

# WritersTalk

A South Bay  
Writers Club Monthly

Volume 15, Issue 8 August 2007

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Page 1

ON AUGUST 8...

## WHEN IS A MANUSCRIPT READY?



Alexander Leon  
Vice President & Programs

by Alexander Leon

**D**on't all writers want to know when their manuscript is ready for publishing?

There are editors and there are writers, but all writers must be ready to be editors of their own work and be able to work with a critique circle. Working with professional editors is optional. So how does a writer get through the editing process until the manuscript is 'right'? The fastest way to become a master at anything is to have the right mentor. And for an hour, at least, we will have one in Becky Levine, a lifetime writer and long-time editor who will talk to us about editing at the South Bay Writers' next meeting.

As a trailer for Becky's talk, the writing process starts with a "quick first draft and multiple revisions." For her, what is most important during the writing stage is "structure"—writing every day and learning one's own capabilities—"how much you can do in a day."

Then the real work begins: editing. Whether working alone, through critique groups, or finally with editors and publishers, writers "must be ready to take their book apart and put it back together again and again." This process is facilitated by a series of "concrete steps"



Editor, Becky Levine

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

By Suzy Paluzzi

### The 31st Annual Foothill Writers Conference

took place on July 6-10 at Foothill College. Over 180 writers enrolled, according to



Suzy Paluzzi  
Contributing Editor

the director Doren Robbins. Some of the presenters were here from other states.

Floyd Salas, an award-winning poet, set the tone of intense emotion with his opening readings about his loved pets and their passing. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston shared a short story based on the topic of her family's experience after the World War II internment. L.D. Janakos lightened the mood with a more whimsical reading. All these authors have achieved noteworthy credit with their art. Students at-

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### A Look Ahead:

Aug	Open Mic—see p19 for details.
Aug 8	Dinner mtg.—Becky Levine talks editing
Aug 21	Editors Mtg.—Orchard Valley Coffee, 10:00a
Sep 5	Board of Directors Mtg.—LaRoche's
Sep 13	Dinner Mtg.—Reese Erlich
Oct 21	Workshop planned—James Dalessandro

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## President's Prowling —Dave LaRoche



Dave LaRoche

President

### TODAY AND TOMORROW

July 15th has come and gone—my grandmother repeated at the end of a year—“just come and gone.” (a cliché even then). And 7/15 marks *our* “new year”, a time for assessing with pleasure and looking forward to change. Not a revolution, mind you, but we have new officers with new ideas of

building on collaboration within, and extending our reach further into the community. And I thought for my first Prowl I would mention a few our new ideas.

We hope to bring speakers who leave value that fits well with our tools and that broadens and deepens the curiosity of our pens. Alex, our VP, is looking and seeking and you will like his first choices.

We also seek recognition and prestige for our Club, in turn attracting our community's awareness and interest. And we're considering an annual anthology of members' work, to be distributed through bookstores. We envision a Club sponsored youth group—a collaboration with our schools and universities—that will assist young writers and provide them an excitement beyond that found in the classroom.

We look to the technical side of our craft and foresee more workshops, an enhanced East of Eden Conference, a directory of critique groups and a how-to for starting them. We will do more in support of our Yahoo Group, which could be a boon in ferreting out resources.

We see a small change in our meetings' agenda that will allow more time for networking. A brisker pace with announcements, guest intros, the raffle and personal successes will enhance the social aspects of writing—there aren't many. There will be a hospitality center at the front table used for queries, announcements, an events calendar and critique-group directory; and for collecting suggestions, applications and successes (for the Accolades Column). The “center” is generally intended to formalize and make available our members' interest and involvement, and to facilitate these ends we will re-inaugurate the Hospitality Chair.

We plan a review, update and subsequent distribution-to-all of our bylaws. They've served our Club well in their present form, when the club was smaller and could operate less formally—but now, they need a look.

The South Bay Board hopes to bring members more access and involvement, and you may be more advantaged with a club you are in some ways responsible for. To that end I invite all to think about the foregoing and where you might like to participate.

And, of course, other ideas and notions will find an eager and receptive audience in your Board. *DLR*

### California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— o —

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Unless otherwise noted above, our email 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



Fading Away .

Managing Editor

## Editor's Itch

### Wanted: Various, All, and Sundry types

#### BE THE M-EDITOR (THERE'S GLORY THERE)

OUR *WRITERSTALK* TEAM, NOW 6 HARD-WORKING AND PROLIFIC EDITORS, IS  
LOOKING FOR A NEW MANAGING TYPE.

Aside from assuring an editorial policy, the duties include:

- ♦ Taking event photos
- ♦ Writing (lots of help here)
- ♦ Collecting submittals (email attachments)
- ♦ Layout and composition
- ♦ Proofing (there is help here)
- ♦ Mailing off to printer
- ♦ Attending Board meetings

Software applications involved today are MS Word and Publisher, Photoshop and Acrobat. Our fading ed will assist in the turnover (or not, your choice) perhaps making it easier .

#### AND BTW...

We are also looking for a Hospitality wonk who's duties might include:

- ♦ Running interface with the host restaurant.
- ♦ Q&A for those in need at the front table.
- ♦ Managing the new "hospitality center" - dispersing and collecting.
- ♦ Some announcements and roving mic.
- ♦ Being hospitable.

#### AND MORE...

We seek people interested in giving their ideas and time to the Branch.

Areas of current interest are:

Sponsorship of writing youth—Jeannine Vegh

Workshop help—Alex Leon

Events Calendar—Jeffery Osborne

Opportunity is knocking, You *are*  
prepared. Open the door as you  
hear the noise—if not before.

...stilllookin



## WritersTalk

is a monthly newsletter published by  
the South Bay Branch of the  
California Writers Club.

### WritersTalk Staff

#### Managing Editor

Dave LaRoche (408) 729-3941  
(Job For Sale)

#### Contributing Editors

Jackie Mutz (copy ed)  
Andrea Galvacs (copy ed)  
Carolyn Donnell  
Lita Kurtz  
Susan P aluzzi  
Una Daly

### Submittals are invited:

#### Guest Columns

*Almost Anything Goes* ≤400 wds

#### Repeat 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.  
to

[newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

or directly to

[writerstalk@comcast.net](mailto:writerstalk@comcast.net)

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no direct economic value to the originator  
and are published free of charge.

