



# The Write News

California Writers Club ~ Mount Diablo Branch

*A Monthly Publication*

*June 2008*

## *June Speaker and Meeting Information*

*The California Writers Club ~ Mount Diablo Branch*

*Presents Martha Engber ~ Great Characters from the Ground Up*



Join the Mount Diablo Branch of the California Writers Club on Saturday, June 14, at the Hungry Hunter Restaurant in Lafayette. Martha Engber will present her workshop: **Pyramid Tipping - How to Build Great Characters from the Top Down**. Ms. Engber says she loves to talk about writing, which is the reason she wrote *Growing Great Characters from the Ground Up*.

While it makes perfect sense to develop in-depth main characters by laying a broad foundation of their likes, dislikes, physical attributes and family history before beginning to write, such a heavy base can wind up crushing our characters by burying their most important qualities and introducing inconsistencies. To avoid the mistake of over-burdening your characters with too much baggage, this workshop will show you how to tip the information pyramid over.

Instead of starting from a broad layer of general facts, you'll learn how to find and isolate that one telling detail upon which your entire character will be based. Such a key detail will not only clearly define your character, but also ensure consistency by serving as true north if you find yourself lost and confused about how your character should act when facing the challenges you create.

Please join us, on June 14, for this informative workshop. You will find meeting details below. All are welcome to come, learn, and network with local writers. The California Writers Club, Mount Diablo Branch web address is: <http://www.mtdiablowriters.org>

## **June Event Details**

**Date & Time:** Saturday, June 14, 2008 at 11:30 a.m.

**Location:** The Hungry Hunter Restaurant, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette (at the corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Highway 24).

**Menu:** Choose one of the following when contacting Betty Iverson for reservations: Prime rib, Salmon, Chicken Caesar Salad, Turkey Croissant or Veggie Pasta.

**Reservations:** Reservations are required, and must be received no later than noon on Wednesday, June 11. To make reservations, contact Betty Iverson, with your menu choice above, via e-mail at [bjiverson@comcast.net](mailto:bjiverson@comcast.net), or by phone at (925) 376-3631. Expect confirmation only if you e-mail your reservation.

## *Upcoming Speakers for 2008*

**July & August** - Club does not meet in July or August

**September 13** - Anita Amirrezvani, author of **Blood of Flowers**

**October 11** - Darryl Brock, Novelist

## *President's Message*

*By Jack Russ*



This is my last message to all of you in this forum, but my TidBits will continue. I'm stepping down as your branch president effective June 30th, and turning over the leadership to an impressive new team. The coming year's new leadership, the new faces on the board, and new ideas now under study will continue the momentum, variety, and enthusiasm of recent years. During my tenure my objectives, enthusiastically shared and supported by the all-volunteer board members, have been aimed at meeting members' needs and implementing ways to enhance the value of membership.

I offer my thanks to all members for their enthusiastic support of the club's activities. Many of you have stepped forward to meet needs as they arise with little public recognition. Those efforts have been recognized and are appreciated. That willing behavior speaks well for those individuals and for the branch as a whole.

In particular I want to thank the all-volunteer members of the board. They have supported my objectives, shared the workload, and contributed both time and imagination to make the Mt. Diablo branch of CWC the second largest branch of the statewide organization, as well as the most respected and admired. Keep it up! My thanks to all of you. It was "a very good year."

## **Update: Club Donations**

The IRS has sent a letter to the club confirming that the state-wide central club and the Mt. Diablo Branch are non-profit organizations under the federal tax laws section 501(C)3. Therefore, contributions made to the club are charity donations and may legally be deducted from income tax returns. Copies of the confirming letter are available from me for any member who would like a copy to support their tax return.

## *CWC - Mount Diablo Branch Officers for 2008-2009*

Mount Diablo Branch members will vote on the slate of officers at our June meeting.

The candidates are as follows:

President: Dave George

Vice President: Julie Dowling

Secretary: Barbara Bentley

Treasurer: Joanne Brown

## *Notable Quote:*

*The profession of book writing makes horse racing seem like a solid, stable business.*

*~ John Steinbeck*

# Young Writers Contest Banquet ~ May 16, 2008

By Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff



Our May 16 banquet featured an inspiring talk by former KTVU Channel Two Leslie Griffith, her informative question and answer session, a delicious all-you-could-eat Back Forty Barbecue, a grand showcase of the students' winning literary poems, essays and short stories in a delightful display created by Maureen Biro and Kathy Urban, special drawing prizes, including donations by the Oakland A's, Encore Gym, and Jewelry Designs by Wilma Murray, and wonderful conversations as we met with the winners, their parents, teachers and our club members, their spouses and friends. What more could you ask for?

