

WritersTalk

A South Bay Branch
Writers Club Monthly

Volume 15, Issue 1, January 2007 Non-member subscription \$20 per year

Page 1

JANUARY WORKSHOP featuring Tod Goldberg

Take Your Writing From Idea To Action

THE ART & CRAFT OF STORY STRUCTURE

by Diana Richomme

When Tod Goldberg begins to work with a student, he often sees talent and viable concepts. "Part of my job is to look for the one thing that will take them from a workshop star to the real publishing world." Often, the element that can be strengthened is structure.



TOD GOLDBERG

Why is structure so important? "Without structure," Goldberg explains, "you're left with something that doesn't fit together. Structure provides you with a guidepost for developing conflict -- a way for you as a writer to figure out complex problems. You have to find out how to make consequence a major roll-player."

Each genre has its own structural requirements. During our January workshop, Goldberg will cover elements of structure that apply to any story. You'll understand the type of book you're writing and the implications of what that represents. According to Goldberg, "Understanding where you are and where you're going will help you to sell the book later on."

About one-quarter to one-third of Goldberg's class and workshop participants go on to be published. His students have produced 20 published novels and sold hundreds of short stories. Two of these books include "The Average American Male" by Chad Kultgen and Lorna Freeman's "Covenants". Freeman, a prolific writer, has 10 books coming out in the next two years.



Diana Richomme
VP & Programs Chair

PROFILES

WITH UNA DALY

Meet Victoria Burlew, CWC South Bay Treasurer

"To see someone reading a

book with my name on it," is CWC South Bay Treasurer, Victoria

(Vicki) Burlew's, biggest

dream about writing. You probably know her as the cheerful person behind the table who takes your money at the monthly dinner meetings. Before becoming our treasurer, she was treasurer of the California School Employees Association Union where she received the Golden Bear regional service award.

She is an accountant with the Santa Clara Unified School District.

"I can't even remember when I



Una Daly
Contributing Editor



Vicki Burlew

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

A Look Ahead:

Jan 5,12,19 Open Mic, see p 19.
Jan 10 Board of Directors —Cathy's
Jan 20 Editors Mtg, Orchard Valley Coffee, 10:00am
Jan 21 Tod Goldberg Workshop, LookOut BG, 9:30-3:00
No regular meeting in Jan.

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President's Prowling —Bill Baldwin



Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Branch

Zen and the Art of Writing

Still trying to wrap my brain around the idea ... that good writers are often "good" in some individual, personal way. Hmm – Can I paraphrase Tolstoy? "All bad writers make similar mistakes; good writers are outstanding in individual ways?" (Bonus points for identifying the Tolstoy quote!)

It puzzles me when I read a review saying: "So-and-so has her own approach to narrative and plot. It's not like anyone else's, but it's valid." Then you can't really achieve good writing by imitation. But then what *do* you gain by reading widely?

I've spent the last few months picking up novels I've heard good things about. I found some in print, some on recordings. I tried to read/listen to them, but I didn't enjoy them. They were all well-praised books. People I respect like them. But I wasn't enjoying them, so I quit reading (listening). I felt stupid ("What's wrong with me?") and guilty ("I mean, *everybody else* likes them!").

Then I returned to Philip Roth (should I say "returned?" I'd only read one book by him previously – *Portnoy's Complaint* – way back when I was in college).

I now find something about Roth's writing style very engaging. I'm specifically referring to the beginning of *The Human Stain*. I've now read over a hundred pages. This is nice. I'd been checking out books and struggling to get to page five; with Roth I was up to page twenty or thirty in no time, and enjoying it.

Not entirely. I had enough "issues" that I diverted myself onto *Goodbye, Columbus*. Curiously, it reminds me of something I wrote. I'll probably finish *Goodbye, Columbus* this weekend. Will I go on to finish *The Human Stain*? Probably – but we'll see. At any rate, I've enjoyed *beginning* it!

But this business of *Goodbye, Columbus* reminding me of something I wrote myself... That gives me something to compare to. The dust jacket calls *Goodbye, Columbus* "a short novel of major scope and impact." Might my own short novel aspire to similar recognition someday? What do Roth and I do similarly? What do we do differently? What can I learn from him?

Keep your eyes open! If you can find a book similar to your own, by a recognized author, it may help guide your writing to success.

Just remember (and I'm afraid this is a bit like Zen): It isn't a matter of imitation! *WB*

"Yes, that's the cleverness of it. When a normally reserved and calculating mind decides for once to come out into the open with the simple truth, it is irresistible." -Anna Clarke, "Poison Parsley"

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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Marjorie Johnson



Dave LaRoche
Managing Editor

Editor's Itch

do

I want to be a writer.
What should I do? How
I start? Oh I can write
some. I'm doing it now,
but I want to be good, a

prize winner—the Pulitzer.

MFA? I recently subscribed to Poets and Writers and there must be a hundred ads for schools offering MFA's in creative writing and in fact, last month's issue contained an entire section on the same—top ten, how to choose, cost to go, curriculum. Should I enroll?

