



WRITERSTALK

Volume 16
Number 4
April 2008

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

Rich Plots Through History

by Alexander Leon

Human history has always facilitated societies with perspectives about their past, leading to better understanding of their present and their vision of the future. However, history is an extensive and at times elusive subject that can be arduous even for the most passionate and dedicated. And this is especially true when so much disinformation has been injected into events in efforts to cover up the tracks of those who have perpetrated horrors.

A telling recent example is when the mainstream media, after endless and unremitting exhortations to “support our troops,” really meaning *support our war*, suddenly abandoned the troops by blacking out *Winter Soldier*, a gathering of Iraq veterans in Maryland the weekend before the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war, where they related their harrowing experiences. Watching the Wednesday, March 19 episode of “Democracy Now” one cannot help but shed a tear (DemocracyNow.org). So the media blackout of *Winter Soldier* screams of how history becomes distorted, and rich plots abound within what these veterans experienced.

But how can authors take advantage of the vast resources of plot and character found in history to write something that makes sense of what seemed senseless and even sets the record straight in the context of something that is gratifying to read? Our April guest speaker, Jess Wells, will answer this and more for us.



Jess Wells

“Historical fiction is gaining in popularity; a really burgeoning genre within fiction.” So certainly history provides great plot and characters for rich writing, but she also counsels that there is a bane and boon to historical fiction writing. “There are some very particular components of writing historical fiction that the author needs to be aware of.” Key, above language and plot, is that “great writing requires great insight into personal psychology and the emotional fabric of human beings.”

For writing, she feels experience is paramount: “being older.” Though she uses plot outlines, she cautions ala Yogi Berra, “It’s never over till it’s over. What you thought was a great buildup in chapter 15, turns out to be chapter 1. You just never know.”

Jess Wells avidly reads historical nonfiction and fiction. She mentions enthusiastically William Manchester’s *A World Lit Only by Fire* and Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel*. She loves Rushdie, Tony Morrison, and Faulkner. However, her all time favorite is *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. “You can taste the air from page one. Evocative; paints a character in a few words; a

Continued on page 9

Rosie’s Daughters March Recap

by Editorial Staff

Each South Bay Writers meeting follows an agenda of sorts. Last Tuesday’s meeting began with a President Dave joke:

A writer’s friend had recently died and appeared to him.

The live writer asked, “Are there writers in Heaven? What’s it like?”

The deceased writer replied, “I have good news and bad news. The good news is that yes, there are writers here. Everyone is published and successful.”

“So what’s the bad news?”

The dead writer: “You’re due to host the Open Mic this coming Friday.”

Ouch. From jokes to announcements:

- Andrea Galvac announced the winners of the 2008 SBW Challenge; Luanne Oleas for “The Eleventh One is Free” in the essay category, Swann Li for “Who Are Our Friends? Who Are Our Enemies?” in fiction, Betty Auchard for “The Wild Woman on L Avenue” in memoir, and Steve Wetlesen for “Shoreglitter” in poetry.
- The upcoming SBW anthology is in the works if you are interested in submitting. (See page 5.)
- The East of Eden Conference is coming in September 2008, and don’t forget the Open Mic nights. Check southbaywriters.com for more details.
- The mic went around with introductions/announcements/success stories to be shared.

From there people milled about, ate good Lookout dinners and checked to see who won the coveted Irish theme raffle prizes.

Continued on page 16

President's Prowling

by *Dave LaRoche*
President, South Bay Writers

More Hodgepodge

Congratulations to Dick Amyx and all of his contributing editors for continuing to upgrade the quality of *WritersTalk*. Andrea's comprehensive review of our February meeting and Richard's discussion of the Alderson workshop both held my attention through (even) a second reading. Carolyn and Lita with great contributions and Betty's conversation with her Dad was maybe too familiar (What keys? Was I looking for my keys?). I know the effort and dedication that goes into our newsletter and am pleased to extend the thanks and appreciation it deserves.



Has *no one* read *The Castle in The Forest*?

I am going through some old stuff written in the dark past, crossing t's and recalling when Emily Jiang spoke of contests and how every time she entered and lost, she went into a rewrite. We grow. It's a fact, and what ever we do repeatedly, we learn to do better. Of course if you're an architect, you don't raze your skyscraper and rebuild, and oil painters seldom redo a canvas, but writers can rewrite until their keyboards collapse and what an advantage it is—to go back and upgrade to your current ability. I notice though, some of my phrases already turn just the right way and are far too precious to change.

I thought when I took this job that it would encroach on my writing time, especially my inclination, but just the opposite has happened. The more I insinuate myself into the machinations of South Bay Writers activity and associate with the people around it, the more I learn about writing and apply it. This draws another adage to the fore: the more one writes, the more one writes. In the broader sense, engaging in the stuff and the peripheral stuff of reading and writing, immersing in it, becoming it, leaves a residual that brings insight and thus quality to the product. It enhances one's skills and brings on the artistry, and the lesson must be this: to improve your writing, run for office.

The thing about elections—the selection from among candidates for an office—is it brings competition that requires an effort, and only people who want to run, run. Those people usually have something to bring that is viewed, by them, as something that is needed. Often it is. The electorate, that's us, we members of the club, get to assess what is brought and decide if we want it. It's a pretty good deal, deciding what we want and voting to get it. Elections are coming up, not tomorrow, but in June, and there is time to think about it. I will be appointing a Nominating Chair next month whose job will be to form a slate... I encourage you to sharpen up your ideas and to bring them.

Continued on page 10

Inside

The Education of a Fiction Writer #3 4
SBW Anthology: Editorial Plan 5
Copyright for Authors: Introduction and Terms 6
New Members 6
The Journey of a Thousand Miles: What is a Short-Short Story? 7
Nipper's Nits 7
Accolades 8
Announcing the WritersTalk "Worth 500 Words" Contest 8

An International Women's Day Celebration 9
Early Spring in California Conference "Voices" 10
WritersTalk Challenge Winners Announced 10
We Are All Polliwogs 11
First Licensed Poet in Cupertino 13
What Spirits Lurk in Your House? 13
Letter to the Editor 14
A Victim of Circumstances 15

California Writers Club South Bay Branch

— 0 —

Executive Committee

President—Dave LaRoche
pres@southbaywriters.com
408 729-3941

Vice President—Alexander Leon
vp@southbaywriters.com

Secretary—Jeannine Vegh
secretary@southbaywriters.com

Treasurer—Jeremy Osborne
treasurer@southbaywriters.com

Central Board Rep

Dave LaRoche (acting)

Directors

Programs—Alexander Leon
vp@southbaywriters.com

Publicity and Public Relations—Edie Matthews
publicity@southbaywriters.com
408 985-0819

Membership—Marjorie Johnson
membership@southbaywriters.com

Hospitality—Cathy Bauer
cathy@bauerstar.com

Networking—Gary Dow
networking@southbaywriters.com

East of Eden Conference—Edie Matthews and
Kelly Harrison, co-chairs
eastofeden@southbaywriters.com

Open Mic—Bill Baldwin
408 730-9622

Webmaster—Ro Davis
webmaster@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 the Membership Chair, Marjorie Johnson.



WRITERSTALK

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

Managing Editor

Richard Amyx
newsletter@southbaywriters.com
408 297-4438

Contributing Editors

Richard Burns
Jackie Mutz (copy editor)
Andrea Galvacs (copy editor)
Carolyn Donnell
Lita Kurth
Susan Paluzzi
Una Daly

Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. Suggested word limits are not absolute; query the editor. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com; or mail double-spaced, typewritten copy to

Richard Amyx
994 No. 2nd Street
San Jose, CA 95112

Guest Columns

Almost Anything Goes (400 words)

News Items (400 words)

Letters to the Editor (300 words)
to Andrea Galvacs
lady_angal@comcast.net

Creative Works

Short Fiction (1800 words)
Memoir (1200 words)
Poetry (300 words)
Essay (900 words)

Announcements and Advertisements

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

An announcement is information of interest and value to writers that does not provide direct economic benefit to its originator. Announcements are published free of charge.

Advertising is accepted on the basis of its interest and value to writers. Advertising rates for Club members, \$7 per column inch; non-members, \$10. We will assist or insist with layout.

Authors retain all rights to their works; *WritersTalk* gratefully acknowledges the authors' permission to publish their works here. Contact individual authors for permission to reprint.

Change of Address: Send changes of address to the Membership Chair at membership@southbaywriters.com

Subscriptions: Nonmember subscriptions are \$20/year; send a check payable to South Bay Writers Club to the Membership Chair.

Circulation: 200

Copyright © 2007 California Writers Club South Bay Branch

Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx
Editor

Hey, where's the poetry?



It's all on my computer, safe in a folder named Poetry, and backed up on a flash drive just to be sure—which probably isn't the answer you're looking for.

It's unprofessional to make excuses and mix personal life in with business, but we're mostly amateurs here, and sometimes life tosses interruptions into the neatly planned flow of our affairs. In particular, I'd no sooner recovered from my bout with The Bug than my wife Meredy's mother passed away, and my son Ethan and I had to hop on an airplane for Boston (Meredy having gone ahead the week before). *WritersTalk* has to go to the printer tonight so that you'll have it before the general meeting a week from today. I just don't have time to give the poetry the care it deserves for effective presentation, so I'm deferring it until next month.

From thin air is where words come, and I need six hundred of them to fill this space. This afternoon I attended Edie Matthews's weekly creative writing workshop and found myself caught in a time warp, feeling like I'd just returned from a displacement in the universe, and wondering how a real writer might describe the sensation. Here I was, in completely familiar and comfortable surrounds, in the company of classmates whose personalities I've come to know over time. Under ordinary circumstances, we all go about our regular lives between classes. There is, it seems to me, an underlying unspoken continuity from Tuesday to Tuesday that helps us order our worlds.

