



WRITERSTALK

Volume 32
Number 01
January 2024

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

January Speaker: Andrew Benzie

Promoting Your Book: Building a Successful Marketing Strategy

By Edie Matthews

Most of us spend years writing a book. Hours are devoted to conjuring up characters, developing the plot – then rewriting, editing, and more rewriting. Finally, submitting it to an agent – or deciding to forego rejection by self-publishing. But that's not the end of your job. The truth is even if you've signed with a New York agent and Simon & Schuster is publishing your novel, your responsibility hasn't ended. Today, authors are expected to help with sales.

What! Are you kidding? I'm an artist, not a salesman!

Actually, in today's market, unless you're famous or infamous, the success of your book is up to you.

Now what? Do I open a booth like Lucy in the Peanut's comic strip? Should I stand on a busy corner and shout, "Extra! Extra! Buy a fabulous book and the author will sign it."

Maybe you have a plan already, but more than likely you don't. Consequently, you won't want to miss our next meeting with Andrew Benzie.

Benzie is a Bay Area native who has more than thirty years' experience in the design industry. He has worked both for corporate art departments and as a freelance designer for his own company, Andrew Benzie Creative Design. In 2010 he established his own publishing company, Andrew Benzie Books, to help authors design, publish, and market their books in both softcover and e-book formats.

According to Benzie, there has never been a better time for artists to publish their work. He will take you through the steps needed to effectively develop a brand for your work. He'll detail how to build a successful marketing strategy to promote and sell your book.

Topics include:

- How to establish a powerful brand for your book.
- How to successfully promote your book to maximize sales.
- How to design and implement a successful marketing strategy.
- Learn new avenues to promote and sell your work.

With the availability of the internet, print-on-demand technology, and electronic book formats, you too can master the skills to increase book sales.

Adopt the techniques used by today's "influencers" who attract a million followers. Keep in mind, the sales of a bestseller range from 3,500 to 10,000. If only one-percent of your followers purchase your book, that would be 10,000, and you'd be a bestseller! But you'll probably sell more. Then your book will be optioned for a film or serialized and streamed on Netflix. — WT

**Map and directions to Maker Nexus, 1330 Orleans Drive, Sunnyvale:
See Page 12. Saturday, January 13, 2024 10:00AM**

Recap: Nov. 18, 2023: Laurie Ann Doyle **Plotting Secrets: How Absence Drives Narrative**

By Bill Baldwin

Laurie Ann Doyle, author of *World Gone Missing* and a Pushcart Prize nominee, began her November 18 talk by asking us to consider "plot." What pushes plot forward? A good approach to developing a plot is to consider an element in the story that is "missing." This can be something that is literally missing (not there, "off-stage") but it can also be anything that is a "felt absence," something that a character feels the lack of, something they wish were there but isn't.

Continued on Page 6

Promoting Your Book Saturday, January 13, 2024

**Andrew Benzie
Speaking at Maker Nexus,
Sunnyvale**



January Speaker
Andrew Benzie, Publisher, Designer
and Founder of Andrew Benzie Books

Between the Lines

Edie Matthews

President, South Bay Writers



Let's Get Started!

The beginning of the new year is like spring to a writer. The holiday hoopla is over. Christmas shopping is done. Parties are over. Decorations are packed and put away. Now you can breathe easy and resume your writing.

Although I've written two novels (both are in rewrite), I self-published a humor book in the 90s.

This was during my comedy stint in LA. I spent most weekdays in Hollywood and returned home on weekends. I couldn't afford to fly, so I made friends with the trek and drove. My routine included a cup of coffee and several books on tape checked out from the library.

The 350-mile trip took me five-and-a-half hours on Highway 5. The speed limit was 70, but I found I could drive at 80 and not get a ticket. The highway patrol was after speedsters zooming at 90+. In fact, maintaining 70 MPH was a hazard. Even the big rigs passed you on the road.

At that time, comedian Jeff Foxworthy, who grew up in Georgia, wrote a book called "You Might Be a Redneck If...." The title was inspired by a joke in his act. Example: "You might be a redneck if—you ever cut your grass and found a car."

