

Founded 1909

Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch  
of the California Writers Club

# The Valley Scribe

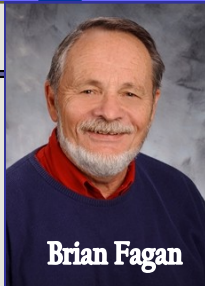
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Brian Fagan

## He Tells It Like It Was

Fagan will speak about his  
adventures researching his

Remember plodding through thick anthropology textbooks to learn the histories of ancient civilizations? And memorizing all kinds of facts and dates that would be needed for the mid-term exam? You prepped successfully for a test but were you able to picture the ancient cities that existed thousands of years ago? Did you appreciate the courage and skills of the peoples who explored new continents or navigated the vast oceans with their primitive forms of navigation?

Not likely, unless you were lucky enough to have a textbook written by a talented historical writer. Historian Brian Fagan, our December guest speaker, writes books that both entertain and inform. — a winning combination.

books about ancient civilizations. He'll recount some of the different genres, story-telling strategies, and difficulties he encounters when reconstructing the past from clusters of flaked stones, broken animal bones, and other detritus discarded by our forebears.

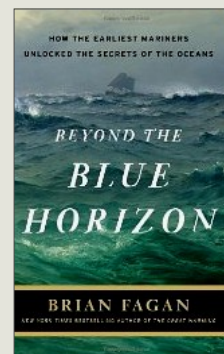
Take a break from your holiday preparations, find a seat in the Katzenberg Room, and listen to author Brian Fagan's publishing adventures.

Fagan's latest book:

*Beyond the Blue Horizon: How the Earliest Mariners Unlocked the Secrets of the Oceans*

For more info on Fagan and his books  
click on

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



## west valley whimsicals

A Schwartz / Highcove Production

## A Gift or a Skill?

Some people believe writing ability is a gift. A writer is born, ready to grow into his gift. His parents become aware that their off-spring is meant to write notable novels or prize winning poetry. As the child grows, his gift unfolds like a flower.



But what about the tot who's more into kneading play dough than dictating descriptive phrases? The average Joe or Joan—do they stand a chance of publishing someday?

Not a problem, according to another group of experts. They assure us that writing

(Continued on page 2)

## Executive Board

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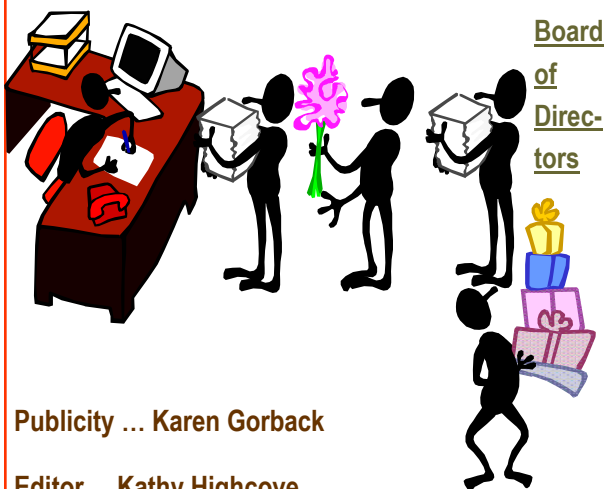
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## President's Message

We members of the San Fernando Valley branch of CWC are fortunate to have the opportunity to see our articles and stories published in the *Scribe*.

Editor Kathy Highcove continually encourages us to submit our creative writing pieces, whether prose or poetry. Some months she even proposes a theme to get us started. This month Kathy showcases the third of four critique groups by publishing samples of their writings.

If you've been to our CWC Saturday general meetings, you are aware that the four existing critique groups are full and a fifth group is being formed. Contact Critique Group Coordinator Andrea Polk at [andipolk4@gmail.com](mailto:andipolk4@gmail.com) if you are interested in joining the new group.

I can personally confirm that a critique group helps an author fine-tune his works. Almost everything I've published has been edited by at least three other pairs of eyes. It's all about writers helping writers.

Being in a critique group forces one to write. As writers, we all have something to say. Write it. Your group provides the perfect audience, a safe audience who will give you constructive feedback that is sure to improve your writing.

I wish you all a joyous holiday season and I look forward to an exciting 2013 for the SFV-CWC.

**Dawn Fintor and her son Hudson share a happy moment in 2012. It's clear that a plentiful amount of joy awaits Grandma Yolanda in 2013!**



(Continued from page 1)

## WAKE UP SANTA!

techniques are learned. Writing is a skill, not a gift. Get to work, kid. Learn the trade.

A third group of theorists believe that ability is a combo

Here comes your critique group. Did you remember to rewrite that story about the good little boys and girls?



of gift and skill. Every writer, even a genius like Shakespeare, must be open to criticism and be willing to learn corrective techniques. And have the will to work through the inevitable rewrites.

—K.H.

# Manny Wants to Hear a Good Story

What's luck got to do with the success of author/radio-TV personality Manny Pacheco's *Forgotten Hollywood* book series?

