



The Write News

A Monthly Newsletter
Elisabeth Tuck, editor

April 2021

VIRTUAL BRANCH MEETING

April 10, 2021

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

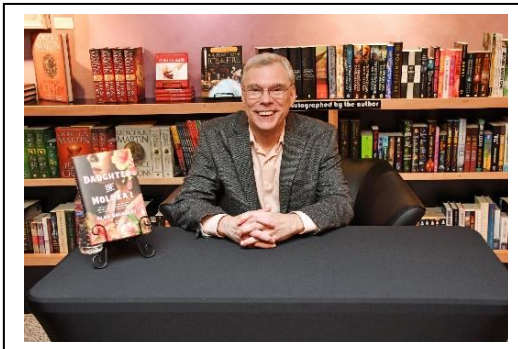
Register online at <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/>
Once registered, you will receive a link to join the Zoom meeting.



Researching your Novel: Reality Matters featuring **Alan Brennert**

Even when you are writing fiction, the setting, clothing, dialect, and other details matter. But finding the information can be a challenge. Whether you are infusing the political climate of your protagonist's region, describing the setting of decades or centuries that have long past, capturing the slang language, or need to understand legal or police procedures, readers expect the novel to be grounded in reality. Alan Brennert will cover the many techniques he has used to ensure his award-winning historical fiction novels conform with the historic records, including:

- Using archives and other resources to recreate the past
- Ferreting out legal matters and other facts surrounding infamous cases
- People resources: Interviewing subject matter experts
- How to resolve conflicting historical accounts



Alan Brennert is the author of multiple historical novels, including his new novel *Daughter of Moloka'i*, *Palisades Park*, *Honolulu* (chosen one of the best books of 2009 by *The Washington Post*), and *Moloka'i*, which won the 2006 Bookies Award, sponsored by the Contra Costa Library; for the Book Club Book of the Year (and has sold over 600,000 copies since publication.) It was also a 2012 One Book, One San Diego selection. He has developed screenplays for major studios, as well as miniseries, pilots, and television movies. He won an Emmy Award and a People's Choice Award for his work as a writer-producer on the television series *L.A. Law*, and his short story "Ma Qui" was honored with a Nebula Award.

CWC Members' Meeting Cost \$5.00 – non-members \$10.00

By registering you consent to be recorded during the meeting

***President's Message:* Linda Hartmann**



Happy Spring CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch Members!

When I was looking into what the month of April was known for, it had the longest list of any month including items like National Volunteer Month. I thought that was a good one to know, working with volunteers every day. Our club would not run without these amazing people. It is also National Safe Digging Month (*is this something bank robbers need?*). For those of you who garden or are planning a landscaping project, at least 72 hours prior to digging, call 811 to have the approximate location of your utility lines marked to help prevent, property damage, injuries, and utility outages. Who would know?

These lists are educational, but also a bit entertaining for me. One list had 55 “National” items listed for April, but then there are also “International” items on another list, that IMHO should not be missed, e.g., International Amateur Radio Month is observed globally in April. Then there is the National Day Calendar, that list things that are celebrated for the day, and often benefit the under-privileged. On the second Saturday of the month, April 3rd, 2021 is International Pillow Fight Day. Seriously. Largest flash mob pillow fight: NYC, 2008. Benefits the homeless. Rules: Swing lightly, use only soft pillows, and remove glasses before beginning. Do not swing at people without a pillow, or at people with cameras, and bring a bag to help clean up!

On the date of our next meeting, April 10th, it will be International Safety Pin Day. This was a pin designed by inventor Walter Hunt to pay off a debt, which he did by selling his patent. The design for Hunt’s “dress pin” was made to spring open with a clasp covering the point to prevent the injuries that straight pins caused. Voila! A “safety pin.” It will also be National Cinnamon Crescent, Encourage a Young Writer, National Farm Animals, and National Siblings Days. That felt fitting. So we wear something attached with a safety pin, encourage young writers by helping out our branch Young Writers Contest or by donating to it, invite our siblings to the meeting, or write something about the ones we never had, or whom we miss terribly, but you’ll have to figure out your own way to honor the farm animals. So that’s just one day. April 30th has 12 things to be honored.

