



# The Write News

A Monthly Newsletter

Elisabeth Tuck, editor

December 2022

## Saturday December 10, 2022 **Holiday Meeting**

**11:00 - Check-In**

**12:00 – Holiday Buffet**

**12:35 - Business Meeting**

**1:00 - Speaker**

REGISTER ONLINE AT:

<https://cwcmt Diablo.org/meetings-and-workshops/>

### **ANNOUNCING: BUCK-A-BOOK!**

Bring books from home and sell them for a buck.

Proceeds to the Young Writers Contest.

## ***Scene Stealer: Master Scene Writing for Powerful Plots***

### **Jordan Rosenfeld**

You've felt the pulse-pounding drama of a good story, caught up in a book that feels so real you might have been inside it. What makes a story come to life? Strong, powerful scenes. Scenes are the building blocks of great fiction and memoir.

They bring flat narrative into full-color action, allow you to breathe life into compelling characters through dynamic action, and when added up, they create powerful plots. When you feel connected to the characters and in the midst of action, when you can't put the book down because you're gripped by the action, you're in scenes.



#### **Writers will learn the essential ingredients for scene construction:**

- How to design scenes from beginning to end
- How to bring characters to life through "words and deeds"
- How to evoke effective setting without overkill
- The role of senses and using imagery
- How to use scene types to create energy and tension
- And how to make every scene count toward the plot

**Jordan Rosenfeld** is author of the novels *Women in Red* and *Forged in Grace* and six books on the craft of writing, most recently *How to Write a Page-Turner*, the bestselling *Make a Scene*, *Writing the Intimate Character*, *A Writer's Guide to Persistence*, *Writing Deep Scenes* and *Write Free*.

Her freelance articles and essays have been published in hundreds of publications, including: *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Scientific American*, *Writer's Digest Magazine*, *The Washington Post* and many more. She is also a freelance manuscript editor, writing coach and teaches online classes. [Jordanrosenfeld.net](http://Jordanrosenfeld.net) and [jordanwritelife@gmail.com](mailto:jordanwritelife@gmail.com)

**Members \$25.00 – Guests \$30.00 (lunch included)**

REGISTER ONLINE AT <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/meetings-and-workshops/>

Zio Fraedo's Restaurant: 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill.



## *President's Message:* Barry Hampshire

I hope everyone had wonderful Thanksgivings. Did we find time to write over those few days? Holidays can cause disruptions in our plans to write. Isn't it frustrating how we need to prioritize our time? How easy is it for other distractions to usurp our writing time? Should we allow our inner critic to hound us for making a decision that took us away from our writing, or did our inner critic take a holiday too?

Such thinking can drive us crazy. How much time should we dedicate to writing? Should we write at the same time for the same length of time every day?

Does a roadblock in our plot creation cause us to falter? Does a need to take a walk, a need to raid the pantry, a request from a friend to take a walk because they need to talk, a realization that the fridge is empty again, or any other distraction take us away from our computer?

The spiral keeps spinning, pulling us deeper into losing faith in our abilities as writers.

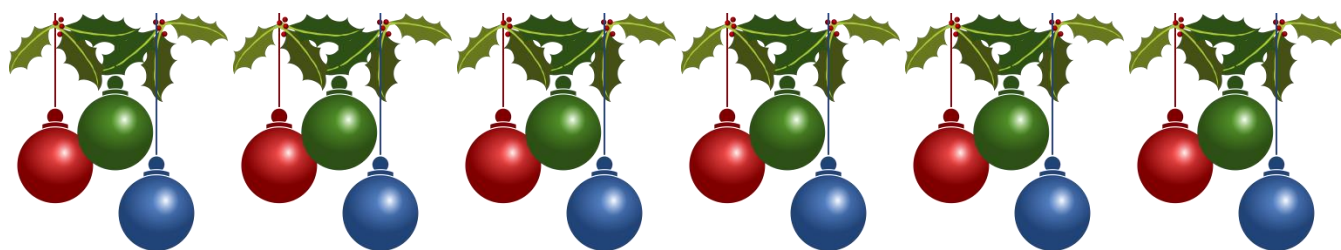
Remember, we writers are simply human beings who are living life. No life is perfect and nobody keeps to a schedule constantly.

Be gentle on yourself and say, "Thank you," when you have a day in which you feel you had a productive session on your computer. On those other days, say, "Today, my writing didn't make it on to my to-do list. That's okay, tomorrow is another opportunity."

Some of you may wonder how or why I come up with this kind of message. To be honest, I really don't know nor particularly care. I think the answer reflects my sense of awe being given the responsibility for producing these monthly messages. If I can buoy up one writer's flagging spirit, then I have done my job.

Barry

**REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR BUCKS TO BUY AND YOUR GENTLY USED BOOKS TO SELL AT THE DECEMBER 10<sup>th</sup> MEETING. PROCEEDS TO OUR YOUNG WRITERS CONTEST.**



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## Member Events, News, and Salutes



This section is regularly open members to writing and submitting a short announcement about milestones in their writing journey. Include a picture of yourself or your book. Publish something? Planning a reading at a bookstore or county fair? Speaking somewhere? Win an IPPY or other prize? Is your play being produced? The TV or movie version of your writing will be out soon? Let us know here.

