



# WRITERS TALK

Volume 32  
Number 04  
April 2024

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

April Speaker:  
Mary Gottschalk

## It's All Writing: What works? What doesn't?

Carl Sagan once said, "Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people, citizens of distant epochs, who never knew one another. Books break the shackles of time." Whether your focus is fiction or non-fiction, novels or magazine pieces, or you're working on a biography or your autobiography, it's all writing: the skillful use of language, transcribed in a tangible medium. Drawing upon her experience as a journalist for four decades in the Bay Area, Mary Gottschalk will share some of her hard-won insights during our meeting on April 13th.



Stephen King has observed, "Books are a uniquely portable magic." Behind the curtain of that magic are the nuts and bolts: interviews, organization, editing, and opening with a hook that will make the reader want to stay with you. Mary Gottschalk is intimately familiar with each and every one of those critical components, and she will generously share her wisdom with us.

At the *San Jose Mercury News*, Mary Gottschalk started out covering politics under Harry Farrell and went on to work for the *Sunday* magazine and then *Features*. As the Style Writer she covered fashion, traveling to the New York shows twice a year and Paris three times. She developed the popular Shop Around column and wrote about home and garden trends.

After leaving the *Mercury News* in 2001, Mary went on to work at *Silicon Valley Community Newspapers* as a reporter, covering the Rose Garden and Willow Glen neighborhoods. She also helped launch *Image*, a monthly magazine supplement for the chain, continuing as the primary writer until publication ceased in 2015. Additionally, Mary has taught magazine article writing classes at San Jose State and freelanced stories to the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Meredith Magazines*.

- **What: Mary Gottschalk - It's All Writing**
- **When: Saturday, April 13, at 10:30AM**
- **Where: Maker Nexus, 1330 Orleans Drive, Sunnyvale**
- **Admission: \$10 for members, \$15 for nonmembers**

Map and directions to Maker Nexus on back cover.

March Recap: Martha Engber

## Flaming Great Dialogue

Bill Baldwin

At our March meeting, Martha Engber emphasized the importance of providing a good sense of your characters and what makes them tick, how to make them unique, and the pitfalls to avoid.

Understand that characters fill a variety of roles: Protagonist, Antagonist, Catalyst, Support, and Side.

Remember that dialogue is conflict: use it to increase the tension! This can apply to monologue as well.

Seven features shape a character's speech: upbringing, age, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, cultural setting, and physical attributes.

As an exercise, consider how you can apply this to the characters you are currently writing about. When applying ethnic background, be sure to explain ethnically-related terms that your readers may not be familiar with. If you use ethnic slang, be careful to keep it appropriate—be aware of what could be considered offensive. Physical attributes can include speech impediments—apply the same cautions you would consider with ethnic slang.

How can you apply these traits as far as distinctive words your characters might use? Would they use regional terms ("pop" vs "soda" etc.). Are there speech signatures arising from word choices, sentence structure, slang, or pronunciation?

Consider your characters and apply all the above! Remember that the purpose of dialogue is conflict. Dialogue should incorporate conflict! Each character should have their own distinctive way of speaking; this tells us who they are.

Try this: Take two of your characters and assign them two sentences each.

Continued on Page 4

# Between the Lines

Edie Matthews

President, South Bay Writers



## The Ultimate Backstage Pass

Some complain about name-droppers, but when you're in showbiz in LA, you rub elbows with famous people. The Improv in Hollywood drew a lot of comedians, who, like myself, liked to hang out whether they

were performing that night or not.

The club has a separate restaurant and bar at the entrance. Regulars included Jay Leno, Jim Carrey, Paul Rodriguez, Jerry Seinfeld, David Spade, George Lopez, Dennis Miller, Paul Reiser, Drew Carey, Rosie O'Donnell, Jeaneane Garofalo, etc. (Women were still a minority.) Lots of celebrities patronized the club too.

One evening I was chatting with a comedy writer for the Tonight Show. He was staring at the audience exiting the showroom. Annoyed, I asked, "Who are you looking at?" "Esther Williams." "Where?" There she was—tall, no longer trim, but still beautiful. She was with a big fellow who could have been her date or her bodyguard. (Her husband, Fernando Lamas, had died several years earlier.)

You never knew who would pop in. Rodney Dangerfield in pajamas, refusing to perform free. Milton Berle hoping someone would recognize him. Bruce Willis, Robert Blake (before the scandal), Terry Garr, Dennis Farina—along with the infamous like John Bobbitt (after his privates were re-attached). There were also nepo babies. Tom Hanks' brother, Kirk Douglas' son, Mohammad Ali's daughter, and Zsa Zsa Gabor's daughter, all attempting to do standup. Their ties got them stage time, but didn't make them funny.

I worked a week at the Last Laugh in Phoenix, an all-gal show with Diane Nichols and Martha Jane. Both of them knew Sam Kinison. His career was on the rise, and while we were joking at the local comedy club, he was doing two shows at the Celebrity Theatre. Martha had backstage passes, so Saturday night, the minute our second show ended, we zipped over to see Kinison. We caught the ending and saw him and his posse singing "Born to Be Wild."

We joined him and a bunch of others in the green room. Jessica Hahn was there too. She was the woman who had been embroiled with televangelist Jim Bakker. After the scandal, she'd moved to LA, had plastic surgery, and posed for Playboy. Her notoriety got her a job at a Phoenix radio station reading the weather. (It didn't last.) We were introduced, but she wasn't friendly.

Diane said to me, "How would you like to be the center of attention because you brought down a man's church?" Nope, not the attention I was looking for.

