



CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN

SPRING 2024+

Don't Sabotage Your Submission!

by Tish Davidson, Fremont Area Writers

What is the first thing you do when you cook a new recipe? Read the directions to determine if you have the necessary ingredients? What is the first thing you do when you assemble a piece of Ikea furniture? Read the directions and follow them, so your table doesn't collapse under the weight of that delicious new recipe you've made for the first time and served to your fiancé's parents? So why do so many writers seem unable to read and follow the directions when submitting to a journal or contest?

I've judged a lot of writing from independently published books to high school writing contests. I was an editor for the 2019 *CWC Literary Review* with responsibility for submission intake as well as judging. What I learned is how few supposedly literate people read and follow the submission directions. Maybe because they are called "guidelines" people consider them optional. Or perhaps the requirements seem overly picky or silly. Take fonts. Why use Courier as requested when your work will stand out from the crowd in Verdana? Well, one reason for a specified font is that all fonts are not equal. New Times Roman, for example, is proportional. Each letter takes up a different amount of space depending on its shape. Some fonts, like Courier, are non-proportional, meaning that each letter, like an "i" and an "m", take up the same amount of space. Using the requested font helps the journal editor figure out how much space the work will take up on the page.

Names are another issue. Some contests request the name only in the body of the email, not on the submission itself. Apparently many writers either 1) don't read the directions; 2) forget to remove their name from the piece; or 3) are afraid the submission editor is incapable of keeping straight which submission goes with which person, so they include their name.

Exceeding word lengths, block paragraphing rather than indenting (or vice versa as requested), using another person's copyrighted song lyrics, subject matter inappropriate to the journal or contest, failing to observe the deadline or contest limitations such as age, or state/country of residence—all these will get your submission sent to the trash without being read. I can tell you as a judge, when one is evaluating a hundred or more submissions, less work is always welcome.

The Fremont Cultural Arts Council is sponsoring a Flash Fiction contest this April. I hope many CWC members will enter and FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS. The theme of the contest is DREAMS. Writers are encouraged to interpret this theme broadly. Complete rules and requirements are available at <https://fremontculturalartscouncil.org/events/flash-fiction-contest>

Read them carefully and follow them ... don't sabotage your work.



Tish Davidson has written 10 nonfiction books for children and 8 for adults. Her creative nonfiction has appeared in collections published by Harlequin, Adams Media, and Scribe Press. She is a member of the Fremont branch of CWC and was on the editorial team of the 2019 CWC Literary Review. This article originally appeared in the Ink Spots newsletter of Fremont Area Writers and is reprinted with grateful permission.



President's Corner: Book Project Updates


by Roger Lubeck, CWC President



Spring is a time of birth and new growth. It is my hope that CWC and our branches are emerging from the lasting effects of COVID and the last few months of rain into a brighter new year. I am please to note that the two CWC book projects for 2024, the ekphrastic book *Vision and Verse* being managed by Les Bernstein (Redwood) and the 2024 revised *Literary Review* being managed by Mike Apodaca (High Desert) are both on time and making great progress. Both books will be made available to our members as a PDF and for purchase later this year.

The *Vision and Verse* project began with an art contest available to members only. In that contest we had over 200 submissions from which our judges chose 15 winners and 20 honorable mentions. The 15 winning pieces are being used as prompts for the poetry and prose that will appear in the new book. The honorable mentioned art will appear in its own section of the book. It is my hope our members will consider these images as prompts for future writing they do on their own.

Besides the new books for 2024, CWC has co-sponsored several statewide workshops or presentations. I am committed to sponsoring more of these statewide, all members' events on zoom. Based on the speaker, some events may have a small fee, but most will be free to our members. Further the recordings of these CWC presentations are usually posted on our website or on a branch YouTube channel.

At the time of this writing, I am very pleased to note our membership in many branches is growing to the extent that we have over 2,100 members. As positive as this news is, I know some branches are still struggling either in terms of members or sufficient volunteers to serve on boards or in key positions in a branch. Our motto is writers helping writers. For a branch to thrive and grow, we need members helping boards and branches. Having new members joining a branch and new members serving on boards is critical to the health of a branch and the club. My message to all our members is bring a writing friend to a meeting and this year attend at least one board meeting. Serving on a board is work, but it also can be satisfying and fun. 



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.

PRESIDENT

ROGER LUBECK (REDWOOD)

VICE-PRESIDENT

GERI SPIELER
(SF PENINSULA)

SECRETARY

ELISABETH TUCK (MT. DIABLO)

TREASURER

CONSTANCE HANSTEDT (TRI-VALLEY)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

SANDY MOFFETT (WRITERS OF KERN)

P.O. Box 11212

PLEASANTON, CA 94588-1212

CALWRITERS.ORG

Vision and Verse
A Fusion of Art and Photography

The CWC Literary Review: A New Approach

by Mike Apodaca, President, High Desert branch



By the time you are reading this, we of the High Desert branch should have received all the entries for the new *CWC Literary Review*. Thank you so much for all the work you put into this effort.

So, why a new Lit Review? Unfortunately, the way that the Lit Review was being done wasn't working well. It was frightfully expensive and labor intensive, a real strain on the CWC board members and all who graciously volunteered to participate in the judging. I was able to watch our own Anita Holmes supervise the judging of the poetry in the last edition. It was a huge commitment.

At the Jack London Awards meeting last year in Oakland, President Roger Lubeck made the announcement that the Lit Review was no longer going to be produced by the CWC. It hit me hard. It has been my great honor to be published twice in the Lit

Review and I wanted other writers to have that experience. Although some of us objected at the meeting, we were outvoted and the Lit Review died—as it should have. It took guts for Roger to make the adult decision that the Lit Review, the way it was being done, was no longer a reasonable endeavor.

But death does not always have the last word. Former CWC Vice-President Bob Isbill and I discussed the situation at the airport after the meeting. We identified the problem and came up with a practical solution. How to you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. How do you do it faster? Invite 22 friends to bring their forks and knives. By distributing the work among the branches (thank you again), we have been able not only to save the Lit Review, but also to provide a way for all branches to be honored in it. For the first time, the Lit Review will represent the best of the best from every branch.



Our proposal was welcomed by the CWC leadership, and we of the High Desert began the project.

Joyce Krieg with the Central Coast branch agreed to produce the artistic pages that will introduce each branch. I can't wait to see what she comes up with.

As of this writing, the stories and poems have been trickling in. We will only create this book if we get a vast majority of the branches participating. We don't want to embarrass anyone or any branch. My hope is that we will get contributions from all twenty-two branches and that we can celebrate the talent among us.



