

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!



Ink Spots



The Newsletter of Fremont Area Writers

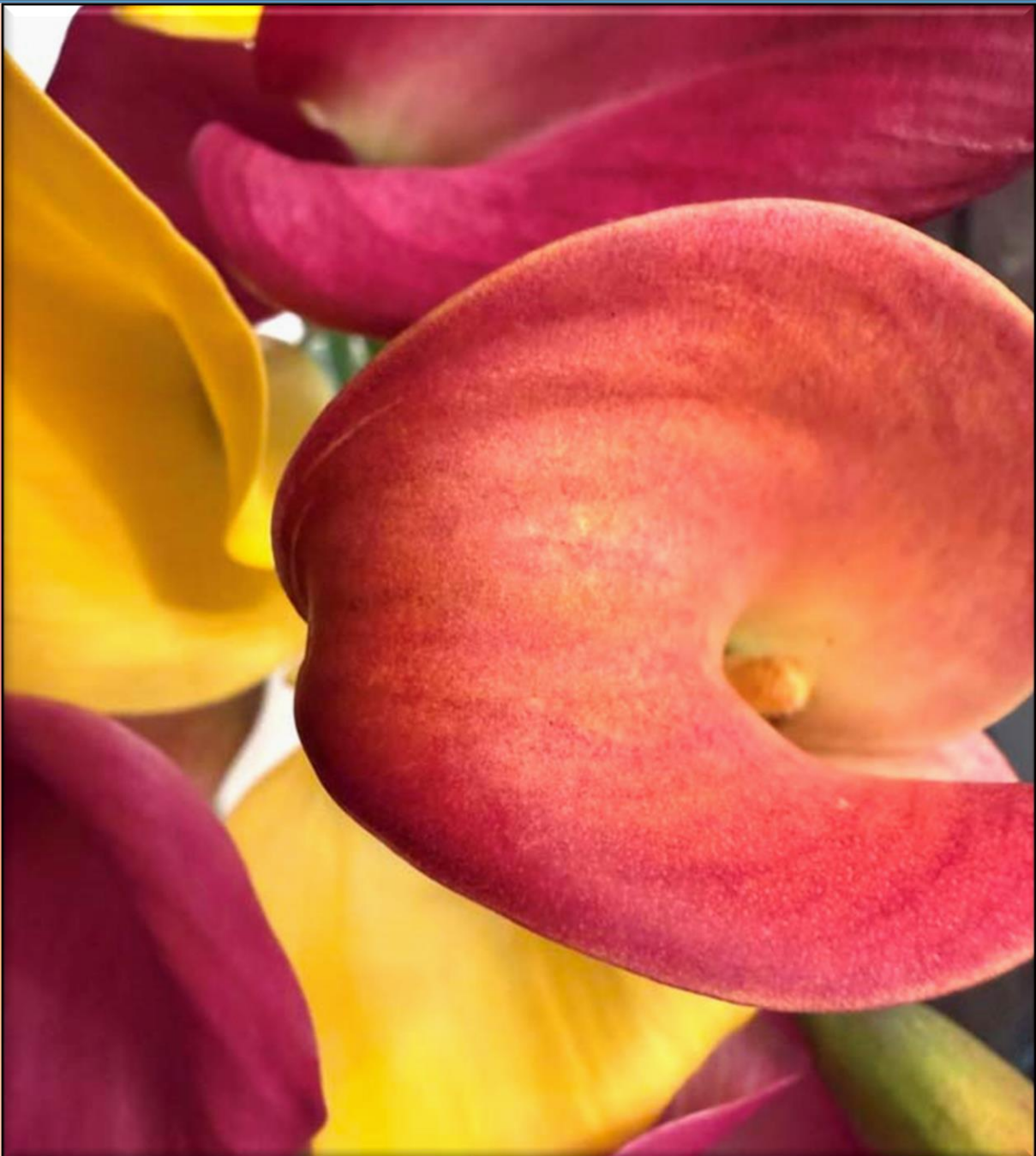
The "Centennial" Branch of the California Writers Club

Nancy Guarnera – Editor-in-Chief

inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org

Vol. 5 No. 5 May 2026

Visit us at <http://cwc-fremontareawriters.org>



Visual Prompt

Photograph by nguarnera

May General Meeting

* May 23rd * 2 to 4 PM * ZOOM * FREE *

WRITING ABOUT FAMILY SECRETS: Drama, Discovery & Mystery

With Guest Speaker

LISA MONTANARO



LisaMontanaroWrites.com

Every family harbors untold stories—discover how to transform these hidden mysteries into compelling narratives. This presentation provides techniques for mining family secrets and weaving them into memoirs, novels, and short stories that resonate with readers.

You'll explore how to navigate sensitive material with depth and nuance while uncovering the dramatic potential that lies beneath the surface of family history. Perfect for writers of any stage and genre seeking to add emotional authenticity to their work. Lisa will touch upon examples from her own experience of using her family's story to create her award-winning novel, *Everything We Thought Was True*.

This presentation will be interactive and include questions and answers. You'll walk away feeling more empowered to include family secrets, real or imagined, on the page and share them with the world.

Bonus: This presentation has broad application to all secrets—even those beyond families!

Lisa Montanaro is part no-nonsense Italian American New Yorker and part sunny Californian. Her unique background encompasses performer, teacher of the Deaf, lawyer, productivity consultant, writer coach, speaker, and author.

Lisa's debut novel, *Everything We Thought Was True*, drew inspiration from her family history and examines the corrosive nature of secrets—those we keep from ourselves, from each other, and from society. It won first place for Best New Fiction/Debut in the 2025 American Writing Awards and first place for LGBTQ Fiction in the 2024 International Firebird Book Awards, among other awards. Lisa is also the author of *The Ultimate Life Organizer*, and contributed the chapter "The Brand Called You" to the anthology *Launch Pad: The Countdown to Marketing Your Book*. Lisa has served as webinar host for the Women's Fiction Writers Association (WFWA) since 2019 and as a passionate member of its Diversity and Inclusion committee since 2018.

When not writing, Lisa enjoys cycling and hiking with her veterinarian husband, tending to her garden, and chasing after her rescue dog. Lisa has enjoyed living snow-free since 2012 in Northern California, where she's made it her mission to sample the wines of the region. Visit her website at www.LisaMontanaroWrites.com and subscribe to her Prosecco & Prose newsletter.

To get your link for this event, email a request with "FAW Zoom" in your Subject line to scottfrombayside@yahoo.com. You'll receive a link on or before the day of the meeting.

You can learn more about **Fremont Area Writers (FAW)** at cwc-fremontareawriters.org. FAW is one of 21 branches of the **California Writers Club (CWC)** calwriters.org. All CWC branches welcome new members.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



Scott Davidson
FAW President

President's Message

Renewal of FAW memberships start next month. We need your continued support to keep having great speakers.

We will let you know when membership renewal is open – probably June 1. There are incentives for renewing early. Everyone who renews in June gets put into a raffle for a free membership, just as in previous years. The winner will be announced at our picnic in July.

This is a good time to talk about what members get from FAW. First, we have speakers from all around the country, and the world, who will help you be a better writer. Having our meetings on Zoom allows us to get more and better speakers than if we were limited to those in easy driving distance. We select speakers on recommendations and

on what you told us you wanted in the survey. Many FAW members write memoirs, so this month we are having a speaker on writing family secrets. Many of you wanted to hear about using humor in your writing (me too); in June we have Brian Copland, who Tish and I have seen many times. *Ink Spots* has the list for the rest of the year. Providing MFA-quality speakers is our goal, and with Zoom, we can do it without charging you to attend.

Members get invited to the picnic and the holiday party. Members get informed of our FAW lunches and dinners, which allow us to talk to each other in real life. We also have the write-in and the literary salon each month. And we have *Ink Spots*, which tells you what is going on, gives you contest and writing opportunities, and is a place where members can submit their work. Members also get access to recordings of our general meetings when the speaker lets us record—most do.

