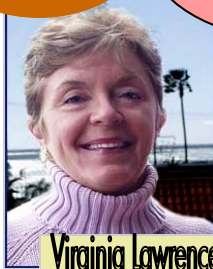




VOLUME 4 ISSUE 10

MAY 2010

**Mothers, Memoirs
and May Memories**



Virginia Lawrence

WE LOVE THEM!

To-day's writers must learn to use the electronic resources of the Internet. Our guest speaker for this month, Virginia Lawrence, is an expert

After earning a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from USC, Virginia started a statistical software company and spent

ten years as their tech writer before moving on.

She edited and published eight volumes for the University of California Press, and seventeen software manuals. As a charter member of Small Publishers, Artists and Writers Network, Virginia served as webmaster for twelve years and as Executive Director for six years. She remains an active member of the SPAWN Board.

Virginia has created ebooks for sale on the SPAWN site since 1997,

and since 1995 she has developed and marketed client web sites on the Internet. Her current position is Senior V.P. of Technology for Ballantines PR, in charge of all online marketing. She guides clients in Search Engine Optimization, as well as Social Media Marketing using blogs, Twitter, and Facebook.

Her topics at our May meeting: how to create and sell ebooks, and how to develop social media marketing using blogs, Twitter and Facebook.

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CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Rita Keeley Brown

How does a writer bring a character to life? Our task in creating and describing characters is similar to an actor preparing for a role. A good actor gets inside the character's skin and studies the character's mannerisms. What is the tone of his voice? Does he walk with a strut or totter along in tiny steps? Is he sophisticated, an average Joe, or a rebellious personality?

A memorable charac-



ter emerges when the writer shows who and what this person is about.

Perceiving how a character, fictional or non-fictional, acts and thinks draws the reader into the story. Alice LaPlante*, who teaches creative writing at San Francisco State and Stanford, keeps in

mind four points when she defines a character: appearance, speech, actions and reactions in response to different events.

Tim Tomlinson**, president of the New York Writers Workshop and master teacher at NYU, advises even-handed treatment of all characters. Give even villains some positive quality and, to heroes and heroines, a flaw. Let the reader decide whether the character is likable or hateful.

Tomlinson cautions against bombarding the reader with excess infor-

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Executive Board

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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 Spell-check 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 In Focus.

mation. He tells us,

"Characters are the choices they make, and the actions they take." In non-fiction many of the characteristics are already known and the focus is on making this real person come alive on the page. The reader needs to walk in his shoes, and feel the angst of his life situations.

Fictional characters are usually created from people we have known in our own lives—the result often being a composite character. A fictional character must become real to the writer. What does your character think about when alone? What are his desires? his values? How does he respond or react to incidents imposed on him by other people, nature, or life's demands?

LaPlante gives exercises that help writers get into character development. One exercise: first, choose a character, fix him solidly in your mind, then make a list of things the character would store in his pockets, purse, wallet or backpack. Make sure there is a least one surprising but convincing item included. Another exercise: list the "sins of omission" (things the fantasy person did not do) and the "sins of commission" (things he did do) that the character may have on his mind. These exercises help reveal inner soul and make for an engrossing and believable character.

Tomlinson suggests doing an interview with a character. First, write a short paragraph about the setting for the interview to provide a back story, and describe conditions such as what day it is, or the weather, or what the character is wearing. The interview questions can range from "Where do you live?" and "Where do you see yourself in five years?" to "For you, what defines love?" or "Is there anything your author doesn't know about you?" and so forth. **It's important to allow characters to speak in their own voice, not your voice.** Tell us what they would think or answer.

Characters can take on a life of their own - if you let them. The personality, attitude and abilities, you've given your characters may lead them on a slightly different path than you envisioned. That's when character development becomes a great ride for both you and your readers.



REFERENCES: * *The Making of a Story – A Norton Guide to Creative Writing* by Alice LaPlante

***The Portable MFA in Creative Writing - The New York Writers Workshop*



Ester's Walkabout

Ester Benjamin Shifren embarks on a tour of speaking engagements in Canada and Israel this April. Shifren often speaks to groups about her childhood spent in a colony of privileged British foreigners in Shanghai's International Settlement. The inhabitants, viewed as

Western allies, were harshly oppressed while China was under Japanese occupational forces. All their possessions were first confiscated and then British, American and Belgian citizens, labeled "enemy Allies," were interned for three years in a Japanese POW camp.

Ester has written a book describing her family's life in China: *A CAVE OF TRUNKS: Five generations of a Jewish Family in Shanghai.*

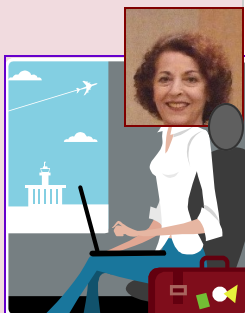
HITTING THE ROAD AGAIN

By Ester Benjamin Shifren

I leave soon for a distant shore
To talk about my life of yore
And who knows what my future holds?
It's good to see how it unfolds,
And twists, and turns, and spins me 'round
Then lifts and throws me to the ground.
Then—lifts me once again, until
I'm breathless, and have had my fill.
And—just as I am feeling blessed
That there's a moment for a rest
Some new horizon beckons me
And off I go again to sea!

