



**WEST
VALLEY
BRANCH**

**"Language is the
blood of the soul
into which thoughts
run and of which
they grow."**

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

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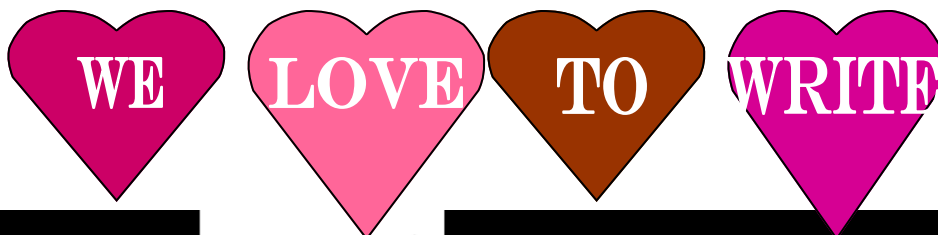
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**Follow your bliss and the
universe will open doors
where there were only
walls.**

Joseph Campbell



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cisco Chronicle, and was published in *Westways* magazine and *Forbes*. She founded and edited *Electronic Commerce News*, a technology journal published by Phillips Business Information, which led to a six year assignment as a Research Director and Analyst for the Gartner Group, an international technology advising company.

She has chosen as her topic, "Writing Non-Fiction That Reads Like a Novel." Ms. Spieler plans to touch on Internet secrets, such as how to weed out truth from misinformation when researching.

Our speaker used painstaking research to unearth new information in *Taking Aim at the President: The Remarkable Story of the Woman who Shot Gerald Ford*.

Gail Spieler is a reporter who knew how to arry through with productive research and how to fulfill her legal responsibilities to the perpetrator, the victim, the principals' friends and families, the readers of her article, and the publisher who hired her services.

This knowledgeable journalist will share her varied professional experiences with our CWC/WV membership. Those writers with a strong interest in non-fiction writing should come prepared to take notes.

We will provide paper and pens if needed. Handouts will also be provided by the speaker.

More information about our speaker available at www.gerispieler.com

- KH



**When I was a
lad, an exhilarating
moment upon enter-
ing a new grade level**

**was receiving my
new textbooks.**

**I remember the brightly
colored and illustrated
hardboard covers, the
weight of the book in my
hands and - especially -
the intoxicating aroma of
ink on new paper in the
freshly opened pages.**

The publishing

**world continually
changes. The newest
assaults on my bookish
childhood memories
come in the form of "e-
books" (or e-books) - a
typically trendy internet-
spawned term for
"electronic books." Ac-
cording to Wikipedia,
the e-book is defined as
"an electronic version of**

(Continued on page 3)

He Knows a Trick or Two

Our January speaker Gerald Schiller is a busy man. He is published in several formats: scripts for educational documentaries, reviews, poems, children's lit and articles for magazines.

Remember the Fedco California history articles? If so, you read stories by Gerald Schiller. The Fedco gig resulted in enough stories for a book! Presto - *True Stories of Old California* appeared in book stores with the help of a small publisher, Intercontinental Publishing, Inc. The collection of historical stories proved popular and still sells several years later.

"A writer should be flexible and work with a publisher if they're a legitimate organization and want to publish your work," advised Schiller.

Schiller's books were built with painstaking research. Before the appearance of the Internet connections we use today, Schiller researched long hours in libraries. "A writer must be willing to put in the time and get the work done."

Schiller has written both non-fiction and fiction. His children's book *The Dog That Belonged to No One* has found young readers in steady numbers. Our speaker reminded his audience that there is a reason that Disney wheels out the same animated hits at regular intervals. "Children's authors have a permanent market of new readers each year." But Schiller also writes for the big folks. He found new creative inspirations in adult fiction, such as the thriller, *Death Underground*.

Advice from Gerald Schiller: "Use *Writers Market* to begin a search for a publication that needs your articles. Let

your mind soar over possible topics. Somewhere a magazine, newspaper or ezine waits for your article," Schiller assured us. He asked our group, "What are your interests? Any topic you can think of is likely to have a matching publication in either hard press or ezine style. Be willing to work for a successful effort."

Persistence is the key to writing success. Our speaker urged our writers to keep working and submit constantly.

For more info: geraldaschiller.com



Legacy Lessons on Success



Lillian and Alexis Rodich

My grandmother, Lillian Rodich, is my biggest role model and, hands down, one of the most important people in my life. She is my go-to person to share laughs, to

get advice and to gain perspective on everything. A former school teacher, she is now a prolific writer and publisher, dancer, lover of the theater and all other art forms and an utterly adored friend, mother, and grandmother. I do not have words strong enough to express how much I love, respect and admire her. In honor of her birthday today, I share some of the lessons on success that I've learned from her over the years:

1) It's never too late to start: My grandmother started writing in earnest in her 60s, after she retired as a school teacher. She has written countless works, including books of poems, short stories, essays and more. She leads several writing groups and has been involved in the publication of multiple anthologies. She picked up folk dancing in her late 50s and continues to participate in several dance groups and teach a weekly class. Whenever anyone tells me they're too old to start something, I always tell them about my grandmother.

2) Embrace technology: My grandmother has used a computer for as long as I can remember and actively uses Facebook and Skype, among other sites. She does not approach technology with fear, but rather sees this moment in time as a renaissance of sorts.

3) Love yourself and allow yourself to be loved: My late grandfather loved my grandmother passionately throughout his life. Her current gentleman friend has come to love her deeply as well. Both loves are completely inspiring! My grandmother's trick? She loves herself. She takes care of herself and her own needs honestly and unabashedly, thus making herself open to the love of others as well. Before getting off the phone, she makes me promise that I am taking care of myself, too.

4) Be a good friend: When it comes to being a good friend, my grandmother is my biggest role model. She has more friends than anyone I know and they are deep, fun and fulfilling friendships. Beyond just remembering birthdays, she is great about remembering all sorts of special occasions that are important to her friends and often commemorates them with beautiful hand-made cards.

5) Pay it forward: From writing to dancing to jewelry and T-shirt making, whatever skills my grandmother has picked up she has been incredibly generous about sharing them with her friends and peers. If she is successful at something, she wants everyone to be successful at it as well! Moreover, she has an uncanny ability to help people work through their self doubt and fear of being creative.

