



WRITERS TALK

Volume 32
Number 06
June 2024

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

June Speaker:
Chris Hennessy

Create Your Book Buzz



Your book is complete. Friends love it. But how do you reach a wider audience? Use every modern tool at your disposal, with an emphasis on direct-to-reader outreach. Substack allows you to build an email list of fans. Inexpensive videos can scale. Podcasts convert listeners into readers. Each unique and well-crafted social media post has the potential to be shared and amplified. And mainstream media remains a viable option. During our meeting on June 8th, speaker, author, and filmmaker Chris Hennessy will demonstrate how to master promoting your work in today's world of social media.

From 1990 through 2018, Chris produced hundreds of professional films for clients such as Apple, Google, the SF 49ers, Folsom State Prison, eBay, Stanford University, Office Max, Deloitte, and The American Cancer Society, featuring his unorthodox style and distinctive comedy schtick. After more than 1,500 of these professional gigs, he retired from corporate and social filmmaking in 2018 to pursue his own creative projects that he writes, produces, acts in, hosts, and directs.

With his decades of experience, Chris has mastered the art of drawing and keeping attention. Don't let your book flounder in obscurity! Join us and learn about Chris's insights into how to effectively promote your book.

- **What: Chris Hennessy - Bookselling on Social Media**
- **When: Saturday, June 8, 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

Membership Renewal is Closing June 30th

Active members - \$45, Dual members - \$25, Student members - \$20.

1. Go to southbaywriters.com/join/#submit and choose the Renewal option, then pay online.
2. Or, write a check to CWC-SOUTH BAY WRITERS, and mail to South Bay Writers, PO BOX 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055.
3. Or, bring cash or a check to our meeting and give to treasurer Alice Wu.

May Recap: Emily Jiang

The ABC's of Picture Books Bill Baldwin

Emily Jiang, our May speaker, began by sharing some of her background. Born here of Taiwanese parents, but growing up in Texas, Emily inherited a combination of Chinese and Western influences.

She explained that publishing a book involves a lot of stress: the process itself generally takes around two years.

She then confessed that, although her title mentioned "ABC's," she found it more useful to speak of the "CAB's," specifically: Content and Craft; Audience/Age-Range; Business.

To demonstrate, Emily shared illustrations and text from her own *Summoning the Phoenix (Poems and Prose About Chinese Musical Instruments)*. Pairs of pages provided lovely drawings featuring traditional Chinese musical instruments, along with poems inspired by those instruments.

As an exercise in determining Content, Emily led us in a short exercise of visualizing aspects of our lives that are meaningful to us and then drafting a short poem about them.

Audience/Age-Range is important to keep in mind. Are you writing for Middle Grade or Young Adult? This can determine whether a publisher would prefer a 32-page book or a 64-page book (the two standard lengths).

Story-based books are a lot like novels, but for picture books you want a thousand words at most. Succinct is preferred. Aim for something that can be read and re-read. Avoid didacticism. If you are writing poetry, emphasize rhythm rather than rhyme. Leave the illustrator the space to create their own visual magic.

(Continued on page 4)

Between the Lines

Edie Matthews

President, South Bay Writers

The Joy of Fiction

As a novelist, I'm inspired by the people I've met. Some of these individuals are unforgettable. Like Faye, a red-headed 16-year old teenager I encountered when I was ten years old and living in Los Angeles. She made such an impression, I later used her as a model for a prominent character in my novel, *On a Clear Day You Can See Hollywood*.

Near our house were two sets of courts. These were a cluster of six to eight bungalows with a common walkway off the sidewalk. They were inexpensive accommodations, and often newcomers to the city stayed there until they learned the lay of the land and moved on.

I used to wander up there to see if any new kids had moved in.

On one occasion, a family from Alabama rented one of the larger two-story, two-bedroom dwellings.

I was sitting on the floor engaged in a Parcheesi game with Faye's three younger siblings, but still heeding Faye's presence. She sat curled in a chair reading *Peyton Place*.

Suddenly, she slapped down the paperback, stood up, and announced, "I'm going to be a movie star."

This was my dream too. But in a million years I wouldn't have had the nerve to boldly announce it to my family. My brothers would have laughed the house down. However, her bravado motivated me to respond. Meekly, I said, "I want to be a movie star too."

Her eyes zeroed in on me. "Really?"

She undulated to the kitchen, giving me an opportunity to scrutinize her. She had a voluptuous figure with breasts the size of cantaloupes, which defied gravity. In comparison, I was a skinny-bones.

Oddly, there was a full-length mirror in the kitchen. She stood in front of it posing. "Do you ever practice acting in the mirror?" Faye asked me.

"No," I replied, feeling self-conscious.



"Oh, I do." She dipped her chin and cooed, "'Pleased to meet you, I'm sure.' That's Jayne Mansfield's signature line. She says it in all of her movies."

"I've been in some of the plays at the recreation center," I replied. This impressed her and we bonded.

Determined to be discovered, Faye gave a fake address and transferred to Hollywood High. She must have believed the story about Lana Turner being discovered there.

At one point, she was going to pose for some sexy magazine and asked me if I had any sexy clothes — which I didn't.

Eventually, her family moved out, and we lost touch until a couple of years later, when she returned to the neighborhood to show off her husband. She looked pregnant. I was disappointed. Later I heard she had a couple of kids, and that her husband was abusive.

