



CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN

SPRING 2023

Thriving as an Author in the Age of AI

Editor's Note: Few developments have ignited talk—and hand-wringing—in the literary world like the launch of artificial intelligence (AI) software, specifically ChatGPT, Nov. 30, 2022. If a robot can write a reasonably decent novel, what does this mean for the future of us human authors? Here's one analysis, reprinted by permission from the Your Writer Platform blog.

by Kimberley Grabas, Your Writer Platform

As an author, you know that the world of publishing is a wild ride – and it's only getting wilder with the rise of AI.

But you know what?

This is actually the best time in history to be an author and build a powerful personal brand. Let's face it, with AI automating the writing and editing process, and more and more competition entering the market, it's becoming a real challenge to stand out and get noticed. But here's the thing: this is exactly why you need to step up your game and create a brand that sets you apart.

Whether you're a newbie just starting out, or you're a seasoned pro looking to take things to the next level, this article is for you. So buckle up, my friend. It's time to turn your passion into a powerful brand that will set you apart, get you recognized, and help you grow your author business.

Understanding the Impact of AI on the Publishing Industry

Okay, let's talk about the elephant in the room—AI.

It's time to understand the impact that artificial intelligence technology is having on the publishing industry, and how it's changing the game.

First of all, AI is automating the writing and editing process like never before. This is a double-edged sword because while it can save time and increase efficiency, it can also lead to a saturation of similar content in the market.

Second, the rise of AI has significantly increased competition in publishing. With more and more people able to write and publish books, it's becoming harder and harder to get noticed.

But this can actually be a good thing.

With increased competition comes increased opportunity.

If you're willing to put in the work to build a powerful personal brand, you'll be able to rise above the noise and stand out in an increasingly crowded arena.

So, bottom line: AI is having a big impact on the publishing industry, but it's not necessarily something to be afraid of. Instead, think of it as a challenge to be embraced, and a chance to set yourself apart. Let's get to work!

continued on page 5



CWC's Geri Spieler (SF Peninsula) shares her experience using ChatGPT. See page 5.

President's Corner: Poetry Month, Elections Jack London Awards and More

by Roger Lubeck, CWC President

Poetry Month: April is poetry month. I hope that all the branches will pay special attention to the art of writing poetry and our member poets in April. I know, for example, the Redwood branch had a poetry contest in January-February with 80 poets submitting over 100 poems. They will announce the contest winners at their April meeting and kick off a new poetry anthology which is open to all CWC members. In addition, they are holding a separate poetry workshop in April. Next to memoir, poetry may be our next largest segment (type) of writers.

Board Elections: In the next months, the branch board of officers will appoint a nominating committee or chair to create a slate of candidates to run for the elected positions on the branch board: president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. The slate has to be presented to the branch members in May and voted on in June.

Jack London Award: This year, being an odd-numbered year, each board has to consider nominees for the Jack London Service Award. Each CWC branch may nominate one member to receive a Jack London Award in recognition of outstanding service to the organization. The award honors a member whose service to the CWC and/or a branch has been exemplary. The JLA may only be received by a member once. It is not mandatory that a branch designates a recipient simply because the opportunity exists. This year, the honorees will receive their award at a luncheon on Sunday, October 22, at the Oakland Airport Holiday Inn. A two-hour business meeting will precede the award luncheon.

Literary Review: I have appointed a member poet, Les Bernstein, to serve as the poetry editor for the next *Literary Review*. Les has been the co-editor on the last five Redwood poetry anthologies. I am looking for other members with editorial and publishing experience to join the *Literary Review* editorial team. If you are interested, please contact me.

California Writers Week: In 2003, the California State Assembly officially declared the third week in October each year as California Writers Week. The bill was developed by the CWC. The purpose is to promote and celebrate all writers in California, past and present. In the past, branches have focused on creating awareness in local libraries and offering special events, for example, readings or workshops, during that week. I have the impression that while



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President's Corner: continued from previous page

some branches have planned events in October, we (the club and its members) are not doing enough to promote this special week and in the process promoting new members for your branch and the club. A good starting point will be to identify members with connections to their local libraries and librarians. Using the poster from our website, they can explain the week to the librarians and perhaps help in creating events that week. One idea is to create a California Writers Corner in their library. These corners can feature famous past authors (see the list on our website) and current local authors, especially authors from the club.

Membership: I am pleased to announce as of this date we have 1,908 members with 1,826 primary branch members, including Life, Active, Associate, Emeritus, and Courtesy. In addition, we have 82 dual members. Since October 1, we have added 215 members. 

The Veep Speaks: Surviving the Shutdown

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



The High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club (HDCWC) had a great meeting planned for January of 2020. We arranged for a “Round Robin” program where the audience intermittently went from table to table to hear our member experts discuss ten different aspects of writing. We were also going to promote our *Jack London in Boyhood Adventures* book, authored by HDCWC member Diane Neil’s grandfather, Frank Irving Atherton, who was a boyhood friend of the author. January 12 is Jack London’s birthday, so it all fit together. The board had met a week earlier and decided to go ahead with the meeting, despite this strange new thing called Covid 19.

However, it didn’t happen. We cancelled. Second thoughts loomed, emphasized by a lack of meaningful social distancing available with such a planned program. So, our president and VP did an early visit to the venue to intercept guests who had not heard of the cancellation.

By February 8, 2020, not a great deal more was known about this virus, and we had our normal face-to-face meeting. Subsequently, Covid reality shut us down and we did not meet in-person again until August 14, 2021.

The HDCWC survived on encouraging communication via email and phone calls, and on Zoom meetings for those 18 months. Mike Apodaca and Richard Zone were fiercely dedicated editors of our monthly *Inkslinger* newsletter, and that helped bring stability and unanimity. All those valued efforts reminded us we were in the same boat and were not alone.

As we all found out, Zoom was a mixed blessing. Zoom technology afforded us opportunities to host people in different states and even other countries; we even had a meeting with a woman in Scotland. Instead of being dismissive of Zoom, we embraced this new capability. Many of those speakers had a lot of good stuff to say to us.

Our membership did not drop. We stayed stable during those dark months. One reason, I think, is that we expanded on the Zoom idea and started doing two meetings a month instead of just the one on the second Saturday. We called it our Act 2 meeting and scheduled those meetings for the fourth Tuesday. Prior to Covid, we had started forming the “On-topic Speakers for You” program which was our speaker’s bureau. The idea was to create a new platform where our writers could do speaking engagements and offer their books for sale. Mike Apodaca and I worked on our www.ontopicspeakers.com website. We knew there was a market for the idea, so we continued to build the space on the internet.