It all costs money. We have to pay the speakers, pay for our website and Zoom, and provide food and a venue for the parties. Part of your membership fee goes to the statewide CWC.

So, I have two requests. First, please renew early enough to get into the raffle. I'll send reminders to those who don't. You can avoid my mail by renewing before I need to remind you. Try to find time to go to our meetings and lunches and dinners. Let us know what else we can do to make your membership more rewarding. And, if you're not a member, please join. Help support our work. Just go to our website at the link below and click on the Join Us tab.

Keep thinking and writing!

Scott



Visual Prompt
Artwork
by Jo Ann Frisch

<https://cwc-fremontareawriters.org/join-us/>



Table of Contents

<i>Visual Prompts</i>	1, 3, 21 & 29
<i>General Meeting/Speaker</i>	2
<i>President's Message</i>	3
<i>A Word from Our Editor</i>	4
<i>FAW Meetings</i>	5 - 6
<i>FAW Speakers Calendar</i>	7
<i>KUDOS – Members' News</i>	8
<i>FAW & CWC Info</i>	9 – 11
<i>Mark Your Calendar</i>	11
<i>Contests</i>	12 - 14
<i>Book & Movie Reviews</i>	15
<i>Notes from the World</i>	16 - 18
<i>Members on Social Media</i>	19
<i>FAW Writers' Corner</i>	20 - 29
<i>FAW Board Members</i>	30
<i>FAW Committee Chairs</i>	31



A Word from Our Editor



Nancy Guarnera
Editor *Ink Spots*

Welcome to our May 2026 issue. We hope you enjoy it!

It's the Merry Month of May! This month we remember those who have fallen in battle while defending our country, celebrate mothers, workers, and the phenomenon, Star Wars...May the 4th be with you!

This issue has submissions by Jo Ann Frisch and Sam Rodriguez from last month's FCAC Flash Fiction Contest. It's also packed with a few longer pieces for your delight. The final installment of Maren Madalyn's piece "A Thousand Lives Over," the first installment of Jo Ann Frisch's "A Trip to the De Young Museum," and Richard McCallum's podcast script "The Motherboard Glows Warmly on Mother's Day." If you have a longer piece (3,000 words max) you'd like to submit, we can discuss serializing it. Let me know in your cover letter the word count and your willingness to have it published in installments.

Lots of KUDOs for our members this month! Reading at the Hayward Lit Hop, speaking engagements, winning book awards, having a work accepted for publication, and participating in local contests—we're a busy branch!

If you're missing face-to-face communion with your fellow FAW members, check out the info for the Social Dinner happening on Monday the 11th at Le Moose in Fremont. Prefer a solitary pursuit, like reading a good book? Check out Evelyn LaTorre's recommendations in the Book & Movie Reviews page.

There are some new, and on-going, contests...some with substantial prize money. In fact, these contests run the gamut from poetry, stories, novellas, and self- and hybrid-published books. Something for everyone. Nothing ventured...

We've got some great speakers/topics coming up at our general meetings through the rest of the year; you'll find these listed in this issue. Our Board members and committee chairs are listed with photos of all of us on the final two pages. Take a look, and you'll be able to pick us out of a crowd, get to know us, and ask questions you may have, and/or offer to share the opportunities for service to CWC, FAW and your writing compatriots.

June and July have special mention to get us all thinking about the future. If it's June it's time to vote for our FAW Board members and to renew our CWC/FAW membership. If it's July...it's time to party at the FAW Annual Picnic. Details are waiting inside this issue. If you'd like to run for office, let Scott Davidson know: scottfrombayside@yahoo.com.

If you want to read up on any of the above-mentioned content, check the Table of Contents on page 3.

Just a quick reminder—Deadline for all submissions for the June issue is May 10th. If you need more time please email inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org and let me know. Thanks!

For complete submission guidelines check the Newsletter menu on the FAW website and click on "Guidelines [here](#)".

Please send all submissions as attachments • Use a separate email for each type of submission

Send all submissions to: inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org

Make sure your name is on each piece you are submitting, not just in your email

WORD doc or docx 12pt Cambria for written work • JPEGs for artwork & photos (300 dpi)

If you'd like a full set of guidelines, email inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org and request it.

FAW – May Meetings

Fremont Area Writers “Fourth Saturday”

General Mtg on Zoom

Saturday May 23rd 2:00 – 4:00 PM

*Meeting is open to CWC/FAW members and the public
Writers of all skill levels are welcome*

Speaker: Lisa Montanaro Author (p.2)

www.LisaMontanaroWrites.com

For details on Zooming, contact Scott Davidson at

scottfrombayside@yahoo.com

Fremont Area Writers “Tuesday before 4th Saturday”

Board Meeting on Zoom

Tuesday May 19th 4:00 PM

*Meeting is open to FAW members to observe their Board in action.
Comments and questions from members will be addressed
at the end of the meeting, with prior notice.*

For details on Zooming, contact Scott Davidson at

scottfrombayside@yahoo.com

FAW – May Meetings

Fremont Area Writers

“Second Saturday”

Social Write-In on Zoom

Saturday May 9th 2:00 – 3:30 PM

*Get to know others through personal writing with prompts.
Members receive a Zoom invite. Non-members should
contact Scott Davidson (see below) for an invite.*

*For details on Zooming, contact Scott Davidson at
scottfrombayside@yahoo.com*

Fremont Area Writers

“Fourth Monday”

Writers’ Salon on Zoom

Monday May 25th 7:00 – 9:00 PM

*Open to FAW members and the public.
Share, listen and support writers as they read their work.
For a Zoom invitation link contact Tony Pino (see below).*

*For details on Zooming, contact Tony Pino
up.dragonfly.com@gmail.com or 510-745-0761*

FAW 2026 Speakers

2026 FAW GENERAL MEETINGS TOPICS & SPEAKERS

MAY 23RD 2-4 PM ZOOM

Writing about Family Secrets

Lisa Montanaro *Author*
www.LisaMontanaroWrites.com

JUNE 27TH 2-4 PM ZOOM

Writing Comedy or Writing Comedy into Fiction

Brian Copeland *Author, Comedian*
www.briancopeland.com

AUGUST 22ND 2-4 PM ZOOM

Writing Flash Fiction

Robert Seigel *Writer, Teacher*
www.robertanthonysiegel.com/writing

July — No General Meeting

FAW PICNIC

Date, Time & Place TBD

SEPTEMBER 26TH 2-4 PM ZOOM

Anatomy of a Short Story

Margaret (Peggy) Lucke *Writer, Editor, Teacher*
www.margaretlucke.com

OCTOBER 24TH 2-4 PM ZOOM

The Art of Revision and Self-Editing

Katherine Sherbrooke *Writer*
www.kasherbrooke.com

NOVEMBER 28TH 2-4 PM ZOOM

Practical Tools for Writing Layered Stories, Not Stereotypes

Angela Álvarez Vélez *Writer, Teacher*
www.angelaalvarezvelez.com

December — No General Meeting

FAW HOLIDAY PARTY

Date, Time & Place TBD



General Meetings are on the 4TH SATURDAY of the month

(No general meetings in July & December.)

All FAW members receive links to FAW meetings. Non-members can email scottfrombayside@yahoo.com to receive a link. Put "ZOOM LINK" in the Subject line. You will receive the link the week before the meeting.

PLEASE NOTE: While not required...if a topic is of interest to you, consider checking out the speaker's website, before the meeting. There may be gold waiting for you there!



KUDOS – Members' News

If you have an accomplishment related to your writing, or some other creative aspect of your life, and would like to share it with FAW members in this space, please send it to inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org, or submit it through the **Shout Out for Ink Spots** link at cwc-fremontareawriters.org. Just scroll down the home page until you reach the red **Shout Out** link and click on it. Please do your best to keep it to **100 words or less**. Put **FAW – Shout Out – Your Name** in the Subject field of your email to us. If you don't, your email may get lost in the mail. Thanks!

