



CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN

AUTUMN 2022

An Entire Week Just for Writers

The third week in October has been designated California Writers Week by the state legislature—and it's all due to the work of your California Writers Club!

For this achievement, we owe our thanks to Anthony Folcarelli of the Sacramento branch. Way back in 1985, the State Senate had passed a resolution declaring California Writers Week, but it was only good for one year. One day in 2003, Anthony had an inspiration—why not arrange for a similar resolution, this time setting aside California Writers Week *in perpetuity*. He got the enthusiastic go-ahead from the CWC Central Board and went to work with his contacts at the State Capitol. On September 4, 2003, at 10 a.m., California Writers Club members gathered on the Assembly floor in Sacramento to receive a Joint Legislative Resolution from then-Assemblyman Tim Leslie. The resolution received the endorsement of the California Library Association.

For his extraordinary service for the betterment of California Writers Club, Anthony was honored with a long-overdue Ina Coolbrith Award in 2017.

CWC encourages the 22 branches to observe California Writers Week, this year October 16-22. One simple idea is to approach your hometown library about a display featuring local authors. Most libraries have display cases that they make available to community organizations and they're usually open to unique ideas for content. Other ideas might be a reading of the works of well-known California authors at a coffeehouse or bookstore. A downloadable and printable poster is available at <https://calwriters.org/history/#week>. Print up a bunch and hang them up around town.

The exact wording of the California Writers Week resolution is available at the above-referenced website. Among other things, the resolution and "encourages the people of the State of California to reflect upon the contributions that California writers have made to humankind."



Our proud day in Sacramento, Sept. 4, 2003. From left: Then-CWC President Barbara Truax (Marin); Assemblyman Tim Leslie, and Anne Marie Gold, then-executive board member of the California Library Association.
Photo by Don Truax.



President's Corner: We're All Active Members

by Roger Lubeck, CWC President



CWC Board meeting in July. The CWC central board met in Oakland on July 31. In addition to our standard reports, we voted on changing in the definitions of Active and Associate member (see section below).

Membership. Membership remains positive. Currently we have 1,958 members with a six percent growth in new members.

Budget. We lost a small amount of money in 2021-2022; however, we have projected a modest profit in 2022-2023 provided we have a good renewal period and continue to experience a five-to-ten percent growth in new members.

Member Renewal. September is the last month for current members to renew their 2022-2023 membership for the fee of \$45.00. We anticipate an exciting year for the club and our branches. If you have not renewed, there is still time (September 30 deadline).

Hybrid Meetings. The CWC meeting in July, like my branch (Redwood Writers), had a number of technical problems related to trying to conduct a hybrid meeting with 20 representatives at the meeting or on Zoom. I know our branches are struggling with the same issues at times. Conducting an in-person and Zoom meeting can be a challenge; however, opening our meetings to Zoom has allowed members we have never seen at a meeting to attend the meetings and benefit from our speakers.

Change in Membership Levels. Following a unanimous vote by the CWC board of representatives, renewing writers and new writers will be given the fee status of Active member meaning they are a writer who has paid in full for the year. Active writers are entitled to all the benefits of the club and their branch.

Associate or Literary Associate Member will be reserved as a membership status for individuals who are not writers, but who want to be in the club. Typically, these will be people who work with writers or in a field related to writing (for example, editors, book designers, publishers, social media experts).

Going forward, we no longer expect a sample of a new member's writing or that branches apply a scoring system for measuring publications of a member. Rather, we welcome all writers as Active members, and we encourage the branches to announce and celebrate a member when she/he is published or receives an honor as a writer. In 2022-2023 we will explore a method to develop a database of member publications and achievements.

This small change has been a long time in coming. The distinction between active and associate has proven artificial and confusing. In the CWC, we welcome all writers at every level of experience—those new to writing all the way to professional writers and best-selling authors. Poets, essayists, fiction writers, nonfiction writers, memoirists, short story writers, novelists, planners and pantsers in every genre are all welcome in our family. We encourage diversity in

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CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

A 501(c)3 NONPROFIT

OUR MISSION: TO EDUCATE WRITERS OF
ALL ABILITIES IN THE CRAFT OF WRITING
AND THE MARKETING OF THEIR WORK.

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our members and in their area of writing. Our goal is to help writers in their craft and in their efforts to be published. It is the mission of the club to see the more experienced author members helping new and less experienced writers refine their poems and stories.

I encourage every member to spread the word. Recognize new members and ask how we can help their writing. Remember, word-of-mouth promotion and having a presence in our communities is essential to the health and growth of a branch and the club, so bring a new writer to a meeting. 

The Veep Speaks: Why It's Essential to Grow

by Bob Isbill, CWC Vice-President and Director of Public Relations



In the words of Dara Marks, author of *Inside Story: The Transformational Arc*, there is nothing in the universe that is static. We are either growing towards something (life) or resisting growth, going towards decay and death.


That is true not only of your protagonist, but also of an organization or a writer's club. Sadly, our members, like other friends, drop out, move away, stop meeting with us—it's life's process. We consider ourselves lucky if we can count on one hand the number of real friends we've cultivated. We do not need to abandon the familiar and the loyal in order to enlarge our relationships and embrace new ones. We have the obligation to tell other people about our club.

Many people have no idea that on a certain day of every month, a hundred-year-old writers club meets in your town or city! They need to know that. Just take, for example, the latest guests who have joined your club. Each one has a separate and interesting background to bring to your branch.

That's how we recreate ourselves and develop the quality of our meetings and our structure. Writers, overall, are great people! When was the last time you invited one? Tell them about your website and look at your branch events, past and future.

Quality guest speakers like to speak to big meetings. Attendance reflects vitality of the group and excites those who come to hear about us. Increased membership also increases networking opportunities to meet and learn from those who can and will help us.

We have a larger responsibility than just increasing the numbers and populating our gatherings with lots of people; we have a sizable message to send to our fellow writers and the community:

We are here! 



Meet your CWC Executive Committee for 2022-23, from left: Sandy Moffett (Writers of Kern), member-at-large; Constance Hanstedt (Tri-Valley), treasurer; Roger Lubeck (Redwood Writers), president; Elisabeth Tuck (Mt. Diablo), secretary; Bob Isbill (High Desert), vice-president. Officers were elected and the member-at-large appointed at the July 31 Central Board meeting. *Photo by Patrick Sburm (Coastal Dunes)*

Conducting an Interview Like a Pro

by Geri Spieler, SF Peninsula

I was preparing to interview Tom Hayden for my book. He graciously agreed to meet me at his office in Los Angeles.

My interview had nothing to do with Hayden's years at the University of Michigan when he was a student editor at the University of Michigan school paper, a founding member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1961, and

one of the authors of the Port Huron Statement, an historic document calling for a more peaceful world. Hayden was also a Freedom Rider in the Deep South and was arrested and beaten in rural Georgia and Mississippi during the early 60s.

