



The Valley Scribe

Next Meeting March 20, 12:30!

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

An open discussion will take place during the regular meeting to determine what the present Board can do to further meet the needs of members and to facilitate their writing goals. Your feedback would be appreciated at this meeting.

March Featured Speaker: JENNIFER HAYMORE

(The Pros and Cons and Ins and Outs of E-Publishing)



Just before her eighth birthday, Jennifer Haymore was sailing with her family in a 42-foot sailboat across the Pacific, and since there were no local schools (except those pertaining to fish) nearby, her mother home-schooled her. Jennifer says her mother was a strict taskmaster! She demanded a new story every day. So Jennifer would sit in the boat's galley and write. She'd stare out the porthole and write some more, and then doodle and write some more. By the time she and family arrived in Hawaii the following year, she had a portfolio of stories and was hooked on writing. She only took time off to obtain a master's degree, get married, and have kids.

Jennifer sold her first historical romance at auction in 2007, and her debut novel, *A Hint of Wicked*, was released in June, 2009. She is currently working on the first book in her second contract with Grand Central Publishing. She also writes Scottish historicals as Dawn Halliday for Penguin/New American Library.

Her alter-ego, Jennifer Miller, has also been a content editor for *Samhain Publishing* since early 2007. Jennifer acquires contemporary, historical, and paranormal romances with likeable, interesting characters, lots of action, and loads of sexual tension.

Bringing her unique perspective both as an author and as an acquiring editor, Jennifer will discuss the pros and cons and ins and outs of e-publishing for the aspiring and established author.

-Ethel Ann Pemberton

(Visit Jennifer's website: www.jenniferhaymore.com.)

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OPEN MIKE RETURNS 12:30 SHARP!

The first 6 members to sign up will be given 5 minutes of FAME. If you read at the November meeting, you cannot read in March — unless there is available time and space. Please bring 2 copies of your material so the hearing-challenged may also enjoy your reading.

February Meeting-in-Review:

BURT PRELUTSKY – ACTOR & STORYTELLER

By Elisabeth A. Cooke

If you missed Burt Prelutsky at the February 20th SFV-CWC meeting, you missed the fun! Mr. Prelutsky is a well-rounded professional, a personable speaker and a very funny storyteller. He has worked as an actor, and written as journalist, humorist and television writer accumulating a large collection of celebrity anecdotes, which he has put in a book: *The Secret of Their Success: Interviews with Legends & Luminaries* (ISBN 978-1934443-9-89).

Mr. Prelutsky began his writing career doing interviews for his college paper, UCLA's *The Daily Bruin*, as "an excuse to meet people I wanted to meet." He names Tony Randall as both his best and worst interview. He had an amazing time talking with Randall only to find that when he sat down to write up the interview, he couldn't use a single quote — every one of them ended in an obscenity which *The Daily Bruin* couldn't print!

Mr. Prelutsky went on to do interviews for *TV Guide*, wrote as a humorist for the *L.A. Times* and as a movie reviewer for *Los Angeles Magazine*. According to his on-line biography he also worked freelance for the *New York Times*, *Washington Times*, *Modern Maturity*, *Emmy*, *Holiday*, *American Film*, and *Sports Illustrated*.

His television credits are varied and numerous, stretching from the 1960s to the 2000s. They include acting, writing and consulting on many hit series: *Dragnet*, *McMillan & Wife*, *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Rhoda*, *Rockford Files*, *M*A*S*H*, *Newhart*, *Silk Stalkings*, *Dr. Quinn* and *Diagnosis Murder*.

Other books by Prelutsky include: *Civilization and Welcome to It* (a collection of humorous essays), *Liberals: America's Termites or It's a Shame That Liberals, Unlike Hamsters, Never Eat Their Young*, and *Conservatives Are from Mars (Liberals Are from San Francisco): A Hollywood Right-winger Comes Out of the Closet*.

Burt Prelutsky's frankness and wit combine with his extensive experience to educate and entertain. Speaking with him afterward, I found him just as friendly and easy-going as he appeared during his presentation. I fervently hope he will come back and see us again. □



Musings from the President

Ethel Ann Pemberton

CHARACTERS are the persons presented in dramatic or narrative works, who are endowed with emotional, moral, or other distinguishing dispositions. When you hear a person identified as a wise guy, rogue, romantic, good Samaritan, business woman, mistress, lady, or tramp, your thoughts immediately connect to the stock roles those monikers represent. However, if you don't expand on the personalities of those characters and provide them with motivation, they will remain "flat characters." In their purest element, flat characters are constructed around a single idea or quality. They are easily remembered because they remain unaltered. To prevent flat characters from being boring, they are often tagged as comics.

A "round character," on the other hand, is complex in temperament and motivation, and even though described with subtle detail, he/she cannot be fully processed. That also holds true for persons in real life who often slip out of their molds and surprise us by their words or actions. If you will reflect momentarily, you will realize that only round characters are appropriate for tragedies; and only round characters can move us emotionally for any length of time. E. M. Forster has stated that "The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat."

The next step, after identifying flat and round characters, is to give your characters motivation. Why does the Harvard-degreed heroine date only men who work with their hands and not behind a desk? Why did the conservative school teacher heroine join a nudist colony? Why did the hard-nosed, arrogant hero adopt a child from Haiti? Why do your characters do what they do, fear what they fear, and want what they can't seem to get? It all has to do with motivation. Perhaps the Harvard-degreed lawyer wants a husband just like her kindly and loving father, a construction worker. It's possible the conservative school teacher masks her feelings at work for the sake of acceptance but sheds her clothes and identity after work through her association with nudists, revealing her liberated tendencies. The hard-nosed hero could have adopted his attitude when he was shuffled back and forth through the foster child-care system.

