



# WRITERSTALK

Volume 21  
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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

## MAY SPEAKERS

### Want to Know About Publishing?

Ask the People Who Have Been There, Done That

by Rita Beach

Sometimes the answers you need and search for are closer than you think. For our May 8 meeting we have assembled a panel of our own members who have published their literary works. Some chose to take the more traditional path of publishing, while others tried their hands at self-publishing. These panel members have been through the decision-making process of whether to order books in bulk or choose print-on-demand.

What will it cost you to see your book in print and how can you estimate the cost per book? How do you turn your pages into an ebook? What path should you follow so prospective buyers can purchase your book online in print and ebook form?

### Our Panel of Ultimate Resident Experts: Johnson & Johnson?

No – Johnson, Johnson & Johnson, with Khaghani, Martina, and McBurney-Lin



**Marjorie Bicknell Johnson** is best known to members of South Bay Writers as the editor of *WritersTalk*, but she is also a published author. Her second published book, *Jaguar Princess: The Last Maya Shaman*, made the top 50 of 5000 in the young adult division of the 2012 Amazon Break-Through Novel Contest. Her first novel, *Bird Watcher*, was drawn from her experience as a pilot; because the story takes place at Palo Alto Airport, the book is popular with local pilots. Marjorie's background as a high school mathematics teacher for 30 years and her work in research with Fibonacci numbers did not make for good cocktail party conversation, so she decided to exercise the other part of her brain and let the artistic creative

juices flow. Marjorie will share with members her experiences at self-publishing as well as explain why she chose Infinity Publishing, why a professional editor is important, and why even a novel has to be carefully researched for facts.



**Victoria M. Johnson** has truly a wealth of information since she has had three books traditionally published and one self-published. Three are ebooks and another soon will be. Victoria feels the decision of whether to go with traditional publishing or self-publishing often depends on the type of book you have written. She will discuss knowing when to hire help and when to do it yourself, and what she wished she'd done sooner. Among her books published traditionally in print form are *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Grant Writing 101*, and *All I Need to Know In Life I Learned From Romance Novels*. *The Substitute Bride* is an ebook, independently published.

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## APRIL RECAP

### Personal Essay

by Grace Tam

On April 10 at Harry's Hofbrau, Victoria Zackheim broke down the essentials of a personal essay and shared her experience with anthologies. Personal essay is what you are feeling or thinking and how you relate it to the human condition. Zackheim discussed "raising the stakes" as well as story arc, dialogue, conflict, and point of view.

How do you raise the stakes with your piece to catch the reader's interest? Zackheim advised writing an introductory paragraph that invites a reader to continue reading. "If your intro doesn't hook the reader, you're finished," she said. "If we get bored while writing, then it is because we think we are writing about one thing, but it's actually about something else."

After grabbing the readers' interest, the writer must develop the arc of the story. The simple formula of a child wanting a bike, earning money, and then buying it in the end is not a story. The arc of a story contains an epiphany – not necessarily a dramatic moment with explosions, but a realization about yourself.

Although some say dialogue can't be in personal essay, Zackheim fights against this belief: "You can't have dialogue in personal essay? Who says!" She also said that capturing the feeling and meaning in dialogue is more important than what is actually said.

Conflict drives the story and allows something to be resolved. Although every problem doesn't need a solution, we writers must resolve the conflict.

In personal essay, the point of view is always that of the writer. In Zackheim's anthologies, although the theme is

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# President's Challenge

by Bill Baldwin  
President, South Bay Writers

## Seize Your Chance



National Poetry Writing Month—that's what April was (is—I'm writing this in April). I didn't know that until at least a week into the month. I didn't have very much time to research. I simply decided to write a poem every day of the month. But I was already eight days behind when I started. So here I am on the fifteenth, writing this—but I have made up a few days. I think I can finish thirty draft poems by the end of the month—ask me at the next dinner meeting; ask me whether I made it!

That's a light-hearted way to say, "Help motivate me to write!" It's something we can all do for one another in this club. We all need encouragement, don't we? We can always use appreciation and encouragement. Eléna Martina ([networking@southbaywriters.com](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.com)) has started a Monday morning group of people who will encourage one another to write. Woody Horn, Mike Freda, and I facilitate open mics where you can read your work out loud and hear other writers read.

I hope our dinner meetings encourage you to read more and to write more. I hope *WritersTalk* and its contests motivate you. I sincerely invite you to take advantage of all these opportunities to get to know each other better. When I first visited South Bay Writers, about 1997, it was a big step for me to meet other writers. Now I have other writers to encourage me. Don't miss that chance to know each other better and learn from one another. If you want a critique group, ask other members. If no critique group is available, find one or two people and start one yourself!

Consider joining our Board in some capacity. That will open up new experiences for you, whether it's meeting people from other branches, working on *WritersTalk*, or becoming more acquainted with the business of writing—or at least that of writing clubs!

Get involved, get energized, get motivated for your future writing success. No better time than the present to take the plunge.

This is your writing club—seize your chance! —WT

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### Join 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, Sally Milnor, or sign up online [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com).



## WritersTalk

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

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### Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. Please prepare your work as carefully as you would for an agent. All submissions will be copyedited to uphold our publication standards. The Managing Editor decides which submissions to publish.

Submission deadline is the 16th of the month.

Suggested word limits are not absolute; query the editor. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

**Anything Goes—Almost** (300 words)

**News Items** (400 words)

**Letters to the Editor** (300 words)

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

### Creative Works

Short Fiction (1500 words)

Memoir (1200 words)

Poetry (300 words)

Essay (900 words)

### Accolades

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### Announcements and Advertisements

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by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson

Editor



## Our minds grow toward thunder

It's time to renew our memberships in California Writers Club and to think about why we belong to South Bay Writers. For me, it's simple: South Bay Writers is about writers helping writers, and I have grown as a writer through my ten years of membership. I learn something from every writer I meet.

As celebrated writer and environmentalist Wallace Stegner wrote, "Minds grow by contact with other minds. The bigger the better, as clouds grow toward thunder by rubbing together." His creative writing program at Stanford has provided young writers guidance and encouragement to further their writing knowledge and craft.

We all can't enter Stanford's creative writing program, but we can obtain guidance, encouragement, and more writing knowledge from our own club, from South Bay Writers, by being active participants.

To obtain those benefits, we need to attend SBW meetings and workshops. Our dinner meeting speakers share their writing experiences and answer questions from the floor. Our workshops feature writers who have expertise in some aspect of writing, be it craft or promoting our work. *WritersTalk* encourages us to write and to enter contests; more practice hones our writing skills. Our open mics provide us with opportunities to read using a microphone—an important skill to have to spread the word about our work.

After a period of learning, we each become expert on some aspect of writing, editing, or marketing, or in some specialized field. Writers helping writers—we then share our skills and information with other writers.

*WritersTalk* publishes a list of "experts" every month on the page facing the calendar. We have experts willing to discuss astronomy, mathematics, banking, medicine, teaching, engineering, and character development. We can consult them to acquire more background information for a story or to expand our own knowledge.

At some point, we develop personal skills that carry over into our professional lives, skills in interviewing, speaking, and relating to others. Service as an officer of SBW allows us to develop leadership skills while "carrying the light" for other club members.

However, these benefits of membership in South Bay Writers do not happen without someone to plan and coordinate club activities and helpers to carry out those plans. We were not born knowing how to be club officers; most of us started out by helping on a committee.

Many SBW members may feel unqualified to run for office, or maybe just plain scared to take on what seems to be a huge responsibility. I say, "Get your feet wet by acting as a member-at-large and suggesting the club activities you want." And never fear! Someone is always there to help—writers helping writers.

It's election time—time to pick up the banner and boost the club as well as ourselves. — WT



**Get your feet wet**  
as Member-at-Large: see p. 5



# View from the Board

by S. Halloran

Seven of us—President Bill Baldwin, Vice President Rita Beach, Treasurer Mike Freda, Secretary Sylvia Halloran, Newsletter Editor Marjorie Johnson, Networking Chairperson Eléna Martina, and Member-at-Large Dick Amyx—met in Sunnyvale Tuesday night, April 2, 2013.

- Watch for the upcoming workshop in June. Surveys indicated that interest is strongest for publishing, then for marketing, craft and critique.
- Changes to the SBW website are already in progress. Check it out!
- Branch nominee for the Jack London Award is Marjorie Johnson.
- Nominees are needed for all offices of the board, plus two members-at-large. This is a great chance to become involved.
- Watch for new Club Merchandise.

**Moved:** (Freda) to allocate up to \$300 for networking chair Eléna Martina to purchase SBW club merchandise for resale. Passed, unanimous.

Nominations are in May and elections happen in June. Remember, two members-at-large attend board meetings without any assigned responsibilities; if you'd like to have your voice heard but don't want to commit to an office, becoming a member-at-large may be just what you're looking for! —WT

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## Jack London Awards: Honor our own

by Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, PR Director, CWC  
pr@calwriters.org

The California Writers Club Jack London Award honors members for exemplary service to the CWC and/or branch, independent from creative writing accomplishments. Each branch may select one designee every other year.

