



WRITERSTALK

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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

March Speaker

Nina Amir: Five Essentials for Nonfiction Writers

by Bill Baldwin

Seasoned journalist, nonfiction editor, author, consultant, and writing coach with more than 30 years of experience in the publishing field, Nina Amir founded *Write Nonfiction in November* and serves as the national Jewish Issue Examiner at Examiner.com. She has edited or written for more than 45 local, national, and international magazines, newspapers, e-zines, and newsletters on a full-time or freelance basis. Her essays have been published in five anthologies and can be found in numerous e-zines and Internet article directories.

Nina will discuss "Five Things Every Nonfiction Writer Needs to Get Published" based on her experiences as a professional nonfiction book consultant and six years as attendee and insider at the San Francisco Writers Conference. She will draw on knowledge gained from her mentoring by Michael Larsen and from running *Write Nonfiction in November* and her own blog. In the blog, nonfiction experts offer a wealth of information on how to get published today.

Nina's topics will include Great Idea, Great Pitch, Great Platform, Great Proposal, and Chutzpah.

Nina in fact writes *four* blogs and has *seven* books **Nina Amir** in various stages of the writing/publishing process. She has a proven track record as a book editor: one of her client's books, *Enlightened Leadership*, was first self-published then rereleased verbatim by Simon & Schuster (Fireside); another, *Radical Forgiveness*, won a 1998 Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Award and received a contract from William Morrow but remained self-published and went on to sell more than 115,000 copies. *Radical Forgiveness* recently was purchased by Sounds True. Another book, *Finding Heaven Here*, was recently purchased by O Books. Her clients' nonfiction proposals regularly help them land contracts with agents, and agents send prospective clients to her for proposal consultation.

You won't want to miss Nina Amir and the information she has to share at the dinner meeting on March 9! wt



February Recap

Michelle Gagnon

by Victoria M. Johnson

Mystery author Michelle Gagnon opened her talk with the announcement that instead of lecturing she would rather answer any questions we had about writing and publishing. Several hands went up then and continued to go up throughout the evening until finally we ran out of time. Below is a sampling of the questions and Michelle's astute replies.

How did you trade in your day job for a writing career? Michelle was a freelance journalist for websites, magazines, and newspapers. At that time she wrote short stories. A friend had told her that short stories were the hardest to sell and recommended that she weave them together to make a novel. Michelle took that advice, and 50 agents rejected the resulting manuscript. She reread it and realized it was ghastly. While working on a new project, Michelle killed off a main character. She kept going and an FBI character showed up. Though it wasn't what she usually wrote, she thought it was okay to keep going with the story as an exercise. That manuscript became her first published book, *The Tunnels*, a thriller about a series of ritualized murders in the abandoned tunnel system beneath a university.

Someone asked about the 50 agents to whom Michelle submitted her first manuscript. Michelle said she learned several things from that experience. First, before submitting, put the manuscript away for a while and come back to read it with fresh eyes. Next, she learned to research and pitch to specific agents. She would not recommend mass

Registration for East of Eden is now open!

Special writing contest grand prize of \$1000!

See pages 2 and 4 and southbaywriters.com

Continued on page 13

President's Prowling

by Dave LaRoche
President, South Bay Writers

Why Am I Writing?

“Why Am I Writing?” is the theme of our 2010 East of Eden Conference in September and an often-asked question.

At some point we all stand aside from our writing selves and pose the question. Some find an easy answer, some are puzzled, some quit the asking and the writing, the answer too elusive. Conferences are intended to assist in that search and underscore the revelations. At conferences we discover why we write.

Our craft is on the move—different ways of expressing our ideas are emerging: new genres, the how-to of new structures, and the how of defining characters to appeal to current readers. I see a new look at dialog, POV, and storytelling (one or two emerging with each issue of *Writer's Digest*). The “shattered mirror” technique to backstory is a good example. And what is old hat to some is experimental to others. I try to catch up at conferences—restore or add to my inventory.



East of Eden 2010, September 24–26

48 workshops in five tracks—fiction, nonfiction, mystery, poetry, and publishing.

Two night-owl sessions, two panels, two happy hours

Agents galore

Editors critiquing your submissions

Contests—a grand prize of \$1000 as well as first and second prizes in genre

All meals, including a Sunday noon barbeque on the lawn

Special early CWC full admission: \$325 through April 15; see southbaywriters.com for details

Another conference feature I like is the exchange; we call it networking. Every writer has solved a problem—say, discovered a unique approach to setting scenes that match a theme that drive a character—and we're not at all averse to sharing. Most insist on it. I like hobnobbing with my peers and the pros, and I dote on the success stories that abound. I may imagine them mine. Imagining oneself on the bestseller list is an excellent start at achieving it. Writers are my friends, and I enjoy the camaraderie, the openness, easy laughter, and warmth.

I have never pitched a book. Those I am working are not ready. Other authors have, and it is said at the coffee shop that this opportunity yields big results. Many have connected with an agent or been pointed to a better match. No slush piles at the conference; no waiting at the mailbox: feedback comes now.

Continued on page 13

Inside

Accolades 4

Shots on Goal 4

Writecraft: Tension, Please 5

Betty Auchard Receives

Matthews-Baldwin Award 5

Book Review: *The Lineup* 6

Funny Business at Cinequest 7

South Bay Writers Critique

Groups—Part 3 7

View from the Board 8

Learning to Speak 9

April Workshop 10

Life Sentence 11

The Big Kissoff 12

Breaking Poetry 12

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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 Galvacs
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Creative Works

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

Accolades

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Announcements and Advertisements

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx
Editor

Weed weather



Rain one day, sun the next. I swear that I can stand in the backyard and *see* the weeds grow.

I've also been seeing a lot of weeds popping up in written English, and I'm once again caught in my old bind between being a stalwart defender of proper use of the language and a crusty old fart who's simply resistant to change in what is by definition a dynamic field. Some demimondaine dictionaries seem to pick up any neologism that touches their hems and are even telling unwary users that it's

all right to write *alright* as one word. It's small comfort to note that *alot* doesn't seem to have gained any lexical traction.

Homonym errors will likely always be among us; a common one is *reign/rein*. To give *free reign* to one's feelings at least makes a certain amount of sense and implies that the writer knows what *reign* means. But to see *free reign* rather than the correct *free rein* suggests that we've moved far enough from horse-and-buggy days for people no longer to know what it means to give *free rein* to a horse.

Perhaps it's a cheap shot to single out transliterations of foreign languages for attention here, but *swaray* and *ordurbs* did stop me cold. One would think *soirée* is used commonly enough in English that almost any writer would have run across it somewhere, and googling "appetizers" shows "appetizers **hors d'oeuvres**" (bold-face included) under "related searches." Admittedly, *hors d'oeuvres* is a little tricky, but still.

