



CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN

WINTER 2023

Two Chances for You to be Published in 2024

by Joyce Krieg, CWC *Bulletin* Editor

The traditional CWC *Literary Review* took the year off in 2023, but never fear—2024 will bring not one but two CWC publications offering opportunities for members to see their words in print.


One of these also creates the chance for visual artists in our club to showcase their work. Under the direction of Editor-in-Chief Les Bernstein of Redwood Writers, a book featuring members' artwork, prose and poetry is being created. This coffee table book is titled *Vision and Verse* and themed around the Greek concept of Ekphrasis.

Now, some of you may be wondering—what the heck is Ekphrasis? (I didn't know either, and



I have a college degree!) Turns out it traces back to the days of ancient Greece and basically means prose or poetry inspired by a work of art. The first phase of this project involves a members-only art contest, including photography. The winning images will be disseminated to all members, and you will then be invited to create a poem or short prose piece about the artwork.

Meanwhile, under the direction of President Mike Apodaca of the High Desert branch, a more traditional anthology in the spirit of the old *Literary Review* is in the works. This time, though, there's one major difference—the branches will select the short stories and poetry to be published, and every branch will be represented with at least one piece of each.

Thus, two exciting publication opportunities, available exclusively to our members in 2024. CWC President Roger Lubeck shares his thoughts on this in his message on page 2 of this newsletter. You'll find details about *Vision and Verse* on page three and more about the "best of the branches" project on page 4. 



President's Corner: Honoring Our Volunteers

by Roger Lubeck, CWC President



Ina Coolbrith and Jack London Awards. At our CWC meeting in October we were able to honor three outstanding members: Carole Bumpus (SF Peninsula), Sandy Moffett (Writers of Kern), and Elisabeth Tuck (Mt. Diablo) with the Ina Coolbrith award for service to the club. In addition, at the luncheon we recognized outstanding members from each branch for their service to the branch, with the Jack London Award for Service. The club and our branches depend on volunteers. Our success is the direct result of members like this year's honorees.

Vision and Verse, a fusion of Art and Photography. Les Bernstein (Redwood) agreed to serve as Editor in Chief for a new 2024 publication Vision and Verse, an ekphrastic book pairing artwork and photography with poetry and short prose. The book will include contest-winning original art and photography from club members and selected member poetry and prose written in response to the art. In order to create this new book, we launched a member-only

art contest starting on December 1 and running through January 15, 2024. The art will be judged by Les Bernstein and Cheryl Maeder. Details for the art contest are posted on the CWC website: <https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse>

Les Bernstein has been the editor with Fran Claggett of six poetry anthologies for the Redwood branch. She is an award-winning poet. Her poems have appeared in journals, literary publications and anthologies in the United States and internationally. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee.

Cheryl Maeder's artistic pursuits have expanded to encompass filmmaking, fine art photography, video installations, and large-scale installations tackling pressing issues like climate change. Her work is featured in various permanent collections and has been exhibited extensively in the United States, South America, and Europe, including The Louvre Museum, Paris, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome.

Details for submitting poetry and prose for Vision and Verse will be sent to all members and posted on the CWC website after the contest winners have been announced and presented in February.

Literary Review. The original purpose of the *Literary Review* was to publish the best writing from our members. The original format was a magazine and later a paperback. While successful in meeting the goal of promoting members' writing, the publication has encountered a number of difficulties. First, finding sufficient volunteers to staff the publishing process each year and second, the cost of printing and mailing the book to members.

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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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(SF PENINSULA)

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ELISABETH TUCK (MT. DIABLO)

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President's Corner: continued from previous page

The CWC board decided (in 2022) that the *Literary Review* would be produced every other year and no longer be mailed to all members. Rather, a PDF would be made available to all members and a print version would be available for sale on Amazon. That solution addressed the problem of cost, but not the difficulty in finding an editor-in-chief to manage the entire process. This year several potential editors bowed out or were unwilling to manage the entire process. Fortunately, we now have a group willing to manage an exciting new approach to the traditional *Literary Review*

Best of the Branches. Mike Apodaca, president of the High Desert branch, has volunteered to manage a fresh approach to the traditional *Literary Review* for 2024 year. For the new book, each branch will be given a number of poems and pieces of short prose that can be submitted for the book by the branch. The number available to a branch will be based on the size of the branch membership. Currently, the plan is that branches with less than 50 members can submit one poem and one piece of prose. Branches with 51 to 100 members can submit two poems and two prose pieces, and so on. The method for selecting the poetry and prose will be up to the branch. Contests and anthologies could be one source. However, the submitted works must represent the best from a branch and be completely edited and ready for publication. We estimate the new collection will have 64 stories and 64 poems—a substantial anthology.

The details for this new publication are still being finalized. All branches will receive an announcement when the guidelines and submission process are posted on the CWC website. The new collection will be available to members as a PDF and a print version (and possibly an e-book) will be available for sale on Amazon.

Creating a CWC Bookshelf. Vice President Geri Spieler and Redwood branch president Judy Baker are working with me to create a database that contains information about our members' publication history. In January members will receive a survey asking if you have any publications. The survey is voluntary. You will be asked if you have any published books. If you do, you will be asked if you would like to list the following: title, ISBN, publisher, and publication date. Also, we will ask the genre and type of publisher for each book. Members with individual publications of poetry and/or prose will be able to list recent publications.

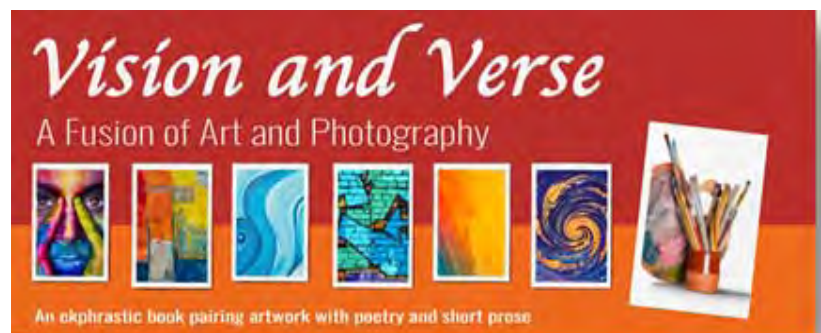
Our plan is to use this information to promote our members' published work. We believe this will be one more way to increase the value of being a member of the California Writers Club. 

Calling All Artists and Photographers

by Les Bernstein, *Vision and Verse* Editor-in-Chief, Redwood Writers

California Writers Club announces plans for a new CWC book in 2024 titled ***Vision and Verse, a fusion of Art and Photography***. *Vision and Verse* will be an Ekphrastic book pairing artwork with poetry and short prose.

There are two phases to this project. Phase one is an art and photography contest. Phase two will post the winning art and call for poetry and short prose submissions inspired by the selected works. Submitted poetry and prose will be judged and selected poems and prose will be published in 2024, along with the winning art, in CWC's *Vision and Verse, an Ekphrastic book*.



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Calling All Artists and Photographers: continued from previous page

Details regarding Phase Two submissions will be posted on the CWC website after the completion of the Phase One contest.

PHASE ONE

A CWC member-only Art and Photography contest

Deadline: January 15, 2024.

Member artists and photographers are invited to submit a digital image of their artwork and thought-provoking photography to the contest. Winners will receive a copy of the book *Vision and Verse*.

1. The first-place winner will be featured on the cover and receive a \$100 prize.
2. The second and third place winners will receive a \$50 prize.
3. All other artists whose work is selected will receive a copy of *Vision and Verse*.

