



WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

Volume 13, Issue 4, April 2005 Non-member subscription \$12 per year

Page 1

April, National Humor Month, Brings Us

Larry Wilde

America's Best-selling Humorist

By Edie Matthews

Humor sells. It strengthens any story or novel. Even somber memoirs like *Angela's Ashes* are enhanced and more palatable with the addition of humor.



But *how* do you write funny?

At the next CWC meeting, author, entertainer, actor, university professor, and motivational speaker, Larry Wilde, will talk about finding comedy, how to use it, and what's needed to develop a better sense of humor.

Larry knows comedy—and publishing. This best-selling author has made publishing history, writing the most popular joke-book series of all times—*The Official Joke Books*. Everybody is familiar with these numerous volumes: *The Official Irish Joke Book*, *The Official Golfer's Joke Book*, *The Official Dog Lovers Joke Book*, etc., etc.

Counting the series and the variety of other books on humor, Larry has sold an amazing 53 titles, with sales exceeding 12 million copies. The *New York Times* rightly dubbed him "America's Best Selling Humorist."

Larry shows no signs of slowing down. His latest book, *When You're Up to Your Eyeballs in Alligators*, is strategies cobbled from his critically acclaimed seminars on how to nurture the natural gift of good humor and offers *5 Secrets For Breaking the Stress Cycle*, as well as the vital *10 Commandments of Light-Hearted Living*.

Like many funny fellows, Larry was the class clown. In college

(Continued on page 4)

Gnarly New Location

By Dave LaRoche

South Bay Writers have decided and from now on we will be holding our monthly meetings at the Lookout Restaurant located atop the pro shop at the Sunnyvale Municipal Golf Course. This is a distinct change from Harry's, adjacent to the gambling pit and which, according to an earlier club speaker, barred our muse and her inspiration at the heavy front door.

The first change of note is the Lookout's parking lot; spacious and virtually empty as most golfers cease chasing the dimpled white ball at sundown.

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NOTICE! NOTICE! NOTICE!

Our next

GENERAL MEETING

will be held at the

Lookout Restuarant

605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale

(Sunnyvale Golf Course)

6 PM, Wed. Apr. 13th

Members \$15, Guests \$18

(includes Dinner)

A Look to the Future:

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President's Prowling—



“Know Which Writers You Hate”

Writing coaches say that aspiring writers should “write-write-write” and “read-read-read.” We all know about “writer’s block,” but sometimes I’ve had “reader’s block.” Maybe I’ve gotten too picky. Maybe I’m still a snob (I’m sure I was one in high school). I just...pick up something to read and...don’t like it. Oh, I read

magazines, newspapers (sometimes), biographies. But...fiction...poetry (i.e. the stuff I myself actually try...to write...)

The first sentence is too long (or the first paragraph) – I get bored. I don’t like the style. I don’t see what the author is getting at. I spot a phrase I personally find ugly. I am struck (disagreeably) by an awkward grammatical construction or...a statement makes no sense, or contradicts a second statement.

This is the hard part of “read-read-read.” It’s easy to read stuff you like. But you should also (I think) read stuff you hate – at least long enough to figure out what is annoying you so much. I suspect this could be extremely useful.

Besides, you can then – if in the mood – hurl invective about “that idiot writer” (“Dickens is so contorted”, etc.) – but best to do this out of range of the fans of that writer. Especially avoid doing this if the writer is still living, and within earshot. Save your opinions, perhaps, for your spouse!

In addition to your list of favorite writers, develop a list of writers you loathe. I once participated in a writing workshop (some of you were there) where the instructor trashed a well-known popular writer (I’ll never tell who!), explaining what annoyed him about this particular author’s style.

The point is that you have a right to adore your favorite writer – and loathe your least favorite. It’s a matter of taste. You and I may entirely disagree. But you should discover (and be aware of) what your own tastes are – and why. This will help you in your own writing.

“Fare Forward, Voyagers!”
(T. S. Eliot, “Four Quartets”)

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— o —

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Unless otherwise noted above, our email
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Join Up

We have a membership category that fits you, dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee.

For the details contact our membership chair, Diane Richomme at.