### Winners of the 2008 Young Writers Contest

Many of the families who approached me afterwards were in awe of our club and how our group takes an interest in inspiring young writers. A big thank you to all the members who donated time and energy into making the contest and banquet a success!

The judges, the children's committee, the board, the financial donators, the club members who attended the event, and those that have shown up on the Saturday after Thanksgiving at Barnes and Noble to demonstrate their support for our one and only fundraiser. Thank you all.



Jack, Sara Johnson & Leslie Griffith



Jack, Eleana Binder & Leslie



Steven Schreitmeuller & Liz

### Sales & Salutes



**Liz Koehler-Pentacoff** sold *Making Contact: One Skeptic's Journey to Animal Wellness*. Also, her book, *John Muir and Stickeen: An Alaskan Adventure*, was published in Korean. Liz just received her copies to discover a picture of a gold award on the cover of the book. The problem? The gold seal has lettering in Korean of course! If you know how to read Korean, please send Liz an e-mail at [lizbooks@aol.com](mailto:lizbooks@aol.com), and she'll send you a fax so you can interpret it for her!

## *A Website Review*

*By B. Lynn Goodwin*

### **Recommendations from Independent Booksellers**

Read any good books lately? Regardless of your answer, you might want to check out the recommendations of independent booksellers by visiting Book Sense, <http://www.booksense.com/>. Click on Book Sense Picks to read the current recommendations. Thirty-six were listed for the week of May 13. All can be ordered from the website or purchased elsewhere.

Looking for more titles? Click on Bestseller List. Then choose from Trade Paperback Fiction, Trade Paperback Nonfiction, Hardcover Fiction, Hardcover Nonfiction, Mass Market, Children's Interest, Children's Illustrated, and Children's Fiction Series. The top three books in each category are pictured. Click on the picture and you'll go to a page that announces, "BookSense.com is all about shopping locally."

Though the site makes it easy to buy online, I clicked on Store Locator and learned that my search for zip code 94526 yielded 110 results. Many offer links to their web pages, where customers can continue to click and explore. The site gives you "...access to information about myriad staff recommendations - and you will also be presented with content that reflects the collective wisdom of booksellers from all 50 states and Puerto Rico."

If you passionately support independent bookstores, as most authors do, check out Book Sense, [www.booksense.com](http://www.booksense.com).

## *Meet Our Member*

*By Jody Denison*

### **PROFILE: Jody Bunting**

Jody Bunting, author of *Buster's December Tale (as told by Buster)*, survived a childhood surrounded by five brothers and Nebraska winters. She considers herself an "accidental" author. While she has done some family history and poetry she never figured she'd write a book that actually got published. While caring for a friend's dog, Jody kept a little diary of the pup's activity on a daily basis and wrote it from the dog's (Buster) point of view. She added pictures and a calendar so Buster could count the days he was alone. She did not count on the small book going any further. It was such a hit that her friend gave her the small shove to publish it. Publish she did and in the process learned a lot about publishing.

The lovely little book is selling like puppy treats and she can take pride in the fact that the book entices the child reading it to write a diary of his own. Jody was a Teacher's Assistant in the Mt. Diablo School system for seventeen years and just recently retired. She worked with Special Education Resource English classes and that fact has obviously given her insight to how and what children write and read.

Madrid, Nebraska provided Jody with the unique experience of attending the same school from Kindergarten through High School. She graduated with the large class of 16 and then went off to Kearney State College. She and her husband, Ivor, have raised two children. Their son is in Computers and their daughter is a teacher of English Literature and Journalism. Jody says she tells herself that "it must be some kind of sin to have so much fun in retirement". We won't tell anybody if you promise to keep on writing!

*The 2008 East of Eden Writer's Conference*, sponsored by the CWC-South Bay Branch, will be held from September 5 -7, 2008. The conference will be held in "Steinbeck Country" in Salinas. For more information, go to the South Bay website at: <http://www.southbaywriters.com>. By clicking on the conference link, you can find more information and also register on-line.

## *From the Editor's Desk*

*By Catherine Accardi*



The annual East of Eden Writers Conference will be held from September 5 to 7 of this year. Conference details can be found above. It's time to make your reservations. It is also time to honor John Steinbeck, the California writer who wrote *East of Eden*.

