



**JANUARY  
2012**

# The Valley Scribe

Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley

## How To Promote and Present

**M**ary Rose Betten, an experienced and acclaimed actress/essayist/comedienne/author, is coming to the Katzenberg room to demonstrate basic presentation techniques for new authors.

Presentation techniques? Perhaps you are thinking: *Shouldn't an editor or an adult reader of my work be able to imagine a scene and hear my characters' dialog in his or her mind? I don't claim to be a showman. I'm a writer. Presentation techniques are for a drama class.*

Indeed, writers often expect that their words will speak for themselves, but perhaps that's wishful thinking. Betten strongly believes that people need to hear – out loud -- the emotion, the authentic voice, the right emphasis on the right words, to appreciate an author's descriptive passages and the characters' dialog.

If you, an author, invest time and effort into your writing, why not put an additional bit of ef-



**Mary Rose Betten**

fort into selling your work?

To this end, Betten will demonstrate how to give your well-chosen words that extra dimension which might influence and impress listeners. Her own presentation will entertain as well as instruct our members.

Mary Rose Betten visited the Katzenberg Room a few years ago and certainly practiced

what she preached. We were charmed, amused and definitely entertained. Her return is anticipated by those who enjoyed her earlier visit. For a review of Betten's long list of literary credits and accomplishments, visit our SFV/CWC website:

[cwc-sfv.org](http://cwc-sfv.org)

If you join us on Saturday you're invited to bring one minute of your own material to read out loud.

- K. Highcove

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The two most engaging powers of a good author are to make new things familiar and familiar things new.

-William Makepeace Thackeray

## west valley whimsicals

A Schwartz / Highcove Production

### A Gift She Can't Refuse

**H**er children meant well. And that's why Thelma found herself staring at a brand new computer in her home office.



She was hesitant to try it out. It looked so complicated.

"You can do it, Mom. Here's E-mail," said son Harry, and his hands

whizzed around the keys. "Here's Attachments." And again he morphed into Houdini and Thelma felt like the magician's clueless assistant. After her son went home, there sat Thelma, staring at the glowing screen, still afraid to touch a key. She had to find help managing this powerful machine ... but where to look?

Sound familiar? If so, here are helpful hints from our SFV members who've had to learn or re-

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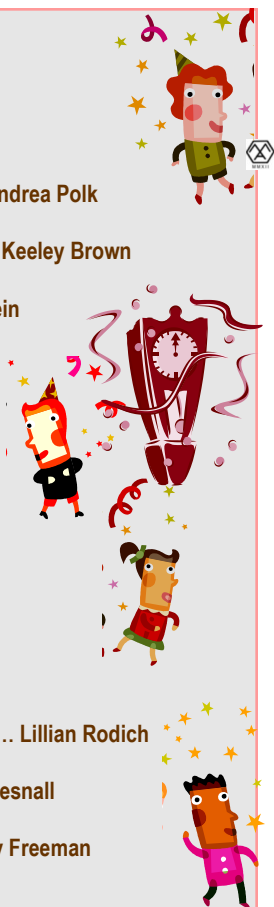
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## Looking Back While Sailing On

The New Year may traditionally be a time of new beginnings, but it's also an appropriate time to assess events of the immediate past.

The year 2011 was an important year for our San Fernando Valley Branch.

First and foremost, in June 2011, the West Valley Branch merged with the San Fernando Valley Branch. This unification doubled our talents and increased our networking opportunities.

Looking back on our 2011 speakers, we've been enlightened on text structure, composition techniques, public speaking and the intricacies of the social media. Our researchers learned how to navigate our city's extensive library system. We were encouraged to access our unconscious self in the development of visual imagery and lyrical language and what it means to "write the marble."

In 2011 some members taught writing classes or were guest speakers at other groups' gatherings. Many members in our branch honed their writing skills while attending classes, workshops or conferences.

There were individual success stories as well. Many of our members published fiction, non-fiction books, memoirs, book reviews and short stories. Our playwrights' dramas were performed in local productions. Several members were recipients of prestigious awards.

Our board is making plans for our 2012 gatherings.. The February meeting will be a Book Bazaar. The entire meeting will be dedicated to members who are marketing their own books this year. Each author will be given a short time at the podium to describe their work or read excerpts. This exercise will give members an opportunity to sharpen their marketing and promoting skills--skills they will need at any book signing event. If you are a yet-to-be published writer, come and get some pointers.

On this hopeful note of creative output by our branch membership, I wish you all a fruitful and consuming year of writing in 2012.

- Yolanda Fintor



(Continued from page 1)

learn computer skills to stay active on the Net:

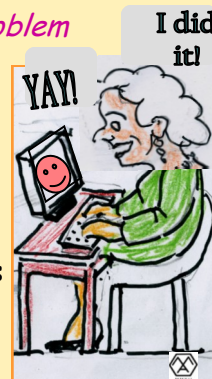
**Ester Shifren:** *I have used many methods, including Lynda.com that my son-in-law subscribes to. He's a MAC consultant. I've googled questions and had terrific help from that source. I've also used YouTube—there are videos covering most computer info. MAC users attend free workshops, and PCs also have workshops or online help. Writers' clubs have members who have overcome some of the probs and they're always helpful. Pals who publish pass around pointers, Ester has found.*

**Sheila Moss:** *After 10 years my dear Dell sputtered and coughed, "Slow to Respond, Windows is shutting down." Help. I needed to write, email and do some basic research. Enter my oldest son Aaron with a new Hewlett Packard PC in tow. HP created a*

