

WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

Volume 14, Issue 11, November 2006 Non-member subscription \$20 per year

Page 1

KATE EVANS AT OUR NOVEMBER 8 MEETING

—By Diana Richomme



Diana Richomme
VP and Programs Chair

LEARN FIVE ELEMENTS OF POETRY TO STRENGTHEN YOUR PROSE

Do you squirm with envy when hearing a reader describe a novel as *poetic*? I do. One of those talented writers, Author and SJSU Professor, Kate Evans has published fiction, non-fiction *and* poetry. "Poetry can tighten things up for you that can then form your fiction," she said.

Some of our members write both poetry and prose. Read their longer works and poetry's influence clearly brings the page to life.

"Language is a major point in how learning the basics of poetry can strengthen your prose," Kate said "In poetry, you get just the right word - the image. Any writer who is interested in hearing about the language they use to craft their stories, poems and novels would benefit from learning about the five elements of poetry."

Kate Evans wasn't always a writing teacher, novelist or poet. Her passion for writing began after reading "Harriet the Spy" as a child. Like Harriet, she wrote in secret journals about the goings-on in her life. It's no wonder she became a journalist. Not until five or six years ago, though, did she give herself permission to write creative work. Since then, she's been nominated for Pushcart Prizes in fiction and non-fiction, been a finalist in two national poetry competitions,



Kate Evans

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

** Holiday Gala **

Wednesday, December 13, 2006,
6 - 9 pm

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

Party Place:
Betty Auchard's home
115 Belhaven Drive,
Los Gatos
408-356-8224

**For the potluck, if your last
name begins with ** bring a:**

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

Beverages are provided

—HO HO HO—

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

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

PS

There is no charge for this fun

Congratulations to *WritersTalk* Challenge Winners—Next Awards in March

A Look Ahead:

Nov 3, 10, 17 Open Mic, see p19
Nov 1, Board of Directors Meeting (and Dia de los Muertos)
Nov 8 Dinner Meeting —Kate Evans
Nov 18 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 10:00am
Dec 13 Holiday Gala (No regular meeting) See p xx
Jan 21 Writing Workshop (No regular meeting) See p xx

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President's Prowling —Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Branch

The Good, the Bad, and the Boring

What's the opposite of "good?" And is it worse to be "bad," "mediocre," or "boring"? I thought of titling this "the good, the bad, and the mediocre".

Anyway: I write, I host open mics, I coordinate writing contests. I get books from the library and even try to read them!

What happens when you get beyond the stage of thinking "everyone raves about this book, so it must be good," or "my writing teacher told us to avoid that, so this must be bad"? What do you *really* like (maybe it's *not* what the critics or instructors recommend)?

Myself...I definitely prefer certain writing (writers I really enjoy reading) – I may find the style easy, enjoyable, startling, insightful, provocative.

Is there writing I hate? Maybe "hate" isn't the right word. Some writing annoys me. I may disagree with the opinion or the characterization/description; that doesn't mean the *writing* is bad, though. Good writing *should* provoke a response.

Bad writing is...*bad* writing. Using the wrong words, mangling grammar. My wife so despaired of the writers in one of her classes that she began making corrections on her own copy of student papers. Some writers used words which were spectacularly wrong. That grabs my attention – in a negative way.

Then there's the stuff that just doesn't interest me – for whatever reason. It may be well-written, but – I don't know; I just may not care. Not bored exactly, but...what?

Curiously, if something is *not* boring, I may go on reading it whether I like it or care about it or not -- even when it's annoying.

But each person has an individual sense of "boring." You can never be sure. What bores you? Can you explain it? Have you ever watched a movie or read a book, intending to stop – but couldn't? Why didn't you? What kept you engaged? *That* would be useful to know!

Find out what does bore you – or what keeps you reading, even when you keep intending to stop! BB

EVANS FROM PAGE 1)

published poetry collection, *Like All We Love*, nofiction book, *Negotiating the Self*, and is an Adjunct Professor in Creative Writing at SJSU. Her first novel is due out in 2007 and the second is seeking a publisher at this time. We will be the first to hear her read from her latest novel.

What do you write? Novels? Non-fiction? Memoirs? Poetry? Multi-talented and fascinating, Kate will tell us about the five elements of poetry that can improve all types of writing, Wednesday, November 8 at our dinner meeting. Come join us. DR

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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

Join With Us

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

Contact our Membership Chair
Marjorie Johnson

Do you have expertise?

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

I'm not giving up here. There are experts in this club, where are you? At this point we have :

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

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

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

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

Me Calling Me

—Carolyn Donnell

Nobody ever calls me but me.
When I look on my callerid
mostly the number that I see
is my own phone number, one of 3.

A lot of unknowns
anonymous groans.
A few from my family
or numbers unknown.

But by and large the majority
Is me calling me just to see
if anyone's out there that cares to be
really in touch with me.



Dave LaRoche
Managing Editor

Editor's Itch

So often and with emphasis, we hear publishing is a large

cost to the writer. If we are skilled, persistent and God-smiling lucky, we might get an advance against sales (I have not met one of these) and even if we do, it's a loan, in effect—due and payable with royalties. Most of those who read, and write, this newsletter will foot the entire bill, assuming we are published at all.

Next comes the marketing, publicity and selling. There may be, in the best case, a small amount set aside to offset our cost of peddling our book—note, I said “our cost.” The publisher may provide a few introductions, and may point us in a direction expected to yield some results. The rest is up to us: book signings, interviews, articles, websites, favorable blurbs by notable blurbists, and think of it; your audience spans 3000 miles, maybe more, and there isn't much time.

We've heard it over and over again. It's discouraging.

On top of this staggering pile of good news is yet another consideration. You must write “pop” to just get into the “pile.” What's hot today? Politics, family-murder, sex is timeless, abuse, religion, did I say politics... and that's only the first chapter. It's the formula, folks! We must get with the formula if we want someone to turn the next page. You've heard it... we've all heard it.

All of this leads to a counter-biased article I read last month in Newsweek. Charles Frasier, wrote *Cold Mountain*, a literary, nonformula novel about... we know the story. And then, Frasier, a one-book novelist, was awarded an eight and a half million advance by Random House based on success with *CM* and a one page query for a new, again nonformula, book: *Thirteen Moons*. Think of it: 8.5 million dollars of confidence in a nonformula literary work—the second novel from a university instructor.