He quickly found that this premise had numerous punchlines:

"Your nickname is Bubba."

"Your girlfriend's hair got caught in a ceiling fan."

"A sign 'Say no to crack' reminds you to pull up your jeans."

Foxworthy had so many punchlines they led to a book. Actually, to several books. It was a great gimmick and marketing ploy.

His success inspired me. What could I write about that would produce numerous punchlines? As a mother of four, I certainly had years of experience to draw from. Finally, I came up with a premise and a title: "You've Been Around Small Children Too Long When..." Punchline: "You put the baby down for a nap because you're tired."

It was during my long commutes that I brainstormed. Periodically, I pulled over to write down an idea or a topic to be developed. (Most comedians keep notebooks especially for this purpose.) Although some ideas ramble around in your brain until they're fully formed, others are flashes you'll forget if you don't jot them down.

I can't recall if I ever looked at Foxworthy's book, but I decided how I would format mine. One page would have a punchline and cartoon depicting the joke, and the opposite page would have three punchlines, text only. The book was 5.5 by 8.5 inches. Dan Wedeking, a comedian friend of mine, did the artwork. I described what I wanted and he drew it for me.

The premise, "You've Been Around Small Children Too Long When..." was at the top of each page in boldface and italics.

Jokes included: "You've Been Around Small Children Too Long When..."

"You have diaper bags that match *your* outfits."

"Some days you feel like sucking *your* thumb."

"In the shower, you snap *your* fingers and sing 'Itsy Bitsy Spider.'"

Continued on Page 4

California Writers Club

South Bay Branch

www.southbaywriters.com

— o —

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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. Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee. Note: California Writers Club uses a fiscal year that runs from July 1 through June 30 each year. Dual membership: \$25. Contact Membership Chair, Inga Silva, 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

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

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Ken Roberge
Marty Sorensen

Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. Please prepare your work as carefully as you would for an agent. All submissions will be copyedited. The Managing Editor decides which submissions to publish.

Submission deadline is the 15th of the month.

Electronic submissions should be attached MS Word files sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com. Use Times New Roman 12-font, no tabs, no colors, no page breaks. Send graphics separately as jpg files.

Creative Works

Short Fiction (1000 words)
Memoir (1000 words)
Poetry (300 words)
Essay (1000 words)

Creative Works

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Member Achievement and News:

membernews@southbaywriters.com

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

Advertising of workshops, conferences, and events is accepted from other Branches of California Writers Club. Because California Writers Club is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation, *WritersTalk* does not accept advertising of events or services that benefit an individual. Also, we cannot accept political advertising of any kind.

Authors retain all rights to their work. *WritersTalk* gratefully acknowledges the authors' permission to publish their submissions here. Contact individual authors for permission to reprint their work.

Our Mission

Encouraging writers at all levels of expertise to hone their skills in the craft of writing

Change of Address: Send changes of address to membership@southbaywriters.com or use MRMS.

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Words from the Editor

by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson
Managing Editor (Interim)



“Je Pense Donc Je Suis.”

—René Descartes, 1596 – 1650.

Perhaps you know this quote as “Cogito, ergo sum.” René Descartes wrote his most celebrated works in Latin and authorized and revised the French translations. We only need worry about English. In any case, he said, “I think, therefore I am.”

Descartes was a mathematician of the first order, an important scientific thinker, and an original metaphysician interested in first principles and abstract concepts such as being and knowing.

“I think, therefore, I am.” Does that apply to Artificial Intelligence, or perhaps to ChatGPT?

To bring this back to earth, we could not have gone to the moon without Descartes. If you have attended college, you have heard of his mathematics, whether or not you know it. Remember the two years of high school math requirement? You would have studied Cartesian geometry, graphing using coordinates (x, y), leading to $x^2 + y^2 = 9$, a circle of radius 3, and $3x + 5y = 11$, a line. Scientists use computers and equations to plot the trajectories of space vehicles. AI does the computations; humans do the thinking and planning.

I don't think that any computer could have thought all this up by itself.

