



Scribbles

California Writers Club - Central Coast Writers Branch
www.centralcoastwriters.org
June 2013

WHAT'S INSIDE

Announcements	5-6
Call Me Madame	2
Contests and Workshops	9-10
If the Shoe Fits	11-12
May Meeting Review	3
Member Profile	4-5
"Stopping In On A NorCal Meeting"	7
Poetry Corner	8
The Last Word	13

July 18 meeting Voting on 2013-2014 Officers

Candidates:

President – Vanessa Smith
Vice President – Janet Tezak
Secretary – Sarah Pruitt
Treasurer – Lillian Surkova



*June 18 - 5:30 dinner, 6:30 meeting
Point Pinos Grill*

Children's author Alison Jackson coming in June

Alison Jackson has been a children's author for more than 20 years, and a children's librarian for more than 30; she has twelve published books for pre-schoolers to young adults. At our June 18 meeting, Ms. Jackson will talk about her career as an author for young readers, addressing the topics of manuscript submission, editing and rewriting, working with editors and illustrators, and promoting children's books in schools and libraries. She will also discuss the changes which have evolved in publishing over the past twenty years, and the unique challenges of writing for children in the "digital age." Ms. Jackson lives in Salinas, and works as a children's librarian for the Pacific Grove Public Library. Her most popular title, *I Know an Old Lady who Swallowed a Pie*, aimed at preschoolers, has sold more than 100,000 copies worldwide.

"Call Me Madame," by Cheri Love



Thank You!

What a privilege – and great fun – it has been to be Central Coast Writers’ President for the last year. When I’m talking to members of the general community, I am so proud to tell them about CCW, and I know that if they visit our meetings, they’ll be blown away by our speakers, our members’ talents, and the cool vibe of the location.

If I could have continued, just running the meetings and chatting with you on email, I would probably have stayed on indefinitely! However, like Joyce before me, I had to move on in order to find time to write again.

The up side of this is that the Club benefits from the energy and new ideas that a new President brings each year. I visited another chapter’s monthly meeting a while back, and the President commented that he had held that position for at least seven years. That room was dead, nothing like our happy, interactive get-togethers.

As you saw on page one, the Executive Committee is recommending Vanessa Smith to succeed me. Vanessa is so energetic and looking forward to being our next Madame President. (I suspect that she’ll change the title of this column, though. I thought it was hilarious when I changed it from the previous “Prez Says,” but apparently no one else caught – or appreciated – the allusion.)

I’ve said it before, but I highly recommend taking on a role within CCW. Start with something like being a Greeter, but aspire to accept a position within the Executive Committee when openings are available again this time next year. We truly have fun each time we get together for our Saturday morning meetings, it’s great being able to participate in planning our future programs, and we get to know members so much better. Who wouldn’t like to join a monthly two-hour brainstorming session when the topic is creativity itself?!

Again, I’ve enjoyed this, and I appreciate your good cheer, good ideas, and support throughout the year.



Constance Hale: Hail the Verb

By Dawn Henderson

We were honored to have Constance Hale as our May guest speaker. A California resident for the past 30 years, Constance is a native of North Beach, Oahu, Hawaii. There she grew up speaking English and Pidgin, a creole mix of English, Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese and Portuguese, with a mix of Polynesian and European syntax. She attended the same high school as President Obama. She continued her English literature studies at Princeton University on an academic scholarship, and studied modern English and British poetry with a long-term mentor. As a young woman, a spark was ignited inside her. That spark quickly ignited a burning passion for the true meaning of words hidden within the English language. She is committed to helping writers understand the importance of verbs in writing—how they not only describe an action, but give the reader a profound understanding of the subject experiencing the action.

Constance is intrigued by the evolution of the English language, particularly the inclusion of Anglo-Saxon words versus words with Latin origins in modern English. In a nutshell, Constance is convinced we have a powerful, diverse language with which to capture and hold the attention of our readers. She studied a variety of poets, including John Keats and Shakespeare, honing her ability to describe action and persona using powerful verbs.

Her presentation focused on how the traditional English language has been shaped and melded into the English we use today. She has authored three published books—*Wired Style*, *Sin and Syntax*, and *Vex, Hex, Smash, Smooch: Let Verbs Power Your Writing*. She is a feature writer for the *New York Times* online, and works with the San Francisco Writer's Grotto.

