

Celebrations



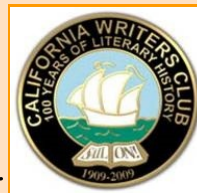
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IN FOCUS

Newsletter of the California Writers Club/West Valley



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SUBURBAN COWBOY



Jerry England

Our December speaker, Jerry England, is a rare breed – a real live cowboy! The San Fernando native has been in the saddle for 50 years. "I've been a cowboy my entire life," he says. Besides trail-riding in Chatsworth, England, 68, has become an expert in the fast-action sport of "cowboy mounted shooting."

Another Western-inspired activity is his ranch styled furniture making. His furnishings, a type of folk art, have been featured in many regional and national publications such as the *Los Angeles Times*' Sunday magazine and *Sunset*.

Through the decades, England has witnessed many movie and television film crews filming in the Chatsworth hills. He once made a guest appearance on the ReelzChannel Dailies program and discussed Hollywood filming on the Iverson Movie Ranch. Afterward the show was widely viewed, and he was urged to further share his research and knowledge. His Western cinema interest has encouraged this California cowboy to write two books on his favorite topics: *Reel Cow-*

boys of the Santa Susanas (2008) and *Boulder Pass: Hollywood's Fantasyland* (2010).

Because of his love for western movies, England works to "preserve the legacy of movie-making in the valley." He's currently a movie historian and photographer. For the last decade, he has researched and collected memorabilia associated with movie locations near his home in the Santa Susana Mountains.

England will present a slide show to our December meeting. His photos will reveal little-known landmarks in the West Valley once used as backdrops for the movies of Roy Rogers, the Lone Ranger and others. He'll also discuss how he readied his research and photographs for publication in the aforementioned books.

On December 4th, gather round to hear a suburban cowboy's tale.

- Yolanda Fintor

JANUARY EXPECTATIONS

Next month, the first month of the new year, this newsletter will focus on expectations. I hope to receive submissions written about members' past, present and future expectations. If you need a starting sentence, try these ; "I never expected..." or "No one expects..." or "Next year I expect to..." Poets, please do the same. Tell us of your anticipations, hopes or perhaps a dream not realized. Write on!

The first Saturday in January falls on New Years Day, which means our meeting day moves to January 8th.

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MAKING GOOD CONNECTIONS

When it comes to publication, Marcia Meier, our Novem-

ber speaker, thinks small. Following a growing trend in the writing trade, this author fervently endorses the self-publishing, user friendly sites on the Internet. She reports that a fast growing number of authors, such as Meier herself, avoid the big New York conglomerates who have traditionally given the thumbs up or down on a manuscript.

In 2009, Meier informed us, there was reported a 132% increase in self-published literature – three times the percentage of traditionally published books on the market. What's the attraction? Meier emphasized the freedom found on the Internet. An author can make all the publishing decisions or find a site that will offer custom services for the individual writer. And the marketing opportunities on line are open-ended. The promotion of a new book can be done

on an individual's website or any number of websites that intersect the topic and potential market.

She warned us that a writer must look very carefully at any online agent or publishing house and should establish copyright and creative control.

Meier recommended these websites:

Scribd.com uses Facebook to give reading recommendations based on what friends are sharing and what the writer searches for while surfing the Net.

Scribd plans future access to your account using your Facebook login and password.

She Writes is the premier destination for women writers, providing services and support for women of different ages and stages of their writing lives.

AuthorsDen is an online community of authors and readers which offers book promotion, author promotion, author marketing, and book marketing.

First Writer offers a writers' resource site, including databases of literary agents, book publishers, writing contests, magazines, and more internet resources.

Red Room is a social media site for the literary world. This meet and greet site connects best-selling authors with thousands of readers through blogs and Net listed events.

Marcia Meier emphasized that these websites are only a few of what's available for help on line. More sites are added every month. Who knows? Your self-published story might become popular enough to be serialized or attract the interest of film or documentary producers. "The sky's the limit if the right buttons are pushed to attract service engines," Meier promised.

-K. Highcove

CWC Anthology Honoree

Christina Steiner's short story, *The Spitball*, has been published in the State CWC Anthology Centennial **West Winds**. Her story was written several years ago but Christina decided to resurrect the piece and submit it.

She says, "I was surprised and very pleased that the story was accepted." Kudos to Christina! Copies of the anthology will be on sale for \$8.00 apiece at our meeting.



Twelve Days of Critiquing

Sung to the tune of On the First Day of Christmas...

