

WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

Volume 14, Issue 7, July 2006 Non-member subscription \$20 per year

Page 1

Put Your Passion Into Print



Diana Richomme
Programs Chair

DIANA RICHOMME INTRODUCES
DAVID HENRY STERRY

What does it take to get published? Some say that it's like winning the lottery.

Not according to David Henry Sterry, co-author of "Putting Your Passion into Print." Getting your work published is entirely realistic -- when you discover what successful authors already know. "To increase your odds in the lottery you have to buy more tickets," Sterry said. "But a writer can take action to significantly improve their odds of getting published."

"You wouldn't invite me over to your house and serve me a cake that's half baked. But that's what most writers do. They send out work that isn't ready."

His wife and coauthor of *Putting Your Passion into Print*, Arielle Eckstut, runs the west coast office of the Levine Greenberg Literary Agency. She receives massive volumes submitted by aspiring authors who simply don't do their research; sometimes writers don't even spell her name correctly, or they send complete manuscripts in genres she doesn't represent. Where do you think those submissions end up?

"Do your research," said Sterry. "Then write a great query letter. A great, concise query letter can get you an agent or a book deal."

There is more to success in publishing, even *with* great writing. "You have to be gently persistent," he explained. On an earlier book, Sterry called his agent once a month for nine months before she agreed to represent him.



David Sterry



WT Profiles Pat Bustamante

— By Una Daly

"I do it all, stories, poems, articles, novels, essays, and SERMONS!" reports CWC member

and Terse Verse author Pat Bustamante. Writing her first book at nine years old, *Gypsy: a Dog*, an American version of *Lassie Come Home*, she does not recall being extremely interested in anything but stories.

"Long ago in a galaxy far away called Manhattan I sold



Pat Bustamante

short stories and supported a family of three for a whole year. I had no writers' support group then, wish I had!" said

Pat. When she lost her markets,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

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:

- Jul 7, 21 Open Mic, see p15
- Jul 5 Board of Directors Meeting—Beth's
- Jul 12 Gen meeting/Sterry—Lookout Bar & Grill
- Jul 22 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 10:00am
- Aug 6 Potluck BBQ—Edie's,
- Sep 8-10 East of Eden Conference—Salinas, see you there.

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President's Prowling —Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Branch

The Kiss of Life

Lately, several writing experiences and influences have been converging on me.

One is the Open Mike readings we do on the first and third Fridays of every month. These have bathed me in the new writings of our members, moving me and forcing me to think about love, hate, racism, parents, oppression...

Another is my diving again into the writings of Christopher Isherwood, perhaps my favorite author (Jack Kerouac and Alan Watts are up there too).

Then there's my upcoming trip east (when you read this, it will be past) – visiting Pennsylvania, home of five generations of ancestors; attending a software conference in Cleveland then driving up the shores of Lake Erie to the home of an old friend.

And working on the novel I began twelve years ago. I've been typing up the fragments. I postponed it to write a different novel. The older novel is set, among other places, in Pennsylvania and Virginia (with a few nods to California).

Now I feel like I've been talking too much about myself. On the other hand – you have an idea now of what I find to write about.

If you have a favorite writer, let him or her inspire you or guide you. If you have a family history or family home, see if that suggests stories or topics. Perhaps your current location or life-situation suggests a theme? Former relationships or writing might also be drawn on. Your feelings...your fears...

We live, always, "under the influence" of Life. Why not write about that?

Kiss "not-writing" goodbye! WB

(STERRY FROM PAGE 1)

By the time Sterry landed his first publishing contract, he'd already traveled a long and unfamiliar route, but he soon learned that getting to success would require continuing onto an even more exciting adventure. Upon returning from a tour in the Northern Pacific states where they dodged rain between book signings, Sterry and Eckstut realized they had another book in them: *Putting Your Passion into Print*.

The experiences and advice collected in this new book produce results. Students who have participated in his Stanford course based on the book win contracts. In the seminar, Sterry & Eckstut present the "skeleton key" sharing what took them years to fully understand to succeed in the publishing industry.

David Henry Sterry is a writer, teacher, performer, presentation coach and pitch doctor. He's written and published poetry, non-fiction, young adult books and screenplays. Along with Arielle Eckstut, he has taught *Putting Your Passion into Print* at Stanford for over three years. Many students, who have taken the course, have landed contracts.

Find out what it takes to get from an intriguing concept to a successful book. Come join us at the next CWC meeting -- And turn 'your' passion into print. DR

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— o —

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Join in 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

Welcome

to Anne Darling, an enthusiastic addition to our editing team. Anne will begin with a column that addresses critique



groups and writers' networks. Expect to see her words and continuing information about both in our next issue and beyond.

Yosemite Writers Conference

Aug 24 – 27
Conference Cost — \$350

Sponsored by nonprofit
Poets and Writers Inc.

Conference rate at Tenaya lodge —\$185 per night double occupancy (ordinarily large bears eat your food)

Many fine writers, editors, publishers including acclaimed T. Jefferson Parker ("resonant, literate and powerful") as key-note.

—See—

www.yosemitewriters.com
for list of faculty and registration info or call
877-849-0176



Dave LaRoche
Managing Editor

Editor's Itch

Technical tidbits and bits, that give our writing dimension, must be believable or they quickly turn readers off, perhaps to another author.

In my reading of Annie Proulx's *Brokeback* – Ennis and Jack, in an evening by the fire, drink a quart of whiskey apiece before lovemaking, then awake the next early morning without signs of a hangover! Now, in an earlier life on the edge of "Gonzo Valley"; I knew how to drink—as did my friends—but as practiced as we were, we could never down a quart in a sitting. Half that would've rendered us neutral, put us into the trash heap and our next day would have started very slowly, about six in the evening... and I wondered about these Wyoming boys.

If I perceive but a tiny bend in reality, an erroneous assertion in an area of familiarity, it sets me questioning the credibility of the author and, so distracted, I miss otherwise good writing.

