Many active CWC writers belong to a critique group that reviews and offers helpful suggestions on compositions or poetry. Most critique groups in our car-oriented society meet in a home, face-to-face. Unable to drive a car for 15 years, I found meeting in local critique groups to be impractical.

Her recent book, *Cryo Kid: Drawing a New Map*, was given finalist status in the 2009 National Indie Awards of Excellence. Here is a brief synopsis of the plot found in Copnick's own website: *Cryo Kid: Drawing a New Map* is an exploration inspired by true experience.... Her own granddaughter, the Cryo Kid of the title, seven years old in 2007, came into being through an anonymous donor from a sperm bank.

At our next meeting Copnick will speak on the future of publishing, her own books and projects, and give tips for our aspiring authors. She will also share her writing discipline and publishing and marketing experiences. There may be time for questions.

Get ready for a stimulating hour in the Katzenberg Room on March 6th. Hold on to your hats! For additional background info on Ms. Copnick:

ccopnick@earthlink.net
And for more information on the *Cryo Kid*:

www.cryokid.com

The Internet Writing Workshop

Many active CWC writers belong to a critique group that reviews and offers helpful suggestions on compositions or poetry. Most critique groups in our car-oriented society meet in a home, face-to-face. Unable to drive a car for 15 years, I found meeting in local critique groups to be impractical.

A few years ago a freelance writer I met on the Internet put me in touch with the Internet Writing Workshop - a totally online collection of critique groups whose membership extends all around the globe. It is the oldest continuous writers' group on the Internet. Membership is free.

Since I joined the IWW my writing has improved steadily every year. I have good friends in this virtual group and we often chat online in our different cities in different countries: India, England, Germany, China, Australia and many locations in Canada and the United States.

It's very stimulating for a house bound writer to have a huge collection of friends who are also skilled writers in the English language. (The poor writers or those with little English skills or little tolerance for critiques don’t last long in the IWW.)

The administrators of the IWW keep an eye on the discussions and the different critique groups. We have had no problems with viruses or spam.

If you are interested in this virtual workshop, here’s the url of the primary site:

http://www.internetwritingworkshop.org/

The Internet Writers Workshop started up a blog this year. Check out this url to view recent published work by our many members:

http://internetwritingworkshop.blogspot.com/

Tell them Kathy Highcove sent you. They’ll know me.

-KH
**Kathy’s Corner**

As the months go by, I continue to learn new editing techniques and format alternatives. That’s why I’m now appearing on page 2 along with some other features formerly found on the last page. Why the changes? I want to be sure that my message is up front and center for the coming months. This issue’s theme is luck. Good luck, bad luck, and in between luck. Surprises and lucky breaks are retold in the March stories by our contributors.

The April issue will honor poetry month and poets. April is National Poetry Month. *In Focus* will feature an article on a recent poet laureate and will display poems by past and present members. If you want to have a poem appear in the April issue, or if you’ve written a limerick, send it to me at khighcove@yahoo.com

April is also known for April Fool’s Day. Let’s have a sampling of humor from our membership. We all could use a good laugh as we prepare those tax forms.

Remember to send notice if you have a special announcement of publication or performance or a public honor that involves your writing skills and the submission guidelines. All for now, Kathy

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**February Meeting**

**February Meeting**

Like hearts hopes and minds photos by Ken Wilkins

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**CWC/WV Branch Officers**

**Executive Board**

President ... Dave Wetterberg
Vice-president/Membership ... Sheila Moss
Vice-president/Programs ... Yolanda Fintor
Secretary ... Danielle Ste. Just
Treasurer ... Dean Stewart

**Board of Directors**

Newsletter Editor, Publicity ... Kathy Highcove
Webmaster ... David Burr
Photographer ... Ken Wilkins
On Site Coordinator ... Betty Freeman
Critique Groups Coordinator ... Lillian Rodich
Open Mike ... Bill Sorrells
Members-at-Large ... Bill Hitchins, Karen Gorback

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**Submission Guidelines**

1. Try to submit a work two weeks in advance of publication.
2. Poems should be of moderate length. I edit to keep stanzas in the original form submitted.
3. Prose up to 400 words fills about a half page. Longer pieces need most or all of a page. It’s helpful to the editors if your prose submission is edited down to below 1000 words. Use Spellcheck before submission. Check for tense uniformity.
4. The editor reserves the right to accept or reject any work submitted. Space might be limited and the omission based on editing difficulties.
5. Be advised that the editor may need to make minor changes in text to reduce a document’s size or correct grammatical or spelling errors.
6. Works not used may be stored and used in a future issue of InFocus.
Sometimes true life is stranger than fiction. Or perhaps as convoluted as a fictional best seller. Geri Spieler has built her journalistic career on retelling real events in a creative— but accurate style. She commits to thorough fact checking and builds a story in accordance with journalistic standards. “I’m a journalist,” she proudly proclaimed at our February meeting and went on to clearly define her role as a creative non-fiction journalist.

