



The Write News

May 9, 2026

A Monthly Newsletter
Denis Hoye, Editor

Mt. Diablo Branch

General Meeting --- May 9th, 2026 Writer's Tables

Different Venue For This Month, September, and November — See Map on page 12

Pleasant Hill Community Center, McHale Room, 320 Civic Drive, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

9:30 – 10:00 Sign-in table opens 11:00 – 12:00 Writers Table - Choose your topic
10:00 – 11:00 Writing Activities 12:00 – Meeting ends—optional activities until 1:30

Part 1: 10 am — 11 am : Three Minute Flash Fiction: Which table can write the best story?

May 2026 General Meeting, Part 2: Writers Table



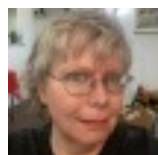
Author's Guide to YouTube
with Michael Barrington



How to Capture Internal and External Emotion on the Page
with Gala Russ



Unleash Your New AI Assistant
with Suzy Orpin



Writing Outside the Box: Fun with Brainstorming
with Lori Lynne Armstrong



Ask Me a Question
with Andrew Benzie



How To Turn Your Book into Speaking Engagements
with Lucinda Jackson

After our meeting, all attendees are invited to stay and participate in the activity of their choice. Book clubs, critique groups, Scrabble, ... start an activity you'd like to do!

Location: Pleasant Hill Community Center, McHale Room, 320 Civic Drive, Pleasant Hill, CA

Cost: \$15:00 for Members; \$20.00 for Guests.

Registration deadline is **One Week** before the meeting. Register before May 2nd at 12:00 p.m. or pay a \$20.00 (includes a \$5 late fee). Walk-ins pay \$20.00.

Register at: <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/meetings-and-workshops/>

(Coffee/Tea and Pastries Included)

President's Message

The world feels like it is perpetually in a game of Whack-a-Mole. I am not sure whether that is accurate, and if it is, who is winning? I am certain it is not me because I never wanted to play in the first place.

But what I do know is that I have a sweet little girl, Phoebe – all 16 pounds of her – in my lap, and she will be snoring there for the next half an hour until it is time for me to refill her food bowl with lunch. Occasionally, Phoebe shifts position and may look up to ensure that her throne is good for another snooze. However, for some reason, we just moved onto the floor to play chase with her hippopotamus. Man, that toy was sewn together well! She will fight me for it.

Now, you may wonder why I'm telling you this. Hopefully, I'll discover the answer before I end this message. I think it's a matter of focus. While Phoebe occupies my lap, I am obliged to be patient and remain in place. The look she can give when I disturb her slumbers is a heartbreaker. Thus, I am compelled to face this screen and write. That's not to say that I am upset with her for making me focus; in fact, I am very appreciative. There are many distractions that might call me away from my writing, but I need time to work on manuscripts and stories.

So, I hope all of you have something in your lives that can force you just a little to stay there in front of that screen or notepad. The current state of the world can be distracting and disturbing. So, find any means by which you can conjure your own sane and compassionate world. Stories are powerful tools that can portray the life you seek for your families. If you are writing horror or a murder mystery, ignore that last sentence.

Writing is cathartic and has so much value. It will not make you rich. I'm pleased to earn enough for a latte, and if it was a really good year, a scone too.

Write on, and if you think an appreciative little critter may find comfort in your lap, check out the many rescues in our area.

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 Hoyer

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

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

3:00 pm — 4:30 pm PDT

May 9th**Mt. Diablo Monthly Meeting**

10:00 pm — 12:00 pm PDT

Pleasant Hill Community Center

320 Civic Drive, Pleasant Hill, CA

[Register for Meeting](#)**May 13th****Open Mic Night**

7:00 pm — 8:00 pm

[Register for Zoom](#)**May 15th****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 Short Story](#)**May 27th****The Writer's Connection**

12:00 PM — 2:00 PM PDT

Chicken Pie Shop

1251 Arroyo Way

Walnut Creek, CA

[Writer's Connection](#)

Open Mic Night on Zoom — May 13th

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...

