



# WRITERSTALK

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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

## Memoirs, History, and Change

by Alexander Leon

I used to see memoirs as mostly narcissistic exercises in self-absorption, by nature designed to bore everyone but their authors. *Rosie's Daughters* finally and completely dispelled that view. A memoir is a record of events by one who has intimate knowledge of them, be they events about self or others. A memoir worth the read, however, is clearly much more than that: it is the marriage of facts, emotion, and wisdom gleaned from personally experienced events wrapped in crisp, fresh narrative, offered in gift to the reader. It tells about the journeys, experiences, joys, tears, changes, and impact of the lives of those whose story is being told.



Everyone is a memoirist orally, at least, but how does one go about doing it effectively in writing? There is no one better to learn this from than renowned memoirist Matilda Butler, author of the celebrated *Rosie's Daughters*, "the collective memoir of a generation" of women who were born during World War II and became the "First Women To" (FW2). It is a memoir full of stories and anecdotes about the women and men who changed an entire society, the echoes and significance of whose activities will be felt for generations to come. In it, Butler documents how the world transitioned from one of narrow expectations for women—to become homemakers dependent on men, or, at best, teachers or nurses—to one in which women finally claimed their birthright of being able to pursue whatever career or occupation they chose to, independent of rather than dependent on men. *Rosie's Daughters* is the account of what it took women to make it in a world dominated by men and how together they changed it. *Rosie's Daughters* is truly a memoir of historical significance.

Matilda Butler belongs to the "rations-stamp babies" generation, born between 1940 and 1945. Her memoir is named after "Rosie the Riveter" who built ships, flew bombers, and carried out countless other jobs essential for the WWII effort, putting to rest the traditional views about "women's work." Nevertheless, after the war, Rosie was thanked and sent back home. That is where *Rosie's Daughters* come in, flinging wide open the doors that Rosie unlocked, claiming more professional firsts and greater sociocultural changes than any other generation before and perhaps since.

Butler is a social psychologist, educator, entrepreneur, life writing coach, and award-winning author. *Rosie's Daughters* benefits from her 35 years of research training and work experiences. She has been an instructor and researcher at Stanford University; she created the nationwide Women's Educational Equity Communication Network and co-founded Knowledge Access International, a software company (which she sold in 1997). After selling the business, she returned

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## SBW Anthology Is Coming

An anthology of the work of SBW members is currently in the planning stages, to be published in 2009, CWC's centennial year. As Dave LaRoche announced at the February monthly meeting and in his column in this issue, a project team has been appointed and is now working on a plan for board approval. Dick Amyx will serve as project lead; Meredy Amyx will head the editorial team; and Ro Davis will be in charge of production.

Content will be drawn from past issues of *WritersTalk* and from members' contributions, including previously published work to which the authors own the rights. The editorial team will make the final selection of content according to an actual budgeted page count. A deadline will be announced in the next issue of *WritersTalk*. Only the work of SBW members in good standing as of the contributions closing date will be eligible for inclusion.

Up to six volunteers will be needed to help with the selection process. Interested members, please contact Meredy at [meredy@amyx.org](mailto:meredy@amyx.org).

# President's Prowling

by Dave LaRoche  
President, South Bay Writers

## Hodgepodge

Were you thrilled? In our past—that deep darkened past of the Hofbrau—we have had greater attendance, I'm told, maybe once, but 83 is a high-water mark for the Lookout. There were faces I had seen before—occasionally, but not all together—and it was thrilling to experience the energy. Proudfoot and Lonquist and Engber and Mueller, the place was abuzz. It might have been Al Rinzler; he kept us glued in. It might have been a long string of exciting speakers thanks to VP Alex Leon.



Speaking of Rinzler, there's a man we can like ... an acquisitions editor with a large publisher within an überlarge publisher who is clever and articulate. That was refreshing. Alan will be at our East of Eden Conference, I'm told. Plan on Salinas in case you missed last month's meeting or just want another helping of his deliciously humorous and insightful delivery.

East of Eden... Now there's a bargain to keep in mind— engrave on your calendar. We're going to hear more but just in case you are wondering, I did some tuition comparing: San Francisco Writers Conference (3 days) \$645; Squaw Valley (5 days) \$750; Yosemite (3) \$400; So Cal Writers Conference, (3) \$350 and Maui... who wouldn't like Maui (3 ½ days) \$600. I don't know what tuition is planned for EoE this year, the "beanies" are still counting, but in 2006 it was (3days) for about \$225. Now... if it were less conference or it sucked, one might argue \$225 is about right but this... this is a big Bluto, robust in every way, compares favorably with those mentioned above, and \$225, or there about... that's huge— one helluva deal. Keep your eyes peeled.

Our Youth Group interest is waning. Jeannine Vegh has invested what she has for it, but to little avail, and she recommends that we drop the idea. In the beginning, caught in an executive wave of euphoria, she was pro-plus youth. With loads of encouragement, she created a website, spoke to teen candidates and solicited member support. We adopted reduced rates for youth membership and meeting fees—a few elder toddlers showed now and then but it hasn't been rewarding. So, we will put the idea into cold storage unless... unless someone reading this semi-obituary should appear with new energy and viable ideas to bring the teetering-at-moribund back to life. Anyone?

On investing, my son gave me a copy of Mailer's *The Castle In The Forest* for Christmas—a monumental tome I compare reading to drilling an oil well. You drill and sharpen until you run low on resources and, if you hit before empty, you roll sweet in the money; but if not, you are wasted. It's an investment without evidence of any return till the end, and maybe not then. Has anyone read this thing clear through? I'm on page 274, please talk to me.

On the other hand, there is Richard Ford. When Tod Goldberg spoke he said lots of valuable things and one that I remember was "Richard Ford." Now there's a writer who can think (they *should* be able to do that, you know—think). Ford wrote

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— 0 —

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### 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.

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### 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](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com); or mail double-spaced, typewritten copy to

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### Guest Columns

*Almost Anything Goes* (400 words)

### News Items

 (400 words)

### Letters to the Editor

 (300 words)

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### Creative Works

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

### Announcements and Advertisements

[newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto: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.

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# Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx  
Editor

## Answers and other topics



Last month, I described the connection between the print medium of *WritersTalk* and the electronic medium of the web. There's a lot of information about writing out there on the web, and *WritersTalk* can't deal with all of it. The most the newsletter can do is let you know that it's out there and point you to it—and the best way to point to a web resource is with a URL. The primary questions were how much *WritersTalk* might depend on web resources and how much you all might be expected to use the SBW website as a regular source of information in conjunction

with *WritersTalk*.

The general answer to the questions is that SBW can use as many means of communication as it can stand without being downright redundant. This would mean, for example, reproducing in HTML a list of links that had appeared in print, but not an entire *WT* article. An example of the kind of article that would benefit from a web connection is Carolyn Donnell's "Caveat Scriptor," on page 13 of this issue. The list of scam-fighting resources at the end of that piece would be a lot easier for you to use if you could just click them on the website rather than having to type them in. So that's how we'll use the website.

What we—primarily webmaster Ro Davis and I—haven't done is decide *where* we'll do it.