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the author for information regarding re-  
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(MANUSCRIPT READY FROM PAGE 1)

that Becky has managed to distill through her lifetime involvement with books, writing and editing. There should be a “mound of sawdust” on the floor after “shaving and shaving and shaving until the shape is right. Only after spending time with [the manuscript] and reworking it again and again, after all the sawdust and all the shaving, does the writer get to the point of knowing their story well enough to judge its readiness.” At the same time, one should not edit ad nauseam to achieve perfection. This would be like the pointless “folding of a napkin in half, over and over forever. Perfection in a manuscript does not exist.”

When asked which element—plot, character, prose, structure, grammar—she considers most important in a story, Becky responded by saying ‘voice.’ “Kids respond to voice... It’s what grabs me... It is the hardest thing to get [as a writer]... The voice of the character... The voice in which the story is told...”

Becky has mountains to share. She has been writing since she was a child; “seriously for fifteen to twenty years.” She is a published author of articles and reviews of children’s literature, has been involved with critique groups for thirteen years and has worked as a professional editor for ten. Becky is currently finishing her first novel, which she will be submitting to agents at the end of summer. From her experience, she has distilled these very “concrete things” writers must do to get their manuscript ready, and this is what she will be generously sharing in her gracious, enthusiastic, encouraging and humorous ‘voice’—“I... want to get this information out.”

Be sure to join us and hear Becky Levine share her wealth of knowledge on writing and editing at the August 8, CWC South Bay Writers’ monthly meeting. Not to be missed!  
AL

## Tech Buzzards in My Life

Susan Mueller

Today everyone encounters these buzzards. Do you have a new car and did you master all the buttons and levers on the first day? Probably not. Do you have a new telephone, cell phone, camera, TV, DVD player? Maybe yo-yo’s are digital now.

I have an old TV. It is a Zenith, age 11. It works fine and I only watch the news. I was happy until one dog bit the remote control. This remote is important to me because I am handicapped. Getting up is a chore. So I went to my yellow pages and called several stores with my model number and serial number at the ready. The responses I got ranged from “huh”, to click, to “sorry ma’am”. So I went high tech and logged on to Google and asked for Zenith. Zenith has a parts store. Aha. I am in luck. With credit card handy, I scrolled through. Nothing matched my model or serial number.

But “aha” again. They have a customer service 800 number. I called. I told him my tale of woe and he didn’t laugh at me. He said he has what is called a universal remote. In later social conversations I discovered that the whole world knows about these things. You get one when you have a household full of entertainment setups so you can program one remote to make your DVD player, three television sets, VHS and the dog door all work from your easy chair. He said he would send me one for \$22. I accepted his offer.

It arrived in about 10 days. They were out of stock because these new buzzards are popular. I opened the package eagerly. My face fell when I discovered it was huge, had 48 buttons, all in colors that almost match the background. It is about 7”-8” long. It comes with a set of instructions for programming it. There are 12 possible codes and the owner must discover through trial and error which one is appropriate. This is just for the TV, not for all the other entertainment items I do not own. So I read the instructions and did not notice the first time through that at some point you must hit a certain button within 3 seconds after the prior button. I cruised through all the codes, finding that the first 7 were not for me.

The 3 second item does not become important until you are at the right code. When I got there, I could not find that button quickly enough out of the 48 possibilities. I went through the whole ruckus twice more. Rather than burst into tears of rage. I quit.

My high tech daughter came home and instead of sympathetically programming it for me, she picked it up, laughed, and said, “The only thing this is good for is whacking a burglar on the head.” I told my sorrows to several friends. One said, “You need a child no older than 5 to help you.” I don’t know any of those kids. But my 11 year old grandson came over. In a moment of either wisdom or insanity I offered him five bucks to program it. It took him less than 5 minutes and it works fine. He wears those pants with 12 pockets up and down the legs where he stuffed the fiver. Now we are both happy SM

# Once Again We Demonstrated That Writers Are a Social Bunch

— Dave LaRoche

Whoever it was that allowed writers are introverts—wanting only to be left to their muse and not to be disturbed in their solitude, must not have met the South Bay bunch who again jollied it up in July at their annual bar-b-que. I'm not certain how many attended but I had to park in the outback...take a cab in.

Edie and Jim Matthews were hosts, and not for the first time, though it's easy to figure out why. Gregarious, gra-

cious, hospitable, warm, all apply—which makes for a marvelous experience. And again, Jim's cooking—though passed in part, with cautious oversight, to his second-in-command —makes chicken desirable. Who-da-thought?

Hi Dong garnered attention with his soft baritone voice and was mesmerizing. Hey... it's not often a Korean sings *My Old Kentucky Home*.

I spent some time taking photos—my usual gig. Have a look.



*Bob's Got Pull  
with the photo Lab*



*Very Happy People*



*Conjuring tersely*



*Why...  
Just tell me why!*



*Woody's back...  
Welcome back Woody*







*Boy, that's a funny one*



*Hey, I heard that*



*Did you hear that?*

*What the hell are they talkin'!*



*Pretty darn good food*



*Well... Sing dammit!*



*Seriously considering...*



*Will ya look at this crowd*



*A Singer, a comedienne and two mobsterettes*



*Wadya say?*



*This is some pretty damn good pecan pie*



*Marriage is so good...*



*Joel is funny, but he doesn't write*



*Do I know them?*

Well, I was Miss Fibonacci... 1963



Yes, we write... why else would we be here?



Wildfire (2)



Kentucky Hi Dong



This space  
unintentionally left blank



Stoic Curmudgeon with conversa-  
tionalist... out of the sun

... and for the Christmas party, I'm  
adding about 1000 square feet.



You don't say...  
Yeah, I do, and did you hear...







