

SACRAMENTO
MAY 2024



BRANCH
NEWSLETTER

SACRAMENTO WRITERS

Narrative Authority



Molly Dwyer

Saturday
18
May

Narrative Authority comes from our sense that the writer is fearless and in control of the story they're telling. We will look at text by several authors to see what they're doing that creates the power of voice, and discuss why and how the text is working. Using visual prompts, we'll write two short pieces and share them, attempting to identify the sound of our own voices.

What attendees will learn:

- To understand narrative authority and voice in fiction and/or memoir writing.
- To understand the power and uniqueness of your own authenticity.
- To examine the text of successful writing to learn what a strong voice can do.
- To discover more about your own voice through prompted writing and discussion.
- To consider the precision of language, and language's power to create.

[Molly](#) teaches creative writing at Mendocino College. She works as an editor, writing coach and workshop facilitator. Her debut novel, [Requiem for the Author of Frankenstein](#), was nominated for the Northern California Book Award in Fiction and won the Independent Publishers Book of the Year Award and an Indie Book Award for Historical Fiction. She's founding president of the Writers of the Mendocino Coast, a branch of California Writers Club.

[Crocker Art Museum](#)

216 O St.
Sacramento

Saturday, May 18th 1–3 pm at the [Arcade Library](#)
2443 Marconi Ave, Sacramento, California 95821

First Friday Networking Meeting

Ready, Set, Launch! Developing a Successful Book Launch Plan



Friday

3

May

Lisa Montanaro
Coach & Webinar Host

Are you ready to get out there as an author and launch your book? Discover tips and strategies for a targeted, successful, and sustainable book launch!

The months (or years!) after landing a book deal are an exhilarating, yet stressful, time. Whether you're traditionally or indie-published, launching and marketing your book is time consuming, but a necessary part of the author journey. Smart authors recognize that a book launch is a marathon, not a sprint, and spread activities over three phases: pre-launch, launch, and post-launch. Launch activities and possibilities are abundant, both online and offline, including book clubs, bookstores, libraries, podcasts, webinars, radio and TV, social media, writer conferences, and more. To be successful, you need to be organized, creative, and consistent. Savvy authors create a timeline, match opportunities to their personality, book themes, and budget, and use their imagination and resources to reach target readers. Think outside the box! No two book launches are alike, and no launch plan includes all activities. Discover tips and strategies for a targeted, successful, and sustainable book launch!

Lisa Montanaro is the author of the book [The Ultimate Life Organizer](#), and the chapter, "The Brand Called You! Personal & Professional Branding for Authors," featured in [Launch Pad: The Countdown to Marketing Your Book](#). Her debut novel will be published by Red Adept Publishing in fall 2024. Lisa serves as Webinar Host for the [Women's Fiction Writers Association](#).

Friday, May 3rd from 9–11 am at
CH Cafe & Grill, 6215 Sunrise Blvd. (just off Greenback)

Sacramento Valley Station

Coming in June

Special Event – First Paragraph Blow-Up *Live!* Brush Up on Your First Paragraph!



Melissa Hart

Saturday
15
June

Saturday, June 15 will bring a special treat to attendees at the quarterly CWC luncheon. Come for fun and learning as author Melissa Hart gives suggestions on members' first paragraph from a manuscript they are working on!

If you have a paragraph you would like Melissa to comment on, it will need to be submitted in advance. Note deadline below of June 8. For \$15, your paragraph will be read aloud by a third party, followed by suggestions and a short discussion. Five minutes total will be devoted to each first paragraph submitted. Author will remain anonymous, so there's no "outing" of anyone – all fun and learning.

Mark your calendar now for June 15. Brush up on a first paragraph if you'd like to submit for a live mini-critique. Following the meeting, member Susan Dlugach will offer a short session on poetry—what writers of all genres can learn from poetry.

Plan to have a good time as we all learn together!

- Social Hour: 11:30
- Membership meeting: Noon
- Melissa Hart & First Paragraph Critique: 12:45
- Bonus post-luncheon special: 2:00 Susan Dlugach on poetry. Donations appreciated.

Cost: Meeting Fee: \$36, includes meal, coffee, soda, speaker, book displays, post-speaker.

What attendees should bring: A copy of your published book or promo items to put on the display table. Any books you're ready to pass on to a new home for the giveaway table.

How to Register: For meeting, register online at CWCSacramento.org.

