

WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

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Page 1

Joel ben Izzy Tells Us Stories on Nov 9

—by Edie Matthews

Joel ben Izzy is a professional storyteller. With his quick smile, curly hair and brown fedora jauntily angled, he looks the part. He has enjoyed telling stories since he was child. "I guess I liked the attention," said Joel. He didn't settle on this unique occupation right away. After his first year at Stanford University, where he played the trombone in a renegade band, he left to travel and discover life. In Paris he studied to become a mime. "My problem was I always wanted to talk," said Joel.



Eventually, Joel returned to Stanford, where he convinced the professors to let him customize his major. In 1983 he completed a degree combining English, creative writing and storytelling. Ironically, though Joel has managed to shun nine-to-five employment, he now teaches storytelling skills to the corporate world of business, law and technology. In his workshops he demonstrates to executives how to communicate more effectively by using stories. Among his prominent clients are Hewlett-Packard, Kaiser Permanente and Pixar Animation Studios.

Joel emphasizes that the art of storytelling is also an essential tool for writers. When a published author goes on a book tour, people want to hear the story behind the story. The more effective and entertaining the writer is in conveying his tale, the more books he is going to sell.

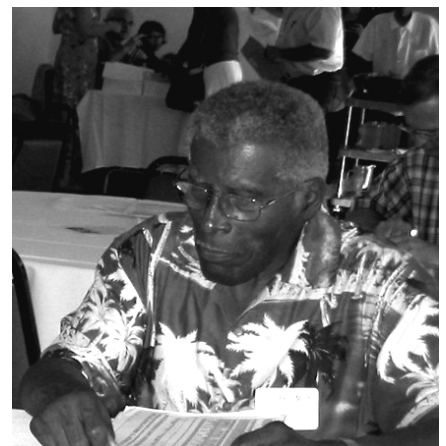
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Profile —by Una Daly

Clarence L. Hammonds
Our South Bay Historian

"I have been interested in writing since my army days in the 1940s while in India. I had time to write a lot. I began writing poetry and monthly articles for my *National Church Paper*," says CWC South Bay Historian, Reverend Clarence L. Hammonds, who has been an ordained minister since 1948, and is currently writing a series of articles on Jack London for our newsletter.

At the present time, Clarence



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WIN AWARDS AND RECOGNITION WITH YOUR SHORT FICTION, POETRY, MEMOIR, ESSAY.

*** See Editors Itch and insert on p 12 for "WritersTalk Challenge" and our masthead for submittal information ***

A Look Ahead:

Nov 4&18 Open Mic,
Nov 6 Board of Directors Meeting—2 pm. Edie's
Nov 9 Gen Meeting, Lookout Restaurant, 6 pm
Nov 21 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 7:30 pm
Dec 14 **Holiday Bash** p9

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President's Prowling— by Bill Baldwin



“What Is Truth?” Asked Pilate”

I was asked recently to write a non-fiction article for a local literary magazine. The request came to me as president of South Bay Writer (i.e. us), so I asked if they wanted an article about our group. No; they usually print memoir or travel writing. They basically said, "Send us anything, as long as it's non-fiction".

Great, I thought. I've written a 300-page novel, several novel-

las and short stories (much of it autobiographical or using travel-writing); but they want "non-fiction."

I thought of various scenes I've written that were based on my own life, or based on exotic places I've visited. But I've fictionalized them all! They've strayed too far from the "facts!" I'd have to disentangle all the changes I made to "reality."

So I embarked on "creative non-fiction". I began to write about a period in my life, and some issues relating to that. But how to shape it? How to structure it? And how to stick to the "facts" without embellishing them, without overdramatizing, with *lying*!

And will they like it, after all? Will it be too "indiscreet"? Will it on the other hand be boring?

This *is* a new experience. In the past, I drafted pieces about my "real" life, then used them as a jump-off to create stories that weren't, strictly speaking, "true". In some cases, they were vastly non-true!

The reason I don't write much non-fiction (other than essays) is that I would have to "sweat the facts." When I write about my family history, for example, I have to check the spelling of all my ancestor's names; I have to double check that I'm referring to the correct person, city, and year.

But for "fiction" -- well, I can just *make it up*!

Memoirs are a bit more flexible -- I can stretch the truth a bit...perhaps. But I wouldn't want to stray too far from "reality."

It's difficult to judge -- So hats off to all of you memoir writers! It is a special skill! **BB**

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— o —

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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

(ben Izzy from page 1)

Joel continues to travel and is a popular speaker at schools, camps and synagogues. He is always adding to his repertoire, collecting stories from countries around the world: England, Wales, Ireland, France, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Spain, Israel, Japan, Hong Kong and China.

The best of these tales have been recorded on six CDs. His recordings, like "The Green Hand and Other Ghostly Tales From Around the World," have been recognized with numerous awards, including the American Library Associations Notable Recording Award and the Parents Choice Award of Excellence.

In an odd twist of fate, Joel was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 1997. Fortunately, this form of the cancer is curable; unfortunately, when Joel woke up from surgery, he was unable to speak. His road to recovery became Joel's own story and his first book, "The Beggar King and the Secret of Happiness," now translated into eight languages. Currently, the book is being developed into a play for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and Joel is working with the playwright on the project. Also, Sony-Columbia Studios has optioned the book for film.

Join us at the next CWC meeting, when Joel ben Izzy will delight us with stories and share some of the techniques used by master storytellers.

Lookout Bar & Grill
605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale
 (Sunnyvale Golf Course)
6 PM, Wed., Nov. 9
 Members \$15, Guests \$18



Editors Itch

It's occasionally a challenge to come up with a column as the muse doesn't always show—off doing a poem or an essay, I suppose.

"There is a schedule," I admonish, but it has no effect—when she's gone she's gone. This month I go solo without trepidation as there is good news to print.