"Plenty," our November speaker told us at our monthly SFV meeting.

"I have the same amount of talent as anyone in this room," he said, "but I am lucky." And he went on to explain.

He had written reams about stars such as Claude Rains, Lionel Barrymore, Walter Brennan, Lon Chaney Jr., and finished his book in 2009. And there it sat, waiting for publication.

Mother Nature intervened and gave the publishing procrastinator a push toward the presses. One afternoon Pacheco and his wife journeyed to the Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library and Museum on President's Day when their planned visit to Disneyland was cancelled by rain.

At the library, Pacheco met Sheryn Hara, the publisher for Ed Nixon, Richard Nixon's brother, who was there at the library signing his new book.

"She was just standing there by herself and no one was bothering her," he recalled. "Everyone was mobbing Ed Nixon. I bothered her. I asked for advice on how to publish my book about movie stars."

Hara encouraged Pacheco to self-publish. "Manny, you can try to sell your book to Simon and Shuster or some other big publisher, and in three years you still will not be published. I guarantee that if you finish your book by April it will be in book stores by Christmas 2009," she said. And that's what happened.

But let's back up a bit. Before luck, came inspiration. Pacheco needed a unifying theme, a reason for

retelling the interesting stories he heard on his radio show. It was the David McCullough book *John Adams* that inspired Manny to write his series.

The stories of American presidents who lived in the shadows of such great presidents as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson made Pacheco think of character actors who live in the shadow of big Hollywood stars. He referred to the lesser lights of stage and screen as the "forgotten heroes" because people usually say, "I can recognize that face but I can't remember the name."

The light bulb flashed on and Pacheco had the theme for his book: character actors. The hard working stiff with low billing in the credits. "I didn't want them to be forgotten," he said.

"As magnificent as the performances of Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henreid were in *Casablanca*, it's the supporting work of such actors as Claude Rains, Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet that equally holds your attention," said Manny.

"Most movie-goers wanted to watch Bogart and Bergman's characters intertwined in a love affair. But I wanted to be different and spotlight the lives of the supporting actors Lorre and Greenstreet in my book."

During most of the time he spoke to the SFV, Pacheco regaled the audience with Hollywood and Vine moments. With his remaining time, he touched on the importance of back covers versus front covers, distribution, publicity, marketing and keeping track on Excel of how much money is spent on marketing and "offering something different on your blog" every week.

He concluded his presentation with this admonition: "Tell your story. Anybody can do it!"

For more information Pacheco's series, *Forgotten Hollywood* *Forgotten History* and *Son of Forgotten Hollywood* *Forgotten History*, visit this site:

[www.forgottenhollywood.com](http://www.forgottenhollywood.com)

— GARY WOSK

ON THE AIR  
RADIO 1510



November Speaker  
Manny Pacheco



# Ken's Pet Peeves by Ken Wilkins

## SHOPPING CART

### ABANDONMENT

A vacant space in the parking lot?  
It sure looks empty but it is not.

A shopping cart has been left behind.  
Some thoughtless soul with a pea-sized mind.

Left to dent fenders, maybe a door.  
Why can't the user properly store?

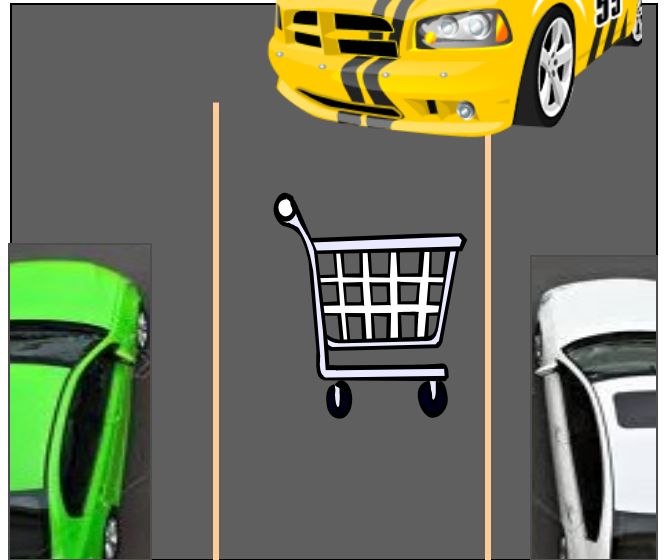
It takes but a moment to return  
Saving someone doing a slow burn.

Show you belong to the human race.  
Return your cart to the proper place.

— Ken Wilkins



What fool left  
THAT thing there?!



Gotta exchange  
this jacket and  
it's Chistmas Evell



We're all waiting  
on the mall roof  
top, Santa! Let's go!



## HAPPY (?) RETURNS

The place is crowded, I'm starting to burn.

I have a small sweater I want to return.

The kids should have known I've put on some weight

The waistline has increased, an oldster's fate.

The lady up front has a brooch to exchange.

