



WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

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Mercury News Columnist Mike Cassidy At Our Next Meeting —Diana Richomme



Diana Richomme
VP and Programs Chair

Growing up in a family of eight, Mike Cassidy couldn't get a word in edgewise. "If I could write," he said, "at least I could get out what I wanted to say. Had it not been for his intense desire to be heard, readers might never have had the pleasure of reading his column while sipping their morning coffee. These days, his writing reaches over 800,000 Mercury News readers.

Cassidy's columns have taken us everywhere from rat-hunting adventures to the Iraq war. The stories he finds most moving are those that result in change.

"There was this young girl I wrote about who lived on a Navajo reservation in Arizona," he said. "She entered a contest through a school project and won an Apple iMac, but she didn't have a phone line for Internet access. No one did on the reservation. There were 100,000 people or so."

The story was read by the White House, and President Clinton got involved. It launched a major change, closing the gap between those who do and don't have phone and Internet access. "The girl grew up, and today she works for a cellular phone company," Cassidy said. "Now she has more phones than she know what to do with."

Making a difference is only part of why Cassidy chose journalism. "I'm not all that much a motivated self-starter," he said. "Newspapers pay you whether you write or not. And they tend to encourage you to write." Sup-



Mike Cassidy

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Meet Magazine Editor and Writer, Loureen Giordano

By Una T. Daly

Deadlines are what make CWC South Bay member Loureen Giordano a successful writer. "I'd never finish anything without them," added the longtime magazine editor and freelance writer. She was recently promoted to Special Sections Editor at the popular *Bay Area Parent* magazine where she has been a writer and Calendar editor for many years.

"I love to write about offbeat places and about people whose zest for life has led them to great acts of service, valuable discoveries, or rare adventures," reported Loureen. A life long resident of San Jose's Willow Glen area, she inherited a love of local history from her dad. On long Sunday

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



Una Daly
Contributing Editor

WritersTalk Challenge Awards during October Meeting

A Look Ahead:

Oct 6, 13, 20 Open Mic, see p19
No Board of Directors Meeting in October
Oct 11 Dinner Meeting, Costumes and Challenge Awards
Oct 21 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 10:00am

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President's Prowling —Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Branch

BACK FROM THE CONFERENCE

They've made an interesting evolution for me, these writing conferences.

My first writing conference was the next-to-last Asilomar Conference – was that 1998? I had never been to a writing conference; I had never met an agent or publisher. I had barely met any published author. I took Frank Baldwin's ("Yeah Frank!") workshop on novel writing and he gave me several sound suggestions about what to do with my novel which was, at that point, more a lengthy travel memoir.

At the final Asilomar Conference (1999?), I actually sat down at a big table and listened to agents answering questions from writers. I was too intimidated to say much, though. At the conference open mic, I read the first three minutes of my new first chapter. The next morning I found myself eating breakfast with an agent and her assistant. The assistant assured me that he remembered "every word" of what I read; the agent continued silently with her eggs. I was not encouraged.

There was a gap between the Asilomar Conferences and the first East of Eden Conference (2002). By then I had progressed beyond Chapter One, but only a few chapters. I decided it was time I learned to pitch to an agent – even if I didn't actually have anything to pitch. I used my five minutes to gather information.

"I understand most agents aren't interested in novels that haven't yet been completed..."

"Yep."

"I have a double-novella, but I understand that novellas are difficult to get published..."

"Yep."

It went something like that, at any rate..

By the second East of Eden Conference (2004), I had completed the novel (at least I thought I had!). At the opening dinner I chanced to sit beside one of our keynoters. The next day one of our faculty critiqued my first page during her workshop, and I tried my first real "pitch" to an agent. But I hadn't quite figured out how to describe my novel (aren't "literary" novels supposed to transcend genre?), and the agent concluded that I had written a "political thriller". He added: "Political thrillers are hard to sell..."

Sunday morning, before brunch at the Steinbeck House, I revised Chapter One. By the following spring, I had revised the entire manuscript.

This year I had better luck. Reserving a seat at an empty table for Friday dinner, I returned with my meal to discover that the entire table was occupied by agents – seven or eight of them! And I was better prepared for my pitches.

Several agents are interested in my novel – definitely exciting for me!

I'm pleased, but that isn't my (main) point. I see two significant lessons.

First, it is definitely worth it to attend our writers meetings – both our conferences and our monthly dinner meetings (and don't forget our open mics!). You meet people who can advise or assist you.

Second, it may take awhile for you to develop your style, finish your book, or find an agent or publisher. But each attempt lays the groundwork for your next progression. Eventually, you can achieve your writing goal.

Don't give up! Build your dream one step at a time! BB

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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Execs

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408 730 9622, pres@...

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vp@...

Secretary—Cathy Bauer
secretary@...

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treasurer@...

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membership@...

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EoE Conference—Beth Proudfoot
eastofeden@...

Open Mic—Bill Baldwin
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Webmaster—Ro Davis
webmaster@...

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address is
... @southbaywriters.com

Join With Us

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

Contact our Membership Chair
Marjorie Johnson

Do you have expertise?

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

Help With Your Profiles

—Susan Mueller



Susan Mueller

I wrote profiles of the Silicon Valley wizards for seven years. The

San Jose/Silicon

Valley Business Journal assigned me to find the person. There was a different business focus every week. These were very popular. Let me describe my formula.

I would send a fax telling the prospective subject my intent and what the business topic would be. I told that person my deadline. The journalist is supposed to provide the person's public relations individual with a list of questions and the time length of the interview. I did not out of innocence. That proved to be a great asset. The subject would give me a date and time that was convenient for them and I would show up with my camera for a portrait.

After introductions, I would lean forward with a smile and ask, "What is so great about your company? What all do you do?"

This beginning was sincere on my part and flattering to that individual. They would leap into a major brag story and I would take notes. Periodically I encouraged them, sincerely, with another smile and say something like, "That is great/fascinating/exciting." This

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



Dave LaRoche

Managing Editor

Editor's Itch

If you are going to write well... the right stuff, the right

way, you must read insatiably.

Every once in a while, on the amateur-looking-for-professional route, we uncover a clever, provocative or poignant piece and stop to admire and reward—maybe envy. It takes an imaginative mind to produce these jewels; cutting perception, Kant's kind of digestion, and exceptional skill at pouring out the beans. Well, I submit, the best way to excel at anything is to immerse yourself in it—get sopping wet. And to writers, that means read—as much and as often as possible.

I play at golf. Like some others I think golf is a metaphor for life or more accurately, when looking for life's metaphor, I mostly think of golf. In any case, golf is a challenge; it requires big discipline, succeeds with confidence, feeds on inspiration and pals around with a muse. Professional golfers hit hundreds of balls a day, take several lessons a week and for entertainment, watch other golfers play—on the course, on video, maybe Play-Station 2. They immerse themselves in the game, get sopping wet, and then they compete. Is golf also a metaphor for writing?

