

IN FOCUS

ELECTRONIC EDITION

SEPTEMBER 2007

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New parking, access announced for CWC/WV's meetings

September's meeting will still be held at Villa Katzenberg, which will continue to California Writers Club/West Valley's regular meeting room, MPTV has advised. However, there is a new parking lot near to Villa Katzenberg which should be used by members. Getting to the meeting room will be a lot easier as it is no longer necessary to take the circuitous route through the MPTV parking lot.

Enter as usual on Steven Spielberg Drive and stay on it. Do not turn towards the MPTV parking lot. Continue to the end then make a left turn. You will now be on the road you have used in the past. Before you get to the apartment building, you will see a new parking lot on the left. This is where you can park.

You should be able to see Villa Katzenberg to the south. Go straight there.

Note that MPTV will be establishing various security measures over the next few months, including guards at the entrances. You will be advised of this in due course. ☞



LET'S BE BLUNT

The next time you hear a politician casually use the word "billion," consider whether you want him spending your tax money

A billion second ago it was 1959.

A billion minutes ago, Jesus was alive.

A billion hours ago, our ancestors were in the Stone Age.

A billion days ago, no one walked on two feet on earth.

A billion dollars ago was 8 hours and 20 minutes at the rate the government spends it.

COMING EVENTS

September 1. Kitty Dill.

October 6. Irwin Zucker.

November 3. Patricia Kokinos.



PHOTO: KEN WILKINS

Outgoing president, Di Johnson, holds the microphone for Marty Evans as he takes his turn at "Open Mike" at CWC/WV's last meeting for the year 2006-2007 in June.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Wetterberg announces 'great' speaker line-up for new year

by David Wetterberg



WELCOME to the second year of our new West Valley Branch of the California Writers Club. The year behind us was a good one: first, we had a slate of outstanding speakers, among them Shelly Berman, celebrity-scholar; and Ray Bradbury, famed American writer of stories, plays, novels, movies, everything. Thanks for all this to the diligence, the persuasiveness, and the charm of Leslie Kaplan and Betty Freeman, our program chairwomen. They're already working hard to wow us with this year's speakers. And, thanks again to Betty Freeman and to the other generous and gracious residents of the Motion Picture and Television Fund, we met in a

bright, crystal-clean room on their beautiful site in Calabasas.

I'm grateful to Di Johnson for leading us off to such a smooth start our first year. She left the Board and me very few bumps in the road. As the new president, two of my goals this year are first, to build up the membership a little more with writers on all levels, those published and successful, as well as those on a more "affectionate" level, so to speak, who just like to write and like to be around people who share this affection. Another goal is to get the general membership to know each other better by participation in Branch events and activities, like workshops, group activities, social events, contests, and writing for *In Focus*, our newsletter

Let's do it! ☞



WHERE TO FIND US

FROM the 101 Freeway exit on Mulholland Drive south. Go to Steven Spielberg Drive. Follow the drive straight through the end. Turn left (south). Park in the new parking lot on your left. Go directly to Villa Katzenberg. If you are stopped by security, say you are going to the CWC meeting. These arrangements will be changed later; you will be advised of the details in due course.

MEETINGS

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

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, September 1, 2007
at 1:00 p.m.

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Review and Refresh

Sentence Openers

Observations

Most of the sentences in professional publications — books, magazines, newspapers — begin with the complete subject.

Our new budget is heading for deep trouble.

When a sentence has an "opener" — something in front of the complete subject, that is — it is rarely a long one, usually a short one, and often one word.

Because of this they re-thought the whole process.

Confident, the astronaut told them to check the star-map themselves.

A Shocker

The most preferred sentence openers among the pros are *and* and *but*. The following are from the *Los Angeles Times*:

And be sure you contact medicare.

But there aren't enough companies in Japan.

And for securities held less than six months...

But the similarities are fewer than many think.

Other examples abound in books and magazines, old and new, fiction and nonfiction.

Various kinds of openers

Noun cluster: *Knife in his hand, Tarzan stood at the cliff's edge.*

Verb cluster: *Bent by the wind, the birch trees*

by David Wetterberg

seemed defeated.

Adjective cluster: *Happy again, Mindy danced all night long.*

Adverb: *Silently, Alonzo walked to the window and looked below.*

Prepositional phrase: *For a minute the UFO hung motionless above the tree line.*

Infinitive cluster: *To keep peace in the family, Raphael apologized to his brother Henry.*

Absolute (a passive voice sentence with the helping verb left out) : *His last arrow gone, Geronimo waited.*

Commas and Sentence Openers

If the opener consists of three syllables or fewer, the comma can be left out.