Membership@southbaywriters.com

Mitch Berman Serves Dessert at the Lookout

By Dave LaRoche

Bastards! That's what they are—all of them! Bastards, the editors who deal with your work—your sweat, your tears, your very early mornings, your much later nights; the planning and development, the squeezing out a line, pushing a paragraph... finally the delivery. And what do they do? If you're lucky, he reflected, they might scan over a paragraph, or two, if not too lengthy.



Mitch Berman MFA, Writer, Professor SJSU, Director of the Center for Literary Arts, our well credentialed speaker for March, straight-talked us—told us how to approach the publishing world with our stories—what not to expect and some of the (rare) possibilities of success. His focus was short stories; he had written a few, and his view of the "game" was practical—a view we could use.

Many of us relish the short story genre and we note the inventory of our heroes—

(Continued on page 8)



Editor's Itch

I've had stuff published in this newsletter in the past. There was no particular trick—I gave it to Edie, she gave it to Carolyn and it went in. The advantage that came was not so much that *you* got to read me in print but that *I* got to read me. What an eye-opener... and I thought, boy, I can do better and I did.

When you send your work to us and we print it, that perspective will be yours and in addition you'll be putting your oar in club waters—participating, committing to greater validation as a writer. And when you end up in *WritersTalk* print, I will announce your contribution at a general meeting and this recognition by your peers is certainly rewarding... if not occasionally a tad embarrassing.

When I write, I do a draft, and then put it down. I polish and put it down and I polish and put it down again... then I reconstruct, change my slant, my POV and of course, polish again. I spend my time dawdling with this piece because ordinarily it has nowhere to go. But, if I am preparing it for publication, even this newsletter, I will spend my best time up front while my engine is warm, do it right from the bottom light and have a satisfying piece soon after my wheels begin to smoke.

Yes, publishing in our newsletter is not a big trick but it does serve to motivate, recognize and reward. And so I encourage you, send your essays, poetry and short fiction to writerstalk.com and mine these advantages.

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Submit:

Guest Columns

— *Almost Anything Goes*

Regular Columns

to Una Daly

News Items to Dave LaRoche

Literary Work

Announcements and Advertisement

Letters to Ed—In My Opinion
to Dave LaRoche

Submittals may also be sent to our website at www.southbaywriters.com/newsletter/newsletter-main.html.

Announcements are accepted on the basis of interest and value to writers, have no economic value to the originator and are published free of charge.

Advertising is accepted on the basis of its interest and value to writers and is charged \$7 per column-inch for members and \$10 for non members. Ads will be limited to three column-inches. Contact the Managing Editor.

All Submittals must be to an editor no later than the 16th of the month preceding publication. *WritersTalk* is published on the 1st of the month.

Help Wanted

News Editor

Will cover events of interest: Meetings, Open Mic, Book signings, etc. (see p. 11).
Call or email Dave LaRoche

(Wilde from page 1)

he started doing an act, lip-syncing to records when one night the record player broke, and he began telling jokes. This incident was the beginning of his stand-up comedy career. College was followed by a stint in the Marines where he saw more action on stage, writing, producing, directing and performing in shows for his fellow-service men.

Coincidentally, Jerry Lewis began by mimicking records. “Yes,” quipped Larry, “All the jobs that Jerry couldn’t do they gave to me.”

Although most stand-up comedians write their own material, Larry did not expect to become a published writer. He was quite successful appearing in clubs and concerts, opening for stars like Ann-Margaret, Diana Ross and Debbie Reynolds. He also had a string of commercials and television credits: *The Tonight Show*, *Sanford and Son*, and repeat appearances on the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*. However, his passion for comedy led to his first book, *Great Comedians Talk About Comedy*, filled with interviews from Woody Allen to Phyllis Diller to Jerry Seinfeld.

His second book wasn’t Larry’s idea. A publisher offered him the assignment after Larry’s first book was published. The idea was for a combination *Official Italian Joke Book* and if you flipped it upside down, it was *The Official Polish Joke Book*. Larry accepted the contract, and then found an ingenious way of gathering jokes—which he’ll explain at the next meeting.

