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# The Pen & Press

May – June 2013

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This issue of the newsletter marks the start of a new administrative year for NCPA, with a full slate of elected officers (see next page) but with some vacancies in key appointed board positions (see board list on page 12).

Folks, allow me to *implore* you to step up to the plate and take a swing at the ball on behalf of your independent publishing organization, Northern California Publishers & Authors. It does not take a vast commitment of time to serve in a position such as membership chair—a role of critical importance but only sporadic time demands—or newsletter editor (I'll be happy to show anyone interested some simple methods for organizing material for the newsletter and putting it into the easily managed format you see here) or the quintessential entry-level role of speakers bureau chair.

That last only involves keeping a list of NCPA members who have expressed an interest in being speakers to groups and organizations, and a summary of their stated topics and expertise, and being available in the event of a request for a speaker (infrequent, but it happens) to suggest names and provide contact information. The result is that the speakers bureau chair learns about many of our members and their interests and expertise and occasionally refers a group needing a speaker to a few members who might be a good match. That chair can also suggest speakers for our monthly meetings from among our own membership. The chair does NOT seek out speaking opportunities, coordinate schedules, or make speaking arrangements, but only suggests suitable names and provides email addresses or phone numbers when asked. Anything beyond that is optional. Oh, and the chair also attends board meetings and participates in board discussions, an excellent opportunity to learn more about what makes NCPA tick.

Other open slots include conference director (which might instead coordinate relatively simple single-topic workshops or seminars) and awards chair. The latter, by the way, can be supplemented by an awards *dinner* manager or chair. There is no reason why the *book awards* process has to be tied to *dinner* arrangements as long as the two functions communicate and coordinate. Time to start planning for the next book awards process and for next year's annual dinner is *now*, and that means we need individuals to take the positions (and the accompanying responsibilities), ask for help from folks with experience, and work with the board to plan, budget, and arrange.

Newly reelected NCPA President Ted Witt will be setting up a board meeting, so watch for that to be announced. You can attend and learn more, even if you are not yet a board member. Please take the opportunity to do so.

— Ken Umbach, interim editor

## New Officers for 2013-2014 Announced at Awards Dinner

*Following is Communications Director Ken Umbach's awards-dinner announcement of the new board:*

Five elected officers serve NCPA. For the coming year, we have:

- President **Ted Witt**, elected to a second term in that key office.
- **Penny Callmeyer**, newly elected as vice president.
- **Laurie Hoirup** as treasurer, back for a return engagement in that position after a year as vice president.
- Secretary **Tom Kando**, elected to a new term in that valuable role.
- I'm continuing for another – and final – year as communications director (which means that I get to pick up the mail and occasionally to be helpful with the NCPA Yahoo group). *[The crowd laughed out loud at this latest “final year” announcement. But I mean it. It is time to move on and let someone else get the experience and contribute to the organization.]*

Also on the board:

- Immediate past President **Barry Schoenborn**. Barry has served NCPA admirably in many roles over the past several years, including president, conference chair, awards director, webmaster, and treasurer. Although he is stepping away from the organization after years of key roles, I am hopeful that he will remain available for consultation. *[Others likewise offered kudos and thanks to Barry, whose efforts have been indispensable over the years.]*
- Webmaster **Jim Collins**, continuing in that role for another year. Jim has also been serving as membership chair, but is vacating that role. We need a volunteer to take over that essential function.
- Serving as chair of publicity and of programs, lining up monthly speakers, **Norma Jean Thornton**.

We have some vacancies still in need of volunteers:

- Awards director (Ted has energetically filled that role this year).
- Speakers bureau chair (a long-neglected role, but useful if someone *makes* it useful).
- Conference chair (which might also oversee workshops or other smaller events than full-scale conferences, which we have not held since 2010).
- Newsletter editor. We are overdue for someone new in that position. I'm continuing for the time being as interim newsletter editor, for the May-June issue, anyway, but the “interim” role has gone on long enough.

We also need volunteers to serve on committees related to each of those functions. A committee role gives a chance to learn on the job and to contribute to the organization.

