



IN FOCUS

New Location for February Meeting

February's meeting will be held in the Louis B. Mayer Theater instead of the Villa Katzenberg because of the large crowd expected for the Ray Bradbury address. See details on Page 2, Column 1, under the heading, "Where to Find Us."

Doors open at 12:30 p.m.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

How West Valley Was Organized

By Diana Johnson
"Interim" President

WEST VALLEY was Organized at a meeting in June 2006, when a group of people gathered and decided to break away from the CWC/San Fernando Valley Branch and start a brand new branch. At that meeting everyone volunteered to take offices and/or jobs to help launch the branch. As a result of that meeting and some adjustments in the first few months, our executive officers are: President, Diana Johnson; Vice President, Dave Wetterberg; Secretary Ann Stalcup and Treasurer, Dean Stewart. The members of the Board of Directors are: Membership, Art Yuwiler; Newsletter Editor, Bill Hitchins; Programs, Betty Freeman & Leslie Kaplan; Publicity, Kathy Highcove; Photographer, Ken Wilkins and Member at Large, Bill Johnson.

Others have volunteered to help as well. Gloria Kositchek has been faithful in coming early to every meeting and helping people sign in at the Welcome Table. And Historians Helen Katzman and Lillian Rodich are busy assembling three books. One to archive copies of *In Focus*. One

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Ray Bradbury (right) at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Santa Monica, in April, 2002.

Ray Bradbury to Address Branch Meeting on Saturday February 3

RAY BRADBURY will address the February meeting of the California Writers Club/West Valley in the Louis B. Mayer Theater on the campus of the Motion Picture and Television Fund (MPTV). His address is scheduled to start at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 3, after the opening program.

Bradbury has been described as "a brilliant conjurer of amazing tales" who has produced hundreds of stories and has been recognized worldwide with numerous awards for his writing. Among these are the National Medal of Arts, the World Fantasy Award-Life Achievement and the Stroker Award Life Achievement. He also earned an Emmy Award for his work on *Halloween Tree* and, for his contribution to the film industry he earned a start on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6644 Hollywood Boulevard.

Bradbury's list of books is long and contain subjects of fantasies, incredible lives and fantastic heroes. Betty Freeman, CWC/WV's program chairman, commented

that "hearing and meeting this remarkable author is a coup, long to be remembered by all of us."

His stories have inspired toys and have been filmed. He has agreed to bring copies of his books and will make sure that they are autographed.

Though Bradbury writes with delight about spaceships and interplanetary travel, he has never driven a car. He suggests that he may have been frightened by an early automobile experience.

Channel 22 will film the address. The tape will be available for those unable to attend the meeting.

COMING EVENTS

February 3. Meeting. Speaker, Ray Bradbury.

March 3. Meeting. Speaker, Gene Perret.

April 7. Meeting. Speaker to be announced.

May 5. Meeting. Speaker to be announced.

June 2. Meeting. To be announced.



**WHERE TO FIND US
(THIS MONTH ONLY)**

OUR MEETING will be held in the Louis B. Mayer Theater on Steven Spielberg Drive for this month only. From the 101 Freeway, take the Mulholland Drive south exit. We strongly recommend parking in the shopping center next to the exit due to limited parking on the MPTV lot. Walk across Mulholland Drive at the corner of Steven Spielberg Drive (traffic light on the west side of the center) and turn right (north) along the road and enter the theater at the first opening on the left. Don't go through the gate—it's longer.

MEETINGS

The California Writers' Club/West Valley meets on the first Saturday of each month at the Motion Picture and Television Fund building (Villa Katzenberg), 23388 Mulholland Drive, Woodland Hills, CA 91364-2733 (except in February, 2007).

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, February 3, 2007
at 1:00 p.m. (Doors open at 12:30 p.m.)

