



# WRITERS TALK

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

July  
2025



## Join us for the Annual July Potluck Hosted by Edie Matthews

Sunday, July 13, 3-6pm

Enjoy tantalizing food and good company -- both provided by you! Relax, network, chat with old friends, and make new ones.

Open to Members+ 1

The club will provide the BBQ meat, drinks, and plates. Please bring a dish based on the first letter of your Last name:

A-K - Salad

L-R - Appetizer or Dessert

S-Z - Main Dish or Side Dish

Please RSVP to [PR@SOUTHBAYWRITERS.COM](mailto:PR@SOUTHBAYWRITERS.COM) for the address

## August Speaker, Nils Michals

For our August Meeting we will be welcoming Nils Michals, who will lead us in a hands-on writing exercise.

Nils Michals is most recently the author of *Gembox*, winner of the 2018 Washington Poetry Prize from the Word Works. Previous collections of poetry include *Come Down to Earth* (Bauhan, 2014) and *Lure* (Pleiades, 2004). A chapbook, "Room", is forthcoming from Sting & Honey Press. His work has appeared in [PANK], *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Miracle Monocle*, *Posit*, and others. Michals lives in Santa Cruz, CA and teaches at West Valley College.

# President's Message

Una Daly  
President, South Bay Writers



## A New Year Begins at South Bay Writers

### Elections

Our 2025-26 year at South Bay Writers(SBW) begins this month, in July. We have exciting new opportunities on the horizon but first I want to thank our members for their confidence in the standing officers and the recent election of new officers. Welcome to Ryan Davis-Marsh, our newest Member-at-Large and Annie Nguyen, our new board Secretary. In addition to officers, our dedicated committee chairs are critical to the branch's operations. Please welcome Tonya McQuade as Membership chair and Ryan Davis-Marsh as Newsletter editor. I also want to thank our outgoing officers: Alfred Jan for his longtime service as our Member-at-Large and Gerri Forte, our board secretary this last year and our newsletter editor in past years.

### Newsletter

We are very pleased to be renewing our branch newsletter this month under the leadership of Ryan. The focus in the immediate future will be on branch and club activities, contests and events, and the craft of writing. This month we are featuring our first "craft of writing" column, a book review on "Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need" contributed by Hal Schoolcraft. We invite you to contribute a column on the "craft of writing" whether it is grammar tips, book reviews, writing classes, etc. Please send your writing craft ideas to [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

### New Directions

I remain deeply grateful for our core of longtime board members but I'm also very pleased that over half of our officers and committee chairs are new in the past year. Our newcomers and old timers are bringing their enthusiasm and skills to expand opportunities for our branch. Read on for exciting member updates where we welcome and need members to participate in small and large roles. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [pres@southbaywriters.com](mailto:pres@southbaywriters.com) or at meetings with your suggestions and/or questions.

---

---

## 2025-2026 List of Officers and Committee Chairs

Officer	Member	Committee	Chair
President	Una Daly	Facebook	Carolyn Donnel
Vice-president	Shari Clare	Hospitality & PR	Edie Matthews
Treasurer	Alice Wu	Membership	Tonya McQuade
Secretary	Annie Nguyen	Member News	Marjorie Johnson
Member-at-Large	Amanda Senior	Newsletter	Ryan Davis Marsh
Member-at-Large	Ryan Davis-Marsh	Photography	Joe Ming
		CWC Representative & Open Mic	Bill Baldwin

# Notes from the Board

### Introductions

We were pleased to welcome Tonya McQuade, our new membership chair and Kelly Harrison to our board meeting.

### Quick Recap of Bay Book Festival on June 1st

Hal, Alice, Bill, Dave, and Una attended and worked the booth

### June 14 Meeting:

Main focus is on elections and the speaker, Becca Gomez Farrell who shared information about Critique Groups.

### Newsletter Update

Ryan Davis-Marsh is our new newsletter editor The newsletter will focus on Club News, Writing Craft, and Contest/Events.

### Branch Anthology Proposal

An anthology committee will be formed with Kelly and Amanda Senior leading the way, more to come soon. Other board members are interested.

### Workshop Update

Amanda Senior walked us through her exciting plans for a writing craft workshop Jan 24 at San Jose History Park featuring Jordan Rosenfeld and her brand new book, *The Sound of Story*.

### MOU with Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council (SASCC)

Sam Leale, ops manager, of the Saratoga Senior Center attended our June 14 meeting at the Rose Garden Library to share an outline of the MOU which includes a spacious room for monthly branch meetings and the opportunity for our members to contribute to SASCC's monthly newsletter, the OUTLOOK.

