

# The Write News

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A Monthly Newsletter

December 2011

## The California Writers Club-Mount Diablo Branch

**On Saturday, December 10, 2011**

**Local California Writers Club Authors Present:**

### *Three Proven Paths to Successful Writing & Publishing*



**Judith Ingram** will share four steps to publication, with examples from her experience with her first non-fiction book. Judith is the author of *A Devotional Walk with Forgiveness: Daily Exercise for Spiritual Fitness*. She is an editor, teacher, published poet, and columnist



**Jeryl Abelmann** will discuss overcoming rejections and setting goals for publication. Jeryl has written a children's book, *Quickly, the Magic Spatula*, and is a past honoree for Teacher of the Year in the San Ramon Valley School District.



### **Nannette Rundle Carroll**

Critique group conflicts? Disagreements with you editor? Contract disputes? Graphic designer flubs? Here's help for writers! Nannette, author of *The Communication Problem Solver*, will show you how to handle critical conversations and preserve vital relationships in the process.

#### **NOTE:**

**Special Meal Selection for our December Luncheon - Page 2**

**Contact:** Jean at [jeaniegpopps@comcast.net](mailto:jeaniegpopps@comcast.net) or leave a message at: (925) 934-5677

**See Meeting Details on Page 2**

## **AUTHORS' SHOW AND SELL**

***Calling all published authors!  
This is your opportunity to display and  
sell your books to other members.***

In keeping with our annual tradition, members are encouraged to bring copies of their published books to the December CWC meeting and offer them for sale.

A few simple rules to follow:

- ❖ Tables will be available inside the meeting room for authors to display their books.
- ❖ You are responsible, as the author, for the entire sales transaction, including price, book signing, payment and change. The supply of books and manning the space is up to you.
- ❖ You can have a reasonable amount of small marketing material such as bookmarks, postcards, and the like. Please don't be a space hog. Respect other author's books and sales space.
- ❖ Any books not claimed after the meeting will be considered orphans and donated to local libraries.
- ❖ CWC Mt. Diablo is not responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged books.

***Don't miss out. Make your meeting reservations now ! See details below.***

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**December 10 Meeting Details** - Check-in begins at 11:30, sit-down lunch at 12:00, and the program begins at approximately 1:00 p.m.

**MENU SELECTION:** When making your reservation, please select your served meal from the following choices: **New York steak, Salmon, Chicken Parmesan and Pasta Primavera**

**Reservations:** Reservations are required and must be received no later than noon on **Wednesday, December 7.**

**Cost:** \$20 for CWC members; \$25 for guests

**To make a reservation,** contact Jean Georgakopoulos, via e-mail at [jeaniegpopps@comcast.net](mailto:jeaniegpopps@comcast.net), or by phone at (925) 934-5677. Expect confirmation only when you e-mail your reservation. **Don't forget to include your meal order in the message!**

**Please Note:** In accordance with our contractual agreement with Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, the club is charged for every reservation confirmed on the day before the meeting. If you are not able to attend this meeting, or if you do not cancel your reservation prior to noon on the Friday before the meeting, you will be asked to remit a \$20 "no-show" payment.

## President's Message

By Lee Paulson

### *Making Lily Pads*



Greetings for the holiday season. There is energy in the air. Credit cards being polished and diets pushed to the back burner. I'm still getting adjusted to Santa Claus stuff showing up on retail shelves in August - far too early for a traditionalist like myself. Back in Indiana where I grew up, the seasons were well defined: winter, spring, summer and fall. Snow was dependable for Christmas, crocus peeking through the snow signaled spring, and you could count on scorching heat for July 4<sup>th</sup>. Turning leaves and Indian Summer were sure signs of fall. All that changed when I moved west.

To paraphrase a retort by Johnny Carson when someone complained that California didn't have distinct seasons. "We do too have four seasons -- fire, flood, mud and drought."

CWC Mt. Diablo branch offers a variety of programs during the year. We strive for three workshops on the craft of writing and six program speakers. December's *Three of Our Own* highlights a trio of members who have recently been published. According to our records, 64% of our members are published - a wonderful accomplishment by a talented group of writers and encouragement for aspiring authors.

One of our program speakers recounted a meeting he had with his German publisher regarding the vast numbers of eBooks and stories that were available with no regard for the quality of the material. The publisher grouched that there was a large swamp of material but only a few lily pads floating on it.

Our goal here at CWC is to support our members in creating professional quality writing - - making more lily pads with beautiful flowers. The new Publishing Pathways program is designed to assist writers in being published either via the traditional route or electronically.