Although we hold the ceremonies on Sunday, July 21 in Oakland, your member winning a statewide distinction represents an excellent local story for your news media. A generic press release will post to the CWC website in late June. Consider using it as the basis for a longer piece focusing on your branch's newest star, or ask a talented member to profile this terrific individual. If a newspaper runs the article, the author appreciates you, the profiled member feels special, and you have effectively publicized your branch.

Our annual all-members-welcome picnic on Saturday, July 20 at the Fire Circle in Oakland's Joaquin Miller Park combines potluck, readings, networking, camaraderie and a "Lit Cake" competition—decorate any cake, cookie or other dessert with a literary theme and the sky's the limit. Your branch could return home with a JLA laureate, a triumphant cake boss—and a doubly fascinating release for the media.

Good luck and sail on! —WT

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## Invitation to Renew

Dear SBW Members,

It's that time of year again! The California Writers Club fiscal year ends June 30, so please don't let your membership lapse. You may renew online or by sending a check for \$45 to CWC-SBW, P.O. Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055, attn: Membership. (Note: Dual members and students renew for \$20.)

We appreciate your membership. Your dues and your presence at our monthly meetings, workshops, and critique groups keep South Bay Writers flourishing. We're looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting (where your membership can also be renewed).

Until next time! —Sally



Sally Milnor

## JUNE WORKSHOP

### Let's Make a Scene

Instructor: Nina Solomita

Novels, short stories, memoirs, plays, and screenplays all have scenes—one leading to the next, together building an entire story. Characters and information are revealed; the plot proceeds, twists and turns, building tension, and scene-by-scene leads us to the climax and finally to the conclusion.

In Nina Solomita's workshop "Let's Make a Scene," we'll examine the elements that make a scene dynamic and frame the questions guiding you to create compelling characters with strong desires in circumstances challenging or obstructing their lives. We'll analyze how specific authors construct scenes with reversals and surprises, leaving readers and audiences wanting more.

Participants will be presented with evocative creative exercises designed to mine the imagination and trick the inner censor. Come prepared to write. Everyone will make a scene!

Nina Solomita, MFA, has over twenty years of experience as writer, editor, teacher, playwright, and consultant. She conducts numerous workshops emphasizing various aspects of writing, each designed to open writers to their most vital resource—the imagination and the riches it contains. She has taught at Book Passage, Elsewhere Gallery, and Yoga Sausalito. Her writing has been published in the *Pitkin Review*, the *Mother/Daughter Monologue Series* of the International Centre for Women Playwrights, the *Plath Journal*, and various newspapers; and her plays have been performed in Massachusetts and California. She offers professional services to writers at any stage of their projects.

**Let's Make a Scene**, workshop at Harry's Hofbrau, Saturday, June 15, 2013. See our website [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com) for details and to register. —WT

See workshop flyer on page 11.

## SBW Picnic Announcement

Please note that the CWC picnic on July 20 in Oakland is NOT the SBW annual picnic traditionally held in Santa Clara.

Our SBW picnic is scheduled on Sunday, July 14, 3 – 6 p.m., in Edie Matthews' park-like backyard. —WT

# Leadership Opportunities Open in SBW

by Meredy Amyx, 2013 Election Committee Chair

The annual election of officers for South Bay Writers creates openings for new and returning officers to take up leading roles in the club.

Through service as officers of SBW and participation on the Board, members support the club and help guide its activities and events. Work on behalf of the club provides opportunities for learning and exposure in a friendly, collaborative setting. You can gain valuable experience while offering your talents in service to SBW for the benefit of all members.

## Election Schedule

The SBW bylaws call for election of officers to take place at the June general meeting. This year, that's on Wednesday, June 12. Names of known candidates will be announced at the May general meeting, and candidates' election statements will be published in the June *WritersTalk*.

Deadline for receipt of election statements by the Election Committee is May 23.

## Election Rules

The rules and procedures under which the election will be conducted are detailed in the Code of Election Procedure, new this year. This document incorporates all the pertinent portions of the bylaws, the practices that have been followed for the past three years, and additional provisions that cover aspects not specified in the bylaws. The document is posted on the SBW website at southbaywriters.com. Look for a link that says "SBW Election Info."

## Nominations and Voting

The six elective officers of the club are president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and two members-at-large. (See descriptions below.)

As your appointed election committee chair, I am now accepting nominations for all positions. You can nominate any member of SBW, including yourself. The nominee must consent to run. Nominees must be members in good standing of SBW and have renewed their membership for the coming year.

**Nominations are now open for SBW office.**

Nominations may also be made from the floor at the June meeting. Nominations close just prior to voting, which takes place in person at the meeting. Members will cast written ballots for any contested offices. Unopposed candidates will be declared elected.

If you have someone in mind that you think would make a good officer and Board member, I will welcome your suggestions for possible recruits.

To place your name or that of another consenting member in nomination for office, send the candidate's name, position for which nominated, statement of consent to nomination, and candidate's contact information to Meredy Amyx by e-mail at meredy@amyx.org, or by phone afternoons and evenings at 408-297-4438.

## Duties of Office

The following unofficial summary of officers' duties is based on descriptions provided by former SBW President Dave LaRoche. Further information is available at the SBW website.

- **President – Leadership, Vision, Policy, and Precedence**

Leads the branch, sets goals and direction, presides over meetings, makes appointments.



## New Members

by Sally A. Milnor

It's a pleasure to introduce our club's three newest members.

**Kimberly Malanczuk** found us online, and we were pleased to meet her at our April meeting. Kimberly is interested in writing young adult novels.

**Annette Bourget-Cone** joined South Bay Writers at our March meeting. Annette is interested in writing contemporary and/or paranormal romance novels. She was drawn to this genre by a television series: "For thirty years all I read were spiritual and self-help books. Then I watched the new HBO series, "True Blood," based upon Charlaine Harris's books, and I was hooked — mainly because of her sense of humor. I started to gravitate to this type of light reading — with a good story line, but, most importantly, the story makes me laugh." Annette has written two contemporary romance novels, one of which is a suspense thriller. She was prompted to join our club to learn about publishing, to network, and to find a critique group.

**Judith Shernock** also joined SBW at our March meeting. Judith is a retired psychotherapist as well as a published writer. Her articles have appeared in the *Magazine of California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists*, and her memoirs and poetry have been published in various collections. Her recently published children's book, *Sammi and the Sea Horse*, is available on Amazon.com. In addition to her writing, Judith is a gardener and a voracious reader.

To our new members: We wish a warm welcome to each and every one of you, and we hope your membership brings you inspiration and enjoyment. See you at our next meeting! — WT

## Resident Expert for May

by Rita Beach

Robert Garfinkle will be our resident expert at 6:30 for the May 8 meeting. Bob is the President of California Writers Club. We are proud to have him come to South Bay Writers to share his expertise on writing and the importance of a writing club. — WT

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## Our Panel of Experts

Continued from Page 1

**Sherrie Johnson** caught the writing bug in 2009 and thankfully has not found a cure for it, so she keeps writing. She has two fiction books, *Straight Man Gay* and *Straight Man Gay Two*. The first was published in summer 2011 and the second in January 2013. Both were quasi-self-published through a local independent publisher. If you, like Sherrie, have no interest in publishing your book entirely on your own or dealing with orders and distribution, then perhaps working with an independent publisher may be the route for you. Her books are print-on-demand to avoid stock inventory. She will share which one thing she would do differently concerning free downloads of her books. Sherrie is quite knowledgeable about *Smashwords* and can share some real insights into what it takes to self-publish. Danny Culpepper, Sherrie's pen name, writes for the joy of telling a story that is humorous, positive, and believable.



**Nader Khaghani** is our male representative on the panel. He holds a BS and Masters in accounting and is a CPA and a controller and CFO for start-ups. His interest in the arts dates back to the late 1970s when he began painting. He has been writing off and on all of his life. Though he has several unpublished books, he self-published *The Grand Conference of Birds at Grant Park: Hueless in Chicago*. He wanted something that was his alone; he had no desire to find an agent or have someone edit the adjectives and adverbs he felt like using. His writing is a personal journey to express what he feels and to enjoy the harmony that creativity brings to his life. Though he recognizes the need to earn a living and pay the bills, he believes creative expression is the sun of our universe.



**Eléna Martina** serves as Network Chair for South Bay Writers. She is an author, freelance writer, blogger, and photographer. Her novel, *Clinging to Deceit*, was self-published and is print-on-demand through Author House Publishers. Eléna feels her learning experience in self-publishing is a valuable tool for giving advice to new writers who may go that same route. She views self-publishing as an avenue to make your name as a writer known, not only to readers, but also to traditional publishers.

