



The Newsletter Of The San Fernando Valley Branch

# The Valley Scribe

Vol. 2

June, 2010

No. 10

## Next Meeting June 19, 12:30!



Photo by Dan Irvin

### June Featured Speaker:

Linda O. Johnston

**MYSTERIES**

(Bio by Linda O. Johnston)

Linda O. Johnston's first published fiction appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and won the Robert L. Fish Memorial Award for Best First Mystery Short Story of the year (1988). Since then, Linda has published more short stories, plus sixteen romance novels, including romantic suspense for *Harlequin Intrigue*, and paranormal romance for *Harlequin Nocturne*. She is also the author of the Kendra Ballantyne, Pet-Sitter cozy mystery series from *Berkley Prime Crime* and the upcoming spin-off Pet Rescue mystery series. Kendra and Linda are both lawyers who live in the Hollywood Hills with their tri-color Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, both named Lexie. However, unlike Kendra, Linda has never lost her law license temporarily and become a pet sitter, nor is Linda a murder magnet.

Linda is a member of Romance Writers of America, Mystery Writers of America, Thriller Writers of America and Sisters in Crime. She blogs with fellow cozy mystery writers on [KillerHobbies.blogspot.com](http://KillerHobbies.blogspot.com).

Linda will be speaking at the June meeting of the California Writers Club, San Fernando Valley Chapter, about cozy mysteries, including how to come up with a theme that people will love, how to murder people the cozy way, and how to have your amateur sleuths solve the crimes in a manner that readers will enjoy.

For more information, go to:

<http://lindaohnston.com/>

### YEAR-END OPEN MIKE!

**Last Chance — 12:30 SHARP!**

The first 6 members to sign up will be given 5 minutes of FAME.

If you read at the May meeting, you cannot read in June — unless there is available time and space.

Please bring 2 copies of your material so the hearing-challenged may also enjoy your reading.

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## June Meeting-in-Review:

### Gene Perret: Comedy Guru

By Ethel Ann Pemberton

Gene Perret, the Guru of Comedy Writing, entertained members and guests at the May 15th meeting with a parade of one-liners and positivity. He believes that if you want to be a T.V. writer, and if you keep writing scripts, you will be a T.V. writer. More advice: "You have to be positive or you won't make it in the writing field." Perret ought to know because he wrote for Bob Hope, Carol Burnett, Phyllis Diller, Tim Conway, and many other notable entertainers. He even traveled with Bob Hope on USO tours and comedy gigs, feeding him one-liners wherever they went. He said Hope was very discerning about the jokes he used. Although Hope had a staff of writers, on an *Academy Award Show* that he emceed, Hope used ten jokes out of the thirty Perret had submitted.

Perret said Hope always wanted current material. One day Perret mentioned to Hope that President Bush was going to give an award to Johnny Carson. Hope replied, "Give me jokes about Carson — NOW." Perret related staying up all night, sitting in a bathtub, writing one-liners for Hope.

Perret said he'd also do personal work for Hope such as writing his son's graduation speech. Gene said Hope was his idol and his favorite comedian — plus he paid well.

As for rejection, Perret said, "Don't take it personally. It happens to every writer. Sometimes it occurs because a similar article had been recently published, perhaps the article just wasn't needed, or perhaps the publisher just hates your guts — and occasionally-it's just that."

Perret also said that rejection can often be a blessing in disguise. In pursuit of a role on *Welcome Back, Kotter*, nineteen actors auditioned for one slot. Later, when an actress was needed for a sitcom, the producer remembered her from the audition. He called her back, and instead of getting hired for one performance, she ended up a 'regular' on a weekly sitcom.

In one instance, a publisher turned down a manuscript, saying he thought it was "nutty." The manuscript, *Conversations with God*, later became



## Musings from the President

Ethel Ann Pemberton

### Basic Story-Telling Guidelines

#### I. Structure

- A. Who is the protagonist, and what does he/she want?
- B. What does he/she do to accomplish his/her goal, and who/what is the opposing force?
- C. What events occur that bring him/her to reaching or failing to reach his/her goal?

#### II. Story

Once upon a time something happens to someone, and he/she decides to pursue a goal. So he/she devises a plan of action. Even though there are forces trying to stop him/her, the protagonist moves forward because there is a lot at stake.

Just as things seem as bad as they can get, he/she learns an important lesson, OR when offered a prize he/she has striven so vigorously to win, the protagonist must decide whether or not to take it. And in making that decision, a need is fulfilled that had been created by something in his/her past, OR a goal is reached, or found to be unattainable, that the protagonist had been strenuously seeking.

While most of us write instinctively, if any traditional elements are missing or weak, the story won't work as well. For example, if the obstacles are too easy to overcome, or there isn't a lot at risk for the hero/heroine, the reader won't care about the outcome. □

### Personal Message From the President

*As many of you already know, I've moved to Georgia where the humidity is high and one sweats without even putting pen to paper. So, I'll have obstacles to overcome. The greatest one I can think of is that of not seeing you or networking with you on a regular basis.*

*It has been my pleasure to meet you, know you, and serve you this past year as president and program chair. I believe the strength of the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club lies in its diversity of members. You are a dynamic and talented group of writers that will always have a place in my heart. Don't be surprised to find yourselves in my novels, appropriately disguised, of course.*

*I hope to see you at the June 19th meeting to wish you a personal goodbye and much luck in your writing endeavors.*

*—Ethel Ann Pemberton*

## TO MARKET, TO MARKET

by Ken Watts

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

**Familyfun** is a magazine covering activities for families with children ages 3-12. It's about all the wonderful things families can do together. The writers are either parents of authorities in a covered field. Guidelines available online. Sample copy for \$5. Responds in 3 months to queries. Accepts multiple submissions. Pays on publication. Offers 25% kill fee. Makes work-for-hire assignments. Circulation: 2,100,000 Nonfiction: Buys dozens of mss/yr. Submission Method: Query w/published clips Length: 850-3,000 words. Pays: \$1.25/word. Pays expenses for writers on assignment. Needs: book excerpts, essays, general interest, how-to, crafts, cooking, educational activities, humor, interview, personal experience, photo feature, travel. See website! Address: Familyfun, Disney Publishing, Inc., 47 Pleasant Street, Northampton, MA 01060. Phone: (413) 585-0444. Fax: (413) 586-5724. E-mail: [queries.familyfun@disney.com](mailto:queries.familyfun@disney.com). Website: [www.familyfun.com](http://www.familyfun.com).