In the **dramatic method**, the author merely presents

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the characters talking and acting, leaving up to the reader to infer what motivations and dispositions are revealed through the characters' words or actions.

In the **narrative method**, the author implicitly describes the motivations and dispositional qualities of the characters.

It's crucial to understand, and convey, the stimuli behind the characters' motivations because that's what gives a story heart and depth. □

Member Showcase Review — February Tom Barnes

It must be fun to be Tom Barnes. Barnes, our February Member Showcase speaker, seems to spend his time following his curiosity and enthusiasms. He is an actor, writer, and hurricane hunter. He took us on a tour of his acting career, which led him to write his first book, *Doc Holliday's Road to Tombstone*. It is as fascinating to hear about, as it must be to live—and to read about. Barnes easily filled 30 minutes with this, just a small part of a life well lived. The members were eager to hear more.

Barnes also penned *Tungee's Gold*, *The Goring Collection*, and *The Hurricane Hunters*. He's an active proponent of Blogging, and has his own site, www.tombarnes39.com. He's been an active member of CWC-San Fernando Valley Branch since its inception.

Yes, it must be fun to be Tom Barnes. It certainly is fun to listen to him. □

Special Year-end Half-Price Clearance Sale Act Now!

For the remainder of the year, membership fee has been reduced From \$65 to
\$42.50.

Why wait to get
Full Membership Benefits!?

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

by Ken Watts

(As always, please check the websites for more information before submissions. When you see "ms." or "mss." this means manuscript and manuscripts respectively. Best wishes and good luck to all!)

WOW! Women on Writing Quarterly Flash Fiction Contest is offered quarterly. Seeks fiction, short stories. Deadline: May 31, August 31, November 30. Fee: \$10. Prizes: 1st Place: \$200 cash, 2nd Place: \$150 cash, 3rd Place: \$100 cash. All three winners receive a 1 year Premium-Green Writers' Market subscription (\$48 value), goodie bag worth \$100, story published on WOW! Women On Writing, interview on blog. Seven Runners-Up: goodie bag worth \$100, story published on WOW! Women on Writing. Contact: Angela Mackintosh, CEO, Address: 740 S. Van Buren St., Suite D, Placentia, CA 92870. E-mail: contestinfo@wow-womenonwriting.com. Website: www.wow-womenonwriting.com/contest.php.

War Poetry Contest offers annual awards. Guidelines available for SASE or on website. Submit online or by mail. Submissions must be unpublished. Considers simultaneous submissions. Deadline: May 31. Entry fee: \$15 for group of 1-3 poems. Awards: 1st Prize: \$2000, 2nd Prize: \$1,200, 3rd Prize: \$600, 12 Honorable Mentions of \$100 each. All prizewinners receive online publication at WinningWriters.com, selected finalists may also receive online publication. Submit 1-3 poems of up to 500 lines total on the theme of war, any form, style, or genre. No name on ms. pages, typed or computer-printed on letter-size white paper, single-sided. Winners announced November 15 at WinningWriters.com and in free e-mail newsletter. Entrants who provided valid e-mail addresses will also receive notification. Address: Winning Writers, 351 Pleasant St., PMB 222, Northampton, MA 01060-3961. Phone: (866) 946-9748. Fax: (413) 280-0539 E-mail: adam@winningwriters.com. Website: www.winningwriters.com/war. Contact: Adam Cohen, award director.

Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Awards wants to "to encourage poets to explore and illuminate positive visions of peace and the human spirit" and offer an annual series of awards to this

TO MARKET (cont'd from page 3)

effort. Guidelines available for SASE or on website. Entry fee: \$15 for adults for up to 3 poems. Ages 13-18: \$5 for up to 3 poems. Age 12 and under: no fee. Deadline July 1 (postmarked). Winners will be announced by October 1 by mail, and on website. Submit up to 3 poems in any form, unpublished and in English, max 30 lines/poem. **MUST FOLLOW GUIDELINES FOR YOUR WORK TO BE ACCEPTED.** Go online. Website: www.wagingpeace.org. E-mail: wagingpeace@napf.org. Address: Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, PMB 121, 1187 Coast Village Rd., Suite 1, Santa Barbara, CA 93108-2794. Phone: (805) 965-3443. Fax: (805) 568-0466. Awards: \$1,000 to adults, \$200 to youth in each 2 categories (13-18 & 12 and under), plus Honorable Mention in each category.

Writers' Journal Annual Romance Contest. Open to any writer for previously unpublished works. Deadline: July 30. Entry fee: \$7. No limit on entries/person. Guidelines: SASE, fax, phone, e-mail, on website and in publication. Accepts inquiries by fax, email, phone. Length: 2,000 words. Results announced in Jan/Feb issue. Contact: Leon Ogroske, editor. Address: Val-Tech Media, P O Box 394, Perham, MN 56573. Website: www.writersjournal.com. E-mail: writersjournal@writersjournal.com. Phone: (218) 346-7921. Fax: (218) 346-7924. Prizes: 1st: \$250, 2nd: \$100, 3rd: \$50, plus Honorable Mentions.

Writers' Journal Annual Short Story Contest. The contact information is the same as above. Deadline: May 30. Entry fee: \$10 reading fee. Length: less than 2,000 words. Open to any writer. Guidelines: SASE and online. Prizes: 1st: \$350, 2nd: \$125, 3rd: \$75, plus Honorable Mentions. Winners and selected HR's published in *Writers' Journal* Nov/Dec issue. Winners notified by mail. Winners list published in *Writers' Journal* and on website.