Tod Goldberg (we loved him at the conference) was funny because he spoke out our truth with his in-your-face, delivery, and one of the three things that he said we should do is: "read voraciously!" (He said some other things about the conference and what to do with your ass, but for now, "read voraciously")

Reading is fuel for the writing process and if you don't read, the process stutters and stalls like an engine lean on gas—ideas fade, words hide, writing stops... chug.

I love to immerse in a book done well. I enjoy it but mostly it sharpens my perception, stimulates my imagination, and fills up my bean pot. DLR

WritersTalk

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WritersTalk Staff

Managing Editor

Dave LaRoche (408) 729-3941

Contributing Editors

Una Daly
Jackie Mutz
Andrea Galvacs
Bill Brisko
Anne Darling

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Guest Columns

Almost Anything Goes ≤300 wds

Regular Columns

to Una Daly

News Items

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

Literary Work :

Short Fiction ≤1500 wds

Memoir ≤1000 wds

Poetry ≤300 wds

Essay ≤700 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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(DALY FROM PAGE 1)

afternoon drives with the family, her father would spin stories about the original residents of the houses downtown and the farms on the outskirts. The Giordano family has lived and farmed in San Jose since long before it became Silicon Valley.

"I knew early on I'd be a writer eventually, but taught English for a few years in our local community colleges before taking an editorial position on a weekly newspaper," said Loureen. While still teaching, she entered the California Pioneers' annual essay contest sensing somehow that she was going to win even though she had no idea what to write about. Her essay, *The Life of J. H. Flickinger, 1830 – 1897*, took the first prize of \$200 and the opportunity to address a large audience at an awards banquet. No other writing accomplishment since then has meant as much to her.

Preferring non-fiction writing, Loureen finds real people and real events strangely wonderful. Her current book length project is a memoir of a D-Day veteran. Pitching this at the revered Maui Writers' Conference last month, she has been invited to send in her proposal. She also is working on two other historical novels, one set in the United States and India, and the other in Wales.

Two years ago, Loureen joined CWC South Bay in time to help judge the East of Eden 2004 short story contest and provide hospitality for conference attendees. "I do my best

to be a good member by attending as many monthly meetings as I can and eating as much of the buffet as I can," and she does appreciate the folks who bring dessert. Inspired by other members' creativity, vulnerability, and persistence, she also enjoys the practical wisdom of the monthly speakers.

Her biggest dream is to finish off one of her major projects. The other women in her writers' group—Karen Llewellyn, Evelyn Sherry and Joyce Koeplin—keep her going with their wonderful insights, humor, and talent. The books of C.S. Lewis have sparked her imagination since childhood and the journals of Lucy Maud Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables*, written in spite of hardship and illness motivate her to overcome the things that get in the way.

When not reading, writing, or editing, Loureen likes to hang out with family and friends, volunteer at church, eat good food, and travel. She also is preparing for a big event in a few months, her upcoming marriage. Congratulations to Loureen and her soon-to-be husband! *UTD*

(RICHOMME FROM PAGE 1)

port from his teachers and experience on high school and college newspapers reinforced his skills and built his confidence. The first thing that drew him to journalism was the excitement.

"I grew up in Chicago where there was no shortage of happenings in the paper," he said.

Today Mike Cassidy writes one of the most popular columns in the Bay Area. Join us Wednesday, October 11, to learn more about creating a weekly column and hear his perspective on the news industry evolution. *DR*

(MUELLER FROM PAGE 3)

launched more story. The interview often went for an hour. That person usually said something like, "I've never enjoyed anything so much." I reassured them that if they said anything they would like to retract I would always honor that and I did.

My editor wanted some human interest so I would ask what they did on the weekends or could I talk to their brother. Only one person in all that time backed off and stiffened up. That profile was never published.

How did I find all these amazing people? I read business publications so I was somewhat savvy about various industries. The newspaper had a directory of all the local companies and their CEO's etc. The directory was sorted by industry. This just made it easy to find people. Sometimes the president or CEO would refer me to someone else in their company that had a particularly wonderful story to tell. Have questions about profiles, contact me. *SM*

Terse Verse
—by Pat Bustamante

Oct. Awk

Proof reading:

If only fool-proof!

..Corrections go "poof"..

I swear: I never said it

Just that way...

It's going into print?

Alack-A-Day!

Voices from East of Eden

Voices everywhere—in, around and after the conference—offering messages of personal value. All of them complimentary, all of them congratulatory. You bet it was worth the money and time—nowhere better spent, when can I come back? Excellent! Congratulations! Here are a few:

Many, many thanks for helping make the conference such a good experience and for all the help you gave organizing me. It was greatly appreciated. Kind regards,

Ken Sherman



Just wanted to thank you for a wonderful time at the conference. I thought the turnout was great, and everyone was so friendly. Great seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones. Sorry I didn't get a chance to thank you in person, Edie, but you did an incredible job, and Beth you're a fantastic MC. Hope it was as successful for you as it was for me.

Thanks again, **Denny Warner**



An East of Eden Thesaurus—

NOUNS: energy, excitement, friends, fun, ideas, information, inspiration, opportunity, professionals, stimulation, value

VERBS: connect, discover, enjoy, exchange, learn, meet, network, share

ADJS: enriching, exhausting, full, intense, satisfying, stimulating, wonderful, worthwhile

ADVS: generously, really, seriously, thoroughly, very, warmly, well

Meredy Amyx



...I guess the biggest thrill was having Adrienne Barbeau attend my workshops! And ask for my card! And share the name of an author I might like since we both have the same sense of humor! Also, sharing dinner with Tod. Know his brother well.... (again) **Denny Warner**

Geez. I could write an entire column! ...It was great meeting so many friends who I hadn't seen in awhile. Lovely haven't people rushing me shouting "Carol!" and giving me big hugs. Met a lot of wonderful new writers. One of the contest winners shared his work with me... ... Sold a few *Salamander the Great* books. Spoke to Tod Goldberg about joining our branch and he did. Asked all of the





Jana's publisher, Charlotte Cook, "I didn't tell her yet. Why don't you tell her." to inform my good friend that she "Jana, sit down." was just nominated for the Pulitzer. Watched her cry. ...Invited about 20 or so speakers and writers to be a part of an anthology I am pulling together. ...Everyone I asked did not say no. ...And now I am facing fear of success! GAAAAD! What a RUSH! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! (All of this and more)" from

Carol Wood

Without a doubt, the high point for this first time presenter was the Cannery Row tour on Sunday afternoon. I mean, here I am, sitting in one of the most sacred literary landmarks on the entire planet -- Doc Rickett's Lab -- with

Jean Freakin' Auel!!! Actually, I am the one who is freakin', just being in this legendary spot with the author of one of the most popular, best-selling books of the 20th century. Jean was delightful, and I can see why she's such a compelling writer -- she's insatiably curious, up for anything, and a good sport no matter what detours and pitfalls may show up in her path. Edie Matthews did a wonderful job leading the tour. She gave each of us a handout with excerpts of Steinbeck's works about Cannery Row, which we took turns reading aloud when we came to the appropriate spot on the tour. How meaningful! I came home Sunday evening feeling energized and inspired, eager to tackle whatever new writing project may come my way. You can't ask for anything more out of a conference.

