



CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB **BULLETIN**

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President's Corner: Defining Success as a Writer

by Roger Lubeck, CWC President



I believe personal success as a writer should be defined by the writer. Whether it is writing your first essay, writing a poem a day, or publishing two stories in a year, what matters is getting the results you desire. As a business psychologist, I learned that setting goals, establishing deadlines, and measuring progress often helped a person stay on task and achieve the outcome he/she desired.

In November, I along with hundreds of other members, will take part in the National Novel Writing Month. This is my 24th novel. The goal is to write a 50,000-word novel in 30 days. Having a goal, deadline, and a measurable outcome helps me get started and keeps me going. While I am writing, I feel creative.

When I cross the finish line, I feel proud. It doesn't matter if the novel is ever published. The writing is often enough. For me, editing, publishing, getting readers, let alone buyers for a novel are separate processes with different goals, timelines, and measures of success.

At an organizational level, success can be measured by our membership (2,189), our branches (21), and our financial security (profitable). Yet, what about publications as a measure of success? Our club was founded by some of the greatest writers the state has ever known. Each year, they would come together to celebrate their new books, poems, essays, and articles. This practice changed as the CWC added branches. Helping new writers and educating our communities became the primary focus as a non-profit. We are writers helping writers. Over time, the branches have assumed the role of celebrating member achievements.

Currently, at the board level, we honor service to the club and the branches, but not publications, writing awards, and other achievements as writers. Yet, among our members, we have New York Times best-selling authors, multiple award-winning authors, poet laureates, playwrights, screenwriters, journalists, and fiction and nonfiction writers with publications in every genre. We know this, yet what we don't have is an organizational measure of our achievements and success. Frankly, I think it is time the CWC gets back into the job of recognizing our writers. Part of this effort includes state-wide contests and workshops, and new publications like *Vision and Verse*. In addition, we plan to create a database of member achievements. To start, we are going to survey our members.

Recently Crissi Langwell, president of the Redwood branch, conducted a survey of its 250 members. The survey evaluated the members' history of publications, the genres and types of writing they do. It asked about meetings, workshops, and areas to change or improve. Crissi will share the survey results with the branch in September. Having seen a preview of the results, I am very encouraged.

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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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SANDY MOFFETT (WRITERS OF KERN)

P.O. Box 11212

PLEASANTON, CA 94588-1212

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President's Corner: continued from previous page

One hundred and seventy-one members opened the e-mail and 92 members responded (completed the survey). These are actually good survey results and yet we only heard from a third of our branch members. Of the 92 writers completing the survey, 85% are published authors. Among these members, a third had books. Many had multiple books and multiple types of publications.

Having so many experienced authors may be one reason Redwood is gaining new members. The problem for me is I can't generalize these results to the larger population of writers in the club. Remember, approximately 60% didn't answer the survey and we don't know why.

We could survey the non-responders, asking why they didn't respond, but that would not get at the primary question. This month, the CWC will conduct a statewide survey of our 2,100+ members. Board member Geri Spieler (past VP) and Jordan Bernal (VP), and I are leading this effort. The CWC survey is short and focuses on member publications and writing. It also asks about workshops and other state-wide events.

All the CWC board is asking is that you take the five minutes required to answer the survey. It will say CWC Member Survey in the header and arrive in an e-mail from Roger Lubeck via Constant Contact.

We want to know what you are writing, what you have published, and what the club and branches can do to help and support your writing.



ROBERT "BOB" ISBILL: 1936-2024

All of CWC and especially the High Desert branch are mourning the loss of Bob Isbill, who died on June 21 of complications from a recent heart attack.

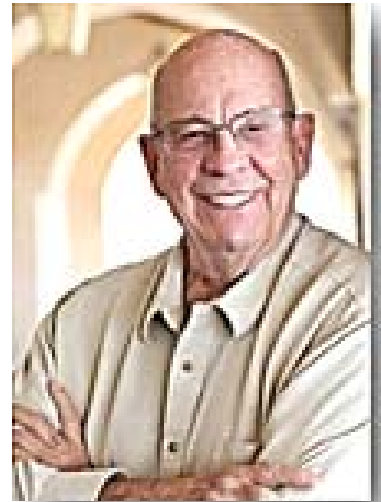
Gob was the very essence of a loyal stalwart, both at his home branch and for all of CWC. A dozen or so years ago, the High Desert branch had dwindled to only 14 members and was in danger of folding. Then Bob came along. It would not be an exaggeration to say he single-handedly brought High Desert back to life. The branch is now robust and vibrant, with 100-plus members. They publish annual anthologies, host conferences and workshops, and much more—all due in large part to Bob's inspiring leadership.

At the state level, Bob has served as Vice-President, Nomination Chair, and Advertising/Promotion Director. He was the recipient of both the Jack London and Ina Coolbrith awards for exemplary service to his branch and the state organization.

A native of Anson, Texas, Bob's last residence was in Apple Valley. He was an Army vet and a graduate of Chapman University. Prior to retirement and his involvement in CWC, Bob worked as an officer and business agent for the Teamsters Union and was a small claims advisor and mediator for the San Bernardino Valley Courts. He lost his beloved wife of 56 years, Judi, just eight months prior to his own passing.

Bob remained active and involved with CWC and his home branch right up to the final weeks of his life. This past year, he authored what he called the CWC "User's Manual," a compilation of governing documents, traditions, and other useful information. He was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the *Best of the Best* literary review. And he was attending High Desert's monthly meetings right up until May.

The High Desert branch devoted its July newsletter to memories of and tributes to this remarkable man. President Mike Apodaca summed it up: "Everybody just loved Bob."



Busting Common Agent Pitch Myths

by Lucinda Halpern, president of Lucinda Literary

Traditional publishing is a business first. And you have to know the rules of that business to succeed. One of the first things you'll need to master? Your **query letter**. This is the submission letter you make to a literary agent or agency which provides them a pitch about your work for their consideration to represent.

When you send a query letter to an agent, you can be sure of one thing: it *will* land in an overflowing inbox alongside a deluge of other queries. So yours *has* to be compelling enough to stand out... First, so it doesn't get overlooked, and second, so it can achieve its primary goal: **getting the agent to request more material**.



In your query letter, your job is to convince an agent (and later, readers) of **these three things**:

1. Why your book is desirable and desired right now;
2. What's different about your approach or point-of-view;
3. The promise your book offers, whether that's something your readers will gain, your characters will experience, or both.

If you've been thinking about publishing a book for a long time, then you've probably received lots of different querying advice from tons of different sources. But what if I told you that the best thing you can do in order to perfect your query letter is to forget everything you've ever heard?

Whether you are a seasoned querier or entirely new to the process, in this market, I'd like to bust a number of **common querying myths** out there that you have likely come across in your research: **Agents don't care who you are, so you shouldn't include any information about yourself in your letter.**

This is entirely untrue! Whether it's your bylines, your e-mail list, the author friends who will endorse your work, or an immediate grasp of your voice, we want a sense of the person behind the page (that's you!) and why readers will trust you as their guide through whatever territory they're exploring.

A long and detailed synopsis should be the focus of your letter.

While other agencies may wish for this, I advise authors to instead study Amazon descriptions of comparable titles to emulate capturing your book's greatest intrigue—not the traditional, formal synopses you learned in school! A stellar query letter is far more like writing jacket copy, emphasizing what a reader will take away from your book.

You have to guess your genre right the first time around.

