

# WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch  
Writers Club Monthly

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## HOLIDAY GALA

It isn't often, maybe twice a year, that we have the opportunity to socialize without taking notes. This is one such night and it's pure fun. Bring your spouse or significant other—you choose—and join in the merriment. Steve Wetlesen if prompted to read, promises to be brief. Last year almost all exchanged gifts, and someone about Santa's looks and demeanor delivered. Whoops, did I write that un-PC "S" word (of course we are all nondenominationally and un-ethnically committed and that funny looking tree in the corner only shows Betty's interest in forestry).

In the past we have enjoyed the fine bouquet of fruity-oak-spice-musk, a liquid with a big nose and smooth pallet that makes "gurgling" on its first run down your throat. I wouldn't be surprised if a repeat opportunity were in store. Betty Auchard, our hostess, will see to it that no one imbibes too much—being the straight-laced, high-collared, nosed-pinch temperance crusader that she is—and if she misses a few, a scalliwagon will be parked at the door as you exit.

The Club will provide all but the stuff mentioned below—there go our dues—and you'd be astonished at how scrumptious a "holiday-luck" can be. I mean, we don't really learn how to cook until we reach this age—it's been arduous but the spread suggests it's well worth the wait. Okay, enough, here's the drill:

**Wednesday, December 13, 2006, 6 - 9 pm**

*Come celebrate at our annual Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange!*

**Betty Auchard's home 115 Belhaven Drive, Los Gatos 408-356-8224 (map on back)**

**For the potluck, If your last name begins with**

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

**\*\* Serving Spoons and Forks are Welcome \*\***

**BRING A GIFT FOR THE EXCHANGE IN THE \$10 RANGE.**

### A Look Ahead:

Open Mic closed for the holidays.

Dec 13 Holiday Gala — Betty Auchard's

Dec 23 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 10:00am

Jan 10 Board of Directors (Cathy's)— no mtg in Dec.

Jan 21 Writing Workshop (No regular meeting) See p 6

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## President's Prowling —Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin  
President, South Bay Branch

### "All Genres Welcome!"

Writing is everywhere -- especially if you include talking and all forms of communication.

Maybe that's pushing it. But someone recently asked me about the appropriate genres to read at our open mics. My first response: If you're *reading* it, then someone has *written* it. At any rate, businesses could employ writers to write anything that has to be written, including (among other delicacies) menus, ads, directions. So I might let someone read a menu or a recipe at our open mics -- if they thought it was "well-written" (or should I say "well-composed").

It's all about words. T. S. Eliot spoke of "trying to learn to use words" -- any communication can be developed into an art. I'd probably limit open mics to *verbal* communication (not, for example, *miming*) -- just to differentiate the non-verbal (for example, *dance*); but I might include non-written verbal communication -- since many cultures maintain traditions of oral poetry, improvisational theater, and so on.

If you have a piece or presentation that you think uses words well, join us -- and our open mics!

Incidentally, we'll be taking a rest from our open mics in December. We'll start them up again in January. BB

## There is a Ripple Effect to what we Teach our Children

By  
ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.

I've become increasingly more concerned about the messages we teach our children inadvertently. Here are some examples of fairly typical parental behaviors:

- 1 Telling children 12 and over to lie and say they are 11 so they can get into the movies and other events for lower children's prices.
- 2 Telling 5 and 6 year olds to say they are 4 so they can get into events for free.
- 3 Hiding children under blankets on the floor of the back seat of the car so they will not be counted and admission will not have to be paid for them at drive in events.

These three commonly observed examples are clearly showing children that it is OK to lie and deceive in order to save a few pennies.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

## California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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Unless otherwise noted above, our email  
address is  
... @southbaywriters.com

### Join With Us

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

Contact our Membership Chair  
Marjorie Johnson

### ***Do you have expertise?***

*Do you have a specialty that might be of help to a writer looking for accuracy in a scene? Do as Susan Mueller and John Howsden—let us know. We will publish your offer and establish a directory.*

I'm not giving up here yet. Where *are* the experts? At this point we have :

**Police Procedures:** John Howsden jwhousden@comcast.net (article in Sep 2006 Issue)

**Profile Writing:** Susan Mueller samueller@worldnet.att.net (article in October 2006 issue)

If you are experienced in a particular vocation and would like to provide insight to a writer who is pulling a scene from your area of expertise, do a little blurb. We will publish it in this space and put your name in the directory. You may yourself be in need at a point.

There is nothing, in writing, so compelling as authenticity. *DLR*



**Arlyne Diamonds**, a new member with experience, energy and well-qualified advice for *getting the best out of you and others*, introduces her website

where she provides a plethora of related information couched in newsletters, essay and other presentation. *WritersTalk* has been invited to draw from the newsletters and reprint any of the observations Arlyne has made and we appreciate the value. But instead, we will repeat her website here and suggest that you peruse at your leisure.

**www.diamondassociates.net**



Dave LaRoche  
Managing Editor

## ***Editor's Itch***

Computers are invading our lives.

Some lives have al-

ready surrendered. There are days it is late afternoon before I get up from my desk... and get dressed. We know the high costs of a Pentium 4: social discourse, fresh air, travel, a lengthening "to-do" list—there's more. But, if you are a writer with a computer for a sole-mate, here is a site you would be smart to check out: [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthBay\\_Writers\\_Exchange/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthBay_Writers_Exchange/).

Yep, it's the Yahoo Group set up exclusively for SouthBay CWC members.

Thanks to the efforts of a few, we now have the beginnings of a resource that can be as broad and deep as the Internet itself. Once a member of this group, you may post relevant information, seek and review the stuff others have posted, and correspond with members about your writing challenges. Bottom line: it's a resource for your writing, it's free and available.

There is facility for Databases and Links, Calendar and Photos, Polls and memorandum. The expectation is that those belonging will populate these partitions with stellar information and as they use that, from others, already there. So when one writer spends his eternity conducting a search, others may benefit without repeating the investment—assuming, of course, that the first writer posts his results.

Share problems, solutions and opportunities; request a critique on a particular selection; get assistance from an expert. All these and more can be yours.

The downside? Well, we could clog the wheels with unrelated hyperbola, book pushing, personal chit-chat, and generally make a dump of the site. But there are "cops" and if we follow the rules, they won't make arrests and their job watching our navigation will be easier.

Okay, so if you are one of those people who spend the day at your keyboard in pajamas and fall off to sleep radiating binary, take a look at our site—join up and join in. Btw, there's an article on page 7 from our site owner detailing the process for membership. *DLR*

## ***WritersTalk***

is a monthly newsletter published by the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club.

