



The Newsletter Of The San Fernando Valley Branch

The Valley Scribe

Vol. 3

February 2011

No. 6

And MAJOR WORKS Supplement



Next Meeting February 19, 12:30!

February Featured Speakers:

Panel: "Short Stories"



James



Thornton



Mallory

Everyone has a story to tell. Some of us have many. Even better, some of us get paid to do it. The Short Story market is a thriving and lucrative one — for those who know how to navigate it.

At our February meeting, we'll show you how. We will feature a Three-For-One, All-Star panel of successful Short Story writers.

Our panel comes to us courtesy of the Sisters-in-Crime Speakers Bureau. It was put together by Eric Stone in response to our request for a panel on short stories. Michael Mallory, Darrell James and Kate Thornton will focus on marketing opportunities, what editors are looking for, the online market for short stories, and the issues involved with rights and reprints.

**Bring your pencils.
Bring your questions!
Don't miss this one!**

For more information on our speakers, go to:

Darrell James: <http://www.authordarrelljames.com>

Kate Thornton: <http://www.katethornton.net>

Michael Mallory: <http://www.michaelmallory.com>

12:30 Sharp!

MEMBER SHOWCASE

*Gagik Melikyan — "Guilty
Until Proven Innocent"*

In This Issue

Feature

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(Click on title to jump to item)

January Meeting-in-Review:
Sue McGinty — MYSTERIES
by Yolanda Fintor

**MEMBER WEBSITE
 OF THE MONTH**

BY RAY MALUS



When Sue McGinty switched from technical writing to creative writing, her goal was to become a novelist. Her choice of genre was mysteries because that is what she enjoyed reading. The setting for her stories (*Murder in Los Lobos* and *Murder at Cuyamaca Beach*) is a

fictional small town along the central coast of California that closely resembles Los Osos, her permanent residence near San Luis Obispo.

When asked about the possibility of people in her town recognizing themselves in her books, Ms. McGinty responded that when she based characters on real people, she changed them enough both in physicality and personality so that no one is recognizable. To safeguard oneself against libel in creating characters, Ms. McGinty shared a source that writers could turn to: California Lawyers for the Arts www.calawyersforthearts.org.

Rather than spend time finding an agent, Ms. McGinty sought out small presses that are not only friendlier to new writers than large publishing houses, but are more accessible and flexible. This flexibility allowed her much leeway in the development of her book covers. The two publishers she worked with are Daniel Publishing at www.danielpublishing.com and Aberdeen Bay at www.aberdeembay.com.

She announced that the Central Coast Writers Conference September 16 and 17 will include 32 workshops, manuscript critiques, contests and agents at a cost of \$139.00 for one-and-a-half days. For more information check out this website: www.communityprograms.net

Her motto and advice to writers who want to be published is “Keep at it!” □

Other Resources from Sue

- <http://www.SueMcGinty.com> Sue’s website
- <http://www.SinCCC.com> Sisters in Crime, Central Coast Chapter
- <http://www.SistersInCrimeLA.com> Sisters in Crime, Los Angeles
- <http://www.OakTreeBooks.com> Sponsors Dark Oak Contest
- <http://www.EricMaisel.com> Creativity Coach
- <http://www.grencikliterary.com> Karen Grencik, Agent, Children’s Fiction

nancecrawford.com

Nancecrawford.com is the personal website of member, Nance Crawford. Currently, it only has one strong focus, but it’s a really good one. The site serves as the primary distribution point for Crawford’s whimsical novel, *Dragon Solstice*.

Designed by Crawford’s husband, David

Stifel, the site uses most of the newest technology to be found on “The Web”: Podcasts, RSS feeds, Blogs, links to facebook (account is required) and iTunes pages. (An upcoming link to an e-book-download is promised.)

But we are writers. It’s content we’re interested in. In this case, the content is well worth the visit. Crawford, an accomplished actor and director, has provided audio files of her entire book. They can be listened to and downloaded.

Fanciful and entertaining, the story has all the potential to become a Seasonal perennial. The reading (by Crawford herself) is charming and professional. The editing (by Stifel) is clean with no noticeable background noise. This is not a ‘garage’ or homemade project. It is thoroughly polished and engaging.

The one possible difficulty with the site is, perhaps, navigation. Initially, only the most recent episodes are shown on the page. This is easily coped with. There is a navigation bar on the right-hand side of the page. Under “Show Me All The:” simply click on “Episodes,” and they all magically appear.

WARNING: This site has a large amount of content, and even a “quick glimpse” can get you “hooked.” If you visit it, be prepared to “Bookmark” it. You’ll want to return. □



AN ANNOUNCEMENT

As they like to say in the friendly skies, fasten your seat belts. Instead of doing a shout-out to all the folks who helped at the last meeting (that's in another part of this issue) and a promo for our next meeting, I want to use this space to make an announcement.

