



# The Write News

A Monthly Newsletter

Elisabeth Tuck, editor

April 2020

## ONLINE BRANCH MEETING & Writers Table

April 11, 2020 - 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

*\*Due to current restrictions on gathering, this free, regular meeting will be held online as a webinar. Further information will be provided to members via #Newsflash.*

### *Using Real People in your Writing Without Ending Up in Court*

Featuring:

**Helen Sedwick**

Real people populate our pages. Whether we base a character on an over-bearing mother-in-law or name names in a political exposé, writers do and must use real people in their work. The good news is libel and invasion of privacy suits are rare, particularly involving fictional works. But a lot of myths still scare writers. Helen will dispel some of these myths, so you know when to tread carefully and when to go for it.



- When may you name names, and when should you change them?
- How far is too far, legally speaking?
- When truth is not a defense.
- How to use photos and letters created by others.

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 popular blog coaches writers on everything from saving on taxes to avoiding scams.

*Coyote Winds*, Helen's historical novel, has earned five-star reviews from *ForeWord Reviews*, and is an IndieBRAG Medallion Honoree. For more information about Helen, check out her website at <http://helensedwick.com>.

## From President Linda Hartmann



Dear Members,

April 2020

I hope you are well, safe, and making the best of our current situation with the additional time you have at home.

You are all aware that the numbers of people known to be positive for coronavirus have risen in our county. As such in an abundance of caution and to maintain safety for our membership and community, we unfortunately canceled our March meeting. That speaker, Penny Warner, has promised to speak at a future meeting. Today we remain under “shelter-in” orders from our County’s Health Officer requiring us to stay at home as much as possible, and now a California statewide State of Emergency as well due the

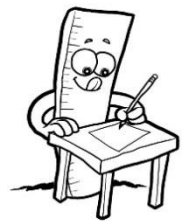
rapid spread of the coronavirus.

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.4.20-Coronavirus-SOE-Proclamation.pdf>

It has always been our goal to keep our writing community solid. Our mission statement states “We are dedicated to educating members and the public, via speakers, workshops, and special programs, in the art and craft of writing, publishing, and marketing their works.” It is our intention to continue with this objective despite the need for sheltering-in. It is important that we not isolate ourselves from what we love the most. We need our community of like-minded people of writers, readers, editors, book-designers, etc., perhaps now more than ever.

It is in this spirit that, until the restrictions are lifted, the Board has decided to bring you our scheduled second Saturday monthly meetings using online conferencing. Our first such meeting led by **lawyer, Helen Sedwick**, will take place April 11 using ZOOM, which we have found to be user-friendly. This will be a new experience for many members and we will help anyone who may have issues logging into the meeting. There will be no charge for this meeting, as we realize it is possible there could be some hiccups, although we are practicing repeatedly to reduce those as much as possible.

Following are other ways we can communicate: Write short pieces about your experiences during this strange time and submit them to the Newsletter @ : [writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org) . It would be interesting to share some of our thoughts!



Meanwhile, be safe, and stay well.



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## ***Important Message to All CWC Mt. Diablo Members – Please Read!!***

**For our next monthly meeting, Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup> from 12:30 to 3 p.m.:**

In acknowledgement of our “sheltering-in” orders and to keep ourselves and our membership safe, we will be hosting the April 11<sup>th</sup> meeting by Zoom video webinar. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with Zoom, we have scheduled practice sessions in advance for you to become familiar with how to attend a webinar. All attendees will be able to listen in by phone or watch on your computers or smartphones, and ask questions at the end of segments. This first meeting webinar will be free and limited to members only. No advance registration will be required.

We are doing our best to be prepared to have our first meeting run as smoothly and professionally as possible. Our On-Line Committee Chair, Marlene Dotterer will be scheduling the practice sessions, and you will be notified by #Newsflash communications. The first practice session on March 31<sup>st</sup> is summarized below after the Meeting Agenda (times are approximate).

