



The Write News

A Monthly Newsletter
Elisabeth Tuck, editor

February 2021



VIRTUAL BRANCH MEETING

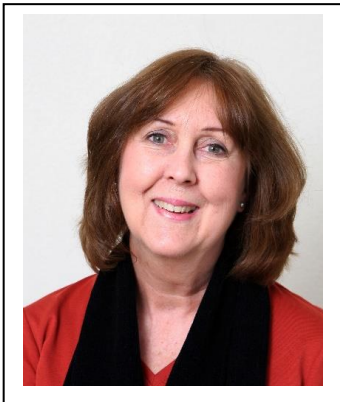
February 13, 2021

**9:30 Sign-In, 9:45 Breakout Rooms – 10:00 Writer's Table – 11:00 Business Mtg.
SPEAKER 11:15 – 12:15**

Register online at <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/>
Once registered, you will receive a link to join the Zoom meeting.

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, since it:

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

Penny Warner has published over 70 adult and children's books. 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.

She has also written award-nominated *The Official Nancy Drew Handbook* and is the author of adult "food-festival mysteries" including *Dead Body Language*, *How to Host a Killer Party*, featuring a party planner, and *Death of a Chocolate Cheater*, featuring food trucks. She wrote a column for the local newspaper on family life for over 30 years, 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.

\$5.00 for CWC members - \$10.00 for non-members
By registering you consent to be recorded during the meeting

President's Message: Linda Hartmann

"Writing the Waves"

Dear CWC-Mt. Diablo Members,

I hope you are as happy as I am that 2021 is looking more hopeful with COVID-19 vaccines being given, and a new one on the horizon. Don't we all know a few people who have received at least a first dose? It is happening! Albeit, not a perfect system, yet it should get better. Practice makes better. Much like it is with resolutions made at the New Year. This is a good time for a check-in on how we are doing with those resolutions.

Do you ever have times when there is so much going on in life, there is simply no time left for the basics? Life had been becoming that way for me. When the New Year rolled around it was definitely time for some resolutions. As I check in, I see a need to step it up. Literally and figuratively. A need to be outdoors and greet nature more often, as this not only lifts my spirits and gets my blood moving in a healthy way, but ideas come to me while I feel chill wind at my face, see leaves blowing about, enjoy the aroma of the woody air with hints of citrus, and squirrels rummaging for treats. I mimic bird songs and they return my calls. As I bond with the universe, normalization and humanization happen. To stretch, to feel body work, to be quiet and in touch with my thoughts, my heartbeat, breath, ideas, weather, nature, while climbing a hill, my batteries recharge. Life feels good again. Some days there is no time, but I am putting it on my calendar every day. Practice does make better, no matter what and how many are your goals. For me, an introvert, it is simple: a bit of time for me. Then the nimiety of commitments is relished again!



During mid-January **two great things happened for our branch**. The first, is that the **Scholastic Art and Writing Contest jurors all finished on time!** My heartfelt thanks go out to them. As a result, we have received a total of \$2500.00 from the Scholastic Awards program for this work. Our branch pays this money forward, for our **Young Writers Contest (YWC) that opened for submissions on Jan. 15th**. The YWC is a middle-grade contest for 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade students from all schools and home-schooled students within Contra Costa County, chaired by Marlene Dotterer. The winning students receive cash prizes and we hold celebratory ceremonies when possible in person, but due to the pandemic a virtual ceremony is being planned by Lyn Roberts and Chloe Laube.

A new program for our branch is a **Voucher Program**. If you know someone who would like to join us for a meeting, you may apply on-line for a \$10.00 discount toward a Mt. Diablo meeting or workshop! Please take advantage of this offer. We hope some of your friends will find it interesting and even perhaps want to join our venerable organization.

Be smart. Be creative. Be kind to yourselves and others. Write the Waves!

All my best, Linda

CONTENTS

- p. 3 Board Meeting; New Secretary Frances Stephenson; Lucinda Jackson's Book
- p. 4 Writers Table: *Ends* Jill Hedgecock; Upcoming Programs
- p. 5 January's speaker: Frederick Foote
- p. 6 Scholastic Awards Judges Honored
- p. 7 - 9 Be Interviewed: Karen Stephen; Harry Michaels; Joni Keim
- p. 10-12 Members' Works: JD Blair; Bob Poirier
- p. 13-14 Some Things to Do: Submit to CWC *Literary Review*; Open Mic Nights
- p. 15 Young Writers 8th Grade First Prize "Living on the Edge" by Kush Rajesh
- p. 16 Young Writers Contest Donor Page
- p. 17-18 In Memoriam: Agnes Moore



Attend a Board Meeting



This is YOUR branch. Extra minds and hands are always welcome.

There's room at the board meetings for observers, the maybe-I'd-like-to-get-involved-ers, advisors, and the just plain curious. This is your branch too, and volunteer organizations can always use new ideas. **Next Zoom board meeting: Saturday, Feb 6, 1-2:30 p.m.** To join us go to <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/contact-us/> and select webmaster. Fill out the form and ask to receive an invitation to the meeting.

Member Events, News, and Salutes



If you have a new publication, a book launch, an upcoming media interview, please write up a short announcement and let us put you in the newsletter. Gather up a picture of yourself or your publication and to submit, go to:

<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/newsletter/>

Frances Stephenson



Mt. Diablo Branch President Linda Hartman is delighted to announce, that Frances Stephenson is hereby appointed to the Mt. Diablo Branch as Interim Officer - Branch Secretary! Congratulations, Frances, and welcome as an officer and member of the board through June 30, 2021.