In a Glimmer Train winner, *Theodore and Nan* by Lydia Copeland: Nan is riding her bicycle down the sidewalk and is struck by the door as a driver exits his car... Wait! How is that? And I envisioned the driver dragging his torso across the console so he could exit on that side of the car. This was the closing scene for *T and N* but the final point was upstaged with distraction and a poignant story, for me, lost some of its "poign." (The car might have been an old Buick, some might argue.)

Supportive observations (my "tidbits and bits") pull the reader into a story as familiar scenes are recognized and identification occurs—we want this. To make slightly outrageous "bits" more believable, we can integrate them into believable context. When we find our characters in specialized environs, we can research... then research the research, letting no scene escape the critical believability review.

Editors and writers spend a great deal of time with syntax—and they should, as we readers don't want to be distracted with poor grammar and construction—in my way of thinking, same goes for the tidbits and bits. **DLR**

WritersTalk

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Almost Anything Goes ≤300 wds

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to Una Daly

News Items ≤400 wds

Ltrs to Ed—In My Opinion ≤200 wds
to Andrea Galvacs

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Short Fiction ≤1500 wds

Memoir ≤1000 wds

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Recap — June Meeting —Una Daly



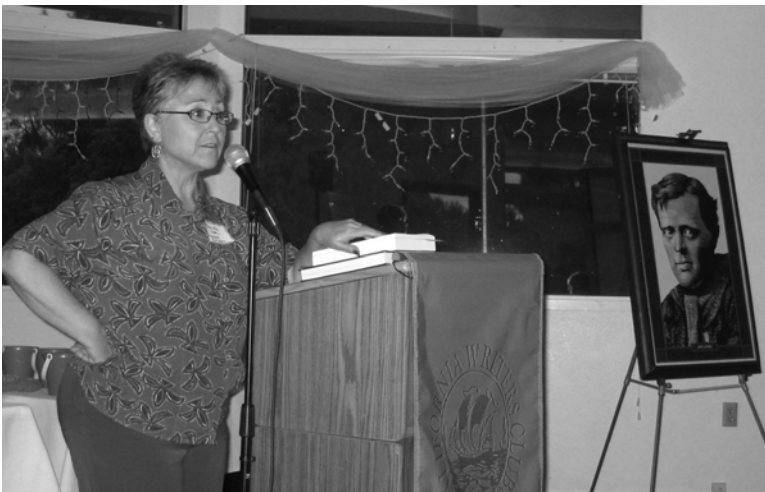
Una Daly

Contributing Editor

“I love what I do and the opportunity to be part of this industry”, said Charlotte Cook, book publisher, editor, and teacher speaking at our June meeting. However, this didn’t stop Cook from identifying many of the industry’s common practices as “stupid”. Her company, Komenar Publishing established in May 2005, is a small house that tries to do the right thing for its authors and readers.

Writers often hear from their agents that a publisher has “no passion” for their subject. This translates as “there is no market or big advance”. Cook points out that this is not necessarily a bad thing. A big advance really means big debt and if a first time author cannot earn back their advance then it usually kills their writing career.

When Komenar chose its first book to publish, they hired consultants to help with book design and other areas. Cook discovered that many qualified book designers are not readers, “Their books were



gorgeous but the fonts were not very readable and the layout was strange”. All the staff hired at Komenar are readers and this is a particularly important skill for an editor.

“I never read anything but the first page of a new book... not even the dust cover. When I read, I want a world to spring up at me”, said Cook. So for this

reason, she counsels against starting your novel with dialogue or a phrase like “It was ...”. There are 5 reasons that people read: “to learn how to; to find information; to find something that articulates their state of being in this world; to escape; or to be taken to a different world”.

All writers receive rejection letters but Cook advises how to read one, “Never start with the words on the page, look for a signature and the lines on the page”. The more formal a letter you receive, the less likely it passed through the gatekeepers to a real editor. The one good thing about a form letter rejection is that you can revise your manuscript and resubmit because it never made it to the top.

“Be thrilled if there is a typo”, said Cook because this means that someone actually wrote the rejection letter. If your manuscript made it to a real editor, then it is likely there is interest in your work or you may be invited to send something else. A publisher looks for a writer that they can work with among other things. A writer should look for a business plan from a publisher. Agenting and publishing is about money and writers shouldn’t neglect that aspect.

Komenar is publishing “My Half of the Sky” by Jana McBurney-Lin, CWC member and former president of the Peninsula branch, in July, and is actively searching for new manuscripts. “Our authors do attend tradeshow but not book tours as it just isn’t cost effective,” reports Cook. Komenar distributes through Ingram and Baker & Taylor, the two biggest names in distribution, and thus getting books into major bookstores is not an issue.

In the end, “It isn’t about the author – it’s about your fine writing”, said Cook. *UD*





Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

Character Development

One of the most important parts of what makes a story work is its characters. Do we like them? Can we picture what they look like? Know their personalities? Understand what makes them who they are? Can we relate to them? Are they three dimensional on the page? Moreover, are they real to us?

Characters are the meat of a story. You can have a killer plot, great story line, a wonderful descriptive setting and if your characters are two dimensional, you have a problem. So what do you do? Ann Lamott, renowned writer and author of the book, *Bird by Bird*, suggests you brainstorm or hold an interview with your character.

Ask your character questions like:

- 1 What do you look like?
- 2 How old are you?
- 3 Where do you live?
- 4 How would you describe your personality?
- 5 What makes you special in your eyes?

You want to get acquainted with your characters and then, get to know them even better. The relationship you have with your characters is reflected in how well they are developed.

She also suggests that one way to get to know your characters is “to base them partly on someone you know, a model from real life, or a composite—your Uncle Edgar, but with the nervous tics and the odd smell of this guy you observed for ten minutes. Squint at these characters in your mind and start to paint them...”

