



The Write News

November, 2025

A Monthly Newsletter
Denis Hoyer, Editor

Mt. Diablo Branch

November 8th, 11:00 am — 2:00 pm Featuring: Small Town, Big Secrets: Writing the Small-Town Mystery



Claudia Hagadus Long

(**Claudia H. Long**) is a lawyer and writer in the tiny wine-soaked town of Calistoga. Her long writing career includes the *Zara and Lilly mystery series*, one of which, *NINE TENTHS OF THE LAW* (Kasva Press) has been optioned for a feature film. *TRUCK A DUCK* (August 2025) and *MURDER WITHOUT A DUCK* (2024) (A Simpato Mystery series, Sibylline Press Digital First) are humorous-edge-of-cozy mysteries, with wine, cannabis-cookie-selling nuns, and awful duck puns! When she's not lawyering or writing, she weaves, cooks, and dotes on her grandchildren at:

www.claudiahlong.com

Small town, big secrets!

Join local mystery writer Claudia H. Long for a chat about modern small-town mysteries. Creating a whole town, with characters, streets, history and charm, and adding a murder? Mini-world-building at its best.

In a big-city mystery, you can put your characters in all kinds of hot water without worrying about hurting the local baker's feelings, but when you write the modern small-town mystery, your neighbors may take offense. We'll talk about how to create a wonderful fictional village your readers will want to return to over and over.

LOCATION

Zio Fraedo's Restaurant
611 Gregory Lane
Pleasanton, California

SCHEDULE

10:30 – 11:00 Sign-in and Network
11:00 – 12:00 Reminisce/Good-byes
12:00 – 1:00 Buffet lunch & Business Meeting
1:00 – 2:00 Featured Presentation

COST

Members: \$30 Guests: \$35
Includes Buffet Lunch
Pay online or at the door

[Register Here](#)

President's Message

Often, I look at a piece of writing that I just wrote and wonder. Where did that come from? I have no idea. Nuggets of experiences coalesced into a thought, a starting point. I was not a planner; I just started writing, and my mind drove the storyline until the characters found their legs. Then they took over.

In truth, the characters were simply extensions of my imagination. They did not exist in concrete form, but they were real in my head. I could converse with them, and sometimes, they made sense. If they were truly the storytellers, then it was best to give them access to the keyboard.

I believe to be a good writer, I needed to give full rein to anything that crossed my mind. It may explain why I was comfortable being a pantsner. Sometimes, I sensed where I was headed, but especially with short stories, I could start and had not a clue where I would land. There would be time to revise, edit, and rethink. Here was the reward for being a writer: to create a world from my imagination and plant a storyline across that never-ending landscape. There were no rights or wrongs, as long as the story had a consistent and believable thread.

Within our membership, we have an incredible array of abilities and talents. If anyone needs help or guidance, there is someone they can ask. At some of our meetings, members can hear the pieces others are currently working on. This is a good way to recognize who may have the necessary skills to help.

Writing can be an isolating occupation for some. So, this club gives everyone access to a community of similarly minded people who love creating stories that engage readers and conjure a world beyond what they know, day to day. Join a meeting and realize all writers have doubts as well as successes. And know that the definition of doubt is not so extensive as you may fear, and success is as large as you want it to be. Be creative and write.

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

NOVEMBER 7th

3:00 pm — 5:00 pm PDT

Mt. Diablo Board Meeting**NOVEMBER 8th**

Featuring: Claudia H. Long:

Small Town, Big SecretsMt. Diablo General Meeting**NOVEMBER 12th**

7:00 pm — 8:00 pm PDT

Open Mic Night on Zoom**NOVEMBER 21st**

12:00 pm — 2:00 pm PDT

What's Your Story Reading Group**NOVEMBER 26st**

12 pm — 1:30 pm PDT

Writers Connection

Chicken Pie Shop

1251 Arroyo Way,

Walnut Nut Creek, CA

Open Mic on Zoom



Wednesday, November 12th, 2025

7:00 PM - 8:00 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 for Open Mic on Zoom](#)

The Writer's Connection

Wednesday, November 26th, 2025,

12 Noon to 1:30 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

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

What's Your Story Come, read and enjoy listening

Friday, November 21st, 2025
12 pm - 2 pm

Walnut Creek Library
Las Trampas Room
1644 N. Broadway
Walnut Creek, California

It occurs on the third Friday of the 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.



[Register for What's Your Story Group](#)

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!

Be Interviewed in the Write News

Here's a chance to sit down with a cup of coffee and your fellow Writers. We want to learn about you. Choose questions from the list below to tell us about yourself. Try to include a mix of personal and professional.

Interview questions

1. What do you like about writing? The process of developing a story by creating distinctive, interesting characters through dialogue and action, creating descriptive settings, and developing page-turning plots.
2. What part of the writing process is most difficult for you? Finding the time to write and avoiding distractions or the right environment to write.
3. Are there any resources, tools, or events that you have found especially helpful for writing or publishing? My current writing group, writing books and magazines, Writer's Digest courses, and other writing courses.
4. What are you currently working on: Fiction novel; genre – crime/spy thriller; entitled Czech Mate (placeholder).