At our first Critique Group meeting, David said to me:



1st meeting:

"And check your spelling very carefully."

2nd meeting:

"Consider content and clarity."

3rd meeting:

"Eliminate unnecessary parentheses."

4th meeting:

"Use parallel construction"

*Now Donner,
Now Blitzen*

5th meeting:

"Know when to use a semi-colon."

6th meeting:

"Remember which tense you are using."

7th meeting:

"Don't use so many commas."

*You know Dasher and Dancer
And Prancer and Vixen,*

8th meeting:

"Keep a consistent point of view."

9th meeting:

"Use figurative language."

10th meeting:

*All of the other reindeer
used to laugh and call him names.* "Critique the writing, not the writer!"

11th meeting:

"Put quotation marks where they belong."

12th meeting:

"Always remain true to yourself."

Happy rewrites, everybody!

Lyrics by Lillian Rodich



Numbers - To Spell or Not to Spell. That is the Question

When a number can be expressed in three words or fewer, spell it out unless the digits have *st, th, nd, or rd* after them

When I was *eighteen*, I lived in Ojai.
The room held *three hundred people*.

I used to live on *18th Street*.

Today's my club's *300th birthday*.

When a number requires four or more words to spell it out, use the digits.

At the time, there were *335* sweating bodies packed in the auditorium.

My Boy Scout troop had *123* boys.

Try not to begin a sentence with digits.
Revise *179 baseballs were in the pail.*
to *In the pail were 179 baseballs.*

Hyphenate numbers under a hundred that take two words to write.

*Thirty-two
seventy-nine
twenty-two*

When pluralizing a digit, use an 's
6's, 9's, 100's
This goes for single letters also.
A's, b's, z's

- Dave Wetterberg

CWC/WV President,
Critique group leader,
And a really good sport!



Do You Dewey?

When someone finds out I'm a librarian, I'm often asked,

"Do you think the Internet is going to replace libraries?" The answer: an emphatic NO! And don't get me started...

Then: "Do libraries still use the Dewey Decimal System?" The answer: YES! Most academic libraries use the Library of Congress system, but the DDS, devised by Melvil Dewey in the 1870's, is still the world's most widely used library classification system for all types of literature.

The Internet won't replace the vital DDC, which provides a logical organization by topic for nonfiction, and a precise "address" for any book or periodical on the shelves. Here's the basic number categories for Dewey non-fiction classifications:

000--Computer science, information, general works

100--Philosophy and psychology

200--Religion

300--Social sciences

400--Languages

500--Science

600--Technology/applied science

700--Arts and recreation

800--Literature

900--History, geography and biography

Every broad number, or class, is further broken down into very precise numbers. Let's look at the 100's again to see why a book on **werewolves** would be included in the philosophy section.

100: Philosophy and psychology (divisions):

100 Philosophy



- 110 Metaphysics
- 120 Epistemology
- 130 Parapsychology & occultism
- 140 Philosophical schools of thought
- 150 Psychology
- 160 Logic
- 170 Ethics
- 180 Ancient, medieval & eastern philosophy
- 190 Modern western philosophy



werewolf = 130

Besides the DDC number, there's a Cutter number on the spine of every book. The Cutter number is assigned to the author's last name. If an author writes more than one book on the same topic, dashes are used.

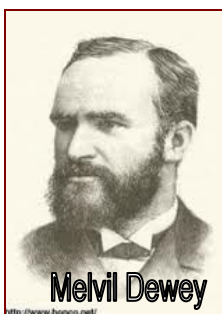
So how does the DDC actually work? Let's look at a book in the L.A. Public library catalog. **The Dewey number is 641.5944 C536.** Here's the breakdown:

641.59 is the basic number for cookbooks. The "44" is the geographical subdivision for France. The C536 is the Cutter number for Child. The book? "The French Chef Cookbook" by Julia Child! Her "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" is 641.59 C536-2.

The DDC has a number for all books – including fiction: American fiction is classified in 813. Many libraries create a separate fiction section to allow readers to easily find preferred authors by alphabetical order of surname.

The Dewey print version is currently in four volumes, and it's updated constantly. For more information go to: "A Brief Introduction to the Dewey Decimal Classification" at <http://www.oclc.org/dewey/resources/summaries/>. Or, you can enlist the help of your local librarian at the reference desk.

- Anne Arnold Olivier



Melvil Dewey

Grace Notes from the Villa

Dec. 19, 2005

The holidays are filled with greetings and blessings and love-
lies to share. Being with my cohorts is a daily reminder that
we are alike in our needs, and our futures are just around
the corner! We have one answer; make each moment
count! And we do!

