



WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

At our next meeting, Jill Lublin will give you *Guerrilla Publicity*

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO SELL YOUR BOOK

An Introduction by Edie Matthews



Edie Matthews
Programs

"If nobody knows about your book," said publicity maven, Jill Lublin, "nobody is going to buy it. Period."

In the current publishing world, it has become the responsibility of the author to understand how to work with media to their advantage, and how to create interest that will stimulate book sales.

Obviously, Lublin follows her own advice. She is the author of two bestsellers on the subject: *Guerrilla Publicity*, considered the PR bible and used in university marketing courses; and her latest success, *Networking Magic*, which went to #1 at Barnes and Noble.

She has helped numerous others find success as well. Her clients, along with those who attended her seminars, have gone on to be featured in major US newspapers, national magazines, and television shows such as CNN, The Today Show, Live with Regis and Kelly, and Good Morning America.



Jill Lublin

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

Meet Karen Llewellyn, CWC Member

By Una Daly



Una Daly
Profiles

Karen, tell me a little about yourself:

I made my living writing, on and off, for more than 30 years. News, PR, advertising, magazine articles, dramatic monologues--I like writing a lot of different types of pieces. I loved publication management, which was my job for several years. While doing that job for a small Christian organization, we won the Bay Area Best Award from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). That was a hoot, since we were a staff of three-and-a-half competing against big companies. I had a terrific creative team, and the artist who was most responsible for our win was Mar-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

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

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

A Look Ahead:

- Feb 3&7 Open Mic, see p15
- Feb 1 Board of Directors Meeting—Cathy Bauer's
- Feb 8 Gen meeting/Jill Lublin—Lookout Restaurant
- Feb 20 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 7:30 pm

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President's Prowling— by Bill Baldwin



Don't Wait – Look and Learn!!

I'm now proceeding towards the publication of my book. I've been much too slow about this. After the last (2004) East of Eden Conference (my first try at "pitching" my novel), I rewrote the entire work for styling, consistency, and general tightness. *That* took me about eight months (I have a day job, eh? And a wife and teenaged daughter, eh? And a writing club and open mics, eh?) And then I entered the novel in a writing contest and waited three months for the Awards Committee to call – a bad idea (waiting for the Awards Committee, that is).

When I *didn't* win...I realized...I should have been looking for publishers all along. But my book's a little "off-beat," so maybe I should find an agent, I thought. All of which landed me in the middle of the *2005 Guide to Literary Agents*, and the discovery, a month or two back, that it actually *is* a good idea to keep your information "current."

I found thirty-one agents I thought might be interested in my novel. I also found that most of them wanted outlines (not just a short synopsis) and most wanted to be approached by regular mail, not email. So it was "off to learn" how to write an outline (I already had a good "pitch" synopsis).

But the business of having "current" information...

I found six or seven agents who accepted email queries, but...

One of them said, on their website, "We are no longer accepting clients."

For another, the *Guide* said they represented 80% non-fiction and 20% fiction; but the website only mentioned non-fiction. I emailed them. "We don't do fiction."

A third replied to my email query: "My current workload does not permit me to read your novel."

There's an agent in the U.K. I thought might be interested. The *Guide* said to email a query, the website said to mail an outline and two chapters (what would the postage be? I wondered).

I emailed them. "Do you want me to email a query or mail an outline and two chapters?"

"Since you're in the U.S., go ahead and email us an outline and two chapters."

Back to the writing of the outline (Note: If you've already completed a tightly-packed, well-constructed novel with many characters, it's an interesting exercise to try to retell your story in even a "mere" fifteen double-spaced pages.)

The moral(s): Don't twiddle your thumbs while waiting to win a contest or waiting for the agents who say they'll reply sometime in the next three months. Do something useful while waiting. Learn how to write a synopsis *and* an outline. And get the latest info you can find (soon I shall buy those *2006 Guides*...)

About the agents who take three months to get back to you – Check for any upcoming postage increases. I sent off a packet to an agent before the holidays, not realizing a postal increase was on the way. I don't know whether my three sample chapters will ever make it back to me in my SASE. I may have to call (but you're *not supposed to call!*) after three or four months, if I haven't heard from them...

Let the Author beware! BB

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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

(GUERRILLA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Lublin began her career in the music business. She quickly discovered that this branch of the entertainment industry is all about "perception" and "imaging." She worked as director of publicity for several independent music labels, which she considers the best training for a publicist, before striking out and opening her own company, Promising Promotions.

After more than twenty years in the business, her client lists is diverse and extensive, from banks, charities and software companies to Jane Goodall, Deepak Chopra

Authors need to understand that they have to create a great message.

and John Densmore of The Doors.

Today Lublin is also a popular national speaker and seminar leader, crisscrossing the country throughout the year, earning \$10,000 and more for her presentations. Said Lublin, "Authors need to understand that they have to create a great message. The mistake most authors make is they believe it's all about the book. Actually, it's all about the message."

At the next CWC meeting, Lublin will focus on books, books, books. She will discuss powerful and practical publicity techniques that anyone can use. Come and learn how to receive more than 15 minutes of fame. *EM*

Lookout Bar & Grill
 605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale
 (Sunnyvale Golf Course)
 6 PM, Wed., Feb. 8th
 Members \$15, Guests \$18
 (includes Dinner)



Dave LaRoche
 Managing Editor

Editors Itch

Okay... so it was less than a million Little Pieces. I was intrigued with the "juice" and just sharpening my teeth when the whole thing dried up—the Mojave Desert in August. Then the monsoons arrived with Oprah retracting her stand-by-the-author speech. Wow, what a storm—words thrashing, egos crashing; big energy, little distance—but the howling did raise the question: What *is* a memoir?

