



The Write News

A Monthly Newsletter

March 2022

Elisabeth Tuck, editor

In-Person and Zoom Branch Meeting

March 12, 2022— **Workshop 9:00 am to 12:00****

Check-in begins at 8:30. See below for timing.

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

Writing Character

Featuring

Constance Hale



Storytellers—whether they are novelists, memoirists, or narrative journalists—know that characters are key to any great yarn. Readers love *people*, and writers must deliver through short sketches to longer portraits to full-length biographies. Yet developing characters is trickier than you might think. Especially minor ones, where few words must make an impression. Connie Hale, who has made the profile her preferred form, gives us readings, interactive exercises, and prompts from her book [*Writing Character*](#).



Skills you will sharpen in this workshop:

- Rendering the physical presence of a person so that a reader might recognize the character on the street.
- Capturing a character's inner life through observed behaviors.
- Nailing character in three descriptive words.
- Treating *yourself*—author, narrator, first-person voice—as a character.

Constance Hale 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 *New York Times*, the *LA Times*, and many magazines. In 2019, she published *Writing Character*, 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 sinandsyntax.com.

***WORKSHOP FEES - IN-PERSON – Members \$45.00 – Guests \$55.00**

ZOOM ONLINE – Members \$25.00 – Guest \$30.00

****TIMES: CHECK IN 8:30-9:00; 3 hr. WORKSHOP 9:00 - 12:00; LUNCHEON 12:00 - 1:00**

President's Message: Linda Hartmann

Writing the Waves

Dear Members,

As writers, we observe the world around us to look for the minutiae that might be missed if we were not in a specific place at that precise time, and note the details using all of our senses for our next chapter, blog, verse, or story. There is never a detail too small to focus on; instead, such an abundance of particulars that it may be challenging to focus on a single element or take in the big picture. Much like a camera to the environment, our eyes open and interface with our brains seeing where they are at any given moment, set on wide-angle or close-up, allowing more or less light into what we see. Your mood, perspective, your location at that time influence what you will see and what it means to you. We are trained to note how the outside world makes us feel inside. What happens to you physically when you look up at the full moon vs. if you see someone ducking behind the bush in your backyard? The former may be very lingering, opening, and compelling a pause to ponder and enjoy, while the latter may spark an impulse for fight or flight, to close up and to protect. Mulling this as a plot twist might be that the figure behind the bushes is someone you know, with a hit to the head creating a confused state and trying against uncertain odds to find familiarity - easier to see under the light of the full moon.



In concert, the month of March is an entrance to spring, a time for opening lenses and shifting our perspectives to a new season. Who said, *"Don't say that spring has come until you can put your foot on nine daisies."* For me, spring is here when the sunny daffodils open, and the acacias send me sneezing -- hunting down the antihistamines.

Like a lull between projects, the pause to appreciate a full moon may be too subtle to fully acknowledge; but I feel small and know my place in the universe at this wonder. Many see a pause in our writing routine as "writers' block." This lull can be the opening of a lens to your next idea or a way of preparing, strengthening, and mulling, taking a moment from the struggle to learn what may propel you - like rain and sun, onto a flower to bloom into the subsequent work. With creative processes, much like nature, we mustn't judge or shoo these moments away; instead, embrace the quiescence and use them as our own creative breeding ground.

On March 18th have yourself a merry "worm moon," a term coined by Native Americans. This was when the earthworms were observed coming out. Recognizing nature's pauses, cycles, and struggles is part of a more extensive creative process; it helps us embrace each moment. Free write. Jot down the details you see and feel. These writings may become the impetus and archives for your next great project!

CONTENTS

- p. 3 Member Events: Senati Mesfin Piccigallo
- p. 4 – 5 Be Interviewed: Dan Patterson; Rhett Bratt
- p. 6 Upcoming Programs;
- p. 6 - 8 Meet Your Board: President Linda Hartmann
- p. 9 - 12 Members' Short Works: Why I Do Science Robert Lane; The Promise Denise P Kalm;
Eulogy JD Blair; Book Review of *Salt to the Sea* Frances Stephenson
- p.12 - 16 Some Things to Do: Find a Critique Group; Writers Connection meeting; NorCal Leadership
Conference; Robert Dugoni on G. Cramer's Blog; Find Other Branch Programs; Important Days
in March for Writers; SF Writers Conference; Open Mic; Brentwood Literary Stroll
- p. 17 Young Writers Contest Donor Page

