



## WEST VALLEY BRANCH

DECEMBER 2008

## CELEBRATIONS

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### BETTY FREEMAN: 95 AND COUNTING

By Sheila Moss

How do you describe a guiding light? It's easy. You just say Betty Freeman. She's been instrumental in the first California Writers Club-SFV and later in the California Writers Club, West Valley Branch. It comes to no surprise that members of the West Valley Branch joined forces and voices on Saturday, November 1, 2008, to celebrate Betty's 95th birthday.

She was born on November 14, 1913, in Marmarth, a small town in North Dakota. Asked if she was born at home, Betty responded with her wry wit. "I don't know. I wasn't there yet." She had one sibling Robert (Bob) who was two years older than she. After the death of her druggist father, her mother packed up the family and Grandma Clara Gilbert and traveled to California. "My mother was determined that we would go to school in California." After graduating from Van Nuys High School, she went on to UCLA. Unfortunately Bob, who had never been healthy, died after college.

It was she who facilitated the fledgling West Valley Branch finding a home at the Katzenberg Room of the Motion Picture Home. "The reason I'm here is that my film editor husband won an Oscar for sound in PORTRAIT OF JENNY. "In those days the Oscars were held in a little theatre in Hollywood. Afterwards we went to dinner. It was exciting and yes, the Oscar was very heavy."

Ask any CWC member and he or she will be able to share a Betty story. Leslie Kaplan, for example, has been Betty's sidekick for a number of years: "Betty is the youngest older person I have ever known. She can speak like a poet and tell a joke like -well you can imagine. I so enjoy spending social time with her. She's promised that she would try to make it to 120. She is my role model and I enjoy every minute I spend with her."

"I consider her my mentor and friend," explained Lenora Smalley, former CWC-SFV president. She's done so much for the club. Lenora added, "Betty has taught us all how to be a volunteer for CWC. I've known Betty Freeman for about eleven years, ever since I became a member of CWC. She has always been encouraging and loving, even through some difficult differences on what was best for CWC. She unabashedly added, "She is one of my all-time favorite people on this planet."

Her graciousness won over current CWC/WV Branch President Dave Wetterberg: "I attended my first meeting in 1992 as a curious visitor. Within a week, I received an invitation from Betty to a branch social at her home in Sherman Oaks. I was so impressed by this kind gesture. I felt I must reciprocate by attending. Thus started my association with Betty and CWC. A warm gesture from a charming lady started it all," concluded Dave. To this statement we all chime in and say:

**"Thank you Betty, and Happy 95th Birthday!"**



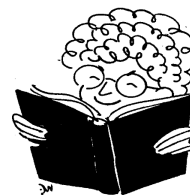
Dean Stewart held on while Betty made a wish.

**"When you rise  
in the morning,  
Think of what a  
privilege it is to  
be alive, to  
breathe, to  
think, to enjoy,  
To love."**

Marcus Aurelius

**Our founder  
supplements  
the quote with  
her own wise  
saying:**

**"If you live  
long enough,  
every dream  
can come  
true."**



Betty's freelancer  
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## JOE SUTTON FOUND HIS REALITY IN FANTASY

By Kathy Highcove



Leslie Kaplan welcomes Joe Sutton.

Our November speaker was unflappable. Joe Sutton recounted his long career in many frenetic Hollywood industries just as a rain storm crackled and splattered heavy raindrops all over the Katzenberg roof and koi pond by the patio. At that very moment, Sutton credited a rain storm for his successful career "doing what I love." If it weren't for a sudden down-pour in Seattle- forty years ago - that dampened his suit, his sample case and his salesman's spirit, he would never have initiated his entertainment and public relations career.

After several years in public relations work, Sutton became vice-President of MCA music division and eventually established his own Shadybrook Records label. Continuing his search for job satisfaction, a priority with Joe Sutton, he returned to personal management of very big entertainment personalities and did public relations work once more for several Hollywood stars.

Asked how he survived the pressures of managing high need talent, he revealed his practice of Vipassana meditation. "I meditate in the morning and just before I go to bed," he told the CWC/WV audience members. "I have learned to quiet my worries and find a true source of peace and inspiration."

His real secret of success might be summed up this way: Joe Sutton simply ... likes people, loves people, in fact. His interviews on station KGIL 1260 are known for his probing questions. Like a genial Johnny Carson, Sutton gently guides his subjects into memories and poignant revelations about their lives and motivations in their own Hollywood careers. Even the most defensive and sensitive celebrities respond to Sutton's instinctual emphasis on the right topic, and his earnest enthusiasm to learn new insights about his subject. He brings the same tactful talent to his interviews on Channel 22 for the in-house MPTF audience.