The second book was a hit from the beginning. “You couldn’t write that book today,” acknowledges Larry. “but back in the Seventies, we weren’t so politically correct.” More books in the series followed, and the success of each one moved Larry’s career in a new direction.

While other comedians scrambled for jobs in the entertainment industry, he became a popular after-dinner speaker. Eventually, he began to refocus his material, adding techniques on how to use laughter for better health, to stay sane when the world gets a little crazy, and using a sense of humor for unlimited success.

Join us this April, National Humor Month, (which was founded by Larry), when he will discuss “How to Write, Rewrite, Cope With Publishers, Find Success and Still Maintain Your Sanity.”

Lookout Restaurant
605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale
(Sunnyvale Golf Course)
6 PM, Wed. April 13th
Members \$15, Guests \$18 (includes Dinner)

CWC members are invited to San Jose’s Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library open mic event on Monday, April 11, 6:30 “where residents will read passages of their choosing and would draw inspiration from CWC presence.”

Contact Anling Wu, Librarian, 408 808-2388 or www.sjlibrary.org

Mini Profile

By Una Daly

Barbara J. Smith

“I was searching the web for writing conferences or seminars and stumbled upon the CWC South Bay site,” reports new member Barbara Smith.

After attending the Elizabeth Lyon’s workshop in January, she joined the



club hoping to glean tools of the trade from the other writers and wannabe writers in the South Bay. “Now that I am *consciously incompetent*, I am devouring every book and seminar I can find on perfecting the craft of writing” she added.

Barbara is interested in children’s literature and has written a book for children but isn’t sure if it’s ready for publication yet. “I’ve got lots of ideas and can’t wait to transform them into compelling stories for young people,” she said.

Born in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, Barbara and her family relocated to San Jose with Siemens in 1990 and haven’t looked back. She and her husband have five children ranging in age from 27 to 5.

Barbara has a BS in Busi-

(Continued on page 6)

(Place from page 1)

This capacious condition is likely to diminish however, when the sun begins to dally on its way to the horizon, encouraging those plaid-pants hopefuls to exit a bit later in the evening. But, we're assured, there'll always be plenty of room... and it's no stretch

to imagine those leaving the golf course are joining the throng on their way to Garden City and Harry's.

Next and foremost is the banquet room itself; large and airy with big windows *looking out* over treed fairways, lush greens—a visual feast to be increasingly available as that "later sun" lingers on its trip. Large circular tables seating eight populate this room lending the gathering more socializing opportunities.

The food line, virtually non-existent as only club writers are there, brings one very soon to the means of delectation and good cheer. Ah, the food; first of all bountiful with seconds available, thirds likely. And while it could be whispered that the entrées were *less than gourmet*, it's a bit over-the-top to add shallots and wine sauce to Western BBQ. For those with a delicate sapidity, vegetarian lasagna and three kinds of salad tempted the palette.

In addition to great service, drinks flowed like the Nile, with as much coke, lemonade and coffee as one might want to drink.

Acoustics poor, ceiling too low, echo's—how's that you say? Well we are a chatty bunch but beyond that, some tweaking of the PA system might make things close to perfect when it's listening we're after.

With this first meal and meeting about 75% of those in attendance voted "aye" for the Lookout, an impressive majority. And most of the "nays" would change their vote for dessert, it turns out.

It has been reported that management is quite cooperative... any small negatives can be



turned positive in short order. So, all in all, the Lookout is deemed *way far out* by the sway of opinion and we will continue to meet there far into the future... all for only a dollar more.