I was introduced to Sam. I'd seen part of his act at the Comedy Store. As a comedian, I could hang out in the back and watch the shows, without paying. I didn't care for his crass religious tirade and left after a few minutes, so I was surprised at how likeable he was off stage.

In LA, I met many other celebrities. Some grumpy like Mickey Rooney, some genuinely nice like John Forsythe. Some disappointing in person, Robert Redford, (a face with moles and a hooked nose), some as handsome as you can imagine, Kevin Costner.

All these encounters are now fodder for my novels. —WT

California Writers Club

South Bay Branch

[www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

### Executive Committee

President—Edie Matthews

[pres@southbaywriters.com](mailto:pres@southbaywriters.com)

Vice President—Jamal Khan

[vp@southbaywriters.com](mailto:vp@southbaywriters.com)

Secretary—Chris Weilert

[secretary@southbaywriters.com](mailto:secretary@southbaywriters.com)

Treasurer—Alice Wu

[treasurer@southbaywriters.com](mailto:treasurer@southbaywriters.com)

Members-at-Large—

Alfred Jan,

[member-at-large2@southbaywriters.com](mailto:member-at-large2@southbaywriters.com)

(2nd Member at Large—VACANT)

Central Board Rep—Bill Baldwin

[WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com)

NorCal Rep—Bill Baldwin

[WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com)

### SBW Committee Chairs

Programs—Jamal Khan

[vp@southbaywriters.com](mailto:vp@southbaywriters.com)

Publicity and Public Relations—VACANT

Facebook Admin—Carolyn Donnell

[facebook@southbaywriters.com](mailto:facebook@southbaywriters.com)

Hospitality—VACANT

Membership—Shari Clare

[membership@southbaywriters.com](mailto:membership@southbaywriters.com)

MRMS Admin (Member Roster)—Marjorie Johnson

[mrms@southbaywriters.com](mailto:mrms@southbaywriters.com)

Member News—Marjorie Johnson

[membernews@southbaywriters.com](mailto:membernews@southbaywriters.com)

Newsletter Editor—Tina Glasner

[newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

Open Mic—Bill Baldwin

[WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com)

Web Editor & Web Master—Una Daly

[webeditor@southbaywriters.com](mailto:webeditor@southbaywriters.com)

### 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](http://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.

Managing Editor—Tina Glasner

### Contributing Editors

Carolyn Donnell  
Marjorie Johnson  
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. The Managing Editor decides which submissions to publish, and submissions may be copyedited for clarity or brevity.

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

Electronic submissions should be attached MS Word files, sent to [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com). Use Times New Roman 12-font, no tabs, no colors, no page breaks. Send graphics separately as jpg files, with placement notes as needed.

Authors retain all rights to their work. WritersTalk gratefully acknowledges the authors' permission to publish their submissions here. For any reprint, contact individual authors for permission.

Submission deadline is the 15th of the month. Submit to: [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

### Member Achievement and News

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. Submit to: [membernews@southbaywriters.com](mailto:membernews@southbaywriters.com)

Change of Address: Send changes of address to [membership@southbaywriters.com](mailto:membership@southbaywriters.com), or you can edit your own entry in the member's roster (MRMS).

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Tina Glasner  
Managing Editor



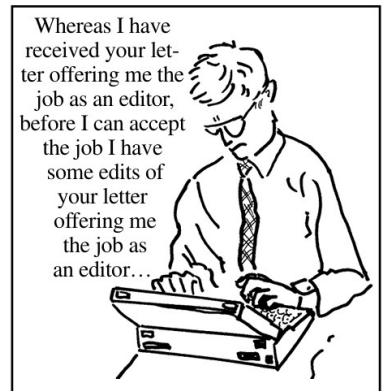
## Finding Out Who You Are

I'm excited to be your new editor. Some may remember me in the same role back in 1999... I also served previously in other branch offices, and was even honored with the Jack London Award. I do love volunteering, it's always been to MY gain.

So why did I leave the club (joined in 1993, left in 2016)? Well, the decision to leave wasn't easy, but I was pretty busy as a technical writer, and I'd gotten

back into flute and piccolo, and so I followed my music muse, playing with multiple community groups, and singing (I now love karaoke). I also became a grandmother along the way. Now that I've been retired for a couple years, it's time to delve back into literary pursuits. Besides, I have wonderful friends still in our club. It feels like home. And hurrah for retirement, plenty of time for art and music too.

Speaking of art, after high school, I wanted to go to art school. But my parents refused to support it, I wasn't Rembrandt! I believe now that they didn't know about commercial art. (You are who you are, right? Right here are a couple of my cartoons.) At Pomona College, young and set adrift from art plans, silly me wanted to be a judge someday (watch out RBG) but I did NOT want to be a lawyer first! So I fell back on German studies begun in high school, although I had no yen to teach. Took Russian and Spanish too along the way. Absolutely no claim to practicality and I couldn't even visualize long-range plans. Well, that's still me. A "late bloomer," and I hope still growing now.



Why is college the ONLY time in your life you're supposed to choose your life's path? It's only four years, filled with frat party kegs, learning to make your bed and lock your dorm room, thinking you're in love, all-nighters, falling asleep in the library stacks, and going home on breaks hoping your folks won't notice your dilated pupils (yes I inhaled).

But I did earn my B.A. in German, and much later, an A.D. from ITT in Multimedia. The second degree was surprisingly enjoyable, at age 50, because I'd chosen it with a lot more focus! Got straight As. — WT

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Recap: continued from Page 1

### Flaming Great Dialogue

Then make sure that these four sentences exhibit tension and conflict.

