



The Newsletter Of The San Fernando Valley Branch

# The Valley Scribe

Volume 4, Issue 1

September 2011

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E=mc<sup>2</sup>



## When last we met...



### June 4, 2011 in the Katzenberg Room

Our speaker for the CWC-SFV September

meeting comes to us with outstanding credentials.

**Nancy Ellen Dodd** not only has two advanced degrees in writing, she has studied with outstanding writers during her 25-year writing career, received numerous awards for her work and is now teaching at Pepperdine University.

In June of this year her book, entitled *The Writer's Compass: From Story Map*



to *Finished Draft in 7 Stages*, was released. It covers the full creative writing process in a form that both beginning writers and published authors will find enlightening. This work applies to all genres.

She will walk us through her approach to writing and get us to do some writing on the spot, too. You won't want to miss this opportunity to hone your skills and gain new insights into writing.

- Rita Keeley Brown

Check out Nancy Dodd's website:  
<http://thewriterscompass.com> and  
blog: <http://nancyellendodd.com>

## west valley whimsicals A Schwartz / Highcove Production

My first invention...



### Why Write a Memoir?

Someday, for some special reason, you may decide to write your memoir. Not an autobiography – a memoir. There's a big difference. Memoirist and author Gore Vidal once commented, "A memoir is how one remembers one's own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research,

dates, facts double-checked." (A memoir) is more about what can be gleaned from a section of one's life than about the outcome of the life as a whole."

Many write a memoir with no thought of future sales. Family and friends are the intended readers. Or, some write for a particular market or for interested historians.

A memoir is usually not the literal truth. A writer can have fun, exaggerate a bit and keep the action rolling when retelling

(Continued on page 2)

## Executive Board

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Vice-president/Programs ... Rita Keeley Brown

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Treasurer ... Pirhiya Goldstein

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Critique Groups Facilitator ... Lillian Rodich

Open Mike ... Bill Sorrells

Member-at-Large ... Judy Presnall

## President's Message

What an exciting year ahead for the newly united San Fernando Valley Branch! SFV/CWC now has ninety-one talented members! The spirit of volunteerism is high among our membership. Board positions were easily filled.

Pirhiya Goldstein will be treasurer. Anne Olivier, who consented to be recorder of minutes when we found ourselves without a secretary last spring, will continue to record. When asked to be our program chair, Rita Brown did not hesitate to accept. She is planning interesting and informative programs for our meetings. Check our website: [cwc-sfv.org](http://cwc-sfv.org) Kathy Highcove will be The Scribe editor. Karen Gorback unhesitatingly agreed to do publicity for our club.

Liz Cooke had to regretfully resign as Membership Chair due to a move to Colorado. Fortunately, Erica Stux accepted my invitation to fill the position. However, Erica cannot attend our first meeting in September; she's asked for a co-chairman to assist her. Any volunteers?

What would we do without webmaster Ray Malus? He's been busy putting member biographies up on the website. If you haven't sent in a bio, or a head shot, here's Ray's CWC email address: [CWC-SFV@roadrunner.com](mailto:CWC-SFV@roadrunner.com)

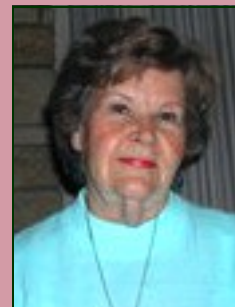
When asked by our editor, a helpful Ken Watts immediately agreed to continue his To Market column. Bill Sorrells, our long-time Open Mike host, has agreed to continue another year. More volunteers: Dave Wetterberg will once more assist Kathy with the editing of the newsletter. Judy Presnall will also be a copy editor as well as a helpful Member-at-Large at our Board meetings.

Anyone want to take photos at meetings? Ken Wilkins has been our faithful photographer until recently when health issues have forced him to relinquish that job.

Something new from the Central Board: the Pathways to Publishing Committee. Its sole purpose is to provide CWC members support resources for up-to-date publishing information. Each CWC branch is asked to designate one or two mentors. These people will be trained to help members navigate the maze of available publishing options, marketing and platform building. Ester Shifren has agreed to become a mentor. She would welcome one or two more volunteer mentors.

Now you know the names of our worker bees, and you'll soon see them in person. If we hope to stay a viable and vibrant club, we'll need your energy at our meetings. Come meet our Board, network with members and get involved with our newly re-formed SFV/CWC.

*Yolanda Fintor*



**SFV/CWC President**  
**Yolanda Fintor**

(Why Write a Memoir? continued from page 1)

an anecdote.

Any story needs tension, climax and an outcome.

A reader's interest should be tweaked by the anecdotes. For

example: *In 1969 I was hired by Xerox, and designed desk printers,* might be: *In 1969 I worked on an exciting new project at Xerox: the laser printer.*

There are many kinds of memoirs. Some folks write about their childhood, or travel adventures, or exciting experiences. Some write about a core event: an accident or a sudden death, or achievement of a life-time goal. A memoir can relate any part of a life story; everyone has stories waiting in their subconscious.

A memoirist should acknowledge that review by a competent critique group or editor is also needed. Feedback is essential.

If you write a memoir, you may find that the creation and presentation of your life story also results in great personal satisfaction. A win/win situation. As Saul Bellow once put it: "Everybody needs his memories. They keep the wolf of insignificance from the door."

- K.H.

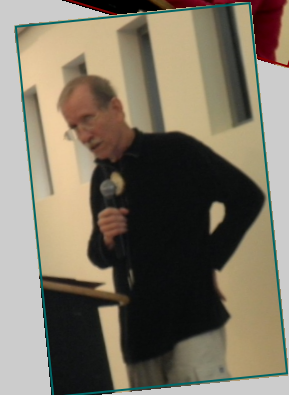


**Remember: The meetings this year will begin at 1:00 p.m. Open Mike will still be first item on the agenda. Come early and sign up on Bill Sorrell's Open Mike list.**





Our June meeting had a festive feel as the WV members welcomed SFV members to the Katzenberg Room. After everyone found a seat, Bill Sorrells brought the meeting to order and announced, that it was time for Open Mike. For a half hour members shared a sample of their writings with an attentive audience. We heard poetry, a memoir and autobiographical material.



