New Year’s Advice from Agent, Sharlene Martin

Sharlene Martin recently joined the SFV Branch, so I questioned her about her many hats as Agent, Writer and Promoter. Her agency has been in existence for over seven years and she is still at it, but now with a difference. Sharlene has her own book (Amazon.com) and workshops to sell.

Because an article she wrote for Writer’s Digest received such a huge response, they approached her to write “the book” about Nonfiction writing. She agreed only if she could co-author with her husband author, Anthony Flacco.

She sent me a sample of her book in Pdf format and the first thing that jumped off the page was the phrase “Simply put: How badly do you want it?” That rang so true with me. It takes a massive force to get your behind in the chair and write. I’m so glad she took the time.

“I asked Sharlene what advice she would give to writers submitting to her company and she said, “My strongest advice on how to approach my agency is precisely the same as my advice on how to approach any literary representative – READ THEIR SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS. Nearly every agent in the business has a website where they explain exactly how they want to be contacted and what specific types of material they will consider. Just do as they suggest. You would be amazed at how many smart and educated people cannot get that simple concept into their heads.”

What can a new writer expect in way of advances from the publisher? “An excellent book by a skilled writer with a solid platform often commands good six-figure advances.” Sharlene has represented a number of those. All advances are down, in our current economy. She never puts a specific figure to any prospective book advance though, because “each and every book presents unique strong and weak points. Each carries its own marketing formula.”

Find out more visit: www.MartinLiteraryManagement.com or www.anthonyflacco.com

For those of you with questions about effective queries, solid book proposals, and writing non-fiction, meet Sharlene Martin at the CWC, South Bay Branch, East of Eden Conference this fall. www.southbaywriters.com

- Carol Wood

“Simply put: How badly do you want it?”

Top New Year Writer Resolutions!

1. Sit in chair and write!
2. Listen to your muse.
3. Write a little each day.
4. Make a set time to write.
5. Increase time in chair!
6. Reduce the noise and enhance the signal
7. Every day. No matter what.
8. Stick to ONE project!
9. Keep it real
10. Submit MORE!
**Editor’s Note:**

Hey Members! You have a new editor for the Bulletin. That would be me, Carol Wood. Joyce Krieg has finally taken time off for good behavior and allowed me the pleasure of filling her shoes.

I will be... different. Just as each editor has changed the Bulletin, I will too, but..... I’m open to your suggestions, prose, poetry, interviews (between branches), branch news, articles of nonfiction or your famous quotes. (How do they become famous? They get read in the Bulletin!) Please send me your advice (as if I could stop you.) Anyone who has been the editor of a writer publication knows that you instantly get a group of editors that is equal to the distribution. Considering how many members we have now, which I think tips over a thousand across the state, this should be interesting.

Judy Presnall, author of twenty-three books, has graciously offered to proof each copy so I at least know that we are in very good hands to start. But don’t be afraid to send me a note and let me know how I’m doing. I’m happy to hear from all of you.

You can see that I wrote the article for the front page. Hopefully this will be the last time I write any article for the Bulletin. Travel followed by ill health made my production time reduce to a few days, so in the absence of submissions, you have to read my writing. PLEASE SUBMIT to CWCBulletin@calwriters.org! I really want fresh writing, previously unpublished. All “Branch news” goes to Lenora Smalley so that she can compact it into the one and a half B-News pages. (In future, that could expand—digital has less restriction on space as there is no additional printing fees).

When I think of CWC I remember the first time someone approached me and asked for encouragement. This dazed looking woman said, “I think I want to write.” In my head I said, “Wow! This is a real baby writer.” I told her about a writing class I was taking. She went on to win National awards for her writing and published a journal of writing for the college where she received her MFA. You never know who you are talking to or who you are encouraging at CWC. Remember to be kind to the new writer and the, uh, new editor.

If you do not want the Bulletin via snail mail and want to encourage the publication to grow larger, or want to help CWC save the postage and printing fees, let me know via email at CWCBulletin@calwriters.org. Think of it as your good deed for the day.

Keep submitting!

CW

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“You can’t wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.”

