



WRITERSTALK

Volume 16
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Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

Beyond the Green Zone—Dahr Jamail

by Bill Baldwin

We are delighted to have as our August guest speaker Dahr Jamail, international journalist and co-recipient of the 2008 Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism. He is the author of *Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches from an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq*. His fellow prize co-recipient was Mohammed Omer, a *Washington Report* correspondent. While Jamail is able to speak with us, Omer is recovering from injuries sustained making his way home to Palestine via an Israeli border crossing.

What is it like to work as an international journalist? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What makes the work rewarding? What is his view of the more mainstream media? These are a few questions that Jamail may address.

His book *Beyond the Green Zone* tells of his experiences covering the war in Iraq as an unembedded journalist, particularly during the 2004 siege of Fallujah, which Jamail witnessed firsthand. Jamail's determination to remain independent of the U.S. government and military in Iraq gives his dispatches a perspective closer to that of the ordinary Iraqi and hopefully less biased and shielded than that of embedded reporters. In any case, we get a more Iraqi-focused report than can be expected from more mainstream media coverage. We hear the war from the point of view of civilians under fire—usually by the American military.

Viewing the war from the perspective of ordinary Iraqis challenges the truisms of the American mainstream media. It takes courage to present evidence that contradicts establishment assertions. It takes courage to suggest that our country has committed appalling crimes. But what does it mean to be a journalist, if not to report the truth seen with one's own eyes?

But how does one approach such topics? How do you avoid your own biases? How do you tell the story fairly? How do you get people to read truths that are disturbing and unsettling?

How to write, how to market such a testimony? Come to the monthly dinner meeting on August 12 and hear what Dahr Jamail has to share with us about his work in journalism, his approach to writing, and his approach to publicity.

I'm sure we'll have many questions for him, and I'm sure that we'll all learn a lot from what he has to tell us! WT



Dahr Jamail. Photo copyright Eric Ruder.

Pulitzer Prize Winner Jane Smiley

Keynoter at East of Eden

by Edie Matthews

Award-winning novelist and essayist Jane Smiley joins the list of keynote speakers at this year's East of Eden Writers' Conference in Salinas.



Jane Smiley

Smiley's novels have achieved the rare combination of critical acclaim and commercial success. Her novel *A Thousand Acres* won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1992. The book, a contemporary deconstruction of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, is set on a Midwestern farm that is owned by a father and his three daughters. The prize-winner was made into a film starring Jessica Lange and Michelle Pfeiffer. Lange won a Golden Globe Award for her role.

In 2002 Smiley's novella *The Age of Grief* was made into film *The Secret Lives of Dentists*.

Her list of awards is extensive. *The All True Travels and Adventures of Lidie Newton* won the 1999 Spur Award for Best Novel of the West. Her novel *Horse Heaven* was short-listed for the Orange Prize in 2002.

Smiley also excels at short stories. She has won numerous honors, including a Pushcart Prize and two O. Henry Awards. She also contributes to a wide range of magazines, such as *The New Yorker*, *Elle*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's*, and *Playboy*.

For a number of years Smiley taught in the prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her latest book is *Thirteen Ways of*

Special pull-out center section: complete East of Eden brochure!

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President's Prowling

by Dave LaRoche
President, South Bay Writers

Smorgasbord

Occasionally I have so many thoughts vying for page space and so little ability to select that I call uncle and send them all to the word bank.

Chili Without Fat

"I'll have the Black Bean Chili ... is it pork or beef? ...like 'em both though better mixed." My mouth watered.

"There is no meat," the waiter sheepishly admitted.

"What!? That's not chili," I cried over the cannon in the 1812 Overture issuing from a speaker overhead.

"We can add some if you like," he added.

"I'll have the Escondido Salad," I grumbled. I had been thinking about a good chili all morning long, and I *start* mine with meat—you absolutely need the fat.

And you need the "fat" in writing. Deeply etched, spiced-up descriptions will keep a passage in mind long after the plot is kaput, the book back on the shelf. Oh, don't deny the plot, but add a zesty flavor to your characters and scenes and let their aroma excite the reader's appetite.

I still remember an old man and his rugged face, burned brown by the sun of an Arizona desert. He sported a prominent mustache, thick and lush above his dry upper lip. Its speckled gray and black growth spread full across his face and was nicely brushed out, except for a wiry stray that bent upward. When the old man inhaled, it tickled his large nose into a twitch and a whopper of a sneeze you could hear clear across the valley ... and I'll take my chili with fat.

Critique

Almost every new member will pull someone aside and ask about critique groups. I often feel that hand on my shoulder. We like critique. No matter which side you are on, you are learning. People bring what they know about the rules and what they think about the writing.

We happily eschew the "marketeers." Because we read, we are the market, and what we think about a piece (how it affects us) becomes as important as what we know about the rules. When I take my work to my critique group, I expect two things: a degree of satisfaction from the "market" and a technical wringing-out based on what is known about the rules, and I want both to be clear and emphatic—no dancing.

East of Eden

The thought of Edie Matthews, in itself, is astonishing—a category-nine enthusiast, on her way to Salinas, uprooting and blowing every literary idea in the hemisphere to the "Center" in September. We'll need to be there to hear them.

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We have a membership category that fits you.
Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20
initiation fee. Contact the Membership Chair,
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Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. Suggested word limits are not absolute; query the editor. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com; or mail double-spaced, typewritten copy to

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Guest Columns

Almost Anything Goes (400 words)

News Items

(400 words)

Letters to the Editor

(300 words)
to Andrea Galvacs
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Creative Works

Short Fiction (1800 words)
Memoir (1200 words)
Poetry (300 words)
Essay (900 words)

Accolades

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Announcements and Advertisements

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

An announcement is information of interest and value to writers that does not provide direct economic benefit to its originator. Announcements are published free of charge.

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Editor's Perspective

by Dick Amyx
Editor

Welcome Aboard

I'd like to welcome new contributing editors Victoria M. Johnson and Bill Belew to the *WritersTalk* staff.



Victoria M. Johnson Speaking for herself, Victoria says, "I am a professional writer, a film buff and a hopeful romantic. Above all, I am a storyteller. Whether I'm writing a World War II drama, a romantic comedy, or a thriller, my goal is to entertain, enlighten and surprise my readers. I am always learning, always stretching my boundaries creatively, and I consider myself a work in progress."

She is the author of *All I Need to Know in Life I Learned from Romance Novels*, has written the screenplay for a romantic comedy, is active in film production, and has contributed the two-part article "Publish Your Book in California!" to *WritersTalk*.

Bill Belew says, "I make a living as a professional blogger and online professor of writing for a national university. I have written more than 1.5 million words in the past two years that have been published through an online media company. My posts have attracted some 3.4 million visitors who have turned more than 5.6 million pages. I hold an MFA from National University."

A new SBW member, Bill says that he was drawn to CWC and SBW in a search for writing-focused energy. His first project for *WritersTalk* will be a column on how writers can make best use of a blog to promote their work.



Bill Belew

Writer on the Road



About a month from now, a bunch of us will be stuffing our toothbrushes and laptops into our bags and hitting the road for Salinas. I've been traveling with a laptop for some years now, and I've found, as a couple of pieces of me started falling apart, that schlepping 9 pounds, 7 ounces of my old Dell Inspiron plus power supply around was becoming a literal pain. And so I've been on the lookout for something a little lighter.

I found it. When it was right, I knew it. The machine plus power supply weighs 2 pounds, 12 ounces. It has a gigabyte of RAM and a 20GB solid state "hard disk"; three USB ports, an Ethernet port, a VGA (monitor) port, and headphone and microphone sockets; built-in wireless; and a built-in 1.3 megapixel webcam and microphone. It comes bundled with a browser and email client, a newsreader, an office suite compatible with Microsoft Office, graphics viewers and editors, a media viewer, an internet phone, a bunch of games, and the usual system and management tools. If you aren't a computer-minded person and don't want to know a bunch of stuff about how a computer works, you can use the "Easy" interface that ships with the machine and just point and click to make things happen. Or you can install—admittedly, with a little geeky doing—a full desktop interface that looks and works mostly like Windows XP.

How much did all this cost? I paid \$549 for mine. The reason it's so inexpensive is

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Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

July was a hot, dry, and smoky month; I hope it didn't leave you too drained to keep up with your writing. As you know, there was no official meeting, but "something better this way came"—the annual CWC barbecue at Edie Matthews' house on July 20. Therefore, "Accolades" is a bit thin this month.



Jackie Mutz
Contributing Editor

Meredy Amyx placed in two contests in the May/June issue of *Byline* magazine; first prize (\$35) in the "Character Sketch" category and third prize (\$10) in the "Filler" category. Outside of SBW, this was her first time winning a first place and a cash prize. Great work, Meredy!

Martha Engber will be teaching two courses: a four-week online course, *Passionate People: Create Characters So Real, So Passionate You Can't Put Them Down and Neither Will Your Readers* offered through Women Writing the West (to register: www.womenwritingthewest.org) and *The Art of Rewriting* offered through CWC Central Coast from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sat., Sep. 27, at the Monterey Art Museum (to register: chartmaker@comcast.net).