President Dave Wetterberg gave us a few fervent words of farewell, and introduced the next President, Yolanda Fintor. She introduced in turn the new board members: Elizabeth Cooke (recently replaced by Erica Stux), membership; Pirhiya Goldstein, treasurer; Anne Olivier, secretary, Rita Keeley Brown, program chair.



Finally, we were entertained by three of our playwrights, Dean Stewart, Ray Malus and Karen Gorback, who performed sections of their latest works.

We left feeling hopeful of the coming year and our first meeting as a reunited branch in September 2011.



Please join us in the Katzenberg Room on Saturday, September 3rd, at 1:00 p.m. - KH

***Man the decks...Sail on!***



## Publishing Pathways

More information regarding the mentor program:

### What is the purpose of the Publishing Pathways Committee?

The sole purpose of Publishing Pathways is to support CWC members in their effort to publish their writing.

### How does Publishing Pathways support CWC members?

- Our website is a primary source for up-to-date publishing information.
- An Expert Speakers' list of people with personal publishing experiences.
- A Skills Bank consisting of individuals with expertise in: creating platforms, marketing, query letter writing.

### How do I get help from the Publishing Pathways Committee?

The PPC has a team of trained Mentors who will advise branch members. Branches provide one to five mentors for our team. Contact them.

### What does a mentor do?

The Publishing Pathways Mentor guides and encourages branch members through the maze of available publishing options. They provide information about publishing options, marketing, branding and platform building. Mentors do not join in the writing process, review, critique or edit writing pieces.

**I don't know much about publishing. Could I still become a mentor?** Absolutely. We would love to have you join our growing team of twenty-six mentors. Let your branch president know you'd like to be a Mentor. We'll provide you with a handbook and a video of our recent Mentor Orientation. In addition, we'll provide support and up-to-date information on various publishing options through a couple of mentor meetings a year, frequent e-mails, and various networking opportunities with other mentors.

### What should I do if I have more questions?

Ask your branch mentor. If you do not have a branch mentor, e-mail your questions to me: [nancycurteman@yahoo.com](mailto:nancycurteman@yahoo.com)

Cheers, Nancy Curteman

## To Market



**Family Circle Magazine** is a national women's service magazine which covers many stages of a woman's life. Topics focus on women's interests: family and personal relationships, children in the 8-16 age-group, physical and mental health, nutrition and self-improvement. Buys both one-time rights and all rights. Byline given. Offers 20% kill fee. Responds in two months to queries and mss. Submit seasonal material 4 months in advance. Editorial lead time is 4 months. For back issues, send \$6.95 to P.O. Box 3156, Harlan, IA 51537.

*Family Circle* looks for nonfiction essays, opinion, personal experience. They buy 200 mss/year. Length: 1,000-2,500 words. Pays \$1/word. To query send a detailed outline, 2 clips, cover letter with your publishing history, SASE or IRC's. Query letters should be concise and to the point.

Interested submitters should keep close tabs on **Family Circle** monthly issues, as well as other women's magazines, to avoid sending the editors similar types of recently published material.

**Contact:** Lisa Kelsey, art director. Address: Meredith Corporation, 375 Lexington Ave., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, NY, NY 10017.

**Website:** [www.familycircle.com](http://www.familycircle.com).

**10-Minute Play Festival** is offered twice a year to showcase unpublished and unproduced plays that are 8-12 minutes long. Fire Rose Productions & International Arts Group are nonprofit organizations committed to discovering new playwrights and giving them opportunities to work with directors and producers. Winners and semi-finalists are offered professionally mounted productions of their plays.

Prizes: 1<sup>st</sup> Place: \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: \$100. Guest judges are entertainment professionals including writers, producers, directors and agents.

Fire Rose Productions does the first evaluation and acquires rights to produce and mount the winning plays. No royalties are gathered for those performances. Download the application online.

**Contact:** Kaz Matamura, director. Address: Fire Rose Productions & International Arts Group, 11246 Magnolia Blvd., NoHo Theatre & Arts District, Ca 91601.

**E-mail:** [info@fireroseproductions.com](mailto:info@fireroseproductions.com)

**Website:** [www.fireroseproductions.com](http://www.fireroseproductions.com)

(Continued on page 5)



(Continued from page 4)

**Mybusiness Magazine** is a bimonthly magazine for small businesses. Guidelines available online. Buys first North American serial rights, buys electronic rights. Pays on acceptance. Offers 30% kill fee. Queries accepted by mail, e-mail. Sample copy free. Responds in 3 weeks to queries. Publishes an average of 4 months after acceptance. Submit seasonal material 5 months in advance. Editorial lead time 4 months.

Needs: nonfiction, book excerpts, how-to, small business topics, new product. Submission method: Query with resume and 2 published clips. They accept pitches for feature stories, which fall under three categories: Own, Operate and Grow. Story ideas should have a small-business focus with emphasis on timely problems that small business owners face and realistic workable solutions.

Submit copy as a Microsoft Word enclosure. Deadlines are 90 days before publication. Length: 200-1,800 words. Pays \$76 - \$1,000. Address: **Imagination Publishing, 600 W. Fulton St., Suite 600, Chicago, IL 60661.**

E-mail: [nfib@imaginepub.com](mailto:nfib@imaginepub.com)

Website: [www.mybusinessmag.com](http://www.mybusinessmag.com)

**Wild Child Publishing** welcomes new/unpublished authors. Submissions this year begin on September 15<sup>th</sup>. WCP publishes paperback originals, e-books. Format: POD printing, perfect bound. Average print order: 50-200. Debut novel print order: 50. Published 12 new writers last year. Plans 10 debut novels this year. Averages 12 fiction titles/year. Member EPIC. Distributes/promotes titles through Ingrams and own website, Mobipocket Kindle, Amazon, and soon with Fictionwise..