Sutton appreciates personalities who may have struggled in their lives and careers, but have not been discouraged. He enjoys interviews with survivors - performers who try and try again, and have faith in themselves and the value of their work. "Those folks who come on my radio show are my inspiration. I learn by listening and so does my audience," the renowned interviewer reveals. "In fact, someone once said that I'm the best listener ever heard!"

When asked to enlarge upon his stated belief that "writing is everything," Sutton confided that he writes a half-hour every day. When he sees a blank page "I want to put compelling words on it - my innermost thoughts." From these short writing sessions Sutton has produced a book, "The Heart of Hollywood: From Hollywood to Hell and Back" which draws upon his long career among the stars, listening to their histories. The orange and gold koi fish swirled around the rain cooled Katzenberg pond outside as Joe Sutton chatted with members, and signed a few copies of his book... a satisfied man spreading good vibes at our CWC/WV November meeting.



## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR : SUBMISSIONS NEEDED FOR JANUARY ISSUE

Hello fellow member of CWC/WV, I have a special request concerning the next issue of InFocus. Next month our country will install a new President of our United States: Barack Hussein Obama prepares to lead our nation out of challenging circumstances that would daunt many new leaders. President Elect Obama is an author and a reader. He values the printed word. This month he forms a Cabinet inspired by a historical novel by Doris Kearns Goodwin: *A Team of Rivals*. Shall we send short messages of advice and hope to our new enthusiastic leader? Pretend you have 60 seconds to say something of import to President Obama. Email your message to me. I'll send on the list to Washington...after I publish some or all your comments in this newsletter the following month. Send to: Editor Kathy Highcove khhighcove@yahoo.com Subject line: President Obama Message

# BETTY FREEMAN'S FREELANCE CAREER - A CANDID LOOK BACK

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**M**y widowed mother's dream was to leave blustery North Dakota for Southern California. Here we would have a choice of universities and jobs while living in the world of star gazing. Her plan worked. My brother and I graduated from UCLA and, doing teacher training at 32<sup>nd</sup> St. School for USC, I finished a Master's Degree and taught classes in English and Music.

As for the star gazing – in my senior year at UCLA I married Charles Freeman, an editor in music, sound and film. Working in different studios he brought home bits of show biz – songs of Roy Rogers, the latest happenings on Peyton Place, and news about his bosses – Charles Chaplin, David O'Selznik, and Harry Cohen at Columbia. His career paid off with an Oscar and an Emmy.

Our marriage paid off with three children and four grandchildren.

Writing? An essential as a teacher and even more so as a principal. The focus was on bulletins, newspaper releases, and hundreds of letters. I dreamed of more and retirement set me free. "Now I'll have time to write my memoirs," I thought, packing bundles of bulletins and calendars for reference.

But first I wrote a romance with torrid scenes of wailing and wooing. The agent advised, "Start another." Then I wrote a book about a lady trucker. The research was fascinating, but the agent wasn't impressed. I thought sure she'd want my book about a sperm bank kid, but no sale.

When I told her some ways to raise your child's I.Q., she said, "Write the proposal!" I did. The publishers said, "No. The author needs a doctorate for credibility." Meanwhile I sold articles to the Chicago Tribune, the Daily News, the L.A. Times, and other publishers. The best pay-off was my winning cookie recipe at \$9 a word! No book sales, but my agent DID hire me to write proposals and edit books. It opened a new world.

I met a doctor, an orthopedist, writing about transferred pain. Next, a dress designer who was incarcerated in a maximum security jail in Africa. His cell-mates, murderers, were won over with his cooking skills while the guards preened in newly designed uniforms. Then a book for a Chinese woman who claimed she had an affair with Claire Chennault. The lady's husband, an electrician, was sent all over China while Chennault pursued the ground work near his wife. More assignments. Each with a life of its own.

For years I have been a GHOST WRITER, but a GHOST doesn't tell.

This year I began my school memoirs. What fun to have a second career, one that is creative and personally satisfying. And what a job to be able to share it with other writers.

Writers, artists, musicians – we are all in the same business – a business of the heart!