But—what if we teach computers to think ...

In 2005, Ray Kurzweil, in *The Singularity is Nearer. When We Merge with Computers*, defines the singularity as the moment when Artificial Intelligence vastly surpasses all of human intelligence. He predicted 2045, but now Kurzweil has written two new books and has moved the singularity to 2030.

In 1904, Auguste Rodin, father of modern sculpture, described his famous work: “What makes my Thinker think is that he thinks not only with his brain, with his knitted brow, his distended nostrils and compressed lips, but with every muscle of his arms, back, and legs, with his clenched fist and gripping toes.” You can see a copy at Stanford University; the original is in Musée Rodin in Paris. Could we teach a computer to create an original work of art?

Can computers think? Can computers create? —WT

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President's Message from Page 2

Fortunately, I had started touring the West Coast in a two-woman show I created called *Mothers and Other Goddesses*. I worked with several comedians, but my best partner was Joni Rodgers. I booked us into clubs, hotels, and wineries. At the end of our show, we had a silly routine promoting my book. I printed a thousand copies. As it turned out, I should have printed two thousand—I didn't expect they'd sell so well.

Whether I was doing the show or working a private party, I took copies of my book and sold it. At one gig I was paid \$100 and sold over \$200 in books.

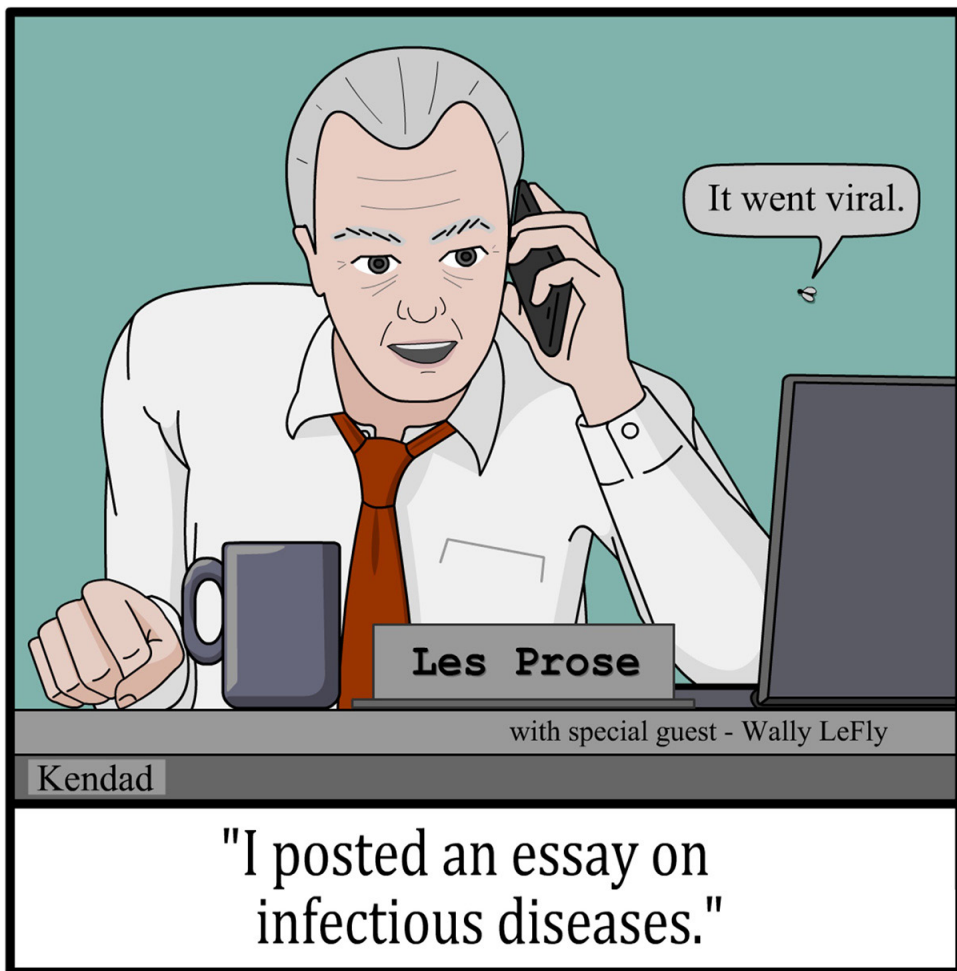
Of course, I had the advantage of having the comedy platform. When my novel is published, it won't be that easy. This is why you don't want to miss our January meeting when Andrew Benzie speaks on "Promoting Your Book: Building a Successful Marketing Strategy." —WT