So the hell with the world we've been dourly doused in. Write a decent tale, find a visionary agent, sit back, smile broadly and rake in the dough. You can do it. We all can do it. There is life after “the end”—call Random House. *DLR*

WritersTalk

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Submittals are invited:

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Almost Anything Goes ≤400 wds

Regular Columns
to Una Daly

News Items ≤400 wds

Ltrs to Ed—In My Opinion ≤300 wds
to Andrea Galvacs

Literary Work :

Short Fiction ≤1800 wds

Memoir ≤1200 wds

Poetry ≤300 wds

Essay ≤900 wds

Announcements and Advertisement
to Dave LaRoche

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

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

or

writerstalk@comcast.net

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OCTOBER RECAP —Dave LaRoche

From the lips of Mike Cassidy, Mercury News columnist and our October guest speaker, came the astonishing statement that, “writing *is* hard—there are no two ways about it.” And here I sit in total agreement, keyboard clicking, mostly backspace, doing the recap for a meeting I did not attend—so what I do, face the screen and sweat blood. There *are* notes on a matchbook from Brisko and photos from Una.



WritersTalk Challenge

This was the second Challenge sponsored by your newsletter. Thirty-four pieces published in genres: short fiction, memoir, essay and poetry, were judged by a peer group with knowledge of the genre and awards made by your editors. Una Daly and Bill Brisko presented the winners for this period, Feb 15 – Aug 15. Challenge details are on page 7.

Your *WritersTalk* editors remind us that all published pieces are automatically entered in the Challenge and that prizes are \$60, \$40, and \$25 (first through third place). Please keep your work sized to the guidelines and, **keep it coming.**

Costumes

October brings make-believe and some of the characters and authors we recognize, from favorites we have read, made believe they were Southbay members. Hummm, I think I see the likes of Richard Burns and Edie Matthews and there’s Tom Wolf looking a bit like Sorensen.

Mike Cassidy

With “a face for radio and a voice for news-print”, Mike Cassidy confesses he is not a good speaker... that his world is 800 words at a time and occasionally to the point. Well, we didn’t agree and his casual style, stand-back perspective and good humor kept us thoroughly engaged; and I thought: some people simply see the world easily.

He was roped into judging the costumes, he said, with the usual pressure to garner his interests, dare



we say favor—“Another rib, Mr. Cassidy?” It reminded him of his home town Chicago where, at a point, even the winds were corrupted. I imagined them blowing hard and cold on those election days when Republicans were ahead.

He likened newspaper writers to bricklayers, just stacking them up—a fact or two here an arbitrary view there. “Unfortunately the pay is more like a

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

RECAP

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

farm

subsidy.” (Being from the Midwest, I thought about that as I knew a few farmers back there, driving new Buicks every year—drought or flood.) Of course we know writers, in the main, are a poor lot and provided our sympathy.

He was leery about talking in front of the group—we being the sophisticates we are. So



not having much of an idea where to focus, he checked out our website and used the content there, especially the FAQs, as cliff notes. Hummm, another great idea for we editors.

Self-deprecating, Cassidy suggests he started

slowly (we already know, *he is not much of a speaker*) and when his blood rises above the freezing point, he turns to his favorite authors. One is another modest writer, John Steinbeck, who he remembers claiming, “I am not a writer but I wish I were.” And Anne Lamott, “I know a lot of writers and none of them are very eloquent the

first time around.”

And Red Smith, master sports articulator, who encourages with, “When I write a good one, the adrenaline is flowing like Vesuvian lava.”

He got started with the pen as a re-



sult of his large family—twenty elbows on the table and his almost last in line. Even then, a bit shy with an audience, he began writing. His stuff was funny, caught on, and his place was secured. Mike, even now, claims he’d rather write it down and have it dropped on your driveway under the cover of night.

Why newspapers? The pay is regular and the discipline is unavoidable. Although, getting a job on a newspaper is not easy these days.

Contrary to most opinion, the internet is not the enemy—it’s the bottom line. Newspapers are owned by investors, who—like the rest of us—have options. And if the Mercury News can’t keep up with Walmart, Walmart gets the bucks. Eighteen percent

return was not enough for the past owners and Knight-Ridder went up on the block. The new owners look for more which means *we might see less*.

Cassidy feels the cost cutting, including deep layoffs, will hurt the paper; that reductions in the news staff from over 400 to 280 will have an effect on its quality—both reporting

and presentation. He ended his talk with an appeal: the Mercury needs YOU! Check out www.savethemerc.org and voice your opinion.

Thanks Mike Cassidy for an entertaining and enlightening evening. I wish I had been there *DLR*



Communications Tips

—from Sam Marines

Email: Write to Communicate (Not to Impress or Offend)

Some Do's and Don'ts for Communicating Effectively with Email

Email is faster than a letter, less intrusive than a phone call. Nevertheless, the tone and intent of our message can be misunderstood since it is all words and no vocal variety, facial expressions, or gestures. And let's not forget that a laptop or display screen makes it easy to be blunt! The challenge for many of us is we struggle with adjusting our communication styles to this medium. When using email, it behooves us to commit to memory some do's and don'ts.

DO:

- 1 Do use short, concrete words whenever possible. Example: We impress no one when we force the recipient to read the longer word *utilize*, when *use* will do. Author Mark Twain, who was paid by the word, once said, "I never write *metropolis* for seven cents, because I can get the same money for *city*."
- 2 Do include a "call to action" at the top of your email in the first sentence or paragraph, or the subject line. An email's call to action is when you ask the recipient to do something specifically or be aware of the information. Consider what is your recipient's purpose for reading? To make a decision? At the top of your email, specify what action you are requesting. To be better informed? At the beginning of your email, let a recipient know it is *FYI*. State your call to action first, and then follow it with the background information.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

January's Workshop Features

Tod Goldberg

Sunday, January 21, 9 am to 3 pm.
LookOut Bar and Grill
605 Macara Ave, off Middlefield at 237
(see map on last page)
Cost: \$55 for CWC members,
\$75 for non-members,
includes continental breakfast & lunch

We enjoyed Tod Goldberg at East of Eden, from his workshops, panels, and especially his keynote address. In January, he'll back for a special one-day workshop. You really don't want to miss Tod's special brand of humor and teaching.

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

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

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

Some have commented that the most salient thing about Tod is his style. With laugh-out-loud humor, he spreads out his experience and knowledge... you pick it up and can't forget it.

More about this in the December issue

Email Do's & Don't's (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

- 3 If you include a web or file hyperlink in the body of your email, do test the link to ensure it works. First send the email to yourself to test the link. Then re-use the received email with the verified link. To re-use an email (Eudora users), select the email message > select **Message** menu > select **Send Again** command, then update the *To:* field with the recipient's email address.

DON'T:

- 4 Don't skip over basic courtesies. You may offend someone, if it's a perceived etiquette breach. Example: Consider the initial correspondence with a new colleague. If you have not had previous correspondence with someone, introduce yourself by including your name and your area of interest or some other important link. Then proceed with your purpose for communicating.
- 5 Don't send an email if you are angry or emotional. Cool off and then reconsider your response.
- 6 Don't use (or limit the use of) symbols, acronyms, and abbreviations. Briefness is expected in email correspondence, but also be stingy with applying pop culture's email style to work-related emails. Not everyone knows WRT means *with respect to*, IMHO means *in my humble opinion*, a joke or affirmation is indicated by the :) symbol, or disapproval is indicated by the :(symbol. However, FYI and ASAP are known in business correspondence.