Constance gave a dynamic presentation intended to show how strong verbs should be used to coax readers into using imagination. Constance spoke about two kinds of verbs: static verbs, which do not relay action, and dynamic verbs, which do. The meeting ended with fun, interactive games intended to teach our group about the use of subject and predicates, and alternative verbs for the static "is."



**Constance Hale speaks and signs copies of her latest book, *Hex, Vex, Smash, Smooch: Let Verbs Power Your Writing* at Central Coast Writers' May meeting.
(Photos courtesy of Laurie Sheehan)**

MEMBER PROFILE

Think Like a Writer

Laurie Gibson

By Michelle Smith



With numerous publications to her credit and having edited more than 300 book manuscripts, including several by fellow CCW members and other local authors, Laurie Gibson, a CCW member since 2008, has parlayed a passion for the written word into a successful writing career.

Since starting out as a newspaper reporter in 1991, Laurie has published approximately 150 articles in general-interest and niche periodicals as a journalist, and she's worked as a full-time independent editor (fiction and nonfiction book manuscripts) since 1997. Laurie has also taught approximately 30 online and in-person editing courses for UCLA and UCSD extension programs.

But it all began with a diary that Laurie started keeping in 1973. Nearly a decade later, at about age 20, she realized that "the blank page is the most difficult challenge to face." Shortly thereafter, she enrolled in several writing classes and read many of the classics.

With a bachelor's degree in English (creative writing option), a specialized certificate in copyediting from UCSD (extension), and the completion of numerous graduate and undergraduate courses in journalism, Laurie has plenty of expert advice to share with fellow CCW members.

"Read as widely and deeply in your genre as possible, and write every day," Laurie says. "This helps you think like a writer. Rewrite, and ask yourself, 'How can I say this more clearly?' This improves the quality of your work."

One highlight of Laurie's career is proofreading the 2003 edition of *The Color Purple*. "I cried while carrying the page proofs from the publisher's office to my car," she remembers. "In my opinion, this book changed the trajectory of English literature."

When it comes to editorial assistance, good rapport and collaboration in the author-editor relationship are critical, Laurie says. "If you're going to hire an editor before self-publishing your book or sending it to a literary agent, use your animal instincts to assess whether you want to put your baby into the hands of a particular editor."

Laurie also recommends establishing credibility on the part of editors and agents by checking their references and determining how long they have been in business. Because editing and writing require different skill sets, authors should inquire whether an editor has academic training in his or her field. It also helps to know what books a particular agent has sold, and to which publishers.

[Continued on page 5]

(Continued from page 4)

Forever the student, Laurie is currently pursuing a certificate at Stanford University (continuing studies) with a focus on communications.

As for future career aspirations, Laurie would "love to proofread at least one Steinbeck novel," she says. "His writing really resonates with me."



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

General Announcements

Looking for a Critique Group?

CCW encourages participation in these groups.

Poetry: The Saturday before the CCW monthly meeting, 9:30 to 11'ish

Prose: The Saturday after the CCW monthly meeting, 9:30 to 11'ish

Poetry and **Prose** each meet at Juice & Java, 599 Lighthouse Avenue, Pacific Grove. For more information, contact Harold Grice at Oookaayy@sbcglobal.net.

June 20 Writers' Open Mike

Featuring **Martin Dodd**, founding member of Central Coast Writers Club and winner of CCW's 2011 short fiction contest with his story "Cold Turkey."

5:30-7:30 p.m., East Village Coffee Lounge, 498 Washington Street, Monterey, 93940. For more information contact Pat Hanson at phanson@scumb.edu.

Alice LaPlante

Pacific Grove Public Library at 7:30 p.m., June 13

...with her novel, *Turn of Mind*, about a doctor who is losing her wits to Alzheimer's disease and is the prime suspect in her best friend's murder. The author will reveal how she drew upon and transformed real life experience into fiction for this *New York Times* bestseller, a talk similar to one she gave at CCW a year and a half ago. In addition, she will offer a preview of her new book, *Coming of Age at the End of Days*, due out this fall. Suggested donation to benefit the PG Library is \$10.

Central Coast Writers and California Writers Club Announcements



July is membership renewal month

Thank you, CCW members for your continued support of Central Coast Writers and California Writers Club. Renewing members' dues are \$45. More information in the July *Scribbles*. For now, plan to keep an eye out during June for the snail mail renewal letter that you will be receiving.

