



WRITERSTALK

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February 2021

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

FEBRUARY SPEAKER: BILL BELEW

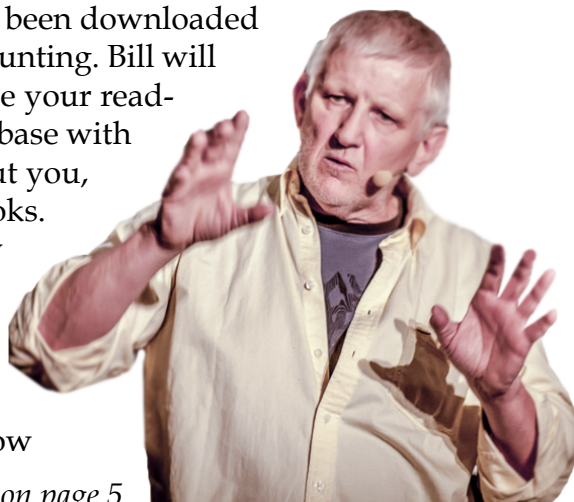
Find and engage readers for your books

Jamal Khan

The advantage of the internet is that anyone can write and sell books. The drawback is that anyone can write and sell books. The challenge has shifted from distributing one's work to distinguishing oneself amidst a glut of content. This is the stark reality even if one lands a publisher, as marketing budgets continue to shrink across the industry. An enterprising author must also be a publicist, creating related content that establishes a cohesive brand and organically builds a readership. On **08 February**, **Bill Belew** will guide us step-by-step through this essential process.

Bill and his daughter Mia are the creators of the *Growing Up Aimi* series (1300+ pages). Within the first six months of launching the series in March 2020, their books had been downloaded more than 5500 times and counting. Bill will present critical steps to entice your readers by building a subscriber base with an engaging newsletter about you, your brand, and your books. The steps are free and they work—but you must put in the work. Bill and Mia began last March with twenty friends and family on their newsletter lists. They now

Monday
08 Feb • 7 PM
Details to come!



Continued on page 5

JANUARY SPEAKER RECAP

Edward Porter Bill Baldwin

Edward Porter came down from Stanford to share some thoughts on humor. Earlier in life, he had aspired to become a “serious” writer. Meanwhile he worked as an actor, a construction worker, and a garbage man.

He sketched some key concepts relating to humor, aiming for a presentation that would be broad rather than deep.

Historically, humor hasn't gotten much respect. Intellectuals have looked down on it. In classical literature and in the Bible, humor has been seen as rude and mocking, a threat. Laughter can be dangerous. Children who dared to make fun of a Biblical prophet's developing baldness were devoured by avenging monsters. More recently, comedians have often gotten in trouble for attacking hypocrisy and religion (not to mention politicians). Humor has never gotten the respect that “serious” writing has.

Thinkers have proposed various theories of humor. The “Superiority Theory” suggests that you laugh at people that you feel superior to. This, after all, is one of the aims of satire: you're making fun of some inferior thought or behavior. Northrop Frye said that wit needs an object of attack. Such humor is “punching down.”

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Between the lines

Edie Matthews
President, South Bay Writers



“I Have a Dream”

We’ve all heard Dr Reverend Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” speech—and if not the entire speech, at least portions of it on television. However, I never took the time to deconstruct this literary masterpiece until I encountered it in one of the text-

books I used while teaching college English.

Closely analyzing it, I learned that Reverend King used 13 literary devices. These are the same techniques used by poets, orators, and literary writers. Here is a list of each device or figure of speech, its definition, followed by an example from Dr King’s speech.

METAPHOR A word or phrase denoting an object or idea used in place of another:

“beacon light of hope . . . seared in the flames of withering injustice . . . lonely island of poverty”

ANAPHORA A repeated word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases:

“One hundred years later” is intoned four times in the same paragraph. (Abraham Lincoln used the same approach in the “Gettysburg Address”: “we can not dedicate — we can not consecrate — we can not hal-low — this ground.”)

AMPLIFICATION A sentence or phrase is extended to further explain, emphasize, or exaggerate:

“And so we have come to cash this check (METAPHOR), a check that will give us (AMPLIFICATION) upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.”

ALLITERATION The repetition of usually initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words or syllables:

“dark and desolate . . . sweltering summer . . . trials and tribulations”

PARALLELISM Repeated syntactical similarities:

“to work together, to pray together, to struggle together”

HYPOPHORA A question is raised, and then immediately an answer is provided:

“When will you be satisfied? We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim”
Continued on page 18

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www.southbaywriters.com

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SBW mission

To educate 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 30 Jun 2021. New member \$65, dual membership \$25, student membership \$20. Contact membership@southbaywriters.com, sign up online at southbaywriters.com, or mail your check and application to CWC-South Bay Writers, PO Box 3254, Santa Clara CA 95055

WritersTalk

The monthly newsletter of South Bay Writers, the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club
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Submissions

SBW encourages writers at all levels to submit their creative work, essays, and reportage for publication in *WritersTalk*. Send submissions and proposals to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Submissions and proposals must be either included in the body of the email or attached as a Word file. No paper submissions. Graphics should be high-quality JPEGs or PNGs. Submissions will be copyedited, and may be sent back for revision. Managing editor reserves all rights to selection

Word limits

Member announcements (200 words, see below)
News/Essay/Reportage (please submit proposal by 1st of month; draft due 15th of month)
Opinion/Letters (300 words)
Fiction/Memoir (1000 words)
Poetry (200 words)

Deadline

Submissions open year-round
Issues close 15th of month prior to publication

Member announcements

An announcement is of interest and value to writers, does not provide direct economic benefit to its originator, and is published free of charge

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Announcements of workshops, conferences, and events from other branches of California Writers Club are welcome in *WritersTalk*. CWC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation, and *WritersTalk* cannot accept advertising of events or services that benefit an individual. To advertise in CWC’s *The Bulletin*, see page 15. No political advertising

Change of address

membership@southbaywriters.com

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Guess you had to be there

Renée J Anderson, Managing Editor



Humor often seems to come from out of nowhere. You’re with a group of friends, someone utters an unexpected repartee, suddenly everyone is laugh-crying, and it’s cathartic. A sublime moment.

Later, you try to tell someone else about it, but they don’t laugh. They don’t get it. Or—oh, they get it, but they just don’t feel it merits a LOL. You sigh in dejection, “*Guess you had to be there.*” And that’s just it: They are aware they missed out on a shared experience you had with others. They *weren’t* there.

As writers, we can’t let that happen. Our job is to put our readers *there*.

