



CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

BULLETIN

WINTER 2024

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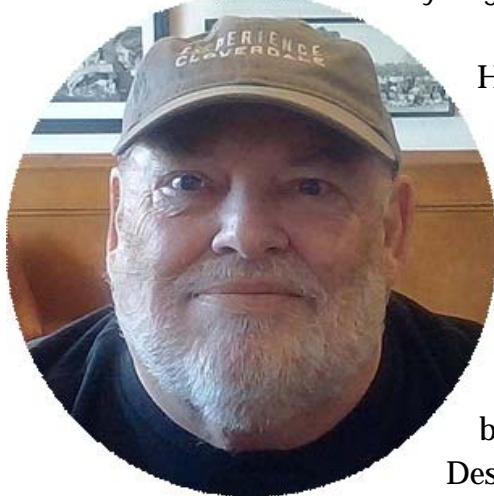
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President's Corner: Commitment to Growth

by Roger Lubeck, CWC President



We are moving into a holiday season and the glad tidings of a new year. Hopefully 2025 will be a happy new writing year for our members. One of my goals for 2024-2025 is to increase our membership. As of December, we have approximately 1885 members of which 335 are new members along with some 75 dual members.

Since COVID we have lost about 23% of our members each year and gained back approximately 14% in new members a year. The branches with over 100 members (Redwood, Central Coast, Orange County, Sacramento, SF-Peninsula, and Mt. Diablo) may lose the most each year, but they are stable or growing. For the next seven branches (South Bay, High Desert, Tri-Valley, Mendocino, Berkeley, Marin, and San Fernando Valley), those with between 90 and 60 members losing 10% a year may not seem critical, but it will be. For the branches with fewer than 60 members (Napa Valley, Writers Of Kern, Fremont, Coastal Dunes, San Joaquin Valley, Inland Empire, East Sierra, North State) losing 10% of your members is a critical problem. Several of the branches (large and small) are experiencing difficulty filling board positions or the same people continue in critical roles (e.g., speaker chair) until they burn out and leave.

Let's make a commitment to help this great club grow and be recognized as the largest writer/author organization in California. In the next six months, we need to recruit new members, especially in the smaller branches. We have to bring (invite) guests to our meetings. We need to show other writers how much fun our meetings can be. We have to have more events (e.g., workshops, conferences, and contests) that are open to the larger public and reward non-members and members alike.

We need to get more members taking part on our boards. We must get away from one person performing multiple jobs for a branch. Each branch may need a speaker chair, but he/she needs a Speaker Team. The same is true for publications, anthologies, workshops, conferences, contests, and food. Each task may need a chair, but they work best with a team of members.

2025 will be an exceptional year in terms of new CWC publications, and CWC statewide contests, speakers, and workshops. Also, this year we will begin a program to profile members and member publications. Together let's make recruiting new members and recognizing member contributions our number one goal.



CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

A 501(c)3 NONPROFIT

OUR MISSION: TO EDUCATE WRITERS OF ALL ABILITIES IN THE CRAFT OF WRITING AND THE MARKETING OF THEIR WORK.

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How to Be a Bestselling Author: Advice from Our Honorary Founder

by Nicole Bianchi, Writer, Editor and Marketing Strategist



Jack London in his Klondike gear.

try to rise above poverty through physical labor. Instead, he would become a writer. So he carved into the cabin wall the words 'Jack London Miner Author Jan 27, 1898.'

Obviously, London was determined to become a successful writer. But the odds seemed stacked against him. Not only was he poor, but he also had no literary connections or literary background.

How was he eventually able to find success?

Luckily for us fellow writers, London shared the secrets of how he learned to write, persevere, and become a famous author. In a 1905 article for *The Editor* magazine, he explained exactly how he got into print.

1. Be Prolific

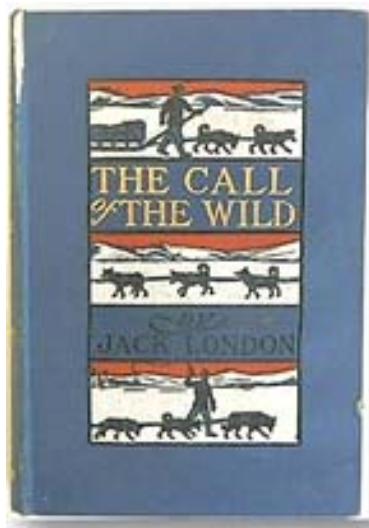
London had zero experience when he decided to become a writer. He observed, "... I knew positively nothing about it. I lived in California, far from the great publishing centers. I did not know what an editor looked like. I did not know a soul who had ever published anything; nor yet again, a soul, with the exception of my own, who had ever tried to write anything, much less tried to publish it. I had no one to give me tips, no one's experience to profit by.

London's solution? He decided to write prolifically and try his hand at all different kinds of writing.