First, we have another editor contributing to *WritersTalk*, Bill Brisko—energetic, creative, enthusiastic, and that makes five.

Next, I am keen about your increased involvement in *WritersTalk*. We've been asking, you've been answering and your response has been growing. We, all five, say, *thank you* and keep it up.

And finally: Our Board of Directors, has approved award money for a new writing contest—the *WritersTalk Challenge*. Here's the skinny.

Every six months, our creative submissions to *WritersTalk* will be graded within their respective genre. The grading will be done by 'SouthBay' critique groups (operating in that genre) in accordance with rules established by your editors. Points will be awarded to each piece in each genre category—0 to 10 in increments of tenths. The top three pieces, overall, will be awarded prizes: \$60; first, \$40; second, and \$25; third, and of course, there will be honorable mentions. *All* contributors will be recognized in a subsequent issue.

The first awards will be made in February, 2006 and will be from all submissions (in genre) made since the first of January, 2005. From then on, the grading and awards will occur every six months.

You don't have to do a thing. If a piece you've submitted (in genre) has been published, you are entered. The categories considered are: short fiction, poetry, essay and memoir.

As an additional inducement, the highest collective point winner for the period, sandwiched between our East of Eden Conferences, will receive free attendance to the next—an "East of Eden Scholarship." *DLR*

WritersTalk

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Submittals are invited:

Guest Columns

— *Almost Anything Goes*

Regular Columns

to Una Daly

News Items

Letters to Ed—*In My Opinion*
to Andrea

Literary Work

Announcements and Advertisement
To Dave

Submit to an editor as an attachment to email by the 16th of the month preceding publication.

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

or

writerstalk@comcast.net

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Contact Dave LaRoche

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Costumes and More at October's Meeting —D LaRoche

Aside from Woody's intimidating Spilane, the closest we got to uneasy was Bill Baldwin's Merlin. (Some think he may in fact be a sorcerer) And, there were others who visited: Frida Kahlo brought her bright colors, Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, sorely



tempting, a Cat in the Hat mused, a volcano refugee seared, and there were more that defied my recognition.

Our attendance was big with 51 members and 26 guests participating. Congratulations to our programs chair, Edie Matthews, for the marvelous showing—it ain't the early golf that brings 'em in. Cathy Bauer, our raffle colporteur, reports \$108 returned from her efforts and again a thumbs up. Things are humming.

Our speaker for the night was Donna... no, it was Dena... no, no it was Penny. It was indeed **Penny Nelson** from Manus Associates in Palo Alto who imparted her agent's view of agents, of editors and publishing. And she was terrific—though a last minute volunteer as previous commitments from others were trampled by events... or so it was said.

Researcher for the Smithsonian and later for Terry Gross of NPR, Interviewer for City Lights and Lectures, generally prominent personality around public-radio town, and now agent; Penny Nelson sauntered her way through an agent's perspective on publishing, taking us along for



the stroll. And it was a great trip, through a panorama of entertaining anecdote and quip, valuable insight and how-to, the agent's profession and what we're up against when we consider publication. Again, "never-give-up" came through clearly.

A salient story was of Firoozeh Dumas, a friend, who with encouragement from Penny and others, put her collection of simple stories, *Funny in Farsi*, out to the agents. Penny, not her agent, cites rejection after rejection for Firoozeh until at a point, hundreds later; someone picked it up and published it. "It was her own kernel of confidence, her own trust in her writing that let this book be." And of course *Funny...* is now a big success. (As a writer, you can't hear this enough.)

But it doesn't matter if you're published, she concluded the thought. In the end, it's the writing that's the magic. Doesn't matter the genre or the publication success, the real meaning is in the recording... for posterity—your family and friends.

The agent plays a critical role between publisher and author—large publishers no longer takes direct submissions and depend on agents to do the initial vetting. So your query letter to the agent is your entrée into the publishing world. Give as much time to it as the first work on your book. A good query letter will get you out of the slush pile.

Query Letter—non-fiction

One page, four items, focused and direct

- What is *concept*, high or low (She read a query letter from a Vietnamese veteran which was profound a few simple words describing the essence, an 'essence' those of us who heard will remember)
- What is *platform* – what are your credentials, do you have a voice out there, who do you know If you don't have it, spend a year of so developing it with small writings, radio appearances etc
- Who is *audience* – agent needs to know there is a book buying public
- Why is this book *different* – must have distinct hook How does the publisher "break it out"

And for fiction:

- **Set up** – must convey the essence of the story, is not a synopsis. *Young idealistic political assistant, looking long for the right job, accidentally kills the aspiring state senator she finally serves*
- **Hook** – what makes you want to continue. *The po-*

(Continued on page 5)

(Meeting from page 4)

lice detective assigned to the case falls in love with her, moves in and becomes friend and father to her teen daughter. The case cools.

- **Resolution** – no mystery for agent *Discovering damning evidence implicating his love, our detective is put to the test. After wrenching consideration, he turns her over to authorities, resigns his job and, with the daughter, opens a store-front agency—leaving his true love a promise to wait.*

(Note: the italics are the editor's and not the example provided by Penny—which he has forgotten)

Other points made.

Always honor the agent's request, if asked for 30pp, send 30 or close if story would otherwise be compromised. The protocol is courtesy, agent is partner.

1000 submissions a week at Manus. Got to be right-on to get some attention.

Never take rejection personally While one agent rejects another one loves—there are myriad things that might cause a rejection. She doesn't recommend re-submitting the same piece to same agent, unless major change, but does suggest submitting same agent with new piece and certainly same piece to different agent. And always do multiple submissions.