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#### **Guest Columns**

*Almost Anything Goes* ≤400 wds

#### **Regular Columns**

to Una Daly

#### **News Items** ≤400 wds

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to Andrea Galvacs

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**Short Fiction** ≤1800 wds

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**Announcements and Advertisement**  
to Dave LaRoche

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

**newsletter@southbaywriters.com**

or

**writerstalk@comcast.net**

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# November Meeting Recap—D. LaRoche

## Announcements

**Christmas Gala:** The CG will be hosted again on Dec. 13 by our charming and successful Betty Auchard. It will be held in her home at 115 Belhaven Drive in Los Gatos and will begin at 6 pm. See clip on front page for details and map on back (address) page. This celebration will supplant our regular meeting. Cheers!



**Workshop:** Our annual writing workshop will be held 9am to 3 at our favorite LookOut Bar and Grill on Jan 21<sup>st</sup>. This workshop will supplant our regular January meeting—pity. See page 9 for details

**February Meeting:** On the 14<sup>th</sup>, Martha Engber will talk about growing characters from the blastomere up. Keep an eye on the newsletter, website and delivery room for more details.



## Kate Evans — Author and Lecturer

I hope those of you who stayed behind in your parlors did it for big reason as Kate Evans glowed... a sparkling gem in an amalgamation of igneous expectations. While Kate is thought of as a poet, her focus this night was the cross pollination of poetry and prose, an idea suggested by our Programs Chair, Diana Richomme.

Kate began with, “Many noted writers have proved that the cross pollination (poetry and prose) is a beneficial thing: Margaret Atwood, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, William



Carlos Williams and...” she mentioned others. Ms Evans had four points to make in support of this idea:

The **first**, in this exchange of verbal DNA, is using poetry as a theme or plot device in fiction; that is, using the poem itself as the story—then extend and elaborate. A decent example is *Specimen Days*, a novel by Michael Cunningham that employs, as a central part, a poem (*The Hours* by Walt Whitman).

Poetry somehow makes the illusive in your life feel tangible and real. The use of words in a poetic way may help the prose writer get at something deeper in their experience, bringing out

fresh and previously un-exportable notions. “Poetry is the go-to place when times are tough... Poetry logic is very different than prose logic and may jostle something quite unusual in

your writing.”

And the **second** point: Read poetry to enliven your prose into startling originality. Wiggle around in it and sensitize yourself to the rhythm and music of the language... “a novelist can get by with the story; the poet has nothing but words.” Prose writers are often inspired by the economy of poetry; and readers of prose enjoy those words that are fresh, unusually composed and compressed.



Kate leaves books of poetry scattered about her house, sampling each like you might a box of chocolates, maintaining and enhancing a poetry perspective to infuse into her prose.



**Three:** Writers are obsessed with certain ideas and topics: love, war, Cheney's marksmanship... and even if you don't do a formal publication, it's good to plumb the depths of these notions in different ways. One approach is to siphon your obsession off into poetry. Grapple with the idea and gain perspective, texture, increased understanding, then address your prose in a more thoughtful, holistic and balanced manner. Explore your obsessions with poetry.



And **lastly:** She said, "If you're a prose writer who wants to write poetry you're going to want to pare things to the most essential elements. Spend time reading poetry out loud, listening to the rhythm and when you give a poem a shot, see what it feels like to make every word count. And even if your poems aren't great, writing them will help you compose and edit your prose because in the revisions you will have the sense of searching for just the right word and right rhythm of the language."

If you are a poet attempting prose, you might want to start with a "poem cycle" (same subject different poems) move to flash fiction, short story and then to

novel—expanding, extending, repeating and loosening as you go. "Abundance" is a word she used to describe prose as compared to poetry.

The classic poem, she said, is a perfected jewel while the novel is necessarily flawed due to its length and meandering. Flash fiction and short story are more closely aligned with poetry in their strict construction, brevity, density and they quickly strike at the depth—start there. She quoted an unknown, "I always think of poets as the fine jewelers of writing. They take their words and thread them with such delicacy; as if they were creating a string of silver beads and river pearls set with such precision as to crown the mind" In summary she returned to: "Try cross pollination and it might take

your writing to new places."

Her favorite poets, when asked:

Marylyn Hacker

EE Cummings

Mickey Giovanni

We liked you Kate Evans. Thanks a bunch and come back. *DLR*

## WRITING WORKSHOP WITH KATE EVANS

*Begin writing, continue writing, enrich your writing,  
be inspired to write fiction, poetry, memoir.  
Thursdays 5:30-8 p.m. in San Jose*

- Small-sized groups (maximum 7 participants)
- Receive inspiration/pointers on how to hone your craft
- Low cost (just \$35 per 2 ½ hour workshop)
- All writing levels welcome

Session #1: February 1, 8, 15, 22 and March 8, 15, 22

Session #2: April 5, 12, 19, 26 and May 3, 10, 17

Kate Evans, Ph.D., M.F.A. is the author of poetry, nonfiction and fiction. Her work has been nominated for a Los Angeles Times Book Prize, a Lambda Literary Award, and two Pushcart Prizes. Her work has appeared in more than 50 publications. She teaches at San Jose State University.

To reserve a spot, send a non-refundable fee of \$245 per session (indicate Session #1 or #2, or both) to:  
Kate Evans, 1296 Hester Ave., San Jose, CA 95126

For questions or more information: 408-832-9270,



## January's Workshop Features Tod Goldberg

Sunday, January 21, 9:30 am to 3 pm.  
LookOut Bar and Grill  
605 Macara Ave, off Middlefield at 237  
Sunnyvale

Early Birds (before Dec 31)  
\$55 for CWC members, \$70 for non-members,  
Later Birds  
\$60 and \$75  
includes continental breakfast & lunch

Register on-line at [Southbaywriters.com](http://Southbaywriters.com) or send check to  
California Writers Club

South Bay Branch  
PO Box 3254  
Santa Clara, CA 95055

"This workshop will cover the art & craft involved in structuring your novel or story. With in depth lectures, handouts and (brief!) readings, we'll look at the essential elements needed to take your work from idea into action. This includes an intensive look at plot, setting, characterization and dialog, as well as samples of work that achieve what your ultimate aim is: publication. This won't be a game of softball...we'll deal with the hard truths of what works and what doesn't and why. You'll laugh. You'll cry. It will be better than Cats. But above all else, you'll leave the workshop with a roadmap towards publication, no matter the genre you work in." - *Tod Goldberg*

**Tod Goldberg** is the author of the novels *Living Dead Girl* (Soho Press), which was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, *Fake Liar Cheat* (Pocket Books / MTV), and the short story collection *Simplify* (OV Books).

Tod's short fiction has appeared in numerous magazines and journals, including *Other Voices*, *Santa Monica Review*, and *The Sun*, and has twice earned Special Mention for the Pushcart Prize. A contributing writer for a number of magazines and newspapers, Tod's journalism and nonfiction regularly appears in *Palm Springs Life Magazine*, *Las Vegas CityLife* and *Better Nutrition*, among others. His work has been featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Journal-News*, *E!*, and many other other publications. In addition, Tod earned three Nevada Press Association awards in journalism for his long running weekly column in the now-defunct Las Vegas Mercury.