First, some background. When I accepted the Nominating Committee's nomination for President of CWC-SFV in May 2010, I did so with hesitation due to the two-year term it involved. None of us knows what our situation will be two years out—economically, family-wise, or health-wise.

Let me explain further. At the time I was nominated as President and then elected, I was promised that two of our Board members were continuing in their positions (which they have), and that another Club member would serve as Programs Chair. As fate would have it, the prospective Programs Chair had to back out because of family illness, so I took on that role too after trying in vain to find a replacement. I now was President and Programs Chair.

I was also told by multiple people at the time that the President usually (but not always) serves as Central Board Rep, so I took that on too—and found it also involved being the meeting rep for the Southern California regional group which was meeting bimonthly in Anaheim (now Pasadena).

Suddenly, all of these Club activities and commitments began to seem more like a part-time job rather than a hobby. I was, as the trendy term

puts it, “overcommitted.”

Two years just seems like too much for me at this point. I'm not going to take the usual route of claiming I “want to spend more time with the family.” “need to take care of my health,” or want to go meditating and mountain climbing to access my inner self in Nepal. It's mainly about needing to use more of my spare time to ensure my future financial security, probably not a big surprise in this economy.

Therefore, I'm announcing my resignation from the Board and all positions I hold, effective June 18, 2011. I will continue to be an active member of our Club, and I encourage any of you who wish to volunteer to run for President or serve in any other open position to make your interest known to me, Ray, or any of our Board members.

It's up to all of you now. I promise I will give those volunteers who come forward to run for President or serve as Program Chair or Central Board Rep all the help I can, and make the transition as easy as possible for them.

Finally, I want to thank you for your support and kindness during the past months as I sought to provide our branch with programs of interest in a congenial setting—I think I can say that with the help of Ray and the Board, I have accomplished this goal so far. I look forward to finishing out the year with the Club between now and June and continuing as an active member and helper in 2011-2012. □

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!)

TheatreWorks specializes in development of new musicals. Their plays are professional productions intended for an adult audience. Buys performance rights. Submissions: Submit synopsis, 10 pages of sample dialogue, and SASE. Produces 8 plays/yr. Responds: 6-8 months. Payment varies per contract. TW has a high standard for excellence. They prefer well-written, well-constructed plays that celebrate the human spirit. No limit to number of characters, and prefer plays with multi-ethnic casting possibilities. They are a LORT C company. Plays are negotiated per playwright. Doesn't want one-acts, or plays with togas. Particularly interested in plays with musical elements. Contact: Kent Nicholson, New Works director. Address: P.O. Box 50458, Palo Alto, CA 94303. Phone: (650) 463-1950. Fax: (650) 463-1963. E-mail: kent@theatreworks.org. Website: www.theatreworks.org.

The Ten-Minute Musicals Project produces plays performed in Equity regional theatres in the US and Canada. Deadline: August 31, notification by November 30. Buys first performance rights. Produces 1-10 plays/yr. Pays: \$250 royalty advance upon selection, against equal share of performance royalties when produced. See website for guidelines. Contact: Michael Koppy, producer. Address: P. O. Box 461194, West Hollywood, CA 90046. E-mail: info@tenminutemusicals.org. Website: www.tenminutemusicals.org.

The Raven Chronicles is a bi-annual publication that seeks to promote transcultural art, literature and the spoken word. Publishes 50-100 new writers/yr. Accepts 30-60 mss/issue, 105-150 mss/yr. Publishes ms 12 months after acceptance. Length: 2,500 words (but negotiable), average length: 2,000 words. Publishes short shorts, literary essays, literary criticism, and poetry. Sometimes comments on rejected mss. Needs: Ethnic/multicultural, literary, regional, political, cultural essays. No romance, fantasy, mystery or detective. Send complete mss with SASE. Responds in 3 months to mss. No simultaneous submissions. Writer's guidelines for #10 SASE. Pays \$10-40 and 2 contributor's copies. Looking for clean, direct language, written from the heart, and experimental writing. Address: 12346 Sand Point Way N. E., Seattle WA 98125. Phone: (206) 364-2045. E-mail: editors@ravenchronicles.org. Website: www.ravenchronicles.org.

Microhorror: Short Stories. Endless Nightmares is a free online archive for short-short horror fiction. MH showcases the power of short-short horror to convey great emotional impact in only a few brief paragraphs. Accepts 300 mss/yr. Ms published 1-3 days after acceptance. Publishes 50 new writers/yr. Length: 666

words (max). Often comments on/critiques rejected mss. Contact: Nathan Rosen, editor. Guidelines available online. Acquires one-time rights. Publication is copyrighted. Address: P. O. Box 32259, Pikesville, MD 21282-2259. Phone: (443) 670-6133. E-mail: microhorror@gmail.com. Website: www.microhorror.com.