**Zoetrope Short Story** is an annual contest for unpublished short stories. Prize: 1st place: \$1,000, 2nd place: \$500, 3rd place: \$250, plus 7 honorable mentions. Entry fee: \$15. Guidelines for SASE, by e-mail, on website, or in publication. Deadline: October 1. Entries MUST be unpublished. Word length: 5,000 words max. Open to any writer. "Please mark envelope clearly 'short fiction contest.'" Winners will be notified by phone or e-mail December 1. Results announced December 1. A list of winners will be posted on website and published in the spring issue. The winning story will be published on the website as a special supplement to the spring issue. Address: Zoetrope: All-Story, 916 Kearny St., San Francisco, CA 94133. Phone: (415) 788-7500. Fax: (415) 989-7910. E-mail: [contests@all-story.com](mailto:contests@all-story.com). Website: [www.all-story.com](http://www.all-story.com). Contact: Krista Halverson, managing editor.

**Skirt! Magazine** is a monthly magazine covering women's interests. It is about their work, play, families, creativity, style, health, wealth, bodies, and souls. Guidelines available online. Accepts multiple submissions; 50% freelance written. Pays on publication. No kill fee. Queries accepted by e-mail (preferred). Responds in 6-8 weeks to queries. Responds 1-2 months to mss. Publishes ms an average of 2 months after acceptance. Nonfiction: Buys 100+ mss/year. Length: 900-1,200 words. Pays: \$150-200. Needs: essays, humor, and personal experience. Address: Morris Communications, 7 Radcliffe St., Suite 302, Charleston, SC 29403. Phone: (843) 958-0028. Fax: (843) 958-0029. E-mail: [submissions@skirt.com](mailto:submissions@skirt.com). Website: [www.skirt.com](http://www.skirt.com).

**Tales Of The Talisman** is a literary sci-fi and fantasy magazine published 4 times a year. They publish short stories, poetry, and articles with themes related to sci-fi and fantasy. Speculative fiction set in the past, present and future is welcome. Do not send stories with copyrighted characters, unless you're the copyright holder. Receives 60 unsolicited mss/month. Accepts 7-10 mss/issue, 21-30 mss/year. Publishes ms 9 months after acceptance. Publishes 8 new writers/year. Length: 1,000-6,000 words. Average: 4,000 words. Often comments on rejected mss. Address: P. O. Box 2194, Mesilla Park, NM 88047-2194. E-mail: [hadrosaur@zianet.com](mailto:hadrosaur@zianet.com). Website: [www.taleofthetalisman.com](http://www.taleofthetalisman.com).

**Genre** is a gay men's lifestyle magazine, covering entertainment, fashion, travel, and relationships in hip, upbeat, upscale voice; 60% freelance written. Pays on publication. Offers 25% kill fee. Buys first North American serial rights, buys electronic rights. Queries accepted by mail, e-mail, and fax. Sample copy for \$6.95 (\$5 plus \$1.95 S&H). They may only respond if interested. Publishes an average of 3 months after acceptance. Nonfiction: Not interested in articles in 2 men negotiating a sexual situation or coming-out stories. Buys a variable number of mss/year. Submission method: Query w/published clips. Length: 500-1,500 words. Pays: \$150-\$1,600. Address: Genre Publishing, 213 W. 35th Street, Suite 402, NY, NY 10001. Phone: (212) 594-8181. Fax: (212) 594-8263. E-mail: [genre@genremagazine.com](mailto:genre@genremagazine.com). Website: [www.genremagazine.com](http://www.genremagazine.com).

**Girlfriends Magazine** is a monthly lesbian magazine currently accepting NONFICTION only. The magazine provides its readers with intelligent, entertaining and visually pleasing coverage of culture, politics, and entertainment — all from an informed and critical lesbian perspective. Guidelines available online. Accepts multiple submissions. Pays on publication. Offers 50% kill fee. Buys first rights and use for advertising/promoting *Girlfriends*. Queries accepted by mail, and e-mail. Responds in 3 weeks to queries, 2 months to mss. Publishes ms an average of 6 months after acceptance. Sample copy \$4.95 plus \$1.50 postage or online. Address: H. A. F. Publishing, 3181 Mission Street, PMB 30, San Francisco, CA 94110. E-mail: [staff@girlfriendsmag.com](mailto:staff@girlfriendsmag.com). Website: [www.girlfriendsmag.com](http://www.girlfriendsmag.com). □

### Something To Ponder

"Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together."

- Vincent van Gogh



*Perret (cont'd from pg. 2)*

a best seller. Perret repeated, "Don't take rejection seriously — it's only business."

He quoted Goldwyn as once saying, "It's only an educated fling — a guess. When we hire someone, we sometimes can be wrong."

"Rejection is painful," Perret said. "Give yourself a moment of self-pity, have a nice lunch, and start working again."

Perret related an incident about a gentleman who had written a manuscript and said he wanted a \$200,000 advance for it. But everyone he contacted refused to even read it.

Danny Simon, Neil Simon's brother boasted, "I believe I'm the best writer in the world." A friend replied, "You're not even the best writer in the family."

Perret told us that writers, especially comedy writers, cannot have writer's block. "Write bad, but write." Further advice: "Your love for your craft will make you write better and better."

In response to a question about the shelf-life of a joke, Perret said: "After told, it's gone. Comedians don't really want jokes. They want someone to

provide jokes." He further emphasized, "A comedy writer needs a fresh outlook on everything. Get creative with now or the future — forget about the past."

Not only did the comedy-writing guru Perret give his captive audience laughter, but he provided a wealth of information about turning rejection into positivity. □

### **IT'S NOT TOO EARLY...**

to pay your dues for next year!

Primary membership for the year is only \$45.

Secondary dues (those already in another Branch)  
are only \$20!

