

June 2016

Suburban Scribe

Newsletter of the Sacramento Suburban Writers Club

sactowriters.org

Lois Ann Abraham Speaker for June 13th Meeting

Lois Ann Abraham is the author of *Tina Goes to Heaven* (Ad Lumen Press). *Tina Goes to Heaven* has been described as “an emotional treasure” by Lydia Netzer, author of *Shine, Shine, Shine* and as “a crazy cocktail” by Joshua Mohr, author of *All This Life*.



Lois Ann is a writer of short fiction, novels, and essays. She has read both as open mic and as a featured reader at TrueStory and also at American River College’s SummerWords 2016, where she offered a workshop on generation, inspiration, and revision as a creative process. Her purpose as a writer is to celebrate untold stories, challenge assumptions, and enjoy the beauty of sentences.

Her first book was *Circus Girl and Other Stories*, a collection of short fiction. Her stories have been presented at Stories on Stage Davis and Stories on Stage Sacramento. Lois Ann is presently mid-way through the first draft of a new novel set in the 1890s.

Lois Ann has been a tenured professor in the English Department at American River College for thirteen years, teaching literature, composition, and creative writing. She lives in Sacramento with husband and cats. Her hobby is staring out the window.

At the June meeting of the Sacramento Suburban Writers Club, Lois Ann will read from her published work and work-in-progress, talk about her processes of writing, and field questions from the audience in what promises to be an entertaining discussion.



All meetings are held at the Crossroads Community Fellowship Church’s meeting hall, 5501 Dewey Drive, Carmichael — just north of the Madison/Dewey intersection, 7-9 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month.

All writers are encouraged to attend.

Membership is not mandatory but brings privileges. See last page.

Annual May Banquet

Mary Lou Anderson

Our 61st anniversary was celebrated with some fanfare, and we had a blast. The food at Cattle Rustlers was delicious, the staff and all our members were friendly, and the room was great.

The winner of our 2nd annual scholarship is Hannah Smith, a member of our high school mentoring group. Her story, "Vision of Mourning," won the best entry out of more than 20 entries. Congratulations to Hannah.

We celebrated with another silent auction to raise money for our scholarship fund and reached our \$1000 goal.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the banquet, the auction, and in the raffle ticket purchases at our meetings. I hope you can make it to our next meeting on June 13.

2016 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Hannah Smith was the winner of the \$1000 Scholarship from Sacramento Suburban Writers Club and was presented with her Award Certificate at our SSWC Spring Banquet on May 9th, 2016. Although we received many well written submissions to the SSWC Scholarship, Hannah's received the overall highest score by the judges.

Hannah recently graduated from Rio Americano High School and plans to attend University of California, Riverside in the fall. Her major will be Theatre, Film, and Digital Production, but she intends to write and become a published author as well.

VISION OF MOURNING

Hannah Smith

I opened my eye and glanced over at the clock: 8:00 AM. I wasn't going to school. Carefully maneuvering into a sitting position, I surveyed my room. It was brighter and the many photos plastered to the wall seemed to leap forward, vibrant with life. It seemed remarkably different except I knew that wasn't true. The room hadn't changed, I had.

I nimbly got up from my bed, shuffling along the carpet catching my reflection in the mirror. The bandage covering my eye seemed to dominate my face like a forlorn guard protecting its treasure and the slinged arm hung limply across my chest. Staring at her—me—was strange.

When I woke up in the hospital and was told the news, the room seemed to shatter around me.

"But there's still hope, right?" My mom had asked, tears streaming down her face as she gripped my good hand tightly.

"At this time, the damage seems to be extensive, I'm sorry." he replied, bowing out of the room gracefully. I think the look on my mom's face crushed me more than the news and hot tears brimmed in the corner of my eyes.

"The accident wasn't even that bad," I whispered. "They're not even injured and they're the ones that caused the... I was fine! I was fine, Mom, I was fine..."

I must have cried for three days straight.

Now, I just want to go back to school, to life before the accident. I slowly walked down the stairs. The aroma of apple cinnamon pancakes wafted in from the kitchen. I stood in the doorway, trying to commit everything to memory: the open window, white countertops, the magnets from trips on the refrigerator, everything I walked past everyday but toward which I never really paid any attention. Mom glanced up from her cooking and put on a smile.

"Oh, sweetie, you're up! Breakfast is almost ready."

"I thought I was going to school today."

"Mal, I don't think it's a good idea. You obviously can't write and your depth perception isn't..." She shook her head. "I'm worried about you. I don't think you're dealing with your grief."

"My grief? Mom, I'm the one who's accepted it! Why do I have to mourn it to be healthy?"

"It's gone, Mallory, it's gone. Your vision isn't coming back. And you're not reacting to it, which tells me that you're in denial and I'm trying to help—"

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Continued from page 2. . .

"I'm not in denial, I'm trying to move on! I'm at peace with it, why can't you see that?"

She didn't say anything.

