

The Write News



A Monthly Newsletter

December 2013

The California Writers Club-Mount Diablo Branch

Saturday, December 14, 2013

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON with THREE OF OUR OWN

Ann Damaschino, Lyn Roberts & Elisabeth Tuck



present

"Why Editing is Essential to Writing"

Learn:

- **Why writers need editors**
- **Different kinds of editing**
- **What writers can learn**
- **What editors don't do**

Ann Damaschino, a former technical editor for Shell Oil and academic editor for the Acalanes school district is currently publicity chair for the Mt. Diablo Branch.

Lyn Roberts gained versatile experience writing and editing for a local newspaper, a design firm, a documentary film company, a local college and a forensic engineering firm. She now works primarily with fiction writers as an independent literary editor.

Elisabeth Tuck was raised by a grammar fanatic, read assiduously, and has edited informally all her life. She came to professional editing after years as a social worker then a computer programmer/project manager and more than a dozen years in writing classes.

Sign-in begins at 11:15 at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Our short, general meeting starts at noon, followed by a festive seated lunch, then the presentation. \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Contact Robin at ragig@aol.com or leave a message at: 925-933-9670 for reservations. **Please remember to place your order with Robin for salmon, chicken parmesan, NY steak or vegetarian pasta.**

President's Message

By Elisabeth Tuck



By the time you read this I hope you'll have had an enjoyable Thanksgiving get together with friends and/or family. Our meeting this month is our festive, seated meal with choice of salmon, chicken parmesan, NY steak, or vegetarian pasta. Let Robin know your preference when you sign up. **Our member authors should bring the books they've written for sale.** December's a great time to pick up a fellow writer's book as a gift or as a guilty pleasure for yourself! If we don't support each other, who will support us?

For December, the board decided that some of the people ancillary to writing should speak up, so members who edit will cover "Why Editing is Essential to Writing." Ann Damaschino, our publicist, Lyn Roberts, our newsletter editor, and I are deeply devoted to exposition, story, grammar, words, and all manner of clear expression. We correct the TV, newspapers, and radio every chance we get! And we feel strongly that writing well is important—and that all of us need professional editing.

Come enjoy the Mt. Diablo branch of the California Writers Club, chat with friends, make new friends, learn, and share during our December meeting.

BRING YOUR BOOKS TO SELL

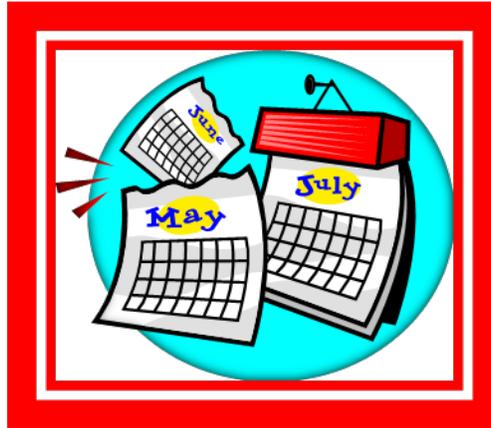
Let's support each other's achievements
Share your stories, sell your books and find the perfect gift

In this Issue:

<i>President's Message – Elisabeth Tuck</i>	<i>Above</i>
<i>Member Profile – Beth Grimm</i>	<i>Page 4</i>
<i>News and Salutes</i>	<i>Page 5</i>
<i>Submissions to the Newsletter</i>	<i>Page 6</i>
<i>Do's and Don'ts of a Query Letter</i>	<i>Page 7,8</i>
<i>Young Writer's Contest Donations</i>	<i>Page 11</i>

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 the \$20 or \$25 no-show payment.

ACTIVITY CALENDAR FOR UPCOMING EVENTS



Dec 14	Board Meeting 10 – 11 am at Zio Fraedos. Members invited.
Dec 14	Monthly meeting with Three of Our Own Editors. Also Member Book Sales
Jan 11	Workshop led by Marilyn Atlas. Check-in at 8:30 am.
Jan 11	Board Meeting 1:15 – 2:15 pm. Members invited.
Feb 1	Young Writers Workshop at Walnut Creek Library
Feb 8	Board Meeting 10 – 11 am at Zio Fraedos. Members invited.
Feb 8	Monthly meeting with speaker Janice de Jesus
Mar 8	Workshop – subject to be announced

Thanks to Barbara Bentley for creating this graphic of upcoming events. This might get our attention!