No writer, even the most seasoned, is 100% certain about how their book will be categorized, or what comparative titles an agent or publisher will envision for it. With that said, you can't afford to leave your genre or comps left unsaid in your letter. So to better categorize where your book best fits on market shelves,

Pitch Myths: continued from previous page

tailor your comps and genre to meet the agency's interests. This tactic demonstrates that you've done your research, not only on your genre but on the agency, too.

Never contact an agent directly unless their submissions page says so.

There are so many ways to take a "side door" versus the more typical "front door" approach listed on free agency search sites. Using an actual industry database like Publishers Marketplace is a more effective route to ensure your query actually lands in an agent's inbox and gets a look.

Don't follow up. An agent will always reach out to you if interested.

One can hope! But hope isn't a strategy. Agents may only see your query the second time. Experiment with new subject lines, or an update if your proposal or manuscript is under review with other agents, or you have recently published an article in a notable publication, amassed a larger social media following, obtained the endorsement of a fellow author. There are so many ways to be creative. Don't have any of this to share? For an agent you admire, write a simple love letter. Confirm your query landed in the first place.

Reach out to every agent possible at once.

There are several risks to this, and one is that a "slush" approach is unlikely to appear as anything *but* slush. Agents are flattered—and can tell—when they're part of a small and curated list and are receiving a more personal letter. So take the time to tailor messages to those top 10-15 agents in your list.

You only get one shot.

Is a door really ever closed? Maybe you're asking the wrong person! Whether submitting a revision of your material or something new altogether, plenty of writers—including several I've signed—find success the second time around.

With this new perspective on querying effectively, I'd also like to inform you of two basic rules to querying that you can use to outline a first draft of your letter:

1. Start with the hook

The opening lines of your query are crucial—for fiction or nonfiction. What's most revelatory about your book in a nutshell? In an agent's inbox, there are myriad reasons for why they could decide not to request your proposal. Don't allow for this possibility.

What's most compelling and unique about your book? Do you solve an age-old problem? Turn a long-held myth on its head? Will you reveal cutting edge science that will change the way we see the world? For fiction queries, what's the premise of your story and what makes it timely? What is it about your novel that will have readers turning the pages?

2. Then dive deeper, share details of the book

Once you've piqued the reader's curiosity, it's the moment to dive deeper. Tell us why your book matters and why it matters now. For nonfiction writers, delve into the key specifics of the problem you're solving and why it's important. And then, of course, deliver a detailed look at your solution and how it differs from the many other websites and books that exist on your topic. Here you should also address why you are the person to write this book. What are your credentials? Why should a reader trust you?

I'd love to see some strong queries come from you through our agency's portal!

Lucinda Halpern is the president of *Lucinda Literary*. She is the author of *Get Signed: Find and Agent, Land a Book Deal, and Become a Published Author (2024, Hay House)*. Her website offers a free workbook for authors looking for representation. Download it at lucindaliterary.com



Marketing Your Self-published Book

by Nicki Ehrlich, Central Coast Writers

Editor's note: This is a much-shortened version of an article that originally appeared in the 2024 edition of Scheherazade, the literary magazine of Monterey Peninsula College. Nicki answered questions about indie publishing (what she calls author-publishing) posed to her by students in the Create Writing Program.

What kind of marketing help can a writer expect when using the various author-publishing options, like Amazon, etc.?

Absolutely none. Author-publishers are on their own with production, marketing, financing, and time. There is a little information about Amazon ads on their site, but figuring out how to do it is up to you. There are courses and webinars on how best to make use of Amazon ads. It's complicated, but doable. Are ads worth it? Hard to say.

What does marketing typically entail, and how much time can a writer anticipate devoting to it, and for how long?

Author-publishing is a business. But it's YOUR business. You can devote as much or as little time and money to it as you want. There was an article in *Writer's Digest* by Kim Catanzarite titled "9 Ways Self-Publishing Changed My Life (and Will Change Yours Too)" Here are her nine points with my comments.

1. Free time no longer exists.

It exists, but you'll feel guilty if you're not doing something to promote your book or at least writing the next one.

2. Your new hobbies include building and maintaining a website.
And maybe hiring someone to help you.

3. Checking reviews and ranking may become an obsession.
True.

4. Reading for pleasure is a thing of the past.

Only because reading is now a part of your job. You'll want to read in your genre to keep up with the competition. You'll find yourself paying more attention to the details of the books you read: design, front and back matter, publishers, editors. And typos are going to stand out like never before.

5. Frequenting bookstores is a must.

To beg the store to carry your book, to check up on it once it's there, to buy books helping to support those who support you.

6. Engaging with your readership happens regularly.

Newsletters, blogs, etc. (You don't have to do this, but it helps build readership.)

7. Walking is your exercise of choice.

Easy to do, gets you out from behind your desk, and inspires creativity.

8. Educating yourself becomes mandatory.

There is so much information online and webinars are easy. Things in the writing/publishing world are in flux. Try to keep up.

9. The planner is your friend.

Do all that other stuff, but don't forget writing is what you love. Make time for writing that next book!

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Marketing: continued from previous page

How does a writer make their book known to its likely readership?

Know your audience. You've probably heard this before, but if you know your audience, you might know where those readers "hang out" and the best ways to get news to them. Have a good-looking website to which you can always point people who are interested. Then, think about a regular newsletter, a blog, emails sent to groups you know would be interested. There are advertising opportunities galore that you'll need to research and choose wisely. Have a budget for advertising and promotion. Get (pre-publication) reviews and use them.

How important are reviews online, and how does a writer get them?

I think they are super important, especially for first-time authors. It's one thing to have family and friends think your book is the greatest thing since Stephen King's *The Shining*, but quite another to get the avid readers at NetGalley to say so. And if you can get a good review from a prominent review site like Publishers Weekly (Booklife for indie authors), or Kirkus, those are things to be highlighted on your website and author pages, and maybe even blurb-ed on the cover of your book.

Depending on what your book is about, you may be able to acquire free reviews and/or blurbs from people prominent in your genre or field of writing. Or if you are lucky enough to know a well-known published author or public figure who will attest to your book being profound, then by all means ask, and say thank you. But if not, or if you want more, you may want to consider paying for some reputable reviews.

You can find out about Booklife and Kirkus on their websites: <https://booklife.com>
<https://www.kirkusreviews.com>

I would advise anyone author-publishing to become a member of IBPA (Independent Book Publishers Association—check out their full list of member benefits!) and go through them to purchase a three-month NetGalley pre-publishing review. You'll get a substantial discount. It costs \$155 to join IBPA and \$249 for three months on the NetGalley review site. NetGalley's regular three-month price is \$449, so you've made your membership dues back and then some. And that's just one of the membership benefits that will save you money. <https://www.ibpa-online.org>

Yes, these are paid reviews. But for author-published books, most reviews are. Do be careful what you pay for. NetGalley is a great way to get reviews because the cost is relatively low for multiple reviews. All results are different, but in my experience, I had about 140 downloads of my book and received 24 reviews (so far). Even though the three months is over, the reviews are still coming in. Booklife is the independently published branch of *Publishers Weekly*. When a book is submitted to PW (free) it is not guaranteed a review, but with Booklife, you are guaranteed a review and you can submit to the free PW review at the same time. Keep in mind these paid reviews are not guaranteed to be "good" reviews. They only guarantee an "honest" review. Never pay for the promise of a five-star review—that would be a scam.