## MEET NEW MEMBER ,MARGANIT LISH



By Geri Jabara

**S**tep right up and meet Marganit Lish, a charming CWC/WV member that you will not soon forget. Always

smiling, ready to offer a helping hand, Marganit was born in the State of Israel and spent her childhood in Israel and South Africa. Married to Merrill Lish, she is the mother of two married daughters and the grandmother of 5 grandchildren.. Her longest teaching assignment is her current role of Professor of Hebrew at Moorpark College This delightful lady has been involved in education for most of her life in the U.S. Her four degrees include an M.A. in Education, a B.A. in Sociology/Psychology, a B.S. in Judaic Education and, she has a Life Teaching Credential/World Languages Department, where she has taught since 1997. Add to that her recognition as the new Chabad Conejo Valley High School founding educator. Yes, you can also call her an entrepreneur. She is the creator of several educational related (Marganit Lish cont'd page 5)

## AND WV SECRETARY SAMANTHA BERLEY



**S**amantha Berley was born and raised in Woodland Hills, California. In elementary school, Samantha discovered her love for writing, only to rediscover her love during high school. Samantha is currently a senior California State University, Northridge and is majoring in English with an emphasis in literature.

Her greatest influence primarily comes from her family and friends, including her Aunt Lillian - a seasoned member of the CWC West Valley and introduced her to the club.

Aside from family, Samantha draws most of her inspiration from JK Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, John Milton, Shakespeare and several literary theorists including Immanuel Kant, Edmund Burke, Plato and Saussure. Her favorite works include Harry Potter, Pride and Prejudice, Canterbury Tales, and A Wrinkle in Time.

Samantha's aspirations are to be a novelist, poet and literary theorist while teaching in academia. In the meantime, Samantha hopes to continue attending meetings at the Movie Home as well as the critique group and learn all that she can on creative writing from fellow CWC members.



## BERMAN EXPOUNDS ON POETRY IN DECEMBER



*He's a poet, and he wants us all to know it!*

At our upcoming December meeting, entertainer and comedian Shelley Berman visits us again. The last time he was here, he regaled us with his treasury of knowledge in the history of comedy. This time around we'll discover another area of his many interests: poetry.

Mr. Berman is a lover of poetry and is an expert in this field. He teaches a seminar in reading/writing poetry every Thursday at the MPTV residence and plans to bring the class along to our meeting as somewhat of an audio-visual-aid to show us how to explicate a poem and how, perhaps more important for us, to create one.

Shelley Berman's reputation as a teacher is, of course, overshadowed by his success in the entertainment world. He speaks deprecatingly of his stints along the way as a soda-shop assistant manager, a cab driver, dance instructor, and assistant manager. But, kidding aside, he became a success on Broadway, he appeared on many major TV variety shows and specials, and he was in many movies. And along the way he won a Grammy for his recording *Inside Shelly Berman*.

Mr. Berman teaches humor writing at USC, and he continues to do film and TV work. He appears in Las Vegas from time to time, and he has written three books, two plays, and many poems. Not bad for a guy in his eighties.

## TOM BARNES BLOG AND WRITERS NOTEBOOK

Enlarged upon by Tom Barnes

Many authors write blogs to promote their books, but there are as many reasons to blog on the Internet as there are themes to write about. Innumerable ways to use a blog. I would like to introduce my blog to the CWC/WV membership.

My blog [www.RocktheTower.com](http://www.RocktheTower.com) covers dozens of subjects from the Algonquin Round Table characters of the 1920s to legendary Tombstone and OK Corral gunfighters of the 1880 era. Another informative subject covers seasonal hurricanes that visit our gulf and Atlantic shores almost every year. I'm adding topics all the time.

I post Rock The Tower every Wednesday and have a couple of features that reoccur weekly. First thing you might note, when visiting my blog, is a slogan at the top of the page such as: "Never confuse movement with action," by Ernest Hemingway. I change that introductory slogan quite often.

Writers Notebook always appears at the bottom of my blog. Writers Notebook is where I need your help. If you have any inspiring or helpful writers quotes or tips (preferred by someone famous) send them to me, and if they are used you'll get written credit for the entry. Here's a good example of what I'm looking for -- an observation made by one of **Broadway's** most prolific comedy writers: Neil Simon.

Neil Simon develops character first, and then plot. But he has said on a number of occasions: "The main force that drives my comedy is conflict."

Check out the blog for more examples, then keep your eyes and ears open. All of us here at CWC/WV can benefit from your observations.

Thanking you in advance.

Tom Barnes

[Tombarnes39@msn.com](mailto:Tombarnes39@msn.com)

CWC FOUNDER JACK LONDON

"You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club."

Barnes blog quote



## MUCH ADO ABOUT SHOPPING

By Ray Malus

Want to ease the pain of Christmas shopping? I can help.



A classic situation: You, I and several others are members of a small group which intends to exchange Christmas gifts (for the sake of high culture, we will assume a six-member bowling team). The members are Sally (that's you), Skip, Babs, Pete, Trish, and me (that's me).