These are just a few of many lessons in success at life that I've learned from my grandmother. I look forward to learning even more from her over the coming years. She says she'll worry about getting old when she is 100.

By Alexis Rodich Reprinted from *Washington Post* 01/7/10

Lillian Rodich is on the CWC/WV Board

a printed book which can be read on a personal computer or hand-held device designed specifically for this purpose."

Two of the most successful of such devices are the Amazon Kindle and the Sony Reader. Each is about 7.5 inches tall by about 5 inches wide, with a 6" diagonal display. The concept of electronic paper fascinates me because it can be read in direct sunlight, even at an angle, much like an actual printed page. While the technology grows exponentially, some users still prefer the printed page and the tactile experience of an actual book and certain ease of use issues. For example, flipping quickly from one portion of the book to another is still a cumbersome maneuver in an electronic device. Nevertheless the popularity of e-books is growing, and "wave of the future" doesn't seem to be in any way an exaggeration.

Some of the advantages of e-book technology include:

- **Availability** – over 2 million free books available online and growing daily

- **Portability and Storage** – thousands of e-books use the same physical space as a single printed book.

- **Languages** – e-books translate electronically into many languages

- **E-book reader functionality** - many readers display motion, enlarge or change fonts, use text-to-speech software, search for key terms, and allow highlighting and annotation.

- **Costs** – downloaded texts are usually cheaper than hard copies

- **Security** – digital rights management may protect text from unauthorized use.

- **Distribution** – cheaper and easier for authors to self-publish

- **Environmental issues** – no need for paper or ink ; minimal energy to produce

Disadvantages:

- **Changing technology** – e-book's software continually evolves

- **Availability** – fewer books available in electronic format

- **Aesthetics** – no multi-sensory experience of the printed page

- **Power and shelf life** – a dead battery may lose the downloaded book

- **Durability** – damage possible if dropped, exposed to extreme temperatures or electronic disturbances

- **Costs** – the cost of the e-book reader itself may be quite high

- **Security** – high-tech devices are an appealing target for Internet thieves

- **Digital Rights Management** – many authors fear electronic piracy

- **Environmental issues** – e-book readers are not biodegradable

Regardless of the pros and cons, e-book technology is definitely here to stay. New models continually enter the publishing market. Apple's iPad is the latest.

For more information on e-books go to Wikipedia at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-book>

For now, I'm going to go bury my head in the paper pages of a good book while I still can enjoy "getting real."

- Dave Burr

Rhyming Poetry

Rhyme is the repetition of the same sound or of a similar sound.

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;

Close to the sun in lonely lands

Ringed with the azure world he stands.

But quite often poets alternate the rhymes.

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,

"And your hair has become very white,

And yet you incessantly stand on your head.-

Do you think at your age, it is right?"

A single word can also rhyme with the end of a longer word.

Worships language and forgives

Everyone by whom it lives.

Further on in the same poem, the last syllable of a three syllable word rhymes nicely with the last syllable of another three syllable word.

Time that is intolerant

Of the brave and innocent.

When the rhyme is in the last syllable, as in the lines above, it is a *masculine rhyme*, generally a more forceful sound, whereas the agreement of sound in two consecutive syllables is a *feminine rhyme*, usually more light and delicate, as in *laden* and *maiden* below.

With rue my heart is laden

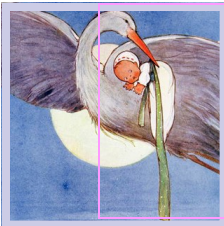
For golden friends I had,

For many a rose-lipt maiden

And many a lightfoot lad.



- Dave Wetterberg



PURE BLISS

by Karen Gorback

The twinges are subtle, barely perceptible; but they jolt me out of a fitful sleep like a primordial alarm.

By Baby Number Four, I smile with cocky confidence. "Yes Alex, I'll take *Childbirth* for one thousand!" A sure win. I know all the answers. Relax. Breathe slowly. It's all so familiar --- except this time, along with the pregnancy, I am in the early stages of a doctoral program and would apparently need to miss class today. My paper is due on the topic of Qualitative Analysis in Educational Research. So I drag my blubbery body into the kitchen and call the instructor's voice mail at the university. "Hello, Professor Feldman. I'm so very sorry. I know that you do not accept late papers, but I'm going to be somewhat busy giving birth today. I hope you'll accept my assignment next week."

I'll call the doctor later. No rush on that one.

Timing contractions in the middle of the night is a lonely job, so it's time to wake the husband.

"Are you sure?" he says, sleepily.

"No, maybe the pains are coming from the alien androids who live outside our bedroom window and zapped me with their ray guns in the middle of the night."

He gets the message. "Do you think we should call your parents to come over and watch the kids?"

RECOGNITION



Karen Gorback won Honorable Mention for her short story titled "Hot Wings, Incorporated," in the Ventura County Writers

Club Short Story Contest. It's up at www.venturacountystar.com. Put Karen's name in the search bar to bring up the article.

Yale Cabaret returns for a special reading of *NOIR - Face the Music*. "DEAD BODY IN UNION STATION, JANITOR QUILTS." Why is Private Eye Buck Reilly nosing around the Mayor's Office? On Sunday, February 21 at 4:00 PM come to the Mt. Pleasant House to hear the answer to this and many other questions in a reading of "NOIR - Face The Music," a script for Interactive TV by Ray Malus, produced by Yale Cabaret Hollywood. Admission is free for members and \$10 for the general public.

"Not yet. Let's wait until the contractions are three minutes apart. I don't want to spend all day in the labor room." I speak from experience.

Several hours later, with parents and children happily playing Candyland, I check into the hospital and slip into an air-conditioned birthing gown and an enormous belly harness that charts the contractions. A stern-looking nurse pulls a ribbon of graph paper out of the contraction measuring machine, glances at the blips and announces, "You're not having this baby today. These are not *labor quality* contractions. You can go home now."

"Listen, Nurse Ratchet. I've done this before. This baby is being born today. I'm not leaving."

She is clearly miffed. Alex could have told her that I was the Three-Time Birthing Champion from Thousand Oaks, but she leaves the room.