NetGalley - \$249 (multiple reviews)

Booklife - \$315 (one review)

Kirkus - \$350 (one review)

Reedsy Discovery - \$50 (one review)



Nicki Ehrlich's post-Civil War novel, *Zephyr Trails* is the sequel to award-winning *Ellis River* and is garnering similar praise:

"...a journey teeming with suspense and discovery." —*Publishers Weekly, Booklife*
"Ehrlich's novel movingly depicts a family and country devastated by war...a work that is timeless. A roving authentic bildungsroman with a unique lead."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Nicki's website is nickiehrlich.com



Six Steps to Create Powerful Characters

by Richard Spencer, High Desert

Have you ever wondered why some characters stay with you long after you've finished reading a book? The secret lies in powerful character development. It is the cornerstone of compelling storytelling. Strong characters drive the plot and resonate deeply with readers, making your story memorable. Here are six key elements to help you master powerful character development

1. Weave a Detailed Physical Description into the Narrative:

All your readers can know about what your character looks like is what you tell them. Readers should be able to visualize your character's appearance in their minds early in the narrative. Provide an adequate description but avoid doing it in an info dump. Use smaller, bite-sized pieces in the narrative and dialogue. You can even use dialogue tags to convey traits. The image on the right shows a well-defined character. All the details are clearly established and the reader has everything they need to visualize him. The image on the left is the same character, but here he lacks detail and color. There is not much here to make him memorable to the reader.



2. Create Relatable Backstories: A character's past shapes their present and future actions. Crafting detailed backstories adds depth, providing motivations that make their actions believable. Use past circumstances to mold your character's current attitudes and actions.

3. Define Clear Goals and Motivations: Characters should have clear goals, whether it's to find love, achieve success, or seek revenge. Their motivations need to be consistent and understandable. This clarity allows readers to invest in their journey, rooting for their success or understanding their failures.

4. Show Growth and Change: Dynamic characters are more engaging than static ones. Illustrate how your characters evolve in response to the challenges they face. This transformation can be physical, emotional, or moral. The important thing to remember is that your readers want to see your characters grow. Don't disappoint them.

5. Develop Unique Voices and Traits: Ensure each character has a distinct voice and personality. This can be achieved through dialogue, mannerisms, and individual quirks. A character's unique perspective adds richness to the narrative and makes them stand out.

6. Use Conflict to Reveal Character: Place your characters in challenging situations to reveal their true nature. How they react under pressure, their decision-making processes, and their resilience in the face of adversity all contribute to their development.

By focusing on these elements, writers can create multi-dimensional characters that captivate readers and drive their stories forward. Remember, powerful character development is about making your characters feel real and relatable, allowing readers to connect with them on a deeper level.

Richard Spencer (writing as Richard S. Thomas) is no spring chicken. When he was born, Harry S. Truman was president. When macular degeneration closed the door to 50 years of fine woodworking, it opened the door to a decades-old dream of writing. His first book, *Earther Wizard, the Rise of Colin Duncan*, was published in June of 2023.



Critique Group Dos and Donts

by Pat Obuchowski and Miera Rao, SF Peninsula

Every piece of writing is precious to the writer and it takes courage to put one's work out there. Sometimes it can take years before an author is ready to share their work to be critiqued. It is, therefore, important for writers to support and feel supported by their critique groups.

Not every writer is at the same level—beginner, intermediate or advanced—but even the most proficient writers benefit from getting feedback from other writers to see if their work is being received as they intended.

GIVING CRITIQUE

Critiquing is not just about highlighting the limitations of the piece — it is a thoughtful assessment of the elements and quality of the writing. Feedback should be a balance of being encouraging while also letting the writer know how to take their story further by suggesting improvements.

DO:



- Be mindful of the level of the writer.
- Use supportive language if you have suggestions for change.
- Comment about the work, not the author.
 - Provide a critique that is constructive to the author, i.e. point out what might be confusing, misunderstood or illogical.
 - If you don't have any suggestions on how the author might improve their story, do point out what you liked, what is working, what flows, what struck you as effective or ineffective.

DON'T:



- Launch into what's not working until you have recognized the positive qualities of the piece.
- Have an accusatory tone.
- Challenge others' critique. However, depending on the level of trust and dynamics, the group might sustain a healthy, supportive debate.
- Critique without offering an explanation as to why you are suggesting the change.

- Re-write another writer's story.

- Use terms such as "right" and "wrong" in your feedback, to avoid sounding judgmental.

Examples of Supportive Comments:

- Instead of saying "Delete this" say "Consider deleting this word/sentence" and offer an explanation.
- Instead of saying "Do this" or "Don't do this", say "You *may* want to try x."
- Instead of saying "This character seems crazy" ask "What is this character trying to achieve?" or "How do you want the reader to see your character?"
- Instead of saying something is "right" or "wrong" use supportive language such as "This does not work for me as a reader".

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Critique Groups: continued from previous page

RECEIVING CRITIQUE

To have your peers' eyes reading your work to provide objective feedback is priceless. Submitting your work for critique is an opportunity for you to see if your characters are coming across the way you intended and the events are logical.

DO:

- Receive each critique graciously and humbly.
- Assume your peers have the best intentions.
- Listen carefully and ask questions to make sure you understand the feedback.
- Remind yourself that constructive criticism can help you improve your writing.
- Reflect on the feedback to see its value for any revisions you choose.
- Express appreciation to those that provided you critique.

DON'T:


- Immediately react. Take a breath, reflect, then comment.
- Explain, persuade, or defend your writing. This might stop people from giving you their honest opinion in the future.
- Connect the critique to yourself. Connect it to your writing.

When you have an open and growth mindset, your work will greatly benefit from the knowledge of experienced writers. If you do not agree with the critique, just say thank you and choose which parts of the feedback you do want to implement. Remember, this is your work and you choose what to leave in or out.



Pat Obuchowski is a best-selling and award-winning non-fiction author. She has published four books including *Gutsy Women Win: How to Get Gutsy and Get Going*. Currently, she is focusing her creativity on poetry, especially haiku, and has had several of her poems published. She was a finalist in the 2023 San Francisco Writer's Conference contest.



Miera Rao writes fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. She has won awards for creative non-fiction and poetry. Her poetry and articles have appeared in the San Jose Mercury News, India Currents, [The Society of Classical Poets](#), Live & Thrive CA, and The Asahi Shimbun, among others. She tutors students in language, writing, and public speaking, and is a college essay coach. 

Congratulations: Branches Launching Anthologies



Left to right: The latest poetry anthology from Redwood Writers, Redwood's new prose anthology, the 25th anniversary anthology from Inland Empire, and the fifth anthology from Coastal Dunes, launching during California Writers Week.

A Writer and His Muse

by Michael Barrington, Mt. Diablo

As a teenager in a catholic boys' only boarding school, the highlight of the month occurred when a small group of senior prefects were allowed to enjoy a local village speaker series. Over the space of just a few years, I spoke with Kingsley Amis who wrote more than 20 novels. *Lucky Jim* was his first, followed by *I like it here* and *Take A Girl like you*, which Amis read from and with great humor. I was thrilled and inspired by his style and in your face prose but completely shocked at his character's causal approach to sex. It was a revelation. In a college where no sex before marriage was religiously preached, his writing revealed a world that I and my friends had no experience of but secretly hoped existed. It was exciting.

John Braine discussed his *Room At the Top*. One of my more daring friends had secreted a copy into our dorm and it was doing the rounds in lightning quick time. I devoured his unadorned use of everyday language that both shocked and excited me. For a group of young men with raging hormones, it was amazing, revealing and titillating material! Here was a writer with strong Irish Catholic roots describing male-female relationships that seemed to be so honest, natural, and real, but in a way that would bewilder any priest!