At midnight Mr. Newman was worried. By one he was frantic.

With four or five syllables, it can sometimes be left out.

Until midnight Mr. Newman was not worried.

After midnight he was frantic.

Any more than five syllables, always plug in the comma.

When the clock struck eleven, Sally didn't even notice.

Lessons from Observing the Pros.

- ✶ Open most of your sentences with the subject.
- ✶ Avoid long openers
- ✶ Stick to short openers
- ✶ Use *and* and *but* freely as openers. ✶

In Focus wants to hear what you have to say

In Focus is planning on including a "Letters to the Editor" column in future issues and is soliciting input from you. The length and appearance of the column will depend on if and what you write us.

You may write about anything that pertains to the club, writing or publishing or anything you feel would be of interest to members. You can criticize articles that appear in *In Focus* or the way we do things at meetings.

As usual, the editor reserves the right to select which letters to include and to edit for brevity. And please keep your letters short. ✶

Inland Empire sponsors writing contest, prizes

The Inland Empire California Writers Club is sponsoring a short story, poetry and non-fiction contest. The theme is "Something of Value." Prizes are \$100, \$50 and \$25 per category. The competition is open to all writers who do not have to be a member of CWC.

The deadline for the contest is September 29, 2007 and the entrance fee is \$10 for the first non-fiction piece, poem or short story and \$5 for each additional entry.

Entries must be submitted to Harold Ramage, IECWC Writing Contest, 2378 8th Street, La Verne, CA 91750-4547. Details are available from Aleta at alpj511@verizon.net.

✶

SEPTEMBER SPEAKER

Award winning writer inspired by her mother

KITTY DILL loves words, inspired by memories of her Mom bent over a typewriter creating PTA newsletters and event news releases.

An award-winning journalist, she works for the *Ventura County Star* and is currently editor of its community journalism site, vc.yourhub.com/ConejoValley where you can post your own news, information, opinions, photos to inform Conejo Valley residents (Calabasas to Newbury Park). No charge. No cost. Totally free.

For *Chopped Liver for the Family Spirit*, a fundraiser for Book Publicists of Southern California, she contributed the "Double Trouble" chapter about being an identical twin. The next chapter contribution was about how she met her future-husband-to-be, an Australian, at the Santa Barbara Writers' Conference. Other publications with her byline included the *Let's Communicate Handbook* from California Association of Public Information Officials; and *About the Media* for California Coastal Commission's *Adopt-a-Beach Handbook*.



Kitty Dill

She received a bachelor's degree in journalism, with a master's in educational psychology and counseling and guidance both from California State University at Northridge.

Jobs in non-profits, special districts and business sectors have ranged from marketing and public relations to being public information officer for the City of Oxnard and community relations specialist for the Ventura Regional Sanitation District and a journalism instructor. Communication tools she helped craft ranged from flyers and sell sheets to strategic plans and videos. 🐾



How to avoid "Mis-Steaks"

One of the nation's best book publicists, Irwin Zucker, is scheduled to be CWC/WV's speaker in October. His talk will be on "How to Avoid P.R. 'Mis-Steaks'." He has promoted books by Zsa Zsa Gabor, Norman Vincent Peale and Helen Gurley Brown. 🐾



PHOTO: KEN WILKINS

Signing in for the last meeting of CWC/WV's first year in June are (clockwise from the top): Dave Wetterberg, incoming President; Art Yuviler, Membership Chairman; Bill Johnson, outgoing board member; Bill Hitchins, In Focus Editor and Di Johnson, outgoing President.

PART II

Setting your story

by "Mark Paul" Sebar

Settings in a story are very important. They can effectively set a tone for a story and assist the plot greatly. An example might be Pearl Harbor. The big party on December 6, or the bombing on December 7. In this case we historically used time effectively, but as you can see by choosing a setting you can alter the plot.

Another example. A couple before they are married, in this case they are happy. A couple after they are married, and the two of them are very miserable to be around. The difference here was the setting in the first was Pearl Harbor, but the second setting was more of a mood, yet it too, qualifies as a setting. Just make sure to use settings to enhance your story greatly and choose them wisely. 🐾



WISDOM

A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both. — DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, 34th President (1890-1969).

Always be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each New Year find you a person. — BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, inventor, diplomat, author (1706-1790).