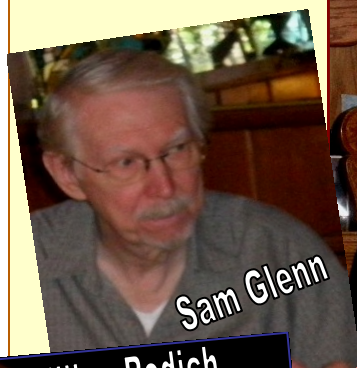
The sparkle she wants is out of her range.

Lord give me the strength just to stand in this line,

Absorbing complaints, be they far from Divine.

— KEN WILKINS

# GERI'S LITERARY LIGHTS



Sam Glenn



Geri Jabara



Pirhiya Goldstein



Sylvia Molesko



Norm Molesko



Lillian Rodich



Clare Goldfarb



Erica Stux

There I stood on Sam Glenn's front step on a Saturday morning. Why was I there? To observe a meeting of Geri Jabara's critique group. I note that Geri is prepared. Coffee and tea are ready. Snacks laid out. Chairs neatly arrayed around a big communal table.

As the members arrived we quickly took a seat. Soon we were good to go. Geri asked Sylvia Molesko to read her piece. Sylvia passed copies to everyone (no one has seen the work beforehand) and read her work. Reactions were many and Sylvia expressed her appreciation. One could hear the expertise and insightful nature of the participants. After Sylvia, we progressed to the next participant.

Every member critiqued expressed thanks for the pointers and suggestions. One woman's personal essay drew an especially enthusiastic reaction from all. The submitter told us that after hearing the reactions she now understood what her piece had been missing.

Watching the interaction, I could understand why the SFV critique groups have proved so popular and are well attended. The critiques are valuable and well worth spending a

few hours around a dining room table.

This critique group worked smoothly throughout the morning. There was very little wasted movement and no one held up the works. By noon we had finished most critiques and members were moving toward the door, their minds lit up with new ideas and POVs.

From Geri Jabara: *Our group consists of nine active members who write in various styles that include poetry, short stories, memoirs, life stories. At our meetings we create a friendly atmosphere that fosters constructive feedback, encouragement and positive support to improve our writing.*

From Giri Sulur: *This group has embraced me, welcoming me whole-heartedly into their midst. Their encouragement is overwhelmingly generous and the critiques are of immense value, honest but not unkind. The individual members have shared some powerful tips that have made my writing more effective.*

Read on and enjoy this group's creative work.

— K. Highcove

# Fit or



# No Fit

"Carol, how do they look?"

"What should I be looking for?"

"The waist, does it look tight?"

"How does it feel, Harry? Does it feel tight?"

"I don't know. It felt a little snug in the department store."

"Well, pull down the zipper."

"Ok, I did that. Now what?"

"Oh oh, it looks to me like you have to pull it together for about 3 inches, just to close it."

"I bought a 35-inch waist. I guess I should have bought a 36-inch."

"What do you usually buy?"

"Thirty five, but with an expandable waist."

"Well, this one doesn't seem to have that feature."

"I already told you that when I was taking it out of the store bag just now."

"So, did you think to ask about a 36 at the same time?"

"No, if I did, I would have told you."

"Maybe we can call the store to see if they have any more in 36. Save ourselves a trip."

"I'm not doing that, Carol."

"Why not?"

"The salesgirl was irritated even when I asked her to help me find some 35s."

"Were the pants on sale?"

"I won't buy them if they're not on sale. You know that."

"That isn't what I asked you, Harry. I asked you if they were on sale?"

"What difference does that make? They always have

pants on sale."

"OK, OK, Harry. You just don't know where I'm coming from."

"Where ARE you coming from?"

"You forgot, Harry, that I used to be in the retail business. I know that the manufacturers decide if their merchandise can be marked down. Maybe the brand with the expanded waist was not on sale."

"What does that have to do with these pants?"

"I'm frustrated, Harry. If you didn't always shop in such a hurry, we wouldn't have to go through this size business after you get home."

"Damn it, Carol, all I wanted was for you to tell me if the pants looked good."

"OK, now one more thing. Don't get upset now. Let me ask you: did you try on any other pants when you were at the store?"

"No, because you weren't with me and I hate to shop."

"Why did I have to be with you?"

"Cause it's just not the waist I'm worried about. It's the problem of the pants being too baggy in the back."

"Why couldn't you ask the salesperson to help you with that?"

"Are you kidding? They'll tell you anything to make a sale."

"So, what do you want from me, Harry? You shoot down every suggestion I make."

"Nothing, Carol. You don't have to do a damned thing. I'm leaving right now before we go any further with this."

"Where are you going?"

"To the thrift store down the street...BY MYSELF!!!"

— Geri Jabara





## Epiphany

Mr. Wigent nods his head, his bald head. I return the nod. Ready. I'm sitting next to the baptismal, clarinet in hand. He's next to the altar, seated at the organ.

To think not so many years ago when I was nine this was where I was baptized, where I became a Methodist. But now I'm sixteen. He seems far away.

I look up, up toward the high-vaulted ceiling and to the back of the church and the tall narrow stained glass windows. Rainbows of light stream angled above and across a sea of people.