Submission guidelines:

1. Artwork: We welcome original paintings, drawings and illustrations.
2. Photography: original photographs only.
3. All submissions must be submitted in a jpeg format.
4. Submissions must be received no later than January 15, 2024
5. Multiple submissions are allowed.
6. There is a \$10 fee for each submission.

We look forward to seeing your talent shine in the CWC's 2024 *Vision and Verse*. The winning art will appear in the Spring 2024 issue of the *CWC Bulletin*.

Contest and Submission Details are available on the CWC website, calwriters.org.



The Literary Review: A New Approach

by Mike Apodaca, High Desert

As has been the tradition of the CWC for many years, there will be a *Literary Review* published in 2024. With the blessing of the CWC, the High Desert branch has created a new model. In order to expedite the process, and to make the costs more manageable, there will be some significant changes.

The *Literary Review* will no longer be comprised of stories submitted by individual members, then collected and judged by the CWC. Each branch will be in charge of selecting the stories and poems that best represent the highest writing from their branch. The number of selections that a branch can submit will be determined by their membership. Those with 50 members or less will be allowed one story and one poem. Those who have memberships from 51 to 100 will be allowed two stories and two poems. You see the progression. By our calculation, using the current reported membership, we may have up to 64 stories and 64 poems—a substantial anthology.

How are the stories to be chosen? This can be ascertained in various ways. One way is to publish a branch anthology, which many of our branches have done. Some branches judge their submissions, assigning first place, second place, etc., to the stories and poems. These branches will submit their top winning stories and poems. The number of submissions, as stated previously, will depend on their membership count at the time of submission.

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Literary Review: continued from previous page


Those branches that have an anthology that has not been judged will have to form an unbiased committee to judge their stories and poems and select the ones that represent the best writing of their branch. Branches that do not have an anthology may choose to have their own short contest, giving their members a few weeks to submit stories and then give a panel of judges a few weeks to choose the winners. Again, the best selections will be submitted according to the size of the branch's membership.

All submissions will be sent to Mike Apodaca, president of the High Desert Branch.

(MrDaca.ma@gmail.com) The High Desert branch will compile the anthology and submit it to the CWC for approval and publication. After it is approved, the book will be published through KDP. Those who have a story or poem published will receive a free hard copy. (Hard copies to be supplied by and paid for by the member's branch.) Everyone else in the CWC will receive a link to download a free PDF of the publication. The *Literary Review* will also be available on Amazon.com in both printed and e-book formats.

Your branch president has been sent details about this project, so see your president if you're interested in submitting a short story or poem. Details will also be posted on the CWC website, calwriters.org, in the coming days.

The submission deadline is Feb. 28, 2024. In other words, this is the date by which the branches must select the writing by their members, edit the winning pieces, and turn them in to High Desert.


This is not a mandatory project. Those choosing to participate will do so voluntarily. It is hoped that each branch will see it as an opportunity for the branch to promote their best writing and writers. We look forward to seeing the best of the best from our members. 

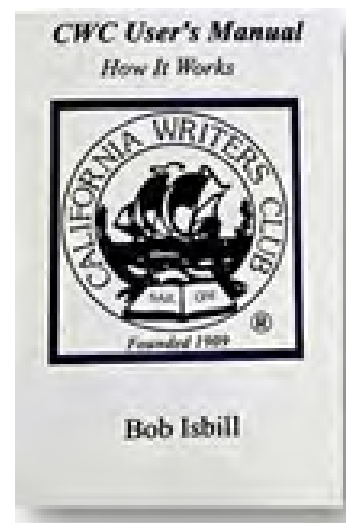
Something New: CWC User's Manual

by Bob Isbill, High Desert, CWC Publicity and Public Relations Chair

The CWC User's Manual draft was presented to the Central Board Representatives at the CB meeting on Sunday, October 22, 2023. The book, designed to be a volume containing information for officers as well as interested members to summarize how the moving parts of our great club work.

The CB reps were asked to take a look at the publication and make suggestions as well as discover any mistakes and/or typos. So many of you have responded, and I am grateful for your input.

At this time, it seems that a completed volume will be available for publication by the end of the year. You will be notified of how and when you will be able to get the book. Plans are to have it available as a hand-held book as well as a PDF file available at no charge on our CWC website. All proceeds will go into the CWC Central Treasury. 



Marketing Tips for Niche Nonfiction

by Michae Stockstill, Orange County

I knew interest in my non-fiction book about the history of the Irvine Ranch in California would be limited, so my marketing plans focused on local communities and organizations.

Our publisher, Routledge, specializes in academic titles; the \$39.99 sales price was a challenge. But using the author discount, I got the price into the \$28 dollar range for sales I made in person. (The price is currently \$32 on Amazon).

My first target group included friends, family and former employees of the Irvine Company. With email lists and addresses gleaned from internet sources, emails went out first, followed by letters to far-flung Irvine Company alumni, in all more than 150. Finding addresses was time-consuming but very few of the initial letters were returned (more in subsequent mailings).

My wife organized a book launch party in our backyard that produced sales, but of greater enjoyment, it was the first time post-COVID we were able to visit with many old friends.

Next came libraries. The county library system has an online process for book purchases, which I followed up on with personal visits to the six local libraries most likely to buy it. This also offered the opportunity to connect with the Friends of the Library at each branch. The result: four invitations to make a book presentation at the library.

For libraries at universities and colleges throughout Southern California, it was a laborious internet search followed by e mails to each librarian in the history section. Outcome: mixed, a handful of positive responses. I did make sales to the California state library, as well as the City of Los Angeles, and to one of the oldest libraries in California, the Mechanic's Institute in San Francisco.

As word spread, friends who belonged to clubs and organizations with an interest in history or real estate offered to set up speaking engagements. One of the most productive was the Daughters of the American Revolution—I spoke to two chapters and sold nine books on the spot. I also had success with two civic groups in Newport Beach.

After the initial mail blast to Irvine Company alumni, I began to strategize a mailing campaign to people I thought would have an interest in local history. Searching the internet and my memory equally, I mailed more than 100 letters, many with handwritten notes. The results were nearly impossible to track, unless someone replied to my e mail address in the letter.

I also began to use LinkedIn to identify senior employees at the Irvine Company who would be interested in the history of the organization. I sent a link request which allowed me to also send a short pitch on the book, all at no cost. I expanded this strategy to target planning professionals at cities and regional agencies, and I think

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Marketing Tips: continued from previous page

it paid off—every week following LinkedIn outreach produced sales on Amazon, which I tracked on my author page.

Social media was a key consideration, and here my co-author's skills really helped. He built an attractive website that we featured in every message, written or otherwise. It has a direct link to Amazon and the publisher for sales and has garnered a great deal of praise. He also configured Facebook so that anytime the book was mentioned, a graphic of the cover popped into sight. I made several short videos of places mentioned in the book and posted them on Facebook and Instagram. A couple of friends mentioned seeing them and buying the book.

Obtaining free media proved difficult. The news hole in local weeklies is so small that a book review was never in the cards. (We did receive stories in online weeklies in Newport Beach and Laguna Beach). Local reporters from the *Register*, the dominant daily paper in the area, ignored my pleadings until a reporter from Los Angeles replied to an email (she had written about a high-priced home sale in Orange County) and wrote a great story that ran not only in the *Register* but in the Sunday edition of sister papers in Pasadena, Long Beach and Riverside. I got lucky with the *Los Angeles Times* when my wife and I attended a charity event and met a reporter who covered arts and found the book of interest.