Right now, there are three places on the website that might be suitable: on a new page included as part of the newsletter area; on the existing Resources page; or in the new South Bay Forum. The Resources page probably won't be it, but we will settle the issue during this month and get the first list of links from *WritersTalk* up where it can be used. Check back on the website from time to time to see what develops.

### The South Bay Forum

The South Bay Forum is a bulletin board for the use of SBW members that Ro has just installed on the website. There's a description of it on page 13 in this issue. Go to [southbaywriters.com/smf](http://southbaywriters.com/smf) and take a look.

### April is National Poetry Month

According to the poets.org website: "Inaugurated by the Academy [of American Poets] in April 1996, National Poetry Month (NPM) brings together publishers, booksellers, literary organizations, libraries, schools, and poets around the country to celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture. Thousands of businesses and non-profit organizations participate through readings, festivals, book displays, workshops, and other events."

In order to help celebrate National Poetry Month and to give SBW's poets a chance to display their works, I'll set aside a special section in April's *WritersTalk* for poetry, and I hope that you'll be generous with your contributions. Selection will not be limited to only one poem per author.

### Shorties

Two short forms have been getting a fair amount of play lately: the six-word memoir and the 100-word story. The thing with the 100-word stories is that they have to be 100 words long, *exactly*. Not 99, and not 101. It's an interesting kind of discipline for a prose writer—something like writing a sonnet. If you want to give either of these shorties a try, I'd be happy to receive them and use them in odd spaces from time to time. This isn't a contest; it's just something to do for fun. See Meredy Amyx's "Favorites" on page 11 for a 100-word example. **WT**



# Getting Ahead of the Game

## February Recap

by Andrea Galvacs

The first meeting of SBW in 2008 was a first in several ways. We had a new meeting day, a new service award and a new feature at the meeting place. Even the chicken served for dinner had a new recipe!

The new meeting day is Tuesday and this will hold for the rest of 2008. The new award is one for exemplary service to the club. Called the Matthews-Baldwin Service Award, it is named for two of our most dedicated members, Edie Matthews and Bill Baldwin. And finally, the new feature is a table displaying the books of members who are published authors, giving them a chance to sell them. This opportunity will be a monthly occurrence.

The meeting started in a familiar manner. President Dave LaRoche gave all a warm welcome and asked for members' help to work on a SBW anthology. Various members made announcements, not the least of them their good news, guests introduced themselves, the raffle was held and Dave presented the service award, *for the first time*, to our tireless Raffle Lady Cathy Bauer.

While all of this was happening, we still managed to have dinner but when Vice-President Alex Leon introduced speaker Alan Rinzler everybody became silent and attentive. Our guest has had a variety of positions in the literary world, among them, acquisitions and development editor since 1992 at several publishing houses and editor and publisher of several authors. Currently he is a free-lance independent editor as well as executive editor at Jossey-Bass/John Wiley & Sons.

Alan, a seasoned editor, said that the book business is all about numbers. Publishing houses have a net revenue of two billion dollars a year and look for best-sellers but 90-95% of books lose money, so they are constantly looking for new writers with a future.

He advised that if we are serious about being writers, we must subscribe to *Publishers Weekly*. For one thing, this



**Jossey-Bass acquisitions editor Alan Rinzler explains the financial realities of the publishing business to SBW—and gives us hints on how to get ahead of the game.**

magazine has useful information on how to make our way into the writing business, and for another, every writer needs to read to improve his output. We must also seek help from others to critique and give opinions of our work.

Once our manuscript is ready, Alan said, it is imperative to find an agent with a good reputation whom we can trust and who will discuss the financial aspects of the contract. These are very intricate, and it can be tacky for a writer to talk about them with an editor.

Research indicates that it is somewhat true that modern technology threatens to replace the book, especially among young people. For this reason, publishers not only want good writers but demand that authors become good sales representatives as well and coach them on how to speak in front of an audience.

Writers today must be public figures and able to “build a platform.” This means knowing about book publishing, develop a “pitch” for the book, choosing an agent and the manner in which to publish, and possibly creating a website and a DVD. No easy tasks, but extremely helpful.

Alan said, “It’s difficult to be a good writer,” but in order to become known, we need publicity. One way to achieve this exposure is to publish one chapter of our novel at a time online, charging a

subscription and even asking for critiques. This way, when the manuscript is ready, we already have a following and the publisher may be more receptive.

The meeting ended with yet another first: Alan Rinzler donated two books to the club, *Focus on the Good Stuff*, by Michael Robbins and *Staring at the Sun*, by Irwin Yalom. Thank you, Alan! **WT**



**Alan packs ‘em in—an all-time high SBW meeting attendance record.**

## Treasures of Istanbul

On March 20, noon to two, SBW member Jill Pipkin will give a visual tour of Istanbul. We'll see the gorgeous interior of the ancient church, Haghia Sophia, as well as the beautiful tiled interior of various mosques. We'll also visit the Old Bazaar, Topkapi (most famous for its Harem buildings), and a fish and fruit bazaar... Come prepared to be wowed...

RSVP to [olli@ucsc-extension.edu](mailto:olli@ucsc-extension.edu)

12 to 2, Osher Institute, UC Extension, 10420 Bubb Road, Cupertino. This is a brown-bag lunch talk, so bring your brown bag; drinks will be provided.

## Anthologies Seeking Articles

Co-editors seeking articles for proposed anthologies. Deadline for submittals is March 30, 2008.

Women & Poetry: Tips on Writing, Publishing and Teaching from American Women Poets:  
[info@encirclepub.com](mailto:info@encirclepub.com)

Women Writing on Family: Writing, Publishing, and Teaching Tips by U.S. Women Writers: [smallwood@tm.net](mailto:smallwood@tm.net); please put GUIDELINES on the subject line or send SASE to: The Aureorean, Box 187, Farmington, ME 04938 ATTN: ANTHOLOGIES

# Creating Story Plots That Sell

by Richard A. Burns

The January 27 seminar on planning better story plots, created and presented by Martha Alderson, was a terrific learning event, nearly filling The Lookout Inn with interested authors, primarily from South Bay Writers.

As a basis, she firmly grounded us in the “typical” plot line of a successful story, which consists of three things:

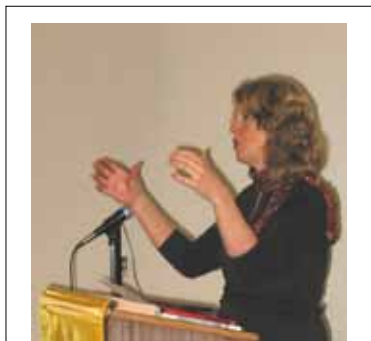
- **The Beginning:** a gradually rising line for approximately the first quarter of the book, “the beginning,” ending at a prime scene she called “*the end of the beginning*.”
- **The Middle Half:** This is followed half of the novel’s pages (or chapters or scenes) with its high energy prime scene being *the crisis* as the novel approaches the three-quarters point; the line rolls off some after the crisis to help the characters and readers catch their breaths.
- **The End:** The final quarter of the book moves inexorably to the third prime scene, “*the climax*.” Afterward, there is a relatively short roll-off of energy during the resolution in the final portion of the story.

