



Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch

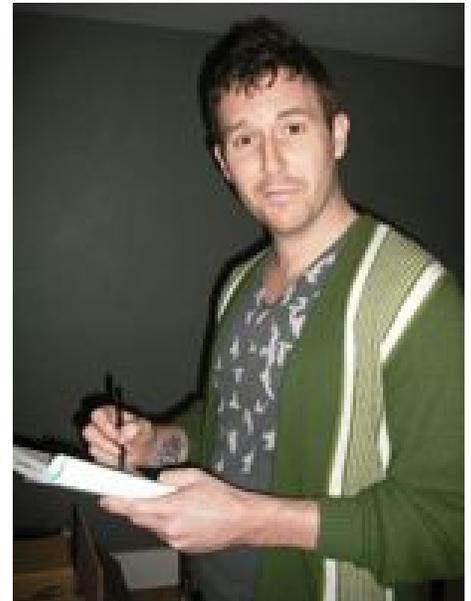
centralcoastwriters.org

January 2016

January 19 Speaker Joshua Mohr

JOSHUA MOHR will talk about how to dig deep down into your characters and your plot to get to the very DNA of your story! The best plots spring from the characters themselves. The more we as writers realize that characters are sovereign beings with independent consciousnesses, the better prepared we are to traverse what Joshua Mohr calls “placterization” — the causality between plot and character.

Joshua Mohr is the author of five novels, including *Damascus*, which *The New York Times* called “Beat-poet cool.” He’s also written *Fight Song* and *Some Things that Meant the World to Me*, one of *O Magazine’s* Top 10 reads of 2009 and a *San Francisco Chronicle* best-seller, as well as *Termite Parade*, an Editors’ Choice on *The New York Times* Best Seller List. His novel *All This Life* was recently published by Counterpoint/Soft Skull.



Coming on February 16

Brooke Warner: Publishing’s New Middle Ground

You know about traditional publishing and self-publishing, but what’s going on in the space in between? Hear from hybrid publisher BROOKE WARNER of [She Writes Press](http://SheWritesPress.com) as she explains the options, and gives us her take on the future of publishing.

Brooke Warner is publisher of She Writes Press, president of Warner Coaching, Inc., and author of *What’s Your Book?* and *How to Sell Your Memoir*, and the co-author of *Breaking Ground on Your Memoir*. Brooke’s expertise is in traditional and new publishing.

WHAT’S INSIDE

Announcements	4
As the Pen Flows	7
CCW President’s Letter	2
Contests and Conferences	9
Holidays in the Highlands!	3
If the Shoe Fits	10
In Memoriam	5
Member Profile	6
The Last Word	11
The Poetry Corner	8



CCW President's Letter

By Laurie Sheehan

2016

December 31st sees an old year slink away, filled with remembrances – likely some good and some less than good. January 1st opens the door, and a new year enters, softly approaching as the poet's cat – quietly and filled with yet untold secrets. One year; 366 days, as 2016 is a Leap Year. How will you use them?

A New Year is a blank page, filled with promise and potential and... a little fear, for mixed with any resolution is the potential to fail. I sometimes forget that "failure" is a word I often define for myself. It's times such as these that I like to remember an old Italian proverb "*Il meglio è nemico del bene.*" Literally translated it means "the best is enemy of the good." It reminds me that success can often be measured in the trying, in just doing one's best, and best doesn't have to equal perfect.

A few years ago on New Year's Eve, I decided that I would make a different sort of resolution. Instead of the traditional, rigid promises of betterment, I picked a few simple words to serve as my resolutions. Words that I could use to guide my everyday life, to remind me to keep trying, to keep doing my best. It went pretty well, and this New Year's Eve, I'll repeat the drill with the following words: Grace, Kindness, Patience, and Simplicity. Is there any situation that wouldn't be well served by a liberal application of those sentiments?

