



WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

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Page 1

Memoirists Phyllis Mattson and Linda Joy Myers discuss Self Publishing and Memoir Writing At our next meeting, March 8th



Edie Matthews

Programs Chair

AN INTRODUCTION BY EDIE MATTHEWS

Memoirs sell better than Stephen King these days. The success of books like *Angela's Ashes*, *Running With Scissors*, and *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, which propelled unknown authors to the forefront, attest to the fact that we are fascinated with other people's stories.

Whether you enjoy reading memoirs or ever considered writing your own, you won't want to miss the next CWC meeting. Two memoir writers, Phyllis Mattson and Linda Joy Meyers will discuss their experience.

Phyllis Mattson is the author of *War Orphan of San Francisco*, a coming of age story beginning in 1940, when her parents sent her from Vienna with a transport of Jewish children to escape Hitler and find refuge in America.

For years, Phyllis was told that she had a compelling story and should write a book. In 1985 she began taking classes and writing portions here and there. In 2000 she started writing seriously. That year she gave a party celebrating 60 years in America and read the first chapter to her guests. "Afterwards," said Phyllis, "I received so many moving notes from people encouraging me to finish."

Once it was completed, she contacted a few agents



Linda Joy Myers



Phyllis Mattson



and publishers. One interested publisher wanted her to trim the letters from her parents to snippets. She disagreed and decided to self-publish. "I'm getting old,"

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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:

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

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President's Prowling— by Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Branch

More on Outlines

I suspect that writing an outline of my novel has opened up a whole new world for me. I needed an outline to send to agents. I had a "pitch," I had a "tag" – and they were eye-openers too, when I wrote them. There's something about compressing the essence of an entire book into a few sentences that really clarifies what you're getting at. But...

What's the real point of a synopsis? I like opera, so I've read a lot of plot synopses. When reading Steinbeck, I've sometimes gone to a website and read chapter summaries. I've read a (long!) summary of Kazantzakis' *Odyssey A Modern Sequel*. I read the teensy descriptions in video guides. I read what shows up in movie or book reviews (but these are all actually so short, they're more like pitches: "Male snob and assertive independent woman fall for each other" -- *Pride and Prejudice*).

I have found a summary of Proust useful (but who wouldn't?) – Otherwise I might have no idea what was going on amidst Proust's shifting oceans of words.

I guess summaries are a whole new "ocean" for me. It's much easier to read a summary of Proust than Proust himself ("Proust himself" took me 14 years). And a summary briefly introduces characters, theme, and plot. You can spot inconsistencies (though not necessarily absurdities!). You might even discuss the book intelligently without actually reading it!

Maybe summaries and outlines are useful after all – although they can never replace actually reading the novel.

At any rate, they make you think. And they make you examine your writing more carefully – which is good. BB

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

said Phyllis, "and I was afraid it wouldn't get done."

It was her dream to have her book in libraries on shelves with "The Diary of Anne Frank." "It's the same kind of story—we were the same age going through adolescence—except she died and I didn't." Now Phyllis has less than a hundred books left of the first thousand published, and it can be found in bookstores and libraries throughout the Bay Area. Her book was also the 2005 winner of the "Best Memoir" awarded from the Bay Area Independent Publishing Association.

Linda Joy Myers PhD, author of *Don't Call Me Mother*, and *Becoming Whole: Writing Your Healing Story*, has been a therapist in Berkeley for over twenty-five years.

"I always knew I wanted to be a writer," said Linda. The calling was so great, that she put her PhD program on hold to earn an MFA in Creative Writing at Mills College.

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California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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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

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

It was Linda's ambition to combine her two interests. So once again she shifted gears, setting aside work on her own memoir to write *Becoming Whole: Writing Your Healing Story*. This led to her unique "Memoir-as-Healing" workshops and training.

Finally, Linda was able complete her own story, *Don't Call Me Mother*, about three generations of mothers' abandonment, and how the cycle was broken.

"I sent this book out a lot without acceptable response, but I was going on 60 and would keep tinkering with it," raved Linda when Melanie Ridney, the former editor of *Writers Digest*, advised, "Get it out in the world how every you can and get on with whatever else you want to do."

A subsidy press published her self-help book. But by now, she felt she knew plenty about getting a book out and decided to self-publish her memoir. Ultimately, Linda started her own publishing company, and after the contract with the subsidy press elapsed, she began publishing both books.

At the next CWC meeting, benefit from the experiences of these two scribes and learn how to start writing your memoir, cope with the inner critic and complete your story. *EM*

Join us at...

Lookout Bar and Grill
605 Macara Ave.,
Sunnyvale
(Sunnyvale Golf Course)
6pm, Wed, March 8
Members \$15, Guests \$20



Dave LaRoche
Managing Editor

Editors Itch

Last month, while browsing Central Coast's *Scribbles*, I was taken by an idea advanced by their president, Ken Jones. It was not the first and likely not the last I will see of it, as it's an oft-repeated theme among those instructing the rest of us on how to proceed with our fiction.