I also attended the class last Tuesday afternoon, in the same comfortable surrounds, with the same familiar classmates. But on Wednesday, when Ethan and I went to the airport to catch our flight to Boston, we found ourselves in the midst of American Airlines' MD-80 recall and consequent flight cancellations. We wound up trapped in the middle of a jammed-to-the-gills, overheated, airless 767 red-eye from Los Angeles to Logan. No movie (the video equipment was broken), no food service, no nothing, and in the seat next to Ethan, a guy who had got on the plane drunk on his butt, passed out, and kept wanting to snuggle into Ethan's shoulder, much to Ethan's ongoing and vocal disgust. Thursday at 7:00 a.m., sleepy-eyed and punchy, checking out an Avis Pontiac and making the I-95/93 loop around the south end of Boston to our hotel in Dedham. A couple hours' sleep, then into coats and ties and off to the funeral parlor in Millis for the afternoon viewing, getting reacquainted with relatives we hadn't seen for some number of years, learning that the nieces and nephews who used to be four or five years old are now becoming firefighters or graduating from college. Back to Dedham for dinner, then off to Millis again for the evening viewing. Friday morning, still numb from travel, three-hour time difference, and hotel sleep, back to Millis, this time to a funeral service in a quintessential white-steepled New England Congregational Church; slow procession to the cemetery; watching the coffin being moved from hearse to grave as windshield wipers slap away thirty-six-degree rain; shivering through the burial service and placing roses atop the coffin; back to the church for food and fellowship, reminding ourselves that while our loved one has gone to her rest, we're all still here. Then back to the hotel, the first real meal in three days, blowing off steam and grief with all the relatives, Ethan having his first opportunity to see snow fall, big, fat, fluffy flakes making orange kaleidoscope swirls in sodium vapor parking lot lights. To bed, then up on Saturday and eight hours on airplanes again. Home, and was I really gone only three days?

Continued on page 7

The Education of a Fiction Writer #3

by Richard Burns

Sharpen Your Tools: Words and Phrases

I. Stronger Verbs; Action Verbs

In a series of creative writing classes I took, the most common red-circled words were non-action words.

Hence, my stories tended to drag. My natural tendency is to overuse verb forms

that have helper verbs (auxiliary verbs). Take a look at your current project and see if it is *riddled* with auxiliary verbs in phrases like

- “were” as in “were going”
- “was” as in “was sparkling”
- “have” as in “have gone”
- “had” as in “had been cleaning”

Sentences usually sound more concrete, more focused on action, and shorter by using the simple past tense. Action moves the plot along. It is all-important. I’m not thinking of disasters and bombs, just something happening.

Lars Eighner wrote “Fiction is written, for the most part, in the simple past tense. This is a deeply ingrained convention ... past tense is convincing.” [<http://www.larseighner.com/workshop/faq/qa050164.html>] Consider how concrete and immediate the shorter alternative words below sound when you read them aloud:

- were going => went
- was sparkling => sparkled
- have gone => went [or] cut out [or]
- split [or] sped away
- had been cleaning => cleaned

But be sure to check the meaning against your context. “Were going” may be a better fit than “went” if continuing action extends into the present time. “It turned out they were going to the movie anyway,” a conditional statement, implies intent to go, not a completed action. “It turned out they went to the movie anyway” may not be a good substitute, depending on the context.

I forget exact definitions of subjunctive and conditional tenses. But for me, the

key is this: try the simple verb and *carefully check if it works*. My view is your sentences and paragraphs will “pop” with new vitality by eliminating some of your auxiliary words if you have my problem of overuse.

On her website, Kathy Krajco agrees. She writes, “Actionless verbs include static verbs, like *exist* and the various forms of the verb *to be*. Other actionless verbs include English’s infamous cargo of ‘helping’ or ‘auxiliary’ verbs. I call them ‘little verbs.’ Vague verbs convey little meaning and usually require help to adequately describe the action. For example *hit* is vague. *Slapped, punched, or walloped* more vividly and precisely describe the action.” Her more complete list is

“Little Verbs

- *be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been*
- *have, has, had, having*
- *do, does, did, doing*
- *may, might*
- *can, could*
- *would, will, shall*
- the contracted forms ‘s, ‘re, and ‘ve.”

See http://lighthouse-writing-tips.blogspot.com/2006_02_01_archive.html.

II. Consider Passive Voice Phrases

The same could be said for *unnecessarily* using the passive voice. Passive voice places the object of the sentence before the verb while placing the subject after the verb, usually preceded with “by.”

An example is: “The house was painted by Kenneth and John.” It generally sounds more streamlined to say, “Kenneth and John painted the house.” Again, we’ve eliminated a helper word, in fact two of them, “was” and “by.” Use passive voice only when the subject is unimportant and the object and verb are all-important or when spelling out the subject would ruin your mystery. Often, then, the subject will be eliminated altogether, such as: “The house was painted.” (It is unimportant or unknown who painted the house.)

If you tend toward too many helper verbs, learn to spot them, and see if the shorter form works.

III. My Problem Words

I’m trying to learn to use them correctly.

Already (as opposed to all ready)

all right (alright is incorrect variant of all right, although it was used by James Joyce and others.)

further / farther (now they have equal meaning)

to lie = to recline (intransitive)

present: (I or we) lie; (you or they) lie; (he or it) lies; is lying; has lain

past: (I or we) lay; (you or they) lay; (he or it) lays; was lying; had lain

to lay = to place something down
transitive (needs an object)

present: (I or we) lay; (you or they) lay; (he or it) lays; is laying, has laid

past: (I or we) laid; (you or they) laid; (he or it) lies; was laying; had laid

also: Throughout my engineering career, I had to watch overuse of “also.” I need to eliminate most of them. For me, they crop up like prickly dandelions in a lawn of lush bluegrass.

Homonyms: These words sound the same, but they are not interchangeable. If you’re active in your critique group, the reviewers will help catch the incorrect application of these words:

there; their; they’re

to; too; two

its; it’s

you’re; your (I don’t actually confound these with “yore,” but it belongs.)

effect; affect

except; accept

whose; who’s

rein, reign, rain

sight; site; cite

weather; whether

Don’t leave it to your publisher to be nice about correcting these. With me, it’s often carelessness, not that I “have no clue.” Dictionary.com comes in very handy. For example gage and gauge are now considered interchangeable.

IV. Fun Quiz

1. Which of these sentences use words incorrectly?
 - a. The affect of the frigid weather was to freeze up the water in the pipes.

Continued on page 8

SBW Anthology: Editorial Plan

by *Meredy Amyx*

The SBW Anthology Committee has sketched out a plan for delivering the yet-to-be named anthology of SBW members' writing early in 2009, the centennial year of the California Writers Club. Although the full plan, with timeline and budget, is not quite ready for publication, the editorial portion can be released.

As the editorial lead, I am pleased to announce the following features of the plan for content selection.

Concept

The anthology will represent the wealth of creative talent in SBW through both new and previously published material. Work that has already appeared in *WritersTalk* under the editorship of both Dave LaRoche and Dick Amyx will automatically be considered and need not be submitted, but nothing will be used without the consent of the author. Current membership in SBW is a requirement.

This is not a contest, so selection is not a matter of judging the few best of all the entries. As broad a representation as possible will be made. Criteria for selection will include some considerations other than best-in-class, such as scope of content, variety of genre, general interest, and number of authors. I know our members will understand that it won't be possible to use everything that comes our way, but we will do our best to make a good selection that well represents our group, with the aims both of appealing to our own membership and of attracting favorable notice beyond our chapter's boundaries.

Title

A title is needed, and suggestions are welcome; again, there will not be a contest. If you have ideas, especially for a title that somehow reflects the group, please send them to the project team at anthology@southbaywriters.com.

Schedule

A rough timeline calls for the selection process (including verification of membership and all necessary tracking and permissions) to proceed into the summer, copy preparation to take place early in the fall, and production work to

occur late in the fall, so that we can go to press shortly after the first of the year. Ro Davis is in charge of production, and the overall schedule will be set by Dick Amyx.

Promotional activity on several fronts will publicize the forthcoming collection, and preorder forms will be available in time for East of Eden.

Rules

Here are the rules for submissions and content selection:

1. Work will be drawn from three sources:
 - Published issues of *WritersTalk* (SBW group newsletter) having cover dates from January 2005 to June 2008. Reprint will occur only with permission of the original author.
 - Contributors' previously published material, provided that the submitting contributor is the author and owns the rights. No third-party submissions will be considered. Previously published material will appear with full source credit and statement of permission to reprint. If written permission is needed from the prior publisher, the author is requested to secure it.
 - Contributors' original material, not previously published.
2. Deadline for receipt of new contributions (not drawn from published issues of *WritersTalk*) is June 1, 2008.
3. Author must be a member in good standing of CWC/SBW as of June 1, 2008.
4. Work must be available in electronic form or be scannable (i.e., printed or typewritten).
5. Work will not be returned. Do not send your only copy of originals.
6. Work will be reproduced unchanged except for the correction of obvious typos and mechanical errors, such as omission of a period, and then only with the consent of the author.
7. Selection of work for inclusion in the anthology will be made at the discretion of the editorial team and its selection committee. The decision of the editors is final.
8. Individual members of the editorial team will not vote on their own work.

9. There will be no compensation for contributions.
10. Contributors whose work is included in the anthology will receive two free copies of the publication.

Submissions

Submit work electronically as a Word or plain-text attachment to meredy@amyx.org. Put 'SBW Anthology' in the subject line, and include all pertinent information in the cover message. It is also okay to put content into the body of a message; be sure that the beginning and end of the work are clearly indicated and that the author's name is given.

Submit typewritten or printed hard-copy entries by mail to

Meredy Amyx
SBW Anthology
994 No. Second St.
San Jose, CA 95112

Please keep your originals safe; work will not be returned.