For first paragraph critique: Pay \$15 online at CWCSacramento.org and submit your first paragraph at: sacramentowriters@gmail.com. Members must be registered for the meeting to sign up for the critique. Deadline for submitting first paragraphs: Saturday, June 8.

Cattlemens

12409 Folsom Blvd, Rancho Cordova, CA 95742

Audio Books



Friday
7
June

Dena Kouremetis

Voice Actor

The San Francisco native is unique in the voice-acting world, having been a writing professional for publications and sites from the *Sacramento Bee* to *Forbes* to *The New York Post* to *Psychology Today*, where she maintains a light-hearted Nora Ephron-esque blog on aging well.

Sacramento Branch President's Message



The same principles apply.

Isn't that why history repeats itself?

Someone once asked me, "Why do I love AI?"

My answer was, I don't love it, but I find it interesting. All engineers want to know how things work, not just motors and computers, but everything, including social systems.

Some consider AI, or Artificial Intelligence to be a panacea. Others consider it to be our ultimate downfall. All I can say is, we have been here before. We will be here again and again.

Life is about information and discovery. In the old days, it was verbal. For instance.

"How do I hunt wooly mammoths?"

"Go ask your father!"

President's Message (continued)

Then came writing (that's us) and the printing press and publishing. Journals, newspapers, and books had to be paid for, but are also driven by communal politics and advertising.

Then came the Internet. This was supposed to be free and open information for all. Now all I see is people selling their wares. Interspersed with data cookies which help to target advertisements. Is that a surprise?

Now comes AI, a simulation of intelligent decision making based upon data and training. This currently is mostly free, but it won't be for long. These systems are run on huge data farms which require vast amounts of electricity to run them. Vast amounts of raw data need to be acquired, and the system trained to work with it. All of this is a non-trivial and hugely expensive task.

As authors, we are all warned of the threats.

First, there is copyright. These systems receive books, journals, and writings of all kinds. Some claims suggest that attempts to create new books with these tools have resulted in copyright infringement. Personally, I do not worry about this because nobody wants to be sued, so the courts will eventually resolve these issues. Hopefully for the good of all.

Second, there are a growing number of people using AI to write books. In my opinion, this is yet another distraction, all this means an increase in competition. If you already have a million real authors as competitors, does another million artificial make a difference? I challenge people to give me a good example of an AI authored novel that is worth reading. Pulp fiction comes to mind, but I'm not talking about Quentin Tarantino.

There are two more issues that are real and much more frightening.

Advertising! Oh, here's that 'A' word again. Given the cost of running these systems, it will be inevitable that AI will adopt ads. It's the intelligent thing to do. I can't imagine how this will work, but I'm sure Madison Avenue already has an artificially intelligent campaign lined up.

The worst danger is the cost. Pretty soon, the best tools will have to be paid for. People who can't afford to adopt the new tools will be at a serious disadvantage. Society will amplify the 'us and them' divide. The term 'Open AI' somehow doesn't ring true to me.

There is no point getting depressed about all of this. All I'm trying to show you is the universe has only so many things it can do. Like I said, the same principles apply, this has happened before, and it will happen again. Some will say it is annoying, we as a species do the same thing over and over, like a merry-go-round.

I say, "Enjoy the ride!"

To help you have fun on the way, we gather together into clubs to help each other.

With that in mind, we as a club have organized the first of our annual [Sacramento Book Festivals](#), which will take place in McKinley Park in Sacramento on Sunday, June 2. Here we have 10 booths, you can either rent a booth for yourself, or share with a partner.

We also have a booth at [Roseville Downtown](#), every Tuesday evening. You can rent this booth on one of the Tuesdays.

Details for both events are available on our website. Priority is for CWC Sacramento members, but be quick to book your booth before others get in. If there are questions about booking for either of these events, please send an [email](#).

So, [get ready to sell your books](#). You can find what you need outlined on our website. If you are not renting a booth, come along and support your local authors.

Both venues promise to be lots of fun.

It's the intelligent thing to do!

Bernard Wozny (bpwozny@gmail.com)

Roseville Downtown Tuesday Night Market



CWC has reserved one 10'x10' space at the Roseville Downtown Tuesday Night Market, on nine consecutive Tuesday nights (from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.) from June 4 to July 30, 2024. The market is held on Vernon Street, adjacent to the Vernon Street Town Square, in Roseville. The Tuesday night markets have been hugely successful, typically bringing in thousands of people every Tuesday night during the summer. This should be an excellent opportunity to sell books and promote your work.