Q&A

- Don't submit WIP. Clean it up, don't expect agent to do your work.
- You get only one shot with each piece at a publisher. Make it good
- Know your prospective agent. Don't send parenting book to a mystery-writing agent. "Read the Bios" At Manus, agents are collaborative—not true everywhere.
- A 'memoir' is a category of 'narrative non-fiction' and powerful because they are true (although recollections are occasionally skewed beneficially).
- How do you make things compelling? Well, that's

were life is art. Compelling is in the telling not the event.



- Titles are changeable and while important, not enormously. In non-fiction, she likes titles that speak to your heart with subtitles that speaks to your head
- Like's Jeff Herman's *Guide to*

Book Publishers, Editors and Literary Agents – always make sure they are AAR.

• Pubs process is long. Takes forever to hear back from an agent. Once in contact, agent might go to a number of editors (knows an agent who went to 40 editors) Though, agents *do* give up. Submit before July 4 as agencies are shut down for August, and every one is effectively down through the holidays. While you're waiting, do your next project.

• Don't let your heart break before 30 places have rejected

• OK to self publish before going to agent. Sell as many as you can. Impresses the editor.

• Don't demure when selling yourself "these books will fly off the shelf" "exquisitely good prose" You get one shot, make it your best.

• A piece may go into auction as agent sends out to 15 houses on same day—interest in suits, agent works deal playing one publisher against another until a best bid – like real estate but this is not ordinary.

• Movie rights at Manus move to an adjunct agent, separate company. When you sign with an agent, look into this. Book deal first, film agent as primary agent, next Two separate deals. "Optioning" means little.

• Advances. Advance is against royalties. You don't want a huge advance as you need to earn it back.

(Author gets about a buck out of each book sold.) If you don't earn it back, you may have the money but you're poison to the community (the agency bears the advance, what ever happens)

• 15% to the agency.

• Marketing plan for fiction is done by agent; non-fiction, the writer mostly. And here's a strong point, marketing people can shut down a book—respond to their needs and desires.

• And, by the way, don't quit your day job *DLR*

(Hammonds from page 1)

has two books being considered for publication: *Spending God* and *My Decades Of Endurance And Survival*. The latter one is a memoir of his life from the 1920s through the 1950s. He also self-published a commentary, *Daniel, Man and Prophet*, in 1979 and is the author of 636 poems.

"My biggest dream is to have all of my poetry published in one book," notes Clarence who has publications in seven anthologies and on www.poetry.com. At present, he is writing about Soteriology, a part of systematic Theology, and is updating the many short stories that he has written over the years.

Born in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1925, the second oldest in a family of seven siblings, his family moved many times as his father was a pastor of a fast growing church. Clarence grew up in Baltimore, Maryland; York, Pennsylvania; and finally Wilmington, Delaware, where he was drafted into the army at age 18 in 1943.

Starting the ministry in 1944, Clarence was ordained four years later and married his wife, Evelyn Knauls, the same year. After moving to San Jose, he earned an Associate of Arts from San Jose City College; a Bachelor of Arts from San Jose State University; and a Bachelor and Master of Christian Education from Freelandia College of Theology. He has been the pastor of three churches in Wilmington, Delaware and one in San Jose and also served as teacher and dean of Mason Bible College in San Jose for 17 years. Clarence retired from Mason College and pastoring in 1992.

Although retired, Clarence is an active volunteer for 2nd Harvest Food Bank with the *Brown Bag for Seniors Program*, a part time instructor in the Christian Education Department of Bethel Church on South Winchester Blvd., and a speaker for special occasions. Clarence and his wife live in San Jose and are the parents of a grown son and daughter.

"I admire many authors. One is John A. Garraty, *1,001 Things Everyone Should Know About American History*, © 1989. Another is Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman*. I also admire Jack London. I wish I could write like that." UD

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

Nipper's Nits

By Pat Decker Nipper

Lesson 8. Overuse of the Word "Got"

The word "got" is a catch-all for lazy writers, while so many better words can be substituted for it. The first paragraph below shows how easy it is to fall into the rut of using the word "got," with a paragraph below it rewritten to show improvement.

"I got ready for my bowling night. I got my bowling bag, got my coat, then got into the car. After I got to the bowling alley, I got a beer and got in line to bowl."

"I prepared for my bowling night. I retrieved my bowling bag, put on my coat, then climbed into the car. After I arrived at the bowling alley, I bought a beer and lined up to bowl."

This paragraph is rudimentary, of course, crying out for even better revision. Why not try your hand at a rewrite?

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

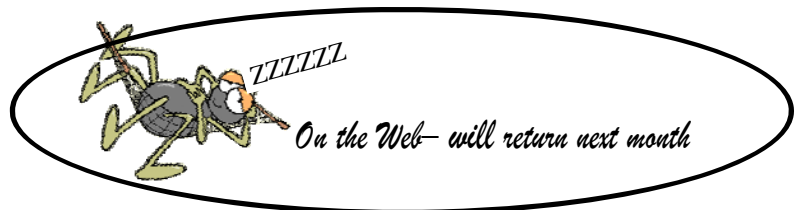
While Waiting

—Clarence L. Hammonds

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While waiting, for a bus, one hot August day
While waiting, I was poised, for me no delay
While waiting, I knew the schedule of the bus
While waiting, within me, there was no fuss
While waiting, it causes a body to think
While waiting, no hurry, I'll take a wink.

While waiting, for the store to open in a mall
While waiting, there were people short and tall
While waiting, I saw folk looking for a bargain
While waiting, I said, "Me, never early again"
While waiting, I saw the opening of that store
While waiting, people went in, not waiting before.



Writers Help'n Writers is devoted to seeking solutions, from the membership at large, to questions about writing posed also by a member. In an Issue, the question will be stated. Responses are invited and will be printed in the next issue along with the next question(s). Both questions and responses may be addressed to

writerstalk@comcast.net

Please keep questions and answers under 150 wds ; subject, "WHW".