Several minutes later, the baby decides to prove my point and makes it very clear that she is ready to be born. And in a sudden flurry of activity, the hospital staff rush me to the delivery room, now fully engaged in *labor quality* contractions.

* * * * *

It's a sunny, clear February afternoon - the spectacular type of day that reminds us why we love living in Southern California. I'm propped up in a hospital bed, eating a chocolate brownie, watching Oprah and suckling my beautiful, little daughter under a pink blanket. Life doesn't get any better. I kiss the top of her head and breathe deeply of the new baby scent. It's delicious. The afternoon nurse enters the room, asks me how I'm feeling, and smiles. "You're the most peaceful looking new mom I've ever seen."

But it's beyond peaceful. It's joy and relief and an abundant sense of gratitude. It's pure bliss.

JUST FOR US



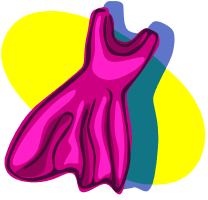
Those were the early Seventies, days of muddled rains and teaching long dark hours with no recess time to relieve the tension. At home our three teenagers filled every nook and cranny with their boisterous laughter and torrential tears. There was no relief from the turmoil except during our Palm Springs weekends.

Retreat into the desert was the gift my husband and I gave each other. A gift of sunshine and love in the afternoon, hot spa soaks, walks in the balmy star filled evenings, dinners in a tiny candle-lit deli on Palm Canyon Ave. and visits to the art galleries and boutiques.

Our few days away each winter renewed the romance in our relationship, changed the perspective with which we viewed our problems and turned fantasy into reality.

Today, the memories I still treasure remain a special gift to me and always lighten my mood on the dark days.

by Lillian Rodich



Eddie and His Girls

The contrast of Ronnie's skin against the violent chartreuse created an ethereal vision in a microcosm of flowing gowns.

Sighing, Ronnie flopped onto the ledge in the dressing room filled with tulle and vintage lace. She looked at her watch as the seconds ticked by as she tapped her foot to an imaginary beat. A sudden knock at the dressing room door startled Ronnie, but just as she reached for the knob, she heard an unfamiliar voice.

"Miss, is everything alright in there?" Ronnie mumbled in acknowledgment and leaned back in her shimmering gown as she contemplated the other ones she had tried on without Eddie. She flipped her phone open and closed as she tapped her foot more purposefully. Ronnie sat up at the sound of approaching footsteps and settled back in a heap of green like a bullfrog waiting for a fly. Ronnie's eyes caught the perfect green shoe dangling from three toes. Just as suddenly as she settled into the sea of green, she flung the shoe at the wall just as an unconfident knock against the flimsy door caught her ear.

Ronnie wrenched the door open to find Eddie standing there scratching his head and hunching his shoulders at the sight of Ronnie's tapping foot and fuming eyes. He held her gaze for a moment before staring at his shoes.

"You're late," she said angrily

"I know. I kind of got held up—" Eddie began, but she swiftly cut him off.

"You got held up with Annie," Ronnie began as she shuffled through the dresses to her purse.

"Jealous, much?" Eddie said with a nefarious smile. Ronnie glared at him as she fussed with her dress.

"More like impatient," she replied, "and angry, and worried actually. Where were you? You were supposed to be here a half hour ago." Ronnie sighed dejectedly. "Look, now that you're here, I need your help," Ronnie said as she started holding up dress after dress. Eddie shrugged at all of them and with every passing dress, Ronnie huffed louder.

"Look, Veronica, what does it matter what you look like? It's what's inside that counts. All those gooey guts. You know, green, purple." Ronnie made a disgusted face.

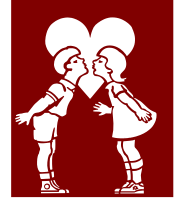
"I hope I'm not green. That might take some explaining," she replied as she attempted to flatten the one crease in the middle of the dress.

"So you're wearing that for a reason, right?" Ronnie nodded as Eddie leaned against the doorway. He looked her up and down and shook his head. "Ronnie, I know you want him to see you in all your glory, particularly about what he left behind, but don't you think you should wear red for that?"

"No," Ronnie replied as she systematically de-creased the dress. "No, I think I rather like green. Red's obvious. Vengeful, angry and wild with passion. But green," Ronnie said with a self-knowing smile, "Green is less obvious. Green is everything that he's not. And it's everything he's never going to get."

- Samantha Berley

The Kiss



I have a secret I have to tell
Cindy, 'cause she's my best friend.

No, she won't believe me and, anyway, she'll go tell her mother. Roni kissed me. It was a small kiss on the side of my face. No, it was a big one, because Roni's big. He's in the 5th grade and I'm only in the 3rd.

If Miss Stacy saw Roni do that to me, maybe we can't be in the play anymore. We were in the back stage, so she couldn't see us. I don't think. I didn't want to be in *Peter Pan* in the first place. Why couldn't she let us do the *Wizard of Oz* again, like we did last year? That was so fun being a munchkin. It's getting late. Where's my mom? All the other kids have already been picked up. Cindy's mom already came to pick her up with their new baby in the car. Roni's dad picked him up too. I don't think he saw me standing by the school door. Oh, oh, here she comes. I can't tell her about Roni. She'll tell my dad.

"Hi honey. How was school today?"

"Good."

"Do you have any homework?"

"Yes."

"Like what?"

"Spelling."

"What's wrong, Missy?"

"Nothing."

"You're unusually quiet. Are you angry at someone?"

"No."

"Then what's bothering you?"

"Nothing, I already told you that."

My face is so hot. I feel like I want to cry. What if Allyson is right, that I'm going to have a baby.

"If you kiss a boy, you'll have a baby." That's what Allyson said.

Cindy and Allyson almost got in a fight about it at recess last week. Cindy answered her right back and said, "Uh, uh, uh, you're wrong! God gives out the babies!"

Another time Cindy said God makes miracles. He can do anything he wants. That's what she said. She goes to Sunday school at the big white church near her house. She even invited me to come sometime. My mom said she would think about it.

I'm in my room now, putting on my pink Cinderella pajamas. I love them, they're so soft. Mom said she would come to read to me when she finishes folding the clothes out of the dryer. I'm going to hurry up and talk to God before she comes in my room.

