



WRITERS TALK

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

January
2025

IMPORTANT: NEW Meeting Location!

We're at the Willow Glen Library. See back cover for details...



Patrick Hunt: Writing *Hannibal* Shari Clare

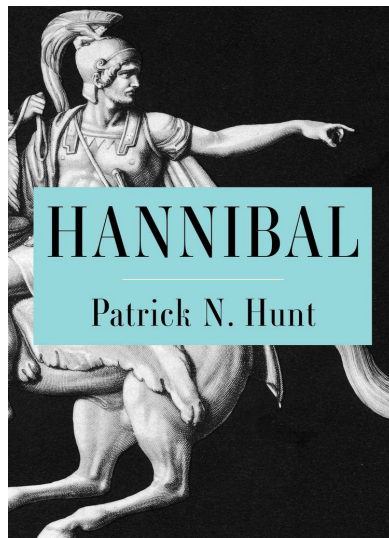
How many kids have slept through history class because of unexciting textbooks?

To the contrary, history includes many fascinating stories that hold important lessons. Those stories deserve to be recounted by authors who can make them come alive. Our January speaker, Patrick Hunt, is just such an author. Patrick is no armchair historian. As an archeologist, he has organized expeditions

that seek out real evidence of ancient historical events that we might have heard about, but have long since forgotten. Using sound academic techniques, combined with a flair for breathing life into historical characters, Patrick's books make us feel like we are right there with him, exploring the paths that were taken by some of the most compelling figures in history.

Patrick, who has won many awards for his archeological research, has written 27 books over the course of his career, including one that was an Editors' Pick for "Best History" on Amazon in 2020. He has been a consultant for *National Geographic*, has served as a judge for the Saroyan International Writing Prize, and has taught at Stanford for more than 30 years. You can check out his website at www.patrick-hunt.us

He will be talking about how he wrote his latest book, *Hannibal*. No, not Hannibal Lecter. The original Hannibal, the Carthaginian general who crossed the Alps with elephants, to attack Rome more than 2,000 years ago. Patrick is like a real-life, though highly ethical, Indiana Jones. You will not want to miss out on hearing Patrick Hunt's riveting presentation at our meeting on January 11. —WT



Julia Prodis Sulek: February Meeting's Speaker

Shari Clare

For our February meeting, we'll welcome Julia Prodis Sulek, a reporter specializing in breaking news and narrative storytelling at the *San Jose Mercury News* and the *East Bay Times*. Julia will talk about the award-winning 6-part narrative cold-case series that she wrote several years ago in the *Mercury News* called "Hanging: The Mysterious Case of the Boy in the Barn," which she also turned into a podcast. Stay tuned for more about Julia in the February edition of *WritersTalk*. —WT

View From the Board

Gerri Forté

The Board met December 11 via Zoom. Present: Una Daly, Shari Clare, Gerri Forté, Alice Wu, Amanda Senior, Alfred Jan, Bill Baldwin, Edie Matthews, Carolyn Donnell, and Joe-Ming Cheng. Absent: Marjorie Johnson, Tina Glasner, Chris Weilert.

General discussion: Reena Kapoor will share information on the innovation/prioritization framework, helping us to plan our upcoming year. We are still seeking a Membership Chair.

Alice Wu, Treasurer: No expenses for November, speaker could not come. The Central Board yearly report includes fees that we pay to central.

Bill Baldwin, Open Mics: Regarding the open mic proposal at the San Jose Club House, Shana McGowan sent a proposal for a special rate, Monday through Thursday night only \$100. There could be a cleanup charge. This proposal is still under discussion. Bill shared the location history of the open mics pre- and post-COVID. Several potential locations, including public libraries, were discussed. Physical meeting on December 20th at 6:30 p.m. Info will be emailed, sent to Meet Up, and the branch website.