Limit your chances for misunderstandings or requiring to respond to subsequent emails asking for clarification on your original message. Careful thought to the structure and considering the purpose of your email--writing to communicate--will go a long way toward your message's effectiveness. SM

Sources: *The Elements of E-Mail Style*, "Subject: Effective Emails" (AMA Seminars, Oct 2006-June 2007), *Webster's II New College Dictionary* (3rd Edition), *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th Edition).

WritersTalk's Challenge Winners Announced

By Una Daly

The second semi-annual WritersTalk's Challenge winners were announced at our October CWC South Bay meeting. Over 30 submissions of short fiction, poetry, essay, and memoir were judged and five finalists honored for their outstanding contributions to the newsletter.

Florence Schorow was our first place winner for *Meeting with Lana*, a short fiction entry, about an unintentional and painfully humorous meeting on a bus. Florence, a student of Edie Matthew's creative writing class, has been published previously.

Richard Burns received second place for "I wished", a poem that he revised and submitted a second time. Richard, also a student of Edie's, shares his writing in class and then is motivated to revise based on the feedback that he receives.

Third place went to **Karen Llewellyn** for her laugh-out-loud essay, *Arrest that Mommy*, which many of us parents who drive with children found uncomfortably familiar.

Finally, we had two honorable mentions. **Marty Sorensen** received a ribbon for his informational essay on the Internet Movie database website. **Patricia Bustamente** received her ribbon for the terse verse that lightens up our newsletter on a monthly basis.

All the WritersTalk editors encourage you to submit your creative works to the newsletter. All submissions are automatically entered into our semi-annual contest, which splits the year from end of February to mid August, and then from end of August to mid February. Our top three winners receive cash awards: \$60, \$40, and \$25 for first, second, and third place. All of our entrants receive our sincere thanks because it is your wonderful writing that ensures the quality of the newsletter.

Special thanks go to our judges who graded each entry in their category for style, grammar, tone, language usage, originality, and compelling storyline. Judges included: Duncan King, Cathy Bauer, Patricia Nipper, Anne Darling, Andrea Galvacs, Bill Brisko, Edie Matthews, Jackie Mutz, and Jana McBurney-Lin. Una Daly chaired the contest and Dave La Roche, originator of the contest, was instrumental as always in its success. UD



Susan Mueller

Gadfly and Treasurer Emeritus

Everybody

Hates Taxes

By Susan Mueller

Everybody hates lawyers. Look at all the *lawyers are bad* jokes. But how our tune does change when we are arrested or need a divorce. So what about taxes?

None of us are thrilled to pay taxes, but surely we want to pay the least amount that is legal. And that is where I come in. I suffered through twenty some boring college hours of accounting and business law courses. Then I took a year of taxes. I fell in love. Taxes are the most fun of everything for me. I want to be able to declare absolutely everything and I do.

For thirty years, I have been filing IRS 1040's and the accompanying state tax forms for clients wherever I am. In that time, I have been audited only three times and I won. I want to tell you about each time. Fasten your seat belt and put on your helmet.

The first time was 28 years ago and the argument was over a \$900 item on a return. I arrived at the IRS summons office, briefcase in hand. I was complimented by the receptionist. She asked whom I represented. I didn't look like a housewife.

I was shown to a seat at a desk and a teenager with blemishes joined me. He pulled out a calculator that had no tape in it and announced where I was wrong. I said I was not and how did I know he put the right numbers in the calculator. I asked him to get one that had a tape so I could see his calculations. He said they don't have any. He called his supervisor. She was a sweet young thing who had never been kissed. Same argument. They told me in severely authoritarian voices that I could have a hearing. Hearing was pronounced something like execution. I said I wanted that. They challenged me, saying I would have to meet in the CITY! (Chicago). I agreed.

My daughter was just about to enter high school and needed a wardrobe for that. So I took her with me so she could see how to handle the IRS if she ever needed to do so.

We went inside to the appropriate office and were guided into a private conference room. An agent about 35 years old came in and had reviewed the 1040 and accompanying schedules in question. There were many. He said he saw nothing wrong

and in fact he found that the IRS owed my client \$35. My tax professor said you should always make that error so they would trust you.

After my victory we walked to a nearby department store and I spent my client's fee on clothes for her.

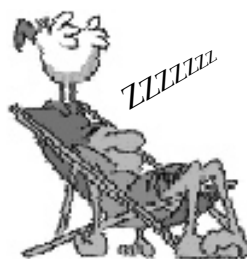
I don't even remember the second audit. It was bland and I won. But the third audit was juicy. The 1040 they questioned was a red herring. It involved a lot of money. Thousands. The total income was higher than previous years, and the claims against that income much bigger than usual. I arrived with a luggage cart and four file boxes because they were looking into the previous year and the subsequent year.

Again, a man in his 30's greeted me, cordially. He had a long list of questions written out and I pulled files, receipts and whatever to answer him. He was satisfied with each answer. We did this for about two hours while we also discussed what was happening in professional baseball at the time. Then he asked me to send him a bunch of other documentation, which I had to get from a couple of sources and I agreed.

When we were finished he said, "You don't seem like you are trying to pull something."

I replied, "I am not. All the 1040's I submit are clean." I went home, sought the records he wanted and mailed them in. I waited about three weeks and got a very cordial letter saying that his supervisor had reviewed the entire audit and they were happy to say it was all in order except for one thing. The IRS owed my client \$35.

(No new clients please.) SM



The best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.



E-Literary Agent, Inc.

Ordinarily I would respond to an email like this with: "Non-member ads are \$10 per column-inch;" however, this is such a compelling idea and might well be advantageous to any of us, that I decided to publish it gratis.

"I thought this would be of interest to your membership.

Have you been looking for a publisher? If so, I'm sure you've found it almost impossible to get someone to read your manuscript. And have you tried to find an agent? Almost as difficult. Why? Because most new authors get very small advances, and the agents percentage is just not worth the time and effort for them to try to sell your work.

After more than 35 years in the publishing business, I've come up with a new way to help you get noticed. E-Literary Agent, Inc. is a totally on-line literary agency (we are NOT a vanity publisher). We will post your (partial) manuscript on-line and contact editors who are interested, who will be able to read and evaluate your work right there on our site. We will be your agent, we will offer your manuscript around the world (the power of the Internet), and negotiate your contract.

To find out more about us, visit
www.e-literaryagent.net.

Thank you,
Fred N. Grayson, President"



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

Dictionary.com defines the word accolade as an *expression of approval or praise, or a special acknowledgement or an award*. The last two terms do not seem a fit although when one receives a *ceremonial embrace, as in a salutation or a ceremonial bestowal of knighthood*, it would be cause for celebration. Yet it does make one think – what are accolades really about? How do accolades apply to writers?