### Agenda for CWC Mt Diablo April 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting Webinar:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Start Time</b>	<b>End Time</b>
Registration (logging in)	12:30 pm	12:45 pm
President Linda's remarks	12:45 pm	1:00 pm
Main Presentation/Q&A	1:00 pm	2:00 pm
<i>Using Real People in your Writing Without Ending Up in Court</i>	Helen Sedwick	
WrapUp and Break	2:00 pm	2:15 pm
Writers Table	2:15 pm	3:00 pm
<i>International Writing:It's a whole big world out there.</i>		
Bill Stong	2:15 pm	
Dita Basu	2:20 pm	
Susan Berman	2:30 pm	
Deborah Greenberg	2:40 pm	
Q&A	2:50 pm	
WrapUp and Closing Comments	2:55 pm	3:00 pm

### **PRACTICES WITH ZOOM BEFORE OUR APRIL WEBINAR – By Marlene Dotterer:**

If, like me, you've never used Zoom, here is a chance to learn how to connect to our webinar. We want to solve any connection problems BEFORE our webinar on April 11th.

We will offer two practice sessions. The first is scheduled for March 31, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. You only need to attend one session, unless you just want extra practice.

## *For Our Next Monthly Meeting (cont'd)*

Here are instructions to get started:

1. Zoom is a company that provides a way to hold group meetings online. If you have ever watched a webinar online, or used GoToMeeting, that's exactly what this is.
2. You don't need a Zoom account to join a meeting. You don't **have** to download anything, although you **can** download a Zoom app if you want to.
3. You can join a meeting on your computer, tablet, or phone.
4. If you wish to watch or ask questions, you need a **camera** and **microphone** on your computer, tablet, or phone.
5. We will provide a link to join our CWC April 11<sup>th</sup> meeting webinar.
6. Click on the link.
7. You'll see a screen asking you to "Open Zoom Meeting?"
8. Say or click "Yes."
9. You may see a screen asking you to allow Zoom to access your microphone and camera.
10. Say or click "Yes."
11. If you are early and the meeting hasn't started yet, you'll see a screen telling you the meeting will start as soon as the host arrives. For this meeting, I am the host. Just leave the screen as it is. When I start the meeting, the webinar will automatically start.
12. You should be able to see the host on your screen. You might need to make sure your camera and microphone are ON. You will be able to turn your camera and microphone off (mute) also. I will troubleshoot problems as quickly as I can. Please don't give up if something is not working.

If you aren't seeing or hearing anything at all, send me a text, or call, at 925-212-1859.

The **link for our first practice session** is <https://zoom.us/j/725641451>.

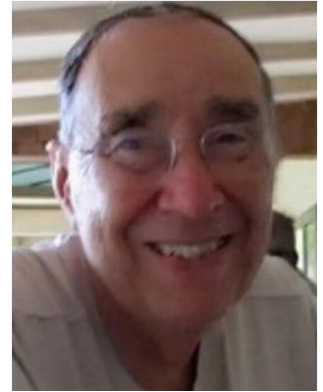
If you have the time, I will also explain what you can expect during our webinar and how you can ask questions or otherwise participate.

Questions beforehand? Email me: [cmdotterer@gmail.com](mailto:cmdotterer@gmail.com).



## *Be Interviewed by Heidi Eliason*

### Al Garrotto



**1. How long have you been a CWC member and why did you join?**

I joined CWC in 1996. I knew about it beforehand but wanted to have a published *novel* (*A Love Forbidden*) before joining a professional writers' organization. This reasoning was skewed, I admit, because the novel was my fourth commercially published book. The first three were a series on adult faith formation. At the time, I didn't think those "counted." Go figure.

**2. How has your CWC membership helped you or your writing?**

Membership in CWC has been invaluable in helping me grow (gradually) into a much more mature writer in every way. Looking at my early books, I feel like going back and reediting/republishing them. I am a better, more professional writer now than I was when I first joined the branch.

