

WEST VALLEY

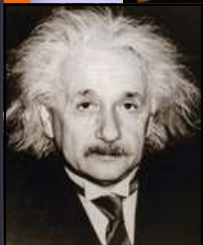
october theme

mysteries



"The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity."

Albert Einstein
(1879 - 1955)



IN FOCUS

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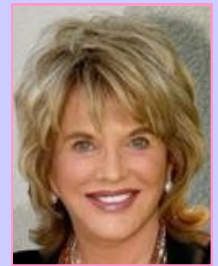
Kelly Lange Reports on Her Writing Career

In 2001 Kelly Lange bid adieu to Tom Snyder and her pals at NBC and retired. But don't imagine that Ms. Lange headed for a Leisure World scenario, reminiscing on her memories of the news desk years while sipping a cup of warm cocoa. Not the ambitious and canny Lange who deftly delivered the news on radio and television in a competitive media profession for four decades. She had other plans. She had places to go and people to meet.

Lange has been busy, to say the least. There is not space in this column to list all her activities in her post-news career days. For starters, Lange took up a new career: author of mystery novels featuring her alter ego Maxi Poole, newsroom gal.

Lange emphasizes the importance of staying involved with life. "I work hard to be a professional in my new writing career."

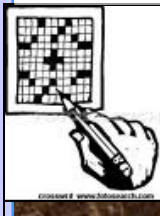
Kelly Lange comes to our October meeting as an experienced author of several published books.



Kelly Lange
Mystery Writer

Lange's topic will be "Reinventing Ourselves" as published writers.

The October meeting will be held in the Saban Center, directly across Steven Spielberg Drive from the Katzenberg room. Look for signs.



It's like an addiction.

Every morning I settle down with the daily paper, scan a few head-

lines and then quickly find the crossword puzzle in the Calendar section. Aha! There's the familiar black and white grid, next to the comics and the bridge game, the chess game and the Sudoku puzzle. Gripping my favorite pen - no careful pencil and eraser for me - I start with the top line, one across. Got it. Now one down, getting it. I'll come back to that one. Soon the white boxes begin to fill with my answers, like a photo slowly filling with pixels. When the puzzle is finished I feel energized, ready for more.

I've cleared the first hurdle of the day. I'm ready to read articles and editorials and believe that solutions to the world's ills might be possible.

On Sundays I attack the more challenging NYT Sunday supplement puzzle, which may take two or more cups of coffee to fuel the nerdy wordy synapses. But I'm not alone in this morning quest: my puzzle addiction is shared by countless millions around the globe. In every country, every language, crossword puzzles are a common form of mental recreation.

Word puzzles are the ancestors of board games, television quiz shows, and several types of electronic games. Some things don't change at a very basic level in a literate society. The first

word puzzles were found by archeologists in the Roman ruins of ancient Pompeii. "Word square" was the term for scrambling words into a word picture game for children. The first English form of "word-cross" was composed by Liverpublian Arthur Wynne and published in *The Sunday New York World* on December 21, 1913. [1] The puzzle quickly gained popularity among the newspaper's readers and became quite the craze in the Twenties. In fact, the fad alarmed clergy men and social conservatives, just as tweets and video games send up the same alarm today.

The list of crossword variations is enough to make one's eyes cross: diagramless crosswords, fill-in crossword, crossnumbers, acrostics, and

(Continued on page 4)



Casey Wilson Shares His Insider's Interview Techniques

State President Casey Wilson took a break from the helm of our CWC vessel to impart his expertise on interview preparations and methods. Interviews are often requested by popular publications. Many freelancers can sell an article that features an interview with an interesting personality or an expert with new information on a newsworthy topic.

How to find an interesting interview? Wilson reads local, state and national news sources, always looking for a special item. Sometimes a story on the Internet has a few cards tucked up a virtual sleeve. A writer, Wilson emphasized, has to read between the lines and probe for a hidden story which might lead to an interview.

Once the interview is secured, the writer needs to get organized. Never stumble into someone's day and busy work hours without an outlined plan, counseled Wilson. Determine first if the inter-

view will be in person, by telephone, email or snail mail. Casey's favorite form is the face-to-face interview. Live interaction can lead to insights not possible in more indirect interview methods. Like a canny card player, Wilson watches reactions to his questions by noting facial expressions, voice levels and body movements. "I keep a poker face, and if I see a certain reaction, I continue to press for details." It's much harder to get the real nitty gritty, Casey confided, when the subject is buffered by distance on the phone or by a printed sheet of questions.

Wilson interviews with an organized plan. His outline for aspiring interviewers: Research beforehand, and have a grasp of the subject and the initial list of questions before starting the interview. Be prompt for the appointment, go efficiently through the questions, tape record the whole interview, and don't depend on notes. If there is time, probe around the edges of the

story, and look for additional information for a future story. Stay alert and focused.

Always end the interview with five minutes to spare. Why? Wilson stated that an early departure will insure the interviewer will not run over the allotted time, and will gain favor for a second interview, if needed for additional questions.

Wilson deftly answered several questions after his talk. The informative speech on this useful writing technique gave our coming year of meetings a great start. We all thank our September speaker, State President Casey Wilson, for a very informative speech.



"I keep my poker face and if I see a certain reaction, I continue to press for details."



Casey Wilson



L/homme de les
bons mots

CWC/WV Treasurer Jay Zuckerman

Truth be told, Board meetings in most organizations tend to become a tad tedious. That's why a quick wit and light hearted Board member is a plus for group cohesion and discussion. Jay Zuckerman is a versatile board member: he fills the bill, and pays the bills also, yuk, yuk. He has the instincts of a stand-up comic—watch out, Shelley Berman—keeps a very straight face to catch us off guard and jolt the Board members into a bit of a laugh. And that's a quality as valuable to us as his skill with columns of numbers and reports on the monthly budget.

More information about Jay provided by his spouse, Dr. Rachelle Zuckerman:

Jay Zuckerman received a BS in chemistry from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA and an MBA in economics from the renowned Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA. He has enjoyed a long and successful career in the real estate investment field.

Jay has an interest in diverse cultures, languages and international and domestic politics. He has lived abroad and had the good fortune to travel extensively.

He has been a supporter of and contributor to Israeli and Jewish causes for many years and is now speaking for the ADL on behalf of the struggle against Anti-Semitism

His friends are familiar with a dry sense of humor, quick repartee and a straight face to accompany his repartee.

We are appreciative that the gentleman has taken up a critical position of not only keeping track of our branch funds, but also the responsibility making financial monthly reports to the State CWC.