HUMOR AWARD

A NEW CATEGORY FOR THE YOUNG WRITERS CONTEST

Have you been to a class reunion? It doesn't take long before people are relating "remember when?" stories and sharing laughter. Middle school kids have a host of challenges as they learn to cope with growing up in today's world.

The local, national and worldwide news organizations live by the old adage "Bad news sells." Because students' writing can reflect the dismal things they experience and observe, Lee Paulson, and his wife Janet, wanted to encourage students to think about the funny things that happen, create a smile and tell a humorous story. To that end, they have donated a financial grant to CWC Mt. Diablo Branch, Young Writers Contest. This annual Humorous Story Award will provide a tangible reward for student writers.

Middle schoolers will now be able to submit a short story, essay or poem in the special humor category and one of these pieces **will receive a \$75 award.**

Member Profile: **Beth Grimm**



Beth Grimm - In her own words:

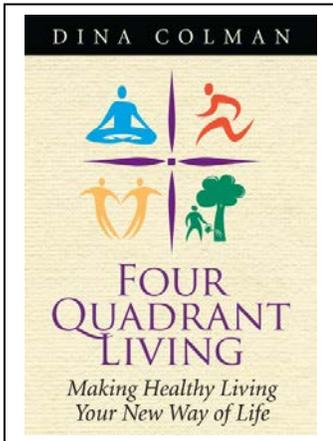
I am a writer. I wasn't sure of that until I was an adult. Non-fiction is my genre, writing about real life things, no added dramatization needed. Writing has become one of my greatest treasures in life.

I write stories about marriage, divorce, raising children (tot to teen), attending night school, rebellion, trying to fit in, recovering from life-threatening illness, and losing loved ones. I have shared these with writing groups in the Concord area. Because I am hovering around retirement age, I find it important to focus also on my work-related articles, Q and A, and finding solutions for people who can't afford a personal attorney.

I also continue to write about personal struggles and successes, and combine writing with photography which is another of my passions. I have two adult children and five grandchildren with whom I try to spend as much time as possible, and still work about half time. For me, I find that time for writing can be carved out if priorities are set. I often write in the evenings – beats TV.

Writing is fun for me. For work-related articles, I take liberties I could not take in a courtroom. Through social media I can reach masses of people with helpful articles about problems and solutions. I've written three books—two are self-published and one is by Sourcebooks, a publishing company in New York. "Finding the Key to Your Castle: was my first book written specifically to help everyone understand what they get when they buy in a homeowners association (HOA). The title is a slight jab at the "my home is my castle and I can do what I want to" mentality and how that affects neighbors. My book "The Condo Owners Answer Book" is a hands-on for people who live, or are trying to decide to live, in an HOA peacefully. I've written hundreds of published articles, about 40 "Primers" and have two blogs and a monthly E-newsletter with a circulation of over 4,000, all of which deal with finding humor, solutions, or ways to effect change. "Plain English" is my first language - many say it is a breath of fresh air coming from an attorney. I am a writer. After all, if writers don't use their special knowledge, experience and insight to help others, who will?

Member Events, News and Salutes



Dina Colman, MA, MBA, the founder of Four Quadrant Living, is a health coach and nutritionist.

Her book [*Four Quadrant Living: Making Healthy Living Your New Way of Life*](#) has achieved the status of the top 100 on Amazon's list. It is now available in paperback and as an eBook



Susan Pace-Koch's *Get Out Books* series is teaming up with the Benicia Education Foundation in fundraising for the Benicia Schools.

"**A Pie for a Pig**" will be part of the "**Parade of Pigs 4 Kids 2013-14**" helping to support computer technology and libraries.

