

# The Write News



A Monthly Newsletter

Elisabeth Tuck, editor

February 2022

## In-Person and Zoom BRANCH MEETING

February 12, 2022

**Check-In 11:00 Writer's Table 11:15 Lunch 12:00**

**Business Meeting 12:40 Speaker 1:00**

Register online at <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/>

Once registered, you will receive a link to join the Zoom meeting. (Please register by February 9, 2022, 12:00 p.m. as the venue needs an estimated headcount by this time. However, your reservation is accepted through Friday, 8:00 p.m.)

## ***Build an Author Platform that Sells Books (Even if the Word "Platform" Scares You!)***

***Featuring***

### **Joey Garcia**

Even if you self-publish or use a hybrid press, you need a platform if you want readers to find you. What exactly is a platform? It's all of the ways you leverage your expertise and tap your network to sell books: bylines in high-circulation publications, a social media following, organizational affiliations, your website, and media interviews. This presentation offers insider tips to build a strong platform and network—even if you're an



your audience, boost your book sales, and even bring agents and the media to

#### **What we will learn:**

- Craft an author bio that promotes your book and platform
- Position yourself as an expert so the media comes to you
- Attract major media attention without a huge social media following
- Think like a media outlet when designing your author website
- Leverage a media interview or presentation so it results in book sales

**Joey Garcia** is an editor and author platform coach. Her clients have been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Ms. Magazine*, CNN, and *The Tamron Hall Show*, among others. In 2014, during her book tour for *When Your Heart Breaks, It's Opening to Love*, Garcia leveraged her relationship advice book to become the invited on-air Relationship Expert for Fox40-TV, a gig she still holds. She's also been featured in HuffPost, *USA Today*, *Deutsche Welle*, KVIE public television, Sweden's *Global Woman TV*, Australia's *Ticker News*, and the *Dear Prudence* podcast. Joey established the first literary fellowship in Belize, her birthplace. [www.joeygarcia.com](http://www.joeygarcia.com).

**In-Person – Members \$25.00 – Guests \$35.00**

**Zoom – Members \$10.00 – Guests \$15.00**



## *President's Message:* Linda Hartmann

### Writing the Waves

Dear Members,

Greetings CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch Members! Facing the second month of the new year, how are you doing with your goals and "To Do" lists you set out for this year - last month, this month? Are you making time for writing? Reading? Healthy food? A bit of exercise? I know that this can be difficult.

If I keep goals manageable or within short spurts to finish the item, I am more likely to achieve the target and perhaps go beyond it. "Walk around the block" or "Walk up the big hill and back" often work. Or for writing, "Write for 10 minutes on something unrelated to work." I do not always make these goals, but they are good reminders of what I want to accomplish. It's a much better day when I click an item off as completed. If you have not achieved your goals, do not give up trying!

Writing is a process. We have heard repeatedly from our speakers that it requires jotting down ideas, percolating those ideas into a story structure (plotters and pantsters), beginning with a shoddy first draft, by getting your thoughts on paper. Then go through multiple rounds of revision and editing to improve your piece until it sparkles, obtain critique from your writing peers, and successfully finish. A long walk, deep breath, submit and repeat.

When I first joined CWC, I was looking for insights on how to be a successful writer, and I wanted information I could use right away on the projects I had started. I was looking at the organization in a transactional way - where you can get value for membership. Although I want you to feel you gain an advantage from your membership, I also want to share one of the surprise benefits. When I decided to judge the contests for Young Writers Contest or Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, I realized how valuable it was to be honored with a window into how the youth think and what topics they think about. Then, in joining the board and getting to know the membership better, deep and enduring friendships developed among our branch's independent-minded and influential people.

Indeed one gets more out of membership by becoming involved, beyond simply joining. Yet, I found the integral part of becoming involved was working with members to accomplish objectives or work through challenges on projects that created possibilities for me to get to know the fantastic people within this branch more intensely.

I invite you to ponder how reaching for an opportunity may help you to know and rely more on the people in our unique community. You might develop surprising connections that can keep you on track through your challenges, or to celebrate each other's accomplishments, and be more present for yourself, your writing, or your business.



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## 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/>

### Mark Clifford

“Author Pens Exciting Adventure Based on True-Life Experience”

By Diane Claytor

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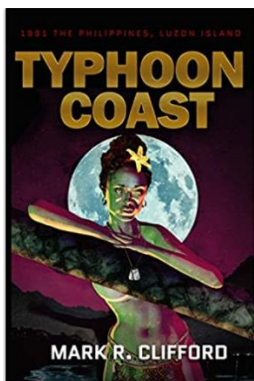


Many people retire after spending a lifetime of intense and dangerous work and happily walk into the sunset, content to spend their days relaxing with a fishing pole or tending to their garden. Moraga’s Mark Clifford is not one of those people. A bundle of energy it’s likely Clifford, a former Marine, retired police officer, and current author, rarely sits still for any length of time (except, perhaps, when he’s writing his next book.)

Clifford retired in 2020 after 27 years as a San Leandro police officer, noting that he was extremely proud to have served that diverse community. Referring to his career as "colorful," Clifford rose to sergeant’s rank and his assignments included being a police academy recruit training officer, a stolen vehicles investigator, serving on the SWAT team, and working undercover narcotics.