CWC Sacramento Branch members have priority to participate. The application is on the CWC [website](#). The cost is \$60 per night. We recommend you share a booth with an author friend or colleague; if you share a booth, the cost is only \$30 per author. To ensure your space, please complete an application and mail a check as soon as possible. CWC Sacramento Branch members' priority lasts until May 15, 2024.

Authors should have a California seller's permit, and are responsible for bringing their own table and chair. As it can be hot in the summer months, we also strongly recommend that you bring a 10'x10' pop-up tent.

How to Obtain a California Seller's Permit

It is easy and FREE to obtain a seller's permit in California. Head to the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration [website](#) for information. You will need to create a logon (username and password) and follow the step-by-step application process under the link for "Register a New Business Activity," here:

<https://onlineservices.cdtfa.ca.gov/#2> .

Sacramento Book Festival

Sacramento has not experienced a book festival in many years. We are excited to restart such an important event in Sacramento. We intend to develop this into an annual Sacramento Capital Experience.

In association with McKinley Farmers Market in Sacramento, we have arranged for 10 booths for authors to promote and sell their books, on Sunday June 2, 2024, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Booking details are available on our [website](#).

You will find details on what you need and suggestions on how to organize your booth. Sharing a booth with another author is not essential, but it does help spread the cost and encourages collaboration. Customers are always excited to be greeted with authors.

Join us at the Book Festival, let's rekindle a new tradition in Sacramento.

Sacramento Book Festival (continued)

Tips for Selling Books at a Book Fair or Market

- Consider rounding the individual sales price of your book down to the nearest \$5 increment to make handling change easier, e.g. if your book sells for \$15.99 on Amazon, consider pricing the book at \$15
- Bring a lot of \$5 bills with you
- Load the Venmo app on your phone. It's quick and easy, and now has a QR code scanning function to ensure the customer is paying you instead of someone with a similar name
- Consider creating a squareup.com account to handle credit card sales on your phone
- Create a display of your book cover to set up on your table
- Be sure to order plenty of author's copies of your book early enough to have them in time for the fair or market
- Also, bring supplies as needed (e.g., pop-up tent, folding table, tablecloth, chairs)
- Invest in bookmarks with a QR code leading to your sales website—gotprint.com is an inexpensive and easy to use website for ordering bookmarks
- It's amazing how well a smile or hello works to bring potential customers to your table
- Finally, keep track of sales—you'll need the info to pay annual state sales tax (due in January each year)

Members' Corner

by Bonnie Blue

We welcomed 3 new members this last month. They are:

- **Scot Crocker** who writes historical fiction, thriller, and mystery.
- **Carolyn Doyle** who writes for seniors.
- **LaVon (Dolly) Goolsby** who writes travel and for children.

Please say hello if you see them.

New members are invited to share a brief (200 words max) bio and a jpeg headshot for our website's Members page. And you can include a link to your own website in your bio! Please send to sacramentowriters@gmail.com. You can have your published books listed in our Members Book section by sending a description and a picture of its cover to Bernard.

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Critique Groups

Critique Groups and writer support is foremost in this club. Interested in finding a Critique Group? So many of us write alone and have gotten very little feedback on our work. Exposing our creative efforts to a group of like-minded and considerate writers is the first step towards sending our masterpieces out into the world.

Email Bonnie if interested. Your names and genre will be collected and linked with other members. Your newly formed group can get help with getting started on our website.

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American River
near Cordova Creek

Members Announcements

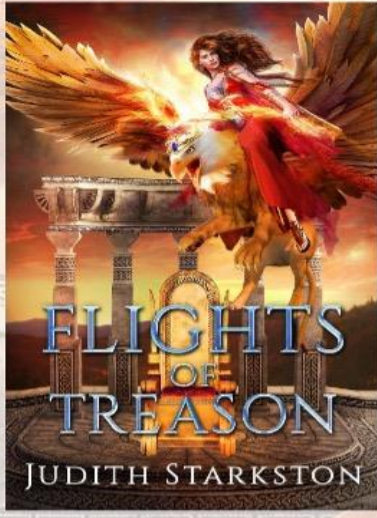
Annie Cilley says: "I will have a poem appear in the [ekphrastic anthology](#) under my pen name, **Annie Hendrix**. The poem will appear with the art piece One With Nature."

