



# WRITERSTALK

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

August  
2025

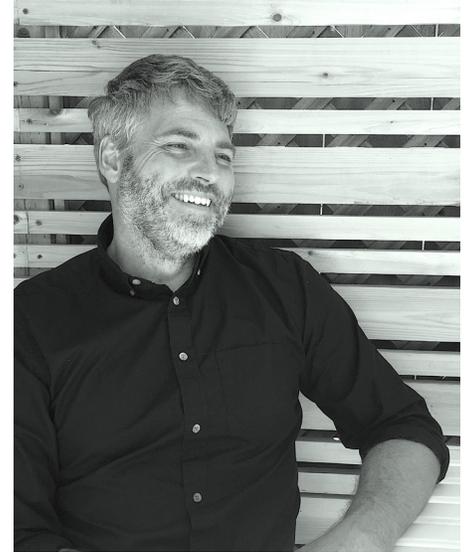
## August Speaker: Nils Michals - Poet and Teacher

by Shari Clare

"Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world." - Percy Bysshe Shelley

To help writers of all genres learn how to choose the right words for creating vivid images, the South Bay Writers Club will welcome poet and teacher Nils Michals as our August speaker.

Nils has been teaching at West Valley College for the past ten years. His journey to becoming a teacher was not one that he would have expected when he first started out. Although Nils has always wanted to be a writer, he kept his poetry a secret when he was a shy high school student in San Diego County. It wasn't until he pursued his MFA in Poetry at the University of Montana, when he was required to teach a composition course, that he discovered how much he enjoyed teaching. In his position at West Valley, he has been able to try out new ideas in the classroom. One of his favorites was a class that he developed on children's literature, specifically around the idea of "choose your own adventure" in which students decided on adventures and then ultimately wrote their own book in this genre. As a poet himself, he particularly enjoys teaching classes on the literature of poetry, and recently taught a class focused on California poets.



In addition to teaching, Nils is also the faculty advisor for "Voices," the West Valley Literary magazine. He has also been the leader of two study abroad sessions. For two weeks this summer, he led students on a literary journey through Ireland, where they saw the Book of Kells and the James Joyce Museum in Dublin, and signed the Peace Wall in Belfast. He is also the author of *Come Down to Earth*, published in 2014 and his most recent collection, *Gembox*, which was the winner of the 2018 Washington Poetry Prize from the Word Works. His letterpress chapbook *Room*, was published in 2020.

When Nils isn't teaching at West Valley or writing poetry, he enjoys creating hand-made quilts, a hobby he took up during the pandemic. He lives in the Santa Cruz mountains, not far from UCSC from which he graduated with a BA in Modern Literary Studies.

During his presentation, Nils will describe how another of his favorite poets, Rainer Maria Rilke, was influenced by his viewing of paintings by Cezanne. He will lead our group through some hands-on exercises that explore how we as writers can approach images. You will not want to miss this interactive presentation and the opportunity to try your hand at some fun and creative writing exercises with the noted poet and masterful teacher, Nils Michals.

## September Preview, Meg Waite Clayton

by Shari Clare

For our September meeting, we will welcome Meg Waite Clayton, a New York Times best selling author. Her most recent novel, *Typewriter Beach*, was an instant USA Today bestseller. In addition to her nine novels, Meg has written extensively for major newspapers, magazines, and public radio, often on the particular challenges women face. She recently gave a presentation at Bookshop Santa Cruz, and is excited to share some of her best writing tips with her fellow writers. Stay tuned for more about Meg in the September edition of Writers Talk.



## Dave LaRoche In Memoriam

by Karen Sundback

Our colleague Dave LaRoche recently passed away in June 2025.

He was a strong leader in CWC and a good friend. His wrangling behind the scenes was legendary. Dave was always fair, thoughtful, and never afraid to speak up. His dry wit and his blustering opinions left most of us in stitches. It was a pleasure to work with him. There was always something to be learned. We will all miss you, Dave.



Former South Bay Writers President and Vice President Dave LaRoche received the 2015 Matthews-Baldwin Award.

*President, July 2009-June 2012*

*Vice President, July 2012-June 2015*

*WritersTalk Editor, October 2006-June 2009*

*Founder and Chairman, NorCal Group, April 2009-March 2012*

*Representative, NorCal Group, April 2009-November 2014*

*Representative, California Writers Club Central Board, July 2009-June 2015*

*Founder and Editor, California Writers Club Literary Review, June 2012-2025*

*Publications: Fault Zone Anthology and five books.*

### President's Note:

Many of us had the opportunity to work with Dave over the years of his active club membership. His leadership has left a lasting impact on South Bay Writers and we welcome any memories of Dave for our upcoming September newsletter. Please send those memories to [pres@southbaywriters.com](mailto:pres@southbaywriters.com).