The story she wrote ran in the Sunday edition and the following two weeks our Amazon sales jumped. The local business weekly ran an excerpt from the book the third week in December and sales improved thereafter.

Book stores were a bust. The price of the book made it very difficult for them to sell it and make money.

One of our best events was sponsored by the library system at UC Irvine, where I spent hours in the Special Collections and got to know the librarians, including one who specialized in Orange County history. She arranged a combination web/in person event that attracted more than 150 people online and in person. Better yet, the presentation was recorded and placed on the UC Irvine YouTube channel and can be viewed by anyone.

As this is written, we're heading into the 17th month since publication. More than 1,300 copies of the book have been sold, which includes the 320 I purchased and have been selling myself.

The lessons? Target your audience, be persistent. The more you work, the more you will sell.

Social media
was a key
consideration ...



Michael Stockstill is the co-author (with Pike Oliver) of Transforming the Irvine Ranch: Joan Irvine William Pereira Ray Watson and THE BIG PLAN, published by Routledge in June 2022. Book website www.thebigplanbook.com



Whatever Happened to Punctuation?

by Michael Barrington, Mt. Diablo

I have just finished reading my third novel by Sally Rooney, followed by Cormac McCarthy's latest, *Stella Maris* and I'd like to report the speech marks are missing! Punctuation goes in and out of fashion, and the marking of text with inverted commas to signify direct speech seems, in the current moment, is decidedly going out of fashion.

Cormac McCarthy called punctuation, "Weird little marks. I believe in periods, in capitals, in the occasional comma, and that's it." Since this was his first novel after a 16-year hiatus, I started reading it because I was intrigued by the subject matter, dedicated solely to a dialogue between two people, a woman who self-committed to a mental institution and a psychiatrist. It was a disaster. After twelve pages I'd had enough and just couldn't handle page after page with no quote marks. However, I was sufficiently intrigued to purchase the audio book. And oh, my goodness, what a difference. I didn't want to stop listening. I was totally enthralled by the female and male voices that gave color and texture to a dynamic, intriguing, and labyrinthine script.

But with Sally Rooney, not so. Why she has chosen to use this technique in her novels, only she can say. I found it gimmicky at best since her lack of quote marks didn't enhance the flow of the story or blend with the rest of the text. But a greater irritant for me was her use in all three novels of another technique, the way she attributes the spoken word. No writer wants their characters to become disembodied, but attribution, clarifying for the reader *who's* saying *what*, is key to maintaining good order in dialogue. It sustains the novel's pace and orients and relieves the reader from unnecessary guesswork. As writers we shouldn't have to send the reader window-shopping in search of a speaker to "assign" the script to! Distractions of that sort break the spell of the interactive flow, and are really an earmark of the inexperienced writer.

I'm speaking here, of course, of "*she said*" and "*he said*," the most common attributions, and their host of variants. When it's evident who's talking, the reader can readily do without them. Often enough, in a brisk exchange between two people once the talk gets rolling, it takes nothing more than a paragraph change, the customary tool for differentiating speakers, to make clear to the reader who's saying what. Repeated attributions can serve to heighten the intent of the exchange two people are having. Beginning writers in particular are prone to suppose that "she said" and "he said" become too humdrum, are used too frequently, and need to be replaced by such alternatives as "she replied," "he explained," "he responded," "she murmured," "she protested," and so on ... all of which, when used judiciously, are useful.

Repeated indications as to who's doing the talking can also be used for dramatic effect. And this is where Sally Rooney drives me crazy. A creative writing teacher advised, not to labor too much about attributions, "*Go*



... this is where
Sally Rooney
drives me crazy.

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Punctuation: continued from previous page

ahead and use 'she said' and 'he said' with little fear of over-use! They soon enough become mere **transparencies** for the reader, barely noted in passing as the reading proceeds." If this is the case, why does it irritate and distract me from the storyline, making me want to stop reading? In Rooney's *Normal People* on just one page I counted thirteen times her use of "he said, she said."

An additional curiosity is Rooney's point of view as she described her characters. In *Beautiful World Where Are You*, much of its tension comes from the disconnect between the spare prose of the third-person sections, (I can't remember seeing a semi colon in any of her books) with sometimes one paragraph filling an entire page, and the rambling soliloquies of the emails. Once they have been named, she ghosts her characters through page after page by simply referring to them as 'she' and 'he,' and given that she rarely fully develops them, I found it annoying and my attention flagging.

But there is a reason her books are bestsellers. In addition to her famous sex scenes, described as "the best in modern literary fiction," she captures with unembellished, often plaintive prose, the angst of her millennial audience, albeit, her sometimes meandering chapters while reflecting the time and milieu, can be perplexing to those of us north of 40. But be that as it may, I still need my punctuation.



Michael Barrington of the Mt. Diablo branch is the author of five books, the latest being *The Baron of Bengal Street*. He blogs at www.mbwriter.net



Making Money with Short Stories

by David Gaughran

Short stories are fun to write, but can you make money from publishing them? The quick answer is: *maybe*. But it's almost certainly harder than you think, and the path to success

A needed dose of realism for authors of short stories: the opportunities brought by ebooks and self-publishing haven't led to the short story renaissance many hoped – except in certain niches. Nevertheless, some intrepid writers are using shorter work in new and clever ways to get attention, grow their readership, and make some money too.

Short Story Markets

You pretty much have three options:

- sell a short story collection to a publisher
- sell a single short story to a magazine
- self-publish short stories – either as singles or collections.

Well, you have three options *in theory*. The odds of the first are astronomical, the prospects of the second aren't much richer. (Sorry, that's the truth.) While the third option is certainly in your own clammy hands, it also comes with a plethora of new challenges.

There's no sugarcoating it, but don't be dissuaded; there is a path ahead for the adventurous short story writer.

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Short Stories: continued from previous page

Short Story Publishers

Your dreams might include a short story collection published by a venerable New York house. The reality is that publishers only tend to acquire short story collections from the very most successful of their large stable of existing authors, and even then only in certain genres.

You don't have to like it, but this is the harsh truth: an unknown author has virtually no chance of interesting an agent or publisher with a short story collection – especially if they don't have a string of impressive magazine credits already.

The exception here is specialist publishers in certain genres. Tor regularly publishes novellas between 20,000 and 40,000 words. Romance also has several publishers like Harlequin looking for shorter books in certain categories.

Slim pickings abound. But there are other routes to readers, some of which might be a much more profitable use of your time.

Short Story Magazines

Once a mainstay of American life, demand for short story magazines has dwindled considerably since their heyday – as have the relative pay rates, which are essentially frozen since the 1950s. Publishing a short story in a magazine is a wonderful experience nonetheless. Especially if you are popping your literary cherry, and particularly so if you actually get paid. Pay is often nominal but getting a magazine credit can be a positive first step at the beginning of your writing career, and certainly was for this particular author.

For authors of literary fiction, famous magazines like *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review*, and *The Atlantic* might be top of their list, just keep in mind that the bar there is incredibly high and established authors – even famous ones – get rejected all the time.

Respected literary magazines include *Ploughshares*, *Zoetrope*, *The Antioch Review*, and *Threepenny Review*. Check them out if you write that kind of story. Writers of humor will already know about *McSweeney's*, surely. It remains a popular choice for submitters of short pieces in various forms.

And then various genre magazines round out things, such as *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine* and *Ellery Quinn Mystery Magazine* for all types of mystery, suspense, legal thrillers, and police procedurals. SF/F

authors will want to check out the likes of *Asimov's*, *Clarkesworld*, *Amazing Stories*, and *Lightspeed* as well.