What is it that’s rising on the vertical axis? Alderson says it’s the basic energy of the plot or the stakes of the key character(s). The horizontal axis is the page number (or scene number or chapter number). Of course these are schematic representations; we needn’t expect perfect precision. However, when she starts reading a new novel, she likes to put a yellow sticky at the quarter point in the story, the three-quarters point, and just before the end so she can note how close the prime scenes, defined above, come to the expected page point.

She likes to think of the x-y graph, which essentially is Alderson’s Plot

Planner, as three separate graphs (three parameters are actually graphed), the first delineating “Character Emotional Development” (CED); the next, “Dramatic Action” (DA); and the third, “Thematic Significance” (TS). Good writers consider or naturally develop all three throughout the novel; the change in each can be described for each scene. Martha demonstrated this plot development using the recent best seller *Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini, as an example. (It’s my current bedside book and I’ve seen the movie, too, so her example was perfect for me.)

She defined a plot as a series of scenes deliberately arranged by cause and effect. The logical placement of these in time is all important to a coherent story. If something you write does not contribute to the plot by integrating cause and effect, eliminate it. She asserts that half of what most people write can be left out.



**Martha Alderson tells workshop attendees how to chart the progress of their novels.**  
Photo: Dave LaRoche

A scene is action that advances character interaction. It always has action and usually has dialog. It is not an “info dump” nor is it “summary.” Psychologically, the scene is beneficial for the reader. Pages turn more quickly, especially if there is a lot of white space in the dialog. On the other hand, sections of summary can greatly compress time, set the

stage, make the reader secure by showing him where he is and who all is there, and by refreshing the story significance if it has become blurred.

Alderson had us consider our own projects for the locations of the prime scenes, the number of scenes linked by cause and effect, and the status change of CED, DA, and TS. We filled out a CED Profile for our antagonist.

CED should be 70% of your novel. It helps us identify with the character and story. It satisfies the human voyeuristic instinct to identify the normal from the abnormal. DA, 30% of the novel, sucks the reader in and keeps him from being bored. It contains the conflict, tension, and suspense.

Each scene, when analyzed for having

significant CED, DA, and TS, can be scored “Yes” or “No,” and points entered on the Plot Planner, scene by scene. These points can be above the line at a scene (if present) or below the line (if not present). Below-the-line scenes are acceptable, especially, for example, as a break from constant action or introducing characters or subplots, but above-the-line scenes should predominate, hence the rising energy and stakes corresponding to the slope on the Plot Planner. Above-the-line points should especially increase prior to the crisis and the climax.

On thematic significance she summarized the TS of *Kite Runner* as, “A boy who won’t stand up for himself becomes a man who can stand up to anything.” We need to identify and build up TS for each of our novels.

Alderson covered a lot, but, by way of summary, I list here a few ideas I especially liked:

- Plotter = plodder = left-brained = organized = craft  
Panther = seat-of-the-pants = right-brained = episodes = disorganized = creative; muse
- Delete scenes (or words or paragraphs) that do not lead to the climax.
- For scenes and whole story, enter late; leave early.
- Don’t give too much away too early.
- Have a goal for every scene; have a protagonist goal [and antagonist goal] for the whole story.
- Have many things standing in the way of the goal(s), some of them huge, and some of them of thematic significance.
- Obstacles = conflict.
- Character’s flaws, dreams, or secrets could be among sources for obstacles.
- Don’t introduce completely new “surprises” in the final quarter (“the end”).
- The middle is the quicksand; the stakes have to build.
- In the middle, create another world (for a while).
- After the crisis, nothing can ever be the same (definition of crisis).
- You want your reader to be your friend.

*Continued on page 14*



# The Journey of a Thousand Miles: Considering A Low-Residency MFA

by Lita Kurth

**Q. What is a low-residency MFA?** A Master of Fine Arts degree (MFA) in creative writing is a terminal degree like a Ph.D., M.D., or J.D. (Recently Ph.D.'s in creative writing have come into existence but haven't replaced MFA's). This credential, along with publications, can lead to an academic career at a four-year university, or just grant bragging rights.

**Q. I see, but what does "low residency" mean and why do it that way?**

Technically, it means you spend ten to thirty days, once or twice a year, in intensive workshops and classes on a campus, and the rest of the year send assignments via email to a professor. During the year, there also may be interactive online sessions with classmates and instructors. Low-residency programs exist because of the cruel reality that hardly anyone makes a living as a creative writer, so a lot of people who love writing and want to grow in it aren't quitting their day jobs.

**Q. Are low-residency programs just degree mills with low-paid instructors like those at the University of Phoenix?** Some of them might be, especially the for-profit ones, but there's a big difference between an MFA received solely through online work and a low-residency MFA. To be honest, I don't know anyone who's gotten an MFA from an online university. At least one program, the one at Antioch College, suspended operations. What do you do about transcripts and references then?

**Q. Are there premier low-residency programs?** Yes. Warren Wilson College in North Carolina has a lot of cachet and is very hard to get into. Goddard College and Vermont College, both in Vermont, were pioneers in low-residency MFA's and enjoy name recognition. Possibly fifty low-residency programs exist today. Many advertise in *Poets & Writers Magazine* and list their faculty and other attractions. The most



Lita Kurth  
Contributing Editor

important question is: "Which is the right program for me?"

**Q. How much do they cost?** Some people claim there's no price-fixing in this world, but when I was shopping around, it was astonishing how many programs clocked in at right around \$25,000 for two years. A new car or an MFA?

**Q. Do you need a B.A. in creative writing to apply?** You need a B.A. or B.S. but not necessarily in creative writing. However, you have to show you've been hard at work on creative writing, involved in a writing community, experienced and productive, if not published.

**Q. Tell me about your own low-residency program!** I thought you'd never ask. I wanted a program that was relatively close, not writhing with cut-throat competition, and nurturing but rigorous. After much searching, I found Pacific Lutheran, a college I'd never heard of, in Tacoma. Their Rainier Writers Workshop MFA feels just about perfect for me (based on 1½ years there).

**Q. What should you investigate?** The MFA was a big commitment for me, both financially and timewise, so I really did my research. I requested the email addresses of current students and interviewed them, asking about the program's weaknesses and strengths. I looked up the faculty, and read their work to see if they were a good fit. I asked about incidental costs like food and lodging. (At the University of British Columbia, you find your own hotel accommodations and commute to class, a significant cost). I asked about faculty-student ratio, types of classes, the number and age range of students (PLU has a cluster of people in their sixties), their backgrounds and publications, and the acceptance rate. I scrutinized the website. Some programs want you to focus on one genre only, and some, like mine, don't offer certain genres such as screenwriting or playwriting. One program wanted a statement of faith along with the

application—attractive to some people, not to others.

It was crucial to me that my program be accredited and affiliated with a solid university that was likely to be around for a while. However, if you aren't planning an academic career, you might not care. Whidbey Island Writers Association, for example, offers an MFA that is not accredited or associated with any university. But I've heard favorable comments about it. A name school offers a certain luster and envy appeal, but may be a mixed blessing. A friend of mine was accepted to the prestigious Syracuse MFA program only to find the interpersonal atmosphere unbearable and even destructive to her writing. One of my instructors at PLU got his MFA from the biggest name of all, Iowa, and learned nothing about plot there. He had to pick that up on his own later. On the other hand, Iowa was crawling with agents. So choose your poison, as they say, and hope it chooses you!