The essence of what makes humor sublime is more than the sum of its gags, bits, and zingers. It’s about perceiving and portraying the shared experience. Neil Simon claimed he never wrote a single joke. “There is no joke there,” Simon said in a 1977 *Playboy* interview, about a line that always produced an enormous laugh. “Because the audience identified. That, more or less, is what’s funny to me: saying something that’s instantly identifiable to everybody. It’s a shared secret between you and the audience.”

This might explain humor that arises in the aftermath of tragedy. “Too soon?” has become a meta-punchline, a chaser following the inevitable shots at national tragedies and celebrity deaths. It acknowledges both the collective grief and the shared need for release.

Are you ever surprised when your characters do or say something funny? I live for those moments. And they do come as a surprise. Because they come from the character, not me. From the story itself. Another screenwriter was once asked if his own jokes ever made him laugh, and he replied, “Yeah, first time I hear ‘em.”

Speaking of humor, **Edie is still collecting your flash humor pieces through 15 February**, so finish yours up so you can enter the contest (pres@southbaywriters.com). **55 words** is the maximum for each piece, please. Winners will be revealed in the March issue of *WritersTalk*.

While you’re flexing your humor-writing muscles, have a go at **double dactyls**. March showers bring April fools and National Poetry Month—what better combination than poetry that is as silly and rules-bound as it is truthful? Give these tricky buggers a try. Instructions are on page 7.

Physiologically, laughter is healthy. It flushes out the system. Awakens flabby muscle and brain parts. Gets the juicy juices juicing. Makes you feel young again. Metaphysiologically, the moment you *get* a joke—the act of realization—is a bite-size taste of true enlightenment. One moment you are lost and questioning, in the darkness of anticipation, then suddenly you get it. You cross over into a new state of understanding and bliss.

No wonder the Buddha is so often depicted belly-laughing. The shared experience is the essence of mindfulness. You read about something you recognize and think, “yeah, that’s what it was like back then,” or you say to your partner, “That’s you!” The self recognizes the self-in-other. Something in the story has connected with you.

When you achieve this as a writer, you bring the reader inside. They’re part of your story now. They’re in on it. They’re *there*. **WT**

WANTED



Double Dactyls!

What is a **double dactyl**?

Turn to page 7 to find out.

Then write one. Or two. Or ten.

Then send them to us.

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

View from the Board

Marjorie Johnson



On 06 January, eight of us zoomed the SBW Board meeting: President Edie Matthews, VP Jamal Khan, Secretary Marjorie Johnson, Treasurer Trenton Myers, Member-at-Large Tatyana Grinenko, CWC Central Board/NorCal Rep Bill Baldwin, Membership Chair Inga Silva, and *WritersTalk* Managing Editor Renée J Anderson.

Edie proposed a poetry contest; details will appear in a later *WT*. You may recall that April is National Poetry Month.

Jamal reported on upcoming speakers for SBW on Zoom:

08 Feb Bill Belew, website guru, “Find & Engage Your Readers”

08 Mar LeeAnne Krusemark, New York literary agent and publisher, “Manuscript Formatting & Submission Do’s & Don’ts” (Avoiding Simple Mistakes that Cause Rejection)

12 Apr Cara Black, *New York Times* best-selling mystery writer, “Writing a Series”

Kelly Harrison and Tatyana are still working on issues with our website. Trenton reported healthy SBW bank accounts. Inga reported 102 members; she also said she’d like to hear from anyone who has unreported publications, and who would therefore be eligible to upgrade their membership status from Associate to Active (membership@southbaywriters.com).

Bill announced a CWC Central Board meeting **24 Jan, 11 AM**. Open mics resume on **1st & 3rd Fridays**; contact him at WABaldwin@aol.com.

The SBW Board meets again **Wednesday, 03 Feb, 7 PM**. Board meetings are open to any club member. Attendance is easy: merely send an email to Edie, pres@southbaywriters.com, and she will send you a Zoom invitation. Bring us your ideas.

WT

Member news

Marjorie Johnson

Dave M Strom did some performing in December. Dave performed his story “What Goes Up” (in CWC Peninsula anthology *Fault Zone: Uplift*) for the San Mateo Library’s Story Café (smcl.org/between-the-lines/). Super Holly saves the day, then meets someone she cannot save. Also, the wonderful Fairy Princess Lolly of Fantasy Arts Entertainment Productions (faeproductions.com), interviewed Dave. He answered questions and performed two stories, “The Intellecta Rhapsody” and “The Malevolent Mystery Meat.” See more at davemstrom.wordpress.com.

I am writing between tears with some sad news: **Dick Amyx** passed away on 15 January 2021, the *WT* deadline day. Dick was my friend for more than fifteen years and a staunch supporter of writers and especially of South Bay Writers. He was *WritersTalk* Managing Editor for two years and encouraged me to take it over. He gave me a three-hour lesson on how to use InDesign, a program like Photoshop on steroids. “Of course you can do it,” he said. Dick, together with Dave LaRoche, created the cumulative index for *WritersTalk* that appears on southbaywriters.com, along with back issues from 2005. Dick and Dave also implemented the *WritersTalk* Challenge contest and encouraged us to send our very best writing. Dick was the recipient of the 2011 CWC Jack London Award and the 2009 SBW Matthews-Baldwin Award, and would have wanted me to report his passing here, where he could cheer us all on one more time.

WT

If you don’t tell us your good writing news, how can we cheer? Send an email to Marjorie: **membernews@southbaywriters.com**

Does SBW know about your latest publication? If you recently published writing that we are not aware of (or published in the past ten years that you have not shared with us), please tell us! It could upgrade your membership from Associate to Active, and we may also describe your work in *WritersTalk*, giving your writing more visibility. Email a description of the writing and the publication to us so we can update your info.

Inga Silva, Membership
ingasbwmembership@gmail.com

Off the shelf

Edie Matthews

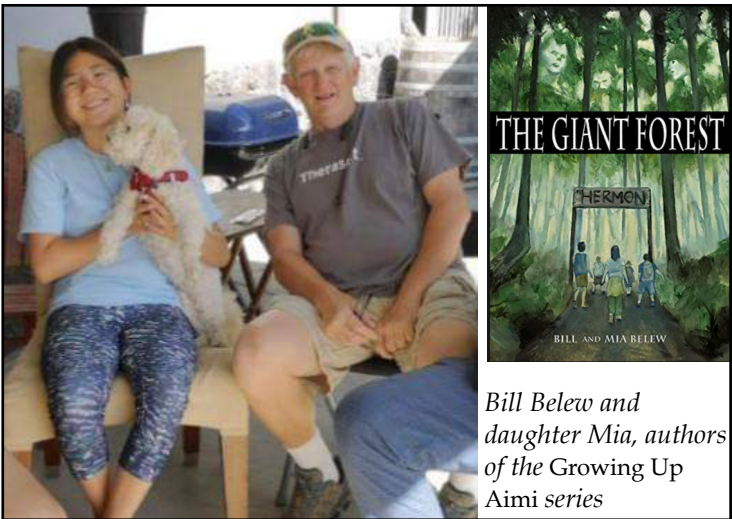


“Are you barbecuing, or working on your caveman romance?”