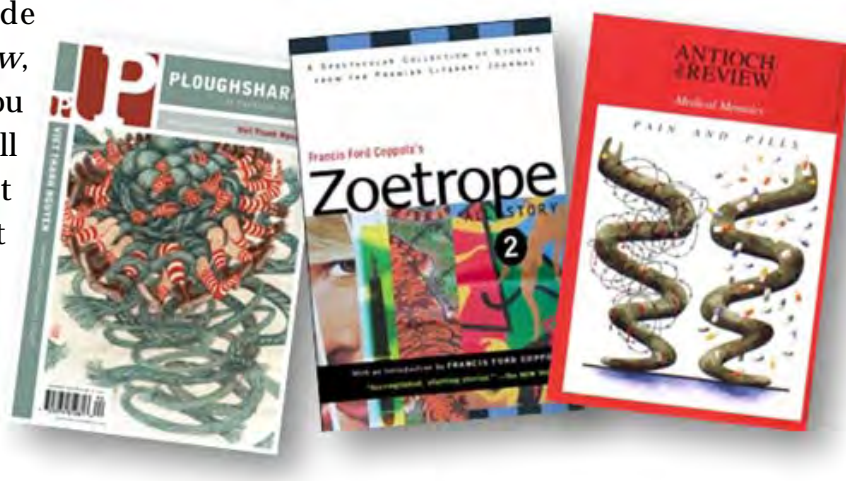
If you are seeking out more markets, or other genres, then [Duotrope](#) should be your first port-of-call. A handy resource for finding markets and tracking submissions.

Self-Publishing Short Stories

Because I am a passionate advocate for self-publishing, you might expect me to say that self-publishing short stories is nothing but sunshine and lollipops. But let me give it to you straight: it's a tough way to make money. And there are certainly easier ways to make a literary buck, especially in the world of self-publishing.

Because there's an inescapable truth: readers prefer novels. And not just any kind of novel, but a series too. The prospect of writing over 1000 pages when you have been struggling to write 10 might be overwhelming.

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Short Stories: continued from previous page

Publishing short stories yourself is certainly one way to ensure your work reaches the marketplace of readers. Yes, you have many new things to learn if you want to do it right. But these are skills which will be incredibly useful to you over the course of a writing career.

But let's be clear about something: the real challenge with short stories isn't publishing them, it's *selling* them. Especially in a world overflowing with novels.

Selling Short Stories You Publish

The inventive world of self-publishing has come up with a number of handy uses for shorter work. Let's go through them in turn:

Anthologies: I'm sure you are familiar with anthologies. To properly distinguish them from box sets, anthologies are collections of short stories by different authors, usually around a chosen theme.

Authors either get invited to participate by the editor organizing the anthology (often a fellow author). Or they might respond to a call for submissions and get chosen – just like with a magazine. They can even act as the editor themselves and invite submissions.


Anthologies aren't usually big money-making operations or chances to hit bestseller lists – although that can happen with strong promotion. Usually the aim is giving curious readers a taste of your writing, and leading them across to the rest of your catalog.

Box sets: The difference with anthologies is that box sets are usually collections of novels (or sometimes novellas) by either a group of authors, or just one throughout. Short stories come into the mix through providing bonus content – which can entice readers who already own some or all of the novels in the box set.

Reader magnets: The most powerful tool any author has is their mailing list. And the very best way to boost sign-ups is by dangling a free story as a bonus for joining – often called a reader magnet. Having an exclusive, free short story or novella as a sign-up bonus can act as a very powerful incentive for readers to join your newsletter, and it's a particularly popular technique among savvy self-publishers seeking to grow their mailing list.

Short stories or novellas are handy as reader magnets because they can be written much more quickly than novels. However, using shorter pieces also opens up the possibility of writing custom reader magnets – such as a short story featuring a popular secondary character. When you have something which readers are crying out for, and they can only get it by signing up to your mailing list, sign-ups can go through the roof. This tactic has been the biggest driver of mailing list growth for me – no question. And most other authors with a big mailing list will probably agree with that too.



Born in Ireland, David Gaughran now lives in a little fishing village in Portugal. He writes novels under another name, has helped thousands of authors build a readership with his books, blogs, workshops, and courses, and has created marketing campaigns for some of the biggest self-publishers on the planet. Friend to all dogs. This blog post is used with grateful permission and originally appeared on davidgaughran.com. His website includes a wealth of free videos, tutorials, and helpful information for self-published authors. 

Spice Up Your Writing with Allusions

by David Wetterberg, San Fernando Valley

An allusion is a reference to something you would expect your audience to be familiar with. Note how in the first example below, the literary allusion to Tom Sawyer draws Tom's freedom, his innocence and his sense of adventure into the nature of the priest.

Literature: Luckily, the priest had experienced a similar Tom Sawyer youth.

Mythology: She wouldn't stop trying to play Cupid.

The chocolate covered cream puff proved to be an Achilles heel.

Folklore: Trying to stop it was like putting your finger in the dike.

Abner ran off like the gingerbread man.

Movies: She cherished it with the passion of a Scarlett O'Hara

The little girl's charm, like Dorothy's oil can, loosened up the gruff old man.

Biblical: The professor carried an air of Solomon about him.

This simple honesty was about to bring down a giant.

Geographic: His nose bled like the Red Sea.

Historical: The two high school teams faced each other like the Spartans fighting the Persians.

Tired of fighting the Battle of the Bulge, Sam finally went on a diet.

An occasional allusion can be intelligent and effective. Just don't overdo it. Your readers will think you're showing off.



The late David Wetterberg once wrote a monthly English grammar column for the San Fernando Valley branch newsletter. A retired English teacher, Dave could quickly recall any obscure rule of English grammar. He was also a long-time SFV member who served as an editor, president and eventually the club's resource for members with an urgent grammar question. Dave, like an affable A.I., would immediately and clearly recite the right answer. He was rarely wrong. This 2010 column is reprinted with grateful permission from The Valley Scribe.



Age Is Just a Number for These Writers



The latest anthology published by the High Desert branch is proof that it doesn't matter how old or young you are when it comes to writing. The oldest and youngest contributors to the anthology are pictured at left. Avalynn Morse (left) is just 20, while June Langer is 100! High Desert launched its seventh anthology, *Conflict*, on November 20. Your editor assumes the stripes in the photograph were caused by light from mini-blinds, and not that both writers chose to wear matching outfits!

Where Do Stories Come From?

by Lily Iona MacKenzie, Berkeley

Whenever I give a talk or reading, someone in the audience asks where my stories come from. I find the answer more complex than what it would appear to be on the surface. What are my narrative seeds? What starts me on these explorations of others' lives?

One of my bios states "Lily sprouted on the Canadian prairies under cumulous clouds that bloomed in Alberta's big sky. They were her first creative writing instructors, scudding across the heavenly blue, constantly changing shape: one minute an elephant, bruised and brooding. The next morphing into a rabbit or a castle. These billowing masses gave her a unique view of life on earth."



I do credit those experiences I had as a child for my impulse to write, my desire to explore (and expand) my immediate surroundings—to move beyond them. Being a writer is being a shape-shifter, a mythic concept that Ovid capitalized on in his *Metamorphoses*. What do I mean here? While writing, we are constantly manipulating reality, making it do things that we actualize in our fictions. And it involves the psychological term transference where we are able to project emotions, ideas, and perceptions onto something in the external world that others resonate with because they share these same impulses, the foundation of what it's like to be human. We are transferring these elements into our characters. But we are also conveying them to our readers.