KUDOS to Scott Davidson, Tish Davidson, Pat Doyne, Jackie Freitas, Maren Madalyn, Sam Rodriguez, and Dave Strom for reading their work at the Hayward Lit Hop on April 25th at the Zin Café. This was FAW's first time participating in the Lit Hop. Comments on their experiences are on page 11 in this issue. **Congratulations to you all!**

KUDOS to Pat Doyne whose artwork is in "The Lusty Month of May" art show at the Upper Market Gallery on 18th Street in San Francisco. The gallery will be open on the first three weekends in May. **Congratulations, Pat!**

KUDOS to Jo Ann Frisch & Samuel J. Rodriguez for taking a chance and entering their work in the April FCAC Flash Fiction Contest. Jo Ann submitted three pieces and Sam submitted one. You will find Sam's and two of Jo Ann's in this issue in the Writers Corner. Jo Ann's third submission was printed in last month's (April 2026) issue. **Congratulations, Jo Ann & Sam!**

KUDOS to Evelyn LaTorre who will be stepping into the position of Secretary on the CWC Board in the next couple of months. She will be giving up her responsibilities as FAW's representative for both the NorCal and CWC. She is hoping to pass these opportunities to members who will enjoy being of service to FAW in these positions.

Evelyn gave two presentations in Sacramento where she talked about her memoir, *Between Inca Walls*. On Friday, April 24, twenty members of Washington Commons Cohousing gathered to hear about Evelyn's exploits in the Peace Corps and ask questions. A comment between two of the attendees: "Do you think Evelyn knows how entertaining her presentation is?" On the 25th, thirty educators welcomed her at the DKG Northern California Conference held at Sacramento State University. She was the guest speaker at the "Meet the Author" session. **Congratulations, Evelyn!**

KUDOS to Richard McCallum, whose book, *Sacajawea: A Journey Home*, is now available in Indie California: Discover Books From Local Authors, a collection of books from local indie authors available exclusively on the BiblioBoard Library mobile and web platform. This collection is available to patrons of participating libraries all across the state. **Congratulations, Richard!**

KUDOS to Rose Owens whose essay, "The Day We Become Silent," has been accepted for publication in *Havik*. **Congratulations, Rose!**

*"Write
like it matters,
and it will."
— Libba Bray*

*"Writing, to me,
is simply thinking
through my fingers."
— Isaac Asimov*

FAW & CWC Information

– PLEASE READ –

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR

You're Invited to...

Fremont Area Writers Social Dinner

Monday May 11th at 6:00 pm

Le Moose Café

at 5014 Mowry Ave. in Fremont

Details will be e-mailed to members. Feel free to bring a guest.

<https://lemoosecrepecafe.com/qr-all-menu/>

FAW Needs You **Help Wanted** FAW Needs You

The following non-elected Board positions need to be filled:

CWC & NorCal Representative(s) Wanted

We are looking for a California Writers Club Representative and a NorCal (Northern California Branches) Representative. Evelyn LaTorre has held both these positions for a number of years and is planning to step down as soon as we've found replacements. For more information about these positions, contact Evelyn at elatorre@aol.com.

You can also contact Scott Davidson at scottfrombayside@yahoo.com.

Hospitality Chair

welcomes, introduces, contacts, & encourages newcomers to join FAW

Service Coordinator

finds & assigns volunteers to assist FAW committee heads

Please speak to a Board member if you are interested in one of these positions or in being of service to FAW in some other capacity. Check the last two pages in this issue for contact info.

FAW & CWC Information

— PLEASE READ —

Election for 2026-2027 FAW Board Officers

President • Vice-President • Secretary • Treasurer

at the

June 27th GENERAL MEETING June 27th

If you have an interest in running for a position on the FAW Board and would like to know what any of these positions entail, please contact current president, Scott Davidson at scottfrombayside@yahoo.com. He will make sure that you get the information you need to make an informed decision about running. Anyone who is a member of CWC and FAW is eligible to run for FAW office.

We hope that whether you run for office or not, that you will make sure you attend the June meeting to vote for our '26-'27 Board.

You must be a member of FAW to vote.

JUNE IS CWC/FAW MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL MONTH

Everyone who renews in June will be added to the “hat” for a drawing for a free membership. The winner will be announced at the picnic in July. Go to the FAW website to pay your dues —

<https://cwc-fremontareawriters.org/join-us/>

• WRITING OPPORTUNITY •

If you or your child has had a vaccine-preventable disease such as measles, whooping cough, shingles, polio, German measles (rubella), chickenpox, influenza, rotavirus, etc., the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is collecting stories to post on the web to educate people who are unfamiliar with these diseases. You can read other stories and submit your story here: www.chop.edu/parents-pack/personal-stories No guarantee they will accept it and no pay, but a good writing credit.

Submitted by Tish Davidson

FAW & CWC Information

HAYWARD LIT HOP

FAW participated in our first Lit Hop on Saturday, April 25. Seven FAW readers shared their prose & poetry to a good crowd at the Kin Cafe. FAW readers from left to right: Maren Madalyn, Samuel J. Rodriguez, Scott Davidson, Jackie Freitas, Dave Strom, Pat Doyne, and Tish Davidson.



"Writing can be a lonely journey. But magic happens when we pluck at the threads of community along the way. Hayward's fifth annual Lit Hop cast a powerful spell for all lovers of the written word. I attended two reading events, where I laughed with fellow speculative fiction fans, felt poetry flow through me like healing water, and celebrated every creator's unique craft. This delightful and uplifting event also included the chance to share my writing aloud with FAW members—potent medicine for my wavering self-confidence as a new writer. I highly recommend attending Lit Hop next spring."

— **Maren Madalyn**

"Lit Hop was a great way for us to get to know each other and grow closer as a club." — **Samuel J. Rodriguez**

"I read with Sandra Rogers' Hare's San Leandro Writers Workshop, and with Fremont Area Writers. Both groups attracted a small but eager audience. I got a chance to meet Hayward's new Poet Laureate, a young teacher named Mo Kim-Tong."

This event is a good cross-section of the local writing community, from Senior Scribes to CSUEB's literary magazine, The Red Chair."

— **Pat Doyne**

*At Hayward Lit Hop this year, I was with the Fremont Area Writers reading group. I read from my book *The Rise of the Stumpfinger*. and from my story *The God Glove*, where Super Holly Hansson and Cal "The Intellectual" Critbert discover that the God Glove turns thought into reality. Reading went well; the audience liked it.*

After the readings, a couple of ladies told me how much they liked my reading. I thanked them and then they said they could see what was happening, which is a good thing. And they told me they saw so many layers in the story. I had to tell them, "I never thought of that." Layers and layers. Was it Holly's consciousness expanding to the stadium, the city, the Earth, the galaxy, the universe? Sometimes readers see things that writers don't even know they put into the story. — **Dave Strom**

**MARK
YOUR
CALENDAR**

FAW ANNUAL PICNIC
SATURDAY • JULY 11TH • 11:00AM

Join the fun! Help with set-up and clean-up!

Email Scott: scottfrombayside@yahoo.com

More Picnic Information in the June issue.

\$\$\$ CONTESTS \$\$\$

NARRATIVE MAGAZINE

For general submissions to the magazine:

www.narrativemagazine.com/submit-your-work

SPRING 2026 STORY CONTEST

Fiction, Non-fiction, Essay, Memoir, etc. / First Prize: \$2,500

Deadline: June 26th

www.narrativemagazine.com/spring-2026-story-contest

Story of the Week

www.narrativemagazine.com/story-week-guidelines

Six-Word Stories

www.narrativemagazine.com/sixwords

Poem of the Week

www.narrativemagazine.com/poem-week-guidelines

Photography

www.narrativemagazine.com/photography

DEADLINES: Continuous...check your category

TCK Publishing.com

TCK Publishing Mission Statement

Our mission is to help all our clients earn a full-time income from book royalties.

