



The Valley Scribe

JUNE 2012

Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley

Volume 4
Issue 10

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Learn Ten Ways to Upgrade Your Manuscript

from author

Our June speaker, Maralys Wills, author, instructor and lecturer, is also a literary do-gooder. Wills tells the whole world on her website (maralys.com): "I especially love the process of helping other writers."

And she's been spreading the good word about good writing all over the Southland for several years. A member of the CWC/Orange County, Wills has visited sister CWC branches and several other Southland writing groups, such as GLAWS, in her "missionary" work.

Any experienced author is well aware that a well-written article, memoir, book, essay, poem, and review needs to be edited and re-edited before the final form emerges.

How does a writer learn self-editing skills? The determination to work hard is essential, Wills writes in her website commentary. And a

willingness to learn a thing or two ... or three ... or ten about ways to make a good story even better — is also of prime importance if a writer wants to become a proficient self-editor.



Maralys Wills

At our upcoming June meeting, Wills will quickly pace through ten of her most basic tips, or literary devices, for writers. You'll find this author of 13 books to be an energetic and entertaining lecturer. And helpful.

Please join us on Saturday and bring a pen and paper for taking notes.

KH

west valley whimsicals

A Schwartz / Highcove Production

Here's Howard Cosell busy reporting sports events back in

1962



In Howard Cosell's day, life was much simpler for a sportswriter/reporter. His job: take quick notes, type 'em up and send 'em on to the editor. Plenty of opportunity to sit back, and leisurely smoke a big Cuban cigar.

Howard Never Played Finger Games

Cosell mastered those basics and went on to learn broadcasting skills, reporting on sports events from start to finish. Who can forget his banter with heavyweight champ Mohammed Ali?

Here's Howard at work if he were magically transported to

2012



(Continued on page 2)

Executive Board

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Vice-president/Membership ... Andrea Polk

Vice-president/Programs ... Rita Keeley Brown

Treasurer ... Pirhiya Goldstein

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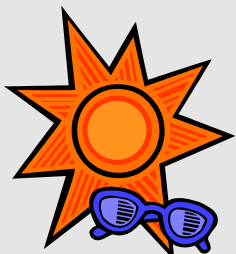
Webmaster/Photographer ... Ray Malus

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Critique Groups Facilitator ... Lillian Rodich

Open Mike ... Bill Sorrells

Member-at-Large ... Judy Presnall



President's June Message

This June issue is the last *Valley Scribe* until September, so it's a good time to thank the lovely people who have put in many hours to make CWC/SFV a successful club.

First of all, I have been blessed with hard-working, conscientious board members on whom I depend so much. Let's start with Rita Keeley Brown, our program chair. She has brought us speakers who have enlightened us on various aspects of writing. In keeping with our club's mission to encourage and support writers in our community, Rita has also conducted a workshop in *life writing* at the West Valley Regional Library. She hopes someone will continue the outreach program next year by offering to lead workshops in poetry, screenwriting, marketing, fiction, nonfiction writing, humor, playwriting or any area of expertise in which he/she feels confident.

I am so proud of membership chair Andrea Polk, and treasurer Pirhiya Goldstein, both of whom learned a whole new system of record-keeping, thanks to Ray Malus, our webmaster. Words cannot express our appreciation to Ray for the hours he has donated to devising this time-saving system. It would have been costly to hire a technician to construct something similar.

And what would we do without Kathy Highcove, who publishes a newsletter that just gets better each month? In fact, if you paid attention, you know she put out two *Valley Scribes* in May. Kathy felt Betty deserved more than one tribute page, so she published an extra issue devoted to remembrances of our beloved Betty Freeman, who passed away on March 29th.

We sadly remember our other recent member losses: Art Yuweiler, Cara Alson and Sulamith Proctor.

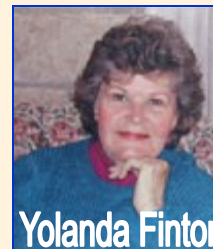
Karen Gorback, head of publicity, has been responsible for bringing in visitors through her announcements to news outlets. Many of these visitors have become members because they liked what they read and heard. So I thank you, members, for making our guests feel welcome.

As you know, we have been without a secretary for most of the year. A big thank you goes to Judy Presnall, who serves as member-at-large and Andrea Polk for filling in as secretary to record minutes during our board meetings. We still need a permanent secretary. Perhaps someone will try taking notes our June board meeting and--finding that it is not a daunting task--volunteer to take it on next year.

Speaking of stepping up where there is a need, two examples come to mind: New member Gary Wosk has volunteered to write reviews of each month's speaker for the *Valley Scribe*; long-time member Nance Crawford has generously answered Jerry McPhie's plea for someone to edit his newly completed book. Jerry is legally blind and is a resident of MPTF.

We can look back with pride at our activities of the past year. I hope you all keep writing during the summer. Enter writing contests, read, experiment with different genres, take classes, and help other writers. In helping others, we become better writers.

— Yolanda Fintor



(Whimsicals continued from page 1)

Ah, those were the days for popular sportswriters ... and then along came social media. The modern sportscaster must be a multitasker, texter, tweeter, and online commentator.

Sports reporters are not only expected to write game stories and interviews but must post online collections of sports data, quotes and commentary.

This summer Olympic sportscasters will need multiple background stories about youthful competitors in the many events.

Howard Cosell wouldn't have time these days to light up a cigar, let alone find an ashtray in a modern newsroom.



KH



Sail on!

Internet Book Promotion Can be Blood, Sweat and Tears, but also ...

FUN!
says Tina Coury



Planning to promote your self-published book on the Internet and feeling a bit lost? Well, take heart. Help is available for new authors – who are willing to research. And whether you sprint into social media or jog along at your own speed, **every-one** is a winner at the finish line, guest speaker Tina Coury, an award-winning multimedia artist, assured us at our May meeting.

Coury spoke about utilizing Internet promotion tools such as blogs, blog tours, book trailers, Websides and book pitches (mini-book trailers).

Her presentation was geared to encourage writers who haven't used social media. She believes that modern book promotion, using technology and applications, are user-friendly compared to past promotion methods.

