March 2026

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March 29: Get Answers to Your Publishing Questions

MORE INFO AND REGISTRATION

Sign Up Slam Today!

Celebrating National Independent Bookstore Day
April 26, 1:00 - 3:30 pm
Book Passage, Corte Madera

$25 entry fee

Don't miss the chance to sell your books with the support of Book Passage, Left Coast Writers, and California Writers Club of Marin!

LCW, CWC Marin and Book Passage will donate a portion of the proceeds to 10-000 Oceanaut, a non-profit providing free ocean-focused learning experiences for children.

Show your support for independent bookstores and college-aspiring students, mingle with the local writer community, and sell some books!

Sign ups for table spaces opened TODAY 8 A.m and close March 30 6 p.m or as soon as the spots are filled. Don't delay — we expect these spots to go quickly!

Answers to your questions are on the Event page (click on the link below). I'm sure you'll still have questions, email us at marin@lcwriters.com.

DETAILS & RESERVE YOUR SPOT HERE

Which Publishing Path?

You've made it through the arduous process of writing, revising, and editing your manuscript. After taking a moment to bask in the glory, you sort your CWC Marin Bookmark and think, "Now what?"

It should be easier than ever. Essentially anyone, anywhere in the world with Internet access, can upload your full-blown book and make it available online to billions of people, for a pretty sum.

Yet, the process of choice is treacherous. Do you meet the requirements to be a good candidate for a traditional publisher? Are you willing to do the legwork and publicity yourself? What's a name published? What is a reputable hybrid and how do you find one? Is self-publishing right for you?

One way to get answers is to ask Marin Club Members. It's various to ask Marin Club Members, and it's fun to see how many different opinions are heeded. It makes no guarantees about the quality of the advice, mind you, but it will be delivered with comedy.

You might also visit the **Local Author Book Fair** at Book Passage on 25 April and scout out books written by people who sell their own books. Ask them what they chose their publishing path.

And sign up now for our March 29 presentation, **"Your Path Through Today's Publishing Labyrinth"**. Sueskers Sherm Yim Lee and Lisa Mantcheva are book coaches and writers, they've been shepe'ing folks like us for years.

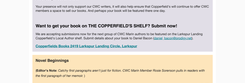
Ultimately, there is no right path and it's not the dark forest of choices keep you from getting the job done. Sherm and Lisa can help you choose which probably fits your project. And before you know it, you'll be doing such advice over a muffin, too.

Jean Gordon Kolenda
President, CWC Marin

(Photo by Valerie Saul)

New Coffee Social Location!

While we love the bustle and hum at Atomic Cafe, many of us have been struggling to hear each other. Before Atomic Cafe we had a great time at Sleeping Lion, but it's now closed. We're looking for a new place to meet. Jean has found a place we think we can't a-beat for our March Coffee Social at the wonderful Studio Fourth Street. Bring your own coffee and pastries. The social is still open to members and non-members alike, and we're offering it free of charge, but we still pass around a tip jar to help defray the rental cost.



Be sure to remind any of your coffee social friends about this new location. We don't anyone to go to Aroma Cafe by mistake. We're very excited about the great space. Let us know what you think.

CWC Marin Author Meet and Greet at Copperfield's

Drop by Copperfield's at Larkspur Landing on Saturday the 21st to support your local writer CWC Marin authors. Three of our series will be on hand to discuss and sell your Black Author Meet and Greet. Come join the festive atmosphere, eat 5 alarm Farmers' Market dip, so you can pick up a basket of fresh strawberries.

The three featured authors are:

Dr. Joe Ferris - Parenting with Self-Compassion
Ann Gerhardt - Mindfulness
Barbara Sjoholm - Another Out

Two other books by CWC Marin members will also be available for purchase:

Ali Phillips - Travels in the Sun
Carol Gross - Sex on Fire

Your presence will not only support our CWC writers, it will also help ensure that Copperfield's will continue to offer CWC members a space to sell our books. And perhaps your book will be featured there one day.

Want to get your book on THE COPPERFIELD'S SHELF! Submit now!