However, the character she inspired in my novel did experience a tumultuous career. She gets hired as a mail girl at Universal Studios, has an affair with an older powerful director, and becomes the latest "bombshell," à la Marilyn Monroe.

Faye, and many others, along with memorable situations, are fodder for my imagination.

One of the perks of writing fiction is enjoying the adventures your inventiveness creates. — WT

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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

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WritersTalk

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

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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 MS Word files. Use a plain font, no tabs, no extra spaces or returns, no page breaks. Send graphics separately as jpg files, with placement notes as desired.

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 20th of the month. Submit to: 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

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

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Tina Glasner
Managing Editor

Thinking of Dad

Soon it will be Father's Day, a good time to think about my dad. And how I once used my new-found pursuit of writing to give him a unique gift.

My dad in his 70s told us he didn't think he'd been much of a father. I disagreed! This became an essay that I wrote and gave to him on his birthday in 1993. He was the only audience.

But in 1997 I was reading one of my favorite sections in the *San Jose Mercury News*, "Celebrations." They used to publish contributions from readers each Thursday. I called dad, and he was fine with me submitting what I'd written for him, so I turned it in and the editor loved it. She asked for a color picture to go with it of my father and me. It was published January 8, 1998, with a photo of my dad and me dancing at my wedding in 1976. When the piece hit the newstands, I drove early in the morning down to the Diridon station newstand to buy a stack of that day's papers, one of which I sent to my dad to demonstrate that San Jose was big enough to merit a substantial sized daily paper. But he always favored the *LA Times*, and that was that!

The editor had titled the piece "The Definitive Dad," but I think dad was a one-off, certainly not the standard for anyone else's dad!

My dad, an electrical contractor, worked long hours to support five kids. Nevertheless, he did unique things in his spare time. One summer he decided we were going to all dig a swimming pool. We had a pretty deep hole, but it was not very wide or long before we lost steam. For a few days we enjoyed sliding into it, then we filled it in. One winter, perhaps in response to the Christmas lights of the neighborhood, Dad built a huge Jewish star with flashing blue and white lights. He said he



wasn't happy until all the other lights in the neighborhood dimmed. There were also wall switches in our house that buzzed but did nothing. No addition to our rambling house was ever done to "code."

Dad also knew how to make a loud whistle that he used to call us in from "out the back" at dinnertime. He used two fingers of one hand — we kids were determined to duplicate it. I do a two-handed version and used it in my own parenting days to summon, from downstairs to upstairs, my own family to dinner.

When mom sent him to our bedrooms to settle us down for the night, he'd sneak up so quietly we wouldn't realize he was there until with a squeal of surprise, we'd spot the tip of a cigarette glowing in the dark. The shock of him listening in on our innermost secrets was punishment enough.

He was the parent to take you into his side of the bed after a bad dream. I recall talking to him about my fear of death. He explained how the old must give way to the new, and that the earth could not hold everybody if nobody ever died.

My parents didn't lavish praise, that just wasn't their manner. But after they'd passed away and we were cleaning out the house, my nieces found a folder with all the clips over the years that I'd sent. A lot of us deeply love our parents, but impressing them is a different story, isn't it? — WT

(Continued from page 1)

Some tips: read at least a hundred recent books so that you understand the current market. Join the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). Join several critique groups.

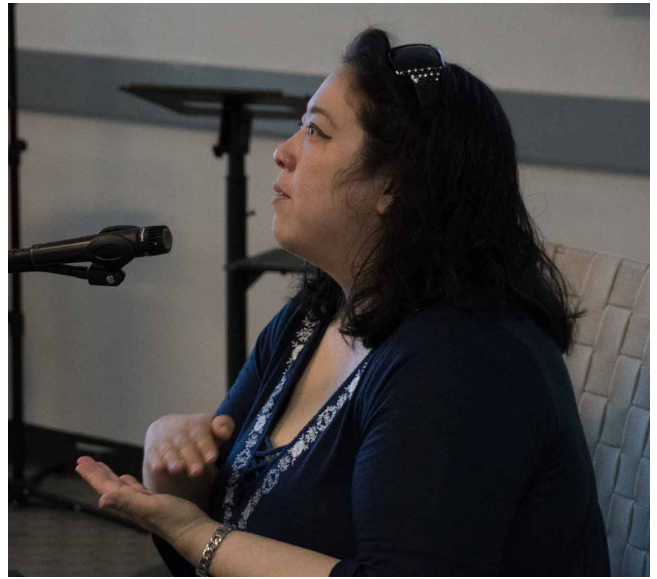
Emily discussed the importance of writing books for children that are diverse: it is a challenge when none of the characters look like you! We need more diverse books. If your own background is well-represented but you'd like to include more diversity in your books, be sure to get feedback and critiques from readers of diverse backgrounds, so you can avoid unintended insensitivity towards anyone. Do your research! Get beta readers.

Further business advice: find a good

agent. Be aware that some agents will want you to work only with them. Check their website, consult their clients, and attend conferences where you might evaluate them.

If you don't find an agent, you should research editors, network at conferences, and consider paying for critiques.