- CWC founding member, Jack London
Sail ON!
Conferences Calling

If you haven’t attended a conference lately, you aren’t doing justice to your craft. I’m not talking here about one or two hour workshops. I’m talking about the two or three day epics with loads of different workshops, panels, speakers..., the kit and caboodle.

Almost all conferences include opportunities to meet with and pitch to agents, editors and publishers. It isn’t unusual for more than one conference attendee to collect a book deal at a well-operated conference.

It is true that ninety percent of our writing takes place while hiding in some quiet space. Getting away from the keyboard for a couple days is a good way to clear the cobwebs while enriching your writing skills.

Picking a conference can be a tricky prospect. If the conference hype doesn’t include workshops and topics to match your writing goals, look at the next one. Some of the best conferences have Night Owl sessions. A lot of those are sessions with well-published authors willing to sit down with groups and just yak about writing — informal structures are the norm.

Night Owl events are one good reason to spend the night as close to the conference as you can, even if it means spending a few extra bucks. All the good multi-day conferences make deals with local hotels for special rates.

Don’t think about brown bagging if lunches and/or dinners are offered. And don’t plan on sitting with your pals. These are great opportunities to meet other writers and share experiences.

I read an interesting article in Entrepreneur Magazine not long ago about business cards. The author’s advice was to never gratuitously offer your card to someone. After remembering the myriad times I’ve dumped a pocket of unsolicited business cards in the waste basket without looking at them, I have to agree with the premise. If someone is interested in following up with you, they’ll ask for your card. Just make sure you have some.

We’ve got some excellent conferences planned within our California Writers Club community — mark them on your calendar to improve your writing skills.

By Casey Wilson
CWC President

President’s Message

CWC Board Meeting Highlights
By Secretary, Carol Celeste

Highlights from the November 8, 2009, CWC Central Board Annual meeting.

Pam Tallman received her Jack London Award during a lunch ceremony. The Ina Coolbrith Award was presented to Joyce Krieg of Central Coast for her dedication and contributions to CWC statewide and her work on The Bulletin.

- CWC received from the US Patent and Office a certificate of registration of Service Mark for the logo, name and CWC.
- A balanced budget is forecast.
- CWC has 1077 paid members.
- CWC’s status as a 501 (c) (3) still does not appear in IRS Publication 78. If it does not appear in the next edition, due in January, professional help will be sought to resolve the problem.
- The Central Board will pay for club pin rockers for those becoming life members during the centennial period. There are 17 to date.
- Carol Wood of San Fernando Valley will be asked to become The Bulletin editor.
- The Re-organization committee presented a summary of recommended changes and received approval to continue with specifics leading to a vote. No changes have been made.
- CWC joined Friends of Joaquin Miller Park (in Oakland), and presented a plaque for display at the home of this CWC founder.
- The anthology project has a new editor, Kelly Harrison of South Bay, who is to receive all materials by December 15 and develop a plan for publication.
- CWC will participate in the Festival of Books in 2010, paying $650 of the total fee. Orange County, Long Beach, Inland Empire and possibly San Fernando Valley branches will split the remainder.
- Linda Brown of Berkeley wants to continue with the CWC history but needs help in forming a plan for putting it on state and branch Web sites. Volunteers sought.
San Fernando Valley Branch

The San Fernando Valley Branch is excited about their upcoming speakers’ list: Dan Poynter, Self-Publishing Guru, presented a 2-hour seminar on 1-16-10. Burt Prelutsky, Author/TV Writer/Interviewer of Legends & Luminaries on 2-20-10. 3-20-10 Jennifer Haymore, Author, who will tell us all we want to know about E-Publishing. Count on a Poet for 4-17-10 since it’s Poetry Month. Members from all branches are welcome to attend our meetings and network with us. Guests are also welcome (fee $5.00). www.CWC-SFV.com

Bakersfield Branch

Writers of Kern celebrated its annual Christmas party at the Rocket Shop Café. Members read short pieces of their own writing and enjoyed the delicious meal and conversation. Our January meeting will feature Mark Bagby, a Mark Twain interpreter who has played the American writer for almost twenty years. Bagby got his start in the serendipitous confluence of being cast as Twain in a local production and winning a Twain writing contest. www.writersofkern.com

