

# THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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## NEWSLETTER

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THE INSTITUTE is affiliated with the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS), the American Historical Association (AHA), and the National Coalition for History (NCH).

The NEWSLETTER is sent to all Institute members, as well as college and university libraries and other interested scholars. The Institute appreciates all tax-deductible contributions made by non-members who wish to remain on its mailing list.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Let me begin by welcoming our new members. **Dot Brovarney** is a freelance historian and writer in Ukiah. **Carol Sicherman** is Professor Emerita of Lehman College, City University of New York. She has recently moved to Oakland and is eagerly learning about Bay Area history. The foodies among us will be interested to know that **Deanna Paoli Gummina** is currently working on a study of dining in San Francisco.

Next, let me offer congratulations to all those who have had work published or performed recently as well as to those who have organized presentations and those who are making advances on their works in progress. You can read all the details in "Member News," but let me state the obvious: that presentation to the public of works of artistic and scholarly value is central to TIHS's mission. The many other dimensions of our organization's work are important and pleasurable, but reaching the broader public is at the heart of what we do.

With this in mind, the Biography Writers Group decided at a recent meeting to re-designate itself the Active Writers Group since it is the only one of TIHS's subsections that brings together writers to discuss and critique each other's work as a prelude to future publication. Many of its members are not doing *biography* in the strictest sense (although all have a biographical component); some are writing fiction, others memoirs and family histories, while still others are writing about particular professions. By making this clear, the writers group encourages others to join its ranks.

Getting new members for TIHS is a continuing concern. On June 23 members of the board and the Outreach Committee (the committee formerly known as "membership") will meet in a special session to discuss this question and the larger issue of organizational revitalization. We will be assisted by Carla Silver, the executive director of the Santa Fe Educational Leadership Center. It is our hope that we will come up with some specific proposals that the board can begin putting into practice at its July meeting. We will keep you apprised of continuing developments.

*Richard Robbins*

## WORKS-IN-PROGRESS

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### History by Other Means

The home of **Georgia Wright** was the location of an innovative and splendid work-in-progress on Sunday, March 11. An all-woman panel presented three approaches to recreating history for public presentation.

**Leslie Friedman**, historian and dancer/choreographer, spoke about the meeting of dance and history. Some of her works were purposely created to be historical, such as *The Gold Rush!*, where narration taken from historic documents, projections of archival pictures, costume, music, and dance evoke the milieu of the period. Other dances grew from movement and music and led her to an historical subject such as Clara Schumann's life and her relationships with Johannes Brahms and Robert Schumann. *Clara* is depicted by movement and Brahms' music. Extensive research on topics led to performance pieces. Dances about women, from Harriet Tubman to Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Tina Turner, explore their times and their destinies. For *Britain Meets the Bay*, Friedman presented *Why? Because*, a two-part dance exploring experiences of World War I using two movements of Elgar's *Cello concerto in E* (Op. 85). Leslie's presentation included a short DVD of excerpts of *Why? Because* and audience participation. Leslie stated that her dances with historical themes do not do the same thing as a written historical work, but they can reach audiences on a deep level leading to understanding.

**Judith Offer**, poet and playwright, discussed the historical nature of several of her plays, emphasizing the imperative for historical accuracy, whether the work is designed for children or an adult audience. She began her talk with a bit of audience participation, a reading of a brief scene from *A Shirtwaist Tale*, the Klezmer musical, which centers on the true story of the 1909 strike by shirtwaist workers in New York City. She also talked about *Compared to What?*, set in Oakland, California in 1926,

which examines the lives and working conditions of Pullman Porters, and a one-act play, *Scenes from the Life of Julia Morgan*.

**Bonda Lewis**, actor, writer, and historian, develops one-person shows on the lives of women writers and activists. She initiated her talk in the persona (and costume) of Sara Bard Field, who crossed the United States by car in 1915, carrying a petition to Congress for the immediate adoption of the Susan B. Anthony amendment for women suffrage. Lewis discussed the research for her topics, the importance of historical accuracy for character development, costume and makeup and language. Besides the shows on Field (recently presented at the San Francisco Public Library), her productions include works on Jane Austen, Louisa May Alcott, Isabella Bird, Amelia Jenks Bloomer, and a show called *The Powder Keg*, a study of the development of the military nursing services of America and Great Britain from 1811 to 1949 using letters, journals, reports, and her interviews of British and American World War II nurses.

