



California Writers Club – SFV
“Serving the writers of Greater Los Angeles”
THE SCRIBE

- established since 1983 -

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March 2008

**MARCH MEETING - LINDA O. JOHNSTON:
LEGAL EAGLE SHARES WRITING SUCCESS**

By: Stephany Spencer

March 8th will “spring into action on the green, while we greet you with a “top o’ the morning,” as gifted attorney, teacher and writer, Linda O. Johnston, will testify to the legalese of writing... the Do’s and Don’ts that could make or break your writing career.



Linda now lives overlooking Lake Hollywood – the perfect place to turn anything into a Romance, Suspense or Mystery novella. Meanwhile, her two dogs protect her from any real danger – while her Muse has her way with her. And that generally happens every

afternoon when she escapes the realities of the true crime at her law office and indulges her fantasies in such endeavors as her latest "Kendra Ballantyne, Pet Sitter" that recently sold to *Silhouette Nocturne*.

The amazing “Linda O!” has the writers’ enviable double-barrel shotgun: a B.A. in journalism and a JD degree from Duquesne.

Her writing career began by running a small newspaper, then she worked in advertising and Public Relations, and later moved into her Law Practice. The multi-talented Linda also has avocations in writing, speaking and teaching.

A member of the Mystery Writers of America (Sisters in Crime) and Romance Writers of America, we are pleased to have Linda O. Johnston regale us with Leprechaun magic and her lucky charms. I plan to bring my bag and capture some of it to take home. It sure beats a trip to Ireland trying to acquire it! ♦♦

**MARCH
MADNESS
MEETING**

WHO: CWC-SFV, Serving Greater Los Angeles writers

WHEN: Saturday, March 8, 2008
1:00-3:30pm

WHERE: Encino Community Center
4935 Balboa Boulevard

DIRECTIONS: This is our lucky #7 meeting in new home – and a worthy venue, at that! We’re just north of Ventura Blvd. and adjoining the east end of Encino Park. Plenty of Free Parking.

THE WORD MECHANIC

RAMBLINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

By: Scott Alixander Sonders, Ph.D.

Recently, I rediscovered this chart touted by "The Toastmasters Guide to Speaking." I recommend studying this and adapting it for your own usage.

I know I surely need to follow its suggestions.

Read your writing aloud. Then record it. Play it back. You'll hear the difference between what you *intended* to write and what you *actually* wrote. Then experiment; have someone else read your work to you. Then really go out on a limb; have someone of the opposite gender read your work aloud. Good screenwriters know this when concocting their characterizations. Why? Because compelling characters must sound authentic.

Evaluating Your Body's Spoken Image:

Weakness	1	2	3	4	5	Strength
Posture						Posture
Nervous/uneasy	1	2	3	4	5	Poised
Uncertain	1	2	3	4	5	Confident
Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	Comfortable
Slouching	1	2	3	4	5	Stiff
Gestures						Gestures
Artificial/wooden	1	2	3	4	5	Natural/spontaneous
Random	1	2	3	4	5	Meaningful
Passive	1	2	3	4	5	Lively
Furtive	1	2	3	4	5	Expansive
Vague	1	2	3	4	5	Precise
Detracted from verbal message	1	2	3	4	5	Enhanced verbal message
Body Movements						Body Movements
Lifeless/dull	1	2	3	4	5	Fluid/animated
Awkward	1	2	3	4	5	Graceful
Random	1	2	3	4	5	Purposeful
Drew attention away from speech	1	2	3	4	5	Enhanced attention to speech
Facial Expression						Facial Expression
Deadpan	1	2	3	4	5	Animated
Unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5	Friendly
Artificial	1	2	3	4	5	Natural/genuine
Incongruent	1	2	3	4	5	Appropriate to speech
Eye Contact						Eye Contact
Forced/artificial	1	2	3	4	5	Natural/smooth
Followed set pattern	1	2	3	4	5	No set pattern
Failed to establish visual bonds	1	2	3	4	5	Successfully established visual bonds

All of us can become better speakers (unless you're Churchill, FDR or JFK – and they're all exanimate). Better speakers make better writers. But being a better writer does not make you a better speaker. I've pontificated on this paradigm until my workshop attendees cover their ears in fear.