Vancouver first—to tell my tale
Hoping it will not be stale.
Friends I love are living there
They'll shower me with love and care
Then Israel—I'll throw a party
For my mom—still hale and hearty
At 94—an inspiration
And example to the nation
Teaching yoga twice a week
Her condition still at peak!
I'll tell my tale to groups once more,
Repeating what I've told before.

Toronto is my final hop
I'm planning on a two-week stop
Will talk about my book, and then
Will plan to visit once again
When, finally, I'm published, Yay
I cannot wait to reach that day!
I've toiled and slaved to get it "write"
And now, I'm nearly on my flight.
I think my work has just begun
I'm hoping it will be more fun
And all the writing, all the pain
Will prove that it was not in vain!



Her Muse is All A-Quiver

Poetess **Chris Beauvais**



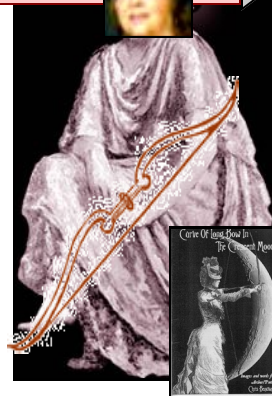
Some poets are turned off by figurative fences or rigid rules of composition. Chris Beauvais is a poet who lets her muse roam free on the range of inspiration. She aims to let thoughts fly forth in free verse, much like the arrows this expert archer looses at circled targets.

Beauvais learned to love the muse after she finished the required courses of English Lit. She enjoyed the music of the modern poets in popular music - Bob Dylan, John Lennon - but couldn't enjoy the formal forms of traditional verse. In other words, she wouldn't curl up in a comfy armchair to read Shakespeare or Dickens or any of those high falutin' folks. Beauvais feels fortunate that she eventually found a teacher who turned her on to the joys of free verse.

Once freed to write as she felt the words come, and once encouraged to write them down in her own preferred personal patterns, her thoughts and feelings came flying out. Beauvais found that archery and free verse composition gave her fulfillment in similar ways. Like arrows shot toward a target, the shafts of her words, phrases and sentences also flew forward into the minds of listeners. Her poems gave voice to her inspiration, and gave form to her *raison d'être*.

Her chapbook *Curve of Longbow in Crescent Moon* is currently available. [See more info below.](#)

Beauvais came prepared for audience participation during her hour in the Katzenberg Room. She passed out papers with an assortment of interesting words such as amethyst, ambitious, toxic, blog, alabaster and crocus. We were asked to use any of the words to compose a verse in 15 minutes of musing - any kind of verse...let fly, CWC/WV members. And so we did. When time was up, we paraded to the mike, stood, and happily delivered our quick compositions in a flurry of imagery and simile. We listened, applauded each other and gave Chris Beauvais a big hand for an invigorating hour of extemporaneous composition. Just the way our guest speaker likes it...sort of blowin' on the West Valley winds. - KH



Beauvais' *CURVE OF LONG BOW IN THE CRESCENT MOON* is \$6.00 with postage. For a copy email her at: chrisbovay@gmail.com She facilitates a Poetry Workshop at the Barnes and Noble on Ventura and Hayvenhurst on the LAST Friday of the month at 7:00PM. All are welcome. Bring 8-10 copies of your poetry to share with other attendees.

Freelance Vocabulary

Winners of the 2010 Washington Post's Mensa Invitational. Contestants altered any word by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter, and dreamed up a new definition:

1. **Cashtration (n.):** The act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period of time.
2. **Ignoramus:** A person who is both stupid and an asshole.
3. **Intaxication:** Euphoria at getting a tax refund, which lasts until you realize it was your money to start with.
4. **Reintarnation:** Coming back to life as a hillbilly.
5. **Bozone (n.):** The substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating. The bozone layer, unfortunately, shows little sign of breaking down in the near future.
6. **Foreplay:** Any misrepresentation about yourself for the purpose of getting laid.
7. **Giraffiti:** Vandalism spray-painted very, very high
8. **Sarchasm:** The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it.
9. **Inoculatte:** To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.
10. **Osteopornosis:** A degenerate disease. (This one got extra credit.)
11. **Karmageddon:** It's like, when everybody is sending off all these really bad vibes, right? And then, like, the Earth explodes and it's like, a serious bummer.
12. **Decafalon (n.):** The grueling event of getting through the day consuming only things that are good for you.
13. **Glibido:** All talk and no action.
14. **Dopeler Effect:** The tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they come at you rapidly.
15. **Arachnoleptic Fit (n.):** The frantic dance performed just after you've accidentally walked through a spider web.
16. **Beelzebug (n.):** Satan in the form of a mosquito that gets into your bedroom at three in the morning and cannot be cast out.
17. **Caterpallor (n.):** The color you turn after finding half a worm in the fruit you're eating.



REVIEW AND

Figurative Language

When a writer, in order to show the blue of his sweetheart's eyes, compares their color to the blue in the morning sky, he is using figurative language, a poetic style characterized by the use of comparison.

Similes and Metaphors: A **simile** is a comparison stated directly by use of "like" or "as."

His shoes were like violin cases.

Not much thinking is needed to see the comparison. The qualities of the largeness and the ample space of a violin case are called upon to describe the same perceived quality in the shoes.