Dear God, please help me and do a miracle for me. I don't want to have a baby. Please take it back. It's not my fault that Roni kissed me. I don't know why he did it. I won't let him do it again. I promise. I'll keep my room picked up and let my little brother play with my toys. You'll see. Please, please, please.

- Geri Jabara



Sentimental Me

Oh, Tahiti!

I listen to the rhythm of the rain drops against the concrete patio. It makes music to my ears, like metal brushes scraping softly against brass symbols. The timing is perfect. It's an autumn night in Woodland Hills, California. I snuggle up cozy and warm by

the fire place in my living room. Opening the drapes, I watch the theater of the water ballet lit by lamp light. The rain dancers pirouette across the pool. Their costumes are silver, studded with diamonds. Beautiful to see and to hear. I have always loved rainy days!

My flowers open their thirsty mouths to drink in the tears shed by the gray clouds. At least that's the way I see it. By contrast the warm glow of the gold and green flames licking at the logs in the fireplace create a paradox of moods. Both effects tranquilize me. I reach for one of my photo albums in the bookcase, put on a CD entitled "The Way We Were," and ...

I OPEN AN ALBUM.

My young tanned body is wrapped in a pareo. A lei of baby orchids hangs around my neck. Once again, I am on the Island of Morea, one of the most beautiful tropical islands of Tahiti. It's paradise. The scent of wild flowers surround and intoxicate me. I'll never forget this place.

I TURN THE PAGE.

I ponder the speed of time. Was it that long ago? Somewhere in the 20th century, I tell myself. But it is now the 21st century. So I might say it was 100 years ago, and yet... in a way, just yesterday. If I ever had a past life, I must have lived on a tropical island. Morea and Boro Boro lure me into their clutches and consume my senses like a passionate lover. Swaying palms reach out to touch my hair and my fresh flower lei feels almost like cool wet kisses that affectionately tickle my skin. I am in love with these Islands and I wish I could stay here forever.

It is our first time as "Genteel Members," or GM'S of Club Med. The counselors and entertainers are international and interracial. They all speak French and English. Guests are GM'S, and the counselors and entertainers are GO'S, or Genteel Organizers.

The first day on the beach is an eye opener in more ways than one. The women are either topless or totally nude. The men are also sans trunks. I look at Sy and he looks at me. He says, "We look like voyeurs. This is a French Island and I suppose it is second nature to be... well... natural." To my surprise, off come his swim trunks. Now if you knew Sy, you would think it is the last thing in the world that this soft spoken, conservative, shy and quiet kind of guy would be willing to participate in...but he does. And me, the flirtatious one with a bit of a wild streak, could hardly get with it. But after a lot of coaxing, I finally become semi nude. My top comes off

and I quickly turn to lie on my stomach. That's the story of my "When in Rome" conversion.

I TURN THE PAGE

I'm now on board a 60 foot sail boat. The GO's are manning the sails. I strum a yukeleli as I sing, "A Sailboat In The Moonlight." Sy, my husband, doesn't like boats particularly so he's on land playing tennis. The nights are filled with wonderful entertainment, exquisite food, all the wine you can drink, dancing at the disco, romancing, moonlight camp outs and more romancing.

I TURN THE PAGE.

Some of the GO'S are cross dressers and/or gay. I so enjoy their style and creativity. From the great American song book, these lyrics remind me of why I love these GO'S. "The way you wear your hat - the way you sing off key." etc. The make-up, the dress, and Broadway performances nightly are an interesting contrast to the natural Tahitian life style. Sometimes I participate a little as I also love to sing and dance. It's easy for me, especially after two glasses of wine, to join the entertainment.

The master of ceremonies usually dons a luxurious Caftan which opens to show a sparkling, matching bikini. His figure is gorgeous. His makeup is flawless and as he flickers his long eyelashes and flashing smile, I realize that his endearing personality is what makes me love this outgoing, talented, charismatic person.

I TURN THE PAGE.

It's dusk as we board a sailboat and head for Bora Bora, which is even more primitive than Morea. Polynesian dancers greet us. The men grip fire lighted torches and wear only loin cloths, while the women sway sensuously in beautiful grass skirts and fresh flower leis on top... just the leis, nothing else. The beat of the bongo-like drums is contagious. I find myself swaying along with the dancers. Owning one of these lovely native outfits to take home is a must. Befriending one of the dancers, I propose, "If I give you my jeans, you give me what you wear. Okay"? She not only says, "Okay," but includes a coconut skin bra and some shell jewelry. I never ever want to leave this place. It lights everyone's fire. It is the sexiest place in the whole world! My quiet husband suddenly becomes a passionate seducer, like finding me for the first time. It's great!

I CLOSE THE BOOK.

Back to reality in my living room. The CD has stopped. The rain has stopped, the fire dwindles down to a flicker, and my favorite vacation is over... again. I close the drapes, put my album back in the bookcase and make sure the fire is out. I say to myself out loud,

"Oh, Tahiti, thank you again for this lovely evening." As I climb the stairs to my bedroom, a crystal teardrop begins to trickle down my cheek.

- Leslie Kaplan





By=

- Mary Schaffer

Cynosure
You're a lure, beck-
oning.
Blindfolded, I fol-
low
backward in time.
Discover secrets.

Will you become
flesh, blood;
or fade away
in a story line,
or final note



Dancin'



**Dancin' around
on toe and heel.**

**Winter nights, Saturday or Sunday
any time the music plays ,
no tapping feet is able to resist**

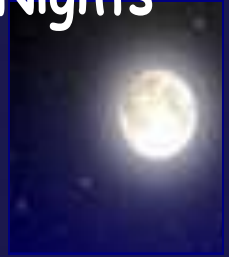
**why not dance on starless nights
and twirl my skirts
and clap in time.....**

**the band plays
hidden figures
among rustling leaves
and calling birds**

**I'll join the circle,
perhaps remain in shadows
or trip along a garden path
and feel wet grass
clinging to my bare feet**

- L Rodich 2008

Magic Winter Nights



One of the childhood
Treasures I miss
Is the sense of mystery
And wonder I felt
Out on a winter night
Treading lightly
On thick cushions of snow,

Looking in wonderment
At the numberless stars
That pierced the black
Hemisphere of night,
And the luminous light
Of the moon on icy snow
That made its crystals glow.