I've read that our reactions to experiences might have the power to alter our circumstances. Wouldn't that be something – if by being nicer to others we could make our own lives better? This idea aligns well with the topic of our first speaker of the new year. On January 19th Joshua Mohr will talk to us about what he calls "Plaracterization," the inescapable notion that no story can exist without the intertwining of plot and character. Maybe by adding a little grace and kindness to my own character, I'll change my plot for the better? It's certainly worth a try.

So, we bid farewell to 2015, and I wish you all a joyous 2016 filled with grace, kindness, patience and simplicity. Keep doing your best, and find joy in your efforts.

Until we meet again, happy writing!

Laurie

Central Coast Writers Annual December Potluck Holidays in the Highlands



Members and their guests enjoyed the afternoon in this very special Tudor manor house in the Carmel Highlands! We can't thank our Vice President Sharon Tucker and Melvin Kaplan/The Harry Singer Foundation enough for allowing us access to this beautiful venue for our December potluck. Applause to Bill Minor, who underscored the good time with his wonderful romantic and holiday tunes on the keyboard.



Announcements

Member Congratulations!

Patricia Hamilton was profiled in the December 25th Carmel Pine Cone, featured in the “[Great Lives](#)” [column](#) (scroll down to page 25A). The column goes into extensive detail as to how Patricia started her publishing company and kept it going all these years by helping people turn their dreams of a published book into a reality.

Elizabeth Strout to Speak in the South Bay

Elizabeth Strout is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Olive Kitteridge*, as well as *The Burgess Boys*, a New York Times bestseller; *Abide with Me*, a national bestseller; and *Amy and Isabelle*. Don't miss this opportunity to hear her read from her latest novel, *My Name is Lucy Barton*. (submitted by Diana Y. Paul)

Tuesday, January 19, 2016 - 7:30pm

Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park, CA 94025

keplers.com/event/premier-event-elizabeth-strout; Tickets: \$40 with book; \$20 for event only.

Networking Aloud: A Writers Open Mike

Next meeting: Tuesday, January 12, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (2nd Tuesdays of the month)

Where: OLD CAPITOL BOOKS – 559 Tyler St., Monterey, CA 93940

Submitted monthly by Pat Hanson

Our free monthly event is open to the public **every second Tuesday: NETWORKING ALOUD: A WRITERS OPEN MIKE**. Come early & sign up for a five-to-seven minute reading from any genre: prose, screenplay, poetry, or essay, following 15 minutes from a featured published reader. We applaud one another; no critique allowed.

January 12th will feature **Martha Graham-Waldon**, a Santa Cruz writer and activist who is the author of the memoir, *Nothing Like Normal: Surviving a Sibling's Schizophrenia*. After an idyllic childhood, she witnessed her sister's downward spiral into schizophrenia as they both journeyed through adolescence. Her struggle to survive and move forward on a journey of self-discovery will resonate with anyone who has known the heartbreak of mental illness in their family, while inspiring hope and healing as well. nothinglikenormal.com.

On February 9th regular reader and playwright **Carol Marquart** asks for your help in reading selections from her new staged reading. You pick the part from [Mark Twain and the Wild Wild West, 1863-1868](#). It includes dramatizations of the best of Mark Twain's stories about California from his book *Roughing It*. Instead of a sing-a-long, this is a read-a-long. Her first staged reading will be at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History on Saturday, February 20, at 2:00 p.m.

On March 8th, **Leslie Patiño** will read from *The Brewer's Justice*, her novel to be released in February. Leslie's weekly blog on craft beer topics, “Not My Father's Beer,” is at LesliePatinoAuthor.com/blog. Direct questions to Pat Hanson at 831-601-9195 or co-emcee Janice Rocke at 831-521-0375.

Advertising Opportunities Available in the California Writers Club Bulletin

In February, 2016, Central Coast Writers' parent organization, California Writers Club, will send out the first electronic *CWC Bulletin*. The deadline for submitting advertising is January 29, 2016. This is a way for CWC members, authors, and guest speakers to reach a large target audience of nearly 2,000 writers in a state-wide publication. The cost is very reasonable: Just \$35 for a 2x3.5 business card size ad; a 3x5 index card size for just \$60, and a 5x7 for \$90. Full details are on <http://calwriters.org/advertising-in-the-bulletin/>. So if you have a book or writing service to promote, hesitate no longer! The Bulletin is an extraordinary way to get the word out to others with an interest in writing.

