



The Write News

March 2025

A Monthly Newsletter
Denis Hoye, Editor

Mt. Diablo Branch

March 8th 2025 Workshop Debbie Weiss

Finding Your Voice in Memoir



Debbie Weiss is the author of the award-winning memoir *Available As Is: A Midlife Widow's Search for Love* about creating a new life after losing her

husband and high school sweetheart of 32 years. It was the gold medalist in the 2024 Independent Publisher Book Awards in the category of Aging, Death and Dying, bronze medalist in the 2023 Reader's Favorite Awards in Nonfiction-Grief/Hardship and a finalist in Grief in the 2024 National Indie Excellence Awards and 2024 IAN Book of the Year Awards. It has been on the Amazon Bestseller list in the Grief and Midlife Management categories.

Debbie's essays have been published in *The New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *Woman's Day*, and other publications. She teaches memoir writing classes for local organizations and has taught essay writing classes for Writing Pad. She is the President of the Benicia Literary Arts. A former lawyer, she earned her Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing in 2020 from Saint Mary's College of California.

Find her at <https://debbieweissauthor.com/>

[Please Register for this Meeting](#)

Finding Your Voice in Memoir

Memoir is deeply personal, yet its appeal comes from the universal, allowing the reader to connect with the narrator. The writer's voice is paramount to creating this relatability. I will discuss craft elements specific to memoir writing. Along with voice, we will focus on creating transformative story arcs, incorporating back story, tackling emotionally difficult topics, incorporating deeper themes, and how to find resonance in the personal. I will provide writing exercises designed to help develop the writer's voice, generate story ideas, and gain distance and perspective.

Writers will learn about:

- Creating a compelling voice and story arc.
- Writing difficult characters who happen to be family.
- Adding depth with themes and historical context.
- Avoiding author/narrator convergence.

Location

Zio Fraedo's Restaurant
611 Gregory Lane
Pleasant Hill, California

Cost

\$50 Members and \$55 Non-Members. Includes a buffet luncheon. Pay at the door or online with PayPal when registering. You do not need a PayPal account.

Scheduled for March 8th, 2024

- 9:30 am – 10:00 Sign-in table opens
- 10:00 am – 12:00 Workshop Pt. 1
- 12:00 pm – 1:00 Buffet Lunch
- 1:00 pm – 2:00 Workshop Pt. 2

CWC Mt. Diablo Branch President's Message

During the last few newsletters, I have allowed myself a little time to vent regarding political issues. Enough is enough. Let's get back to our roots and celebrate what we are – an enthusiastic writing community.

I hope you have all had a productive winter season. At times, the weather has been very encouraging with its rainy days, when the chair in front of that computer screen looks even more inviting. Come, rest your bones for a few minutes while those dusty cogs in your head can self-lubricate and start humming, as they love to do. Words can flow and be committed to the screen or paper. We are writers and stories are what we produce. Even those of you who are non-fiction writers, you produce stories, but they are based in reality. We all have a style that stamps our works with a unique sense of who we, the authors, are in real life.

Is it bragging or self-exposing to write? Some may consider so. My question to those folks is 'what are you hiding?' I believe that writing gives the author the opportunity to explore facets of themselves they probably need to resolve. We all have pasts that we can never fully explain. Writing gives our internal voices the ability to participate in healthy conversations.

Even when authors fail to see these connections, it is fine because their stories open the possibilities for readers to see themselves more clearly. Stories force us to make comparisons between ourselves and others, but they also demonstrate the commonality found in all human beings and, less obviously, found in all sentient beings.

You know I just made a huge discovery about myself while writing this message. I have hated reading all my life, but that's another story. I had never realized that when I'm reading, in some ways, I'm opening my eyes to myself as I exist and as I fit in with humanity. I cannot believe this gift I have ignored for these 75 years. Tomorrow will be a brand new day.

So, I'm pleading with you to keep up your incredible work as I now see every written word as an opportunity for me to grow. As I discovered several years ago, writing a memoir was a great and effective gateway drug – now I'm addicted to writing. Writing a memoir is a great start to exploring who we are and, as a result, growing. So, join the March general meeting and workshop, which is all about Finding your Voice in Memoir.

