

Write Angles



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKELEY BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

President's Message

Saying a Goodbye and a Welcome Back

—Tanya Grove

Weaving through fairgoers at the Art and Soul Festival in downtown Oakland, I reached the African American Museum and Library—the site of Charlie Russell's memorial service.

Charlie was a tall, quiet fellow who followed a strict writing schedule. He adapted his own play *Five on the Black Hand Side* into a film and won a NAACP image award. He was an active member of the Harlem Writers Guild before he joined CWC.

But he had other sides to him too. At the well-attended celebration of Charlie's life, friends and family members referred to his other loves—basketball, drama, and jazz. His neighborhood school, McClymonds High, was attended by many of his friends and his little brother Bill. (I suppose I should say *younger* brother, since basketball star Bill Russell is anything but *little*.) But Charlie's parents felt that he would benefit from a more academic atmosphere, so they used a family member's address to enroll him in Oakland Tech.

When his son, Joshua, sat next to me, I was struck by his close resemblance to Charlie. I didn't know Charlie when he was young, but meeting Joshua felt like I was looking at a thirty-year-old Charlie. Joshua was actually born on his father's fiftieth birthday. As one generation ages and passes, another takes over.



CWC is growing older but doesn't show signs of passing. We've made it past 100 and continue to grow. In the past year, Napa started a branch, and it looks as if Santa Cruz may be the next one. The Berkeley branch of CWC (or, as I like to call it—the *trunk*) has over a hundred members, including writers who live as far away as New Mexico. Some never attend meetings but are regulars in one of our critique groups. Some venture out for social occasions but don't come to general meetings. Some only read *Write Angles*. Few take advantage of *all* the club's benefits. We are a diverse bunch who write fiction, poetry, plays, children's books, essays, humor, mystery, memoir, songs, and just about anything else. We have published authors, blog posters, award winners, and folks who have no interest in publishing but like to write.

Although we all have writing in common, members have different needs and wishes for what they hope to get out of the club. But unless you inform me, I won't know what you like and what you don't. Our branch has lost members because we failed to provide what they wanted. So speak up! If you really enjoyed a particular speaker, let me know. If you'd like to be involved in our LitCake event, tell me. If you're tired of _____ (fill in the blank), don't be afraid to drop me a note. If you have a great idea for an event and want to volunteer to plan it, send me an email (berkeley.cwc@gmail.com). And if you want to serve on the board, we have lots of opportunities for you! Remember: it's *your* club.

September 2013

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Upcoming Events

- 9/15 Meetings
10:00 CWC-BB board meeting
12:00 Committee meeting
1:00 Marketing Group
2:00 General Meeting—Speaker:
Brooke Warner
- 10/20 Meeting—LitCake!
- 10/21–10/27 California Writers
Week

The Berkeley Branch meets on the third Sunday of each month (except July, August, and December) at 2:00 p.m. in the Bradley C. Walters Community Room of the Main Library in Oakland at 125 14th Street ([View Map](#)).
Enter on Madison Street.

Free street parking is available, and it is a short walk from the Lake Merritt BART station.

September Speaker

Building a Platform for Success

– David Baker



So far, we view our query letter as a masterpiece. We begin by telling the agent what he or she can look forward to: "No less than 850 pages of pure joy." We stress our novel's exceptionalism by employing a comparison technique popular with agents and editors: "It's like *Taxi Driver* meets *Mary Poppins*." But now we've come to the hard part. How do we present our platform? For that matter, what *is* a platform?

Brooke Warner, our featured speaker for the September 15 meeting, can tell us. Warner spent thirteen years in the publishing industry working as an acquisitions editor, most recently as the Executive Editor at Seal Press. Last year she left Seal Press to found Warner Coaching, through which she offers her services as a writing coach and publishing consultant. She also launched She Writes Press with Kamy Wicoff, founder of SheWrites.com. According to Warner's website, brooke@warnercoaching.com, she has guided novelists, memoirists, screenplay writers, poets, and artists, stressing always the importance of the AAP ("Almighty Author Profile"), which includes the author platform.

