

Mixed Media

Is a picture worth a thousand words? If your book incorporates both text and illustration, you won't need to favor one over the other, nor solve the age-old debate! However, completion of an illustrated work incorporates special challenges.

Tina Glasner has produced line-art portraits, logos, book covers, bookmarks, and interiors. Last year she designed, edited illustrated, and produced *LOPSIDED LAUGHS*, a book featuring one hundred humorous poems by author Rick Duncan.

Her April speech to our WV meeting will focus on:

- ☐ Using illustrations with text
- ☐ Illustration inspirations
- ☐ Desired illustrator qualities

- ☐ Author/illustrator collaboration
- ☐ Publisher negotiations
- ☐ Self-publishing considerations
- ☐ Choosing an artistic style
- ☐ Qualities of attractive layouts

Participate! Bring your own humorous caption for this example of Tina's illustrations.

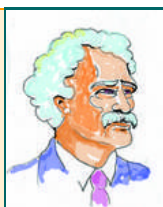
She'll announce first and second prize winners — then we'll learn the story behind this sketch and how Tina's illustrations were used in *LOPSIDED LAUGHS*.



-Yolanda Fintor

Tina Glasner, a writer, editor, and graphic designer, has been a California Writers Club member since 1994. More information about Tina and samples of her art can be found at her web site: www.DreadedMomLady.com

west valley whimsicals A Schwartz / Highcove Production



"Humor is the good natured side of a truth," said Mark Twain.

Some say that humor is basically a form of surprise. We startle, and then laugh at an incongruity. Any one who's played peek-a-boo with

a baby can attest to the validity of this theory. But the ability to make an audience titter or guffaw is not an easy task. The average adult is not as malleable as the average infant.

Humorists – writers, emcees and comedians - work hard to

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unexpected events

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Of Note...



Ray Malus, dual member of WV and the SFV, received the Jack London award from the SFV this spring. Ray is editor of The Scribe and is also the SFV webmaster. Congrats to Ray!

And kudos to Marganit Lish for her outreach to the MPTF residents. Thanks to her initiative, an announcement regarding the next CWC meeting, and our future meetings will appear on the weekly guide Channel 22 provides for the residents. Thanks, Marganit!

President's Message

Board Votes to Merge
with SFV /CWC



This is the fifth year since we left the SFV branch and established ourselves as a separate branch in the California Writers Club.

We thought we would get new members from the MPTV residence and from the outlying areas of West Valley and Agoura and Thousand Oaks. We didn't get the numbers we anticipated.

In addition, a decline in attendance, the number of crossover members participating in both branches, the geographic proximity of the two meeting places, and a desire to share talent and speakers has made it reasonable to reunite with the San Fernando branch.

In March our Board of Directors voted unanimously to enter into discussions with SFV regarding a merger. Representatives of the two branches will meet soon. I'll keep you informed.

Any questions and/or concerns may be expressed to me at the April meeting, or call me at 818-883-9427 or send email to dwetter@sbcglobal.net

Erica Stux' new musical, HEIDI, based on the children's classic, plays at the North Hollywood London Music Hall every April weekend (except the Easter weekend) and the first weekend in May. Call 818-762-7883 for show times and reservations. The theater is at 10620 Magnolia Blvd. Saturdays at 7 pm, Sundays at 2 pm

Our Internet Literate Libraries



March Speaker
Anne Olivier

If today's writers believe that the Internet has made libraries obsolete, Anne Olivier's speech did much to dispel that notion. Using a slideshow, Anne demonstrated how our members could

navigate through the labyrinth of the Los Angeles Central Library's website (www.lapl.org). That trip would bring research rewards.

By clicking on [Databases](#), which is on the [Library Resources](#) page, then on [Databases Listed by Subjects](#), twenty subjects come up ranging from [Art, Music and Recreation](#) to [U.S. Government Documents](#). Each subject has a database marker. Documents accessed from your home computer are coded with **-1-**. Subjects accessed from any LAPL branch and the Central Library have a **-2-** code. Ones with a **-3-** number code may be accessed only from the Central Library.

Anne reminded us that with a few clicks of

your keyboard, a book can be requested and sent from the Central Library to your branch library for pick up.

Searches from the Databases reveal a wealth of information. For historians needing to cite sources, the newspaper archives contain articles as far back as the 1700s, from all over the world. One can narrow a search by area and date or topic. These old newspaper pages can be copied and printed out.