So buddy up to your characters, get to know them and then start writing. We want to know them too. -jam

(PROFILE FROM PAGE 1)

she and her two babies (a now grown son and daughter) moved back to California and that was 1963. Her current daytime gig is “poetry engineer” at a Silicon Valley startup where she types for engineers whose hands hurt too much from computer work. Fortunately, the job leaves her time for writing her own material and she gets “sparks” from working in a totally creative environment.

A fifth generation Californian, Pat has had short stories and poetry published over the years but never a novel. “I won a contest in Harper’s and they published my name, which my mother, then living (*thank you god*) recognized and thought I had made it.” It was actually a puzzle that she submitted, but still it got her name in Harper’s.

Pat is working on several manuscripts simultaneously and although she doesn’t recommend this, it’s just the way that she works. *A Book of The Dead*, by Pat Att, a pseudonym, is soon to be available through publishamerica.com, a print-on-demand publisher. “It was an online novel way before Steven King thought of that,” she added. A thriller and romance are also in the works, as well as, an almost completed memoir (children’s) book, *Auntie Grandma Stories*, illustrated by the author.

“Edie Matthews got me in California Writer’s Club, I went to Harry’s Hofbrau on Saratoga Avenue many years ago,” said Pat. She believes the encouragement and professional tips that she gets from the CWC meetings are invaluable to her as a writer and has belonged to several other writing clubs throughout the years including *Cupertino Writers* and *Associated Authors* in Cupertino.

Pat’s biggest dream is to stand on the speaker’s podium with Stephen King as he whispers confidentially, “You and me, kid! We’ve brought ‘em to their knees.” Regardless of the trends of the publishing industry, she counsels, “One has to believe in oneself. I am one of my favorite writers. When you truly believe that, you have succeeded.

Besides Stephen King, Pat admires Ernest Hemingway and local author Julie Jervis whose book, *The World Beneath Their Wings*, was recently published by InFlight Publishing, San Mateo. Currently she is reading bestseller: *You’re Wearing THAT?*, *Understanding Mothers And Daughters in Conversation* by Deborah Tannen, and Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code* with National Geographic’s *The Judas Gospel* since “they go so well together.”

To share books and ideas, contact Pat at patatat@hotmail.com

CWC South Bay at Book Group Expo 2006

—By Una T. Daly

Book Group Expo held its first ever event June 17th and 18th at the McEnery San Jose Convention Center and we were there. Although the convention center was a great venue – spacious and well equipped (good bathrooms) – it was a little hard to find the upstairs wing where the happenings were. The signage out front was missing at 8:30 am on Sunday as I wandered in thinking that maybe I had the wrong convention center. Once inside, there was a capable staff printing badges and directing exhibitors, volunteers, and attendees alike.

The literary salons and author signings were the highlights of the show. Big names such as Amy Tan, Molly Giles, John Lescoat, and Ayelet Waldman were featured in salons that were open to all attendees but periodically drained the foot traffic from the exhibition hall. Our own Edie Matthews was a featured author and librarians along with local booksellers hawked advice on starting and maintaining book groups.

Side-by-side with Bay Area Independent Publishers' Association (BAIPA), CWC South Bay members flogged our upcoming East of Eden writer's

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...

Lesson 15 Commas #1

Only one comma rule is discussed this month: Using the serial comma. The rule is simple. For clarification, formal writing demands a comma after each of three or more items in a series and before the conjunction. (The last item in the series is usually followed by an end mark.)


One actual example is the gravel company that wanted some bins built to separate and hold their various grades of gravel. They advertised for bids and worded the ad something like this: "Wanted: bids for bins to hold rough gravel, fine gravel and sand."

They received one bid that was significantly lower than the others so they accepted it. When the winning company began building bins, it became apparent they intended to build only two bins, not the three that the gravel company had wanted.

When asked why, the winning company pointed out that the way the ad was worded, it sounded like the fine gravel and sand would be combined, hence one bin for that and one for the rough gravel.

The gravel company had to accept the added cost of the third bin, and all for the lack of a serial comma.

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



Pat Decker Nipper
Columnist

conference. We received many guest book entries and gave away countless postcard advertisements, newsletter copies, and chocolate mini-bars. Special thanks to member Dan Ingerman of Mediamorphosis for the East of Eden poster and

Cathy Bauer for the California Writer's Club banner and other booth amenities.

The exhibit area, though small, featured three independent booksellers: Berkeley's Cody's Books, Menlo Park's Kepler's, and Books Inc., along with tea, wine, chocolate, and specialty clothing and jewelry vendors. University of California Santa Cruz extension writing, San Jose Repertory, and Silicon Valley Ballet also had staff and literature available. *UTD*



A Café Write

—by Emily Jiang

Cup o' joe to the left,
Cell phone clock to the right,
Reference books stacked on a chair,
Alphasmart in front of light.

Jazz grooving, people chatting,
Standing, sitting, waiting by the wall.
Saxophone playing, register ringing,
Cappuccino machine's the loudest of all.

Shift in chair, sit square,
Angle legs, dangle arms,
Toes tapping, fingers snapping,
Summon muse and good luck charms.

Do you start *in media res*
With conflicts, action, death, and desires?
Or do you ease into the scene
With the quiet prose reflection requires?

Write a page, maybe three.
Cell phone rings, just ignore.
Focus solely on the screen,
A creation space that you explore.

Words are slowing, take a sip.
Caffine buzz, writer's best friend.
Biscotti beckoning, dunk and dip,
Sugar rush—write to "The End."

Fingers fly, then stumble, then crash.
Words seem tired, derivative, flip.
Drink more coffee, drain the cup,
Server busses by without tip.

Chair too comfy, eyelids heavy,
All you see is blank, blank screen.
Characters talking, they make no sense,
They might as well be little and green.

