

The Write News



California Writers Club ~ Mount Diablo Branch

A Monthly Newsletter

Summer 2009

~ Coming Attractions ~ Upcoming Speakers for 2009-2010

The featured speakers for the CWC~Mount Diablo Branch meetings for 2009-2010 are listed below. Page two highlights our September speaker and page three details our special October Centennial event.

September 12: Janis Bell, Grammarian
“Clean, Well-Lighted Sentences”
(see details on page two)

October 17: Jack London Lecture with speaker Ron Hansen
(see details on page three)

November 14: Writing Workshop – Leader Janice Cooke Newman

December 12: “Three of Our Own”
Catherine Accardi ~ Writing for Hire
Lynn Goodwin ~ *Writing for Caregivers*, WriterAdvice.com
Igal Levy ~ Managing Editor, *West Winds Century* (CWC Anthology)

January 9: Veronica Chater, Memoirist ~ *Waiting for the Apocalypse:
A Memoir of Faith and Family*

February 13: Speaker to be announced

March 13: Nik C. Colyer, Grit-Lit Novelist, Poet,
and author of the Biker Bob series

April 10: Writing Workshop – Leader to be announced

May 8: Young Writers Banquet – Speaker to be announced

June 12: Speaker to be announced

Please join us for these informative sessions to be held at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant. All are welcome to come, learn, and network with local writers. The California Writers Club, Mount Diablo Branch web address is: www.mtdiablowlriters.org.

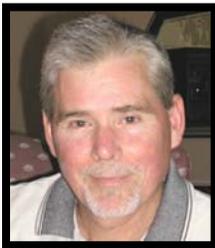
Zio Fraedo's is offering CWC members (any branch) the following specials: Sunday and Tuesday Prime Rib with soup and salad for \$19.95, on Wednesday Filet Mignon \$19.95, on Thursday Crab Cioppino for \$19.95. All the member has to do is tell them he/she is a CWC member. No membership card is necessary.

Highlight of First Speaker in 2009-2010

On Saturday, September 12, the California Writers Club-Mount Diablo Branch, will present Janis Bell, author of *Clean, Well-lighted Sentences, A Guide to Avoiding the Most Common Errors in Grammar and Punctuation*. Janis has been teaching writing in universities, private industry, and government agencies for over three decades. This highly interactive presentation offers writers a chance to get answers to questions about the sentences they (and others) write. If you are wondering about issues related to grammar, usage, or punctuation, pack them up and bring them to the September meeting for a big dose of clarity and satisfaction. This informative and lively presentation will be both practical and entertaining—not your everyday English class. Visit our speaker online at <http://www.janisbell.com>. Meeting details will be available in the September edition of *The Write News* due out on September 1.

President's Message

By David George



Instead of another businesslike president's message, I'd like to share with you an unpublished poem of mine. This is in keeping with the more creative content of our summertime newsletter edition. It is an important poem to me on a personal level. I hope you enjoy it.

The Intervening

You seek to disappear,
But I won't let you.

The burden too heavy,
The relived pain too intense.
I know what you'd like,
To slip away and be done.

Your childhood stained by abuse,
An incident in the bath.
Only small snippets of time
But large enough to lay your universe to waste.

You'd like to slip away
Down the hall, out the window
Run off to a world that does not exist

In your mind
You listen to your heart,
Beat, beat, flee.

Pills, wrists, starvation,
Vulnerability
The easy way out.

I caught you once
That's all it took.

Did you not understand?

You are more than half of me.
I can't let go
Of that part you would take
That is us.

You would steal from our world
The you that I need?
Sensitive, brilliant star
The complex equation summed into one.