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Asking for your help

We are looking for a restaurant to meet at for our quarterly Saturday meetings. Centrally located, it must have a separate meeting room. If you know of a place that you feel might work, please let us [know](#).

You're Invited! At The Avid Reader, Davis Judith Starkston's Flights of Treason Book Launch Celebration



An evening of lively conversation & laughter led by Davis author Eileen Rendahl. Dive into Judith's Hittite inspired historical fantasy series.

May 14th, 6:30 pm
The Avid Reader Bookstore
617 2nd Street Davis, CA 95616

Literary Review Results

by Bonnie Blue

As an update (thanks to Robin Elizabeth Robinson for reminding us), the literary review project from the state-wide California Writer's Club is still in process and should be published on May 31st.

The Sacramento Branch of the CWC was allowed to submit four pieces of prose and four of poetry. Our novel idea to have members vote for their favorite was a great success. Thank you so much to everyone who read through the collection and voted.

Our contest winners for prose are:

“The Three Tenors” by Tim Schooley

“A Chance Encounter Near the Himalayas” by Brina Patel

“The Last Supper” by Jerilyn Ring

“Appah” by Lally Pia

(an honorary mention goes to “Lizbeth” by Mari-Lynne Infantino)

Our contest winners for poetry are:

“When I See You” by Eric Sweigert

“Daddy’s Girl” by Darlene Kapur

“The Writer” by Alcalde Marr

“Noodling” by Susan Dlugach

You can read the original submissions on our website under Contests, as well as the submission guidelines.

Announcements from Afield

How to Write a Killer Book Blurb

Saturday, May 18, 10 – 11:30 am at Book Passage Corte Madera, Marin County
\$5 for CWC Members, \$10 for Non-Members

Having a killer book blurb for the back cover of your book and online sales page is critical! Only your cover and title are more important in attracting readers. In this hands-on workshop, John will walk us through the art of creating a teaser that grabs readers’ attention and makes them want to know more.

Submit your blurb in advance (100 words or less, one per participant) if you’d like a live critique! Send it to marin@cwcmarin.com by May 10 or share with us during the workshop. We will collaborate to make your hook stronger and sharper.

John Byrne Barry is a writer, designer, actor, director, and crossing guard. He is author of four novels and three plays, including “Sausalypso Houseboat Wars Murder Mystery,” which he wrote and directed in 2023, and has adapted into a novel called Pirates of Sausalito: Houseboat Wars Murder Mystery.

Announcements from Afield (continued)



California Writers Club Mt. Diablo Branch

Spring into action with your Flash Fiction.

A Flash Fiction Competition with a twist.

Each entry must have a specific focus.

Choose from: Murder mystery, Romance, or Fantasy

Up to three submissions allowed per person, any category.

Prizes: One \$100 prize will be given in each category.

Rubrics:

1. The word count is strictly 100. No exceptions
2. Print in 12 pt. Times Roman or Calibri
3. Double spaced.
4. Submit as a Word document
5. List story focus at top righthand of manuscript
6. No name or personal identification anywhere on the manuscript.
7. Provide full name, phone number, email, and branch name on the submission form
8. All entries will be judged blindly.

Entry fees:

\$10.00 for first submission

\$10.00 for second submission

\$5.00 for third submission

Submission Period:

Midday April 15th through Midday May 30th.

Winners will be announced June 30, 2024



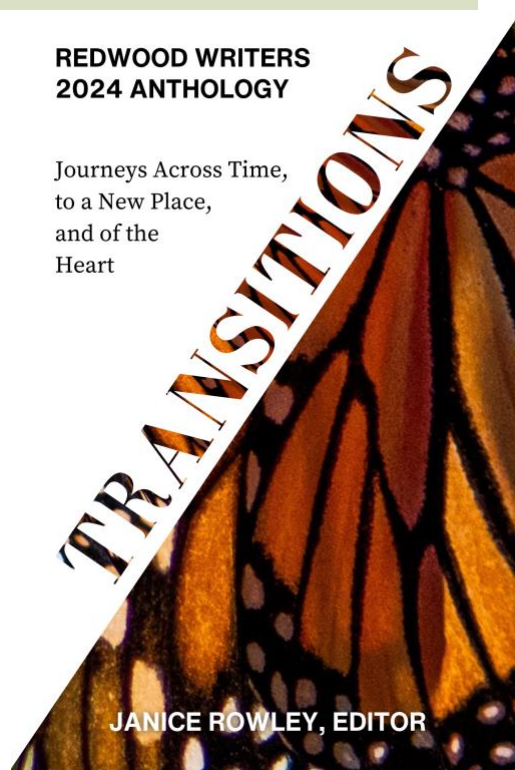
Entry form:

<https://cwcmtdiablo.org/cwc-mt-diablo-flash-fiction-contest/>



CWC Sacramento Branch member [Dierdre Wolownick](#)'s son, [Alex Honnold](#), recently coached David Letterman on climbing at the World Trade Center's new Performing Arts Center. Watch the video on [YouTube](#) or [Reddit](#).