Central Coast Branch

Central Coast is in the judging phase of its annual poetry and short story contest. First place winners will receive $500 each in their respective categories, plus publication in the Hartnell College literary magazine Homestead Review. Due to the size of the cash prize, and the fact that Central Coast advertises the contest in Poets and Writers, the annual contest generates a great deal of interest in the worldwide writing community. Central Coast has received entries from 37 states, plus Italy. Winners, selected by Hartnell College faculty, will be announced in April. In other Central Coast news, recent speakers in 2010 have or will include: Magnus Torén, director of the Henry Miller Library in Big Sur; actor and screenwriter Alec Murdock, whose talk is entitled "Story Structure: From Zero to Hollywood in One Hour"; Dr. Andrie Aleinikov, author of MegaCreativity, who will discuss techniques to wake up your writing genius; and Kemble Scott, whose first novel, SoMa, hit the San Francisco bestseller lists largely due to a series of videos that he posted on www.YouTube.com. http://centralcoastwriters.org

High Desert Branch

The Apple Valley Branch had over 400% increase in 2009 (from 14 members to 60), and with 6 more new members at our January meeting, we’re off to a great start for 2010. How?

Line up quality speakers and then let the folks know about it. Last year, the HD CWC Board members met several writers at a book signing event at our local Barnes & Noble. We “signed them up” for 2010 guest speaking commitments. This led to a public Reading Festival consisting of our members reading their work at the Barnes & Noble store. (One of the stories by Harold Meza has since been published in an anthology honoring veterans.) At the same time, we advertised our existence with flyers, business cards and brochures.

The Town of Apple Valley cooperated with the HD CWC by issuing a proclamation honoring the third week of October as writers’ week. We plan to have an all-day writers “Howl At The Moon” conference September 25, 2010. We’re looking at putting an anthology together using our members’ works, and planning to sponsor more youth activities and contests as we go through the year.

The year 2009 was so great, we’re planning “more of the same” for 2010! http://hdwc.org

Long Beach Branch

The new year began auspiciously for the Long Beach Branch, which celebrated its third anniversary in January. The first good sign came in the form of a telephone call from a Long Beach Magazine reporter. She interviewed branch members about LB CWC for an upcoming article. January also marked the launch of the official newsletter, Long Beach Currents. So far branch information has been disseminated monthly to members as email text, but with new layout options and graphical enhancements at our fingertips (though it’s not as easy as it looks), plans are underway to add features, photos, and expand from one page to three or four pages by 2011. The first issue was distributed as hard copy, but members (and other CWC branch reps) will start receiving Long Beach Currents as a PDF in February.

The new calendar of speakers began with book industry and ghostwriting expert Claudia Suzanne and her apt title “Publishing Options and Realities 2010.” With its timely news peg, the meeting announcement was picked up by two local newspapers, which brought many new faces and packed our meeting -- not a bad way to start the new year. www.calwriterslongbeach.org

Marin Branch

Marin Branch celebrated its ten year anniversary and association with Book Passage in Corte Madera along with the CWC Centennial Celebration.

On October 18th, Marin hosted a unique celebration at Book Passage, You Know They Can Write but Can They Sing? Fourteen SF Bay Area authors treated over 150 people to a songfest featuring Los Train Wreck, an offshoot of the Rock Bottom Remainders featuring original RBR members Kathi Kamen Goldmark and Dave Barry. Peter Beren, Tony Broadent, David Corbett, Deborah Grabien, David Harris, Ivory Madison, Janis Cooke Newman, Brenda Novak, Suzanne Pari, Ransom Stephens, and Wendy Nelson Tokunaga were joined by Marin’s Patricia Volonakis Davis, Tanya Egan Gibson and Sheldon Siegel and Redwood’s Gil Mansergh.

It was a stellar event with music, great food, wine donated by Bonny Doon winery, agent appointments and more. Guests met their favorite authors, the authors signed books, the four agents kept busy, and networking was the word of the day.

By the end of the event, David Corbett’s rendition of Wooly Bully had everyone dancing in the aisles. (Los Train Wreck plays monthly at the El Rio in San Francisco — every 2nd Tues.) (cont.p5)
Marin Branch members set up displays of California authors in Marin County libraries during September and October. The branch is working on a County resolution and a public library event with other writing organizations to support libraries for October 2010.

www.cwcmarinwriters.com

Redwood Branch

Winter Workshops and Manuscript Deadlines: A Time to Write, Revise and Publish!