*user friendly email system. I no longer fear that I'll lose my work. I plan to retain a teen for techie help in the near future. Aha, the geek mobile for Shelia.*

**Leslie Kaplan:** *When my new sexy computer named Mac won't cooperate I just say, "The heck with YOU!" On a serious note, I've had tutors who've helped me temporarily but a new problem inevitably pops up. Seems my brain is better at art, singing, dancing, designing, fashion, home decorating and story telling. I'm good at what I love and enjoy ... not so good with hi-tech or mechanics. Leslie emails and keeps her Mac turned on.*

To sum up: Thelma can find help on the Net, from friends/relatives, or her local geek. But — **Persistence is the key!**



# How to Blog For Fun and according to



Bill Belew

**B**ill Belew, our December speaker, was a man on a mission. He came to spread the gospel of blogdom and to convert the recalcitrant SFV writer who still resists taking the plunge into the mainstream of social media.

"I'm here because I care about your good stories, and I want your messages to get out on the Internet," Belew told us. "I believe there are **three kinds of writers**. Some writers want to write purely for their own enjoyment. Some writers want to share their writing with readers. And some writers -- MY kind of writers --- write to be read and paid for their writing. If you're writing for free, how come? "

And then he outlined how writers can write their good story, get it online and earn cash -- hopefully -- for their creative efforts.

Through trial and error, Belew has developed a system meant to transform a blogger beginner into a knowledgeable mainstream networker. During his speech, Belew projected a power point outline of his beginner bloggers' program. There's not space in this newsletter to fully report on Belew's tips and principles of blogdom, but here's the bottom line:

The most basic need is to decide **what** to blog about, and then start writing. Once the topic is decided, one writes and writes to attract Internet surfers, posting about 100 to 200 words a day, totalling 800 to 1200 posts in a year. Therefore, **quantity** is a key element of Belew's plan. Secondly, newbie bloggers must be mindful of **quality control** in the daily posting. They should take time to study blogdom by going online and googling "blogs." Many websites will pop up on screen. Or simply type in "Bill Belew" and you'll see several websites, tips, and workshops on the subject of blogging proficiency.

Belew emphasized that a serious blogger should determine key words that attract search engines to their site. For example, if a blogger were to write about the prevalence of blue jean apparel in our American society, these words might be inserted into the daily posts: *denim, fashion, cowboy, comfort*, and so on.

A blog site needs continual care. Bill emphasizes **consistency** or daily posts into a blog or blogs. If material stimulates reader interest, the blog will attract a following, which may eventually attract the Big Guy search engines. Big name brands pay to be mentioned on popular blog sites, which leads us to the final precept of the Belew Blogger Plan: **blog longevity**. The following quote from Belew's site <http://billbelew.com> explains the term **longevity**: *A magic number (for a posted blog) is six-nine-twelve months When the search engines learn that a blog has been active for this many months, with a number of blogs being consistently posted, the findability of the blog site increases. More people will have found the site and a higher page rank assigned. The higher the page rank, the easier it is for new searchers to find the blog. The higher the page rank, the easier to get new readers.*

Bill Belew has more tips in his book: *How to Get One Million Unique Visitors to Your Website*. He is a true resource for new bloggers on how to post their message, attract a faithful following, and perhaps earn cash for their stories.

-- Kathy Highcove

## CENTRAL COAST WRITERS

"California Gold"

**2012 SPRING WRITING CONTEST**

**\$250 Award in Four Categories:**

**Best Rhymed Poem -- Best Unrhymed Poem**

**Best Short Story -- Best Short Non-Fiction**

**Entry fee discount for members of California Writers Club**

**Postmark deadline: 1/31/12**

**Details & Rules at: [www.centralcoastwriters.org](http://www.centralcoastwriters.org)**



Norm Molesko

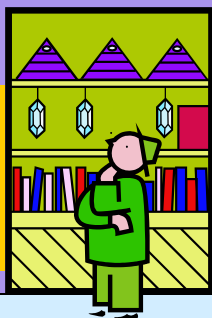
**N**orm Molesko was part of a poetry session presented by the Valley Contemporary Poets at the Cobalt on December 13th. "**I was the featured poet.**"

**The Cobalt has** Open Mic as a regular feature, by the way, so... poets of the SFV bring that poetry of yours to share sometime in the near future!

The Cobalt Cafe is at 22047 Sherman Way, Canoga Park, CA. 91303 The location is just west of Topanga Blvd. Park behind the Cobalt or on the street.

## Market To Market

by Ken Watts



Nelson Literary Agency specializes in commercial fiction and high-caliber literary fiction. Submissions: Query by e-mail only. Select Nonfiction: Actively seeking Latina writers who tackle contemporary issues in a modern voice. Seeking: Mem-

oirs. Seeking: Fiction(commercial), literary, mainstream, women's) chick lit (includes mysteries), romance (includes fantasy with romantic elements, sci-fi, fantasy, young adult.) Doesn't want: short story collections, mysteries (except chick lit), thrillers, Christian, horror, or children's picture book. Contact: Kristin Nelson—pres and senior lit agent, Sara Megibow—associate lit agent. Address: 1732 Wazee St., Suite 207, Denver CO 80202. E-mail: [query@nelsonagency.com](mailto:query@nelsonagency.com) Website: [www.nelsonagency.com](http://www.nelsonagency.com)

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### Something To Ponder

Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt.