Needs: fiction, adventure, children's/juvenile, erotica for Freya's Bower only, ethnic/multicultural, experimental, fantasy, feminist, gay, historical, horror, humor/satire, lesbian, New Age/mystic, psychic/supernatural, romance, sci-fi, see website for more info.

Query with outline/synopsis and one sample chapter. Accepts queries by e-mail only. Include estimated word count and a brief bio. Responds to queries and submitted mss. in 2-4 weeks. Sends pre-production galleys to author. Mss. published 2-4 months after acceptance. Pays royalties 10-40%. Book catalogs on website. Read guidelines thoroughly.

Contact: Faith Bicknell-Brown, managing editor (horror and romance), S. R. Howen, editor (sci-fi and non-fiction), Marci Baun, editor-in-chief, (all other genres) Address: P. O. Box 4897, Culver City, CA 90231.

Submission E-mail: [admin@wildchildpublishing.com](mailto:admin@wildchildpublishing.com)

Website: [www.wildchildpublishing.com](http://www.wildchildpublishing.com)

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The Review covers ethical issues, trends in the industry, coverage that falls short of fair journalism. Byline given. Pays within one month after publication. Offers 25% kill fee. Publishes mss an average of 2 months after acceptance. Buys first North American serial rights, buys electronic rights. Editorial lead time 1 month. Accepts queries by mail, e-mail, fax. Responds in 1 month to queries and unsolicited mss. Sample copy for \$4.95 pre-paid or online. Guidelines available online. Needs: non-fiction, expose, personal experience, ethical issues. The Review wants anecdotes, facts, short humor, short pieces as fillers. Length: 150-1,000 words. Pays \$100-\$250.

Buys many mss/year. Send complete ms. Length: 2,000-4,000 words. Pays \$1,500-\$2,000. Pays expenses of writers on assignment.

Or, write a short piece for the front-of-the-book section. They prefer queries to completed articles. Include in a page what you'd like to write about, who you'll interview, why it's important, and why you should write it.

Contact: Rachel Smolkin, Managing Editor. Address: University of Maryland Foundation, 1117 Journalism Bldg., University of Maryland, College Park MD 20742. Phone: (301) 405-8803. Fax: (301) 405-8323.

E-mail: [editor@ajr.umd.edu](mailto:editor@ajr.umd.edu)

Website: [www.ajr.org](http://www.ajr.org)

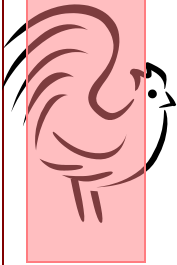
- Ken Watts

I find it useful to remember, everyone lives by selling something.

[Robert Louis Stevenson](#)



## The Chicken Business



- Ed Rasky

I was only 12 years old. The year: 1937. There were eight kids in our family. We

shared chores. One day, my father told me, "It's your turn to clean out the chicken coops."

I well remember the very noticeable pungent smell in our backyard because of the chickens. Once a week, the chicken pen had to be cleaned. There were about 300 chickens in our backyard and someone had to clean up the chicken shit. My father gave me a shovel and two garbage cans.

I sometimes wondered why I was chosen to do this job. Our neighbors constantly complained about the smell that came from our backyard. My father had to pay off the garbage collector with a good bottle of Canadian whisky about once a month.

There were certain hazards that came with the job. I had to stare down the huge rats that made their home in the backyard. Sometimes I went after them with my shovel. They were too fast for me. There were many holes in the cement surface and the rats would come out and taunt me.

I hated the job in general but especially hated it in July when the temperature would soar to 95 degrees. I kept thinking to myself, How did my father get us into this business in the first place?

His parents had a flour mill in Kiev, Russia. He took his three youngest children and left Russia in 1920. The pogroms by the Cossacks were aimed at the Jews. The Cossacks would often come through a town and kill all the Jews in sight.

My father was a very learned man and became what they call in Hebrew: shoihet. My father said a prayer over each chicken he killed. The chickens were then plucked and were then delivered by bicycle. In the Jewish faith, this made the chickens Kosher. The chickens had to be left in Kosher salt for an hour and then they were really kosher.

My father, the shoihet, had a little red beard and loved getting ready for the Shabbat each Friday night. Saturday was always a quiet day in our house. As I sweated and cleaned the chicken pens I felt sorry for myself for being stuck in such a business.

This chicken business involved the whole family. Cleaning the chicken pens and facing the rats head on was one of the hardest knocks of my life. As I dragged the two garbage cans of chicken shit to the front of the house, I was thankful when I didn't have to pluck chickens the whole day. But that's another hard knock that awaited me in the future.

## ON STAGE

Erica Stux' musical revue "The World of Lake Balboa" will be performed at the North Hollywood London Music Hall, 10620 Magnolia Blvd., N.H., CA, 91601. Sept 3rd - 25th, Saturdays: 8 p.m., Sundays 3 p.m.

## NEW CONNECTIONS -

SFV member Larry Levine hosts, edits and publishes an online food magazine - *Table Talk* - that focuses on restaurant recommendations.

"For this site we are accepting submissions of articles, essays, rants, features, etc. about food, food travel, the general subject of restaurant dining, but not restaurant reviews or recommendations. We will pay stipends for accepted and published material. " Additional submission information at: <http://www.tabletalkatlarrys.com> click on [Submit/Advertise](#).

The magazine has been read in 81 countries and has a new contract with a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) company. Your material if published on this website will be found by readers interested in such restaurant commentary.

Larry reviews restaurants on his other website: [www.atLarrys.com](http://www.atLarrys.com).

## SAUCY STEPH

**Stephanie Sharf has a new gig:**

"I'm now a writer for an online rag called *dirt.com*...Below is a link to my first article. <http://www.dirt.com/the-top-five-reasons-the-world-will-soon-despise-kate-middleton/> See bottom of article for my byline...do you guys believe this?

After answering their ad on craigslist (Writing and Editing, under Aug. 1st) I was notified that they liked my writing sample. I looked over their guidelines, then sent in my first article yesterday—they told me they loved it and it was perfect, and it's on the front page!!! Thanks to all my pals in SFV for your kind words and encouragement with my writing."