Joyce Krieg —Talk Radio Mysteries

I'm sure you already received, or will receive many comments, so the only one I'll make is: Was EoE terrific, or was it!!! **Andrea Galvacs**





Hope everyone gets a chance to recover this week. But pat yourselves on the back for a job well done. Today after the Cannery Row Tour, Jean Auel said (in front of witnesses) it was the best conference she'd ever attended! Congratulations!

Edie Matthews

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed being part of the East of Eden Writing Conference. All the participants were nice, upbeat folks. Better yet, the audience paid attention when I spoke and even laughed in the

right places! It was truly a pleasure. Thank you again for asking me to be a part of such a wonderful event! Sincerely, **Chris Reich** P.S. my thanks to Una Daly, Jackie Mutz, and Bill Brisko for their driving talents!!

Thanks so much for inviting me to participate in the conference and I hope that each of my presentations were well received. I present for many writers conferences each year all across the U.S. and the East of Eden conference is one of the best in the country. ...I'd welcome an invitation for the next East of Eden if you guys can see your way clear to have me back. ...Today I'm heading out for a lecture on forensic DNA testing. It'll be a wee bit more technical than what I showed you guys [at the conference]. Thanks again! **Lee Lofland**

Dave, I must have missed you. What an incredible

weekend, though! I'm still decompressing...

Becky Levine



I just wanted to again thank you for the great job you did at the conference! I've attended the Squaw Valley Writers' conference twice, and this was by far a much better event! Everything was great - the venue, the speakers, the food, AND the fact that we stayed on schedule! Good Job! thanks, **Kat Madison**

The conference was one that I shall never forget. What a rush Saturday turned out to be. It took me a few days to calm down. After the program, agents Ashley Grayson and his wife Carolyn (faculty members at the conference) approached me to ask who handled my speaking schedule. I said that I did it on my own. He said that I should get an agent for speaking and that he will help me with that. He added, "My wife and I are on our way to a planning session for a national women's conference and we're going to tell them to



hire you as the speaker." He was very complimentary about the connection between the audience and me. It was a wonderful group and the best I've had in over four years of speaking. You people on the planning team should be as proud as new parents. Bests, **Betty Auchard**



helped to set an atmosphere comfortable... The faculty you and your team chose were not only high caliber, but made themselves wonderfully accessible to participants. What a treat. I also LOVED that things ran on time.

My friend, Amy Peele, and I are still running on "conference high" from the experience, with lots of inspiration as well as lots of meaningful connections to keep us following up for some time... See you in print!

Betsy Fasbinder



Just wanted to say thanks for including me in the East of Eden conference. I really enjoyed myself — met some truly amazing and inspiring folks — and possibly a few future book projects! Your organization of the event — and helpfulness with the faculty — was greatly appreciated. Very best and keep writing!

Carolyn Hayes Uber Stephens Press



East of Eden Writing Contest Winners

It is the pleasure of the East of Eden Conference Committee, their Judges, the South Bay Writers, the Benefactors of Basil Stevens and Dan Niemi, Komenar Publishing and the editors of *WritersTalk* to announce the winners of the writing contests associated with the conference. Thank you for your good work and to all that participated.

BASIL STEVENS MEMORIAL WRITING CONTEST

- First place: Daniel P. Smith
- Second place: Kathleen Jalalpour

DAN NIEMI MEMORIAL FICTION WRITING CONTEST

- First place: Michael Hahn

WRITERS TALK CHALLENGE

Meredy Amyx

THE CHARLES & CHARLOTTE COOK (KOMENAR PUBLISHING) WRITING CONTEST

- First place: Leonore Doyle, "Triestes"
- Runner-Up: Collyn Justus, "Care and Feeding of a Dead Tiger"
- Runner-Up: Luanne Oleas, "Pilots and Priests"

Honorable Mentions

Janet Goddard
Judy Delaney
R.M. Ward
Richard Brost
Tyna Burford

Significant Potential

Cynthia Furze
Kathleen Wyland
Martin Sorensen
J.G. O'Reilly
Kevin McNeil
Kathleen Jalalpour
Giselle Stancic
Luanne Oleas
Jack Erickson
Brian David Granatir
Mysti Berry

EAST OF EDEN WRITING CONTEST

Short Story category:

- First place: "The Shape of Smoke" Elizabeth Banning
- Second place: "Valentine's Day" Willard Thompson
- Third place: "Casualties of War" Robert J. Miller

Screenplay category:

- First place: "The Ice Melts" Brian David Granatir
- Second place: "Hopeless Heterosexual?: The Tenure Trap" Pat Hanson
- Third place: "St. John" Mysti Berry

Nonfiction category:

- First place: "War Bike" Pat Tyler
- Second place: "Purple Plum In A Dark Green Sky" Chuck Kensler
- Third place: "Smell The Coffee" Betsy Fasbinder

Poetry category:

- First place: "Breakers"/"Cypress"/"Estuary" Deanne Gwinn
- Second place: "Pacific Time"/"On A Train Called the City of San Francisco" Robert J. Miller
- Second place tie: "Education Center, Drake's Bay: To A Cormorant On A Shelf" Robert J. Miller
- Third Place: "TV is Something," Richard A. Burns

Children's/Juvenile Fiction category:

- First place: "A Poem For Jimmy" Robert J. Miller
- Second place: from "Gwion Bach and the Cauldron of Keridwen" Cynthia Furze
- Third place: from "Care and Feeding of a Dead Tiger" Collyn Justus

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

GO AHEAD AND FIGHT! I DARE YOU!

Writers are nice people. We all saw it in September at the East of Eden conference—everybody smiling, talking, sharing. We're generous, helpful, and supportive—go ahead, make your own list of positive adjectives!

Unfortunately, when we sit down at our computers, with our typewriters, with our pens...we're sometimes *too* nice. We back off from plot problems, from character conflict; we avoid making things too nasty.

As a result, we miss the chance to put necessary tension into our stories.

Conflict *is* tension. Without it, your story will go smoothly along, nice and calm...so calm that your reader may decide to stop reading. Bad news!

Okay, fine. So how do you create conflict? First, give your protagonist a goal. Your hero has to want something, and he has to want it badly. Once you've got a goal, start tossing in the obstacles, or—to quote Beth Proudfoot, "Make bad things happen!"

