



# The Write News

A Monthly Newsletter

Elisabeth Tuck, editor

March 2020

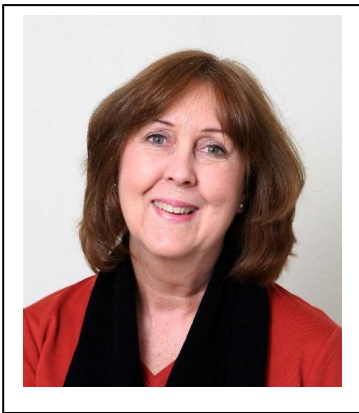
## WORKSHOP AND LUNCHEON

March 14, 2020 – Workshop 9:00 am to 12:00, Lunch 12:00 to 1:00

### *Talking the Talk:* *How to make your dialogue sound realistic* featuring **Penny Warner**

While writing dialogue can be challenging, it's one of the most important skills  
you'll need to tell your story.

Dialogue moves the story along at a faster pace, and...



Dialogue makes a story come alive, as it:

- Reveals character
- Sets the mood
- Increases the drama, and
- Incorporates the advice, "Show. Don't tell"

**Penny Warner** has published over 70 books for both adults and children. Her middle-grade mystery series, *The Code Busters Club*, has won three Agatha Awards for Best Children's Mystery, and has over half a million in print world-wide.

In addition to middle-grade fiction, she has written the award-nominated *The Official Nancy Drew Handbook* and is the author of three adult mystery series, including *Dead Body Language*, *How to Host a Killer Party*, featuring a party planner, *Death of a Chocolate Cheater*, featuring food trucks. For over 30 years, Warner wrote a column on family life for a local newspaper. She creates fund-raising murder mystery events for libraries across the country, and taught child development at Diablo Valley College for 35 years. She can be reached at <http://www.pennywarner.com> or [pennywarnerink@yahoo.com](mailto:pennywarnerink@yahoo.com).

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**Sign-in starts at 8:30 am. Workshop 9:00 – 12:00. Luncheon 12:00 – 1:00** at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant: 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. \$45 members, \$55 guests. **Reservation deadline: noon, Wednesday, March 11, 2020.** To reserve a spot, go to: <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/> Branch website: <http://cwcmtdiablo.org>

## From President Linda Hartmann

Dear Membership,

You are likely to notice a few changes in the branch leadership this spring, and among them is having me as your new president. After six months of full immersion and cultivation while in the roles of vice president, “communicator-in-chief,” and president-in-training, I learned an enormous amount with amazing mentorship from our branch and board members. Following is only a **partial list** of my mentors’ extraordinary pasts and current positions within the CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch/Board. Theirs and others’ combined experiences made it easier for me to learn my new role.



In particular, I would like to thank:

-**David George** past president at branch and state levels, current VP and MRMS manager, former treasurer, membership chair, and more

-**Marlene Dotterer** past branch president, on-line systems and website forms chair, chairs of both our Young Writers Contest and the Scholastic Art and Writing branch judging

-**Judith Ingram**, past vice president, secretary, and communicator-in-chief

-**Elisabeth Tuck**, past President, current newsletter editor, central board rep/secretary, former speaker chair and more

-**Lyn Roberts**, current hospitality chair, web forms submission liaison, co-chair of the YWC, speaker committee member, and more.

Now some of you may be thinking “Wow. That IS REALLY a LOT of TALENT to learn from!” While others may simply be thinking, “*What is **she** doing **here**?*” just know that they’ve assured me I can always count on them, so we shall survive!

Transitions in the air... Revisions we will share

A few other branch/board changes you will read about in the newsletter. It is with great pride when I see people step up to fill open or new positions, and I appreciate those who gave of their time and are now stepping down. For me, this is a time in my life when I am volunteering to give back for the some of the wonderful opportunities I have had.

We have just finished our work at the San Francisco Writer’s Conference over President’s Day weekend, where for the eighth year CWC had a booth in the Conference Exhibition Hall.

Next up is a call for volunteers in the always- exciting Bay Area Book Festival in Berkeley, Saturday and Sunday, May 2-3, 11:00 am – 5:00 pm each day. See more information in #NewsFlash and the newsletter.

Know that volunteering usually starts small. The usual path is to sit in on a few board meetings to find out what goes on behind the scenes and what it takes to make this organization run smoothly be fun. We need suggestions how to make it better. Be a voice we can hear. Volunteer for something small. See how it fits. Go from there. We want to hear from our members. Board meetings are always noted in the newsletters. The board meets 10:00 -11:00 a.m. before regular meetings unless there’s a workshop as in March.