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



### Jill Hedgecock

YouTube can be another marketing tool for authors. In addition to uploading book trailers in this medium, you might draw the attention of an influencer. Jill Hedgecock was approached by Doberman Planet which produced a Halloween video around one of her Shadow books. She was even given a chance to provide input on the script. Click here to see the result:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cza9P7uf7YE>



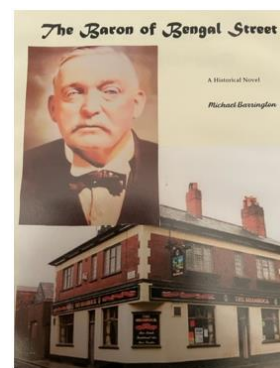
### [NEVER Touch a Doberman Between the Eyes! A Halloween Story](#)



### Michael Barrington

Michael's article about his recent visit to his hometown and places where he grew up, "Notes on the North" (2,000 words and five photos) was published in the September edition of *Big Issue*, a UK publication.

Michael's short story "The Crossing" (2,500 words) adapted from his forthcoming book, *The Baron of Bengal Street*, a historical, biographical novel to be published this month, appeared in the *Café Literary Magazine* (UK) this month.



## December 10 Writers Table

How to Choose a Great Title for Your Book

featuring **Isidra Mencos**



Your book title, along with the cover, is a key marketing tool: it must prompt potential readers to pick up the book in a bookstore or click on it online because they want to know more. General nonfiction often makes its purpose explicit in the title or subtitle, but memoirs and novels are more ethereal; they explore themes, characters and situations, and their titles can go in a thousand directions. This richness of choice can sometimes stump a writer.



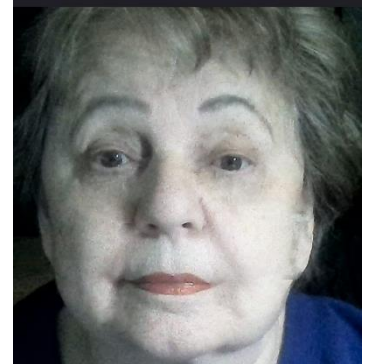
## Be Interviewed

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/>

### Josephine (Jo) Mele

The CWC newsletter gave me a list of questions to answer as an interview. I chose four: What do you like about writing? How have your background, previous work, and experience contributed to your writing? Do you have any published work? Do you have any advice for new writers?



Writing is my therapy. So much cheaper than a psychiatrist and no commute involved.

I have failed retirement, four times. I have retired from teaching K-6 art, as Parks & Recreation Director, DVC's Emeritus College Executive Director, VP of a construction company, and tour director for a S.F. travel company.

Three of my jobs involved planning and directing group travel, which gave me the opportunity to visit countries around the world. These experiences, and my love of reading mysteries have combined into my desire to write cozy travel mysteries. I have just completed my seventh, *Sicilian Sanctuary*. My next is set in India, and that's all I know right now. I'm waiting for my characters to fill me in.

I've been asked why I self-publish on Amazon and the answer is twofold. I am old, and can't wait years for someone to discover me, and I really enjoy the writing. The marketing, not so much.

My advice to new writers is to start with short stories about something that interests you. Get them published in magazines. I found this to be a great confidence booster. I wrote about growing up in Brooklyn and my Italian family. Soon I had enough stories to write a memoir, *The Odd Grandmothers*, about my great, great grandmother, my grandmother, and myself. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> generations. The odd ones. I was surprised to discover the many similarities in our lives.

My second tip is to write something every day. Ten minutes fleshing out a character or a setting can be more productive than writing a chapter you will later delete.

I hope writing brings you as much joy as it does me.




By now your **2022 Literary Review**. Should have been delivered if you were a CWC member as of the end of September this year. Hope you enjoy it. My advice to prose writers is to read even the poetry and watch how poets get their point across with so few words. This is a skill more prose writers should hone.

Also consider volunteering to help with the 2024 Lit Review. Without volunteers it cannot happen. Many judges have commented about how much they have learned from judging. Judges may also submit. You don't get your own piece to review, and if such an accident should happen, you would return it so someone else can read your piece. Each submission is read/judged by 3 judges. If I have any say in how the process runs for 2024, there will be many more volunteers pitching in for a variety of tasks.



## Upcoming Programs

2023

<b>Jan 14</b> 	<b>Paul Zeidman</b>	Paul will teach us the following craft-related skills: --developing structure and conflict within your story --creating three-dimensional characters --taking the familiar and putting your own personal spin on it
<b>Feb 11</b>	<b>Kevin Fisher-Paulson</b>	"Honoring the Creative Self" 1. Creativity is a marathon, not a sprint. You have to train your body, spirit, and mind how to run that long race. Kevin will give us exercises to build creative muscles. 2. Creativity relies on inspiration, perspiration, and desperation. Kevin talks about how not to get in the way of that which can inspire you. 3. Creativity requires a commitment to what you believe and the story you have to tell. Kevin will guide people to find their story, and to cherish it.
<b>Mar.11</b>	Workshop TBD	
<b>Apr 8</b>	<b>Andrea Firth</b>	Flash fiction and non-fiction
<b>May 13</b>	TBD	
<b>June 10</b>	TBD	

If you've heard a great speaker on writing/publishing/editing, email our speaker chair, Mark Clifford, at [programs@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:programs@cwcmtdiablo.org)



## You in the Newsletter: Short Works

Members, See your writing in print

Send your short works (up to 750 words, preferably less) to be included in the Mt Diablo branch newsletter to:

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

This month's works are as-submitted by the authors.

"Hoff"

by **Bob Poirier**

Lydia Hoffman looked up from the poem she was writing when she noticed movement in the driveway camera. A black SUV stopped, and three men wearing green pullovers and khaki pants exited the vehicle.

Hoffman, a tall, slender, attractive woman with long, fine flaxen hair and green-speckled, gray eyes, instinctively reached for the Walther PPK she kept under her writing table, checked the load, and put the safety on.

