It’s Lucky 13 for the FOB

By Allene Symons, Long Beach Branch

Boasting a prime booth location at the L.A. Times Festival of Books, the California Writers Club is again poised to make a strong showing the weekend of April 26 and 27, when the festival returns to the beautiful grounds of the UCLA campus.

In a new twist this year, CWC plans to highlight the educational mission of our nonprofit organization.

Under the canopy of booth 619, which overlooks a green plaza with 100-year-old trees, CWC’s member-volunteers greet visitors and distribute a brochure listing all CWC branches with contact information.

Members’ book covers on display at the CWC booth at last year’s festival.

If you live in or plan to visit Southern California at the end of April, it’s fun to volunteer at the busy CWC booth. You’ll meet other CWC members, interact with the public, and be amazed how quickly time flies. Two volunteers are needed at our booth for two-hour shifts beginning each day at 9 a.m. To volunteer please contact Cyndy Largenticha, cyndycat1234@aol.com

The blue and gold colors of the festival provide the exterior theme. Decorations inside CWC’s booth include a large, laminated copy of the CWC logo and a half dozen trifold displays showing covers of books written by CWC members. Book covers from authors representing all branches are welcome. See sidebar below for details.

Our booth is a standard size with one draped table, so unfortunately we have limited space. We do not sell any items at the festival, nor do we promote individual writers other than as part of the group cover display (in other words, we do not display

Guidelines for Submitting Your Book Cover for Display

- Book covers submitted for display should be the exact size of the actual book cover.
- If possible, submit the actual dust jacket or paperback cover.
- Also acceptable: quality color copy on glossy paper.
- Book covers must be submitted by mail.
- E-mail attachments will not be accepted.
- Mail your cover(s) to:
  Allene Symons
  2373 N. Flower St.
  Santa Ana, CA 92706.
When your favorite writers’ hangout – coffeeshouse, bookstore, A.A. meeting – experiences a drop in attendance on weeknights during the spring months, it can only mean one thing.

JOYCE’S VOICE

By Joyce Krieg
Central Coast Branch

It’s okay. I, too, have fallen under the spell of the amateur vocal talent contest. There’s just something subversively seductive about the combination of train wrecks and true talent, the drama unfolding before our eyes on live, coast-to-coast television, that sucks us in and holds us hostage week after week.

And you know what? I don’t think we have anything to feel guilty about. For those of us whose calling is to make up stories for the masses (in other words, writers of popular fiction), hit TV programs aren’t just Frank Lloyd Wright’s “chewing gum for the eyes,” they’re an important research tool.

Yes, research. I mean, if we’re going to craft stories that accurately and authentically reflect our place and time in history, we’ve got to have some understanding of the themes and dreams that resonate so strongly in our collective psyche. Why did we turn The Da Vinci Code into a mega-seller? What’s up with our endless fascination with Britney Spears? And what is it about American Idol?

Imagine you’re a screenwriting pro like James Dalessandro or a plot expert along the lines of Martha Alderson, and you’re taking apart and analyzing Idol: a poor-but-plucky heroine or hero leaves the village (ever notice how the finalists all seem to come from one jerkwater hamlet or another?) to seek her fortune in the wide world. She has challenges to overcome (the audition, Hollywood week), a dragon or two to slay (snarky bloggers, backstabbing fellow contestants, Simon Cowell), until she finally stands alone in victory, holding high the prize, accepting the adulation of all, even the foes she just vanquished. The End. Distilled to its essence, Idol isn’t just a television program; it’s an epic adventure, a story as old as time itself.

Now, let’s see if we can borrow some of those themes to make our own stories richer and more compelling.

After all, isn’t this what we writers are doing every time we approach an agent at a conference, send a poem to The New Yorker, or enter a short story contest? Seems to me, we’re behaving exactly like those American Idol contestants, putting ourselves out there in a literary talent search, scrambling for the grand prize of a publishing contract.

So, like, when are they going to give us a TV show?

Sue Tasker: 1960 – 2008

By Kathy Urban, Tri-Valley Branch

Sue is mourning the loss of Tri-Valley founder Sue Tasker, who died unexpectedly on February 3.

Sue’s passion for travel and history lead her writing journey, and inspired her to pursue the idea of starting a writers group in the Pleasanton-Livermore area.