I was interested in his perspective on the 60s political environment as a whole. His insight would help me better understand someone who was such a significant player during that time.

By doing all this background reading, I could better understand his point of view on the 60s, which is what I was after. I needed his specific biographical background to understand his point of view.

Do your homework for the interview.

Many articles talk about preparing for your questions, but you should be reading up about the person long before you do that. Even if your interview is focused on a particular niche, such as a new product from the company, you still want to know about the person.

I had flown down from San Francisco for the meeting. I had 30 minutes of his time, so I had to make the most of it. Besides not daring to be late, I mapped out exactly how I would get there with time to get lost and still be early.

Of course, if your subject is not within traveling distance and in a different time zone, be sure you have accurate timing. You certainly don't want to wake the person at 2:00 a.m.!

These were lessons I learned along the way. Interviewing for any article and publication is more than just asking questions. The interaction between the interviewer and interviewee can make the difference between a very revealing result and one lacking in depth.

- What does this product mean to your subject, perhaps personally?
- Where did the idea come from? Was the product created out of a personal experience?
- What is the background of the person in charge of a department, program, or position in a group, campaign, or organization?
- Personal stories differentiate between a "marketing" interview and a personal interview. The marketing will already be there, but the stories make the difference.

Recording the interview

Be sure to ask if you can record the interview for accuracy, whether in person or on the phone. Many states require this as a law, but before the subject asks you, ask. In some cases, the interviewee will record it as well.

So, on to some tips about the structure of a good interview:


1. When asking for an interview, it is better to call the person. By calling, you make a more professional impression, and it is more difficult to say no one is on the phone.
2. Again, always research the person and the topic before you ask for the interview.
3. Have at least ten questions prepared in advance. You will likely need to follow up as you read through the information and may want to clarify an answer. Ask the interviewee if they mind. Most agree as they understand, and clarification serves you both.

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Conducting an Interview Like a Pro: continued from previous page

4. Ask your subject about the most convenient time for their schedule and be specific about how much time you may need. For most article interviews, you shouldn't need more than one-hour maximum.
5. Be sure you exchange contact information. You just never know what can happen.
6. Be clear if your interview is for a specific publication, your blog, an assignment, or on speculation. Honesty is the hallmark of a professional.
7. Be prepared to send your questions in advance. Many times people want to be prepared. You may want to balk at this as you hope to catch them off guard. However, you want the interview and need to be flexible. You can always throw in that particular question during the discussion.
8. If your subject is only interviewed via email, you may not have a choice. Try to be sure you can extend your questions to get as much information as possible. But don't make a list so long that the subject balks at length.
9. It is essential to stick to your timetable. A trick a professional taught me is to remove your watch or set your cell phone in front of you. Be sure to tell your subject are doing this to keep track of the time. This way, you are not looking at your wrist. People appreciate it when you show consideration for their busy schedules. It also shows that you are a professional.
10. Never sabotage your subject by throwing in highly personal or controversial topics by surprise. You can still get highly personal information by prefacing your question with something like, "May I ask you about such and such?" If the subject doesn't want to talk about it, you wouldn't have gotten an answer anyway. This way, you have maintained a good relationship rather than be thrown out the door.
11. The interview is not about you; although the person may ask personal questions, keep it short. You only have so much time, so it is nice if the person is interested, but pay attention to the time. You will need every minute.
12. Stay professional. You are not visiting with a friend.
13. Listen to your subject. There may be something in an answer you didn't expect, and it may be worthy of follow-up. You don't have to stick to your script if something better comes along in the conversation you didn't expect.
14. Once finished, always leave the door open for follow-up questions and a check for accuracy.
15. Finally, send a thank you note and a copy of the interview once it is published.



A well-conducted interview can also be an excellent resource for future reference and introductions. I always want to leave your contact happy to have worked with you. 



Geri Spieler is the author of Taking Aim at the President: The Remarkable Story of the Woman Who Shot at Gerald Ford, which has been optioned for a major motion picture. In 2020, she and her husband, Rick Kaplowitz, published San Francisco Values: Common Ground for Getting America Back on Track. Geri is the president of the SF Peninsula branch. She is a freelance business writer who has made presentations to several CWC branches on the topic of doing research on the internet. <http://gerispieler.com/>

Create a Powerful Writing Habit

by Judy M. Baker, Redwood Writers

I'm a big fan of *Tiny Habits* by Professor BJ Fogg, PhD. His book is based on neuroscientific research. He discovered something pretty amazing: by taking small steps, we can get big results. And here's how to get started:



This is a recipe, and it's easy for you to follow because it uses A, B, C's. Start with an "A" anchor moment. Something you're already doing. Acknowledge your anchor and then slip something in right behind it. For instance, I'll guess most of you brush your teeth every day in the morning. What if right after you brush your teeth, you say, "After I brush my teeth, I'll take out my pen."

Taking out your pen = "B" for behavior. It's a small, tiny thing that doesn't require willpower. And it doesn't require thinking or require an emotional state. It's just easy to do and takes you less than 30 seconds.

Begin with an anchor moment, follow with a behavior. And after taking out your pen, you want to "C" celebrate. That could mean you do your happy dance. If you're more introverted, like I am, it could just be smiling to myself and congratulating myself for doing that tiny step.

You can build habits using those three things (Anchor + Behavior + Celebrating) and build on each habit. After you get comfortable with "brushing my teeth + taking out my pen + celebrating," you might add on:

Anchor: I brush my teeth

Behavior: I take out my pen

Celebrating: I smile to myself

And build another habit with:

"After I take out my pen, I'm going to write one sentence."

I know this sounds crazy. It works. I'm living proof that this works. We've been using this technique within one program that I belong to. And it was how I could drop over 50 pounds and keep it off for over four years. By taking these small steps, you're rewiring yourself to be successful.

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the September 2022 newsletter of Redwood Writers and is reprinted with grateful permission. 



Judy M. Baker is president of Redwood Writers. She is a past present of BAIPA, the Bay Area Independent Publishers Association, and is a member of the Bay Area chapter of Women's National Book Association, the Bay Area Consultants Network, and Bay Area Women in Publishing. Her business, Book Marketing Mentor, assists writers in branding, marketing, and generally getting the word out about their books. <https://bookmarketingmentor.com/home>

Why You Should Write a Memoir

by Evelyn LaTorre, Fremont Area Writers and SF Peninsula

Face it. You're not getting any younger. Once you're gone, your stories won't be there the way only you can tell them—unless they're written down. Do it now. One never knows when one's faculties might fade. Write a scene about one of the many tales you've often given voice to about the time you "did such-and-such and then ..." Those memories are important to put on paper or store in your computer while you can still recall them. Look at a few old photos or listen to music you loved to resurrect forgotten feelings and the memories *will* come flooding back.