## WritersTalk

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

Managing Editor—Ryan Davis-Marsh

### Reviewers

Una Daly Hal Schoolcraft

Carolyn Donnell

### 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 [mrms@southbaywriters.com](mailto:mrms@southbaywriters.com), or you can edit your own entry in the member's roster (MRMS).

### Trademarks and Copyright

The California Writers Club logo is a registered trademark® of the California Writers Club. All other trademarks, logos, and brand names appearing in this newsletter are the property of their respective owners. Some images are used with the permission of IMSI's *MasterClips/MasterPhotos Collection*.

Copyright © 2025 California Writers Club South Bay Branch (South Bay Writers). All creative works contained herein are published with first publication rights granted to the California Writers Club South Bay Writers. Upon publication, the author retains copyright and grants the publisher continuous, non-exclusive digital rights to display and archive the work. All other rights remain with the author, including the right to reproduce, distribute, or republish in any form.

## Member News

Reena Kapoor's short story "Fragments Unlived" has been selected for the The San Joaquin Valley Writers 2025 Anthology, which is called *Beginnings & Endings*, to be published in the fall of 2025.

Ryan Davis-Marsh  
Managing Editor

## Addressing Isolation in Writing

Writing is often portrayed as one of the loneliest of the art forms. The story is told of the amazing author who goes on a retreat to an unforgiving and isolated hotel. There they mold a manuscript out of ink, the clacks of a typewriter, and their own soul. When they finish their masterpiece, they pop a bottle of Champagne and return to civilization, carrying their art down the mountain to unleash upon the masses, like a modern-day Moses. Once purchased, the art must also be consumed in solitude, this time within the comfortable nooks and crannies of their own homes.



The truth of the matter is quite different. Writers notoriously form clubs to share their craft and their thoughts, in fact the CWC itself was formed from the informal gatherings of well known authors. Libraries and Bookstores often hold readings, signings or open mic nights where writers of all kinds can share or create their work in public spaces. Even our June speaker talked about the importance of Critique groups in gaining feedback and perspective on your works.

However, to me, there is definitely some truth to the myth. While there are many opportunities to publicly share your work, your ideas or to discuss the craft itself, the act of writing itself can often be lonely and daunting. But what can be done to address this? One such idea I've come across and found valuable is the concept of "Body Doubling". While it sounds like the premise of a Sci-fi short story, the premise is really quite simple: fill the empty room you write in with another person.

I first came across this concept while working with some co-workers who were Software Engineers. They presented this strategy as a way to keep working on isolated tasks, while filling our unspoken desire to be motivated by others. Initially linked to support individuals with ADHD, this technique has proved popular to a variety of audiences. If it sounds interesting to you, here are some of my tips to implementing it:

- 1) Look for a partner who is quiet and independent. Although some people don't mind a little noise, the goal is individual productivity, not socialization. Ideally someone who has their own tasks or hobbies to focus on.
- 2) Start with small sessions. Consider a timer of 25 minutes of quiet followed by 5 minutes for open discussion, repeat as needed or until you find yourself wanting to socialize more than work. If it's working well, then consider a longer session.
- 3) Don't be afraid to experiment with non-traditional partners, or spaces. A significant other might be a great match for this, but it's okay if they are not. The best space might not even be your office, some people actually prefer open spaces with strangers.

The science on body doubling is still limited, but I've found it to be helpful to me for a variety of tasks, particularly when writing. If you are struggling with a big task or feeling blocked when you sit down alone, perhaps it could work for you as well.

Good luck and keep writing!

## Membership Renewal 2025

Membership renewals will continue until July 31st. Everyone who renews on or before the SBW July 13 BBQ will be eligible for a raffle.

Remember there will be a small convenience charge for renewals by Paypal to cover costs.

Cash and check renewals remain unchanged.

## Anthology Committee

South Bay Writers is in the early planning stages for a branch Anthology. Kelly Harrison, a longtime member, and veteran anthology developer is leading this effort. Planning will start in late August but opportunities to join the committee and select the activities you are most interested in are available now.

## Critique Groups

We had a wonderful presentation by Becca Gomez Farrell on June 14 where she shared the pros and cons of the different types of critique groups and how to engage in the work to get the most benefit for your writing. Thank you to those who signed up after the meeting to join newly emerging critique groups. If you did not sign-up but are still interested, please reach out to [pres@southbaywriters.com](mailto:pres@southbaywriters.com) for details on how to get involved.