From the nugget of an idea and a fledgling group two-and-a-half years ago, the Tri-Valley branch has grown to over 50 members. As a charter member of the group and its first president, Sue poured her heart and soul into the organization. The seeds she sowed years ago are in full bloom, and our speakers regularly comment on the energetic enthusiasm they find among our members. They are impressed with our knowledge, and they often comment that our branch is “known” for its innovative programs and its warm, welcoming manner.

Sue displayed an endless passion and drive for the Tri-Valley branch in her two years as president and most recently as vice president and program chair. As we move forward with our programs and continue to forge friendships with other members, we will always remember Sue and the gratitude we owe her for making our writing lives so much richer. Her generous heart and giving spirit will always live on in the wonderful club we have today. Sue once described creating the Tri-Valley branch as “quite a thrilling ride” for her, but it is the branch members who have been thrilled to be along for the ride.

Her loss leaves a legacy to be admired and respected by all. Her selection as the club’s first Jack London Award winner establishes a standard of performance and leadership to be admired by all.
Festival, Centennial and More: CWC Moves Forward

For the fourth year in a row, Allene Symons has taken on the leadership role for CWC’s presence at the L.A. Times Festival of Books. This year’s event is April 26 and 27 on the UCLA campus. This is an event where CWC has a booth and displays the front covers from published authors who are members of CWC. In addition, attendees have an opportunity to sign up for contact regarding membership in CWC.

This is quite an event where usually 70,000 people attend each day. Every part of the writing world attends from every area of the country. Publishers, agents, publicists, writers, and readers – you name it. This is the only event of this kind that CWC sponsors with our membership dues. The booth always requires volunteers to fulfill the role of volunteer coordinator. Contact her at cyndycat1234@aol.com and plan to spend an enjoyable day at the festival.

Please read Allene’s article on Page 1, which is full of information as to how you can receive exposure for your books, no matter where you live in California.

At the October meeting of the Central Board of the California Writers Club, the board voted to make 2009 the official Centennial Celebration for their organization. This is no small accomplishment, an organization (generally all volunteer) that has been in existence for over 100 years.

In fact it is unique in a country that prides itself on a tradition of citizens getting together for a common interest or cause. The most outstanding fact about our celebration is that CWC is the oldest continuously meeting writers organization in America.

It all started when some a group of journalists began meeting in the Bay Area for lunch about 1904. There purpose was merely to assist each other as they pursued the art of writing. Eventually several of them split off to pursue a more formalized approach of assisting each other in their personal development and the publication of their manuscripts. In the mix, sometime and somewhere, Jack London was involved.

In and around 1909, according to our in-house historian Dave Sawle of the Berkeley branch, the group began to adopt all the trappings of formalized meetings and record-keeping.

The rest is history – as they say. Now it’s time to begin preparations for our glorious celebration. With the consensus support of the Central Board, I have appointed Donna McCrohan Rosenthal (East Sierra branch) chairperson of the event. We all need to help her to make this a successful event for all our members, past and present.

Other members of the Central Board are busy working on expense reimbursement policies, updating the Policy and Procedures of CWC, standards and guidelines for the admission of new branches, rules and guidelines for the Central Board to do business on the Internet, new systems to make our Web site more of an interactive vehicle for the Central Board – whew!!

I have to arise earlier in the morning just to keep up to this bunch of dedicated writers.

Join in and help – we can always use an extra head of words, ideas, and solutions.


Death has claimed long-time CWC member Dorothy K. Dowdell. Mrs. Dowdell was involved with CWC for some 40 years, serving as president of the Sacramento branch in 1953. She was also president of the Berkeley branch, and according to the collection of her friends and relatives, was involved in the Peninsula and South Bay branches during their formative years. She organized a national writers conference at Stanford University in 1977, and was a recipient of the CWC Jack London Award in recognition of her outstanding service to the organization.

Mrs. Dowdell was the author of 27 books, many of them romances and historical novels, seven of them in collaboration with her husband, the late Dr. Joseph Dowdell. She also penned numerous articles and short stories.

A scholarship in Mrs. Dowdell’s honor has been established at Sacramento City College.
Draft Minutes of the Jan. 20, 2008, Central Board Meeting

Note: The following are draft minutes, subject to correction, revision, and final approval by the Central Board at the May 4, 2008, meeting. Due to space limitation, some agenda items have been summarized.