Member Events, News, and Salutes



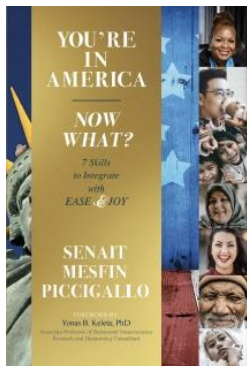
If you have a new publication, a book launch, an upcoming media interview, please write up a short announcement and let us put you in the newsletter. Gather up a picture of yourself or your publication and to submit, go to:

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

Senati Mesfin Piccigallo

You're in America —Now What? This is a guide to help immigrants transition into their new country. The book reflects the author's life experiences of coming to her new home by way of China and Eritrea. It includes several researched skillsets designed and based on stories and advice for first-generation immigrants from developing nations to make the American integration process easier and enjoyable.

"Not only is this a well-organized, well-researched guide, but it's absolutely fascinating reading! The author has had a great deal of relevant life experience and has worked through more transitions and challenges thus far than many people will experience in their whole life. That makes this information valuable and useful for any new arrivals/people considering a move to the US, and for US citizens wanting to empathize with new Americans, or for those considering emigrating themselves. This book is definitely worth checking out, both as a helpful manual for immigrating to a new country, but also as a worthwhile 'walk a mile in my shoes' change of perspective." L. Gage (Educator) -NetGalley Review



Senait Mesfin Piccigallo is an author who speaks and writes in three languages; Tigrinya, Amharic, and English. She has kept journals to navigate her ever-changing life transition from Ethiopia and Eritrea to China and the USA. She taught Chinese teachers to prepare their curriculum in English while working as a second language teacher for two years in Dalian, China. Senait is a graduate of Asmara University in East Africa and she has a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Anthropology. Senait is married with three children.

BOOK EMOTION IS:

THAT MOMENT WHEN YOU
FINISH A BOOK, LOOK AROUND,
AND REALIZE THAT EVERYONE IS
JUST CARRYING ON WITH
THEIR LIVES...



AS THOUGH YOU DIDN'T
JUST EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL
TRAUMA AT THE HANDS
OF A PAPERBACK.

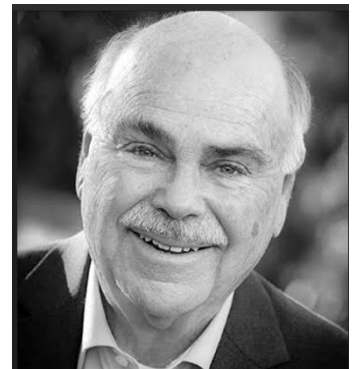
Be Interviewed

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/>

Dan Patterson

by Heidi Eliason



1. Approximately how long have you been a CWC member and why did you join?

I joined CWC early in Jan 2022. My goals with the club are to improve my writing and learn more about editing and publishing my recently completed science fiction book, *L.D., the Underdog*. Also, ideas on getting sales of the book, and finding the right person who would buy the movie rights would be great.

2. What inspires your writing?

Since I am a huge science fiction fan, I have read the works of most of the legendary greats of sci-fi. I have also viewed a large selection of TV and movie productions in this genre. Some of the TV and film is great, and some not so great. My goal is to write an epic book that will be a best seller and also inspire production for film or TV.

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

I tried to create a story with action and scenery set in a futuristic world, but at the same time presenting memorable characters and dialogue with an infusion of humor. I did not do research, but I have a science degree and am always interested in new developments in all areas of science. That knowledge, plus an interest in politics, history, and being a student of human nature helped me shape my story and the characters in my book.

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

I have read many good books about writing, and they have all been helpful. I recently read a great book by J. Michael Straczynski, *Becoming a Writer, Staying a Writer*, which I recommend.

5. What are your future writing goals?

While my book is finished, the stories of its characters are not, so I plan on continuing the saga

Rhett Bratt

by Heidi Eliason

1. Approximately how long have you been a CWC member and why did you join?

I joined CWC in January. I majored in English composition in college, and I've written during the (many!) years since, but now I want to make writing a central part of my life. I'm hoping that CWC can be a resource to help me sharpen my skills and build on my commitment with discipline and focus.