*Nancy Zinn*

### France and World War II: The Tourist Perspective During and Since

On April 20 at the home of **Georgia Wright**, **Bert Gordon** presented "France and World War II: The Tourist Perspective During and Since," illustrated with images of posters, placards, pamphlets, advertisements, magazine covers, official guides, battlegrounds, monuments, and memorials. He covered the varied aspects of what is called war or battleground tourism, starting with the well-known photograph of Hitler in front of the Eiffel Tower after the German conquest of Paris in June 1940. There is no doubt that war tourism has a long history and a wide reach, from the Crimean War and the American Civil War to World War I, the

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Spanish Civil War, World War II, the Vietnam War, and now 9/11 and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and includes visits to cemeteries, battlefields, monuments, and museums.

War tourism in France during and after World War II constituted a major industry and was both domestic and international. Throughout the war the French published "What's Going on in Paris?," a listing of arts events, films, musical performances, restaurants, etc., to stress normalcy and to draw tourists away from the German-fortified coasts. Shortly after the fall of France in 1940, the Germans brought to Paris the railroad car in which Germany had signed the surrender at Compiegne in 1918, an attempt to erase the stigma of their earlier defeat. A special department of the German military occupation published a magazine touting the charms of Paris, "Der Wegweiser," organized guided tours, and even instituted a bureau for the protection of French art.

In the years after the war, the British were attracted to the sites where they had been victorious, as were the Americans, and Normandy alone sprouted thirty museums. The American military cemetery at Colville-sur-Mer drew over a million visitors a year. A Shoa Memorial and archives of contemporary Jewish history was established in the Marais in the late 1960s. The 1970s saw an increase in war-related museums and an expansion of the topics deemed worthy of attention, as well as an effort to celebrate previous wars, which further accelerated during the 1990s. A privately organized and financed effort maintains individual fortresses of the old Maginot Line; memorial sites have been dedicated to Marshalls Petain and LeClere; the city of Vichy began tours in 1987 of sites related to World War II; the Musée Militaire established a Charles de Gaulle monument. In 2011 the anniversary of the Armistice saw the opening of the Musée de la Grande Guerre in Paris.

## GROUP REPORTS

Yet, despite the increase in sites and subjects, there has been a falling off in war tourism since a high in 2005, when 38 percent of the most visited sites in France were war-related. In 1960, it had been 15 percent; by 2008, it was down to 9 percent.

A probing discussion ensued that raised specific questions, e.g., about the use of translations, the future of war tourism, and where might reenactments fit into the broader picture of "lieux de mémoire." Notwithstanding the entrepre-neurial spirit which helped create many of the World War II sites and the professionalization and state support of heritage and memory, we concluded that a decline in interest over time was inevitable.

*Cornelia Levine*

### Medieval Studies

On Saturday, March 10, at the home of **Ellen Huppert, Nancy Zinn** gave a brief talk on medieval Arabic science, focusing on "The House of Wisdom" (Bayt al Hikma). This was the title given to a center for translation, discussion, and scholarly pursuits in the field of science in ninth- and tenth-century Baghdad under the patronage of Caliph al-Mansur, the leader of the Abbasid empire. One result of this effort was the transmission of some of the works of science from the classical world to Western scholars, some of whom first encountered the material by traveling to Muslim Spain.

On Saturday, May 19, at the home of **Lyn Reese, Ellen Huppert** discussed Saladin, who



## GROUP REPORTS

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led the Muslim opposition against the Crusaders during the twelfth century. A Kurd, he conquered Syria and Mesopotamia and founded the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt. A strict Sunni Muslim, he is said to have seen *jihad* as personal piety; he drank no wine, gave away money and property, and always sought to rule justly. Some of the many stories told about him are clearly myth. Some Westerners attributed Christian knightly values to Saladin—in some stories he was actually knighted. Others even claim that he believed in the power of the True Cross and stressed the agreement of all three Abrahamic faiths. Both Saddam Hussein—who, like Saladin, was from Tikrit, Iraq—and Hafez al-Assad identified with Saladin.