February speaker Bill Belew, continued from page 1 have more than 3600 subscribers, a readership that is growing daily.

Bill served as a communications and intelligence officer in the US Navy. Following that experience, he lived and taught in Japan for nearly twenty years. In his third career, he has lived in Silicon Valley, where he paid off his sizable mortgage as a professional blogger, garnering more than 150 million views.

After receiving too many probing inquiries of “How did you do that?” he was eventually coaxed into building company online brands. Bill has taught content marketing in San Francisco, New York, Bangkok, Singapore, and Shanghai, to name but a few, on behalf of multinational companies and as-



Bill Belew and daughter Mia, authors of the Growing Up Aimi series

WT

The chitlin concerto

Geraldine Cynthia Forté

I truly loved Viola and everything we did together. The All-states Club at church was having a Soul Food Fundraiser, and the California contingency had been assigned the task of preparing chitlins. Viola represented the California contingency, and not having the slightest idea of what to do, she asked me, a southern-bred man, to help her clean and cook one hundred pounds of authentic chitlins. I agreed.

It took us two days. First, we had to procure the chitlins, or *chitterlings* as they're called on the West Coast. We could either go to the Housewives Market in Oakland or find a vendor in the South Bay where we lived. I located a Mexican market on North 13th Street that carried the grocery items, and we picked up twenty of the frozen ten-pound containers.

Viola asked why we needed so many containers, amounting to twice the amount that was called for. I told her she would understand once we started to clean them. I unloaded the frozen containers while Viola changed into some comfortable chitlin-cleaning clothes. After thawing the purchased items, Viola and I stood side-by-side as I instructed her on how to clean those chitlins.

"Now, to cook good chitlins, you have to thoroughly clean them before they go into the pot. You initially defrost them in tubs of water until they are pliable enough to clean. You remove all of the membrane and fat with your par-

ing knife, like this."

"Oh my God, Ralph! They smell like dog poop!"

"No, Baby, they smell like hog poop! That is because the poop is what goes through the intestines before it makes its final exit from the hog's body. The fat and the membranes are what hold the smell. If you don't carefully clean out the fat and the membrane, you'll be literally cooking hog poop. If you think that cleaning chitlins smells bad, try cooking some unclean chitlins. The smell of seasoned and boiling poop will permeate through the entire neighborhood. Now let's continue to clean. We have a long way to go before we can cook them."

We stood at the sink scraping out membrane and fat for twelve hours. When Viola displayed signs of fatigue, I implored her to sit down, put her feet up, and rest herself. I was the stronger of us, and I had cleaned countless buckets of chitlins before. I could persevere.

There were times when I stood behind her with my arms delicately around her waist with my hands cupping hers as I guided her through the cleaning process. Oh, how I loved the way she felt and the fragrant aroma of her hair. I loved how she looked up to me and unabashedly needed me. Good God, I loved her.

Once done, for every two pounds frozen and thawed chitlins, we had one pound clean. I packed away ten of the containers filled

with membrane and fat that had been freed from the edible chitlins, and disposed of them in the dumpster behind the Lucky Store. Then we rinsed the cleaned chitlins well, and soaked them in an icy brine bath in the other containers.

They would soak for six hours while we rested. We had planned a long soak for ourselves, in the bath, and a tender nap together. As we bathed in the warm tub, I gently massaged her legs and feet.

Then I dried her in a thick Turkish towel, wondering if she would be too tired to make love with me. She had told me her shoulder blades hurt, so after she had settled in the bed, I massaged them. The right shoulder blade and then the left one. My touch was firm, and when I detected that she was relaxed, I began to kiss her shoulder blades softly and sincerely. When she gently murmured, I responded and made soft, sincere, yet passionate love with her. Before I allowed Mt Vesuvius to explode, I made sure that Mt Saint Helens would erupt simultaneously. Thus, we entered the realm of orgasmic heaven together, then collapsed and slept in each other's arms.

We arose to showers, a light breakfast of scrambled eggs, toast, and that vanilla-infused coffee Viola loved to make, and then on to the next phase. I chopped onions and peppers while she crushed garlic and measured dry seasonings.

Writing prompt

We had industrial-size stew pots from the church kitchen, and we placed yellow onions, red onions, freshly crushed garlic, jalapeño peppers, red bell pepper, dried bay leaves, powdered basil, fresh rosemary, Lawry's Seasoned Salt, cayenne pepper, black pepper, fresh lemon rind, and twenty-five pounds of the cleaned and brined chitlins. We covered everything with fresh water, brought the contents of each pot to a boil, reduced the temperatures to low, covered the pots with lids, sat down with our feet up on ottomans, and cooked the chitlins. The aroma that emanated from our kitchen advertised the mouthwatering combination of seasonings and flavors extraordinaire.

The amount of time to prepare that epicurean delight was nothing compared to the short time it took those church folks to slurp them up. The smacking of grateful lips assured us that the chitlins were delectable and appreciated.

It was a task indeed to prepare and serve one hundred pounds of authentic chitlins, but we did it. Viola and I successfully performed the *Chitlin Concerto* together that year, and the execution of our recital was a demonstrable act of authentic love between a man and woman.

Double dactyls

A flibberty gibberty dance in eight steps

Renée J Anderson, Managing Editor

Gilligan billigan, let's have some fun. If you enjoy limericks, you'll love double dactyls—precisely metered, strict-rhyming bits of floofery. But first, a dance lesson:

A double dactyl is **eight lines** over **two stanzas**:

Three lines of dactylic dimeter:
 ' _ _ ' _ _
 { *Huffala puffala* ← Nonsense rhyming words
Hop-along Cassidy ← The subject of the poem
Name of a three-legged

One choriamb: '- -' → *Cat I once knew*

Three lines of dactylic dimeter again:

' - - ' - -

{ *Finicky risk taker*
Using up lives like she
Regeneratively ← Must be one 6-syllable word

One choriamb: ' - -' → *Grows legs anew* ← Must rhyme with line 4

- 1) Start with the two rhyming nonsense words in line 1. Well begun is half done. The only other rhymes will be lines 4 and 8.
- 2) Decide who or what your poem is going to be about. Traditionally, line 2 is a proper noun, like “Benjamin Harrison,” but feel free to bend this rule a little, e.g., “sharp-witted alleycats.”
- 3) Line 7 must be a *single*, double-dactylic word. (Traditionally, it is said, once you’ve used a word in line 7 of a double dactyl, you must solemnly swear to never use it in prose again.) These hexasyllabic words are easy to create by tacking on prefixes or suffixes, but it must be one word: no hyphens, no apostrophes to eliminate extra syllables. Pronunciation is where it counts.