**Jana McBurney-Lin** is a freelance journalist who lived in Asia for fifteen years and has written for media in seven countries, including *Writer's Digest*, *Hemispheres*, *Islands Magazine*, *Singapore Straits Times*, and *Japan Times*. She served five years as President of CWC SF-Peninsula Branch, founded the Writers Camp for Kids, and teaches creative writing in local schools as a volunteer. Her novels include *My Half of the Sky*, born out of the years she spent in Asia, and *Blossoms and Bayonets*, a story of love and courage in Korea during the Japanese occupation. Her debut novel, published through Komenar Publishing in 2008, was chosen by American Booksellers Association as a Book Sense Pick and listed as a top contender in the *Foreword Magazine* Book of the Year Contest. Her second novel was co-written by SBW member and native Korean, Hi-Dong Chai, and published in 2012 by Redwood Publishing. We are pleased that she has returned from her most recent trip to China just in time to join this panel.



## Mix and Mingle with the Panel

Each panelist will have five minutes to give the audience an overview of how they proceeded through their individual publishing process. SBW members should take notes because after all the speakers have finished, they can direct questions to individual panelists in an open forum. Panel members will go to individual tables during the last part of the meeting; members who have specific questions for a panel member can go to that table. This is an opportunity to have a one-on-one with your peers who have paved a path to publishing for you. All you have to do is come to the May meeting and ask. South Bay Writers will meet at Harry's Hofbrau at 6 p.m., Wednesday, May 8. —WT



*Jaguar Princess*: Marjorie Bicknell Johnson  
*The Doctor's Dilemma*: Victoria M. Johnson



*Straight Man Gay*: Danny Culpepper  
*Hueless in Chicago*: Nader Khaghani



*Clinging to Deceit*: Eléna Martina  
*My Half of the Sky*: Jana McBurney-Lin

# A Tale of Two Entrees

by Rita Beach

Frank and Frances arrive at a restaurant in Half Moon Bay. The hostess shows them to a table by the window overlooking the ocean. The waiter takes Frances's order for a merlot, and Frank asks for his usual, Kentucky bourbon and diet soda. The bus boy fills their glasses with ice water to sip while waiting. The waiter returns with the drinks and asks if entrees have been chosen. Frances decides on baked salmon, brown rice, and broccoli. Frank chooses a steak and a baked potato with extra butter. She rolls her eyes and reminds him that those are questionable healthy choices. He shrugs, says the atmosphere is lovely, and asks if she would like to dance. The jazz trio is fabulous.

"So, how do you like that writers' club you joined a few months ago?" he asks, as they dance to *Begin the Beguine* playing in the background.

"Well," she replies, "sometimes they spend too much time talking about nothing. The place where we meet is not as classy as I'd like it to be, but it's cheap enough." He thinks she's finished speaking, but then she continues. "Some of the speakers are so busy with self-promotion they forget to pass on writing tips."

"Quit," he says.

"Why would I quit? I love it!"

The song ends and they make their way back to the table.

"I love being in a room full of writers," Frances says. "There's something inspiring about meeting such interesting people. A table displays the published writers' books, and a second table has free books people are passing on."

"That sounds great," he says as the food arrives.

"Parts are great, but some things really need work."

The conversation slows as the food stops their mouths. Finally he says, "Ever thought of running for office so you could change some things you don't like?"

"Heavens, no. I don't know anything about all that stuff."

"Afraid?"

"No, not afraid. Just not qualified."

"Of those people running the club, do you think they knew all they needed when first elected? You and everyone there are writers — aspiring, accomplished, maybe frustrated — but nobody with experience holding office. I'd bet a hundred dollars."

"You really think so?"

They order another round of drinks after finishing the two entrees.

"Look around here," Frank says. "After we sit down, nothing happens until each person does his job. They work together to take care of the clientele. Besides what we see around us, things happen behind the scenes — planning, ordering supplies, paying the bills."

"I never thought about it like that. It takes a lot to run a place, doesn't it?"

"Sure does — cooks, servers, musicians, a boss in charge. All to serve the clientele."

"I guess the same thing is true of the writers' club. Somebody finds a place to meet and another person collects the money. The speakers have to be booked. They have a webpage and a newsletter. Wow, running a club does take a lot of people."

"Yeah, it does," Frank said. "Maybe if you don't want to run for an office you might volunteer to help out on a committee."

"You're right. That's exactly what I'll do. How was the steak?"

"Delicious."

"I think I'll try that next time," she said. "What say we have one more drink?"

Thus ends a tale of two entrees. — WT

## Personal Essay

*Continued from Page 1*

the same, the perspectives always differ, so that each author tells a different story.

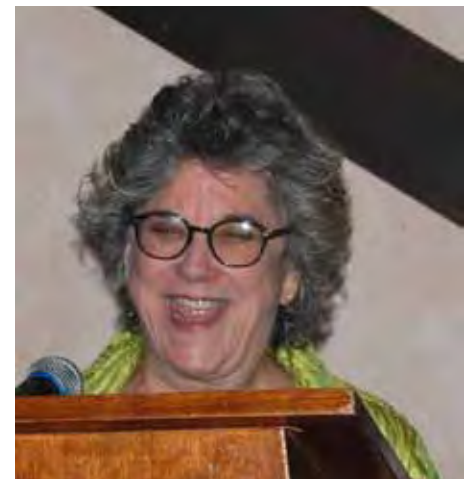
Zackheim advised posting pieces on websites such as RedRoom.com and SheWrites.com for visibility from agents and publishers. When browsing such sites, editors look for solid writing with a limited amount of adjectives and adverbs. She suggested an exercise in which you print out a page of your work and circle all the adjectives and adverbs used. Too many descriptive words take away the reader's imagination, so we must show — not tell — through action verbs, body movements, and facial expressions. Also, brevity is paramount. "If you can't tell an agent what your novel is about in fifty or sixty words, then you are not clear on the concept of your novel," Zackheim said.

"We all have things we want to write about and when given the opportunity, we will write," said Zackheim. However, personal essay means exposing some of our most vulnerable spots to scrutiny and judgment. Once we expose ourselves, we lose the ability to protect ourselves. Speaking about her anthology *The Other Woman*, she related an inspirational quote from a participating writer and good friend: "Once you tell the ugliest secret of your life, there is no more reason to be afraid."

But not all secrets are ugly; some are downright embarrassing! Zackheim demonstrated by reading passages from *Exit Laughing: How Humor Takes the Sting Out of Death*. — WT

**Below: Victoria Zackheim**

— Photo by Dick Amyx





## Duties of SBW Officers

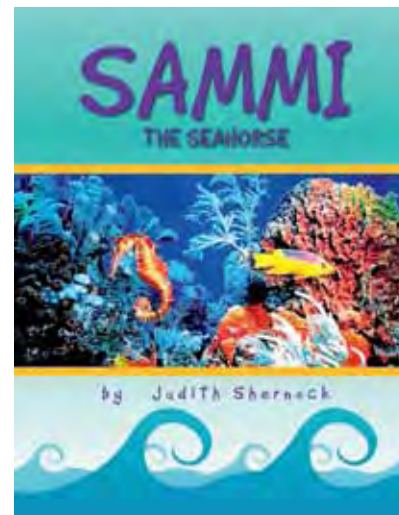
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- **Vice President – Advice, Programs, Presidential Stand-In**  
Advises president and Board, plans and produces monthly programs, substitutes for president when necessary.
- **Secretary – Branch Business Records and Activity Prompting**  
Records and publishes minutes of Board meetings, serves as parliamentarian, maintains archives, tracks action items, handles correspondence, updates calendar of events.
- **Treasurer – Finance Management**  
Plans club budgets, establishes and maintains financial accounts, receives and deposits revenues, disburses funds, performs bookkeeping and financial reporting.
- **Member-at-Large (Two)**  
Serves as Board observer and contributor without portfolio; acts as ad hoc members' representative; may be asked to assume other duties as the need arises.
- **All Officers and Appointed Chairs**  
Attend regular and specially called Board meetings; participate in guiding club business; represent the club to members and in the community; aspire, in all club interests and direction, to fulfill the mission statement:

*To assist published, nascent and aspiring writers in the pursuit of their muse and the honing of their craft through conferences, educational workshops, lectures, opportunity alerts and networking; to spread our Branch reputation and credibility through the community so as to be known and solicited as writers.* — WT

### Want to help run SBW?

Serve on the Board. See article, page 5.



## Sammi the Seahorse

by Judith Shernock

Did you know? Seahorses mate for life. The male broods the female's eggs in his inner pocket until they are ready to hatch.

The octopus *Wunderpus photogenicus* is used in Brazil to determine the betting odds in play-off soccer matches.

I learned these facts and many more while researching my children's book, *Sammi the Seahorse*.

The idea for the book was conceived after seeing a huge exhibit of seahorses at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. I fell in love with these amazing creatures and imagined what their life in the ocean was like.

I had just retired after a long career as a psychotherapist. This would be my next project. Having worked successfully with children, I knew what would interest them.

I wrote my story. My husband, who loves to draw and is recently retired, animated my ideas and gave life to Sammi, Yammi, Dawdy and Lolly.