Bill Baldwin, Central Board & NorCal Rep: CWC Central Board: No Central Board meeting since our last SBW board meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for the end of January. NorCal: NorCal met this Monday (December 9). Jack London Awards may be presented in October rather than July. The meeting may be bundled into a Central Board meeting or Leadership event. San Francisco Writers Conference: For now, we are not inclined to participate. The next NorCal meeting is scheduled for January 30 or February 13.

Shari Clare, Vice President: Patrick Hunt will speak to our branch on January 11.

(Continued on page 4)

President's Message

Una Daly
President, South Bay Writers

Grandma's Accidental Italian Cake

I recently received the joyous news that I would become a grandparent. We'd been careful not to put any pressure on our son and daughter-in-law, but still I had hoped it would be sooner rather than later — we're not getting any younger. In short order, I was finding myself drawn to products for the grandparent demographic.

My first venture into grandmothering was to purchase a cookie press, envisioning a warm kitchen scene decorating cookies with a delighted little tot. And not just any cookie press, I ordered an Italian-made red "anodized aluminum" spritzer at triple the cost of the plastic domestic types — we're talking real family heirlooms.

In a few short days, a sleek cardboard package with snow white text and illustrations arrived — think the iPhone of cookie presses. I pulled out a red cylinder, steel handle, bottom locking ring, and a box of 20 cookie designs, before I found a slim pamphlet entitled "Biscuits." To my dismay, "Biscuits" contained one page of pictures detailing how to assemble the press, and 20 pages of a simple shortbread cookie recipe, translated into languages from Italian to Arabic, and thankfully including English.

Now any of you who know me can relate that I'm a bit of a free spirit in the kitchen. I like to innovate when trying new recipes, modifying here and there, based on ingredient availability and whim. Only this recipe was metric, requiring yet another translation to US standard cups and teaspoons. I dutifully googled 500 grams of flour, arriving at approximately four cups. 200 grams of sugar equaled 2 cups, 250 grams of butter came in at a cup, and 75 ml of milk equaled 3 cups. A pinch of salt is a guess in any system.



My husband agreed to help with assembling the dough as I melted the butter and mixed in the sugar and salt. He poured in the egg yolks, producing a beautiful golden goop, and then started adding the four cups of flour. He stirred away, producing quite a stiff dough. Figuring this was simply the way the Italians make cookies, we stuffed the dough into the press and started squeezing. A few dribs and drabs were extruded but they didn't look anything like the charming Christmas tree design we'd attached to the press.

Scratching my head, I thought I'd probably missed something in the recipe, and sure enough I'd forgotten the milk. We removed the dough from the press, warmed the milk, and added the first two of three cups. Only now the dough was more like a batter, and my husband asked me how sure I was about my metric-U.S. standard conversion. Upon rechecking all the measurements, I realized I'd misread 75ml as 750ml, and the recipe only called for a 1/3 cup of milk.

Well, the cookies were dashed, but instead we found a yellow cake recipe that called for similar ingredients, with the addition of baking powder and orange zest. We replaced the cookie sheet with a cake pan, and soon the kitchen was filled with the amazing scent of what I've now christened as "accidental Italian Grandma cake."

Here's hoping you had a warm and humorous holiday season! — 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.

For dual membership, add \$25. Sign up online at southbaywriters.com, or send a check to CWC-South Bay Writers, P O Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055.

Our club uses a fiscal year that runs from July 1 through June 30. Note: Life membership is also available, for details, inquire with our Membership Chair (membership@southbaywriters.com).

WritersTalk

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

Managing Editor—Tina Glasner

Reviewers

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Shari Clare | Una Daly |
| Carolyn Donnell | Tonya McQuade |
| Hal Schoolcraft | Marty Sorensen |
| Carey Steffee | |

Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in WritersTalk (electronic submissions only). The Managing Editor decides which submissions to publish, and submissions may be copyedited for clarity or brevity.

Fiction, memoir, review, or essay (1000 words)
Poetry (300 words)

(Longer submissions may be used as part 1, part 2, etc.)

