



The Write News

February, 2026

A Monthly Newsletter
Denis Hoye, Editor

Mt. Diablo Branch

CWC Mt. Diablo February 14, 2026 General Meeting Featuring Chris Hennessy



Write It, Film It, Share It – The Power of Video for Authors

Chris Hennessy is an award-winning filmmaker, author, and speaker who spent 28 years producing over 1,500 professional films for major clients including Google, eBay, and the SF 49ers. After retiring from commercial filmmaking, he created the award-winning TV series *Yolo YoYo's* (Best New TV Cable Series, Sacramento, 2019) and the short documentary *Miracles on College Street*—produced to promote his recently released memoir, *Touched by Hannah*. *Miracles* won the prestigious 'Film Heals' award (most inspirational) at the 2022 Manhattan Film Festival and was runner-up for 'Best Narrative Episode West Coast' at the 2022 ACM Western Region WAVE Cable TV Awards.

The Power of Videos for Authors

In this energetic, practical session, Chris demystifies video creation for writers, showing you how to leverage visual storytelling to build your author platform, promote your work, and connect authentically with readers—all without breaking the bank or needing Hollywood production skills.

Attendees Will Be Shown

- How and why to incorporate video into your author platform and writing projects
- The video production process, explaining pre-production, production, and post-production in writer-friendly terms
- Create video buzz
- How to repurpose your videos for free marketing and promotion

Cost

\$15.00 for members. Guests pay \$20.00.

Register before February 7th at Noon or pay the late fee of \$20.00. Walk-ins pay \$20.00. Coffee/tea and pastries included! [Register Here](#)

Location

Pleasant Hill Senior Center
233 Gregory Lane
Pleasant Hill, CA

Schedule

9:30 – 10:00 Sign-in table opens

10:00 – 12:00 Chris Hennessy—Write It, Film It

12:00 – 2:30 Optional activities.

(Bring your lunch if you want to eat, or order from a downtown restaurant.)

President's Message

I am delighted to report that the first general meeting in the new location, with a new format, at a different time, went very well. Members enjoyed the activities, the environment, the refreshments, and the sense of camaraderie. So, I would encourage those who didn't join us to make plans to register for future meetings. Keep an eye on the Newsletter and the CWC News Flashes for details of upcoming meetings (second Saturday of each month – registration 9:30 – 10:00; meeting 10:00 – 12:00; post-meeting drop-in activities 12:00 – 1:30).



I'll admit that I may have been distracted from my own writing a little over the last few months as the Board went through the process of setting up this new general meeting. I want to thank all members of the Board for their positive attitude, their willingness to compromise, their willingness to get their hands dirty, and their flexibility in meeting problems when they arose. We still have some issues to resolve, but hopefully, the major ones are behind us. Having said that, there is still some room for change. So, if you have a suggestion, a concern, or anything, do not hesitate – contact me. I don't promise to agree with you, but I do value opinions and thoughts. This is your club.

Now, I have some creative writing to work on, so I will stop here.

I look forward to seeing you at our next general meeting, which I understand falls on Valentine's Day. Even though it is early – Happy Valentine's Day!!

Write on.

Barry

CWC Mt. Diablo Branch

Board of Directors

President—Barry Hampshire
president@cwcmtdiablo.org

Vice President—Michael Barrington
vp@cwcmtdiablo.org

Secretary— Dita Basu
secretary@cwcmtdiablo.org Treasurer
 —Margie Witt
treasurer@cwcmtdiablo.org

Webmaster—Marlene Dotterer
cmdotterer@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor—Denis Hoye
writenews@cwcmtdiablo.org

Backfence—Marlene Dotterer
backfence@cwcmtdiablo.org

Elisabeth Tuck
helpfuleditor@cwcmtdiablo.org

Lyn Roberts
openmic@cwcmtdiablo.org

Dot Edwards
membership@cwcmtdiablo.org

Linda Hartmann
ekphrasis@cwcmtdiablo.org

Anne Marie Gouveia
youngwriters@cwcmtdiablo.org

Suzy Orpin
outreachchair@cwcmtdiablo.org

Andrew Benzie
writerstable@cwcmtdiablo.org

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

February 13th**Mt. Diablo Board Meeting**

3:00 pm — 4:30 pm PDT

[Register for Board Meeting](#)**February 18th****Open Mic Night**

7:00 pm — 8:00 pm

[Register for Zoom](#)**February 25th****The Writer's Connection**

12:00 PM — 2:00 PM PDT

Chicken Pie Shop1251 Arroyo Way,
Walnut Creek, CA[The Writer's Connection](#)**February 14th****Mt. Diablo Monthly Meeting**