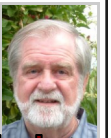
A **metaphor**, on the other hand, is a comparison stated indirectly, minus the assistance of the words "like" or "as."

Play after play, the fullback chugged down the field, piling up yardage.

A metaphor requires a little thinking. A fullback does not "chug." He runs. But both the fullback and the locomotive share an important quality in the word chug: a steady, seemingly unstoppable power.

A simile or a metaphor has three parts:

- 1) the object being described (the shoes, the fullback)
- 2) the object pulled in from another area (the violin cases, the locomotive) and
- 3) the quality the two objects share. (the largeness, the unstoppable power) This is perhaps the most important part.



Dave Wetterberg

(The terms figurative language, metaphor, metaphorical language, language of comparison, and figures of speech are often used interchangeably.)



"Analogies, it is true, decide nothing, but they can make one feel more at home."

- Sigmund Freud

"In argument similes are like songs in love; they describe much, but prove nothing."

- Franz Kafka



Spring

Alabaster faces
hidden in a crystalline spring,
Winter's icicles
tangled in the underbrush.

Frozen drops
join a string of jewels
decorating branches
like spring blossoms.

Faces somewhere
among new-grown greenery,
illuminated
by a glowing sun
and melting into smiles.

- Lillian Rodich

May Evening

I am standing by the garden gate
on a May evening.
I am seventeen.
A Mock Orange overhangs the gate;
blossom-laden branches cascade
over my head and shoulders.
the stone walk white
with fallen petals.
Drunk on the scent of Mock Orange,
I rest my arms on the gate.

The molten bubble of the rising moon
ignites a consuming longing.

- Mary Houston Shaffer



In My Grandmother's Garden

In my Grandmother's garden
Grew Lilacs
Grew Lilies of the Valley -
Cascades of purple
Droplets of white.

In my Grandmother's garden
Grew grandchildren -
Running, shouting, giggling.
Offspring of her daughters
Progeny of her sons.

In my Grandmother's garden,
Grew memories -
The love of sweet-scented flowers
The art of give-and-take
Learned from time shared with cousins.

- Sylvia Molesko

DISAPPEARING GRANDMAS

To all the blonde grandmas
Some red haired ones too
Where went the gray hair
I haven't a clue.

My grandma looks younger
Than Mommy does now
She hasn't one wrinkle
From chin to her brow.

Grandma wears jeans
That are tight just like mine
She flirts and she dances
And loves to sip wine.

She tells of her grandma
So old and so gray
And how perfect she looked
In a natural way.

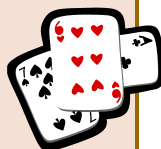
Still to all the blonde grandmas
And much to my dismay
They will stay young forever
As their grandkids turn gray.

- Leslie Kaplan

I remember Gramma

a tall stately woman,
with black hair liberally
laced with silver streaks.
Her black eyes twinkled
as she laughed out loud.
When Daddy left, Gramma
took us in. She nurtured us,
kept us safe from the uncertain
future. Mommy went to work.
I started school. After school
I played in the street. She and
her best friend Mrs. Stricker,
would sit on the corner and watch
us play. Mrs. Stricker was
as wide as she was tall and
had no lap. One day Gramma
was sitting alone watching me
when she gave me two pennies
to buy some Indian nuts from the
machine. in front of the candy store.
I put my penny in the machine
out came the nuts and my penny was
returned. I did it again and again I
got the nuts and my penny back. I
ran to Gramma with my treasure. She
said, "I'll watch the machine, you run
up and get a bag." We almost emptied the
globe. Gramma and I happily ate the nuts,
no guilt feelings between us. Those were
the days. We were carefree and happy.
Gramma and I did almost everything
together. Tuesday was movie night.
No matter what the movie, Gramma
and I went. It was dish night at the
cinema. They gave away the ugliest
plates I have ever seen. Didn't care,
they were free. Mommy just shook
her head and refused to eat off them.
Every August Gramma and I went
to the Catskills for three weeks.
Mommy would meet us for the
last week before school started
and we would all go home together.
Gramma would play cards.
My friend Annie and I would run
around together. Only this August
of '43, Gramma didn't come home with
me. Mommy said Gramma took sick
and that was the last time I saw my Gramma.
I remember Gramma for her love and her
humor, for her protection from the outside world. I
remember her hearty laugh.
Most of all I remember her warm arms
encircling me, when I was hurting
and her saying, "Shah boobalah,
everything will be all right."

- Clare Goldfarb 11/21/09



MAY BASKETS



One of my fondest childhood memories was gathering spring violets to put in a specially decorated paper doily. It was a tradition that my mom encouraged. "This is the time when you acknowledge your friends without taking credit for it." It took me awhile to absorb her words, but I did know that I relished hanging a

flower filled basket on a neighbor's front door knob, ringing the bell and running as though my life depended on it. My older sister warned me, "If the person catches you, you have to kiss them." I wouldn't mind kissing Ms. Buell; she was like a grandmother to me, but I sure didn't want to kiss Bobby Weinshigle. We were comrades-in-arms; not sissy kissers.

My mom showed me how to roll a paper lace doily into a cone and glue the sides tightly closed. For the handle, I could select a colored pipe cleaner I thought would look nice with the flowers. Task completed, I figured out my strategy for delivering my May baskets.. I reasoned that I would go to my good friend Gay's house first since she lived furthest from us. I didn't want to do the easy delivery first and then be out of breath for the long distance run.