*"It's like *Taxi Driver* meets *Mary Poppins*."*

"A platform," she writes, "is anything that shows your future publisher that you have the potential to reach a wide readership." It must be "focused and concise, and if you're smart, it will detail things the publisher won't have thought of." Among the components of a good platform Warner includes: **starting a website** that tells people who you are and offers samples of your writing, **doing outreach**, if you're writing nonfiction, by contacting organizations working in the field you're investigating, **writing op-eds and features** to polish your profile as a published writer, **contacting friends (or friends of friends) in high places** about forewords or blurbs, and **public speaking**.

At the September meeting, Warner will answer our questions about these and other platform building blocks. She may also be willing to help us improve our query letter, which, on second reading, seems apt to trigger a reaction other than the one we want.

Calling for Submissions!

Write Angles is the Berkeley branch's newsletter, but it is also a way for members to get published. We're always looking for book reviews, articles about the publishing industry, and humorous or serious pieces that relate in some way to writing. This fall we're expanding our submissions to include poetry. (See more on page 3.)

Submissions guidelines for *Write Angles*

- send it as an attached word document (doc, not doc.x)
- must be no longer than 425 words
- submit no later than the 15th of the month
- should be in 12 point type, any easy-to-read font (can be single or double-spaced)
- write "submission" in subject line and send to writeangles@gmail.com

Editor will select pieces based on perceived interest to readership and quality of writing. Please polish and proofread before you submit. Editor and copyeditor may edit your piece for space and might contact you for clarification. If your piece is accepted, you will be notified in advance. If I believe your piece is not right for whatever reason, I will let you know why. If we receive lots of quality submissions for one month, we might save some for a future issue.



Poetry Page

FEATURED POET: You!

Write Angles is changing its poetry page. Rather than providing a mini-bio about a famous poet and printing one of his or her poems as we have done in the past, this fall the poetry page will feature members' poetry.

What are the rules of poetry? There *are* no rules. You may submit free verse, iambic pentameter, limericks, haiku, sonnets, or any form of poem on any subject. Except for space, there are no limits. I will select those that I feel are the best written and most appropriate.

So dust off that quill and find your muse. I look forward to reading your submissions!

**Walking on Ensenada**

I walk by this word every morning
And it tells me the same thing each day
This gentle command draws its line in the sand
Even so, I have yet to obey

It hangs on the fence at the corner
This blue and white pirate skull pail
Holding nothing within, but it wears a broad grin
So I know it must have quite a tale



This sign is covered with greenery
It tells me what it wants me to do
So I stop and smile just for a while
And then I continue on through

–Tanya Grove

The CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB is a 501(c) (3) educational nonprofit. dedicated to educating members and the public-at-large in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work.

Be sure to check our website: www.cwc-berkeley.org

Central Board (CB) News

- Linda Brown

In July, your CB hosted two writerly social activities. Perfect weather prevailed for the picnic in Joaquin Miller Park on Saturday, July 20. Members read their works at Open Mic. (Thanks again, Davie Simmons, for your audio equipment.)



Kristen Caven's Winning LitCake

Eight members entered the LitCake contest. Our Kristen Caven won first place with her talking cake, HAL. Four UC Berkeley student volunteers from the Circle K service organization helped make our day a success. We set records for the number of attendees (over 60) and the number of branches represented.



Circle K Volunteers

Sunday's Jack London Awards luncheon reached a new graciousness level with a video showcase of the branches, white tablecloths, and flowers. Thanks to CB Secretary [and CWC-North leader] Joyce Krieg (Central Coast), CB Public Relations Chair Donna



CWC Central Board meeting

McCrohan Rosenthal (East Sierra), and mystery writer Nancy Curtemann (Fremont Area Writers [FAW]) for a truly special event.

Thanks, Berkeley Branch members, for selecting me to receive this branch service award. I will share the video and program and my plaque with you at future CWC-BB meetings.

For insights into the CB business meeting on July 22, spend some time on www.calwriters.org, the CB's website. Here are highlights.



David George (left) and Bob Garfinkle

1) **New Leadership** - Mt. Diablo member, David George, who formerly served as CB Vice-President and held dual membership with the Berkeley Branch, took the gavel from Bob Garfinkle (FAW), who held the post for three years. Many of you met Ray Malus (San Fernando Valley) at the picnic. He's the CB's new At-Large member. He also developed the MRMS software. Check CB website for a full listing of CB representatives and the officers.

2) **Member Record Management System (MRMS)** - Everyone praised the new MRMS software program. It saves time for membership chair volunteers,

(continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4)

tracks dues, and facilitates member networking throughout the Club.