I used to think that I understood the world through numbers and patterns. Believe me, that is not going to change. But I thought they were my sole entry point. Now, words and stories have joined them. Numbers are black and white, while patterns make sense of gatherings of numbers. Words add color and tone, while stories paint an entire scene. To hold both literary and numerical understandings of the world is incredible.

So keep writing. I love this amazing group of human beings.



Barry

CWC Mt. Diablo Branch

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Mt. Diablo Branch Mission

Educating writers of all levels of expertise in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work.

Upcoming Events

- March 7, 2025, 3 pm, Friday: Sit in on a Zoom Board Meeting
- March 8, 2025, 9:30 am to 2:00 pm, Saturday: Mt. Diablo Monthly Meeting, Finding Your Voice in Memoir with Debbie Weiss
- March 12, 2025, 7 pm to 8:30 pm, Wednesday: Open Mic on Zoom
- March 21, 2025, Noon: A New Group for Short Story Writers
- March 26, 2025 12 am to 1:30 pm, Wednesday: Writers Connection, Chicken Pie Shop
- April 12, 2025, Saturday: Donna Levin, Creating a Writing Practice
- May 10, 2025, Saturday: Allison Landa, Developing Your Writing Voice
- June 14, 2025, Saturday: Brian Copeland, Topic is *TBD*

Writer's Helping Writers Fundraising

CWC's motto is "Writers Helping Writers." We help in obvious ways, with professional speakers, critique groups, sharing what works and what doesn't, and other things. But we also know that a struggling writer needs a little more... practical help. We want to help you with that, too.

Our branch has established this fund for any member who needs help with paying for a meeting or workshop, or with membership costs.

Just fill out the form below and our WHW committee will discreetly review your request. When approved, you will receive a coupon code to use when renewing your membership or registering for a meeting or workshop.

Your information is not shared anywhere. The Writers Helping Writers Fund relies only on donations for funding.

Please consider donating to this worthy cause in support of practical help to writers. California Writers Club is an IRS 501-3c designated non-profit educational organization. The Mt. Diablo Branch EIN Number is: 94-3068331. Please consult your tax advisor for the deductibility of your donation.

To donate: [writers-helping-writers/](https://www.writers-helping-writers.com)

Thank You To All Who Support This Important Writers Fund

A Short Story

The Sitka Brown Bear by Robert Poirier

“Just a few more casts and I’ll wrap this up,” Phil thought, his fly line arcing over sun-glistened Starrigavan Creek on the outskirts of Sitka, Alaska.

Phil, a trim, bearded, retired teacher, heard something approaching. He turned just as a bear lumbered into view fifty yards upstream, separating him from the gravel road. This bear was larger than the typical Sitka brown bear, with black fur and an oversized humped back. Phil knew how to handle bear encounters: Make yourself larger, talk in a normal but loud voice, and move slowly away. He always carried a 120 decibel marine air horn and a 30-foot range can of bear spray.

Rosheen, his girl-next-door pretty wife, was in the cabin. She was also a retired teacher and enjoyed fishing as much as Phil, but reading in a cozy chair before the cabin fireplace was her favored vacation spot.

The cabin was fully stocked, including a six-shot Mossberg 500, 20-gauge, smooth-bore pump shotgun loaded with Remington rifled slugs. Rosheen was comfortable handling and shooting the weapon.

When Phil moved out of the creek, the bear moved in the same direction, sat on its haunches, and gnawed at a crossbow bolt shaft with fluorescent green fletching sticking out of his left shoulder. Phil was now becoming concerned. Bear-to-human encounters were not uncommon in the Sitka area, on the West side of Baranof Island, one of the three ABC islands. The islands have one of the largest bear populations in the world.

When the bear moved closer to Phil, he triggered three short blasts of the air horn. The bear stopped, then advanced a few feet closer. Phil estimated he was fifty feet away. Not close enough for the bear spray.

Rosheen heard the air horn, grabbed the Mossberg, checked the load, and hurried to the section of the creek where Phil had said he would be fishing.

She arrived thirty yards downstream from the encounter simultaneously with a tall, dark-haired man with a dog.