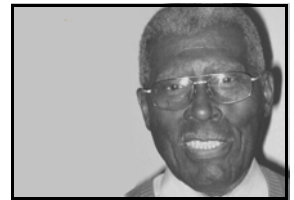
Clock is ticking on the wall,
Your neighbors discuss the latest events,
Debating so loud you overhear all,
You scrawl their dialogue on receipts spent.

Someone enters, you stop to stare.
He's the perfect villain, to the trench coat.
Your muse is back, you're writing a storm,
The climatic scene where the villain gloats.

Finish your page-count, back on track.
Begin a new page with total glee.
Your villain-friend joins you, offers a snack,
You thank him for a fresh cup of tea.

What keeps you going
When the story gets sour?
Five-dollar coffee—
Write a dollar per hour! *EJ*

CWC CHRONICLE SOUTH BAY BRANCH Clarence L. Hammonds, Historian



Clarence Hammonds

Historian

This month I am changing my focus from Madge to another one of importance, Jack London. It is always good to read anything about Jack London in 2006. It means Jack London has not been forgotten. There was an article in the San Jose Mercury News, May 29, 2006 called: AUTHOR'S HIDDEN CHAPTER. Restoration of Jack London's cottage is the subject behind this article. Michelle Locke, of the *Associated Press*, begins by calling her article: GLEN ELLEN and in her column she talks about things I have written about earlier.

First we know Jack London as a writer and a traveler. She speaks of another side of Jack London. She goes on to say, "*We don't know him as a farmer*" However, I do know him as a farmer as I have read it before. She said many other things I will not repeat but I am glad to know about the restoration process.

State park regional superintendent, John Crossman, is seen in London's living room in this report. It shows a beautiful living room; I am sure it is or will be in the restoration process. There is a small picture, which shows a field of cactus growing outside a distillery. This was once a part of Jack London's ranch.

After reading this article, about **GLEN ELLEN**, I saw that it agrees with what I wrote about in *Writers Talk*, November 2005. "Jack London the Early 1900s." I will repeat the last part

1902

Sonoma County, California **Glen Ellen**, is there
He bought a ranch, his love for it, more than fair

1903

Jack said, "The ranch, is second next to my wife
He wrote, to make his investment as good as life
Jack London wanted to add acres by writing more.

Joan said, few *criticized* her father then, for sure
London was rugged, and saw the world as, good
But, did not want to work harder, than he should
Now! He joins the new American Socialist Party
A newspaper story was about him, he was true.
In Oakland's City Hall Park he talked, each major
On Socialism, the Party he used, to run for mayor
Jack London left the Socialist Party of Glen Ellen
Because, of its lack of fight. I guess for all, men?

Jack London was known as a rancher, and an adventurer, an architect too. I am happy to learn, the restoration of Jack London's ranch, is an ongoing project.

"The grapes on a score of rolling hills are with autumn flame. Across Sonoma Mountain wisps of sea fog are stealing. The afternoon sun smolders in the drowsy sky. I have everything to make me glad I am alive. I am filled with dreams and mysteries. I am all sun and air and sparkle. I am vitalized, organic," Jack London. *CH*

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

HANGING IN THROUGH MULTIPLE DRAFTS

Dave LaRoche asked me to supply a column title. If you missed it, read it now. Simple. Clean. With feeling. At least, I hope so.

Easy? Ha! Here's how it went.

When I got Dave's email, I tossed off a joke reply. Dave, rightly so, took it as just that—a joke.

I thought, I wrote, I emailed again. Guess what? Rejection. I should have known better.

I've heard that Agatha Christie walked around her garden for a few days to work out her plots, then sat down and wrote her entire book from beginning to end. Done.

So I wish I could write like Agatha Christie. What else is new?

For us worker bees, multiple drafts are a necessity. Everybody has different skills, habits, and personalities. You'll need to find what works best for you—at each stage of the writing process.

Here, though, are some general guidelines:

First Draft—Write and write and write. Do not go back. Do not edit. (You can play with plot as you go, but only for some basic direction. Don't get stuck.)

Middle Drafts—(Yes, I mean plural.) Work on structure. Make sure your story arc progresses through the manuscript. Check that your hero has goals and obstacles; make sure every character has a reason for being. Get your setting in, and make it work for you. Hone in on your voice.

Final Drafts (Again, the *s* is not a typo.) Trim—kill those last darlings that still aren't adding to your story. Layer—fit in the dialog beats that make your characterization sing. Polish—read it aloud, smooth out the transitions, and make every one of your words count.

Yes, it's an incredible amount of work. It's also your writing, and it's worth every second you put into it.

So...*The Next Draft*. I thought about content. I made word lists. I played with rhyme and rhythm. I ran it through my critique group (okay, my family). I submitted my final draft.

My publisher appreciated the effort. So will yours. *BL*

KEPLER'S JULY PROGRAMS

include, among many interesting others:

WOMEN EMPOWERED AND PICKING UP THE PEN LATER IN LIFE

This program on Tues 7/18 at 7:30 will present:

Betty Auchard

"Dancing in my Nightgown: *The Rhythms of widowhood*"

Gilberta Futh

"The Fighter Pilot's Wife"

Norma Barzman

"The End of Romance: A Memoir of Love, Sex and the Mystery of the Violin"

You will discover the "others" at

www.keplers.com

Terse Verse

—by Pat Bustamante

July O Fie!

From Bestseller list

On which I keep an eye

I visualize "Mr. or Ms. July"

"Topnotch Authors."

-- Oh to be such firecrackers!

Just wait, I'm switching publishers-

The secret may lie in the backers?

I'm sure I write

As well as some of those Hack(er)s!



Jeannine Vegh

My Bike and Me

—by Jeannine Vegh, WSD

Growing up in Ohio, I remember fondly my first birthday party where I turned five years old. The best gift of all was a tricycle. I remember it vaguely, thanks to photographs, and memories that go through my head. You could see how proud I was of that bike, because most of those birthday pictures were of me and the trike. There was my lil sister standing next to me and my trike. And there was me riding it around, while other children stared enviously with those blank child-like glares. My mother has these photos and one of them, taken at a later date, is of me passionately at work, fixing my trike. You can see by the look on my face that I am imagining myself as a bike mechanic when I grow up. I do remember proudly going in to tell my mom how I had fixed the wheel and that I was really good with bikes. I can't imagine how a trike wheel must have broke, but when you're a kid with an imagination and a dream...