“Where Does My Raffle Money Go?”

By Publicity Chair Leslie Patiño and Secretary Joyce Krieg

Back when CCW was born in 2002, our club was so small and money so tight that the club had to conduct monthly door prize drawings just to pay for the speaker’s dinner. As our numbers and our treasury grew, we’re now able to easily feed the speaker and also offer overnight accommodations, gas money, and, at times, an honorarium. Most long-time members will agree this ability to bring in speakers from the Bay Area and beyond has vastly improved the caliber and credibility of our presenters.

And yet, the monthly door prize drawing continues. Why? Partly because it’s popular — most of our members seem to enjoy the chance to win a prize — partly because the drawing is one of our long-standing traditions, and partly because it’s a steady stream of income that can be set aside for special purposes beyond the day-to-day running of the club.

About a year ago, the Executive Committee began discussions on appropriate ways to use this money. Over the past several months, The two of us have worked with Webmaster Ken Jones and President Laurie Sheehan, as well as consulted with local teachers and other California Writers Club branches.

The result is CCW’s first-ever short story contest for Monterey County high school students. Submissions will be accepted during the month of February, with judging in March and the announcement of the winners on or around April 1. Thanks to those of you who have purchased raffle tickets, we’re able to award a total of \$1,000 in prize money to the winners.

In Memoriam



Dr. Vanessa Smith, 1962-2015

In December, member Dr. Vanessa Smith passed away. She served as secretary and as president of CCW for a short time. Michelle Smith interviewed Vanessa in 2014. Some reflections follow.

On her way to becoming a head and neck cancer surgeon, Vanessa completed her pre-med requirements at San Francisco State University and spent her residency at the Cleveland Clinic. Her genres included memoir and fiction, and she vacillated between writing a memoir about becoming a surgeon and a comic novel about medicine.

Reflecting on her medical and writing careers, Vanessa stated, “Becoming the kind of head and neck surgeon I wanted to be didn’t allow for anything else in my life. And I had a young son I adored, plus all those books I wanted to read and, hopefully, even write.”

At the interview’s conclusion, Michelle asked Vanessa if there was anything else she wanted to share with fellow CCW members. She replied, “The love of my life is my son, Max, who wrote a story about a dog on the Titanic that still tops most of my work. The other thing is that when I found CCW, I found an organization I’d been longing for my whole life. I’m so happy and proud to be a member.”



“Murder, Mayhem and Memoir”

Lenore Genovese Perez

Life hasn't exactly been peachy-keen for Lenore Genovese Perez. In fact, it's been downright horrific at times given the series of tragedies she's contended with since 1994 when her parents succumbed to murder/suicide. Unfortunately, Lenore's misfortune did not end with the death of her parents. In 1999, her first husband shot himself with two guns "to assure the outcome." Eleven months later, her sister died at age fifty-four from ovarian cancer. In 2012, her brother passed away under suspicious circumstances. So it's understandable when Lenore says, "I've got to get these feelings out, or I'm going to internally combust."

On a positive note, Lenore aspires to be a prolific writer, and, whenever her schedule permits, she takes time to work on her memoir, usually from her couch and in the company of her cat. "My writing schedule is not consistent," she states. "I wish I could wipe everything else off the slate to clear a time and place to write." Though she'd like to have written more, Lenore has had "Letters to the Editor" published, and a short story of hers appeared in *Cedar Street Times*. In addition, she writes poetry, which she first attempted back in high school when she found the experience less than gratifying. "I got ridiculed for my prose, and I had no positive reinforcement," Lenore recalls, adding that affirmation for her memoir "has [also] come up nil."