Merci beaucoup, Monsieur Jay Zuckerman.

Consider

Did you ever see that painting the Mona Lisa? It always reminds me of a reporter listening to a politician.

- [Robert Orben](#)

The opposite of talking isn't listening. The opposite of talking is waiting.

- [Fran Lebowitz](#)

A writer and nothing else: a man alone in a room with the English language, trying to get human feelings right.

- [John K. Hutchens](#)

- Dave Wetterberg



The Semi-Colon

A semi-colon may be used to link two closely related sentences.

She was slightly nervous with him; she was utterly frantic without him.

But hardly any professional writers use the semi-colon this way any more. They just end the first sentence with a period and begin another.

She was slightly nervous with him. She was utterly frantic without him

If the items in a series of word groups contain commas, a semicolon is used to separate the items. In the following sentence, the semi-colon makes it clear that Ivana took three people to lunch, not six.

Ivana took Mrs. Reed, her best friend; Marco, her makeup consultant; and Jose, her hairdresser to lunch at the Brown Derby.

When there are additional commas in a compound sentence, a semi-colon, not a comma, precedes the conjunction.

Much to Orville's surprise, Sam, the Anderson's watchdog, bit him; and, because of it, Orville never complained about the dog's barking again.

The Colon

A colon must always have a complete sentence to the left of it. Information missing from this sentence comes after it.

Some of the evidence was not in his briefcase: a camera, a map, and a pistol.

The example above has a list of three items.

But a colon may be used before just one one item as well as a list of items.

The most common element in all Mother's recipes was missing: garlic.

Dashes

If you prefer items to come at the beginning of a sentence, you might use dashes.

His notebook—this was what he needed most.

Peace, tranquility, his mother—he valued these more than anything.

If you want the items within the sentence, you can of course use commas.

The most important items, a camera, a map, and a pistol, were missing.

Or, for a more dramatic effect, you might use dashes.

The most important items—a camera, a map, and a pistol—were missing!



Opportunity Knocks

- Lenora Smalley

October reminds many of mystery writing. Conse-

quently, I thought about listing some accepted tips for mystery writing, but ran across an article in the current *The Writer* magazine titled "What Makes Me Stop Reading a Mystery."

Five authors, including an editor and an agent, listed a few ways one might judge a good mystery. They all agreed that something dramatic must happen in the first chapter. Vivid descriptions of characters and setting doesn't make for a must-read-right-now mystery. If readers aren't hooked by the end of the first page, forget it. Additionally, the plot should be believable unless the book is a gothic fantasy.

Starting off with a crowd scene and a long list of characters is also a no-no. Backstory in the first pages slows down the movement and kills interest. Most readers look for a likeable protagonist. A despicable main character with no redeeming qualities makes most of mystery fans stop reading. Some said they didn't want to get into the mind of a killer, especially a serial killer. If the action has too much violence and gore many readers will close the book. *The Writer* editor also pointed out that she's turned off when the author gets facts wrong. All these bits of helpful advice can relate to all genres - not specifically to mystery writing.

If you try your hand at a mystery story, submit to this market from *The Writer*:

The Strand Magazine
Birmingham, MI 48012

strandmag.com

www.strandmag.com

Description: Mystery stories, detective stories, pieces are modeled after the writing styles of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Daphne du Maurier, and Robert Louis Stevenson.

Frequency: Quarterly

Fiction: Stories of 2,000-6,000 words; \$25-\$150. Occasionally publishes short stories of 1,000 words or a short novella.

Queries: Not necessary

E-queries: No

Persistence Paid Off

After completing my Young Adult novel *DREAM PROM* in 2007, receiving critiques at various SCBWI meetings, and rejections from 16 publishers/agents, I now have a publisher interested in my work. Publish America, based in Maryland and founded in 1999, has accepted *DREAM PROM* for publication. It will be available in books stores in 4 to 5 months. *DREAM PROM* is about two lonely teens. Feeling rejected by their peers, Larisa and Izzy find their love of music strengthens their friendship. When surgery has healed Izzy's clubfoot and Larisa has learned to turn rejection into acceptance, they dance their cares away to the music of Benny Goodman at their senior prom.

- Gloria Kosltchek

The Pumpkin Patch

- Lillian Rodich



Chill shakes us and mixes with laughter.
Courtne, Alexis, and I crunch through dried grass
and open our mouths to the wind.

Pumpkins roll in the sawdust,
their orange faces grooved and scarred
and topped by jaunty green caps.

"I want that little baby one,
just as big as my hand," Courtne chants.
Then, "I want THAT one!"
And I see a candy-smeared face
peeking around a sixty pound giant.
"I want THAT one!"

Bells ring ... tinkling silver bells
and we look over toward mushrooms of dust
where Indians pound out their rhythm
on beaded drums
as they begin to dance.

Their chant beckons us to join them and we do.
Alexis, Courtne, and I skip into the circle.
Courtne's face is painted
and a bright feather quivers in her hair
while we stamp, walk, walk, hop, and turn in line.

We turn toward the hot apple cider.
toward stacks of corn stalks
and toward a sea of pumpkins
alive and glowing in the dusk.



The Man in the Moon

**He used to frighten me in the nights of childhood,
The wide adult face, enormous, stern, aloft,
I could not imagine such loneliness, such coldness.**

**But tonight as I drive home over these hilly roads
I see him sinking behind stands of winter trees
And rising again to show his familiar face.**

**And when he comes in full view over open fields
He looks like a young man who has fallen in love
With the dark earth.**

**A pale bachelor, well-groomed and full of melancholy,
His round mouth open
As if he had just broken into song.**

Poem by Billy Collins, America's poet laureate 2001- 2003



**Welcome back, friend.
How was your summer?**



September 2009

(Continued from page 1)

many other derivations, too numerous to describe or list in this short column. Each country has its own forms, depending on the language's grammatical rules, colloquialisms, in-jokes, techie terms, punctuation and accent marks. There are four major types of grids for the letter mazes: American, British, Japanese and Swedish styles. The great network of word games spans cultures and has moved into the great world of the Internet. Word puzzles are found wherever people have learned to write an alphabet and read words on some form of a page or collection of pages.

Why do so many people need their daily puzzle event? I wondered and asked fellow CWC member and Scribe Editor Ray Malus, who has occasionally mentioned his obsession with crossword puzzles. "Why the daily puzzle? What's your reward?" Malus responded, "Actually, I do four a day (three

from the News — except Sunday when the News only has 2, one from the Times). The main reason is that I love the word-play (as opposed to Sudoku, which is only a puzzle.) There are 4 main elements: The Theme, The Grid (layout), The Words, and The Clues. All usually exhibit a wonderfully sly cleverness. I just love the 'Aha Moments'."