Pay early and avoid the late (initiation) fee!

## **ELECTIONS — 2010**

Elections for our new Board will take place at our June meeting (June 19<sup>th</sup>).  
The Nominating Committee has proposed the following slate of officers:

President: Stephanie Sharf

Vice President/Membership: Lenora Smalley (current Membership Chair)

Treasurer: Judy Presnall (current Treasurer)

Secretary: Ken Watts

Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor.

Please be there and make your wishes known. Remember: YOU are the Branch!

## **BOARD MEETINGS**

Our SFV Branch holds its Board Meetings every month after the Speaker's Presentation. Members are not permitted to speak or participate, but are encouraged to audit and observe these meetings.

*When writing, let nothing happen deliberately.*

*When re-writing, let nothing happen accidentally. -rm-*

## The Wright Word – by Ray

### HOMEWORK

As you read this, we are about to go on summer hiatus. Lots more time to write! (That *is* how you intend to spend your time, isn't it?) Perhaps it's not my place, but I'd like to issue a few challenges to you.

First. Go over your writing, and look for *clichés*. *Clichés* are traps. There's no rule that says you can't be the *second* person to express something in the same way. But read your material, and if a phrase sounds familiar, ask yourself, "Did I just take the easy way out? Would a little more thought have found a better way of saying that?" If not, fine! But it's very easy to let habit take over, and just plug in a shop-worn phrase or image. If so, fix it!

Second. You poets. One of your tools is economy. Another is vividness. Are there extra words? Are there non-specific images, slushy general adjectives, miscellany that doesn't add anything but word count? Cut it! Don't just take up space; fill it!

Third. You storytellers. Are you soggy with adverbs? Do a word-search for "ly" words. Could that adverb be eliminated by using a more specific verb? Do it! Are your adjectives flaccid? When you wrote "red," did you mean "crimson?" Change it!

Fourth. Question your narrator. Do we trust him? Do we like him? Does he make us want to listen? Remember: he's your surrogate.

Fifth. Writing dialogue? Do all your people sound the same? Why? Do you really know who they are? If not, study them! Read your dialogue aloud. Do people actually talk that way? If you overheard it from the next room, would you believe it? Or would it sound like badly acted soap opera. Re-write!

Sixth. Do a "Sense Inventory." How many of the senses are you appealing to? Sight? (Of course!) Smell? Taste? Hearing? Touch? Inner sense ("He could feel his heart pounding.")? Is it enough? Too much?

Seventh. Check your plot development! Does it

follow reasonably? Now, ask yourself, "If my reader's house starts to burn down, will my book be one of the things he takes with him when he escapes — just because he *has* to know what happens next?" No? Do something about it!

Eighth: Characters. Love, hate, fear, whatever! Will your readers care? No? Flesh them out!

Most important: Why are you writing? As "Writers" (capital 'W') we are *Artists*. I know. It sounds "stuffy" and "pretentious." It is not. We are trying to illuminate the human experience and expose our commonality. That's the purpose of "Art." If your target audience is only the people who already know and love you, you are "writing," but you're not "Writing."

Each of us is unique — and that very uniqueness is the commonality that makes us the same. Find something that needs to be said — that will resonate with others of our race. Something bare, naked, and true — that's never been said before, or never been said in the way you want to say it. Then write it! Clearly! Vividly! (Well, sometimes adverbs are useful!) Make us see it! Make us feel it! Make us know it! Convince each of us that *we* are not alone — and *you* will no longer be alone.

And isn't that why you write?

Let me know how it goes. See ya in the Fall. --m--

### KUDOS COLUMN

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](mailto:ericastux@aol.com). We are interested in everyone's successes.)

Linda Ballou is announcing the publication of her new book, *Lost Angel Walkabout—One Traveler's Tales*, a "spirited collection of travel narratives."

Available at Amazon.com.

Signed copy with free shipping at author's site  
[www.LindaBallouAuthor.com](http://www.LindaBallouAuthor.com)

To say that poetry is "just prose broken into small lines," is utter stupidity. A 1040 form put through a wood-chipper is not "poetry" any more than excrement rolled into tiny balls is "medicine." --m--

## It Could Be Verse

### **HEAT**

**Ken Watts**

*Searing breeze blowing  
delicate flower dancing  
all else is wasteland*

### **Sands**

Lillian Rodich

*grains of sand  
fine as diamond dust  
spread like frosting  
over the shore*

*pushed into wave patterns  
by a whimsical wind  
and echoing sea swells...  
along the beach*

*endless grains...  
an eternity of history  
written on the edge  
of a wordless sea*

*I walk quickly over sand  
before I sink out of control  
before my naked feet  
burn on the way to the sea*

*sands are my childhood  
diamond dust blown  
into peaks and valleys  
by the whims of the wind*

### **Break-up** *Lillian Rodich*

*illusions*

*truth*

*torn*

*reality*

*cutting*

*deliberately*

*carelessly*

*into*

*delicate fabric*

### **Playing the Game of Life**

Edward Louis Braun

Though Nature's delights  
And those we create  
Continued to sustain me  
At times my mind became  
A whirling carousel  
Of confusion from  
Discovery of many  
Illusions and delusions,

Discovering that each of us  
Is a scene of empty space  
Where trillions of cells  
Dance happily together  
Until the music stops,

Wondering where and how  
In our inner galaxy of cells  
Our benevolent and brutal  
Qualities arise.

Troubled by the depth  
Of my unknowing,  
The insoluble mystery  
Of our birth and form,  
Perplexed about  
Our purpose,  
Knowing the certainty  
Of our plight and end,  
I wondered how to play  
This bewildering game.

Though there wasn't  
A sudden epiphany  
I gradually came to see  
Much of what life offered me:  
I could enjoy contemplating  
So many of life's mysteries,  
Follow my passion and  
Cultivate what I do best,  
Be caring and kind,  
Present a friendly face,  
Enjoy Nature, fun and play,  
Have one to love each day,  
Be persistent in pursuit  
Of education, justice, truth.