ZYZZYVA features the work of writers on the West Coast, Alaska, and Hawaii only. This magazine is published in March, August, and November. Guidelines available online. Buys first North American serial and one-time anthology rights. Byline given. Pays on acceptance. No kill fee. Queries accepted by mail, e-mail. Responds in 1 week to queries. Responds in 1 month to mss. Publishes mss an average of 3 months after acceptance. 100% freelance written. Works with a number of new/unpublished writers each year. Looking for nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. Contact: Howard Junker. Address: P. O. Box 590069, San Francisco, CA 94159-0069. Phone: (415) 752-4393. E-mail: editor@zyzzyva.com. Website: www.zyzyva.com.

Glimmer Train's Fiction Open contest is offered quarterly for unpublished stories on any theme. Contest open during the months of March, June, September and December. Winners will be called and results announced 2 months after the close of each contest. Word count should not exceed 20,000 words. Submit online. Entry fee: \$20/story. Prize: First place - \$2,000, publication in Glimmer Train Stories and 20 copies of that issue. First/second runners-up - \$1,000/\$600 (respectively) and possible publication in Glimmer Train Stories. Contact: Susan Burmeister-Brown, co-editor. Address: 1211 NW Glisan St., Suite 207, Portland OR 97209. Phone: (503) 221-0836. Fax: (503) 221-0837. Website: www.glimmertrain.com.

Exotic Magazine is pro-sex, informative, amusing, mature, and intelligent. Their readers rent and/or buy adult videos, visit strip clubs and are interested in topics related to the adult entertainment industry and sexuality/culture. They ask that you do not talk down to their readers, or fire too far over their heads. Many of their readers are computer literate and well-traveled. They are also interested in insightful fetish material. They are not a "hard-core" publication. Accepts simultaneous submissions. Guidelines for #10 SASE. Buys first North American serial rights, and online rights, may negotiate second serial (reprint) rights. Byline given. Pays 30 days after publication. No kill fee. Queries accepted by fax. Responds in 2 weeks to queries. Responds in 2 months to mss. Nonfiction: expose, general interest, historical, how-to, humor, interview, travel. Length: 1,000-1,800 words. Pays: \$0.10/word up to \$150. Fiction: They are overwhelmed with fiction. Send fiction only if it's really amazing. Address: X Publishing, 314 W. Burnside St., Portland, OR 97209. Fax: (503) 241-7239. E-mail: exoticunderground2004@yahoo.com. Website: www.xmag.com. □

The Wright Word – by Ray

The following is a re-print of an editorial that appeared in our January, 2010 issue. If you read Stephanie's President's Corner column this month, you will see that it's even more germane now.

I urge you to read— and heed — it!

Charlie Gordon?

The question is from the movie, *Charlie* (adapted from the novella, *Flowers For Algernon*, by Daniel Keyes). It is asked by Charlie Gordon, himself.

Charlie has lived most of his life mentally impaired — functionally a child — with a recorded I.Q. of 68. Now, a miraculous operation has given him a brilliant intellect. At symposium, Charlie asks the assembled medical experts the question: “Charlie Gordon?”

In the manner of great teachers, Charlie already knows the answer: “Charlie Gordon... is a fella... who will soon be... what he was.”

It's a gut-wrenching moment. Charlie Gordon has discovered that the effects of the operation are temporary. He will soon return to his original capabilities.

Less than a year ago, our Branch was suspended from CWC. We were, basically, non-functional and non-existent — the equivalent of Charlie Gordon. A group of energetic, generous people formed a committee and got us reinstated. Many of them became our current Board. It was, in its own way, miraculous.

But our Board ‘retires’ in June. Some are exhausted, some need to get back to their careers, some just feel the membership needs to take ownership of their own Branch.

So, I must ask the question: “San Fernando Valley Chapter?”

Tragically, the answer is much the same as Charlie's: “CWC-SFV ... is a Branch... that will soon be... what it was.”

We have good attendance at meetings. We have (in my opinion) some of the finest writers in CWC. We have congenial personalities.

The problem is that too few members are coming forward to do active work. Too few are “getting involved.” Chair positions go unfilled, members do not ‘sit in’ on Board meetings, no one is being prepared for leadership roles.

Yes, it's great fun to show up every month, hear



provocative Open Mikes, socialize and have a nosh, watch a presentation by an expert speaker. But we're like children who believe in Santa Claus, trusting that the presents will just magically appear on Christmas morning, waiting to be torn open.

It's time to wake up!