Representatives present: Berkeley: Dave Sawle; Central Coast: Joyce Krieg; East Sierra: Casey Wilson; High Desert: Barbara Schultz; Inland Empire: Cyndy Largarticha; Long Beach: Allene Symons; Marin: Barbara Truax; Mount Diablo: David George; Orange County: Carol Celeste; Peninsula: Ann Foster; Redwood: absent; Sacramento: La Rhonda Bowen (no proxy); San Fernando Valley: Scott Sonders; South Bay: Ro Davis (proxy); Tri-Valley: Kathy Urban; West Valley: Dave Wetterberg; Writers of Kern: Sandy Moffett

Also present: Anthony Folcarelli, CWC President; Donna McChrohan-Rosenthal, East Sierra

Approval of Minutes:
The minutes of October 21, 2007, were approved with one minor correction.

Treasurer’s Report:
Barbara Truax presented a second quarter summary report dated October 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007. Wells Fargo checking account balance as of 12-31-07 is $40,168.85. An overview of state treasurer’s duties was presented. The treasurer’s report was approved by unanimous vote.

Motion: To authorize the treasurer to transfer the CWC checking account monies into an interest bearing account as soon as possible. Moved by David George; seconded by Sandy Moffitt. Passed unanimously.

Executive Committee:
President Anthony Folcarelli informed the Board that CWC’s insurance coverage with Jay-Marie Garcia Insurance agency is defined as non-profit. Mr. Folcarelli read a prepared statement regarding the omission of a fourth signature on the Wells Fargo account, that of the vice president. Secretary Cyndy Largarticha volunteered to facilitate the process of resolving that issue.

Membership Report:
As of December 31, 2007, we have 1,107 members.

Policies and Procedures:
The Central Board approved a variety of changes in the Policies and Procedures for greater clarity and/or to reflect how the organization actually does conduct its business.

Section II. ORGANIZATION, B. Unless otherwise stated in this document or the bylaws, the Central Board conducts the corporate business in accordance with a majority vote or the representatives present at duly called meetings. Moved by Casey Wilson; seconded by Barbara Truax. Passed unanimously.

Section II. ORGANIZATION, B. Unless otherwise stated in this document or the corporate bylaws a quorum consists of half of the duly appointed branch representatives or their proxies. Moved by Casey Wilson; seconded by Barbara Truax. Passed unanimously.

Section II. ORGANIZATION, B. Unless otherwise stated in this document or the corporate bylaws a quorum consists of half of the duly appointed branch representatives or their proxies. Moved by Casey Wilson; seconded by Barbara Truax.


VIII. COMMITTEES: Various changes were made to the duties and structure of the Standing Committees.

Conducting business via the Internet:
Joyce Krieg presented a topic overview including advantages and disadvantages of conducting business via e-mail, chat room, or electronic bulletin board, as well as a proposed addition to the P&Ps outlining parameters of conducting business via electronic meetings. Ro Davis, CWC webmaster, presented a detailed visual of the proposed bulletin board website.

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Write About What You Don’t Know

The sages tell us to write about what we know. That is good advice—providing you don’t mind treading in a rut. I will admit that my first published article was about electronic technology back in the late 60s and that technology was my career for almost forty years.

Today, several hundred magazine and newspaper articles later, the majority of my writing has been on subjects about which I started with little or no knowledge.

I have never jumped out of an airplane but I sold an article about skydiving. I’m not a doctor but several of my articles on medical themes have appeared in magazines. I have a private pilot’s license, but that hardly qualified me to write a front-page story about the crash of a Marine Corps Harrier jet for the local newspaper.

I had already contacted the guy who had bought that airplane in Poland along with two others of the same model and gotten his permission to write about his airplane. While I was waiting for the magazine editor to give me the go-ahead assignment, I depleted the local library branch’s stash of Soviet airplane references.

This was all happening in the pre-Google era. When the assignment came in, and it became apparent that I still didn’t know enough to write a good article, I made a deal with an undergrad student to be my research assistant. For a percentage of the payment for the article, he sent me a two-foot stack of information gleaned from the university’s archives. Much of the material was in public domain and permission for using the rest was acquired with a simple promise of attribution.