### **HIMALAYA LADY**

GIL ROSCOE

HIMALAYA LADY,  
SITTING BY THE TRAIL.  
HIMALAYA LADY,  
GOT TO KNOW YOU WELL.  
SHE WAS A STRANGER  
WITH ANOTHER MAN.  
WALKING ROOFTOPS  
IN A FOREIGN LAND.  
HE WALKED TOO FAST  
WHILE I STROLLED ALONG.  
SO WE SHARED A PACE  
AND THE MOUNTAIN DAWN.  
THE MORNING AIR  
HELPS YOU FEEL SO FREE.  
SHE SLEPT WITH HIM,  
BUT HIMALAYED WITH ME.



**KALEIDOSCOPE OF AMERICA***Helen Katzman*

*Couples young and old  
Well dressed, or shabby  
Walking hand in hand  
Chatting, smiling*

*Couples young and old  
Walking side by side  
Eyes dull  
Expressionless  
Void to the outside world*

*Girls jauntily moving hips  
Lacy tops slung off shoulder  
Jeans hanging below navel  
Eyes darting from window to window  
And*

*Boys eying the girls  
With jeans below hips  
Swaggering, knowing*

*Woman, walking, walking,  
Expression of  
Loneliness, sadness  
Cell phone glued to ear  
Oblivious to surroundings  
Have they been molested?  
Divorced?*

*Women in pedal pushers tight over bottom  
Or skirts so short and tight  
Legs barely move  
Parading the halls of the malls*

*Women dressed for business  
High heels sounding with each stride  
As if to show their importance  
In the business world*

*Woman dressed to represent their cultures  
Indian, African, Hindu  
Appearing comfortable in their new  
homeland*

*This is America!*

**Sustenance***Ray Malus*

*You feed my eye with lovely form and face,  
With glowing smiles and gently doubtful brow,  
And sassy hips that sway with fluid grace  
Like ocean waves with treasures to endow.*

*You feed my ear with soft impassioned sighs  
That crush into my shoulder in the night,  
With whispered talk and murmured lullabies,  
And rolling laughs that burble with delight.*

*You feed my breath with womanly perfume,  
Of heady ginger blooms and jasmine sprays.  
And underneath the smells of earth and womb,  
And dusky secret scents where mystery lays.*

*You feed my mouth with tastes of velvet skin  
With honey lips, and tang of salted sweat,  
On ripened breasts that pulse with fire within  
And dewy thighs with sweetened nectar wet.*

*You feed my touch with hair like flowing silk,  
And molded flesh lasciviously lush;  
And satin textured body soft as milk,  
That warms my palms and loins with heated flush.*

*You feed my heart with numberless delights,  
Sustaining me in vast uncounted ways.  
My nourishment in yet imagined nights  
My sustenance for yet uncounted days.*

**Why***Howard Goldstein*

“That’s fine for you. You’re well known. But, it’s different for me. What I do isn’t important,” the young woman standing in the audience at the art seminar said, at the Question and Answer session.

“Really?” the speaker inquired, “What is it that you do?”

In a very quiet voice, she answered, “I design and paste up classified ads for the Times.”

The speaker smiled, and began to do some math. “Okay, let’s suppose you paste up only ten ads a day for three hundred days a year. That’s a total of three thousand ads. Would that be a fair figure?”

The woman nodded, and the speaker continued. “And in a city of many millions we’ll assume the circulation of the paper is perhaps a few million each day. But we will be conservative and only count one million. Multiply that by 3000 ads and that’s a lot of newspapers. But, of course, only a fraction of a newspaper’s classified section is read by people looking for jobs. So let’s take an arbitrary figure of 300 people a day who read the classifieds looking for jobs. If only thirty of those read your ads each day we’re back to three thousand people in the year reading your ads, looking for work. Do you think that might be a fair figure?”

“I guess so.” The attendee replied.

“Okay. Now, of those three-thousand people, do you imagine one or two might actually get work from those ads?”

“Yes, it’s possible.”

“Actually, it is more than possible,” the speaker assured her, “It is very likely. And if only one person got a job in the entire year from your efforts, it could change his or her life, feed a family, or launch a career. Would you consider that important?”

“Of course,” the young woman admitted, with a smile. I thought so, too.

At each Expo, once again the nooks and crannies of exhibit floor and presentation rooms will be filled with little programs, introductory products and fledgling services. As with the countless other daily competitors for my time, interest and money, I am inclined to just pass by or drop their literature in the trash basket. Except that sometimes I remember that seminar, and the value of what may seem to be the least important item deserving of my attention. So, I pause, and ask a question, or simply listen.

It’s amazing, what wonders I’ve discovered.

Demonstrators for games or products I will never need have taught me lessons that save me hours of work. Programs designed for purposes outside of my discipline contain tools, plug-ins, filters and methods that can make my work leapfrog that of others in my field.

Everywhere, people want to give us information or tools, want to be of purpose in this world, just as you and I. While it seems everyone is striving for the wherewithal to exist, the truth is otherwise. Everyone is looking to justify their existence, hoping someone will listen, care, and take or buy what they offer. The whole world is simply a humongous buffet!

Each of us does so many seemingly unimportant things every day without extending their comprehensive meaning into the larger world. It is easy to lose our bearings in the complexity of business and society. From a one-inch classified ad to a two-page full color spread, billboard, campaign, logo, product name or piece of copy—everything that contributes to an exchange or communication—contributes to the lives of countless others to infinite and unknowable effect.

Whenever I find myself despairing of purpose, questioning my own reason for existence, I dedicate a moment of gratitude to that anonymous young woman for her question. For the speaker at the seminar that day was none other than myself. I’ve grown to understand that the answer I gave, while hoping it would lend greater purpose to her life, was as much hers as my own. Who among us has not asked it?

And the answer? I prefer to think it came as a blessing from somewhere outside myself, as an explanation for a seemingly unanswerable and eternal question. Why am I here?

And if the shoe fits, you’re welcome. □



**Full Frontal**

By Douglas William Douglas

"You sure I won't be disturbing your mom, Ann?" Bjorn Kelsen asked as he pried open the scuffed, faded gray canvas-covered guitar case Lynn Heathbriar had pulled from behind a stack of umbrellas and musty old luggage in the hall closet.