# PUBLISH YOUR OWN COOKBOOK



## SUMMER GOALS

Five women of different ages and ethnicities sit around table and look at me expectantly. They have paid to learn the nuts and bolts of writing a cookbook. My job as teacher is to deliver. I wonder if the hours I spent organizing my notes and preparing my

handouts will accomplish that goal.

After telling a little about myself and how I came to be part of the writing world, I ask each student to introduce herself and tell why she is taking the class. This exchange sets the stage for a relaxed "give and take" kind of atmosphere. They do not need to be motivated; each student has a goal.

Celeste is a student at State University of Channel Islands, majoring in psychology. She has always had an interest in writing a cookbook that "... contains authentic recipes from my Mexican ancestors. Nothing I've eaten at local restaurants comes close to what real Mexican food tastes like," she tells us.

Yoko was born in Japan but has been a translator in America for 24 years. Taking classes at a professional cooking school sparked a desire to put her collection of family recipes into a book.

A fifth-generation Californian, Laurie lives on a mountain in Ojai. She has no computer, no cell phone and types novels and short stories on an electric typewriter. Her interest lies in chuck wagon cooking and, despite her lack of technology, she wants to publish a collection of family recipes spiced with historical anecdotes.

Peggy loves to cook. Her goal is to gather recipes from her circle of friends and family and put them into book form, giving a brief history of each recipe. She describes the prospective book as "informative, but fun."

The rebel of the class is Teresa. She announces, "I hate to cook but love to write!"

After three divorces and four children, she hopes to combine her love of writing with some failed culinary and life experiences recounted in a "not-too-serious" book.

Taking a cue from Irene Brennick, our CWC/WV May presenter on public speaking, I decide not to talk "at" the students in lecture style, but "engage my audience."

I tell them, "I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that a cookbook has a long shelf life and the bad news is that getting it published doesn't make you rich or famous."

Nobody walks out at that point, so we concentrate on the good news. We talk about how to decide on a niche that would make a book unique. This discussion leads to brainstorming for possible titles. Teresa's book

idea best lends itself to fun suggestions: *Help, Mom's in the Kitchen*, or *So You Think You Can't Cook*.

Other discussion topics: How to compile and organize recipes; whether to use a formal or anecdotal style of writing; current culinary trends; different types of illustrations; the pros and cons of self-publishing versus traditional methods.

The subject of writing a compelling query letter and proposal takes a big chunk of our time. The class studies samples of query letters and proposals. Their take home copies will help them focus when making adaptations to their own cookbooks.

I emphasize the importance of having a marketing plan either for a potential publisher or self-publishing, but find, unfortunately, that I have scant time to thoroughly cover all that marketing entails. I need another three hours just for that topic. I pass out copies of press releases and other marketing tools for them to take and file away for future use.

The three hours of class time went by quickly. As I gather my materials, I am rewarded with comments on how much the ladies enjoyed the class and that they received needed information. The frosting on the : Peggy, Laurie and Teresa announce that this session was the best writing class they have ever taken. Yes, some goals were met this day.

## Yolanda's Favorite Soup

**Creamed Green Bean Soup** – from *Hungarian Cookbook, Old World Recipes for New World Cooks* available on Amazon.

### Ingredients

2 pounds of fresh green beans, cut into 2-inch pieces  
2 ½ quarts water  
1 tablespoon salt  
1 ¼ cups milk  
¾ cup flour  
1 egg, beaten with a fork  
½ cup sour cream  
8-10 sprigs parsley, leaves only  
1 tablespoon white vinegar  
1 or 2 cubes chicken bouillon



Cook the beans in salted water until crisp tender, about 15 minutes. While the beans are cooking, pour milk into a medium bowl. Add flour and whisk until smooth. In a small bowl, combine egg and sour cream; mix well and add to the flour/milk mixture. Pour in sour cream mixture, stirring constantly. Add vinegar, parsley and bouillon. Continue to stir occasionally on low-medium for 5 to 8 minutes, until liquid thickens. Serve cold in the summer and hot in the winter.

- Yolanda Fintor



## Lenora Smalley's Beaded Purse Contest



Some people talk a good story; others, like Lenora Smalley, encourage writing a good story – in verse.

Lenora Smalley, a three times published poet, puts poets to work yearly with her **Beaded Purse Contest**. For this contest she sets a theme and then poets are invited to visit their muse and emote freely. A panel of judges, Lenora is not one of them, chooses first, second, third and Honorable Mentions.

And this coming year? Lenora tells us:

The 4th annual contest will run from October 1 until March 31, 2012. This year there will be a few changes. I am upping the prize money to \$100 for first place, \$50 for Second place and \$30 for Third place, each amount in a beaded purse. The judges may award Honorable Mentions as they see fit. The theme for 2012 is **Moments That Made a Difference**. I hope this topic is general enough to attract lots of submissions. A poet may submit three poems for no fee. Each should be 60 lines maximum, single spaced and relate in some way to the theme. *They must not contain any hate language, racial slurs, or inappropriate words.*

Visit Lenora's website at :

<http://lenorasmalley.com/contests.php>

## Echoes

*Most people read poetry listening for echoes because the echoes are familiar to them. They wade through it the way a boy wades through water, feeling with his toes for the bottom: The echoes are the bottom.*

Wallace Stevens

## Seasons of Laughter

2010 Beaded Purse  
Winners Contest

### 1st Place

#### Rapprochement by Ray Malus

The winter icicles along the frozen eaves,  
like wind-chimes, crack and tinkle in the falcon breeze.  
And laughing children stand and fire snowballs up  
to crash them to the earth like flashing meteors.  
Then, squealing, bound into the drifts like playful pups  
to seize their prey and suck the fresh and icy tang  
of gleaming sunlight frozen in its crystal fire,  
and savor winter's flavor on their tongues.