And I've heard read! Read often and more. Some have said, if you want to be a writer, don't spend you time withering in class, instead read. Of course they didn't mean the comic strips. Should I read more—hibernate in a library, build on a study—devote “forty hours?” I have a book and can get more.

Here's my notion. We can only write what we know and we know best what we've experienced—not from a lectern or a book but from life. The stuff we remember and understand the fullest is the stuff that we do. Love, despise, fight, run, despair, hope... the action verbs we seek are the stuff of our lives and as we “do” and do well—plumb deep, travel wide, take risks, welcome fear, enjoy pleasure—we *will* become writers.

Yeah, I'll do a class—learn how to grammar-ize (could use fewer em dashes) maybe buy a handbook—and I do like to read. But beyond that, two things:

- ⇒ I'll stock up on Ginko Bilboa, find a “Walden's Pond” and think about my past. Dredge up my experiences, delve in and have a hard look, and if there's something of interest, home in and use it.
- ⇒ The other thing I am going to do is jump in the deep end... “get down.” I'm gonna live every minute to its fullest; up early, stay late, explore—“plumb those depths”. No more half-hearted, slipshod, for me. To find something to write about I'll live a little first.

So, that's my notion: get out there in the world—shun fear, invite curiosity and immerse yourself in life. Become a writer. **DLR**

Do you have expertise?

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

DIRECTORY

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

Profile Writing: Susan Mueller
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(article in October 2006 issue)

Character Development: Arlyne Diamond Ph.D.,
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WritersTalk

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to Dave LaRoche

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

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(GOLDBERG WORKSHOP —RICHOMME FROM PAGE 1)

"When I read her assignment," said Goldberg, "I called my agent and told him, I've got this student who just wrote this fantasy novel -- I just read the first 50 pages of it -- you're going to make a million dollars off of [it]."

Tod Goldberg is the author of; the novels "Living Dead Girl" (Soho Press), a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and "Fake Liar Cheat" (Pocket Books / MTV), and the short story collection "Simplify" (OV Books). Two more novels will be released in March. He teaches creative writing at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program, where he was named the 2005 Outstanding Instructor of the Year, and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor in the MFA Program at the University of California-Riverside Palm Desert.

"This [workshop] won't be a game of softball," said Goldberg. "We'll deal with the hard truths of what works and what doesn't and why. You'll laugh. You'll cry. It will be better than "Cats". But above all else, you'll leave the workshop with a roadmap towards publication, no matter the genre you work in."

Join us January 21, 9:30 am to 3:00, for this workshop that can guide your talent onto the path of publishing success. DR

VERSE BY JACKIE MUTZ

A defensive pose
timed for meaning
adrift in emotion
suffused with pain
I reach and the moment slips
like silk my grasp it
eludes you once again.
You drift and
my sight--blighted
my soul a searing reminder
my aloneness complete.

(BURLEW PROFILE —DALY FROM PAGE 1)

began writing. I've always loved to read and it just seemed like a natural progression," said Vicki. Still working towards a big accomplishment in writing, she has had several poems and articles published thus far. She is currently rewriting her first suspense novel with the help of her critique group. It is about a bad cop turned serial killer and is located back home in rural Michigan.

"I was born and raised in a small farming community in Southern Michigan with two brothers, two sisters and several hundred extended family members that still live in that area," reported Vicki. A particularly harsh winter and the desire to be more than a pig farmer's wife with a bunch of kids, working in a factory, strengthened her resolve to pursue her childhood dream of coming to California.

"After that winter I vowed I'd never spend another one in Michigan," said Vicki and when a roommate invited her to move out to San Diego, "we gave away or sold everything we could and packed the rest up in her Pinto." Off they went with a "California or Bust" sign in the rear window. She and her son have resided in several regions of the state ever since.

Vicki has raised the plumeria (frangipani) flower since 1981. The Polynesians use these flowers to make leis and hair decorations and it is the wonderful fragrance you smell upon arrival in Hawaii. She is getting ready to launch a gardening website by year-end where she can combine her passion of writing with gardening.

Joining the CWC South Bay branch in 2003, Vicki initially joined the board as the roster chair but became our treasurer a year and a half ago. Her first East of Eden Conference (2004) was an experience that she'll never forget. As one of the conference organizers, she got to meet informally with famous writers, agents, and publishers.

"Writing is such a solitary endeavor, so to meet with other writers to share our mutual frustrations and successes gives me the perspective that at least I'm not alone," said Vicki. The club's speakers and workshops along with her critique group provide invaluable insights and opportunities to improve her writing skills.

Vicki admires many writers but her all-time favorites are: Jean Auel, Stephen King, Jeffrey Deaver, Tom Clancy, Herman Wouk, Sue Harrison, Sue Grafton, Dickens, Steinbeck, Hemmingway, Tolkien, and Poe.