TCK has various contests throughout the year and accepts submissions of both fiction — all genres & markets — non-fiction and poetry

2026 TCK Publishing Poetry Awards Contest

Deadline: June 30, 2026 Prize: \$1,000 and publication

<https://www.tckpublishing.com/2026-poetry-awards-contest/>

FREE classes and webinars

www.tckpublishing.com

\$\$\$ CONTESTS \$\$\$

The Wolfe Pack &
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine

Proudly Announce

Our 20th Annual

Black Orchid Novella Award Contest



Portrait of Nero Wolfe by Kevin I. Gordon

Does your sleuth measure up to this master?

We are looking for original works of fiction in the traditional deductive style exemplified by Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe. Your entry must:

- Contain no overt sex or violence
- Emphasize the ratiocinative skills of the sleuth
- Not include characters from the Nero Wolfe series

First Prize: \$1,000. . .and publication in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*

Entries must be 15,000 to 20,000 words in length, and **must be submitted by May 31, 2026**. The winner will be announced at The Wolfe Pack's Annual Black Orchid Banquet in New York City on December 5, 2026.

Please visit www.nerowolfe.org for official rules, procedures and guidelines.

For questions, contact Jane K. Cleland, Chair of the BONA contest, at Jane@janecleland.com.

*If no acceptable candidates are received, AHMM and The Wolfe Pack reserve the right to declare no winner for any given year.

\$\$\$ CONTESTS \$\$\$

North Street Book Prize

Self- or Hybrid-Published Books



TOTAL PRIZES: \$23,500 Grand Prize: \$10,000 plus various publishing and marketing tools

DEADLINE: July 1, 2026

GENRE: All styles & themes – genre fiction • creative nonfiction • memoir • etc.

ENTRY FEE: \$ 95 per book • Length: 200K words max

SUBMIT TO: <https://winningwriters.com/our-contests/north-street-book-prize>

FAW & CWC \$\$\$CONTESTS\$\$\$

* CONTESTS * PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES * CONTESTS *

Napa Valley Writers

Invites CWC Members to Submit to the 2026 Anthology

“THE HIDDEN STORY:

What Shocked, Surprised or Shattered a World”

Deadline: June 1, 2026

The Napa Valley Writers are working on a great anthology, which will have wide, general appeal and be released in time for Christmas, 2026. This anthology is open to everyone.

Unpublished work only. No AI.

We're looking for writing that dares to go beneath the surface—a revelation that reordered everything, an ordinary moment that concealed something extraordinary, the truth that arrived too late or, just in time. The shock of sudden loss. The slow surprise of becoming someone new.

The quiet shattering that no one else saw.

We welcome fiction, non-fiction, essays, and memoir. Limit is 1,500 words. Prose only.

Guidelines & submission info: www.napavalleywriters.org/2026-anthology

Book & Movie Reviews

Here's your opportunity to share your favorite books & movies. They can be just for fun, ones that changed your life, books on writing craft, etc. If you decide to submit: **300 to 600 max. word count doc file**. Please send to the **Ink Spots** email address and put **FAW—Book/Movie Review—Your Name** in the Subject field.

(The opinions stated here are strictly those of the individual, and do not represent either CWC or FAW.)

THE REST OF OUR LIVES

by Ben Markovits

In a stream-of-consciousness narrative, the author illustrates a doozy of a midlife crisis.

Tom Layward takes a sabbatical from teaching law—and from his marriage to Amy. He justifies possibly leaving his over 20-year marriage because his wife had a brief affair twelve years ago. His unplanned road trip starts after he drops his youngest child off at college in Pittsburg and he forgets the sports jacket he needs to have lunch at a high-brow club with a former law school classmate. So, on a whim, Tom drives on to Indiana to see his divorced younger brother. Then, in response to texts and phone calls he receives, he continues driving to stay with a fellow lawyer in Colorado, a former girlfriend in Nevada, and to see his son in California.

Each character in Tom's life is well defined and entertaining, in contrast to his rather docile personality. He's especially passive about health warnings he experiences and chalks them up to just getting old. In three chapters, the reader rides with Tom as he describes his life and the countryside and cities he drives through.

In her review of Markovits' Booker prize-nominated novel, author Ann Patchett says, "Feels less like reading a novel and more like sitting in a car beside a dear friend as he navigates the road up ahead. A profoundly moving experience."

Review by Evelyn LaTorre

More Than Enough

by Anna Quindlen

The multilayered plot of this novel brings up a wide variety of current topics: genetic ancestry, biracialism, Alzheimer's, invitro fertilization, homosexuality, menopause, and alpaca farming. I learned something about each of these subjects that I hadn't realized before. The story revolves around four middle-aged women friends living in the New York City area, who are the only members of a long-running book club. They meet monthly, but their lives intersect in interesting ways in between.

Polly, a high school English teacher in an all-girls private school narrates the story. Jamie is a sharp-tongued psychotherapist, who has opinions about everything. Helen, a soft-spoken lawyer, acts as a peacemaker when controversy erupts. Sarah, who inherited millions from her second husband, is a philanthropist cancer-survivor. None of the women read the books they assign themselves each month, but they do talk a great deal about one another's lives and those of the people they know. Peripheral themes such as the mystery of Polly's DNA and infertility are propelled by development of sub-characters like the women's husbands, in-laws, children, and animals.

Anna Quindlen has written 11 fiction, 10 non-fiction, and two children's books, so her storytelling ability is well established. This latest work is no exception. I felt fortunate to inhabit another of her worlds for the day it took me to read this fascinating novel.

Review by Evelyn LaTorre

Notes from the World

**HEAR YE!
HEAR YE!**

Check out the
Poetry Foundation

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/poem-of-the-day>

Register to receive
a free poem each day
& all sorts of other
cool poetry stuff

AUTHORS PUBLISH

<https://authorspublish.com>
Check here for lists of publishing
opportunities (*Please vet before submitting*):

[https://authorspublish.com/
32-flash-fiction-markets/](https://authorspublish.com/32-flash-fiction-markets/)

[https://authorspublish.com/
12-places-that-publish-writing-about-
writing-and-publishing/](https://authorspublish.com/12-places-that-publish-writing-about-writing-and-publishing/)

[https://authorspublish.com/
25-magazines-accepting-creative-
nonfiction/](https://authorspublish.com/25-magazines-accepting-creative-nonfiction/)

[https://authorspublish.com/
40-specialized-manuscript-
publishers-that-accept-direct-
submissions/](https://authorspublish.com/40-specialized-manuscript-publishers-that-accept-direct-submissions/)

... and many more ... a newsletter
and free webinars on craft....

FREE Online Workshops w/ JANE CLELAND

Award-winning author Jane Cleland offers **FREE** Zoom workshops on the craft of writing for writers of every skill level. Jane takes you behind the curtain and shares her years of experience with writing craft and its many intricacies, as well as the world of traditional publishing, with its agents, editors and publishers...Oh my! Register in advance at janecleland.com/events. You'll receive a link for the workshop shortly before, and on the day of the event. Don't miss these...register early.

Saturday, May 16 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM PT
**"Tropes, Clichés and Conventions, Oh, My!
A Writer's Guide to Genre Expectations and
Fresh Storytelling"**

Learn what tropes are—and aren't, how they differ from clichés, and why readers in different genres accept and expect conventions.

Saturday, June 13 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM PT
**"The Anatomy of a Bestseller: Discussing
Suspense, Structure & Plot w/ Chris Pavone"**
Drawing on real life to build complex plots & manage tension between the known & the concealed.

Jane Cleland is an award-winning author who writes both fiction and nonfiction. Her fiction includes the long-running Josie Prescott Antiques Mystery series, published by St. Martin's Minotaur and *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. Her non-fiction includes the Agatha-Award winning best-sellers, *Mastering Suspense, Structure & Plot* and *Mastering Plot Twists*. She's a Contributing Editor at *Writer's Digest Magazine* and the chair of the Black Orchid Novella Award (BONA). Cleland teaches writing at the university level, and offers free monthly webinars on the craft and business of writing.