Being a police officer was the second career for Clifford, a man who admits to continually reinventing himself. Prior to that, the fourth generation San Franciscan and second in a family of seven children, served in the Marines for ten years, rising to the rank of staff sergeant. He received special operations training with the 3rd Marine Division in Okinawa and was operating in the Philippines in 1991 during the historic Mount Pinatubo eruption. And this is when, perhaps unknowingly, Clifford began preparing for this third career: author.

“After being at Mount Pinatubo and experiencing the second largest volcanic eruption of the last century,” Clifford says, “I knew I had to tell a story about it.” It was June 1991 and Clifford was stationed on Luzon, the largest of the Philippines’ 7,641 islands. He was living in the jungle with his troops when he was called back to base because the volcano had erupted. “I looked up and saw a huge cloud. It was an unbelievable cataclysmic experience,” he recalls, “literally putting us under ash.” Clifford always wondered why this wasn’t a huge story. “It was an epic disaster in every sense, like living through an apocalypse.”



Fast forward 25 years and the story that had been fermenting in Clifford’s mind since 1991 finally comes to fruition when he writes his first book, *Typhoon Coast*, inspired by the Mount Pinatubo eruption and a lost treasure rumored to be near the top of the volcano. As Clifford describes it, “*Typhoon Coast* is a rollicking ride through 1980s San Francisco, through the vibrant eyes of a boy who loses his mother, and then his innocence. In the jungles of the Philippines, that boy becomes a man and begins a lifelong quest for a mythical hidden treasure trove. Magical realism and romanticism merge with the hard, cold reality of a Marine’s life to reveal a glimpse into how the imagination conspires to keep us dreaming.”

Clifford is very pleased with the way the different arcs of the story eventually fell into place. “Imagine telling someone about surviving the most cataclysmic volcanic eruption in a populated area of the last century. It’s hard to really grasp the story. So I decided to tell it as a slightly fictionalized account, developing composite characters and settings,” he said. “I loved the creative aspect of doing it this way.”

Available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), one reader of *Typhoon Coast* called it a “fun and adventurous book,” while another said, “writing is great, what an imagination.”

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

It's been said that the best thing that happens to your first book is your second book. With that in mind, *Typhoon Coast* is the first of a trilogy: *The Barbary Coast: Fly from Evil*, will be released soon, and *The Devil's Sea* will be published in 2023.

Clifford, who is quite talented at marketing and firmly believes that life is a treasure hunt and the people you meet are the real treasures, coined a descriptive phrase to go along with *Typhoon Coast*.

“Life is a treasure hunt; seek and you will find” is on merchandise that can be purchased at [www.typhooncoast.com](http://www.typhooncoast.com). He has also buried \$1,000 in a public location in San Francisco with clues given throughout the book. Details can be found on the website. One of the most worthwhile and humbling experiences Clifford has enjoyed recently is doing veteran outreach through Grammy-award winning country singer Zac Brown's Camp Southern Ground. Clifford works with post 9-11 veterans during the camp's Warrior Week wellness program, helping them adjust to the many challenges they face as they return to civilian life. As Clifford proclaims, “We are here to take care of each other, be our brothers' keepers. We are as good as the people with whom we connect. When you've been able to achieve success in life, help the next person achieve theirs.”

Clifford has done this his entire life. Perhaps this is why Moraga resident and first responder Douglas Young called Clifford “a local American hero.”

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com) Copyright Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA

LAMORINDA WEEKLY | Author pens exciting adventure based on true-life experience  
file:///C:/...ndy/Documents/Web/Lamorindaweekly/archive/issue1522/pdf/Author-pens-exciting-adventure-based-on-true-life-experience.html[12/20/2021 6:01:17 PM]

### Jill Hedgecock

Jill was interviewed by the Nonfiction Authors Association on January 24th.

**The podcast will go live February 16 at 10 am Pacific Time**

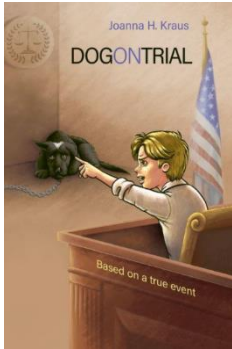
<https://nonfictionauthorsassociation.com/category/upcoming-events-2/>

**The topic Is How to Use a Muse Board to Keep Your Writing on Track**

When asked how she landed the interview, Jill said, “I'm on the Nonfiction Authors Association email list and went to their site to watch a podcast. There's a form to submit an idea for you to do a podcast for them and I filled it out!” Their basic membership is free. If you miss the podcast, Jill will have a link to share after that date.



## Joanna H Kraus



Joanna's new children's book *Dog on Trial* is based on a true story. Can a dog be convicted of murder? Twelve-year old Peter demands justice after a huge dog attacks his best friend, who was swimming in the canal. Though he couldn't save him, Peter vows to get even in the courtroom.

After conflicting testimony and surprise evidence, his doubts mount. Justice is served, but not the way Peter expects.

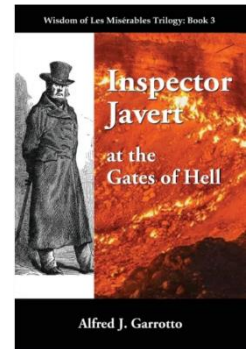
The fictional chapter book is inspired by a 1936 landmark court case in upstate New York. Geared to readers aged eight to twelve. Available through Barnes and Noble.