Wow, that's a serious habit! But I completely understand the "Aha! Moment." When the grid is completely filled out, everything neatly in its place, and all clues are solved, and the enigma conquered once again, I feel... triumphant! The satisfaction of besting an invisible foe is a fine way to start the day.

A crossword is cheap, convenient and so far - bloodless. A win/win situation all the ways around the square. Looks like the "fad" is alive and well and as addictive in 2009 as it was in 1913. Back to number 1 down. I think I've got it now. Aha!



Some things never change. He glowered at the dead body on the kitchen table. A body is a body is a body, he said to himself and he'd seen them all : fat ones, skinny ones and naked ones like the one before him. You can't be in the business as long as he had without seeing them all, without getting used to it. Yet it was gruesome enough, when you thought of it, cut off at the neck like that. Heaven knows where the head went.

Chewing his frayed toothpick, he turned around the room on fat, flat feet. Someone brought it, he thought. It sure as hell didn't just fly in the window. Someone placed it on that table. But who and why? No blood on the polished wooden floor. Likely long dead before being brought here. And no footprints either, though the rains last night soaked the grounds. Whoever had put it there was neat. He opened a kitchen drawer. Plenty of knives he noted. And sharp.

A star shaped chandelier hung from the ceiling in the next room, each of its eight arms ending in a cluster of elongated light bulbs, the kind that flickered like candlelight when turned on. Beneath it a long cherrywood table glowed blood red in the light from the living room windows. But it was the portrait on the wall that struck him. She emerged from a yellow background, long auburn hair framing an oval face; laughing gray eyes; cheeks touched with rose; full, red lips parted in a shy smile. An adorable face -- young, happy. He

looked at it for a moment. She doesn't look like that now, he thought, his face grim.

The dining room opened onto a living area. Tall French windows opened onto the garden. On one side, a graceful staircase curved up to split into balconies rimming the upper floor. On the other, a massive stone fireplace cut into the wall. An arc of white couches surrounded it.

He heard rustling above him and darted back into the darkened dining room. She descended the staircase slowly in her black dress, an ageing ingénue. Plump now, arms heavy, grey spotting her auburn hair, she considered her red nails.

He stepped from the shadows and she turned, eyes still fixed on her nails.

"There is a body in the kitchen," he said. "Would you happen to know who put it there and why?"

"The butler did it," she answered, then added, "We are having six for dinner, Gaston. I would like you to barbecue that turkey."

"Again, madam?" he asked. She turned sharp grey eyes on him. Her full, red lips flattened into a sharp line. "Yes, again. Barbecued!" she said firmly.

He turned toward the kitchen muttering to himself. A Cordon-bleu chef and she wants barbecue again, and again, and again. Some things never change.

- Art Yuwiler



The Search For One To Adore

-Edward Louis Braun

Claps of thunder, then a heavy rain,
Winds pounding branches at my windowpane,
This foul winter evening, dank and dreary,
Found me deep in thought and weak and weary.

I was bleary, my eyes strained and tearing,
From the tiresome, sad uncertain peering
Over personal ads I'd seen before,
Wondering which, if any, to explore.
Though some seemed to have a certain allure,
This guessing was distressing and a bore,
This long search for one I could adore,
For favorable finds had failed before.

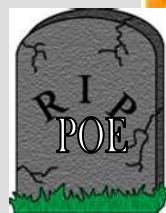
Suddenly there flashed a bolt of lightning,
Electric blue, dreadful and frightening,
Followed by tap, tap, tapping on my head
That formed distinct dots and dashes that read:

The one you seek may not be far away
Happiness each day with D09A,
Love, feeling alive with K15J,
Fun and friendship with 470K.
Though hope again was alive and burning,
My lifelong experiential learning
Questioned whether all this frantic churning
Could bring the one for whom I was yearning,

Whether happy days and great elation
Were a foolish, unreal expectation.
How well I knew the laughing gods of chance
Take delight in their 'disappointment dance'.

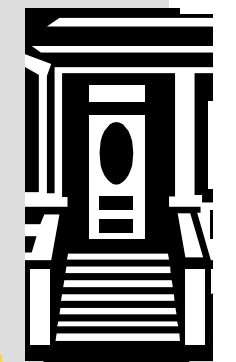
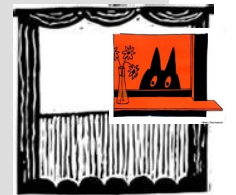
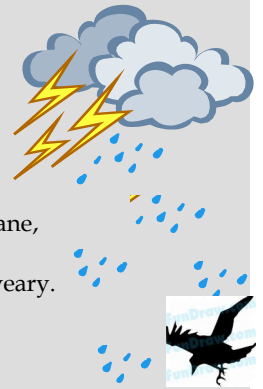
As I nodded and dozed into dreaming,
I heard frenzied fluttering and screaming
By Poe's raven uttering. "Nevermore",
While a bluebird sang, "Love forevermore."
(While a bluebird warbled, "Don't close the door.")

1



Never to suffer would have
been never to have been
blessed.

- Edgar Allan Poe |



She Was A Mystified New Driver On LA Streets

I took

hold of the wheel,
sat up straight,
waited for the instruc-
tor to get into his seat,
clenched my teeth,

took a deep breath and started the ignition. Slowly, I
inched my way onto the crowded boulevard. This was my
first driving lesson. *Well, my first official driving lesson any-
way.*

Mom and I arrived in Los Angeles about six months
earlier and coming from New York where the public trans-
portation is plentiful, I discovered to my dismay, Los An-
geles had no subway, no trolley cars traveling down the
middle of the street and a public bus system that closed
down after eleven o'clock at night. Some buses didn't even
run on Sunday. *I thought the blue laws back East were a nui-
sance, but at least the trains ran on Sunday.*

After a particularly bad experience taking my mother for
a special treat-- movies and dinner in Hollywood, traveling
by bus from Van Nuys, discovering that many restaurants
closed on Sunday and after seven o'clock there was no di-
rect route back home--I decided to take driving lessons.

It was 1960, Mom and I were still living in Van Nuys and
I was working in Hollywood for Pacific Bell. I found a driv-
ing school on Hollywood Boulevard; five lessons for fifty
dollars guaranteed that I would pass the drivers test or my
money back. Good Deal. Everyday on my lunch hour for a
week, I took a driving lesson.