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

I've written a couple novels, several short stories, and a blog over the years, but none of it has been published.

3. Do you have a website?

I have a blog that I post to sporadically. I'm hoping to make that a more regular occurrence. URL: www.rhettbratt.com I'm also just experimenting with a page on [Patreon](https://www.patreon.com/), but I'm not marketing it yet.

Be Interviewed (cont'd)

Rhett Bratt



4. What are you currently working on?

I am reworking a novel I wrote several years ago. It's really a teardown though, refreshing the characters and extending the plot timeline. I'm also working on a couple short stories and the aforementioned blog.

5. In which genre(s) do you write?

I write literary fiction (i.e., not genre specific), and my blog entries are personal exposition and interpretation, usually of my internal journey.

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

I write what I know, generally, so I heavily leverage all of my accumulated experience and knowledge. My fiction is generally set in places both physically and emotionally familiar, and my characters are highly informed by people I've known and circumstances I've seen. So my people and places are generally conceived within my experience, while plot is where I get imaginative.

7. What do you like about writing?

Writing is the way I'm most comfortable expressing myself, my thoughts, and ideas, even my emotions. It allows me the chance to revise and edit, so that I express more precisely what I think and feel. And it memorializes my journey, so I can reflect more fully as I consider it.

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

My influences have been broad and encompass more than the writing community. I appreciate ferocity in artists, and while my emotions run cooler, I admire those writers who will strip themselves emotionally bare. I'm not always that brave, but I aspire to be.

9. How do you define success as a writer?

I am successful when I am honest in my writing and when my prose is tight, respecting my reader's time and engagement. In other words, when I tell my full truth and do it with skill.

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

In the past it's been the commitment to write even when time is short and my attention flags. I'm hoping to make writing a central part of my life, a priority so I have the necessary space to write with focus and energy. Sustaining engagement with my writing will be what I strive for first.

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

I write what I know, so I don't start my works with research. My focus in my fiction is on characterization, which is largely internal and highly specific, and I don't need a lot of research insights for that. Instead I'll research as I write to make sure I'm not making factual errors with regard to settings, features, professions, and processes.

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

Um, the internet. . . .




13. Do you have any advice for new writers?

Nothing original. Just to write every day.

14. What are your future writing goals?

I would like to bring my works to completion and publish regularly.

Upcoming programs

Apr. 9 	Stephanie Chandler on Zoom	<i>Advanced Book Marketing and Launch Strategies</i> Materials will be available to print for those who sign up
May 	Grant Faulkner on Zoom	<i>The power of writing with abandon</i>
June 	Betsy Graziani Fasbinder in person <i>How to Be the Best Ambassador for Your Book: Pitfalls to Avoid, Practices that Pay Off</i>	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.

Meet Your Board - President

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. This month we present the board member busiest with Mt. Diablo business **President Linda Hartmann**



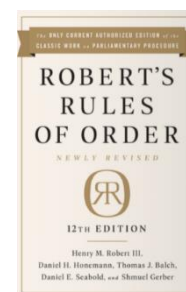
What does it mean to be president of the CWC Mt. Diablo Branch? Each CWC branch may have its own directives for the office of branch president in accordance with the statewide CWC Policies and Procedures, or general rules. These overarching governing documents are available to read on the state website: <https://calwriters.org/resources-for-branches/#docs>

When I initially became a branch member, I was unaware of the scope of what the many Mt. Diablo volunteers do. During a post-meeting session to hear how members could help, I realized what occurs behind the scenes including the talent, strategy, energy, and time taken to keep the branch running and attractive to a diverse group of writers. Additionally we want to grow according to members' interests and needs, with a vision for the future.

A board member approached me, and found my interest piqued. Still somewhat new to the club, and feeling out of my league, I was not sure if this was a path I should follow. It was clear there would be a steep learning curve. But that is a comfortable place for me, a chronic student. I was assured I could learn from the experience and expertise of others. The opportunity to grow, learn, and expand my horizons appealed. With my reservations articulated I was assured that during my training and assumption of duties, the board would have my back and allow me to mature into the role. That meant the world to me, and has been very true.

