



California Writers Club – SFV

“Serving the writers of Greater Los Angeles”

THE SCRIBE

- established since 1983 -

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December 2007

Local Agent Lands Writers on Oprah

By: Stephany Spencer

Look out December! Our guest presenter will be literary agent, Sharlene Martin, of "Considerate literary management for the 21st Century."



She will share secrets for big-time connections that could make you a star. And she really knows; one of her clients was a guest on Oprah.

Says Martin, "Crazy Queries" is sure to be the best advice you'll ever get on what NOT to do with your writing career." Get ready to laugh while you learn from first-hand accounts of misguided queries.

You're guaranteed to chuckle at queries that make truth stranger than fiction. Says Martin, "Some will seem as if the writer can't possibly be serious, and some will make you wince to think any poor soul ever thought their letter would get them an agent."

The importance of a pre-query game plan will be stressed, as will an outline of the essential elements of effective queries that will generate positive responses.

This event is bound to be barrels of fun, while still offering sound advice. You'll walk out equipped to generate query letters that truly invite interest. And you'll find that the sense of knowing how to do it is a sure confidence-booster for the "pitch fest" to follow this session.

Since founding Martin Literary Management in 2003, Sharlene has mounted spectacular successes for her clients, including over 60 non-fiction sales to such major publishers as Crown, Penguin, Putnam, Rodale, St. Martin's, McGraw Hill, Ballantine, Harper Collins, – and many boutique and independent publishers. She's boosted clients in Readers Digest, People Mag and the London Times.

Examples of her success in the industry are her client's book, "You'll Never Nanny in This Town Again." That hit the New York and LA Times Best Seller lists in 2006 and was recently optioned to E!-Entertainment for development as a sitcom. And Brad Cohen's book, "Front of the Class," is now in development with Hallmark for a television movie.

In the past year alone, her clients have made appearances on The Today Show, Oprah, The View, Good Morning America, Martha Stewart, The Apprentice, 20/20, Discovery Channel, Inside Edition, Donny Deutsch and Fox News.

So come touch base and break bread with the Agent who might be your lucky star. And let's all look forward to this December. □□

THE WORD MECHANIC

Ramblings from your President

By: Scott Alixander Sonders, Ph.D.

"Eats, Shoots, and Leaves." What's the truth behind this title and how does punctuation change meaning? Is it about a BBQ where Dick Cheney then took his buddies on an infamous hunting trip? Or maybe it's the memoirs of Robert Blake and the last dinner he had with his now exanimate wife? With no commas, "eats shoots and leaves," is just a verb and two nouns that describe the diet of koala bears. That's not too funny.

This was also the title of a popular book on grammar. But actually the author, Lynn Truss, didn't get it quite right. Because this is routinely the punch line to an old and funny joke involving a koala bear and, uh, a lady of the night – and a dispute over "payment." The joke comes when the commas change "eats, shoots, and leaves" to a phrase of three verbs, of three progressive, consecutive actions. If you think in slang synonyms, you can likely imagine most of it and I won't have to publicly repeat it here, in print – and then get hounded out of CWC by the "Church Lady."

However, what Truss did get right is that punctuation is more important than most writers imagine. Punctuation is not that boring thing of memorization. It's a thing of beauty, of the direction given from the writer to the reader. It tells them where to breathe, when to shout, when to make a list and advertise, or when a character might pause, lost in thought. It's all about the punctuation. Punctuation transforms words into actions.

So, if your words become your actions... Psychologist Bruce Schneider says, "When you judge others, you judge yourself. The next time you find yourself upset with another person's actions, try to see yourself in that person and his or her actions. If you are open to the possibility, you may actually find that, in many cases, what you see within that other person is a reflection of you. You see a part of yourself you do not like, and it is you that you are upset with. The other person is only a mirror for your own self-learning."

So now your words become your actions, which become your active characters. Especially writers should be aware of seeing others multi-dimensionally. This practice could just save you some grief in your relationships at home, with your publisher, and surely with your reader.

