



The Write News

September 2025

A Monthly Newsletter
Denis Hoye, Editor

Mt. Diablo Branch

Dena Kouremetis began her writing career for the Sacramento Bee in the late



1990s. Soon she began providing content for websites, podcasts, blogs, ghostwriting and co-authoring books with and for other authors, and eventually became a

contributor for Forbes. She currently maintains a blog on healthy aging for Psychology Today called (R)Aging with Grace.

Over the past few years, Kouremetis took her vocal talents, created a website with samples of her “voices,” and began narrating audiobooks, using her penchant for mimicry and foreign accents to make “audio movies” of novels.

While she gets work as a narrator for ACX/ Audible, she adores working up-close and personal with local authors. Dena invites you to visit her website at DenaKouremetis.com, which she swears is a great bathroom listening experience.

[Click Here to Register](#)

Giving Voice to Your Words

A heads up! Professional voice actor and copywriter Dena Kouremetis offers a peek into the world of audiobooks; from their ancient storytelling origins to today. Learn about:

- The world has been going to audio readings.
- How today’s voice actors do their magic.
- How to choose a narrator and/or what to watch out for when narrating your own book.
- The ins and outs of making your book go audio.
- Valuable links and resources with which to begin your audio journey.

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. Door Price is: \$40.

President's Message

After much deliberation, the Board of Directors has opted to make some significant changes to our monthly meetings, beginning January 10th, 2026.

- 1 We are moving location from Zio Fraedo's Restaurant.
2. The meetings will take place at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center – the Dining Room. However, due to other events at the Senior Center, a few meetings will need to take place at the Pleasant Hill Community Center on Taylor Blvd. We will let you know well in advance when this shift will be necessary.
3. Each meeting will be shortened from 3 hours to 2 hours, starting at 10:00 and finishing at noon. Sign-in for meetings will open at 9:30.
4. We will no longer have a catered buffet lunch, but arrange coffee, tea, and pastries.
5. The main event of the meeting, either an outside presenter or Writers Table, will commence at 11:00.
6. We are still discussing what to schedule in the first hour. If you have any suggestions, let me know.
7. We have the room available to us for longer than the actual 2-hour meeting. This will give us the freedom to have a social gathering time after the main event. Other potential uses of this time are:
 - a. We could arrange an impromptu critique group.
 - b. Alternatively, we could arrange a book club group to meet at this time, too.
 - c. What would you want? If you wish to bring a snack for lunch, feel free to do so.
8. These meetings will still require a charge to attend. Following Covid, meeting rooms are far more expensive. We have not finalized the meeting charge, but I suspect it will be \$20 - \$25.

Members may wonder why the Board decided to make such a radical change. Two reasons prompted this:

Zio's proposed pricing would have made the meetings at their restaurant prohibitively expensive. The Board, for the last year or so, has been absorbing a cost increase and subsidizing for each attendee.

Secondly, our relationship with the restaurant has changed since Tony died.

Making these types of changes takes time, focus, and determination. I did not want to be forced to make such a location change if our situation suddenly altered. I wanted to give you all a heads-up about these changes to the general monthly meeting. All other programs will continue as normal. — 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

SEPTEMBER 6

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm PDT

Book Signing with AnneMarie Mazotti Gouveia

SEPTEMBER 12

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm PDT

What's Your Story Reading Group

SEPTEMBER 13

11:00 am – 2:00 pm PDT

September General Meeting featuring Voice Actor, Dena Kouremetis, "Giving Voice to Your Words" Includes a buffet luncheon. Pay at the door or online with PayPal when registering.

SEPTEMBER 17

7:00 pm – 8:00 pm PDT

Open Mic Night on Zoom
View

SEPTEMBER 24

12 pm — 2 pm PDT

Writers Connection at Chicken Pie Shop
1251 Arroyo Way, Walnut Nut Creek, CA

Writer's Helping Writers

CWC's motto is "Writers Helping Writers." We know that a struggling writer occasionally needs a little help. Our WHW fund is available to any member who needs help with paying for a meeting or workshop, or with membership costs. Just visit our website and complete this form <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/whw-form/>

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.