No, I can't let you leave.
Now or ever.
So, stay a while and love me.

~~~~~

## California Writers Club Centennial (1909 – 2009)

By Al Garrotto

CWC Mt. Diablo Centennial Coordinator

In solidarity with CWC Branches throughout the state, we are preparing to celebrate the historic founding of our club by some of the great writers of the past century. During our 2009-2010 season, we will mark the event with several high-profile events all members can take part in.



Photograph by Charles Barry

Our premiere event will take place on Saturday, October 17, 2009. At our regular luncheon meeting, distinguished California author Ron Hansen will deliver our Jack London Lecture. Mr. Hansen holds the Gerard Manley Hopkins Chair at Santa Clara University. He is the author of the bestselling novels, *Exiles*, *Atticus*, *Mariette in Ecstasy*, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, and *Nebraska*, as well as nonfiction works, including *Faith and Fiction*. Three of his novels have been made into feature-length motion pictures. This event is open to both members and the public.



The theme of our Young Writers Workshops and Contest next winter and spring will be "Honoring a New Generation of California Writers." As is customary, the contest will be open to all 6th – 7th – 8th Grade students in Contra Costa County's public and private schools. (*Workshop dates and contest details are yet to be announced.*) Contest Prizes will be awarded at our regular May 8, 2010 luncheon meeting. These programs get better and more exciting each year, with expanded student participation. Liz Pentacoff will again chair this event, working with a team of talented volunteers.

The final special event of our year-long celebration will be the Centennial Writing Contest. Get inside the head of Jack London, John Muir or Joaquin Miller.

Write a query letter in the voice of one of these great California authors. We will announce specific contest details and deadlines early in 2010, and award prizes at our final regular luncheon meeting on Saturday, June 12. Entries are limited to Mt. Diablo and Tri-Valley Branch members. Joanne Brown is chairing the contest committee and event.

### CWC Centennial

On the left is the newly approved colorized, stylized version of the California Writers Club Centennial logo. On the right is a photograph of the Life Member combination of pin and "rocker tab." The pin is available for purchase at our monthly meetings. The rocker tab is available for Active members who pay the Life membership fee of \$599.

Those members will receive both items as a gift.



## What is a Wiki?

By Aline Soules

A wiki is basically a web site that allows users to add and update content on the site using their own web browser. The most famous is probably wikipedia, but the software it uses must be downloaded to your computer if you want to start your own wiki. Other services, such as wetpaint and pbworks, do not require that.

There are free wikis and you can upgrade to a wiki without ads on it and with more features to manipulate, so I'm giving you some examples of wikis of various kinds.

<http://alinesoules.wetpaint.com> - this is my free wiki on wetpaint and I use it as a platform for many other pages. The advantage is that if I need to ask someone to write me a blurb or a review or whatever, I can just send them to my wiki page with my resume and I don't have to worry about sending them anything. It's the place I keep up to date with information. It links to my library resume, my creative writing resume, the material I use in my various courses and classes at Cal State East Bay.

<http://libresos.pbworks.com/Chem4700> - this is also a free wiki, this one on pbworks, that I use for a science course on campus.

<http://literaturesinenglish.pbworks.com> - this is a wiki that I and a number of others maintain for the Literatures in English Section of the Association of College & Research Libraries. The organization chose to upgrade its wiki pages to remove the ads and get more features. A number of us maintain elements of the page, but only I and one other person administer the pages, so there is some control.

Features I like about wikis:

1. it's fast
2. it's easier to update than a full web site
3. it's easy to get at the history and restore an earlier version if something goes wrong
4. more than one person can work on the wiki and it can be used to edit various texts, if you want
5. it's a central portal to store information that you can use in future



One of our new board members, Elisabeth Tuck, ran across this helpful web site link at [www.writersontherise.wordpress.com](http://www.writersontherise.wordpress.com). It looks to be an informative and helpful blog about many aspects of writing.

## So You Want to Write a Children's Book?

By Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff

[www.lizbooks.com](http://www.lizbooks.com)

Do YOU have a glimmer of an idea for a children's story you've always wanted to write? What are you waiting for? Get started! But how?

1. Immerse yourself in a variety of children's books. Go to the children's section of your local library and bookstore. READ.  
When you research before you write, you read more books on one subject than you'd ever believe possible. It's the same way with writing for children.
2. At home, with children's books all around you, study the books as though you were taking a class. Discover their structure, introductions of conflict, character, rhythm, repetition, the rule of three and other techniques in children's lit.
3. Read books out loud. *Internalize the rhythm* of children's books.