I won't see many of you again until our next whiz-bang meeting on December 8th. And our meeting will come in the middle of the Jewish holiday of Chanukah - a celebration of candles. And lighting candles is all about discovery and meaning and dispelling darkness.

So, let's all light a candle and make our words and actions both light and bright. □□

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REWIND

With Pen and Brush

By: Debra Zednik

Many thanks to the San Fernando Valley Art Club for displaying their talents at our November meeting and turning our meeting room into a beautiful and inspiring art gallery collaboration between SFVAC President Dori Marler and California Writers Club president Scott Sonders, resulted in a most enjoyable and mutually inspirational event that blended two art forms: painting and writing. Artists included Sharon Weaver, Anita Louise Van Tellingen, Joey Barnes, and Dori Marler who interpreted and translated CWC member writing into visual art.



Painting by Dori Marler

Out of 20 CWC writing submissions, five pieces of poetry and prose were selected by the artists for interpretation. Selections included "At 4 a.m. a Whir of Wings" and "Orange Messiahs" by Scott Sonders; "Ladies of the Afternoon" by Mike Cahill; "On Bended Bough" by Venita Louise; and "L.A. Immigrant" by Regina Apigo.

With poetry and prose as inspiration, the artists employed a variety of media: watercolor, acrylic, and mixed media to create (in a remarkably short time!) several beautiful works of art.

Turnabout is fair play! The artists were also invited to display previously finished works and CWC members were invited to create poetry and prose based on any of the paintings in the room. Authors submitted their impromptu writings to judges Debra Zednik, Danielle Ste. Juste, and George Hirai.

The winning writings inspired by the paintings were created by Richard Schmorleitz, Mike Cahill, and Cheri Hector.

This was a very productive afternoon for writers and painters alike. This event is surely just the beginning of many more collaborative efforts. □□

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FAST FORWARD

By: Stephany Spencer

Coming In January...

Anthony Flacco: True Crime and Crime Fiction...

"True crime is all about getting the story rights; choices of action and character are secondary. Crime fiction is all about getting the story right; choices of genre and style are secondary."

Anthony, an award-winning author, orator and actor, with a screen-writing background, frequently gives seminars on crime writing. He is a featured speaker on writing for writers' conferences and clubs. Look for an interactive seminar, answering many commonly asked questions such as:

- > How does one handle legal matters and agreements with the person one is writing about?
- > Do you always need to *cut in* the person you are writing about?
- > Just what is a sellable idea?
- > How do we find common ground in the True Crime/Non Fiction market?

COMING IN FEBRUARY...

Kitty Dill: Award-winning Journalism Editor

This will be an exciting interactive seminar wherein Kitty will not only answer your questions about writing Press Releases, getting your pieces on "The Hub," or in the Ventura County Star newspaper, but will also expound on what to do when "60 Minutes" shows up at your door.

These up-coming seminars are sure hits, with something for everyone -- so come enjoy, and help make our afternoon a real hit by your presence there. Ciao till next time.

THE VIEWPOINT

Unforgettable Papa Juanito

By: Olivia Mohler

There was always much excitement when my maternal grandparents, Papa Juanito and Mama Josie, came to visit. They lived in the sun-soaked town of San Miguel de Allende, which to this day maintains an old-world beauty, with its well-preserved, majestic buildings dating back to the 1700's.

My immediate family consisted of my mom, dad, younger sister and spoiled little brother. Papi, the king of the roost, was someone to be reckoned with. He had a commanding and charismatic presence and expected his orders to be followed without question. He was an engineer and physicist. Always impeccably dressed, he would even wear a smoking jacket at dinner-time. My mother, twelve years his junior, was spirited and strong-willed and managed to hold her ground whenever she felt Papi was getting carried away with himself -- and carried away he got, expecting that his grapes be peeled and pitted before being served, and his newspaper "ironed" by the maid whenever it was delivered in less than perfect condition.

It was difficult to grow up around a father whom I both idolized and feared. I think that is why I looked forward to my grandparents visit with wild anticipation. Although I couldn't understand it yet, I think grandpa filled the void created by the conflicting relationship I had with Papi, and the rejection I felt from my mother. Tall, with a full head of wavy white hair, piercing blue eyes and a killer smile, grandpa was my most favorite person in the whole world; and best of all, he loved me to pieces.