I've been critiqued by those who know me. And those know that my intentions are as good as gold. But when I speak, those intentions sometimes come across as something less than shiny & valuable. And that's an issue.

When one studies clinical hypnotherapy, it's discovered that only a small portion of what a speaker actually says is retained by the audience. Instead, most of what that audience takes away is the speaker's tone of voice and body language. That's scary! No wonder we have issues with each other. And we resolve those issues in a number of ways: with a gun or sharp object, by ignoring the other, or by *actively* listening and sharing. Not wanting any of you to end your time at the end of a rope, I'd suggest you avoid the first of these options. The second leads to no relationship at all. But the last creates a thing of beauty. I'll vote for beauty every time.

Writers Club serves its membership well when supplying the tools to make better people and better writers. Study the chart above.

Don't we all want more personal and inter-relational synchronicity? Let's actively listen to each other and our speakers. And welcome to March 8th where we'll present another fine opportunity to develop your writerly self. See you there! ♦♦

REWIND

OUR FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING

By: Kelly Jungersmith



Bobby Woods

essential to the success of her musical, "I've Got a Man." Sophia Echols gave us goose bumps with her amazing voice and Bobby Woods exhibited a multitude of amazing musical talents. Denise perseverance and discussed the determination



Denise Decker

need as we make our way in the writing field.

Denise's performance was enough to send us home happy. Our President, Dr. Scott Sonders, then introduced our amazing guest speaker.

Diligent members pulled themselves from soccer fields and picnics to join us in another entertaining and informative meeting on Saturday. Our featured member, Denise Decker, added pizzazz to our meeting with two singers who were



Sophia Echols

required for her to write, produce and direct the musical of her dreams. Her enthusiasm and success gave us the inspiration that we all

Kitty Dill, a journalist at the *Ventura County Star*, enlightened us with the essentials of getting news into our local papers. Her "5 Ws and an H" outlined the essential components of correspondence which will ensure that our work gets noticed. As writers, brevity is not always our forte. To help us with this shortcoming, Ms. Dill provided valuable tips on how to keep it brief and keep your e-mails and letters out of the bin.

As our stomachs rumbled, we profusely praised the efforts of Olivia Mohler, our Hospitality Chair, and Mary Black for providing us with refreshments to keep our taste buds happy and our minds functioning. Our appreciation is extended to all the volunteers at CWC-SFV who help run the show and ensure that we don't end up milling about the Encino Community Center like zombies in a shopping mall. ♦♦

FAST FORWARD

KEVYN LETTAU: A True Princess of Cabaret Jazz...

She's divine, sublime, and without her it's a crime. So come be enthralled by the mellifluous riffs of Kevyn Lettau, internationally known jazz singer. She's the voice behind Philippine Airlines and a recently sold-out gig at LaVaLee in Studio City.

Kevyn is the intersection of the poetic written word and music. Be prepared to fall in love as Kevyn shares the inner place that sparks her poetry – and then performs the final result. Come be enchanted by the lilting words and voice of the Divine Miss Kevyn. – **By: SAS** ♦♦



FICTION EXCERPT

From "Green Passions"

By: Elaine Shevin

"I don't like this, Gunny," said Lieutenant Murphy. "Why are the roads and fields empty? Where are the Honduran troops? Or the villagers? I don't see a light anywhere. The houses look deserted."

Behind the night glasses, Michael's eyes swept the land. Suddenly, he yelled, "S**t!" and threw himself sideways, knocking Murphy to the ground. As if on signal, a barrage from half a dozen AK-47s burst through the silence.

"Ambush!" yelled Michael. "Take cover! Return fire!"

"Where's our f***'n air support?" Murphy cried. "Where the hell are the Hondurans? This is supposed to be a joint operation!"

"Sir, it was a set-up! Let's get outa here!"

"Oh, s**t look!" Covered in mud and huddled against a tree, Murphy pointed ahead to the clearing. A small plane was coming in fast and close to the ground. Seconds later, it had landed and a swarm of men appeared out of nowhere to transfer boxes to waiting trucks. Within minutes, the plane took off again and the trucks started to move.