Get Out Books will be at the **Walnut Creek Historical Society** for the 31st **Annual Christmas Holiday Faire** and Christmas Tea

November 30-December 15th, 10 am – 4 pm
Stop in for a lovely holiday tea treats and some early holiday gift browsing, with 'vetted' crafters. Children's picture books will be on sale to support the WCHS.

“THANKS FOR SHOPPING INDIES”

Following the success of the first “**Thanks for Shopping Indie**” campaign in 2012, more booksellers have signed up to participate this year, bringing the number to over 400. The campaign begins on Nov. 30, Small Business Saturday. No coincidence – that's also when authors will report to work at bookstores around the country for Indies First, the Sherman Alexie brainchild that's grown into a full-fledged movement.

This presents an excellent opportunity for **CWC** branches to join a publicized project that helps keep booksellers profitable and authors gainfully employed. Consider calling on your local indie to see if they plan to participate on November 30 and after, and what you can do to work with them.

Bear in mind that the campaign starts on November first but does not end then. One way or another, it gives you an opening to partner with your local indie bookstore.

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES
and
SUBMISSIONS to the NEWSLETTER

Note from the editor: We often receive ideas for submissions that would be fun or enriching for our members. Let's make the newsletter more participatory. Below are ideas of ways to do just that. Get inspired – get involved and send your submissions to Lyn Roberts, newsletter editor at editingonline@astound.net. We look forward to seeing your name in the January newsletter

From our Writers' Market columnist – Lynn Goodwin

Send us your most treasured writer's milestone: In 100 words or less, share a milestone in your writing life. It might be an eventful turning point, or a class, or a book you have read. Send your milestone along with your name and e-mail.

Lynn is conducting a research project based on your thoughts and submissions. We look forward to seeing the results soon!

From Al Garroto

Submit a paragraph (or two) entitled: "**What's In a Title?**"- tell us how you chose the title of your book and how you arrived at the title, and what you refer to or mean in relationship to the story/nonfiction concept .

(This would enhance your 'curb appeal' when marketing your book!)

Reprint from Writer's Digest

Written by Brian A. Klems

January 30, 2013

(Our thanks to Judith Marshall for submitting this article for our members.)

Dos and Don'ts of Writing a Query Letter

Learning [how to write](#) a must-read query letter is nearly as important as writing a must-read manuscript—after all, an enticing query letter is what will get an agent to say, “Love your story. Send me the full manuscript.”

While query letters vary a little depending on who the agent is (and their guidelines) and what type of book you're writing (novel, nonfiction, poetry, etc.), there are many elements that remain the same. That's why I've developed this list of dos and don'ts to help you navigate what's really important to include in your pitch and, also, what should be avoided at all costs. By sticking to these 10 specific dos and don'ts of writing a query letter, you'll give yourself the best opportunity to find success and land an agent. Good luck!

When Writing a Query Letter Do ...

Address the agent by name. When sending query letters to an agent, you always want to use his or her name. Generic letters addressed to “To Whom it May Concern” or “Dear Literary Agent” are much less likely to connect with someone at an agency. By using an agent's name, you not only personalize your message but also show you've done a little research—and agents take writers who do research a little more seriously than writers who do not. Just make sure you spell the agent's name correctly.

Cut right to the chase. Don't waste the opening paragraph of your query letter introducing yourself. Save that for later. Much like a book, you want to hook that agent with your first sentence. The best way to do that is to introduce the hook of your manuscript right away.

Sell your manuscript. The summary of your book will ultimately make or break your chances of landing the agent. Write this section the same way you would write the copy that would appear on the back of the book jacket—one or two paragraphs that sell the heart and soul of your book. Remember, this is the most important part of your query. Spend the most time on it. (Looking for a professional editor to tell you if your summary is strong enough? I recommend a [2nd Draft Query Critique](#).)

