



WRITERSTALK

Volume 17
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November 2009

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

November Speakers

Michael Larsen and Elizabeth Pomada: Agents Extraordinaire

by Bill Baldwin

We are pleased to present at our November 10 meeting the distinguished team of Michael Larsen and Elizabeth Pomada, literary agents well known to those of you who have attended our East of Eden conferences.

If you want to know how to find an agent and how to work with an agent after you find one, you won't want to miss this presentation!

The Larsen-Pomada Literary Agency is Northern California's oldest literary agency. Michael (who handles nonfiction) and Elizabeth (who handles fiction) have sold hundreds of books to more than one hundred publishers. In addition to their work as agents, they are also co-founders of the San Francisco Writers Conference and the Writing for Change Conference.

Michael and Elizabeth have a wealth of valuable information to share. In addition, their website at larsen-pomada.com provides a cornucopia of advice for writers.

Do you know what you need to know to succeed as a writer?

Do you know how to work with an agent? How to make the most of a conference? At my first conference I was just brave enough to listen to other attendees toss questions at agents. At my second I asked two questions. Only at the third was I ready to attempt a "pitch." It wasn't until the fourth that I had any confidence in what I was doing. Almost everyone suffers from stage fright. Listening to knowledgeable guides can help.

So join us for an information-packed interactive fun experience in two parts:

Publishing from A to Z: The Essential Information You Need to Succeed: An interactive session where you choose key publishing ideas for Elizabeth and Michael to talk about. What emerges is a comprehensive overview of the business and what you need to know to succeed.

Bonus Critique Session: Elizabeth and Michael provide feedback on your pitches and work. This is a pitch and first-page contest in which everyone wins. Bring two copies of a 25-word pitch aimed at agents and editors for an adult fiction or nonfiction book. Or bring two copies of the first 250 words of a novel, a narrative nonfiction book, or a proposal.

Elizabeth and Michael will choose a few of these to discuss. The two winners will



Michael Larsen



Elizabeth Pomada

October Recap Surprise Panel

by Carolyn Donnell

The Postal Service creed "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds" was true at my house on Tuesday, October 13. In spite of remnants of Typhoon Melor that roared onshore early that morning, I arrived home to find mail, however soggy, in my mailbox. However, heavy rains, high winds (clocked as high as 70 mph in Los Gatos), flooded roadways, and power outages (more than 1600 households without power in the South Bay alone) did not seem to deter members from attending the monthly meeting. The brave, hardy souls who made it to the meeting found power on, food ready (including Cathy Bauer's brownies), members in costume, and camaraderie around the tables.

President Dave LaRoche welcomed everyone and proceeded to some items of business:

- Spotlight, started in September, focuses on one member's contribution each month. October's spotlight: Richard Burns, SBW's treasurer. He is responsible for the business of cash flow. Dave says he also keeps us from spending too much money.
- East of Eden needs a grant writer. Contact Dave LaRoche (dalaroche@comcast.net) if you can help out.
- Networking and critique groups: Contact Cathy Bauer at cathy@bauerstar.com.
- Open mics: Read anything, just to get used to reading before an audience.

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President's Prowling

by *Dave LaRoche*
President, South Bay Writers

Every one of our dinner meetings leaves its impression with me, and my thought from our last was the wonderful variety of writers we are: from superhero "protags" slaying underworld demons through the pages of a cross between comic book and novel to the truth of an adventuresome journey from Nazi death camp to gilded "City by the Bay." We write about grief turning to laughter; pen a funny or poignant verse; witty intersections find their way to our paper; love lost, maybe gained. We are journalists, reporters, fantasists, memoirists, novelists, short fiction writers; you name it. We split our genres like infinitives, and halve them again, often once more, and yet under one roof we are uniformly focused on the business and craft of our writing, sharing experiences while enjoying our friendships and eating the broccoli.



We are twenty to eighty-five years in age. We respect ourselves and accommodate each other when appropriate. Teacher, student, and struggling writer, we congratulate our successes, even those foreign to our personal literary bent. We offer thoughtful, creative solutions to problems from which we would not gain or suffer a farthing. Are we family?

And is it not the writing itself that brings our cohesion? It may be the kind of engagement no other approach will suit—that writers are and need to be family. I see it around: tradeshows, book expos, conventions, and the like. The atmospheres differ but the energy and exchange are the same. People who would pass on the street neglecting even a nod are, "under the tent," sharing interests, successes, and holding out a hand with a book in it.

It is a curious endeavor, writing. On the other side of all this "family," we seek a quiet place to write and *don't want to be bothered with anything*. I have a sign on my studio door: CAUTION – DO NOT ENTER. HIGH LEVELS OF MENTAL ENERGY RELEASED WITHIN. Cathy Bauer, a writing pal, rents a hotel room or takes a ride on a train, alone except for her computer. We want absolute solitude; thesaurus allowed.

And here's my theory: the isolation that seems necessary for actual composition finds its balance in clubbing and the rest; while that socializing thing, hardly creative, and sticky in time, drives us willingly back to seclusion. Umm, sounds even more like a family. WT

Leave room in your December schedule for the Annual SBW Holiday Bash.

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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.



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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; 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)

to Andrea Galvac
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Creative Works

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

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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.

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Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx
Editor

NoWriSupSys



Meredy, my wife, having recently retired, has decided to participate in National Novel Writing Month this year, which means that, according to the fine print in the contract I signed, I'll be a Novel Writing Support System during November.

I find a certain irony in the rapidity with which the NaNoWriMo approach to writing a novel caught the attention of and gained popularity with not just Americans but the entire world. A way long time ago, when I first decided that I wanted to be a writer, I

had a vague vision of, somewhere along the line, entering into a writing fugue, probably assisted by alcohol rather than caffeine, and—about a week later, I figured—coming out of it to find the Great American Novel neatly stacked to the right of my typewriter. It was all very romantic. Ernest Hemingway was my hero at the time—I was very much enamored of the American expatriate writers—and Hemingway sat in a Paris bistro, sipping Sauternes and nibbling croissants as he filled seven *cahiers* with a manuscript that he called “Fiesta” and that the world came to know as *The Sun Also Rises*. That sure sounded like a great life to me.

Then I went to college to pursue a degree in English with an emphasis on creative writing, and I learned all about plot and character and scene and setting and pacing and conflict and story arc and planning and outlining and scenarios, and I read a lot of good books and realized that my hope of mindlessly creating a novel in a week's time was something less than naïve. Delusional might have been closer to the mark.

Now we skip ahead in time some unspecified number of decades until April 2007, when Chris Baty, the founder of NaNoWriMo, was scheduled to speak at the SBW meeting. Meredy had been a member of SBW for a couple of years at that point, but I hadn't yet joined. And even though Meredy was going to be out of town at the time of that meeting, I decided I just had to go on my own. I had an inexplicable fascination with the NaNoWriMo concept, a kind of approach-avoidance conflict, drawn to it and yet fearful of it in the way that people sometimes can't look away from a horrifying scene. Given what had dispelled my delusion of writing a novel in a week, I thought that Baty must be quite mad. Write a novel in a month, indeed! I came prepared to scoff.