Officers and Board of Directors

- President Diana Johnson
- V. P. & State Rep. David Wetterberg
- Treasurer Dean Stewart
- Secretary Ann Stalcup
- Membership Arthur Yuwiler
- Programs Betty Freeman & Leslie Kaplan
- Newsletter Editor William E. Hitchins
- Sound Ken Wilkins
- Site Relations Betty Freeman
- Publicity Katherine Highcove
- Critique Groups David Wetterberg
- Member at Large William R. Johnson

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Editor's E-mail: . . . whitchins@socal.rr.com

MEET OUR MEMBERS AND GUESTS

Writer Teaches Children to Value Their Heritage and Make Tortillas

Dolly Wiseman has resided in Calabasas for 20 years. Her three sons are all in the entertainment industry. Dolly just published *Everybody Eats Tortillas*, a story/cookbook for ages 8–12. The book teaches children to appreciate their heritage and includes recipes for 23 flatbreads from all over the world. Dolly is currently looking for a publisher for *Promise of Palenque*, a historical novel about the last ten years of the Mayan empire.

—Dave Wetterberg.

Jo Paris is a “no nonsense” practical, knowledgeable lady of 83 (though she appears much younger). Jo earned her spot at the Motion Picture TV Home after years of working in show biz. She worked behind the scenes at the studio's law office as a legal secretary and later as a paralegal. Her career included 15 years at Universal Studios. Jo is the proud daughter of parents who were married for 67 years. They were intellectuals with many interests, one of which was astrology. She learned much about the subject and is an accomplished astrologer herself. She claims she is not a writer, but after our very interesting conversation, I would counsel her to put her thoughts on paper. Jo is a friend of Betty Freeman and, for those of like interest, a Taurus.

—Bill Sorrels

Jill Freeman, daughter of Betty Freeman,

active, successful West Valley member and MPTV Fund resident, was an interesting, welcome guest at our January meeting. Jill's interests and work are in the creative fields. She is kept busy in her profession as a singer and songwriter, specializing in original acoustic pop with blues and jazz Jill recorded with Magic Records and wrote songs for TV and films, including Touchstone's *Mr. Wrong*, starring Ellen Degeneres. Although not actively not pursuing writing, Jill says “The written word is very important to me. I write a daily journal and have written short articles on various subjects.” Jill lives in Pasadena with her producer/songwriter husband, Joel Wachbrit.

—Ester Ben Shrifren

Wayne LeVine, a first time visitor to our club, doesn't hide his talents under the proverbial basket. Instead he stepped right up during Open Mike and shared his provocative poem, *Buying Bread in Jerusalem*. Wayne has already published two books: *Forgiveness for Forgotten Dreams* in 2004 and his newest, *Myths and Articles*. He is presently pursuing his dream of being a full-time writer and motivational speaker. Wayne and his amazing wife, Robie, reside in the Oak Park area of Agoura Hills with their two adult sons.

—Sheila Moss

CWC Central Wants to Know If You Are Getting Their Newsletter

California Writers Club (central office) wants to know if you are receiving their newsletter, *The CWC Bulletin*. Their notice is reproduced below.

As a member of the California Writers Club/West Valley you are automatically also a member of our parent organization, California Writers Club (CWC). One of the benefits of CWC membership is a subscription to the CWC newsletter, *The Bulletin*.

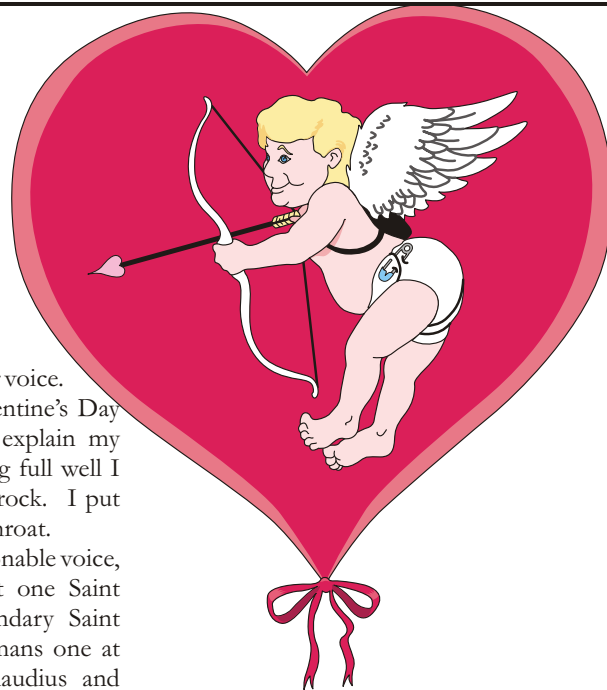
You should be receiving *The Bulletin* via the U. S. Mail every other month, roughly the second week of January, March, May, July, September and November. The most recent issue, January-February 2007, was mailed the

first week of January and arrived in most members' mailboxes around January 12. The publication is usually eight pages in size, black ink on tan-colored paper. The words “California Writers Club” and “The Bulletin” appear prominently across the top of the first page. The publication is bulk-mailed from Ridgecrest, Calif., and includes a Ridgecrest return address and postal indicia on the back page.