My next bike was the kind with the training wheels. Wow! This was so much easier to pedal and I could go much, much faster. Whoowee, look at me! The day came of course when dad felt I should graduate to the next level. Two-wheeler. His idea of training was the aggressive dictator method. Push. Fall Off. Cry. Followed by my dad's phrase "Stop your sniveling and get back on the bike." By the end of the hour, I had cried enough and threw the bike down with a white flag of defeat. "I'm sick of it, I don't want to ever, ever ride a bike," I declared and he shrugged his arms and went inside. Meanwhile, I stayed outside to pout and to think of how nasty a teacher my father was and that it was all his fault anyway. Just then a boy came riding down the street on his bike. Gosh was he cute. Wouldn't I like to catch up with him, to show him I was just as fast as he was. I got up on my bike, and after several false starts, I was up the street riding away. Crooked that is, not so straight and narrow, but over time I'd get there. After a time of riding I went in the house and declared "I taught myself to ride my bike!" My father was hurt, as my pride jumped up and down in bemusement.

The next bike I had was the blue one. My favorite color in the whole world. I wasn't one of those pink cupcake type of girls. The kind of kids who road with banana seats and fringe on the handlebars. Blue was the only real color in the world if you had ambition and

liked standing out in a crowd. All that frilly stuff was for non-serious riders who couldn't go as fast as me anyway. By this time we lived in the country and our driveway was a half mile to the main street. From there, it was about a mile and a half to my best friend's house. I'd go there to play and then come home. Sometimes I'd just ride my bike up and down the main street to see who was outside and spy on them. The main street was about 5 miles long and had about 10 houses on it at the time (Now it's about 50). I could ride my bike down to the egg lady and bring back a few dozen. I could also just stare at the farms with their cows and horses grazing, or the men at work tending the hay. My all-time favorite the tall trees that stood watch over me, while I glided by, hands in the air.

My first boyfriend was so enthralled with beginner's passion that he rode his bike to see me every-day after school. In a car, it would be a 30 minute ride. We smooched in the living room while my mom was cooking in the kitchen. We'd act stupid and giggle when we heard her walking up to the living room. It was my first French kiss and I couldn't do it unless I had brushed my teeth. That would be gross! This first guy was special because he had a pet monkey that lived in the garage in a cage. I never saw it though because I didn't know how to navigate beyond our main street. I hated that the poor monkey had to live in a box. Monkeys were one of my favorite animals, and I imagined owning one and letting it run around with me and having a fun time. Soon though, I got bored with talking about the monkey. There were also the games of "I might let you, but I won't." It was so silly because I really didn't know what I might let him do. The poor thing did seem to know though as he would be grief stricken every time I played this game. I ended it and went back to riding my bike and soon he was forgotten.

However, as time went on, boys came and went and the bicycle was unused more and more. By the time I was in my 20's I was living in Southern California and dancing became my new passion. That was when I could be out several times a week till 4 am, come home and get up at 6 am for work. In LA you had to be out all the time, so you could be seen. Someone might notice you and turn you into a model, or something like that. The bike took a back seat until I got nearer my 30's. At this point I did 25 miles on the weekend up and down the coast from

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)



Andrea Galvacs
Contributing Editor

SILLY OR BRILLIANT?

Andrea Galvacs

Almost all of us know that necessity is the mother of invention but have no idea who the father is. In the case of the cordless jump rope it doesn't really matter because either one could have come up with the notion for this new toy. The person who conceived it is Lester Clancy, a male so, evidently he fathered this brainstorm. However, I have to ask, what is the necessity of a gadget like this?

No doubt, Mr. Clancy has an extremely idle or creative mind and he must have been trying to lose weight or just getting some exercise. In the process, perhaps he became tired of breaking the family heirlooms inside his house or tripping and losing both impetus and count.

The contraption works like this: Holding a handle in each of your hands, you move your arms in a circular motion and jump. The secret of feeling the same sensation as if you were jumping with an actual rope is that inside each of the handles is a weighted ball that simulates the real thing.

It is possible that adults would take a liking for this kind of exercise but I'm sure children

would not go for it very eagerly. With this type of jump rope they would not be able to count who can jump the most without tripping; even if together, they would have to jump by themselves, without the option of two kids turning the rope and one or two others jumping into the middle. That is, if there still are children playing with jump ropes instead of computers.

I don't particularly want to lose weight, but would love to do some exercise. I would be

Why expose myself to ridicule or potentially impolite questions and comments? If I want to go around the block, I'll just walk, without any gadgets. If I want to jump rope, I'll do it in the privacy of my home,

happy if I could develop the habit of taking a walk every day. Once I put myself in shape, perhaps, just maybe, I would jump rope around the block, but with the old fashioned one. If I used this new cordless gadget, people who saw me would probably think I'm crazy. They would want to stop me, ask me what I'm doing and I wouldn't even be able to tell them. This would just confirm their assumption.

What, indeed, would I be doing? Jumping rope without a rope sounds pretty silly. Jumping making circles? Circling weights while-u-jump? If this new exercise catches on with the public, I think jumping cordless would be the most descriptive name, but

plain jumping with the old-fashioned rope is a lot simpler.

Regardless of the type of jump rope I would be using, I would be stopped only if there would be somebody on the street, but in residential neighborhoods this is usually not the case. Aside from a few dog owners walking their best friends to give *them* a little exercise, the street is generally devoid of walkers. If at home, people are too busy to look out the window. They are doing the normal things people do to exercise or lose weight, such as riding a stationary bicycle, lifting weights or starving to death. Or, if not at home, they are at the gym, for the same reasons.