Enlivened by the winter's chill,
I trudged to the top of a hill
With my silver runnered sled,
Pressed my chest to its bed,
And swiftly and silently sped
Down a steep snowy slope,
My face animated, aglow
And tingling from the cold.

How wonderful it was
To feel the sparkle,
The zest and zeal for life,
To be happily excited,
Unaware and unperturbed
About questions of my place
In time and space

- Edward Louis Braun



George Bernard Shaw

*We don't stop playing because
we grow old; we grow old be-
cause we stop playing.*



1958 Kallafo, Ethiopia
Ken Wilkins poses with
his coffin project.

Share the Love

I am often asked, "What prompted you to serve as a missionary in Africa?" My immediate reply is, "I wanted to share the love of God." Many times the questioner then states, "So you run around all day with a Bible in your hand, preaching to 'lost souls.'" "Not exactly," I reply and then proceed to relate to them the events of one particular day that comes to mind.

6:00 AM The compound workmen, a few clinic helpers and house servants arrive. We meet on the hospital steps where I go over the plans for the day, conduct a brief devotional and a prayer. I ask God to keep everyone safe from accidents and to be a blessing to the many patients who will arrive later seeking medical help.

6:30 -7:30 Breakfast, personal devotions, play time with our children, ages five and six. Sometimes interrupted by someone at the door wanting to sell a goat or eggs ... chicken and ostrich.

7:00 - 8:00 Check on outside workmen. Always something being built or repaired. One brick layer complains of a headache, so he's cleared to see one of the nurses for an aspirin. Returns "cured."

8:00 Clinic is opened. The doctor is on furlough, so I'll conduct the brief devotional before the nurses start examinations and treatment. **8:30** Off to school office. Review lesson plans for today. Consult with fellow teachers, both National and "European" (American, Canadian, etc.)

9:00 Students arrive. Brief devotional. We've been studying "Heroes of the Old Testament." They love the story of Elijah mocking the false prophets of Baal. Classes begin with students ranging in age from eight to twenty-two. Only one girl student, Fadoma, beautiful, shy and very intelligent. It's the month of Ramadan so the students are permitted to go outside and spit since they are not allowed to swallow food or liquid from sunup to sundown.

10:15 My class is interrupted when a hospital orderly informs me a sick patient needs transportation to the clinic. I grab the keys to my LandRover and head to the dusty outskirts of the village to provide ambulance service. The other teachers absorb my class.

12:00 Lunch and a three hour rest period. A frantic knock on our bedroom window and the news an Amharic (ruling class) soldier has drowned in the Webi Shebeli (River of Leopards) Can we help? We find he is beyond help and one of our nurses pronounces him dead.

2:00 I am asked to build a coffin for the deceased. The workmen are on rest period too, so I'll start one myself. I find myself laughing half way through the project. I have spent one-third of my life earning three degrees and here I am ... a casket maker. I remember the Apostle Paul reminding his Corinthian readers that we are to " ... become all things to all men ... " It's all part of sharing God's love.

3:00 My LandRover becomes a hearse as we transport the drowned soldier to the local burial ground.

4:30 Village youths are on the compound for a game of soccer. I'm called upon to settle a couple of fights.

5:00 -7:00 Evening meal, quality time with our kids. Catch the evening news from BBC on the shortwave radio.

7:00 - 9:00 ESL class with the local shop keepers, police, soldiers and a few tribal leaders. Class dismissed early when the bugs, attracted by the kerosene lantern, become so thick I can't see the back of the classroom.

9:30 With the kids in bed under mosquito netting, I accompany my nurse-wife across the darkened compound for final rounds to check on the hospital patients. Killed a Spitting Cobra in the nurses' station. Second one in a week ... the first found climbing out of my wife's boot.

10:00 In bed, under mosquito netting, hoping to fall asleep in spite of the lion growls from a nearby mesa and the hyena laughs just outside the compound. It's been a long day ... sharing the love of God.

by Ken Wilkins



MELLOWED WITH AGE

- Kathy Highcove

Who knew I'd find the right card in the museum's gift shop? When Loretta was still looking at paintings in the Old Masters gallery. I flipped open the card to see if it had the usual sappy poetry that makes me gag. Ah, perfect, I thought, no sentiments inside. The couple looks kinda serious, no big smiles. But...the woman in the painting looks like Loretta all those years ago. On her folks' porch. And that fellow could be me. That's why I picked it out and bought it for our anniversary. Reminds me so much of that evening I asked her the big question, "Should we give up on growing beans and start a winery? How about it, Cherie?" I think she'll remember too. In fact, she'll be amazed that I thought of something so romantic after all these years. I usually forget our anniversary. And she always forgives me when we have enough champagne at our anniversary celebrations.

Oh yeah. Won't ever forget the beginning of our winery. Some pretty intense chats with her folks, my folks, the bank and the farmers at the co-op. Most folks said we were crazy. But Loretta's father was a cool old guy. He said, "Go for it. Your family grew grapes in France. If that's what you know, and you think it'll work, go ahead. Your call now, Jules."

Loretta studied up on grapes, the best climate, the harvest, the whole ball of wax. I cheered her on and did my part - contacted my uncles, asked them to send cuttings, talked to guys who grew grapes. I was excited...for the first time.

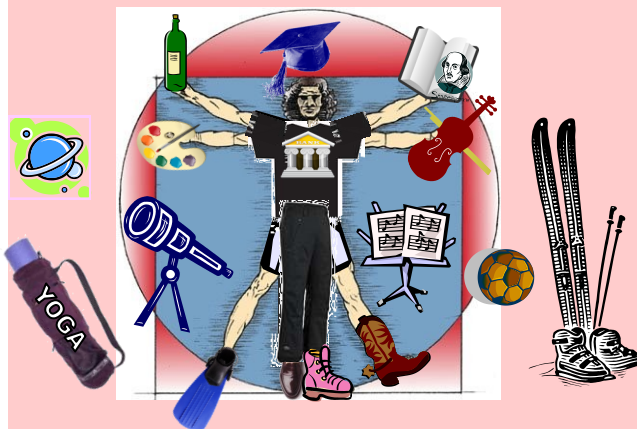
And so we started. I can still see Loretta, four months pregnant with our first kid Joannie, reading all the catalogues of wine equipment. And she'd call the wives at those other wineries to get the real nitty gritty. Crazy time. We were in for years of hard work, learning things the hard way, dealing with the weather. And the droughts, the bugs, the blights. So tough. Loretta stuck it out with me. And talked her old man into a loan when we needed to expand and buy the farm next door.