"So who cares about what I have to say?" you may ask. Maybe your family will. Or maybe they won't. But do it anyway. Leaving a record of your life while you're still kickin' will do more than prove you existed. It will teach or inspire someone who's waiting to receive your message. Find your stories and write them for posterity, your unknown readers, and for yourself.

Do you keep a journal? Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Frida Kahlo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Fredrick Douglass all kept journals. That's an advantage for recalling details—and for your health. Research by James Pennebaker (*Writing to Heal*, 2004) has proven that those who write about themselves have stronger immune systems, better sleep, improved mental health, lower blood pressure, and reduced pain.

An effective way to find your voice and help others find theirs is to write honestly about traumas you went through. Expressive writing helps reevaluate life, grief, and distress. Once a traumatic experience is on the page, it has less power in our lives. For years I felt ashamed that I'd become pregnant before marriage—a big "no-no" in the 60s. When I wrote about my situation, guilt lifted from my shoulders. Compassion for the naïve 23-year-old me filled my heart. When women began talking more openly about the sexual harassment and abuse they'd experienced, healing and prosecutions followed.

Writing about one's own life shows us who we are and opens a different vista for others. People learn from new points of view. Every life is unique. The lessons you learned should be shared with others. Many readers will identify with experiences you've had. Reading your words can help them face things they can't or don't want to encounter. Fans who've read my memoirs tell me that they feel like they've traveled to the Andes as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Begin by making a list of the important events in your life. Maybe a letter, a smell, or a garment will produce a memory. Once you begin, forgotten incidents come bubbling up from your unconscious. You might begin with a question: "How did I go from _____ to _____?" Or with an anecdote. Plot the turning points of your life, your peak experiences, or any events and activities which have been important to you. After you get a few incidents down, you may notice a theme. Or you might begin with a theme: how your seven divorces came about, the five dogs you've raised, or the 10 places where you've lived. Regardless of where you begin, trust that



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Write Your Memoir: continued from previous page

whatever rises to the surface is what needs to be examined. But be aware that unresolved issues often show up. If the subject matter is too traumatic, you might need a therapist to help you sort through it. The effort is worthwhile. You'll be rewarded by *ah-ha* moments when you recognize the connections between parts of your life. You'll discover both good and bad qualities about yourself. Progress from anecdotes to an essay to a chapter and end up with an entire manuscript. If you're still around when your memoir is published, you may be pleasantly surprised by the effect your words have on others.

Writing about your life moves you into a deeper and more authentic sense of self. When the mind is put to creative use, the sensation of freedom can be off the charts. The constraints of what we thought possible evaporate. After two memoirs, I'm now motivated to write a third—this one will be about my travels around the world.

Mark Twain said, "There was never yet an uninteresting life. Such a thing is an impossibility. Inside the dullest exterior there is a drama, comedy, and a tragedy."

Write your memoir.



Evelyn's first published book, Between Inca Walls, about falling in love while serving in the Peace Corps, was awarded the 2021 Peace Corps Experience prize. Her second memoir, Love in Any Language, has numerous 5-star reviews on Amazon. Evelyn has had numerous pieces published in literary journals and magazines. She is often a featured podcast guest, lecturer, and presenter on topics such as how and why to write your memoir and the ingredients of a long-term marriage. <http://www.evelynlatorre.com>.

How to Create Your Own Book Trailer

by Geraldine "Gerri" C. Forté, South Bay Writers

Creating a 90 second trailer of your book can be a fun and positive way to market your work. Your publisher probably has this service. If not, you can hire a graphic designer to create the trailer for you, or you can do it yourself.

If you choose to do it yourself:

- Capture highlights of your work that can become frames of text inserted into the pictures.
- Select photographs and music from a licensed website such as Shutterstock.com for royalty free images, clip art and sounds.
- Let your trailer not only be an introduction to your work, but an inspiration to read it in full.
- Be sure to include a copy of your book cover.
- Include information as to where the book can be purchased.

I have used my trailers as advertisements on social media platforms, and I also use them as openings when I am involved in a virtual book talk. Due to the COVID pandemic, all of my book talks for the past two years have been online, and this has actually been a good thing. No traveling on the freeway!



Geraldine "Gerri" C. Forté is the author of three published books, including The Sinceria Pound Cake Extraordinaire: A Recipe for Life, for which she created a trailer. You may view her book trailer at <https://youtu.be/1rpLOhPJ9Lo>. Gerri is the managing editor of the South Bay Writers newsletter, where this article originally appeared. It is reprinted here with grateful permission.

‘A Letter in the L.A. Times Is a Coup’

by Kathryn Atkins, Long Beach

Our president, Frank Kearns, wrote that sentence in an email to Steve Varalyay, one of our very loyal CWC-Long Beach members. Steve had his Letter to the Editor published in *the Los Angeles Times*. Because it's true, it was a coup!

Here's the thing. We can easily think about craft and Writing (capital W) as applying to fiction. Lots of people believe novels are the very definition of a writer's success. We at the California Writers Club know this is not true! However, as we surveyed the many speakers our branch has had over the last fifteen years, ninety percent or so are fiction writers. We choose presenters anxious to tell us how to market our novels, write dialog, create tension, shape characters, and the like—most of which apply to fiction.

All the topics are helpful, and the presenters have been awesome. And as writers, we need to know *all* of this, of course. But let's face it. Much of today's writing is nonfiction, and it's short. Blog posts. Website pages. Short blurbs on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, and other longer essays on Medium and Thrive must be well written. But they also must carry a message that will not just garner Likes, Re-Tweets, and Followers but will leave readers with some new knowledge, or perhaps, a feeling they hadn't felt before.

We support and applaud our nonfiction writers and our fiction peeps. And so, below is Steve's letter in response to a previous LA Times Opinion essay, "American history is a parade of horrors—and also heroes,"

Los Angeles Times. OPINION. Saturday, August 20, 2022, p.A9 LETTERS


I agree that the heroes of American history do not get enough attention. Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass get some. Labor leaders get very little.

Never heard of Smedley Butler? That's OK. Neither have two University of California graduates with history degrees I know. An ex-Marine friend learned about Butler's military career while in boot camp, but that's all. Butler was a Marine general who served 33-plus years and won two Congressional Medals of Honor. During retirement he marched with the Bonus Army in 1932, wrote "War Is a Racket," and testified in 1934 before the House McCormack-Dickstein Committee about being approached to lead a coup against President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

To paraphrase Coontz, the only people who should feel discomfort in learning the story of U.S. history are those who benefit mightily from people not learning it.

Steve Varalyay

Torrance

Congrats to Steve and to all of our members who are published. But we also celebrate our members who just like to write for themselves! Writing is its own coup. 



