



WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

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JAS LONNQUIST (our August speaker) On Screenwriting Essentials

By Edie Matthews

Screenwriter and CWC member, Jas Lonquist, had just finished writing a screenplay for John Brister, the producer of 53 films, when I spoke to her in July. *Puppies On Ice* part of a series of films aimed at children, is Jas's ninth screenplay.

Her next project is an adaptation of the book, *Once Upon an Island* by David Conover. "More than 40% of today's films are based on novels," said Jas, "so if you're writing a book, you'd better think about screenplays." Not to mention, once a book becomes a film its sales multiply, and the writer's marketability is enriched.



Jas favors humorous films; four of her comedies have been honored in the prestigious Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Nicholl Screenwriting Fellowships. Most of this was accomplished before Jas began splitting her time between her home in Silicon Valley and Los Angeles. She hasn't written exclusively for the movies, however. She also has 33 television credits. Her work has appeared on the Discovery Channel, Tech TV, Knowledge TV, and Comedy Central.

It's not surprising that Jas was drawn to writing since she comes from a family of scribes. Her mother wrote for the local newspaper, her father wrote for radio, and her great-great grandmother wrote for a newspaper in Montana when it was still a territory. "She was a woman way ahead of her time," said Jas. Now Jas carries on the family tradition, along with

(Continued on page 5)

Meet Jeannine Vegh MA, MFTI

by Una Daly

"With a [writing] group it isn't possible to go to a meeting without having to discuss what you are writing, when is it being published, and what's the storyline. It keeps me from being lazy,"

says

Jeannine Vegh.

Before returning to California and



joining CWC South Bay two years ago, she was a member of the Baltimore Writer's Alliance. Last year she started a novel writing critique group that meets monthly in Southern Alameda County.

Jeannine is the author of *Absent Hearts, Missing Pieces: The Story of a Survivor* published in 2003, an autobiographical book based on growing up with physical and emo-

(Continued on page 4)

A Look to the Future:

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President's Prowling— by Bill Baldwin



PERSEVERANCE AND PATIENCE (OR: FROM PAIN TO GAIN)

Part of the goal of the California Writers Club is to educate its members in the “business of writing.” I must admit I’ve learn a lot about the “business” since joining the club. Our monthly speakers have taught me a great deal. Now, if I continue to pay attention and actually work on applying what I’ve heard, I will learn even more, from actual experience.

Some of you know these things already; some of you are coming along with me or a bit behind me.

I submitted my first completed novel to a contest back in May. How on earth am I to last until they announce the winners? Why didn’t I realize how long four months is? I was rolling along on the excitement of actually having completed a novel and having submitted it to someone! But now the time crawls by.

So – I have finally gone and bought the *Novel and Short Story Writer’s Market*, and the *Guide to Literary Agents*. I remember how these publications discouraged me when I bought them several years ago. Going through lists of hundreds of agents or publishers – is this why I started writing? How could I possibly tell, from the short descriptions, whether or not an agent would be interested in my book? How could I decide which publishers to contact? But that is why you research the books they have worked with – and why you always look through a copy of any magazine you may be contributing to. I remember, several years ago, how surprised I was at how an actual magazine might differ from the concept of it I had formed from its description in the reference book.

At our first East of Eden conference, I had my first one-on-one conversation with an agent -- just for practice (I had no book to sell yet). At our second conference, I had a book and tried my first “pitch”. My novel has many aspects to it – though “political thriller” isn’t really one of them; but that’s how the agent interpreted my pitch. So it was “back to the drawing board” (and another rewrite of the manuscript!).

Now I am planning my query letters for agents and publishers. And I notice it will probably take months to hear back from them. Perseverance and patience are certainly two traits we all need!

So my writing education continues.

One thing I remember from reading Proust: It is not until way down in volume 6 or 7 that Marcel’s short literary description (that he wrote half-way through volume 1) is finally accepted for publication. Heavens! Must it always take so long!?!?

Perseverance and patience! BB

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— o —

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Unless otherwise noted above, our email address is
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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.