And we made it work. We own a first class winery, provide jobs for a hundred folks, have five grown kids, and all those grandkids...lots of wine under the bridge.

Yeah, I'll get this card and write, "Happy 60th, Loretta, my love. Remember when we started on your folks' front porch? Meet you there tonight for a glass of champagne, mon amour. Jules"



A Renaissance Man



It's so hard to find a true Renaissance man,
a man who can bowl me over
with talk of Etruscan linguistics,
of spectra and strange supernova.

If he could spout Virgil in Latin,
I'd feel my knees getting quite weak.
I'd start sprouting goose bumps all over
if thermodynamics he'd speak.

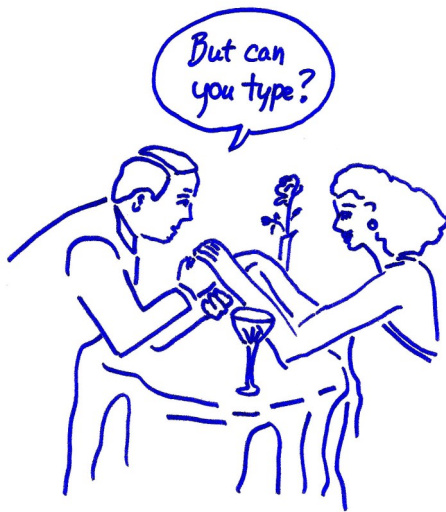
He knows of red giants and white dwarfs.
He's read every Shakespeare play,
has nodding acquaintance with Steinbeck,
can hum several themes by Bizet.

When he sits down at the piano
and plinks out a Cole Porter tune,
then segues right into Tchaikovsky,
I'd be so impressed I could swoon.

Forget all the Gables and Redfords,
the guys who resemble Tom Cruise.
If offered a date with such idols,
I think I'd most likely refuse.

Just give me a man who's well-rounded,
a near-extinct Renaissance man;
I'll show you someone who I'm sure will
turn me on like no one else can.

- Erica Stux



Rick Duncan, Author

He is a musician, songwriter, poet, arranger, and parody writer. He has written over 300 poems, 300 original songs, and 1,100 parodies, mostly in a humorous or sarcastic vein. This poem is found in his book *LOP-SIDED LAUGHS*, edited by CWC/WV member Tina Glasner. For info on Duncan: www.wheresmypizza.com under the tabs RAD I and RAD II.



Tina Glasner, Illustrator

Tina uses both sides of her brain. As a technical writer, her subjects include computer hardware and software. As a freelancer, she

has authored over 50 published articles, produced newsletters, and also worked for many authors as a developmental editor and book designer. She created a cartoon panel about the writing life called "Double Space" that was published for 3 years in the newsletters of the California Writers Club. She has also created logos, illustrations, and pen and ink portraits. In 2004 she was class speaker at ITT Technical Institute, where she studied Multimedia.

Collaboration

For *LOP-SIDED LAUGHS*, Tina has created art to team with a selection of Rick's poems (some recent, some written early in his career), and contributed her editing and book layout skills. Rick and Tina hope people will enjoy the book on several levels: the messages, the bylines, and the drawings.

Tina's website: www.dreadedmomlady.com

WHAT A MAN NEEDS

From "Lopsided Laughs," by Rick Duncan, illustrated by Tina Glasner



There are people that insist
That a woman's place is in the kitchen
This I find offensive and based in macho hype
What a real man must enlist
Is a woman who is wise
In the world of word processing
And knows just what to type

There are throwbacks that prefer
That the bedroom is the place
That a woman must excel to be desired
Well, I must beg to defer
I believe the greatest prize
Is a lady who as secretary
Would be quickly hired

What a man needs is a cleric
For he lacks the needed skills
What a man needs is a woman
To organize the bills
To a man it's esoteric
His brain is at a loss
He doesn't have the patience
To master Word or DOS

Every secretary knows
That her boss is good for speed
But he's useless if it's accuracy you need
Well, the same is true at home
Though the poor lug tries
He just can't balance his checkbook
And instructions he can't read

What a man needs is a cleric
He gets lost using a mouse
What a man needs is a woman
To organize the house



Oh, how wonderful it is to thrive

And not just survive

Oh, how wonderful it is to be alive

To have the spirit

Within revived!

**Red Geraniums,
White and yellow chrysanthemums**

**Delight my soul
Through the garden I stroll!**

The essence of living I've learned

**I can even spend time alone,
But**

Not without a radio or a telephone!

**The world about me sings:
The melody of birds**

The chatter of squirrels

The rustle of leaves

Imbue the world with beauty

And

My heart sings!

Oh, how wonderful it is to THRIVE

Not just survive!

OH, HOW WONDERFUL TO BE ALIVE!

- Helen S. Katzman



The moment Allan opened his eyes and felt the cool spring breeze slip through the open bedroom window, he recalled the night before and how much he loved Annik after almost forty years of marriage.

"Good morning," she said, opening another window. "You wouldn't believe how perfect today is."

"Mmm," Allan mumbled. "I remember how perfect last night was."

She sat on the edge of the bed and kissed him on the forehead. She was fully dressed.

"You ready to go to work?" Allan asked.

"Yeah. I have a meeting at eight-thirty. I need to get there early. Help me with this necklace, will you?"

Allan sat up and stretched his fingers like he was about to perform a complex Bach sonata. "Okay, but first I have to kiss you." Pressing his lips to her neck, he breathed deeply. "You smell good. You shouldn't waste that at work."

"Hey, you horny old man. Didn't you have enough last night?"

Ignoring her question, he continued kissing the back of her neck. "I have an idea," he said.

"Sorry. You had an idea last night. At our age we're allowed only one idea in a twenty-four hour period."

"I'm serious. Stay home. Call in sick."

"Honey, I can't. I have a staff meeting."