Kathryn Atkins is a past president of the Long Beach branch and a recipient of the Jack London Service Award. Her nonfiction has been published in numerous regional publications and The Huffington Post. Her poems, essays and short stories have been published in Giving My Self to the Wind and My Piano Hands. Earlier this year, she launched her first novel, Deathlist. <https://kathrynatkins.com/>



BERKELEY

Sept. 18: Michael Lucker on adapting your novel for the big screen. 1:15 p.m. \$5. To sign up: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/monthly-speaker-series-the-art-craft-business-of-writing-tickets-407666771287>

CENTRAL COAST

Sept. 20: Karen Joy Fowler, best-selling author (*Jane Austen Book Club*, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, *Booth*) on “All My Thoughts Are Second Thoughts.”

Oct. 18 “Booktoberfest,” our annual celebration of our members and their new releases.

Nov. 15 Shannon Pufahl on writing LGBTQ+ fiction.

Meetings begin at 6:15 p.m. via Zoom and in-person at Juice ‘n Java, 599 Lighthouse Avenue, Pacific Grove. No pre-registration required for in-person meeting; \$5 donation requested at the door. Attending via Zoom is free. For the Zoom link, email President Sarah Pruitt, sep23@sbcglobal.net, at least 24 hours in advance. Please put “CWC-Want to Zoom Your Meeting” in the Subject line.

COASTAL DUNES

Oct. 1: Sara Roahen, “How to Write Stories Based on Your Life Experiences.”

Nov. 5: Annette Gunseth, “Combining Memoir, History and Poetry to Tell a Life Story.”

Dec. 3: Open mic featuring branch members.

Meetings are free hybrid events and begin at 10:30 a.m. In person at the Nipomo Library, 918 W. Tefft St., Nipomo. Zoom link: www.coastalduneswc.com and submit a request on the Contact page.

EAST SIERRA

Oct. 7-8: “Weird Weekend.” Celebrating the strange but special tales of the Ridgecrest area from lost gold mines to ghost stories to Bigfoot, Weird Weekend is an annual one-weekend festival hosted by the East Sierra branch that includes three interactive events. This year, we are going with a campfire theme with a Campfire Story Contest, a Campfire Song Contest, and a Reader’s Theatre revival of *Close Encounters of the Hairy Kind*,
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the wildly popular interactive mystery play written by CWC member Monica Dwyer about a group of believers in Bigfoot out to discover the traitorous prankster in their midst. The play will also include specially made “camp meals” for all the guests. These are in-person events at Moe’s Music, 207 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. Contest tickets are \$5, while play-plus-food tickets are \$20. Tickets are being sold through Red Rock Books, 760/375-3454.

HIGH DESERT

Sept. 19: Luis Fuerte and Rene DeLaCruz, “Hispanic Heritage Month.”

Oct. 17: Mary Langer Thompson moderating a panel of children’s book authors.

Free hybrid meetings beginning at 5:00 p.m. In-person at the Hesperia Library community room in Hesperia. For Zoom link, contact Publicity Chair Bob Isbill, risbill@aol.com.

INLAND EMPIRE

Oct. 22: Pauline Wiles, “Writer Websites.” 10:00 a.m. Free Zoom event. Link: <https://www.meetup.com/The-California-Writers-Club-Inland-Empire-Branch> or contact President Sam Nichols, samuelthomasnichols@gmail.com. In-person possibility TBA.

LONG BEACH

Oct. 8: Tessa Smith McGovern, “Your Outreach to Readers: Tips for Collecting an Email List and Landing Reviews.”

Nov. 12: Veronica Rossi, “On Revision.”

Meetings begin at 2:45 p.m., are free, and are Zoom only. Requests for the link must be made by the first of the month for the upcoming speaker. Contact info@calwriterslongbeach.org.

MARIN

Sept. 28: Tobi Doyle, “Book Mapping: Be Your Own Developmental Editor.” 6:00 p.m. Zoom only. \$5 members, \$10 public. Register at cwcmarin.com/events.

Oct 26: “Find Your Voice!” Panel discussion featuring Marin branch members. 7:00 p.m. Free for members, \$5 general public. Register at cwcmarin.com/events.

Nov. 16: Lisa Tener, “Choose Your Publishing Path: Traditional Hybrid or Self.” 6:00 p.m. Zoom only. \$5 members, \$10 public. Register at cwcmarin.com/events.

MT. DIABLO

Sept.24: Kevin Fisher-Paulson and Jill Hedgecock, “Writing from Life.” Free, in-person event at Reasonable Books, 3645C Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

Sept. 28: “Writers Connection.” in-person social event focused on informal discussions about the writing life. noon, at the Chicken Pie Shop, 1251 Arroyo Way, Walnut Creek. Free.

Oct. 8: Betsy Graziani Fasbinder, workshop on public skills for writers. 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Zio Fraedo’s restaurant, 611 Gregory Ln., Pleasant Hill. \$45 for members, \$55 for general public, includes lunch. To register: <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/meetings-and-workshops/>

Nov. 12: “Three of Our Own,” panel featuring three branch members. 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Zio Fraedo’s restaurant, 611 Gregory Ln., Pleasant Hill. \$25 members, \$30 general public, includes lunch. Sign up after Oct. 10, <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/meetings-and-workshops/>

On the Horizon: continued from previous page

Dec. 10: Jordan Rosenfeld, “Building Setting and Scene.” 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Zio Fraedo’s restaurant, 611 Gregory Ln., Pleasant Hill. \$25 members, \$30 general public, includes lunch. Sign up after Oct. 10, <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/meetings-and-workshops/>

NORTH STATE

Sept. 19: Erin Lindsay McCabe, “Point of View/Deep POV.”

Oct. 17: N.J. Hanson, “How to Write Frightful Fiction that Sells.”

Nov. 22: David D. Bruhn, “Researching Local History.”

Meetings begin at 6:00 p.m., are hybrid events, and are free to all. In-person at Chico Veterans Hall, 554 Rio Linda Ave., Chico. To request the Zoom link, send an email to northstatewriters@gmail.com no later than 5:00 p.m. the Sunday prior to the meeting.

ORANGE COUNTY

Oct. 1: Anne Cleeland, “How to Quit Your Day Job.”

Nov. 5: D.J. MacHale, “If You Can’t Stand the Heat . . . Stay in the Kitchen and Write About It.”

Dec. 3: Open mic featuring members of the Orange County branch.

Meetings are in-person only, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., at Anaheim Packing House Food Hall, 440 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim. Free to members and the general public.

REDWOOD WRITERS

Sept. 17: Deborah Halverson, “You’ve Written a Book, What’s Next? Writing Queries, Strategizing Submissions and Ways to Translate ‘No’ to ‘Yes’.” 1:00 p.m. Hybrid meeting, in-person at Finley Center, 2060 W. College Ave., Santa Rosa. For the Zoom link, register at redwoodwriters.org/meetings. \$5 members, \$10 general public.