The idea is: *it's the story!* It's not the thesaurus-laden descriptions, the over-hued characters or the finely detailed scenes that we so enjoy articulating—it's the story.

As readers, the thing that keeps us up until two, wide-eyed and attentive, is big suspense, surprise and satisfaction—it's the story. And when I'm thumbing pages in my favorite bookstore, I'm seeking dialog indicating a plot—action, drama, conflict. As a reader, I want a story.

As a writer, it's not difficult to load up from a word-pallet and brush out a scene. And I find enjoyment in conjuring up a character with a sizzling sneer sewn crooked on a face as thin as a line. The thing that breaks my sweat is the story—the plot with its conflict and resolution; its interwoven subplots, believable events, empathetic motivations, and the nuance of hints at later surprise that make for good reading. The challenge for me is the story.

Here's the notion. When starting, chart a course, put out some forks leading to alternative routes through unexpected locals and dead ends (of course know the ultimate destination). The terrain is mountainous, maybe nodding-off flat. There will be detours and accidents, disagreement and threats; near misses, some hits (a little sympathy please and some humor). There's a sudden dodge of calamity, then relief and reward... or desperation and death. And at the end, when it's past two and time to nod off, there will be harmony and deep satisfaction.

Plan the trip and construct the story first. Know where and how you are going, *then* dress up the scenes, color in your characters and verbalize. *DLR*

WritersTalk

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to Andrea

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Essay ≤700 wds

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to Dave

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newsletter@southbaywriters.com

or

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Contact Dave LaRoche

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In the Public Eye

A Recap —Jackie Mutz

They stood up like new students, eager to share a little of themselves. All were published or, as one noted, an “in progress” writer, looking for a place to meet others writers. And did they come to the right place, this rollicking meeting of the writing minds and a few stand-up comedians? Was it the food? The drink? Or just that everyone was “in the mood” to have some



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor



fun and maybe learn a little in the process.

A few of our visitors were: Nancy Smith, Lorraine Maccello who published a memoir, Lynn Saunders, a transpersonal psychologist/fiction writer, and Surya Sati, an East/West psychotherapist who described herself as an isolated writer, here for intellectual stimulation.

What did they have in common? They were looking to meet other writers and what better place than our monthly CWC meeting?

Seventy-eight attended including 20 guests and two who signed up as new members that night. Out raffle (I



Jill and Edie, last minute pow wow

think some come solely for this) was supported with 115 tickets held among the attendees.

Our guest speaker, **Jill Lublim**, author of *Guerrilla Publicity* and *Networking Magic* set the fast paced,



hilarious tone for her topic: publicity. Why is publicity important, she asked. Because it establishes



credibility and visibility for the author and that's how you will sell your book. As an author, it is imperative to establish credibility by becoming an expert. It is you that has the MESSAGE, a very important message to share. Sell yourself and your book is sold. Think of Oprah and her Book Club, it is the writer she is presenting...

(remember the guy who embellished his journey of drug and addiction?

It was he that received the attention, albeit, in the end, not the kind we may look for.)



Do you believe that?

How do you do that, she asked the audience? When you (not your book) become an expert on your topic, the focus of your work, you give people something to talk about. This is where an experienced publicist comes into play. It is his/her job to help make *you* into that expert who



(RECAP CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

offers solutions to whatever problem you're an expert in...sound confusing? Maybe, but people will remember you because of the **visibility publicity provides**, something Jill Lublum calls the *I've Heard of you Somewhere Syndrome*.

- I've heard of you!
- The ooh aah factor
- Networking magic

These three factors can lead to creative name recognition and visibility in the public eye, which is where you want to be if you want to sell that book you worked so hard to create.

At this point, looking around the room, I noticed people were focused on her, listening intently to her MESSAGE, totally engaged. It was working!



Toward the end, Jill did a little exercise in which the audience had a 30 second practice publicity spot on her make-believe *Do the Dream* "radio show."

Seem to like her your message out, sharp, brisk, believable in thirty seconds.

About ten members tried their hand and were cutoff mid-sentence as they wandered and reached, having barely collected their spiel... "Hard, wasn't it," she asked, driving home that an expert makes sure to use



After the show — "Questions?"

in, what the problem is and offer three solutions, pulling the focus into yourself—the expert.

Remember the mantra: I am not a writer, I am an expert and the answer is in the MESSAGE. Now what was the question? Call your publicity person, Jill. She will know. ~JAM

ARREST THAT MOMMY

by Karen Oliver Llewellyn



If you are a mother driving with kids in the car, you're under arrest. Laws make it illegal to drive while distracted, which I think covers a suffocatingly wide swath of activities. Although the legal focus is largely on cell phone use, a plethora of other things going on in my vehicle might qualify me as a distracted driver. Surely they can't mean I'm breaking the law when I steer with my elbow while opening my daughter's water bottle! They can't mean it's illegal to drive while shouting at your four-year-old to STOP THAT YELLING BACK THERE! Or to STOP KICKING THE BACK OF MY SEAT! Or DON'T PUT THAT CHEERIO UP YOUR NOSE BECAUSE IT'S NOT FUNNY! Let's face it. If you have children in the car, you're driving illegally.