Chopping at the bit can be explained as a lack of familiarity with horses (who *champ* at the bit) in the same way as *free rein*. Further to emphasize today's reliance on mechanical devices for transportation is *taking a different tact*. Clearly, the author of that phrase doesn't know what it means to *tack* in a sailboat.

Apparently even *kitty-corner* can be elusive. I saw it in one place as *kiddie-corner* (which gave me an image of kindergartners sitting at a little table) and in another as *caddy cornered* (which I suppose may reflect the earlier *cater-corner*, "cater" meaning diagonally and deriving from French "quatre").

Meredy and I both collect these misuses—found primarily but by no means exclusively on the Internet—because we find them so boggling, amusing, and frightening. I was baffled at how so many of them might have come about, but Meredy had an instant theory: people are no longer expanding their vocabularies by reading but are attempting to reproduce what they've heard in conversation, on television, or in movies without having any idea what the expressions mean.

Perhaps that explains such prizes as *gorged by a bull* (maybe that writer thought the bull was going to eat its victim), dropping a *priced china cup* (it was expensive), commencing from a *sorted beginning* (that writer had no clue), a smile that *could have melted butter* (this one deserves a double award, one for mixed metaphor and one for pure ignorance of meaning), and *far be it for you* to help me out (I give up). I'm not making these things up, folks, I couldn't.

It's easy to see why mangling the language like this is amusing. But one of the primary uses of language is to transmit information, and if writers don't know what they're talking about—what they're saying—then the opportunities for misunderstanding and trouble are huge. Just look at rhetorical activity in the political arena right now and the apparent success of Newspeak.

When April comes *gamboling* (not *gambling*) in on little lamb feet and things begin to dry out, at least I'll be able to have at the back yard with weedwhacker and rototiller. WT

Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

As I sit this Sunday afternoon, the rain peppers the sidewalk as the sun peaks an errant cloud. The dampness subsides and the earth is warmed by soft spring rays. A gas fire burns inside, my rat terrier



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

pup sleeps in her pink princess doggie bed, and I am, as they say, having a Zen moment. All this sets the tone for my writing, which takes place in a small office space in our bedroom. And it works; I only need to *plant my rear to get the writing muse in gear*. Zen moments often result in successful writing. A few members have their own versions of

good news:

- Audry Lynch has just returned from the first lap of an around-the-world tour on Cunard Cruise Lines' *Queen Mary 2*. Invited by the ship's social director, she gave her Steinbeck talk as a guest lecturer. To her delight, her mostly British audience said they remembered reading Steinbeck in school. Her talk is on DVD in the ship's archives.
- Victoria Johnson happily reported that her nonfiction proposal for a grant writing book has been sold to McGraw-Hill for a November 2010 publication date. Congrats, Victoria!
- Betty Auchard, in conjunction with Dog and Pony Show post-production audio (dogandponystudios.net), recently completed the audio book of *Dancing in My Nightgown* for Stephens Press.



Betty poses with the Dog and Pony Studio technical crew upon completion of her recording session. Photo: Tina Olson

To all of you who shared your writing success stories at the February meeting, congratulations. Please email me directly at accolades@southbaywriters.com to have your good news appear in "Accolades." It is an easy way to ensure that everyone knows what is going on in the South Bay Writers' community. Look forward to hearing from you. WT

Shots on Goal

by Victoria M. Johnson

In honor of hockey season, I thought I'd



Victoria M. Johnson
Contributing Editor

write about how a popular hockey term relates to writing. In hockey, the phrase *shots on goal* refers to how many times the players take a shot with the puck to score. I'm of the opinion that, in writing, shots on goal refers to how many times a writer submits her work for publication. That's kind of obvious. But let's look a little deeper. In hockey, there's a lot of skating, passing, and fighting, in the players' quest to score.

Writers spend their time thinking, plotting, and writing and sometimes fighting in their quest for publication. Where the hockey players have thousands of fans screaming at them if they don't take shots, writers often have only themselves or critique partners to answer to. But what other difference is there? Well, there is the net itself. That small square with a big guy (goalie) holding a big stick ready to whack the puck, or the opposing player, if either comes near his territory. That net is the

goal. That is what every player is aiming for. It doesn't matter where on the ice the puck goes, the players are continually trying to get it back to the net, to where they can score.

For writers it's a little more complicated. Our goal is publication, right? But what is preventing us from our goal? Do we have a big guy with a stick standing in front of the mailbox or the send button on our computers? Do we have other mean guys with sticks trying to wipe us out? No. Not usually. Hockey players know the more times they take good, deliberate shots at the goal, the more chance they have of scoring. Hmm . . . not bad shots. Not wayward shots. Not weak shots. But practiced, strategic shots at their goal. Ever watch a game where your team is not shooting the puck? They could be making great passes, playing awesome defense, creating explosive breakaway opportunities, and then not shoot the puck! What happens? The other team, perhaps not playing as gracefully, will steal it, whisk it down the ice, and take a shot on goal. They do this over and over and finally they score! My favorite team, the Detroit Red Wings, often won games where there were 50 shots on goal and they scored only three points.

Continued on page 11

2010 East of Eden Writing Contest

Don't miss the 2010 East of Eden Conference Writing Contest!

- Categories: Short Fiction, Novel, Poetry, and Nonfiction
- Prizes: \$200 for first place in each category; \$100 for second place
- Special Grand Prize of \$1,000!
- Deadline: July 15, 2010.
- Cost: \$20 per entry
- Maximum length: Prose is 3,500 words; poetry, 3 pages.
- No limit on the number of entries.

Winners will be notified at the conference and receive their prizes on Saturday night after dinner. They may read their entries at a special night-owl session.

You must register for the conference to be eligible to enter the contest.

See southbaywriters.com/EastofEden2010/writing_contest.html for complete details.

Writecraft: Tension, Please

by Lisa Eckstein

I first heard literary agent Donald Maass at a conference two years ago, and what stuck with me most from that presentation was a concept he calls *micro-tension*. When I attended a workshop



Lisa Eckstein
Contributing Editor

with Maass in January (recap in February *WT*), he discussed the same technique in more depth, and I was gratified that one of my tablemates declared it the most valuable insight of the day.

Micro-tension refers to small doses of conflict that appear throughout a story, ideally in every line. At the core, the strategy is so simple that it's hard to believe it's not obvious: to keep your audience reading, make every sentence compel them to wonder what will happen in the next one. Yet for many writers, myself included, this idea isn't apparent until someone like Maass points it out. How to put the theory into practice in a manuscript is even harder to grasp.

