



Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch

centralcoastwriters.org

February 2024

February 20, 2024

Small Publishing in a Big Universe

Steven Radecki



Between traditional publishing and self-publishing there is small publishing. In this presentation, our speaker will discuss the place independent publishers occupy in the publishing ecosystem, comparing and contrasting the submissions processes, benefits, and challenges authors might encounter as they follow each publishing path.

Steven Radecki is the author of *Building Baby Brother*, short fiction, technical papers, and the non-fiction book *Multimedia with QuickTime*. Steven is also the managing editor of Paper Angel Press, Water Dragon Publishing, and Unruly Voices as well as executive producer of the *Small Publishing in a Big Universe* podcast. Steven is a member of the SFWA Independent Authors Committee and is a technical writer by trade.

March 19, 2024

How and When to Write your Memoir

Dr. Evelyn LaTorre



It might surprise you how beneficial thinking and writing about your life can be. This simple creative act leads to insights into how your experiences fit together and explain who you are today. Writing about a personal or family memory also has the potential to improve your physical, emotional,

and spiritual well-being.

Dr. Evelyn LaTorre served in the Peace Corps in Peru and married a native from the Andes, which changed the trajectory of her life. Her first book, *Between Inca Walls*, won the 2021 Moritz Thomsen Peace Corps Experience Award and first place with Chanticleer Books. Her second book, *Love in Any Language*, received a Book Excellence Award and a five-star *Readers' Favorite* rating. Visit her at <https://www.evelynlatorre.com>.

WHAT'S INSIDE

CCW President's Letter	2
Speaker Report	3
Announcements	4
Member Profile	6
Contests and Conferences	7
What's on Your Nightstand?	8
In So Many Words	9
The Last Word	10



CCW President's Letter

By Sarah Pruitt

Dear Central Coast Writers,

This is my last official *Scribbles* letter. From now on announcements and columns will appear on the club website.

(<https://centralcoastwriters.org/>)

All the leftover bits of history trivia I've collected are here for your reading enjoyment. History is filled with odd connections. George Washington's sister married a man whose surname was Lewis. Mr. Lewis's second or third cousin was the Lewis who explored the Louisiana Purchase with his pal Clark.

According to information from the Paul Revere House Website, Paul Revere married twice and fathered sixteen children. Five died young. Of the eleven who survived to grow up, six died as young adults, leaving only five to survive him. Joseph Warren Revere, his tenth child, lived through the Civil War dying in 1868. (110 years after the birth of his oldest sister.) Revere was particularly fond of one of his sons-in-law who first married Deborah Revere, his oldest, and after she died, Elizabeth Revere, Paul's seventh. The man in question worked as a carpenter and his name was Amos Lincoln. A fourth cousin of his fathered Abraham Lincoln.

Before he became President, James Monroe served as our ambassador to Great Britain. When he returned to America from England, the newspapers filled with the story of his younger daughter (age five) wearing a "short" skirt (mid calf) with pantaloons. (Think Little Bo Peep). It was considered a great advance for womankind. For the first time, adults acknowledged that little girls wanted to move around more freely. And they did albeit, modestly covered from head to toe.

Our speaker this month is Steven Radecki. He will be comparing traditional publishers, small publishers, and self-publishing. He will discuss different submission procedures, benefits and challenges for each choice.

Our February meeting will be on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at the Center for Spiritual Awareness, 522 Central Ave. in Pacific Grove, CA.

It is across the street from the Pacific Grove Public Library. If you want to help set up, doors open at 5 p.m. Or, any time between 5:30 and 6:15 is an excellent time to arrive. As always, admission is free for members and guests. Don't forget—FREE pizza!

Let me remind you of coming attractions:

- Our February literary salon will meet from 1 to 3 PM on the following Sunday, February 25, at Juice n' Java, 599 Lighthouse in Pacific Grove, CA.
- No Writers Roundup in February. Stay tuned for March's "The Writer's Tool Kit."