*Lorrie O'Dell*

### History-Play Readers

The group recently read John Hodge's new play *Collaborators*. It was very timely, as *Collaborators* recently opened at the National Theatre in London. The play, concerning an imaginary meeting between Joseph Stalin and the playwright Mikhail Bulgakov in Moscow in 1938, is a dark comedy. Bulgakov was born in Kiev in 1891. He earned a medical degree at Kiev University and practiced medicine in nearby provincial villages. He returned to Kiev in 1918 when the city was in turmoil. His brothers enlisted in the White Army and ended up in Paris. He too enlisted with the White Army, moved from medicine to journalism, never left Russia, and never saw his brothers again.

The years when the play is set was not an easy time for a writer in the Soviet Union. Earlier Bulgakov's work had come to the attention of Stalin, who protected him and found work for him in the Moscow theatre world. Stalin very much liked his 1926 play *Days of the Turbins* (which we read earlier this year). Subsequent

difficulties with censorship and critics led Bulgakov to write to Stalin in 1930 asking permission either to emigrate or to resume work in the theatre. He received a phone call from Stalin and was awarded a post at the Moscow Art Theatre. *Day of the Turbins* was revived and Stalin was reputed to have seen it fifteen times. Its success protected Bulgakov from arrest in the 1930s. However, his play about Molière, which premiered in 1936, was denounced, an act he never forgave. In 1938, he once again turned to Stalin and agreed to write a play to celebrate Stalin's sixtieth birthday in December 1939. In return, he received a promise that the ban on his play about Molière would be lifted. His complicity also insured his life and that of his wife.

This is the story which provided the inspiration for *Collaborators*. Using the historical background, Hodges embarks upon a blistering, surreal adventure in which the dictator and the writer meet and collaborate on the play, the two exchanging roles—Stalin works on the play while Bulgakov attends to his collaborator's government paperwork on matters ranging from steel and grain to death quotas. It is a brilliant, amusing, extremely disturbing concept. The play, of course, will never be performed. Stalin exults in the fact that, rather than killing Bulgakov, he has controlled his mind. He boasts that he broke him as he broke everyone. Bulgakov, having survived by his wits, unlike many of his literary colleagues, died of natural causes in 1940.

Anyone wishing to participate with the group, please contact Joanne Lafler.

*Edith Piness*

## Biography Writers

At our meeting of March 25, the group welcomed a new member, **Carol Sicherman**. New to the Institute, Carol has published a biography of Harry J. Marks entitled *Rude Awakenings: An American Historian's Encounter with Nazism, Communism and McCarthyism*. It was published by New Academia Publishing, for which she paid production costs, and the book is produced on demand. While the publication itself was very satisfactory, it leaves Carol with the need to promote the book on her own and to convince bookstores to stock it.

**Rob Robbins** reported on his adventure with "speed dating" with agents. He was given five minutes to describe his project to a series of agents, and one of them asked him to send samples of his book. The group expressed congratulations and good wishes on that success. We look forward to hearing the results at our next meeting.

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**Ann Harlow** explained that through barter, she has acquired a writing coach and a life coach, which has renewed her energy for her biography project. She is looking at the possibility of a museum exhibition to create interest in her two figures, Anne Bremer and Albert Bender.

**Ellen Huppert** and **Liz Nakahara** shared some pieces of their work and welcomed the comments of the group.

When the meeting set for May did not work out, the group set the second Sunday of each month as the regular meeting time, beginning June 10. That decision should help everyone be prepared for each meeting.

*Ellen Huppert*

A fuller welcome to new members **Dot Brovarney** and **Carol Sicherman**, barely introduced in the previous Newsletter. Dot brings many years of museum curatorship and exhibition development experience on various California history projects. She just dismantled "A Passion for Plants and Place: Carl Purdy of Mendocino County." She is co-author of *Remember Your Relations: The Elsie Allen Baskets, Family & Friends*.