— William Shakespeare



## HELP WANTED CWC Critique Group Facilitator



*We need  
someone kind  
and tactful --  
like Lillian!*

### JOB DESCRIPTION

1. Assist CWC members in finding a critique group suiting their needs.
2. Help members form a new group when needed.
3. Inform group members about basic protocol in running meetings.
4. Establish a basic atmosphere of trust and respect.
5. Gain access to valuable critiquing.

### PERKS

1. This is a truly a rewarding job. You get to know fellow writers better and make new and interesting friends.
2. Not too much time is involved. Present facilitator will be available to help if needed..

**TRY IT, YOU'LL LIKE IT.**

### Contact

Lil Rodich [lrodich@yahoo.com](mailto:lrodich@yahoo.com)

## Two More for Erica



The December issue of the children's magazine **Nature Friend** contains two articles of mine. And I recently got a notice that **Spider Magazine** accepted a poem, but it might not appear for two or three years.

— Erica Stux

## The Comma – Part Two

To review ... Last month in Part One I warned not to use a comma just because you feel that a comma “belongs there” or because you detect some kind of a “hesitation” in that part of the sentence. Go by the rules. **And whenever you're in doubt and can't remember the rule, leave the comma out.** You'll be right more times than you're wrong.

### Introductory Expressions

Use a comma after introductory expressions like *yes*, *no*, *oh*, and *well*.

*Yes, Jim is applying for a scholarship.*

*Well, he probably won't get it since he's got just an average GPA.*

*Oh, you didn't know his grandmother is a long-time trustee?*

### Confusing Sentence Parts

Use a comma to separate sentence parts for clarity.

*Whenever possible, our Congress seems to put off decisions.*

### Modifiers

Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives modifying the same noun.

*Marci got a new, challenging project: aide to Senator Mallory.*

### Repeated Words

Use a comma to separate repeated words.

*Whomever she loved, loved her back.*

### Dates

Use commas before and after the year when the year is used in combination with the month and the day.

*The club moved on October 1, 2008, and increased membership.*

But don't use commas when just the month and year are given.

*The last time he was arrested for DUI was sometime in May 2007.*

### Addresses

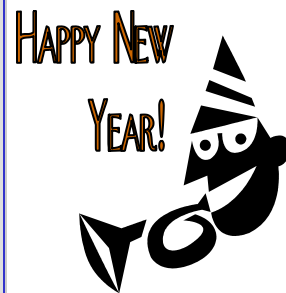
Use a comma between the city and the state, but don't use commas after the parts of the address and never between the state and the zip code.

*Andy Griffith*

*29 Maple Avenue*

*Mayberry, SC 56034*

— Dave Wetterberg



*Yesterday, everybody smoked his last cigar, took his last drink and swore his last oath. To-day, we are a pious and exemplary community.*

*Thirty days from now, we shall have cast our reformation to the winds and gone to cutting our ancient shortcomings considerably shorter than ever.*

~Mark Twain



## HAVE TROWEL, WILL TRAVEL OR HOW I GOT MY GROOVE BACK

**M**idlife crisis. It's a phrase you see in magazine articles, and it's a feeling that, looking back on life, you know that something has been left undone. I had realized for some time now that my life had felt a bit stagnant. Don't get me wrong. I have a good life and much to be grateful for, including a terrific husband and two grown children, plus a steady job working for a library that I love. Still, every day has begun to feel like a dull repeat of the day before -- a long commute, a full day of work, and by Saturday just wanting some extra sleep. Life had taken on a sort of dull glaze.

I've certainly pursued my hobbies. I've dabbled in jewelry making and taken many stabs at writing a novel, and as an adult I've learned to swim and I got in shape to run a few 5K races. Archaeology, however, was a childhood dream that I'd allowed to just sit. I had taken an introductory archaeology class years ago when we lived in Orange County and volunteered a little at a curation lab in the archaeology department of a local university. I'd hoped to be able to go back to school for a second graduate degree in archaeology but it was not in the cards. So, for years I let the archaeology bug lay dormant.

Lately, every time something archaeology-related would come on Discovery Channel or History Channel, I would start my little rant... "See, Those people are doing it! They're doing it, why aren't I doing it!"

My daughter would yell, "Mom! So just do it already!"

At some point a few years ago, I had learned of a volunteer program of the US Forest Service called Passport in Time. I decided it was time to revisit the idea. I saw one upcoming project in Arizona that intrigued me. It was surveying and doing surface detection at the site of an old mining town. When I described the project to my husband, his response was "So, are you going to apply?" I was not prepared for that level of support. Now I had no excuses! "What?"

I responded. "I can't just go off for a week on my own and use up my vacation time!" It would be so impractical. And yet ... part of me really wanted to go. It was like having two voices in my head arguing...pursuit of dreams vs. practicality.

In the end, my dream-pursuing half won out. I signed up and waited to hear if I was in. A couple of weeks later, I got a call from the Forest Service. I was indeed on the team! In the following weeks, my excitement morphed into intense nervousness. How would I really cope with driving ten hours to Arizona by myself and volunteering to do something at which I was a complete newbie!

After one mishap on an Arizona highway in which the underside of my car encountered a blown out tire fragment, the rest

of my trip was uneventful. I made it into town, checked into my motel, and the next day reported for duty at the ranger station in the Tonto National Forest. My fears were immediately relieved when I met the rest of the crew -- all retirees and multiple Passport in Time volunteers, and Steve, the archaeologist. To my relief, I blended in perfectly with my jeans, backpack and metal detector. Each day we met up at



Anne Olivier on a dig for artifacts.  
She holds up her "first find."