Some of my fondest memories are of the Sunday brunches we had when my grandparents visited. We not only ate, but talked and laughed throughout the meal. There were times, however, when grandma would start complaining about grandpa's endless travels, his lack of concern for her many ailments, etc., etc. Patiently, grandpa would say: "enough, Josie, or I'll play the castanets."

She would ignore him and go on and on until, before anyone noticed, he would take out of his coat pocket a fake set of dentures.

He would then start clicking them with his right hand, mimicking her endless chatter and making them sound exactly like a flamenco dancer's castanet.

I still experience indescribable joy at the memory of the long walks grandpa and I took when I was a very young girl, trying my best with giant steps and little, awkward, skips to match his long, elegant strides. Our favorite place was Chapultepec Park, an idyllic woodsy area surrounded by a lake. Atop the hill lies a magnificent castle where Emperor Maximilian of Austria and his wife, Empress Carlota, resided during one of Mexico's most turbulent times.

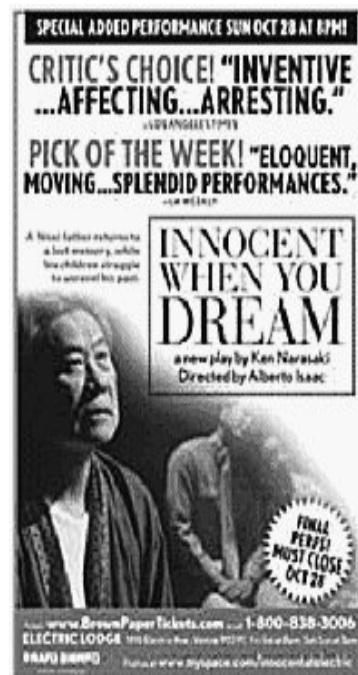
As my carefree childhood ended, I still looked forward to those precious times we shared together. His wisdom, unconditional love and emotional support provided me with the imaginary handkerchief with which I dried my tears and found solace in my darkest hours. □□

PLAY REVIEW

Innocent When You Dream Captures the Nisei/Sansei Experience

A Play Review – By: George Y. Hirai

On October 14, I witnessed engaging performances in a new play by Ken Narasaki.



This drama of the Japanese-American experience was at the Electric Lodge Theatre in Venice.

The well-formed play portrayed American-born Japanese (the Nisei) and the next generation: the Sansei.

It captured the torment of the relocation of the Japanese-Americans to various camps in 1942.

The story was about an aging Nisei reminiscing about the War, relations with his Sansei offspring, and Japanese-American sensibilities.

The story begins with Dan, a Nisei in his seventies, who suffers a stroke at a local bar. Scenes move from the hospital and Dan's flashbacks of a WW II relocation center: a romantic encounter at camp and battlefield memories. At a desolate internment camp, Dan meets Grace (Sharon Omi). He falls for in that brief moment and declares his love for her. He talks of a long life with her after the war.

In the next scene Dan, dressed in his U.S. Army uniform, searches for what he feels is a lost love. This leads him to a bar owned by Grace. He first encounters the bartender, Frank (John Miyasaki). In contrast to Dan, Frank was conscientious objector, a "No, No Boy." The glossary provided the audience explains the term, "Slang term for someone who refused to sign two key questions of a loyalty oath administered to Japanese internees." Dan, who was in the all-Nisei 442 Regiment, knocks Frank down and kicks him in anger for his failure to sign the loyalty oath. This conflict haunts Dan throughout the story.

In the alternating hospital scenes, there are visits by Dan's son (the writer Narasaki) and the angry, civil rights activist, daughter Joy (Emily Kuroda). The encounters are humorous and natural.