We are thrilled to have you as part of our team and board of directors. Naturally, we all hope that you will find this role to be a good fit, and perhaps you will consider a longer commitment with more responsibility as you grow into this position.

Thank you for joining us, and as this board promised to have my back, they and I have yours.

Lucinda Jackson

Lucinda has an article published in the new magazine OilWoman. She discusses an excerpt from her book *Just a Girl: Growing up Female and Ambitious* about her struggles to succeed as a female scientist in the chemical and energy industries. The article begins with the statement: "I never advise women to lie." Discover why not and read the full article at:

<https://oilwomanmagazine.com/article/just-a-girl-growing-up-female-and-ambitious/>



UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE
THE DAYS OF THE WEEK

ARE NOW CALLED
THISDAY, THATDAY,

OTHERDAY, SOMEDAY,
YESTERDAY, TODAY &

NEXTDAY!

Writers Table

The End: Finding the Best Way to Wrap it All Up

Presented by Jill Hedgecock

Whether it's a chapter ending, or the conclusion of a novel, endings matter



Jill will share how beginnings and endings are linked, and the differences between chapter and book endings.

Every chapter ending or conclusion of a book should leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction. It doesn't have to be a happy ending, but it does need to tidy up all the loose story ends.



Upcoming Programs for 2021

2021

Feb 13 	Penny Warner <i>Talking the talk: How to make your dialogue sound realistic</i>	Penny has published over 70 adult and children's books. 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. She has also written award-nominated <i>The Official Nancy Drew Handbook</i> and is the author of adult "food festival mysteries" including <i>Dead Body Language</i> , <i>How To Host A Killer Party</i> , featuring a party planner, and <i>Death Of A Chocolate Cheater</i> , featuring food trucks. She wrote a column for the local newspaper on family life for over 30 years, creates fund-raising murder mystery events for libraries across the country, and taught child development at Diablo Valley College for 35 years.
March 13 	James Scott Bell <i>Write Your Novel from the Middle: A New Approach for Plotters, Pantsers, and Everyone in Between</i>	This workshop will teach you a unique method for crafting a powerful, unified novel by way of the "mirror moment" -- a crucial beat that happens right in the middle of great and enduring stories. BELL is a winner of the International Thriller Writers Award and the author of the bestseller for writers, <i>Plot & Structure</i> , among many other books. He teaches and leads workshops on novel writing around the world.

If you've heard a great speaker on writing/publishing/editing, email Jill Hedgecock at hedgewriter@sbcglobal.net



Highly recommended past speaker

“Frederick K. Foote Jr., Mt. Diablo Speaker January 2021”

By **Linda Hartmann** and **Elisabeth Tuck**

Frederick Foote, a writer who has published over three-hundred stories, essays, poems, and fables in a multitude of genres, spoke on “Creating Diverse Characters.” When the topic was determined, he wondered, “Why would anyone want to have diverse characters in their novels or stories?” So he delved into the issue. He reviewed the 100 Greatest U.S. Novels in the 20th Century thinking, “There may be answers here if I look at the nature of writing that aspires to greatness and is recognized for its quality or originality.”



He found that most of these books were written by white authors and populated by white characters, with very few references to any people of color. Then he reviewed some Black authors' titles such as *Native Son*, *The Color Purple*, *Invisible Man*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Those were written from a Black perspective, entirely populated with Black characters, and few to no references to white people. Here you have great literature with Black people, but Fred said, “It’s not like having the U.N. at the table or what you’d call diverse literature.”

Then he looked at the books of the 1930s that called Blacks “niggers” rather than “the N-word.” Those books told us something about reality in that time and place. *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Gone with the Wind* had niggers. They are not diverse literature, don’t have an international cast of characters, and were written from a white perspective. They tell us how we saw reality then and there and how we saw the world.

The book that came to his mind that was an example of creating diverse characters, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee. It’s a high school staple on everybody’s reading list. What makes this book so popular? It’s from a young, white, Southern girl’s perspective, a realistic portrayal of life in the South in the ’30s where they had niggers and didn’t say “the N-word.” So what was the diversity? Age: children and adults don’t always see eye to eye. Calpurnia represents racial diversity but Lee presents none of her interior thoughts or motivations. Further diverse issues are: justice vs injustice; prejudice vs acceptance; loss of innocence; courage and cowardice; wealth vs poverty; and good vs. evil.

Potential diversities are anything you have not experienced in the way you want a character to: religion, gender, nationality, military experience, musical taste, education, travel, family size; rural, suburban, urban settings; politics; etc., etc..

Foote recommended reading *Go Set a Watchman*, also written by Lee but before *Mockingbird* and only published in 2015. In *Watchman*, race is treated more as it would have been lived in the ’30s. It’s harder to like that version of Atticus.

Foote pressed that diversity should be an organic outgrowth of what your story has not dragged in for commercial value, which today is often done. Immerse yourself and make it part of you to become fluent in the language or attitude of the characters, understand them. That is a compelling endeavor and a monumental task. Many writers are not up to it, thus our literature is segregated because our lives are.

We highly recommend Frederick Foote as a speaker to other branches or organizations looking for an inspiring, knowledgeable speaker on topics of diversity.