Beatrix Potter brainstorms names for her rabbit characters: Jocko, Jumper, Thumper, Digger, Hopper, Hoppidy, Bouncer, Pouncer, Pesky, Pinkeye, Pixie, Trixie, Lurch, Furball, Foxtail, Cotton-head, Mophead, Itchy, Scratchy, Stewy.

Les Prose

—Kendad

*Comedy in Real Life*

Seven Yuan

Marjorie Johnson

Before my husband Frank and I traveled to China, we took conversational Chinese at adult ed. We found four tonal levels for each vowel challenging, but surely we could learn a few polite phrases from our charming young instructor.

The numbers one through ten — Yes! Right down the area of expertise for two math teachers. We were ready for the test.

"Give me 7 yuan," our instructor said in Chinese. She stood between us and put a \$5 bill and five \$1s on the table.

Neither of us could distinguish the number 7, spoken within a sentence. After two more failures, she put her hands on our shoulders and asked, "And you're both math teachers?"

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

Member News

Marjorie Johnson

Giselle Stancic has published three online articles as part of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) Biography Project (<https://sabr.org/bioproject>). The biographies, all of pitchers, include Tim Lincecum (#55 with the San Francisco Giants), Darren Oliver (20-year MLB veteran), and Ann Cindric (right-hander in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League).

Audry Lynch reported on a recent article about her and what she's doing. The article, "One Good Deed: Mentoring Young Writers from The Gambia" by Sophie Yarin, appears in *Bostonia*, the alumni magazine from Boston University, Fall, 2023, page 70. Here's a link to see the article online: <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2023/one-good-deed-audry-lynch/> If you have a comment on this article, please send it to Audry Lynch, audry.lynch33@gmail.com.

If you would like to see your name here along with your writing triumph, send an email to membernews@southbaywriters.com — WT

View from the Board

Chris Weilert

The South Bay Writers Board met as it always does, zooming at 7 p.m. on December 5th. SBW Board members are listed on page 2 of WritersTalk with their emails. The meeting began at 7:05 PM.

Edie Matthews, President: The prior meeting minutes were approved.

We had a good turnout for our first meeting at Maker Nexus. It is a better venue for sound quality. We hope we see an increase in attendance for future meetings.

The annual holiday party at Edie's house is from 5 to 8pm, December 10. There will be a gift exchange along with delicious potluck dishes.

The next board meeting will be on January 8 and the next speaker will be on Saturday, January 13.

Jamal Khan, Vice President: Andrew Benzie will speak on "Promoting Your Book" on January 13. In February 2024, we will have Eleanor Vincent, speaking on memoir.

Marjorie Johnson, MRMS: Always looking for member news. Marge will be the interim editor of WT in January.

Alice Wu, Treasurer: Alice is the official treasurer taking over for Jack London Award Winner, Trent Myers. A small increase in funds to our treasury account.

Bill Baldwin: Open Mics continue on the first and third Fridays on Zoom. Recent Open Mic stats: November 17 and December 1, each 6 readers. We usually do not do the third Friday in December. However, December 15 doesn't seem overly close to Christmas; so, by mutual agreement, we will do an open mic. Please contact Bill (WABaldwin@aol.com) to set up your opportunity to read your work.

Inga Silva, Membership: As of November, we have 93 members, 2 lifetime members and 2 students.