**3. You have published a lot of books! What is the total number, and did you have a traditional publisher or publish them yourself?**

I have just published my 13<sup>th</sup> book (5 nonfiction, 8 fiction). I had agents for my earlier books. When I hit the "senior citizen" stage of my life, I realized that I no longer wanted to endure the year or two it took to see my books in print from the time of sale. I switched to print-on-demand for my last four or five books because I can control the entire process from concept to writing to editing and publishing. I have been able to go from first written word to publication in less than a year.

The now-defunct Winston Press (Minneapolis) published my first three nonfiction books. They were very good to me throughout the process, even flying me to their home office for consultation. I had no agent for those books. They sold pretty well, in the low thousands.

I had two different agents for my next set of books. Small publishing houses (Genesis Press and Hilliard & Harris) bought those. Then that I learned the harsh reality of small presses. They did little, if anything, to market my books. After the agent's cut plus the publisher's profit, I received a very small percentage on the sale of each book.

**4. Do you have a favorite, or one that you enjoyed writing more than others?**

Nothing ranks higher than completing and selling my first novel (*A Love Forbidden*). I got very emotional—even wept—when I opened the box containing printed copies of my novel. Seeing the book "in the flesh" was overwhelming.

Next to that, my most joyful writing experience was the planning and creation of *Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*.

**5. How long have you been writing?**

Professionally, for about 30+ years.

**6. Do you have a website and/or social media?**

Yes, website (<https://www.alfredjgarrotto.com>) and a blog (<https://wisdomoflesmiserables.blogspot.com>)

I'm on Facebook at AlfredJGarrottoAuthor

And Twitter at @algarrotto



## *Be Interviewed by Heidi Eliason (cont'd)* Al Garrotto

### 7. What are you currently working on?

My novel, *Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*, is now available in e-book format at all online book sellers. The paperback edition saw the light of day in March 2020. In *Les Miserables*, Victor Hugo outlined in detail a book that his character, Bishop Myriel, intended to write. Then, Hugo added that the bishop got no further than the outline. In my book I dare to write the text for the bishop, following the exact outline Hugo laid out, just as the author *might* have written it. It is a great challenge, but I do my best to crawl inside the bishop's mind and channel his beautiful spirit.

### 8. In which genre(s) do you write?

I write fiction, nonfiction, poetry, with an occasional magazine article or book review. My fiction works range from romantic thrillers to the spirituality of creative talent (*The Soul of Art*).

### 9. How have your background, previous work, and/or experience contributed to your writing?

Mightily. I spent 12 years in the seminary and 18 years as a Catholic priest, before being called to another vocation—marriage and parenthood. For the last 20 years, I have served as a lay minister in my local parish, so my earlier education in philosophy and theology and my life experience in parish ministry were not wasted.

### 10. What do you like about writing?

The most fun in writing is that you never know what is inside of you until you see it on a page. When I look at any of my published work, I'm likely to say, "This is really good. I wonder who wrote it." Even though my name is on the cover or in the byline of a magazine article, I've had the same experience of wondering where all those ideas and their literary expression came from. It can't be the same guy I see in the mirror every morning.

*Any member can be interviewed by Heidi for the newsletter.*

Just follow the link: [writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org) to let us know you'd like an interview then see your name in print!

## Jennifer Egan on Writing, the Trap of Approval, and the Most Important Discipline for Aspiring Writers

*"You can only write regularly if you're willing to write badly. Accept bad writing as a way of priming the pump, a warm-up exercise that allows you to write well."*

## T.S. Eliot on Writing: His Warm and Wry Letter of Advice to a Sixteen-Year-Old Girl Aspiring to Become a Writer

*"Don't write at first for anyone but yourself."*



## Writers Tables Through June 2020

By John Marvin & Bill Stong

**April 11** - International Writing: *It's a whole big world out there.*

Have you thought of writing something that has international components? Or maybe you already have? The ways in which international culture, architecture, foods, etc., and writing intersect are as diverse as the world we live in.



Please join us on April 11, 2020 as Dita Basu, Susan Berman, and Deborah Greenberg share their experiences of writing with “things international.”