When I read Faulkner's *Sound and Fury*, I not only understood Caddy's feelings, but I also *became* Caddy for a time. She inhabited me, reading in me similar impulses that I had had as a young woman. Faulkner had created a character that had such an effect because he could imagine and inhabit *her* world, thereby enabling me to imagine it too. So, a reader's shape is also shifted as a writer shapes and shifts his/her creations into characters. There's a whole lot of shape-shifting going on!

It isn't just that our imaginations seek opportunities to alter the material world and recreate it. *Odyssey* is an important word here to describe the journey that each of us takes when we begin writing a narrative, whether it's a short or long fiction.

In the *Odyssey*, Circe was the ultimate shape-shifter, turning Odysseus' men into pigs. We writers all share this impulse, whether we recognize it or not. We can't bear to just take the world as it is. We are always probing, inquiring, analyzing, creating and turning things into other things: into clouds, into human beings, into fiction. And that's how stories begin. It's also why there are constantly new stories: there are always new combinations, fresh possibilities. How can we possibly stop searching in these clouds of perception for novel forms that will immerse us in new worlds that we have at our fingertips.



Lily Iona Mackenzie is the author of six novels, four collections of poetry, and a memoir. She blogs at <https://lilyionamackenzie.com/>



Honoring Our Wonderful Volunteers

Twenty-five hardworking volunteers received much-deserved recognition and applause at CWC's Jack London/Ina Coolbrith Service Awards luncheon and ceremony October 22 in Oakland.

The Jack London Awards, honoring volunteerism at the branch level, is a tradition dating back to 1973. Thus, this year's celebration marked the 50th anniversary of the awards. They are, of course, named after the popular California writer, the Honorary Founder of CWC.

The Ina Coolbrith Awards came about more recently, when the need was recognized to honor exceptional service to the parent organization. They are named for California's first poet laureate. Miss Coolbrith was a key figure in the Alameda Press Club, which spun off and evolved to become California Writers Club in 1909. She is also remembered as the Oakland librarian who gave Jack London his first library card, fostering his love of reading and writing.

Ina Coolbrith Honorees

Carole Bumpus: NOrCal Group Chair 2015-2023, chaired Leadership Conferences in 2016 and 2018, in charge of CWC's booth at the annual San Francisco Writers Conference. Member of SF Peninsula.

continued on next page



The "Class of 2023": Front row, from left:

Tim Flood, SF Peninsula; Diane Vickers, Marin; Carole Wagener, Coastal Dunes; Janis Kunz, East Sierra; Criss Langwell, Redwood; Jill Hedgecock, Mt. Diablo; Karen Gorback, San Fernando Valley; CWC President Roger Lubeck.

Middle row, from left:

Kymberlie Ingalls, Berkeley; Mike Apodaca, High Desert; Constance Hanstedt, Tri-Valley; Donee Harris, Writers of Kern; Gloria Pierrot-Dyer, Sacramento; Lynn Tosello, North State; Pam Van Allen, San Joaquin Valley; Carole Bumpus, SF Peninsula (Ina Coolbrith honoree).

Back row, from left:

Trenton Myers, South Bay; Lenore Hirsch, Napa Valley; Judy Kohnen, Inland Empire; Elizabeth Tuck, Mt. Diablo (Ina Coolbrith honoree); Sandy Moffett, Writers of Kern (Ina Coolbrith honoree).

Missing: Scott Davidson, Fremont; Katherine Brown, Writers of the Mendocino Coast; Nancy Middleton, Central Coast; Mary Vensel White, Orange County.

Service Awards: continued from previous page

Sandy Moffett: Membership Chair for CWC and the Central Board Executive Committee's Member-at-Large. She has also chaired CWC-South. Member of Writers of Kern.

Elisabeth Tuck: Secretary of the CWC Central Board, 2016 to the present. A major volunteer for the CWC *Literary Review*, serving as Acquisitions Editor and for four editions, Managing Editor. Member of Mt. Diablo.

Jack London Honorees

Kymberlie Ingalls, Berkeley: Former President, active meeting participant, mentor to numerous writers.

Nancy Middleton, Central Coast: Program Chair for the past five years, consistently bringing in informative and inspiring speakers.

Carole L. Wagener, Coastal Dunes: Branch Secretary and Membership Chair, member of the Monthly Speaker and Anthology committees.

Janis Kunz, East Sierra: Vice-President, Youth Coordinator and Scholarship Chair. Improved club's outreach to local schools and young writers.

Scott Davidson, Fremont: Webmaster and Zoom-master, keeping the branch going during the pandemic lock-down.

Mike Apodaca, High Desert: Current branch President, former Vice-President and Editor of the branch newsletter, organized branch speakers' bureau.

Judy Kohnen, Inland Empire: A member of the branch board for ten years, has cycled through nearly all the key positions, including President.

Russ Thompson, Long Beach: Branch Secretary, a key figure in finding a new meeting venue and solving tech issues during the pandemic Zoom meetings.

Diane Vickers, Marin: Almost single-handedly kept the branch afloat before and during the pandemic shut-down, now training a new generation of board members.

Jill Hedgecock, Mt. Diablo: Program Chair for the past eight years, former co-chair and current judge of the Young Writers Contest.

Lenore Hirsch, Napa Valley: One of the founders of the branch in 2012, former President and Treasurer, section editor of the branch anthologies.

Lynn Tosello, North State: Current President and one of the founding members of the branch in 2013, former Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor.

Mary Vensel White, Orange County: Current President, part of the team that made changes and saw 400 percent growth in branch membership.

Crissi Langwell, Redwood: Vice-President, Social Media Manager and Editor-in-Chief for two anthologies, "a lifeline for the club" during the pandemic.



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Service Awards: continued from previous page

Gloria Pierrot-Dyer, Sacramento: First Vice-President and Programs Coordinator, and a board member of Friends of Allensworth.

Karen Gorback, San Fernando Valley: Currently president, she has held a number of key positions in SFV since joining in 2008.

Tim Flood, SF Peninsula: Membership Chair, Website Manager, and originator of the “news blasts” that replaced the traditional branch newsletter.

Pam Van Allen, San Joaquin Valley: Has held several key positions on the branch board and is the Editor of SJV’s just-released first anthology.

Trenton Myers, South Bay: As branch treasurer, he has kept meticulous records and introduced numerous improvements to branch operations.

Constance Hanstedt, Tri-Valley: Branch Treasurer for five terms, ran the Member Spotlight program and leads the Poetry Critique Group.

Donée Harris, Writers of Kern: Four terms as Vice-President, has run meetings and planned conferences, her “love and dedication ... knows no limits.”

Katherine Heimann Brown, Writers of the Mendocino Coast: Former President and current Secretary, has given dedicated service to the branch for many years. 

VIOLET CARR MOORE: 1939–2023




Tri-Valley Writers lost a true stalwart with the passing of Violet Carr Moore on November 26.

Violet received the Jack London Award for her volunteer service to Tri-Valley Writers after serving as vice president, and then president. She continued to volunteer in several positions and was most recently the publicity editor. She continued to share writing tips with a touch of humor on her blog up until just days before her death.

She was active in a novelist critique group, an avid reader, member of Friends of the Livermore Library, and a perpetual student.