Redwood will hold its 3rd annual Craft of Writing Workshops, a series of three sessions on consecutive Saturday mornings: Jan 23 & 30, Feb 6 in Petaluma. (Register on our website.) These workshops support and prepare our members to write and edit their manuscripts to meet a March 1st deadline for: Poetry Contest (open to public), our 5th annual anthology (Vintage Voices) submissions and our 3rd annual Unlimited Publishing co-publishing project submissions (Redwood members only). Also there is a location change: Redwood’s next general meeting Feb. 21 will be held at the Flamingo Hotel in Santa Rosa.

www.redwoodwriters.org

Mount Diablo Branch

The Mount Diablo Branch has launched a new community outreach initiative embraced by the board. We have assigned member liaisons to each local bookstore in central Contra Costa County. With their blessing, each bookstore will be featured in our newsletters and on our web site. Their initiatives and events will be publicized, without any remuneration. In return, we will ask the bookstores who agree to cooperate with us to increase their promotion of our local author/member books.

The 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. Contest submissions are free and must be received on or before April 14, 2010. Winners are notified in May and awards are presented at a luncheon on Saturday, May 15, 2010. All expenses are supported by individual donations and grants.

www.mtdiablowriters.org

Tri-Valley Branch

Tri-Valley Branch started the Centennial Year with a renewed commitment to promoting local writers. We recently updated our website www.trivalleywriters.org to include a members’ blog. We are challenging each member to contribute at least once during the year. We also have a revamped members’ page with personal and professional information as well as links to members’ blogs, websites, and publications.

Tri-Valley is also continuing with our Literary Evenings, a time for local writers to read their works to the public at Towne Center Books in downtown Pleasanton. Readings have included many genres such as poetry and children’s lit, and the event is capped with a wonderful sampling of hors d’oeuvres and desserts.

Berkeley Branch

The CWC branches in Northern California helped celebrate Jack London’s birthday at JL Square in Oakland on Jan. 9. (Jack’s birthday is actually Jan. 12, 1876). Heinold’s First and Last Chance Saloon served cupcakes on Tuesday, his actual birthday.

Nancy Curteman from the new, Centennial Branch, the Fremont Area Writers, read excerpts from a number of Jack London’s works and delighted the many age groups—students from a local high school, members representing the United Nations and ROTC, and CWC members. The Redwood Chapter and the Berkeley Branch provided displays on upcoming events and displayed all four of the CWC’s West Winds.

Lucille Belluci, author of five published works, announced the 24th annual Fifth Grade Writing Contest — deadline March 15.

Linda Brown represents the statewide CWC on the Friends of Joaquin Miller Park. The Friends are planning an event, in partnership with CWC and other Park supporters to draw attention to the rich natural legacy of the 550-acre park where Joaquin Miller lived and Jack London and his literary friends gathered for conversations, theatrical productions, and discussions of their work. The event is tentatively scheduled for Saturday April 24.

www.cwc-berkeley.com

East Sierra Branch

We have speakers lined up through May, plus a few special programs on non-meeting nights. We’re particularly proud that playwright/actor Kathrine Bates will perform scenes from “Evil Legacy,” her acclaimed one-woman show about Lucrezia Borgia, on January 28th. We’ve invited the public and admission is free. In February, a group of us will attend the Dickens Festival in Riverside and catch up with Paul Jacques, who spoke to our group last year and who portrays the man of the hour, Charles Dickens. We’ve also begun work on a desert-themed anthology that we’ll use as learning opportunity for exploring the intricacies of self-publishing, e-marketing and the new world of publishing.

www.ridgenet.net/~curtadan/ridgewriters/RidgeWriters.html

Sacramento Branch

The CWC was honored by the Asian Week Foundation on November 18, 2009, for their participation in the 5th Annual Asian Heritage Street Celebration (AHSC) in San Francisco on May 16, 2009, and support of the AHSC School Raffle Program.

On behalf of CWC, Dale King accepted a $250 award plus certificates from AsianWeek Foundation, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, California Legislature Assembly, and California State Board of Equalization.