Jana McBurney-Lin had some wonderful news to share. On July 1, KOMENAR Publishing released *My Half of the Sky* in trade paperback (ISBN 978-0-9772081-7-3). Since its publication in 2006, *My Half of the Sky* has received several awards, including being an American Booksellers Association Book Sense Pick, finalist in the 2006 *ForeWord* Magazine Book of the Year Awards, and a selection for the Forbes Book Club. Most recently, Friends of the Museum, Singapore, reviewed *My Half of the Sky* with the following:

It is a rare women's novel that sensitively describes the life of a young educated woman in modern-day China in its full complexity, without resorting to unnecessary sentimentalism. Jana's deep knowledge of the realities of life in China

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Retreat

by Cathy J. Bauer

When soldiers find themselves overwhelmed by opposing forces, they retreat. As a wife, mother, and volunteer, I often find myself overwhelmed by day-to-day activities and life in general. It affects my writing time and blocks my ability to focus on the development of characters and plot. When it gets to the point where a mere phone call to confirm an appointment disrupts my train of thought, I yell, "Retreat!"



My favorite writing spot on my Florida retreat. What's outside the window?

The past few months have been particularly bad—my son broke his hand, I needed to finish up my mother's estate, and I was constantly bugged by phone calls from politicians soliciting my vote. My imagination dried up. It seemed the only time I could be creative was when I was not at home. After a struggling for weeks, I decided it was time for me to go somewhere and get back on track.

In the past I've done local retreats. One year I spent five days in an inexpensive motel in Monterey; another time a hotel in Dublin provided me sanctuary. This year I took my executor's fees from my mother's estate and went to Florida, the setting for my novel.

I take several things into consideration when planning a retreat. Cost, of course, is a major factor. Safety and proximity to restaurants are also high on my list, since I travel alone. If I need to do research, Internet access is a requirement. A coffee pot in the room is helpful, and I keep snacks on hand. Occasionally I've been so into writing that I didn't want to take time to go out to eat. Some of my more creative days have been fueled by powdered donuts and wine.

Don't think I sit in my room and write for twelve hours straight. I wish I could, but it doesn't happen. I need inspiration, and often find it outside the hotel room. I work on plot while walking to the restaurant, develop characters while eavesdropping on conversations, and find the right adjectives to describe the sky while watching the sunset.

After a couple of days of disciplined writing, the temptation to surf the Internet or watch television may pop up. I have found ways to keep that in check. If the hotel changes its access code daily, I don't go to the lobby and get the new one until I've put in so many hours or completed so many pages. My trick to avoid television is to take the batteries out of the remote control and toss them in the trash. Before I check out, I buy a pack of new ones and install them.

When I get stuck on a chapter, I move on to something else. I might sit outside with pen and paper and write about the sounds around me—birds chirping, the hum of traffic, the smells coming from nearby restaurant.

One good thing about being alone: if I get inspired in the middle of the night, I can turn on the lights and get to work.



On my recent retreat to **The mighty Apalachicola**, Florida, I took photographs of the places where my characters might live or work. One photo in particular is inspiring. It is of a mobile home sitting under a canopy of moss-draped pine trees. Instead of a house number, a driftwood sign tells all that this is "Purgatory." The next time I find myself stuck in writer's block hell, I'll look at that photograph—hopefully, inspiration will follow. **WT**

Nobody asks you to do this. The world out there is not panting after another novelist. We choose it.

—Paul Auster, quoted in an interview with his wife, novelist Siri Hustvedt

The Journey of a Thousand Miles: Collaboration

by Lita Kurth

"No one writes a novel alone,"¹ said Roland Merullo, author of *Leaving Losapas*; *A Russian Requiem*; *Revere Beach Boulevard*; *In Revere*, in *Those Days*; and *Golfing With God*, all prize-winners and critical successes.



Lita Kurth
Contributing Editor

But wait—shouldn't that be "*Everyone* writes a novel alone?" Writers are solitaires, housed in their individual oyster shells, lonely dreamers toiling in a single, ill-furnished room, aren't they? And what about the harsh criticism, competition, misunderstanding, and discouragement that may result from connecting with others? In spite of those real hazards, and in spite of the necessity for *some* solitary work, many writers, like Merullo, find that collaboration and involvement in a community, instead of detracting from their work, enhances and even inspires it.

Reading the dedications and acknowledgments in published books, I'm often astonished at the large number of people who played a role and even find myself asking, "How did they get so much feedback? Bribes? Death threats?" Chances are they're members of a writing community and have returned the favor.

I've sometimes forgotten to work with others or not made time for it, but by now I've gathered enough evidence in my own life and the lives of other writers to change my ways. One of the

most valuable writing resources in my life right now is the Yahoo group for my MFA program.² Through it, I learned the following wonderful story of collaboration.

Writer Marjorie Rommel once undertook a year-long collaborative project with Lindi Taylor, a Seattle quilter. Together, they created, from the ground up, a poetry chapbook and related quilt that toured for a while under the auspices of Visual Verse, an organization that pairs poets and quilters.

Their project centered on the idea of women's work. As Marjorie recounts it, "Lindi thought about our project as a kind of ongoing date-book with entries and 'to-do' lists, some of which got embroidered on the cross-stitched half-aprons she attached to her quilt. I'd been reading Rumer Godden, (who, interestingly, co-wrote several books with her sister) and my grandmother's Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, so thought about the canonical hours, the way the myths, the cycles of seasons and history, enter the work women traditionally have done, ... and the way the necessities and pleasures of that work enter into the stories women tell one another, neighbor and neighbor, mother and daughter and sister and aunt and grandmother and granddaughter, passing it on, the burden of the stories, the trick of the hand held just right, the joy of work done properly and well"

The experience was both memorable and positive. Marjorie said, "I loved the way

our collaboration changed the way both of us thought about the subject we were pursuing; the give and take of ideas—the joy of being able to take hers, and relinquish my own, to turn them over and over in our hands and minds as if, together, we were molding something entirely new" In fact, she adds, "What we ended up with ... was nothing like what we thought we'd do at the beginning."

Come to think of it, if our work has been inspired by an experience with others, a play, a prayer, a poem, a song, a painting, a garden, or a love affair, it is already in some sense collaborative. The only question is whether or not the collaboration is consciously chosen and equally entered into.

Through critique groups, websites, the newsletter, contests, meetings, conferences, and open mics, South Bay Writers Club offers numerous opportunities for conscious collaboration. To sum up her experience, Marjorie borrowed the words of a Hasidic rabbi: "First you do, *then* you understand"—and added that after her collaboration with Lindi, she thinks she understands what the rabbi meant.

Happy collaborating! WT

1. *AWP Chronicle*, March-April, 2008.

2. Another storehouse of expertise and information is our own South Bay Writers Yahoo group. Go to groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthBay_Writers_Exchange/ and click Join This Group.

SBW Anthology Needs Marketing Ace

The SBW anthology will go to press early in 2009. The club needs a capable and reliable person who has the sales and marketing experience to help with promotional activities such as the following (plus your own ideas, of course):

- Work with the SBW treasurer to maintain a list of orders and payments for order fulfillment.
 - Propose and develop potential sales outlets and serve as liaison with them.
 - Set promotional schedules.
 - Work with the anthology core team to design a preorder flyer, ads, etc.
 - Write and send press releases to other chapter newsletters and the state CWC bulletin.
 - Prepare ad content for the web page.
- If you can afford some volunteer time for SBW over the next few months, please get in touch right away with anthology project lead Dick Amyx, dick@amyx.org.



Betty Auchard reads from her book *Dancing in My Nightgown* at the Prune-yard Open Mic. Photo: Carolyn Donnell

Take Five with the Foothill Writers Conference

by Carolyn Donnell

The 32nd Annual Foothill Writers Conference opened at noon on Wednesday, July 9, and continued through Sunday, July 11. Current director Doren Robbins headed an extensive list of speakers—novelists, poets (including California's current Poet Laureate), screenwriters, playwrights, musicians and composers. More than 50 workshops afforded opportunities to read, write, and review—all for a mere \$53.50 (for California residents). In conjunction with the conference was the 2008 Richard Maxwell Fellowship (fiction and poetry). SBW member Sylvia E. Halloran received an honorable mention in the poetry division.

The opening session began with Marianne Villanueva reading from her newly published collection of short stories, *Mayor of the Roses*. Lawrence R. (Larry) Smith read from his novel, *Annie's Soup Kitchen*, and Morton Marcus closed with recollections of time spent with other writers, including activist writer Tillie Olsen, Robert Bly, and Al Young.



Carolyn Donnell and Bill Baldwin take five at the Foothill Writers Conference.

Photo: Carolyn Donnell

In Marianne Villanueva's workshop, "Blurred Genres: Fiction and Memoir; Prose Poetry; and other Hybrid Forms," participants learned that Villanueva is a Filipina writer who came to the U.S. in 1995 after being accepted into the creative writing program at Stanford. Although many of her short stories are autobiographical, she urges students not to underestimate the power of fiction. She can imagine herself having the experiences of a much younger person

and is able to write about them convincingly, proving that you don't have to live it to write about it.

Larry Smith, a novelist, poet, translator, filmmaker, and editor, directed "What I Look For: A Magazine Editor's Take on Submissions—fiction & poetry." His main advice: "Read the magazine first." Don't submit to a publication you don't love. What Smith looks for is (1) make a good start, (2) sustain the story, and (3) "land well," or have a satisfying ending. He emphasized that if you receive notes back from an editor, don't take it as a rejection. Amend and send it back!

Greg Sarris, author, producer, and professor at Sonoma State University, led "Memoir Writing: Self and Place." We wrote about a secret we had never told anyone and placed that memory in a specific time and season. Discussions showed how the world you were in and what was going on at the time affects your story.

Friday, I gravitated toward poetry. Avotcja Jiltonilro is a poet, composer, musician, and published author. Her reading had a Dave Brubeck beat—5/4. Turns out she's a jazz musician. Go figure. I hummed "Take Five" for hours.