5. Who or what has influenced you the most as a writer? Elmore Leonard, Graham Greene, William Boyd, Michael Connelly, Steven King.
6. How have your background, previous work, and/or experience contributed to your writing? I'm a retired lawyer, having worked for an international corporation for 35 years.
7. Approximately how long have you been a CWC member? Just joined a few days ago.
8. How has your CWC membership helped you or your writing? Too early to tell.
9. Do you have published works? Not yet.
10. Do you have any advice for new writers? In writing a first draft, "[D]on't look back until you've written an entire draft, just begin each day from the last sentence you wrote the preceding day. This prevents those cringing feelings and means that you have a substantial body of work before you get down to the real work which is all in . . . the edit." (attributed to Will Self)
11. How do you define success as a writer? Getting published.
12. What are your future writing goals? Completing my manuscript and deciding whether to submit to an agent or self-publish.

Writers 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:

[Register for a Request](#)

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.

CWC Fundraising

We wish to acknowledge our generous donors to one (or both) of our established funds during last fiscal year (7/1/24-6/30/25).

Writers Helping Writers supports writers who may need financial help to attend meetings or pay for membership. We thank the following members for their donations to this worthy cause: Al Garrotto, Ann O'Connell-Nye, Ann Steiner, Anne Marie Mazotti Gouveia, Arthur Cabral, Cindy Leonard, Deborah Greenberg, Denis Hoyer, Donna Darling, Donna Levin, Dorothy Edwards, Elise Dirlam-Ching, John Blanchard, John Harper, Julie Hamilton, Lenore McKnight, Linda Hartmann, Lyn Roberts, Nancy Chan, Patricia Northlich, Robert O'Brien, Robert Portier, Ronald Sacchi, Sherida Bush, Wayne Resnick

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 celebrate and present awards in May and thank the following members for their donations: Al

Garrotto, Anindita Basu, Ann O'Connell-Nye, Ann Steiner, Anne Marie Mazotti Gouveia, Arthur Cabral, Bob Lane, Cecilia Pugh, Chloe Laube, Donna Darling, Elise Dirlam-Ching, Elizabeth Pentacoff, Jerry Blair, John Schembra, Judith Marshall, Ken Kerkhoff, Linda Hartman, Marianne Lonsdale, Marianne McBride, Nancy Chan, Patricia Northlich, Robin Gigoux, Susan Berman, William Yarborough

Please consider donating to one of our funds either at a meeting or via our website at:

[Donate to Writers Helping Writers Fund](#)

[Donate to the Young 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



My publisher loved my first novel, but now I am forced to come up with a terrific outline for my second novel starring Charlie Barnes, my ace detective. You know, my first novel was based on real events, but now I must find a suitable antagonist, and a plot that can keep a waiting audience turning those pages 'till reaching the surprising end!



Help Wanted

**CWC Mt. Diablo is
looking
for volunteers!**

Job Descriptions

**Click on the Title
Below**

[Webmaster](#)

[Web Special Assistant](#)

**Contact Marlene Dotterer
cmdotterer@gmail.com**



Author/Publisher/Designer Andrew Benzie gave away two copies of his latest book *Firehouse Replicas & Model Fire Station Toys* at the Author Showcase in downtown Martinez on Saturday October 11.

The first went to a young man who spent the morning at Contra Costa County Fire Rescue's open house event so he was already fire

department-primed. He couldn't take his eyes off Andrew's fire engine models on display so he was rewarded with a free copy of the book. Maybe a future firefighter! Then Contra Costa Fire's Truck 14 (Martinez) crew pulled up so a book was donated to fire station 14. You never know what differences our books can make to people's lives. Available at: <https://www.ModelFireEngines.com>



Resources for Writers this Month

Education Articles for Writers

[How do You Stop Yourself Getting Stuck at the Planning Stage](#)

[Revising Your Novel: Playing in the Sandbox](#)

[Seven Types of Imagery to Bring Your Story to Life](#)

[A Writers Guide to Recommended Word Counts](#)

[5 Editing Tips to Revise and Strengthen Your Dialogue](#)

[What Kind of Editing is Right for Me?](#)

[Self-Editing Like a Pro: From First to Final Draft](#)

[Tackling a November Writing Challenge? Here's What You Need to Know](#)

[Where Am I Finding All of these Articles?](#)

These are just a few of the useful articles available on this wonderful site!

<https://www.novlr.org/the-reading-room/>

Join us with a cuppa and settle in for expert writing advice,
writing and publishing tips, book reviews, and your questions answered!