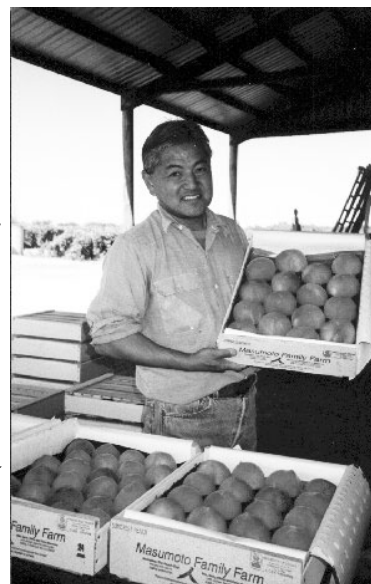
P.S., I personally like the "Steaming Hot Polish and Kraut" from a white cart that Ernesto pushes down San Fernando. DLR

Author of *Epitaph for Peach* Shares Vision

By Una Daly

"Harvest of words" is how David "Mas" Masumoto, author of the 2005 Silicon Valley Reads selected book and organic peach farmer, described writing *Epitaph for a Peach*. Mas spent the month of February visiting our libraries and community halls sharing his life as a writer and third generation Central Valley farmer. At "Breakfast in the Orchard with Mas", held February 24th at the Saratoga Community Library, he explained how the book grew out of an article written for the L.A. Times about the frustration of growing heirloom peaches in a supermarket world.

Lacking the "lipstick red" color and extended shelf life of mass-produced peaches, the juicy and sweet



(Continued on page 10)

Seeking persons interested in forming a critique group (fiction) in the Cupertino area. Contact Cathy Bauer at 408-252-4479 or cathy@bauerstar.com

(Smith from page 4)

ness Information Systems and works at Siemens Communications in San Jose, where she is a sales representative in the Enterprise Sales Solutions division.

Favorite author: "I really admire Sue Grafton, who despite her success seems genu-

Mini Profile

By Una Daly

Emily Jiang

"I located your organization on the Internet and when I decided to get more serious about writing, I joined," reports new member Emily Jiang. She hopes to meet other local writers as well as expand her knowledge of the craft and business of writing.

"I write primarily poetry and fiction, and my most recent focus is on the creation of literature for children and young adults," said Emily. Her current work-in-progress is a young adult historical novel that tells the story of a Chinese-American family and their experiences during World War II in California, specifically Angel Island, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. She is also working on a picture book manuscript and a poetry collection for children.

"After graduating from Rice University in Houston, Texas, with a B.A. in English, I joined the thousands of tech-savvy college grads migrating to the San Francisco Bay Area in search of internet gold", said Emily. After working many different positions in high tech,

(Continued on page 7)

This column brings a series of brief grammar lessons by Pat Decker Nipper, a writer, a former English teacher, and a member of CWC...

Nipper's Nits

By Pat Decker Nipper

Lesson 2. Correct Verb Usage with the Word "None"

This lesson involves using "is" or "are" with the word "none," when it's followed by a plural noun. You can think of "none" as a contraction of "not one," as in, "Of the five nominees, none [not one] is qualified." You can also try writing around the situation, as in "All five nominees lack qualification."

Modern style allows either the singular or the plural verb, in order to make the sentence sound more natural. ("None of the letters is..." or "None of the letters are...") Usually the plural sounds better unless you're trying to emphasize the idea of "not one," or if the words that follow are singular. With group nouns, always use the singular verb, as in "none of the class is..."

One other Nipper nit: The adverb "badly" does not explain how you feel unless you have something wrong with your fingers. You feel "bad" when something goes wrong. If you feel badly, you have something wrong with your sense of touch.

Contact Pat at pat@patdeckernipper.com for comments or questions.

View from the Board

The BoD met March 1, at 7:00pm at the home of Beth Proudfoot.

Absent were, Treasurer; Susan Mueller, Roster; Vicki Miller, Newsletter; Dave LaRoche, Membership; Diana Richomme.

In response to a query from Bill Baldwin, present officers indicated they will run again this year as incumbents.

Vice-President and Program Chair, Edie Matthews, announced speakers for April; Larry Wilde, May; Paul Douglas, and September; Firoozeh Dumas.

Central Board (Bob Garfinkle): said that Tina Ferrell has resigned her position as state roster chairperson, Trish Bench is interested in being a part of the next East of Eden Conference and that he will look into whether the Basil Stevens Contest will be held again this year.

Beth Proudfoot, Conference Chair said, the date and venue for East of Eden Conference 2006 needs to be set within the next couple of months and that she will be seeking volunteers soon for registration, treasurer, venue coordinator, catering coordinator, volunteer coordinator, speakers, etc.