Now. I call you up and say, "Sally, I'd really like to give you something you'll appreciate for Christmas; but I don't know you that well. On the other hand, I don't want you to tell me what to get for you (too much like catalog shopping). Let's agree on a price limit. Then, I'll give you a list of 10 things I'd like; and you give me a list of 10 things you'd like. That way, I can be sure you'll like what I get for you; but you'll still be surprised. You can do the same."

Being a reasonable person, you see the wisdom in this, and agree. We will meet for coffee tomorrow at 10:00, and exchange lists. When we meet, I accept your list; but (Wouldn't you know!) I've left my list home (Silly me!). Well, no matter, I'll drop it by your home later.

So far, so good. Now the genius part: I've made the identical arrangement with Skip, Babs, Pete, and Trish. I now go to meet Skip. I get his list, and give him ... yours (I can hear your moan of appreciation). Naturally enough, during the day Babs gets Skip's list, Pete gets Babs', and Trish gets Pete's, the day culminates with my apologetically handing you Trish's list. And I'm done until Christmas Day. While you all go out and frantically shop, I recline peacefully at home with a diet pop, watching my fifth re-run of "It's A Wonderful Life".

I pass on the gift from Pete to Babs (Isn't this fun?). Bab's gift (of course) delights Skip, and Skip has gotten the PERFECT thing for you (how dumb of me to have left it in my car!). It's the perfect solution. Of course, I don't think anyone has actually tried this yet...

Well, I'm glad I could be of some help to you. Meanwhile, I've got some writing to do... and someone's at the door.

Probably Trish with that doggone list...

(Manganit Lish continued from page 3)

curriculum and is the owner of "Educational Resources," a company specializing in supplementary primary educational aids and books in the primary grades. Her travels have taken her to five world continents and traveling is only one of her many hobbies. She knits, sews, reads and writes – presently writing memoirs of her parents' life history. Although English is Manganit's second language, she recently received first prize for one of our CWC/WV writing contests held this year. Writing opened a facet of her personality that she enjoys so very much. She credits Dave Wetterberg for inspiring her new interest.

She also devotes much time serving as a volunteer at the Motion Picture & Television Fund. This was recently acknowledged when she was interviewed by Joe Sutton, the very popular CWC/WV speaker for the November 2008 meeting. Kudos to you, Manganit! **You are one amazing lady!**

## WRAPPING PRESENTS

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By Lenora Smalley

Wrapping packages for presents or mail.

no matter the practice I always fail to get it straight, to tuck the ends, to choose them so the paper blends with colors of ribbons which are never the right length, string and tape that have no strength. The scissors won't cut, the tape twists, becomes hung up on my hands and wrists. Now where are those scissors?

They were right here.

I don't know how they could disappear.

The wrapping's too short, too narrow, too worn.

The corner's split, now the sides are torn.

Finally, I finished! My heart feels light.

Then the label wrinkles, my pen won't write.

While shopping next Christmas,

I'll pass lighted trees,

Go up to the counter and say,

"Gift wrap, please."



## CANDLES

A Christmas tree,  
moist green branches  
supporting candles  
glittering in my neighbor's window  
and reflected in a wreath of good will.

By Lillian Rodich

Eight Chanukah candles,  
each kindled by the Shammash  
and greeted by children singing,  
relating tales of anguish and triumph  
and survival of my ancestors.



Crystal and champagne,  
candlelight reflected in loving eyes,  
hands held across a table.  
In the glow, a promise made...and kept  
one rain drenched December eve.

One hundred birthday candles lit,  
combined in a blaze of glory.  
Zayda begging the youngest guests  
to help him extinguish each tip of flame,  
celebrating a century of life.

Lonely candles burning brightly  
in remembrance of our deepest losses,  
lighting dark corners of grief....  
continuity in life's circle,  
treasured flames never extinguished.

Symbolic candles, lights of hope  
ignited in classrooms of a ghetto school,  
students' eyes sparkling with discoveries.  
Teachers amidst Asia's turmoil and Mid-eastern strife  
holding fragile tapers up to the black draped night.

## Senteh Cluz and the Good Girl



By Leslie Kaplan

I'm just a little kid, maybe three or four. It's December in Philadelphia, where I live, and it's snowing outside.

"I want to go to bed... I'm tired."

My mommy and daddy look at the clock. Daddy says, "It's only six thirty." Mostly every night they have to keep saying, "It's eight o'clock! Go get ready for bed!" But not tonight.

Mommy puts her lips to my head and says, "I don't think she's sick. She has no fever." So, I put my hands on my hips like I know everything and say, "Don't you know that Senteh Cluz is coming tonight and I must hang up my stocking?"