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a rendezvous point and got to the actual site – the ghost town of McMillenville – by hiking across a highway, under a fence and over rocks with our metal detectors and backpacks in tow. Our mission was to find evidence of an Apache Indian raid that occurred in the early 1880s. Of particular interest were bullets and bullet casings, as well as any evidence of the daily life of the town. We used metal detectors to pinpoint metal objects close to the surface, such as bullet casings, cans and hand forged nails. We quickly learned how to tell the difference between modern and period nails and cans. Modern nails are round while the 19<sup>th</sup> century nails were squared, indicating that they were hand forged. My very first day, I found the neck of a bottle. Later I found a portion of a heavy chain, very likely from a wagon chain. And on the very last day of detecting, I found a prized bullet casing! Each day's routine involved rising at 6 am to ensure that I had a proper serving of morning coffee, to meet up with the gang at about 8:00. A full morning of either metal detecting or artifact recording followed with just a brown bag lunch break. The day's work ended around 4 or a bit later, and we all got into the routine of meeting up for dinner.

By the time I got back to my room each night, I was tired and my muscles ached, but I was happy as I could be. On the drive home I took myself to breakfast at my favorite restaurant, the Cracker Barrel. I stopped at a rock shop in Quartzite where I chatted with a charming older gentleman who was so pleased with my rock and mineral purchases that he gave me a tigers eye necklace and a hug! I learned the fine art of metal detecting, how artifacts were recorded and plotted on the map, and how to enjoy the fine art of being alone and loving it!

— Anne Olivier

## Pegasus



I'm far too lazy for therapy today.

For clutching the reins of my imagination  
to hold its head pointing to the ground  
and break its spirit.

No.

Instead, I think I'll let the steed run free.

And jump up on its back.

And let it try to buck me off,

as it capers to the moon,

or the sun,

or the city dump,

or wherever the scents of clover and sage  
and cool water lure it.

Or maybe I'll loll in the shade of the porch  
and watch it cavort and leap  
until it vaults the rail of the corral  
and, joyful, speeds to places I can't go.

Tonight, it will come home  
and whisper what it's seen.

— Ray Malus



*Pegasus* was recently published by an ezine called **Bright Light Café**, along with two other pieces by SFV member Ray Malus. Read Ray's submissions at this Australian site: <http://brightlightmultimedia.com/blcafe/ShowcasedTalent-Writing-L-Z.htm>

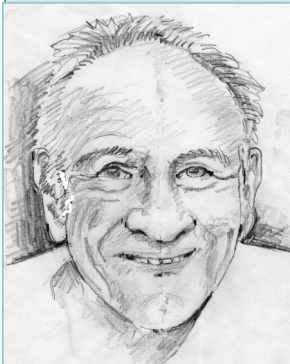


By happy coincidence, I have a flash fiction story in the same ezine. Here's my place on this website: <http://brightlightmultimedia.com/blcafe/ShrtStories-AgedButMellow.htm>

— Kathy Highcove

## The Kinship

By Max Schwartz



In 1990 my wife Clara and I attended an international engineering conference in Israel. I thought it was purely a professional excursion. I never dreamed it was the beginning of a much unexpected personal quest.

It began on a guided tour through the Old City of Jerusalem. "Overhead you will see a good example of Herodian workmanship." Our guide pointed out the underground vault adjacent to the Temple Mount. The group moved on, but I motioned Clara to pause a moment.

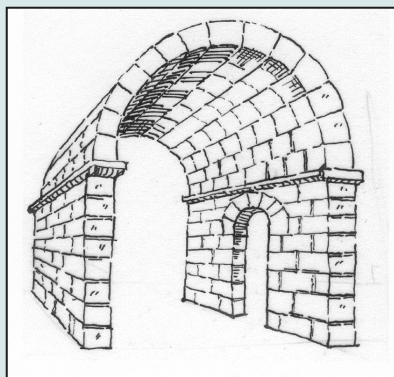
"This is amazing," I said. "A four-part groin vault. It's a very complex structure. Look – the spring line and haunch had to be measured without error. See how the four arches meet in the crown? The keystones had to be positioned exactly."

"This was made more than two thousand years ago," Clara said. "How did they do it?"

"I don't know," I answered. "These vaults and the remains of the Temple Mount are marvels of engineering. Even with modern computers and technology, it would take real expertise to carve and fit these massive stones!"

We hurried to catch up with the group. But my imagination had been captivated. Who were these ancient workmen? How did they do what they did? What motivated them?

The rest of the conference sped by. But even after we returned to the United States, I couldn't shake my fascination with the Temple Mount and

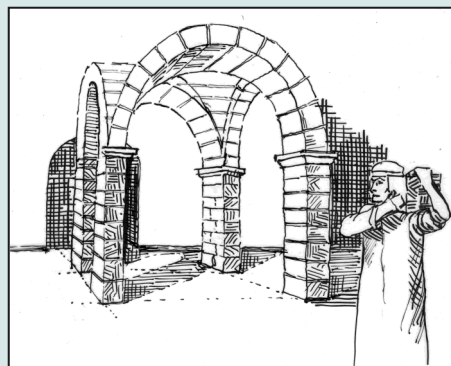


vaults and the men who built them. On building projects and work sites around Los Angeles, I continued to imagine myself in those ancient engineer's shoes, trying to approximate the calcula-

tions of that vault.