Reliable Webster tells us it's a biographical sketch, esp. one that is objective and anecdotal in emphasis. It's "The truth of your life as you know it", says the slighted and duped Winfrey. And the now-more-notorious publisher, Nan Telese, chimes in with, "It's an author's remembrance." So, I surmise, it's objective, it's true, and by the way, it's recollection.

One suspects the 'objective and true' part might require some research but doesn't research itself rely upon recollection? Is a memoir then a collection of recollections, the result of mining memories? And wouldn't we expect a few flaws in the mining, as well as the memory? Of course there *are* facts... Frey's police record jumps out.

Some editors and agents tell us, "A memoir is a category of narrative non-fiction and *powerful because it is true* although (wink, wink) recollections are occasionally skewed beneficially." This profit-sensitive notion is extracted from Penny Nelson's talk a couple months back. Well... book sales *are* off and shelves are crowded with atrophied fiction.

In view of the current political and social scene: 'misinforming'

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

WritersTalk

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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

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newsletter@southbaywriters.com

or

writertalk@comcast.net

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Contact Dave LaRoche

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Meredy Amyx

A Prayer to the God of Atheists

Our Father, in whom I don't believe,
This is just in case.

I'm not in a foxhole
Exactly,
But the thousand things are coming at me
And I'm not so sure
I like facing them
Alone.
So if you can deliver us from evil,
Please do.
If you can't, it's nobody's fault.
So don't feel bad.

While I'm at it,
A few less temptations would help,
Including the daily bread
And other carbs.
Oh, and I guess I should mention
There are some things I did
Willingly
That I'm really sorry for now.

Not that there's any point in telling you
Since there's really nothing
There.
You know.
In godspace.
(Please don't take this personally.)

And I never wanted the power anyway,
Much less the kingdom.
You can have them.
But if you could spare a little glory
For my small heroics . . .
Oh, well, never mind.

Amen.

(LLEWELLYN PROFILE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

tin French, who's now known nationally. Also on that team was a fellow who is currently at Disney and worked on the recent Narnia movie.

Who or what got you interested in writing?

I don't remember not writing stuff. I wrote silly poems to amuse my parents when I was a kid. I loved English in school--even writing the term papers. My mom was a teacher before she married, and she always read to us. We also had a collection of short stories by great writers, so in early grade school I was reading Twain, O Henry, and Dickens.

How many years have you been a member of CWC, any specific highlights?

I've been a CWC member around 7 years. I've helped out a little at the East of Eden conferences, but other involvement is limited. I have some health issues, so energy has to be conserved for the important things, like my eight-year-old, wild-child daughter, Jamie, and my husband, Bill, who's (what else) an engineer.

What is the single most helpful thing in making you a successful writer?

Critique groups. I'm currently in two of them. The encouragement I get from my groups is both professional and personal. I cannot overstate the impact of being appreciated by fellow writers--who also happen to be capable of helping revise (sometimes drastically) my work. You need to be willing to take the criticism, though. Some people seem to get involved with groups expecting only accolades. That will not help you improve your work or grow.

What are your current projects?

I have several humor bits floating around. And I write a lot of things I suppose you'd just call ruminations, which are a bit more serious. I also have a novel in the works that probably falls into the chick lit category. It's about letting ourselves be who we really are. I think many of us try to shape ourselves to fit a certain role in life, maybe forgetting or hiding another side of ourselves that we need to be fully rich human beings. I really work at being a decent writer of an interesting story--I take the writing quality seriously.

What is your biggest dream about writing?

To publish all the stuff in my files and cover my daughter's college education. Realistically, at this point, I just want to finish the book! UD



Karen Llewellyn

Book in a Week Workshop with April Kihlstrom

By Una Daly

“Are you crazy?” is the first thing out of people’s mouths when award winning author and writing coach, April Kihlstrom, encourages them to write a *book in a week*. Of course, she is only referring to the first draft and the first draft is something that you never have to show to anyone. She further counsels that you can fix anything but first you need something to fix.

Thirty members and seventeen non-members (four of whom became new members) attended the annual South Bay CWC workshop held at the Sunnyvale golf course on Sunday, January 22. The topic was how to write a book in a week, not how to swing a golf club, although some attendees ate their lunches out on the sunny patio overlooking the green.

“Something happens when you get out of your own way,” said April, writing naturally and letting go of your inner critic during a week-long writing spree. Your subconscious takes over and you often write your best this way. She usually writes over two hundred pages of a three hundred page book in a week.

It is easier to take chances with new topics or different structural approaches when you are only committing to a week. Use this freedom to write like you did when you were just starting out and didn’t know or care about the rules. If you’re stuck on a current book, write a completely different one in the one-week workshop. The process can result in a new book and resolution of the previous book’s blockage.

Consistency is a primary benefit of writing an entire first draft quickly. Many people take a year or more to complete the first draft and then it becomes hard to remember the details of earlier chap-

ters. This can lead to mistakes such as a blue-eyed character in one chapter changing to green-eyed later on.

Before starting the week, April suggested that you let your family and/or friends know that you will need their support to be successful. Make meals and freeze them or post the phone numbers for take-out restaurants. Stock your house with healthy food and get all the laundry done and out of the way.

Mental and emotional preparation is equally important. Set up a specific place to write. Choose some talismans to help you get through the tough times. Organize your information and complete any critical research for the first draft. Set your goal for daily number of pages higher than you think you can achieve. April usually chooses forty pages and then feels quite accomplished when she actually completes twenty-five or so. But if your daily average is four or five pages, as is common for many people, congratulate yourself on the work done.

During *book in a week*, you must simply write no matter what happens. If you are interrupted, get back to work as

soon as possible. Take a notebook or voice recorder with you when an appointment cannot be delayed. Some writers like to do an outline and others are “seat of the pants” so just do what works for you. Plan a positive experience for the end of each working day e.g. a favorite cup of tea, talking to a friend, but do NOT reread your manuscript. If you need to make a significant change then continue the



story from where you left off.