Alan Sillitoe left school at age 14 and never went to college, which made me wonder why my parents were spending so much money on my private education, and it was only while in hospital with tuberculosis that he became an avid reader of literature and started to write. He eventually wrote *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, influenced in part by the stripped-down prose of Ernest Hemingway. As with John Braine's bestseller, it was essentially a social protest, with daring sex scenes and female relationships that were a far cry from *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Vanity Fair* and even *Tom Jones*, our staple college literary diet. But when I heard him speak, he had also just published his short story collection, *The Loneliness of the long-Distance Runner*. I was smitten. Awestruck would be an understatement. I also learned, but didn't know it at the time, that reading a work and having it read to you can be a totally different and exhilarating experience. A charming man, he spoke to us (we were a small group of five) as if we were adults and answered our schoolboy questions as if they had been posed by a gaggle of eminent professors.

There was a memorable lecture by the Australian writer, Russel Braddon, his bestselling book, *The Naked Island*. As a Japanese prisoner of war, he was tormented by the fact he couldn't remember how to solve Pythagoras' theorem nor the second movement of the Bruch violin concerto. Ever ready to help, I quickly searched in my pocket for some paper and scribbled down the theorem. When we met for his autograph, I presented it to him.

"Sir," I remember saying politely, "I too want to write and just in case you haven't had time to catch up with your math, this might jog your memory; but I can't help you with the Bruch."

He looked at it quizzically, smiled, shook my hand, said thank you, carefully folded and placed the paper in his inside jacket pocket, then signed my autograph book.



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Muse: continued from previous page

Years later, I happened to hear him being interviewed by the BBC and he recounted this incident of when he met with a precocious or, as he put it, 'a snotty nosed schoolboy who wanted to be a writer!'

But in high school, I also discovered Edna O'Brien. I was on the short list to read the only clandestine copy of *The Country Girls* that was buzzing through the senior study hall. Wow! It was mind blowing.

As an established writer myself, I realized years ago how O'Brien's writing has influenced mine. Initially, I was simply attracted to her style, her voice, her word selection and her "tell it as it is" attitude, but was unaware of her own influences. Educated in the classics, I had read all of Dickens, Walter Scott, Jane Austen and all Shakespeare's play by the time I was seventeen. I have always felt that as a writer I related to an earlier period. Just as she was greatly influenced by Hemingway and especially Scott Fitzgerald, I, in turn, discovered those writers through her. They resonated with me the first time I read them.



O'Brien was my muse. For years, I carried around a copy of her short stories, *Lantern Slides*. I wanted to write like her. She stated she would never write her autobiography and yet also said that "Any book that is any good must be autobiographical." In the latter stages of her life, she broke her own resistance and gave us another unmistakable read. "We all leave one another," she said. "We die, we change - it's mostly change - we outgrow our best friends; but even if I do leave you, I will have passed on to you something of myself; you will be a different person because of knowing me; it's inescapable." And that's the

feeling I came away with after reading her "*Country Girl*."

Her first novel, "*The Country Girls*" which she wrote in three weeks, was instantly acclaimed in the UK and US, but was banned and denounced by Catholic bishops and priests in Ireland, some even burning copies –I was captivated by her style and honesty of expression. Her biography has much of that feeling but also the tiredness of a writer who has seen and done it all.

I found the earlier part of the book to be more appealing and in many ways more self-disclosing. She writes affectionately of her childhood, but her entry into the world of publishing, books and writers came with marrying the novelist Ernest Gebler in her early twenties in Dublin. He realized O'Brien's talent and was paralyzed with jealousy and bitterness. She gave him two sons, but the publication and international success of her first novel spelled the end of her marriage.

The second part of the book read for me more like sections from a journal and, although interesting, lacked the simplicity and freshness of the early years. In the 1970s, she was known for dinner parties whose guests included Princess Margaret hosted in her six-bedroom house on London's Carlyle Square. Paul McCartney sees her home. Marlon Brando walks her home. ("We sat in the kitchen, where he drank milk, and I drank wine.") She asks Jack Nicholson to see her home. Richard Burton rings the doorbell. Jackie Onassis invites her in. Prepped by Sean Connery, she drops acid with R. D. Laing, who was her psychiatrist. She attracted numerous famous studs, and makes some bedroom confessions, revealing a one-night stand with Robert Mitchum.

Country Girl is filled with many telling moments as O'Brien shares with us eight decades filled with honesty and vulnerability: unable to swim, unable to drive; the regrettable choices made, unreciprocated love and, always, a passion for words and literature. I am envious of her prose and feelings for the right word; it is always exquisite and makes it an excellent read.

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Muse: continued from previous page

She published more than 20 novels, eight collections of short stories, eight non-fiction and four children's books. She challenged Ireland's religious, sexual and gender boundaries by tackling issues of loneliness, sex, rebellion, and persecution. She had style, a command of language, and an incredibly fertile imagination. "Thinking is the enemy of feeling, and feeling...is the true language of the novel," she said. "The emotions of love, hatred, desire or despair are the real, and the task of the writer is to access those emotions." And she was my muse.

(Edna O'Brien passed away on July 27, 2024, aged 93.)



Michael Barrington's latest book is Take a Priest Like You, a true-to-life 'survivor' tale, replete with adrenaline pumping adventures, daunting challenges and one priest's profound religious struggle to find his true self. Combined with warm humor and moving insights it offers a rare glimpse into one man's spiritual experiences



How to Preserve a Veteran's Story

by Carole Wagener, Coastal Dunes

A veteran's letters are a rich source to be mined when writing a life story. Using these first-person accounts, the events of the time when they were written should be historically accurate. Many vets wrote letters home to their sweethearts or to their parents, who saved them. Some brought home journals, tucking them away, while today's soldier communicates by email or text, which may be harder to keep.

Perhaps you have your grandfather's WWI journal or your father's WWII letters stored in the attic. To start, take a writing class at a community college, attend a writing conference, or join one of the twenty-one branches of the California Writers Club. For extra help, join the Military Writers Society of America which offers members free online writing classes at www.mwsadispatches.com. The Veterans Breakfast Club Happy Hour, which meets weekly on Zoom, is another good resource. Contact todd@veteransbreakfastclub.org for further information.

I wrote a memoir after I found a dusty shoebox filled with 300 hand-written letters fifty-five years old from my co-author husband, William. The letters provided the backbone of *The Hardest Year: A Love Story in Letters During the Vietnam War*. It took seven years for us to complete the project, and in January 2023, Brian Schwartz of selfpublish.org helped us to publish it. In six months, *The Hardest Year* was up on Amazon in Kindle, paperback, and audio book versions. It then took me another two years to turn my memoir into a fictionalized screenplay,

On Veterans Day, why not plan to interview a veteran? Ask to see any letters, photo albums, or journals they may have kept. Speak to family members to glean from their memories and you will be well on your way to preserve a veteran's story.

Award-winning author and screenwriter Carole Wagener is a charter member and serves as the corresponding secretary of the Coastal Dunes branch of the California Writers Club.

Carole's website is carolewagener.com



Author's Secrets Go Up in Flames

by Kimberly Edwards, Sacramento

When Charles Warren Stoddard knew he was dying in 1909, he ordered his assistant to burn his personal papers. Ina Coolbrith, who was compiling a book of California poets and had known Stoddard from the Bret Harte days, was said to have been horrified.

Born in New York in 1843, Stoddard's family settled in San Francisco when he was twelve. He first submitted poems to *The Golden Era* under the name pseudonym "Pip Pepperpod." That began a life of travel writing and poetry.

Health problems drove Stoddard to Hawaii, where in 1864 he immersed himself in Polynesian culture. He enjoyed companionship with "brown-skinned youth," a longing that would follow him through life.