The Branch runs by a lot of effort — effort that, if it's successful, is invisible. Moreover, there are administrative and leadership functions that never stop. We have relationships and responsibilities to the State Organization. If all this doesn't get done on a continuing basis, we die.

I know many of you will respond, “When the time comes, I'll do my part.” The fact is, one doesn't just assume Office. It takes familiarity and experience. “The time” is now!

There is also the matter of membership involvement. It is not my place to do a ‘postmortem’ on what caused the previous upheaval in our Branch. But I will assert that a vigilant membership would have forestalled it. Any single person or small group can make well meant, but misguided, decisions that negatively impact a group. But an involved membership insures that the benefit of the whole is being judiciously considered.

We have an election coming up in 6 months. Ideally, we don't elect ‘people’ — we elect the visions that people champion. Without these visions, the group just drifts, goal-less and stagnant. We need your ideas, and we need you to be willing to work to ‘actualize’ them.

You may ask why I'm not following my own advice. I am! I am not a candidate for office, simply because I feel I am more valuable as a ‘worker bee.’ But, believe me, I am involved.

You need to be, too.

This is not an appeal. I (personally) am not asking anything of you. It is simply a warning — and a question: “San Fernando Valley Branch?” □

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.



TOO MANY GROUNDHOGS!!

As you can plainly see, our editorial office has been infested by groundhogs!! They're all over the place!
See how many you can spot in the newsletter, and win bragging rights. (The word 'groundhog' doesn't count, only the critters themselves.)
Submit your count to cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com.
Winners' names published next month!

Something To Ponder

Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself is Enlightenment.

— Lao-tzu

BOARD MEETINGS

Our SFV Branch holds its Board Meetings every month after the Speaker's Presentation.

Non-board members may not participate, but are encouraged to audit and observe these meetings.



It Could Be Verse

Lincoln's Statue, Washington DC Lillian Rodich

Lincoln's eyes seem to follow me...
I climb steps slowly,
fearful of falling back
into the star-encrusted night.

Stone eyes cannot see,
still the marble has a soul,
cold over an anguished past;
a model of undaunted purpose.

It is late and lights dim
around the massive sculpture.
He looks past my lowered head
toward the reflecting pool.

Lincoln's eyes no longer follow me...
Slowly I descend the slippery steps,
fearful of falling,
into a starless future

VALENTINES DAY, 1954

Helen Katzman

Six pound, two ounce baby girl
Wrapped in a soft pink blanket
Placed in my arms
On Valentine's Day, 1954

Her daddy and I kissed her beautiful face
Counted each tiny finger and toe
Named her "Sara Ellen"

I held her gently
Put her to my breast
The sweet "nectar" of my soul
Nourishing hers

Her daddy kissed me sweetly
Handed me a box of chocolate Valentine candy
To enjoy for a week or two
The love and sweetness of our little one
Will be with us always

Today Sara turns fifty-seven
Happily married
Living in Denver
With a daughter, Hannah
Off to college

The warmth and love
Of my daughter and granddaughter
Nourishes my soul
And magically, the soul of Sara's father
As he sleeps his eternal sleep





FEBRUARY FEATURED POET

Wanda Sue Parrot is a member of our Central Coast Writers Branch, and former editor of *Scribbles*, their newsletter. She is an accomplished and honored poet(ess). Her skill shines through this short poem.

For more about Wanda, go to:

<http://amykitchenerfdn.org/wbiox.html>

Ode to Einstein

Wanda Sue Parrot

Great brilliance
often goes unshined
within a world
where folks are blind
and mindlessness
upstages Mind.

Mom Ray Malus

*From somewhere deep within a torpid Winter dream,
I woke to feel the urging of her quiet hand.
She touched my lips and softly kissed my tousled
hair,
and wrapped me in a robe and gently lifted me.*

*She held me in her warm embrace and carried me
Through shiv'ry darkness out into the living room,
and over to the window, where the parted drapes
revealed the miracle she'd wakened me to share.*

*A secret snow had fallen as I lay asleep,
and blanketed the squalor of the New York street.
I lay there in the luxury of loving arms
and looked out at a slum become a wonderland.*

*The traffic-melted flakes had wet the surface of
the grimy streets. The cobblestones lay glistening bright,
like loaves of fresh-baked whole wheat bread set tight upon
a rack to cool, with shiny glaze sprayed on their crusts.*

*The hoar hung on the rusty pillars of the El,
a gleaming coat of stucco that was new applied
to crumbling, shoddy, old decaying building walls,
and made them seem like fabled villas in the night.*

*Across the avenue the intersecting street —
whose torrid asphalt surface in the summer wore
a coat of shimmering heat — was blanketed with white,
with tire ruts that made it seem a country lane.*

*The lights above the pavement seemed to perch upon
fluorescent cones of iridescent fireflies,
Like blazing pom-poms set on tinsel party hats
that marched in single column down the boulevard.*

*And, as we watched, a grime-grayed train roared overhead,
and showers of sparks cascaded to the street below —
a dazzling show of incandescent fireworks
put on by God for just the two of us to see.*

*In all the many years she loved and cared for me,
I never felt we owned each other more than then.*

*And there was no way either of us could have known
that this would be my most beloved memory.*



The Gallery
(Photos by Mark-Paul Sebar)
(Captions by the Editor)

NEW MEMBERS — Welcome!