I trained for eight months with the title Vice President under the tutelage of past, and at the time, Interim President David George. I had a lengthy checklist of things to do.

-Read and embrace *Robert's Rules of Order*, America's guide to parliamentary procedure. I can hear your thoughts, "Wow, sounds like a real page-turner." Four books on the subject later, and despite its ability to bring on a good nap, I see how it ensures decisions are made fairly, and that the president remains neutral and objective.



Meet Your Board (Cont'd)

- Become familiar with** MSWord, Mailchimp, Dropbox, Excel, PowerPoint, Zoom, Calendar, and MRMS, a database built by a member of another branch to maintain the Club's membership records.
- Review** the state Policies and Procedures as well as the bylaws and any other relevant state documents (see link above).
- Read** the Mt Diablo bylaws.
- Read** the Mt Diablo president's job description which lays out tasks the president is responsible for or oversees through the calendar year.
- Review** the job descriptions of Mt. Diablo board members to become familiar with the activities they lead.
- Attend** a NorCal meeting to understand what this association of the 14 northern California branches does. Currently, about 75% of the total state membership is from Northern California.
- Attend** a state central board meeting to become familiar with their role in.
- Shadow** the acting Mt. Diablo branch president while learning.

So what is expected of the president of the Mt. Diablo Branch? And what does it entail? Time, effort, organization, and as it turns out, **lots of fun!**

Leading the general and board meetings:

When you attend monthly meetings, you see the president preside over the meetings as an emcee of sorts. I ensure CWC statewide and branch business is shared with members, necessary announcements are made, and encourage members to volunteer for branch activities. The president may oversee contests, encourage visitors and new members to introduce themselves, and members to announce accomplishments.



I also preside at 10 monthly branch board meetings and an annual branch planning meeting. I develop the agenda, and coordinate a time that works for as many as possible. **Board Meetings are open to all** members. See <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/contact-us/> for time and date and to notify me so you can receive an agenda and reports. We would like to hear your ideas

Meeting by Zoom forced a shift of gears. Discussions of the new technology and practice sessions with speakers and leaders take time. With a high-level of commitment from Marlene Dotterer, David George, Andrew Benzie, Lucinda Jackson, Kymberlie Ingalls, myself, and members of the board who Zoomed in for testing, it's working!

The president writes at least one column per month for the newsletter, may summarize the previous month's speaker's message, draft calls to action for volunteers, and generate status updates on projects like the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, (which I voluntarily chair.) The president writes or delegates someone to write two or three articles a year about branch activities for the statewide CWC *Bulletin*.

The president is the coordinator of information for the branch (and state through the Central Board rep and Bulletin) ensuring that dates, times, costs and changes to bylaws or policies and procedures are accurate on the website, our new-member materials, flyers, board meeting minutes, in the newsletter, and on any other documents we produce.

When votes are taken by e-mail all documentation including the initial motion, who seconded it, discussion, and individuals' votes must be saved in the branch Dropbox.

The CWC News! alerts about meetings, contests, reminders, and news of the branch are written by me and Vice President, David George.

Meet Your Board (Cont'd)

After holding this office for a while, I identified a missed opportunity. There was no forum for branch presidents to talk with one another about common challenges, the difficulties we share with leveraging technology for hybrid meetings, etc. I found that many other branch presidents felt the same and were excited to join a forum called the **Statewide CWC Presidents Meeting**. The CWC State Board President attends, as well as anyone from the CB who needs to address the group or wants help with an issue. This is an opportunity to talk about what works well, or not, and a place to teach and learn from each other. Facilitating these meetings is fun, and most participants have found them highly productive. Smaller special interest groups (SIGs) have met to tackle topics such as running hybrid meetings, keeping complex calendars, software issues, volunteerism, and increasing membership.

Many of our Mt. Diablo standing or long-term committees are highly functioning. I try to attend budding committees piloting new programs to help if needed and let go when appropriate. At times I appoint volunteers to subcommittees for short-term tasks.

Many tasks occur annually throughout the calendar year. For example, in March the president appoints a volunteer Nominations Chair, to prepare a slate of officers. Annually a Mt Diablo branch Distinguished Service Award recognizing extraordinary commitment and effort on an important branch project during that year may be awarded to a branch member. Biennially the branch may recommend a member for the state Jack London Award, for an outstanding member who has been particularly instrumental in helping the branch further its mission. I ensure a volunteer handles the branch voting for these awards, with a high degree of discretion and confidentiality.