*“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”* Unknown



## Attend a Board Meeting Next Month (April)

**Next board meeting: April 11, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Zio Fraedo’s.**

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## Member Events, News and Salutes



This section of the newsletter is regularly open to members to submit information about milestones in your writing journey. Publish or self-publish a book? Published in a magazine or journal? Planning a reading at a public venue? Win an IPPY or other prize? Is your play being produced? The TV or movie version of your writing will be out soon? Let us know and we'll put the info here.

### JOANNA KRAUS

Playwright Joanna Kraus was the guest of Clarks Summit University, Pennsylvania at the end of February, to attend performances of her prize-winning play, *Remember My Name: a Story of Survival in Wartime France*, published by Samuel French.

When the Nazis invade Marseilles, young Rachel is sent away on a moment's notice with only a false name to protect her. Yet she assists the Maquis (rural guerrilla bands of French Resistance fighters), who protect her while fighting for her own life and for France.



### HEIDI ELIASON



Flashlight Books will host Musical Memoir, a book talk, signing, and music with author Heidi Eliason and musician Dan Beck on Saturday, March 28 at 2:00 p.m. at 1537 N. Main Street, Walnut Creek.

Come enjoy acoustic guitar played by Dan as CWC member Heidi Eliason talks about her memoir, *Confessions of a Middle-Aged Runaway: An RV Travel Adventure*.

Have you ever felt suffocated by your routine and responsibilities, or just longed for some adventure? Heidi Eliason did. At the age of 45 she quit her job, sold her house, bought a motorhome, and embarked on a five-year road trip with her dog, Rylie. The journey transformed her life. Learn more at

[www.HeidiEliason.com](http://www.HeidiEliason.com).

Dan plays bass guitar with the band Cut Loose. [www.cutlooseband.com](http://www.cutlooseband.com)

## Writers Tables through June 2020

**March 14** – No Writers Table due to workshop

**April 11** – International Writing: *It's a whole big world out there*  
A Panel with: Dita Basu, Susan Berman, Deborah Greenberg




**May 9** – Travel & Writing: *Travel imbues your writing with authenticity and interest.* A Panel with: Barbara Bentley, Jill Hedgecock, Bill Stong

**June 13** – No Writers Table due to workshop



## Our Upcoming Programs for 2020

Click here to **sign up for the February 8 meeting**: <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/>

<b>Apr. 11</b> 	<b>Helen Sedwick</b> <i>Using Real People in Your Writing Without Ending up in Court</i>	Author and attorney, Helen Sedwick has represented small businesses and entrepreneurs for 30+ years. Publisher's Weekly lists her Self-Publisher's Legal Handbook as one of the top five resource books for independent authors. Helen is a member of the Board of Advisors of the Alliance of Independent Authors and a Contributing Writer for TheBookDesigner.com. Helen's blog coaches writers on everything from saving on taxes to avoiding scams.
<b>May 9</b> 	<i>Travel imbues your writing with authenticity and interest.</i>	A Panel with: Barbara Bentley, Jill Hedgecock, Bill Stong
<b>June 13</b> 	<b>Jennifer March Soloway</b> /Literary Associate Victoria Piontek <b>WORKSHOP</b> <i>Query Letters</i>	Jennifer March Soloway is an agent for Andrea Brown Literary Agency. She represents authors and illustrators of picture books, middle grade, and young adult stories. She specializes in children's literature. Jennifer also represents adult fiction, both literary and commercial, particularly crime, suspense, and horror. She has worked in marketing and public relations in a variety of industries. Jennifer has an MFA in English and Creative Writing from Mills College. In 2012 she was a fellow at the San Francisco Writer's Grotto. Jennifer regularly presents at writing conferences all over the country.

Summer break in July and Aug

<b>Sept 12</b>	<b>Kevin Fisher-Paulson</b>	
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We're always looking for great speakers. If you've benefitted from a speaker on writing/publishing/agents/editing, etc, email Programs Chair Jill Hedgecock at [hedgewriter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hedgewriter@sbcglobal.net)



## New Volunteers

It is with great pleasure that our president, Linda Hartmann announces that:

**John Schembra** will be stepping into the Writers Table Chair position in September. We look forward to his vision and ideas and thank him for ensuring this popular member benefit continues.



**Bill Stong and John Marvin** have developed and expanded the Writers Table over the past several years and have done an exemplary job. They will be available to help or mentor as needed. A hearty thanks to Bill and John M. for all they have accomplished.