Floyd Salas, award-winning and critically acclaimed author, gave "Spontaneous and Improvisational Poetry Writing." The exercise involved stream-of-consciousness writing. We paired off and listened to each other read, marking breaths. Each person rewrote her work, making a line break at each breath mark. Further steps included finding the main idea, throwing out what didn't fit, etc., but Salas said that the unfettered stream of loose writing always comes first.

Saturday began with Al Young, California's current Poet Laureate, leading "Speaking Your Story, Writing Your Story." He discussed storytelling and how it differs from writing and called on students to share a story incorporating the five senses: sight, smell, sound, touch, and taste. Add kinesthetic movement and energy to complete the sensory palette. A teacher of creative writing for over thirty-five years, Young's list of honors and publications is extensive. His work has been translated into more than twelve languages.

Next, I moved outside under the trees with Andrea Hollander Budy's "Fresh Approach, Fresh Results: A Poetry



Andrea Hollander Budy moved her poetry workshop out into the fresh air. Photo:

Carolyn Donnell

Writing Workshop." Participants chose one evocative adjective, one active verb, and one descriptive noun. Pairing off, the two took turns writing a line, each using one of her chosen words. This process continued three more times, producing an eight-line poem. Andrea asked us to read every other line and then from the bottom to the top. These approaches give the writer new ideas and perspectives. Budy is a Writer in Residence at Lyon College in Arkansas.

Sunday found me returning to Al Young in "Words and Music: Sparking Creativity." We listened to five music selections and wrote down our feelings. Midori tugged at our hearts with Paganini; guitar and accordion tangoed through a sultry tropical night; a nineteen-year-old crooned the joys of love; Puerto Rican Salsa punctuated with trumpets had us all tapping our feet; and Hawaiian with Appalachian influences (long story) completed the agenda. Needless to say, the diversity of the ensuing writings was immense.

I was not able to attend the final evening session, but Una Daly reported that it ended with a bang when breath-taking soprano Catherine Seidel sang poems of E.E. Cummings set to jazz piano composed and played by Denny Berthiaume, playwright and former Foothill College professor. Floyd Salas read a chapter from his WWII memoir and reminded the audience that many novels are short stories stitched together, such as the Chinese immigrant novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, by Amy Tan. Al Young's comparisons of his recent travels to Egypt to the

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View from the Board

by Dave LaRoche

Your 2008–2009 board of directors met July 8, with both new and retiring officers present, except Marjorie (touring Greece) and Jeannine (touring obligations).

Thank you, Jeannine Vegh, for a year of valued involvement, good ideas, and a sensitive and sincere Youth Group effort. Oh yeah, we will also miss your critical eye.

Announcements included the notion that Ro Davis would proceed with the Pitchcraft workshop even if Rick Brost is not able to participate. Clarence Hammonds has expressed an interest in resuming his historian chair.

Reports

President: suggestions on how we (both South Bay and state organization) might celebrate our centennial were solicited and will be welcome throughout this year and into next. Dave will act as the collector. The new executive committee will meet Saturdays to establish an agenda for the coming fiscal year.

VP: Alex presented the calendar of planned events.

- July—BBQ, no regular meeting
- Aug—Dahr Jamail, journalist, author, and speaker
- Sep—East of Eden
- Oct—Steve Bhaerman, inspirational speaker, author, and humorist
- Nov—Norman Solomon, journalist, social and political activist/critic, memoirist, and TV commentator

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New Executive Committee



The new Executive Committee, elected at the June General Meeting: Bill Baldwin, Vice President; Rita St. Claire, Secretary; Dave LaRoche, President; Richard Burns, Treasurer.

A Cyber Chat with Faith Black

by Victoria M. Johnson

Faith Black began as an editorial intern at New Horizon Press while she obtained her Master's in English. She then moved to Cambridge University Press as an editorial assistant before being promoted to senior editorial assistant. Faith joined Avalon Books in December 2006, as Associate Editor working on Romance, Mysteries and Westerns. She was promoted to Editor in April 2008.



Victoria M. Johnson

Avalon Books publishes 60 hardcover books a year, ten every two months, for the library market. Established in 1950 by Thomas Bouregy, the Avalon publishing program has always had the aim of providing readers with quality books in a variety of fiction genres.

Faith acquires manuscripts for the romance, mystery, and western lines. "I'm always looking for a good story. Particularly, right now I'm looking for historical romances."

Faith says she is absolutely open to series proposals. "I very seldom issue multibook contracts to first-time authors, but I have recently acquired several new series from promising new authors that I'm really excited about."

Before you wrap up your manuscripts, be aware that there are plots and themes she doesn't want to see. "At Avalon we have pretty strict guidelines. We're a family-friendly publisher, which means no sex. It also means no violence and swearing in the romances (obviously violence is part and parcel of the mysteries and westerns, so long as it's not gruesome or grotesque). We don't do any sort of fantasy, science fiction, or Christian themes."

She prefers, at the moment, to receive queries via regular mail. Faith likes working with authors with whom she can get along well and with whom she has a rapport. "Friendly and personable are always good attributes to have as are stick-to-it-iveness and an easy-going nature."

Do Avalon authors need to self-promote? "Avalon is a small company, so we don't have the wherewithal to do a big marketing blitz for all of our books. Many of our authors have been very successful with self-promotion and I think it never hurts," Faith says. "A lot of our authors have websites and book trailers and they arrange book signings or interviews with local news outlets, and I'm happy to help them with that in any way that I can."

Does having a platform make a difference with Avalon? "Not really. It's definitely not a necessity and it's not something that weighs heavily on my decision."

Faith shares the most common reasons that she rejects a manuscript. "I am continually amazed at how many people don't seem to read our guidelines. I get so many submissions that just aren't right for Avalon. Either they're full of graphic sexual themes or they're too long or they're spiritual fiction, etc."

When asked how many proposals she read last year and of these how many she bought, Faith says, "Wow, I have absolutely no idea. I think I read about 50 just yesterday (though that's an uncommon thing). But I figure I read certainly a few hundred and we bought 60 of those." However, last year was a good one for first-time authors. "I'd say about a dozen or so, several of whom I have since bought more books from."

Faith offers advice to authors submitting to her. "It's so important to read the guidelines of whoever you're submitting to. First of all, it shows that you did your homework and you know something about the press you're soliciting; and second of all it, ensures that you're not wasting your time (and postage) submitting to someone who doesn't publish what it is you write."

Author guidelines are available at avalonbooks.com/wrtgdl.html. WT

August Auger

An auger drills right to the heart. Your pointed prose can do its part: Show passion
Where you've aimed to show you're smart!

—Pat Bustamante

New Members

by Lita Kurth

Gisela Zebroski is an alumna of Louise Vernon's writing group and many a conference and workshop as well as the author of the historical novels *The Baroness*, a World War I novel, now in print, and *Mephisto*, a World War II novel nearing completion. She has translated a novel from Russian and is interested in a fiction critique group. GiselaZ@comcast.net

Reed Stevens, a renewed member and author whose works include *Santa Fe Dreamhouse*, *Ten Years in the Land of Enchantment*, and *Treasure of Taos* (which won the National Presswomen's First Prize for fiction), has this exciting endorsement of the club: "In less than a week, I found a professional blurb, an excellent copyeditor, and a storytelling gig. Well worth the membership fee." She asks members to check out her website, santafedreamhouse.net and is seeking a critique group. Reedstevens@earthlink.net

Sandi Smith, author of numerous and varied works, who recently experienced the ordeal of moving, is now ready to network and seeks an experienced non-fiction business writing critique group. You may reach her at sandi@sandismith.com. WT

Editor's Perspective, continued from page 3

that all the software is free. The operating system is Xandros Linux; the applications are what's called "open source" software.

What is it? The little white guy cradled in old Dell's embrace is an ASUS Eee 900 PC. After working in the computer industry for more than twenty years, I'm rarely impressed by technology, but the Eee 900 impressed me. I won't try to persuade you that it's for everyone, though. The display is 1204 x 600 pixels on an 8.9" screen—small—and the Chiclet-size keys take some getting used to. But for keeping up with email and writing on the road, it will suit me just fine—painlessly. WT

Manuscript Critique Sessions at EoE



Hallie Ephron

Hallie Ephron, author of *Writing and Selling Your Mystery Novel: How to Knock 'Em Dead with Style*, is available to critique a limited number of manuscripts at the East of Eden Writers Conference in the following genres:

- Crime Fiction: Thriller, Suspense, Cozy, or True Crime
- Mainstream Fiction and Nonfiction (no memoir).

You will get feedback, including a 20-minute one-on-one critique session at the conference. You must be registered for EoE to be eligible to submit your work for critique.

To register:

1. For each critique, mail \$55 with your name and contact info to:
Critique
East of Eden Writers Conference
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055
2. Email the first chapter or a maximum of 12–15 double-spaced pages to eastofeden@southbaywriters.com as a Word attachment.
3. Let us know the days you will be attending the conference, so we can schedule your critique session.
4. Once your check is received, your submission will be forwarded to Hallie Ephron.
5. Deadline: submission and fee must be received by Aug 20th.

Twelve Agents Booked for EoE

by Edie Matthews

We now have a dozen agents lined up for the East of Eden Writers Conference. You may be familiar with some of them, but most are new to our conference. Some are from smaller agencies, and two are from a top agency in New York that represents famous writers and celebrities. Many are young and eager, yet all of these agents are seeking the next bestselling author.

No matter where you are in your writing journey, don't miss this opportunity. The keynote speakers and workshops have all been carefully selected.

EoE is held only every other year, so we hope that you are able to take advantage of it in 2008. The experience will broaden your knowledge, expand your contacts, and help you achieve your writing goals.