Tod Goldberg teaches creative writing at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program, where he was named the 2005 Outstanding Instructor of the Year, and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor in the MFA Program at the University of California-Riverside Palm Desert.

*We enjoyed Tod Goldberg at East of Eden, from his workshops, panels, and especially his keynote address. You really don't want to miss Tod's special brand of humor and teaching.*





## Yearning to Communicate?

--By Carolyn Donnell

Do you want to communicate with other CWC SouthBay members? Then join the new Yahoo group. As the purpose states we are: *Dedicated to the continuing education and support of SouthBay Branch Writers.* You will be able to post messages to the group, have access to files, links, and other tools for the benefit of our members. See you there and here's how you join.

1. Go to [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthBay\\_Writers\\_Exchange](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthBay_Writers_Exchange)
2. Click on **Join This Group** button in the upper right hand portion of the screen.
3. Sign in or Sign up.

**If** you already have a Yahoo ID ,sign in with:  
**"Yahoo! ID" and "Password"**

Or, no Yahoo ID? Sign up at the **"Sign Up"** link.

(This is like signing up for any online ID. Name, Yahoo! required info, choose a password, etc. Then go back to step 1.)

Continuing with process: You will see something like the following:

-----  
*You are three quick steps away from joining SouthBay\_Writers\_Exchange.*

*All membership requests for SouthBay\_Writers\_Exchange need to be approved by the moderator. You will receive a confirmation email when your membership has been approved.*

*Note: You are currently signed-in as (your yahoo ID.) If you are not (your yahoo ID), sign in as a different user. Then stipulate:*

4. Your Contact Information
5. Message Delivery

Answer the questions and click **Save Changes.** You will then receive the following message:

### **Membership Pending:**

*Your membership request has been submitted to the group*

### ***SouthBay\_Writers\_Exchange!***

*You will receive a confirmation email when your membership has been approved...*

When your membership has been approved you will receive an email at the address you signed up with. The sender and subject line of the email will look like the following:

**"SouthBay\_Writers\_Exchange Moderator"**

**"Yahoo! Groups: Welcome to SouthBay\_Writers\_Exchange. Visit today!"**

Now when you return to

**"SouthBay\_Writers\_Exchange"**

you should have full membership capabilities. Please read the posted rules on the home page.

Or you can go to [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com), click on GROUPS and this one should be listed.

*Welcome to the group!*

### ***Creative Writing Winter Intensive***

They say every picture tells a story. Well, every writer has a story to tell. Do you have a story you are aching to write? A funny essay? Poem? Family stories you want to put to paper? Then join others in an intensive Creative Writing workshop. Here we will create, share and critique our written words. Class meets once a week for four weeks. Find and develop your writing voice from the materials you already might have: your own experience. A great way to perfect your skills or to explore writing for the first time. First class on 1/22 and runs for four consecutive weeks.

Registration through Santa Clara Adult Education  
 @ 408.423.3555 or [www.scae.org](http://www.scae.org).

## A Book Review

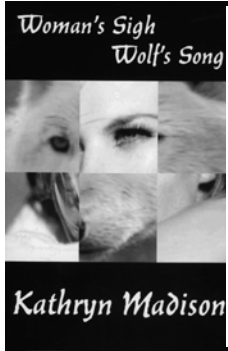
By

Robert A. Garfinkle

### **Woman's Sigh, Wolf's Song**

By Kathryn Madison

Windstorm Creative; 433 pages; \$19.99



I am still shivering from the winter cold after reading San Francisco Bay Area author Kathryn Madison's debut novel about a woman veterinarian, a blue-eyed white timber wolf, and winters in the Canadian Rockies. Alexandra Verazzano, the contemporary human co-protagonist, has a successful veterinary practice

in Seattle with a specialty of taking care of large dogs. Her world begins to crumble when she returns home a day early from a trip and finds her wealthy lawyer husband, Stephen, bedded down with his secretary in the masterbed of their large house. We see from Alex's point of view her reaction to this devastating situation.

As this opening part of the story is unfolding, the author has interspersed the birth of White-cub, the canine protagonist, and his littermates in the wilds of Alberta, Canada. White-cub is the largest pup of the litter and we see how he develops and interplays with the other members of the pack. White-cub becomes attached to the alpha male and learns the hunting and survival skills he will need to depend upon later.

Alex is raked over the divorce coals by Stephen. He keeps the house, marries his secretary, and closes Alex's veterinary clinic. He paid for it and does not what her to get any additional joy from it. Stephen does allow her to keep her mustang Viento. Alone, broke, and needing to start her life over, Alex begins her search for her psychological and physical recovery. In the meantime, the wolf pack faces the destruction of the leaders of the pack at the hands of poachers and must learn how to keep the survivors alive.

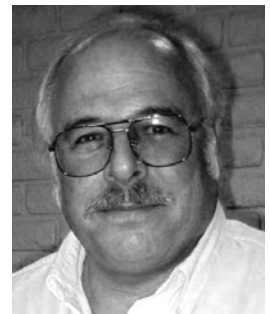
Alex is offered the chance to do an environmental research project in the Canadian Rockies by one of her college classmates. She decides to take the job as a way of getting away from Seattle and hopefully find a way out of her internal fight to get over her failed marriage and the loss of the clinic. She will have to live alone in a forestry service cabin and takes Viento along. Lightening strike fires begin to rage in a nearby valley and Alex is recruited to help at the fire base camp. She helps to provide medical attention to a severely burned firefighter.

Over the mountain range, White-cub and his pack mates try to flee the fire, but are trapped by smoke and flame. White-cub is severely burned, but wracked with pain and growing weaker by the minute, he survives by falling down in the stream. After the fire is out, Alex rides Viento through the burn area and is shocked by the destruction to the wildlife. She comes across the near dead large white wolf. At this major turning point in the story, the lives of woman and beast become intertwined when Alex takes the wolf back to the cabin to treat his wounds.

For the first time in months, her veterinary instincts take over and she begins to nurse the wild animal back to health. From the perspectives of both protagonists, the author shows us how the human and animal jointly develop their own courage to survive. Alex must keep from becoming too attached to the wolf, that she names

Survivor, because she knows that he must return to the wild as a wild animal and not be allowed to become dependant on humans.

I hate this book, because it kept me up late reading page after page, thereby keeping me from completing other tasks. I really don't hate this book, but it is a real page-turner with conflict, tension, and 'what is going to happen next' on every page. Despite a few minor first novel flaws, Kathryn Madison has written one book that you should put on your reading list and actually sit down and read. You will come away with a different perspective on wolves and their place in the environment than you had before you started reading this remarkable book.





**(RIPPLE EFFECT** FROM PAGE 2)

I'd bet these same parents punish their children severely if they ever lie to a parent.

These examples are clear. Here are a few others less clear that will clearly touch some nerves (including those of friends of mine.)

Many parents teach their children there is an Easter Bunny, Tooth Fairy and Santa Claus. Parents create elaborately deceitful schemes to perpetuate these myths.