I find these calendars painfully fun. (*Now that I have found them, how do I un-find them?*). It is often when I am trying to learn something about someone’s birthdate, or need to write a message like this that I begin browsing them and get caught up in the infinite trivia... why is there a National Pecan Day on April 14th, and a National Pecan Month for the entire month of April, celebrating one of my favorite and more healthy nuts? *If a simple nut cracks a huge flow of memories for me - am I a nut case?*

Well, now I had to know... how is animal cracker day chosen but not dark chocolate covered caramels with sea salt? With little research, I learn that Alice Anderson and her husband co-founded the National Day Calendar as a quirky hobby. Anderson reported that they now get over 18,000 submissions yearly for new national days, only from companies and organizations. “This world needs some happy, fun things,” she said. The decisions are made by a special committee, and each year 30 new days are added. Benefits include a special press release, inclusion on the National Day Calendar website, a media alert to people who need to know, and a framed certificate. Of course these days are not enforced, but they make interesting conversation starters. See: <https://nationaldaycalendar.com/>

April is also National Poetry Month, right? You’ve heard “April showers bring May flowers,” from a poem by Englishman Thomas Tusser, and first published in 1557. He wrote: “Sweet April showers do spring May flowers.” A subtle, poetic difference, with use of syllabic rhythm, assonance, alliteration, and rhyme, though both iterations offer meaning. By protraction, a period of hardship or discomfort (the rains) can provide the basis for a period of joy (the flowers.) I look forward to reading more of what writers of all genres have written to mark these most unique times we live in, and am thrilled to know many of them are you.

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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. 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.

Next board meeting: Saturday, April 3, 1-2:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Writers Table

Writers Tables are short, informal, informative talks by branch members who volunteer to share writing-related knowledge. Any member can suggest a topic or suggest and present! These talks have become popular as members gather to hear from a peer or peers, ask questions, and share ideas.

If you'd like to learn more, please contact Linda at <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/contact-us/> and select "president."

April 10 – *Action Verbs: Add Zest to Your Writing* Presented by **Al Garrotto**

Exploring the pros and cons of verb forms

Abundant evidence suggests that some of the biggest selling books today contain hundreds of forms of the verb: "to be." We'll look at these exceptions, then make a case for the use of power verbs.

Al will share how the use of power verbs can greatly enhance the quality of your writing.

Al became so determined to use power verbs that he challenged himself to write a complete novel without a single "to be" verb, with one exception--in dialog.



Upcoming Writers Tables:

May 8 – Nancy Branka: *Writing Tech Tools for Authors*

June 12 – Karen Stephen: *Creation and Value of Book Trailers*



From the Editor:

Recently a *Literary Review* judge detected what they felt was unnecessary racism in a submission. As a result I wrote the following article (with excellent editing from Al Garrotto) about microaggressions which are unconscious slights against marginalized people. Note that marginalization can refer to any group we label such as: the disabled, the mentally ill, the poor, women who speak their minds, etc.

As CWC members, we need to think carefully about what we write. I would not want CWC to publish anything that could cast us as biased whether in the Lit Review, in an anthology, in a newsletter (many of which are searchable on the internet), or in anything else CWC-related. We need to be a neutral organization. PLEASE read the article.

mi·cro·ag·gres·sion

An online dictionary defines microaggression as a noun, a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group.

In this era of social divisiveness, CWC authors need to understand and be aware of microaggressions. Defining microaggression as only as a racial hurt, doesn't go far enough. Consider comments made about the mentally ill, the disabled, other cultures, and so on. Think about what you say and what you write.

Vox Media shows examples such as:

An Asian-American student is complimented by a professor for speaking perfect English, but it's actually the student's first language.

A black man notices a white woman flinch and clutch her bag when she sees him in the elevator she's about to enter. He is painfully reminded of racial stereotypes.

A woman speaks up in a meeting, but is interrupted by her male colleagues. In another scene she is ignored by them.

I recommend the article and the accompanying short video._

<https://www.vox.com/2015/2/16/8031073/what-are-microaggressions>

I'm currently managing CWC's *Literary Review*. A judge brought to my attention a submission that contained what the judge felt was racism. To give the author the benefit of the doubt, since I don't know them and prefer to think the best of others, I'll call it an unconscious slip—a microaggression in the form of a quick mention of a trait that could be assigned to a person of color. A character in the fictional story denigrated this person for reasons unrelated to race. So why mention the trait? Does the author unconsciously believe that trait helps to show the character as less? The comment was unnecessarily hurtful.