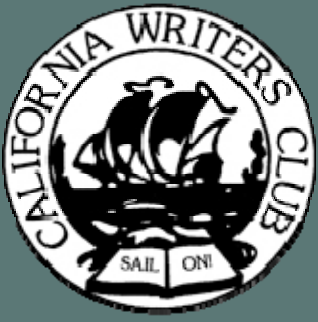
Whether you can attend one day or all three, join us in Salinas and Monterey,

the city that inspired John Steinbeck to write prose like this: "Cannery Row in Monterey in California is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, nostalgia, a dream."

Fulfill your writing dreams—come to EoE, Sept. 5–7. For more details, see the brochure in this newsletter, and for updates check www.southbaywriters.com. WT



The Steinbeck House in Salinas. Photo: Tom Martella



Founded 1909

Hosted by the South Bay branch of the California Writers Club, a non-profit organization—the nation's oldest professional club for writers

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East of Eden Writers Conference

http://www.southbaywriters.com/conference_2008

September 5 - 7, 2008
Salinas, CA Steinbeck Country

*J*oin us in Salinas, CA for writing inspiration. Hone your writing in the land that inspired John Steinbeck. East of Eden is packed with writing workshops and opportunities to pitch your work to agents and publishers.

Message from the Directors

We're looking forward to meeting you at the fourth biennial East of Eden Writers Conference. We've spent more than a year planning and scheduling all of the events and speakers. Our main goal? To help you get your writing published!

We've booked over a dozen agents, multiple publishers, and lots of other writing professionals—all to help you get your work to the next level.

If you didn't sign up for an Ask-A-Pro session when you registered, you can do so during the conference. What's Ask-A-Pro? See page 6.

We are extremely proud to present several success stories. You'll hear about writers who were in your shoes at one of our previous conferences; they'll tell you how they made it.

We're providing six workshop sessions by various industry experts and published writers. But what's a conference that's all work and no play? The following optional events will make the most of your visit to Steinbeck country:

- Saturday Night Gala at the National Steinbeck Center
- Sunday brunch at John Steinbeck's boyhood home
- Sunday tour along Cannery Row and Doc Ricketts' Lab.

If you have any questions, ask one of our many volunteers or stop by the registration desk. We look forward to meeting you and making your conference experience a memorable one!



Kelly Harrison and Edie Matthews met in the MFA Creative Writing Program at San José State University and worked together at the Center for Literary Arts.

They both currently teach college English. The photo was taken in a Barnes & Noble with John Steinbeck in the background.

About Salinas

Salinas enjoys a similar climate to Monterey, with average summer temperatures in the 70s, cooling off at night to the 50s. The Salinas Valley is agricultural country as famous for rodeo as for Steinbeck.

Distances:

- 50 miles south of San Jose
- 101 miles south of San Francisco
- 325 miles north of Los Angeles
- 8 miles east of Monterey

Steinbeck Country

East of Eden Writers Conference 2008 - *Keynote Speakers*



Hallie Ephron

Hallie Ephron is the third of four writing Ephron sisters (Nora, Delia, and Amy) and her parents were screenwriters Henry and Phoebe Ephron who wrote classic movies like *The Desk Set* and *Carousel*.

Hallie combined writing talent with a love of teaching in her book, *Writing and Selling Your Mystery Novel: How to Knock 'Em Dead with Style*. She teamed up with Donald Davidoff, a neuro-psychologist at Harvard's McLean Hospital, to create fictional forensic neuropsychologist Dr. Peter Zak and investigator Annie Squires. Under the shared pseudonym G. H. Ephron, they have written five series mystery/suspense novels. Her latest book, *1001 Books for Every Mood*, is the book lover's book, a guide to the best books of our time, organized to suit your every mood.



Carolyn See

Carolyn See is the author of five novels, including *The Handyman* and *Golden Days*. She has reviewed books for the Los Angeles Times, New York Newsday, and the Washington Post. She is also on

the board of PEN Center USA West. She has a PhD in American literature from UCLA, where she is an adjunct professor of English. Her awards include the prestigious Los Angeles Times Robert Kirsch Body of Work Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship in fiction.



Brian Copeland

His accomplishments include standup-comedian, TV host of Morning's on 2, Weatherman on KTVU News, Talk Show Host on KGO-Radio, and the creator/performer of San Francisco's longest-running one-man show,

Not a Genuine Blackman. The San Francisco Chronicle called it, "...a beautiful mix of wry humor and heartbreak, indignation and inspiration". Producer/director Rob Reiner cast Brian as Morgan Freeman's son in *The Bucket List*. The memoir, *Not a Genuine Blackman*, is now being developed by Reiner as a feature film and a television series. *Not a Genuine Blackman* was selected for 2008-09 Silicon Valley Reads.

Jane Smiley's novels have achieved the rare combination of critical acclaim and commercial success. Her novel, *A Thousand Acres*, won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award and was made into a film starring Jessica Lange and Michele Pfeiffer. Smiley has won numerous honors including a Pushcart and two O'Henry Awards. She also contributes to a wide range of magazines. Smiley earned her B.A. from Vassar College and went on to the Iowa Writers' Workshop. She has both an MFA and a PhD and has taught for the prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her latest book is *Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Novel*, a history and anatomy of the novel as a literary form. She lives in California and has 14 horses.



Jane Smiley



Karen Joy Fowler

Karen Joy Fowler's best-selling novel, *The*

Jane Austen Book Club, was recently made into a movie. Karen is also the author of two story collections and three other novels. *Sister Noon* (Putnam) was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner award. Karen has taught creative writing at universities and led numerous summer workshops. Her short story collection *Black Glass* won the World Fantasy Award in

1999; her first two novels were both New York Times notable books in their years.

David Corbett

His latest book, *Blood of Paradise*, is a nominee for an Edgar Award and chosen as a Top Ten Thriller & Mystery of 2007 by The Washington Post and named a San Francisco Chronicle Notable Book of 2007. In the footsteps of Dashiell Hammett, who worked as a Pinkerton Detective before turning to writing, David worked for the San Francisco private investigation firm of Palladino & Sutherland for 15 years and played a significant part in a number of high-profile criminal and civil litigations, including the first Michael Jackson child molestation case. In 1995, he eased out of private investigation work and began writing.



Scott Rice Professor Scott Rice created the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest in 1982.

This whimsical literary competition challenges entrants to compose the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novel beginnings that began with the infamous, "It was a dark and stormy night." Featured in numerous media

like CNN, NPR, and the Washington Post, the contest has garnered worldwide attention, and every year entries arrive from various parts of the globe. Professor Rice, who teaches English at San José State University, has published five sequels to his book *A Dark and Stormy Night*. In addition to these collection of contests entries, he wrote the quintessential handbook on the stylistic power of grammar, *Right Words, Right Places: A Writer's Grammar*.

East of Eden Writers Conference 2008 - *Presenters* (continued pg 6)

See www.southbaywriters.com for more information, including the most-current list of presenters and workshops.

Agents...



Nathan Bransford is with Curtis Brown Ltd., a New York agency that has been representing writers since 1914. He has five year's experience and is particularly interested in literary fiction, mysteries and suspense, historical fiction, narrative nonfiction, business, history, sports, politics, current events, young adult fiction and science fiction.



Andrea Brown is president of the Andrea Brown Literary Agency, Inc. Founded in New York City in 1981, it was the first literary agency to represent both children's book authors and illustrators. Andrea has worked for Alfred A. Knopf, Random House, and Dell. Her literary agency has sold approximately 1,500 books to publishers.



Verna Dreisbach has started a new agency that offers professional representation for distinctive voices with a diverse range of both fiction and non-fiction interests. She is currently looking for emerging and experienced writers. The agency has a particular interest in books with a political, economic, or social context.



April Eberhardt joined Reece Halsey North as a Literary Agent. Her specialty is adult literary fiction, particularly ironic family dramas and realistic midlife tales, often with a twist, preferably involving strong female characters. She is attracted to collections of interlinked stories with a common character or theme.



Melissa Flashman is part of Trident Media Group. Melissa grew up in Kentucky, graduated from Wesleyan University and studied in the PhD program in English at Johns Hopkins. She represents narrative and serious non-fiction, memoirs, political, lifestyle and pop-culture books and fiction. Melissa has also sold articles and fiction to various magazines.



Alex Glass is part of Trident Media Group. He's interested in literary and select commercial fiction. He began at the Putnam Berkley Publishing Group. He served 3 years at the NEA where he helped award federal grants to writers. Alex came to Trident as Chairman Robert Gottlieb's assistant and was promoted to literary agent shortly thereafter. He has an MFA.



Michael Larsen worked in promotion for three major publishers. He and his wife, Elizabeth Pomada, moved to San Francisco in 1970. They started Northern California's oldest literary agency, founded in 1972. Since then, the agency has sold books, mostly by new writers, to more than 100 publishers. He is a member of AAR and represents nonfiction.



Alana Lennie is with Lennie Literary in San Diego. When her husband decided to merge his law practice with a literary agency, Alana moved from managing the law office into the position of literary agent. Alana represents literary fiction, mysteries (cozies), and short stories. Her interests range from business books, child care, and anything involving travel.



Michael R. Lennie This longtime literary agent and author's attorney holds licenses in California and New York. Lennie's knowledge of publishing practices, contract negotiations, licensing, and author/publisher rights gives him a unique advantage representing authors as both a literary agent and attorney. His literary agency and law office is in San Diego.