Bad things can come from three places:

- From a random external event. Yes, if you do it believably, I'll allow you one car accident, lightning strike, or rogue meteorite per story. Seriously--the weather can slow you down; an old car battery can die; you can have an allergic reaction to a bee sting.
- From another character. Your bad guy, your antagonist, is constantly throwing up obstacles to your heroine's goal, but so is his brother, his son's teacher, his parents, the neighbor's dog. *Nobody* makes things easy.
- From the hero himself. Every character trait can be an obstacle—impulsiveness can send your hero into danger; caution can make them miss an opportunity. We can be our own worst enemies—especially in fiction.

Beth is the master of plotting out "bad things." Follow her advice, and you'll have conflict. Take it one more step, and you'll have tension. Don't back off. Force your hero to be rude, argumentative, and pushy—all those things we writers are too nice to be. Let him fight for that goal, battle for what he wants—as though his life depends on it.

Your story does. *BL*

ANDREA'S WEBSITES

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



Andrea Galvacs
Contributing Editor

Getting published in WritersTalk may be rewarding but, let's face it, the readership is small. To help you disseminate your work to a wider audience, we 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.

SHORT FICTION

www.Readmywords.com, until Dec 15
www.lbjswriting.com/contest.shtml
www.hamiltonwritersgroup.com,
until October 13

For women only: www.korepress.org,
until Oct 31

SCREENPLAYS

Slamdance Screenplay Competition is accepting submissions in all genres. For horror, science fiction, gore: www.slamdance.com.screencomp/horror, until Oct 31

2007 submissions beginning Nov 10 through May 18.

For **feature length**: www.slamdance.com/screencomp/feature_competition.asp

For **short length**: www.slamdance.com/screencomp/short_competition.asp

CONTESTS TO AVOID

Because of space constraints, we will publish these names in three issues. The Amherst Society, Circle of Poets, Iliad Press, Iliad Literary Awards Program, International Library of Poetry, International Poetry Hall of Fame.



In My Opinion...

It's All in the Writing

—Marsha Brandsdorfer

I am a legal secretary and (I) have been working for lawyers for almost 25 years. At my present job, I have over two decades more experience than the attorneys I support. In fact, one of the attorneys was only a baby when I got into this field, as he just celebrated his 27th birthday, and I celebrated my 47th.

The attorneys have way more energy than me, that's for sure. My workstation is a mess and I am buried with paper work. One of the attorneys could not find me the other day, and I was sitting right there at my desk.

I wrote a memoir about my experiences as a legal secretary and after two and a half years of working on it and seven revisions, I'm ready to see some real interest from agents or publishers. So, I'm querying and submitting sample chapters to them, just like we have been prompted to do in all these books on writing and at the writers' conferences, and yet all I experience is a lot of hurry up and wait.

I was telling Edie Matthews (our South Bay Writers' Club Publicity Chairperson) about my frustrations. I told her, "I am sending out a lot of submissions, but I'm getting rejection letters. I don't really know what to do. I thought I would generate appeal. Even my friend Joanne told me that everyone hates lawyers, so I should get some readers interested in my book about them."

Edie responded, "That's it, Marsha. 'Everyone hates lawyers.' Try that as your opening pitch and see what happens. I think you might grab people with that line."

I don't know if she's right, but I

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 19. They're, Their, There

This lesson might indicate more a spelling problem than grammar, but the error is a very common one.

The word "they're" is a contraction of "they are." If you wonder whether or not you've written it correctly, try to substitute "they are." If this doesn't work, you've chosen the wrong word. "They're taking a trip to Spain next week."

"Their" is a possessive pronoun like "her" or "our." "Children sometimes cross their fingers when telling a lie." You might remember to spell it correctly by thinking that it has the word "heir" embedded in it--as in, children are heirs (they inherit--possess) after their fathers' death.

Everything else is "there." "I saw him sitting over there by the bus stop. There goes the bus with a sign advertising *Hollywoodland*. What is there about Adrian Brody that makes him a compelling actor?"

Remember, your computer spell checker can't catch an incorrect spelling of any of these words, unless you type "thier" or "theyre" or "thair," etc. Only you can make the correct choice.

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

guess it cannot hurt. So, I've been using that sentence in my query letters. I have also been indicating how I feel that anyone who has ever worked in a job, particularly in an office, would be able to relate to many of my experiences.

As of this writing, I haven't received any more rejection letters in the mail. In fact, I haven't heard anything from anyone. However, I think, if the publishers' desks look at all like my desk at my job, then I'll be lucky if I ever hear from them at all.

The publishing field has become quite competitive, so much so that most people just self-publish. I'm definitely leaning in that direction. I do not think it would be so bad. I won't have someone slicing and dicing my work and I can have a lot of control of what I want. It's my story; it's my experience. I told Edie I'll continue sending the submissions out, but I think that if there are no promising responses by early 2007, I'm going to go the self-publishing route. I am looking at possibly doing my book as a Print on Demand publication. I like the idea of not having 400 copies of my book in my small Mountain View apartment and not having to deal with shipping expenses. Interested readers can go (on line), order my book and it is as simple as that. Welcome to the electronic age.

However, I realize what it all comes down to is not whether you are published, but whether you write. I am really proud of disciplining my-

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Anne Darling
Contributing Editor

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES Writing Critique Groups to the Rescue

—By Anne Darling

Finding the right critique group is not unlike the hunt for a good pair of shoes. Fit is key. This month's column offers writing group opportunities along with information on how to form your own group.

Author, journalist and East of Eden conference faculty member Martha Engber is looking for writers to join her critique group. However, she stresses not to join a critique group until you've developed a regular writing habit. "We've got loads of passion for writers whose passion (as opposed to hobby) it is to write and critique all genres, though we're most experienced in literary, thrillers, women's fiction and nonfiction."

South Bay California Writer's Club member Engber says, "Monday Night Writers is a small group of dedicated writers who meet at 8 p.m. every other Monday near downtown San Jose." Critique group members are required to e-mail their work four days in advance of the meeting. Other members give their comments out loud one at a time. The person being critiqued listens attentively. For more information on joining this group, Engber can be contacted at Martha@engber.com or (408) 243-7662.

As a reporter, I attended East of Eden Conference Chairperson Beth Proudfoot's critique group. Before this group invites a new member to join, they request a sample of their writing. Then a prospective member attends a few meetings to see if the group will be a good fit.

All five members of this mixed genre group have published and meet every-other week at a member's house. Most groups target five to ten members.

In this group, members don't read their work aloud, but like Engber's group submit manuscripts by e-mail to the others in advance of their regular meeting. This group encourages a minimum of three and accepts a maximum of ten pages from each member.