But I did listen, and I found that, Chris Baty's engaging personality aside, the dude had a couple of points.

The first was to squelch your inner editor. My inner editor being an excessively persnickety 800-pound gorilla, I could see the sense of it. I coupled that insight with the advice of a writer I'd heard some years in the past; namely, that, at least for your first novel, you have to just sit and dump—write whatever comes to your mind to clear your buffers so that you can then get down to serious work.

The second was that you can't edit or rewrite a blank page. To that, I can only say, “Duh.” I can't imagine why that rocket-science notion had never crossed my mind.

And I came away a believer. Chris Baty had convinced me that his approach to writing the first draft of a novel had some merit. As a matter of fact, I didn't come away just a believer: I also came away with an autographed copy of Baty's book *No Plot? No Problem!* in my hand.

So for this November, I'll cheerfully puree varied and nutritious meals and serve them to Meredy in a big glass with a straw so that she won't have to leave her desk to eat. Maybe next November I won't have any more excuses, and she can be the household NoWriSupSys. wt

Happy Anniversaries to You

by Forrest "Woody" Horn

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our first Open Mic Night for writers, sponsored by the South Bay branch of the California Writers Club and hosted by Borders Books in Los Gatos. I'm George Quentin, tonight's master of ceremonies, and we have a stellar lineup of authors for your enjoyment."

So began the premiere performance of a new program which is scheduled from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the first Friday of the month. It is held in the bookstore's espresso bar, whose latte steamer sputtered hissing critiques that produced sympathetic smiles.

That evening's program included the following ten-minute vignettes: Reed Stevens read from her *Treasure of Taos*; Carol King recited her delightful "Little Drummer Girl"; Sue Mueller delivered her humorous "You Can Survive An IRS Audit"; Marilyn Quentin read from Mark Twain's *Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses*; Carolyn Straub offered an excerpt from Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club*. And there were excerpts from George Quentin's unorthodox *How to Set Your VCR*; Becky Levine's "work in progress"; Beth Proudfoot's "mystery in progress"; Edie Matthews' "novel in progress"; Bill Baldwin's *Fall Down and The Legacy*; and Jacqueline Mutz's reading from Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*.

George ended the evening by urging attendees to mark their calendars for SBW's next Open Mic Night—Friday, December 1, 1999, at 7:30 p.m. at Borders Books in Los Gatos Old Town Center.

South Bay Writers continued those monthly Open Mic Nights at Borders Books in Los Gatos. In July of 2001, a second monthly performance (third Fridays) was added at Barnes & Noble in Campbell's Pruneyard. In October of 2006, our first Fridays were switched to the Barnes & Noble in Almaden Plaza. In May of 2007, we added the second Fridays at Borders Books in Santana Row and the fourth Fridays at Borders Books in Sunnyvale.

Initially, the purpose of SBW's open mic programs was to give our members an opportunity to read their works in public so that they would feel more experienced when they went on book tours to promote their best sellers. Besides, SBW's public exposure would be a good way to attract new members.



Woody treats an Open Mic night crowd to one of his memoirs.

The experience our members gained included learning to ignore distractions like cell phones, chatty audiences, Muzak, paging intercoms, rabid chess players, and noisy latte steamers—since our venues were often in the bookstores' coffee shops. On tour, a writer can never count on what type of sound system, if any, will be provided, although there seldom seems to be any shortage of audiophiles who were trained at rock concerts or are too vain to wear their hearing aid. The reader also learns how to speak into the mic—not down at his waist where he is holding his book—without drooling on it like a rock star.

Presentation time is usually rationed (ten-minute segments) so readers learn to practice their material at home with a watch or clock, not in front of an audience with hollow excuses like, "I only have ten pages." If their presentation is an excerpt and the stage needs to be set, that too has to fit into their allotted time. They are professionals presenting written material, not stand-ups at an improv, so ad libs like "this part is really funny" should not be interjected unless it is written into the manuscript. Usually the readers can sense how and where their audiences react to their material, so protracted discussions and critiques should be left until after all participants have had

their share of the time.

SBW is opposed to limiting free speech. However, we do expect our members to exercise prudent judgement when presenting their material in an open forum (i.e., a public bookstore) where juveniles may be present.

Over the last ten years, many of our members have benefited from SBW's open mic forums. According to my notes, we have staged nearly 250 programs, at which the number of participants and audiences often varied. Our programs included good, bad, sad, and glad presentations of all genres: poetry, children's stories, romances, mysteries, science fiction, histories, biographies, memoirs, plays, and even satirical newscasts.

I doubt if any of us ever imagined that our Open Mic Nights would celebrate their 10th anniversary in November of 2009, the same year that the California Writers Club is celebrating its 100th anniversary. Congratulations and thanks to all of you for a job well done.
WT

The Fire in Fiction: Workshop with Literary Agent Donald Maass

Saturday, January 23, 2010, 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m., Sunnyvale Sheraton Hotel

"The Fire in Fiction: Passion, Purpose and Techniques to Make Your Novel Great" is an all-day workshop in which New York literary agent Donald Maass reveals the techniques of master novelists through lively discussion and structured writing exercises on your work in progress.

Sponsored by the Silicon Valley, Sacramento Valley Rose, Black Diamond, and Monterey chapters of the Romance Writers of America.

Registration for non-RWA members begins November 1. Fee is \$150 by check, \$155 by PayPal, and includes lunch and continental breakfast. Advance registration required. Space is limited to 200 attendees.

For registration and more information, visit www.svrwa.com/meetings/future-meetings#jan10

Writecraft: Writers Write, Then Rewrite

by Lisa Eckstein

As this newsletter makes its way to you, I'm starting to write my eighth novel.

Every November since 2002, I've participated in National Novel Writing Month and begun the first draft of

a new story. Some years I finished by November 30, and other times it took me much longer to reach The End. My writing skills improve with each novel, and that's one reason I keep going back for more. But first drafts can only take me so far, because first drafts are uniformly terrible.

Okay, I'm exaggerating. Some first drafts are less terrible than others. While I've written a few so awful that I cringe just thinking about them, other early versions charm me with each humiliating sentence, and these are the novels I can't wait to start revising. I



Lisa Eckstein
Contributing Editor

love returning to a first draft to uncover the good stuff buried in the garbage, and revision is the part of the writing process that has taught me the most.

First drafts are essential—without first drafts, we'd never have subsequent drafts. Their embarrassing messiness is both crucial and unavoidable, so accept that the first attempt at any piece of writing will be flawed. This column, for example, began with a dozen sentences ending in “blah blah blah” that I knew I'd replace with articulate content later, once I'd nailed down the overall structure.