Violet achieved her goal of becoming a published author with *In the Right Place: A Gallery of Treasured Moments*. Following that collection of mystic vignettes, she published *Moments of Meditation*, a collection of inspirational devotionals. Violet’s short stories have been published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Devotional Stories for Mothers*; *Christmas Miracles*; *Written Across the Genres*; *The Choice Matters*; *Voices of the Valley: First Press, Encore, Word for Word*, *Journeys*; *Through the Window*; and several anthologies. She

co-authored *Double Take*, a memoir of her childhood years as a twin. Violet’s winning haiku was published in Bay Area News Group newspapers, both printed and online. “Fatal,” her first attempt at a sci-fi short story, won first place in *Survival*, the High Desert anthology.

Former Tri-Valley President Jordan Bernal said, “I’ll always remember her smile and her enthusiasm for writing. She volunteered so much with the Tri-Valley branch and helped many of her writing friends improve their work through proofreading, editing or being in a critique group with them.” 

Zoom Round-Up



Editor's Note: At the last CWC Central Board meeting, someone (your editor did not catch the name) made an intriguing suggestion. How about a comprehensive, all-inclusive directory of all of the various Zoom meetings, speakers and workshops being offered by the branches? Brilliant, thinks your editor. Just the thing for the CWC Bulletin. Thus, the old "On the Horizon" feature has evolved into the Zoom Round-Up.

As a reminder, it is CWC tradition to offer reciprocal privileges to members of other branches at the same cost (if there is a fee) charged to the host branch members. Space permitting, of course. So don't be shy! If a Zoom event being offered by another branch sounds interesting to you, reach out and make contact.

FREMONT AREA WRITERS

Jan. 27: Agy Wilson, children's book illustrator and cover designer, "What to Expect from Your Illustrator." 2:00-4:00 p.m. Free.

Feb. 24: Dave Strom, author of the Super Holly Hansson stories, "Performing Your Work." 2:00-4:00 p.m. Free.

March 23: Julie Artz, author, editor and book coach, "How to Know What Kind of Editor You Need, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Free.

Contact Scott Davidson, scottfrombayside@yahoo.com, for the Zoom link. Please put "FAW Zoom" in the subject line.

HIGH DESERT

Jan. 30: Al Watt, author of *The Ninety Day Memoir*, 6:00 p.m. Free. Attendees are encouraged to purchase a copy of Mr. Watt's book. He will be offering an exclusive CWC discount on an upcoming memoir class, and will return to High Desert on June 25 to see how the memoirs are coming along. For the Zoom link, contact Bob Isbill, risbill@aol.com.

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Zoom Round-Up: continued from previous page

MARIN

Jan. 17: Mystery author Jane Cleland, "Creating Characters that Resonate with Emotional Truth," 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. \$5. Register at <https://cwcmarin.com/rsvp-for-january-2024-meeting/>

REDWOOD WRITERS

Jan. 13: Bryan Cohen, CEO of Best Page Forward, "How to Decipher the Wild World of Amazon Ads," 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. \$25. Register at <https://redwoodwriters.org/amazon-ads/>

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

Jan. 6: BBC presenter Paul Lewis, "A Complicated Life," all about Victorian writer Wilkie Collins. 2:00 p.m. Free.

Feb. 3: Romance author Synithia Williams, "Black and in Love," 2:00 p.m. Free.

To sign up and get the Zoom link, go to <https://www.cwc-sfv.org>.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

Jan. 13: Branch President June Gillam, "Imagine Your 2024 Writers Journey," 2:00-4:00 p.m. Free.

Jan. 30: Al Watt, author of *The Ninety Day Memoir*, "Writing Memoir," 6:00-7:00 p.m. Free.

Feb. 10: Jennifer O'Neill Pickering, "Writing Contests and Ekphrastic Writing," Noon-2:00 p.m. Free.

March 9: T.E. Watson, "Why You Write What You Write," Noon-2:00 p.m. Free.

Four Mondays, Feb. 12 and 26, March 11 and 25: Writing workshop. focus on memoir, writing about art, and writing for anthologies. 4:00-6:00 p.m. \$50 suggested donation.

For the Zoom link, contact June Gillam, gorillagirlink@gmail.com.



Out and About with Our Members



Two former CWC branch presidents, now living in Oregon, have connected through Willamette Writers. Sue Fagalde Lick (left) was president of South Bay Writers in the 1990s. Linda Brown is a former president of the Berkeley branch.



CWC was well-represented at the 35th annual National Kidney Foundation Authors Luncheon in San Francisco October 26. These attendees came together through the invitation of Carole Bumpus of the SF Peninsula branch and former NorCal Group Chair. That's Carole seated in the center.

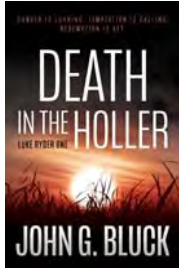


Member Spotlight

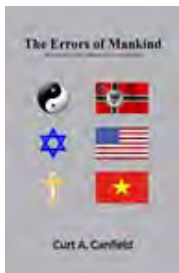
NEW RELEASES



Michael Barrington (Mt. Diablo) is enjoying the launch and success of his two historical novels in 2023. *The Baron of Bengal Street* features a penniless Irish boy who arrives in Manchester, UK in 1895, educates himself and rises to the heights of society. *No Room For Heroes* is set against a background of the French Resistance in World War II. It follows two female identical twins, as they try to outwit first the Italians who occupied the region, then the Germans.



John G. Bluck's (Tri-Valley Writers) Luke Ryder mystery/thriller trilogy was published by Rough Edges Press this summer. A recent *New York Post* article named Book 1, *Death in the Holler*, as one of "20 action-packed books to bring on vacation..." The Public Safety Writers Association honored the next two volumes, *Murder at NASA* and *Mayhem at Sea*, with awards in July. For more information, visit: <https://roughedgespress.com/project/john-g-bluck/>.



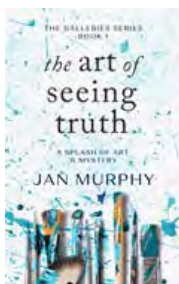
Curt Canfield (Sacramento) has published *The Errors of Mankind: Mistaking the True Conditions for Our Well-Being*. *Publisher's Weekly* wrote, "This promising plot revolves around conversations between a Vietnam veteran, a World War II German veteran, and an Auschwitz survivor, exploring humankind's culpability for evil acts." Read more at www.curtcanfield.com



E. Michael Lunsford (South Bay) announces publication of *Derek's Spooky Scavenger Hunt*: Spookaphobic Derek lives in the haunted Hyde Funeral Home & Body Parts shop with his adoptive mortician parents, Jack and Formalda. What's worse, Derek really misses his birth parents—who supposedly died. Turns out, they're not so dead.



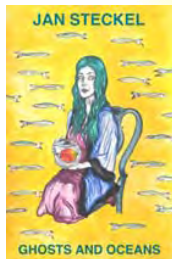
Lily Iona MacKenzie's (Berkeley) memoir, *Dreaming Myself into Old Age: One Woman's Search for Meaning*, published by Shanti Arts Press, invites readers to join her quest for self-discovery. In her early eighties, she remains determined to age gracefully and thoughtfully. Her memoir not only shows how night dreams have influenced her, but also how all the arts have fed her waking and dreaming self.



Jan Murphy (Orange County) has published her debut novel, *The Art In Seeing Truth*, a splash of art and mystery. Book One of the Galleries Series finds Nina, a watercolorist, losing her dream award and art career when she's implicated in an art judge's murder. Secrets are hidden in plain sight and in her past buried beneath the brushstrokes of a painting.

continued on next page

Member Spotlight (continued)



Jan Steckel's (Berkeley) fiction collection *Ghosts and Oceans* (Zeitgeist Press) is available on Amazon and at <https://www.zeitgeist-press.com>. Berkeley author Thaisa Frank writes, "Jan Steckel has created her own magic realism, exploring fluid realms between rumor and myth.... Both the lush musicality and startling imagination invite the reader to travel in tilted and surprising worlds."