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A Book Review

By
Robert A. Garfinkle

“Welcome to the Dunes”

Welcome to the Dunes

By Jack Hasling

Iceni Books; 187 pages; \$15.95

Mr. Jack Hasling’s book is not only a who-done-it, but also a cleaver who-is-the-victim mystery. Cupertino author Jack Hasling has put together a solid story from what seemed like a corny idea of a murder at a writers’ conference on the Monterey coast. The story takes place in 1984. A murder at a writer’s conference? I thought he had to be kidding when I first heard about this book, but Hasling hooked me early and kept me reading until the last sentence. The book was intended to be a light-hearted and good-natured spoof of writer’s conferences, but out of this goal came a

THE AUTHOR DID A GREAT JOB WEAVING INTO HIS STORY HISTORICAL REFERENCES OF THE TIMES (1984–1987), LIKE A DEMONSTRATION OF THE THEN NEW MACINTOSH COMPUTER.

well-developed mystery.

The author did a great job weaving into his story historical references of the times (1984–1987), like a demonstration of the then new Macintosh computer. I remember when we had a demonstration of this new graphical-based

computer at my place of employment in 1984. The engineers in the room were stunned by what

you could do on the little blue screen compared to the clunky slow DOS-based IBM personal computers.

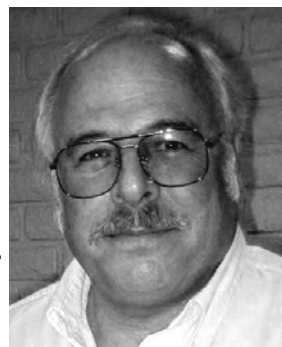
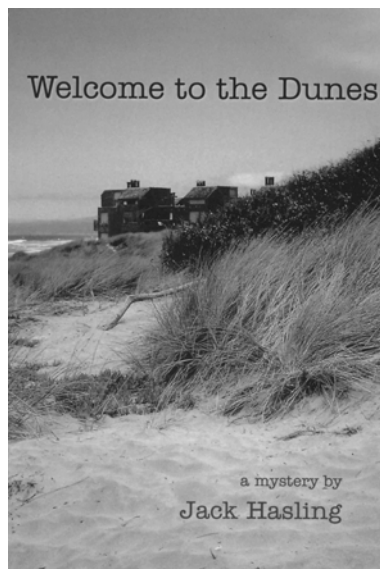
In 1984, a writers’ conference was scheduled for a fictional conference center/resort called the Dunes Retreat Center on the beach in the Monterey area. You are introduced to the players of this story as they arrive for the conference. You have to pay close attention to how everyone arrives, or so you think has arrived. The arrivals are an integral part of the whole mystery. The intended target of the killer is the wealthy San Francisco publisher Cornelia Ferndale. She is suspected of being a major supporter of the Contras in the civil war in Nicaragua. You are

lead to believe that she has shady connections with the CIA and President Ronald Reagan’s covert operations to supply the Contras’ with weapons.

During the conference, an anti-war protest, lead by Jason Oberon, takes place at the gates to the center and one of the conference attendees participates in it. The attendee, along with Oberon, become prime suspects in the murder of the sickly Mrs. Ferndale. The publisher even has her private physician accompany her to the conference, where she is to give a keynote speech.

Mrs. Ferndale appears to have been killed in her room, but no body is found. A few pages later, Oberon is killed in a very murky manner. Are the killings related and who did them? To find out, you’ll just have to read “Welcome to the Dunes”.

For his second novel, Jack Hasling, a professor emeritus at Foothill College, has woven a very interesting page-turning tale that kept me guessing about who committed the murders of Cornelia Ferndale and Jason Oberon and why. If you are a fan of mystery books, then this is a good read for you and I highly recommend it to you.



Bob Garfinkle

Expertise: Character Development, by ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.

What makes your character tick? What are his/her motivations, fears, values and expectations? What were his parents like? His religion? The messages from his community about right and wrong? Did he come for a background that left him feeling benevolent or malevolent? How do you know how to make his beliefs, behaviors and desires consistent with his character, personality and background?

Let me help. My background is in psychology, counseling and evaluations of people. I was a therapist, mentor and coach to people of all ages and types for many years. I was a nationally recognized forensic psychologist and I also taught psychological evaluations to graduate psychology students. I teach interviewing and employee selection and training to my corporate clients.

As a consultant to management, my focus is still about people – what makes them tick, how can we motivate them, train them, teach them to work together, etc. I deal with change, conflict, culture, diversity, harassment and discrimination – all about how people treat each other in the workplace.

Developing your character so that he or she is believable is not easy to do. It really involves getting inside his head and background and knowing what her beliefs are about what fits her personality and style. It's like profiling – something I love to do – trying to figure out what fits.

You need to understand her cultural background, the beliefs and behaviors of parents, siblings, relatives and others in the neighborhood. An understanding of his religion and the extent to which he was involved with it is also crucial to understanding why he believes and does what he does.

It will be fun to work collaboratively with you to develop the characters for your novel so that your book becomes more believable, exciting, and successful. AD



ArLyne Diamond

On Gratitude

By Jackie Mutz



Jackie Mutz

Contributing Editor

The season is upon us again. Black Friday began Thursday night on Thanksgiving; people brawled at Wal-Mart over a big screen television at 4 am in Any Town, USA and I wondered if this brings new meaning to old cliché *what's wrong with this picture?*

Of all the things that are wrong in our world today, we have one thing we can bank on. Gratitude. Gratitude that we are alive and breathing. Gratitude for all those simple things too numerous to name. The person who smiled at you today and made you smile in return. A random moment, a random act; so much power in such a little thing.