At the last CWC meeting, I sat at one of the naked tables (no linens) and looked at the many faces; some dressed in Halloween gear, others in their come from work or evening-out clothes. And then it struck me; I was sitting smack dab in the middle of a community, a writing community. We were all at the meeting to connect with others who write, who want to write and who have written. There I was supposed to be taking notes about who had done good things this Halloweenie month and instead I experienced an epiphany, the James Joyce kind. I marveled at everyone around me.

I do remember that **Bob Garfinkel** finally had his article published in the Astronomy Journal (sorry Bob for not remembering the particulars) and that **Jana McBurney Lin** will be doing a reading/signing of her book, *My Half Of The Sky* at Barnes & No-

Accolades

—Jackie Mutz

ble (off Almaden Expressway) on November 7, 2006 at 7 p.m. (she is also up for a Pulitzer prize as well).

And congratulations to **Carolyn Donnell** who took 2nd place and \$100 for her story, *Albuquerque Sky*, entered in SouthWest Writers' 2006 annual under the "Other and Short Story" category—go Carolyn. I apologize for not getting the rest. Many others had writing accomplishments to share—a book, an essay or poem just published.

It is at these meetings that we are recharged. We leave ready to go back to our spiral notebook a la Natalie Goldberg, old typewriter/word processor or top of the line computer to write about what we know and sometimes what we don't. The CWC writing community gives all writers a venue to share their accomplishments and even frustrations and every month eager acknowledgments from those at the meeting.

Broadcast your good news even more. Email me at writerstalk.com so we can all congratulate your success. *Accolades* is an empty column without your input. —jam

THE WRITING DEPARTMENT at SAN
JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY
brings you

**Tommy Mouton, Charles Schubert
and Susan Shillinglaw**

At the Poetry Lounge
Tuesday, November 7th, 2006
7:00pm-9:00pm
The Blue Monkey Bar and Taqueria
1 East San Fernando Street
San José, CA 95113
www.pcsj.org
Admission is free

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

"...Ly" Words—Banishing Them From Your Writing

"Hello," the teacher said brightly. She moved gracefully through the room, murmuring quietly to each student. She stopped briefly, as one child waved hopefully to catch her attention quickly.

Okay, now I've done it. I've set myself up. I'll have to show you the rewrites. Well, I'll take that challenge! Getting rid of those pesky -ly words, the ones publishers and agents hate—isn't easy, but it's doable. And it's necessary.

Right now, you may be asking, do we have to? J.K. Rowling does it all the time! And, the big question, the one none of us dare ask those publishers and agents, is *Why?!!*

All right. I'll ignore your whining and give you some reasons.

- **First, -ly** words tell, instead of show. That big, bad no-no. Look at that paragraph above. Have I actually shown you anything? No. I've only told you.

- **Second, -ly** words are vague. They make the reader do all the work, forcing them to create their own details and guess at what they're seeing. How does someone speak *brightly*? Does their voice gets higher? Do they sound like they're singing? Is it a pleasant tone or a sickeningly sweet one? We all have plenty of images in our minds that we can use to fill in the blanks, but the blanks are still there. Readers shouldn't have to do the work.

- **Third, -ly** words are often redundant. I mean, how exactly *do* you murmur, if not quietly?

- **Finally**, the best reason for not using them, in my opinion—because you don't have to! (Here comes the mom voice.) We have computers. We have search features. We can hunt down the -ly words and destroy them. Or, for those less violent writers, we can replace them with vivid, concrete imagery.

Said brightly becomes *said with the warm, morning voice her children loved*.

Moved gracefully through the room becomes *moved through the room like a ballerina*. And...

Waved hopefully becomes *sat up tall in his chair, stretched his arm an extra two inches, and flapped his hand in mad circles*.

Can you see it? You bet you can. Can you do it? For sure! **BL**

ANDREA'S WEBSITES

An ongoing listing of helpful websites updated each month to reflect interesting finds



Andrea Galvacs
Contributing Editor

As I have repeated, getting published in WritersTalk is rewarding but, let's face it, the readership is small. To help you disseminate your work to a wider audience, I will let you know occasionally, of contests and publications soliciting work.

Organizations from the AARP to Writers Digest are requesting articles and stories in every genre and here is this month's list. Also, we will let you know of conferences and websites helpful to writers. **AG**

POETRY

Country Mouse Contest, www.poetrycmouse.com/contest/html until Nov 30.

Colorado Prize for Poetry, <http://www.coloradoreview.colostate.edu/CPP/sub.html> until Nov 30. \$25 reading fee includes one year subscription to the Colorado Review.

SHORT STORY

Writers' Digest Short Story Competition, www.writersdigest.com/conests/shortshort, until Dec 1.

Prairie Fire Contest, www.prairiefire.ca/conests.html, until Nov 30.

CONTESTS TO AVOID

International Society of Poets, The National Archives, National Library of Poetry, Noble House, Poetry.com, Poetry Press.



YAHOO WRITERS' GROUP INAUGURATED

—Dave LaRoche

What is a Yahoo Group you might ask—I did and here's what I found.

It is an interactive website made available by Yahoo—a space where any Yahoo registrant may promote an interest... like writing. There are predetermined formats and methods for handling information but content is open. Within this environment, the “owner” establishing the “group” will set up rules for its use; primarily purpose and who may participate. Yep, group membership is through invitation. The “owner” will name “moderators” who job is to keep an eye on the activity insuring it is consistent with “purpose”. Hopefully this makes the site more usable.

A few months ago, Carolyn Donnell, with help from Diana Richomme and myself, inaugurated a Yahoo Group as a clearing house for information that would be helpful to writers. Its membership is now open (exclusively) to all in the South Bay Branch.

A mission statement, or “purpose”, has been adopted and Carolyn, the “owner”, with her moderators, will see that the rules, set out on the first page, are followed. Roam around and enjoy... become enlightened. And once you have joined feel free to add your good experience to the site's growing value. No fat please and, as a member, check that you are not adding something already there.

There are the four essential elements:

Message Board – here one may read and post messages pertaining to writing. Ask questions, provide answers, comment and the like but not intended as a substitute for personal email.

Files – are intended for posting information of general interest like an article on agents, how to build a despicable character, etc. This is not for Links, but for a complete piece.

Links – are intended to point users to other locations on the Web where information of general interest may be found: resources like dictionaries, thesaurus, quotes, etc. are examples.

Data Base – is intended to further define resource material before a user explores a universe of material, a first-order selection tool. It may also be quite robust and the final source of information.

NIPPER'S NITS

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



Pat Decker Nipper
Columnist

Lesson 20. Affect/Effect

"Affect" means to bring about a change. It's always a verb. For example, "The scientist attempted to affect the molecules in a way that would create a cure for cancer."