Daily, good things are available; last night- a remarkable
men's chorus in our theater, tomorrow a play in a little
theater in Hollywood and Wednesday a tour of the Walt
Disney Symphony Hall, plus a visit to the magnificent new
cathedral with its pipe organ thundering powerful Bach mu-
sic!

Even more important - we always have wonderful peo-
ple here who help us, give us a hug and a smile. Today my
family of 15, ranging from 2 years to my 92, were here for
an afternoon lunch. We ended up on the floor watching and
helping Clay, the 2 year old with his beautiful new go- cart;
putting together the yellow-red contents into towers, struc-
tures. What fun to listen to his perfect words parceled out
precisely. At that age, son Richard- now 65- was equally
focused, and his dad said "God made two year olds adorable
so you can survive their frequent frustrations." Clay behaved
perfectly.

Frequently we residents are reminded of our fragile
lives. Working on projects in our In-House TV station,
Channel 22, we run into problems. We may start with a
great cast for group interviews. The next day, half could be
in the hospital. When a purring car with a great motor runs
amuck, we get new parts, or a new car. For people, it does-
n't work. Unlike Pep Boys, most of us need parts individually
tailored and not as easily available.

Even so, with a good sense of humor and patience, our
life here is good; tailored to fit our ages and our needs in a
truly beautiful environment - Amazing!

May this coming year be beautiful for you, one of good
health and a big caboodle of smiles. If a special success is in
your plans, spit in your palm, give it a slap, and go for it!



Best wishes and my love,

Betty Freeman



CANDLES

A Christmas tree,
moist green branches
support candles
glittering in my neighbor's window
and reflected in a wreath of good will.

Eight Chanukah candles,
each kindled by the Shammash
and greeted by children singing,
relating tales of anguish and triumph
and survival of my ancestors.

Crystal and champagne,
candlelight reflected in loving eyes,
hands held across a table.
In the glow, a promise made...and kept
one rain drenched December eve.

One hundred birthday candles lit,
combined in a blaze of glory.
Zayda begged the youngest guests
to help him extinguish each tip of flame,
celebrating a century of life.

Lonely candles burning brightly
in remembrance of our deepest losses,
lighting dark corners of grief....
continuity in life's circle,
treasured flames never extinguished.

Symbolic candles, lights of hope
ignited in classrooms of a ghetto school,
students' eyes sparkling with discoveries.
Teachers amidst Asia's turmoil and Africa's strife
holding fragile tapers up to the black draped night.

- Lillian Rodich

Santa Makes an Entry

"Where's the next stop, Kringle?" Santa asked his most helpful elf.

"I'll ask our new global GPS. Yesterday I entered all the info into the GPS memory bank: names, addresses and type of gifts expected."

"Well, I hope you know what you're doing with that gadget. One slip-up, Kringle, and we'd have a real problem. And you know what happens then!"

"Uh, back to magic and the lo-o-ong printed-out list of good boys and girls," said Kringle with a grimace. Santa nodded with a tight smile which reminded the elf of Santa's work ethic. No slip ups allowed on Delivery Night.

The sleigh settled softly on a flat snowy roof. The reindeer snuffled and blew frosty breaths into the night air. Rudolf's nose created a red glow over the flat surface.

Santa noted an attic door.

"Let's go in there this time, Kringle. I get so sick of the narrow dusty fireplaces."

"Fine, Santa, I'm ready. Here's the pack of presents for this house. Let's see. A big blonde doll, fancy clothes, and clever toys."

They climbed through the little hatch and descended a narrow stair. They looked around when their eyes got used to the dusk and saw several mannequins dressed in lacy black underwear and thigh high leather boots.

"Where are we? In a shop?" Santa asked Kringle. Black bins held all kinds of cone shaped and fuzzy apparatus.

Kringle took in the whip display and the black masks and garter belts fetchingly displayed on a nearby wall and whispered, "Uh, Santa. I think the clothes, toys and big doll is not what this person - adult - is expecting. We're in the wrong house. Someone's played a joke on us. Must have been that naughty Snapple getting into my data base again."

"Let me see that address, Elf! It says Delilah Foreman, 1069 Everest in Stockingdale, London. Where are we right now, Kringle? Where did that blasted GPS bring us?"

Kringle stared at his xmasPad and blanched.