There in the balcony at the railing she stands like an angel, Mary Esther, in her blue robe and white col-

lar, her black hair held in place with a silver headband framing her face, her flawless face.

Another nod from Mr. Wigent and from the wall of organ pipes, so capable of making thunder and making the floor vibrate beneath my feet, comes a simple melody. I count my measures of rests and now it's time to play the melody. The organ lays down a cushion of notes. Seconds, or is it an eternity later, Mary Esther's voice, lyrical, joins us, now a triangle, the organ, the clarinet, and her voice singing "Panis Angelicus."

I glance over at a woman in the front row pew. She dabs her eyes with a white lace handkerchief. Her husband bows his head in prayer. A hundred faces, no, hundreds of faces, form a tapestry of lives gathered together.

I look over at the minister. Soon he will give his sermon. He looks at me over the top of his glasses. Is that a glimmer of approval? That I'm playing okay? The organ, the clarinet, and the soprano, all three weave in and out, sounds and words to inspire, console, enrich, to give meaning to all of our lives.

Yes. To be a musician. That's what I want to be.

—SAM GLENN

## Automatic Writing

If I really let go. I mean really, really let go, and allowed the pencil or something, something else to guide my hand. Some entity. But, oh, my God. No! That means I lose control or is it I give up control? But what if, I mean what if what comes out ...

I tried it a few times but the pencil wrote at a frantic pace, flying across the page as if to get the words down on paper before I gained control of it. To stifle it, to bring it back to earth, to reality, to calmness. Have I ever had calmness? I'm tight as a drum.



There's a name for it: automatic writing.

I once saw at an amusement park a mechanical figure in a large glass box. I dropped a coin in the slot and the gypsy woman wrote my fortune. I know she was controlled by the gears and wheels of an electric motor.

But what if I let something... let some Thing guide my hand? A thing outside myself. A spirit or angel. Where does that Thing come from? Or is it always hovering around me? Nudging, prodding, making me do ... making me write things.

Well, not making me. I mean I can prevent it. Doesn't take much to stop it. Just a little fear, a tiny scare. I can control it.

I can keep from being creative.

— Sam Glenn



## Four Seasons

*written in tanka poetic form*

### Spring

Judean hillsides  
Covered with red cyclamen  
Moving in light breeze  
Majestic Hermon Mountains  
Proclaiming spring's arrival.

### Summer

Tehran summer nights  
Sleeping outdoors by the pool.  
Hot and humid air,  
On radio poetry  
Swept away by its beauty.

### Fall

Wild wind shrieking  
Crying despair and anguish  
Skies looking dreary  
Foretelling still colder times  
Shedding of leaves, naked trees.

### Winter

Snowflakes drifting down  
Towards Yosemite Valley  
Dancing in a spell  
And I am spinning inward  
Intoxicated, no cure.

– Pirhiya Goldstein

## Hibernation

Though the sun is shining  
The air is clear and refreshing  
My heart is dormant  
In hibernating season.

A massive rock is  
Resting upon my soul  
Gates are sealed  
No exchange is taking place.

No inhale  
Of nature's beauty  
Of volatile flamenco music  
Of gentle touch of friendship  
Of remnants of any love.

No exhale  
Of poisonous sudden hurt  
Of unfulfilled wishes, dreams  
Of sense of abandonment  
Of shattered reality.

My soul is a desert  
A cactus holding within  
A dried up raisin  
An empty vessel  
Incapable of delivering.

I reel back through my memory  
Where I have known  
Other days other existences  
Yet for now my heart  
Is in the winter season—hibernating.

– Pirhiya Goldstein



# THE PREDATOR

He nonchalantly leans against the traffic light, biding his time watching for easy prey, his cold black eyes, within knife-like features, darting to and fro. A black baseball cap, worn with brim to the back, almost hides the tattoo snaking around his neck.

He stands there, remembering, chuckling to himself, how easy it is. They are so docile, walking so slowly; they can't even get across the street before the light changes. Just bump, grab the purse and run, knock her down, in a minute it is over.

That last hag had almost two hundred dollars on her. He snickers as he remembers. She just lay there, barely breathing, her head bloody. A car couldn't stop on time and it hit her as he slipped into a waiting car and sped away. No one pays any attention to him.

One more proof how superior he is. His brothers would be proud of him, succeeding where they failed.

To get into the gang he had to prove himself. Last year he was the wheel man in a drive-by. This year he was the shooter. How satisfying that is, but this is even easier. Just keep up the slow stalk and then attack. It is over in a flash.

He yawns as he hitches up his baggy black trousers, red shirt hanging over his hips. Red and black, good colors, should warn people. He is bad news, just like a snake who uses his rattle. Don't mess with me.

How long has he been waiting here? This is usually a good corner. The bus stop is close by and people have to cross the wide street to get to the market. Coming back, their arms are laden with packages, slows them down even further. But he learned that is not a good idea; they have less cash on them. But waiting is the hard part.