Wikipedia gives the history and pros and cons of the issue. **Microaggression** is a term used for brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups. The term was coined in 1970 by [Harvard University](#) psychiatrist [Chester M. Pierce](#) to describe insults and dismissals which he regularly witnessed non-black Americans inflicting on [African Americans](#). By the early 2000s, use of the term was applied to the casual degradation of any [socially marginalized](#) group, including [LGBT](#) people, the poor, and the [disabled](#). Psychologist [Derald Wing Sue](#) defines microaggressions as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership." The persons making the comments may be otherwise well-intentioned and unaware of the potential impact of their words. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microaggression>

In a world where we can be anything, be kind.

We don't have to agree on anything to be kind to one another.



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://cwcmt Diablo.org/contact-us/>

Joanna Kraus

Joanna's new play inspired by a true story and called *Champion* has been selected by Utah Valley University through a blind read as one of three winners in the 2021 Old Miner Playwriting Contest. *Champion* aims at Middle School students and will be read on Zoom this month.

The play will undergo a developmental workshop at another university and after that published.

Synopsis:

Can 12-year-old Robin do something that will amaze everyone and make her family proud? Robin joins a water polo club but is unprepared for the rigors of athletic training and the bullying and hostility particularly from one teammate. Although training is rigorous she is continually promoted to the next step. When the National Team rosters are announced, Robin is thrilled to know she is on track for that year's international team.

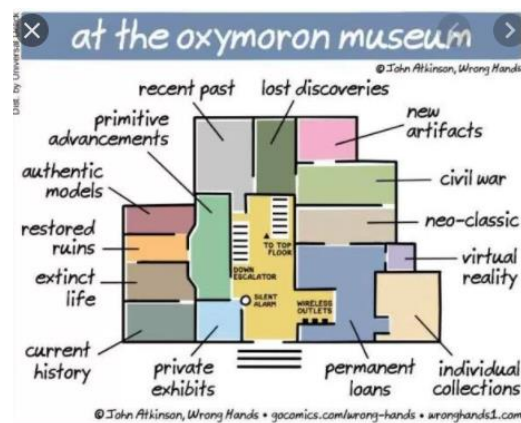
Christine Sunderland



Christine's seventh novel, *Angel Mountain* (Wipf and Stock, 2020), won Finalist, Inspirational, in the Feathered Quill Book Awards. Set in the present on Mount Diablo, *Angel Mountain* tells the story of a holy hermit, a Holocaust survivor, a literary librarian, and a Christian geneticist who search for peace and happiness in a world of earthquake, fire, and mob violence. Thematic subjects include human dignity and free speech, history and memory, faith and science. *Angel Mountain* is available through Amazon and local booksellers, as well as through the publisher.



Back cover endorsement: "In *Angel Mountain*, Sunderland has created a gripping and theologically rich novel, in which four remarkable people make their way through a shifting cultural landscape ringed with apocalyptic fire, revolutionary politics, and end-times expectancy." —Wilfred M. McClay, University of Oklahoma, author of *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story*



Member Events, News, and Salutes (cont'd)

Don't miss our Mt. Diablo members' articles in the *Diablo Gazette*:

<http://www.diablogazette.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Diablo-Gazette-Feb-2021D2.pdf>

Among this news and information packed publication are 3 Mt. Diablo members' contributions.

David George does a regular column on chemical-free gardening titled, "The Naked Gardener" and in this issue reports with Mt. Diablo member **Dr. Robert Lane**, medical entomologist and professor emeritus at UC Berkeley. They give the low-down on ticks.

Jill Hedgecock's column, "Book Ends" article covers Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* then and now. Jill had read the book many years before and had expected to skim it this time but became engrossed in it, thinking of what Bradbury could have known about Mars when he wrote the book 70 years ago. Jill also writes a column, "Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue" featuring dogs available for adoption and other pet news.



Fran Cain's column, "Journeyman's Journal" this time is: "Gateway to Briones and a Funtastic Balestrieri Family Farm." Fran found an entrance to Briones Regional Park new to her by driving up Briones Road in Martinez to the Briones Road staging area to the Old Briones Trailhead. Starting from this point reduces the amount of uphill walking and is gentler than most of the trails that start in Lafayette.