We are accepting submissions now for the next group of CWC Marin authors to be featured on the Larkspur Landing Copperfield's Local Author shelf. Submit details about your book to Sherm Bevel (bevel_bevin@yahoo.net).

Copperfields Books 2310 Larkspur Landing Circle, Larkspur

Novel Beginnings

Esther's Note: Cranky first paragraphs aren't just for fiction. CWC Marin Member Rose Greenson pulls in readers with the first paragraph of her memoir.

"It's 1:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 17, 2015. I'm all alone in the cold overcrowded hospital waiting room where I've closed together three sizeable chunks of hard plastic chairs to make a bed for myself. I'm in my pajamas, which I had to accommodate my CAT frame. I'm hooked up in the middle of a mud, trailing clear to my body heat, trying to hold my bladder. Inevitable while over the edge, the spaghetti dripping over the rim of a campsite. My carry-on suitcase stands upright like a party. I had packed in a hurry—a crazy person leaving in a baggie filled with almost bullet slathered with Neosporin, a pair of socks, a toothbrush, and a tube of toothpaste. I'm in a hospital office, my phone charged, the audition card I'd made ready that day. Blame, my start called at 10 years, is now lying on a sheet table in the frigid waiting room, being prepared to be sliced open. I'm a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a teacher, a smoothie, a vet and, a vet and an—nothing to worry about, just a vet and an. It's been four exhausting years since the diagnosis of non-alcoholic, cryptogenic, end-stage liver disease—a very long long hot tamale as far as my dreams remembered but is relinquish a teaching job to know?"

Rose Greenson is a CWC Member.

Do you have a quirky first paragraph you'd like to share (200 words or less)? Send it to marin@lcwriters.com and we may publish it in an upcoming newsletter!

Shout Outs!

Welcome to our New and Returning Members

James Richards
Ann Gerhardt
Kaiyan Wang
Dani Lanier
Sarah Bierman

We appreciate you!

Kudos goes to announce that the March chapter of CWC has **officially accounted 100 members**. Only a few short years ago, the pandemic hit our chapter hard. As the chapter began to grow, our membership dwindled to fewer than twenty people, and we faced the very real possibility that our chapter might not survive. We are only here today because of you. Thank you!

Mary Alice Stephens book *Uncorked: A Memoir of Cutting Six and Sterling Over* won the Pencraft award.

Tracy Sunde met her deadline to format the content for her new book and is now working on the illustrations.

CWC President **Joan Gordon Kolenda** launches her historical novel **Grit or Bus**, based on the tangled life of Japanese terrorist poet Kazuko Akiba, on Tuesday, April 23 at 6 pm at the lovely Copper Canyon Museum. Dominican University of California, San Rafael. Joan will be in conversation with Dr. Judy Halabisky, Director of the MFA Creative Writing program at Dominican. Pamela Varey

Michael J. Coffino's book **The Green Train Heist** hit #5 on the USA TODAY's Best-selling Bestseller last month. He enjoyed the ride, but it was a long one. Now he is back to his day job, helping people who have suffered life-changing medical outcomes, negotiate traffic impact, and a train lower that arrives heavily invested the affiliate. By revealing a history of financial mismanagement and misleading projections, the book serves as a cautionary tale for taxpayers facing an upcoming vote on whether to continue funding the train. You can purchase it here.

Have you done your own book launch? As a recent event, a non-member asked if he could be connected with someone who could help him with his book launch. Do you have a book launch coordinator? Do you need a coach? Do you have recent experience doing book launches? Let us know at marin@lcwriters.com.

Have something to shout about? We want to celebrate with you. Maybe you finished a draft or found a key piece of evidence for your research. Maybe you got a great publisher. Whatever it is, let us know. It's good for all of us to see our peers moving forward, meeting goals, and getting recognized! Email us at marin@lcwriters.com. (Members Only)

Got a book coming out this year? We know a few of you have books launching this year, and we want to highlight them. Send us an image of your book cover and a 50-word or less description of the book, along with any launch event information, and we'll make sure it gets featured. (Members Only)

Redwoods Book Launch

Celebrate with CWC Marin Member **Valerie Saul** at her Book Launch on Saturday, March 7 at 1 pm at Book Passage. She'll be in conversation with fellow CWC Marin member, **Mary Alice Stephens**, author of Uncorked: a Memoir of Letting Go and Staying Over.