Back in San Francisco, he became part of the "Golden Gate Trinity," co-editing the *Overland Monthly* with Ina Coolbrith under Harte's direction. The latter edited Stoddard's first book, *Poems*. So well did Stoddard write lush detail that *The San Francisco Evening Bulletin* commissioned him to write travel sketches.

Stoddard's fascination with Polynesia and South Pacific carried him to Tahiti and Samoa. He was happiest in these cultures, especially when he found a "friend." He was said to have also had affairs with the poet Yone Noguchi, Joaquin Miller's "housemate," and Francis Davis Millet, who would go down with the *Titanic*.

Biographers have characterized Stoddard as not being comfortable in his own skin from an early age. In those days, same-sex relationships were illegal and had to be kept hidden.

But Stoddard made acquaintances easily. He was an excellent listener and had a lust for liquor. Ambrose Bierce and Robert Louis Stevenson were among his associates. He worked as Mark Train's secretary in Europe and helped Joaquin Miller to polish his poetry.

His most important travel book, *South-Sea Idyls*, made Polynesia a literary trend. He visited the Middle East in 1876, resulting in more works. In 1877, he authored the column "Fancy Free" for *The Argonaut*. Howells of the *Atlantic Monthly* compared his writing to Harte and Twain.

Stoddard's 1885 account of his conversion to Roman Catholicism, *A Troubled Heart and How It Was Comforted at Last*, is regarded as one of his best works. He taught literature at the University of Notre Dame and later at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He ran into challenges at both universities due to relationships with students.

In the early 1900s when "Bohemians" started an artist colony in Carmel, Stoddard was in the first wave, which included Upton Sinclair. When Stoddard's health worsened, he settled in Monterey. In 1907, he contributed a paragraph from one of his books to benefit Coolbrith, who lost her home in the 1906 earthquake and fire. Though Stoddard died in 1909, he was named a CWC Honorary Member because of his influence on early California literature. He had written perhaps 20 books and more than a thousand articles and poems. We'll never know what secrets were lost in the flames, but our club is proud to claim him.



Kimberly Edwards is the immediate past president of the Sacramento branch. Her latest projects include researching the history of California Writers Club, and the West Coast literary movement of the early 1900s. She is the author of Sacramento Motorcycling: a Capital City Tradition, released in 2021 by the History Press.



Celebrating Calif. Writers Week

The third week in October has been designated California Writers Week by state legislative proclamation sponsored by CWC in 2003.

The Coastal Dunes branch is celebrating in a big way, as this year is the tenth anniversary of its founding. Coastal Dunes is hosting a free event, open to the public, on Sunday, October 13, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria. Refreshments will be served.

This unique writer's event includes prominent speakers and the launching of the fifth Coastal Dunes anthology, *Splash*. This collection of prose and verse showcases the diverse voices and talents within branch.

Among the distinguished presenters will be California Poet Laureate Lee Herrick, who will read from his poetry and reflect on the power of verse.

Other presenters include memoirist Mary Firestone, a survivor of the 2018 Montecito mudslide, who will present her book *Trusting the Dawn: How to Find Joy After Trauma*; screenwriter Gerald Di Pego, who will share insights from his career in film and television, and best-selling authors Lida Sideris and Mara Purl, sharing the essential elements that make a novel compelling, engaging, and believable.




Catherine Kitcho

Catherine Kitcho will give a brief talk on the history of California Writers Club and the Coastal Dunes branch. Catherine is considered to be the founder of the Coastal Dunes branch, as she organized the first branch meeting in 2014, and led it through the chartering process, which was completed in July of 2015. Catherine has been a member and officer in three different branches of CWC over the last 26 years. For this special event, Catherine will address the history and traditions of CWC including California Writers Week and how it all began, based on her long experience with CWC.

Catherine started her own publishing company, Pele Publications, in 1998, long before self-publishing became a trend. She is the author of nine books in both fiction and non-fiction. Her most recent work is a fiction suspense series, *Dark Side Identity* and *Dark Side Redemption*. She has been a frequent speaker at various CWC branches and the Independent Book Publishers Association on the topics of book marketing, websites for authors, and small-press publishing. For more information about Catherine's books, visit: <https://pelepubs.com/>

Meanwhile, Fremont Area Writers (FAW) is celebrating California Writers Week by creating a display in the lobby of the Fremont Main Library for the month of October. This display features books by FAW members and information about the club.

DID YOU KNOW . . . There are resources for branches when it comes to California Writers Week on the CWC website? It's true! You'll find the text of the resolution, the story of our trip to Sacramento to get the resolution passed, and a downloadable poster. Go to calwriters.org, click on the History tab, and then choose "California Writers Week" from the pull-down menu. 

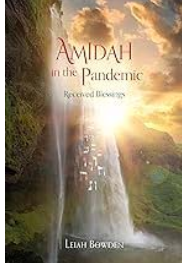




Member Spotlight



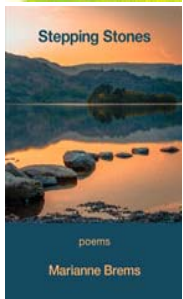
NEW RELEASES



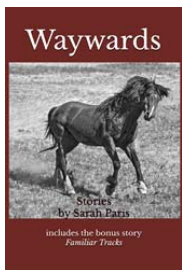
Leiah Bowden (Redwood Writers) has published her newest book, *Amidah in the Pandemic: Received Blessings*, a collection of poems that poured into her mind during silent meditations in zoomed sacred services from 2020 - 2022. She is thrilled that spiritual leaders use this book as liturgy. *Amidah in the Pandemic: Received Blessings* is available on Amazon.



Marianne Brems (San Francisco Peninsula Writers) announces the release of *Stepping Stones*, a poetry collection available from Kelsay Books and Amazon, which considers how incidents interact to make moving from one place to another possible physically, mentally, or spiritually. These poems focus on curious but easily overlooked aspects of daily life.



Kimberly Lovato (Marin) has released *Pisa Loves Bella: A Towering Tale of Kindness*, a rhyming children's picture book told from the point-of-view of the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. The story brings the iconic bell tower to life and shares a universal truth, that kindness and words matter. *Pisa Loves Bella* was released by MB Publishing, specializing in books for young readers.



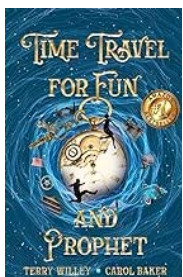
Sarah Paris {Redwood Writers} recently published *Waywards*, a series of interconnected short stories (available on Amazon), as well as a collection of haiku *For the Birds*, available from Red Moon Press or from the author, bsarahparis@gmail.com.

ANTHOLOGIES, ARTICLES, AWARDS AND MORE

Grace Bubulka {Coastal Dunes} had a piece accepted for publication in the Canadian magazine *Power of Music and Audio*. Grace's article tells the tale of a special childhood memory, "The Day Chubby Checker Did the Twist in my Playground."