On this day she discovered the Balestrieri farm at 6140 Alhambra Valley Road in Martinez, and recommends to call ahead for an appointment or perhaps even place an order. www.balestrierifamilyfarm.com

Additionally **David George** is a certified Master Gardener and has an article in the 2021 edition of the UC Master Gardeners newsletter, "News to Grow By." Although he has a large garden of his own, he was asked to write the article "Tiny Spaces Gardening!"

THE MENTIONS SO FAR ON THIS PAGE SHOW THAT IF YOU HAVE HOBBIES OR INTERESTS ALONGSIDE YOUR WRITING, YOU MAY FIND PUBLICATIONS THAT WOULD LIKE ARTICLES ON THOSE PASTIMES.

Upcoming Programs for 2021

May 8 	Kendra Levin	Be the Hero of Your Writing Process 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
June 12 	Liz Tucker <i>Writing to Theme</i>	

“The Times They Are A Changing”

CWC BackFence Discussion Board Moves to Facebook

by **David George**

The CWC BackFence online Yahoo discussion group was originally established in 2006 for Mt. Diablo branch members to seek help from fellow writers, ask or discuss writing-related questions, and share news. Participation was expanded in 2010 to include Tri-Valley and Berkeley branch CWC members also. The motto of the BackFence is *Members Helping Members*.

Approximately 80 members have subscribed to the BackFence. But Yahoo announced that they are phasing out their Yahoo Groups feature. The Mt. Diablo Branch board decided to move the BackFence offering to Facebook Groups beginning in April of this year. You will be able to post to the discussion group much as you would to a individual Facebook account, but posts and replies will be shared by all subscribers. All Mt. Diablo Branch members will receive an invitation email to join the new Facebook-based BackFence during the first week of April, and Berkeley/Tri-Valley branch members will be invited in May. A Facebook account seems to be required but this is still under investigation. If you'd like to join the new BackFence, just click on the “Accept” button in the emailed invite and follow the instructions. A subscription guide will be emailed to branch members in the same timeframe.

Feel free to contact the BackFence moderator, David George at davegeorge7@comcast.net if you have questions or issues.

Book Promotion Resource

By **Judith Marshall**

I have been looking for book promotion resources and came across this list.

<https://kindlepreneur.com/list-sites-promote-free-amazon-books/>

January Speaker Fred Foote's Helpful Story

Fred Foote has a published story that is a good example of one way he develops diverse characters. He said, “I think your members may enjoy this story and as always I welcome their feedback. They can find the story at:

[Short Stuff by Frederick K. Foote, Jr. – FreedomFiction.com](http://FreedomFiction.com)



The Craft of Writing

The Purpose of the Last Line

by **Judith Marshall**

An article on the craft of writing from Judith's blog: <https://judithmarshall.net/the-purpose-of-the-last-line/>

When you begin the first draft of your novel, you probably have no idea where it will end. You may know where you want it to go, but the characters often take it places you never imagined. What's important to remember is: The last line is often more important than the first line of your book. So, ask yourself what do you want the last line to do?

- Immediately make the reader want to re-read the novel from the beginning
- Hook the reader into reading your next novel
- Leave your reader pondering the last scene
- All of the above



If you choose the last bullet, you've hit the mark. So how can you achieve such an ending? It's time to review the six types of endings available.

The Perfect Loop: Brings the reader back to the first line.

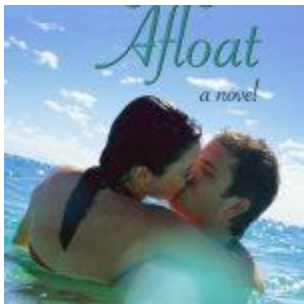
The Surprise Ending: This is tough to achieve. You add a new detail or switch up the story completely. In order for this to work, you need lots of foreshadowing sprinkled through the story.

The Moral of the Story: What you want to reader to take away from the story?

The Cliffhanger: This works if you have a sequel in mind and don't want to give away everything about the main character.

The "Happily Ever After": You tie up all the loose ends and reveal what happens in the future.

The Vagueness of it All: This type of ending is difficult to pull off. Readers don't want to come up with their own conclusion; they want to know what you, the writer thinks. They want to say good-bye to the characters.