Open Discussion: Accommodations at Maker Nexus. We will review our set up to allow for more attendees

The meeting ended at 7:40 PM. The next board meeting will be January 8, 2024, on Zoom. SBW members are always welcome at Board meetings. To attend a board meeting, email to Edie.Matthews@pres@southbaywriters.com — WT

Facebook Pages/Groups for Writers

Carolyn Donnell

SBW Facebook Administrator

South Bay Writers has a Facebook page and a Facebook group. The page is a public outward facing page, named **California Writers Club-South Bay Branch**.

The group is **South Bay Writers Club**. This is a private group for members only. If you are on Facebook, check them out.

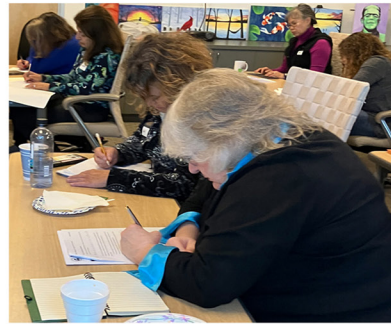
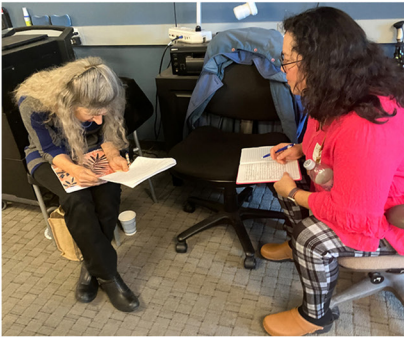
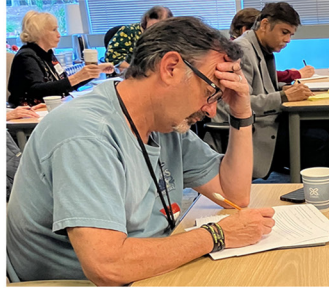
Many other writing-related pages or groups are on Facebook. Here are some:

Anthologies Seeking Submissions
Writing Competitions and Contests
Open Submission Calls Short Story Writers
Writing Competitions and
Contests - Weekly Updates
Playwriting Submissions & Competitions
Poetry Center San Jose-PCSJ
Poetry Exchange
Poetry Lounge
Willow Glen Poetry Project
Cupertino Poet Laureate
Santa Clara County Poet Laureate
Los Gatos Poet Laureate
National Poetry Month-write-a-poem-a-day-challenge
California Poets
The Poetry Salon Online
No Fee Calls for Poems

Direct any questions to newsletter@southbaywriters.com — WT



**South Bay Writers Meeting
November 18, 2023
Plotting Secrets,” with Laurie Ann Doyle**



What’s Missing?

Marjorie Johnson

South Bay Writers’ November speaker, Laurie Ann Doyle, asked us, “What’s missing?” as part of her talk, “Plotting Secrets: How absence can drive narrative.” She suggested that three people or creatures might be missing; three physical objects; three emotional things. She gave us a few minutes to free-write an opening paragraph/stanza for a story or poem.

I have been working on a memoir and struggle with an evil writer’s block genie who asks, “How could all of this drivel interest anyone?”

Focus. What’s missing? My husband of forty years. He loved his guitar. I jotted down

black case leans
silent guitar sings
ghost music

Voila! A poem, maybe? Or perhaps a flash fiction? I thought of Ernest Hemingway and his famous shortest short story. Legend has it that Hemingway bet everyone at the table \$10 that he could craft an entire story in six words. After the pot was assembled, Hemingway took a napkin and wrote:

“For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

The power comes from what he left out —
from what’s missing. — WT

Recap continued from Page 1

Christopher Lehmann-Haupt has said that “absence is the highest form of action.” A wedding ring has been stolen—or hoped for. A family member has disappeared—or died—or run away. A birth parent is longed-for/sought-for. A man misses the college degree he never obtained, the person he never married.

Loss can be painful. What we had before is now gone. We long for what we used to have, or what we wish we had achieved.

Plot can be driven by the fact that the protagonist is missing something, lacking something, and wants it. Wants it, indeed, right away: now!

Absence, though, can be double-edged, because it can bring both loss and liberation (if the characters can restructure their life and come to terms with their situation).