Maass says the foundation of micro-tension is the conflicting emotions of characters. What makes a passage of dialogue, an action scene, or a description come to life for the reader is an indication of how a character feels about what he's saying, doing, or seeing. If the emotions are unexpected, or if they are at odds with the character's obligations or with the desires of other characters, then you've got something really worth reading.

Once I started thinking about micro-tension, I realized that it underlies much of the writing advice I've received. I'd been learning to cut unnecessary pieces from my manuscript—greetings and farewells that frame conversations, travel interludes between scenes, unimportant backstory—as I gained enough perspective on my own writing to recognize that these parts are boring. But the more subtle lesson is that boring passages are not the ones with particular types of content but those with no tension. While small talk in fiction should usually be edited out, a scene in

which sworn enemies must chitchat about the contents of the breakfast buffet could be the most gripping event of a chapter.

In real life, we strive to minimize conflict, but a lack of tension makes for dull fiction. If your dialogue feels flat, maybe it's because your characters are being too nice to one another. Get them into an argument, or when that isn't possible, reveal that their thoughts are far less charitable than their words. Is your character at a point of decision? The wrong choice is usually better for the story, particularly if the reader has enough information to know that it's a mistake.

Micro-tension can also create riveting prose from a scene in which nothing happens. This is an advanced skill that I know I haven't mastered yet, but I'm starting to recognize it when I read. Literary fiction is notorious for being light on plot and heavy on interior monologue and description, so by a casual analysis these novels violate the rules of good storytelling. Why are they acclaimed? The secret is that each passage is imbued with strong emotion, and there's conflict in every sentence, even when on the surface not much is going on.

I've used the idea of micro-tension to improve many scenes during revision. In the novel I'm currently working on, two characters get married. They do it hastily, with a small, simple wedding. The reasons for this are an important and well-explored part of the plot. The wedding itself doesn't do anything to move the story forward. In the first draft, I spent only a couple of pages on the event, and when I reached that point in the rewrite, I considered cutting the wedding entirely and just making clear that it occurred. That didn't feel right; I was afraid the omission would appear sinister in a way I didn't intend.

The problem with the wedding was that if I wrote about the characters' happiness, the scene would be generic and add nothing to the story. If I explored their feelings regarding the circumstances of the marriage, it would be redundant with other, higher-tension scenes. After contemplating where else conflict could come from, I ended up with a short account of the ceremony filtered through the groom's regret—not

about getting married, but that their momentous occasion is celebrated with so little fanfare. I think my solution keeps the reader interested with conflict and emotion beyond the obvious. And I hope my example illustrates the kind of attention you might give your own fiction.

This column presents my own take on micro-tension, but most of the ideas originate from Donald Maass. To learn more, read his book *The Fire in Fiction: Passion, Purpose, and Techniques to Make Your Novel Great* (see chapter 8, "Tension All The Time"). Find an excerpt and discussion of micro-tension at wordswimmer.blogspot.com/2009/04/beachtalk-with-donald-maass-on-creating.html WT

Betty Auchard Receives Matthews-Baldwin Award

by Carolyn Donnell

The Matthews-Baldwin Service Award, named to honor the dedication to the club of long-standing members Edie Matthews and Bill Baldwin, acknowledges SBW's appreciation of the outstanding service of one of its members.

This year the award goes to Betty Auchard, for generously opening her home for the Holiday Bash for more years than anyone can remember, for donating her artistic talents to *Writers-Talk*, for being a benefactor of the East of Eden Writers Conference, for being a mixer lubricant during meetings, and for—being Betty.



President Dave LaRoche presents this year's Matthews-Baldwin Award to Betty Auchard. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Book Review

by Chuck Peradotto

The Lineup: The World's Greatest Crime Writers Tell the Inside Story of Their Greatest Detectives

Edited by Otto Penzler. New York, Little, Brown and Company, 2009. 402 pp. \$25.99. ISBN 978-0-316-03193-6

The Lineup is one of those rare books that give the inside dope in the actual words of the writer. If you are a fan of crime fiction, this book will give you the insight into how successful authors discovered and built some of the most memorable characters ever.

Twenty-three famous crime writers unlock the doors to their writing studios and give the reader the rare opportunity to peer into the hard drives of their laptops.

In the introduction, editor Otto Penzler, owner of The Mysterious Bookshop in New York, expounds on the state of independent bookstores and reading in general. Each section starts with a brief biography of the author. Then the authors peel away the layers of their central characters like an onion.

English-born author Lee Child was an insatiable reader in all genres before he developed the famous and popular Jack Reacher. He was a big fan of John D. MacDonald, who became a major influence on his writing. Lee started writing with a yellow pad and pencil. Not surprisingly his first writing conclusion was “character is king,” and thus in *Killing Floor* was born Jack Reacher, an ex-military cop and a loner with his own sense of justice. Here’s a small taste: Reacher’s West Point football career was limited to only one game, “Why?” someone asked. “Were you injured?” “No,” he replied, “I was too violent.”

Each of the authors tries to answer the question of where these fascinating and long-lasting characters come from. What happens when a character becomes almost real to the author?

Michael Connelly first introduced his character Hieronymus Bosch in *The Black Echo* and went on to write many more Bosch novels. Connelly, who was raised in Pennsylvania, decided he wanted to write in California like his

heroes Chandler, MacDonald, and Wambaugh. So he set out and was hired by the *Los Angeles Times* and assigned the crime beat. Thus he got paid to research his fiction. Michael’s novels are heavily influenced by jazz and the world surrounding it. Hieronymus was named after a fifteenth-century Flemish painter of hellish landscapes, a perfect counterpart for the dark underworld of LA.

Each of the contributors to *The Lineup* attempts to give us the relevant background and an in-depth insight into his or her creations.

Robert Crais has two characters—Elvis Cole and Joe Pike—who “live in his head every day of his life.”

Jeffery Deaver’s quadriplegic detective Captain Lincoln Rhyme is a master who has taken forensic science to a new level. Deaver chose to convey that to us in a mock obituary.

Bob Lee Swagger, also known as “The Nailer,” was introduced by Stephen Hunter in *Point of Impact*. The Nailer is an ex-marine sniper whose life parallels but is different from that of the real-life sniper Carlos Hathcock, who had 93 kills. Hunter became a student of Hathcock’s character and the tools and mechanics of being a sniper. Learn how and why Bob is also roughly patterned after Ty Cobb, the famous baseball player.

Faye Kellerman writes characters Rina Lazarus, a Jewish woman, and Detective Peter Decker. Kellerman’s childhood imaginary friends resurfaced as adults after she completed higher education and was raising two children. She struggled to set herself apart from others writing in the genre, including her own husband. Faye learned to write as most aspiring writers do, by becoming her own student, teacher, editor and critic. She wrestled long and deep to create the type of unique character she wanted. She also hears the characters’ dialogue in her head.