Carol Sicherman, professor emerita of English literature, with publications on Renaissance and African topics, has been delving into family history. *Rude Awakenings: An American Historian's Encounter with Nazism, Communism and McCarthyism* is a biography about her father. She is currently working with a collection of early twentieth-century postcards from her husband's family.

And welcome also to **Deanna Paoli Gumina** who joined very recently. Although practicing as an educational therapist, Deanna has authored several historical works, including the bilingual *The Italians of San Francisco, 1850-1930*; *A Certain Woman of Importance: The Life and Times of Kathleen Norris*, and "Frank Norris: The Brilliant Writer with Math Disability," in *Studies in American Naturalism*.

About two recent reviews of *The First White House Library*, which features her essay, "Abigail Powers Fillmore: First Lady of the Library," **Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada** noted: "I'm pleased that both reviews give Abigail her due!"

**Anne Richardson's** presentation at the Institute's annual meeting, "Tyndale's Artistry of Vexation" will be published in *The Tyndale Society Journal*.

## MEMBER NEWS

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"Meanwhile Back at the Ranch: Discoveries in the Valley of the Moon" was the title of **Jim Shere's** talk as guest speaker at the annual luncheon on March 25 of the Sonoma County Historical Society.

In April, **Joanne Lafler** gave the last of four talks by Institute members at the Center for Learning in Retirement in San Francisco. (Her predecessor at CLIR, **Leslie Friedman**, was a tough act to follow, she said.) Joanne's presentation, "A Homesteader-Poet in Big Sur," wove the history of Big Sur into the story of Harry Lafler's long love affair with that rugged stretch of coast south of Monterey.

Thanks to a grant from the Institute, **Steven Levi** was able to complete his book on Alaska's ghost ship, the *Clara Nevada*. After the book came out, he was "contacted by the grandniece of the ship's captain, who had found an illustration of the captain in a book about his wife, who had become involved in a drug-smuggling love triangle in Lima, Peru in 1891. Her death by poisoning in San Francisco resulted in a legal case, which was apparently so compelling that it was written up as a case law sample for law students."

In April, **Rose Marie Cleese** was interviewed by the production group Ark Media for a six-hour, three-part documentary on Italian-Americans that will air nationally on PBS in early 2014. The filmmakers were interested in what their Italian roots meant to her grandfather Angelo J. Rossi (the first mayor of a major American city of 100 percent Italian descent) and his immigrant parents, and how those roots influenced their perceptions and actions. (Ark Media is one of the production companies that worked on Henry Louis Gates' *Finding Your Roots*, which recently aired on PBS.)

**Bert Gordon** reports his publications for 2011-2012: "The Evolving Popularity of Tourist Sites in France: What Can Be Learned from

French Statistical Publications?," *Journal of Tourism History*; "World War II Tourism in France," in David Picard and Mike Robinson, eds., *Emotion in Motion: Tourism, Affect and Transformation*; and "Reinventions of a Spa Town: The Unique Case of Vichy," *Journal of Tourism History*.

State Parks' subjects featured in **Maria Sakovich's** April and May presentations: "Our Shared Heritage: Over One Hundred Years of Preservation and Development at Fort Ross State Historic Park," for the Fort Ross Bicentennial Conference, and a talk to a group of Methodist church women on Deaconess Katharine Maurer, social worker at the Angel Island Immigration Station.

In August at the Society of American Archivists annual meeting, **Kathleen O'Conner** will be part of a panel of talks on work experiences in religious archives. Her topic is the use of archives and artifacts in prayer services.

**Judith Offer** is doing a read-it-yourself "Scenes from the Life of Julia Morgan" on July 19 at 6 p.m. at the Mechanics Institute Library. (If you have a group that might enjoy reading this hour-long piece together, contact Judith.) On July 28 at 2:00, Judith and poet Adam Cornford are joining the San Francisco Labor Chorus in a program of labor songs (featuring Woodie Guthrie) and poetry. This free event, which will take place at the Oakland Public Main Library, is part of a whole array of LaborFest 2012 programs.