Now this Monday was my first lesson. As I clenched the
steering wheel, I stared straight ahead. The instructor, Jim,
kept saying, "Look before you pull into traffic, check your
rear view mirror, side mirrors and also signal your inten-
tions". *Too much to remember. My head hurts, my teeth hurt
and I don't think I'll ever unclench my hands.* After an hour
we were finally back at my office on Gower Street. I took a
deep breath; I survived my first lesson on Hollywood
Boulevard at noon no less.

Whee-ew!

Tuesday went much better. I unclenched my teeth, but
not my hands. They still were glued to the steering wheel
and Jim didn't have to remind me very often about looking
in the mirrors, but he did have to tell me to move my head
to look over my shoulder when changing lanes. *I was proud
of myself.* Wednesday was a challenge. Jim nonchalantly
directed me on to the freeway at Hollywood Blvd. I took
one look at the freeway and went into a catatonic state.
Beads of sweat formed on my forehead, my eyes glazed



over, my mouth became dry, my teeth clenched so tight not
a bit of saliva could escape, that is if I had any to spit out.
Even my hands become unglued with so much perspira-
tion and began slipping around on the steering wheel. Jim's
soothing voice kept saying "Now look over your shoulder
as you ease into the traffic." I took a deep breath, held on
tight to the steering wheel and merged into the line of traf-
fic. Once on the freeway I discovered, much to my joy, it
was easier to navigate the traffic. I didn't have to worry
about green lights, red lights, orange lights, children play-
ing on the sidewalks, old ladies pushing shopping carts
across the streets or even making the dreaded left hand
turn. *I liked it.*

The next day, Jim said he was going to show me spec-
tacular scenery. He directed me to drive west on Holly-
wood Boulevard, towards Laurel Canyon, had me turn
right on Curson St. and immediately, I was driving the
Hollywood Hills. I didn't have time to freeze. I was thrown
into narrow winding hilly streets; cars were parked on both
side of the road. Jim's soothing voice, "Take it slow, keep
your eyes on the road, don't get too close to the cars, and
watch out for cars backing out of their driveways." *Don't
close your eyes when a car is coming towards you.*

He was right. The scenery was spectacular, but I really
didn't notice it. My hands were clenched on the wheel and
my teeth were clenched in my mouth. I think I muttered a
"Thank you," when he dropped me off I stumbled into my
office, wondering if this is worth getting my driver's li-
cense. I was tempted to cancel tomorrow's lesson. I
thought of the car I would be buying when I passed the
test. My girl friend was moving to Alaska and she was sell-
ing her car.

I made an appointment to take my test the next Monday
and wondered what misery Jim would put me through on
Friday, my last lesson. But it went smoothly. He told me
what to expect on my test, had me practice parallel park-
ing, backing up in a straight line and we went on the free-
way for some more



practice. He said I was
ready to take my test
and I should pass. He
would pick me up Mon-
day morning to take me
to the DMV. Thanks to
Jim and my determina-
tion, I passed my test

and the next day I was the proud owner of an automobile:
A 1955 yellow Chevrolet Bel Air Sedan.

- Clare Goldfarb

Americans are broad-minded people. They'll accept the
fact that a person can be an alcoholic, a dope fiend, a wife
beater, and even a newspaperman, but if a man doesn't
drive, there is something wrong with him. ~Art Buchwald

A Ghost of A Chance



I wake up. My body floats under the covers. Weightless and confused, I look up at the ceiling. Lights and darks form a moving pattern. For a moment I expect to see stars or a slice of moon. No, there is only a ripple of shadows across the plaster.

The Pricilla curtains next to my bed stir. I sigh and look out at a faintly glowing sky. Then I notice it ... a pale waxen arm lying in my bed next to my pillow. My heartbeat thunders in my ears and my eyes tear with terror. Gingerly I pick up the horrible limb and drop it.

It is dead! I try to scream but fear clutches at my throat. As I roll away in terror the arm follows me! Now I AM crazy I have no logical explanation. I dash out of the bedroom in sheer panic. Only now does a sudden tingling in my left arm turn my terrified tears into embarrassed laughter.

- Lillian Rodich

"My dear Watson,"



Sherlock Holmes practically glared at his faithful colleague Watson. "You know my methods, Watson. We must get on it. The clues abide and we must rectify these crimes."

Watson kept a firm grip on his cuppa and returned Holmes' challenging stare. He knew what was at stake. Reputation was everything.

Twenty-first century housewives bemoaned these heinous crimes.

"We must go forth to the scene of the crime and investigate laundry appliances and list the salient facts," said Holmes.

"The closest report comes from the Cadbury Street, the home of the Danvers," stated Watson.

In no time, the noteworthy pair reached the Danvers' abode where they were ushered into the laundry room. Tugging his chin whiskers as he was wont to do, Watson carefully elucidated what he knew.

"First off, we have one clue: A little pink sock is missing. Multiply that by households throughout England and the States, we are talking millions."

"Yes, indeed," stated Holmes. "Two cute little pink socks with lace trim entered the washer. What happened afterward is up to us to divine since that was the last time Mrs. Danvers saw said socks."

"Harrumph," said Watson. "I understand the dear lady has retreated to her drawing room, mourning the absence of her precious daughter Victoria's favorite pair of socks."

Holmes analyzed the situation. Some speculated that the missing sock was eaten by the agitator, flushed out with the rinse hose or swallowed by the new fangled dryer. Is that the case in a nutshell?

"Absolutely. You are most concise as usual, Holmes."

"So it was probably last seen in the dryer," commented Watson.

"Perhaps, but I am not quite ready make that leap," replied Holmes, bending down and examining the dryer. "Hmm, nothing stuck to the barrel and no evidence of open air vents."

"Most perplexing," uttered Watson. For the first time he wondered. Will the great Holmes be able to solve this mystery?

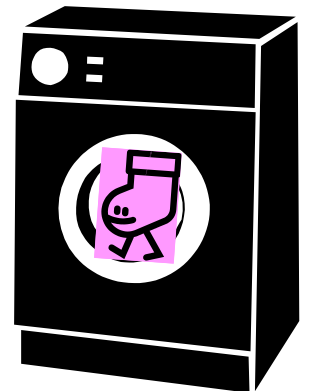
"Remember what I always stress," said Holmes, "To let the brain work without sufficient material is like a racing engine. It rocks itself to pieces."

"So we must go back to square one!" exclaimed Watson.

"Exactly! It is my esteemed opinion that the little pink sock never made it into the laundry room. Hence it was not lost, merely misplaced. It's probably hiding under the hamper just waiting to be reunited with its mate," the famous sleuth revealed.

"Excellent, Holmes!" cried Watson.

