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FINDING OURSELVES THROUGH MEMOIR with Thomas Larson

The memoir is rapidly becoming the literary form of our time. Hundreds of thousands of people, from teenagers to octogenarians, are seeking out personal narrative. At our next meeting, Thomas Larson, author of "The Memoir and the Memoirist," examines the memoir's popularity and how we can use it to explore the age-old questions: Who am I? Why am I? What is the purpose of my life?

Larson explains that a memoir focuses on the meaning and intensity of a phase in the author's life or a singular relationship—unresolved feelings for a parent, a child, a sibling, a friend; the author's coming to terms with a loss, an illness, a death; remembering a significant phase like childhood or adolescence or a period in which the writer was challenged or changed. Come to our next meeting and bring your past into the present.

Larson's book, "The Memoir and the Memoirist: Reading and Writing Personal Narrative," is the first of its kind to explore the craft and purpose of contemporary memoir writing.



Larson also writes personal essays, memoir, nonfiction, and literary criticism. Since 1999, he has been a contributing writer for the weekly San Diego Reader where he specializes in investigative journalism, narrative nonfiction, and profiles.

Larson's memoir writing includes "Freshman Comp, 1967," from the Anchor Essay Annual: The Best of 1997, edited by Phillip Lopate, Doubleday. This piece is taught every semester in the writing program at the University of Missouri. ♦♦

-- Leila Morris

THE SPIRITUAL STORY OF WOMEN with Dr. Jayne Demente

Dr. Jayne Demente is coming to our March meeting in honor of Women's History Month

Demente, a native Californian and Renaissance woman is well travelled and cross-trained in several professional fields.

The daughter of a Christian minister, she is passionate about religion in society and culture, especially the examination of female imagery in the world's diverse religious traditions.



She is excited to be a contributing part of the reclaiming of women's spiritual story. Her writing credits in this arena are all encompassing:

- ❖ **A textbook** – Feminine Reformation, a goddess meta narrative
- ❖ **An Academic paper** – Trinity of the Hebrew Goddess



- ❖ **A Rock Opera** – Matreya, The return of the Dark Goddess
- ❖ **Her Thesis** – Gender and Cultural Balanced Guidelines for Ethics Curriculum in Middle School (based upon the US Constitution) and currently writing this curriculum for the GEMS program in Los Angeles.

Dr. Demente believes that understanding the subjugated stories of women is a vital component of the human story that has been repressed and subjugated as heretical by patriarchal religions throughout history and has set up the Women's Heritage Project in part, to preserve that heritage.

"It is necessary", she says, "to tell these stories alongside the sister Women's History and Studies programs.

Women's spirituality is an inclusive movement that calls for a reclaiming of the female story within our current religions and traditions without abandoning what traditions already exist." ♦♦

-- Pauline Williams

BE KIND - REWIND

By Pauline Williams

Yes, I know; we didn't get to recap the December event before deadline. So here are the juicy details.

Carolyn Howard Johnson (The Frugal Book Editor) was very informative and open to communicating on a one-to-one basis.



She had so many ways to promote one's work that were not only affordable and accessible, but also so easy to do without an agent or publicist!

Roger Rodd's performance piece offered a glimpse into a writer's vision from written form. Per Larry Fazio, "Roger Rodd "performed the first act of his one-man show on football.

His polished and well delivered is an example of someone who wrote a piece and then brought it to the performance level. And as Roman aptly put it, "He allowed us to see what happens when a writer's vision is self-directed." Of course, the holiday decorations brought a festive tone to the event.

On January 10th, we met Michelle Wallerstein and her direct approach to

advising us on writing screenplays (and novels) "that will sell" and how to work with our literary agent in a manner that makes us the dream client. No sugary fluff here!

She gave us a great warning on being aware of what we sign when we get a contract so that the writer doesn't lose out.



And then Jimi Yamagishi introduced us to expanding our marketing abilities with song lyrics. He provided names of books and online links to quality information on lyric writing and music sales and marketing. Several members and visitors alike seemed eager to continue exploring this new world.

As always, writers were offered wonderful opportunities to network and encourage each other. Thanks to our wonderful President, Scott Sonders, for believing in new ideas and presenting us with great workshops and access to knowledgeable and talented people at the top of their craft. ♦♦

GOODBYE GEORGE OUR FRIEND AND FELLOW WRITER

**The following memorial was written
by Christy M. Ball (family friend)**



George Hirai was born in Santa Maria, Calif. on February 22, 1940 to Seigo and Shiko Hirai. He is survived by his siblings, May Hirai and Fred Hirai, his three nieces, one nephew, four grandnephews and one grandniece. George moved to Idaho during World War II with his family between 1942 and 1947. Subsequently, he settled in Los Angeles, attended Belmont High School and graduated in 1958 as Senior Class President.