Something To Ponder

"No one can defeat us unless we first defeat ourselves."

— Dwight D. Eisenhower

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BRANCH

The San Fernando Valley Branch is one of eighteen branches throughout California, organized and operating under the auspices of The California Writers Club. We are a non-profit professional organization whose goal is to provide a friendly and inclusive environment for members to meet and network; to provide professional speakers who will aid in writing, publishing, and marketing members' endeavors; and other writing-related opportunities that will further members' writing enjoyment and careers.

Check Out Our New Look!

**We have a stunning new face on the World Wide Web!
Want to feel extra proud to be a member of
The San Fernando Valley Branch?
Take a gander at our new Web Site!**

CWC-SFV.ORG

**has been completely revamped,
and it's sensational!**

**It's high-tech, elegant,
and packed with information.
... and we have a new look that would make a
Beverly Hills Cosmetic Surgeon preen.
Our new site gives an exciting new face to
the most dynamic Branch in CWC.
We expect the site to grow and expand,
and be a model for other branches.
Huge thanks to our Webmaster, Glenn Wood.**

The Wright Word – by Kay

So. You've finished your manuscript. Your friends have read it. You've polished it until it gleams like gold. You've submitted it. So why hasn't it been Published (note capital "P")? Well, it's "being considered." Now, depending on what you've written, and to whom you've sent it, it may be "being considered" by from one to a whole army of people — a lone editor, or a panel — or even hierarchy — of editors, producers, et al.

But really, it's all the same process. For our discussion we'll say it's one person, and call him:

The Ogre In The Office.

So, who is this mystical, mean-spirited man who has so much power over your future? Truth is he's not an ogre, and he's not mean-spirited. He's not even mystical. He's just a guy with a job. A hard job. And like any guy with a job, he has to perform well, and he has to please the people who sign his checks — and he'd love to go home early.

An editor is a man with spaces to fill. He needs stories, screenplays, poetry. Without these, he doesn't have a product. He needs your manuscript! Even better, he has a budget! And the funny thing about budgets is that, if you don't spend them, you lose them. So he *wants* to buy your piece. As soon as he starts reading your submission, you want him to think, "Yup. This is exactly what I need."

For that to happen, there are certain considerations.

Image. Your submission must conform to the image his publication represents. His buyers choose his publication(s) because they've learned what to expect — and they like it. He wants a lot more of what he's already published. (Do you think *Anchor Publishing* wouldn't want another *DaVinci Code*?) But a children's publication doesn't want a crime story, and a Poetry magazine doesn't want a political treatise. Know your target!

Length. Your editor has "slots" to fill. He has a formula and layout that works for him. If the

guidelines say 900 words, that's what he wants. One thousand or 500 will simply not fit for him — even if it's deathless stuff. My advice? Write too much, then cut the fat. How do you cut? Easy! Imagine you're 25 words too long. Imagine that if you can just cut these 25 words, you are *certain* to be accepted. Then, read your manuscript word-by-word. Ask yourself, "If I cut or shorten this or that, will it seriously damage the piece?" If the answer is "no," cut it! (You'll be astounded at how many times the answer will be "yes.") Keep doing this! If you get to your desired length, submit it; if you can't, find another market!

Form. Your editor gets a *lot* of manuscripts. He's used to having things where they "belong." He doesn't want to search for a page number. If he stipulates, "...upper left-hand corner," put it there! If he's asked for wide margins, double-space, he needs them to make notes. Give them to him!

Make reading your submission as easy and comfortable as you can. Put him in a good mood!

Correctness. If your submission has typos, grammar or spelling mistakes, missing attributions, not only will your editor dismiss you as an amateur, he'll need to make corrections. He doesn't want to do a re-write. *He has neither the time nor the inclination for this.* Make your submission *perfect!*

In short, your editor is just a guy with a job. His job is to find material that makes his product sell. He wants to do this with as little effort as possible. Make his job easy — and he'll reward you.

Is all the above a sure-fire ticket for acceptance? Nope. There are lots of variables over which you have absolutely no control. But it'll maximize your chances. For an unknown writer, a 1-in-20 acceptance rate is probably excellent. So start collecting rejection slips. When you reach 19, look for the lightning to hit.

On my desk, I have a framed check. At the bottom, I've written, "You never know when!" I look at it and smile — every time GlimmerTrain says, "Thanks, but no thanks." —

KUDOS KOLUMN

by Erica Stux

(If any member has good news to share, such as getting an agent, selling a book, script, essay, or even getting a personalized rejection letter, contact me at: ericastux@aol.com. We are interested in everyone's successes.)

Kudos to Lenora Smalley, sponsor of the "Beaded Purse Contest," and to the winners: Lillian Rodich, Helen Katzman, Ray Malus, and J. Raymond Kent.

It Could Be Verse

Winter Winds

by Ray Malus

*Summer runs, when Winter muscled in
And shoulders Autumn's modesty aside,
To clothe the pavement with his pap'ry skin
Of frozen leaves and promise that has died.*

*Autumn cringes, craven, at the clutch
Of Winter's blust'ry gales and icy blast.
She shrinks and shudders at his bitter touch
And hides in dread until his time has passed.*

*Winter wins, when wanton tempests blow
And make the lush and blushing summer quail.
When timid Autumn cowers 'neath the snow
And shrinks in wretched terror from the gale.*

*But, sunny Spring need only bide a while,
Then warmly wither Winter with her smile.*



The Tango

by Edward Louis Braun

In an out-of-the-way café
In Buenos Aires

I noticed her
Standing by the bar,
Her closely shorn,
Lustrous black silk hair
Highlighting
Her alabaster face,
Her black silk skirt
Split open to her thighs,
Showing her provocative,
Alluring legs
Beneath the black net,
Nylons that she wore.