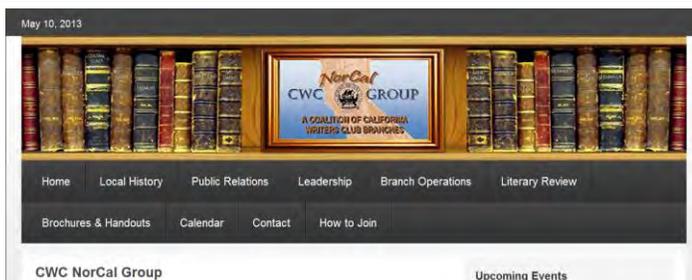
TELL ME AGAIN, WHEN IS THE NEXT MEETING?

Except for the Summer Picnic (see below) and the Winter Holiday Party, CCW monthly meetings are held on the **third Tuesday of the month**.

Plan ahead and mark all of the meetings for the rest of the year on your calendar right now, and then again on New Year's Day!

ANNUAL CCW SUMMER PICNIC

Mark your calendar now for this year's CCW picnic on **Sunday, August 18, 1-3 pm** at Leslie Patiño's home, located at 903 Jefferson Street, Monterey. Once again, Harold Grice will man the grill, cooking steaks and chicken. CCW provides drinks. All you need to bring is a salad or dessert and, if desired, a guest. See you there!



California Writers Club's NorCal Group has updated its website with you in mind. The new banner was designed by our very own Joyce Krieg, past president of CCW and current chair of NorCal. See the new and improved calendar of events for the northern California writing community at <http://www.cwcnorcalwriters.org/>.

NorCal Group is an informal coalition of the 12 California Writers Club branches in the northern half of the state. We meet four times a year to share ideas as to good speakers and workshop leaders, and to brainstorm solutions for common problems facing our branches. More NorCal news on page 7.



Stopping in on a NorCal Meeting

By Vanessa Smith

On the first Saturday of May, I had the pleasure of attending the NorCal California Writers' Club Quarterly Meeting with its chair, our own Joyce Krieg. NorCal is comprised of a dozen branches of the California Writers' Club in Northern California, from our branch in the south to Sacramento in the north.

Joyce and I drove through still-green hills that became more golden as we made our way to Mt. Diablo. We met in Pleasant Hill, a mile from where I last lived. Every one of the NorCal branches sent a representative. Joyce is an amazing chair of the group. She provided the structure for the meeting, and then let the group members take it from there. She knows how to bring out the best in each person, leading by example; there is no job she would ask someone to do that she hasn't done herself. She encourages and supports the representatives of groups just getting off the ground, and is sure to give plenty of praise to those with accomplishments. Joyce positively effervesced with enthusiasm, and she led a wonderfully congenial, supportive, and spirited meeting.

The part of the meeting I found most interesting was the "Branch Meeting Share-A-Thon," where members described how monthly meetings are run at their branches. Three-quarters of the branches meet during the day on Saturday or Sunday, in locations as diverse as the public library to the Sheraton. Only two branches besides ours meet for dinner; when Mike Freda—a BJ Honeycutt look-a-like from the South Bay branch—hinted of the horrors of holding a happening at Harry's Hofbrau, I pined for the Point Pinos Grill. Almost every branch charges members for attending meetings, a minimum of \$5, with guests \$2–\$5 more.

A number of groups have used-book exchanges; very few have raffles. One branch raises revenue by having writing contests; another has just started selling CWC coffee mugs. A part of our charter is for us to promote writing in the community. One group fulfills this by sponsoring a writing contest for the local high school; several others host monthly open mike sessions, open to the public.

When we adjourned at three, there was still a feeling of energy in the room—rare after a four-hour meeting. The drive home flew by, as we talked about how we could apply what we had learned to our branch. As the person being recommended by the Executive Committee to be your next president, it was wonderful for me to see Joyce shine and bring so much energy to the NorCal meeting.

Please visit the NorCal website at www.cwcnorcalwriters.org.



The Poetry Corner

By Nancy Jacobs



MJ Becco - The Short Lady

In her own words...

My poetry writing style is short.
My muse is short.
Most of all I love writing short poems.