Explain why you've chosen to query this specific agent. When salespeople go out to make a sale, they attempt to learn everything they can about a client before making their pitch. The more you know, the more likely you are to target the right person and find success. When pitching to an agent, it's important you know a little bit about that agent—namely, what other books they represent. In your query, be sure to mention one or two of these books and briefly explain why you think your book is a good fit in that group. (NOTE: If your book isn't similar in genre or scope to others the agent represents, you're likely pitching to the wrong agent.)

Mention your platform (if you have one). Have a blog that gets 20,000 pageviews a month? Mention it. Speak at writing conferences 10 or more times a year? Mention it. Have a Twitter following of more than 30,000 followers? Mention it. Basically, having a platform can only enhance your opportunity to reach an audience of readers—which enhances your opportunity to sell books. If an agent knows you have the resources to reach an audience on your own, it

makes you a more attractive client. And if you don't have a platform, don't worry (and don't mention it). But consider starting to build a platform now. (Here is a great resource on everything you need to [build your writer platform](#).)

Study other successful query letters. Thousands of others have found success when querying agents. No need to reinvent the felt-tipped pen. Spend time studying actual [query letter examples](#) that other writers—many of whom had no previous writing credits or platform—have used to land their literary agents. Here are several [query letter examples](#) that may help.

When Writing a Query Letter Don't ...

Be arrogant. Never say anything in your query like “my manuscript is a bestseller in the making” or “you'd be lucky to represent my book.” (You laugh, but some people do this.) Save all bragging until the end, and even then it should be focused on meaningful writing credits and authoritative credentials (the final “don't” on the list covers this).

Include your age. There is no real upside to this. In fact, it often can create unintentional bias and make it more difficult for you to sell your book.

Tell agents that you value their time. I learned this from my agent, Tina Wexler. Many writers waste a sentence or two in their query explaining that *they know how busy the agent is* and that they *value their time*. There's no need for this, as agents are well aware of how busy they are. More important, though, is that this is wasted space in your query that could be used to give more information about (and sell the idea of) your manuscript.

Include writing credits that aren't meaningful. Unless you've had books published through a publishing house before or have had work appear in something prestigious, like *The New Yorker*, it's best to not say anything. Just stick to selling your story and your concept. Now, if you have other non-writing credentials that are valuable—such as you're writing a nonfiction book on financial planning and you've spent 15 years working as a financial planner at a major financial firm—you want to mention that. Anything that makes you an authority on your topic is worth noting.

Call For Volunteers

Would You Like To Be A Volunteer For Your Writers Club?

Would you not want to further the mission of our writers club? Our mission, as defined on our statewide club website is: *“Educating writers of all abilities in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work”*. Sounds like a good plan to me. Our writers club runs smoothly, thanks to our talented and dedicated volunteers. Our board members are volunteers, our program chairs are volunteers, and all the other people who assist with various projects and tasks are volunteers. We hope you will be our next volunteer.

2014 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 today's young Contra Costa County middle school students who like to write by honoring the great California writers of the past. Please consider joining one of the following donor clubs. 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 donors to the Young Writers Contest from July 1, 2012, to September 1, 2013.

<p>Foundation Donors</p> <p><i>The Leroe Family Foundation</i></p>	<p>The Gertrude Atherton Guild</p> <p><i>Lee Paulson Gary and Lilly Gwilliam Karen Terhune</i></p>
<p>The John Muir Member Club</p> <p>The Mary Austin Writers Club</p> <p><i>David George Ron Shoop – Random House</i></p>	<p>The Ina Coolbrith Laureate Club</p> <p><i>Danard Emanuelson</i></p>

~ 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

Please consider joining a Donor Club in support of our Annual Young Writers Contest which awards cash prizes for excellence in the following categories: short story, poetry, essay/personal narrative. Winners are notified in May and presented with their awards at a luncheon at a local restaurant. All program expenses are supported by individual donations and grants.

Your gift furthers our mission to identify and reward excellence among Contra Costa County middle school students and enables our club to continue and to expand our outreach to young writers. Your gift is fully tax deductible. Thank you to all our members who generously donated to the 2013 Young Writers Contest.

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



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

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 Holiday Luncheon with 'Three of our Own'
is December 14, 2013 at 11:30 am, 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.