Recipe for a Successful Critique Group

by Sheila Moss, San Fernando Valley

Is there one recipe for a successful critique group? you may ask. Well, I would say that these (following) qualities are very important:


- Love the written word.
- Be honest, but don't go out for blood. Nits are nits.
- Be encouraging and be kind.
- Do not take the critique personally.
- Be serious: you want to learn, improve and be challenged.
- Respect the submission deadline as well as the other requirements: font size and number of pages.
- Critique what is on the page; there is no need to cross talk, to explain or defend.
- Contrary to some gossip, critique groups do not (need to) have contests as to which host has the best snacks.

How do I feel certain of the recipe for the best critique group interaction? I was lucky to have awesome writers and mentors in my first critique group: Dave Wetterberg, Art Yuwiler, Elaine Shevin and Max Schwartz. Dave was a thoughtful leader and an impeccable grammarian.

My second group was again led by Dave with Claude Baxter, an erudite scholar who matched wisdom with humor.



Our present-day leader, Andi Polk, holds us to strict standards. She is exacting, thorough and kind.

The late Sheila Sullivan Moss (1940-2023) was a long-time member of the San Fernando Valley branch. She originally wrote this article in 2019 for the branch newsletter, The Valley Scribe. It was reprinted in February to honor her memory. 


The CWC User's Manual Has Landed

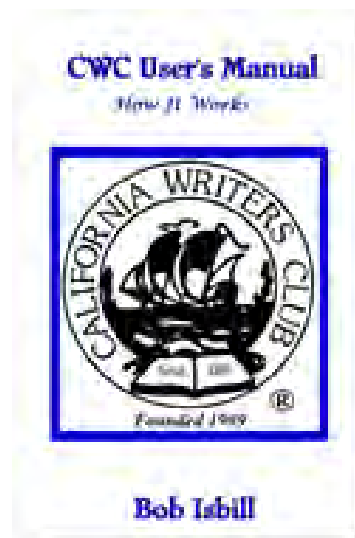
by Bob Isbill, CWC Puibicity and Public Relations

We are proud to announce that the *CWC User's Manual* book, presented to the California Writers Club central board meeting on October 22, 2023, has been revised, updated, and is now in publication.

With gratitude for their feedback to Andrea Polk (San Fernando Valley), Joyce Krieg (Central Coast), Karen Gorback (San Fernando Valley), Carole Bumpus (SF Peninsula), Tim Flood (SF Peninsula), June Gillam (San Joaquin Valley), Lenore Hirsch (Napa Valley), Linda Brown (Berkeley), Constance Hanstedt (Tri-Valley), Roger Lubeck (Redwood), Elisabeth Tuck (Mt. Diablo), and Mike Apodaca (High Desert).

Changes to correct the publication have been made and the book, published through KDP, will be available for purchase on Amazon.com. Any profits generated will be given back to the central treasury of the California Writers Club.

A free version is available on the California Writers Club website, <https://calwriters.org/resources-for-branches/#usersmanua> in a PDF format, available for download to anyone wanting the book. 



You're Never Too Old to Write a Book

by Kevin T. Johns, Writing Coach

A topic that comes up surprisingly often with the clients that I work with, as well as with potential clients and people that I have consultation calls with, is the idea of being “too old to write.” You would not believe how often people come to me and say, “Kevin, I think I might just be too old to do this. I might be too old to write a book.” I’ve had people from the ages of 30 to 70 say this to me, and my response to this fear that you’re too old to write is that it’s much more likely someone is too young to write a book than it is that they’re too old to write it.

Some people tend to think of becoming an author as something like being a professional sports athlete or a model or a pop star or something. Yes, if you are hoping to be a football star in your 40s, I hate to tell you, but it probably ain’t happening. If you’re in your 60s, and you’re still holding on to that dream of becoming the next Britney Spears or Madonna or whatever the latest pop sensation is, it’s probably not going to happen. While there are careers where the chances of hitting it big do decline with age, I don’t think writing is one of them.

In fact, I would argue that long-form fiction writing, in particular, is a skill set that really takes many years to develop and perfect. That’s not just many years of developing and perfecting your writing, but also many years of living life.

I like to say that books entertain, but they also share wisdom. Much of the wisdom that authors share in their books is the type of wisdom that’s gained through life experience, through actually having gone through things. The more triumphs you experience and the more tragedies you endure, the better perspective you’ll have as an author.

Let’s look at someone like Ernest Hemingway. He spent time as an expatriate in France. He spent time as a World War I ambulance driver, and he spent time as a soldier in the Spanish Civil War. Each of these experiences went on to inform books like *The Sun Also Rises*, which is about expatriates, *A Farewell to Arms*, which is about an ambulance driver in a war, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which is again a book about war. Without having lived through genuine life experiences over many decades, Hemingway never could have written those masterpieces.

I look at someone more recent, like Chuck Palahniuk, the author of *Fight Club*. Long before he was an author, he was a member of the Cacophony Society, which is, according to Wikipedia, “An American organization described on their website as a randomly gathered network of Free Spirits united in the pursuit of experiences beyond the pale of mainstream society.”

Now when I think of Palahniuk’s writing—whether it’s *Fight Club*, *Survivor*, *Rant*, or *Haunted*—all of these books are about people living “beyond the pale of mainstream society,” as the Cacophony Society website describes it.

...it's much more likely someone is too young to write a book ...

continued on next page

Never Too Old: continued from previous page

I understand that the Cacophony Society is thought of as pranksters, and his experiences with that group obviously informed Palahniuk's writing. For example, in *Survivor*, the characters go into drugstores, and they mix hair dye from different packaging. They'll move the red hair dye to the blonde hair dye package and the blonde hair dye to the brunette hair dye package just for the anarchistic, prankster spirit of it. That sort of thing happening in *Survivor* clearly comes from the author's experiences in real life doing these sorts of mischief behaviors as part of that Cacophony Society.

We can also look at someone like my favorite, Virginia Woolf.

Virginia Woolf battled mental health for a lot of her life, and at one point, she thought the birds were speaking to her in Greek. Then we go and look at her masterpiece *Mrs. Dalloway*, one of whom the main character, Septimus Smith, is dealing with mental health throughout the book, and in fact, at one moment, hears the birds speaking to him in Greek. Again, Virginia Woolf's life experiences going through suffering with mental health informed the greatest book possibly ever written, *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The point here is that reaching middle age or becoming a senior citizen is no reason at all to give up on your dream of becoming an author. In fact, it's actually a reason to pursue those dreams more vigorously.

