

The Valley Scribe

Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley



MARCH 2012



CONTENTS

President's Message	2
Whimsicals Continued	2
State CWC PR Tips.....	3
SFV Suggestions	3
New Moves.....	3
Book Bazaar Review.....	4&5
Ken's Pet Peeves.....	6
Lost and Found.....	6
Review and Refresh.....	7
Market To Market.....	7
Cara Alson Memorial.....	8
Dream Turned Upside Down...	9
Andy's Lucky Day.....	10&11
Guest Writer Wayne Scheer...	12
Old Friends, New Stories.....	13
Art Yuwiler Notice	13
March Madness.....	14
Map and Meeting Info.....	14



When to Promote Your Book? Anytime!



Carolyn Howard-Johnson

SFV speakers this year have often emphasized the importance of marketing one's new book. Our March speaker, Carolyn Howard-

Johnson, is ready and extremely willing to give us pointers on marketing.

"I am best known as The Frugal Book Promoter, but I want to be known as a literary writer, poet, and all round smart and giving marketer," says Carolyn. However, she's reluctant to label her work, or specialty, because of her diverse experiences in the writing trade.

Here's a brief synopsis of Carolyn's jobs: staff writer, an editorial assistant, press releaser for celebrity designers, consultant for the Oak Park Press, columnist and reviewer for several local publications. She's currently an instructor for UCLA Extension Writers' Program. In her spare time, she's written several novels, stories and poems.

Her book, *The Frugal Book Promoter*, is an e-book best seller on Amazon, and currently in an updated form. Carolyn has written several additional books for this popular *How To Do It Frugally* series.

On Saturday Carolyn will speak on *The Beauty of Marketing: It's Never Too Late or Too Soon to Promote Your Book*. Bring a pen and pad. —KH

west valley whimsicals

A Schwartz / Highcove Production

Talk That Talk!

Thelma waited as her critique group read dialogue from the fifth chapter of her novel. A key scene. Her heroine Stella, all dressed up for her cousin's wedding, waited for her boyfriend Harold to return from the parking lot. Harold



So much slang.



Rewrite that whole scene.

didn't trust any valet to park his classic Cadillac. Suddenly, Stella felt the cold muzzle of a gun pressed against the back of her neck.

"Okay, lady, gimme yer necklace. Pronto."

"Please don't shoot me. Here. Take it."

"Cool. The rocks look real. Oh, don't bawl, lady. You ain't got no use for it, and I sure as hell do."

(Continued on page 2)

Executive Board

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Successful Book Bazaar!

"Hey, Yolanda, throw me one of those Hungarian cookies," shouted Ken Wilkins from a table away. He may have been stuck at his station where he was displaying his children's book, but he wasn't going to miss out on homemade goodies set out next to my cookbook. I won't apologize for using samples of recipes as a marketing tool. This day was all about marketing, after all.

What is marketing? It is giving exposure to your product by promoting it to as wide an audience as possible. For an hour, eleven participating authors and a playwright did just that in the time and space available to them. They each had five minutes to pitch their books and plays. That's not a lot of time to encapsulate work that took months, more likely years to produce, but they did it.

Before breaking for refreshments, five lucky people won a CD or books that were donated by participants and raffled off. That left plenty of time to browse, talk to authors and purchase books or CDs. You will find photos of this exciting event on our website: www.cwc-sfv.org

Some comments heard: "What a great idea to showcase our members' work like this. We should do it every year." "I didn't realize our club had so much talent." "This event has inspired me to get going on my writing." And "How do I get into a critique group?" voiced one of sixteen guests who attended. She may have been one of the two guests who joined that day!

These comments reflect all the reasons why our California Writers Club exists. It furthers our mission to encourage writers to hone their skills, to bring to fruition their creative ideas and to get published.



(Whimsicals continued from page 1)

"Please, just ... go away. I haven't seen your face."

"Not yet. Open up yer purse. Gimme those bills and, yeah, the plastic too. Now let's wait for the jerk who left you here alone while he parks his friggin' fancy wheels."

Reina was the first to weigh in: "I'm just not comfortable with all this street slang, Rocks? Bills? Plastic?"

"And how about the mugger using bad grammar?" asked Violet. "Gimme... don't bawl none ... ain't got ... Sounds like a trite gangster movie script."

Derek chimed in: "What kind of idiot leaves his girlfriend alone on a dark street? Not me!"

Thelma listened and longed to speak up, but she had to wait until everyone had commented on her story.

"If I'd written this section," said Maggie, "Stella would ..."

"Wait, wait, gang, " broke in Dave. "I gotta help Thelma out. Who wrote this scene? Thelma, right?" They nodded. "And who should know what her characters should say"

"Thelma," they told him.

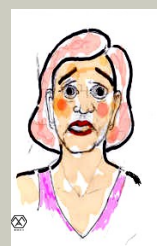
"Right. Thelma knows what her characters should say and do. We can only tell her if the dialogue sounds like Stella. And if Harold is more concerned about his car than his date, then

Thelma needs to tell us what's up with Harold. Right?"

They all nodded. My hero, Thelma

thought.

"But," said Dave, "Let's look at the punctuation: namely, the use of quotes in dialogue, my favorite topic. Hey, where're you all going?"



All quotation marks should ...

From CWC Headquarters ...