"Gunny, we're going in," Lieutenant Murphy said.

"There's no point in going after them on foot, Sir. There's just seven of us left, counting you and me. And they've got the same night-vision goggles we have, the same infrared weapons. Plus we're in their back yard. They can just pick us off."

"I want that shipment and every one of those bastards, Gunny! Get someone to take out those front runners."

"Sir! Saunders, Redding!" Michael pointed to the two enemy men firing from tripods and made a slash motion across his throat. The two men, moving low to the ground, ran forward firing. Seconds later, the two tripod stations were silent, but so were Saunders and Redding.

"That's it, Lieutenant," Michael growled. "There's no sense in fighting to the last man for a bunch of drugs that are already gone! Let's get the hell out of here!"

Lieutenant Murphy started to say something, but never got the chance. A grenade exploded alongside the road, hitting a makeshift barricade of rocks to the side of their cover building and spewing shrapnel in all directions Michael inched closer to the dead officer and snatched his gun. "Call for reinforcements," he shouted at one of his few remaining men as he scurried back in the mud. "I need air strikes, and I want them now!"

"Yes, Gunny!"

Michael hollered, "Everybody back in the truck! Mission abort . . ." He gasped as something ripped into his side, like a hot branding iron searing his ribs. The ground came up to meet him, and he lay still. ..Someone was talking over him, calling him, but they were far away, too far away to help. A familiar sound, like the plop, plop, plop of a chopper's blades, played in the back of his head. An air-to-ground missile whizzed in the distance and exploded. A voice was yelling, "I've got room for one more. Arms tugged at him, lifting him, and shooting agony through his body. "No," he begged, "take. . . ." Something stung his arm and he stopped thrashing and went away for a while. The next time he pried his eyes open, he couldn't move. Something was holding him down, something was blowing in his face, across him, the air was dark; everything was dark. He let his eyelids droop closed against the heat, chills running through his body, too tired to shiver. Too tired. Have to sleep, sleep forever. ◇◇

THE WORDSMITH

Green

By: Megan Shaughnessy Masten



My lover is as silent as the drizzle that slides down the windshield. I pretzel my legs and press my tongue to the back of my teeth, hard.

His breath is thunderous, mocking. In, out, in, out, in, nose whistling.

I punch his shoulder and leap out strutting to the headstone sunk into the grass among the upright plaques he has locked the car and is picking dandelions which grow between the cement and the gravel disgusting bright dyes which must be plucked every summer only to return multiplied the next

I stomp atop the soil and wave my arms ridiculously, daring him to meet my eyes. There's nothing sacred in this earth. His horrified stare satisfies me until he steps forward.

The weeds flop about in his too-slow hands and he rests them on her grave the trees rustle and echo the Bible verse read twice the trees shall clap their hands

I spin and wander through the questions in his eyes. Through the Johnsons, Smiths, and Raymonts, sneaking glances at his bowed head, his careful touch smoothing the earth and sweeping away the crinkled leaves.

How absurd; he mutters.

Speaking to rotting flesh encased in cedar covered by green as if she was ever there at all, this woman he never met.

A wasp flutters by and I shout daring it to sting but it is gone and he mutters as the trees rustle and the grass blinds and as I collapse under imagined pain we drive away dry-eyed and joking and I wonder if I ever screamed at all. ◇◇

This first appeared in the Adiago Verse Quarterly and is reprinted with permission from the author.

THE VIEWPOINT

Cell Phones & Other Microscopic Organisms

By: Venita Louise

Every day, people at work are walking around the office wearing their headsets, seemingly talking to themselves. Trouble is, when they're listening, it's impossible to tell if they are on a call. Often, I start to talk to them and they give me that, *can't-you-see-I'm-on-the-phone*, glare. At other times, they are actually talking to me and I don't realize it. That's when I get the, *hell-oooo-I'm talking to YOU* look.

