



# WRITERSTALK

Volume 17  
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October 2009

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

## October Surprise Panel “What to Know About Getting Published”

by Bill Baldwin

We have gathered five of our own talented members to give us the scoop on getting published. Combined, our panelists have published memoirs, blogs, plays, novels, short stories, and poetry. They will share their knowledge and help us understand the skills we need to get our work published. There will be plenty of time for questions and answers. Please join us for this educational evening! Our panelists are Betty Auchard, Bill Belew, Howard Burman, and Jack Hasling. Martha Engber will chair the discussion (and include her own perspective).

**Betty Auchard** is a retired art teacher who morphed into a writer after her husband died in 1998. Her stories appeared in five anthologies before her first book, *Dancing in My Nightgown: The Rhythms of Widowhood*, became the recipient of a 2005 IPPY Award in the memoir category. It will be released in Spanish before Christmas this year. Betty has marketed her books as a speaker since 2002 and her second memoir (not yet titled) will be released early in 2010.

**Bill Belew** is a professional blogger: he pays his sizeable mortgage with his network of blogs. One of his blogs has already taken on the shape of a book, *Gee, I Wish I Had Been Drinking at the Time*, published by a local independent publisher and available via Amazon. His blogging platform also serves as a means to advertising his book with over 20,000 visits or impressions daily.

**Howard Burman** has had more than 30 plays produced and has now turned to novels. His latest, *Gentlemen at the Bat: A Fictional Oral History of the New York Knickerbocker Base Ball Club 1845-1882*, published by McFarland Publishers, is due out this winter. His plays have been translated and produced in a number of foreign languages.

**Jack Hasling** served on the faculty at Foothill College in Northern California for 25 years. He has written three textbooks in the area of speech communication. One of them, *The Audience, The Message, The Speaker*, has gone into its sixth edition. His novel *Hillview* describes college life in the 1960s. *Welcome to the Dunes* is a mystery set at a writers conference.

**Martha Engber** is the author of *Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up: A Thorough Primer for Writers of Fiction and Nonfiction*. She had a short story nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a full-length play produced in Hollywood. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in many literary journals.

And don't forget, the October meeting will also feature our annual Literary Costume Party and the chance to win a prize in categories made up on the spot. Come as an author, character, book, concept, prop, or whatever. WT

## September Recap

Katie Hafner

by Jackie Mutz

Each SBW meeting has the lull of familiarity in its format. An outline graces each table, so we know what to expect. Yet each meeting is different in tone, content and quality. Why? Maybe it's the time of year, the speaker, and the mix of attendees. The audience has a lot to do with a guest speaker's success at the podium. Katie Hafner was an entertaining and educational speaker.

Dave began by *not* telling one of his jokes (to a collective gasp from the audience). He pointed out the usual agenda items:

- Book exchange table with a suggestion area where you can request information on critique groups and educational aspects of SBW.
- SBW anthology still for sale.
- A survey to fill out.
- Cathy Bauer critique group update.
- East of Eden Writers Conference date 9/24-26 in 2010.
- Bill Baldwin open mike update.
- New carpool established. Care to carpool?
- New agenda item titled “Spotlight” in recognition of those who have contributed to the SBW branch.

Finally it was time for the evening's highlight. Katie Hafner, as Bill Baldwin noted in his introduction, is a technology reporter, writer, journalist, and

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**On October 13: Literary Costume Party**  
You are invited to come to the meeting dressed as a literary character or figure.

# President's Prowling

by Dave LaRoche  
President, South Bay Writers

## About Last Month

In this space last month, I tried to say that *critically* reading a good author is an excellent way of obtaining the stuff that is required to be one; and mentioned Don DeLillo as a good authoring example. When reading through my column, however, *WritersTalk* then on the kitchen table, I saw just how well my message had been formed: *clear* it was not. I want to revisit one of those points.



Among the things that make a book a good read is the identification a reader can make with the narrative. At least some of what is presented needs to be familiar in a way that makes explanation unnecessary. I'm not talking about an account of the Crusades written by a medieval Persian whose neighbors were decapitated in yesterday's assault—which does need significant context—but the closer you can bring your reader to your narrative without mounds of explanation, the better we all like it. And this element is one DeLillo does superbly. (His characters are “just like me.” Although they lead a more complex and exciting life, I empathize in part, and read on.)

As a reader familiar with the experience being described—the scene, the character, the action—one can identify and is drawn in, becomes a part of the story, is invested. If you *know* that experience, have actually had it, you are yanked right out of your chair. When an author can do this, he has that reader's trust and can take him, with confidence, to any place in the story and do it repeatedly—no questions asked. The reader is hooked, more likely to buy in to even the incredible, moreover, is a fan and will read that author again—come what may. My son, a literary type with degrees, likes Thomas Pynchon because he identifies with Pynchon's loosely knit style and worldview, and whatever Pynchon writes gets his money. Authors who know their readers' experience have a real leg up.

What does this mean? How does any writer know a reader's experience? I ask, and the answer I find is this: know life. Live fully and pay rapt attention. Life pulls a common thread through all of us.

Know thyself. Dig deep. Examine perceptions and search out the crannies of your personal experience. Uncover the lost. Ask why do I think as I do, hold certain opinions, consider some things absolute and others some shade of gray. Recall the follies, the hurt and success, the emotional trauma, the joy. Don't just scrape the bottom, upend the barrel and make all that you are available to your pen.

Okay, now that I'm fathoming *my* life a little better, what's next? And the answer is look outward and hard. Take in all that can be seen. Allow that a high-definition, wide-screen, LED-backlit projection of what is happening today, a heavier load of

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## California Writers Club South Bay Branch

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### Executive Committee

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

Vice President—Bill Baldwin  
vp@southbaywriters.com

Secretary—Loureen Giordano  
secretary@southbaywriters.com

Treasurer—Richard Burns  
treasurer@southbaywriters.com

### Central Board Rep

Dave LaRoche (acting rep)

### Directors

Programs—Bill Baldwin  
vp@southbaywriters.com

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

Membership—Marjorie Johnson  
membership@southbaywriters.com

Hospitality—Cathy Bauer  
cathy@bauerstar.com

Networking—Cathy Bauer  
networking@southbaywriters.com

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

Open Mic—Bill Baldwin  
408 730-9622

Webmaster—Ro Davis  
webmaster@southbaywriters.com

### Join With Us

We have a membership category that fits you. Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee. Contact the Membership Chair, Marjorie Johnson.



## WRITERSTALK

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

### Managing Editor

Richard Amyx  
newsletter@southbaywriters.com  
408 297-4438

### Contributing Editors

Bill Belew  
Carolyn Donnell  
Lisa Eckstein (copyeditor)  
Andrea Galvac (copyeditor)  
Victoria M. Johnson  
Jackie Mutz (copyeditor)

### Submissions

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

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

### Guest Columns

*Almost Anything Goes* (400 words)

### News Items (400 words)

### Letters to the Editor (300 words)

to Andrea Galvac  
junestar@comcast.net

### Creative Works

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

### Accolades

accolades@southbaywriters.com

### Announcements and Advertisements

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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

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

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

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

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# Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx  
Editor

## Help Wanted



**W**ritersTalk is in the market for a new contributing editor. Creating a newsletter is not a one-person show: it's a team effort, a combination of the work of members who have offered their writing for publication, the staff of contributing editors who provide content and continuity, and the managing editor, who hands out assignments and puts the pieces together after everybody else is done with the hard work.