Whether you're writing an article, a story, a poem, or a corporate report, the best bits are often the ones you don't plan in advance. Avoid censoring yourself as you create. Some of my favorite scenes in my novels emerged after I pushed aside thoughts like “No, that's a horrible idea.” Embrace the unexpected and run with wild notions that pop into your head. If you can write first drafts quickly, you'll have less time to spend on second-guessing and doubt, so do whatever it takes to get a draft out.

Don't wait for inspiration. The more you write, the better you'll become, so make writing a habit. Write, and write often. Then rewrite. Revision is just as important for honing your skills, and it's imperative if you want to consider publishing. While a few writers choose to edit as they write, I advise completing a first draft before moving on to the next stage. It's much easier to approach revision when you're able to examine the work as a whole.

I'm not going to lie: Revising is tough. It's usually harder than the initial creation process, because you have to set aside that permissive first-draft attitude and get critical. Editing your writing is a lot more than fixing punctuation and checking the thesaurus for alternatives to repeated words. Those are crucial steps, for sure, but they come later, when you're a few drafts in.

To revise effectively, you have to be willing to make significant changes. In a piece the size of this column, that means rearranging sentences and shortening paragraphs. For a book-length work,

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Is Your Idea a Novel or a Short Story?

by Victoria M. Johnson



Victoria M. Johnson
Contributing Editor

You've come up with a brilliant idea. How do you decide whether the idea is suitable for a novel or a short story? While sometimes you just instinctively know, other times you may be stumped. Let me

offer a few points to consider that may save you days, weeks, or months of writing only to discover that you're heading in an unpromising direction.

There are two other reasons to identify your project's structure early. First, if you've experienced writer's block with a story that initially had high promise, it's possible that your case of writer's block stems from not choosing the best format. Second, it's also possible that comments from editors' rejection letters such as “not enough conflict” or “pac-

ing too slow” may be signs that you're telling too little story for a long form, and comments such as “too many characters to keep track of” or “plot too confusing” may indicate that you're telling too much story for a short form.

There are a few essential elements that both short stories and novels have in common: a compelling premise, a compelling character with a compelling goal, and compelling conflict. They both have a beginning, middle, and end. Did I mention compelling?

What is a short story?

In short stories everything is condensed. There's no time for subplots, and there's a limited number of characters. Short stories capture a significant moment in time—often a snippet of time in the character's life.

What is a novel?

Obviously novels are longer. What fills these extra pages? More characters, more complex plots, and a longer time span.

How to decide

Start with your end in mind. That is, what

does your character have to overcome to achieve his goal? If that path can be shown to the reader in a compelling way without too many characters, without a subplot, and without a lot of layers of revelation, perhaps you have a short story. If your character has to undergo much trial and tribulation to achieve his growth and change; if his actions affect many others and the reader needs to see those other characters and the impact on them; if subplots add more significance to the goal, theme, or resolution, then perhaps you have a novel.

Theme

What do you want to say with your piece? Whatever message you hope your reader gets, ask yourself if you can convey that message with the form you've selected. Of course, you never want to hit readers over the head with the moral of your story; rather, you want all the elements of the story to lead the reader to that “hidden” message. Michael Crichton's novel *Next*

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New Members

by Jackie Mutz

It has been a while since the new member column has appeared. Adding “new writing blood” is essential to keep South Bay Writers interesting and fun. Below are introductions to four of our new members.

Leslie Hoffman began writing in the early 1960s while working after school and summers at *The Saratoga News*. Leslie now works as a writer and independent copy editor, dividing her time between San Jose and Las Vegas. Her poems, short stories, and articles have been published in magazines, anthologies, newspapers, and on the Web. A former partner in PenHouseInk Guild in Guerneville, California, she is currently a member of the Henderson Writer’s Group, which sponsors the annual Las Vegas Writers’ Conference, editor of the Patchwork Path series, and cofounder of Laudably Tarnished, a poetry workshop that meets monthly in Las Vegas. Her landscape photos are sold via her line of note cards and as matted enlargements—her “Hacienda

Bridge” photo was featured on *Oprah* in 2002. Contact Leslie at lesliehoffman@hotmail.com and view her blog at lesliehoffman.blogspot.com.

Nina Amir is a nonfiction writer whose focus is on the human potential, personal growth, and practical spiritual tools from a Jewish perspective that appeals to all faiths and spiritual backgrounds. Several books on related topics are in the works. She is also a professional magazine journalist writing for a grocery industry trade journal. A self-published booklet, *Using the Internet to Build Your Platform One Article at a Time*, is available. And in response to NaNoWriMo, she founded Write Nonfiction in November (writtenonfictionin november.wordpress.com). A lover of horses, she enjoys riding, gardening, and theatre, especially dance. As she puts it, she is “into anything woo woo, spiritual or metaphysical.” Check out her websites copywrightcommunications.com and purespiritcreations.com to learn more about Nina.

Jana Barkley, a fiction writer, is currently working on a sequel to her first

novel, *The Apprentice*, writing that reflects her chief passion: the ancient sport of falconry. Director and Education Committee Chair for the California Hawking Club and board member of the California Foundation for Birds of Prey, she is also an educator for the West Coast Falconry Academy in Marysville, CA, where future falconry apprentices learn how to work with raptors. She was also featured with her fellow instructors on the Discovery Channel’s *Wreckreation Nation* in 2009. When not writing or educating the public about falconry, she can be found in the field flying her Harris hawk, Seabag, and her hybrid falcon, Kali. Contact Jana at EalasSong@aol.com to find out more about her interesting work.

Dennis Amoroso is a journalist and novelist whose most recent book falls under the science fiction/romance genre, “written as true human science fiction without fantasy.” He describes his background as that of “a cowboy with some military and auto mechanic

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Member Spotlight

by Dave LaRoche

Occasionally, the urge to celebrate worthy contribution is so overwhelming we must simply do something about it. It seems a human thing, recognition and reward. Glistening gold medals, year-end bonuses, paid trips to Hawaii and tons more find their way into our rituals of communion.

Well, we at SBW, while no less appreciative of good deed and somewhat limited on the reward side of things, are blessed with the ability to communicate, and here we will do that. In addition to spotlighting these outstanding efforts of worthy individuals in meetings, and on the SBW blog, we will present here, for your pleasure in seeing social balance, a similar rendition. This will be an “occasional” article and begin with:

Dick Amyx

It becomes apparent, when every time an award opportunity arrives and Dick’s name rises quickly to the surface, that we think quite a bit of his service to our club. He is our newsletter’s manag-

ing editor, supervising a team and doing all of the niggling composition. Our newsletter sings for itself, with broad register, rhythmically, and on key.

Dick also spearheaded our first anthology, a centennial book, now “on the shelves,” that we take great pride in. Under his leadership, the branch acted as publisher, and today we have a book easily a credit to any of the major trade publishing outfits. He is also our informal kibitzer, not an officially recognized role, but ultra-important just the same. Whenever we want to do something foolish, he points out the twelve steps.

Dick was spotlighted during our September 2009 meeting and recognized by the club as one of our most valuable and cherished members.