Announcements from Afield (continued)



Editor Jan Rowley invites your submissions!

This year's theme is transitions and will be a collection of stories that allow the reader to experience your character's journey through a period of change. A character may be a human, an aspect of nature, or an alien of the author's imagination.

All adult fiction genres are welcome.

Think literary fiction: character driven versus plot driven. It is the journey across that bridge of transition that the judges want to read and the editors will be ready to polish.

The judging rubric, available to view or [download](#), lays out the expectations. Watch your email for posts from the editor with tips to help make your submission the best it can be.

Janice Rowley is excited to have you share her transition from 2023 Personal Essay Contest Chair to Editor-in-Chief of Redwood Writers 2024 Anthology.

Open to all Redwood Writers and CWC members.

A personal note from Editor, Jan Rowley:

Transitions: The theme for the 2024 Redwood Writers Anthology. Transitions happen. You will experience a transition while reading this message, at the end of which you will have changed. And if you accept the challenge and the opportunity to submit to the Redwood Writers 2024 anthology, you will experience yet another transition. Should your story be accepted for publication, you will experience an even greater transition.

Submissions are now being accepted! **Don't procrastinate . . .**

As brick-and-mortar stores are closing nationwide, Michael Brandt is happy to announce that Appaloosa Radio Online produced the first chapter of his book [Cherry Blossoms at Night](#), a biological warfare mystery thriller set in contemporary San Francisco. The twenty-five minute audio story was written by [Brandon Michaels](#) (AKA [Michael Brandt](#)). *Cherry Blossoms at Night* can be found at: <https://appaloosaradio.online/cherry-blossoms-at-night/>

Poetry Corner

by [Raymond Leo Blain](#)



Girl in the Blue Hat, a painting by [Raymond Leo Blain](#), earned an honorable mention in the Vision and Verse, a Fusion of Poetry, Prose, Art and Photography competition and will be published in the book.

The Girl With the Blue Ribboned Hat
by Raymond Leo Blain
Dedicated to Yara wherever she may be.

Serendipity? Fate? Dumb luck?
Winter had engender bitter cold misery.
Cabin fever oozed from every wall.
Now Spring sought recompense
With weeks of melting walls of snow
That had imprisoned our small village.
The sun rose higher to the south,
with lengthen arc
And warmer rays each day.

Finally venturing out one temperate morning
To walk the miles of rocky beach,
Breathing deeply the gentle breeze,
Intoxicated by its warming freshness,
A harbinger of better times to come.
The days of total darkness lengthening toward a midnight sun
As if by magic.

Nature sprang to glory as I turned my gaze.
From fishermen in kayaks hunting for the family meal
Beneath a gently rocking sea.
Life is good, I thought.
It always gets renewed after darkness and despair.
Times worth waiting for
After melancholy moments
Fighting lonely, solitary hours
Snow bound in lonely isolation.

Tired of the crowded cacophony,
Others called civilized urban life,
I'd moved to isolated nature,

Poetry Corner (continued)

To see and capture with eye, oil, brush and canvas
What so many failed to see, smell or taste.
Pursuing wealth or fame and
Other empty goals as life's
Precious moments slipped away.

My reverie was broken by something white,
A tiny speck of light at first.
Far off in the distance.
Upon a rock.
Washed ashore perhaps,
Or left behind last night
By firelight reveling tourists
Leaving trash for others to clean up.

My curiosity now peaked the more,
I had nothing of importance planned
So changed my gentle pace in that direction.
The mystery grew clearer to see
But harder to solve as the object focused
To my aging eyes.
A beautiful young lady, sat upon the rock
Focused out to sea.
Her white dress draped low on her young breasts,
Loosened by torn cloth that once held it on her shoulders.
Gold hair with straggling ends framed a lovely face.
Her head was crown more richly than a queen:
A simple straw hat with gossamer light blue ribbon.
Accented by a Gordian bow.