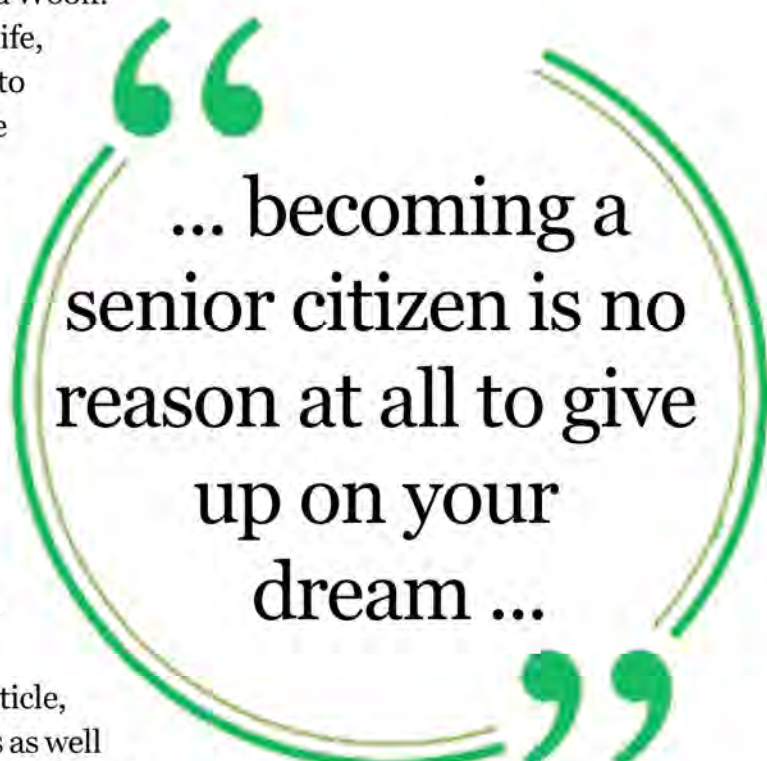
As Malcom Gladwell points out in his *New Yorker* article, "Late Bloomers," which explores late-blooming painters as well as authors, "The Cézannes of the world bloom late not as a result of some defect in character, or distraction, or lack of ambition, but because the kind of creativity that proceeds through trial and error necessarily takes a long time to come to fruition."

So many people spend their entire lives wanting to be an author, wanting to write. They get a taste of it when they're young in high school or university, but then life happens. They get married, and they focus on taking care of their children, or they start a career, and they focus on progressing through their career or building a business. It's only upon the kids growing up and moving out and finally reaching retirement age that they have the space, the time, and the energy in their lives to dedicate to their writing.

And that is okay.

If you do publish later in life, you won't be alone:

- William S. Burroughs was 39 when his first book, *Queer*, was published.
 - Henry Miller debuted with *Tropic of Cancer* at the age of 44.
 - Charles Bukowski wrote *Post Office* and became a published novelist at 49 years old.
 - Raymond Chandler's first book, *The Big Sleep*, came out when he was 51.
 - Richard Adam's debut effort, *Watership Down*, was published at age 52.
 - Frank McCourt was a 66-year-old retiree when he wrote his first novel, *Angela's Ashes*.
 - Norman McLean launched an author career at the ripe age of 74 with *A River Runs Through It*.
- Age wasn't a factor for any of these authors, and it shouldn't be for you, either.



... becoming a
senior citizen is no
reason at all to give
up on your
dream ...

continued on next page

Never Too Old: continued from previous page

There is even a website, [Bloom](#), dedicated to “authors whose first books were published when they were 40 or older; who bloomed in their own good time”.

When it comes to writing and publishing your first novel, it’s never too late.

I’ve worked for several years as a ghostwriter, and usually, I was ghostwriting books for elderly people with a lifetime of experience that they wanted to share through a book. One of those people that I wrote for taught me this Chinese proverb that I think is absolutely so wonderful. It’s this:

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.

You can’t go back in time and start writing that book you never wrote. You can’t go back in time and start studying writing the way you should have twenty years ago. There is only now. There is only this moment. Don’t worry about your age. When it comes to writing a novel, being older is more of a benefit than it is a hindrance.



For over a decade, writing coach Kevin T. Johns has helped authors learn the craft of fiction writing. He has published seven books, including fiction and non-fiction, and has ghostwritten several more. He founded The Writer’s Craft Summit, has hosted 200 episodes of The Writing Coach podcast (where the above article originally appeared), and holds a master’s degree in English Literature from Carleton University. He lives in Ottawa, Canada, with his wife and three daughters. www.kevintjohns.com



CWC: Meandering through the Early Years

by Dave LaRoche, South Bay Writers



Coppa’s restaurant has been called San Francisco’s “first hipster hangout.” Jack London and his bohemian pals frequently gathered at Coppa’s until the 1906 earthquake and fire caused them to flee to Oakland.

came James MacLafferty, an accomplished poet (*My Soul’s Cathedral*, a popular collection reprinted as late as 2004). Frank Soule, a West Point graduate, was next at the podium, and his gavel passing, brings us to Dr. William Morgan, president during the 1912-13 fiscal year.

It may have been the Coppa Four: Whitaker, Sterling, Lewis, and London— some or all as early members of the Alameda Press Club—became disenchanted with direction and content, and left for their picnics and more meaningful discussions at what is now Joaquin Miller Park. Or, it may have been otherwise, but the former is the more popular view. (If someone was watching, no one was writing it down.)

Soon the four became more, as talent and interest showed up with sandwiches, wine, and inventive ideas, and at a point, many if not most of the Press Club were picnicking along with the Four. One can surmise when reading what remains of the history, which isn’t much, that the group at this point was loosely knit with members in and out as life’s demands of the day allowed. By 1911, it seems the “elevated thinkers” of the two groups had shed the lessor in interest and skill and fully integrated under the banner: The California Writers Club.

Austin Lewis of the original Four was elected the first club president in 1909 (recall he was the British politician, a pamphleteer who ran for Governor against James Gillet and lost). Following Lewis

continued on next page

CWC Early Years: continued from previous page



Perham Nahl was a prominent member of the Northern California art scene at the turn of the twentieth century. He was on the faculty of the Art Department at UC Berkeley and a founder of what is now the California College of the Arts. In 1913, he designed CWC's "sail on" corporate seal and carved the original woodblock from which all subsequent copies are based. The image is "wrong side up" so that copies could be made by applying ink to the woodblock and then pressing a sheet of paper or fabric on top of it. When the paper or fabric was removed, the image appeared right side up. *Woodblock photo by Kymberlie Ingalls of the Mt. Diablo, Napa Valley, Tri-Valley and Berkeley branches.*



Morgan is of particular interest as under his guidance, and through his energy, the CWC became a more organized group, petitioned for incorporation in February of 1913, and on March 6 was chartered by the state as a nonprofit business entity—a form of organization we continue today. The rationale for this move was then and is now—education. In the words of the original charter: “fellowship, inspiration, encouragement, and assistance in the pursuit of interest in art and literature.” More recently, in the charter amendment of 1994, these words became more focused: “. . . Providing a forum for the education of both members and the public in the craft of writing and in marketing their work . . . served by monthly public meetings, workshops, and seminars of each of the branches, as well as the biennial conference, which is open to all writers and is conducted for the purpose of educating writers of all levels of expertise.”