Meanwhile, enjoy your writing journey,

Sarah Pruitt
President



In Search of the Perfect . . . Blurb

Whether you publish indie or traditionally, compelling back cover copy (aka a “blurb”) is an important marketing tool for your book, according to writer Shelley Adina. An attractive cover may lead readers to pick up your book, but it’s the back cover copy that entices them to open it. Back cover copy “makes a promise” to readers of what they can expect to find in your book, so it should evoke the tone and emotion of your genre. “The voice on the back cover should match the book’s,” Adina said.

The first element of a back cover blurb is the shoutline, a pithy, witty sentence that encapsulates the book’s plot or theme and grabs readers’ attention. The body of the blurb should introduce the story’s inciting incident as well as the main protagonists and their inner conflicts and outer goals. At 200 words, the body is not a synopsis but it should address the book’s main question or conflict, Adina said. Back cover blurbs should end with a hook that raises a question or point of tension.

The content of back cover copy shifts slightly for different genres. Blurbs for women’s fiction highlight voice and the protagonist’s inner journey, for example, while urban fantasy blurbs focus on world building. Memoir back cover copy should feature the principal conflict or struggle, voice, interesting details, and theme. “What’s in it for me?” should be clear to potential readers of memoir, Adina said. The number of protagonists also changes a blurb’s content. Back cover copy for dual protagonists might need to address two conflicts or perhaps a relationship. For books with ensemble casts, the story world plays a bigger role. Book series and boxed sets present unique challenges for writing back cover copy—namely, what to highlight and what to leave out? Adina offered two approaches: 1) introduce the story world, give a short blurb for each book, end with a wrap-up that features the larger story question, or 2) focus on anchor character(s) and summarize the story conflicts for other characters.

Good back cover copy uses active verbs, vivid images, and—most importantly— **keywords** that make it easy for potential readers to find your work through online searches. Using keywords that are common for your genre ensures that the algorithms used by sites like Amazon and Google will find your books. Adina suggested using a site like publisherrocket.com to determine the best keywords for your back cover copy.

Announcements

New CCW members

Please welcome new members Florence Ng, Karen Flack, Arvia Glass, Arvia Glass, Patricia Doon, and Jim Hollingsworth.



Next Writers Roundup

Saturday, March 30, 1-3pm

The Writer's Tool Kit: Share Your Favorite Tools and Resources

Facilitated by Jennifer Schmidt, Brooke L. French, Scotty Cornfield

The Little House in Jewel Park, next to the Pacific Grove Library

Sunday Salon

February 25, 1-3pm

Juice n Java

Member Congratulations



Member **Michelle Smith Johansen** was recently notified that her poem titled "The Journey" (about the Middle Passage) won a top-20 position out of nearly 1000 submissions from around the world to *Writer's Digest* Annual Poetry 2023 Contest. There is a small cash award and publication in their July/August issue.

Publicity Chair Needed

We are looking for a new publicity chair. This volunteer position may include sending out postcards, placing ads about our club in print publicity newspapers, helping to expand our use of social media, and/or strategic use of fliers and bulletin boards. What you decide to do depends on what you are interested in doing. If you are thinking about pitching in this way, please contact Sarah Pruitt (Sep23@sbcglobal.net).

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.

In Memoriam: J.T. Rethke

By J.L. Schmidt



December 8, 2022, CCW member J.T. Rethke perished during an automobile accident in El Dorado County while returning home from a trip to Lake Tahoe.

I met J.T. through classes at Monterey Peninsula College. We were some of the more 'senior' students in the creative writing classes and often found ourselves sitting next to each other and chatting. I felt fortunate to have gotten acquainted with him, especially after we discovered that we had many things in common. Not only writing, but an interest (a passion - for him) in aviation, and each of us had been in the Civil Air Patrol in our youths. He'd even offered to take my special needs son flying when he was ready to go. While I didn't know him long, or very well, I wanted to share what will be missed, and the type of person he was.