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The Veep Speaks: continued from previous page

We also joined the Greater High Desert Chamber of Commerce, which has been instrumental in implementing our program as well as opening doors for other speaking engagements and networking. We have continued with our Act 2 meetings with Zoom and have been able to feature such speakers as James Scott Bell, Christopher Vogler, Dara Marks, and Dean Koontz. All these broadcasts on Zoom were offered to the entire CWC state membership at no cost. We made an impression on the High Desert and the state as well.

“Accountability Meeting” via Zoom also sprang up. These are weekly one-hour Zoom meetings where a handful of people get together and make commitments to their writing goals, then report back the next week. Some critique groups also kept going by Zoom. A dedicated board of directors continued conspiring on how best to keep the members involved. It worked.

I mentioned in my “The Value of Volunteerism” article in the winter edition of the *Bulletin* how our branch thrived in 2010 by requiring activity of its members. “We’re looking for members, not dues payers” was our mantra. They got it. And out of that personal urging to give of themselves came a unity and charisma that remains today.

Why the success in maintaining and even growing in membership? Upon resuming in-person and hybrid meetings, we had no hard and fast rules about wearing or not wearing masks. Some did, some didn’t. Those who opted to stay at home could now attend by Zoom. Most others chose to attend, and guests still responded to publicity and our no-cost meetings for writers. HDCWC membership is in the mid-eighties with audience in attendance ranging between 45 and 60. We had a record 112 show up when we featured Luis Fuerta, cameraman for the late PBS TV personality Huell Howser.



A record-breaking crowd at a recent meeting of the High Desert branch.

There’s no magic formula. It is more of an attitude developed out of love and respect for each other. It’s a family thing.

In August of 2021 we opened up our in-person gatherings with a networking meeting featuring open mic. It was great to get back together again and to experience our friends in person.

Prior to the meeting, our webmaster, Roberta Smith, lovingly posted her own opinion and excitement: “There’s nothing like being with a friend, someone who has cheered you on through your attempts to become a

writer—a most terrifying endeavor. When you see their smiling face, the intensity of their welcoming eyes, and the warmth of their pat on your shoulder, you know you belong. Saturday, August 14th, will be our first in-person meeting in a year and a half. And I, for one, am ready. I miss the bright faces, the fold-out chairs, Dwight getting up front and trying to be funny. I miss Rita’s scrumptious snacks and Anita’s hot coffee. I miss Michael Raff welcoming me at the front table and giving me a cheesy name tag and Jenny Margotta manning her outpost with the highest possible efficiency. If you haven’t renewed your membership, she’ll make it easy for you. I can still see Joan Rudder Ward operating the video camera in the middle of the room, yet somehow remaining invisible, never distracting from the meeting. I miss putting away the chairs at the end of our time together, working side-by-side with those willing to pitch in wherever needed. Most of all, I miss the laughter. I remember our meetings being a light and positive time where we learned, made connections, and enjoyed one another. I can hardly wait to do this again.”



The Age of AI: continued from front page

Okay, now it's time to talk about the fun stuff – how to build a strong personal brand as an author. And let me tell you, **building a personal brand is the key to setting yourself apart in the crowded world of publishing.**

The initial step is to define your Unique Selling Point or USP.

What makes you special and different from all the other authors out there? This is your secret sauce, and it's what sets you apart from the rest. And it's what will make you memorable in the minds of your readers and industry peers.

How can you define your USP? Here's a detailed checklist to help you get started:

1. Identify your niche or genre: What sets your writing apart? Do you specialize in a certain genre, or do you have a unique writing style?

2. Analyze your competition: Who are the other authors in your niche or genre? What sets you apart from them AND what sets them apart from you?

ChatGPT: A Cautionary Tale

by Geri Spieler, SF Peninsula


While we have had several conversations regarding the merits or ChatGPT or lack thereof, I have suggested it could be a useful tool for research. During one of these conversations, someone suggested looking up “Geri Spieler” and seeing what turns up.

So, I put in “Who is Geri Spieler?” as a topic for the robots on ChatGPT. Below is the result. I've bolded the misinformation about me.

Geri Spieler is an author, investigative journalist, and a writing coach. She has written several books, including “Taking Aim at the President: The Remarkable Story of the Woman Who Shot at Gerald Ford,” which is a true crime book about the attempted assassination of President Gerald Ford by Sara Jane Moore in 1975.

Spierer has also worked as a journalist for various publications, including the San Francisco Chronicle, where she was a staff writer for several years. She has also written for other major newspapers such as The New York Times and The Washington Post.

In addition to her writing and journalism work, Geri Spieler has also worked as a writing coach, helping other writers to improve their skills and achieve their writing goals.

I was **never** a writing coach, and never wrote for the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Not mentioned is that I was a regular correspondent with the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *LA Times*. It did not include the fact that I am the author of *Housewife Assassin* or *San Francisco Values* or the many publications I wrote for Gartner. 



Geri Spieler is an investigative journalist and award-winning speaker. Her most recent book is Housewife Assassin. She is president of the SF Peninsula branch, a member of the Society of Professional Journalists, the Authors Guild, Women's National Book Association, the Internet Society, and Book Critics Circle.

3. Ask for feedback: Ask your current readers, friends, family, and writing peers for their honest feedback on your writing. What do they think makes your writing unique?

4. Reflect on your own writing journey: What motivates you to write? What experiences have shaped your writing? How have these experiences influenced your writing style?

5. Identify your target audience: Who is your ideal reader? What do they want and need from an author in your genre? Knowing your target audience will help you tailor or align your USP to meet their needs.

6. Test your USP: Once you've identified your USP, test it out by sharing it with your target audience. Ask for their feedback and see if it resonates with them. Remember, defining your USP is a process of self-discovery, reflection, and testing – not a “set-it-and-forget-it” task.

Next, establish a consistent online presence.

This means creating some variation of a website, social media accounts, and a blog or podcast. Make sure everything is cohesive and represents your

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The Age of AI: continued from previous page

personal brand. It's your chance to showcase your writing, connect with your audience, and position yourself as an authority in your topic area.

Here's a detailed checklist to help you develop a consistent online presence:

1. Create a website: Your website is your online home base, and it should reflect your personal brand. Make sure your website is easy to navigate and includes a portfolio of your work, a blog or podcast, and a way for readers to connect with you.

2. Blog regularly: A blog is a great way to showcase your expertise and share your writing journey with your audience. Make sure your blog is consistent with your personal brand and target audience.

3. Consistency is key: Make sure your website, social media accounts, and blog are consistent with each other. Use the same color scheme, logo, and voice across all platforms.