The exquisite, glowing
Black pearls in her eyes
Drew me to her side
And we began to dance,
In luxuriously slow,
Tantalizing movements,
Until the music paused
And we held each other tight
Till once again we glided
On smooth, seductive sounds
Past other clinging dancers.

The luscious rapturous music,
At times accentuated by the
Sharp, pulsating, provocative
Sounds of the bandoneon,
Moved us to quickly twist
And turn, to briefly thrust
And intertwine our legs,
Each time tighter together,
Till I was hopelessly immersed
In the escalating excitement
And intimacy of the dance,
The glowing fire of romance
Burst into flames and,
In my fervor, I did not know
If I could ever let her go
As I was swept into a trance
By the desire in her eyes
And the tango's seductive flow.

Limericks



*His big heart is, oh, so flirtatious
 His craving for jokes so voracious
 He likes them unclean
 Though none that demean
 But mostly he likes them salacious.*
 —Yolanda Fintor



A floozie the fellows all tarted with,
 In regard to the favors she parted with,
 Said, "Well, you may say
 That I give 'it' away,
 But I've still got as much as I started with."
 —Ray Malus

A SWIMMER OF GREAT REPUTATION
 PAID A FORTUNE FOR BREAST AUGMENTATION.
 THOUGH THEY MIGHT SLOW HER DOWN,
 IT'S A CINCH SHE WON'T DROWN,
 CAUSE THEY'RE TERRIBLY GOOD FOR FLOATATION.
 —J. RAYMOND KENT

A LASS OF BOHEMIAN ATTITUDE,
 WHO IS KNOWN FOR HER SEXUAL LATITUDE,
 MAY ACCRUE ILL REPUTE ,
 BUT IT S HARD TO REFUTE,
 SHE ENGENDERS A PANT-LOAD OF GRATITUDE.
 —J. RAYMOND KENT



Lenora Smalley & The Beaded Purse



POET AND PATRON, LENORA SMALLEY

Patrons of the arts are a rarity, now-a-days. In this narcissistic, Twitter, “Where’s mine?!” society, benefactors are as rare as blacksmiths.

Then, there’s Lenora Smalley. A life-long poet and decades-long member of CWC — with three published books of poetry, Smalley is devoted to the genre and its creators. She is the organizer and sole benefactor of the yearly “Beaded Purse Poetry Contest.” Poets are invited to submit poems addressing a designated theme. A panel of judges (Smalley is not one of them) then chooses those they deem best.

This year, the theme was “Catching a dream in your bare hands.”

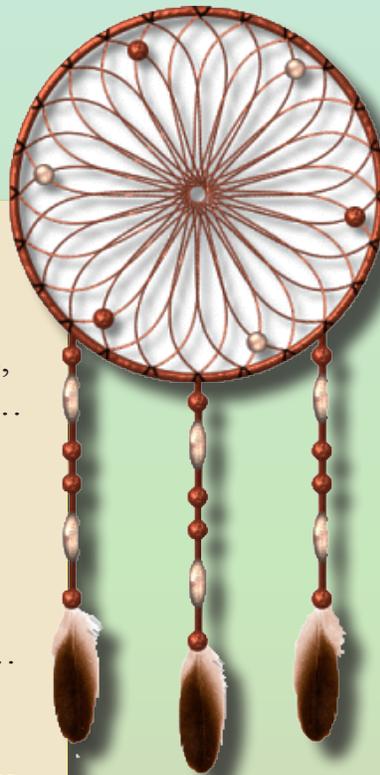
Out of a field of almost one hundred submissions, we are honored to

present the winners of The Beaded Purse Poetry Contest. —= (Visit www.lenorasmalley.com.)

(NOTE: Johana West won Honorable Mention for “Tending His Roots.” Poem was unavailable for publication.)

CATCHING DREAMS BAREHANDED BY HELEN KATZMAN

ONCE UPON A TIME
I CAUGHT A DREAM
BARE-HANDED
ONE COLD, RAINY DECEMBER DAY
ON THE FIFTH FLOOR
OF A DEPARTMENT STORE
OR RATHER
THE DREAM CAUGHT ME
AS I LEANED OVER AN OPEN DRAWER
OF PINK, YELLOW, BROWN
FUZZY BEARS
READY FOR CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS
MY BODY BEGAN TO SHAKE, TO TREMBLE
I SCREAMED I M GOING TO FAINT.
AND WAS SAVED BY A SAINT.
A WARM GENTLE HAND
WITHOUT A RING-BAND
HELD ME TIGHT AND QUIETLY SAID
IT S AN EARTHQUAKE.
OUR FRIENDSHIP BEGAN.
SIPPING SMOOTHIES BEFORE WORK
TAKING LUNCH BREAKS TOGETHER
WALKING HAND IN HAND TO PERSHING SQUARE
SHARING THE DEPTHS OF OUR LIVES
OUR LIVES BEGAN
WE DATED
WE HUGGED
WE CRIED
WE LAUGHED
WE MARRIED!
WE CAUGHT OUR DREAMS BARE-HANDED
AND GREW WITH THEM
BUT NOT LONG ENOUGH
ANOTHER DREAM
A SAD DREAM NOT WANTED
CAUGHT US UNAWARE
TOOK HIM TO ANOTHER WORLD
AND LEFT ME WITH MEMORIES
CATCHING MY DREAMS BAREHANDED.



Dream Catcher

by Lillian Rodich

Butterflies brushing my fingertips,
illusive dreams I want to capture...