What a contributing editor does is evident in every issue. Going down the current roster alphabetically, Bill Belew focuses on blogs. Carolyn Donnell, our roving reporter and assistant photographer, attends various literary events in the valley and reports on them; she also keeps tabs on contests. Lisa Eckstein shares in copyediting, and, with the first appearance of "Writecraft" in this issue, has stepped up to begin an ongoing column on the craft of writing. Andrea Galvac serves primarily as a copyeditor, but also sometimes shares her thoughts in particularly pointed essays. Victoria Johnson has a specialty in filmwriting, provides cross-pollination with the Romance Writers, keeps an eye on the publishing world, and writes articles such as "How to Write Scary Stories." Jackie Mutz shares the copyediting task and assembles "Accolades" month after month. All the contributing editors take a turn at writing the recap of a monthly meeting.

So, in short, a contributing editor takes part in doing what needs to be done and chooses what else to contribute.

As a contributing editor, what's in it for you? The opportunity to flex some of your writing muscles; to write on assignment and to specification; to see your writing edited and to work with an editor; to bring your special expertise to the mix; to learn how a newsletter like *WritersTalk* is made. And, of course, to do your part in helping to make South Bay Writers a vital and vibrant branch of CWC.

All work and no play makes for a dull contributing editor, though, so we have monthly powwows at which we share coffee, tea, and pastries, as well as a post mortem of the previous issue, planning for the next issue, and discussing ways in which *WritersTalk* might be improved. From time to time, we go out to dinner, and, coming up, we have planned an Indie bookstore crawl in Santa Cruz, followed by lunch or dinner and a powwow.

If you're interested in joining the *WritersTalk* crew, drop a note to me at newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

## California Writers Week

In 2003, the California Writers Club worked to establish a week to celebrate and recognize California Writers. The result of this effort occurred on September 4, 2003 when the California State Assembly officially declared the third week in October of each year as California Writers Week (Members Resolution No. 2170). The Resolution is endorsed by the California Library Association. Celebrate California Writers Week this year beginning on October 11.

Seek out a friend who's not a writer and ask him or her to take you to lunch. **WT**



# This November, Write a Novel!

by Lisa Eckstein

Starting at the stroke of midnight on November 1, more than 100,000 people around the world will take a crack at an ambitious literary challenge: writing a 50,000-word novel in 30 days. These brave souls are participants in National Novel Writing Month, and all you need to be one of them is a bit of discipline and the germ of a story.

Attempting to write a novel in a single month is a little nuts, and that's one of the reasons it's so much fun. To avoid getting stalled by self-criticism on page 1, it's necessary to banish your inner editor for a month and adopt an "anything goes" attitude. You'll be pleasantly surprised to discover how many fabulous plot twists and character quirks your rushed mind will create that never would have emerged if you'd taken a sedate, analytical approach to the story. Letting go of your usual writing process is a liberating thrill that results in a messy but vivid first draft.

Another November surprise is that writing doesn't have to be a solitary activity. One of the most popular parts of NaNoWriMo is the write-ins held at cafes and other public spaces. At these events, local participants sit down together with laptops and notepads to work on their novels, encourage each other, and solicit ideas when stuck. There's nothing so motivating as hearing that the person next to you is 300 words ahead, and little as amusing or frightening as asking a roomful of writers for creative ways to kill off a character. The South Bay is a particularly active region, with write-ins scheduled for most days of the month.

Visit [NaNoWriMo.org](http://NaNoWriMo.org) to learn more about National Novel Writing Month, sign up for an account to track your word count, and talk to other participants in the discussion forums. While you're there, be sure to affiliate with the South Bay region so you can stay informed of local write-ins and parties. I'm one of the liaisons who coordinate events in our area, and you'll find me in the regional forum with the username "marcopolo." I hope to see more SBW members than ever this year! WT

# SBW Journal: Our New Blog

by Carolyn Donnell

South Bay Writers has a blog! On the home page at [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com), click on SBW Journal - our blog in the right hand column. This will open up a new page that reads

We are the South Bay branch of the California Writers Club. Visit our website at [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com).

We use this blog/online journal as a place to post information for South Bay/Silicon Valley writers about area events, conferences, workshops, educational opportunities, critique groups, and more.

On the right side of this page you'll see a list of categories, which we use to organize our posts.

If you're a member of South Bay Writers and would like to contribute to this blog, contact webmaster Ro Davis. Visit [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com) for info about membership and a contact list.

SBW journal/blog categories include:

- 2010 East of Eden Writers Conference
- Contests and Related
- Critique Groups
- CWC NorCal Association
- Events
- New Member Orientation
- SBW Workshops
- Workshops
- Writers conferences

Information about various activities of interest to our writers—conferences, workshops (ours and those of other CWC branches), contests, and much more—was posted in the past on the old website's Forum and also on the Yahoo! group. The new journal/blog will take the place of both of those venues. Stop by often and look around.

Some recent postings include a \$50 discount to next year's San Francisco Writers Conference, the announcement of the next East of Eden Conference,

information about the new CWC NorCal Association, and how to get information about critique groups and contests. Everyone (including the public) can read it, so be sure to inform your non-SBW member friends as well.

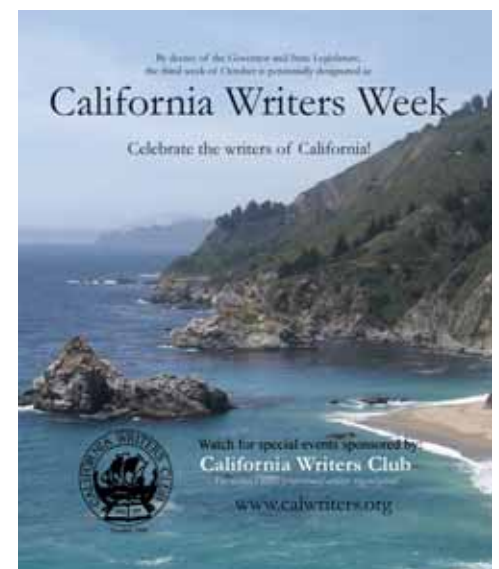
As it says on the blog home page, if you'd like to post your news or have info to share with your fellow SBW members, please contact webmaster, Ro Davis, at [webmaster@southbaywriters.com](mailto:webmaster@southbaywriters.com). WT

## Book Arts Jam 2009

Foothill College will host the popular seventh annual Book Arts Jam Saturday, Oct. 17, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Campus Center. Admission is free. Parking is \$2.

The one-day event includes individual displays by more than 50 book arts exhibitors and vendors; demonstrations of book arts skills by artists and craftspeople; talks and Q&A sessions by book artists about the creative process and working methods; print studio open house; artists' book virtual exhibition slideshow; and a silent auction. The event is cosponsored by Bay Area Book Artists and Foothill College and is funded in part by a grant from the Associated Students of Foothill College and Arts Council Silicon Valley in partnership with Santa Clara County and the National Endowment for the Arts.

See [bookartsjam.org](http://bookartsjam.org) for more detail.



# Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

Each SBW monthly meeting at the Look-out Inn follows a familiar format, but still has its own unique rhythm, mostly because the mix of people changes. There are the regulars who come every month and those like me who try their best to make it when life does not get in the way (family, kids, work, not necessarily in that order). Yet our meetings are always interesting and I leave recharged and ready to write, especially when I hear writing success stories such as these:



Jackie Mutz  
Contributing Editor

- **Richard Burns** will read his poetry at the Art Object Gallery, 592 North 5th Street, San Jose, on October 6, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. Readings will include award-winning poems “Cold Temptation” and “TV Is Somethin’” and more, some of which you will find in our own SBW anthology published

this year. Congratulations, Richard!