Spieler came prepared to the Katzenberg Room with handouts titled: “What is ‘Creative Non-Fiction? It’s Not Fiction.” The definition of C-NF? The reporter of real events must stick to the known facts and verify those facts before presenting that information to the public. Any article, document or manuscript written about a real person, place or thing is an example of creative non-fiction. Non-fiction literature or historical non-fiction is another example of the C-NF genre. Think of Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* or any book that retells a true story and sticks to the real deal. C-NF writers, however, are not court reporters. Spieler spelled it out:

“Although the story may already be generally known, a C-NF writer still needs to write a readable and interesting account. The goal is to write a page turner, not a dry recounting of an event.”

A C-NF writer needs a theme— the thread that defines the story, such as “Skier Lindsey Vonn battles shin injury in her pursuit of a gold medal.” The second needed element— plot— provides the details of how the injured skier managed to recuperate and win a gold medal in an Olympic slalom contest.

Geri Spieler has built her career on creative non-fiction. She worked as a reporter for several publications, but she is best known for her book *Taking Aim At The President: The Remarkable Story of the Woman Who Shot At Gerald Ford*.

Our visiting speaker is recognized in journalism and C-NF circles as a thorough researcher and fact checker. She has also been extremely careful to avoid plagiarism in her writing; she gave examples of touchy situations that might lead to legal problems.

Spieler’s presentation held our interest and she was stopped several times by an audience member with a question. The hour went by too quickly. We hope to welcome Geri Spieler again in the near future and learn more of her career as a sleuth, author and journalist.

Geri Spieler is the type of talented journalist who restages reality through the printed word. Our news media outlets would come to a screeching halt without the contributions of the creative non-fiction writers working behind the scenes.

For information on Geri Spieler:
GeriSpieler-www.gerisieler.com
Email: gs@gmail.com

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**She Tends to our Pens and Queues**

Sheila Moss’ POV: When I took office this fall as Membership Chairman, I realized that I was honored to know the names of all our members, some 55 strong. Well, I have learned most of them as well as learning who wants to wear a name tag and who doesn’t.

Like a number of CWC members, Betty Freeman was instrumental in getting me to join shortly after I retired as an English teacher at John F. Kennedy in 1999. I’d always had some success in the business end of writing, but I wanted to explore magazine writing, fiction and non fiction.

I took a third place fiction award at our first writer’s conference. I’ve sold an article to Dialogue Magazine and two articles in Senior Plus. Thanks to my article on tomatoes, I’ve become a bit of a tomato guru.

Serendipity played a role in my obtaining a monthly column in the Northridge Community Newspaper. For over a year, I covered Northridge news from faithful dogs to an unlikely Jewish Santa.

Ed.’s note: We are very fortunate to have Sheila Moss as our Membership Chair. I have known Sheila for several years and have learned that she’s the polar opposite of sloppy and disorganized. When Sheila takes on a responsibility, by gum, things are going to get done and get done right! Thanks to Sheila your name tag should be waiting every meeting in that file box, or she’ll know the reason why. If it’s not there, think about it. Did you take it home the month before? Very likely. Every meeting, be assured that an efficient and helpful Sheila will be ready with pens and signature lists. Thanks to Sheila Moss, CWC/WV members will be able to greet each other by name, every meeting.

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**Tina Glasner Pays a Visit in March**

Tina Glasner, a former CWC/SBW president and newsletter editor, Jack London award winner, and editor for several CWC authors, plans to visit us in March. Tina always has a new iron in the literary fires to tell us about. We look forward to seeing her again.
A haiku is a deceptively simple, short Japanese poem. Like other poems, it's easy to write one, whereas writing a good one is quite another matter.

**White moth, flutter off:**
_Fly back into my breast now_  
_Quickly, my own soul!_

The haiku’s reputation for simplicity of course comes from its shortness --- three lines: five syllables in the first and third lines, seven in the second line. The examples below do not necessarily follow this 5-7-5 count because they are translations from the Japanese.

**Standing still at dusk**  
**Listen ... in far distances**  
**The song of froglings!**

The poem is usually set in one of the seasons of the year. The season is not always named, but rather alluded to.