With little ones you may find yourself teaching via the tour director method:

"Look, Jamie! There's a fire truck! Do you see the big, red truck?"

"Look, honey, see the funny dog on the corner? What does a dog say?"

Look out, Mommy. See the car stop in front of you suddenly while you're pointing out fire trucks and dogs? You are definitely a distracted driver. If you have multiple children in the car, you probably spend more of your time on riot control. Rules help, but only if the kids pay attention to them.

My car rules:

- 1) No touching anyone, at any time, for any reason.
- 2) No whining.
- 3) No touching anyone, I said, at any time or for any reason.
- 4) No smuggling in gummy bears. "Look how they stick to the window, Mommy!"
- 5) No touching anyone, at any time and that means now, mister, for any reason.

But does anyone obey the rules? Dream on, Mommy.

Music provides some respite for Manar, mother of twin toddlers. Tapes of the Wiggles keep the boys happily occupied, but she says, "Unfortunately, now I know all the stupid songs."

Charmaine, a mom living in South Africa at the time, picked up her seven-year-old daughter at school.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

Already in the car was a four-year-old—and a Barbie doll, a very exclusive item in South Africa. As the battle for the Barbie escalated, Charmaine gave the girls the ultimate warning: stop the fighting or the doll goes out the window. But the girls failed to take heed.

“I started driving faster,” she told me, “to get home before I killed them both, all the while yelling, ‘I am warning you two.’ Forty miles an hour, fifty miles an hour: ‘I am going to throw that thing out the window if you don’t stop it!’”

“At 70 miles an hour, my arm whipped back like Elastigirl. I ripped the doll out of their grubby little paws and hurled it out the window. I looked in the rear view mirror. Their eyes were huge and their hands still in the air where the Barbie had been a nanosecond ago.”

End of conflict and, thankfully, there was no one nearby to be distracted by a flying Barbie.

As for older kids: if you have teens in the car, your biggest distraction may be the effort you go through to get their attention away from their CDs or video games as you pull into the school/mall/sport field parking lot. They will generally be happier if you let them pretend they are arriving by magic, without the nuisance of a driver. Let it go and just drive. At least you don’t have to worry about them pooping in their car seats just as you arrive at your destination.

In the end, I guess it comes down to keeping your hands on the wheel, eyes on the road, and dealing with your beloved offspring (and your cell phone) in the parking lot. Don’t search your purse for that cell phone if it’s ringing, play your CDs, change the radio station, adjust the visor, brush your hair, reach for your sport bottle, or scratch where it itches. You might be considered a distracted driver. And that, I understand, is illegal. *KL*

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...



Pat Decker Nipper
Columnist

Nipper's Nits

Lesson 12. Pity the Poor Preposition

Prepositions connect two parts of a sentence and can be placed anywhere within a sentence. They commonly show location or timeliness. A few simple prepositions include “at, by, for, from, of, on, over, under, to, up, through, with, and under.”

However, because they are rather difficult to define, they are frequently misused or dropped. Many people now say “graduate high school”, instead of the correct “graduate from high school”, or they “baby sit children” rather than “baby sit for children.” Then they add the preposition “up,” as in “meet up with somebody,” instead of just “meet with somebody.” These expressions have been accepted orally, but are now, unfortunately, becoming common in writing.

An old language rule dictated that sentences shouldn’t end with a preposition because it is supposed to precede a noun or pronoun. Fortunately, that rule has become relaxed. Winston Churchill pointed out how silly it was to struggle with writing around a “dangling preposition” when he said, “From now on, ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I will not put.”

Contact Pat at pat@patdeckernipper.com for comments or ques-

Check out the Club’s Critique Groups

—by Dave LaRoche

Cathy Bauer whips up a fiction critique group every other week. They meet from 6pm til 10 with an evening supper provided by a rotating host. Currently there are three novels and a series of short stories in review. Vicki Miller, Duncan King and Dave LaRoche join with Cathy in no-holds-barred reviews with emphasis on content, flow, construction, believability and interest.

The work (about 2500 wds per member) is distributed by email ahead of the meet permitting the critics adequate time to work up a scowl. Members read their work between bites and discussion moves around the table—critical repetition is minimized while good effort is praised repeatedly. Interested parties may contact Cathy for a spot in the queue, however this group feels four is an optimum number for their kind of synergism and all report beneficial results.

“DeAnza Writers”, named for their origins, is administered by

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Edie Matthews and meets once a month, she tells us. We are a friendly and supportive bunch but we offer honest criticism to all genres. Copies of work are brought and distributed at the time of the meeting when work is read and critiqued. The group is mature, having been around for a while and is currently without openings; however, should you be interested in the que, contact Edie at

**edie3333@aol.com or
edie333@sbcglobal.net**

Jeannine Vegh supports a Novel (as in Book) writing critique group for people living in Southern Alameda County although, she reports, "We have members in Santa Clara and San Francisco." The group is about a year and a half old and meets monthly on Saturdays from 1 to 3pm.