“My name is Paul,” the man said. “This my dog, Willie. I’m a Sitka Firefighter/EMT. I heard the air horn and called 911. Shooting the bear from here might be a little premature. If you know how to shoot that, we should have enough firepower to neutralize the bear.” He showed her the large revolver he carried on his hip.

“I’m a surgeon with this shotgun,” Rosheen replied, lowering the weapon.

“My husband’s name is Phil,” she said while slowly walking alongside the creek. “And my name is Rosheen.”

“I don’t believe it will attack us immediately,” Paul said when they met up with Phil. “That crossbow bolt is causing some pain, but it is staying out of range of the bear spray.”

“That’s fine,” Rosheen said. “But if it looks like it is getting too close, I’ll empty the magazine at it.”

Suddenly, the bear stood and let out a terrible roar. Then it went to all fours and slowly advanced.

Phil sounded the air horn three times again. The bear stopped, then resumed a measured advance. Phil took off his backpack with the day’s trout catch and threw it at the advancing bear, who stopped and tore it apart.

Paul led them quickly away from the creek and toward the gravel road. When the bear saw they were leaving, it let out another roar and charged them.

Phil readied the bear spray. Paul pulled the handgun, removed the safety, and held the weapon at his side.

Rosheen stood between the charging bear and the group, aimed for a head shot, and was about to pull the trigger when the bear slowed, staggered, and then collapsed.

Two Alaska Wildlife Troopers from the Sitka post of the Southeast Region approached the bear, further sedated it, and put it in restraints.

“We were called by someone who heard the air horn. An idiot hunter shot it with a crossbow,” the senior trooper told Rosheen. “Our techs will remove the bolt. Your decision not to shoot saved the bear. Thank you!”



Robert Poirier began writing in 2018 with a small creative writing group at the Martinez, California Veteran’s Administration Medical Center. He has since published short stories in the annual statewide California Writers Club Literary Review of 2019 and 2020 and *SURVIVAL: Tales of Pandemic*, a CWC anthology, 2020.

His gritty thriller novel, *The Killings at Hulls Cove*, was published on Amazon in November 2021. His second book, a collection of the fifty short stories he has written since 2018, should be published in April 2024.

A retired U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander, retired mechanical engineer, and retired computer engineer, he lives in Martinez, California, with Teresa, his wife of fifty-three years, Pepper, their six-year-old Irish setter, and two spoiled rotten cat siblings.

Board Member Nominations for Annual Elections

At the June 14, 2025 Meeting, the attending membership will elect officers for the Mt. Diablo Branch Board for the upcoming CWC year.

Currently, the slate is as follows:

President: Barry Hampshire (incumbent)

Vice President: Michael Barrington (incumbent)

Treasurer: Marjorie Witt (incumbent)

Secretary: Dita Basu (incumbent)

All members of the club can nominate themselves or another member for any of these four officer positions. If you have a nominee who you feel should be added to the slate, please first confirm that the nominee is willing to stand for the office.

Forward the nominee's name and a brief description of the qualities that make them an appropriate candidate to me through the "Contact us" link on the Mt. Diablo branch website.

<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/contact-us/>

Alternatively, members can add a nominee to the slate just prior to the election at the June meeting, no later than May 2nd, 2025. Again, the potential nominee should have confirmed they are willing to stand.

Annual Mt. Diablo Branch Distinguished Service Award (DSA)

It is time to select a nominee for each of the following Awards:

1. Annual Mt. Diablo Branch Distinguished Service Award (DSA). The DSA recognizes extraordinary commitment and effort on an important branch project during the year.
2. Biennial Jack London Service Award (JLA) which honors outstanding members who have been particularly instrumental in helping our branch further its mission.

Please reply to this email with your nominee names along with reasons for your choice by Friday May 2nd.

Email voting will start Sat. May 3th thru Thursday, May 8th. Results will be announced at the Friday, May 9th Board Meeting.

The DSA choice will be sent to our Newsletter Editor no later than May 20th to be announced in the June Newsletter and acknowledged at the June Meeting.

The JLA choice will be submitted to CWC for acknowledgement at the 2025 Fall Corporate Meeting/Luncheon. FYI: Board members can nominate any club member for this award.