Some of Frederick K. Foote Jr.’s published works are: two short story collections, *For the Sake of Soul* (2015) with African American themes and *Crossroads Encounters* (2016) fantasy, sci-fi, literary with Afro-centric themes; his latest book, *Maroon, Fables, and Revelations*, published on Election Day 2020, explores the wilderness that is human nature from an African-American perspective, and delves into our taboos, passions, and melodies of madness. His books are available on Amazon.

“Foote’s presentation was mesmerizing,” said Linda Hartmann

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards 2021 A Success!!



The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, a national contest for **students in grades 7 - 12** began September 1st when Mt Diablo branch coordinators signed contracts and juror recruitment commenced. Coordinator training began in late November, and juror training in December. Upon on-time completion, the Scholastic organization pays our branch \$2,500 for up to 20 jurors to read and judge the submissions they send us. We then pay this money forward to the youth in our county by funding our branch's Young Writers Contest.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards is the largest, longest-running national recognition program for creative teenagers. For nearly 100 years, the Scholastic Awards have provided teachers with an opportunity to motivate and challenge students to become better writers. Students in grades 7-12 submit their works of visual arts and creative writing to be reviewed by professionals to receive recognition, exhibition, publication, and scholarships. Some of our nation's most celebrated writers were first discovered as teenagers by the Scholastic Awards, including Truman Capote, Sylvia Plath, Joyce Carol Oates, and Stephen King.

The judging period begins when judges receive their assignments. This year it was December 22, 2020 and the deadline for finishing was January 11, 2021. All jurors finished on time, and we want to celebrate them!

Congratulations to the 2021 Jurors!!

Ann Damanschino Al Garrotto Chris Stafford David George	Dita Basu Fran Cain Jill Hedgecock Linda Force	Linda Hartmann Marianne Lonsdale Nancy Branka Patty Northlich	Richard Black Stanford Stewart Suzy Orpin Wendy Blakely
--	---	--	--

Please consider participating in this fun and interesting contest near the end of 2021 and into 2022. We held meetings to share our experiences, and a common thread is that it's a treat to hear what the youth of our country are thinking about, how well they can write, and that there are some really excellent writers among the next generation.

Student submission categories are:

Critical Essay	Dramatic Script
Flash Fiction	Humor
Journalism	Novel Writing
Personal Essay & Memoir	Poetry
Science Fiction & Fantasy	Short Story
Writing Portfolio (senior class only)	

For more information, questions, or to express interest, please contact this year's Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Chair, Linda Hartmann, at president@cwcmtdiablo.org and feel free to browse the websites below. Thank you. Linda Hartmann, Chair, Coordinator, & Juror

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

<https://www.artandwriting.org/awards/how-to-enter/categories/>

<https://ral.artandwriting.org/2021/01/26/meet-our-2021-ral-jurors/> shows regional coordinators

Be Interviewed

These interviews help Mt. Diablo Branch members get to know you, your work, and your thoughts about writing and the writing process. You do not have to be a new member. If you would like to be interviewed, let us know through this link: <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/newsletter/>

Karen Stephen

karenstephen_author@hotmail.com

www.karenstephen.com



What do you like about writing?

Writing is my primary creative outlet whether the product is a daily journal entry, a novel, or a poem. Writing is completely absorbing, allowing me to lose track of time and worries while hopefully giving back to others.

What part of the writing process is most difficult for you?

The most time-consuming aspect of writing has been the multiple revisions which always take longer than I've anticipated. The most difficult thing is being willing to edit out whatever is not working, particularly when I think it's the most brilliant thing I've ever written.

What is the most fun part of writing?

Making my own book trailers for each of my novels, which is very time consuming but in a good way. They are a delightful way to begin or end my creative process. After all, the novels begin as movies in my head that then get arduously translated to words on a page. It is great fun to turn them back into mini-movies.

Are there any resources, tools, or events that you have found especially helpful for writing or publishing?

Whether it was mastering the art of essay in high school or learning to write fiction in my Fifties, my major resource has always been the patience, skill, and encouragement of my writing teachers in whatever course, conference, or workshop I have taken.

What are you currently working on?

I am almost finished with my third novel and first mystery. It will be Book One in the Stanford Daily Mysteries series focused on student journalists who solve crimes on the Stanford campus. This first novel in the series is set in 1961.

Who or what has influenced you the most as a writer?

My first major influence was my Mrs. Becker, my honors English teacher, who insisted I learn to write a perfect essay. My mentor over the past two decades has been Margaret (Peggy) Lucke, Bay area teacher and author of *Writing Mysteries* and paranormal romance novels, who has made suggestions or been an editor for each of my novels. Reading Stephen King's *On Writing* was also a strong influence.

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

My 44 years as a clinical psychologist has certainly informed my current work—focused on the psychological aftermath of sexual maltreatment in children and adults. Plus, a wild and wooly sailing adventure on the Mediterranean at age 19 provided the back story for my second novel (a suspense story set in Corsica.)

Approximately how long have you been a CWC member?

I joined in November of 2020.

How has your CWC membership helped you or your writing?

The two meetings I have attended have already been extremely useful in providing me with marketing tips and craft hints (especially the talk about authentic diversity.)

Be Interviewed (Cont'd)

Karen Stephen

Do you have published works?

I have self-published two novels: [Degrees of Obsession](#) and [Mother Tongue: Lingua Corsa](#).

Do you have any advice for new writers?

You're never too old to begin, and: Be willing to let go of your "darlings."

How do you define success as a writer?