"We do Novels only and they must have already been started, although if someone would like to check us out to become motivated to get started this is okay too," says Jeannine. As to process she says,

The fun is just getting together

"At each meeting we determine who will be critiqued at the next meeting. Prior to that next month, those people email their submissions, 25 pages or 1 chapter. We read these ahead of time and make any edits with pen and then share these at the next meeting." This group "is pretty honest so some people have gotten scared off... some are not ready to be critiqued."

"The fun part is just getting to-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

Accolades

—by Jackie Mutz



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

Well, the February meeting brought me a list of exciting happenings for our CWC writers and guests!

- 1 Kathy Madison received her first royalty check for her novel *Woman's Sigh Wolf's Song*.
- 2 Steve Wetlesen had three poems published in the Jan/Feb publication of the *Whistle Stop Magazine*. Look for his poem in WT.
- 3 Duncan King had an article published in the *California Explorer* (*check this Dave*)
- 4 Becky Levine's new monthly column in *Writers Talk* offers editing tips and her new website is up and running. Visit her at www.beckylevine.com
- 5 Phyllis Mattson, author of *War Orphan in San Francisco*, was one of many authors presenting to English classes in Los Altos February 13-16 on writing and, in conjunction with *Silicon Valley Reads* month, she will be speaking at libraries in Gilroy, (Feb. 18) Milpitas (March 18) and Campbell (April 7) in the programs called "Wartime Correspondence: Letters from World War II." Way to go Phyllis!
- 6 Barb Matson won a poetry award in the Edgar Lee Masters *Spoon River Anthology*
- 7 Diane Solewski's article on life in the South Bay Area was recently published in the German newspaper *Bonner Allgemeine*
- 8 Our own CWC president Bill Baldwin, whose novel is now finished, is learning the finer art of "Marketing Your Novel."
- 9 Will Rahal's novel, *Remmi*, has made it to the qualifying round in the novel competition put on by *Fade In Magazine*.

So there you have it for the month of February's *Accolades*. Guest speaker Jill Lublum, author of *Guerilla Publicity*, says to make your accomplishments known. *Accolades* is a way to do just that, so send me your news at either newsletter@southbaywriters.com or writerstalk@comcast.net. JAM

\$2000 AWAITS WINNERS OF LORIAN HEMINGWAY SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Entries are now being accepted for the 26th annual Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition, created to recognize and encourage the efforts of writers who have not yet achieved major-market success. Stories in all genres of fiction are welcome.

Maximum length is 3,000 words, and writers retain all rights to their work. Final deadline is May 15, 2006; winners will be announced at the end of July.

For complete guidelines, visit www.shortstorycompetition.com,

Reminder



Becky Levine
Columnist

Becky Levine is a writer and a free-lance editor who is available for copy-editing 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

MIX UP THE INGREDIENTS, AMP UP THE TENSION

You're at the airport, waiting to board your flight. You're looking at the schedule for tomorrow's conference. That little headache is getting worse, and your aspirin is at the bottom of your suitcase. A garbled voice announces a cancelled flight; was it yours? You're pretty sure you turned off the oven, but not *really* sure.

I've just described a realistic, if busy, morning. Dealing with each problem one at a time is simple. Call your husband about the oven. Go ask someone about the flight. Re-read your conference schedule. By now, you probably don't even need the aspirin. Life is rarely that calm, though; too often, everything happens at once and the headache is a killer. You're stressed, and you're tense.

Okay, this isn't such a good place to be in real life. In fiction, though? Tension is just what the doctor ordered!

Plotting a scene is hard; merging all the necessary elements can feel close to impossible. What a writer often ends up with is several paragraphs on the first problem—say the conference schedule. They might follow those paragraphs up with a few more, dealing with the flight announcement. Several bits later, they stick in the thought about the oven, and the character makes the phone call to her husband. Finally, the headache, which made a brief appearance in paragraph one and has mysteriously disappeared for two pages, comes back. It's blindingly painful for the character and absolutely unexpected for the reader.

This kind of writing is fine for the first draft; you're getting all the issues onto paper. In the next pass, though, start mixing things up. In your mind, or for real, cut the pages up and toss the pieces into the air. See where they fall. Shove a stick into the mess and make it even worse. Now rewrite.

This isn't an easy task; you'll probably end up with a nice headache of your own. In the end, though, your character's day and your scene are going to be complicated and complex...yes, stressful. What could be better?

*Becky is happy to answer questions and chat by email.
Contact her through her website:*

Santa Cruz County Book Fair

Our infamous bon vivant and author, Betty Auchard of *Dancing In My Nightgown*, encourages your participation in the "First Annual Schools Plus Santa Cruz County Book Fair" – now, that's a mouthful, especially for Santa Cruz. Should you sign up she will be at your side, which in itself is a worthy consideration. The following is a synopsis of their press release:

Since 1984, Schools Plus has raised half million dollars plus in the furtherance of grants for Santa Cruz and Santa Clara County teachers who drive creative and innovative classroom projects in public schools.