By the way, the share of the payment that I gave to my research assistant was recouped by selling an article to Writers Digest about how to get a research assistant.

somewhere in your writing career, you must step into a different pair of shoes and write about what you don’t know. The worst thing that can happen is you get a rejection letter. If you don’t have a drawer full of those, you are not submitting enough.

When I sent a query letter to Wings magazine and told them a Soviet built MiG-21 fighter was sitting on the tarmac at a nearby airport, all I knew was that it was an enemy jet fighter. By the time the 2,500-word article and 15 photographs went to print—including the cover photo—I was an expert on fighters built by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

I had previously outlined an article about skydiving, but that hardly qualified me to write a front-page story about the crash of a Marine Corps Harrier jet for the local newspaper.

THIS ‘N’ THAT

By Casey Wilson
East Sierra Branch

L.A. Times/UCLA Festival of Books:
Chair Allene Symons will formulate an educational mission statement as well as organize displays and sign-up sheets. The Festival of Books is April 26 & 27, 2008.

Centennial Celebration:
Donna McCrohan-Rosenthal was appointed by unanimous approval to coordinate a CB Representative handbook.

Proposed CWC Anthology:
David George reported that Igal Levy of Mt. Diablo needs volunteers to aid in the production of a club-wide literary anthology. Reps are asked to inquire within their branches for possible volunteers.

CWC History Project:
Berkeley rep Dave Sawle presented an impressive rough draft including branch histories and archived photos and documents. All branches should have their branch histories submitted by March 15, 2008.

Old Business:
The motion concerning proportional voting was withdrawn via South Bay proxy Ro Davis.

New business:
Joyce Krieg was appointed Nominations Chair by unanimous approval.

Carol Celeste was appointed as Expense Reimbursement Policy Chair by unanimous approval.

Donna McCrohan-Rosenthal was appointed as Member Benefits chair by unanimous approval.

Barbara Truax was appointed by unanimous approval to coordinate a CB Representative handbook.

Tabled business:
The following agenda items were discussed and tabled until the next meeting:


2. Tabled: Change in P&Ps article XXII: ROSTER, C, which authorizes the distribution of the CWC roster to the general membership.

Adjournment at 3:28 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Cyndy Largarticha, Secretary
**Central Coast**

President Ken Jones reminds us that we’re all surrounded by characters and for the writer, the more unpredictable and quirkiest, the more fortunate we are. “Few of us would stay with a book populated by one dimensional, uninteresting characters who drift through the story without making waves or forcing issues... if the characters in your life are peculiar, sharp at the edges, and sometimes difficult, consider yourself lucky. They’re what it’s all about.”

*Scribbles – Joyce Krieg, Editor*

**East Sierra (Ridge Writers)**

Member Allison Aubin was brave enough to participate in the grueling NaNoWriMo novel-writing marathon this past November, and discovered several helpful online tools for increasing her productivity. Evernote (www.evernote.com) organizes material like plot points and character tags. If you ever get so engrossed in your writing that you forget to feed the cat – or yourself – a free downloadable timer is available at www.spacejock.com. To reduce distractions, blank out your desktop with software/distraction/lifehacker-code-dropcloth-windows-24574.php). Allison says, “Looking at that black screen creates some kind of mental barrier between me and my ‘quick’ game of 35 rounds of Solitaire.”

*Writers of the Purple Sage – Liz Babcock, Editor*

**High Desert**

“Don’t start with the lead – the initial sentence or paragraph,” guest speaker Stuart Kellogg told High Desert members at a recent meeting. “You will fall in love with your own cleverness.” He explained how he starts with the “nut,” the crux of the story, and then works outward, finally achieving a lead paragraph and an ending, closure.

*Ink Slingers – Barbara Bailey, Editor*

**Inland Empire**

“Face it – you can’t write.” How’s that for a discouraging rejection letter! Columnist Mike Foley knows of a writer who did, indeed, receive just such a rejection. He continued to submit, and eventually landed an agent and a publishing deal. Mike’s advice: “Recommit to the idea of writing, the idea that you and your work are valuable. If nothing else, recognize that at this very moment, you’re reading a column about writing. So you’re a writer. Face it.”