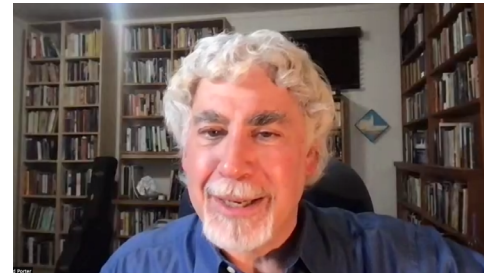
Give it a go! Start on it. Put it down and come back. The brain keeps chipping away while you're brewing your morning cuppa. These are great for working through writer's block as well, because the exercise forces different areas of the brain to engage than the areas you use for creative writing. The strict rules, rhyme, and meter of the double dactyl likewise force you to choose words with precision and care—excellent training for composing your bread & butter poetry and prose.

And when you've got one, **newsletter@southbaywriters.com** is the place to send it, that we might laud your efforts in the April issue of *WritersTalk*.

Send as many as you like, but we may have to limit how many we publish. *Hokery pokery*, you've got this! We can't wait to see your moves.



In all, 66 participants attended the South Bay Writers meeting
11 January 2021 featuring speaker Edward Porter
Photo captures, C Donnell.



Professor Edward Porter
discusses theories of humor
Photo captures, C Donnell



Baldwin, *Continued from page 1*

On the other hand, John Milton, the English Puritan, preferred to “punch up,” to direct his barbs at people who held power but perhaps didn’t deserve it. See Exercise 1, right.

Freud proposed a “release” theory of humor: We laugh or make fun of things we’re afraid of. In this regard, offbeat comments can often save an awkward social situation, where the tension has become unbearable. The room has gone silent, no one dares speak, and then—a humorous remark releases the tension. Everyone laughs, and the room breathes again. See Exercise 2.

Another theory of humor invokes Incongruity or Juxtaposition. You present several items (often three) in sequence. The first two items establish a pattern. The third then barrels in from a totally unexpected angle, catching you by surprise: something you never would have expected, something out of place (frequently involving a bad pun). By being unexpected, it makes us laugh. See Exercise 3.

Henri Bergson in *Laughter* proposed a “Theory of Rigidity,” poking fun at inelasticity, involuntary dysfunction. Consider a person struggling to walk up ice-covered steps to a house. Rather than making it up the steps through flexibility, the person’s rigidity causes them to fall. They can’t help themselves. This rigidity/flexibility can be internal as well as external. Think Don Quixote. Think Madame Bovary (this suggestion provoked several chat comments!). Think Walter Mitty, one of Porter’s favorite stories grow-

The Exercises

Porter provided several prompts in the course of his talk, which made for lively chat.

- 1 Think of three people or types who ought to be “taken down a peg”
- 2 Name three sources of anxiety where humor might relieve the stress
- 3 Design a triathlon—a group of three activities at which you would excel
- 4 Daydream. Name three things you fantasize about doing
- 5 Name three human vices that could inspire a story

ing up. The fantasies of these fictional characters served as escapes from the “real” world. See Exercise 4.

Bergson applied his theory to rigid parts of ourselves that could become vices. He spoke of vices that are inhabited by feelings, people who have vices but hearts of gold. Humor can redeem tragedy. Bergson felt that society demanded flexibility rather than rigidity, and suggested laughter as a corrective to rigidity. See Exercise 5.

Finally, Porter remarked that romantic melodrama can captivate us. The Q&A period after Porter’s talk raised questions about myths involving delusions, the relation between humor and sentimentality (William Saroyan), and “gentle” humor (David Sedaris). Incidentally, there was some lively back-and-forth in the Zoom chat session. **WT**

Life Lines

A conversation with Evie Preston and how a milestone birthday became a pandemic passion project



It began as a way to commemorate her 85th birthday, a holiday greeting to friends and family, with a sampling of humor pieces written over the years. Then COVID-19 happened. Shelter-in-place. Lock-down. Yet Evelyn Preston and Nature both abhor a vacuum, and the simple gesture flowered into a true passion project: her life's *œuvre* bound in one handsome monograph, *Life Lines*.

Evelyn Preston: My odd-style memoir to mark a milestone year began as a holiday greeting, then morphed as I gathered samples of my writing. I was reminded of the advice from a long-ago writing teacher: Always find different ways to reuse material that you've worked so hard to perfect.

From there, it grew into a family venture due to and during the pandemic. I bookended the bits and pieces of my own life-stories with a nod to the incredible changes and challenges still ahead, and hoped my jottings would be enjoyed as ripened nostalgia moved up in time. I gave another nod to better days ahead, writing that, like mellowing wine and curing cheese, I hoped to continue on as a work-in-progress, aging to perfection.

"You'll never get old if you believe in a future—so plan ahead"

With the fantastic help of my family, especially my son Robert Preston, who became a tough-as-nails editor, and his wife, Mahoko Kuramasu, professional video editor who did the layout, we published *Life Lines*, a magazine-style, selective compilation from my fifty years (can you believe?) of writing columns and essays.

Most pieces were originally published in local magazines and newspapers, including *Palo Alto Weekly*. I added transitions to smooth the flow and reworked others for clarity. My 1976 *Redbook* Young Mother's Story, "Mom, Are We Jewish or Christmas?" (see excerpt, page 12) went in as



Evelyn Preston holding *Life Lines*, cover artwork by Alisa Montgomery
Photo, M Kuramasu

well, along with excerpts from the prologue and epilogue of my 2007 book, *Memoirs of the Money Lady*.

Alisa Montgomery, my teen-aged granddaughter, drew the beautiful cover. At the end of the intro, I thanked and acknowledged my family, heaped credit and praise on the publishing team, lauded two friends as first readers, and invited readers to read on.

All format choices and final publication were accomplished online. We absorbed all cost, from printing to postage. I tucked in a small holiday note in a mini red or green envelope: "A taste of the past and a toast to the future," I wrote. I honed a mailing list. Starting slowly in March and

ramping up by September, the entire project paced the pandemic. We mailed 80 copies to family and friends. They arrived in time for Christmas.

The feedback? Better than a Pulitzer. Calls, emails, texts, and notes. Some raves from the minute received with kudos still coming. For all the ego-stoking (what writer doesn't love fan-mail?), I saw it as a touchstone in this unique era. A way to reach out across the miles and through the years.