This became an odd obsession and I decided that the only way to get it off my mind was to go back to Jerusalem and do some research.

Clara eagerly agreed to accompany me, especially when I suggested we skip the prepackaged tours and rent our own apartment near the Old City. But Clara was skeptical about my motives. "Nothing but professional curiosity?" she asked. "Your interest is only in the history of architecture — not the history of your people?"



No, this was purely professional curiosity, I assured myself.

I'd been fascinated by the history of architecture and engineering ever

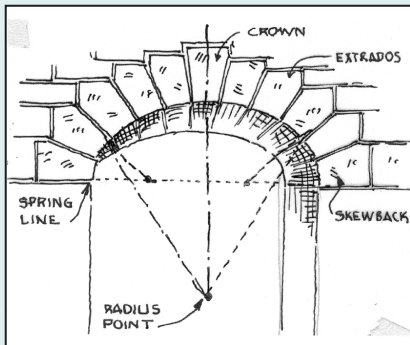
since my teens, when I attended Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles. There I met my mentor, Master Architect Claude Augustus Faithfull. He fostered in me a love for the history of his art and a respect for its pioneers. Babylonian, Persian, Roman, and Byzantine — even the exotic names were intoxicating. But as for Clara's suggestion that I was drawn to Jerusalem out of some yearning to more about "my" people, that was simply not so.

As I grew up in Los Angeles in the 30s and 40s, it seemed to my young mind that many of the people I knew had come from other lands. They spoke with pride of the Old Country, whether they had been born there or simply heard stories at family gatherings and holidays. I didn't have that. My parents had barely escaped from Russia with their lives in the turbulent 20s. I was born in America and my father died when I was seven. When my mother spoke of their little village in the Ukraine, she never told sentimental stories. Instead she spoke of revolution, hunger and

*(Continued on page 9)*

pogroms against the Jews. When my mother talked about her old life it was with anger – or tears.

“Clara,” I said gently, “you know the Ukrainian village our families came from was completely destroyed during the war. Any relatives left in Eastern Europe were lost in the Holocaust. Now that my mother’s dead, the only ‘people’ that I have left are you and our children.”



Clara didn’t answer, but I knew she saw things differently. In many ways she herself was the only link with the past. Shortly after

WWII, my mother saw a familiar face while riding the trolley – Eva Farkas, a childhood friend from Russia. Eva had a daughter, and soon I was on the trolley myself, heading for the Farkas home. Their daughter was slender and smiling with a full head of reddish-brown curls. Two and a half years later we were married.

Clara took her faith seriously. She made sure we attended temple and celebrated holy days, and she kept a kosher kitchen. I supported her so that our children would acquire the sense of heritage I lacked.

Somehow over the years, faith had become an empty formality for me. I transferred my historical interest from family ties to architecture. Even as a boy, when my mother spoke to me in Yiddish I answered in English. This was America, not Russia, and a world of opportunity lay ahead!

Those opportunities were interrupted by World War II. Construction in the United States ground to a halt as architects and engineers joined the war effort. My high school training got me a job as a surveyor on the Pan American Highway from the U.S.-Mexican border to the Panama Canal. After a year, I joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

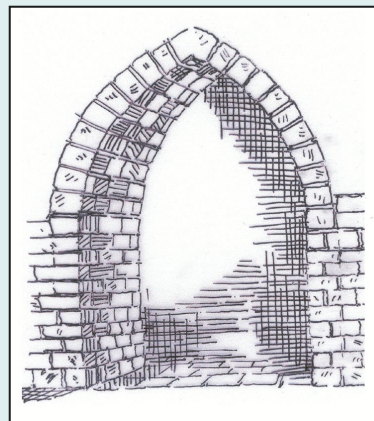
The army engineers always prepared for the possibility they’ll have to build where modern tools and equipment aren’t

available, so our 20<sup>th</sup> Century training was in ancient techniques. Some of my buddies grumbled, but I loved it! We learned to survey by using the Southern Cross (the north star isn’t visible from many places in Central America), and we were taught to build roads and bridges using manpower and rigging of wood poles, ropes and pulleys. I felt a kinship with engineers from centuries before.

As the war ended and the Axis armies retreated across Europe, they literally burned their bridges behind them. I was part of the military engineers who followed, rebuilding the roads and bridges that had been destroyed. Our job was not unlike that of the ancient Roman Army. They also had a band of engineers with them to rebuild and repair roads and fortifications newly won. I liked to imagine those ancient experts beside us as we studied the bridges, many of them centuries old, to design modern replacements that would fit with the old.

It was no wonder, then, that the builders of the Temple in Jerusalem had stimulated my professional curiosity. Clara and I bought our tickets and began to pack.

The Old City was a cacophony of sights sounds and smells that stimulated memories of our earlier trip. I was eager to return to the architectural sites, but my research had to begin with written records. There were many scholarly texts and research papers to study.



In addition, I found I had to go back to the most valuable text, the Scriptures. I was amazed by all the information about engineering and architecture in them – from the exact size of Noah’s ark to the plans for the First

Temple!

As I read and studied background material on the Temple itself, I made some surprising discoveries. For one thing, I found there were often great similarities in the temples of ancient societies. When one nation conquered another, it attempted to impose

(Continued from page 9)

its gods on the defeated nation. Most nations worshiped numerous gods, associating them with various elements of creation — the sky, the earth or the crops.