**Silent the old town ...**  
**The scent of flowers floating**  
**and evening bell.**

In the best haiku a single image dominates, intended to bring out an emotion in the reader --- joy, tranquility, sadness etc.. There is a sense of closeness to the poet, and he speaks in the first person, the “I”.

**Rainy-month, dripping**  
**on and on as I lie abed ...**  
**Ah, old man’s memories!**

Favorite subjects are flowers, small creatures, insects, dogs, cats, other small animals.

**Rash tomcat lover ...**  
**Careless even of that rice**  
**Stuck to your whiskers**

Aesthetically, the haiku is a beautiful genre of poetry. In practice, writing them is great for developing the knack of writing sensory images --- images of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, which are as important in fiction and non-fiction as they are in poetry.  
—daw

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Opportunity Knocks

by Lenora Smalley

There are many reasons for entering contests. Writers may want to evaluate their work in relation to other writers’ work. Comparisons will certainly test your mettle. Even if you are not the winner, finalists are often given recognition for their efforts. A contest may introduce your name and provide an example of your work to outstanding and influential judges.

The book contest is offered by many academic institutions, established literary publishers or university presses. Besides offering a cash prize to winners, they usually offer publication of their books.

Don’t be afraid to enter these contests. They can be vehicles that will feature new talent. These contests will accept submissions - along with a hefty readers fee from all who adhere to the guidelines. **Be sure to read the guidelines.**

If you have a book-length manuscript, make sure you have worked and honed it over a period of time. Send only your best work. The following book contests give book publication as part of the award.

**The Iowa Short Fiction,**

Considers a manuscript of at least 150 pages. Entries must be unpublished although individual stories may have been previously published. No entry fee. The prize is book publication by the University of Iowa Press. Manuscripts received August 1 - September 30 each calendar year will be considered. Learn more at:  
[uiowapress.org/authors/iowa-short-fiction.html](http://uiowapress.org/authors/iowa-short-fiction.html)

**The Brittingham and Felix Pollak Prizes in Poetry:**


Each entry will be considered for both prizes, $1000 and $1500 honorarium to cover expenses for reading in Madison, Wisconsin and book publication by the University of Wisconsin Press. Manuscripts received September 1 - October 1 each calendar year will be considered. Learn more:  
[uwpress.wisc.edu/poetryguide.html](http://uwpress.wisc.edu/poetryguide.html)

Contests can be used for other purposes. View the results of a popular - and humorous - contest among many writers on page 6.
I had to know what was happening. We were 250 miles and six hours away from our baby girl. I had no choice but to call Dr. Schulte at his home, his number having been given to me years ago by the kindly, dear man.

His wife Jackie answered and informed me that he wasn’t there. He was doing hospital rounds.

“Was he,” I wondered frantically, “tending to my daughter in the hospital? Was she part of his rounds?” Hearing the panic in my voice, she said she didn’t know what was happening, why his office wanted me to call, but that she would have his service page him, and he would get back to me as soon as possible.

The 14 minutes I sat in that office, waiting for his call, were among the longest 14 minutes of my life. I wanted to call home again, or try Harriet’s house, but I couldn’t tie up the phone if Dr. Schulte was trying to call me. Asa and I looked at each other, tearfully, afraid, thinking the worst.

At last the phone rang, and it was Dr. Schulte. He was sorry his staff had not been able to reach me. There was no cause for alarm. Rory was just fine. His office manager had called our home earlier that day and the woman who answered, after learning the reason for the call, gave them this number to call.

“The reason we were calling was to inform you that Rory won that national art contest she entered a few weeks ago. If you remember, it carries with it a $1,000 first prize.”

I started crying then, all the pent up pressure released. “It’s okay, Asa,” I remember sobbing. “Rory won an art contest. The doctor’s office was calling to tell us that.”

Dr. Schulte apologized for scaring us, and when I finally reached Harriet, she told me she and Rory had gone out to dinner to celebrate the occasion.

Asa and I celebrated that night, too, and decided to forego any more fishing, and return home the next day.

The picture that evoked such strong memories was a photo of Rory and her pediatrician, and it had appeared in the Salem Statesman-Journal newspaper, along with a lengthy story about a local girl winning an art poster contest, sponsored by a national pharmaceutical company.

Shelley Burrell Lewelling, grad of SF State, worked as editor and reporter in Albany OR, Salem OR, and Honolulu Hawaii. Won national prize for Capital Life section of Capital Journal. Also many state awards. Her stint in Hawaii was last working experience, hired as people editor, but ended up being roving reporter/interviewer! Married to a Salem lawyer, now a widow, one daughter, Rory!