When I began my romance novel, *Staying Afloat*, the story of a 43-year-old devoted wife and mother who re-enters the workplace and loses her moral compass, I knew in the end my protagonist would have to choose between what was right and what felt right. But I had no idea what her choice would be until the final revision. Ultimately, I chose a modified surprise ending; one that would surprise some readers and not others.

The important thing to remember is that the last line is often more important than the first line. Happy Writing!

Check out Judith's blog for more good tips.

Copyright and Copywrite

Remember, you don't *copywrite* what you wrote, you *copyright* it. "Copyright" is a legal right (notice the "right") giving the creator of an original work the exclusive legal entitlement to it. "Copywriting" is something people in advertising do — they write *copy* (or text). Incidentally, no one says "copywrite" without the "ing," they "write copy."

- Original written works are protected by **copyright** law.
- The top **copywriter** at the ad agency writes stellar copy.

If You Missed James Scott Bell

March Speaker at CWC-Mt. Diablo; author James Scott Bell

Writing Your Novel From the Middle

By Linda Hartmann

On March 13th for our monthly meeting, our featured speaker was the prominent, winner of the International Thriller Writers Award, James Scott Bell. His topic, *Writing Your Novel From the Middle*, happened to be just the place in a piece I have been writing, but have been stuck in for a while, so I was really looking forward to hearing him speak.

He began by saying that with all of the competent fiction out in the world now, we should always be looking for a way to elevate it. Describing a quote from Marian Lizzi, an acquisitions editor from Penquin Publishing, whose first boss warned the green editorial assistants two decades ago, the type of submissions that were the toughest to spot in traditional publishing, and the most essential to avoid were the ones that were “skillful, competent, literate, and ultimately forgettable.” Bell said we should take that to another level and make them unforgettable.

He then spent time on the structure within a novel, using a suspension bridge as a metaphor, with two big pillars grounding the entire structure, like the Golden Gate Bridge. He initially learned about structure when he wanted to be a screenwriter, and found that screen writing is all about structure. Bell says it carries over well into fiction, calling structure “translation software” for your imagination. That it is in the imagination of a writer that the heart, and feelings you know you want to express are inside you, but what structure do they take on in your writing? In academic terms, it would usually be a beginning, middle (or muddle!), and an end. Some creative writers like to play with that, which Bell says is okay, but for a book to definitely hold together, use this structure and it will work. Going back to the bridge analogy, the basic principle is that there are two big pillars that ground the whole structure. The first part as you enter the bridge (the story or novel or movie) and then you know a little bit about the bridge, the middle part is the longest part of the bridge, and then another little part is at the end as you exit. The cables (scenes?) come down and suspend the bridge holding it together, with the two pillars keeping it grounded, and a longer middle with a mid-point, is a sort of a broad plan of what structure does for writing.

Bell says that to grab the attention of a reader immediately, one should not begin a novel with a bunch “throat-clearing,” but rather to throw them into an “opening disturbance” so that by the time you get to the middle or the muddle the protagonist will have to pass through a “doorway of no return” (first pillar) with all sorts of obstacles and battles going on. It is during this time that the protagonist goes through so much that they cannot return to the ordinary world in the same way. Here he used the opening scene of “Wizard of Oz” with Dorothy and her dog, ToTo, running in the wind in the dusty dirt roads of Kansas portending what was to come.

As we entered a discussion of the middle of the book, story, or film, Bell says that this is where a death of some sort must occur. Death. He went on to explain that Death can be one of three different types: Physical Death. Professional Death. Psychological Death. With many examples, one that stuck was “Silence of the Lambs,” where Buffalo Bill being a serial killer doing horrible things, this physical death was a subplot. The main plot point, was the protagonist, Clarice Starling, wanted to become an FBI agent and part of the Behavioral Unit elite. She is given this opportunity, and finds she is the only one who can communicate with Hannibal Lecter, so if she fails this, her professional life will be over. She will suffer a professional death, as this will keep her from becoming who she wants to be. This is what drove the story.

James chose “Hunger Games” to illustrate the psychological death. Although it seemed to me it was all about survival and escaping physical death, with psychological games for the elite, he showed it differently, by going right straight to the middle of the trilogy. In the book *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins, Katniss is talking about not how she never wanted to be married or to have children to bring into this world, and now as a result of her participation in the games to save her sister, she was doing both. A psychological death. This is also what Bell eventually, through a look at many books and film, began to call the “Mirror Moment.” It is from this mirror moment that the protagonist begins to decide if, and how they are going to change. Thus unfolds the rest of the story.