"So I sat down and wrote in order to get an experience of my own. I wrote everything—short stories, articles, anecdotes, jokes, essays, sonnets, ballads, villanelles, triolets, songs, light plays in iambic tetrameter, and heavy tragedies in blank verse. These various creations I stuck into envelopes, enclosed return postage, and dropped into the mail. Oh, I was prolific. Day by day my manuscripts mounted up, till the problem of finding stamps for them became as great as that of making life livable for my widow landlady."

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Jack London's Advice to Writers: continued from previous page



Between 1900 and 1916, London completed hundreds of short stories and fifty fiction and nonfiction books. Of course, not all famous writers are that prolific, although it might be necessary in order to reach London's level of monetary success. Many self-publishing gurus today say that publishing numerous books is an effective strategy for making a full-time income as an author.

However, London's advice is also helpful for those writers who are not yet ready to publish and are focused on sharpening their skills. It's only by writing that we can gain practice as a writer.

So write as much as you can, no matter how badly you think it is. Try all different genres and types of writing. Maybe you'll discover a literary form that you love that you would never have experimented with otherwise.

2. Don't Quit Your Day Job

When London first started writing short stories, he thought he would be able to quickly make a comfortable living. But he soon found out that it's a difficult journey to earn a full-time income from one's writing. Instead of receiving money, he received rejections.

At last, one story was accepted. However, the magazine offered to pay just five dollars. Disheartened, London nearly quit writing and went back to shoveling coal.

But, just before going through with this resolution, he received an offer of forty dollars for another story he had submitted. That story finally helped him break into the publishing industry. And the rest, as they say, is history.

However, London advised, "Don't quit your job in order to write unless there is none dependent upon you."

I think this is valuable advice for anyone who is any kind of creator online. It is much easier to put in the time to practice and create when you're not worrying about money. And it also means that you probably won't give up as quickly when success takes longer than you think.

3. Popular Genres Will Pay More

London's advised, "Fiction pays best of all, and when it is of fair quality is more easily sold. A good joke will sell quicker than a good poem, and, measured in sweat and blood, will bring better remuneration. Avoid the unhappy ending, the harsh, the brutal, the tragic, the horrible—if you care to see in print the things you write. (In this connection don't do as I do, but do as I say.) Humor is the hardest to write, easiest to sell, and best rewarded. There are only a few who are able to do it. If you are able, do it by all means."

I like that London made the aside, "Don't do as I do, but do as I say." He obviously found success writing many harsh stories with unhappy endings. However, it's true that certain genres will always have more readers. For example, the romance, mystery, and fantasy/science-fiction genres tend to sell the most today.

Take this into consideration if you want to reach the most readers. Maybe the story idea you have can fit into one of those genres. But, of course, you can also be a Jack London and forge your own path.

4. Don't Wait for Inspiration

London also shared his strategies for how he wrote so prolifically:

"Don't dash off a six-thousand-word story before breakfast," London told aspiring writers. "Don't write too much. Concentrate your sweat on one story, rather than dissipate over a dozen. Don't loaf and invite inspiration; light out after it with a club, and if you don't get it you will nonetheless get something that looks remarkably like

Jack London's Advice to Writers: continued from previous page

it. Set yourself a 'stint,' and see that you do that 'stint' each day; you will have more words to your credit at the end of the year."

His advice to not write too much reminds me of Ernest Hemingway's advice to not deplete your inspiration. Hemingway advised, "The best way is always to stop when you are going good and when you know what will happen next. If you do that every day when you are writing a novel you will never be stuck."

Jack London set himself a goal of writing 1,500 words every day. Many other bestselling authors set themselves a daily word count goal. This goal can be huge (3,000 words) or small (500 words) depending on your circumstances and the pace at which you write.

If you follow through every single morning or afternoon or evening, despite the distractions and the craziness of your everyday life, you will gradually develop a daily writing habit. And that means you will also develop an incredible amount of focus and determination and passion for your craft.

5. Study the Craft

Speaking of passion for your craft, London said he learned to write by reading the works of great writers. "Study the tricks of the writers who have arrived. They have mastered the tools with which you are cutting your fingers. They are doing things, and their work bears the internal evidence of how it is done. Don't wait for some Good Samaritan to tell you, but dig it out for yourself."

By studying the work of the greatest writers, you'll have a standard to judge your own work against. Is your plot too simple or does it have intriguing twists and turns like a Dickens novel? Can you tackle complex themes in your work, provoking your readers to consider their own deeply held beliefs, like a Dostoevsky novel?

6. Stay Healthy

This is one that writers often neglect. Staying healthy is important to keep up your stamina and inspiration as a writer. London noted, "See that your pores are open and your digestion is good. That is, I am confident, the most important rule of all."

Science fiction writer Orson Scott Card agreed, focusing on the importance of daily walks. "Take care of your body. Writing is a sedentary business; it's easy for many of us to get fat and sluggish. Your brain is attached to the rest of your body. You can't do your best work when you're weak or in ill health."