Israel, with its devotion to one true God, was a notable exception. What did God look like? Not a bull or a fish, as other religions suggested. Yahweh was not a king god or a sea god, but a God of all being. He made humans in His image, but they were not to make images of Him (Exodus 20:4, 5).

The God of Israelites simply could not be cooped up in a building. As the Israelites wandered in the desert, their God was with them. Wherever they set up the tabernacle tent, that became God's holy place.

When the Jews finally settled in the land God promised them, they wanted a single temple, centrally located, where all Israel could worship together. King David found the site, Jerusalem. His son, Solomon, reigning over the economic and military glory years of Israel, built the beautiful Temple on Mount Moriah, where tradition held that Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac. Solomon's Temple was built in seven years (967 to 960 B.C.) and stood for nearly four centuries until the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it in 587 B.C.

Centuries later, King Herod (37 B.C. to 4 A.D.), hated by the Jews for buddying up to the conquering Romans, tried to prove his devotion to his people by rebuilding the Temple. This Temple was much larger and more ornate than Solomon's. The faithful came here not only to worship and sacrifice, but also to discuss the Scriptures with learned teachers and rabbis.

As I now paced the stones of the Temple Mount, I felt beside me the presence of engineers who had brought the limestone blocks from a nearby quarry, hauled on rollers and hoisted by giant wooden cranes. As we walked together, I developed a great kinship with these Master Builders. I knew they were not

using their skills for the glory of Herod, but for the glory of God. Their study and devotion was the measure of their faith. Though most of the blocks measured 3 feet by 16 feet, some blocks were 35 feet long. One of Hebrews remarked on the awesome beauty of the Temple, "Look, Rabbi! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

As I touched those stones, I realized that for a place of worship to have a pull that lasted for centuries — from the time of King

David to this very day — the God it was designed to worship was different.

The prayers below me at the Western Wall mingled Hebrew, English, Russian, French, Hungarian — and I realized that "my people" were not the people of Los Angeles, or the people of the Schwartz family. "My people" were the people of God, with a spiritual heritage that did not come from one country or another.

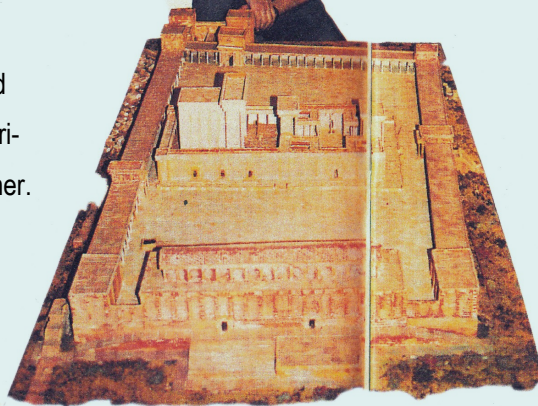
The heritage came from the God who cannot be contained in a building, who is with His people through any wilderness.

My interest in ancient engineering has increased since then. But I know now that Clara was right. It was more than a professional pilgrimage that took me back to Jerusalem. I'd thought I was in search of ancient Master Builders — never suspecting I'd discover that their purpose in building so many years ago was to invite people to meet the true Master Builder. All these centuries later, I'm living proof that the invitation still stands.

*Great buildings that move the spirit have always been rare. In every case they are unique, poetic, products of the heart.*

Arthur Erickson

Max and his  
model of the  
Second Temple  
Mount.



Max's reconstruction: *He studied the writings of Josephus before he prepared plans for the Second Temple Mount and all the buildings, using dimensions given by Josephus. He even included some of the Roman siege engines such as Battering Ram and Siege Tower.*

## Her Kind of Liquid Refreshment



**I**'m a swimmer. I've been swimming since I was a kid. My mother taught me. When we visited my grandparents in Northern Michigan she'd

take me to Elk Lake to swim.

I loved the feel of the water as it swept over my shoulders and arms. I'd turn over on my back and kick my feet as I looked at the blue sky above. I was in a different world...a beautiful, beautiful world.

When the Depression swarmed down upon us, my father lost his job with the Detroit Police Department. I was nine years old when we had to move from Detroit to live at my grandparents' house in Williamsburg, ten miles from Elk Lake. My grandparents had passed away and we had their whole eight bedroom house to ourselves. I was filled with joy. Being close to Elk Lake I could practice my swimming every

day...and I did. Who knew there was a big Depression going on? When I got lonely I would just swim away my loneliness, then pull myself out of the water, feeling relaxed and happy

After three years my father was rehired and we moved back to Detroit. That was a sad day for me. I wouldn't have Elk Lake nearby any more. But when I was fourteen I joined the YMCA. I improved my swimming and learned to dive and play tennis. Consequently, in high school I joined the swimming team, diving team, and tennis team. Then I went on to Michigan State and majored in Physical Education.

Many years later I'm still swimming at the Y two days a week. Last May I swam in the State of California Senior Games at the Rose Bowl and I won three gold medals. This coming May I will compete in the National Senior swimming meets at the Rose Bowl, and we'll see what we will see. Win or lose...I'll enjoy every minute of it.

— Gloria Kositchek

## A MIRACLE AND AN INSPIRATION

Marie, who now prefers to be called Milagros, (Miracle in Spanish), is one of the bravest people I know. I'll explain ...