That's What It Is All About

*Within the perspective of geological time,
one's life is just a blink of time.*

*Ideas are borrowed from prehistory,
from the early Chinese and the Greeks.*

*What's in the air now and here,
easily is blown away, away to there.*

*Yet, you and I, sister and brother,
need acceptance from one another.*

*One may showcase and be an example,
but by someone's whim, become no more.*

*My time in the sun is replaced by another.
This has been occurring with each other.*

*As soon as tomorrow, I can become ashes
and therefore exist no more.*

*In the meantime, I want to contribute,
with my mind and body, as much as I can.*

*Just by giving you one of my ideas,
voilà, I'm a catalyst and the idea can
flourish.*

*Having good talks...sharing, honesty and
synergism,*

*I envision this for our CWC Branch and
for humanity.*

NORMAN MOLESKO

Memories from the ~~Ninth~~ Month Month

by Art Yuviler

SEPTEM is the Latin word for seven and thereby September should, by rights, be the seventh month. But Julius and Augustus Caesar horned in to form July and August and as a result September became the misnamed ninth month of the year.

On the very first day of the month we come of out of our summer hibernation to meet as a group at the Motion Picture Home there to be greeted by our new president, Dave Wetterberg. And on this day, in 1939, German Troops invaded Poland, violating their contract with the French and British and starting a bloody WWII.

The second also marks the day in 1945 when Japan surrendered after the second atom bomb, thus ending WWII. The second was also the first day of the "terror" of the French Revolution when, in 1792, prisoners transferred to Abbaye prison near Saint-Germain-des-Prés were attacked by an armed band. And on this same day in 1789 the United States Department of the Treasury began to function.

THE THIRD of the month (Monday) is Labor Day, established as a legal public holiday in 1894. First proposed by Mathew (or Pete) McGuire, Samuel Gompers himself designated it as the first Monday in September. Alas, the day also marks the end of the lazy summer vacation. For some it is the day teachers again take over some of the chores of parents. On the 5th of September 1774, the first Continental Congress (sans Georgia) assembled in Philadelphia led by Peyon Randolph to pass the "Articles of Association" (hereby all the colonies were to boycott British goods) and pave the way for the Second Continental



Congress to meet on May 10 of 1775. On the seventh, the London Blitz began in 1940. A year after the lawlessness accompanying the Great Gold Rush of January 24, 1849, California became the thirty-first "free" state of the union on the 9th of September 1850, thanks to the efforts of President Millard Fillmore and the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty exchanged 525,000 square miles of land for \$15,000,000. It was on the eleventh of this month that suicide bombing terrorists drove our fuel-filled airplanes into the Pentagon and the Twin Towers in Manhattan and killed some 3,000 innocent people. That event changed our world despite the fact that ten times as many die yearly in road accidents, an equal number die from the flu despite our vaccines, or that the 3000 dead represent only 0.001% of our total population.

SEPTEMBER 12 is the first day of Ramadan, when the Koran was revealed, anger, envy, greed and lust are to be avoided and Muslims are to fast from dawn to sunset.

The day after, September 13, the only



"religious" holiday in the Hebrew liturgy, is the Jewish "Head of the Year" or *Rosh Hashanah*, the beginning of the days of awe when, it is believed, God first opens the book of life and judges all men.

On September 14th, Francis Scott Key wrote the words that became our national anthem when the British attacked Fort McHenry in 1814.

The Mexican War of Independence began on September 15, 1810 and the pilgrims sailed from England on September 16, 1620.

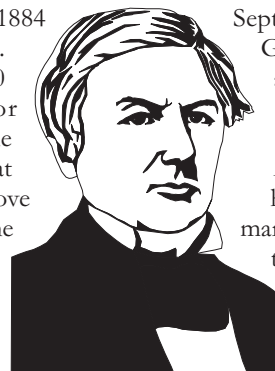
Our constitution, the basic structure of our political life, was signed on September 17, 1787 and nine years later George Washington's farewell address was published on September 19, 1796.

September 22 is the "Day of Atonement" or *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day of the year for Jews. It marks the day God makes entries in, then closes the book of life. Jews are supposed to fast on that day. The 22nd is also the time Nathan Hale was hanged as a spy by the British after first declaring that "I only regret that I have but one

life to lose for my country."

The 23rd is the official end of summer and the beginning of autumn (one keeps this secret from tomato plants, however).

And on September 25, 1513 Vasco Nunez de Balboa first sighted the Pacific Ocean. The Indians, in their native languages of Hoka, Penutian, Algonkian, Shoshonean, Athabaskan, Lutuamian, or Yukian, may well have wondered what that galleon was doing in their ocean. Have fun. ☺



President Fillmore