Following publication and mailing by the state a copy of the *Literary Review* to each member, I ensure that members who have ordered and paid for additional copies receive them. Mt. Diablo orders about 15 additional copies to give one to each new member who subsequently joins our branch.

It is impossible to include every detail of what the president does, but I will tell you that it is fun, interesting, and rewarding. I hear from members and the public through the Contact Us page on the website, and I get to know so many wonderful members. Meeting the speakers and learning from them and from the member-led Writers Table discussion leaders has been incredible. Supporting new initiatives like Open Mic and the Writers Connection, and being a judge for Scholastic, the Young Writers Contest, and the *Literary Review* is also rewarding. To hear what the youth and adults are thinking and writing about is eye-opening, especially with all the change we face in the world.

We are thrilled you are part of this club and want to see you grow and use your skills, experience, and talents to meet our CWC mission of “Writers Helping Writers.”

Tidbit: The state organization is referred to as the Club. The 22 branches are branches!

Editor's note: I recall sitting at a pre-Covid lunch at Zio's with newish-member, Linda, who I almost talked into taking on the newsletter. David swooped in some time after that, and being a far better sales person than I, sold Linda on the president role. She has embraced it fully.



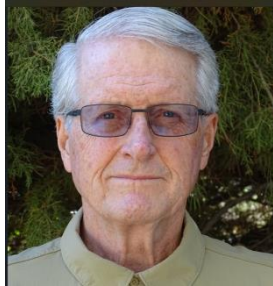
MY THREE FAVORITE
THINGS ARE
EATING MY FAMILY AND
NOT USING COMMAS

Members' (Short) Works

Members, See your writing in print!

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

<https://cwcmt Diablo.org/newsletter/>



Why I Do Science*

By Robert S. Lane

Long ago, while sitting in a Berkeley eatery conversing with a visiting scientist, we asked each other, why do we do science? It was a no-brainer: Science provides a lifetime of experiencing the joy of discovery. My love affair with my chosen field, entomology, began when as a young boy in Los Angeles I first saw a mourning cloak butterfly on the wing, and decided instantly to pursue insect collecting as a hobby. Innumerable days spent roaming the then-undeveloped Baldwin Hills yielded collections of insects, scorpions, spiders, lizards and snakes – basically, anything that crawled, ran, flew, bit or stung. In the 1950s, I even witnessed a rare event, a massive irruption of black-tailed jackrabbits in the adjacent grassy flatlands.

This early-life passion continued unabated until my thirteenth year, but wasn't rekindled until I took a course in entomology while I was a graduate student at San Francisco State College. After completing my doctoral training in medical entomology at the University of California, Berkeley, I began studying the biology of ticks, and the ecology, epidemiology and prevention of tick-borne diseases impacting public health in the far- western United States and, later on, in Europe. Our research sought to clarify what behaviors and environmental factors increase one's risk of exposure to human-biting ticks, how climate change may alter the Californian geographic distribution of the notorious western black-legged tick (WBLT) during the 21st century, and more.

Life sometimes comes full circle. Some animals I either collected or observed in my youth proved to be key players in maintaining natural cycles of microbial disease agents. Western fence lizards (aka blue bellies) were discovered to reduce the force of transmission of Lyme disease to people bitten by adult WBLTs by cleansing infected, juvenile ticks of their bacterial burdens. Jackrabbits were found to be important hosts for both spotted fever- and Lyme-disease-group bacteria and their carrier ticks. The research is never-ending, the devil is in sorting the details, but the great joy remains the chase and the occasional epiphany.

In a professional career now spanning nearly five decades, I had the privilege of sharing the joy of discovery with scores of esteemed co-workers globally, publishing numerous scientific reports with them, and co-editing a few books. While approaching semi-retirement in 2010, I began repurposing some of our novel research findings into magazine pieces, aimed at educating outdoor recreationists and workers, about noxious arthropods they might chance upon, and how best to avoid them. Although switching genres from technical writing to journalism late in life absent any formal training was challenging, it quickly became one of the most gratifying phases of my career. My only regret is that I didn't discover the California Writers Club sooner. And, there is so much to write, and so little time to do it.