Her narrowed eyes set looking out to sea
Hoping something would appear
That failed throughout the night;
Her enigmatic smile brought memories
Of the Mona Lisa I had seen,
But her's was not the same.
Her lips were taugth as if in anger.
Repeated in the narrow gaze cast to the distance.

"Are you alright," I asked.
Her head bowed slightly indicating "yes".
"Do you need help?"
"No," she nodded briefly.
"Are you cold?"
Again a slight nod in the negative.
"I'm an artist. Would you mind if I draw you with charcoal?"
She shrugged her shoulders indicating it made no difference."
My sketch pad and charcoal tried to capture all.
But failed to catch the full sadness of her loss.
As I finished she whispered, "I'd like to be alone now."



I wandered back to the tiny town from whence I came.
A cup of coffee later, I left to see how
The lady in the blue ribboned hat had done.
She was gone, never to be seen again.
While memory still would serve me well,
I rushed back to my cabin.
The mix of beauty, sadness, yet so determined
Had to be preserved.
With canvas, paints and brush I worked
To make a picture worthy of the moments.
The viewer must be the judge.

Creative Endeavors Can Bring Rewards in Many Different Ways.

an essay by Raymond Leo Blain

Scientists have long suspected that math, art, and writing are related functions in human brains (and maybe some other species).

My father was a talented artist but he never worked to develop that talent. He dropped out of school to work in an auto parts store in the 7th grade (about age 12). I suspect because he probably had dyslexia which brings into question the scientific theory but does not disprove it. He taught me how to change the size of a picture or drawing using squares when I was fairly young and I have loved drawing and painting ever since. I also loved reading and poetry since about the same age as his when he dropped out of school.

I have since drawn many pictures with pencil, and charcoal, and painted on canvases that I stretched on frame myself, using nature, photographs, pictures in magazines, and later, the Internet for ideas since I lacked the financial ability to buy material other than the basic canvas, oils, or acrylics. Most have been destroyed because I did not have training in preparing canvas, paints, or final products for long term preservation. But art has taught me to pay attention to detail the holistic integration of the work. Writing has taught me to be aware of composition, structure, focal point, and audience interests. This really is truth in art and art in truth (and can be in fiction). My professors commented on my ability to create pictures with words and convey messages with art.

Both writing and art can be relaxing to tension producing. When it becomes burdensome or stressful neither is fun so the project should be put aside until enjoyment returns. Articles, novels, books, memoirs, photographs, drawings, cartoons, paintings, and even documentaries, movie scripts and features are better when you enjoy what you are doing. If you doubt this ask to see my Medical School Yearbook in which I wrote essays, drew pictures and even a cartoon strip.

I have many interests and hobbies and devote time and energy to each as the fancy strikes me. I am interested in many but a master of none. Such has been my very fulfilling life.

I have always had interests in more subjects than any one person has time to pursue but this is what has given my four score and three years joy, purpose, and meaning. My literary and political opus finally came into focus in 2023-4 with my writing and publishing [A More Perfect Democracy: Modernizing the United States Constitution for the 21st Century](#). Whether or not I succeed in making our democracy better is important, but even if I fail, I know that I tried.

As my favorite song lyrics and guide for my life since were written by Joe Darion in “The Impossible Dream”. How can life have a better meaning? Thank you, Mr. Darion, for giving me such a noble goal to try to attain.

Member Profile: Sigrid Bathen

Compiled by Kimberly Edwards



Sigrid Bathen: Torchbearer for Women in Media

Our branch is fortunate to have many accomplished members. One is Sigrid Bathen, who serves as an inspiration to many. But first, a summary of her extensive bio:

[Sigrid Bathen](#) was a staff writer for the *Sacramento Bee* for 13 years and has written for numerous publications, including the *California Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Capitol Weekly*, *California Lawyer*, the *American Lawyer Newspapers*, *California Medicine*, *California Republic*, the *Sacramento Business Journal*, *Comstock's Magazine*, the *Sacramento (and Chico) News & Review* and *Sacramento Magazine*. She has been a contributing writer for online media published by the *California Health Care Foundation*.

She has served as communications director for three state agencies. She taught journalism and communications at Sacramento State University for 32 years, including courses on news writing, editing and ethics, magazine writing, public affairs reporting, opinion writing, women and minorities in media, critical thinking, and public relations writing and strategy. She has also taught seminars on media strategy for business and community organizations. She served two terms on the Board of Directors of the Sacramento Press Club. In 2013, she was honored by the Press Club with a scholarship in her name.