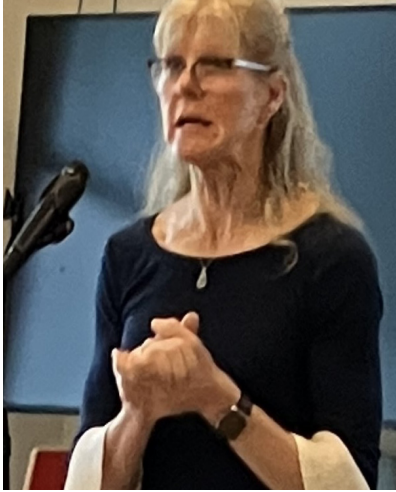
Follow-up: rewrite these four sentences and increase the conflict in the dialogue!

What about the pitfalls to avoid in writing dialogue? Here are a few:

Giving unequal treatment to the characters speaking: one person does most of the talking; one person is much more interesting or distinctive.

Using clichés.

Having your characters speak too properly, ie: using language that is too grammatically correct, language that actual people would likely never use.



Martha Engber

Avoid use of phonetic spellings. If someone is speaking in a dialect or slang, don't overdo alternate spellings.

Don't over-explain. You don't want to slow down the dialogue. In the back and forth of real-life conversation, one person usually doesn't have the chance to sermonize or lecture. If your character tends to, you have to figure out how to shorten them down to something that will conclude before it becomes boring.

Finally and again: Beware the absence of conflict. Remember, remember, remember: The purpose of dialogue is conflict! – WT

## Membership Renewal Begins Now

Shari Clare

Once a year we ask members to renew their membership. Active members pay \$45, Dual members pay \$25, and Student members pay \$20. For those joining for the first time, or if your membership has lapsed, the cost to join or rejoin is \$65.

Membership is valid until June 30, 2025. Note that if you joined this year between January 1 and March 31, you received a discounted rate for the partial year membership and now need to renew at the \$45 rate for the 2024/2025 year.

There are 3 easy ways to renew:

1. Go to [southbaywriters.com/join/#submit](https://southbaywriters.com/join/#submit) and choose the Renewal option, then click the Buy Now button to pay online.
2. Write a check to CWC-SOUTH BAY WRITERS, and mail it to South Bay Writers, PO BOX 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055
3. Bring cash or a check to an upcoming meeting and give it to our treasurer, Alice Wu.

Remember, the deadline to renew for the 2024/2025 year is June 30, 2024

## Member News

Marjorie Johnson

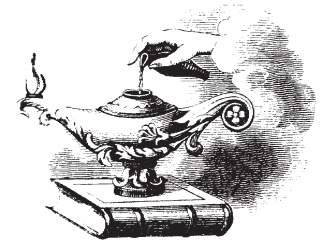
**Reena Kapoor** read her flash story, "Rent-A-Gent," by invitation, on March 13 at the Flash Fiction Forum.

**Dr. Jac Fitzenz** wrote: I just published my third novel in the Shanahans Trilogy: Shanahans Full House. This is my last book. After 18 books and nearly 400 articles, short stories, and columns, I've had enough. I turned 90 last summer and I think it is time to stop.

**Shari Clare** wrote: "Robin Sloan, SBW's invited guest speaker for September, explained in his newsletter about the value of pre-orders in getting onto the NY Times Bestseller List. His book, *Moonbound*, was my first time ever to pre-order a book. I also wrote a limerick (see page 7) to encourage our members to do the same, instead of waiting until September 14 when he will bring his own copies."

Congrats to Reena and to Dr. Jac, and thank you Shari for your creativity.

News? Please send an email to [membernews@southbaywriters.com](mailto:membernews@southbaywriters.com) – WT



## How to Update Your Mailing Address

Marjorie Johnson

Reminder: you can review and edit your own MRMS entry in the CWC statewide membership roster.

1. Go to [MRMSys.org](https://MRMSys.org)
2. Select your branch (we are listed as South Bay Writers).
3. Enter your User ID and password (if you've misplaced these, send an email to Marjorie, our MRMS Admin).
4. Click "I'm not a robot."
5. Click "Edit Member Record" and then change any and all fields you wish.
6. Click "Log Out" to exit.

This will update your record immediately. – WT

## View from the Board

*Chris Weilert*

The South Bay Writers Board met on March 4, zooming at 7 p.m. SBW Board members are listed on page 2 of *WritersTalk* with their emails.

**Edie Matthews, President:** Marge will carry duties for the Newsletter Editor until April, Tina Glasner will assume duty as the Editor of *WritersTalk* in April. Decided to change our board meetings to Wednesday to accommodate schedules.

**Jamal Khan, Vice-President & Programs:** April Speaker is Mary Gottschalk, on nonfiction. May speaker is Emily Jiang, "ABC's of Writing a Children's Picture Book."

**Alice Wu, Treasurer:** Alice reported on income and the current balance of our treasury funds.

**Bill Baldwin, Open Mics, Central Board & NorCal Rep:** Open Mics continue on first and third Fridays on Zoom. Please contact Bill to set up your opportunity to read your work. We have had 2 open mics since our last board meeting: February 17th - 7 readers, March 1st - 7 readers. Re the Central Board, the next meeting is in April. He will be asking

*Poetry & Photo*

## Morning Tea – October 2019

*Carey Doheny Steffee*

The early morning hours are my favorite time of day

It's dark

It's quiet

The house still asleep

With the first pre-dawn stretch,

Ideas begin to gather in the ganglia

What will this new day share with me

when the light appears out my windows

It's dark

It's quiet

A writer's paradise

Where new ideas begin to form

Only constrained by the limits of imagination

Peering out into the dark stillness

There is no light

There is no movement

why we are moving ahead with the Literary Review this year, after voting to do the ekphrasis project instead. There were no updates from NorCal. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 6th.