Yesterday, I had a ten-minute conversation with a woman in the checkout line in the

supermarket. I didn't realize she was on the phone until she said, "No, I'm not talking to anyone but the woman in line ahead of me thinks **she** is." Maybe someone should create some sort of signal that lets you know when they're on the phone. How about placing a sticky note on your forehead? You could say something like Rod Serling: You're dazed, bewildered, trapped in a world without time, where sound collides with color and shadows explode. You see a signpost up ahead — this is no ordinary telephone... You have reached, "The Twilight Phone." Inferior being, kindly slip me a hand-written note and I'll get back to you as soon as I can...or, talk to the hand.

Recently, at a gathering I attended, a pre-teen came in from the garage and asked if anyone had a razor. I was horrified until he explained that he wanted to try using their cell phone. Someone produced a Bluetooth with digital camera and MPEG4 video playback, built-in speakerphone and precision cut keypad. He said it provided a total sensory experience. Huh. And to think, I used to be impressed if a gadget chopped, sliced and diced. Another phone was pulled from a purse. Now, this one seemed more my style. She said she wanted a cell phone that didn't intimidate her, and reinforced her sense of comfort and familiarity. The features she showed made me feel more relaxed.

I immediately knew it would fit my needs. It wasn't small and difficult to handle. When she unfolded it, it was sleek and shaped exactly like the receiver of my old pink princess phone. A coiled cord dropped down and was completely twisted and snarled. We laughed hilariously as she allowed it to twirl to untangle it. She said she didn't have to configure it either. It was configured remotely by her five-year-old grandson. Instead of a keypad, it had a dial with holes big enough for your fingers. Instead of a signal strength meter, there was a dial tone. There were no icons or menus, but there was a feature that would ask you a few yes and no questions, which you could answer via voice command: Do you want to check your voicemail? Do you want to talk to your psychologist? Do you want to call the driver behind you and ask if they are lonely, because if they aren't, they should back off before you slam on your brakes? I think I'll buy one. It almost makes the collective schizophrenia and brain tumors that are being created by all the radioactive radiation worth the risk. ◇◇

CWC-SFV TEAM

Executive Board:

Scott A. Sonders, President
George Hirai, interim VP¹
Leila Morris, Secretary
James Ganatta, Treasurer

ADVISORY BOARD:

Venita Louise, Membership Chair
Stephany Spencer, Programs Chair
Richard Deets, Open Mic Host
Larry Fazio, Events Manager
Mike Austin, Development Advisor
Olivia Mohler, Hospitality Chair
Patty Foltz, Webmaster
Farah Khalid, Videographer

TEAM MEMBERS:

Scott Sonders, State Rep²
Lenora Smalley, SFV Spokesperson
Bruce Zacuto, Sergeant-at-Arms
Elisabeth Cooke, Critiques Chair
Debra Zednik, Critiques Advisor
Megan Masten, Outreach
Elizabeth Jaimes, Hospitality

¹ also: Editor of the Scribe

² also: VP of the CWC-Central Board

ABOUT WRITING

By: Kitty Dill, "The Ventura County Star"

Kitty Dill, the dynamic and informative speaker at our February 9th monthly meeting, provided this item. It is a journalist's rules for news or press releases.

It's easier than you think if you look at the goal line, stay objective, and squash your ego. Developing a news or press release is easy. The key to any such tool is to keep it simple.

HOW

Type a release on company or organization letterhead. At the top, list the contact person, daytime phone numbers, etc. This person needs to know enough about the occasion to answer questions. List the contact even if an information number is included. Most of the time, the person who takes reservations isn't geared to help a media person.

WHAT

In the body of the release, make information clear and enticing. Think about the audience. You want to provide basic interest to catch an editor's attention and get free publicity for your event, cause, award, etc. And the editor wants to give news to his audience (in print, online, or otherwise).

WHERE

If your club meets in Woodland Hills and its members come from the same city, editors in Sylmar and Pasadena aren't likely to be able to help you. Keep track of what cities your members live in or where your speaker is from and use that information to demonstrate there's an interest in a wider area.

WHY

Ideally, a news release is one page long, not more than 1 ½ pages. If you have too much information, consider an addendum with background information. A news release is designed to produce nuts and bolts information and get the editor interested. It may not get read if it is too long. And, PLEASE, break information into paragraphs.