Writers Helpin' Writers

How do you show an accent in a character's speech without awkward and tiresome phonetic spellings, unwanted humorous effects, and the risk of insulting readers? —offered by Meredy Amyx

From Pat Bustemante—

--A good study of great use of dialect is Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' novel, "The Yearling."

Dialect can definitely get in the way of a "smooth running story." Or: it can make you feel you are right there... The trick is balance. For Rawlings, and it works: characters talk (in quotes) in phonetically-spelled dialect but think in standard English and, even at times, poetically. No word is wasted in "The Yearling."

Probably other writers will suggest other good examples: it seems to me, the balance/contrast is important. The "uneducated" dialect of settlers in 1800s rough-country Florida underscores the sense of desperation and yearning that is central to the story—a lot of "if only's...."

Used that way dialect emphasizes respect for the character: it is not used in a belittling or patronizing way. That's difficult! But necessary..

And from Andrea Galvacs—

In most good fiction, you will find some kind of regional dialect, such as the inevitable Southern drawl (think *Gone With the Wind*). Dialogue plays an important part in character development; it is one tool used to bring a character to life and make him/her stand out. However, there is a fine line between using accent to emphasize a character and parody of dialect.

A good rule of thumb is to read the dialogue aloud, with the accent emphasized. Does it sound over-the-top? Chances are it is. Look at how other authors develop dialogue where dialect is important to the character's development (think *The Color Purple*).

Of course, there is the option of not using accent in dialogue at all. As a writer, it is about preference and what reads well. The choice is ultimately yours. As the writer, you know your characters best

If you have a question, send it in. Our panel, about 150 SouthBay members, may have an answer that suits you.

For Authors Who Have (published) Books:

If you have a book published and are interested in the possibility of selling and signing at the Los Angeles Festival of Books April 29-30, 2006, please contact **Kathryn Madison at 408-376-3560, or kathrynmadison@sbcglobal.net.**

We are looking for authors who would be willing to share the expense of a booth at this very large book festival.

The Comeback

by Andrea Galvacs

A few weeks ago the Mercury News ran an article about the triumphal return of the manual typewriter. It said that the people raving about this relic are in their twenties and thirties and the reasons they give for their preference for this artifact from antiquity are diverse.

They enjoy the clickety-clack noise made by the keys and the bell-ringing sound at the end of every line. They rather stare at a blank page than at a blank computer screen. When they make a mistake, they derive a certain degree of satisfaction grabbing the paper out of the carriage, crumpling it into a ball and hurling it across the room.

There is something to be said for each of these reasons but, still, I don't really understand. I had my 39th birthday several times already and started using a computer only because I got sick and tired of resisting it but, now, I wouldn't know what to do without one. Not that I want to push the benefits of the computer, but maybe I should give the typewriter enthusiasts a few pointers.

You want noise while typing your dissertation on the causes of headaches? Pretend the boy next door is practicing his drums for the high school band; the answers will come to you much faster. You enjoy staring into white space? Imagine yourself taking skiing lessons next winter; exercise is good for you and it will inspire you. You think that the last two or three paragraphs you just wrote are really lousy?

Now you got me! I don't have

(Continued on page 8)

(Comeback from page 7)

an answer to this one! In fact, I would love to have a manual typewriter when I make a mistake! How wonderful it would be to yank the dumb sheet of paper out of the stupid carriage, make a ball of it and throw it in the wastepaper basket! I wouldn't even care if I missed!

But, being a computer enthusiast and user, I cannot do any of this. The latest version of Windows does not give instructions on how to vent frustration effectively. Until Bill Gates comes up with them, all I can do is spew forth a few carefully selected expletives and click delete.

There are cons and pros to everything and after thoughtful consideration I've arrived at my conclusion. When my next 39th birthday comes around, I will celebrate by toasting my computer and clicking on the future while laughing at all the twenty and thirty-somethings reaching for the past. AG

CWC's Sam Marines wants interviews with Bay Area parents who have adult-aged offspring.

It is part of research for his non-fiction book about the importance of the relationship between parents and adult children.

His urgent needs are parents who are foreign-born, or have only step children, or gave up their children to adoption but later established contact.

You may find book information at www.agapeguypress.com/

Contact information may be found at questions@agapeguypress.com

You may be able to help

Bill Brisko's Space (at least for a while)

Hello all! I am William Brisko, newest member to the CWC editorial staff of *WritersTalk*. For opening my big mouth I was given this column to write and expected to fill it with material of interest. OK. My main interest is the genre of the Pop sub/counter-culture movement; the dark, seamy underbelly of post-War American decadence; removing that rock in the rose garden only to find some slimy, leech-like animal with teeth living underneath; turning the garment inside out and discovering it too has seams that scratch and tags that pinch, and the fitting room never fails to need cleaning.

So what do I start a column with? What do people like to read in a column? What do people *need* to read? Then it hit me - how about an exposé of authors or icons of the genre?

I thought about this for a while over cocktails and black and white movies on TV and decided - why not! But almost immediately the cocktail glass went empty and the credits filled the screen - what is a counter-culture writer or icon anyway, or *any* icon for that matter? Most people remember visual icons of various pop cultures: The Roman Polanskis and Andy Warhols of the world; Peter Maxx; Marilyn Monroe's face on a Campbell's soup can; my kind of guy (Spiro T.) Ted Agnew is; the like. But how about *literary* icons?

Sooo let's start off with one of my favorite counter-culture writers and icons, although he is considered very mainstream. He lived during the excessive times of F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Roaring Twenties, but worked on the edge of the Society Movement. He was the direct polar opposite of the great writer William Faulkner, yet was well read and his writings anticipated. This writer gave us a new style of writing, in between beating up his critics and kicking his contemporaries in the groin. He wrote about Civil Wars, fantastic adventures, and a clean, well-lighted place. Of course, I am talking about the great Ernest (Papa) Hemingway.

