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Special writers' edition

by Don Frances

JOE GOLD is no stranger to Mountain View, having worked for a high-tech company on Castro Street during the dot-com boom. That's why he specifically came to Books Inc. earlier this week to give a reading from his new science fiction novel, "The Lamp Post Motel."

The novel, Gold's first, is about a "shy man who's got more faith in circuits than people ... and I thought in Silicon Valley people would identify with that."

Gold is referring to the novel's main character, Elmo, a sad little Norman Bates-type fellow — minus the murder, but with a voyeuristic streak — who uses high-tech equipment to spy on the guests while they have sex. Then some kids from the future arrive and throw Elmo's consciousness into the heads of the people he's spying on. Then things really get weird.

"Suddenly this very lonely man is experiencing sex through another person, and finding out what their thoughts are, and they're not what he expected," Gold said.

"There's a lot of disillusionment in it," he added, noting later that "I'm trying to look at sex intellectually, instead of as pure titillation."

Although I haven't read the book myself, he told me that it's "definitely an adult book." Sounds pretty kooky, too.

"It is, but then, I am," Gold said.

Gold, who lives in San Francisco, used to work for a Mountain View company called OneChannel.net. Before that he had a successful career in journalism, he said, and was twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize while a reporter at the *Arizona Daily Star*.

It's no wonder he became a novelist: "Successful career in journalism" is an oxymoron, like "aspiring poet." Even so, Gold said it's hard breaking into novel writing, "because the publishing business these days is mostly about people who are pretty surefire best-sellers."

For those who missed his reading at Books Inc., Gold gives a chapter-by-chapter podcast reading on the book's Web site, www.thelamppostmotel.com. ...

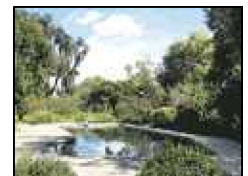
And so, between Gold, Audrey Shafer (see story, this page), and whoever the kids met during Writers Week at Los Altos High School, there should be plenty of new fiction writers in circulation around here.

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BACK IN REALITY, the Little League people would like me to announce something related to their 50th Anniversary season, which is this year:

At the opening ceremony next month, organizers hope to introduce some of the players and coaches from Mountain View Little League's earliest days. To that end, anyone who played or coached in Mountain View Little League between 1957 and 1970 is urged to contact events coordinator Eric Johansson at either ejohanss@altera.com or (408) 735-7450.

The opening ceremony is coming right up — Saturday, March 17th at noon — so please contact him soon.

ALSO, it's not too early to buy tickets for next weekend's Mardi Gras celebration, a yearly party which doubles as a fund raiser for the Mountain View Library Foundation.

The event runs all day next Saturday, March 3 at the downtown library, and includes good food, festive music and all the other fun stuff we associate with Fat Tuesday. Tickets are \$60 in advance, \$70 at the door. Call (650) 526-7014 or visit www.mvlf.org for more info.

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