Pat Decker Nipper  
**Columnist**

## NIPPER'S NITS

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

### Lesson 29, Good vs. Well

Some people substitute "well" for "good" because they believe it sounds more correct. Often they use it incorrectly. Because the word "well" can be either an adjective or adverb, it has a broader use than "good," yet still is often misused.

When employed as an adverb, "well" is usually meant to describe the way something is done; it can modify a verb, adjective, or other adverb. The word "good," on the other hand, is always an adjective. It only modifies nouns or pronouns, as in "good dog," or "good genes."

When "well" is used as an adjective, it can have three meanings: 1) in good health: "Harry feels well"; 2) well-dressed: "That suit fits Jane well"; 3) satisfactory: "All is well."

You can do something "well," but if you describe a thing, use "good." Verbs that describe sensations allow you to say "I feel good," or "the aftershave smells good." If you said "the aftershave smells well," you're implying that the aftershave has a nose.

Contact Pat at [pat@patdeckernipper.com](mailto:pat@patdeckernipper.com) for comments or questions



Jackie Mutz  
**Contributing Editor**

## Accolades

—Jackie Mutz

Last Wednesday, we were speeding up *the 101* as they say in LA, somewhere north of Pismo Beach when we heard the familiar KGO afternoon voice of Pete Wilson discussing his upcoming hip replacement surgery. He invited callers to talk about their own experiences, possibly to help reassure him just how routine this type of surgery is these days. *A walk in the park*—something one of his callers might have said. I remember mentally wishing him well before his voice faded out into the loud buzz of interference.

Yesterday, on Sunday, we rode the Interstate 80 roller coaster on our way home from Tahoe, the tire noise loud in our ears. By Auburn (I always know it's Auburn by the train trestle bridge), the road was now a gentle wave, much quieter and we could hear the soft hum of KGO. Then the announcer mentioned something about Pete Wilson's memorial information not being available yet. Memorial? Pete Wilson dead? I felt sick inside, and incredibly sad at the same time. He was a great guy, a public figure I admired and respected. A heart attack on the operating table that shouldn't have happened, but did and he was gone.

So what does this have to do with Accolades? It isn't good news that someone has passed on. But what happened to him made me "wake up and take notice." Specifically with regards to my own writing and how expert I am at doing everything but... I have a lot of writing to do.

I was published in *The Sandhill Review*, a little anthology Marty Sorensen puts together every year, and I cannot begin to tell you how exciting it was to see my two little poems in a little red book with all the other authors. Writer. That is what I am—poetry and occasionally short stories and essays. And what do writers do? *They write*. Not do the chores, pet the cat, but sit in a chair on the deck or at SB's sipping latte and write.

So if you consider yourself a writer, get busy. Write and then write more. Because one never knows what life will bring. Pete Wilson certainly didn't, but he still left a legacy as a newscaster and talk show host. Make sure you have your own legacy to leave behind. And pat yourself on the back for writing yesterday and today. Make sure you do it tomorrow too. You never know what might happen.

~JAM

\*\*\*\*Got some good news you want to share? Email me at [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)  
Or drop it in the box on the table at our next meeting\*\*\*\*



Suzy Paluzzi  
Contributing Editor

## THE BUSINESS OF WRITING

By Suzy Paluzzi

### PATHS TO PUBLICATION: SELF-PUBLISHING

In this issue and the following one, I will discuss the different paths to publication. The focus in this article is self-

publishing. Again, I interviewed writers who have been successful

One person I contacted was our very own Pat Nipper, author of “Nipper’s Nits” in the South Bay California Writers Club newsletter. Pat sold her first children’s story to “Highlights for Children” in 1959. During the 60’s and 70’s, she sold “a number of children’s articles” and a book titled “The Lady Who Saw The Good Side of Everything” in 1976. Her writing career was “interrupted by a family accident... When I finally attempted to re-enter the market in the late 1980s, the publishing industry had changed: Many of the small presses had been bought out by large ones, which control the types of books they print and we read,” Pat said. “I’ve struggled to re-establish my publishing career ever since,” she added. She did get an adult audience book published by Kroshka Books in 1999, but her solution in 2002, was to establish her own publishing company, Syringa Books.

Subsidiary publishing is another route to take. Pat Nipper prefers subsidiary publishing to self-publishing because of the difficulty of distributing one’s books. An established company that Pat mentioned is iUniverse. “Subsidiary publishing companies will do some distribution and take away a lot of the hassle, such as procuring your ISBN (International Standard Book Number) and finding a suitable cover. The drawbacks include having to buy your own books from them at a reduced price; you then make your profit by selling them at full price, which can, unfortunately, be so high as to keep your customers away,” Pat lamented. She shared that she did make a profit selling her self-published books.

A common complaint about traditional publishing channels is that one’s work suffers in the editing. Rochelle Brener, resident of Arizona, won the Writers Digest competition in 2004 with the best self-published book, “Snapshots: Photo Op Poems from an Everyday Life.” As editor of “The Albany Review”, she was key in its

award of the Pushcart Prize. “There are many good poems out there that just don’t fit space constraints, and my job, as I saw it, was to get exposure for the poet. I must’ve been doing something right,”

Brener asserted. Prior to that job, she had “spent a great deal of time submitting to other journals. One thing I learned as a cold, hard fact is that many publishers don’t give a flying fig about a poet’s intent or his/her line lengths,” she explained.

“In the next two years, I self-published two of my own chapbooks, and edited a book of poems (“Women Dancing Free”) by, for and about women who have moved away from oppressive situations. In the meantime, I found a delightful thirteen year old poet, Kira Bonner, whose chapbook I published; an eighteen year old poet, David Ward, had a chapbook I published; and Karen Squire, a new poet at age thirty-five, whose work I also published. I now have a tiny poetry publishing house called CrystalWings Publishing, LLC; and although I don’t publish a lot, I love working with young and emerging poets,” Brener remarked. So, besides the avenue to sell your books, self-publishing gives you more creative freedom.