In continuation of this work, They're beginning a new fundraiser and The Schools Plus Grant Program will be holding its first annual Santa Cruz County Book Fair this May:

- When: Saturday, May 20th
- Where: Shoreline Middle School, Santa Cruz
- What: Get great deals on great books. Meet the authors. And support a worthy cause.

They are actively looking for authors, publishers, and bookstore vendors to participate in this sure-to-be-popular event. Join in and discover the wealth of literary talent, community spirit, and educational resources in and around our community.

For more information on participating authors, vendors, et al, and how to join Betty Auchard in her support of this project, visit the Santa Cruz County Book Fair web site at:

www.schoolsplus.net/BookFair/BookFairPage1.htm

Or contact

Bernard "Barney" Bricmont, Schools Plus
Phone: 831/476-0504

Terse Verse

—by Pat Bustamante

...Marshy March...

One-two-three-four:

GET that manuscript out the door!

Five-six-seven-eight:

(Ignore mud-rain-wind-sleet)

And DON'T you mail it late!

ONLINE DATING

—By Andea Galvacs

Marriage is bliss, widowhood is the pits! Not that I am anxious to get married again, but a little male companionship would be great.

How does a respectable widow, a grandma, for heavens' sake, go about finding male companionship? In Silicon Valley, in the fairly new millennium, the answer is obvious: she contacts an online dating service!

Online? That is a word that came into being when personal computers became everybody's absolute necessity! Dating? The last time I had a date was over forty years ago and then, I ended up marrying the man! But, searching online seems to be what everybody does nowadays and I do not want to stay behind.

Knowing very little about computers, I asked my son to buy one for me, explaining that I didn't want his children to think that I belong in an antiquarium. After recovering from his surprise he was delighted that I had finally decided to join the XXI century and not only did he buy me a computer, he even taught me how to use it and to navigate the internet.

At the time, choosing a dating service proved to be just about as difficult as sorting out the Medicare prescription plans was a few months ago but, in the end, I signed up with one for seniors only and hoped for the best.

After registering I had to answer a lot of questions that dealt with my physical appearance, my personality and things I like and dislike. I was encouraged to send a photo of myself as well, the explanation for this being that I would elicit more interest if people would know what I look like. This is called a profile, which the service would post for everybody to see. I also had to describe the kind of man I was looking for, so that people would know my expectations.

After doing all this and, of course, paying the required fee, I was ready to start my search. The choices seemed endless but, I quickly learned to narrow them down and to differentiate among the jokers and those who seemed serious, and concentrated on the latter. I wrote to a man with whom, according to his profile, I had quite a few things in common and after exchanging a few emails, we decided it was time to meet in person. Even though we knew what we looked like because of our pic-



Andea Galvacs
Contributing Editor

tures posted online, he said he would be wearing a T-shirt that said "Save the whales". I'm all for saving the whales but I don't like T-shirts with lettering on them so, I figured I wouldn't like the man wearing one either. Right from the start my first "date" didn't bode well, but I decided to give it a shot; what could I lose?

I was as nervous as a teenager before her first date. What would we talk about? How long should the meeting be? What if I did not like him in spite of the interests in common? What if he did not like me? Luckily, by the time I arrived at the Starbucks we had agreed upon, I was relaxed enough to hold a normal conversation.

He was there already, T-shirt and all. We smiled in recognition, ordered our drinks and sat down. I actually do not remember what we talked about; what I do recall is that after ten minutes or so, I realized I was bored to tears so, as soon as politely possible, I said goodbye.

So much for the T-shirt and the whales. Later came the shirt and necktie, which I liked a lot better but the man wearing them turned out to be quite strange. He downed his drink pretty quickly then, placing a piece of gum in his mouth, proceeded to chew the entire time we were together. He must have been trying to quit smoking! Then came the man with the pony tail, which he did not have on his picture online, a band leader who was determined to teach me how to conduct an orchestra. I love music, but I just as soon listen to it and leave the conducting to somebody else!

There were also a psychiatrist and a stockbroker, either of whom I would not have minded meeting again, but I guess they must have had some negative opinions of me because I never heard from them again. Their loss!

By this time I had become an expert on dating and started calling these meetings *interviews* instead of *dates*. After all, that is what they were; we were sizing each other up! My subscription with the dating service was about to expire but I decided not to renew it because I had met most of the men at a Starbucks, which seems to be the *in* place to transact this kind of business, and was beginning to suffer from sleep deprivation from all that coffee.