The club's incorporation protected members from claims of damage or libel, allowed the club to accept donations, conduct profit-making events with club-bound revenues, exempted the club from income taxes, and generally provided the organizational rules of behavior. William Morgan is credited with purpose, process, and organization—as a leader quite effective during his time.

We are relatively certain Jack London was involved in the formation of our club, particularly during the “picnic era” and through that first couple of years. However, the 1913 roster lists London as an honorary member, which leads us to believe he was less active in the latter of those early years. Intensely interested in animal husbandry, he had bought his acreage in 1905 and through the next decade spent a great deal of his time building his Glen Ellen house, farming, and raising livestock as well as writing, sailing, and his on-going political activism. London died in late 1916 at the age of 40, with symptoms of alcoholism, uremia, dysentery, and a few unknown maladies picked up in his travels. London lived hard as he wrote worthy.

During the period of 1906 through the twenties, the club took on a social air as well as the furtherance of writing and publishing, and a sense of frivolity brought a patina of joy to the lustrous gatherings. With the exception of the war in Europe of 1914-18, the entire country reflected a euphoric feeling of good times that might last if not forever, a mighty long time. The first issue of *West Winds*, a continuing club anthology, was published in 1914 with stories from Herman Whitaker, Agnes Cleveland, Charles Lummis, Jack London,


continued on next page

CWC Early Years: continued from previous page

Torrey Conner, Maynard Dixon, and artwork from Perham Nahl, who later carved the seal we use today. Issues of the *Bulletin* were also regularly published by this time with news of successes and writing and marketing tips. It's factual to say that early members of the CWC were diligent, practiced, and successful with their writing and artistic goals. Many works were made publicly available by club booster, Paul Elder, a known and respected publisher in San Francisco.

With a casual, almost accidental start—the quake and fire driving the Coppa Four to Oakland picnics—the CWC grew through professional acumen and dedication from those involved. From its first official roster of thirty-two, known today as the Berkeley branch, the club has now reached to well over 2000 members in twenty-two branches across the state—Napa to Long Beach, Ridgecrest to Monterey. Look for more of that development and growth in the next issue of *The Bulletin*.



Dave LaRoche's contributions to CWC are too numerous to count. He was the founder of the NorCal Group (now NorCal Network) in 2009, and in 2012 he was the driving force behind the creation of the Literary Review. He is the recipient of both the Jack London and Ina Coolbrith service awards. His latest novel is Ordinary Times. 


And Speaking of Our Club's History . . .

by Kimberly Edwards, Sacramento, NorCal Network Chair

I am compiling a history of CWC's early years and am asking branches if they have early records or photos from the formation of the club up through the 1930s. The Sacramento branch seems to have valuable records pertaining to the very early era. (Go figure!) I am also drawing from drafts or notes from past members of other branches. One is a draft gathered by Dave Sawle. Attempts to get ahold of him have failed. I don't know what libraries or materials he used to collect the information he did. If anyone knows, please contact me. This project

is not of the Central Board project; I am doing it because I want to see a final product in writing that pieces together the storied beginnings of our club! If anyone knows of libraries with rich collections, please let me know. Our forbearers were accomplished writers who provide a standard for ourselves as members of a professional writing club.

Contact Kimberly Edwards at kimberlyedwards100@comcast.net.

Editor's Note: Just as we were putting the finishing touches on this Spring 2024 edition of The Bulletin, Kim was one her way to Berkeley to pore through the CWC archive at the Bancroft Library. It will be very interesting to find out what treasures Kim was able to uncover! 



The Bancroft Library under construction at UC Berkeley in 1909, the same year California Writers Club was formed.



A Sampling of Activities from Our Branches



Central Coast Writers April Meeting

Who/What: Poet Ray Mash, "The Art of Diction: Choosing Your Words"

When: Tuesday, April 16, 6:15 to 8:00 p.m.

Where: Center for Spiritual Awakening, 522 Central Ave., Pacific Grove

Admission: Free and open to CWC members and the public



Long Beach Branch April Meeting

Who/What: Poet Nancy Lynne Woo, "Poetry for Poets and Writers of Prose"

When: Saturday, April 8, 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Where: Los Altos United Methodist Church, 5950 E. Willow St., Long Beach

Admission: Free and open to all



San Fernando Valley April Meeting

Who/What: Nevada County Poet Laureate Kristen Casey, "Putting the Fun Back into Writing"

When: Saturday, April 6, 1:00 p.m.

Where: Via Zoom

Admission: Free for CWC members. For Zoom link, email SFV.CWC@gmail.com

Redwood Writers Poetry Reading

When: Saturday, April 6, 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Where: Finley Community Center, 2060 W. College Ave., Santa Rosa

Admission: Free and open to all CWC members. Sign up to read by contacting Les Bernstein, lessieb13@yahoo.com

Poetry Reading in Mendocino

Who/What: Reading featuring Writers of the Mendocino Coast members windflower and Elizabeth Vrenios

When: Saturday, March 30, 6:00 p.m.

Where: Gallery Books, 310 Kasten St., Mendocino

Admission: Free and open to all

Tri-Valley Writers April Meeting

Who/What: Gillian Wegener, "The Relevance of Poetry in Our Everyday Lives"

When: Saturday, April 20, 2:00 p.m.

Where: Las Positas College, Building 2400, Livermore

Admission: \$10 for CWC members, RSVP treasurer@trivalleywriters.org

Berkeley Branch Open Mic

When: Tuesday, April 16, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Where: Poetry Express, 2727 California St., Berkeley

Admission: Free and open to all



The Zoom Room



BERKELEY

March 17: Mike Lockwood, "Retirement Planning for Authors," 1:00-3:00 p.m. Zoom link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/monthly-speaker-series-the-art-craft-business-of-writing-tickets-407666771287>

FREMONT AREA WRITERS

March 23: Julie Artz, "Understanding Levels of Edit and How They Impact Your Revision Passes." 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Free and open to all. Zoom link: email to scottfrombayside@yahoo.com and put "FAW Zoom" in the Subject line.

HIGH DESERT

June 25: Al Watts, "The 90-Day Memoir," follow-up session to previous presentation on January 30. 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Free to all CWC members. Zoom link will be sent to all CWC branch presidents in June for distribution to their members.