The Sansei viewpoint is solidly reflected during the encounters. Japanese-American, born between the Nisei and Sansei generations, I felt a deeper kinship and understanding with the characters in this WWII tale. I recommend Narasaki's drama to all audiences because of the historical content of the Japanese internment. There were stellar performances by lead actor Sab Shimono as well as Sharon Omi and Emily Kuroda. □□

MEMOIR (Excerpt)

BESHERT – IT WAS MEANT TO BE

Written in 1986 by Roma Talasiewicz-Eibuszyc, and translated from Polish, 2007, by Suzanna Eibuszyc

I was my parent's sixth and last child when I was born in 1917. German occupiers had taken many Polish citizens for forced labor. Much of Warsaw was plagued by starvation and Typhus.

My father worked two jobs to support the family. My mother cared for her six children in a tenement apartment with one room and a kitchen.

After my father died from an ear infection at only 36, my 12-year old brother had to support the family. My twin sisters also went to work when they turned twelve.

Many hard years followed. One incident still haunts me. We were home: alone, hungry, and cold. Our mother appeared just before dark clutching a small piece of bread. She looked around at the six children and without hesitation, gave it to me – her youngest child. My stomach growled as I devoured the bread, forgetting my five siblings. At only five, my sense of survival had taken over.

When Mother could no longer pay the rent, she sublet the kitchen to a couple with a son. Two more daughters were born and the five of them lived in our kitchen.

The seven in our family lived in one room, we never saw the sun. In the winter, we defrosted the one small window to see outside. We slept two to a bed and one of us slept on a mattress stuffed with hay.

The hay was changed every year during Passover. Although it was the least comfortable place to sleep, we looked forward to the smell of fresh hay in the spring. Mother saved for a whole year so we would observe the Jewish holiday properly. Everything at home was cleaned. Pesach began at sunset and we observed a traditional Seder meal, late at night. Mother always put me to bed for a long nap in the afternoon so I could stay up late with the rest of the family.

Passover meant the coming of spring and with it the welcoming warmth of the sun. Life sprang forth. The skeletons of trees opened their green umbrellas. The foliage all around filled us with happiness, especially us children. When I was finally allowed out from our gray apartment, I breathed in the fresh air after a long, cold winter and turned my white face toward the sun, grateful for its warm rays. □□

APPLAUSE

Venita Louise – "In Mysterious Ways"

Lang Garret likes to keep to himself, and often carries the label of anti-social. Still, being an accomplished artist tends to make up for any negative identifier, at least it does in his mind.

That, mixed with occasional periods of depression, moodiness and attacks of mulishness provides an expected flair for his artistic nature.

Try telling that to his blues-singing fiancée, Amanda Howard. After making an appearance at the "Half Mile From The Sun" art gallery in Phoenix, Arizona, he and Amanda take an unexpected tour in a remote area of Prescott. Curiosity isn't a strong enough word to describe the anticipation Lang feels when he is told they will be visiting a recently-formed crop circle. His curiosity soon turns to horror when the energy from the circle begins to show its effect on anyone who dares to enter its boundaries. How could they know that someone would die? Transformations begin to take place in each individual in the small tour group; transformations that continue even after they're safely back home. Or, are they really safe?

Here is the cover for, In Mysterious Ways, a soon to be released e-book by Forbidden Publications.



Dean Stewart – has won three Honorable Mentions in the 76th Annual Writer's Digest Competition. His screenplays "Abuse" and "One Big Hit for Martha" both won in the Television/Movie Script category and his Short Story "Pain" won in the Mainstream/Literary Short Story category. There were more than 19,000 entries. It will not be known until November with the publication of all winners, how high Dean placed among the 90 honorable mentions in each category. Dean is a member of both the San Fernando Valley and West Valley Branches of CWC. □□

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We are soliciting items for the **January** edition of **The Scribe**. Submit your articles about writing, memoirs, essays, short stories, and excerpts from fiction/non-fiction (limited to 500 words) as well as poetry and 300-word film, stage, and fiction/non-fiction reviews. Submissions must be emailed to George Hirai, Scribe Editor, as Word document attachments: cwcsvf@gmail.com

The next submittal deadline is December 16, 2007.

December Meeting

Who: California Writers - SFV

When: Saturday, December 8 - 1:00 p.m.

