







The Write News

March, 2026

A Monthly Newsletter
Denis Hoye, Editor

Mt. Diablo Branch

CWC Mt. Diablo March 14, 2026 **Featuring These Writing Tables & Facilitators**

		
Bernice Weber All About Substack	Jill Hedgecock World-Building and	Doré Ripley Branding Your Book On Amazon
		
<u>Al Garrotto</u> <u>To Be or Not To Be</u>	Elisabeth Tuck Editing Your Book	Patrick Kelly Using Google Library to List Your AI Searches

Cost

\$15.00 for members. Guests pay \$20.00. (Bring your lunch if you want to eat or from a local restaurant.) Register before March 7th at Noon or pay the late fee of \$20.00. Walk-ins pay \$20.00. Coffee/tea and pastries included!

[Register Here](#)

Location

233 Gregory Lane
Pleasant Hill, CA

Schedule

9:30 – 10:00 Sign-in table open

10:00 – 11:00 Author Interviews—AnneMarie Mazotti Gouveia & Jill Hedgecock

11:00 – 12:00 Writer's Table (*With the Names Shown Above*)

President's Message

Despite it recently pouring with rain and the Sierras being blanketed in fresh snow, there is a hint of Spring in the air. A time to renew and re-engage with activities we love. As writers, we recommit to spending time, most days, staring at a blank computer screen, trying to persuade it to fill with profound and meaningful prose or poetry.



But we are not alone. Painters stare at blank canvases. Musicians imagine musical scores that await the dampening of a reed or the waxing of a bow. Dancers stretch muscles to prepare for jumps and pirouettes. Actors strut across stages, engaging with roles yet to be rehearsed. Singers warm up their voices in anticipation of new works that will melt the hearts of audience patrons.

We are just one particular group of artists who have the audacious courage to present materials that can elevate the hearts, spirits, and minds of those who wish to be moved or distracted from day-to-day living.

Our decision to be called writers or authors was a courageous move. People may wish to judge us or condemn us for doing so. But if we can touch the heart of one reader with our words, then we are rightly members of the all-encompassing group, artists.

Be proud. Be bold 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.

12:00 – 1:30 Optional Activities

Upcoming Events

March 13th

Mt. Diablo Board Meeting

3:00 pm — 4:30 pm PDT

[Register for Board Meeting](#)

March 18th

Open Mic Night

7:00 pm — 8:00 pm

[Register for Zoom](#)

March 25th

The Writer's Connection

12:00 PM — 2:00 PM PDT

Chicken Pie Shop

1251 Arroyo Way,

Walnut Creek, CA

[The Writer's Connection](#)

March 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](#)

March 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 — March 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: Lyn Roberts



What's Your Short Story — March 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 — March 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.



*Be ye Irish, or Patrick by attitude and plea,
Hoist a constitutional jar for all to see—
A noble cup (or whatever's nearest me),
Sanctioned by law, tradition, and definitely thy wee.
Dance I shall till the heart swears loyalty,
Proving dignity quits after a count of three.
Then haul me home when fades thee revelry,
Past songs I nailed—in my memory.
To keep me, bless me, save me—peacefully,
Ignore the spinning room and the pounding plea.
For tonight is joy, loud cheer, and charity...*

And a crumpled note: "Blame Patrick, not Me." 🍷🍀 DPH

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, "Don'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 three places to find an agent or a publisher:

[Literary Market Place](#)

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

[Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market 33rd Edition](#)

On Finding an Old British Mailbox in a Museum

A reverie

Michael Barrington



In a quiet hall of glass and dust
I saw an old mailbox, iron-red with trust.
Its mouth still open, patient, and round,
As if listening for footsteps, for breathing, for sound.

Paint chipped, laid soft by decades of rain,
It knows ache of distance, of separation, pain.
I touched its side; the metal was cold,
Yet warm with the palms of love stories told.

Love letters slept here, for her and for him,
Crossing oceans on faith and ink-stained skin.
I felt a tug—an urge to believe
That words still travel, that hearts still receive.

So, I wrote your name with a trembling hand

My unspoken longing, scarcely planned.
If iron can dream, and time can forgive
Then maybe this letter's, a sign to relive.

Perhaps somewhere, in the hush of night.
You'll hear this confession with nervous delight.
Perhaps you'll pause at the curve of my name,

Feeling how silence still carries a flame.

So I send this sealed whisper, short but sincere,
Trusting old iron to carry you near.
If love ever learned how to travel through time,
It started like this—with a stamp and a sign.

Maybe miles are between us—merciless, wide—
But emotions are stored where the heart cannot hide.
For though we've been parted by distance and years.

Love outlasts silence, and outlives tears.

A Poem by David Flower

SIXTY

Actually, being sixty is such a shock to me.
I used to think that sixty was as old could be.