Paul Levine represents commercial fiction—thrillers, mysteries, women's fiction—literary fiction, and non-fiction. He opened his own law practice and in 1996 started his own literary agency. He has had many books developed as movies-for-television and feature films. He represents numerous clients, 75% of which are new/unpublished writers.



Laurie McLean is a literary agent at Larsen-Pomada Literary Agency. She specializes in genre fiction and children's fiction. She earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the State University of New York and a master's degree at Syracuse University's prestigious Newhouse School of Journalism. She is also the author of three novels.

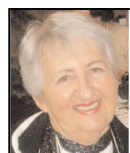


Elizabeth Pomada worked at David McKay, Holt Rinehart & Winston, and the Dial Press in New York City before moving to San Francisco in 1970 with her partner and husband, Michael Larsen. She loves to find promising new writers who are writing books that will interest New York publishers.

Publishers and Faculty...



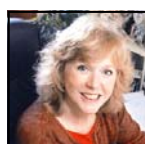
Charlotte Cook, president of KOMENAR Publishing, is the driving force within KOMENAR for acquisitions and editing. To date KOMENAR and Charlotte have published six titles, five from CWC members and one from the winner of the KOMENAR-sponsored contest at the last East of Eden Writers Conference.



Phyllis Mattson's memoir, *War Orphan in San Francisco* is a coming-of-age story told through family letters. With her family scattered over three continents during World War II, Phyllis wrote her parents' details of her life, while they tried to parent her long-distance. Phyllis will co-teach a memoir workshop with Linda Joy Myers.



Alan Rinzler, executive editor at Jossey-Bass (Wiley), has been a book editor since 1962. He was VP/Associate Publisher of Rolling Stone magazine and president of Rolling Stone's book division. He has edited and published books by Toni Morrison, Hunter Thompson, Robert Ludlum, Tom Robbins, Jerzy Kosinski, Shirley MacLaine, and many others.



Martha Stockton Alderson, M.A., is the author of *Blockbuster Plots: Pure & Simple* and two award-winning historical novels. She teaches plot workshops privately and through UCSC Extension, the Learning Annex, and at writers conferences. She offers plot consultations to writers anywhere in the world.



Sue Fagalde Lick worked as a staff reporter, photographer, and editor before leaping into full-time freelancing. Her latest book, *Freelancing for Newspapers*, follows a trio of books about Portuguese Americans. Sue earned her BA in journalism at San José State University and an MFA in creative nonfiction at Antioch University Los Angeles.



Jordan E. Rosenfeld is the author of two books for writers, *Make a Scene: How to Craft a Powerful Story One Scene at a Time* and with Rebecca Lawton, *Write Free: Attracting the Creative Life*. She's taught writing workshops at The Mendocino Coast Writer's Conference and Gavilan College.



Matilda Butler co-authored the collective memoir, *Rosie's Daughters: The "First Woman To" Generation Tells Its Story*. In addition to teaching women's memoir writing, she is a partner in the California-based Two Women Inc., a writing, marketing, and publishing firm for authors looking to gain maximum visibility and sales for their books.



Kathryn Madison's experiences with wolves and the publication of her first novel, *Woman's Sig, Wolf's Song*, has made her a favorite speaker at book festivals, libraries, and environmental groups like the Sierra Club. She also teaches a writing class at UCSC Extension Program. Her second novel, *Summoned By the Sea*, is now with a New York agent.



Nick Taylor's debut novel, *The Disagreement*, was published by Simon & Schuster in 2008. A graduate of the MFA program at the University of Virginia, he is Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at San José State University and lives in the Bay Area.



Patrice Vecchione has taught poetry and creative writing to children and adults through her program *The Heart of the Word: Poetry and the Imagination*. Her books include *Territory of Wind*, a collection of poetry, and the nonfiction book, *Writing and the Spiritual Life: Finding Your Voice by Looking Within*. She has also edited many respected anthologies.

Friday, September 5

Sherwood Hall Conference Center
940 N. Main St., Salinas

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Registration Check-in
Visit Bookstore

Workshop Session One

2:00 – 4:30 p.m.

- Compelling Scenes—*Alderson*
- Point of View-What's the Big Deal—*Ephron*

2:00 – 3:15 p.m.

- Querying Your Novel—*B. Levine*
- Writing and Selling Freelance Articles—*Lick*

Workshop Session Two

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

- Be Ready to Publish—*Cook*
- Creating Compelling Villains—*Lofland*
- Using the Internet to Write Your Way to Book Sales—*Bonnett*

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.: Late Registration

6:00 – 9:00 p.m.: Buffet Dinner

Speakers: *Carolyn See, Brian Copeland*



Night Owl Sessions Laurel Inn

9:30 p.m.

- Mystery Writers Panel—*Corbett, Ephron, Lofland, Thayer*
- Contest Winners' Reading
- Succeed w/Small Publishers—*Cook, Nakagaw, Hill, Wilson-Fried, Doyle, Cory*

Saturday, September 6

Sherwood Hall Conference Center
940 N. Main St., Salinas

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

Registration Check-in
Continental Breakfast

8:15 – 9 a.m.: Greetings



Speakers: *Marahys Wills, David Corbett, Terri Thayer*

Workshops Session Three

9:15 – 10:30 a.m.

- Publishers Panel—*Cook, Rinzler, Macklin*
- The Business & Legal Aspects of Book Publishing—*P. Levine*
- Dialogue That Delivers—*Corbett*
- The First 5 Steps to Jump-Start Your Memoir—*Butler*
- The Plot Thickens—*Alderson*
- Writing Historical Fiction—*Taylor*

Workshop Session Four

10:45 – 11:55 a.m.

- Freelance For Newspapers—*Lick*
- Literary Larceny, How the Greats Stole History and Wrote Masterpieces—*Madison*
- Make a Scene—*Rosenfeld*
- The Perfect Book Proposal—*Larsen & Pomada*
- Screen Writing—*Cari-Esta Albert*
- Workshop Your Opening Pages—*Cook*

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.: Lunch

Speakers: *Scott Rice, Hallie Ephron*



Workshop Session Five

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

- A Matter of Characters—*Fowler*
- Attract an Agent/Publisher Working with a Freelance Editor—*Rinzler*
- How to Think Like a Detective—*Lofland*
- Make Them Laugh—*Wills*
- Memoir Challenges: Truth, Voice and the Inner Critic—*Mattson & Myers*
- Novel Writing For the Commitment Shy—*Rosenfeld*

Workshop Session Six

3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

- Agents Panel: *Brandford, Brown, Dreisbach, Eberhardt, Flashman, Larson, L. Lennie, M. Lennie, P. Levine, McLean, Pomada*
- Revisions, Revisions, Revisions—*B. Levine*
- Poetry's calling — *Vecchione*



Gala Dinner—National Steinbeck Center

One Main St., Old Town, Salinas

6:00 – 7 p.m. No-Host Cocktails, Museum Tour

7:00 – 9 p.m. Dinner

Keynote Speakers: *Karen Joy Fowler, Jane Smiley*



Night Owl Sessions ☾ Laurel Inn

- Agent's Panel—Mistakes to Avoid
- Memoir Writers Panel — *Auchard, Butler, Mattson, Myers, Wills*
- Ask the Detective — *Lofland*

Sunday, September 7, 2008

The Steinbeck House

132 Central Ave., Salinas

9:30 – 11a.m. OR 11:30 – 1 p.m.

Brunch & Docent Tour



Photo: Tom Martella

Cannery Row & Doc Rickett's Lab

Walking Tour in Monterey

2:00 p.m. Meet at Rickett's Lab,
next to Monterey Bay Aquarium
886 Cannery Row



2006 EOE participants at Doc Rickett's Lab

The schedule is subject to change. Some workshops may move dates or times.

East of Eden Writers Conference 2008

Presenters, continued from page 3



Linda Joy Myers is the president of the National Association of Memoir Writers, a therapist, and the author of *Becoming Whole: Writing Your Healing Story*. Her memoir *Don't Call Me Mother* won the 2006 Gold Medal Award from BAIPA. Linda will co-teach a memoir workshop with Phyllis Mattson.



Becky Levine is a freelance manuscript editor, children's writer, and book reviewer. She has just finished writing her first children's mystery and is currently co-writing (with East-of-Eden presenter Lee Lofland) a nonfiction children's book about being a police officer. Becky lives in California's Santa Cruz mountains with her husband and son.



Lee Lofland worked as an undercover officer, a narcotics K-9 handler and taught at the police academy. He's solved cases in narcotics, homicide, rape, murder-for-hire, and ritualistic and occult crimes. In addition to his book, *Police Procedures & Investigation: A Guide for Writers*, he has served as a consultant for Slate Magazine, Spike TV, BBC Television.



Kendra Bonnett has written more than 200 magazine articles. She is the author/ghostwriter/editor of seven books, most currently co-authoring *Rosie's Daughters: The First Woman To: Generation Tells Its Story* with Matilda Butler. Bonnett and Butler are business partners in the Gilroy-based Two Women Inc., a writing, marketing, and publishing firm.



Jana McBurney Lin writes, edits, and critiques both fiction and non-fiction. She lived over half her adult life overseas (six years in Japan, eight years in Singapore) and thus had the opportunity to work for media around the world. Jana's first novel, *My Half of the Sky*, was selected the Book Sense Pick for August, 2006.



Terri Thayer joined CWC in 2002 seeking guidance on how to write mystery cozies. She now has a six-book deal with two publishers. Her third book comes out in September.



Maralys Wills is the author of 12 books, spanning 6 different genres. Her nonfiction works include books about hang gliding, party games, and addiction. Three memoirs, *Higher Than Eagles*, *A Circus Without Elephants*, and *A Clown in the Trunk*, share her family's light and tragic moments.