## Al Garrotto

Al earned a 5-star review for his book, *Inspector Javert: at the Gates of Hell* (part of his Wisdom of Les Misérables series) from Reader Views.

Reader Views offers "book by book reviews for independent authors. . . Reader Views started in 2005 as a book review service. We quickly identified a need for indie author representation in the literary world and expanded into offering a variety of services to help capture the attention of potential readers."

Read Al's book's review at



[https://readerviewsarchives.wordpress.com/2022/01/27/reviewgarrottoinspectorjavert/?fbclid=IwAR3zEBfJqIHFEg7fkEBOe-5NTiRvboTEzkeYI2jJI9To9Hir1O9aF9b6Y\\_4](https://readerviewsarchives.wordpress.com/2022/01/27/reviewgarrottoinspectorjavert/?fbclid=IwAR3zEBfJqIHFEg7fkEBOe-5NTiRvboTEzkeYI2jJI9To9Hir1O9aF9b6Y_4)

## 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/>

### Cindy Leonard

Interviewed by Heidi Eliason

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

I like the sounds and etymologies of language. I like creating scenes that show a story. The time to write is a gift.

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

In nonfiction the organization of themes or chapters and narrowing my focus while staying within those boundaries is challenging. In memoir the most difficult for me is vulnerability and reconciling the impossibility of pleasing everyone and the tendency to perfect each sentence rather than just writing what comes to mind. Editing will come later.



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

A memoir of being raised on the road. My dad was a magician and my mom was the Levitating Lady & The Human Cannonball.

## *Be Interviewed (Cont'd)*

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

There have been many influences including the clarity of Marilyn Robinson, the humor/therapy of David Sedaris, and the scenes of Virginia Woolf.

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

I have an MTS in theological studies from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. Although research papers are very different from personal essays, the practice forced me to narrow my focus. I have an MFA in creative writing in both nonfiction and fiction from St. Mary's College. A writer does not need an MFA to be a good writer, but it helped me to be aware of tense, voice, and transition. They had a saying, "Each word costs you \$5." Say as much as you can with as few words as possible! No passive voice. The author has authority.

### **Approximately how long have you been a CWC member?**

Two months.

### **How has your CWC membership helped you or your writing?**

I've joined a critique group starting soon, and meeting other writers has been enjoyable.



### **Do you have published works?**

A twelve-page essay as part of an anthology published with Shebooks.net.

### **What was your path to getting your essay included in the anthology?**

Five or six years ago, I took a memoir class at Stanford Continuing Studies online. The instructor was Laura Fraser. She and a few other women had or were in the process of starting Shebooks.net. As I remember, they had a contest for stories about mothers. My essay about my mom, *The Levitating Lady*, was a runner up and chosen to be a part of the anthology. I was very excited!

Since the essay was digitally published, there was a change of ownership, and Shebooks.net is now She Writes Press. Shebooks.net no longer exists.

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

Write a little every day. Just write, don't worry about editing until later.

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

A love of writing, a space, and designated time to write. Publishing is a wonderful acknowledgment of that commitment. Yet, success as a writer might be unpublished work written for ancestral history or other valuable need.

### **What are your future writing goals?**

I want to complete my memoir before I die. I want to finish several travel essays and a fiction short story underway. Publication would be very nice.

Slate has an excellent article written by a professional book reviewer on book reviews in general and sometimes referring to Amazon and Good Reads reviews.

<https://slate.com/culture/2016/09/a-professional-book-critic-in-praise-of-amazon-reader-reviews.html>

## *Be Interviewed (cont'd)*

### Michael Barrington

Interviewed by Heidi Eliason



**1. How long have you been a member of the California Writers Club and what do you hope to get out of your membership?**

About four months. What I need as sort of break from actual writing is to be with other writers who want to meet every couple of weeks and just chat informally about writing, personal writing issues, publishing issues, books we are reading and why, etc. If a person wants feedback on an item, that would be OK too. However, it would not be a formal critique group as such with homework, taking turns to share, etc.

**2. What have you written and has any of your work been published?**

I have three books published (*Let the Peacock Sing: Love in a Time of Resistance France: 1942-44* (2020); *The Bishop Wears No Drawers: A Former Catholic Missionary Remembers Africa* (2017); *Becoming Anya* (2021) and a fourth that will be released in March. I have written numerous articles and short stories that have been published in several literary magazines.

**3. If your work was published with a traditional publisher, how did you find your publisher? If your work was self-published, why did you decide to publish your work yourself?**

I have self-published and also used a traditional publisher. I self-published because initially it was so difficult to find an agent or publisher willing to take a chance on my material. More recently I found a UK publisher and one in Ireland that was looking for specific material and they liked what I had written. I also write almost every day or work on my material five or six hours a day. I write because I love to write and have several books already in mind that I want to complete in addition to a list of articles that need finishing.

**4. Do you have a website?**

[www.mbwriter.net](http://www.mbwriter.net)

**5. What are you currently working on?**

I have just completed a manuscript for my UK publisher. I am ready to start a new novel, a follow up to *Becoming Anya*. I am writing an article about Nigerian writers.

**6. In which genre(s) do you write?**

Eclectic. My first book was a memoir of ten years I spent as a missionary priest in Nigeria, and three of those were during a civil war where I was stood up to be shot. I've written a historical novel about the French Resistance in WWII, and most recently a spy novel à la John le Carre.