"So sorry, Santa. We're at 1069 Everylove in Silk Sticking Mall, Soho. The name of this place is..." Kringle gulped seeing Santa's complexion growing more ruddy by the second, "Delectably Forceful."

Rudolf and the reindeer started as Kringle flew out of the attic door, soared over their antlers and landed with an "OOF!" on a pile of thermal lap blankets. Santa climbed out of the dark doorway and trod quickly across the snowy roof to the waiting sleigh. He hopped into the driver's seat, then reached over and snapped off the glowing GPS.

"Bring out your wand, Kringle. And find the List web-

site on our dashboard computer. We've got to get a move on. But first I'll have to reboot my holiday cheer.

And tune up my "HO, HO, HO!" "

"Sorry, Santa. I promise I'll get that glitch fixed first thing back at headquarters. Don't worry, I know we'll finish our deliveries tonight."

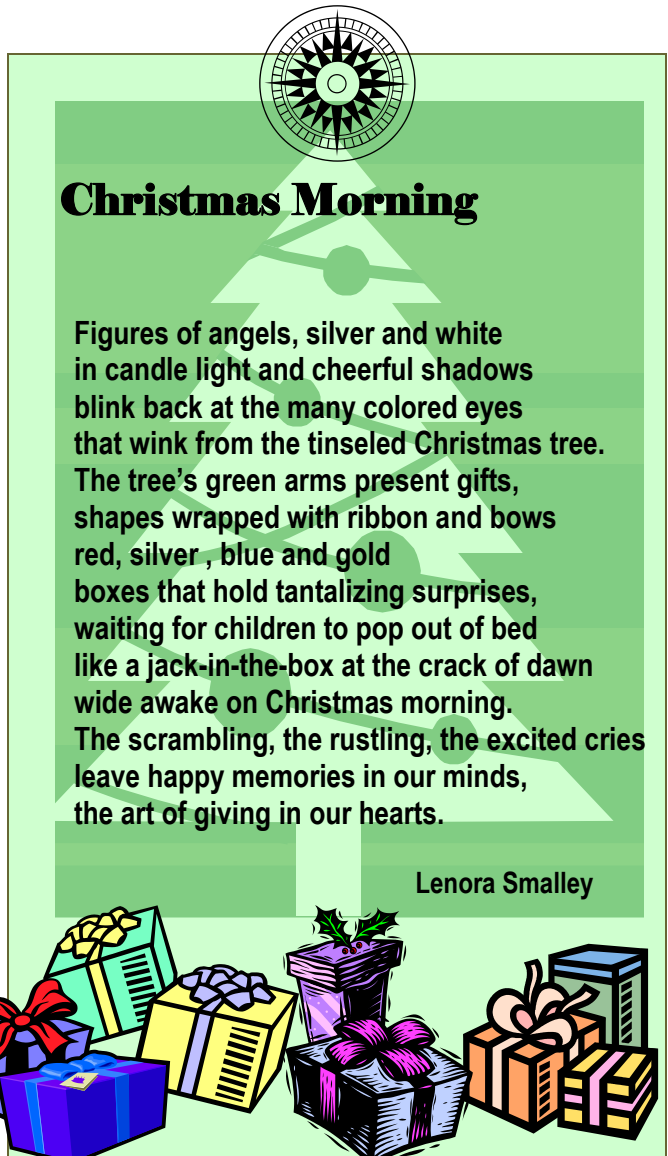
"I hope so, Elf. Oh...I know how to get back in the Xmas mood. Pour me a cup of hot chocolate from that thermos Mrs. Santa packed in the sleigh hamper. Yum, that's good. Hmm. Wish she'd wear sexy black net stockings once in a while. Wool socks and flannel gets old. But, enough chatter, enough chocolate—we've got to get moving! Ready, Rudolf? Nose on neon red, please.

Watch for aircraft. "

Santa shook the reins and off they glided into the star-glittery, black satin night sky.

**Happy holidays to all the CWC
good boys and girls!**

- Kathy Highcove



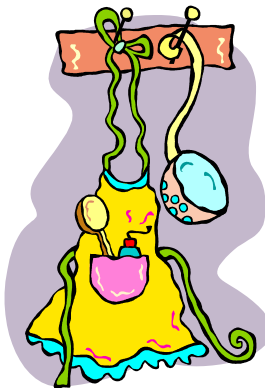
When It's All Said and Done

Ma was the queen of advice, the "Dear Abby" of Logan Square. Never fall for a poor man, she said, which meant she'd ignored her own good counsel, twice.

She advised friends and neighbors, strangers, too, but reserved the choicest directives for me.