**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 planned workshop

## Our Upcoming Programs for 2020

<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)



## ***The Young Writers Contest Update***

Judging for the contest is about to begin. Aline Soules managed intake and setting up the submissions in our branch DropBox. Lyn Roberts and Chloe Laub are managing the judging teams who will report the results of their reading to Marlene Dotterer. Some time ago Marlene reserved the Pleasant Hill Teen Center for the award ceremony but it is not yet known if gatherings like that will be allowed in May.



## **From "For Writers Seeking A Genre, the Path Ahead Is Lit" by Richard Glover in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 21, 2011**

CHICK LIT - began when Helen Fielding (Brigit Jones) discovered her underpants were rather large

CLICK LIT - a genre featuring books about the Internet, all of them claiming the Internet is about to kill off the publishing industry

DICK LIT - Airport thrillers written for a male audience in which commandos, submarine officers or undercover spies save the day through acts of swaggering derring-do

FLICK LIT - lots of pictures, not much text, coffee table size, flick through this in dentists' waiting rooms

HICK LIT - about country people in the city getting their bearings

KICK LIT - Any sports book that claims to have been written by the sportsman himself but, in fact, written by a grizzled ghost writer

QUICK LIT - Modern printing techniques now allow the production of news-related books within minutes of an event occurring as in while Osama bin Laden's body was still sinking, scores of publishers were already pressing the "print" button

SHTICK LIT - Books written by comedians in which they work-in their best lines, preferably while having a top-rated comedy on TV

SICK LIT - gruesome examination of corpses every page as the main actor/protagonist is forensic medical examiner

SIT LIT - This is the sort of volume perfect for reading when sitting on the toilet.

THICK LIT - Fantasy novels which have to be 600 pages and part of a series of 10 books with a pompous title like *The Agamemnon Chronicles*. As Mark Twain once said of a similarly hefty book, once you put it down, you can't pick it up

TICK Lit - Any book that promises to give you a tick of approval for the views you already hold

BRICK LIT - about building mud brick houses in the bush  
And from past President, Lee Paulson:

CHOC LIT - dessert books





## Book Reviews by Members



This section of the newsletter is regularly open to members to submit short reviews of books they've recently read. As writers we should read a lot, looking for what works or what doesn't work. Send your review to: [writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org)

### When I Killed My Father – By John Byrne Barry

Reviewed by Linda Hartmann

*When I Killed My Father*, John Byrne Barry's most recent novel, explores the controversial topic of assisted suicide, or from another perspective, what some would consider as murder. The book's protagonist, Lamar, is on a difficult journey with his father, who is not only clinically declining with dementia, but who also has cancer, and in his lucid moments, is well aware of the dementia taking away more and more of his true self. He asks for help from his son, to end his tireless pain, torture, and burdensome life. If Lamar did that, could he live with himself? If caught, could he handle prison time? Should he leave well-enough alone?

Taking a serious dilemma and developing a page-turner, pins-and-needles, tension-filled chiller was surprising. Barry dealt with solemn ethical and moral issues that are worthy for all to consider. Having worked in healthcare, I have met plenty of people who see things for others in black and white, rather than the numerous shades of gray that so many find their lives falling into, particularly with chronic diseases as they linger, and the suffering becomes intense and unmanageable.

Each chapter in Barry's book left me wanting more. I needed to find out if there was resolution for the fascinating characters and the situations they found themselves in! With terrific plot twists, and settings, there were many surprises throughout.

The plot, and character development, plot twists, and moral/ethical dilemmas involved were extremely well written, thought provoking, and current as well as controversial. Barry used dialogue to great effect. The subtleties, use of language, and expression felt true to each character – a well-developed talent. The telling of essentially two stories with the main characters at different points in time made the book more interesting. I enjoyed the intertwined life of Lamar with wife, Janis, moving on from Janis, and then post-Janis. It is clear to me that a lot of thought was put into the structure of this novel and it worked. Lamar and his sister Andrea's rocky relationship, and their relationship with their parents was also realistic, and engaging.

I found the town of Madrid, Lamar's escape, to be special and eccentric. The secondary characters made the book so believable, humorous, and meaningful. Lastly, a quick word about the epilogue; some might think nine pages does a long epilogue make. Not me. It brought ends together, that made for a perfect wrapping for this highly recommended book.