Now I know we are Jewish, but I think that Senteh Cluz comes to all little kids, especially if they are good. I am good most of the time ...except, when my big brother teases me. Then I get mad and I cry. Mommy and daddy look at each other and smile, like they know something. Then they say,

"So okay, so go to bed already."

So we go upstairs and Mommy gives me one of her long silk stockings with a run in it, and I hang it on the corner of my crib. I still sleep in a crib because we can't get a big girls bed yet. She kisses me goodnight, shuts the light and goes down stairs. Now I'm alone and I like to talk to myself. I do it a lot. So I say, "Senteh Cluz, I never had a doll and doll clothes, and that is what I wish you will bring me. Okay? I'm going to sleep now, so good night."

Early in the morning I open my eyes and look at my stocking. It looks fat and full of lumps and bumps. It's very quiet in my house because everybody is still sleeping. I climb out of my crib and reach for the lumpy stocking. It's full of stuff. I pull out things like candy, crayons, jacks and a ball, a wooden spool with woolen string and stuff like that.

But....no doll.

So I say to myself,

"Did Senteh Cluz forget? Does he think I am not a good girl on account of my brother?"

Mommy and Daddy must have heard me pulling the stuff out of the stocking, because they both came into my room. I was ready to cry. Daddy says,

"What's the matter, bubelleh?" With tears I try to hide, I swallow hard and say,

"Senteh Cluz forgot to bring me my doll."

Daddy looks at me like he feels sorry, and then he looks surprised! He says,

"Did you look under your bed?" I say, "no-oh, but I will."

So I lay down on the floor to peek under my crib and I see a big red suitcase. Daddy helps me pull it out and open it. It opens like a fat book. On one side is a beautiful doll. After I hug and kiss my dolly, I open the drawers on the other side and find lots of clothes, dresses, underwear and a sweater. I wipe away the tear that is rolling down my cheek and say,

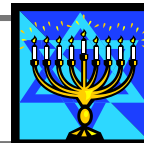
"Oh daddy, on Mommy,...look! Senteh Cluz remembered me!"

Daddy puts his arms around me and says, "It's because...you are a good girl."





## OH, HOW HAPPY YOU MUST BE, WITH A MENORAH AND A CHRISTMAS TREE



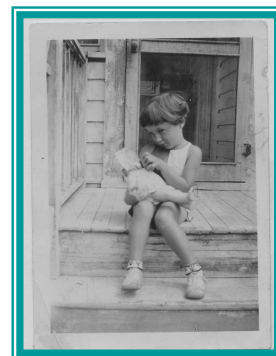
By  
Sylvia Molesko  
from her book, *Memories Revisited* ©

I don't remember a big fuss happening at Hanukkah time when I was a little girl. We played marble games with hazel nuts and walnuts. Sometimes we were given some 'gelt', meaning money. I do remember Mama making potato pancakes. We did not light a menorah, sing songs, play the dreidel game nor get presents. I did, however, know the story about how long ago the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Maccabees. Only a tiny amount of oil, all the oil that remained, burnt in the temple for eight days. Miracle of miracles!

As for Christmas, I know that I wished that Mama hadn't told me that there was no Santa Claus, while all of my little friends believed in him and received Christmas presents. I knew I couldn't tell them. It made me feel sad and alone inside myself, with this secret that I couldn't tell and the sadness that I was 'different' and couldn't participate.

Years later, when my older daughter, Julie, was not quite 2 months old, we celebrated our third Christmas and Hanukkah. Ours was a interfaith marriage. We bought a very small tree, and we decorated it with Julie's rattles, blocks and other little toys and ribbons. It was our "baby" Christmas tree.

As years went by, the girls were toddlers and then pre-schoolers, and we established our own family customs. We celebrated the eight days of Hanukkah with a present for each day, often small items bought at Woolworths 5¢ & 10¢ Store, such as a writing pad, new crayons, oil pastels, scissors, and scotch tape. There was gold foil wrapped 'gelt', maybe some clothing, and one big Hanukah gift for each of us. Then at Christmas we had a tree, sometimes decorated with blue lights and blue hanging ornaments, but more often with customary Christmas trimmings. The religious meaning of Christmas was not part of our celebration of the holiday. The other kids in the neighborhood thought that Julie and Tracy were so lucky to get eight Hanukkah presents, and the Christmas celebrations as well. Our girls thought so too.



We always spent Christmas Day with my husband's family in the traditional way, giving and receiving gifts, and having Christmas brunch or dinner together. Some dishes became family favorites and are served still, such as curried fruit and stuffed mushrooms. Usually there were enough leftovers to share with company for the next few days.