"Never get old," she said recently.

She left me and the words to chill on the outside stoop then marched into her overheated kitchen, the room where she'd scorched countless holiday birds and sweet potato pies, overcooked hot-cross buns and those tooth-ache sweet, upside-down cakes. This was the room where Russell Gares probed my mouth with his amazing tongue then pinned me to the wall like a fluttering moth. And then there was Buddy, my half-brother, who karate-kicked the



pantry, only to get stuck in the plaster and require a rescue. My father (unsuitable husband number two) stormed from this small, steamy kitchen after Ma suggested he take a long vacation. He liked the idea and left that night, then died of lung cancer nine months later.

Haunted. Ma's kitchen could keep a medium entranced for years.

"Don't get old!" she repeated.

"Too late."

"Ridiculous. If you're old, I'm old."

"Precisely, Ma."

She tossed her head. Her gray bobbed hair bounced against her shoulders. Despite thick, corrective lenses and the crêpey fullness of her neck, I caught a glimpse of the glory days—the silvery-blue eyes, high cheekbones and those generous lips that once stopped traffic with a flirty

smile. Years ago, our neighborhood butcher, Mr. Fitzpatrick, made a point of stroking Ma's slender hands whenever he counted out change. How she laughed, I recall, a deep throaty laugh of unmistakable pleasure.

"Age is . . . a mere number," she said.

"The lower the better," I quipped.

She frowned and smacked me, playfully. She put the kettle on then swung around, right hand over her good breast, the one that continued to shun radiation and/or disfiguring surgery. She'd sacrificed the other breast to paralytic fear and expert opinion, only to find later that the radical mastectomy had been . . . unnecessarily radical.

"Numbers are irrelevant," she said. "It's all about the heart. Every day, you need a hard flutter, a boom-de-boom. Music helps. Show tunes can send the heart aflutter. The people you love works best. The heart, Lou. You're my only daughter. You need to know."

I nodded though I didn't know. Not then.

Two weeks later, I received a call while leaving my last class. I was teaching comparative religion studies at a local community college. My students, as ethnically diverse as their fevered opinions, were embroiled in a spirited debate over Christian versus Islamic justice. The bitter irony hadn't escaped me—the coursework was meant to inspire tolerance and religious understanding, yet the readings seemed to provoke the reverse: *I'm right, you're wrong, end of story*. I'd been planning to shift the conversation to something else, the Beatitudes, perhaps, when my cell phone rang.

Ma had been rushed to an ICU after collapsing outside her Vine Street row house. She'd been hauling two large shopping bags and wore a belly bag loaded with loose change. She'd spent the afternoon at an outside street fair on Penn's Landing, I learned later, and refused to let go of her purchases even when the EMT's arrived. She was in critical condition now; a heart attack, the doctors suspected. Could I come, quickly?

I grabbed a cab. I was at the Thomas Jefferson

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

Heart Institute in less than ten minutes, but when I asked at the ICU nursing station for Elizabeth Harker, the young woman behind the computer blinked, shuffled some papers and said she'd be right back.

The attending physician said he was sorry but they'd lost Ma as if she'd wandered off without a chaperone. The medical team had done everything they could, the doctor assured me. There were papers to fill out and insurance considerations. I demanded to see her first.

The gurney had been tucked into a corner. Ma's last resting place was behind a flimsy white curtain that went *click, click, click* on a metal ceiling track. The nurse who accompanied me pulled the curtain with a white plastic wand then gently pulled the sheet from Ma's face.

"I'll give you some privacy," she said in a kind voice.

I nodded but privacy seemed unnecessary. Conversation, intimacy and all the things we

take for granted were irrelevant now. But I noticed this: how small my mother looked, more like a wizened child than the eighty-three year old woman she'd been. Her shopping bags and belly belt had been tucked in a clear plastic bag and stowed beside the gurney.

I took her hand. I stroked her long, slender fingers, then hummed a verse of *New York, New York*, her all-time favorite. When I was finished, I pulled her shopping bags from the plastic carrier. Slipping Ma's belly bag on, I tightened the strap then headed for the stairs. Before I reached the first landing, my heart was thumping. The beat grew stronger and wilder once I reached the street that came alive, buzzed with shoppers and vendors, the screech of buses and rush hour traffic. I had an urge to walk towards Delaware Avenue, take a stroll along the pier when an elderly man stopped and asked for directions to Delancey Place.

"You want to go uptown," I said. "Off 16th."