If you have comments or questions about this or other columns, please email me at lakurth@yahoo.com. I'd love to hear from you. Maybe you'll give me an idea for a future column!  
WT

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**Prowling, continued from page 2**

*Sportswriter, Independence Day, Lay of the Land...* all about a man and his associations as he moves through the few days of an ordinary life that is chock-full with adventure and promise, fragility and hope, disaster and success. Yes, he makes ordinary life just that, Richard Ford does, and my thanks to Tod Goldberg who knows a producing well when he sees one.

And speaking of writing... call up your muse, for we are doing an anthology. Richard Amyx will be announcing his approach in short order but in the meantime I can say this: it will be for SBW members; it will be inexpensive, and it will be done. See the announcement on page 1.

Stay with me until next month when you *may* find that I have stopped drilling. WT

# Book Signing for Marjorie Johnson, Author of *Bird Watcher*

by Carolyn Donnell

Petite and silver haired great-grandmother Marge Johnson is a dynamo of talents and accomplishments: teacher, mathematician, pilot (member of the 99s, a women pilots' association), and now a novelist. I can't keep up with her.

On Thursday, February 14, Doreen Jurado hosted a book signing at her home in San Jose. As I walked in Marge was saying, "I guess you want to hear what happened to Kedar," and continued reading from her novel, *Bird Watcher*.



Marjorie Johnson personalizes a copy of *Bird Watcher* for SBW member Beth Wyman. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Kedar, a young Muslim-American teenager, flying a stolen Cessna, crashes in the desert. Lost and suffering from amnesia, he meets Mother, an eccentric

miner, who takes him in. Meanwhile, the owner of the airplane and his friend pursue the thieves through many twists and turns. Marge said at one point that she had probably told too much and now no one would need to buy the book, but that did not turn out to be the case.

The 20 or more women in the audience asked many questions, such as "Where did your characters come from?" and "Where did you come up with the names?"

Marge said she saw a young Middle Eastern looking guy at the airport whose luggage tag read Kedar. One of the pilots chasing the thieves is named Frank. Marge's husband is named Frank. Coincidence? Mostly, but Marge did say that both Franks have a propensity for remembering detailed trivia, and both are pilots and schoolteachers.

She mentioned a friend who had adopted an Indian child. Marge learned something about the culture from this source and did massive research. Yes, you can find translations even from English to Sioux on the Internet!

Marge ran her novel through critique groups and personal editors. After many years of publishing in mathematical journals, she decided to try her hand

at fiction. She started out in Edie Matthews's workshops with short stories. (She garnered an honorable mention in the *WritersTalk* Challenge for her short story "Nicotine or Aspirin.") She tried the agent route to publication first but one wanted more novels in the wings; another disliked a scene. (Sledgehammer on knuckles, etc.) All said, it would take a couple of years to get the book to market.

"Heck, I'm a great-grandmother," Marge said. "If I want my family to have my book I need to publish now, not in a few years." So she chose a publish-on-demand group, narrowing her choices to I-Universe and Infinity. Infinity won by actually returning phone calls, getting a sample copy to her in 4 days (as opposed to 2 weeks from I-Universe), putting items on Amazon and Barnes & Noble, making business cards, posters, etc. They also have their own machines. (Most PODs send materials out to printers.)

Marge's next book topic is finding a lost Mayan Codex.

Future signings and readings:

- AAUW meeting in Fremont April 12th.
- Imagination and Mystery Bookstore, April 19, Glendale, California. **WT**

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Dave LaRoche's comments about developing reading groups in the February edition of *WT* were certainly welcomed by this member, for I have often wished for a group of book lovers who are also writers.

If there are others who share my opinion that the reading and discussion of literary fiction provide inspiration and offer models for struggling writers and would like to join a reading group, contact me at flo19@pacbell.net.

Florence Schorow

Dear Editor:

Some thoughts on reading the "On Critique Groups: Hurt Feelings."

Too often members of critique groups hesitate to say anything but "nice" when an author's piece is read, for fear of the very things outlined in the above piece. I would like to suggest that there are very good ways in which one can convey criticism positively, thus helping the author find a way to improve his or her writing.

My remedies are as follows:

1. Say what you like about the piece first, and make it sincere.
2. Then—if you were bored say something like "I found my attention drifting when...", or "It's a little flat. Maybe the sequence of events

could be changed..."

3. If you couldn't keep the characters straight, "I was confused..."
4. If the facts don't jibe throughout the piece, "I was confused..."
5. If the grammar is faulty, "I believe the correct word, tense, etc. should be..."

And so on. If the burden of criticism is put on the listener, the author will figure out ways to improve. Or maybe he, she will ignore it which is an author's prerogative too!

This is probably all redundant stuff, but had to get it off my chest!

Juliana Richmond

## Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

I feel like I am coming out of “a long winter’s nap,” as the saying goes. December hailed the SBW holiday party and January hosted Martha Alderson’s Blockbuster Plot workshop. February found us back to business as usual at the Lookout Inn, with one exception—South Bay Writers now meets on the second Tuesday of every month.

At the February meeting, many members had successes to share (you can find the success form at the front table if you would like to give me something directly for Accolades).

- Jill Pipkin will give a talk on Istanbul at the UC Santa Cruz Extension, OSHR Institute in Campbell on March 20, 2008 at 12:00 p.m. Admission is free. A good deal of Jill’s memoir in progress is set in Turkey and Istanbul.
- Juliana Richmond, author of *Dancing Mama*, is giving a talk on April 26, 2007 at the Martin Luther King Library in San Jose. Call the library for time.
- Kathy Garfinkle informed us of the AAUW meet the authors program to take place on April 12, 2008 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Many authors from SBW will be speaking at this event.
- Bob Garfinkle was accepted at [www.redroom.com](http://www.redroom.com), a website for networking authors, and as a freelance editor and book reviewer for *Sky and Telescope*.
- Terri Thayer landed a six-book contract for the “Cozy Mystery Series.” Her first in the series, *Wild Goose Chase, a Quilting Mystery*, received five stars from the toughest reviewer at Amazon.com.
- Steve Wetlesen continues to receive paid commissions for his artist collaborations and poetry.
- Martha Engber noted there are requests for articles on poetry, family and milestones in life. More informa-



Jackie Mutz  
Contributing Editor

- tion at [marthaengber.blogspot.com](http://marthaengber.blogspot.com).
- Beth Proudfoot will be speaking on Parent Education at the Saratoga Library in the near future.
  - Kathryn Madison just received word that her second novel, *Summoned by the Sea*, was accepted for publication.
  - Rita Derbas’s mystery *Dead in Bed* won second place in the fiction category of the San Francisco Writers Conference writing contest.

I know I missed some who had news to share, but some of my notes were either incomplete or I just couldn’t read. As the kids say, “My bad.” At the next SBW meeting, take a little time to jot your successful writer news on the success form or email me directly at [j\\_mutz@yahoo.com](mailto:j_mutz@yahoo.com). As our club continues to grow and change, it is more important than ever that we witness and support our successes as writers. That cliché “hope springs eternal” is true—keep writing and let us know your successes. **WT**

## South Bay Writers Members’ Book Table

Now available: a Books-For-Sale table at our regular dinner meetings!