10:00 pm — 12:00 pm PDT

Pleasant Hill Senior Center

233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill, CA

[Mt. Diablo Monthly Meeting](#)**February 20th****What's Your Short Story**

12 pm — 2 pm PDT

Walnut Public Library

Las Trampus Room

1644 N. Broadway

Walnut Creek, California

[What's Your Story](#)

Open Mic Night on Zoom — February 18th

Meeting will take place from: 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM — Online event**Details:** Join us for Open Mic Night! *NOTE: Your RSVP on Meetup does not register you for this event. Register online.

Sign up to read a five-minute segment from something you've written. It can be a work-in-progress, something already published, or that sheaf of poems you hid under the bed last year. Share it with writers and readers at our 60 - 90-mi...

[Register for Open Mic on Zoom](#)**Hosted by:** Marlene Dotterer

What's Your Short Story — February 20th

Meeting will take place from 12 PM — 2 PM.

If you are reading:

- Time yourself beforehand. Practice! A 2,500 word story will typically take 10/12 mins to read. The 15-minute limit is firm.
- We will use a microphone.
- Michael will introduce each reader. He/she will read the title and the genre.
- Feedback, if requested, will be given. **Note: feedback is part of your allotted 15 minutes.** Therefore, your reading time should be shortened.
- The next reader will be introduced etc.
- If time permits, we'll have final questions.



Come, Read, and enjoy listening at CWC Mt. Diablo's new Short Story Reading Group!

The What

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



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

The Writer's Connection — February 25th

Meeting will take place from: 12 Noon to 1:30 pm

Writers Connection is a social place where like-minded people, hapless authors, and creative geniuses can come together and chat about the one thing they all have in common: the compulsion to write. It is open to any CWC member, published or not, interested in a freewheeling, nonjudgmental, welcoming, and relaxed environment. Content will include a potpourri of any writing or associated topics: news items, agents, publishers, bouquets & brickbats. Membership is open-ended, limited only by space, and people may come and go as they please. Short readings are welcome.

Please Register so we can have the venue prepare a large enough table for us – Food and Beverages are encouraged and are on your own dime! Delicious!

Join us at:

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

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

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 <https://cwcmtdiablo.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.

CWC Fundraising

We wish to acknowledge our generous donors to one (or both) of our established funds through Nov 8th for this fiscal year (7/1/25-6/30/26).

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: LaVonne Taft, Nancy Chan, Barry Hampshire, Robert Poirier.

Young Writers Contest supports Contra Costa County middle school students with cash prizes in short story, poetry, and essay/personal narrative. Contest submissions are free. We celebrate and present awards in May and thank the following members for their donations: Colleen Gonzalez, Nancy Chan, Barry Hampshire, Robert Poirier.

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

<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/writers-helping-writers/>

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

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.



*May your Valentine's Day be one
filled with love and quiet cheer,
enough to last the months to come
and hold us close throughout the year.
In gentle moments, hand in hand,
where words are few and hearts are near,
may our lives be filled with memories
lasting and to be found in any year.*

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 with sample answers in color

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.*

Here are two places to find an agent or a publisher:

[Literary Market Place](#)

[Writer's Market: The Most Trusted Guides to Publishing](#)

If the Shoe Fits

A Short Story by: Phil Scimonelli

Have you ever met someone so elegant and dignified that you ask yourself, “I want to know her story?” A woman who exudes exquisite fashion: Dior gowns, Dolce and Gabbana stilettos, Louis Vuitton handbags, and Cartier fragrances.

Well, this tall slender elegant woman with statuesque posture gracefully prances the hallways of a top shelf advertising agency. She is also my boss, so polite daily greetings are the extent of our social interactions. When Ms. M walks into the boardroom the silence is deafening and the concept of running a tight ship is understated. Seated at the head of a table, which is longer than it needs to be, she listens. Never making comments, only uncomfortable long individual eye contact. After the last pitch has been presented, Ms. M proclaims, “I made a decision,” and walks out.

We all knew whoever was seated in her office at 8:30 sharp the following morning, their concept for product promotion was selected. The AM arrived. I was in her office. My name is Phyllis. I am one of the newest and youngest members of the agency. Ms. M informed me she was choosing my campaign pitch, and I would oversee its rollout. My mind and body were battling mixed emotions of excitement and dread. I knew this was an opportunity that would either advance my ideas or work quickly to dismiss them in the future.