Karen Macklin is the Editorial Director at Orange Avenue Publishing (representing non-fiction books) and Zest Books (teen non-fiction).



Manuscript Critique

Hallie Ephron is available to critique a limited number of manuscripts (crime fiction: thriller, suspense, cozy, or true crime; also mainstream fiction and nonfiction manuscripts, not memoir). Send in the first chapter (12-15 double-spaced pages) and get feedback, including a 20-minute one-on-one critique session at the East of Eden Writers Conference.

1. For each critique, mail \$55 to:

Critique
East of Eden Writer's Conference
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055

2. Email your entry as a Word attachment to:
eastofeden@southbaywriters.com
3. Once your check is received, your submission will be forwarded to Hallie Ephron.
4. Deadline: submission and fee must be received by Aug 20th.

Check the website!

As we continue to book agents, publishers, and presenters, we will update the website with their information.

Please check the website for the most up-to-date list.

www.southbaywriters.org/conference_2008



Laurel Anne Hill was awarded first prize in the Captivating Beginnings Short Story Contest. She received an honorable mention for "Learning the Bones" in the 2004 Soul-Making Literary Competition, a program of the National League of American Pen Women. In 2007, KOMENAR Publishing released *Heroes Arise*, Laurel's debut parable.



Cari-Esta Albert was an executive at Geffen Pictures, Universal Pictures, and USA Network before becoming an independent producer. She produced *The Difference Between Cats and Dogs*, and worked on *Interview With The Vampire*, *Gorillas In The Mist*, and *The Mummy*. She is always on the lookout for her next project.

Ask-A-Pro Sessions!

Ask-a-Pro sessions are one-on-one, 5-minute pitch sessions with a literary agent or publisher, or 15 minutes with a writing expert who can discuss your project—at no additional charge!

What to pitch? Book-length projects such as a novel, non-fiction book, memoir, or collection.

Ask-a-Pro sessions are for those writers who are ready to sell (or practice selling) their fiction or nonfiction book or for writers seeking professional advice on their work.

After you register for the conference, we'll ask you (via email) to list your top choices for agents, publishers, or

writing experts. The sessions are first-come, first served, so register early.

FREE!

Don't know which agent or publisher is right for you? Specify the type of project you have, and we'll match you with an agent, publisher, or writing expert who handles the genre or subject matter.

Before the conference begins, you will receive email or phone notification of your appointment. All appointments are scheduled on Saturday.

At the conference, you may be able to sign up for an additional sessions, subject to availability.

East of Eden Writers Conference 2008 *Venues & Maps*



Laurel Inn

801 West Laurel Drive, Salinas

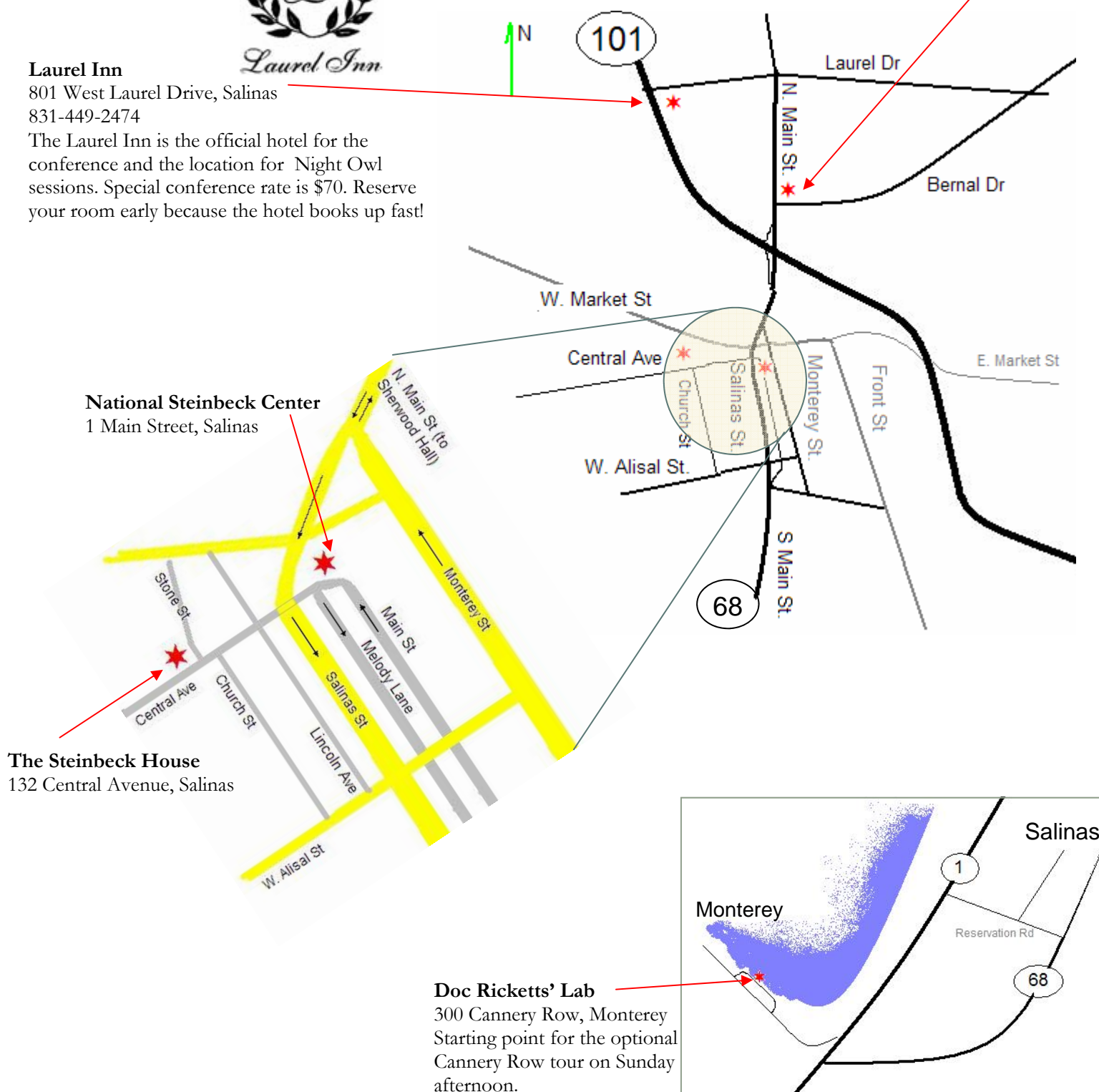
831-449-2474

The Laurel Inn is the official hotel for the conference and the location for Night Owl sessions. Special conference rate is \$70. Reserve your room early because the hotel books up fast!

Sherwood Hall, Salinas Community Center

940 North Main Street, Salinas

Sherwood Hall is the main conference venue.



REGISTRATION

East of Eden Writers Conference - September 5 - 7, 2008

Sherwood Hall, Salinas, CA

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Email:		

☐ I am a member of the California Writers Club branch _____

Ask-a-Pro (No additional charge to conference registrants.) Pitch your work to an agent or publisher, or consult with a writing pro! To participate, we'll contact you via email. You get one scheduled Ask-a-Pro session. Others will be available on a first-come, first-served basis at the conference. Please check the type of writing that best defines the book you want to pitch. ☐ Non-fiction ☐ Memoir ☐ Fiction, novel ☐ Fiction, short

FULL CONFERENCE

☐ \$400 Regular (CWC Member) ☐ \$425 Regular (Non-member)

Friday and Saturday Workshops & Night Owl Sessions, Ask-a-Pro, Meals (Friday dinner through Sunday brunch), Saturday Night Gala at the Steinbeck Center, Sunday Brunch at the Steinbeck House, Cannery Row Walking Tour in Monterey. Sunday brunch preference ☐ 9:30am ☐ 11:30am

FRIDAY-SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

☐ \$275 Regular (CWC Member) ☐ \$300 Regular (Non-member)

Friday and Saturday Workshops & Night Owl Sessions, Ask-a-Pro, Meals (Friday dinner through Saturday lunch)

COMMUTER SATURDAY

☐ \$175 Regular (CWC Member) ☐ \$200 Regular (Non-member)

Saturday Workshops & Night Owl Sessions, Ask-a-Pro, Meals (Saturday breakfast & lunch)

EVENTS & EXTRAS

☐ \$70 **Saturday Night Gala at the Steinbeck Center:** Includes entry to Steinbeck Center, museum tour, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, and two keynote speakers.

Extra/Spouse ticket ☐ \$70

☐ \$35 **Sunday Brunch:** Exclusive brunch at Steinbeck's house. Tour and learn the history of this Queen Anne Victorian house. Seating time: _____ 9:30 or _____ 11:30 Extra/Spouse ticket ☐ \$35

☐ \$25 **Cannery Row Tour:** Visit locations that inspired Steinbeck, including Doc Rickett's lab, generally not open to the public.

Conference fees	\$
Extras	\$
Total	\$

Make check payable to:
East of Eden Writing Conference.
Mail to:
**East of Eden/CWC, PO Box 3254,
Santa Clara, CA 95055-3254**

I attended our last conference and was saturated with the creative exposure. For several days I was an author and drank in the essence of it. The idea never wore off. Oh, it waned some but I'm gratified with its continuing energy. I've forgotten my age and my mother's maiden name, but the effect of EoE remains and I will build on it this year—like the zany Mrs. Winchester.