If you are a published author and wish to make your book available to the membership and guests (as some of our speakers do) please bring your books and come prepared to sell. You must have books in hand and conduct your own transactions.

Books may be sold before the business part of the meeting, during breaks, and after the meeting is over.

This opportunity will be available at all of our regular dinner meetings *only* to members who are published authors. It will provide you the sales opportunity we give to our guest speakers, and the rest of us an introduction to your work.

If you have questions, please email Dave LaRoche at [pres@southbaywriters.com](mailto:pres@southbaywriters.com)

## Nipper’s Nits

by Pat Decker Nipper

### Lesson 35. Parallel Construction

Parallel construction is using the same grammatical form or framework for similar ideas, whether in a list or in a sentence. Elements must balance in a sentence to best compare a relationship between ideas. One way to do this is to repeat words or sounds in the same position.

A single sentence or a series of sentences can show parallelism. For example, “Skiing is better exercise than skating.” You wouldn’t say, “Skiing is better exercise than to skate.”

If you have three thoughts in a list, they should be worded in a parallel fashion:

Interview the candidate.  
Evaluate the candidate.  
Hire the candidate.

A third item that said “Hiring the candidate” wouldn’t be parallel.

To ensure your material follows the rules of parallelism:

1. Read aloud and listen to your comparisons. Are the parts constructed alike?
2. Use parallelism to add emphasis by repeating similar sounds.
3. Check elements in a list to see if they begin in the same way.

Politicians are famous for using parallels in their oratory. Here’s one from a recent speech by one of the leading presidential candidates: “I know you have real pain, real anxiety, real problems.”

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

### March Margins

Wide margins march the book somehow:

How many pages, now?  
Don’t count words just count pages  
“White space” hey: all the rage is!  
The sooner submitted  
The sooner new-author  
Takes a bow...

—Pat Bustamante





## **First Love: A Conversation with My Dad**

by *Betty Auchard*

My dad and Denny were important men in my life, and they had several things in common. Each had married his first love—and of course, both of them loved me.

Even though time and fading health eventually removed most of us from his memory, Dad never forgot his first love: my mother.

My parents loved each other but did not know how to stay together. They married and divorced each other three times. Even after my father's second wife, Lucille, died, my parents stayed friends, and she visited him in the convalescent home whenever she went back to Iowa. Dad wanted her to move in with him. My mom said that when she visited him, he couldn't keep his hands off her—and they were both almost 80!

Now, it was my turn to visit my dad in the convalescent home. Denny clutched my sweaty hand as we entered the front door. I hadn't seen my dad in several years and didn't know what to expect. Denny and I waited as they wheeled Dad into the room. I had never seen him in a wheelchair before. He wore a baseball cap with an opening in the back where his faded red hair poked through. His face lit up when he saw us, though not with recognition. I could tell he hadn't the faintest idea who we were. Denny and I introduced ourselves, and Dad plunged headlong into conversation. He still loved to talk to anyone who would listen.

Dad: Now, who did you say you are?

Betty: I'm Betty, your oldest child, Dad.

Dad: Oh. I couldn't remember if you said you were my sister or my daughter.

Betty: Your sister was here today, so maybe that confused you.

Dad: What's her name?

Betty: Her name is Lora, Dad, your oldest sister.

Dad: Oh. Lora?

Betty: Yes, Lora.

Dad: Yeah, I remember her. She comes to see me sometimes, but I can never remember her name. Where does she live?

Betty: She lives in Cedar Rapids, where you used to live.

Dad: Where do you live?

Betty: In California.

Dad: In California? That's where Waneta is from. Do you know Waneta?

Betty: Oh, yes, Dad. I know her well. Waneta is my mother.

Dad: Well, I'll never forget Waneta. She came to visit me a couple of times.

Betty: Oh, yes, she told me about visiting you here.

Dad: Don't know why in the ever-lovin' world she moved to California. Do you see Waneta much?

Betty: Oh, sure. All the time.

Dad: I'll never forget Waneta.

Betty: Well, Dad, you and Mom were married a long time.

Dad: Well, then, who in the hell is Lucille? Lemme show you this newspaper clipping someone gave me because "Lucille" had just died. They say I was *married* to her!

Betty: Yeah, Dad, you were.

Dad: What was Lucille like?

Betty: She was a very nice woman.

Dad: Well, you couldn't prove it by me.

Betty: Dad, you were actually married to Lucille longer than you were married to Mom.

Dad: And you come from California?

Betty: Yes, and you came to visit us a couple of times in California.

Dad: I seem to remember sitting out under a tree and reading my detective magazines and drinking a beer. Could that have been in California?

Betty: It sure was, Dad. You really liked sitting under our mulberry tree.

Dad: Were the mulberries a mess on the ground?

Betty: No, we have fruitless mulberries in California.

Dad: Those damned mulberry trees are a mess when the fruit is all over the ground.

Betty: I remember the huge one we had on Oakland Road in Cedar Rapids.

Dad: The one I remember was such a mess!

Betty: Bobby fell down under that tree and bit his tongue so bad he had to have five stitches.

Dad: Bobby? I keep remembering the names Betty, Bobby, and Patty.

Betty: That's us—the three children you and Mom had. I'm Betty, and Bob and Pat are my brother and sister. Pat has red hair, just like you.

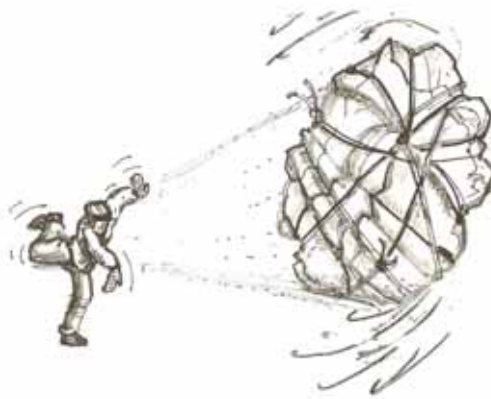
Dad: Now, where do they live?

Betty: Bob lives in Nebraska and Pat lives in Colorado.

Dad: And you live in California?

Betty: Right. But we all lived in Cedar Rapids 'til I was fourteen. Then you got transferred to the Denver Iron Works and we moved to Colorado. [I was afraid this might be too much input for my dad to process, but I plunged on.] After I got married, Denny and I moved to California in 1956, and we have four children.

Dad: Well, I don't remember them, and I don't remember Lucille, and sometimes I can't even remember which one is my sister.



Betty: That happens, Dad, when you don't see those people every day.

Dad: I'll tell you one thing for sure!

Betty: What's that?

Dad: I don't see Waneta every day, but I will never forget her!

Betty: Well, you were only seventeen when you met and twenty-one when I was born. I don't think you ever forget your first love.

Dad: How long did you say we were married?

Betty: Close to twenty-seven years.

Dad: I know another thing about Waneta. I know for sure she was a virgin.

Betty: Oh, really? [Gulp] And how did you know that, Dad?

Dad: Well, she was living away from home because she didn't get on very well with her mother.

Betty: Oh, yes. I know that was true.

Dad: And Waneta and I met at a young people's group at the Southern Baptist church. We both played cornet in the orchestra.

Betty: Your church had an orchestra?

Dad: No, not the whole church, just the young people's group.