Hosted by: Marlene Dotterer

[Register for Open Mic on Zoom](#)

Barry

What's Your Short Story — May 15th

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 includes your allotted 15 minutes.** Note, your reading time will be shortened.
- **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.

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

The Writer's Connection — May 27th

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](#)

Membership Renewals

Yes, a cheerful reminder that another year is passing, looms on the horizon. CWC's annual Renewal Season approaches. However, there are some changes this year that you need to be aware of.

In the past, the renewal period has stretched from May to September, with the Central Board purging the roles of non-renewing members in early October. This is changing this year.

The ability to renew your membership will be available for just two months – July and August. Membership for people who do not renew in these two months will be dropped in early September. If any member tries to renew on or after September 1st, they will not be able to do so and must reapply as a new member, with the associated additional initiation fee.

There has been some talk at the Central Board level regarding increasing membership fees. Our Board has strongly fought against such a proposal. All members statewide will continue to pay \$45 for renewal, and if anyone is late, the additional \$20 re-initiation fee will apply.

The shortening of the renewal period will hopefully focus members to renew promptly, rather than letting it languish without any sense of urgency. In the past, the fluidity at the start and end of the renewal period has caused several Board members additional, frustrating work in finalizing the branch's annual budget.

Remember, the Board consists of members like you, and they are invested in providing a program that meets your needs. This is an opportunity to show your support for the Board and their work by scheduling your renewal in early July.

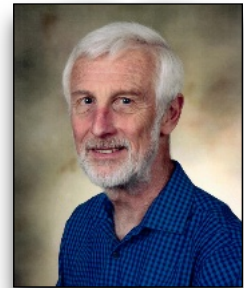
To encourage you to do this, we will collect the names of all members who renew in July. We will then hold a drawing for two members to receive discount coupons covering the cost of one meeting each.

Thank you for reading this. I'm sharing this now so everyone has heard of the new procedures before it becomes a surprise.

Renew early (in July).

Thanks,

Barry



Some more Interesting Reads for Writers

[How to Start a Children's Book](#)

[Developing a Career as a Travel Writer](#)

[What is a Character Arc?](#)

[A Character Death: Ideas to Further Your Plot](#)

[Writers and Editors: Finding The Right Fit](#)

[Beginner's Guide to Outlining Chapters](#)

[How to Get Good Writing Feedback from Beta Readers](#)

[Ready To Break Into Freelance Writing? Start With A Marketing Plan.](#)

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.

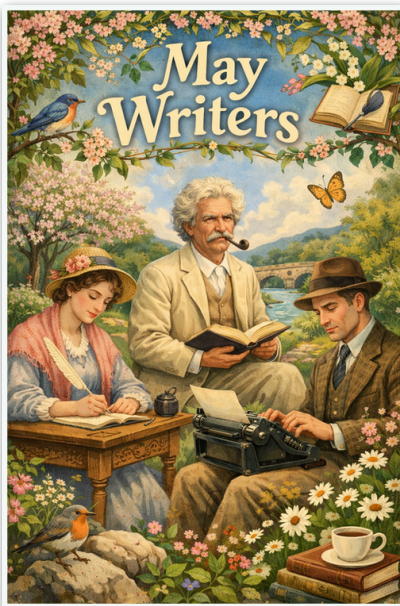
Young Writers Contest supports Contra Costa County middle school students with cash prizes in short story, poetry, and essay/personal narrative. Contest submissions are free. We celebrate and present awards in May and thank the following members for their donations: Colleen Gonzalez, Nancy Chan, Barry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



"Ok, Mr. Twain, it may be interesting to critique your writing, but may we discuss how well the short or long sentences fit the story being told; do the short sentences read naturally, and how are the long being constructed — in carefully articulated pieces or one torrent; is the syntax of the long sentences clear and assured, so that the reader doesn't get lost and have to go back and start over, or does it read easily?"