## EXHIBITION TOUR

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### **"Wild Flight of the Imagination"**

Twenty Institute members and guests gathered on April 14 at the California Historical Society for a private tour of the current exhibit "Wild Flight of the Imagination: The Story of the Golden Gate Bridge." Past president of the Society's board and Institute member **Edith Piness**, who organized the special trip, had persuaded the charismatic Anthea Hartig, recently appointed executive director, to serve as our guide. Jessica Hough, the curator of the exhibition, also gave a brief introduction.

Even before entering the building, some visitors noticed a change: the two-story building has acquired a new coat of paint to match the Golden Gate Bridge. Dr. Hartig (who has a Ph.D. in history) chose the International Orange at the tongue-in-cheek suggestion of the interim director.

Paintings and photographs document the Golden Gate before, during, and after bridge construction. Ansel Adams, Chesley Bonestell, Maynard Dixon, Dorothea Lange, and Carleton Watkins are some of the artists whose work is shown. A scrapbook of news clippings from the media campaign to build the bridge, architectural drawings, letters, and samples of the bridge cables are also part of the exhibition. Photographs, other scrapbooks, and artifacts portray the working life of the bridge builders.

After our tour we met in the conference room for informal conversation and refreshments with the director who shared with us her vision for the Society in the twenty-first century. There were also some reminiscences, including **Rose Marie Cleese's** story (as granddaughter of mayor Angelo Rossi) of being at the center of the unnervingly crowded bridge during the fiftieth anniversary celebration.

*Nancy Zinn, Maria Sakovich, Joanne Lafler,  
and Ann Harlow*

### **"Book Publishing Basics"**

Institute members gathered on June 2 at Georgia Wright's house for this seminar, given by Beth Wright, co-owner of Trio Bookworks (triobookworks.com). In four hours she covered a great deal of information on traditional publishing, self- (or "independent") publishing, the stages of production for both printed books and e-books, distribution, marketing, and publicity. With more than thirteen years experience in the publishing business, she spoke of how much the field has changed and continues to change. She also distributed a three-page handout of resources for more information. Participants had lots of questions, anecdotes of their own experiences, and recommendations for each other.

*Ann Harlow*



## ADDENDUM

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### **On the Eve of Armageddon: Hitler, Stalin, and the Coming of the Second World War**

In the Winter 2011-12 issue of the Newsletter, we reported on **Richard Raack's** work in progress presented on September 18, 2011. Later he asked "to clarify the report on the two documents I provided to those attending my talk." The documents he provided were the speech of Stalin to the Politbiuro on August 19, 1939 and the Kremlin's post-Nazi-Soviet Pact "Instructions to Foreign Parties" dated before August 26, 1939. Here are his comments.

Neither of the two documents I provided (both of which have previously been published in Russia, and one in Germany as well) has ever been challenged. Some of the published copies of the text of Stalin's speech of August 19, 1939 have been questioned previously, but they were, all of them, censored and edited (that is, faulty), not the original copy from the archive. The Kremlin's post-Nazi-Soviet Pact "Instructions to Foreign Parties" was betrayed to outsiders a few days later. No one has ever, to my knowledge, challenged the authenticity of the "Instructions."

Since the speech text was published in the leading Russian historical monthly (*Voprosy istorii*) in August 2005 in an article authored by two Russian historians and me, I have to assume that the document has been seen in the last seven or so years by many scholars who might have an interest in Stalin's post-Pact war plan, about which the document and the "Instructions" provide key evidence.

In view of the lively historical controversy which has raged for years about Stalin's intentions in making his Pact with Hitler, the fact that no historian from the countries directly involved in the criminal Pact, Russia and Germany, nor from the entire historical "Anglosphere," has so far questioned the authenticity of either document underscores the validity of the evidence I presented.

Stalin, as he said in his speech, took pride in inducing the foolish Hitler to make an agreement which brought on a major European war. During the course of the war, the Red Army was able to advance westward as far as the center of Europe. There is evidence that Stalin, in 1945, wanted to send his forces even farther to the west, to which no one, myself excepted, seems to have paid the slightest attention. Like the two documents referred to above, this raises more fundamental questions about Soviet intentions before, during, and after the war, which it behooves historians to try to clarify.