Your CB voted to transfer ownership of the MRMS website to the CB from the San Fernando Valley Branch, which hosted the site while Ray Malus developed it, brought all the branches on board, and created and tested a new enhancement, automated user surveys.

If you have not yet checked your MRMS profile or hooked up with members via MRMS because you don't know how, contact Kristen Caven, kbc@littlepig.com.

3) **New Branch Development**- A group of Santa Cruz writers contacted the CB and are beginning the certification process to become a new branch. To learn what writers must do to qualify, go to www.calwriters.org/central-board/documents and look in the Policies and Procedures.

4) **Publications & Publicity**-Discussed judging criteria for the *Literary Review*—it is comprehensive, issuing *The Bulletin* newsletter, and offering new ways to help members get published and promote their published works.



Barbara Ruffner receives prize for her LitCake
(All photos for this article courtesy of Linda Brown.)

Did you submit to the *Literary Review* by August 30? If not, start planning now for next year!



Entries in LitCake Contest

Did you know that *Write Angles* is now up on our website www.cwc-berkeley.org?
And if you've missed past issues, you can find them on Scribd at this link:
<http://www.scribd.com/search?query=cwc.berkeley+Write+Angles>

NorCal News—Now CWC-North

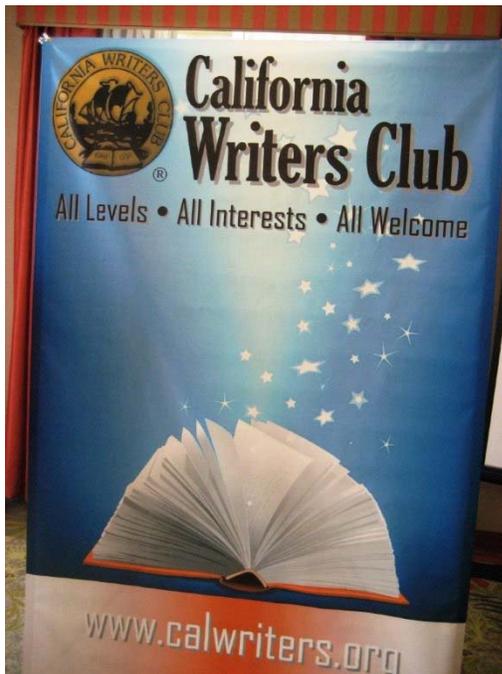
- Linda Brown

I enjoyed my time with CWC writers from other branches at Oakland's historic Bellevue Club on Lake Merritt while Kathleen Orosco was basking or baking in the Texas sun. If you want to join or back up Kathleen for the next CWC-North meeting, save the date: October 5, 11 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Your 10 Northern California branches continue to strengthen the Club with the synergy that only comes from writers from different areas pooling ideas face-to-face, making plans and then making those plans a reality. Here are highlights from the August meeting.

1) Displayed the new banner that, after its debut at the Central Board's Jack London Awards, is now being shared among and shipped to the branches that don't have a banner.

NorCal paid for this new banner after we learned that the CWC-Berkeley banner was a bit too long for the display area at the San Francisco Writers Conference (SFWC) last February.



New poster created by Joyce Krieg (Central Coast), Bob Garfinkle (outgoing CWC-CB President, FAW), and Nancy Curteman (co-chair of the Jack London Awards, original chair of Publishing Pathways FAW).

2) Planned for the 2014 San Francisco Writers Conference, www.SFWriters.org. Next year the CWC may become a sponsor in addition to staffing the CWC exhibit booth. A sponsorship will add our Club name to all print material and some marketing collateral handed out at the Conference.

Both marketing activities and associated expenses promote the Club, our programs, and our published authors. Save the date (President's weekend), check the website, and consider volunteering if you do not pay to go to the conference. Kathleen Orosco is your branch contact for the SFWC.

3) Discussed Publishing Pathways & LitQuake. Judith Marshall, Mt. Diablo, whose book is under contract for a movie, is spearheading the next steps for Publishing Pathways (Read more under the Central Board News). Judith is working with Lucille Bellucci, our branch's mentor.

NorCal will apply for LitQuake exhibit space again next year. We think we were turned down this year because of limited LitQuake space and because the CWC-San Francisco/Peninsula had space in 2012. (LitQuake may be sharing the space with those who did not exhibit last year.)