We may not - at first glance - think of Hemingway as a counter-culture icon. But he is (was). No doubt. He wrote the way he lived, on the fringe. Whether driving an ambulance in WW1, raising money for the Loyalist Spaniards, crossing the channel on D-Day, fishing for marlin and sailfish, hunting big game in Africa, or going to bullfights; Hemingway did it all. Definitely what we'd call a fast-lane sort of lifestyle. Hemingway was everything that the posh Society movement wasn't, and they hated him for it (although through Fitzgerald he is identified with it.) The champion of the Lost Generation, the Demagogue, the electric Sitar, the anti-Christ (in a way.) Hemingway lived life a true Renaissance man; doing the manly thing...then he wrote about it.

(Continued on page 9)

(Brisko from page 8)

What I loved (and learned) the most from Hemingway's writing was his use of repetitious dialogue between characters to get a point across – how he repeated himself without really repeating himself. Urged by the poet Gertrude Stein to understand the rhythm of prose and the power of the repetition of words, Hemingway developed a terse, intense style that many of us use today. He departed from the florid style of the post-Victorian era, and replaced it with the lean, clear style that he is noted for, based on action rather than reflection. Hemingway's style is very direct and extremely tense, keeping the reader on the edge of his seat.

Another element of style I learned from Hemingway's writing was his *theory of omission* or *iceberg principle*. This is where the writer, having complete mastery of his subject, will describe only briefly the subject to the reader, and because of the writer's mastery and understanding of what he is describing, the reader will grasp the subject as strongly as the writer. Confused? Simply put, if you know what you're talking about, just talk about it normally and with authority. Your mastery of the subject will show through. Much like the iceberg in the ocean, we can only see the top 10%, but we know the rest of it is still there to get us.

Ernest Hemingway was not only a great writer and literary icon; he was an avid adventurer, total mad-man and lived life on the edge. After surviving a bomb blast in WW1, being shot at during the Spanish Civil War, fighting from Normandy to The Bulge in WW2, enduring four wives, numerous automotive accidents, two plane crashes, stiff bouts with alcoholism (and God knows what else!); Ernest Hemingway finally succeeded and broke on through to the *other* side. In 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho he committed suicide. He lived life hard and died like a pro, and with the manner of his death, started a trend that would be shared by many a writer still to come.

"An influence on you?" he said.

"Yes, Papa, you have been a great influence, on everybody!"

"I've been a *great* influence you say? On everybody?"

"Yes" I replied.

"I cannot believe that I have been that great of an influence. I mean, I just write them as I see them."

"But Papa, there is genius in your *style*. The tension you create with your dialogue. The abruptness of your sentences. The mastery of your subject. You wrote against the grain of other writers of your time. It was not mainstream. It was total counter-culture. It made you a great icon."

"I've been a great influence on other writers? A counter-culture icon you say?" Papa looked down towards the ground for a while, then at me. "Naw! Come on, let's us go shoot a buck and stew him up for lunch."

Papa Hemingway picked up his rifle and walked up towards the shade trees on the hot savannah where the herd was grazing. WB

**** Holiday Bash ****

Wednesday, December 14, 2005, 6 - 9 pm

Come celebrate at our annual Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange!

Party Place:

**Betty Auchard's house
115 Belhaven Drive,
Los Gatos 95032,
408-356-8224**

For the potluck, If your last name begins with:

A - H Bring a Salad or Side Dish
I - R Bring a Dessert or Appetizer
S - Z Bring a Main Dish

Beverages are provided —Ho Ho Ho

For the Gift Exchange, bring a gift in the \$10 range

Please RSVP:

**RSVP@southbaywriters.com or
call Edie at 408 985-0819**

PS There is no charge for this fun

Whatever Happened To... **ZORA NEALE HURSTON** —by Adrea Galvacs

Zora Neale Hurston, forgotten by many but becoming popular again, was responsible for the new literary direction taken by the Harlem Renaissance and was a great influence on subsequent Negro and black writers.

Depending on which of her biographical notes you consult, she was born in 1901, 1903 or even 1891. Her birthplace was said to be Eatonville, Fla., where many of her writings take place, but more recent information purports it to be Notasulga, Ala. Zora was the fifth of eight children born to John and Lucy Ann Potts Hurston and when she was three the family settled in Eatonville, the first incorporated black community in America. In her stories of later years, Zora glorified the town as a place where Negroes could live as they wanted, disregarding white society.

As a young adult, Zora had little schooling and worked as a domestic, moving often. While in Baltimore in 1917, she entered the Morgan Academy, now Morgan State University, and graduated a year later. She then matriculated at Howard University in Washington, D.C. and decided to dedicate herself to a literary career. Her first short story, "John Redding Goes to Sea", set in Eatonville, was published in 1921, followed by several more stories in various magazines. One of them caught the attention of the poets Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, who were active in a new artistic movement called the Harlem Renaissance. Zora transferred to Barnard College and since she was in New York, she also became very active in the movement.

The time of the Harlem Renaissance was a period in which Negro artists began to explore their own culture, expressing themselves in literature and music. Zora and her stories about Eatonville made the largest contribution to this endeavor. With the help of several fellowships she did anthropological research which resulted in her finest works. Examples of these are her first novel, "Jonah's Gourd Vine" (1934) and "Mules and Men" (1935).

With the aid of another fellowship Zora studied in Jamaica and Haiti from 1936 to 1938. This produced "Tell My Horse" (1938), a travelogue and study on Caribbean voodoo, to mixed reviews. Her second novel, "Their Eyes Were Watching God" (1937), about a quadroon named Janie and her three marriages, received praise and in March, 2005 the Oprah Winfrey Film Productions made a movie from this book, with Halle Berry as Janie.

Her other novels are "Moses, Man Of The Mountain" (1939) and "Seraph On The Suwanee" (1948). Her autobiography, "Dust Tracks On A Road" (1942) was a commercial success, albeit inaccurate because Zora depicted her life in accordance with the fantasy world she held as ideal.