Betty: You were both very musically inclined.

Dad: Inclined, hell. Waneta could make a piano talk!

Betty: How right you are, Dad.

Dad: Anyway, I took a shine to her right off and used to walk her home to where she got free room and board for taking care of the kids in the family after school. Then I would walk all the way to my house, and that was a hell of a lot of walkin' in the snow.

Betty: In the snow?

Dad: Yeah. It was snowin' that night!

Betty: Which night, Dad?

Dad: The night I'm talkin' about. Now, stay with me!

Betty: Oh, OK.

Dad: Anyway, I had been after her to do it for a long time, and she wouldn't.

Betty: Do it? You mean ... like making love?

Dad: Yeah! Doin' it! The back porch

was closed in for the winter with storm windows and wasn't so cold as the outside. [My dad pauses.]

Betty: Yes, and ...

Dad: Since no one was home, Waneta decided to do it with me.

Betty: [Gulp, Gulp] Um hmm.

Dad: The washer and tubs was the only things out there. Waneta took off her panties, and I lifted her up on the lid of one of them tubs. It had a big knob in the middle that was pressing on her butt, so it took a little doin' to get comfortable, and then we did it on top of the lid of that tub. [My dad seemed lost in thought at this point and didn't talk for several seconds, until I cautiously broke his reverie.]

Betty: So, how did you know Mom was a virgin, Dad?

Dad: [Impatiently] I'm gettin' to it!

Betty: OK. [I had been scolded.]

Dad: Well, I had a few miles to walk all the way home with snow over my ankles and by the time I got there, my ass was freezin'.

Betty: Dad, I believe you.

Dad: I got undressed for bed and went to put my shorts in the hamper and saw blood inside my shorts.

Betty: And that's how you could tell that Mom was a virgin?

Dad: Yup! But I knew I would catch holy hell if my mother saw those shorts with blood in 'em.

Betty: What did you do?

Dad: Well, I found me an old rag, a rock, a paper bag, and some string. Then I wrapped those bloody shorts around that rock, tied it all up real good, put it in the paper bag, tied the paper bag up real good with lots of tight string, and put it in my jacket pocket.

Betty: Then what?

Dad: On my way to the Quaker Oats plant where I worked after I dropped out of school, I had to pass by the slough, and I was thinkin' about throwin' it way out in the middle of the water where it could sink to the bottom.

Betty: Oh, do I remember the slough. We swam there on sizzling hot days with all the other poor kids in town.

Dad: Well, no one, rich or poor, could swim in it this day. It was frozen solid. I wasn't expectin' no ice-covered slough!

[I was on the edge of my seat.]

Betty: So, what did you do, Dad?

Dad: Well, I looked both ways real casual, like I was just lookin' over the scenery, and when I saw the coast was clear, I took the package out of my pocket and slung it as hard as I could to get it way out in the middle of the slough where the ice might be thin.

Betty: Did it sink?

Dad: Not right at first, and that really worried me. I didn't want no one gettin' curious and somehow findin' out they was my shorts.

Betty: Dad, how would they have ever known that?

Dad: We had ten kids in our family and our names were marked with a laundry marker in all our underwear so we'd know whose shorts was whose!

Betty: Dad, what about the rock package? Did it ever sink?

Dad: Yeah, it did, but not right at first. It hesitated just a little before it cracked through the ice and disappeared. Boy, was I relieved.

Betty: Well, I know I'm relieved. Then did you go on to work?

Dad: Yup. I went on to work, but I couldn't get my mind off how Waneta had finally let me do it with her. [Pause] I had never done it before either! I'll never forget it.

Betty: Oh, I will never forget it either! That was a very dear story, and I'm so glad you told it to me.

Dad: [Nothing but silence, relishing his memory.]

Betty: They're waiting dinner for you in the dining room, so I'd better get going. We have to drive back to Nebraska tonight, but it was just wonderful being here with you. [I forgot to call him Dad.]

Dad: It's been nice talkin' to you, too. Now, who did you say you are?

Betty: I'm Betty, your oldest child, Dad, from California.

Dad: [Snaps his fingers] That's right! I keep forgettin'. **WT**

# Matthews-Baldwin Award



Cathy Bauer, recipient of the first SBW Matthews-Baldwin award for exemplary service to the club, beams as she receives an inscribed desk set from president Dave LaRoche.



## Favorites

by *Meredy Amyx*

Crystal awoke at 11:11, her favorite time. Great start for a great day!

She put on her favorite purple outfit and amethyst earrings and took off to meet Eric at the Nautilus. Favorite boyfriend, favorite restaurant. What could go wrong?

She ordered the lobster salad. Over champagne, Eric proposed. She said yes.

Everything was perfect in Crystal's life! Outside on the street, Crystal danced in jubilation. The strap of her favorite shoe broke, and she stumbled off the curb just in time to be crushed by her favorite bus, the number eleven.

Too bad. This had been her favorite lifetime. **WT**

## May I?

by *Susan Mueller*

I want a dashboard device that has a keyboard. Half will be blue and half will be red. When I punch a key it will do my road rage for me. Various neon signs will pop up in my designated car window. The red keys will be for snotty remarks and the blue ones will be silly stuff. Here is what I want.

Red Key choices: Do you have a turn signal? How did you get a license? You are too dumb to own a car that expensive. If I had a Hummer, you would be mashed potatoes. The lives of the children in your car are at stake. Go home quick. My dog is bigger and meaner than yours. I am pointing a squirt gun at you—roll down your window. I don't want to hear your stupid music—my ears live in a free country. Get hostile with me and I will

tell my mom on you. I will pray at your funeral tomorrow, maniac.

Blue Key choices (these are for nice people, good drivers and cute kids and maybe dogs): Big faces of cartoon characters like Disney guys, Garfield the cat, Halloween scary face. Gorgeous babe, Superman, Spider Man, googly eyes with tongue stuck out. A hand holding an ice cream cone that is melting, all sloppy down the hand. A big parrot biting someone's ear. A big foot with a Band-Aid on the toe. A few alphabets all written badly and wrong. Please send money at the next red light.

Now all this is highly illegal. My fear is that I don't put the sign away quickly enough and the car pulls ahead and is followed by a cop. I'm dead. **WT**

## A View from the Board

by *Dave LaRoche*

A fully attended meeting saw action on many fronts. We adopted the Book-Sale-for-Members table, which will continue indefinitely giving space to the sale of members' published books; approved a Branch anthology project (plan forthcoming); selected the first winner for our Mathews-Baldwin Service Award, Cathy Bauer; and we saw to the formal introduction of G Dow as Networking Chair—a new function that includes critique groups, reading groups, new member mentoring, and educational opportunities for writers. (Even Doctorow would call that a long sentence.)

Our workshop with Martha Alderson netted the Branch \$1000 with 58 registrants. Your Branch remains economically viable, and attendees were exposed to a plot line.

Bill and Jeannine report healthy attendance overall at the open mic sessions though Bill seeks ideas regarding promotion.

A website redesign is in our future, and first on the list of needs is a mailing system that both protects the identities of addressees and offers professional looking promotional messages. Also in

the works is an interactive forum.

Marjorie reported 178 members with yet more coming (we ended last July, before renewals, with 187).