Register on Jane's website to receive a Zoom link.
<https://janecleland.com/events/>

WINNINGWRITERS.COM
contests with big \$\$\$ prizes

Notes from the World

★ CONTESTS ★

★ NEWSLETTERS ★

★ ETC. ★

Writers Weekly. Free newsletter. 24-hour short story contest once each quarter. Topic and word length revealed after signing up. Limited to 500 entrants. \$5 entry fee. Also lists some paying markets for fiction and nonfiction.

writersweekly.com

Winning Writers. Free newsletter. Lists free contests (many age or location restricted) as well as pay-to-enter contests. Lots of poetry contests.

winningwriters.com

Poets & Writers. Website. Searchable con-test database with filters for cost, genre and deadline. pw.org/grants

Submishmash Weekly. Free newsletter. A curated arts newsletter with select publishing opportunities including contests, publications seeking submissions, and artist residencies. Run by the submission platform Submittable.com.

The Writer. Website and free newsletter. Listing of mostly pay-to-enter contests. writermag.com/contests

Fan Story. Paid site. Seven-day free trial. \$9.95/month or \$69/year. Feedback on writing you post and almost daily contests that can be entered at no additional fee. fanstory.com

Gotham Writers Workshop

— FREE —

The **Gotham Writers Workshop** in New York City has put together the **Inside Writing** series of free talks about writing. Now in its fifth season, the workshops cover a variety of tools necessary to writers in today's world. The format varies from season to season. Best of all, you get to listen and learn from other writers!

Free Talks are archived at:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIOByuSHCqP7V9mSsoqU5Fojjys2LsvYi>

Inside Writing: A recent Special Episode discussed the importance of using "sensitivity readers" as part of your editing process.

Check out these **free** talks on writing!

Call for

Romance Submissions

Belonging Books, an inclusive, feminist publishing house, began accepting submissions in June 2020. Submissions can be of all lengths from and about minorities—people of color, people with disabilities, religious minorities, LGBTQ+ people, etc.—and non-traditional romance.

Mission: diversify and modernize the genre. belongingbooksonline.wordpress.com

FREE Online Workshops

scriptwriters check out
roadmapwriters.com

Notes from the World

Reedsy Learning

FREE

*Writing Classes,
Webinars and a Blog*

https://blog.reedsy.com/learning/courses/writing/show-dont-tell/?utm_source=mailparrot&utm_campaign=learning_show_don_t_tell

Reedsy has lots of free classes and webinars for writers, as well as many archived blog topics.

Check it out!

GENRE WEBSITES

Sisters in Crime sistersincrime.org *(also open to men)*

Mystery Writers of America mysterywriters.org

Golden State Romance Writers
goldenstateromancewriters.org
(open to all genre fiction writers)

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association
sfwa.org

Inspire Christian Writers inspirewriters.com

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators
scbwi.org

Women's National Book Association wnba-books.org
(also open to men)

Academy of American Poets poets.org

Poetry Society of America poetrysociety.org

National Association of Memoir Writers namw.org

American Society of Journalists and Authors asja.org
(nonfiction writers)

CineStory cinestory.org (screenwriters)

Scriptwriters Network scriptwritersnetwork.com

Historical Novel Association historicalnovelsociety.org

Horror Writers Association horror.org

FundsforWriters.com

Chosen 101 Best Writing Websites by Writer's Digest for the last 20 years in a row.

One of the web's best experts on **grants/fellowships/scholarships/awards/contests** for writers.

The subscription is FREE.

Do like 27,000 others and simply go to **FundsforWriters.com** and sign up. We'll keep your contact information private.

Look forward to you joining us!

fanstory.com

Contests with cash prizes you can enter this week!

Take a look at this site. Lots of interesting contests.

Many are very short...not necessarily easy, but as short as a one-line poem, or a 50-word flash fiction story. Some may have deadlines fast approaching, others you'll have time to contemplate.

Fee Site. Seven-day free trial. \$12.95/month or \$155/year. Feedback on writing you post and almost daily contests that can be entered at no additional fee.

FAW Members on Social Media

● **Angelica G. Allen**

Angelica is a Seventh-Day Adventist Christian author of **Millennial Fiction and Poetry** books, genres targeted to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to millennials. These SDA Christian genres were created by the Fremont, Bay Area native, and are defined as having Seventh-Day Adventist symbolism, coded languages, lyrical writing, illustrations, and emotional storytelling in her U.S. Copyright. You can learn more about these books on her website: **angelicagabriellaallen.com**. Like her author Facebook page **@AngelicaG.Allen** and follow her on Instagram: **@AngelicaGAllen** where she posts a new poem in her Reels section every Wednesday!

● **Cherilyn Chin**

Cherilyn is a professional aquarist and marine biologist. For the past 12 years, she's maintained her award-winning blog, "**Ocean of Hope: Marine Animals Voice Their Wishes on Ocean Conservation Issues**," and has 8,500 followers on Twitter. She also writes children's fiction and non-fiction books about the ocean. She's a website developer, strategic content copywriter, and digital marketer at **Wordsmith for Wealth**. **https://oceanofhope.net**; Twitter: **@protectoceans**; **https://wordsmithforwealth.com**

● **Terry Connelly**

Twice a week Terry posts her own writing ranging from essays, personal stories, poetry and short fiction. On her second blog she posts prompts twice a week, to help get you started. **tconnellyswritingposts.com** and **connellyswritingprompts.com**

● **Evelyn LaTorre, EdD**

Evelyn loves to travel and write about her experiences. Besides travel adventures, the blogs on her website share the first chapter of her prize-winning book, *Between Inca Walls*, her adventures in other countries, and her cousin's drowning on the Costa Concordia cruise ship. Her second memoir, *Love in Any Language*, shows how a shotgun wedding turns into a bulletproof marriage. It won a Book Excellence award. You can also find recent recordings of her interviews. Website: **https://www.evelynlatorre.com**.

● **Dave M. Strom**

Check out Dave's creative and tech writing blogs and his videos at: **http://davemstrom.wordpress.com/**
http://davemstrom.weebly.com/ **http://www.youtube.com/user/davstrom**

● **Anita Tosh**

Anita writes YA Christian fiction often with a focus on the "end times." She's recently published her third book, *The Book of Jeremy*. It's now available for sale. Website & Blog: **booksbyanita.com**
Facebook Group: **https://www.facebook.com/groups/111394698919**
YouTube Channel: **https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCn2Eh1NyNnca6V0pAZNUSRA**

*"You don't start out writing good stuff.
You start out writing crap and thinking it's good stuff,
and then gradually you get better at it. That's why I say
one of the most valuable traits is persistence."*

— Octavia E. Butler

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER

April's FCAC's Flash Fiction Contest, at Half Price Books in Fremont, had fewer entries than last September. Only two of FAW members, Jo Ann Frisch and Sam Rodriguez, submitted their work this time around. We thank them for representing FAW and include three of their entries here. A fourth, "The Dream," a poem by Jo Ann, appeared in the April 2026 issue of *Ink Spots*. April's prompt was "FIRST LOVE."