Opportunities to Volunteer

Volunteer help will be needed in several aspects of the editorial phase. Volunteers will have to be able to send and receive material electronically. To offer your assistance, please contact me at meredy@amyx.org. Here are the ways in which we expect to need help:

- Clerical assistant, Excel master/mistress: help with recording and tracking, membership verification, permissions records, and bios; help with copies and distribution
- Editorial assistants (up to five): under direction of the editorial lead, receive, examine, and evaluate content for possible inclusion in anthology; correspond with authors; perform copyediting; gather, compile, and edit author bios; proofread

There will be a kickoff meeting of the editorial team probably in late April and one or possibly two meetings during the selection phase.

This anthology project is an exciting extension of our club activity. It offers a wonderful chance both to get involved in a short-term project and to see your work showcased in a professional-quality collection. Our thanks to Dave LaRoche for initiating this project and setting it in motion for the benefit of the organization. WT

Copyright for Authors: Introduction and Terms

Part I of III

by *Una Daly*

Copyright law is important for writers and other artists to understand because it affects how you can market your own creative work and how you can use the creative work of others. Without a



Una Daly
Contributing Editor

basic understanding of copyright, it is possible to sign away rights to your original work, thus preventing you from revising it or publishing it in a different medium. On the other hand, writers who have included copyrighted materials in their work without permission have been stripped of awards and publishing contracts. That ignorance of the law is no defense was demonstrated in a 2006 case in which the coming of age novels of a Harvard sophomore were found to contain passages from another author's novel and subsequently pulled from bookstore shelves.

The founding fathers laid the framework for copyright law in the Constitution (Article 1, Section 8) when they gave Congress the power: "... to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries ..." This early recognition of the need to balance public access with private interests was codified in U.S. copyright law (Title 17) protecting "... original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression ..." including literary, musical, and other artistic endeavors for a specified period of time.

An original work of authorship must be fixed in a tangible medium of expression by or under the authority of its author for copyright to apply. For literary works, this most often means making a permanent copy either by writing them on paper, typing them on a computer, or recording the spoken words. If the words were uttered in an impromptu speech—without a recording device—then copyright protection is not afforded because the work cannot

be reproduced. Therefore, it is only the creation and recording of the work and not the publication that grants copyright.

When distributing writing samples to critique groups or editors and publishers, it is not necessary to include the copyright notice because it already applies. But if you choose to specify the copyright, make sure it includes either the word "copyright," the symbol ©, or the abbreviation Copr., the year of publication, and your name on the first page of the manuscript. It is most commonly displayed as: "© 2008, Una T. Daly." It is also possible to register a work with the U.S. Copyright office for a fee and it usually improves chances for a successful prosecution in a case of copyright infringement.

Title 17 guarantees that the owner of a copyrighted work has the exclusive rights to reproduce the work, develop derivative work from it, distribute copies, and perform or display it for a specified number of years. The term of protection initially set in 1790 at 14 years has been repeatedly increased over time to favor the copyright owner and his or her heirs. Effective in 1978, the law was changed from a fixed number of years of protection to the lifetime of the author plus 50 years and this term was increased again in 1998 to 70 years. One notable exception is work-made-for-hire where the product is created as part of an employee's job, and the business is granted copyright protection for up to 95 years.

After the specified number of years expires, a copyrighted work passes into what is called the public domain where its use is unregulated by law. Final determination on whether a copyrighted work has entered the public domain is not as straightforward as it may appear. All works created or published before 1923 can safely be assumed to be public domain but inconsistencies in the law have made some works published before 1978 without valid copyright notices to prematurely enter the public domain. Copyright owners may also choose to place their work in the public domain at anytime before this would normally occur.

The next article in the series will discuss the contract issues that authors face

when granting permission to a publisher to use their work. It is important to surrender as few of these "use rights" as possible in order to maintain control of the work, and be able to offer the same work in different media or to make derivative works that can be published elsewhere.

References

www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.html

www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2007/march07/copyrightresources.cfm

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The author of this article is an educator and not an attorney. The legal information contained here is not meant as a substitute for seeking legal advice in specific situations. WT

New Members

by *Lita Kurth*

Welcome to all new members and visitors who attended the last meeting!

New member **Tim Null** tells us "I am a humorist because comedians are expected to be funny," and asserts that since the Safeway clerks know all his one-liners, he had to join South Bay Writers. He hopes to derive good company, good conversation, and good food. Tim@timnull.com

David Yeater, a technical writer and writer of children's stories (series of five books in the works already), is also interested in other types of writing, and wants to learn more about area conferences (See Edie!), maintain his writing through interaction with other writers, and make contacts in the publishing world. Members with similar interests may contact him at dyeater5477@sbcglobal.net.

Deanna McCusker is one of those committed writers (two drafts of her novel completed) who belongs to two writing clubs: ours and the Peninsula Branch. She's been getting a lot out of our speakers and the "lively, fun-loving bunch" that SBW is! (Yes, that's a direct quote!) She can be reached at the wonderful writerly email address of prose_less_taken@yahoo.com.

If you're a new member and I somehow missed profiling you, please contact me at Lakurth@yahoo.com WT

The Journey of a Thousand Miles: What is a Short-Short Story?

by Lita A. Kurth

Let me begin by saying “Many thanks!” to Jim Hansel who gave me the idea for this column at the February SBW meeting.



Lita Kurth
Contributing Editor

Flash fiction. Short-stories. Sudden Fiction. Prose poems. These are all names for what, at least for now, is being called the short-short story. Think of the Academy Awards and its category for Best Short Film. In more ways than one, short-short stories are like that. The first similarity, of course, is that they are not nearly as popular as long stories (which is a pity). Outside of writing programs or writers’ conferences, you might never hear of them, and it’s a good bet you’d search pretty hard at an airport bookstore to locate one.

But, once you know where to look, you’ll find them in surprising profusion. My current mentor, Jim Heynen, happens to be a master of the genre, who more or less established his reputation with this form. His touching collection of rural Minnesota tales, *The Boys’ House*, recalls a bygone but fascinating time. One story that stays with me involves a boy watching piglets being born and putting his face up close to a piglet’s eye so that the first thing the piglet sees on earth is the boy looking at him.

Plenty of short-stories are anything but quiet and tender, however. For a real jolt, try Jayne Anne Phillips’ *Black Tickets*. You may find yourself saying both, “Wow!” and “Huh?” The Nobel Prize winner, Naguib Mahfouz, has a collection of stories, *Fountain and Tomb*, about life in an Egyptian neighborhood around 1950. It isn’t labeled “short shorts” but fits the category beautifully. A popular collection is Robert Shapard’s *Sudden Fiction*, which includes mini-works from famous au-

thors: John Updike, Langston Hughes, Joyce Carol Oates, and Hemingway. Care to Google some publications that feature short-stories? Try *Quick Fiction*, *Double Room*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, or the very funny *Monkeybicycle*.

Now here’s something that may astound you: in Japan, people read and write fiction on and for their cell-phone screens. Barry Yourgrau’s *keitai* fiction consists of no more than 350 words. (Some Japanese authors have written 200-page cell-phone novels, however, using only their thumbs to type, but that’s another, longer story.)

As with creative nonfiction, definitions of short-stories vary. Heynen has described the short-short as “an hors d’oeuvre loaded with calories.” Many say a short-short should have fewer than 1,000 words, and some say, fewer than 500. Does a short-short need an actual plot? How can you tell it from a prose poem? No one knows. Or rather everyone does, but each knows something different. Contests and publications list their own specifications, but for practical purposes, think of a short-short as a story that takes only a page or two.

My first vivid memory of short-short stories arises from the 2002 East of Eden Conference in Salinas (yes, our very own!). I tend to be skeptical of new forms if they seem gimmicky, but after Kristen Iverson’s workshop introduced me to Brady Udall’s poignant short-short story, “The Wig”, I was hooked.

Short-short stories are not only fun and quick to read, but fun and quick to write, (and relatively fun and quick to rewrite the requisite ten or twenty times). At least, unlike when working on a novel, you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, I sometimes take a break from my novel to play with a short-short or two.

Want to try it yourself? Oh, go ahead. Here are a couple prompts Heynen suggested at my residency last summer:

- Reflect on a memory involving a relative in a defining moment
- Start with a dominant fear in childhood

Chances are excellent you’ll get it published in *Writers Talk!* WT

Nipper’s Nits

by Pat Decker Nipper

Lesson 36. That or Which

We use “that” for an identifying statement, while using “which” to amplify, enhance, or add to a statement.

“Which” almost always follows a comma. Another way to say it is “that” introduces a restrictive clause while “which” is nonrestrictive. In other words, for anything that is essential, use “that.” For example, “The TV that is broken is being replaced.” We know that the household is replacing the broken TV.

If the clause isn’t essential and can be left out without ruining the meaning of the sentence, use “which.” For example, “Billy’s TV, which is broken, is in the garage.” In this second example, someone’s personal TV has been moved.

I told my technical grammar classes to distinguish the two by a little mnemonic: “THat” IDentifies, therefore think “THID.” “WHich” AMplifies, therefore think “WHAM.”

If you think that this is not clear, you are not alone. Jan Venolia, author of *Write Right!*, says: “That/which takes up six pages in Fowler’s Dictionary of Modern English Usage.”

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

Editorial, continued from page 3

Tuesday. Class. The trip to Boston and everything it entailed in a bubble of time behind me, feeling almost as if I must have lived my ordinary life, too, otherwise I wouldn’t be back in the comfortable surrounds with the familiar classmates. Or maybe none of us exists between classes, and we all just materialize at Valley Village on Tuesday afternoons.