Electronic submissions are preferred as 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 mrms@southbaywriters.com, or you can edit your own entry in the member's roster (MRMS).

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Tina Glasner
Managing Editor

Having a Jewish Christmas

I know it's January, but I had to write about being Jewish in December.

Way before Adam Sandler came out with his Hannukah song for "left-out feeling" Jewish kids in 1994, my parents had a record album from 1967, called "Have a Jewish Christmas...?" It's comedy about Jews trying to "appropriate" customs from Christmas, including cards from a manufacturer named "Hal Markowitz," out-competing each other on lawn displays (the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is only topped by the Pope), and going all out with Christmas parties (serving exotic fare like white bread). Come over sometime and I'll play it for you.

Comedy albums aside, I am happy to "do" Christmas. I hand-make cards, sing carols, and happily accept Christmas cookies. I bought a beautiful fiber-optic "Northern Lights" tree last year, while dating a Mormon. The boyfriend had to go, but the tree stayed!

Hannukah is in reality a minor Jewish festival. It is not a "high" holiday like Passover, Rosh Hashanah, or Yom Kippur. Jews have some nice songs, but not like the plentitude of carols. And we wouldn't go door to door singing them. I've recently heard there is such a thing as a Hannukah sweater. Maybe they're ugly? A Jewish friend told me she'd spotted some in Dallas. Who knew? We've borrowed that too.

By now I've played flute in many community bands. One year the conductor in the Villages Concert Band asked me to find a new song honoring Hannukah for our joint production combining the band with soloists, bells, and the Village Voices, a wonderful choir. I recalled that while I was with the Hewlett Packard orchestra, the choir conductor, Russell Lee, who is Chinese and not Jewish, had written a very nice original song, "Celebrating Hannukah," for the HP Choir. I got in touch with Russell and he was very flattered that we'd perform it.



But then at rehearsal my band conductor relayed that the choir conductor was objecting to lyrics that were about "worshipping the light." I had no objection to the lyrics myself, but I wasn't raised religiously, so what did I know? Composer Russell replied that his source was "the great scholar, Daniel Persky," but I was welcome to ask my rabbi. The problem was, I didn't know any rabbis. OK, I'd never heard of Persky either. But, online, guess what I found? "Ask a Rabbi." I wrote, asking them to advise from the standpoint of Judaism. An orthodox rabbi from upstate New York gave me his ruling. Religiously, the lyrics weren't quite right. I relayed the feedback to Russell, because new words still have to fit the rhythm, and all was made good. "Worshipping the light" was changed to "how precious the sight."

At the concert, I'd gotten Russell and his wife free front-row tickets. We introduced him to the audience and he took his bow, thrilled. He and I were chatting after, and he pulled out some sheets of paper. "Here is a copy of Persky's article that I used," he said, "show this to your rabbi!" Red-faced, I did send a donation later to "Ask a Rabbi." So, it seems I might be just about as casual about being Jewish as I am about Christmas.

In years past my Milpitas band was booked to play for the city tree-lighting. What is a tree-lighting, I asked, and what time of the day does it happen? (Oops, sundown!) And this year, when current boyfriend invited me to his Christmas Day family get-together, he had to remind me which day on the calendar it was. In spite of that, we had a grand time. I even baked cookies. —WT



(View From the Board, continued from page 1)

ary 11. Julia Prodis Sudek, journalist at the *San Jose Mercury News* will be speaking on February 8. Liz Kracht, an agent, will possibly speak on March 8. No speaker is scheduled yet for April 12. Catharine Bramkamp, story coach, will be speaking on May 10. Shari reached out to two local authors who participated in the San Jose Library Local Lit event, and who expressed interest in speaking to our club: Guisselle Nunez, who wrote a book about life in a fishbowl (being the spouse of an elected official), and Rebecca Farrell, a fiction author who has expertise in running critique groups. Shari also met with Gwen Minor from Feldman's Books to discuss ideas for how/where to organize a "lit-crawl" in the South Bay next year, possibly in association with the San Francisco Lit Quake event.

