



The Newsletter Of The San Fernando Valley Branch

The Valley Scribe

Vol. 3

May, 2011

No. 9

Next Meeting May 21, 12:30!

May Featured Speaker:

Linda Ballou — “Make Travel Writing Work for You”
(by the Speaker)



A love triangle of extremes has proven to be a solid base for my writing. From my roots in Alaska I receive strength, solitude, centeredness and respect for the awful power of nature. Many of my adventure articles take place in my homeland.

While living in Hawaii I found nurturing, a spiritual awakening, sensuality, peace and my heroine for my historical fiction, *Wainani—High Chieftess of Hawaii*.

In proud California I obtained a degree in English Literature from Cal State Northridge and a doctorate in urban savvy.

I continue to enjoy opportunities here in Los Angeles for intellectual stimulation, exciting

contacts and friends.

Each week I share a Great Outdoor Day in L.A. in my column on www.Examiner.com. In my travel collection *Lost Angel Walkabout-One Traveler's Tales* I share my most memorable and meaningful outdoor adventures.

You may go to my website www.lindaballouauthor.com to view a host of articles and photo essays. There is a free download “How to Make Travel Writing Work for You” waiting for you.

Check out my Great Outdoor Days in L.A. on the Examiner website:

<http://www.examiner.com/outdoor-travel-in-los-angeles/linda-ballou>

OPEN MIC! 12:30 SHARP!

The first six members to sign up will be given five minutes of FAME.

Please bring 2 copies of your material so the hearing-challenged may also enjoy your reading.
(Priority will be given to those who did NOT read in March.)

In This Issue

Feature

Page



(Click on title to jump to item)

April Meeting-in-Review:

Mastery! by The Scribe Staff

At our April meeting, we were fortunate to have two masters of their respective fields: Writing Success Coach, Deborah Riley-Magnus; and member/poet,



'Our' Lenora Smalley

Lenora Smalley.

Smalley opened the meeting. Our Lenora is an accomplished writer, and a charming speaker. Her modest demeanor belies years of experience and a wealth of knowledge. She began with a survey of different types and forms of poetry — a surprising variety. Next, she asked a member to read several poems

from her book, *Smalley's Sampler*. (She gave away copies of the book to attendees.)

All this was leavened with modesty and good humor.

Deborah Riley-Magnus, an Author Success Coach, followed — as she expounded on the “do’s” and “don’ts” for the new publishing world. (And by the way, for those writers who would prefer to stick with “traditional” publishing, Deborah made it clear that the old world as we knew it is gone — as a writer one must adjust to the new paradigm or “perish”).



Deborah Riley-Magnus

She presented a list of ten tools for publishing success — far too much to summarize here.

Some sample goodies:

- If you have a book in print, you *must* also have an e-book.
- If you have an e-book, be sure you know how to market it. For example, think about letting one of your *characters* “blog” in order to build a following.
- Your author platform should be a website. It should contain other links and your blog. Get *serious* about your site.
- On Twitter, make sure you are following people who will *buy your book*. Look for groups that relate to the *content*, whether it’s fiction or nonfiction.

- Keep your Facebook page focused on your *book*. Don’t mix in family pictures, vacation news, etc. Personal content can be housed on another site or on another account if necessary.
- Whether you blog once a week or once a month, keep the content specific to your book. Let potential readers know what you’re doing *as a writer*.
- Update your blog on a regular schedule. Never let it stagnate.
- A book video should be no longer than 30 seconds. They are great marketing tools — a website with a video gets 98% more hits.
- Take a look at independent publishers who will work with you.

Magnus showed great command of both her subject and her presentation. Occasionally mentioning that she had far more material than time, she still managed to encapsulate her information in a well-balanced hour. Also notable was her ability to control her audience and side-step distractions. She has obviously had a lot of experience in public speaking. (Attention Program Chairs: You need to invite her!)

Deborah has two novels and a nonfiction book, *The Author Success Coach Book*, coming out in 2011.

For more about Deborah Riley-Magnus, go to <http://www.deborahriley-magnus.com>.

For more information about Lenora Smalley, go to <http://www.lenorasmalley.com>. □

Website Enhancement: Bio Pages

As part of our Branch Unification, we will be doing a lot of changes and enhancements to our website.

One of these will be the institution of personal Bio Pages.