If you have never received *The Bulletin*, used to receive it but haven't recently, or have other concerns about your subscription, please contact Membership Chairman Art Yuwiler at ayuwiler@earthlink.net or (818) 348-1027. ☺

Battle with the Saints

by Arthur Yuwiler



BY ALL RIGHTS, my annual battle with the Saints should rank with the World Series and the Super Bowl as a symbol of integrity, virtue, and struggle in the face of the inevitable. It usually begins at breakfast on Valentine's Day.

This year she came bouncing into the room with a broad smile on her face and a red package tied with a gold ribbon in her hands.

"Look what I found in the sewing room. Franky must have brought it."

Franky is my wife's mythical equivalent of a first husband—a handsome fellow of impeccable virtue who magically brings the presents I have forgotten and is otherwise used as both exemplar of desired behavior and threat. I hear a good deal of him. In vain I have tried to corrode his image by attributing to him pimples, halitosis and false teeth ("Oh you mean Clackers," I say). She ignores it.

Attempts to counter with a competing mythic Gina or Mabel have utterly failed. My wife knows her power over my heart.

"I wonder what it can be?" she beamed, placing the package on the dining room table next to my bowl of corn flakes. I tried to chew loudly to override her happy humming with the crunch, crunch of my cereal.

SHE finished undressing the contents of the red package. "Why look at this," she said innocently with a familiar note of surprise in her voice.

In the middle of the red wrapping was a white cup bedecked with red hearts. It had a heart shaped handle that made it impossible to hold. It looked remarkably like the one appearing annually at this time of year filled with chocolate hearts and which normally hung with other cups on the rack above the kitchen counter. This year the cup was filled with little dark brown chocolate balls. They looked like rabbit droppings. I gingerly tasted one. It was mint. I reached for another but she pushed my hand away.

"Franky gave it to me, not you," she said. "You didn't give me anything." I did not have

to look. The pout was clear in her voice.

Now this happens every Valentine's Day and every year I try again to explain my position on this holiday knowing full well I will fail—like Sisyphus with his rock. I put down my spoon and cleared my throat.

"Dear," I said in my most reasonable voice, "you know that there was not one Saint Valentine but rather two legendary Saint Valentines martyred by the Romans one at the order of the Emperor Claudius and presumed buried on the Flaminian Way and the other, Bishop of Terni, interned in his own bishopric."

As I have said before," she commented frostily, "two Valentines are better than one just as two entwined hearts are better than one."

"You know perfectly well what I mean. This is an artificial holiday speciously named for two clerics who had forsworn women and romance and instead went out and got martyred, which is hardly romantic. I doubt they were even very happy with their fellow men, at least at the time they were being martyred. And what in the world do two clerics have to do with two entwined hearts? Two entwined hearts would be a physiological disaster. Siamese twins born with entwined hearts require immediate surgery and a single person with two entwined hearts would surely die."

"Many have died from love," she said, loftily avoiding my attempt to move the argument to another plane, "including clerics. Look at Abelard!" Her tone was triumphant.

"Abelard died in the 12th century and had absolutely nothing whatever to do with Valentine's Day. Besides he got castrated for his loving. What kind of model is that? Should I get emasculated in emulation?"

"Why should I care if you don't even love me enough to remember me on Valentine's Day?"

FGRUNTED, picked up my spoon and absently stirred the cereal which was now a brown mush. I put the spoon back down and tried again.