Marjorie Johnson

Marjorie is pure nitroglycerin. Diminutive, inconspicuous, and quiet, with a work wallop that would put Microsoft to shame—and, by the way, don’t jiggle the jar. First, she does our membership stuff, enough for a large team. She

accounts to the state and to us for every change in status, every new and dropped, every address, telephone, and email change for every member—about 200 this year. She promotes, cajoles, and intimidates all guests with the notion of joining, and by the number on her roll, one might say she does well.

Marjorie is also our conference treasurer. It’s a big business, running a business, and that’s exactly what a writers’ conference is. Marjorie collects and disburses and accounts for every dime involved. She encourages high-value expenses, eschewing all others, likes receipts of all character, and keeps an eye on the efficacy of every transaction.

Marjorie, also the author of recently published novel *Bird Watcher* and, over the years many short stories, was spotlighted during our September 2009 meeting.

Richard Burns

Rich is a mainstay for our board (mainstay, *n*: a line extending from the main

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So You Want to Blog, Eh?

by *Bill Belew*

So, you want to blog. Or maybe you are already one of the 16% (according to Technorati) of Californians who already have a blog and you just want to get read more, have more visitors, and have folk turn more pages once they get to your site.



Bill Belew
Contributing Editor

Starting a blog, like many endeavors, is pretty easy. It's keeping it going that's hard. Getting the blog read is even harder. This article deals with how to start a blog from scratch. Other aspects of blogging will be covered in future articles.

Here are four ways to get started.

1. Go to blogger.com and click the Create a Blog button, then follow the directions. My two cents: a blog created at blogger.com is obvious to the visitor and doesn't really get a lot of respect. I may be wrong. Mashable.com (mashable.com/2007/08/06/free-blog-hosts/) lists more than forty free blog hosts. It's a bit old but will give you options.
2. Go to Godaddy.com or other similar service that offers domains and hosting and fiddle with choices till you come up with the domain name you'd like for your blog. How do you choose a name for your domain? I own billbelew.com, panasianbiz.com, and filmyfair.com—so how about your name? How about the name of your book? How about something related to what your book is about? Keep it simple, easy to remember. I use Surpass Hosting for my large sites and Godaddy for my smaller ones. Laughing Squid is good, I hear, as is Total Choice Hosting. Once you get your domain and hosting at a hosting service such as Godaddy.com, call their service department (believe it or not, the Godaddy folks do answer the phone) and tell them you want to install WordPress (it's free) on your

site. They will send you the directions. It may sound intimidating, but it is not. The Godaddy folks (I am feeling like a salesman) are easy to work with and will often stay on the phone and walk you through the process. There are other blogging software choices (Moveable Type for example), but I'd go with WordPress. One reason is that the creator of WordPress lives in San Francisco. They have WordCamps where WordPress users get together and solve all the problems of the WordPress universe. Seriously, WordPress is the most blogger-friendly platform there is, and when I went to WordCamp last year I got some hard questions answered.

3. Try to get yourself accepted into a blog network. If you're accepted, the network will do all the work for you in setting up your blog, pay you a little, and take a lot *if* your site becomes successful, but the site they create will belong to them. A good place to start for this option is Problogger (jobs.problogger.net); another place that is hiring is examiner.com (examiner.com/about_examiner). If you try Examiner, let me know because I can refer you with my secret Examiner number. What that means is that if they hire you, I'll get \$50.00 (we can go out to eat to celebrate if you like). More importantly, I have a bit of mojo with the company and my recommendation might help you get to the top of the applicant pile. It has helped before. Or you can also do a search for blogging jobs and wade through the options.
4. Call me and say, "Bill, I want to start blogging." And I will help. I can do a little bit for nothing, but I can't do a lot. And if a lot of folks call and each asks me to do a little, then a little becomes a lot. If your idea for your blog is good, we will consider including it in our network. Being in a network is a good thing. One big reason, but definitely not the only one, is that being in a network means other sites will be linked to your site and your site to theirs from the get-go. The search engines see links to a site as a credibility factor for your site, and in the end they

Accolades

by *Jackie Mutz*

I missed the annual October Literary Costume Contest where members can dress up as their favorite literary figures. Listening to the audio of the meeting it seems it was a hilarious evening considering all the laughter. Here is what I could decipher amid giggles galore:

- Somewhere in the conversation, blogger **Bill Belew** noted he is writing a novel about cricket and gets thousands of hits a day because people are interested in the sport. Bill is using his blog to build interest in his novel before it's published.

- **Richard Burns** is currently working on a novel about Native Americans



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

set in Nevada during the 1950s. As mentioned in last month's column, he did a poetry reading October 6 and received not only a good turnout but great applause as well. *WT* contributing

editor Carolyn Donnell was there to lend her support and take pictures as well.

- **Howard Burman's** latest novel, *Gentlemen at the Bat: A Fictional Oral History of the New York Knickerbockers and the Early Days of Base Ball*, published by McFarland Publishers, is due out this winter.
- The launch of **Martha Engber's** novel *The Wind Thief* on October 24 was a great success. Congrats again to Martha on the publication of her new book.
- **Jack Hasling's** little book of verse *Footprints 'n My Tongue* is now in its second printing. A second book (*I've Thought Every Thought I Can Think*) is scheduled for release in November.
- **Katherine Bolger Hyde** announced that her first book, a children's picture book titled *Lucia, Saint of Light* has just been released by Conciliar Press. St. Lucia, an early martyr from Sicily, became the unofficial patron saint of Sweden and is celebrated very colorfully there

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A Ray of Light in Morgan Hill

by Carolyn Donnell

In a time when many independent bookstores are in trouble or even closing their doors, there is still at least one ray of light to be found. Go south from San Jose via 101 or Monterey Road and wind your way over to East Second Street in Historic Downtown Morgan Hill, California.



Carolyn Donnell
Contributing Editor

BookSmart bookstore looks a little like an upscale country store, selling art supplies and quality toys as well as books. Inside, ceiling fans cool customers and shelves on a warm day. To the right immediately on entering is a cafe where sandwiches, espresso drinks, and ice cream can be ordered; a fireplace resides against the front wall for the not-so-warm days.

BookSmart provides a venue for book clubs and other activities, including one led by SBW member Beth Wyman. The writers' group meets every other Friday morning at 10:30, with participants able to share their work over yummy scones and a cup of coffee or tea. (I can attest to the yummy part.)

There is also a children's area in the back. The second Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. is Story Time with Miss Susan. Susan reads stories and weaves magical tales. The children receive cookies or ice cream cones afterward. BookSmart book club meets on the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. in the BookSmart café (more beverages and snacks). Book and CD release parties are encouraged, a BookSmart Art club and a regular Toastmasters' meeting round out the many activities. Check the BookSmart Calendar at myBookSmart.com (under Events Schedule).

If you are wondering why snacks are mentioned so often in reference to a bookstore, owners Brad Jones and Cinda Meister, a married couple, started their life in Morgan Hill two decades ago as restaurant owners and caterers. They took over the original bookstore on Monterey Road at West

Second Street in 1994. They moved to their present location several years later and decided to combine some of their restaurant skills with their new venture.