## NCPA Book Awards for Books Published in 2012

**Twelve awards honor Northern California writers and publishers in 20th annual book competition.**

The novel *Flint House*, by Kathleen L. Asay of Granite Bay, took first place in the fiction category in NCPA's 20th annual book competition.

*New York Times* best-selling author John Lescroart, pictured at right, announced her name Saturday, April 27, in front of 65 attendees who participated in NCPA's annual awards night dinner at the Blue Prynt Restaurant and Bar in downtown Sacramento.

Lescroart "opened the envelope" to announce all winners at the event, including first-place honors for Laurie Hoirup of Sacramento, who topped the category of general non-fiction with her memoir of her life of accomplishments in the face of a form of muscular dystrophy. Her book is *I Can Dance: My Life with a Disability*.

Asay's book, whose storyline involves a burnt-out journalist and a house of lost souls, was published by Bridle Path Press, and Hoirup's book was published by Umbach Consulting and Publishing.

First-place in the children's book category went to Frances H. Kakugawa of Sacramento for her book *Wordsworth! Stop the Bulldozers!*, published by Watermark Publishing, in which poems are the hope to save endangered trees. The book also won third place for cover design and layout.

The top prize for cover design and book layout went to Earth Patch Press, owned by Terry Burke Maxwell of Sacramento, for her book by Ruben Llamas, *Eye from the Edge, A Memoir of West Oakland, California*.

Before presenting the awards, Lescroart told the story of his publishing journey, how fate helped him get his first book published, and how his first manuscript sat unattended in a drawer for 14 years. Other awards he announced at the event included:

- Second place in general non-fiction to Owen Sullivan of Orangevale for *The House's Money*, and third place to F.X. Biasi, Jr. of Lincoln for *The Brother-in-Law*. Honorable mention went to Theodora Bruns of Sacramento for *Through Phantom Eyes, Volume 5*.
- In the category of non-fiction, second place went to Carolyn Singer of Grass valley for *The Seasoned Gardner*, which also took second place in the cover design and book layout category.



- Cheryl Anne Stapp of Elk Grove, earned third place with her historical account of early California: *Disaster & Triumph, Sacramento Women, Gold Rush through the Civil War*.
- Honorable mention went to Earth Patch Press's *Eye from the Edge* by Ruben Llamas of Oakland.



In addition to presentation of book awards and a talk by New York Times bestselling author John Lescroart, the April 27<sup>th</sup> NCPA Awards dinner featured Ted Witt's presentation of certificates to authors included in the forthcoming NCPA anthology.

The dinner also featured a "Silent Auction" of donated items, with all proceeds to go towards a scholarship for a worthy high school student interested in writing. Items donated:

- Sharif's Jewelers, Aquamarine & diamond, yellow gold right-hand, cocktail ring, value: \$450, [www.sharifjewelers.com/](http://www.sharifjewelers.com/)
- Grand Oaks Inn B&B, one night free, plus second night half price, value: \$225+ [www.grandoaksinn.com/home.htm](http://www.grandoaksinn.com/home.htm)
- Pretty Road Press (Ted Witt): Kindle Fire e-reader, value \$199, [www.prettymroadpress.com/](http://www.prettymroadpress.com/)
- Mira Reisberg: writing class for children's picture book, value: \$149, [www.mirareisberg.com/](http://www.mirareisberg.com/)
- Stephanie Chandler: access pass to virtual Non-Fiction Writing Conference, value: \$99, [www.stephaniechandler.com/](http://www.stephaniechandler.com/)
- Linda Joy Singleton: synopsis session, Value: \$50, [www.lindajoyingleton.com/](http://www.lindajoyingleton.com/)
- Erin Dealey: professional critique, children's picture book, value: \$45, <http://erindealey.com/>

## May 2013 Meeting to Feature Judith Horstman

*As always, the meeting is on the second Saturday of the month, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at Merrill Gardens, Citrus Heights (Sun Terrace room, third floor).*

Judith Horstman, local freelance writer published (and self-promoted) in just about every medium, boasts that she'll show us how and why writers need to promote themselves and their books. In her presentation on "Shameless Self Promotion: Tips, Tools and Techniques for Selling Yourself and Your Work," she advises:

Marketing is crucial, and not just in selling the completed work but in getting assignments, endorsements, agents, publishers, speaking engagements and readers. Yet we're often reluctant to boast about and boost ourselves and our work.