He took my hand then and stroked it, gently, almost lovingly. "Thank you," he said. "You've saved an old man some steps and none of us are getting any younger." Then he winked.

I'm not a person who believes in signs or New Age portents. I'm not the sort to take a stranger's peculiar words to heart, not even in the City of Brotherly Love. But I nodded and watched the man disappear into the crowd because that's when I knew.

It was a boom-de-boom moment. It was Ma saying "good-bye."



*Margaret A. Frey writes from the foothills of the Smoky Mountains. Her work has been published in *flashquake, Cezanne's Carrot, Notre Dame Magazine, Smokelong Quarterly, Trillium Literary Journal, Camroc Press, Thema* and elsewhere. Forthcoming work will appear in *Kaleidoscope,* January 2011.*

Currently, Margaret is working on a novel about coal miners and their families, the people who keep the lights on. She lives with her husband John and canine literary critic, Ruffian. Margaret can be reached at: mafrey@tds.net

I have no romantic feelings about age. Either you are interesting at any age or you are not. There is nothing particularly interesting about being old—or about being young, for that matter.



- Katherine Hepburn



Girl Reading A Book

by Kęzle Birnberg-Goldstein

From the window Klara sees the old carved furniture, dragged without finesse into a waiting van.

Faded velvet curtains folded with old dust cover the piano, and what looks like...the massive family

credenza carved in dark wood with its dangling heavy-metal Spanish-large-pulls. Two men go two steps forward and two steps back, dragging the long Colonial table and long straight-back chairs replicas of the museum pieces shown at The Museum of Colonial Art, Quito. The men are forcing the furniture to fit out of the front portico doors.

Everything in the house is dark and old...but Klara likes it all, especially the paintings, and the ancient soiled leather-covered books lining walls from the floor going way up, almost like-bending the ceiling. She reads on the sneak 'forbidden-to-read' Mother's books when nobody is looking. Where have the movers put all of these? She sees them going back and forth with heavy sealed boxes.

Her heart skips when she sees the empty walls where the paintings used to be. Her brother Salem said they were replicas of the old masters and made her memorize so many of them like Renoir, Rembrandt, Modigliani, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Murillo, and others. But Klara is not interested in all those names. Her favorite, Fragonard's *Girl Reading A Book* is also missing. Different size dust frames vacated by the paintings makes her worry that they're been taken away, and her eyes fill with tears. She is not allowed to ask questions...nobody seems to care. Her family did not talk about things, especially to children. Whispered voices always pushed into closets...that slowly turned into skeletons behind closed doors.

She runs to her mother's room and sees her reshaping her lips with outlines of red, leaving the imprint of her mouth...like a perfect 'M' on a crumpled linen napkin. Her empty china dishes dusted with toast crumbs... rests on

the carved silver tray lined with a delicate lacey-ecru-doily. This is no time to ask questions. Her mother seems pre-occupied with her appearance; things must be normal, running smoothly. She has probably convinced Dad to move again to a new rented house...Leaving Klara's memories tied into a bundle waiting to be stored in a new splinter of her brain.

Without being noticed, she flattens her body against the wall, steps out of her mother's room backwards and slides down the banister to the lower floor. She sees furniture movers, house cleaners, or whoever they are, EATING! Leaving white dot crumbs all around. She is in the patio now hiding behind tall palms growing out of giant clay pots, shadowing her presence.

Her father's voice thunders. He is holding his Talit and Hebrew book under his arm. It must be Friday night already.

"There you are...we must learn to count our blessings one by one," he says. "No more moving again. Your mother 'ordered' me to send everything into storage, until all draperies are cleaned, walls painted and repairs done."

Holding her hand, Father drags Klara back into the house. Nothing has changed. The long table is covered by the Shabbat tablecloth, chalah, wine, and candlesticks. The Hanukah Menorah is shinning bright. On her toes she slides a kiss on her father's cheek. Running with delight, she goes directly to the replica gallery. There she is, *Girl Reading A Book*. Tears brim in her eyes blurring the image.

The ritual starts. Every night she pretends going inside the painting, wearing the bright yellow dress with the frilly gauze white collar, eyes looking down... Klara starts reading the opened book. Her waking nightmare is the only thing that's disappeared.



What we remember from childhood we remember forever-permanent ghosts, stamped, imprinted, eternally seen.

- Cynthia Ozick

Celebrating Her Loves - Leslie Kaplan

When I was a teen, falling in love with a movie star or a new boy on the block happened every other month or so. I believed each crush would last forever. **Forever!** My favorite word.