In closing, Doyle led us through a writing exercise. Chose a character, then think of something they might be missing and wanting. Consider how that might impact them and how they might act in response.

An entire setting and plot may suddenly suggest itself.

Consider Laurie Ann Doyle’s approach and see where it takes you. — WT



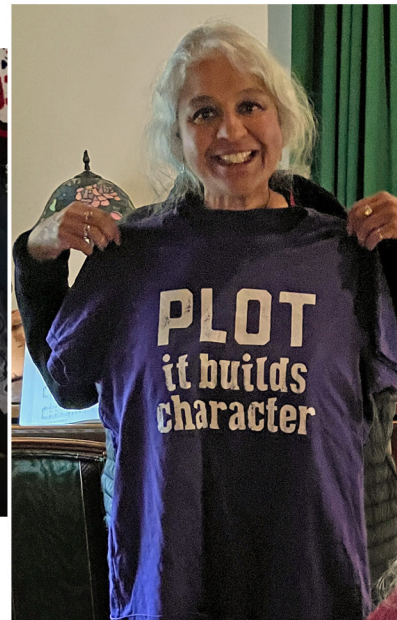
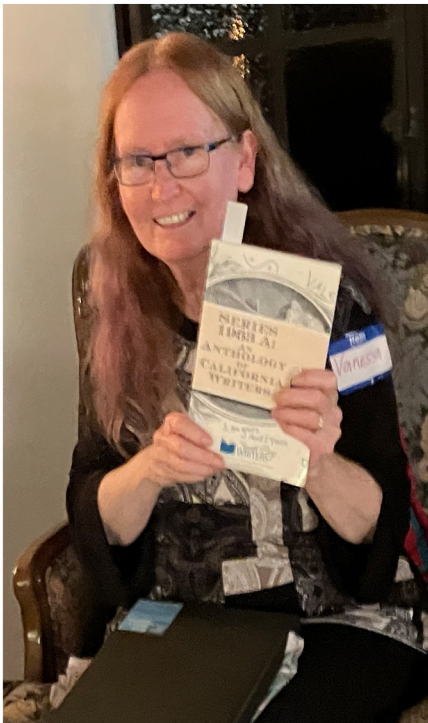
Toss the Santa December 2023



December 2023

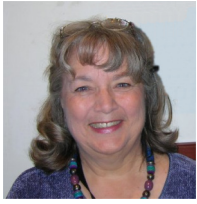


Gift drawing (and stealing)



Contests, Markets, and Resources

by Carolyn Donnell



Carolyn Donnell
Contributing Editor

Let us know if you have any success with any of the contests listed in *WritersTalk*. Or any other contest, for that matter. Send your writing victories to member-news@southbaywriters.com. You can also check other branches for their current contests and submissions. See a list of other CWC branches at www.calwriters.org/cwcbranches/

Members of our Facebook group – **South Bay Writers Club** – see contest postings there.

Listings are for information only. NO VETTING has been done by South Bay Writers Club. Read all guidelines carefully before submitting. And please share any experience you have, good or bad.

WRITERS BEWARE site: Check out this website for warnings about contests or submissions: <https://www.sfw.org/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware/>
LOCAL (PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS) AND OTHER CWC BRANCH RESOURCES: See branches at <https://calwriters.org/cwcbranches/>

NEW

California Writers Club announces a new CWC member-only book project for 2024. *Vision and Verse, a fusion of Art and Photography*. An ekphrastic book pairing artwork with poetry and short prose.

Phase One: art and photography contest open to members only. Deadline Jan. 15.