Contact our Membership Chair
Diana Richomme

Writers' Workshop Writing With Steinbeck

Sunday, August 7, 2005
Steinbeck Center,
One Main Street, Salinas CA
www.steinbeck.org

Part of the greater
25th Steinbeck Festival

9:30 AM-10:15 AM: Cannery Row roundtable discussion, Impact and meaning 60 years later. With Susan Shillinglaw, Robert DeMott, Harold Augenbraum and other Festival speakers

10:30 AM-11:15 AM: Who Wins the National Book Award? Harold Augenbraum-Director of the National Book Award.

11:15 PM-12:00 PM: Marking and Modeling Steinbeck's Prose. Journaling, Editing & Publication. Featured speaker Robert DeMott, poet and writer.

12:00 PM to 2: PM Plot Construction, with emphasis on East of Eden, Martha Alderson, author of Blockbuster Plots.

**For complete information
for this and the rest of the
Festival:
(831) 775-4721
(408) 483-4968
or
www.steinbeck.org/festival**

The real voyage of discovery
consists not in seeking new
landscapes, but
in having new eyes.
-Marcel Proust



Editors Itch

Ah "summer, when the living is easy" (but my muse has disappeared).

Remembrances of fishing in warm rain on a pond up the road with tackle from Western Auto last week—I cleaned, mom cooked. And rafting with pirates down spring-swollen creeks, wooden swords sheathed but ready for those who might challenge. And when older; Merimac swimming, summer placid, floating silently in warm currents for miles watching docks with sun bathers slip by (there was the getting back).

Vacation time in the back seat of our family sedan—teased sisters screaming. And Mom, the sight-docent, against Pops, the determined, headed straight for his destination—no stops. Summers also brought scout-camp: axe handling, first aid, evening campfires and moonlight hikes before returning home with skills and ills we didn't have when we started.

Today we motor the gold country, visiting quaint destinations presenting t-shirts and ice cream and old ladies in blue hair with antique shops... hmmm? Or the wine country; Paso Robles to Napa Valley, Pinot Grigios to robust reds, not to mention mudding at the end, in tile boxes in Calistoga (*They call it "bathing"*).

In the bay, mild winds pull big yachts—take the wheel here while I mix us a martini. Or at the beach: merlot and cheese in Santa Cruz, Capitola, San Gregorio. Lake Tahoe is a hoot—check the congestion on Highway 28. Picnics in Sunol, cycling Sausalito, the aquarium

WritersTalk

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Submittals are invited:

Guest Columns
— *Almost Anything Goes*
Regular Columns
to Una Daly

News Items
Literary Work
Announcements and Advertisement
Letters to Ed—In My Opinion
to Dave LaRoche

Submit as attachment to email
to
newsletter@southbaywriters.com
or
writerstalk@comcast.net

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in Monterey... or if your tired now, an afternoon on the deck, a cooling breeze, ice tea and a book.

I must leave now, it's "easy living" and there's fun I'm missing. (And I wonder where that muse of mine has gone—no matter) *DLR*

(Vegh from page 1)

tional abuse and her journey of recovery. She has been interviewed by several magazines on domestic violence including "Glamour" magazine on the topic of removing children from abusive homes. While working on her master's degree, she started a website devoted to the subject of domestic violence and physical abuse. This was at a time when there was little or no information online for those seeking to overcome these issues in their lives.

Born and raised in Columbus Ohio, Jeannine came out to California as a young, military spouse and stayed after the divorce. Forced to figure out life on her own, she got a degree at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising but later realized that becoming a buyer was not the right career for her. Upon reflection she decided to tackle psychology, getting her Bachelor's degree at Antioch University, Santa Barbara and her Master's degree at John F. Kennedy in Orinda, CA. She now works as a Child Welfare Worker for Children's Protective Services in Alameda County.

"No one got me interested in writing. I just did it one day. I was journaling before it became popular", said Jeannine.

During her abusive marriage, she wrote to ease the pain and later, to explain her experiences to the son that she was forced to leave behind. While at Antioch University, she had the opportunity to work with an established writer and professor who helped her hone her skills and find her voice. This early work got incorporated into her published book.