Kate Evans, a former speaker at CWC and well-known local author, thinks one should determine why one wants to get published before choosing how to go about it. “For me, for a long time, the thrill of seeing my work in print and knowing at least a few people might read it trumped my need to get paid. Literary magazines and online publishing are great for this. These publishing experiences can also help you get credibility when the time comes to get an agent or a job in the writing field. They can also be ‘free publicity’ for your other work,” offered Evans. More from Kate Evans will be included in the next installment of ways to publish.

Online self-publication is thus another way to create your own opportunity. Sally Ashton, local San Jose poet and talented teacher, created her own e-zine site as such a vehicle for poets. “Disquieting Muses Quarterly Review”, or DMQ, has been in existence since 1999. Ashton is also the editor-in-chief.

While self-publishing can be expensive and risky, it has its own rewards. The author determines the content of his/her work and removes the middleman. *SP*



Una Daly

Contributing Editor

## Upcoming Events —Una Daly

### End of Summer Writing Contests

It's not too late to submit some of that summer inspired writing. If you've just barely gotten into "summer mode", then check out the prize money for further motivation. All of these contests have deadlines in August or September. And don't forget about our own CWC South Bay WritersTalk contest which runs year round with \$\$cash\$\$ awards announced in September and March. Any work submitted to WritersTalk by August 15<sup>th</sup> will be eligible for the September awards.

#### Byline Magazine

A large number of writing contests throughout the year, including poetry, fiction, non-fiction. Open to all. Modest cash prizes. Visit website for complete details.

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

#### American Literary Review Literary Awards

Three prizes of \$1,000 each and publication in the *American Literary Review* will be given annually to a poet, a short story writer, and a creative nonfiction writer. Submit up to three poems, a short story of up to 8,000 words, or an essay of up to 6,500 words with a \$15 entry fee, by Sept. 1. Visit website for complete guidelines. [www.engl.unt.edu/alr/contest.htm](http://www.engl.unt.edu/alr/contest.htm)

#### Farmingdale State University of New York Paumanok Poetry Award

A prize of \$1,000 and travel and lodging expenses to give a reading at Farmingdale State University is awarded annually for a group of poems. The prize is given by the university's Visiting Writers Program to encourage emerging and established poets. Submit three to five published or unpublished poems totaling no more than 10 pages with a \$25 entry fee by September 15. Visit website for complete details.

[www.farmingdale.edu/ifs\\_academic\\_programs.html](http://www.farmingdale.edu/ifs_academic_programs.html)

#### Robert Frost Foundation Poetry Award

A prize of \$1,000 and an invitation to read the winning work at the Robert Frost Festival is given annually for a poem written in the spirit of Robert Frost. Submit up to three poems of no more than three pages total with a \$10 entry fee per poem by September 15. Visit the website for complete guidelines. [www.frostfoundation.org](http://www.frostfoundation.org)

#### Gival Press Short Story Award

A prize of \$1,000 is given annually for a short story. The winning entry will be published on the press's Web site and in an anthology of short fiction published by Gival Press. Submit a story of 5,000 to 15,000 words with a \$25 entry fee by August 8. Visit the website for complete guidelines.

[www.givalpress.com](http://www.givalpress.com)

#### Hunger Mountain Creative Nonfiction Prize

A prize of \$1,000 and publication in Hunger Mountain will be given annually for a work of creative nonfiction. Submit a work of creative nonfiction of up to 10,000 words with a \$15 entry fee by September 10.

Visit the website for complete guidelines. [www.hungermtn.org](http://www.hungermtn.org)

#### Ellen LaForge Memorial Poetry Foundation Poetry Prize

A prize of \$1,000 and publication in the Ellen LaForge Poetry Prize Annual is given each year to a poet who has not yet published a poetry collection. Submit up to six poems totaling no more than 12 pages with a \$10 entry fee by August 31. Send an SASE for complete guidelines.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

EVENTS FROM PAGE 11)

Ellen LaForge Memorial Poetry Foundation, Poetry Prize, 172 Auburn Street, #2, Cambridge, MA 02139.

**Literal Latté Ames Essay Award**

A prize of \$1,000 and publication in *Literal Latté* is given annually for a personal essay. Submit a manuscript of up to 8,000 words with a \$10 entry fee by September 15. Visit the website for complete guidelines. [www.literal-latte.com](http://www.literal-latte.com)

**Margie Editor's Prize**

A prize of \$1,000 and publication in *Margie: The American Journal of Poetry* is given annually for a single poem. Submit three poems of up to 60 lines each with a \$15 entry fee (\$5 for each additional poem) by August 31. Visit the website for complete guidelines. [www.margiereview.com](http://www.margiereview.com)

**Northeastern University Samuel French Morse Poetry Prize**

A prize of \$1,000 and publication by Northeastern University Press is given annually for a first or second book of poems by a U.S. poet. Submit a manuscript of 50 to 70 pages with a \$20 entry fee by September 15. Visit the website for complete guidelines. [www.english.neu.edu/publications/morse](http://www.english.neu.edu/publications/morse)

**University of North Texas Press Katherine Anne Porter Prize**

A prize of \$1,000 and publication by the University of North Texas Press is given annually for a collection of short fiction. Submit a manuscript of 100 to 200 pages with a \$20 entry fee by August 29. Visit the website for complete guidelines. [web3.unt.edu/untpress/contest.cfm](http://web3.unt.edu/untpress/contest.cfm)

**Pavement Saw Press Transcontinental Poetry Award**

A prize of \$1,000, publication by Pavement Saw Press, and 50 author copies are given annually for a first poetry collection. Poets who have not published a book, who have published a collection of fewer than 40 pages, or who have published a full-length collection with a press run of no more than 500 copies are eligible. Submit a manuscript of 48 to 70 pages with an \$18 entry fee, which includes a selection of Pavement Saw Press books, by August 15. Visit the website for complete guidelines. [www.pavementsaw.org](http://www.pavementsaw.org)

**Writers Digest**

A prize of \$100 and publication in an upcoming issue of *Writer's Digest* is given every other month for stories based on a short, open-ended prompt. Submit a short story of 750 words or fewer based on that prompt. You can be funny, poignant, witty since it is your story. [www.writersdigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com)

*Another Expert for our Directory*

I'm Jeremy Osborne, a computer nerd, and available for common computer software, hacker and computer/video game related questions, I'm open to being consulted as an amateur expert.



consist of

Experience = 10 years in computer technical support industry dealing with customer questions on all different environments (Linux, Unix, Mac, Windows, even HP 3000... and I'll call you a nerd, too, if you know what an HP 3000 is) and for all different software platforms. Yes, a computer joke can consist of one line that is simply (cd \ ; rm -rf \*)

Contact me at [jeremy\\_w\\_osborne@yahoo.com](mailto:jeremy_w_osborne@yahoo.com)

**Terse Verse**  
—by Pat Bustamante

August Teens

How lucky can one be  
Begetting Ms.'s and progeny.  
Forgive this lapse in energy  
In a two-front battle I am locked  
Since both are "blocked"  
Right on the brink of maturity!