## Partnership with SASCC 2025-26

South Bay Writers is entering into a partnership with the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council (SASCC). SASCC will provide their spacious community room for our monthly second Saturday morning meetings. We will welcome their members to join meetings to learn more about the California Writers' Club and the craft of writing alongside all of us. In addition, SBW members will have opportunities to submit articles for publication in SASCC's OUTLOOK newsletter which is delivered monthly to all residents in Los Gatos, Saratoga, and Monte Sereno. Stay tuned for an online meeting in the next few weeks where SASCC's media director will share submission guidelines and answer questions.

## January 24, 2026 Workshop - Save the Date

Award winning author, teacher and coach, Jordan Rosenfeld will facilitate our January workshop at San Jose History Park. Sharing lessons from her soon-to-be published book, *Sound of Story*, you will learn how to use syntax, point of view, emotion, and more to shape voice on the page. Whether you're crafting fiction or nonfiction, get the tools to shape and refine voice to create compelling, authentic narratives. A copy of the book and lunch will be included in the admission price for this full day event. Tickets to go on sale in August.

---

---

## Scammers Preying on Writers is on the Rise

*Tish Davidson, Reposted with permission from the CWC Fremont Area Branch*

There has been an uptick in scammers preying on self-published and aspiring writers. Most of these scams are based overseas leaving little recourse to writers who have been scammed and lost money. Before you sign anything or pay anyone money to publish your book, represent you to agents, publicize your book, or sign you to a contract, check Scam Alerts at:

[authorsguild.org/resource/publishing-scam-alerts/](https://authorsguild.org/resource/publishing-scam-alerts/)

This site is maintained by the Authors Guild. The website is accessible to all, even if you're not a Guild member.

Writer Beware offers another list of publishing scammers at:

[writerbeware.blog/scam-archive](https://writerbeware.blog/scam-archive)

Writer Beware also maintains a separate agent impersonation list. This is a particularly noxious form of scamming, because it hurts both the writer and legitimate literary agents. The list can be found here:

[writerbeware.blog/2024/03/15/the-impersonation-list/](https://writerbeware.blog/2024/03/15/the-impersonation-list/)

Remember: There are legitimate businesses that help writers self-publish, and there are legitimate public relations companies that will promote your book for a fee. But, if it sounds too good to be true, look before you leap, and your bank account will thank you.

Hal Schoolcraft  
Contributor



## Book Review - Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need

Don't be misled by the title of Blake Snyder's book *Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need*. The structure and guidelines he lays out can be easily applied to multiple types of media. (See *Save the Cat! Writes a Novel*, by Jessica Brody.) If you're already an outliner but still struggle with how to best arrange the sections of your story, or a seat-of-the-pants writer who has contemplated outlining to better organize your thoughts but have no idea how to start, Blake Snyder's Beat Sheet provides a step-by-step process on how to write an engaging story that will captivate your audience.

The title itself comes from Snyder's suggestion that your protagonist should do something early on in your story that will endear him/her to the reader, creating a character that the reader wants to know better. Snyder's Beat Sheet provides a 15-step, or "beat", guideline on how to take your character, and the reader, on a roller coaster ride through your story. From "Set-up" and "Fun and Games" to "All is Lost" and "Dark Night of the Soul", he describes how to create a journey that not only includes well-paced ups and downs of the story action, but also gives your character a path to personal growth. Your protagonist has a character flaw, we all do, and the story should provide a way that gives him/her a chance to understand their flaw and allows them to address it and hopefully grow.

While there are critics that say this 15-beat scheme creates formulaic results, Blake provides numerous examples of highly successful movies, both recent and classic, that can be seen to fit into his beat scheme, and that even within his "formula" there is still plenty of room for originality and creativity in crafting an engaging story.

Snyder's accessible writing style and deep insight into the craft of storytelling make his book ideal for both beginners and established writers.

## June Recap: Rebecca Gomez Farrell

### Critique Group Styles, Formats, and Expectations

Bill Baldwin

As writers, most of us understand the importance of critique groups—but how well do we actually understand their true usefulness and how they function? Did you know there are actually a variety of approaches to critique groups? Rebecca Gomez Farrell shared a wealth of useful information and insights at our June South Bay Writers meeting. Why join a critique group? You can improve your craft and get help when you get stuck. You can develop a support network to encourage you in your writing. When considering critique groups, you might ask them what their particular approach is. Rebecca identified five different types of critique groups (and there are probably more). You'll want to research a critique group before you join one.