Please email a head-shot and a short biographical sketch
(300 words MAXIMUM)

to

cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com

(You may include your website URL if you have one.)

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!)

Boulevard Emerging Poets Contest is an annual contest. It offers \$1,000 and publication in *Boulevard* for the best group of 3 poems from a writer who has not yet published a book of poetry with a nationally distributed press. Submissions must be unpublished. They do consider simultaneous submissions. Submit 3 poems, typed, may be sequenced or unrelated. Guidelines are online. Entry fee: \$15/group of 3 poems. \$15 for each additional group of 3 poems, includes one-year subscription to *Boulevard*. Make checks payable to *Boulevard*. Deadline: June 1 (postmark). Contact: Kelly Leavitt, managing editor. Address: PMB 325, 6614 Clayton Rd., Richmond Heights, MO 63117. E-mail: kellyleavitt@boulevardmagazine.org. Website: www.boulevardmagazine.org.

Linda Joy Myers Memoir Prize is open to any writer. First place: \$100, second place: \$50, third place: \$25. Entry fee: \$5/entry (make checks payable to NLAPW, Nob Hill Branch). One memoir/entry, up to 1,500 words, double spaced. Previously published material is acceptable. Indicate the category on the first page. Identify only with a 3x5 card. Deadline: November 30. Contact: Eileen Malone. Address: National League of American Pen Women, Nob Hill - San Francisco Branch, Webhallow House, 1544 Sweetwood Dr., Broadmoor Village, CA 94015-2029. E-mail: pennobhill@aol.com. Website: www.soulmakingcontest.us.

Writers' Journal Annual Romance Contest is offered annually for previously unpublished

Something To Ponder

Arriving at one goal is the starting point of another.

— John Dewey

PRESIDENT'S

Stephanie Sharf

CORNER

It's Spring, and appropriately enough, we as a branch of the California Writers Club now face a potential "new beginning" as we decide whether to merge with another branch of the same club, to form an entity hopefully greater than each.

On May 21, 2011 (provided the world doesn't end — some seers have predicted just that for this date), our branch members who attend the monthly meeting will vote on whether to merge with our friends at the West Valley Branch under the name "San Fernando Valley Branch," thus retaining the present name of our branch but committing to meet at a different location — the Motion Picture and Television Home — and at a different date and time, the first Saturday of each month at 1:30 pm. The details of the proposed merger are listed on page 4 in this issue of the *Scribe*. Please read them carefully and then come to the next meeting and vote. Our SFV Board supports the merger 100% and is looking forward to this transition as being a good move for our club — but of course, it's up to *you* to decide the outcome of the proposal.

Our last meeting featured a wonderful speaker, author coach Deborah Riley-Magnus, who has offered to keep in touch with those of our members who write to her and to answer their publishing questions as needed. I strongly urge you to take advantage of Deborah's offer — indeed, I believe that all of our past speakers would be happy to hear from you and answer any questions you may have about the publishing scene. Hey! You came to a meeting, you made a "contact" there — now **work it!** It's called networking!

As usual thanks are due to those who made the April meeting a success: Liz for the goodies which included healthy fresh fruit; Mark Paul for the pics and for help with set-up. And Gagik, we loved the Arabica coffee you brought!

Finally, I want to thank Lenora for her outstanding member showcase in honor of National Poetry Month. Thanks to Lenora, I've finally learned that it's still okay to rhyme — and it's about thyme! She didn't divulge the secrets of the sestina however — some things are best left to those inventive and clever enough to pursue them. I'm still working on haiku (See my attempt at Jewish haiku in the poetry section of this issue). □

Editorial

Valley United!

by Ray Malus

On Saturday, April ninth, delegations from the West Valley and San Fernando Valley Branches met to discuss the merger of the two Branches. Representing West Valley were President, Dave Wetterberg; Yolanda Fintor; and Kathy Highcove. Representing San Fernando Valley were President, Stephanie Sharf; Treasurer, Judy Presnall; and Ray Malus.

The San Fernando Valley Branch was formed in 1986. In 2006, a separate branch, West Valley, was formed. The sister Branches have co-existed peacefully (albeit, with a touch of friendly sibling rivalry) ever since.