- **Martha Engber** is happy to announce that her literary novel, *The Wind Thief*, a book club pick, is now available to pre-order from Amazon and Alondra Press. Martha will be actively promoting the book through speaking engagements, blog tours, book club gatherings, conferences, and workshops, so feel free to contact her if you need a speaker for your occasion at [Martha@Engber.com](mailto:Martha@Engber.com). Way to go, Martha!
- **Becky Levine** told us at the September meeting that her new book, *Writing & Critique Group Survival Guide*, will have its book launch in January 2010. Great news, Becky!
- **Audry Lynch** has published her book, *The Rebel Figure in American Literature and Film: The Interconnected Lives of John Steinbeck and James Dean*, a study that “examines the educational, professional and social similarities in the backgrounds of John Steinbeck and James Dean.” See the complete review at [mellenpress.com](http://mellenpress.com). Congratulations, Audry!
- **Steve Wetlesen**, local poetic artist,

has begun an informal association with Stone Griffin Art Gallery located in Campbell, where he creates on-the-spot original personalized handwritten poetic art for a nominal fee. You will find Steve at Stone Griffin most third Fridays of any calendar month. Congrats, Steve!

So keep coming to our meetings and listen to the wisdom of those who have been a little farther down that sometimes lonely writer’s road. And keep writing yourself. Oh, and don’t forget to send us your writing success stories at [accolades@southbaywriters.com](mailto:accolades@southbaywriters.com). WT



Steve Wetlesen creates poetic art on demand outside the Stone Griffin Gallery in Campbell. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

# Eat, Sleep, Whatnot

by Carolyn Donnell

EAT  
SLEEP  
READ

This IndieBound motto used to grace the entrance of Willow Glen Books, formerly located at 1330 Lincoln Avenue in San Jose. Now, unfortunately, it would have to read Eat, Sleep, and Whatnot. That’s the new store that has taken the venerable old bookstore’s place—Whatnots & Dodads (their spelling).

Willow Glen Books, which opened for business in 1992, is gone. It offered a one-of-a-kind service, was especially supportive of local authors, and regularly hosted readings and other writers’ group activities. Owner Cathy Adkins said she had planned to retire next year,



but health problems and lagging sales forced her to change her mind. She said the biggest culprit—beyond the big bookstores—was the Internet, which ate into her revenues increasingly during the past few years.

Earlier this year, longtime Willow Glen resident and bookstore lover Roland A. Vierra stepped forward, and for a while it looked as if he would be able to save the store. Evidently this deal failed, though, because when I looked, I found Whatnots there instead.



The red brick at the bottom is the same, but everything else is painted beige, inside and out.

The owner of the new store did say that Hickleebee’s, the independent children’s bookstore just down the street, may have plans to expand to take on some of the clientele left out in the cold by the demise of Willow Glen Books. Stay

tuned for further developments on that. Other areas have been struck too. Moon News in Half Moon Bay—which was older than Willow Glen Books—recently shut its doors. But a former employee was able to reopen a similar store named Harbor Books. So Half Moon Bay still has five independent bookstores. San Jose: where are your other 360? (If you count the number of bookstores against the population, San Jose should have at least in the mid 300s to match that little town by the sea. San Jose, get busy!)

There is still an independent bookstore in Morgan Hill: BookSmart. According to SBW member Beth Wyman, it has been there for more than twenty years and is still going strong. Aficionados of independent bookstores who live north of San Jose may have to go to Mountain View or even Palo Alto for now.

The website [indiebound.org](http://indiebound.org), an online community for independently owned bookstores, includes a locator for Indie-supported businesses. WT

Photos: Carolyn Donnell

# View from the Board

by Loureen Giordano

The SBW board met on September 2. Present were Dave LaRoche, Richard Burns, Dick Amyx, Marjorie Johnson, Bill Baldwin and Loureen Giordano. The meeting was called to order at 7:13 p.m.

Kicking off the festivities, President Dave LaRoche mentioned that the June minutes had never been approved, so the Board reversed the action items from that month and moved to approve; passed unanimously.

Dave announced that the ride-sharing effort is underway now that a blurb has been published in *WritersTalk*.

The new Learning Center needs a coordinator; Richard Burns may step up to fill the role.

VP Bill Baldwin confirmed the speaker slate he presented at the previous meeting, restating that he'd like to see more emphasis on the how-to's of writing a book, as well as insights on how authors got into writing and what keeps them persevering in the craft. He also announced that Betty Auchard will host the Christmas party for the last time this December 8.

The new Board Secretary Loureen "Red" Giordano had nothing to report but received collective advice to avoid recording in the minutes every word, cough and sneeze, thus shortening the length of the minutes. She was amenable to the suggestion.

Treasurer Richard Burns reported that attendance in August was up by one, and also that the club's assets were up from \$28,000 to \$28,600. In response to a question, Dave explained that, of the annual dues, \$25 per member, plus an extra \$10 for each new member, goes to the State CWC organization, which amounts to roughly \$4,000 per year for SBW.

## Central Board News

As our rep on the Central CWC Board, Dave updated with the following:

- He continues to spearhead the reorganization of this board with the goals of reducing the number of state meetings, slashing costs for local clubs, and developing publishing

opportunities for members. Branches will have voting representation proportionate to their membership.

- The state anthology is still on life support; prognosis uncertain.
- Under development is a statewide matrix that would allow all branches to list their speakers with contact information, presentation summary, and a star rating system.
- The Redwood Club raised its membership from 35 to 135 in two years and passed along a page or two of pointers on how they did this.

Discussion arose about whether the club exists to educate, thus the 501(c)(3) designation, or to draw professional writers. Bill remarked that the bylaws seem to contradict themselves on this.

## Committee Reports

Membership Chair Marjorie Johnson tallied 180 members, having contacted most people on the SBW roster. Nineteen have not responded at all. Those needing to renew can still do so at the September 8 meeting. Membership is down from 220 last year, when many joined only to get the discount at the conference but did not renew.

Networking/Hospitality: In Cathy Bauer's absence, Dave reported that she is planning a meeting with all 25-30 people who have indicated they'd like to join a critique group.

Workshops: Though he valiantly tried to keep them topside, Dave indicated the legal workshops have fallen off the table. He is still targeting November as a workshop date and has set his sights on another local group of attorneys who may be willing to address the issue of intellectual property.

Anthology: Dick announced that a long-awaited meeting on getting the volume into bookstores is still pending.

East of Eden: Dave reported that all chairs are now staffed with the addition of Bill Belew on logistics and Colin Seymour on acquisitions and speakers. Next meeting: September 12.

Dave checked into the legality of paying members for work done on the conference. The attorney said this is legal if the work is done on a set fee basis with a service contract.

## Other Business

- The Book Expo, for which the Board had earmarked \$500, is not happening this year, so the money stays with the club.
- Dave suggested the club create a permanent board with the names of award winners and those earning recognition for outstanding service to the club. The Board's reaction was positive and not just because adjournment time approached.

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Next meeting: October 7. WT

# WritersTalk Challenge Adjusted

The *WritersTalk* Challenge is a contest held twice yearly in which prizes are awarded for the best contributions to *WritersTalk* in the genres of fiction, poetry, memoir, and article/essay during the preceding six months. Any SBW member who has had a piece published in *WritersTalk* is a contestant in the Challenge.