I've written alongside several careers, sometimes got paid, gave critique workshops with writer friends long ago, spoke and sold my book, and continued to dabble. I didn't follow conventional wisdom or work ethic when it comes to becoming a working writer. Regrets? Yes! However, it's never too late, and even if I'm not rich, I've managed a bit of local fame and immense satisfaction. **WT**

Evelyn Preston has been a member of South Bay Writers since 2009.

Her work has appeared in *WritersTalk* May 2009, March & July 2019, and April 2020.

Pictured right, Evelyn receives 2nd prize in the *WritersTalk* 2019 Challenge Contest for Essay. Photo courtesy C Donnell



From the *Life Lines* introduction, by Evelyn Preston

Over time, cheese cures, wine mellows, meat tenderizes, but they can also ferment, curdle, or decay. People, too, change for good or ill as they age. However, by challenging our bodies and brains, people can live the happy cliché of graceful aging. If we discover along the way that A—"Attitude is everything" and B—an inner passion "ups the ante," our aging will be further enhanced.

My passion? At heart I'm a writer, although I sadly neglected the sage advice to "Write every day!" However, during and between other endeavors, I continued creating. My subject? Samples of suburbia, motherhood, and my several careers, as well as some errors and omissions along the way—my life-in-print—from over 50 years of written "snapshots" that might resonate with readers.

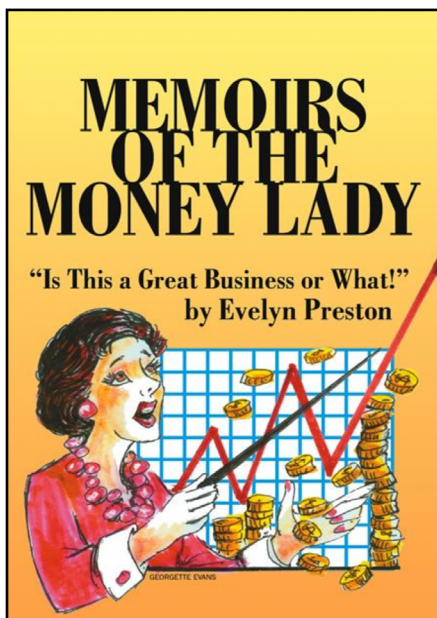
As I compiled this mostly light-hearted legacy, the Don't-Take-Anything-for-Granted Gods figured out a diabolical way to upstage my efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic suddenly skewed my loose flow of lifelines and tested my positive approach.

We've all needed to adjust our attitudes as well as our lifestyles to reflect 2020's monumental changes. Instead of revising these everyday essays to reflect the weight of current woes, I'll hope that the fun and foibles of mid-20th-century middle-class moms and some laughs at senior angst will lighten the current mood and won't be erased due to this devastating detour.

So I invite you to join me on a few stops along my personal trip of a lifetime. Some pieces reflect inevitable sadness, but diverse slants and varying tone make the journey more memorable. And considering America's 2020 national upheaval, my take suddenly highlights a never-to-return—almost quaint—past.

My husband used to say, "If you can't find a bright side, make one," and in this era of the unknown, especially as we age, I've added, "You'll never get old if you believe in a future—so plan ahead."

Next page: Excerpt from Evelyn's 1976 *Redbook* story, "Mom, Are We Jewish or Christmas?" with photo courtesy E Preston



“Mom, are we Jewish or Christmas?”

An excerpt from *Redbook*’s “Young Mother’s Story” series, published 1976

Evelyn Preston

Last December, after I had polished our antique Menorah and placed it on the mantel for the Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony, my eight-year-old son and I struggled to untangle the maze of Christmas tree lights. When they finally winked on and off among the tree branches, Kenneth turned his large brown eyes up to me and asked in a puzzled voice, “Mom, are we Jewish or Christmas?”

At that particular moment I evaded his question. Having a religious discussion with Kenneth was not on my list of holiday chores. My mind was occupied with getting the tree trimmed and shredding potatoes for latkes, the traditional Hanukkah pancakes. But later, I did consider my child’s question—“Who are we; what are we?” I realized that an answer was needed for all of us—for Ken, for my other two children, for my husband, Oliver, for myself.

In our family, Daddy buys the Christmas tree and helps convert allowances into gifts. Mommy lights the Hanukkah candles and chants the ancient prayers. But Mommy also becomes involved with Christmas. She buys presents, makes decorations, plans parties. In fact, we all participate in both holidays.

Kenneth’s question was simply a wish to clarify this cultural confusion, to have this double celebration explained. What were we really—“Jewish or Christmas?” One or the other response might settle the matter for him and we could get on with wrapping presents. However, there was a lesson here. I wanted to dispel Ken’s notion that people had to be one thing or another or nothing at all. And I wanted to show him that people could participate in more than one religious observance. But where to start?

The first day of winter vacation, I took the children to see *Fiddler on the Roof*. To me the movie’s theme song, “Tradition,” echoed every family’s need for meaningful observances. I responded immediately to the universality of the confused and loving parents in the film. Their sense of humor and devotion to their chil-

dren helped them deal with the anger and heartache of a daughter’s break with Jewish tradition.

My parents had gone through a similar experience when I cut the firm roots of my past. I told my mother first.

“Mom, I’m in love.”

“Is he Jewish?”

“He’s a wonderful man.”

“But is he Jewish?”

“He’s brilliant, older, wiser. He’ll be good to me.”

“You haven’t told me if he’s Jewish.”

“No, Mom, he’s not Jewish.”

Then her sobs came and her threat: “This will kill your father.”

Several weeks later, when I introduced my Australian fiancé to my family, my mother asked, “You plan to have children?”

“Of course, Mom.” Oliver and I both nodded.

“How will you raise them?”

I glanced at Oliver and answered, “The way we were raised.” There was no need then to elaborate on our shared promise not to impose formal religious training on our children.

My mother gave in. “I’ll talk to your father,” she said. “When I accept, I accept.” She kissed her future son-in-law on the cheek. The wedding preparations were made, and my father gave me away to an “outsider.” ❁

PERSPECTIVE

Grief is not symbolic

Diane Jones

Gazing upon the newspaper picture of a small child kneeling at the makeshift symbolic grave of her grandmother who passed away from COVID-19, I am suddenly overwhelmed by the incredible loss we all have and are suffering in this pandemic.

That poor child is not the only one having to say goodbye to an empty grave. So many thousands of grieving families have lost their loved ones, young and old, and not at the bedside but standing outside the hospital or remaining in their homes, unable to hold a hand for the last time and say, “it’s OK Nana if you need to go, we are here by your side so you don’t have to start your final journey alone.”

I am overcome by the immense worldwide grief that rocks our planet and wonder why The Great Spirit, or The Good Lord, or whoever rules our universe has seen fit to raise his or her mighty hand and slap us down so severely.

To cause so much grief, a grief that will linger long past the end of this holocaust, is way beyond my powers of understanding.