Web Page Master, Ro Davis, said that back issues of the newsletter are too large to put on the web site.

Open position: Historian.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 6th @ 7:00 at Cathy's house, 10650 Culbertson Drive, Cupertino, CA. DLR

(Jaing from page 6)

she is now working in the philanthropic sector by day while pursuing her other passions: singing, dancing, and writing poetry and fiction in the "tween".

Favorite Quote: "The secret to becoming a writer is BIC. Butt in chair." Paraphrased from Jane Yolen. UD

Mini Profile

By Una Daly

Diane Kavanaugh

"I was searching the Internet for local writer's groups and came across your website. I'm looking for motivation, inspiration and information" reports new member Diane Kavanaugh.

Diane is learning the basics of the writing craft and training her family to leave her alone when it's time to write.

"Theoretically, I have at least 4 hours of quiet time each day, during which I could write my heart out.

Realistically however, I'm lucky if I can write 4 hours a week" said Diane. She is also trying to decide on where her focus should be: non-fiction or fiction, novel or short story, genre or mainstream, commercial or literary, but has definitely decided not to pursue poetry.

After working various office jobs for 26 years, Diane retired from the corporate world in the



middle of the dot.com bust. "I'm now a wife, step mom, grandma and homemaker who's trying to become a full-time writer" she said. Besides writing, the passions in her life are her faith, her husband, and her children. She and her husband, Tom, will celebrate their 2nd anniversary on April 26th and between them have 4 boys aged 29, 25, 23, and 11-3/4.

Favorite Quote: "You must stand for something, or you'll fall for everything." Author Unknown. UD

826 Valencia

presents

Learn to write and produce a screenplay
April 23, 2p to 6 - \$30

Kabuki 8 theaters
1881 Post St, SF
For info

www.826valencia.org

Attention Published Southbay Authors

Again this year, April 23 & 24, the CWC booth at the popular LA Times/UCLA Festival of Books will be decorated with a montage of book covers from the Clubs published authors. If you want to participate, send dust covers or color photocopy of the cover of your published book ASAP to

Allene Symons
2373 North Flower
Santa Ana, CA 92706

For contact, email at: asymons@earthlink.net and mention CWC in the subject space or for more encouragement and info, Bob Garfinkle, our Central Board Rep at: ragarf@earthlink.net

\$2,000 Awaits Winners of Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition

Stories in all genres of fiction are welcome. Maximum length is 3,000 words, writers retain all rights. The final deadline is May 15, 2005; winners will be announced at the end of July.

For guidelines, please visit www.shortstorycompetition.com, e-mail Calico2419@aol.com, or send an SASE to the Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition, P.O. Box 993, Key West, FL 33041.

It's Flu Season
by Pat Bustamante

The object of my infection
Can speedily change my complexion
From white to rosy red --
I'm not in love with you:
I just have the flu.

Our Speaker for May

Professor Paul Douglass is the author of the historical biography, "Lady Caroline Lamb." In addition to being Lord Byron's notorious mistress, she was an accomplished poet, writer and playwright.

Professor Douglass will speak about the different phases of writing: how to begin the first chapter, living with the work, how to connect the loose ends, juggling your job and writing, the role of patience and much more.

(Berman from page 3)

Faulkner, Hemmingway, Chekhov, Joyce—and we think of the infamy and success available to the literary writer. And then Mitch Berman, certainly a player in that literary world, tells us the most he's received for one of his stories is \$475. *There are fifty thousand submittals a year to magazines, each of which choose about twelve.* So, with that work and those odds for that reward, if we want to continue, here's what he said we should do.

First, make it look nice. Use good paper; title of story, name of the author and a page number on every page; double spaced lines, a legible font—Garamond 13 or Palatino Linotype 11.5 are the fonts he uses, and staples are optional. "Of course you don't need a page number on the first page as any idiot can see, from a hundred feet away, it is the first page."