Jonathan Kellerman wrote *When the Bough Breaks* in 1985 and brought into this world his character Alex Delaware, a Ph.D. in psychology. Jonathan himself is a clinical psychologist turned crime writer, so he brings incredible validity to his stories. Jonathan patterned Alex after himself plus the himself he would

like to be. “After all, writing fiction is like playing God.” Kellerman has another main character, police detective Milo Sturgis, a gay man who is a member of the LAPD, no less.

Each writer chose to treat the expose of his character differently, which makes for some intriguing reading.

David Morrell drew on his love for the TV series *Route 66* and integrated its style into his writing in *First Blood*, where he brought us Rambo.

Carol O’Connell’s character Kathleen Mallory, an NYPD detective and sociopath, first appeared in *Mallory’s Oracle*. Carol gives us great insight into not only Mallory but the crime writing genre in general. When asked what she did, O’Connell replied, “I just kill people.”

The prolific late Robert B. Parker delves into the creation of the popular Spencer, the classic hard-boiled private detective, a man who doesn’t like rules or most structure and is very much his own man.

We learn what the writers bring of themselves to their characters and are shown which of their own real-life observations and experiences come into play. Is the character like the writer or the way the writer imagines he could be in a different, perfect life?

Anne Perry uses Charlotte and Thomas Pitt to tell her stories. The son of a gamekeeper but educated with the estate owner’s son, Thomas learned the ways of both the aristocracy and the common man. He met Charlotte while investigating the murder of her sister. She is a woman of high upbringing, deep character, and integrity. Her keen sense of observation allows her to assist in her husband’s cases.

My only wish is that a book like this could have been written by authors no longer with us. How we would love to peek between the ears of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Mickey Spillane, John D. MacDonald, and others.

One word of advice when reading *The Lineup*: keep a pen and pad close to jot down the numerous books mentioned that could be worth exploring. WT



South Bay Writers Critique Groups— Part 3

by Carolyn Donnell

So far I have presented two critique groups attended by South Bay members—Valley Writers and Northpoint Writers. This month's focus is Le Boulanger Writers (my name for them because of their meeting place).

Members attended the Pruneyard Barnes and Noble group from September 2007, until September 2009. When that group dissolved, Karen Hartley and three others moved down a few doors to Le Boulanger bakery and coffee shop. The group consists of South Bay members Leah Hayland and Dave Strom and nonmembers Karen Hartley and Kathy Dalziel.

Karen is currently working on a romance novel. She has also written a memoir of her days in Brooklyn, NY, and is planning another about her life as a young person in an Italian family with roots on Palm Street in San Jose. Leah's name has appeared in *WritersTalk* before. She published a few confession stories ages ago, but now concentrates on mysteries. Her current book is a cozy, set in England. Dave, a technical

writer by day, dons his green power ring at night and works on his satirical novel about super superheroes, an interest of his since the days when he wrote "Strom's Index," a column for *Amazing Heroes* magazine. Kathy is writing a series of related short stories that she plans to incorporate into a book.



Le Boulanger critique group: Karen Hartley, Kathy Dalziel, Dave Strom, Leah Hayland: Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Each member brings printouts to the group—one copy for each person. They take the copies home, write comments, and bring them back to the next session. The authors then read their selections aloud and receive critiques. This method combines the benefits of hearing the selection read aloud with having time to read and make notes.

Members say the group helps them to keep on writing and moving forward. They say they like hearing the authors' voices when they read their selections

and also that the group is a lot of fun. (The fact that someone usually brings cookies doesn't hurt either.)

This group is open to new members. Contact Karen at Sew1Machin@aol.com.

If you are interested in finding or starting a critique group, you can begin by emailing networking@southbaywriters.com.

You don't have to limit yourself to just one group. Dave belongs to another critique group in Fremont, and in February's *WritersTalk*, I mentioned that Marjorie Johnson also belongs to more than one group. If you are a member of the South Bay Writers Yahoo group, SouthBay_Writers_Exchange, you could also ask about critique groups there.

It is my goal to write something about every critique group with South Bay member participants. The first hurdle to that goal, however, is finding them all. So if you're currently in a critique group and have not already been contacted by me about featuring your group in *WritersTalk*, you can email the above networking email address with your contact information.

Thanks to everyone for helping to make critique groups and the lessons learned from them more available to all our members. WT

Funny Business at Cinequest

by Edie Matthews

What do O. Henry, Ogden Nash, and Charlie Chaplin have in common? All three make us laugh—and their skill at humor made them famous.

Comedy can enhance any creative work. It doesn't matter whether it's a short story, a poem, or a novel. A humorous line or scene adds another layer.

Even tragedy is improved with humor. William Shakespeare used witty dialogue and comedy throughout *Hamlet*. If you don't recall, go back and reread the graveyard scene in Act V or watch it on Youtube. (I recommend the version with Kenneth Branagh and Billy Crystal.)

But if you're not naturally funny, how

do you create mirth? You could read some of the books explaining comedy techniques; or you could analyze jokes, comedy routines, or amusing scenes on your own; or you could start by attending the comedy workshops sponsored by Cinequest.

Cinequest, the San Jose Film Festival, celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. In addition to the 200 new films and celebrity speakers, they are hosting three workshops that focus on humor. The first two are "How to Write Comedy for the Big Screen" and "Comedy Writing for Television."

Each workshop has an impressive panel of successful writers like Lew Hunter (*Sideways*), Richard Walter (*Everybody Loves Raymond* and *The Office*), Marley Sims (*Cheers*), and Fred Rubin (*Night Court*).

The third workshop, "The Maverick Spirit Conversation," will have a special

guest and will be hosted by James Dalessandro (he taught the screenwriting workshop for us in 2007).

The best part of these events is the price—only \$20 for all three.

So if you'd like to add a little humor to your writing and would like to learn how the pros do it—or if you'd like to be entertained by a rollicking group of writers, check on these workshops on Friday, March 5, at Cinequest, beginning at 10 am, at the University Theatre at SJSU. To purchase a ticket before they're sold out, go to cinequest.org.

WT

Dawn

Deep darkness beyond,
A bright speck in the Cosmos—
Swirling towards Dawn.

—Sally A. Milnor

View from the Board

by Jackie Mutz

February 3, 2010 SBW Board Meeting

Present: Dick Amyx, Bill Baldwin, Bill Belew, Richard Burns, Loureen Giordano, Marjorie Johnson, Dave LaRoche.

Announcements

There will be a change in the process of announcements during monthly meetings. Member mic announcements will be discontinued; members are encouraged to make flyers for pick up at front table. The meeting will now start at 6:45 p.m.