**Carolyn Donnell, Contests & Facebook Admin:** Will be reworking the website index.

**Shari Clare, Membership:** As of February 29, we have 94 active members, 3 dual, 2 life members, and 3 students. The total is 102.

**Marjorie Johnson, Member News, MRMS Admin:** As Interim Editor, provided details of the limerick contest (in this issue). As Member News Editor, Marge always welcomes member news.

**Tina Glasner, Writers Talk Editor:** On taking over for the April issue of WT newsletter, I anticipate issuing it on time.

**Una Daly:** Starting the project to add book covers to members bio's on our website.

The next board meeting will be Wednesday, April 10, 2024, on Zoom. SBW members are always welcome at Board meetings. To attend, email Edie Matthews. – WT



Oh such beauty is held in these early moments of the day

My favorite part of the day

Always grateful for its presence upon awakening

A time of day when anything is still possible

No one can change this or alter the course of the joy

for the day or path it may lead us on

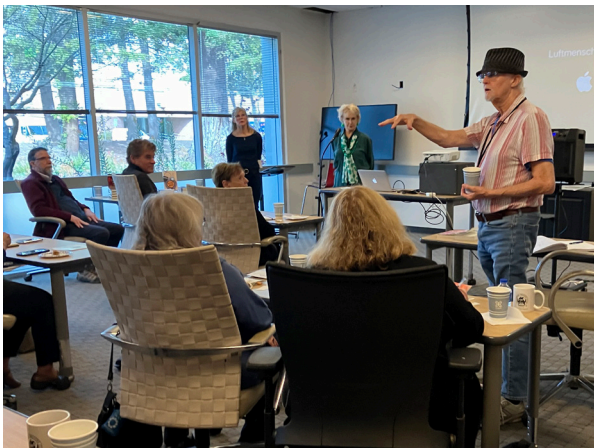
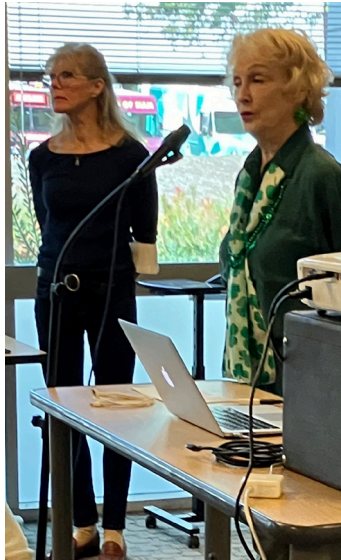
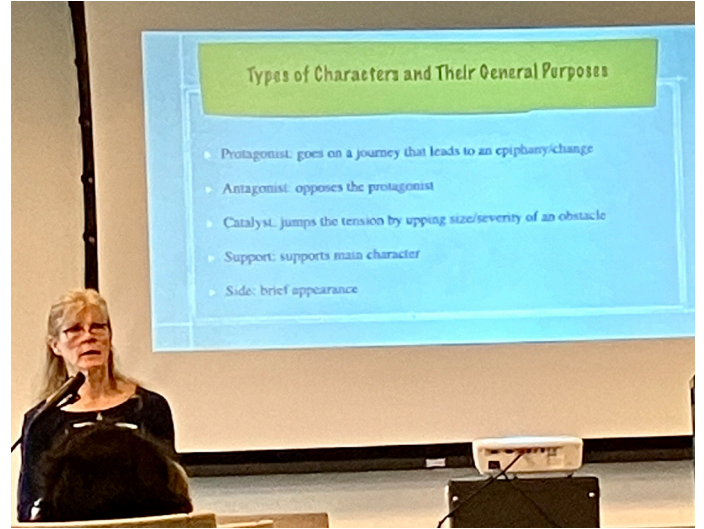
How can I carry this contentment through until nightfall?

– WT



# SBW March 9: Martha Engber on Dialogue

*Photos by Carolyn Donnell*





Poetry

## Top O' the Limerick To Ye Contest Results

Marjorie Johnson

The top three submissions to South Bay Writers Limerick Contest are "Senior Named Ted" by Carolyn Donnell; "Outlaw from Queens" by Colin Seymour; and "Old Writer from San Jose" by Una Daly. Carolyn, Colin, and Una will each receive a \$25 gift card.

### Senior Named Ted

There once was a senior named Ted,  
Could just barely get out of bed,  
He got a new chair,  
Electric – beware!  
Now Ted speeds along way ahead.

– C. Donnell

### Outlaw from Queens

An evil old outlaw from Queens,  
Who thinks he's attractive to teens,  
Has the skin of a lobster,  
The soul of a mobster,  
An ass crammed in Size Fifty jeans.

– Colin Seymour

### Old Writer from San Jose

There was an old writer from Saint Joe's  
Who couldn't sit and her memoir compose  
Her attention was constantly diverted  
As the cats and dogs cavorted  
She'll hire a ghostwriter I suppose.

– Una Daly

And the top three contenders were "Skated on Bacon" by M. Johnson; "Moonbound by Robin Sloan" by Shari Clare; and "Les Prose Weighs In" by K. Roberge.

### Skated on Bacon

There was an old lady from Middle,  
Who climbed onto the griddle,  
Skated on the bacon,  
Sizzled through Macon,  
Jumped off to piddle.