Oct. 8: Sonoma County Writers Conference. 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. featuring 12 speakers and a keynote address. In-person only at Finley Center, 2060 W. College Ave., Santa Rosa. \$95 in advance or \$110 at the door for member, \$125/\$150 for the general public. Register at redwoodwriters.org.

Oct. 15: Literary costume party plus presentation by Rebecca Rosenberg on creating a strong author platform. In-person only, Finley center, 2060 W. College Ave., Santa Rosa. \$5 members, \$10 general public. Register at redwoodwriters.org/meetings.

SACRAMENTO

Sept. 17: Jacqueline Smithson Howard, “I Write to Introduce You to the World.” 10:00 a.m. to noon, Arden-Dimick Library, 891 Watt Ave., Sacramento.

Oct. 1: Chris Hennessey, independent filmmaker, on turning your novel into a feature film. 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., Perko’s Cafe Grill, 6215 Sunrise Blvd., Citrus Heights.

Oct. 15: Kerry Schafer, “How One Author Went from Fantasies to Mysteries with Success.” 10:00 a.m. to noon, Arden-Dimick Library, 891 Watt Ave., Sacramento.

All meets are hybrid events and are free to all. Pre-registration is required for the Zoom link in order to prevent “Zoom bombing.” Contact sacramentowriters@gmail.com

On the Horizon: continued from previous page

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

Oct. 1: Beverly Olevin, “The Power of the Pen: Short Stories and Beyond.”

Nov. 5: Vincent Virom Coppola, “The Power of Myth in Storytelling.”

Dec. 3: Dacre Stoker, great-grandnephew of Bram Stoker, “Stoker on Stoker: The Mysteries Behind the Research and Writing of *Dracula*.”

Meetings are Zoom only, free for all, and start at 1:00 p.m. For the link, contact cwcsfvhost@gmail.com by noon at least one day prior.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

Oct. 8: Members will be hosting a panel, “Great Valley Stories Anthology Launch” at the Great Valley Bookfest, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at The Promenade Shops, 280 Lifestyle Road, Manteca.

Nov. 12: Jennifer Grainger Schoenborn, “How to Make Writing Your Day Job.”

Dec. 10: Terry Wells-Brown and June Gillam, “Highlights on Marketing from the 20Booksto50K Conference.”

Meetings are Zoom only, noon to 2:00 p.m. Free for all. For the link, sign up for the branch mailing list, <https://sjvalleywriters.us10.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=899132e01f7a84cc55e31563e&id=7acdb2b23f>

SF PENINSULA

Sept. 17: Robert Pimm, “Get Answers to Your Legal Questions.”

Oct. 15: Stuart Horwitz, author of *Book Architecture*.

Meetings are hybrid, are \$10 for all, and start at 10:00 a.m. In-person at the Sequoia Yacht Club in Redwood City. To register and to get the Zoom link, go to <https://www.cwc-sfpeninsula.org/store/p/p/upcoming-meetings>

SOUTH BAY

Oct. 10: Annual Halloween costume contest, plus presentation by Jennifer Givhan on “Revision, Transformation and Success.” 7:00 p.m., Zoom only. \$5 members, \$10 non-members. To register and get the Zoom link, go to <https://southbaywriters.com/>

TRI-VALLEY

Sept. 17: Kevin Fisher Paulson, “The Fourth Column.”

Oct. 15: Glenda Carroll, “Using Setting Not Only as a Setting, But Also as a Character.”

Nov. 16: Jill Hedgecock, “Muse Boards: A Visual Writing Aid for All Genres.”

All meetings are in-person only, 2:00 p.m. at Four Points Sheraton 1515 Hopyard Rod., Pleasanton. Members \$14, nonmembers \$18. Register at www.trivalleywriters.org. 

Keep up with branch activities
on calwriters.org.
Click on the
Events Calendar tab.



Member Spotlight



NEW RELEASES



Lynne Brightman Horn (Long Beach) has just released *A Woman in Search of...* a novel set in 1973. Wendy separates from her husband and takes her life in a new direction. She opens an indoor plant nursery and becomes involved in the singles bar scene around Los Angeles. Her conservative lifestyle changes. Her life gets complicated with the men in her life, including a bar singer.



Jon Jackson (Redwood Writers) has published a book of poems, *Practicing Silence*. Many of his poems retell timeless cultural myths, making them strangely relevant. He asks deep and hard questions, pointing to countless life mysteries that surround us. *Practicing Silence* is available on the Art and Poetry website, <https://www.artandpoetry.com/practicing-silence>



Mara Lynn Johnstone (Redwood Writers) has released *Spectacular Silver Earthling*. This Sci-Fi work features Hubcap, who has traded life as a rescue bot (saving boneheaded humans) for life as a TV star (making fun of them instead). But now: space plague, surprise aliens, and ten days to save the show from rival TV trash. Onward!

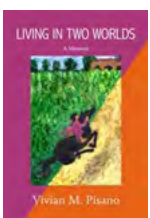


Shawn Langwell (Redwood Writers) announces the release of his second nonfiction book, *Ten Seconds of Boldness: The Essential Guide to Solving Problems and Building Self-Confidence*. With humor, compassion, and clarity, *Ten Seconds of Boldness* offers a practical approach to rebooting a broken belief system that continues to block people from accomplishing their goals and dreams.

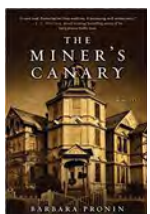
SHAWN LANGWELL



Kate Moore (Tri-Valley) published two books this past spring. *New Girl: The Further Adventures of Elinormal* is a sequel to the first Elinormal middle-grade novel. Seventh grader Elinor Malcolm must cope with the revelation of family secrets. Kate has also released *A Poetry Primer for the Everyday Poet*, part memoir, part poetry collection, and part writing guide.

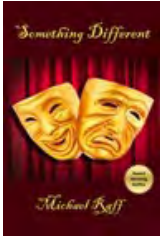


Vivian Pisano (Berkeley) announces the release of *Living in Two Worlds: A Memoir*. As she describes it, “Born in Chile to a Chilean father and American mother, I came to the U.S. at the age of ten with mother and siblings. This is a story of displacement, grief, resentments, the search for identity and belonging, then understanding and appreciation.”



Barbara Pronin (Orange County) plans to launch her seventh mystery, *The Miner's Canary*, on Oct. 25. The story takes a SoCal single mom back to the Black Hills of S. Dakota, where she thought she'd left her troubled youth behind. But inheriting the old Victorian puts sparks a test of wills with a killer who has her squarely in his sights.