Participating in the AHSC, from Sacramento and SF/Peninsula branches, were authors Frances Kakugawa, Teresa LeYung Ryan, and Kiyo Sato, along with Dale King, Elliotte Mao, and Margie Yee Webb. Sacramento, SF/Peninsula, Berkeley, and Redwood branches donated books and CWC tote bags for the school raffle.

www.sacramento-writers.org

Freemont Area Writers Branch

http://cwc-fremontareawriters.org

Inland Empire Branch

www.angelfire.com/amiga/iecwc/index.html

Orange County Branch

www.calwritersorangecounty.org

San Francisco/Peninsula Branch

www.cwc-peninsula.org

South Bay Writers Branch

www.southbaywriters.com

West Valley Branch

http://cwcwestvalley.org

Please submit Branch News to Lenora Smalley at BranchNews@CalWriters.org
Trials and Tribulations of Self-Publishing a Novel
- by Roberta Smith, Apple Valley Branch

I used to think I wanted to be a screenwriter. But after writing five screenplays and getting nowhere with them, I decided to turn one of my screenplays into a novel. So that's what I did and after a zillion rewrites and having a lot of people read it for input, I believed in it enough to seek an agent and a publisher. But I had a dilemma. When you aren't 'somebody' and don't have the writing credits to prove you're book worthy, how do you get a publisher to take a chance? My solution was to self-publish.

In January of 2008 I used Lulu to publish my novel, The Secret of Lucianne Dove. There were positives to my decision. The first? It happened. My book was in print. I could hold it in my hand and feel good. The second? It didn't cost much. With Lulu you pay by ordering copies of the book and as the author your cost is less than what others pay. You have to order a copy of the book to proof it and approve it before Lulu will publish it. After that, it is pay as you buy.

Your cost is set by Lulu, but you decide what you want your creator revenue/royalty to be. Your cost, plus your creator revenue, plus 20% of the creator revenue as payment to Lulu, sets the retail price of the book. If you stick with Lulu as your marketplace, you can keep your revenue per book at a decent level while maintaining a competitive retail price. If you opt to buy the global distribution package, your book gets offered by online book sellers worldwide, but to keep the reasonable retail price, your royalty drops significantly. You won't know where your book is being purchased and you won't know if every sale is really being reported. All of this is a negative. I did it and would not do it again.

Once your book is available, it is up to you to publicize it. This was actually fun for me. I created a postcard to announce the availability of my book and mailed cards to friends, family and acquaintances. This generated some sales and I heard back from people I hadn't touched base with in a while which was great. I got a lot of positive feedback from those who read my book. Many told me how they passed it on to friends to read. Hmm, the idea is to tell others you liked it so much they should buy it. Oh, well.

I wrote publicity pieces and tried to get them in newspapers. The editor of the community page of my local paper told me she would print my piece, but did not. The paper of the city where I grew up did not respond. My book is set in Virginia City, Nevada, and the paper for that community did print my announcement. I also got a publicity photo in my college alumni magazine.

I created a website for my book (www.bertabooks.com). I joined Google's AdWords to direct people to my site. It works! I placed an ad in Nevada Magazine. It was expensive and did not generate sales. I did book signings.

My first book signing was done in connection with the bookstore in Virginia City over Memorial Day weekend. A month earlier I had mailed six copies to the bookstore and was pleased to see that all but one copy had sold — at above the retail price, no less. It was a cold rainy day and my book signing took place in front of the bookstore from eleven in the morning until four in the afternoon. I sold only five books that day, but it was fun to talk about my novel to the tourists.

My most successful book signing was at Barnes and Noble on a Tuesday evening from five to seven. Two weeks prior to the event I brought a dozen books to the store and seven of them sold just from being on display. I sold twenty-four copies at the event and had one stolen. Imagine that. Someone wanted my book enough to steal a copy.