"But my real dream is to change people's lives by what I write", says Jeannine, "not that I haven't fantasized about becoming a best seller." She is currently working on a novel

...my real dream is to change people's lives by what I write

about a young abuse victim who becomes a survivor; in-

corporating the stories of many young women she met working as a psychotherapist and social worker. Jeannine's writings about ending violence in our community can be controversial and run counter to some beliefs of the Women's Movement.

Although stories interest Jeannine more than authors, an exception to this is Isabel Allende who writes about women's heroic journeys using the mysticism that occurs naturally in their lives. She also admires Sena Jeter Naslund who wrote *Ahab's Wife*. Usually, you can find her reading biographies of women in history or mystical works about the ancient paths of religion. *WD*

Editors note: "Whatever Happen to..." is a new column that anyone may write. I am doing the first few to get it started. Please jump in with about 400 words.

Whatever Happened to Thorne Smith

By Dave LaRoche

Does anyone even know of Thorne Smith? He entertained us all and we have laughed at *Topper's* antics at least... and there is much more. Over the years since his death in 1934, his ideas and story lines have been borrowed and utilized in various ways by the media; he has been, and is, an inspirational source for many of today's comics.

When I was seventeen, I had the questionable fortune to spend my summer husbanding a couple of older ladies on an island in Georgian Bay, Lake Huron. I picked blueberries, cut wood, skippered a launch... and read Thorne Smith who's fanciful humor pulled me out of my world and into his where I laughed, often out loud—puzzling the ladies considerably, as it rolled across the island into their cottage in the middle of the night.

In the less than eight years of serious writing, Smith authored ten novels, two books of poetry (one published), five serialized stories and two anthologies of shorts—all published—and today, books from the original run bring thousands of dollars. Here's a few:

Dreams End (1927),
Topper (1928),
The Stray Lamb (1929),
Night Life of the Gods (1931),
The Bishop's Jaegers (1932),
Rain in the Doorway (1933)

(Continued on page 7)

Help Wanted

Contributing Editor

May cover events of interest: Meetings, Open Mic, Book signings, etc.

Call or email Dave LaRoche

(Lonnquist from page 1)

her sister, published author, Joni Rodgers, who recently co-wrote “No Mountain High Enough” with Linda Armstrong Kelly, the mother of Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong.

Like many writers, Jas started as a reader and spent many afternoons of wonder and escape from the frosty Wisconsin winters in the library. Jas reminisced, “Words were very powerful to me—words were the door.” She even learned how to twirl a baton from a library book and became the head twirler in high school.

But Jas side-stepped college initially and her writing ambition, opting for marriage and was soon raising a family. (She is still happily married.) One afternoon while waiting in the car to pick up her son from Tai Kwon Do, she jotted down a short story under the dome light. Only like most young mother’s, she didn’t have time to submit it—until ten years later when it won an award.

Though once her three children were in the routine of school, she enrolled in college. She majored in Journalism and later added Theater Arts emphasizing Film, and Law Enforcement—the latter choice was so she could write knowledgeably about crime. Yet, she was very insecure about her writing, until unbeknownst to her, a journalism professor submitted her story, and it won an award for investigative reporting from the Journalism Association of Community Colleges. Ultimately, she received eight college journalism honors and a scholarship, and later won several professional citations from Peninsula Press Club Awards, the competition including the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Jas also began submitting work to magazines. Her first submission sold to *Videomaker Magazine*. For the next several years, the publication gave her regular assignments. Simultaneously, she began scriptwriting for Intel. In the corporate world she quickly earned a reputation as a skilled writer, and all of her future clients: NASA, Microsoft, NEC, and Dell Computers sought her out, saving her the trouble of soliciting work.

In 1995, eager for a more creative outlet, Jas wrote her first screenplay, after teaching herself the fundamentals from Syd Field’s *Screenwriting Workshop*. She submitted it to the Nicholl’s competition, and it placed in the top 200 out of 5600 entries. When the results were published, Univer-

sal Studios was the first to call and request to read the script. She was told, “You’re dialogue sounds like Neil Simon.”