- Sheila Moss



Give Me A Sign



Prognosis...terminal. In 1988 Sy, my husband of 28 wonderful years, was seriously ill. During the progression of his illness we attended a retreat up in the Santa Monica mountains. All of the people had life threatening illnesses and were accompanied by their support persons. They ranged in ages from 20's to 50's. Dr. Carl Simington was the facilitator.

This place, touched by nature at it's best, was a powerful tranquilizer. The beauty of the mountains and sea reached the endless ceiling of blue sky, and added to a feeling of well being even though undertones of death were evident.

Never before had I felt so much love for so many strangers. Dr. Simington led us through visualizations, feelings, fears, tears and laughter in our daily seminars. We gobbled up our diseases with special creatures that we designed in our minds eye.

Three young women took their wigs off, completely bald as a result of chemo. They linked arms and danced like chorus girls, kicking their legs up high. I couldn't help but think how beautiful they were.

John was a musician who came from San Francisco with Mary, his support person, best friend and lover. In the evening we gathered around and sang as he strummed his guitar. Shortly after the retreat, I got a letter from Mary:

Dear Leslie: John passed away peacefully with me and his many friends surrounding him. I asked him to give me a sign from the other side after he leaves, to let me know that there is indeed something else. John said, "You know that straggly rose bush that never blooms in your back yard? Well, I will make it bloom for you and that will be my sign."

I still had my import business and I had to attend a trade show in San Francisco. Our daughter Julie and our best friend Aaron could stay with Sy until I returned in four days. Sy said, "Don't worry about me, Honey. Go ahead and do a good job. Call me."

When I was in San Francisco I called Mary and we arranged to have dinner. She came to my hotel and handed me the most beautiful bouquet of roses and said, "Here... these are from John."

I returned home to find that Sy had kidney failure and was on peritoneal dialysis. I ordered a stairway elevator so that he could still get up and down the stairs.

April the 7th - "Where are you going?" I asked. It was the middle of the night and Sy sat up on the edge of the bed. "To get a drink," he answered. "I'll get it for you," I said. He'd fallen several times that week so I got up and went to the bathroom for a glass of water.

I heard a loud thump! I rushed back to the bed. He had tumbled on to the floor. I turned on the small bedside lamp. He whispered, "Turn off the light." I did. His face was bloody. He must have hit the night stand which has fresh red stains. I forced a pillow under his head.

"OH MY GOD!"

I began to pace, not knowing what to do. Should I call his Dr. or 911...or an ambulance? Our daughter Julie woke up and came into our room. She was 19. I called the doctor. He said he'd send an ambulance. I threw on some jeans. The minutes seemed like an eternity. Sy began to snore very loud and hard. The noise was deafening. I imagined that it sounded like a death rattle. I panicked and called 911. The paramedics arrived quickly. The ambulance still hadn't come. The medics sent me and Julie out of the room. We went downstairs. It felt like forever before they finally came down.

"Mrs. Kaplan, we did everything we could but we were unable to save him. I'm very sorry."

"Oh Sy, oh Sy! Oh God!" Julie was hysterical as we wrapped our arms around each other. I answered the medics' questions about the mortuary and what other information they required. Then I went upstairs to have some moments alone with my husband.

He appeared to be smiling and at peace. I spoke to him, "I love you honey, and now you won't have anymore pain. No more...no more." My tears washed his face as I kissed him. "I'm asking you now, if you can... give me a sign too, like John did."

A few days after the funeral, I heard his voice at my bedside. He called my name. "Leslie." Clear as anything! I sat straight up in bed, half frightened, half astonished. I said, "Sy... where are you?" In the morning, Julie told me, "Mom, I heard Dad's footsteps coming up the stairs last night."

A couple of nights passed. I was in the twilight zone, half-way between awake and falling asleep when I heard, "Honey." It was Sy's distinctive voice once more. The most vivid of all... again.... just before I fell asleep, eyes half closed, I focused on Sy standing at the foot of the bed. I said, "I see you Sy. I know you are here." He was transparent. I could see through him, like looking through a window.

Don't know how to explain it... I can't. I only know what I know. "Thank you Sy, for giving me a sign."



One year later, the black dresses were put away, so to speak, and I decided it was time to open a new chapter in my life. I dared to go to a dance. Someone tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Care to dance?" He looked nice. I smiled and nodded and before I knew it, we were on the dance floor doing a slow fox trot.

When I asked him his name, he looked at me rather tenderly and said, "My name is Sy. What's yours?" My face flushed because I felt so strongly that my husband was telling me it's okay to be out dancing again... with a guy... named... SY.

*I spoke to him,
"I love you
honey, and now
you won't have
anymore
pain. No
more...no more."
"*

- Leslie Kaplan

A Higher Calling

- Kathy Highcove



Big John watched the flood waters swirl underneath his attic window. Lawn chairs and trash cans bobbed on the current. He stared back down at his BlackBerry. No messages. What the hell happened? he wondered. Where's everybody? I ALWAYS have messages, or appointments to remember. Good thing this gadget is still under warranty. Feel like... I need to get going...somewhere.

"I figgered you'd be sittin' up here, Big John," cried a female voice.

He whirled around and recognized his tenant Angelique, an elderly Creole with her wiry grey hair tucked into a red bandanna.

"You startled me! But I'm actually glad to see you. How'd I get up here, Angelique? One moment I'm down there swimming in my business suit, and then I'm suddenly up here, looking out this window. In dry clothes. No messages on my BlackBerry. What happened?"

"You be daid, Big John, and so's I," Angelique replied with a low chuckle. "See your body o'er there? You had y'self a heart attack and drowned daid. I'm the Messenger - sent to fetch y'all."

"WHAT? You're ... right. I see myself floating face down. Horrible. You'd think I'd remember taking my last breath. Help me remember ...Messenger."

"'Member comin' out here this mornin' to evict your renters? Tried to raise the rents, you greedy old polecat. You and me and lotsa folks was arguin' on the front porch when the levee busted."

"Then... are you daid - I mean dead, too?" asked Big John. "I didn't kill you, did I? I think you riled me."

"Hah, you nevah teched me. The flood water swept us all off the porch. I slammed into a lamppost. Drowned daid."

"What now? The moon is rising and this town is... spooky. I feel like I'm in Limbo."

"Not exactly. You got a new job. Look yonder. There's our krewe. The parade is formin'."

"Parade? Not time for Mardi Gras yet, Angelique," replied Big John with a smirk. Then he peered in the direction where his visitor pointed - toward the dark horizon, where night's smooth edges met the turgid dark floodwater. Something long writhed and lifted into the air like a disjointed snake...