Eds. Note: A few years ago I wrote the essay “Finding Chuck.” I described the experience on finding my high school classmate’s name on the Vietnam Wall in Washington D.C. First Lt. Charles Burrell was the younger brother of Shelley Lewelling. Shelley grew up and lived many years in my hometown of Salem, Oregon, and a mutual friend put us in contact after the story was published in my high school’s alumni newsletter. Our correspondence has thrived. I enjoy Shelley’s style of writing and here share her essay about potential bad news that segued into very good news. Any parent can emphasize with her experience.

-KH
Continued from Opportunity Knocks on page 4

Bulwer-Lytton Contest Winners 2010

For all lovers of good writing, here in reverse order are this year’s winners of the San Jose State University English Department’s Bulwer-Lytton contest (aka “It Was a Dark and Stormy Night” contest) for the best worst opening sentence in a novel:

10. As a scientist, Throckmorton knew that if he were ever to break wind in the echo chamber, he would never hear the end of it.

9. Just beyond the Narrows, the river widens.

8. With a curvaceous figure that Venus would have envied, a tanned unblemished oval face framed with lustrous thick brown hair, deep azure-blue eyes fringed with long black lashes, perfect teeth that vied for competition, and a small straight nose, Marilee had a beauty that defied description.

7. Andre, a simple peasant, had only one thing on his mind as he crept along the East wall: “Andre creep... Andre creep...Andre creep.”

6. Stanislaus Smedley, a man always on the cutting edge of narcissism, was about to give his body and soul to a back-alley sex-change surgeon to become the woman he loved.

5. Although Sarah had an abnormal fear of mice, it did not keep her from eking out a living at a local pet store.

4. Stanley looked quite bored and somewhat detached, but then penguins often do.

3. Like an over-ripe beefsteak tomato rimmed with cottage cheese, the corpulent remains of Santa Claus lay dead on the hotel floor.

2. Mike Hardware was the kind of private eye who didn’t know the meaning of the word “fear”; a man who could laugh in the face of danger and spit in the eye of death — in short, a moron with suicidal tendencies.

AND THE WINNER IS...

1. The sun oozed over the horizon, shoved aside darkness, crept along the greensward, and, with sickly fingers, pushed through the castle window, revealing the pillaged princess, hand at throat, crown asunder, gaping in frenzied horror at the sated, sodden amphibian lying beside her, disbelieving the magnitude of the frog’s deception, screaming madly, “You lied!”

After the fourth week of training in a camp of pyramidal tents near Crowcombe, UK, our engineering regiment was ready for a break. The commander allowed trucks to take the men to nearby towns for a day’s relaxation. I climbed onto a truck heading for Bridgewater, a small fishing town at the English Channel. Upon arrival some of the men headed for the nearest Pub, others went sightseeing, and I spotted a red brick building with a sign reading Recreation Center.

When I entered the near empty building I saw a large indoor swimming pool with no one in the water. I was directed to the Men’s Locker-room and given a towel. I undressed except for my shorts and went to the pool. As I was about to dive, I noticed a beautiful young woman in a bathing suit leaving the Women’s Locker Room across the room and walk up to the pools edge. I pretended I didn’t notice her and dove into the water. She did the same and we crossed each other as we swam. About the third time, she smiled as we passed and on the fourth time we met underwater and she kissed me on the lips and waited at the far side of the pool.

Until that moment, neither of us knew whether the other was a Yank or a Brit, a civilian or in the military. I was happy to find out her name was Diane and she was with the American Red Cross. We spent the rest of the day swimming and diving until I had to catch my truck back to camp. I promised I would see her the next Sunday at the same time and place. I smiled all the way back to camp as I was sure I now had a girl friend here in England.

The next Sunday I dressed in a freshly pressed Class A uniform and climbed back on the truck. “Are we going to Bridgewater?” I asked. “No” said the driver. “We’re gong to Taunton. It’s a bigger town.” I pleaded and begged, but to no avail. We went to Taunton. I didn’t even have Diane’s last name, address or unit.

Months later, after the Normandy Invasion, our regiment found ourselves in a bivouac area near Le Mans, France. A Red Cross truck entered the woods to boost our morale by handing out cups of coffee. I wasn’t much interested in coffee until I recognized that one of the girls was Diane. “Hi Diane,” I shouted. She didn’t recognize me in muddy uniform, steel helmet, rifle and other gear. “Don’t you remember me? I asked. “No,” she said bluntly as she filled my canteen cup with coffee.