Next month, poetry. For sure. WT



Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

Considering all the good news that was shared at the March 11 meeting, I'd say that South Bay Writers had a busy month:



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

- Pat Bustamante has received the first business license for a poet in Cupertino.
- Susan Mueller finds that when she struggles with her novel, all she has to do is write something goofy for *WT* and it always gets published. Keep sending in those submittals Susan!
- Bob Garfinkel mentioned www.redroom.com, a website for published authors of which he is a member. He also shared that it only took six hours to receive a response to his query letter from a new literary agency in Oregon.
- Louise Webb is teaching an on going memoir class at the Senior Center in Saratoga. See www.sascc.org for more information.
- Marsha Brandsdorfer, author of the recently published memoir *The Accidental Secretary*, is currently working on and publishing articles in the Sequoia Stamp Club bimonthly newsletter and a women's writers club in Austin Texas.
- Una Daly has completed four of five chapters of her MA Education thesis titled *Electronic Portfolio*.
- Michael Murray finished a short story which is to be published in an upcoming issue of *WT*.
- Betty Auchard was a featured fourth speaker for the Art Alliance in Milpitas, which she enjoyed immensely. We're sure the audience had some fun too!
- Mary Tomasi-Dubois recently made the cover of the Los Gatos Weekly Times that featured a story on her latest book *Danger in the Jeweled City*.
- Deana McCusker has completed the third draft of her novel *Still Life with Fidel*.
- Suzy Paluzzi had a poem published

in Western Writers Chat and two articles in the online magazine Cupertino Daily (www.cupertinodaily.com).

- Edie Matthews has an ongoing Creative Writing class that meets Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Westmont Retirement Home. All ages welcome. See www.scae.org for details.
- Steve Wetlesen has been commissioned to write the subject text for and has also created a piece of poetic art to grace the newly launched website of Papachay Peruvian Coffee (www.papachay.com).
- I also teach a Creative Writing class through SCAE with new four week session coming up the end of May. Email me at j_mutz@yahoo.com for details.

Keep sending those emails and filling out the success form located at the table when you first come into our monthly meetings. Tell me your good news so I can pass it on to everyone. Your success encourages the rest of us to work that much harder and "stretch for our own success." Keep writing! WT

Education, continued from page 4

- b. He was a good boy. Also, he was quiet.
 - c. The sun rose probably around 6:15 a.m.
 - d. In a huge hurry, the men put on there shoes and ran out of the building.
2. Compare the following sentences. Which would in most cases be a better use of words? Why? How many words does each version have? Which version makes the narrator sound more authoritative?
 - a. She had finished her third semester. On Saturday, unfortunately, she had gone home with the very bad headache she had somehow got.
 - b. She finished her third semester. On Saturday, with head aching, she cut out for home.

V. Rule of Thumb

Avoid overuse of helper verbs and passive voice phrases. WT

Announcing the *WritersTalk* "Worth 500 Words" Contest



Illustration by Betty Auchard

A few months back, Betty Auchard suggested a new contest for *WritersTalk*; to wit, writing a piece inspired by an illustration. The *WT* editors readily accepted the idea, with the one condition that the maximum length of any submission be limited to 500 words; hence, the name "Worth 500 Words" contest. Entries will be judged in the same way as *WT* Challenge, except that there will be only one winner, who will receive a certificate and a \$35 cash award. The Worth 500 Words contest is planned to be held annually, most likely during April.

The rules are simple: all you have to do is write something to suit the illustration above. Genre doesn't matter; the only qualification is the maximum length of 500 words.

Deadline for entries is May 16. The winning entry will be published in the June issue; the award will be made at the July meeting (if we don't have a picnic), or at the August meeting otherwise. WT



An International Women's Day Celebration

by Carolyn Donnell

On March 1, 2008 participants from nine Bay Area counties and beyond ranging in ages from 11 to 90 converged on Skyline College in San Bruno to attend the sixth annual WOW! (Women on Writing) Conference.

Keynote speaker Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen spoke about her philosophy, "The wholeness of the world can only be restored one reader at a time". A pioneer of Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Clinical Professor of Family and Community Medicine at UCSF School of Medicine, and



WOW keynote speaker Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen and WT contributing editor Carolyn Donnell.

Founder/Director of the Institute for the Study of Health and Illness at Commonweal, she won the 1996 Wilbur Award for best spiritual non-fiction for her *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal*. I won't go into her philosophy here, but if you want an inspiring read I can personally recommend *My Grandfather's Blessings: Stories of Strength and Refuge and Belonging*.

For the morning workshop I chose Cara Black's "Setting and Sense of Place in Mysteries". Cara divides her life between San Francisco and Paris and has a continuing series set in Paris, with a female (what else!) sleuth—a computer security person. The session began with a reading from Raymond Chandler that illustrated how he could describe a character in a few precisely chosen words. We discussed how emotions could be evoked by sound and smell as well as sight and listed aromas—everything from perfume and

clean air to fish and Clorox.

Noon found a long line of hungry writers at the cafeteria—another chance to meet writers. I made the acquaintance of three members of our sister branch, SF/Peninsula, but only one possible future member of South Bay.

After lunch and camaraderie, we flocked back to the auditorium to listen to three other writers.

Tess Uriza Holthe, author of *The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes*; Carol Lem, author of the poetry collection *Shadow of the Plum*; Samina Ali, author of *Madras on Rainy Days*.

Tess Uriza Holthe was suffering from writer's block, so her mother (or maybe it was her mother-in-law) said, "Let's go shopping". Except this shopping therapy took place in Paris and the Riviera! Must be nice. While on the train to Cannes, she thought of plots and characters in abundance. Probably still got some shopping done, though.

Carol Lem, a Chinese-American poet born in the 1950s was raised in Los Angeles and is an instructor of English at East Los Angeles College. Influenced by T. S. Eliot, she said that she thought she too could write something that no one else understands (some laughter from the audience).

Samina, writer and American Muslim woman activist, was born in India but raised both there and in the United States. Co-founder of Daughters of Hajar, she and the other two founders staged a "walk-in" into a mosque in West Virginia in June of 2004 to reclaim women's rights to enter a mosque through the front door. The women won. Samina smiled at us and raised one eyebrow as she told us that she wore a bright green scarf and black stilettos that day.

In the afternoon I opted for "A Primer on Publishing" with agents Amy Rennert and Pat Walsh, and then slipped out to the poetry slam where young men and women slammed the establishment in hip-hop time. I got the uncomfortable feeling that I was considered one of them (the establishment) rather than one of us (the poets).

The conference ended at 4:00 with refreshments and an Art Exhibit in the Gallery Theatre—featuring the Women's Art Caucus, Peninsula

Chapter. There were definitely no starving artists that day. Whatever your interest, you had a good chance for finding something at the WOW 2008 conference. For a complete list of speakers and workshops, see <http://www.smccd.net/accounts/skywow>. WT

Rich Plots, continued from page 1

character that may die two pages later but you *know* the character. Astounding!"

Her latest book, *The Mandrake Broom* took her seven years; "four to write and three to sell." Originally a 500 page manuscript but now whittled down to half that size, *The Mandrake Broom* dramatizes the fight to save medical knowledge during the witch-burning times in Europe, 1465-1540, and is the result of years of research into the social, political, and medical communities of the times.

Jess Wells is the author of thirteen volumes of work, including three novels and five books of short stories. A winner of a San Francisco Art Commission Grant for Literature and a three-time Lambda Literary Award finalist, she is included in more than two dozen literary anthologies and journals, university curricula, and European publications. Her books and short stories can be found at www.jesswells.com. When she is not writing, she is a marketing specialist for the green industries.

Come learn from this rising star about novel writing with emphasis on historical fiction. Hear Jess Wells expound on the joys and trials of writing in this genre. Is a novel easier to construct with a factual backbone? Can you do too much research? What are your requirements for accuracy and your freedom to imagine and invent? How do you face the professionals as a part-time historian? Is historical fiction just a formula? How does it differ from modern fiction?

Don't miss this night at South Bay Writers, truly bound to become history. Join us on our April 8 at the Lookout Inn in Mountain View for great eats, networking and the opportunity to meet, hear and learn from this wonderful historical author, Jess Wells. WT

Early Spring in California Conference “Voices”

by Suzy Paluzzi

From March 14 to March 16, at the Bosch Bahai School grounds in Santa Cruz, the International Women's Writing Guild met for their annual conference in the redwoods.

The first workshop focused upon writing to change lives and addressed “Dangerous Voices.” The presenter was Mary Reynolds Thompson, co-founder of Write the Damn Book, a company that assists people in doing just that. Her work *Awakening the Eco-Soul* speaks of the environment and the spirit.

Gayle Brandeis's topic was “Embodied Voices,” and she guided attendees in writing about what their individual bodies were telling them at the time. This was a powerful exercise. Gayle is the author of *Fruitflesh: Seeds of Inspiration for Women Who Write*, *The Book of Dead Birds: A Novel*, and *Self Storage*.

Rachel de Baere conducted the workshop, “Poetic Voices”, and taught about the mechanics of the craft, as well as providing inspirational cues from which to write. She is the Northern California Regional Representative of the IWWG, and also directs workshops at IWWG's summer conference at Skidmore College.

The founder of IWWG, Hannelore Hahn, was present and spoke her thoughts about the nonprofit organization. “I like the idea that we do things in a futuristic way,” she said.

The IWWG began thirty-two years ago in New York, out of Hannelore's response to the first International Women's Day. The Guild underscores that “no portfolio is necessary” and rose out of the three movements in society at the time: The Human Potential Movement, The New Age, and The Women's Movement. The fact that the group doesn't own any buildings, but “comes in, pitches its tent and does its thing”, as Hannelore Hahn proposed, “suggests movement.”