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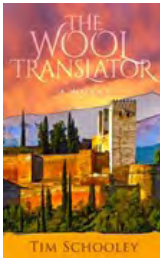


Member Spotlight: continued from previous page

Michael Raff (High Desert) has published *Something Different*, an anthology of 17 pieces, fiction and nonfiction, from comedy to drama, including four award-winners. Available on Amazon or on mraffbooks.com.



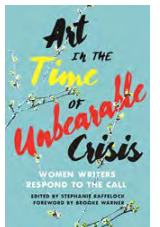
Marilyn Ramirez (High Desert), writing as Marilyn V. King, has released the first in the “Call of the West” historical romance series. *Deep in the Heart of Love* is based on the true story of Captain John Grigsby. Two women have John’s devoted love, but only one will see him through the challenges of life on the frontier.



Tim Schooley (Sacramento) announces the release of *The Wool Translator*, which traces the intersecting paths of two children of wool merchants, a boy from England and a girl from the Nasrid Kingdom of Andalusia, in the wartorn fifteenth century. www.timschooley.com

Short Stories, Poetry, Articles, Honors and More

Linda S. Gunther (Central Coast) has launched Write-Bytes, a new blog in which she shares writing tips every Friday. Linda is a much-published author with six suspense novels, three children’s books, and numerous poems, short stories and essays to her credit. <http://www.lindasgunther.com/write-bytes-blog/>



Evelyn LaTorre (Fremont Area Writers and SF Peninsula) had an essay published in the anthology *Art in the Time of Unbearable Crisis: Women Writers Respond to the Call*. She read her chapter at the Book Passage store in Corte Madera on Sept. 10. All proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to the Jose Andres’ World Central Kitchens for Ukraine.

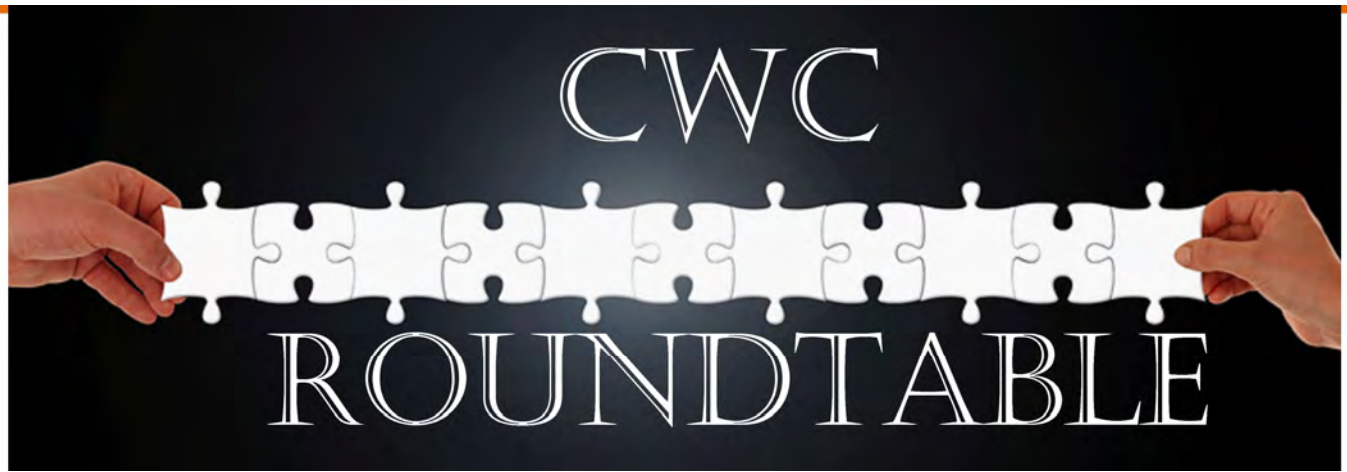


Michael Raff (High Desert) has had two short stories accepted for publication in anthologies by Dragon Soul Press. “Tell Me a Story” appears in the *Haunt* anthology, to be released Sept. 30. A second short story, “Bed Thirteen,” is will appear in *Beautiful Darkness*, with a release date of Oct. 30.



Put Your Work in the Spotlight!

Just released a book? Had a short story, poem or article appear in a magazine or anthology? Won a literary contest? Share your good news with your fellow CWC members. Send an announcement, 50 words or less, to editor@calwriters.org. Put “Member Spotlight” in the Subject line and don’t forget to let us know which branch you belong to! Covers should be submitted in JPEG format as an attachment to the email. Deadline for the Winter 2022 issue is December 1.



Today's topic: ***Speaker compensation. How much and how did your branch arrive at this amount?*** If you've got an idea for a future CWC Roundtable discussion, send your topic to editor@calwriters.org.



Nancy Middleton, Program Chair, Central Coast Writers: We offer \$200 for in-person speakers, \$100 for Zoom-only, plus dinner and the chance to sell books. This has been our branch's practice for many years. Originally, I believe our leadership settled on this amount because we're far from a major population center and needed to pay travel expenses to attract good speakers. Honoraria for workshops depends on how many members attend the workshop and how much we decide to charge each member for the workshop.



Patrick Sturm, President, Coastal Dunes: Our small branch gives \$50 to speakers. For those who travel from outside of our immediate area, an additional amount is given to cover travel expenses. Due to the current size of our branch, \$50 is the most that we can give at this time. We are optimistic that as we continue to grow, we will be able to give more to speakers. Speakers are given the opportunity to sell their books and receive a free meal at our post-meeting luncheon. In the past we have given \$50-100 to workshop presenters.



Knuti VanHoven, Vice-President-Programs, Fremont Area Writers: We offer \$100 to our speakers. It's difficult to ask people to prepare a one hour presentation plus 20 minutes of Q&A even for that amount. It's a lot of work that we're asking people to do and their presentations reflect that.



Bob Isbill, Programs/Publicity, High Desert: Our standard fee is \$100. We offer a generous time to meet and greet and offer their books for sale. We have a good-size audience so many times our speaker runs out of books to sell. The programs chair is authorized to go to \$200 for an exceptional speaker without board approval. In rare instances, we pay for a hotel room. We arrived at these figures by CWC South comparisons done a few years ago. High Desert does not offer a stipend to our members, but does offer them an exclusive opportunity to sell their books or services after the presentation. Our last conference was 2018. Fees are whatever we can negotiate that seems fair and yet yields a profit to our branch. These range from \$250 to \$500 for an all-day presentation.

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CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)



Sam Nichols, President, Inland Empire: \$75 stipend is paid to our monthly speakers – this is a recent increase from \$50 based on an unofficial survey of what others offer. We also offer to buy our speakers lunch at a nearby restaurant. Each speaker is allowed a table to display and sell books – occasionally a speaker will bring someone like a spouse or child to handle book sales. We have paid anywhere from \$250 to \$500 for workshop presenters. The \$500 was to the storyteller Michael D. McCarty for a full day program.