"Affect" is used less often to mean pretend or imitate, such as, "The scientist affected a look of disbelief when his molecules didn't act the way he expected."

"Effect" can be a verb or a noun, though it's most often used as a noun. For example, "The experiment had an effect on the scientist."

When "effect" is a verb, it means to cause something to happen. "The new manager effected changes in the laboratory."

You might try simplifying them and putting them together kind of alphabetically: a-c, e-m, as in, "affect" means "change," while "effect" means "make."

Another mnemonic you could use is "affect = action," "effect = end result." You can probably think of others to make this word combination easier to remember.

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

To visit, please visit. Go to: groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthBay_Writers_Exchange/.

To join, click the blue button and follow the instructions. If you encounter problems, you may contact Carolyn, Diana or myself. DLR

Night of the Silver Moon —Carolyn Donnell

The last rays of the afternoon sun filtered through the sheer curtains stretched over the French doors, turning the dust into a golden haze around the faded chintz-covered armchair and its diminutive occupant.

"Grammy." I waved to the lady with long white hair loosely tied up in a knot on the top of her head. My grammy, great grandmother to be exact, sat where she sat every afternoon for decades. The blue veins on the back of her hand mapped a lifetime's experience as she motioned me to the worn velvet sofa opposite her.

You wouldn't know to look at her – thin and bent, no make-up, loose wisps of silver hair floating in the breeze, outdated dress, unmatched socks with old flipflops – that she was the first female professor at the University of Florida. At 40, she became the first woman to receive a doctoral degree from that institution. Her emphasis was English Literature, but she also recorded many local legends and created a few of her own before her retirement at the age of 80.

That was nineteen years ago. According to the family bible, today's birthday party marked 99 years for her on this planet. Her frail body has to be carried almost everywhere these days. Hearing and eyesight have deteriorated as well, but her mind remains sound.

I sank into the soft cushions, kicked off my shoes, and gazed out at the expansive lawn. The sun set quickly behind the hills allowing the full moon to stand out in the cloudless twilight sky. A hint of jasmine floated in on an unseasonably cool breeze. The changing light cast shadows on the line of woods behind the yard, adding to the drop in temperature.

"Brr." I shivered and looked at Grammy bundled up in her blanket. "You've got the right idea."

A cracked voice floated over to my ears. "It's the moon, Juliet." My name was Julie but Grammy always liked to be literary. "Full moon tonight. And you know what that means." A low chuckle rumbled up from her nearly one hundred year old throat.

I reached for the afghan and pulled my feet up under me as she began to recite the old legend I knew by heart, but never tired of hearing.

"Thirty miles east of Tallahassee, at the end of an long-forgotten blacktop road, is an abandoned

plantation house. Beneath peeling paint and loose shutters, you can still glimpse the faded elegance. The overgrown lawns run back to a line of dark green woods, deepening to opaque ebony beyond – a black so thick it seems solid, impenetrable. A thicket separates a grove from the other wooded areas; you have to know it's there, push branches aside deliberately to enter.

One night, long ago, the full moon illuminated a path that led north by northeast from that grove to a pond. Those muddy waters, normally nothing but a backwater arm of an old bayou, were transformed when the waxing moon reached its fullness and slipped up over the horizon. The rays caressed the far shore, as if Diana herself were spreading out her luminous tresses over the tranquil surface. Enraptured by that lunar presence, the brown liquid transformed into iridescent silver, as if some stellar alchemist had finally conquered the ancient quest of transmutation. The pale light swirling through the rising fog and the cool scent of moss woods combined to create a fairy-dusted enchantment.

On this night even the deer that came to drink were mesmerized by the glistening water and the shimmering mist. Frozen in an astral spell, they stood motionless as a slight ripple flowed smoothly across that sea of silver tranquility. Like the unrolling of a drop of mercury down a steel colored walkway, it continued unnoticed, gliding silently from one shore to the other.

Until, at the last second, in a whooshing rush of air and splashing water, a swift projectile with two long rows of jagged teeth shot up into the air. The gaping gargantuan jaws wrapped themselves around the midsection of a stately stag. Suspended in mid-air, the deer managed one terrified shriek before sliding down into oblivion. The mercurial water closed around the apparition, which disappeared as swiftly and silently as it came."

Grammy's voice tapered off on the last couple of sentences. The hypnotic trance broken, I glanced at her chair. She was asleep. The clock on

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SILVER MOON (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

the table blinked. It was late. I moved one of the pillows to the end of the sofa and pulled the afghan around me. I continued the story in my mind as I snuggled in for the night.

According to the legend, skeletal remains would emerge from the water monthly, after a full moon, as if the pond participated in a lunar cycle of sacrifice and offering. Indians that lived here long before white man came, spoke of giants in their legends, gods of the swamps, but Grammy said that Ol' Gator, as she called him, was a primeval sinner who had been banished to the moon. The only time he could come to earth was on the night when the moon joined the earth in that luminescent bog. Why he always took a large deer - only thing he would get to eat for a whole month.

As a child, I wanted to sneak out to that trail on a night of the silver moon. But Ol' Gator would have probably had me for desert. I drifted into dreams; I was that child again. Moonlit mist surrounded me, shrouding me from the denizens of the hushed woods. I remained mute as the deer gathered reverently around the enchanted waterway. The gator rose up suddenly like a sub-oceanic missile. I cringed at the wail of the deer. Trashing sounds continued. No, wait, it was thumping, a pounding that I heard. I turned my head and left the dream with a start.

Soft dawn light streamed the window. Over the pounding, I heard, "Hey, Julie . . ." I peered through my fogged-over eyes at the French doors and saw two faces looking at me, the features blurred further by the sheer curtains. Siamese twins. Snow white hair juxtaposed to black sable, like salt and pepper in jackets. Shaking my head to dispel the web of the night's images, I focused on the apparition at the door. It was only my father and his uncle outside, banging on the door and calling to me. I staggered to the door and turned the key in the brass lock. They entered together, falling over each other in body as well as in conversation. Two male voices, booming like twin foghorns.

"Damnedest thing," Uncle Henry retorted.

"It was unusual," my father joined in. "A skeleton, a huge deer . . .," he started.

"Picked clean as a whistle." Uncle Henry interrupted. "And still fresh. But no sign of . . ."

"You don't suppose that old legend . . ." I

took my turn at interrupting as we all spun around to look at Grammy. Everyone froze. One of her hands lay on the arm of the chair, a stiff bony finger pointing toward the woods.

"Grammy!" I shouted as we all bumped into each other trying to get to. Uncle Henry went over to her arm and lifted it carefully, while Father felt for a pulse at her throat and then put his ear to her chest. He looked up slowly, shaking his head.

"Grammy." I whispered this time.