**7. Since you write in multiple genres, do you have a favorite genre--have you enjoyed writing one of your books more than the others?**

My favorite genre is historical (modern) literary fiction with a twist. In all of my books, I incorporate a mix of cultures and often show the many challenges and joys of acculturation. I also enjoy the research needed. My next novel, which I plan to start in February, will also feature these issues.

Although my latest book is a spy novel, it is also a romp through Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, El Salvador, and England. I have no intention of writing in this genre again! This was just a novel that had been in my head for quite a while and I had to write. I'm happy it's completed.

## *Be Interviewed (cont'd)*

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

A huge amount of my material comes from personal experience and countries in which I have lived and worked. I have lived in seven countries and worked in more than seventy. I also speak six languages, all of which provide me with lots of material.

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

Its many moods: I find it stimulating, exciting, frustrating, satisfying, relaxing, and challenging.

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

- 1) My mother who when I was a child helped me enroll in the local public library where I developed a love for words.
- 2) My eighth grade English teacher who told me I was a good essay writer.
- 3) Brilliantly written books that have style, character, and an extraordinary command of language. (*The White House Years*, two volumes by Henry Kissinger, *A Monarchy Transformed* by Mark Kishlansky, and Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls*.)

### 11. How do you define success as a writer?

I'm a successful writer because I write.

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

None, really. Probably just not enough time for me to complete all that I want to do.

### 13. What kind of research do you do, if any, and how long do you spend researching before beginning a story/piece of work?

I love doing research, but I tend to go down too many rabbit holes and spend an inordinate amount time just satisfying my curiosity instead of getting on with my real work. The amount depends on the kind of book I'm writing. For my novel with the French resistance as background, I accessed archives in France in Brive-la-Gaillarde, Riom, Clermont-Ferrand, and Vichy. I have a collection of fifteen or twenty books which I read in French and English covering the occupation of France 1939-45. I interviewed people who fought in the Resistance and obtained stories from families who had relatives who were involved. I visited many of the museums and sites in France and spent eighteen months doing the research.

### 14. Do you have any advice for new writers?

Just keep writing. It's not what you publish that defines who you are. If you are serious you need to give as much attention to your book as you would to any professional job. Also, *make a double backup of everything you write!*



Person: How does writing work?

Writer: Well, you type and you delete.

You rethink.

Then you do 187 minutes of research and correct it.





You reread and wonder if you have a grasp of English

Then you revise.

Person: Then you're finished with the book?

Writer: Then you move to the next sentence.

## Upcoming programs

<p>Mar. 12</p> 	<p><b>Constance Hale</b></p> <p><b>WORKSHOP</b></p> <p><i>Writing Character</i></p>	<p>Constance is a San Francisco–based journalist and the author of cheeky writing manuals, a book for adults on hula, and a picture book for children set in Hawai‘i. Her articles have appeared in the <i>New York Times</i>, the <i>LA Times</i>, and many magazines. In 2019, she published <i>Writing Character</i>, a book chock-full of thoughts, tips, and prompts that is part of the Lit Starts series, produced by The Writers Grotto. She is an energetic workshop leader, and she covers the writing life at <a href="http://sinandsyntax.com">sinandsyntax.com</a>.</p>
<p>Apr. 9</p> 	<p><b>Stephanie Chandler</b></p>	
<p>May</p> 	<p>Invitation to <b>Grant Faulkner</b> not finalized</p>	<p><i>The power of writing with abandon</i></p>
<p>June</p> 	<p><b>Betsy Graziani Fasbinder</b></p> <p><i>How to Be the Best Ambassador for Your Book: Pitfalls to Avoid, Practices that Pay Off</i></p>	<p>Betsy is an award-winning, genre-jumping author, a licensed psychotherapist, and an in-demand communications trainer. She has coached public speaking for the reluctant and the downright phobic in fortune 500 companies, non-profit organizations, throughout the U.S. and abroad, working with executives, as well as with authors, activists, entrepreneurs, politicians, and thought leaders.</p>

## Meet Your Board

This is a new section with a new article or articles written by board members to share what the various jobs on the board constitute. Members may not realize what is involved in supporting a branch. Barry Hampshire is our first volunteer to submit an article. He actually wears two hats: treasurer and membership chair. This month he has covered the treasurer’s job. In spite of all he does in those capacities, Barry found time to write a fun story that was selected for the 2021 Literary Review, proving that being on the board doesn’t take up ALL of one’s time!



### Barry Hampshire

Mt. Diablo’s Treasurer



Leading up to last June’s Mt. Diablo branch elections, I decided to stand for the position of Treasurer. Many people would ask a simple question – why? To me, numbers are precise, they follow patterns, and they can be manipulated in many different ways. Perhaps as I’m treasurer, I shouldn’t discuss manipulating numbers. Someone may demand an audit. But let me just say that numbers are really fun. I can hear some readers groaning at such a suggestion.



What do I do in this capacity? I take money in and pay money out. It’s that easy. Do you want to oppose me in next year’s election? I’m not joking, that is what I do, and it is easy. Now the gnarly consideration in this exercise is that I need to account for every single penny. That means preparing an Excel spreadsheet with all incoming entries and all outgoing expenses. That wouldn’t be difficult but I have to bring together income and expenses that pass through our bank accounts, pass through PayPal, or are paid out of pocket by board members. That starts the entertainment for me.