Second, make it read well from the start. Get your story off the ground in the first paragraph—better in the first line. Editors have little time, are callused, and if you're planning to impress, you must do it quickly. He related stories. His friend, Tobias Wolfe remembered an encounter with Gordon Lish, a famous and respected New York editor. (When Lish was with Esquire, he had published Wolfe... Wolfe's "first big break.") Wolfe had stopped by Lish's office one day for "hellos" and Lish suggested lunch, the hour being near. "But first," he said, sitting Wolfe down in a chair, "I have a few manuscripts to review." With that, recounted Wolfe to Berman, Lish brought up to his desk a two foot "slush pile" and, one by one, went through a hundred or so stories in less than fifteen minutes—one by one, just glancing at the first lines.

Editors' reviews are casual if at all. Rejection is common and little time is spent generating the letters—some are coming in the size of recipe cards. Mitch told of someone who got a rejection note written on the back of a page from their previously rejected story.

Third, make it weigh enough—emotionally. You must make it feel that you're writing something important and that you *know* about what you are writing—that your story comes directly from life. He likened the effect of a hollow, unimportant story to eating an "air sandwich"—not especially satisfying to chew, worse to digest. The writer's fatal judgment, he said, "is believing someone wants to read about his or her taking out the trash."

"If you want to know what a short story should sound like, read Flannery O'Connor—greatest short story writer ever to walk the planet," Mitch said as he reminded us he was talking here about *literary fiction*. He distributed a list of publications showing how often pieces published in each won major awards.

Send your stuff to a publication that will put it in print; that is, don't send your "Gardening Tips" to *Modern Photography*. Do research before submitting to determine who publishes the kind of stuff that you write—go to Barnes and Noble, pick up their literary publications, look in at the table of contents, note what's included, then make your selection and submit.

You don't need a query letter for a short story, simply send it in. If you include a cover letter, make it simple and short—list your credits: previous publications, education, awards if recognizable, "but don't make a big deal of it—don't mention that you edit the newsletter from your tenants' association."

"Most publications ask for exclusive submittals—who do they think they're kidding? You could spend your life... Send out ten at a time, who's going to know? You might have to apologize, so what?" Mitch keeps a matrix: publications he will submit to (which remain the same over time) down the left, stories he submits across the top; and in the matrix itself, "when sent", "when rejected", "when accepted". Most of his response squares contain "Rs", but this is "not an object of your despair as it represents what you've done—your writing career." The "Rs" don't discourage him, just part of the game.

"Should you get an offer, sit on it—another, more favorable, may follow and you don't want to renege after an effusive acceptance of the first." *And when you decline, offering an apology and another story will go much farther to ameliorate an offended editor—if you first haven't accepted.* "You may char a bridge here and there with simultaneous submittals and sitting on offers but probably not burn them completely."

Berman was not impressed with *Writers Market*—"scammy", he said, "vested interests, don't trust them". When asked what was "literary fiction", a term he used repeatedly, he paused then said, "I don't

(Continued on page 9)

(Berman from page 8)

know but Scott Turrow is not, Leo Tolstoy is." He elaborated, "'Literary fiction' delves deeper into the human condition, dwells longer in the mind, has substance and weight... each sentence is beautifully sculpted."

"Writing and editing are two different (hostile) activities"—avoid doing them together. Write then wait, giving your mind a vacation so that it may start fresh with your edit, though, he said, "Vonnegut could not wait to edit—to see just how clever he was."

Berman likes a lot of projects bubbling away—cold with one, he goes to another, though "every writer has his or her own method."

Nonfiction is similar to fiction in many ways: character development, suspense, conflict, surprise... the need for an opening that grabs: "It was the year I lost all of my legs..." Now that's grabby.



The Postmortem

He left us this parting thought, "Remember, 90% of editors are female." And, with that curious fact and the veritable treasure preceding it, the night was rewarding. So, thank you Mitch Berman for information we can apply as well as your humorous perspective. DLR

We know the truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart.

Blaise Pascal. (1623–1662)

A Modest Gathering

by Dave LaRoche

On a drizzly Friday night, a few dedicated readers drifted into Barnes and Noble at the Pruneyard to read at a podium in front of a live mic—an occasion hosted and emceed by the personable and inveterate Bill Baldwin... "Does everyone have coffee?"