During her entire career Zora was criticized for not addressing the racism practiced by white America towards Negro society. The majority of Negro writers of the era after World War II adopted this subject as a theme and Zora's literary appeal diminished. Her reputation suffered as well when in 1950 she wrote an article attacking the right of blacks to vote in the South, charging that votes were bought. In 1954 she voiced her opposition to the ruling in Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Ka., stating that Negro children did not need to go to school with white children in order to learn.

Zora lived her last years in poverty and obscurity. In 1959 she suffered a severe stroke and died in a welfare home in Fort Pierce, Fla. in 1960.

Zora Neale Hurston was criticized and maligned at the end of her career but the extraordinary quality of her literary works is evident. Future writers Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker were greatly influenced by her books and it is in great part thanks to her that Negro culture is preserved today. *AG*



New members above from left: Larry Pratt, a technical writer that freelances in the genre of travel articles and local interest, is currently in search of publishing for his recently completed novel . You can meet semi-gonzo Bill Brisko, on page 8 of this issue. We know little about Juliana Richmonds, a pretty lady with a big smile, but hope to find more in the future.

The Chinchilla Menace

by Marjorie Johnson

In the abstract, a chinchilla is a small silvery gray rodent native to South America, with soft fur prized by coat manufacturers. To make one full-length coat, as many as thirty chinchillas may be pieced together. Only those with the finest fur need apply. The others are sold for pets.

At Andy's Pet Shop, several chinchillas whose coats were seconds or thirds in the fur trade cuddled together sleeping, a silvery breathing fur pillow. One lifted his head and locked eyes with my husband Ben, a serial animal owner who had come into the shop for a book on how to raise the puppy that he bought yesterday.

When the two of them came home, the chinchilla was already in charge, with a new cage, a plastic tub filled with pumice dust, packages of special food, and a book on how to raise a chinchilla. He had forgotten the book on puppies, but I didn't mention it. Who knows what would come home if he made another trip?

Ben started the chinchilla with a special food treat, followed by a dust bath in powdered pumice, good for his coat. Dust flew everywhere, a fine gray dust. The chinchilla hopped out of the tub and bounded around the room, jumping against one wall at a corner, and rebounding off of the other, then continuing at the far corner of the room. He was fast, leaving little gray footprints on all four walls, then shooting out the door into the living room, where he took a bite out of a corner of each windowsill.

Ben and both children tried to corner him while I stood holding the squirming, yipping puppy, pee soaking through my blouse. "Head him off!" Ben yelled.

The chinchilla was impossible to catch until he bit into the cord of a lighted table lamp. His fur stood on end, and he stopped for a few seconds, shaking his head. Our son Steve tackled the critter, who chewed a hole in his sleeve but luckily not in his arm, before Ben grabbed the silver menace with a pair of leather gloves.

After that, Ben kept the door closed when he gave the rodent pumice dusting privileges, and developed proper chinchilla trapping procedures. First, he used a fishing-net and barricaded the tub into a corner with plywood sheets. Then he put the tub of pumice inside of the bottom half of a refrigerator box. Finally, he bought a cage large enough to enclose the tub of pumice, which had to be refilled frequently and left a thin gray coating throughout the house. However, cleaning the cage remained a challenge.

Despite his fine fur coat, after some months the chinchilla died of pneumonia, but not before he had chewed a corner off every windowsill in the house during periodic escapes, leaving little gray footprints low on every wall.

American Beauty

This rose is about to blow
We can change the water
Add another aspirin
But tomorrow
Or maybe the next day
The weak stem will bend its
back
And the petals will
Fall

You can't put them back
You could try with tweezers
And glue
Or those granules
That suck out the vital juices
To mummify the dead plant
Forever

But why bother when
There are so many tight buds
Waiting for an empty spot in
the bouquet

This rose is about to blow
And there's something sensual
About its loose soft petals
Its rust-tipped stamen
Its thickening hips
And the deep sweet aroma
That must be inhaled fully
Until your lungs
Ache

This rose is about to blow
For today, though,
And maybe tomorrow
It's in full bloom.

By Beth Proudfoot

WritersTalk Challenge

Creative Writing Awards

Genres:

Memoirs <1000 wds
Short Fiction <1500 wds
Poetry <300 wds
Essays <700 wds

Awards:

Twice yearly, Feb 15 and Aug 15

First Prize - \$60

Second - \$40

Third - \$25

An **East of Eden Scholarship** will be awarded in February and then regularly, once every two years.

And always, **Honorable Mentions**

Entrants:

Limited to (all) work in the genres above, published in WT during the preceding six months although the first awards will cover the period from Jan 05 thru Feb 15, 2006.

Judging Standards:

Will be established by WT Editing Staff. Editors are excluded from participation in awards.

Judging: To be done by genre-related critique groups, headed by Club members, overseen by the WT Editors

Judging approach: Ten points are available for each piece. These will be allocated to each of several categories of grading in each genre, i.e., in fiction, 1.5 might be allocated to imagery, 2.3 to suspense, etc. The allotments will be determined in consultation with respective critique groups.

The three pieces with the highest scores will win (regardless of genre)

When you submit to *WritersTalk* and are published in the genres above in the word allotment indicated, you are entered. You need do nothing else.

Note: Publishing in *WritersTalk*, excluding ads and announcements, is limited to members of the Southbay Branch of the California Writers Club

When Are You Going to Cry

A short story by Robert A. Garfinkle © 2005

The moment I entered my modest home that dead-leaves-scattered-across-the-lawn fall day, I sensed something amiss. No music came from the stereo. No steaming dinner awaited me. Yet a cool and forebodingly darkness pervaded the house.

"Honey," I called as I set her birthday present on the kitchen table. "Rosey?"