He is so intent on looking for his prey, that he fails to notice the yellow car pass him for the third time and is now slowly approaching him. A black round object slides out of the window, a spray of bullets rake across his body. He slowly slides down the pole, a smile still on his face, as his lifeblood oozes from his body. The car speeds away.

A new predator is in town.

— *Clare Goldfarb*

## A Gray Mouse

**She stands, a small gray mouse huddling  
Against the gray wall, part of the scenery.  
A small voice, "Any change?"  
A quick glance, then with averted eyes,  
I shake my head and hurry on by.**

**Her eyes haunt me, boring into my back,  
A steel bit piercing my heart.  
Slowly, I take some money from my purse,  
Turn, and walk back.  
Her eyes follow me, sad, gray ghostly eyes,  
Eyes that tell a story.**

**I hand her the money, wish her a better New Year.  
"It will be better, my doctor said  
I could go back to work next week."  
The same small voice, "I am homeless."  
She smiles.  
Her face crinkles like crimped aluminum foil.**

**Eyes still piercing me.  
I wish her luck, turn my back, and walk away.  
I look back.  
She is still standing there,  
A gray mouse huddling against the wall,  
Her eyes boring into my back.**

— *Clare Goldfarb*





## ON THE CUD-ING EDGE

I came across an article on the back of a recipe I had clipped that said old newspapers can be transformed into feed for cattle. As much as 30 to 40% of a cow's diet could be filled by newsprint. That amounts to ten pounds of newspapers a day per cow.

This could lead to all kinds of unexpected results. Entertainment pages advertising the current crop of comedies would make cows skip around the pasture while emitting high-pitched moos. Pages with ads for bedding would make them drop to their knees with drooping heads. Ads for high-speed Internet connections could make bulls more eager to connect with cows. Red dyes in the newsprint will make bulls look around for something to charge at, or someone with whom to lock horns.

Stories about race relations would be gobbled up by Holsteins, who are living embodiments of how black and white can co-exist. On the other hand, stories that are complimentary about brown-skinned humans make Jerseys calm and content, secure in the knowledge that brown is beautiful.

Pages containing ads for leather coats, shoes, or furniture will make cows upchuck. Ads for new song releases will make them moo in rap rhythm. Stories with pictures of food items could double their milk production, provided no pictures of hamburgers were included. Features about builders obtaining farmland and covering it with asphalt and new housing developments would make cows produce huge quantities of methane gas to show their disapproval. Or possibly they would go on strike and refuse to give milk.

Sports pages would induce bulls to race each other across their pasture, or perhaps have the cows compete to see which ones can jump over the moon. The business pages indicating a bull market would make cows so happy they would increase their milk production.

War news would definitely result in the production of curdled milk. Stories about national or local politics would induce yawns, and send them off into bovine dreamland.

Tabloids such as the National Enquirer would be considered indigestible by cows, in spite of their four stomachs. Such newsprint would be moved from stomach to stomach, but would never continue its intended onward movement, and may in the end be hurled out again.

One unintended result of feeding cows newsprint: It would certainly spice up their otherwise boring lives, and make the butchered meat more savory.

— Erica Stux

## A CUP OF COFFEE

Grande, or dry, or  
quad espresso?

Choices leave in distress-o.

All I want is coffee plain,  
And I look down with disdain  
On those who like complication;  
Isn't it just affectation?  
Only a caffeine fanatic  
Would make this so problematic!

— Erica Stux





## In My Grandmother's Garden

In my Grandmother's garden  
Grew lilacs  
Grew lilies of the valley -  
Cascades of purple  
Droplets of white.

In my Grandmother's garden  
Grew grandchildren -  
Running, shouting, giggling.  
Offspring of her daughters  
Progeny of her sons.

In my Grandmother's garden,  
Grew memories —  
The love of sweet-scented flowers  
The art of give-and-take  
Learned from time shared with cousins.

— Sylvia Molesko



## CHOICES

You either get older or not.  
That's not even a choice that you've got.  
Well...I'd rather get older than not,  
given the alternative!

How I get older is up to me.  
I can do, I can go, I can see,  
It's basically up to me.  
How active - or not - I want to be.

I can sit at home or get out.  
I can laugh, whimper or shout,  
I can whine, argue or pout.  
Which options do I take?  
Some choices I need make.

How do I come over to others?  
Do they respect me,  
love me like their mothers?  
Pamper me, humor me,  
treat me as contemporary?  
...or just here temporarily?

Do they care, do they share,  
Am I included in their prayer?  
As I get older, some things are still up to me,  
I still decide the person I want others to see.  
Basically that will... still be up to me.

So...This is the choice I chose to make.  
To live life fully for everyone's sake.  
To do all that I can still do,  
To be all that I can still be.  
To be the very best me.  
That will make both me and others happy.

— Sylvia Molesko



I miss the people and the crowds. And of course, the sounds. It wasn't a meaningless din, a muddle of loud clatter. As each instrument in an orchestra is recognizable by the distinct quality of sound it produces, each sound on the street was distinct. And they blended to produce a melody of indescribable flavour.