In person and in print
SHOW OFF THE CWC



Publicity means getting the word out. Public image has to do with how the community and larger audience see your organization. January gave us an excellent idea for advancement in both arenas. This month brings another one.

At the January Central Board meeting, Mt. Diablo representative Judith Marshall spoke about a program her branch presents locally at libraries and other venues. "So You Want To Write a Book" draws the perfect crowd to view as potential CWC members. Other branches might try this ingenious approach.

This month, the inaugural issue of the California Writers Club Literary Review goes out to members. It looks awfully good and contains a wealth of fine writing. Read it for fun, of course, but also with a thought in the back of your head that "I can do better." Great. What's stopping you? Check out the submission guidelines in the magazine, create a work of deathless prose or poesy and send it off. Publication means a prestigious credit for you, and passing the Literary Review around shows off the CWC.

Both the program and the Literary Review call attention to our CWC fellowship of talent – getting the word out and enhancing our public image while you receive personal publicity in the bargain.

Incidentally, my last column suggested using Letters to the Editor to talk up issues of interest such as finding affordable meeting spaces for nonprofits. A reader subsequently reminded me to remind you that you can write about the CWC as a member of the CWC, but take care that you don't represent yourself as a spokesperson for the CWC.

Good luck and sail on!

Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, PR chair,
- pr@calwriters.org



From Your SFV Board -- Send Suggestions

Our 2012 Book Bazaar was a big success for our club. Why? The event drew in more guests than we have ever had for a meeting in the Katzenberg Room. We've received very positive feedback from both bazaar presenters and the attendees. So ... the SFV Board wants to know how you, the membership, feel about our group establishing a more ambitious outreach program in the Valley community. A current suggestion: Our website and newsletter network with other local writers' groups and/or the local libraries. Our social media sites would post meeting information and actively promote each other's special events, such as the SFV Book Bazaar.

Suggestions are welcome. Send them to [<yfintor@sbcglobal.net>](mailto:yfintor@sbcglobal.net)

New Moves

Bill Sorrells and Ray Malus will appear in a Chancel Drama, *Faith*, at St. Martin-In-The-Fields Church, Canoga Park.

Malus' play, featuring a musical score composed by the author, will be presented at 8 AM and 10 AM on March 18, 2012.

Chancel Drama is a traditional form of theater, presented as part of a church service. *Faith* is a contemporary drama which explores the importance of one's religious beliefs. Described as "Kafka-esque," the play has a cast of six actors, and runs 1/2 hour. Admission is free and the public is welcome.

Ray Malus has been awarded "Featured Talent" status at *Bright Lights Cafe*, a literary website.

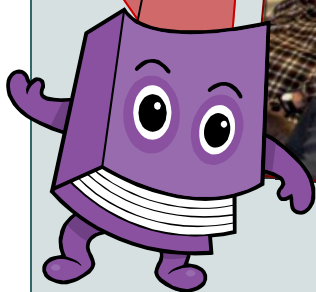
You can find info and an interview with Ray at <http://www.brightlightmultimedia.com/BLCafe/ShowcasedTalent-RayMalus.htm>

Kathy Highcove's flash fiction story, "Gifts for the Magi," was a Fiction365's featured story on Feb. 17th. It's in the archives at [<submissions@fiction365.com>](mailto:submissions@fiction365.com)

Kathy also reviews books for the *Internet Review of Books*. Her last review was *Leonardo's Legacy* at <http://internetreviewof-books.blogspot.com/2012/01/leonardos-legacy.html>

Blast off to the 2012 SFV/CWC Book Bazaar

On our way!



the stars

Book Bazaar Review



The cheery red hearts on the white walls announced to all that we were having a party – our first Book Bazaar. At the February meeting we heard from our local talent, met old friends and met new writers. We gained two new members. Our festivities reminded us that we're a talented group and many of us have gone the extra mile into publishing land.

I could feel new energy surging around the room when all the folks came and set up their books. On Saturday our SFV/CWC branch was selling itself in the best way possible -- through our productive writers.

Our event was organized to spotlight some of our local talent. Each of the twelve presenters had five minutes to present their latest book or creative work.

We learned that our writers had brought mysteries, juvenile fiction and non-fiction, historical fic-

(Continued on page 5)



Judy Presnall



Betty Hechtman



Ken Wilkins

Autograph,
please?



Erica Stux





Yolanda Fintor



Ray Malus

eight more authors



Diana Johnson



Rita Keeley-Brown

(Continued from page 4)

tion, scientific research on consumer products, and DVDs of a drama.

The Book Bazaar was a big success and it may become an annual SFV affair. This type of event is a type of community outreach which stimulates our group to share ideas with others and it may provide just that needed "you can do it" to people who need encouragement.

Writing is such a wonderful outlet for thought and expression be it just for ourselves or to share with others.

— Rita Keeley Brown



Paula Diggs



Nance Crawford



Gagik Melikyan



Jerry MacPhie and Lenora Smalley
enjoyed the ride



Max Schwartz



Market To Market



by Ken Watts

ALWAYS check website for guidelines.