In spring, the coeds giggle in the empty stands,  
and titter at the taut and tightened haunches of  
young bucks who whet their antlers on the playing field,  
in practice for uncertain combat yet to come.  
They jeer the posturings they watch with craving eyes,  
their bodies flushed with adolescent eagerness.  
They hug themselves with fancied strangers' lusty hands  
and squeeze their thighs together to protect their  
warmth.

The summer cabins echo with the bawdy bark  
of laughter and the snapping of the poker cards  
by ghostly t-shirt silhouettes of swarthy men  
cast by a naked lamp on fly-specked window screens.  
The air is censed by sweat and beer and kerosene,  
by stinging citronella oil and cheap cigars.  
They lick the foam from icy pop-top cans of beer  
and brag of earthy passions — they have never known.

The autumn old folks gaze at faded photographs  
on foxed and flaking pages cushioned on their laps.  
Their memories, once keen and sharp as stainless steel  
now blunted — gilded with the copper rust of years.  
They chuckle at the gentle lies of endless youth  
and boundless possibilities depicted there.  
Then, wrapped in mental tissue paper, set them by,  
and clothed in afghans of nostalgia, hug the past.





## 2nd Place

### What is Laughter Made of? by Patricia Smekel

Sometimes  
when the tide is right  
it wells up from the deep  
rolls through my belly  
breaks me up with a great splash  
leaves my funny bones in a backwash  
of titters.

Sometimes it drops  
a sprinkle of chuckles  
on my boredom  
douses the flame of anger  
pours endorphins  
on pain.

Sometimes  
a taste of it can sustain me  
quench my thirst for cheer  
wet absurdity's appetite  
dribble ridiculous down me  
drench me  
in silly.

Best of all  
It's a shower with a friend  
a merry flow  
to drain away dead-serious  
drizzle us with daft  
puddle into snickers  
swell into giggles  
burst into chortles  
and drown us in floods  
of hilarity.

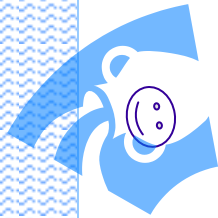
Laughter must be made of water

## Honorable Mention

### Like Fred Astaire by Patricia Smekel

Your wit moves light  
on it's feet. It dances  
in patent-leather shoes,  
sweeps up my mood,  
puts a shine on gloom.

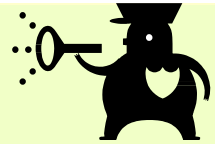
You bend me to your humour,  
dip and sway me into step,  
tap me happy, turn me out  
in top hat and tails.



## 4th Place

### Wreck Room by Erica Stux

The house was robbed; policemen came



To make out an official list

Of televisions, stereo,

And other thing that's missed.

On reaching daughter's room, they  
gasped;

"Look what they did in here - those  
crooks!

They really turned it upside down!"

Oh, no, that's how it always looks.



## Honorable Mention

### Mooch-O Talent by Erica Stux

Our student son was undecided

What he wants to do.

Is it business, art, or science  
that he should pursue.

But the letter he wrote home  
with most persuasive phrasing  
led me to believe his field's  
professional fund-raising.



# Quickstart Opinion

**"If the stone hits the pitcher,  
Or the pitcher hits the stone,  
It's going to be bad for the pit**

Sancho Panza, from *The Man of La Mancha*



prehend that which is below the surface. Like icebergs, at first sighting we have no idea what they truly are. Closer inspection gives us pause at the enormity of what they may be. Study only makes us think we understand. We are deceived because such an infinite universe cannot fit into our existing experience.

In order to understand, we assert our finest skills. We begin taking it apart. Human beings are masters at take-apart-put-together. It is

Opinions can be dangerous. Weapons or blessings. Prejudices. Awards. Say what you really feel or intend and you expose yourself to all manner of hazards. I admit, there is a modicum of respect available for the individual foolhardy enough to be constantly forthright. A few even become famous or infamous, even venerated, for their judgmental abilities. Such fame may arrive post mortem, but it can come, all the same. However, for the average bloke? Extremely risky business!

Why do I even address the subject? As the third generation of a publishing family, I may have printer's ink in my DNA. I've been fed fundamental publication values all my life. That, combined with study, complementary natural gifts in the graphic arts, and good fortune, have made me a writer, designer, and illustrator of printed matter. And designers live by their opinions.

Design, as you know, is an exercise in judgment and the application of carefully considered choices. Every creative person is therefore a judge, of sorts. In any form or medium the process is always—selecting, evaluating, discarding and/or applying toward desired effects. Depending upon the reception, the creative individual reaps the benefits or suffers the consequences.

Although I grew up in New York and own my share of the expected attendant sarcastic and skeptical attitudes, beneath that façade lives a trusting spirit. Wanting to believe the best of others, I place my faith in a reward for good design and justice. Like you, I want my world to be beautiful, ethical and fair. But the world isn't always fair. Oh yes, you and I try to be so, but the world doesn't always return the favor!

Sometimes we think we understand. But our computers and the internet are very like icebergs. Only that fraction above the surface is visible. It is almost impossible to estimate or com-

what we do best. Sometimes we claim ownership of whatever it is we have assembled or disassembled. And that is the tip of another iceberg.

Write or illustrate a story or book, hire designer(s) for cover and interior, and you're in iceberg waters. Sign the manuscript and/or graphics with your name, a copyright © and the year and you initiate protection slightly beyond the basics. If foreign distribution is planned, add "All rights reserved," and "Printed in USA" (if it is). Register it with the government copyright office and you secure a tighter hold. Those details will protect where people observe the laws. Unfortunately, no amount of care will safeguard ownership against those countries, companies and individuals who abuse the rights of others for profit. The very technologies which liberate us enable scanning and reproduction of almost any graphic, audio, film or written work.

Do not be discouraged. Appreciate yourself. Your greatest advantage is the ability of the individual to produce the next original piece. The world and copyists are dependent upon your unique perspectives and abilities. Should you doubt it, look at the incredible quantity and quality of books available in spite of the difficulties. Consider the books you use for reference and learning.