Tips for revising your manuscript, finding an agent, working with editors, and getting through the publication process consumed the afternoon hours of the workshop. Persistence counts in publication but write what you care about because trends change quickly counsels April. Keep in mind what you want readers to remember from your story and let this guide your decision-making when the inevitable change requests arrive from your editor.

April Kihlstrom is the successful author of thirty-one published books mainly Regency Romance novels and currently resides in Texas. UD

BAIPA
BY DIANA
CORNELIUS



For those of you not aware of a very valuable resource for self-publishing, let me introduce you to the Bar Area Independent Publishers Association (BAIPA).

BAIPA is a non-profit group located in San Rafael who exist simply to give encouragement and help to writers and authors. The web site displays a Mission Statement that explains that they are a “liaison, clearing-house, guide, cheering section to pursue small scale publishing...” The friendly group of people consist of regulars and drop-ins, all professional types who are interested in self-publishing. Some authors attend to report on the disappointments they have had with large publishing houses in their past experience. As each attendee tells their individual story in a three-minute time frame, a lot of information gets passed around the room. The BAIPA board of directors fields questions and answers them all with easy-to-understand clarity. In about two hours, you will pick up an amazing amount of information.

As a complete novice in both writing and publishing techniques, I found the early morning trip to Marin on many a Saturday very well worth the effort. I made many friends, one of whom became a car-pooling buddy. I also found a reasonable source for quality printing of my book. I ended up with a very professional-looking product I was proud to call my own. I can truly say, with the help of the South Bay Chapter of the California Writers Club and BAIPA, “I did it myself!”

The BAIPA web site is www.baipa.org. DC

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 11. Italics

Italics are commonly used to: Distinguish titles of complete works such as magazines, books, newspapers, academic journals, films, television programs, and plays; indicate foreign words not common to English; emphasize certain words, or even parts of words.

Think about the following sentences and how the emphasized word changes the meaning.

- 1) She knew he’d never ask her for a date.
- 2) She knew *he’d* never ask her for a date.
- 3) She knew he’d never ask her for a *date*. *Maybe for a loan*.

The italics at the end of example 3 above shows the reader that your character is thinking. An example for emphasizing part of a word: “You said we’d visit a park, not a *ballpark*.”

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

Accolades

—by Jackie Mutz



We are moving into February and you all must still be mulling over those New Year’s Resolutions, because no accolades rolled in for my column. So, I shall hand out some accolades of my own.

- When your muse urges you to write and you do, ignoring the laundry, that work project and all those other “things” you should do.
- In the “aha” moment when your writing becomes an extension of yourself.
- When the poem, short story, essay or anything you write evokes a strong response from the reader.
- When you see your work in print for the first time and know *you are a writer*.

Writing takes discipline; any published author will tell you this. You have also heard writing is a process (cliché), but true. So, for this moment, congratulate yourself for any small writing accomplishments. And send me the news about the big accomplishments—so we can all applaud you. Write me at newsletter@southbaywriters.com or writerstalk@comcast.net. JAM

(ITCH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

politicians, economic inequities, community and family dissolution, 'poorly educated' graduates; readers look for substance, like the truth of a memoir, and we are particularly taken with all that redemption among the "pieces" (there were so many of them). But, I'm disappointed with a blatant transgression of truth, even in a work of fiction—it's unnecessary and usually works against you... destroys trust. Outright lying makes the liar look stupid and uninformed—unless he's a four-year-old with a mouth full of cookies.

But reason tells us memory *is* flawed. The courts say that eye-witness testimony is the least accurate of all. I have difficulty remembering how I *felt* 'back-when', much less the facts (as I saw them). Remember the Russell Baker book, *Growing Up?* He didn't call it a memoir but others did and that's what it was. It was also charming and poignant, touching and realistic. It was my life too, as I remembered it, and I rested easy in its hold on my attention. I doubt that anyone considered a fact check on Russell Baker.

And I like historical stuff too, biographies of movers and shakers, and I say, keep it interesting, provocative, and keep me up at nights—just don't deceive me... much (of course I'm not a virgin).

Ellen Goodman, like others, wrote about this. "The headline writers got the most out of this brouhaha..." was her intro into big columns of commentary in the Boston Globe in which she offered little opinion about the line between memoir and fiction. And they all (the commentators) after wringing the 'tiny lies' from James Frey, tossed the question aside with innuendo and eye-rolling but no serious opinion. But the jig may be up! The truth detectives have found fabrication and any titillation that might keep us interested is banned—so memoirs may retreat to the dusty study where grandpa Otis IV first penned his family legacy.

Our internal compass says there is a wide and gray line between fact and fancy. Some philosophers suggest all is fancy and truth is *what you want*, while others suggest all is science—hard, mathematical, and observable. As a writer I think most writing is memoir of a kind. I use my life more than any other influence or tool. Some of my recollections are as hard as a dollar, others more intangible and need help... and they all require a bit of "connective tissue" to link them into a story.

Memoirs are growing in popularity; people *are* looking for substance. "Memoir" might be better defined but, in the world of literature as in others, it may be up to the reader to qualify and place value.

Have an opinion about this, a point to make? Let us know with an email and we'll publish it in our "opinion" space. **DLR**

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

By Andrea Galvaes

Getting published in *WritersTalk* is very rewarding but, let's admit it, the readership is rather small. To help you disseminate your work to a wider audience, we will let you know of contests, magazines, or anything else where you can submit your work. Organizations from the AARP to the Writer's Digest are requesting articles and stories in every kind of writing, including poetry. Here is a list of places where you can submit your work; please let us know when it is published.