The Hillerman Mystery Novel Competition is

holding their annual competition/award for novels. Unpublished mystery novels set in the American southwest, written by a first-time author in the mystery genre. Entry form is on the website. Deadline: June 1. Prize: \$10,000 advance and publication by Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Minotaur imprint. ALL ENTRIES MUST BE MAILED TO: Hillerman Mystery Competition, Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010. Contact: Anne Hillerman & Jean Schaumberg, co-organizers. E-mail: wordharvest@wordharvest.com. Website: www.hillermanconference.com. Address: Wordharvest & St. Martin's Press, 304 Calle Oso, Santa Fe, NM 87501.

Writer's Digest Writing is holding a contest with 10 categories: Inspirational Writing, Memoir/Personal Essay, Magazine Feature Article, Short Story(genre), Short Story (mainstream/literary), Rhyming and Nonrhyming Poetry, Stage Play, and TV/Movie Script. Entries must be original, in English, unpublished and unproduced. Grand Prize: \$3,000 and a trip to NY City to meet with editors and agents. Cost \$15/ first poetry entry, \$10/additional poem. All other entries are \$20/first ms, \$15/additional ms. See the website for complete info. Contact: Nicki Florence. Address: Writer's Digest, a publication of F + W Media, Inc., 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990. Website: www.writersdigest.com. E-mail: writing-competition@fwmedia.com, nicole.florence@fwmedia.com.

The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction publishes fantasy & sci-fi short stories and novellas. Guidelines for SASE, by e-mail or website. Pays on acceptance. Responds in 2 months to queries. Contact: Gordon Van Gelder, editor. Address: P. O. Box 3447, Hoboken, NJ 07030. Website: www.fandsf.com. E-mail: fandsf@aol.com.

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Something To Ponder

True success is overcoming the fear of being unsuccessful. — Paul Sweeney



REVIEW AND REFRESH

The Semi-Colon

A semi-colon may be used to link two closely related sentences.

He was slightly nervous with her; he was utterly frantic without her.

But hardly any professional writers use the semi-colon this way any more. They just end the first sentence with a period and begin another.

He was slightly nervous with her. He was utterly frantic without her.

If the items in a series of word groups contain commas, a semicolon is used to separate the items. In the following sentence, the semicolon makes it clear that Ivana took three people to lunch, not six.

Ivana took Mrs. Reed, her best friend; Marco, her boyfriend; and Artie, her agent to lunch at the Brown Derby.

When there are additional commas in a compound sentence besides the one before the connecting conjunction, replace the comma with a semi-colon.

Much to Orville's surprise, Sam, the Andersons' watchdog, bit him; and, because of the ensuing civil lawsuit, Orville and Sam had a strained relationship forever after.

The Colon

A colon must always have a complete sentence to the left of it. Information missing from this sentence comes after it.

Some of the evidence was not in his briefcase: a camera, a map, and a pistol.

The example above has a list of three items after the complete sentence on the left. But a colon may be used before just one item as well as a list of items.

Every one of Mom's pasta recipes called for one basic ingredient: minced garlic.

The Dash

If you prefer items to come at the beginning of a sentence, you might use dashes.

His laptop — the latest iMac — was now his most valued and useful tool at the office.

Good health, an active life style and sunshine — these ingredients added up to a pleasant retirement in the Bahamas.

If you want the items within the sentence, you can of course use commas.

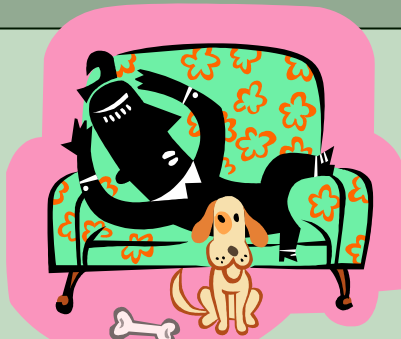
The most important items, a camera, a map and a compass, were missing from his day pack.

Or for a more dramatic effect, you might use dashes.

The most important items — a camera, a map and a compass — were missing from his day pack!

— Dave Wetterberg

KEN'S PET PEEVES



HYPOCHONDRIACS

To hear them tell it they're a basket case
 Being the sickest of the human race
 Though visible signs show not a trace.
 "We shall die before noon," they grimly supply.
 "But you look so healthy," I quickly reply.
 "Not so, not so," is their desperate sigh.
 Constantly reciting their doctor bills
 One by one they enumerate their ills
 Punctuated by the popping of pills.
 Let them wallow in their illness not real.
 I'll listen no more to their nauseous spiel
 For fear that their sickness I too might feel.

—Ken Wilkins



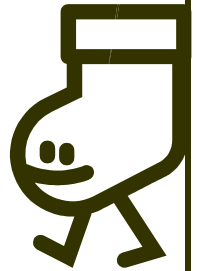
TALKATIVE BARBERS

Snip, snip snip as my hair he does clip,
 But the barber has a non-stop lip.

Politics and sports is all I hear,
 But much too loud and close to my ear.

Just wield your scissors and shut your mouth
 Before my ears decide to go South.

Lost and Found



Several years ago on a normal laundry day as I was folding clothes, I pulled a single green sock from the dryer. I was puzzled as to where the other sock had gone. Did the dryer "swallow" it up? Reluctantly I folded the single sock and put it away in the socks drawer because its moss green color was pleasing to see in the drawer among other colored socks, but I thought that I would never use it again.

Several years passed. During that time I would periodically use my sewing box for minor sewing projects. I would rummage in the box for sewing needles, sewing threads, buttons, and other small items.