Masters of take-apart-put-together content exemplify the clarity of electronic convergence of writing and design in print. Benjamin Franklin Awards are the Academy Award Oscars for books where professional design and editorial judges honor books annually. Check their website at [ibpabbenjaminfranklinawards.com](http://ibpabbenjaminfranklinawards.com). Form your own opinion. You be the judge.

- Howard Goldstein ©2001

MicroPublishingNews/BM&M 3/2001



## Birthday Party

The man watched the three little girls leave the school yard shoving, and giggling. They were wearing new dresses in party brilliant colors of green, yellow, blue, and red ... carefully carrying gift wrapped boxes with iridescent ribbons dangling in the wind ... shiny black patent-leather shoes reflecting their glowing faces. He could tell they were going to a birthday party.

Another little girl trailed at a distance careful not to be discovered. All along he knew who she was. He recognized the faded flowered dress, limp and wrinkled. It was too small for her — wash, after wash, after wash, had made the fabric almost transparent. Her knees showed the scabs from carelessly tripping and falling still not completely healed. With her hands she smoothed her dress in an effort to stretch it. She carried no gift. He could tell that his little daughter had not been invited.

Holding hands, the three little girls crossed the street on the way to the park whispering and looking back at the little girl with the faded dress. Hidden behind every tree they laughed as the little girl anxiously searched for them ... and then, they disappeared into the house with tall towers just like the castles in storybooks he had read to her night after night. He spotted her sitting on the grass crying and crying.

He wanted to console her to make her pain go away; instead he sat and waited behind a tree for a long time. Looking at his pocket-watch, he realized that he had fallen asleep. Startled he looked around but the park was deserted. There was no sign of the three little girls or the faded flowered dress. Everything had disappeared. He started running...his lips dry and trembling, the lump in his throat growing bigger with anxiety making him cough. But he couldn't stop and continued going and going. Pushed the door of the little gloomy house open resting his hands on his knees to catch his halting breath. His little daughter like a shadow was still crying, shoulders shaking ... her hand busy stretching the faded yellow-flowered dress.

- Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

## A ROADSIDE OCCURRENCE

I was driving alone, cautiously, in an old car, on a wintry night in January of '73. I recall...along a country road in Vermont, white snowflakes had fallen all around. The sweeping motions from the window wipers enabled me to see whiteness on the road ahead. I was fatigued. I wanted to stop somewhere. There was no sight of a building or a light. Exhaustedly, I halted the car on the roadside. I wrapped newspaper over my front side, inside my overcoat and around my thighs. I closed my drooping eyes and went to sleep. As the darkness of the night transitioned into the dawn of the day, I aroused myself. I rubbed my eyes and looked around. I blinked at what I observed close-by. Over there, to my right, a farmhouse, off the road a few hundred feet away. It was before seven in the morning. I opened the car door and trudged slowly through a crunching foot of snow and approached the front door of the farmhouse. I pushed the doorbell and a gruff voice replied, "Who are you? What do you want?" "I stopped my car on the road. I just wanted to ask for some directions." Then I heard "Get off my property right now. I'm holding a double-barreled shotgun aimed directly at your head. I'll blow you to pieces, if you don't go." I backed away, reached my car, drove off. I felt relieved that I wasn't shot. I rolled on for a short distance, two to three miles or so. I came to road signs announcing a town ahead. The sunshine made the buildings inviting. I reached a coffee shop and the folks there were chatty and hospitable. I had breakfast. I did not say anything...how lucky I was several minutes before, up the road a bit.

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## A Switch in Life's Track

I was one of many draftsmen in the Survey Section of the Los Angeles Base Office of the Corps of Engineers. Although I studied architectural drafting in high school, I found myself working there because December the 7th had halted all private construction. My new work in surveying was a challenge, but I was unaware of the events that were about to change my life and vocation.



I was 18 years old, a devoted son of an immigrant widowed mother. I knew nothing about war meetings in Washington DC between Secretary of State Hull, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and Secretary of Navy Frank Knox. I knew less about the impor-

tance of the Panama Canal, the Inter-American or the Pan American Highway. I would soon learn a lot about them.

Normally I took the street car from Boyle Heights to work downtown, but this particular morning I rode with Mrs. Harrison, the mother of a girl friend, who also had her psychology office downtown. I mentioned the strange activity at the Corps where men with sun helmets, cowboy hats, Levis and boots were walking through our drafting room every day. When I asked who they were I was told that they were being recruited for survey of a highway to the Panama Canal.

Then Mrs. Harrison did a strange thing. She suddenly pulled up to the curb, turned to me and firmly said "Max, I want you to join that group!" I was taken by surprise as I was only one of her daughter's friends. Mrs. Harrison was deadly serious, pointing her finger at my face. Then we continued driving downtown while I remained silent in thought.

At work, I felt the twinge of excitement. I was bored with my sedentary job of inking lines and letters on 24-inch by 36-inch sheets of linen tracing paper. My God, I thought, my whole world is this damn drafting table surrounded by twenty other drafting tables. I looked around at the other men perched on

stools, hunched over their work. Oh, how I longed to be part of an important project, to be independent, and to be free of my widowed mother's smothering love. However, how could I leave her, I reminded myself. I was her only child and now her only support. On the other hand, I reasoned, I could send her money from Central America.

Finally, while riding the streetcar home, I decided to take the plunge. I was a man now, 150 pounds, 5'-9", and strong. I planned to be diplomatic and gentle in convincing my mother that a surveying job in Central America would be safe. Therefore, after dinner and cleaning the dishes, I started. "Mom, you know the minimum age for the military draft is twenty-one," I said gently.

"Yes, I know that. Why are you telling me?" she asked fearing that her restless son was planning to join the Marines where they accept eighteen-year-olds. Although Bronia Schwartz was only five feet tall, spoke broken English, and an immigrant from Russia, she demanded and got full respect from her only son. She looked at me carefully and waited to hear what I had to say.

"Well Mom, I have a chance to work on the Pan American Highway in Central America. I would be in the survey work like I am now." She sighed in relief. At least he didn't announce that he had joined the Marines.