I run through tall grass,
sticky wild wheat shafts
caught on my sweater
and tangling my hair.

Like some young animal, I leap ...
pursued or pursuing,
galloping with abandon
and confront invincible sunflowers.

I trip on a rusty can
and suddenly collapse
into a heap of childhood ...
on my back, contemplating the sky,

butterflies brushing my fingertips,
illusive dreams I want to capture...

Beaded Purse (cont'd from pg. 8)

Pegasus
by Ray Malus



I'm far too lazy for therapy today.
For clutching the reins of my imagination
to hold its head pointing to the ground
and break its spirit.

No.
Instead, I think I'll let the steed run free.
And jump up on its back.
And let it try to buck me off,
as it capers to the moon,
or the sun,
or the city dump,
or wherever the scents of clover and sage
and cool water lure it.

Or maybe I'll loll in the shade of the porch
and watch it cavort and leap
until it vaults the rail of the corral
and, joyful, speeds to places I can't go.

Tonight, it will come home
and whisper what it's seen.

**Catching A Dream**

by J. Raymond Kent



I lay in misery, one milk-warm day,
Abandoned by my muse.
Hounded by a host of hostile words that scorned
The game I'd scheduled for them.

A truant soap bubble happened by,
Filled with joy and possibility by the breath of some
unseen child.
It flirted shamelessly.

I stood and grabbed at it.
Laughing and giggling, it danced out of reach.
And riding the free wind,
Raced across the park with me in hot pursuit.

We chased
Past matriarch trees that had watched generations of
sandlot ball.
Past scarred benches that had couched gasping new
lovers.
Past new-mown lawns perfuming the air with scents
of green and amber.
Past bearded boulders that had defied mammoth
glaciers, but crumbled under gentle rain.

At last, it relented, and gleefully hovered, jumping
up and down on springs of air.
I snatched, and — cat-quick — caught the prize.
Then opened my hand in exultant triumph, and found
nothing.

But oh God, the journey it had led me on!



My Mom's Cold Cash

by Carol Wood

My sisters and brothers are used to my pulling jokes on them, so much so that when I came home and told them my teacher said we had landed on the moon, they didn't believe me. Whenever we played Scrabble, I'd look them in the eye and say, "Go ahead and challenge. It doesn't bother me that you don't know all the two letter words." I'd lie. I am forgetful and I can't spell worth a damn. At the end of the game I'd usually say, "Of course, you know that isn't a word, or that." Sometimes I would inspire others to work a joke, like this one time when we vacationed at the shore.

"The shore" is Wildwood, New Jersey to all those living in Pennsylvania. Or if you are really rich, Cape May, (oooh). My mother rented a little house in Wildwood around the corner from my pregnant sister, Jane. Jane was living down the shore for the summer while her husband worked as a trash man. "Ma, you cannot believe the kind of money they pay for trash men here! We're making it hand over fist!" So I was over at my sister's place quite a lot in the month we were at the shore. She always was willing to give me money to go buy licorice pipes from Morrow's Nut House and I felt very grown up around her. My father only came down on weekends. He'd hand over his paycheck to Mom in cash before he left. My mother would count every dollar and stick it in an envelope in her purse. After Dad left the second weekend, I said, "Aren't you afraid of all that cash sitting out?"

"Of course not!" my mother told me, making an I-can't-believe-you smirk, but right at that moment a police car drove by with sirens wailing and it was dark and dangerous looking out. Her face changed to a worried look and she walked over to the fridge and stashed the money in the freezer.

"What are you doing?" I said, amazed.

"A thief would never think of looking in the freezer. Here, give me a piece of tin foil, I'll wrap it like a steak." she said, and started folding dollars into a steak shaped aluminum foil.

The next morning while I was over at Jane's, I told her what our mother had done. "She hid it in the freezer?" This was followed by loud tee-hees. "Wait, wait... we gotta use this." So Jane and I hatched a plan. All I had to do was keep a straight face.

When I got home, I said, "Jane's coming over for lunch tomorrow, okay?" My mom looked at me and said, "We're on a budget. We can't treat her too often. She has her own money now." With seven kids, six still at home, my mom ran a tight ship.

The next day after my sister, Peggy, took the boys back to the beach, we sat on the porch casually sipping our tea and Jane said, "That was a great lunch Ma. No one makes grilled cheese like you do. Oh Ma, I gotta tell you this. You won't believe it. There's this thief around that is robbing people, right?"

My mother said, "I hadn't heard that, but Yeeees?"

"You didn't? It was in the paper," I said. Jane gave me a sideways wink.

"Well, he gets to my neighbor's house and he can't find any money right?" Jane said. "But wait, wait, you're gonna love this."

My mother moved to the edge of her seat.

"See, he figures, well, if I can't get any money, I can at least eat well, so — you are gonna die!" Here Jane starts laughing. Of course, my sister was laughing because she could see my mother twisting her napkin. "See this guy, he opens the freezer..."

Here's where my mother gasps.

"And he figures he'll take home some steaks. See, she had put all the cash in the freezer! Can you believe it? He took everything! Ma? Where are you going?"

Here's where my mother jumped up and ran into the kitchen. We followed her into the house and watched her take all the money out of the freezer.

"Ma?" Jane said.

Mom was turning right and left opening cabinets and looking in cereal boxes, with cold cash in her hands trying to find a place to hide it.

I couldn't hold it in any longer. I burst out laughing and Jane and I held our sides as the laughter spilled out of us. I actually wept tears while my mother raced around trying to find a better place to hide the cash. It was too funny.