Ursula K. Le Guin remarks that if either part of such an exercise forced you into writing in a way you'd never ordinarily choose to write, maybe you'd consider whether this was enjoyable, useful, maddening, enlightening, etc., and why. If so, you might want to work on it some more!

(From Ursula Le Guin's book, "Steering the Craft") — 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.*

[Enter Your Q&A Here](#)

Articles of Interest & Places to Submit

[Literary Market Place](#)

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

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

[Four Magazines & Book Publishers](#)

[Markets for Noir International Crime Fictions](#)

[Dark City & Mystery Magazine](#)

[Tough Crime Fiction Journal](#)

[Austin Macauley Publishers](#)

Bookouture Submit & Submission Guidelines for: The Very Brightest Voices in Women's Fiction

Genres We're Particularly Interested In

Crime & Thriller
Psychological Thriller
Domestic Suspense
Police Procedural
Women's Fiction
Contemporary Romance
Romantic Comedy
Reading Group
Cozy Crime
Historical Fiction
Multi-Cultural Fiction
Science Fiction & Fantasy

But if you think you've written the next bestseller that isn't in one of the categories above, we'd love to hear from you.

[Submit Your Manuscript](#)

Bookouture Submission Process

Submission Guidelines

Read through our submission guidelines to make sure that your manuscript is a good fit with Bookouture.

Complete Form

Fill in our simple submission form – remember to attach your manuscript!

Confirmation

Once you've completed the form, you'll receive a confirmation email.

Response

We do our very best to respond to every submission within 1 month.

Decision

We'll let you know whether or not we'd like to publish your book – good luck!

I've often been asked, and more often asked myself, why do I have to write, but write I must! There is no question about it. I used to say to myself, "I write because I have to." But is that the truth? What is driving me to spend hours each day putting words onto paper? Am I just a dreamer, aimlessly frittering away my time?

Poetry Session
12:00 – 1:00 on Sat, May 9th
at the Pleasant Hill Community Center

Our group will hold our poetry meeting immediately after the General Group meeting, from 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. After this, we will discuss and agree on additional items to include in future sessions. Some reasons to participate:

- Do you wish to have a poetry writing sprint?
- Do you wish to concentrate on poetry craft?
- And remember these ground rules:
 - The poem belongs to the poet.
 - We respond to what *is*, not critique.
 - Silence is a valid response.
 - 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. Just come to listen or to read your poetry. You are welcomed!

Mt. Diablo's 2026-2027 Branch Officer Election Nominations

At the June CWC Meeting, the attending membership will elect officers for the Mt. Diablo Branch Board for the upcoming 2026-2027 CWC year. Currently, the slate is as follows:

- President: Barry Hampshire (incumbent)
- Vice President: Michael Barrington (incumbent)
- Treasurer: Marjorie Witt (incumbent)
- Secretary: Beatrice Weber

Would YOU like to be a Branch Officer?

All members of the club can nominate themselves or another member for any of these four officer positions. If you have a nominee whom you feel should be added to the slate for any of the above roles, please first confirm that the nominee is willing to stand for the office.

Forward the nominee's name and a brief description of the qualities that make them an appropriate candidate to Quynh Trinh, Nominations Chair, through the "Contact us" link on the Mt. Diablo branch website. <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/contact-us/>

Alternatively, members can add a nominee to the slate just prior to the election at the June meeting. Again, the potential nominee should have confirmed they are willing to stand. We look forward to the election of the officers who will guide the club over the next year.

-Quynh Trinh, Nominations Chair

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 May 9th— Pleasant Hill Community 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 Community 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.

This group is facilitated by [Wayne Reznik](#)



"No WAIT, I'm not quite ready to submit it yet!
Just need to go over it one more time..."