Kylie Wang (Mt. Diablo) recently published her first book with Earnshaw Books at 17 years old. *Stuck in Her Head*, a heartfelt story about navigating relationships and mental illness, is the first modern Young Adult novel set in Hong Kong. Learn more and buy a copy at <https://twoteenauthors.com/stuck-in-her-head/>.

SHORT STORIES, CONTESTS AND OTHER HONORS

Michael Barrington (Mt. Diablo) has received notice that his short story, "Writers I Have Known" has been published online by www.CafeLit.com in the UK This the fifth short story from Michael that they have published in the past three years.

Tish Davidson and **Evelyn LaTorre** (Fremont Area Writers) were interviewed in early November by Ricky B of "The Fremont Podcast" about Fremont Area Writers and what the branch is doing for members and writers in the local area. A recording is currently available to listen to online at <https://thefremontpodcast.com/>

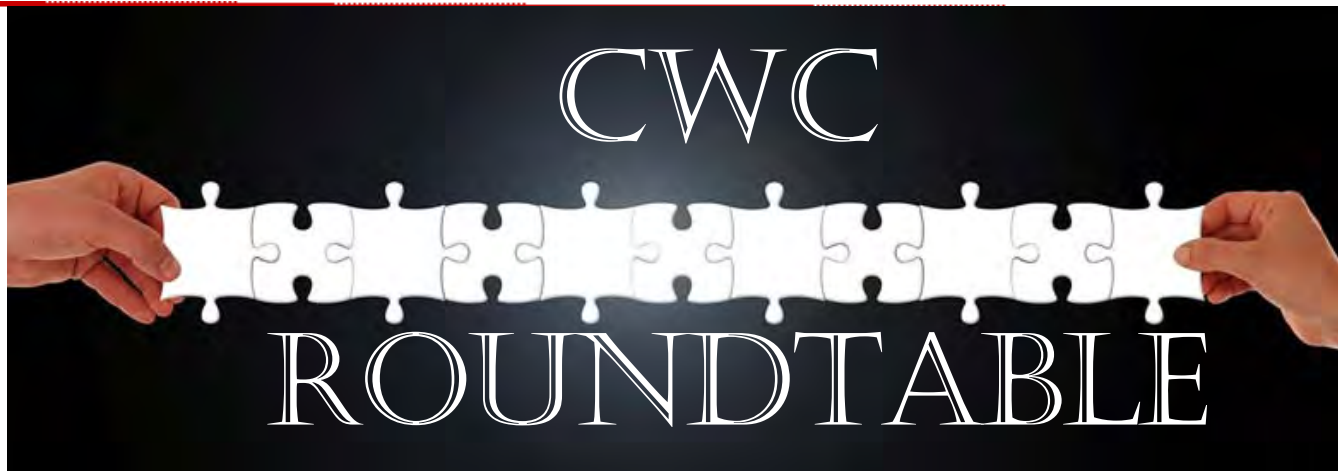
Pat Doyne (Fremont Area Writers) won first place in this year's "Dancing Poetry" contest with her poem "Indian Wedding Dance." Her poem will be performed by the "Dancing Poetry" troupe. Parts I and II are available on YouTube. Pat also won a special award for her poem in the category of "Poems that Leap and Lilt: A Tribute to Richard Angilly."

Lally Pia (Fremont Area Writers) recently read from her upcoming book, *The Fortune Teller's Prophecy: A Memoir of an Unlikely Doctor* (out in Spring 2024), at a group reading at the Avid Reader bookshop in Davis. The event broke the store's record for attendance with over 40 avid readers. Lally and her book were also featured on Bookish Road Trip, a Facebook Live radio show, in early November.

Samuel Rodriguez (Fremont Area Writers) won fourth place with his flash fiction piece, "A Drink to Savor," in the October 2023 Flash Fiction Contest, "The Day I Fell in Love," sponsored by Fremont Cultural Arts Council and Half Price Books. Sam joins a long list of FAW members who have placed in this annual contest.

Bill Van Patten (San Joaquin Valley) has had three stories published in 2023. "Penguins" was published by Wingless Press in their anthology *Petal Pages*, "Henry" was published by The Write Launch in their September issue, and "Coffee with Half-and-Half" was published by Sad Girl Diaries in November. Bill's third novel, *A Little Rain*, was a Grand Prize Finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award.





For the Winter 2023 issue, our topic is ***Holiday Traditions: What, if anything, does your branch do to celebrate the holiday season?*** Ideas for a future CWC Roundtable discussion are always welcome. Send your topic to editor@calwriters.org.



Keith Gaboury, President, Berkeley: We don't have a regular meeting in December. We offer a Winter Social gathering on December 16 at the California Shakespeare Theater in Orinda. We are excited to meet in a literary significant venue where writers of all CWC branches are welcome to come. There will be time for socializing with a selection of appetizers along with a literary reading.



Sarah Pruitt, President, Central Coast: We don't have a regular meeting in December, but instead have our annual holiday party. The club supplies water, coffee, tea, plates, napkins and plasticware. Members bring a dish to share. The food is glorious! Everyone brings their special dish. This year, we are able to hold it in the party room of the Monterey Civic Club, one of Monterey's historic adobes.



Daniel Stallings, President and Newsletter Editor, East Sierra: Each December we hold a holiday party with our members and their invited guests. It's a potluck with a variety of tasty food and beverages, and we hold member readings of their works. We've had many a pleasant evening sharing stories and talking about the craft and importance of writing. East Sierra holds in early December the Dickens Tea, now its in 9th year, which is an interactive tea-time event celebrating Charles Dickens and Victoriana Christmas. Over holiday tea and treats, the festivities include our annual white elephant book exchange of holiday craft books, cookbooks, and advanced reader's copies, a Yuletide craft for all the guests to create, a holiday finery costume contest, and a dramatic reading of a Dickens holiday piece. We've had "visits" from actors portraying, over the years, the Ghost of Jacob Marley, Queen Victoria, and Mrs. Cratchit. It's been a lovely tradition beloved by our community.



Terry Tosh, President, Fremont Area Writers: We have a holiday party with a potluck, gift exchange, various "parlor games" and singing.

continued on next page

CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)

Mike Apodaca, President, High Desert: We have a holiday celebration instead of a regular meeting in December. We bring in music students from our local high school who do a holiday program with singing and dancing. We also sing and have a gift exchange. Our snack coordinator always does an excellent job putting together holiday treats.



Kathryn Atkins, Co-President, Long Beach: We always have a “winter fête/open mic” with cookies and coffee. This year, we’re also presenting the results of a survey we’ve extended to members over the last two months at in-person meetings.



Daniel Bacon, President, Marin: We will be having a holiday party for members and spouses with munchies and libations supplied by the chapter and our members. No live music, but we may have readings if the holiday spirit moves us.



Catherine Marshall, Co-President, Mendocino: We give our board a break in December! We’re knee-deep in judging the SchOlastic Art and Writing Awards.



Barry Hampshire, President, Mt. Diablo: Normally we have a regular speaker meeting in December, but this year we are having the winners of a branch-wide contest read their poems and prose. We have our standard lunch, but instead of a buffet, the restaurant prepares a Christmas lunch. The club pays for a drink for all attendees. We provide a wrapped book gift for all as well.