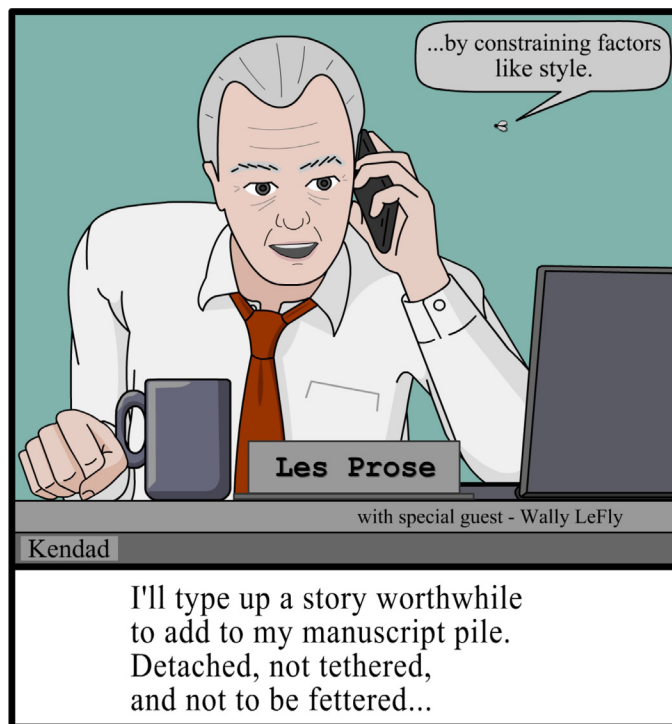
– M. Johnson

### Moonbound by Robin Sloan

There's a book coming out very soon  
That has me quite over the moon  
The title's Moonbound  
And if you are around  
Let's all plan to read it in June.

– Shari Clare

### Les Prose Weighs In



– K. Roberge

– WT

### Bay Area Book Festival

Vanessa MacLaren-Wray

*Cometary Tales: Writing on the Solar Wind*

The Bay Area Book Festival is coming up in June in downtown Berkeley. My publisher is offering a shared space for local indie and self-pub authors to sell their books.

"Small Publishing In a Big Universe," a project of local publisher Paper Angel Press, plans to host a table for small-press and indie authors to sell their books together at the Bay Area Book Festival's outdoor fair on June 2nd. The shared-space fee covers room for your books, onsite sales support, and online marketing.

The application form contains the details:

[spbu-marketplace.com/vendors/application](http://spbu-marketplace.com/vendors/application)

If you have remaining questions you can reach out to Steven Radecki at [spbumarketplace@gmail.com](mailto:spbumarketplace@gmail.com). – WT

## Watch and Discuss Films About Writers

Shari Clare

Even if you do not write screenplays, you might still enjoy watching a good movie. As members of this writing club, it can be especially fun to see films that feature writers as protagonists. While the quality of such films is not guaranteed, two outstanding films that had a writer as the main character ("American Fiction" and "Anatomy of a Fall") each won an Oscar this year for best screenplay. Additional movies about writers have also recently been playing in theaters.

Last month, four club members (along with two additional guests) met up to watch the film "Origin" at the Mercado Theater in Santa Clara, then we walked over to the nearby Paris Baguette coffee shop to discuss it. Although that film was not nominated for any Oscars, it was a powerful portrayal of how a writer found and researched her subject matter, then turned it into a best-selling book. The discussion that this film inspired was thought-provoking and enjoyable, and the group agreed that we should plan additional excursions.

If you have any suggestions for films about writers, or are interested in watching and discussing this type of film, please send an email to [filmwatchers@southbaywriters.com](mailto:filmwatchers@southbaywriters.com) to learn about or help plan potential film viewing/discussion events. – WT

## Origins, A Film Review

Shari Clare

While we all know that writers are essential to the creation of a screenplay, it is relatively rare for a writer to take center stage as the main character in a movie. The film "Origin" takes us on a journey with Isabel Wilkerson, the author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book "The Warmth of Other Suns", as she writes her follow-up book. While working on an article about Trayvon Martin, her research leads her to discover some surprising connections between slavery in the US, the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, and the caste system that has been in place in India for more than two thousand years. And while in the midst of coping with her own set of family traumas, Isabel continues to learn about traumas that occurred to people who were marginalized by a dominant group or caste. Through her research and personal experiences, she develops a theory about the root cause of these seemingly unrelated systems, and this theory forms the basis for her latest book "Caste". Although the movie contains some shocking scenes and a few disturbing images, everything was based on true events. This important and compelling film tells an emotional story that will stay with you long after the final credits. – WT

## Pitch-O-Rama

Naomi Shammash, WBNA-SF Intern

On behalf of the Women's National Book Association – San Francisco Chapter ([WNBA-SF](http://WNBA-SF)), you're invited to our Pitch-O-Rama event on Saturday, April 20, 2024 from 8:00am to 1:00pm PST virtually on Zoom. We are thrilled to bring back this highly anticipated event for fiction and nonfiction writers to pitch their work to agents. To register for Pitch-O-Rama and for more information, please visit [WNBA-SF](http://WNBA-SF). – WT

## Today is a Special Day

Marjorie Johnson

What's so special about today? Of course, some days are special because they come with religious or historical significance such as Christmas, the Ides of March, or Washington's Birthday. Others are just plain bonkers. For example, Google says March 23 is World Meteorological Day, National Puppy Day, and National Corn Dog Day. There is even a National Popcorn Day every January.

In my March editorial, I asked you to guess why November 23 is Fibonacci Day. Since the Fibonacci Numbers are 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, ..., and November 23 is 11/23, some blooming idiot decided to call it Fibonacci Day. In the same way, March 14 is Pi day, because  $\pi = 3.14$  (corrected to hundredths).