Recently I needed to sew a button on a garment. In my customary way, I opened the sewing box, took a needle, and as I was looking for the thread I noticed a crumpled green ball peeking underneath a small plastic box containing some pins. I pulled on the green ball to see what it was. I wondered where it came from because I did not notice it before. As I unruffled it and realized that it was a **moss green sock**, I let out a loud: "**I can't believe it!**" To be sure, I immediately went to the socks drawer and searched for the other moss green sock. Sure enough, it was lying in the back of the drawer.

As I held the reunited pair of socks, I wondered: how did the missing sock get into the sewing box? How come all of these years I did not see a sock whenever I opened the sewing box? Why did the sock end up in a sewing box? Who put it there?

I may never know the answers, but I am sure glad to have a complete set of moss green socks in the drawer!

-Marganit Lish



A Portrait of Cara

by *Lenora Smalley*

On February 2, 2012, some two hundred relatives and friends gathered at Temple Beth Hillel in North Hollywood to honor the life of Cara Alson, who passed away suddenly on January 24, 2012.

Cara was an outstanding member of California Writers Club/ San Fernando Valley

Branch as well as several other writing and poetry groups in the Valley. I remember she became interested in CWC/SFV in the late 90s. Soon she became a volunteer who added her energy, humor and creativity to help make the club a better experience for all. During the days when someone needed to be in charge of refreshments Cara was Hospitality Chair for two years. At the Town Hall meetings there were always problems like the coffee pot socket being in the ceiling. She came early to help set up and one day when she opened the door a huge canoe was hanging from the ceiling. But Cara was a cheerful problem solver. She became Program Chair for a two year term providing great speakers for meetings. Cara possessed a generous spirit that reached out to others to make them feel welcome.

Her book of poems, *Heartache and Whimsy*, was published in 2004. Then she was co-editor with Judy Presnall in 2006 to publish the CWC/SFV anthology *Blessings*, an excellent edition containing the work of fifty-five individual CWC members. Cara received the prestigious Jack London Award in 2008. Even though she began to have health issues she agreed to be Secretary for the Reorganization Board to reinstate our charter.

Every summer for five years, starting in 2003, Cara and I attended the Santa Barbara Poetry Workshops hosted by Perie Longo, a Santa Barbara poet laureate. Cara's quick-witted puns and sense of humor made her a favorite of many of the returning poets. At Westmont College she was allowed to use a golf cart to transport several older poets up and down the hilly terrain.

This kindness was an example of Cara's concern for others. She loved driving the cart, taking on the responsibility of recharging it overnight outside our dorm rooms. She made a sign to hang on the back which read POETIC LICENSE amusing students at the college who whizzed by in their own golf carts.

One of the friends we made in those years, Polly Bee, said this about Cara: "I will always remember her as a delight-

ful, friendly woman who loved poets and poetry, and the room was brighter when she was there."

In order to paint a picture of Cara Alson's life, I must use an even more expansive canvas and many colored palette.

Not only a poet and writer, Cara was interested in the community around her. Because of her talent for detail, keeping names addresses, phone numbers, rosters for several groups, she was a valued member of the Permanent Reunion Committee of Grant High School, class of '63. She was a member of Temple Sisterhood, B'Nai B'rith Women, Jewish Women International, and Temple Hava-rah. Cara also was interested in making her community safer where people could have a voice, so she became a founding member of the North Hollywood West Neighborhood Council.

Every painting has a focal point. The focus of her life was her family. Cara married her high school sweetheart, Mayer Alson. They were married forty-eight years. Their family, son Kevin Alson, daughter Patti Alson Fleetwood, and granddaughter Kristina Fleetwood, made up the most important part of her life. Nothing made her happier than spending time with Kristina.

We are sad to lose her, but Cara, still thinking of others, left this recent poem on her desk. It became the back cover for the program of the memorial service. Its simplicity is moving.



**Say your goodbyes
shed a tear.
I'll be watching,
I'll be near.**

**My time has come,
my life was long.
I was ready
to travel on.**

**I'm with loved ones
who called to me.
Someday you'll join us,
wait and see.**

**Remember our
many good times past.
Tell the stories,
share a laugh.**

**Speak of me,
use my name.
Hold me in your heart
til we meet again.**

A Dream Turned ḡbzīqs DOMU

What was I, a rather ordinary woman in my forties, doing in Egypt with my behind pointed skyward and my face eight inches from the desert floor?

Well, for one thing, holding on for dear life to the coarse-haired neck of what may be nature's ugliest creature. It must also be one of the smelliest. The closest I can come to describing the odor is a combination of dirty feet, week-old cabbage and rancid sour cream.

I felt the thump of my heart against my eardrums beating out the rhythm of my fear. Following gravity, sweat trickled up my face, burning my eyes and dripping off the tip of my nose.

Two months earlier my husband Mayer and I were discussing a possible destination for our vacation. We went around in circles until he suggested Israel. It sounded like a good possibility, so he phoned our sister-in-law, who is also our travel agent. I also asked her for information on tours into Egypt.

"If we're going to Israel, I'd like to go see the Great Pyramids."

The brochures were delivered the next day: weeklong group tours to both Israel and Egypt.