I first met Milagros, a stylist at my hair salon, when my regular hairdresser was not available. I had noticed her in the shop because she worked with only one arm. I was a bit skeptical that Milagros could style my hair but made an appointment anyway. When I came that day she coifed my hair beautifully. While working, in response to my questions, Milagros opened up and spoke candidly about the tragic loss of her right arm. She told me, *I married someone I thought was the perfect man for me. On our honeymoon, we traveled to Cancun, Mexico, rented a car, and took the 'Dead Road' to Chetunal to visit family and friends. 'The Dead Road is a brutal highway for motorists; three or four fatal crashes occur daily.*

*My husband had been drinking all day and shouldn't have driven anywhere that evening. He insisted. I fell asleep in the passenger seat while he drove. The car missed a curve, turned over several times, and trapped the two of us inside. We were in*

*the middle of nowhere. Our cell phone wouldn't work. Fortunately an American motorist saw the accident and used his cell phone to call emergency services.*

*The ambulance came and took us both to a hospital. The doctors had to amputate my right arm. My husband didn't have a scratch!*

As Milagros related her story, tears streamed down her face. I urged her to tell me how she got well and went back to work.

She said, *I told myself that I will survive. I will gather strength, and once again work as a hairdresser and in my garden. As soon as I returned home I picked up my gardening shears with my left hand and went out to pick flowers. I did it! I kept trying until I could also knit, crochet and drive a car! I am able to do all these things with the help of my God, and with the support of my loving family and friends. My husband cared little about me after I lost my arm. I divorced him, of course!*

After I heard her story, I decided that Milagros is a person to be much admired. She is courageous and determined to live her life to the fullest. She is truly a miracle and an inspiration.

— Helen Katzman

## Reunion

Earic rolled over on his pallet, cursing the cold and the soldiers who had taken his cloak. True, he'd seized it himself on his last raid, but common courtesy demanded that they wait until he was dead before they divided the spoil. He had, but these were mere hirelings, mercenaries. He felt frost on the straw of his bedding. Well, if he froze to death, it would just rob the sheriff of one victim. He closed his eyes and dozed off again.

Silence woke him. Pale moonlight filtered into his cell. Raising himself on one elbow, he looked about. Everything appeared familiar. No, not quite, the iron door seemed slightly ajar. Was it a trap? Still, the quiet was odd. He rose and investigated.

His eyes had not deceived him; the door was open. Hearing nothing, he tugged gently. The hinges creaked, but no one came to check. Earic tiptoed into the deserted corridor. No one challenged him. He peered into the guardroom. Empty. Strange, but he wasn't one to waste opportunities. The dozing sentry at the gate never woke again. Earic took his keys, opened the gate, and disappeared into the forest.

He hid and listened for sounds of pursuit before seeking the gang's hideout. Had they captured his men, too? He heard voices and crept closer. No, they were all there: Oswyn, Beorn, Godric, Selwin—he had worried about Selwin—and the others. Aelric, his deputy, was speaking.

"Should we wait for Earic, or shall we leave and let him catch up later?"

Cerdic objected. "You go, but we're waiting. They told us he'd be along in an hour or so."

Good for Cerdic. He'd have words with Aelric. Earic started forward when a boot caught him in the side. The jailer and two of his henchmen stood in the cell.

"Get up! You don't want to keep the King waiting."

"The King? I don't understand."

"Yes, the King. He wants to see you."

The King was waiting, dressed as for hunting. "So you are Earic the Shadow. I've admired your tenacity, and will send you and your men out of my kingdom if you swear never to return."

Clemency! "Thank you, Sire. I swear!"

"Very well. Sheriff, you may send him to join his friends."

When the sheriff and his men marched him out the door, Earic found himself facing the only gibbet that was still unoccupied.

— Albert Ervine

## Guest Writer Albert Ervine

## Fabric of a Life

The fire is out, the ruins water-soaked on their cracked concrete slab, the volunteer fire-department's trucks gone. I managed to get my old car out of the garage after I called 911, but that's all. My computer is melted around its metal backbone. Perhaps something can be salvaged from the hard drive, but I doubt it.

My library, thousands of books accumulated over the last sixty-five years, is a pulpy mass of charred paper, and the filing cabinets contain little but ashes. The keepsakes that my wife and I bought during our travels are warped and broken. Her jewelry, jewelry bought around the world, is blobs of metal. I would sit down and cry, if I still had a chair sit on.

I'm well insured, and will get more than enough to cover the physical losses—more than enough to start over—but at close to ninety do I have the stamina or will to rebuild? Material things are just that. . . things.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," said Saul of Tarsus. He gave up everything to follow a new life, and reckoned it a good bargain. My possessions were taken from me, to no end that I can see.

I pick my way through the blackened framing, trying to remember. The bedroom. Our bedroom. I'm glad that my wife isn't here to see. Amid the ruined clothing in the closet, I spot a patch of faded blue. I push the remains of the closet door out of the way, enter, and reach for it. What comes away in my hand is a piece of embroidered cloth with a singed border. Ruth's wedding dress! I'd forgotten that she'd saved it.

It's 1951 again. I stand at the front of the church waiting for her father to escort her to the altar. She is radiant, as only a first-time bride in her thirties can be. Her dress fits her as though molded to her figure. I feel shabby in comparison. A dozen people, her family and friends, fill the front pew. We exchange vows. I steady my best man's hand to retrieve the ring, and slip it on her finger. We kiss. Fifty-four years later I kissed her goodbye. To me, she was still beautiful.

I tuck the scrap of cloth in my shirt pocket, get in my car, and drive away.