One thing became clear: male companionship is very hard to come by because the good men who could provide it are married, dead or gay, in every case, not available. All is not lost though. I learned how to use a computer, my grandchildren think I am *cool* and I can tell a cappuccino from a frappuccino! AG

The Sky is the Limit —by Susan Mueller



My older brother, John Brennen, would take my skates and bike and my sister's also and dismantle them. He used the parts to make scooters and ride them down a short hill on our street. Sister Beverly and I would scream to mother when we discovered the destruction and she would order John to make restitution. He never did. I don't think he was old enough to put the purloined parts back on their original vehicles.

John was an adorable child and he loved airplanes. Mother bought him little balsa wood kits for making airplanes and she would thumbtack the resulting models from a string to his bedroom ceiling. Then she painted the ceiling blue and found some large silver shiny stars to stick up there. It was quite charming and too bad that only the family ever saw it.

Later on, our father built us a bigger and better house. John was 20 and put in charge as the superintendent over the subcontractors. Our father gave him his orders every morning and the house was complete in one long summer and was an excellent build. John preferred that work to the factory. I was the sweep up the junk slave at age 15. I reported to work there on my bike.

When John was in his early twenties he took private flying lessons secretly. He tried to join every military organization of the federal government to become a pilot. But he is slightly colored blind and they all send good-bye. He did not pursue any personal aviation. This was probably due to lack of funds.

During high school and college he worked every weekend and vacation in our father's small factory. He hated this but he became an excellent machinist. Father insisted he major in engineering in college. There were many fights over this. John just wanted to be playboy of the western world and he was good at that. But father won out because he refused to pay tuition for any other major. Playboy areas outside of college were not plentiful at the time. Student loans did not exist for us at that time. It was Dad or live on the street.

Finally he did graduate Northwestern University in engineering with a C+ average. This was

in the late 1950's. It took him six years I think. Air travel had just become big business. He was hired by Boeing Corporation. Our father was horrified. He didn't believe God intended a big metal thing to stay up in the sky. Dad died while John's life long career was still in its infancy.

Boeing got a contract with NASA (National Aeronautics Space Agency) to build a rocket and a moon rover for a launch to the moon. Guess who was the well qualified (engineer, machinist) to head up the rover project. Good old brother John. Mother was so proud. Beverly and I lovingly chided him that his million dollar project looked like a dune buggy with Walgreen's lawn chairs. He responded, "Don't tell NASA".

Of course, the launch and the moon rover were big successes for their time. That moon rover is in the Smithsonian Institute and John flies from Seattle to visit their daughter and his rover about once a year. On one such occasion, a docent was telling a high school group about it as John approached the display. The docent made a small error and John raised his hand. He identified himself and the docent handed the over the floor to him. Now playboy of the western world loves nothing more than an audience unless it is a rocket. There was great joy all around that day. John was able to tell the full rover story along with some inside scoop.

John is happily retired now. Using former experience, he has done major home remodels for each of his three children and his church. Maybe our dad was not such a bad slave driver after all. *SM*



(CRITIQUE GROUPS FROM PAGE 7)

gether," Vegh goes on. "Feeling the stress of that monthly deadline and being pushed internally to write. We take turns at each other's houses and there are refreshments from the hostess. The part that I always enjoy is when a perspective new member wants to join and they usually start out with 'I am just not sure if I am good enough.' I always write back and soothe their egos by explaining that this isn't a group of Steinbecks and Hemingways—that I am aware of. Not that we don't hope that we are... but we are pretty honest with ourselves. We are just out to have a good time and be supported in the process."

Jeannine speaks for the editor when she says, "Here is my warning though 'Are you ready to be a writer?' If someone is, then they will show up to a meeting, fear in tow. If they can handle the critiques/honesty, then they are definitely ready. *DLR*

Balance of Mind - New Year Resolve

—By Jeannine Vegh

J. Krishnamurti is quoted to have said “The Crisis is in our Consciousness, not in the World.” At a time when there is so much unrest here on this planet, it seems fitting to have a discussion about what this may mean. What I believe he is saying is that we must look toward ourselves rather than externalizing our frustrations. It is easy to put the blame on world leaders, on the economy, on belief systems, and other positions of power. When we externalize, we disconnect from our mind, body, and soul, and project all of our anger outside of our self. On the contrary, there are problems with the state of the world; I am not negating external forces. However, in order to achieve satisfaction with our self and with our life, we must turn within and look at who we are and what our role is in the world.

To have unrest within our self, our consciousness, adds to the confusion and conflicts outside of our self. How are we living our life? Do we spend equal times with our health, family, spirituality, life partners, and community? Are we in a job that we are satisfied with? If not, do we have a plan for finding the right job/career, or are we spending every day complaining about the job we have? Do we love the person we are with or are we collapsing into this relationship because it is convenient for us? What do you do in your community? These are all questions you must ask yourself. They are full of possible resolutions to start your new year with. It is never too late to begin again and renew your ambitions in life.