4. Be authentic: Be true to yourself, and let your personality shine through. People connect with authenticity, and a personal touch will make your online presence feel more relatable.

5. Engage with your audience: Respond to comments, answer questions, and engage in conversations. Start building your email list to ensure the relationships you build are not obstructed or erased by changes in social platform rules. Email is one of the best ways to build a community and connect with your audience.

Third, interact with your readers and peers on social media.

Share your writing journey, insights, and experiences. Interacting with your readers and peers on social media is another way to build a community and grow your personal brand. It gives you the opportunity to connect and interact with your audience, get feedback on your writing and WIP, and show some personality.

So, how can you interact with your readers and peers on social media? Here's a checklist to help you get started:

1. Choose the right platforms: Choose the social media platforms that are most relevant to your audience and niche, as well as your brand. This will ensure that you are connecting with the right people.

2. Share your work: Share your writing, blog posts, and any other content that allows readers to 'sample' what you offer. This is a great way to highlight your expertise and connect with potential readers.

3. Engage with your peers: Follow other authors in your niche, engage in conversations, and share their work. This allows you to build relationships and goodwill, and will also help to broaden your network.

4. Respond to comments: Respond to comments on your posts, answer questions, and

engage in conversations. To build a community, you need to be continually connecting with your audience and responding to their interests.

5. Be active: Make sure to post regularly and be active on your social media accounts. This will ensure that you are staying top-of-mind with your audience and peers. To avoid overwhelm, focus and master one social media account initially, then expand from there.

Fourth, network with other authors and industry professionals.



The Age of AI: continued from previous page

Attend events, join writing groups, and connect with people who can help you grow your brand. Interacting with other authors and industry professionals allows you to network, collaborate, and ideally position yourself among your peers.

To start interacting with other authors and industry professionals, try the following:

1. Attend events: Attend conferences, book signings, and other events to meet other authors and industry professionals. This is a fun way to network and make new connections.

2. Join online groups: Join online groups related to your niche, such as writing groups, author communities, and industry associations.

3. Collaborate: Reach out to other authors and industry professionals to collaborate on projects, guest posts, podcasts, and other initiatives.

4. Seek mentorship: Seek out mentors in your field to help guide you and offer advice. Learn from more experienced professionals to help grow your personal brand.

5. Be generous: Share your knowledge and expertise, and offer help to others in your field.

6. Show appreciation: Show appreciation for the work of other authors and industry professionals by sharing their work and offering praise. Build valuable relationships and show that you are a team player.

Fifth, offer valuable content for free, like blog posts, podcasts, or webinars.

Creating and sharing valuable free content helps you to create a deeper connection with your audience, demonstrate your expertise, and gain visibility for your brand and writing. Here's how to leverage your valuable free content:

1. Choose a format: Decide on the format that you want to create your free content in. This could be a blog post, an ebook, a podcast, or a video.

2. Choose a topic: Choose a topic that is relevant to your audience and highlights your expertise or authority. This could be a tutorial, a how-to guide, a Q&A, or a thought piece on a current industry issue.

3. Research: Research your topic thoroughly to ensure that you are providing valuable and accurate information to your audience.

4. Create: Create your free content, making sure to focus on providing value and maintaining relevance.


5. Promote: Share your free content with your audience, on your website, and on social media. Make sure to promote it to your email list.

6. Engage: Engage with your audience on your free content, answering questions and responding to comments. Focus on truly understanding your audience and building strong relationships.

The Benefits of Having a Strong Personal Brand

Building a strong personal brand as an author takes time, effort, and a willingness to put yourself out there. But, trust me, it's worth it. With a powerful personal brand, you'll be able to get noticed, increase your visibility, and advance your career like never before. Having a strong personal brand as an author has many benefits.

Let's highlight a few:



Attend events,
join writing groups
and connect with
people ...

Age of AI: continued from previous page


- 1. Increased visibility:** A strong personal brand helps you stand out in a crowded marketplace, making it easier for people to find you and your work.
- 2. Stronger relationships:** A strong personal brand helps you connect in a deeper way with your readers, building stronger relationships and helping you to establish a loyal following.
- 3. Increased credibility:** By showcasing your expertise and demonstrating your knowledge, you can establish yourself as an authority in your genre or an expert in your field.
- 4. Better opportunities:** A strong personal brand opens up new opportunities, such as speaking engagements, book deals, and other collaborations.
- 5. Increased income:** By building a strong personal brand, you can increase your income and make more money as an author.

Bottom line: with the rise of AI, it's more important than ever to brand yourself as an author

By understanding the impact of AI on the publishing industry and building a strong personal brand, you can position yourself to leverage any new opportunities that arise from the advancement of these technologies.

Building a strong personal brand takes time and effort, but the benefits are most definitely worth it. From increased visibility to better opportunities and increased income, the advantages of having a strong personal brand as an author are numerous.

Define your USP, establish a consistent online presence, interact with your readers and peers on social media, connect with other authors and industry professionals, and use valuable free content to showcase your expertise.

Remember, *people need what you have to offer, and it's time for the world to know it.* So, go out there and become the author you were meant to be! 


Kimberley Grabas is a Canadian writer, brand strategist, and the founder of YourWriterPlatform.com – a site where she provides writers with the resources, tools, and inspiration they need to build their platforms, engage their fans, and sell more books. She is the creator of [Believe, Plan, Act: The Platform + Productivity Planner for Writers](#).



CWC Election Process Begins

Under CWC's Bylaws and Policies and Procedures, the offices of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer are filled on an annual basis, voted upon by the Central Board representatives, one per branch, at the annual meeting in July. The process begins with the appointment of a Nominating Chair. For 2023, Roger has named the rep from East Sierra, Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, to serve as Nominating Chair. Donna is a past CWC president, an Ina Coolbrith Award honoree, and has held a variety of key leadership positions in our organization for many years.

Candidates for president must have served at least one year out of the past five on the Central Board. Candidates for vice-president must have at least one year's experience on their branch board. No restrictions exist for secretary and treasurer—other than, of course, a willingness to take on the job.

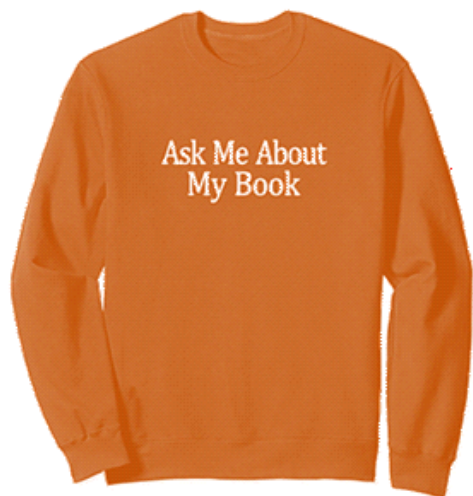
If you're interested in holding office, or know of someone to recommend, email Donna at CWC@mcrosenthal.com. For a detailed job description of the four elected officers, go to calwriters.org, click on the Resources for Branches tab, choose Governing Documents from the drop-down menu, and open up the PDF titled "Policies and Procedures." 