"The Internet, social media and cyber promotion is a **community**. This is a community accessible on your computer any time, day or night."

And there is another important benefit: free advertising and promotion.

The first order of business, she emphasized, should be to start your own blog or comment on a blog as a way to discover new audiences.

"It should not just be about promoting your book," she said, "a blog is a parking space on the Internet for your ideas. Editors look at blogs when they Google your name. They go to your blog to see how you write. Everyone in this room should have one! It's easy and it's free."

She asserted that today's writers can no longer depend on traditional book promotion methods. Publishers expect authors to handle most of their

cyber promotion.

Just having a manuscript is not enough; a **platform** is essential. A platform, she explained, includes having your own website, using Facebook and producing book trailers and Websides. (A Webside is a video that can appear on a blog.)

All this self-promotion sounds formidable to a

new writer. Why not sit back and let the experts take over?

Coury explained, "The upside to self-promotion on the Internet is that we're not relying on Barnes & Noble or our editor, whether they have the resources or not. You can sell it yourself."



Our speaker devoted a considerable portion of her presentation on how to produce an engaging book trailer — relatively new on the Internet. She owns a book trailer production company that creates trailers for authors, publishers and literary organizations and can be found at http://tinanicholscoury.typedpad.com/tinas_book_trailers/.

She played a series of book trailers to demonstrate that the best trailers consist of compelling action, music and type, are positive, and are designed to be one minute and thirty seconds in length. It's also imperative that the cover of the book appears in the book trailer for at least four seconds so viewers have time to read it.

She emphasized that one has to ask production companies where they found the music and images for the book trailer and to make sure they are royalty free.

"A credit is not a license."

She told us that promoting a book on the Internet can be time consuming, but the Internet, thankfully, has also replaced another antiquated practice."

"You don't have to knock on doors like the Fuller Brush man."

Coury's blogs can be found at <http://www.tinanicholscoury.com> and <http://www.tinanicholscouryblog.com>.

— Gary Wosk





Ken's Pet Peeves

THE WAVE

There is no water, yet I may drown
The WAVE at ball games has got me down.

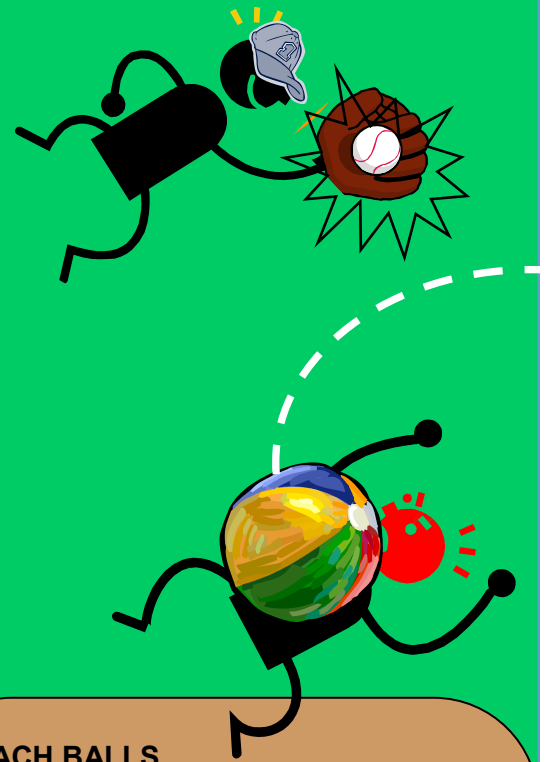
The crowd leaps up while blocking the view.
The team's best play is seen by a few.

The ticket says it's a Dodger game.
Yet now I'm watching with sea-sick shame.

"Please be seated," I shout to the crowd
To no avail, no matter how loud.

The best field action I cannot see
Only because I'm lost out at sea.

Ken Wilkins



BEACH BALLS

Beach balls, beach balls, they are everywhere.
Who has the breath to fill them with air?

Where did they hide when at the gate;
Unnoticed when starting to inflate?

Ushers chase them, but to no avail
A crowd-pleasing game they can't curtail?

Loud boos are heard when a ball is caught.
Sides are taken and feelings are taut.

Another beach ball quickly appears
Fans show they're happy shouting long cheers.

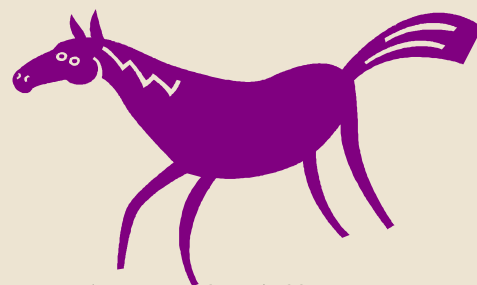
Ken Wilkins



Refresh and Review

Clichés

A cliché is an expression that, when it was first dreamed up, was doubtless imaginative and creative: *chicken-livered, happy as a lark, run like a deer*. But by the time it was borrowed and used over and over ad infinitum, it lost any or all of its original freshness: *left high and dry, the finger of suspicion, a whale of an appetite*.

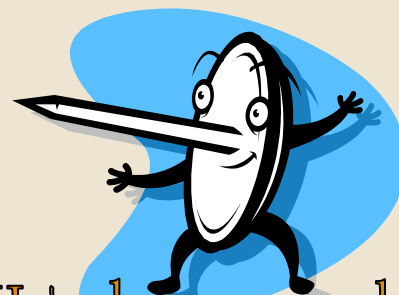


That's a horse of a different color.

Clichés are acceptable and basic to informal conversation, and necessary to the comfort and the flow of the discourse: *red letter day, hard as a rock, leaps and bounds*. But even though they economize on time and effort, good writers try to avoid them, or at least use them rarely and with discretion: *warm as toast, old as the hills, the life of the party*. Why use someone else's overused expressions when you can create your own?

You can spot a cliché coming: *a diamond _____ ; an ace _____* Some of them have been around as long as the Bible: *a parting of the ways, the blind leading the blind, a multitude of sins*.