©2010, 2014 Debbie Ridpath Ohi. URL: inkyyr.com, Twitter: [@inkyellowsoh](https://twitter.com/inkyellowsoh).

New Ongoing Memoir Critique Groups Forming

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

New ongoing, in-person Critique Groups are 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

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. Also members can discover a critique group facilitated by Patrick Kelly for those interest in Science Fiction. You can reach him at: **Patrick Kelly**.



The writers group met every Tuesday for support and fellowship.

Why Every Writer Should Try Poetry

As a writing coach, when I mention how liberating poetry might be, there's pushback. I share the five reasons why every writer should at least try poetry.

- Challenging ruts
- Saying what's not the page
- Saying old ideas in new ways
- Playing with form
- Creativity reignited [Why Every Writer Should Try Poetry](#)

Editing Fiction and Memoir Writing

• If you've ever looked back at something you wrote and asked yourself, "What was I even trying to say there?" ... you already know how important editing is. Let's take a closer look at how editing can shape storytelling in both fiction and memoir writing, and why it's about more than just grammar. We'll show you how the right edits can make your writing clearer and more impactful while staying true to your voice. We'll also cover helpful resources you can take advantage of to make your editing solid.

- Why editing matters
- A slice of life: the micro-memoir
- Refining your work's structure and clarity
- Three stages of professional editing
- Fiction editing vs. memoir editing
- Editing is rarely a straight line [Try This Article on Editing & Memoir](#)

Map to Pleasant Hill Community Center

This Map leads from Contra Costa Blvd. (Not shown) on the right edge of the image. Take Taylor Boulevard then turn right onto Civic Drive and follow it around past the Pleasant Hill Police Department to the Pleasant Hill Community Center.



A Short Story by Wayne Reznik

He Deserves This Musical Opening

Were there any off-limits places at high school that you were more than intellectually curious about and wanted to explore? To some extent, Wiley was.

Among such mini-mysteries for him was the hidden world behind and beside the thick, gray stage curtains in the school auditorium. The stage stood about five feet above the floor of a huge, white-walled, two-story venue where school programs and assemblies were held. Thanks to TV shows that featured backstage scenes, he had a general notion of what was probably hidden there. But apparently, the mischievous gods called ninth-grader Wiley to wander off alone and explore the specifics of this backstage area and the functions of its switches, buttons, and devices.

During a couple of recesses, he figured out the purpose of the various contraptions and how to operate them. During his hunt, he noticed a record player that could be connected to the sound system. Rummaging around further in a tiny side room, he happened upon a cardboard box filled with vinyl records of classical music. Sorting through them, he came across Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*. In a nanosecond, an irresistible idea popped into his head. That would be the perfect walk-on music for when the principal began speaking at an assembly in front of the students. On those occasions, the principal stood at ground level and not on the stage. Much of the time, it still felt as if he was talking down to them or, at best, at them.

The current principal had held the position for about a year at that time. By then, students and teachers had ample evidence of his arrogance from his frequent bragging about his academic degrees and accomplishments. Wiley and his friends regarded the principal's interaction style as needlessly harsh. His apparent aim seemed to be to inspire fear rather than respect for himself and his authority. Many of the students also interpreted his black, bushy mustache on his small face as a prop meant to convey sophistication mixed with fierceness. But he lacked the stature to make any of that work. And his constant wearing of dark gray suits didn't help.

Toying around with the sound system, Wiley learned that it took a few minutes to warm up before becoming loud enough to broadcast effectively. Such a delay was perfect protection for his shenanigan. So, before several principal-led assemblies, Wiley stealthily went backstage to place the *Orpheus* record on the record player's rotating disc. The arm of the needle was set a bit before the desired portion of the music to allow for the warm-up interval. He then returned to the audience, sitting with his classmates in uncomfortable, foldable, beige metal chairs without any padding.