"You once told me you were first attracted to me by my honesty and integrity. How then can you expect me to pay homage to a fake holiday? It is a festival created for and by

business. I'll grant that the pagan fertility festival of Lupercalia took place in the middle of February but that was a Roman holiday unrelated to the Valentine's. The only real historical event known on this date was the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, and Al Capone can hardly be mistaken for cupid!"

Her voice was icy. "Don't you think it is time for you to go to work?"

She was right. The almighty clock confirmed her judgment and besides there seemed little else to say. I gulped my cold coffee, rose, and tried to kiss her on the way out but she turned her head and only the tip of her right ear brushed my lips. Oh, well.

At the office, red heart-shaped balloons hung above my secretary's desk. A half-empty heart shaped box of candy lay open on the waiting room table. A little mint candy heart with "Love is great" written across its surface was on the saucer with my morning cup of office coffee. Each of my colleagues greeted me with some inane remark about the delights of Valentine's day. At noon, my usual sandwich came from the deli cut into the shape of a heart with the red of ketchup substituted for the yellow of mustard. It was surrounded by little heart-shaped pickle slices. The pickles were sweet not sour and the ketchup gave me gas. Throughout the day I was asked "What did you get your wife for Valentines Day?" and throughout the day I was greeted with embarrassed silence as I answered, "Nothing." It was a long day.

As the sky turned red and then black I began again my yearly ritualistic rationalization. Schopenhauer noted, "It is not what happens to a man that is important

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A Windy Day in Chatsworth

The wind calls to me
as it pushes through falling leaves
and sends pewter chimes
into dissonant clinking
against my patio wall.

I open my door
gingerly at first
then boldly to accept
the cool slap of frosted air
crashing down from canyon halls.

The sky is swept clear
of rain cloud debris
only a few feathers remain
twirling around aimlessly
and scattering into oblivion.

Ancient trees on Dupont Street
bend painfully in sharp gusts
their top-heavy branches struggling
against the wind's unforgiving force
and shuddering with the effort.

Birds escape flying with a V
heading south
their songs no longer heard
amidst the swishing and wailing
when suddenly stillness covers
plants and trees and chimes.

For in that moment
the giant holds his breath
and just as suddenly
all is set in motion again
as I close my door against the onslaught.

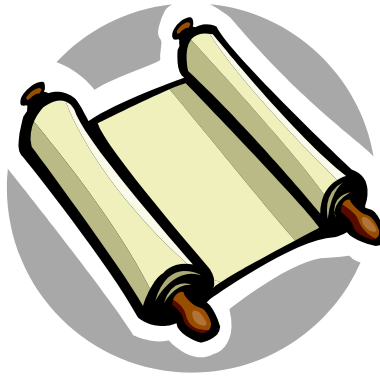
—LILLIAN RODICH

From Page 3

Battle of the Saints

but what he thinks happened to him." Granted that the holiday is a bastard combination of a religious horror, a fertility rite, and a commercial orgy. Granted that the Saints Valentine were celibates and the holiday was created to peddle greeting cards and candy and flowers. Despite all that it does elicit tenderness. Despite all that, it reminds lovers to hold hands, to lose themselves in each other's eyes, and to dream mutual dreams.

I smiled at the florist on the way home and gave her my annual order plus one. All right, so it is a fake, but Love is not. I counted the roses. One for each year of marriage. Blood red. Red for the martyred Valentines. Red for my heart beat at her glance. Red for the blood she will shed if she focuses on their cost. Red for my lost bloody battle with the Saints. ☹



Upon Holding the Torah for the First Time

Come to me, my child, my Bube*, my past
soul.

Let me cradle your weight in my tremulous
arms.

In my whole life, I only touched you lightly.
I never knew how strongly you touched me.

I fell away at twelve then ran and danced
apart

From innocence, from God, my group,
myself...

I fell into at sixty-six, just by holding you.
So suddenly. So tearfully. So gratefully. At
last.

—WILMA R. HITCHINS

* Grandmother

Limerickia

A woman who wanted to write
Was waiting for muses to bite
When finally bitten
She was totally smitten
And now writes from morning 'til night.
—ESTER SHIFREN

Of compliments I have many to spare
If for my ego, I do not care.
It may seem funny
I'd rather have money
So my kids have something to wear.
—KEN WILKINS

There once was a book with no end
No important message to send.
It turned page by page
And started to age,
Then went to a library to "lend."
—LILLIAN RODICH

MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Ester Ben Shifren's article about her BBC One TV appearance in 2005 has been accepted for publication in the March 2007 issue *SAJAC*, a widely circulated magazine read by a large number of ex-pat South Africans in North America.