(Continued on Page 7)

Annual Mt. Diablo Branch Distinguished Service Award (DSA)

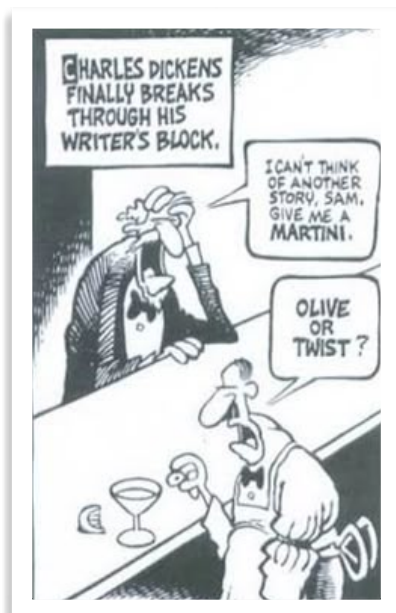
(Continued from Page 6)

Past Distinguished Service Awardees

- 2025: TBD
- 2024 Michael Barrington
- 2023 Barry Hampshire
- 2022 Elisabeth Tuck
- 2021 Marlene Dotterer
- 2020 David George
- 2019 Bill Stong & John Marvin
- 2018 Jill Hedgecock
- 2017 Judith Ingram
- 2016 Danard Emanuelson
- 2015 Lyn Roberts
- 2014 Christa Fairfield & Jill Hedgecock
- 2013 Barbara Bentley
- 2012 Judith Marshall
- 2011 Aline Soules
- 2010 Catherine Accardi
- 2009 Alfred J. Garrotto
- 2008 Joanne Brown
- 2007 Jack Russ
- 2006 Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff
- 2005 B. Lynn Goodwin
- 2004 Agnes Moore
- 2003 Igal Levy
- 2002 Hunter Anderson
- 2001 Laura Fischer
- 2000 Al Villaire
- 1999 Adena Reed

Jack London Awardees

- 2025: TBD
- 2023 Jill Hedgecock
- 2021 Linda Hartmann
- 2019 Marlene Dotterer
- 2017 Elisabeth Tuck
- 2015 Barbara Bentley
- 2013 Judith Marshall
- 2011 David George
- 2009 Joanne Brown
- 2007 Camille Minichino
- 2005 Al Villaire
- 2004 Danard Emanuelson
- 2003 Jack Russ
- 2002 Denise Kalm
- 2001 Alfred J. Garrotto
- 2000 Bev Lauderdale
- 1999 Liz Koehler-Pentacoff
- 1998 Ray Martell
- 1997 Joan Brennan
- 1995 Pat Edwards
- 1993 Ted Fuller
- 1991 Mercedes Gardner
- 1989 Helen McGrath



What's Your Story
Come, read and enjoy listening...

Place: Chicken Pie Shop, Walnut Creek.

When: the 3rd FRIDAY of each month

Duration: 12:00 Noon to 2:00 PM

Open to anybody, but please RSVP via CWC Website to give headcount to restaurant.

Rubrics:

1. This is not a critique group. A reader will be given feedback only if requested.
2. On average six/seven readers will be allocated 15 mins max. to both read their short story and receive feedback.
3. There will be no 'walk in' readers.
4. But walk in listeners, YES.

Process:

1. Readers will submit the titles of their pieces and their genres to majb7016@gmail.com (Michael) at any time.
2. A small committee will select the readers for each month. You will know well in advance when it is your turn.
3. I will introduce each reader. He/she will read the title and the genre.
4. Feedback if requested will be given
5. The next reader will be introduced etc.
6. If time permits, final questions.

Other:

1. Time yourself beforehand. Practice! A 2,500 word story will typically take 10/12 mins to read. The 15 minute limit is firm.
2. Chapter from a book. Yes, it can be read if it is a free-standing story and meets the 15 minute time limit. Let us know the genre.
3. We will use a microphone.
4. New stories or a story already published: Yes. Both are Ok to read.

<https://cwcmt Diablo.org/event/whats-your-short-story/>

Resources for Writers

Looking for an editor, writing class, marketing, or publishing help?