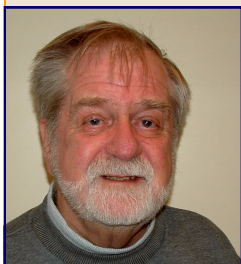
Certain nouns and adjectives have been glued together so long, they have become clichés: *clockwork precision, whirlwind courtship, crushing defeat*. Some expressions that were once new have been used so much they have become clichés in my lifetime and perhaps yours: *support mushroomed, a real hang-up, what a rip-off!*



He's sharp as a tack!

Song lyrics, especially country, are the real champions of the cliché. Check out some for illustrations. The truly beautiful songs have always had imaginative lyrics. The corny ones string one cliché to another from beginning to end.

Avoiding clichés is especially important in poetry, description and narration. After you write your rough draft, go back and line out all the clichés. You can do better.



Clichés are, of course, not *verboten*. Sometimes you just can't come up with anything better than *the old tried and true*. (See what I mean?) Just try not to overdo them. And refer to a thesaurus *if you feel at a loss for words*, or if you're ready to *leave the job half-done*. *Go the whole nine yards*. *Keep the faith*. *Carpe diem*.

And now I should quit while I'm still ahead.

- Dave Wetterberg

GO MARKET



by Ken Watts

BBC International Radio Playwriting Competition 2012 is a great opportunity for writers. The deadline is July 31, 2012. The prize is £2,000 (depending on exchange rates, it's about \$2500) and a trip to London to see their play recorded at the BBC. The play will then be broadcast on the World Service. Go to the website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom>. On the webpage, go to the LAT-EST OPPORTUNITIES section and click on the competition. This site will provide all the details and the application form.

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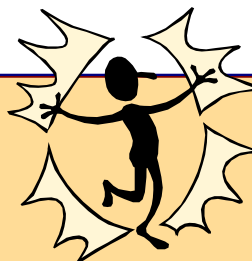
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SOMETHING TO PONDER:

If you want to succeed, you must make your own opportunities as you go.

— John B. Gough



My love of sports goes way back. I was at UCLA when Lew Alcindor (before he became Kareem Abdul Jabbar) was confounding every other team in college basketball. A time when other teams practiced standing on a chair with tennis rackets in their hands to get a perspective of what it was like to defend against him. I screamed "Go Bruins!" at the top of my lungs and played glockenspiel in the pep band in those wonderful John Wooden days. We even won some football games then, too.

LA Sports these days is centered on the pro teams. We have hit pay dirt this year with the exciting Clippers, Lakers, Kings, Dodgers and Angels. Everybody is 'way up there' and not just hoping for, at least, a 'more wins than losses' season. What a sports year for LA this is!! (Sorry, fellow writers, but after what we have been through sports-wise in LA this does rate 2 exclamation points.)

My favorite sport really is tennis. Tennis is so 'mano a mano.' Nobody comes in for you when things are not going so well. You just have to 'gut it out.' How about John Isner's 3-day match point tie-breaker at Wimbledon? I don't want to miss a minute of Roger Federer's class and finesse. He is one-of-a-kind. Loved Sampras and Agassi, too.

Just wish my creaky old knees would cooperate and let me get in a few drop shots, serves and crosscourt backhands that I could never master but had a heck of a lot of fun trying.



— Rita Keeley Brown



Marc Littman

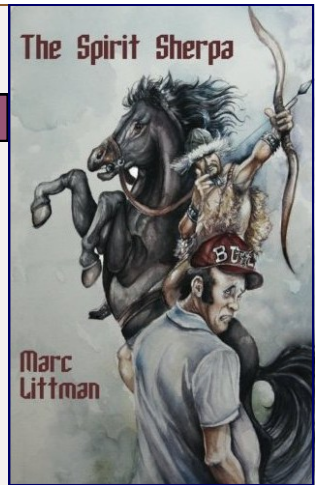
New Member Check-In

Marc Littman has worked as a reporter, editor and freelance journalist and in public relations for more than 20 years. He makes his living as a corporate writer but creative writing is his passion. He's earned awards for short stories and screenplays and has self-published two novels available on Amazon.com.

The Spirit Sherpa is Marc's latest book, newly published this May. It's the story of a troubled man who must learn the essence of spirituality and universal love through a revolving door of adventurous lives that play out in the past, present and future. The traveler is escorted on his journey by a mysterious Sherpa spirit who holds the key to helping him dump the emotional baggage and fear he has been burdened with through the ages. Historical vignettes, mystery, action and humor are blended in an intriguing story that bends time.

Marc's debut novel *Eddie and Me on the Scrap Heap* was published six years ago and garnered critical acclaim from Midwest Book Review and others. It's about a gifted autistic boy who positively transforms the lives of a medley of broken characters even as they're trying to "fix" him. The book was inspired by Marc's own autistic son. Likewise, Marc drew inspiration for *The Spirit Sherpa* from personal experience. Marc's writing is life-affirming and often funny, but his messages are serious. In *The Spirit Sherpa*, he suggests to readers that they live virtuous lives because, like his main character, they too may end up making amends in future rounds.

Marc's friend, Gary Wosk, encouraged him to join the California Writers Club, San Fernando Valley branch. As a new member, Marc looks forward to reading some of his prose at open mike. And he promises to keep them short.



ERICA'S Big Win



The children's literary magazine, **LADYBUG**, has published Erica Stux' poem, *Under the Willow Tree*, in the May/June issue.

Her poem was submitted to the publication seven long years ago! Erica tells us that she was very surprised to see it in print, but certainly gratified.

Kudos, Erica.

KH

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE

CURRENT MEMBERS - RENEWAL DUES \$45.00. PAY NOW through SEPTEMBER 30, 2012. The October meeting is **TOO LATE!** After September 30th all members paying dues are considered **NEW MEMBERS** and the dues are \$65. Make it easy on yourself and bring your check made out to the CWC-SFV to the June meeting, Saturday, June 2nd, or mail it to:

Pirhiya Goldstein, CWC-SFV Treasurer
19360 Rinaldi Street, #171
Northridge, CA 91326

If you have moved from **ASSOCIATE** to **ACTIVE STATUS** since joining SFV, or have **CHANGED** your address, phone or website, please inform Andrea Polk, our membership chair at apolk@socal.rr.com.