Big John's eyes widened as he watched a line of specters slowly dance toward him, over the dark water. "OH WHEN THE SAINTS, GO MARCHIN' IN..." The tune drifted through the humid night air.

"What kind of parade is that?" Big John asked his companion. "I knew some of those folks. There's Papa Rolando. He died last week of pneumonia. And isn't that drummer the guy we used to see in the *La Vida Loca Club*? He was shot by his girlfriend's husband. Our krewe is a bunch of ghosts!?"

"C'mon, Big John. Look who's talkin'. Gotta join 'em right now, or we'll be haints in this old house. Oh...nearly forgot. I'm s'posed to give you this here saxophone. Learn to blow with soul. Yew got forevuh to learn how!" She guffawed at his baffled expression.

"Where're we going?" Big John asked as the duo floated through the window. They sailed gracefully over to their krewe and settled next to a toddler shaking a tambourine and an old man tooting a bugle. Angelique pulled a kazoo from her skirt pocket.

"Not sure. Mebbe we're goin' to find a black hole, jump in, an' spin around with star dust...an'...mebbe we'll all come back to life here- like my Mama tole me."

The reveler's line rose slowly, snaking across an inky sky. Angelique pointed at Big John, "Blow your horn. Let's hear your soul music."

Big John blew a low note then looked down one last time at his flooded house.

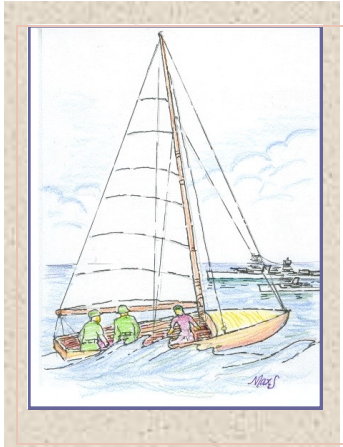
"Okay, Angelique. You win. I'll try to keep up with our krewe, but... sure wish I could take my BlackBerry with me."



Sailboating in Tokyo Bay

After VJ Day

- **Max Schwartz**



This short story is true and is part of my book "Bridges to Victory." - Max Schwartz

One day Pete rushed into the warehouse, excited, "Max, I found a sail boat near here. Wanna go sailing with me?" Max had never sailed in his life.

"Sure, anything's better than sitting around."

"There's only one problem," added Pete. "There's no sail on the mast."

"Great, then we'll find some paddles," said Max sarcastically.

The following day, Pete, hauling a large dirty bundle, shouted happily, "I found a sail. It's a little torn, but I think it'll work. Bring along a carton of cigarettes, too. We may need something to trade with."

Pete led Max along the dock into an old factory district where he pointed out a sleek white 18-foot-long sailboat moored amongst floating logs. "There she is. Isn't she a beaut?"

"Yeah, but how do we get her out from all those logs?"

"We push them away. There must be a sawmill nearby and they stored these logs on the water. Pretty smart, huh?"

Dressed in their wrinkled and soiled uniforms, the two soldiers were not dressed for leisure sailing. They looked out of place boarding the graceful slim pleasure craft. As they prepared to hang the old sail, a grey-bearded elderly Japanese man accompanied by a young boy approached the boat.

"You want to sail boat?" quizzed the old man

"Yeah, can we?"

"Yes, but grandson must go with you. I bring good sail," he said and shuffled off into a nearby building.

The two Americans were astounded when the old man returned carrying a large seabag with a new sail, covered with a white talcum-like powder.

"Great. This is perfect, a Star sail" exclaimed Pete, gleefully. Then he and the boy with Max helping efficiently rigged the sail to the mast. "We're ready to go, buddy. Get on the bow and clear a path through the logs while I steer this boat." When they were free of the logs and in open water, a cold brisk wind filled the sail while Pete handled the tiller. Max and the boy sat on the rails as the craft silently cut through the water toward the open Tokyo Bay.

Max was thrilled. The soft whish of the boat slicing through the waves and the clean salt air was invigorating. Ahead were ships of all kinds, some anchored and others slowly heading into port. Max spotted an American cargo ship that he thought he recognized, and remarked, "That looks like a Liberty Ship."

"No," corrected the boy, politely. "That is Victory Ship. Faster and better." Then he recited the model, tonnage and type of engines. The two Americans raised their eyebrows, impressed by the boy's knowledge of American ships.

When the waves and swells of the open bay became too rough and the boat hard to handle, Pete decided to return to port. The boy directed Pete where to dock while Max lay on the bow and again pushed the logs away. The old man was waiting and tied the boat to a mooring post. The Americans and the boy lowered the sail, carefully packed it back into the bag, and handed the sail to the old man.

"Thank you very much," said Pete, while Max handed him the carton of cigarettes that he carried in his field jacket. The old man and his grandson smiled and bowed deeply.

"Wow," shouted Max, happily, on the way back to the warehouse. "That was fun. When I get home, I swear I'm going to learn how to sail." The next day, Pete found another boat, a disabled Japanese landing craft moored to the dock. He worked on the engine until he got it running and the two again spent the afternoon chugging around Tokyo Bay.

Mystery about a Device and its Disposition

by Claude F. Baxter

In 1948 the Agricultural Engineering Department of U.C. Davis occupied a building with a large entrance hall. A variety of innovative pieces of farm machinery were displayed in that hall. Other equipment covered with tarps was tucked away in dark corners

As an undergraduate reporter for the college newspaper I became interested in apparently neglected or forgotten devices that stood gathering dust in the out of the way places in this hall. Quite innocently I uncovered a mysterious something for which I could not guess a use. It looked like an elaborate Rube Goldberg contraption with an electrically activated suction-cup-like conveyor belt, copper tubing, electric wires, a syringe-like device, a tiny motor, a gas tank, a huge funnel and large bins.

I asked one of the junior engineering professors what it might be and received the curt answer, "That is a machine that blows up walnuts."

"Blows up walnuts? Why would you want to do that?" I asked completely perplexed.

"To harvest the walnut meats so that you can eat them." His answer left out the last word "stupid," but it was implied.

My obvious next question was, "How does it work?" I received a knowing smile and the evasive answer, "You'll have to talk to the inventor, Professor Henry Langer."

I could not dig up the good professor but found Chris, one of his students. Chris knew all about the contraption and was only too willing to share his knowledge

"See here, this is a small drill that makes a small hole in the shell of the walnut as it comes along on this conveyor belt," Chris started, pointing at different parts of the device.