Wonderpus Octopus completed the cast of characters. He helps the family when Sammi goes missing. The underwater scenes are drawn in amazing detail. The characters light every child's imagination as this magical world under the ocean unfolds. — WT



Victoria M. Johnson, Pat Bustamante, Lisa Francesca, and Nader Khaghani.

— Photo by Dick Amyx

## May Accolades

by Andrea Galvacs

Pat Bustamante's poem "Springing Scruffy" will be published in the quarterly magazine, *Song of the San Joaquin*.

Victoria M. Johnson was interviewed by *Scene* magazine for a piece on

Bay Area romance writers. Also, she received a certificate from De Anza College after completing their Literary Magazine course.

Nader Khaghani's book *The Grand Conference of Birds at Grant Park* can be bought by students at the Pacifica Graduate Institute. — WT



# Networking Log

by ElénaMartina

## A Writer's Vital Signs

You were feeling enthusiastic about a fabulous book topic, but life got in the way and the great idea left you. Or maybe you were experiencing writer's block when a lightning bolt of inspiration came to you, but two days later, your energy faded away.



What happens to writers when their "writing juices" begin to flow but don't become a finished product? Some produce very little or nothing in years... Is that you?

Your heart is where the plan beats. You have a plan, don't you? Having one is required in this business. Think of it as writing your final graduate college paper. You are the demanding professor who will not give an extra week to finish the project. But wait, you are also the student who must finish the task or not graduate. Acting as both, you will succeed.

Your brainwave is the storyline. You wrote enough to make it a fascinat-

ing story. That's perfect. Or is it? The constant changes, add-ons, rewrites and edits make your fabulous story go in different directions and frustration kicks in. You decide to abandon it by writing poetry, or working on new pieces instead of continuing the pace. Choose a task and stick to it, no matter what.

Your oxygen level is your attendance at writers' gatherings, workshops, critique groups, and dinners, and mingling with others who might teach you something. Pretending to know everything is precarious to your learning curve.

Your food ration comes when you start selling books. The networking, marketing and selling combination is what you should study well in order to provide yourself with cash flow. Granted, I have been told by someone in the industry that most indie authors sell approximately 99 copies in each book's lifetime, so make it a goal not to be in that group.

Your speaking voice is crucial for pitching your book line to agents and publishers. Your novel will not sell itself, so practice a three minute pitch and deliver it with assertiveness and eloquence. What's your book about?

Who is it for? Why are you the best person to write it?

Your appearance, not a vital sign, is the favorable first impression you give others and is central to your platform. Put some effort in your wardrobe, hair, nails and overall look. To claim comfort while dressed in an oversize pair of jeans and T-shirt could possibly eliminate your chance at charming an agent. Remember: The book and you are looked at as a package. And finally, a measure of club involvement will cast depth on your seriousness of being an influential writer who is ready to play in the big literary leagues.

**Footnote:** A writing group meets at Barnes and Noble, 5353 Almaden Expressway in San Jose every Monday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. This is not a critique group. Writers show up at any time during those three hours. The group's purpose is to increase writing quotas and get writers to finish their chapters with lots of encouragement and coaching. Send ElénaMartina a brief note if interested.

If you have a networking question, contact ElénaMartina at [networking@southbaywriters.com](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.com). — WT

## Virtual Writing Partners

by Suzy Paluzzi, M.B.A.

Are you discovering you are having a difficult time keeping to a schedule while writing a book? I find that I stick to my plan of writing my book if I have a writing partner. Writing partners support one another, as well as give one another a person to answer to that the day's work is achieved. Linda Joy Meyers, PhD reminded me of this approach when I used her coaching services. (See <http://memoriesandmemoirs.com/coaching/>)

The beauty is you can create your own version of holding one another accountable. My writing buddy and I coordinate our calendars periodically and have a set day every week. We stick to that day as much as possible. You can decide to schedule more often, but we find this to be manageable and optimal for our busy lives.

We are "virtual" writing partners. By

this I mean we use the phone to conduct our writing meeting. This works well for me, as I am better able to focus on my topic in private. Also, my friend and I are not distracted by a social setting, like a coffee shop, where we might be tempted to chat rather than work.

We call one another at the designated time and use the honor system. One calls to begin the writing session. The other calls to end it. We each often start by telling what our writing agenda is for that day, and encourage one another. At the close, we may rejoice in our success or ask for advice regarding a hurdle we encountered.

You may find that you are more productive using the energy your writing partner provides in person. And the setting is whatever works for you both. Libraries can be a resource, as well as create a quiet space. If your mind thrives on activity in the background, coffee shops abound.

Coffee or lunch together is a fine way to

celebrate significant accomplishments during your projects. The biggest reward is the completion of each of your books. You can manage this outcome with a writing partner. — WT

*Suzy Paluzzi is a freelance writer, poet, and journalist whose contact information appears in our Directory of Experts on page 18.*



Victoria Zackheim signs a book for Rita Beach. — Photo by Carolyn Donnell

# My Visit Home

by Richard A. Burns

I visit my hometown. I'm here for my fifty-year high-school reunion. I dance with some gray-haired ladies--another one, a slim, vivacious faux-brunette with a face-lift, comes on to me--who are these people?

The next day my daughter, residing these days in Hollywood, rides around with me. She's interested in seeing her dad's old stomping grounds.

I take the right turn and there's our narrow dead-end street, Linden Avenue in Burbank, where great canopies of grown-up trees form a cave, a million rustling leaves overhead and on the street.

Our particular block is a dead end, terminated by the old cement-lined "wash," a storm-drain tributary of the L.A. River. We threw rocks over it at other kids. Gee, that was a long time ago. It was self-defense, retaliation for their rocks whizzing out of nowhere, splattering dust around us.

The house is much smaller than I remember it, a beware-of-dog sign on the driveway's locked fence, the front door guarded by black metal bars, so depressing, reminding me of a jail instead of my first home. When I was young, we never locked our house.

We used to take our bat, ball, and mitts and play "Three-Flies-Up" right here out front. The pavement used to tear up the stitches on baseballs. My grandpa, sitting on the porch, patiently repaired ball after unraveling ball with black friction tape. Oh, how we saved countless parked cars here. I'd reach in front of a neighbor's new turquoise and white '53 Pontiac Chieftain just in time, snagging a blistering line-drive off Billy's bat. A miracle catch is what I'd say today. It deprived a headlight from getting smashed to smithereens. We'd think nothing of it.

Today, I'm bursting with stories as my daughter listens. The street begins to sway and the trees tilt. I push away a parked car that has shifted closer. I am in the middle of some deeply spiritual experience, the world slowing down, even backing up many, many years, and I smell the lawn clippings collected by the grass-catcher, the pungent stink of cheap geraniums along the front of the house. Mr. Walker is right on his porch, his hair the same as ever, thin and snowy white. He's making sure we don't run through his flowers.

My daughter says something and the breeze stirs, bringing me out of my reverie. I can't seem to work up the courage it takes to ring the doorbell, so I tell my daughter unimportant stories that pour out of me--how my friend George, near the wash, sometimes camped out in a sleeping bag on our front lawn, watching the stars with me and my brothers--and all of us freezing in the morning. Then, there was the swimming pool a few houses up where our barber, Gordon, lived. He was happy to host raucous, spontaneous swimming parties for his family and us neighborhood kids on blazing afternoons.

So we walk up the lumpy dirt alley. We look over the back fence to the main house and the narrow yard where flowers bloom brightly. The added patio is screened in, an awning provides shade. The grass in back (we never had) now grows,

green and lush. I'm glad someone cares for the yard so well.

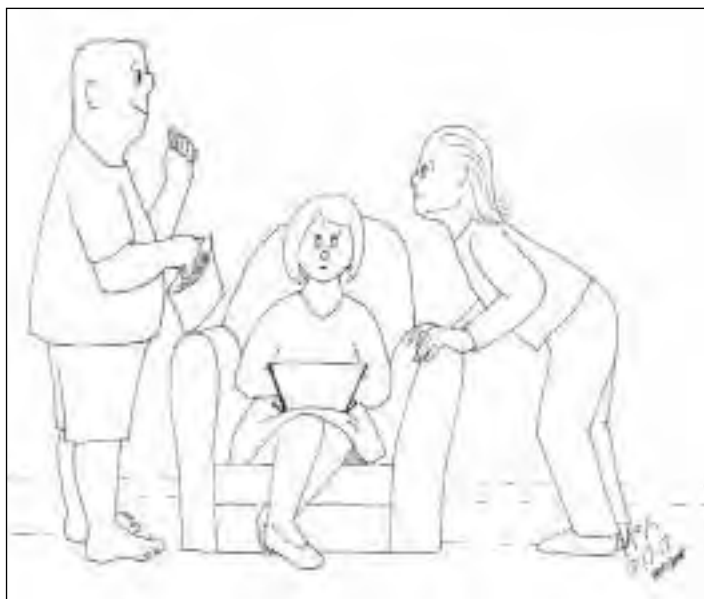
We catch a glimpse of movement. Someone is doing something in the patio. Is that a painting easel? I almost walk away, but my daughter's presence bolsters me--Why not?--and so I give a shout at the person. A burly man immediately gets up, stepping around a planter, wiping his hands on a rag. Approaching us, he speaks with an engaging south-of-the-border rhythm to his English. He's middle-aged, a stocky Mexican, with a friendly face and relaxing manner. This is his country, too. Talking to him is a thrill and comes easily. Over there, I tell him, is where our big plum tree used to stand--you can't find juicy, red-meat plums in supermarkets these days. And only ten feet away from where the man stands is where our fireplace for burning trash would be, overflowing with gray ashes. To our left would have been the lumber pile--the place where Uncle Bob stored his old wooden sailboat, never to move again. We used to chase gray horned toads back here; they'd scurry out of the ancient lumber. Lift any plank, and there likely would hang a black widow and her dirty web. We grew our first radishes and carrots over there near the shed. Oh, the shed. That used to be our clubhouse, our fort, where we glued together battle ships and airplanes. Mike next door smoked there.