4. Brainstorm your book. Let it flow! Write a rough draft and see where it takes you. Write *several* rough drafts. What age child is your audience? Play with the format or the voice.
5. Read every draft you write out loud. Books for children will be read aloud. They all need to have a natural in-born rhythm. When you master it, you'll know it!
6. Join SCBWI. The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators is the reason many of us children's authors are published. They have an excellent monthly newsletter, many free publications, and local and national conferences.  
<http://www.scbwi.org>  
After you join, sign up for every free item they have. Their most helpful publication is their annual market survey, which lists publishers and what they are looking for.
7. Find or form a critique group. Writing partners are also good. With a partner, you share manuscripts via email or in person. At a signing I had for my book, *The ABCs of Writing for Children* a few years ago, two women wanted to write for children. They met at my signing, had coffee right after my talk and started their own partnership right away! I received an e-mail from one of them the other day, telling me they've been writing and meeting ever since . . . and publishing too!
8. Don't forget the children's magazine world. Many stories for children may not be picture books, but short stories for children. And unlike the adult world, there ARE opportunities for paying markets for short story publication in print magazines. (Online too, of course)
9. Continue reading what is published today. Kids, books, and publishing have changed over the years. Don't rely on "my neighbor's children loved it" (they will because they love YOU) or "this story would have been fabulous when I was a child." (Yes, but THEN is not NOW.) Be honest with yourself. If the story has been done before, publishers aren't going to want it now. However, maybe you can take your story and give it a new twist or slant. Look at it a new way.  
Take classes and go to conferences. Learn. Network.
10. Persistence pays! Don't let a few rejections get you down. There are lots of large, medium and small publishers out there! If one editor says they don't want it, don't despair. Get a standard rejection? Don't worry. It may not have made it to the right editor's desk.
11. BIC. Remember Jane Yolen's advice Butt In Chair. If you keep at it long enough, you WILL succeed. And, when you read your published book to children in the audience and they smile, comment, and shout out answers to your questions, you'll know it was worth every minute.

# Member Profile

By Jody Denison



## Profile: Jerry Vaught

What does a man who has spent his life staring at numbers and gathering letters after his name, (MBA from UC Berkeley), CPA, VP etc., do when he retires? (Jerry suggests that there should be a “Numbers Anonymous” for folks like him.) He had been writing articles for financial, computer and technical magazines. Then, on vacation, he met someone in Scotland, of all places, who told him of the California Writers Club. He then realized he had a wealth of experience upon which to draw to make the switch from numerical fact to infinite fiction.

Jerry was raised in Phoenix, Arizona. When it came time to go to college, he entered Arizona State University where he met Cheryl, his wife to be. On their first date, just fifteen minutes into it Jerry asked Cheryl if she was religious. When she answered, “No,” Jerry was definitely interested. You may wonder why he would ask such a question right off the bat. Well, he was raised in a fundamentalist (as he describes it) “hell-fire and brimstone” religion, and wanted no part of any religion as a result. He grew from superstition to education and from fundamentalism to intellectual freedom. However, he moved easily from fact to fiction and in his book, *Twentyhundred*, his hero reflects some of the journey that Jerry has made. The book is now in what he calls the “eternal editing” unpublished stage.

Jerry and Cheryl graduated from college on a Friday in Arizona and moved to Lafayette, California on Saturday. They have two children and two grandsons. Jerry is giving his time and energy to CWC as the coordinator of the Mount Diablo Branch critique group, as his way of thanking the organization for widening his horizons into writing for satisfaction.

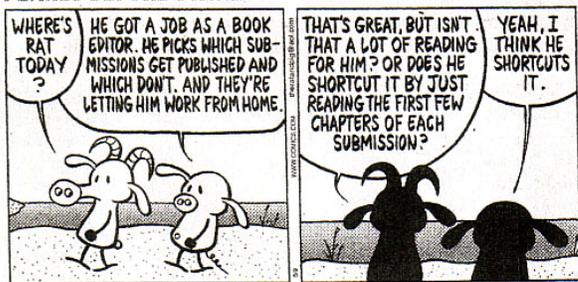
## Are Writers Funny?

Would you care to chuckle?  
Thank you Jack Russ for forwarding these cartoons for our summer newsletter.

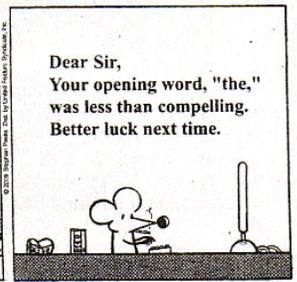


"I told you not to join that Tablet of the Month Club!"

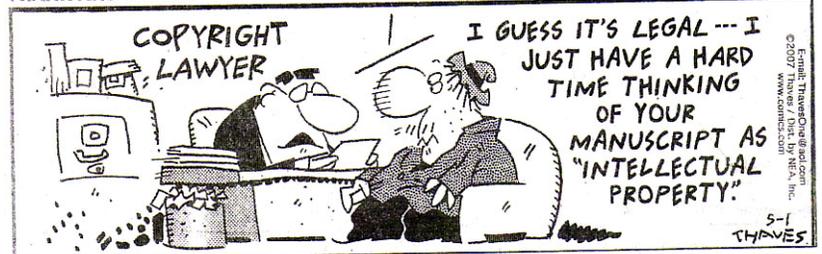
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



STEPHAN PASTIS



FRANK AND ERNEST



BOB THAVES

## The Tip Bucket



As reported in the December 2008 edition of *The Write News*, the Back Fence has a new feature called the Tip Bucket. Future editions of *The Write News* will feature excerpts from the Tip Bucket. Below is the tip for summer.

### SELL MANUSCRIPT – QUERY LETTER

The query letter is your first introduction to a literary agent, mainstream publisher or Internet publisher and it must be powerful, concise and sparkling.

- Agents/editors may get a hundred queries a day. You have only a couple of seconds to grab their attention to make them want to read more.
- Use your best writing as this is your introduction, your first sales pitch, and you want to look and sound professional.
- Keep it short – one to two pages – but preferably one.
- Address it to the specific editor who will read your query.