## *Meet Our Board (cont'd)*

### **Barry Hampshire, Mt. Diablo Branch Treasurer**

I suppose PayPal is the main trouble spot. They charge us a fee for almost every transaction and unfortunately it is not just a straight forward fee. It is a fee that I need a calculator to determine. The fee taken for a \$20 transaction is not twice the fee for \$10. Excel is a great tool to help with this issue.

I need to send my balance sheet report to the board a few days before our monthly meeting. Depending on when exactly the meeting is scheduled, I need to move the PayPal account's balance to the bank account and give myself time to prepare the report for the board. It was somewhat of a panic period for me when I first took on the position. But now I'm feeling a little more relaxed about it. However, often the board meeting occurs before the end of the month. This means that other income and expenses for that month hit the accounts between when I prepared the report and the actual end of the month. I then need to revise the report later to reflect the true end of month balances on all of our accounts. Doesn't this sound like something you want to spend your writing time doing?

Unfortunately, it is not only our branch's board who want regular reports. The State Treasurer understands my earlier reference to potential manipulation of numbers. They require a quarterly report so they can audit our accounts. They ask for an unwieldy Excel spreadsheet that in some ways demonstrates how not to set up an Excel spreadsheet. But at end of the day, it provides the State with what they need. I should submit that sheet along with our bank statements within 10 days of each quarter end. The CWC state treasurer sends the total state information to the auditor the state employs, and after he audits everything, he sends it to the IRS.

When I inherited this role from Lucy Hart, she did a great transfer of knowledge to me, and for that I thank her. One of the first projects I undertook was to semi automate the Excel spreadsheets that I need to update with each month's data. This has helped my work, so that when there are discrepancies, I can find and resolve them more quickly. During next summer's break, provided none of you unseat me in the election, I plan on spending some of that time hooking the monthly and quarterly reports together so that I enter data once and both reports will automatically reflect the revised data. I can sense all of you drooling at such a thought.

I head a Financial Sub-Committee and have been requested to prepare a budget for the branch. I have been reluctant to do this currently because with moving to a hybrid style of general meetings, finances have been a little more variable than we have seen in the past. However, I believe a new trend may be showing, which means that we can plan more predictably over the long and medium range. So I may acquiesce and prepare a budget.

This all takes time, but I enjoy doing it and I don't seem to hear pounding on my door with hordes of members wishing to take over my position. Thankfully, I am retired and I still do find time to write, some serious and some whimsical pieces.

So, now you know the delights of being your Treasurer. It is my pleasure to act in this role and I hope to continue to contribute to the ongoing success of the branch. I always think it is better to view membership as an opportunity to learn, to grow, but also to find the time and energy to be a part of the branch's functioning, keeping it strong and vibrant.

I must admit that I do thoroughly enjoy being a member of this Board and working with Linda, David, Frances, and all the other members.

And as I said earlier, numbers have always been my thing, I struggle with words. And, lastly, did I ever mention that I'm a bit of a masochist? This does not apply to being on the board.

## Members' (Short) Works

Members, See your writing in print!

Send your **short** works to be included in the Mt Diablo branch newsletter to:

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



### Greg Coplans

#### "The Lion"

I am very pleased to announce that my short story, "The Lion," was awarded third place in the annual Santa Fe New Mexican Pasatiempo Story Contest. The story, set in Africa, may be viewed online at:

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/writingcontest/writing-contest-fiction/article\\_e754a768-5e8f-11ec-b937-b77690c6817a.html#tncms-source=article-nav-next](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/writingcontest/writing-contest-fiction/article_e754a768-5e8f-11ec-b937-b77690c6817a.html#tncms-source=article-nav-next)

I wasn't wearing my mask or hearing aids when the lion materialized out of nowhere.



I hate masks, except for the indescribable pleasure of ripping them off in my car, my townhouse, or anywhere where other people aren't in close proximity. If you have a goatee, like me, you'll know how much masks itch. What's especially annoying is the inevitable entanglement of the mask's straps with my hearing aids. Then there's mask-muffled speech — like hearing conversations through a wall — so frustrating, and I'm always the one apologizing, "So sorry, could you repeat that?" I have balanced the risk of death against a mask's discomfort and, at sixty-five, I've opted for the latter. Now, thanks to my booster shot, my long-planned ten-day canoe adventure down the Zambezi

is finally a reality. We don't have to mask up on the river.

It's irrelevant that I wasn't wearing hearing aids when the lion appeared — you never hear a lion approach. The canoes, beached for our daily mid-morning break, rested on a shallow bank of soft, white sand dotted with the tracks of birds, in a protected inlet shaded by overhanging trees — a haven safe from lurking hippos and crocodiles. This was one of the so-called dead times of day when animals remain concealed, so while the rest of the safari group chatted over coffee and rusks at the river's edge, I wandered up a trail carved out by elephants that wound up to the riverbank. It was late in the dry season, and once at the top of the riverbank, I easily threaded my way through scattered dry scrub vegetation that gave way to denser bush, evergreens and acacias. I settled behind a large thorn bush that screened me from the river because nature was calling.