MARIN

April 10: Jennie Nash, "The Secret to Writing a Good Novel." 7-8:30 p.m. \$5 for CWC members. Zoom link at cwcmarin.com/events

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

April 6: Kristen Casey, "Putting the Fun Back into Writing." 1:00 p.m. Free to all CWC members. Zoom link: SFV.CWC@gmail.com

Zoom Room: continued from previous page

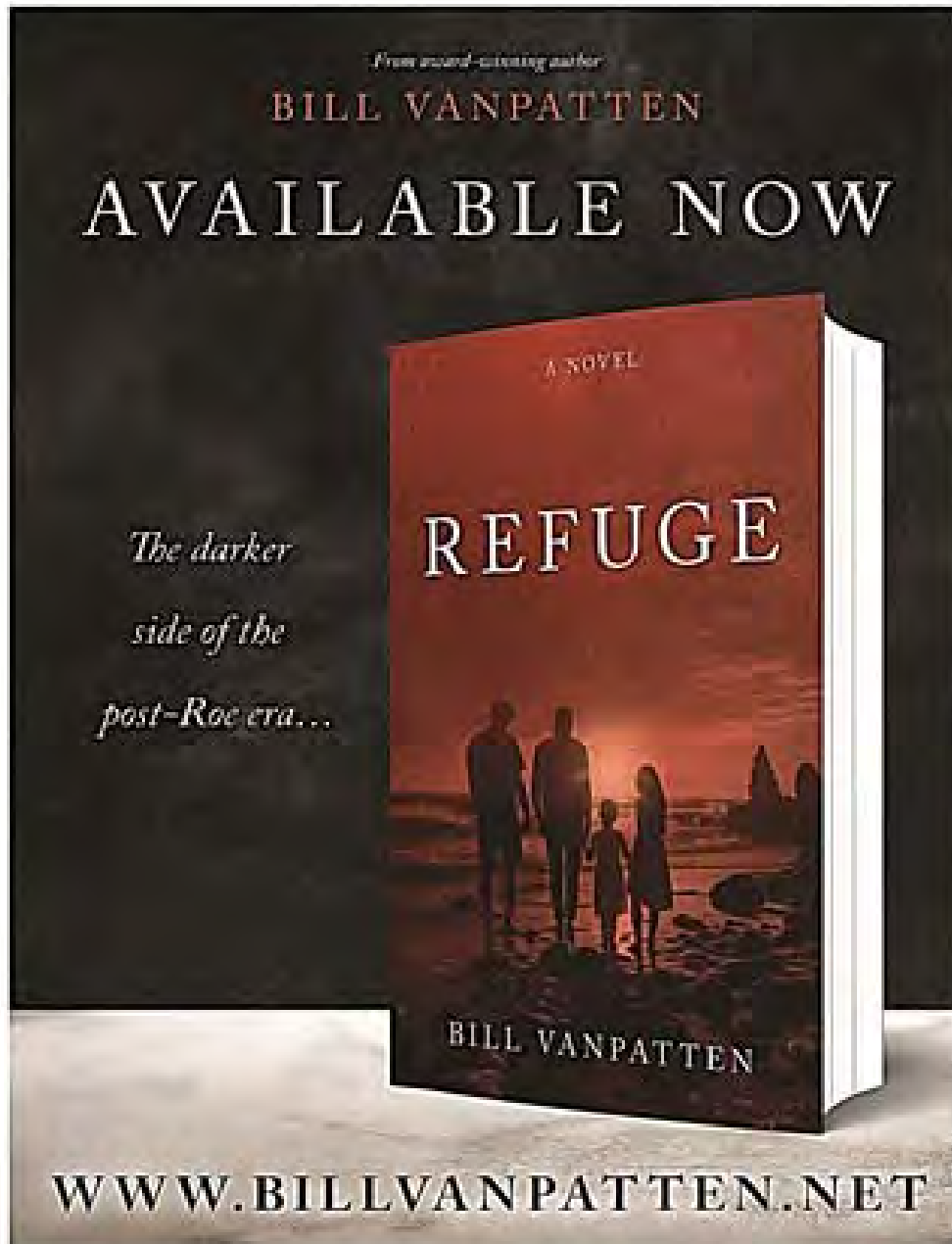
May 4: Luis Rodriguez, "How Memoir Writing Transformed My Life." 1:00 p.m. Free to all CWC members.
Zoom link: SFV.CWC@gmail.com

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

April 13: Bill VanPatten, "Talk, Talk, Talk: Making Dialogue Work in Fiction," 12:00-2:00 p.m., Zoom link: aliasbvp@gmail.com.

May 11: Terry Wells Brown, "The Business of Writing 101," 12:00-2:00 p.m., Zoom link: aliasbvp@gmail.com.

June 8: Matt Abraham, "Writing and Marketing to Get Great Reviews," 12:00-2:00 p.m., Zoom link: aliasbvp@gmail.com. 





Member Spotlight

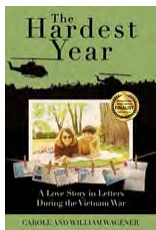
NEW RELEASES



Richard Spencer (High Desert), writing as Richard S. Thomas, recently published his first book, *Earther Wizard, the Rise of Colin Duncan*. He entered it in two writing contests: The American Writing Award and the Pinnacle Book Achievement Award. He was declared a finalist in one, and winner in the other. View his website at www.richardstthomas.com.



Allene Symons (Long Beach) announces the release of *Love in a Time of Caterpillars: A Memoir of Monarchs and Caregiving*. When Allene's husband descended into dementia, their monarch butterfly garden gave him distraction and her an antidote for despair. Being his caregiver, she devised ways to preserve his dignity and her sanity, as detailed in these linked essay-stories about a wife's survival and how she found gifts of gratitude.



Carole Wagener (Coastal Dunes) published her memoir, *The Hardest Year: A Love Story in Letters During the Vietnam War*, based on 300 handwritten letters between her and her co-author husband, William. The book, receiving a 2023 International Book Award, is a true transportation back to the Vietnam era. Contact: carolewagener.com.



SHORT STORIES, POETRY, AWARDS, HONORS

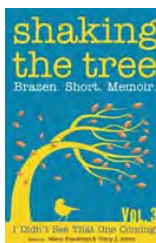
Chase Anderson's (Berkeley) newly-published fantasy stories "The Fox and the Unicorns" and "How to Survive a Draconic Business Takeover" can both be found in the Redwood Writers anthology *One Universe to the Left*. The horror story "Moth{er}" can be found in *Another Name for Darkness*. Buy links: <https://www.chasej.xyz/where-to-buy/>



Kristine Rae Anderson (Orange County) received a Pushcart Prize nomination for her poem "Lost Gloves," published in the fall 2023 issue of the online journal *Inlandia: A Literary Journey*.



Bill VanPatten (San Joaquin Valley Writers) has had his story, "Applause," published in the anthology *Pebbles on the Strand* (Coverstory Books: United Kingdom), in addition to the release of his latest novel, *Refuge*.



Leslie "L.A." Young (Orange County) was chosen by the International Memoir Writers' Association as a winner for her memoir piece "A Meeting of the Guild." The piece was performed by an actor at the Conrad Theater in La Jolla in the organization's annual "Memoir Showcase." It will also be published in the award-winning anthology *Shaking the Tree: Brazen. Short. Memoir. (Vol. 7)*. More information at <https://sdmwa.org/>





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 2024 issue is June 1.