We thank Karen Sundback for her article above and recounting Dave's many of-ficial roles with SBW and the California Writers Club over the years.

### Membership

Tonya was happy to report that the current membership of the club is up to 119 members, up from 104 last year.

### Finances

Una was happy to announce that we had broken even for the fiscal year and that the club expenses had come within expectations. There was additional discussion about what could be done with reserve funds, including restarting conferences, which had stopped due to the 2008 financial crisis.

### Critique Groups

A new Critique Group has been successfully launched, but there is still more that could be done to support interest in these groups. One option discussed was a group theming, like a group focused on Children's Books.

### Events and Partnerships

The Board was happy to announce that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed with SASCC. The MOU confirms the meeting space for the next year.

### Communications & Outreach

The Board discussed the various communication channels that are being used and ways that they could expand those channels as well as align the messaging between them. As a first step, Shari will send messaging about our upcoming speakers to each chairperson, who will adapt the information based on the needs of their communication channel.

### Looking Ahead

Shari reported that our upcoming speakers include:

Gerri Spieler on October 11

Donna Rowell on November 8

Peggy Townsend on April 11, 2026

## 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.

Ryan Davis-Marsh  
Managing Editor

## Summertime Musings

“Context is everything.”

My wife uses this phrase often and I was recently reminded of the truth of this statement. How context, even in small amounts, can drastically change how we experience a moment.

While Summer has been unseasonably mild in the bay this year, I still enjoy rolling my windows down listening to “Summertime Classics”, while driving around doing errands. One such “classic” is “*Summertime*” by The Fresh Prince Will Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff. Released in 1991, the song has a breezy, bouncing beat that I imagine perfectly nails the feeling of cruising down the street in Philadelphia on a hot summer day. Supporting this are powerful synth samples from “*Summer Madness*” by Kool & the Gang, another east coast powerhouse.

As a kid I always thought that I didn’t care about the lyrics of a song and was more of a “melody person”. However I have recently realized that it’s not that I don’t enjoy lyrics, it’s more that when I hear them in a song it becomes difficult for me to connect the lyrics in my brain to real words. Much like you might pay attention to your friend when several people start talking at once, I was tuning out the lyrics in favor of the melody. Meanwhile, my wife, a genius who seemingly learns the lyrics of an entire song after a few listens, loves talking about song lyrics and so I’ve been working on improving my comprehension skills.

When “*Summertime*” recently came on, I was taking the extra effort to pay attention to the lyrics. That is when I heard a specific line I had never truly heard before. In the middle of the song’s third verse, Will Smith makes a call to the actual temperature of this fictional summer day and says “The temperature's about 88”. When my brain finally processed what was being said, I had to stop the song.

I have never had the opportunity to travel to Philadelphia, let alone during the summertime, but as a life-long resident of California, particularly of Los Angeles, I had foolishly assumed that the summertime in question would have temperatures close to those I know. Something in the high 90’s, potentially even in the 100’s. A temperature that didn’t just encourage lightweight clothes, but demanded it. In that moment, my entire relationship with the song and its setting had changed.

“Context is everything.”



## Shared Passion For Writing Inspires New Partnership In Saratoga

*This article is reprinted with permission from the August edition of The Outlook*

South Bay Writers (SBW), a branch of California Writers Club (CWC), is excited to announce a partnership with Successful Aging Solutions & Community Consulting (SASCC). "Writers helping Writers," the CWC club motto provides the impetus for club activities including monthly meetings with writing experts, open mics, member news, book fests, and other learning events. With this partnership, members of SASCC who share a passion for writing will have many new opportunities as part of a larger writing community. As an added benefit of this partnership, SASCC's newspaper, *The Outlook*, provides exciting new writing opportunities for SBW members.

CWC was founded in 1909 by literary luminaries of the day including Jack London, Ina Coolbrith, and others. The initial meeting place was in Oakland, and there are now twenty-one branches of the statewide club. SBW is one of seven branches in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2003, at the behest of CWC members, the California State Senate officially designated the third week of October as California Writers Week. Branches celebrate this annual tribute with various events including writing contests and special literary festivities.

"This year, our club has more than 115 members," said Shari Clare, who has been membership chair and now serves as vice-president. "Most of us live in Santa Clara County, from Palo Alto to Gilroy. We write in a variety of genres, such as thrillers, science fiction, children's literature, poetry, memoir, literary fiction, and non-fiction. And the experience level of our members ranges from novices who are learning the craft to seasoned writers who have published dozens of books. Regardless of experience or genre, each of us has found a welcoming community where we can enjoy each other's company while improving our skills."