I peered out the kitchen window. Perhaps she was on the deck tending her flower boxes.

I turned away, picked up the mail from the counter, and headed toward the bedroom. As I neared the guest room, I heard a whimpered "Honey" echo from within. I opened the door and saw my petite wife, cross-legged on the hide-a-bed, her head propped up by the flowerprint pillow on her lap. Around the edges of it I could see the opal whiteness of her bare body. Rosey's honey-brown hair draped, uncombed, around her angelic oval face. The slight breeze puffed the shade away from the windowsill and gently allowed it to thump against the wood ledge. Streaks of light penetrated the darkness. Even in the uncertain light, I could tell by the frightened expression frozen on her face that her "little problem" had progressed. I could no longer fool myself into believing she was going to return to normal.

Rosey's doctors had informed us almost two years before that the causes of a breakdown are sometimes hard to determine. During the period when she should have been home raising children, Rosey had put in long stressful hours at her job. Shortly after her thirty-sixth birthday, I began to notice slight changes in her, but nothing that would cause alarm. Her bouncy step gradually evolved into a stooped-shuffle, like a person fifty years older. The perpetual smile on her lively face disappeared. Her blue eyes lost their sparkle as her body and spirit slumped into a pit of muddled depression. No matter how hard the specialist and I tried, we failed to get Rosey to reveal what caused her such distress.

I guess what shocked me the most was that in the fifteen years I had known her, she had always been the strong and steady one in her family. When her sister had slit her wrists, Rosey had rushed home to assist Julie's recovery. When her mother lost a breast to cancer, Rosey flew to Chicago to console and nurse her back to mental and physical health. I did not have to think long about who was going to come here to California to help Rosey, because he was already here standing in the guest room doorway.

Rosey glanced up at me, lowered her head, and timidly held out her hands.

The hands I grasped were cold, clammy. I had become accustomed to the coldness, but this time they felt like she had just taken them out of the freezer. I kissed one, then tenderly rubbed it with my fingertips. I lifted her chin and asked softly, "What's happening? What're you going through right now?"

She had heard those questions so many times before—she just shook

(Continued on page 13)

(Cry from page 12)

her head.

"Nothing?" I asked.

The corners of the delicate mouth curled down. Her cheeks contorted into an embryonic cry, but her eyes refused to cooperate.

"Let it out." I comfortingly patted her head, child-like. "Don't hold back."

In the frailest voice I had ever heard, she said, "I can't." As though weak with fatigue, her whole body shook. "I can't do it."

I put my ear next to her lips, so I could hear better.

"I've been trying all day." She sucked in two shallow breaths. "It hurts."

"Where?"

Her lips quivered. Her glassy eyes drifted from side to side like those of a black cat pendulum clock. After a moment, she held out her hands, palms up.

I touched her palms. "Here?"

"My wrists."

"I don't see anything, Rosey."

"They hurt. Believe me. They hurt," she pleaded in a clear, yet weak voice.

"I believe you." I sat next to Rosey, pulling her close. I remember the lightness of her head as she rested it against my shoulder. In my attempt to soothe her, I said, "I'm sorry they hurt. Just because Julie cut hers doesn't mean you're going to do the same thing. Your wrists look fine." I pretended to be a doctor performing an examination. I held them up to her. "See. No cuts. You believe me now?"

She shook her head. Again, her face twisted into a dry cry.

"When are you going to cry?" I shouted and pushed her hands into her lap. "You've got to let go and start telling me what's wrong with you. You scare me when you act like this."

"I want to, but Daddy'll be mad at me." Her voice reminded me of a plaintive, wailing five-year-old.

"Your daddy can't hurt you anymore. He went far far away, so you can tell me. He'll never know." I began to feel like I was talking to a five-year-old.

"I'm sorry for what I did, Daddy. Don't get mad at me. Please."

Her continued baby talk frightened me. Again, I groped for a way to help her overcome her delusions—get her back to realize she was nearing forty, not regressing toward her own birth. She babbled a few incoherent baby sentences, then stopped and shivered. I put my arm around her and held on as

tightly as I could. I felt the frailness of her body and wanted to cry out for her, but restrained myself. One of us had to remain strong.

A few minutes with her head resting on my shoulder, I heard her breathing in the steady, slow rhythm of sleep. Carefully, I lowered her so that she was lying on the couch. But she needed a blanket.

Standing at the linen closet in the hall, I could see into the bathroom through the slightly open door. Reflected in the yellow tile-framed mirror, I saw her lying in the tub, her head resting serenely against the band of blue tiles. One hand hung limply over the side of the red-stained porcelain. "What in God's name . . ." I shoved the door open and stared in wide-eyed total disbelief. Stringers of brownish dried blood discolored the walls and trailed down the side of the tub. A veiling of fluid that should have been inside Rosey coated her naked body. For a moment, all I could mutter was, "No. This can't be happening . . ."

I touched her to reassure myself that what I saw in the tub was really my wife, not an hallucination. Her arm was stiff and cold. Coagulated blood had pooled in the cup her hand had formed as the muscles contracted in death. I suddenly realized something that terrified me like nothing ever before, or since. If Rosey was really there with me in the bathroom, then who, or what, was I talking to and holding moments before in the guest room?

I dashed back to see. The couch was empty, except for a pale pink rose with large porcelain-like petals. The flower lay where her head had been. Frightened, I stood motionless for a moment. I could hear my heart thrumming in my temples, as though it had risen to my head. Carefully, I stepped to the couch and picked up the flower. Its intense coldness stung my fingers. I dropped it. Like my life, the pink rose shattered on the hardwood.

It's taken me several years to get over losing my Rosey, but tomorrow, her birthday, another rose will appear on the guest room couch, and I'll have her back again, if only for a few minutes. Maybe then I'll cry.
RG

Terse Verse —by Pat Bustamante

No-Bummer November

No-Vember

No vendor (wish I'd sold that book!)