Children's books are very competitive and the process is quite slow. Take a deep breath. You will need a lot of patience. Good luck! – WT



Emily Jiang

Left Coast Crime 2024 Conference

Shari Clare

An intriguing idea for a story can sometimes strike unexpectedly. To my great surprise, I felt compelled to write a murder mystery and wanted to immerse myself in this branch of literature that I had avoided reading in recent years. A friend recommended that I attend the Left Coast Mystery conference. When I learned it would take place in Bellevue, Washington, which is close to my daughter's home, I immediately signed up.

To say that this conference was life-changing would only be a slight exaggeration. At Left Coast Crime, I collected dozens of valuable tips and met no end of amazing fellow writers who generously gave their time and advice. Among the most memorable were D. R. Ransdell, who hosted a coffee for writers new to the genre, and Heather Haven, a quick-witted mystery writer who lives locally and has agreed to be the speaker for our August meeting. I also met an editor who lives in Santa Cruz, with whom I have established a working relationship, and I joined the Sisters in Crime club.

The keynote speakers this year were Megan Abbot and Robert Dugoni. Additional highlights included a new author's breakfast and a "speed-dating" session where authors traveled from table to table and described their books in two minutes or less. A silent auction, which took place during the awards dinner, raised money for the Page Ahead Children's Literacy Program. The breakout sessions I attended included "First Time Authors Share Their Stories," "Amateur Sleuths," and "The Red Pen Experts: Editors Panel." At one of the final sessions, I spoke up about how well-run this conference was and how I felt embraced in a warm community that I didn't even know existed just a few short months ago.

I've already signed up for *Left Coast Crime 2025: Rocky Mountain High Jinks* in Denver. If you enjoy reading or writing in the mystery genre, please let me know if you are interested in attending by emailing me at membership@southbaywriters.com. Perhaps we can coordinate! – WT

Member News

Marjorie Johnson

From **Alfred Jan**: Here is the information on the mystery panel. Steve Latner, David Wolf, and Alfred Jan will present their work in mystery fiction at Feldman's Books, 1075 Curtis Street, Menlo Park on June 14 at 6:30 pm.

From **DeWayne Mason**: This past Saturday afternoon, I submitted my memoir, *Baseball's Greatest Miracle: My High School Hero, Thirteen Gritty Ballplayers, and Our Historic Comeback Season*, to Paul S. Levine Literary Agency. Three or four hours later, I received his email reporting that he had read enough to know he wanted to represent me and sell the book on my behalf – and that a contract would be forthcoming this week. Thank you [to the club] for whatever role you played, minor or major, in supporting me during the past seven-plus years as I learned to write, revise, and polish my work. As I have noted before, it takes a village to help the village wannabe jock and visual artist write a book, and I am deeply grateful for your assistance – in whatever form it took. It's been a journey. Stay tuned and keep your fingers crossed.

From **Marjorie Johnson**: From Research Gate, congratulations on reaching a new milestone. My article, "A primer on the Pell sequence and related sequences," has reached 100 citations. Also from **Marjorie Johnson**: Infinity Publishing, the publisher of my three novels: *Jaguar Princess*, *Lost Jade of the Maya*, and *Bird Watcher*, declared bankruptcy in 2022. They couldn't compete with Amazon and Barnes & Noble. However, in late 2023, they helped me move my books to Kindle Direct Publishing. All three books went live in May. (Note: I write as Marjorie Bicknell Johnson, if perchance, you should like to check me out.)

If you would like to share your writing news, send an email to membernews@southbaywriters.com – WT

View from the Board

Chris Weilert

The South Bay Writers Board met on April 10, zooming at 7 p.m. SBW Board members are listed on page 2 of *WritersTalk*.

Edie Matthews, President: Prior minutes were approved. In June the speaker is Chris Hennessy, “Story-Telling Crossover: How to Use Visual Media in Your Author Platform and Writing Projects.” At our general meeting Edie will announce the need for newsletter copy-editors, along with board members. Current vacancies on the board include Public Relations.

Alice Wu, Treasurer: Alice reported income via the April balance sheet.

Bill Baldwin, Open Mics, Central Board & NorCal Rep: Open Mics occur on first and third Fridays, and one of these may return to in-person. Please contact Bill to set up your opportunity to read your work and to confirm whether an open mic is live or via Zoom. Recent open mics: April 19th – 6 readers, May 3rd – 4 readers. Central Board met on April 28, the NorCal meeting was May 13th. Highlights: The Long Beach branch is closing after June, due to many post-pandemic issues. The cover and interior design of the Ekphrasis book has been funded by Roger Lubeck, and the Board voted to do another such book next year. This year’s Literary Review is scheduled to be published on June 1. The Board is planning an alternative to MRMS which should provide much more service to individual members. Roger Lubeck will be renominated for President, Jordan Bernal for VP, and Crissi Langwell for Secretary (Treasurer position is still open). The Board also voted to present Kymberlie Ingalls, a beloved member of several branches, with a posthumous Ina Coolbrith Award. Joyce Krieg is soliciting feedback on the Bulletin – what works, what doesn’t.

Carolyn Donnell, Contests & Facebook Admin: Carolyn is temporarily on leave from club activities, recovering from a broken arm. The Board wishes her a speedy recovery. Joe-Ming Cheng will take pictures for our Saturday meeting in place of Carolyn.