We will also be featured by **Left Coast Writers at Book Passage on March 14th** with Linda Watanabe McFerrin at 2 p.m.

In addition, The Redwoods will be spotlighted on the KMR Redwood Writers radio show on March 26th.

The Barbary Widows: A Mystery, comes out **March 6th** from Skyline Press and it's available for preorder now!

From the Blog

To Was or Not to Was

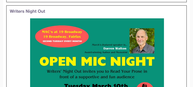
by Melissa J. Caffey

Like other writing coaches, I have often called out the use of "was" in literary works. Its passively little sentences of story impact. The common advice is that whenever possible, writers should replace "was" with more dynamic verbs. Instead of saying "the cat was on the table," we could write, "the cat curled the table," a structural overhaul, anything with more panache. The editing mantra is: stick to how you might come at whole.

I have some around "Was."

"Was" isn't a bad or bad! It's neither villain nor virtue. It is a word. The art is knowing when to let it stand and when to demand more of yourself. In literary parlance, the question isn't "Is was wrong?" but "What do I need the sentence to do to advance the story?"

Here are some thoughts on how to address the problem.



When "Was" Works

Factual Matters. Use "was" when the sentence includes pure factual content rather than dramatizes an event.

"He was the first elected committee chair."

"The apartment above was for lease."

Here, "was" performs a proper grammatical function: it ties the subject to a fact or a state of being. Trying to eliminate this canvas information. Replacing "was" with something more powerful would distort time or inflate importance.

Orientation and Context

Use "was" to anchor the reader in time, space, or circumstance before action unfolds.

"The escape route through the alley was narrow and debris-ridden."

"It was that time of day before the everything sun had risen."

In these cases, "was" situates the reader. It frames the environment or moment without competing with the action that follows.

READ MORE...

Are you interested in writing for the CWC Marin blog? Blog Master Michael Coffino is accepting submissions. Guidelines are on our blog page: https://www.cwcmarin.com/blog/

Photo: www.melissacaffey.com

Critique Groups Are Forming Now

Are you interested in joining a critique group? CWC Marin Board member Mike Nye has been here knowing with his brand new sci-fi novel Gear Creature: Third Grade Pre-Apocalypse. Book 1 in his trilogy), is organizing groups of CWC Marin writers who are interested in critiquing each other's work. It's a great way to get an initial sense of how your writing is working. It's also a great way to make new friends.

CWC Members only, please. Groups can take many different forms. Contact Mike at mike@pacificpublishing.com. He'll try to connect you with other like-minded writers.

March Zoom Writing Classes

I'm inviting you to Celebrate the Novel Beginning with me.

You may bring prose,poetry, memoirs and other longer-form writing to work on, as well as the novel.

Though we'll be looking at art and exercises to inspire us, we'll be using the principles apply to other forms of writing, as I will demonstrate.

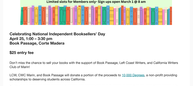
Feel free to bring your work-in-progress.

Each class will feature a mini-lesson based on a how-to writing craft, to work on our own material, followed by sharing and commenting in small groups.

Zoom, four Wednesdays, March 1 through 25th, 6-8 pm. You may attend one or all classes.

Please let me know if you're interested, and I'll send you the pay link. $25 per class/workshop available. Contact me: sjoe.writer@gmail.com

Writers Night Out



Creative Writing Retreat - Get Your CWC Discount!

Spring Creative Writing Retreat
Saturday, March 21
9:00 am - 4:00 pm
In person at Dominican University of CA

Commonwealth MFA writing mentors will lead workshops in fiction, essay, memoir, and poetry. This retreat has a new format that offers attendees time in small group workshops in both the morning and the afternoon as well as group journal writing, a nature walk, and a keynote lecture with **Dennis Nolan**, author of Good Michael, A Recitatory.

