



South Bay  
WRITERS

Silicon Valley's Premier Writing Group



## October Newsletter

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October is the first full month of Fall, and falling behind is exactly what happened to the October Newsletter. While we don't have an exciting print version of WritersTalk to share with you, I still wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to get some of the content that would normally appear in those versions.

As a reminder, the week of October 20th to 26th is California's Writer's Week. In support of this, the Newsletter is taking submissions until the 26th around the theme of "Favorite Fall or Spooky Story" for featuring in the November Newsletter. Please consider writing a short piece (300 - 500 words) and submitting it to [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com) or I will be forced to subject you to horrible short stories of my own making under various pseudonyms.

I hope you have a great October and keep writing!

-Ryan Davis-Marsh

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### **November Speaker: D. M. Rowell** **By Shari Clare**

To celebrate Native American Heritage Month, we welcome Donna (D. M.) Rowell as our November speaker. She will share storytelling traditions she learned from her grandfather and describe how she has applied them to her crime fiction novels.

Donna comes from a long line of Kiowa storytellers within a culture that treasures oral traditions. She is an enrolled citizen of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and has spent decades preserving sacred stories shared by tribal elders.

As a child, she was deeply influenced by her grandfather, C. E. Rowell, a recognized tribal elder, artist, and master storyteller. He was one of the last readers of the Sai-guats, deerskin winter count calendars that

chronicled a century of Kiowa history. His stories, memories, and art instilled in her a deep respect for Kiowa culture and traditions.

Donna was seven years old when her family moved to San Jose, where her father sought greater opportunities to support the family. She continued to visit her extended family in Oklahoma. At age twelve, her grandfather pointed at her with his chin, in the style of the old ones, and said, “You. You will keep these stories alive. You are next.” She has never forgotten that moment or responsibility.

After graduating from Silver Creek High School, Donna attended De Anza and West Valley colleges and became the first in her family to earn a bachelor’s degree. She studied communication and media at San Jose State University and later headed her own production company, Better Image Productions, Inc., providing video production and marketing for Silicon Valley startups. She also worked in marketing and media for larger companies including Macromedia, Sun Microsystems and Cypress Semiconductor.

At the end of a three-decade high-tech career, culminating as a digital media director, Donna took on the pen name D. M. Rowell, and began a new chapter as a novelist. She is writing a mystery series featuring a Silicon Valley professional Kiowa woman and her Plains Indian tribe. The first book, “Never Name the Dead,” was published in 2022 and nominated for the Mary Higgins Clark Award. She is now working on the fourth book in the series.

Donna is also an award-winning producer and scriptwriter of several documentaries, including “Vanishing Link: My Spiritual Return to the Kiowa Way.” The film, which aired on PBS, won TrailDance 2007 Best Oklahoma Documentary.

Join us Saturday, Nov. 8, for an inspiring presentation on “Native American Traditions: Influence on Novel Writing” with D. M. Rowell at 10:30 a.m. at the Saratoga Senior Center, 19655 Allendale Ave.

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### **Important Dates:**

- SBW 2026 Anthology submissions due November 15, 2025. Poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction welcome. [Read the submission requirements here.](#)
- Purchase your tickets to the January 24, 2026 Writing Workshop on the “Sound of Story” with award winning author and editor Jordan Rosenfeld. Lunch and a copy of her book included in ticket price. \$80 thru December 1 for members.



If you use PayPal you can use the QR code or click below to purchase your ticket today!

**BUY NOW**

## Member News:

- Member **Tonya McQuade**, author of “A State Divided: The Civil War Letters of James Calaway Hale and Benjamin Petree of Andrew County, Missouri, 1862-1865” give a talk on themes in her book:

When: October 21, 2025, 11 a.m.

Who: Peninsula Civil War Round Table

Where: Harry’s Hofbrau, 1909 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA

- Member **Reena Kapoor** has co-authored a new book "You Spoke Prose, I Heard Poetry" with local poet Kate Adams.

This book is a unique collection bringing together 100-word micro stories by Reena, with matching sonnets by Kate, and evocative photo-art to create immersive worlds within each chapter. It is available now on several platforms, including Amazon.

## A Writer’s Journey Bill Baldwin

Our September speaker, Meg Waite Clayton, shared her experience of knowing at a young that she wanted to become a writer, but not fulfilling that ambition until midlife.

She felt the attraction of writing, even as a preteen; yet it was more than twenty years later that she decided to “take the plunge.”

The first lesson she shared with us would seem obvious, but so easy to refuse to see: to become a writer, you have to try!

As happens with so many people in so many fields, Meg instead pursued something “practical.” She went to law school and became a corporate lawyer. A good career! But not the path she ultimately longed for. She has now published nine novels, including *Typewriter Beach*, *Language of Light*, and *The Last Train to London*, receiving multiple awards and honors.



Meg shared some of the lessons she has learned through writing. She reviewed the basic story arc so often suggested: Situation, Complication, Climax; leading to Denouement and Resolution. She added some practical suggestions of her own.

She suggested carrying your manuscript around with you and pulling it out when you can. She recommended writing conferences. Contact agents—but not too many—then take their feedback seriously.

Figure out what works for you. Write however you can. Meg has used timelines, flowcharts and similar tools. She writes ideas on small slips of paper then posts them on bulletin boards: scene ideas and character ideas that she can update as they evolve.

She works with agents and editors—whoever is available and willing.

But Meg’s most important advice remains: “Do whatever works for you!” Figure out what that is, and then follow through.

And remember: In order to succeed at writing, you have to try!

See the slides from Geri's talk [here](#).



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