THE UNNATURAL

By Gary Wosk



I slowly approached the mound at the local park with much trepidation. After the last time I pitched to my son, David, my left arm felt like it was going to fall off. The shooting pain in the shoulder had been practically unbearable, yet here I was, ready to sacrifice my health again because he wanted to see how far he could hit the baseball and I wanted to make him

happy. That's what dads are for, right?

I was sure he would get his wish and knock the 3-inch in diameter sphere to kingdom come because I had the arm power of a 10-year-old and the baseball would appear as large as a beach ball as it approached. He couldn't miss. I knew that in a short while he would be hitting homers and I'd be shagging balls.

David was home from college on spring break. It was an unusually hot March day and I told myself the batting practice would not take long because the broiling conditions would probably get to me first and that I would either quit or collapse. I was nearing 60 years of age and I would throw in the towel at the slightest sign of a cramp and/or perspiration droplets stinging my eyes.

"Are you ready?" I called over to him.

"Yeah, show me your heater," he replied with a grin.

I wound up and delivered the ball. There was a pop and a snap, but my arm remained attached and that was a victory in itself.

When the ball finally reached home plate, my 6-foot 4-inch son swung as hard as he could, missed and landed on his ass.

I tried not to gloat, but seeing him swing and miss the ball was definitely the highlight of my recent life — and that kind of triumph was rather sad. There is always that competitive thing between dad and son.

He dusted himself off. His demeanor changed -- no more Mr. Nice Son. He was determined to blast the next pitch into the stratosphere.

"I wasn't trying," he assured me. "Won't happen again. You were just lucky."

He lost the smirk and looked deadly serious. This was war!

Déjà vu. He didn't even come close.

"Lucky again," he said. "Better tell the people on the other side of the fence to watch out," he said confidently. "We don't want a lawsuit if they happen to get conked on the noggin."

"Whatever, whatever, Babe," I said.

It was interesting that he would even suggest that I was "lucky." Not lately for sure. I had not worked in two years, and my body was beginning to betray me. Aches and pains never ceased.

David had struck out, but he was not one to quit, even though he continued to swing and miss at my ultra slow pitches.

"Dad, have you been practicing?" he inquired.

"No," I replied, "but my arm feels great for the first time in years. Could be those fish oil pills or maybe the weight lifting at the gym is beginning to pay off."

Tomorrow morning might be another story completely, I thought.

Better make sure there was Advil in the house.

"Come on Dad, one more pitch, puh-leez," he pleaded.

It was all about pride now. We both wanted to leave the park feeling good about ourselves. I told him that I couldn't take much more of the searing heat and that I felt dehydrated.

"You'll live Dad. Don't worry. Just one more, one more, and then we can leave." He was beginning to sound like he was ten years old again. I felt sorry for him. If he clobbers it, so be it, I thought.

"Okay," I finally said, however, I warned him that he was about to see my super slow pitch. This would definitely be my last pitch because the searing heat was really doing a number on me. My forehead was very hot and my throat was sore.

I wound up and delivered the ball. The result was the same, which I guiltily admit was sweet music to my ears. Swoosh. The bat hit nothing but air. I was engulfed in glory but definitely light-headed. I silently celebrated because I didn't want what had just happened to adversely affect his studies. We were paying enough for tuition.

We gathered our gear and headed toward the car when out of the corner of my eye I noticed a man wearing a Panama hat, white suit coat and pants, blue shirt and black tassel loafers. He called over to us in a gravelly, phlegm-constricted voice to come over. He looked to be about 80 years of age.

"Ay, ay, ay," he said as what appeared to be an expensive half-smoked and quite juicy Cuban cigar dangled from his mouth. "Not so fast guys. I wanna talk to the old man."

He held what resembled to be a hair blower, but I recognized it as a radar gun that he had been using to measure how fast my pitches were traveling. I would be surprised if my velocity even broke the 40 miles per hour barrier.

Some people need to get a life, I thought.

I didn't want to get too close to him because he looked like one of those park type loonies, which I expected he would confirm very soon.

"Looked really good out there throwing, son," he remarked to me.

Who was he kidding? I was more than aware of how awkward I appeared. In fact, I could probably have auditioned for a role in *The Walking Dead*. That's how gangly and weak I seemed to myself.

"You're a little on the gimpy side, but you've got something. It's that windup and delivery of yours," he chuckled. I was slightly taken aback. A perfect stranger was insulting me?

"Thanks for the unsolicited critique," I replied. "David, we need to go. Mom is making dinner."

"Listen, seriously, have you ever played organized ball?" he asked me.

"Well, if you count Little League, yes. Who are you anyway?"

"I'm Ralph Breeto. I scout for the Dodgers, part-time now. You've probably seen me on TV, but it's been a while. I stood in the stands right behind home plate and pointed my radar gun toward the pitcher. When they could no longer 'bring it,' that is, even when you, old man, could hit it, they got the hook and off to the showers they went. The grandchildren are great to play with but I still want

(continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

to find that next superstar.”

He showed me his credentials and everything seemed on the up and up.

“Don’t go,” said Breeto. “Sit down here on the bench; I wanna ask you something.”

Like Pavlov’s conditioned dogs, my son and I complied. He seemed harmless, plus I had a bat in my hand in case things got out of control.

“We really need to go,” I said. “What is it?”

“The team is hurting real bad. Our lefty out of the bullpen tore up his arm. He’s out for the season. Spring training just got going and we don’t have nobody in the system who can replace him. Blame that on our wonderful owner. They call him the Parking Lot Attendant. He won’t spend the money on an experienced veteran. We need a guy like you who won’t demand 10 million bucks a year. We’ll start your out throwing batting practice and then we’ll see.”

The more he spoke, the closer I came to pulling the plug on this psycho. I did not take kindly to being played like a fool.

“Are ya interested?” asked Breeto. “You’re a Dodger fan, ain’t you? Do you bleed Dodger Blue like me and Tommy Lasorda? We’ll pay you a thousand bucks a day plus, uh, room and board. I think you can do it. It would be something you could tell your grandkids about. You’d be famous.”