'No Sweat' Book Marketing

by Michael Barrington, Mt. Diablo

Marketing one's books can be a daunting task. Like most authors, I have a well-developed plan including good use of social media, a solid website from which I also blog, make an occasional presentation, and promote my books by writing articles for various magazines. But over the past two years I have developed an additional strategy and all due to my wife!



As a Christmas gift, I received two sweatshirts, both with slogans on them: "Ask Me About My Book" and the other, "Careful or You'll End Up in My Next Novel." At first, I just thought they were whimsical and wore them around the house. Then one day while I was shopping with my wife in Costco wearing my "Ask Me" shirt, a lady came up to me and asked if I was a writer. "Yes, I am," I replied and asked her, "Are you a reader?" When she nodded, I gave her my business card. As we were loading the car, another lady walked over as if she knew me. "That's a cute sweatshirt," she said. "Are you a writer?" Again, I asked if she was a reader and answering in the affirmative, I gave her a business card.

That evening as I reflected on the day, I realized I had missed a potential marketing opportunity. Yes, I had given away two business cards, but what if I had given each of those ladies a signed copy of my book? Maybe they would have read it and recommended it to their friends. How, in fact, I thought, could I get to their friends? I needed people to buy my books, so I decided on two things. Firstly, I would always carry a few books in my car that I would have at the ready for any marketing opportunity and I would give them away. But with one condition! It was clear I had multiple opportunities, daily, weekly, to build up a client reader base. Simply by giving away a signed copy, the market would come to me. Secondly, it was clear that I needed to ask more than the one question, "Are you a reader?" I should also ask, "Do you belong to a book club?" If the person responded in the affirmative, then I would give them a free book on condition that they took it to their club as a possible read. I also would offer to meet with their club either physically if it was local, or via Zoom.

As I started my marketing pyramid book campaign, I began to learn even better ways to improve my homemade marketing system. It all started with Big O Tires. I took my car into the local shop and the owner, Eric, saw my sweatshirt.

"So, you're a writer?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," I replied. "Are you a reader?"

"Yes, I love to read."

Within minutes I knew what kinds of books he enjoyed best and then popped the question.

"And are you a member of a book club?"

"Absolutely. We meet every month, and I wouldn't miss it for anything."

"Can you wait for second while I retrieve something from my car?" A minute later he was holding a signed copy of one of my books.

"But how much is it?" he asked.

Learning that it was free, his face broke into a huge smile. And when I mentioned his taking to his book club he was thrilled.

"No problem. I'm sure they will read it and be delighted to have you join us."

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'No Sweat' Book Marketing: continued from previous page

"But I have another question. How many people in your book club might know people in other book clubs?"

"There are eight or nine of us usually," he answered, "but I would imagine there are at least two or three people who have other connections."

"Then pass on the good news," I urged. "I will give them a free signed copy if they will present it to those other clubs or groups."

"This is amazing," said Eric. "I will certainly do that. But what about my daughter?"


"What do you mean?" I asked quizzically.

"Well, she is a voracious reader and also a member of a book club."

"Hang on a minute," I replied and scurried out to my car and retrieved another copy. "What's her name?" I asked, and inscribed it to her.

That was the very beginning of my pyramid scheme, and like Topsy it has just 'growed and growed.' Through that one connection I was soon contacted by seven book clubs and two other ladies' social groups who wanted me to talk to them about why and what do I write.

I understand writers in general are not great social animals and are often shy about contacting or simply striking up a conversation with people who are usually strangers. But sometimes we have to. Last year, wearing one on my sweatshirts, I had to visit my dentist. Five or six young ladies were working in an administrative pool, and one of them called out to me, "Are you a writer?" And so it began! By the time I had my teeth cleaned, I had signed and donated two books and was later connected to four book clubs.

I now get phone calls from people I don't know but are asking for copies of my books so they can later take it to their clubs. I have been invited to speak to church groups, multiple Rotary clubs, Red Hat groups, Soroptimists and branches of SIRs. The latter are mainly men, but I have been contacted by many of their wives! At these presentations my focus is not on selling books but on expanding my market, so I always ask that second question, "How many of you are connected to a book club or any other kind of club?" And so, I collect names and contact information, offer to give away free copies and continue to build my pyramid. And the royalties keep coming in! 

Michael Barrington is a member of CWC Mt Diablo. The author of five books and numerous articles, he also blogs on his website: www.mbwriter.net.



Update from CWC-South

by Donna McCrohan-Rosenthal, Chair, CWC-South

CWC-South has had a table at the Riverside Dickens Festival each February for the past eight or so years. We have handouts about early California writers and Dickens' influence on late 19th-century California, and we generate sign-ups for email notices from our southern branches. Unfortunately, festival organizers had to cancel 2023's event owing to miserable weather. We hope for better luck next year.

Near term, we expect to hold a regional Zoom meeting in April; to continue our mini-grant program; and we have our socalwritersshowcase.com website, updated monthly with creative writing by our members.



The Ins and Outs of Internal Conflict

by Michael Raff, High Desert


Conflict is a vital component in writing in writing compelling stories. I think we all know what conflict is: the problem or struggle that the protagonist faces within a story. Most often the problem is the antagonist. In this context, that situation would be classified as *external* conflict. But I would like to touch upon *internal* conflict, which by definition is a struggle that is *internalized*, giving rise to choices, consequences, or emotions. It's a conflict that can be described as the main character versus himself. The protagonist must defeat his *own* emotions or characteristics in order to prevail. One could call this type of story a *psychological drama or thriller*. When a character experiences an internal conflict, their struggle helps move the story forward.

Of course, there are a variety of internal conflicts such as opposing needs, desires, and values. They can also include relationships, ethics, careers, mental health, and society. Additionally, characters suffering from internal conflict can experience confusion, doubt, anxiety, and fear.

One internal conflict that most readers can relate to is *existential* conflict, when a character questions their purpose in the world, often conflicted about the meaning of life, or the nature of the universe. This is accomplished marvelously in Willian Somerset Maughan's classic novel, *The Razor's Edge*.