With that encouragement, Jas attended a screenwriting conference in Monterey and started a second screenplay called *Gone But Not Forgotten*. This one placed in the top ten at the Nicholl’s. Although she just missed the cash award, it got her her first Hollywood agent, and it was optioned by Sally Field’s production company. Yet, Jas believes you never rest on the laurels of one or two screenplays, but keep writing.

In addition to her work, she has taught Screenwriting for Adult Education and is a popular instructor at the East of Eden Writing Conference.

Join us at the August CWC meeting and learn from an expert about the essentials of screenwriting. *EM*

Lookout Bar & Grill

605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale
(Sunnyvale Golf Course)

6 PM, Wed., August 10

Members \$15, Guests \$18 (includes Dinner)

VALENCIA PRESENTS one exciting adult seminar coming up:

Humor Writing:

August 21, 4-7 p.m. 826 Valencia St.
\$100.

A HANDS-ON WORKSHOP for adult aspiring humor writers. Panelists include: Will Durst, Josh Kornbluth, Don Asmussen and Cameron Tuttle. Moderated by Keith Knight.

Sign up online at
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826 Valencia's storefront at,
826 Valencia St., S.F., CA 94110.]

826 Valencia is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting students ages 6 to 18 with their creative and expository writing skills, and to helping teachers inspire their students to write.

Fiction Writers

Join two novelists and a short story writer and round out a critique group of five.

Meet on the first and third Thursdays for three hours to review plot, description, characterization and structure—maybe a teeny bit of grammar sneaks in.

Call Cathy Bauer at 408 252-4479 or email at cathy@bauerstar.com.

She'll answer inquiries and give details.

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 6. The Most Misspelled Word

The most misspelled word in the English language is only three letters long: its. Most of us want to add an apostrophe, regardless of the intended use. The poor little word looks so naked without an apostrophe and we can't remember whether the apostrophe goes with the possessive form or a contraction. So we add it anyway, just to be safe.

After all, isn't the rule to always add an apostrophe for possessive? No. It is customary but not required.

Furthermore, isn't the rule to add an apostrophe-s for a contraction, to shorten "is" or "was" or "has"? Yes. And that's the secret to remembering that "it's" is a contraction. It is here, or it was there, or it has been becomes: "it's here," "it's there," and "it's been nice knowing you."

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

Tahoe

By Jackie Mutz

Heat strikes early on trees,
hangs on afternoon branches
drooping with the sheer weight
of Hell's Breath.

The Lake counters; a cool swell
shifts upward from frozen silence,
pushing spray to cool
thickened air.

The suffusion of hot and cold--
wetness slakes the parched air,
a cool kiss
on a burnt cheek.

On the Web—

Ro Johnston's spinning
will return with our next
edition... zzzzzz



— Notice —

Kathy Madison (*Woman's Sigh, Wolf's Song*)
featured in the March issue of *WritersTalk*,
will appear at Willow Glen Books, Aug 11 , 7:00pm,
1330 Lincoln Ave, San Jose, CA 95125

(HER FIRST LOCAL SIGNING)

Instead of the traditional "read the first chapter", she will be presenting, "Why Write about Women and Wolves", a talk in which she discusses her research on wolves and the parallels between wolf society and human society. Come out, support her, and find out if there is really a difference.

What if the Hokey
Pokey is what it's all
about

A. Thinker



James Thorne Smith Jr

(Smith from page 4)

The Glorious Pool.(1934)... ribald, imaginative, funny, to which the ladies and I can personally attest—they, of course, through hearsay.

James Thorne Smith Jr. was born to a USN Commodore and his wife Florence (Rundle) at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis in 1892. His mother died four years later and he came reluctantly to the care of nannies and aunts. What may be called an estrangement led to a fertile imagination and he began his story telling early in life. Smith was an average student in various private academies and dropped out of Dartmouth in his sophomore year. He fell into advertising as a copy writer, where he garnered most of his income—though he hated the role. In 1917, he joined the Navy for a short stint including a job as the editor of *Broadsides*, his ship's newsletter. Discharged and back into advertising, he took residence in Greenwich Village where he completed a volume of poetry (his first love) and found a wife (his next).