Sigrid's writing has won awards: the Berton J. Ballard Press-Bar Award for Distinguished Reporting on the Administration of Justice from the State Bar of California, the Catherine L. O'Brien Award for women's interest reporting—both for a series on juvenile crime published in the *Bee*—and awards for Commentary and Enterprise Reporting from the Society of Professional Journalists. She has received national awards from the National Mental Health Association and from the California Mental Health Association. Her *Bee* coverage of conditions in the Stockton State Hospital was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. She co-founded the Women's Caucus of the Sacramento Newspaper Guild and was the first president of Sacramento Women in the Media.

Sigrid's master's thesis, "The Girls on the Bus," about women political reporters, has been excerpted in several magazines.

Questions to CWC Member Sigrid Bathen

How and when did your interest in writing begin?

I knew I wanted to be a writer at a very early age, started writing stories to read to my younger sister and brother on long family road trips. I "discovered" newspapers in high school, when an English teacher at Chico Senior High School suggested I check out the student newspaper, a weekly four-page tab called *The Red and Gold*, the school colors. I was named editor-in-chief in my senior year, and I would lay it out, write the headlines (and edit myriad articles, editorials), on my parents' dining room table. It was printed at a local print shop, within walking distance of Chico High, and I would trek back and forth checking page proofs,

making corrections. I loved it. In college, I majored in English and Journalism (1968 BA in Journalism from Chico State and 1991 MA in English and Journalism from Sac State), and was editor-in-chief of my college newspaper, *The Wildcat*, (now *The Orion*) in my sophomore year. We also started a student magazine, with the deep-thinking title of *Probe*.

I've worked professionally in journalism since age 18-19, mainly print, but also some TV: a summer job between my freshman and sophomore years at a twice-weekly newspaper (the *Orland Unit-Register*, about 20 miles from Chico), great experience, covered everything—accidents, features, local government, even sports. I did some public television (in a studio on the Chico State campus connected to the local/North Valley public TV station—then called “educational” TV), produced and moderated a program, “Student Viewpoints,” which I also adapted for the student newspaper. And I wrote occasional features for the local paper, the *Chico Enterprise-Record*. In my junior and senior years, I was the Butte-Glenn County correspondent for KRCR-TV in Redding, when there were only two network stations in the North Valley (the other was KHSL in Chico), very competitive. Great job for a student journalist, covered local government, campus news, cops, features, dictated stories by phone, was paid by the word and for still photos and film (16mm), put the undeveloped film on the Greyhound bus! Since I had worked in TV, my first job after college was as an associate producer for one of the first live news/talk shows, “Tempo I” on KHJ-TV, channel 9, in Los Angeles, then decided to return to print and was hired at the *Sacramento Bee* in January 1969.

What made you decide to go into Journalism?

Ancient history now, given the subsequent sea changes in the news business, but I saw newspapers as a way to make a living as a writer, which helped (sort of) to convince my businessman-father that I could earn a living in the unpredictable (and not highly paid) news business, particularly for women. “Get a teaching credential (for backup),” he said. “Go to law school.” Although I did eventually teach college journalism at CSUS Sacramento for 32 years (while also continuing to write for many publications), and went to law school for a time (evenings, at McGeorge-UOP, while working as a young reporter for the *Bee*), but decided to stick with journalism, and was with the *Bee* for 13 years. I was 22, not long out of college, when I was hired by the *Bee*, and I was told by older colleagues/mentors that I was the first woman to be hired directly to do “cityside” reporting, not consigned (as most women were then) to covering “social” news for the “women’s pages”—the “Women’s Activities” section at the *Bee*—or “Katherine Kitchen” (the food section).

What foundation did Journalism give you that would help in other genres, e.g., accuracy, fact checking, vivid writing, etc.?

As I often tell students, the skills of a journalist are invaluable in many professions: the ability to write clearly, quickly, concisely, accurately and under deadline; research and interview skills; focus, empathy, patience, knowing where and how to get key information; how to organize, write and edit articles that readers want to read. After a few early years of daily deadline reporting, most of my writing has been long-form, investigative journalism, often on controversial and difficult subjects. I always try to *humanize* my stories by writing the stories of people most affected, while tying their experiences to the larger issues, including in-depth examinations of broken systems—foster care, mass incarceration, educational and health care inequities, mental health, to name a few.