Anne told us she found a revealing article about her great-grandfather in a 1902 newspaper. It described how he was shot during an altercation with another man. She narrowed her search by entering his name and date of death.

With a library catalogue of over 6 million printed books, audio books, periodicals, DVDs, CDs, maps and over 50,000 photographs, writers have a vast field of information at their fingertips.

"But," Anne emphasized, "the library's most valuable resource is the librarian. When you need help you get to talk to an expert."

- Yolanda Fintor



- Anne Olivier

This month let's focus on an often overlooked library resource – the librarian! Patrons are often reluctant to approach the reference desk and leave without the needed information.

Perhaps you're at home using an online databases and get stuck. Did you forget how to log in or your PIN? Just call the library and ask for the reference desk and you'll be helped.

Here's a list of typical topics a librarian can help you

research whether in the library or at home:

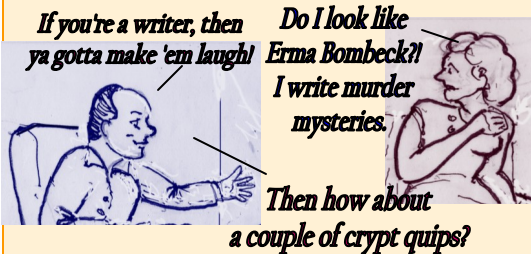
- A specific music score or sheet music
- Directions for curing olives.
- Baseball statistics from the 1970 World Series.
- How to reserve a book.
- How to use the online newspaper database
- Word definitions/ grammar rules
- How to request a book from another library
- Lists of book clubs or programs at the branch

This website www.lapl.org/branches/ makes available a complete list of library branches and phone numbers.

And remember, the librarian is there for YOU.

(*Whimsicals* Continued from page 1)

elicit laughter from their audiences. Here in the city of film and television, big paychecks go to those who feed media's laugh factories. But humor is not only the tool of a comedian or columnist. Humor is needed in all types of writing: articles, memoirs, reviews, anything meant for any audience.



A little humor in a mystery, a serious tract, a scientific essay, or a detailed bio, will make the reader sit up and take notice. Complicated material may become more palatable if presented with a bit of humor.

Authors of juvenile literature have injected humor into their books for generations.

Think about your favorite instructors and their lectures. Remember the aura of fun and creative thinking in the classroom? Did you learn while you laughed? Most probably, you did.

Humor might morph a writer into a person of perspective with an open mind. A light approach, rather than a dogmatic shove, can often win over those still on the fence.

You're not a comedian or adept at a quick comeback? Then research the experts. Borrow an appropriate quip and credit the

source.



How to Punctuate a Title

The ease of using italics on the computer has brought some adjustments in the rules for the punctuation of titles. Once we underlined major works like novels, biographies, essay collections, etc. and put quotation marks around minor pieces like short stories, articles, and poems. A look at current newspapers and magazines, however, indicates that the old conventions seem to have faded away in favor of putting everything *in italics*. In any event, the following rules still apply when you put a title on your manuscript.

Manuscript Titles

The first page of your manuscript should be blank except for the title, which is centered .

Do **not** capitalize all the words in your title.

Do **not** put quotation marks around your title.

Do **not** underline your title.

Do **not** do a combination of or all of the above.

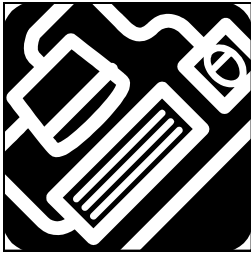
Do capitalize the first letter of each word except the following: 1) the articles *a*, *an*, and *the*, 2) short prepositions like *in*, *on*, *for*, and *by*, and 3) the coordinate conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, *so*, and *yet*. Longer prepositions like *before*, *around*, *against* etc. *may be* capitalized.

Examples: **A Geography of the Philippine Islands**
A Trip Around the Globe
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo
The Old Man and the Sea

When you refer to your title or to someone else's title within the manuscript, put it in italics.

Example: According to my students, everyone replaced *Pride and Prejudice* with *Cliff's Notes*.