Sheila Moss's article, *Betty Freeman: Bringing the Silver Screen Book to Life*, appeared in the December 2006 edition of *Plus Magazine: Life's Second Half on the Central Coast*. The article details the story of how Betty arrived at her "Departure Station" (the Motion Picture and Television Fund Retirement Community in Woodland Hills) vowing to introduce herself to fellow residents and listen to their stories, ultimately, with the help of Lauren Dow, wife of Tony Dow, of *Leave it to Beaver*. These stories became a slick coffee table book which *Variety Magazine* gave to each person attending its Centennial Dinner on February 26, 2005.

Ann Stalcup has announced that *National Geographic Kids* published her article *Mali: How Animals Guide One Group of African People*. Ann also did presentations at the San Juan Capistrano Mission on January 18 and the Ranch Mirage Public Library on January 24 in connection with her book, *Leo Politi, Artist of the Angels*. She also spoke to a large group at the Huntington Museum's Member Shopping Night.

JANUARY BOARD MEETING

The treasurer reported at The West Valley Board meeting on January 6, 2007 that the ending balance was unchanged at \$1,036.03. Two new members joined at the January meeting to bring membership to 50.

Ray Bradbury will be the speaker at the February 3 meeting, which will be held in the MPTV Home's 250-seat theater. Although the newsletter editor has not yet used the services of a consultant as approved by the Board last month, he succeeded in e-mailing the newsletter to all members.

In a discussion as to whether or not to have a CWC/West Valley website, the Board voted not to have one at this time. An election to form a new board will be held in June. ☹

Eve was probably the only woman who took a man's side.

—With thanks from CAROL FOX

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(From Page 1)

awaiting your photographs and biographies as a Members In-depth Directory. The third to archive our meetings and activities with words and pictures. Carol Fox edits your interviews with new members, guests and MPTV hosts for *In Focus*. "Mark Paul" Sebar has offered space for a web site on his domain. While the board doesn't feel we're ready to take that step yet, he has volunteered.

Election of Officers/ Approval of Board of Directors

As volunteers, neither elected nor appointed with the approval of the membership (since we didn't have any members yet) we all consider ourselves to be "interim" officers and members of the board of directors. CWC branches elect their officers and approve the appointment of members to the board of directors in June. Therefore, a nominating committee must be appointed in March. They will report back to the board and branch at the May meeting, where nominations from the floor may be made. The election will be held at the June meeting.

Why Did You Join CWC/WV?

There are many reasons to join an organization. Perhaps you joined for the camaraderie. You wanted to make new friends who shared your love of writing or to maintain friendships made in the SFV Branch. Perhaps you wanted to gain information and/or skills that will make you a better, more productive writer. Perhaps your goal was to get published in 2007 and hoped that our many published writers would help you along that path. Perhaps you just wanted to improve the God-given talents you have with the help of others who have similar talents. We hope we are meeting those expectations.

Serving as well as Taking

When you join an organization, especially one run by volunteers, it is wise to recognize that we make more friends by participating. Working shoulder to shoulder, holding an office, being a board member, accepting a job, helps us make friends with those who, before, were acquaintances at best.

As you gain information and further your skills, don't just keep those gains to yourself. Plan to share them with others. Your abilities will blossom as you do

What I'm suggesting is that, in joining CWC West Valley, you should plan to serve CWC West Valley as well. Some of our volunteer officers and jobholders may

Continued in Next Column



PHOTO: KEN WILKINS

Stan Mack Addresses CWC/WV January Meeting

Cartoonist with a Ready Laugh Presents a Refreshing Approach

by Betty Freeman

STAN MACK WAS HERE! A cartoonist with a ready laugh and deep sensitivity. His work in the illustrated *Story of the Jews: A 4000 year Adventure*, was effective, adding a different dimension to the history involved, a refreshing approach.