Her series of devastating family losses notwithstanding, Lenore's roots on the Monterey Peninsula encompass a more lighthearted time when she worked in the tourism industry. "My most interesting job was working for an amphibious bus based on Wave Street in Monterey," she remembers. "I sold tickets and worked the snack bar, and when the narrator for the bus didn't show up, I'd jump on and do my own rendition of how I've seen Cannery Row evolve in my lifetime."

As part of her quest to find a supportive environment comprised of kindred spirits, Lenore attended CCW meetings as a guest for several years before becoming a bona fide member three years ago. Through her writing and our CCW community, perhaps Lenore will find the positive reinforcement she desires and evolve from the darkness that has permeated the last twenty years of her life. Capturing her life's story in the pages of a memoir should prove to be a therapeutic means towards that evolution.

Michelle Smith's articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Her website is <http://theebonyquill.com>.



Some Thoughts About Our November Speaker

By Joyce Krieg

This story came to me third-hand, so take it with the proverbial grain of salt — or a low-sodium substitute of your choice.

Supposedly this happened at the November CCW meeting, the one where literary agent Andy Ross was the guest speaker. Those of you who were at the meeting may recall that Mr. Ross was — how shall I put this? — a bit harsh when it comes to today's traditional publishing scene and our chances of landing an agent and book deal. "Brutally honest" is how I'd sum up his message.

After the meeting, as we were all gathering up our coats and what was left of our egos and preparing to leave, one of the non-member guests apparently announced to anyone within hearing distance, "Well, that's it. I'm going to give up on my novel." Or so I've been told.

When this anecdote made its way to my ears, my first thought was, "How sad!"

If you, too, left the November meeting feeling as if all is lost, ready to give up, all I can say is — don't!

Don't let one guy destroy your dream. Because that's all he is — one guy. Yeah, he wears the title of literary agent and possesses an insider's knowledge of the publishing industry. He's right — it ain't pretty. But in the end, he's still just one guy.

When I first started writing fiction some 20 years ago, I admit I was pretty cocky at first. How hard could it be? Then I went to a conference — can't remember exactly when or where, some hotel up in the Bay Area, the usual panels of editors and agents — and came away more than a little chastened. OK, it really is that hard. But instead of deciding to give up, I figuratively beat my fists on my desk and vowed that, like Winston Churchill, I would "never give in — never, never, never, never."

A few years later, I landed a three-book deal with St. Martin's Press. If I can do it...

For years, I had a quote from the movie *A League of Their Own* taped to the top of my computer monitor. It's still one of my all-time favorite lines from the movies. When Geena Davis complains to her coach about how "hard" baseball is, Tom Hanks responds with, "It's supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great."

True for professional athletes, and equally true for professional writers.

Joyce Carol Oates



Born on January 16, 1938, Joyce Carol Oates loved to read and especially loved to write at a very early age. She grew up on a farm. After graduation she attended Syracuse University on a scholarship where she graduated valedictorian. Oates went on to receive a Master's degree from the University of Wisconsin. In 1961, she married the love of her life, Raymond Smith. After her marriage, she became a prolific writer.

Her works include several short story collections, such as *By the North Gate* written in 1963. In 1966, she published "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," a short story that she dedicated to Bob Dylan after listening to his song, "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue."

In 1967, *A Garden of Earthly Delights*, the first novel of the Wonderland Quartet, was published by Vanguard. In 2006, she published *Landfill*, based on the true story of the death of John A. Fiocco Jr., a New Jersey college student.

The London Times selected as Oates' best work *On Boxing, Black Water, and High Lonesome: New and Selected Stories*. Oates won two O. Henry Awards, the National Book Award for Fiction, the Pushcart Prize, the National Humanities Medal, and was selected for Oprah's Book Club.

Two art forms meet

Nighthawks is a 1942 oil painting by artist Edward Hopper that portrays people in a downtown diner late at night. It is Hopper's most famous work and one of the most recognizable paintings in American art. Many say that this painting was the inspiration for film noir. In her poem "Edward Hopper's Nighthawks, 1942," Oates wrote interior monologues for the figures in the painting.