Judith Horstman is an award-winning journalist who has been a Washington correspondent, a university professor, a Knight Science Journalism Fellow and a Fulbright scholar. She writes about health and medicine, and has been published (and self-promoted) in just about every medium.

Judith is the author of four brain books in collaboration with Scientific American, including *The Scientific American Healthy Aging Brain*, which has a jacket blurb begged from Dr. Oz.

*Website:* [www.judithhorstman.com](http://www.judithhorstman.com)

*Twitter:* <http://twitter.com/judithhorstman>

## Other Upcoming Meetings for 2013

Mark your calendars for the rest of the year:

- June 8, 2013, T.E. Watson: “Putting Your Passion Where Your Pen Is”
- July 13 2013, Member networking and question/answer session
- August 10, 2013, Stephanie Chandler. “Internet Marketing”
- September 14, 2013, Amy Rogers, “AudioBooks”
- October 2, 2013, Jennifer Basye-Sander, topic to be announced
- November 9, 2013, Teresa LeYung Ryan, “Platform Building”
- December 14, 2013, the popular annual “Book Display” and member networking event

*Thanks go to Norma Jean Thornton for her energetic recruitment of speakers and selection of topics for our meetings.*

## 15 Tips Writers Can Use to Improve Dialogue

*By Ted Witt*

I can thumb through a manuscript and quickly determine its suitability for publication by browsing the dialogue. If the dialogue is bad, I know there will be other structural problems with the story. Amateurs and inexperienced writers often fail at compelling dialogue because they don't understand its integral role in story architecture. To help you succeed, here are 15 tips to help aspiring writers master the fine art of conversation in print

1. Dialogue is diverse. Only one character in your book can possess your personal voice; the rest of your characters must impersonate other voices. Don't write how you talk and place your words in every character's mouth. You have to become someone else.

2. Dialogue is meant to be spoken. When creating your stories, don't write your dialogue. Speak it out loud, and then record the words you have created. When finishing your book, always read the dialogue aloud during the editing process. Fix it, so it becomes Talking English. Oral English and Written English are two different languages.
3. Dialogue evolves out of personality. If you have not fully defined your character, you can't possibly be creating appropriate dialogue. You are mostly likely writing your own thoughts, not your characters. Dialogue defines character.
4. Dialogue builds tension. Ask yourself, "What is at risk?" Mere chit-chat bores readers. They want suspense and entertainment. The motivation of characters should be the genesis of their conversations. If there is no tension under development, your reader leaves the book on the nightstand and never returns.
5. Dialogue should not be journalistic. Newspaper-style comments are a common ailment among those of us who have been reporters. This kind of dialogue is characterized by quotations of factual reinforcement or proof of a point already expressed. It does little to expose personality.
6. Dialogue should be heavily scattered throughout memoirs. Otherwise, you are likely to present a myopic view of life through your own eyes. Help us see other people's perspective of your life by remembering dialogue within the scenes of your story.
7. Dialogue should not dump information for information's sake. Narrative and description do that. Please, no so-what conversations as in, "That building is big," said John." Dialogue is more subtle. It reveals mood, offers glimpses and drops clues.
8. Dialogue should be able to pass the relevancy test. Use a conversation when the story calls for a character to reveal something about his or her personal development, needs, desires, or relationships. Re-read all your dialogue to see if it can pass this test.
9. Dialogue follows a pattern within story architecture, whereby narrative introduces facts, leading to scenes. Scenes play out through characters, who act, and whose words create an emotional bond (good or bad) with readers. Scenes incorporate subtext and advance a plot. As such, dialogue is a tool and has its place. Metaphorically speaking, don't use dialogue as a hammer, when a paint brush is required.
10. Dialogue in print is imperfect because it represents actual oral speech. That means your story's conversations will often record clipped thoughts, staccato bursts, pauses, incomplete sentences, repetition, and even poor grammar.
11. Dialogue sits next to a varied and comfortable blend of identifiers. Identifiers are the words that reveal which person is speaking and how. The word "said" is your best friend in dialogue. That said (no pun intended), the four chief writing sins with regard to identifiers are 1) to use "synonyms for "said" too often, 2) to use flowery adverbs, 3) to avoid using identifiers altogether so that the readers gets lost, and 4) to rely to the word "said" so much that the word becomes irritating.