I suddenly felt dazed, probably a combination of the soaring temperature and the preposterous proposal.

“Dad, are you okay? Here, drink some water.” David handed me his water bottle.

The water was warm but helped bring me back from semi-consciousness.

Breeto took a few puffs from his new cigar and flicked off some ashes next to my feet.

Was this deal too good to be true? I thought.

“I’ve been around for a long time, son,” said Breeto. “I’ve signed some of the biggest names in the game; some of them are in the Cooperstown. You’ve got something special and rank up there with the best I seen buddy. Yeah, your pitches are unbelievably slow, but you get them over the plate, and they kind of zigzag at the end. I know a phenom when I see a phenom. You could be the next Fernando Valenzuela.”

I liked being referred to as son, made me feel younger, and I liked being compared to Fernando Valenzuela of the Dodgers, but even so, I was ready to faint. Suddenly I figured everything out. I turned to my son.

“Is this one of your pranks, because if it is, it’s a doozy. Have I been punked?”

“No, dad, this is not a prank,” said my always cool, collected, analytical son. “This could be the big break you’ve been waiting for your entire life. Don’t walk away from this chance.” He was a bright college kid who was always right, or so he thought.

“What do you say, son?” Breeto persisted.

I was skeptical but finally felt convinced that I had just received

the biggest opportunity of my life.

Two days later at the stadium, surrounded by my family, the owner of the team and its manager, I signed the contract. Spring training in Arizona — here I come. I had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The media was all over me after the Dodgers announced that a nearly 60 year-old man, with no professional baseball experience, could possibly become the team’s left-handed relief pitcher, the oldest person in the history of the game to accomplish this feat. I even made the cover of AARP The Magazine, for crying out loud. The requests for interviews never stopped.

Finally, enough was enough, it was time to get in shape for spring training, get rid of the love handles and not embarrass myself or my family.

I also had to quickly develop a thick skin. When the players dined at the best restaurants with the enormous per diem moola, they would teasingly suggest that I order only off the senior menu. They would recommend I order a half sandwich and soup and salad, enough to fill a bird. No way. I still have a ravenous appetite.

Their hazing didn’t faze me and I ordered appetizers along with a main dish and sides that would even make Goliath drool.

“Hey, that’s a lot of steak for a senior citizen,” chirped one of the \$10 million bonus babies. “Do you think you can still chew it with your dentures?” No respect.

It was something I would have to get used to -- remarks about my age, that is. It didn’t bother me one bit though, getting paid \$1,000 a day, plus free room and board. I was living the high life, even if it was probably not going to last much longer.

The serenity came crashing down one day. I noticed players, who said they were my friends, were having closed door meetings with the manager and coaches. I found out that they were miffed that I was humiliating them during batting practice. Most of them were swinging and missing at my pitches, or at best, hitting weak grounders to the little kids who shagged baseballs in the out-

field. Their bloated egos were now deflated. They wanted me gone, flown back to Los Angeles in coach.

When they were told I had made the team, their attitudes changed. Now, they figured, the opposition would have to deal with me, and their team would win more games, and possibly make it into the post season. I was now one of them and they treated me with more respect, except they called me, “Pops,” which I didn’t appreciate.

Opening day finally arrived. Dodger Stadium was sold out on a clear, wind-swept day. I was napping in the bullpen when suddenly the telephone rang. The Philadelphia Phillies were staging a comeback. The manger needed ME, his left-handed relief pitcher.

The crowd gave me a standing ovation mixed with laughter and a few jeers as I jogged to the mound in the seventh inning of a now close ballgame. I tried to remain focused and not let anything, including the excitement of the moment, get to me. The manager handed me the ball. I walked behind the mound, meditated for a moment and kept my composure. The umpire yelled, “Play ball!” I looked into the



(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

stands and saw David and my wife Mary rooting for me. Then I wound up and delivered my blazing 58 m.p.h. fastball ball to one of the most feared hitters in baseball, Ryan Howard. Howard's eyes grew larger as the ball floated toward home plate. I expected that the Giant Behemoth was going to slam it into the parking lot, about 500 feet away. He missed so bad that even the players in his dugout let out big guffaws. Red-faced, the player stared out at me, raised his bat and pointed it toward me. I thought he was going to charge the mound but I wouldn't back down. I wound up, raised my leg, and ... *someone threw a pail of water in my face!*

"Dad, wake up, wake up, you're delirious."

"Huh? Where am I?" I felt dizzy. Tasted dirt in my mouth. Mud under my head. And ... hey, my face and hair were wet.

"What happened, David?!"

"You got delirious, Dad. Kept calling me Howard, and then passed out on the mound. I had to throw water in your face. Sorry."

"Passed out? From what? How did you know what to do?"

"I was pretty sure you'd had another bad attack of Spring Fever. Happens every March. Right? Mom told me to be prepared."

And so ends the shagged baseball story.



A Blessing and a Curse

By Bill Sorrells

As I look back on my spent youth, zeal and talent wasted;
On artificial tinsel show and shallow victories tasted.
I cannot help but worship, then.
The very few amongst us, who refuse to swill the common gruel

Perhaps they're made of sterner stuff, or maybe only lucky,
To pass on the glitter pile and continue on so plucky.
At once, I sorely long to be included in their ranks,
But given chances long ago, I chose to say, "No thanks."

I'm way too special in my position to ever take a chance;
To reveal my inner self so weak, a victim of happenstance.
Really good at what I do, an athlete tried and true.
I didn't really try so much; it's something I already knew.



How to read the guy at first when he's intent to steal.
And if the jaw that's set on this batter's really real,
That baseball had a way of sliding away from every bat.
I just wound up and threw across...they missed it...that was that.
They gave me piles of money then, fortunately invested.
And after shedding a wife or two, still covertly lies nested.
What the hell does a hero do when he feels he hasn't earned it?
He gazes back at a wasted youth and wonders how he burned it.

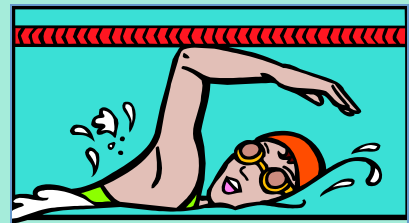
Will She Take a Dive?