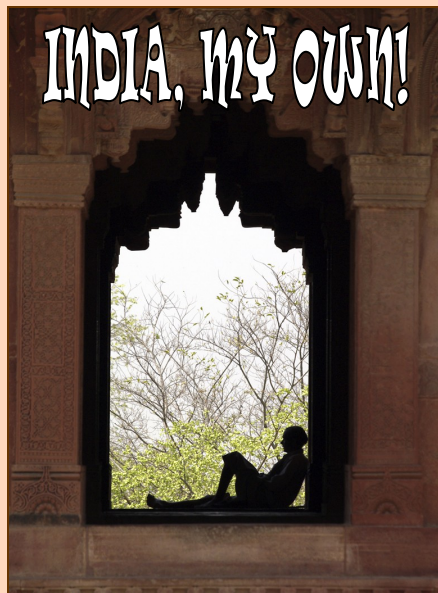
I miss the monsoon rains, the thundering, cascading rains, each drop the size of a grape falling from thick, bilious clouds. Cleansing, refreshing. It's never a dismal, chilling rain. As the first few drops hit the ground, the earth emits a fragrance, an aroma that haunts you for the rest of your life. In the dry heat of Los Angeles summers, I nostalgically yearn for that fragrance of rain.

I miss the delicate scent of the jasmine flowers. The creeper had spread its tenacious tentacles all across growing on the trellis of the verandah and succeeded in blotting out the mid-day heat. Millions of insects made it their home. On cool summer evenings, after a convectional rainfall, we would sit in the verandah and breathe in the scent of the jasmine flowers as it wafted towards us carried by the pre-monsoon winds. I miss all the other heavily-scented flowers that filled our garden. The champaks, the tuber roses, Cassandras, and the shaggy roses. We plucked the flowers everyday to offer it to the gods. My grandmothers refused to grow fragrance-less flowers. They vowed that it would displease the gods to worship them with "paper-flowers"!

I miss the cool, clayey taste of water in earthenware pots. My mother would have them in every room, covering the long necks of these pots with a steel mug. She and my grandmothers believed that the fridge was invented by the devil, an evil device that caused sore throats and headaches.

I miss all the festivals and holidays. The festivals came in such quick succession that they were upon us before we got over the previous one. My mother and my aunt cleaned the silver and bronze gods until they shone as if with an inner light. Our maid-servants, Selvi and Padma, swept every corner, helped in shopping for the right ingredients that went into the food, "stole" the special banana leaves from the neighbour's back garden. These rituals, that were necessary for the ceremonies, had become a part and parcel of my routine. The special foods, the incenses,

the flowers, the fruits, the new clothes for us and the priest's chanting have been framed to form a special picture in my mind. Even Christmas and Eid were celebrated with great gusto. All the festivals deserved a National Holiday. Every god and goddess has his or her day. We had over 20 days of National Holidays, besides the three months of summer holidays and one month off for Christmas and New Year. Americans are happy with nine days of National Holidays.



I even miss the beggars! The ladies with torn saris, cradling babies in their arms and cursing us for not sparing a few paises. The older beggars, drunk to a state of stupour, got my sympathy. They sat in their corners either talking to themselves or cursing nobody in particular or sound asleep.

I miss the street urchins. They, with sparkling eyes, snot encrusted upper lips and spiky malnourished hair, tattered smelly clothes of indeterminate colours, pulled at my clothes. I would pretend to spank them with my rolled up college notes and they would dodge me mimicking my movements, distinctly laughing at me.

I miss Selvi and Padma, our maid-servants, always at my beck and call. How often have I sat in the bathroom with a towel around me and they would come in to wash my hair with shikai powder! They would oil my hair and comb it. Selvi and Padma...I could write a book on them!

I miss Ranga, the self-appointed vegetable vendor for our locality. He brought to our homes all the fresh vegetables, straight from the farm, and gave them filmstars' names. Every morning he would bellow out the vegetable that he had in his cart. At his call the women emerged from their homes, baskets swinging in their hands to pick and choose their vegetables. He had them conditioned!

His prices were atrocious and everyone haggled till he brought them down. He danced obscenely to film songs that played on his transistor which sat in the midst of the vegetables, as his customers pondered over the choices his cart presented.

I left all this behind. Indeed, no! I had been wrenched from their midst to this glittery, glamorous desert. My heart gasps in anguish. And I yearn for everything with such passion that it blinds me to all else. How could I replace everything I had left behind?

— **Giri Sular**



### UNFINISHED SENTENCES

Where does the time go?  
My mind is fast, yet too slow.  
I'm busy all day long.  
Unexpected things keep happening  
to me and to my aging body.  
I visit this doctor, that doctor.  
I take this pill, that pill.  
This exercise, that exercise.  
Now it's my arthritis.  
Now it's my tooth.  
My foot in my right shoe  
feels uncomfortable.  
Ouch! That shoe is rather tight.  
So many things to handle.  
I start with one thing,  
postpone it for another.  
It keeps going on. It doesn't stop.  
It's like listening to a person,  
speaking in unfinished sentences.  
When he walks away from you,  
you don't know what he said.