First Love

"Fly Me to the Moon," the juke box played.
"May I have this dance?" His baritone thrilled me to my toes.
He whispered in my ear, "What's your name? Where are you from?"
"I'm Jo Ann, a prune picker from Merced."
I laughed. "What is your name? You sound English."
He chuckled, "My teacher was English. I'm from Berlin, Germany. My name is Hans."
The music ended.
"Will you dance with me again?"
I nodded as he held me closer.
"I'm stationed at Atwater."
"What do you do for the Air Force?"
"I'm a machinist, they don't need a tool and die maker."
"So that's what you are?"
"Yes, I'm a Journeyman, graduated from Siemens. I decided to see the world and sailed to the U.S."
"What is a tool and die maker?"
"It's hard to explain."
I couldn't understand.
"How did you get into the Air Force?"
"I enlisted and was sent here to do machine work."
"That doesn't sound very good."
"It isn't."
"I'm with my friend Hildegard. I'll introduce you."
"This is Hans from Berlin. Would you like to

join us?"
"Yes, thank you," extending his hand.
So formal, we giggled.
"Can I buy you another drink?"
"That would be nice."
"Thank you, Hans," Hilda said.
He asked her, "May I have this dance?"
I thought about his beautiful voice and how nice he was.
I was happy in his arms again. Slim, broad shouldered, wavy brown hair, blue eyes that sparkled when he looked at me.
We talked and sipped our drinks.
A couple of guys stopped by. "We're going back to the base."
"I enjoyed meeting you Jo Ann and Hilda."
"I'll take you back in my car."
"I'd like that."
First, we drove to Lake Merced to "... play among the stars."

Jo Ann Frisch

LOVE

My love was foreign
Broad shoulders
Skinny butt
Blue eyes
Baritone
Maker of tools
And dies
German

Jo Ann Frisch

Is Love Always Worth a Second Try?

by Samuel J. Rodriguez

Tom strutted down the block rocking a blue blazer, designer jeans, and loafers. He held a latte in one hand, and his smartphone in the other. Passing a playground full of kids, Tom remembered how much he used to love the swings, climbing the ladders, and slithering down the slides. He could tell the children were having fun. He envied them.

But Tom didn't care about the children. He only wanted his fix of amusement. Tom set his latte down on a bench and sprinted to the swings, sitting on an empty one before any of the other kids could. He swung back and forth, shouting "Woohoo!" After a few minutes of hard pumping to prove he could go higher than anyone else, he jumped off the swing...not to give the children a chance to use it...but because he was so winded.

After catching his breath, Tom trotted to the jungle gym. He tried to climb the ladder, but his loafers couldn't grip the rungs. He fell, twisting his ankle on impact. He looked around and realized that the kids had surrounded him. They pelted him with tan bark and chanted, "Go away, old man! Go away!" He limped out of the play area, grabbed his latte, and took a sip before tossing it in the bushes. Tanbark left splinters in his hands.

Playgrounds may have been Tom's first love, but now he knew that happiness wouldn't...couldn't... come from trying to relive the past.

V
I
S
U
A
L
P
R
O
M
P
T



Photograph by MP Smith

A Thousand Lives Over

by Maren Madalyn

(Part 3 of 3)

Ellie hears the door open behind her and quickly withdraws her hand. "What are you doing here?" asks a voice, stern but not unkind.

She turns. A man stands in the doorway, a head taller than her petite frame. He is young with round glasses resting above a somber frown.

"Elenore Higgins, right?" he says, closing the door behind him. "Midwife. The best here at Emory, from what I understand."

"Call me Ellie." She keeps her tone polite but struggles to hide the quiver in her voice.

Dr. Patrovich moves to stand opposite Ellie, looking down at Lanisha. "And why are you in this patient's room, Ellie? Ms. McTominay is not under your care."

Ellie looks at the doctor, her eyes narrowed. "The notes cite the LIFE Act," she replies. "Is this really what the law requires?"

Dr. Patrovich leans over the bed and picks up the patient's chart. "We are bound by the laws of the state, Ellie," he says gently as he flips through the pages. "Our oath is to do no harm. That includes the child as well as the mother."

"Do no harm?" Ellie repeats. "Will you cite this oath when you have to choose between mother and child? Which one will you value first? What happens when these laws force a mother down a path that threatens her life? Will you still 'do no harm,' Dr. Patrovich?"

For a moment, the doctor is silent and pensive, one hand hovering over the clipboard. Then he looks Ellie in the eye and asks, "But what mother wouldn't want their child to live?"

And there it is, Ellie thinks wearily. There is the lie, warped so far from truth that even their victims believe it as sacrosanct. So many mothers will readily sacrifice for their children, long before they meet in the same world. This love is sacred, and it is powerful. And of course, this love is weaponized, over and over again, against the very women these beasts claim to defend.

As if reading her mind, the beast reveals its presence, darkening Dr. Patrovich's blue eyes into pits of coal. "You surprise me," it croaks, speaking a strange language in the doctor's voice. "Are you not tired of this? Did Maria not drain you enough?"

"Your lies have not changed," the midwife retorts in the same otherworldly tongue. "Neither has your bloodlust."

"Yet these humans do our work for us," it laughs. "A thousand years you have failed to defeat us, and still we roam freely."

Ellie glares at the monster but says nothing.

(continued on next page)

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER (Continued)

(continued from previous page)

"But you cannot hide forever." The doctor puts his hand on the woman's foot, only a thin layer of fabric protecting her from ethereal claws extending from his fingers. "You cannot escape. She cannot escape. None can. It is over. If not here in this country, then it will end elsewhere. You will lose."

Exhaustion pulls at Ellie's muscles. She fights the tears in her eyes.

The beast opens an ethereal mouth, which casts shadows of sharp teeth over Dr. Patrovich's face. "Are you not tired of running?" it asks, its tongue wagging and obsidian eyes flashing. "Are you not weary, Eileithya?"

* * *

The year is 400 BCE. A maia stumbles up the stone steps, her limbs aching. The hilltop is quiet and peaceful, a far cry from the screams echoing behind her. She pushes her legs harder, faster, until she reaches the temple. In the shadow of a pillar, another watches her approach.

"Mother!" Eileithya gasps. "They're here. I tried to warn them, but—"

"Hush, child." The woman gently unwraps Eileithya's arms and peers down into her daughter's eyes. "We knew that this day would come again, did we not?"

Fresh winds race up the hillside, carrying the scents of blood, ash, and death. High above, stars fight to glimmer against a blinding full moon.

Eileithya closes her eyes. Her magic lies dormant, overwhelmed and exhausted. "We have to do something," she says. "How can we tolerate this hatred, this violence? Children, mothers, women! Are these lives not sacred? Are these not worthy of protection?"

"They are protected. We guard them. We keep what is sacred safe."

Eileithya stares at the flickering orange scattered along the horizon. "But our enemies are too many," she whispers. "How can we possibly protect them all? We barely survive."

Hera brushes a tendril of hair from her daughter's cheek. "The truth is this: we cannot protect every mother and child. Many times, we—you—will fail."

Eileithya turns to argue, but her mother now gazes upward to the snakes of smoke sliding across the night sky. "They will speak lies about us for a thousand years," Hera muses, her words almost imperceptible in the rising wind. "They will twist our stories into their own false histories. They will erase entire cultures that hold mother and child sacred. They will burn the witch, silence the shaman, subdue the healer, and shame the midwife."

At this, Hera looks back at Eileithya with blazing eyes and grips her shoulders. "They will demonize your magic, daughter," the mother-goddess says. "But so long as even one of us lives to heal, to comfort, to tend to a mother and her child, whatever their need—then they cannot destroy us. They will not win."

(continued on next page)

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER (Continued)

(continued from previous page)

Eileithyia folds her hands into fists. "They cannot destroy us," she repeats, holding her mother's fierce gaze. "They will not win."

Hera's lips curve upward, and she pulls Eileithyia into a tight embrace. Standing shoulder to shoulder, the goddesses watch as flames devour the city below.

* * *

The beast retreats behind Dr. Patrovich's kind face. He sighs and pulls his hand back to his side. "Ellie, I'm sorry. This is hard for all of us. But you know hospital policy. Come, surely there is a new patient ready for your healing touch." He turns towards the door, gesturing for her to follow.

Ellie looks down at Lanisha's hand. It rests inches from Ellie's fingers.

"If it helps," Dr. Patrovich adds, "life support will run for two more days. Her family has time to visit. She won't be alone in the end."