But suppose I came across a dog owner or two? Why expose myself to ridicule or potentially impolite questions and comments? If I want to go around the block, I'll just walk, without any gadgets. If I want to jump rope, I'll do it in the privacy of my home, with an old fashioned jump rope. The way I see it, there is no point in jumping rope without a rope. I mean, jumping cordless.

It is just as well. The cordless jump rope is not for sale yet and I don't know when or if it will be on the market. Lester Clancy has only one handle ready to go and is waiting for financial backers to make more.

AG

WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND

—By Anne Darling

We sit side by side on the ratty old couch bathed in a small pool of light generated from the low wattage bulbs. The tan drapes are drawn to insulate us from what to Dad is the chill night air—even on a late California spring evening. His gnarled hands cover mine. He's lived in the house for more than a quarter of a century, and nothing has changed.

"Tough day," he gasps.

"Yeah." I try to ignore the deep rattling sound coming from inside his lungs and the hum of the compressor attached to his oxygen tube. He's become a skeleton covered by a little flesh. It occurs to me he was born attached to a cord and will probably leave the same way.

It's midnight and we've just returned home from the hospital where my step-mother is recovering from surgery. Earlier in the day she tripped over Dad's almost invisible tubing and collapsed on the tiled floor. With advanced Parkinson's disease plus the now added complication of a broken elbow, the future isn't looking good for her.

My once wiry dad rises, shuffles toward the office closet, pausing every few seconds to catch his breath. Looking at him now, it's hard to believe he once sailed a thirty-foot sailboat from England to Florida, taking a three month leave of absence from work.

Few people have the opportunity to act out their dreams," he'd told me after purchasing the boat. "I plan to study celestial navigation and take sailing lessons before I leave South Hampton."

Dad loved the challenge and the media attention he received when he sailed into Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where my husband, children and myself were living at the time.

"Can I get whatever you're looking for, Dad?"

"No." He bends over, opens a steel filing cabinet and extracts a small, metal box.

"Here. There's something I want you to have. The keys are in my desk. Take it," he orders. "It's heavy."

"Wow. You're not kidding," I say, limping away after relieving him of his weighty burden.

"Knee bothering you?" He asks.

"Yes, but nothing new. This business of aging is greatly over-rated."

"You're still a kid. Just wait until you're 91. That's old!"

We plop back down on the couch and he un-locks the box. He hands me a thin stack of used dollar bills, two fives, a ten and some two dollar bills. "My grandfather gave me these." Then Dad thrusts a bag of coins in my direction.

"These are for you. I'll bet some of these are really

valuable." He unveils each yellowed plastic wrapped coin.

A cursory look confirms my worst suspicions. Having once collected coins, I realize there are no prize winners here.

"The gold ones were stolen by that private detective your mom hired way back when we were getting divorced; you know, the gold dollars that my uncle Lynn gave me.

"Oh," I respond using a neutral tone. I find it hard to believe that an investigator would break into Dad's house in search of coins, but understand it's best to keep the thought to myself.

"I still love your mom by the way. I've learned it's possible to love two women."

I try to visualize Dad, his current wife and my mom sitting down for a latte in heaven. Doesn't work!

Dad unwraps a stack of quarters and smiles. "My brother sent me these during the war."

Suddenly I get it. He hopes I'll find a rare coin that will support me in luxury for the rest of my life, but what he's really giving me is far more valuable. It's his memories of those who were closest to him that he's entrusting to me.

Next he offers me a brown-stained envelope. It contains all his expired driver's, hunting and fishing licenses, business cards and even a library card.

"Dad, should I throw the library card away since you can no longer read?"

Embarrassed, he laughs. "Guess I save too much stuff. Can't seem to part with anything." I toss the library card into the wastepaper basket then connect with Dad's mind. These are official documents that bore his imprinted name. These cards bear witness to the fact that he existed. His coins and assortment of cards are important. He wants me to share his stories with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren and in time pass down bits of his collection to each of them.

I fish the library card out of the trash—notice Dad is watching.

"Are those tears in your eyes, Dad?"

"Yes, and I see you're just as sentimental as I am."

"You're darn right," I respond giving him a hug.

Maybe he really will have that latte with my mom and together they can chase down the detective that stole his gold coins. Who knows? Perhaps I'll sell a quarter or half-dollar that will make me rich. In the meantime, I'll treasure what Dad has left behind. *AD*

WritersTalk Challenge

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

Genres:

Memoirs <1000 wds
Short Fiction <1500 wds
Poetry <300 wds
Essays <700 wds
Articles <400 wds

Awards:

Twice yearly, Feb 15 and Aug 15

First Prize - \$60

Second - \$40

Third - \$25

Honorable Mentions

An **East of Eden Scholarship** will be awarded during the August meeting for the most unique entry received through July 15, 2006

Entrants:

All work in the genres above, published in WT during the period Feb 15 through Aug 15, 2006 is entered. WT Editors are excluded from participation.

Judging: Is to be done by genre-related critique groups (or individuals) of Club membership.

Judging approach: Ten points are available for each piece, to be allocated over several categories of grading in each genre. The allotments 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

SCAM... —by Dave LaRoche

I've met a few agents: a gray haired old guy with a bit of a paunch, cheery smile and a twinkle in his eyes... sat with his wife—nice enough; A hefty blond explosion waving her arms about, batting at the enthusiasm pouring forth with her perpetual proclamations —lots of knowledge, all for me. Their life is all literature and they are too eager and energized, too direct and insistent to be anything else... or so I've thought.

But here comes another point of view and it's startling to me, sets me off balance: *some agents are frauds*... hear that, *frauds*, in the biz strictly and exclusively for our money, offering early promises and praise—nothing else.

This is from Lynne and she's seen a few victimized authors and apparently there are others. What follows are extracts from an essay she has written that calls attention to our writers' naiveté and the scoundrels that lurk just beyond the final sentence, poised to leverage our big sigh of relief into a trip to the Caribbean. Read on and be warned.