Anthology Issues Call for Submissions

Redwood Writers invites CWC members from any branch to submit short stories for consideration for their 2024 prose anthology, *Transitions*. They're looking for short fiction of 2500 words or less that tell a story of transition. Deadline May 17, 2024. Details and submission guidelines at redwoodwriters.org/2024-transitions-anthology.

Redwood announces the release of two new publications:

Phases, the 2023 poetry anthology, celebrates the varied aspects of what it is to be human. This collection of poems offers poignant reflections of well-earned experiences, written by members of all CWC branches. redwoodwriters.org/publications/anthologies

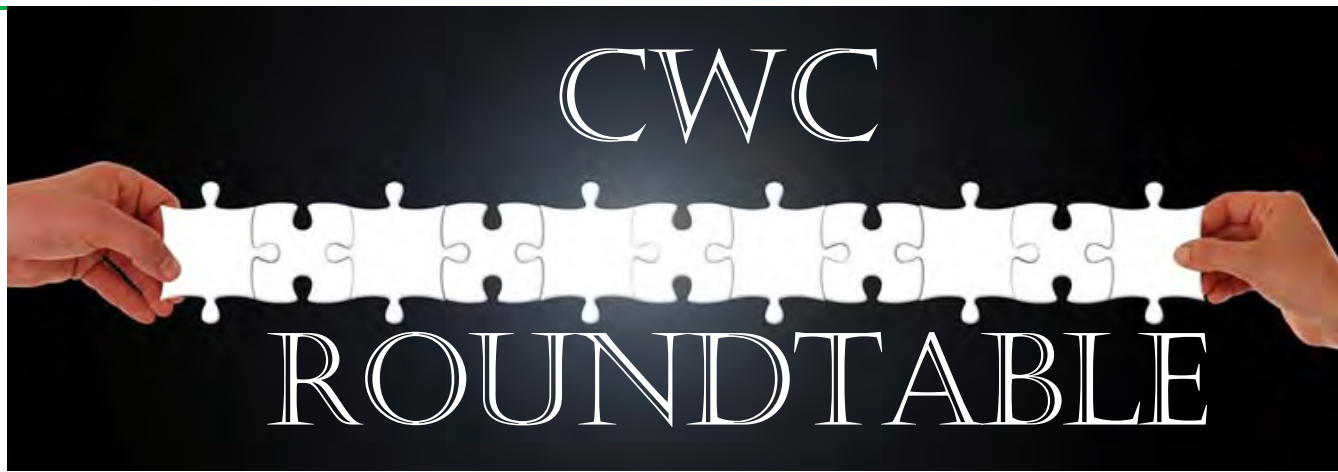
One Universe to the Left, Redwood Writers 2023 prose anthology, is a collection of speculative fiction, from fantasy to science fiction, and everything in between. Writers throughout CWC joined the Redwood Branch to give a glimpse of what's happening one universe to the left. redwoodwriters.org/publications/anthologies



Writing Contest Open to All CWC Members

San Joaquin Valley Writers is pleased to announce it will host its first contest in 2024. The contest is open to all active members in all branches of the California Writers Club. Three categories comprise the contest: prose fiction, prose non-fiction, and poetry. Up to three winning entries will receive a cash prize of \$100 and are automatically accepted into the next SJVW anthology (2025) in addition to being published on the SJVW website. Up to two honorable mentions will be selected with their names published on the website. For details and submission guidelines, please visit the website: www.sjvalleywriters.org/contest (or click on the News & Events tab at www.sjvalleywriters.org to be directed to the contest). Deadline is June 1, 2024.





Our topic for this issue is **Tradition!** Specifically, what sort of traditions does your branch have at your monthly general membership meetings beyond a guest speaker?



Keith Gaboury, President, Berkeley: An active member is invited to give a 15-minute Member Spotlight presentation. In the first five minutes, they talk about their writing journey. In the next five minutes, they read a sample of their writing. The last five minutes are for Q&A. This is a great opportunity for a writer to practice speaking in front of a crowd and hone the business end of their writing life. In preparing for their Member Spotlight, the member also puts together a media kit, which is great practice for future promotional efforts. The Member Spotlight is a membership benefit.



Sarah Pruitt, President, Central Coast: We start the meeting by setting up the chairs and tables at our rented venue. It is a good social time with everyone getting things ready. Then, the free pizza arrives, and people socialize some more with a slice and a bottle of water. The president calls the meeting to order and we have announcements. I try to get as many different people as possible to make announcements for variety's sake. I then introduce the Five Minute Reader, a member who reads from their published work or a work-in-progress. Then, I introduce the program chair, who introduces the speaker.



Daniel Stallings, President, East Sierra: Our meetings are the first Thursday of every month at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church. We open the general meeting with our business meeting where the officers and chairs give their monthly reports. We offer used books to members and guests for a \$1 donation to the branch. We have a section in the agenda called Writer's Closet, where our guests can share an anecdote of their writing success or journey. We then move onto the speaker program for the evening, which concludes with a Q&A and, when applicable, a book signing.



Terry Tosh, President, Fremont Area Writers: We introduce CWC as an organization, introduce visitors, give Shoutouts, announce our Social Write-In, introduce upcoming speakers, introduce today's speaker, and allow time for questions and visiting.

continued on next page

CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)



Bob Isbill, Programs/Publicity, High Desert: Our High Desert branch meetings are free and open to the public. We invite them to participate in writing exercises as well. In July, our President, Mike. Apodaca, and our social media Director, Judith Pfeffer, led us in a writing exercise to determine a story out of the song, “Summertime and the Living is Easy.” People participated in a writing workshop keeping busy for most of the hour and then reading their work to the audience. Our treasurer, Jenny Margotta, sang the song, “Summertime and the Living is Easy” to get the mood going. Tasty refreshments were served by our hospitality chair, Rita Wells.



Sam Nichols, President, Inland Empire: At our monthly meetings we start by setting up the room (and equipment as necessary). We then open with a welcome followed by announcements. We like to recognize any member accomplishments and encourage members to share them. Then, we have often/usually have a speaker present a topic usually related to some aspect of writing and publishing, but this isn’t always the case. For example, the March 2024 apropos presentation will be on the Office of the First Lady. At least twice a year we aim to do an open mic for our members – Poetry in April and Prose in July.



Kathryn Atkins, Co-President, Long Beach: During each speaker meeting, we have a raffle (free) for presenter’s books, which we purchase and send to two audience winners as part of the speakers’ “honorarium.” During the meeting introduction, we ask if anyone has news about their writing, publishing, launches, speaking events, etc. We have had really cool member presentations for last-minute speaker cancellations. We have an open mic—usually at the December meeting and maybe one during summer. A “Speed-Dating” event—usually at the December holiday party. Members have three to five minutes (depending on number of attendees and time) to talk about themselves and their writing. Then, move one seat, like the scene in the movie “Hitch.”