Where: Encino Community Center
4935 Balboa Boulevard

Directions: We're just north of Ventura Blvd.
Plenty of Free Parking.

UNTITLED

By: Cheryl Hector

He had large rough hands. He towered over nearly everybody. Some called him big John. At work, he wore a white shirt with short sleeves and you could see his long arms. He was always in motion. I would be careful to know where I stood so I wasn't in his way.

Children and pets were beneath him. He tolerated his wife with gruff demands and questions he'd pose to her. "Where's my newspaper?" Always a bellowing concern. "Don't touch my paper!"

Mother instructed me to set his table on the nights he worked late. "Make sure you have everything exactly as he wants it" she told me. The water, newspaper, bowl for the soup, napkin all in place when he came in.

If you sat with him to be polite asking him a question would say, "How can you be so stupid?"

He had very large feet and wore dress shoes with ties. He was an important man and demanded respect for his things. How heavy those shoes were. As a young girl lifting them I could feel the leather lining, the size of them would make me flinch.

"Why don't you greet me with 'hello daddy' when I come home?" he asked. "Aren't you happy to see me?"

Instead I would remember the big rough hands hitting me and feel his threatening voice penetrating my veins. His anger made the world come down around me. Nowhere to run and hide any sort of emotion made it worse.

Growing older and wiser, it became more violent. Mother was there but always a silent participant like in a Science Fiction show. Re-entering the home, things were more serious and the big hands were treacherous. They removed the battery from my car to keep me hostage. The basement was where he taped my phone conversations and I was maid to iron his stark white shirts. There was one way in and out; he had a lock on the door above.

Ironing the shirts red burns from the iron would imprint my skin. It was most tender at the whitest part and I would let the iron burn me there. The pain was sharp and sore and lingered for days. The scars would throb and hurt but never as painful as the pain from those hands. □□

WHY I WRITE

By: Regina Apigo

I wanted the City to make public bathrooms on LA's skid row where my parent's had their grocery store. So at age 9 I wrote a letter. How would you feel, I asked then-Mayor Tom Bradley, if you had to pee in the street like our homeless customers.

To my surprise the Mayor, or his aide, wrote back. The reasons my wish couldn't be granted, I don't remember, but I know the letter stated I should keep my idealism.

Maybe that's the best reason for writing--crazy, unrealistic idealism. I suspect even the most jaded, cynical writer is a bit of an idealist. I think many writers hold hope that words can wash out dusty eyes, connect readers to humanity and stir something in others.

Good writing provides me with intangible gifts the author will likely never know about.

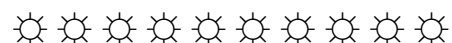
Still when I'm writing, I'm not consciously thinking about the reader's response. I'm usually trying to hone in on the nebulous something in my head, trying to get down a truth as easy as tracking the flutter of a hummingbird's wings.

Only gradually, I realized I write repeatedly about truths that are muted, unspoken or invisible.

That may stem from being a child of immigrant parents-- smart, college-educated professionals from Korea seeking better opportunities here. They ended up spending most of their adult life in a cramped grocery store on LA's dirty skid row.

Verbal bullies humiliated them, told them to, "Go back to China." Criminals socked them in the nose and jaw and held them at gunpoint. As much as a parent wants to protect their children, children want to protect their parents. And I had failed.

Yet it seemed part of me was hopeful about restoring their lost dignity and humanity. I could write. I could tell the story of our lives and countless other immigrant families who struggle, but do so nearly invisibly. It transformed my pain into a building block for expression. □□



GET YOUR 15-MINUTES OF FAME...

NOW x3 - OPEN MICS!

- 1 - Our regular monthly meet at Encino Community Center
- 2 - Borders Books in Canoga Park, Sign-ups begin at 6:45PM
The third Thursday of every month - 6510 Canoga Avenue
For info or advance sign-ups, email: rrdeets@socal.rr.com
- 3 - Barnes & Noble in Encino, Sign-ups begin at 6:45PM
The second Friday of every month - 16461 Ventura Boulevard
For info or advance sign-ups, email: cwcsfv@gmail.com

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