"No -- she's probably going over the court briefs for tomorrow. You couldn't break her concentration with a wrecking ball."

After closing the curtains on the arched bay window, Ann sat on the couch next to Bjorn while he tuned. There was no mistaking Ann was Lynn's daughter, with the same swept hairstyle down to her shoulder, but darker blonde and without the streaks of gray. Her dark eyes were larger and lips more voluptuous, giving her a gentler, less business-like appearance. But add thirty pounds plus thirty years and they could be twins.

The thick walls, beamed ceilings, heavy antique Spanish furniture and Mexican throw rugs over dark hardwood floors of this mission-style home in Hancock Park put Bjorn in the mood for something classical. Fortunately, the guitar was one of those vintage Yamaha 'Red-label' acoustics that had been so popular with folkies in the 1970s. Though badly out of tune, once corrected it sounded like plucked velvet. He played "Les Adieux" by Sor, a piece he'd learned during his first year at Juilliard. Because of his swollen, injured hand he had to slow the tempo, making the piece more romantic.

Alone with Bjorn for once, Ann made no pretense of checking him out: the blond highlights in Bjorn's trendily disarrayed chestnut hair, his emerald green eyes and slim physique all belied his thirty years. Mesmerized, Ann's yearning eyes gazed at Bjorn's fingers caressing the guitar strings. There was a contented hush as the final chord faded.

"That was wonderful, Bjorn. Will you play some more?" she asked, touching his knee.

"My hand still hurts a little," he said, lifting his left hand and turning it side-to-side like a Rose Parade Queen's wave. "Maybe tomorrow?"

"I'd really like that." She took Bjorn's right hand in hers and led him down the hall to the guest room.

"Sleep tight." Ann stretched up, giving Bjorn a peck on his cheek. "See you tomorrow."

"Gute Nacht, Fraulein Ann."

The next morning after stepping out of the shower, Bjorn was lathering his face when a shadow in the mirror clued him that the door behind had opened. He turned to face his intruder, full frontal.

"Aren't you a little young to see a man naked?" he asked.

"I'm twenty-two; that's plenty old." Ann puckered the corners of her mouth to imply this was pretty routine for her.

"I thought you were just a freshman at USC."

"I took a few years off after high school. Went to Europe and stuff."

"What if your mom sees you in here?" Bjorn pulled a towel from the rack, dabbing a drop of water from his hip before wrapping it around his waist.

"She left for work an hour ago."

With a short burst of air through his nostrils, Bjorn turned and resumed shaving.

"Who's 'A.S.'?" Ann asked.

"What's that again?"

"The tattoo on your shoulder -- 'B.K.' is you, so who's 'A.S.'?"

"A friend. Now, can I have a little privacy here?" He finished the left side of his face, rinsed the Schick disposable and started again at the right sideburn.

"That's kind of ugly to have a tattoo of a real heart instead of the valentine kind."

"Yeah, well, like you say, I guess that means it's real, doesn't it?"

He continued shaving, but when the door closed he straightened his arms and leaned on the sink, hanging his head. There was a lot of symbolism in that tattoo. Sometimes love is ugly, especially when it's genuine. There actually had been a valentine heart tattoo there once -- the fake kind, with different initials next to his. He'd had them laser-expunged, then changed designs to cover the scar -- all for his 'A.S.' Bjorn wondered if his lover had done the same, or was someone else's name still engraved inside his beating heart. *Albert, Albert, Albert -- I never miss you until I think I might not own you anymore. Where are you, Albert Spiegel?*

□

## The Rising of Sweet Pea

Duke Howard

Sweet Pea rose from his grave. His hair was the color of corn silk, his eyes blue as the sky above and his face as green as the meadow below. He was lean and thin as a fence, and his faded blue bib-overalls hung there blowing in the hot summer breeze. He stood looking at his world.

"Howdy Sky,"

Then he looked at the valley with its meadows, corn fields and river.

"Howdy Valley, Sweet Pea Walker es the name. I'm comin' at ya from Eternal Rest, my new home.

"I can see it's gonna be anotha beautiful summer morning down en Wendy Cove Valley, not too hot an' not too cold. Up here, I can jes about smell the freshness of the early mornin' dew, an' I can jes about see dat Ol Daddy Sun creepin' up tu the top of Snake Mountain. Any moment now, it's gonna ta break loose an' come roarin' over the top. One, two, three. It's up; it's over.

"Never tire of watchin' it light up the valley. It seems like I've been here fer eternity, but I jes got here. I came here unexpectedly. I didn't ask tu come, an' I certainly wasn't plannin' on comin', but here I be.

"See dere's a curve down dere, an' I came tu know that curve, an' I came tu know it fer the last time. I knew it before, but not as well as I got tu know it that night.

"There was a light fog, a slick on the road an' a deer en the headlights. Of course none of dis woulda happened if I haven't been drinkin'. I was ovea en Goshen playin' a gig at my Uncle Blind Dawg Walker's place. I was feelin' so good that I stayed ovea an' had a few. Well, I made it outta of Dawg's an' all the way tu top of the grade when it happened.

"I saw dat deer. He was en the road. Now, wha-ta-hell was a deer doin' up here? The deer crossin' was down below, but here he was lookin' en my headlights wid dose big brown eyes.

"Well, I grabbed on that steerin' wheel an' pulled it tu ta right. Wrong side, ta bank was on the left, ta deer en the middle an dat slick on the right. I hit dat slick an' went slidin' off ento space. On the way down, looked ento the mirra an' I could swear that deer was wavin' bye, bye. Down, down I went. Hit dat bottom, went up en flames.

"Nothin' much left of me, but a pile of ashes. That's all dey found when dey scraped me up an' put me en a box. Deys brought it up here, an' here I be restin' under one of dese slabs fer the rest of eternity." □

## "The Perilous Pizza"

By Jackie Houchin

My mouth watered, as I remembered the large slice of leftover pizza in the fridge. Sitting behind the wheel of my SUV, I visualized the thin crust, the gooey cheese, the spicy sausage and curling slices of pepperoni, the onions, olives, green peppers and mushrooms - my "reward" for a too long day at work. I deserved it. I craved it.