It took me some moments to identify the drill that was smaller than a dentist drill and visualize how the conveyor belt picked up walnuts from a bin and conveyed them to the drill, each nut held in a rubberized suction cup-like device of the conveyor belt

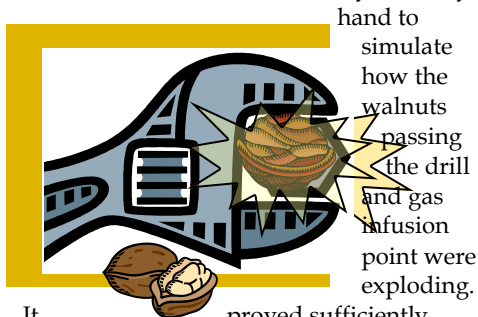
"Now see here, this is a little tricky," Chris continued. "Mounted right behind the drill are a little metal tube and a sparking device. See them?"

I saw something trailing the drill-head connected to a gas tank and some

electric wires. I nodded my head

Chris continued, "First the drill makes a hole and the metal tube falls into the hole the drill made. The tube injects a combustible mixture of gasses into the walnut. Then the sparker, following the gas tube, falls into the hole, sparks and ignites the mixture inside the shell. Then BINGO the nut explodes. The light outer shell halves of the walnut fly outward and the heavier halves of walnut meat fall into this receptacle under the conveyor belt.

At this point Chris had become quite animated. "Bingo, Bingo, Bingo," he shouted as he moved the conveyor belt by



It proved sufficiently dramatic to get the idea across, if not the details of this ingenious device.

I had a zillion questions: "What was the combustion mixture? At what speed could the device operate? What was the yield of whole walnut halves as compared to walnut pieces?" On and on--- then finally, "Why is this machine standing in a corner all covered with dust instead of being used to shell walnuts?" Chris had only some of the answers. When I asked why the machine stood abandoned in a corner and was not in use, he shrugged his shoulders and ventured,

"I guess because it is only experimental."

That did not satisfy me and Dr Langer was unavailable for comment. In fact I never found him on campus. Eventually I decided rather unwisely to make the "walnut-shelling device" the subject of one of my biweekly columns for the newspaper.

With undergraduate enthusiasm I fantasized the headline: "Mysterious Explosive Device Unattended in Engineering Building." That should get the attention of readers and those who saw fit to abandon it. I itched to write a real exposé for once in my life.

The column, under the less provocative title, "Unique Walnut Cracker Gathering Dust," was set to run on December 9th 1948 in the California Aggie. A week before that date I received a call from the dean's office. They had read the galley of the story

and now informed me that I could not run it "for policy reasons." I had no idea what that implied, but knew from an earlier encounter with that office that their veto could not be questioned, especially not in the absence and without the backing of Dr Langer. Unhappily I scrapped the whole story.

That did not imply, however, that I had lost interest in the walnut-shelling device. *Why is the University Administration afraid of shedding some light upon this unique device?* I asked myself. In the weeks that followed I tried to find answers.

All I obtained was speculation. One opinion held that the device infringed upon the patent rights of another. Others raised questions about safety features, reliability, speed, economic compatibility and durability if placed in a processing plant. The most prevalent belief, however, was more cynical.

One of California's largest walnut producers had been a very generous donor and benefactor to the Davis campus. This corporation had recently invested considerable funds to modernize its walnut shelling operation. For this purpose it had invested large sums of money in the best available mechanical walnut shelling equipment. If the Agricultural Engineering Department supported the development of a competitive device, it might have been seen as ingratitude on the part of the University toward a major benefactor. In 1948, those were my findings in a nutshell (no pun intended), not very satisfactory to explain the mystery! Langer's device was left gathering dust where it stood, a monument to ingenuity.

About two decades passed before I returned to my alma mater. The walnut industry had undergone profound changes - from mechanical tree shaking and other automated harvesting devices, to the use of vibrators and laser sorters to shell and sort walnuts. The Davis campus too had changed drastically and I failed to find anyone who recollected the device that had so intrigued me as an undergraduate.

The final fate of this walnut shelling machine is now a mystery that I will never unravel!



Ed.'s note: Professor Henry Langer is an alias.

A Man Who Dreamed A Man Who Dreamed

- Howard Goldstein



Outside.

All his life he had felt alone and outside. Growing up in the city, surrounded by machinery and the grey cement, brick and glass world of industry, something inside him yearned for trees and fields and open skies. When other children joined in games and sports, he played at playing. Always apart. Always remotely aware he was not there.

And when he grew to manhood, writing poetry, acting as was expected of him, he wrote and painted, drew, and moved from job to job. Never finding a place to call his home.

But now and then, in sleep, would come a dream of travel on a lonely country road. Of walking down a misted earthen lane that led to... what?

Brief fragments lingered after sleep, between the years. Nestled in the quiet corners of remember, they comforted and slept. Of pausing by a stone wall no higher than his knee, and speaking to a boy who worked the fields, as if the lad were his. Telling of his life and his beliefs. Counseling, and guiding, and believing himself needed — his words important and valued. And there too, a house, like none he'd ever known. Warm, and wood, and welcoming. A country lane, and a girl who held her arms to him, and opened.

Dreams.

Years rolled by and over him, like weights and feathers — and still he dreamed — and worked his way between. Tired now, of body, not of mind, he sought to find brief pleasure in some travels. Wandered aimlessly from place to place. The old black Labrador, Digby, his com-

panion. Driving. Pausing. Tasting. Using up the time.

Off the map, he wondered where he was. The countryside here was much like England, Napa, or New Hampshire. It could be anywhere of late summer, verdant with sunburned fields and farms. And yet...

The motor stalled. Quit. He would have to walk. Find a station or phone. It was getting late. He would have to hurry. Soon it would be dark.

The pathlike road was oddly familiar. So many roads like this one. Dusty, hard-packed tracks where wheels had worn the earth to either side of a weed-grown center strip. Low stone walls, or post and wire fences, on one or either side. Trees, and the occasional house.

There, ahead, a cluster of trees. And then... the house. Familiar. A breeze, and gusts of wind lifted dust to swirl about his feet as he drew closer. The front door opened and a figure emerged, to stand upon the porch with one hand raised to shade her eyes. A wave. A greeting. A beckoning gesture.

He hastened, with quickening steps, his stride longer. She was off the porch and standing. Waiting.

Home. At last.

Digby, whimpering, tried in vain to press his muzzle beneath an outstretched and motionless hand. Tugged gently at an unresponsive sleeve. After a while, he lay down beside, resting his grey muzzle upon the back of the silent figure sprawled face down in the afternoon dust of a nameless country road.