**Richard Raack**

### **Book Review, continued**

originally a dirt and gravel road and "is not paved," a discouragement to travelers who might not know that it was intended to say "is now paved." The next entry defines Aleut as "a Alaska Native." The publisher's website notes that writers are encouraged to work with professional editors before submitting their manuscripts but that the publisher takes care of proofreading. This could not have been the case. A review of a newer book by Steven C. Levi in the *Alaska History* quarterly indicates that he has chosen a new publisher. A fellow Alaskan wishes him well!

**Jackie Pels**



## BOOK REVIEW

*Cowboys of the Sky: The Story of Alaska's Bush Pilots*, by Steven C. Levi (Walker & Company, 1996; reprinted by Alaska Publication Consultants, 2008)

For a homesick Alaskan it's always exciting to open a new book about the forty-ninth state. This ex-pat was particularly pleased that Steven Levi begins *Cowboys of the Sky* with a tribute to a figure from my own childhood in the Alaska Bush. Harold "Thrill 'em, chill 'em, spill 'em, but no kill 'em" Gillam was always just Hal Gillam in my mother's stories and in family photos, but his near-mythical status as a pilot was never in question.

In the early years of aviation in the Bush, Levi says, there were three kinds of weather: Pan American Weather ("clear as glass"); Flying Weather (which varied depending on which pilot was assessing it), and Gillam Weather, when no one else would take to the air. Thus begins an informal, affectionate story of decades of derring-do.

"Alaskans grew up with the bush plane," Levi writes. Despite primitive takeoff and landing conditions and ever-changing, often fatally dangerous weather, small planes "brought schoolbooks in and pregnant women out. ... They transported public officials from village to village and ministers from congregation to congregation. Law enforcement personnel were flown in and criminals were flown out. And all this was done by men and a few women who were willing to risk their lives to maintain the heartbeat of Alaska." One might quibble with that paragraph; as Levi shows in later chapters, it could well be written in present tense, and I looked in vain for further mention of "a few women." But risk their lives they all did—even though, again as Levi ably demonstrates, it was not infrequently because they relished the risk.

In fewer than a hundred pages the narrative takes us from the 1920s to the present, with stops along the way to rue (from the pilots' perspective) the coming of flight regulations in the 1940s and to learn of the role of Alaska's civilian pilots during World War II. In the postwar years of tourism and development, small planes still played and are playing a vital role.

Archival photos of pilots and planes, tundra and towns, bingles and bearskin are generously included, along with a glossary of terms and an index. Those whose appetites are whetted by Levi's fast-paced chapters will find plenty to feed their interest in the bibliography he provides. Harold Gillam, for one, inspired his own book, and many other volumes on the topic are available (including *Women Pilots of Alaska* and a recent sequel, *Wheels Up*, not on the list).

While applauding Steven Levi's dedication to Alaska history in general and his overview of Alaska aviation in particular, it must be said that the publisher of *Cowboys of the Sky* has done the author a disservice. Although the book is in second printing, it is rife with typographical and other errors that distract greatly from what should be an enjoyable read. The first photo caption, for example, is a mystery until one realizes that the photograph is flopped; this can easily happen in the production process but surely should have been attended to in a subsequent printing. Early on, in a capsule history of Alaska itself, we read that Alaskans "lived off the land, much as their ancestors do today." In sequence throughout are references to bush pilots and Bush pilots and bush pilots again (in Alaska, the Bush is capitalized). Almost every page has its problem, some relatively minor, some major, but cumulatively a stumble for any reader. One of the first items in the glossary tells us that the Alaska Highway was

## CALENDAR

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July 15                      Work-in-Progress – Jeanne McDonnell  
September 8               Potluck

Members are encouraged to let us know all their news – a paper being given at a conference; a new job or position; the awarding of a grant or fellowship. Please send all material for the NEWSLETTER either by e-mail to [msakovich@juno](mailto:msakovich@juno) or to the Institute's postal address given below. Also, we welcome the opportunity to review members' newly published books. Contact **Autumn Stanley** at [autumn\\_stanley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:autumn_stanley@sbcglobal.net). The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **August 31, 2012**.

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