Bell found that in so many books and films, when he went right to the mid-page or mid-point, more or less by a page or minute or two, there would be a moment where the protagonist is looking at where they are in their life, reflecting about who they have become, and who they want to be. In films he said it often does involve an actual mirror! Although the mirror moment can be a metaphorical mirror as well, one looking at themselves wondering how did I get here? Who am I? This is usually right in the middle. Some of the books and films he used to illustrate to us this point repeatedly were “Lethal Weapon,” “The Verdict,” “Casablanca,” “The Godfather,” “The Fugitive,” “Sideways” and books by Lee Child, *Bad ha Trouble*, and *The Hunger Games Trilogy* by Suzanne Collins, in addition to those mentioned above.

The workshop was riveting and engaging. James Scott Bell is a former trial lawyer, has won many awards for his thriller writing, and has also written a number of books on writing craft, including *Write Your Novel From the Middle: A New Approach for Plotters, Pantsters, and Everyone in Between* (available at Amazon \$10.99 paperback, \$3.99 Kindle).

Things to Do

SUBMIT TO THE 2021 CWC LITERARY REVIEW:

- The submission guidelines are on the state website: www.Calwriters.org
- The deadline for submissions is **April 15th 2021**
- Poems are now allowed to be **50 lines or less.**
- Narratives up to 2,500 words
- As in the past, you may submit something that has been published elsewhere as long as you hold the copyright.

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

OPPORTUNITY: Become the Newsletter Editor Get YOUR name on the internet

As with other volunteers in the branch, I have been doing this task for several years and it's time for someone else to put their flair into the publication which is posted on our website then searchable on the internet.

I have enjoyed compiling this newsletter and recently have figured a way to make it easier, however, after at least 7 years I wholly believe it's time for new blood. I was branch president for a while but when Marlene became president, she brought so many new and great ideas. The newsletter is more than ready for change.

I have held on for so long because doing this is **fun** in many ways:

- I've come to know and care for many branch members.
- I pretty well know what's going on in the branch and to an extent, statewide.
- The board is very supportive.
- Others write the articles and stories. I fit them in.
- I've learned about non-profits.
- I've learned and been able to experiment with new, minor technical skills (all I use are a laptop and MSWord!)
- I've had fun with free clip art.
- I get to read the entire newsletter!
- I get to insert cartoons, jokes, and editing hints.



I will only continue through June this year (the branch doesn't meet or publish a newsletter in July or Aug,) but I welcome anyone even vaguely interested to **step forward now**, ask questions, and let's talk about possibilities. I will wholly support anyone who steps up. I have the job tasks documented. There's a documented newsletter policy. The job is flexible. I will support you as little or as much as you'd like. I will volunteer to edit the newsletter before you send it for publication. Lyn Roberts has been a great help to me in that respect (when I finish in time to ask for her help) and Al Garrotto, another good editor, has volunteered to edit.

Twice in the past couple of years I've almost talked someone into taking this over. The first switched to a branch nearer her home; the second became our current president instead!

Contact me at <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/newsletter/>

Things to Do (cont'd)

The Alamo Womens Club

AUTHORS' FAIRE is RESCHEDULED to WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 20, 2021

at the Round Hill Country Club

We are very excited to announce that **Robert Dugoni** will be the moderator. He is a critically acclaimed *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and #1 Amazon bestselling author selling more than 6 million books. Many of you might remember him from a few years ago when he was an extremely popular author on our panel. If you are looking for wonderful books to read, please check our authors. They are some of the best-ever and we know you'd enjoy them.