Writers 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 sometimes, 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 paying for a meeting or workshop, or with membership.

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.

Young Writers Contests

The **Young Writers Contest** supports Contra Costa County middle school students with cash prizes in short story, poetry, essay/ personal narrative, and humor. Contest submissions are free. We will celebrate and present awards in May and thank the following members for their donations: Al Garrotto, Ann O'Connell-Nye, Bob Lane, Jerry Blair, John Schembra, Linda Hartman, Marianne McBride, Nancy Chan, Patricia Northlich, and William Yarborough.

Contact Marlene Dotterer at:

webmaster@cwcmt Diablo.org

**Thank You To All Who Support This
Important Writers Fund**

Open Mic on Zoom

Wednesday, September 17, 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!

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

The Writer's Connection

Wednesday, September 24th, 2025,

12 Noon to 2 pm

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:

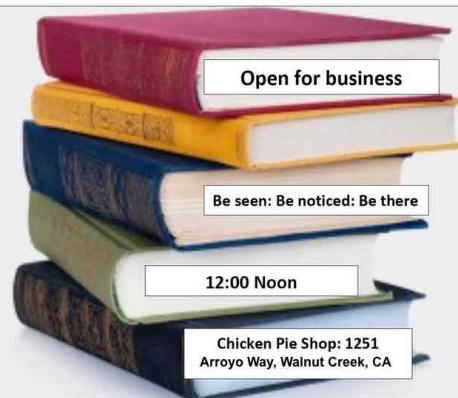
The Chicken Pie Shop

1251 Arroyo Way

Walnut Creek, California 94523

[Please Register for The Writer's Connection](#)

WRITERS CONNECTION



What's Your Story Come, read and enjoy listening

Place: Walnut Creek Library, the Las Trampas Room:

1644 N. Broadway, Walnut Creek,
California

When: 12 pm, September 12th, 2025, the second Friday of this month.



WHAT'S YOUR STORY? is a place to join other writers to read your short story aloud, or enjoy listening to others. Meetings are held the 3rd Friday of every month.

cwcmt Diablo.org/whats-your-story-reading

New Resources from Authors Publish

[25 Publications that Pay \\$1,000 and Up](#)

www.freedomwithwriting.com/freedom/uncategorized/14-calls-for-pitches-directly-from-editors-16/

[30 Magazines Publishing Hybrid Writing](#)

A Book Reading — Finding Max by Jennifer Wallig

September 31 @ 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
PDT

Barnes & Noble — 1192 Locust Street,
Walnut Creek, California

"Sometimes we don't know what we need until we find it".

Join us for the official launch of *Finding Max*—the award-winning memoir by Jennifer Wallig, recipient of the Literary Titan Gold Book Award. In this powerful and emotional true story, Jennifer shares her journey to uncover her father's birth family, revealing long-hidden secrets and the healing power of truth.



Come hear the author speak about the inspiration behind the book, the challenges of tracing hidden histories, and the triumph of love and resilience. A must-attend event for memoir lovers, genealogy enthusiasts, and anyone who believes in the strength of family.

As a teen, Jennifer Wallig learned that her father was adopted, turning what she thought she knew about her family history—and identity—upside down. Her life had been turbulent as the child of divorced parents inundated with their own struggles. These revelations changed everything.

[Purchase this at Jennifer Wallig](#)

Writers Helping Writers

Michael Barrington

As a writer, I have learned the importance of editorial feedback. I have friends who have consulted with writers' groups, critique groups or writer friends and have become confused because they receive such a variety of opinions. The conflicting viewpoints ended up paralyzing them, and they stopped writing.

Whether you're a budding or more experienced writer, choose people who not only like your work but who understand the choices you've made; people whom you're in synch with; people who are smart and constructive, whether they're fellow writers or not; and people who don't trigger your anxiety. You don't want to share your work with anyone who can make you doubt its value or even doubt yourself as a writer. It's difficult enough staying centered and confident about our work without getting confused by too many differing opinions or feeling like a failure.