Amber Lee Starfire, President, Napa Valley: We have a member holiday potluck celebration. This year, the party was held on December 9 from 1 to 3 at the Napa Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Napa. In addition to the potluck, we will hold an open mic during a portion of the party.



Mary Vensel White, President, Orange County: We do meet in December, but instead of presenting a speaker, we have a holiday party and a member open mic reading. Members are invited to sign up and read a two-minute excerpt of their work. In addition to the readings, we’ll provide light breakfast fare and coffee. This year, we’re also having a raffle of member-donated books. Members are encouraged to bring one of their books to be raffled as prizes for this special event.

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CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)



Roger Lubeck, CWC President, Membership Chair, Redwood Writers: The Redwood meeting on December 16 included a costume party with awards for best costumes. The costumes had to be a character in a book or an author. Also, there was an auction for donated gift baskets, holiday snacks, and a speaker sharing her journey in writing her memoir.



Bernard Wozny, President, Sacramento: Our First Friday meeting has a regular speaker in December. Our Third Saturday meeting usually has a speaker but changes in December to a seasonal holiday luncheon. We have games, raffles, and lots of interactive party games. This year's raffle we are offering as first prize the InkersCon online conference. Second prize is a one-hour session with a renowned book editor.



Vibha Akkaraju, President, SF Peninsula: We host a holiday party on a Sunday afternoon in December, where the members and their guests bring food to share and the club provides non-alcoholic drinks (We used to make the bar available, but very few attendees chose to imbibe - so this year, we are not offering any sort of alcohol.) This event is free and takes the place of a regular meeting in December. Every two years, the party celebrates the launch of our club anthology, *Fault Zone*. We choose by lottery a number of *Fault Zone* authors who get to read at the party. On non-*Fault Zone* years, we hold an open mic at the party - but the readers are pre-determined because of time constraints. It's a great party. Come join us one year!



Karen Gorback, President, San Fernando Valley: We have a regular speaker meeting in December.



June Gillam, President, San Joaquin Valley: We used to have a regular speaker meeting in December, but things have become too hectic and packed with other events, so we are skipping this year and likely in the future too.



Edie Matthews, President, South Bay: No speaker meeting in December. Instead, we have our Holiday Bash, a potluck and gift exchange.



Tami Beaulieu, President, Writers of Kern: We offer a Winter Dinner at Hodels restaurant on December 16 th at 6:30. Our fancy dinner shindig will feature a concert pianist (one of our members), a gift exchange, book donation, speeches, the recipients of our Fall Writing Contest (the winning entry will be read), a small ceremony for members who have won other awards, and plenty of time for participants to catch up on the latest events and mingle.



NorCal Group: 'Building Stronger Writers Clubs'

by Evelyn LaTorre, Fremont Area Writers

Early Sunday morning, September 24th, I picked up FAW's tech guru, Scott, then FAW Treasurer, Cherilyn. We headed to the Holiday Inn near the Oakland Airport and met up with FAW secretary, Pat. Our team was complete. From 9 to 3, including during lunch, the four of us covered all six of the sessions. Topics included: attracting new members, increasing branch revenue, obtaining interesting speakers, setting goals, and modernizing our presence in the writing community.

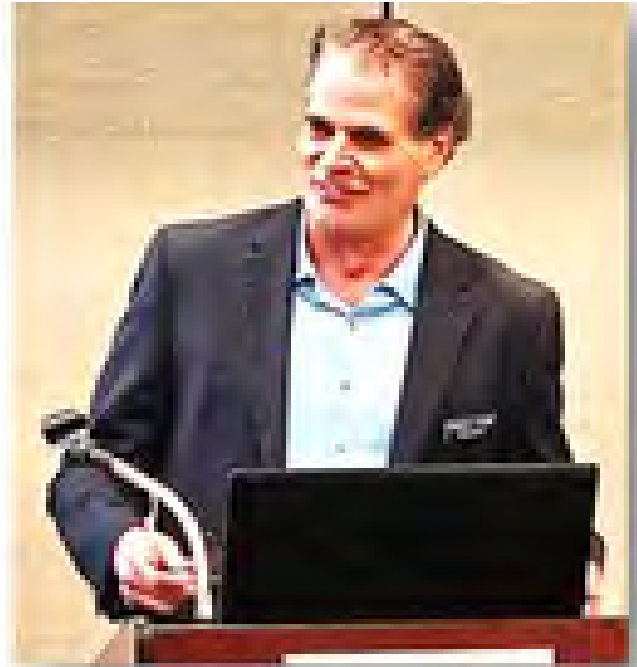
As soon as we arrived at the conference venue, Cherilyn, Scott, and Pat set up the Fremont Area Writers' display, complete with our new banner and notices of past speakers. I assisted with checking in the 45 other attendees from the 14 NorCal branches. A couple of the distant branches, Mendocino and North State, had driven 3 to 4 hours to attend.

Branches introduced themselves stating their membership numbers and renewal percentages. The club sizes ranged from San Joaquin Valley, with 30 members, to the Redwood branch with 253. Most groups had renewed 70% of their members. Each branch gave the name of a book that best described them. Scott introduced Fremont's as *The Mouse That Roared* because we are one of the smallest branches.

Brian Gaps, former president of the Orange County CWC branch gave the keynote address. He described how his branch had grown from 34 members in 2020 to 139 in 2023 and became the monthly in-person social event to attend.

Brian, with his graphics and marketing skills, developed an impressive brochure that pitched how being associated with his CWC branch would add prestige to any organization associated with it. Using the written information plus persuasion, he found a new venue in a shopping mall near a food court. The mall helps advertise the club's monthly meetings. Brian used media like YouTube, Next Door, Meet-up, and an email list to advertise the group's well-known speakers to the public. That publicity helps sell many books written by the group's speakers and members. He changed the content of the group's newsletters to contain only information that members used and wanted.

Other sessions at the conference were equally stimulating. My fingers were numb from writing page after page of notes from each of the five programs I attended. From Lani Longshore, I obtained the Tri-Valley Writers list of "Best Practices for Critique Groups," that saved me hours of summarizing a CWC member's book on the subject. I'm using the summary for a new memoir critique group I just started at the SF-Peninsula CWC branch. The many ideas around marketing will help me with my book sales. My fellow FAW members expressed similar experiences. My delight for new learning filled my brain. Thank you for the opportunity.



Keynote speaker Brian Gaps gave helpful tips on how the Orange County branch grew its membership by 400 percent in two-and-a-half years.



NorCal Group Chair Kimberly Edwards of the Sacramento branch kept everything running smoothly, from morning check-in to the afternoon cookie break.





THE CWC BULLETIN

THE OFFICIAL MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB
PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES A YEAR: MARCH, JUNE, SEPTEMBER AND DECEMBER
SENT BY EMAIL TO ALL CURRENT MEMBERS

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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 "Zoom Round-Up": 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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- ✓ Reach some 1800 writers in 22 branches throughout California four times a year.
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From the Editor's Desk



The Obligatory Holiday Doggerel

On the 12th day of christmas

my agent gave to me ...

12 city tour

11 foreign rights sales

10 part Netflix series

9 influencers influencing

8 publishers bidding

7 figure advance

6 dozen podcasts

5 star reviews!



4 thousand Facebook followers

3 audiobook narrators

2 interviews on NPR

And the next pick for Reese's Book Club!

Well, we can all dream, right? May all your literary dreams come true in 2024!

—Joyce Krieg