- 1 They paint, decorate and hide eggs claiming that the Easter Bunny left them.

- 2 They substitute money for teeth left under pillows and claim the Tooth Fairy left the money.

- 3 They spend countless hours shopping for gifts, thousands of dollars purchasing them, and many more hours wrapping them finally affixing a card from Santa Claus.

What do you think children learn from these behaviors? Here's what I think:

- 1 Children do not learn to appreciate the loving care and concern of their parents because the credit for all the hard work goes elsewhere. Thus causing parents to become under-valued and under-appreciated.

- 2 Children learn they cannot trust the veracity of their parents when later they learn the truth – causing feelings of betrayal, loss of respect, trust and sometimes in a reduction in love and affection.

- 3 Perhaps most important of all, they no longer auto-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)



Jackie Mutz  
Contributing Editor

## Accolades

—Jackie Mutz

Every month at the CWC meeting people stand and share their writing accomplishments. This column is devoted to those who had good news to share at November's meeting:

**Betty Auchard** is engaged in a media campaign to publicize the national distribution of the paperback version of "*Dancing in My Nightgown*," her award winning book. Betty's publicist ([www.miltonkahnpr.com](http://www.miltonkahnpr.com)) contacts TV hosts, NPR hosts, and magazines on her behalf. Betty picked up six NPR phone interviews in November. One magazine, *Today's Senior* will publish a story from her book each month for as long as she can drag it out.

**Emily Jiang** won 2 honors in the 75th annual Writer's Digest Writing Competition, which received almost 19,000 entries this year. "Homecoming, a Small World View" won Honorable Mention in the Non-Rhyming Poem category, and "First Memory of Ah Ma" won Honorable Mention in the Rhyming Poem category.

On Saturday, November 11, Emily Jiang spoke on "Confessions of a Contest Queen, How Winning and Losing Writing Contests Can Help Pave the Path to Publication." Sponsored by the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Emily's talk had almost 40 attendees and took place in the Community Room of the Mountain View Library. A recap of the event can be found on her blog: <http://emilyjiang.blogspot.com>.

**Kathryn Madison** wrote, "Because my novel *Woman's Sigh, Wolf's Song* is environmental fiction, I have been pursuing getting a chance to give my presentation on the wolves I researched for the book to environmental groups like the Sierra Club, etc. Phyllis Mattson, a member of one of the Sierra Club chapters, recommended me to their program person. The event went VERY well; great attendance, they bought books, and the Q&A session lasted until we had to get out of the building they meet in. Even better, it looks like this might lead to other events in the future. Other than the fact this was a great event for me, I think Phyllis was a great example of what CWC should be - a group of writers that help each other and recommend each others books to readers. Thank you, Phyllis!"

**Luanne Oleas** became a member of CWC after having a great time at the East of Eden Writers Conference. She won two awards in the conference novel writing contest and is currently working with the contest sponsor, KOMENAR Publishing, to rewrite her novel *Pilots & Priests* for publication. Her other novel, *A Primrose in November*, received a significant potential award.

There were others who had items to share, but failed to respond to *WT* in time for publication. Congratulations to Betty, Emily, Kathryn and new member Luanne. And a special congratulations to all who write sometimes or as diligent drill sergeant. Email me at

[newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

and share your news for a future Accolades column. A very joyous holiday season to you all! JAM

## The Next Draft — Becky Levine



Becky Levine  
Columnist

*Becky is a writer and a freelance editor who is available for copyediting and manuscript critiques. Becky's column will give tips on ways to develop and strengthen your writing style. She can be reached at*

[www.beckylevine.com](http://www.beckylevine.com)

### Lights, Camera, Action...and REACTION!

You write a scene where a mother leaves work, late. She has a plan. She's driving to the afterschool care, where she'll pick up her two kids, stop by the grocery store, then head home. Suddenly...!! A Mini Cooper shoots through the red light, swerves to miss her, and slams into the side of a Hummer. The Hummer's paint gets scratched. The Mini Cooper turns into an accordion.

And the mother, goes to daycare, picks up her kids, goes to the grocery store, and heads home.

Not.

What's missing? The woman's reaction.

Writers work hard to create active characters, realistic dialog, and dramatic scenes. Too often, though, they forget that last element—that reaction.

People—and characters—have three kinds of reactions—physical response, internal thought, and activity.

Take the scene above. When the mother sees the Mini Cooper rushing toward her, tiny as it is, her stomach tightens, her hands clench the wheel, her vision narrows. She has a thought—probably short and disjointed—a panicked thought of her children, a swear word, a simple, “No!” And she does something—brakes or steers to the right.

She does not simply note the incident and drive on. Even though the Mini hits the Hummer, not her vintage 1962 Volkswagen beetle, she is still a participant in the scene, *not* simply an observer.

Every action has a reaction. Isaac Newton. Smart guy.

And it goes further. When you drop a penny into a pond, the impact sends out ripples. When you drop a crisis, a sweet moment, an overheard conversation into a scene...again, ripples. If your mother is a minor character, never to be seen again, those ripples can be tiny.

If the mother is your protagonist, however, it is your job to make sure the accident impacts her in some way. For a tiny ripple, make her five minutes late for daycare. For a big ripple, show her a bloody arm hanging from the Mini and give her nightmares.

Something. Anything.

To write an event with *only* the action makes a scene incomplete, unfinished, unsatisfying to your reader. To layer in the character's reactions, to have her respond to and be affected by the event, makes your scene...real.

BL

## A Very Good Thing —D. LaRoche

There can be too much of a good thing, it has been said, but we haven't neared that point with Betty Auchard. She epitomizes and idealizes the Branch writer; focused and directed, energized and dedicated, and, by all relative measurements, successful. (Have I left out her gracious “Gala” hosting.)

I envy the person who actually bores though the process (she's not the only) organizing, outlining, writing and rewriting, publishing, stumping and selling.

As she continues to promote, her latest

achievement is a book recommendation from Jayne Meadows, vivacious bride of the late Steve Allen.



Above we see Betty at a speaking engagement and below the card from JM.

Keep at it Betty, can you hear the applause?



The card reads: “How thrilled I was... with that wonderful cover on *Dancing in My Nightgown*. That book should be a best seller and soon. It certainly deserves to be. Congratulations to you and Betty Auchard and my love to you both. —Jayne”

(RIPPLE EFFECT FROM PAGE 9)

matically believe their parents ever again. Parents are no more the absolute authorities on life's lessons. Of course this could be a good thing because it leads to more self-reliance and independent thought rather than automatic trust in authorities.

Finally, my pet peeve of all time: Trick or Treat at Halloween!

Don't get me wrong. I love Halloween, costumes, games and parties. But Trick or Treat! The very words trick or treat are extortion.

*"If you don't pay me off I will do you, or your property harm."* Doesn't that sound exactly like the words of a goon in the protection racket?

Next, we need to look at the behaviors themselves: Children in disguise, usually accompanied by parents go door to door demanding candy. They are begging.