Digital publishing has arrived. More and more of our members have published eBooks through Smashwords, Amazon, and other digital avenues. We haven't yet had a member to equal that of author Amanda Hocking who has sold more than a million digital books, but let's think big in the coming year. Whether by traditional or digital publishing, perhaps next December you can be one of our featured *Three of Own* authors sharing your success story.

Mark your calendars for the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Following our tradition, lunch will be "sit-down" rather than buffet. All authors are encouraged to bring their books to sell at the meeting. Tables will be available for display. This holiday gathering is a great opportunity to chat with our authors, buy an autographed copy, or just talk shop.

Lee Paulson, CWC Mt. Diablo Branch President

## Highlighting One of Our Members

By Catherine Accardi

### Member Profile: *Milan E. Wight*



Milan with his daughter, and co-author, Chris Bratton

Milan Wight is a native Californian, born in Selma, California. He attended Reedley College, the University of California at Berkeley, Oberlin College, and the Harvard Business School.

Milan served 3 ½ years in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After his service, Milan was employed for 40 years in the Mount Diablo Unified School District as a business teacher, counselor and vocational administrator.

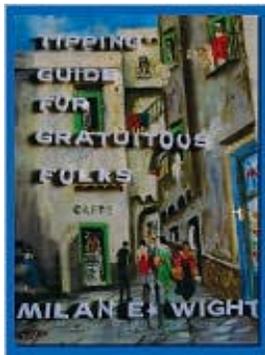
After he retired, Milan joined the Retired Teachers Association, where he wrote technical reports and an insurance column for the newsletter. At one of the Association board meetings, Alpha Quincy, a member of the retired Teachers Association and of the California Writers Club, said to Milan,

“I like the way you write.”

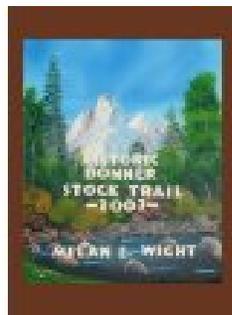
With that bit of encouragement, Milan began his writing journey and went on to publish three books, to date, and has three more in various states of completion.

At age 89, and being confined to a wheel chair but with access to a computer, Milan finds his writing successes to be quite an accomplishment.

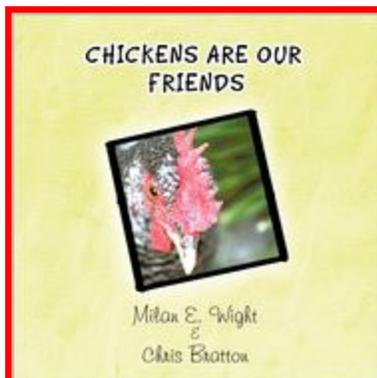
### Milan's published works include:



*Tipping Guide for Gratuitous Folks*  
ISBN: 1-4120-3466-3



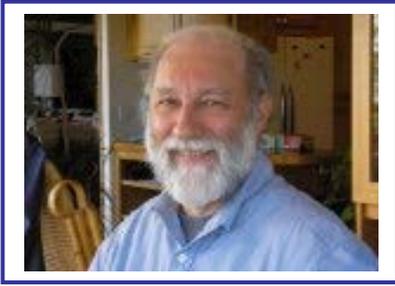
*Historic Donner Stock Trail-2007*  
ISBN: 978-1-4251-3955-1



*Chickens Are Our Friends*  
ISBN: 978-1-4269-5238-8

*Chickens Are Our Friends* is a children's book all about the life of chickens from incubator to scrambled eggs, showing the development and activities of chickens on an actual farm. Children will want to read this story over and over again.

## ***Special Column from Peter Hjersman Our Correspondent in Tokyo***



Peter Hjersman is a Mt. Diablo CWC member, former CWC Board Member and previous Critique Chair. In March 2010 he joined his wife and family in Tokyo.

This is Peter's story about the Japan Writers Conference that he attended last October and his encounter with the author of ***Slumdog Millionaire***.

The Tokyo Writers Workshop ( <http://www.meetup.com/Tokyo-Writers-Workshop/> ) has been operating monthly critique groups for over 30 years and hosting conferences for five years. The time and place is wherever a donated space is found. When I recently joined TWW, it was through Meetup.com, which was started in NYC after 9/11 as a way to get like-minds together.

This conference is total volunteer. Even the facilities are donated. All organizing is by volunteers and the speakers donate their time with no honorarium. Even so, there is one famous speaker, the man who wrote *Slumdog Millionaire*, Vikas Swarup. I was intrigued to see how well this works and how many attend.