Dejected I walked way from the truck with only a memory of the pool in Bridgewater and a cup of cold coffee.

- Max Schwartz
It was obvious that our six-month old baby boy was slipping away fast and there seemed little we could do. We were at a mission station in the Ogaden Desert in the Horn of Africa, some six hundred miles from medical help. Our station doctor and one nurse were on furlough back in the U.S. My wife, the only nurse left on the compound, was overworked from the additional work at the clinic and small hospital. She tried everything she knew from her medical experience to keep our little David from vomiting his every meal. As the nausea persisted, we could see him grow weaker and weaker. It was getting to the point where we had pictured in our minds where we would bury him. Between the two tamarisk pines just north of the clinic would be the most protected. The grave would NOT be patterned after the typical ones used by the nationals ... too prone for the hyenas to rob at night. We would use what little cement we had available to form a sturdy vault.

Our pessimism seemed to take over. We believed in prayer but at the same time knew that although God answers ALL prayers, some are “No.” There was no way for us to contact our praying friends and relatives. The only prayers going up for our dying child were from his mom and dad.

There were a lot of “what ifs” going through our minds. What if an Ethiopian military plane made an unscheduled visit to our village? We could fly our baby out to “civilization.” No chance. It wouldn’t happen and besides, the makeshift airfield sometimes used by the air force was in terrible shape from the recent rains. “What if an Italian truck driver made it through the flooded area north of the village?” If he did, I could bundle up our child and accompany him as he left. Forget it. The loaded lorries had already sat for days some miles away waiting for the roads to dry up. It would be days, even weeks, before the truckers would head northward again to larger villages and sites where medical help could be found. Time was slipping away.

The nights were the worst. My wife needed her sleep to be able to carry on her nursing duties during the day, so I tended to our sick child at night. The sounds of Africa at night emphasized the desolation we faced. I could hear lions roar from Gal Wane (The Big Infidel) mesa. I heard the mocking laughs of hyenas lurking near the livestock just outside the compound. Braying donkeys at night are even more irritating than in the daytime. And then there were the mosquitoes ... the ever buzzing mosquitoes ... a constant reminder that malaria was but a bite away.

Every time the baby whimpered I rushed to his crib, pulled back the mosquito netting, lifted him up and made an attempt to force some formula down, hoping it would stay down. Each time I picked him up I noticed he was just a bit weaker. I HAD to do something.

I knew that the doctor, now on furlough, kept a small pharmacy adjoining the operating room. Perhaps there was something stored there that would help. I grabbed a flashlight and walked across the quiet compound. As I walked past the small hospital ward, I was tempted to show my light through the open door. I didn’t because I knew what I would see ... most of the patients lying on the floor while their relatives occupied the hospital beds. It was probably the only time that any of them had slept in a real bed.

As I unlocked the door to the tiny room that served as a pharmacy, I noticed three or four shelves of medical samples ... samples sent to the mission doctor from all over Europe and a few from America. I shined my light across the array not really knowing what I was looking for, but hoping I would find a miracle amongst the numerous possibilities. Some were still in their original boxes, but most were brown and amber bottles. Instructions were usually in a foreign language: French, German or Italian. As my light swept back and forth, one bottle caught my eye. It stood out from the others because of its color. Cobalt blue. I picked it off the shelf, blew off the dust and noticed that the instructions were in German. Years ago I had taken a college course in German, but passed only because I had headed up the CARE package collection for the instructor. One phrase loomed out at me from the instructions. Even in German I recognized it was for anti nausea. Something told me I should try it on little Davy. Nothing to lose.

Back at the house I tried to make out the dosage instructions. That was hopeless so I’d just have to guess. I started out with half a teaspoon. The words “elixir belladonna” appeared somewhere on the bottle and in the back of my mind I remembered it was related to the nightshade plant, a poison. The dosage could be critical. It could either help him or kill him. The baby put up little resistance as I forced down the bitter medicine. I returned him to his crib, closed the mosquito net and whispered a prayer.

David slept through the rest of the night and when we offered him formula in the morning he held it down. Praise God! The medicine obviously contained a sedative so he slept most of the next day. Each time he awoke we fed him food and he kept it down. Within a few days he was much stronger and it appeared he was “out of the woods.”

Today, at the age of 46, our “baby” is a tall broad shouldered electronics engineer living in San Diego and employed by the United States Navy. In his spare time he often works as a body guard for celebrities.