But now that I'm old enough to collect social security, and after saying goodbye to so many friends and family, the word **forever** has changed its meaning. Nobody lives forever. Love doesn't always last forever.

However, I've experienced lasting friendships, memories, and known "chemistry." So I write it all down hoping that what I've written will be passed on, and on, and on. **forever**.

NORMAN was my very first real boyfriend when I was fifteen. He was older, a truck driver, Golden Gloves light weight boxer - street smart. Norman showed me the night life and showered me with things my mom couldn't afford to buy for me. There was jewelry. A gold sweetheart bracelet for my sixteenth birthday and a fake fur coat and hat for Christmas. We dined in fine restaurants. I learned how to shoot crap in a private night club called, "The Bath and Turf" in Atlantic City. I experienced the excitement of betting on a track of beautiful race horses.

"C'mon baby...roll the dice!...C'mon baby...pick the horse!" I discovered adrenaline.

Then war came. Norman joined the Marines and went away to the South Pacific. Eventually, love faded. What I learned from him was what hormones and passion was all about. He exposed me to some of the finer things in life. Like...**how to roll spaghetti with a fork and spoon.**

MURRAY was the first husband, the *bad* husband. He had a flashing smile but was a charming bullshit artist. I didn't know the true Murray until we were on our honeymoon, driving across country from Philly to L.A. I discovered the real



Murray when we stopped in Las Vegas. He stayed up all night, ignored me completely, and lost all of our wedding gift money. Three thousand dollars! We came to California dead broke.

While in the army Murray learned the art of meat cutting. So he got a job at a fancy Beverly Hills butcher shop on Beverly Drive. The meat was displayed

in the window as though it were fine jewelry on velvet. We dined on the very best prime cuts of beef that we otherwise could not afford. However things went from bad to worse. Between his bad temper and frequent trips to Las Vegas, the marriage failed. But at least he got me to California where my life began anew.

SY was my second husband—my best husband. I was living in an apartment in West Hollywood after my divorce, and Sy moved into the building fresh out of New York. He was like the so-called "Boy Next Door" that Judy Garland used to sing about. Strangers became friends. Friends became lovers. Lovers became husband and wife.

Sy brought out my potential, my artistic side and my true personality. I learned to paint, designed the interior of my home, and became a mother when we adopted our baby girl, Julie. I started my own creative business coached by my good husband and travelled the world with Sy on vacations I could only have imagined in Philly.

We were so lucky. The only bad times were during illnesses. The worst was when Sy came down with a disease that was incurable: Primary Amyloidosis. Everything medically possible was done to try to save him. But in 1988, Sy passed away.

Goodbye my love. Thank you for helping me to know myself. And thank you for sharing yourself with the best part of my life. Twenty-eight years with Sy were the most memorable days of my life. I'll always remember you! **Forever.**



Sy Kaplan

Celebrate Smiles



Smiles celebrate life no matter where we live, the color of our skin, or our age. Smiles are an international language without words. They

warm us like cup of tea on a cool day. Smiles and camaraderie from family and friends, as well as from grocery clerks, doctors, cardiologists, dentist and hygienists and physical therapists nourish us with warmth, care and understanding.

Several weeks ago I needed to go to an emergency room. The sweet expressions of my doctor, of the moment, nurses and volunteers made my stay of several hours almost enjoyable. Happily I was released in good health with a reassuring smile and a hug from my female doctor.

Life is celebrated when a baby is born, smiles for the first time, reflecting our own, cuts its first tooth, takes its first step, starts kindergarten and so our baby's life continues to develop. Our little one, no longer little, graduates from high school and college, meets a loved one, marries and life begins anew. We, as parents, rejoice.

Holiday dinners provide a time of recollection, a time to remember silly childhood pranks, or crazy vocabulary popular a "thousand years" ago. All that is needed is one word, like a flash of light, to ignite hilarious memories. We look upon our children with joy and excitement knowing that one day they too will celebrate holiday dinners in their home.

There are times when smiles are not visible, they're deep within and only the individual will feel the

connection. For example, for me, this occurs while speaking to members of my family, friends, housekeeper, Ida and neighbors. Three of us, including me, have lived on this cul de sac for over fifty years. In the latter years, as widows, we keep in close contact calling each other daily to be sure all is well. How lucky the three of us are! Smiles seem to float across telephone lines into my heart.

Strange as it may seem, mourners may smile, with tears in their eyes, remembering joyous events of the loved one's life. Memories magically bring the loved one back into the hearts to live there forever.