The Mexican owner smiles and nods. Mike Hammer, he says. He still lives there, pointing over his shoulder. Really? I say, and guffaw loudly, slapping my thigh. Sixty years later, the scourge of the neighborhood, infamous rock-thrower and window-breaker, bane of my dad's existence, still lives right next door. Wow. Incredible. Wonderful!

The Mexican man tells me how leaky the roof had been until he paid big money for repairs. He describes his plumbing

*Continued on Page 14*

## Shelf Life by Madeline McEwen



*I love reading about myself in all her romance novels.*



CWC South Bay Writers

*Presents*

## Let's Make a Scene

Nina Solomita, MFA

Saturday, June 15, 2013

9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.



Novels, short stories, memoirs, plays, and screenplays all have scenes—one leading to the next, together building an entire story. Characters and information are revealed; the plot proceeds, twists and turns, building tension, and scene-by-scene leads us to the climax and finally the conclusion.

In this workshop, we'll examine the elements that make a scene dynamic and frame the questions guiding you to create them. We'll analyze how specific authors construct scenes with reversals and surprises leaving readers and audiences wanting more.

Come prepared to write. Everyone will make a scene!

Nina Solomita, MFA, conducts numerous workshops (Book Passage, Elsewhere Gallery, Yoga Sausalito) emphasizing various aspects of writing, each designed to open writers to their most vital resource—the imagination and the riches it contains. In addition to editing several prize winning books, she's a published author and a playwright.

Workshop includes lunch and morning snack

Location: Harry's Hofbrau, 390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose

Registration: Member \$45; Nonmember \$55

Early bird registration Member \$35, Nonmember \$45 thru May 15

Register and pay by credit card (PayPal) at [www.southbaywriters.com](http://www.southbaywriters.com)

If you want to pay by check, please use the form below.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mail this portion to: SBW Workshops, P O Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055.

Check payable to South Bay Writers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ CWC Branch \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Paid \_\_\_\_\_



# Graveside Angel

By Karen Hartley

On a fall afternoon with a gentle breeze and a bright, warm sun shining, the map of the grounds should have been an easy guide for me. It was not. I had never been very good at reading maps. But now I tried to read it the way I had been taught to read any map; I found the street I needed and turned the map in the same direction. This did not help. The kind office person had even highlighted the locations on the map for me.

I clutched the map and proceeded to walk down the roadway that looked like where I wanted to go. It soon became apparent that I was not going in the right direction. I stopped in the middle of the roadway, looked at the map, and decided another method was needed. Knowing that each row of gravesites had a letter and a number, I attempted to find the locations that way. I was certain I was walking in the right direction; after all, I'd been there for the funeral. I'd seen the actual burial—not that long ago. Why couldn't I find that same gravesite now?

That day too had been warm and sunny, just like today. I remembered standing in the roadway after the service. There had been people there I was related to. They had taken pictures; I assumed it was for several reasons; to remember the day, to remember the dead, to remember that there we all were again, relatives who hadn't seen each other for a long, long time. After all, faraway relatives always reunited for these things. I could see myself there; I could remember being in some of the pictures. Why couldn't I remember where this had happened? Why was it so hard to find these gravesites today?

Walking down one of the roadways that again felt familiar, I scrutinized each marker believing that soon, I would be at one of the three I was searching for. I became increasingly anxious; maybe I was just imagining that I remembered where I'd been on that day. I was also now becoming aware of a time not long ago in this same cemetery, when I had stayed too long and the gates had closed and locked. Although I was comforted by the memory of how I was rescued that time, this recollection increased my anxiousness. My footsteps quickened; I looked again at the map, determined to understand it.

After a few minutes I stood still, took a deep breath, and decided to give up the quest for this day. I started to walk in the opposite direction. Suddenly a breeze blew over me, and at that very moment, a man appeared in front of me in a motorized garden cart.

"Can I help you find something?" he asked in a gentle voice. I was startled at first. I had not heard the cart approach. I had not seen anyone around. Yet here was this person ready to assist me. I somehow knew I did not have to be afraid; I walked directly toward the man, holding out the map.

"Oh, yes. Please. I need to locate these graves, and I can't seem to find my way. I hate to bother you."

Before I could continue, he said, "I can take you there. Please do get in."

I looked around. There was no one else nearby. The area was quiet, simple, peaceful; the man driving was quiet, simple, gentle. I turned to him, and saw that his face was as clear as a young boy's. He was looking straight ahead as he steered.

"What do you do here?" I asked finally.

He turned slightly to me and said softly, "I've been on these grounds for many, many years. First, I took care of the landscape; then I was directed to the tombs where I helped mourners. Now I am everywhere; I help wherever I see the need. I saw you. I am here to help you."

I was about to ask another question when the cart came to a stop. The man got out, walked around to my side, and said, "Come. This is the first gravesite on your search."

After a few steps he pointed with his outstretched hand. Then he stepped away and stood reverently off to the side while I knelt. When I rose he came to me. "Come, I'll take you to the next one."

"Are you sure I'm not bothering you?" I asked.

The man replied gently, "I'm here to help you. Please do not be concerned."

I now knew that I could trust him. I relaxed in my seat as once more the garden cart quietly proceeded down the roadway. The same thing happened at the next location; the man indicated the headstone, then stepped away.

After a few minutes I rose; he came to me and once again helped me into the cart.

"There's only one more," I said.

"I know. It's just a short way from here," he answered.

I could not resist the question I'd wanted to ask since he'd so mysteriously appeared. "So, you are here every day? What do you do here all day, if there's no one needing to find a marker?"

The man turned to me and smiled. "Yes, I am here every day." That was all he said.

We had arrived at the last location on the map. This time when I stepped from the cart I saw my own vehicle parked only a short distance away. "Oh, there's my car! I must've been walking in circles until you came."

The man again got out and led me onto the lawn and through a few rows of graves to the last one I was seeking.

"I'll be fine now. I can just walk to my car from here."

He answered, "Are you sure? I am happy to wait for you."

I faced him and held out my hand to shake his. When I did so, I noticed how soft his hand felt in spite of the gardening clothes he wore and the tools that I'd seen in the back of the cart. I answered, "It's OK. My car is right over there. I can see it. I'm fine."

The man softly squeezed my hand, then let it go. He smiled and said, "I'll be going now. Glad I could help you. Take good care." Again, I felt a soft breeze.

In the same instant that I heard him shift in his seat and start the motor, I quickly turned from the graveside, moved by a sudden impulse to again offer thanks.

The man and his garden cart were gone. — WT

# Bee Attack / 1953

by Gerri Tiernan

"Yeow, owwieee, ow..." Running, running, swatting bees!

My brother's screams followed him as he raced to outrun the buzzing swarm. His rosy cheeks puffed with stings as he ran. Sweat dripped from his forehead, his dark, curly hair slicked back from his face, his sweat mixing with dirt and tears.

I heard his screams long before he reached home. "Daddy! Daddy!" I hollered for help, running into the house, not yet knowing what the commotion was about, only that it was serious, because Charlie never cried like that. He was six. I was five and this is a memory that sticks.

It was before Daddy died.

We saw Charlie running, running, and Daddy ran to beat the wind. He caught my brother up into his arms, a hero again, like in the Army. Only this time it was my brother Charlie earning the Purple Heart.

The sweltering heat and humidity of the summer afternoon had been especially oppressive, so I'd stayed outside on the wooden porch glider to play with my dolls, rather than join the neighborhood children in the meadow. It was late summer 1953, and World War Two patriotism still reigned in Naugatuck, Connecticut. Fathers played poker, drank beer, smoked cigarettes, and told war stories to one another while children played under foot and listened with half an ear. It didn't matter if you were boy or girl; war involved everybody, and whenever the neighborhood children came together to play, "war" was the game of choice.

Piling fallen leaves, sticks, and stones into a fort to throw bombs out from, or digging a foxhole to hide in while the enemy crept, made it come alive in our imaginations. Daddy had been a paratrooper in the invasion of Normandy. He'd been injured, then nursed back to health by heroic Army nurses.