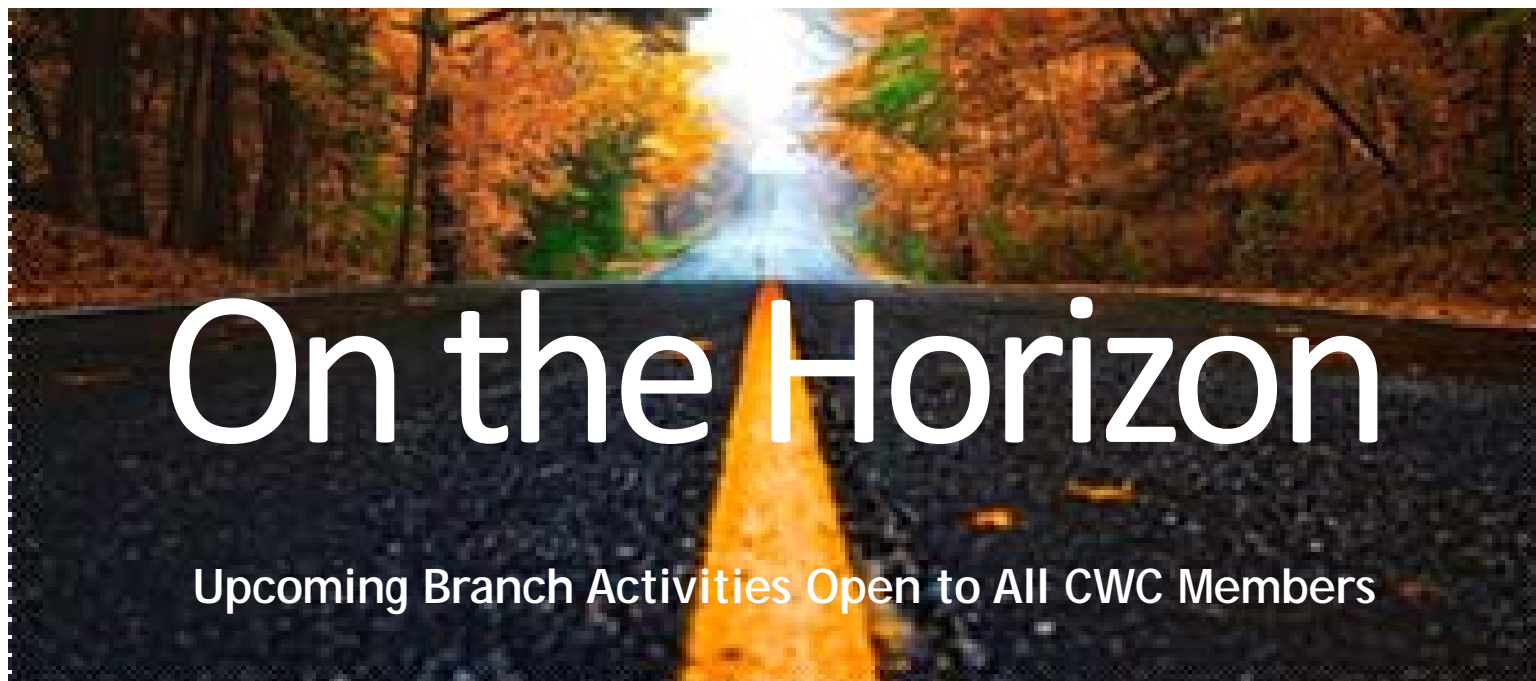


Carole Wagener's {Coastal Dunes} first screenplay, *The Girl with the Dark Red Hair*, is a semifinalist in the 2024 Glendale International Film Festival. The screenplay is a fictional adaptation of her memoir, *The Hardest Year: A Love Story in Letters During the Vietnam War*, a finalist in the 2023 International Book Awards.



Terry Willey and Carol Baker (Coastal Dunes CWC) are pleased to announce their genre-blending novel, *Time Travel for Fun and Prophet*, won Silver in the Humor and Bronze in the Science Fiction categories in the 2024 Colorado Independent Publishers Association (CIPA) EVVY™ Book Awards. This fast-paced, action-packed adventure takes Dan and Freddie from frozen wastelands to outer space and back to Earth as they ride the surf of time, eat sandwiches, fall in love, and try to avoid saving the universe.





On the Horizon

Upcoming Branch Activities Open to All CWC Members

THE ZOOM ROOM

FREMONT AREA WRITERS:

October 26: Jennifer Gennari, author, poet and editor, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

November 23: Jane Cleland, mystery writer, on “The Art of Distraction: Using Red Herrings,” 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Both events are free and open to all. To request the Zoom link, email scottfrombayside@yahoo.com. Put “FAW Zoom” in the Subject line.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY:

October 5: Clay Stafford, “Incorporate Mystery, Thriller, Suspense, Romance and Action into Any Work,” 1:00 p.m.

November 2: Lee Barnathan, “All About Ghost Writing,” 1:00 p.m.

December 7: Shawna Keeney, “How to Write a Winning Book Hook, Query an Agent, and Find Your Place in the Publishing World.” 1:00 p.m.

Zoom link: Email Anat Wenick at least 24 hours in advance at SFV.CWC@gmail.com

ALL ABOUT AUTHOR PLATFORMS

The Marin branch invites CWC members to an in-person, two-part workshop on two Wednesday evenings, October 9 and October 23, 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the Mill Valley Public Library.

Part One, on October 9, will focus on author platforms: In conversation with CWC Marin member Sheri T Joseph—whose novel *Edge of the Known World* debuts this month—Dominican University Professor Claudia Morales and Communications student Elizabeth Rosales make the case for getting outside your comfort zone. They will take your questions and provide new ways to think about how you present yourself and your work.

Part Two, on October 23, will be devoted to Instagram. Bring your laptop or mobile phone to this 90-minute workshop and leave with an Instagram account to which you have posted original content. If you already have an account, bring your questions about hashtags, SEO algorithms, or whatever is stumping you.

Details: <https://cwcmarin.com/rsvp-for-october-2024-meeting>

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On the Horizon: continued from previous page

SONOMA COUNTY WRITERS CONFERENCE



Redwood Writers invites CWC members to join them for a packed, one-day event October 19 in Santa Rosa. Keynote speaker, bestselling author and workshop leader Jeff Goins, along with 14 other industry experts, will talk and teach on subjects that focus on craft, genre, publishing and marketing. Choose from a variety of hour-long sessions and ninety-minute interactive workshops offered throughout the morning and afternoon.

Jeff Goins is the best-selling author of five books, including *The Art of Work* and *Real Artists Don't Starve*. His award-winning blog *Goinswriter.com* has been visited by tens of millions of people, and through his online courses and events, he's taught over 20,000 writers since 2012.

Keynote topic: The Art of Being Interesting: How to Succeed As a Writer Without Selling Your Soul. Every writer wants to write words they

believe in—and not going broke doing it. It's a timeless challenge that most authors, artists, and creative professionals have struggled with since time immemorial. But what if you didn't have to choose between starving and selling out? What if you could thrive as a writer without violating your own integrity. Bestselling author, entrepreneur, and lifelong marketer Jeff Goins will share his own struggles with fame, success, and how he learned to balance the challenges of craft, market, and personal boundaries to create a writing career he can be proud of that still pays the bills.

Registration includes continental breakfast and lunch. Details at <https://redwoodwriters.org/2024-conference/>

DISCOVER YOUR PUBLISHING PATH

San Francisco Peninsula Branch presents:

Discover Your Publishing Path:

Self-Publishing and Small Press Options Workshop

Sequoia Yacht Club

441 Seaport Ct, Redwood City, CA 94063

Saturday, October 26, 10 AM to 1:30 PM

Light lunch provided.

Early bird price \$49 through October 12, then regular price \$55

Author Martha Gies and Self-Publishing Coach Ruth Schwartz will present a three-hour workshop diving into approachable publishing avenues. Learn how to find a small press you resonate with or how to publish on your own with a little guidance sprinkled in.

Morning Session: Publishing with a Small Independent Press

Martha Gies will walk writers through the author's journey working with a university press and a small independent publisher, comparing the two. Topics will include the author/agent relationship, how to research agents and presses, contracts, and marketing opportunities, including scheduling bookstores and getting reviews.