BookSmart provides book fairs to local schools and a Summer Book Club for kids ages 8 to 14. "It was really fun because the kids chose the books," said Jones. The two owners credit much of their success to these and other activities in their community. They have received Morgan Hill's Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Showcase Award and will be the next recipient of the NCIBA Debi Echlin Memorial Award for Outstanding Community Bookstore.

Some online reviews from happy customers include:



For the lover of independent bookstores, a ray of light in Morgan Hill. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

- "What a great neighborhood bookstore! . . . anything they don't have they can order. I usually can get any book I'm looking for in 3 days or less."
- "My son loves the toy area in the back of the store. I would rather shop here than drive all the way to Toys-R-Us in San Jose. I appreciate that most of the toys are educational and of good quality."
- "The staff is always friendly and the owners really care about the customers."
- "BookSmart is a hidden treasure in Morgan Hill."
- "Great place for browsing and serious shopping—and wonderful staff always on hand to help out."
- "The best bookstore ever! I won't shop online anymore."

And if one independent bookstore isn't enough, BookSmart's owners hope to be expanding to Gilroy next January.

Garlic City Bookshop will open at the corner of Monterey and Martin streets in the heart of downtown and stock about seventy-five percent recycled books. Like BookSmart, Garlic City Bookshop will also carry toys and provide personalized book orders—and include a coffee and ice cream bar. And to make things even more interesting, this store will contain some of the fixtures from the recently closed Willow Glen Bookstore. Talk about recycling.

BookSmart is located at 80 East Second Street in Historic Downtown Morgan Hill, CA 95037 and is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Call 408-778-6467 or visit the website at mybooksmart.com

Check out the newsletter link for current events. To sign up to receive the newsletter, send Brad an email at brad@mybooksmart.com. WT

South Bay NaNoWriMo Write-ins

For all you SBW WriMo entrants who might want some support or company—the full list of write-ins is here:

nanowrimo.org/eng/node/168

New Members Continued from page 6

thrown in," learning his writing skills teaching fighter jet weapons systems in the USAF. He also writes about the economic history of California, centering on gold refinery and mine waste industries, topics he would like to discuss with other writers. He would like to be involved in a critique group and may read excerpts of his novel at an open mic in the future. Contact Dennis at dennis.amaroso@gmail.com.

So there you have it for this month. From time to time, you will see short new member information pieces and longer feature profiles of members as well. Welcome, all new members. Please take a few minutes and respond to the questionnaire emailed to you after joining the SBW group. It's a nice way to get to know one another. WT



Absolutely everybody in costume, from Woody on the left to Rich Burns on the right, with apologies to Edie, who got caught in the middle.

With a Twist and a Hey Diddle Diddle

by Carolyn Donnell

Bill Baldwin moderated the annual Literary Costume Contest in a tie-died tee-shirt and similarly adorned canvas hat. He stated he was Neal Cassady, the icon of the Beat Generation of the 1950s and the psychedelic movement of the 1960s, the Holy Goof, Cowboy Neal at the wheel of the bus “Furthur” (on the road to Nevereverland). Or was Bill supposed to be Tom Wolfe, for his book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, written about The Merry Pranksters and that psychedelically painted bus?

The long line of characters represented a varied range of impersonations and impressions. I found it too difficult to single out just a couple of examples. You wouldn’t want to miss Woody Horn, dressed in faded Levis and a suede vest, holding up a can of Boraxo. “This is a clue,” he said, and asked who had heard of 20 Mule Team Borax. A member of the audience said, “Everyone in this room has.” And then there was David Breithaupt saying he was obviously Jack London in Alaska. He claimed there was a photo just like it on Jack London’s website. (I couldn’t find it. I went to jacklondon.com, jacklondon.org, jacklondons.net and other sites and googled pages of images.) Luanne Oleas, dressed as Mother Goose, commented that you have to love a character who made a living with words like “Hey, diddle, diddle.” Groans came next as Pat Bustamante held up an olive and a lemon twist: Olive or Twist. “Puns are the lowest form of humor,” came from a member of the audience.

Not to be forgotten was Suzy Paluzzi, who portrayed Guinevere, consort of

King Arthur, lamenting that she was the cause of all the Round Table problems because of her unfaithfulness with Sir Gawain. No. Wait. That was Sir Lancelot. And I can’t leave out Steve Wetlesen, with aluminum foil on his head, claiming to be a Truther, a person who believes the US government committed 9/11. Steve says it was Elvis.

Great lines came from Edie Matthews, who depicted Scheherazade, a woman who never suffered from writer’s block. One thousand and one tales, three years and three kids later, she must have declared, “Enough! I’m marrying you.”

Loureen Giordano stepped forward in a meter maid uniform, a Poetic Meter

Maid she said, from the Department of Poetic Justice, specializing in rhyme crimes and verse violators. Where does she think up these ideas? Last year she was little Red Riding Hood, but not the sweet little girl we remember from the fairy tale.

Two authors came as characters from their own books: Gisela Zebrowski as the baroness from her book of the same name and Marjorie Johnson as the pilot from *Bird Watcher*, who was mad as hell because someone stole her airplane and the FBI wouldn’t do anything about it.

A pair of characters from *Through The*

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Funniest: Suzette Gamero and Lisa Eckstein, the Walrus and the Carpenter (Suzette’s the Carpenter). **Most creative:** tie between Luanne Oleas, Mother Goose, and Edie Matthews, Scheherazade. **Cleverest:** Loureen Giordano, Meter Maid for Poetic Justice. **Scariest:** Richard Burns, the Werewolf.

View from the Board

by Loureen Giordano

Board members Dave LaRoche, Richard Burns, Marjorie Johnson, Bill Baldwin, Loureen Giordano, and Jamie Miller met on October 7.

Moved Burns, seconded Johnson to accept the minutes of the September meeting; passed unanimously.

President Dave LaRoche announced that the Jack London Conference slated for October had been canceled for financial reasons.

The news is much better for the upcoming SBW East of Eden Conference, Dave reported. The budget was almost complete as of October 6. The committee has now developed a policy for paying the presenters. He'll offer a more comprehensive report in the next month or so.

Dave has decided to continue the new practice of spotlighting a member at monthly meetings.

VP Bill Baldwin reported that he has rescheduled Gerard Jones for January and confirmed that a panel composed of five SBW members, moderated by Martha Engber, would address the ins and outs of getting published at the October meeting. Agents Michael Larsen and Elizabeth Pomada will speak in November, and the Christmas party will replace the general meeting for December.

Secretary Loureen Giordano has agreed to carry on with "View from the Board."

Treasurer Richard Burns reported that September's attendance at 65 was up among record levels, but we had fewer guests (10) that month. The club's current balance is \$23,700, with CWC state dues paid a few days prior.