In recent years, since the girls got married, had their families, and moved out of state, my husband and I spend Christmas day with our extended family, in the long-established eating and gift giving way, but give each other Hanukkah gifts. Currently the girls spend the holidays with their own family and friends, creating their own significant traditions, but that's another story...





*Editor's note: Our President Dave Wetterberg is a modest man, who often demurs a byline or any special publication favors. In this Celebrations issue, Dave tells us a holiday story. A special child in your life might enjoy this tale of Golly Gotcha and the Fireflies. Enjoy.*

Papa and me liked to get the Christmas lights up on his house three or four weeks ahead of time. He always waited for the weekend for me to come over and help him. I stayed on the ground and decorated the lower windows and the bushes while he did the peak up on the roof. When I got a little older, I got to go half-way up the ladder and hand the lights up to him.

One year when Papa was ready to go up the ladder, he beckoned me over with his finger and said, almost whispering, "Want to come up on the roof with me?" He said it like he didn't want Grandma to hear what was going on, even though she was inside in the kitchen.

"Do you mean it, Papa?" I said.

"Sure. Come here."

I climbed up three rungs; then he climbed up behind me and put his hands under my armpits and reached in to the sides of the ladder and the two of us climbed up like one person. At the top rung, he held one arm tight and said, "Now lean into the roof when you step on to it."

Once on the roof, he told me to sit down and stay put, that I wasn't old enough yet to walk around with him up there. The shingles were a little scratchy, but I stayed put like he wanted me to.

I watched Papa until it got dark. I couldn't see him too good down at the far end, so I looked out at the trees and the houses. The houses had snowmen and reindeer and Santas in their front yards, and one of the houses played music, though I couldn't tell which one. And as far as I could see in the distance, all the houses had Christmas lights...blue and green and orange and red. Some of them flashed on and off, but most of them didn't, and they just stared quietly ahead.



When Papa had the lights all strung out on the peak of the roof the way he wanted them, he came over and stood beside me where I was sitting.

"And to think we owe all this to some fireflies," he said.

I looked up at him. "What, Papa?"

"Fireflies," he said. "If it hadn't been for the fireflies, nobody would ever have thought of putting lights all over their houses like this at Christmas."

"What are you talking about, Papa?"

"It's true. This fuss about putting up Christmas lights. It was fireflies caused it. About a hundred, two hundred years ago, maybe a thousand."

"What?"

He sat down beside me, and we looked out at all the houses lit up in color against the darkness.

"Back then at Christmas," he said, "they didn't need lights on the houses because there weren't as many kids for Santa Claus to keep track of as there is today. Him and the reindeers knew pretty much where to go every year. But lately Santa's memory wasn't as good as it used to be, so one year he asked all the kids to get a fire going in the back yard before they went to bed Christmas Eve in order that he could be able to see their houses from up in the sky.

"Come on, Papa."

"What do you mean, 'Come on'?"

"Really?"

"Yes, really. Now listen. One year there was a little kid who loved fireflies. He was so poor..."

"What was his name?"

"His name? Oh...his name was Golly."

"Golly?"

(continued on page 9)



"Yes, Golly... like in 'by Golly.' They had different names then."

"What was his last name?"

"What difference does it make?"

"Come on, Papa. You don't know his last name, do you?"

"Yes, I do. See if I remember....His last name was....it was 'Gotcha...Golly Gotcha.'"

"That's sure a funny name."

"Yeah? Well, if you want to talk about funny names, how about your last name? Say, do you want to hear about these fireflies or don't you?"

Papa elbowed me. And I elbowed him back.

"Yes."

"Then pipe down and listen."

"Fireflies have a lot of arms," he said, "and right beside one of them arms, there's this tiny electric switch. All spring and summer the fireflies fly around flipping the light on and off, on and off."

"Why do they do that?"

"So things will be pretty. They like it when everything's pretty in spring and summer."

"How about the winter? Don't they like it to be pretty in the winter?"

"Well, yes, of course. They would like to. But they have to sleep all winter, like bears do...to recharge their batteries. Every night all spring and summer puts quite a drain on them, especially these particular fireflies I'm trying to tell you about...that is, if you'll quiet down for a minute."

"Okay. Go ahead, Papa."

"Gee, thanks," he said. "Well, this kid named Golly loved fireflies. He'd sit on the porch for hours and watch them floating around the garden, bouncing here and there, flashing on and off. He'd chase them and catch them. He didn't ever hurt them, so they got so they didn't mind too much him catching them. He'd catch one and make a cup with his two hands and hold them there, like this, and stick his eye up to it like this and whisper things to them, how pretty they were, things like that. He just loved them little fireflies! Then the fireflies got to love Golly too."