Grief, such as a loss of a loved one, and the emotion of guilt, have a way of creating conflict. Perhaps my favorite internal conflict is guilt. I dove into that emotion in "The Salvation of Edward Wilson." The protagonist suffers from survivors' guilt, a common occurrence in war veterans. It comes to a climax when he attends an anniversary event at Pearl Harbor.

Another example of a protagonist suffering from guilt comes from Dostoevsky's brilliant novel, *Crime and Punishment*. After murdering a pawnbroker, the protagonist, Raskolnikov, copes with confusion, paranoia, horror, and disgust. Because of his crime, he also struggles with guilt and ends up confronting the *internal* consequences of his action.

With all due respect for *external* conflict, I think *internal* is more challenging to pursue. Mostly because there are so many causes and types of emotions that can come into play, therefore the possibilities are seemingly endless. 



Since 2011, Michael Raff has published three novels and five anthologies. His stories have appeared in two Dragon Soul Press anthologies, in the CWC Literary Review, and in High Desert's anthologies, some winning prizes. His web site is mraffbooks.com. He can be reached at mprseven@aol.com. All his books are available on Amazon.

External Conflict in Storytelling

by Jenny Margotta, High Desert

In literature, conflict is a struggle or problem that the protagonist must face. External conflict focuses on the character against an outside force. There are five different ways that conflict can be presented:

- Character vs. character
- Character vs. society
- Character vs. supernatural
- Character vs. technology
- Character vs. nature

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External Conflict: continued from previous page

Conflict is an essential element of any plot. External conflict drives the action of a plot forward. For example, the protagonist can be fighting to defeat an enemy, win a promotion or coveted job, settle old scores or grudges, right a wrong, win the love of another character, or work to resolve another type of problem. A story can have just one central conflict or it may have multiple storylines with different protagonists involved in separate, ongoing conflicts. Additionally, a good conflict story may have elements of more than one of the five external conflict types.



Classic fairy tales and myths often fall into the first category: character vs. character. For example, the miller's daughter outsmarts Rumpelstiltskin, Cinderella is freed from her evil stepmother, and Theseus slays the minotaur. Fairy tales and myths often meet the criteria for character vs. supernatural conflict as well.

George Orwell's *1984* is an excellent example of character vs. society. Winston tries—and fails—to resist the oppressive power of the police state that controls his world's society.

Stories revolving around character vs. the supernatural have been popular since the beginning of time. The epic poem "Beowulf," which consists of 3,182 alliterative lines, was written sometime in the eighth century. There's also Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* became a multi-

billion-dollar box office success, and there's the popular current Netflix series, *The Haunting of Hill House*. Supernatural forces are defined as forces that operate outside the laws of nature, often having special powers or abilities normal humans do not. They can be witches or wizards, ghosts, werewolves, vampires, zombies, or other paranormal or magical creatures.


Character vs. technology conflict, which explores the problems that arise when technology grows beyond its intended use, is the hallmark of science fiction. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a classic example. The Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey* is another example. Who among us doesn't know something about the AI computer HAL 9000? And of course, there's Arnold Schwarzenegger's iconic role in *The Terminator*. Schwarzenegger is a cyborg assassin sent from the future by Skynet, an AI defense network that has achieved self-awareness. The winner of the conflict between the cyborg and the human soldier could determine what the future holds for both man and machine.

Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire" is an example of character vs. nature. The story is about a foolish man traveling alone through the extreme cold of an Alaskan winter. Wet and in danger of freezing to death, he manages to light a fire with his last remaining match. However, the heat from the fire leads to disaster.

Without a problem or conflict, most stories wouldn't go anywhere. They might achieve their goals without any challenges or struggles, but that would not make for an interesting read. Your character might win or lose the battle, but that struggle against another character or outside force is what ultimately makes the story worth telling. Conflict motivates characters to take action, and that's what keeps readers turning the pages. You want your readers to be eager to find out what happens next. Does the character they're rooting for win or lose? How will they overcome—or be defeated by—the problems they face? And why should your readers care? Those are the questions to ask yourself as you write your external conflict story or poem.

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External Conflict: continued from previous page

Now you have the key elements for either internal or external conflict in storytelling. So go forth and do battle against the evil force of writer's block. Triumph and write the story or poem that wins first place in your branch's anthology or other writing contest. And take it from me, the prize money is worth winning—plus you get all those great bragging rights! 



Jenny Margotta is a professional copy editor with over 175 books to her credit. She also formats books, works with graphics and photos, and has designed numerous book covers. As J Margotta-Ferrara, she is the author of four books, most notably the braided memoir, The Woman in Room 23. Her books are available on Amazon. Jenny can be contacted at jennymargotta@mail.com. This article and the one previous on Internal Conflict are reprinted with grateful permission from The Inkslinger, the newsletter of the High Desert branch.

My Writing Process: Rollin' Down the River


by D.L. LaRoche, South Bay Writers

Some think of writing story as a jigsaw puzzle to be assembled. One opens the box, and out fall the pieces: characters, plot, theme, scenes; there are many. Riffing through, we find obstacles big and small, red herrings, minor characters, false starts, and an unreliable narrator—each with a particular role to fulfill, each with a unique description and shape. The writer's job is to fit them together, tongue to groove, so that a picture emerges complete with nothing left over—no open holes, no lonely pieces.

I see the process more like a small boat in a mountain stream, carrying the reader lazily down under dappled light through shore trees: cottonwoods and willows catching the afternoon breeze—a tranquil time of observation for the reader-passenger.

Then, alerted by a distant growl, the upcoming narrows speak of the stream turning deep and fast into what appears to be a threatening, damaging rush over rapids and perhaps a fall. There comes a shudder as the excited surface begins its inevitable pull on the boat toward the impending thrashing and crashing in the turbulence ahead—huge boulders mark the entrance. The rapid's shallow battering, the boat bouncing, turning, and smashing against all sorts of stone and cottonwood root protrusions exposed from earlier spring rains. Will the boat sustain? Will the reader hang on? We hope but do not know.

And then the pool—quiet and placid, and the little boat, some battered, some changed in shape, finds an eddy and slowly spins in the new light of that's over; what next? Well, there may be the doldrums, a stillness that fosters algae and scum. There might be a swamp where the boat becomes mired among cattails and grass, and the passenger gets out—slogs his way to the shore. Or there may be a beach, a long strip of inviting white sand under a warm glow from the sun, and contentment around.

Those of us who have watched *The African Queen* may liken this method of storytelling to John Huston taking us down the Congo River in a small boat named "Livingstone." I suppose there are as many ways to construct a story as there are storytellers, but this is my favorite. 