J.T. was a kind soul and had an adventurous spirit. As a child, he was fascinated and fell in love with aviation. He spent time as a pilot in the US Air Force and was a flight instructor on the C-130. Flying gave him opportunities and adventures that not many else could ever imagine. While in the Air Force, he traveled, received accolades for his work, and expanded and shared his knowledge - even obtaining a patent for a piece of equipment designed to aid other pilots.

After the Air Force J.T. worked as a mechanical engineer for the Pebble Beach Company as well as operating his own [aviation-based business](#). In 2014 he started taking writing classes at MPC. His works were published in the College Literary Magazine '[Scheherazade](#)'. More recently, last year, he was ecstatic, and confessed to being a bit nervous about being signed to a book deal. He was preparing to publish his book about being a bush pilot in Alaska, titled "*South To Alaska; What Could Possibly Go Wrong?*". He'd celebrated this accomplishment freely, having lunch with his writing professor from MPC, and discussing the book deal with those of us that knew about his found love of writing. That was J.T., he's who I envision when someone uses the phrase *a really nice guy*.

There's much more I could tell people about J.T., but I think the best way to get to know who he was is to read about him. Use the links provided, as well as [his webpage](#) that was being prepared for his book release in 2025. You'll get a sense of this lovely man who will be missed.



**You can find some of J.T.'s writing in [Scheherazade](#) starting in issue #5*



“Crime and Comedy: You Can Make this Stuff Up” Scotty Cornfield

Scotty Cornfield’s keen sense of humor belies the dark underbelly of homicide in which he spent more than 30 years fighting crime, including as a homicide detective. His law enforcement career began with a B.S. in Administration Justice from San Jose State University followed by a master’s degree in Public Administration from Golden Gate University. During college, he developed an interest in creative writing—though he jests that he’s likely been writing since his first trimester.

In his “former life,” Scotty was an investigator and inspector with U.S. Customs in the Bay Area and Anchorage, Alaska. He then joined the San Jose Police Department for 28 years, eventually retiring as a commander. His favorite assignments included the homicide unit and working deep undercover. He says his enjoyment of story-telling may explain why he loved testifying in court as a cop.

Scotty fondly recalls the homicide unit’s motto, “Our day begins when yours ends.” So it’s no surprise that his time spent in crime suppression, along with his performances in college as a standup comic, provides plenty of inspiration for his “crime and cop” stories. “Even though I write about the dark world of crime, it’s not always totally serious,” Scotty says of his penchant for humor. “I like to say, ‘I write crime, comedy, crimes involving comedy, and comedies involving crime.’”

Since joining CCW two and a half years ago, Scotty has published two books, *Fast Fiction: 101 Stories of Exactly 101 Words Each, Vol. 1*, and *Fast Fiction, Vol 2: Man Vs. Machine*, both available on Amazon. But he wanted to write something much longer than 101-word essays, so he spent the last two months drafting a novel. If his novel generates enough interest, he may continue down that path in addition to writing short stories.

Beyond writing and sleuthing, Scotty also owned a video production company for a couple of decades. He produced corporate programs for Silicon Valley clients, and he occasionally developed products for television (America’s Most Wanted, ESPN, and the Golf Channel). He also produced a documentary titled *Children of Alcatraz*, a story about the eyewitness accounts of children whose parents worked on Alcatraz Island.

With his diverse expertise, Scotty, who writes best first thing in the morning, offers steadfast advice for fellow CCW members: “Don’t let anybody see what you’ve written until you’ve stepped away from whatever ‘gem’ you may have just written. Even the shortest of stories can almost always be improved with a rewrite or at least another look after time has passed.”

Scotty’s website is www.scottycornfield.com.

Michelle Smith’s articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Her website is www.thebonyquill.com.





This February contest page is my last column for the CCW. The newsletter is undergoing a format change and this column is being retired. It has been a privilege to write the Contests and Conferences page for the club these past seven years. I wish our members all the best in their writing journeys and look forward to seeing you in publication. Thank you for your kind comments and suggestions for and about this page over the years. Enjoy your craft. Keep writing!