"I just want to go back to school," I whispered. "I just want to see my friends. *Please.*"

"Okay," she replied, brushing some small tear away. "I'll make you a deal. I will consider letting you return to school if you go see that therapist I told you about. Do we have a deal?"

I took a deep breath, "I really don't need to talk to a counselor. I'm fine, really."

"Do we have a deal or not?"

Well, if it's the only way I'm going back to school, "Yes."

She nodded, "Ready for pancakes?"

"Mallory?" The receptionist called. I gave my mother one last glance and followed the receptionist.

The room had one large window with the shades partially drawn and two chairs in front of a massive mahogany desk. Behind the desk was a woman with auburn, curly hair and glasses wearing a black dress. She looked up, smiled, and motioned for me to sit down.

"Hi, you must be Mallory, I'm Dr. Levenly" she extended her hand which I shook with my good hand.

"So, your mom told me that you've been having trouble adjusting to a traumatic event—the loss of vision in your eye?"

"She's the one not adjusting, not me."

"So, you're not at all upset?"

"No."

"Mallory, it's really not a bad thing to be upset about it. What happened to you would take a toll on anyone."

"I'm not upset. The whole world is half-blind anyway so why does it make a difference?"

She leaned back in her chair. "What do you mean by that?"

"What I mean is people live like they're half-blind. Think about it. We spend all of our time on our phones, we rush by things in a hurry, and we hardly seem to give our full attention to anyone. We're living without seeing anything. So, no, I'm not upset anymore; I feel like I finally am seeing clearly."

"Okay, fine. Would you like to discuss your desire to return to class so soon?"

"I don't know."

"I don't believe that. Your mother made it clear to me that it was important to you. So, why is that?"

"I don't know, I just want to feel—"

"Like your old self?" I nodded. "Mallory, if you're going to move past this, you need to accept that your life isn't going to go back to the way it was before. There are going to be some adjustments, and I think ignoring the loss of your eye is only going to hinder that process. From what I've been told, everyone seems very upset about the accident and you seem to be pushing them away, avoiding the issue."

"Stop! Just stop, okay?! Everyone is freaking out about my eye and I'm sick of it! No, I didn't want this to happen to me and yes, I would fix it if I could but I can't and I know that. I know that my eyesight is never coming back and it's terrible but that's reality! I don't need everyone and their mother reminding me of the vision loss or how I'll never look the same! I mean, does it really matter what my prom pictures look like?" My voice kept rising but I couldn't stop, "And yes, I want to feel like my old self. I want to feel *normal*."

I want to feel like me! I don't want people looking at me and only seeing my eye. I am alive. That's what they should be focusing on: I AM ALIVE. I'm still here and I'm finally seeing everything clearly. Why does no one else realize that?" I looked down. I felt a sense of panic like I was back in that car again, not going anywhere, worrying that I was never going to go anywhere. My heart was pounding, my breathing shallow, and I could feel my eye watering.

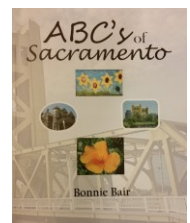
Dr. Levenly looked concerned. "Mallory, are you okay?"

"I'm fine... I am fine."



Book Launch for Bonnie Bair's "ABC's of Sacramento"

I was able to get a book signing at **Avid Reader on Saturday, June 11th at 4pm**. Come and support me at this great bookstore on the corner of Broadway and Land Park Drive, 1600 Broadway, Sacramento, CA 95818.



A WALK TO REMEMBER

Penny Howard

It was April 1937. My sister and I with a few of our girlfriends rode the street car to our objective. We then walked a short distance to the gate and paid our nickel to be admitted.

We walked for nearly a mile, and then turned around to walk back. About half way back we sat down to eat our sack lunch, and watch all the people walking. Some were on roller skates, and a few on stilts. No one was on bicycles. There were also a few in colorful costumes.

This was a big day for San Francisco. It was the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge, a great engineering feat. The next day it was open for automobile traffic at 25 cents a car. That brought on a lot of grumbling and griping at having to pay that much to cross the bridge.

“Don’t worry” the city said. It will soon pay for itself.”

That was the understatement of the century. Apparently, no one took into consideration the high cost of maintenance, especially constantly painting it so it wouldn’t turn to rust and collapse.

Now, whenever I see pictures of all the people walking across on that day, I can say, “I’m in there, I’m in there!”



Photo credit: Bonnie Bair

If You Can Write - You Can Speak

John Marchel

Speaking is a basic part of selling your book. Publishers want to know what YOU are doing to help sell your book. Speaking at book stores, libraries, and social clubs (i.e., Lyons, Chamber of Commerce, and Elks) are just some of the places that publishers expect you to participate in to speak and sell books

It’s not that difficult to give a short talk. Have you ever encountered something fascinating or want to tell about a great vacation you had and you couldn’t wait to tell your friends? When you did finally relay the tale, your friends were engaged and followed every word. Guess what? That is very much like a short speech.