My big smile told my mom that I hadn't been caught. Then I took the next basket to Garland, my sister's best friend who tolerated me because she wanted a little sister. She lived diagonally from us.

Two down and three to go. I needed to move fast. I grabbed all three baskets and placed them in crook of my elbow. I would cross back yards and turn up on the designated doorstep. Mrs. Fisher scared me half to death by saying "I see you." Then I noticed she didn't have her glasses on. Mrs. Owens didn't even try to catch me; she just stood there inhaling the fragrant of the purple violets.

Only one basket was left. My comrade and most of the time best friend. I crept stealthily passed their peony bushes. Using the largest red one for cover, I slipped onto the porch, secured the basket and rang the bell. As I turned to make a hasty departure, I heard a familiar giggle.

"Caught you!" announced a voice I knew only too well.

"I'm not going to kiss you. I don't care what they say," I squeaked.

Bobby looked at me with a piecing stare, "But that's the tradition. My sister told me so."

"Well, I'm not going to kiss you," I said, and turned to run. Bobby and his family moved away soon after that May Day and I never did kiss him.

- Sheila Moss

My Mama

By Sylvia Molesko

An excerpt from Sylvia's memoir *Memories Revisited*.



If I asked Mama what she would want me to say about her, I think she would say, "I love my children, Sylvie and Bernie, and my husband Morris. Taking good care of my family is my life. To cook and clean is how I show my love. I am a good housekeeper, a good cook, and a good Jew. Every day I dust, and sweep and cook and do dishes. I keep a clean house. I wash the floors and put newspaper down on them so they don't get dirty when we walk on them..

On Friday I cook chicken and chicken soup for Friday night and cut up a Greek Salad for Saturday, then I cut up some chicken to put in the salad for when Sylvie and Bernie get home from the movies on Saturday afternoon.

I wash clothes by hand, rubbing them with Ivory Soap on a metal wash-board in a large basin of water, then I hang them with clothespins on a pulley clothesline to dry between two apartment buildings

I iron on Tuesday. In New Jersey, I had to heat the iron on a kerosene stove, but in our apartment in The Bronx, I at least have an electric iron, and even an electric mangle. I learned to use it so good that I can even iron shirts on it as well as sheets, pillow cases and table cloths, of course.

Once a week I go shopping for food. I walk to Jennings Street, first to the fish market. I watch the fishes swim, and when I see the one I like, the one that is the right size and looks healthy, I point to it and say "That one!" Then I wait for it to be cleaned and scaled. Sometimes I buy flounder to fry, other times pike and whitefish for gefilte fish balls. If the scaler does a good job, I might give him a penny.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are bought from the fruit and vegetable stands and braided egg bread from the bakery. Morris brings home the milk, butter, cream, sour cream and eggs. He is a milkman, you know.

Oye! I have to schlep those bags of food home. I carry two or three big cloth shopping bags about six blocks. Sometimes I pay a little boy a nickel or dime to help me carry the bags home, and upstairs to the third floor. Then I put most of the food into the icebox. The iceman comes three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. He brings up a big block of ice, a twelve or sixteen inch cube, and lifts it into the top of the ice box

I cook very good. I cook oatmeal or farina and make sure that little Sylvie and Bernie eat it all before I let them go off to school. I make egg, tuna, or salami sandwiches for them to take to school. Maybe some sugar cookies shaped like hearts or diamonds too.

For dinner I make 'from soup to nuts'... all kinds of

good and healthy foods. Soups! Vegetable, chicken with noodles or matzo balls, lentil, split pea, potato soup, and borsht. What kind of soup can't I make?

My Greek salad takes more than an hour to prepare, shredding, slicing, cubing, and chopping all the good fresh vegetables, then mixing them all together with lemon juice and mayonnaise, packing into clean mayonnaise jars. So much, that we have it for days.

Chicken, meats, fish! I grind chuck roast, by hand, in a metal meat grinder that attaches to the table with a vise. After adding egg, grated onion, and matza meal, I shape it into little oval cutlets and fry them, or bake a meatloaf with a surprise hard-boiled egg in the middle. I don't buy gefilte fish in a jar - I grind the two or three kinds of fish by hand, mixed with a pinch of kosher salt, pepper, onion, and matza meal ...oye, so good!

Did I mention my lugshen (noodle) pudding, potato kugel and potato pancakes, matza pancakes and matza brie (fried matza)? Not to forget blintzes, and kishka? To die for!

Was it appreciated? Maybe. No one ever said, so I had to ask. I could also tell if they ate seconds, asked for thirds, accepted fourths. Ess mien kinderlach, ess. (Eat my children, eat.)"

With all of that hard work, Mama still 'kept herself up'. She would say, "A little powder and a little paint makes an old woman look like what she ain't." She was proud of her curly hair, which she wore fairly short. "Do you like my new permanent wave?" she would ask a new acquaintance, "God gave it to me." she would then boast. She always wore an apron in the kitchen, or when doing housework, and she usually wore a flower-printed housedress, that buttoned or zippered or snapped down the front.