*Why is this traffic so slow?*

I thought about Jack; imagined him opening the fridge, noticing my foil-covered triangle of meat and cheese. I clenched the wheel and willed him to ignore the pizza and eat his salad. What had his doctor said? "Your LDL is dangerously high, Mr. Spratt. You must take care." I pounded the wheel with my fist.

*Will this light never change?*

Suddenly alert, I sensed Jack lifting the foil; sniffing the sausage; licking his lips.

*Don't do it! Eat your salad! Remember your cholesterol!! Remember your heart!*

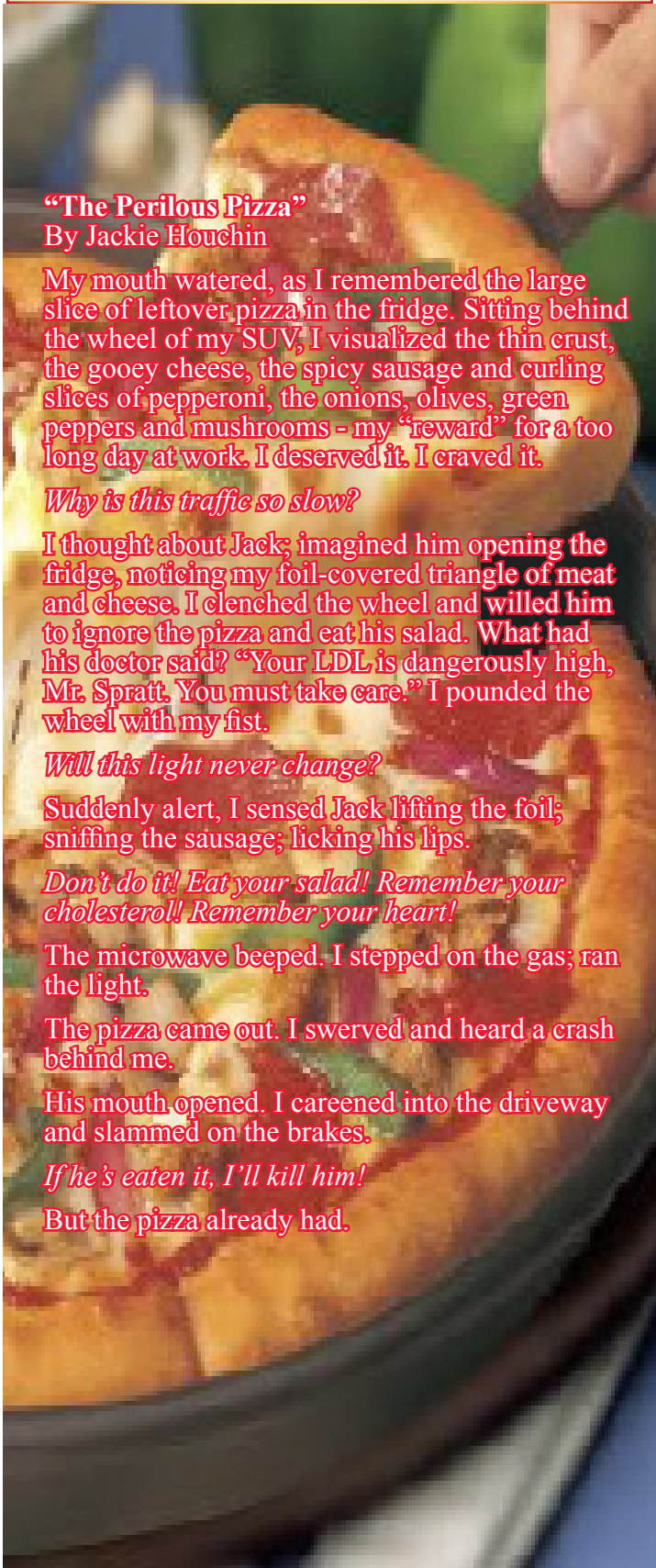
The microwave beeped. I stepped on the gas; ran the light.

The pizza came out. I swerved and heard a crash behind me.

His mouth opened. I careened into the driveway and slammed on the brakes.

*If he's eaten it, I'll kill him!*

But the pizza already had.





## Smokin'

Ray Malus

For those who don't know, I am the Junior Warden of an Episcopal Church. Basically, that just means I have the most keys. It also means that I try to be available and friendly to the people who use the church.

Our church shares the facility with several other congregations. One of them is a large Maronite Church.

Maronites are an ancient, orthodox denomination that traces its origin to Biblical Lebanon. As a culture, they straddle the gulf between their Aramaic history and the American present. They are interesting folks.

Last Sunday, I arrived at church early. On the Church Calendar, it was Ascension Sunday. This is evidently a big deal for Maronites. The parking lot was completely filled with carnival stalls, as was the patio.

I was walking across the grounds greeting Lebanese folk who were setting up for the day's festivities, when — over in the corner of the patio, next to our small chapel — I spied a colorful awning. Under it were at least 15 *hookahs* — Turkish water-pipes. I walked over. A teen-aged couple was arranging the *hookahs*. The exotic pipes were all about 4-feet tall, and the water reservoirs were iridescent colors: crimson, blue, yellow. They looked brand new with the morning sun glinting off them.

"Wow!" I said. "Are those *hookahs*?"

The boy-half of the team smiled at me broadly, and said in slightly confused English, "Yes. You know *hookahs*? ..."

Now, look. I'm not perfect. I'm a writer and an actor, and I have more characters inside me than a New York Subway train at rush-hour. So maybe it was the fact that just thirty-six hours before — I'd been performing Country songs at our church barbeque in the very same patio, or maybe it was just plain cussedness, but at that moment, one of my personae, a "good-ol'-boy" named "R. J." chose to assert himself.

"... Yes. You know *hookas*?!"

"Why certainly, Son. Why, I've been aroun' quite a few in my time."

The Lebanese guy smiled shyly, "Where you know *hookahs*?"

"Hell, Son. I was in Haight-Ashbury in the 70s. I saw more hookers than you've ever seen!" R. J. was cookin'.