## 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, Mar 15 and Sep15

**First Prize - \$60**

**Second - \$40**

**Third - \$25**

**Honorable Mentions**

### Entrance:

All work in the genres above, published in *WT* during the periods Aug 15 through Feb 15 and Feb 15 through Aug 15, 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**

## SELF-PUBLISHING WITH XLIBRIS

By Marsha Brandsdorfer

I am very lucky my coworker Cheryl volunteered to read my long book and proof it for me. After many reads, my head was spinning. For Cheryl, reading my story would be fresh.

My memoir, *The Accidental Secretary*, will be published late this summer or early fall. My book is about my experiences working for attorneys for over two decades. Cheryl said to me, "Marsha, you had a lot of jobs." In fact, I did. That is the point. I worked in New York, San Francisco, Louisiana, Los Angeles and the Silicon Valley. Presently I work for a law firm in Redwood Shores. My motivation for writing the book was that due to my many experiences at different offices and living in different places, I felt it might make for an interesting read.

I went to several writers' conferences, including the 2004 East of Eden Writers' Conference. I tried submitting my book to agents and directly to publishers, but I got the impression that the professional publishing field was too saturated. Therefore, I decided to take charge and self-publish.

I decided on the print-on-demand company, Xlibris, as they can be somewhat affordable depending on the package you choose. The Executive package, which included copyediting, is the one I chose. I will receive 100 copies of my book initially, business cards and bookmarks. Of course, I can always order more books and materials later.

I found the copyediting helpful, but I still did more rewriting after I received the manuscript back and I have gone back and forth several times with more corrections and edits. They helped me design my own cover. I used an image of the Bay Bridge that I took with a digital camera in San Francisco.

What is interesting about self-publishing is my being in full control of my book, the contents and the cover. Since it will be a print-on-demand book, I do not have to make room for hundreds of these books in my small apartment. I can encourage readers to order the book on line. It will be available through the Xlibris web site, Amazon.com and other sites. I will make a small royalty on each book ordered and Xlibris will send me a check a few times a year.

Do not be discouraged with competition in the publishing world. I encourage self-publishing as it is a creative and wonderful form of expression. MB



John Howsden

## COP TALK

John Howsden

### *Family Fights*

Ask any police officer which call is the most dangerous and he'll likely tell you it's the 415 Family, better known as the family fight. The moment the call comes over the radio, the responding officer starts preparing to handle it. First he'll avoid parking directly in front of the house. He'll walk diagonally towards the front of the house, avoiding the front walkway when possible, so the husband won't lean out of the window and shoot him or his partner with his favorite deer rifle.

Once on the porch, he'll stand to the side of the door and listen, hoping to hear what is happening inside the house to determine who, if anyone, is being the aggressor. Barring any blood curdling screaming or sounds of violence, he'll knock on the door and wait for permission to enter. Upon entering the house, he'll separate the parties and send them to neutral corners, keeping them out of sight of each other.

Picking a neutral corner to talk to an emotionally charged person is critical and not a random choice. For instance talking to the wife in the kitchen would be a poor choice—think steak knives, meat cleavers or rolling pins. Talking to the husband in the garage isn't any better—axes, tire irons or ball peen hammers come to mind. Normally living rooms are fine, but if the person wants to sit down on the sofa, beware of belly guns stuffed between the cushions.

Now that the cop has them in a safe spot and no one is making a grab for a weapon, he needs to calm them down and get to the nub of the problem. He'll do this by listening, nodding, and occasionally saying, "Really?" It's important for the officer to remain impartial and agreeable, but he must be careful. For instance, agreeing with the husband that the wife is a no good, cheating slut may cause the husband to ask the officer how he knows. Keeping in mind that other calls for service are stacking up, the officer will keep the conversation on track and moving quickly by asking questions. Soon the crux of the problem will boil down to money, alcohol or infidelity, none of which the officer can fix, especially the last one.

Once the problem is identified, the officer may suggest such things as professional counseling, time apart to cool off, or incarceration if a crime, normally, battery, has occurred. Spousal abuse is not taken lightly anymore. Nine times out of ten, it's the man who ends up going to jail. Strange thing happens when the wife sees the police dragging her husband out the front door in handcuffs. She might have a change of heart and end up jumping on the cop's back trying to rescue her husband. No one said family fights were rational.

A family fight is a street cop's bread and butter. On hot summer nights you may handle so many that you start to feel like Lucy working at the chocolate factory. At the end of a shift of children crying, men screaming and women doing both, it was a relief to walk through my front door and see my smiling wife. I'd hug her, and just grin at her from across the dinner table. At first she squinted back at me and wondered why I was so happy. After she went on a ride along with me one summer night, she started grinning back. *JH*

## ***Do You Have EXPERTISE?***

*Do you have a specialty that you will share, that might be of help to a writer looking for authenticity in a scene? Do as those below—let us know. We will publish your offer and add you name to our directory.*

### **Directory of Experts**

#### **Police Procedures:**

John Howsden  
jwhowsden@comcast.net (article in Sep 2006 Issue)

#### **Profile Writing:**

Susan Mueller  
samueller@worldnet.att.net  
(article in Oct 2006 issue)

#### **Character Development:**

ArLyne Diamond Ph.D ,  
ALyne@DiamondAssociates.net  
(article in Jan 2007 issue)

#### **Doctors' Office**

#### **Environment, OB-GYN:**

Dottie Sieve,  
pdrsieve@yahoo.com (article in Feb 2007 issue )

#### **Teaching and the Arts:**

Betty Auchard.  
Btauchard@aol.com (article in April 2007 issue)

#### **Hospital and Nursing**

#### **Environment:**

Maureen Griswold, maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net (article in May 2007 issue)

#### **Computer Dingus and Full Time Nerd**

Jeremy Osborne  
jeremy\_w\_osborne@yahoo.com  
Page 12, this issue

(BIRDS OF A FEATHER FROM PAGE 1)

tending the conference had a forum to read their works too, on Sunday the 8th.