"Our critiques always begin with the positive," Proudfoot said. She noted the group doesn't waste time on simple editing or grammar flaws. "That's marked up in advance by each group member." During the meeting, the person being critiqued doesn't speak unless it's to clarify a point. Each group member reads his/her comments aloud then returns the copy to the writer.

CWC secretary Cathy Bauer chairs a different writing

critique group that currently has four members and will soon be adding a fifth. This group rotates the bi-weekly meetings which include dinner. "We do the chit-chatting over dinner, then get down to business," Bauer said.

Again, manuscripts are e-mailed in advance of the regular meeting for editing and comments. Bauer's group emphasizes fiction writing. In her group, each manuscript is read aloud but not by the author, according to Bauer. Their critiques emphasize structure, color (description), character definition and behavior, event synchronization, readability and grammar. The edited copies are returned at the end of the meeting to each writer.

"In order to offer a more effective critique, members provide a synopsis of their novels or short stories so we know where the story is going and how it's going to end," Bauer said.

From the interviews, it seems most people make contacts through friends, a CWC meeting, a conference or writing class. Although groups can meet anywhere, most prefer to trade homes for the meeting spot. The interviewees agree that having a leader or moderator is important. Most critique groups have written rules which cover time, place, participation, and preferred manuscript format. The people I interviewed stressed that critiquing should be honest and constructive.

Martha Enger who has as a new book, *Growing Great Characters From The Ground Floor Up*, due out in October said, "It's important for anybody who joins a critique group to take the time to do it properly. A critique group is a direct trade. It's an opportunity to get constructive feedback on your own work, but it's just as important to give it to others."

For those people looking to start their own critique group, East of Eden faculty member and author Martha Alderson, M.A., is offering a new University Santa Cruz Extension class, *Inspiring Company: How to Start a Writer's Group*, Saturday, 9am-4pm, September 30th at the Cupertino campus. For more information contact www.ucsc-extension.edu or Martha Alderson (408) 482-4678.

A recently published critique book, *How to Start and Run a Writers' Critique Group*, 2006, Carol J. Amato, offers specific information and includes sample forms for critique group check lists and rules.

I welcome reader input. If you are seeking new members for an existing writing group or are interested in starting your own group, please contact me at (408) 354-7705 or www.annedarl@aol.com AD

(BRANDORFER FROM PAGE 11)

self to write and revise this book. It's the writing that has been the rewarding experience. Getting my thoughts down, watching the development, knowing that I could complete a project. Revising and learning how to be better, always better.

Writing also gave me the opportunity to shun from my life people and elements that do not belong. You will be surprised how you can find out who your true friends are when you write. I had friends who were encouraging and those who weren't, are no longer in my life. To be a friend, you should encourage your friends in their goals.

Eddie hasn't read what I wrote, but yet she has been a friend in encouraging me not to give up trying to find an agent or a publisher - just not yet. She is a positive element in my life.

Writing and trying to get my book published have taught me a lot about human nature. And it is training me not just in patience, but in perseverance. MB

What Time Takes

—Sally A. Milnor

A sad song longs
For what time takes.

A cruel wind remembers
A heart that breaks.

In silence slumbers
A spirit's aches.

The soft dawn beckons
And joy awakes.



Andrea Galvacs
Contributing Editor

LONGING FOR FREEDOM

--Andrea Galvacs

that fateful day of

had had enough and fought the despots.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising Hungary staged against the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The country had been living under communist rulers since the end of World War II, but on October 23rd, 1956, the Hungarian people decided they

By October 29th, the brave Hungarians miraculously defeated the government and considered themselves free. Unfortunately, this hard won and deserved victory, at the cost of many lives, didn't last long. On November 4th the capital city of Budapest was invaded by enormous Russian tanks operated by men whose only orders were to shoot. The Hungarian people didn't have the weapons to fight these powerful monsters and were forced to give up. A new government was established and Hungary would continue living under communism until the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

In the weeks following the Russian invasion, thousands upon thousands of men, women and children ran from the tyrannical yoke, escaping to the temporary safe haven offered to them by neighboring Austria and from there, to all western points in the world. Among these men, known as freedom fighters, was my future husband, Laszlo Galvacs.

Six months earlier, thirty-year old Laszlo had graduated from the College of Engineering in the city of Miskolc and held a job as superintendent over several thousand workers in the Lenin Kohaszati Muvek (Metallurgical Works) foundry. On the day the revolt erupted, he was absent from his job at the foundry, doing his last stint in the military in Budapest. He and the other recruits were barred from leaving the barracks and left bereft of all weapons, to prevent them from helping those fighting against the regime. They were forced to stay there until they were all discharged on November 2nd.

Upon his return to Miskolc, Laszlo learned that during his absence the foundry's workers had elected him president of the Workers Committee. This position, conferred upon him because he was very much liked and respected, also made him responsible for everything that took place at the foundry.

Before leaving for Budapest for military service, Laszlo had reported to his superiors that one of the machines was malfunctioning but it wasn't repaired. When a worker lost a finger while operating it, somebody, perhaps hoping that he could obtain some favor or preferred treatment, reported the accident to the secret police, the dreaded AVO (ah-vo, Allam Vedelmi Osztaly, Department of State Protection). This agency was notorious for its brutal, sadistic agents, who treated prisoners worse than garbage. Laszlo was blamed for the misfortune and taken away by the AVO officers to be mercilessly tortured, in order to make him "confess" why he hadn't taken the necessary steps to avoid the accident. Thankfully, he was released after a few days.

Laszlo realized that his situation was untenable. The next time anything out of the ordinary happened at the foundry or for no reason at all, he would be imprisoned and tortured again. Aware of the exodus of his fellow citizens, he decided he had no choice; he had to leave too. He went to his girlfriend's place to ask her to go with him, but she was afraid and refused. He then went home, packed a few belongings in a backpack and saying a very tearful goodbye to his widowed mother and two sisters, left for the western border.

He traveled by train to Gyor, the westernmost major Hungarian city at about

WritersTalk Challenge

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

Genres:

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

Awards:

Twice yearly, Feb 15 and Aug 15

First Prize - \$60

Second - \$40

Third - \$25

Honorable Mentions

An **East of Eden Scholarship** was awarded to Meredy Amyx for her short fiction "Brian"

Entrants:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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fifty miles from the crossing to Austria. From there he, like everybody else, went on foot. First, he walked alone but later joined a group of departing people led by a guide familiar with the terrain. That area of Hungary was swampy and the only way one could arrive in Austria on foot was by crossing a canal. A guide was very welcome because he could show the exhausted and desperate people the safest places.

The canal was relatively narrow and the water shallow enough to wade across if people were willing to get wet up to their waist. And willing they were! In spite of the bitter cold, many men, Laszlo among them, made several crossings, carrying children and helping the elderly.