Most people don't know how to give feedback. They're not careful with their choice of words, or they let their emotions take over. When feedback hurts, it's difficult to see the good in it that might help you grow. The part that feels so damn shitty dominates. Feedback should never be about what a person does or doesn't like, but about what's working or not working.

The most frustrating feedback I've received on my writing was "I loved it." It gave me no information about the actual writing. While positive reactions are lovely for a review, as feedback, they're worthless because they don't give you a way to improve. Even the most hurtful, mean feedback can be useful if it gives you a way to produce a better next draft.

Response or reaction: what's the difference? A reaction is automatic. It's based on emotion. A response is the result of careful thinking that best supports what the writer needs. If you have an emotional reaction to feedback, take a deep breath. Remember that feedback on your work is not personal to you. It's easy to want to explain to your readers what they didn't understand or why you made a particular choice. Instead, listen and evaluate. Why did your readers respond the way they did? Can you change something in the writing to create a different response?

Purely positive feedback is great for your ego, but it does nothing to improve your writing.

Positive feedback is worthless if it doesn't help you know what to do next. What's great? What did you like? What did you learn? Why did you like it? Purely negative feedback is completely empty, although it may not feel that way. It just makes you feel shitty. It's easy to take it to heart, but the reality is, "This sucks," is as useless and empty as "This is great." Neither expression gives you any information about the writing, they only tell you the opinion of the reader.

You can always say No to feedback. As long as you carefully consider what is offered, if it doesn't work for you, you don't have to use it.

Personal attacks on you and your writing aren't about you. They are ALWAYS about the person giving it. The key to healthy feedback is finding the right people to give it. People whom you respect and trust.

Sharing something as precious as your most intimate feelings and emotions, even expressed through your characters, is trusting your readers to hold a precious piece of china in their hands..and praying they will not drop it.

How to Add Value With a Prologue

An Essay by: Catherine Hokin.

Prologues are divisive things. They seem to have turned into the Marmite of the literary world, despite their long history as a writing device. The word itself comes to us from Middle English, via the Greek *prologos* which translates as, ‘before saying.’

Prologues were a key feature of ancient Greek drama. Shakespeare used the technique, as did Chaucer, to walk their audiences through who and what they could expect to meet in the tale that was about to unfold. And yet go down any Reddit or Facebook rabbit hole about favorite/least favorite novels or authors and you’ll quickly find readers foaming at the mouth on the subject of prologues.



So perhaps the question we should be asking is, what’s disappointing them? And what can we do as writers—and I include myself here as somebody who regularly writes them—to convince reluctant readers that a well-used prologue merits its place?

Before I get into that, I do think it’s important to acknowledge that constructing a prologue—like any what is essentially short-form writing—is not an easy thing to do. I’m sure it comes as no surprise to anyone that my first tip is to read as many examples as possible, deconstructing the factors that either draw you into the main text, or push you away from it.

Prologue Pitfalls

What is writing based on after all, if not extensive reading? You’ll make your own checklist of what works and what doesn’t, but the following are some of my red flags.

1. **It’s too slow.** This could be because the author has used the prologue as a means to throw in a whole pile of backstory about a character the reader doesn’t know and hasn’t yet invested in. Or because it’s building a world in too many complicated stages. Or dumping research about a key event that’s going to matter later in the story but is far too dry to take up time now. Whatever the reason, the outcome is the same: The first few pages are so dull, the reader isn’t inspired to tackle the rest. Especially, or so it seems, if they’re reading on Kindle Unlimited and have many other choices at their fingertips to turn to.
2. **It’s too much.** In this instance, the reader is thrown at top speed into a piece of dramatic action that roars along at a possibly confusing pace, and then... Everything drops off in chapter one and the novel feels like a different book.
3. **It doesn’t make sense.** Admittedly the reader might be a little further in than the first chapter or so before they realize that the prologue is completely disconnected from the

main story, but that won't make them forgive the writer any more than a dull prologue will.