There are over 150 regional contacts within the United States and abroad. An energy of openness and non-

WritersTalk Challenge Winners Announced

Twice a year, in March and September, prizes are awarded to contributors to *WritersTalk*. Members of South Bay Writers need take no special steps to enter this competition; if your piece in one of the designated genres is published in *WritersTalk*, you are a contestant in the Challenge. Winners of the *WritersTalk* Challenge judging period of August 16, 2007, through February 15, 2008, were announced at the March 11 meeting.

And the winners!

Fiction: Swann Li, for “Who Are Our Friends? Who Are Our Enemies?”

Essay: Luanne F. Oleas, for “And the Eleventh One Is Free.”

Memoir: Betty Auchard, for “The Wild Woman on L Street.”

Poetry: Stephen Wetlesen, for “Shoreglitter.”



WritersTalk Challenge winners receive certificates at the March meeting. Left to right: Stephen Wetlesen, Luanne F. Oleas, Challenge administrator Andrea Galvacs, Betty Auchard.

competitiveness was obvious to me at this my first meeting. The camaraderie of women writers and their support empowered the females of different backgrounds and ages to participate fully in the Open Readings by Conferrees. And although the atmosphere is very friendly, there is a sense of pride in writing, whether or not one has professional writing experience.

The setting of the Bosch Bahai grounds also was comfortable and beautiful, and the food and service was excellent. IWWG sponsors other conferences nationwide throughout each year. More information may be obtained at www.iwwg.org or by writing The International Women's Writing Guild, PO Box 810, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028. WT

Prowl, continued from page 2

Are you certain *no one* has read *The Castle in The Forest*?

Congratulations to our *WritersTalk* winners: Betty Auchard can use her memoir prize on her annex; and there were Luanne Oleas for her essay, Steve Wetlesen for his poetry, and Swann Li for her nicely unsettling fiction. We all know this goes on twice a year, that the work you submit to *WritersTalk* is judged in its category and if it is good, you win forty bucks and a certificate.

I promise something more provocative next month. WT



We Are All Polliwogs

by Michael W. Murray



Illustration by Betty Arehard

June, 1978.

It's almost twenty to ten in the morning, and Mrs. Hsui has delivered her son Paul and me to our weekly ordeal. We've racked our brains for some way, any way, out of our predicament. There isn't, of course, Paul and I both know it. None, zip, zero, nada. No way, José. Mrs. Hsui has driven the Volvo that brought us here. Neither Paul Hsui nor I are old enough to drive, and even if we were, only Paul's mom has the keys.

Paul and I have been demoted from Bullfrogs to Polliwogs. Maybe "demoted" is the wrong word, since neither of us really had a shot at Bullfrogs in the first place. Those are just two of the names they have for the different age and skill classes in the Learn-To-Swim program at Larsen Park Pool, which is where Paul and I have to come every Tuesday, from ten to eleven. It's on 19th Avenue and Wawona Street, not too far away from where my mom and I live. If you're between eight and twelve, and just learning to swim, they put you in Beginning Bullfrogs. The only thing wrong with that is you have to be able to put your face in the water. See, that's the key to the whole thing. If you're too scared to dunk your head under water, then forget it. You can't even get in Beginning Bullfrogs. That's when they put you in Polliwogs. It's called Water Adjustment in the brochure. That means they teach you how to put your face in the water without being scared, and how to float forward and on your back. The brochure says they have a ninety-four percent success rate. I'm going to be one of the other six percent, I just know it.

"Mike?" My mother nudged me while I still lay in bed, pretending to be asleep. "Michael!" Then more softly, "Let's go, Mike." She laid a hand on my shoulder. "I know you don't want to. You can be scared all you want, and that's okay. But you need to learn to swim, and I'm going to keep taking you there for the rest of the summer, if that's what it takes, so you might as well get used to it."

The poolroom is the main part of the building and it's enormous, about eighty feet long, forty feet wide, and tall as a two-story house. It's old, too, about as old as my dad, maybe even older. It's got cinder-block walls, and impossibly thick steel girders painted some dingy off-white color holding up the roof and skylights. Windows run the whole length of the building, but they're up above, so nobody can see in. There's not much light for them to let in, though, because it's foggy and damp outside. San Francisco's like that a lot of the time, even in the summer.

Paul wrinkles his nose. "It stinks in here," he complains.

His mother pats his shoulder and makes a soothing noise. "It not so bad, honey," she says in her slightly broken English.

The room smells of chlorine, of course, and the air is damp and musty, kind of like the bathroom at home, just after somebody's taken a shower. The pool itself is about thirty feet wide and sixty feet long. They hold practice sessions for school swim teams. They also have times set aside for recreational swimming.

They've got a locker room for men and boys, but we're not allowed to use it. See, in Water Adjustment, we don't have any man teachers. We have two teachers, one for the girls and one for the boys. But they're both women, and they're not allowed in the Boys'/Men's locker room. I wish we had just one man teacher, but we don't. No man wants to work with a bunch of scared little kids. All the regular swimming classes have at least one man teacher. They'll teach kids who aren't the least bit scared of jumping in the pool and ducking under right away. We wouldn't really need a man to *teach* us anything. All he'd have to do would be to supervise us in the locker room and make sure nobody gets a wet towel snapped on the butt, or worse, de-pantsed. How hard could that be? My P.E. teacher could do it. But no man will. That's why the girls get to use their locker room, but the boys don't.

Seated on metal folding chairs, we slowly undress. Sneakers and socks come off easily. Our sweatshirts, and T-shirts come next. These go into large shopping bags. All we have left are our sweatpants.

"Come on, now," my mother prompts. "No dawdling."

Slowly, Paul and I surrender our sweatpants. Our suits are on underneath. It's so embarrassing for Paul and me, being seen, not just by our own mothers, but other kids' moms, wearing just these tiny suits that have no legs, only high leg openings, and a low waistband, and they don't even completely cover our little butts. It's just a little sliver they leave exposed, but it feels like more. I swear my Fruit-of-the-Loom briefs would cover more than this

stupid thing. But I have to wear it. It's a rule. They've got all the pool rules, all fourteen of them, posted at both ends of the building, on large plywood sheets, painted white with black letters. RACING-STYLE SUITS REQUIRED FOR ALL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SWIMMING CLASSES, and that means us. It makes absolutely no sense, but there it is, good old Rule Number 13. I'm convinced somebody made it that number on purpose.

I wish I could be outside, in the park, fully dressed. Larsen Park takes up two whole city blocks. It has all the usual park things: a baseball diamond, tennis and basketball courts, and an equipment area. The most awesome thing they have, though, what no other park has, is this old military fighter jet. It's really just a hollowed-out shell with the jet engine missing, but it beats the regular playground equipment by a mile.

SHOWER BEFORE ENTERING POOL. That's the very first rule they have. In one corner of the building are two showers. Those showers are completely open, with no frosted glass or curtains. There's no privacy, except for getting to keep our suits on. Also, we can't just jump in, get wet, and jump out, like we do in P.E. We have to use soap, wash ourselves all over, and rinse thoroughly. We also have to get our hair wet, otherwise, according to our teachers, it doesn't count, and we have to go back and do it again. I step into a stall and turn on the valves.

The first burst of spray is *freezing!* I nearly leap out of the stall, then slowly turn on the hot water. There isn't a lot of time to fiddle around with the valves. I haven't had to undress and shower in front of my own mother since I was seven. I'm ten now, and here I am doing just that, and in view of other kids and their moms as well. Even worse, the girls are starting to come out of their locker room, and I know they're looking at me. I rinse off and step out.

Barbara, our instructor, and her other pupils are already in the pool. Her full name is Barbara Grajevski, but she lets us call her Barbara. She's a tall, slim woman, with short blond hair and very muscular arms and legs. I guess years of competitive swimming will do that for you. Anyway, she sees us and

beams.

"Hi! How are you guys? Ready to put your heads under today?"

I shrug.

"Well, come on in." She climbs partway up the steps and takes my hands in hers. "Pool's all nice and warm."

The pool is heated and feels lukewarm, and much better than that shower. We take one step at a time under Barbara's gentle encouragement, until we are all the way in. It's four feet deep in the shallow end of the pool, and that's almost up to my shoulders.

"Let me see you try putting your heads under water." Barbara is talking to the class. Last class, I was able to get my mouth and nose under, and blow bubbles. I was even able to put my face in the water, but with my nose pinched shut and my eyes closed, so it didn't count. Today, I have to try to keep my eyes open. I stare down at the rippling surface. My heart pounds and I am shaking all over. I'm afraid the water will sting my eyes. I take a deep breath. I take several deep breaths, readying myself to put my face in. But every time, I freeze. "I can't do it."

"Oh, yes, you can," Barbara says flatly. "Now I want to see you try."

I take another deep breath, and this time I plunge my face in—then, at the last second, my eyes shut tightly. Worse, I gasp, and get water up my nose. I come up choking. My nose hurts.

Barbara gives me a hug for trying. "Better now?" she asks after a few moments.

I nod, sniffing.

"Want to try it again? This time, take a nice deep breath and hold it *before* you go under. Try to keep those eyes open too, okay?"

I like Barbara. She's very patient and kind, and she doesn't yell at you when you're scared and you don't do what she tells you right away. If she thinks you're not trying, that's another thing.

As the hour wears on, both Paul and I are able to get our heads under, but so far neither of us can force our eyes to open. The water feels tickly in my ears. I'm starting to get used to that. It's no good, though. No matter how many

times I try, my eyes shut automatically. No matter how long I stay under, I can't make them open. I come back up, gulping in huge breaths.

Barbara comes over to Paul and me and has us show her what we can do.

"Try keeping your eyes open before you put your faces in," she tells us. "It works better than closing them and trying to open them under water." She puts her hands on my bare shoulders. "Let's try going under together. Want to try it? We'll take a nice deep breath, and go under on the count of three. Ready?"

