



The Write News

April 2025

A Monthly Newsletter
Denis Hoye, Editor

Mt. Diablo Branch

April 12th 2025 Creating a Writing Practice Donna Levin



Donna Levin is the author of five acclaimed novels, *Extraordinary Means*, *California Street*, *There's More Than One Way Home*, *He Could Be Another Bill Gates*, and now *The Talking Stick*, which was published by Skyhorse in April of last year.

She has also written two books on the craft of writing: *Get That Novel Started* and *Get That Novel Written*. She is a longtime facilitator of fiction-writing workshops, and a frequent speaker at conferences.

Donna's work is included in the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University and in the California State Library's collection of California novels. She lives in San Francisco.

Please Register for this Meeting

If you register after 9:00 a.m. on April 9, the cost will be \$40.00 for members & \$40.00 for each guest.

Creating a Writing Practice

I've sometimes been asked, "Do you write when you get inspired?"

My answer, "I don't get inspired. I show up."

Creating and committing to a writing practice is essential for artists of all kinds. But to those of us who have other demanding commitments – to family, friends, work, and yes, even hobbies – it can seem impossible to find time to write. My goal in this presentation is to identify the perceived obstacles to making it happen, to suggest ways of overcoming those obstacles, and ways to keep on track.

Three Takeaways:

- Everything takes care of itself except writing.
- Daily practice is essential a short time will suffice.
- Real writers don't do lunch.

Scheduled for April 12th, 2024

- 10:30 am Sign-in table opens
- 11:15 am Writer's Table
- 12:00 pm Buffet Lunch
- 1:00 pm Main Presentation

Location

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

Cost

\$30 Members and \$35 Non-Members.

Includes a buffet luncheon. Pay at the door or online with PayPal when registering.

CWC Mt. Diablo Branch President's Message

Good grief! I just received an email from my tax accountant saying my returns had been completed. Where is this year going? Is it really tax return time already? There is a simple answer – yes. So, what have we all managed to achieve so far this year?

How many chapters have we added to the novel or memoir? Have we agreed on terms with an agent? Has a magazine accepted one of our short stories? Or are we still trying to work out how to blend regular writing time into our busy daily schedule?

No matter what your responses were in that last section, any considered answers confirm that you are a writer, and that is an amazing admission for any human to make. But that admission permits you to follow any wild thought that springs to mind. Any observation or understanding can lead us to start a fresh story.

For myself, do I need to know the ending before I start? Often, I entertain the ending after most of the story is in draft form. Once in a while, I can see the storyline from start to finish before I commit anything to paper or the computer screen. But this scenario is rare. I gravitate toward being classified as a pantsler.

As writers, we construct a world that is based on our imaginations. We populate those worlds with characters who help us to tell our story. Sometimes, the location or characters remind us of some time in our past. I truly believe that in many stories, there are fragments of the writer in the characters they embrace. Settings can evoke feelings that may not be conscious for the author, but those feelings still linger deep within them. These feelings can surface at any time and in many forms. Being part of a story's character is a common way for this to occur, despite some writers denying such a notion. It is not that the author is being given a voice. However, if a story character parodies the author or a close associate in some way, then I suggest that the author's level of engagement may be enhanced. The author may have a more committed investment in that character. I believe that commitment will be carried to other main characters so that they are all compatible with their roles in the story's plot.

I invite you all to review some of your favorite stories. Which character(s) are you most drawn to? Can you explain why you feel that way? Is there something that reminds you of yourself, your mate, a family member, or a close friend?

I'm unsure whether recognizing this in your writing is a good or bad trait. I believe it is good to be aware that you do it, as understanding your personal writing habits is an excellent means to deepen your written stories, giving them color, tone, and shade.

Write on.

Barry



CWC Mt. Diablo Branch Board of Directors

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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

- April 5, 2025, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm, Art Embraces Poetry
- April 5, 2025 Dore Ripley Book Signing at [Barnes & Noble](#) at 2:00 pm
- April 11, 2025, 3 pm, Friday: Sit in on a Zoom Board Meeting
- April 12, 2025, 10:30 am to 2:00 pm, Saturday:
Mt. Diablo Monthly Meeting, Donna Levin, Creating a Writing Practice
- April 16, 2025, 7 pm to 9 pm, Wednesday: Open Mic on Zoom, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm
- April 18, 2025, What's Your Story: Walnut Creek Library, Las Trampus Room (see page 6)
- April 30, 2025 12 am to 1:30 pm, Wednesday: Writers Connection, Chicken Pie Shop
- May 10, 2025, Allison Landa, Developing Your Writing Voice
- June 14, 2025, Brian Copeland — Details to be announced

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/](#)

Thank You To All Who Support This Important Writers Fund

It Is Time to Select a Nominee To Be a Board Member

It now is time to select a nominee. 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 they are 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.