**John Marvin** has volunteered to join treasurer, **Lucy Hart**, at the sign-in table beginning in September to help expedite check-in. Meanwhile we can rotate volunteers unless someone would like to take this on through June. Thank you, John M. for stepping into this very helpful role!

**Barry Hampshire** will assume the Awards Chair this year. **Al Garrotto** has taken this on for the past many years. A big thanks to Al for his past work and thanks to Barry for volunteering.

## So You Want to Write a Book

**Judith Marshall** initiated this popular program several years ago. Judith finds locations where our authors can participate in a panel discussion about writing. Usually there are four speakers and a moderator. The hard part is finding locations. Libraries seem most open to the idea. Some bookstores see it as a way to draw traffic, and occasionally members have ideas for places to hold panels. If you have suggestions, please contact Judith. She tries to invite many of our member authors but you have to be a comfortable and aware speaker. By aware I mean tailor you talk to respect the topic and limited time each person has according to the time allowed by the location. Below is a photo from a successful panel held at Orinda Books.



**Dave George**

**Dot Edwards**

**Jill Hedgecock**

**Andrew Benzie**

## ***Be Interviewed by Heidi Eliason***

This is a new feature introducing members to each other. Contact Heidi for an interview.

Interview with **Greg Coplans** February 13, 2020 by Heidi Eliason

### **Q: How long have you been a member of the California Writers Club?**

Greg: I joined around April 2019. I was looking for a writing organization, found CWC online, and applied.

### **Q: Has being a member of the club helped you with your writing?**

Greg: It has helped a huge amount. First, you meet other writers and it's fun to engage with people who like to write. Then the speakers at the Club's monthly lunch events talk about all sorts of aspects of the craft of writing. Also, it was a notice from the club that led me to submit a short story for reading at a Lamorinda Arts Council event. I read a couple of short stories at their events and met other writers, three of whom encouraged me to sign up for a creative writing course at Acalanes.

Deborah Greenburg helped me find a peer review group to join. Another area has been the series that Bill Strong and John Martens do at JFK that I've also found helpful.

### **Q: Has any of your work been published?**

Greg: I've only published two things. The first was an article called "Making Your Business One of the Most Ethical Companies in the World" that was published in a law journal called *International In-House Counsel Journal*. In early February my short story, "The Professor," was published in an English journal called *The Fiction Pool*.

### **Q: Do you have a website?**

Greg: I tried to create one on an application called Wix but I haven't launched it. I have a friend who does a lot of website work and he has agreed to help me get it going.

### **Q: What are you currently working on?**

Greg: I'm revising a novel, and I'm about to complete a short story which I hope to submit for publication. It's a story about conflict between two women friends who love shopping for high-end brand clothes and accessories. I have four more stories that I'll call under construction.

### **Q: So I take it you like the short story format?**

Greg: I always read serious fiction but almost never short stories until I took a creative writing class at Las Positas College. The assignments were often to read short stories and that's when I started trying to write them. I think short stories are so much fun.

### **Q: Do you have a certain writing schedule that you work on?**

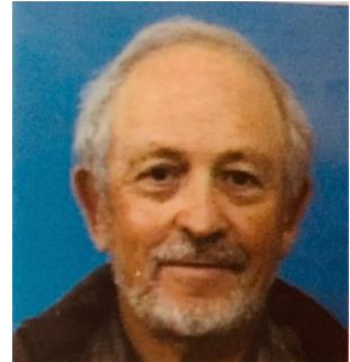
Greg: No. I have quite a busy day because I work on all sorts of things. The least intellectual activity is golf. I still do some consulting for my former employer.

I served on the board of We Care Services for Children, a nonprofit agency in Concord that provides services for preschool children with developmental and mental health challenges.

When I retired, I resigned from the We Care board and became a We Care volunteer. I help on the operations side.

### **Q: So you touched on this a little bit in your previous answers, but in what other ways has your background, previous work and/or experience contributed to your writing?**

Greg: Growing up in South Africa during Apartheid helped shape my ideals. As a liberal, one had to constantly define where one stood in terms of racist laws and oppression. Whites were the privileged class under Apartheid; that was an issue. I was active in the student movement and wanted my behavior to be consistent with my ivory-tower principles. It wasn't always. The point is that when you grow up under an oppressive system like Apartheid, you are constantly trying to figure out who you are and what you stand for. Reading can be an enormous help with this process.



## *Be Interviewed by Heidi Eliason (cont'd)* Greg Coplans

I grew up questioning things, and because I later had a job that took me all over the world, I had experiences that I think have contributed to my writing. For example, I went to law school at an English university and lived in London for nine years, practicing as a lawyer. I don't think I could have written the short story about the London professor if I hadn't lived in London and been to an English university. Another short story, "Remembering Beauty," written last year for Black History month, couldn't have been written if I hadn't lived in the U.S. and South Africa.