4. **It never ends.** It's not a tempting snack, it's a whole meal with far too many elements. Somewhere between 1,000 to 2,000 words is the recommended length. I personally aim for the lower end of that. Which leads me nicely into...

Prologue Opportunities

If those are the pitfalls, what are the opportunities? Why write one at all? In my case, I do it to give my reader a glimpse into the world that's coming, usually by establishing a key voice in the story and raising questions about that character and/or the situation they're caught up in. What I'm trying to achieve is a sense of high stakes which will encourage the reader to quickly invest in the story.

There might be a sense of danger, or immediacy, or a task whose success/failure could have serious consequences. There could be a moral dilemma, or a hint that the reader has just met somebody they really shouldn't trust. Whichever I choose, I'm aiming to be sticky and concise in the delivery. That should remain the case however you approach a prologue, but there are, of course, other ways than character to do it.

1. **Use the classic attention-grabbing opener.** In many ways, a prologue is a short story that's going to be picked up in the rest of the narrative, so why not let the opening line sing? Perhaps through an offbeat sentence (e.g., the opening line of Orwell's *1984* or Ian Banks's *The Crow Road*). Or one that poses multiple questions (e.g., Plath's, *The Bell Jar*). Or one that instantly establishes a character's quirks (e.g., Dodie Smith's *I Capture the Castle*). Just remember that whichever way you go, you've now set the tone for the rest of the book.
2. **Pull your reader onto the edge of their seat.** Create a vivid setting they can't help but step further into, or a conflict they can't look away from. Create tension or uncertainty. And then deliver what you've signposted.
3. **Drop them into an event which will twist.** Put your reader onto a path they don't want to get off, with a promise that what's happening is going to lead somewhere they think they can guess. And then push them out of that comfort zone in the main story.

However you do it, stay precise—again, like a short story, every word has to earn its place—and don't forget to pick up the thread you've dangled in the prologue later on.

We live in an era where we're constantly being told people have less and less time and shorter attention spans. Against this backdrop, a prologue that adds value could be one of the sharpest tools in your writing tool kit. I like to think of it as the introduction at a party that stops you looking for someone more interesting to talk to. Hopefully my readers think the same way!



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 October 25th Costumed Halloween Event

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

Poetry For The Ages

Town Hall Theater

3535 School St.

Lafayette, CA 94549

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

2025 DATES:

Tuesday, October 7th

“All Hallow’s Eve”

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

Call for Judges: Scholastic Awards & Young Writers Contests

CWC-Mt. Diablo needs your help once again this season. We are looking for volunteers who are willing to be judges for the Scholastic Awards Writing Contest in December 2025 and the Young Writers Contests in March 2026. Each contest has a Judging Period of 2 weeks; training will be provided. Judges must have computer skills and a keen eye for critical reading. We are especially seeking members with a background in education. Volunteers may contact Quynh Trinn at: NQQ.TRINH@GMAIL.COM for further details. Maholo!



**100 Years
of Writing
Excellence**

**A sponsorship
project
for writing
awareness
and literacy**



Help us reach students and aspiring writers

SPONSORSHIPS: 100 YEARS of WRITING

A **\$5,000** Goal to Support Writing Awareness in the Greater Sacramento Area

Because the California Writers Club
in Sacramento is 100 years old,
we are celebrating by giving back
to the community.

**Will you help promote writing
awareness in our community?**

Your support will help our July-to-December campaign to provide writing tips to schools and libraries, speakers, articles, and the celebration of California Writers Week in October, culminating with an Oct. 18, 2025 gala to celebrate our 100th anniversary.





**The California
Writers Club is a
501 (c) 3
organization**

Help us reach students and aspiring writers

SPONSORSHIP LEVELS & BENEFITS

Gold Level, \$1,250

- We will write an article about your company or industry as it pertains to writing. We may interview you for quotations. We will publish this article on our website, link to it on social media, and provide reprints to you for distribution.
- Your logo will go on pamphlets, posters, our website, and the gala dinner program.
- Acknowledgment of your sponsorship will be noticed at meetings, and our book fair.
- Promotion on Facebook and other social media
- Two dinner tickets to the October 18, 2025 gala celebration

Silver Level, \$500

- Your logo will go on pamphlets, posters, our website, and the gala dinner program.
- Acknowledgment of your sponsorship will be noticed at meetings, and book fairs.
- Promotion on Facebook and other social media
- A frameable Certificate of Sponsorship and a frameable poster about writing.