Shari Clare, (acting) Membership: The branch currently has 94 (paid) members, consisting of 2 Lifetime, 6 Dual, 85 Active, and 1 Student.

Tina Glasner, WritersTalk Editor: Tina contacted the Sunnyvale Moose Lodge's Kathy Childs, Youth Awareness chairperson, and found out that students who try out for scholarships have to do presentations and reports, so there is indeed commonality between the Moose and CWC in promoting writing skills and public speaking. Tina is inquiring with Shari and Una on how we might coordinate with student guest speakers. Re WT page count, if more submissions come in she can increase page count again, to 12. We all still need to observe the submission deadline of the 20th. Re the Cumulative Index ([see our website](#)), member Hal Schoolcraft has now processed much of our backlog of published newsletters, getting the data into simpler categories. He will volunteer to add new entries from ongoing newsletters into the index. He's also "reverse-engineered" to use the same code framework as the current index. He has good ideas,

such as creating active links between the index listing and its newsletter issue. Great work, Hal!

Edie Matthews, Publicity & Public Relations: Holiday party: Edie was happy to host (and the board expressed its gratefulness that we were able to hold our Holiday Bash in her beautiful home). She thanked the members who stayed back and helped with cleanup. She is also rethinking the frequency of publicity emails.

Joe-Ming Cheng, Web Editor & Web Master: Our branch site was updated with details of the next speaker and current WT file. He will be posting monthly photos on the website.

The next Zoom meeting will be Thursday, January 9, 7:30pm. To attend, email Una at pres@southbaywriters.com. — WT



Save the Date: Events and Contests

| Description | Date | Details |
|---|--------------------|---|
| Open Mic - on Zoom..... | Jan 3 | 7:30pm, reserve by Jan 2: southbaywritersopenmic@gmail.com |
| South Bay Writers January Meeting..... | Jan 11 | Author Patrick Hunt |
| Phyllis Grant Zellmer Prize for Fiction | Jan 15-Mar 15..... | West Trade Review, grand prize and possible publication |
| Open Mic at Almaden Barnes & Noble | Jan 17 | 6:30pm, reserve by Jan 16: southbaywritersopenmic@gmail.com |
| Redwood Writers Writing Contest | Jan 18 | "Heartbeat/Heartbreak," up to 1500 words, CWC \$10 fee |
| Los Gatos Library - Seth Fishman | Jan 28 | 10am - "An Inside Look at Working with a Literary Agent" |
| Silicon Valley Reads kickoff event..... | Jan 30 | At De Anza College, full schedule available after New Year's |
| Catamaran - Fashion Issue | Feb 1 | Fiction, poetry, creative nofiction, art |
| South Bay Writers February Meeting..... | Feb 8 | Reporter Julia Prodis Sulek |
| San Joaquin Valley Writers 2025 Anthology ... | Mar 1 | Theme: "Beginnings and Endings"; open to all CWC branches |
| South Bay Writers March Meeting | Mar 8 | Speaker TBD |

South Bay Writers Open Mics – Bill Baldwin

Open Mics are on the first and third Fridays of the month (for details, see above Save the Date list). To participate, register in advance with Bill Baldwin (southbaywritersopenmic@gmail.com) by 5p the Thursday before, and you'll receive a confirmation by Friday afternoon.

Writing Contests, Grants & Awards – Carolyn Donnell

From *Poets & Writers Magazine*: "The Writing Contests, Grants & Awards database includes poetry contests, short story competitions, essay contests, awards for novels, and more—as published in *Poets & Writers Magazine* during the past year. Ours is the most trusted resource for legitimate writing contests available anywhere." See pw.org/grants. There are also several free [Newsletters](#) that you can opt to sign up for, using a form on the Poets & Writers site. — WT

She Had an Eye for Me

D.L. LaRoche

"I'll have a cappuccino with an extra shot of coffee," I said to the barista, once I got her attention. It had taken a while, and I watched her.