Central Board News

Our Central Board rep Dave LaRoche updated with the following:

- The reorganization effort is churning along. There will be two meetings a year in the future. Dues will go down, and voting will be based on membership numbers. They are working on designing fewer and less defined membership categories, as opposed to the current seven or eight. Right now members cannot vote unless they have active status.

- Unlimited Publishing, which co-published with the Redwood branch, would like to work with SBW. UP would underwrite a year's membership in IPBA, the Independent Book Publishers Association, if we supply a representative. Dave is seeking someone who has published a book who would like to represent us. He or she would attend meetings (sometimes out of state) and bring back new ideas from the publishing world to the club. This would help us continue our own imprint more effectively.

Standing Committees

Membership—Marjorie Johnson's current roll indicates that we have 180 members and 9 dual members who have their main membership in another branch. Jamie mentioned that one advantage of dual membership is the freedom to submit to *WritersTalk*.

Publicity and PR—Edie reported by email that a press release for the October 9 meeting went out to 42 recipients on October 2.

Open Mic—Bill said five open mic events took place since the September meeting, with a total of 45 readings. Fewer of these take place around the holidays. They have moved out of the cafe of the Almaden Barnes & Noble and into the store itself. Now they have the use of chairs and a podium in a much quieter atmosphere.

Networking and Hospitality—Dave explained that Networking covers networking, education, and reading groups. Networking Chair Cathy Bauer has held a meeting of those interested in critique groups. Bill Belew is forming another one.

Special Committees

Anthology—A meeting is in the works to discuss sales strategies.

Young Writers—Jamie reported that he's thinking about next year already and is planning on an earlier time, perhaps April or early May, to avoid finals time. He'll contact those who participated before to start generating interest in the 2010 event.

East of Eden—According to Dave, the plans are moving along very well. It looks like we'll need 150 attending to break even.

Learning Center—Richard Burns has agreed to facilitate the DVD and discussion meetings based on Prof. Brooks Landon's lectures on sentences. The first of these free sessions is October 22.

New Business

Moved Burns, seconded Baldwin to set aside \$300 for the IBPA representative; motion carried.

Improving the Branch

Dave invites all members to drop suggestions regarding the monthly meeting into the basket on the table near the podium.

The meeting adjourned at 9:07. Next meeting November 4. WT

Nov. Novel

No denying that "novel" means new. How to invent A brand-new event? The "U" in Unique gives a clue!

—Pat Bustamante

Blogging

Continued from page 7

make your site more findable. If your blog were to become part of my network, I would *not* own the content or the domain name. Those belong to you. That's very different from #3. Email is the best way to reach me—wcbelow@gmail.com.

Once you find your platform, be it a freebie like blogger.com or wordpress.com, or set it up yourself, or become part of a network, or pay someone else to do it for you, you will end up with a login name and password that get you to your blogging software. This is where you write your blog. The software looks much like a glorified email program except that once you have written what you like and want people to read, instead of clicking send, you click publish. Then you go to your website and you see your work on the web. Cool, eh?

Keep in mind that at this point all you have is a blog name, a host, and software for publishing your work. The blog won't look like much, meaning the appearance will be quite basic, but those things can be changed and improved to taste. That, however, is beyond the scope of this article. WT

Writecraft

Continued from page 5

you might reorder passages and remove entire chapters, characters, or storylines. You can't stay too attached to anything because you need to judge objectively whether it's worth keeping.

I had one bloated novel first draft that I trimmed to less than half its size in revision. No, I didn't delete every other word. I reconsidered each scene, devised an improved version of the story, and edited accordingly. I took out events and wrote new ones, added back stories and character traits, condensed, combined, and cut all the boring and repetitive parts. And then I went through the whole process again. After two years, I had a manuscript that I could show to agents, but I know the novel will still require more revising before it ever gets published.

When tackling your own rewrites, start with the big picture. Ask yourself if the work has achieved what you intended or if it falls short of telling the story or conveying the information. Question your choices. Identify the parts you like most and least, and think about how they differ. How can you make the rest of the text more like your favorite sections? What did you want to delete even as you wrote it? Can you anticipate what your critique partner is going to tell you to change?

Whether you show your first drafts to anyone is up to you, but at some stage of revision, share your work with people you can trust to give you thoughtful feedback. A critique group or writer friend can evaluate your manuscript from a distance you don't have. Comments from others help you fix the piece under review and also point to problem areas to be aware of when revising future work. Use all the tools at your disposal to learn how to be your own best editor.

A few other resources you can turn to:

- At edittorrent.blogspot.com, two editors discuss the many different issues of style and storytelling worth considering as you rewrite.
- Author Jennifer R. Hubbard shares revision experiences and tips on her blog: writerjenn.livejournal.com/tag/revisions

- *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers* by Renni Browne and Dave King covers techniques for getting critical about your manuscript, complete with examples and exercises. WT

Suspect all your favorite sentences.

—Kenneth Atchity

Novel or Short Story

Continued from page 5

tells a riveting tale that leads readers to his theme of the real-world catastrophic mess concerning gene patents. The novel is as fascinating and fast-paced as any of his books, and I was convinced by the end of it that gene patent procedures in this country needed a drastic overhaul. I don't believe he could have conveyed this theme so convincingly in a short story.

On the other hand, Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain" uses a relationship between two gay men in a time and place where homosexuality is unacceptable to draw the reader in. Proulx skillfully provides insight into a theme of intolerance with strong characters and gripping conflict all in about 15,000 words.

Conflict

Does your idea have enough conflict to sustain a novel? If it doesn't, you have a short story. Going back to comments from editors about the lack of conflict, don't try to add conflict with arguments and petty bickering. Editors can spot weak conflict a mile away. Successful novelists prolong conflict throughout their books by altering, twisting, and elevating it. Static conflict causes all sorts of problems (which is an article by itself). No matter what length your project becomes, when the conflict's resolved, the story is over. Tie up all the loose ends and finish it.

Once you decide where you want to take your idea, dive in. Whether your project ends up as a short story or as a novel, make it compelling. Say what you want to say with confidence, and have fun. Enjoy the burst of creativity a new idea brings. WT

Accolades

Continued from page 7

(and by Americans of Scandinavian descent) on December 13. The book is available at conciliarpress.com.

- **Victoria Johnson** has been busy the past few months and currently has six projects out under consideration. That's two short stories, two fiction proposals, one nonfiction proposal, and two grant requests. Oops, that's seven. And since the last SBW meeting she has had one more request for a partial. Is busy the right word?
- **Donna Fujimoto's** short fiction piece "Halcyon Hypocrisy" was published in the October 2009 issue of the science fiction journal *Beyond Centauri*.
- **Edie Matthews** mentioned someone sent her a trailer—not for a movie, but for a book. A new way to market your book? Something to think about.

And finally, someone (she did not give her name) told her friend she was going to participate in NaNoWriMo next month. To which her friend asked if that is where you write teeny tiny poetry. Keep your humor as you write and remember this and smile the next time you sit down and type in teeny tiny letters. Writers really are funny people. South Bay Writers has proven that.