Robert S. Lane is Professor Emeritus of Medical Entomology, Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, UC Berkeley.

*This piece represents a modified version of an essay Lane published in *Breakthroughs* magazine, UC Berkeley College of Natural Resources, in 2012.

Members' (Short) Works (Cont'd)

THE PROMISE **Denise P. Kalm**



Approaching my 45th birthday, I organized a party the Saturday before, both to celebrate and to introduce my wonderful mother to my friends. She and her husband, Tony, had planned a special trip around the world culminating in a monthlong visit to the Bay Area where she had lived for many years. Since her move to England, we didn't get to see each other often enough and pre-Skype, had to rely on carefully timed phone calls to keep in touch.

The night before the party, a friend and I went to see George Thorogood at the Concord Pavilion. A few songs into the set, my cell phone surprised me with a ring that cut sharply through the rock-and-roll cacophony. I ran up the stairs from my seat, trying to find a place to hear the voice on the other end, a voice I didn't recognize.

"Your mother, Louise Hitchcock, has been admitted to Highland Hospital. She's been intubated and is unconscious."

Mom had been playing duplicate bridge, a passion of hers. What could have happened?

I tore out to my car, dropped off my friend and picked up my sister, heading directly to the hospital. Pre-smartphone, I have no idea how I found the place, but somewhere after 9:30 that night, Tony, Debbie, and I were watching my mother while the doctor explained her condition and how she had been found.

During the bridge tournament, she developed a bad headache and went out to the car to lie down, hoping it would pass. After a bit, Tony went out to check on her, only to find her unconscious in the locked car. The EMTs broke the window and took her to the nearest hospital where Tony agreed to have them use all possible life-saving measures. By the time I saw her, they had scanned her brain and found massive bleeding. I couldn't figure it out; my mother and I both suffer from low blood pressure, so it seemed unlikely. Her health was good and she was only 69.

The doctor took me aside. Both Tony and Debbie were in shock and unable to make any decisions. "Much of your mother's brain has been destroyed by the blood, and while she is still alive, her prognosis is grave. If she were to regain consciousness, she would most likely suffer a great deal of paralysis and be significantly affected mentally."

The moment I hoped would never happen had finally arrived. Years ago, Mom extracted a promise from me. "If anything really bad happens to me, promise that you'll kick the plug. Okay?"

I said yes, in that easy way you do when asked to agree to something you expect never to happen. But now, the promise had come due. Tony would have kept her alive, hoping some semblance of her would return to him. They hadn't been married long. I had to decide and it had to be what she wanted. Otherwise, I would be left with my hope and my need.

The doctor said that as I felt she needed it, I could request more pain medicine. We both knew what was left unsaid. Unconscious, she showed no sign of pain, but with this choice, I could help give her the end I promised.

I paused, only wondering if we knew enough. If there weren't something else that could be done while knowing there wasn't. They removed all support except her IV. For the next few hours, I checked in with the nurse at regular intervals, asking for pain killers to be administered. It all took longer than I thought, and was infinitely harder than I could imagine.

At last, Mom was at peace and we were heartbroken

Members' (Short) Works (Cont'd)

Eulogy

By J D Blair

Critics called him a “genuinely fresh talent,” even though he had been writing prose for over forty years.

Despite his claims that he graduated with a master’s degree in literature from Harvard there is no evidence that he finished college. At Penn State, where he dabbled in drama, and at Harvard transcripts show large gaps in his attendance at both institutions. They do show increased interest in extracurricular courses dealing in the occult and martial arts, nothing approaching literature.

He refused to bow to pressure from professors and mentors to complete an MFA regimen and opted instead to, in his words, “take the low road” to literary success. Because he never sought out an MFA, acceptance of his work was hard to come by. Rejections from *The New Yorker* alone numbered in the fifties. Whether he achieved his literary goals only time will tell. As yet his name has not appeared among the pantheon of American literary giants Faulkner, Hemingway, Roth, Steinbeck, or Salinger.

In an early autobiographical essay published in an obscure Harvard newsletter he confessed that during his teen years he spent hours writing pornographic poetry in the storage attic of his father’s Olathe, Kansas, clothing store, “masturbating among the plastic ladies.” In subsequent interviews he admitted to becoming orgasmic while reading a critique of the letters of T.S. Eliot. What he found sexually arousing in the Eliot papers is anybody’s guess.