Bronze Level, \$250

- We will acknowledge your sponsorship at club meetings, at the book fair, and on the club website, plus we will place a listing of your name within the program for the dinner gala.

Patrons, \$100

- We will acknowledge your sponsorship within the program for the dinner gala.

Please make your check payable to the California Writers Club, PO Box 1231. Orangevale, CA 95662.

A receipt for your donation will be returned to you.

Please provide your contact information and email, so we can reach out to obtain your logo and to ensure your sponsorship benefits are put into place.

Contact Kim Edwards for any questions.

KimberlyEdwards00@Comcast.net



The Soul Catcher

A Short Story by: Bob Pourier

The communicator woke Robert Taylor at midnight. He knew it was a soul-catching project but wondered aloud, “Why can’t these people get murdered during daylight hours?”

He was responsible for all high-profile projects in the greater Bay Area within a hundred miles of his sleep cubicle in Walnut Creek, California. The transport system used by the soul-catching organization could only work within a 100-mile circle. The 2027 scheduled upgrade should correct this.

Taylor, a retired professional baseball player, specifically a former catcher, was one of the principal soul catchers on the team. A lack of sleep was the only drawback of the job.

The baseball background information came up during his earthly plane exit interview after a fatal heart attack. Mother Nature thought the instincts of a baseball catcher could be beneficial as a soul catcher.

“A soul catcher’s role,” Mother explained, “is to be near a target at death, catch the soul when it exits the body, and then be near the birth mother at the time of delivery, when the soul will be transplanted. A soul is like a SIM card in a phone. It contains all the intellect and conscience of the person, as well as the non-personal information stored in their brain. It is about the size of a baseball, weighs approximately 21 grams, and is only viable for a two-hour transplant window.”

“You will be assigned to catch only those souls advancing the planet’s safety. You will compete for the soul with the underworld soul crushers, whose mission is to destroy the first soul they see.”

“The cardinal rule,” she emphasized, “catchers cannot have any contact with humans. The only exception to this rule is that old-soul humans, who have been recipients of transplanted souls, can see catchers and crushers.”

Taylor would be in spirit form during this time, able to see humans but only to interact with the crushers, who would also be in spirit form.

In an instant, Taylor was transported to a hotel in downtown Oakland. The target, an old-soul keynote speaker at a gathering of No Coal activists, was celebrating the group’s latest judicial victory.

Taylor smelled the crusher, a foul mixture of damp, moldy earth and sulfur, before he spotted it. The crusher was across the room, head down, and wearing a black robe that went down to large cloven hooves. It carried a small hand scythe and was moving toward the target.

The target paused in conversation, sniffed the air, and turned toward the crusher. A look of fear crossed her face.

Nearby, a compact, neatly dressed man holding a small, black, semi-automatic pistol at his side was also moving toward the target.

The cardinal rule prevented Taylor from stopping the assassin. He maneuvered behind the crusher, who was concentrating on the target and did not notice him. When the shooter raised the pistol, Taylor shoved the crusher, who fell against the shooter. The shooter sensed the crusher's presence and instinctively fired at it twice before being tackled. During the struggle, the pistol fired again, killing the shooter and releasing his soul. The crusher quickly cut the soul in half, releasing a swarm of tiny black insects that it crushed with its hooves. Having completed its mission, it shimmered away.

A moment later, Taylor was standing in front of Mother.

"You broke the cardinal rule," Mother fumed. "Absolutely no contact with humans."

"To be fair," Taylor said. "I made contact with the crusher, not the human."

Mother scoffed.

"I'm putting you on angel duty," Mother said with a tight-lipped smile. "You are to guard the activist 24x7 for the next year."