Oh, and don't forget to email us your writing success stories at accolades@southbaywriters.com. We are waiting to hear from you. WT

Morning Fog

The early morning fog nestles itself
In a most selective way
Lighting first upon a leaf—then twig—
Then in quiet, gulps all that stands
before it.
With its moistness tipping every edge,
It finds—it rests—standing
motionless—
Refreshing its energy.
When renewed, it joins with wisps,
And drifts, and clouds, then mountains
To hide its final tricks from view.
And slowly—as planned—
Returns toward its invisible destiny.

—Walter Symons

Panel

Continued from page 1

- Learning center: SBW procured a projector, and Richard Burns has a set of DVDs, “Exploring the Writer’s Craft: Building Great Sentences.” Free viewings begin on Oct. 22 and continue on 2nd and 4th Thursdays, with breaks for Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and possibly New Years Eve at Westmont Retirement Center on Scott near El Camino in Santa Clara. Contact Richard at 408-986-8710 or Richard5599@att.net.
- Reminder: The carpool needs drivers, too. Drop a note to rideshare@southbaywriters.com to volunteer.

After the break, Suzy Paluzzi hosted the roving mic, introducing guests and new members, successes and announcements, and interviewing members at a chosen table where writers were asked to briefly talk about their writing. Since Dave has given up his joke openings, one of the guests provided the joke of the evening. “When talking about the upcoming NaNoWriMo event in November, a friend of mine said, ‘Nano Rhymo? What’s that? Teeny, tiny poetry?’”

The Literary Costume Contest took place after the second break.

The evening ended with a member



Martha Engber

panel that discussed the topic “What to Know About Getting Published.” The originally scheduled speaker canceled, and the group decided to experiment and assemble a group of published members. Bill Baldwin introduced moderator Martha Engber, who in turn introduced the other panelists.

Martha Engber is the author of *Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up: A Thorough Primer for Writers of Fiction and Nonfiction* and a new novel, *The Wind Thief*, available from Alondra Press. She is also a professional book editor, presenter, and workshop facilitator.

Bill Belew holds a PhD in Education and an MFA with an emphasis in



Bill Belew

creative nonfiction, is a professional blogger with more than fourteen million page views, and the author of *Gee, I Wish I Had Been Drinking At The Time (101 Real Reasons Why You Never Hear Those Words)*. He owns the CosmoFair Blog Network (cosmofair.com) and writes on PanAsianBiz and RisingSunOfNihon for the b5Media network.

Howard Burman has had more than thirty plays produced. His latest novel, *Gentlemen at the Bat: A Fictional Oral*

History of the New York Knickerbockers and the Early Days of Base Ball, published by McFarland Publishers, is due out this winter. He was Artistic Producing Director of Cameo Entertainments, the Hilberry Theater, and California Repertory Company, which he co-founded.



Howard Burman

Jana McBurney-Lin is the author of *My Half of the Sky*, published in 2006 by Komenar Publishing. Jana wrote for KQED on NPR, *The Japan Times*, and many other outlets during her fifteen years overseas. A past president of CWC SF/Peninsula branch, she has critiqued and judged manuscripts for Kids Camp as well as several Jack London Conference writing contests.

Jack Hasling taught at Foothill College for twenty-five years and wrote three



Jack Hasling

Photo: Carolyn Donnell

textbooks on speech communication. Novels include *Hillview*, about college life in the 1960s, and *Welcome to the Dunes*, a mystery set at a writers’ conference. *Footprints on My Tongue* was written, as Jack says, “For the many times I’ve had my foot in my mouth.” Grandpa Jack is also the author of *Little Rock and Other Stories*.

Betty Auchard, a former art teacher turned full-time writer and speaker, wrote *Dancing in My Nightgown* and articles for *Chocolate for a Woman’s Soul* and *San Jose Mercury News*.

Martha passed the first question to the panelists: How were you published (self-published, small publisher, or large), who is your publisher, and how was the experience?

Bill Belew went with a small publisher. He had to do most of the work, but said it was a lot of fun and a good experience. His son, who used to be an animation artist in Japan, did the illustrations, including the cover—a picture of his other son sitting and reading. That’s all I am going to tell you. See it for yourself at Amazon.com.

Howard uses both traditional and self-publishers. Traditional publishers use the C-word (“cuts”) too much for his liking. They are commercially oriented. Length matters, Howard advises. You must keep your book within the publisher’s requirements.

Jana went with a small independent house, Komenar Publishing. She said it was like a marriage—both good and bad.

Jack Hasling said that publishing is a mixed bag. His public speaking textbook, published by McGraw Hill, is being translated into Chinese, something he couldn’t have done himself. His advice: filling a niche is the key to getting published.

Bill Baldwin channeled Betty (read from her notes, actually, Betty having stayed at home because of the weather). Her publisher, Stevens Press (who may be at EoE 2010), charged her for the first edition. They paid for everything else after that (the collaborative method). Betty’s advice: Tell how your book is different. Independent publishers don’t work with agents. You don’t need a full proposal for nonfiction; a query proposal is sufficient. A good editor is essential.

Martha’s book is published with Alondra Press in Houston, a two-year-old company specializing in interna-



Jana McBurney-Lin
Photo: Carolyn Donnell

tional markets and social networking sites. She has learned a lot about the publishing industry.

Question two: What is the one thing you never dreamed you'd have to do to get published?

Jana didn't think she would need an editor because she had been one for so long. But when she had someone in the SF/Peninsula branch look at her novel, he said she needed one and took her to Charlotte Cook. Jana says Charlotte was able to see the arc of the story and the character, what was missing, which sentences should go where and other items that Jana, as a nonfiction writer, was not aware of.

Jack spoke to the editor issue as well. Never try to be your own editor. Don't rely on yourself or a print-on-demand (POD) service to edit. Hire an editor yourself. Or marry one, as he did.

Martha pointed out the difference between a content editor and a copyeditor—the latter checks the commas, punctuation, spelling, and other grammatical details.

The audience was interested in how the panelists found an editor. Jana asked her agent. Or you can write to favorite authors and ask, "Who's your editor or do you edit?" Martha suggested authors who are also editors or workshop facilitators. From the audience came the word "conferences." At the last EoE conference, editors passed out cards offering their services.

Several websites were recommended. Goodreads.com has author pages and services listed. You can get your own author page there. Book Place (morganmandelbooks.ning.com) was also mentioned, along with Bay Area Editors' Forum (editorsforum.org). Bill Belew found a good editor through Authors Guild (authorsguild.org).

The panelists all agreed you need to match the editor to your style and work with someone who knows what you are writing about. Martha suggested interviewing the person. See how you feel. Bill Belew looks for authors writing similar things. Or you could ask an editor to critique a chapter in order to see what they do. Editing can be an expensive item and you want to be careful that you get the right one for your project.