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On the Horizon: continued from previous page

Afternoon Session: Self-Publishing 101: Whether you're a first-time author or looking to refine your self-publishing skills, Ruth Schwartz's session will give you essential knowledge and actionable steps to kick-start your self-publishing journey. Learn the differences between traditional, hybrid, and self-publishing, and get an overview of the self-publishing industry and its evolution. This high-level walkthrough of the self-publishing process focuses on the importance of editing, formatting, and professional cover design.

Details: cwc-sfpeninsula.org

ENTER THE FAULT ZONE

Fault Zone is a biennial project of the SF Peninsula chapter, combining the efforts of authors and mentoring editors to create an anthology rooted in the CWC's mission: Writers Helping Writers. For the upcoming eleventh edition, members are invited to submit new works of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction sparked by the title *Fault Zone: Faultless?*

Pay special attention to the question mark in the title! Consider: Is anyone or anything fault-free? Earthquake rifts appear everywhere. DNA fractures and recombines. How do we come to terms with the imperfections of ourselves and others? Or is it those flaws, fractures, and faults that make us who we are and our world the place we treasure?

Submissions close on October 31. Details: cwc-sfpeninsula.org

SUBMISSIONS INVITED FOR SJV ANTHOLOGY

The San Joaquin Valley Writers branch is pleased to announce the theme for its next anthology, to be published in the fall of 2025: *Beginnings & Endings*.

It is human nature to conceptualize the world consisting of beginnings and endings. This duality permeates almost everything we see, imagine, feel, and hope for. Send us your stories, memoirs, essays, or poetry in which a beginning and/or an ending takes center stage or is the background for something else. Show us the human experience through images, dialogue, verse, but no matter what, with beautiful words. And maybe, just maybe, show us a new take on beginnings and endings.

Submission information and guidelines will be published on the SJV website during the first week of November, 2024. Be on the lookout at www.sjvalleywriters.org.

TWO EKPHRASIS EVENTS IN MENDOCINO

Saturday, October 12: Join Writers of the Mendocino Coast at a celebration and exhibit of Ekphrasis artists' and writers' work at this Second Saturday event at the Artists' Co-op of Mendocino Gallery, 10400 Kasten Street. This will be a showcase of participants' artwork and framed writing, side-by-side.

Sunday, October 20: Come listen to Ekphrasis writers read their entries aloud next to an image of the artwork they inspired or were inspired by. This will take place at the WMC October 20 membership meeting at the Mendocino Community Center

Details: writersmendocino.org





CWC IDEA EXCHANGE

Inspirations from Our Branches

COMMUNAL WRITING

Many of our branches offer opportunities for members to get together and “just write.” Berkeley takes that concept up a notch by choosing inspiring venues that are sure to spark creativity. One such gathering takes place in the afternoon of the second Saturday of the month at the Oakland Museum of California. Then there’s the all-day write-in on the third Wednesday at Joaquin Miller Park—the birthplace of California Writers Club



BEYOND THE MONTHLY SPEAKER MEETING

When the Central Coast branch began to emerge from the pandemic lockdown, it became obvious it would take more than just the monthly speaker meetings to entice the members out of their homes. Central Coast Writers now offers three additional regular events that have been well received by the members. The monthly Sunday Salon offers members a chance to share their work in a low-key, supportive atmosphere at a local coffeehouse. Sat Chat is a monthly Saturday morning event in which members get together on an informal, free-form, unstructured basis to simply chat with each other about anything writing related. Writers Round-up takes place on an every-other-month basis in which members with a specific expertise (editing, public speaking, bookstore events) offers their knowledge to their fellow writers.

WHERE’S WALDO PARTY

Now, here’s something you don’t see many of our branches doing often. Amidst red and white balloons and dozens of variations on a famous sweater, the month-long celebration of the *Where’s Waldo?* books by Martin Hanford at Red Rocks Books in Ridgecrest culminated in a big party on July 27. The East Sierra branch hosted a table at the event with three special offerings: free stuffed animals for free to any child who bought a book that day; Donna McCrohan Rosenthal created a Where’s Waldo crossword puzzle challenge, and Daniel Stallings designed a scavenger hunt throughout the store. Red Rock Books offered cookies, a selfie station, a costume contest, a drawing and coloring contest, their grand prize giveaway, and even a chance to meet Waldo himself. The party was a massive hit, and East Sierra’s contributions were some of the most popular.

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Idea Exchange: continued from previous page

COFFEE WITH THE PREZ

Redwood Writers' new president, Crissi Langwell, hosted an informal "getting to know you" event on a recent Sunday morning at a coffeehouse in Windsor. This was a chance for members to drop in and ask questions about Redwood Writers, talk about writing, or just hang out and get to know Crissi and other members of the branch.



A BOOK FESTIVAL? YES, YOU CAN DO IT!

Hosting a book festival is an ambitious project, one undertaken by the Sacramento branch this past June. Organizer Tim Schooley reports twenty local authors participated, sharing twelve booths at McKinley Park. The club expects that this will be the first of an annual book festival event. By all accounts, the book festival was a success. The weather cooperated nicely. Authors reported selling many books. In a quick survey at the end of the day, every author said they hoped to return to the book festival next year. The festival also gave us a chance to tout the California Writers Club to potential new members, and to talk about books with the many people who came to the festival. The Sacramento branch also got the word out—and helped members sell their books—by sponsoring a table at the Tuesday Night Market in Roseville, held every Tuesday night in June and July.

PUT IT ON YOUTUBE

Several of our branches post videos of their speakers and workshop presenters on YouTube. San Joaquin Valley has a strong commitment to making their videos free and available to anyone, no password required. Check out their offerings at <https://www.sjvalleywriters.org/resources>

NEED EXTRA REVENUE?

There's little to lose by applying for a grant and much to gain, as Tri-Valley Writers has learned. The branch was awarded a grant of \$2500 by the Alameda County Arts Commission. The grants are awarded on a two-year cycle to 501(c)3 arts groups within Alameda County.



CREATE A 'WRITER MAGNET'

Many of us have heard the concept of a "reader magnet"—a free offer to tempt potential new readers and fans of our books to sign up for our email list. Writers of Kern has taken that concept to create a "writer magnet" to attract potential new members. The WOK website offers a free PDF guide, "The Best Places to Write in Bakersfield" in return for giving an email address—a novel way to attract interest from fellow writers.

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Published authors who are members of Writers of the Mendocino Coast offer free creative writing workshops for adults on the second Wednesday afternoon of the month at the Fort Bragg Library. Upcoming topics include "Ghost Stories" with Rob Hawthorn, "Prompts for All Reasons and Seasons" with Earlene Gleisner and "Write a Ten-Minute Play" with Phil Zwerling.



NorCal Network: Collective Ideas

by Kimberly Edwards (Sacramento), NorCal Network Chair



On September 9, representatives from nine northern branches met as part of the NorCal Network. Identifying and implementing efficient board operations are the salient purpose of NorCal.

Several branches reported an uptick in membership. Keep the good news coming!

Ideas for successful membership recruitment were shared. They include posts on Meetup, Next Door, and online community bulletin boards. They also include printed materials sent out to media contacts and even to a community TV/radio station. Other ideas from branches include: word-of-mouth, an annual book fair, the branch website, FaceBook, articles in community newspapers, and craft-chat meetings.

Ideas for efficient membership renewal were also discussed: relentless reminders, activities that require renewed membership (anthologies, open mic, critique groups, community events on craft), raffles, contests. Some reps expressed an interest in learning more about “auto-renewal,” following the lead of other organizations.