For a squat little woman, she had a large head that rolled on her shoulders with no discernable neck. Her eyes were differently sized. The larger, her left, turned at me, ringed in red, when she looked up and addressed me. It had an anger about it, a challenge implicit, wanting to argue or fight. And when she spoke that eye lit up — many watts under a film of pterygium, demanding attention and insisting on taking me down — the ring alive, oscillated from a bright patriotic red to fuchsia. Her other eye was quiet — lidded and hidden in folds off her brow. If it followed, it followed reluctantly.

"I know your type," she said, "proud, smart, and indifferent. You don't care how the rest of us feel. You've never said hello to me, not once in all this time you've been coming here, and now an extra shot. Well, you can't have it, and I don't give a fiddle about your salivary needs. I'm mixing the ordinary kind... you and your uppity sort."

Her eye, that eye, had spoken more than her words. I tried to avoid it but it was right in my face — threatening. I stepped back a little out of its glare. Of course she was right, I had ignored her. If not intentionally, I found I was drawn to more attractive people, at least those whose names I knew, and they knew mine, or were otherwise eager to exchange. And what's wrong with that? I mean the bees don't suckle on plastic flowers.

"Is there anything I can do to remedy?" I asked, on my heels. "It's not my intention to ignore, and I apologize if offending. I aim for equality in my dealings. That may not always come across, but I certainly intend it."

"Well," She pulled back her big eye a little, and her miniature mouth turned up approaching a smile. "I guess I accept your apology. But listen asshole — I don't give it much credence, no more than I give you. Words come easy to your type but mean little to me." She blinked — the first I had noticed, and the area below that eye got unusually wet.

After a moment she wiped with a handkerchief I assumed she kept for that purpose. The other eye, by the way, remained dry and seemingly unconcerned.

"I'm finished with you after this," she said. "Spend your time with the lovelies, the ones who expect your favor. I've nothing for you." She punctuated that with a final glare from the demanding eye. It seemed to jump from her face in a frontal attack. She provided it power that must've come from the other because I noticed the other had closed. I turned and left the counter. They would call my name when my drink was ready.

I can't overstate the eye. It followed me that night into bed. I tried to leave it, but no success, even with the meditative approach. Big, rimmed in red; yellow where white should've been. An iris of both green and hazel, like the decision had yet to be made. The film that protected the rawness of it was thick in places and lacking in others — a goo from clear to yellow. The last I recall the clock — it said four.

I thought of those eyes as fraternal twins — much the same beginning milieu, but with an independent start and a slightly different slide down the tube. Both were attached to the same brain, used the same technology, and experienced identical views, but had entirely different ways of reacting. I've known twins like that — same beginnings, single sperm, but entirely different behavior.

I wondered if they started that way — big and little, aggressive and resigned? Perhaps it all evolved as her way of dealing with my type. It is now weeks later, and I still see that eye — demanding, pushy, and large. — WT