Stories Everywhere

What is this writer's block jinx? Daily I check the news, particularly the local news, and see a fascinating news article. I let my imagination in and a story evolves or maybe a vignette. Through machinations of mind, some become adventures, others a poignant tale. There are more stories in a daily than one has time to exploit, and there is the supermarket and the mall. Take a fresh brew and dark glasses to the mall and have a seat. WOW! There is no end of characters and stories.

A tall older man with a sassy young woman dressed smartly in labels from Saks amble by at about two in the afternoon. He has a confident look and wears a houndstooth jacket over a white cashmere turtleneck—are those Ferragamos on his feet? He's a debonair seventy-five and she can't be over thirty. They pause at the Tiffany widow. She points a bare finger and exclaims something excitedly. He bends slightly toward the door and they hurry in.

Remembering Tim Meyers

You'll be "your writer" when you define yourself that way. When you go into your quiet place and say with conviction, "I am a writer." Writing is a commitment that requires a baptism of sorts. When my father died, I became a man. There was no choice. I had to commit—no question whatsoever. I was on my own. I was a man. And so it is with writing (though no one really needs to die). We must be awakened to the commitment to be baptized and know without question, and here's what I recommend. (Am I going too far with this? It's an occasional problem.)

Think, speak, and write as a writer! Do your grocery list as a preface to a good meal. Use as few words as possible to convey your ideas—stretch your brain a little. Write your emails for a critique

group and your reports for an agent. Consider this: the skimpiest of sketches from Michelangelo and Picasso and carelessly scrawled notes from Kant and Pascal are all collectors' items. You are a writer because you think, speak, and write as a writer. You're committed: don't let go. WT

Accolades, continued from page 4

and Singapore makes the reading extra rewarding. In fact, with every new page the novel gets harder to put down and you find yourself gobbling it up before you know it. Finally, the author has given a voice to the Li Hui in all of us, as we struggle for the golden middle between tradition and the modern momentum of our world.

—Izabella Sluzek

For more information about *My Half of the Sky*, please visit www.komenarpublishing.com or Jana's blog: myhalfofthesky.blogspot.com.

Since "Accolades" has blossomed into a monthly column, I now have my own email address where you can forward your writing success stories. It is accolades@southbaywriters.com. Send me your good news! Everyone here at WT is waiting. We all want to hear it. WT

Jane Smiley, continued from page 1

Looking at the Novel, a history and anatomy of the novel as a literary form.

Smiley earned her B.A. from Vassar College in 1971 and went to the Iowa Writers' Workshop. After receiving her M.F.A. degree, she completed a Ph.D. with the Department of English in 1978. She lives in California and has 14 horses.

On Saturday evening, Sept. 6, Smiley will speak at the National Steinbeck Center, along with Karen Joy Fowler, author of *The Jane Austen Book Club*. For more conference details: www.southbaywriters.com. WT

Bill Embraces Fame

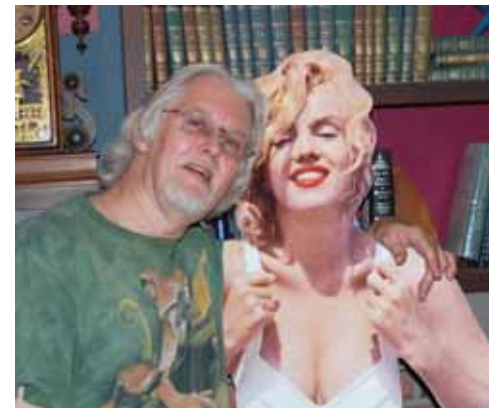
by Dick Amyx

I took my camera to the June board meeting to get a picture of the newly elected Executive Committee ensemble. As we moved into Dave LaRoche's den to use his bookshelves as a backdrop, Bill Baldwin spotted one of Dave's treasures: a life-size cardboard cut-out of Marilyn Monroe. Bill immediately went to Marilyn, put his arm over her shoulders, leaned his head against hers, and said, "I always wanted to have my picture taken with Marilyn Monroe."

Film's cheap in a digital camera, so I snapped a couple of shots.

Later that evening, after I'd downloaded the pictures from my camera, I sent around to the board the picture of the ExCom I thought was best—along with the picture of Bill and Marilyn.

A surprising number of them said, "You should put that picture in *WritersTalk*," to which I responded, "Sure, if you guys give me a caption."



Marilyn dumps celebrity for "Plain Bill."
(Dave LaRoche)

Oh, gee! I just read Bill's new novel, *Homecome*, and I just hope I can star in the movie version. (Rich Burns)

Membership has its privileges. (Lita Kurth)
Marilyn seeks happiness with another literary man. (Edie Matthews)

And you, too, can reap the benefits of serving on the board. Go for it! Run next year. (Rita St. Claire)

Bill uses his imagination for inspiration ... or something (Edie Matthews)





The annual South Bay Writers Club potluck barbecue on July 20th drew a capacity crowd to the residence of Jim and Edie Matthews. The day was clear and sunny. Members sampled sumptuous offerings from tables crowded with main dishes, side dishes, and sweets, downed chicken from the grill, swilled beer or wine or soft drinks, and gathered in groups to socialize both inside and outside the spacious Matthews home.

SBW ANNUAL POTLUCK BARBECUE 2008



1. Carolyn Donnell
2. Dick Amyx
3. Desserts
4. Main dishes
5. Phyllis Mattson and friends
6. Louise Webb, Audry Lynch
7. Edie Matthews, Una Daly
8. Jim Matthews, Frank Johnson
9. Sally Milnor, Steve Wetlesen
10. Andrea Galvacs, Rich Burns
11. Rich Burns
12. Karen LaRoche, Jamie Miller
13. Front: Bill Baldwin; Rear: Alex Leon and friend, Dave LaRoche, Jamie Miller
14. Clockwise from front: Dick Amyx, Meredy Amyx, Marjorie Johnson, Bertha Lewis
15. SF/Peninsula guest, Andrea Galvacs and Rich Burns
16. Hi-Dong Chai entertains with Korean folk songs
17. Bill Belew, wife Samantha, daughter Mai



• Dec—Holiday Bash

Alex has taken us through to December, a big help to the VP- elect, and we all appreciate his discerning eye for this year's speakers and workshop presenters. He has shown us a slightly different path and opened some minds on the way. Thanks, Alex Leon! Good job.

Treasurer: SBW is financially sound. Several treasurer meetings have transpired regarding the transfer of duties from Jeremy to Richard Burns.

Retiring to a life less jammed with wayward numbers, our outgoing treasurer, Jeremy Osborne, has put visibility and control into the task of accounting—a freshness we hope will continue. We appreciate his rational, if unfamiliar, idea of “managing” our money. A big thanks to Jeremy.

State Board Rep: State meeting on July 20 with e-business, travel expenses, and new branches on the agenda.

Membership: renewals healthy and new members signing up at rates above

previous years. 200 expected to hold.

Open Mic: readings averaging nine at four sites, attendance remains higher than last year.

Newsletter: costs about a dollar a copy to the mailbox. Winner of “Worth 500 Words”: the renowned terse-verse poet Pat Bustamante.

Webmaster: SF/Peninsula Branch will join our online Writers Forum, enhancing content and encouraging cross-membership as well as event opportunities for both branches.

East of Eden: registration double (95) what we experienced at this time last conference; due (likely) to popular keynoters and instructors and well placed publicity. Books from *Writers Digest* and *Poets & Writers* magazines have been donated, and a ninth agent booked. Manuscript critiques will be offered by Hallie Ephron at \$55. All looks encouraging.

Networking: eight new “experts” and five new interested in critique groups

signed up. More effort will be spent on promoting and broadcasting networking ideas.

Anthology: on schedule with publication scheduled during the first quarter of 2009. Early orders will be discounted; details to come.

New Business

Amyx motion: ISBN at \$150 and copyright registration at \$35 for the anthology passed unanimously.

Amyx motion: Anthology cover price of \$12.50, \$9.95 for prepublication orders passed unanimously.

Branch Improvement

An addition to the board agenda invites open discussion to focus on improvement of all facets for our branch, and at this meeting brought a new chair with the workshop portfolio. This will relieve the VP to direct exclusive attention to meeting programs and write-ups, and enhance the scope, quality, and frequency of our workshops.

Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m. WT

CWC South Bay Writers presents a special workshop

Pitchcraft: Taking the Mystery out of Writers Conferences

Get ready for East of Eden or any writers conference

Sunday, August 17, 2008, 10 am to 3 pm

What:

Join us for a day of tips and fun and learn the dos and don'ts to get the most value out of any writers conference you'll attend.

Let SBW members tell you about all the mistakes they've made at conferences—so you don't have to. At the workshop, we'll focus on:

- your conference strategy
- working the room
- dealing effectively with agents and publishers
- crafting your pitch
- practicing your pitch in one-on-one practice sessions

Where:

Lookout Restaurant
605 Macara Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA
(at the Sunnyvale Golf Course)

Special price (includes lunch):

- \$20 for CWC members
- \$25 for nonmembers

Sign up today! Two ways to register:

- Online registration
- Mail-in registration form

For more information about East of Eden Writers Conference, this workshop, and the CWC South Bay branch, please visit www.southbaywriters.com

How I Beat the Odds

by Leah Hayland

Just after my husband took off with the blonde and *his* car and just before I was supposed to have surgery, I dreamed Rosemary's baby had had a sex change. Now, the baby had straggling hair just like the blonde cow. Mine's gray, but I refuse to touch it up. After all, it's my hair. It was *him* who wanted to pretend he was young. He didn't get much—neither did she.