The boy caught one of my little jokes — but only one. "We don' smoke no funny stuff," he grinned, "only tobacco."

I tried to rein ol' R. J. in. "No. I know," I reassured him. "Is this part of the celebration?"

"Oh Yes. Everybody like the *hookahs*."

I was maintaining — barely. "Where in the world did you get them all?"

"We rent from *hookah* bar."

OK. Not my fault. It was Rodeo Time! "Hooker bars! Yeah. I been to a few a those!"

"The people, they rent *hookah* for hour."

Shoot-HOWDY! "Yep. That's the way I remember 'em."

"The people, they make celebration."

"I'm right with ya, Son! Say, they look brand new."

"Oh yes. Some new. Some old. But all clean."

"Well, I'm right glad to hear that, Son. Nobody wants a dirty ol' hooker."

"No. No. Have bad taste."

Yee-HAH! "I'm right with ya on that one, Son."

"Clean for each customer."

"Wouldn't have it any other way!"

"Maybe want different flavor."

"Flavor! Yeah, man! What's a hooker without taste?!"

"Have all sorts flavors."

"Oh yeah! Good hooker bar's gotta have variety!"

"You come back later, maybe try?"

"Well, I don' know that it's all that healthy."

"Oh yes. Very good. You try!"

"Naw. Don't think so, Son. It bein' Sunday and all."

"No. Is good on Sunday."

"Yeah? Well Melina Mercuri didn't think so."

This last reference to the film *Never On Sunday* was a bit dated for the kid, so the conversation flagged. I figured it was time to move on. "Well, have a good time with the hookers."

"Thank you, sir."

I can't say I felt proud of myself as I walked away. But, as R. J. would say, "When ya got a mount that good, ya gotta ride it till it drops."

As I walked across the patio, I saw my friend Chuck. "Hey Hoss," R. J. called, "Ya won't believe what they got over here!" □





# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE:

This is our final issue of the year. As we prepare for the Summer vacation, I'd like to express my gratitude to all the people that made this year's issues possible: my colleagues, Ethel Ann and Judy; our regular columnists, Ken and Erica; and all of you, the members, who have been so willing and eloquent in your submissions. Have a great Summer. Write, write, write!

Right?



— Ray

### IMPORTANT!

DUE TO THE YOM KIPPUR HOLIDAY,  
SEPTEMBER'S MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>!  
SAME BAT-TIME, SAME BAT-CHANNEL!

## STAY ACTIVE OVER THE SUMMER!

### 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](mailto:esemgee@yahoo.com).

### WEB-BASED CRITIQUE GROUP

Interested in forming an e-mail-based critique group for poetry and short fiction?  
Contact [Ray Malus](#) for details.

### 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.

### A Big Thank You

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

To **Pirhiya Goldstein** for all her help with Hospitality and refreshments.

### THANK YOU

Earn a Thank You — Volunteer!

Give a Thank You — Tell us someone who's helped!

### FREE BEER!!

Setting up for meetings is a large task. If you can help, Please come at 11:30.

You'll get to hob-nob with friends, help the Club and, earn our eternal gratitude.  
(OK. We lied about the beer.)

## 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.*

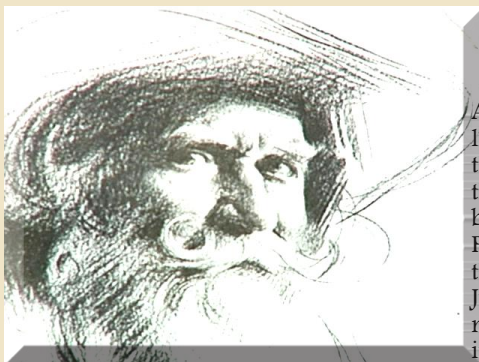
## Out And About

### *East of Eden Writers Conference*

September 24 to 26, 2010 ----- Salinas, California

[southbaywriters.com/EastofEden2010](http://southbaywriters.com/EastofEden2010)

## A Glorious Tradition Returns



At the dawn of the Twentieth Century, Jack London and his literary pals often gathered at the home of Joaquin Miller in the Oakland hills for picnics and conversation. In 1909, those informal outdoor literary salons □ a blanket and a basket of chow □ evolved into the California Writers Club. For many years, CWC honored its heritage by maintaining the tradition of an annual picnic at Joaquin Miller Park. On July 10, 2010, you are invited to join your fellow CWC members as we revive the tradition of food and fellowship in the majestic setting of Joaquin Miller Park.

Gentle-to-ambitious walks in Writers Memorial Grove • Potluck • See Joaquin Miller's home •

Visit Woodminster Amphitheater and The Cascades

Saturday, July 10, 2010 2:00 □ 5:00 p.m.

The Fire Circle at Joaquin Miller Park, 3594 Sanborn Drive, Oakland

Admission is free; reservations are requested. Contact your Central Board representative.



# The Bulletin Board

**MEETINGS**  
 ARE HELD AT 12:30 P.M.  
 ON THE 3<sup>RD</sup> SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH  
 (September – June)  
 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**  
 We will be taking summer hiatus.  
 Check the September Valley Scribe (due out next September)  
 for next year's exciting events!

## 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@cw-csfv.org](mailto:membership@cw-csfv.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 [cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com](mailto:cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com)

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.

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.

**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>



## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS WILL TAKE PLACE IN JUNE FOR THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB**

Below is a list of offices that will be open and available for the 2010-2012 years.

If you, or someone you know, fits the qualifications and would like to volunteer for an office, be aware that nominations will also be accepted from the floor prior to the elections. ....

**President** – Sets a professional and congenial tone for the club.

Prepares agendas and presides over meetings of the Executive Board, Board of Directors, and general membership. The President shall, with the advice and consent of the Executive Board, direct the affairs of the club in accordance with the Bylaws and Roberts Rules of Order. Also appoints members of the Board of Directors.

Qualifications. Outgoing demeanor, good organizational skills, open mind, positive attitude, accountability.

**Vice-President** – Assists the President and assumes the duties of President in his or her absence. Usually assumes the duties of Membership Chair.