Selected extracts from *The Dark Side of Publishing*, with permission from author Lynne Marie Zerance

There's no question about it: Writers, as a group, are among the most vulnerable of people. And let's face it, we're among the biggest dreamers, too. Perhaps that's what makes us a prime target for those who make their living preying on people they perceive as naïve and gullible...

Making a business of exploiting aspiring writers is not a new game, but neither is it an old one, and unfortunately, it shows no signs of becoming a "lost art" any time soon. Unless, of course, we (meaning the publishing industry as a whole) crank up the volume to a decibel that can be heard by every hopeful writer who's got his/her ears on, and share with them what we know about the publishing-related "enterprises" whose business practices are somewhat, shall we say, less than ethical—or at best, simply ineffective. Perhaps then we can tip the scales of justice to favor writers instead of the bottom feeders who feast on their vulnerabilities.

Fortunately for writers, as the numbers of unethical, ineffective, and exploitative publishing-related businesses have increased, so too have the numbers of industry watchdog entities. The leaders of these organizations were all spurred into action for similar reasons: They'd either been exploited themselves, they knew another writer who was, or they simply couldn't stand by and do nothing.

Heading the list is Jim Fisher, a Vanderbilt University Law School graduate and former FBI agent who can be credited as the forefather of the literary scam-hunting movement. His groundbreaking study of bogus literary agents, book doctors, and vanity publishers, *The Fisher Report*, ultimately led to the FBI investigation and subsequent arrest of Dorothy

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Deering. If you haven't done so already, you can read the thrilling story of Dorothy's decade-long reign as a corrupt publishing maven in Jim's book: Ten percent for Nothing: *The Literary Agent from Hell*.

Next comes Dave Kuzminski, editor of the aforementioned *Predators & Editors*, who threw his hat in the scam-busting ring about ten years ago, nearly by accident. Today, Dave's website is one of the best-known online writers' resources, praised for its warnings and recommendations feature.

Victoria Strauss & A.C. Crispin also play a stellar role in the scam-hunting business with the website *Writer Beware*. Victoria's professional affiliations include The Author's Guild, Novelists Inc., and the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, where she is vice-chair of the Writing Scams committee.

James MacDonald's claim to fame, aside from being a full-time writer since 1988, is as the mastermind behind the *Atlanta Nights* PublishAmerica sting... His sage advice to new writers: "There are only two places in publishing that money can come from: the readers or the writers. If it's not coming from the readers, it's coming from the wrong place."

Teresa Nielsen Hayden, an editor for Tor Books, has reveled in her role as a scam hunter for years. She runs an excellent blog called *Making Light* in which the topic is sometimes literary scams.... "Writers are so very, very easily crushed. If you tell them that they're worthless, a lot of them will just fold up and not fight back afterwards. That's one of the good things about online discussion forums. They provide a safe place for writers to tell each other, "Hey, it's not your fault."

Isis Riley does her part in sweeping the publishing streets clean by maintaining a free comprehensive searchable database of agents at *AgentQuery.com*. She polices her own site, ensuring that only legitimate agencies appear in her 800+ agencies database.

Bill Martin also offers a free search service on his website, *Agent Research & Evaluation Verification Service*. The site also offers numerous paid services to help you narrow down your agent search, and Bill assures me that no scammers get through his solid screening process.

Now that you're acquainted with the watchdogs, you can find the 20 worst agencies in a list on *Writers Beware* or in Lynne's full essay.

Some tips from Jim Fisher (who says, "You've got a better chance of getting published by writing a note, putting it in a bottle and dropping it in the Hudson River than you do working with a literary agent who doesn't do his job.")

Beware of agents who:

1. Offer you a contract for representation shortly after receiving your manuscript. This suggests that the agent, particularly if a fee is involved, is more interested in your money than your work. Ask questions to determine if the agent is familiar with your manuscript. Remember, real agents, when accepting a manuscript, don't use form letters.
2. Solicit your manuscript for representation out of the blue. Some agents get your name from copyright registration files. This kind of manuscript-chasing is not the way real agents obtain clients. Again, beware of the form letter.
3. Refuse to disclose whom they represent and what books they have recently sold. Why would an agent want to keep this type of information a secret? Maybe they have no sales to report.

(See 4 through 20 in Lynne's complete essay).

And from Dave Kuzminski, editor of *Predators & Editors*, come these guidelines for spotting a scam literary agency:

1. Openly advertises for writers in print or online publications or both.
2. Claims that it has new methodology for gaining access or acceptance with book publishers, but never explains why other successful agencies aren't utilizing it.
3. Does not list any sales or refuses to divulge the titles of sales for "confidentiality" reasons.
4. The only sales it lists are for vanity or subsidy publishers or the sales it lists were made by the author before the author signed with the agent, often years before representation.
5. Sales it claims to have made cannot be found listed in any reference lists of books that were printed by the supposed publisher.
6. Sales it made were mostly to a publishing house wholly or partially owned by the agency.
7. Requires an upfront payment for administration or for a web display or for later postage and copying.

And more in Lynne's complete essay.

On the Getting of Agents

A bad agent is worse than no agent at all. Getting past the "no un-agented submissions" barrier is not sufficient justification for hooking up with a bad agent.

The easiest time to get an agent is when you've just gotten an offer on a book. The editor phones you and says, "I want to buy your book." Then, call the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)

(SCAM FROM PAGE 13)

agent who's your first choice. If they say they're not interested, call your second choice. It's hard to imagine your having to call a third choice.

It's harder if you haven't sold a book. Selling short stories helps. Having a really good novel in hand also helps.

Real agents learn how to be agents by working for other real agents. It's like a medieval apprenticeship, except the authorities don't bring back the ones that run away.