Phase Two: winning art will be published and used as the inspiration in a call for poetry and short prose submissions. Details and submission form at <https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse/>

NAME	DEAD LINE	URL	COMMENTS
Vision and Verse	Jan 15	https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse/	Art first, poetry submissions later
SF/Peninsula Branch.		https://www.cwc-sfpeninsula.org/writers-resources/writing-contests	Lists other resources
Fremont Area Writers		https://cwc-fremontareawriters.org/resources-writers/	See Writers Resources tab
North State Writers		https://www.northstatewriters.com/nsw-anthologies.html	Planning a new anthology soon
The Literary Nest		https://www.theliterarynest.org	Send visual art to theliterarynest@gmail.com
Catamaran Literary Reader		https://www.catamaranliteraryreader.com/	West Coast quarterly literary/visual arts journal

Raw Earth Ink	Mar 31	https://raw-earth-ink.com/2023/11/15/what-is-a-woman-anthology-submissions-open/	Women's stories previously published OK
Edinburgh Short Story Award	Feb.29	https://www.scottishartstrust.org/enter-writing	11:59 pm UK time
The Masters Review	Jan 28	https://mastersreview.com/winter-short-story-award-for-new-writers/	Short story by new writer
Chicken Soup For The Soul		https://www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/submit-your-story/	Ongoing topics
Writer's Digest		https://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions	Contests year round. Also classes/webinars
Romance Writers of America		https://www.rwa.org/chapterevents	Lists by month
Red Penguin Books		https://redpenguinbooks.com/open-submissions/	Various ongoing submissions
Driftwoods Press	Jan 15	https://driftwoodpress.submittable.com/submit	Fiction and poetry
Falling Star Magazine	Feb 11	https://falling-star-magazine.com/	Short stories. Some poetry
Water Dragon Publishing		https://waterdragonpublishing.com/2023/07/call-for-submissions-dragon-gems-winter-2024/	Check website for opening date
The Write Life		https://thewritelife.com/writing-contests/	Lists contests

Contests and Markets:

Continued from page 9

Winning Writers		https://winningwriters.com/	their contests and others listed
Authors Publish		www.authorspublish.com	Lists many contests, submissions, etc.
Funds for Writers		https://fundsforwriters.com/contests/	Subscribe to <i>hope@chope-clark.com</i>
Trish Hopkinson		https://trishhopkinson.com/	blog
Newpages		https://www.newpages.com/guide-submission-opportunities/big-list-of-writing-contests/	List of writing contests
The Writers College		https://www.thewriterscollege.com/short-story-writing-competitions/	
Freedom With Writing		https://www.freedomwithwriting.com	Lists many resources

POETRY CONTESTS, RESOURCES

NAME	DEAD LINE	URL	COMMENTS
Academy of American Poets	n/a	https://poets.org/academy-american-poets/american-poets-prizes	Lists contests/submissions
Writing Matters		http://www.randalssanctuary.wordpress.com/2020/08/11/publishers-of-poetry-books-chapbooks/	30 Publishers of Poetry Books & Chapbooks
Up the Staircase Quarterly		https://www.upthestaircase.org/	
Colorado Prize For Poetry	Jan 14	https://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/colorado-prize-for-poetry/	Poetry book
The Rialto Nature and Place Poetry Competition 2024	Apr 1	https://www.therialto.co.uk/pages/nature-poetry-competition/	British contest
Poets & Writers		https://www.pw.org/content/upcoming_contest_deadlines_87	Lists upcoming deadlines
Poetry Society of America		https://poetrysociety.org/awards	Awards/prizes
The Thimble Magazine		http://www.thimblelitmag.com/submissions/	quarterly online
Poetry Foundation		www.poetryfoundation.org	
Palette Poetry	Jan 15	https://palettopoetry.submittable.com/submit	Previously published contest
Poetry Pacific		www.poetrypacific.blogspot.com/	Published and unpublished.
Everywriter		www.everywritersresource.com/best-poetry-prizes/	
Reedsy		https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/chapbook/how-to-make/	chapbook contests
Gyroscope		https://www.gyroskopereview.com/welcome/guidelines	4 issues a year
Poetry Soup		https://www.poetrysoup.com/poetry/contests/	
Rattle chapbook prize	Jan 15	https://www.rattle.com/chapbooks/prize/	

Breaking News: San Francisco Book Festival

The 2024 San Francisco Book Festival has issued a call for entries to its annual program celebrating the best books of the spring season. Here's the link:

<https://mailchi.mp/jmnorthernmedia/2022-san-francisco-book-festival-call-for-entries-13922993>

Upward and onward!