Beginning in August, SBW will hold our monthly meetings at the Saratoga Senior Center at 19655 Allendale Ave, across from the post office. These meetings, which are held on the second Saturday of most months, run from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.. In the months of July and December, our offsite social events replace the monthly meetings. Each meeting features an expert speaker or panel of speakers on the craft of writing. Some of our past speakers have been best-selling author Robin Sloan, literary agent Elizabeth Kracht, and archeologist and author Patrick Hunt. Light snacks and coffee are also provided.

SBW shares many members in common with the National League of Pen Women (NLAPW), Santa Clara Valley, who also meet at the Saratoga Senior Center to foster memoir writing among community members. NLAPW's focus on encouraging the production of creative works through outreach activities and professional support aligns with CWC's mission.

"Whether you're composing music, writing a novel, or painting a masterpiece, the creative process is generally a solitary venture, so gathering with other creative people is inspiring and fills that social void. Pen Women and the South Bay Branch of California Writers Club provide that opportunity," said Edie Matthews, past president of SBW, and NLAPW member.

In addition to our monthly meetings, SBW sponsors both online and in-person open mic events, as well as critique groups.

"All are welcome at our open mics, and they are free," said Bill Baldwin, SBW's open mic host and board member. Time permitting, anyone may read up to ten minutes of a favorite piece – their own or someone they admire. It's a great way to promote your writing, get feedback, and meet other writers."

SBW welcomes all members of the community to attend and support our educational mission.

South Bay Writers held its inaugural event at the Saratoga Senior Center on Saturday, August 9. Attendees enjoyed a writing exercise on imagery led by Nils Michals, a published poet and professor of English at West Valley College.

For more information and to learn how to join South Bay Writers, visit [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com).

## Welcome to The Outlook Contributor Program (OCP), From SASCC

Are you interested in getting your works published in *The Outlook*? SASCC is thrilled to welcome members of South Bay Writers to The Outlook Contributor Program. Through this exciting partnership, SBW members will have the opportunity to receive published bylines through contributing meaningful journalism and personal reflections to a widely-circulated, community-centered publication. Brandy Maddox sat down with some members and shared additional information about how to submit an article for consideration in *The Outlook*.

### About The Outlook

The Outlook is an Age-Friendly community newspaper dedicated to celebrating and strengthening the communities we serve. We provide accessible, uplifting, and hyperlocal journalism that fosters connection, encourages civic engagement, and shines a light on the people, events, and everyday moments that enrich the lives of residents of all ages. Successful Aging Solutions & Community Consulting (SASCC) publishes *The Outlook*.

### What you can contribute

SASCC welcomes a wide range of submissions, including:

- Hyperlocal stories and interviews related to Saratoga, Los Gatos, Cupertino, and Santa Clara
- Creative nonfiction rooted in place or experience
- Thoughtful opinion pieces or essays
- Arts & culture coverage, or community profiles
- Historical retrospectives or neighborhood spotlights
- Pieces already published in SBW newsletter as long as they align to our focus
- Photos related to your stories (2-3 with captions and credits)
- Strong editors may contribute by fact-checking and editing

### How the process works

#### 1. Pitching a story

- Email your pitch to [outlook@sascc.org](mailto:outlook@sascc.org) with:
- Working title or topic
- 2-3 sentence summary and angle
- Any sources or photos you plan to use

#### 2. Writing & formatting

- Use Google Docs
- Arial, 11pt font, 1.15 spacing
- Include a headline idea and your full name for your byline
- News and feature stories should address the "5 W's + H" (who, what, where, when, why, how)

#### 3. Submitting your work

- Go to the South Bay Writers' Google Drive folder
- Create a subfolder with your story title
- Upload your article draft as a Google Doc

When applicable, use high-resolution images (with captions/credits)

- Notify us via email at [outlook@sascc.org](mailto:outlook@sascc.org) once submitted

#### 4. Deadlines

- First draft due: 15th of each month (or following Monday if on a weekend)
- Must revise edits within 48 hours
- Revised articles go to print the first week of the following month

#### 5. Journalism resources

- Need help with topics like AP Style, lead writing, story structure, active voice, quote attribution, or photojournalism?