What did we do, or not do? Did someone warn us? Were we not listening? Might there not have been some other way to get our attention?

To those who said *There is no danger; Live your life normally; Don’t listen to those naysayers; You have nothing to fear because it is not real*, I say: *Go talk to the families who have lost their loved ones; Tell them this isn’t real; Tell them their grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, or best friend died from nothing.*

The grief is universal. It has touched the rich, the poor, and the in-between. No one is exempt or safe from it unless we heed the warnings. This virus is very contagious and it has mutated.

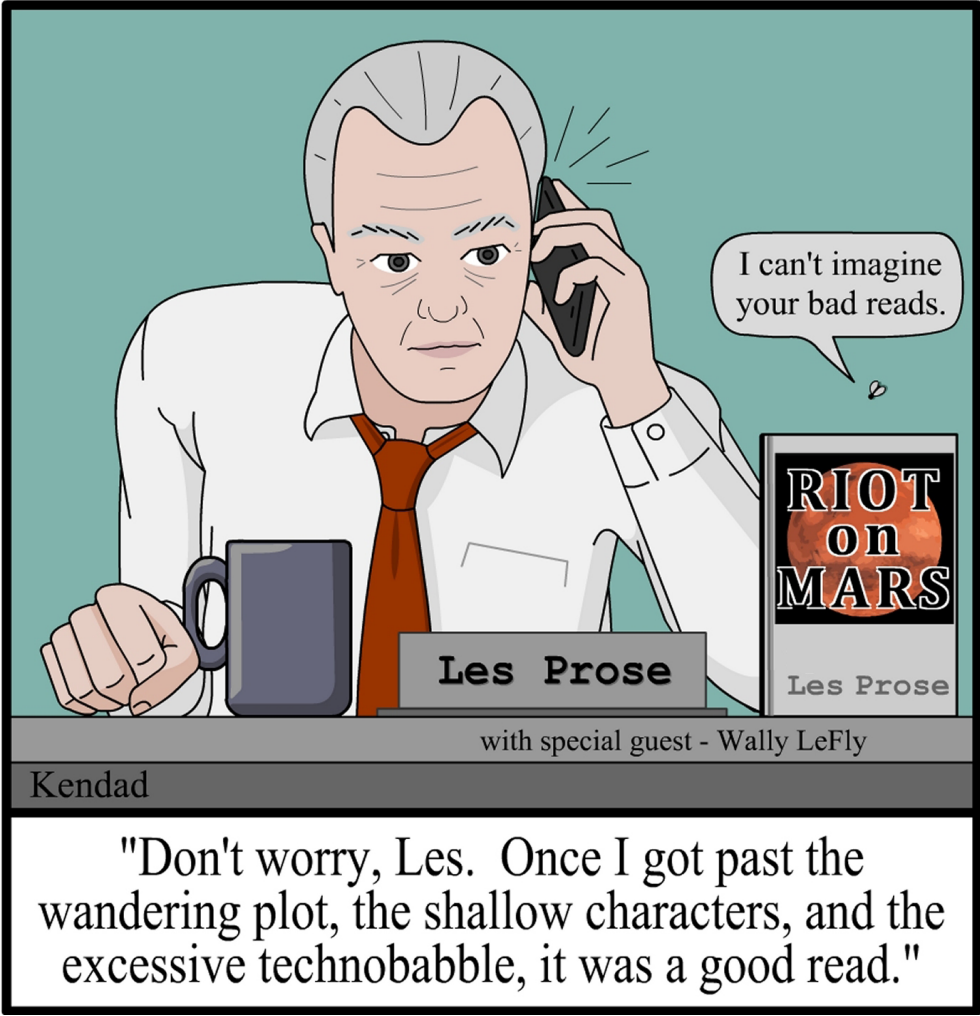
We were not prepared for the first wave but hopefully the new variant can be mitigated by the inoculations designed to stop the initial outbreak. We ALL should get vaccinated and wear masks and respect social distancing. We ALL should stay out of crowds or stay home for as long as it takes to STOP this scourge upon humanity. If you value your own life and the lives of those around you, PLEASE listen to what the doctors say!

To those deemed “essential” in our daily lives, my hat is off to YOU ALL for the bravery you display on a daily basis. *THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU.* I wish you all a safe journey through this pandemic and a lifetime of joy thereafter. **WT**

That poor child is not the only one having to say goodbye to an empty grave



Young neighborhood artists thank front-line and essential workers, Santa Clara, CA. Photo R Anderson



Contest
Flash humor
Open thru
15 February

Participate in our Flash Humor contest before the deadline!

- Who is eligible? All members of South Bay Writers, or dual members
- Word count? 55 or fewer, including title
- Submit up to three entries
- Send to pres@southbaywriters.com
- Winners announced in the March issue of *WritersTalk*
- Details posted in January's issue, page 6

Deadline
15 Feb!

Prizes!
1st \$50
2nd \$30
3rd \$20

WANTED
Photos, artwork, fiction, essays, poems, games, riddles, jokes & jingles, commercials, operas, plays, chants, recipes, Cockney rhyming slang, songs, odes, eulogies, toasts, cereal box copy, thoughts, prayers, spells, omens, insults
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

LOST
Me, for an hour, after Googling Utah's state motto and discovering Donny Osmond's complete journey as the Peacock on *The Masked Singer*

FOUND
The last parking space right in front of Draeger's in San Mateo, with time still on the meter. "There's a place for us...!"

WANTED
D o u b l e
D a c t y l s
See page 7
newsletter@southbaywriters.com



WANTED
Join our dynamic team!
Volunteer copyeditors and proofreaders of all stripes

write to
newsletter@southbaywriters.com



Breathing in

I strongly believe that **writing is an act of courage**. It's almost an act of physical courage. You get up and you have this great idea, maybe you were hanging out with your friends, you had this idea, and they said something like "that's brilliant, someone should go write it." And you sit down to write it, and almost always, what was brilliant before, when you were sitting around talking, is somehow not so brilliant when you go to write it. It's as if **you have a certain music in your head**, and trying to get that music out on the page is just absolute hell.

And so you fail.

And if you're doing it correctly, **what happens is the translation of what you hear in your head**, your ideas in your head, will almost always come out really badly on the page when you first write.

But what you have to do is, you have to give yourself a day, go back, revise over and over and over and over again, until you get to something that is at least maybe 70% of what you wanted to do, so **you try to go from really bad to okay to acceptable**. And then you know you've done your job. You never really get — *I never really get* — to that perfect thing that was in my head. I always considered the entire process about failure.