The lion halted about a dozen feet from me. The mane was black and lush, the forelegs and chest heavily muscled. Fierce yellow eyes impaled me. My pants were around my ankles so I couldn't run. I couldn't move. The lion stood motionless, head cocked to one side, looking at me quizzically. What do you do when confronted by a lion? Do you avoid eye contact? Stand up and make yourself look as large as possible? I felt absurd standing up with my pants down.

The lion spoke. "Don't worry, I'm not going to hurt you. I've just feasted on a bush buck. Damn tasty she was. Nothing more delicious than a bit of tender venison, wouldn't you agree?"

Lions don't talk, certainly not in standard English. Nevertheless, however surreal, I knew it would be rude not to reply.

"I'm an old man," I said. "No exotic flesh on this body. My bones are brittle, largely void of marrow. You'll spit me out in disgust. I'm not a meal for you."

"Well, there is always the question of dessert," replied the lion.

The lion advanced and licked my arm. The tongue was raspy. It was a surprise that the licking was painful.



## Members' (Short) Works

### Greg Coplans' "The Lion"

"Ouch! Cut it out! You're hurting my arm!" Red irregular bruising immediately spread along my forearm.

"I was only joking about dessert," the lion said.

Why was the stench of the lion's breath so pungent? Aren't cats scrupulous about their hygiene? Isn't a lion an oversized cat? I reached out and began to scratch the enormous head behind one ear — a move that generates friendly purrs from my daughter's cat. The lion began to purr. I remembered that lions are a feline species that can't purr. Was I imagining everything?

"Good man," I said to the lion as I gently scratched it behind the ear as I would a cat. I couldn't bring myself to say, "Good boy," not to a male lion. Not to a male lion in its prime. "Who's a good man, then?" I scratched the lion's other ear.

I saw myself looking down at the lion, observing from above. The thorn bush was not something I could climb. How did I get up here? Disoriented and nauseous, I seemed to be floating.

"Well, I'll be off then" the lion said looking up at me. "It's been a pleasure."

\*\*\*

"My God!" exclaimed Aneni, the Shona guide, pale, despite his dark skin. "A lion took him." He pointed out the large paw prints in the sand and the spattered blood. "Here, see the tracks? It dragged him away. I never heard a sound. Did anyone hear anything? It must have been over so quickly that he didn't have a chance to cry out for help."

"What if he had?" a safari guest asked. "We couldn't have saved him. We don't have a rifle, and I wouldn't care to test your puny revolver against a lion, especially one that might be hungry. Anyway, I thought you told us that this time of day is too hot for lions." He looked around apprehensively. They all observed his shudder.

"I'm a nurse," a woman said. "He would have gone into shock, so he probably didn't feel any pain. Perhaps that's why we didn't hear anything."

I looked down, heard them talking, saw them looking around, observed their horror.

"Don't worry," I reassured them. "It's so much nicer here. I'll never have to wear a mask again and my hearing is so much better."



## Volunteer Opportunities Young Writers Contest

Our contest for middle school writers opens for submissions on January 15, 2022. I encourage everyone to consider helping with this popular and beneficial contest. If you are new to our branch, read about the contest and explore our pages dedicated to winners and award ceremonies at <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/young-writers/>.

### OPEN POSITIONS

#### Judging

Chloe Laube is our Judging Coordinator, and she'll be pestering... er... chatting with members in the next month or two, to see who wants to read and judge the entries. Sometimes there's a waiting list since previous judges always want to return, so get your name on the list.

If you are new to judging, don't worry – we'll train you. Our judges work in teams for each category/grade, so you won't be on your own. Categories are **Poetry, Short Story, Personal Narrative, and Humor**.

**When:** The judging period is April 1 – 15, 2022.

**Time to complete:** Depends on the number of submissions received. This is rarely more than 30 pieces in any given category/grade.

#### Administrative Tasks

Once the winners are chosen, we need help with preparing materials for the Awards Ceremony in May.

#### Tasks

1. Creation and printing of certificates for winners (**1 hour**)
2. Printing of envelopes for winners - to hold cash prize (**30 minutes**)
3. Creation and printing of certificates and envelopes for Honorable Mentions (**1 hour**)
4. Assembly of Awards Packets and mailing of Honorable Mention certificates – this can be a group effort (**3 hours**)

**When:** April 17 – May 10, 2022

**Time to complete:** The approximate time needed to accomplish the task is listed next to each item in the list above.

**Equipment needed:** A computer with MS Word and a connected printer.

**Skills needed:** Requires knowledge of **Mail Merge** in MS Word. **\*I will teach a class on how to use Mail Merge for anyone who is interested, even if you can't volunteer at this time.**

#### Anthology preparation

Every year, we create and publish an anthology of the winning entries. Help prepare the anthology for publishing.

**What:** Copyedit and layout of document. Help find errors!

**When:** April 17 – 27, 2022, a few hours total time

#### PowerPoint Presentation

Every year, we create a presentation featuring our winners and their pieces.

[Go here to download last year's presentation.](#) Make sure the sound is on!

**What:** Create presentation

**When:** April 17 – May 10, 2022, 10 – 20 hours

**Skills needed:** Knowledge of PowerPoint or other slide show program



## [Some Things to Do](#)

### Looking for a Critique Group?

Chloe Laube

As a member benefit our Mt. Diablo branch facilitates the formation of critique groups. We also connect writers with existing groups that are looking for additional members. All groups are independent, self-governing, and not sponsored by CWC.