Budgets were approved. This is the first fiscal year ever we have actually had budgets, thanks to some serious digging and persistence from our treasurer, Jeremy Osborne. (He's the cheerful guy who takes your money at the door.)

At the State level, an anthology is planned. Those interested may contact Igal Levy of the Mt Diablo Branch, who is heading the project (textractor@yahoo.com).

Machinations within the State policy and procedures realm promise to produce a more workable document; and, while our tax status yet goes wanting, the insurance problem is resolved with fresh liability coverage for our branch and the others.

A nominating chair for the 2008-2009 state slate is filled by Joyce Kreig; and Donna McCrohan Rosenthal was appointed to plan the CWC Centennial Celebration in 2009.

Ro Davis brought us this State news.

**WT**



# Letter to My People

by Vicki Wynne

Dear Alpha Dad, Alpha Mom, My Boy Tom, and My Girl Stephanie,

Well, I'm getting ready to leave soon, so I just thought I would write you all a good-bye letter while I'm still here. You're going to miss me, but know I'm going to be okay. I've had a great life.

I'm slowing down a bit. But thank goodness I can still run to the door when those delivery people come and bark my fullest bark to let them know who is in charge here. If anyone gets too close, I'll be sure to check them out, sniff their crotch, and growl my fierce growl. I can still protect you and keep you safe. I'm your boy. You can still count on me!

I remember when you first adopted me from the pet store. Alpha Mom just wanted to look and see what kind of dog that you wanted for the family. But it was you, Alpha Dad, who first saw me and fell in love with me when I looked into your eyes. You weren't even prepared to bring a dog like me home with you that day. The lady with the tattoos on both arms told you that I was only going to be 40 pounds when I grew up. All that good food you fed me over the years made me blossom into such a fine young dog of 60 pounds! More of me to pet and adore, right?

Alpha Dad, you were the one who trained me with that Navy commando voice of yours. "Einstein!" you'd shout. "Come here!" "Heel." "Down." You gave the clearest commands. I was well trained. Top notch. I could go anywhere. But sometimes I got scared. The folks who owned me before you weren't very nice to me. They broke my tail and did things to hurt me.

Sometimes I wondered if you folks were going to do those things too. When you would raise your voice, I got scared. I'd roll on my back, show you my soft vulnerable tummy, and hope that you would just pet me and love me. You always did, as if I was the lucky Buddha that would bring you good luck and fortune if you kept rubbing me. I was the lucky one!

Thank you for taking me hiking up Mission Peak. My favorite memory was rolling in the grass, smooching around

in those nice warm cow paddies! I didn't understand why everyone didn't want to get too close to me and was holding their noses when we all were sitting together in the car. I thought I smelled pretty good. We dogs really dig that smell!

Alpha Mom, I know you are going to miss me the most. I'm glad I got to show you how brave and strong I am. I got that raccoon good when he came into the house through my dog door. Sorry for all the fur and blood all over your kitchen!

I know I'm getting skinnier and the lumps on my legs are getting bigger. I just take one day at a time. When I wake up each day now, I tell myself, "Oh, good, one more day to spend with my people I love!" Breakfast tastes so good. Dinner tastes so good. My after-dinner chew tastes so good. Life tastes so good".

When it's time for me to go, I'll let you know. We'll say good-bye. You take me to my friends at the vet, and I'll go to sleep one last time. Peacefully. No more pain.

Whenever you go to the beach, know that I will be the ocean wave playing tag with you, the gentle breeze kissing your face, and the warm sand that hugs your toes with every step. I am always with you.

Your faithful dog,  
God in fur,  
Einstein WT

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## *Memoirs, continued from page 1*

to research and writing, which eventually led to *Rosie's Daughters*. Though she has focused on women, she helps all people tell their life stories in her memoir writing classes and through her full-of-tips-and-resources web site about memoir writing ([www.WomensMemoirs.com](http://www.WomensMemoirs.com)).

She is a magna cum laude graduate from Boston University, holds an M.A. in communication research from Stanford University, and a Ph.D. in social psychology from Northwestern University. She has been listed in Who's Who in the West since 1978 and Who's Who of American Women since 1975. She has published more than 50 articles on women, contributed chapters to published books about women in

education and work, co-authored the award-winning book *Women and the Mass Media*, and coedited *Knowledge Utilization Systems*.

Kendra Bonnett, co-author of *Rosie's Daughters*, is accompanying Ms. Butler on her visit with SBW. Trained in history and archeology, she is currently a writer, editor, and marketing consultant, and has published books on marketing, business, and technology. She loves new technology and applies internet tools to traditional marketing methodology, which results in "marketing on steroids." Though they live at two ends of the continental United States, Matilda Butler and Kendra Bonnett continue to collaborate together to promote the memoir genre.

The world's social transformation is hardly complete; it is ongoing, and rightly so in the face of social inertia and ingrained prejudices. *Rosie's Daughters* is essential reading not just for women, but perhaps even more so for men—so that we might together grow out of centuries-old prejudices about roles and genders. And that must also be said about coming to hear this inspiring guest speaker at the March 11 meeting of South Bay Writers, especially if you are even remotely contemplating writing a memoir.

Come learn what it was like to be one of the FW2 women, as well as about life, writing, and memoir writing from this remarkable, wonderful, and accomplished woman, mother, and author, as she relates her experiences growing up as one of *Rosie's Daughters* and being an FW2 woman. Be sure to save the date: Tuesday, March 11, 6 p.m.—South Bay Writers meeting at the Lookout Inn in Sunnyvale. You will be glad you did. And bring your checkbook or a \$20 bill: Matilda Butler will donate \$5.00 to the EoE scholarship fund for each copy of *Rosie's Daughters* sold at the meeting.  
WT

April is  
National Poetry Month

Help *WritersTalk*  
celebrate the occasion.

# Caveat Scriptor: Contests to Avoid

by Carolyn Donnell

You entered a contest. The good news: you're a winner! The bad news: it's costing you.



Carolyn Donnell  
Contributing Editor

A painful truth that all new writers run into sooner or later is that there are lots of bogus contests out there. Many accept all entries, good and worthless, with glowing praise. Then money is requested—for the “opportunity” to purchase the book or CD in which their own work will appear or for special offers to edit or represent, but always at a hefty price. Stop! The legitimate world of publishing does not work this way. Real publishers pay authors for their work; authors do not pay publishers. There are scams and there are vanity presses.

A few examples of scams:

- Agency representation is offered to everyone who enters, but with a substantial editing fee.
- All entrants are told that their entry is “exceptional” and are referred to an agency with an up-front fee.
- Nonwinners are told that their work needs help and are offered the chance to buy it at a “discount.”
- A charity runs a contest with a publisher. The charity and the publisher are run by the same person.

One infamous example is the Famous Poets Society, which has at least three web sites, twelve different business names, and thirteen different addresses in CA, TX, NJ, OR, NV, and FL.

See the complete list at <http://windpub.com/literary.scams/famous.htm>

Vanity presses on the other hand, will publish the volumes, but the anthology is available by order only, and most are sold only to the writers or their friends and families. The book will probably never see the inside of a bookstore or library. And because anything and everything is accepted, credits aren't

respected by publishing professionals.