Kathryn Atkins, Co-Chair and Board Member, Long Beach: (1) \$100 as an honorarium via check, snail mailed to presenter. \$100 seemed “fair.” We understand some organizations have no honorarium, but we decided otherwise. (2) Also, we run a raffle for TWO of the speaker’s books, which we order from Amazon or an independent bookstore and ship at the club’s expense to the raffle winners. Money is not a speaker recruiting tool. The benefit/value to them is building their audience/readership and helping fellow writers, maybe not in that order. We haven’t done a workshop since BC (Before Covid).



Jean Gordon Kocienda, Newsletter Editor/Media Chair/Events Coordinator, Marin: We offer \$100 plus a “tip jar.” This was the amount I was told to pay when I took over the Events coordination.



Linda Hartmann, Immediate Past President/Vice-President, Mt. Diablo: We offer a \$100 honorarium for a one-hour presentation with Q&A and a free lunch for themselves and a guest. The one-hour rate has been in effect for eight years without change. Thus, the Program Committee has developed a new proposal to present at the next Board Meeting to request an increase in the amount due to the high cost of living in the Bay Area, and the wish to draw in-person, recommended, well-known, and experienced speakers. Our branch has offered our three-hour workshop speakers a \$300 honorarium, as well as a full lunch for themselves and a guest. This amount has been in effect since at least 2011, the Program Committee developed a new proposal for the board to consider for an increase in this amount. We are looking for highly qualified and recommended workshop leaders for in-person meetings in the expensive Bay Area. We want to remain respectful of the time they put in for the preparation and delivery of an interactive workshop, and to make the honorarium an attractive one.



Lynn Tosello, Vice-President, North State Writers: We offer \$50 for local speakers and those on Zoom; \$100 for those who travel to speak in person. In-person speakers have the opportunity to sell their books.



Brian Gaps, President, Orange County: Our guest speakers are paid a \$100 honorarium. The branch also buys two books as door prizes. Authors typically sign and sell books after presentations, with one prolific self-published author recently selling nearly \$1K. Pre-pandemic, we paid \$50. After discussions with other branches and in light of a healthy treasury, the board unanimously agreed to increase the rate to \$100 with our return to live meetings in January 2022. Our program co-chairs, Mary Vensel White and Kelli Devan Edwards, attend numerous writing conferences to meet potential speakers in person.

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CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)



Crissi Langwell, Vice-President/Newsletter Editor, Redwood Writers: We offer our meeting presenters \$100 per meeting, plus the opportunity to sell their books. This was a board decision a long time ago, and we have continued offering this amount. Our conference keynote speaker receives \$1000, and workshop presenters receive between \$100-\$150. Like the fee we offer our meeting presenters, these amounts were decided by the board a long time ago, and we continue to offer these same rates.



Gloria Pierrot-Dyer, Vice-President/Programs Chair, Sacramento: For our monthly meeting speakers, we offer \$100 for a one-hour presentation by Zoom. For in-person speakers, we pay \$200. Additionally, we have a monthly Networking/ Writers Workshop event. When we have speakers there, we pay them \$50 for a one-hour presentation. We have not held any conferences recently. The pandemic-caused Zoom “revolution” has broadened our ability to reach speakers from places as far away as new York for our monthly meeting, some of whom are nationally known and most of whom are highly skilled in the area/ genre in which they are presenting. Our workshop leaders, on the other hand, are usually local, and have a range of skill levels



Karen Gorback, President, San Fernando Valley: We have been offering a \$100 honorarium to speakers for the past two years and will continue to do so this program year. For many years, this chapter offered a \$50 honorarium to presenters; however, we also reimbursed mileage for travel to the meeting, and we purchased a book from the speaker to raffle at the end of the meeting. Since pivoting to an online format, the speakers no longer have travel expenses and we have not raffled off anyone’s book. Thus, we raised the honorarium to a more professional level, and we market our speakers’ books in our newsletter prior to their presentations.



Vibha Akkaraju, Vice-President, SF Peninsula: We offer \$175. We came upon this amount after we learned that some speakers were spending several hours preparing for the talk, and for those who presented in person, it also entailed commute time. We discussed this at our board meeting, and decided we wanted to respect the time and effort that our guests were putting in by compensating them adequately.



June Gillam, President, San Joaquin Valley: We do not pay our speakers. We recruit speakers from friends I know who can offer good info without needing honoraria; it helps us and helps friends build their networks and potential fans/clients, etc.



Edie Matthews, President, South Bay Writers: Most speakers are paid \$100. Workshop payment is either a flat fee or a percentage of the profit.



Jordan Bernal, Past President, Tri-Valley Writers; Monthly meeting speakers receive \$100 and the opportunity to sell their books. Workshop presenters receive \$300. For TVW’s conference we give \$100 per session presenters and \$300 - \$350 for keynote.



Remembering Cathy Chase and Lenora Smalley



CATHY CHASE: 1947-2022

North State Writers is mourning the loss of past president Cathy Chase, who died July 30 in Fremont. Cathy was a true stalwart of the branch, leading the way during the devastating days, weeks and months following the disastrous Camp Fire, which displaced so many members in 2019. Last October, she was honored for her dedication and service with the Jack London Award.

Cathy was an emeritus professor at Butte College in Chico and before that, had a 25-year career in law enforcement. She put the latter experience to good use in her latest book, *Murder Chose Them*, written as C.A. Chase. Cathy's Amazon author profile describes her as: "Author, teacher, adventurer, Cathy Chase is all these things. She has worked in law enforcement, taught college English, driven semi-trucks, lived in Europe teaching English, came second in a destruction derby, and appeared on the San Francisco Opera house stage. Her experiences give her an imagination sprinkled with the facts of her life and the people she has met."



News of Cathy's passing brought an outpouring of tributes from those who had worked with Cathy not only at the branch level, but as a representative for North State at CWC Central Board meetings and NorCal Group. Current North State President James Henson wrote: "It is said that the life we live is not our own. We don't decide to be born or when, and we don't decide when we die. However, we can decide how we want to live our life being fearful or fearless. I didn't know Cathy Chase that well, but what I did know about her makes me believe her to have been fearless. . . . I will miss Cathy at the North State Writers' meetings, parties, fundraisers, the Chocolate Festival, and lunches. Cathy made being president look easy and fun, and that's how I will always remember her."

CWC President Roger Lubeck: "I am very sorry to learn about Cathy. I first met her at a NorCal meeting and had the honor of making a presentation at the NS branch when Cathy was president. She was a real force and I know we will miss her."

CWC Vice-President Bob Isbill: "So sorry to hear of Cathy's passing. She was a devoted CB Rep and a model volunteer. So glad she was recognized with the Jack London Award last year. Condolences to her family and to the North State branch."