GENERAL ARTICLES

Ambition Magazine, geared to women between 25 and 50 who consider themselves ambitious and sophisticated. Queries to: Articles Dept., Ambition Magazine, 1909 Stearns Hill Rd., Waltham, MA 02451, or,

articles@ambitionthemag.com.

Ms. is looking for articles on politics, social commentary, law, etc.

www.ms magazine.com/congact.asp

AARP The Magazine accepts queries on just about anything of interest to seniors. Send a one page query with recent writing samples and note target feature or department.

www.aarp.org/about_aarp/contact/doing_business_withaarp_contacts.html

SHORT STORIES

Scary Stories dot org accepts submissions of up to 10,000 words for the scariest.

www.scarystories.org

CONTESTS

Glimmer Train Stories (Short story award for new writers) Check guidelines and submit online:

www.glimmertrain.com

Pacific Northwest Writers Association Literary Contest judges writings in eleven categories, must be post-marked by February 22, 2006. 425/673-BOOK or

www.pnwa.org

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

Becky Levine is a writer and a freelance editor who is available for copyediting and manuscript critiques. Becky's new (and monthly) column below will give tips on ways to develop and strengthen your writing style. She can be reached at becky77@gte.net



Writing Narrative: More isn't Always Better

—By Becky Levine

Go to your shelves and pick up three books. Find an old one—I'm looking at my copy of Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Choose a new one; the best book I read last year was Lolly Winston's *Good Grief*. Now go fetch your own manuscript and put it in the pile. Open all three.

You'll see an obvious difference between the first two. The first book will have much longer paragraphs, less white space. The newer book will have less narrative, more dialog, and a faster pace of writing.

Now check out a page of your book. If it looks more like the Victorian novel, you may be in trouble.

When I read manuscripts, especially from new writers, I often see pages of narrative; descriptive summaries instead of active scenes; unbroken paragraphs that take up half the page. Narrative explanations distance your reader, who—today—wants to be right in the story with the hero, feeling their emotions, experiencing their actions.

There are lots of ways to trim and tighten your own writing. Here are a few to get you started playing with the words.

- **Turn explanation into dialog.** When your reader needs specific information, put it in the mouth of a character. Dialog has emotions, energy; it brings the reader closer in to your characters.
- **Activate your settings.** Move your characters *through* the scenery—let your hero climb a tree, throw a dish, explore an office building. Static descriptions of landscape will lose your reader; movement and scenes will capture them.
- **Eliminate repetition.** Does your hero shout, stomp, pound a table, *and* put his fist through a wall? Pick the best two. Do you show four different characters boarding the same ship? Highlight one, dump the others.

I love Dickens. He was a genius. He was also, however, writing more than 150 years ago. While I like to think he would get published today, the reality is that styles...as well as times...have changed.

Go buy *Good Grief*. Pick up a copy of S. J. Rozan's *Reflecting the Sky*. Read Linda Sue Park's *Project Mulberry*. There is a magic to these books, to the way the authors use fewer words to create tension, excitement, and emotion. These writers aren't just the current market; they're producing some of the best fiction of our time. It's as wonderful a club as the Victorian one, and—with a bit of practice—it's a club you can join!

Becky is happy to answer quick questions or chat by email. Contact her through her website: www.beckylevine.com

(SUCCESS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

2006 Southwest Writer's Contest
Cash prizes up to \$1,000, by May 1,
2006. 505/265-9485 or

www.southwestwriters.org

Tom Howard Short Story Any type of
short story, essay or other prose, by
March 31, 2006.

www.winningwriters.com

CWC Central Coast Branch Spring
Writing Contest accepts fiction entries
of 4000 words maximum and poetry
with no restrictions by March 1, 2006.

www.centralcoastwriters.org

Writer's Digest Annual Writing Com-
petition is accepting entries in ten
categories until May 15, 2006.

[www.writersdigest.com/contests/
annual/75th](http://www.writersdigest.com/contests/annual/75th)

Writer's Digest International Self-
Published Book Awards. Writer's Di-
gest claims to be the only competition
exclusively for self-published books
and is accepting entries in nine cate-
gories until May 1, 2006.

[www.writersdigest.com/contests/
selfpublished.asp](http://www.writersdigest.com/contests/selfpublished.asp)

Terse Verse

—by Pat Bustamante

FEBRUARY BREW

A cup of tea

A quiet hour...

Leave off the lemon,

Let nothing sour.

This is writing-time for me.

Don't be insulted, but til three:

I'm hoping not to hear from thee.

The Ultimate Sports Fanatic—by Victoria Miller

Fan: “A slang term derived from the word *fanatic*, which means ‘an irrational enthusiast’.”



Yep! That’s my husband. Not just a sports fan, a sports fanatic! His office is strewn with sports pages from two local newspapers. Sports magazines litter his desk. He has a cabinet cluttered with memorabilia, autographed balls, two Barry Bonds bobble head dolls—one with a tally counter on its base so he can keep track of Barry’s current home run total—

and a much coveted metal case that came with his first set of season tickets!

Plaques, posters, and souvenirs collected from games he’s attended grace the office walls. Stats of his favorite players are tacked to a corkboard along with ticket stubs and schedules for the upcoming season. His sports hat collection has produced “oohs” and “ahhs” from envious friends.

I’ve come home from work to find every television in the house—including the two in his office—tuned in to a different game with my husband sitting in his favorite chair, his eyes glazed over in a TV-sports-induced stupor, and a remote dangling from each hand. If I dare turn one off, I hear an outraged, “Hey! I was watching that!”

Like any spectator in a stadium, my husband hoots and hollers, whistles and claps, cheering his favorite team from the comfort of home. He heckles officials when they make a bad call, shouts at umpires, and swears at coaches for pulling his favorite players off the field. If his team wins, it’s cause for celebration. If they lose, it’s earth shattering.