Father lifted her body and carried her one last time to her bed. I heard a quiet sob come from the bedroom. I walked toward the door.

"He needs to be alone for a while, sweetie."


Uncle Henry's large hand touched my arm gently.

"Come and sit with me."

As we walked to the sofa, he stopped. "Oh. Wait." He rummaged in his front pants pocket. "We found this near the skeleton, along with a muddy footprint, human and fairly small." He held out a medalion, a likeness of a moon goddess on a golden chain.

I clutched at my throat. My hand came away empty. I yanked the necklace from his grasp.

"Are you all right?" He reached over to steady me as I swayed.

My legs turned to jelly. I sank down onto the sofa and stared at the muddy necklace. A present from Grammy 10 years ago, when I was 12, I tried to never be without it. My eyes continued on to the floor where my shoes sat. Size 5 ½, fairly small. A cold gust blew across my hand as I leaned over and picked one up. Crusted mud covered the bottom. I had not walked on anything the night before other than concrete and carpet. The dream returned in a swirling mist. The room receded. I collapsed into the soft velvet cushions. 

Terse Verse —by Pat Bustamante

New Nov. Novel

New as an exploding star,
So proud the night, this birth so far!
Every novel word a gem. Ahem!
This new 'script might mean
Living in clover;
Who can resist a Super-Nova!

WritersTalk Challenge

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

Genres:

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

Awards:

Twice yearly, Feb 15 and Aug 15

First Prize - \$60

Second - \$40

Third - \$25

Honorable Mentions

Entrants:

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

Judging:

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

Judging approach:

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

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

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

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

The Dark Flutes of November

by Meredy Amyx

Every year when I turn the calendar page over to November, my first thoughts are not of Thanksgiving and Pilgrims, harvests and feasts and pumpkin pies, early snow, over the river and through the woods to Christmas we go. I think first of the deep end of the year, the heavy brown and purple velvet draperies of the days drawn against the lowering sky, the soulful music of descent. I think first of the dark flutes of November.

The dark flutes of November come from a poem—an old poem, a bad poem, written by Tom the poet. All the verses of Tom the poet were in some way bad.

Tom's poems were social heretics, blaring their challenge to the established order. It was 1962, and the established order seemed unassailable, but Tom had no fear of windmills. Soon enough, the voices of a great many young people like Tom would rock society to its foundation; but in that year most of the challengers were still writing their college applications and worrying about SAT scores. Hippies had yet to be invented, and Dylan's recording of "Blowing in the Wind" was a year away from release. Tom heralded the brewing storm.

His poems were literary renegades, trampling the conventions of verse composition by following in the sandalprints of the beatniks, who by then had well-defined conventions of their own. No less idealistic than the poetry of the past, these new verses embodied other ideals and other literary standards. They accused, raved, wailed, and defied using abstract nouns with capital letters and an abundance of emotive language such as *scream*, *mad*, *horror*, and *despair*. They reveled in their own mediocre genius. Superlatives abounded. Oblique phrases and outlandish figures of speech supplied color in a nightmarish Times Square sort of way.

Tom's poems were moral outlaws, stridently defying or flagrantly dismissing cultural and religious norms of right and wrong. In the homogenized milieu in which I was growing up, common values and assumptions yielded stable definitions of good and evil. Tom's poems resisted virtue not only out of a gluttonous appetite for sin but also out of a zealous application of principle.

Tom's poems were vagabond mystics, thumbing their way from satori to nickel-and-dime satori in rundown shoes, finding divinity in unauthorized places: spider, garbage, self.

By the rule books I knew, these things were all manifestly bad.

Some of Tom's poems were simply aesthetic duds. They were bad in the most unforgivable way: poorly conceived, poorly executed, and poorly typed amateurish crap.

But they were, after all, the work of a boy. Tom the poet was eighteen. At fifteen I was simultaneously awed, shocked, fascinated, horrified, dazzled, and confused.

Such is the power of verse.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 15)

Dark Flutes (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

The work of Tom the poet jumped the cosmic barrier between parallel universes and entered mine through the normally chaste medium of the newspaper. Tom McInerney was profiled in a column for teens as the youthful founder of a poetry magazine, the *Blue Note Journal*, which he sold to the denizens of Harvard Square.

As a junior in high school, I was probably more innocent than the average nine-year-old today. My own social, cultural, and racial environment was all I knew. I was the daughter of a professor of philosophy and religion at a small Protestant college in a suburb south of Boston, in an all-white neighborhood and all-white schools where each of us knew exactly which European strains were in our blood. I wore white gloves to church on Sunday and hats with little veils, spent my allowance on *Classics Illustrated* comics and five-cent candy bars, and didn't know the meaning of any swear words except "hell."

Yet in the privacy of my own rebel mind, I had by the age of thirteen begun wondering if everything I was being taught in school, in church, and at home was precisely and utterly true. I was insulated from any evidence to the contrary. But I had been reading beyond the bounds of the library's suggested book list for adolescents, and I had been writing poetry secretly since I was eleven. The search of the inner reaches that it takes to write poetry, any poetry, even angst-laden grandiose loquacious overromanticized self-absorbed precious juvenile poetry in lines of uneven length that do not rhyme, upsets the equilibrium. The mind that has been questing after truth instead of doing homework is a mind susceptible to unorthodox views.

The newspaper columnist praised Tom's entrepreneurship and his commitment to the literary arts, quoting his scornful reference to the "hip-dilettantes" who grew beards and wrote verse because it was the faddish thing to do. I had never known anyone who used expressions like "hip-dilettante," and I had no idea what it meant, but I was almost abjectly impressed. The very idea of a teenager's publishing a serious literary magazine excited me on so many levels at once that it was as if the universe had delivered this opportunity directly to my welcome mat, gift-wrapped. I penned a formal note requesting two sample copies, enclosed 75 cents apiece in cash, and added \$2.00 of my babysitting money to show my support of Tom's publishing venture. And I tucked in a tasteful selection of my own verse, daring to

expose my tender creations to his alien but sympathetic eye.

A few days later, a brown envelope arrived at my home, addressed in messy black ballpoint script, with the return address of "Blue Note." Ignoring elevated parental eyebrows, I clasped it to the breast of my fringed turquoise pullover sweater and hustled it away upstairs. There was nothing of this that I meant to share.

Along with my sample copies, the envelope contained an actual semilegible handwritten note. Tom the poet had written to me *personally*, and what's more, he wanted to publish one of my poems—"and not just because you were wonderful enough to send two dollars."

Not many thrills like that one come in a lifetime.

The *Blue Note Journal* consisted of folded and stapled mimeographed sheets produced on a manual typewriter, with crudely rendered line art on the cover. The grotesque, hallucinatory image of a man's face was a disturbing foretaste of the contents.