The holidays always seem to bring out the best in us humans (forget the Wal-Mart scene). We donate food and gifts to those in need. It makes us feel good to give and for those who receive, well, they feel pretty good too. We are thankful for all that we have; gratitude for our health, our homes, our families.

But gratitude is something we can't take for granted. We have to say thank you, give voice to our gratefulness and take action. Gratitude happens every day, so smile at someone, say thank you to the clerk at Safeway, listen to an older person who needs someone to hear her story, make that connection all year long, not just during the Holidays. There is an old saying that "it is greater to give than it is to receive." Try it. I guarantee you will smile and feel good all over. That's gratitude for you! jam

Terse Verse —by Pat Bustamante

JAN ENGINE

A "SEARCH-IN-JAN." (ENGINE) IS
MY RESEARCH PLAN: SUCH ENGINES CAN
GIVE WRITERS "BRAN-NEW" IDEAS THEY SAY.
GOOD RESEARCH WAY.
I'M A DEFINITE FAN.
(EXCEPT FOR THAT AWFUL
TEMPTATION TO USE WORKTIME FOR PLAY..)



A Reminder....

Our Yahoo Group, the South Bay's locus for writers resources, is active and growing. Go to:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthBay_Writers_Exchange

Click on **Join This Group** button Sign in or Sign up.

- ⇒ If you already have a Yahoo Id you can sign in.
- ⇒ No Yahoo id? You can sign up.
- ⇒ Signing up is easy. Choose a password, etc. Then go back to step 1.

Continue with the process as outlined on the site and soon you will receive an invite. When you are (automatically) approved and have access, you may participate fully—too bad about the administrative stuff.

Give it a try, in time could be the most centralized resource to a writer available. DLR



In My Opinion...

Regarding A. Diamond's "Ripple Effect" item in the December issue of Writer's Talk,

I found her text to have no real connection to the world of

creative writing and question why it was presented in WT.

While some of her points were valid, I did not find her comments to be value added to the realm of writing and, in many instances her take on contemporary society seemed much ado about nothing. Additionally, the attempt to draw any connections between deliberately deceiving a merchant (fraud)

fairy tales did reader.

Regarding she comments elaborately de- From this

without the ability to create elaborate schemes (deceitful or otherwise), the world of the fictional written word would be quite empty. Creating elaborate schemes may indeed be the core of imagination.

We live in a quite imperfect world that most likely will see very little essential change in the human psyche in the foreseeable future. Personally, I'll accept the imperfections and, as time permits, attempt to create as much imaginative fiction as possible.

Finally, I found her "bio" to be little more than a promotion for her established commercial interests and hope that WT received appropriate compensation.

Lawrence Pratt.

WE LIVE IN A QUITE IMPERFECT
WORLD THAT MOST LIKELY WILL SEE
VERY LITTLE ESSENTIAL CHANGE IN
THE HUMAN PSYCHE IN THE
FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

and one or more
not work for this
Santa Claus et al,
"Parents create
ceitful schemes . . ."
writer's perspective,

Come my friends.
It is not too late to
seek a newer world.
For my purpose holds
to sail beyond the sunset.
And though we are not
now that strength which in
old days moved earth and
heaven.
That which we are,
we are,
One equal temper of
heroic hearts
Made weak by time and
fate, but strong in will
To seek, to find,
and not to yield.
- Alfred Lord Tennyson

Creative Writing Winter Intensive

They say every picture tells a story. Well, every writer has a story to tell. Do you have a story you are aching to write? A funny essay? Poem? Family stories you want to put to paper? Then join others in an intensive Creative Writing workshop. Here we will create, share and critique our written words. Class meets once a week for four weeks. Find and develop your writing voice from the materials you already might have: your own experience. A great way to perfect your skills or to explore writing for the first time. First class on 1/22 and runs for four consecutive weeks.

Registration through Santa Clara Adult Education @ 408.423.3555
or www.scae.org.

Holiday Traditions

by Victoria Burlew

— ○ —

In the last few years I have noticed a distinct rebellion by the Christian community regarding the use of the term Happy Holidays in the place of Merry Christmas. My e-mail box is full of such cries of “It’s not a Hannukah Bush or Holiday Hedge or Allah Bush. It’s a Christmas Tree”. I even saw several news reports about people angry that Merry Christmas signs were being replaced by Happy Holidays signs.

Intrigued by this anti-everybody-else attitude that seems to be sweeping our country, I decided to do some research on the origins of some of the symbols of Christmas that we Christians practice.

Did you know that the tradition of the Christmas tree actually has roots way before the Christian era? It’s actually a symbol from the celebration of the Winter Solstice—a Pagan ritual. The ancient Egyptians used date palm leaves as a symbol of the triumph of life over death. The Druids used pine boughs and holly leaf as a symbol of eternal life. The Romans celebrated the “Feast of Saturn” by the raising of an evergreen bough. The Norsemen symbolized the revival of the sun god Balder with evergreen boughs. Pine boughs were used to keep witches and evil spirits away by those inclined to superstition. Why an evergreen? The reason is in the name. Ever Green. The Solstice marks the shortest day of the year and the evergreen was a symbol of eternal life because its boughs stayed green all year long. Pagans were celebrating a rebirth of the earth and eternal life.