Finally, Mom stopped and silently turned clutching her dollars and did a slow squint. It was a scary look.

"It was a joke, Ma! It was a joke!" Jane said wiping her tears and hiccupping laughter.

"OUT!" Mom pointed.

She never let me know where she hid her cash after that. □

The Bachelor Party

by Ray Malus

(Excerpt from Malus' Novel Ashes In Yonkers — unpublished.)

“Ya ever been in love, Danny?”

The three men sat at the formica kitchen table— Danny, old and grizzled; Sean, who looked too young to have just mustered out of the Service; and Joe, paunchy and already just a little drunk—who had asked the question.

Danny's face took on a dreamy smile. “Yeah. Once.”

Joe was interested. “Really!! Do I know ‘er.”

Danny shrugged. “Nah. It was a long time ago—durin’ da ‘Big War’!”

“Yeah. Lota guys lost their innocence in the Service.”

“Oh DAT!!” Danny sneered, “Yeah, dat, too. But that was differen’.”

They sat waiting.

“That was in da beginning.” Danny emptied his glass. “I was in Belfast, fer training. Took a lot of static from the guys in the outfit: ‘Country Boy,’ ‘Saint Danny,’ ‘Virgin,’ ‘Lamb Ta Da Slaughter.’”

The others laughed.

“Din’ bother me none.”

He gave them an impish grin.

“But one night, we was out drinkin’ and dey dared me. I thot, ‘What da hell. Gotta be sometime.’ So we wen’ out lookin’. Wasn’ dat hard. War time. Lota soldiers.

“We found a whore. Da udder guys set it up. Made me pay, dough. Tree pounds. She took me in a alley. Raised up her skirts, an’ leaned against da wall.

“Well, back home, I’d seen the sheep do it, so I expected ‘er ta turn ‘er back ta me. So I jus’ stood der, like a dummy.”

He laughed.

“She said sometin’ about ‘gettin’ it done,’ an’ unbuttoned my fly. She started ta take my pecker out. Jesus!! It was all over da minute she touched me. What a mess!!”

The others laughed in sympathy. Danny took his bottle back from Sean and refilled his glass to the brim.

“She jus’ kep’ laughin’ an’ laughin’. Said she should give me a 2-pound refund!!

“I tol’ her ta keep it, if she’d walk da udder way, where the lads wouldn’ see ‘er. She laughed an’ said, ‘Sure Honey. Anythin’ fer a luvver like you.’ She was all right, fer a whore.”

He took a careful sip from his glass.

“I cleaned myself up an’ wen’ back ta da billet. Nex’ mornin’ I told the lads she’d liked me so much she took me home wid ‘er.”

They all laughed. Sean got up, and got himself a glass. He sat and filled it from the bottle on the table. Still chuckling, he asked Danny, “And the

other?”

Danny stopped laughing. His face saddened. The laughter of the others died out. There was an eerie silence while its echo faded.

Danny spoke, quietly—like a prayer.

“Yeah. Da udder.”

He paused for a long time. His eyes focused on something far off the others couldn’t see. When he spoke, his voice had a gentle sing-song quality—a child’s lullabye.

“Dat was after I got outta da hospital. I was in Paris. Still walked wid a cane, den. I was walkin’ aroun’, and wen’ inter a café. Had a cuppa coffee and one-a-doze French rolls.

“Place was almos’ empty. Der was dis woman, ‘bout my age, sittin’ over in da corner, alone. She was wearin’ a black dress. She had short, dark hair, an’ dis milky white complexion. An her cheeks was blushed like pink roses.”

He paused and contemplated both men, making sure they understood. They nodded. He continued.

“She was sittin’, readin’ a letter, an’ cryin’ so I t’ought my heart would break. I kep’ lookin’ at ‘er.”

Danny shrugged.

“Finally, she caught me at it. I looked away, quick. When I looked back, she was still lookin’ at me wid dose soruh-ful eyes, but she’d stopped cryin’. She smiled a sad little smile.”

He paused, while his memory caught up with his story. He let out a sigh, and continued. His voice grew soft again.

“I wen’ over to ‘er table, an’ asked if I could help. She said somethin’ in French.”

His eyes focused on Joe for a moment, as he explained, “Now, I don’ speak no French, an’ I was gonna leave,” he paused and his mind went back to that time again, “but she stood up, an’ took my hand.

“We walked out onta da street. Don’ know how long we walked. She kep’ talkin’ French. I kep’ talking English—all a time holdin’ hands.

“Once, she showed me da letter she’d been readin’—I dunno know what it said. French. Later, she showed me a picture of a man. He was wearing a flyer’s suit. She cried again, when she did dat.

“We walked all afternoon, her talkin’ French. Sometimes, she’d stop, and I’d tell her about myself.”

Danny was no longer talking to them. They had ceased to exist. He was alone with his memory. His voice crooned with a kind of reverence. Lost in a long-ago moment, he was telling the story to himself.

“I guess she told me t’ings she’d never tell someone else. I know I told her t’ings I’d never spoken of. It was all right, ‘cause neider of us knew what the udder was sayin’.

“About Sunset, we got ta a buildin’, an’ she led me inside, upstairs. I guess it was tree, four flights. Don’ matter.

“She took me into a flat. One room. Dark. She lit a

THE HUMMINGBIRD THAT SAID “WA WA”

Helen Katzman

Late one afternoon I was sitting on the front porch listening to the music of the gentle summer breeze swirling through the leaves of neighborhood trees when I heard another sound, a stressful sound. I walked off the porch into the front yard and observed nothing and yet I kept hearing a “wa wa,” a cry of a little creature as if calling for its mother. I walked slowly towards a short white fence dividing my yard from that of my neighbor’s thinking the “wa wa” was coming from that direction. Indeed it was. A fledgling hummingbird, with its long beak, was nestled in the huge palm of a workman’s hand.