DECK THE HALLS . . .

Thank you, Edie

Photos from Tonya McQuade

Below: Edie Matthews, Amanda Senior



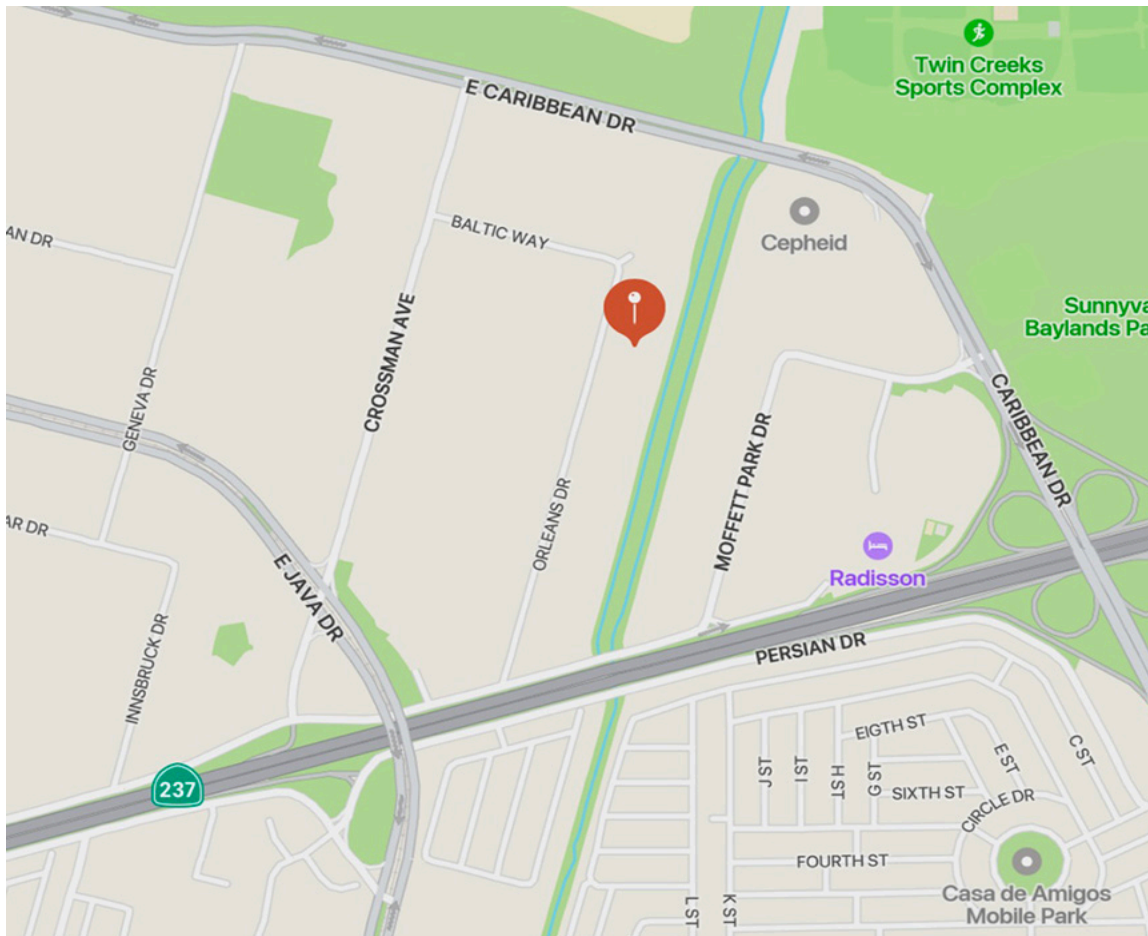


California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055

www.southbaywriters.com

Address Correction Requested



Directions from Santa Clara
to:

Maker Nexus

1330 Orleans Drive
Sunnyvale

North on Lawrence
Expressway,
Cross Hwy 101,
Name changes to Caribbean
Drive,
Cross Hwy 237.
Left at Crossman Ave,
Left at Baltic Way,
Right at Orleans Dr. to 1330.