Soon the sound system launched into the "Galop Infernal," the part of the composition that most people joyfully recognize as the can-can. The setup worked, with the bawdy piece emerging to compete with the principal's opening remarks. The sound level at the beginning was a bit lower than Wiley had hoped for, but he hummed along quietly. He noticed a few others around him grinning.

Wiley dared to imagine what a vibrant, memorable event would have been created if the principal had exhibited even minimal dance moves aligned with the music. The students would have clapped loudly and screamed, "Bravo!" and "Encore!" But, no, as assumed, the principal didn't have it in him. He deprived students and faculty alike of the moment with his fixed posture of untouchable dignity.

The ironic use of a burlesque soundtrack produced the desired comedic scene multiple times. Wiley wanted to assume that some teachers secretly enjoyed witnessing it. On each occasion, the principal sent

someone backstage to turn off the record player. Frankly, Wiley was puzzled as to why the principal never had someone check out the backstage area prior to having them assemble in the auditorium. The record was removed only once, but Wiley was able to quickly retrieve it from the box of records for another round. He doubted that the principal looked forward to the musical interlude or even hummed it later in his office. No matter. Wiley was grateful that he could repeat the jovial prank.

And no, Wiley never got caught or even suspected.

Years later, while working at his uncle's car dealership as a friendly and effective salesman, he heard a customer entering the store with a phone loudly playing the *Orpheus* piece. Wiley's memory replayed the mischievous high school scenario. He hummed along with his head bouncing while sitting behind his desk on the far side of the showroom. Nostalgia evoked pride and pleasure for the moment, but disappointment struck him at the memory's finale.

Wiley mumbled, "Why didn't I move to L.A. and try to make a career arranging soundtracks for comedies? That would have been a fun way to make a living. But I'm a married man now, with a wonderful wife who is pregnant with our first child. So I'm stuck with this good life."

Nevertheless, the regret would nip at him from time to time, haunting him beyond his last breath.



Wayne Reznik writes memoir and short stories and is the Facilitator for the Critique Groups, he helps anyone who wishes to join a group to find the best fit for their style of writing.



A Poet Drafting His Craft

With a bit more light
I would see a word or two
To ply with some muse

A Short Story by Robert Poirier

Wormhole

George Davis was a writer, Master Gardener, and tinkerer. Cool under pressure, collected, and unflappable were the terms his friends used to describe him. His inventions, three of which have been patented so far, usually came to him in dreams. The wormhole device, his most vivid dream, was no exception.

Based on Einstein's Theory of Relativity, and meant to connect two points within the same universe, an intra-universe wormhole has always been theoretically possible, but it would require a hypothetical substance called exotic matter. Davis's device, described in great detail in the dream, would create an intra-universe wormhole using an accelerating perpetual-motion machine (APM), bypassing the need for exotic matter.

The APM used a racing bicycle wheel mounted on a vertical plywood base, with strategically placed powerful Grade N52 neodymium magnets on the wheel and board. Each magnet had a residual flux density of 14,800 gauss, which continually pushed and pulled the wheel.

It took 20 tries to position the magnets correctly on the APM so that the wheel would continue to accelerate.

After a few seconds of acceleration, the final positioning resulted in two manhole-sized, gauzy-blue, shallow champagne-glass shapes connected by a yard-long, yard-wide, pulsing, swirling tube.

Davis peered into the nearest blue shape and was startled to see a face with a pair of bulging, bright red eyes looking back through the tube. It was the same face that appeared to him in the dream.

A closer look revealed a creature that closely resembled the Area 51 alien images. A small, tea-green creature with large, red, almond-shaped eyes, long arms, large hands, and an oval-shaped head narrowing at the jaw.

When Davis moved a little closer to take a picture with his cell phone, an arm shot through the tube and grabbed his hand holding the phone. The arm pulled him towards the mouth of the blue shape. In a panic, Davis grabbed a screwdriver from his tool belt and jammed it into the bicycle wheel spokes. The APM imploded, sending wheel parts all around the small garage.