Check out these [resources!](#)

## Reflections on the early Fibonacci Quarterly

My article “Reflections on the early *Fibonacci Quarterly*” appears within the section “Fibonacci Association: Memories and Reflections 1962 – 2024” in *The Fibonacci Quarterly* Volume 63, Issue 1, February 2025. In July 2024, I attended the Association’s biennial International Conference, where I received an award for my 62 years of service. Here, I have included enough information for the reader to learn what this is all about.

In 1962, I was an undergraduate majoring in mathematics at San Jose State College. I worked on many projects with Dr. Vern E. Hoggatt, Jr., my advisor in the math department and my favorite professor. He and Brother Alfred Brousseau, Chair of School of Science at St. Mary’s College in Moraga, co-founded the Fibonacci Association devoted to number theory and the study of recurrent sequences, especially the Fibonacci sequence 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, ... and its close relative, the Golden Ratio.

Vern and Brother Alfred established the Association’s nonprofit corporation status for the IRS, which required, among other things, regular board meetings with minutes kept on file and the filing of federal income tax every year. (The California Writers Club has the same legal structure.) Vern named me as the first secretary of the Fibonacci Association. I took voluminous notes, brought donuts, and made coffee with the San Jose State Math Department’s drip coffee maker. Their mathematics professor colleagues told them their journal wouldn’t last beyond the first year of publication. Subscriptions were \$4.00 per year.

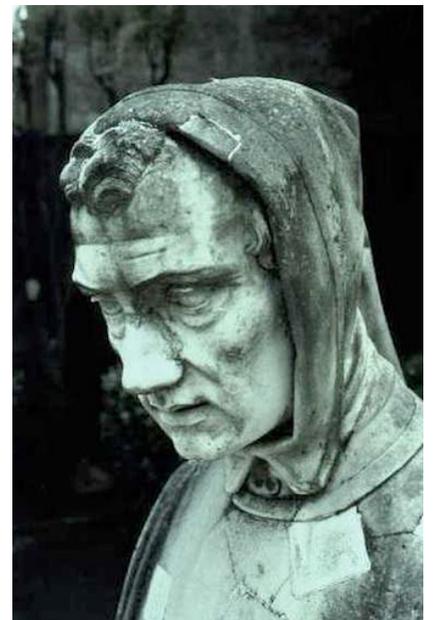
Vern wrote everything in sprawling cursive. Over the years, I typed at least 5,000 pages for him on my Olympia manual typewriter which had a cool key for pi but needed a manual turn of the cylindrical platen for subscripts and superscripts. Special symbols, such as braces for matrices, were drawn in India ink using a template. I typed everything from pages of my joint papers with Vern to handwritten papers submitted to *The Fibonacci Quarterly* from foreign countries. In those days, a professional typed pages for publication in the Quarterly so there was much proofreading, comparing the original to the finished copy. After every issue, we had to mail 50 reprints to each author.

In 1961, Vern computed the first 571 Fibonacci numbers using an early IBM mainframe computer. The Fibonacci number 571 is a monster number with 119 digits, at the end of the range for computers to print integers then. With another member of Vern’s class, I proofread the typed copy alongside the computer printout, a fifteen-hour effort. However, the article appeared with two fifty-digit errors! The printer’s apprentice at *Recreational Mathematics* confessed that he had dropped a tray of individual lead characters. Yes, that was how type was set in those days. Vern corresponded with other mathematicians worldwide, sometimes (hand) writing 50 letters in one week, making no copies. He had an amazing mental filing cabinet; he knew all the names and addresses of everyone interested in Fibonacci numbers.

Brother Alfred played the accordion and loved to lead group singing. In tune with his personality, he wrote the ballad “Do what comes Fibonaturally” to the melody of “The Blue Tail Fly” by Burl Ives. He hiked mountain trails and collected cones from the 21 species of pine trees growing in California. He marked each cone with colored pins following spirals to reveal sequences of Fibonacci numbers. He shared his colorful display with high school students and teachers at several mathematics conferences. He wanted to encourage young people to study mathematics; hence, the elementary sections in early issues of *The Fibonacci Quarterly*.

So, who was Fibonacci? Fibonacci, son of Bonaccio, was the nickname for Leonardo of Pisa, the foremost mathematician in Europe in 1202. He introduced the Hindu-Arabic numerals in use today and how to compute with them to a world that used the abacus and wrote Roman numerals. Just thinking about long division with Roman numerals gives me a headache.