*Fresh Ink – Laura Slattery, Editor*

**Long Beach**

The year-old Long Beach branch meets in the spacious community room of a neighborhood library, where — thanks to a recent bequest — the library now owns a state-of-the-art digital projector and a new overhead screen. It just happens that our next author-speaker asked if the branch had access to such equipment, and he accepted our invitation when we said yes. Now our branch can offer future speakers an option that keeps pace with changing and increasingly visual times. It also gives our members a chance to hone a speech and add a graphic presentation, as did one of our members recently, an architect who has written a memoir. As we continue to attract both new and younger members, the opportunity to use the library’s digital projector should enhance our chances of staying current and shaping an exciting speakers’ calendar.

*Aliene Symons, President*

**Marin**

When was the last time you diagrammed a sentence? The Marin branch wants to make sure all of its members have basic literary skills by offering a series of mini-classes 45 minutes before the start of their regular Sunday afternoon meetings. Led by retired English teacher and past branch president Mary Jane Essex, the topics include grammar, structure and vocabulary, historical accuracy, and — yes — how to diagram a sentence. Sister Emily would be so proud!

*Marin Writes – Jett Walker, Editor*

**Mt. Diablo**

Members of Mt. Diablo and neighboring Tri-Valley are reminded of a tremendous branch resource – the online message board, the Back Fence. Coordinator Julie Dowling says, “Here you can interact with more than fifty other Mt. Diablo and Tri-Valley CWC members every day, not just at our monthly meetings. You can form a critique group, seek feedback on a story idea, post details on a local literary event, query other members about carpooling to a conference, and share your writing successes (or frustrations).” Check it out at www.groups.yahoo.com/group/cwecbackfence.

*The Write News – Catherine Accardi, Editor*

**Orange County**

The opportunity to write comes in many forms, as President Carol Celeste discovered when she was called upon to write a commentary about her late mother for a celebration of life. “The task seems daunting. Yet, as a writer, it occurs to me that there is a market for this type of writing. Not everyone with a loved one has the skill to express feelings and memories in an articulate manner... no event is beyond the reach of a writer.”

*Orange Ink – Ro Woodruff, Editor*

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Branching Out
continued from page 6

Peninsula

Peninsula has launched an ambitious series of monthly workshops for middle school writers on Friday afternoons at the Burlingame Public Library. Using volunteers from within the organization, Peninsula is offering workshops to young writers on such topics as Brainstorming, Revision and Proofreading, and Publishing World 101. This program offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for members, ranging from helping an individual student revise his manuscript, to reading and discussing a published work.

The Peninsula Writer – Linda Okerlund, Editor

Redwood

Redwood is on fire – but in a good way. President Karen Batchelor says, “This passion has pushed us forward – another anthology (2008), the third annual Youth Writing contest, RWC-sponsored book readings every two months, and a series of four consecutive editing workshops. We’ve warmed up to the challenges. In fact, it looks like we are on fire.”

The Redwood Writer – R.K. Koslowsky, Editor

Sacramento

Sacramento’s Nonfiction Network recently heard a presentation by freelance journalist Richard Langtree who had this advice: Become familiar with a wide variety of newspapers and magazines. Pick up copies and research their particular field(s). Write articles that editors might want for publication. Then call an editor and tell him you are interested in writing for his newspaper or magazine. Enthusiasm is important!

Write On – Julie Bauer, Editor

San Fernando Valley

Literary agent Ashley Grayson recently assured San Fernando Valley members that despite all the gloomy news about the future of book publishing, he is still optimistic that new writers can get published. Mr. Grayson advised SFV members to create a “Can-Do” list, a compendium of activities that we are willing to do for money or other rewards – PG-rated, of course! Valley Scribe reporter Kelly Jungersmith said the presentation “lifted spirits and made us believe publishing was again within our reach.”

The Valley Scribe – George Hirai, Editor

South Bay

We hear a lot about creative nonfiction these days, but what, exactly, is it? Contributing Editor Lita Kurth defines it as essays and memoirs that use fiction techniques such as plotting and backstory, remembered conversations set on the page as dialogue, sensory details, vivid descriptions of setting, metaphors, and novelistic structures. And it is 100 percent factual. “Creative nonfiction is telling the truth,” Lita says. “Scrupulously but beautifully and often after painstaking research.”