There were 29 sessions with about 100 people in attendance. Mostly, I went for learning about how to write for and in Japan, making contacts, writing about a foreign country and 'synaesthesia' – a blending of the senses.

Then came a reading by Vikas Swarup. In general, I don't go to readings, so I hesitated and checked out another session first. Then I decided to see what it was all about. Vikas Swarup works in the Indian diplomatic corps and heads the Kobe Consulate. My experience with diplomats is that they are pleasant people and very astute; i.e. a pleasure to be around. Mr. Swarup is all that a diplomat can be. He is one of the best speakers I have ever heard. What he read from his books was masterful writing. Most of what he shared is well known, so I will pinpoint what impressed me.

When asked about his 'luck' in finishing "Q & A" in three months, obtaining a world-class agent with only four chapters written, having a movie made soon, translations in almost 50 languages, and all from his *first draft*...he said he considers himself more of a storyteller than a writer. When he was transferred back to India, he sent his family ahead and spent an intense month finishing the book, which he wrote for 'insiders' (Indians), not even seriously considering publication. He took full responsibility, was humble and told straight out how he did finish the book. There was no 'luck.' He may have been in 'the zone', which can make amazing things happen.

I have heard him, now I have met him, now he has given me his business card, and we talked for a few minutes while no one else came up, which astounded me. Anyway, just to hear him speak was worth being there and all else was a bonus. I discovered that the conference worked, even all volunteer, no cost, we learned a lot, contacts were made (I sent one proposal right after) and I look forward to the conference next year in Kyoto!

## Member Events, News and Salutes



*Yone Noguchi & Joaquin Miller*

**Nina Egert's** article about Yone Noguchi's time in California appeared in the Sept/Oct issue of *Poetry Flash*. "The well-known poet, Joaquin Miller, had purchased the hills that eventually became Joaquin Miller Park in the 1870s as a spot to host a writers' retreat. His friends—poets and authors of note, such as John Muir, Ina Coolbrith, Edwin Markham, and Jack London (all founding members of the California Writers Club) came often to picnic on Miller's land."



**Four authors from our CWC Mt. Diablo** branch will participate in a panel discussion called "*So You Want to Write a Book*" at the Moraga Library on Saturday, January 7 at 2:00 pm. Barbara Bentley, Jon Cory, Al Garrotto and Judith Marshall will discuss their writing journeys and offer tips for aspiring writers.

## The CWC - Mount Diablo Branch Critique Group

*By Ted Wells, Critique Group Chair*

Whow, look what Santa has brought us early before Christmas this year on December 10 at 9:30 to 11:00 AM right here at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant:

- Sean Hazlett will talk briefly about "Blogging to Build an Audience 101: 10 Lessons about Building an Online Platform in 10 Months." He will share his experience and lessons learned, generating traffic for a blog started in early 2011, which now has a total of over 53,000 page views and up to 600 a day.
- Ted Wells will speak informally for a few minutes on "The State of the Big Six Publishing Houses" based on meetings on November 19, 2011, with Michael Larsen and Elizabeth Pomada, literary agents. Larsen and Pomada have been in business in San Francisco since 1972.
- Critiques and discussion on fiction manuscripts.

I look forward to 5-10 typed pages, double-spaced, of your manuscripts on fiction for someone to critique. See you Saturday, December 10 at Zio Fraedo's at 9:30 AM in the room across from the bar area.

***To our great works***

## Writer's Markets Column

### To Submit or Not to Submit

by **B. Lynn Goodwin**



In December, submissions and acceptances slow down. Offices are closed. Editors and agents take a break. But the Internet is open 24-7.

In December why not post responses on other people's blogs. Get your name out there, and if you have a signature line or a link to your blog, add it below your name. For a list of blogs that belong to CWC members, go to <http://www.writeradvice.com/websitereviews.html> and scroll down. You can also visit the other websites listed there if you have time.

While you're in the e-zine, check out Writer Advice's Contests & Markets, <http://www.writeradvice.com/markets.html>. As always, it's eclectic.

Looking for a way to earn some money as a writer? Visit <http://www.fundsforwriters.com/>. This excellent site has been honed for years. It's a wonderful ongoing resource and if you sign up for Hope's newsletter, you'll get regular information about opportunities.

Feel like slowing down? Try something different.

1. Make a list of what you've accomplished this year as a writer. List conferences, meetings, and writing groups, as well as publications.
2. Write yourself a letter about what you want to accomplish next year. Put someplace safe and put a note on your calendar to read it at the end of December 2012.
3. Make a list of writing obstacles and brainstorm strategies for overcoming them.
4. Use this month for revisions.
5. Use this month to read.
6. Use this month to fertilize your brain so you can take off with renewed energy in January.