She picked up the ringing phone and instantly recognized the voice.

"Hello, Hoff," Michael said. "It's been a long time."

"Are these your minions, Michael?" she asked. "If they hit the first tripwire, they're fair game."

"They'll stay in the SUV," Michael said. "Can I come in and have a cup of coffee? I have a business proposition for you."

"I've been out of the game for a long time," she said as she poured the second cup of coffee. "I'm a little rusty to be back in action. Hell, I'll be on Medicare in a few years."

"Nothing like that," Michael said. "Sergey Petrov wants to defect. His handler put him on a plane to San Francisco that lands in three hours. You're the only one who would recognize him from the old days. We would like you to meet him at the gate and let us know if it is him."



## *You in the Newsletter: Short Works (cont'd)*

Hoffman's face blanched. "That's not possible. He and his daughter were killed in a car accident twenty years ago."

"That's what we thought also," Michael said. "But apparently, the KGB thought we were getting a little too close, so they sent him to an indoctrination camp for a few years and then retired him. He contacted an agent while on vacation in Turkey last month."

"What about the daughter?" she asked.

"No word of her," he said. "We think she died in the camp."

"Okay," she said. "I'll do it. I'll be down in a few minutes."

Hoffman changed to a hunter green, short-sleeve, scoop-neck tunic over black leggings, put a hair tie on her wrist, placed an everyday carry (EDC) Kershaw Fraxion flipper 2.75-inch blade with a clip-point tip in a fabric sheath inside her legging waistband, and put the Walther PPK in a small of the back holster.

She stopped to finger-kiss the photo of the three-year-old girl in the faded Polaroid and tenderly touched the caesarian scar under her tunic.

Three hours later, Hoffman was near the arrival gate scanning the arriving passengers.

"It's not Petrov," Hoffman said into the shoulder mic. "He's four inches shorter, even though he's wearing lifts."

The target spotted Hoffman, pulled off his left shoe, twisted the heel clockwise, and threw it into the gaggle of deplaning passengers.

"Bomb," the target shouted. Smoke billowed from the shoe as the passengers scattered.

Hoffman was closest to the target. She used the hair tie to quickly put her hair into a fighter's bun and closed with the target, who pulled a dagger from a sheaf below his back neckline. She reached him as he brought the knife in front of him, formed a "V" with her right hand, and jammed it into his throat.

The target gagged and dropped to his knees. Hoff round-kicked him in his left temple. He fell to the ground and was still. She used the Fraxion knife to cut the shoelaces and remove the remaining shoe.

Michael, pistol in hand, arrived a few seconds later.

"Gentle and charming as ever, Hoff."

"I think there was a female with him," she said, breathing hard. "Young, five six, 120 pounds, shoulder-length blond hair. She's wearing a grey, hip-length raincoat and the same mid-thigh, grey skirts the hostesses are wearing."

Michael turned away and repeated the description into his shoulder mic.

"I'm going to the head to clean up," Hoffman said.

The nearest restroom appeared empty when she entered. She heard whimpering from the furthest stall. At the same time, she noticed a grey skirt on the floor of the same stall. She pulled the PPK from the holster and partially racked the slide to check the load.

"There are two ways out of this," Hoffman said softly. "Dead or alive. I don't care which you choose. In a couple of minutes, a team of armed agents will breach the room with orders to shoot to kill anyone standing. Any hostages will be considered collateral damage. I am putting away my weapon. Come out, let the woman go, and we'll talk about your next steps."

The stall door opened inward. A young woman stepped outside. Another young woman followed closely behind, holding a dagger to the first woman's throat.

"Good," Hoffman said. "We're making progress. Now, tell me your name, let her go, and we'll figure out how to proceed."

"My name is Mia," she said

After a moment of hesitation, Mia released her hold on the hostage, who took a few tentative steps forward then bolted for the exit door.



## *You in the Newsletter: Short Works (cont'd)*

Hoffman keyed the mic. “She’s in the women’s restroom nearest the arrival gate. Give me a few minutes before barging in.”

“Copy that,” Michael replied.

When they were alone, Hoffman slowly approached Mia, who was holding the dagger at her side.

“You must be Hoff,” Mia said warily. “My father told me about you.”

“What was your father’s name?”

“Sergey Petrov.”

Hoffman stared at her. “How old are you?”

“Twenty-five. We have the same eyes and the same hair.”

“They told me you and your father were killed in an auto accident.”

“They told us you tried to kill us, so we had to go into hiding. My father died three years ago. I was sent to San Francisco to find and kill you.”

Michael’s voice filled her earbud. “What’s going on?”

“I’m a little busy now, Michael. I need a few more minutes.”

“I’m breaching in three minutes.”

“So, Mia, what’s it going to be? If you put the knife down and ask for asylum, I’ll do my best to ensure you are treated fairly. If a DNA test shows you are my daughter, I will ask that you be transferred to my custody until the asylum hearing. If you are not my daughter, I will do my best to arrange for a prisoner swap.”

“That sounds fair,” Mia said as she dropped the knife.

“Michael, we are coming out. Please don’t shoot us.”

“Copy that.”

### The Christmas Surprise

by **Josephine (Jo) Mele**

‘Twas the day before Christmas Eve, and wrapping the last few presents was the only thing on my mind. After two hours of trying to wrap the odd-sized presents I’d bought, I needed a break.

I made a cup of coffee and sat on the couch in my family room. I spotted the poorest excuse for a cat I’d ever seen on my back deck. The orange-colored cat peered back at me through the patio door. It looked thin, skittish, and hungry. I poured milk into a small bowl and slid the door open a crack. The cat ran away.