If we are in the process of achieving balance, we are beginning to form a holistic relationship with our self. We are conscious of the commitment we have



Jeannine Vegh

with our partner. Everyday we think of this union and explore our growth process. We give and we receive. We listen and we respect. We are participating in our career rather than just showing up to work every day. By this I mean we are coming up with new ideas, starting workgroups, supporting the team in a new way, and looking at your tasks as an expression of yourself, rather than what you do. We are examining our community and looking to see what we can do to create change. Is there an organization you can volunteer with? Do you have the skills to work on city council? What is it that you like to do that you can share with someone else? We are involved in seeking our higher consciousness on a daily basis. This does not mean you go to your religious affiliation everyday. It has to do with examining the world around you and appreciating each day, enjoying each moment. Ultimately, realizing your relationship to your higher power, and to the objects you come in contact with.

A person once told me that I was not interested in the world around me and unconcerned with the state of affairs. This was rather strange to me because I am a social worker and spend my days with people who are less fortunate than others. I am also active in a girls group that is creating change in our community. I have spent my life devoted to various causes. I had a website online for eight years dedicated to the plight of abused women. At first I blamed myself for not doing more. Then I realized that this person was in a state of unbalance and they were actually tormented by their own lack of participation. This person was a talker and judged people constantly for not giving their utmost. Yet in their life, they accomplished nothing more than a room full of

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

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. WT Editors are excluded from participation in awards.

Judging: To be done by genre-related critique groups of Club members

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

notes on what the world should be doing. I began to examine similar people like this, who go out and yell and scream about what change should be occurring. Around them I saw so much discomfort, so much illusion, and sometimes very little life experience. It is important to be involved in the world around us, but we must first be involved in our self. We must strive to be role models, so that when we go out of our homes we represent humanity. When we walk, we look at the people we see around us. When we talk, we think about how it will affect the other. When we drive, we note that there are others on the road with us. When we make love, we touch the other human and see them, feel them, taste them and hear them. We are in the moment of our life. When we can be in these moments, we begin to deal with our own inner conflicts and open our minds to possibility. We can begin to feel settled and relaxed so that the answers become apparent.

As humans we have a mind, a body, a soul. It is important to nurture all of these. We live in a world. Acknowledge the people around you; exist with them, not against them. It is important to have values, beliefs, and boundaries, but those are your own not necessarily someone else's. How can you fit into the world around you whereby you respect yourself, as well as the person next to you? This comes from recognizing the fact that we are not "right," we are just of an opinion that we formed on our own. We came to the conclusions by examining our past, present and future and deciding what was important to us. The key is the journey we took to get to this point. Our path is much different then the person next to us. If we respect the fact that we are each capable of coming to conclusions on our own, then we respect each other for the different ideas that we come up with. If we are not of the belief that we are right, and they are wrong, then we continue to be on a journey of self-exploration.

Are we not here to grow and be challenged? The world is in a state of unrest. This is what we see. It will not be solved by wars, prejudice, demands, power. Each of us must look at our life and examine the level of balance we have achieved. If we all began to examine our own consciousness, we would see the problem exists within, not out there.

By: Jeannine Vegh, M.A., M.F.T.I.

(Originally posted on The Sage Advisor 1/06

www.thesageadvisor.com)

CWC CHRONICLE South Bay Branch

By Clarence L. Hammonds

The article below, I wrote before attending the fantastic Workshop on January 22, 2006. So, this would be an appropriate time to release it. It is about the, First South Bay Writers Workshop. This workshop was held in San Jose. Here is a synopsis.



Clarence Hammonds

Historian

I was looking through the history of CWC. South Bay and discovered an article of interest. It was about the "The First South Bay Writers Workshop." And a letter from Tom Mach, president 1988. who had been vice president until that July 1988. I will share with you, a letter written by him to Cornelia Fogle (one of the organizers) after the workshop. The Workshops's theme was, "Successful Writing for the Serious Writer". It was held on Saturday, June 25th 1988. at 2290 North First Street, San Jose, California, suite 101 (University of Phoenix). Madge Saksena was president at the beginning of the workshop, Tom was vice president. There were six speakers on the panel. 1) Helens Barnhart, the author of two best selling books: *Writing Romance Fiction For Love and Money* and *How to Write the Eight Easiest Article Types*. 2) Madeline Di Maggio has screen written six TV motion pictures, two features and 221 episodic TV programs. 3) Dorothy Dowdell specializes in historical romances inspired by the developers of the West. She has written short stories and juvenile romances. 4) Robbie Fanning has written 10 books (fiction and non-fiction) and is a Series Editor for Chilton Books. She currently owns her own publishing business. 5) Emily Hallin has written three juvenile nature books and 19 books for Blossom Valley Young Adults Series (Simon & Shuster). (6) Duane Newcomb has authored over 5000 articles and 23 books. His latest book is, *How to Sell the Same Article Many Times*. Here is a portion of the letter written by Tom Mach to Cornelia Fogel.

July 4th, 1988

"Dear Cornelia,

Our first South Bay Workshop was a Huge success. I've received many compliments from guest and speakers alike. We've also received some very

nice words from attendees who completed the evaluation questionnaire.