My husband believes opening day at the ballpark should be a national holiday. He’s in ecstasy over the pennant races and The World Series. And just as soon as baseball is over, along comes football, which culminates in the undisputed king of sporting events—The Super Bowl.

But it’s not just college and pro football, basketball, and baseball that he watches. Golf, soccer, hockey, tennis, volleyball, table tennis—yes, table tennis—Nascar, motorcycles, and monster trucks are part of his viewing schedule. I’ve even caught him watching women’s weight lifting.

It gets worse during the Olympics. The dizzying number of competitions guarantees a rapturous state of euphoria for my husband with swimming, diving, gymnastics, track, and triathlons in the summer, skiing, speed skating, and bobsledding in the winter.

I swear, if they made underwater basket weaving a sport, he’d watch it! I can picture my husband cheering participants, while they sit at the bottom of a pool and

weave—air bubbles escaping as they struggle to hold their breath—then yelling at the officials when one of the contestants is penalized for having to surface for another lung full of air.

But for all my husband’s fanatical enthusiasm for sports, it’s purely as a spectator. My son and I regularly beat him shooting hoops in the driveway and he couldn’t lob a ball across home plate from the pitcher’s mound if he tried. He doesn’t bike, or run, or bowl. I can’t even twist his arm to play a game of Trivial Pursuit. Instead he prefers to read his sports page or watch a game on the tube.

I used to worry about what our neighbors thought of my husband’s boisterous zeal until one Sunday when I happened to be outside during a particularly close game. The same fevered uproar emanated from houses up and down the block. At least I’m not the only wife that has to put up with such lunacy.

Home isn’t the only place my husband displays behavior reminiscent of Billy Martin—whose antics on the baseball field resulted in ejection from many a game—he sometimes rants and raves when listening to a game while driving. Once we were pulled over by the highway patrol for a perceived act of road rage, when it was nothing more than my husband shaking his fist and yelling at the radio. The cop let us off with a warning—after getting the score, of course—and an admonishment, “Be careful! There are a lot of nuts on the road!” Little did he know he was talking to one of them!

Yep! That’s my husband, the ultimate sports fanatic!

For the Love of Literature

by Emily Jiang



Like most writers, I’ve been writing stories and poetry since I first picked up a pencil. A few years ago, I started calling myself a serious writer when I realized I would never stop.

Seeing one’s work in print is worth the string of lonely late nights and entire weekends spent writing at cafes, at home, and in random places whenever I had a few extra minutes to spare (in my car right before rehearsals and performances, or waiting for the dentist, or at the post office, or at the bank). When I’m on a deadline, I often watch the laundry and clutter pile up since I only do the bare minimum necessary to get by to maximize my writing time.

Some people who have recently met me assume I

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

LITERARY ADVICE —By Andrea Galvacs

Writing is the most masochistic endeavor I can think of and people who engage in writing careers are crazy. This in no way discouraged me from taking the same path because I was born a masochist and enjoy squeezing out my creative juices.



I have written many, many letters and helped friends when they needed something written, so I thought it would be a breeze. What a fallacy! I sat in front of my computer and stared. And stared. What do I write about?

How and where do the ideas come from? Once I get an idea and can start, do I have to figure out how the whole thing will end or do I just go along and see what happens? Should the finished product be an essay, a short story, a novel? Which decision should be made first?

I could not come up with anything intelligent or productive, so I signed up for a writing class to learn what other aspiring writers do and how they do it. The answer I heard from almost everybody was: “It’s a struggle” but, I also received a lot of advice.

I was told: “Write from the heart; see where it takes you”. I have a hunch that this was meant rhetorically. If meant literally, I would have to cut open my delicate heart, find one of those old-fashioned feathers to dip in my chest and then I could take the longest writing trip ever! Actually, I wouldn’t even have to wait very long to discover where this very inspirational and original writing trip would take me: straight to the hospital! I love to travel but, I would rather not go to a hospital.

I was advised to start my project writing it by hand. The energy flowing from my fingers onto the paper through the pen might enable me to think more creatively and the ideas might come more easily. There is no other way to follow this advice but literally and one very creative thought I had right away is that I would need many pens, reams and reams of paper and a very good aim at the wastepaper basket.

By this time, I did not need any more advice; I was on a roll with great ideas myself! Once the basket was filled, I would put it by my bedside and sleep on its contents, hoping for some overnight magic. The problem with magic is that it does not work if you do not help it along, but I have the solution to that. Assuming that literary fairies accept money instead of giving it away, like tooth fairies, I would leave some on top of all the discarded pages. I am sure she would know what to do! Would \$10 be enough, I wonder?

On the other hand, the following day I may decide that I do not need any fairies. Upon waking up and giving my

work another look, I might realize that it is not so bad after all. In fact, it is pretty good and making it even better should be a cinch!

In any case, writing is an adventure and, just as that princess did, I’ll have to kiss many frogs before finding the elusive prince. My heart will tell me which one it is. That is, I’ll have to write many drafts before finishing the manuscript.

Now comes the real hard part: getting it published! Finding an agent, convincing him that my manuscript is the greatest thing he ever read, waiting to hear from editors, publishers... Just thinking about this is extremely depressing; I will pretend that I will overcome all the obstacles and my work will be accepted to great reviews. Then, fully aware of where I am going, I would travel to my final destination at the Stockholm Concert Hall, where King Carl XVI Gustav will congratulate me and give me the most coveted prize in literature. And next to him, with the biggest smile I have ever seen on anybody’s face, waving a \$10 bill in her hand, will be the literary fairy. *AG*

(*LOVE OF LITERATURE—JIANG, FROM PAGE 9*)

write for fiction and poetry for children full-time because I can’t stop talking about my work. I actually write part-time, in addition to my full-time day job. Others might think once my novel is published I can quit my day job, since J.K. Rowling created her best-selling Harry Potter series. I’ll be lying if I said I didn’t dream of generating even one twentieth of her rags to riches success. But let’s get real.