I would love to acquire an agent and be traditionally published but efforts in that direction have not panned out. So, I have happily settled on producing and marketing top notch self-published novels.

What are your future writing goals?

I definitely would like to complete the next 3 books in my current mystery series before the grim reaper catches up with me!

New Member: Harry Gael Michaels

To branch members, thank you for welcoming me in as a new member. Following is a summary of who I am as an interested writer.

I am a local boy born and raised for the most part in Oakland with frequent visits to my grandparents' farm in Kingsburg, California, and 3 years growing up in Springfield, Missouri, as the son of a medical officer in WWII.

My latest news is my recent publication of an essay I wrote titled: "Coping with Life, A Study in Adaptation" which shows how some of us cope better than others and why there can be so much variance. I think it's a child development issue and I attempt to show why and what to do about it.



After I retired as a school psychologist I began writing to express my thoughts and keep my brain active. Perhaps it was a felt need to express a kind of a synthesis of all I had learned in my life.

The inspiration to write my first book was the awful event that occurred on April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School in which two boys of the same student body conspired to massacre their fellow students and teachers. Why did this happen and what can be done about it became the subject of my writing. My book is titled: *How Goes It with America---In the Interests of Educational and Societal Reform*.

I am a voracious reader with usually 5 or 6 books going at the same time. I read anything from great stories by James Michener to current events in our fractured political systems, to adventure, religion, and WWII. Most all genres interest me.

Right now, I am reading: *Awaken the Giant Within* by Anthony Robbins, *Caribbean* by James Michener, *Up the Down Staircase* by Bel Kaufman, *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah, *Why We're Polarized* by Ezra Klein and *Western Civilization* by Jackson J. Spielvogel.

My published books are:

The State Of The Republic---How the Misadventures of U.S. Policy Since WWII have led to the Quagmire of Today's Economic, Social and Political Disappointments;

Wings Over Normandy---A WW II story of the B-26 and One Man That Flew It;

Reflections on Institutional Catholicism--- A Critical Perspective.

All my works are available on Amazon. *Wings over Normandy* is on Barnes and Noble as well.

My website <https://www.wingsovernornandy.com/> has more information on my writings.

Be Interviewed (Cont'd)

New Member: Joni Keim



I am a fifth-generation Californian and grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. I was the youngest and only introvert in a gregarious family. My mother used to say that sending me to my room was an ineffective punishment, and when she resorted to it, she eventually had to come get me to rejoin the family. I mention this because these dynamics—being the youngest and being mostly introverted—set the stage for writing.

Writing became a contemplative and personal time for me. It allowed me to be able to freely and safely express myself when doing so otherwise might be uncomfortable or unavailable or both. Though there were writing assignments in school, thank-you notes after birthdays, and occasional pen-pals, I did not do much writing in my youth. I began writing in earnest when my children were young. I got up at 4:30 in the morning and wrote until the family got up. For some reason, it was my best time for writing, and it still is.

In the early days, I wrote for a variety of magazines in the health and wellness field. I was on the advisory board for one of them. Then, by happenstance, while in the waiting room of a doctor's office, I met a man who owned a publishing company. We chatted about all things books and writing and I told him I wrote for magazines. He said, "Why don't you write a book?" And so I did, and he published it in 1996.

My writing styles range from technical (40+ years in the health and wellness field) to spiritual (my father's influence), to memoirs (my love for matters of the heart.) Writing is not a career for me, but it *is* a lifestyle. I always have a writing project in the works. All of my books are non-fiction. Even my children's books are true stories.

I have written 13 books (some second editions) and 9 are currently on Amazon. Foreign rights were purchased by Brazil for 3 of them. My books in-progress are 1) *The Checklist for Naturally Beautiful Skin* (technical), 2) *Sisters* (memoir), and 3) an angel book for children (spiritual)—to follow my angel book for adults, *Angels & Aromas*.)

The most helpful words I heard many years ago about the writing process were, "Write about what you know," and for non-fiction writing, include "facts, quotes, and anecdotes."

Joni's books are available on Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/Joni-Keim/e/BO01JRVLP6%3Fref=dbs_a_mng_rwt_sens_share



Photo by **Ardash Gupta** of Moraga

Members' (Short) Works

Members, See your writing in print!

Send your **short** works (up to 750 words, more can be considered) to be included in the Mt Diablo branch newsletter to: <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/newsletter/>



“Jim: A Tragedy”

By J.D. Blair

The specter of Tennessee Williams lurked in the room...one dimly lit room with a sour smell. Jim's mother was a Blanche Dubois in decline, Blanche years beyond Stanley and Stella Kowalski, she was in her early forties but looked older and her efforts to make her once flaxen hair look flaxen again were fruitless, thinning filaments ringed her ears and spilled over her boney shoulders, she brushed her hand over her forehead guiding one strand from her face. Her syrupy southern accent was spiked with gin.

“Jimmy dahlin’ ya’ll forget ya mannas? Ya’ll think I din’ raise ya right?”

Jim engulfed her in a hug. “This is him, Mama, this is J.D.”

She touched my arm, “Why, Jimmy, you didn’t tell me he was such a fahn-lookin’ young man.”

Her hand lingered on my arm, gently petting.

“Leave him alone, Mama. He’s mine.”

In the dim light conflicting images rocked me. Mother and son, he was Scarlett O’Hara; she was Blanche.