Writers Talk – Dick Amyx, Editor

Tri-Valley

Writers are always looking for good critique groups. Tri-Valley met that challenge by turning the February meeting into one big critique session. Members brought four copies of a manuscript (maximum five double-spaced pages). At the meeting, members divided themselves into genre-specific groups to read and comment on the manuscripts. After a designated time, they mixed up the groups to give members a chance to receive feedback from readers outside their genre. As an added incentive, the Pleasanton Poetry and Prose Festival is right around the corner, and it includes a writing contest!

Write Around the Valley – Kathy Urban, Editor

West Valley

Comedy acting coach Paul Ryan challenged West Valley members at the January meeting to participate, react, and think about the benefits of a positive, healthy lifestyle. “Writers need energy: physically, mentally and spiritually,” he said. Among other exercises, he had members stand, breathe, and project positive thoughts. His personal philosophy – laugh when possible, question the status quo, turn stress into positive energy, banish those negative vibes, and keep writing and submitting.

In Focus – William E. Hitchins, Editor

Writers of Kern

President Carol Black has a suggestion for describing characters in fiction – use the indirect approach. “You don’t always have to hit the reader over the head with a character’s physical attributes. An effective technique for subtly describing one character is divulging information about him/her through the viewpoints and actions of another. A mother telling her child not to stare at a certain person tells us plenty about the character without having to describe that he has terrible burn scars.”

The Write Way – Marty Gorsching, Editor

CWC Member Benefits

Heyday Books
20% discount on all California Legacy titles. Phone 510/549-3564 ext 304; e-mail orders@heydaybooks.com. Details on titles and prices are available at www.heydaybooks.com.

Dollar Rent a Car
Corporate discounts when booking online at www.dollar.com, or through a travel agency, or by calling 800/800-4000. Use CD # TA2253.

Bay Tree Publishers
30% discount on all titles. Call 510/526-2916 or visit www.baytreepublish.com and identify yourself as a CWC member.

Dramatica Pro Software
Discounts on this popular screenwriting software are available by ordering through www.storymind.com. CWC members get a $5 discount off the already-low price. Use coupon code DISCOUNTBONUS and enter CWC in the comment box.

Tallfellow Press
20% discount on titles in the “10 Minutes to Success” series. Visit www.tallfellow.com for details on titles and prices. To order, phone Claudia at 310/203-3837 and identify yourself as a CWC member.

Disclaimer: These offers are made for the benefit and convenience of California Writers Club members, and do not represent an endorsement of, or recommendation by, the CWC Central Board.
Central Coast Writers Spring Contest

What: Short story and poetry contest.
Who: Sponsored by Central Coast branch of CWC, open to all.
Theme: Open.
Deadline: March 31, 2008.
Entry Fee: $15 per short story, $5 per poem.
Prizes: $250 in each category and publication in the Hartnell College Homestead Review.
For more information: www.centralcoastwriters.org.

Portia Steele Award for Poetry and Prose

What: Writing contest in memory of Portia Steele, long-time member of the Peninsula branch.
Who: Open to women over age 50.
Theme: Open.
Prizes: $100 prose, $100 for poetry.
Entry fee: None.
Deadline: April 15, 2008.
For more information: http://portiasteeleaward.org

Sacramento Limerick Contest Reminder

The deadline is March 31 for Sacramento’s limerick and poetry contest. $50 first prize for limericks, $100 for poetry. See the January-February issue of The Bulletin for details, or go to www.sacramento-writers.org.

Pleasanton Poetry, Prose and Arts Festival

What: Major weekend festival with heavy emphasis on the literary arts.
Who: Peninsula branch member Martha Alderson is one of the workshop presenters. A number of members of the Tri-Valley branch are involved in this event, which is sponsored by the Pleasanton Cultural Arts Council.
When: April 5 and 6, 2008
Where: Pleasanton Senior Center, 5353 Sunol Boulevard, Pleasanton
Cost: Varies, many events are free and open to the public.
For more information: www.pleasantonarts.org

East of Eden is Coming!

Reserve the weekend of September 5, 6 and 7 for the 2008 East of Eden Writers Conference in Salinas, sponsored by the South Bay branch. In 2006, headliner Jean Auel said this was the best conference she’d ever been to, and many other attendees agreed. Subscribe to the conference mailing list by sending an e-mail message to: eoe-list-subscribe@southbaywriters.com.