12. Dialogue lives alongside body language. If you cannot imagine a person using body language with your dialogue, throw the line out. It is probably just information. When people are passionate about their conversation, their hands, face, body and legs move. Watch for it. Passion equals movement.
13. Dialogue requires study. Next time you are at a restaurant with friends, study their speech. Then mimic their speech patterns. It is impossible to write without true-life experience. Get in the world. Teen-age fan fiction is full of one-sided dialogue from kids who have spent too much time in the basement—alone.
14. Dialogue has dual purposes. When you are hiding a clue in dialogue, the conversation has to have meaning in the present moment while simultaneously offering a hint of the future. The foreshadowing cannot stick out. You can witness shoddy execution of this principle in many popular TV crime dramas. Dialogue will be so unrelated to the current scene that you know it is a clue toward a later resolution.
15. Dialogue is better when it written in the context of a plan. If you are writing without an on-paper outline, your dialogue will suffer because you have not thought through all the intricacies of theme, plot points, and relevant scenes. Your dialogue cannot connect to whole unless you know where you are going.

## **Some NCPA Discussion List Dialogue on Self-Publishing**

The following is adapted from a series of posts to the NCPA email discussion list.

### **From Naida West:**

Hello NCPAers,

The bookstore owner in Berkeley is honest in the piece below. It is a waste of energy to try to sprinkle books around in independent bookstores or wage a major campaign and pay more than you'll get from sales to hire a distributor who will actively "sell" them to bookstores. Focus elsewhere—the direct market: readers.

I'll never forget a comment on this subject from Tom Ross, author (with wife Marilyn) of *The Complete Guide to Self Publishing*. In 1997 he was speaking at a publishing conference sponsored by Sac Publishers & Authors, forerunner of NCPA. During Q & A, a neophyte asked in a desperate and frustrated tone: "But how do I get my books into the bookstores!!" That subject had received almost no attention.

Ross, about to leave, quickly explained the realities of bookstore sales and concluded with this: "The question is not how to get your books into bookstores, it's how to get them out!!" He then turned off the mic; the conference was over.

I was astonished, like many others in the audience. We had grown up believing success meant seeing your book in bookstores. And I didn't believe him, though he was right. If your books are in stores on consignment (normally your only option), half the time or more you won't get paid for the occasional sale, and even if you do, you've wasted too much energy chasing store sales all for a couple of dollars. Success is measured in income and volume of readers, not being shown in

bookstores (where customers are a tiny segment of the population and income is miserable). Much truer now than in 1997, for several reasons.

I remain a client of wholesalers Ingram and Baker & Taylor so that customers in faraway places can order my books in Barnes & Noble stores, but I won't pay \$2000 to have them shelved. The cost of this I chalk up to advertising (not sales), and an ineffective means of advertising it is. Get out and meet your readers.

Naida West, [www.bridgehousebooks.com](http://www.bridgehousebooks.com)

**From Barry Schoenborn:**

Hi, Folks

You recall Ken's alert about that *New York Times* article [<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/17/business/media/david-mamet-and-other-big-authors-choose-to-self-publish.html?pagewanted=all>]. Here, a book seller in Berkeley responds.

Barry

To Self-Publish or Not? A Word of Warning

Published: April 21, 2013

To the Editor [of the *New York Times*]:

Re "New Publisher Authors Trust: Themselves" (front page, April 17):

Authors who choose to self-publish as a recourse to rejection from, or frustration with, traditional publishing houses subject themselves to further disappointment when they try to publicize and distribute their books themselves.

We see this every day in our independent bookstore: writers dropping off unsolicited work in the hope that we will stock books that have had little or no editing, and few reviews or distribution beyond Amazon (always a nonstarter).

With rare exceptions, it is unrealistic to expect busy booksellers, who conduct business with hundreds of established vendors already, to take them on: reading, evaluating and setting up separate vendors for each title.