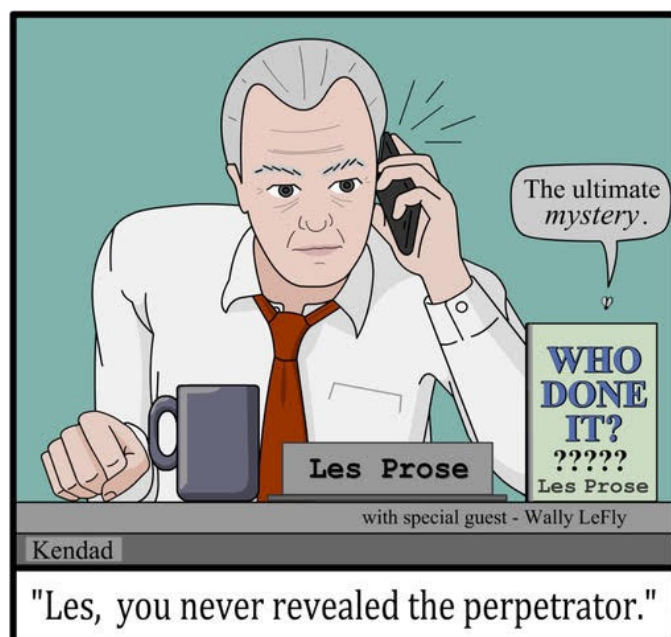
So, what's so special about today? Ask Google. If there's nothing listed, then that day is especially "special," a day without notice. I propose that every day is special. – WT

## Check us out on Facebook

Carolyn Donnell, SBW Facebook Admin

South Bay Writers has a Facebook members' group, [South Bay Writers Club](#), please join us. Other pages on Facebook that might interest you:

- Anthologies Seeking Submissions
- California Poets
- Cupertino Poet Laureate
- Los Gatos Poet Laureate
- No Fee Calls for Poems
- Open Submission Calls for Short Story Writers
- Playwriting Submissions & Competitions
- Poetry Center San Jose-PCSJ
- Poetry Exchange
- Poetry Lounge
- Santa Clara County Poet Laureate
- The Poetry Salon Online
- Willow Glen Poetry Project







Carolyn Donnell  
Contributing Editor

## Contests and Markets *by Carolyn Donnell*

Listings are for information only. NO VETTING has been done by our club. Let us know if you have any success with any of the contests listed in WritersTalk, or any bad experiences. Also, if you hear about an interesting new contest, please email me at [facebook@southbaywriters.com](mailto:facebook@southbaywriters.com).

Other tips: You can directly research information online from other branches ([California Writers Club BRANCHES](#)) to see whether they are running contests. Some allow all CWC members, others, just dual members. For more contest information on Facebook, see [Writing Competitions and Contests - Weekly Updates](#). For excellent advice on literary scams, see the [Writer Beware](#) page of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA).

### New Contests This Issue

- [Indie Author Project Annual Contest](#). Any indie author is eligible to apply, regardless of where they reside (as long as the book is written in English). One winner and two runner-ups will be chosen in seven genres. Deadline May 31, 2024.
- The [San Joaquin Valley Writers](#) branch contest is open to all active members in all branches, with 3 categories: prose fiction, prose nonfiction, and poetry. 3 winning entries will receive a cash prize of \$100 and acceptance into the 2025 SJVW anthology and SJVW website. Deadline June 1, 2024.

### Previously Published Contests (alphabetical order)

Name	Deadline	Comments
<a href="#">13th Annual Kindle Book Awards!</a>	May 1	The KINDLE Book Review.
<a href="#">2025 Int'l Voices Creative Nonfiction</a>	July 1	Vine Leaves Press, per Martha Engber.
<a href="#">Academy of American Poets</a>	n/a	Lists contests/submissions.
<a href="#">Almond Press</a>		Lists many contests.
<a href="#">Authors Publish</a>		Lists contests/submissions.
<a href="#">Catamaran Literary Reader</a>		West Coast quarterly literary/visual arts journal.
<a href="#">Chicken Soup For The Soul</a>		Ongoing topics. See Submit Your Story.
<a href="#">EveryWriter: The Best Poetry Prizes</a>		A blog listing poetry prizes. Also lists other resources for writers.
<a href="#">Freedom With Writing</a>		Lists many resources.
<a href="#">Fremont Area Writers</a>		See Writers Resources tab.
<a href="#">Funds for Writers</a>		Subscribe to Hope Clark's newsletter <a href="mailto:hope@chopeclark.com">hope@chopeclark.com</a> .
<a href="#">Gyroscope</a>		4 issues a year.
<a href="#">Newpages</a>		List of writing contests.
<a href="#">North State Writers</a>		See Anthologies. Planning a new anthology soon.
<a href="#">Palette Poetry</a>	April 7	The 2024 Love & Eros Prize.
<a href="#">Poetry Foundation</a>		Resources for poets.
<a href="#">Poetry Pacific</a>		Published and unpublished.
<a href="#">Poetry Society of America</a>		Awards/prizes.
<a href="#">Poetry Soup</a>		Free poetry contest and other resources for poets.
<a href="#">Poets &amp; Writers</a>		Upcoming deadlines.
<a href="#">Rattle Poetry Prize</a>	July 15	Entry fee includes 1 year subscription.
<a href="#">Red Penguin Books</a>		Various ongoing submissions.
<a href="#">Reedsy</a>		Chapbook contests.
<a href="#">Romance Writers of America</a>		Lists by month.
<a href="#">SF Book Festival</a>	May 24	See the call for entries.
<a href="#">SF/Peninsula Branch</a>		See writing contests. Lists other resources.
<a href="#">The Literary Nest</a>		Send visual art to <a href="mailto:theliterarynest@gmail.com">theliterarynest@gmail.com</a> .
<a href="#">The Masters Review</a>		Chapbook contest.
<a href="#">The Thimble Magazine</a>		Quarterly online.
<a href="#">The Write Life</a>		Lists contests.
<a href="#">The Writers College</a>		Writing competitions and events.
<a href="#">Tom Howard/John H. Reid</a>	May 1	Fiction & Essay Contest. Winning Writers latest contest.
<a href="#">Trish Hopkinson: A Selfish Poet</a>		a blog.
<a href="#">Up the Staircase Quarterly</a>		Online journal of poetry, art, interviews, and reviews.
<a href="#">Water Dragon Publishing</a>		Check website for date for submissions.
<a href="#">West Trade Review</a>	multiple	Reading periods: Apr 1 - Aug 1, Aug 15 - Dec 1.
<a href="#">Winning Writers</a>		Their contests and others listed.
<a href="#">Writer's Digest</a>	May 6	93rd Annual Writing Competition.