Shari Clare, Membership: As of May 8th, we have 96 active members, two lifetime members, three students and three dual, 104 in total. Shari is working on confirming and updating member details, including payment information.

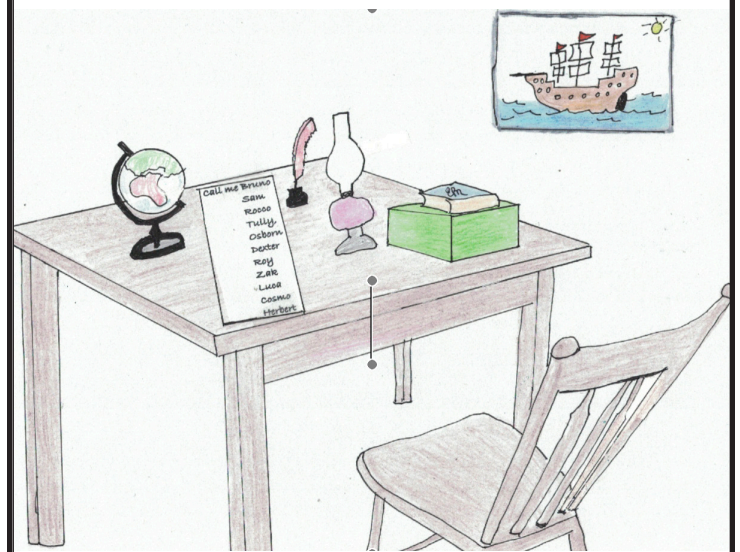
Marjorie Johnson, Member News, MRMS Admin: Marge will be involved when the MRMS is updated. She needs more raffle tickets for our Saturday meeting.

Tina Glasner, Writers Talk Editor: Tina would like more submissions. She plans to work on the cumulative index with Una’s help. When she emailed the last WT digital version some emails bounced, this was relayed to Marge and Shari. She will add a calendar feature to the newsletters.

Una Daly, Web Editor: The website is being updated. She will make an announcement about elections.

The next board meeting will be Wednesday, June 5, 2024, on Zoom. SBW members are always welcome at Board meetings. To attend, email Edie Matthews. – WT

Off the Shelf – Edie Matthews



HERMAN MELVILLE BRAINSTORMING NAMES FOR HIS PROTAGONIST: “Call me Bruno, Rocco, Sam, Tully, Osborn, Dexter, Roy, Zak, Cosmo, Luca, Herbert...”

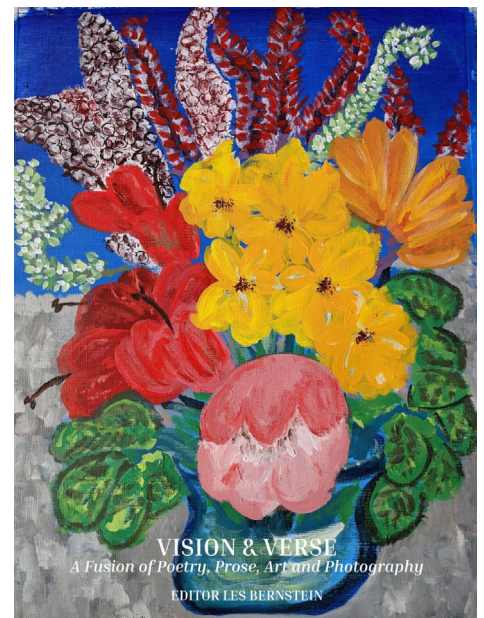
CWC 2024 Ekphrastic Book - Update

Roger C. Lubeck, CWC President

The CWC 2024 Ekphrastic Book, *Vision and Verse, A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry* is in the final stage of copy proofing. Below is a copy of the front cover. The art is “Welcome” by Briahn Kelly-Brennan. The cover was designed by Crissi Langwell.

In the book, there are 15 pieces of contest winning member art and photographs with 130 member poems and prose prompted by the art. In addition, we have included images of member art that received honorable mention. The final published book will be a high-quality softback, 200-page, book with color covers and 20 pages of art in full-color.

We expect the book will be available for purchase for \$35.00 on August 15, 2024. Books may also be sold at branch meetings, with a to-be-determined member discount. The CWC is actively seeking traditional and new ways to promote writing, publishing, marketing and selling. We look forward to your feedback when the book becomes available. – WT



Saving Estelle

Marty Sorensen

Estelle crossed the street and stood among the Pacific Madrones on Magnolia Bluff. But it did no good, the fog so thick she saw only the gray mist, no white-tipped Mount Rainier, no purple Olympic Mountains her family loved to watch during sunset. A lonely foghorn sounded down below and she smelled the salt air of Puget Sound. She became sick to her stomach as she felt the intense realization that she was totally alone. She ran back home and to the bathroom, fell on her hands and knees and threw up into the toilet. Sweat dripped from her hot face.

She remembered their first stunning view from the bluff when they were newly arrived from Iowa. Christy, Estelle, and their son Bobby.

It had been three months since Bobby drowned and she and Christy made separate lives, but she picked up the phone and dialed Christy's number. The phone rang several times on the other end, then she heard Christy's voice.

"Hello?"

"I-" and then she hung up. What if he didn't care that she called?

She sat on the floor and pulled her legs up to her chest and wrapped her arms around them. The phone rang. She put her head down on her knees. She let it ring five times, and then she picked it up. She waited a long time before answering.