When I see anything colored cobalt blue, the color triggers memories that go back to a time when that outstanding hue led to the healing of a dying child in far away Africa.
“Don’t go into Room Seven! Just listen to me, Mrs. Rodich. I promise I’ll take care of everything. Use the bungalow for now. That’s fine.”

Jerry talks earnestly. His pleading eyes and voice command my attention yet nothing registers. I know he’s trying to warn me or something. Still I’m so tired and numb I really don’t care.

Last week’s memories are swirling around me: trips to UCLA Medical Center, doctors and nurses in mud green cottons and hushed voices, far off laughter, paralyzing fear. I haven’t come to grips with the realities I face and a newly married son who will spend the next five months with his jaw wired shut and the threat of spreading cancer still very real. All the cards and calls and reassurances cannot assuage my grief or calm the ghost of fear which continues to strangle me.

It’s only 7:00 a.m. I have time to peruse the class rosters and make some last minute decisions about logistics. My pencil feels like lead and my hand shakes. Perhaps I should leave the office and check out the classrooms I’ll be using.

Room Seven is set up for art projects. I worked in frenzy the last week of school setting the room up for what I call my three ring circus: music, art and literature arranged in rotating groups. This time the theme is Rumpelstiltskin. One group will make puppets, one group will learn a dance, and one group will read a story at the listening center. After that I’ll go to Bungalow 25 to teach math and social studies. I’m grateful that the rooms are ready for business.

My heart is heavy. My son David was married on Sunday and had cancer surgery on Monday… just a week ago. A week of daily hospital visits and emotionally searing days and nights. Now I’m back to work and everything feels strange and unreal.

“Mrs. Rodich, I’m so very, very sorry. We just found out and I’ve reported it. A crew will be out this afternoon. I promise!”

I look at Jerry, our custodian. I’m confused. This doesn’t sound like a concerned message regarding David. Blindly I walk down the ramp toward Room Seven. My keys are in my hand. But I don’t need them. The door is unlocked and I enter.

At first I walk in and don’t notice anything unusual. Then everything comes into focus. What has happened? I sigh, feeling nothing, feeling a strange calm. The room is a shambles. Easels are knocked over and paint boxes have spilled rivers of red and green and yellow and blue all over the floor and across the story rug. The sun shines through a broken window in the corner and sparkles on shards of glass on the floor below. Every closet door is wide open and paper, crayons, pencils, books, clay, scissors and glue are strewn everywhere in vicious abandon.

Lines of crayon markings cover the chalkboards. Every chart is torn and trampled upon and the bulletin boards are stripped of their carefully planned magic. The tape recorder lies smashed on the floor and the earphones are ripped apart. Copies of Rumpelstiltskin are scattered, rumpled and torn, across the floor.

Then my senses become alerted to an awful smell. And I realize that the culprits who did all this finally urinated and defecated all over their handiwork! A wave of nausea washes over me. I turn away, walk out and close the door. Then I hurry over to the bungalow, go in and sit down at my desk. It is 7:20 a.m. I begin to revise my lesson plans as my mind goes on automatic. We’ll do simple projects I decide. And maybe I can tie math and geography in with a little art and music. I must make a list of materials I’ll need. It will be 8:00 a.m. soon and I need to be ready for my class.

Epilogue

Sometimes we manage to weather great storms by feeling their impact after the fact. By now I can look back on this episode with curiosity and relief … and certainly much pain. Still David survived his surgery and recovered remarkably well. Room Seven was re-done from floor to ceiling: materials were replaced and the window, through which the vandals had entered, was repaired and covered with protective wires. My summer school class had a successful session, including art and music, and sadness and fear finally left my soul.

- Lillian Rodich

PROTEST

friendly figures forage through glass grasses each blade a perilous point of contention

I rummage through the painter’s rags, torn and stained, still camouflaged and shredded by a vast community of doubt I still remember the scaffolds were high above the littered, brilliant, sparkling shards one figure fell too far for us to recognize his journey or even locate what he left behind for the friendly foragers to find.

Lillian Rodich
A Delayed Vacation  by Leslie Kaplan

It was the summer of 1985 and I’d just returned from working a trade show in San Francisco. It was hard work, but I loved my small jewelry business, which was started on my kitchen table in 1973. After standing on my feet for eight hours, three days in a row, my tired legs ached. Like a headache in my calves.

After the trade show ended my husband Sy and I planned to take our vacation. My husband arranged a great getaway for us. I had two days to pack before we left for a French Island in the Caribbean called Martinique. Reservations were arranged for accommodations at Club Med. Sy knew how I had always been attracted to tropical islands.