She counts to three. We take a deep breath. And plunge under. My nerve fails, and my eyes shut again. No matter how many times Barbara reassures me that the water won't sting my eyes, there's always some doubt. We come back up. I flick my wet hair out of my eyes.

Barbara then turns to Paul.

"Let me see *you* try it. I'm going to hold up my fingers under the water, and you tell me how many I'm holding up, okay?"

"Okay," he says doubtfully. He takes a deep breath and ducks under. Then comes back up. "Three fingers!" he gasps.

Barbara beams. "That's right! Want to try it again?"

This is *so* not fair! How come he can do it, but not me? He does it again, this time guessing no fingers. He's right. Three more times, each time coming up with the correct number of fingers.

"You did it!" Barbara announces, hugging him. "Listen, everyone, Paul Hsui kept his eyes open under water!"

I join in the applause and the chorus of *Yay's*. But inside, I only feel jealousy smoldering. He'll be learning face and back floats, and before long, he'll be promoted to Bullfrogs. While I stay stuck in Polliwogs.

It's time to get out and dress, the most awkward part of the lesson. As I climb out of the pool, my suit feels even smaller. Our mothers are waiting for us with outstretched arms and towels.

"You did it!" Mrs. Hsui squeals, wrapping her son up in their towel. "I so *proud* of you, honey!" She hugs and kisses him on the forehead.

First Licensed Poet in Cupertino

by Pat Bustamante,
*Licensed Poet, Head of Bard
Productions, Chief Bard*

Well, Pat Bustamante, you ought to be building a platform for your writing career. All the savvy publishers/editors say so! That book proposal is going nowhere unless “you have been certified.”

(Psychiatrist certification “Yep, you are nuts” does *not* count with publishers...)

So I called my local city government (happens to be Cupertino): “Say, have you ever issued a business license to write poetry?”

No. They had not. “Is it legal? Is it possible?” Yes. And so I obtained one! The *first* licensed poet in Cupertino! I write novels and short stories, too. But this past year I only made \$35 as a writer, from selling poetry. And there may be better poets. But I am the first and always will be ... to get a poetic license from the City Government of Cupertino!

I have other tips for building your platform. The very best advice: Be Famous for Something! So famous that Oprah wants you on her show. That is not me. Yet!! But ... 2nd tip ... make friends with people representing your local media.

I used to write for local newspapers, a Journalist, yeah, that was me! Long

time ago now. But I can hang out with Hemingwayesque reporters, sure, it's fun! (I can't drink with the best of them any more—that was my wasted youth.)

You get yourself published in a paper or a magazine. Do it!! Write something for *WritersTalk* right now!!

Every bit of your public life is a potential asset for your “platform as a successful writer.” That includes, should you go to jail as assistant to some would-be terrorist or the new Unabomber (your notoriety is just as good as your good deeds only), I recommend the latter. However, we all know: famous liars/ famous criminals sometimes break into print.

4th tip: Document Everything. Look at your old cancelled checks/ recall your past history/keep journals. When you go to that interview with that interested publisher-rep, be prepared to blow your horn loudly. Have a horn to blow! You have a life. I know you do!! Brag about its highlights! (I stood on a street corner to shake hands with John F. Kennedy during his successful campaign. The wrong corner, as it turns out. Hey, I was there, though!)

I spoke to Bennett Cerf (“Have a seat in the waiting room,” he said)—my husband was in conference over a novel that Random House did not buy.

You have better stories than that ... go for it. WT

“Mom, cut it out!” he protests.

My mother wraps me up in our towel and holds me close to her for several moments. It's a big beach towel that covers all of me.

“I know you were trying,” she consoles me. “Next time, huh?”

I agree numbly. Next time. Yeah, sure. Whatever, Mom.

The towel feels so soft and warm next to my bare skin. I wish I could lie down in one of the lounge chairs wrapped up in it and take a nap. But I can't.

Mom holds the towel so it won't fall off. I slide my suit down around my knees and let it drop the rest of the way.

Nobody can see anything under the towel. I clutch the towel around me so my mother can reach into the Macy's bag and come out with a pair of my P.E. shorts. They're lined, and they cover way more. My mother has to hold them for me to step into them, since I can't hold them and the towel at the same time. I pull up my shorts under the towel, and once they're on, the rest is easy. I let the towel go and put on my sweatpants.

Once we are fully dressed, Mrs. Hsui leads us outside to where her Volvo is parked. We pass through the door, and she suddenly breaks into a smile.

“Look!” she says. “The sun's come out!” WT

What Spirits Lurk in Your House?

by Valerie Whong

A news headline read, “Learning of suicide, home buyers want out.”

This article, which appeared in a recent issue of our local newspaper, naturally piqued my interest.

It was the case of Wai Kai and Choi Wan Young, who purchased a house from Emilio and Dina Uribe in August 2007. Three months later, they learned from an Asian crew working on the property that a relative of the Uribes had hung himself in the house 14 months earlier. The buyers should have been told before moving in, but they weren't. Although the three-bedroom house at \$423,000 seemed like a good deal, it was not a good buy at any price, especially for the Chinese.

It's a fact that many Chinese are superstitious. The man's suicide was considered bad luck so the residents wanted out but the Uribes refused to cancel the deal. The Youngs saw no way out but to file suit.

Asians believe in life after death and purposely avoid properties where anyone has died. Their strong belief system is that the spirit of the deceased can influence the living, especially residents in such a house. The *gwei* (spirit) has the power to create problems that plague human beings. They can make humans sick, take possession of them, haunt their houses, and bring misfortune down on their families.

Now, if this spirit is part of their own family, the Chinese would carry out complex death rituals on behalf of those who have passed on so that it can release its hold on earth and pass through to the afterlife. Sometimes they call in experts like mediums.

Mediums have a rare gift. They claim to have a unique ability and remarkable power to speak directly with spirits. For these reasons, the blind often become mediums, not necessarily by their own choice but because they are traditionally associated with being seers involved with the spirit world. In Hong Kong, one name for these female mediums is *Mun Mai*, which means “asking for rice.” That was all they

required— a handful of rice as payment for their services.

Just being able to see ghosts and spirits doesn't necessarily qualify someone as a medium because she cannot communicate with them. Women being "yin" instead of "yang" have this gift known as "yin eyes." Those who have yin eyes, also known as eyes of darkness, discover this gift when they are young but it's not until they are middle-aged or elderly before they actually put it to the test. These ladies are referred to as *Sam Ku*, which means "Third Aunt." She can make a "passport" for the dead. It's actually a printed document about the size of a medium-sized poster with the name of the deceased, his previous address, exact birth date, down to the exact minute and hour of birth and time of death. This passport has to be properly completed and executed with a red seal mark so the ritual of moving the dead to the afterlife can be carried out. But that isn't all that's required. Other things need to be included also, like numerous strips of papers like prayer incantations, spells and charms of protection against sickness, danger and bad luck, several sets of paper clothes and large bundles of bank notes for the deceased in the afterlife. The *Sam Ku* stands in front of an altar adorned with Tao deities and sages and large joss sticks burning in the corner of the room near an incinerator. She places her hands over everything, and goes in and out of a trance, chants a bit and everything is consumed in one wonderful blaze. This can be done at any time, morning, noon, or night, with none of the secrecy, silence, and darkness that usually comes with séances in the West.

Fortunetellers, healers, palm readers, and handwriting practitioners also claim to have this ability with this pseudoscience of physiognomy.

Although Hong Kong and Taiwan are considered to be the last bastions of mediums, they are more widespread than you think. They can be found in many Chinatowns in major U.S. and Canadian cities, like San Francisco, New York, Vancouver, and Toronto. It is just that the Chinese in the West are ashamed of folk practices and their traditions and feel that Americans might scoff at them so they seldom talk

about them.

It is no secret that some houses are haunted. Ghost stories are not unheard of. For example, many years ago, a woman heartbroken over her husband's unfaithfulness committed suicide. She had been so unhappy that she continued to appear at strange times and one day, a workman painting the outside of her house saw her sitting on an overhead rafter. Fearful that she might fall and hurt herself, he told her to climb down but she just laughed and then cried hysterically. The workman didn't know what to do, so he just left her alone. He wasn't sure she even understood what he had said to her. Later, he described the woman to the owner of the house who said that what he had just seen was impossible. The owner's face paled and his hands shook because from what the workman had said, it had to be his deceased wife right down to the red apron she always wore.

Another Chinese family purchased a house in an affluent area, and when they moved in, they unpacked their suitcases and put everything away in the closet. They awoke the next morning and were baffled to find their suitcases all packed, with their shoes ready for them by the front door. At first, they thought it was a trick or relatives were playing a game, but when this continued for days and relatives were unaware of this mysterious event, they complained to their realtor. After much investigation, they learned that someone did die in that house. Afraid of the angry dead spirit, the residents wasted no time and quickly moved out. To this day, the house remains vacant.

This strange behavior among the Chinese may seem ridiculous to those who don't understand their culture but traditional rituals should be treated with respect. The origins are impossible to track down.

Chinese Buddhism presumes the existence of various Hells, almost like the Christian purgatory through which the soul must work off its karmic debts. Taoist mystic psychics also offer a wide belief about the afterlife. Others are of the opinion that the afterlife resembles life on earth where material goods are transferred to the underworld on behalf of the dead. Scholars frequently call

upon the clear-cut philosophical guidance of Confucius in their public affirmation of values.

To the Chinese, it is religion in the form they have practiced for centuries. Although the Chinese want as little as possible to do with the supernatural world, they do live with all due respect for the invading presence of the world unseen.

These superstitions are not only shared by traditional Chinese, but also by Western-educated Asian-Americans today. It is difficult to erase centuries-old beliefs that youngsters are instilled with, so many of them will buy new only homes—and who can blame them?
WT

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

This is in response to the President's Prowling column in the March 2008 issue.