President's Report

East of Eden Conference essentially on track with registration scheduled to open on Feb. 15th. Keynoters signed, workshops 95% filled out, program established with 48 separate workshops that include fiction, nonfiction, mystery, publishing, and poetry. Two night-owl sessions that include panels and readings will follow an open bar and buffet dinner. Our writing contest will feature a \$1000 grand prize along with the usual. A comprehensive critique will be offered to any attendee submitting work and a \$35 check.

Vice President's Report

Upcoming events: February 9 speaker Michelle Gagnon, crime fiction author of *Boneyard*; March 9 speaker journalist, author and editor Nina Amir; April 13 speaker Jordon Rosenfeld (columnist for *Writers Digest*). Possibilities for May/June – Wendy Tokunaga, author of *Love in Translation*, and Claire Mullen, a media interview coach. Nina also sent 12 topics she could address.

Officer nominations will take place in April.

Treasurer's Report

- Jan. 12 General Meeting Summary: 52 attendees; 43 members; 9 guests; Net Profit = minus \$135.
- Jan. 23 Blog Workshop enrollment—66 paid (63 attended); Gross income \$2,695; net to SBW \$695.
- SBW Assets Balance as of Jan 31: \$23,100, holding steady.
- Q2 (FY 2009–2010) report for SBW sent to state CPA Jan 7.
- State taxes (CA 2009) for anthologies sent: ~\$155 for 166 books sold.

Central Board Report

Next meeting scheduled for March 14.

Officers are elected in July.

Organizational tweaks resulting in fewer meetings and smaller budgets are in the offing.

NorCal Report

Next meeting is scheduled for March 6th—anyone interested in the group's promotion of events and circumstances related to branch members' writing and publishing is welcome to attend. The Pema Osel Ling writing retreat (redwoods) has 16 people signed up as of Feb 1. A website and associated blog intended to foster collaboration and sharing is under development (to include things like event calendar, speaker evaluations, branch operations, branch and group news, etc.).

Committee Reports

Membership: Marjorie Johnson said that we gained three new members in January and lost one, with a net increase of two to 197 members. Marjorie will need help during renewal time as she will be processing EoE registrations as well.

Publicity/PR: Edie Matthews (absent) reported that Press Releases for February's meeting were sent out in January. Also contacted speaker and asked her to list us on her website. Michelle Gagnon will put her speaking engagement on her website, Facebook and Twitter. Also sent announcement to San Jose Events menu, but not sure we'll be accepted. Bill Belew reported that the Meetup number is up to 58 writers.

Open Mic: Bill Baldwin reported Jan. 1 (Almaden), canceled; Jan. 8 (Santana Row), 3 readings; Jan. 15 (Pruneyard), 9 readings; Jan. 22 (Sunnyvale), 10 readings.

Web: Ro Davis (absent) reported the EoE information is now on website (registration to open Feb. 15).

Networking/Hospitality: Cathy Bauer (absent) reported no updates on critique groups. Another means for brownies/cookies is needed as she can no longer do the baking.

Newsletter: Dick Amyx reported the February issue was 16 pages, printed and mailed on January 29. Press run was 194 dues-paid members, 13 comps,

and 15 extras for a total of 222. He hasn't received the invoice for February yet. (The cost for January was \$252.87, which included the cost of the envelopes at approximately 4¢ each.)

Anthology: Dick Amyx reported that the planned sales meeting is still in the making. Copy of the anthology for copyright and Library of Congress number has not been sent in yet.

Young Writers: Marilyn Fahey (absent) reported room deposit not yet made on reserved room for April 17 event.

- Will ask SBW members (through the newsletter and at the next club meeting) if anyone interested in being a presenter.
- May have three classes this time instead of four.

East of Eden: Dave LaRoche reported that a caterer is being selected, registration begins Feb. 15 (Early Bird rate for CWC members), 40 workshops are slated with 32 presenters, including 5 keynoters. New events are the cocktail hour and the Sunday barbecue out on the lawn.

Learning Center: Richard Burns reported three core people attended the January lessons. Betty Auchard's house is a possible location for the lessons.

Workshops: Bill Belew reported on the Blogging Workshop. 62 attended; 55 registered—13 signed up at the door; 29 requested a Part II to the workshop.

Three proposals for upcoming workshops:

- Blogging—Part II (by popular demand)
- Step-by-step to working with an indie-publisher/editor.
- A close look at the traditional route to publishing.

New Business:

Dave presented some amendments to the policy regarding the Matthews-Baldwin Award for Service. The changes allow for some flexibility in when the award is presented and reduces the number of committee members from five to three.

Adjourned at 9:14 p.m. Next meeting scheduled for March 3, 2010. **wr**



Learning to Speak

by Phyllis Mattson

It's 1968, and I'm sitting in a small auditorium at a high school in San Jose. On the stage are several men from the Department of Education in Washington, dressed in smart business suits, visiting San Jose to certify the Metropolitan Adult Education (MAE) program. I am here as part of the Adult Education Senate, an advisory committee, a job I applied for in response to an ad for volunteers. There are several of us "Senators." Our duties are to attend monthly meetings and give opinions on matters being considered by the MAE staff. Today we are being asked to tell the visiting bureaucrats about our experiences in the program, why we're taking classes, and how they have helped us. MAE is the only school district in the country that has a student advisory committee, so the representatives from the Department of Education are very anxious to hear from us Senators.

We Senators are a diverse group. I am a stay-at-home mom taking a sewing class. Well aware of my extraordinary education (two Master's degrees) compared to the others, I am dreading this day because I am scared of speaking in public. When I stand up to speak at our monthly meetings my knees shake, and I am aware of my face flushing and voice breaking. At least we won't have to be on stage—we can speak from our seats.

The first person to speak, a Mexican mother of six children, explains that she wants to be a good model for her children and incidentally to get a high school diploma. She speaks well, despite her accent and improper grammar. Her story is riveting, as are all the others. "Joe," a man of about 40 who is working on a GED because he dropped out of school, wants to encourage his fifteen-year-old son to stay in school. Li Jun, a middle-aged Chinese immigrant, wants to be able to speak fluent English; he has prepared his talk in writing. Michael, an older man who has always wanted to get his diploma but didn't finish high school because of World War II and his long stay in the service, will graduate this year. The stories are touching and speak to us of

the power of ambition, of fulfilling dreams, and of getting a second chance.

And what will I say? I'm scared to speak. I've always been afraid to speak in front of a class. I want to say, "Despite my advanced degrees, at this stage of my life I still have things to learn that I didn't have time for before, a chance to explore other subjects. I've taken other classes, too—physical education, sex education for parents, home gardening—and I think that the adult schools are great for the community." But when it comes to actually making my speech, I stumble over words, I wring my hands, my face flushes, and once again I feel humiliated and embarrassed. Why can't I speak in a relaxed and comfortable way? I end my talk by saying that my next class will be public speaking, and everybody laughs.