Whenever I played war with the kids, my job was clear. I was the Army nurse. I'd crawl out onto the battlefield and drag the fallen soldiers to safety. I'd bandage their broken bones and stick thermometers in their mouths. But this day, I hadn't gone. When Charlie needed me, I was playing dolls.

Instead, Dr. Casella came to our house. He was our family doctor, the one who gave us shots of antibiotics when we were sick—the doctor who took care of Daddy's war wound and bandaged his back. He came and stayed in the room with Charlie for a long time.

"It's grave," he said when he came out, and I pictured a cemetery cross over a soldier's grave. This time, over my brother's grave.

"Is my brother going to die?" I asked, trying to be brave, trying not to cry.

"Nobody's going to die," Daddy promised. Then why was Mommy crying?

The room I shared with my brother was dark and I had to stay away. The children who'd played war games with my brother hovered outside on the porch waiting for news, talking about the bees' nests in the ground, saying how Charlie

was making a bed of fallen leaves, like a deer's bed, when he stirred up a hive.

Dr. Casella left. The children went home from the porch. Lights and black and white televisions turned on in the neighboring houses. Nighttime came. Our house remained solemn and dark. "Stay away from Charlie," Dr. Casella had said because he needed peace and quiet. I slept on the couch that night and Mommy slept in my bed to take care of my brother. Daddy said he might be better by morning.

"But, what if he's not?" I fought back my tears, except for the trickle that snuck out the sides of my eyes.

"Nobody's going to die in this family," Daddy said. Usually he's the one we worried about, with fevers and infections from his wound. Whenever the ambulance came, he was the one who went away, with the sirens and flashing lights.

"Please, God, don't let my brother die," I prayed alone, on my knees, in front of the couch. "I'll be good."

Morning came, and Mommy said the swelling was down. Dr. Casella came early. "He needs to drink lots of fluids. Give him whatever he wants to drink," he said.

"Can I see my brother now?" I begged.

"No, he needs peace and quiet," the doctor said. I saw Mommy glance at Daddy's face. Then Daddy left the house, but didn't say where he was going. It was Sunday, so I knew it wasn't work. When he came home, he carried in two big cases of soda.

"A case of root beer for Charlie, and this one for his best pal in the world," he said, meaning me.

I inched closer to see. He handed me a clear glass bottle filled with orange, non-carbonated soda. It was called Pal soda! I couldn't believe my eyes. They made a special soda just for me.

"Come on, let's bring your brother some root beer and his pal," Daddy said.

Charlie was sitting up in bed. The room was dark, except for the light filtering through the curtains. I could see his swollen face and splotches of stings on his arms, but he was smiling. "I love root beer," he said. I asked if he wanted taste my Pal. He did and said he liked it.

"I'll bet you love your sister better," my father said.

Charlie nodded. "Next time she'd better play war with me, because I might need a nurse," he said, moving over so I could sit up on the bed next to him. What a relief! —WT



# I Hate War

by Hi-Dong Chai

*War is a terrible thing. It kills. It destroys. It orphans.*

*In World War II, 62 to 78 million lost their lives. In the Korean War 2.5 million North and South Koreans were killed or wounded. In the Vietnam War, more than 3 million Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians lost their lives. During the Korean War, tens of thousands of children lost their parents and became homeless. Many roamed the streets begging for food in blustery winter cold and in suffocating summer heat. Only a fortunate few found shelter in orphanages.*

*One day I followed Mother to an orphanage. As we entered the gate, I saw half a dozen boys lined up in black uniforms with their heads shaved like prisoners of war. They were around ten years old and they all turned and looked at me. I stood motionless feeling uneasy, realizing that I had my mother next to me while those orphans stood alone without their mothers.*

*This image still haunts me. Images of those children prompted me to seek peace and brotherhood at home, at work, or wherever I may be. As more people search for peace and brotherhood, I believe, there will be less conflict in the world – less killing, less orphans, and less suffering.*

*I wrote the following dialogue a few years back, a dialogue between an old man and a child who lost his family and whose house was destroyed by a bomb from the sky the night before.*

*"You have not had a drink since this morning."*

*"I know."*

*"You have not eaten at all."*

*"I know."*

*"Come, Child. Come home with me," urged the worried old man. "You need a drink and some food in your tummy, and rest."*

*"I don't want to go," replied the child, sitting on broken beams, torn plaster, shattered glass and scattered furniture. "This is my home. My mom is down there. My dad is there. My sister is there. All under this pile."*

*"I know." The old man paused. "But, come up for just a few minutes. I will clean the cuts on your hands and face before they get infected. Look, your feet are badly cut from broken glass. They need to be taken care of."*

*"I don't care," the child replied with empty weariness in his voice. "My family is here under the pile. I want to be close to them."*

*His round eyes showed deep fatigue. His eyes were emptied of tears. Weariness was etched in his tender face, covered with dirt and dried blood. His pajamas were torn from nails and splintered beams. His hands were black, like those of a coal miner, clutching onto his toy tiger. He sat on a fallen beam above his room, blankly staring into space.*

*The old man turned his gaze toward the heavens as if he wanted answers. Slowly, he turned to the child and kneeled down behind him. The old man reached out and gently held the child in his arms. The child closed his eyes. There were no tears, just an emptiness on his face.* — WT



# I Hate War

Peace, peace, peace,  
Where are you?  
I have been looking all over for you.  
Wherever you are  
Please come on out  
Please dwell with us as our family.  
Come and dwell with us,  
O Precious one  
For eternity.  
Come and dwell with us.  
Come and dwell with us.  
Peace . . . Peace . . . Peace.  
– Hi-Dong Chai

## My Visit Home

*Continued from Page 10*

woes over the years. It's clear he has a long history here, too, a love-hate relationship with the place. He speaks, in his pleasantly musical accent, stories about where he works and his painting hobby, and boasts about the roses he and his wife grow along the fence. Yes, they're beautiful. Here is a real man, I think, diligent about providing for his family and the upkeep of the Linden property. My old house has lucked out, found a decent owner. He asks about things I have to say, tidbits of my ancient history, and I feel like a boy again, eight-years-old, only now, a little bit important, worthy of whatever small successes I've earned.

It's a fitting reward that comes by trying (sometimes failing) to follow my dad's rules. And, no doubt, there has been unappreciated growth from the struggles of life, having my own unpredictable family; and, if needed, working my ass off.

I sense that this man and I belong to the same club.

My thirty-something daughter listens. I'm amazed at how fully tuned in she stays, both of them laughing readily in the right places. This old place is all such a part of me. Even I'm surprised about how much; and when we back away and bid the man goodbye at last, I imagine he enjoyed helping me with my brief, magical trip back in time. He seems to respect the fact that, in a very real way, I still own that property, or maybe it just owns me. And my daughter is quick to supply me a tissue so falling tears won't make a mess of my shirt. — WT



# May Terse On Verse

by Pat Bustamante



Pat Bustamante

## May Ye Email

What is more fun than a yakety-yak?  
Well it's email of course. And you have a stack  
Of email waiting. Now you must choose:  
Serious work on your genius eruption?  
Or allow your pals to steal time with disruption  
Causing some bad writer's blues.

— Pat Bustamante

TYPING: I like typewriters. They don't pretend to have a brain that's smarter than me. On the other hand (sometimes I type with one hand) they are not "social."

Social vs. groundhog (a creature who goes public once a year): either could fit into a professional writer's life. So are you busy casting your net on the social-network or are you hiding out? At the time of my imagined "best seller" I would have to try to deal with the idea of the dreaded Book Tour. One cannot autograph a book online, can one? But you could use your website to send personal notes to each fan, small notes the fan could print and then paste into the front of the book.

Of course that raises the possibility, Why not forge a note from Mr./Ms. Bestselling Author? We can write just like that, who would know? There goes posterity.

Lately social networking has turned a bit sociopath. If you are famous, someone with the morals of a shark is liable to hack your ID—social security number, online purchases, email account. The opposite-of-etiquette gossip columnist-mentality plus pure greed has created monsters. So, should I give up the idea of becoming a famous writer? It bears considering; or, here is the greatest excuse for NOT succeeding: "I am safer!" Oh-oh, cop-out.

Time to seek out the hundreds of emails I ignored while banging away at 50 pages for a contest. After all, writing emails is writing—No, don't you believe it! —WT

## Senior Poets Laureate

Annual Senior Poets Laureate Poetry Competition; deadline June 30. See [www.amykitchenerfdn.org](http://www.amykitchenerfdn.org) — WT

## A Mayan Poem

by Marjorie Johnson

Ancient Mayan scribes painted their words on long strips of bark paper. In 1562, the Spaniards burned as many of these books as they could find. Later, anonymous scribes used the Spanish alphabet to record Mayan legends and stories of creation in the *Popol Vuh*. One such poem records the sounds of a primordial world consisting only of a flat sea and an empty sky.