It is sad that the youth membership idea hasn't succeeded as well as it should. Jeannine reaching out to teen forums like the websites they frequent is a very good approach. The concept of mentors for young writers is also great.

Are there any teachers in our membership who could connect with local school districts to promote youth in our club? Maybe Jeannine needs help getting the word out.

Just a thought,

Suzy Paluzzi

April I'll Approve

Permission granted
To take these lines,
To spread the word
In print, so cool!
This is what it's all about.
(Don't DARE to shout
Cruel "April Fool!")

—Pat Bustamante

A Victim of Circumstances

by Forrest “Woody” Horn

© 1999 by F.E. Horn

I REMEMBER gettin’ into mischief, once. Or twice, maybe. Okay, so it was more. It’s not like I planned to get in trouble. But sometimes, it couldn’t be helped. I mean, usually... I was just a *victim of circumstances*.

Like that time in the thirties, when I was walking home from Morton grade school and saw some older boys pushing a Model A coupe down Chauncy Street. The boy steering called out, “Hey, twerp, give us a hand.” Glancing around, I asked, “Who, me?” “Ya don’t see any other twerps, do ya? Come on.” Naturally, I was curious to know, “What’cha doin’?” “The battery’s dead,” he explained, “so we gotta coast it down State Street hill to get it started.”

Flattered that the older boys wanted my help, I quickly dropped my books on the curb and joined the two husky lads each shoving against a rear fender. That left me positioned behind the exposed spare tire. Like them, I pushed and grunted, but it wasn’t easy since my leather soled shoes slipped on the pavement.

Huffin’ and puffin’, the boy next to me claimed, “It gets easier... when the street... starts to slope.”

Lowering my head between outstretched arms, I pushed with all my might. Sure enough, it began to get easier and rolled quite smoothly. Then—it got harder again.

Before I could ask why, someone inquired, “What’cha doin’, kid?”

“I’m pushin’... this car... down the hill.”

A firm hand on my shoulder restrained me, while his voice informed me, “Not any more.” I raised my head to see a *giant* policeman scowling at me and also caught a glimpse of my new friends running pellmell down the street.

Naturally, he wanted to know, “Whose car is this?”

“Ah, I think it belongs to one of them,” and nervously pointed at the disappearing trio.

“I doubt that,” he scoffed. The policeman reached in the window and cranked the steering wheel to guide the car back to the curb. Once it was safely parked, he asked if I knew the names of the other boys. I didn’t, fortunately, because having to *snitch* would have made my guilt even worse. West Lafayette, Indiana, was a small town, so he would undoubtedly catch up with them later. First, he scolded me for taking other people’s property and how dangerous this prank could have ended. With a faint smile, he suggested that I should be more careful when making new friends. He also instructed me to tell my parents exactly what happened. If I didn’t, he would.

Darn, that’s the trouble with small towns. Ya can’t get away with anything. Besides—I was just a *victim of circumstances*.

Our town’s police force was rather small, just three or four officers and the chief, Robert Burns. He lived about three blocks away and was a friend of my grandfather, because they belonged to some fraternal order. A few years later, I dated the chief’s daughter, once. Coincidentally, that was the same day he gave me my first traffic ticket.

Some of the guys liked to play pranks on our diligent peace officers. Especially, at Halloween when the cops cruised around town in their two squad cars lookin’ for dangerous desperados, a.k.a. trick-or-treaters.

One of us would dart out of the shadows, then run behind a house so they had to pull over and pursue us on foot. You’d think they would have caught on eventually, but invariably they’d leap out of their car and leave the door open, so our partners could soap the car windows and stick the horn with a twig or nail. A couple of times, they left the keys in the ignition and we drove the car into a neighbor’s driveway, turned off the lights and watched them hunt for it. And once, a neighbor’s garage was open and empty, so we pushed the car inside and closed the doors. The cops hunted frantically for their valuable vehicle and might not have found it—if we had thought to turn off its squawking radio. We laughed so hard that they nearly found us, too.

Hey, it wasn’t our fault that they reacted so predictably. Like I said, we

were just *victims of circumstances*.

During my teens, sneaking into movie theaters was a very popular sport. I don’t think we really considered it to be breaking the law and it wasn’t the money, since most of us could afford it. Some theaters were pretty tricky to get into, so I suppose they posed a challenge to teenage ingenuity. And after World War II, drive-in theaters provided us a new challenge—like how many kids could squeeze into the car’s trunk without suffocating.

Sometimes, my motivation was harder to explain.

Like, in high school when I *just happened* to notice that the GIRLS restroom door sign had a screw coming loose. I also *just happened* to have some tools with me—a pen knife with a screw driver blade. And I *just happened* to be alone in the hall, since classes were still in session. So, I decided to “fix it.”

However, instead of tightening the screw, I removed it and the other one. Then, I calmly took the sign down the hall and swapped it with the BOYS sign. Fortunately, the holes lined up perfectly. I returned to the girls rest room and started attaching the BOYS sign—just as the bell rang to let out classes. I still had the second screw to finish as classroom doors opened and students poured out to check their lockers or go to their next classes. Some kids saw what I was doing and simply laughed or made jokes, while the deafening din of excited conversations and locker doors opening and closing filled the hallway.

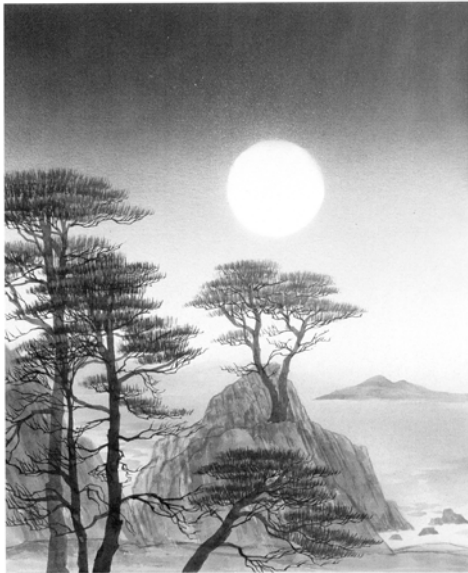
Suddenly, the noise subsided. I felt a firm hand on my shoulder and a too familiar voice said, “After you put those signs back where they belong, Forrest, please come to my office.”

It was Carl Hammer, our esteemed principal. In World War II, Carl was a naval officer. So now the student body affectionately referred to him as the Captain of our Good Ship Lollipop. I was tempted to respond, “Aye, aye, sir,” but silently shrugged and nodded sheepishly. Obviously, he just wanted to reward my custodial diligence—with a few hours of detention in his brig.

Like I said—I was just a *victim of circumstances*. **WT**

GET PUBLISHED!

East of Eden Writers Conference



September 5-7, 2008
Steinbeck Country, Salinas

- Agents
- Editors
- Publishers
- Keynote Speakers
- Writing Workshops

**REGISTER NOW
& SAVE**

southbaywriters.com

and talked about a new project *Using the Internet to Write your Way to Book Sales*.

A former marketing and technology executive at IBM, Kendra embraces online tools available on the Internet to build a following for her projects. Although there are many tools available for connecting with potential readers, including blogs and social networking sites like MySpace or Gather, it is important to remain focused on the goal of selling books. Consistently participating in one or two virtual communities is usually more effective than trying to spread out in too many directions.



Kendra Bonnett

It is never too early to start a book blog and Kendra suggests starting a blog on the same day as the writing begins. Excitement and anticipation can be built by blogging about the theme or geography of a book in process without giving away the plot line. This kind of viral marketing has helped music bands and other celebrities build huge fan bases online instead of through road tours that used to be required.

Commenting on other people's blogs can also build readership so be thoughtful in all online correspondence. It is important to realize that comments that are made online live virtually forever and can come back to haunt you. Google and other search engines accept requests to remove references to damaging information but there is a delay of up to six weeks and the information may be cached in multiple locations.

In the end, all this Internet activity is about building community with like-minded individuals. In the past, authors might have done this through readings at local or independent bookstores but now there is no need to be limited by the physical location of readers. Most social networking sites feature free registration including Gather and now that Oprah has joined, there's no telling how that might affect your book sales. WT



Rosie, continued from page 1



Matilda Butler

And then it was time to tune into featured guest speaker Matilda Butler, author of *Rosie's Daughters*, the collective memoir of women born during World War II. These were daughters of

women such as Rosie the Riveter, who stepped outside of the home and entered the work force with the "can do" attitude. Encouraged to enter the workforce, Rosie and those like her took over jobs traditionally held by men who were now "fighting the good fight." Not only did the view of women change, but the whole notion of traditional roles changed for both men and women during and after WWII.

During WWII, *Minnie was in the money*, as the song went; she was the breadwinner. When the men came home after the war and went back to work, women's expectations had changed forever. The GI Bill made a college education accessible to everyone, not

just those wealthy enough to afford it. The notion that a man could be the only bread winner in the family proved to be untrue. Women could take care of themselves, get an education and work outside the home. It was the beginning of the legacy that Rosie passed on to her daughters and even granddaughters as Matilda noted in her overview.

There are many kinds of memoirs: coming of age, celebrity, life lesson memoirs to name a few. What is unique about *Rosie's Daughters* is the synthesis of women's experiences over the decades since WWII; a group speak centered on the daughters of Rosie's coming into their own during the turbulent sixties and beyond. Matilda who was also born during WWII has named this generation the First Women To (FW2) because so many of them went on to achieve "firsts" in the formerly male-dominated work sphere.

While this was not a typical meeting in which the audience is able to ask questions, the kind of information provided was fascinating. Matilda's business partner and co-author Kendra Bonnet was a surprise guest speaker

Basil Stevens* Memorial Writing Contest

What: Previously unpublished essay, article, story, or poem, 750 word maximum, sports theme.