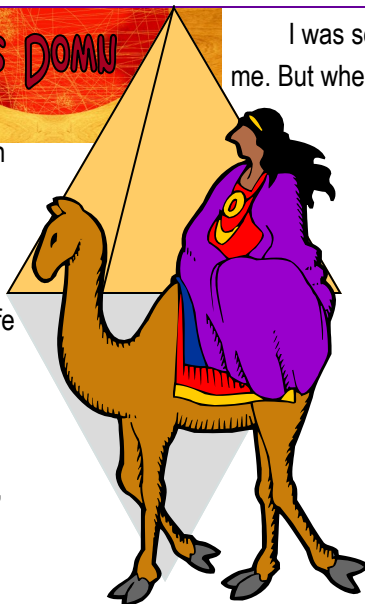
"She must have misunderstood me," Mayer muttered as he flipped through the Egypt tour book. "But maybe we can get an idea of how far a side trip to the pyramids would be."

As we read both booklets cover-to-cover, we became aware of more sights of interest in Egypt. Looking at the schedule, we discovered back-to-back tours to both countries. We could travel on our own from Cairo and have a relaxing afternoon in Tel Aviv.

Sitting there reviewing the brochures, I recalled things my late grandmother had told us about her journey to Israel a decade earlier: "Our tour includes a trip to the fortress at Masada. Gram went up to the top of Masada, remember? Oh, and I remember her saying 'I was on a camel!'"

"So you want to ride a camel, too? Yeah, that might be fun," he agreed.

And that's why I was in Egypt inverted on a camel. Here's why: To get down from a standing position, a camel first gets down on its front knees, and then lowers its back half. Getting up, the order is reversed.



I was seated in the front of the camel, with Mayer behind me. But when the camel was to stand, once it raised its rear, it refused to budge any further. The camel driver prodded it, spoke gently, then spewed what I assumed was a tirade of ancient curses. Mayer's head was parallel to the ground, but I was almost completely upside down. As gravity took effect, I began to feel dizzy. Fearing I would soon faint, I became convinced that this beast wanted to kill me. I tried to scream bloody murder, but my voice came out in strangled yelps.

At last the cantankerous camel stood up. My relief was brief, however, because it then tried to eat my tennis shoe — with my foot still in it! Another poke or two from the handler seemed to curb its appetite, and from then on it was well-behaved.

The ride itself was a wild experience. In the movies it looks as if rider and camel are one, evidently in tune with each other's bodily rhythms. They look positively graceful.

I'm here, miraculously, to tell you that it just isn't so. I felt as if I were sitting inside a cement mixer, and my spine was moving in ways it wasn't meant to. I guess the camel was moving along at a moderate pace similar to the canter of a horse, but it felt as if it was galloping hell-bent for the Nile — which was nowhere in sight!

It was then that I noticed what was in front of us. Coming up fast was ... nothing. It seemed we were headed for a precipice.

"Look!" I yelled over my shoulder to Mayer. "They're going to dump the Jews into oblivion in the middle of the Egyptian desert!"

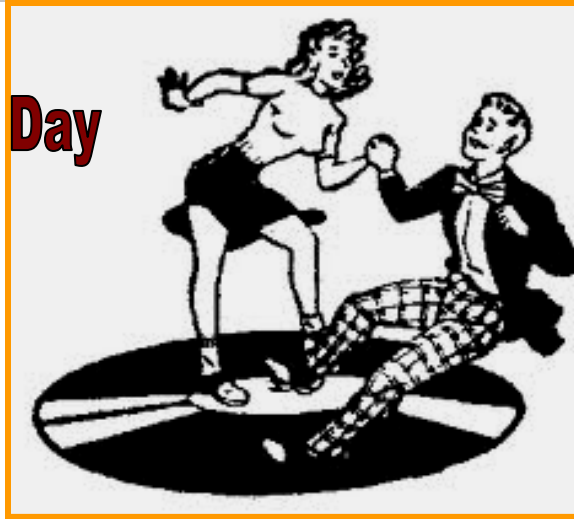
Home again, we shared this story with a friend of the family. "Oh, I was on a camel, too," she grinned. "When I was in Israel our group stopped at a Bedouin camp, where several men make money taking pictures of tourists sitting on camels. We climbed on, it stood, the man took our picture, and we got off. Thank heaven it never moved!"

Mayer and I looked at each other with sudden realization: Gram had said she was *on* a camel. She'd never said she'd *rid-den* one!

— Cara Alison @ 2003

First Place winner for non-fiction in the SFV/CWC Writing Contest in 2004. Copied from the June 2004 **Valley Scribe**.

Andy's Lucky Day



The old blue Ford turned in to the parking lot of Barselott's, a favorite tavern among the college crowd. From the passenger seat stepped long-legged Vincent, a tall skinny senior. Two girls exited by the back door, Corinne first, Vince's newly-arrived sister, a freshman, whom Andy had had a crush on from the moment he met her. She was followed by Ivy, a wide-eyed redhead, also a freshman.

Inside the tavern, music flowed from a jukebox, and on the tiny dance floor several couples moved unimaginatively. Andy and his friends found an empty booth and scooted in, Corinne against the inboard wall, Andy next to her.

Vince assured the girls that it wasn't always this quiet. It was a little early yet. But it was Saturday night, and the joint would start jumping soon.