I expected to spend my adult life working for newspapers, but after 13 years at the *Bee*, I crossed over to the *dark side* (as reporters then called political PR, though we don’t hear that term much anymore as reporters and editors move between the two), to become Press Secretary to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Wilson Riles, and then to Attorney General John Van de Kamp, and years later, a five-year stint as media director for the California Fair Political Practices Commission. I continued to write for publication, and to teach at Sac State. I have covered education, courts, crime, health care, mental health, foster care—all interrelated, and all political issues. And I continued to utilize those skills while

working for elected officials whose policy interests I shared. I learned that the skills of journalistic writing—news and opinion articles (op-eds), press releases, public statements, position papers, speeches—were invaluable. And I've hired, supervised, taught and mentored many students and student assistants who have gone on to careers in media, government, politics, policy, PR and law.

What in your writing career are you most proud of?

That's a tough one. Even decades later, I go back to some of the investigative series I wrote decades ago for the *Bee* that remain relevant today. And, sadly, some issues have become even more fraught. I've continued to cover many of the same issues, for multiple publications, and am currently writing a series on the horrific failings of California's mental health care system for *Capitol Weekly*, a nonprofit, online news service that covers state government and politics. The reporting I did for the *Bee* on terrible conditions in state mental hospitals in the 1970s, continues to inform my current reporting. The hospitals were largely closed in the 1960s and 1970s, but the community care that was to take their place, never materialized, leading directly to the crisis of untreated mental illness, substance abuse and homelessness that we see today on our streets, in jails and prisons, and hospital emergency rooms.

What type of reading do you do when not writing?

I read widely, many different genres, though mostly non-fiction, long-form journalism, primarily in digital form—multiple mainstream media (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *LA Times*, *the Guardian*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Sacramento Bee*) and magazines, both print and digital (*The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Washington Monthly*, several local magazines). And I pay close attention to the growing number of nonprofit media (*Kaiser Health News*, *ProPublica*, *PBS Frontline*, *NPR*, *Center for Investigative Reporting/REVEAL*, *Capitol Weekly*, *CalMatters*, *EdSource*, *STAT*). And I follow local media – mainstream, alternative, nonprofit. I like to read biographies—most recently a wonderful, slim (unusual for him) autobiography by the great Robert Caro, called Working, about how he researches, reports, writes and edits his monumental biographies of Lyndon Johnson (multiple volumes, still working on the final volume at 88!) and Robert Moses. I often buy hardbacks **and** audiobooks, am currently listening to *New Yorker* writer Calvin Trillin's latest essay collection, "*The Lede: Dispatches from a Life in the Press*." I have an extensive library, dating back decades, on media issues, politics, race, women writers, mental health and incarceration. And I read fiction too! Joan Didion has always been my favorite.

What words of encouragement and advice would you give to writers, new and experienced?

Keep writing! Connect with mentors, pay attention, ask questions, **prepare** for interviews, read voraciously (and please, not only on social media), helps to learn basic tech skills, photography/video/podcasts. Check your facts, repeatedly, and it helps (really) to read your writing aloud (for cadence, flow). While I write on a computer, I always pull a printout, take it **out** of my office and read it again, often find glitches I didn't notice on the screen. A well-equipped home office is essential, and—after decades of working in various newsrooms and offices (often writing on deadline from wherever I was reporting)—I try to only do serious writing in my office, at a *work station*, which is equipped with a large monitor, separate keyboard and docking station, professional-quality printer/scanner. You **always** need some form of reliable tech support. While it's important to have some technical expertise (and many writers are very skilled technologically), it's important to remember that you are primarily a **writer**, not a tech expert. I prefer writing in Word on a PC (a Dell professional laptop with Dell Pro Tech Support), and now that I work mainly at home, I've found the Best Buy Total Tech Support/Geek Squad helpful as well (as Emeritus faculty at Sac State, I can also access the library and some tech support there).

I also read, do research, write notes, deal with email, on an iPad equipped with a keyboard case. I do a lot of phone interviews, and use a headset to free up my hands to type, and sometimes record (with permission) longer interviews (prefer in-person for those), especially when I need a verbatim transcript for a profile/Q&A. Be disciplined about your writing, schedule time to write, stick with it, stay focused, and get **out**: take a walk, meet with sources—and friends, who are often other writers.

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