-Dave Wetterberg



A New Publishing Opportunity Knocks

The California Writers Club will launch the publication of a literary review late this spring and thereafter three issues a year—spring, fall, and winter. Our magazine-style publication—think *New Yorker* but yet to be named—will host writing from members through a blind selection process, and include fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Unique graphics and photography may also sneak in on a limited basis. Your co-editors, Joyce Krieg of Central Coast Branch and former *CWC Bulletin* editor, and Dave LaRoche of South Bay, solicit your work for inclusion—published or fresh from your vivid imaginations, and of course sent with this single-use rights.

The *CWC Lit-Review* (working title) will be mailed out to all members in hard copy and, in time, made available for non-member subscription. We intend a prestigious publication, both shining light on the included authors and bringing cachet to the club. You will want to be included.

Submission requirements and deadline dates will be repeated in each issue and apply to the next. For our first issue the following applies:

- ✦ Submissions in email attachment, MSWord, doc or rtf format, space and one-half with one inch margins, New Times Roman 12pt—no tabs or special formatting.
- ✦ Maximum length is 2500 words; fiction, 1500; nonfiction, and 700; poetry. These may be adjusted in future issues
- ✦ All work must be error free and “camera ready” and must include a separate cover sheet with author’s name, email address, number of words, and title. The remaining pages to be free of all ID except title: upper right, and page number: lower center.
- ✦ Submissions for the first issue must be emailed not later than April 15

Include in your transmittal email the statement, “I own and convey the right to publish this work (name it) one time in the CWC Lit-Review.”

Our first issue, will include the rules for a Name-the-Lit-Review Contest—and identify a prize for the member whose name is chosen.

We are excited about this venture, another value in club membership, and have aspirations that will see the review on shelves in bookstores and in e-distribution. Of course you are a big part of it, so join in and have fun. Send your work, limit 2 on a given submission, to Dave LaRoche dalaroche@comcast.net by April 15, then sit back and watch our *CWC Lit-Review* grow.

Joyce and Dave, co-editors

paraprosdokian

*A paraprosdokian is a figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or **unexpected** in a way that causes the reader or listener to reframe or reinterpret the first part. It is frequently used for humorous or dramatic effect, sometimes producing an anticlimax. For this reason, it is extremely popular among comedians and satirists.*

Ø If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong. (I have to remember this one)

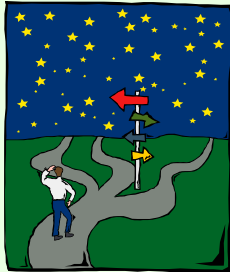


Ø War does not determine who is right - only who is left standing.

Ø Evening news is where they begin with 'Good evening', and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.

Ø To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; To steal from many is research.

Ø Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars, but check if you say paint is wet?



Ø A clear conscience is often the sign of a bad memory.

Ø I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not sure.

Ø You're never too old to learn something stupid.

Ø Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.



Ø Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

Anonymous authors; this page found on the Net by Ken Wilkins

Further examples:

"What do you get when you grow an insomniac, an agnostic, and a dyslexic? Someone who stays up all night wondering if there is a Dog."



Groucho Marx



"You know, once a girl proposed to me in a garage and I couldn't back out!"

Ed Wynn

"A bank is a place that will lend you money, if you can prove that you don't need it!"



Bob Hope



"Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons."

Woody Allen

"I want my children to have all the things I couldn't afford. Then I want to move in with them!"

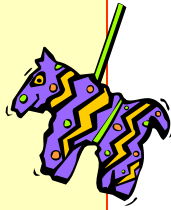


Phyllis Diller

All sketches by Max Schwartz

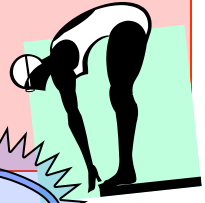
Got an invitation to a party.
Which actually was to surprise
me.
Naive, unsuspecting, and unin-
formed
That minute of surprise
Caught me truly off guard!

Marganit Lish



Watching me swim laps while practic-
ing for the Senior Olympics, a reporter,
surprised that I'd be 90
in July, decided to write
about my efforts.

Gloria Kositchek



TWENTY-FIVE WORD STORY

SURPRISE!



Dyed my hair
blond, or so I
thought... a dip
in a pool

and green's what I got!
Now I'm white, a
much better sight.

Lillian Rodich

*Advice on demeanor for
a senior: Aging is not
for the humorless, all
those praying to remain
tumorless and surprise
this world rapidly be-
coming
Boomerless!*

As agreed, he
comes, rings
the bell.