Five foot two Marsha J. Becco, or MJ, writes haiku poetry and is president of Poets and Friends, the Springfield chapter of the Missouri State Poetry Society. She's also a friend of CCW's Wanda Sue Parrot. While MJ was in town for a visit, I met with her for this interview. MJ spoke of her love for three things: her granddaughter above all, poetry and travel. She uses the photographs she has taken during her travels as inspiration for her poems, some of which she has self-published through EmJay Press along with a poetical autobiography. She was a recipient of the 2013 Golden Pen Award of the Senior Poet Laureate's Competition.

MJ renewed her old love of poetry writing in 2000 after a career that included teaching English and serving in the Army. Her poetry has been influenced by Carl Sandburg, Emily Dickenson and Japanese master Issa who lived 1763-1827. She particularly enjoys tanka, a formal, highly-mannered style of Japanese poetry that is the direct ancestor of the haiku. It has five lines of Japanese Mora, arranged 5-7-5-7-7. The upper phrase, the *kami-no-ku* is the first three lines of 5-7-5, and the lower, the *shimo-no-ku*, is the two last lines of 7-7.

We ended the interview with a smile. It was dinnertime and the last subject was, "Where was the best place to eat?" Two days later MJ Becco left for Springfield, Missouri!

I speak poetry
unless I would explode or
sink mute in darkness

long cats napping
belly down to cool stone
Ah! summertime
(two haikus)

An old Taoist travels...

solemn thing the Way,
winds circles-given *li* we
travel, giving back
rarely speaking, only seen
the last, a worm empty sack

(In Taoism, the Way is our path to travel
and *li* is the life force we are given for this journey.
If we do it correctly, we end empty.)

moon fills the window
with silver pearlescent light,
painting by magic
your face on the pillow--now
empty in the chill, dim dawn

eagle, eagle, high
you rule the sky--may I fly
with you when I die,
not in dark without wind song
but high free where I belong?
(three tankas)

CONTESTS AND WORKSHOPS

By Diana Paul

Best of luck, and share your experiences with *Scribbles* too!

CONTESTS:

1) Bitter Oleander Press

Deadline: June 14

Website: <http://www.bitteroleander.com>

Email address: info@bitteroleander.com

Entry fee: \$25

A prize of \$1,000 and publication by Bitter Oleander Press is given annually for a poetry collection. Original works written in English are eligible. Submit a manuscript of 48 to 80 pages. Visit the website for complete instructions.

2) Pulitzer Prizes

Deadline: June 15

Website: <http://www.pulitzer.org>

Email address: pulitzer@pulitzer.org

Entry fee: \$50

Three prizes of \$10,000 each are given annually to U.S. writers to honor books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction (including creative nonfiction) published in the United States during the current year. Visit the website for required form and guidelines.

3) RopeWalk Press

Deadline: June 15

Website: http://www.usi.edu/ropewalk/RopeWalk_Press.asp

Email address: ropewalkpress@usi.edu

Entry Fee: \$20

An Editor's Fiction Chapbook prize of \$1,000, publication by RopeWalk Press, and 25 author copies is given annually for a fiction chapbook. Submit a manuscript of up to 45 pages with a \$20 entry fee (\$5 for each additional entry). The website had complete guidelines for submissions.

4) Inland Empire California Writers Club 2013 Short Story, Poetry, Nonfiction Contest

Theme: The Truest Wisdom

Deadline: August 15

Website: <http://www.angelfire.com/amiga/iecbcw/contest.html>

Email address: iecwritersclub@gmail.com

Entry fee: \$15

First, second and third place prizes of \$125, \$75, and \$50 will be awarded in each of the short story, poetry and nonfiction categories. First place entries will also be published in *Fresh Ink*, the online journal of the Inland Empire California Writers Club. For more information: iecwritersclub@gmail.com.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 11)

WORKSHOP

BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORY SEMINARS

Meeting Saturdays, July 27-August 24, 9 am-12 noon, Los Altos, California, Home of author Ellen Sussman

Cost: \$70 per class

Discussion of the 2012 edition of *The Best American Short Stories*, edited by Tom Perrotta. Discussions will focus on what we, as writers, can learn about the craft from masters of the genre. You can attend one class or all four -- each one will be different. (The participants will read and talk about five stories for each class.) For more information contact Ellen at: ellen@ellensussman.com.

WHAT GRADE LEVEL IS YOUR WRITING?