“Where on earth did you find this little creature?” I asked

With a smile, he answered, “On the short white fence. The ‘wa wa’ of the infant hummingbird crying for its mother touched me deeply,” said the workman.

He then placed it in the palm of my small hand. It sent shivers down my spine, but there was no way for me to comfort the baby.

I knocked on the door of my neighbor asking for advice. Novelle opened the door and looked into my startled face. “Where on earth did you find this little creature?” she asked softly so as not to startle this infant hummingbird. I told her about the workman.

“What can we do to protect this little crying hummingbird whose beak seems as long as its body?” I asked.

Novelle made several telephone calls and finally received an answer. “If the fledgling can fly it will be safe,” she was told.

At that very moment the fledgling hummingbird flew from the palm of my hand to a nearby couch. We gave each other a smile of joy, and then realized it had to fly to land on the short, white fence.

“Now what should we do?” I asked.

“Let’s take it outside and camouflage it on a leaf. We don’t want predators to have easy access to it,” Novelle said.

We did just that. We found the perfect leaf, put our precious baby there, and wished it God’s speed.

Several days later two or three hummingbirds were flitting from one gladiola bloom to another, sucking delicious nourishing nectar. Perhaps one of the hummingbirds we nurtured — even for only for a short period of time — was the little one crying “wa wa” for its mother. □

Bachelor Party (*cont’d from pg. 11*)

oil lamp. It was cold. Very slowly, she took all ‘er clothes off. Den she took mine off. It seemed like the mos’ natural t’ing in da world.

“We both got inta dis tiny bed – about da size o’ my cot back in da billet.

“We jus’ held each udder fer hours. We’d both stopped talkin’ by now. Now ‘n’ den she’d cry. I’d cry, too.

“I guess she was cryin’ fer her pilot. I don’ know what I was cryin’ fer. Maybe da boys dat hadn’ come back. Maybe fer her. Maybe fer me. I dunno.”

There was a deep sadness in Danny’s voice.

“Sometime later, in da dark, she showed me how ta love ‘er. It was slow, ‘n’ sad, ‘n’ beautiful. She smelled o’ rosewater. ‘er skin was so soft an’ smooth, an’ she cried out, an’ bit my shoulder.

“In da mornin’ she put on a robe, an’ dressed me. I tried ta’ tell ‘er I was in love wid ‘er. She kep’ puttin’

‘er finger ta my lips ta’ shut me up. I t’ink she knew what I was sayin’.”

Danny stopped long enough to take a big swallow of whiskey.

“Anyway, she walked me down ta da street. She kissed my han’, an’ she said ‘Au Revoir.’ Den she smiled that sad smile agin, an’ closed da door.”

He stopped for a long time, remembering.

“I never wen’ back – dough I wanted to.

“Dat was almos’ 30 years ago. But sometimes, I still lie in da dark an’ t’ink o’ her. An remember how salty ‘er face was when I kissed ‘er, an’ how pretty she smelt.”

He took another drink. When he went on, his voice was sad and far away.

“God!! I hope she had a happier life.”

Danny continued to stare into the past.

No one dared shatter the silence.

As quietly as possible, the other men let themselves out— leaving Danny alone with his love. □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ABOUT THIS ISSUE:

Great submissions this month!
 It's Spring! It's St. Patrick's Day!
 We've got news, reviews, stories, limericks, and the winners of the "Beaded Purse" contest — plus a little fun with our layout.
 All this, along with our always-terrific columnists.
 Sincere thanks to all.

— The Staff of The Valley Scribe



THE MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

IS EXPECTED TO BE READY FOR DISTRIBUTION AT THE MARCH MEETING.
 YOU WILL BE ASKED TO SIGN FOR A COPY.

Critique Group — Members Invited

Polite, but quite serious, threesome of heretofore unpublished fiction writers seeks additional participants in near two-year-old critique group meeting approximately once a month on Saturdays. Current members: Doug Douglas, Liz Cooke, and Scott Gitlen. If you have an interest, please e-mail your writing sample to: esemgee@yahoo.com.

WEB-BASED CRITIQUE GROUP

Interested in forming an e-mail-based critique group for poetry and short fiction?
 Contact Ray Malus (raysplays@roadrunner.com) for details.

Ray Malus' Chancel Drama
AMELIA
 will premiere at St. Martin-In-The-Field's
 Church at 8 am & 10 am.
 Sunday, March 21.
 Admission is free. All are welcome.

BECOME A MEMBER
 Display newly-published books/flyers/business cards/post-cards regarding your own writing endeavors and/or writer-related activities.
 Participate in Member-Showcase Presentations.
 Read at Open Mikes.
 Publish in The Valley Scribe.

A Big Thank You

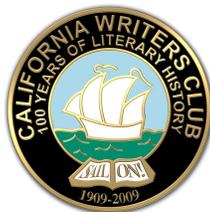
To **Duke Howard** for helping with the February set-up.

MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATION

If you haven't been qualified as an Active or Associate member of CWC-SFV as yet, please request an application from Lenora Smalley, Accreditation Committee Chair, and she will provide you with one to complete. This information will be in the Roster, so get busy and get your membership status confirmed.

THANK YOU
 Earn a Thank You — Volunteer!
 Give a Thank You — Tell us someone's who's helped!