Check out our resources!

[Publishing Services: Book Design, Covers, Publishers, Agents](#)

[Writers Services: Editors, Coaches, Classes, Prof. Orgs](#)

[Marketing](#)

[Blogs, Conferences, Bookstores](#)

Condolences to to the family of Beverly Lauderdale



A California Writers Club Mount Diablo Branch's founding member, Beverly Lauderdale passed away on January 22. A Midwest native and graduate of Simpson College, Iowa, Bev taught junior high English before beginning her prolific writing career. She received an MA in English Literature from Holy Names College. Bev wrote numerous short stories, poetry, and articles which were published in both national magazines and newspapers and three traditionally published novels: *The Long Wind*, *Notes When Summer Ends*, and *In Franklin's House*.

Through CWC she acted in several California Authors Nights portraying Mary Austen, (*The Land of the Rain*), Jessamyn West, (*The Friendly Persuasion*), Kathleen Norris, (Radio soap opera *Bright Horizon*), Mary Hadock Foote (Wallace Stegner's main character in *Angle of Repose*), Alice Tinsdale Hobart. (*The Cup and the Sword*, retitled as *This Earth Is Mine*, the movie starring Rock Hudson) and Ayn Rand, (*The Fountainhead*).

A dedicated educator, Bev taught writing through Mount Diablo Adult Education for many years and mentored numerous writers. She also served on the CWC board and as a judge for the Young Writers Contest. Bev won the branch's Jack London Award in 2000.

She was a warm, talented, and giving friend and colleague and she'll be greatly missed.

The Back Fence: Online Writers Discussion Group

Got questions about writing? Or answers? Connect with other writers!

As a member of the Mt. Diablo, Tri-Valley, or Berkeley branch, you are allowed to join and participate in The Back Fence Facebook Group's Online Discussion Forum. **The Back Fence** is a free private Facebook Group discussion board. You will need a Facebook account to access it.

Writer's Submittal Requests

- 10 Fiction Magazines Paying up to \$500 Per Story
[10 Fiction Magazines Paying up to \\$500 Per Story](#)
- 29 Publications that pay for Writing on Food & Drinks
[29 Publications that Pay for Writing on Food & Drinks](#)
- 15 Calls for Pitches Directly from Editors
[15 Calls for Pitches Directly from Editors](#)
- 30 Magazines Publishing Literary Fiction
[30 Magazines Publishing Literary Fiction](#)
- 65 Specialized Publishers Open to Manuscripts Submissions
[65 Specialized Publishers Open to Manuscript Submissions](#)

Two for One Two Members for One Publication

Many months ago Michael Barrington submitted a short story, *The Barn In Winter* (3,000 words) to UK publication, called the *Prosetrics Magazine*, a high class literary magazine. He was fortunate that they accepted his piece for publication in their January, 2025 Edition. However, when he shared the issue with Bruce Lewis, his jaw dropped.

Michael had given him the link to the magazine last year and Bruce submitted a number of photos but then heard nothing. When he opened the magazine, it was to page 16, and shockingly to Bruce, at least, was a beautiful black and white photo (his own), including his name as contributing photographer, along with references to his Website and Email address. So two CWC members published in the same edition in a UK magazine. By the way, this issue of the magazine was priced at \$60.00 in U.S. dollars. It's a great start to 2025, which thus far has been a very successful year for Michael, with five articles or short stories being published by various magazines, three in the USA and two in the UK.

The stories are a mix of fiction and nonfiction. Another article Michael wrote, "*Nigerian Writers, A Treasure-trove of Riches*" made it onto the cover of *Afritondo*, a magazine focusing on Black culture.



CWC Mt. Diablo Open Mic on Zoom

Wednesday, March 12, 2025 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM — Online event

Details: Join us for Open Mic Night!

Sign up to read a five-minute segment from something you've written, a work-in-progress, something already published, or that sheaf of poems you hid under the bed for the last year. Share it with writers and readers at our 90-minute Read Fest!

Not ready to read your work to a crowd? That's okay, we need an audience, too. Come and hear what others have to say. When you register, let us know if you want to be a reader. The first seven people to sign-up will be given a slot to read for five minutes.