Since its inception in 2006, the judging periods for the Challenge have run from February 16 through August 15 and from August 16 through February 15, with awards being presented at the meetings in March and September.

When South Bay Writers stages the East of Eden Writers Conference in September of even years, there is no general meeting that month. In 2008, it became clear that if we delayed Challenge awards until October, the Challenge competed with the annual costume contest. And if we further delayed the awards until November, there was too great a separation between contest and prizes.

In order to eliminate these even-year conflicts, the editorial team has decided to move the Challenge periods back one month to run from January 16 through July 15 and from July 16 through January 15, with awards being made in February and August.

This also means that the judging period that ends on January 15, 2010, will be only five months long. You can easily compensate for this limitation by increasing your rate of submission to *WritersTalk* by 20%. WT

# Writecraft: It's Like Magic

by Lisa Eckstein

When I watch a magic act, I'm always trying to figure out how the trick works. How about you? Does your mind struggle to explain the effect, or do you simply marvel at the illusion? I get a certain pleasure out of attempting to make sense of the apparently impossible, but the truth is that I'm terrible at puzzling out magic tricks, and I'm glad that's the case. The real joy of watching a talented magician comes when I allow myself to be convinced that the unthinkable has happened: the dove has truly vanished, and the magic is real.



Lisa Eckstein  
Contributing Editor

Ideally, a reader starts a work of fiction with the same willingness to suspend disbelief. The reader agrees to accept the premise, whether it's that monsters live among us, that two strangers could repeatedly encounter each other across decades, or that one small town could witness so many murders. Within the bounds of the premise, the writer has to convince the reader to buy into the story. If the author creates characters that don't react like real people or interrupts the flow with sentences that are difficult to process, the illusion is spoiled, just as when the magician fumbles a card. A good writer pulls off the story with practiced sleight of hand to make the magic happen.

I am plagued with an affliction shared by many who write: I can't merely enjoy good writing, even when the execution is flawless. I'm always trying to figure out how the trick works. I not only guess where the plot is headed but also analyze the structure as I read, identifying high and low points or appreciating clever techniques for skipping past the boring parts. I take note of recurring motifs and flip back to review foreshadowing. I count the number of chapters, consider the percentage of dialogue, and think about where the main conflict begins. I can still get lost in a story, but I have so much more to wonder at while the conjurer performs.

Reading as a writer means that every time I pick up a book, I get a chance to learn. I notice approaches to a story or sentence that impress me and those that leave me yawning. Though I mostly write fiction, I find educational opportunities in anything I read. Memoirs and other forms of creative nonfiction are structured much like novels, telling stories that happen to be true. Poetry illustrates the use of language beautifully to convey description and emotion. Articles that report or persuade demonstrate how to write clearly (or how to fail to do so). Every encounter with the written word is a lesson in what to do and what to avoid.

"Writecraft" is a new column replacing the excellent "Journey of a Thousand Miles" as Lita Kurth embarks on a fresh journey of her own. Through this series, I hope to share with you some useful ideas about the craft of writing. If you care to follow along, you may find yourself reading with a different outlook. Warning: peeking behind the curtain is dangerous. You will become more critical of both the writing you consume and the work you create. Your new awareness may be distracting and even disheartening at first, but it's one of the best ways to improve your craft. I think you'll find it's all worth it when you astonish your own readers by expertly pulling the rabbit from the hat.

Until next month, fill your bag of tricks with these recommended resources:

- *Reading Like a Writer* by Francine Prose examines passages by famous authors and explores what makes them effective.
- *Fiction Writers Review* ([fictionwritersreview.com](http://fictionwritersreview.com)) presents reviews of new books from a writerly perspective. WT

Orion, hunter,  
bold in winter sky.  
In ten year old's dream, 'twas I.

—Jamie Miller

## October Over

Over there! There's a heap of paper:  
31 days to pull off the caper.  
... And the writing goes rolling along ...  
You can do it!  
Write a story, a chapter, a song.

—Pat Bustamante

# WritersTalk Challenge Winners Announced

Winners of the *WritersTalk* Challenge for the period February 16 through August 15 were announced at the September general meeting:

Fiction: Luanne Oleas, for "Why Gladys Stuben Turned to a Life of Crime"

Memoir: Anna M. Thumann, for "That Haunting Clank in the Clink"

Poetry: Victoria Ballard, for "Remembering Naomi, Dead at 39"

Article/Essay: Carolyn Donnell, for "Eating Weeds"

Each Challenge winner received a certificate of award and a check for \$40.



*WritersTalk* Challenge winners Carolyn Donnell (left) and Luanne Oleas display their certificates of award. Center: Challengemistress Andrea Galvacs.

## Redwood Writers Conference

Friday, October 23, 2009

7:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

Plus Dinner and  
An Evening of Poetry

Flamingo Resort and Hotel,  
Santa Rosa

**Registration fee:** \$145 for CWC members; \$30 for dinner (optional); \$50 for editorial session (optional); rooms are available at \$99–\$199.

Presenters include Al Young, Steve Hockensmith, and Tamim Ansary.

Full conference details and registration at [redwoodwriters.org/conference.html](http://redwoodwriters.org/conference.html)

# Halloween

by Betty Auchard

On Halloween weekend, after listening to a terrifying and soon-to-be-famous radio show starring Orson Welles, many of the staff members at the Home were anxious and fearful. In the middle of the show, Mr. Welles announced that aliens were invading our planet. He sounded so scared that the staff believed it was really happening. Some of the kids were afraid, but at eight years of age, I wasn't. I didn't even ponder the safety of my little brother and sister in their dormitory rooms on the other side of the building.

But I *was* curious. What if aliens invaded Cedar Rapids? Would they hurt us? Would the world be a big mess? But none of that deep thinking kept me from sleeping soundly that night.

The next day at school it was hard to do our lessons because the only thing the kids could talk about was that program and Orson Welles, the man who wrote the script he called *The War of the Worlds*. The teacher even set aside our Palmer Method penmanship lesson so we could talk about what we had experienced. My third grade classroom at Polk Elementary School became a solid mass of arms in the air with hands wiggling, each kid begging to tell his or her story. I didn't dare raise my hand. What would they think if I said that I wasn't even worried about my little brother and sister? I wished that I *had* been scared so I would have something to say. But I just listened.

Arthur said, "I was scared to death and I hid under the bed for a long time."

Violet said, "Not me. I knew it was a joke."

Phillip said, "It was not a joke, just a misunderstanding." Phillip was very grown up.

A boy whose father worked at the police station said someone called and asked, "What time is this going to happen?" A girl whose father was a fireman said a lady called the fire department and asked, "When it happens, shall I close my windows?" Another student said that when her mother called to check on an elderly

neighbor, the woman said, "I don't have time to talk right now! The end of the world is coming and I've got a lot to do!"

We all laughed about those stories, even the teacher. Then she told us another story, turning it into a lesson. "While I pull down the map, be ready to raise your hand if you know the answer to my question," she instructed.

I was not good at geography so I knew my hand would stay by my side.

"There is a college in Brevard, North Carolina, where the entire student body panicked during last night's program. Raise your hand if you can tell me what the word 'panic' means."

Phillip's hand shot into the air. He said, "It's the button my mother pushes when she loses her marbles."

"Phillip, explain for the class what you mean by pushing a button and losing her marbles."

"Well, when our new puppy went potty in my mother's lap, she screamed and tossed the pup to my dad. My dad said that she had lost her marbles and hit her panic button."

"So, Phillip, did you know what your dad meant by that?"

"I sure don't."