NorCal Writers' Retreat



- What:** California Writers Club – 2010 NorCal Writers Retreat
(A collaboration of the Northern California Branches of CWC)
- When:** Monday, April 5 to Wednesday, April 7, 2010
(An extended stay to Friday, April 9 is at a base rate fee per day.)
- Where:** Pema Osel Ling Retreat Center
2013 Eureka Canyon
Watsonville, CA 95076
- Fee:** \$206 (includes meals and lodging) prior to March 1st
\$256 after March 1st
- Speakers:** Alice Wilson Fried, Berkeley member
Luisah Teish, SF/P member

Send registration form and a check made out to *Wild Mind Writer* to:
Dale King, 32 Bloom Lane, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019.

For further questions, please contact retreat coordinator, Dale King at deking8@msn.com.

For further information about Pema Osel Ling: www.polmountainretreat.com

The Bulletin Board

MEETINGS
ARE HELD AT 12:30 P.M.
ON THE 3RD SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH
AT ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Hannibal Hall
 7136 Winnetka Avenue, Winnetka – South of Sherman Way
(Directions & Map on last page)
UPCOMING MEETINGS
 March 20, 2010 – Jennifer Haymore
 April 17, 2010 - TBA- but it's Poetry Month- count on a Poet!
 May 15, 2010 – Gene Parrett!

UPCOMING MEMBER SHOWCASES
 April 17, 2010 – Ray Malus

NEWSLETTER MAILINGS:
NEWSLETTERS ARE EMAILED TO MEMBERS.
 Members not having email will receive B&W copies by USPS.
 Cara Alson (818) 764-0807 is the contact for sending USPS copies.
 Courtesy copies will be mailed for three months to non-members and/or guests who request same.
 Copies can be downloaded from the Website:
<http://www.cwc-sfv.org>

GUEST DONATIONS
 Non-members attending meetings, are asked to pay a \$5 (tax deductible) donation.
 New membership is immediate upon application at door.
 For more information, contact Lenora Smalley, Membership Chair, at the meeting entrance or email membership@cwc-sfv.org.

SUBMISSIONS
 Members are encouraged to submit writing contributions to *The Valley Scribe*. This is your newsletter, and you should be part of it.
 Submit your prose and poetry to humorist@verizon.net
 It will then be proofed and sent to the Editor.
 Type "Submissions" in the subject line.
 If submitting a hard copy, please bring it to the meeting and hand it to the Editor, Ray Malus, or to the President.
 - 400 words or less
 - 800 words or less
 - Limited to 30 lines

Articles/Essays
 Short Stories
 Poetry

Submit your writings within ten days after the monthly Open Meetings.

The Editor (or President) has license to accept or reject any work submitted based on available space or editing problems.
 All submissions must include an email address or a phone number.
 Writings will not be returned and may be included in future issues.

Get Member Benefits
1/2 Price!
(See announcement, page 3.)

The Fine Print

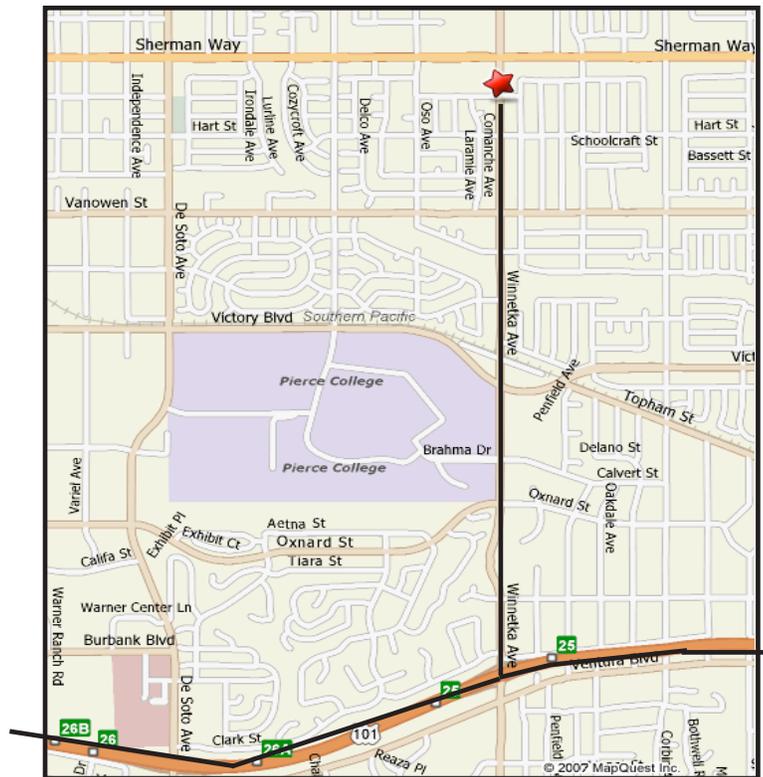
ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS
7136 WINNETKA AVE
CANOGA PARK, CA 91306

From San Fernando Valley
 Take 101 Fwy to Valley. Exit Winnetka. Go North (From Hollywood, turn right. From Ventura, turn left) past Vanowen (almost to Sherman Way). Church is on East side (right side) 1 Bl. before Sherman Way.

From Simi

Take 118 Fwy to Valley. Exit DeSoto. Go South to Sherman Way. Turn East to Winnetka. Turn South 1 block. Church is on East side (left side) 1 Bl. after Sherman Way.

Walk into the campus. Hannibal Hall is at North end.



The Valley Scribe

the Newsletter of the
 San Fernando Valley Branch
 of
 California Writers Club

is published monthly.

We solicit submissions from members.
 (See Bulletin Board: SUBMISSIONS)

Editor
[Ray Malus](#)

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California Writers Club
 San Fernando Valley Branch

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