Colin Gallagher



Holly LaMora



Mary Black

OPEN MIKE!



Norm Molesko



Gil Roscoe



Ed Braun



Steph and Speaker,
Sue McGinty



The Gallery II

(Photos by Mark-Paul Sebar)
(Captions by the Editor)



Visitors from West Valley Branch
(Esther Shifren and Marganit Lish)



Pirhiya — Hospitality Personified



Great turn-out



"Oh NO! The Papparazzi!"



Ken — Hospitality Appreciated

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ABOUT THIS ISSUE:

Really important stuff in this issue: MAJOR WORKS SUPPLEMENT, where some of our writers get to show some of their longer work.

Be sure to read Stephanie's President's Corner. It's vital to us all! On a lighter note, count the groundhogs, and send your estimate in! Because of the short month, next Scribe deadline will need to be Feb. 25th. Sorry to rush you, but get your pencils (keyboards?) busy!



ENJOY the issue!

— Ray

URGENT: *HELP* WANTED!

KUDOS KOLUMNIST

We are searching for someone to write our monthly Kudos Kolumn. It's not hard. Simply compile all our Branch's good news for the month into one place! If you like spreading Good News — PLUS being the first to hear it, this is the job you've been waiting for!

PROGRAM REVIEWER!

Also urgently needed: Someone to write the "Last-Month-in-Review" column. Our Speakers are not paid. The least we can do is review their presentations.

Just contact Stephanie or Ray.

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.

THANK YOU

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

A Big Thank You

To *Mark-Paul Sebar and Doug Douglas* for helping with the January set-up, to *Mark-Paul* for the great photos, to *Scott Gitlen* for the goodies, to *Liz Cooke* for her help at the Membership Table.

Much appreciated!

FREE BEER!!

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

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

The Bulletin Board

**MEETINGS ...
 ARE HELD AT 12:30 P.M.
 ON THE 3RD 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
 February: Panel on “Short Stories”
 March: E. P. McKnight – Dreams ‘N’ Action
 April: Lenora Smalley – Poetry

GUEST DONATIONS

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

SUBMISSIONS

Members are encouraged to submit writing contributions to *The Valley Scribe*. This is your newsletter, and you should be part of it. Submit your prose and poetry to cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com Please type “SUBMISSION” 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.

- 500 words or less
- 800 words or less
- Limited to 40 lines

Articles/Essays
 Short Stories
 Poetry

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

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

UPCOMING MEMBER SHOWCASE

February 19, 2011
 Dr. Gagik Melikyan

The Fine Print

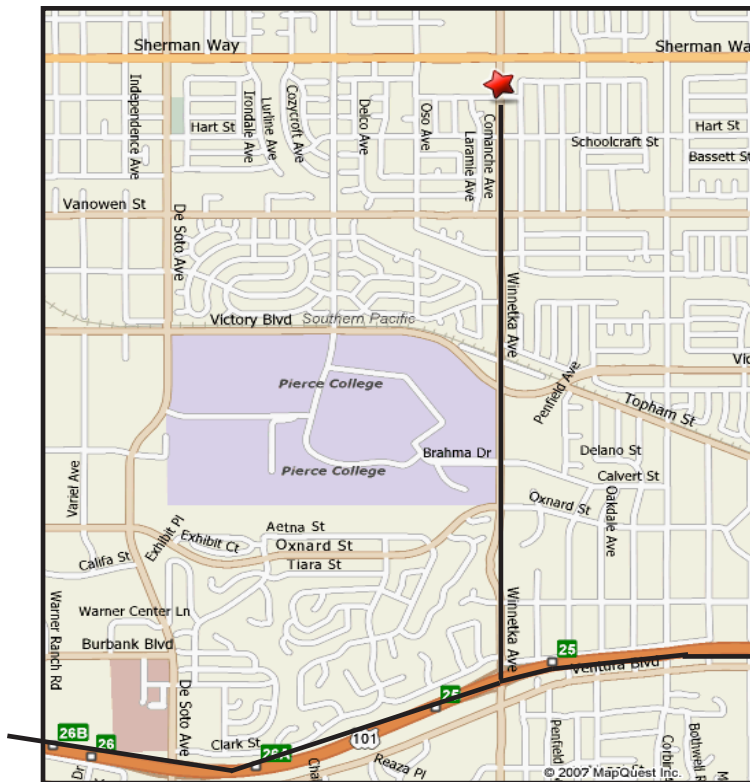
ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS
7136 WINNETKA AVE
CANOGA PARK, CA 91306