His poetry failed, his marriage did not and two daughters were born. Disappointed in his career, perhaps bitter, Smith squandered an inheritance from his father, began to drink heavily and became quite morose.

His writing was going nowhere; he hated his jobs—there were several, though all in the advertising game. In 1928, a welcome *Topper* emerged and things changed most dramatically. The book was a hit and until his death in 1934, a heart attack with complications, he published the rest, all huge commercial successes. I heard that he did most of his writing while drunk but that's just a rumor (I somehow enjoy harboring). One thing that isn't a rumor is that he was a very witty man, if a bit cynic with his life. He is quoted as saying: "Quite casually I wander into my plot, poke around with my characters for a while, and then amble off leaving no moral proved and no reader improved." DLR

THERE WAS A BBQ, WRITERS CAME ...



THERE WAS FUN...



AND BIG SMILES ...



AND TALK ...



Announcements

Announcements

Announcements

Terse Verse

By Pat Butamante

AUGUST MARCHes as best-selling
booksRequire
SAUL BELLOWS like a blazing
blown-on fire
Writers with hot manuscripts perspire
We'd like to cause such heat
and then retire!



Write a column—

Anything Goes (Almost).

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 Nepal. Opinionated, informational, persuasive. Email it to Una Daly, our columns editor, before the 16th of the month.

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Vancouver Anyone ?

For \$189 Canadian, CWC members may benefit from a day with Bill Martell and his hundreds of techniques to improve your writing—
Sep 17 & 18, 2005

For this reduced rate, sign-up early at

www.scriptsecrets.net/lecture/vancouv1.html

or

contact local organizers for more information at
ayf@telus.net or
bmarles@shaw.ca

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

—o—
Bring in your old books—pick up new readings por nada. It's a great deal and the return policy is quite lenient.

—o—
Every monthly meeting, the Book Table is set.

Ellen Sussman, Author, *On A Night Like This*, and Jack London Conference Contributor will conduct workshops at her home in Los Altos:

Advanced Fiction Workshop, meeting on Thursday evenings, 6:30 - 9:30, Sept 8 thru Dec 15. Cost: \$500.

Craft of Fiction will focus on skills and exercises and will meet on 6 Saturday mornings, from 9 – noon, Sept 10, 17, 24, Oct 8, 15, 22. Cost: \$300

Contact Ellen at: ellen@ellensussman.com

Betty Auchard—*Dancing in my Nightgown*
will be speaking !

Come listen to our own at the Capitola Book Café
1475 41st Avenue, Capitola, CA 7:30-9:00 p.m. on the 18th of August.

It's always fun listening to what is very much on her heart in a loving and entertaining way.

She will be sharing the audience with Maryann Schacht, *Caregiver's Challenge*.

GOT NEWS?

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

**Book Reviews
Committee Meetings
Critique Groups
Reading Fours
Book-store openings
Conferences**

If it's of interest to writers we want to publish it.

writerstalk@comcast.net



**South
Bay
Writers**

Open Mic

First Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm
Borders Books
50 University Ave, Los Gatos

Third Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm
Barns and Noble
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 bit, we won't notice.

For a spot at the podium, contact Bill Baldwin beforehand.

(408) 730-9622 or email
wabaldwin@aol.com
or reserve at

www.southbaywriters.com



California Writers Club

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Stamp(s)

ADDRESSEE

Address Correction Requested

SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors
Aug 3, 7p,

General Meeting
Jul 10, 6p
Lookout Restaurant

Open Mic
Aug 5, 7p
Borders, Los Gatos
Aug 19, 7p
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Deadline
Aug 16 to an editor

Editors Pow Wow
Aug 22, 10am
Orchard Valley Coffee

**General Membership Meeting—2nd Wednesday
At**

**LookOut Restaurant
605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale
(Sunnyvale Golfcourse)**

See Map Below