- Start off with a lead that will grab the reader's attention and follow with a short synopsis of your book or article.
- Provide a brief summary of your qualifications for writing about the subject, mention if you are a published author, and then ask if you can send your entire article or manuscript for consideration. Be sure to mention if your proposal is exclusive to the agent/editor or if you are sending out multiple submissions.
- End the letter by thanking the agent or editor for her time and mention that you're looking forward to hearing from her at her earliest convenience.
- Below your signature include your complete contact information.
- Enclose a self-address stamped envelope (SASE).
- If you are sending a query via the Internet, follow the instructions implicitly and do not assume that the agent or editor received your information once you hit *send*.

There are two other informative documents under this section of "Sell Manuscript-Query Letter." These are worth checking out: "Wise Words from Agent on Query Letters" and "Attention-Grabbing Query and Cover Letters".

For the complete text of these", and other helpful tips, check out the Tip Bucket at the Back Fence. Members of The Back Fence can visit The Back Fence at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CWCBackFence/>. Click on "Files" at the left of your screen. Topics of interest to writers are arranged in order as you work your way through the publishing process. Do you have any tips to share under the main topics? Do you have another topic you feel needs to be addressed? Members who want to add their tips can open a folder and easily add a file. If you haven't yet joined the Back Fence go to the link above and follow the simple sign-up process.

## From the Editor's Desk ~ 100 Years of Literary History By Catherine Accardi

Beginning with our September edition of *The Write News*, I will highlight California authors and California literary landmarks. This series is in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of our California Writers Club. Stay tuned and *Sail On!*



## Conferences

**The San Francisco-Peninsula Branch of the California Writers Club organizes The annual Jack London Writers Conference.** The inaugural conference was held in 1988 as a fund-raiser to help restore the famed author's cottage in the Jack London State Park. Information on the 18th annual 2009 Jack London Writers Conference can be found below. For more detailed information, go to [www.cwc-peninsula.org/conference/index.html](http://www.cwc-peninsula.org/conference/index.html)

**The Berkeley Branch of the California Writers Club** has a call for submissions for their 2009 WestSide Story Contest. The Grand prize is \$250. Winning stories as well as semifinalists and honorable mentions will be published in a chapbook in December 2009. Winning stories and honorable mentions will be published at [www.westsidestorycontest.com](http://www.westsidestorycontest.com). Stories will be read at the December luncheon meeting of the Berkeley Branch of the California Writers Club. The WestSide Story Contest is open to writers of all genres of literary fiction. All submissions must be in English, previously unpublished, 2200 words or fewer, submitted between June 1, 2009 and September 1, 2009. Winners will be notified by November 1. For contest details, go to [www.cwc-berkeley.com](http://www.cwc-berkeley.com), or email [workshop@mac.com](mailto:workshop@mac.com).

## Sales and Salutes

**Catherine Accardi's** book, *Images of America-Walnut Creek*, released in March of this year, was recently featured in the Thursday, July 23, edition of the *Contra Costa Times*. Catherine was interviewed by a reporter from the *Contra Costa Times*, and this included a photo shoot at Clayton Books. Thank you Joel! The article is titled "A new book about the city's old times".

## Members – Would You Like To Be Saluted?

We would like to salute you in *The Write News*. Please let newsletter Editor Catherine Accardi know if you have been published recently. Your name and writing achievement will be highlighted in the "Sales and Salutes" section of the newsletter. Send along a photograph of yourself and we shall include it as well. You may contact Catherine at [caacat@comcast.net](mailto:caacat@comcast.net).



In the June edition of *The Write News*, "From the Editor's Desk" section, I mentioned the website [www.writing.shawguides.com](http://www.writing.shawguides.com). I neglected to state that this website was brought to our attention by CWC member Peter Hjersman. Thank you Peter!



## California Writers Club ~ Mount Diablo Branch

**President: David George**  
**Vice-President: William Stong**  
**Treasurer: Joanne Brown**  
**Secretary: Barbara Bentley**

### **Board Members**

Catherine Accardi  
Ann Damaschino  
Jody Denison  
Danard Emanuelson  
Al Garrotto  
Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff  
Aline Soules  
Elisabeth Tuck  
Fran Wojnar

### **Committee Chairs**

Central Board Rep: David George  
Central Board Alternate Rep: Jack Russ  
Membership: Jody Denison  
Newsletter: Catherine Accardi  
Barnes & Noble Fundraiser: Camille Minichino  
Programs & Website: Al Garrotto  
Branch Historian & Door Prizes: Fran Wojnar  
Young Writers Contest: Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff  
Publicity: Ann Damaschino  
Workshops: Elisabeth Tuck, Nannette Carroll  
Event Logistics: Danard Emanuelson

### **Advisory Board Members**

Nannette Carroll  
Lee Paulson  
Veronica Rossi  
Jack Russ

---

**California Writers Club ~ Mount Diablo Branch**  
**Post Office Box 606, Alamo, CA 94507**



***Sail On!***