But sixty snuck up silently and pounced out of a tree.
How could I be sixty when I'm not finished making me?

I do feel more like 30. My bones don't even ache.
My mind's as sharp as ever. There must be some mistake.

A kid is looking out my eyes and sees what I can see.
Ugh, that mirror. It's the only thing that ever startles me.

Alas, my license says I'm sixty; I must accept that it's true.
But... I'm really *only sixty*. There's still a lot want to do:

I want good health and weather always sunny.
I want enough wealth so I never hurt for money.

I want to win the games I play.
I want to laugh and joke all day.

I want to dress in the current fashion.
I want to make love with a raging passion.

I want to run the perfect race.
I want savoir-faire and social grace.

I want to express my innermost feeling.
I want to well spoken and mentally appealing.

I want to ski the perfect run.
I want to play in water and relax in the sun.

I want to travel the perfect road.
I want to write the perfect ode.

I want to be part of the perfect "we".
Yes, I still have time to become the *perfect me*.

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A Short Story — The Bacon Slicer

By: Robert Poirier

The phone rang as Lydia was enjoying a celebratory glass of chardonnay after completing a beta reading project for a friend in the California Writers Club.

“Lydia Hart speaking,” she said, a holdover from her days as a sheriff’s detective before she was medically retired. A shootout after a domestic disturbance investigation went south left her with a fractured hip. She walked with a slight limp.

“Lydia, this is Frank Wilson. I have a huge favor to ask.”

“Hello, Frank, what can I do for you?”

“I’m working as head of security for the state fair, but tomorrow I have a conflicting VA appointment. Would you be able to cover for me? All you would do is ride around in a security golf cart for eight hours. It’s the middle of the week, so it should be quiet.”

“Alright,” she sighed. “But you owe me big time.”

The fairgrounds office gave her a brief tour, including a quick background discussion of the employees, and outfitted her with a light blue windbreaker and ball cap, with “Security” emblazoned on both. She tucked her long, light-blond hair under the ball cap and adjusted the holster containing the snub-nosed revolver so it would be comfortable while driving the golf cart.

It was an unusually hot day. She was nearing the end of her third afternoon tour of the fairgrounds when she noticed a young woman in a heated discussion with an older man. Lydia recognized the woman from her money-handling tour of the office. She was an attractive, mid-thirties, single mother, according to the office supervisor. The shabbily dressed, emaciated man with a meth mouth did not fit. When he grabbed her upper arm, and the woman flinched, Lydia drove after them.

“Hi,” she said when she caught up with them. “I’m Lydia from fairgrounds security. Are you okay?”

“I was just having a private conversation with my girlfriend,” the man said. “Why don’t you butt out and leave us alone?”

Lydia stepped out of the golf cart. “I was talking to the young lady,” she said in a more authoritative tone.

“You’re Charlotte from the fairground office, aren’t you? Is everything okay?”

“No,” Charlotte sobbed. “He has my child in the trunk of his car and wants me to help him rob the box office.”

The man grabbed Charlotte around her neck, produced a hunting knife, and held it to her neck.

“We’re leaving,” he said. “Don’t try to stop us.”

Lydia pulled the windbreaker back with her left hand and put her right hand on the revolver.

“If I pull this, I’ll use it,” she said. “At this distance, I can put a bullet between your eyes in less than a second.”

She took a step closer.

“If you want to live, drop the knife and car keys, tell me where the car is, and leave. I’ll give you a thirty-minute head start before I call it in.”

The man hesitated for a second, dropped the knife and key fob, and broke into a shuffling run away from them.

“What about my baby?” Charlotte sobbed. “Shoot him, shoot him!”

“I can’t,” Lydia said. “Let’s go to the office. We can arrange a search from there. Grab the car keys.”

Lydia called on the way to the office, described the runner, and asked them to call the Sheriff’s office for backup and search teams.

“I think I know who can help us,” Charlotte said. “There’s a very smart IT guy at the office. His name is Dennis Noyes. He is wonderful at sorting through the noise and coming up with an answer. One of the volunteers, a big Agatha Christie fan, said Dennis was unflappable and had a mind like a bacon slicer.”

Lydia called ahead and briefed Noyes on the problem.

When they arrived, Noyes, a quiet man with fashionable beard stubble and a flat cap, asked for the key fob.

“Hmm, late-model Toyota Camry,” he murmured. “A few questions.”

“Charlotte, where did you enter the fairgrounds?”

“Near the stables,” Charlotte said.

“How long did it take to walk from the car to the entrance?”

“About 7 or 8 minutes.”

“Did you walk in a straight line?”

“Yes.”

“Did you notice anything on the walk?” Noyes pressed. “Like your shadow, or any type of vehicle?”

“Our shadows were in front of us. Nothing unusual.”

“Very observant, Charlotte,” he said.