I realized it was a feral cat unused to people, and thought it must have been desperate to attempt contact with a human. I set the bowl down, closed the door, and backed away. The cat returned and drank like it had been stranded in a desert for days. It kept looking up to be sure I wasn’t going to open the door. Then it turned, and disappeared into the bushes.

Later that afternoon, I placed a can of tuna out on the back deck. The food was gone by the next time I looked.

I didn’t expect to see the cat again, but there it was the next morning waiting for me. I set out another bowl of milk. The cat drank more slowly this time. She left, and returned a few minutes later with a kitten hanging from her mouth. That’s when I realized she was a new mother.

No wonder she looked worn out.

Her kitten was so tiny, a ball of orange fur only days old.





## *You in the Newsletter: Short Works (cont'd)*

I found a cardboard box, newspapers, and an old towel and made a bed for the kitten. By the time I assembled the bed and carried it out to the deck, there were two orange kittens. I looked to the bushes and saw the bedraggled young mom making her way toward me, with a black kitten. A trifecta.

I placed one kitten in the box and closed the door. Mom dropped the other two next to the first, and got in with them. They stayed there all afternoon.

The weatherman said it was going to be a very cold night and I worried about the tiny kittens. When mom left, I brought the box inside and left the door open enough for her to come in, if she wanted to.

She did.

The four cats spent the night in my family room with the outside door cracked just enough for mom not to feel trapped.

Over the next two days she ate the food I left out for her, nursed her kittens, and left them in my care for hours at a time.

Christmas day, my grandkids were delighted to see what Santa had brought me. They held the kittens and stroked them until they fell asleep in their arms. Santa and his presents were being upstaged by a raggedy trio of kittens. Momma cat was nowhere to be seen all day.

At dinner my daughter told me that there was a group, called The Cat Ladies that fed feral cats, had them neutered, and tried to get them adopted.

After my family left, I opened the door and mom came back to feed her kittens and snuggle with them. She was a good mom, just people shy.

The next day, I found a phone number for The Cat Ladies and told the woman who answered about my surprise Christmas presents. She asked if I'd be willing to foster the kittens for a month, feed them, play with them, and make them comfortable around people so they could be adopted. I asked about the mom.

"We can set a trap, have her spayed and then released in another neighborhood."

"You can release her here," I said. "I'll take care of her."

"That would be great, she already trusts you."

I agreed to take on the job of foster mom to the three adorable kittens knowing that my grandchildren would be delighted to help me get them used to people.

I only hoped we could part with our surprise Christmas presents, at the end of a month.



### **"Nigerian Writers: A Treasury of Riches"**

by **Michael Barrington**

While teaching in Nigeria many years ago, I discovered the African Writer Series novels published by Heineman and was immediately captivated. They opened up a whole new world of literature to me. After Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* followed by *No Longer at Ease*, I wanted more; I needed to be educated about this amazing country. Achebe often called the Father of Nigerian Literature, frequently weaves oral tradition with Ibo folk tales and the individual's struggle to find a place in this "new world." Since I was born and educated in the UK, his anti-colonial sentiments showed me how naïve my attitudes were, and how simplistic my understanding of Nigerian history. I needed to read more. That had its own challenges since I was working in a remote part of the country where there were few amenities and the nearest bookstore over two hundred miles away. But I was hooked!



## You in the Newsletter: Short Works (cont'd)

Achebe's works directed me to another Ibo writer, Cyprien Ekwensi. His *People of the City* was the first major novel to be published by a Nigerian. His most widely read work, *Jagua Nana*, returned to the same setting of *People of the City*, the capital Lagos, but boasted a much more cohesive plot. It focuses on the contradictions within the life of an aging sex worker. Almost better known for his short stories, *Burning Grass*, a collection of vignettes about a nomadic Fulani family, really captivated me.

T.M Aluko, a Yoruba writer, uses similar themes in his novel *One Man One Matchet*, reflecting the growing sentiment of the anticolonialism of the 1950s.

Wole Soyinka, novelist and playwright, also from the Yoruba tribe, in *The Interpreters*, focuses on the oppression of the poor and abuse of the weak by the strong. He spares nobody, neither the white speculator nor the black exploiter. During my ten years in Nigeria, he of all the writers, made me question what I was really doing there.

I discovered several female writers, which shouldn't have surprised me but did since, at the time, there were few females in academia generating creative thought and expression. Flora Nwapa is considered to be the 'Mother of Modern African Literature' starting with her novel *Efuru*. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu writes love stories and popular fiction, in Hausa, the first African language I learned.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels have garnered universal acclaim; *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). Her novel *Americanah* (2013) is a book every person concerned with racism, immigration and globalization should read. It's about love, loneliness, and race. But it's also a poignant, funny, scathing look at the reality of being a new immigrant in the USA...from an African perspective.

Oyindamole Affinnih gave up her career as a lawyer to write two intriguing novels about personal relationships, *A Tailor-made Romance* (2015) and *Two Gone...Still Counting*, (2014). Chibundu Onuzo's first book, *The Spider King's Daughter* (2012), portrays life in modern-day Lagos with its informal economy and class divide centered around a compelling love story. Chigozie Obioma is sometimes referred to as "the heir to Chinua Achebe." His novel *The Fishermen* (2015), is a powerful tale of grief, healing, and sibling loyalty, and was a finalist for the 2015 Man Booker Prize. His works have been translated into more than 25 languages. Ijeoma Umebinyuo named one of Sub-Saharan Africa's greatest contemporary poets, in *Questions for Ada* (2016), embodies the pain, passion, and the power of love. Lesley Nneka Arimah, the author of *What It Means When a Man Falls from the Sky* (2017), offers a fascinating collection of stories demonstrating rich imagination and love of language and people. Ayobami Adebayo, in *Stay with Me* (2017), explores feminism and relationships. "She writes not just with extraordinary grace but with genuine wisdom about love and loss and the possibility of redemption. She has written a powerfully magnetic and heartbreaking book." (New York Times).