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 & Jack London Award

Every other year, the Central Board of CWC presents the Jack London Award (JLA) to recipients chosen by their respective branches. The purpose of the award is to honor a member whose service to the CWC and/or a branch has been exemplary.

The annual Mt. Diablo Branch Distinguished Service Award (DSA) recognizes a member's extraordinary commitment and effort on an important branch project during the year.

In preparation for these awards, Mt. Diablo's board of directors is considering nominations of those members who have been particularly instrumental in helping our branch further its mission.

When the nomination period ends, board members will choose the final winners by email vote, May 3rd – 8th. The JLA choice will be submitted to CWC for acknowledgment at the Central Board's 2025 Fall Corporate Meeting/Luncheon. All winners are invited to attend the luncheon.

The branch covers their travel and luncheon costs.

The DSA winner's name will be announced in the June Newsletter and acknowledged at the June Meeting. The winner receives the DSA plaque, which lists all recent DSA winners. The winner may keep and display the plaque for one year.

Below is a list of previous winners of the Jack London and Distinguished Service Awards.

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.

**Annual Mt. Diablo Branch Distinguished Service Award (DSA)
and Jack London Awardees**

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

Runner up of the Mercer Cup

Michael Barrington was the runner up of the prestigious Mercer Cup 2025, an annual award presented by the Lancashire Authors Association founded in 1909 for a 1500 word short story. His submission, *Magic on Pendle Hill*, will be published in their anthology, on their Website, and in the National Authors Magazine. He also will be a speaker at the CWC Sacramento Branch, on April 19th.

What's Your Story

Come, read and enjoy listening...

Place: Walnut Creek Library, the Las Trampas Room: 1644 N. Broadway, W/Creek.

Come, read and enjoy listening...

When: the April 18th, 2025, The third Friday of the month

Duration: 12:00 Noon to 2:00 PM

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.

Resources for Writers

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

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

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

[Marketing](#)

[Blogs, Conferences, Bookstores](#)

Darlene Kapur's poem, "Daddy's Girl" is in CWC's Best of the Best: 2024 Literary Review



Darlene Kapur's award-winning poem, "Daddy's Girl" was voted for inclusion in CWC's Best of the Best: 2024 Literary Review. Her artwork is featured in CWC's *Vision and Verse* for 2024. Her short story, "Andrew Pelley's Stellar Year" was chosen for "One Universe to The Left," and her poem, "Alms" will appear in CWC's *Smalls*, a collection of short poems.

Darlene Kapur began writing poems and stories in her early teens. She majored in journalism and worked as a speechwriter and editor before returning to short stories. Her debut book of stories on India, *In Any Given Room*, was published in 2022, followed by, *A Year Without Men*, published in 2023. Kapur's prize-winning poetry, stories, and photography are featured in *Persimmon Tree*, *Vision and Verse*, and the anthologies *Ink Spots* and *One Universe to The Left*. Her poem, was voted for inclusion in Best of The Best, 2024 Literary Review by the California Writers Club.

<https://www.idkapur.com/>

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

[16 Calls for Pitches Directly from Editors](#)

[46 Recently Opened Submission Calls, Upcoming Deadlines, Themes](#)

[72 Pitch Calls, Writing Jobs, Internships, Volunteer Opps, Fellowships](#)



Scammers Preying on Writers is on the Rise by Tish Davidson from the CWC Fremont Area Branch

There has been an uptick in scammers preying on self-published and aspiring writers. Most of these scams are based overseas leaving little recourse to writers who have been scammed and lost money. Before you sign anything or pay anyone money to publish your book, represent you to agents, publicize your book, or sign you to a contract, check Scam Alerts at authorsguild.org/resource/publishing-scam-alerts/. This site is maintained by the Authors Guild. The website is accessible to all, even if you're not a Guild member.