"And what happens if you're not there?"

"There's no meeting. I'm the boss, remember?"

"Then you won't miss the meeting." Allan felt proud of his logic, but Annik remained unimpressed.

Everyone will be there. I have to go."

"Why? They're supposed to get to work by eight anyway. You think anyone will mind if there's no meeting? Tell them they can eat the donuts without you."

"Very funny."

"I'm serious. Stay home. It's a beautiful Atlanta morning. We'll go to Murphy's for breakfast and we'll hold hands and walk around the galleries at Little Five Points. It'll be like we're kids home for a snow day, except

we don't have to wear gloves."

"Except we're not kids. We have responsibilities."

Allan took Annik in his arms. "We've been responsible all our lives. Good jobs, children, grandkids. It's time we did something irresponsible. We've earned it."

"It's easy for you. You're retired."

"Semi-retired"

"Okay, semi. You can take the morning off, but..."

Allan interrupted her. "You can be retired too, you know. Semi or completely."

"We've had this conversation before. What will I do?"

"Well we can start by going out for breakfast. Days work themselves out after a good Western omelet."

"I'm not so sure. What if I'm bored?"

"How can you be bored? Then try a Mexican omelet with a little jalapeno."

"I'm serious. You know what I mean."

"Look. Retirement means waking up every morning and deciding what you want to do. It's the definition of freedom."

"That's what scares me. What if there's nothing I want to do?"

"You have to trust your own imagination."

They kissed. She let her hands slide over his body. They kissed again. "My imagination is working," she whispered.

"Then trust it."

She pushed him back down on the bed.

"But what about your job and my breakfast?"

Annik began unbuttoning her blouse. "I feel a cold coming on. I'll call the office. But, first, you're going to have to earn your breakfast."



Wayne Scheer, a fellow member of the Internet Writers Workshop, is a prodigious flash fiction writer. Google his name and you'll find a plethora of Wayne Scheer flash fiction on the ezines. His official bio:

*Wayne Scheer has been locked in a room with his computer and turtle since his retirement. (Wayne's, not the turtle's.) To keep from going back to work, he's published hundreds of short stories, essays and poems, including, *Revealing Moments*, a collection of twenty-four flash stories, available at <http://www.pearnoir.com/thumbscrews.htm>. He's been nominated for four Pushcart Prizes and a Best of the Net. Wayne can be contacted at wvscheer@aol.com.*

How I Became a Clown

A clown often has a dramatic effect on the audience. For example, entertaining retirement people in a retirement home can be very rewarding. A clown can put a smile on someone's face even though they recently had a stroke. It's a magical experience. Deep down in my soul I've always wanted to be a clown.

Clowns wear queer costumes with so many bright colors. Polka dots, diamond shape, squares, circles, of red, yellow, green, and brown. If it's a loud color, a clown will show it off. The outfit is loose fitting and the shoes are too big. Clowns love attention and will do anything to get your eyes focused on the outfit he or she is wearing.

When else would I ever get a chance to wear make up? Every clown uses a base of white and gets a ghostly effect from the start. The eyebrows are usually stashed with brown and then red takes over the mouth and lips. It is so much fun to lift the eyebrows up and down.

Soon, the clown brings on the best theatrical he or she can muster. The cornier the joke the better the audience likes it. Here's an example of a knock, knock, joke.



Clown 1. "Knock, knock."

Clown 2. "Who's there?"

Clown 1. "Aldo."

Clown 2. "Aldo who?"

Clown 1. "I'll do anything for you, babe."

The clown world opened up its doors and allowed me to enter. I had no experience but knew it was something I wanted to do. About ten years ago I had heard of a clown course in Orange County. It seemed too far away for me to travel that long distance.

Age was another factor I was thinking about. I was 72 and wondered if taking a course in clowning was going to be worth the effort.

The real break for me was an article in the *Daily News* on



An account of the evolution of **Peachy Keen**, alias CWC/WV member Ed Rasky

July 20th, 2008. It was written by Dennis McCarthy and was a human interest story about the Carousel of Clowns. These clowns were mostly women and had been in business for over 20 years. They entertain children in hospitals or lonely seniors in convalescent homes. Here's a quote from the article: "The Carousel of Clowns is looking for new members to train as clowns, and for new places to visit around the valley where people might need a smile or a laugh." I called up the head clown, **Strawberry**, and told her I was interested. This added a whole new chapter to my life.

Making up a clown name was intriguing. Our senior clown was named **Strawberry** and another was called **Melodius**. Clown names are usually unusual. I'm a tennis player and one of my partners, Bing, always used the expression "peachy keen" whenever he made a good shot. That phrase became my new clown name, **Peachy Keen**. Isn't that a clever little story?

Another search came when I had to choose a new outfit. It had to be baggy and have loud colors. I didn't want to spend a lot of money. My wife and I tried The Salvation Army and tried on anything that was colorful. We weren't too happy with what we saw. We finally went to a costume store that had a lot of clown outfits. The outfit makes me look very big and had a lot of yellow and red. It was perfect and I was almost ready to make my debut.

I soon learned that there were two types of entertainment in clowning. One is a group show that lasts almost an hour. The other is an individual effort where clowns do one-on-one activities. It might be a magic trick or making animal balloons for children. I prefer the show where we all sit around and make up skits. I like the attention I get when I perform solo. For example, I do a creative dance to the music of **YMCA**. Another clown called **Melodius** sings one or two songs. Then we usually do **Knock, Knock** jokes. The cornier the joke, the better they seem to like it.

Our leader, **Strawberry**, performs a corny doctor's skit with two other clowns. Then we do a skit with "**Take Me Out to the Ball Game**" theme. Towards the end we do a few magic tricks and then do the **Chicken Dance** or the **Hokey Pokey Dance**. We do a lot of hand movements and get the audience involved.

The audience appreciates everything we do. I still have a lot to learn but clowning is something I'll never give up. I love being a clown even though people see me all dressed up and have a nice laugh when they see me with all the make up on.

by **Ed Rasky**



We're all familiar with the Shakespearean quote, "The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." To paraphrase in a colloquial genre: Stuff happens. We are not masters of our fate and plans are often set awry or changed in unforeseen ways. My theme for the March submissions is the term - Outrageous Fortune. Send me stories of good or bad luck, or surprising outcomes that no one saw coming. In our Collage anthology are several examples of "stuff happens" or the quirks of outrageous fortune. I may ask to publish a couple of those anecdotes, but don't be shy about submitting a piece for my review.