"Hello?"

"It's me, Christy. Wasn't that you just now on the phone?"

She pictured him talking into the phone and smiled and pushed her hair out of the way. She wiped her fingers across her eye.

"Thank you for calling me back."

"Stel, are you all right?" he said.

"Yes I am." She wondered if her voice betrayed her. "No, I'm not."

"I'm not either. I miss you," he said. She wanted to cry at the sadness in his voice, but felt the soothing effect the words had on her stomach and head.

"I have missed you very much," she said. "Can't you come over? Home? Soon?" She got nervous again waiting for his reply.

"I want to see you too," he said. She waited for him to say 'now.' She put out her cigarette and took a deep breath.

"Do you mean it?" she said.

"Stel, something happened to me a couple of days ago."

Estelle felt a stab in her stomach. "What?"

"I was driving down Finney and turned the corner and saw Green Lake, right where Bobby drowned. I pulled the car over and cried."

"I'm sorry, Christy. I'm really sorry. I'm so sorry it pulled us apart."

"Stel, I buried myself in work and you wanted to go back to the farm. I'm so grateful you stayed here. Seeing the lake, it made me think. I'm lost without you."

"I have never stopped loving you, Christy. We only have each other now."

"I need to come see you."

"I'll be here. I'll always be here. Come now."

Estelle put down the phone. She went into the kitchen and put mason jars and ripe yellow-red peaches on the counter.

Milton parked his motorcycle a block away from Estelle's house. A soft drizzle hung in the air, muffling all sound. Houses all around seemed to fight their way out of the fog. The trees were completely still, frozen in layers of dark green and gray. He sat quietly and listened as a streetcar clanked around a corner in the distance and rumbled off into oblivion.

He lit a cigarette, waved the match once and tossed it into the street. He watched it fall slowly onto the wet green grass of the parking strip and lie there like a thin dead body with a burnt head.

He took a few drags, then put the cigarette on his thumb and flicked it away as he started down the street, walking on the parking strip. The black telephone poles seemed to be jammed into the ground out of the gray mist. He reached the corner of her house, walked across the street, and followed the sidewalk alongside. The shade on the bedroom window was pulled down. He walked around the back and saw Estelle dimly through the kitchen window moving back and forth.

He hesitated and looked at the other houses. No one was visible. He opened the screen door slowly, hoping it would not creak, but it did. He stopped for a moment, listening intently. She did not come to the door. He quickly opened the screen door and then opened the kitchen door and walked in. Estelle turned and looked at him, her hands caught in mid-air with a white bowl full of peach halves, hovering over a row of mason jars. She put the bowl down and went over to the sink and washed her hands and dried them without taking her eyes off him. She said nothing. Her mouth was a straight line.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"Can't you tell?"

"Looks like you're cooking peaches."

"Why are you here?" she said.

"Maybe I like peach pie."

"I'm not making pie."

"It's quite a mess." Milton reached in his pocket, took out his cigarettes, and started to put one in his mouth.

"It's an organized mess." She put down the towel and turned the burner up on the stove. "And don't smoke in here while I'm cooking."

"Well maybe you could stop working for a while."

"No, I'm in the middle of this." She leaned back against the counter and folded her arms across her chest.

"You can turn the stove off. It won't run away." Estelle didn't

(Continued from page 6)

answer him.

Milton started to move toward her. "I just stopped by to say hello. Is that asking too much?" He smiled.

"You can see I'm busy."

He stopped smiling and frowned. "We need to talk."

"No." She moved her head back and forth. "We don't. We have nothing to say, Milton." She looked at his eyes and felt sick that she had ever started with him.

Neither of them moved, and then he said, "Can't I have a cup of coffee even?" He went over and pulled a chair away from the table.

"I don't want you here." She looked down and shook her head.

"What's that supposed to mean?" He stood up.

"You know what it means. I told you last night."

"But you didn't really mean it."

She threw her hands up in the air and looked down as if speaking only to herself. "I certainly did mean it."

He put his hand on the back of the chair and studied the floor. He smiled to himself, put his hands on his hips, and then looked at her. "We could go away." He held his hands out wide.

"Milton!" She stood up straight and stiff.

He moved closer to her. She put her hands out, pushed against his chest and walked by him, and went over by the kitchen door. He followed. She opened the door.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Leave."

He stared into her eyes. She pushed him against the screen door. It swung open and he lost his balance and fell out. She went over to the peaches and picked up two halves, but turned when she heard him come back in.

He pointed a pistol at her. Estelle screamed, dropped the peaches, held her hands to her head and jerked away, knocking the jars off the counter. They landed with a loud crash, broken glass splintering everywhere, and the smell of peaches filled the room.

In one swift movement, Christy opened the screen door, jumped up the steps and into the kitchen, and grabbed Milton around the neck with one arm and pulled the gun away with the other. The gun went off and put a hole in the cupboard door. Christy wrestled Milton to the floor, face down, put his knee in his back, and reached over and took the gun out of his hand. He put the barrel up against Milton's neck.

"You son of a bitch, one move and I'll pull the trigger," Christy said.

Milton raised his head and tried to get up, but Christy's full weight kept him slammed against the floor.

Estelle stared down at Christy. "You're bleeding!"