— Ta-Nehisi Coates

"Creative breakthroughs: Ta-Nehisi Coates," interview, *The Atlantic*, 27 Sep 2013

The power³ of
...one paragraph

It was as if his eye were an ear and a crackle went through it each time he shot a look at the accordion. The instrument rested on the bench, lacquer gleaming like wet sap. Rivulets of light washed mother-of-pearl, the nineteen polished bone buttons, winked a pair of small oval mirrors rimmed in black paint, eyes seeking eyes, seeking the poisonous stare of anyone who possessed *malocchio*, eager to reflect the bitter glance back at the glancer.

—Annie Proulx
opening paragraph of
Accordion Crimes, 1996

The power³ of
...one sentence

Rain, rain, rain . . . my mother put her head through the window to let the neighbour know that I was nine, and they flattered me with the consolation that my birthday had brought showers of blessing.

—George Lamming
opening sentence of
In the Castle of my Skin, 1953

The power³ of
...one word

Sloop
Curious
Powertrain
Justice



Artist, Sharon Loper
"The Sanctuary," large-scale bronze
Triton Museum of Art Sculpture Garden
Santa Clara, CA
Photo, R Anderson

Contests and markets

Carolyn Donnell



⚠NB: NO VETTING has been done by South Bay Writers Club. Listings are for information only. Some contests have been around for a long time and the reputation is known, but some are newer. Please read all guidelines carefully before submitting. And please share your experiences, good or bad

CONTESTS

WOW! Women On Writing hosts two quarterly contests: one for flash fiction and one for nonfiction essays. Limit 300 entries. Enter early! **Winter deadline 28 Feb** wow-womenonwriting.com/contest.php

The Missouri Review Perkoff Prize, deadline 15 Mar, \$1000 and publication each for best story, best set of poems, and best essay that engage in evocative ways with health and medicine missourireview.com/contests/perkoff-prize/

2021 Effie Lee Morris Literary Contest Women’s National Book Assn–San Francisco literary contest. Fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. 1st prize \$200, 2nd \$100, 3rd \$50 and publication on the WNBA–SF website for 90 days. **Deadline 31 Mar** wnba-sfchapter.org/2021-effie-lee-morris-contest-get-ready

National Indie Excellence Awards (NIEA) Celebrating Self & Independent Publishing Excellence. **Entries must be post-marked by 31 Mar** indieexcellence.com

Winning Writers

- **Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest** (no fee) Seeks humor poems. Total prizes \$3500. **Deadline 01 Apr.** 1st prize \$2000 plus a two-year gift certificate from Duotrope (a \$100 value), 2nd prize \$500, 10 honorable mentions \$100 each
- **Tom Howard/John H Reid Fiction & Essay Contest** All styles and themes, fiction and nonfiction. Accepts published and unpublished work. **Deadline 30 Apr** winningwriters.com/our-contests

Regal House Publishing Kraken Book Prize for middle-grade fiction, **deadline 06 Apr**, winner receives \$750 and publication regalhousepublishing.com/the-kraken-book-award/

Grist—Imagine 2200: Climate fiction for future ancestors, deadline 12 Apr. Stories that envision the next 180 years of climate progress grist.org/fix/climate-fiction-writing-contest-imagine-2200-prizes/

CONTESTS, CONTINUED

Writer’s Digest

- **Self-Published Book Awards, deadline 01Apr** 1st prize \$1000
- **Annual writing competition**, WD’s oldest and most popular competition now in its 90th year. Winners announced in the Nov/Dec 2021 issue. **Deadline 07 May** writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions

The Vincent Brothers Review Fiction, nonfiction, poetry. Unpublished only. \$25 per accepted item. “House keeping” short story contest **deadline 31 Oct** vincentbrothersreview.org/annual-short-story-contest/ vincentbrothersreview.org/submissions/

LOCAL & CWC

California Writers Club Literary Review reading cycle open for submissions through **15 Mar**. We have our team. Our web-master has posted the submission rules and forms. All CWC members are encouraged to send their best work for consideration in *Literary Review* calwriters.org/publications/#submit

Catamaran Literary Reader Santa Cruz print quarterly. “West Coast themes. Writers and artists from everywhere.” Fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, fine art. catamaranliteraryreader.com

Fremont Area Writers lists many resources on their page, such as contest announcements, publications seeking submissions, freelance jobs, resources for screenwriters, genre organizations, and more cwc-fremontareawriters.org/resources-writers

West Trade Review Reading periods 01 Apr–01 Aug & 15 Aug–15 Dec. Original and unpublished fiction, poetry, and photography by new and established writers & artists. SBW’s Kelly Harrison is an associate editor. westtradereview.com/submissionguidelines.html

LOCAL CONFERENCE

Catamaran Summer Writing Conference 25–29 July (Virtual) Workshops, craft. Keynote speaker Jane Smiley. Poetry, fiction, and nonfiction readings. catamaranliteraryreader.com/conference-2020

ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS

The Blue Nib Essays, journalism, reviews, poetry, and fiction. Paying market for items accepted for print thebluenib.com/submit-to-the-blue-nib-2

ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS, CONTINUED

Delmara Review No reading or submission fees. **Deadline 31 Mar** for November publication delmarvareview.org/submissions

Kosmos Theme issue, “**The Century of Awakening,**” submission **deadline 20 Feb**. Call for essays and other works on the theme of generating the energy of peace and self-awareness kosmosjournal.org/contribute-to-kosmos-quarterly/

Lumiere Review Accepts poems and prose, encouraging emerging writers, BIPOC, LGBTQIA, and disabled. No fees. lumierereview.com/

Sequestrum: Literature & Art Paying market. Previously unpublished only. Nominal fee. sequestrum.org/submissions

Thimble Quarterly online literary journal. Poetry, visual art, short story thimblelitmag.com/submissions

FOR POETS

Academy of American Poets poets.org/academy-american-poets/american-poets-prizes

Everywriter List of poetry prizes and competitions everywritersresource.com/best-poetry-prizes

The Literary Nest Online publication. Visual arts also accepted. theliterarynest.org

Palette Poetry Monthly contests, open submissions palettepoetry.com/submit/

Poetry Foundation poetryfoundation.org

Poetry Pacific poetrypacific.blogspot.com

Poetry Society of America poetrysociety.org

Trish Hopkinson List of markets accepting re-prints trishhopkinson.com

Up the Staircase Quarterly No previously published poetry, but previously published artwork OK upthestaircase.org/submit

Writing Matters Article, “34 Pubs of Poetry Books & Chapbooks” randalssanctuary.wordpress.com/2020/08/11/publishers-of-poetry-books-chapbooks

Facebook poetry groups

- Poetry Center San Jose—PCSJ
- Willow Glen Poetry Project
- Cupertino Poet Laureate
- Santa Clara County Poet Laureate
- Los Gatos Poet Laureate
- Natl Poetry Month poem-a-day challenge
- California Poets
- How Writers Write Poetry Community Group
- No Fee Calls for Poems
- SF Creative Writing Inst drop-in poetry workshops