In some towns the retail stores are bombarded all day long with hoards of kids and their parents coming from neighborhoods far away, barging into stores demanding candy. The store owners are forced to buy tons of candy and have more staff on hand to deal with all the people coming in that day.

Sales are down significantly because masqueraded children and their parents are crowding the parking lots, streets and stores. Vandalism, theft and accidental breakage increase significantly on October 31<sup>st</sup> for the retail community.

More and more parents from less affluent neighborhoods take their children to more upscale areas for better quality treats. Often, people who choose not to participate by keeping porch lights out, or having signs on doors saying "no trick or treat" are vandalized – in the name of a trick.

The message: Begging, demanding and grubbing from those who have is appropriate and desirable.

Are these the messages you want to communicate to children? They sure aren't mine. AD

# NIPPER'S NITS

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



Pat Decker Nipper  
Columnist

**See how much you've learned about grammar from this column and take this test. Everything has been published here before.**

## Lesson 21. A Grammar Test

### Grade School Level

1. A writer must use (his/their) creativity to avoid plagiarism.
2. I drive (less/fewer) miles these days.
3. On (their/they're/there) trip they will see Yellowstone Park.

### Middle School Level

4. The four children were arguing (between each other/among one another).
5. How much (further/farther) is the beach?
6. I caught Bob and (him/he) just in time.

### High School Level

7. Before you go, (lie/lay) the paper down.
8. Each time I (had waked/had woke) during the winter no birds were singing.
9. He tried to (effect/affect) the molecules to cure cancer.

Answers below

Points for correct answers: Grade School, 1 each; for Middle School, 2 each; High School, 3 each.

For 5 or fewer points, read this column more carefully or buy a grammar book. For 10 or fewer points, you're pretty good, but rusty. For 15-18 points, you're ahead of the game.

Answers: 1. his; 2. fewer; 3. their; 4. among one another, though either is correct; 5. farther; 6. him; 7. lay; 8. had waked; 9. affect.

## Confessions of a Contest Queen

by Emily Jiang



I'm a self-proclaimed contest queen. I love entering contests, mostly the artistic kind like writing contests and music competitions. My newest experiment is the costume contest.

This summer, at a writer's conference, the costume contest theme was "jade," and since I'm Chinese-American, I thought, how could I NOT enter this contest? I had a secret weapon. My good friend Bonnie, a professional costumer. She threw ten different articles of clothing at me, and I selected the ones I wanted to wear. My costume ended up looking more like an elegant outfit than a costume. At the conference, I was lucky enough to spot another woman wearing a very similar-styled green outfit. I suggested that we enter the costume contest together, and we went as jade twins, spontaneously dancing some simple step that others thought we had choreographed in advance. We hadn't. We were just going with the flow. In the end, we each won a prize, a gift certificate to the bookstore.

My costume for Halloween this year was The Blue Fairy. Not Tinkerbell, as so many of my friends were confused. Tinkerbell's from *Peter Pan*. The Blue Fairy was the one who turned Pinocchio into a real boy, and in the movie she had long blonde hair. I couldn't find a long blonde wig, but someone reminded me that the blonde blue fairy was just the Disney interpretation.

Each time I became The Blue Fairy, I spent an hour painting my fingernails and toenails bright blue. I spent a couple of hours curling my hair. I spent another fifteen minutes on my makeup and blue face jewels. My feet balanced on five-inch platform silver sandals. I wore a giant blue ball gown and my store-bought, perfectly-matching blue butterfly wings.

The first time I was The Blue Fairy this year was at the local California Writers Club Hallow-

een meeting. When I entered the room, several people gasped and told me that I'd win a prize. So my expectations were set. But in the end, I

won nothing.

Honestly, I was in a bit of a shock. Hours of preparation were to naught. To nothing. In vain. Useless. I might as well not have bothered with my costume.

After the results were announced, many people approached me and told me that I should have won. They also offered advice. I should have spoken up louder. I should have sung a tune from the movie. I should have shown my silver shoes. I should have turned and flapped my wings. I agreed with everyone.

Except, even if I had done everything right, I still might have lost. A contest is inherently subjective. As a self-proclaimed contest queen, I knew that entering a costume contest is no different than entering a writing contest. I tried my best, but I should have been prepared for rejection. Because one never knows what the judge is thinking. Maybe the judge didn't understand my costume persona. Or liked the color blue.

In the end, I did benefit. I enjoyed dressing up. I enjoyed the time I took with the details. I enjoyed people's reactions. When some people saw my costume, they literally were "wowed." People loved my blue butterfly wings and my crazy silver shoes. They loved the fact that I took the time to be over the top. If the judging was based on popular vote, I think I might have received a prize. But like on "Dancing with the Stars," popular vote and judges' vote don't always agree.

Every contest is a learning experience, whether you win or you lose. My goal for 2005 was to receive 30 writing rejections. 30 because it was a reasonable number and rejections so I had an excuse to really celebrate each rejection.

Unfortunately, or fortunately however you want to spin it, I never made all 30 rejections. I received many rejections, but I also won over 10 honors in 2005 for my writing. I shared my experiences in November in a session called "Confessions of a Contest Queen, How Winning AND Losing Contests Can Help Pave the Path to Publication." When contesting life gives you lemons, make lemonade. *EJ*



STEPHEN C. WETLESEN  
Commercial Poetic Artist

What's a poetic artist? Contrary to popular belief, poetic artist is not just a fancy term for poet. Although the poetic artist's work looks similar to a casual eye to that of a poet, a poetic artist is something very different. A poetic artist is a new species that is just now being born and is evolving into some kind of strange creature we still do not know nor entirely understand as yet – but it will be beautiful, after a few struggles.



Stated briefly in simple terms (the definition is very much a work in progress as well), a poetic artist sees a picture, tableau, vision or series of them in his or her mind, often inspired by the surrounding world (or is it the figurative infrared, ultraviolet, X-rays or gamma rays, invisible to most eyes that make up the inner core nature or someone or something?) and paints, sculpts, sketches or even dances it with pure thought and words as media and canvas.

Well, all right: poetic art will serve to define and invent itself as time passes!

Make no mistake about it, and let there be no underestimation. Poetic art has literally induced people, sometimes perfect strangers, to weep.

Stephen C. Wetlesen, California Writers Club South Bay Branch member, has worked as a poetic artist and, in that time, built up a small but ongoing business earning modest amounts executing commissions for such needs and events as weddings, birthdays, per-

sonal tributes, infant ceremonies, cultural events, graduations, medical needs, personal growth, memorials, CD releases, business presentations, speeches and seasonal matters, among many others. His poetic art has also appeared regularly in the WhistleStop Magazine for Peninsula railroad commuters traveling up and down the tracks from San Jose to San Francisco and in between.