"Sometimes they played games together. He'd stand very, very still, like a statue, and let them swirl around and light him all up. Then all of a sudden he'd run, and zip! they'd all take off and all chase after after him in a long line, lit up like they were a lightning bolt, only three feet off the ground."

Another game they played was when Golly'd hide, and the fireflies'd all flash around the back yard in every which direction, pretending not to know where he was. They really knew, of course, but this was part of the game. Fireflies are not dumb. Then when it was time, somebody'd find him and they'd all of 'em in the yard zap over and swirl around him like they were having great fun.

"One time Golly's cat Chipper knocked a firefly down with her paw and tried to eat it. Golly raced down the lawn and pried the cat's mouth open and got the firefly out right before Chipper crunched down on it. And don't think them fireflies didn't appreciate that!"

"Papa?"

"What?"

"What does this have to do with the Christmas lights?"

"I'm getting to that, Mister, if you'll sit still and listen. Now be quiet!"

I told him okay, and he went on, looking out above the houses into the dark.

"One Christmas things got very hard for Golly's parents. His mother scrubbed people's front steps, you see, and she wore her back out and couldn't work anymore. And Golly's father was an apple-rubber. Whenever new apples were delivered to the grocery stores he came in and he rubbed them with a cloth so they'd look good when the grocers put them out in front of their stores."

"But this was a bad year for apples. There'd been a drought, and the grocers didn't get any apples to rub. So neither one of Golly's parents could work. And the day before Christmas, they bought this tiny bit of soup and bread, and it took every dime they had and they had no money left over to buy wood to signal Santa Claus."

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"Why didn't they chop some then, Papa?"

"There wasn't any left. Everybody else in town got it."

"What about if it was raining? All the fires would go out."

"Then he'd go another night. Are you going to listen to this story?" he said. "Or are you going to ask stupid questions all night?"

"Okay, okay. Go on."

"Well, when Santa flew over Golly's house, he didn't see any fire, so he didn't land. He stopped at all the other kids whose houses had fires. Then he was just about to head out of town, when Golly ran out in front of his house and yelled and cried up at the sky at Santa. Well, one of the fireflies heard Golly crying, and ...."

"Hey, Papa?"

"What?"

"You said all the fireflies were asleep for the winter."

"That's right."

"Then how could the firefly notice Golly was crying if he was asleep for the winter?"

"Because Golly was really making a racket, you know. This firefly woke up a little to fluff his pillow ...not really a pillow, you know, but ... and turn over on his stomach. All right? Can I go on with the story now?"

"Okay. Go ahead."

"You're sure now?"

"Yes."

"Gee, thanks...Well, this firefly woke up the firefly-chief, and the two of them flew over to Golly's yard and asked what was what."

"Golly told them ' We don't have money for the fire this year and Santa Claus couldn't see me and he didn't leave me any toys.'

"The firefly-chief looked in the sky and saw Santa leaving, and, like a shot, he and the other guy flew off and woke up all the fireflies in their village. Then about a million fireflies... like I told you, they all loved Golly...raced over to Golly's house and spread themselves all over his house and blinked themselves on and off, on and off, for all they were worth. They weren't fully charged yet, you know, and they were kind of groggy, because they hadn't slept that much yet. But the firefly-chief yelled at them and they gave it all they had."

"Santa was heading out of town, but luckily, the fireflies had Golly's house lit up just enough for Santa to notice it when he glanced over his shoulder for one last look back. He saw the dim light from the fireflies and thought some kid's fire was going out and maybe he'd missed his house. So he swung the reindeers around and came back. Golly hid in the bushes while Santa landed on the roof and went down the chimney with a bag full of toys."

"Everybody in town heard what the fireflies did at Golly's house, and the next Christmas, they tried to get Golly to ask the fireflies to light up their houses too."

"Nah! Why should we?" the fireflies said when he asked them. "Those guys could have given Golly some of their wood for his fire and they didn't. Let them light up their own houses."

"Fireflies can talk, Papa?"

"Well, not usually. Just when they have to, like emergencies. But this time they thought it was important to teach the town a lesson."

"I don't blame the fireflies for not wanting to help them," I said.

"Me neither," Papa said, and went on. "So the next Christmas everybody did the next best thing. They put candles on a

(continued on page 11)



He  
out

string to go on the houses so Santa wouldn't miss them. That was kind of dangerous. But then they got electricity,. Well, that's why now at Christmas we string lights all over the house."



Then Papa and me went down for supper. Papa got on the ladder first; then he waited for me to get inside his arms like when we went up before. Then we went down very, very carefully.

When we got down on the ground, I said, "You made that story up, didn't you, Papa?"