### Anton Chekhov's 6 Rules for a Great Story

*Mastering the essential complementarity of compassion and total objectivity.*

### The Only Story in the World: John Steinbeck on Kindness, Good and Evil, the Wellspring of Good

**Writing** "Try to understand men, if you understand each other you will be kind to each other. Knowing a man well never leads to hate and nearly always leads to love."

## Maybe May Events

### Alamo Women's Club Author's Faire

"We are still hoping that we will host our Authors' Faire on May 20th. But, in light of the current situation with the Corona Virus we are monitoring it closely and will post updates here on our website:

<https://www.alamowomensclub.org/events/2019-07/sixth-annual-authors-faire>

## Canceled Events

Following are some events previously suggested in the newsletter.

### Bay Area Book Festival

previously scheduled for early May

Learn more about the festival's cancellation in the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) and [Berkeleyside](#).

[Help the festival return stronger than ever!](#)

Check out our year-round [Women Lit speaker series](#) featuring Eimear McBride, Louise Aronson, and more to come!

### April Branch Drawing for \$25 off a Meeting

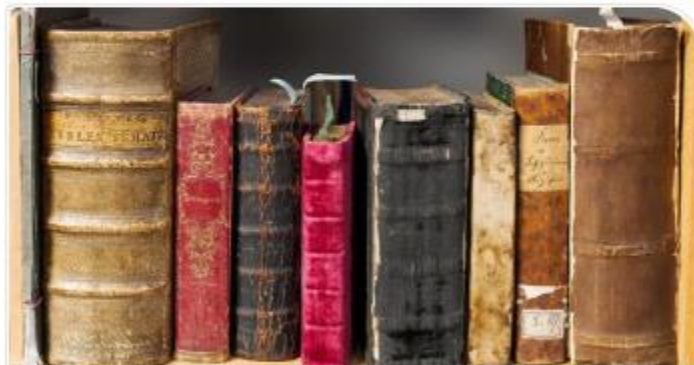
We haven't figured out how to hold a drawing online! And the April meeting is free anyway!

### Board Meetings Including Members

The board is meeting online which is difficult as is. If the shelter-in continues, either as an order or an advisable path, we may figure out whether we can invite members to join us. And certainly if you have a specific issue you'd like to bring up, contact our president Linda Hartmann.



[https://motherboard.vice.com/en\\_us/article/qvq99b/how-to-download-the-books-that-just-entered-the-public-domain?utm\\_source=dmfb](https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/qvq99b/how-to-download-the-books-that-just-entered-the-public-domain?utm_source=dmfb)



Where to Download All the Books That Just Entered the Public Domain

## ***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+)  
**Susan Berman**

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

The John Muir Member Club (\$150 - \$249)  
**Linda Hartmann**  
**James Hasse**

The Mary Austin Writers Club (\$50 - \$99)  
**Kathy Urban**  
**Sherida Bush**  
**Marianne Lonsdale**

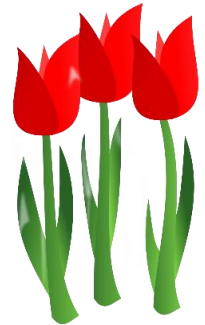
The Gertrude Atherton Guild (\$10 - \$24)  
**Lee Paulson**      **Marjorie Witt**  
**Howard Weissman**      **Bill Yarborough**  
**Bill Stong**

The John Steinbeck Society (\$250 - \$499)  
**Judith Overmeier**

**David George**  
The John Steinbeck Society (\$250 - \$499)

The Ina Coolbrith Laureate Club (\$100 - \$149)  
**Judith Ingram**  
**Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff**  
**Fran Cain**

Helen Hunt Jackson Group (\$25 - \$49)  
**David Alpaugh**  
**Patty Northlich**  
**Robert Poirier**  
**Dita Basu**  
**Susan Lawson**



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: [youngwriters@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:youngwriters@cwcmtdiablo.org)

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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