The campaign went off without a hitch. Ms. M was incredibly pleased with my efforts and overtime took me under her wing. At a snail’s pace, we learned more about one another including our personal backgrounds. Mine mundane, Ms. M’s full of travel, excitement, and intrigue. As the years of my employment accumulated, Ms. M was no longer this unrelatable fashion diva. She had morphed into an enjoyable and may I dare to say, silly, and at times, an unpredictable woman.

She was just like any other female in the office when it came to the burdens forced upon women to maintain their daily wardrobe comfort. The quick adjustment of the pantyhose, the stubborn straps of a camisole, or stepping out of the heels to rest one’s aching feet. She always said men had it so easy, except for the occasional absent mindedness of a downed fly, they had nothing to worry about. However, women were always tucking, adjusting latching, unlatching one or more parts of their wardrobe to keep their appearance. If we happen to catch her during a wardrobe adjustment to prevent a malfunction, Ms. M would give us the side eye, like an irritated dachshund, which lets you know just go on with your business.

Outside of her love for high fashion, Ms. M’s other obsession was luxury vehicles. Every three years she would pull up with a new set of wheels. No Prius here. I am talking about Maserati, Jaguar, Mercedes-Benz. cars that made a statement. The manufacturer that had the sexiest and sleekest lines would be rewarded to replace her timed-out lease. There would be an office pool to guess the make and model every 36 months. Of course she was obsessed with the car being kept immaculate. Ms. M was very generous when someone needed a ride. However, there was a laundry list of dos and don'ts even before you opened the car door, such as checking the bottom of your shoes, no food or drink in the car, no touching knobs or buttons, and any bag,

briefcase or backpack must go in the trunk not in the back seat. As you can imagine, only when all other options for a ride were unavailable would you agree to take Ms. M up on her offer.

There was a situation years ago that propelled my personal relationship with Ms. M from boss/employee to friend /confidante. One afternoon, stepping off the elevator to our floor, I saw Ms. M wearing two different shoes. A four-inch heel on the left foot, a tennis shoe on the right. She was also wearing a scowl on her face that could melt ice. You did not have to see it to know something was amiss. She was walking like a wooded leg pirate. The sound was also off; the normal double click of two heels was now a click blank click blank. As Ms. M passed my desk, she said “Phyllis, in my office ASAP.”

Well, Ms. M has a weakness for ice cream, after lunch she often drove over to her favorite parlor to grab a scoop. Cup only, never cone. However, this time things took a wrong turn. As she was exiting the car her left foot stepped on an oil grease puddle that swallowed up her stiletto. Her right foot instinctively knew not to step on the gooey concoction. So, she was left in a predicament. As you know the soaked heeled shoe was not going back in the car. Ms. M remembered she had a pair of tennis shoes in a bag in the trunk. When she opened the bag there was only one tennis shoe. Her desire for her afternoon treats took over. She entered the ice cream shop with two different shoes. A youngster noticed this strange combination of footwear and said to her, “Lady, do you know you have two different shoes on”? Ms. M, with all her confidence, replied “Of course, it is the latest new fashion. Do you like it?” The mother of the young lad, grabbed his hand and said to her son, “Let’s finish our ice cream at the park.” This is how Ms. M came to exit the elevator with miss matched footwear.

As I walked into her office holding back my laughter Ms. M said, “Please, I need you to rescue me and stop that laughing. What shoe size are you?” Ms. M had a board meeting in 15 minutes. It turns out I was half size smaller. “Wonderful, I could work with that. Take your shoes off, let me try them on. This will work. Phyllis you are a lifesaver.” Off to the board meeting she marched with my shoes, all the while me feeling like the proud mom sending her child to school. Ms. M was back in time for me to recover my footwear and for her to clickety clack back to the elevator and home for the night.

The next morning on my desk was a box with the most gorgeous pair of shoes and a note which read, “You are a devoted friend and from now on please call me Antoinette.”

The End.

A Life Well Lived

A Poem by Richard Stanton

What makes a life well lived, I wonder?
It's hard to say for sure

Is it living one with no regrets?
A feeling of being secure?

Is it being famous?
The one that fans adore?

Or a life of great adventure?
Telling heroic stories galore

Is it having the most followers?
People following your every move

The one that has the most likes?
And nothing left to prove

Maybe it's about money
I don't think that it's a sin

The biggest boat, the fastest car
One with the most toys wins

What do you think of your life?
What will other people say about you?