John Ernst Steinbeck was born February 27, 1902, in the Salinas family home at 132 Central Avenue. As an adult, he visited his parents and wrote sections of various works including *The Red Pony* and *Tortilla Flat*. In 1936 he wrote *Of Mice and Men*, set around Soledad, which was produced as a novel and then as a play. During this time, Steinbeck mentioned labor violence in Salinas in a letter: "There are riots in Salinas and killings in the streets of that dear little town where I was born."

The classic film, *Lifeboat*, based on a Steinbeck novel, was released in 1944. Around this time, Steinbeck bought a house in Monterey, but was unwelcomed, as no one would rent him an office for writing. He was harassed when trying to get fuel and wood from a local wartime rations board. Steinbeck wrote that his old friends did not want him, partly because of his works and partly because he was so successful. He said: "This isn't my country anymore. And it won't be until I am dead. It makes me very sad." He left Monterey the next year and moved to New York, but this move was short lived as he moved from New York to Pacific Grove in 1948. It was then that Steinbeck began his research for his book *East of Eden*, of which he wrote: "I am on my marathon book, which is called 'Salinas Valley.' It is what I have been practicing to write all of my life. Everything else has been training." In 1952, *East of Eden* his major work about the history of the Salinas Valley, was published.

At this point in his writing career, literary historians report that Steinbeck wrote to an aspiring writer from Salinas: "Don't think for a moment that you will ever be forgiven for being what they call 'different.' You won't! I still have not been forgiven. Only when I am delivered in a pine box will I be considered 'safe.' After I had written *The Grapes of Wrath* and it had been to a large extent read and sometimes burned, the librarians at the Salinas Public Library, who had known my folks remarked that it was lucky my parents were dead so that they did not have to suffer this shame." John Ernst Steinbeck died in New York in 1968. His awards and honors were many, among them the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (*The Grapes of Wrath*) in 1940, Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, and the United States Medal of Freedom in 1964.

For more information on John Steinbeck, go to <http://nobelprizes.com/nobel/literature/1962a.html>.

Mr. Steinbeck's photograph courtesy of the Nobel Foundation

*The discipline of the written word punishes both stupidity and dishonesty.*

*~ John Steinbeck*



### *It's CWC Membership Renewal Time & We Want You To Renew* *By Jody Denison*

**REMINDER:** For all members, your membership expires on June 30, 2008. Dues for the upcoming 2008/2009 year are \$45.00 payable to CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch. Mail your check and membership renewal form below to: Membership, CWC Mt. Diablo Branch, P.O. Box 606, Alamo CA, 94507.

And don't forget—one of the members who have renewed prior to May 31 will be selected in a drawing for a free lunch at our June meeting. **Please note:** All dues expire on June 30, even those members who paid for joining after December 2007.



### **It's Annual Membership Renewal Time Again!**

There really is such a thing as a **FREE LUNCH!** Renew your Membership by May 31st, and your name will be entered in our drawing for a **FREE LUNCH** at a future meeting of your choice. Don't wait. **RENEW TODAY!**

Please complete this form, and include it with your \$45 check. We're updating our member database and we want to make sure we have correct information about you. PLEASE print clearly!

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Initial \_\_\_\_ Nickname \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ Main Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Addr. \_\_\_\_\_ FAX (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Active Member  Associate Member  Supporting Member Web Site \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Genre \_\_\_\_\_ Additional Genre(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Security Note: Membership information is not made public at any time.

Make your check for \$45 payable to "CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch". Mail this form with your check to : CWC-Membership, P.O. Box 606, Alamo CA 94507. If you have any questions call Jody at (925) 838-0058, or e-mail denisonjd@sbcglobal.net.



# California Writers Club - Mount Diablo Branch

## *Officers:*

*President:* Jack Russ  
*Vice-President:* Dave George  
*Treasurer:* Joanne Brown  
*Secretary:* Julie Dowling

## *Committees:*

**Central Board Rep:** Dave George  
**Membership:** Jody Denison  
**Newsletter:** Catherine Accardi  
**Programs:** Elizabeth Pentacoff  
**Barnes & Noble Fundraiser:**  
Joanne Brown &  
Camille Minichino  
**Publicity:** Ann Damaschino  
**Webmaster:** Cynthia Borcena  
**Historian:** Fran Wojnar

## *Board Members:*

Catherine Accardi  
Jody Denison  
Al Garrotto  
Igal Levy  
Lee Paulson  
Elizabeth Pentacoff

## *Advisory Board Members:*

Nannette Carroll  
Ann Damaschino  
Pat Edwards  
Danard Emanuelson  
Veronica Rossi

*The ideas and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributing individuals  
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Post Office Box 606, Alamo, CA 94507



**Time is the only critic without ambition.**

~ John Steinbeck