"Just a little glass. Call the police," he said. — WT

Fiction

Parents Day

Marjorie Johnson

I love my home. I have plenty to eat. I like to watch giants pass by on the other side of the glass wall. The giants have no tails, only two long fins, but they can glide. The smaller ones put their faces against the wall until a bigger one pulls them away.

Every morning my mate entwines his tail with mine. We dance, promenade, and spin pirouettes, changing colors, pink, orange, green. My mate has a large brood pouch, filled with tiny seahorses. He is the best-looking seahorse in the herd. After our morning greetings, we separate and spend most of the day hanging onto seaweed with our tails — and eating, of course.

I have found that, in the right light, I have a shadow on my side of the wall. All of us seahorses look alike, but I can tell it's my shadow because it moves when I do. If I flutter the fin on my back to chase my shadow, it disappears by the time my snout touches the wall.

The giants point at me with their smaller fins and hold up square boxes that they show to one another. One giant visits every day. He watches my mate and me when we dance. He has a large brood pouch on his front. I wonder how many smaller giants will pop out.

Today he held a small square object against the wall. When I touched the wall on my side, I saw myself as if my snout were glued to the wall. Behind me, I could see other seahorses swaying in the grass.

When the giant pulled away from the wall, I didn't see myself anymore. His small square glittered in the light and showed other giants behind him. Before the giant left, he locked his eyes with mine and waved one fin. Our eyes made ... a connection.

I come every day to study the seahorses' courtship displays. Today I'd put my mirror to the glass to see what the female seahorse would do — she's not male because she has no brood pouch. Seahorses have it right: let the males take care of pregnancy and birth. Her eyes lock onto mine, a pull on my arm that waves, my fingers co-join. They feel welded together.

I flutter my back fin and glide down the hall. I feel the joy of the dance —

Then the baby kicks, much harder than usual. I gasp with a strong contraction. In the aquarium tank, tiny seahorses spew from a male's brood pouch. Warm liquid runs down my legs ... — WT

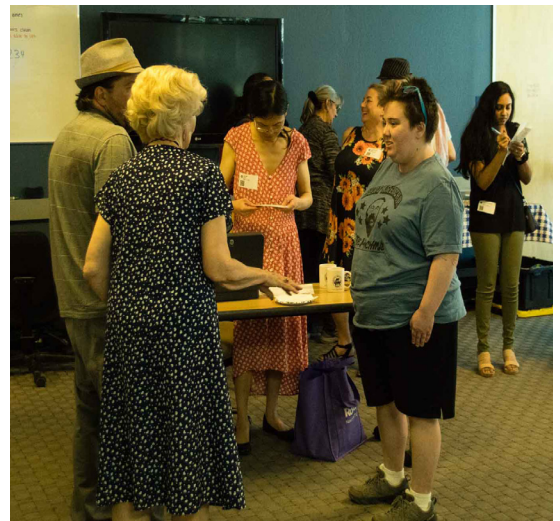
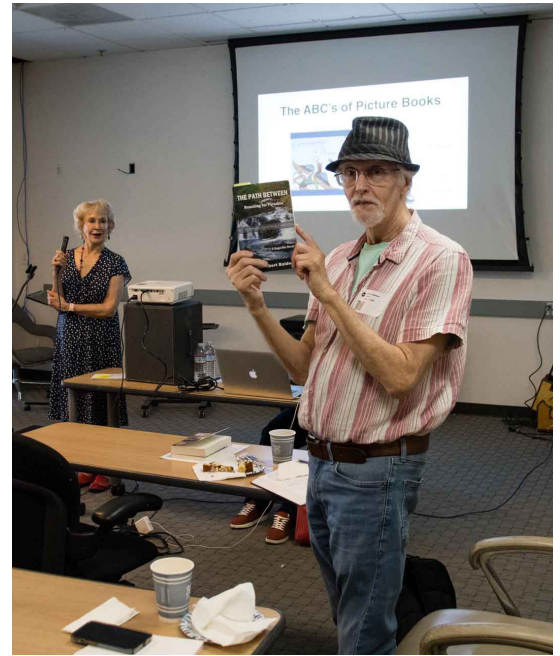


Mixed-media art by Tina Glasner, from a design by Deb Antonick

SBW May 11: ABC's of Picture Books

Photos by Joe-Ming Cheng





Publicize Your Book Launch In the California Writers Club Bulletin

Joyce Krieg, Bulletin Editor



Joyce Krieg

The *Bulletin* is a great way to publicize your book launches or writing-related achievements: short stories or poems published, contests won, awards and recognition for your work. Send a blurb of around 50 words, plus your book cover in JPEG format. Send directly to Editor Joyce Krieg, at [edi-tor@calwriters.org](mailto:editor@calwriters.org). — WT



"Les, how's your progress with regression therapy to improve writing?"