REGISTER HERE

Use the Discount Code CWCDISCOUNT to get 20 percent off

Upcoming Events

This is just a sampler of things going on in our area and online. Be sure to check our fellow CWC branch websites (https://calwriters.org/cwcbranches/). Some events come up too quickly for this monthly newsletter, so follow us on Facebook as well. We appreciate your tips! If you know of upcoming events that fellow members might enjoy, please let us know at marin@cwcmarin.com.

CWC Marin offerings are highlighted in red . All times are Pacific zone and events are free of charge, unless otherwise specified. Now through March 15 - The Smalls Too: A Big Contest for Small Works!

Now through March 15 - The Smalls Too: A Big Contest for Small Works! The California Writers Club proudly announces a statewide poetry and prose contest celebrating the power of brevity. Submit your 8-line poems or 75-word prose pieces for a chance to be featured in a forthcoming CWC publication. Small works, big impact—how much can you say in so few words? Awards: First Place $100, Second Place $50, Third Place $25. $10 Entrance fee. Learn more

March 1 through April 19 for Haunted: The 2026 Redwood Writers Prose Anthology. Editor Barbara Cottrell is seeking your fiction and memoir writings that explore all interpretations of "haunted," from supernatural encounters to emotional echoes, lost love, unfinished business, and everything in between. Bring us your romance, your horror, your quiet truths, and your restless spirits. Learn more

Sat. March 7, 1:00 pm. We are thrilled to celebrate CWC member **Valerie Saul** on the release of her debut novel, ***The Badass Widows***. Please join us for a special book launch event at Book Passage. Book Passage, 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera. See Shout Outs above for more information.

Sun. March 8 & 15, 11:30 am – 2:30 pm. **Beyond the Hero's Journey: Non-Western Narrative Styles** with Vanitha Sankaran. Explore narrative styles beyond the Hero's Journey (a popular Western cultural writing guide). From Africa to Asia and beyond, this course will look at different structures and how to use them in your writing. $185. Book Passage, 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera. Learn more

Sat. March 14, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm. **Books at the Source: North Bay Literary Arts Summit.** Authors and teachers will share their writing craft, publishing journeys, and books to inform our writing practices. CWC members **Mary Stephens** and our president, **Jean Gordon Kocienda**, will be participating in this all-day event. Mary will be leading a workshop on Developing Complex Characters for Memoirists and Novelists. At noon, Jean and Mary will be on a panel discussing Writing Forward from the Past: Inspired by family artifacts, others' words, and truths of character. $255.74. Sebastopol Center for the Arts, 282 S. High Street, Sebastopol. Learn more

Sat. March 14, 2:00 pm. Join **Valerie Saul** in conversation with Linda Watanabe McFerrin at Left Coast Writers for a **Book Talk** at Book Passage, , 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera. Learn more

Sun. March 29, 1:00 – 2:30 pm. **CWC Marin presents: Your Path through Today's Publishing Labyrinth** with writing coaches Shirin Yim Leos and Lisa Manterfield. This workshop will help participants consider what they want from publishing and determine which of today's many paths best aligns with their personal definition of success. Because any journey to publication is long, even beginning writers will benefit from learning how to set themselves up early for success. Advanced writers who are ready to submit will also benefit by taking away focused, actionable next steps. Get a behind-the-scenes look at the complex but exciting state of today's publishing industry. To register and for more information

CWC Marin

Board Members
Jean Gordon Kocienda, President
Susanna Solomon, Treasurer
Gini Grossenbacher, Membership
Daniel Bacon, Copperfield's Partnership, Coffee Social Leader
Mike Van Horn, Writing and Critique Groups POC
Robin Cohn, Newsletter Shout Outs, Calendar of Events, Meetup

We also received valuable assistance from:

Carol Bruce, New Member Ambassador
Tracy Tandy, Local Author Book Fair
Valerie Saul, Events
Erik Cederblom, Contest

Curious about helping us steer the club? Attend an upcoming Board meeting. Email us at marin@cwcmarin.com for details!

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