Why did Jim bring me here, to the Tenderloin, a smear on the well-advertised charm of San Francisco where the disenchanting, disowned, and otherwise unwanted souls come to live out their sordid lives? To show me off of course.



I met Jim in that messy melting pot, the U.S. Navy, and we remained friends until he attempted suicide and was discharged. I saw it coming but didn’t do anything to stop it and in the long run it was probably the best thing that could have happened. The Navy wasn’t the place for a man like Jim.

Jim was homely and compounded his homeliness by exhibiting exaggerated femininity. In his walk and speech, he was feminine...a female trapped in a gangly six-foot-two, double-jointed body...loose and knobby. His head was large and triangular, an upside-down triangle with a pointed chin at the base. His face splayed upward in a wedge, cresting in a scalp shaded by a crop of sandy hair. His face was mildly pock-marked, and his eyes were widely spaced. They bracketed a nose that overshadowed a small mouth with thin lips. Large ears punctuated all of it.

That was the face of the man who loved me, a tortured soul who, if I had responded, would have done anything for me, given anything to me, stood in front of a train for me.

He had roots in Texas and spoke in an exaggerated Texas drawl. I think he believed it helped maintain the image he was nurturing, that of a well-bred, southern belle with bigger-than-life Texas tastes.

Where else but in the Navy could we have been thrown together, mismatched?

It ended as it was destined to end, I suppose, with Jim on his knees in his room, razor tracks on his wrists, bloodied towel, and reddened, tear-filled eyes. Half carrying, half stumbling, I took him to the emergency room, his final destination as a Medical Corpsman Third Class.

Following hours of Jim’s psychiatric interrogation, I finally convinced the doctors to discharge him and free him from his agonizing existence.

It was a one-sided love that ended badly, so badly that a man’s life was jeopardized by an environment that haunted him every day and brought him sadness every day.

Members' (Short) Works (cont'd)

“Jim: A Tragedy” By **J.D. Blair** (cont'd)

What does it say about the man who didn't return love, who blithely turned away the love that, for all intents and purposes, was well-meant and heartfelt but was destined to fail? The story haunts me when I recall what it meant to say no to another man whose only crimes were caring too much, wanting to help too much, and wanting to watch out for the well-being of another man.

Crossing the Bridge

Bob Poirier

The two dogs became mortal enemies as soon as they moved into their fenced yards next door to each other in the cul-de-sac bordering open space.

The English setter would bark repeatedly, “I’ll have your guts for garters.”

The Australian shepherd would bark in reply, “I’ll have your butt on the barbie.”

They would venture from their covered dog runs and repeat this sporadically through the day until their owners returned from work. These confrontations continued for two weeks until, during a windstorm, a section of the redwood good neighbor fence blew down. The dogs stood on either side of the opening.

“To the death,” the setter snarled.

“No quarter asked or given,” the shepherd snarled.

They were about to spring when a squirrel, returning from his daily jaunt along the fence to an oak tree in the setter’s yard, stopped at the opening. The three stared at each other for several seconds. Then the squirrel leaped into the air, turned in mid-leap, and raced back along the fence.

“Squirrel,” the dogs barked excitedly and tore after the rodent.

The squirrel reached the end of the fence and leaped into a tree, narrowly avoiding the setter’s snapping jaws.

The two dogs sat side by side, panting until the setter turned to the shepherd. “It seems I may have misjudged you, old boy. Thank you for helping me rid the yard of the rodent.”

“No, no, mate,” the shepherd replied. “Entirely, my error. The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

“My human is at work,” the shepherd continued. “Would you like to hang out in my yard?”

“Jolly good idea,” the setter replied. “My human is at work also.”

They frolicked until Teresa, the shepherd’s human, returned that afternoon. The dogs were sleeping in a corner, spooned, with the setter’s paw over the shepherd. Teresa snapped a picture, printed it, and added a brief note that read, “Your setter visited today and played with my Aussie. You can come over and pick up your puppy anytime.” She signed it “Teresa” and put it in his mailbox.

Her doorbell rang thirty minutes later. “Hi, I’m Robert,” her neighbor said with a smile. “I’m here to get my setter out of hock.”

Teresa looked out the window an hour later to see Robert repairing the fence. She got a cup of coffee and walked out to the repair area. “Is there anything I can do to help?” she asked.

Robert looked at the cup. “A cup of coffee would be nice,” he said.

“Please, take this one,” Teresa said. “I haven’t had a drink from it yet.”



Members' (Short) Works (cont'd)

Crossing the Bridge by Bob Poirier (cont'd)

"Thanks," Robert said as he accepted the cup.

Teresa returned a few minutes later, carrying another cup. "I'm going to make a simple supper. Would you like to join me?"

Robert looked at her thoughtfully. "Why yes," he replied. "That would be very nice."

That weekend, Robert, a maintenance engineer, and Teresa, a registered nurse, put a hinged doggy-door in the fence. Three months later, Robert moved in with Teresa on a trial basis. They married three months after that in a simple ceremony in Teresa's back yard.

Their daughter, Rhonda, was born a year later. The dogs adored Rhonda and slept at the foot of her bed every night. When she was eight, after several panic attacks, Rhonda was diagnosed with agoraphobia. Rhonda remained housebound, was home-schooled, and only interacted with the dogs in the house.