Surprised, he
sees a tooth-
less old

woman. Had
he been that
drunk?

Wrong place,
wrong
everything!

Keyle Birnberg
-Goldstein

Disasters in Japan,
earthquakes and
tsunami,

My dear Louis'
daughter
teaches English
there.

Calls to no avail,
then to learn
she's here visiting
in California.

Helen Katzman



A WRITER'S LIFE

Keeping track of ongoing writing projects
makes me feel like a juggler
keeping multiple balls aloft
at the same time.

When I catch one ball and
mail off its corresponding manuscript,
often I might as well have dropped it
into the Grand Canyon,
or perhaps the Columbia River,
to be swept out to sea.

So I catch another ball and
hope that the project it represents
will find a home where it is welcomed.

Erica Stux



Confessions of a Chocoholic

There is nothing so satisfying, so comforting, so sensual as the warm velvet of buttery chocolate melting on the tongue. To some of us, chocolate is a drug. It creates cravings stronger than a wino's need for a bottle of booze. This craving can turn a normal woman into a junkie willing to do what is necessary to feed her habit, like raiding her children's trick-or-treat bags while they sleep.

I reached an embarrassing breach of motherhood one Easter when my young son received a ten-ounce solid chocolate rabbit from his grandparents. My trusting offspring left the rabbit in full view and went off to school. What I did to that bunny was brutal. By the time Son returned home, I had devoured all but the tail.

When Son saw his mutilated bunny and demanded to know what happened, my lame response was, "The dog did it."

"Right, Mom. The dog's been dead for two years."

I apologized, bought him a replacement and warned him to hide it. Silly me. He hid it so well, I almost climbed out of my skin. By the time my family arrived from school and work, the house and I were in such disarray,

I looked like a crazy woman to them. I knew then I had to have help. Unable to find a Chocoholic Anonymous group, I developed my own ten-step plan:



1. Recognize the symptoms: lying about how much chocolate you consume; salivating when you pass the candy counter at the store; keeping your chocolate supply well stocked.



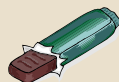
2. Acknowledge that your cravings are out of control. Stand in front of your mirror and say, "Hi, I'm Jane and I'm a chocoholic." Remove all your clothing and see the full effects of your chocolate saturated diet.



3. Don't stop cold turkey and throw out your entire hoard. Save one four-ounce candy bar and make it last all day. Do this for one week.



4. Weeks 2 and 3: buy one four-ounce candy bar and make it last all week. (These weeks are the hardest).



5. Consume only four ounces of chocolate per month. If you fall off the wagon or start hallucinating, go back to steps 3 and



6. Choose a replacement activity. Tennis, gardening, sewing, and sex come to mind.



7. Use imagery. Eat prunes and imagine they are chocolates.



8. Re-enforce good behavior by rewarding yourself. Go to a movie, but by-pass the snack counter.



9. Stay away from friends who won't cooperate. If they order sundaes draped in hot fudge and whipped cream while you eat naked vanilla ice cream, drop them.



10. Develop an affinity for foods beginning with "a" as in apples, almonds and apricots.

This detoxification took me almost four months. But it was worth the days of anguish and self-denial to know I could conquer this weakness and no longer live in shame.

But wait! Maybe chocolate is not all that bad! Recent studies imply that chocolate contains antioxidants which may prevent cancer and arterioscleroses. And Harvard University researchers found that folks who ate chocolate a few times a week were no more apt to suffer from heart disease than those who abstained. Now that news is the revelation of the century! Think I'll celebrate with a giant Almond Joy!

- Yolanda Fintor





Suffering from a severe case of writer's block, I decided to get away from my computer, sit in the solarium (which I lovingly call

my soul-airing room) and see if any inspirations might come my way because nothin' was happening at the keyboard. I curled up in my big round 'Papa-San' chair where I knew, even if nothing else happened, I could have a wonderful nap.

As I was getting all comfy and cozy, I heard a frantic peeping sound. *How annoying is this!* I thought. Not to mention totally disturbing for any creative muse I hoped to invite in.

I looked out to see a small young bird, black chest and head with a white lower tummy, doing loop-de-loops and quick 'out and backs' from the gate of my wrought-iron fence to a nearby tangerine tree. You could hear in its screaming peeps, "Mom! This is scary! I don't want to do this! Don't make me, Mom! Let me back in the nest!"