Scam agents are legion. The wildest ones are constantly refining their approach, and the merely sneaky ones steal riffs from them, so I won't even try to describe their current cabana acts. Meanwhile, observe the following rules:

1. Never pay them. The real ones make their money by collecting a percentage of what the publisher pays you, and they collect it after the publisher pays it out.
2. Ask to see their client list. If for any reason they refuse to show it to you, run away. If you don't recognize their authors, be suspicious.
3. If they try to refer you to a book doctor or freelance editor, start edging away. If they tell you that "No publisher will look at your book unless it's been professionally edited," see earlier remarks regarding fast getaways.
4. If they try to place your book via a deal that has you paying *anything* (that includes PublishAmerica's deal), *vide supra*.
5. The internet may have given scam agents a vast new playground for their operations, but Google is on your side, not theirs. Use it.
6. In a pinch, Victoria Strauss and Yog Sysop (a.k.a. Jim Macdonald) will always give you the straight dope. If they're not available, ask at The Rumor Mill, specifically the "Caveat Scrivener" section.

Some websites to start with:

sfwa.org/beware

preditors&editors.com

agentquery.com

editorialdepartment.com

(very comprehensive and home of Lynne's essay

Note: **Lynne Marie Zerance** is a writer, the Managing Editor of *Between the Lines*, and the Director of Business Development for *The Editorial Department*.

DLR

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

Santa Monica to Torrance, all along the boardwalks hitting every major tourist attraction. I'd stop half way to buy French fries and lemonade, my lunch of a champion. At the end I'd kick back on the beach for an hour or so and then head back. This bike was sold for about \$20 while I did some traveling back and forth to Ohio. It would be years later that I would ride again, while living in Maryland. It was my partner's ex-wife's bike. We rode together on the trail, he on his shiny new bike, me on her leftovers. I never liked that thing, (him or it) and I bitched and complained the entire journey. Hey! Bikes have energy too.

Now at 43 and $\frac{3}{4}$, I've recently purchased a new bike. It is my first professional top of the line, cheapest model I could find, Trek 1000 WSD (women's specific design). Last year, I book-marked it and salivated over it time and time again until I got my extra paycheck for the year. Then I went out, cash in bank and ATM'd it with a smile from ear to ear. It has 27-30 speeds, I'm not quite sure yet, as personally, I can only do 10. I have my gear: tight pants with foam padding, shirts, socks, shoes, and plastic helmet. The helmet presumably so I don't lose my head when I fall. The WSD test market probably had a different butt then mine, 'cause I wasn't too happy along the trail. I had to get extra padding with a Trek gel cover, and this does me quite well. Now up to 18 miles, I stretch out along the Alameda Creek Trail. I'd love to go farther some day, but for now there's a bay in the way. JV

Attention SouthBay Playwrights !! – Here is a big opportunity

Have your new (un-produced) script read in front of a live audience and receive feedback at the City Lights Theater in downtown San Jose. You may submit your script to a screening committee and, if selected, enjoin in the casting, direction and rehearsals leading to an evening reading of your play in front of a public audience.

City Lights has a strong commitment to developing new, off-beat theater pieces. The New Play Readers Series gives promising new plays by local playwrights a workshop play-reading production, followed by an audience TalkBack session in which audiences can let the artists know what they think of the show. Potential plays are reviewed by our New Play Readers' Committee and are selected on a competitive basis. City Lights secures the actors and director for the piece, and the playwright is closely involved with casting decisions and rehearsals. The public play readings are one-night-only performances that occur on selected nights throughout City Lights' season. [For more details, an application and submittal requirements, see www.cltc.org/newplay.htm]

Announcements Announcements Announcements

Free Author/Book event for South Bay members

In partnership with the Elk Grove Community Services District and the Elk Grove Library among others, a fine arts festival featuring authors, poets, artists and entertainers (100 authors will participate) will be held in Elk Grove on March 31, 2007.

The Military Writer's Society of America (MWSA) and "The American Authors Association" (AAA) are the forces behind this event and are extending an invitation at this time to SouthBay members – there are no fees or charges to register .

"New York Times Best Selling Authors" will be featured to help draw readers and book buyers to the event. A wonderful facility is secured. This will be the first year but it will be an annual event for authors .

What: "The Elk Grove Arts Festival 2007"

Where: The Barbara Morse Wackford Community Complex

When: Saturday March 31st, 2007

Who: Community sponsored partnership with The AAA, The MWSA and others.

Registration: No fees for authors, artists, or poets. To register send an email (preferred) or a letter with the following information:

Author name

Email address

Personal/ book website address

Brief Bio for media presentations

Phone number (not made public)

Mailing address

Titles of your books.

Email to:
Bill McDonald
angelnet@surewest.net

Or send by mail to:

Bill McDonald E.G.
Arts Festival, Post Office Box
2441
Elk Grove, CA 95759-2441



Write a column—
Anything Goes (Almost).
That's the name of the space. You may make it opinionated, informational, persuasive...Email it to Una Daly, by the 16th of the month.

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Steinbeck Center

Mark Your Calendars:

East Of Eden Writers Conference

September 8 – 10, 2006
in Salinas, California.

- Agents
- Editors
- Writers
- Teachers
- Contests
- Camaraderie

See our website for more information about Contests, Author Participants, Networking, Accommodations, etc.

www.southbaywriters.com

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First Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm

Borders Books
50 University Ave, Los Gatos

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7:30 — 9:30 pm
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Pruneyard in Campbell

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. Contact Bill Baldwin

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

The Dan Niemi Memorial Fiction Writing Contest until August 15

Open to working or retired law enforcement officers

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www.southbaywriters.com

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SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors Meet
Jul 5, ??

General Meeting
David Sterry
Jul 12

Open Mic
Jul 7, 7:30p
Borders, Los Gatos
Jul 21, 7:30p
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Inputs
Jul 16

Editors Pow Wow
Jul 22, 10:00am
Orchard Valley Coffee

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

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

See Map Below