Prize: First: Scholarship to East of Eden Writers Conference (\$425 value).

Second: \$100 credit for Conference.

Third: \$50 credit for Conference.

September 5-7, 2008, Salinas, CA.

Entry: \$10 Fee per entry. Open to all, except that previous first-place winners are not eligible.

Submittal Format

Text on one side of numbered pages, double-spaced in 12-point type. Title in the header on all pages. No personal identification on any of the pages.

Name and contact information on a separate page or index card attached to your entry with a paper clip.

Send your entry to:

Basil Stevens
Memorial Writing Contest
East of Eden/CWC,
PO Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055-3254

Deadline: July 1, 2008 (postmarked).
Winners announced by July 15th. Results posted on CWC website.

For more EoE Conference info:
www.southbaywriters.com

* Basil Stevens was a member of CWC, South Bay Branch. He passed away in 2004 and is sorely missed. This contest is run with funds donated in his memory.

April Birthdays

- 1 Edmond Rostard
- 2 Emile Zola
- 3 Washington Irving
- 7 William Wordsworth
- 10 Paul Theroux
- 13 Samuel Beckett
- 13 Eudora Welty
- 15 Henry James
- 16 Kingsley Amis

Northern California Publishers & Puthors Pride in Publishing Conference

April 26, 2008

8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Red Lion Inn
1401 Arden Way
Sacramento, CA 95815-4002

Speakers include

- Dan Poynter, author of *The Self-Publishing Manual*
- Michael Larsen & Elizabeth Pomada, Larsen-Pomada Literary Agents
- Bud Gardner, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Writer's Soul*

Info: norcalpa.org

Meet the Authors

Presented by the Fremont Branch
American Association of University
Women

April 12, 2008

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
38451 Fremont Boulevard, Fremont

Suggested \$20 advance donation/\$25 at the door.

Don't miss this extraordinary gala event. This is a unique program in which you will have the opportunity to hear six dynamic authors discuss their work and the process of becoming a published author. All of our panelists are active members of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club (CWC). The panelist are: Betty Auchard, Jana McBurney-Lin, Juliana Richmond, Jeannine Vegh, Marjorie Johnson, and Bob Garfinkle. Wine and light refreshments will be served and authors will be available for brief introductions and signing of books. Some authors will have books available for sale.

Send your check, payable to AAUW Fremont Branch, by April 5, 2008 to Kathy Garfinkle, 32924 Monrovia Street, Union City, CA 94587. Please be sure to include your name and phone number and the name(s) of any guest you may wish to invite.

Take a Look at Our Updated Website

Our branch website, southbaywriters.com, has a new look and some new features:

Members Book page

We now have a page for books by members, arranged by category. If you already had your book on your Members Gallery page, it has been added to the book page. If you want to add your book (or more books!), the info on how to do that is on the bottom of the Members Book page.

Updated Members Gallery

Do you have your SBW web page yet? This is a benefit of membership, so take advantage of it. If you have a page already, please review it.

Click on the "Request one here" link at the top of the Gallery page to get a new page or update the one you have.

Writers Forum

The Forum is our online bulletin board where you can tell the world about your books, your services, find a critique group, network, and more. Only members are allowed to post, so when you register, please use something like your real name so we will know you're legit.

And...

If you haven't been online lately, our East of Eden Writers Conference pages are up and filling up with info about the authors, agents, and publishers who will be there. Registration is open, so make sure you don't miss out on the early bird discount prices—that's on top of your CWC member discount. **WT**

- 17 Thornton Wilder
- 21 Charlotte Bronte
- 22 Henry Fielding
- 22 Vladimir Nabokov
- 26 William Shakespeare
- 28 Harper Lee
- 28 Terry Pratchett
- 30 Annie Dillard

Third Annual Portia Steele Award for Poetry & Prose

The Portia Steele Award Organization[©] is pleased to announce its Third Annual awards competition for writers. The awards are for Excellence in Poetry and Excellence in Prose and invite women 50 years of age or older to compete for a \$100.00 first place prize in each category. There is no entry fee required.

"The guidelines for the awards are simple", said Dennis Steele, Founder and Trustee for the Portia Steele Awards Foundation. "The Prose submission should be no more than 500 words and the poetry submission is limited to a page and a half. This is in keeping with Portia's philosophy that: "less is more". The deadline for the competition is April 15, 2008.

"This year is a bit different for us, we will be accepting entries by email only. No mail-in entries can be accepted. It's actually quite easy," Steele explained. "Use Microsoft Word file format, double space and use 12-point Arial or Times Roman font. Entries in each category must be unpublished works. Finally," he concluded, "there can only one submission per category."

The Portia Steele Awards Foundation is conducting the contest, judging the submissions and will announce the winners on July 1, 2008. Winners will be notified individually. Additionally, they will be posted on the portia Steele Award website.

For complete information, please visit our website at portia Steele Award website and click on the contest page.

There are worse crimes than burning books. One is not reading them.

—Joseph Brodsky

Wanted: actors

to do dramatic readings of short biographical pieces (mostly quite serious) at South Bay Open Mics. These are biographical short-shorts, some male, some female, but there's also a California Pioneer Women piece for five women and a narrator (on the light side). Contact Lita, lakurth@yahoo.com, if interested. All ages welcome!

Directory of Experts

Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? If you are willing to share your expertise, let us know. We will add your listing to our directory of experts.

Character Development

ArLyne Diamond Ph.D
ALyne@DiamondAssociates.net

Character Traits

Jeannine Vegh M.A. M.F.T.I.
ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net

Computer Dingus and Full-Time Nerd

Jeremy Osborne
jeremy_w_osborne@yahoo.com

Doctors' Office Environment, OB-GYN

Dottie Sieve
pdrsieve@yahoo.com

Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold
maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net

Police Procedures

John Howsden
jwhowsden961@yahoo.com

Profile Writing

Susan Mueller
susan_mueller@yahoo.com

Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard
Btauchard@aol.com

Television Production

Woody Horn
408-266-7040

CWC Around the Bay

These are the published meeting times and locations for the CWC branches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. If you're thinking about attending one of their meetings, be sure to check the website first for details.

Berkeley: Meetings are held from 10 a.m. to noon on the third Saturday of each month, except for July and August. Unless otherwise noted, our meetings are held at Barnes & Noble bookstore, in Jack London Square, Event Loft, Oakland.

berkeleywritersclub.org

San Francisco/Peninsula: Meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon at the Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont.
sfpeninsulawriters.com

Central Coast: Meets on the third Tuesday of each month except December at Buzzard's Backyard BBQ, adjacent to the Travelodge, 2030 N. Fremont, Monterey. The dinner hour begins at 5:30 p.m. and the program begins at 7 p.m.

centralcoastwriters.org

Mount Diablo: Meets the second Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Hungry Hunter Restaurant, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette (corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Highway 24).
mtdiablowriters.org

Tri-Valley: Meets the third Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Oasis Grille, 780 Main Street, Pleasanton.
trivalleywriters.com

Sacramento: Meets at 11:00 a.m. the third Saturday of every month, except July and August, at Luau Garden Chinese Buffet, 1890 Arden Way, Sacramento 95815.

acramento-writers.org

Marin: Meets on the fourth Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera.
cwcmarinwriters.com

Redwood: Meets the first Sunday of the month, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Marvin's Restaurant, 7991 Old Redwood Highway, corner of William St., in Cotati.
redwoodwriters.org

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	5
6	7	8 6P Monthly Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn, Sunnyvale Jess Wells	9	10	11 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	12 11A Editors' Powwow
13	14	15	16 <i>WritersTalk</i> deadline	17 7:00P Open Mic Barnes & Noble 3900 Mowery, Fremont	18 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	26
27	28	29	30	April 2008		
Future Flashes		May 13 General Meeting Michelle Simon				

Stay Informed!

Sign up for the SBW Email List to receive meeting and event announcements.

www.southbaywriters.com

South Bay Writers Open Mic

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. See calendar for schedule.

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

For Fremont Open Mic contact
Jeannine Vegh
ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net

or

Bob Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net

Small Group Critique

Do you need a professional critique of your manuscript, but can't afford the cost? Get the feedback you need while defraying the expense and connecting with other writers by joining Martha Engber's six-week online critique group from April 23 to May 27. Writer, book editor and workshop instructor, Martha is the author of *Growing Great Characters From the Ground Up*.

Limited to 10 people, participants will each week submit up to 2,000 words via group email and receive a reply from Martha within four days. Each week's submission will focus on a different aspect of the writing process, from concept to character develop to narrative. The cost is \$110. To register, contact Martha at Martha@Engber.com.

San Jose Poetry Slam (Est. 1998)

8:00 p.m., \$6.00

First Tuesday: Open Mic with music by Rebelskamp

Second and Fourth Tuesdays: Poetry Slam with music by Jay Rush

Third Tuesday: Head-to-Head Poetry Bouts with special guests.

At The Britannia Arms

173 W Santa Clara

Downtown San Jose

www.sanjosepoetryslam.com

Poetry Center San Jose Readings at

First Gallery downtown

Willow Glen Books

Cosponsored by the
Creative Writing Department at
San José State University

Free admission.

See www.pcsj.org for featured guests and details.



California Writers Club
South Bay Branch
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055
www.southbaywriters.com

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

TUESDAY

April 8, at the Lookout Inn

Jess Wells,

Author of *The Mandrake Broom*
"Rich Plots Through History"

Next Monthly Meeting—TUESDAY, April 8, 6:00 p.m.

Lookout Inn

605 Macara Avenue, Sunnyvale

At the Sunnyvale Golf Course

East of Eden

Writers Conference

September 5, 6, and 7, 2008
in Salinas, California

Mark your calendar now!

SBW Anthology

is coming

See page 5

Deadline for Contributions:

June 1, 2008