When Rhonda was eleven, a drought changed the coastal deer foraging pattern in the open space behind their house. With more deer came an increased presence of coyotes hunting in pairs. Rhonda could hear them communicating with barks, yips, and howls when the deer were active around dusk and dawn. To protect the dogs, Robert purchased a seven-pound Browning 20-gauge Micro Midas pump shotgun with a 24-inch barrel. Rhonda learned how to handle, load, and shoot the gun, and they kept it near the sliding glass door to the back yard loaded with four rounds of rock salt ammunition.

A few weeks later, at dusk, just before her parents arrived home, Rhonda heard a commotion in the back yard. Two large coyotes had jumped over the six-foot fence and cornered the two dogs.

"This doesn't look good, mate," the shepherd said.

"Stay behind me, old boy," the setter said. "The humans should be home any minute."

The coyotes circled the dogs until the smaller one saw an opening and lunged for the shepherd's flank. The setter, who was 10 pounds heavier, knocked the coyote down and broke its leg with one vicious bite. The larger coyote rushed the setter and had seized the setter's throat when a scream came from the sliding glass door.

Rhonda, crying in fear and anger, was running towards the scrum. She fired once when she was 20 feet away, knocking down the smaller coyote, and again at point-blank range, killing it as she passed by. She fired twice more at the larger coyote, striking it twice in its hindquarters. The coyote, dragging its hind legs, crawled snarling towards Rhonda, who stumbled backward and fell. She used her heels to scoot back while trying desperately to load the shotgun with shells from her pocket.

Suddenly, both dogs, wounded and bleeding, pounced on the coyote. The shepherd sank his teeth into the coyote's flank. When the coyote turned, the setter grabbed it by the nape of its neck and bit down until the neck broke. The dogs crawled to the sobbing girl and nuzzled her face, comforting her until Robert returned home. He ran to the back yard, picked up the girl, and carried her into the house.

"This is it for me, Mate," the shepherd whimpered as the dogs huddled together.

"Don't be afraid, old boy," the setter softly huffed as he nuzzled the shepherd's face. "I'll come with you. We'll wait in the fields and hills on the other side of the Rainbow Bridge until our humans join us."

Two weeks later, her parents and Rhonda, slowly recovering from agoraphobia, dug a hole in the corner of the yard, spread the dog's combined ashes into the hole, planted a green-leafed euryops evergreen shrub, and held a simple celebration of life ceremony.

Every year in December and January, when the cold snap hits the Diablo Valley and the ground fog blankets the land in a gray mist, they look at the smiling yellow euryops daisy-like flower heads and are thankful the two dogs were in their lives.



Some Things to Do



SUBMIT TO THE CWC LITERARY REVIEW:

- The *Literary Review* is open for submissions
- The updated submission guidelines are on the state website:

www.Calwriters.org

- The deadline for submissions is **March 15th 2021**

Let's have another great year for the Mt. Diablo branch!!



Submit some of your writing fact or fiction for the newsletter. Muse about 2020, share a report on a book you enjoyed (or disliked) and why. Share a memoir piece. Share a writing tip. Share an upcoming event (assuming the timing's right. The newsletter comes out at the end of the month.)

Volunteer to lead a Writers Table

These are short (40 minutes or so) informational or practice session on the craft of writing. Hosted by Mt. Diablo members, these sessions cover topics of interest to writers. Share a writing, publishing, editing, research, etc. skill.

Contact John Schembra: <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/writerstable/>

Speak or Listen at Open Mic Night



The votes are in and it's unanimous:

Open Mic Night is

FUN and Inspiring!

Be prepared to have your socks knocked off,
because when you hear
what our own member-authors have written,

you'll be **amazed**

blown away, actually, by the talent in our club.

See for yourself.

Come **read**

for yourself by signing up for a future date!

Open Mic Night is every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.
on Zoom of course.

Register online at

<https://cwcmt Diablo.org/register-for-open-mic-night/>

Or just open the website and click on the link in the pop-up.

It's that easy!



Young Writers Contest First Prize Winner

1st Place Winner in: Humor-All Grades and Short Story-8th Grade

“Living on the Edge” by Kush Rajesh

Teacher: Sara Opeyany

School: Gale Ranch, San Ramon

It's day 42 and I'm the last of my kind. I've done unspeakable things in order to reach this status such as leaving my buddies to get sucked up by the all-powerful force which activates once a week. Maybe it activates once every two weeks. Maybe it's not even day 42. I don't know. But I do know something. I must survive. I must find a way to escape this cold, dark, and fallaciously safe environment. One single error, miscalculation, or false step could lead to my demise. A demise which I know to be inevitable, but one I must stall for as long as possible. To live life as a dust bunny in an ordinary household is to live life on the edge.

Each day I lose a part of myself. And no, I do not mean this figuratively. As each day passes, I lose a large portion of lint, dust, hair — you name it. *BZZZZZ!* Oh god. That sound is all too familiar. My fuzzy stomach starts to turn and sweat glands I didn't know was possible for me to make, start to produce. The portal which has a tendency to swallow my friends whole, has been activated. All I need to do is survive, right? Pwshhh, that's no big deal. I pick what's left of me off the ground and start rolling wherever the wind takes me. The only reason I trust this logic is that it hasn't failed me so far! But I guess today is a special case. The more I tumble forward, the louder the portal's whirring gets. In a panic, I try to roll the other way but with the force of the portal and power of the wind, I am no match. Even using every muscle in my body — which would be 0 — I failed to move in the opposite direction. Is this it? Am I done for? Have I even left a footprint on this Earth? Will I be remembered by future generations? What have I done to benefit citizens of Earth f? I close my eyes and wait for the end.