Howard talked about agents, and how *not* to get one. The query letter is critical, so avoid cutesy pastel missives or lots of adjectives describing how wonderful your book is. Write a one-page letter with three paragraphs: 1. Hook, 2. Description, 3. About you. Do your homework, including looking in the *Writer's Market* (writersmarket.com). Target agents with connections to publishers who publish what you write.

Martha recommended at least five to ten hours of research. More homework means you're more likely to get good agent. If you have sent fifteen or more queries with no bites, then go back and look at the material or at least the query letter. A good query example can be found in the back of Martha's book.

Question three: What must you understand about the business of publishing before you publish?

Martha: Learn about marketing and promotion now! Learn legalities. Involve yourself to the *n*th degree to sell your book. Don't leave the task to someone else.

Bill Belew blogs to sell his books and ideas. He doesn't have to go the begging route. He gets 70% this way. But you need a good blogger or website manager. Bill can show you how or will help you do it—not for free, though.

Howard: You have to promote yourself, with publishers or on your own.

Jana: Become aware of business and law, especially if you don't have an agent. Jana trusts her gut, but has learned to be careful with contracts. You wear all the hats, not just one.

California Lawyers for the Arts (calawyersforthearts.org) was recommended. They provide volunteers to help look over contracts and charge \$35 for a 30-minute consultation. Call (415) 775-7200 Ext. 107 in Northern California for more information.

Another piece of advice was that POD or small independent publishers must allow returns in order to get a book into a bookstore.

The discussion ended with someone saying that the traditional route took too long and was only for the young. "If you're 81, you don't have that kind of time," Jack Hasling quipped. Another member spoke up with, "Make that the

young at heart." So go forth and blog, Twitter (or is that tweet?), and publish, publish, publish. wt

Larsen and Pomada

Continued from page 1

receive one of Michael's books: *How to Write a Book Proposal*, *How to Get a Literary Agent*, or *Guerrilla Marketing for Writers: 100 Weapons for Selling Your Work*.

Everyone who brings a contribution wins because they will learn how to make it stronger. And Michael can give you feedback after the talk.

Elizabeth and Michael are looking forward to meeting you, answering your questions, and having fun. wt

WANTED

Contributing Editor for *WritersTalk*

Lend your journalistic hand to the creation and production of *WritersTalk*.

As a contributing editor, you'll have the opportunity to write articles on topics of interest to you, report on activities within the writing community, take on occasional writing assignments, proofread or edit copy, hone your writing skills, AND enjoy a monthly powwow with the *WritersTalk* staff.

If you're interested, drop a note to

newsletter@
southbaywriters.com

Directory of Experts

Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? Send a message to networking@southbaywriters.com or to the club post office box and we will add your listing to our directory of experts.

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Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

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Member Spotlight

Continued from page 6

mast, supporting it and holding it in place). Of course, we know that without the mast in place, we can never “sail on.” Rich is also our treasurer. For some reason, nonprofits need to report to the state on a quarterly basis, and Rich is our reporter. Every quarter, he collects our transactions, sums the flows, notes their effect on our balances, and reports all to the Central Board in a form that seems non-universal. Richard also attends every meeting and workshop, where he collects and manages fees, pays providers, and keeps us all financially balanced. Rich is into his second year with this challenging job and is greatly appreciated.

We started a Learning Center recently where members may listen to lectures about writing and discuss what they know and have heard. Richard set this up and is currently facilitating lectures about building “great sentences.”

Richard is a poet, occasionally reading at several open mic events in San Jose, and a novelist with his first book in the wings. We want him to continue and hope he takes care of himself. He was spotlighted during our October 2009 meeting. WT

With a Twist

Continued from page 9

Looking Glass—The Walrus and the Carpenter—complete with oysters and a broom (for sweeping away the sand, they claimed) entertained us next. The Green Lantern (aka David Strom) arrived without a mask. But he made up for that deficiency with a power ring and a full recitation of the oath.

Realistic looking Zelda Fitzgerald, with her husband F. Scott, complained that he stole her material after the asylum where he had her committed burned down. F. Scott admitted she was his inspiration. The Bird Woman of Alcatraz followed the duo. The birds on her head weren't canaries, but they were half price at Michael's. What are you going to do? She introduced her boyfriend, the Werewolf (Rich Burns), who growled and groaned, but finally admitted that he was just a fool who wandered into a CVS pharmacy and found the cheap mask.

Che Guevara (the tee-shirt came from Cuba), the Indian maid from “A Maid Servant's Story”—a selection from Chitra Divakaruni's book *Arranged Marriage*—and a *Star Trek* communications officer completed the entourage. Now you tell me. Who would you have left out?

The panel (Bill Belew, Howard Burman, Martha Engber, and Jana McBurney-Lin, except for Jack Hasling, who was in the contest), took a while to judge the contest, agreeing that the choices were many and the categories (too) few. As it is, some of the winners will have to wait for a certificate unless they want to halve one or share it. WT

Revise and revise and
revise—the best thought
will come after the printer
has snatched away the
copy.

—Michael Morahan

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 7P Board Meeting LaRoche residence	5	6 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	7
8	9	10 6P Monthly Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn, Sunnyvale Larsen & Pomada	11	12	13 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	14 11A Editors' Powwow
15 <i>WritersTalk</i> deadline	16	17	18	19	20 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	28
29	30	<h1>November 2009</h1>				
		December 8 6P Annual Holiday Party				Future Flashes

Stay Informed!

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

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

Check out the new
South Bay Writers
Blog
southbaywriters.com
Click SBW Journal—Blog

SBW Poets

Poetry Center San Jose is turning its eyes toward SBW with an interest in showcasing our poets at its monthly readings. PCSJ's host and member of South Bay Writers Linda Lappin is making a personal request. Are you a poet? Would you like to read your work? If your answer is yes, contact Linda by email at captainlappin@netzero.net and have a look at PCSJ's website, www.pcsj.org

South Bay Writers Anthology



\$12.50 + 9.25% sales tax
At the meeting.
On the website.
southbaywriters.com

Other Open Mics

Thursday Gig

Third Thursday, 6:30–9:30 p.m.
411 E. Campbell Ave., Campbell
Stone Griffin Gallery

10Ten Gallery

Last Friday, 6:30–10:00 p.m.
1010 E. Taylor St., San Jose
Al Preciado's home

Poets@Play

Second Sun. 1 p.m.–4 p.m.
1650 Senter Rd., San Jose
Markham House History Park

Poetry Center San Jose Readings

Art Object Gallery
1st Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.
(September–May)
592 North Fifth St., San Jose

Willow Glen Library
2nd Mondays, 7:00 p.m.
1157 Minnesota Ave., San Jose

Free admission.

See pcsj.org for details.



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

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

Next Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, November 10, 6:00 p.m.

Lookout Inn
605 Macara Avenue, Sunnyvale
At the Sunnyvale Golf Course

Michael Larsen
Elizabeth Pomada
Finding an Agent
Bonus Critique Session

No General Meeting in
December. Come to the
Annual Holiday Bash
instead.