—Norman Molesko

### THIS SENIOR STORYTELLER/POET

It is a **natural** thing for me to do,  
as a **Senior** to **contribute** and **give help**  
to other **individuals** and to the **community**.

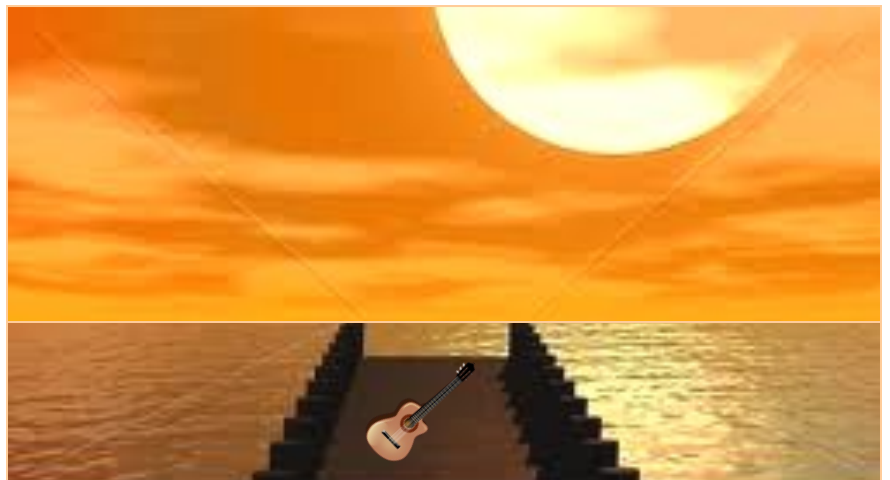
Many times I strive to give my **expertise**,  
only to be **thwarted**, meeting **obstacles**.  
I **shrug** it away for there will be another day.

I continue **Good Samaritan efforts** for others,  
presenting my precious **insights** and **experiences**  
and **benefiting folks** now and forever.

My poetry and stories **inform** and **connect**.  
Many of my **messages communicate** to many,  
the average man and woman and the professional.

These **benefits** - these **gifts** - these **treasures**  
arise from my **visions**, my **passions**, my **creativity**.  
This is what I offer to you as a **storyteller/poet**.

—Norman Molesko



# THE TELEGRAM

She was smiling the warm, silly smile of a ten-year-old. Denise Lyon pounded on the door and I was relieved to see her familiar face that misty 6:30 AM on a school day. My kids were in their rooms, struggling to wake up and get ready for school and I still had my robe on.

"Carole is getting dressed," I said. Then I noticed that Denise was in her pajamas.

"Come on in," I whispered.

"He's dead. Jimmy Adams is dead." My daughter's friend spoke terrible words with a smile distorting the reality of her statement. At first I didn't digest Denise's message. The cereal bowls were out before the horror washed over me.

"My God, what are you saying?" I screamed.

"Barbara Adams just found out! Mom went to get the paper this morning and she saw them delivering the telegram. I guess she ran across the street to find out what happened and that's how we found out. So I ran right over to tell you guys."

Just then my son David walked in dressed and ready to leave for Junior High. He had overheard our conversation and was pale with distress.

"I can't believe it!" I moaned and I sat down and hugged my ribs. The room was spinning and all I seemed to see was my son's face. "I just can't believe it!"

Denise waved at us. "So long," she murmured in a matter-of-fact voice and she ran off slamming the door behind her.

Carole and Gail tumbled out of the bedroom and sat down at the kitchen bar. "I've got to see Barbara!" I cried. The adrenaline was pushing me mercilessly. "You kids--did you hear what Denise said? She can't be kidding. She wouldn't kid about something like this!" My voice sounded like a stranger's to my ears.

The girls started to cry and David said, "Mom, I'm coming with you."

"No, I'll be right back. You just eat and get ready. We've all got school today." My voice had calmed somewhat.

I ran barefoot the block and a half to Barbara's house. The screen door was open and I saw my friend's figure, a dark silhouette against the couch. I walked in. It was so quiet I could hear birds singing and the hum of a car's motor. This can't be true, I counseled myself, maybe—then I saw my neighbor's eyes and I knew.



Jimmy had been killed in the hell-hole we knew so well each day on TV and slashed across the newspapers' front pages. The Vietnam War at once so cruel, so debated, that all the images on the TV screen and all the stories written in blood and all the amputated limbs and minds had to be fictitious. We found it too difficult to face the reality.

Could Barbara's son have been a metaphor for patriotism—calling for help for his buddy then quietly collapsing from a single bloodless wound? I was sickened. This was reality. A healthy innocent nineteen-

year-old, after a short training program, his first time away from home, a quick trip in a cargo jet from Burbank to Vietnam and ten days later zipped into a body bag. And later a flag draped coffin.