By Kathryn Atkins

President, CWC Long Beach

From *Long Beach Currents*, May 2013

Wikipedia describes the Gunning Fog index as follows:

In linguistics, the **Gunning Fog index** measures the readability of English writing. The index estimates the years of formal education needed to understand the text on a first reading. A fog index of 12 requires the reading level of a U.S. high school senior (around 18 years old). The test was developed by Robert Gunning, an American businessman in 1952.

The fog index is commonly used to confirm that text can be read easily by the *intended audience*. Texts for a wide audience generally need a fog index less than 12. Texts requiring near-universal understanding *generally need an index less than eight*. So who is your intended audience? What grade level? Make sure your writing will be understood by that audience by copy-pasting your text *into the website* at: <http://gunning-fog-index.com>.

Advice from Constance Hale in *Hex, Vex, Smash Smooch*

"The best character descriptions . . . are little dramas in which we watch a protagonist move through meaningful moments...The trick is to find verbs that get at a character's psyche as well as his or her physical presence...In *Moonshine*, Alec Wilkinson paints the hilarious personality of Garland Bunting, a federal agent who busted bootleggers, through verbs:

For more than thirty years, Garland Bunting has been engaged in capturing and prosecuting men and women in North Carolina who make and sell liquor illegally. To do this, he has driven taxis, delivered sermons, peddled fish, buckdanced, worked carnivals as a barker, operated bulldozers, loaded carriages and hauled logs at sawmills, feigned drunkenness, and pretended to be an idiot. In the mind of many people, he is the most successful revenue agent in the history of a state that has always been enormously productive of moonshine."

IF THE SHOE FITS . . .

by Jonathan Shoemaker

. . . For Sandra



"If you have good thoughts, they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely."

That's wonderful! Words of wisdom coming from Roald Dahl, author of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and many other popular children's books. His work is a tribute to this philosophy.

I have noticed that if I feel happy within myself and smile when I pass strangers walking toward me on the street or in a store, they suddenly brighten up and maybe stand taller and even smile. Sometimes they even smile and say "Hello".

It seems to me that happy, positive thoughts while we are writing may cause our readers to turn pages more readily, and feelings of frustration or negative expectations while pounding the keys may cause the readers to simply put the book down. I remember that I stopped reading some interesting books because I definitely did not enjoy the mood they put me in: *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* by Tom Wolfe, for example. Wolfe so exquisitely described the scene in the Mexican desert with the protagonists on a "bummer" that I personally felt their depressed emotions. His skill in portraying the mood caused me to stop reading the book.

I have noticed that young children tend to shy away from stories that make them feel uncomfortable, even refusing to touch a page that displays an illustration of the villain. Some of my teen-age students expressed interest in the plot of a book – "but the author's way of telling it is kind of creepy." Many post-war German writers have an important message and an interesting plot, but the tone of their presentation is definitely dour. Several students in my German class asked, "Do we really have to keep on reading this?" I explained that it exemplifies the mood of the whole country after the horrors and deprivation of the war. They said, "Okay, we get it! May we please move on?" The following week, I had them move on to Herman Hesse and Thomas Mann whom they enjoyed rather than Bertolt Brecht, whom many adults consider sinister.

As it is with children and young adults, so it probably is with readers of any age. If we have doubts about the success of our material or approach the work as a task that must be done, perhaps it will come across to the reader in a less enjoyable reading experience than if we attack our writing with a happy heart and positive energy. Readers will say, "Oh, yes. His stories are rather simple and straightforward, but I love the way he writes." Or – "The characters are complex and mysterious, but her presentation is bright and full of positive energy." Yes, if we have good thoughts as we write, they will shine out of our words like sunbeams, and readers will be looking forward to more of our work.

Be well,

and do good work,

Jonathan

By Jonathan Shoemaker

I cry ink.
Tears of joy and sadness
go streaming down the page.
I cry words.

When surrounded by the suffocating pressure
of unfathomable grief,
in my efforts to escape the sorrow
silence gives me no relief.

Silence brings no consolation,
nor does it express
abrupt eruption of elation
from an overwhelming surge of happiness.

Laughing, crying, to the body
are identical in feeling.
Sobs will shake the body as does laughter,
open floodgates, start the healing.

Tears come forth to wash away
the surface pain we feel,
but for me the deeper pain
is what I need to heal.

Bring emotion to the surface.
Vomit words upon the page
till I'm empty of all anger,
sorrow, pain, resentment, rage.

Sing my love and joyous rapture.
Say exactly what I think.
Tears of joy and sobs of laughter
must be written down in ink.