This humble though not unpretentious vehicle was about to transport me from the guarded pasture of the Lamb to the savage jungle of the Tyger. In an instant my innocence was blown away like the aureole of a dandelion whose bloom is past.

Without touching me or even meeting me, and without using any forbidden words, Tom the poet penetrated my intellectual virginity.

Physical virginity is a natural intact state. Intellectual virginity is a construct of words that conspire to form a reality shielded from disruptive contradictions. Possessing nothing but schoolgirl knowledge and my own vague surmises, I was virginal with respect to a view of the world. Composed of words and the silences between words, my innocence could be seduced and deflowered with words.

It wasn't that I had never before encountered strong ideas or disquieting images in my reading. Keats and Shelley swelled with Romantic fervor and conviction. Poe teemed with morbid fears and passions. Dostoevsky tormented his characters with unanswerable questions. The standard English curriculum of Dickens, Hawthorne, and Shakespeare delivered murder, betrayal, revenge, and catastrophe to our impressionable minds. The Bible itself was rife with stories of vice and corruption.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

Dark Flutes (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15)

Yet this was something different. The underlying assumptions were different.

Until then, all the reading I had done, whether by assignment or by free choice, subscribed to the same essential morality. Good and evil were clear-cut. Traditional Judaeo-Christian judgment prevailed in the end over every wayward sinner from Huck Finn to Emma Bovary. If a Raskolnikov introduced ambiguities, replacing absolutes with relatives and supplanting altruism with self-interest, he invariably met the doom he deserved.

Another morality pervaded the words of Tom the poet, a personal compass and social conscience not expressed by Christian Sunday-school notions of right and wrong. Self-consciously bohemian, it celebrated what the uninitiated had hardly dared to countenance, never mind embrace: openness to sensation, expansion of perception, autonomy, the liberated will. Exploration that leapt over the warning signs and dashed to the edge of the precipice, arms flung wide open, shouting with angry joy. Defiance, blasphemy, and simple disobedience. Experience above all, beyond the bounds of madness, heaven and hell. Everything we knew could be questioned, every authority challenged, every truth doubted. Every consciousness could create itself. This morality rejoiced in the breaking of the mind not to make it whole again but to exaggerate and multiply its powers of perception, like the smashing of a crystal into multifaceted shards that will never reunite but will always reflect their surroundings and one another hyperdimensionally.

Too late to close my eyes, too late to unsee what I had seen, too late to fend off the unprecedented thoughts and sudden realizations and half-formed questions that flooded my awareness, I now took in the voices of my own generation and recognized their language. It was the language of revolution.

As a diligent schoolgirl brought up in Protestant New England I had been taught to honor revolutionaries. From Jesus Christ to Martin Luther, from Christopher Columbus to Paul Revere, our heroes were those who dared to put personal conviction above conventional authority, and then act on it.

Paradoxically, I was most faithful to my upbringing in the moment when I cast it off.

Tom the poet was not the only influence on me in that malleable and impressionable time when the wave of the sixties broke over our safe shore and we were carried away. But he was the first, with his loping gait

and scruffy brown hair, his shy smile and soft brown eyes, dressed in worn cords and a brown tweed jacket whose better days had been spent in a thrift shop, carrying a battered canvas backpack stuffed with limp, creased paperbacks and a notebook filled with scribbles in messy handwriting, declaiming his reverence for Baudelaire and Rimbaud, Nietzsche, St. John of the Cross, and Salvador Dali, Gurdjieff and Leary and gods of some other heaven, rhapsodizing over spiritual journeys taken with the aid of substances too new to be illegal, raising aloft gleaming visions of literature as the means of society's redemption on the one hand while with the other he borrowed a dollar from a girl's allowance money in order to buy her a cup of coffee—all unaware, he was the first to corrupt me. To emancipate me. To show me another way.

The pages of the *Blue Note Journal* cast an eerie light by which I saw for the first time the stone walls of my thought prison. A red neon sign blazed: "EXIT." Without a backward glance, I exited the safe world that I had been reared and schooled and churched in.

Somewhere behind me a door slammed, but I was too absorbed to hear it. Never once have I wished to reopen it.

Every verse but one of Tom the poet is long gone from my life. So far as I know, nothing of Tom McInerney's was ever published, except in the *Blue Note Journal*. No more than a few kindly souls ever bought the copies peddled on the street in Cambridge by a tall, lean youth, soft-spoken, with a self-effacing manner, who looked like he could use a good meal. Every line of every bad poem is forgotten but this one: "the dark flutes of November." Amidst the overwrought verbiage in ragged lines without proper punctuation or spelling, that lone image sang out to me. That lyric grafted itself onto my soul. The haunting mellow tones of the dark flutes found a place within me that words never touch.

I set a new course by the light of the neon sign, and somehow it brought me to where I am now. I rarely think about the path I took and how it diverged from where I might have gone. I never wonder if I would have been happier to stay within the lines. I seldom even think of Tom the poet, who came and went in my life for more than twelve years before he disappeared.

But his words left a permanent mark on November. The song of the season, ever and always, begins with the dark flutes. *MA*

BILL BRISKO'S COUNTER CURRENTS CAN I GIVE YOU SOMETHING FOR IT -PART 2

"We counterfeit concert tickets."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Like, what kind of concert tickets?"

He looked around cautiously to see if curious eyes or inquisitive ears were pointed his way. He was satisfied when there weren't.

"Like to the concert tonight!"

"No! Show me one!"

He reached into his coat pocket (why he was wearing a coat in late summer, I'll never know) and produced a yellow Ticketron ticket. I looked it over, and took mine out to compare it with. They were identical! "Naw, you just bought this, this isn't forged," I whispered to him.

"Yes it is!" And he grabbed the ticket and turned it over to the backside. "See the back, there is no printing on it like yours. We don't do the backs."

I couldn't believe my eyes, it was the nicest forgery I had ever seen. I looked closely at the ticket; the blacks, the yellows...yes, all the colors were there, and they were correct. Wow, and at \$6 a pop, you could make some serious money (back in the '70's!), and you weren't dealing with money. I mean it would be different if you were forging money, this was just show tickets.

"This is incredible! You two guys really are crazy! Do you make any money off of it?"

"We do all right," said the quiet one, chiming in again. "What we don't get in Social Security, we make up in ticket money. Then, of course, we roll our profits into other investments."

"Other investments?"

"You know, the usual Rock and Roll stuff," said the one with the glasses. "Pot, crank, smack, psychedelics... whatever. We did a Grateful Dead concert last month! Christ, you should have seen what was going around in line! We cleaned up."

"Yeah? But the Grateful Dead? I dunno if I could stand that concert!"

"You don't have to like them, man! You just have to clean up. Lots of psychedelic stuff there..."