But it doesn't come. Instead, I feel myself being ripped apart by a monstrosity I've never seen in my life. With pointed ears, 4 legs, a tail, and eyes with thin pupils, this thing has managed to become the most terrifying being I've ever come across. I open my mouth to scream yet nothing comes out. After a long and thoughtful analysis, I realize it may be because I have no mouth to begin with. Somehow the beast stops tearing me limb by limb and I am dropped to the ground, gasping for the air I never really needed in the first place. It's physically impossible for me to move but I know I have to try. I have to fight. I have to rebel. I have to do it not only for me but for my pals who have lost their lives to that cruel hunk of metal.

So I do. I drag myself across the carpeted floor and find shelter. Minutes later, I come across a polished wooden sculpture consisting of 4 legs which soars multiple feet above me. I crawl underneath and finally close my eyes which once again, I have to remind myself are non-existent. But someone's movement — *something's* movement keeps me awake. I jolt my absent eyes awake and look around only to see another ball of lint just like me.

“I...I thought I was the only one.”

“Yeah so did I,” the ball responds though my only view of him is of his back. As he turns around, I get a glimpse of his face — his twisted, messed up and ancient face.



“How long have you been down here?” I ask.

“Long enough. I've seen those like us come and go. I've seen them be mauled by that vicious beast. I've had their screams pierce my ears to this very day. The only place where that monster can't reach is here, in the darkness... Shhh. Do you hear that?”

Young Writers Contest First Prize Winner (cont'd) Kush Rajesh

I look around and sure enough, I hear it. The footsteps of the beast which swallowed my friends whole soon became louder and louder. Its feet grow closer so I grasp my mouth with my hand in order to quiet myself. Its hands sweep underneath the structure above me, reaching forward as far as they can. The purrs of this massive creature echo in my ears so I look away in order to keep calm. I stay in position for a few more minutes until it finally gives up and walks away. I sigh in relief and look to my side.

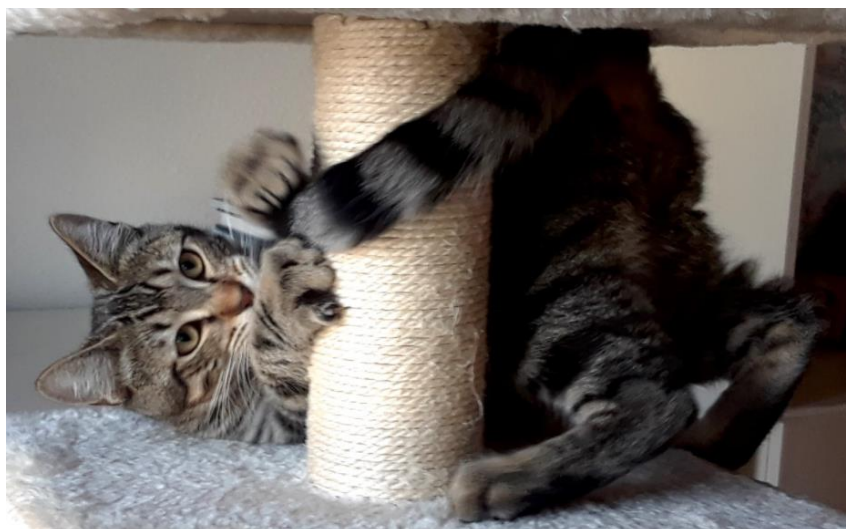
To my horror, the ball of lint which I befriended merely *seconds* ago was already torn apart by the savage claws of the orange monster. I rush over to his side trying to feel his pulse however it soon dawns on me that we, dust bunnies, have no such thing. He struggles yet he manages to only to say one word...

“S-s-s-survive.”

And with that, he closed his non-existent eyelids for the last time. I analyze my surroundings and to my right is what seems to be a collar. With all my strength I pick it up and squint at it. It reads “Mr. Fluffykins.” Of course! This belongs to the beast! I must do whatever it takes to escape Mr. Fluffykins, not for me but for my family. For my friends. And last but not least, for the ball of lint whose name I never got and who I knew for less than a minute.



I gather my literal remains together which consist of dirt, pennies, and dust, and walk on forward away from my prized shelter. But that's when the hideous creature spots me. I sprint across the house in a zig-zag pattern, struggling to maintain my entire body together. Just then the front door opens wide, bathing me in a beam of sunlight — a beam of which I have not seen in months — and I know what I have to do. I dash toward the exit, pouring as much energy into my legs as I possibly can. And that's when I see it— the luscious green hills, the vibrant blue sky and most importantly, the gleaming sun above the concrete ground! As the door closes behind me it all sinks in. Mr. Fluffykins can no longer hunt me down nor can he tear me limb from limb because I am finally free!!