The two workshops/seminars I was able to attend were brimming with eager students. The time allowed

Budy believes that a poem must always have more than one draft. Her revision technique includes “re-hearing” the poem.

averaged an hour and a half.

Andrea Hollander Budy led “Poetry-Small as a Postcard, Large as the World: A Conversation about Revisions, exercises.” She is the Writer-in-Residence at Lyon College and lives in Arkansas. She too has received acclaim for her work.

Budy believes that a poem must always have more than one draft. Her revision technique includes “re-hearing” the poem. She feels our culture is more a visual one than a listening one. Budy also thinks a poem shouldn’t be predictable, and that the title shouldn’t give the content away.

The exercise involved revising other authors’ poetry, as practice for applying the pattern to our own. Handouts were included.

The second presenter, Cecilia Woloch, entitled her session: “Poetry-The Beauty of Error: Turning Mistakes into Poetry, exercises.” She began by reading writing mistakes of youth from 8th grade through college, and the errors were hilarious. Woloch’s enthusiasm was infectious.

She opened our eyes to the fact that mistakes may be a good thing and encouraged a free writing exercise that incorporated a past mistake. The responses to the challenge ranged from poignant to funny and the vehicles surprisingly were not all poetry.

Woloch is the founder of Summer Poetry in Idyllwild and lectures at the University of Southern California and Western Connecticut State University. She too has received accolades.

The Foothill Writers Conference was a revelation to me. I learned much about poetry and it was underscored that writers are sensitive. I feel a kinship has been reinforced. *SP*

## Hot Earth

by Susan Mueller

“Smithsonian” this month has an article relating to global warming which is amazing. There is an American scientist who studies ice cores from glaciers all over the world. He is not a spring chicken and he has asthma. But he climbs these icy peaks with a team and a core driller that goes to the base of the glacier. He brings these huge cores back to his lab (Lonnie Thompson from Ohio State University) after scaling 16,000 feet with Yaks and drillers. They remain frozen and he examines them. He says the last 50 years’ evidence is very unusual. (Prevalent use of autos began about 50 years ago.) His fortitude on these trips is fabulous. He rode a Mongolian pony for three days in driving sleet and rain in 1986 in China. In 1993 he crawled across a yawning chasm on a rickety wooden ladder. At 19,800 feet hurricane winds started to blow his tent to the edge of a chasm. He thrust his ice ax through the tent floor to stop its movement. The journalists covering one of his expeditions chickened out and went back. Anyway, he says that many of the most enormous glaciers worldwide have either disappeared or are close to doing so soon. His terrifying predictions of global warming are pretty scary and coming up fast.

Now there is another scientist whose news is not any better but much different from our current Al Gore perspective. He says global warming is caused by the sun’s cosmic rays. Everyone thinks he is all wrong. If he is right our efforts are too puny. We thought Levenhouken and his microscope showing germs was a nut also. The scientist is Danish.

These rays he studies are bigger and better than in times past. You can find the article on the Internet at Google. Ask for global warming and sun’s rays. This is happening, he says, much faster than our earthly pollution. Maybe I should just go buy a Hummer and not worry. *SM*

## Musings on Literary Criticism from Foothill Writers' Conference By Una Daly

New writers want their work praised by those who read it, opined Tom Parker, best selling author, and longtime writing teacher at Canada College in Redwood City. But it is important to listen to what readers tell you is not working, enjoined author Leo Litwak, and Tom's former creative writing teacher from San Francisco State University. Thus began an hour and a half of musings from two celebrated authors and writing teachers on the craft of literary critique.

"First, I like to have the group read the story silently, then I have it read by the author," related Leo. The contrast is usually quite illuminating as we hear what the author emphasizes. "I instruct the author to ask 'What did you learn about my story?' The answers to that may tell the author what is missing," he added.

Tom prefers to first read the story anonymously and then ask the author what he thought of it. This usually results in the author relating what made him or her wince. "When I read a story aloud, I stop after two or three pages and ask the audience if they would like me to continue," said Tom. This is as far as an editor will read, so it is important for writers to generate interest upfront or risk having their manuscript rejected.

"As teachers, we are dealing with writers at different stages," offered Leo, "I do adjust my criticism to these different stages of being." Although we don't want people to go on who are not likely to succeed, it is better to encourage someone that shouldn't be than the reverse," he added.

"Every writer has a story of someone who told them not to write. Did anyone whom you respected tell you to quit?" asked Tom.

"Yes, my mother," replied Leo ruefully.

Putting your work out there for others to read is risky. "Beginners may go deaf when they hear criticism," Leo interjected. "It's very confusing to get feedback from fifteen different people in a writing group. Accept what is of benefit and discard what you cannot use," he elaborated.

"It's very confusing to show your work to too many people, especially those you like. I have it down to one relative and one gate-

keeper, my editor," reciprocated Tom. He offered a cooking analogy for how to receive criticism:

When you hear the criticism, it is like the high temperature searing of a roast used to seal in the juices. After the initial searing, you turn down the heat and let the meat cook slowly through to the center. In other words, accept the criticism as graciously as possible ... consider who is giving it ... and then let it percolate.


"Giving criticism requires two readings," continued Tom. The first is to get a sense of what the writer was trying to do. This step may require huge structural changes such as adding and removing characters or making plot changes. The second step is addressing the words and improving them. The order is important because "Once we do the language around it, we are so invested in terms of time," he warned.