If you are seeking a group or want assistance in establishing a group, please send an email indicating your needs and genre -- fiction, non-fiction, memoir, poetry, etc., – to Chloe Laube at [critiquegroups@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:critiquegroups@cwcmtdiablo.org)

. Chloe is coordinating this activity and has three current opportunities:

1. An established group is hoping to add one or two members interested in mystery, crime, or police procedurals.
2. Another existing group, focused on more eclectic fiction, would like to add one or two members.
3. A member is offering to host a new group for poetry.

If any of these appeal to you, please email Chloe, and she will forward your information to the respective group leader.

Thanks to all of you who responded so quickly to her initial query. We intend to keep the information updated and appreciate your help.

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## NEW PROGRAM!

**Wed., February 9, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm**

**Writers Connection** is the brainchild of CWC member Michael Barrington. Michael envisions a social place where like-minded people, hapless authors and creative geniuses can come together and chat about the one thing they all have in common: the compulsion to write. We will meet twice monthly, open to any CWC member, published, or not, interested in a freewheeling, nonjudgmental, welcoming, and relaxed environment. Its content will include a potpourri of any writing or associated topics: news items, agents, publishers, bouquets, & brickbats. Membership is open-ended, limited only by space, and people may come and go as they please.

Anticipated time limit initially 90 minutes but TBD as the group develops.

Join us via Zoom on **Wednesday, February 9<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 Noon until 1:30 pm** as we launch this exciting new group!

To get the Zoom link, go to

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpduqqqD0vHtVoexmShuSfeJah6Fmchs2Z>

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## An Easy Way to Discover Speakers Other Branches Are Offering

From Jordan Bernal, president of the Tri-Valley Writers branch

As of January 1, 2022, statewide CWC branches' meetings with speakers will be added to the "Event" page on the state website: <https://calwriters.org/events/>

or via the first page on the Mt. Diablo website: <https://calwriters.org/events-month/month/2022-01/>

Keep in mind that branch meetings happen throughout the month and postings on any given day will not include all 22 branches' speaker meetings for that month.

There are also a plethora of interesting pages and posts on the state website that might interest you.

## Writers Table

These are short (40 minutes or so) informational or practice session prior to our regular meetings. Led by Mt. Diablo members, these sessions cover topics of interest to writers. Volunteer to share a writing, publishing, editing, research, etc., skill that works for you. Contact: <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/contact-us/>

### February 12, 2022 The Joys and Benefits of Free Writing by B. Lynn Goodwin



What you will learn:

- How to problem solve writing issues by journaling
- The benefits of journaling as your character

Lynn owns Writer Advice, [www.writeradvice.com](http://www.writeradvice.com). Her memoir, *Never Too Late: From Wannabe to Wife at 62* won a National Indie Excellence Award a Human Relations Indie Book Award, and a Pinnacle Book Award as well as being an Honorable Mention in other contests.

Her YA, *Talent*, won a bronze medal in the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards, was short listed for the Literary Lightbox Award, and was a finalist for a Sarton Women's Book Award. Her first book, *You Want Me to Do WHAT? Journaling for Caregivers* is used by caregiving groups.

Shorter works have appeared in Hip Mama, The Sun, [GoodHousekeeping.com](http://GoodHousekeeping.com), [PurpleClover.com](http://PurpleClover.com), and Flashquake among other places. She is a reviewer and teacher at Story Circle Network as well as Writer Advice and is available to write guest blogs for your web site. She lives east of Berkeley and west of the San Joaquin Valley with her energizer-bunny husband and their exceptional terrier.

## San Francisco Writers Conference (SFWC)

From Carole Bumpus, NorCal Chair

Due to Covid the conference has been postponed to July 21-24th.

The date for the Summit for Poetry and Screenwriters is **Saturday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

## Speak or Listen at Open Mic Night

Open Mic is FUN  
and Inspiring!

You'll be amazed  
(*blown away, actually*)  
by the talent in our club.

**WE HAVE TWO OPEN MIC EVENTS EACH MONTH.**

Please [register](#) to attend. See our [Events Calendar](#) for  
upcoming events.

### Zoom Open Mic

Wednesday **or** Thursday after the second Saturday of the month. Our next meeting is Thursday, February 17, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

Join us for our virtual open mic session. Sign up to read or as part of the audience. We'd love to hear your work!

Readers have 5 -7 minutes for reading and Q&A.

This event is open to the public. All writers are welcome to read.

### In-Person Open Mic

Our next meeting is Thursday, February 24, 2022, 12:00 – 2 p.m.

Experience the stimulation of a friendly audience! Meet us at noon for an optional lunch.

Reading starts at 1:00.