I was just about finished packing, wearing old shorts, when I looked up and saw Sy staring at my legs. He wasn’t staring in admiration, but rather in concern. So I stopped what I was doing and said, “What’s wrong honey? Why are you staring at my legs like that?” He hesitated a moment and finally said, “You’d better take a look at your left leg. I think we may have a problem.”

I stood in front of a full length mirror. I couldn’t believe what I saw: My left leg was twice the size of my right leg and looked like a tree trunk, completely shapeless. Oh my God! What happened to me? Sy was already on the phone with the doctor. I heard him say, “Right away.” He turned to me and calmly said, “C’mon honey, we’re meeting the doctor at the hospital. We have to check this out before we can go anywhere.”

Now the child in me was beyond reasoning with so I said, “I don’t want to go to the hospital! I want to go on vacation! Tomorrow!”

“I know.” He hugged me. “We’ll just have to wait and see what the doctor says.” My husband was also my best friend, my lover... my father. We headed out to the Century City Hospital which looked like a beautiful hotel, arranged for accommodations at Club Med. Sy knew how I had always been attracted to tropical islands.

One day I decided to take a walk in the hallway. With my heparin drip hanging on a pole with wheels, I went for a stroll. Halfway down the corridor, I encountered an unusual sight: An extremely tall dark and handsome black man dressed in a colorful African caftan walked toward me. As he passed by, he nodded and smiled at me. There was something familiar about him, though I’d never been to Africa.

I u-turned back to my room wondering about this strange and exciting looking person in the colorful caftan. As I got back into bed, weary after my short hike, who came walking into my room, right to my bedside, but the handsome African. He took my hand and kissed it, just like in some Hollywood movie, and introduced himself.

“I’m in the room next to yours.” Surprisingly, his accent was not African. Instead, it was purely American English as he said, “And my name is Lou Gossett. I hope you are doing well. I’ll be in to visit you again.” Then he left. He had a voice like the professional performer he was - Magical! Lou Gossett? Of course! “An Officer and a Gentleman.” That wonderful movie! That was where I knew him from! Sometimes, even in a hospital, interesting things can happen.

The following day was our 25th wedding anniversary and Sy made sure we had a celebration - even if it was in the hospital. He wheeled in a cart containing a bottle of champagne, an anniversary cake and white roses. My brother Herman and sister-in-law Loretta arrived with a silver ice cooler on a pedestal. Lou Gossett and his lovely lady friend joined us as we celebrated with champagne, cake and toasts to everyone’s good health and our anniversary.

Before I left the hospital, Lou gave me an autographed photo of himself in the uniform he wore in the movie. It read, “Happy anniversary to the Kaplan’s.”

My leg got back to normal and Sy kept his promise. Not only did we go to Martinique for one week, but continued on to a Cruise ship and some other islands... with a very romantic Italian crew.
"But Mr. Gutierrez, It’s not my fault the beer delivery truck was late. I’ve got to get home. I can’t stock the shelves and work late again tonight."

"If not you, who else is going to do it? It’s your job. Not mine. Stock that beer. Right away."

Julie tried again:

"My mother has a night cleaning job. She’ll have to leave Jimbo with a neighbor again... if I’m not..."

"Spare me. I don’t care. All I care about is beer getting on that shelf. No, don’t whine to me about overtime. Didn’t you come in late three times last month when your kid was sick? Remember? Stock!"

"Yes sir." What’s the use? Julie thought. He never listens. And never pays overtime. He knows I need this job and won’t complain to the union. She wheeled out the Schlitz beer shipment, picked up a six-pack and shelved it. Gutierrez watched her start work and then walked up the aisle to lock the front doors and empty the till.

A couple minutes later Julie heard Gutierrez talking to someone at the entrance. Who’s here at 11:30 P.M.? She softly walked up the aisle and took a look. A young man wearing a hooded jacket had entered the store. He seemed nervous as he looked around the mart.

Gutierrez spoke to the customer as he returned to the check-out counter.

"Sorry, this place is closing up, unless it’s just smokes you want. I’ll keep the till open for that purchase."

"Okay, Dude. One pack of Lucky’s." The customer put his hand in his pocket, fished around as if for change, and came up with a gun.

"Didn’t come for smokes this time, man. Clean out the till. Not kiddin’ around. See?"

A shot shattered the security camera on the ceiling. Julie jumped and then ducked down behind the Schlitz stack.