4) Changed NorCal's formal name to CWC-North to be consistent with the name adopted by the Southern California branches that are now working together regionally. Check out their new website, <http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/> as well as our fab www.norcalwriters.org. The website address will not change.

5) Made plans for a Leadership Conference on Saturday, May 3, 2014. Save the date. This day-long conference strengthens all branches as we pool knowledge and resources.

6) Discussed ways to attract more Career Writers, but I'll report on that once I get the minutes, as I left early for Charlie Russell's Celebration of Life.

Remember October 21-27, 2013 is the 10th anniversary of California Writers Week, and it all began with today's Berkeley Branch.



Appreciation for a Passing Poet

- Al Levenson

Understanding poetry has been a lifelong struggle for me. For most of my life I thought I was hopeless.

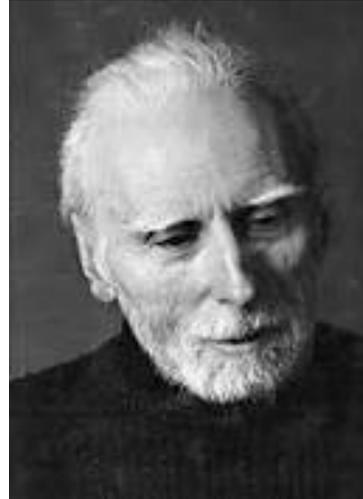
In the English classes of my school days, poetry was treated like the red-headed stepchild. What I gleaned was, if it rhymed, it was poetry. Otherwise, it was a pretender.

Thus, limericks with their complex rhyming scheme were poetry, and some nursery rhymes made the cut. No one mentioned sonnets, haiku, sagas, or doggerel. Free verse seemed to me to be prose in which the length of the lines was nearly equal, without regard to the size of sentences or phrases. It was as if the writer had a secret deal with the typographer.

I did notice that what was proclaimed to be poetry often had a musical quality: rhythm, flow, picturesque language, and evocative words. But because most great prose has all the same qualities, it was hard for me to distinguish what made something poetry and something else prose. In fact, it seemed to be none other than word count.

Over time I have found lines written by those who self-identified as poets. The lines stuck with me for the beauty of the thought within.

"Revelation must be terrible with no time left to say goodbye," a first line of a poem by David Whyte, has stayed with me for years—because I pondered on it for so long before I got it.



Because haiku combined extreme economy of words and precise choice of language to call up grand visions or notions, it became my only form of poetic expression.

I had never heard of Jack Gilbert, whose first book of poetry was nominated for the Pulitzer. He passed away in November of 2012 at the age of 87. Neither had Luc Saunders, an

associate editor of *The Sun* magazine. Luc, impressed with Gilbert's obituary in *The New York Times*, researched further to the benefit of *Sun* readers. The July 2013 number of *The Sun* devotes five pages to Gilbert's poems, plus an introductory page to introduce the man's history and the vitality of his work.

Gilbert's poems speared their way through my infantile understanding of poetry and left me feeling fully appreciative for perhaps the very first time.

I will not soon forget "Failing and Flying," a poem with the opening line, "Everyone forgets that Icarus also flew." Twenty-two unrhymed lines later, the poem concludes, "I believe Icarus was not falling as he fell, but just coming to the end of his triumph."

And I thank Jack Gilbert for putting me in the mind of Icarus.

Lindsay Wildlife Museum Hosts Wild about Writers Celebration

CWC-BB member Charlotte Cook is the conference director for this one-day intimate, inspiring and unique one-day writers' conference on November 2, 2013, at the Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek that benefits both the museum and attending writers.

Keynote speakers include Malcolm Margolin of Heyday Books and Gary Bogue, former wildlife columnist and Curator Emeritus, Lindsay Wildlife Museum.

Presenters include writers, poets, and established writing professionals providing workshops and office hours to attending writers, as well as Lindsay staff offering their insights into local nature and history topics. Profiles and a calendar will be available online shortly.

Limited attendance: 125

Fee of \$150 is for full day of activities, includes workshops, special tours and consulting opportunities, breakfast, lunch, and a Wine and Cheese Mingle, as well as special surprise gifts and book bags.

Registration is online only. Go to the "Event Page" on the Lindsay Wildlife Museum website.