Writer Beware offers another list of publishing scammers at writerbeware.blog/scam-archive. Writer Beware also maintains a separate agent impersonation list. This is a particularly noxious form of scamming, because it hurts both the writer and legitimate literary agents. The list can be found here writerbeware.blog/2024/03/15/the-impersonation-list/.

Remember: There are legitimate businesses that help writers self-publish, and there are legitimate public relations companies that will promote your book for a fee. But, if it sounds too good to be true, look before you leap, and your bank account will thank you.

Public Domain News for 2025

Copyright provides protection for creatives, but it does not last forever. On January 1, 2025, many familiar books, plays, art, and music first published in 1929 lost copyright protection. This leaves authors free to quote from these books and use the artwork or music without permission of the publisher. Some of the works losing copyright in 2025 include William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Hemmingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, the character Popeye, musical compositions like *Singing' in the Rain* (but not the movie), Gershwin's *An American in Paris* and many art works. There are some caveats. Characters are only out of copyright as they were portrayed in 1929. Popeye, for example, can be portrayed with super strength, but you will have to wait until 1931 to use his super spinach eating. Other considerations include the fact that the work must be published, not just created, in 1929 to become copyright-free. Art works created in 1929 but not publicly exhibited (the equivalent of publishing art) are still protected. And many character names and some images continue to be protected by trademark laws even after they are out of copyright.

Yes, it's complicated, but a good resource on what works lost copyright protection in 2025 and the nuances of copyright law is available to from the Duke University Law Center for the Study of Public Domain at web.law.duke.edu/cspd/publicdomainday/2025/. Note that the information Duke Law provides is applicable only to versions of works copyrighted in the US. Even if you never plan to use any of the copyright-free material, the site is interesting reading and provides a wealth of information about copyright law.

If you do decide to use material that may or may not be copyrighted, make sure to do your due diligence. The last thing anyone wants to face is a lawsuit for copyright violation.

*Tish Davidson is the Chairperson
Social Write-in Host Speakers Program & Publicity
CWC Fremont Area Branch.*

CWC Mt. Diablo Open Mic on Zoom

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM — Online event

Details: Join us for Open Mic Night!

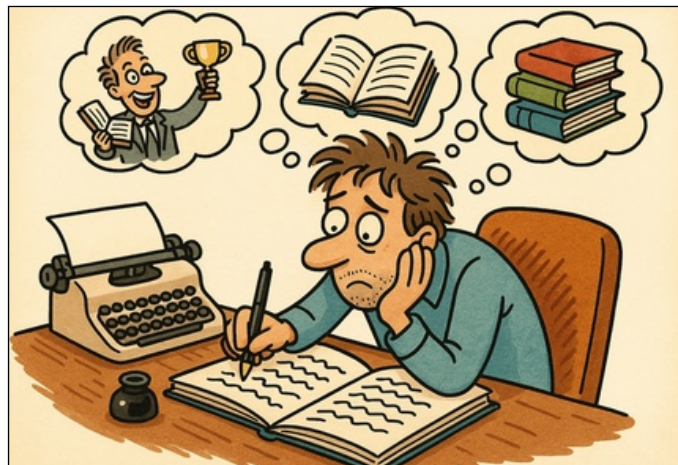
Sign up to read a five-minute segment from something you've written, a work-in-progress, something already published, or that sheaf of poems you hid under the bed for the last year. Share it with writers and readers at our 90-minute Read Fest!

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!

Note: Your RSVP on Meetup does not register you for this event. Register online at:

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



*I tried to create a book without a prompt using AI; sigh!
Guess I need a computer for that!*

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. From 12:00 Noon to 1:30 pm. Be seen, Be noticed, Be there!

Join us at:

The Chicken Pie Shop
1251 Arroyo Way
Walnut Creek, California 94523



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, April 5th “National Poetry Month**
- **Saturday, August 26rd 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”**

A Short Story by Robert Poirier The Beta Reader

Lydia Hoffmann was an excellent beta reader. She had an eye for what makes a good story great and what makes a great story pop. A tall, slender, attractive nurse, Lydia spent a lot of her time organizing art shows for the local libraries, but she also enjoyed giving talks on writing and beta reading.

Unknown to most of her friends, she had an appetite for true crime documentaries, especially unsolved cold-case killings in her local area.