Recent changes in the economy and culture have led to a decline in participation in both Branches. There was a perception by the Boards of both Branches that separation was no longer practical: There are two separate meetings per month (within 7 miles of one another). All positions and tasks (and most expenses) are duplicated. Many members have dual membership, and divide their time and talents between the two Branches. The two Branches are competing for Speakers — and attendance for those presentations is diminished. Members willing and able to serve are becoming harder to find.

Moreover, separate Branches are not in the collegial spirit which is the hallmark of California Writers Club and its founders.

The fact is two separate Branches are no longer needed or desirable. The time has come to join forces.

The talks were cordial and productive. They focused on reconciliation and elimination of duplicated functions, and on the details of unification. In addition, a slate of the Officers for the unified Branch was chosen.

The resulting proposal has been forwarded to the Membership for ratification (by simple majority vote) at our May meeting.

Proposed:

- The West Valley Branch will become inactive
- All members will now become members of the San Fernando Valley Branch
- Treasuries will be pooled
- The official publication of the Branch will be The Valley Scribe
- The Editor of The Valley Scribe will be Kathy Highcove
- The website will be cwc-sfv.org
- The Webmaster will be Ray Malus
- Meetings will take place on the first Saturday of the month, at the Motion Picture & Television Fund, at 1:30 pm.
- The proposed slate of Officers is:
 - President: Yolanda Fintor
 - Vice President: Elizabeth Cooke
 - Secretary: Ann Olivier
 - Treasurer: Pirhiya Goldstein

Stephanie Sharf will be appointed our State Board Rep.

The members of the respective Branches will be asked to approve this agreement at their May meetings. If it is ratified, unified meetings will begin in September of 2011.

The respective Boards of both Branches unanimously endorse this agreement and call for your support. □

TO MARKET (cont'd from page 3)

works. Cover letter should include name, address, phone, e-mail, word count and title, just title on ms. Winners notified by mail and on website. Enclose SASE for winner's list. Entry fee: \$15. Prize: 1st place: \$1,000; 2nd place: \$500, 3rd place: \$250; plus 7 honorable mentions. Word length: 5,000 max. Deadline: October 1. Address: Val-Tech Media, P. O. Box 394, Perham, MN 56573. Phone: (218) 346-7921, Fax: (218) 346-7924. E-mail: writersjournal@writersjournal.com. Website: www.writersjournal.com.

Santa Monica Review needs experimental, literary, memoirs. No crime and detective, misogyny, footnotes, TV, dog stories. They want more self-conscious, smart, political, humorous, digressive, meta-fiction. Accepts 10 mss/issue, 20 mss/year. Send complete ms. Send disposable copy of ms. Responds in 3 months to mss. Accepts simultaneous, multiple submissions. Sample copy for \$7. Pays 5 contributor's copies. Acquires first North American serial rights. Sends galleys to author. Address: 1900 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405. Website: www.smc.edu/sm_review.

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and children's books (limited fiction), provides a one-stop resource for authors. Agents receive 15% commission on domestic sales, 20% on foreign sales. Currently handles: nonfiction books 70%, novels 10%, and juvenile books 20%. They have 55 clients. Accepts e-queries. See website for all guidelines. Contact: Lilly Ghahremani, Stefanie Von Borstel. Address: 7676 Hazard Center Dr., Suite 500, San Diego, CA 92108. E-mail: submissions@fullcircleliterary.com. Website: www.fullcircleliterary.com.

Andrea Hurst Literary Management is actively seeking well written nonfiction with a strong platform, superbly crafted fiction with depth that touches the mind and heart and all of their listed subjects. They do not want to receive sci-fi, horror, Western, poetry or screenplays. Currently handles: nonfiction books 50%, novels 50%. Number of clients: 100+. Agent receives 15% commission on domestic sales 20% on foreign sales. Contact: Andrea Hurst, Judy Mikalonis, Gordon Warnock, Vickie Motter. E-mail: andrea@andreahurst.com. Website: www.andreahurst.com. □

DON'T MISS OUR MAY MEETING!

Be sure to attend our May meeting
when we will be voting on unification with the
West Valley Branch

The meeting will start promptly at 12:30

YOUR VOTE COUNTS!

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.**

Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

Give a man a fish and he'll keep coming back asking for more fish until you're so bugged that you want to kill him and you can't figure out why-in-the-hell you ever rented that spare bedroom to your son in the first place.

— Ancient Chinese proverb I just made up.

Writers — by Ray

Playing With The Net Up.