Ideas for when to charge for meetings and events: On branch charges more for guests, so members see the benefit of membership. One branch allows members to pay for all fees annual in advance, resulting in a cheaper cost.

Ideas for securing new board members: approaching possible candidates one-on-one; conveying small tasks with low expectations as in, *can you help with this*. The personal approach can continue until the member is comfortable. One branch requests that a member serve on a committee for a year to get to know the club.

Interesting meeting ideas: include a writing prompt; have craft talks, with member-leader passing out a single page on the topic and resources. Example of a topic: internal dialogue.

Ideas for California Writers Week: library displays, articles in newspapers, community presentations open to the public.

The NorCal Network will meet again in December. If your branch faces a challenge you would like troubleshooting help with, let us know. We are here to support the branches and to keep our club healthy and exciting.



CWC South: ‘Writing Makes Us Immortal’

by Donna McCrohan Rosenthal (East Sierra), Chair, CWC South

Instead of the customary regional report, I want to share thoughts I had while doing posts for socalwritersshowcase.com, CWC-South’s mag-format website. We publish member submissions in the seven categories of fiction, nonfiction/essay, poetry, memoir, interview, writer’s life, and craft, switching out content every month, featuring each post in its first month, then keeping it in a “clickable” directory for at least six month and generally at least a year.

We decided from *Showcase’s* inception that we would occasionally include pieces by colleagues I like to think of as “active deceased” – those who live in our hearts and minds, who advanced the mission of the CWC on every level, and so meaningfully whose written words stay with us long after these dear friends have gone.



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CWC South: continued from previous page

I recently had the privilege of posting San Fernando Branch Monte Swann's thoroughly engaging "Ars Gratia Artis" about his frequent forays of sneaking onto the MGM lot as a boy, Orange County Branch Jeanette Fratto's clever and savvy "Night Duty" about an ambivalent detective, and High Desert's inimitable Bob Isbill's "The Importance of Volunteerism" which we should all read and take to heart.

Putting Monte, Jeanette, and Bob up on our site, I felt such elation in the fact that *writing makes us immortal*. Their earthly presence has left us, but their written words never will. I sensed them smiling to see this rebirth of appreciation of their talent as they spin their tales again to entertain more people they hadn't reached before. What a wonderful thing. A gift that goes on through time.

Don't we write for permanence? Otherwise, we could just sit someone down and talk.

Showcase can post the active deceased's legacies. Branch newsletters can reprint them, too, and we can read them at open mic meetings, their inner beauty brightening our camaraderie just like it used to. When their stories survive, they survive in their stories.

But even if you've never published anything anywhere, don't overlook recording family memories and histories. They'll endure through generations if not through the ages.

Note: If a CWC-South member and you want to contribute, do it through your branch newsletter editor or president. We do not take submissions through the website.



Honoring Kymberlie Ingalls



CWC lost long-time loyal member Kymberlie Ingalls on April 9. Her home branch was Mt. Diablo, but she also held dual memberships in at least six other Northern California branches. She just loved going to CWC meetings! The Central Board honored Kymberlie with a posthumous Ina Coolbrith Award in light of her years of volunteer service.

Many of us have wondered about a celebration of life. The Mt. Diablo newsletter offered this update from Kymberlie's husband, Roger:

"As I was reviewing our pre-marriage notes to each other I was reminded that she wished to have her celebration in late autumn or winter. And as it turns out,

this is perfect timing. Many of us have participated in Kymberlie's annual Christmas toy drive for kids and families in need. 2024 would have been her 30th year organizing this annual event and we are going to make this milestone happen in Kymberlie's honor. The event will be a celebration of life and Christmas toy drive mashup – Kymberlie is smiling above and loving it; the toy drive was one of her biggest joys. The event is currently planned for November 30th at the Chicken Pie Shop in Walnut Creek, where the toy drive has been held for the past several years. We will celebrate Kymberlie with a nod to her passions: writing and the writers clubs, comedy, broadcast radio and the toy drive. We are getting it all organized and will make announcements soon, stay tuned."





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
 OPEN

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.

"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.



Volunteer to coordinate advertising in the *CWC Bulletin*. No special talent needed, just a conscientious attitude and basic computer skills. If you can help, contact CWC President Roger Lubeck, president@calwriters.org

Put Your Work in the Spotlight!

Just released a book? Had a short story, poem or article appear in a magazine or anthology? Share your good news with your fellow CWC members. Send an announcement, 50 words or less, to editor@calwriters.org. Put "Member Spotlight" in the Subject line and don't forget to let us know which branch you belong to! Covers should be submitted in JPEG format as an attachment to the email. Deadline for the Winter 2024 issue is December 1.



From the Editor's Desk

Buff Versus Bunk

When it comes to history, you've got your buffs, and then you've got those who believe, like Henry Ford, that "history is bunk."

If you know me well, or even casually, you will undoubtedly guess that I fall in the former category. I adore history, lapping it up like a cat with a saucer of tuna broth.

All of goes to explain why, when I heard rumblings of "just throw them away" when it came to two banker boxes full of old CWC *Bulletins*, I sprang into action. "I'll take them!" I declared, jumping into the car and racing from the Monterey peninsula to Fremont, where the two boxes sat in a storage unit.

What I found, when I lugged them home and opened the lids, were multiple copies of our newsletters from the early 1950s to the late 1970s. Most were just four pages long, or possibly six. No photographs, no graphics of any kind. Just text. Remember, this was before desktop publishing, even before photocopy machines became affordable and widely available.

As short as they were, they offer an intriguing (at least for us history buffs) look into the workings of our club some 50 or 60 years ago. Back then, there were only two branches—Berkeley and Sacramento—and later a third, SF Peninsula. I was struck at the formality of our operations, how fancy and proper everything was. Dinner meetings were the practice, often preceded by a cocktail hour. The venues were quite swank: for Berkeley, the Claremont Hotel, restaurants in San Francisco, and at times, the Men's Faculty Club at UC Berkeley. Which begs the question—could our women members attend meetings at the Men's Faculty Club? Sacramento, meanwhile, usually held their dinners at the El Rancho Hotel in West Sacramento, which was top-of-the-line in its day. When SF Peninsula came on board, they were meeting at Dinah's Shack in Palo Alto, which despite its name was (and still is) quite posh. The dinner tabs ran around \$3 or \$4, which would be in the \$30 range today, adjusting for inflation.

Other than meeting notices, the contents consist of members' publishing credits. I was amazed at how accomplished our long-ago members were, and how many publishing outlets were available at the midpoint of the 20th century. So many traditional book publishers, so many print magazines that actually paid for content, from *Houseboat Life* to *California Highway Patrolman*. Some of our members were selling to the top periodicals of their day, titles like *Mademoiselle* and *Playboy*.

And then I hit pay-dirt. One of those moments researchers dream of, but seldom encounter. Some twenty years ago, I heard a rumor there was once a Carmel branch of California Writers Club back in the 1950s. But that's all it was—an elusive rumor—until I picked up one of those old *Bulletins* from 1957 and found a listing for a Carmel branch with dinner meetings at the très chic La Playa Hotel. Alas, the Carmel branch seems to have lasted only 18 months or so, as I find no mention of it in *Bulletins* past 1959. Still, what a find! That alone made the schlep to Fremont well worth it.

By the way . . . Henry Ford never actually said "History is bunk." What he did say, in a 1916 *Chicago Tribune* article, was "History is more or less bunk." Irony of ironies, he ended up establishing a history museum in Greenfield Village, Michigan, which you can still visit today.

—Joyce Krieg