"The obvious profit of good literary criticism is selling your book and making a million bucks but," Leo countered, "this rarely happens and thousands of soul have been sacrificed in this endeavor." As he matured in his writing, Leo could see that earlier criticism was justified. "You can profit by getting a rejection. If an editor is willing to be explicit as to what is wrong, you may be able to profit and fix the story," he explained.

"When you're younger, you have the feeling that the world is waiting for your book. When you're older, you realize your book could come out and everyone could miss it," Tom admitted. This point was driven home recently when giving a talk at Stanford, and a young person in the audience asked him what he did for a living.

"I'm at a very mature stage. I'm confident of what I've achieved and need some support but not much," added Leo. Dreams of fame, glory, and immortality have gone along with my willingness to live in poverty," he offered smiling.

Leo Litwak is an O. Henry prize-winning short story writer, twice recipient of the National Jewish Book Award for fiction, and author of the best-seller, *The Medic*, a memoir of his tour of duty in WW II.

Tom Parker is an O. Henry prize-winning short story writer and author of the best-selling novels, *Anna, Ann, Annie* and *Small Business*. 



Leo and Tom



## The Work Ethic of the Mule

Marjorie Johnson

The guide, a lanky fellow hiding behind sunglasses and under a broad-brimmed straw hat, gives me a leg-up onto the mule and adjusts the stirrups as far up as they go. My mule, as large as a horse, has long ears like a donkey. Seven dark-brown mules line up single-file for the trek down a narrow trail from the North Rim to the floor of the Grand Canyon. My mule is last.

The lead mule passes by. The guide, a college basketball player in the winter, almost stands on his toes in the stirrups. I try his technique and find it relieves the pressure on my widely spread-apart knees. My mule follows the others along a gravel path under scrubby pine trees. The trail leads down, gently at first, then steeply.

Below and a mile below my left elbow, the Colorado River cuts through a rocky channel. Ten miles out, irregular red sandstone colors the south canyon wall, a flat-looking panorama like a stage set painted in hazy pinks and greens. I feel the rhythmic sway of the mule's steps and hear the click of horseshoes against gravel. An insect buzzes around my head. I hear the drone of conversation but I am too far back to distinguish the speakers.

My mule snorts and swings his head and stops; he urinates like a garden hose and splashes red dust into a muddy puddle. The other mules all urinate like dogs marking territory, stopped like videotape held on pause. The guide growls, "Let's go," and the head mule leads them, a mule train swishing unclipped and unkempt tails in unison, tails strangely bare at the root.

I suck in my breath and my heart beats faster. Beneath my left elbow is nothing, the view to the bottom of the canyon blocked by scotch broom clinging to the edge of the path over dizzyfying, death defying landscape. The mule looks neither right nor left. I relax the reins and stretch my stiff legs and fan myself with my wide-brimmed hat.

The mule stops—just stops, not even a snort. I nudge his ribs with my heels; I have fallen behind the others. Trying to sound like the guide, I command, "Let's go."

He doesn't budge. His name was . . . Jeremiah, that's it. "Jeremiah, let's go." I speak more firmly and kick his ribs and pull up on the reins.

Jeremiah ignores me, more interested in a small scratchy plant of some kind, the only living thing in sight. The other mules are ahead and around the bend. I

hear them urinate in unison like six fire hydrants on a hot day.

I urge Jeremiah again and slap his neck with the reins at the same time that I kick him in the ribs.

The mule moves. He turns crosswise to the trail, butt against the loose rock of the mountain, head facing the yawning canyon, hooves on the brim. He snorts and slaps my leg with his tail.

I can see forever, to infinity, to eternity. I do not look down, my heart pounding, my mouth dry, blood rushing in my head. The last view I may ever see—

Jeremiah urinates.

Do I urge the mule to move? Certainly not forward. His front hooves are at the very edge of the abyss.

Jeremiah snorts.

Then somehow I know: He doesn't want to die; he makes this trip daily. I pull the right rein. His head turns towards the downhill path, towards the other mules, wherever they are. I make a *ch-click ch-click* sound I have heard in the movies.

As though nothing has happened, Jeremiah resumes his down-trail plodding for two more hours, ending in a valley behind the others. Jeremiah sucks water and snorts at a trough in the splotchy shade of a dusty Joshua tree, its bayonet-like leaves reaching toward Heaven, its roots directly beneath his feet.

I swing one leg over the mule's damp and slippery back and ease myself down from the saddle. My legs are made of rubber and sweat runs down my back. We have one hour for lunch before climbing the trail back to the North Rim. Too hot to eat, I desert my sandwich in the sand and drink water.

On the return journey, Jeremiah follows on the hooves of the guide mule but he almost brushes my left arm and leg against the hillside. I feel firmly anchored as long as I concentrate on the view to my left: rock and gravel. The view to the right, across the abyss, is more menacing but I am all right as long as the mule moves upward and clings to the inside. The sun burns my right arm through my long sleeved cotton shirt.

Jeremiah bobs his head and pauses to urinate, more liquid from his amazing bladder reserves. He moves closer to the uphill left and rubs me against the rocks as though scratching an itch or removing a pesky burden.

I pull his reins to the right towards the center of the trail. I know Jeremiah's secret: he is eager to rid himself of his passenger but he doesn't want to die and he makes this trip every day. We both want the saddle to come off. The work ethic of the mule will make him climb the hill.

MJ

Announcements Announcements Announcements

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**Mon. 1-3pm**, Valley Village,  
390 N. Winchester Bl.

Register at class or on-line at  
**[www.scae.org](http://www.scae.org)**

## NEW

### OPEN MIC IN FREMONT

On a trial basis, we will do a new Open Mic at the Barnes and Noble on 3900 Mowery in Fremont.

Our first will be in August on the 16th (which is the 3rd Thursday) from 7-9 pm.