The hard reality is there is only one J.K. Rowling among thousands of published authors, the majority of whom do not generate enough writing income to live. Most published authors supplement their writing come with secondary sources of income (day job, teaching and speaking gigs, spouse, or all of the above), and I do not intend to quit my day job any time soon.

So if I can’t become fabulously wealthy from writing, why do I write? I write because I have to. I write for the joy of creating art. I write to entertain (mostly myself and hopefully others as well). I write because there are so many colorful characters, poems, and stories within me that need to be told.

Why do I write for children and teens? I think back to my childhood, when I would often spend an entire summer day reading on the couch with a stack of books on the end table. I am writing for that child now. That child with a love of language, seeking meaningful stories, and ready to experience new worlds through the simple act of turning a page. *EL*

Youthful Explorer

A short story by Darwin Mathison © 2005

Once upon a time—now only dimly recalled—on a day when I was about age nine or ten, I walked my way to the Lowell Elementary School on the East side of Madison WI. There, on that route, stood an old ancient house completely devoid of paint and, let me also remark, in dire need of repairs. Also on the property, was a large two-story carriage barn, kind of off to one side and behind, where I supposed they had kept their horse and carriage during those by-gone days before the advent of the automobile. My God how those ancient structures—which could have belonged in a haunted house movie—my God how they intrigued my young mind.

This was all happening during the years of 1944 or 45, when my need for exploration of any and all things consumed my little self with bright scarlet passion and I just had to see what that shed contained, no matter the cost to life or limb. So on one fine spring afternoon, delayed after school for some infraction of the rules or other and there being no one around so late to witness said act of inquisitive mischievousness, I explored that shed.

The shed had those large heavy rolling doors that I could pull out just enough to squeeze through my little young whippet of a body. And by all the Lords and Gods, who watch over small boys during their inquisitive adventures, I wasn't disappointed upon entering those doors. Mercy sakes alive, I saw there in front of me a veritable treasure trove of odds and ends—goodies to see and touch. For sure... there was an old buggy in there, complete with whips and the rest and a horse harness hung on the center post that supported the second floor and roof. The place, I remember, smelled so good—old leather and hay along with the faint odor of horse pooh. I most vividly recall all this due to the fact that I was almost overcome with the inquisitive exploration fever.

Old furniture piled up, the soft stuffed kind, hoards of old books and magazines, plus all manner and sorts of household stuff confronted my wide eyes—indeed, a treasure trove of amazing things to see and touch. Over in one corner of the upstairs of the building stood a collection of parasols. Those kind of umbrellas that ladies of grace and impeccable beauty used to have along on their strolls—to keep the sun's rays from their delicate complexions way back in those past horse and buggy days. These parasols intrigued me to the core. Boy-O-Boy, there sure were some fancy ones with all manner of

ribbons and lace—colored pinks and blues browns, the hues. Now I mean there must have been at least two-dozen in number. Of course, I had to work each and every one to see how they looked opened up. My God how much there was in that place for me to check out.

Inquisitive exploration not nearly fulfilled, I remember leaving that night when the sun was almost down, because I couldn't see anymore by the light filtering through the cracks and knotholes in those old boards of which the place was constructed. How many more is the times I snuck into that shed, in the days that passed, with fleeting-adventure's swiftness. I can still remember like yesterday the forbidden hours spent in that old buggy, with the whip in my young hand, poised to drive that imaginary nag all over the grand city of Madison. Oh, in that shed, in that seat, I dreamt of a fine sun lit summer morning with the dew glistening in, filtered light and all and maybe we'd drive down to the lakeshore.

I would be with a picnic basket chocked to the brim and maybe even a girl friend by my side. Of course the horse would be in that good smelling harness that resided on those hooks on that center posts that held up the second story of this explorer's dream of a building. If I had a girl friend along, for sure she would have sported one of those ancient parasols—for sure. And I'd be in one of those straight black suits that hung upstairs on those clothes poles, where I supposed they had rested for an eternity of past days with all sorts of other clothes, both men's and lady's kinds. Those fancy lady-kinds of dresses and coats with lace and frilly stuff on them were nestled side by side with the men's coats and trousers and brass buttons they had.

My, the hours I spent dreaming in that shed, in which I knew full well I wasn't supposed to be because I didn't know these people and they didn't know me. I knew each and every little thing that inhabited that shed though.

Ya-know... all those times that I entered that dominion of exploration, never once did I take one little thing out as every thing there lived in a dream-world of the past from which we are only supposed to look, not take or disturb. As I knew the taking would disrupt the bond of all that stuff to each and every other piece contained within that sweet smelling shed.

When I finally did go off to high school in 1947, I never did come back to that building and don't know what ever happened to all that treasure. All I do know for sure is it's there in my mind with crystal clear clarity and as thrilling as ever, and I would hope and maybe dream that it is actually there for still another young explorer.

Well, at least this story is!

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

Counter Currents—Hunter S. Thompson

—BY BILL BRISKO



In the last two newsletters, I introduced to you two counterculture icons: Ernest Hemingway and Jack Kerouac. In finishing up writers of the genre, my last writer could be anyone, couldn't it? I could suggest Kurt Vonnegut, which would work, or even Robert Heinlein, who wouldn't be too far a stretch. But the last writer I will introduce to you is not only a counterculture icon—he's an actual outlaw journalist.