And so it was: I signed up immediately for the MAE public speaking class. There was urgency too—I had applied for and gotten a job teaching anthropology at the adult school, and the class would start the next fall.

The public speaking class was relatively small, and we each had to prepare a talk every week. The teacher gave us guidelines and suggested that we make a point outline. She gave us an assignment each week and, following her guidelines and the critiques she and others gave, I improved immediately. What a relief—and how easy! Why didn't I do this a long time ago? Well, actually, I had taken a public speaking class at San Francisco State in my second year of college, but all I remember of that was how bad I was! I remember leaning on the table, stuttering, and just being self-conscious instead of focusing on what I had to say. I barely passed, and avoided speaking even more. When I became a teaching assistant at the University of Wisconsin, it was my job to lead a discussion-review class once a week, and I did OK, I guess, but I questioned my desire to become a college teacher because I was uncomfortable at the front of the classroom.

I never understood why it was that speaking publicly was so uncomfortable for me. It was really ironic—I was comfortable with people in small gatherings, had many friends, and made friends easily. Though my

husband lacked my ability to be comfortable in small gatherings and make friends easily, he had no trouble speaking before a gathering of a thousand scientists at conferences.

The course I was taking had an immediate effect. At the next meeting of the Adult Education Board, I stood up straight and said what I planned to say, and my knees did not shake and my voice did not break! Wow, what a relief—and it did get noticed because the director asked me to be a speaker at the graduation ceremony that June. I was thrilled, and used my recently acquired information about public speaking to address several hundred people who were witnessing the graduation of a previous drop-out family member. It went well, and I was relieved that I had overcome this hurdle.

Many years have passed since then. I started teaching at community colleges and got good reviews from most of the students. Then I dared to give papers at professional meetings. One I especially remember took place in Mexico City at an anthropology conference (in the mid-1970's) where I gave a paper on "Parents without Partners," an organization of which I was an unhappy member, having recently divorced. What made the talk memorable was that Margaret Mead, the legendary anthropologist, attended my presentation and complimented me! Now I liked public speaking, and continued to give papers and chair and organize panels at many other meetings. My classroom teaching became better.

Fast forward another thirty years: I have published my memoir and speak about it often, and look forward to those speaking occasions. I speak about my book at libraries, in schools to kids who are studying the Holocaust, to seniors in retirement homes, and to book clubs. I've gotten good at speaking, and now, even though I'm nearly 80 years of age, my voice is still strong and I look forward to my next presentation. *WT*

The Poet's Path

Peaceful perusing,
Pondering the Poet's Path—
Creative musing.

—Sally A. Milnor

April Workshop

Saturday, April 24, 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lookout Inn, 605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale (at the Sunnyvale Golf Course)

Bill Belew

Complete Hands-On Blogging

A hands-on workshop that explains in detail the how-to of blogging, from the nitty gritty of setting up a blog to the added perk of possibly earning six figures while building your platform. Registration fee includes continental breakfast and lunch.

The session will be broken into four parts. Participants are encouraged to bring a laptop or be prepared to take copious notes.

1. Creating a blog—finding a domain name, choosing software, picking a template, going public.
2. Putting up quality content—inserting images, internal and external links, finding hot topics, establishing a voice.
3. Building a network—Creating links to other writers, adding links to your books, making some money.
4. Q&A.

Bill holds a PhD in Education and an MFA in Creative Writing. In the four years that he's worked as a professional blogger, his pages have seen more than 20 million views. He has taught numerous other bloggers the principles he has learned. When participants of this workshop leave, they will **know** what it takes to achieve their blogging goals as well.



Early Bird Special—Register by April 1, 2010:

CWC members \$35; nonmembers \$45

After April 1 or at the door: CWC members \$45; nonmembers \$60

Students (24 and younger) \$25 with student ID

Registration fee includes continental breakfast and lunch

NOTE: cancellation in full, less \$10, before Apr. 17. No refunds after the 17th. (Hardship exceptions may apply. Contact dalaroche@comcast.net.)

Register online at southbaywriters.com

or clip and mail this coupon (or a copy of it) to

SBW Blogging

PO Box 3254

Santa Clara, CA 95055

Make check payable to South Bay Writers

Name _____

Street address _____

City, state, ZIP code _____

Phone number _____ Email _____

Early Bird Special
By April 1, 2010
CWC Members \$35
Nonmembers \$45

Regular Registration
After April 1 or at the door
CWC Members \$45
Nonmembers \$60

Student Registration
24 or younger, with ID
\$25

Life Sentence

by *Marcela Dickerson*

The chill in her heart was worse than the one coming from the open car window.

"It will be all right, it will be all right," she repeated, attempting to convince herself. The past fifteen days had been a rough reminder that life can suddenly become short and unforgiving.

Alyssa brushed her hair with her hand as she pressed the button to close the car window. Here she was once again, parked in front of the huge building to repeat her failed mammogram.

She zipped her purse and bravely exited the car on the way to her destiny. She had prayed, oh yes! But not as she did when she was young. Now she was mature and wiser: "Oh God, whatever it is, just give me strength to live with it!"

The only people in whom she had confided were her husband and three close friends she had seen during the last two weeks, which had seemed like eternity. She wouldn't mind knowing, but the uncertainty was killing her. At times she had managed to forget what was going on and had even enjoyed herself.

"It's funny," she thought, "we are dying every day, but we don't know when it'll happen; yet when we get advance notice, we stop living."

She had decided that this wouldn't happen to her—she would live to the fullest until the last minute.

Her husband had supported and even teased her; he felt what she was going through and complimented her for the way she was dealing with it.

She had decided to come alone, and now she entered the building and took the elevator to the third floor. If worse came to worst she would have a lumpectomy and radiation. She was too old to deal with anything else. Even though she was not afraid of dying, she hated pain.

She had even put her dental implants on hold. She'd told her dentist that it wouldn't make sense to spend money that her children and husband could use. He understood and hugged her as he said he would pray for her.

She handed her insurance card to the receptionist and signed the credit slip for the twenty-dollar copay. She was not nervous; probably her morning prayer and the B12 vitamin she'd taken with breakfast were kicking in.

She changed into the hospital gown and sat in the waiting area, unable to read her book. When her name was called she was taken to a different room from the one she had been in before; the technician was older, and appeared more experienced.

"Take off the gown," she said, before she started positioning Alyssa in front of the mammogram machine.

"This way, that way, closer, diagonal, perpendicular, horizontal. Hold your breath, now you can breathe," the same repeated over and over again.

Many digital images appeared and were stored on the computer screen.

Alyssa tried to help even though her right breast felt pureed between the two stiff plastic plates.

"We're almost done," Myrna the technician said twenty minutes later as she released Alyssa's sore breast from the last clasp.