A voice called out. “Search party ETA 12 minutes.”

“We have about 20 minutes before the trunk temperature reaches 125 degrees,” Lydia said. “The search party will take too long.”

“I think I can fix this,” Noyes said.

He took a DJI Mini drone out of a black shoulder bag and quickly set up the four rotors.

Next, he used a pair of diagonal pliers to snip three small pieces from a paper clip. He fastened the sections to the key fob trunk hold button with a narrow strip of duct tape and attached the fob to the drone fuselage with another thin strip of duct tape.

Lydia drove Charlotte and Noyes to the stable entrance to start the search.

“The parking lot is 25 acres,” Noyes said as they drove. “That’s 125,000 square yards. From your shadow placement, gait, and walk time, the car should be roughly 250 yards in a westerly direction. We’ll go out 300 yards, then make slow ellipses north and south, 25 yards on either side of the west axis. That should give us the best chance of opening the trunk. We have enough battery life to make six or seven passes before I have to bring it back.”

The trunk popped on the third pass. A heavyset man in blue jeans and a hoodie opened the driver-side door and ran toward the parking lot exit. Noyes set the drone on top of the car and called in the coordinates to the search team that was assembling at the fairgrounds office.

Lydia, Charlotte, and Noyes jumped into the Security golf cart and headed for the drone, arriving seconds before the search team. Charlotte picked up her red-faced, perspiring, but still-sleeping baby.

“She seems fine,” Charlotte said, crying with relief.

Noyes picked up the drone and began walking back to the office.

“Wait, wait,” Charlotte pleaded. “You’re brilliant. I don’t know how to thank you. Can I cook a nice dinner for you and your wife or girlfriend?”

“No wife, no girlfriend,” Noyes said. “But I would love it if you cooked a dinner for me. Is tomorrow night too soon?” he asked. They both smiled.

March Resources for Writers

Magazine Submissions

[The Dark City: Crime & Mystery](#)

[Noir Nation: International Crime Fiction](#)

[Tough: A Blogazine of Crime](#)

[Stone’s Throw: A Companion to A Rock and a Hard Place](#)

And Next Articles for Writers

[How to Write an Unconventional Protagonist](#)

[Your Checklist for Writing a Good Bad Guy](#)

[How To Suspect Everyone \(Agatha Christie Style\)](#)

Articles on Help for Novel Writers

[The Parts of a Book \(And How to Get Them Right\)](#)

[How a Frame Narrative Solves Everything](#)

[Writing Subtext in Dialogue](#)

[7 Ways to Keep a Reader’s Interest](#)

Two Critique Opportunities for Writers

If you're looking for thoughtful feedback in a supportive setting, your CWC branch is offering two separate ways to connect with fellow writers and strengthen your work.

Drop-In Critique Group Sessions

Following the General Meeting March 14 | Pleasant Hill Senior Center | 12:00–1:00 p.m.

Do you want feedback from a small group of friendly writers on a writing idea or a piece you're currently working on?

These sessions will immediately follow the CWC branch meetings on the second Saturday of each month through June. Just stay at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center from **12:00 noon until 1:00 p.m.** for a **Drop-In Critique Group Session**. A group facilitator will be present.

Participants may:

- Discuss a writing idea
- Ask specific craft questions
- Read aloud approximately **1,000 words** (or more, time permitting) in any genre

Both beginning and experienced writers often find this an encouraging way to receive supportive suggestions. This session is open to **non-CWC members**, provided they attend the earlier branch meeting.

You might participate if you're wondering:

- Does my short story idea have appeal?
- Which of these two openings works better?
- Is my draft engaging, and how can I improve it?
- How can I strengthen its character portrayal?
- Does inserting backstory at this point disrupt the flow of the plot?

New Ongoing Memoir Critique Group Forming

In-Person | Concord–Walnut Creek Area — Time & Date (TBD)

A new ongoing, in-person Critique Group is forming in the Concord–Walnut Creek area with a focus on **memoir in its varied forms**, including:

- Short-story memoir
- Personal and memoir essays
- Braided or mixed memoir pieces
- Memoir incorporating research or historical context

Hosted by CWC member **Beatrice Weber**, possible meeting times include:

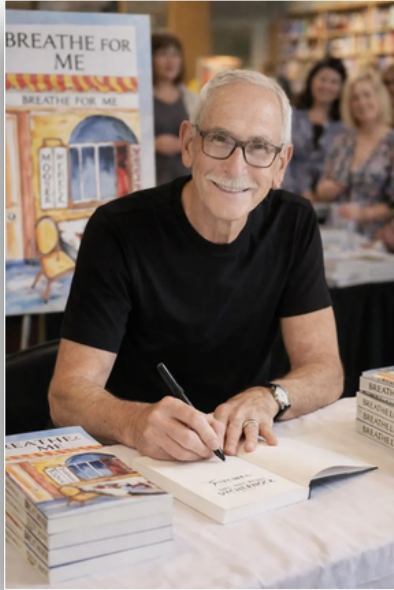
Saturday afternoons, Sunday mornings, or Sunday afternoons.