As many young Nigerian debut authors rise to global prominence, the diversity and range of the country's fiction is on full display. Elnathan John's debut novel *Born on a Tuesday* (2016) which tackles the rise of Islamic extremism through the eyes of a homeless teenager who gets swept up in political violence, was heralded as "a stunning, important coming-of-age story" by Publishers Weekly. The treasure trove of Nigerian writers is deep, varied, and fascinating.

The country's flourishing literary scene is giving rise to some of the most groundbreaking and boundary-pushing fiction on the continent. In the past, successful African writers often first gained renown abroad, yet weren't widely read in their homelands. But now, many of Nigeria's promising young authors are increasingly building an audience at home, where there is a growing appetite for fiction that addresses contemporary issues.

A new wave of thematically and stylistically diverse fiction is emerging from the country, as writers there experiment with different genres and explore controversial subjects like violence against women, polygamy, and the rise of the Islamist militant group Boko Haram.



## MEMBER BENEFIT

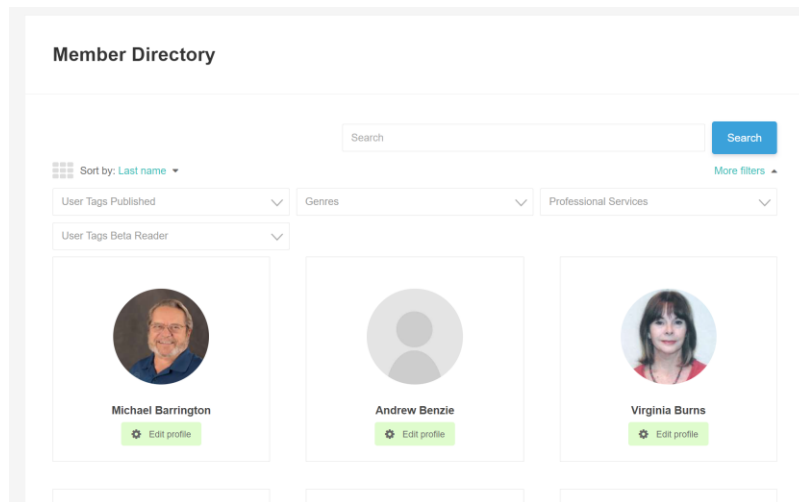
Member Directory  
You asked for it. We delivered it.  
by Marlene Dotterer, Webmaster

Mt. Diablo members now have a way to find other members with similar interests and to contact each other on a safe and private basis. This is accomplished through our new [Member Directory](#).

The Directory can also be accessed through the menu on our website homepage:  
<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/member-directory/>

The member directory page will list our members with tags showing the genres they write or read, whether they are published, if they are available as a Beta Reader, or offer a writing-related service, such as editing, writing coach or teacher, book design, publishing, marketing, etc. The search feature allows you to search by any of these categories.

This Member Directory page is accessible to the public on the web. However, you control who sees your profile and who can send you messages. A few board members agreed to be test subjects and have created profiles. Here is a screen shot of the page:



The success of this venture depends on all of YOU. You must create an account, with your own username and password. We will send each member a **private link** to the registration form where you create your account. Instructions will be included.

The Member Directory is intended to take the place of our current “Our Authors” page. If you are a published author listed on that page, you **MUST** transfer the information (copy and paste is the easiest way) to your new profile in the Member Directory.

I hope everyone finds the directory useful and fun. With the messaging feature, it’s a way to get to know other members beyond our once-a-month meetings. Your personal contact information is never used.

Questions or suggestions? Contact [Marlene](#) for technical issues or [Barry Hampshire](#) for anything else.



- A malapropism walks into a bar, looking for all intensive purposes like a wolf in cheap clothing, muttering epitaphs and casting dispersions on his magnificent other, who takes him for granite.
- Hyperbole totally rips into this insane bar and absolutely destroys everything.
- A question mark walks into a bar?

## Things to Do

### The Value of Volunteerism

by **Bob Isbill** (High Desert), CWC Vice President.  
and Director of Publicity and Public Relations



Experts generally agree that the best way to succeed is to surround yourself with great people.

How best can we do that?

You may think you know someone at the office (whatever “office” may mean in your context) or in your branch of the California Writers Club. Whether you are considering forming a business partnership, developing a professional project, or just contemplating the thought of hanging out together more often, one way to find out more about people is to volunteer with them.

Immersing yourself in a temporary project can reveal flaws as well as talents you otherwise would never encounter in a relationship. The simple act of working together to complete a goal can be beneficial in many ways. We bond (or not) in a more meaningful way with the mutual joy of accomplishment. When I have related with others to achieve something together, I have been astounded several times to discover they knew something or knew how to do something that I otherwise would never would have been aware of. Discovering the abilities of others is just one byproduct of volunteering. Another obvious reason to “show up” is for our own personal development. It is a safe way to explore your own abilities. Giving time to do something for the general good of a project can be fulfilling in many ways.

I remember a dozen years ago when our High Desert branch had enormous growth. We went from 14 to 100 members in 26 months. The reasons? Determination not to fail, but to excel was one reason. Another was not caring about who got the credit. A further key factor was informing visitors that we were looking for members, not just dues payers. We expected them to contribute to our growth and achievement. It was something of a rite of passage. Newbies were expected to join in our success story by sharing their talents and abilities. The outcome was outstanding relationship building. Even today, years later, the close bonding that took place through massive volunteering is present now. Friendships are solid and growing stronger. And our branch is still thriving.