7. Write Down Your Ideas in a Notebook

I am a huge fan of keeping a writing notebook so I loved this piece of advice from London: "Keep a notebook. Travel with it, eat with it, sleep with it. Slap into it every stray thought that flutters up into your brain. Cheap paper is less perishable than gray matter, and lead pencil markings endure longer than memory."

London isn't the only famous writer who kept a notebook. W. Somerset Maugham, Mark Twain, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Joan Didion, John Steinbeck, and Damon Knight are among the other bestselling writers who kept a notebook to collect ideas and help them out of creative ruts. If you want to write prolifically, you need to be generating many story ideas.

Study the
tricks of the
writers who
have arrived.

“ ”

Jack London's Advice to Writers: continued from previous page

The Takeaway

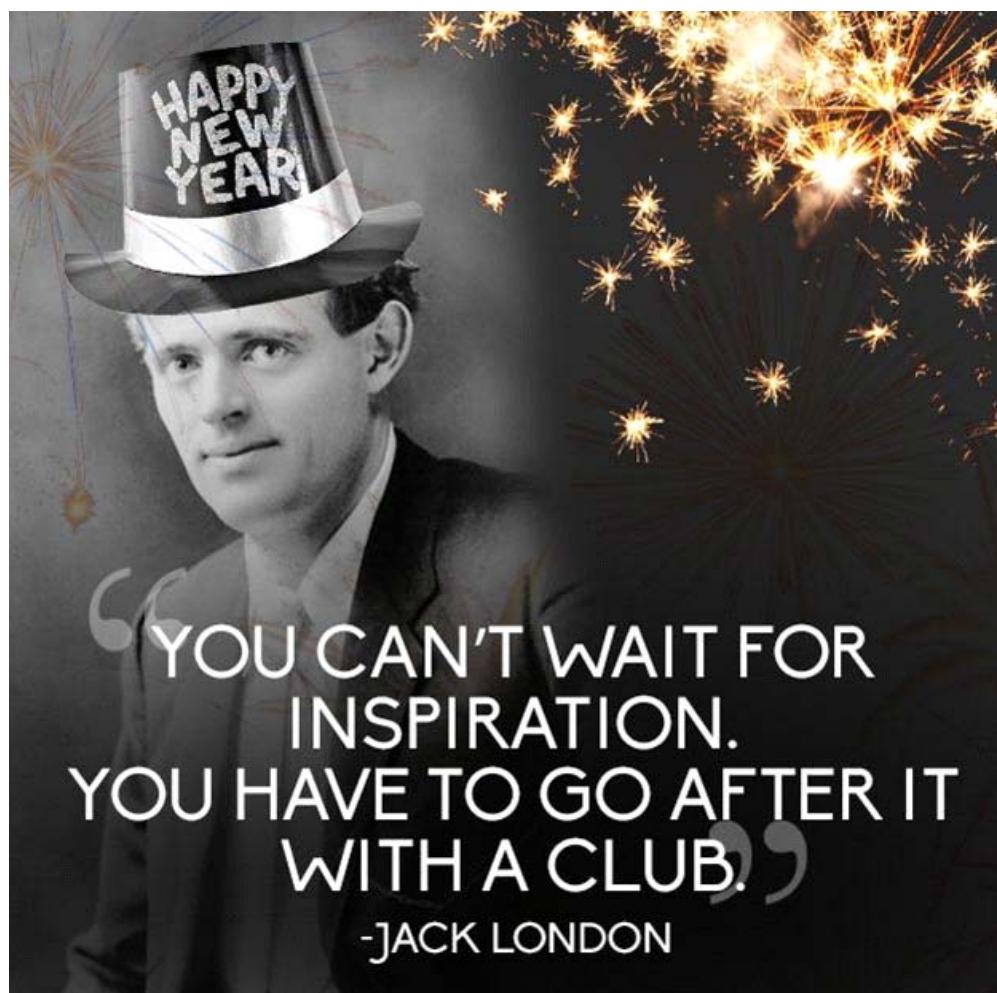
All of these strategies helped London become a bestselling author. In just five years time, he taught himself to write gripping stories and was crafting beautiful prose like this paragraph from *The Call of the Wild*:

"There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad in a stricken field and refusing quarter; and it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food that was alive and that fled swiftly before him through the moonlight."

London concluded his advice to writers with these words: "Spell it in capital letters. WORK. WORK all the time. Find out about this earth; this universe ,,, And by all this I mean WORK for a philosophy of life ... The three great things are: GOOD HEALTH; WORK; and a PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE. I may add, nay, must add, a fourth—SINCERITY. Without this, the other three are without avail; and with it you may cleave to greatness and sit among the giants."



Nicole Bianchi is a writer, editor and marketing strategist living in North Carolina. She and her brothers own a digital marketing agency where they help creatives and business owners around the world build their online platforms. The above article appeared in her blog at nicolebianchi.com. A video version of this article is available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k5kZovE09g>



What about the Heroine's Journey?

by Mike Van Horn, Marin

Years ago during a presentation on the Hero's Journey, I came away disappointed. My stories just didn't fit into that mold. Recently I read *The Heroine's Journey* by Gail Carriger, and thought, Aha! my stories do fit this model.