"Boys and girls, the word 'panic' means being so frightened that you lose control and do things you wouldn't ordinarily do."

"You mean like my mom throwing our puppy in the air?" Phillip asked.

"That's right. Now, who would like to locate the state of North Carolina?"

Up jumped Bernard, Mr. Map himself, to point with pride at the state of North Carolina.

Our teacher said, "This is the location of the college where the students panicked during the program." Then she read from a newspaper clipping: "Five students at Brevard College, N.C., fainted and panic gripped the campus for a half hour with many students fighting for telephones to ask their parents to come and get them."

If a pin had dropped in my classroom, we would've heard it because everyone was wide-eyed and speechless. We listened to every word as our teacher went on. "A radio program is usually

heard by the whole country. So just imagine how many other people were scared last night and how many of them probably panicked."

Every kid nodded in agreement while she continued. "When a large group of people are frightened by something they can't see, they sometimes do strange things to get away from the fear. It's called 'mass hysteria' and it means that fear is sometimes contagious, just like the measles."

That night after supper all of the kids and staff at the Home gathered close to the big Zenith console to listen to the news. A lot of people were really mad about the show being broadcast, especially on Halloween. I felt sorry for Orson Welles because he probably had no idea what a ruckus his program would cause. When a reporter asked Mr. Welles what he thought about the commotion, he said, "I apologize to the producers of the CBS Mercury Theater for this getting out of hand. The show was just a story and not real. That's why we announced that at the beginning."

"But, Mr. Welles, anyone who tuned in late didn't know that," the interviewer said. "The program seemed so real that everyone was confused."

"I am so sorry. I don't think we will ever broadcast that program again."

While I was listening to the show, I was a little bit confused, too, but I didn't think it was real. Maybe growing up with such hullabaloo in my family had taught me to take things in stride. If I thought something bad was under my bed in the dark, I could get scared real fast. But when bad things happened in the adult world, like kidnapping and bank robberies, I felt certain the grown-ups would take care of it. After listening to *The War of the Worlds*, the scared grownups at the Home must have caught fear from each other.

I was just glad the world hadn't ended on Halloween. It would have wrecked our costume party, and I was really looking forward to stuffing my face with candy. WT

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: This happened while my brother, sister, and I were living at the Home for the Friendless, a 30s version of a children's shelter.*



## Join the Dead

by Pat Bustamante

At first I thought it was just another intriguing ghost story. You'll see why I don't name the small suburban neighborhood.

At least five people in walking range of the bridge had a version of "the ghost."

"He was some kid rafting when the creek turned into a river—remember the flood? Days before they recovered the body."

"I think it's old Jacob. He lived and died on his homestead. First house he had was a cabin, right there. His well still works."

And: "It's malevolent. I had to call in an exorcist. I had no idea what was going on but it was bad. I'm moving. I can't take it . . ."

Perhaps she was right, that lady biting her nails and looking sleep-deprived. Nobody actually saw the ghost. You felt it. The hair on your neck lifted. If it had derived power from some tragedy . . . A

motive of revenge? Story of a painful or evil death? Jealousy of the living?

Real estate was the big deal and that empty lot was prime land; the water company wanted to sell, expected a million. My ghost experience happened while I walked the dog an evening the creek was drained out. My shepherd dog's back fur rose and a growl issued from her bared teeth unlike anything I'd seen or heard from her. A midnight-black cat minced out of the blackberry thicket next to the muddy creek bed. Was the dog after her? No. The cat became a bristling statue, stare fixed on the same dark blank space past the bridge in front of us.

What "thing" immobilized the three of us?

I spoke of it later when the city sent a workman to dig on the empty lot. He'd been a boy on my street. "Of course I heard of that ghost. Always right here. I'm betting the old well has some magnetic field or somethin'. Has to do with that. Ghosts always appear near wells or water."

I was heavily involved in a community

tragedy a year later. A number of women compared notes and discovered their rate of miscarriage was just too high. Multiple cases of cancer, too. A petition against the water company appeared. Lawyers got busy. Silicon Valley chemical leakage was blamed—the high cost of technology.

It all turned into a nothing. Not for the miscarrying women; their losses were beyond repair by money. The water company hastily removed a large storage tank from the lot by the bridge. "Nobody has used that water for over 20 years since contamination was discovered!"

I used to drink faucet water, a filter on it. But imagine what it's like to learn: when city construction finally started, piping carried water from that well directly to the water main. Had all along. I can live with a ghost hanging around. But my stomach still turns at the scope of the scandal unfolding about the water system. Just to make a buck? Poison for sale? If that ghost is angry it is *nothing* compared to how I feel! WT

## A One-Wish Can

by Dave LaRoche

"If you can think it you can change it."

*Oh my, can that be true . . . maybe I could have . . .*

"Take charge of your life, it belongs only to you."

*If only I'd known . . .*

These empowering ideas, made available to Janet from the half-dozen books on her table, seemed always to appear too late. She was almost certain, though not quite, that she was just who she was and nothing would change that—*but well, something might.*

Her mind was on the tomato sauce that she needed today, or was it the stewed variety? At her grocer's, she read the labels—so many to consider. She wondered about size and about chopped vs. halved, and with or without seasoning, Italian or not—such a quandary, all of this deciding. *Umm, and I wonder which brand . . .*

A label caught her eye, a new label, "Lynne's Fabulous T-Sauce." She picked it up for a closer look. Lynne stared back from the label. Janet squinted. Lynne winked and then spoke. "Take me, and I will give you the power."

"What power?" Janet inquired of the label.

"Just put me in your basket, Janet, and the power will be yours."

"Oh my God! How . . . what . . . who are you and . . . I don't understand how a can of tomato sauce can speak."

"Listen to me Janet, you may go back in time and change any single event in your life," Lynne responded with authority. "You will have the power, any single event . . . though you seem uncertain. Do you have questions?"

"Of course I have questions . . . well, no . . . I think . . . well, I believe you. Let me see . . . any event . . . oh, I love this. I can really change my life." She looked up and down the aisle. Could anyone hear? An old man with a cart was approaching.

"Know where's the lima beans, young missy?"

"Let's see . . . eh, try aisle four, or is it three . . . It might be . . ."

He scowled and passed, banging his cart against hers, "Is it three, no it's four, well, maybe it's a hundred and four . . . sheeze."

"How far back can I go?" Janet said to the can.

"As far as you like," said Lynne. "But remember, my dear, only one event."

Janet moved closer to the shelf, holding the can where no one might see it.

"What would I change . . . What? I never did like that pink-feathered hat I chose when a sophomore in high school . . . for Easter, you know. I should have chosen yellow," she said to the can. "Could I change that?"

"Anything."

"And there was the time I brought turkey to a Christmas potluck, when it seemed everyone wanted ham."

"Yes, go on."

*Continued on page 11*

# Phantom in the Attic

by Valerie Whong

The corner house on Heatley Avenue near Chinatown had two bedrooms in the attic. The front room, used for storage, was piled high with cartons filled with old collectibles. The closed door and windows jammed shut with drawn, old, faded curtains never attracted any member of the family to venture in unless it was absolutely necessary. Then it was only to store another box. No one could open the window, which explained the musty smell. It had been that way since they had moved in three years earlier. Two brothers shared the back bedroom and had their twin beds on opposite walls.

Early one Sunday morning, all was quiet. Everyone in the house was asleep. Ten-year-old Bing turned in his bed, suddenly cold, and his eyes popped open. He rubbed them and looked at the clock on the tiny night table that separated him from Fong: it was 6 a.m. His younger brother snored noisily and had turned to face the newly painted white wall. Bing mumbled to himself because his own blanket had fallen to the side of his bed. He gathered it up, making certain to tuck one side in, and settled down to sleep again.