Once on the other side, soaking wet, with teeth chattering from the cold, they were finally free; the odyssey was over. Compassionate Austrians who had been waiting for them in trucks at the border took the refugees to their farms, giving them warmth, food and dry clothes.

The risk these valiant and determined folks took is incomprehensible. They knew that the AVO was aware of people fleeing and had agents at indeterminate points along the border, ready to shoot. Also, the AVO could have intercepted all westward trains and asked questions. In spite of this danger, the desire to be free propelled the Hungarians forward.

From one of these farms, Laszlo was transported to a governmental refugee camp where he was allowed to stay for two weeks. During this time he had to sign up and make arrangements to go to a country that was accepting Hungarian freedom fighters and their families. For a long time it had been Laszlo's dream to go to Germany, stay there for a couple of years and return to Hungary with the newly acquired experience and knowledge of the German language. Here was his chance. He took all the necessary steps to make his dream come true and was given a ticket for a train that was leaving for Germany the following morning.

Destiny, however, had other things in store for Laszlo. The next day he overslept and missed the train. Of course, he was upset; his two weeks at the camp were coming to an end. But being flexible, because the American paperwork took less time, he signed up to go to America.

The rest of Laszlo's story is like a fairy tale. In January, 1957 he was flown to Camp Kilmer, a refugee camp in New Jersey. Hungarian people already established in the United States volunteered to sponsor the new arrivals, so Laszlo went to Allentown, PA, to the home of an elderly lady who was delighted to give him food and shelter. He took a job pumping gas while he learned English, and not long afterward landed another one as a draftsman, for which he was academically overqualified, but was a stepping stone for better things to come.

Laszlo fell in love with the United States. He loved the freedom with which he could go anywhere, talk about anything, including the berating of the government and be able to buy anything he wanted if he worked hard. These were experiences he cherished. By 1963, as a naturalized citizen, he was living in Cleveland, OH with full command of the English language and had a job as Project Manager of a small engineering company.

That's when we met. We were married two years later and moved to California, where we raised our children.

In spite of his love for his adopted country, Laszlo never forgot the land of his birth. Hungary remained close to his heart and he was delighted when Reagan and Gorbachev put an end to communism and later when the country was admitted into NATO in 1999.

No doubt, he would have been happy when Hungary joined the European Union in 2004, but he died in the year 2000. Were Laszlo alive today, he would commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the day Hungary attempted to be free and rejoice in the better life enjoyed by the Hungarians who stayed behind. *AG*

Unpacking —Meredy Amyx

An hour ago I pulled out of the parking lot of the Laurel Inn in Salinas and headed north on 101. The 2006 East of Eden Writers' Conference was over, and I had packed up my suitcase, my laptop computer bag, and several tote bags with things I had taken to Salinas and a small heap of new acquisitions. Even for just a 48-hour stay 55 miles from home, I carry a lot with me. You could need all kinds of things on the road.

Now I am back in San Jose. I've brought everything in from the car, and I am unpacking.

First the computer, so I can write. Laptop, power supply, mouse pad, mouse. Yes, I used them while I was there. I write every day, no matter where I am or what is going on.

The other compartment of the rolling computer bag is stuffed with papers.

An envelope full of registration confirmations, receipts for agent and editor sessions, maps of facilities and the city of Salinas, Yahoo directions, volunteer assignments. This was my first writers' conference and my first time driving around in Salinas, and I needed a lot of hand-holding. Next time I'll be a confident veteran giving directions to others.

Ah. My blue conference program folder. I'm finally looking at the contents for the first time. Hmm, that map would have been useful. Uh-oh, I didn't turn in my evaluation form. I'd better mail it.

My name tag. It says I'm from San Jose and I'm a member of the South Bay Writers, the conference's sponsoring organization. And it says "Winner, *WritersTalk* Challenge Contest." I had the honor to wear a blue "Winner" ribbon attached to my name tag all weekend. It was as great a thrill as receiving the news that my short story "Brian" had won the scholarship award.

Displaying that ribbon taught me quickly what a generous-spirited bunch my writing comrades are, how rich in fellow feeling, even though we all are in truth competitors, not just for contest awards but for the attention of editors and agents, for an opportunity in the marketplace, for a moment's shot at a reader's notice. Words of congratulation came my way continually from friends and strangers alike. Whenever I saw others wearing blue ribbons like mine, a spark of elation jumped the gap between us.

I met the two winners of the Basil Stevens competition and took great delight in congratulating them and telling them that I had helped choose their pieces for the awards.

Every success experienced by any writer present felt like a triumph for all of us, whether it was a modest word of encouragement from a prospective agent or the news of a Pulitzer Prize nomination received the first day of the conference by club member Jana McBurney-Lin.

My name tag also says "Volunteer" on a purple ribbon that I wore proudly. I served on the registration desk during the busiest period on Friday. For that I received not only a ribbon and many thanks but a bag of treats and treasures, including a beautiful blank book.

What I did was trivial, a couple of hours of on-the-spot service. The real volunteers to thank are the conference committee, headed by Beth Proudfoot, who organized, planned, and promoted this event for nearly a year. The amount of forethought and preparation and the sheer quantity of detail involved in mounting an event of this scale is almost unimaginable to anyone who has never been close to it. The checklist of things to bring to the conference center must have been miles long. Tons of printed paper. Tools and supplies. Filled goodie bags. Pens and notebooks. Gallons of water, cases of fresh fruit, signs, easels. Flowers. Somebody thought of everything.

And there they all were at Sherwood Hall, the people who made it happen: Beth toting a box full of wall clocks to synchronize and place in every meeting room, Vicki Miller spreading out lists of registrants and alphabetized sheets of tickets and name tags, Ro Davis wielding her computer, stapler, and paper cutter, Diana Richomme directing her volunteer workforce to their posts, Bill Baldwin deploying his calm, visible presence and his invisible support, Bob Garfinkle maintaining a huge wall chart to track hours of consecutive five-minute sessions with agents, Edie Matthews shepherding guest speakers and spreading smiles. And many more. I don't know what all they did, Marjorie and Cathy and Susan and the others, but they were busy folks. Next time, committee people, please list your names in the program. We owe you a big salute.

Here's the notebook in which I took notes at all the sessions I attended. Information, tips, cautions, and idea boosters: many ways to improve my work.

Sample chapters of my in-progress novel, in case the agents I pitched to asked to see them. They didn't.

Large-print copies of my entries to the conference competitions, in case they won anything and I would be asked to read them aloud. They didn't.

A hard copy of "Brian," which I did read aloud at the nightowl session for competition winners—a two-hour opportunity to listen to the best work of several fel-

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low wordists. (Special thanks to the open-mike group at Barnes & Noble in the Pruneyard for all the practice in facing an audience and the generous, encouraging reception month by month.)