This went on for several long minutes.

Next, the little bundle of feathers made it to the roof of the garage, then up to the top of an old TV antenna. After a little courage-building time he did a *two feet out - two feet back* routine, landing with obvious relief on the antenna. (Don't ask me to describe how I knew it was relief. I just knew it.) This went on for several more minutes until the tired frightened little bird just dropped to the

roof and started walking around.

The next sound was a scolding so lengthy and intense I expected to see the mother charging toward him with a huge paddle, but Mom never showed herself. She just harangued mercilessly at this poor little bird from the foliage of the tangerine tree.

This went on for a good two or three full minutes. Brrrrrrrak rak rak rak rak. BRRRRRAK, rak, ree, rak, REEEE, rak, rak, and on and on and on until I felt guilty and wanted to tell her, "Gosh, Mom, this is his first time out. He's just a little kid. He did pretty well for a first time. He'll do it. He just needs a little more practice."

This mother was a dyed-in-the-wool *spare the rod, spoil the child* advocate. She was on a million mile vocal march to get this kid winging it. There would be no compromises, no prisoners taken. Just do it, kid!

After several long torturous minutes of this haranguing, the little guy made it back up to the TV antenna, began his pitiful peeping and did another *two feet out - two feet back, two feet out - two feet back* routine. I couldn't watch anymore. It was just too painful.

I thought it prophetic that his launching pad was a TV antenna. Absolute proof that there is entirely too much violence on TV these days.

-Rita Keeley Brown



Saying Goodbye To a Career



A sea of faces turns toward me and I am at a loss for words. I am ill prepared for this farewell and my heart hammers in my chest like an alien spirit. The truth is that I'm not ready to leave. Everything is happening too fast and I haven't had time to adjust to each new phase.

It all started just two weeks ago. Mr. D, the principal at the elementary school where I am a teacher, called me into his office before the school day was about to begin. And, in his benign way, laid his powerful cards on the table. "Look Lil," he said, "I've got a proposition you just can't refuse."

I did look ... carefully ... at his weathered and smiling face. Using my first name and coming out with "off the record" statements was not the style of this administrator. And his relaxed manner seemed suspicious.

I was anxious to get to my classroom. The morning bell would be ringing in ten minutes and I needed to get materials out for my second grade class. Still curiosity overcame my anxiety.

"The Board of Education has arranged a 'golden handshake' for teachers over sixty ... a half-year's salary for one thing. But the paper work has to be finished, notarized and received by midnight, the end of this week. I'd strongly advise your doing it. You really deserve this!"

I was in shock. I couldn't even say NO. The bell rang. I mumbled a "thank you" and started for the door.

Mr. D. called after me. "Don't forget these papers. I took the liberty of getting them for you."

The papers were like fire in my hands and I could barely tolerate holding them. I wanted no part of retirement. Of this I was certain!

As the morning progressed my problem class acted like a band of angels. A brisk breeze had cleared the skies and the world seemed to sparkle everywhere I looked. Leave my job! This was the farthest thing from my mind. My twenty-six years of teaching seemed like the briefest of times, not the end of an era.

Mr. D had gone to some trouble to arrange all of this for me and I was aware that his reasoning was out of friendship. Turning him down would have been insulting. However I figured out a graceful way to get out of the whole thing. I would simply file the papers just after midnight on the cut-off date. That way I could show good faith and still miss the consequences.

The papers were complicated, in triplicate and ambiguous. Still I filled them out dutifully and hurriedly ... with no apprehension. After all I was just going through the motions. I dropped them into a local mailbox after the last pick up time and breathed a sigh of relief.

Three days later I received a congratulatory telegram. I would be officially retired as of November 23, 1992! An outdoor assembly was arranged in my honor. The door to my career had closed.

I look out at a sea of faces: children blinking in the sunlight, fellow teachers and old friends waving. My vision is blurred and my heart speaks only in whispers. I look out at my children, my life for the past twenty-six years, and uncontrollable tears stream down my face.

- Lillian Rodich
Thanksgiving
1992



FORTUNE COOKIE

"There are many unexpected and thrilling surprises in store for you."

Oh yes, little fortune cookie!
Does *thrilling* mean positive, wonderful, dangerous, emotional ?
Does *surprise* mean wished for, uncalled for, impossible, unusual ?
What are you implying? Or are you predicting?