Being active makes growing old more enjoyable...but damn, I had to fall down the up escalator at J.C. Penny's a couple weeks ago and cut my leg. Now how am I going to swim in the California Senior Olympics June 6th?

Last year when I swam in the Senior Olympics it was so much fun. All my family came to see the event and cheer me on. My great granddaughter Jayme, who is 15 and lives in Salidas, came all the way down to Pasadena to swim with me in the 50 yard grand mother, grand daughter race. It started the big event and nobody won the event but everybody received an award.

Soon came the first big event of the Senior Olympics which was a 25 yard free style. The second event was a 50 yard free style. I swam in both of them and won three golden medals, of course, being 90 I had no competition so I swam my heart out.

I just checked my wound and it's healing nicely so maybe I'll swim June 6th after all.



— Gloria Kositchek

SENIOR OLYMPIC SURPRISES

One of my passions is playing volleyball. I am part of a unique group of ladies who play for fun and exercise. We call ourselves "Recycled Teenagers." Though most of us are at the age where speed and fleet-footedness has somewhat diminished, we meet every week at a local park.

One morning last spring, a newcomer showed up at the gym. She appeared to be in her sixties and in good shape. She wore knee pads, indicating she was a serious player who can "dig," for the ball, which means she hits the floor on padded knees to pop the ball up before it hits the floor. She played like a pro and we hoped she would return.

Diana did come back the following week and then two more weeks. Little did we know she was auditioning us for an important event. On her fourth visit, she announced, "I am inviting you ladies to sign up for the Pasadena Senior Olympics!"

We were all pleasantly surprised. Only a few of us had been in tournaments when we were young and agile. Now that the joints were a bit stiff, depth perception a little flawed and balance slightly off, could we actually compete?

I sized up my teammates.

Jean, a retired postal worker, the oldest at 79, is rarely ill and shows up every week.

Marci and Ann each have had a hip replaced. Marci is the glue that holds the group together, while Ann moves the fastest of all of us. Grandmother to sixteen grandchildren, Ann contends they keep her young and fit.

Joyce and I are retired teachers, each grateful that, in spite of spells of arthritis, we can still move well enough to play decently.

Waynette is a strong, competitive player who offered to drive us to the event if we decided to participate.

"Now remember," Diana said when she saw our hesitancy, "you will be playing against women in your age group."

"What do you think?" I asked the group. "Can we do it?"

"What the heck. If nothing else, we'll get



a tee shirt out of it," said Jean, always ready for anything.

On the day of the tournament, we met at Waynette's house. We were excited but wondered how we would measure up against our opponents.

"Hey, we know we're good. We'll show those gals a thing or two," said Marci.

We did a high-five and piled into the van.

After we signed in at the registration table we walked into the gym. Players were already warming up on one of the courts. They were tall, moved well and looked to be in their very fit fifties. They reminded me of those bronze goddesses that play beach volleyball.

Diana came over to greet us.

"We can't play against those amazons!" Anne protested.

"Relax, ladies. You will be competing against women in your age group, 70-79.

As it turned out, all our games were against teams that fell into the 60-69 age range because there were no other teams in our age category. The games were played in round robin matches in which there is no elimination of teams that lose. Wins and losses are simply tracked. It was a good thing because we only won one game.

After the games were over we were asked to line up in the lobby. We thought it was for photographs, but it was for much more than that. We heard an announcement that each member of our team would receive a shirt AND a gold medal!

After a short ceremony, we gathered our belongings and our coveted medals and returned to Waynette's van. The mood was somber rather than jubilant. Waynette broke the silence. "Does anyone else feel that this is a hollow victory?"

Ann agreed. "It's too bad we received recognition just for being the only ones in our age category to show up."

"But deep down we know we could have beaten another team at our level of play," added Joyce.

"Well, look at it this way," said Marci.

"We'll proudly wear our medals over our *Senior Olympic* shirts."

Her voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper. "No one needs to know we won by default."

We did a high-five.



— Yolanda Fintor

Usher at the L.A. '84 Olympics

The Unnatural



by Karen Faye Gorback

First printed as an Op-Ed essay in the August 7, 2008 Ventura County Star.



I was offered my first school counseling job in July, 1984 – an exciting accomplishment for a young teacher who had recently completed her

graduate studies at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks.

So, when the school principal asked me to start right away, I could hardly believe my answer. “I’m really sorry, but I can’t start for about a month. I’m going to be in the Olympics!”

“That’s incredible!” gushed the administrator. “What event?”

I hesitated. “Well, it’s not exactly an event, you know, in the sense of a sporting event.”

The poor man looked confused.

“An usher!” I exploded. “I’m going to be an usher in the gymnastics venue at Pauley Pavilion!”

And even though I wanted the job very badly, I was ready to give it up for three weeks of donning my blue and gold uniform and usher’s cap to be part of the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

No, I had not been active in sports as a child. Quite the opposite, I was a bookworm who played piano, painted, and wrote poetry. Pretty dull stuff. Yet, when I read the tiny want-ad in the local paper for Olympic volunteers, my heart began to race as I was drawn into the history and pageantry and grandeur of it all.

So desperate to earn an usher’s spot, I studied my old college French text for weeks, knowing that the Usher Selection Committee preferred bilingual volunteers. Thus, I confidently told my interviewer, “Oui, je parle Francais!” and thankfully wasn’t asked to say anything else!

The Gymnastics assignment at Pauley Pavilion for was a coveted duty among ushers. While I would have happily taken anything, I was tickled to be assigned to UCLA, having graduated from the university a decade earlier. Pauley Pavilion was a wonderful place to spend

the Olympics – all dressed up with colorful flags and banners from around the world draped over the rafters. And when the house lights dimmed and spotlighted the athletes receiving their medals on the podium, Pauley was the center of the universe.

Thus began an adventure that I lovingly chronicled in a daily journal, trying to capture every goose bump produced each time I heard the Star Spangled Banner, watched Mary Lou Retton fly through the air, or witnessed Mitch Gaylord and Bart Conner perform magic on the pommel horse and rings.