"You may put on your gown and I'll go and show this to the doctor."

"How soon can I get the result?" Alyssa's voice was strong.

"Whether it is good or bad we'll let you know right away. No sense in having you worry anymore."

Myrna left the room as Alyssa let out a deep breath. At least she would know now.

In a few minutes she was back.

"I'll need to take one more" she said. "Take off your gown again and come to the machine." She took the picture and left the room without saying a word.

Soon she returned, her wide smile entering the room before she did.

"It's good!" she beamed. "You can get dressed now."

"What about the ultrasound?" Alyssa asked, still in doubt.

"You don't need it anymore! Congratulations, I'm very happy for you!"

"Me too! May I give you a hug?"

"More than one if you want." The

women hugged each other.

The digital equipment had been turned off. Alyssa's sentence had been commuted. She dressed quickly and left the building.

Once in her car she called her husband. He chuckled at the other end of the line. "I'm happy for you and for us; very happy!"

She tuned on the music and slowly pulled out of the parking lot, seagulls flying overhead. WT

March Marshmallow

Softy are you? The one someone asks: "Hey writer: I need help with writing-tasks."

March 'Springs' eternal with each longer day.

Don't lowball your talent.
For each word get pay!

—Pat Bustamante

Shots on Goal

Continued from page 4

Guess what? The other team had 40 shots on goal and scored two points. See how that works?

We're back to that question of why writers aren't taking their shots on goal. Are you submitting your work? If you don't submit your work, you can't be published. If publication is your goal, you have to take a shot at it. Over and over. I have a rule to always have something out there under consideration with an editor. Sometimes these editors take forever to reply and I end up with several projects waiting for a response. I find that the more I submit, the more rejections I get (just like hockey players getting denied by the goalie). But at least I'm in the game. At least there's hope for publication.

A few months ago I realized that I had six projects under consideration. I was excited because I had never done that before. I had six shots on goal. As it turned out, I got one rejection, two are still pending, and three were accepted! Sticking to my rule has made a difference. Every year during hockey season I'm reminded of that rule, and I'm re-inspired to keep taking those shots on goal. I encourage you to give it a try.
WT

The Big Kissoff

by K. O. Llewellyn

"Listen, you ignorant piece of cow plop, you know you can't just chitchat your evil little heart out with every pal on the street!" Cody Caulfield breathed deeply, as if preparing to exhale flames to consume her recalcitrant client. "Especially not to a guy you know very well to be a snitch!"

There was some mumbling on the other end of the line. Cody picked at some flaking paint on the window sill.

"No, I don't think it will blow over, and if you keep shutting your brain off every time you open your mouth, you'll end up getting all your legal help from a public defender."

She listened to more whining. "No." She picked up a tennis ball from the desk and threw it, hard, at a target on the wall. It ricocheted off the stained and warped paneling back at her. She let it bounce several times on the floor and roll under a credenza behind her as she listened to more excuses.

"I said no, you imbecile, and if I didn't owe your father big time, I'd toss you to the D.A. right now. Just shut up and get your butt over here."

She slammed the phone down hard enough to hurt her own ears.

"The elegant Mr. Diggerson, I presume?" Cody's secretary, Janet, leaned her plump shoulder against the doorframe and smirked. She'd heard it all before, many times. Cody's rages were legendary. Improving of late, but still pretty impressive. "Would you like me to get you some coffee? I'm headed to the shop downstairs."

"Do I look like I need coffee right now?" Cody snarled at her. "I need a good stiff swig of something a heck of a lot better than that." Her gaze slid off Janet and she knelt down to reach for the ball in the dust under the credenza.

"It's Wednesday, right?" Janet shrugged. "You can talk about it at your AA meeting." She turned and shut the door as she left.

Cody stood up and tossed the ball toward the cracked light fixture several times, changing which hand she caught

it in. She shouldn't take things out on Janet, who was the best, smartest and kindest person she knew. Being drunk had been so much easier than real life, even if it had reduced her to this crummy office in the low-rent part of town. Janet had put up with enough from her over the last five years.

She cooled off by continuing to toss the tennis ball around. It reminded her of her softball-playing days. Maybe she should go pitch some balls to her neighbors' kids after work. Her street was full of the little beasts, armed with bats, balls and mitts, and hitting fouls into windows all over the place. That might feel nice—pitch some balls and hear a few windows break, then run away with the kids to hide.

She laughed at herself a little. Her sense of humor was coming back—slowly, and in weird ways, like the softball fantasy. There had been a time she'd enjoyed the game on weekends during law school. Then she got out into the real world and nearly killed herself trying to be the up-and-coming star of her law firm. That's when she started dating Johnny Walker regularly instead of running bases.

She slammed the tennis ball into an open drawer and shoved it shut with her foot. The outer office door creaked open and the clickety-click of Janet's shoes moved into the reception area.

"Hey!" Cody yelled as she opened her own office door. "Is it Thursday? You've been gone forever." She smiled as Janet looked up and nodded.

"You wish. Then you'd already be done with your AA meeting." Janet set two coffees down on her desk and motioned Cody to come over and get one. She posed a little brown bag next to the coffees.

"I bought scones. Blueberry today."

"Janet, you are a jewel. Take the funds out of petty cash." Cody patted Janet's shoulder self-consciously. "Sorry I'm such a goose."

"Tell it to AA. That's where your confessions belong. How's that going, by the way?" Janet looked at her, then bit a big chunk of a scone and rolled her eyes in delight.

"I don't know how it's going." Cody broke a bit off the other scone and

nibbled it. "Some days it's okay, other days I dread seeing those same faces—knowing they all feel like they know all about what I'm feeling. Those days it ticks me off." WT

Breaking Poetry

by Steve Wetlesen

Respectfully, I wanted to demonstrate for *WritersTalk* readers a quickly created piece, manufactured, as it were, on the fly, just as an event was announced, quiet unexpectedly and much to my sudden surprise.

We need to observe the results of art that must be created rapidly and with little preparation, like a squadron of jet fighters rapidly scrambled into the sky with almost no notice.

A Brief Poetic Requiem for Merce Cunningham, Genius of the Choreographic Arts, Left the World Today, July 27, 2009

How do we plot the dance of the final infinitude, gliding movement, like a balletic shark circling through the great measureless silence, the timeless black vacuum?

And what elegance moves when death's hardened amber transfixes our afterglow beyond the purview of history?

Yet in this knowable life the unorthodox, unexpected never before seen cunning shape shifts, otherworldly bodily movements and intensely probing footwork, collaborations with all manner of eclectic aesthetics, though divorced from all formal music, still grow and deepen, continue to elicit the mortal human rhapsodies as long as some winsome depths still draw our curiosity.