This writer is loosely associated with the Beat Generation, mostly because of his upbringing. He is touted as the finest writer of the sixties (the "Dope Decade"), and his definitive work came out in 1971, after that vicious turning point (at Altamont in 1969) when the "Shambala" innocence and optimism of the late sixties turned into the brutal "Won't Get Fooled Again" cynicism and "The Establishment" of the seventies. He is credited with the term Gonzo Journalism, an attempt to shoehorn sixties radical activism and the drug culture of that decade into perspective with a journalistic style of writing (an extension of the New Journalism championed by Tom Wolfe and George Plimpton) that was "to cover the story for good or ill." He was at home with a tab of acid in his mouth as he was with an IBM Selectric under his hands. Who else can this be, but Hunter Stockton Thompson?

It is interesting to note that Thompson, like many writers, started out, by his own description, as a "serious novelist." His first two works were titled *Prince Jellyfish* and *The Rum Diary*. Neither one was published when initially submitted. *Rum Diary* was eventually published, but not until 1998, decades after it was written and long after Thompson had become a celebrity. His journalist friend William Kennedy often remarked that both he and Thompson were failed novelists who had turned to journalism to make a living. And it was this journalistic, first-person habit of writing that made Thompson so interesting.

In the mid-sixties, Thompson took a job with *The Nation* to do an exposé on the notorious Hells Angels, then a little-known, shadowy outlaw motorcycle club. He rode for over a year with the Oakland chapter of the Angels, then under the direction of Sonny Barger. But the relationship fell apart when the Angels suspected Thompson's motives and demanded a piece of his action. He was later "stomped" by a group of Angels (I think at the La Honda home of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* author Ken Kesey). Thompson barely escaped with his life. *The Nation* published the story, and Random House tendered a hard-cover offer. (In 1967, Bantam Books published *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang*.)

In 1971, Thompson published his most noteworthy – and most famous – book. He had just signed on with *Rolling Stone* magazine, and over two issues, Thompson and *Rolling Stone* published the scathing *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Though to tell this strange story I must introduce one of Thompson's cronies, the catalyst who made it all happen:

Oscar Zeta Acosta. Acosta was a Chicano anti-poverty attorney working in Oakland about the time Thompson was riding with the Angels. In 1970, Acosta ran for Sheriff of Los Angeles County. During the campaign, he defended the anti-establishment Chicano group *Católicos por La Raza* (a gesture akin to defending Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panthers). Acosta spent a couple of days in jail for contempt of court, and thereafter, he vowed to abolish the Sheriff's Department if elected. Thompson wanted to do a piece on Acosta, but was fearful of being "stomped" again by Acosta's militant bodyguards for being the only Anglo in a Chicano crowd. At the same time, Thompson was on a \$300 assignment for *Sports Illustrated* to crank out 250 words on the Mint 400 motorcycle race in Las Vegas. So Thompson invited Acosta on the trip with him. The 250-word column turned into a drug-fueled, high-speed power run out to Vegas—and one of the most depraved narratives of the Twentieth Century. The coverage of the motorcycle race then transmogrifies into a District Attorneys convention—with our narrators' head full of LSD! What remains is one of the most bizarre, incredible—and downright entertaining—stories in print. To protect his personal safety—and keep himself out of San Quentin—Thompson employed the nom de strange Raoul Duke, and changed Acosta's identity to Dr. Gonzo, his 300-pound Samoan attorney, mostly to protect him from the California Bar Association.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas was an instant success when *Rolling Stone* first serialized it in 1971 (Random House published it in novel form as *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* shortly thereafter). By 1980, parts of *Fear and Loathing* were made into a disjointed movie (along with other bits and pieces from Thompson's subsequent efforts). The movie, *Where the Buffalo Roam*, starred Bill Murray and Peter Boyle cast respectively as Thompson and Acosta. The screenplay was hobbled together from pieces of *Fear and Loathing* as well as *The Banshee Screams for Buffalo Meat* (Thompson's 1972 eulogy for the already deceased Acosta, whose nickname had been "the Brown Buffalo"). The movie suffered as much from Thompson's consulting (for a fee of \$100,000) on the project as from any other defect of storytelling or editorial pacing. While Peter Boyle brought the requisite weirdness to carry his role, Bill Murray's glib lounge-singer smarminess and *Ghostbusters* flim-flam jangled with Thompson's politically radical public persona.

But in 1998, Monty Python alumnus Terry Gilliam directed Johnny Depp and Benicio del Toro in a much truer movie treatment of *Fear and Loathing*. This second movie was far more authentic than the first—Depp brilliantly captured Thompson's muttering, distracted crankiness and del Toro was arguably a better choice to represent Acosta. However, I fear the movie came one—maybe even two—generations too late to make a real impact. By then, the Beat Generation, the Hippie Generation, the Dope Decade, the activism surrounding the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon, Watergate and so on, had vanished. Many now view the era merely as doped-up freaks bumbling through weird times, or even worse. They view it with the kitschy nostalgia of an *Austin Powers* movie.

Thompson's writing style was unique. He mixed Kerouac's *Spontaneous Prose* with the Modernists' *Stream of Consciousness*, employing what he called "action verbs." Thompson's style is based on William Faulkner's idea that 'the best fiction is far more true than any kind of journalism—and the best journalists know this.' Thompson coined the phrase "Gonzo Journalism" to describe his writing. Many commentators today think that Gonzo Journalism is just writing about booze, drugs and rock & roll while under the influence of booze, drugs and rock & roll. This misses the point. What Thompson defined as Gonzo Journalism is writing the story, for good or ill, as it occurs, with whatever substance help you may need, in one pass, without any rewrite. Furthermore, Gonzo Journalism dispenses with the myth that a writer can somehow detach himself from the action he describes—in fact Gonzo Journalism encourages the writer to participate! This spirit gave his writing that raw edge of first-person observation – along with all the loose ends, dead-ends and absence of polish we expect in well-edited narrative. Gonzo Journalism even demanded minimal editing by the home office copy editors (especially!), preserving the "as-it-occurred" flavor of the piece. (Thompson often enforced this demand by dashing headlong to a deadline with no copy, then shooting his submission to the home office at the eleventh hour via the "Mojo Wire.") Thompson was convinced you had to get something down as it occurred for *Stream of Consciousness* spontaneity. Comparing his Gonzo Journalism to Tom Wolfe's meticulously researched, immaculately polished writing, Thompson would comment, "Who would you rather read: An observer or a participant?"