Bill began with his familiar introduction of sponsorship with a line or two of legacy, then inaugurated the evening's reading with early 20th century Russian poems, including Pasternak's *Winter Night*, from a collection entitled *The Heritage of Russian Verse*.

Sylvia followed Bill with half-a-dozen woeful experiences committed to verse. She recounted, when her daughter asked why her poetry was so sad, she told her that she uses her writing to digest and dispose of lingering, troubled experiences... and when she is happy, she has absolutely no time to write. Familiar?

Woody read from his memoirs. He related his college-days' choice between two Margies, one of which spent the next 50 years along side him—lucky him. And later, in another piece of the same era, he poignantly described his awkward hesitation and tentative first moves toward his "only true love." I'm certain all males within listening range felt a tinge of like recollection.

David, a drop-in, read three poems of his—nicely done, some abstract. He explained that he liked to go out alone, along a deserted old road or a slow-running stream... sit on a rail fence in front of a setting sun and ponder the shape of things. *Mannequin*, *Early Winter*, and *Subterranean Moments* brought these shapes to us richly and with great clarity of form.

Sam, a regular at these events, gave us insight into the value of good relations between adult child and parent as he read from the first chapter of his book—a book, ten years in the making, to be published this year. Good relationships, parent to child, help maintain a family's legacy, and the knowledge of its total experience is passed down generation to generation. If that legacy is broken by bad or non-existent relationships, the channels carrying the flow of that knowledge are dammed—growth is encumbered and the adult child is left without his family's experience and foundation.

Open Mic is conducted on the first and third Fridays of the month from about 7:00 to 9:30 pm. The first Friday is at Borders in Los Gatos, the third at Barnes and Noble in the Pruneyard Shopping Center. You may come to listen, read your stuff, or read the stuff of others. It is a warm inviting place of people and books. Curious eyes glance over, stop by, give ears a listen and pass on. The books remain and abet. DLR

(*Epitaph from page 5*)

Sun Crests were jettisoned by fruit brokers. Mas received dozens of responses to the article from admirers who wanted to buy his peaches. While this was not enough to stave off a huge loss that year, it was the impetus for switching to organic farming, where crops are valued for taste and nutrition over homogenization and convenience.

“Walking the fields, involving the senses, rather than driving” gave Mas an up close view of his farm. “Old farmers are better at walking; they come back dusty and grass stained after being enveloped in their orchards for hours” he added. A believer in the Slow Food movement, which promotes agricultural diversity, he has been selling peaches to spokeswoman and Chez Panisse proprietor Alice Waters for over a decade. With three trucks on his farm, and only two running, the cab of the ’72 Chevy functions as an office and the newest a 1991, registers only 5000 miles. He lives the Slow Food movement.

A compact, soft spoken man with an easy smile, he led us into the Saratoga Heritage Orchard to view a gnarled, old apricot tree sporting a few scattered buds. We learned about the three bud stages: popcorn before the bud opens, white or pink bud stage, and finally blooming. To our amazement, Mas identified the elder tree as 50% through its blooming cycle. Listening for sounds, we heard three or four different birdcalls, flying insects, and cars whizzing by; all indicators of a healthy orchard with the exception of the cars.

Mas grew up on a family farm outside Fresno with his parents, grandmother, and siblings. For college, he chose to attend UC Berkeley and earn a degree in sociology as a way of putting the family farm and all its hard work behind him. After earning a Masters Degree at UC Davis and studying in Japan, Mas returned to work with his father, eventually marrying and taking over the farm.

Back in the library, we examined an old family shovel, the blade worn into two crescent shaped mounds naturally sharpened by the surrounding whetstone. Worked by three generations, the shovel is still a favorite for its ability to slice through the shallow root systems of the Central Valley. Mas passed around a sample of hardpan, the compressed rock-like soil, bane of farmers, and with which he is intimately familiar. After spending WWII in an internment camp, his family re-

turned to California only able to afford a hardpan farm.

Family and traditions compose the web of life on a farm. Although Mas never spoke with his grandmother Baachan, whose only language was Japanese, they worked in the fields communicating through shared experiences. Harvest time always involved extended family, cousins and uncles coming from town to help during the busy time. The summer packing rituals of his childhood long over, Mas and his family still pack a few boxes for the specialty stores and some evenings he can still hear Baachan’s footsteps treading the familiar pathways.