"I would as soon write free verse as play tennis with the net down." ~Robert Frost, 1935

Last month, we explored the evolution of a piece of 'poetic' prose into an actual poem. At one point, we discovered that we were close to a poetic *form* (a haiku), and decided to take that approach. I mentioned this will not always be an available, or attractive, choice.

Personally, although I like 'form,' I only partially share Mr. Frost's position. The modern world is not on his side. There are many poetry competitions that specify, "No rhyming poetry." There are even more that seem to have tacit prejudices against it. It's a fact of life.

Although there are innumerable kinds of *formal* poetry, the most common characteristics of poetic *form* are *cadence* and *rhyme*. (By *cadence* I will mean the regular repeating of a rhythmic pattern.) These two tools are historically intertwined with the very definition of *poetry*. The reason is simple. The human mind easily extracts order from chaos, impressing patterns on information.

Poetry goes back to an oral tradition — the passing on of lore — that was common before the general populace could read and write. The fact is, it is far easier to remember things with a regular pattern. (Ask any singer or actor!) Even in general life this is true: "Thirty days has September..." These little 'hints' are called *mnemonics*, and they are very useful. So, the ancient *bards* and *troubadours* wrote in regular cadence and rhyme so they could remember their stories.

So why have these two tools fallen so badly out of favor?

One answer is simply *modernism*, the urge to not be 'old fashioned' — to find *new* ways of doing things.

But the fact is, these tools are easily abused.

Poetry is, above all, an aesthetic endeavor. A poem should provoke an emotional reaction. It should 'touch' us, 'move' us. In any art, devices which call attention to *technique* thwart that aim. They provoke the intellect, rather than the heart.

In *formal* poetry the danger constantly exists that the form will become more visible than the message. The very characteristic that formed poetic convention, ensures this: the tendency of the brain to see patterns.

A writer I respect once told me that *regularity* in poetry 'tires the ear.' I don't think this is really the problem. The real problems are *artifice* and *predictability*.

'Artifice' is when the need to fit into a form perverts the graceful, natural flow of the language. A line like: "Oh what a joyous day will be, when your beloved face I see," just *screams*, "LOOK AT ME! I'M A POEM!" Of course it does. Nobody *talks* like that! (At least, not recently.) The adding of extra words or syllables — or the perverting of sentence structure — just to even out meter or to place an easy rhyme at the end of the line is a dead give-away. It takes the reader out of the poem and into the task of writing. It shifts the focus from the message to the messenger.

Predictability is harder to deal with.

"Roses are red; violets are blue. Sugar is sweet, and so are you." Well, you didn't have to be Shelly to see that coming, did you? There's no surprise. No delight.

"Roses are red; violets are blue. Sugar is sweet, and so are your feet."

OK. It's not 'Ozymandias' — but I'll bet you smiled.

When regularity leads the reader to keep trying to guess the end of a line it draws attention away from *experiencing* the poem. Worse yet, when the reader is right, it destroys the poet's authority. "Hell, I can write better than that!"

However, when used skillfully, regularity can delight. The reader's assumptions are shattered. His expectations are exceeded.

Look at Frost's Poem, 'The Road Not Taken':

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.*

It's that marvelous, unanticipated fourth line! The heart leaps!

Instead of being a slave to predictability, Frost has used it to sneak under the reader's defenses. To delight! And isn't art supposed to do that?

So. The questions remain: "Should I write *formal* poetry? Free verse? Prose poetry? Greeting Cards? Should I just stick to prose? What-the hell IS a poem, anyhow?!"

A lot of the answers simply have to do with personal taste. Next month, I'll conclude this three-part discussion of poetry with my thoughts on this. It will be a nice way to close out the year. □

judithjandapresnall.com

If you go to the URL: www.judithjandapresnall.com, you will find yourself at the website of member Judy Presnall.

This is what I like to think of as a 'Shaker' site. There are no distractions, no frills, no multi-media, no animations — just a clean, well done, functional set of pages.

There's little here to entertain the 'techie.' What *is* here is an extensive catalog of the works of a prolific and successful writer — one with twenty-three published books to her credit!

One benefit of this is that the site is easily accessible to even the slowest internet connections.

The page illustrated (above) is the Home page. Page navigation is through a menu bar at the top, which is repeated (in whole or part) on each page.