Dave LaRoche's contributions to CWC are too numerous to count. Among many accomplishments, he founded NorCal Group in 2009 and in 2012 gave birth to the Literary Review. He is the author of Abducted: A Mulhaney Crime Novel, What Price Charlie's Soul, The Arkansas Rose, and The Mortician and Other Love Stories.



On the Horizon

CENTRAL COAST

April 18: Kevin Fisher-Paulson, *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist, on editing your work.

May 16: Geri Spieler, “Advanced Internet Research for Writers.”

Meetings are in-person only, 6:15 p.m. at the Center for Spiritual Awakening, 522 Lighthouse Ave., Pacific Grove. Free admission, \$5 donation requested.

COASTAL DUNES

April 1: Tony Piazza on writing and researching crime and mystery fiction. 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., in-person at the Nipomo Library, 918 West Tefft St., Nipomo, and on Zoom.

May 6: Brian Schwartz on AI and what it means for authors. 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in-person at the Rancho Buena Vista Mobile Estates clubhouse, 2135 N. Railroad Ave., Santa Maria, and on Zoom.

June 3: Diane Smith, Coasta Dunes VP, workshop on point-of-view, voice and authentic dialogue. 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in-person at the Nipomo Library, 918 West Tefft St., Nipomo, and on Zoom.

For the Zoom link for these events, go to <https://coastaldunescwc.com>, click on “Contact” and send a request. No fee.

EAST SIERRA

March 25: Junior Writers Book Swap, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at Red Rock Books in Ridgecrest. In honor of National Reading Month and the birthday of Dr. Suess, young people in grades K-12 are invited to a book swpa, poetry reading, story title writing contest, and other fun activities.

HIGH DESERT

April 8: Poetry Month celebration. 10 a.m.-noon, in-person at Community Church at Jess Ranch, 11537 Apple Valley Rd., Apple Valley, and on Zoom. For the link, contact Bob Isbill, risbill@aol.com. No fee.

June 27: Meet literary agent Lucianne Diver of The Knight Agency, 6:00 p.m. on Zoom. The link will be sent to all CWC presidents for distribution to their members one week prior to the event. Free and open to all members.

On the Horizon: continued from previous page

LONG BEACH

April 8: Gustavo Hernandez, "How Setting Amplifies Writing." 2:30 to 5:00 p.m., in-person only at My Acting Studio, 4412 E. Village Rd., Long Beach. \$5, members only.

MARIN

April 26: Daniel Barthel, "Writing an Eye-catching Query." 5:00 to 6:30 p.m., Zoom only. \$5 members, \$10 non-members. Register at cwcmarin.com/events.

NORTH STATE

April 13 and May 11: Open Mic Night, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., Butte County Library, 1108 Sherman Ave., Chico. In-person only, free and open to all.

May 13: All About Books Chocolate Festival, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Terry Ashe Park, 6626 Skyway, Paradise. Free and open to all. Meet your favorite Northern California authors, illustrators and publishers. Browse and buy books in a variety of genres and subject matter. Authors interested in reserving a booth and selling their books should contact the festival office at 510/342-4896 or email debbie@chocolatefest.us.

ORANGE COUNTY

April 1: Tina Mai, "The Power of Words, Initiative and Community."

May 6: Lisa Cupolo, "Building Tension and Surprise in Short Stories."

June 3: Patty Civalleri, "Applying Trader Joe's Tactics to the Business of Writing."

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

REDWOOD WRITERS

April 8: Rebecca Foust, Poetry Workshop, 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Finley Community Center, 2060 W. College Ave., Santa Rosa. \$30 members, \$35 non-members.

April 15: Poetry Celebration. 1:00 p.m., at the Finley Community Center, 2060 W. College Ave., Santa Rosa. \$5 members, \$10 non-members.

May 20: Stacy Ennis, Q&A on book writing, publishing, author platform, location independence, and more. 1:00 p.m., Zoom only. \$5 members, \$10 non-members.

Register for all Redwood Writers events at redwoodwriters.org.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

April 1: Luzmaria Espinosa, poet laureate for Ventura County.

May 6: Adam Plantiga, "Writing Realistic Police Procedurals."

June 3: Ross Berger, "Writing for Video Games and New Technologies."

Meetings begin at 1:00 p.m. and are Zoom only. Free to all members. For the Zoom link, contact Anat Wenick, SFV.CWC@gmail.com.

SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA

April 15: Betsy Fasbinder. "How to Write About Sex." 10:00 a.m. to noon, in-person only at the Sequoia Yacht Club, 441Seaport Ct., Redwood City. \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. Register and pay in advance at <https://www.cwc-sfpeninsula.org>.

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On the Horizon: continued from previous page

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

April 18: Terry Wells-Brown, “BookFunnel Magic Marketing.”

May 13: John Byrne Barry, “When Plots Collide--Creating Suspenseful Page-turners by Weaving Multiple Storylines.”

Meetings are Zoom only, noon to 2:00 p.m. Free for all. For the link, email president June Gillam, gorillagirlink@gmail.com

TRI-VALLEY

April 15: Connie Post, “Finding Your Creativity in the Between Places.”

June 17: Kate Farrell, “Storytelling, An Interactive Workshop for Authors.”

Both events are in-person only, 2:00 p.m. at Las Positas College, room 2470, at 3000 Campus Hill Drive, Livermore. \$10 members, \$12 non-members, \$5 student members, \$8 non-member student. Register and pay at <https://www.trivalleywriters.org/speaker-meeting-registration-and-payment>. 

**Don't miss out on the latest branch activities!
Stay up-to-date on the CWC website,
calwriters.org. Click on the Events Calendar tab.**


Bud Gardner: 1934-2023

The Sacramento branch is mourning the death of Marion Melvin “Bud” Gardner, a longtime CWC member and pillar of the Sacramento literary community.

Bud trained and inspired countless young writers with his “Writing for Publication” class that he taught for 40 years at American River College. He assiduously kept track of the payments received by his students, and upon his retirement in 1996 his students had earned more than \$10 million selling some 10,000 articles and 200 books. Refusing to slow down in retirement, Bud turned to television, teaching “Writing for Publication” via satellite, drawing some 50,000 viewers each week.

In 2000, Bud teamed up with Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen to co-author *Chicken Soup for the Writers Soul*, part of the best-selling “Chicken Soup” series. His many honors include resolutions from the Governor and Legislature praising his outstanding teaching accomplishments.

Kim Edwards of the Sacramento branch took Bud’s class at American River College and recalls him being “extremely charismatic and loved by all.” At one time, he was very active in CWC, particularly with the biennial conference that took place in the 1980s and 90s. He was the 1983 recipient of the Jack London Award for outstanding volunteer service.