Mama was a religious person. On Friday night she would 'bench lightz', which means light the Sabbath candles. While wearing a scarf to cover her head, circling the air with her arms, she would whisper the blessing to herself. Services in the synagogue were attended on important holydays. She kept a kosher house, keeping meat and dairy products separate, and she had separate sets of dishes to use for Passover. When I was little, and asked 'why?' questions I seldom got satisfactory answers, just "God says", or "That's just the way we do it." For Mama, that was enough of an answer.

Mama had a good sense of humor, often using play-on-words, like the teacher asked her class, "Who can use the words commercial and official in the same sentence?" A little Jewish boy raised his hand and said "I can. When Mama calls me to come in for dinner, she sometimes says 'Come Mershel, eat a fishel'." Another of her favorites is... Johnny's mama forgot her keys in the house, so she calls in through the window, "Johnny, throw my key out the window." So Johnny throws his brother, Mikey, out of the window. Honestly, Mama taught me to pun!



VERMONT

(Where my mother grew up.)

I visit Burlington...
there a blue and purple iris grows
visible in expanses of green.

She bends toward the bloom
and cups it gently in her hands.
She runs through fields of wild flowers
and sings her song off key....

“Come on you Y girls,
Come on and play with me
And bring your dollies three.
Climb up my apple tree.
Look down my rain barrel,
Slide down my cellar door,
And we'll be jolly friends
Forever more...”

Forever there in soft shadows,
mysterious forests
and blueberry patches,
in Vermont's delicate summers
and snow-painted winters.
She is there, her spirit conversing
with whispering trees,
her smile greeting wild birds,
her fingers exploring soil,
feeling seedlings.

Now I visit Burlington,
the wild flowers turn
towards the sun
and I can hear my
mother sing.

- Lillian Rodich



Frances Mackay is my virtual friend in the International Writers Workshop . She spent many years moving with her husband through the east of Australia and New Zealand. She worked a variety of jobs, had two children, before she returned to school to earn a teaching degree .

A Posy of Violets (A Memoir)

I remember you sent me violets
for my seventh birthday.
A waste of money on a child,
the nurses snorted as they left them
in the ward. Such extravagance.

They didn't know
how I'd hunt for violets
around this date,
my favourite flower
that held the promise of spring..

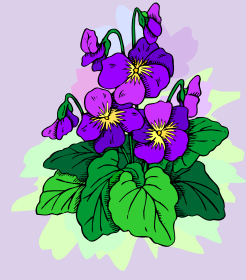
It wasn't just a posy you sent,
with hope for a normal spring,
but a feeling of worth for me,
lost in the bustle those first
confusing days far from home.

I had never been alone before,
your violets told me I wasn't,
their deep purple faces whispered
I was still special
and their perfume embraced me.

New nurses came on duty,
and each paid homage
to my sweet posy.
The modest violets you sent me
you sent me
remain treasured in my mind.

Thank you.

- Frances Mackay
fm_mackay@YAHOO.COM.AU
<http://overanotherhump.blogspot.>



For the next eleven years she taught Humanities subjects to secondary students. At an age when most teachers became jaded Frances thoroughly enjoyed her teaching experiences and has met past students in most unexpected places.

Frances and her husband Frank enjoy retirement in a small village in outback Queensland, Australia, where she began writing. She has had various pieces published, poetry and prose, on the internet as well as print media and readings over the radio, here and overseas. The wildlife in her area has inspired many of her pieces although she does often include personal experiences.



In the California trees.

"Remember your favorite rust feather hat?" I ask.

Her laughter, a melody of all seasons,

Softly rings in my ears-

"My favorite hat was a black and white plaid,

With a see-thru-red-veil covering my eyes," she

answers softly.

A faint smile curves her lips...

"Oh, yes, I remember now.

It was my favorite too," I whisper.

My eyes follow hers trying

To see the beauty she finds in every tree.

Pale leaves like lettuce buds wave

At her rusty memory.

Mom remembers yesterday, tells me

Treasured family memories embroidered

With nostalgic secrets, a smile always

Ready for me when tears visit my eyes.

Her eternal youth floats around me

And I must admit that she is younger

Than I ever was.

Hers is no ordinary visit...it never is,

Soon, she'll fly back home to Quito, Ecuador...

Where all imaginary lines meet in the very center of the world-

In my garden she says good bye once more

To daffodils, irises, roses, and lady bugs,

Waves to birds and trees, closing her eyes to capture

For safekeeping the magic of all she sees.

With veiled, anguished smiles.

And holding back a million tears travel help

Mom pack our memories

In her suitcase, of forever spring

But, I convince her to stay until Mother's Day...

Her suitcase is bulging with laughter and tears

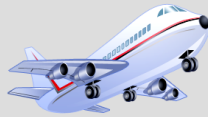
Waiting at the front door...

Days flying like the wind

Until May, when the silver bird in the sky

Separate us one more time

treasure for each.



- Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

PICTURES IN AN ALBUM

Turning pages in a picture album,
Nudging the diary of the mind,
Memories moving like a pendulum,
Recalling forgotten moments.

Faded pictures in an album,
People no longer alive
Captured at an important
Moment of their lives.

Each picture tells a story,
Sometimes happy, sometimes sad
Memories recede, become
Faded in an album of the mind.

No matter how many
Pages we turn, our memories
Remain hazy, like
Pictures in an album.
Our memories of the mind.