To Andy's delight, Corinne encircled Andy's arm and squeezed. "Thanks for taking us along with you tonight," she said.

A weary-looking, gray-haired waitress came to their booth.

"Hi, Marie," Andy said, using her name as proof to the girls that he was a regular there.

"Hi, Andy," she said. "Beer?"

"Is the Pope Catholic?" he responded, smiling.

The waitress nodded. Loud voices came from the other end of the dance floor. Andy glanced in their direction. A tough-looking guy stood out from the rest.

"Is there a problem over there, Marie?" Andy asked.

"Same problem we always have when Frank Johnson comes. He has a few drinks and gets loud," said Marie.

She brought a pitcher of beer and four beer mugs. Andy filled each one carefully to avoid too much foam. They raised the mugs aloft. "Skoal!" Andy said. They clinked glasses.

"I love it here!" Ivy chirped.

Over the rim of his glass, Andy saw Frank Johnson looking at the girls. He's built like a piece of farm machinery, he thought.

"That guy's still making a racket over there," he said

"I hope he stays there. He looks obnoxious," said Corinne.

Andy kept glancing at Johnson, who kept glancing back at Corinne and Ivy. Andy stiffened when he saw him raise his glass to them.

"Hi, girls," he yelled across the dance floor. The girls ignored his greeting.

After a few more numbers from the juke box, Johnson put down his beer glass and stumbled toward their booth. When he arrived, he smiled all around as if to verify that he was a very friendly guy.

"Hi," he said.

They returned his greeting with half-smiles and muffled hellos. He put his hands on the table and leaned toward Corinne.

"You wanna dance?" he asked.

Corinne said, "No thank you."

This doesn't look good, Andy thought.

Undaunted, Johnson turned to Ivy. "How about you? You wanna dance?"

"No thank you," she said with a please-go-away smile.

At this rejection, Johnson slammed a fist on the table and turned to go.

At last. Thank you God, Andy thought, exhaling.

But Johnson turned back.

"Come on! Just one dance," he said to Corinne, less pleasant this time.

Vince spoke up. "Come on, pal. She said she doesn't feel like dancing right now."

Johnson glared at Vince. His eyes looked twice their normal size. "You wanna step outside?" he said.

Vince tried diplomacy. "No! Come on! There's no need for that!" he said. "We don't want any trouble. Just leave us in peace, will you?"

Frank Johnson was not a diplomat. He would not go beyond his bar room brawl language. "You wanna step outside?" he repeated.

Vince remained rooted in the booth.

Johnson turned back to Corinne. "Come on. One dance.

Andy noticed her voice rise to an unusually high pitch.

"No," she said.

"Why not?" he said.

(Continued on page 11)

"Look," she answered. "I've tried to be nice, but I just don't feel like dancing! All right?"

Johnson responded to this new refusal with three slams on the table. Andy looked over at the bar hoping the bartender noticed the commotion and would come to help. But no help from that quarter. Conscious of Corinne looking at him, he knew it was his turn. He stood up.

"Look. Will you please leave us alone?" he said.

"You wanna step outside?" Johnson said.

Regretting it immediately, not knowing why he said it, Andy responded.

"Sure."

Johnson led the way to the parking lot, Andy following, wondering how long it would take his bruises to heal. He resisted the temptation to take the opposite direction and duck out the back.

Johnson stormed ahead across the dance floor, pushing the dancers aside. On his way he collided with a tall, wiry young man dancing with a brunette half his size. The young man turned and for an instant he smiled at Johnson, as if he were ready to excuse him for a bad dance maneuver. When he saw the pusher was Johnson, he grabbed him by his shirt and shook him.

"You! You jerk!" he said. "You've been looking for trouble all night, you know that?" He hurled Johnson at the open doorway.

Andy watched. He heard the man's dancing partner yelling, "Mack! Don't! Come back here!"

Mack shoved Johnson out the door and followed behind the bully as he stumbled down three wooden steps to the outside parking lot. Here Johnson met a fist to the left side of his head, followed by a rapid fire of punches to his body.

By this time the tavern had emptied to watch the show.

Andy was enjoying every punch when he became aware of Corinne and Ivy and Vince at his side, watching, speechless. Loud grunts and wheezes came from Johnson's throat. They'd never counted on Mack doing this, he thought.

Johnson's beaten body slid down the side of a car to the asphalt, like the Titanic slipping into the sea. He lay on his side, then rolled on to his back, his eyes glazed. Mack backed away.

There but for the grace of God go I, Andy thought. This has to be the luckiest day of my life.



He could hardly wait to congratulate his replacement. "Good job! Good job!" he beamed, taking his hand to shake it. Mack winced. "Good job, Mack! Good job!" he kept repeating.

Mack smiled at him ear-to-ear. He kept rubbing his knuckles.

Corinne joined them. "Is your hand sore?" she asked sympathetically.

Mack smiled at her. "I'm fine, really," he said. "But thank you very much."

"You should soak it in cold water so it doesn't swell up!" Corinne said. She asked the waitress for some water and a cloth.

Andy wondered if the hand in question was injured that bad to warrant such attention. He noticed Mack studying Corinne's face as she tended to his hand. He thanked her over and over again for her attention.

"You're being awfully nice," he said.

"It's nothing," she said.

"What's your name?"

"Corinne."