Now, however, Wetlesen's poetic art has gone commercial. His "Ode to Lavender" (referring to the flower and the balms and lotions derived from it, not the color) now graces the website of the Foxhollow Herb Farm (please call Jackie at 1-(831) 637-8626 or go to <http://www.foxhollowherbs.com>), a proud organic grower of fine herbs of all kinds and maker of the highest quality balms, lotions, soaps, teas and wedding favors produced from them (no animal tests nor animal products are used). Foxhollow Herb Farm, family owned and operated, is located in lovely rural Hollister in San Benito County south of San Jose, but maintains a presence at the Organic Farmers Market held every Sunday morning at the Mountain View train station and in other venues in Santa Clara County.

Wetlesen expects the day will come when nearly every business entity or other organization, large or small, local, national or worldwide, will use poetic art for all kinds of purposes to enhance their markets and images. Thus we will be seeing the growth of commercial poetic art as a public relations motif; Foxhollow Herb Farm is in the vanguard.

Wetlesen plans to begin the growth of his commercial poetic art by expansion into high end en-

terprises of the sort favored by elegant people of taste, and warmly welcomes any inquiries.

"Ode to Lavender" is reproduced below, with a little contact information at the end of the piece.

ODE TO LAVENDER

Paradox,  
crisp complexity.  
Connector of the dissimilar,  
sharp aroma of relationship  
between surprising things,  
opposites,  
all that seems to have  
nothing in common.

Sweet scent,  
but piercing  
nasal femininity,  
heady inhalation,  
manly strength,  
penetration.  
It is beyond gender,  
transcending it.

Lotion that joins  
far distant places,  
strings together  
the disparate,  
by its mere whiff.  
Could its romance transform  
the blood ruby and the bright  
emerald  
into one incomprehensible  
gemstone?

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)





## WritersTalk Challenge

Creative Writing Awards are offered to those publishing in *WritersTalk*

### Genres:

Memoirs <1200 wds  
Short Fiction <1800 wds  
Poetry <300 wds  
Essays <900 wds  
Articles <900 wds

### Awards:

Twice yearly, Feb 15 and Aug 15

**First Prize - \$60**

**Second - \$40**

**Third - \$25**

**Honorable Mentions**

### Entrants:

All work in the genres above, published in WT during the period Aug 15 through Feb 15, 2007 is entered. *WT* Editors are excluded from participation.

### Judging:

Is to be done by genre-related Club members selected by the editors.

### Judging approach:

Ten points are available for each piece, to be allocated over several categories of grading in each genre. The allocations are available from *WritersTalk* Editors

**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**

(WETLESEN FROM PAGE 13)

It is a gentle flower,  
soft color of April,  
yet it also evokes  
December gaudy red lights  
and is just as at home  
in January's  
fierce freezing  
purity  
and in the hot Thermidor  
that is August heat waves.  
It is outside the calendar,  
outside history,  
as much in place  
thousands of years ago  
as in style  
this very day.  
And its future draws us.

Some in science say that,  
in higher dimensions,  
the jumbled varied  
objects and energies  
we see  
glued together  
are but aspects,  
facets  
of one great unity,  
a whole.

Perhaps lavender  
and the balms it spawns  
force this deep sight,  
this enhancement,  
this stark intensity,  
this loving caress,  
this hint of vision,  
this fountainhead  
of all art and  
creativity  
upon us,  
a holy compulsion  
yet virtuous seduction  
leaving us with  
that soft light breeze we call free  
will,  
emanating

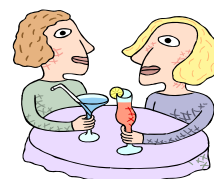
from tiny strong  
but delicate  
subtle hued purple blossoms  
and their derived  
liquid  
herbal essence.

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STEPHEN C. WETLESEN

-to Jackie and Foxhollow Herb  
Farm,  
Hollister, California

STEPHEN C. WETLESEN, 10250 Mira Vista Rd., Cupertino, CA 95014 (408) 252-8655 email: SCWetlesen@aol.com, a published poet and writer, has been commissioned for many needs and occasions, including weddings, birthdays, life tributes, diplomatic receptions, speeches, business presentations, institutional openings, memorials, fundraisers, artistic needs, church events, a CD release party, public relations, seasonal holidays, graduations and infant ceremonies, among other events. Mr. Wetlesen is available for any reasonable request that might be imagined. Sending flowers? Why not send a poem with them?! Need a unique gift? Have a special poem created. Every newborn child needs a birth poem.

"A poem for every need, event  
or occasion,  
and everything needs a poem."



## Nicotine or Aspirin?

—Marjorie Johnson

The flag is up on our rural mailbox. It's come at last, a plain brown envelope from Underground Press, addressed to me, Betsy Mills. I slip the *Poisoner's Handbook* into my apron pocket and head back to the house: two rooms, tarpaper roof, red-clay yard.



I hurry past my husband Wayne: blond, twice my weight, six years older. He has the old Chevy in pieces again, the hood leaning against a pine tree. He pounds on something with an oversized wrench, throws the carburetor across the yard.

In the doorway I spot an aspirin bottle, pick it up. I pull out my box of treasures from under the bed. I add the latest bottle and two small seed cones, just right to make a porcupine. I look at my critters-in-a-bottle—Lady Bug, Wilbur W. Worm, Al E. Cat, Dandy Andy Ant—it's the name that'll sell them at the fair. I build them using tweezers in small, empty aspirin bottles, all saved after Wayne emptied them.

Wayne takes too much aspirin. They make your stomach bleed, I tell him, but he says no way, besides his shoulder hurts all night. He tells me I'm too young to know much. Not that he got that much out of high school, except a ruined shoulder, from playing football. Anyhoo, I'm plumb tuckered out, what with him not sleeping at night, right next to me.

I hide my new book under my underwear in the dresser drawer. Wayne stomps in, shakes out some aspirin, his jeans covered with oil and red dirt. "Mail's here," I say.

"Win any contests yet," he says, moseys back outside.

"Sweepstakes," I say to the back of his head.

That night Wayne is listening to the radio in the dark, a water glass on the dresser beside the radio. He fusses with the cap, can't get the lid off the bottle. The radio does a fade out, like most nights in the mountains. Havin' a tizzy, Wayne throws the aspirin bottle across the room, cusses, and slaps at the radio, as usual, only this time he hits the water glass. Breaking glass. Radio crashing. I turn on the bare-bulb ceiling light. Blood spurting. I wrap a white dishtowel around his wrist. The bleeding doesn't stop.

The car isn't running. I pull on pants and a shirt and run to the neighbor's house, a quarter of a mile down the road.

"Hey, it's midnight, what's going on," the neighbor says. He gives me a ride back in his pickup truck, oak wood in the truck-bed, the window stuck open. I help Wayne and my best dishtowel pile in. The neighbor can only take one. I clean up the mess.

Come four o'clock, I hear the truck rattle and bang on down, wood bouncing in its bed. Wayne says, "Thank you for the lift, much obliged," slams the door. The truck grinds and whines, lurching up the rocky hill. Wayne kicks off his shoes, comes to bed, still dressed. I play dead.