She points out that the heroine's journey needn't feature a female as main character—the Harry Potter series fits this model. My sci-fi series does have a woman as first-person narrator, but even my other stories fit this model.

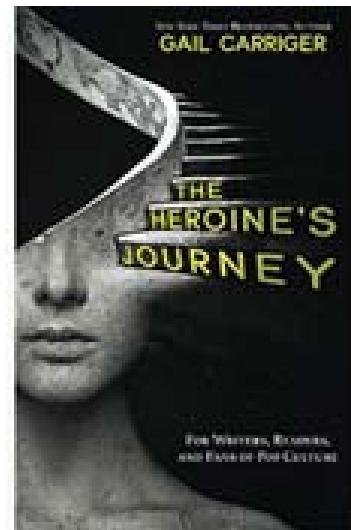
Below is an outline that contrasts the key elements of the Hero's and Heroine's journey, taken from Carriger's book.

The hero's journey emphasizes

- Individuality
- Separation
- Solo achievement over insurmountable odds
- Revenge
- Reticence in asking for help
- A savior or white knight complex
- Success as defined by the death or utter defeat of another

The heroine's journey emphasizes

- Networking
- Connection
- Solidarity and unity
- Asking for help
- Giving aid
- Success through portioning out achievement
- Also generally contains comedy and humor



The heroine's journey is one of building teams, creating cohesion, forming social relationships, ensuring civilization and posterity. It seeks balance and compromise rather than conquest. The characters may appear as foils, siblings, friends, or lovers. They will almost always assist the heroine through motivation, emotional support, and the tendering of useful information.

The feminine represents a largely positive element in this journey. This stands in stark contrast to the hero's journey, where the feminine usually represents civilization, stasis, and obstacle. By its implication of stopping a hero from completing his quest, it is negative.

Carriger points out that publishers are often biased toward the action of the hero's journey. However, in self-publishing we have the opportunity to attract those who prefer the different model. So understanding it can help us craft messages that catch the ear of those readers. I highly recommend her book.

Mike Van Horn is a board member of the Marin branch. He has published eight books of science fiction and also writes sci-fi music. His website is galaxytalltales.com.



Award-winning Poetry by Our Members

CWC's first Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose is complete and the three winners have been announced. According to President Roger Lubeck, "With so many excellent entries received (377) we have decided to make a book of some of the best writings submitted. The book will be titled *The Smalls: California Writers Club 2024 Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose*. The book will include a selection of the pieces submitted." If you entered the contest and your poem or prose piece was selected to appear in the book, Editor Les Bernstein will notify you as soon as it is possible.

The judges were Robin Gabbert, Steve Trenam and Les Bernstein, all from the Redwood branch. Here are the top three poems they selected.

First Place

Bich Khoi Do
San Francisco Peninsula

WHAT MATTERS

Absence is the quality
That defines
The very shaping of things

It's the spaces in between
That electrify the being
Filling its emptiness— exactly



Bich-Khoi Do is a poet for all occasions, traversing the world with her notebook and pencils. She writes with startling regularity for someone who started rather late in life. Someday, soon or late, she hopes to have her poetry published in books and periodicals. She lives in the SF Bay Area with her white dog, black cat, and teenage son, sharing all with her beloved wife.

Second Place

Rod Morgan
Redwood Writers

COASTLINE

The morning mist was full of strangeness, an oddness in the air.
An albatross unfurled his wings, drifted upward on the current
as the gale careened off the headland cliffs. The sea floor quivered,
rumbled and snapped with a lurch. An angered sea rebuked the lunar tug,
launched a tsunami that surged and washed the land. Earth shuttered,
shook with aftershocks, then rested to wait another hundred years.

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Poetry Winners: continued from previous page

Rod Morgan has an AAS degree in graphic design with a minor in creative writing and journalism. His choice of genre is tales constructed to amuse, entertain, and mystify; fact and fiction jumbled together in unknown quantities. Short stories, novellas, and poems combine weird equivocations of memories, recollections, and fabrications.

Third Place

Phillip (Rags) Rosenberg

Central Coast Writers

THE CLOVER AND THE CACTUS

To note the fact but refuse to judge,
A trick I've never mastered.

To be exacting yet forgive,
My ongoing disaster.

I try to walk the razor's edge
But falling is my practice

Into grace and out of
The clover and the cactus.



Phillip (Rags) Rosenberg's first chapbook, *Raised in the Shadow*, received praise from Robert Bly ("a certain drive forward into truth") and Philip Levine ("strong signs of a real talent"). His poetry has appeared in Black Moon, Fine Homebuilding Magazine, The California Writers Club Literary Review, and Hudson View.