Suddenly his ears picked up a sound—it was the same noise he had heard before. What was it? He wasn't imagining it! It was the creaking of a rocking chair and a man's voice. Did someone downstairs have a radio on?

Dropping his legs off the side of the bed, he tightened his pajama strings, tiptoed and slowly opened the door to the adjoining room used mainly for storage. Instantly he brought his arm up to shield his eyes. He squinted, almost blinded by the bright rays of the sun. A light breeze brushed against his face. The window usually sealed shut was open. Dumbstruck, he walked in past large boxes stacked high. The rocking chair creaked louder. That was strange! He didn't remember ever seeing a rocking chair up in the attic. Crouching down, taking care to be quiet, just in case someone was playing a joke or his parents had an unexpected overnight guest staying in the top room, he made

his way towards the open window. His heart beat wildly in his chest, and his hands felt clammy. Perspiration formed on his forehead and his knees were rubbery and weak. Suddenly, he stopped in his tracks.

At first he thought his eyes were playing tricks on him. He rubbed them, hoping that what he was witnessing wasn't real. But there was no mistaking it. There he was—a fat, balding man, smoking a smelly pipe, sitting in a rocking chair, singing an old Irish lullaby and staring out the open window in front of him. Tears rolled down the transparent, grayish cheeks of this person dressed in a pair of striped pajamas.

Bing froze, stunned. No one occupied this room. At least that's what everyone thought, but they were wrong. Someone definitely was making use of it, and whatever he saw now in front of him wasn't human, of that he was certain. He shook his head, "*Sai lai*," hoping to wake up from this terrible nightmare. Then Mama's words echoed in his mind, "There's no such thing as ghosts."

Suddenly someone called his name, startling him. "Bing, where are you?" He turned and darted for the open door. He ran out to the hallway where Fong, who had awakened, asked, "What's the matter? You look scared. Did you see a ghost or something?" He chuckled at his own words.

Bing grabbed Fong's arm and tried to pull him into the front room. Fong tugged to break free. "Wait a minute. What's wrong with you?"

"Come. I'll show you once and for all that there is such a thing as ghosts. Look over there." He pointed towards the window and Fong laughed, "You've got a problem, big brother. I don't see a thing. *Nai saw gah*. You're insane. That window's sealed shut as usual and the room still smells musty. Gosh, it's dark in here."

Bing's mouth dropped open. Instant fear gripped his heart and he felt stupid. Fong was right. There was no evidence of any rocking chair or anything else. The room was dark and empty except for the boxes.

He tried to convince everyone at dinner that evening that he had seen a ghost in

a rocking chair in the front attic room, but everyone laughed and refused to believe him.

After dinner, he spoke to Mama. "What would you say if I told you that I actually saw something upstairs?"

"*Mmm hi*, no, Bing, that's impossible! You were probably sleepwalking."

Bing rubbed his head. No, he knew what he saw. He wasn't sleepwalking. There was someone up there and it wasn't human.

Fong wasted no time in telling his friends about his big brother's wild imagination. Bing thought he would never hear the end of this continuous teasing about a *bak gwai* in their attic.

Now it happened that about a month later, Fong, suffering an upset stomach, woke up early. Bing was sound asleep and didn't stir, but Fong was certain he heard voices. He went on his own inspection of the adjoining room.

He tiptoed and opened the door quietly. He experienced the same thing his big brother had described: the blinding brightness to the eyes, the breeze that brushed his face, the squeaking of a rocking chair and a man's voice. However, he wasn't prepared for what he saw—a shadowy figure sitting in front of the window in a rocking chair.

Fong's knees felt like jelly, his eyes widened in amazement and his rapid heartbeat sounded like thunder in his brain. He couldn't move! *Mmm hai, mmm hai*, can't be. Someone was moving behind him. He was afraid to turn to find out who it was, fearful that the shadow might have a friend.

Bing had awakened. He had followed his brother. Right now he was tempted to leave him there to witness what he said could never be, but he couldn't do it. He had to keep from laughing out loud when he tapped Fong on the shoulder, because of his scared expression. He knew what he was feeling. He whispered in his ear to calm him down and motioned him to follow out through the open door. Fong, stunned, was too scared to move. Bing half dragged him out into the hallway back to the safety of their room and told him to sit on his bed. "Now be quiet! *Mow cho!* Do you believe me now?"

Fong nodded, his eyes wide with fear and his lips trembling. He shook his

head from side to side and said, "But there's no such thing as ghosts."

"What? Are you crazy? What else is it? I'd like to hear what you have to tell your friends now."

Fong's face paled. "We have to keep this a secret. This discovery will spook everyone in the house. What are we going to do?"

Bing, arms behind his back, began pacing. "Well, you know Mama and Baba don't believe in ghosts. I got to admit it would be fun to scare Susie and May but it's out of the question. I don't want them having nightmares. We have to take care of this ourselves."

Fong's eyes widened and he stammered, "What do you mean? How?"

Bing grinned. "Come, I'll tell you what we're going to do." He whispered into his brother's ear and Fong smiled at his suggestion, rubbing his hands eagerly.

It took Bing and Fong a month to get everything together to proceed with their plan. They had everything hidden in an old suitcase under Bing's bed. The evening before the big day, their sisters had gone to spend the night at a friend's

house down the street. Their parents were alerted as to what the boys were going to do. Bing and Fong could hardly sleep themselves because they were so excited to set their plan into motion.

When the day arrived, Bing and Fong had difficulty waking up at 5:30 a.m. because it was dark and overcast outside and starting to rain. Finally Bing dragged himself over to open the drapes and pull out the suitcase. Fong, awakened by his movements, got out of bed to help. He looked out the window and said, "Wow! What a day! It's dark out there."

Bing's eyes sparkled with mischief, "It's perfect, dreary and gray. We're going to brighten it up around here." He laughed and Fong smiled as he stared at all they had accumulated. Inside the suitcase was exactly what they needed: exploding bombs and five packages of small, red firecrackers. Fong's eyes blazed with eagerness when he picked up a punk. He couldn't wait to light it with a match. Bing whispered, "Remember, be careful with that. Don't forget to throw the fireworks right away so you don't get hurt. Remember what

Baba said."

"*Hi law, hi law.* I'll be careful. What do you make of what Mama said?"

"You mean the bit about firecrackers scaring away bad spirits? There's probably some truth to it. If she had remembered to do this in four corners of the house when we first moved in, we wouldn't have our friendly *gwai* around."

Fong smiled, "It turned out better this way. Gives us an excuse to use fireworks."

Armed with all the fireworks, they tiptoed into the front room. They heard the familiar sound of the rocking chair and a man singing. Bing signaled Fong to start, and almost in unison, both fireworks exploded loudly inches away from the phantom *bak gwai* in the rocking chair. The noise was deafening and continuous. Smoke filled the now-stuffy room and the boys could see that the gray ghost was gone. They cheered happily, and when Mama and Baba came up to the attic to stand beside them, Bing said, "Well, that's the end of the *bak gwai*." Mama smiled weakly and wondered. WT

## A One-Wish Can

*Continued from page 9*

"In seventh grade, I ignored a whistle from Ronnie . . . stuck up my nose and walked on. I could've at least looked around . . . made him feel better. And I bought those brown pumps last year and since have wanted black."