If we have more than seven requests to read, we'll start the list for the next event. We'll have time for discussion, but please remember, this is not a critique session! Talk about what you liked, not what the author can do better. This event is open to the public. Please bring your friends!

Register online at: <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/event/open-mic-on-zoom/>.

Vision & Verse II: A Fusion of Art and Writing
A CWC-members-only art and photography contest
Open to all CWC Members

<https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse-ii/>

Link to Vision and Verse II Art Contest | California Writers Club

The California Writers Club is proud to announce a members-only Art and Photography contest beginning on February 15, 2025 and ending on March 15, 2025. The winning art/photography will appear as visual inspiration for our second Ekphrastic Book.

If you would like the opportunity to see your artwork or photography published in the book, we invite you to submit a digital image of your work to the CWC Art Contest. The chosen winners' work will be featured prominently throughout Vision & Verse II and combined with poetry and prose that is selected from the members submissions. The Vision and Verse II submission guideline will be announced after the winning images are published in March. The announcement will be e-mailed to all members.

2025 CWC Art and Photography Contest Submission Guidelines:

1. **Artwork:**
We welcome original paintings, drawings, illustrations, or any other visual art mediums. All work must be original to the artist and has not appeared in any publication electronically or in print. The artist will be asked to attest that the art is not AI generated.
2. **Photography:**
We invite striking and evocative original photographs. All work must be original to the artist and not previously published (electronically or in print). We recognize that commonly used photographic tools like Adobe Photoshop use AI processes. As such, the artist will be asked to attest whether any AI tool was used in creating or modifying the submitted image.
3. All submissions must be submitted in a jpeg format. Size limit 8" x 10" (2400 x 3000 pixels).
4. All submissions must be received by March 15 to be eligible for consideration.
5. There is a \$10.00 submission fee for each piece of art submitted.
6. Members may submit as many pieces as they want. The fee is \$10.00 each.
7. Submissions are to include a 50 word (brief) bio.
8. It is expected there will be up to 15 pieces selected for the book. A first prize winner will receive \$100.00 and his/her art and it will appear on the cover. The second and third place winners will receive \$50.00 each and their art will be prominently featured in the book. The other contest winners featured in the book will receive a free copy.

All the winners' art will appear in an issue of the CWC Bulletin and will be on the CWC



website ... We look forward to
Vision & Verse II.



seeing your talent shine in the *CWC's 2025*

Art Embraces Words

Lafayette Library, Art and Science Room
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd
Lafayette, CA 94549

2:00 – 3:30 PM with reception following in courtyard

2025 DATES:

- Saturday May 17
- Saturday July 12
- Saturday October 25 Costumed Halloween Event

<https://lamorindaarts.org/art-embraces-words/>

Art Embraces Poetry

Town Hall Theater
3535 School St.
Lafayette, CA 94549

1:30 – 3:30 PM with reception following
with a 3-minute Open Mic session from 2:30-3:30 PM!

2025 DATES:

- Saturday, March 8 “Women’s History Month”
- Saturday, April 5th “National Poetry Month
- Saturday, August 23rd TBD

<https://lamorindaarts.org/art-embraces-poetry/>

Poetry For The Ages

Town Hall Theater
3535 School St.
Lafayette, CA 94549

12:00 Noon – 1:30 PM Enjoy complimentary coffee, tea, and cookies

2025 DATES:

- Tuesday, April 29th “National Poetry Month
- Tuesday, October 7th “All Hallow’s Eve”

<https://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/commissions-committees/public-art-committee/programs>

The Cannoli Imposters, Help!

By Philip Scimonelli

Full disclosure, I'm second-generation Italian-American. My ancestors came from the island off the tip of the boot, known as Sicily. This amazing region is famous for Mt. Etna, Taormina, Pasta con le Sarde, Al Pacino, and of course the most famous Italian dessert, Cannoli.

Legend has it, Cannoli originated in the Palermo and Messina regions of Sicily. Theories suggest the pastry is a symbol of fertility. This seems a bit counterintuitive because the singular of cannoli is Cannolo. Interestingly, Cannolo roughly translates to "little tube." YIKES!