- The Milford Method is feedback-focused. This is the most common approach used in MFA programs and current critique groups. The author provides a manuscript ahead of time, then listens to a round robin of feedback, without speaking.
- The Revised Milford Method provides positive feedback first, then encourages the author to speak and ask questions.
- The Amherst Writers Method asks the group to say what they liked/loved, what they disliked, and what stuck with them.
- The Mary Robinette Kowal Method focuses on how readers react to an author's writing: were they amazed, bored, confused, distracted?
- The Exchange of Work method is more casual, less restrictive. The group basically creates its own approach to critiquing.

How do you find a critique group? Maybe in a writing class you are taking, or workshop, or online group. You might ask people at an open mic!

In any case, think about what you are looking for. A specific genre? How much time are you willing to devote to the group? You want something you can feel comfortable with—not something that will just become another chore! South Bay Writers has created various critique groups—take a look at what we have to offer. And if you have ideas of your own, let us know! Don't be afraid to collect members with similar interests and start your own critique group!

Best of Luck!!

## Bay Area Book Festival June 1, 2025

*Una Daly*

Six club members and family headed over to Berkeley on Sunday, June 1st to represent the South Bay Writers at the Bay Area Book festival. The day began cool and cloudy particularly as we drove north past the east entrance to the Bay Bridge. Arriving early for setup, Hal Schoolcraft, our webmaster, my husband, and I unloaded and set up the canopy and tables for our booth. Big thanks to Hal's daughter, Ally, who loaned us booth equipment from her business where she sells unique crocheted animals at festivals throughout the Bay Area. She does take custom orders, see her work on Instagram ([@fiber.fly](#)).

Alice Wu, our treasurer, arrived soon after with copies of her compelling Bug Guy book featuring a human sized bug in a tuxedo drinking a martini on the cover. We hung our South Bay Writers signs up and the public began arriving. A continuous stream of curious writers and readers approached our booth and wanted to know more about the club. It didn't hurt that we were assigned booth #57 at the intersection of Harold Way and Kittredge street and directly across from the main Poetry stage. All day long we enjoyed local poets reading their award winning and poignant stories about life's struggles and joy. The booth to our immediate west was the Benicia Writers Club and CWC NorCal's booth was just around the corner from us on Harold Way. We had fun swapping notes with the Berkeley branch and Benicia writers and reviewing the books they had on display.

We handed out bookmarks with information about South Bay Writers to all who expressed interest and Bill Baldwin arrived soon afterwards with three of his books to sell. The new books helped round out our display soon thereafter Dave Strom arrived with his colorful graphic novels starring his inimitable super-hero Holly. Somewhere in there, our newest board member Ryan Davis-Marsh, arrived in tow with his college age daughter, Zoe, who is an art student at prestigious Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. I enjoyed seeing some of her custom designs on her phone.

By noontime, the fog had been burned off and the day was bright and sunny. We had writers from around the Bay Area fascinated by our motto "writers helping writers". A surprising number who dropped by were from the South Bay but for those from San Francisco, San Ramon, Oakland, and Millbrae we referred them to the [calwriters.org](#) site and informed them of the branch which would be the closest to them.

In the afternoon, I wandered over several streets to where the smaller and mostly local publishers were selling their titles discounted with some giveaways. I purchased books from She Writes, Stone Bridge Press, and Hey Day. There were other free lectures and panels in adjacent buildings. I had the opportunity to attend one on reconnecting with the land and protecting immigrant rights.

It was getting warmer as the afternoon continued and we enjoyed some ice cream snicker bars from the nearby Target store as the festival wound down. The Poetry Stage was still going strong until 5:30pm when they finally closed shop and the rest of us were free to gather our booths and head home. Overall, a really fun day - some books were sold and some new friends were made. Although there was plenty of parking, it was expensive, so next year I think we'll definitely carpool, save some money, and save the planet. The festival is located a block from the Berkeley BART station so another option for those who don't have too much to carry.

---

---

## Upcoming Writers Contests and Events

- Open Mic Night - August 1st, Zoom
- Chill Out & Read 2025 Book Faire - August 12th
- California Writers Club Marin, Flash Fiction Contest - Submissions accepted: June 1- Sept 30, 2025
- Open Mic Night - August 15th, Willow Glen Library
- The Missouri Review Jeffrey E. Smith Editors' Prize Deadline Oct 1,
- Save the Date, Sound of Story - Jan 24th, Lunch Workshop with Jordan Rosenfield at San Jose History Park.