Daniel Bacon, President, Marin: We start by announcing upcoming events. If it’s on Zoom and there are twenty attendees or less, we let everyone introduce themselves and give a very brief description of what they write. Then after an introduction, we turn it over to our speaker and follow their talk with questions.



Barry Hampshire, President, Mt. Diablo: In addition to the main speaker, we have the following activities: 1) Writers Table – this is a 45 minute session for one or two members to present on an aspect or craft, editing, social media, publishing, or marketing. We alternate this style with table discussions in which five or six members lead a table discussion about any subject of interest, such as POV, characterization, editing, website features, Instagram, back cover blurbs, reading aloud, elevator speeches and showing vs telling. 2) A chance for new members and guests to introduce themselves. 3) Announcements from the Board. 4) Members’ announcements of speaking engagements, book launches, etc. 5) Lunch together, which allows time to socialize. 6) Once a year, we organize a book sale over the lunch period. 7) Other than that, we sit around, staring at each other . . .

continued on next page

CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)



Amber Starfire, President, Napa Valley Writers: We open our meetings with a poetry invocation, authored and read by one of our members. During the lead up to the guest speaker, we also feature a monthly member reader. Member readers are given 10 minutes to read a piece of their choosing and answer questions. During announcements, attendees are invited to brag about recent accomplishments, such as completing a manuscript or getting published. Often, we offer a writing prompt and invite our members to submit their responses for publication in our newsletter. In upcoming meetings, we are planning a fun, structured networking activity, where we organize people in groups to get to know each other better using a “speed-dating” format. Our goal with all of these activities is to provide opportunities for our members to highlight their writing, knowledge, and skills, and benefit others in the process.



Crissi Langwell, Vice-president, Redwood Writers: Other than a featured speaker, one of our most popular presentations is a roundtable discussion on a particular theme. One of our recent topics was writing a novel in 30 days, with several members who regularly write during National Novel Writing Month in November. Another topic was on publishing, offering several different pathways toward publication. And of course, we keep these meetings fluid to allow for audience participation and time for Q&A. Our members and leaders have a lot of wisdom and experience, and it's a great way to promote our motto of writers helping our writers.



Bernard Wozny, President, Sacramento: We have two meetings every month, so I have to answer twice. Our First Friday Meeting is in the morning. It is for networking, talking to members, exchanging gossip, and sometimes sharing a success story. We also have a speaker, usually from our membership. We meet in a café where we can enjoy a breakfast. Our Third Saturday Meeting is an afternoon affair, usually in a local library. We like to entertain professional speakers while they provide us with topical insights into writing and publishing. All meetings are free EXCEPT every quarter, we hold the Third Saturday in a local restaurant. For this we have to charge a ‘meeting fee’, not for the meal, but for the meeting space. We have Open Mic sessions, but these are separate from our regular meetings. These are popular and include prose and poetry. Meetings are usually hybrid, in-person and on Zoom. We always try to record the speaker, but this is subject to the acceptance of the speaker – we ALWAYS respect the privacy of contributors.



Tim Flood, Communications Director, SF Peninsula: No speaker in our February meeting declared VP Eva Barrows who created “Author Day” instead. Result? The Sequoia Yacht Club harbored 64 noisy, excited participants networking, celebrating, sharing, selling books, telling writers’ yarns in genre circles, and gabbing in twos and threes. The room was a-buzz with

continued on next page

CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)

raffles, announcements, and news. Guests came, liked the energy, and joined up. Additionally, our branch offers in-person and virtual shut-up-and-writes, plus members present at local libraries. Twice a month a team of nine members updates our website, posts on social media, and sends “newsblasts” with links to our website.



June Gillam, President, San Joaquin Valley Writers: On our monthly Second Saturday of the month Zoom meetings, we start with a couple minutes of check in by each person about what’s going on in their writing life at the moment. This also gives our speaker the sense of where the participants are coming from if the speaker wants to use the info to tweak the presentation. For our 4th Saturday of the month in-person meetings, we have just switched from an informal critique opportunity to a facilitated craft topic short presentation and invitation for discussion as to how that topic is handled by the participants in their own writing. This change is due to our growing too large for a drop-in critique program at this lunch meeting in the Cabernet Room at Papapavlos Greek restaurant in Stockton—growing pains we are happy to suffer.



Edie Mathews, President, South Bay Writers: We have moved to Maker Nexus in Sunnyvale. Since constructing a new complex, this Google-owned building is for non-profits and creative endeavors. SBW now meets on the second Saturday of the month at 10:30 AM and includes a continental breakfast. The first 30-40 minutes of our meeting includes welcoming everyone, announcements about SBW events, (contests, open mic, newsletter deadline, raffle, upcoming speakers, etc.). Members share good news and guests introduce themselves. We often allow time for attendees to introduce themselves and chat with people sitting near them.



Rose Owens, President, Tri-Valley Writers: We recognize new members, guests and announce member successes. “This Moment is Mine” is the opportunity for a member to share a three-minute excerpt from their writing. Members who wish to participate put their name in the This Moment is Mine bag and a random selection is made the week of our meeting.




Sandy Moffett, Membership Chair, Writers of Kern: After welcoming our returning members and guests, we talk about our “Opportunity Drawing.” This consists of a gift bag filled with items donated by the board. All proceeds go toward our scholarship fund in memory of one of our long-time members who was authored children’s books. One or two \$500 scholarships are awarded to children’s writers to help move their projects forward. We then go over “submissions, successes, and rejections.” We celebrate rejections, because it shows that members are participating in the process. Next is a writing prompt – usually a one- or two-word prompt for a three-minute timeframe. We offer members and guests to read their pieces aloud, and if they wish, they can submit them to the online newsletter. A very short break to refresh food or drinks, followed by the opportunity drawing, and then the rest of the time goes to the speaker.

continued on next page

CWC ROUNDTABLE (CONTINUED)



Catherine Marshall, Co-President, Writers of the Mendocino Coast: At every meeting we ask new attendees to introduce themselves. We also make announcements and ask for other announcements. Our monthly meetings are offered to the public as well as to members at no charge. We have speakers for most of the year, but also offer several meetings when members get to read their work. Member speakers are usually reading because their work was featured in the annual anthology or they opted to participate in a fun program like SmatchUp or Ekphrasis. 




Mini-Grants Offered by CWC-South

by Donna McCrohan-Rosenthal, Chair, CWC-South



We did not participate in the Riverside Dickens Festival this year. Covid had hit them hard for two years, and a huge storm just before last year's scheduled event forced them to cancel. This completely undermined their funding and required radical changes that didn't fit our objectives. However, we intend to work with them this coming year to see what we can do to move them forward while enhancing our visibility, impact, and participation in 2025.