At her latest talk on beta reading, she ended the presentation by offering a cursory reading of the first five manuscripts she received for a hundred-dollar fee. She expected to receive a dozen emailed manuscripts and would quickly process each by reading the first and last twenty-five pages to get a sense of the story. If she felt the story had promise, she would keep the fee. If not, she would gently advise the author to find an alpha reader who reads rough drafts.

The next morning, there was a handwritten manuscript on yellow legal paper in an unmarked manila envelope with five twenty-dollar bills on her doorstep. It was barely legible, with many scribbled notes in the margins. Typically, she would return a manuscript in this condition, but there was no name, phone number, or return address. Besides, the title, *The East Bay Killings*, piqued her curiosity. The East Bay communities were in the northern part of Contra Costa County.

She sat in her downstairs study with her English setter at her feet and struggled through the first twenty-five pages until the story described the killing of a twenty-year-old Latina in a nearby suburb ten years ago. The victim had disappeared following a dance at a local college. A CHP officer on patrol found the body on the side of the road the next day. The manuscript described the scene as the body on her back, fully clothed with hands crossed on her chest as if in a coffin. She had been stabbed multiple times with a large-bladed knife.

The only thing different from the television documentary she had seen describing the crime scene was the manuscript description of a lower back tattoo of a small, red devil wearing light blue diapers and holding a pitchfork.

Lydia researched the latest newspaper story online about the killing and found a contact tip line. She called and left a message explaining the detailed information in the manuscript about the tattoo.

Three hours later, she was back in her study when the doorbell rang. Lydia checked her Ring camera to see a vaguely familiar man in a dark jacket holding a small bouquet. She grabbed her dog by the collar and opened the door as far as the security chain allowed.

“Can I help you?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said. “I gave you the wrong manuscript and would like it back. You can keep the hundred dollars.”

“Sure,” she said, now recognizing the man as one of the wait staff at the previous day’s presentation.

Lydia turned to put the dog in a small fenced pen near the front door. When she bent down to secure the pen, she glanced at the hall mirror and saw the visitor stick his foot inside the door and pull a large knife out of a sheath at his side.

She threw herself against the bottom of the door and heard a scream as the heavy door crushed the man's foot. Twisting her ankle when she turned, she hobbled for the stairs to reach the bathroom, which also was a safe room at the top.

She heard a crash as the intruder broke the security chain and came after her. Lydia was halfway up the stairs when he caught up with her, grabbed her left leg, and pulled her toward him.

The dog leaped over the enclosure and charged the man, snarling and nipping at his ankles. The man turned to stab the dog. Lydia lashed out with her right leg, striking him just below the knee. He lost his balance and tumbled backward.

The assailant struggled to get up, hesitated momentarily, then slowly started back up the stairs.

He was two steps below her when he stopped, opened his jacket, and revealed the knife part-way into his side, just below his rib cage. Blood stained his white shirt.

"Please help me," he said.

"No," she said.

"Then go to Hell, bitch," he said and took another step up.

"You first," she said and kicked the knife with her foot, driving it in to the hilt.

He screamed once, fell backward to the bottom of the stairs, and was still.

The dog sniffed him, then padded up to Lydia and nuzzled her.

"It's okay, puppy," she said quietly, hugging the dog. "I think we just solved a murder."

**Register as Early As You Can For The June 14th General Meeting
Featuring An Afternoon with Brian Copeland
Bay Area Author, Comedian, and Actor**

June 14, 2025

11:00 am — 2:00pm



Brian Copeland is an award-winning actor, comedian, author, playwright, television and radio talk show host based in the San Francisco Bay Area. His one-man play, “*Not a Genuine Black Man*,” went on to become the longest-running solo show in San Francisco theatrical history, recently celebrating its 1,000th performance.

His debut thriller, *Outraged*, was released in April 2024. The second *Topher Davis* thriller, *Shadows of Justice*, will be published on April 29, 2025.

An Afternoon with Brian Copeland

Come and hear Brian discuss his multifaceted career, his writings and his new thriller, detective novels: *Outrage* and recently published *Shadow of Justice* with two more to follow. Enjoy this afternoon at:

Zio Fraedo’s Restaurant

611 Gregory Lane

Pleasant Hill, CA

Registration Opens Soon