When it came to writing about the pain and loss of his partner and love, Janet Bode, the penned figures made a quick turn about, were quiet and sensitive to the story. As it developed, his partner's battle with breast cancer and his role as care-giver, it became a new genre, *The Illustrated Memoir: Janet and Me*.

With his partner, Janet Bode, Stan Mack

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
(From preceding Column)

continue in their current positions. We certainly hope so. However, some will not. We will soon make a list of those offices, board positions and jobs that will need to be filled in June. Please, think seriously about filling them. If you have a passion to do jobs that do not as yet exist in our young branch, let us know.

It takes time to get an organization, such as a branch of CWC, fully operational. I think we've done extraordinarily well to have such a lovely meeting place. And soon the new building with larger meeting facilities will be opening. We've also done very well having

had written young adult books and created children's picture books, including the best selling, *10 Bears in my Bed*.

So effective is Stan Mack's writing and illustrating combination it has evoked applause from writing professionals. Al Martinez of the *Los Angeles Times* says, *Janet and Me* is a true story of love so deep and compelling that one wants it to go on forever. And his improbably moving and downright funny illustrations drive this book right out of the crowded field of cancer memoirs, stated a review in *Publishers Weekly*.

All true. For those who could hear, it was a poignant story, beautifully told and illustrated.

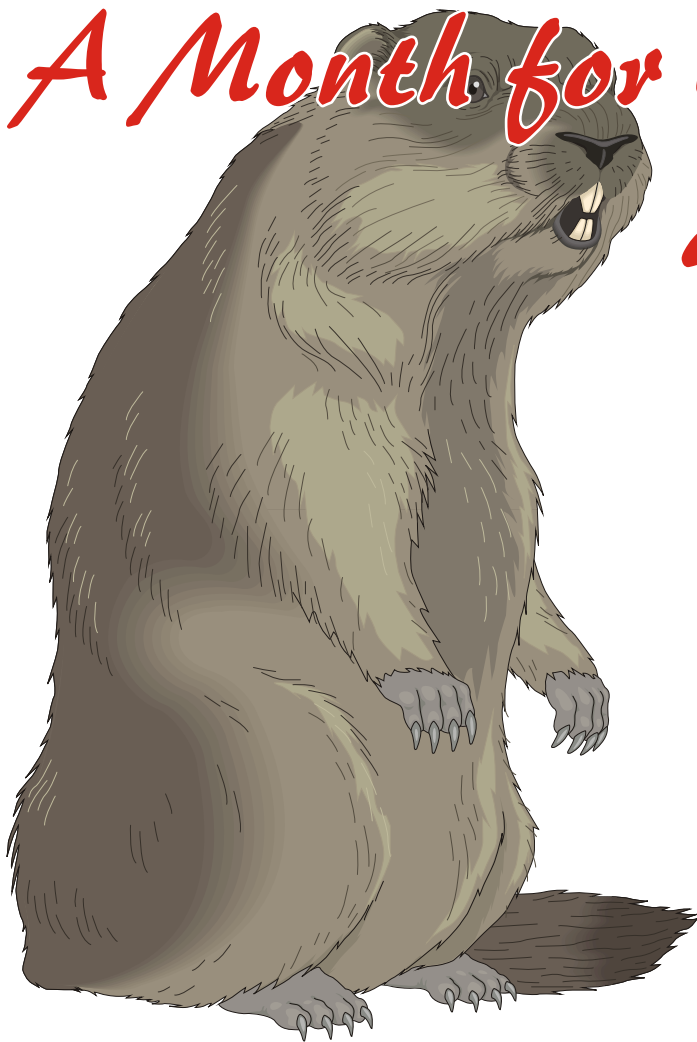
interesting meetings even though we contacted our speakers at the last minute, since we weren't even organized a year ago. Many speakers need to be booked well in advance of the event. Our *Open Mike* is particularly successful, which is a compliment to all who participate.

Every activity we attempt has to be thought out. Every step we take sets a precedent. Hopefully the precedents we've set have been the right ones.

Eventually we will have not only a web site, but sponsor writing conferences, publish an anthology of our writing, sponsor writing contests for children and...