WHO

Send the news release to the appropriate editor. If you don't know, find out who it is. Whoever is handling publicity for your group needs to know editors of local media (Buy a copy of everything in your area and look for the sections you think your news fits in). Most news releases are sent directly to the editor covering your community. Other releases, such as meeting notices, may go directly to a calendar editor, business editor, lifestyle editor, sports editor and even a trade publication's newsletter editor.

WHEN

Send the news release at least two to three weeks before the reservations deadline or event. If your event has the potential to be a story or feature, call the editor and suggest that possibility and why you think it's unique. Remember that magazines work three or more months out. Even print "soft" sections like communities in dailies are prepared 48 hours ahead of publication.

Finally, ask lots of questions of people you value. Most are willing to be helpful to the sincere. *Reprinted with permission from Kitty Dill and Ventura County Star* ◇◇

CALL FOR CO-WRITER

I am looking for a writer who would be interested in rewriting my mother's memoir, either as a memoir or possibly as a historical novel. The story is a tragic tale of a young woman who survived "against all odds" as a child and a teenager in Warsaw Poland from 1917 till 1939 and as a very young woman in the Soviet Russia from 1940 till 1946. An excerpt from the memoir "BESHERT - It Was Meant To Be" was published in December's 2007 issue of The Scribe.

Interested writers please reply via e- email to:
Suzanna Eibuszyc: suzanna@chsoff.com

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The editors are soliciting for the April issue of our literary journal, THE SCRIBE. Submit your essays about writing, memoirs, short stories, film and book and stage reviews, humor pieces, and excerpts from longer works. The limit is 500 words. We also want your poems, but please limit these to about 35 lines. Email your submissions to George Hirai, our Scribe Editor, as Word.doc attachments. Our next submission deadline is March 23, 2008. Email: cwcsfv@gmail.com

Photos: If your work is published in THE SCRIBE, we'd like you to send portrait or candid shots of yourself, to accompany your work. We that find photos of members enhance the newsletter and increase your name recognition. ◇◇

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From our February Featured Speaker...

I very much value the honor of being asked and appreciate the opportunity to share time with you. How do I thank you... let me count the ways: nice venue, easy to reach, friendly folks, interesting questions, good leadership, an audience that wants to learn and grow, and the prized opportunity to share.

Cheers and such,
Kitty Dill

BITS OF WISDOM

{Adapted for reprinting – S.A.S.}

- **Politicians and diapers** have one thing in common. They should both be changed regularly and for the same reason.
- **Time may be a great healer**, but it's a lousy beautician.
- **Never be afraid to try something new.** Remember, amateurs built the Ark but professionals built the Titanic.
- **Conscience is what hurts** when everything else feels good.
- **Talk is cheap** because supply exceeds demand.
- **Even if you are on the right track**, you'll get run over if you just sit there.
- **An optimist thinks** this is the best possible world. A pessimist fears this is true.
- **There will always be death & taxes.** However, death doesn't get worse yearly.
- **In just two days** tomorrow will be yesterday.
- **I plan on living forever.** So far, so good.
- **Practice safe eating** -- always use condiments.
- **A day without sunshine** is like night.
- **It's annoying to know all the answers** when nobody asks you the questions.
- **The real art of conversation** is not only to say the right thing at the right time, but also to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.
- **Brain cells come and brain cells go**, but fat cells live forever.
- **Age doesn't always bring wisdom.** Sometimes it comes alone.
- **Life not only begins at forty**, it also begins to show. ◇◇

MARCH MADNESS MEETING

WHO: CWC-SFV - Serving Greater Los Angeles writers

WHEN: Saturday, March 8th, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

WHERE: Encino Community Center - 4935 Balboa Boulevard

GET YOUR 15-MINUTES OF FAME – NOW **x3 OPEN MICS!**

- 1** – At our regular monthly meeting at the Encino Community Center
- 2** – At Borders Books in Canoga Park. Sign-ups begin at 6:45 p.m.
on the third Thursday of every month – 6510 Canoga Avenue
For more info please email: rrdeets@socal.rr.com
- 3** – At Barnes & Noble in Encino. Sign-ups begin at 6:45 p.m.
on the second Friday of every month – 16461 Ventura Boulevard
For more info please email: cwcsfv@gmail.com

CWC-SFV

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