But Thompson suffered the curse of a writer producing a popular epic early in his career. *Fear and*

Loathing was an immediate success. None of his later works could equal this most impressive first bestseller. The Great Shark Hunt, Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail 1972, and The Curse of Lono (his fishing adventures in Hawaii) were satisfactory, sometimes even inspired, but all fell short of his initial landmark piece. The later works also exposed the disjointed nature of Thompson's writing style, in which he cavalierly dropped story lines, never bothering to "tie up the loose ends."

In the eighties, Thompson took a job with Bill Hearst of the San Francisco Examiner for a column (which turned into Generation of Swine and Songs of the Doomed) and finally capped it off with his ESPN sports website column "Hey Rube." But Thompson was plagued with the obligation to live up to the fictional self that he had created, "cultivating the persona of a dangerously absurd, drug-crazed journalist bent on comic self-destruction."

I once saw Hunter S. Thompson speak in person at The Stone in San Francisco, when Gary Hart of Colorado literally got caught with his pants down during the presidential primaries against Walter Mondale. Thompson was pushing to vote Hart in on the second ballot, as Thompson was convinced that Hart was a better candidate than Mondale, and moreover had a better chance of beating Ronald Reagan. But during the question & answer period, most of the audience at The Stone insisted on asking about the infamously crazed Las Vegas trip way back when. I sensed that Thompson was growing tired of the questioning, which amounted almost to an interrogation. Thompson struggled vainly to keep the discourse focused on the presidential elections (as best he could after consuming a quart of Chivas Regal). Pressure like that could understandably inspire anyone to even contemplate suicide.

But there were even darker times ahead for Thompson – and to a great extent, these times kept Thompson on his self-described "keen edge." (Thompson's physician, noting the writer's profuse perspiration and his penchant for chemical over-indulgence, advised Thompson to tell him when he stopped sweating.) For as much as Thompson felt we had come across dark times during the administrations of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, he wasn't prepared for what we would endure during George W. Bush's administration. Thompson wrote in "Fear and Loathing, Campaign 2004," (Rolling Stone) that "Nixon was a professional politician, and I despised everything he stood for, but if he were running for president this year against the evil

Bush-Cheney gang, I would happily vote for him." Fighting alcohol and substance abuse, as well as pain from hip and back surgeries—but not, apparently, out of desperation, Hunter Stockton Thompson committed suicide on February 20, 2005. Like his own hero, Ernest Hemingway, Thompson took his life with a gunshot to the head. (Thompson used a .45 caliber pistol, Hemingway a shotgun.) Six months later – per his last will – Thompson's ashes were fired out of a 150-foot cannon (financed by Johnny Depp) shaped in the form of his own Gonzo logo (a double-thumbed fist clutching a peyote button). Rock on, Hunter...

As it is... Jeannine Vegh

The Truth

Is that we are who we are whether we like it or not.

The Dream

We wished for came true, then we gave it back.

The Mountain

Was tall and slippery, jaded and painful; yet we climbed and stood on top.

The Journey

Continues while we look back and take inventory, keep walking even though we limp and set goals even though the old ones have not been reached.

The Choice

To move ahead while you drag your feet behind makes sense because you follow intuition.

The Answers

Are not clear and may never be, though we must live and seek as though we will find.

The Faith

Waivers when we don't get what we want. It is clear that we have a belief but not in ourself.

The Time

Has come to let go and be.

The Message

Is not here even though it has told you many things - that you already knew.

The Point

Was to remind you.

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Announcements Announcements Announcements

The Campbell Public Library will host "Poemcrazy", a FREE poetry writing workshop, on Wednesday March 22nd 2006, 6:30 - 8:30pm, presented by poet Susan G. Wooldridge, 20yr veteran teacher, whose book Poemcrazy: freeing your life with words, is now in its thirteenth printing. She brings extensive knowledge and excitement to writing poetry.

Call Soher Youssef, Campbell Public Library, (408) 866-1991, ext. 3214.



Interested in local LITERARY EVENTS? You may subscribe to the on-line newsletter (calendar), San Francisco Bay Area Literary Arts Newsletter.

It comes to your computer on Fridays with events for the upcoming week including signings, reviews, presentations from authors like AMY TAN, DAVE EGGERS, ALICE WALKER, GAIL SHEEHY, AND DAVE BARRY.

Simply go to their site, www.somalit.com, and look under "NEWSLETTER" to sign up - It's FREE.



Renowned literary agent Donald Maass

will present two-day workshop, "Writing the Breakout Novel", on Feb 18 and 19 in San Jose.

Plumb depth of characters, deepen themes, strengthen point of view and voice and more.

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lorin@free-expressions.com or visit

www.free-expressions.com.

Fools aren't born, Pongo. Pretty girls make them in their spare time.

-- Roger, 101 Dalmatians



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

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!

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General Membership Meeting—2nd Wednesday
At

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

See Map Below

SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors
Feb

General Meeting
Guerrilla Publicity
Feb 8

Open Mic
Feb 3, 7:30p
Borders, Los Gatos
Feb 17, 7:30p
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Inputs
Feb 16

Editors Pow Wow
Feb 20, 7:30pm
Orchard Valley Coffee

Take 237 to
W Maude to Macara