Reputable publishers will supply a certain number of copies/reprints at no charge. With the increasing availability and affordability of quality PODs (publish on demand) you would be better off to publish and distribute your work on your own.

Poetry.com is a well known vanity press and operates under the following names:

- Poets.com
- The Poets' Workshop ([www.poets.com](http://www.poets.com))
- National Library of Poetry
- International Library of Poetry
- International Society of Poets
- Watermark Press
- International Poetry Hall of Fame

It also appears to be affiliated with Noble House, as is International Library of Photography (aka Picture.com).

Other vanity publishers include:

- Famous Poets Society
- Sparrowgrass Poetry Forum
- The Amherst Society
- The Poets' Guild
- Poetry Press
- Poetry Unlimited
- The National Archives
- JMW Publishing

## Things to consider when choosing a contest:

- Who's conducting the contest?
- Is the contest free?
- Entry fee? If it's over \$25 (more for screenwriting contests), check it out.
- Encouraged to buy additional items or services?
- Frequency of contests? This shouldn't be too often.
- How many categories are there? Should have a specific focus and limit the number of categories.
- Guidelines clearly stated? Categories, deadlines, eligibility, format, fees, prizes, and any rights you may be surrendering.
- Who's judging?
- Fringe benefits? Perhaps, but you should never be asked to pay extra.
- What's the prize? Clearly described?
- Representation, publication, or

production is appealing? Be sure the sponsor is not a vanity publisher.

Read the fine print. *Always* read the contest rules and guidelines carefully before you submit.

## Scam-fighting resources:

<http://www.sfw.org/beware>  
<http://www.anotherealm.com/predators>  
<http://www.nwu.org/>  
<http://www.yudkin.com/scams.htm>  
[http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/avoid/av\\_avoid.php](http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/avoid/av_avoid.php)  
<http://www.poets.org/>  
[http://www.pw.org/content/vanity\\_presses](http://www.pw.org/content/vanity_presses)  
<http://windpub.com/literary.scams/>  
<http://poetry.about.com/od/onlinecontests/a/heintzcontests.htm>  
WT

## Announcing the South Bay Forum

Now on the SBW website: CWC South Bay Writers Discussion & Information Forum.

The SBW Forum is a bulletin board on which SBW members can post information about their books, events of interest to writers, services available to writers, classes they are teaching, or anything that might be of interest to members of SBW. The purpose of this Forum is to build an online networking community for writers of all levels.

Topics currently on the Forum include

- Area events of interest to writers
- Writers conferences
- Short story contests
- Poetry contests
- Other writing contests
- Member author events
- Members' books
- Services/Classes

You can view the public areas of the Forum simply by going to the site. If you register as a user, you can get permission to initiate or reply to posts. If you would like to open a new subject area, you can request that one of the moderators do so.

Check it out:

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

## 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](http://portia Steele Award website).

For complete information, please visit our website at [portia Steele Award website](http://portia Steele Award website) and click on the contest page.

### Plots, continued from page 5

- Your readers need payback at certain times in a story or they will quit.
- In the three big scenes, use all five senses.

You had to be there to get all the gems she laid on us. It was a satisfying lunch, continental breakfast, and afternoon cookie-fest, along with a chance to network and visit friends. But what will stick with me is coming home to work on my novel, now with concrete changes in methods and tools. They should make my work hang together, grab readers (nicely), and keep them turning pages. **WT**

## Central Coast Writers Spring '08 Contest

for poetry and short stories.

Awards for winners in each category: \$250 and publication (print and online) in the spring '08 *Homestead Review* (Hartnell College, Salinas).

Entry fees: \$15 per short story and \$5 per poem.

Submission period: February 1, 2008, through March 31, 2008.

Complete info at [centralcoastwriters.org/2008-spring-contest-rules.htm](http://centralcoastwriters.org/2008-spring-contest-rules.htm)

## 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](mailto:ALyne@DiamondAssociates.net)

### Character Traits

Jeannine Vegh M.A. M.F.T.I.  
[ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net)

### Computer Dingus and Full-Time Nerd

Jeremy Osborne  
[jeremy\\_w\\_osborne@yahoo.com](mailto:jeremy_w_osborne@yahoo.com)

### Doctors' Office Environment, OB-GYN

Dottie Sieve  
[pdrsieve@yahoo.com](mailto:pdrsieve@yahoo.com)

### Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold  
[maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net)

### Police Procedures

John Howsden  
[jwhowsden961@yahoo.com](mailto:jwhowsden961@yahoo.com)

### Profile Writing

Susan Mueller  
[samueller@worldnet.att.net](mailto:samueller@worldnet.att.net)

### Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard  
[Btauchard@aol.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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).  
[mtdiablowlriters.org](http://mtdiablowlriters.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](http://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](http://acramento-writers.org)

**Marin:** Meets on the fourth Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera.  
[cwcmarinwriters.com](http://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](http://redwoodwriters.org)



| Sunday                            | Monday | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday  | Friday  | Saturday                 |
|-----------------------------------|--------|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|
| <h1>March 2008</h1>               |        |   |   |   |   | 1                        |
| 2                                 | 3      | 4   | 5<br>7P Board of Directors<br>LaRoche residence<br>San Jose | 6   | 7<br>7:30P Open Mic<br>Barnes & Noble<br>Almaden Plaza,<br>San Jose | 8<br>11A Editors' Powwow |
| 9                                 | 10     | 11<br>6p Monthly Dinner<br>Meeting<br>Lookout Inn,<br>Sunnyvale<br>Matilda Butler | 12  | 13  | 14<br>7:30P Open Mic<br>Borders Books<br>Santana Row,<br>San Jose   | 15                       |
| 16<br><i>WritersTalk</i> deadline | 17     | 18  | 19  | 20<br>7:00P Open Mic<br>Barnes & Noble<br>3900 Mowery,<br>Fremont | 21<br>7:30P Open Mic<br>Barnes & Noble<br>Pruneyard,<br>Campbell    | 22                       |
| 23/30                             | 24/31  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28<br>7:30P Open Mic<br>Borders Books<br>Sunnyvale                  | 29                       |
| <b>Future Flashes</b>             |        | April 9<br>General Meeting<br>Jess Wells  |   |   |   |                          |

## Stay Informed!

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

[www.southbaywriters.com](http://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](mailto:wabaldwin@aol.com)

For Fremont Open Mic contact  
Jeannine Vegh  
[ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net)

or

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

## Third Annual Gold Rush Writer's Conference

This year will be bigger and better than ever—fourteen workshops to choose from, ten workshop leaders, award-winning novelist Karen Joy Fowler as a speaker (and workshop leader), plus many more extras.

We're offering a special early bird rate of \$135 if you sign up before March 30. Hurry because several great workshops are limited.

Sign up now and let us hear what you've been doing.

Antoinette May and the Gold Rush Staff  
[Toni@goldrushwriters.com](mailto:Toni@goldrushwriters.com)

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

## MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

### TUESDAY

March 11, at the Lookout Inn

**Matilda Butler,**

Author of *Rosie's Daughters*

"Memoirs, History and Change"

### Next Monthly Meeting—TUESDAY, March 11, 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!

**ALL YOUR POEM  
ARE BELONG TO US!**

Help *WritersTalk* celebrate National  
Poetry month. Be generous with  
your contributions.