Then, there are the terrible political tragedies that seem to bird dog the Olympics around the globe, perhaps because the world is watching and the temptation is great for extremists and nations to make a statement – often with tragic consequences, as in the massacre of the Israeli athletes during the 1972 Games in Munich.

The Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 was the year that the Soviet Union and 13 other Communist countries boycotted the Games in retaliation for the United States boycotting the 1980 Olympics. But it was also the year that we first heard John William’s magnificent *Olympic Fanfare*; and it was the first privately-funded Olympics that turned a profit, under the remarkable management of Peter Ueberroth.

The world came to Los Angeles and didn’t get swallowed in freeway gridlock or poisoned by smog. I made new friends with people from throughout Southern California, witnessed the skill and stamina of world-class gymnasts, and gave one of my commemorative pins to actor Alan Alda after ushering him to his seat.

All-in-all a wonderful summer! And yes, the principal held the job open for me, which I started in late August 1984, and kept for fourteen years.

So — Dear Olympic Organizing Committee: Please consider this my letter of intent. If the Games ever come back to California, I’d like to apply -- for a volunteer usher’s position. I’m a little older now and still can’t speak French very well, but I have my old uniform and cap and would give up anything in a heart-beat to play another small role in the Olympic tradition.

Just say when!



A Feathered Dust-up

I spotted a dark form lurking on a high branch of our Brazilian pepper tree. I heard the resident mockingbird squall a warning. She teetered on the edge of her nest and dared the crow to come one inch closer. And he did. He hopped down to a lower branch, and leered at her three pale green eggs. I sipped my coffee and waited; I knew the intruder would

soon be getting the bum's rush.

The female bird spread out her tail feathers, puffed out her chest and squalled for her mate – who was looking for bugs in the nearby avocado tree. The crow fluttered back up to a higher branch. Her mate came back on the double, and screeched raspy warnings as he boldly landed on a twig a few feet above the crow. “CHIRP! CHIRP!”

Both of the mockingbirds now scolded the predator. They teetered, puffed up, spread their wings and rasped war cries at the enemy. The beleaguered crow listened to the avian abuse for a few seconds, then retreated off his branch. As he flapped ponderously toward his own mate in the tall pine tree down the street, the mockingbirds followed and dive bombed his black feathered back. The crow frantically swooped up and down, banked left, swung right, but his attackers never slackened the attack.

"K-r-r-a-ck! Take THAT! you black heart!"

The songbirds' gray forms cut like two sharp Ninja knives through the morning haze. They adeptly criss-crossed their flight paths and attacked from both sides: first one peck from HER and then another sharp peck from HIM on the crow's head and wings. Each jab was accompanied by their low rasping cry, "K-R-R-R-A-C-K," followed by an aggrieved "CAW!" from the victim.

Crow eventually made it back to his mate, who waited at the top of our neighbor's pine tree, and landed close to her perch. His tormentors pulled back, gave a final battle-cry and winged away, triumphant once more. The crows watched them go.

The bird world's version of the Dynamic Duo landed on the lawn near my chair to troll companionably for a few bugs. Beaks full, they returned to the pepper tree. The female settled over her clutch of eggs. Her mate kept watch.

The crows now settled disconsolately on a telephone wire. They bent their heads and stroked their beaks on the black insulation in a show of frustration and menace. They ruffled their wings and seemed to discuss the situation in crow speak. "Caw! Caw!" Then the female crow lifted off the wire and began her own stealthy flight plan toward the nest in the pepper tree. The mockingbirds watched her devious approach.

Time for a new strategy, I thought, but I'm betting on the Home Team.

— Kathy Highcove



Kathy with Nikki Highcove, the family nestling. (Granddaughter)

Our SFV Critique Groups

The San Fernando Valley branch of CWC has four active critique groups at the present time. I have had the opportunity to visit and participate with three of them and am well acquainted with the fourth. They are all conducted in a professional and helpful manner and are always well-attended. There is a common atmosphere of enthusiasm, camaraderie and respect within each group. And, as a special bonus, a social network and new friendships have grown within the groups.

Join a critique group? Of course!
Try it, you'll like it!

— *Lil Rodich*



Drawing by Max Schwartz

Leslie's Group



One of the best reasons for belonging to the California Writers Club is the chance to join a critique group. My group, at the present time, has five members: Dave Wetterberg, our facilitator and short story person ... Lillian Rodich, our poet and mentor... Ed Rasky, non-fiction family life ... Leslie Kaplan, that's me, the memoir lady who tries to make you laugh or shed a tear ... and last, but not least, the multitalented historian and former engineer, Max Schwartz.

Diverse as we are, not only have we helped each other improve our literary skills, but we've grown to be a sort of family. There are re-writes and respectful disagreements as well as praise when it's appropriate.

My group first enjoys a short social time. We eat snacks and chat and then get down to the serious business at hand. Each member reads his/her copy out loud, one by one. The rest of us listen and read the written copy at the same time. Reading the work and hearing it is a double bonus. After the copy is read we respond as to whether the story flowed smoothly and whether it held our interest ... or not.

We meet twice monthly and rotate meeting in each member's home. Call Lillian Rodich, Dave Wetterberg, or Leslie Kaplan if you're interested in my group. We meet the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m. And that's that!



LESLIE'S GROUP



Paula Diggs



Judy Garris



Lillian Rodich

Sharon Yofan

Andi Polk

Sharon's Group

Sharon's Group

Our group consists of Andrea Polk, Paula Diggs, Judy Garris, and facilitator, Sharon Yofan. Lillian Rodich is an honored and welcome guest.



We meet at a different member's home every other Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Prose and/or poetry is submitted to each member via email at least two days before the meeting. We encourage members to limit their work to approximately four pages.

After each member reads her work, comments are the work are shared. Our critiques are suggestions, in support of another's work. The intention is to encourage and inspire each member while remaining honest and forthright. Written comments are handed to each author at the close of the discussion.

We learn from each other's written expression, be it prose or poetry, fiction or non-fiction. Simultaneously, each meeting helps the members of our group improve our written and verbal critiquing skills.