SBW December 8: Holiday Bash at Jim & Edie Matthews' Home

Photos by Carolyn Donnell





SBW December 20: Open Mic In-Person at Almaden Barnes & Noble

Photos by Shari Clare



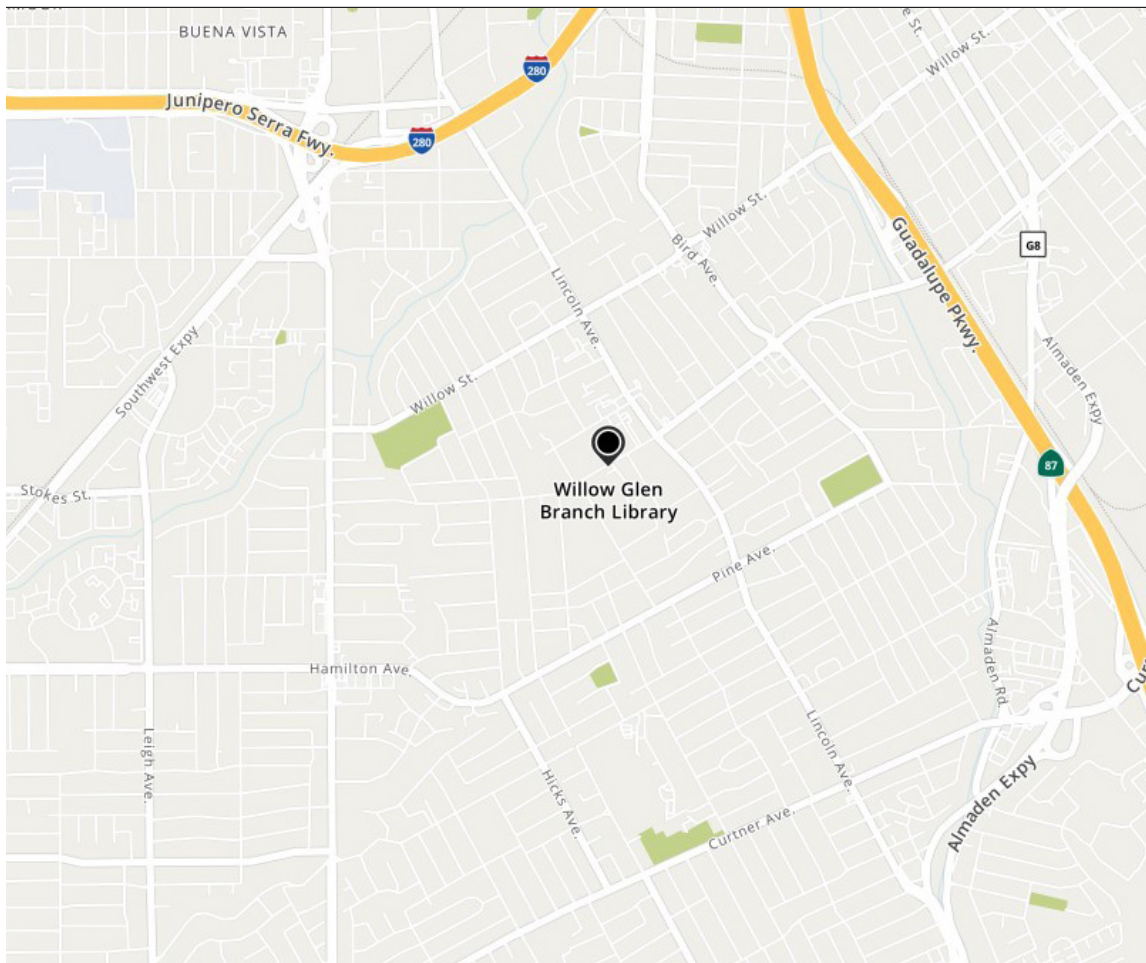


California Writers Club

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Address Correction Requested



Willow Glen Library
1157 Minnesota Ave
San Jose

From the north: Take 101 south to 87 south, exit Alma Ave, keep right toward Alma Ave, turn left onto Lelong St, then right on W Alma Ave. On your right.

From the south: Come north on Almaden Expy, keep left onto Lincoln Ave, turn left onto Minnesota Ave. On your right.

From the east: Take 680 south, exit 87 Guadalupe Pkwy, keeping left, keep right toward Alma Ave, turn left onto Lelong St, then right on W Alma Ave. On your right.

From the west: Take 280 south, exit Meridian Ave South, turn left onto Minnesota Ave. On your left.

**Saturday, January 11,
10:30 in the Community
Room of Willow Glen
Branch Library**

**Patrick Hunt:
Writing *Hannibal***