<http://wildlife-museum.org/>

We're adding three contests (poetry, fiction, non-fiction). Five finalists in each category will receive special gifts, with the winner receiving a \$100 cash prize and the opportunity to read at the Wine and Cheese Mingle.



Member News

Berkeley Branch members are encouraged to send us writing-related news. Please write "Member News" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Judith L. Newton's food memoir, *Tasting Home: Coming of Age in the Kitchen*, won an IPPY (Independent Publishers Award) in May 2013.

Risa Nye's Craft essay in *Hippocampus Magazine*, July 2013, "Getting to There," examines the challenges of the writer's journey—beginnings, endings, and the in-betweens—citing John McPhee, Virginia Woolf, and Jane Anne Staw as route-travelers in this "Road Trip"-themed issue.

Risa's book review of *When Will My Grown-Up Kid Grow Up?* by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Ph.D. and Elizabeth Fishel appeared in the July issue of online magazine *More.com*. <http://www.more.com/entertainment/books/review-when-will-my-grown-kid-grow>

Risa was among the 25 bloggers honored by online *Revolution Gray* for writing exceptional blog posts about going gray. For Risa's blog: <http://www.zerotosixtyinoneyear.com/2011/09/touch-of-gray.html>

Lucille Bellucci's compendium of blogs is available at www.authorsden.com/lucillebellucci and in the Blogs category in the sidebar.

Lucille's story "Bottles and Me" made it to the semifinals in the *New Millennium Writings* contest.

Anne Fox's flash fiction "Choices" is in *Flash in the Attic: 33 Very Short Stories*, an e-book published by Fiction Attic Press.

Jeffrey Kingman's story, "The Package," was First Winner in the Flash Fiction contest of *Revolution House*, Vol. 3.1, Spring 2013. http://revolutionhousemag.com/?page_id=23

Kristen Caven and her mother/co-author, Louise Hart, will speak Oct. 2 at Great Good Place for Books, 7 p.m., on *The Bullying Antidote: Superpower Your Kids for Life*, first launched at the CWC in June. Please tell friends with young children, whether pre-schoolers or middle schoolers. 6120 La Salle Ave., Oakland

Remember our Berkeley Branch is celebrating Lit-Quake with its LitCake special event on October 20.



In Memoriam: Charlie L. Russell (3/10/32-6/28/13), a vigorous voice in the Saturday support/critique writers' group, began his published writing early in the '60s was involved with two magazines, and continued to create short stories, plays, a novella, a novel—*The Worthy Ones*—and an off-Broadway play, *Five on the Black Hand Side*, which he made into a screenplay that became the motion picture for which he received the NAACP Image Award. The CWC Saturday support/critique writers' group had the opportunity to read and discuss chapters from Charlie's final writing project, a novel based on Toussaint L'Ouverture's life and the Haitian slave rebellion.

Charlie's career included membership in the Harlem Writers' Guild, the National Black Theatre, and the American Place Theatre, and later work as drama teacher, counselor, and social worker in New York and in California. Always, throughout the years, jazz played on the soundtrack of Charlie's life.

A moving tribute to Charlie, attended by well over 100 people—relatives, colleagues, long-time friends, students, CWC members—was held the afternoon of Saturday, August 3, 2013, at the venerable African American Museum and Library, 659 14th St., Oakland.

Marketplace

Berkeley Branch members are welcome to advertise their writing-related services. Please write "Marketplace" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Charlotte Cook offers story editing, prepublishing services, and workshops for writers of fiction, creative non-fiction, and screenplays. Also available is office/retreat space for classes and meetings. www.adapting sideways.com or charlotte@adaptingsideways.com.

Tatjana Greiner offers developmental editing for all genres of fiction and nonfiction. Email her at workshop@mac.com. More information at: <http://tatjanagreinerwordshop.com>.

Anne Fox, *Write Angles* copyeditor, offers copyediting services for all levels of fiction and non-fiction. References available. writefox@aol.com

Thomas Burchfield offers editing and proofreading services for fiction and nonfiction books by CWC Berkeley members. For details, visit his webpage, e-mail him at tbdeluxe@sbcglobal.net, or call 510-817-4432.

Write Angles

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Lindsay Wildlife Museum

First Annual
**WILD ABOUT WRITERS
 CELEBRATION**
 An intimate, one-day writers conference
 November 2, 2013