"Why?" That's the word Jimmy's platoon brothers used in their condolence letters. "We don't know why we're here. We're just fighting to survive."

Barbara kept the letters and made it her mission to write to each member of Jimmy's platoon until one by one the soldiers were lost and there was no one left to correspond with.

Barbara only cried once. Jimmy's last letter arrived the day after the telegram. She clutched it to her heart and sobbed with an emotion reserved only for those who experience a pain too intolerable to be borne.

Barbara, her husband and daughter were calm and gracious at the funeral. All our family attended. We held hands and were unable to speak. What could be said? The finality of death must be left unquestioned. Before its time, mixed with bitterness and defeat and the worst of human experience, it is unfathomably tragic.

The Adams family, supported by their religious faith, a poor struggling God-worshiping family known for their kindness and gentle dignity, sat peacefully during the service.

Wars continue in tragic numbers on our planet. Their carnage isn't always visible or even known to us. But they continue to exist. Still unbelievable artistry and music and literature and human compassion survive and sometimes flourish on the same planet. "Hope" remains a word in our vocabulary.

But Jimmy Adams never married or had children or composed a song or attended his parents' funerals. And I will never forget the strange smile on Denise Lyon's face that October morning in 1968.

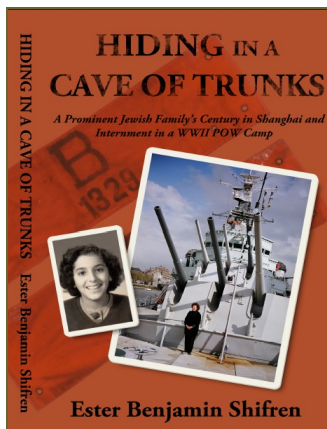
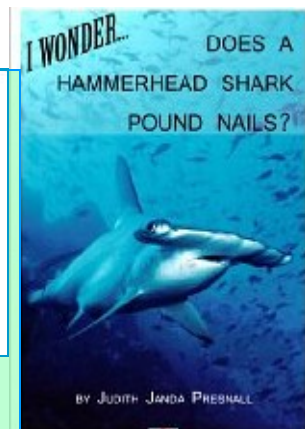
— Lillian Rodich



## TAKE NOTE: SFV Members' Books Online

**J**udy Presnall, a published author of several children's books, has finished her first e-book : *I Wonder ... Does a Hammerhead Shark Pound Nails?* The publication can be found on *Amazon.com* and *BarnesandNoble.com*

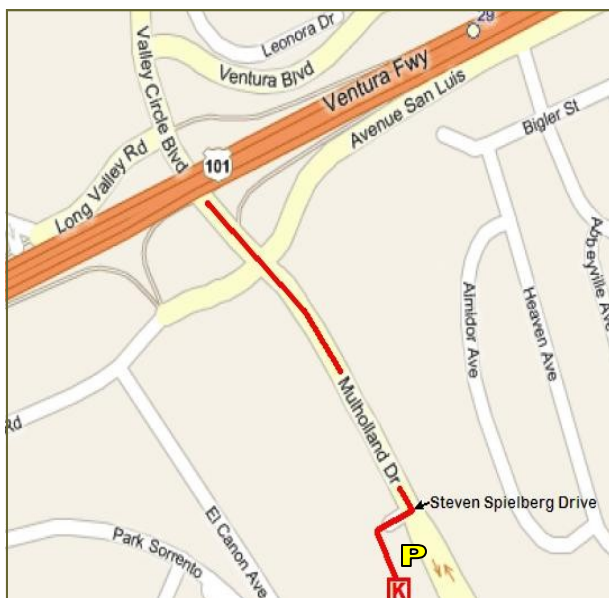
This sea animal book, written for ages 7-10, can be downloaded for just 99 cents. Download a free kindle app to read this book. It's a great read for a young child with an avid interest in sea creatures! Or an online resource book for the classroom.



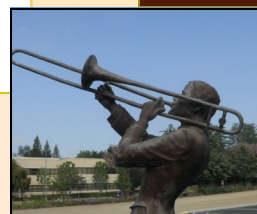
**A** second SFV member, Ester Benjamin Shifren, published this month. Her book, *Hiding in a Cave of Trunks* is also up at *Amazon.com*. In this paperback Ester recounts her culturally enriched childhood in Shanghai, then relives her family's slide from privilege to impoverishment under Japanese occupation. It's an engrossing tale.

Recently Ester was asked to join a panel of published authors at an IWOSC (Independent Writers of Southern California) meeting in Culver City. The participants discussed their books, publication choices, publicity methods and helpful web sites for authors.

Ester was accompanied to the IWOSC meeting by SFV members Yolanda Fintor, Sheila Moss and Kathy Highcove.



**Free parking** is available in a large lot behind the Katzenberg Room. Look for the trombone statue – that's our 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:

### NEXT MEETING

Saturday, Dec. 2nd. at 1 p.m.

Sign up for Open Mic at 12:30 p.m.

Villa Katzenberg  
23388 Mulholland  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364-2733