An instant later, Taylor, thrilled with the prospect of a normal sleep routine, was in spirit form beside the activist.

She turned to him, smiled, and mouthed, "Thank you."



BOOK SIGNING EVENT
Middle-Grade & Young Adult - AnneMarie Mazotti Gouveia

DRIFTERS REALM
MIRROR TREE
BRAVE FALLS

September 6th 2pm - 4pm
REASONABLE BOOKS
3645 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite C
Lafayette, CA 94549



[Read More](#)



Calling All Authors!

Join Suzy Orpin at Welsh Winery Tasting Room in Martinez.

Suzy is putting together a special **Author Showcase & Book Signing** at the **Welsh Winery Tasting Room in Martinez** on **Saturday, October 11th** (time TBD).

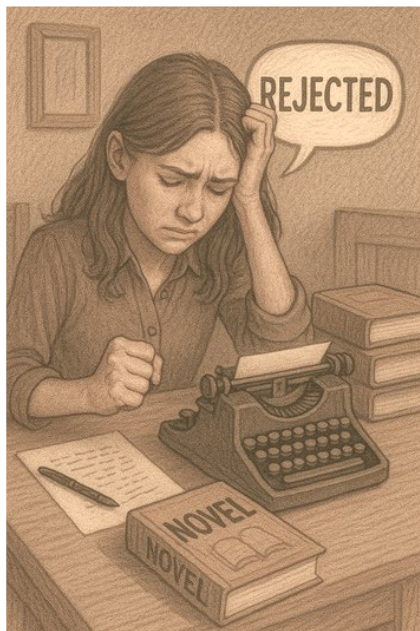
Authors will have the opportunity to connect with readers in a warm, inviting atmosphere while enjoying a local wine tasting. Whether you'd like to **read from your work, share your story, host a fun activity, or simply sell your books**, this event is designed to celebrate writers and bring the community together.

- 📅 **Date:** October 11, 2025
- 🕒 **Time:** To be determined
- 💰 **Cost:** Approximately \$15 per table (includes a wine tasting)
- 🙋 **Open to:** A limited number of authors across a variety of genres

If you'd like to participate, please email **Suzy Orpin** at sgorpin@yahoo.com. Space is limited, and we aim for a diverse group of voices. **Author lineup will be confirmed by September 5th, and promotion will begin shortly after.**

Come share your words, sip some wine, and make it a night to remember! 🍷✨

This is a private event and is not organized by CWC Mt. Diablo.



Rejection Again!

The agent said it looked like my novel was written backward, and my query letter was typed low on ink!

This illustration was created from my prompt with the help of ChatGPT, but the caption was completely written with no help from any AI (as you can tell).

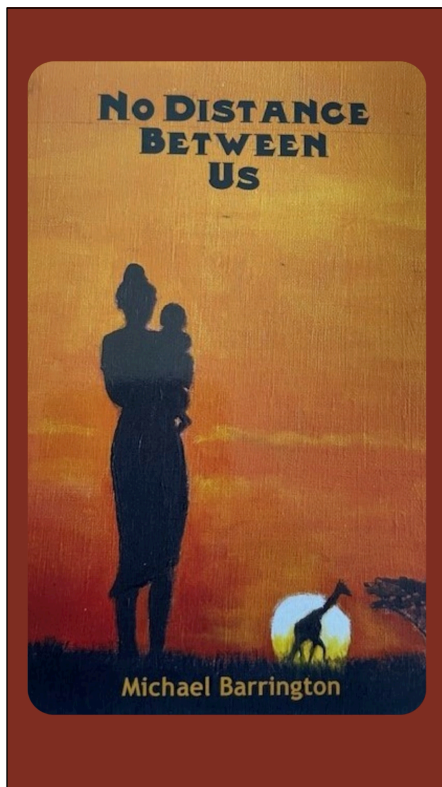
Honest, I am now taking drawing lessons. — DPH

Michael Barrington Publishes His 13th Book

No Distance Between Us

Available on Amazon.

Michael Barrington's 13th book is another page turner!