Home.



Set The Table - Let's Eat!

Summer has sizzled by and sure as a turkey shoot, it's time for Thanksgiving in the United States of America...and the Southland. The theme for November, dear members and writers, will be FOOD, appropriately. Send me stories, anecdotes, commentary, artwork and descriptions of entrees, family meals, favorite dishes, and favorite Thanksgivings. Perhaps a short wonderful recipe. Food is an emotional subject, or a catalyst for all types of memories. Remember your grandmother's pies? Remember the gardens you helped tend? Remember the first time you tried to cook a holiday meal? Remember the vegetable you had to choke down every Turkey Day? The relatives you were forced to kiss? Or...have the poets out there written an ode to an omelet, or a perfect peach or a haiku dedicated to green tea ice creams? I await your juicy items.

- Kathy Highcove

Recognitions

Member Ray Malus' play, "The Ninth Bell", was a winner in the Tehachapi Community Theater's FIRST ANNUAL 10-MINUTE PLAYWRITING FESTIVAL. It will be presented Nov. 20, 21, 22nd, at the Beekay Theater, Tehachapi, CA.

Kathy Highcove reviewed **A Short History of Women** by Kate Walbert for the International Writers Workshop Book Blog. The review is found at <http://internetreviewofbooks.com> along with several other reviews and interesting features.

Editor's Note: Please send a short notice of any awards or triumphs that pertain to your writing efforts. Recognitions is a permanent feature in this newsletter.





Where's the Enthusiasm?

– Mike Foley

About Mike Foley : *Mike Foley, editor of Dream Merchant Magazine, grew up in Long Beach, CA and earned bachelors degrees in both business and creative writing from California State University–Long Beach. A full-time writer since 1980, he has worked as a staff writer for three newspapers and two magazines, as well as freelancing more than 750 published stories and articles. Under Mike's direction, the Dream Merchant grew from a small monthly newsletter to the nation's leading magazine for inventors. He tells In Focus that his "greatest joy" is sharing with others and he continues to do so through workshops for writers and the personal enrichment seminars taught regularly with his brother, Tom. In 1995, the brothers founded the Big Bear Writer's Retreat, where writers gather twice a year for writing practice and inner renewal. For the past 20 years, Mike has also operated the Writer's Review critique service for aspiring writers, assisting writers of both fiction and nonfiction.*

Over the years, I've talked with thousands of writers. I've discovered that everyone has a unique story to tell and a unique way of telling it. But the challenges facing writers are the same. As a result, I often hear the same complaints, the same questions, the same challenges that face writers.

One of the most common is what I call the "honeymoon is over" phase. This occurs when a writer loses the enthusiasm for a particular endeavor, especially a novel or book-length project. The original love affair with the idea or the characters has lost its appeal, and the writer now sees the project as less than wonderful. The writing suddenly seems weak and the writer's skills are laid bare on the page, warts and all.

Sound familiar? Write long enough and you'll have moments like these. Fortunately, these moments don't have to mean the end of your project or end of your journey as a writer. In fact, they can make you stronger.

Losing enthusiasm for your writing? Here's how you can handle it:

1. Stand Back—This involves creating a certain distance between you and the project. When you're writing, you focus on a specific area, a certain scene, or a critical chapter of nonfiction information. And so it's easy to lose perspective. Your original enthusiasm sprang from your concept of the project as a whole. When the enthusiasm wanes, it's time to stand back and revisit your original concept. View the project as whole, complete, and engrossing—the way you first thought of it. That's where you're headed. That's where the book is headed, no matter what stage it's in right now. Reminding yourself of this is great way to rekindle your enthusiasm.

2. Move On—Very often, enthusiasm wanes because a writer is struggling with a particular section. And because that section isn't going well, it's easy to think that the entire project isn't working. The cure? Set those pages aside and write a different section of the project. Pick a section that seems fun or exciting to you. Chances are the writing will go well and your enthusiasm will begin building once again.

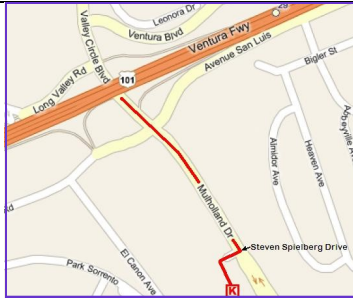
3. Read—Enthusiasm still weakening? Begin looking over the manuscript that you've produced so far. As you reread what you've done, pick out a few aspects that are strong and working well. It might be a particular character, a section of dialogue, or in nonfiction, an exciting anecdote or even a strong how-to section. When you see something that's working well, it's hard to view the project as a lost cause. And so your enthusiasm can return.

4. Focus on Yourself—That's right. You've come this far, and what does that mean? You're a writer. Plain and simple. Even if the project doesn't seem to be going well, you've taken it this far. You've done more than most people do. You're far beyond those folks who casually say that they'll "write a book someday," then never write a word. You've taken the risks and created something. You're a writer. And if a piece of writing isn't well done, a writer can fix it. If a project has lost its zing, a writer can rediscover that. A writer can tap imagination, alter words, and make things right. You're a writer. You're capable of doing all that.

The last suggestion above is probably the most important. So I ask you—Would this project have been created thus far without a writer? Without YOU? Look at what you've accomplished. You're a writer. Be proud. Best of luck with all your writing.

More information about Foley from his website: Mike Foley has helped hundreds of writers improve their work with focused critiques and edits of novels, nonfiction books, feature articles, short stories, and screenplays. Contact Mike for a quote: mike@writers-review.com You may also find information on Mike's services by visiting his website <http://www.writers-review.com/> Mike Foley is editor of Dream Merchant Magazine and author of more than 700 published stories and articles. He also teaches fiction and nonfiction writing in the extension program at UC-Riverside. Since 1986, he has operated the Writer's Review critique service, helping hundreds of aspiring writers improve their fiction and nonfiction projects.

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From the 101 Freeway exit on Mulholland Drive. Travel south on Mulholland and turn right at Steven Spielberg Drive. Then turn left and follow the route to the large parking lot on the left for the Saban Center. 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, Oct 3rd, 2009 at 1:30 p.m.

MAILING ADDRESS

c/o Dave Wetterberg, 23809 Friar Street

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Submission Guidelines

Try to submit a work two weeks in advance of publication. Edit to keep the work between 200 and 500 words. Poems should also be in a compact form: three to four stanzas. Editor reserves the right to condense for brevity or to correct errors. Some submissions may be reserved for a future issue. Please notify the editor if you desire the work returned or deleted.



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