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 December 2020

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

David George in honor of Lee Paulson
Susan Berman

The John Steinbeck Society (\$250 - \$499)

David George
Robert Lane

The John Muir Member Club (\$150 - \$249)

Linda Hartmann

The Ina Coolbrith Laureate Club (\$100 - \$149)

Judith Ingram
Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff in honor of Susie Wilson
Patrick Hancock
Aline Soules **Danard Emanuelson**
Kathy Urban in honor of Susie Wilson

The Mary Austin Writers Club (\$50 - \$99)

Chloe Laube

Helen Hunt Jackson Group (\$25 - \$49)

Daniel Cheung **Dorothy Kerwin**
Nanette Cooper McGuiness **June Gatewood**
Patty Northlich
Robert Boyle

The Gertrude Atherton Guild (\$10 - \$24)

Lee Paulson	George Cramer	Al Garrotto
Marjorie Witt	Linda Todd	
Marlene Dotterer	Laura Blackwell	
Maya Das	Ana Luengo Palomino	
Joanna Pace	Robin Abbott	
Chris Stafford	Pavan Kumar Katragadda	

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 submission is free. Check our branch website for details:

<https://cwcmt Diablo.org/young-writers/>

In May the Mt. Diablo Branch hosts an awards ceremony to honor the students--if there's no pandemic! All program expenses are supported by individual donations and grants.

Please list my membership in the following donor club: _____

Name _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ My donation is in honor/memory of: _____

To pay via PayPal click "buy now" on the Mt. Diablo website: <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/young-writers/>

Or 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

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORT THIS ANNUAL CONTEST

In Memoriam

Agnes Moore

Feb. 24, 1920 - Jan. 6, 2021

Details we have on Agnes' membership with Mt. Diablo CWC show that she was honored with the branch's Distinguished Service Award in 2004 and was a member through the 2013-14 CWC season. So she was a member for at least a decade.



The following is extracted from her online obituary in *The East Bay Times*:

Our beloved Rosie the Riveter, Agnes Moore, passed away of cancer at her daughter's home in Martinez. Agnes was a 50-year resident of Martinez before moving to Rossmoor, Walnut Creek. Her heroic goal was to reach her 101st birthday in February to accept President elect Biden's invitation to celebrate her birthday in the White House. Also she was to accept The Congressional Gold Medal at the same time for her work as a docent in the Rosie the Riveter National Park. At 100 she continued to share her experiences as a Rosie with civic groups, schools, and businesses. At the same time she would tell them "you can be successful and learn whatever you set your mind to do."

Born in Marshall, Arkansas in Searey County. Her father was a sheriff killed in the line of duty. Siblings Alfred, Clara, Eugene, Willie, Bonnie, and only survivor, brother Ralph.

Agnes married at 16 and was the mother of two girls: Cheryl Buscaglia (husband Richard) children Shayne and Cristen; and Wanda Guthrie, deceased, children Cheri, Keith, Ted, Machel, Amy, 8 great-grandchildren, and 6 great-great-grandchildren. Her caretakers Siu and Piney were family too! A woman of strong heart and courage, Agnes had an unwavering commitment to her family, charities, and America.



Agnes exemplified what it means to be of service to one's country, which she did by working as a journeywoman welder from 1942 to 1945 in Kaiser Richmond Shipyard #3.

She had a one-year-old daughter when she and her first husband followed her siblings to Salinas, CA in 1939 to work in the vegetable packing industry. When the couple divorced, Moore had to support herself and her young daughter.

She heard about a new opportunity in a quintessential 1940s way: on the radio. An announcer said, "Women, do something for your country, go to the Richmond shipyards, and be a welder!" Although Agnes didn't know what a welder was, she identified it as way she could help bring the "boys" home from the war. She arrived at the Richmond hiring hall dressed to the nines; when the receptionist suggested a job in the office, Moore declined, noting she was responding to the call for women welders.

In Memoriam (cont'd) Agnes Moore



Moore's welding outfit consisted of heavy leathers for her jacket, bibs, and elbow-length gloves; solid, steel-toed boots; and her hair wrapped up in a bandana with a welder's cap and hood on her head. If her work "uniform" was unglamorous, her job was even more so. Moore often found herself working in tight, poorly lit spaces for hours at a time, often kneeling or lying on cold steel decks or up on ladders welding overhead. Her work environment could

also be hot, smoky and dust-laden—not to mention loud from the bulkheads ringing with the ear-piercing sounds of the chipping guns.

At first, Moore resided with her sister and brother-in-law in San Francisco and commuted to her job on the Home Front by taking a streetcar to the Ferry Building and then riding the ferry to Richmond. After remarrying in 1943, she and her husband Ray bought a home in Richmond. While on the job, her daughter received childcare provided to her as a shipyard worker.

Eventually, Moore went on to take the test to become a certified journeywoman welder, her pay rate subsequently increasing to \$85.00 a week (\$1,133.60 in 2015 dollars).

Although was very difficult—and when the war ended she was happy to give her work as a wartime welder up but that remained one of the proudest and most rewarding experiences of her life.

Pre-pandemic article:

Half a dozen Rosies still regularly visit Richmond's shipyards, but no longer as welders. They volunteer for the Rosie the Riveter, World War II Home Front National Historical Park Visitors' Center established October 25, 2000. Every Friday the Rosies hold a storytelling event and meet and greet, at which visitors can learn about life during the war and the work they did for the war effort.

Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park is a United States national historical park, at 1414 Harbour Way S #3000, Richmond, CA 94804; phone: (510) 232-5050

Note Agnes' shirt!



FROM A PRESS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSWOMAN JACKIE SPEIER

December 4, 2020

Washington, D.C.—Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA) was pleased to join U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) in announcing today their bipartisan, bicameral legislation to honor American women who joined the workforce and volunteered in support of the World War II war effort was signed into law. The Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal Act will award a Congressional Gold Medal to the women who answered the Nation's call to action and learned new skills, many building the vehicles, weaponry, and ammunitions critical to the war effort. The medal will go to the Smithsonian.