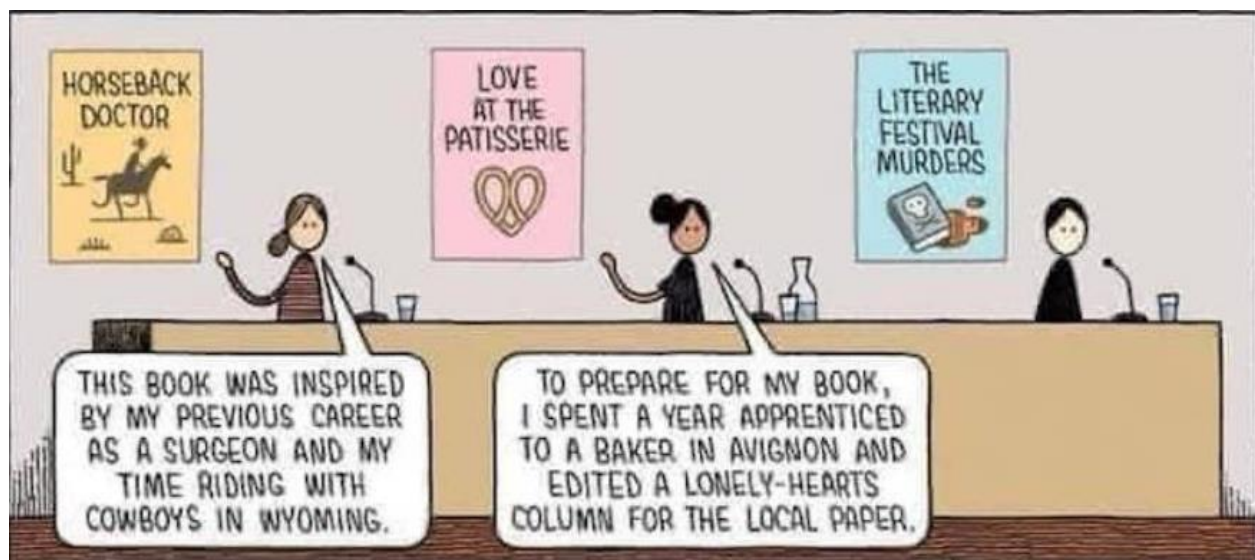
Robert Dugoni, Moderator	Mystery, spy, etc.	https://www.robertdugonibooks.com
Rhys Bowen	Historical fiction	https://rhysbowen.com/
Tim Tigner	Spy and espionage	https://timtigner.com/
Simon Wood	Mystery	http://simonwood.net/
Lee Goldberg	Detective	http://leegoldberg.com/

We will let you know when we begin selling tickets for our **October 20th** event and we hope that you and your friends will buy tickets at that time. We will send out more information at a later date.

If you have questions or would like us to include someone else in our notification, please let us know!

Jerilyn Strong and Sandi McKae
Co-Chairs, AWC 6th Annual Authors' Faire
jeristrong@gmail.com

Editor's note. Robert Dugoni is worth missing work for, worth saying no to anything that sounds tempting in favor of hearing him speak. He spoke at our branch 7 or 8 years ago. He's an excellent knowledgeable, approachable speaker.



Things to Do (cont'd)



by **Lucinda Jackson**

Having Trouble Finding Time to Write? Try **Shut Up & Write** (SU&W) with the group branch member Lucinda Jackson attends:

Lucinda says:

I wrote my first book and am now finishing up my second book at Shut Up & Write (SU&W) a FREE, on-line ZOOM (during the pandemic) meet-up for anyone—from beginner to pro—who wants to write! No one will critique your writing—we just write together.

Join me, Lucinda Jackson, and others at the ZOOM SU&W that I lead EVERY MONDAY from 3:30 to 5:30 PM. Other California Writer Club members often attend.”

Where: This link shows you the Zoom info and more:

<https://www.meetup.com/shutupandwriteSFO/events/sjgbtrycccbpb/>

How it works:

We exchange ideas and goals for 15 minutes, then—yes—we shut up and write for 90 minutes; then meet back up to share any methods, challenges, successes, and opportunities—or just chat. Get support and TIME for your writing. All are welcome!

Or search for chapters all over the world that fit your schedule. SU&W is in over 50 countries!

<https://www.meetup.com/pro/shut-up-write>

SU&W is a no-fee, safe way to get your writing on anything—your novel, thesis, document, poem, memoir, screenplay, whatever—DONE! I highly recommend it!

Lucinda Jackson is the author of *Just a Girl: Growing Up Female and Ambitious*

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://cwcmtdiablo.org/writerstable/>



Things to Do (cont'd)

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!

Next Open Mic Night is Wednesday, April 21 from 7- 8:30 p.m.

on Zoom, of course.

Register online at

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

Or just open the website <https://cwcmt Diablo.org> and click on the link in the pop-up.

It's that easy!