If you've been to Sicily, you know cannoli is sold everywhere, from airports to petrol filling stations, taverns, pizza houses, and of course bakeries. The quality of cannoli bought outside a bakery in Sicily, is still superior to what is happening in the United States. My Sicilian blood starts boiling when I see what establishments are using to fill the majestic tube: instant pudding, cream fillings, and even aerosol whipping creams. These are the IMPOSTERS! You can't use the name cannoli with these fillings, it's sacrilegious. Please, catering services, restaurants, bakeries in the good old USA, do your research and make cannoli that has a sweet ricotta filling, or at the minimum, a mixture of ricotta and mascarpone.

A pristine Sicilian cannoli is filled with semisweet ricotta cheese made from grass fed sheep's milk, topped with your choice of candied orange peel, chocolate chips, or chopped pistachios. The homemade bowtie shape shell that holds this filling must have the perfect crunch. Purists will have the shells filled upon request. You see, you don't want the filling resting inside the Cannolo for more than 30 minutes for the greatest culinary ecstasy. For Sicilians, Cannoli are a religion, not a dessert.

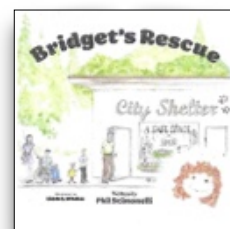
Now, if you live in the US and are fortunate to be close to a Little Italy neighborhood, you are lucky. People in San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, New York, or Philadelphia, they will be able to get their hands on a respectable Cannolo. If your hometown has a quality Italian deli, again, you will enjoy a fine Cannolo. I'm somewhat satisfied with these options; I can live with them. They still won't hold up to what I consumed daily in Sicily. Since I can't afford to run off to Palermo every time I get a craving, I will seek out my best options. However, I will never eat an imposter.

Cannoli pastry is famous throughout the world. Not only because they were mentioned in the greatest movie ever, but when made properly, they are so delicious. Those of you producing impostors, please STOP!

Listen, if they gave out stars for pastries on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, you know Cannoli would have one, right next to Francis Ford Coppola. **Mangia Mangia!**

Philip Scimonelli attended his first California's Writers Club meeting on September 9th, 2023. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1958, his family moved to North Hollywood, California when he was 8 years old. Phil grew up in the San Fernando Valley and graduated from California State University Northridge with a Liberal Arts degree and a Teaching Credential. Upon retirement, Phil and his wife moved to the San Francisco East Bay.

His passion for teaching started in Child Development where he specialized in reading to children from age three to six. Combining his educational experience with a love of dogs, led him to write and self-publish *Bridget's Rescue*. Phil believes passionately in the pet adoption process as the best means to save an animal and acquire a best friend.



The Writer's Connection

Come share what is happening in your life as a writer: the successes, the rejections, anything goes. Want to read something, wonderful, bring it along. Let us know about any book or story you are reading, like it or not, share it with us. Had a rejection that meant something, tell us about it. Want to give a book away, do so.

This month write a piece of Flash Fiction (100 words or less), using one or both of these prompts:

1. Only two weeks had passed into the New year and Bill had already broken his first resolution...
2. Mary had never been given anything like it before...

Young Writers Contest Submissions Are Now Open

CWC Mt. Diablo is pleased to announce that the submission period for the 2025 Young Writers Contest (YWC) is now accepting submissions online. This contest is open to all 6th, 7th, and 8th graders who live and/or attend school in Contra Costa County.

- Submission categories include:
- Poetry
- Short Story
- Personal Narrative
- Humor in Poetry, Short Story, and Personal Narrative

Our YWC committee is busy screening all submissions in the meanwhile. Special thanks goes to our YWC Screening Committee: Ceci Pugh, Cindy Leonard, Marlene Dotterer, Margie Witt, AnneMarie Gouveia, and Quynh-Uyen Trinh for helping with the screening process.

1. The deadline for submissions is March 21.
2. CWC Judging Period commences March 30-April 6.
3. Winners will be notified via email on April 7.
4. An Awards Ceremony will be held on May 17.

We need more judges, and are always looking for more Judges!