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)

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Ray Malus

Staff

- Proofreaders Judy Presnall, Stephanie Sharf, Sharron Malus
- Columnists Stephanie Sharf, Ken Watts, Ray Malus
- Guest Columnist Yolanda Fintor
- Staff Photographer Mark-Paul Sebar

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California Writers Club
 San Fernando Valley Branch

EXECUTIVE BOARD & BOARD MEMBERS

- President, Stephanie Sharf stephaniesharf@yahoo.com
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- Webmaster, Ray Malus cw-csfv@roadrunner.com

Website: www.cw-csfv.org

Once each year, we allocate space to include parts of longer works by our members
— material that just doesn't fit into a monthly newsletter' format.

Here is this year's

MAJOR WORKS SUPPLEMENT

Contributors:

Here are two excerpts from Norman Molesko's book (in progress)

DEALING WITH A HEART ATTACK. THEN WHAT?

WHEN MY WORLD CHANGES

I swallowed a prune, slightly chewed.

Thought the prune would dissolve.

A deep pain in the middle of my chest.

A pressure spot the size of a half dollar.

My left arm feels frail, weak and numb.

I chew four baby aspirins.

I follow up with an antacid pill.

The sensations remain just the same.

I place two nitros under my tongue
about five minutes apart.

I sense no relief to my disbelief.

My thinking is keen, yet in a haze.

I tell my wife to call 911 for help.

A few fleeting minutes of waiting.

Six able attendants at my side.

Monitored vital signs recorded.

Answers to questions given.

Telephone conversations heard.

Decisions affecting me are made.

I am in competent care, putting me at ease.

I am placed on a narrow gurney,
moved through open ambulance doors.

I thankfully say, "God bless the 911 team."

ON THE TREADMILL

I stretch. I warm up.

I chat to my machine, my friend.

I set my walking speed. And reset.

Need more speed. Some more.

To mend, to strengthen. I sing,

Go higher. Go higher. Go higher.

I'm on fire.

Go higher. Go higher. Go higher.

I'm working harder.

Go higher. Go higher. Go higher.

My numbers are increasing for the better.

My body wants it faster.

Increase the elevation, elevate the speed,
Then I feel twinges in the middle of my chest.

Is it my heart or another muscle in arrest?

Go moderate. Go lower.

My mind tells me slower.

I have been easily carried away
by too much momentum.

I realize I have to slow down
to a lower speed I can handle.

It is time for me to adjust and drop down.

Lillian Rodich is one of our most skilled poets. Her work often graces the Poetry Section of The Valley Scribe. Here, she shines in a longer format than usual. We regret that the poem had to be continued to a second page. Please follow the link and read in its entirety. It's worth it.

Notes on a Metro Subway Tour

Lillian Rodich

I enter a tube in a tunnel,
guided by blinking neon signs
and settle into Metro's narrow car,
strangers crowding into my space,
their faces blank pages.

A surprising lurch and we are off,
acceleration propels me
forward in my narrow place,
when suddenly lights appear
and invade the darkness.

As we approach each station
a blur of street names and numbers
taunts me with brief moments of clarity
just coming into focus
through thick glass train windows.

Doors snap open with split second precision
forcing exit, for most their destination,
then snap shut and speed pulls us along
into a dark cave with blurred walls.
I feel threatened and a desire to escape.

I hold on to a slippery silver pole
and sway with the rhythm of the car...
an awkward dancer alone with my thoughts.
A young father holds my pole briefly,
a wiggly girl child clinging to his leg.

Strangers, a chubby baby girl and a child-man
wearing a torn undershirt and wrinkled blazer,
heading for Hollywood's opulent station.
They debark, a trail of milk tears
dripping from the baby's bottle.

Doors snap open and I detrain
breathless from my quick exit,
suddenly blinded and alone.
I am in a giant hall blasted by light
while school children follow a nun and sing,
their sweet voices floating toward me.

Then I look up and see
thousands of empty movie reels
and my gaze is drawn toward the ceiling,
toward a canopy of empty reels,
naked in their loss and imprisoned
forever in a Metro station.

I hold the hand rail and climb steep stairs,
forgetting the pain in my rib cage,
forgetting my sore ankle and white hair,
forgetting I am not as sure-footed
as I once was among dashing strangers.