For us, it's a bookkeeping nightmare yielding very little return. For the novice author, it's a cumbersome process at best to learn how to become a one-person publishing company.

David Mamet's plan to self-publish his next book is one thing, but would-be authors might think twice before venturing into a world largely unknown to them.

MARION ABBOTT

Berkeley, Calif., April 17, 2013

The writer is a co-owner of Mrs. Dalloway's Literary and Garden

Barry Schoenborn, President, WVS - The Technical Writing Company



The original article is “New Publisher Authors Trust: Themselves,” by Leslie Kaufman, Published: April 16, 2013. The article drew over 130 comments at the *NY Times* website.

My own comment on the article (not posted to the NCPA email list, but on the *NY Times* site) was as follows:

Ken Umbach, California

This article appears to be confusing subsidy publishing with self-publishing. They are NOT the same. No one can "self-publish" on behalf of the author. The only SELF-publisher is the author himself or herself, owning the ISBN in his or her name (whether personal name or business name) and managing the process. That will typically involve buying such services as editing, formatting, and cover design, but does not involve having another company publish using its own ISBN (which by definition makes that company the publisher). The distinction might seem subtle to those not involved in the business, but it is nonetheless meaningful.

Unfortunately, even big commercial publishers are hijacking the term "self-publishing" to encompass their pay-to-play subsidy publishing arms, sometimes administered by the same subsidy and vanity publishers that more directly exploit authors.

April 17, 2013 at 9:11 a.m.

## **California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch Activities**

*CWC-Sacramento has overlapping membership and some shared interests with NCPA. The Sacramento Branch is one of 18 throughout California. Starting in March 2013, monthly luncheon meetings are at Cattlemens restaurant, 12049 Folsom Blvd., Rancho Cordova. Meeting fee is \$12 for members and \$14 for non-members, and includes a buffet lunch.*

**See [www.cwcsacramentowriters.org](http://www.cwcsacramentowriters.org) for more information on CWC, Sacramento Branch, and its meetings and activities.**

### **Upcoming California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch, Luncheon Meetings**

- May 18, 2013 (see [www.cwcsacramentowriters.org](http://www.cwcsacramentowriters.org) for details)
- June 15, 2013 (see [www.cwcsacramentowriters.org](http://www.cwcsacramentowriters.org) for details)

### **The CWC Sacramento Branch Writers Network**

The CWC Sacramento Branch Writers Network, meets the first Friday morning of every month, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., at IHOP, 2216 Sunrise Blvd., Rancho Cordova, CA (west side of Sunrise, north of Zinfandel). Participants include book, newspaper, magazine, and trade journal writers. Visitors are welcome. No charge, but attendees pay for their own breakfast. Upcoming: May 3 and June 7, 2013.

### **Open Mic for Writers (“10 Minutes of Fame”)**

Join the Sacramento branch of the California Writers Club on the second Friday of each month for opportunities to read your written work. Sign-up begins at 6:45 p.m. Listeners are also welcome. Barnes & Noble, Birdcage, 6111 Sunrise Blvd., Citrus Heights

(Sunrise just south of Greenback). Contact: Julie Bauer, joolieb@aol.com. Upcoming: May 10 and June 14, 2013.

## Other News, Announcements, and Comments

Your editor invites submissions for this section of *The Pen & Press*. Short items about NCPA members or otherwise of interest to writers, editors, and publishers (and allied folks) are welcome here.

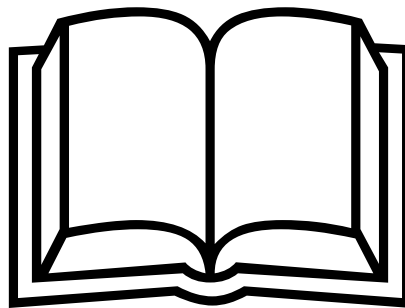
✓ Kathleen Asay will be signing copies of *Flint House* at Avid Reader at Tower, 1600 Broadway, Sacramento, Sunday May 5, at 2 p.m. Kathleen tells us, “Please come by and say hello, buy a book and support a local treasure, an independent bookstore. *Flint House* is a novel wrapped around a mystery and has been receiving high praise from readers. I'd love to see you there. Remember, books make great Mother's Day gifts.”