In 2008, her husband's death threw her into intense grief. She found love again with Charles Gross, whom she married in 2009.

One can get to know Oates through a very simple quote that she made about herself. "I have always lived a very conventional life of moderation, absolutely regular hours, nothing exotic, no need, even to organize my time." And that is her recipe for living well.

Oates likes to use metaphors in her work. She seems to write in layers. Layer one is literal, which most people can understand. The second layer contains double meaning, symbolism, and so on.

Her book *The Time Traveler* includes ekphrastic poetry, meaning poetry inspired by paintings or other works of art in a different medium, and contains the *Nighthawk* monologues. The rest of the book consists of typical Oates poetry with the exception of a small section on exquisite nature poetry, which one reviewer compared to that of Hayden Carruth.

from "New Jersey-White-Tailed Deer"

Morning?—opaque
and dream-muddled.
And outside our windows
the snow is madly churned
as if by heraldic beasts—
not seven or eight starving deer,
all does.

By Joyce Carol Oates



CONTESTS

Contests to Avoid: winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests/contests-to-avoid

I thought it might be interesting for our newsletter readers to start the year perusing some of the sites that won't be a good use of their time and effort. This article is on an award-winning website that helps authors build resumes through contests and writing community activities. The piece is too long for reprint, but well worth a read online before you commit to this year's schedule of contest entries.

Contests to Kick Off 2016!

Writer's Digest Short Story Competition

Deadline: January 15, 2016 (Online entries only; mail-in entry deadline of Dec. 15, 2015 ended.)

Entry Fee: \$25.00; 1500 words or less

Website: writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/short-short-story-competition#how-to-enter

For login registration: app.wizehive.com/apps/login/WdShortShort15

Prizes: Cash awards: **1st Place:** \$3000.00 and a paid trip to the Writer's Digest Conference, **2nd Place:** \$1500.00, **3rd Place:** \$500.00, **4th-10th Place:** \$100.00

1st-4th place winners: Publication in the July/August issue of *Writer's Digest Magazine*, each will receive one copy of the 16th Annual Short Story Competition Collection, one copy of the *2016 Novel & Short Story Writer's Market*, one copy of the *2016 Guide to Literary Agents*, plus applicable cash prizes. **11th thru 25th place winners** receive the *Short Story Competition Collection* and a \$50 gift certificate to the WDSshop.

2016 Nelson Algren Literary Awards

Deadline: January 31, 2016 (11:59 P.M. CT), online submissions only, open to U.S. residents over 18 years.

Entry Fee: Free, sponsored by the Chicago Tribune Company, LLC

Website: chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/books/chi-2016-algren-award-rules-20151201-story.html

Prizes: **Grand Prize:** \$3500.00, **4 Finalist Prizes:** \$1000.00, **5 Runner-up Prizes:** \$500.00

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

SDSU Writer's Conference

Location: SDSU College of Extended Studies, 5250 Campanile Dr., San Diego, CA 92182

Date: January 22-24, 2016. *Fees include Friday/Saturday receptions, Sat. breakfast & lunch, & Sun. breakfast.*

Deadline & Cost: \$449.00 up to January 4; \$499, January 5-19; \$549.00 at the door. *Consultation fees extra.*

Website: ces.sdsu.edu/Pages/Engine.aspx?id=743

Agent and Editor consultation appointments require advance applications.

San Francisco Writers Conference

Date: February 11- 14, 2016 at the Mark Hopkins Hotel

Cost: \$725 until Dec. 31; \$745 until Jan. 31; (\$795 thereafter if seats remain)

Website: sfwriters.org/



Deadlines and Commitments

Wow! It's December 18th and my column isn't anywhere close to being ready to send in on the 23rd.

With deadlines and commitments pressuring us, how will we find the time or energy to write? We have the desire to get our ideas down on paper; to share our inspirations and fantasies with others, but daily duties and other pressures have squeezed writing out of the schedule. I wrote a column about deadlines years ago, but those same thoughts are pressing in on me again.