Please contact Lyn Roberts if you are interested:

in being a Judge at: Lynzcwc@gmail.com.

For more information on the Young Writers Contest and how to submit, visit:

<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/young-writers-contest/>

AnneMarie Gouveia — 2025 YWC Chairperson

Writing in the Age of Short Attention Spans: Crafting Stories that Stick

By Sabyasachi Roy

Let's start with the elephant in the room, a.k.a. to the point: people don't have the patience for long-winded setups anymore. Like it or not, we are in the middle of a world of endless swipes, dings, and dopamine hits. This presents a high-stakes challenge, especially for writers, how do you keep readers hooked when they're one "ugh, boring" away from ditching your work for the latest TikTok trend? Short attention spans mean writers have to structure narratives like a playlist — each beat compelling enough to keep someone from skipping to the next track. That's not necessarily a bad thing. It forces us to sharpen our storytelling tools.

Narrative Darwinism

Call it narrative Darwinism adapt or get left unread. There are exceptions to this trend, but this article will not be focusing on those exceptions.

Hook 'Em Like a Pro

The secret to grabbing attention? Start strong. Open with a sentence that raises eyebrows—or blood pressure. Think of it like a Tinder bio: you've got one line to make them swipe right. For instance, instead of: "On a cloudy Monday morning, Sarah walked to work thinking about her overdue rent," try: "By the time Sarah reached the office, she'd already Googled 'how to fake your death.'" Curiosity piqued? Exactly.

The Next Step

Once you've got them, don't let up. Use short, punchy sentences to build momentum. Throw in surprises. Keep the stakes high. People love a good cliffhanger, even in the middle of a paragraph. It's all about maintaining that mental tug-of-war: "What happens next?" vs. "Should I check my phone?"

Now, here's the tricky part: keeping things tight without sacrificing depth. Because yes, people want brevity—but they also crave meaning. The trick is to make every word pull double duty. Don't just describe; evoke. Don't explain; imply. This also means cutting the fluff. Your story doesn't need a thousand words when 500 will do.

Modern Storytelling That Works

Need proof this approach can work? Look at Twitter (or X or whatever Elon's calling it now).

Microfiction thrives there—complete stories in 280 characters. Or consider Netflix's obsession with limited series: tightly plotted, emotionally packed episodes that beg to be binged. And let's not forget podcasts, where even meandering conversations are shaped into narratives with precision editing.

Take someone like Emily Varga, whose debut novel "For She is Wrath" stands out with a lovers-to-enemies storyline wrapped in forbidden Jinn magic. It navigates betrayal, revenge, and lingering love in a richly developed magical world, keeping readers hooked with high motional stakes and dark secrets. Or Carissa Broadbent who is already gaining traction with her "Crowns of Nyaxia" series. Read her latest installment, "The Songbird and the Heart of Stone", and you will find it is a well-paced rich vampire fantasy with themes of redemption and betrayal.

All these make her work a perfect blend of lush settings with gripping tension. Or for that matter Taylor Jenkins Reid, whose books like “The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo” cut straight to the drama without losing their emotional core. These authors are the perfect examples for aspiring authors because they show how emerging voices in fantasy can captivate with dynamic characters and immersive worlds while maintaining the tension that keeps pages turning.

In Conclusion

Once I was trying hard to come up with the most captivating opening paragraph, and in doing so spent a whole day. My friend happened to put his eyes on it and commented, “Quite great.

But, what is the point”? Thanks, but he had a point: I was so caught up in being literary, that I forgot to be interesting. So now, whenever I start a new piece, I ask myself, “Would my friend keep reading?” If the answer’s no, I scrap it. And really, it’s more about life than just writing.

Surely, you don’t want to be the guy at a party who insists on telling a story that meanders for 15 minutes before going nowhere. It is the dignity of your readers — and yours too — that deserves better.

Bio: Sabyasachi Roy is primarily a Bengali poet from West Bengal, India. He writes in English from time to time. His poetry has been published in Stand, Poetry Salzburg Review, FourWsixteen, Linq, Quintessence, Voicesnet, Dicey Brown, Mindfire Renewed, The Potomac, 13th Warrior, and several print and online magazines.