Speaking to my children and grandchildren on the phone is always a time of celebration. So it is when I'm with my gentleman friend, Norman. I cherish the crinkle around the eyes as he smiles and I smile in return. A delicious celebration of life!

Nature is another way to celebrate. I look out the window and smile as I see a tall blooming pink rose bush swaying to the music of the gentle wind and the green delicious looking grass ideal for a neighborhood picnic on a warm Sunday afternoon.

Smiles! Smiles are able to make us more attractive, change our mood and are contagious. When we receive a smile, even by someone passing by, a smile is often returned. In addition, smiles tend to relieve stress, boost the immune system and lower blood pressure. Wow!

Smiles are magic. They're like sweet sucking candy, lasting a very long time!

- Helen S. Katzman



A holiday gives one the chance to look backward and forward, to reset oneself by an inner compass.

Max Sarton, *At Seventy (A Journal)*

Celebration of a New Life



Nikki Janice Highcove

We grinned at each other in the hospital elevator. It was weird to feel so happy in this place where we'd had paid several gloomy visits to ill patients. Not this time. Joe and I were ascending to the maternity ward to view our first grandchild, Nikki Highcove, who arrived two weeks early on October 11th. We were happily accustoming ourselves to our new titles: Grandma and Grandpa Highcove.

We looked around when we reached the second floor and finally saw our son waving at us from a nearby room. Our daughter and my sister were already there. We slowly came near to the bed where my daughter-in-law Lisa lay with her new daughter...our granddaughter. I'll never forget my first sight of Nikki. She looked like a little doll, wrapped tightly in her hospital blankets or like a figurine in a life-sized Nativity display.

Anxious to feel the reality of the new family member, I asked to hold her. I sat and soon someone passed the warm bundle into my arms. I stared down at her small face and watched her breathe. I looked at her little hands resting under her chin. I pressed my forefinger against her palm. Instantly, her fingers splayed and curled around my digit like a miniature pink starfish taking hold of a piece of coral reef. I stroked her forehead and a barely perceptible flush washed over her face as she seemed to register the caress. I passed her on to my sister for more cuddling.

"I am earth and air and fire and water," she said softly. "I come from the Dark where all the things have their beginning ... I come from the sea and its tides ... I come from the sun and its brightness ... And I come from the forests of earth...."

Slowly I moved at first, always sleeping and dreaming. I remembered all I had been, and I thought of all I shall be. And when I had dreamed my dream, I awoke and came swiftly.

I heard the stars singing as I came and I felt warm wings about me. I passed the beasts of the jungle and came through the dark, deep waters. It was a long journey."

A starling asks newborn Annabel from whence she came to arrive in the Bank's nursery.

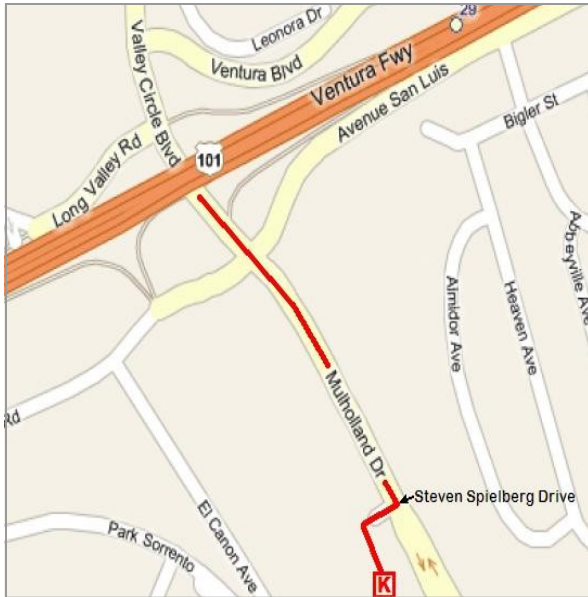
Mary Poppins Comes Back, pgs. 118-19

Several hours later Nikki would become very animated and agitated, demanding to be fed and comforted. Her parents would begin to learn that birth is the first frame of a very long production. But right then, that first day of life, I witnessed an infant newly awakened from her dreams. I wondered how the world sounded to a newborn. Gone was the warm recess that had insulated her for nine months. Gone was the steady throb of her mother's heart. She had so much to take in, and her family, her grandparents, had so much joy to anticipate. So much love to share.

Grandma and Grandpa grinned all the way home.

- Kathy Highcove





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, December 4th, 2010 at 1:30 p.m.

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