"How long will you be away?"

"Just a year, Mom, it'll be good experience and I'll make more money. I'll write often and will send most of my pay home so you won't have to go back to work."

There was a long silence as she pondered all the alternatives and arguments. The money was not important. He'll be safe for a year and that is most important. Many of her friends have Gold Stars in their windows for sons fighting in the South Pacific or North Africa.

"Alright, but promise to write me every week, understand?" she tearfully ordered, and embraced me tightly. I smiled to myself thinking this is the biggest hurdle I had and it went by easy.

Whew, that wasn't as hard as I expected, I thought on my way to work the next morning. My mother gave in quickly. Of course, she had no other choice. The alternate was worse. But it was a relief to get her blessings.

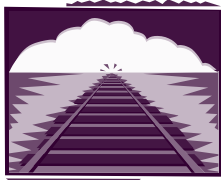
I felt free at last. Now I was on my own to pick my future. Designing picturesque houses and buildings was a thing of the past. My new hero was the rugged tanned surveyor trudging through the mountains with a transit and tripod on his shoulder.

*(Continued on page 13)*

(Continued from page 12)

Somewhere in my memory, I remembered reading that this was what the Corps of Engineers was all about. Even from the days of George Washington, the Corps designed and built the fortresses, harbors, and roads, all necessary for a new republic. Later, Corps surveyors like Lewis and Clark explored and mapped the sources of the Missouri River searching for a route to the Pacific. And of course, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers surveyed and built the Panama Canal.

My life was on a different track, and the switch was a lady named Mrs. Harrison.



- Max Schwartz



### The Garden

The beauty in life is not what you see  
In the air, or on the ground  
The beauty in you, and the beauty in me  
Makes this world go round.

A loving thought and one good deed  
Should be a daily duty.  
Each time you'll find you've pulled a weed  
From the Garden of inner beauty.

- Anne Faulkner



### Scents and Non-Scents

While the scent of fresh-brewing coffee will cause most adults to do an about-face and follow their nose, it does not have that same effect on an 8-year old. As I recall the era of my 8-year-oldness the

smell of coffee brewing was a constant at our house. It seemed to me that my mom and dad drank coffee 24 hours a day. It just blended in with the smell of my dad's pipe, my sisters' overdoses of perfume, and my three brothers' smelly tennis shoes. A pot-pourri that made scents and sense as in: *Yes, this is where I live.*

What did make my 8-year old nostrils snap to attention and salute was the smell of vanilla. That wonderful smell could lift me right out of bed, even in REM sleep, and send me scurrying to the kitchen. Vanilla has to be the elixir of the gods. The rich, sweet (but not too sweet), smooth, languid scent makes all other smells fade into non-scents.

Whenever Mom was baking it seemed that there was no recipe that did not call for 'one level teaspoon vanilla.' As I watched her take that dark brown arch-shaped bottle down from the cupboard I bombarded her with, "Can I put the vanilla in, please Mom? Can I, please? Please, can I?"

"All right, get the measuring spoons out," she'd say. "Take the one marked tsp., not the one marked tbsp. Be very careful and pour it slowly until the vanilla is level with the top of the spoon. Then pour the spoonful into the batter. Make sure you

pour it all in. Tap the spoon on the top edge of the bowl to be sure you got it all in there."

I did it exactly as she said. There was not a trace left in the spoon, but the spoon still smelled heavily and heavenly of vanilla. I inhaled every tiny last bit of residue. Cinnamon smells nice, so does nutmeg, but nothing comes anywhere near *eau de vanille*. It is the MVP of spices – holder of the Confectioners Medal of Honor.

As Mom stirred it into the batter and turned around to pour the mixture into the baking pan, I was in a scent-ual reverie holding the empty spoon under my nose. I was thinking about how everything with vanilla in it tastes so wonderful. If its smell can take you into ecstasy, its taste must be even better. Mom will never miss just one more level teaspoon.

While Mom's back was still turned I carefully poured another level teaspoon of vanilla, savored its wonderful aroma, and swallowed it down.

"AARGH! BLEK! BLAAAAH! Gag! Shudder! **WATER!** Cough! Cough! **WATER!**"

It was worse than castor oil! How could something that smelled so heavenly taste so hellish?

"Tried a little swig of it straight, did ya?" Mom asked, trying to stifle a hearty belly laugh. "Things don't always turn out as you expect, do they? Let's wash the taste out of your mouth with some tea and fresh-baked pecan rolls."

"That sounds really good," I said. After a pause, I said, "I thought that ..."

"I know," Mom soothed.

- Rita Keeley Brown

## SAVING GAS

Some things are plain stupid although well intended. Conserving gas in the

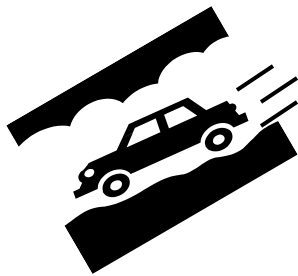


1960s when gas was thirty-five cents a gallon may seem strange by today's prices. But when I was a college student living on a department store sales clerk's salary, frugality was my motto.

My dad bought me a used small English-made car, a 1957 Hillman Minx. He paid for the license registration fees and insurance; I had to pay for the gas and oil. Water for the radiator and air for the tires were free from the local Mobile station.

In order to stretch the few dollars in my job, I came up with an idea to save on gasoline: I would coast rather than use gas. The Hillman was already a small economy car, but I took it a step further and developed a habit of putting the manual shift car in neutral and coasting whenever possible. Almost without exception I was in neutral coming to every stop.

One day, driving home westward on Parthenia St., I saw the signal was red at Hayvenhurst Avenue. I put the car in neutral hoping the red light would change to green and I could slip into second gear and keep going through the intersection. I hadn't judged the distance, my speed, and the



duration of the red light that well, so I had to brake to a stop. Damn, I thought, I was so close to the green.