You don’t feel that you are a speaker? Well, as the title of this article says; *if you can write – you can speak*. If you need to find out if you can speak in front of an audience, considered joining Toastmasters. There are half-dozen groups in the greater Sacramento area. Go to a meeting as an observer and see if you want to join. They have a long history of teaching how to be a speaker.

Practice makes perfect. That is an old saying we have heard all our lives. It very much applies to being a speaker. You really don’t have to memorize a speech; you can have notes to follow so you cover all that you want to say. There are many techniques around that will show you how to make a short speech. Just like the elevator speech, the more you do it the better you will get.

You can present it in one of two ways. First, you can explain in detail how you wrote the book, how you got the idea, what steps you took to get it published. Or what the book is about. How many elephants there are in zoos and how many are in Africa, for example. One thing to keep in mind, don’t try to “sell” your book during the presentation, but certainly mention it during the talk. There is also nothing wrong with reading a “short” piece from your book, just don’t make it too long.

Making short presentations to various groups will go a long way in helping you to sell more of your book.

Chopper barks 'read' as summer reading program begins



Walter Jackson Elementary School kicked off a summer reading campaign Monday with the help of a self-published author and her dog, Chopper. It's one of many programs Decatur City Schools plans to have as the district continues to address reading woes revealed after the state adopted ACT Aspire, the toughest standardized test in the nation.

“When students don’t read over the summer, they lose a lot of ground,” said Walter Jackson’s media specialist Todd McDonald.

Amanda Steedley, a 1988 Decatur High graduate who resides in Sacramento, California, announced the release of her fourth children’s book at the school Monday. All of the books are told from the view of Chopper, who appeared with her.

Chopper grabbed students’ attention as Steedley rode in on a motorcycle, and that’s part of the plan to get students focused on reading, McDonald said.

“We’re going to ask students to keep logs during the summer of how many minutes they read, and we’re going to give them prizes when they return to school,” he said. “It’s called the Chopper reading contest because Chopper is something they can relate to.”

Walter Jackson reading coach Britt Lovelace and Principal Rhonda Reece said if students can’t read, they can’t solve math problems.



“All of the testing we do is reading-based,” Lovelace said. “Before students can work on a higher order of thinking, they have to know how to read.”

A National Education Association study found that students who don’t read during the summer fall behind as much as three months. Other studies say students learn more when they are allowed to select their own books.

Steedley said she was in town to “give back to students” by letting them know how important reading is. Her new book with Chopper is titled “I’ve Been Tricked” and is about helping others.

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Reading vs Writing

Mary Lou Anderson

How long does it take to read a book? That fast? Great! How long to write a book? Not so quick, huh?

Why am I asking? Maybe because I finished reading a book on my e-reader over the weekend — completed in less than three days. Over. Done. Crime solved. Case closed. Book finished.

The book that I’m working on? Well, my first one took 35 years, including many false starts, and seemingly endless edits and rewrites. I was lucky to live long enough to finish it.

My next book took two years of nights after work then more endless edits and rewrites until I could no longer stand working on it anymore.

My next one is, once again, endless, and in the meantime I suffer from interruptions, articles, newsletters, Solitaire, restarts, responsibilities, new starts, procrastination, excuses, FreeCell, emails, meetings, and two of the cutest grandchildren imaginable ... and on and on and on.

Three days to read a book? Months, if not years, to write one? It’s just not fair.

I can only hope I live long enough to finish my next one.

MEMBERSHIP is paid on a yearly basis. If joining after March, dues are prorated by the quarter for new members.

Individual \$40.00/year Couple \$55.00/year
Full-Time Student \$30.00/year Platinum Senior (70+) \$30.00/year

Membership is not required for attending meetings but provides benefits such as:

- 1) publication in newsletter
- 2) participation in club author events
- 3) participation in critique groups
- 4) grants for conferences ... & more

More information is on our website: sactowriters.org.

Name: _____ Genres: _____ Published? Y/N

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Website/other info/address (optional): _____

Your name and email are needed to receive the digital newsletter.

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Elected Officers:

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Contact the newsletter if you would like to **ADVERTISE** in the SSWC Newsletter for your writing related services.
 \$3 a month (3 month minimum) for members
 \$5 a month (3 month minimum) for non-members

COPY AND DEADLINES

Submit original written material such as poems, letters, book excerpts, articles, book reviews, humor, web sites to visit, general information, fun stuff to share — almost anything ***by the 25th of each month***. Also, share info about other meetings, contests, books, book signings, classes, etc.
 Please keep the submission relatively short. Also, please submit electronically. There is no pay but byline credit is given — and that looks good to agents and publishers. This is a benefit of being a member of SSWC.

Contact

bonniebonniebair@yahoo.com with your submissions.

(Clipart provided by clipartbest.com)



Monthly Writing Prompt

The found poem: Read a book and circle some words on a page. Use those words to craft a poem. Alternatively you can cut out words and phrases from magazines.

<http://thinkwritten.com/365-creative-writing-prompts/>



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