A red folder containing a beautifully prepared manuscript critique by editor Becky Levine, offering practical and artistic suggestions that will aid me in my further work. Becky's praise made me glow, and her criticisms were sound and well-aimed.

A couple of tote bags of other provisions, from an electric teapot and some tea bags to extra pens and pencils.

Oh, here goes. A copy of Adrienne Barbeau's book, *There Are Worse Things I Could Do*, which I bought not for its anticipated literary merit but because Adrienne was sitting right over there with her sister at dinner and it was easy to go up and talk to her and, by the way, ask for her signature. And I thought my husband would like the cover.

Our Hollywood celebrity guest speaker was even more friendly and approachable than our star writer and keynote speaker, Jean Auel, author of the best-selling "Earth's Children" series that began with *Clan of the Cave Bear* and is now heading into book 6. That figures, though. We fiction writers tend to be solitary practitioners of our craft, usually not the outgoing, theatrical, crowd-pleasing type but withdrawn, inner-directed, with a host of characters living in our brains and another world spanning the space behind our eyes, at any one time perhaps only half here in the present and the other half lost somewhere among the threads of a story. Indeed, it amazes me that so many writers could be found who were willing to get up and address large audiences. We were lucky to have speakers who entertained, who informed and inspired, who delivered goosebumps: Christopher Reich, Jean M. Auel, Jean V. Naggar, Tod Goldberg. Our own Betty Auchard. James Houston. Dorothy Allison.

Now for my suitcase. The black outfit I wore being cool and trying to look like an artsy writer on the first day. Did it work? I have no idea. The classy cut velvet jacket I dressed up in on Friday night, with its symbolic butterfly motif. The colorful woven Guatemalan jacket I put on to look craftsmy on the second day. Again, no idea, but it gave me confidence when I sat down to talk to Jean V. Naggar, Jean Auel's agent, and tried to interest her in the novel I am working on. She was kind enough to give me the card of her associate and ask for a sample, and maybe she wouldn't have if I had been wearing a different jacket.

The dress I wore to the buffet banquet on Saturday night at the National Steinbeck Center, and the heels that made me want to sit down a lot.

Comfortable slippers. Yes.

My copy of *Clan of the Cave Bear*, purchased hot off the press in October of 1980 and signed for me by Jean at the registration desk last Friday. She kindly said she remembered our meeting at a gathering in 1979, when her first book was still a pile of paper and reference books next to her typewriter on the kitchen table. She had that fiction author's other-world-behind-the-eyes look then, and she has it now.

A box of business cards. Preconference coaching messages advised me of many things I never would have known, including the need for business cards. I placed a rush order online with Iconix. So there's my box of 500, minus about 40 stowed in a little wallet in my purse. I think I gave away maybe a dozen. But I'm ready for just about any business card emergency that arises for the next twenty years.

It looks like I'm unpacked now. Everything I took is pretty much back where it belongs: hair spray and jewelry, woven jacket, electric teapot. Slippers on my feet.

The new things, the mementoes and gifts, the award certificate and the purchased books—all will work their way into the crowded spaces of my office and my life, becoming a part of what I do next.

The computer bag is empty. The tote bags and suitcase are empty. But I have not finished unpacking. The most important thing I acquired at the conference isn't there in the bags and cases, and yet I didn't leave it behind. My greatest acquisition at East of Eden is inside me. It's a sense of myself as a writer, as a writer among writers. A member of a community, credentialed, carded, badged, and acknowledged. Connected. A working writer, sitting down every day to do what so many others sit down to do every day: to write the words that we have to write. Alone, and yet no longer quite so alone. The bond among us is real. The excitement and energy we generated being together in one place was real. We celebrate each other, we enjoy each other, we help each other along.

The writers' club is the field where this sensibility can take root and grow, and East of Eden is the harvest.

The knowledge and ideas I gained at the many working sessions, condensed, rapid, and intense, I will be unpacking for months and using little by little as I learn how.

The identity I found in taking my place among writers—I know now I'll never unpack that at all. I'll carry it with me on my way forward from here, wherever the road goes. MA

** CAN I GIVE YOU SOMETHING FOR IT **

CounterCurrents — in two parts by Bill Brisko

Part I

The cement was cold that late summer day. I sat down on the sidewalk at what was, at that time, the end of the line. Although it wasn't cold enough to freeze my buns off, it was still uncomfortable. I remember it being as hard as ever, especially when I kissed it with the back of my head just weeks earlier. The bastard got in a cheap shot before I knew it and caught me off guard. But he didn't get far when I stuck most of the 6" switchblade into the cheek of his ass some moments later...

Jesus, let's try to stay back on topic this time, at least at this stage in the game! The tendency to drift off into some funkless doldrum, like a rudderless ship caught in a terrible storm, is, at times, far too strong. OK, it was another late afternoon on line at Winterland, the undisputed heavyweight Mecca for Rock and Rollers back in the day. I can truly say I don't remember who the headliner was that night, which is in complete agreement with the saying that if you really remember, then you weren't there. I believe it was either J. Geils or the James Gang or someone like that. But I do remember the warm-up band. It was a little known English band called Slade. Slade was a stylish glitter-Rock group cast in the same vein as David Bowie, T. Rex and Suzy Quattro; lots of fancy clothes and good foot-stomping music. They had quite a few swashbuckling hits to their name, one of which was called Cum Feel the Noise (which would become the biggest hit out of a metal-Rock group named Quiet Riot, though without the same...panache). I remember them throwing bags of confetti into the crowd for everyone to toss around, the disco-mirror hats they all wore and the voice of their singer Noddy Holder, which was reminiscent of Janis Joplin. And that's about all I remember about the show, nothing else... But I'll never forget what happened earlier that night, right outside in line. It was one of the strangest and most depraved rights of passage I have ever experienced in my entire life.

It had occurred no more than 4 hours before showtime as I sat there waiting on the hard concrete sidewalk. What was the end of the line had quickly turned into the middle. The constant stream of people shuffling to the end was never-ending, forcing the line

around the corner of the building and onto the next street. It was then I noticed the two pencil-necked geeks casing out my section in line. At first I thought they

might be looking for a couple of friends, someone to take cuts with. But it became apparent they had something else in mind and were looking for the right fish to hook. That's when they spotted me. I guess the white-man Afro, horn-rimmed glasses and semi-menacing look didn't phase them too much. No, they had some sort of scam going on, and it was going to be sprung on me.

I sized-up the two as they approached: One fellow was a funny-looking shorter guy wearing wire-rimmed glasses and sported what appeared to be a well-groomed patch of pubic hair he'd call a beard. The other was a little taller and heavier, and had the bad Mongoloid stare of someone who was down on their medication. The short one carried something like a backpack, and some sort of cane – walking stick – shillelagh. The larger one just stared. They approached cautiously, and knelt down on the sidewalk beside me.