### Flat sea, empty sky

Now it still ripples  
Now it still murmurs,  
Ripples.  
It still sighs  
It still hums,  
And it is empty.

— Anonymous

## Rhyming Dictionary

Poets: Check out the RhymeZone rhyming dictionary and thesaurus, a language arts reference tool and comprehensive search engine for words, at [www.rhymezone.com](http://www.rhymezone.com) — WT

## Why Poetry?

Poetry is the enemy of forgetfulness.  
It takes dreams,  
Weaves them into an eternal  
Garment of memory.

Poetry reminds us that we have lived  
Or tried to live  
Through frozen, forgettable winters;  
Unfulfilled, steamy summers.

Poetry can help create  
Something from nothing.  
Give meaning to  
A sky bare of stars.

When you cross the Styx  
Your beacon of words  
Will illuminate who you were,  
Or wanted to be.

— Judith Shernock

## Cranky Spring

Spring has sprung  
rains flood the house  
flora  
makes me sneeze  
No clouds  
to stop sun's heat  
gentle breezes  
turn to gusts.  
wet grass  
messes up my shoes  
birds are crows  
who screech  
not sing  
but even in  
this moment  
bad  
I still  
write  
poems  
is that sad  
or glad?

— Carolyn Donnell



## Union Pacific Challenger

120 foot  
black  
steel  
dragon  
emerges  
out of the past,  
out of time  
to once again  
spew so much smoke  
the sky is gone.  
We have traveled far,  
we have waited long  
for the approach of  
your one bright white  
circular eye  
on your rounded head,  
your metallic whistle  
roar,  
the clattering tracks  
and  
the shaking of all the world  
as your  
behemoth body  
passes by.

— Stephen C. Wetlesen

# Congratulations! Or Not.

by Carolyn Donnell

"Congratulations! Your poem has been selected for our next anthology!" or "Your poem has been selected as a semi-finalist in our Poetry Contest. You could win \$\$\$\$." Those are wonderful words to a writer's ear, until you find out that that it's a scam or the most famous of the "too good to be true" offers, a vanity press.

Some vanity presses are up front about what they are and if you can't find a publisher, you might consider one. But even though they will publish your poem in an anthology, you will pay for the privilege. At an average price of \$50 per book, you could self-publish a whole book of your own poetry for less. The National Library of Poetry is one of these. Their site lists five different sponsors: *The National Library of Poetry*, *The International Library of Poetry*, *the International Society of Poets*, *The International Poetry Hall of Fame*, and *Watermark Press*. And all of those sites have links to Poetry.com. You get the message.

So how can you discern between a bona fide offer and a bogus or misleading one?

- Take a look at the organization behind the contest or offer. The online presence should entail much more than just the contest. What else do they do? Is the contest or offer connected to a well-established organization or journal?
- Do they have a telephone number, or does the number have more than a tape-recorded message? Do your phone or e-mail queries go unanswered?
- Check with your peers. Do you know anyone who has worked with them?
- Check rewards beyond the prizes themselves and check the legal provisions. (Who owns your manuscript and what are the reproduction rights and limits?)
- Check the quality of the work of past winners.
- Be cautious and research thoroughly.

*Poets & Writers* has a link to Predators and Editors, [pred-ed.com/](http://pred-ed.com/). Other writing sites, such as [writersdigest.com](http://writersdigest.com) and [writermag.com](http://writermag.com), feature articles from time to time concerning publishing warnings. One of *Winning Writers* pages is "Web Resources That Help You Identify Scams" at [winningwriters.com/contests/avoid/av\\_web.php#.UTkM-Rl1HGF](http://winningwriters.com/contests/avoid/av_web.php#.UTkM-Rl1HGF). This site helps identify blogs, websites, and newsletters that specialize in tips and cautions to help the author ferret out dubious contests, publishers, organizations and agents.

A few links from this site offer more resources for tips to avoid or detect a scam and lists of dishonest contests and literary agencies:

[absolutewrite.com/specialty\\_writing/poetry\\_scams.htm](http://absolutewrite.com/specialty_writing/poetry_scams.htm)  
[sfsa.org/for-authors/writer-beware/contests/](http://sfsa.org/for-authors/writer-beware/contests/)  
[writersweekly.com/whispers\\_and\\_warnings.php](http://writersweekly.com/whispers_and_warnings.php)  
[writing.org/html/a\\_poetry\\_scams.htm](http://writing.org/html/a_poetry_scams.htm) — WT

## Why Agents Stop Reading

by Marjorie Johnson

Here are five common reasons an agent stops reading a manuscript.

1. **Slow or generic beginning.** Stories that open with the date or the weather don't inspire interest. Nor do those started with commonplace detail, such as brewing tea or washing dishes, or unnecessary background information.
2. **Trying too hard.** The writer uses flowery prose, awkward or forced imagery, or unusual "twenty-dollar" words to begin a simple story. Similarly, the writer may give overly detailed descriptions.
3. **Clichés.** Clichés, while hard to avoid, turn off agents.
4. **Loss of focus.** Some manuscripts hop disjointedly from one theme to the next or have jumbled time sequences.
5. **Unrealistic internal narrative or slow dialogue.** The character makes a long eloquent narration of what being strangled feels like, but he would be busy gasping for breath. The dialogue uses unnecessary words, such as, "Well, I just thought I would," or contains long speeches without action or attribution.

These glitches are also why a reader stops reading. — WT

### P&W Guide to Literary Agents

Searching for an agent? *Poets & Writers* has just published an e-document, *The Poets & Writers Guide to Literary Agents*; [pw.org/content/the\\_poets\\_and\\_writers\\_guide\\_to\\_literary\\_agents](http://pw.org/content/the_poets_and_writers_guide_to_literary_agents)

## Got True Cat Stories?

Margie Yee Webb announced there's still time to submit your funny, silly and endearing stories of 500 to 2,500 words for *Not Your Mother's Book . . . On Cats* of which she is co-creator. The due date has been extended to June 1, 2013. Publishing Syndicate adjusted the production schedule for the NYMB anthology series after signing a contract with independent book distributor Small Press United. Visit <https://publishing-syndicate.com/> for details.



Elena Martina announces members' books — Photo by Carolyn Donnell

# Contests

## More Writing Contests

*Poets & Writers* lists more writing contests than any other source, and all of the contests listed in their database at [pw.org/grants](http://pw.org/grants) have been carefully reviewed and benefit writers.

While you're perusing the listings, please take a look at the entry for *Tusculum Review's* annual literary prizes, which offer \$1,000 and publication to winners in poetry and fiction.

An extensive list of contests appears on [preditorsandeditors.com](http://preditorsandeditors.com) and on [writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions](http://writersdigest.com/competitions/writing-competitions). —WT

## Reminisce

By Jerry Mulenburg

I ran across a magazine, *Reminisce Extra*, [www.reminisce.com](http://www.reminisce.com), that we at South Bay Writers may want to consider. Its contributor guidelines say, "We love hearing from *Reminisce* readers. Your memories are the very heart of this reader-written magazine."

I know some of Betty Auchard's memories would fit well with the type of articles they publish, and perhaps many of our members would be interested. Details are on the website. —WT

## Great Spirit Legends

Members of California Writers Club are invited to submit one poem and/or one piece of prose to the 4th annual White Buffalo Native American Literary Challenge produced by Great Spirit Publishing. There is no entry fee and authors retain all rights. Barbara Callahan Quin, editor, is judge. Wanda Sue Parrott, member of Central Coast Writers branch, is co-editor.

Selected entries will be published this fall in the anthology featuring winners of the 2013 White Buffalo Native American Poet Laureate contest, *Gifts of the Great Spirit, LEGENDS, Volume IV*. Native American ancestry is not necessary; writing in the spirit of Great Spirit is required. Postmark deadline is 6/30/13.

Here is how to participate. Concentrate on the silhouette of the Indian Brave on the book cover and write a poem no longer than two pages long or a prose piece, 3500 words or fewer, about the impressions you receive. *Who is he? Where is he? What is he doing? When is it? Why? What is his message, if he has one?*

Send one copy of each submission, with your name, address, email and phone on the first page, to: **Legends, c/o WSP Literary Fund, P. O. Box 1821, Monterey, CA 93942-1821**. Enclose two #10 stamped envelopes, one addressed to you, the other blank. Winners announced in July. Details at [www.amykitchenerfdn.org](http://www.amykitchenerfdn.org) —WT

## Dream Quest One Contest

The Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest is open to anyone who loves expressing innermost thoughts and feelings poetry or writing a short story worth the telling.

**Guidelines:** Poems, thirty lines max, any subject, style, or form; stories, five pages max, any subject or theme; fiction or nonfiction or short play. All entries must be typed or neatly hand printed.