Set in Nigeria during the 1920s against the backdrop of British colonialism, the white community drinks afternoon tea, plays bridge and dresses its servants as if they still lived in the UK. Affairs are commonplace, and infidelity ignored, provided it is discreet.

Ngutor, a houseboy, becomes the unfortunate victim messenger between the wife of his master and her lover. Worlds collide when the District Officer, a married man, falls madly in love with a French nun, a doctor and director of the local hospital.

Lyrical, sensitive and hauntingly evocative, as their relationship develops through letters to each other, the characters will stay with you long after the last page. *No Distance Between Us*, is a historical novel of sensitive intimacy, desire and passion.



Michael Barrington

Michael Barrington Receives an Award from the Lancashire Author Association

While on vacation in the UK, Michael was invited by the Lancashire Authors Association to receive his award for the 2025 prestigious Mercer Cup, an annual Short Story competition (1500 words), won earlier this year. His certificate was presented by Mrs Olive Riley, the club Vice President.

Interview with Donna Darling

donnadarlingauthor@gmail.com

cell: 925-408-7505

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

Writing has always been in the background of my life. When my children were young, I wrote short stories for them, making them the main character in a fantastic or funny story.

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

I was most influenced to start writing in earnest when I was bitten by the genealogy bug. Curious to learn about my great-grandparents, who came from Puerto Rico to Hawaii in 1900, I dove deep into research. What I learned about Puerto Rico's history, and the migration of over 5,000 people became my first book, *THE 3 MARIAS*. A second edition, *A PUERTO RICO STORY*, *THE 3 MARIAS* was released in April 2025, with added chapters.

A friend, Jacque Hall, brought me to my first California Writers Club meeting in about 2010. She encouraged me to pursue writing, and join the CWC. She also suggested a writing class, taught at DVC Emeritus, by Camille Minichino.

When a friend offers a suggestion, listen with an open heart. Jacque steered me in the right direction, and Camille taught me how to put my stories on the page. I was as student of Camille's from about 2012 until her death in 2024.

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

Students from Camille's class bonded, and we formed a weekly writers' group. With online tools available, like Zoom, we pull fellow writers from Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. A writer's group can be one of the most helpful tools in writing. My friends don't pull punches, and they offer constructive critiques that make me a better writer. We never take opinions personally, rather use them to improve our piece.

Q. How do you define success as a writer?

For me, success as a writer comes from telling the story. I don't expect to be the next #1 NYT bestseller, but I believe that anything is possible. I found that most people know little to nothing about Puerto Rico, and I hope to make a difference by telling the story with fictional characters,

and true historic events. Success to me is when someone reads the book, and tells me they were surprised to learn about Puerto Rico. Two readers who read my book visited Puerto Rico, and more people said they were interested in visiting.

Q. What do you like about writing?

I write every day. It's a must. Not because I'm regimented to the routine, but because I need to write. As an expression of art, emotion, or clear my head. Writing is a passion.

In a world that feels out of control, a writer can create their own universe. We can create chaos, or mayhem, and control the outcome.

Q. Do you have any advice for new writers?

My advice to writers:

- Write regularly. Even if it's just a brain dump. Get something on the page.
- Read books, articles, academic works, and newspapers.
- Read in the genre you want to write
- Whether you're a pantsier or a plotter, have an idea where your story is going.
- Outline your story by chapters
- Write a detailed character description for all central characters
- Draw a sketch of scenes. What does the room look like? Where is the door?
- Remember to include all the elements of a scene.
- Ask your character questions, then write about them.
 - What is your characters fundamental fear?
 - What does your character read?
 - Favorite meal. Do they cook?
 - Hobbies/ work
 - How do they style their hair?
 - Tics/ habits
 - Religion or loss of faith
- Each character's voice should be heard, distinctly different from each other
- Don't beat yourself up when you get stuck. Instead, ask your characters questions. Let them start talking to you.

Q. What are your future writing goals?

Writing my first book was a learning process. I'm currently writing my second book about the migration of Puerto Ricans to Hawaii. My third book will release concurrently, or closely behind.