Which was true, in a twisted sort of way. There were those who lived their way through the hippie era and there were those who profited their way through the hippie era. It could be argued that both paths were identical, but they were, in fact, different. Many people that I know were part of the post-Beat culture known as the

Hippies. There was grass, music, out-of-body experiences, demonstrating against unpopular wars, the constant paranoia that the Government 'Thought' squad would blast their way through your front door at any moment;

those sorts of things. Then there were those who only said they were there, but really weren't. Those who sold the drugs, bootlegged the music, provided the experiences, staged the wars...those who *were* the Government Thought squad. I wondered exactly which these two were.

After eyeing the forged tickets, we continued our long wait on line sitting in a small circle, as if a tiny campfire were burning on the sidewalk in front of us. Since more and more people had joined the line we were all packed in pretty tight, rubbing shoulders with those around us. Just then the one with the glasses pulled something else out of his coat pocket. I couldn't quite see what he was fumbling with, but it looked like a small film canister, the new ones that just came out from Kodak made of plastic with a snap lid. For some strange reason he was having real trouble prying the top off. Was it some vestige of his insanity that was keeping him from getting inside? Usually insane people are quite smart; they're just insane. Just then the cap came flying off while he jerked his hand to one side, and a stream of white powder came flowing out and coated the leg of my right trouser.

I looked over at him, bewildered. "What the hell is that?" I croaked.

He stared at my leg in disgust, at all the precious powder he just spilled on it, and just smiled. Motioning to the quiet one the two of them stood up, looked at each other, then just walked away - disappearing into the crowd at the front of the line. They left me helplessly alone and in some sort of *predicament* with my right leg covered in suspicious white powder. I took a long look at my leg, then quickly realized - *this must be some of their investment!*

I deliberated about this peculiar situation carefully: Here I am sitting on the concrete sidewalk at Winterland waiting to get into a concert which I can't remember the headliner for, sharing some beer and four hours with certified loonies who forge concert tickets, and now I have a leg full of white powder. What *is* going on here? How do I work this? Should I just stand up and brush it off so it drifts silently into the wind like some sort of short-lived memory? Or should I try to salvage this suspicious powder? Hell, I don't even know what it is! But I had a good idea. And a leg full of white powder is...well, a leg full of white powder!

As I sat there pondering this strange dilemma, some dreg-looking hippie with a scraggy beard sitting in line be-

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CAN I GIVE YOU... FROM PAGE 17

side me noticed the quandary I was in. Sitting there on the sidewalk with this powdery white leg, I was completely confused and bewildered. He looked me up and down, then said...

"What the hell is that all over your leg?"

"Jesus, I don't know," I muttered. "Could be crank, lash, scag; the guy took off before I could find out exactly what it was."

"You mean *smack*?"

"Yeah, that or speed. But I gotta figure out what to do with it quick, before everyone tramples me trying to get inside when they open the doors." I was playing up the drama of the situation a bit, hell for all I know it could've been powdered sugar. I just wanted to get inside.

And *then* it happened. It occurred so quickly that I couldn't prepare for it. The hippie looked at my leg in disbelief and shock, his eyes as big as baseballs and his mouth totally agape. He then shoved me down onto the sidewalk, my head bouncing off the cinder block wall. I started to reach for the 4" Mexican switchblade I keep in my pocket when all of a sudden he grabbed my leg by the knee and started licking the powdery substance off my trousers. After several attempts I finally hoisted myself up into a sitting position, regaining my balance, then he shoved me back down onto the sidewalk.

It was this strange repetitious up and down motion. He had full control of my leg with both hands, and every time I regained my balance and tried to sit up, he'd shove me back down and I'd keep hitting my head on the cinder block wall. I must have looked like some desperate fish out of water flopping around on the sidewalk there. We did this about 5 or 6 times, and I was getting pissed about as fast as it was getting old.

After about the 6th bounce and clunk on the head I noticed the hippie almost had the entire leg cleaned off. I figured it didn't warrant sticking a knife into the bastard at this point. But then it hit me - Sweet Jesus, where was this guy headed when he ran out of powder? I mean I could expect *anything* this close to the Castro district! So I took my hands off the switchblade and covered up my pecker between my legs.

To my relief, he finally finished somewhere in the upper thigh area and sat up - smacking his lips and licking his unkempt facial hair. He then rose to his feet, still licking anything that tasted like powder off his face. And then, awfully gentlemanly of him I thought, extended a hand and helped me off the concrete sidewalk.

"Thanks a lot, I really needed that," he said. I stood there completely stunned, not knowing exactly what to do. Was I supposed to haul off and hit this guy all the way

into Geary Avenue? Was I supposed to thank him for solving the little *problem* I had there? Was I supposed to join him in some ritual smoke ceremony, bonding with the eternal flame of a joint when it passed us in line while swearing blood allegiance to each other? I had no freaking clue, but it would be a moot point in about 5 seconds because of what the hippie was just going to say...

"Can I give you something for it?" he beamed, with a big smile on his face, reaching for his wallet.

"What?"

"Can I give you something for *it*? The lash? The *dumb dust*?"

"You mean on my *leg*?"

"Yeah!"

Standing there trembling with fear I thought - you mean this bastard actually wants to *pay* for it? For the privilege of licking my leg clean of some unknown substance that could've been anything from pure Southeast Asian heroine to powdered sugar from Hawaii? Or the mere fact that if he didn't stop where he did I might have been forced, by some strange rationale, to stick a 4" switchblade purchased from a cheap liquor store in Tijuana into the cheek of his ass? That the last time anything this strange happened to me I was canoeing down a river in the West Virginia wilderness when I came across two men and a whiskey still hidden in the woods and they tried corn-holing my best friend? (We'll talk about this later...) No, reality is far too weird, too grim for things like this to happen on a random basis. Especially so on the Streets of San Francisco within pissing distance of Polk Street and the Castro while waiting to get into a concert of glitter-clad geezers and mods from England. Just as I was about to shake the whole thing off as some bad, psychedelic, psychotic episode my mouth said

"I'll take a dime for it."

"You mean ten bucks?"

"Yeah, it was a least a dime's worth, so ten will cover it. Besides, how was I suppose to get it off my leg?"

"I hear ya," said the hippie. He reached around for his wallet, which was chained to his belt (must be a San Francisco thing), pulled out ten bucks and handed it to me.

"Thanks a lot, man!"

"No mention. See you inside..." I said. "And sweet dreams!"

And with that the doors finally opened and we bolted through.

*So cum on feel the noise.
Girls Rock your boys.
We get wild, wild, wild.
At your door!*

Slade

BB

Announcements Announcements Announcements

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November 1 at Edies

General Meeting:
November 8
Kate Evans

Open Mic:
Nov 3, 7:30p
B&N Almaden Plaza
Nov 10, 7:30.p
Borders, Santana Row
Nov 17, 7:30
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Inputs:
Nov 16

Editors Pow-Wow:
Nov 18 10:00am
Orchard Valley Coffee

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

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

See Map Below

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