## April is National Poetry Month

Carolyn Donnell

April is National Poetry Month. Check the following websites for daily prompts and activities. Also check the other Poetry sites listed below (Internet and Facebook) to see if they have any other activities for April.

Poem-a-day (PAD) prompts:

- NaPoWriMo NAtional POetry WRiting MOnth at Writers Digest PAD ([writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry/2024-april-PAD-challenge-guidelines](https://writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry/2024-april-PAD-challenge-guidelines))

Some Poetry Month Activities:

- [Poets.org/national-poetry-month](https://Poets.org/national-poetry-month)
- [Programminglibrarian.org/articles/national-poetry-month](https://Programminglibrarian.org/articles/national-poetry-month)
- [Americanwritersmuseum.org/celebrate-national-poetry-month-with-these-5-activities](https://Americanwritersmuseum.org/celebrate-national-poetry-month-with-these-5-activities)
- [Familyfriendpoems.com/national-poetry-month](https://Familyfriendpoems.com/national-poetry-month)

– WT

*Memoir*

### Mom's Fifteen Minutes of Fame

Tina Glasner

My mother, having achieved an age (her 70s) when one might assume anonymity is the norm, was instead gifted with the unwelcome notoriety of being mistaken for a celebrity – sort of – she was actually being mistaken for a celebrity's mother.

My mother lived in the San Fernando Valley, a sprawling and prosperous valley that is part of the greater Los Angeles, California area. What do most people associate with LA? Hollywood. Who is one of Hollywood's favorite sons? Why, Steven Spielberg. And my mother, moving in the same general circles of that diverse yet clubby community, was being mistaken for Steven's mother, Leah Spielberg Adler.

In the years this started happening my mom visited me in northern California, and she was outraged. I found it a bit unbelievable and humorous as well; of course, no one was making my everyday life uncomfortable. It certainly made me muse about the nature of "fame."

To strangers catching sight of her, for all they knew, this might be Steven Spielberg's mother! Mom was "spotted" countless times at charity events and the theater. People would come up and drape an arm around her. I eventually saw it happen myself in a restaurant in San Diego. As she had a "bristly" temperament, my mother actively disliked such approaches. "No, I'm not," she would snap out before the hopeful supplicant had even finished "Aren't you...?"

If my mother had ever let anybody get past "Aren't you Steven Spielberg's mother?" I always wondered what these people would ask next. "Can you put in a good word for me, Mrs. Adler, when Steven casts his next movie, perhaps?" "Can you tell your son not to put so much violence on the screen, Mrs. Adler, for heaven's sake? You're his mother, after all!" But perhaps it was not influence that these people were after. Maybe all they wanted to say was, "Mazel tov, what a good job you did. You must be so proud of your wonderful son."



Leah Spielberg Adler, a.k.a. "Steven Spielberg's mother" (pictured at left), was known in her own right, running a "chic" kosher restaurant called "The Milky Way" in West Los Angeles. Surfing online, I found Mrs. Adler described as a diminutive Peter-Pan-like woman. Mrs. Adler was a bit older than my mother and had blue eyes. In online photos she looked blonde. My mother, in contrast, had brown eyes and auburn hair, though it was eventually a beautiful silver. Obviously these two women could only have twinned in their later years. Mrs. Adler had divorced Steven's father, Arnold Spielberg, and remarried (Bernie Adler). My mom was still on marriage number one.

One time, at my parents house, I printed out the picture of Leah in overalls and showed it to my dad. "Go show it to your mother." I walked into the kitchen and put it in front of her. "That's a lousy picture of me!" she said.

Leah Adler, I read online, was happy to share her memories of raising a precocious Steven. True to the pixie-ish spirit portrayed in the article, Leah even admitted to writing fake notes to school so she could take all of the kids on outings. "Don't worry, just live for today," she'd say.

So, definitely not my mother. On the contrary, my mother ran our household of five kids like a boot camp. We all had our orders, and absences from school, our chore duties, or from the dinner table were not tolerated, thank you! Despite her 5'1"



*Mom's Fifteen Minutes of Fame: continued from Page 10*

height, I would never have dared describe my mother as "pixie-ish." Truthfully, history or literature brings few female figures to mind fierce enough to compete with Mom, although Dickens' Madame Defarge might be a fit. She had a grip of iron from years of piano, and drove a tractor. Approach at your own risk!

Within our family though, and out of arm's reach, I couldn't resist kidding her. "I am so disappointed! I thought I was going to have dinner with Steven's mom!" I'd say. The reply here was a glare.

"Why don't you go down to the restaurant and meet her, Mom?" "I don't like kosher!" There might have been some culinary snobbism hidden in this response. Truth to tell, I would have vouched for my mom's cooking any day. Leah would have to be pretty good.

I did try to figure out how this could work to some advantage. Should she have toured on the Las Vegas nightclub circuit? Perhaps come out with a line of distinctively nonkosher comestibles? Just my ruminations.