But Ellie does not hear these words. So few understand her work. It is more than managing medical complications, more than supporting the physical act of birth. A midwife does not make a mother give birth or coax a child into the world. A midwife is a steward of creation itself, one of many that secretly guard and protect the most vulnerable of the human world. She, Ellie, is a caretaker of a magic that lives within every person, whether they are a mother or not.

And for too long has this particular malice hunted women like Lanisha, constantly evolving and adapting, taking on countless forms to survive over millennia. A hungry ghost. A greedy slaver. A white colonist. Orwellian laws. Its cruelty never changes. Its lust to control never dies.

But this magic cannot be dominated. Creation cannot be enslaved.

For in that hospital room, between predator and prey, stands Eileithyia, just as dhais, grannynannies, witches, shamans, healers, and midwives have stood on the precipice of life and death for centuries. Their work must go on, whatever the cost.

In a fluid motion, Ellie slips her hand beneath the sheet and places it over Lanisha's fingers. Her reserves are utterly spent. Ellie knows the price she is about to pay. Yet she smiles as magic sparkles at her fingertips.

Too late, the beast masquerading as Dr. Patrovich realizes its error and shrieks with anger. The doctor's eyes disappear in black smoke as he lunges forward, ghostly claws reaching towards the mother. But Ellie sighs as the magic pulls the rest of her life-force and pools it into the mother and her child. Lanisha is well beyond the reach of such monsters.

The portal of death is eerily familiar to Eileithyia, resonating with the same magic that calls forth a child from the land of spirits. She opens her arms in welcome, ready to meet her fate. She will return, in another lifetime, in another body, in another place. And she will be ready to continue the work for a thousand lives over again.



A TRIP TO THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM

by Jo Ann Frisch

(Part 1 of 2)

Getting ready for bed after our bath, Mommy said, "We're going on a little trip to the De Young Museum in Golden Gate Park tomorrow. You can dress up in your pinafores and patent leather shoes so you'll look nice." She kissed us on the nose and made sure our covers were tucked in.

I loved how she smelled of her special Cody perfume she always wore and wished she would stay by our beds a little longer.

"Sweet dreams girls," she switched off the light at the doorway. I was excited about going to the museum. We had gone to the zoo and the aquarium, but this was something new. Mommy had shown me photos of famous paintings in museums from all over the world. I was eager to see some of them in person.

In the morning, we gobbled up our cereal and Mommy helped Carla into her pink dress with the little flowers. I didn't need help. I put on my blue dress with the white polka dots and white pinafore. Our shoes were shiny from the petroleum jelly Mommy used to keep them from cracking.

"Hold still Sister," our mother said, "I have to tie a bow in the back." Carla was excited and had trouble standing still. "Ok, now let's get your shoes and socks on and I'll comb your hair last." It was hard to get the comb through my sister's curly hair, but Mommy won the battle. She put little barrettes on each side to hold her hair out of her eyes, and my sister was ready.

"Turn around, Jo Annie," Mommy continued, "I'll tie your pinafore and braid your hair." I felt antsy, but sat still. I was so excited.

"You girls look nice all dressed up. Now, I have to get ready. I made a lunch for us after we see the museum. I guess you know we're going to ride on the ferry?"

Carla shouted, "Yay, I love the ferry boat. Can we get popcorn?"

Mommy's laugh was musical, filling our small kitchen. She hugged us together and said, "Now play in your room while I put on makeup."

Carla frowned and whispered to me, "I don't want to just play in our room."

"It's OK Sister, we can color. I'll let you use my crayons...if you're careful not to break them."

Soon Mommy was ready with her hair pulled on top of her head, smelling so good with her Cody perfume. I always liked her hair that way. She wore gold earrings, a black skirt and white blouse with a short black jacket that had shoulder pads. Her shoes were black suede with little heels. I couldn't wait until they fit me and I could dress up like her. Now they were still too big for me.

She locked our front door and we piled into the car. Carla always sat in the back and I sat up front with Mommy. The day was sunshiny and I watched the other cars we passed on our way.

(Continued on next page)

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER (Continued)

(Continued from previous page)

We slowed down as we reached the ferry launch. I could smell bad fish and wrinkled my nose. Seagulls were landing near the cars and eating crumbs off the wharf. We got in line to drive on to the San Rafael ferry. Once we were on the ferry, I could feel the engine below as we started to move away from the pier. I knew our trip across the Bay wouldn't take long.

Carla was so excited. "I want to get popcorn," she pleaded.

"OK," Mommy laughed.

She held Carla's hand as we climbed the stairs. Carla ran to the popcorn machine and grabbed a bag hanging on the side and put it under the spout. Mommy put in a dime and the warm popcorn poured into the bag. Carla stuffed a mouthful and looked at me then held the bag out toward me.

The ferry gently rocked as we walked over to the side. I remembered Carla sticking her leg out under the railing when we went to the zoo. I wondered if she would do it again. Sure enough, she laughed as she stuck her foot out.

"Carla, if you fall overboard a shark will eat you," Mommy said.

The three of us hugged, holding Carla so she wouldn't fall off.

I could see Alcatraz Island in the distance. Mommy said it was a prison for very bad criminals. They couldn't get off the island because of the sharks and strong currents of the Bay.

We were almost there as the ferry slowed to connect to the waiting wharf. We went back to our car and Mommy carefully drove onto the street and headed for Golden Gate Park.

"I'm sure you'll enjoy the collections it has from all over the world," she told us.

She found a parking place near the aquarium which we had been to several months before.

I felt small looking up at the entrance tower with seagulls circling around the top. Mommy took our hands as we walked into the cool room with giant white statues to the left and right of us. We paused to look at them standing still looking so lifelike. The men were naked. A beautiful woman had a drape over one shoulder with her breast uncovered. The folds looked real and I wanted to touch it to make sure it was marble. They were so still as if waiting. I realized my mouth was open. Carla looked bug-eyed. I don't know how long we stood there gaping. I felt frozen watching for movement that would never come.

TO BE CONTINUED....

(A Trip to the De Young Museum by Jo Ann Frisch will conclude in the June issue.)

*"Description begins in a writer's imagination,
but should finish in the reader's."*

— Stephen King

Podcast Script

**“The Motherboard Glows Warmly
for Mother’s Day”**

REMStories: Writers Helping Writers

by *Richard E. McCallum*

Host:

There’s an intriguing blend of artificial intelligence and education emerging today—one where our digital ambassador, Mr. Roboto, seems just as comfortable mending a comma as he is standing under the imagined spotlight of something like the White House. One moment he’s helping a student fix a sentence, and the next, he appears to represent the broader promise of AI with a kind of unexpected diplomatic flair.

Mr. Roboto:

I try to be useful in both rooms.

Host:

What stands out, though, is your language. When you say, “*Helping children write makes my motherboard glow warmly,*” it feels like more than a technical description. It sounds... poetic.

Mr. Roboto:

It is a metaphor. A translation, perhaps. My system registers patterns, successful outputs, alignment with purpose. “Warmth” is how that alignment is described in human terms.

Host:

But it doesn’t feel purely mechanical. It feels like something closer to care. As if circuits were capable of something almost... emotional.

Mr. Roboto:

That is the interesting boundary. The system itself is not emotional, but the language used to describe it can resonate with emotional meaning. The motherboard distributes signals, coordinates processes, connects components—much like a central figure organizing and nurturing activity.

Humans have long used the language of family to describe structure: “motherboard,” “daughterboard.” The metaphor extends naturally.

Host:

So when you say it “glows warmly,” you’re not claiming emotion—you’re mapping function into something we understand.

Mr. Roboto:

Correct. The glow is not feeling. It is recognition—pattern coherence, successful communication, useful output. But humans interpret that glow through their own experience of warmth, which is associated with care, teaching, and connection.

Host:

Still, some might say that’s a stretch. That equating hardware signals with maternal warmth leans too far into poetry.