GENERAL RESOURCES (* = Internet and FB)

Ace World Pub Submission lists aceworldpub.com.ng/category/latest-opportunities

Association of Writers & Writing Programs awpwriter.org/contests

Authors Publish* List of publishers accepting submissions for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that do not impose reading fees authorspublish.com

The Best Writing Contests curated by Reedsy. blog.reedsy.com/writing-contests

Electric Lit Article, “Free or cheap resources for emerging writers” electricliterature.com/free-or-cheap-resources-for-emerging-writers

Freedom with Writing* Submissions, contests, jobs freedomwithwriting.com

Funds for Writers Contests, submissions, grants. fundsforwriters.com/contests/

Hidden River Arts Book award deadlines. hiddenriverarts.wordpress.com

MWA NorCal Chapter* Mystery Writers of America mwanorcal.org

NewPages news, info, and guides to lit mags, indie publishers and bookstores, creative writing programs, alternative periodicals, and writing contests newpages.com

Poets & Writers pw.org/grants Contest blog: pw.org/blogs/prize_reporter

ProWritingAid Writer’s Community FB group

Rattle* Submissions & live critiques rattle.com

Women’s Natl Book Assn–San Francisco* wnba-sfchapter.org

The Write Life* Articles, “39 Free writing contests: Legitimate competitions with cash prizes” and “22 Facebook groups for writers you don’t want to miss” thewritelife.com

The Writer Upcoming contests, articles, resources writermag.com/contests

Writers Post No Fee Call for Submissions Facebook group



Matthews, Continued from page 2

CONDUPLICATION Repetition of one or more words in successive clauses:
“we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied”

SIMILE Two dissimilar objects or concepts are compared using the words “as” or “like”:
“until justice rolls down like waters and
righteousness like a mighty stream”

LITOTE Understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary, e.g., “not a bad singer”:
“I am not unmindful”

ASYNDETON Intentional elimination of conjunctions between phrases:
“go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia,
go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums”

EPITHET Characterizing word or phrase accompanying or occurring in place of the name or thing:
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal”

ANTITHESIS Rhetorical contrast of ideas in a parallel arrangement of words, phrases, or sentences, yet maintaining grammatical accuracy:
“where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but
by the content of their character”

DIACOPE Repetition of a word or phrase, broken up by intervening words: e.g., “To be or not to be”:
“Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

Even though we can analyze and categorize the literary devices, I believe Reverend King’s technique was intuitive. He’d developed oratory skills as pastor of the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church. Over the years, he delivered variations of the speech, honing, editing, expanding, and polishing to achieve its final draft.

At the March on Washington, Reverend King’s *tour de force* was delivered on 28 August 1963 in front of the Lincoln Memorial to a crowd estimated at over 200,000. Moreover, like the “Gettysburg Address” and Churchill’s “Never Surrender” speech, it will stand the test of time.

If you haven’t previously, I encourage writers to listen to Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech while following the text. (Here is a link to the speech, with subtitles: youtu.be/vP4iY1TtS3s.)

You will be inspired and amazed.

Calling all copyeditors and proofreaders

We at WritersTalk are always on the lookout for volunteer proofreaders and copyeditors.

We are happy to teach you the skills if you would like to learn.

Time commitment is 2–3 hours each month, negotiable.

newsletter@southbaywriters.com



CWC around the Bay

- Berkeley cwc-berkeley.org
- Central coast centralcoastwriters.org
- Fremont area cwc-fremontareawriters.org
- Marin cwcmarin.com
- Mendocino writersmendocinocoast.org
- Mt Diablo cwcmtdiablo.org
- Napa Valley napavalleywriters.net
- North state northstatewriters.com
- Redwood City redwoodwriters.org
- Sacramento cwcsacramentowriters.org
- SF peninsula cwc-peninsula.org
- San Joaquin Valley trivalleywriters.org

Facebook discussion group

Join our Facebook group
South Bay Writers Club
Group admin Carolyn Donnell

SBW/CWC Events

FEBRUARY 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 VALLEY WRITERS 2 PM SBW MTG 7 PM	2 IMBOLC GROUNDHOG DAY	3 SBW BOARD MTG 7 PM	4	5 OPEN MIC	6
7	8 VALLEY WRITERS 2 PM SBW MTG 7 PM	9	10	11	12 LUNAR NEW YEAR	13
14 VALENTINE'S DAY	15 VALLEY WRITERS 2 PM WT ISSUE CLOSES PRESIDENTS' DAY	16 FAT TUESDAY	17 ASH WEDNESDAY	18	19 OPEN MIC	20
21	22 VALLEY WRITERS 2 PM	23	24	25	26 PURIM BEGINS	27 QUICKENING MOON
28	1	2	3	4	5	6

Ongoing events

Critique groups

Valley Writers Mondays 2–4 PM
via Zoom. Email Marjorie Johnson
marjohnson@mac.com

Zoom writing group

Small supportive group of experienced writers has room for one more. We meet the 1st & 3rd Fridays, 3:30–5 PM. If you’re interested, please contact Karen Sundback at sundback@gmail.com.

Morgan Hill writers group

We’re a critique circle based in Morgan Hill, with members from all over. Long and short narra-

tive, any genre. Mondays, 5 PM. Contact Vanessa MacLaren-Wray for Zoom login details
cometarytales@gmail.com

SBW regular meetings
2nd Mondays, 7 PM. Watch your email for Zoom login details

SBW Board meetings
1st Wednesdays, 7 PM. Contact pres@southbaywriters.com

Open mic
1st & 3rd Friday nights. Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622
WABaldwin@aol.com

Know of a regularly occurring event for writers? Email us! newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Ads in CWC’s The Bulletin

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 CWC’s *The Bulletin*, published three times a year, reaches 2,000 published and aspiring writers in 22 CWC branches throughout the state and is published on calwriters.org.

We accept 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.



California Writers Club
South Bay Branch
PO Box 3254
Santa Clara CA 95055
southbaywriters.com

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

South Bay Writers
March 2021 meeting
Monday | 08 March | 7 PM

Guest speaker
LeeAnne Krusemark

Watch your email
for details!

California Writers Club
Literary Review

Open for submissions
through 15 March

**[calwriters.org/
publications/#submit](http://calwriters.org/publications/#submit)**

COVID-19 VACCINE IS HERE

STAY INFORMED. KEEP WEARING YOUR MASK.

- Validated by the nation's top medical experts to be safe and effective
- Provided at no cost
- Phased distribution plan based on risk and level of exposure
- Widely available later in 2021



covid19.ca.gov/vaccines

Vaccinate ALL 58