Ina Coolbrith Inducted into California Hall of Fame

On December 19, our own Ina Coolbrith posthumously became a member of the 18th "class" of the California Hall of Fame. In a virtual ceremony hosted by Governor Gavin Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, she joined six other honorees. They included author and TV personality Julia Child, primatologist Dian Fossey, and legendary soul singer Tina Turner. Olympic diver Vicki Manalo Draves and civil rights activists Mitsuyo Endo and Alice Piper. Ms. Coolbrith was California's first poet laureate and, as an Oakland librarian, gave Jack London his first library card. She was a leader of the Alameda Press Club, one of the organizations that led to the formation of CWC, and is the namesake for our Ina Coolbrith Award for volunteer service at the state level.



When Jack London Lost His Chair

by Kimberly Edwards, Sacramento



This 1965 photograph from the *Sacramento Bee* shows the first president of the Sacramento branch, Edna Wilson Becsey, trying out the Jack London chair on the occasion of the branch's 40th anniversary.

gone by way of a local junkyard, its significance lost forever? Few members from that era are still around, and off-spring are hard to locate.

On a whim, I sent the one photo of the chair that ran in the newspaper to the Jack London Museum in Glen Ellen. They agreed to look at their inventory of five chairs. Then word came: they had located the chair and it sits in the cottage on the grounds of what is now Jack London State Historic Park. What a relief to know that the chair was safe. But records were scarce as to details of how it got there or who of our members had donated it.

Then the curator for State Parks for that area got involved. He identified the date of the donation: 1977. He found out who donated it: the wife of a couple who were active members and wrote about legal matters – and whom I actually met when I joined CWC the first time, in the late 70s. Also listed as involved in the donation is

While searching records on our branch history – our 100th year anniversary will be celebrated in October, 2025 – I came across a newspaper article from 1955. It covered our branch's 40th anniversary event. Referenced was the presence of a chair Jack London used when he was writing. Branch members in attendance took turns sitting in the chair and getting photographed in it. Supposedly the chair was given to the club by London's widow. I thought to myself, boy, this newspaper reporter was really snookered, believing a P.R. narrative about a "real" Jack London chair.

Soon thereafter, I found another newspaper article, covering our 50th anniversary. This article pictured our first president seated in "Jack London's chair." So the narrative about the chair persisted ten years later. This time, the article contained intriguing details: the year it was donated to the Sacramento branch and to whom it was donated. I realized there might be truth to this story, as far-fetched as it sounded.

While the London widow was not named – he was married twice - it likely was his second wife, Charmian. She would have known Mr. and Mrs. Henry Noyes Pratt, to whom the chair was purportedly given, according to the newspaper article. Mr. Pratt was one of CWC's first presidents. He and his wife would likely have known Charmian, as they would have traveled in the same writing circles in the Bay Area. He edited the *Overland Monthly*, belonged to a Western Writers Club, was a prolific poet, and headed a state museum association. According to branch records, he encouraged Sacramentans to form a separate branch due to distance from the Oakland-Berkeley area. The Pratts attended the new branch's inaugural dinner in 1925. Within a decade, the couple moved to Sacramento and Pratt became curator of the Crocker Museum. After he died, his widow stayed here for decades.

The thought that there was truth to the chair story, our next concern was, where was it? Had the chair ended up in someone's garage? Had it

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Short Stories: continued from previous page



Jack London in "the chair" in the office at the Beauty Ranch in Glen Ellen.



Kimberly Edwards is chair of CWC's NorCal Network. She is the author of Sacramento Motorcycling A Capital City Tradition (2021 History Press). Her current project is "Writers of the West: Bohemia, West Coast Nature Movement, Women's Suffrage, and the Founding of the California Writers Club.



Reconsidering Joaquin Miller

by Kristen Caven, Berkeley

In the Berkeley branch of the CWC, we do an annual reading of "Columbus" with raucous choruses of "Sail on! Sail on! Sail on and on!" We also debate the club's symbol of a sailing ship, which carried more dread than inspiration to the ancestors of our BIPOC members! The history of our club is the history of California, and of the evolving voice of the West. Everyone in our membership should know, at the very least, the name of Joaquin Miller, where his park is (in Oakland) and why it's important. At most, I hope our members get to know some of his works!

As CWC Writer in Residence at Joaquin Miller Park, I delivered a talk last month for the Oakland Public Library's Fall Lecture Series called "Reconsidering Joaquin Miller." In Oakland, I have sadly discovered, it is fashionable to see Miller as a hack, a clown, a wannabe, a failed poet, and the guy who planted all the eucalyptus trees that are now the fire department's public enemy #1. Frustrated at my inability to find support for my work around Miller, I dug deep into historical research and think I finally cracked the mystery of the criticism that always seems to accompany his praise.