Bud died on March 16. A Celebration of Life is in the works at a future date at Sun City Roseville, where Bud lived out his final years. 



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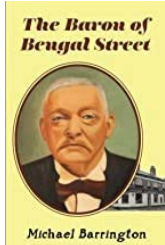
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Member Spotlight

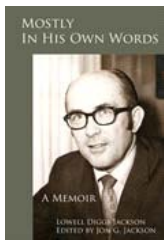
NEW RELEASES



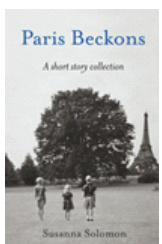
Michael Barrington's (Mt. Diablo) latest historical novel, *The Baron of Bengal Street*, is set at the turn of nineteenth century Manchester, England. Based on his maternal Irish grandfather, a Robin Hood-type personality, who 'owned' the chief of police, city councilors, local Catholic priests and ran the Shamrock Inn for 32 years.



Tenisha Bernal (Redwood Writers) had her debut children's book, *Little Chef's First 100 Words*, published in May 2022 by Random House Children's Books. This book introduces items that can be found in the heart of the home: the kitchen. From utensils to appliances, international cookware to baking supplies.



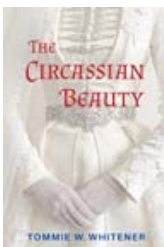
Jon Jackson (Redwood Writers. *Mostly in His Own Words*, the story of Lowell Diggs Jackson, who grew up in rural Kansas in the 1930s dirt poor with few amenities. He went to a one-room schoolhouse. Later, as Dr. Lowell Jackson, he rebuilt the public school system for the brand-new state of Hawaii. Countless educators and administrators were shaped by his teachings.



Susanna Solomon (Marin and Redwood) has released a short story collection, *Paris Beckons*. Cara Black, author of the award-winning Aimee LeDuc mystery series, says, "Evocative and personal, heart-wrenching and illuminating, Susanna Solomon's *Paris Beckons* showcases 34 stories revealing what lies beneath our deepest fears and memories. Poignant and for those with pasts that refuse to remain buried."



Bill VanPatten (San Joaquin Valley) has published a collection of short stories, *There I Go*. "Rips the bandage off lifestyles, emotions and, well, not-so-well-kept secrets in and around small-town California." (*BookTrib*). "These intimate tales prove worthy of the accolades for his previous stories and novels." (*US Review of Books*). www.billvanpatten.net.



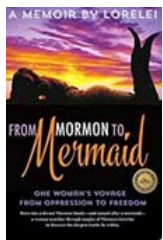
Tommie W. Whitener (Redwood Writers) has published *The Circassian Beauty*, a novel of romance and adventure. Pavel and Natalia must prevail against wolves, bombers and the snooty elites of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, but their passion and love for each other was not to be denied.

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Congratulations!




Member Spotlight (continued)



AWARDS AND HONORS

Lorelei Kay (High Desert) has won first place for creative nonfiction and memoir in the Winning Writers' eighth annual North Street Book competition for her memoir, *From Mormon to Mermaid: One Woman's Voyage from Oppression to Freedom*. The prize includes cash, a marketing consultation and publication of an excerpt on <https://winningwriters.com>.



Bill Van Patten's (San Joaquin Valley) mystery novel, *Looks Are Deceiving*, has been recognized as a Distinguished Favorite by the Independent Press Award in the category of LGBTQ fiction. This international competition draws thousands of entries and is judged by book industry experts. The Distinguished Favorite is based on overall excellence. www.billvanpatten.net. 

Put Your Work in the Spotlight!

Share your latest book release or other literary achievement with your fellow CWC members. Send an announcement, 50 words or less, to editor@calwriters.org. Covers should be submitted in JPEG format as an attachment to the email. Deadline for the Summer 2023 issue is June 1.

"Read, read, read. Read everything -- trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write. If it's good, you'll find out. If it's not, throw it out of the window."

– *William Faulkner*





Our topic for this issue is **Food!** Specifically, food and beverage at your branch meetings. If you've got an idea for a future CWC Roundtable discussion, send your topic to editor@calwriters.org.



Gary Parker, Publicity Chair and Treasurer Pro Tem, Central Coast Writers: We are at a new facility and are trying out different things. In January, we charged \$2.00 for a slice of pizza and a bottled water and netted about \$22. In February, we offered free pizza and water as a promotional experiment; cost to the club was about \$37. We are not at a restaurant. We have a member of the club's Executive Committee stop by Costco and bring pizza and bottled water to the meeting. All attendees have the option to bring their own food and beverage if they prefer.



Patrick Sturm, President, Coastal Dunes: We offer light snacks, bottled and hot water (for tea, coffee or cocoa). We go to lunch at a nearby restaurant after the meeting. Due to ongoing concerns regarding the flu and Covid-19 we only serve wrapped light snacks (potato chips, granola bars, cookies). Since our meetings take place at the local library we serve non-perishable items only. Snacks and refreshments (coffee, tea, cocoa) are free; however a donation jar is close by.



Daniel Stallings, President and Newsletter Editor, East Sierra: We offer free mini water bottles at all general meetings. For certain meetings, such as our annual August Open Mic Night, we offer light refreshments to members and guests. Our venue is the fellowship hall of a church, so food isn't on hand. We focus on the speaker and program. Members are satisfied with very light refreshments, finger foods like individually wrapped cookies or crackers. Our Program Chair usually provides the water. When we do light refreshments for Open Mic Night, it's more of a potluck. We do not charge for refreshments at our meetings.



Bob Isbill, Programs and Publicity Chair, High Desert: We allow our members to bring in their own food/drink if they wish, especially if they have dietary or allergic constraints. We offer coffee, juices, cookies and/or healthier snacks such as fruits and vegetable trays. Our hostesses provide a variety of tasty snacks. No meals, just snacks and coffee and juices. We have two members who decorate the table appropriately and secure the coffee and snacks. Rita Wells and Sally Ortiz have been doing this a long time and do a beautiful job. Refreshments are served on a table open to all. Members and guests are welcome to help themselves at no charge. This is included in the program, which is also free and open to the public at no charge.

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CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)



Kathryn Atkins, Co-president, Long Beach: We have donated store-bought cookies and water at our monthly meetings.



Notty Bumpo, Board Rep, Writers of the Mendocino Coast: We are just now starting to offer hybrid meetings, in-person and Zoom. We cannot find a venue that offers food that doesn't want to charge a use fee as well.



Lenore Hirsch, President, Napa Valley Writers: We offer water only. We meet in the evening so meal service is not necessary. Masking eliminated the possibility of snacking indoors. We are now not required to mask, but nobody has stepped up to bring treats. We meet in a church, so food serve is not an option.