Will you be remembered fondly?
As someone special they once knew ?

Or will you be forgotten?
A name they can't remember

Or worse, I think. if what they do
Is remember your bad temper

A well lived life's a tricky thing
Maybe it's one with having friends

We only have one chance at it
But does it matter in the end

Drop-in Critique Group Session
12:00 – 1:00 on Sat, Feb 14
at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center

Do you want feedback from a small group of friendly writers on your writing idea or a piece you are working on? Your CWC branch is offering a drop-in opportunity, right after our CWC branch meeting on Feb 14 ends at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center at 12:00 noon. Just stick around there until 1:00 for a Drop-In Critique Group Session. We will have a group facilitator present.

You can discuss, ask a question, and read out loud some of your piece (about 1000 words, maybe more, if time permits) of any genre to other drop-in participants. Both beginning writers and experienced writers might find this an encouraging way to obtain supportive suggestions. This session is open to nonCWC members, if they attended the earlier main meeting.

Some reasons to participate:

- I have this idea for a short story. Does it have an appeal?
- Which of the two beginnings works better?
- Is the drafted piece I shared with you engaging? How could I improve it?
- Any suggestions to enhance the way I portray this character?
- Does the insertion of the backstory at this point in the story mess up the flow of the plot?

February Resources for Writers

First Come the Poetry Submissions

[Poetry Books: Small Presses](#)

[Writing Contests, Grants & Awards](#)

[Top U.S. Publishers To Submit Your Work](#)

[Best Literary Magazines in 2026](#)

And Next Education Articles for Writers

[Surviving and Thriving As a Writer in the Age of AI](#)

[A Guest Blog from Stephen King—Yes, that Stephen King](#)

[Memoir vs. Autobiography: What's the Difference](#)

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

Poetry Session
12:00 – 1:00 on Sat, Feb 14
at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center

We will hold our inaugural poetry meeting immediately after the next General Group meeting, from approximately 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm. We will begin by reading poems submitted by group members. Each participant will read their poem limited to five minutes. Given that this is our first meeting, we will make exceptions if the group agrees and keeps time in mind. After we read the poems, we will discuss and agree on additional items to include in future sessions. Some things that are prohibited include: Critique, Advice, Interpretation, and Comparison.

Some reasons to participate:

- Do you have an idea for a poetry lab?
- Do you wish to have a poetry writing sprint?
- Do you wish to concentrate on poetry craft?
- Do you wish to work on Line breaks as breath, image vs. abstraction, white space, visual poetry, or sound and repetition?
- And remember these ground rules:
 - The poem belongs to the poet.
 - We respond to what *is*, not what we would change.
 - Silence is a valid response.
 - No hierarchy of experience.
 - Confidentiality is absolute.

We will discuss any and all suggestions for new ways to make this an ongoing, engaging, and productive forum that supports creativity, collaboration, and the continued growth of our group.

Latest Contest Information

Share on Facebook Share on Twitter Share on LinkedIn

Everybody Has Great Stories to Tell



A flash memoir shows readers how you (the narrator) experienced and reacted to a turning point in your life.

Write about something that changed the way you viewed yourself or your world. Show what happened and how it affected you. Invite us into your emotional truths.

What We're Looking For:

We look for a protagonist, a conflict, a setting, excellent use of language, and an ending that makes a point and/or makes us think.

We enjoy stories with a discovery, complex characters, language that engages us, and a tone that rings true. Enlighten, inspire, or dazzle us. **Please send us 750-words or less.**

If the story feels squeezed at 750-words, don't force it. There are plenty of journals where you can send your longer pieces. Go to the [Contests & Markets](#) page.

You'll find lots of places seeking longer submissions. "I like to let the most mundane things that catch my attention have the chance to be flashes of lightning." ~~Unknown

PRIZES? PUBLICATION? ABSOLUTELY! for the best 3 to 8 pieces. All can call themselves winners in Writer Advice's 2025 Flash Memoir Contest. We no longer rank as first, second, and third place. There are small cash prizes for everyone who is published.

You can find some samples in [Prior Winners](#)

How do you enter? Use this Submittable link or the one at the bottom of the page. The contest will close on March 2 at midnight ET.

Want to see the rubric that guides us? You'll find it on the [Writing Advice page](#).

"Great stories often come from the smallest, least flashy places, and being open to the idea that even a dirty sock on the floor can serve as a catalyst for a story means inspiration can truly come from anywhere."

[**Click Here to Submit**](#)