The Last Word

Leslie Patiño, *Scribbles* Editor

Novel Progress?

Every now and then, someone asks what's the news on my novel manuscript, the one three agents asked to see more of during Speed Dating with the Agents at the San Francisco Writers Conference in February. Well, it's been over three months, and lately, I haven't worked much on the manuscript, let alone sent it.

What I *have* done:

- Read two and a half books on how to build platform, present/pitch/format your manuscript and accompanying information for agents
- Worked with two paid editors on yet another version of the query letter and the first fifty pages of the novel
- Interviewed two individuals who help writers design websites and signed a contract with one
- Spent an intense week working on all the things the website designer requested (welcome, bio, headshot and other photos, social media contact info, blog intro and first entry, free sample chapter of novel)
- Finally, finally, finally come up with a workable blog idea

If you're thinking that's not much, hang on. I've spent hours looking at websites—writers' in particular—and gradually pinned down what I want. I spent forty-five minutes at <http://www.colorcombos.com/> choosing my colors. And I've got a lock on the domain. I updated my Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ information accordingly for everything I developed for the website.

I've spent more time on the blog than anything else. This afternoon, after several days of research, a live chat and email exchanges, I sent my introductory paragraph and interview questions to the Mexico City marketing director of the largest chain of bookstores in Mexico for a blog entry. I've also got three interviews scheduled and

several pending while I'm in Monterrey, Mexico next week. (I'm writing on May 22.) And the actual blog? That's my July *Scribbles* column!

CENTRAL COAST WRITERS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Cheri Love

Vice President: Janet Tezak

Secretary: Vanessa Smith

Treasurer: Patricia Covert

Programs Chair: Dorothy Vriend

Workshops: Judi Marquart and Joyce Krieg

Membership: Patricia Hamilton

Publicity: Laurie Sheehan

Hospitality: Judi Marquart

Newsletter: Leslie Patiño

Webmaster: Ken Jones

Assistant Webmaster: Kemberlee Shortland

Central Board Representative: Joyce Krieg

Scribbles is the official monthly publication for members of Central Coast Writers, a branch of California Writers Club, a registered non-profit corporation. All material is copyrighted ©2013 by California Writers Club and may not be reproduced without permission. Opinions expressed under individual bylines do not necessarily represent an official position of, or endorsement by, Central Coast Writers or California Writers Club.

***Scribbles* is published by:**

Central Coast Writers
Post Office Box 997
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

***Scribbles* electronic addresses**

Editorial Department: lnpatino@comcast.net
Website: www.centralcoastwriters.org

Editorial Staff

Leslie Patiño: Editor

Nancy Jacobs: "Poet's Corner"

Michelle Smith: "Member Profiles"

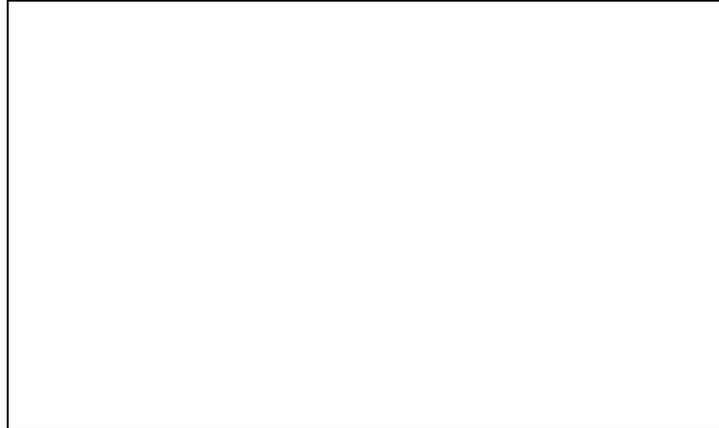
C. Jonathan Shoemaker: "If the Shoe Fits"

Diana Paul: Contests and Workshops

Dorothy Vriend: Monthly Speaker



California Writers Club
Central Coast Writers Branch
Post Office Box 997
Pacific Grove, CA 93950



Raffle Prizes for June 18th at Point Pinos Grill

- Set of brightly-colored melamine bowls for picnics and other parties
- *Writer's Digest* special issue: *Writer's Yearbook 2013*
- *Let the Crazy Child Write! Finding Your Creative Writing Voice*, by Clive Matson
- Large traveling coffee thermos
- Lined willow basket
- Scented natural soy candle