"Why don't you change your hairstyle, Mom? That would solve the problem!" "She should change *her* hair!" As you can tell, Steven Spielberg had not cornered the market in feisty Jewish mothers.



*My mother Cecile (Cecy) Glasner and I, 2012*

My father joked that since he was now ready for wife number two (after 50 years), this might be just the thing. He wouldn't even have to clean out the closets. And there'd be a minimum of gossip – people might not notice the change! "Dad," I advised, "there's still time, rekindle your romance with Mom. However, don't kiss her in public, the word will get out that Mrs. Adler is dating again."

As it happened, some friends finally prevailed upon my mom to visit Leah's kosher restaurant. Leah was on the premises, emerged from the kitchen, and the two women met! Leah reportedly said, "It's like I'm looking in a mirror." She sat down and chatted for a bit and they got on very well.

Steven Spielberg should have issued a press release. "For the benefit of all mothers everywhere, there is only one occasion a year, namely, the second Sunday in May, when mothers crave attention and wish to be showered with it. Therefore go ye forth and leave my mother, and any mothers resembling her, strictly alone!"

But before leaving my Mom alone, I also hoped someone would say, "Mazel tov, what a good job you did. You must be so proud of your wonderful daughter!"

Rest in peace, Mom, in so many ways you're still with me. – WT

*Poetry*

## Two Limericks

*Chris Weilert*

### Bow to Elastic

You can take away all the plastic,  
But stay away from my elastic.  
Keeps my pants riding high  
Never seen to the naked eye  
It has abilities like no other fabric.

### Enough Already

There once was a man from Nantucket  
Some say was a quick wit  
A corny pun, he would tell  
Doesn't always go over well  
Banal to most who endure it

*Ed. note: These missed the contest on page 7, but we're happy to publish here. – WT*



*"Lassie, I need your help with the rescue in Chapter 12 in my book."*

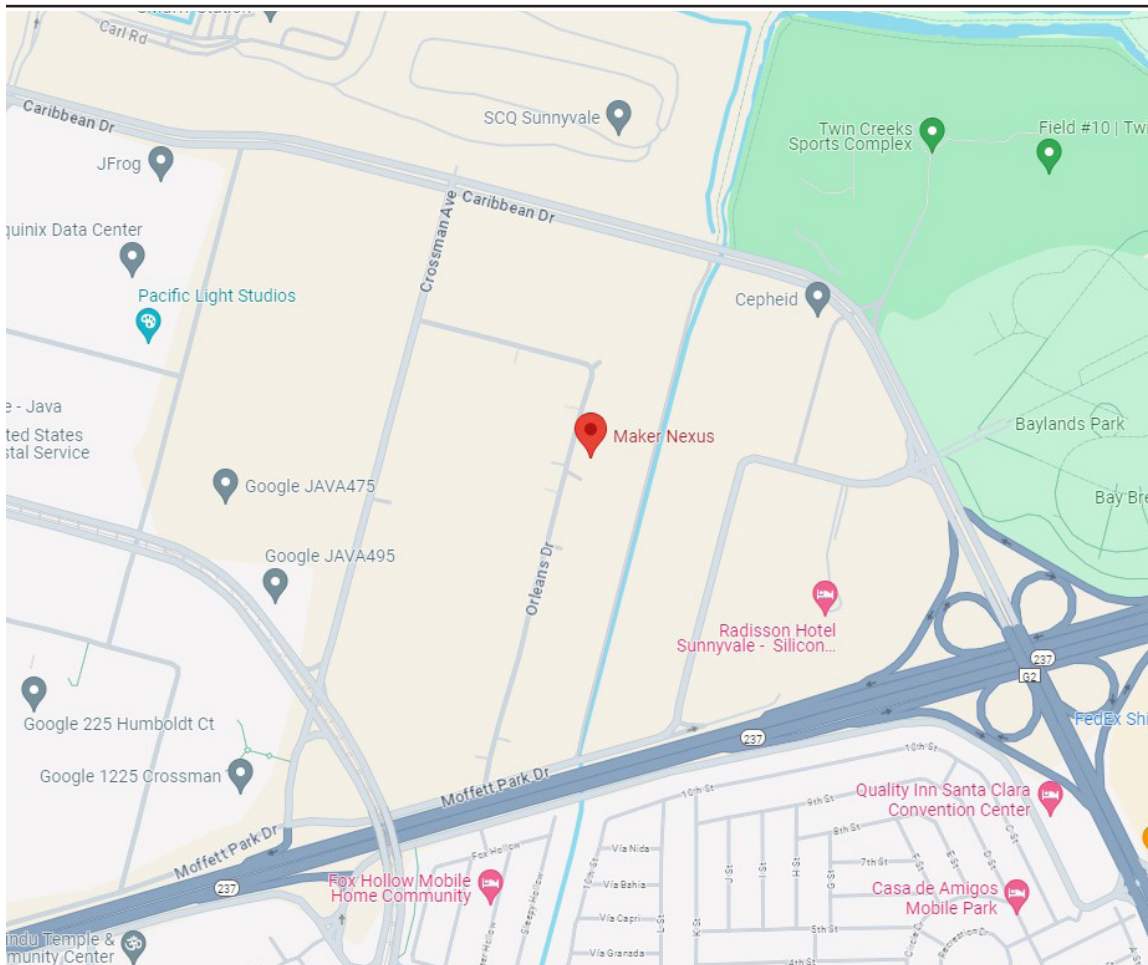


## California Writers Club

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

[www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

### Address Correction Requested



Directions from Santa Clara:

**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.

**Saturday, April 13,  
10:30 at Maker Nexus**

**Come EARLY to  
allow for security check  
in at door**

**Mary Gottschalk  
It's All Writing**