As we enter the Spring season, St. Patrick's Day is once more upon us. We think of the four-leaved clovers, St. Pat and the snakes and the Fairy Folk. The Irish leprechaun was a tricky creature. He could bring massive amounts of good luck, a pot of gold, or send a poor mortal into a tail spin. One had to be clever to deal with the Wee Ones - slingers of ironic mishaps. Perhaps you've been clever or incredibly lucky or star crossed. Tell me all about it. I want to read your story.

- **Kathy Highcove**



Gazing at the Stars



Because he wants to know how God put the stars up there, the man lays on the ground looking up at the sky.

The immense night extends like soft black velvet... upholstering the dark with tiny-mirror-like-stars... playing tricks with his eyes.

It seems that tonight... the stars have moved around, like sparkles of diamonds flickering in other places... No one hears him when he whispers, "Dear God, permit me to count them all one by one."

And he stares at the brightest, choosing it as the beginning of his quest to count all stars... no matter the years it takes until he is done. But, it seems... that by staring at the North Star, his eyes blur, water and blink... merging it with all the others... The stars dance around holding hands in circles of light. The man loses his count in the mystery of the galaxies created by God through the millenniums. No one is allowed to neither count his creations... nor question the pieces of light he dropped one night when he tripped on a cloud... leaving the stars suspended with invisible threads swinging in blessed harmony. God trusted the clouds to hold His mysteries forever.

Man has gone through parching sands and furious seas to count God's brilliant toys, but only He can keep a watch... not those who walk beneath the heavenly blanket above.

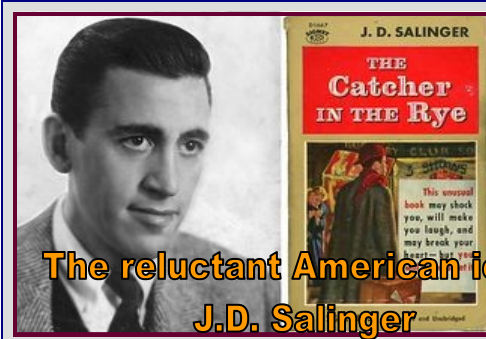
Man wants to know, where do the stars hide in the ebony blackness of the night? Does He count the hours that go as fast as a flash? But who dares to knock on heaven's door to find out.

Does God pull down the dark velvet curtain from afar crunching his unanswerable secrets? Would God keep man standing at His door? How long?

Man awakens slowly forgetting his count, opens his eyes to see that all stars have quickly vanished. With his chin resting on his hands, the man now lays face down on the ground. A trail of ants quickly moves in straight formation... going somewhere with definite purpose. He decides to count those instead.

White canvas shoes stop quietly. "Bless his soul. He's here!" A familiar voice calls out. Other canvas shoes approach and a group of men dressed in white carry the man back to his room where countless dreams await him.

By **Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein**



The reluctant American Icon -

J.D. Salinger

"Publishing is an invasion of my privacy. I like to write. I live to write. But I write just for myself and my own pleasure."

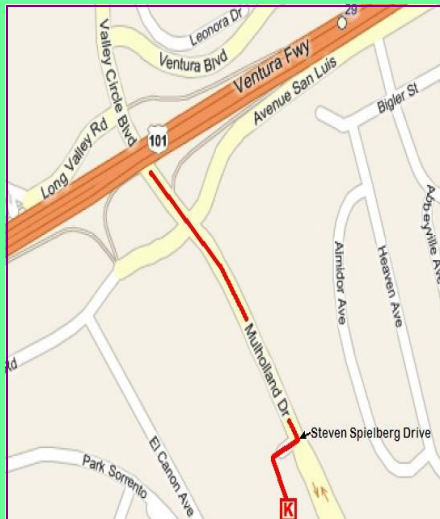
Our members revisit Salinger influence on literature:

When I was in high school, there was only one book that captured the minds of my peers more than any other book. *Catcher in the Rye* was one of the most prolific books of the twentieth century making J.D. Salinger one of the most renowned authors of today. As writers, we all live in our writings and after some contemplation, I realized that the general public knew very little of such a famous writer. It is possible he was like his character, Holden Caulfield: sardonic and disillusioned on the surface, but beneath a soft-hearted sensitive boy lost in a world where his own hope had gone astray. But perhaps, much like his death, Salinger will remain an enigma of intellect, only touched by his writings and the entangled threads of history. **Samantha Berley**

J.D. Salinger wrote *The Catcher in the Rye* in 1951, the year I was married. I still remember the many discussions about the book with my UCLA alumni friends. What is fascinating to me is that I have a book of his stories written between 1940 and 1948. Someone published his early short stories without his permission. The book is a paperback without a publisher or date! It is titled *The Complete Uncollected Short Stories of J.D. Salinger Volume 2*, and includes *A Young Girl in 1941 with No Waist at All*, *The Inverted Forest*, *A Girl I Knew*, *Blue Melody*, and *Hapworth 16, 1924*. I bought the book off a bargain table many years ago and didn't think much about it until I read a newspaper article some time after that titled, "Salinger Says His Stories Were Pirated." I have this article taped to the front page of the book. **Lillian Rodich**

There are seminal moments which a person always remembers: the assassination of JFK, landing on the moon, to name a few. I have to include discovering *Catcher in the Rye* as a memorable event. It was the first book I read (in school) where swear words were used with abandon and the teenage angst was forever captured in Caulfield.

Later as a teacher, I looked forward to guiding my 10th graders through this classic. Even 50 years later, they could identify to this 'prep school' misfit. The language usually didn't faze them and they shared Holden's loathing of phonies. Salinger has truly given us a classic for all ages. **Sheila Moss**



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 Katzenberg Room. 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, Feb. 6th, 2009 at 1:30 p.m.

MAILING ADDRESS

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Submission Guidelines

Please submit a work two weeks in advance of publication. Edit to keep the work between 200 and 500 words. Poems should also be compact: 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. Notify the editor if you wish the work returned.



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