The options available are:

- **Home**
- **About Judy** — a short auto-biographical sketch by the author, along with some pictures.
- **Research Adventures** — pictures and captions by the author from research trips for her books
- **Judy's Books** — a catalog of published works by Presnall
- **School Visits** — a short promo for Presnall's school presentations
- **Bookmarks** — (there are two of these) a page that can be printed and cut up into bookmarks

MEMBER WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

BY RAY MALUS



Most of the pages are sparse. (We assume the site will grow over time.)

The 'gold' is on the "Judy's Books" page. Here, you will find the cover images of the full catalog of Presnall's twenty-three published books. Clicking on an image takes you to a page with an enlargement of the cover and details on the book. The details are very complete —

including a short synopsis, publisher, page count, and ISBN number. (The inclusion of a link which goes directly to the Amazon order page for the specific book is a very smart idea.)

As mentioned above, we assume the site will grow. True Presnall devotees will find the site a bit frustrating, as the 'bio' page is very short. (As such, we'd like more — but this is quibbling.)

Other small evolutions we'd like to see are "Back to Judy's Books" link on the individual book pages (for those who have yet to discover the "back-arrow" in their browser), and standardized menu options (some change or disappear as you navigate different pages).

In summary, this is an excellent site for its purpose: to promote the work of Judy Presnall. Check it out at <http://www.judithjandapresnall.com>, or click on the title of this article or on the illustration. □

STUX'S *HEIDI* in NORTH HOLLYWOOD!

A stage show to take your children,
your grandchildren, your neighbor's children to see!
It's the musical *HEIDI* — based on the children's classic — written by Erica Stux.

It is playing at the North Hollywood London Music Hall
10620 Magnolia Blvd.

Saturdays at 7 pm, Sundays at 2 pm, April 30th through May 22nd
except for the Easter weekend.

Tickets are \$10 and \$12.

Call (818) 762-7883 for reservations.

It Could Be Verse

Pitter Patterns

Lenora Smalley

I love the pitter of rain
in puddles
where little translucent men
jump up and down in glee
and with all their tiny kin dance
down the concrete sidewalks
into windy, rain-slick streets,
celebrating in big block parties
the imminent coming of spring.

At Peace in the Gardens

Lillian Rodich

no one disturbs
my thoughts here
alone I can close my eyes and visualize
each rock and leaf
reflected in a pool of silence

no tears blur
a simple landscape
or thundering heartbeat
intrude upon the calm
of sculpted greenery
silhouetted against
a cloud-free sky

singing birds are hidden
I hear them briefly
and they blend
into the rustle of leaves
moving amidst delicate flowers
and spikes of green
at the pool's edge

I sit quietly on a stone bench
near the water
feeling
foreign to the landscape
and part of it

Jewish Hostess haiku

Stephanie Sharf

Come over at four
Don't bring anything but you
And maybe a cake.

