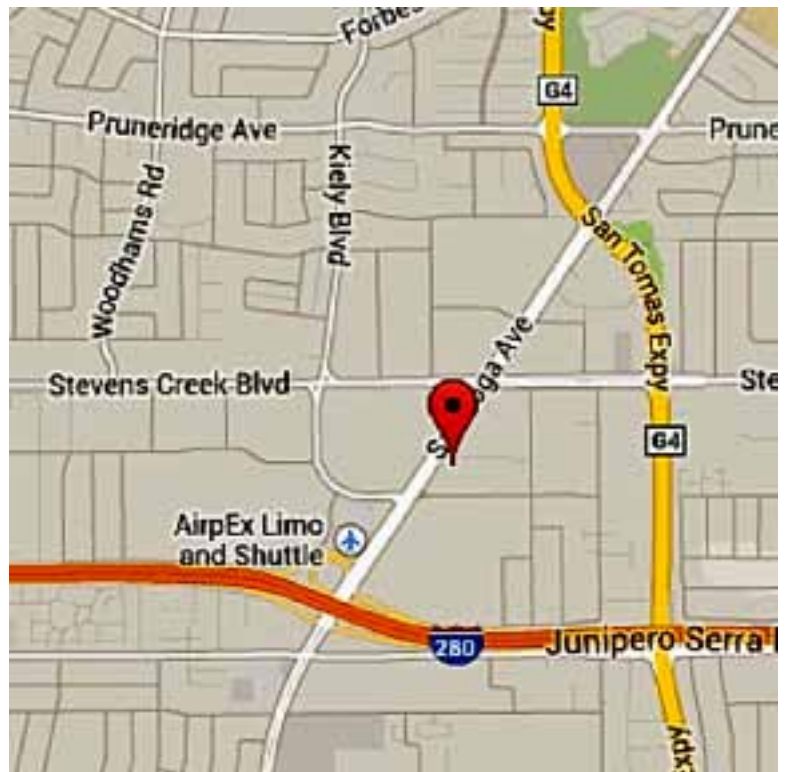
Address Correction Requested

South Bay Writers**6 – 9 p.m.****Monday, January 8, 2018****Harry's Hofbrau****390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose**

Holiday Party**5 – 8 Sunday, December 10****Details Page 1****(No Monday meeting in Dec.)**

WritersTalk deadline is always
the 15th of the month.

Regular dinner meetings are
second Mondays 6 – 9 PM
except July, December, and
workshop months

**Harry's Hofbrau**

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