So let's see, what would it be?
A *thrilling* and unexpected *surprise* just for me?

A lottery won would be lots of fun. That cash would remedy lots of woes. (And I wouldn't seek just wealthy beaus.)

Everyone in my family would have a house and a car, Now am I really going too far?

Perhaps I'll look in my mirror one day And suddenly discover I'm no longer gray.

Maybe I'll write a poem and publish in the New Yorker.

Now that surprise would be a real corker! Perhaps I'd win a house on T.V. with nary a stair. Certainly at my age wouldn't that only be fair?

Surprises and miracles ? Well nobody knows... So I'll eat fortune cookies and stay on my toes!

- Lillian Rodich

The Encounter

He came to me silently in the early morning mist.
Water droplets caressed each fragrant rose petal.
Leaves glistened then suddenly a rustling sound.
Iridescent green and ruby color flickered close to me.
Fluttering wings maneuvered to bathe in the cool pool.
Rainbows collected in the spray from the garden hose.
He whirred past me and sat perched on a tiny branch.
Washing pollen from his tiny pointed beak was a task.

Suddenly he dove into the cascade of moisture.

I stood still, mesmerized.

We were touched that day, forever changed.

This morning I just finished watering the lawn,
a whirring noise caught my attention.

You have been in my presence before, I mused.

"You look like you need a bath," I said out loud.

A Bird of Paradise leaf became your outdoor tub.

"Were you watching me, waiting for me to notice you?"

I turned the nozzle to a fine mist.

"How does that feel?"

I don't want the cool water to hurt your body."

Glancing at my watch in disbelief the bath lasted a long two minutes.

You opened every feather to the rainbow filled droplets.

"Now lift your wings," I coaxed.

It was a miracle,

You did as I asked. I thought you were about to fly away
but you surprised me.

Hovering in mid-air you turned clockwise
so I could wash your back.

"Thank You!"

Water trickled down my cheeks.

We trusted each other.

I knew we had met before.



-Kathy McCarthy

CWC/SFV 2003 anthology *Voices From The Valley*

guest writer



Barry Basden

Sundays brought harsh religion in an unadorned church. The boy, who had just turned twelve, was now at the age of consent. He sat with his parents in a hard wooden pew midway back on the left side of the little hall. After a few a cappella hymns, the black-suited preacher worked himself up and spewed God's wrath over the his flock.

"Frills are for Catholics," Brother Jones railed, his face reddening. "They wear fancy robes and bow down to false idols. Blasphemy. Abominations in the eyes of the Lord. And the Jews are worse. They crucified Christ."

The boy wouldn't have blinked if the cross on the front of the pulpit had burst into flames.

Finally, the preacher stopped his agitated pacing and swept an arm expansively across his chest, taking in the whole congregation. "Get right with Jesus or face eternal Hellfire and damnation."

Then came the call to salvation and, while the congregation sang a hymn about spotless garments and being "washed in the soul-cleansing blood of the lamb," the boy's father poked him with an elbow and nodded toward the preacher waiting at the front of the room.

The boy moved out of the pew and down the center aisle, his head lowered. His heart thumped and a sourness rose in his throat as he stood before the congregation and confessed aloud that he was a sinner and that he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

There was more singing and someone led him through a door into a tiny, dimly lit room where he changed into the white smock he found hanging on a peg. He walked down two steps into a galvanized baptismal tank reeking of chlorine. The preacher, wearing hip waders, took his hand to steady him. A curtain across the front of the tank opened, but the boy could not look out at the silent crowd.

The preacher turned to the congregation and raised his hand. "I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." He laid the boy back until water closed over his face, then lifted him upright again.

Dripping wet, the boy pulled free and stepped out of the tank, certain that God had nothing at all to do with any of it.

At the Home 70 Years Later

The bomber pilot remembered coming back to London's East End, his house gone up in smoke and ash. Sirens, the crunch of broken glass, fire hoses, men in tin hats. Straw men sitting cross-legged in saffron robes, chanting, the smell of gasoline in the air. The little girl running toward him, arms outstretched, howling, skin peeling from her body. And his grandsons, something about the Khyber Pass.

Barry Basden lives in the Texas hill country with his wife and two yellow Labs. He writes mostly short pieces. Some have been published in various online and print venues. He edits Camroc Press Review at www.camrocpressreview.com

He's also the co-author of Crack! and Thump, the story of Captain Charles Scheffel, who was featured in the History Channel's 10-part color series, WWII in HD.