Chicken Pie Shop

1251 ARROYO WAY

Walnut Creek

<https://chickenpieshopwc.com/>

[This event is open to the public. All writers are welcome to read.](#)

[Click Here to Register](#)



Imagine something like ¶  
this in our high schools ¶

This locker area is in a science museum



# 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 Nov 2021

JACK LONDON FOUNDER’S CIRCLE (\$500+)

**Susan Berman**

THE JOHN STEINBECK SOCIETY (\$250 - \$499)

**Robert Lane**

**Linda Hartmann**

**David George** In honor & support of **R. Lee Paulson** Humor Award

JOHN MUIR MEMBER CLUB (\$150 -

\$249) **Ken Kerkhoff** in honor of **S. M**

**Pejathaya**

INA COOLBRITH LAUREATE CLUB (\$100 - \$149)

**Kathy Urban** in honor of **Susie Wilson**

**Elizabeth Pentacoff** in honor of **Susie Wilson**

**Judith Marshall**

MARY AUSTIN WRITERS CLUB (\$50 - \$99)

**Lynn Goodwin**

**Uyen Chau Nguyen**

HELEN HUNT JACKSON GROUP (\$25 - \$49)

**Robert Poirier**

**Janet Clark**

THE GERTRUDE ATHERTON GUILD (\$10 - \$24)

**Marjorie Witt**

**Ravinder Ramchan**

**Jonathan Singh** in honor of **Ali Singh**

**Dennis Yee** in honor of **Natasha Yee**

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://cwcmtdiablo.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://cwcmtdiablo.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

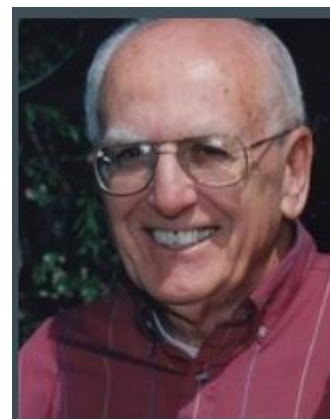
**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORT THIS ANNUAL CONTEST**

## In Memoriam

### Theodore W. Fuller Ted

February. 1, 1928 - January. 23, 2022

Theodore W. Fuller, aka Ted, aka Theodorable Wonderfuller, passed away in his sleep at 93 years young. He was born in Topeka, Kansas, to parents William Henry Fuller and Ruth Irene Brown and spent his childhood in and around Denver eventually meeting his first wife, Betty Ann Bangs, at Western State College in Gunnison, CO. They moved to Pleasant Hill in 1963 and enjoyed over 30 years together. Ted was active in his children's lives, and enjoyed a long fellowship with the Lafayette Christian Church. After Betty died in 1999, Ted met and married Norma Lent and they shared 16 years together until she passed in 2016.



Ted wrote for a utility company in Denver then transferred to PG&E in 1963 to edit the PG&E Progress newsletter sent to customers inside their paper bills. He joined Toastmasters there, and continued meeting with different clubs for decades. After he retired at 55, things really took off. He and Betty purchased a 7-Eleven franchise in Pleasant Hill, followed by the start-up of Fubar's Comedy Club. Ted worked with many nonprofit organizations including the PH Historical Society, Rodgers Ranch Heritage Center, **California Writers Club**, Onstage Theater, and the Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber recognized his dedication by voting him Pleasant Hill's Citizen of the Year in 1995. Ted continued to write after he retired from PG&E, setting up his own publishing company to facilitate the publication of several books, including a children's book.

As the years progressed, Ted shifted his focus to issues around aging. He wrote the Senior Scene column in the *Contra Costa Times* for several years, served on the Pleasant Hill Commission on Aging, developed an "Age Less – Live Longer" writers forum in 2000, and another forum in 2012 called "The Best Is Yet to Come". He was a founding member of both the Silver Wings Repertory Company and The Vagabond Players--both senior theater groups that perform for assisted living and senior centers.

Ted brought a sense of humor to everything he did. He loved to laugh, and enjoyed bringing laughter to others, usually at his own expense! He maintained until the end that it kept him young. He was telling puns until the day of his death.

Ted is survived by his companion Susan Pinedo, his children Dave (Carol Turner), Tom (Hary), Andy (Yoshiko), Ted (Gwyn Kanekofuller) and Liz (Jeff Carmichael), grandkids Christopher, Kati, Brian, Matthew, Alex and Spencer, and great granddaughters Kailey, Olivia and Rosalie. Through Norma, he added stepchildren Laura (Dave Silverman) and Dean Lent, and grandson, Jake, to his family. Through Liz he added step grandchildren Lani and Jason Carmichael (Alysia), and their six children.

A Celebration of Life will take place later in the spring or summer. Email Liz at [jcarfuller@gmail.com](mailto:jcarfuller@gmail.com) if you'd like to be notified about this.

If you'd like to donate something in Ted's name please consider supporting one of these organizations: Lafayette Christian Church (<https://www.lafayettechristianchurch.org/>),

Pleasant Hill Senior Center (<https://www.pleasanthillrec.com/526/Sponsorships>),

Kindred Hospice in Dublin, CA (<https://www.kindredhospice.com/locations/kindred-hospice-dublin/>).

## *In Memoriam (cont'd)*

### Ted Fuller's History with the California Writers Club

By the late 1980s, there were enough writers and would-be writers in the East Bay that the idea of locating a branch of the California Writers Club in Contra Costa County made sense.

Some people were already at work creating what would become the nucleus of a new CWC branch. Berkeley Branch members Bobbie Davis, Shyrle Hacker, and **Ted Fuller** decided the new branch should be centered in Pleasant Hill. At the same time, Helen McGrath, one of the charter members of the Mount Diablo Branch, remembers starting three different informal writers groups.

Although the branch charter was authorized in June 1987, in an article dated March 31, 1987, the *Contra Costa Times* reported that the group was actively seeking members.

Ted served as branch president from 1990 – 1991 and received the Jack London Award in 1993.