Wayne sleeps 'til lunchtime. He gets the car to run, and we go five miles to the country store for groceries. I spend the last of the paper money, only coins left now. Wayne says he's going to get some work with the road crew tomorrow.

When he finally goes to work, I read my new book. I want to know about poisons: what the dead body looks like afterwards, like in those murder mystery stories. But, this book from Underground Press tells how to poison people, how to inject poison into a piece of fruit. Just like the witch in *Snow White*.

Something about nicotine catches my eye. Right here, it says one drop of pure nicotine kills a person, if you drop it into an ear while the victim sleeps. The murderer on tiptoe, holding out a medicine dropper . . . It might help me with the gophers.

I save Wayne's cigarette butts for the end of the month, when I put the tobacco fibers into a paper and roll them. Saves money but makes my fingers stink. The book says soak the tobacco and evaporate the water to concentrate the nicotine. But keep it out of the sun.

Early next morning while I tend the garden, I light up the burn pile. I'm thinking maybe I will cook up some of those cigarette butts, make some nicotine like in the book. I put the tobacco water in an empty tomato juice can over the coals and let it simmer. I do it outside, don't breathe in the fumes. It makes nasty brown goo, too sticky to do much with. A witch's brew: witches, *sing cauldron boil, cauldron bubble*, dance in a circle, make up spells. I move the nicotine brew away from the sun.

In a couple of days, I catch a gopher out behind

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

(NICOTINE OR ASPIRIN FROM PAGE 15)

the carrots. I lift the trap, the ugly critter dangles down. I keep away from those yellow teeth, dab a little tobacco paste on his nose with a stick. Sure enough, in a few minutes he's dead. I dig a hole in the garden and cover the dead gopher. I don't know if he will turn to fertilizer or if he will poison my plants.

I let the nicotine concentrate set out another night. I need to dry it out, divide it into small doses. I try dipping aspirin tablets into the goo. When the brown coating dries, I push the capsules into an empty aspirin bottle with stick and hide them under my underwear next to the book on poisons.

That afternoon, Wayne works on the car again. He says, "The clutch is going, old car's about worn out."

"Good thing it's not winter," I say. "Leastways, your shoes aren't stuck in the muck." He doesn't laugh.

I go to my garden, admire the tomatoes, water the plants. I hear a big commotion, Wayne yelling. He smashes the car roof with a big rock and punches the door with his fist. He throws a greasy car-part across the driveway. I know it's a bad day.

I pick the first red ripe tomato and start dinner. I make a salad with fresh greens and the ripe tomato, boil up some spaghetti. I set the table, put his spaghetti in the middle of the yellow plastic plate, prettier than on the blue or pink. I call Wayne for dinner. He takes his time coming, like usual. I say, "Spaghetti's getting cold."

Wayne sits at the table, pushes the salad away. He puts some spaghetti in his mouth and spits it out. "You trying to poison me, woman?" he says, flings his dinner plate across the room. It smashes against the wall. The plate bounces and rolls. Paints a splotchy red trail, clatters to a stop. Spaghetti drools down, down, sliding slowly, piling up in a red sauce puddle.

"I make you something nice for dinner, and look what you do. I'm not cleaning it up. It's not my fault if it's cold." I cross my arms over my chest and frown.

"What was that stuff, anyway?" He sits there, knife in one hand, fork in the other.

"An onion, a green tomato, tomato sauce. And cinnamon. You always say, put in spice."

"That's crazy, woman. Nobody puts cinnamon in spaghetti sauce."

"Spaghetti's still there. You gonna clean up the mess?"

"You don't tell me what to do, woman," he says.

He shoves me hard, makes a fist.

"My name is Betsy," I say, and shove him back. We yell and scream, bump one another around, have a terrible fight. I duck and move farther away. "I wish you were dead," I say, starting to cry, leaning against the doorjamb.

He sits down on the bed, folds his arms across his chest and crosses one leg over, big frown on his face. He massages his shoulder, clenches and unclenches his jaw.

I clean up the mess. I wash down the walls and scrub the floors, hating, wanting to punch him out instead.

Same old thing, come bedtime, he's listening to the radio in the dark. "Bring me some more aspirin, woman," he says, "I need them in the night."

I get the tobacco aspirin from my dresser drawer and put them next to him, within easy reach. Now we'll see, Roger Q. Rat, I think. But I can't go to sleep.

I hook my leg over the edge of the mattress, try not to roll downhill to the center. Wayne starts to snore. I'm thinking a lot, like, you can't just kill somebody, even if you get some bruises, even if you want to wring his neck. What if that bedspring breaks through again, wakes him up? First thing, he'll grab those pills. I slip out of bed, creep across the dark room, trade aspirin bottles. I hide the tobacco stuff and turn off the radio. I edge myself back over the up-hill mattress, go to sleep.

Middle of the night, he sits up, pulls off all the covers. "Help me," he moans. "I just threw up."

I turn on the light. I see blood, a lot of blood. "Let's put another pillow under your head," I say, wiping him off with a damp towel.

"Car still doesn't run, and us with no phone. Just stay right here. I'll get help." I run to the neighbors. It's dark, no moon. I slip and skin my knee, tear my pants. I bang on the door and yell under the window.

"You again? Are you crazy?" he says, leaning out of the upstairs window in his underwear.

"I have to use the phone, please, I have to use the phone."

It takes a long time for help to come. Wayne just lies there, white against the blood-red sheets. "Are you okay?" I ask. He doesn't answer. I hear the siren, see the whirling red lights coming down the drive.

The ambulance driver rushes to the door. "Where

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 17)

(NICOTINE OR ASPIRIN FROM PAGE 16)

is he, Ma'am?"

"Right here," I say, "too small a house to lose him."

The helper rolls in a stretcher. They both wear white uniforms and white shoes. They try to make him breathe.

Sure enough, he's dead. The sheriff's here before Wayne leaves in the ambulance: no siren, red clay dust boiling up, like a cloud of nicotine gas.

"What happened, Ma'am?" the sheriff asks. He has a pistol in a black holster.

"I don't know, I just don't know."

The sheriff picks up an aspirin bottle. "Is this what he's been taking? So many aspirin bottles around here," he says. "You'll have to come in tomorrow." He drives out, his taillights aglow in the dust, like coals from a witch's bonfire.

When the sheriff leaves, I change the bed. I throw the sheets and the bloody pillow on top of the burn pile. That aspirin bottle, did he swallow half a bottle all at once, there in the dark? I look for the nicotine-flavored ones, right there with my underwear. Only ten tablets, I thought there were more. Ten? Twelve? How many were there? Oh-my-god. I must have killed him! What'll happen to me?

I cannot sleep.

Come morning, I catch a ride into town with the neighbor. This time I'm the one in the pick-up, kind of cold with that window stuck down, lots of rattles. Rough ride, too, his springs are shot. He drops me by the sheriff's office, half a dozen posters on the wall, mostly wanted for murder. *Murder!*

"You say he took lots of aspirin." The sheriff writes that down. "Wait for the coroner's report, don't go anywhere." Then, friendly-like, he says, "There's coffee and donuts in the waiting room."