Also, my parents read a lot. They always wanted to know what I was reading and suggested books. My mother became a librarian later in life. So there was always that influence around the house.

### **Q: What do you like about writing?**

Greg: I have a lot of fun when I write. When I first started, I wanted to write like Ian McEwan, or a Booker Prize or Nobel Prize novelist. It was years later that I forgave myself for not being able to write at that level. It was only then that I managed to start to get words on paper without having to shred everything. Writing, I think, is a process of continuous improvement for everyone. It's a voyage of discovery, that's really the fun of it.

### **Q: How do you define success as a writer?**

Greg: I don't think I've discovered success. It's lovely to have something published and you could argue that's an element of success. I think finishing a novel or any kind of book, regardless of whether you publish it or not, is also success. Opening yourself up to improvement is a form of success too. You're constantly learning and that in turn generates additional ideas and insights for writing. I'm not writing to make a living, so I don't measure success in those terms. I do measure success in terms of Am I having fun?

### **Q: What part of the process is most difficult for you?**

Greg: I'm a "seat of the pants" writer. I get an idea but often have no clue where it's going to go. A month or two ago, a speaker at the CWC talked about the importance of outlines. I realized I had written a novel without an outline. Now I'm thinking of going back and retroactively creating an outline, so I can make sure that I haven't repeated myself and that everything is in the right sequence. I don't think I can sit down and create an outline for a story but then I've never tried to.

### **Q: What kind of research do you do and how long do you usually spending researching before you start writing a story?**

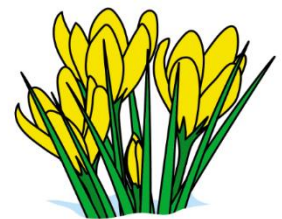
Greg: I do lots of research. For the short story that was published, I spent hours sitting in the library reading Aristotle because the story is about a professor who teaches Aristotle's philosophy. The second part of the story is about grandiose delusions, so hours were spent in the library tracking down books about grandiose delusions that I could actually understand.

What you write has to be credible for the reader and that's why it has to be backed up by sound research. One hopes the reader will say, "Yeah, that sounds right. That was my experience too."

### **Q: Do you have any advice for new writers?**

Greg: Try not to be like other writers. Forgive yourself for not being Hemingway and just write. By forgiving yourself for not being Hemingway, you're putting your ego to one side. You also need to be open to feedback, whether you're taking a creative writing course or you are in a peer review group. If ego gets in the way, you're unlikely to make meaningful progress. Listening to what people say and embracing it, whether or not you choose to use it, is so important.

We'd all like to play basketball like Steph Curry or golf like Tiger Woods but we're not them. That doesn't mean we won't enjoy playing golf or basketball. We might even have a measure of success at it. I think it's the same with writing, but you're never going to know unless you sit down and do it.





## ***NorCal - What is NorCal?***

The CWC NorCal Group is an association of Northern California branches of the California Writers Club (CWC) that have proximity and common interests and so have joined in the pursuit of ideas, opportunities, and events that speak directly to our craft of writing and the means of publishing. NorCal's intent is to share awareness to branches – successes and misses – as well as to scour our broader landscape, singling out and creating opportunities of value that will provide a benefit to branch members. They meet three times per year on the first Saturdays of February, May, and October. All members of the California Writers Club are welcome. Contact your NorCal representative and plan to attend a meeting. Mt. Diablo's NorCal rep is **Andrew Benzie**.

## ***San Francisco Writers Conference***

by Carole Bumpus, CWC NorCal Chair

I worked with a number of folks through the San Francisco Writers Conference to bring new ideas and possibilities to you. This year we were able to offer two free passes to two all-day conference summits—one for poetry and the other for screenwriting—to each of our twenty-two CWC branches throughout the State. We also ran our CWC booth and had twenty CWC members signed up to participate.

A major focus we have within our NorCal Board is to help branches find good speakers and provide up-to-date ideas and information regarding the world of craft building and publishing. At last year's SFWC, Jim Azevedo of Smashwords donated one full fare ticket (\$750 value) to CWC. This year, in return, we are offering to help promote his company and his new webinar, which centers on *The Secrets to Ebook Publishing*. <https://www.smashwords.com/> Contact him to set up either a webinar or a speaking engagement at your branch. Tell him you heard about this special offer through the NorCal Group. Thank you.