His questionable reputation goes back to his teenage years when he was known among gold miners as "Crazy Miller" for reciting poetry at them (rather than listening to their stories, and capturing their voices as Mark Twain did.) It takes hold in derisive quotes by other established San Francisco writers amused by his presumptive appearance among their set, though when he later proved his popularity they would sing his praises. And the aspersions take a twist around his emergence as an early voice of American liberalism before it was even a thing. While other writers of the time portrayed first people as either "savages" or "noble savages," Miller lived among and portrayed them as relatable, admirable, understandable, and fallible human beings. He was also the first to criticize resource exploitation and call for environmental stewardship, following their example. Critics often felt he was out of touch, but Miller's out-of-bounds

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a long-time officer, sister of the first president, photographed sitting in the chair. While the president was now deceased, her dedicated sister was said to not have missed a club meeting in 50 years, and was known to do anything for the club! Donation records suggest that she may have made the initial inquiry about donating the chair. Also in the records is that there were possibly more details "based on material left by her deceased sister ..."

While we'll never know if any other details were contained in this material –the sister, too, is now gone—we are delighted to know that for more than two decades, our branch was entrusted with a historical artifact and that leaders in our branch did the right thing by returning London's chair to the safety of his beloved Beauty Ranch.

Reconsidering Joaquin Miller: continued from previous page

position allowed him to be a vocal ally to minorities and the downtrodden. In fact, he was the only one who publicly stood up for Oscar Wilde when the brilliant Brit was imprisoned for being gay.

Whether he was “touched” or gifted with true genius, I believe understanding Joaquin Miller is an adventure not unlike like panning for historic and universal gold. There is dirt, there is fool’s gold, and there are veins of nuggets—nuggets like the ones he wore on his white deerskin coat that time he met Queen Victoria in the Green Room at Buckingham Palace, when he took off his sombrero to sweep into a bow and his golden curls came tumbling out and made her smile—which set new hairstyle trends among the dandies. There are pure gold nuggets of stories like these, and nuggets of truly beautiful writing, especially about the wild beauty of Western nature. Once, he was introduced as the greatest poet in California. But he replied, with grave humility, “That title belongs to Bret Harte.” He then added, with great humor, “I do not represent California, but a little hill called The Earth.” As the story goes, one of his Bohemian Club friends teased that he was surprised he didn’t say “The Universe!”

Miller was a force of friendship, a volcano of poetry, a theatrical superstar who made it into the spotlight and shone his own light on everyone around him. He was loved and admired by his colleagues in California (Harte, Charles Stoddard, Yone Noguchi), London (Tennyson, Rosetti, Browning), and New York (Longfellow, Whitman, Hawthorne), even as he exasperated them. He slept under a bearskin and had some incredible women as his muses (Miriam Leslie, Adah Isaacs Menken, Lily Langtry, Ina Coolbrith). I defy writers of historical fiction to bring them all back to life, even to the big screen where they belong!

The more I learn about Joaquin Miller, the more interesting and relatable he becomes. I find his flaws humanizing and his message uplifting. He may have some real gifts for our generation if he’s given a chance. The more you learn, the more you find there’s a little Joaquin Miller in all of us.



The real Joaquin Miller at far left, and CWC's Kristen Caven as Joaquin Miller for her presentation at the Oakland Public Library's Fall Lecture Series.

And now for the big announcement: at my lecture I announced the launch of a new wiki for Miller Nerds at www.MillerLight.org. “Shedding light on Joaquin Miller | Letting Miller’s light shine.” I even made t-shirts! Come take a look, or a deep dive. Also check out my blog, Walkin’ with Joaquin. <https://kbc-cwc-wir-jmp.blogspot.com>. If you’re a branch historian, or interested in the history of the CWC, please let me know at wir.cwc.berkeley@gmail.com if you’d like to be added to the CWC Historians Google Group! I’m also producing the November 13th talk as a video lecture that I will present to the CWC in upcoming months—stay tuned for details!

As for that Columbus poem, be sure to check out my cartoon-annotated version and the funny Miller story behind it on my Substack publication, Generous Muse: https://kristencaven.substack.com/p/happy-day-formerly-known-as-columbus?utm_source=publication-search



On the Horizon

Upcoming Branch Activities

Open to All CWC Members

THE ZOOM ROOM

FREMONT AREA WRITERS

Jan. 11: Zoom Write-in, “Start the New Year Creatively.” 2:00-3:30 p.m. Free. Contact Scott Davidson, scottfrombayside@yahoo.com, for the Zoom link. Please put “FAW Zoom” in the subject line.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

Jan. 11: Dara Miles, “Story Development.” 1:00 p.m. Free.

Feb. 1: Lisa Teasley, “The Art of the Short Story.” 1:00 p.m. Free.

March 1: Mandy Jackson-Beverly, “Self-Publishing and the Independent Bookstore.” 1:00 p.m. Free.

To sign up and get the Zoom link, go to <https://www.cwc—sfv.org>.

Anthology Launch for Mendocino Writers



Members of Writers of the Mendocino Coast will launch their latest anthology, *Resilience*, on Sunday, January 11, from 2:00-3:30 at Tall Guy Brewery in Fort Bragg. Forty-nine writers and photographers have interpreted the theme in forty-nine ways.

more upcoming events on next page

San Joaquin Valley Seeks Anthology Submissions



San Joaquin Valley Writers is pleased to announce the theme for its next anthology, to be published in the fall of 2025: **Beginnings & Endings**.