Where will you volunteer to help? Will you

A Month for Groundhogs. . . and Presidents



cold in the Northern Hemisphere, a time when most of our country has blizzards and snow. The critic Josepha Wood Krutch once wrote, “the most serious charge what can be brought against New England is not Puritanism, but February,” and so it is. Even February’s birthstone, amethyst, and its flower, the primrose, is purple with the cold.

And yet, February is a time for rejoicing. First, the whole month is Black History Month. It took from 1619, when the first Africans were brought to Virginia, until the 15th amendment in 1870 to gain the right of

our history, 620,000 dead soldiers, the war ended, among other things, slavery, and our country was again, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Two days later, on the 14th, we celebrate St. Valentine’s, named for two celibate priests, one martyred on the Roman Via Flamina and the other killed in his own bishopric in Terni. It’s not clear why they are the patron saints of Valentine’s Day as we know it. Perhaps it is to celebrate the Roman Gamelon and the sacred marriage of Zeus to Hera, occurring at this time of the year. Or perhaps it is because of the feast of Lupercalia, which once occurred on February 15, and featured young men running naked down the streets and bumping into women, getting in their way in the hope of becoming pregnant. In any case, in our time, Valentine’s Day is dedicated to love and romance.

The 18th is the Chinese New Year, the year of the pig. In personality, those born under the sign of the pig are hardworking, giving, helpful, materialistic, and gullible.

FEBRUARY comes from the Latin, *Februum*, or “purification” because of the purification ritual held for the Roman god *Februa* on February 15. But actually neither January nor February existed in the early Roman calendar. In about 700 B.C., Numa Pompilius wrested them from a month-less winter period when people did little except twiddle their thumbs. As it is, February is the second and the shortest month of the year on both the Julian and Gregorian calendars. Normally the month consists of only 28 days but the Gregorian calendar inserted the rule that if the year is divisible by 4, except for centennial years unless they were divisible by 400, an additional day is added to make up for the 6 hours, 9 minutes and 9.54 seconds it takes the earth, traveling at 30 km/s, to wander around the sun.

The irregularity in the days of the months led Stevens in 1555 to invent the ditty that most of us recite: “Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November, all the rest hath thirty-one excepting February alone. And that hath twenty-eight days clear and 29 in each leap year”. February is also

African Americans to vote as free men. Even then it required the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to assure that discrimination officially stopped in all states.

The 2nd marks Groundhog day, based upon the Scottish couplet “if Candlemas day in bright and clear, there’ll be two winters in the year.” Thus, each year the groundhog comes out of hibernation to view his shadow and, if it is sunny, goes back in to snooze for another six weeks or, if cloudy and its shadow can’t be seen, it yawns and stays awake for spring is coming soon.

THE 12th is the birthday of the 16th president of the United States, one of our greatest, Abraham Lincoln. Born on February 12, 1809 and growing up in Hardin County, Kentucky, he made extraordinary efforts to attain knowledge. A captain in the Black Hawk War, a lawyer spending eight years in the Illinois legislature, he rode the circuit before he won the Republican nomination for President in 1860. Five years later, he was shot and killed on April 14, 1865 by John Wilkes Booth while attending *Our American Cousin* at Ford’s Theatre. While Lincoln presided over the bloodiest war in

THANKS to advertisers, the 19th, the third Monday in February, is the longer “Presidents’” Day sales period (notice it is Presidents’ not President’s and refers to all federal workers and all presidents but primarily Washington and Lincoln.)

February 22, 1732 in the Gregorian calendar is the real birthday of our first President, George Washington. Born in Westmoreland County, Virginia and president for ten years from 1789 to 1779, he assumed command of the Continental Army on July 3, 1775. A bitter war with Great Britain ensued. In 1776 the Continental Army lost the battle of Long Island and Washington retreated with his forces into the bitter cold of Valley Forge. A successful attack on December 25th, 1776 on Hessian forces in Trenton, New Jersey, and Benedict Arnold’s and Gates’s successful battle of Saratoga in 1777 brought the French into the war on our side and boosted the morale of pro-independence colonists. Then, in 1781, the beginning of the end, Washington besieged General Cornwallis in the Battle of Yorktown, Virginia, and in 1783 the Treaty of Paris was signed and America was born.

Have a Happy February. ☞