These adolescent episodes laid the groundwork that eventually led to the sexually explicit essays he exchanged with Henry Miller and Jack Kerouac in the early ’50s. He was a regular attendee at the Esalen Institute in California and often stayed at Miller’s home in Big Sur. Miller introduced him to Kerouac who in turn introduced him to the San Francisco drug culture that became such a large part of his literary focus extending into the seventies. Their published exchanges were met with critical ridicule at the time and most were banned. They appear almost quaint in light of today’s literary mores. There was an anthology published during this period titled *Psychedelic Pornographic Prose: Seeing Sex from the Far Side*. With diligent research excerpts can be found in small underground publications.

After missing a chance at the Nobel Prize for literature in 1994 he confessed to having difficulty with the word “literature,” for years spelling it “lituriture.”

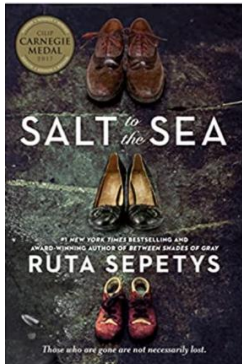
He died at 72 with his fingers on the keys of the Royal typewriter he used throughout his career. His final sentence, “He was a teaser stallion whose seed and talent are frittered away in fruitless pursuits,” is perhaps a fitting epitaph for a “genuinely fresh talent.”



Members' (Short) Works (Cont'd)

Book Review of *Salt to the Sea* by Ruta Sepetys

Reviewed by **Frances E. Stephenson**, Mt. Diablo CWC



Salt to the Sea, historical fiction, by Ruta Sepetys tells the personal story of four young refugees fleeing their homelands and hoping to evacuate to safety from the advancing Russian troops in early 1945. The story is told in the first person from the perspectives of four different characters. The refugees meet on the road in East Prussia during the cold winter. The Nazi Regime is collapsing and the refugees are trapped between the Germans and Russians. The four voices of the story are Joana of Lithuania, Florian of East Prussia, Emilia of Poland, and Alfred, a Nazi soldier. Each of the four young people have their own dark secrets from the past. Throughout the book, the lives of the four characters entwine.



Because the voices of the young refugees are teenagers and young adults, the story will appeal to young readers, but also to an older audience. These characters compelling for both ages because an awareness that, though they may be fictional, the horrors and miraculous acts of kindness the reader sees played out in the story could essentially be real.

The German ocean liner, the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, the Amber Room in the Catherine Palace in St. Petersburg, and Operation Hannibal, evacuating over two million German troops and civilians from East Prussia and the Polish Corridor, are all real. Many of those transported by the *Wilhelm Gustloff* were civilians. The author does successfully give a voice to the many refugees, particularly children, who suffered losses, family separations, and terrible hardships. There is never enough food to eat, warm clothes in the depth of winter, or shelter from the snow, sleet, and winds. Ruta Sepetys wants their stories told.

The book moves at a fast pace. It can be compared to a thriller at some points as the tension builds in the relationships between the characters. The stories of the *Lusitania* and *Titanic* are well known, but few people know of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*. I highly recommend *Salt to the Sea*, a well-researched, historical fiction novel. The book was awarded the Carnegie Medal in 2017 and in the same year a winner of SCBWI's Golden Kite Award.

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 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 to Chloe Laube at <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/critique-groups/>

Still open is a member is offering to host a new group for poetry.



Some Things to Do (Cont'd)

Writers Connection is 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. It is open to any CWC member published or not, interested in a freewheeling, nonjudgmental, welcoming, and relaxed environment. Content will include a potpourri of any writing or associated topic: news items, agents, publishers, bouquets & brickbats. Membership is open ended, limited only by space, and people may come and go as they please. Short readings are welcome.

Join us **March 16 12:00 pm–2:00 pm PDT**

Chicken Pie Shop

1251 ARROYO WAY

Walnut Creek, CA



To Register:

<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/register-for-writers-connection/>

NorCal Leadership Conference

NorCal is planning a leadership conference for October this year. Currently they are looking for a location. These conferences have helped train volunteers who are in volunteer positions or who are considering volunteering for the branch. If you are interested in helping with the conference or being an attendee, contact Andrew Benzie.