I'm glad I've had the experience of self-publishing a book. Even if I did not make anybody's best seller list, I do have a novel out there in the world. People ask me all the time when my next book will come out (it's written) and they want to know what happened to some of my characters. Sales come in dribs and drabs and every once in a while I hear from someone who enjoyed reading it. I got an e-mail from a stranger in Pennsylvania who told me she was a fan. I have a fan! What could be better than that?
Cindy A. Pavlinac is the 2009 Jack London Award recipient for Marin branch and represents the adage, “A branch is only as great as its volunteers.” A charter member of Marin Branch, Cindy has served as Vice President and program chair, the most time consuming job in any branch. She has served on many committees, including two highly successful conferences and the October 18, 2009 Marin Centennial Event at Book Passage in Corte Madera. She has taken on branch publicity, including website development, Marin Writes! newsletter and networking with other branches and other writing organizations, developing data bases and contacts.

Cindy was instrumental in creating five critique groups and has advised potential, new and current members on professional presentation. She is a valuable branch resource, reaching out to writers everywhere — at meetings, conferences, and through her presentations.

Cindy’s photography graces the Marin branch website. Her work has appeared in over 700 publications and won numerous awards. With her Power of Place multimedia productions (with original music by husband Marty Gregory), Mystical Britain, American Southwest Spirit and Labyrinths of Spirit & Grace, she strives to bridge the ancient with the modern and to inspire people through images, words, music, and performance.

Winning is important to me, but what brings me real joy is the experience of being fully engaged in whatever I’m doing.

- Phil Jackson/ Sacred Hoops

The California Writers Club, with its comprehensive display of member book covers, is sure to stand out again this year at the LA Times Festival of Books. Hundreds of organizations participate, but few can claim a 100-year legacy like ours.

The Festival takes place on the UCLA campus the weekend of April 24-25. Founded in 1995, this is the largest book festival in the nation, drawing 130,000 visitors each year with its colorful booths, food, and more than 100 indoor speaker and panel sessions.

To be included in the CWC book cover display, members with published books are invited to send a glossy color photocopy in the actual size (or an original cover) of their book or books with a limit of two covers. These must be in hard copy, not submitted digitally, and received by April 1 at the mailing address below.

Here are guidelines for those who wish to be included in the cover display:

- Since the display is cumulative, please do not send a duplicate of any cover you have sent in the past. If you have previously submitted the maximum of two covers and wish to substitute a different one, then include a note indicating which cover the new one should replace.

Please send covers by April 1 to Allene Symons, 2373 N. Flower St., Santa Ana, CA 92706. If you have questions about book cover submission, email questions to asymons@earthlink.net

Our booth is staffed by CWC volunteers working two-hour shifts. Most are from Southern California branches, although all CWC members are welcome to attend the festival. If you wish to volunteer at the CWC booth contact Cyndy Largarticha at cyndycat1234@aol.com. Cyndy coordinates the volunteer calendar to be sure all time periods are covered (Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.).

The basic duties for a volunteer include talking about CWC as an organization (not promoting books or services of individual members), and pointing out a visitor’s nearest branch by using a map on display and a brochure with meeting and contact information for all CWC branches — then encouraging the visitor to attend a CWC meeting or visit a website.

For anyone wishing to attend the Festival for the first time, this is what you need to know: Free tickets to indoor panel and speaker sessions should be obtained in advance through Ticketmaster, either online or at a Ticketmaster outlet (a limited number of tickets are available same day on campus). Parking is $9 per day. The session-specific free tickets become available a week before (starting Monday, April 19, according to the website).

For more information, updates and campus maps, see www.latimes.com/extras/festivalofbooks To Mapquest directions to UCLA, the address is UCLA 405 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024.
Peek inside Mosaic: A Collection of Short Stories on Amazon.com. Ten talented writers will enthral you with tales that piece together like a MOSAIC. Published by www.OmegaPublications.net.

Colleen Rae of the Marin Branch of CWC has published her debut novel, Mohave Mambo with Wordrunner Press of Petaluma, California. It was released in October 2009. She has scheduled a series of book readings in the Western Michigan area at book stores, libraries and shops. More information and copies of the book can be ordered at: www.colleenraesnovels.com.

Full Sail: A 21st Century Spiritual Cruise On Board The Mayflower by Sacramento Branch member and Mayflower descendant, Beverly Pierce Stroebel, was released September 2009 by VMI Publishers. Available at bookstores, online, or by contacting beverlystroebel@sbcglobal.net.

CWC ads are submitted to Sandy Moffet $20 for 30 words and $40 for 60 words. Ads must be related to the field of writing. Contact Sandy at adrep@CalWriters.org