- Clare Goldfarb



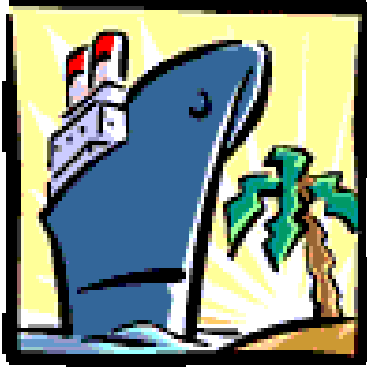
Mother and Child

*Mother and child
a bond without words
to live it the only defining
growth of both
endemic, enduring
bearing and born
with tearing and torn
umbilical flow
unceasing
treasure for each.*

- Rita Brown

TROPICAL STORM

By Ray Malus



Sixty feet below, the dark wharf of Papeete, Tahiti skulked in the gloom. Rising to meet me was the wedding cake of the ship: white, tiered, glowing with life and promise.

From where I stood on the officers' deck, I could see the bridge,

and the funnel and masts reaching up above me.

Even at 10:00, the air was heavy with humidity, and my shirt clung. A soft breeze carried the scent of the island, sweet and floral — but with an overtone of musky decay. Not unpleasant. Warm, feral, like a familiar bed too-long slept in. It mingled with the bite of salt and diesel from the water below.

Behind me, the officers' deck was hung with dim-lit paper lanterns. A redolence of burgers and dogs mingled with the sting of charcoal smoke.

A portable cassette player started playing "Stayin' Alive," and my foot tapped with it. I felt a touch on my shoulder. "New in town, Sailor?" — a soft sultry voice with an English Shire lilt.

Her name was Anne — a purser's assistant. Tonight, she was out of uniform. She wore a white nylon blouse buttoned to the throat, and a long black maxi-skirt cinched tightly at the waist. The severity of the outfit did nothing to hide the willowy ripeness of her body. On the contrary, its austerity called attention to her full chest and lush hips. She had the pink-gold complexion that only generations in the pale, dewy climate of the British Isles could produce. Her black hair, usually done in a formal Gibson, hung straight down her back to her waist.

"Dance?" I said.

In response, she began to move with the music, and slowly backed on to the improvised dance floor in the middle of the deck. I followed, and we joined the small crowd of uniformed officers and women there.

A disco-strobe seemed to take snapshots of the dancers. The officers strutted like awkward roosters in that strange butt-jutting posture adopted by Englishmen-in-uniform on dance floors, as they circled their far less inhibited partners.

Anne moved suggestively, her breasts swaying heavy beneath the nylon, her hips thrust forward, cir-

cling — a primal native girl in a nun's habit. We danced, gazes locked. The strobe froze mute messages of seduction.

"Are you?"

"Will you?"

"Do you?"

"Should we?"

"Yes."

"Yes!"

"YES!"

The music segued into "How Deep Is Your Love." The strobe ceased, leaving the deck in warm half-light. I moved forward. Anne molded against me, arms around my neck. I put my hands flat and strong against the small of her back, and drew her in. My fingertips kneaded her muscles as we swayed to the Bee Gees.

Suddenly, like an icy cataract, the sky unleashed a torrent of rain. The other couples dashed in panic for the cover of the Wardroom, abandoning the cassette player. Oblivious, we continued dancing, alone in the deluge. The water cascaded over us, drenching us, the wind chilling us. I could feel the cold fabric of her blouse, and the soft heat of her body beneath — warm butter-scotch under ice cream. Heedless, we continued, swaying, our hips locked together. Then her motion changed, now moving counter to me, her breasts and belly rubbing across me with an excruciating friction. The downpour raged, pounding us, cascading off her hair and across my arms, as we writhed, hard, against one another, the passion of the storm feeding our own.

As the song ended, she pulled herself against me once again, holding me fiercely. We stood, Adam and Eve alone on the deserted deck. Her grip tightened as the music faded into the roar of the rain. She stepped back. The nylon blouse molded to her, pink and brown where it clung to her loose breasts, transparently wet.

We looked at each other for long a moment, then she laughed and curtsied. "Thank you, fine sir." She hurried off into the anonymity of the Wardroom, leaving me in the rain.



CWC/WV



Edward closed his window blinds and reduced the morning glare. A darkened room was best for video games.

The computer screen was now a small glowing window into cyberspace. He clicked on the cyborg icon and found where he left off last time.

I'll be Captain Juno this time. Time to see things from his perspective.

Captain Juno followed his enemy into a warehouse. A red-eyed cyborg leapt from the doorway, claws extended. Captain Juno's laser ray vaporized the monster into oblivion.

He could hear his father waking up - his usual hangover routine of hacks, coughs and spits.

Now he'll start looking for Mom, but she's gone, Edward thought. I heard her car leave after Dad came home last night. She told me she'd leave if he came home drunk again.

"I don't want to leave you, Edward," she told me. "But...I can't stay here anymore. You've heard me fighting with Dad. Every day the same bad fights. It can't go on."

"Yeah, Mom. I've heard you guys yelling about money and stuff."

"Sorry, Edward. It hurts me that you have to stay here, but I'll try to see you every week. And I'm going to keep tabs on you. Check your Gmail. Then send me messages. Dad will take care of you. He loves you. And I love you."