## ***Literary Review Deadline Extended***

Owing to a number of complications and delays, we have extended the submission deadline for the Literary Review to March 31, 2020. Payments in the form of a check must be postmarked no later than that date. Submission is open only to members of the California Writer Club.

For further information see: <https://calwriters.org/publications/#submit>

## ***Mt. Diablo Branch's Young Writers Contest (YWC) 2020***

The Mount Diablo Branch of the California Writers Club proudly sponsors the YWC. The contest is open to 6th, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8th grade students who live in or attend school in Contra Costa County. Categories include short story, poetry, personal narrative, and humor.

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

--Student submissions: January 15 - March 25

--Judging: April 1 - April 15

--Last day for coordinators to inform Marlene of winners: April 15 at 9:00 PM

--Awards Ceremony: Saturday, May 16. Details to come.



May 2-3, 2020 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. - Berkeley

<https://www.baybookfest.org/>



Volunteer opportunities for CWC members:

- 1) Promote CWC membership at the CWC booth at the outdoor fair associated with the festival
- 2) Have an opportunity to hear and question some of the best minds in the book-writing business.
- 3) Here's an opportunity to sell your books at the booth
- 4) Meet great local authors including other CWC members

**When:** Saturday and Sunday, May 2-3, in two-hour shifts (11-1, 1-3, 3-5)

**Where:** Between Center Street and Alston Way at Martin Luther King Junior Way, Berkeley, CA

**What:** Over two days, eighteen CWC booth volunteers will staff two-hour shifts with two staffers and an alternate on each shift.

**Contact:** Tim Jollymore, [tim\\_jollymore@yahoo.com](mailto:tim_jollymore@yahoo.com), 510-387-2662. Volunteers must email

1. Name
2. Club affiliation
3. Cell phone number, landline number (if you have one)
4. Preferred day
5. Preferred shift
6. Any special requests

Note: carrying a working cell phone the day of the fair is required.

## ***Drawing for Mt. Diablo Members***

**Print this page, write your name on the coupon, cut it out, attend the March meeting, put the coupon in the glass/basket/bag and be in a drawing for \$25 off a future meeting.**

After each drawing, the non-winning coupons will be destroyed. Look for a new coupon each month in the newsletter. One coupon per member per meeting. A member may only win once per CWC year, i.e., Sept – June.

**March 2020 coupon**

**MT. DIABLO CWC Members only. Good for \$25 off one meeting**

**Print this page. Cut out this coupon. Write your name below and drop in the basket/hat/paper bag at the meeting corresponding to the date on this coupon. One coupon will be drawn at each meeting to be applied to a future mtg.**

**Your name: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Must be present to win.**

## ***Our Mt. Diablo Website: More Than Reservations***

by Marlene Dotterer

At the last meeting, the board decided it would be a good idea to talk about ways our website might be useful for our members. I held a brief tutorial last year during a Writers Table but time was limited and I raced through my presentation. So I'm going to do a series of articles to remind long-time members what they can do, and to introduce the site to our newer members.



The first thing I want you to do is open our [website](#) on your browser and bookmark it, so you'll always be able to find it. Now on to specifics:

Most people are familiar with web pages, so you know to look for the menu bar near the top of the page. Our menu bar has nine tabs. From left to right they are:

Home, About, Membership, Our Authors, Current Meeting, Members Benefits, Newsletter, Young Writers, and Contact.

Most of the tabs have sub-menus under them. You'll see these when you hover your mouse over the tab.

We all know how to use the [Current Meeting](#) page to register for meetings and workshops. That was a big change for us but we made a successful adjustment and the system works exactly as it should.

Most members also know they can renew their membership online during the renewal period, which happens every year, May - September. Our new members may not be aware they can renew online. That link is <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/renew-membership/>. It's under the Membership tab on the menu. The renewal form is not available until May 1st.

[Our Authors](#) is a way for our published members to tell us about themselves and their writing. Use the link on this page to send us your bio, author photo, and links to where your books can be found. We can also post book covers, and links to your social media sites. Please note we have a limit of four (4) books or articles per member. Be sure to update your list as needed.

Not published yet? This page is also useful for you! Use it to find out what's available from your fellow Mt. Diablo members. I guarantee you'll find something you will enjoy reading. This page is also a good way to simply learn about other members.

## ***Let's Up the Interest Factor of The Write News: Submit***

Many other branches publish members' works, so Mt. Diablo has changed its policy and will now accept members' **short** works for publication. These days it's hard to get anyone's attention with the written word, so I recommend short works to show your writing talent. It's also general good practice to be as concise as possible. Pick your words thoughtfully. Let's say 500 - 1000 words maximum for fiction, non-fiction, essay, or play, and 30 lines for a poem. A play probably cannot be realized in 500 words, but if you have a short, interesting scene, let's talk. Likewise if you have something longer than 1000, we could serialize it. We're also trying out the first 500 words of your book to tease readers.