Parallels between Santa Clara Valley’s shift from rural to high technology and today’s rapid development in the Central Valley are unavoidable. Mas points out that we need a new way to measure the value of our relationship to the land. Dollars per acre doesn’t convey the powerful role of family farms in producing healthy food and rich cultural connections for all of us. If land development continues at the current rate, California will not be able to feed its own population in a few decades.

The Santa Clara County Library invites all county residents to submit personal memoirs of their experiences growing up or living in rural areas. Submissions are due on March 15 and selected ones will be posted on the Library Blog and honored during National Library Week in April.

Epitaph for a Peach won the 1995 Julia Child Cookbook Award for Literary Food Writing as well making finalist for the James Beard Food Writing Award. Mas has more recently published the following books: *Harvest Son*, *Four Seasons in Five Senses*, and *Letters to the Valley: A Harvest of Memories*.

Mas and his wife Marcy have two children. They live in their 90- year-old farmhouse just outside Del Rey, California in the Fresno

The Saturday Poets present their reading series featuring: Geri Doran followed by an open mike on Wednesday, May 18, at 7:00 p.m.

Il Piccolo Caffè, 1219 Broadway, Burlingame.

Contact Amy MacLennan at

amy.maclennan@saturdaypoets.org

650-631-5732 or www.saturdaypoets.org.

Announcements

Announcements

Announcements

Reminder

**Our April Meeting
will be held on
Wed, April 13 at
the Lookout in
Sunnyvale**

**Bring your appetite and your interest in Humor
and allow
Larry Wilde to
tickle your funny
bone**

A new South Bay novel critique group has formed in the Milpitas to Hayward area. If you are interested in joining us for our monthly sessions, please contact Jeannine Vegh at:

ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net

**Get Published in *WritersTalk*
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Send your *literary work* to the editor—poetry, essays, short fiction. Keep them less than 1200 words... but we're negotiable. Dave LaRoche at

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Write a column—

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That's the name of the column space and we mean it. Your ski down Mount Everest, your first PGA tournament, your thoughts on the "book table" or the Arts Community in SJ or Nepal. Make it opinionated, informational, persuasive, and. Email it to Una Daly, our columns editor, before the 16th of the month. Should you want guidance, she'll call you—leave a phone number in your email.

unatdaly@mac.com

**The BOOK TABLE
at Club Meetings
hosting old reads and
new adventures**

Clean off your shelves and bring in your old books—those you've read a dozen times or won't read at all. Bring them to our club book table and give others an opportunity ...

And you TV couch potatoes, come pick up new readings por nada. It's a great deal— and the return policy is quite lenient.

Every monthly meeting, the Book Table is set.

GOT NEWS?

Know of an event that needs reporting—one coming up or happening now. Email our news editor—he/she'll hop on it or appoint one of our many staff members.

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Writers'**

Open Mic

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**Third Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm**

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Pruneyard in Campbell**

Read from your own prose or poetry, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. It's good experience and great fun—and if your knees wobble a little, we won't notice.

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**The San Fernando Branch of CWC presents their
Writers Journey Conference**

June 3rd and 4th.

The focus this year is on the Mystery of Writing. Writer Contest - Prizes \$100, \$50, \$25 Fee: \$5, Deadline May 3rd. Check out the details on our website - www.CalWritersSFV.com For more, Contact Carol Wood at pres@hazelst.com



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
1125 Miguel Ave
Los Altos, CA 94024

www.southbaywriters.com

Stamp(s)

MEMBER

Address Correction Requested

SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors
Apr 6, 6:30p

General Meeting
Apr 13, 6p
Lookout Restaurant

Open Mic
Apr 1, 7p
Borders, Los Gatos
Apr 15, 7p
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Deadline
Apr 16 to editor

Editors Pow Wow
Apr 25, 1:30p
Main St Cafe

General Membership meeting—2nd Wenesday

— 0 —

Lookout Restaurant
605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale
(Sunnyvale Golf Course)

See Map