The Need For Love

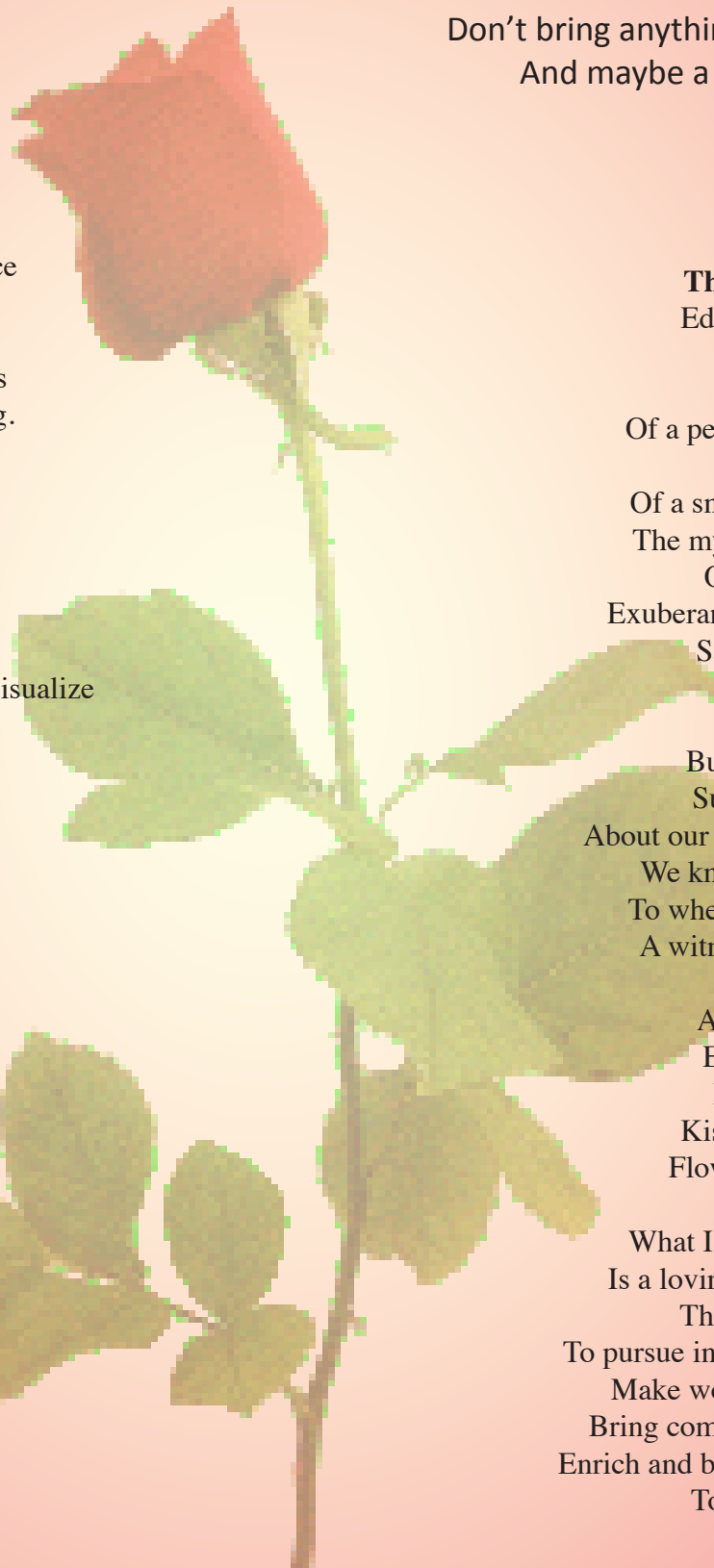
Edward Louis Braun

The exhilaration
Of a perfect summer day,
The tingling chill
Of a snowy winter night,
The mysterious splendor
Of a star filled sky,
Exuberant toddlers at play,
Say how wonderful
To be alive.

But I, like you, have
Submerged feelings
About our ephemeral nature.
We know time will flow
To when we're no longer
A witness to any of this.

And though I enjoy
Each wonder I see,
I cannot hold, hug
Kiss or talk to a tree,
Flower or distant star.

What I need and long for
Is a loving partner to share
This brief adventure,
To pursue individual passions,
Make wonderful each day,
Bring comfort to each other,
Enrich and be a loving witness
To each other's life.



More Verse

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
fresh loaves of crisp-baked whole wheat bread set tight upon
a rack to cool, with gleaming glaze sprayed on their crusts.

The hoar hung on the rusty pillars of the El.
A pristine coat of stucco had been 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 seamy asphalt in the summer seared and seethed
with undulating heat, was quenched — and veiled in 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.
A hail of sparks cascaded to the street below —
a dazzling show of incandescent meteors
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.

IT'S MY EXPERIENCE Norman Molesko

I had an experience.

I remembered it.

I told someone about it.

That person didn't have the experience.

That person doubted me.

I know that I had the experience.

It cannot be taken away from me.

The experience belongs to me.

(from *HEART ATTACK! THEN WHAT?*)

Night Winds Return Lillian Rodich

night winds surround me
embrace me with the gentle arms of a lover
perfume my pillow with forgetfulness

within my troubled solitude
they make whisper sounds
in language strange and familiar

seeking comfort in solutions
I reach for diamond stars
their glittering perfection a dream

I fashion an intricate necklace
its glowing galaxy an illusion
flirting with me and slipping away

night winds whisper through my hair
laughing at the lost baubles
and perfume my pillow with tenderness.