All of us are inspired by the personal revelations shared by the writer and by the ensuing discussion after the work is presented.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in our group, and feel deep affection for our fellow members.

Geri's Group

Date of Meetings: 2nd & 4th Saturday of the Month, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Place: Member's homes

Purpose: We create a friendly atmosphere that fosters constructive feedback, encouragement and positive support to improve our writing. We offer comments/suggestions re: transitions, dialogue, voice, etc.



Required: Members bring copies of their work for the other members. Each member reads his/her work out loud and the others listen and follow along during the reading.

We have a diverse mix of writing styles.

Lil Rodich: Poetry, non-fiction and fiction

Erica Stux: Educational and humorous stories, poetry

Pirhiya Goldstein: Poetry about in-depth feelings and relationships

Giri Sulur: Memoirs on coming to the United States from India

Sam Glenn: Slice of life stories, poetry

Geri Jabara: Short fiction, humorous

Norm and Sylvia Molesko are on hiatus.

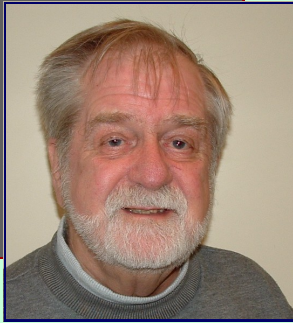
Norm writes poetry that recounts events from his life as a senior citizen. Sylvia is multi-genre—essays, memoirs and poetry.

— Geri Jabara



Geri's Group

Dave's Group



We are a serious and dedicated group of six, consisting of four memoirists, Andrea Polk, Sheila Moss, Claude Baxter, and Linette Stone; and two short story writers, Gary Wosk and Dave Wetterberg.

Sheila and Gary are experi-

enced journalists, Claude is a retired research scientist and professor, Andi is a San Fernando Valley historian, Linette Stone is an expert hand-signer for the hearing-impaired, and Dave Wetterberg is a retired English teacher. We meet every other Friday afternoon at 2 p.m., alternating in each other's homes.

Our critique group is a little different from the other groups: our members e-mail our writing to each other two days in advance of the meeting. This change came about be-

cause some contributions were getting long ... six or eight pages single-spaced sometimes ... and in fairness to the writer, we wanted more time to read and think about it than the meeting itself provided.

We've been getting together like this for several years in (mostly) pleasurable discourse about our writing. Misplaced commas, faulty references, tense-shifting, and misplaced modifiers are not welcome in our group, but hugs are always welcome and munchies are always on the table.



DAVE'S GROUP

Time For the California Writers Club Annual Picnic

... and we're waiting for you!



Pictured from left: George Sterling, Mary Austin, Jack London, James Hopper
Photo by Arnold Genthe, circa 1902-1907

Saturday, July 21, 2012 • 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. • Joaquin Miller Park, Oakland

Barbecue • Potluck • Open mic •

Free admission • Open to all CWC members, family and friends. Details, directions and ADA accessibility: www.calwriters.org

RSVP: Linda Brown (Berkeley) 510/530-1261 BrownCalifornia@aol.com

Graphic design by Joyce Krieg, Central Coast

One Last Tribute For Betty Freeman



Rosemary and Roses

by Lenora Smalley

She used to bring them
from her garden
to grace tables of hospitality
when writers in the Valley
founded their branch of CWC.

The rosemary's pungent power
reminds me of her leadership,
her energy,
her goal-setting practicality,
a petite dynamo
who always seemed to know
who to call, where to go,
a driving force
of encouragement and support.

Roses speak
of sweetness in strength,
a satin touch to the fingertips,
lovely in fragrance and form.
In her life she sought
quality and color,
excellence rising above the thorns.

Every morning she tended her garden
even at the end.
Let's bequeath bouquets
of rosemary and roses
to Betty Freeman, our friend.

*Betty was truly a remarkable person and it was heartwarming to see all the pictures and comments and memories. (in the **Remembering Betty Valley Scribe**) I was sick nearly the whole month and regret that I didn't send something. She was such a little dynamo for our first one-day conference.*

She was the one who found the beautiful grounds of the Povoreli Retreat and was the energy behind that successful day. I was her roommate in Oakland the weekend she won the first Ina Coolbrith Award. I woke up early that morning to see her sitting at a desk in our room working on her acceptance speech. She and I both were blown away by the research she had done about Ina Coolbrith. In a way, she was our Ina Coolbrith.

— Lenora Smalley



Betty enjoyed showing visitors around the MPTF residents' garden plots - one of her many projects at the Grace Villa, her last home.



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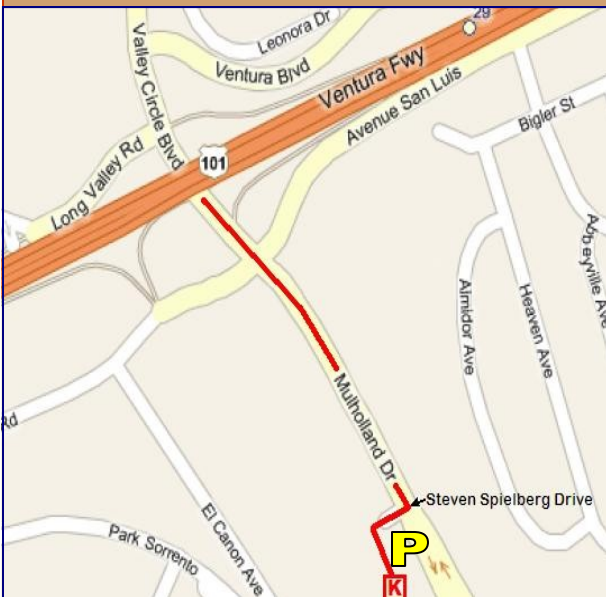


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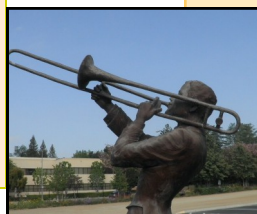


Kathy Highcove
Editor

is
sailing on
to
September.
See you then.



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, June 2nd, at 1 p.m.

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