Ornaments are derived from that same era. Celebrants of the Winter Solstice tied dried fruit and berries to an upside down evergreen in a ritual to pay homage to the gods for their bountiful harvest and life after death.

The modern Christmas tree tradition began in Germany sometime in the 7th century when a monk traveling to Germany used the triangular shape of the evergreen tree in his teachings to symbolize the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The first decorated tree in recorded history is said to have started in Latvia in 1510. It was decorated with paper flowers and pastry twists. In the early 16th century Martin Luther supposedly decorated a fir tree with small candles tied to its boughs to show his children how the lights of the stars twinkled throughout the night. 17th century proprietors

in German market fairs made gingerbread men and wax ornaments to sell as souvenirs of the fair. Tinsel was invented in Germany around the same time by making thin strands out of silver. Practical items were bought as gifts, such as sharpening tools and knives. Hence the tradition of gift giving at Christmas.

The symbol of the Christmas tree spread throughout Europe and America during the mid 1800’s by Queen Victoria and her German husband Prince Albert. Queen Victoria’s enamored subjects wanted to copy the Christmas tradition brought from Germany. It became fashionable to make hand sewn pouches made of fabric and lace and paper baskets laden with sugared nuts to be used as ornaments and to give as gifts at court.

The Yule log is another example of a pagan ritual converted into a Christmas tradition. Pagan peasants lit a large log on the longest night of the year to keep evil spirits away as they waited for the sun to rise to mark the Sun’s victory over darkness. Different wood was used for different effects. For example, oak brings healing, strength and wisdom. Birch signifies new beginnings. Willow invokes the Goddess to achieve desires.

Reindeer is yet again another ancient pagan ritual incorporated into Christmas. Pagans dressed up in goat skins to pay homage to the Norse god, Thor, who used goats to fly his chariot. Over the centuries, the goats evolved into reindeer.

And did you know that the real St. Nicholas was a monk born around 280 A.D. in Turkey? He was much admired for his goodness and piety. It is said that he gave away all his inherited wealth and traveled the world to help the sick and the poor.

And last but not least, theologian research actually places Christ’s birth sometime in late September to mid-October. Yet, we celebrate his birth on December 25th. Why? Well part of the reason is because the early Christian monks incorporated the Winter Solstice to convert pagans to Christianity. Another reason is that the Christ child’s bris ceremony (circumcision) could not take place until King Herod was dead for fear he would kill the so named “King of the Jews”. Some scholars believe that the ceremony took place around Hanukah in the year 3 B.C.

Correct me if I’m wrong, but isn’t Christianity derived from Judaism and don’t we Christians be-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

(TRADITIONS —BURLEW FROM PAGE 8)

lieve in the same God as both the Muslims and the Jews? Now I'm not what you'd call a good Christian if the standard is that I only recognize Christian holidays. I no longer attend the church and no longer practice any organized religion, but I try to follow the values I was taught as a child. Didn't Jesus teach the Golden Rule—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And to love one another as we do ourselves? Aren't our carols full of "Peace and goodwill toward man"? Isn't the celebration of the birth of Jesus supposed to instill love, kindness, giving and sharing? Certainly with all the borrowed traditions we Christians use to celebrate the holidays, we could be just a little more tolerant of others' celebrations.

Happy Holidays everyone.

WB

Congratulations to South Bay, CWC

We've had a good year, a banner year! Let's celebrate.

There's the obvious: membership increase to the point where we are now the most populace branch in the club; A remarkably successful East of Eden Conference; (a winning newsletter?), terrific speakers at our meetings, good attendance at all functions and we are not in the financial red—rather we have a few bucks!

Do we know why this success—it ain't luck!

We have an energetic, visionary, diligent, charitable and hard-working Board of Directors—and they do brownies. They take the extra steps, whatever is required: the overlooked, the not imagined, the unplanned, to make every event a success. They haul up their bootstraps and "just do it." And when I say Board of Directors, I'm talking committee chairs and their helpers as well as the elected. All of these people deserve our applause.

Okay, so here it is: Congratulations to the South Bay Branch for a stellar year and a huge thanks to our leaders—the Board and Committee Chairs. Lift them high, slam em down and here's wishing the same and better for 2007. *The WT Editors*

Please be advised that the Fifteenth Dame Lisbet Throckmorton Short Fiction Contest is seeking original stories 3,500 words or less and offering cash prizes (\$500, \$125, \$75, \$50) and publishing for the four winners. Stories may be from any genre, they are judged according to originality and quality of writing. Chapters from novels are accepted as long as they stand on their own.

This is a great opportunity to compete against other aspiring writers and earn notice for your work, a help when writing query letters for grants, literary agents, or publishers.

Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sherri Cook Woosley

M.A. in English literature from University of MD

www.coffeehousefiction.com

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

Becky has "gone fishing" and will return in the February issue



THE EXTENDED ARTIST

SBW member **Lawrence Pratt** has taken a selection of photos from his series of travel articles solo and invites you to visit his online presentation hosted by

www.decembersrose.com.

From the home page, simply click on the "photo of the month" to go to the Site Map page. From the left side of the map page, select "Artists & Their Images" to access the gallery of artists. Of course, Larry would like you to visit his site first and, if you like what you see, pass word of the site on to others.



While waiting and reading, mid-afternoon, from a collection of far-eastern meditations, I nodded off and fell soundly asleep—inextricably pulled into an unfathomable

vortex. Down I tumbled deep

along spiraling walls and through caverns of the chilly abyss until eventually and gradually I slowed. It was bright there, very bright, and all became evident. I could see more than ever before—20-05. All knowledge was before me in waves of understanding and I saw it. I saw everything.

As I absorbed everything and it became me, the remainder intensified and I was blinded in a light that brought excruciating pain—my corneas recoiled with the trauma. When I donned my Bollés, they seemed not to fit. I looked in a mirror. Gads... there in the middle of my mind was a third eye looking back—brown and blue, green speckles—wise eastern thought flowing through. Well, you can imagine my fright and, as I covered my face with a page from the book, to a table I was ushered and urged hurriedly to lay upon.

Surrounding the table in the intensified light, were seven green surgeons with scalpels poised high, each with attendants in white standing by. I heard symphony—a rousing Tchaikovsky from the gallery. The attendants leaned in peering—pressuring my awareness down into the table—while perspiring surgeons moved their tools to the music, nodding and jabbering in a language I dare not understand. Cymbals crashed, cannon roared silencing my linguistic interest and, just as Pyotr reached his final crescendo, I slid far away into pastoral lands, a soft melody flowing in from the East—eyes closing brown, closing blue, green speckles.

The next I remember, there in a mirror of 60 watt light, was my forehead nicely bandaged and a note on the glass: "Wash daily with peroxide and dress gently with poly – see you in a week for stitches"

ANDREA'S WEBSITES

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



Andrea Galvacs
Contributing Editor

Getting published in WritersTalk is very 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.

CONTESTS

Colorado Prize for Poetry

The winning book-length collection of poems submitted by January 15 will be published by the Center for Literary Publishing and distributed by the University Press of Colorado. There is a \$25 reading fee, which includes a one-year subscription to Colorado Review. See <http://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/CPP/sub.html> for submission guidelines.

Fifteenth Dame Lisbet Throckmorton Short Fiction

Seeking stories <3,500 wds, and chapters from novels, any genre, until January 15. Cash prizes.
info@coffehousefiction.com

Glimmer Train Winter Fiction

Deadline, January 15. Winner receives \$2,000, publication in Glimmer Train. www.glimmertrain.org

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

esson 22. Multiple vs. Numerous

Some words constitute such a minor difference in meaning that most of us are happy to ignore it. However, grammar aficionados and linguists often enjoy making a distinction. For anybody who cares, here's an explanation of the difference between "multiple" and "numerous," both of which mean "many," in general.

The word "multiple" is more similar to "various," while "numerous" refers to large numbers of individual items. For example, when we writers send out "multiple submissions," we send the same MS more than once. If we send out "numerous" submissions, they can be many different MSS.

For the word "multiple," compare to multiply: Relating to or consisting of more than one individual component.

For the word "numerous," compare to numbers: Consisting of a large, indefinite number of items.

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

Dream Quest One Poetry and Writing Contest

Original short story or poem, by an 15. Short story entry fee, \$15, poetry entry fee, \$5.
www.dreamquestone.com.

SUBMISSION REQUESTS Unbound Press

Unpublished one to six poems, one short story or one creative non-fiction contribution.
UnboundPress@gmail.com

The Inspired Pen

Check out the new journal de-

voted to publishing short work. Information and guidelines at www.inspiredpen

MISCELLANEOUS WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Formatting mss for submission:
<http://sfwa.org/writing/format/betancourt.htm>

Common errors in English, good for checking grammar: www.wsu.edu/~Brians/errors/index.html

AG

Timeless Tear —Carolyn Donnell

I sat upon a grassy hill, beneath a spreading oak
and watched as dappled sunlight turned green leaves to burnished gold.

A bubbling stream ran at my feet, its soothing sounds did flow.
The cool clean air filled up my lungs, refreshing flesh and soul.

A crackling in the brush did cause the reverie to end.
My eyes sought out the noise's source and spied the russet skin.

The Lord of forest dark and deep did pause to view his realm.
He turned and contemplated me with head, imperial.

I gazed into his sable eyes and saw there first, myself.
He showed me hunters with their guns, defaming rock and rill.

I shed one tear, and as I stared into that regal orb,
I swear to you, I saw there too, a drop in his eye form.

Then in one timeless moment pure, we two became as one.
Our minds, our hearts, our souls did blend. At last, I understood.

I heard a shot ring from the west. "Go, run the other way."
I shouted, pointing to the east to try to aid escape.