I wait. The donuts are stale. Coffee doesn't help my aching head or my guilty conscience. They will find nicotine—he smoked by the carton. Will they search my dresser drawer?

Time passes slowly. Finally, the sheriff's helper comes, tells me to walk right on in. The coroner wants to see me. "How much aspirin did you say your husband took, Mrs. Mills?"

"Way too much. He took it by the bottle."

"Wonder it didn't kill him sooner, with that bleeding ulcer," the coroner says. He has a bushy mustache.

"What do you want to do with his body?"

"His body? I have to do something with his body?"

"Well, are you having a funeral or something? What would he want done?"

"No sense having a funeral," I say. "No family to speak of."

"Okay. The county will cremate him and mail his remains to you. Just fill out these forms here." He tells me to go on home, just let him know if there is anything else he can do for me.

"Sure could use a ride home," I say.

Next morning early, I light the burn pile, put the book right on top, along with the bloody sheets. While I'm at it, I throw in the nicotine aspirin, still in its bottle. Kind of like a funeral pyre, except this widow's not climbing on.

Right next to the beets, that's where I'll plant his ashes. Make him eat his vegetables after all. *MJ*

## WritersTalk is on line

Yep, those of you who have asked for our newsletter on line can now view and download from our website. It's a pdf so you must have Acrobat Reader and if you don't (most do) you may download it at the same time—or technically, a nano before. Just go to the button below the newsletter download and press. Reminder, our website is [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com).

Additionally, I am experimenting with delivering WritersTalk as an email attachment. If anyone would prefer receiving the newsletter as an email, send me a request.

([writerstalk@comcast.net](mailto:writerstalk@comcast.net)) I will take your name off of our hard-copy distribution and add you to email distribution.

There are NO plans to deliver the newsletter exclusively electronically. This is available only to those who indicate the email attachment as a preference.



## Cool Blue

— Jackie Mutz

One day  
hot reflection slit  
my eyes  
I could not see  
cool blue.

She saw  
determined stiff  
toddler toes touched  
cool blue.

Three steps  
An eon beats  
my heart gone in  
cool blue.

I pulled  
A drowned sputter  
disbelieving  
too terrible horror  
cool blue hurts.



## nanowrimo-ing

eight haikus, or nine, plus line—  
— emily jiang

fifty-thousand words,  
almost two-hundred pages—  
thirty days to write.

impossible? no.  
difficult? well, just do it—  
break up first draft in

three-hour freewrites:  
perfection is not allowed—  
turn off editor.

pen in hand, now write:  
first thought that needs to be told—  
condensed resonance.

write before thinking  
in nanoseconds, don't stop—  
misspellings okay.

describe characters  
living in different settings—  
let clichés clutter.

try for fresh ideas,  
roll your eyes, muss hair, and sigh—  
capture words like pearls,

though words are more like  
diamonds, pre-cut, dull, clunky—  
in need of polish...

save that for another month—



## Stolen Soul

— Carolyn Donnell

I went up into the hills  
for only half a day.  
I watched mist rise  
behind green mountains,  
winding down  
to rocky creeks below.

I listened to quiet breezes  
waft through trees and grass.  
I felt the swell of dreams,  
ideas, desires.  
New understanding  
of the world was rising.

I came back down to my old house,  
I can't call it a home.  
Noise, pollution,  
cacophony in the valley  
stole the peace it in less time  
than it took to gain.

A hundred cars if there was one  
and curs-ed motorcycles  
spewed their noise and fumes  
through my open window,  
Both asphyxiating body  
and stealing soul.

The neighbors screaming all the time,  
add to all the stress.  
They can't ever seem to find  
a moment's peace.  
But I don't really wonder why.  
I already know.

When can I go back uphill,  
to that sweet green retreat?  
Could I live there,  
pitch a tent,  
or just go for a walk?  
I know it won't be for me  
a day too soon.



Announcements Announcements Announcements

### Creative Writing Classes

Looking for information and feedback on your writing?

**Edie Matthews M.F.A.**  
offers creative writing classes on Tuesdays.

- 10am-noon Westmont Retirement Center, 1675 Scott Blvd., Santa Clara.
- 1:30-3:30 pm Valley Village, 390 N. Winchester Blvd., Santa Clara,

*"My goal is to make students become consciously aware of what they're doing right and how to improve themselves."*

For more information, contact [www.scae.org](http://www.scae.org) or Edie or show up. Enrollment fee is three dollars.



### Write a column—

*Anything Goes (Almost).*

That's the name of the space. Make it opinionated, informational, persuasive... Email it to Una Daly, by the 16th of the month.

[newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

### GOT NEWS?

Book Reviews?  
Committee Meetings?  
Critique Groups?  
Reading Forums?  
Book-store openings?  
Signings?  
Conferences ?

[newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

## JACK LONDON WRITERS CONFERENCE

March 24, 2007

Foster City Crowne Plaza, Foster City, CA

For further information visit: [www.sfpeninsulawriters.com](http://www.sfpeninsulawriters.com)

The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Jack London Writers Conference will be held all day Saturday, March 24, 2007 at the Foster City Crowne Plaza. Keynote speaker Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket) will kick off the one day conference of workshops, speakers, and agent appointments.

Early registration guarantees a free agent consultation! Special rate for CWC members. Check our website for further information. ([www.sfpeninsulawriters.com](http://www.sfpeninsulawriters.com))

WRITERS CONTEST: Categories include Short Story, Nonfiction, and Poetry. Prizes are \$100, \$50 and \$25. The Charles and Lois Cook Writing Prize plus \$250 and consideration for publication by KOMENAR will be awarded for Best Novel. Deadline for entries is January 20, 2007.

See [www.sfpeninsulawriters.com](http://www.sfpeninsulawriters.com) for further rules and information.



### South Bay Writers Open Mic

Taking the month off— see you all in January, 2007— same schedule

(408) 730-9622 or email [wabaldwin@aol.com](mailto:wabaldwin@aol.com)

## SPELL-CHECK ISN'T ENOUGH

A REMINDER FROM LAURIE GIBSON, PROFESSORIAL EDITOR

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South Bay Branch  
PO Box 3254  
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Stamp(s)

ADDRESSEE

Address Correction Requested

*SAVE THESE DATES*

Board of Directors Meet  
Jan 10 at Cathy's

Holiday Gala:  
Dec 13  
Betty Auchard's

Open Mic:

*Gene Fishin*  
*Return in Jan*

WritersTalk Inputs:  
Dec 16

Editors Pow-Wow:  
Dec 23 10:00am  
Orchard Valley Coffee

Workshop—Goldberg  
Jan 21

**Holiday Gala, December 13, 6:00 pm**  
At

**Betty Auchard's**  
**115 Bellhaven Drive**  
**Los Gatos**