"Hi! Do you have a dollar?"

"Huh?"

"Do you have a dollar?"

"And what, may I ask, are you going to do with this dollar?"

"Well," he said in an tense voice, having jumped the first hurdle. "You see...I have a dollar, too!"

"That's good!"

"And I'm going to take your dollar, and go around the corner to the liquor store and get us a cold six-pack of beer."

"Really? OK."

I reached into my pocket and produced a One and gave it to them. Then both of them got up and disappeared around the corner of the building. I figured I'd never see them or the dollar bill again, they were probably just sponging money for admission and that was the best story they could muster. Which was all right with me, figuring every time I came to The City I needed to bring a few bucks in spiff money. You know, money for tipping the garagemen, money for bribing the local hefe, money for the street beggars and the like. But what totally astounded me was that after about 20 minutes of watching all the happenings in line; the hippies, the weirdos; the loose-titted girls;

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these two returned. They actually turned the corner with a brown paper bag in their hands and walked towards me.

They sat on the ground next to me and smiled. The shorter one with the glasses pulled out a Ranier ale from the bag and handed it to me. I looked inside, there were only 4 left. "I had one on the way back," he said. I twisted (that is the word...twisted!) the top off and had a sip.

"So, ah...do you mind if we take a cut in line with you?" asked the one with glasses.

"No. I figured that's what you had in mind anyway."

"We can go to the back if it's a problem."

"No sweat. Don't worry about it."

They weren't a real talkative pair. We sat there for awhile, staring at each other and watching all of the commotion on Post Street. Occasionally a joint would work its way back and forth in line, pausing slightly with these two for a quick hit. I felt slightly uncomfortable with them in the vicinity. They just had a strange demeanor about them, like laboratory experiments gone awry that had just wandered out of some unguarded door. I figured I'd have to strike up some sort of conversation to calm everyone down.

"So, you guys live around here somewhere?"

"Yeah, a couple of blocks away, in the Tenderloin."

"You come to Winterland often?"

"Every chance we get!" said the quiet one, finally piping up.

"You have to take a lot of time off work, you know, to line up here in line?"

"Sort of."

"The fact of the matter is," said the quiet one, eye-balling the other, "we don't really work."

"Really?" I exclaimed. "You guys in school?"

"No, not really."

"Then, uhh...if you don't mind, how do afford to live up here? And go to concerts?"

"Well, do you know where Mt. Zion hospital is? Around the corner?" asked the one with the glasses.

"Sure! I park my convertible there in the Physician's lot. Tip the guard 2 bucks to keep an eye on it."

"Oh, you have a convertible! What kind?"

"A '64 Chevy Impala convertible, white with red interior."

"Nice! Well, you know where it is then. So we

went over there to Mt. Zion..."

"Yeah?"

"And, uhh...had ourselves declared mentally insane."

Mentally insane. That's nice. A couple of nut cases! Just when you thought the story had a happy ending, someone pisses on your parade. Exactly what have I gotten myself into here? It was no wonder the quiet one had the look of a psychological experiment gone bad, and the one with glasses could never totally focus his eyes on me. Here were a couple of escapees from the Mt. Zion mental ward and they were no more than a foot away - smoking dope and drinking my beer.

"Insane, huh?"

"Well, we're not really insane, no..." said the one with glasses, shaking his head. The other shaking his in total agreement.

"No, we just did that so we could collect \$600 a month apiece from Social Security."

"Oh, I see. So you get paid to be insane?"

"Yep, that's about it!" said the quiet one. "We just mill around town and have a good time and go to concerts. We're what you call self-admitted, so we can get 'cured' at any time!" he said with a pride that bordered on lunacy.

Hmm...This was a good bit of thinking. Have yourself self-admitted as a nut case, then collect \$600 from the government. Not a bad scam, when you come down to thinking about it. You basically have all day to do the things you want to do, then spend the evenings going to concerts and such. Sleep-in in the mornings, stay out late at night, whatever you wanted. It was a little hard to make a large capital expenditure on this sort of money, but barring that, not a bad lifestyle!

"So, does \$600 each make it for you guys? Are you able to cut the nut on that?"

"Well, we also supplement our income on the side...you know, side projects."

"Yeah? Like what?"

The one looked at the other as if there was some big secret to tell, but who would tell it first. Then the one with the glasses moved closer to me, the beer in one hand and cupping his hand over his mouth.

"We counterfeit concert tickets!" **BB**

Part II next month

Announcements Announcements Announcements

Creative Writing Classes

Looking for information and feedback on your writing?

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

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

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

For more information, contact www.scae.org or Edie or show up. Enrollment fee is three dollars.

HALLOWEEN IS HERE

and

visiting the Lookout on October 11th.

Okay, it's a little early—
it's a warm up



Come dressed as your favorite author or lit-character and win recognition and applause—maybe a prize, and of course there'll be photos. Captain Ahab anyone, a Lilliputian in a cordial or glass of Scotch, the hunchback of ND, Jean Val jean? Use your writer's imagination and come have fun.



Write a column—

Anything Goes (Almost).

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

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

DISCOUNTS FOR CWC MEMBERS NEGOTIATED BY CENTRAL BOARD

Dramatica software helps generate text and track details
Reduced Dramatically!!
www.storymind.com

Heyday books offers 20% off their "Legacy Series"
www.heydaybooks.com/public/callegs.html.

Bay Tree Publishers gives 30% off of all titles they publish.
www.baytreepublish.com.

Tallfellow Press, 20% on their titles.

www.tallfellow.com or phone
Claudia at 310-203-3837

Dollar Rent a Car offers corporate discounts.
Call 800 number and use
CD TA2253

See Central Board Rep for more details

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

Barnes & Noble

Almaden Plaza, San Jose

Second Friday each Month

7:30 — 9:30 pm

Borders Books

Santana Row, San Jose

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

Creative Writing Workshop

with Jacqueline Mutz

Santa Clara Adult Education

1840 Benton St., Santa Clara

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**Eight week course beginning
8/28/06. Call 423-3500
for registration information.
(Late arrivals welcome)**

The BOOK TABLE

at Club Meetings

hosts experienced reads

—○—

Bring in your seasoned books—pick up new readings, the return policy is lenient.

—○—

Every meeting, the Book Table is set.



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
PO Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055

www.southbaywriters.com

Stamp(s)

ADDRESSEE

Address Correction Requested

SAVE THESE DATES

No Board of Directors Meet
in October

General Meeting:
Cassidy
October 11

Open Mic:
Oct 6, 7:30p
B&N Almaden Plaza
Oct 13, 7:30.p
Borders, Santana Row
Oct 20, 7:30
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Inputs:
Oct 16 (it's a joke folks)

Editors Pow-Wow:
Oct 21 10:00am
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