✓ *The Seasoned Gardener*, by Carolyn Singer (Garden Wisdom Press), is a finalist in the *ForeWord Reviews*' “Book of the Year” Awards. Carolyn will be signing and selling books at a discount at the El Dorado Home & Garden Show in Placerville May 3-5 and at the Auburn Home & Garden Show May 17-19. (*The Seasoned Gardner* won two awards in the latest NCPA book awards competition.)

✓ Searching for a special used book, or looking for bargains on reading? Check out 2010 NCPA Conference sponsor Time-Tested Books, 1114 21st Street, Sacramento, CA 95811. See <http://timetestedbooks.net/> for more information.

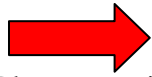

✓ Know someone who is looking for quality assisted living? Be sure to ask for a tour of our monthly meeting host, Merrill Gardens, Citrus Heights.

✓ **Your notice or announcement could go here!**



### A Note from the Editor

Send your articles and announcements for the newsletter to Ken Umbach, [ken@umbachconsulting.com](mailto:ken@umbachconsulting.com).

 Use “NCPA NEWSLETTER” as the email subject heading! 

Please provide submissions in Microsoft Word (or compatible) format or in plain text (preferably *not* in pdf and definitely not in jpeg or other image format for text). If you would like to discuss an article idea or have any other questions or comments about the newsletter, feel free to email or phone.

What fits best into *The Pen & Press* is news of members’ books, activities, marketing, speaking engagements, and accomplishments. Also of value: members’ insights into the challenges and opportunities of writing and publishing and information on regional resources for authors and publishers. Cover illustrations and other photos are welcome in jpeg or other standard format. Please keep file sizes and illustration dimensions reasonable. When in doubt, call or email me in advance.

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is Monday, June 24, 2013. **Please submit material *before the deadline if possible!*** If you do not want your article or announcement to be lost in hundreds of accumulated email messages, **use NCPA NEWSLETTER — *exactly and only that* — as your email subject heading.** Send to [ken@umbachconsulting.com](mailto:ken@umbachconsulting.com).

— Ken Umbach, interim editor

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Readers are of course free to print copies for noncommercial personal use, and NCPA members are welcome to print copies of the newsletter to share with friends, colleagues, and prospective members.

*Mailing address*

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Citrus Heights, California 95610  
[www.norcalpa.org](http://www.norcalpa.org)

## Board of Directors of NCPA

*The following list is updated for 2013-14, as of April 30, 2013*

### **President**

Ted Witt  
tedwitt@prettyroadpress.com  
916-934-8434

### **Vice President**

Penny Callmeyer  
cpennyc@msn.com  
916-692-5054

### **Secretary**

Tom Kando  
Kandotom@csus.edu  
916-852-0253

### **Treasurer**

Laurie Hoirup  
Laurie@LauriesLegacy.com  
916-469-7695

### **Communications Director**

Ken Umbach  
ken@umbachconsulting.com  
916-722-6897  
916-812-9178 (cell)

Note: NCPA's executive committee includes president, VP, secretary, treasurer, and communications director.

### **Publicity**

Norma Jean Thornton  
normathornton@yahoo.com  
916-991-5751

### **Website**

Jim Collins  
jim@jcwwrite.com  
209-566-0935

### **Programs**

Norma Jean Thornton  
normathornton@yahoo.com  
916-991-5751

### **Newsletter (interim)**

Ken Umbach  
ken@umbachconsulting.com  
916-812-9178 (cell)

### **Membership**

Position is open

### **Awards**

Position is open!

### **Past President**

Barry Schoenborn  
barry@wvswrite.com  
530-265-4705

### **Conference Chair**

Position is open! *(Could coordinate workshops or seminars instead of full conference.)*

### **Speakers Bureau**

Position is open!

Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at Merrill Gardens Retirement Community, 7418 Stock Ranch Road (just west of Sylvan Road about a quarter mile north of Greenback Lane), Citrus Heights  
Visitors are welcome.