"Want to dance, Corinne?"

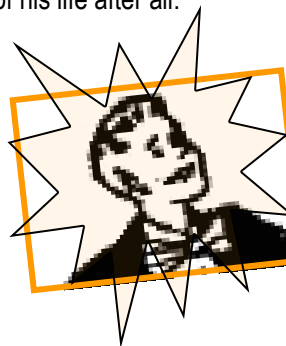
Corinne smiled. "What about your girlfriend?" she asked.

"She's not my girlfriend," he answered. "She's my cousin. She has a boyfriend."

"Isn't your hand hurting too much to dance?"

"Not any more," he assured her. "The water treatment fixed her all up."

Andy watched them dance cheek-to-cheek the rest of the evening. Maybe this wasn't the luckiest day of his life after all.



--- Dave
Wetterberg

Turning the Table

Two by Guest Writer
Wayne Scheer

The Root of All Evil

Grady had his health, a woman who loved him, a good job and the money to pay his bills, with enough left over for modest luxuries like a vacation every few years and the pocket change to buy a book or a slice of pizza whenever he felt like it.

Clara loved her life as well as Grady, but she also enjoyed the fantasy of playing the lottery. She liked imagining what she'd do with wealth. To her credit, most of her dreams consisted of giving much of the money away. Grady loved that about her.

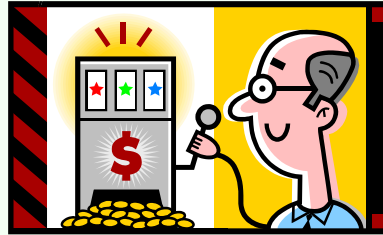
Still, he didn't like playing the lottery. "I don't want to tempt fate," he'd explain, hugging Clara for emphasis. "I have everything I want right now. It just seems wrong to want more."

One day, Grady found himself in a casino. He and Clara were cruising the Caribbean and Clara loved to gamble, believing in some fairy-tale-everything-is-possible corner of her brain that if she put a chip on 27 red and spun the roulette wheel, she'd win the \$100,000 jackpot. At the same time, Grady tolerated playing the slots because he was certain he wouldn't win. So he'd cash twenty dollars and press buttons mindlessly until the money ran out. That way he'd keep busy and not spoil Clara's fun.

But gambling gods are, by definition, unpredictable. With a flick of an imaginary wand, Grady started winning — small amounts, at first, followed by larger amounts — until he needed a second bucket to hold his chips, and a third and fourth. A crowd gathered. The more his adrenaline flowed, the more he won. And the more he won, the more he dreamed of what to do with his winnings — quit his job, travel to small towns in Italy, buy a seasons ticket to Yankee games.

Meanwhile, Clara grew bored losing, preferring to be with the man she loved. She spotted him at the slots, surrounded by people, as bells rang, whistles blew, and chips gushed from the machine, prompting a kiss from a woman. She watched Grady kiss her back.

The gambling gods laughed and turned to an overweight middle-aged woman playing the slots in another section of the casino. Her machine began to spout money and dreams while Grady, like a man possessed, fed his winnings back into the machine.



It all started with the television set. The 24-inch model we had for over ten years wasn't good enough. We had to get a 52-inch flat screen hi-def number. Then, of course, the old furniture in the den wasn't right. The comfortable love seat we'd shared for years had to be replaced with something more stylish. In the old days, Susan would rest her head on my chest and I'd kiss the top of her head, and we'd watch TV that way. With this new couch, we both spread out at opposite ends and never even touch.

My recliner had to go, too. I knew it was ripped and we'd get rid of it eventually, but I figured we'd get another one just like it. But, no. Danish Modern was the way to go, the interior designer told Susan. She replaced it with this one-piece leather lounge. Now when I lay down on it, I feel like I'm waiting for the doctor to check my prostate.

We won the lottery is what happened. Just under a million bucks after taxes. I still remember the night we found out. Susan was half asleep on my chest while I matched the numbers flashing on the TV screen to the ticket I had bought that morning.

I just sat there with my mouth open, staring at the TV without hearing anything, as if someone had clicked the mute on the remote. Finally, I whispered, "Susie, I think we won. Big time."

She looked up at me like I was speaking Greek.

"The lottery. We won. The kids' birthdays and our anniversary numbers match."

"Sure. And I'm the Queen of Sheba."

So we went to the lottery site on the Internet and checked the winning numbers with the ticket. She started screaming and jumping up and down like when we were dating and we went to see the Beatles at the old Shea Stadium.

This time, when she calmed down, she looked at me and said, "After we put money away for the kids and the grandkids, we're buying a bigger TV set."

That's when I knew our comfortable little life was doomed.

*Wayne Scheer has locked himself in a room with his computer and turtle since his retirement. (Wayne's, not the turtle's.) To keep from going back to work, he's published short stories, essays and poems, including **Revealing Moments**, a collection of flash stories, available at http://issuu.com/pearnoir/docs/revealing_moments. He's been nominated for four Pushcart Prizes and a Best of the Net.*

Old Friends with New Stories

—Kathy Highcove

Wanda sauntered into Bobby Lee's bookstore/cafe. There sat Bobby at a table. He waved and beckoned to her. It'd been almost a year since last she'd had an opportunity to visit her hometown — and Bobby Lee.