NorCal Group Chair Carole Bumpus: "The first words I uttered upon hearing the news was, 'Damn! I loved that gal!' And I truly did! She reminded me of the heart and soul of the Wild West."



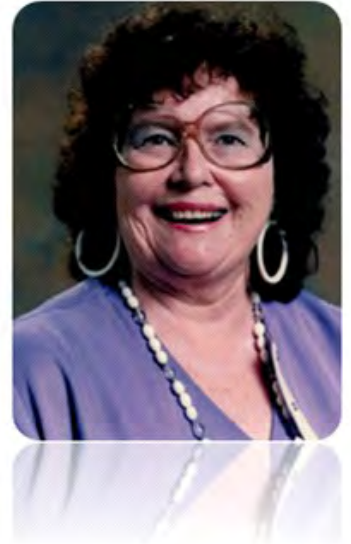
LENORA SMALLEY: 1927-2022

The San Fernando Valley branch has lost one of its longtime stalwart leaders, Lenora “Lennie”: Smalley. She served as president from 2003 to 2005, and received the Jack London Award for her volunteer service in 2002. Lenora was a pianist, a wife, a mother of four children, a teacher, a poet, and a student of biblical archeology.

A retired elementary school teacher, Lennie was an accomplished poet and published numerous chapbooks, including *Poems Inspired by the Passion Play*, *Sign of Spring*, *Christmas Poems*, *On the Mark*, and *Smalley’s Sampler*. In 2006 the SFV branch presented her with a certificate of merit for her poem, *On a Day Like Today*.

Former SFV president Ethel Ann Shaffer commented, “Lenora was a humble person and a great humanitarian. She worked behind-the-scenes to resurrect the San Fernando Valley Chapter of the CWC, spending several hundred dollars of her own money for our first meeting place. Lenora was a silent angel for many projects and made every room brighter that she entered. She had a big heart that she shared with everyone lucky enough to know her. Poetry was her passion for which she was highly applauded. We will miss Lenora greatly as she continues in her role as angel, but now among the angels in heaven.”

Long-time member and fellow Jack London Award recipient Yolanda Fintor wrote, “She was a longtime CWC-SFV member and had a strong presence in our club—serving as a board member some years and as president during 2003-2005. What I remember most about Lenora is that she was such a gentle and generous soul. Her specialty was writing poetry. In fact, she produced a booklet with a collection of her poems. She found inspiration for her poetry all around her, but especially, it was the beauty of nature that spoke to her.”



NorCal Group at the SFWC

by Carole Bumpus, NorCal Group Chair

CWC was once again well represented at the San Francisco Writers Conference, returning after a two-year absence due to the pandemic and held this year in July. NorCal Group staffed an information table at the conference, and several members participated in a panel titled, “Success Stories from a Writers Group—the California Writers Club.” CWC members who appeared on the panel were Andrew Benzie (Mt. Diablo), Kim Edwards (Sacramento), Terry Tierney (Berkeley), Evelyn LaTorre (Fremont Area Writers and SF Peninsula) and Kymberlie Ingalls (Mt. Diablo, Napa Valley Writers, Berkeley, and Tri-Valley Writers). They spoke about how their experiences in the CWC helped them in their own literary successes. As before, the SFWC gifted every CWC branch with two free day passes to the Poetry Summit and the Screenwriters (Hollywood) Summit, with a value of \$279 each.



In other news, the NorCal Group board has voted to cancel this year’s Building Better Branches Leadership Conference due to continued constraints with Covid and travel. NorCal Group will be developing other means of outreach to our branch officers throughout the year, which makes sense in this ever-changing world.



THE CWC BULLETIN

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Member Spotlight: For new book releases, short stories, poems or articles, or news of literary honors. 50 words or less by email to editor@calwriters.org. Put "Member Spotlight" in the Subject line. Send a copy of your book cover in JPEG format as an email attachment.

Articles on writing craft, the writing life, marketing and publication: Send a proposal to editor@calwriters.org. Contributors will receive a short blurb to promote their books and/or services.

"CWC Roundtable" and "On the Horizon": Instructions on contributing to these features will be sent to all branch presidents, newsletter editors and publicity chairs approximately one month prior to the deadline. Watch for an email from Sandy Moffett, sm@sandymoffett.com.

Photographs: JPEG format, sent separately (not embedded in a Word doc or PDF). Please provide complete details in the caption, including names of people pictured.

Deadlines: First day of the month prior to publication. March 1, June 1, September 1, December 1.

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From the Editor's Desk



The Great Indie Debate

Want to start a fight in a room full of writers? Just bring up the topic of self-publishing.

For the longest time, I was an insufferable snob when it came to self-publishing. This was in the pre-Kindle, pre-POD era, when the vanity presses were the only option if you couldn't land a traditional book deal. In my opinion (which I am never shy about sharing), if you had to pay someone to publish your book, it didn't count.

Now I'm not so sure. When I see major authors in my specialty of mystery fiction, names like Julie Smith (Edgar winner, 20 books published by the biggies) enthusiastically embracing indie publishing, I have to wonder—could there be something to this? When I see traditionally-published authors as diverse as James Scott Bell (thrillers) and Gail Carriger (steampunk/fantasy) going the indie route for projects the big houses aren't interested in—too long, too short, too “out there”—I begin to ask myself, why not?

So yeah, I'm seriously considering DIY for my next book project. I know, I know. This is like the Kardashians deciding to close all their social media accounts. But I figure I have little to lose except my time, so why not give it a try? I mean, the type of thing I write—fluffy little mysteries on the cozy side—will earn a non-celebrity author an advance of maybe \$8K or so from a traditional house. Some indie authors are making that in a month. Not many, but some. More realistically, if you can break into Amazon's top 100 in a popular category, you can earn some decent money, certainly more in a year than a traditional advance for genre fiction.

On the considerable other hand, you could make zero dollars. It's definitely a roll of the dice.

More stuff to fret about . . . if you self-publish, you are forever closing the door on getting a traditional deal for that particular book, unless you are one of those outliers like Andy Weir with *The Martian*, and how often does that happen? You aren't going to get a review in *Publishers Weekly* unless you pay for it, and it's going to be very difficult to get your book in every Barnes & Noble and library across the country.

But, as I remind myself, I already had all that with the three mysteries I published with one of the Big Five (or is it the Big Four now?) some 20 years ago. Do I still have the pathetic need for all that attention and external validation? Well, yes, but that's another topic for another time. I ask myself—did all the attention and validation make me happier/wealthier/thinner/altogther a better person? Well, no.

Many of us have encountered San Francisco literary agent Michael Larsen over the years, and undoubtedly recall how he's always saying, “Now is the best time to be a writer.” I have to agree. Self-publishing no longer carries the stigma that it once did. Isn't it great we're living in a time when we have options!

Now . . . anyone want to get in a fight over plotting versus pantsing?

—Joyce Krieg