In 1978, my husband Frank Johnson and I took a month-long trip to Europe using a Eurail pass and a copy of Frommer’s *Europe on \$5-a-Day*. Before we left, we stopped by Vern’s house for me to give him the current batch of typed papers. When Frank asked if he would like us to bring him anything from Europe, Vern said he’d like to have a photo of Fibonacci’s statue, from somewhere in Pisa, Italy. We tracked it down: it had been moved temporarily from its usual place close to the Leaning Tower and was obscured by scaffolding to prepare for an arts festival. Frank climbed the rickety scaffolding to get a portrait shot—the statue’s head was about 15 feet off the ground. We had the photo framed and gave it to Vern, who hung it in his home office. I have a duplicate of that framed photo over my desk, and it appears ubiquitously on the web. The patches on the statue’s cloak covered damage from World War Two. (Photo attached.)



## July BBQ

Photos by Carolyn Donnell, Edie Matthews




---



---

## Upcoming Writers Contests and Events

- Chill Out & Read 2025 Book Faire - August 17th
- California Writers Club Marin, Flash Fiction Contest - Submissions accepted: June 1- Sept 30, 2025
- Open Mic Night - August 15th, Willow Glen Library
- Tom Howard/Margaret Reid Poetry Contest - April 15-October 1, 2025
- 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/>

# July BBQ & Board Meeting

Photos by Carolyn Donnell, Edie Matthews





## California Writers Club

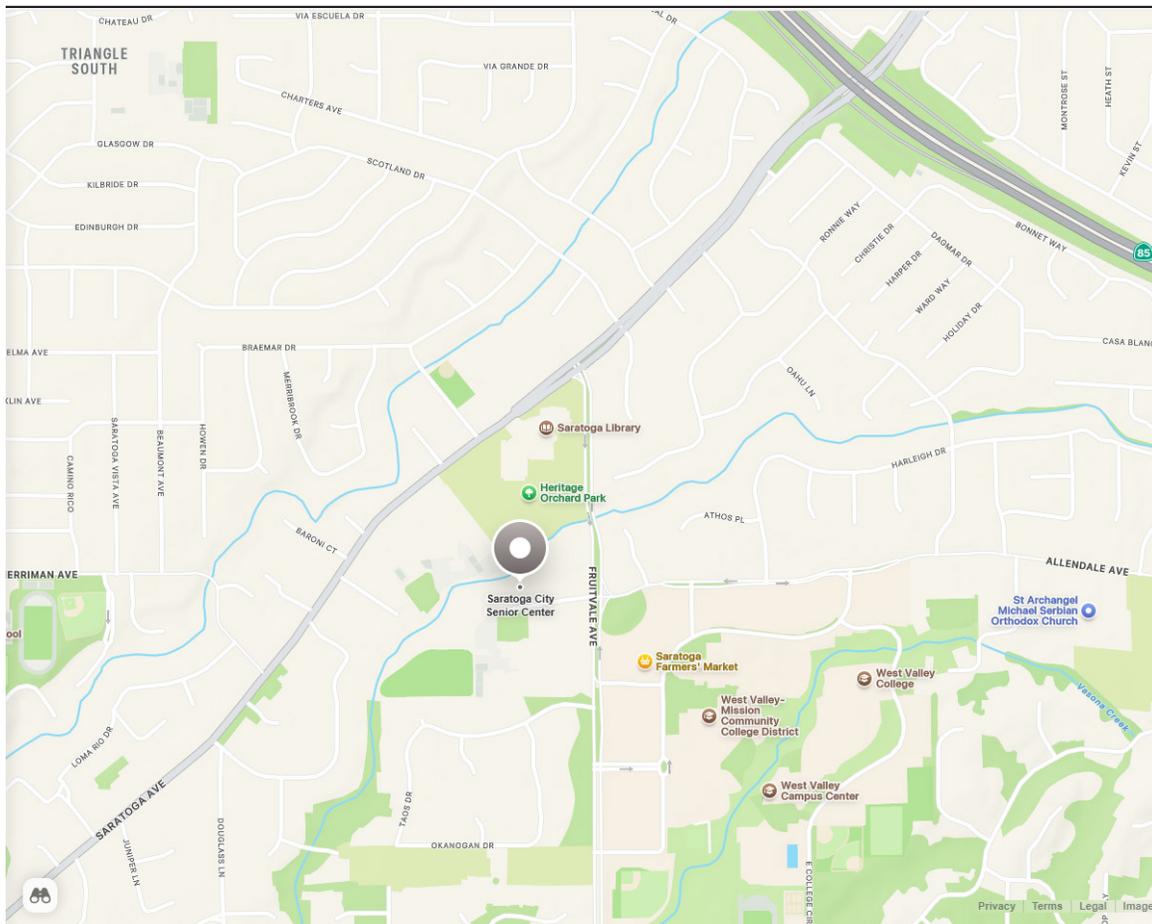
South Bay Branch

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**