"Hold it steady, Ramirez."

"Roger. Here's comes one. I'm ready."

The radar gun flashed 86 MPH when the car—a Jeep Cherokee—raced by.

"Let's go," ordered Officer Owens.

Their cruiser easily caught up with the car. Owens spoke into the mike: "PULL OVER AT THE NEXT EXIT!"

"Might be a few illegals packed in there," suggested Officer Ramirez. "Remember the car we stopped last week with three guys crammed together in the trunk?"

"Yep. Glad we got 'em. Hate to think of the ones who get through illegally."

The Jeep pulled over to the shoulder. The police parked behind it.

"Only see one head...so far," said Ramirez.

"Right. One male driver, and no one in the passenger seat."

Owens cautiously approached the driver's side. Ramirez took a position on the other side of the car. The driver lowered his window.

"OFFICERS!" he shouted. "Emergency! I need your help!"

"Calm down, sir. Please exit the car. That's right. Now show me your driver's license." The driver complied, hands shaking as he handed over his ID. Owens read the name and checked to see if the photo matched the driver.

"You're Jose Amaya?" The man nodded, and turned his head to stare into the dark interior of the car.

Owens thought, Uh-oh. Someone's back there.

"Look in the back seat, Ramirez. "

His partner cautiously opened the back door, his hand on his weapon. He peered in.

"One woman." he reported.

"Who's that woman, Mr. Amaya?" asked Owens.

"My wife, Julia! Havin' a baby! Help us get to the hospital!"

"Having a baby? Think I'll take a look. "

Owens leaned in and saw a woman laying prone on the back seat, legs akimbo.

"A-A-A-AH!" she cried.

"W-A-A-AIT!" implored Owens, to no avail. He caught a baby's head and then eased the rest of the child into the Arizona evening. Oh my God. Never thought I'd do this for real, he thought.

"W-A-A-AH! bawled the baby. Amaya peered over Owens' shoulder.

"IT'S A BOY!" yelled the father. Ramirez ran back to the patrol car and radioed for an ambulance.

"Sure is a boy," Owens replied. He picked up a towel on the back seat and tried to wipe down and swaddle the newborn.

"Here y'are, ma'am." Owens handed the noisy bundle over to his mother.

"You saved my family!" Amaya gazed down happily at his wife and son. "Que, Julia? Si. Officer, my wife wants to name him for you. Please...your first name?"

"Uh, Howard. Howie."

Amaya repeated "Howard" to his wife, who shook her head.

"Ah...she doesn't like Howard so much. How 'bout your middle name, sir? "

A siren was audible a short ways down the road. Ramirez stood in the road and waved to them.

"My middle name? Robert. Roberto. Is that better?"

Amaya relayed the info and looked up, wearing a big grin. "Oh yes, Roberto is perfecto. Roberto Amaya, a new citizen of the USA. Gracias, Officer Owens. We'll never forget you."

"Same here," said Owens.

- Kathy Highcove

MEETINGS

The California Writers Club meets the first Saturday of the month except July and August at the Motion Picture and Television Fund complex:

Villa Katzenberg

23388 Mulholland

Woodland Hills, CA 91364-2733

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, April 2nd , 2011 at 1:30 p.m.

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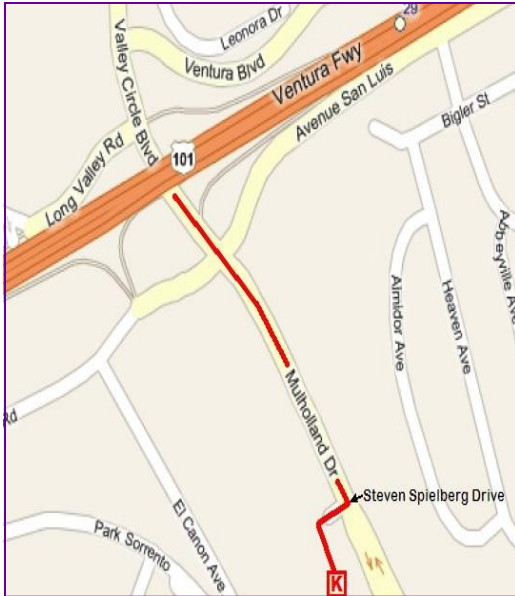
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