One of the things I love about the CWC is the concept of Jack London Awards. They are something of a barometer of how well a branch is doing. For example, if there is a year where no Jack London is given, it is a red flag that either nobody is doing anything or that people are doing a lot without recognition. The Jack London is awarded only once per lifetime, but have you noticed that JL Award winners just keep doing exceptional things over and over again? I recently contacted one of our former members who was a Jack London Award winner. I was not surprised to learn that years later while working for an internationally famous company, she has been awarded that organization’s equivalent of our Jack London Award. She knows the value of volunteering and it has paid off all her life.

I find myself writing this on the anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, who is famous for his challenge, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

Find a need in your branch and fill it.

You will discover the value of volunteerism.



PLEASE NOTE: Although this was written by a member of another branch, Mt. Diablo is also always looking for volunteers for various tasks. You would not be plunged into any enormous task. You’d be welcome to try something you think suits you, and then you decide how much your schedule allows. It is a way to make friends and to get the most out of your membership. Start by joining the board meeting on Zoom Dec 2 at 2 p.m. If the afternoon timing doesn’t work for you, but you’d like to know more, use the Contact link on our website to contact someone in any of the tasks listed <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/contact-us/>

Or at a meeting, speak up and say you’re interested!

## Things to Do (cont'd)

### 2023 Scholastic Awards

#### Support Young Writers: Calling for Scholastic Awards Jurors

**Linda Hartmann**

As a respected member of the literary arts community, I invite you to join us as a juror for the 2023 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Join the ranks of the many illustrious artists and writers who have judged with the Awards in the past, including Wangechi Mutu, Red Grooms, Marc Brown, Langston Hughes, and David Sedaris, among countless others.

As a juror for the Awards, you would commit to read and score works between December 20, 2022 and January 09, 2023 in one of 11 categories from teen writers. Expect to spend roughly 10–15 hours during that period reading and scoring your assigned works. All of the works are online, so you can read and score from the comfort of your own computer!

This is an excellent opportunity to support young writers, and get a firsthand look at nationwide trends in writing. Jurors report finding the experience enlightening, engaging, and rewarding. Choose your favorite categories and grade level to judge, and we will do our best to assign you those.

The reading/judging process is the core of the program. Jurors look for works that exemplify the Awards' core values: originality, technical skill, and the emergence of personal voice or vision. We offer a rubric to score using these values as a guide.

I will chair this event once more this year, with Senait Mesfin Piccigallo and Quynh Trinh at my side as Scholastic Coordinators. Training will be provided for those new to this process or who would like a refresher.

Join us! Let us hear from you soon! If interested, please contact Linda Hartmann at [vicepresident@cwcmtdiablo.org](mailto:vicepresident@cwcmtdiablo.org)

#### About the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Since 1923, the [Scholastic Awards](#) have recognized creative teens in grades 7–12 with opportunities for exhibition, publication, and scholarships. A few of the Alumni include Stephen King, Tschabalala Self, Kay WalkingStick, Charles White, Joyce Carol Oates, and Andy Warhol. With 29 art and writing [categories](#) where creative teens can submit their work, there are multiple opportunities for students to be recognized for creative excellence. The Scholastic Awards distributes more than \$300,000 in direct [scholarships](#) annually. In 2020 alone, the Scholastic Awards received nearly 320,000 submissions from students nationwide, and it grows each year. Support the work of talented and creative teens by adjudicating some of the hundreds of thousands of pieces submitted to the Awards for 2023!

#### Categories for Submissions in Writing:

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

**LEAD A WRITERS TABLE:** As writers, we all have unique skills or perspectives we could offer to our community. What do you bring to the craft or business side of our industry? What tips and tricks have you learned along the way? Is it something that inspires you with ideas for writing, something that encourages you to work at writing, a way to begin or to finish? Do you use any software, the internet, or reference books? What's the best tip you've absorbed and honed? Do you have a publishing or marketing idea to share?

*Writers Table* is an opportunity for our members to engage by way of mini-presentations at our monthly meetings in which members motivate, teach, and discuss topics relevant to writers. It is also a great way to hone your speaking/leadership skills. Would you like to lead a Writers Table session? We'd love to hear from you. Please reach out by emailing Andrew Benzie [andrew@andrewbenzie.com](mailto:andrew@andrewbenzie.com)



## Things to Do (cont'd)

# EKPHRASIS EXHIBIT

**Our Exhibit is inspired by Ekphrasis, a Greek word defined as writing that describes or explains other art; we add that art can describe or explain writing.**

Visual Artist Initiates



Author Responds

The Ballad of Andy & Rocky  
Along the way Rocky dipped the blossom into several ponds so it could drink and stay fresh. Rocky jumped over the border fence of the

Author Initiates

Railroad Betty  
The bad seeds have become quite powerful, hovering over the railroad tracks like shadowy wraiths. Invisible to the naked eye, they feed off the energy

Visual Artist Responds



**INITIATE** → **RESPOND**

**INITIATE** → **RESPOND**

Calling for writers of the CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch to participate in the inaugural Ekphrasis Project and Exhibit. Have you ever seen something that has motivated you to write about what it made you feel, think, or shout about? Most writers have! If you are among them, join in and stretch your imagination while pairing your writing with a visual art image. What inspires you about the piece? Does it make you emote, want to write a story around what may have place there, or involved the characters, or write a poem, literary narrative, or piece of flash to capture all of the above? Then the Ekphrasis Project is for you! Join soon and be included as an Initiator Author (one or two spots left) or as a Responder Author. **You do not have to be previously published to participate.**