But sportsmen had their way today. Mere contest was the goal.
Those antlers, just a prize to place for viewing on a wall.

I went to see that royal head, to pay my last respects.
For one brief instant, I did wish the hunter's there instead.

WritersTalk is on line

Those who have asked for our newsletter on line can now view
and download from our website. Reminder, our website is
www.southbaywriters.com.

Additionally, If anyone would prefer receiving the newsletter as a
pdf email attachment, send a request. (writerstalk@comcast.net) I
will take your name off of our hardcopy distribution and add you
to an email distribution.

Note: there are NO plans to deliver the newsletter exclusively
electronically.

The One

by Victoria J. Burlew

She sits,
curled up with a comforter wrapped
around her,
smoking a cigarette in the dark,
thinking.
And thinking.
“Why do I feel so down?” she asks
herself.
She is more than a little melancholy.
She feels empty and very tired.
Tired of...everything!
Deep down she knows what's miss-
ing—
what has always been missing.
“Maybe I'm just an incurable ro-
mantic,” she tells
herself as she takes another drag of
the cigarette.
She feels as though she's on a
merry-go-round,
trying desperately just to hold on,
let alone be able to grasp the brass
ring.
Why can't she find The One?
The One meant for her.
She only wants to find...what? The
other...
the other half of herself.
But where? Who?
The One who is friend, lover, soul-
mate.
To share thoughts, desires, hopes,
dreams.
No longer two but One.
One together.
She laughs a short mirthless laugh,
crushes the cigarette out,
a tear slides slowly down her cheek.
Her eyes close as she drifts into
sleep.
And she dreams.
Dreams of The One.

GIVE UNTO OTHERS —Mary Feeny, guest contributor.

I asked my adorable six-year-old niece what she wanted for Christmas.

"Barbie!" she cried, without the slightest hesitation. "Barbie, Barbie, Barbie!!!" she added, just in case I was hard of hearing or slow on the uptake.

I try to be a good aunt, but her response stunned me.

"Umm, Kimberly, you already have at least a dozen Barbie dolls. You couldn't possibly want another *doll* could you? Do you mean you want some new outfits for them, or a Barbie backpack or what?"

"ANYTHING Barbie!" she replied.

Goddammit. Barbie was the last thing I wanted to hear. I detest that slut with the long blond hair, the fake eyelashes, boobs bigger than mine, and that boy-toy bearing. Is this the kind of woman Kimberly wanted to emulate? Where had I gone wrong?

"What about some ice skates, or a cool game you could play with your friends?"

"I play Barbie with my friends! They all have hundreds of them!"

I sought out my sister, feeling dejected. "I don't think I can possibly go through with this," I told her. "Barbie is the epitome of pointless consumerism, the death knell for feminism, the height of corrupt corporate marketing of useless brain-deadening crap."

"Take it easy," she replied. "Kimberly adores you. That won't change if you give her a basketball for Christmas, so do whatever feels right to you. You don't need to compromise your principles. Besides, Santa will undoubtedly be providing Barbie gear this year."

I went into a Toys-R-Us feeling better. I would comb the aisles for something new and different, something challenging and educational, something entertaining yet wholesome.

"Can I help you?" a young male clerk with slept-in hair and thick, black-rimmed glasses asked. His name tag said "Hi--I'm Keith."

"I'm looking for a gift for my ten-year-old niece."

"Oh--let me take you directly to the Barbie section," he replied. Before I could protest, he was guiding me by the elbow to a part of the store that seemed to exude a neon pink glow.

There were entire aisles dedicated to Barbie, and yet more space for Skipper and Ken dolls. I felt like an alien on my own planet. Clearly, people must be buying this stuff by the truckload. Civilization was in rapid decline.

"We just got a couple of new Barbie models in that I can show you," Keith said. They seem to be really popular with young girls--and a few older guys, if you know what I mean," he said, winking. He showed me one of the new arrivals: Growin' Pretty Hair Barbie.

"You mean to tell me this thing actually grows hair? That's creepy."

"Well, it doesn't actually grow. You have to hold her firmly and pull on her ponytail, then the hair gets longer. It comes with a manual showing all the different hairstyles and looks you can give your Barbie. It even comes with a tool you can use to push her hair back in, to make it shorter again."

The idea of yanking Barbie by the hair or taking pliers to her head had some appeal, but still...

"This one's new, as well," Keith continued. "It's called Talking Busy Barbie. Her arms move and everything. And she comes with these great accessories, including her own telephone and a serving tray with two tumblers on it."

"What--so she can call Ken over and serve him drinks?" I gasped. I took the box from Keith for a closer look. Barbie was wearing

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)

WritersTalk Challenge

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

Genres:

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

Awards:

Twice yearly, Feb 15 and Aug 15

First Prize - \$60

Second - \$40

Third - \$25

Honorable Mentions

Entrants:

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

Judging:

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

Judging approach:

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

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

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

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

(GIVE —FEENY FROM PAGE 13)

turquoise blue hot pants and lime green go-go boots. There was no way I would buy this thing for Kimberly.