Be Interviewed These interviews help Mt. Diablo Branch members get to know you, your work, and your thoughts about writing and the writing process. If you would like to be interviewed, let us know through this link: <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/newsletter/>

Members' (Short) Works

Members, See your writing in print!

Send your **short** works (up to 750 words, preferably less) to be included in the Mt Diablo branch newsletter to: <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/newsletter/>



2020 Young Writers Contest First Prize Winner

Background Girl

Marilyn Jia

**Teacher: James Flowers
School: Joaquin Moraga, Moraga**

If you were to look at Emily P., the first thing you would notice was probably nothing at all. She was, undeniably, the least noticeable out of any kid in Ms. Beck's 9th-grade class, a feat on its own. Emily seemed to barely take up any space. She was pale, with grayish-brown hair, a little tall at best, and at the end of the day, there was only one thing about her that stood out.

Every day, when she walked into class, she had a different sweet. Always homemade. So when we were assigned a project to finish at home, it was no surprise to me that she pulled out a wrapped caramel on the way back. We passed the school bounds and the park. The park was almost empty, skies gray and riddled with fog.

"So we only need to finish the writing and the poster, yeah?" I said. I was a bit apprehensive that day. After all, I had never interacted with Emily outside of class, and honestly, I had never even noticed her outside of class. Now, we had to do a project together worth way more of our grade than any single assignment had a right to be.

"Mhm." She was still chewing the caramel. I glanced at the messy wrapper, obviously prepared in a rush. My own lunches were always store-bought. Was this even part of her lunch? Where did she eat lunch? Emily noticed me eyeing the wrapper, and her eyes widened a little.

"Oh," she said, swallowing quickly. "Want one?"

"Um," I hesitated. "Sure." At this point, I was looking to avoid what was obviously going to be an awkward walk to the library, an awkward two hours of writing, and an awkward "See you later" at the end. Shyly, she reached into her bag and pulled out a caramel.

"I got these from Cami. She means well, I guess, and these are better than they look."

The wrapper was sticky. I stopped walking and popped it into my mouth, while she continued on.

I chewed thoughtfully. "They're pretty good, yeah." The caramel was very good. Sweet and chewy. A passing dog barked as I savored the taste on my tongue.

"Cami, you said? Never heard of her."

"She's in our class."

"Oh." I swallowed the caramel and shoved the wrapper in my pocket.

"Cami's great at making sweets. Not so much a good student, but then again neither am I. All B's." She giggled a little, leaning towards the edge of the sidewalk. We turned a corner.

"Huh. I guess I never noticed- Not to say that you're..." I trailed off, embarrassed. Maybe it had never occurred to me how Emily did in school, or who she was friends with.

"I guess I'm not really noticeable, huh?" Finally, she stopped walking and turned to me. "I'll tell you, though." She smiled. "Us invisible kids have a little more fun."

"What?"

"I mean," Emily looked down again, at her shoes. Mud splattered the sides of her leggings. "Nobody has ever really put that much pressure on me. I guess I'm free to do what I want. And I noticed," She glanced away. "Sometimes you seem like you can't do what you want, like you're trapped a little by the spotlight or something."

I stared at her, shocked. The fog of the day had begun to clear. Here was a girl who made straight B's in school. Here was a girl with lollipops in her pockets and gumdrops on her tongue, sweeter and nicer than they appeared to be.

"Well, I'll keep that in mind."



2020 Young Writers Contest First Prize Winner (cont'd)

“And anyway,” Her eyes gleamed now, and she walked a little closer to me. “Nobody ever found out when I put that fake spider in Ms. Beck’s desk.”

“Wait, that was you?! That spider was huge!” She threw her head back and laughed.

“Yeah. And Kevin Li got blamed. I felt a little bad, maybe, but he’d been teasing Eloise for weeks, so he deserved it.”

The library was just up ahead. The poster was in my bag.

“Let’s work on this project, then?” I said. She turned to me, and her eyes were caramel, and she suddenly seemed to take up much more space than she ever had.

The next day in class, we didn’t say much, but I saw her turn her head to me and wink.

Nobody else saw it. Emily was again swallowed by the room, falling into the background. Kevin Li got up out of his seat and started yelling, Eloise turned around in her seat and sighed. I’d never realized, but Emily was actually one of the tallest kids in class, and she seemed to sit there with an air of confidence- like she could be whatever she wanted, and no one would stop her.



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!

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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 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: _____

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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