Rainy Days Rainy Ways

Lillian Rodich

It's the merry month of May and not supposed to be raining. Not on my cracked and scarred condo, not on the roses smiling up at a gray sky, not on the dried out cement so recently shimmering in the heat. But rain it must to quench our thirst, to wash us clean of sorrow and debris, to allow the coming cumulous clouds access to a freshly painted sky. "Into every life a little rain must fall." The phrase dances around in my brain as I sit curled up on my couch and stare through our cracked picture window at the splashes of water swirling around pots and patio chairs. Somehow this rain soothes my turbulent soul and confides the promise of better things to come. Streams of water satisfy the thirsty earth and gray skies become a blanket of consolation while sadness begins to fade.

I have known joy in the rain. The smell of wet earth. The comfortable patter of drops on the sidewalk. Twirling my umbrella and doing a splash dance on my driveway. The enchanting sight of a rainbow as I rode home from Palm Springs, my lover's proposal in the front seat of his truck — rain slicing all around us — sunlight glinting through the windshield. Endless afternoons when the kids were little and we all sat warm and cozy in our tiny den and played Monopoly or Pick Up Sticks and drank hot chocolate. School days at Morningside, smelling damp sweaters and the faintly camphor odor of mothballs when I greeted my students on a stormy morning. Playing Heads up Seven up and laughing with the children. Rainy days so many years ago with my best friend Helen Weinblatt, splashing down Ogden Drive, sharing an umbrella, tasting the sweetness of raindrops on our tongues. Walking beach sands in a misty rain, holding hands with my guy, watching a muted sun sink into the grayness, feeling the damp sand between our toes, suddenly breaking into a chase and falling into each other's arms overcome by exhaustion and laughter. Sitting in our daughter Gail's home watching the lightning illuminate silver sheets of water, having Jennifer cuddle up beside me and say, "Grammy, are you scared?"

Rain has framed sad memories and mixed with unshed tears. Standing by my father's grave, unable to comprehend that he was really gone, unable to bear the fine needles of drizzle on my eyelids and forehead. Rain again in a sudden cloudburst when my beloved nephew Barry left all of us in a flood of anguish we thought would never wash away. Saying "goodbye" to my first real boyfriend and mourning what might have been when the sky suddenly darkened and rain began to splatter on my window pane. The floods of 1938 frightening me, muddy water swirling around our Chevy's tires, the streets like rivers and my father carrying me across, my head buried in his neck. Flash floods on our way to Las Vegas heading for higher land, my heart beating so hard I couldn't swallow and my love laughing up at the black clouds and shouting taunts at the thunder. The steady drumbeat of rain while waiting by telephones and in hospital rooms, and praying without words and without the comfort of sunny skies.

Can the rain cleanse the sorrow from my soul, bring its sweetness and healing power into my perception, lull me with its special music and clear the marred canvas of earth and sky?

It's May ... much too late in the season for rain. Still the birds are soaring through the mist and singing their joy and the leaves and flowers are glistening. □

*Gummy**By Ray Malus*

Gummy was the last.

Wise beyond her years, she had watched her whole clan decimated by coyotes or dogs, or whatever lived in that perilous world outside the screen door. She never went there.

Which is why it was strange that she was missing. Small, plain, black and brown, she had learned early-on that she wouldn't make it on looks. She had survived on charm — charm and caution.

Her real name was "Montgomery," after the city in which she'd been born. That had been in the back seat of a car during the long drive to California. She had love for only a few, but regard for all.

Did I mention she was my cat?

Where was she at 9:00 on this work-late-at-UCLA Thursday night? I searched the house.

After 20 minutes, I found her. She was exactly midway under my king-size bed — where no arm could reach her. The beam of a flashlight revealed her, lying on her side, breathing heavily.

"Gummy?"

Nothing.

"Gummy!"

She raised her head and gave a faint mewl. In the harsh light, her eyes were filmed, glassy. She laid her head back down.

As quietly as I could, I snaked myself under the bed, and stroked her, softly. Then I gently, half-lifted, half dragged her out, and placed her on the bed.

She lay there, limp, like someone's old discarded fox-fur collar. Her coat was matted. Her breathing was labored. Her rheumy eyes looked at me, and she made a small squeaking meow. I could tell our long friendship was coming to a close.

And somehow I suddenly knew that the only reason she was clinging so desperately to life — was that she didn't want to abandon me. That she was suffering out of a sense of duty.

I carefully picked her up and held her in my arms. I lay down on the bed with her on my lap, and started to pet her. She raised her head and gave that small "meow" again — "I'm still here."