George Cramer's Blog Guest: Robert Dugoni

Robert Dugoni is George Cramer's blog guest where he shares some personal insights into his writing. Stop by and see what he has to say. You won't want to miss it.

This link takes you directly to the blog:

<https://gdcramer.com/2022/02/17/robert-dugoni-award-winning-author-shares-his-thoughts/>



Some Things to Do (Cont'd)

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.

Important Writerly Days in March

by Linda Hartmann

March 13: **Daylight Savings - Spring Forward! Change clocks ahead by one hour**

[https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-spring-vernal-equinox-~-:text=We'll explain ...reflect a different time zone](https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-spring-vernal-equinox-~-:text=We'll%20explain%20...reflect%20a%20different%20time%20zone) Will this affect or effect your writing habit?

March 16: **Freedom of Information Day** <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/FOI-Day>

March 20: **Equinox Earth Day, First Day of Spring** [https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-spring-vernal-equinox-~-:text=We'll explain ...reflect a different time zone.](https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-spring-vernal-equinox-~-:text=We'll%20explain%20...reflect%20a%20different%20time%20zone)

March 21: **World Poetry Day** <https://nationaltoday.com/world-poetry-day/>

March 25: **Tolkien Reading Day** <https://nationaltoday.com/tolkien-reading-day/>

March 31: **World Backup Day - a reminder to secure files by making backup copies**
<https://worldbackupday.com/en>

San Francisco Writers Conference (SFWC) July 21-24th

From Carole Bumpus, NorCal Chair

Due to Covid the conference has been postponed to July.

If you had made reservations at the hotel, contact the hotel to ensure your reservations are changed.

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

Either write something worth reading
or do something worth writing.

~ Benjamin Franklin



[Some Things to Do \(Cont'd\)](#)

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.

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, March 17, 2022, 7:00 – 8:30 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.

“Why English Is Hard to Learn”

We'll begin with *box*; the plural is *boxes*,
But the plural of *ox* is *oxen*, not *oxes*.
One fowl is a *goose*, and two are called *geese*,
Yet the plural of *moose* is never called *meese*.

You may find a lone *mouse* or a house full of *mice*;
But the plural of *house* is *houses*, not *hice*.
The plural of *man* is always *men*,
But the plural of *pan* is never *pen*.


If I speak of a *foot*, and you show me two *feet*,
And I give you a *book*, would a pair be a *beek*?
If one is a *tooth* and a whole set are *teeth*,
Why shouldn't two *booths* be called *beeth*?

Some Things to Do (Cont'd)

Friends of the Brentwood Library present

Brentwood Literary Stroll

Sunday, April 3, 2022
1:00-4:00 pm



- Visit Fiction and Non-Fiction Authors at Downtown Brentwood Businesses
- Children's Authors at Brentwood Library
- Light Refreshments Included
- Check-in Tables at Brentwood Library, 104 Oak Street, and the Corner of First and Oak Streets

Participating Downtown Businesses

- Brentwood Library
- Chelsea Fusion
- CoCo Wine Company
- Corcoran Global Living
- Dino's Sandwich Shop
- Harry's Wine Depot & Tavern
- La Fuente
- Roadees Cafe
- Sip And Scoop
- VFW Brentwood
- Zephyr's

Participating Authors

- Tamim Ansary
- Steven Burchik
- Matthew Felix
- Dan Hanel
- Carol Jensen
- Joey Garcia
- Steven Kent Mirassou
- Suzy Q. Orpin
- Sarah Sundin
- Vicki L. Ward




Children's Book Authors

- Carolyn Joyce Dodds
- Claudia Hull
- Phelicia Lang

Tickets \$5

brentwoodlibrary.brownpapertickets.com

The Brentwood Literary Stroll is supported by a City of Brentwood Grant

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 February 2022

JACK LONDON FOUNDER'S CIRCLE (\$500+)

Judith Overmier

Susan Berman

David George In honor & support of

R. Lee Paulson Humor Award

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

Linda Hartman

JOHN MUIR MEMBER CLUB (\$150 - \$249)

Ken Kirkhoff 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

Aline Soules

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

Lynn Goodwin

Uyen Chau Nguyen

Marianne Lonsdale

Robert Poirier

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

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://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