At least five committed people are required at each meeting to move forward (a B&N requirement)

Interested writers should contact  
**either**

Jeannine Vegh

[ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net),

Bill Baldwin

[WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com)

or Bob Garfinkle

[ragarf@earthlink.net](mailto:ragarf@earthlink.net)

## A VIEW FROM THE BOARD —DAVE LAROCHE

*Monthly, on the first Wednesday, your Board of Directors meets to discuss and plan the future of your club. In this space we will synopsise its doings and some of its not doing. This month's meeting was held at the home of Bill Baldwin.*

New officers were announced by Bill Baldwin, retiring Pres. They will take office on July 15. Later, Dave LaRoche, president elect, articulated a litany of items the new Board will consider through the new year. Diana Richomme, retiring VP presented a membership allocated zip-code map of the Valley which will help in determining centralized event locations. Vicki Burlew, ret Treasurer announced healthy treasury balances (members may inquire). An account will be established with Valley Credit, convenient to Jeremy Osborne, treasurer elect. Bob Garfinkle announced that the question of IRS status for the CWC is under question but has not yet been resolved. Yes, we are non-profit—the question is whether or not donations from others may be deducted from their taxes. Edie Matthews, EoE Chair updated on the status of progress for the 2008 conference. Dave LaRoche announced that a change in printers for the newsletter has halved our previous publication cost. Marjorie Johnson, membership chair, announced that about 49 members have not yet renewed. Bill Baldwin, open mics, reported that all sites are doing well and that a fifth site will open in Fremont (see this page). The Board moved to provide three complimentary memberships, two free meetings each, to winners at the Youth Poetry Slam. Adjournment at 9:15.

Twenty-four magazine and book publishing professionals, including best-selling author David Morrell, will speak to aspiring and published writers at the **2007 Yosemite Writers Conference**, August 24-26, at the Tenaya Lodge.

Additional information is available at  
[www.yosemitewriters.com](http://www.yosemitewriters.com) or by calling 877-849-0176

*Announcements Announcements Announcements*

**POETRY CENTER SAN JOSÉ  
ANNOUNCES SECOND  
CALIFORNIA POETS FESTIVAL**

An all-day, outdoor festival celebrating poets and poetry from California. Includes Readings, Small Press Fair, Book Signings, Food and Wine.

**Saturday, September 22, 2007,  
10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
History Park San José,  
1650 Senter Road  
ADMISSION FREE**

Join poets and poetry lovers from around the state in celebration of our unique literary poetry heritage. Listen to readings throughout the day by California poets including former United States Poet Laureate Robert Hass, Jane Hirshfield, Diem Jones, Ellen Bass, Wanda Coleman, Francisco X. Alarcón, and Victoria Chang.

More information and biographies at  
**[www.californiapoetsfestival.org](http://www.californiapoetsfestival.org)**

**UPCOMING  
LITERARY EVENT**

**Wednesday, August 8, 2007  
Mystery Author Panel**  
Campbell Library hosts local mystery authors Rhys Bowen, Deborah Grabien, and David Corbett as they discuss their books and answer audience questions. This event is part of the Summer of Mystery series organized by the Santa Clara County Library. For the complete series schedule and directions to the libraries, visit <http://www.santaclaracountylib.org/summerreading/adults.html> 7:00pm at the Campbell Library 77 Harrison Ave. Campbell, CA 95008  
Free.

**SHORT STORY CONTEST**

**Ventura County Writers Club**  
Short story contest for 2007.  
first prize is \$500 and publication of the winner's story.  
Second prize \$250  
Third prize is \$125.

The deadline for entries is Sep 1. Additional contest information, manuscript format, and other entry rules are available on the club's website

**[www.venturacountywriters.com](http://www.venturacountywriters.com)**

Or call the contest Chairperson, William Vietinghoff at (805) 358-7762.

The contest is open to everyone, everywhere and the story submitted can be in any genre: mystery, romance, science-fiction, drama, comedy, western, horror. A three-tiered system of judging is used to ensure fairness. Each entry is assigned a number; the judges do not know who the writer is. Because a point system is used for scoring, as explained in the rules, budding writers who pay attention and work at developing their stories have equal chances of winning.

**A Diamond**  
by Jackie Mutz

Rooted  
ground around  
rings aged bitterly  
gnarled branches  
weep.



**South  
Bay  
Writers  
Open Mic**

**First Friday each Month**  
7:30 — 9:30 p

**Barnes & Noble  
Almaden Plaza, San Jose**

**Second Friday 7:30 — 9:30 p**  
**Borders Books  
Santana Row, San Jose**

**Third Friday 7:30 — 9:30 p**  
**Barnes and Noble  
Pruneyard in Campbell**

**Fourth Wednesday 7:30 — 9:30 p**  
**Borders in Sunnyvale**

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](mailto:wabaldwin@aol.com)**

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**[www.sanjosepoetryslam.com](http://www.sanjosepoetryslam.com)**

**POETRY CENTER SAN JOSÉ ANNOUNCES THE POETRY LOUNGE at  
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**ADMISSION IS FREE**

**The Blue Monkey Bar and Taquería  
1 East San Fernando Street  
San José, CA 95113 [www.pcsj.org](http://www.pcsj.org)**



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch  
PO Box 3254  
Santa Clara, CA 95055

[www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

ADDRESSEE

Address Correction Requested

**SAVE THESE DATES**

Board of Directors Meet  
Aug 1, 7pm LaRoche's

General Meeting (Dinner):  
Aug 8, Levine on Editing  
LookOut Inn

Open Mic:  
Aug 3, 7:30p  
B&N, Almaden Plaza  
Aug 10, 7:30.p  
Boarders Santana Row  
Aug 16, 7:00  
Borders Fremont,  
Aug 17, 7:30  
B&N Pruneyard  
Aug 22, 7:30  
Borders, Sunnyvale

WritersTalk Inputs:  
Aug 16 (non-proofed)  
Aug 23 (proofed)

Editors Pow-Wow:  
Aug 21, 10:00am  
Orchard Valley Coffee

**General Dinner Meet — August 8, 6:00pm**

**LookOut Inn (aka Bar & Grill)  
605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale  
(Sunnyvale Golfcourse)**

See Map Below