He then went on to graduate from Cal State University Los Angeles in 1967 with a BA in Psychology. He also served in the United States Army from 1963 to 1965. As his professional career stands, he worked for Lockheed Martin Corp. from 1967 to 1998, working at its various sites, including two tours in Saudi Arabia (1975-1976 and 1979-1982). He retired from Lockheed/Sunnyvale in 1998 after 30 years

as an Employee Relations Specialist. Finally, he returned home to Los Angeles in 2003. There are many adjectives that come to the minds that knew George. A few of those words might even be foreign, as he traveled to places far beyond his dreams, but close to his heart and soul. He was simply a fun person with a marvelous sense of humor. These attributes made him a joy to be around and the memorable conversations plentiful.

To those who were fortunate enough to have George in their lives, it is almost certain that they cracked a smile or worse... a couple of ribs! Fred and his Vegas posse even recall him stopping a Rolls Royce with a very dapperly dressed couple on the way to Vegas, asking the ever popular question of that era..."Excuse me, do you have any Grey Poupon?" It was said that the laughter was heard all the way to the strip that day. And who could forget "Hirai Hilton"? If you were so privileged to stay at his home, he would place a protective wrapper over the toilet seat so you knew it was clean and mints on your pillows for turndown service. Classic George.

As a brother to Fred, he was caring. Even though George was almost two years younger, it was as if he was the older brother...always worrying and watching out for him. Whatever it may have been, life's general concerns and daily dealings, George was serious when it came to protecting Fred. It was sweet and thoughtful.

These brothers frequented Vegas and Chumash Casino together and Fred said that George always wanted to be a winner at cards, whether it be in poker or blackjack...needless to say, he was a winner in so many ways, regardless of the

chips stacked in front of him. May remembers a brother that was kind and generous.

She stated that one of his best qualities was that he never said a bad thing about anyone, never chimed in on the gossip or trash talk. She not only considered him a brother, but a great friend. He was also a great uncle, funny, upbeat and entertaining and always the life of the party. His niece once said that

George never had kids of his own, granted he had all of us, including his best friend's sons to whom he was like an uncle. Nieces and nephews that he loved dearly, but could send back home to their own parents...lol...it was an ideal situation for him.

Fred and his late wife Nancy used to take all the "kids" (sometimes upwards of 11 at once) to visit George up north and to his condo in Upland. Needless to say, the kids were excited to visit Uncle George and wholly enjoyed the times spent together.

Even after he retired from Lockheed, George was never shy about staying active. He took classes in writing, such as 'How to Write Fiction' and 'How to Write a Personal Memoir', a stand-up comedy class, poetry and 'How to be a Private Detective' to name a few.

He was always interested in learning something new. This is not a surprise, as he was a very bright individual. Just ask his best friend Andy about all the Jeopardy answers he surprisingly got right!

Add this all up with a cheerful personality and his love for old films and obscure B movies...and you had a lovable, living life

to the fullest, sincerely happy man that could not live without the ensemble cast of the Police Academy flicks and spam musubi!

What a great friend he must have been with whom to keep company. His infectious laugh most likely played a role in keeping things light and allowed the two of them to remain kids at heart for the last 50 years.

George unquestionably loved karaoke. He was suitably named the "Sansei of Soul" in selected circles because of his alternate, karaoke persona; a short, Japanese version of James Brown.

This was a perfect outlet, as he loved the limelight and being the center of attention. He recently reminisced of all the second requests that he received from on goers in the crowd. He laughed and we laughed.

George lived such an eventful life, albeit too short. It was comforting to know that towards the end, he was able to stroll down memory lane happily...and we all hope, fulfilled.

Thank you George for your quirky character, your quick wit, your sincere smile and for all the smiles you gave as unintentional gifts in the everyday lives of your family and friends.

As your front and back license plates indicated for years...You were always a "Hirai am" type of guy and we are all sad to see you "Hirai go". ♦♦

March Meeting

CWC-SFV:

Serving Greater Los Angeles Writers

Saturday the 14th
1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Encino Community Center
4935 Balboa Blvd.
Encino, CA 91316

Directions:
Just north of Ventura Blvd.
Plenty of free parking.

☀ **Revel in Your** ☀
“15-Minutes of Fame”

☀ **OPEN MIC** ☀

Barnes & Noble
16461 Ventura Blvd. – Encino

All genres of reading welcome

March 20th 2009

Sign-ups at 6:45 p.m.
cwcsfv@gmail.com

CWC-SFV

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