I am mesmerized by a canopy of empty movie reels,
corpses of a golden era and confusing relics
to those who someday may unearth them.
I'm told this place is earthquake safe
and fireproof and bomb safe ... a mausoleum!

The floors are marble and slippery.
Don't race for a train I silently roar.
Don't run with a sore ankle or a broken spirit.
Look at the reels, the vintage cars
and Hollywood glitz instead.

I turn around slowly and absorb
the bold mosaics and message paintings,
the empty benches and memories
of movie cameras weeping without film
and some who care and some who don't.

Over there ... a young man in a wheel chair;
he's wearing a jogging suit and leather half-gloves
and a blank expression like empty movie reels
and faceless sculptures that don't breathe.
Doors snap open and he disappears,
by what miracle whisked away?

Poetry by Ed Braun appears in almost every issue of our publication. He is a prolific writer, and plans on publishing four volumes of his poetry in the near future.

Love Letter

Edward Louis Braun

*My life before
I knew of you
Was a barren place,
A faceless place.*

*Now you sweeten my days
In ways I never dreamed of
And I do not like to think
Of days without you,*

*For I would be
Like the sky without clouds,
Like a flat insipid sea
Not stirred by winds
Nor caressed by a breeze,
Like trees with few leaves
To change white light
To green, red and gold.*

*I do not need you
To survive
For I am no stranger
To empty days.
I know too well
The ways of solitude
But though I am strong
Days without you
Would be too long..*

*I need your smile
To light my days,
I need the peace
And calm of you,
The excitement
And delight of you..*

*I want to share all
That delights us both,
To enjoy our lives
Creating what we can,
Enjoying what there is.*

*I wasn't to look into
The truth of your eyes
And be less burdened
By life's lies.*

*It's true there's much
I can do without you:
Think, work, strive,
Accomplish and create,
Satiating my senses
With wine, fine food
Poor imitations of you.*

*I can walk
The dark pathways
Of the night
And starlight
From distant worlds
Can touch me
Though not the way
Your eyes do..*

*The roar and murmur
Of the sea
Can talk to me,
Though not like you,
Nor does it listen
With its heart like you..*

*Breezes of the forest
Sing seductive songs
But they have no ear
For my music.*

*Though the world
Offers much to enjoy,
Life without the touch
Of your hand, your smile,
The love in your eyes,
The happiness from
Being with you,
Would be prosaic,
Passionless, dry,
Flat and uninspired.*

Helen Katzman is another of our frequent contributors. We're pleased to print this, slightly longer piece.

SMILES

Helen S. Katzman

Warm nurturing smiles
 Evolve
 Expressed
 Appreciated
 In all walks of life
 Smiles celebrate life

Smiles from staff at
 Medical doctor's office
 A dentist
 Emergency room doctors
 and
 volunteers
 Bring a feeling of comfort

A smile
 Calms trepidations
 Opens heart
 Love sneaks in

We celebrate life with a smile
 When an infant is born
 With its first smile
 Takes first step
 Cuts first tooth
 Starts kindergarten
 Graduates with honors
 Announces an engagement
 Purchases a home
 All brings smiles of joy
 To family and friends

We celebrate life with a smile for
 One who is no longer with us
 Gentle smiles
 Of remembrances

We celebrate
 Roses in bloom
 Children playing
 Family loving

Smiles have no accent,
 No country, no boundaries
 Smiles enrich the heart
 Celebrates life

("Metro" cont'd from pg. M-2)

Hooray for Hollywood
 the subway and wheelchairs,
 sore ankles and broken spirits.
 Hooray for back-bent strangers
 with full shopping bags pulling them to their knees.

I turn quickly and avoid three young men
 in the uniform of gangs,
 their heads shaved, their expressions shaved.
 Heavy muscles ripple their arms and calves
 and baggy pants hang from crack to ankle
 like a heap of laundry thrown around their waists.

A swish of cold air
 rushes like a live entity down the tracks.
 Then Metrolink's headlight announces its arrival.
 Doors snap open and I tumble back into a car.
 Strangers and I are heading toward Mac Arthur Park.

Back in the tube ... tired faces,
 close enough to touch and difficult not to,
 find their own space
 in a rocking train heading for a place
 I once went boating with my love.

This time I don't disembark.
 The screech of brakes and brightly painted station
 do not tempt me. I am being propelled home,
 in the bowels of the city, going north,
 back to what is familiar and real,
 back to my home.

And while the wheels clatter
 and the world is a dark window next to me
 I can *see* vast paintings and bold relief sculptures
 I can *hear* the screech of brakes and young voices in
 the background
 and *feel* a sharp blast of wind.

I know the touch of cool silver poles,
 the breath of strangers...
 panic of loneliness amidst strangers
 and I will not soon forget.