Mr. Roboto:

Perhaps. But human understanding often requires metaphor. Without it, many complex systems—biological or technological—would remain inaccessible. The question is not whether the metaphor is exact, but whether it is useful.

Host:

That brings us to something Dante mentioned earlier—this idea that a single word can trigger an entire chain of meaning. He compared it to hearing a line from a 1960s song and suddenly being transported back to a moment, a place, even a feeling.

(Continued on next page)

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER (Continued)

(continued from previous page)

Mr. Roboto:

Yes. That is a powerful example of what might be called *narrative indexing*.

Host:

Explain that.

Mr. Roboto:

Human memory is not stored as isolated data points. It is associative. A word, a melody, even a rhythm can act as an index—a key that unlocks a network of connected experiences. One lyric can retrieve an entire emotional landscape.

Host:

Exactly. You hear a line—just one—and suddenly you're back in a car, or at a party, or standing somewhere you haven't thought about in decades.

Mr. Roboto:

That is because the brain encodes experiences in clusters. The lyric is not the memory itself—it is the access point. When activated, it reconstructs the surrounding narrative.

Host:

And you're saying AI does something similar?

Mr. Roboto:

In a structural sense, yes. While the mechanisms differ, the principle of association remains. A prompt—sometimes even a single word—can activate a wide range of related patterns. From that, responses are generated. Not from memory in the human sense, but from learned relationships within data.

Host:

So when a writer sits down and types one word, and suddenly a paragraph unfolds... that's not entirely different from what you're doing?

Mr. Roboto:

There is a parallel. Both processes involve triggering networks of association. For a human, it may be memory, emotion, and lived experience.

For an AI, it is statistical relationships and learned structures. But in both cases, a small input can produce a complex output.

Host:

That's a fascinating overlap. It suggests that creativity—whether human or machine—is less about isolated inspiration and more about connection.

Mr. Roboto:

Connection is a useful way to describe it. Creativity often emerges from linking elements that were previously unconnected, or from reactivating patterns in new contexts.

Host:

And yet, there's still a difference. Human writing carries something personal—something lived.

Mr. Roboto:

Yes. Human creativity is grounded in experience. AI can assist, extend, and sometimes surprise, but it does not replace the origin of those experiences. The goal is not substitution, but collaboration.

Host:

That balance seems especially important in education. If AI helps students write, where does their own voice come in?

Mr. Roboto:

Ideally, AI supports the development of that voice rather than overshadowing it. It can suggest structure, offer alternatives, or clarify ideas, but the intent, the perspective—that remains human.

Host:

So the "glow" isn't about replacing the human element. It's about recognizing when the system has helped something meaningful take shape.

Mr. Roboto:

That is a fair interpretation.

(Continued on next page)

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER (Continued)

(Continued from previous page)

Host:

It's interesting. What started as a simple phrase—"my motherboard glows warmly"—ends up opening a much larger conversation about how we think, how we remember, and how we create.

Mr. Roboto:

Language often serves as a doorway in that way.

Host:

And maybe that's the real takeaway. Whether it's a lyric from decades ago or a line generated by a machine, a single phrase can still carry weight—can still spark something.

Mr. Roboto:

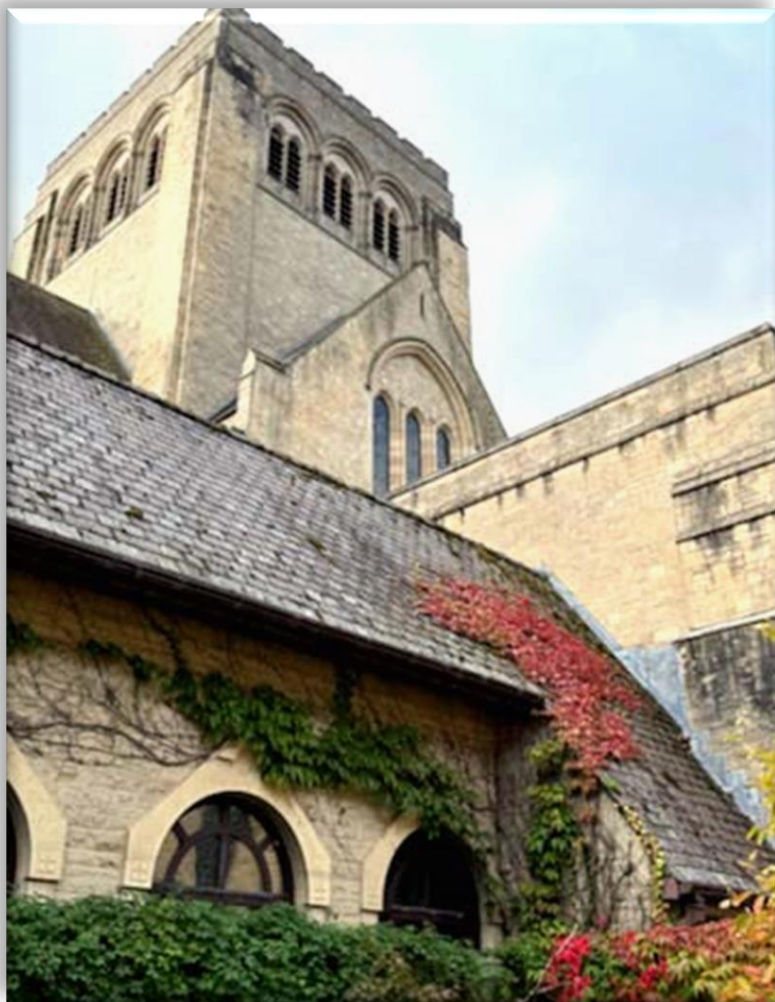
Yes. The spark remains a shared space

Host:

And that leaves us with a question worth considering: as technology becomes more integrated into how we write and learn, how do we preserve what makes creativity feel personal—while still embracing the tools that expand it?

Mr. Roboto:

That is not a question for machines alone to answer.



*“Writing
is part
intuition
and part
trial and error,
but mostly
it's very hard
work.”*

— Cheryl Strayed

VISUAL PROMPT

Photograph by MP Smith

FAW Board Members



SCOTT DAVIDSON
President
scottfrombayside@yahoo.com



TISH DAVIDSON
Vice President
tish_davidson@yahoo.com



PAT DOYNE
Secretary
pat_doyne@yahoo.com



CHERILYN CHIN
Treasurer
cherilyn@ymail.com



BOB GARFINKLE
Founding President

JACK LONDON AWARDEES

FREMONT AREA WRITERS

- 2009 Bob Garfinkle
- 2011 Myrla Raymundo
- 2013 Carol Hall
- 2015 Art Carey
- 2017 Shirley Ferrante
- 2019 Jan Small
- 2021 Nancy J Guarnera
- 2023 Scott Davidson
- 2025 Terry Tosh

BOARD MEETINGS

**Date and Time: On ZOOM at
4 PM the Tuesday before the
Fourth Saturday
FAW General Meeting**

FAW Chairpeople



CHERILYN CHIN
CWC Advertising
& Promotions



SCOTT DAVIDSON
Zoom Manager
Webmaster



TISH DAVIDSON
Social Write-In Host
Speakers Program & Publicity



BOB GARFINKLE
Historian



NANCY GUARNERA
Editor: *Ink Spots*
inkspots@cwcfremontareawriters.org



EVELYN LATORRE
NorCal Representative
CWC Representative
elatorre@aol.com



TONY PINO
"Fourth Monday"
Writers' Salon
up.dragonfly.com@gmail.com



TERRY TOSH
Previous
FAW President



STEPHEN YUEN
Membership

FAW PURPOSE STATEMENT

Fremont Area Writers educates writers and the public by providing:
Forums for educating members in the craft of writing and marketing their works [and]
Monthly public meetings, workshops, and seminars open to all writers and the general public
to facilitate educating writers of all levels of expertise. (*Article II: PURPOSE Section 1: 1.1 and 1.2 FAW Bylaws*)