Speaking of hair, or anyway heads, the Rosemary's baby I dreamed about had a weird thing around hers that looked like one of those things my grandmother wore in the 20's. She was a tough looking broad—very mannish—with devil eyebrows and one of the nastiest smiles I've ever seen. It turned on and off like it was triggered by a T.V. remote control. Especially awful was the fact that a snake did the triggering. The snake was a skinny, black thing with a silver head and was wrapped around Rosemary's baby's neck like a snake charmer's pet. When the snake raised its head the baby's lips parted showing green teeth. I woke up with the sweats—not for the first time since I went off estrogen. I got up and drank some ice water.

That was okay, but the next morning,

Writers Conference, continued from page 6

Arizona deserts drew a few laughs. A mislaid passport forced him to cancel an important international trip the day before departure, but all was not in vain because he wrote a poem to capture the angst of the moment. Sorry I missed that.

Foothill Writers Conference was definitely good for the writer's soul, offering many new ideas, skills and references for the future as well as camaraderie with fellow writers. For more information on the conference and speakers, see www.foothill.edu/la/conference/index.php. WT

when I reported to Good Sam for my gall bladder surgery, there was the grown up baby sitting at the reception desk. There was a calendar, like St Peter probably has, in front of her like she kept track of who was next. Her lips parted and there were the green teeth. Greenish, anyway. Sort of like when you don't brush. The snake was there, but dead still. It looked like one of those things the doctor pokes your chest with, but then it would, wouldn't it? I debated with myself about that and the rest of it—sort of struck dumb for a minute. Was this a sign? My mother died under the knife only that was cancer. The doctor had told me gall bladder problems were from too much fat. Sometimes the pain was gut-awful, but it wasn't lethal. Would going without fat be that bad? Actually, it would help me lose. Before the baby could do her thing with the self-sell stuff—her devil driven methods—I turned and beat it to the door. Outside, I caught the 62 bus and went home.

There, before I could re-think it, I called my doctor's office and told his assistant the hell with it. It had been his idea not mine. I didn't say that and tried to sooth it over. She sounded disgusted, but it wasn't her life. After all, I pay her salary; it's my money. I got it all except for the car—his male ego toy. I had a female lawyer. I can't tell you how relieved my mind was when I sat down and planned dinners that left out fats. Next, so I wouldn't have any more nightmares, I got rid of my copy of *Rosemary's Baby* and all of my Stephen Kings. Giving up mysteries was a gut-wincer because I grew up on Agathas. They helped me a lot. I talked myself into putting up with a life of bland diets and romance books.

Now, two years later, I don't miss French fries. They remind me of my husband—except for the color—if you know what I mean. Whatever she ever saw in him, I don't know. I still get pains, but it's the romance books that make me throw up. So what? After all it's my sink.

They never did find out what I did to the car. WT



WRITERSTALK Challenge

What Is It?

Twice a year, in March and September, awards are given to contributors to *WritersTalk*. You need take no special steps to enter this competition; if your piece in one of the designated genres is published in *WritersTalk*, you are a contestant in the Challenge.*

Genres

Fiction
Memoir
Essay
Poetry

Judging Periods

February 16 through August 15
August 16 through February 15

Prizes

One winner will be selected from each of the eligible genres. Each winner will be awarded a cash prize of \$40.

Judging

Judging will be done by *WritersTalk* contributing editors and other Club members whom the contributing editors may ask to assist.

* Eligibility for the *WritersTalk* Challenge is limited to members of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club; judges may not participate in the competition.

WritersTalk Challenge Awards to Be Made in October

Because there will be no general meeting in September, the *WritersTalk* Challenge awards for the judging period February 16–August 15 will be made at the October meeting.

Professional Proofreading & Light Editing

• Articles • Book Manuscripts
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& More

Contact Jane at
408.723.0968

Directory of Experts

Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? If you are willing to share your expertise, send a message to networking@southbaywriters.com or to the club post office box. We will add your listing to our directory of experts.

Asia, Japan, China, Russia

Bill Belew
belew@panasianbiz.com

Astrology, Singing

Sara Aurich
saraaurich@comcast.net

Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle
rargarf@earthlink.net

Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.
ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net

Character Traits

Jeannine Vegh, M.A. M.F.T.I.
ladyjathbay@sbcglobal.net

Computer Dingus and Full-Time Nerd

Jeremy Osborne
jeremy_w_osborne@yahoo.com

Counseling

Dr. Audry L. Lynch
GLYNCH7003@sbcglobal.net

Death Care

Rick Brost
rickpatrickb@sbcglobal.net

Doctors' Office Environment, OB-GYN

Dottie Sieve
pdrsieve@yahoo.com

Central Coast Writers Branch 2009 Writing Contest

For poetry and short stories.

Winners' awards: \$500 and publication (print and on-line) in the *Homestead Review* (Hartnell College).

Entry Fees: \$15 per short story and \$5 per poem.

Submission period: August 15, 2008 through November 15, 2008.

Guidelines and Info:
www.centralcoastwriters.org

Engineering: Mechanical, Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg
geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net

Growing Great Characters From the Ground Up

Martha Engber
marthaengber.com
marthaengber.blogspot.com

Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold
maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net

Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/Psychology

Dave Breithaupt
dlbmlb@comcast.net

Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson
Marjohnson89@earthlink.net

Police Procedures

John Howsden
jwhowsden961@yahoo.com

Profile Writing

Susan Mueller
susan_mueller@yahoo.com

Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard
Btauchard@aol.com

Television Production

Woody Horn
408-266-7040

Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.

—T. S. Eliot

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www.bmeisner.com

CWC

Around the Bay

These are the published meeting times and locations for the CWC branches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. If you're thinking about attending one of their meetings, be sure to check the website first for details.

Berkeley: Meetings are held from 10 a.m. to noon on the third Saturday of each month, except for July and August. Unless otherwise noted, our meetings are held at Barnes & Noble bookstore, in Jack London Square, Event Loft, Oakland.
berkeleywritersclub.org

San Francisco/Peninsula: Meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon at the Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont.
sfpeninsulawriters.com

Central Coast: Meets on the third Tuesday of each month except December at Buzzard's Backyard BBQ, adjacent to the Travelodge, 2030 N. Fremont, Monterey. The dinner hour begins at 5:30 p.m. and the program begins at 7 p.m.
centralcoastwriters.org

Mount Diablo: Meets the second Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Hungry Hunter Restaurant, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette (corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Highway 24).
mtdiablowriters.org

Tri-Valley: Meets the third Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Oasis Grille, 780 Main Street, Pleasanton.
trivalleywriters.com

Sacramento: Meets at 11:00 a.m. the third Saturday of every month, except July and August, at Luau Garden Chinese Buffet, 1890 Arden Way, Sacramento 95815.
sacramento-writers.org

Marin: Meets on the fourth Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera.
cwcmarinwriters.com

Redwood: Meets the first Sunday of the month, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Marvin's Restaurant, 7991 Old Redwood Highway, corner of William St., in Cotati.
redwoodwriters.org

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>August 2008</i>					1 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza, San Jose	2
					8 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Santana Row, San Jose	9 10:30A Editors' Powwow
3	4	5 6:00P Monthly Dinner Meeting Lookout Inn, Sunnyvale Dahr Jamail	6 7P Board of Directors Meeting	7	14 7:30P Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard, Campbell	16 <i>WritersTalk deadline</i>
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 10:00A Pitchcraft Workshop Lookout Inn, Sunnyvale	18	19	20	21 7:00P Open Mic Barnes & Noble 3900 Mowry, Fremont	22 7:30P Open Mic Borders Books Sunnyvale	23
24/31	25	26	27	28	29	30
Future Flashes					Sept. 5-7 East of Eden Writers Conference	

Stay Informed!

Sign up for the SBW Email List to receive meeting and event announcements.

www.southbaywriters.com

South Bay Writers Open Mic

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. See calendar for schedule.

Contact Bill Baldwin
(408) 730-9622 or email
wabaldwin@aol.com

For Fremont Open Mic contact
Jeannine Vegh
ladyjatbay@sbcglobal.net

or

Bob Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net

SBW Poets

The San Jose Poetry Center is turning its eyes toward SBW with an interest in showcasing our poets at its monthly readings. PCSJ's host and member of South Bay Writers Linda Lappin is making a personal request. Are you a poet? Would you like to read your work? If your answer is yes, contact Linda by email at captainlappin@netzero.net and have a look at PCSJ's website, www.pcsj.org

SBW Writers' Forum

Events
Conferences
Contests
Networking
Resources
SBW Author Events
and News at

southbaywriters.com

San Jose Poetry Slam (Est. 1998)

8:00 p.m., \$6.00

First Tuesday: Open Mic with music by Rebelskamp

Second and Fourth Tuesdays: Poetry Slam with music by Jay Rush

Third Tuesday: Head-to-Head Poetry Bouts with special guests.

At The Britannia Arms
173 W Santa Clara
Downtown San Jose
www.sanjosepoetryslam.com

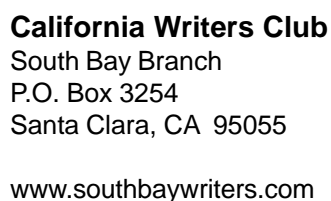
Poetry Center San Jose Readings

First Gallery downtown
Willow Glen Books

Cosponsored by the
Creative Writing Department at
San José State University

Free admission.

See www.pcsj.org for featured guests and details.



Address Correction Requested

This is a detailed street map of the Sunnyvale Municipal Golf Course area. The map shows the course's location, surrounded by various streets including Bayshore Fwy, Mountain View-Alviso Rd, and several local roads like Macon Rd, Clyde Ave, and Maude Ave. A grey arrow points to the entrance of the golf course. The map also shows surrounding areas like Encinal Park and the Central Expressway.