Papa broke out in a big smile. "Oh, you think so, do you? Well, how much do you wanna bet?" he said.

## HOMEcoming PRESENTS



By Kathy Highcove

Randy circled the exercise equipment and rechecked the newspaper clipping: "Twelve weights, bench, punching bag - make an offer. Find the perfect gift. " He braked his chair and reached down to pick up a ten pound barbell.

Glad there's no snow in San Diego and I can still find a garage sale in December. Hope I can bargain a good price .

He flinched slightly as he curled the weight, arm pumping next to the chair's right wheel. He held it steady at shoulder's height and ... it happened again. His sweaty hands now gripped the wheel of a Hummie. He looked to his left and saw the flash of a rocket fired from the bushes. Parker and Rein-gold raised their rifles. He ducked... bright concussion...truck on fire...legs numb...Someone screamed his name....A hand gripped his shoulder and... Randy blinked and stared at some-one's ...leaf-blower. The weight still hovered his shoulder, and his arm ached from the strain.

"Easy Marine, no enemies in sight," said the tall older man in front of the wheel chair.

A light perspiration moistened Randy's forehead.

"Sorry. Just got out of rehab."

"What do you need? Weights? Barbells?"

"Yeah. I have to get back in shape. My Sarge made me promise to join the chair basketball team at the base. He's a crazy guy. Still wants to give me orders!"

"Yup, I know. 'Nam, 1967. Six months in the jungle. I'm an old Marine, bro: Captain Chuck Burrell. Semper fi, y'know? Can't forget those Halls of Montezuma," he said with a chuckle.

"Guess Sarge doesn't want me to forget I'm a Marine, first and always. By the way, my name's Randy Johnson."

The men shook hands.

"So...how much for your stuff? I need them all - the bench, weights and punching bag."

"For another Marine, twenty-five bucks."

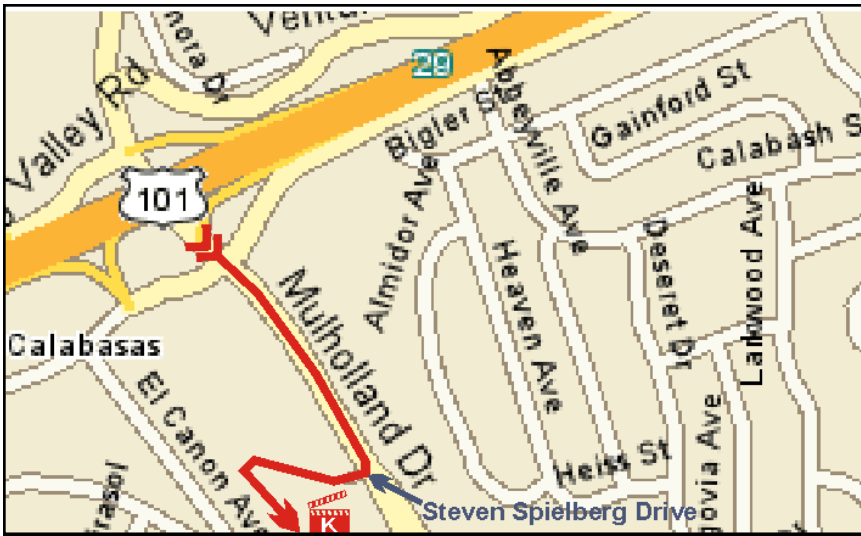
"Oh... man. Way too cheap."

"Don't argue with a Leatherneck Captain. You know better. And ...one more thing."

"What's that, Sir?"

"Have a great holiday. Welcome home, Marine. And now let's load those weights in your car."





From the 101 Freeway exit on Mulholland Drive South. Drive south to 23388 Mulholland Drive. Turn right onto the Steven Spielberg Drive. Then turn left and follow the route to the large parking lot on the left for Villa Katzenberg. If you are stopped by the MPTF Security, tell the official that you are attending a CWC meeting.

### MEETINGS

The California Writers Club meets the first Saturday of the month at the Motion Picture and Television Fund complex:

Villa Katzenberg, 23388 Mulholland, Woodland Hills, CA 91364-2733.

### NEXT MEETING

Saturday, December 6th, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.

### MAILING ADDRESS

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### **Submission Guidelines**

- 1. Submit a work two weeks in advance of publication.**
- 2. Keep prose short, between 200 and 300 words. Contact editor if work is longer.**
- 3. Poems also should be short, approximately three to four stanzas.**
- 4. The editor reserves the right to accept or reject any work submitted. Space might be limited and the omission based on editing difficulties.**
- 5. Works not used may be stored and used in a future issue of In-Focus.**