**Deadline: July 31, 2013**

**Prizes:** Stories \$500; \$250; \$100. Poetry \$250; \$125; \$50. **Fee:** \$10 story, \$5 poem.

**To submit:** Include title(s) of story/poems, along with your name, address, phone number, email, and brief bio on coversheet. Fees payable to "DREAM-QUESTONE.COM." Mail to Dream Quest One, Poetry & Writing Contest, P.O. Box 3141, Chicago, IL 60654

**Details:** [www.dreamquestone.com](http://www.dreamquestone.com)

*"And remember, in whatever you do, it's okay to dream, for dreams do come true."*  
—Dream Quest One

**To win, you first must enter.**



## 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, 500 – 1500 words  
Memoir, 500 – 1200 words  
Essay/Nonfiction, 500 – 1200 words  
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. —WT

## Call for Entries: Fault Zone

*Fault Zone: Shift*, fourth in the anthology series edited by the SF/Peninsula Branch of California Writers, will be published later in 2013. Nonmembers are eligible to enter the *Fault Zone* short story contest. First Prize, \$300 and publication in anthology; Second, \$100; Third, \$50. **Deadline:** July 31. **Fee:** \$15. Go to [www.cwc-peninsula.org](http://www.cwc-peninsula.org). —WT

## Contest for sports writers

**What to Submit:** One story or essay on a sports-related theme; original and unpublished, up to 6,000 words. Prizes: First, \$1000; five honorable mentions, \$100 each. Fee: \$15. **Deadline:** May 31. Details at [http://winningwriters.com/contests/sports/sp\\_guidelines](http://winningwriters.com/contests/sports/sp_guidelines) —WT



## Directory of Experts

*Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? Send a message to [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com) and we will add your listing to our directory of experts.*

### Astronomy, History of Astronomy

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

### Banking

Pam Oliver-Lyons [polpap@prodigy.net](mailto:polpap@prodigy.net)

### Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.

[ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net](mailto:ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net)

### Counseling/John Steinbeck

Dr. Audry L. Lynch

[glynch0001@comcast.net](mailto:glynch0001@comcast.net)

### Engineering: Mechanical, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg

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

### Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up

Martha Engber [martha@engber.com](mailto:martha@engber.com)

### Internal Medicine/Addiction

#### Disorder/Psychology

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

### Marketing and Management

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

### Mathematics/Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson [marjohnson@mac.com](mailto:marjohnson@mac.com)

### Teaching and the Arts

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

### Telecommunications Technology

Allan Cobb [allancobb@computer.org](mailto:allancobb@computer.org)

### Television Production

Woody Horn 408-266-7040

## CWC Around the Bay

These are published meeting locations and times for 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:** 1:30 third Sundays, Oakland Public Library Main Branch. [cwc-berkeley.com](http://cwc-berkeley.com)

**Central Coast:** 5:30 third Tuesdays, Bay Park Hotel, 1425 Munras Avenue, Monterey. [centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)

**Fremont:** 2:00 fourth Saturdays at DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 204, Fremont. [cwc-fremontareawriters.org](http://cwc-fremontareawriters.org)

**Marin:** 2:00 fourth Sundays, Book Passage in Corte Madera. [cwcmarinwriters.com](http://cwcmarinwriters.com)

**Mount Diablo:** 11:30 second Saturdays, Hungry Hunter, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette. [mtdiablowriters.org](http://mtdiablowriters.org)

**Napa:** 6:30 second Wednesdays, Napa River Inn. [napavalleywriters.net](http://napavalleywriters.net)

**Redwood:** 3:00 first Sundays at Copperfield's Books, 2316 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. [redwoodwriters.org](http://redwoodwriters.org)

**Tri-Valley:** 11:30 third Saturdays, Oasis Grille, 780 Main, Pleasanton. [trivalleywriters.com](http://trivalleywriters.com)

**Sacramento:** 11:00 third Saturdays, Cattlemen's Restaurant, 12409 Folsom Blvd., Rancho Cordova. [cwcsacramentowriters.org](http://cwcsacramentowriters.org)

**San Francisco/Peninsula:** 10:00 third Saturdays, Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont. [sfpeninsulawriters.com](http://sfpeninsulawriters.com)

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## Ongoing Critique Groups

### Our Voices

Meets at Pruneyard in Campbell every other Sunday 11 am. Genres: Fiction, nontechnical nonfiction, memoir. Contact: Dave LaRoche – [dalaroche@comcast.net](mailto:dalaroche@comcast.net)

### Valley Writers

Meets at Valley Village Retirement Center in Santa Clara, Mondays 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Contact: Marjorie Johnson at [marjoriej358@comcast.net](mailto:marjoriej358@comcast.net)

### Emperor's Mystery Circle

Meets at Emperor Norton's, 7508 Santa Teresa Blvd, San Jose, 1:30 pm., first Mondays. Mystery genre. Contact Pam Oliver-Lyons, [polpap@prodigy.net](mailto:polpap@prodigy.net)

### Karen's Critique Group

Meets at The Hickr'y Pit, Campbell, 10am to Noon, second and fourth Tuesdays. Fiction, non-fiction or memoir only. Contact Karen, [Sew1Machin@aol.com](mailto:Sew1Machin@aol.com)

### Your Critique Group

For consideration, send information to [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

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## Workshops and Conferences

### Writing for Life Workshops

#### James Scott Bell: Next Level Fiction

Friday, June 28 – Sunday, June 30, 2013

James Scott Bell, best-selling author, is a top-notch writing instructor. Hurry! \$50 off! Type in promo code JSBELL50 at [www.writingforlifeworkshops.com](http://www.writingforlifeworkshops.com)

### Self-Publishing Summit

Don't miss the Self-Publishing Summit with Brooke Warner, June 1 & 2, Hotel Shattuck Plaza, Berkeley. Brooke Warner, founder of Warner Coaching, has shepherded over 500 books through the publication process.

<http://selfpublishingsummit2013.com/>

### California State University Monterey Bay: Workshops

July 1-14: The Triple-Threat Writer: TV, Play, Screenplay

July 15-28: Memoir Writing: From Personal to Cultural

July 15-28: Writing Fantasy: For Children and Teens

See [csusummerarts.org](http://csusummerarts.org)

### Children's Books

Oregon Coast Children's Book Writers Workshop will take place July 15-19 at Oceanside, OR. The instructors are at the top of their game. For information visit: [www.occbww.com](http://www.occbww.com)

### Want More?

Listings for contests, conferences and workshops commonly appear in *Writers Digest* and *The Writer*. Check their websites and also the websites of other CWC Branches listed above. Please send conference and workshop information to [newsletter@southbaywriters.com](mailto:newsletter@southbaywriters.com)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
May 2013			1	2	3 7:30P Open mic Barnes & Noble Almaden, San Jose	4
			8 6:00P Regular Dinner Meeting, Harry's Hofbrau	9	10	11 10:30A WT Editors Powwow
12	13	14	15	16 Deadline <i>WritersTalk</i>	17 7:30P Open mic Wil- low Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
Future Flashes						
	June 12 SBW Elections	June 7 and 21 Open mics	June 12 Reg. Dinner Meeting	South Bay Writers Annual Picnic Sunday, July 14	Saturday July 20 CWC picnic at Joaquin Miller Park Oakland	

### South Bay Writers Open Mic

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

Note third Friday location: Willow Glen Library, 1157 Minnesota Ave, San Jose

Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622 or email [WABaldwin@aol.com](mailto:WABaldwin@aol.com)

**Note:** Come to a South Bay Writers dinner meeting to look for others who may want to form a critique group. Contact Networking Chair Elena Martina at [networking@southbaywriters.org](mailto:networking@southbaywriters.org).

### CWC bags: Only \$10 each



Offered during our monthly meetings. Collect yours before supplies run out!

### Your ad could go here

\$7 per column inch for SBW members

\$10 per inch for nonmembers

### Members Books

Go to [southbaywriters.com](http://southbaywriters.com) to see the members' gallery and members books. Add your book to our website.

### South Bay Writers Anthology



\$10

At the meeting or on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

### Poetry Readings

#### Poets@Play

Second Sundays: Check for times  
Markham House History Park  
1650 Senter Rd., San Jose

#### Poetry Center San Jose

Willow Glen Library  
3rd Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.  
1157 Minnesota Ave., San Jose

Free and open to the public. For more information, contact Dennis Noren at [norcamp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:norcamp@sbcglobal.net) or go to [www.poetrycentersanjose.org/calendar.html](http://www.poetrycentersanjose.org/calendar.html)



### Stay Informed

Read the Constant Contact notices in your email to receive meeting and event announcements. If you are not receiving those announcements, send your name and email address to [webmaster@southbaywriters.org](mailto:webmaster@southbaywriters.org)



## 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

**South Bay Writers  
May Regular Monthly Meeting  
6 p.m. Wednesday, May 8**

Harry's Hofbrau  
390 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose

**PANEL: Six Speakers from the  
SBW Trenches  
Want to Know About  
Publishing?**

*WritersTalk* deadline is always  
the 16th of the month.

Regular dinner meetings are  
second Wednesdays 6 – 9 pm



### Harry's Hofbrau

From Highway 280, take Saratoga Avenue North.  
Harry's is on your right near Stevens Creek Blvd.