Congratulations to all of you who have been productive writers (whatever that means) in 2011. Continue to enjoy the journey of writing in 2012.

**Value Added****News from CWC Central**

## ***CALLING ALL BLOGGERS***

The world of communication has seen its share of changes over the past century, and CWC membership has reflected them. Early on we had novelists, essayists, journalists, short story writers and poets. The arrival of cinema added screenwriters. The Golden Age of Radio accounted for an influx of radio writers. Not long after, TV writers joined our ranks. Throughout the decades, some became quite prominent.

What about now? Surely we have bloggers. Perhaps some command sizable audiences. How ironic. They could have global outreach, yet pass under our radar. So here are a few questions to update the radar:

Do you maintain a regular, topical blog for mass-market consumption such as the blog made famous by "Julie and Julia"? How much traffic does it get? In the same vein, do you send out regular, topical email blasts to readers other than family and friends? If yes, what is the subject? Do you blog or broadcast issues related to writing or creative pursuits? Do you manage to plug the CWC from time to time?

Recently, Redwood's Robin Moore emailed me, "I wrote a blog today about the closing of Jack London State Park. My inspiration was a posting on our Redwood Writers by our Web Editor Lynn Millar...." Good work, Redwood.

Everyone else, if you have CWC success stories that could help branches and members to get the word out, please send a note to [pr@calwriters.org](mailto:pr@calwriters.org). Your advice could turn up in a future column.

Thanks in advance and sail on!  
Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, PR chair,  
- [pr@calwriters.org](mailto:pr@calwriters.org)

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### ***The Editing Saga of the 'Mississippi Ham' continues.....***

#### ***TESTING YOUR EDITING SKILLS***

Mt. Diablo Branch's theme is Writers helping Writers. In that spirit, and also having a little fun, we are posting the results of a two-part editing test that began in last month's newsletter. On the next page you will find the edited results from our esteemed editor and Vice President, Elisabeth Tuck. Using 'Track Changes' as her editing tool, she has (as predicted) found numerous errors, omissions, incorrect usage, bad grammar and cringe-worthy writing. Take a look at Elisabeth's edits. Have fun!

**Editor's Note:** We apologize for the appearance of the edited story. In order to show Track Changes, the font size automatically reduces to fit the width of the newsletter page. Zoom to 110% to make it readable.

The Mississippi Ham

Tupelo is ~~basically~~ famous for being the birthplace of Elvis Presley, but I remember it as ~~it being~~ the town where I was exposed to smoked, salt-cured ham of local fame.

My reason for ~~flying on the airplane~~ from San Francisco had been to visit a fabric plant ~~that where~~ I did an annual review ~~of~~ their computer systems.

Mr. Tadford, the plant president, did not like having corporate visitors ~~for~~ from anywhere north of ~~the~~ Mississippi or west of the Sabine ~~the~~ River. "Damn Yankee" was one word to him.

"I dropped out of the fourth grade, ~~he boasted,~~ "and never suffered for it," ~~he boasted.~~ Living as a rich man in a poor state allowed him ~~the~~ ~~boasted~~ to say such nonsense.

~~One morning during my visit,~~ I watched him ~~during my visit one morning~~ swiftly open the mail. He ~~occasionally~~ ~~but~~ bills due on the left side of his desk and checks received on the right side.

"Long as the two stacks are equal, I'm doing OK," he said. "I hate to admit it," ~~he said to me,~~ "but my people say you ain't like those ivy leaguers."

"That's because I'm from Indiana and worked with the Cajuns in Louisiana," ~~I replied.~~

"I had a heart attack a year ago," Mr. Tadford said, "and the board of directors sent me a get-well card that said, 'Dear Mr. Tadford, ~~we~~ wish you a speedy recovery by a vote of six to five.'"

We shared a laugh. Mr. Tadford ~~picked up his penned~~ ~~and the note~~ directions to a local hog farmer who cured the best country ham for miles around.

"It's a present," ~~he told me.~~ "On the way to airport, stop by and the ~~has~~ farmer will have a whole ham waiting for you. My present to you all. ~~paid~~ for Southern Hospitality."

I pulled in to the farmer's yard, past a hand-lettered sign advertising Country Hams for Sale. The farmer presented me with a whole ham with the best ~~smelling aroma~~ whole ham I had ever smelled. He offered to ship it to my home in California by the Greyhound Express.