When the portal slammed shut, he heard a distant squeal like the sound of a rabbit caught in a trap, as the alien's arm that had tried to snatch him dropped on the garage floor in front of him. It quivered, then stiffened as the hand and fingers shriveled up into a knob at the end of a yard-long walking stick.

Early the next morning, Davis debarked from a BART train to pick up an Uber to take him to the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park, where the arm/walking stick could be evaluated.

As he approached the Market Street level stairs, a shabbily dressed, diminutive person wearing a dark hoodie blocked his path. With an exasperated sigh, Davis pushed past the panhandler, who painfully grabbed his bicep and leaned in close.

"Give me my arm," the panhandler snarled in a computer-generated voice.

Davis recognized the bulging, bright red eyes behind the sunglasses.

The alien spoke again, “Give me my arm so I can leave this filthy planet.”

Davis surrendered the walking stick. The alien tucked the ossified arm into the empty sleeve of the hoodie and held it there until it came back to life.

“Now I can report back that this planet is not habitable and should be destroyed,” the alien said.

With that, the alien shuffled up the stairs, stepped into the crosswalk against the light, and was promptly struck by a Muni bus, which threw the alien fifty feet down Market Street. A passing Fire Department truck, responding with lights and siren to a medical emergency, ran over the crumpled body.

Davis arrived on the scene in time to see the alien body spasm for a few seconds, then disintegrate into a swarm of tiny black insects, which quickly evaporated in the San Francisco sunshine.

“No body, no story,” Davis murmured. “There isn’t a chance in hell anyone would believe my story now.”

He walked down Market to Embarcadero, thinking about where to have lunch.

Robert Poirier began writing in 2018 with a small creative writing group at the Martinez, California Veteran’s Administration Medical Center. He has since published short stories in the annual statewide California Writers Club Literary Review of 2019 and 2020 and SURVIVAL: Tales of Pandemic, a CWC anthology, 2020.

His gritty thriller novel, The Killings at Hulls Cove, was published on Amazon in November 2021. His second book, a collection of the fifty short stories he has written since 2018, should be published in April 2024.



The Smalls Too Contest Winners

The California Writers Club is pleased to announce the three winning writers on the Smalls Too contest and ten writers receiving an honorable mention. A profile of the prize winning writers with their winning poems or prose will appear in the next CWC Bulletin (provided the authors give their permission). These authors are to be congratulated. They are a tribute to the club and to their branch.

Prize Winners

1st place: A Homemaker's Vision (Poem), Marianne Brems (SF-Peninsula)

2nd place: After the Fall (Prose), Laura Peracchio (Marin)

3rd place: Envy the Candle (Poem), Jim Wolff (San Fernando Valley)

Honorable Mention

Old Age (Poem), Wayne Aronsen (Orange County)

Hail Mary (Poem), J.P. Garner (High Desert)

Time (Poem), Chris Hougie (Mendocino)

Cloud (Poem), Leigh Jordan (Sacramento)

When It Gets Crisp in the Fall (Poem), Elizabeth Kirkpatrick-Vrensio (Mendocino)

Support Group (Prose), Jenny Lanning (Orange County)

Seasons (Poem), Rod Morgan (Redwood Writers)

The Drop (Prose), Jim Robinson (Redwood Writers)

Still Red in Tooth and Claw (Poem), Bart Scott (Redwood Writers)

Wings (Poem), Lauren Scott Swalbert (Non-Member)

For those writers who submitted but did not win, please take heart. Our judges, Les Bernstein and Robin Gabbert did not have an easy time coming to a final decision. We had close to 200 authors submit more than 450 short poems and prose. According to the judges, most of poems and prose should be published.

A selection of these poems and prose will appear (with the author's permission) in the forthcoming CWC Press publication, Smalls Too.

Authors will be contacted if their work is selected for potential publication in Smalls Too. For questions, please contact Les Bernstein at Lessieb13@yahoo.com