Resources for this Month

Pine Hills Review: Now Seeking Submissions

<https://authorspublish.com/pine-hills-review-now-seeking-submissions/>

38 Themed Submission Calls & Contests for October 2025

<https://authorspublish.com/38-themed-submission-calls-and-contests-for-october-2025/>

22 Terrific Small Presses Open to Direct Submissions

<https://authorspublish.com/22-terrific-small-presses-open-to-direct-submissions/>

Freedom With Writers We Send You Publishers that Pay Writers

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

23 Popular Magazines That Need Freelance Writers

<https://realwaystoeearnmoneyonline.com/freelance-writing-for-magazines/>

CWC Mt. Diablo Presents

HOLIDAY POTLUCK

We are announcing this Holiday Potluck a month early, so that you can have plenty of time to arrange for this special event.

SUNDAY, December 7, 2025

12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Senior Center, 233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill

Let's have a party! Bring your favorite holiday dish (creative people are great cooks!) and your holiday poems, flash fiction, or essays to read aloud. We'll have prizes, games, laughter, and lots of fun.

<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/>

REGISTRATION OPENS SOON.

The Attic Noise

By Robert Poirier

Harold Caine first heard the attic scraping and clicking noises while watching “Monk” reruns with the cat who had adopted him three years earlier, shortly after Caine arrived. The large, green-eyed, black cat stared at the ceiling for a few moments, then flattened its ears, raised its back, and snarled loudly. The noise stopped.

At first, Caine thought the noise was a squirrel or roof rat looking for bird eggs from the family of house finches flying in and out of the attic through torn wire mesh ventilation screens.

He heard the noises again the next morning. The cat repeated its movements from the evening before. Caine flipped the switch for the attic fluorescent lights, pulled down the attic access door, and climbed the ladder carefully.

He scanned the attic space. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

A few hours after he descended, he again heard the scratching sound, now louder. Caine inspected the attic again, this time with the fluorescent lights out, using only a flashlight.

The first thing he noticed in the darkened attic was a basketball-sized hole on the west side of the roof. The second was a pair of fluorescent red eyes in the far corner of the attic. He pointed the flashlight toward the eyes bulging from a cat-sized body. It had an elongated head and stiletto teeth.

The creature scurried toward him. Caine scrambled down the ladder and closed the access door a second before the creature arrived. It clawed at the door while making loud hissing sounds.

“They found us,” he said to the cat.

He retrieved a Remington 12-gauge tactical shotgun. With a pistol-grip stock and a 14-inch barrel, it was perfect for home defense. Caine loaded the gun with buckshot shells, chambered a round, and duct-taped a Maglite flashlight onto the barrel.

He pulled down the access ladder and quickly ascended. Standing waist-high at the top of the ladder, he scanned the area where he last saw the creature. He had nearly completed the sweep when he heard a loud hissing noise behind him. He turned and fired. The creature, just a few feet away, caught the full brunt of the shotgun blast in its head and upper body. The now-headless body shuddered to a stop and collapsed. In a few seconds, all that remained was a small smoldering lump of charcoal.

Pleased with himself, he lowered the weapon and turned his back to descend the access ladder. He was feeling for the next step when he saw another set of red eyes moving quickly toward him. The shotgun was below the opening and out of play. In his haste, Caine missed the step and fell five steps onto the wooden floor, spraining his ankle and banging his ulnar nerve, numbing his left arm.

Caine realized he was in trouble when he looked up and saw the red eyes at the opening. The cat appeared at his side and nudged the shotgun into his hands while snarling up at the creature.

When the creature dropped onto the floor, the cat leaped onto the creature's back. With jaws now fully extended, the cat bit down on the creature's neck.

The creature rolled over and raked the cat's stomach. Caine maneuvered the shotgun barrel onto the creature's side and pulled the trigger. The cat continued to bite down until the creature's neck snapped.

Disemboweled, the cat crawled up to Caine, purred softly, and died. Moments later, both the creature and the cat turned into small lumps of charcoal.

Caine limped to the bathroom, where he washed his face. He removed his brown-tinted contacts and looked at his fluorescent green eyes in the mirror.

"That was close," he murmured to himself.

He returned to the sofa and dozed until he heard a loud banging at the sliding glass door to the backyard. A large black cat with fluorescent green eyes, accompanied by two smaller black cats, forced the sliding glass door open. The three cats hurriedly picked up the charcoal lumps with their teeth, scurried to a spot behind a blue plumbago bush in the backyard, and vanished.

A couple of minutes later, a tiny, green-eyed, black kitten entered the open glass door and boldly approached him. The kitten leaped up on the sofa, put its forehead against Cain's forehead, and purred softly.



Robert Poirier has published his second book, *Hulls Cove* (and other stories), a collection of fifty-four fiction short stories representing mystery, war, humor, and science fiction literary genres.

The stories, which vary from 100 to 5,000 words, are those he has written since joining the CWC Mt. Diablo Branch in 2018. This book, and his gritty thriller first novel, *The Killings at Hulls Cove*, are available on Amazon.