As an Author Initiator, you will write a short piece that will give a visual artist something compelling to respond to. As an Author Responder, you will be paired with a Visual Artist by the Ekphrasis Committee. You will have an opportunity to preview images entered and rank order what you would like to respond to. This will culminate in a paired Exhibition at the Art Gallery at Orinda Library throughout the month of May 2023, with presentations and a reception following on **May 6<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.** You will the opportunity to think outside of the box, put your name on something completely different than your usual, and have fun at the same time. See the Ekphrasis page on our home website at <http://cwcmt Diablo.org/> for all of the details. Sign up for the next **workshop** on **November 30<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.** here and register to participate here: <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/ekphrasis/> . For questions, contact **Linda Hartmann** at [ekphrasis@cwcmt Diablo.org](mailto:ekphrasis@cwcmt Diablo.org) .

- A non sequitur walks into a bar. In a strong wind, even turkeys can fly.
- Papyrus and Comic Sans walk into a bar. The bartender says, "Get out -- we don't serve your type."
- A mixed metaphor walks into a bar, seeing the handwriting on the wall but hoping to nip it in the bud.
- A comma splice walks into a bar, it has a drink and then leaves.

## *Things to Do (cont'd)*

# Writers Helping Writers Assistance Fund

Linda Hartmann

## INTRODUCTION

**Writers Helping Writers Assistance Fund (WHWAF)** is a program to enable writers who are economically challenged, to join the Mt. Diablo Branch of the California Writers Club (CWC), or to assist those who are already members but may need help financially in order to maintain their membership or to attend meetings. The program establishes assistance for membership and/or meeting costs for low-income people with an interest in joining or continuing membership with CWC.

## ASSISTANCE

The **WHWAF** will provide two assistance funds for members or prospective members of CWC Mt. Diablo Branch.

1. Membership Assistance (either initial or renewing)
2. Member Meeting/Workshop Attendance via Assistance Voucher

## AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE

1. Initial One-Year Membership: \$65.00 (Dues: \$45.00, State Fee: \$20.00)
2. Renewal of Annual Membership: \$45.00
3. Meeting Costs: \$25.00 for each General Meeting (usually eight per year), \$45.00 for Workshops (usually two per year.) Members may request assistance for one meeting/workshop, up to as many as they need for the current fiscal year.

## FUNDING

The funding for The **WHW Assistance Fund** is through donations. Mt. Diablo members and others may donate at any time. PayPal "Donate" buttons added to the website and the Write News Newsletter will make this function easy. Fundraisers may be planned as needed to raise additional funds.

## AUTHORIZATION

State Board Policies and Procedures allows branches to maintain Hardship Memberships up to 5% of the branch membership total.

Members or prospective members may petition for Membership Assistance or Meeting/Workshop Assistance by submitting our request form at <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/writers-helping-writers/>.

1. Each Assistance shall be approved by both the President and the Treasurer (or other second officer if needed).



- Three intransitive verbs walk into a bar. They sit. They converse. They depart.
- A synonym strolls into a tavern.
- At the end of the day, a cliché walks into a bar -- fresh as a daisy, cute as a button, and sharp as a tack.

## Things to Do (cont'd)

### December 14 Open Mic on Zoom



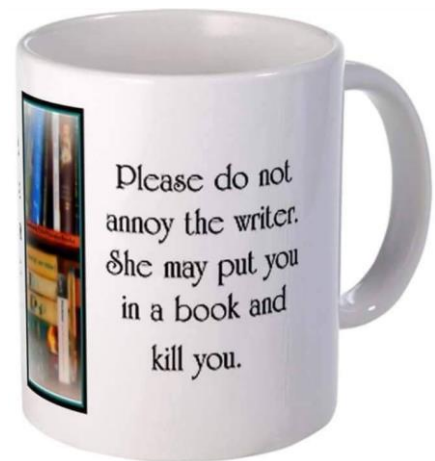
**December 14, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.** Join us on Zoom! Bring your own eggnog and cookies.

Readers will have 5 minutes to read, with two minutes for Q&A.

These events are open to the public. Invite your friends!

[Click Here to Register](#)

- An Oxford comma walks into a bar where it spends the evening watching the television getting drunk and smoking cigars.
- A dangling participle walks into a bar. Enjoying a cocktail and chatting with the bartender, the evening passes pleasantly.
- A bar was walked into by the passive voice.
- An oxymoron walked into a bar, and the silence was deafening.
- Two quotation marks walk into a “bar.”



- A run-on sentence walks into a bar it starts flirting. With a cute little sentence fragment.
- Falling slowly, softly falling, the chiasmus collapses to the bar floor.
- A figure of speech literally walks into a bar and ends up getting figuratively hammered.



## Young Writers Contest First Prize Winner

\*\*\*Humor – All GRADES\*\*\*

**1st Place  
Perelman**

### A Typical Day at Our Art Class

**Alexandra**

Foothill Middle School, Walnut Creek  
Teacher: Christopher Hoshaw

One of my classmates calls our art teacher, Mrs. Kay, a “supernatural being.” Another student in our class believes Mrs. Kay is a good witch. She can make different objects appear out of thin air whenever she needs them. She is unlike any other teacher in the world, and classes with her are certainly unlike any school classes. Our last art class was even crazier than usual. Three problems caused this, and their names were Annie, Luke, and Alex, our new classmates. It was their first class with Mrs. Kay, and they made the mistake of not comprehending that she must be obeyed, or class will never go smoothly. We love Mrs. Kay, but no one wants to make her angry. She is patient, but any patience can come to an end, and if it does, there will be trouble!