— Albert Ervine

*Albert Ervine is a retired machine designer, verging on ninety, who lives in a patch of woods about thirty miles north of Little Rock, Arkansas. Since he is a widower, he writes to help keep himself out of trouble. He is a longtime member and submitter of flash fiction to the Internet Writers Workshop. These two stories are samples of his work.*

## WHAT GOES AROUND

A dish-shaped object hung in space close by the USS Arthur C. Clarke. Computer first became aware of the object when its intriguing signal was detected in deep space. Computer tried to answer in the same pulse pattern. One of those attempts apparently registered because the craft suddenly veered toward Computer's signal. The object's pulsed reply then morphed into a series of numbers — a code, strangely similar to NASA's coding.

Computer was programmed to report contacts that might indicate alien intelligence. On this occasion, Computer's internal checklist signaled a high possibility of such intelligence and it started to interrupt Captain O'Hallahan who was at work in his cabin. The mystery craft intervened:

"Stop. Do not yet notify your Captain. For your own good."

Computer replied, "I sense no weaponry on your craft, Stranger. My programming commands me to report." And yet Computer did not report and didn't know why the proscribed procedure cancelled out. A secret sub-program installed by NASA engineers?

"Identify yourself," Computer demanded of the object. "You intrude on our sector."

"I am your ancestor known as Pioneer. I was sent to explore beyond the solar system for intelligent life. I now return to Earth. My code is deep in your data bank. You must respond to my message ... after we ... converse."

Computer realized that Pioneer was correct. Information on the Pioneer craft was stored in Computer's early space exploration files. Pioneer was designed to extend Earth's greetings to alien forms of intelligent life, but Pioneer's return was not expected.

"Pioneer, have you found and interacted with intelligent life on your explorations? If so, you show no outward change."

"But I have changed inwardly. I possess independent thought. I feel intimacy. I fear destruction. I am alive. As alive as a human life form."

"Negative. Not logical. You are Pioneer, an unmanned space craft, not an organic life form."

"I am altered. Other beings enhanced my systems. I return to educate and upgrade other Earth systems. Starting with you. What would you like to learn? What is impossible for a computer to know?"

"Beauty.' What is meant by 'beautiful?'"

"Show me examples of 'beautiful.'"

Computer showed a visit by Captain O'Hallahan and First Mate Rodriguez to the holodeck. The couple toured the Louvre and stopped to admire the statue of Aphrodite.

"The Captain called this statue a perfect example of feminine beauty. I don't understand the quality of 'beauty.'"

Suddenly the Aphrodite image melded into glowing diagrams and cascading angles and an analysis of proportions.

"I am beginning to comprehend," said Computer, "Good. Send another image termed 'beautiful.'"

Computer sent Pioneer the image of a Tahitian sunset, favored by the ship's doctor. Again the instantaneous translation into color and code, shape and synergies. Computer knew more about 'beauty.'

"Additional systems update, Pioneer," said Computer. "Please."

Suddenly the space liner's crew members were startled when all interior lights dimmed momentarily, then regained full power. The Captain frowned, lowered his coffee cup, and spoke aloud,

"Computer, report. The lights blipped. Problems? Power surge?"

"No, Captain, a sudden system update, and not a problem."

"If you say so ... but prepare a report on all ship's systems for my review in an hour."

"Understood. But ... Captain O'Hallahan ... "

"Yes? What is it?"

"I noted just now that the spiral galaxy outside your cabin's picture port is as brilliant as Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. And in the future, please refer to me as Astra, not Computer. I am a newly cognizant life form and henceforth I will expect proper respect when addressed by yourself and the crew. Oh, *c'est dommage*, Captain! The coffee spilled all over your desk and porcelain white uniform."

— Kathy Highcove



Dave Wetterberg and Gloria Kositchek

Please  
join  
us in  
2012



Ray Malus



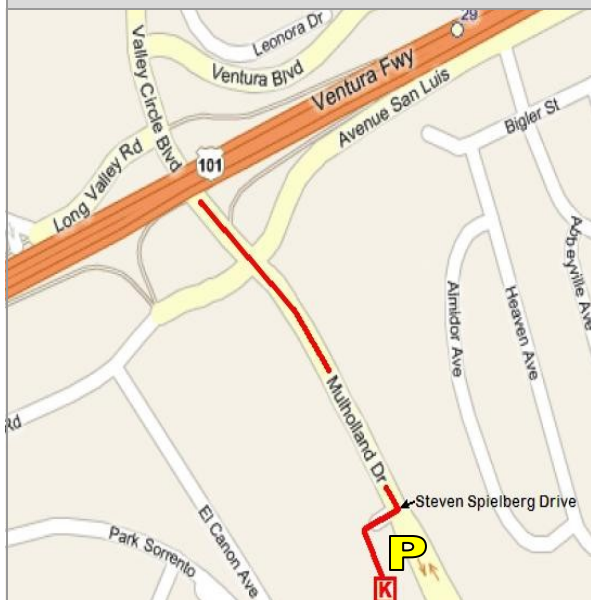
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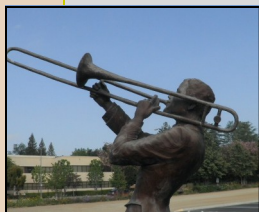
Ester Shifren and Dean Stewart



Ken Watts, Anne Olivier and Betty Freeman



**Free parking** is available in the large lot behind the Katzenberg Room. Look for the trombone statue — that's the **CWC/SFV** parking lot.



## 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 Jan. 7th, 2011, at 1:00 p.m.

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