Knowing that that wouldn't work, I prevailed on him and we wrapped it up in a large, black plastic trash bag and ~~securely~~ ~~duct~~ taped it ~~tight.~~

Going through security at the airport, the screener shouted for his supervisor. There on the ~~x-ray~~ display of my carry ~~on~~ bag was ~~the x-ray of~~ a large leg bone.

What had he found? An axe murderer? Two armed guards ~~with stern looks~~ unwrapped the black plastic ~~with stern looks.~~ They finally understood when I said, "It's a country ham".

"Sure smells good," one said. "I'm hungry," said the other.

Rushing to catch my flight, I trailed delightful aromas behind me through the gate area.

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Comment [E1]: "For being" is OK but I would substitute "as." In fact I would rewrite it as: Tupelo is the famous birthplace of Elvis. . .

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Comment [E2]: No other way people can fly! And I would rewrite this as "I flew from San Francisco to Tupelo to visit a fabric plant. . ."

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Comment [E3]: redundant

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Comment [E4]: Put is OK but I would recommend "placed"

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Comment [E5]: Usually "duct" tape but there is a brand called "duck" tape. Since the author isn't specifying a brand, I would recommend "duct".

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Comment [E6]: Should be two words.

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# 2012 Annual Young Writers Contest

Sponsored by The California Writers Club, Mount Diablo Branch

The Mount Diablo Branch of the California Writers Club invites you to support the young writers of today by honoring the great California writers of the past. Please consider joining one of the following donor clubs **for this fiscal year**. Your gift will be acknowledged in the Young Writers Contest program and in the Mount Diablo CWC newsletter. In addition, all donations are tax-deductible. The Young Writers Contest Committee and the Mt. Diablo Board of Directors wish to thank the following donors to the Young Writers Contest from July 1, 2011, to the present:

### Foundation Donors

*The Leroe Family Foundation*

### The John Steinbeck Society

*Barbara Bentley*

### The Jack London Founder's Circle

*Christine Sunderland*

### The Ina Coolbrith Laureate Club

*Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff in memory of Joan Brennan*

*Lee Paulson*

*Kathy Urban*

*The Vinapa Foundation for Cross-Cultural Studies*

### The John Muir Member Club

### The Helen Hunt Jackson Group

### The Mary Austin Writers Club

*David George in memory of Joan Brennan*

### The Gertrude Atherton Guild

This annual Young Writers Contest for middle school students of Contra Costa County awards cash prizes for excellence in short story, poetry, and essay/personal narrative categories. Winners are notified in May and presented with their awards at an awards luncheon, at a local restaurant. All expenses of the program are supported by individual donations and grants. Please join us in this unique program for encouraging our youth toward creative writing.

~ The Jack London Founder's Circle - \$500

~ The John Steinbeck Society - \$250-\$499      ~ The John Muir Member Club - \$150-\$249

~ The Ina Coolbrith Laureate Club - \$100-\$149      ~ The Mary Austin Writers Club - \$50-\$99

~ The Gertrude Atherton Guild - \$10-\$24      ~ The Helen Hunt Jackson Group - \$25-\$49

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Please list my membership in the following donor club: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (checks or cash only, please)

Acknowledge my gift in honor of/in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Make your check payable to: *CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch*      Mail check to:

CWC Mt. Diablo Branch, Attention: Young Writers Contest, P.O. Box 606, Alamo, CA 94507

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Please consider joining a Donor Club in support of our Annual Young Writers Contest. Your gift furthers our mission to provide support and encouragement not only to our adult writers, but also to identify and reward excellence among Contra Costa County middle school students. Your gift enables our club to continue and to expand our outreach to young writers. You can designate a gift in honor of or in memory of a friend or loved one. Your gift is fully tax deductible. Thank you to all our members who generously donated to the 2011 Young Writers Contest. It was the best ever! Please consider joining one of our Donor Clubs again this year to support the next generation of California writers who look forward to entering the 2012 contest. They are depending on you!



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

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**California Writers Club ~ Mount Diablo Branch**

*~ The California Writers Club is a designated 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation. ~*

***Join Us!***

**Our next CWC-Mt. Diablo Branch Meeting  
is on December 10, 2011, at 11:30, in Pleasant Hill.**

**For detailed meeting information, go to**

**<http://cwcmtdiablowriters.wordpress.com>**

The California Writer's Club (CWC) shall foster professionalism in writing, promote networking of writers with the writing community, mentor new writers, and provide the literary support for writers and the writing community as is appropriate through education and leadership. All items in this newsletter are the opinions of the author(s) and do not in any way represent the views or official position of CWC.