Our assignment was to paint the five different colored glass bottles Mrs. Kay had put on a small table covered by a tablecloth. She positioned a lamp near the table, so we could see the shadows of the bottles better. Then, she made a huge mistake, and asked us to squeeze acrylic paint out by ourselves. The mistake lay in the fact that Annie did not know that Mrs. Kay’s paint bottles had a tendency to explode when squeezed too hard.

You may guess what happened next. A moment before *that* happened, Alex managed to break a paintbrush. The rest of the class felt like vanishing on the spot. Breaking art supplies can make Mrs. Kay very angry. We expected an explosion from the place Mrs. Kay was standing, but she merely pursed her lips, and came to look at his painting.

“What is that green blob under the green bottle?” she asked, pointing at his painting.

“The shadow?” Alex half asked.

Mrs. Kay sighed. “Just because the bottle is green, its shadow doesn’t suddenly turn green!” She turned away from a surprised Alex, who must have never seen shadows before, to Luke who sat next to him.

“Why did you paint the tablecloth white?” she asked. “Because it is white,” Luke answered, surprised.

“Artists do not use the color white by itself,” she explained patiently. “That tablecloth needs to be painted light blue.”

“It looks white to me,” Luke persisted. I, who was sitting across from Luke, caught my breath. I saw that Mrs. Kay was losing her patience.

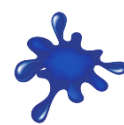
“Who is the teacher you or me?” she inquired softly.

“Well, then I must be color blind, because I still think it’s white!” Luke shouted.

“You must be!” Mrs. Kay retorted.

“Agree with her,” I whispered to Luke urgently.

“Okay, if you really want it to be blue...” he began.



The strange argument was interrupted by Annie, who, at that moment, squeezed the yellow paint bottle with one hand, and the blue with the other, and made them both explode.

“Why did you do that?” Mrs. Kay nearly howled and moved toward Annie, who was surrounded by the paint she had spilled on the floor.

“I was making green paint! You said that blue and yellow make green!” Alice explained.

“Not in the air! Not on the floor!” Mrs. Kay walked toward the sink at the other end of the room.



## *Young Writers Contest First Prize Winner (cont'd)*

"I'll get some towels!" Alex shouted. He ran to the sink, slipped on the paint, fell, and got back up looking like a green, blue, and yellow monster.

Thankful that the incident stopped their argument, Luke also ran to the sink. He ripped off a paper towel and turned one of the taps. The water started running very slowly. So to make it speed up, Luke pulled the tap harder. I had to grind my teeth because I could not stop Luke.

The sink had looked like it might break at any moment since I first saw it, which was on my first day of class six years ago. As expected, when Luke pulled it, it came off! The water was running at a crazy speed now, flooding the sink in seconds.

"Get away from the sink!" Mrs. Kay commanded.

"What did you do?" the rest of the class yelled.

"I'll help!" Annie offered, running to Luke with a red paint bottle in her hand.

"Put the bottle down!" I cried.

"I can fix it!" Luke shouted confidently. He pulled the second tap, which promptly came off, causing the water to run even harder. Everyone dropped their paintings and headed to the sink, crowding around Luke and Mrs. Kay. We were talking and shouting, someone knocked a few paint bottles off the counter...

"Quiet!" Mrs. Kay barked, and the room was instantly silent, except for the sound of running water. The next five minutes, we stood quietly around the sink, watching Mrs. Kay.

When you have seen a professional art teacher fix a sink with a wrench and a screwdriver, which conveniently appeared on the table, you may say that you have seen everything.

In the ringing silence after the sink was fixed and the water off, Luke offered timidly, "Should I wash the paint brushes, since class is almost over?"

"No way! I am not letting you anywhere near the sink again!" Mrs. Kay rounded on Luke. He backed away, and, before anyone could stop him, backed into the table on which the glass bottles were set. The bottles, table, white/blue tablecloth, and Luke crashed to the floor.

Some bottles cracked, others rolled all around the room. The lights in the room turned off, because the cabinet door hit the switch. Everyone stumbled in the dark to get to the switch, bumping into each other on the way. Annie ran to help Luke with the red paint bottle still in her hand. She squeezed it in the process, causing it to explode and spray everyone within three feet of her. After several moments of chaos, Luke stood up. In the dim light of the lamp which had illuminated the bottles, and which was the only object still standing, everyone saw him clearly.

He was wrapped in the tablecloth, which was now sprayed with red paint.

"At least now," he declared confidently, "The tablecloth is not blue, but red, though I stand by the fact that it was white earlier!"

After the loud burst of laughter which we could not hold back, Mrs. Kay uttered a long, exhausted sigh. The reason we are sure she is a supernatural phenomenon is that no human creature could have the patience to deal with our art class!



*All the best for the season to all*

## 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 Mount Diablo CWC newsletter every month in the year you donate. Or remain anonymous if you prefer!

**DONATIONS A/O September 2022**

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

**Judith Overmier**

**Susan Berman**

**David George** in honor of Jan & Lee Paulson

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

**Lily Gwilliam**

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

**Robert Poirier**

**Marianne Lonsdale**

**Patty Northlich**

**Chloe Laube**

**Sherida Bush**

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

**Linda Hartmann**

**Cindy Leonard**

**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**

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**Jane Bloomstrand**

**Colleen Gonzalez**

**Corrienne Heinemann**

**George Cramer**

**Jerry Blair**

**Juanita Martin**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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**