Qualifications. Outgoing demeanor, ability to interact easily with members, reliable, organized.

**Secretary** – Prepares and records Minutes for all Board meetings, handles incoming and outgoing correspondence, and maintains administrative files for the branch.

Qualifications. Good writing skills, accountability, and the ability to summarize information.

**Treasurer** – Keeps proper books of account and reports the financial status of the branch at each Board of Directors' Meeting. Duties include: receiving and depositing all funds and paying bills as authorized by the Executive Board; co-sign all checks; and prepares all quarterly financial reports as required by the Central Board of the California Writers Club.

Qualifications. Honesty, some bookkeeping knowledge, organizational skills, accountability.

*The following chairpersons are appointed by the President with the approval of the Executive Board. Their duties and qualifications follow.*

**Program Chair** – Secures speakers for the monthly meetings and confirms engagements prior to the meetings; writes up a speaker column for the monthly newsletters; introduces the speaker(s) at the meetings; purchases a gift and presents same after the presentation; follows up with a thank-you letter or email.

Qualifications. Outgoing demeanor, reliable, organizational skills, ability to interact with people easily, accountability.

**Membership Chair** (Usually the Vice-President assumes this position) – Invites guests at meetings to become active members; receives, validates, and processes membership applications; provides copies of member information to all officers and the Newsletter Editor; has member name tags made up; maintains and dispenses them to members at general meetings; submits quarterly membership reports and year-end reports to the Central Board.

Qualifications. Enthusiasm, accountability, ability to interact with people easily and tactfully, good record-keeping skills, desire to help others.

**Hospitality Chair** – Welcomes guests; purchases food, refreshments, paper goods, and condiments as necessary for the monthly meetings; arranges them on a table; oversees cleanup, and seeks out other members to help with hospitality and cleanup. Turns in receipts for supplies to Treasurer for payment.

Qualifications. Enthusiasm, accountability, ability to interact with people easily, desire to help others.

**Newsletter Editor** – Researches and writes articles as needed for ten newsletter issues; prepares layout and design; sets tone of newsletter; seeks and accepts submissions; has newsletter proofread by president and one other member before e-mailing final copy; e-mails final copy to members, editors and presidents of other branches.

Qualifications. Enthusiasm, accountability, good writing skills.

## The Fine Print

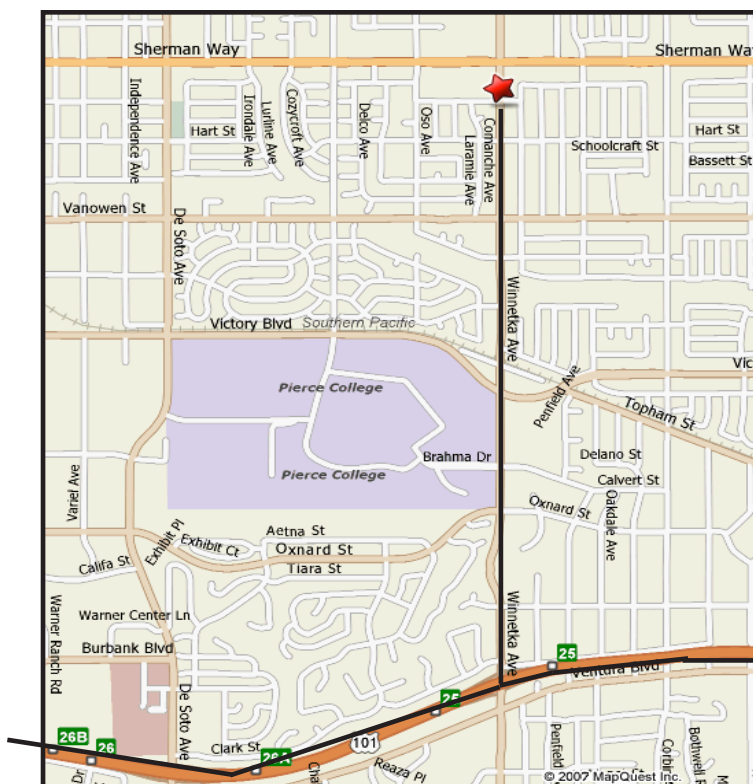
### **ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS** **7136 WINNETKA AVE** **CANOGA PARK, CA 91306**

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](#)

### Staff

Proof Readers Judy Presnall, Ethel Ann Pemberton  
Columnists Ethel Ann Pemberton,  
Ken Watts, Erica Stux, Ray Malus

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## **California Writers Club** San Fernando Valley Branch

### EXECUTIVE BOARD & BOARD MEMBERS

President, Ethel Ann Pemberton [president@cwc-sfv.org](mailto:president@cwc-sfv.org)  
Exec. Vice President, Glenn Wood [vice-president@cwc-sfv.org](mailto:vice-president@cwc-sfv.org)  
Treasurer, Judy Presnall [treasurer@cwc-sfv.org](mailto:treasurer@cwc-sfv.org)  
Secretary, Cara Alson [secretary@cwc-sfv.org](mailto:secretary@cwc-sfv.org)  
Central Board Rep., Glenn Wood

### Other Board Members

Membership, Lenora Smalley [membership@cwc-sfv.org](mailto:membership@cwc-sfv.org)  
Member-at-Large, Stephanie Sharf [stephaniesharf@yahoo.com](mailto:stephaniesharf@yahoo.com)  
Member-at-Large, Ken Watts [onemomoe@earthlink.net](mailto:onemomoe@earthlink.net)

Program Chair, Ethel Ann Pemberton [president@cwc-sfv.org](mailto:president@cwc-sfv.org)  
Pre-Session Leader, Ray Malus [cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com](mailto:cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com)  
Hospitality Chair, Stephanie Sharf [stephaniesharf@yahoo.com](mailto:stephaniesharf@yahoo.com)  
Assistant Secretary Pro Tem, Stephanie Sharf [stephaniesharf@yahoo.com](mailto:stephaniesharf@yahoo.com)  
Webmaster, Glenn Wood [webmaster@cwc-sfv.org](mailto:webmaster@cwc-sfv.org)  
Website: [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org)