Nothing political, lewd, or too far out. No *Lincoln in the Bardo* or *The Tenth of December*. You must do your own editing. Read your piece aloud to yourself so you hear errors. If you have trouble reading it, the reader will have trouble following. Run spell check. Word does a fair job of grammar checking so look carefully at what it's telling you, and do your best to correct.

## More about Submitting Your Work for The Write News

Please indent paragraphs so I can remove skipped lines between them if needed, and use correct dialog format. Since I'm the newsletter editor and have a fair amount of experience editing, I reserve the right to review your pieces for readability, suitability, etc. I may edit, or return it to you with suggestions, which you are free to apply or ignore. I do not promise to publish everything. I will decide what fits each month. You reserve all rights and can use your piece again anywhere that doesn't mind if the work appeared in your branch newsletter. Use the following form to send your work: [writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org)

## New Feature: Members' Submissions



### How Do You Come Up With Your Plots?

By John Schembra

When talking to friends, family and strangers about my books and writing in general, the first question they usually ask is "How do you come up with your ideas?"

I tell them I have no specific process in figuring out what the plot will be. Inspiration seems to come to me out of the blue when least expected. It could be something said in passing by people around me or something I heard listening to the radio while driving. It may be an obscure back page news article in the paper. Maybe something said by a character in a movie or television program catches my attention, or a story told by a friend at dinner.

Whatever the source, it's whether it piques my interest. My latest novel, *Sin Eater*, came about as I was half listening to a movie on television. Though I can't remember what the movie was, I know the scene was two men, one of whom may have been Robin Williams, sitting in a bar talking. I don't even remember what they were talking about, but one of them said something about a sin eater. There was just that one quick reference but it caught my attention. I had never heard of a sin eater and became very curious about what it, or he, could be. A bit of research and I thought, *Hmmm, this might make a good book*. A few months later it had been written.

There are accepted and recommended procedures writers can use in their writing endeavors to enhance and polish their skills and the pace and fluidity of their writing. However, if one does not choose to use those procedures, it doesn't mean they are doomed to failure. Included in those procedures are ways to select a plot theme. I found, in my case, that spontaneity works best. I don't wrack my brain for hours trying to come up with a fresh spin on an established plot, or in coming up with a new idea. Too much hard thinking about those things makes my head hurt!

The bottom line being that if one tries too hard to come up with a plot, or, for that matter, a character, it makes the writing process less enjoyable, and in my opinion, there is less chance of success.

Let those creative juices flow. If something seems interesting to you, it will be interesting to your readers.

I consider myself a writer. I don't have to be normal!

**Homonyms:** A **homonym** is a word that is spelled or pronounced the same way as another word but each has a different meaning:

write/right	berg/burg	black out/blackout	boarder/border	it's/its
altar/alter	peek/peak	horde/hoard	pitcher of water/baseball pitcher	there/their/they're
write/right	clamor/clamber	baited/bated	breach/breech	broach/brooch
bullion/bouillon	callous/callus	canvas/canvass	carat/karat/caret/carrot	



## *New Feature: Members' Submissions (cont'd)*

### **Yosemite's Historic and Current Firefall**

**By Robin Gigoux**

Yosemite Valley has been my all-time favorite state destination since moving to California years ago.