See more Writing Contest and Publishing Events at <https://southbaywriters.com/writing-and-publishing-events/>

# Bay Area Book Festival & June Meeting

Photos by Una Daly, Ally Schoolcraft (IG: [@fiber.fly](#)), Carolyn Donnell

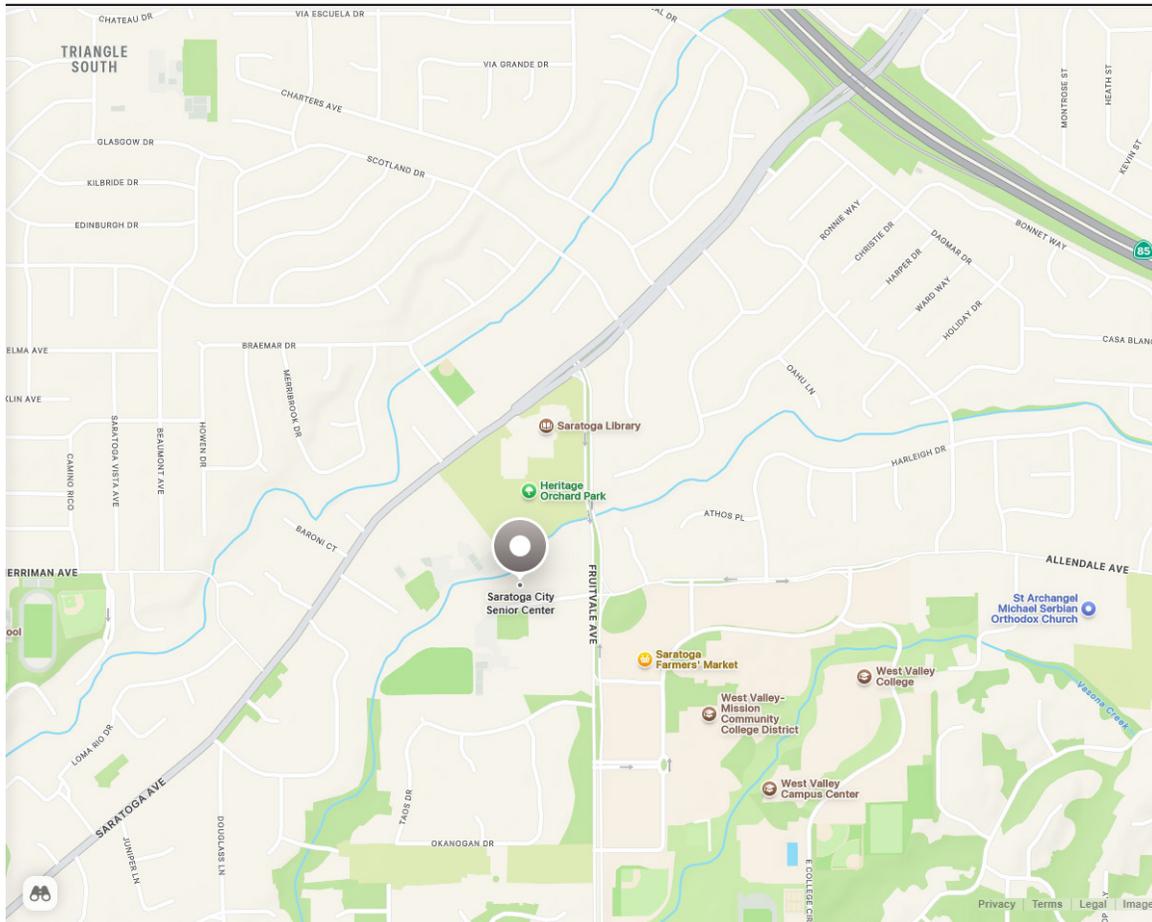


<https://www.baybookfest.org/2025info/>



**California Writers Club**  
South Bay Branch  
P.O. Box 3254  
Santa Clara, CA 95055  
[www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

Address Correction Requested



**Saratoga Senior Center**  
19655 Allendale Avenue  
Saratoga, CA 95070

From the north: Take 101 south to 85 south. Exit Saratoga Ave, turn right onto Saratoga Ave, then left on Fruitvale Ave, then right on Allendale Ave. On your right.

From the east: Take 680 south, stay on 280, take 17 south, then 85 north. Exit Saratoga Ave, turn left onto Saratoga Ave, then left on Fruitvale Ave, then right on Allendale Ave. On your right.

From the west: Take 280 south to 85 south. Exit Saratoga Ave, turn right onto Saratoga Ave, then left on Fruitvale Ave, then right on Allendale Ave. On your right.

**Saturday, August 9,**  
**10:30 Saratoga Senior Center**  
**Writing with**  
**Nils Michals**