No sender (of checks)

No splendor, no member

(...of best-selling-writer's club, yet.)

Oh well. Next year!

JACK LONDON – THE EARLY 1900s

By Clarence L. Hammonds

1901

Jack London accused of plagiarism, who said so? Some said it happened many times other said, no He was a successful writer that was not a, notion Expression you see with me, easier than invention Jack wrote this to E. Hoffman. Jack was cunning? He bought plots from a Sinclair Lewis, no fling Plots were for stories with news clippings, as base London was smart, but for this, people gave chase *The Call of the Wild*, part from a book by Young Young said yes, Jack said no, it is source I hung He writes same newspaper story, papers different Summer 02, McLean wrote story, same incident

1902

A charge by Biddle and Macdonald, is about Jack Eighteen parts from his *Love of Life* is, no slack It means the same as their article that ends in Sun He's revised Biddle, said the daughter of London He said this; "I use material from various sources" He turned journalism into literature, his resources Look at Chapter 7 of *The Iron Heel*; The Bishop-Jack's Bishop, twin to Harris' '01, who said stop He wanted part of the royalties of *The Iron Heel* Jack's reprint, by an American Paper so, no deal Sonoma County, California **Glen Ellen**, is there He bought a ranch, his love for it, more than fair

1903

Jack said, "The ranch, is second next to my wife" He wrote, to make his investment as good as life Jack London wanted to add acres by writing more Joan said, few *criticized* her father then, for sure London was rugged, and saw the world as, good But, did not want to work harder, than he should Now! He joins the new American Socialist Party A newspaper story was about him, he was twenty In Oakland's City Hall Park he talked, each major On Socialism, the Party he used, to run for mayor Jack London left the Socialist Party of Glen Ellen Because, of its lack of fight. I guess for all, men?

LATER

Each morning you rise and think a great thought,
but being so busy it oft comes to naught.
You think of the things that you want to write,
and sending to friends whom you'll fill with delight.
Taking care of a wrong and making it right.

Youth is no longer your ally to cherish,
your dreams and ambitions must not perish.
Traveling life's road with its curious bends,
you consider each day, continuing friends
and postmen for words, you intend to send.

Your years are not done, there's still time to review
all the things that you did and shouldn't have to.
The good times and bad times now all seem the same,
more time you will give to enjoying life's game.
You look back and laugh, there's no one to blame,

For delay and distraction you never did ask,
what a shame it would be not to finish your task.
Should life's challenges pass and you fade from view,
all your wants and desires which you never saw through,
join a long list of things you intended to do.

J.H.Wilson

Mark your calendars:

Our biannual *East Of Eden Writers Conference* will be held September 8 – 10, 2006 in Salinas, California. Please see our website at www.southbaywriters.com for more information in the coming months about scholarships, contests, Early Bird discounts, accommodations, etc.

We will have special discounts and scholarships for South Bay Branch members. So, stay tuned, put a red circle around September 8, 9, and 10, 2006, and tell all your writing friends!

Announcements Announcements Announcements

"The Traveling Steinbeckians", an outgrowth from the South Bay CWC, will be helping the Gilroy Writers Project celebrate their second anniversary on

**Saturday, November 19th
2:00-4:00 p.m.**

Members Betty Auchard, Bill Baldwin, Jack Hasling, Audry Lynch and Al Adams join Central Coast member Jane Parks-McKay, presenting works from the great author or pieces inspired by him

The party is FREE and open to the public. Come to the children's storytelling room; the library is at 7387 Rosanna Street in Gilroy. Phone (408) 842-8207.

COME AND HAVE SOME FUN!

Oceanview Publishing seeks manuscripts.
Guidelines available at
www.oceanviewpub.com



Write a column—
Anything Goes (Almost).
That's the name of the space and we mean it.
Your ski down Mount

Whitney, your first PGA tournament, your thoughts on the "book table" or the arts community in Nepal. Opinionated, informational, persuasive...

Email it to Una Daly, by the 16th of the month.

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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

Bring in your seasoned books—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 Andrea—She'll hop on it or appoint one of her huge staff.

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

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

Andrea Galvacs
newsletter@southbaywriters.com



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
Barnes and Noble
Pruneyard in Campbell

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. For a spot at the podium, contact Bill Baldwin

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

The Saturday Poets

present their reading series featuring Amber Thomas followed by an open mike on Wednesday, December 21, at 7:00 p.m. at the Il Piccolo Caffè, 1219 Broadway, Burlingame.

Contact Amy MacLennan at
amy.maclennan@saturdaypoets.org / 650-631-5732 or www.saturdaypoets.org.

Thursday, November 17, 2005 6:00pm-9:00pm

Women's National Book Association Believes in Magic. How about you?

Join us for an entertaining evening with 18 authors. Dine overlooking the San Francisco Bay, do your literary shopping, and get the insider's scoop from these writers.

Place: Swiss Louis at Pier 39, San Francisco

6:00 p.m. Showcase and No-host bar reception begins

6:30 p.m. Dinner

7:30 p.m. Authors Share the Magic and Showcase continues

Fee: \$39 for WNBA members; \$45 for non-members. More info, please go to:

www.wnba-sfchapter.org

NOTICE!

A December Issue of WritersTalk will be published EARLY. Inputs MUST be in to an Editor by the 14th of November



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
PO Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055

Stamp(s)

ADDRESSEE

Address Correction Requested

SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors
Nov 6, 2p, Edie's

General Meeting
Nov 9, 6p
Lookout Restaurant

Open Mic
Nov 4, 7p
Borders, Los Gatos
Nov 18 7p
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Deadline
Nov 14 to an editor

Editors Pow Wow
Nov 21, 7:30pm
Orchard Valley Coffee

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

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

See Map Below