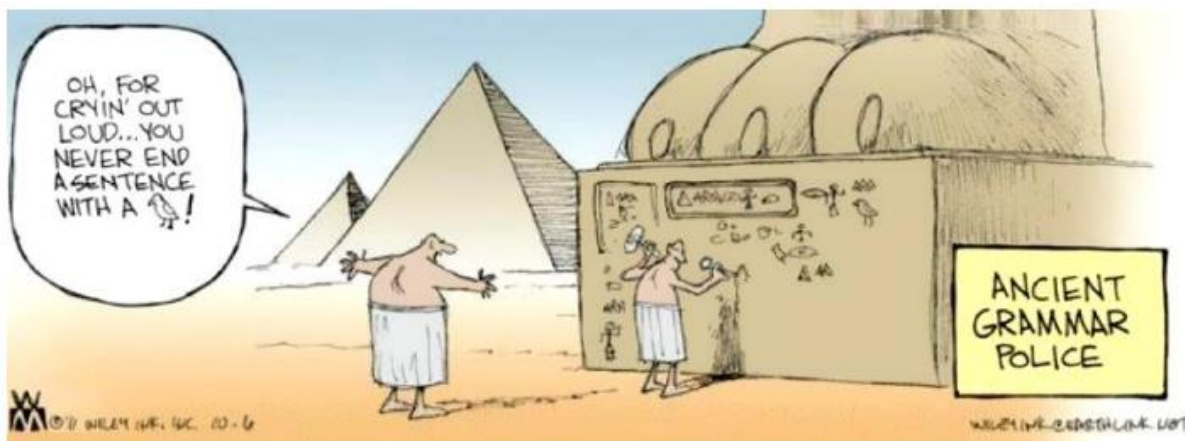
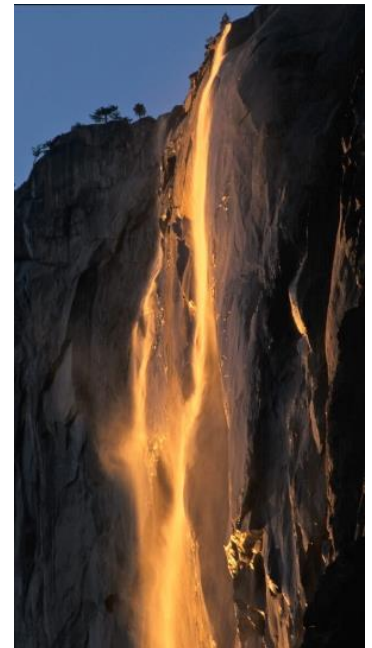
On a field trip to Frogard Schmidt's aRt Cottage in Concord, an exquisite, 15 by 45 inch professional photograph by Galen Rowell captivated me. The beautifully mounted photograph had no frame to distract from the magnificent image of vivid reds, yellows, and oranges of fire cascading down Yosemite's Glacier Point in the dark.

In 1871, James McCauley built a toll trail to and from Yosemite Valley at the base of Sentinel Rock that climbed over 3,000 feet to Glacier Point. Then in 1873, innkeeper Charles Peregoy built "The Mountain House" a small hotel at the overlook. Campfires entertained the guests, and the ashes were pushed over the edge. From Camp Curry in the valley below, the falling ashes looked like a waterfall of fire thus beginning the Yosemite tradition of the Firefall.

President Woodrow Wilson authorized the creation of the National Park Service on August 25, 1916. Yosemite, along with all other parks on federal land, came under the jurisdiction of the new independent agency. Despite public protest, on January 25, 1968, the Park Service ended the Yosemite campfire firefall.

For those, like myself, who never witnessed the flaming spectacle, there is an ecologically neutral substitute. A natural phenomenon occurs in mid to late February along Horsetail Fall on the eastern side of 3,000-foot El Capitan. When skies are clear, snow is melted and flowing, and light hits the waterfall at just the right angle at the right time of day, the falling water reflects brilliant reds and oranges and appears to be on fire.

Few observed or talked about this natural "firefall" until photographer Galen Rowell noticed the illusion in the early 1970s. Within months of the 100-year anniversary of the first firefall, Rowell took the first known photograph of this natural phenomenon. That single photo ushered in a new chapter in the history of the Yosemite Firefall and, within a few decades, some say this natural event has become as famous as the original manmade firefall.



## New Feature: Members' Submissions (cont'd)

### First 500 words of *Between Shadow's Eyes*

By Jill Hedgecock

#### CHAPTER ONE

On my sixteenth birthday, I wished for an ordinary life. All I wanted on that special day six months ago was to be a teen girl who got good grades in high school, a girl whose mother hadn't died in childbirth, and whose father didn't have cancer. If I could turn back the clock and stand in front of that pink cake with its flickering candles knowing then that my father would not survive no matter how much I wanted a different outcome, I would ask instead for a life without secrets and a dog that didn't bark all day while I was away at work.

As I steered my car onto Cherryglen Lane and maneuvered it into my driveway, I knew my post-birthday requests would never come true. Especially the one about my dog. The presence of a white envelope wedged into the screen door confirmed Shadow's barking was still causing problems. Because animal control had already contacted me by phone, the letter was not a surprise. This was the third citation triggered by my dog's behavior.

I pressed my forehead against the steering wheel letting the vibrations of the idling engine travel through my tired body. I really had no idea what to do. Since Dad died, decisions overwhelmed me. The Game Plan Rules he left behind for me to follow didn't address barking dogs. His guidelines were designed for me to keep a low profile and out of the foster care system. Dad would have found the solution in his rules anyway. He stormed through life armed with a spreadsheet of all the possible alternatives. I tended to try the quickest and easiest fix. My approach seldom worked and then I let things slide until the problem reached a tipping point. We had always been very different people.