Judith Gerard: Intrepid Hollywood Reporter

Alfred Jan

By the mid 1930s, Harry Donenfeld's Culture/Trojan publishing empire had consolidated its girly pulp stable to include *La Pairee Stories*, *Pep Stories*, *Gay Parisienne*, *Tattle Tales*, *Spicy Stories*, and *Snappy: Illustrated Fun and Fiction*. This last title stood out among the rest because of its women-playing-sports cover images and inside features foreshadowing those in later men's magazines like *Playboy*. The truly unique aspect of *Snappy* was Judith Gerard, possibly the only girly-pulp series character, who appeared in six stories from May to October of 1935. The author, Rex Roberts, described himself in the "As Seen By Himself" sidebar (September, 1935) issue: born in 1900, having a black mustache, being divorced, and living in Hollywood. His hobbies: fast cars and fast women. Roberts wrote, "Seriously, I'm getting a wallop out of writing the 'Judith Gerard' series for *Snappy*. Judith represents my ideal girl—the one I dream about on the nights when I sleep alone. Of course, I don't get a chance to dream about her very often."

Roberts' creation, Judith Gerard, was a reporter for the *Hollywood Herald* on assignment to cover Altamount Pictures on location shoots around the world. The series debut story, "Judith Intervenes," finds her Honolulu-bound on the Malawaii luxury liner, where bold Altamount star Betty Brent has her diamond necklace stolen during a dance. To complicate matters, Judith's rhinestone pin is stolen at the same dance. The two chief male characters include Johnny Allen, the ship's detective, and Steve James, a passenger Judith finds attractive. Both men lust after her, but she dislikes Johnny's crude physical overtures. Both guys had danced with both women, so who stole whose jewelry?

Judith likes Steve so much that she "intervenes" by sneaking into his cabin to recover the necklace (just in case he stole it). In the dark, she encounters a man professing to be Steve, yet his groping tells her that he is Johnny. She later exposes Johnny by finding loose diamonds in his pocket; Johnny had planted the setting in Steve's cabin, intending it to be found later in a search, thus framing him. Steve James turns out to be a private investigator hired by the ship owners, who've suspected their detective of thievery. James gets the drop on Allen when Judith retrieves the diamonds from his pocket. But who stole the reporter's pin? James did, as an excuse to see her again later while "returning" it, but readers aren't expected to anticipate that, especially since Allen had hinted earlier that James was a notorious jewel thief.

In the second story, "Jeopardy For Judith" (June 1935), our heroine arrives with the Altamount crew in Honolulu, their first stop on a worldwide filming expedition. This time, an Altamount actress is kidnapped, and the two main male characters are Hal Foster, a tanned muscular assistant director, and nerdy, needy cameraman Billy Grove. But Roberts short-circuits reader expectations by casting Judith's favorite, Foster, as kidnapper and Grove as the hero who saves her from harm after she rescues the actress. Production chief Dave Levinson is portrayed in negative Jewish stereotype as oily, fat, and dark, his "pig-like" eyes lecherously undressing

Judith when she requests his help in clearing Grove, arrested earlier by police with false evidence on him.

Subsequent stories chronicle exploits in various cities. "Judith Poses" (July 1935) takes place in Shanghai, where the reporter breaks up a Japanese espionage ring. She helps smash a Singaporean white-slavery organization in "The Crimson Envelope" (August 1935), and in "The Ruby Buddha" (September 1935) she solves the theft of the titular statuette in Rangoon. Finally, she exposes a Calcuttan subversive separatist leader in "Judith Dances" (October 1935). Nowhere in these stories do we find her typing up news stories to send to her paper (although Roberts probably allowed us to assume that), so it seems that her real calling is detective/adventurer, especially when she declares in one story, "I crave danger!"

So who was Judith Gerard as a person? To begin with, she was a native Californian whose body was tantalizingly described in the "spicy" tradition by author Roberts in this passage from "Judith Dances":

From the tips of her tiny high-heeled slippers to the jaunty toque hat perched on her soft wavy black hair, she was a dream-picture of feminine perfection—a symphonic tone poem in feminine curves and contours. Her summery frock clung intimately and revealingly to the lyric arches of her hips, the cream-smooth lines of her svelte thighs. Through the frock's tight-fitting bodice bulged the glorious mounds of her breasts—twin magnificent hillocks of nubile flesh, firmly pliant and arrogantly jutting. No brassiere cupped or imprisoned those proudly solid charms; through the frock's thinness their dainty pink tips were almost visible.

But she has brains as well as beauty! An independent woman who loves her job, Judith refuses to settle down with a man. Inevitable offers come at every story's end, but they are consistently rebuffed; instead, a short sexual dalliance is coyly promised before she departs to the next location. After Calcutta, her next stop was to be Constantinople, but Roberts (or his editor) ended the series before she got there, denying her fans closure by having the Altamount production unit return to Hollywood. For all we know, Judith is still on a perpetual journey around the world, having adventures.

(For more examples of short detective and mystery fiction from the pulp magazines of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, see Alfred's works on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).) — WT



2024 JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 CWC Bulletin submit deadline; SJValleyWriters entry deadline
2	3 Writer's Digest Writing Competition entry deadline	4	5 SBW Board - 7p	6	7 Open-Mic - 7:30p (see note*)	8 SBW Meeting 10:30a
9	10	11	12	13	14	15 Catamaran Poetry Prize entry deadline; Sequestrum entry deadlines
16 Sappho Prize for Women Poets entry deadline	17	18	19	20 SBW WritersTalk submit deadline)	21 Open-Mic - 7:30p (see note*)	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 CWC Membership - pay your dues for 2024 - 2025						

*Open-Mic - Register in advance at southbaywritersopenmic@gmail.com by 5p the Thursday before, and you'll receive a Zoom link on Friday afternoon.