Lynne smiled from her can and said, "You're rounding up possibilities."

"Well, it's a big problem, ya know, which to choose."

A woman with three kids in her basket wheeled by. "Ma, can we have a Popsicle?"

Janet put the can back in its place but left her hand on it. A clerk appeared.

"Can I help you find something, Miss?"

"Oh no, I'm okay, just trying to decide."

"One event could change everything, bring greater joy to your life," Lynne reminded from her eye-level shelf.

Janet moved closer. "There was

Charlie," she whispered. "He asked me out for the second time in a week and I said no, I was busy. He never asked again—I would love to change that. Oh, I know which . . . it was at Emma's *bon voyage* party, and I debated all day on when to arrive. Should I be early and meet everyone as they came in . . . or acceptably late and create a little suspense. I chose early and ended up in the kitchen with an apron. I could change that."

"Put me in your shopping cart, Janet. You will have the power and can decide."

"But I don't know which, and there are so many more. I simply don't know. Oh dear, oh dear." She stepped back hesitantly, leaving "Lynne's Fabulous T-Sauce" on the shelf.

"Pardon me ma'am," a tall, well-dressed man said through a warm smile. "I see you eyeing the tomato sauce. Which do you recommend?"

"Oh, I don't know," she smiled back,

"though Lynne's has a certain mystique."

"Why, thank you, lovely lady." He tipped an imaginary hat. "Do you shop here often?"

"Oh, sometimes," And she turned and pushed her empty cart down the aisle—*my, he was handsome, and those sparkling blue eyes . . . but I wonder why he didn't take the sauce.* WT

## Selene

I only seek  
a transfinite number of ways  
to speak the sight of  
the moon's cratered white orb  
and the cold white fire effect  
of its delicate ethereal luminescence  
on the nocturnal earth below,  
all our doings,  
each hidden rendezvous,  
and unrevealed thoughts.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

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# A Gothic Dare

by Chuck Peradotto

The ancient three-story mansion stood weathered and sagging apart from the other more modern houses of the small town. A hundred years ago it was a Victorian Gothic masterpiece, but now the elaborate towers, bay windows, and intricate scrollwork were disintegrating back into the earth. Surrounding it, the shriveled and dying bushes and vines of the extensive grounds were so dense and tangled that a small boy could easily become lost in there until he grew his first hint of whiskers.

One fall day many years ago, the shadowy people who had lived there had disappeared. Just up and vanished, gone. Rumor had it they went back to Europe and the Carpathian Mountains.

The abandoned house changed slowly over the years. High weeds grew, turned yellow and withered, and the bone-colored walks became stained and deeply cracked. Jagged broken windows glared, and gray twisted shutters swung beneath rotted sagging eaves.

Late October, and rustling gold and red leaves danced on manicured green lawns, but none appeared on the land around the old Stoker place. For some strange reason, even the sky above and the thick air surrounding the manor seemed darker, as if a perpetual storm were slowly swirling around it.

Halloween, and what did five 11- and 12-year-old boys full of more mischief and bravado and boldness than belonged to them do?

They waited. They waited until the blackest part of Halloween, when the full orange moon drooped low in the sky and scudding clouds blew across its face. The time when all the other trick-or-treaters were home eating their haul of candy in warm, well-lit kitchens.

The five boys raced through the night as a cold wind wandered across the land. Laughing and pushing and shoving each other, they scurried into the thick undergrowth beside the mansion.

"I dare you."

"No, I double dare you."

"I triple dare all of you." Rusty's voice

broke into a squeak on the last three words.

More giggles, and then quiet as they stared at the black old house against an even blacker sky.

The boys waited some more, carefully studying the ebony structure before them. They elbowed each other and whispered quick ghost and spook and goblin stories, trying to scare each other.

A thin serpentlike mist wound its way through the scattered trees as a handful of errant bats fluttered and flashed by. Shrieks and snickers nervously burst forth from the youngsters as they huddled together, building up courage.

The boys approached the foreboding Stoker house with caution. The powerful smell of damp decay floated on the night fog and slick dew covered the walkway.

"What was that?" Porky hoarsely whispered.

"What's what, you fool?"

"In the window."

Two stories up, behind one of the shattered windows, a faint yellow glow was framed by the ominous house.

*Crack, baboooooom!* A wide vertical slash of lightning behind the house blazed, making the eerie edifice stand out in sharp silhouette. A biting wind laced with icy fingers moved through the land.

"A light. Someone's in there."

"No, they're not. The Stokers are all gone, long time ago, dead by now I 'spect."

"Maybe dead but not gone, still in there."

"No, they moved."

"No, moved maybe, but now they're back and they don't want us messin' around in there."

In the distance a hound wailed long and sour and then blended into the night.

"Now what?"

"What, what? We go in. That's what. Chicken?"

"No way, I'm no chicken."

"Then let's go."

In the boys slowly went. Two meager Boy Scout flashlights led the way, painting silent moving shadows onto

the flaking walls. Dark things scurried before the frail glow, their long tails trailing. Hallways disappeared into black holes. Partially open doors led to . . . nothing. Each step brought forth a groan from the shrinking planked floors.

"Ahhhhh, something got me!"

"Quiet, shush, shush."

A quick beam of light revealed the redheaded Donny entangled in a huge spider web. He quickly pulled at it as he did a strange jerky dance. Each boy nervously laughed, imagining what that would have felt like had it happened to him.

"Let's go up."

"Are you nuts? Not me."

But groups of young boys breed bravado. The stairs creaked and moaned as they slowly moved up the dusty steps.

One of the flashlights dimmed and went quickly out.

"I told you to put in new batteries," Casey barked softly at his brother.

About halfway up the stairs the banister had pulled away and was missing, leaving a yawning bottomless abyss.

At the top of the stairs they gathered and jostled, touching shoulders for courage.

Before them, halfway down the hall, a ray of weak light lay on the floor like a final line drawn in the sand. A pulse of frigid air found its way into the dank interior and massaged them, pulling forth shivers and causing goosebumps to rise on thin-haired skin. Outside, the wind's howling increased, and its powerful gusts made the loose old bones of the house rattle.

They silently made their way to the door. Jason reached out and grasped the knob and jerked his hand back as if snake-bit.

"The knob is like ice. What's in there?" he whispered.

A huge bang erupted as the door was slammed back. An enormous figure framed by the candlelight stood in the opening.

"WHAT DO YOU BOYS WANT HERE?" he bellowed.

*Continued on next page*

**Katie Hafner**

*Continued from page 1*

author or co-author of such books as *Cyberpunk*, *The House at the Bridge*, *Where Wizards Stay Up Late*, and *A Romance on Three Legs*. Her focus for the evening's talk was why she writes and what she has learned along the way.

Coming from a family of scientists, she wrote some as a child, but as a writer, she has learned to watch and observe and "stay close to what she feels she knows." In journalism, as she says, "you cannot make stuff up." And to write a book you may as well choose a topic about which you are passionate, right?

One way to do this is to tell a story through an inanimate object, as in the story of one piano in *A Romance on Three Legs*. A piano? The story is set around a World War II Steinway grand piano that Canadian pianist Glenn Gould adopted as his own. You will have to read the book to find out what happens.

Katie did the research for the book while she was a single mother and working full time at *The New York Times*. Writing the book took place a week at a time. This is where she discovered that "editing is arbitrary and subjective." It is very important to have an editor you are in sync with—one Norton editor she worked with loved the first half of the book and hated the second half, but could not say why.