The schedule and frequency will be determined by participants with coordination with **Beatrice Weber**. The branch helps you to find and form critique groups, but these are autonomous and are not operated by or under the authority of the California Writers Club or its Mt. Diablo Branch. Member participants can belong to more than one group. For further information, answers to your questions, or to indicate your availability preferences, contact the CWC Mt. Diablo Branch Critique Group Facilitator at:

CWCwaynezez@gmail.com

A Book Launch of Poetry Now Available by Mitchell Chernock

A Powerful Journey You Can Hold in Your Hands



Breathe for Me. Is a poetic storytelling Quest.

Each story creates a rhythm, rippling through the pages while you read.

My written words become your spoken words with every stanza you read out loud, resonating inside your body.

A melding of your mind, heart, body, and soul until there is no longer an author, only you, the reader.

[Order Book Here](#) [Book Signing Dates](#)

About the Author

Mitchell is a San Francisco native growing up during the summer of love and the end of the Vietnam War. His father, George, was a World War II army veteran in the South Pacific. George had many jobs throughout his life and truly was a salesman. Mitchell's mother Thelma, was a nurse and had the main role of guiding him into the medical profession at age 17.

While working in respiratory medicine in Walnut Creek Ca, a chance meeting with his future wife Durell changed the course of his life. Most of the short story prose in Breathe for Me, are from true life experiences.

Growing up in a home living in the storm of PTSD, Mitchell's father saw him as the good son, and his brother Paul, the bad son. His two sisters were simple bystanders, living with their own dark secrets.

1976 marked the beginning of a lifelong journey with Durell. The most beautiful joy he and his wife shared came to them in the form of their grandson, Jeremy. Mitchell's middle daughter was a meth addict, unable to take care of her son.

Regarded as the highest privilege of his life, Mitchell became a father to Jeremy. Life has given many blessings to his daughters, Rue & Robin, who have been sober for 8 years and 28 years, respectively. Mitchell lives with his wife Durell in their 1868 Civil War era home, built by the Union Army, in Benicia, CA.

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

We will hold our 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.

Share your Book Review!

Use the Newsletter Submission Form to send in your 250 word (or less) book review. We always accept reviews of member books.

Share your Good News!

Have a book launch event coming up, a recent publication, an award or any exciting writing milestone? We want to celebrate with you. Share your news with the club using our quick online form. Your submission may be featured in the next issue of the Write Newsletter.

The submission form for either a book review or good news is: [Click here to Submit](#)

The Smalls Too

A BIG contest for small poems and prose

Announcing a statewide CWC poetry and prose contest beginning on **February 15 –March 15**, inviting your submissions of 8-line poems or 75-word prose.

AWARDS

- First Place \$100
- Second Place \$50
- Third Place \$25

Winning and selected poems/prose will also appear in a forthcoming publication.

Billy Collins, past Poet Laureate of the U.S.A writes in his book, *Musical Tables*, “Whenever I pick up a new book of poems. I flip through the pages, looking for small ones. Just as I might trust an abstract painter more if I knew he or she could draw a credible chicken, I have faith in poets who can go short.”

Here is an example of one of his poems from this book:

Falling Asleep

Walking backwards
into a dark forest,
I sweep my footprints
out of existence
with a large
weightless branch

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Submission period is February 15 to March 15
- \$10 submission fee for CWC members, \$20 for non-members
- Maximum 8 lines per poem (please no Haiku or Tanka)
- In addition to the 8 line poems, we will be accepting prose of 75 words or less.
- This contest invites participation from writers of all genres. Any combination of
- prose and poetry in your submission is welcome.
- Maximum 3 poems or prose pieces (or a combination) can be submitted
- Typeface: Times New Roman 12-point font
- Format submission in a Microsoft Word document
- Multiple poems or prose pieces must be submitted in a single document
- Each submission must have a title
- Submissions must be the unpublished original work of author
- Author name cannot appear in the Word Doc

JUDGES

Les Bernstein, head judge, is an award-winning poet and anthologist whose poems have appeared in journals and anthologies in the United States and internationally. Her full-length book, *Loose Magic*, was reviewed by the Los Angeles Review of Books and is available on Amazon.

Robin Gabbert has poems published in local, state, and international anthologies. Her books include—*The Clandestine Life of Paintings*, in *Poems* and a new book *Somehow, I Haven't Drowned* published by **Blue Light Press**. www.robingabbert.com

For questions, please contact Les Bernstein at: lessieb13@yahoo.com

[Submit Your Poems or Prose!](#)