Save The Date: Events and Contests

Name	Date	Comments
2025 Int'l Voices Creative Nonfiction	July 1.....	Vine Leaves Press, as mentioned by Martha Engber
Rattle Poetry Prize	July 15.....	Entry fee includes 1 year subscription
Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest.....	July 18.....	Submit 3 poems, no entry fee (info: slolowe@icloud.com)
South Bay Writers July BBQ	July 21.....	Potluck at Edie Matthews home, details to follow
West Trade Review	multiple.....	Reading periods: Apr 1 - Aug 1, Aug 15 - Dec 1
South Bay Writers August Meeting.....	Aug 10.....	Author Heather Haven, on "The Journey to Published Author"
California Writers Club Bulletin	Sept 1, Dec 1.....	Submit articles or announcements to the state membership
South Bay Writers September Meeting	Sept 14.....	Author Robert Sloan (topic TBD)
Central Coast Writers Conference	Oct 5.....	40th annual conference at Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo
South Bay Writers October Meeting	Oct 12.....	Author Jill Hedgecock, on "Chapter Endings"

TIPS:

The South Bay Writers Facebook members' group is [South Bay Writers Club](#), be sure to check for updates there. If you hear about an interesting new contest, email Carolyn Donnell at facebook@southbaywriters.com.

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 excellent advice on literary scams, see the [Writer Beware](#) page of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA). – WT



California Writers Club

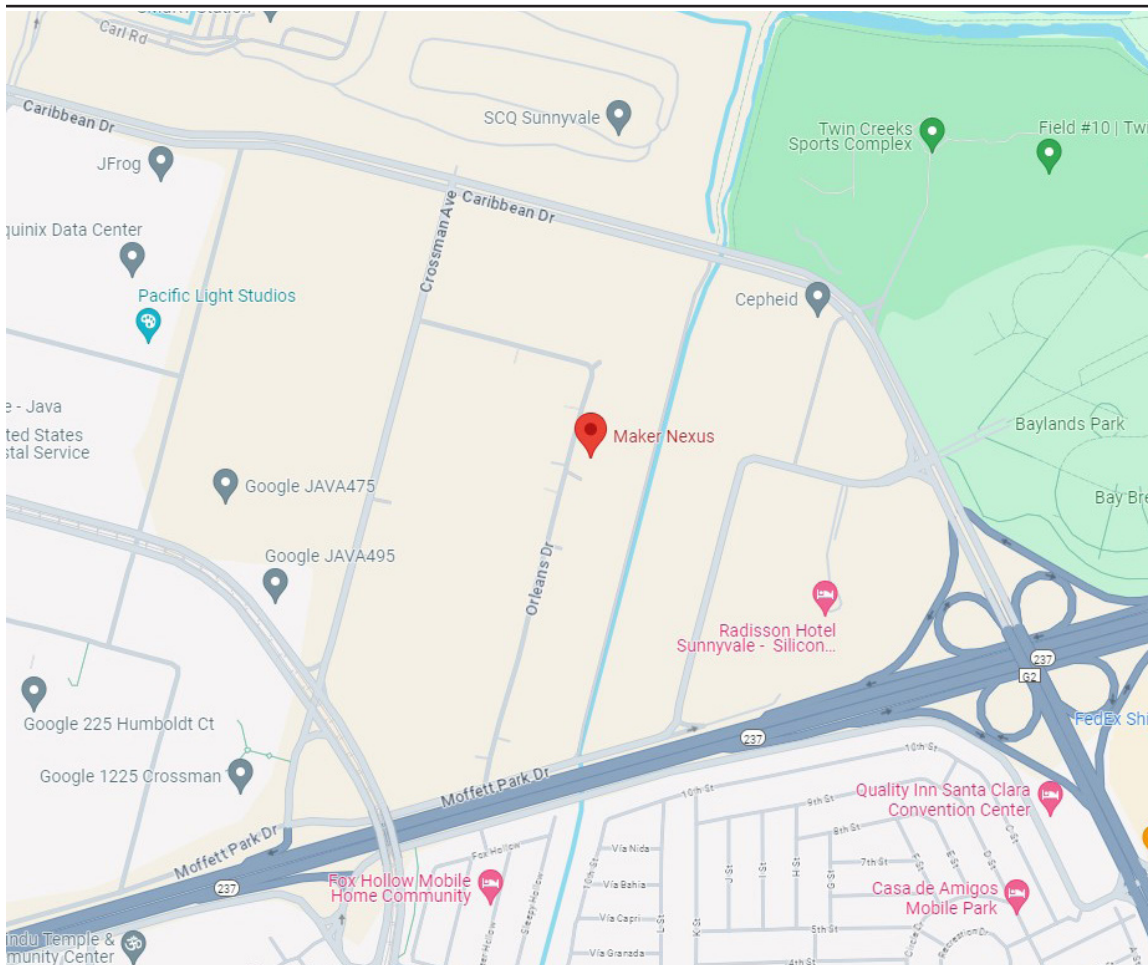
South Bay Branch

P.O. Box 3254

Santa Clara, CA 95055

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, June 8,
10:30 at Maker Nexus**

**Come EARLY to
allow for the security
check-in and finding
a good seat**

**Chris Hennessy:
"Create Your
Book Buzz"**