"Hey, girl, welcome back home to Lewiston. Have a seat."

"Thanks. Sure am glad to see you! Need a few laughs with Bobby Lee. And I may want to hear some local talent. Who've you got performing here tonight?"

"Couple of hip-hoppers. They can't sing for shit but they sure do like to rhyme!"

"Hip-hop's not my thing," said Wanda. "I liked disco and Marvin Gaye back in the day."

"And I go waaay back before y'all's disco. I remember Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis. Sam Cooke and Fats Domino. Some of those guys did their thing right up there on our little stage. We'd get acts in here that I'd see later on the Dick Clark show. You too young, sugar."

"Oh, Bobby Lee, you big flatterer! I just wish I were 'too young.' But ... didn't you tell me that Bob Dylan played here a couple times?" asked Wanda.

"Yup. I even taught Bob Dylan some old chain gang songs."

"Don't you mean Johnny Cash, Bobby? That's what I 'member you saying last time I heard you talk about the old days," said Wanda with a smile. "You helped Cash learn your granddaddy's chain gang songs. Isn't that what you told me?"

"Oh, mebbe you're right. So many new kids been here in the past fifty years. Got confused. But I definitely do recall a little white guy with a real smooth voice, who went on TV and got famous. Still sells records. Lessee ... now, what's his name? I re-

call that he owes me money."

"Why's that?"

"Well, one day he came in here and said he had to write another song for his next album. I wasn't feelin' too sharp that day — my new false teeth didn't fit — and I took them outta my mouth while I talked to him about his problem."

"Go on. "

"We was standin' at the counter where someone had left an LP of Ethel Waters singin' 'Stormy Weather.' I accidentally set down my choppers on the record cover. The little guy looked down and stared hard for a second ... then his head jerked up and he yelled, 'Like a bridge over

troubled waters! Thanks a heap, Bobby!' and he ran out the door like a rabbit.

Next thing I knowed he was on the Ed Sullivan show singin' those same words with some tall skinny dude. Now, why're you laughin', girl?"

"You're claiming that Paul Simon owes you co-writing credit for 'Like a Bridge Over Troubled Waters?' Ha, ha, ha!"

"You got no respect. Same old Wanda."

"Same old Bobby Lee," she replied.



Renaissance Man

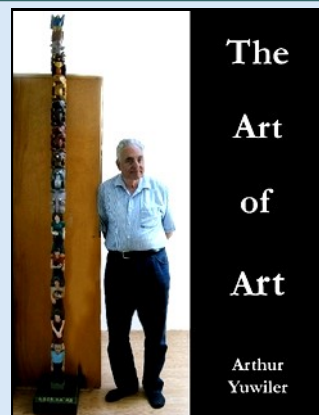
Longtime SFV member Art Yuwiler passed away last month.

Art was a scientific researcher and lecturer at UCLA for several years.

When he retired, he wrote fiction, poetry, and fashioned a variety of art works.

Dave Wetterberg and Claude Baxter will write about their close friend and colleague for the April issue of this newsletter.

— KH



March Madness



March madness
Implacable and harsh,
Loosens tiles on my roof,
Leaving layers of wounded pieces
Scattered without mercy
To a heap by my door.

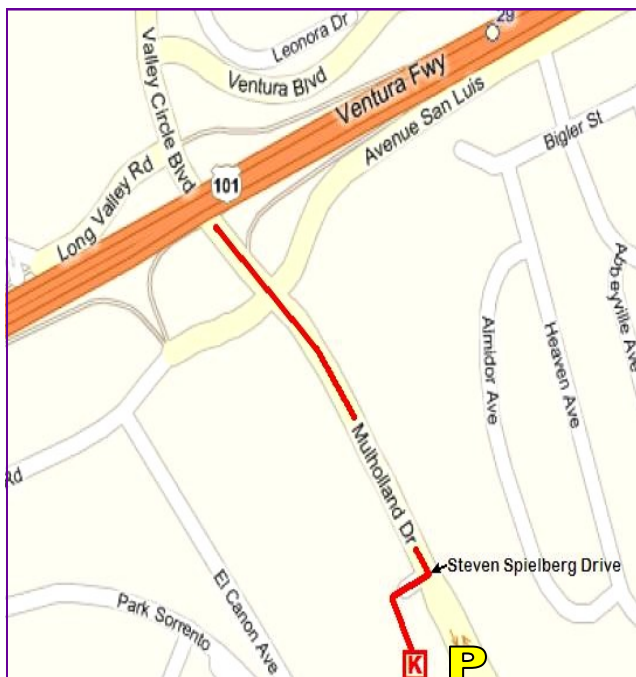
March madness
Rude and harsh,
Playing games is here;
Torrential rains drown my grass
Weeds come up for air.



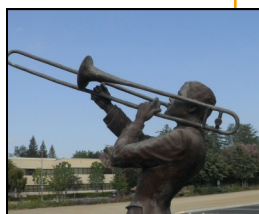
March madness
Shake my trees;
Naked branches shiver without leaves
Pleading
With the sun to warm their fear,
Hoping
For the wind to disappear.

Angry winds
Rattle my windows
Like diamond dust:
Shattered glass falls,
Murmuring secrets
Before night ends.

-- Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein



Free parking is available in a 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, March 3rd, at 1:00 p.m.

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