I stroked her gently. "It's alright, Gummy. I'll be OK. Let go. Don't hold on for me. I'll be fine. Let go."

Her head slowly sagged back down and rested on my leg. Her eyes closed. Her breathing started to slow. For fifteen minutes, I caressed her as she slipped slowly away.

Suddenly, the phone rang. I let the answering machine down the hall pick up, hoping it wouldn't disturb our last minutes. Gummy continued to drift away.

I heard the machine cycle. Then, as I stroked my companion of all those years and she slowly died, I heard the voice of my buddy, Tip. He was singing.

"Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday, dear Raymond. Happy Birthday to you."

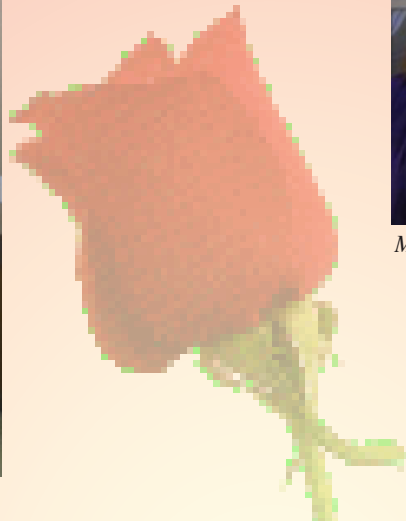
I had completely forgotten. □

The Gallery

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



An Historic Announcement!



Malus reads Smalley.



All eyes on Deborah Riley-Magnus.



Our POET! — Lenora

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ABOUT THIS ISSUE:

Spring is here! The year's almost over for us.
By far the most important news is our proposed merger;
check out pages 3 & 4!
We have lots of works from our resident poets, a few
short stories for variety, and our usual informative
columns.

ENJOY the issue!

— Ray



URGENT: *HELP* WANTED!

KUDOS KOLUMNIST

We are still 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 **Liz Cooke** for the goodies,
and to **Mark Paul Sebar** for
helping with the April set-up.

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
May: Linda Ballou – “Make Travel Writing Work for You”
June: Eric Stone – “Taking Your Novel From Idea To Finished Work”**

GUEST DONATIONS

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

Submission deadline is one week 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.

The Fine Print

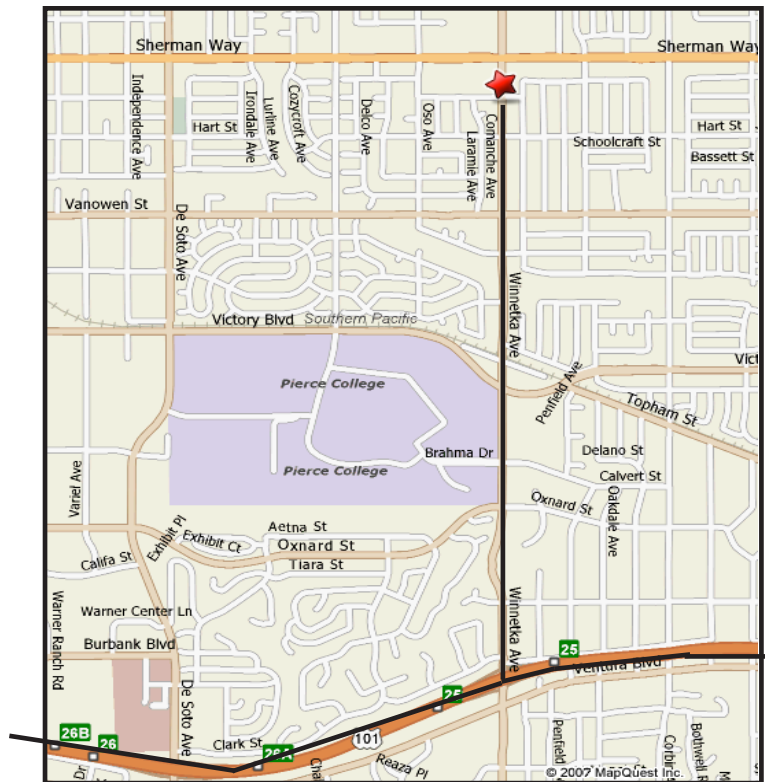
ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS **7136 WINNETKA AVE** **CANOGA PARK, CA 91306**

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](#)

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Ray Malus
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California Writers Club San Fernando Valley Branch

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