It is human nature to conceptualize the world consisting of beginnings and endings. This duality permeates almost everything we see, imagine, feel, and hope for. Beginnings and endings can be real and tangible such as birth and death, marriage and divorce, the first and last day of school. They can be metaphorical, perhaps not even visible, such as a thought that blinks into existence only to disappear just as quickly from someone's mind, or a first impression of someone or something that changes over time. Beginnings and endings can be fast, sudden, or they can be slow, gradual.

They can be far apart or blend into each other. Maybe a beginning is also an ending and vice versa. Send us your stories, memoirs, essays, or poetry in which a beginning and/or an ending takes center stage or is the background for something else. Show us the human experience through images, dialogue, verse, but no matter what, with beautiful words. And maybe, just maybe, show us a new take on beginnings and endings.

Submission information and guidelines can be found at www.sjvalleywriters.org/2025-anthology-submissions

Deadline: March 1, 2025.



Write Your Heart Out in Redwood's Contest

Redwood Writers is sponsoring a writing contest with the theme "Heartbeat/Heartbreak." Writers of all genres from any CWC branch are invited to enter. Whether you've been lucky or unlucky in love, share a true or made-up story of a first meeting or a decision to part ways. It can be fiction, a memoir, or an essay about love won or lost. Winners will be announced at the Redwood Writers meeting on February 15.

Word count: 1500 or less.

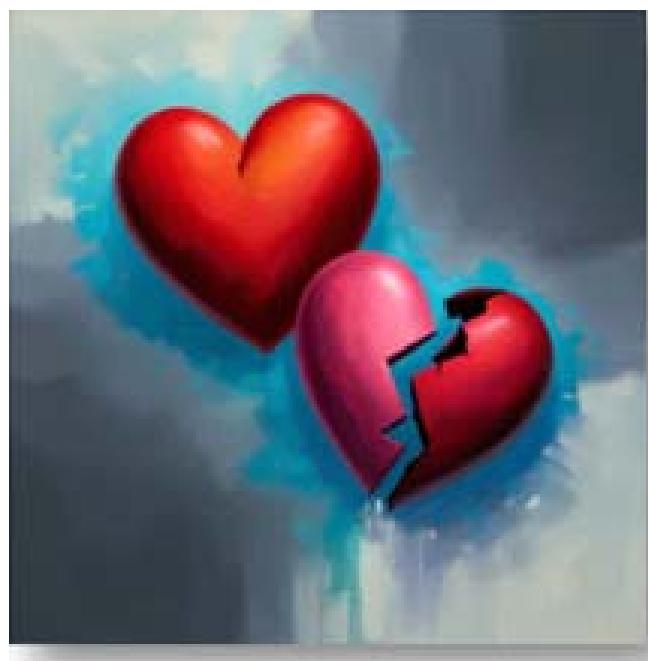
Deadline: Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025, at midnight.

Entry fee: \$10 for CWC members

Prizes: \$100, \$50 and \$25 for first, second and third place

Winners will be announced at the Redwood Writers meeting on February 15.

For more information: <https://redwoodwriters.org/2024-heartbeats-writing-contest/>



Big Plans for 2025 at Sacramento Branch



CWC's Sacramento branch is planning two major events in 2025. The centennial of the branch's founding in 1925, and the second annual Sacramento Book Festival.

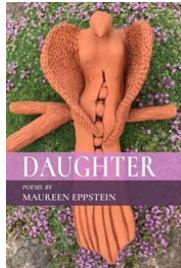
The centennial celebration is planning for October of 2025. The book festival is coming up sooner, on May 31. Authors will have the opportunity to sell books and interact with readers, everything from rockets to romance, from cookbooks to children's stories, plus non-fiction to inspire working lives.

Along with books for sale, the festival will offer a series of workshops for aspiring writers, who will be able to meet members of the California Writers Club to gain guidance on how to develop their art. The keynote speaker will be James Rollins, author of the bestselling Sigma Force thriller series. As an added bonus, the Sacramento branch is planning to have food trucks available outside the venue, the Shepard Garden and Arts Center at McKinley Park in historic East Sacramento.

This is an indoor event, so there is no need to put up a tent or canopy. Tables and chairs will be provided by the venue. For details on reserving a table, go to <https://www.cwcsacramentowriters.org/2024/sacramento-book-festival-2025/>



Member Spotlight



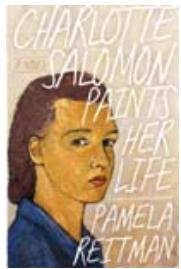
Maureen Eppstein (Writers of the Mendocino Coast) is receiving accolades for her new chapbook, *Daughter* (Finishing Line Press), a memoir in the form of poems about the stillbirth of her first child, the silence around that death, and how a quarter-century later she found her voice.