Unfortunately, my little car did not stop. A new big heavy American-made, nine-passenger station wagon heading north on Hayvenhurst, hit me as the driver went through the intersection on his amber light. Surely, he must have thought my Minx was stopping.

BAM! and I was sent sailing through the intersection! First came the post and sign reading *No Stopping At Any Time*. WAP! And it disappeared. Next came two sections of five-foot tall chain linked fencing before I came to a stop. Naturally, I had pushed on the brake as hard as I could - why didn't I stop? After the dust had cleared I discovered that I had my foot on the clutch and not the brake!

No one was badly hurt. However, I carry a dent in my thigh to this day from the window crank. The Minx's front door was dented and the frame suddenly a little narrower than before. The storage shelf that ran the width of the car under the dash was bent up in the middle.

After I was towed home and got a lecture from my father. Then I told my little economy car that I would pay for the extra gas and promised not to coast again. We rode together for a few more years.

- Andrea L. Polk

## Dues Are Due

**Our CWC treasurer is now accepting renewal dues. Renewal is \$45.00. Please make your check payable to CWC/SFV and send to**

**Pirhiya Goldstein  
11731 Porter Valley Drive  
Porter Ranch, CA 91326**

**Please include a note if there are any changes in your postal address, phone or email address. New members will pay an extra \$20.00 one-time fee.**

**Those who wait until September 30 to renew will pay \$65.00, which includes the inaugural fee.**

## Note from Sheila

Sheila Moss lost her husband, Jerry, this past summer. Yolanda Fintor gave the family a floral display to represent the sympathies of our SFV/CWC membership. Sheila sent this note to our membership:

*Dear California Writers,  
July 15, 2011*



*Your beautiful bouquet in its uniquely designed vase has brought joy and comfort to our hearts. ... It's truly a comfort to have such friends.*

*Sincerely,  
Sheila and family*





"Hello, Weight Winner ladies," said Wanda. "Since we started meetin' here at the mall, you've lost, altogether, 478 and 1/2 pounds! Give each other a high five!"

Most of her WW membership gleefully whacked hands right and left, but Wanda spotted a glum face in the back row.

She hushed the crowd and said, "Sometimes we lose and feel like a real winner. But sometimes we give in to temptation and just HAVE to have a couple cookies or that second helping of ravioli. Right? I know all about those urges, ladies. Yes sir, I fought the Battle of the Bulge and lost time and again. But ... and I mean, butt, ha ha, which is five sizes smaller now, I WON THE WAR! So can you!"

"YAAAY, Wanda!"

"So why do I see someone cryin'? I mean YOU, Roberta. Stand up and tell us why you're bawlin'. Did you gain weight this week, honey?"

"Nope. I lost two pounds."

"What's wrong? Tell us."

"Okay, here goes: I joined Weight Winners to get thin and find a boy friend," Roberta began, "I was so tired of sitting home alone. I wanted to be loved. Have a good time. Know what I mean?"

"Yes, Roberta! Sure do! Wanna be loved! Amen!" the group chorused.

"Okay, quiet down, group, and let the lady tell her story," said Wanda.

Everyone refocused on Roberta who was pulling Kleenexes out of her purse.

"This membership has been my second go-round in Weight Winners, but this time I didn't cheat. Not once. Cross my heart. So I'm slimmer now, and sometimes I wear sexy clothes like I always wanted to wear. And a few months ago, I started going to dance clubs with my girl friends. Finally, I met guys."

Roberta stopped to dab at her eyes.

"And?" prompted Wanda.

"I found my dream guy, Kenny. Love at first sight. We've been seeing each other every week-end. Last night, he asked me to marry him. I said, 'Yes!' But ... big mistake 'cause now I'm miserable again." She wiped her eyes.

The women buzzed like a hive hit by a stick.

"You're miserable with your dream guy, Roberta? You got us all confused. Why aren't you smilin' today? You're gonna shop for a ring!"

"Because I know it won't last. I'll get fat again and lose him." Roberta sobbed into her Kleenex.

"What the ... HAY ... is your problem? I don't get it! You're a Weight Winner and you're going to stay that way! Right, ladies?"

"Right, Wanda!"

"I'll tell you all why," said Roberta. She stood and looked around the gathering. "Kenny owns the Buttercream Bakery. And Angelo's Pizza!"

Everyone moaned and tsk-tsked.

"Oh, Lord. You're gonna marry a man who comes home smellin' like sugar and spice and everythin' nice?"

Roberta nodded. "And he always offers me special stuff from his restaurants if I go to his apartment. He doesn't like me to say no."

Wanda walked behind the podium and then looked Roberta in the eye.

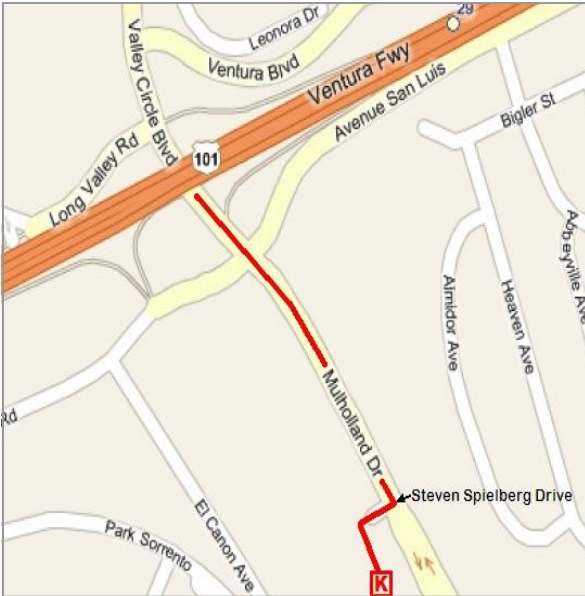
"You're right, honey. Can't help you here in Weight Winners. I don't perform no miracles and don't give no refunds!"

"I was afraid you'd say that."

Wanda waved good-bye as Roberta hurriedly left the meeting.

(to be continued in the October issue)

- 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, Sept. 3, 2011 at **1:00** p.m.

## MAILING ADDRESS

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