"Jerk! Security knows something’s up if that camera goes blank! They’ll be here in ten."

"I’ll be gone in two. Give me the cash from that till. Oh... no you don’t, man..."

Two shots blasted simultaneously. Julie heard "Damn!", groans, then silence. She ran to the front and gaped at her boss and a young guy crumpled up on the floor. She crept up close and looked down at Gutierrez. His eyes were wide open, and he bled from a head wound. She crept closer and took his pulse. Nothing. Same for the robber. No pulse. Julie thought, they’re both dead. No one’s around. Do I dare?

Yes. I’ve got six minutes to get my unpaid overtime. Jesus will forgive me. He knows how I’ve suffered.

Julie grabbed a small shopping basket, and ran to dairy for milk and cheese, then over to the meat counter for hamburger and pork chops. She headed up one aisle and grabbed Aleve, baby aspirin, band aids, Listerine and Tampon. On the second aisle she scooped up five lipsticks, shampoo and conditioner and her mother’s favorite hand cream. Heading toward the door, she snatched up a liter of diet coke, a baseball mitt and soft ball. She paused for a second, and selected a woman’s wrist watch from a counter display. Then she ran out the open glass doors into the dark parking lot, packed everything in her car trunk and raced back inside, trying not to look at the still bodies and dark pools of blood.

She called her mother and waited for the security guys to show.

- Kathy Highcove

RAY MALUS’ Chancel Drama, “Amelia” will be premiered at St. Martin-In-The-Field’s Church, Canoga Park, at 8 am & 10 am, on Sunday, March 21. Admission is free. All are welcome. Church is located at: 7136 Winnetka Avenue. (1 Bl. S. of Sherman Way) Phone: (818) 348-1419

Ester Benjamin Shifren will be the guest speaker at a Young Judea fundraiser in San Diego on March 7th. She will tell the story of her life in China to a large group of adults and teens. Her story is also currently being published in two episodes in Senior Line, a regular publication in Vancouver BC.

A Stitch in Crime, Berkley, was released February 2nd. It’s the fourth in my crochet mystery series. Betty Hechtman www.BettyHechtman.com

I have just started getting some web content articles published. They’re quite brief. I have started with health topics - but I can research a wide variety of topics and even propose titles. Here’s a link to one of them - http://www.ehow.com/facts_5970496_fleas-ticks-pregnancy.html

- Tina Glasner
March Madness

Rude and harsh,
Playing games is here;
Torrential rains drown my grass,
Weeds come up for air.
Angry winds
Rattle my windows
Shattered glass falls,
Like diamond dust;
Whispering secrets
Before night ends
March Madness
Shake my trees;
Naked branches shiver without leaves,
Pleading
With the sun to warm their fear,
Hoping
For the wind to disappear.

March madness,
Implacable and harsh,
Loosens tiles an my roof,
Leaving layers of wounded pieces
Scattered without mercy
In a heap by my door.

Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

2010 East of Eden Writers Conference
Join us in Steinbeck Country - Salinas, California

CWC Members: register before April 15, 2010 and save!

Only $325 for Full Conference Registration includes:

- All 3 days - September 24, 25, and 26, 2010 - all meals and events!
- 48 workshops!
- Pitch Sessions - multiple opportunities to pitch your work to literary agents at no additional charge!

Saturday evening gala dinner and Writing Contest awards ceremony (grand prize is $1000)

That's $110 off the regular price and a $50 savings compared to the public early registration fee!

Saturday Only (7:30 am to 5 pm) option available for only $179!

For more info, conference details, and to register, visit southbaywriters.com.

Offer ends April 15, 2010 -- so sign up today!

Group Genre Workshop

Who: California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch
What: Group Genre Workshop and speaker Writing Career Coach Teresa LeYung Ryan
When: Saturday, March 20, 2010, 10:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Where: Luau Garden Chinese Buffet, 1890 Arden Way, Sacramento, CA 95815
Cost: $12 members, $14 non-members, includes buffet lunch

RSVP and info: Julie Bauer, (916) 344-5778
Club details: www.sacramento-writers.org

March’s CWC luncheon meeting will feature a group genre workshop and special speaker. For the workshop, attendees will meet in groups for fiction and nonfiction to exchange ideas and materials. Teresa LeYung Ryan, a writing career coach, will help writers build their names by identifying the themes and archetypes in their fiction and non-fiction, before and after publication. http://WritingCoachTeresa.com.

CONTACT: joolieb@aol.com
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, March 6th, 2010 at 1:30 p.m.

**MAILING ADDRESS**  
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