Que Sera, Sera

Ray Malus

(This is an excerpt from Malus' unpublished novel, Ashes In Yonkers.)

Doris Day was singing "Que Sera, Sera." Not the stupid yelling version that'd been in the movie — the sweet mandolin-accompanied version. She sat on a huge toast-colored suede sofa, and sang just for him, staring into his eyes. She was dressed in a muted cocktail dress, a half shade darker than the couch.

The room's walls were floor-to-ceiling glass. Through them, he could see vast expanses of tan ripe wheat, extending in all directions, rippling in the light breeze.

Other than the bar he stood behind, the sofa was the only furniture in the room. It sat on a carpet that matched its color.

The whole scene was pale, monochromatic — like a sepia print. The only vivid color was at the far end of the room.

On a small spot lit stage, June Kearney was dancing an Irish Jig in front of a crimson curtain.

She appeared to be about seventeen years old. The grin on her beautiful face was joyful, and her innocent dark eyes shown with pleasure.

She wore a plaid jumper, with a virginal, blindingly white blouse underneath. There was a Kelly-green silk scarf tied around her neck. Argyle knit socks were pulled up to her knees. Her arms hung loosely at her sides. Her black patent leather clogs flashed in the spotlight, their heavy taps pounding out a primitive Celtic tattoo.

Clack-clackety-clack-clack.

He forced himself to tear his eyes off June, and smiled at Doris Day. Doris' hair was in a lacquered gold bouffant. He could clearly see the freckles on her pert nose — between sparkling blue eyes. Her impossibly white teeth gleamed as she assured only him that what would be, would be.

He dropped three unbroken raw eggs and a dash of Angostura Bitters into the blender. Then he adroitly added 2 scoops of pistachio ice cream and a mint leaf. He poured in about 2 cups of Irish whiskey, and put the cap on the blender jar, ready to hit the power switch.

Doris Day's singing had become more insistent now — trying to drown out June's dance — which had become louder, wilder.

CRACK-CRACKETY-CRACK-CRACK!

He looked at Doris Day. Her eyes had an urgency — willing him to stay focused on her. But he was drawn to June, whose eyes were locked on his. They took on a smoky, sultry air, and she moistened her full red lips. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Danny and Rose Kearney were now standing — to his right — at the end of the bar, watching their daughter's performance.

June's eyes continued to bore into his. There was suggestion, promise in them. Her feet kept the same pounding rhythm, but her body movements changed — became sensual. Her hips undulated, sexily — thrusting toward him.

BANG-BANGETY-BANG-BANG!

She shucked off the straps of her jumper. The bib front fell to her waist.

Doris Day's voice was even coarser — strident. "Que Sera, Sera."

Something acrid — biting — burned his nose. He looked down. Smoke was rising from the jar of the blender where the whiskey was corroding the glass — rotting away large holes like concentrated acid eating flesh. The entire jar was sagging — melting over his hand.

He focused back on the stage.

June's dance was even louder now.

SLAM-SLAMITY-SLAM-SLAM!

She reached down and pulled the blouse out of the waistband of her skirt. She unbuttoned it, starting at the top. He glanced over. Danny and Rose were beaming approvingly at June.

Still staring at him, June tore her blouse off. Threw it behind her. She stood there, pounding the rhythm with her clogs.

She began to gyrate her hips — thrusting her crotch at him. Her plain white bra was translucent with sweat — accentuating her heavy, ripe breasts. Her areolas were dark shadows, the nipples straining against the thin material. Never stopping her dance, she untied the green scarf, and lasciviously wiped the sweat from her chest and belly. She put it in her mouth — sensuously sucking and licking the moisture from it. Her hands went to her breasts, and cupped them, lifted them, offering them to him. Her thumbs teased her nipples. Her hips bucked. Little mewls of pleasure came from her pursed lips.

Doris Day was now shrieking "Que Sera, Sera." A tuneless banshee's wail.

June slipped her hands inside the waistband of her skirt and rubbed her crotch. She pushed her hands down, and her skirt and panties fell to her ankles, where she kicked them off, never breaking the rhythm of her dance. Her feet were wider apart now — her knees slightly bent, her thighs spread. The pounding of her taps was thunder, drowning everything else out.

POUND! POUND! POUND! POUND!

Still undulating, June slid her hands slowly over her stomach, her buttocks, her thighs — finally cupping the dark vee between her legs. She gripped herself and threw her head back with pleasure. Her back arched.

Doris Day abruptly stopped singing. She reached into the space between two of the sofa cushions. Her hand came away holding an ugly military-issue forty-five automatic. She turned and pointed it at June.

Danny rushed over and snatched the gun from her hand. He shrieked, "SONS OF ERIN!" and aimed the gun at June. It fired with a horrendous report. □