Brian Gaps, President, Orange County: Our meetings are hosted at an upscale two-story food hall. Food is available for sale. Members and guests love the venue—it is part of the appeal and one-of-a-kind among CWC branches. Outside food is not permitted. Our meeting takes place in the dining area of a great food hall, before it opens to the general public. Two venues open early to serve our members. Breakfast, pastries, coffee, and other drinks are available. As the meeting ends, twenty restaurants begin opening for lunch all around us offering nearly every cuisine. Members and guests may attend without ordering; however, food purchases are encouraged to support the venue and the restaurants that open to serve us. The restaurants do well enough to continue opening early for our event. We make additional purchases for holidays and special events. However, I would not host at a venue that required a purchase in the admission price as I believe mandatory food purchases make the events prohibitive and non-inclusive in general, thereby limiting membership, diversity, and equity.




Crissi Langwell, Vice-President, Redwood Writers: We offer individually wrapped snacks, both sweet and savory, plus bottled water. The club provides provide any refreshments that are served. We do not charge for refreshments.



Geri Spieler, President, SF Peninsula: We offer brunch, as we meet at 10 AM. We have bagels, fruit, cheese and crackers and some sort of sweet, plus coffee, tea and orange juice. We cater all our food at our meeting venue, the Sequoia Yacht Club. It has a kitchen, so that helps. Attendees pay \$10 members, \$15 non-members and that includes food.



Sandy Moffett, President, Writers of Kern. Our meetings are held at a local family-owned buffet. The cost of the meeting, \$20 for members, and \$25 for non-members, includes full access to the buffet and the omelet station. There is a coffee/tea station set up in our meeting room, and the participants have access for one hour prior to the meeting. Prices have just increased because the venue raised their prices. 



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NorCal Group: Steering into a New Era

by Kimberly Edwards, NorCal Group Interim Chair

More than a dozen representatives of the NorCal Group – a network of 14 branches – met on March 1 to review the results of branch surveys that will shape our focus for the year:

1. Getting members back to in-person meetings;
2. Finding new members, including younger members;
3. Retaining members – creating meetings and activities to meet members' needs;
4. Finding and exchanging information on excellent meeting speakers;
5. Recruiting volunteers.


Promoting members was identified as an additional area of interest.

A focus for the NorCal year will be dissemination of good practices to branches within the stated priorities. As one way to address these needs, the NorCal Group hopes to hold a Leadership Conference for board members and those interested in branch leadership. Plans are underway to showcase innovative ways to fortify our historic writing club. Branches with fresh, effective strategies are sought. The conference is tentatively scheduled for Sept 24. Stay tuned for a “Save-the-Date” flyer.

NorCal reps received an orientation on the purpose of NorCal—to support the boards and branches in meeting needs of members. Reps shared pros and cons of Zoom branch meetings. While some are hybrid meetings, others have gone to in-person only. Accommodations for those who cannot make meetings include recording the speaker for later access and live streaming on YouTube or a Facebook closed group. It was suggested that the mode in which the meeting is to be held be clearly stated on branch websites.

The NorCal Group voted to support another year of participating in the Bay Area Book Festival, should a branch step forward to assume the lead. For several years NorCal has arranged for the CWC booth, where members can also sell their books.

Outgoing NorCal Chair Carole Bumpus wound up another stellar year at the San Francisco Writers Club with a plethora of volunteers at the CWC booth. Due to Carole's continuing efforts, each branch was again awarded scholarships for attendance at poetry and screenwriting summits. Special appreciation to Carole for amazing efforts on behalf of the club.

The next NorCal meeting will take place May 3. Branches are invited to submit ideas for “deliverables” to support branch operations and needs. It has been my privilege to serve as Interim Chair of an exciting group committed to fine-tuning our acclaimed writing club as we look to the future. 



Longtime members of NorCal Group, past and present, gathered in Fremont in February to honor outgoing chair Carole Bumpus for her seven years of service to the regional association. She was presented with a snow globe featuring a sailboat, appropriate as Carole and her husband are avid sailors, as well as CWC's sailing ship logo and slogan of “Sail on!”



THE CWC BULLETIN

THE OFFICIAL MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB
 PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES A YEAR: MARCH, JUNE, SEPTEMBER AND DECEMBER
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ADVERTISING/PROMOTION
 BOB ISBILL (HIGH DESERT)

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

Getting Along Without It



The human race got along just fine for thousands of years without it. Great works of literature were created without it. And yet, just a few days without it and I was reduced to a helpless, cranky, miserable mess, as useless as a box of Betamax tapes.

“It,” of course, is that invisible energy flowing into our homes and offices. Electricity.

If you’ve been paying any attention at all to the news the past couple of weeks, you’re aware of the harsh weather slamming most of the Golden State. The central coast, Monterey County, has been particularly hard hit. I’ve actually been more fortunate than most. My hometown of Pacific Grove is built on bedrock, so no danger of mudslides. We have no nearby rivers prone to flooding.


What we do have are trees. Lots and lots of trees: pine, palm, Monterey cypress, eucalyptus. Trees + gale-force winds + overhead power lines = disaster. As to why we are relying on 19th century tech—wooden poles and wires—to deliver a 21st century necessity ... well, that’s another rant for another time.

Day One of the power outage was almost fun in a weird sort of way, like being in the cast of one of those survivor reality shows. My phone and Kindle were all charged up, logs crackled merrily in the fireplace, a little battery-powered DVD player offered entertainment when it became too dark to read, and there was plenty of wine.

By Day Three, the mood was decidedly less sanguine. The fire had sputtered out, the DVD player had lost its charge during the second season of *Sherlock*, and the wine supply was growing dangerously low. Moreover, I was becoming quite angsty over the many projects languishing on hold due to no computer and no internet access. Sure, I could still write with pen and paper, but any sort of editing project, let alone graphic design, was completely out of the question. How helpless we become, and how quickly!

The above is a long-winded apology and explanation for the late arrival of this edition of the *CWC Bulletin*. My target deadline is the 15th of March, June, September and December. As a one-time print and broadcast news person, I respect deadlines and feel horrible about missing them. But, well ... it just wasn’t in the cards this time around. I feel especially bad for the branches that sent news items about events happening in mid-March. I am so sorry! But in the end, Mother Nature always wins.

My power did come back at the end of Day Three ... then went out again for around 8 hours a day or so later ... then came back. I’m slowly catching up on a backlog of work. But I hear another atmospheric river is on its way, so I’d better hurry and finish up with the *Bulletin*.

And make sure we’ve got enough wine. 

— Joyce Krieg