While I will want to mention it again at our July 24th meeting, I couldn't wait until then to thank you for a job well done. We not only received praise from everyone, but we also made money for the club. I could not have done it alone, however, I want you to know how much I truly appreciate your help.

Regards,

Tom Mach, President"

THE POETRY CENTER SAN JOSE ANNOUNCES:

Joan Gelfand

At the Poetry Lounge in The Blue Monkey, Tuesday, March 7th beginning at 7pm followed by an open mike reading.

Joan Gelfand's work has appeared in The New York Times Magazine, she holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Mills College and is the author of "Voice Over", a novel and "Seeking Center", a collection of poems. Joan is the President of the San Francisco Chapter of the Women's National Book Association.

And on Tuesday. April 4th at 7pm, same venue

David Roderick

David Roderick is a former Wallace Stegner Fellow in poetry at Stanford University. His poems and stories have recently appeared in *The Hudson Review*, *New England Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *TriQuarterly*, and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. He teaches writing classes at Stanford Continuing Studies and lives in San Francisco.

The Blue Monkey Bar and Taquería,
1 East San Fernando Street
San José.

Admission is free.

The Right Number

— Jackie Mutz



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

555-4321. I stared at the number I had just dialed. A voice had answered, a soft elderly voice, similar in tone to the one I missed. How soon do they give away a dead person's number? Too soon; when that is all I had.

She left one day, just like that, before I was ready. I had not even exhaled my anger before I inhaled the grief. How did I not know?

I sat next to her that day; not on the comfy couch of before, but a stiff rendition that was hard to lean into; there was no peace in its repose. Her eyes saw me through a cloud of pain; the body just hurt too much. It was giving in; too tired to fight anymore...I leaned toward her and saw for the first time: *her pain, her anger and her grief* at Death's imminent domain.

She told me she wasn't ready, not yet. I wasn't ready for her either, for my own selfish reasons. Divine intervention or a random chaos of a moment, she was my rock, my mentor, having entered my life at a time of crisis. And here I now faced her, Mother to her Child; holding her, holding myself, holding us all. For that is what we do for one another, hold each other up...

The voice accepted my apology for dialing the wrong number, once the right number in time of trouble. But I was glad there was life at the other end, even if not the voice I longed to hear.

I thanked her, but she had already replaced the receiver, leaving me to cradle my own grief, in my own time, my own way. A "wrong" number, yes, but oh so right, at this moment... *JAM*

Wise Woman —by Jeannine Vegh

Walks Alone.
Stands Tall.
Sees and observes; Questions and speaks.

She is not well loved or even understood - because she knows many things yet to unfold.

People fear her or scold her as she will not deny nor conform.
What they don't know they will not allow anyone else to either.
Yet others see and acknowledge and accept what she has to offer.

And she would suffer
Humility, yet show a brave woman with stamina and courage.

She would commit herself to a challenge if she would learn.

She would love with her heart even though it might break.

While others are following one by one as the head of the line tells them what to do - she would stand by the side and consider the pros and cons.

If there is a job to do it will be done.

When you need a friend there will be one.

Wise but not perfect; learned and perhaps educated.

A nurturer who remains detached and conscious of her soul and the whole world as it effects one.

The wise woman is not necessarily the leader but yet she would succeed In keeping her wits about her and always coming out on top.

The wise woman is the person you ought to seek and know.

She is with you this moment taking in the words that you read.

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Announcements Announcements Announcements

Interested in local LITERARY EVENTS?

You may subscribe to the on-line newsletter (calendar),

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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

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 in the coming months about scholarships, contests, Early-Bird discounts, accommodations, etc.

www.southbaywriters.com

Too bad that all the people who know how to run this country are busy driving taxis and cutting hair.

—George Burns

I don't want any yes-men around me. I want everybody to tell me the truth, even if it costs them their jobs.

—Sam Goldwyn

GOT NEWS?

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

newsletter@southbaywriters.com



South Bay Writers Open Mic

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

Borders Books
50 University Ave, Los Gatos

Third Friday each Month
7:30 — 9:30 pm
Barnes and Noble
Pruneyard in Campbell

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

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

DEAFNESS

—by Steve Wetlesen

WHY
DO WE CONSIDER
A
WORLD
WITHOUT
SOUND
SO STRANGE
WHEN
SILENCE
IS
THE CONDITION
OF
MOST
OF
THE
UNIVERSE?

"That is one of the functions of art: to present what the narrow and desperately practical perspectives of real life exclude."

C. S. Lewis - On stories.

The BOOK TABLE
at Club Meetings

hosts experienced reads and new adventures

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

Every monthly meeting, the Book Table is set.



California Writers Club

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Santa Clara, CA 95055

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Stamp(s)

ADDRESSEE

Address Correction Requested

SAVE THESE DATES

Board of Directors
Mar 1

General Meeting
Mattson & Myers
Mar 8

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

WritersTalk Inputs
Mar 16

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

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

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

See Map Below

Take 237 to
W Maude to Macara