Mara Lynn Johnstone (Redwood Writers) has published *Shatterlore: Myths of Past and Future*. If you've ever wanted to read about Beowulf as a noir detective, or Narcissus as a vampire who wants a reflection, then this book is for you. And if it never occurred to you that such things were an option (but now they sound fascinating), then it's for you too! <https://books2read.com/u/4j7z0X>



Sheri T. Joseph's (Marin) debut novel *Edge of the Known World* is published by SparkPress, distributed by Simon & Schuster. It's a love and adventure story about a brilliant young refugee caught in era when genetic screening tests, like 23AndMe, make it impossible to hide a secret identity. The novel won the 2024 American Fiction Awards in multiple categories, including Best New Fiction, General Science Fiction; and Political Thriller. <https://www.authorsheritjoseph.com/>.



Pamela Reitman (Redwood Writers) announces her debut novel, *Charlotte Salomon Paints Her Life*, will be published by Sibylline Press in April, 2025. Pre-orders are available now from Sibylline Press, Bookshop, Barnes & Noble, and Amazon. Inspired by the life and work of Charlotte Salomon, this historical fiction shows an artist intent on pursuing her art against all odds. She's a young German-Jewish art student who clings to her determination to become a serious modernist painter, to complete her monumental work and get it into safekeeping in a race against time before capture by the Nazis.



Terry Willey and Carol Baker (Coastal Dunes) are pleased to announce their genre-blending novel, *Time Travel for Fun and Prophet*, won Silver in the Humor and Bronze in the Science Fiction categories in the 2024 Colorado Independent Publishers Association (CIPA) EVVY™ Book Awards. This fast-paced, action-packed adventure takes Dan and Freddie from frozen wastelands to outer space and back to Earth as they ride the surf of time, eat sandwiches, fall in love, and try to avoid saving the universe.





THE CWC BULLETIN

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Member Spotlight: For new book releases, short stories, poems or articles, or news of literary honors. 50 words or less by email to editor@calwriters.org. Put "Member Spotlight" in the Subject line. Send a copy of your book cover in JPEG format as an email attachment.

Articles on writing craft, the writing life, marketing and publication: Send a proposal to editor@calwriters.org. Contributors will receive a short blurb to promote their books and/or services. prior to the deadline. Watch for an email from Sandy Moffett, sm@sandymoffett.com.

Photographs: JPEG format, sent separately (not embedded in a Word doc or PDF). Please provide complete details in the caption, including names of people pictured.

Deadlines: First day of the month prior to publication. March 1, June 1, September 1, December 1.

Volunteer to coordinate advertising in the CWC Bulletin. No special talent needed, just a conscientious attitude and basic computer skills. Contact: President Roger Lubeck, president@calwriters.org.



HELP
WANTED

From the Editor's Desk



The Time Has Come to Say . . .

... Well, not goodbye exactly but definitely "so long for now."

It's now been three years since I took on the editorship of the *CWC Bulletin*. Four issues a year, all but this one between 25 and 30-plus pages long. I have done my darndest to give our members the quality publication they deserve, filled with a lively mix of writing craft, marketing advice, branch news of interest to more than just the members of the particular branch, and helpful insights for branch leaders.

But no one's reading it.

Okay, I exaggerate. Some of you are, indeed, reading *The Bulletin*. When I first took on the editorship, the open rate for the email was around 75 percent. But the click rate on the actual PDF was only around 25 percent. In other words, some 400 members were reading *The Bulletin* for a club that numbers between 1,800 and over 2,000, depending on where we're at with the renewal cycle. Those numbers have never increased appreciably in three years.

President Roger Lubeck has frequently assured me that these open rates are actually quite positive, remarkably so, for a typical email marketing campaign. Perhaps that's part of my problem. I don't look at *The Bulletin* as a marketing campaign. I see it as a vital communications link between the "mother ship" and the rank-and-file, a valuable member perk.

I do understand. We're all suffering from digital overload, email fatigue. I don't expect every single member to read *The Bulletin* (even though they should ☺), but dear readers, these numbers are just plain discouraging. Equally demoralizing is when I contact branch presidents and some of them respond with, "I've never received it," or even worse, "Bulletin? What's that?" If our own leadership isn't aware and supportive, then what's the point of continuing to pour all that effort into it?

Thus, this will be my last *Bulletin*, at least under its current format. I would expect the CWC Central Board to discuss the fate of *The Bulletin* at the next meeting on January 26. They can either choose to continue *The Bulletin* in its current format and find a new editor, or explore other options. A true email newsletter, perhaps, if logistics can be worked out. If the Central Board chooses that option, or something else equally innovative, I would be interested in sticking around.

In the meantime, it has been a privilege to carry on the 115-year tradition of *The CWC Bulletin* these past three years. Those of you who are actually reading *The Bulletin* and supporting it by contributing material, you have my deepest gratitude. So I won't say goodbye, but instead channel my inner Carol Burnett: "I'm so glad we had this time together . . ."



—Joyce Krieg