CONTESTS

The Whitefish Review 2024 Montana Prize for Fiction

Deadline: February 15, 2024, 11:00 PM MST

Entry Fee: \$22.00

Website: <https://whitefishreview.submittable.com/submit>

Judge: Award winning author Rick Bass

Prize: \$1000 plus publication in issue #30 of [The Whitefish Review](#), all submissions will be considered for publication

Guidelines: See website for complete guidelines. One submission only allowed. Word limit of approximately 7000 words. All work must be original and unpublished. Read previous stories in the review. Any subjects or themes the writer chooses will be considered.

The 15th Annual Claymore Awards Hosted by Killer Nashville Writers' Conference

Deadline: April 1, 2024, midnight Monday night PT

Entry Fee: \$45.00

Website: <https://www.killernashville.com/the-claymore-award>

Prizes: 1st Place: Winner will receive recognition at the Killer Nashville Writers' Conference, along with connections to publishers and agents.

Guidelines: See website for complete guidelines. Enter first 50 pages of an unpublished manuscript, play or screenplay that deals with crime and murder. Visit the website for complete information about attending the Killer Nashville Conference in August 2024.

The Gotham Writers Honest Holiday Haiku Contest

Deadline: Thursday February 29, 2024, 11:59 pm ET

Entry Fee: Free

Website: <https://v2.writingclasses.com/contests/holiday-haiku-contest-2023>

Prizes: 1st Prize: Winner's choice of Gotham in-person or online non-premium courses

Guidelines: See website for details. Submit one Honest Holiday Haiku about the writer's holiday memories. Work must be original, unpublished and in traditional Haiku form.

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

The Community Of Writers Poetry Workshop

Event Date: June 17-23, 2024, **Deadline:** March 10, 2024, must submit work for event

Tuition: \$1675 including 5 dinners, housing and transport not included

Location: Olympic House Lodge, Olympic Valley, CA, See webpage for author requirements

Website: <https://communityofwriters.org/workshops/writers-workshops/>



What are *you* reading now? What book has moved or engaged you in a special way? Share it with the other CCW members. All genres will be accepted. Please send your review to Barbara.siebeneick@gmail.com. Remember to add: Name of book, author, publisher, date of publication and your name. Tell us what the book is about (without giving away any spoilers), your reaction to it and why. This month's review is from *Michael Beck*.

A DAY OF FIRE: A Novel of Pompeii, William Morrow, Harper Collins, 2023

Events of Pompeii's devastating end come from the letters of seventeen-year-old Pliny the Younger, recounting his adoptive father's death during the eruption in October 79AD. In two letters to his friend, the historian Cornelius Tacitus, a generation later, Pliny grasps to contain the memory: "A cloud, from which mountain uncertain, ascended, a pine tree shot up to a great height, with a very thick trunk..."

The letter resurfaced in the 16th century; its crucial evidence was used to unravel different stages of the eruption. Vesuvius intrigue continues today.

In *A Day of Fire*, six renowned authors weave intricate stories, sprout flesh and blood characters, and layer the Greek Tragedy fated for a bloated culture, their gods dark and cowed.

In the introduction, Michelle Moran notes, "Kate Quinn, Stephanie Dray, Ben Kane, Eliza Knight, Sophie Peridot and Victoria Alvear give the reader spirituality and profanity, squalor, immense profits, gladiators, temples, brothels and inns, the ever homeless."

The clatter of the senses, the grit of the streets, gardened estates above, six men and women play their fated lives. Dare I say more?



February. Let's get to the heart of the matter. It's always a challenge to come up with something for a monthly column. I happen to be in the throes of editing my second novel, so I'm going to let you in on a technique I've been using.

I call it a reverse outline. I should probably think of a better name. I know, there are plotters and pantsers and if you're a dyed-in-the-wool pantser you're going to stop reading right about now because I used the "o" word. But wait. I'm not talking about an outline *before* you've written the book (pantsers think that's too constricting, plotters love following a map), I'm talking about *after* you've written it.