As in past years, CWC-South has a mini-grant program drawing on our regional stipend. For this, branches partner with local organizations, primarily nonprofits, on initiatives that reflect our mission. Previously we have joined forces with prison writing programs, summer "boot camps" for kids at the library, and presentations at public libraries. Grants range from \$100-\$300 each. Requirements include publicity for the CWC. We expect to award up to four grants.

On a region-wide level, if the stars align, we might try to hold an in-person meeting at a location that combines business with pleasure. Details will follow as we investigate what we can arrange. We also proudly continue our monthly "mag-format" website socialwritersshowcase.com that features pieces by region members in the categories fiction, non-fiction/essay, poetry, memoir, writer's life, and craft. 

"I love deadlines. I love the whooshing sound they make as they go by."

-Douglas Adams



NorCal Network: New Name, New Energy

by Kimberly Edwards, NorCal Network Chair




The CWC table at the San Francisco Writers Conference rocked this year, bringing visibility to our historic club. NorCal made this happen on behalf of all of CWC. Membership brochures stood out in attendee bags, our name appeared in the printed program, 14 members from branches received scholarships to the Poetry or “Hollywood” Summits, and our booth and welcoming smiles heightened awareness of the best club around.

The common element behind the CWC booth was Jordan Pastor of the Berkeley branch. He reported, “The California Writers Club made waves at the San Francisco Writers Conference on the weekend of February 16th-18th. Our volunteers, Kristen Caven (Berkeley), June Gilliam (San Joaquin), Myles Garcia (Fremont), Keith Gaboury (Berkeley) and Ellen McBarnette (Berkeley) came to the SFWC as a team of CWC representatives. This was a one-of-a-kind opportunity for volunteers to get acquainted with authors from all around the state (and the world!) familiar with the oldest writers organization west of the Mississippi River. We had the chance to interact with authors of all experience levels and from all walks of life, any of whom could be your next favorite author! The gilded history of our club is set to continue into the future as we bring the excitement of our community to new writers, also offering them the chance to provide their own expertise and experience. We’re buzzing!”

Jordan’s energy, enthusiasm, and willingness to take on responsibility from beginning to end was inspiring. More than 130 writers stopped by the booth. Close to 40 signed up to receive follow-up information. The conference organizers (with a tad of twisting of the arm) assigned our booth to a choice spot near the lobby entrance, bringing the booth into view as attendees and presenters arrived.

Several CWC members joined Jordan at the table as their schedules permitted – thank you, thank you! And Berkeley president Keith Gaboury supported the preparation every step of the way. We are made prouder knowing the backstory of the booth: a last-minute scramble for brochure printing and for a new stand-up banner, thanks to the thieves who lifted our last banner stand from our storage facility! Thanks a lot, guys. But the invincible Joyce Krieg managed to get a new banner in time.

On another topic, at a recent NorCal meeting, the branch representative agreed to call ourselves a network: a working title of NorCal Network, for that is what we are, a group supporting and sharing ideas on successes and challenges. While we commiserate on occasion, we help to solve each other’s problems. This allows us to continue the work of the Leadership Conference. 



June Gilliam (San Joaquin Valley) and Jordan Pastor (Berkeley) ably represented CWC to the literary world at the San Francisco Writers Conference in February.



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

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

JOYCE KRIEG (CENTRAL COAST)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR/SUBMISSIONS

SANDY MOFFETT (WRITERS OF KERN)

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.

Advertising Opportunities in *The Bulletin*

- ✓ Reach some 1800 writers in 22 branches throughout California four times a year.
- ✓ Increase your visibility, sell your services, promote your book, increase speaking engagements, pump up web traffic, and more.
- ✓ Affordable rates—as low as \$30 for a business card-size ad, up to \$200 for a full page.

Details: Go to calwriters.org/bulletin and scroll down to the section on advertising. Or contact Advertising Director Bob Isbill, advertisingcwc@gmail.com, 760/221-6367.

From the Editor's Desk

Heartbreak in Fremont



brochures and memorabilia?

For the past eight years or so, CWC has rented a unit at one of those CubeSmart storage facilities, this one in Fremont. I personally chose this location during my tenure as president. It was either that or store the club's property in my tiny apartment on the Monterey peninsula, far from our base of operations.

It wasn't until this past December that I was able to make the trip to Fremont and assess the situation. What I saw when the young woman at CubeSmart undid the new lock had me dissolving into tears.


The Dorothy Benson scrapbook was gone.

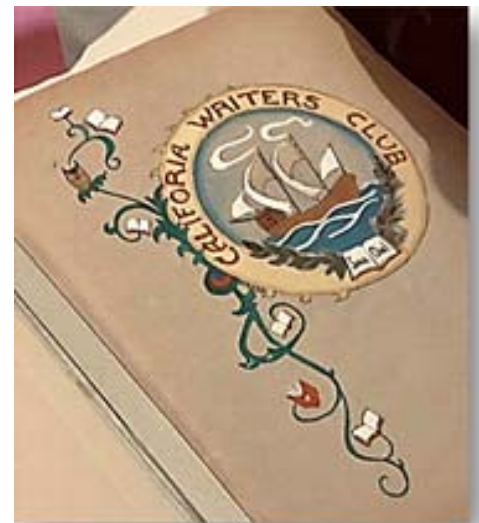
Some of you may recall seeing this lovely scrapbook with its beautiful hand-painted rendition of our corporate seal on display at the Jack London Service Awards ceremony last October. Dorothy Benson was a poet and long-time member of the Berkeley branch. Her scrapbook provided a fascinating and irreplaceable snapshot of CWC activities at mid-century. As a history buff, I love running across things like this, so rich with detail, so sweet and precious. When Dorothy Benson passed away at age 93, her scrapbook ended up in my hands, after a circuitous journey too complicated to go into here. I put it in the storage unit.

I know, right? Stupid! What was I thinking?

The thieves also got our framed California Writers Week resolution, the stand for our banner, and a tripod we'd just purchased for displaying the woodblock of our corporate seal. The woodblock, in case you are wondering, is safe, being stored in Secretary Elisabeth Tuck's home. Evelyn LaTorre of Fremont Area Writers was kind enough to check with the Fremont Police Department, but let's face it. They don't exactly put out an APB for a missing scrapbook. By now, the scrapbook and all the rest of our property is undoubtedly rotting away at the side of some remote road, tossed out of a speeding vehicle once the meatheads who broke into our unit realized it had no value. No value, that is, except to us.

I know, I know. It's only stuff. Save your tears for people (and pets!). But the loss still hurts.

In the meantime, if anyone has ideas for a better solution to storing CWC's property, I'm sure President Roger Lubeck or the other officers would be glad to hear from you. I for one cannot take another heartbreak in Fremont. 



The last--and possibly only--known photograph of the Dorothy Benson scrapbook, taken while it was on display at the Jack London service awards luncheon last October. *Photo by Kymberlie Ingalls (Berkeley, Mt. Diablo, Napa Valley, Tri-Valley).*

Joyce Krieg