She hugged her on and he tried not to cry when she walked out the front door. Her car backed out of the driveway and sped away.

I could tell Mom wanted to live with her girlfriend, Rikki. Now it's just me and Dad living here, he thought. Bummer. Oh, oh. Here he comes.

"Lilly! Where are you? Answer me!"

Henrik came up the stairs and stopped at his son's bedroom door. Edward leaned closer to concentrate on his frantic pursuit of Khan Ranu through the warehouse filled with boxes.

Now his father swung open his door. "Where's your mother?" *Captain Juno's vision swept the hallway and caught a glimpse of Khan Ranu fleeing to-*

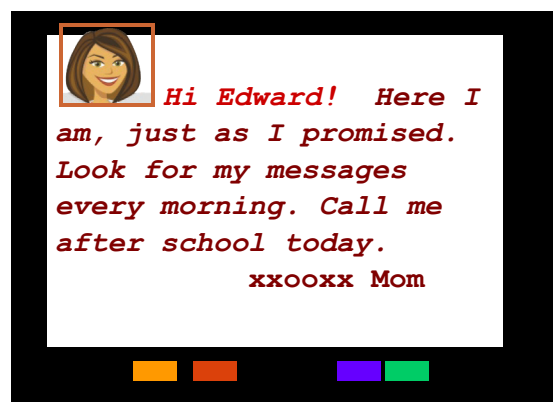
ward the basement stairs.

"She left last night, Dad. She...uh.... might be at Rikki's condo."

Henrik spun around and raced downstairs. He left the bedroom door ajar so Edward heard Dad on his cell phone calling different people: his grandmother, his uncle, his aunts... one-sided loud conversations in a mixture of English and Cantonese, punctuated by curse words in both languages.

Edward closed his door, and returned to his game. *Surrounded by cyborgs of evil Khan Ranu, Captain Juno wandered blindly in the dark basement of the warehouse. Laser rays streaked through the dark pulverizing boxes next to his head. A svelte form suddenly rappelled down the dimly lit airshaft. Captain Electra! The joint power of their lasers burned a large gap in the warehouse ceiling. Escape!*

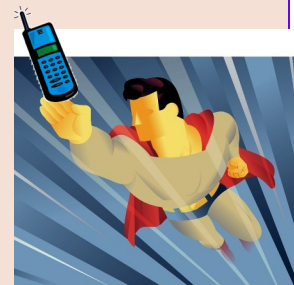
Suddenly a bright Gmail message flashed on the screen.



THIS UPCOMING CENTURY

Inventions and discoveries have accelerated over the last century. Comparing numerous lifestyles that have faded from the memory can easily stagger my Senior mind. The pace is accelerating even faster. What will lie ahead in this century for the youth of today and tomorrow?

© Norman Molesko, 2010



May Day by Ed Rasky

"Whup! Whup! Whup! Whup!" repeated over and over again as I rushed to my battle station on the Antigonish, a corvette carrying 91 men. It was November 5th, 1944 and I was very proud to be a Sick Berth Attendant in the Royal Canadian Navy.

I was 18 years of age after having spent a full year at the Sydney Naval Hospital in Nova Scotia. We had been at sea in the Atlantic Ocean for four weeks now and the maneuvers we had been through prepared our ship for convoy duty to Ireland.

The dangers were all around us. A German sub called a U Boat had followed us for a week. Thank goodness for radar. The German sailors in the U Boat were all aware of our power. We could catapult 15 barrels of TNT into the water at one time.

Our ship was faster than theirs. Our depth charges could sink a submarine. Once we got a sub on radar, it could be over in a few minutes. If the garbage from the sub reached the surface, we knew we'd made a kill. On the other hand, if the U Boat got into a proper position it could torpedo us.

As I reached my battle station I felt the sweat of fear on my forehead. When I saw our depth charges in mid air I said a prayer in Hebrew that might help them to their destination. It didn't help.

I day dreamed about my family. I had four brothers and three sisters. I was the only one in the military service. Would they miss me if my ship was sunk?

My job was to open up the Sick Bay each day from 9-12 and 1-4. I did small stitching jobs when necessary. I had heard of some cases when a Sick Berth Attendant had to operate. Wow! Please don't make me that person. I have enough on my plate right now, I thought..

An hour later, "Whup! Whup! Whup! Whup!" and I was back at my battle station again. I was informed that there might be dead bodies which would be my responsibility to prepare for burial. The sweat came back in earnest. I tried to appear calm.

The scene was not pleasant. I saw a lot of garbage. We were told over the loudspeaker that a U Boat had sunk a Canadian corvette like ours. There was no sign of the ship—just one life raft with three bodies remained in the sea.

I saw the three dead sailors later that day. They were all my age. Their stomachs were swollen and their skin was a purplish color. I had never seen a dead body before.

It took a while for the captain to maneuver the ship to pick up the bodies. I prepared them for burial the next day. I thought I was going to vomit several times.

The three sailors were buried at sea. The captain said a few words. *"May the three sailors and all 82 men aboard be blessed for fighting for our freedom."*

I will always remember the brave men and women who fought and died in World War II.