—Stephen C. Wetlesen

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Recap: Michelle Gagnon

Continued from page 1

submitting to agents as she did. Next, write a good query letter. Lastly, tailor each pitch to the agent. You can look at agent's websites now to see their client list and read their specific wants. Michelle also researched writers like her to find out who their agents were. If they represented those books, maybe they would like hers, too. "The best way to get an agent is to go to conferences," Michelle advises. "You can find out where your desired agent will be speaking by looking at his website. Go to that conference and meet him in person." She said her agent gets 300 submissions a week. "You need to have something unique. Show them your hook in the query letter or when meeting them in person."

How do you get your ideas?

Michelle's books start with something she's interested in. For example, she remembers the beliefs in the late 80's about neopaganism, serial killers, immigration, internal militias, and the strong opinions and terrifying possibilities. So she started there for her book *The Gatekeeper*. "This book was the most challenging because I wanted the storylines to intersect organically." When Michelle's writing, she doesn't keep the reader in mind. "The story must be in and of itself first. The characters must be tangible and human," she says.

Do you belong to a critique group?

Michelle has beta readers. She has 10 people besides her editor read the manuscript before she submits the final. The readers are her sister, her father, and experts in the field. But no one reads the manuscript until she is done. "The biggest mistake writers make is they stop at page 100 and go back. Don't look back."

What is your writing process?

At the end of the working day Michelle writes a sentence or two about the next scene. She also puts in brackets any questions that require research. Then when she's done with the manuscript she does a word search for the brackets. For a 90,000–100,000 word manuscript she spends two to three hours a day of straight writing, five days a week. Michelle completes five to ten pages a

day and she allows herself to be bad in the first draft. She goes through the manuscript seven or eight times. She also thinks it's important to have her office in her house.

How much rewriting do you do for your editor? Michelle related the humorous story of why she's on her fourth editor in three years (it has to do with maternity leaves—the editors', not hers). She's learned to work with many editors and different opinions. "At the end of the day it's your book." In her



Michelle Gagnon answers South Bay Writers' questions.

experience it's very different from journalism. Michelle advised us to never agree to a late December-early January deadline date. With the holidays, there's too much going on, and she was on a book tour and still trying to get her pages done. She ended up having to change her last 50 pages. Michelle likes to think that she got better with each book.

Are you able to make a living as a writer? "It's a little scary." But she does well. "I was fortunate to get a good advance, and my first two books earned out their advances. The rest is gravy."

Closing thoughts: "Everyone in the book industry is waking up to the reality that e-books are in the future. They're resisting, like the music industry did," Michelle said. Her first book was a learning experience. "Have a good germ of an idea. Have cliffhanger endings for each chapter. Know how to tell a story." She says *The Da Vinci Code* was not great writing but the author knew how to tell a story. WT

Prowling

Continued from page 2

I'm into short fiction, and contests are everywhere promising prizes and recognition. One is in for not only a nice check but publication in a prestigious review. I regularly send my work off to Lorian Hemingway, *Glimmer Train*, and others, but have yet to win a dime because, I surmise, I am competing with thousands. Not the case at conferences, where competition is thin, maybe one in twenty or so—and at some conferences the prizes are huge (relatively speaking) and publication is included.

I have yet to attend a writers conference when I didn't leave eager to get at my computer—my inertia transformed into momentum. It's a full-service tuneup. I chug in with the sluggishness of a worn old sedan and leave as a sports car. We all feel it—it's unavoidable.

And I suppose in evaluating it all, the most important to me is the spiritual effect. The idea, reinforced at a conference, that I am a writer. There's no denying, when there, I speak the language. I am familiar with the techniques discussed, the larger concepts; the tools, the means, and the break-loose energy. I am opened to inspiration; it comes in, and I mature in the notion—I'm a writer. What distraction? What block? Give me a damned pen.

Our East of Eden Writers Conference is coming up, and I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said it is the most robust and least expensive of any that South Bay Writers has produced. Of course it's in Salinas, that's John's country; and if you open your mind's eye as you drive through the yellowing fields, you will see him over there on a tractor, stroking his stubbled chin and grinning. The conference is in his honor, after all; and as he contemplates his large volume of work, he knows he deserves it—as certainly do we our attendance. WT

I don't like to write, but I love to have written.

—Michael Kanin

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.

Asia, Japan, China, Russia

Bill Belew
belew@panasianbiz.com

Astrology, Singing

Sara Aurich
saraaurich@comcast.net

Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net

Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.
ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net

Counseling

Dr. Audry L. Lynch
GLYNCH7003@sbcglobal.net

Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg
geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net

Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber
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Hiking, Backpacking, Scuba, Bicycling, Classic Cars, Running

Rick Deutsch
MrHalfDome@gmail.com; 408-888-4752

Hospital and Nursing Environment

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maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net

Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/ Psychology

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Library Science

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Marketing and Management

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Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence

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Real Estate, Horses, Remodeling, Southwest History

Reed Stevens
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Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard
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Television Production

Woody Horn
408-266-7040

USMC and NASA/Ames

Terry DeHart
tdehart@earthlink.net

WRITERSTALK Challenge

What Is It?

Twice a year, in February and August, awards are given to contributors to *WritersTalk*. You need take no special steps to enter this competition; if your piece in one of the designated genres is published in *WritersTalk*, you are a contestant in the Challenge.*

Genres

Fiction
Memoir
Essay
Poetry

Judging Periods

January 16 through July 15
July 16 through January 15

Prizes

One winner will be selected from each of the eligible genres. Each winner will be awarded a cash prize of \$40.

Judging

Judging will be done by *WritersTalk* contributing editors and other Club members whom the contributing editors may ask to assist.

* Eligibility for the *WritersTalk* Challenge is limited to members of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club; judges may not judge in any category in which they have an entry.

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 on the third Sunday of each month, except for July and August, at 1:30 at the Oakland Public Library Main Branch.
cwc-berkeley.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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 7p Board Meeting LaRoche residence	4	5 7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	6
7	8	9 6p Regular Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn Nina Amir	10	11 7:30p Learning Center Westmont 1675 Scott Blvd. Santa Clara	12 7:30p Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	13 11A Editors' Powwow
14	15	16 <i>WritersTalk</i> deadline	17	18	19 7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	20
21	22	23	24	25 7:30p Learning Center Westmont 1675 Scott Blvd. Santa Clara	26 7:30p Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	27
28	29	30	31	March 2010		
Future Flashes		April 13 6p Regular Dinner Meeting Jordan Rosenfeld				April 24 9:30A Blogging Workshop

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



\$10
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 Sunday 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, March 9, 6:00 p.m.

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

Nina Amir

Journalist, editor, author,
consultant, and writing coach

WritersTalk deadline is *always* the 16th of the month preceding the month of issue, and is *always* listed on the calendar inside the back cover.