"Keith--you gotta help me here. There must be something a ten-year-old girl might want besides a Barbie doll."

"I don't think so!" he replied. "The Barbie dolls just fly out of here; we can hardly keep them on the shelves. Nobody's buying board games this year."

Heading back to the parking lot, I recalled my own childhood Christmases. The family photo albums are full of shots of us kids on successive Christmas mornings. My brother and sister are always grinning, but my unmanageable hair invariably framed a big scowl, and I'd be holding a dumb doll or a sewing kit--when what I had begged Santa for was an erector set or a hockey stick or a holster with pistols, like the one my brother got. I knew what it was like to be certain about what you want, to ask for it clearly, and not get it.

I went back into the store and found Keith.

"Okay, I surrender. I'm going to get some kind of Barbie thing. But don't they make anything with a bit of an edge? You know, something like Lesbian Separatist Barbie, or Psychopath Ax Murderer Barbie, or Alien Space Invadin' Barbie?"

"Oh, they haven't released anything like that yet, I'm afraid," he snickered.

"Well how about a professional series? Doctor Barbie, Judge Barbie, University Professor Barbie?"

"I haven't seen those either, but it sounds like a good idea. Let me show you our bin of older models, the simpler ones that didn't come with so much paraphernalia."

I sorted through the bin and eventually picked out a Malibu Barbie. She had the usual shape and that smarmy painted-on smile, but at least she looked like she just wanted to go plop her stiff limbs on the beach and work on a tan. No high heels, no apron, no makeup kit. I bought her some tiny sunglasses to prevent premature cataracts and a parasol she could use to avoid severe sunburn.

While Keith was wrapping my purchases in Christmas paper with a big pink ribbon, I decided I would make up some tiny books that Barbie could take to the beach with her--*War and Peace*, *A Room of One's Own*, and maybe an auto repair manual, so she could become a little more self-reliant. MF

December's Gala Shots —D. LaRoche

The house was overflowing—wondrous women and merry men, all emoting a holiday cheer. Party time. Fifty-one, someone counted, and when it came to doling gifts, there was no mistaking the number.

(Betty A., buy new digs—hundreds more feet in each direction. You've got a year!)

Betty's home: a beckoning place, lovely daughters hosting, set a bit into the hills, cedar and fir emitting an appropriate essence—follow the candles please. Is that cinnamon and mulled wine or the magi with frankincense? Colored lights red and green, beaming faces greeting. A door that doesn't close as more come in. It was all that we'd hoped and expected. Thank you Betty and friends.



Writers flooded rooms—
I hovered over the food.
I talked then ate, then













ate, then sang. Gifts spilled
into eager hands. The bell
rang and rang.



I talked about cats,
books, piano, politics,
the environment,



libraries, jazz, and
writerly things. I answered
most
to: "Where are your wings?"



Happy Holidays!
Emily J.























I could mention the "got what I wanted in the gift ex-














change and left so I couldn't get stolen from" syndrome—



happened twice that I know. And Christmas carols in enthu-



siastic varying degrees of tonality. One guy thanked me



heartily for NOT putting okra in the black-eye peas this



year. – Carolyn D.


CWC Holiday Bash

At Betty's there was a CWC invasion
To celebrate this holiday occasion.
The food was yummy, and conversation funny
We raised our voices in song, led by Hi Dong
Cathy read a Christmas story we all found hunky-dory.
Gifts wrapped and mysterious made us all curious
We left feeling contented, inspired and enthused
Looking forward to 2007 and a visit from the muse.
Edie M.





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.

JACK LONDON WRITERS CONFERENCE

March 24, 2007

Foster City Crowne Plaza, Foster City, CA

For further information visit: www.sfpeninsulawriters.com

The 17th Annual Jack London Writers Conference will be held all day Saturday, March 24, 2007 at the Foster City Crowne Plaza. Keynote speaker Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket) will kick off the one day conference of workshops, speakers, and agent appointments.

Early registration guarantees a free agent consultation! Special rate for CWC members. Check our website for further information. (www.sfpeninsulawriters.com)

WRITERS CONTEST: Categories include Short Story, Nonfiction, and Poetry. Prizes are \$100, \$50 and \$25. The Charles and Lois Cook Writing Prize plus \$250 and consideration for publication by KO-MENAR will be awarded for Best Novel. Deadline for entries is January 20, 2007.

See www.sfpeninsulawriters.com for further rules and information.



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

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.



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

SPELL-CHECK ISN'T ENOUGH

A REMINDER FROM LAURIE GIBSON, PROFESSIONAL EDITOR

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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

Board of Directors Meet
January 10 at Cathy's

No General Meeting:
Jan 21 Workshop
Tod Goldberg

Open Mic:
Jan 5, 7:30p
B&N Almaden Plaza
Jan 12 7:30.p
Borders, Santana Row
Jan 19, 7:30
B&N in the Pruneyard

WritersTalk Inputs:
Jan 16

Editors Pow-Wow:
Jan 20, 10:00am
Orchard Valley Coffee

Workshop— Jan 21, 9:30
At

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

See Map Below

Take 237 to
W Maude to Macara