MILITARY GRAVEYARD

- Lillian Rodich

drumbeat, heartbeat, echoes

echoes calling echoes

train whistles taunt the solitude

gunsmiths pound metal to metal

crying

once in the calmness of midnight

gather the wilted flowers

gather the cannon volleys

gather the crosses and stars

stained and warped wood

one dreary footprint

encased in mud

drumbeat, heartbeat echoes

Memorial Day
May 31st.



*A hero is someone
who has given his
or her life to something
bigger than oneself.*

~Joseph Campbell



These poems were taken from a book of poetry Dave Wetterberg's mother collected from the time she was in high school. She clipped them from newspapers and magazines and pasted them in a composition notebook. After she died, Dave's aunt gave the book, fat with paste and poems, to Dave. Inscribed inside the front cover was "Note: If anything happens to me, please give this book to David."

A Poem to Me Mudder

When me prayers were poorly said,
Who tucked me in me bed,
And spanked me till me ass was red?
Me Mudder.

Who took me from me cozy cot,
And put me on me ice cold pot,
And made me pee-pee if me could not?
Me Mudder.

And when the morning light would come,
And in me crib me dribble some,
Who wipe me tiny widdle bum?
Me Mudder.

Who would me hair so gently part,
And hug me gently to her heart,
And sometimes squeeze me till me fart?
Me Mudder.

Who looked at me with eyebrows knit,
And nearly had a king sized fit,
When in my Sunday clothes me shit?
Me Mudder.

When at night the bed did squeak,
Me raised me head to have a peek,
Who yelled at me to go to sleep?
Me Fadder.

M-O-T-H-E-R

M is for the million things she gave me,
O means only that she's growing old,
T is for the tears she shed to save me,
H is for her heart of purest gold;
E is for her eyes, with love-light shining,
R means right, and right she'll always be,

Put them all together, they spell
MOTHER, a word that means
the world to



VIRTUALLY YOURS

Editor's Note: The websites listed below were checked out before publication. They are all current websites found and posted by members/writers on the Internet Writing Workshop. You may want to bookmark websites for future use.

Are you a writer looking for grants? Click on:

<http://fundsforwriters.com/>

This useful Web site offers free information about different formats, how to download, and so forth. The site provides info on eBook readers such as Adobe Digital Editions, Microsoft Reader, eReader Pro (iPhone, iPod, Windows, Mac, PalmOS and BlackBerry) <http://helpebook.com/>

Condensed versions of business and advice books are sold for a smaller price for Kindle, with longer essays at a slightly higher fee. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/08/business/media/08condense.html>

This website offers its members books to trade. Free membership; only cost members incur is postage to mail the book. On average, books are sold for under \$2 + 1 (club member) credit. paperbackswap.com

A new PBS Market where you can buy new overstocked books at very low prices. There's a wide selection - over 9000 titles available. Check out: www.paperbackswap.com/market/allbooks.php

Google has scanned and digitized all the early copyright records:

<http://books.google.com/googlebooks/copyrightsearch.html>

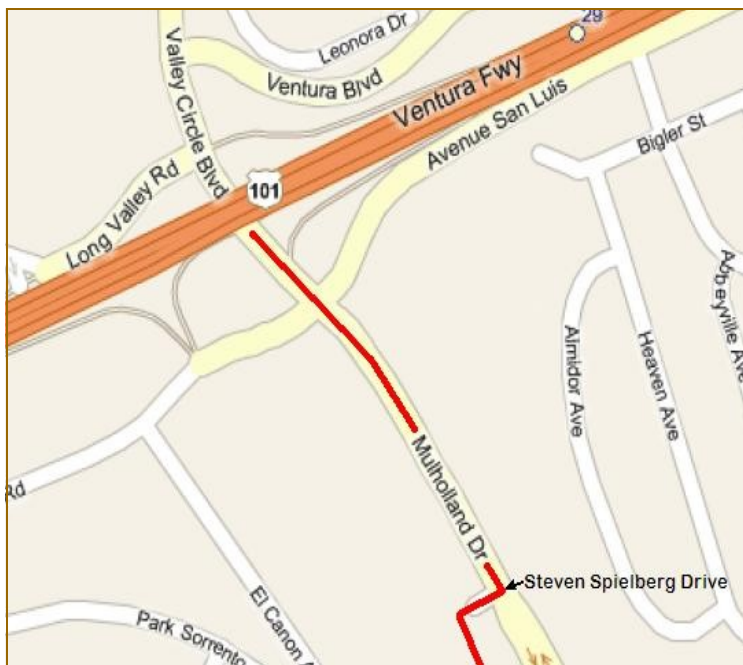
Take note, poets: B-Rhymes is a dictionary for finding near-rhymes. <http://www.b-rhymes.com/>

If you need a search engine magazine search for research: Try Worldcat or FirstSearch: <http://www.worldcat.org/> or <http://firstsearch.oclc.org/>

Want to read an article on translations? --an unsung facet of a writer's trade: <http://tinyurl.com/yapxnr7>

Some writers find Elmore Leonard's writing tips useful: <http://tinyurl.com/yg5zxqb>

This timely article compares the environmental impact of eBook readers vs. printed matter: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/04/04/opinion/04opchart.html>



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 Villa Katzenberg. 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, May 1st., 2010 at 1:30 p.m.

MAILING ADDRESS

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IN FOCUS

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