Sometimes I wondered if we were even related. Dad and I hadn't even looked alike. He was tall—about six feet to my five-foot-four. His graying hair had once been a mousy brown, while my dark chestnut locks bordered on black. Dad said that my eyes looked just like my mother's—an opaque hazel with a hint of yellow. I had never seen her eyes. As I slipped into this world, she slipped out.

I switched off the engine and listened for my dog's distinctive bark. All I could hear was the whistle of the wind. I slowly raised my head to stare at the dreaded envelope that flapped in the breeze like a loose sail.

Dad would say to find Shadow a new home, that the more the authorities poked around the recently purchased house that I inherited from him, the more likely a representative from the social services agency would discover that I was underage and living alone. Even though Dad had told me enough stories about his childhood experiences with his foster parents for me to agree that living on my own was my best option, I would never give up Shadow.



Oh, hey. I see you're seconds away from falling asleep. Allow me to take the time to flood you with the most amazing ideas ever, all of which you'll forget by morning.

## *NorCal and San Francisco Writers Conference*

This year at the last minute, Mt Diablo was notified that NorCal had secured two places at the San Francisco Writers Conference for each CWC branch statewide. One place in each branch was for screenwriting; the other for poetry. David scrambled to get volunteers for the places. Next year if SFWC offers us the same exceptional opportunity, we hope we learn of it earlier and we can assign the places with more planning. These opportunities are gold.

Unfortunately, the person who was supposed to take the screenwriting place fell ill at the last minute and couldn't get a substitute. Linda Hartmann was able to take advantage of the poetry slot. NorCal asked all who attended the poetry session to write a poem and have it printed in their branch newsletter as a way of acknowledging the SF Writers Conference.

Thus, **Linda Hartmann's** poem!

### **Poetry Summit SFWC 2020**

Linda Hartmann

What? I get to go to a Poetry summit?  
Would I finally learn to write a sonnet?  
What should I wear, a beanie or a bonnet?  
Ooops! Not much time, I'd best get on it!

Poems aren't required to rhyme  
They can be written with rhythm and time  
A beat – beat - - - beat then a chime,  
A sentence that ends with a climb on a dime.

Once I learned about assonance,  
And wondered about resonance -  
Shrewd enough, but no poet brilliance - I  
Elatedly entered into the poet's conference.

Panels of wise, with light and desire  
Shared insight; while try, smile, and apply did I.  
Note - wrote poem over paper plate – flows like moon glows -  
Assonance the zone I tried to scope.

Alliteration, an assured advantage to  
attain; attention, abilities, alongside  
applicable activities advanced and achieved -  
Attention to authority aloft this author;  
Acknowledged and appreciated,  
absolute awesome Alive art was offered.





## *Young Writers Contest Fundraising*

Sponsored by

### **The California Writers Club, Mount Diablo Branch**

**Please consider joining one of the following donor clubs to benefit our programs in support of young writers.** Your tax-deductible gift will appear in the contest program in May, and in the newsletter every month in the year you donate. Or remain anonymous if you prefer!

#### **DONATIONS A/O Feb 2020**

The Jack London Founder's Circle (\$500+)  
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The Jack London Founder's Circle (\$500+)

The John Muir Member Club (\$150 - \$249)  
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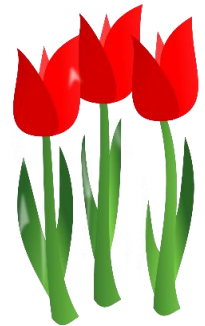
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Contra Costa County middle school students who enter the Young Writers Contest are eligible for cash prizes in short story, poetry, essay/personal narrative, and humor. Contest submissions are free. Check our branch website for details: [cwcmtdiablowriters.wordpress.com/young-writers-contest/](http://cwcmtdiablowriters.wordpress.com/young-writers-contest/)

The Mt. Diablo Branch hosts an awards luncheon in May of each year.

All program expenses are supported by individual donations and grants. Thank you for considering membership in one of the above donor clubs.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* Please list my membership in the following donor club: \_\_\_\_\_

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Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Acknowledge my gift in honor/memory of:

Or via PayPal click "buy now" on the Mt. Diablo website

<http://cwcmtdiablowriters.wordpress.com/next-program/>. Please add the \$2 transaction fee



Make a check payable to: CWC Mt. Diablo Branch. And mail to:  
CWC Mt. Diablo Branch, P.O. Box 606, Alamo, CA 94507 Attention: Young Writers Contest

**HAPPY ST PATRICK'S DAY**