We have been visited by the Muse, but only for a while. It seems she left us when other commitments crowded her into the background — commitments with deadlines. The busyness of business robs us of the opportunity to write more than the inspired spurt.

But wait! Can't deadlines work in our favor?

Must we be slaves to deadlines? Or might we use deadlines to our advantage; to fabricate an urgency, an impetus to carry us through the procrastination barrier?

We thus create a person who expects us to produce something by a designated time. To accomplish this, we form or join a critique group that requires new work to be brought to each meeting.

We belong to a critique group, not only for help in analyzing our writing, but also to add deadlines and commitment to our writing routine. Analyzing the work of others sharpens our skills of self-analysis, but most important, we will have to produce something before the next critique meeting. That commitment forces us to meet a deadline of our own.

What a concept! A personal deadline!

I was in one critique group with very pleasant writers who did fascinating work, made poignant comments, devised helpful suggestions and demonstrated a rich sense of humor. It was sheer joy working together. But! Invariably, one or two people might fail to show up to the next meeting. Another member attends the meeting but says, "I didn't have a chance to write anything this time." The next meeting fell on a holiday and was never rescheduled. Obviously, we needed to have rules by common assent and group commitment.

Once we find a group of compatible folks, we need to meet where there are a minimum of distractions and agree to restrict personal conversation to before or after the meeting, or during the break. (Assign a sergeant at arms at the start of each meeting and rotate that responsibility.) This might work if we show an interest, work together with commitment and fellowship and follow a few basic rules. We can have a strong critique program on the Central Coast.

It would be great to have a "critique group hotline" in Central Coast Writers, for us to see the existing groups in various genres who might consider adding a serious member; or to see a list of writers who might like to form a new critique group in a particular genre.

Got ideas?

Be well, and do good work, Jonathan

The Last Word

By Lana Bryan

The Culinary Scrapbook



As the first technical writer at Google, I created documents that included concepts such as queries, search results, SafeSearch, and search appliances. But my favorite project was the cookbook.

When Google opened in 1998, there was one chef in one café open for lunch. Chef Charlie Ayers set the standard for healthful and gourmet meal choices — free. “No iceberg lettuce and no ketchup, people!” He knew his customers until their numbers reached a thousand. By 2007, Google’s campus cafés grew from one to 17, and served meals three times a day.

I set about this dream job by interviewing the chef and sous chef at each café and requesting recipes, which came to me in various ways, most commonly by email. Sometimes, I sat down in the kitchen and took dictation as the chef conjured deliciousness and often fed me. Other times, I took a ragged paper offering and transcribed it.

Some recipes produced more questions. From Dublin, Ireland, a recipe advised, “Turn the cooker to Gas Mark 5.” Huh? Suspecting that was not an error, I checked it out. “Gas mark 1 is 275° Fahrenheit (135° Celsius). Oven temperatures increase by 25° F (13.9° C) each time the gas mark increases by 1.” ([Wikipedia](#))

One French chef gave me his recipe for Niman Ranch Leg of Lamb cooked in alfalfa hay. He had an outdoor cooker fired up and was feeding it alfalfa hay from a bale. So I asked, “Where do ordinary folk get alfalfa hay?” Puzzled, he said, “Well, you have to know your farmer!” Well, of course you do.

That particular recipe didn’t make it into the first book, and alas, there was no second one. But if you want to check out some Google chefs’ recipes, you can read [The Culinary Scrapbook](#) in Google Books.

Happy eating – and writing! -Lana

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centralcoastwriters.org

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Not yet a member of CCW?

You can join at a monthly meeting or online at:

centralcoastwriters.org



California Writers Club
Central Coast Writers Branch
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Pacific Grove, CA 93950



January 19
Joshua Mohr: "Plaracterization"
5:30 p.m. - DINNER
6:30 p.m. - MEETING
Point Pinos Grill
79 Asilomar Boulevard
Pacific Grove