**Katie Hafner urges us to write about something we love and feel passionate about.**

Luckily, her agent sent the book proposal to six different people and Annik LaFarge, then a publishing director at Bloomsbury, took on her book project. An amazing editor, she taught Katie how to edit her own book, no easy feat. She felt her editor on her shoulder, helping her to reset her brain and be objective about what she was reading.

She left us with the idea we should "write about something you love and feel passionate about." Something she did when writing *A Romance on Three Legs*. Something we can do ourselves when choosing a topic for our first book or next book. WT

### **September 5, 2009 Haiku Lithia Park, Ashland, Oregon**

Exquisite cello.  
Bright human rainbow strolls by.  
Couples play croquet.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

*To Dave Lane, my classmate, Monta Vista High School, 1973, who desired to get a picture—this is it.*

© 2009 Stephen C. Wetlesen

**Prowl**

*Continued from page 2*

experience, will snag your reader, as life does draw that "thread." Your experience, in some form, is theirs.

Much of our experience is vicarious and much comes from reading. Reading a good author critically, studying the presentation and movement, can be as rewarding for a writer as living that extra-full life. The promised result of this broadening is a narrative much closer to a reality your reader will recognize. He will see in your writing, if only in fragments, what he himself has experienced; give you his trust and stay with your story—and likely your career. WT

### **A Gothic Dare**

*Continued from previous page*

"Ahhhh!"

"Ahhhhhhh!"

Screams and tears and warm wet spots on pants erupted as the boys scrambled for the stairs and tumbled upon themselves to get down and out and far away.

Outside it had begun to rain. Thunder barked and streaks of lightning flashed in the intense night.

Two blocks away the soaked boys gathered in the visitors' dugout of the town park's baseball diamond.

"What was it?" Rusty panted.

"A bum, I think."

"No, a ghost, a ghost."

"No, a Stoker, that's who it was, or what's left of them."

One boy laughed. He was the oldest, if only by a few months.

"No, you're all wrong. It was JJ Waley, a Valley High senior, and behind him was his girlfriend, Gretchen. Probably just looking for a little privacy on Halloween." 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](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.com) or to the club post office box and we will add your listing to our directory of experts.*

## Asia, Japan, China, Russia

Bill Belew  
[belew@panasianbiz.com](mailto:belew@panasianbiz.com)

## Astrology, Singing

Sara Aurich  
[saraaurich@comcast.net](mailto:saraaurich@comcast.net)

## Astronomy, History of Astronomy

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

## Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.  
[ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net](mailto:ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net)

## Counseling

Dr. Audry L. Lynch  
[GLYNCH7003@sbcglobal.net](mailto:GLYNCH7003@sbcglobal.net)

## Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg  
[geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net)

## Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber  
[marthaengber.com](http://marthaengber.com)  
[marthaengber.blogspot.com](http://marthaengber.blogspot.com)

## Hiking, Backpacking, Scuba, Bicycling, Classic Cars, Running

Rick Deutsch  
[MrHalfDome@gmail.com](mailto:MrHalfDome@gmail.com); 408-888-4752

## Hospital and Nursing Environment

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

## Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/ Psychology

Dave Breithaupt  
[dlbmlb@comcast.net](mailto:dlbmlb@comcast.net)

## Library Science

Molly Westmoreland  
[mulcarend@hotmail.com](mailto:mulcarend@hotmail.com)

## Marketing and Management

Suzy Paluzzi, MBA  
[jomarch06@yahoo.com](mailto:jomarch06@yahoo.com)

## Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson  
[Marjohnson89@earthlink.net](mailto:Marjohnson89@earthlink.net)

## Philosophy, Religion, Evolution, Construction, Crafts, Norse

Darwin Mathison  
[olddinosaur@comcast.net](mailto:olddinosaur@comcast.net)

510-471-8944

## Profile Writing

Susan Mueller  
[susan\\_mueller@yahoo.com](mailto:susan_mueller@yahoo.com)

## Real Estate, Horses, Remodeling, Southwest History

Reed Stevens  
[reedstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:reedstevens@earthlink.net); 408-374-1591

## Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard  
[Btauchard@aol.com](mailto:Btauchard@aol.com)

## Television Production

Woody Horn  
408-266-7040

## USMC and NASA/Ames

Terry DeHart  
[tdehart@earthlink.net](mailto:tdehart@earthlink.net)

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## Self-Publish Your Book: Lisa Alpine & Carla King

### Fort Mason Center in San Francisco

**Sunday, Oct. 4, 2009 10-5 p.m.**

**\$85 (SBW members \$75)**

In this dynamic workshop, "Authors at the Crossroads: Turn Toward Self-Publishing," you will learn

- Printing strategies for offset, print-on-demand, and eBooks
- The many choices for distribution and fulfillment
- How to effectively market and publicize your book
- How to construct a realistic timeline, budget, and what to outsource
- How to create your platform and assert your brand
- Low-cost and no-cost author and publisher services companies
- How to make the most of your website and social media tools

Lisa and Carla are longtime self-published authors, coaches, consultants, and high-energy workshop leaders with clients from first-time authors to multi-book stars. On their own and with their group the Wild Writing Women, they've been active in the San Francisco Bay Area literary community for over a decade.

For more details, visit [CarlaKing.com/workshops/crossroads](http://CarlaKing.com/workshops/crossroads) or call Lisa at 415.887.8820

# CWC Around the Bay

These are the published meeting times and locations for the other 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 the Casa Munras Hotel, 700 Munras Avenue, 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).  
[mtdiablowriters.org](http://mtdiablowriters.org)

**Tri-Valley:** Meets the third Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Oasis Grille, 780 Main Street, Pleasanton.  
[trivalleywriters.com](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.  
[sacramento-writers.org](http://sacramento-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:** Meetings are held on the first Sunday of the month (except for holiday weekends), from 3-5 p.m. at Copperfield's Books, 2316 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa.  
[redwoodwriters.org](http://redwoodwriters.org)

**Fremont:** Meets (except in July, December, and on holiday weekends) from 2-4 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of the month at Mountain Mike's Pizza, 35760 Fremont Blvd., in the Brookvale Shopping Center, one block south of Decoto Road in Fremont. Contact, Bob Garfinkle: [ragarf@earthlink.net](mailto:ragarf@earthlink.net) or (510) 489-4779

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>October 2009</h1>					1 2	3
4	5	6	7 7P Board Meeting LaRoche residence	8	9 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	10 11A Editors' Powwow (Virtual)
11	12	13 6p Monthly Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn, Sunnyvale Panel Discussion <b>Literary Costume Party</b>	14	15	16 <b>WritersTalk deadline</b> 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	17
18	19	20	21	22	23 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		<b>November 10</b> 6P Monthly Dinner Meeting Larsen & Pomada				<b>Future Flashes</b>

## Stay Informed!

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

[southbaywriters.com](http://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)

Check out the new  
South Bay Writers  
**Blog**  
[southbaywriters.com](http://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](mailto:captainlappin@netzero.net) and have a look at PCSJ's website, [www.pcsj.org](http://www.pcsj.org)

## South Bay Writers Anthology



\$12.50 + 9.25% sales tax  
At the meeting.  
On the website.  
[southbaywriters.com](http://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

Cosponsored by the  
Creative Writing Department at  
San José State University

Free admission.

See [pcsj.org](http://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

**Next Monthly Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 13, 6:00 p.m.**

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

**Panel Discussion**

**“What to Know About  
Getting Published”**

**And don't forget the Lit-  
erary Costume Party.**  
You are invited to come  
dressed as a literary  
work, character, author,  
or genre.