I started doing this in the editing stage. My manuscript was complete, I turned it over to my editor (she said she loved it, bless her heart...but...), and I'm reading her notes (...uh oh...). I'm going through the manuscript page by page and after two or three-hundred pages and twenty or thirty chapters—you book authors know—even I'm confused. Who did what to whom in chapter three and is that the same horse in chapter sixteen...?

I needed a way to find things more efficiently. I listed each chapter and the page of the manuscript it starts on. Then I listed the characters in that chapter. I even list ones only spoken about, if I thought I might need to know that. (I put them in parenthesis.) If there is a special category of characters, you might want to list them separately. For me, that means listing horses' names. Then I list the time of year and/or duration of hours or days included in the chapter. If there is some sort of "thread" that weaves in and out of chapters, you might want to list those. For me, journal entries and letters written by characters are important. Finally, I listed the place(s) or setting(s) of scenes in the chapter, then a condensed description. Each chapter looks something like this:

Chapter One (P. 6)

Characters: Ellis, Lucas, Emmett, Jimmie

Horses: Ace, Arrow/Emmett's, Benny

Time: April 1866, 5 days

Letters: Lucas to Ellis re Anders in town

Place: trail to St. Louis, St. Louis (Bilford News & Printing Co.)

Ellis has left for St. Louis. One night on the trail, a Zephyr Post rider finds her and delivers a letter from Lucas. Five days after leaving Cady ranch she reaches the city. Visits Lucas's print shop, sees book and diaries, meets Jimmie Orr. Finds out Anders has left town on a nick-eared horse.

Index cards might work for some, or just plain paper. Whether you try this or have your own way of keeping track of things through the editing process, I hope you find joy in your writing and editing endeavors!

You can find multitudes of books on editing. Here are a few of my favorites:

Intuitive Editing by Tiffany Yates Martin

Self-Editing for Fiction Writers by Renni Browne & Dave King

The Chicago Manual of Style from The University of Chicago Press

The Elements of Style by Strunk & White

The Last Word Christine Sleeter



Farewell

I've enjoyed editing *Scribbles* over these past four years, but it's time to move on to other pursuits. I'm still a member of CCW, I'll still show up for meetings and such, and I'll pitch in in other ways.

But it's time to hand off *Scribbles* to our wonderful new webmaster, Jennifer Schmidt. The format of our newsletter will change, but not the usefulness of the information. There will still be most of the same columns—maybe a new one or two—and the same information about upcoming CCW events.

For me, I'll be diving into the novel I put aside a few months ago in order to finish up some other things.

Oh, and I am the new newsletter editor of my Homeowners Association! Can't get away from it!

Christine

CCW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Sarah Pruitt
Vice President	Scotty Cornfield
Past President	Sharon Law Tucker
Secretary	Joyce Krieg
Treasurer	Gary Parker
Programs Chair	Nancy Middleton
CCW Workshops	Sharon Law Tucker
Membership	Maria Skyttä
Publicity	Nora Peyton
Hospitality	Mike Beck
Newsletter	Christine Sleeter
Webmaster	Jennifer Schmidt
Writing Contests	Dennis Hamilton
Central Board Representative (acting)	Joyce Krieg
NorCal Representative	Position open

Scribbles is the official monthly publication for members of Central Coast Writers, a branch of the California Writers Club, a registered non-profit corporation. All material is copyrighted ©2022 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

Editorial Staff

Christine Sleeter	Editor
Nicki Ehrlich	In So Many Words
Nancy Middleton	Speaker Report
Barbara Siebeneick	What's on your Nightstand?
Michelle Smith	Member Profiles
Patricia Watson	Contests and Workshops

CCW Website

centralcoastwriters.org

Click *Scribbles* Newsletter for archived copies.

For anything *Scribbles* related:

Contact *Scribbles* editor Christine Sleeter

csleeter@gmail.com

Not yet a member of CCW?

You can join at a monthly meeting or online at:

Centralcoastwriters.org

NorCal Group of California Writers Club

cwnorcalwriters.org