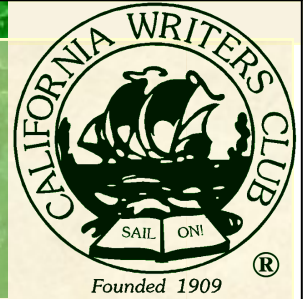




# The Valley Scribe

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



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## Ventura Adventurer in Tween Territory

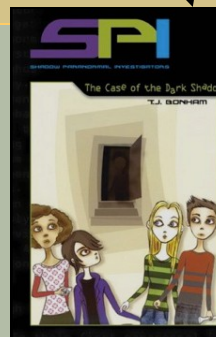
**T**eresa Bonham, Oxford College English professor and our March 2nd speaker, writes mysteries for young teens. Her topic on Saturday is *My Journey in YA Fiction from Concept to Published Book*.

Bonham will list special criteria of writing fiction for the junior high student. For example, we'll learn how Bonham dreams up her story ideas, and how she grabs and keeps the attention of the young reader from the first chapter to the last. AND Bonham will read a selection from *The Case of the Dark Shadow*.

Read the synopsis of Bonham's book



Teresa Bonham reads with expression from her spooky mystery for young teens.



below and you'll understand why *Shadow Paranormal Investigators* is attracting young readers. And you may want to read this entertaining book yourself! Hope to see you on Saturday.

## SPI: The Case of the Dark Shadow

A sinister dark shadow threatens harm to ghost hunter Ellie Hunter and her family. Appearing first in dreams, and then at a haunted adobe, the shadow materializes in front of the entire ghost hunter team. Terrified by the entity, the young investigators seek the assistance of a Chumash shaman. He mentors the teens to become fearless ghost warriors.

So begins *The Case of the Dark Shadow*, a paranormal investigative mystery which introduces the SPI—Shadow Paranormal Investigators.

## west valley whimsicals

A Schwartz / Highcove Production

## Meet and Greet



**A**fter you've published your first book, sent free copies to near and dear, given a few speeches, and sold a few books, then what? Marketing, that's what.

These days the writer is usually responsible

for a book's promotion. Now you've got a new job—selling stacks and stacks of your new book.

As a newly published author, you must be determined, resourceful and persistent. Obsessed.

Constantly look for buyers. Bring copies to outings with friends, to church or synagogue, and keep an eye peeled for community book fairs. Find places to display your ads and your flyers. And remember, the social network is a major marketing tool.

No one cares more about your book than you, the author. Get busy. Carpe diem!

—KH



## President's Message

The "Our Paths to Publishing" February meeting filled Katzenberg Hall to capacity. We greeted 13 guests—five MPF residents and eight first-time visitors who found us through news releases or our SFV website. Many attendees expressed appreciation for our program on current methods of publication.

"This was so informative," one guest told me. Others said, "I'm so glad I came," and "Club members greeted us with such warmth, we want to come back." This last comment is important, so my heartfelt thanks to members who helped welcome our guests.

I credit the meeting's success to moderator Rita Brown and the three panelists, Ester Shifren, Gagik

Melikyan and Judy Presnall. While these three authors ably represented the talent and professionalism found in our branch, many other published members could also have served on the panel. Perhaps a workshop led by other SFV branch authors might lie in our future?

Tales of success inspire those who have completed manuscripts and need that extra push to move forward. *{Note} Rita ran out of the informational handouts at the February meeting, but will bring additional copies to our March meeting.*

Marganit Lish, our new hospitality chair, requests that members take turns donating cookies or other munchies. Liquid refreshments are provided. March's meeting has a donor, leaving only April, May, and June to fill. Contact me at **818-624-1926** if you'd like to donate snacks for any of the remaining months.

Reminders: Bill Sorrells, Open Mic moderator, states, "When you read at a monthly meeting, please do not sign up to read at the following month. We want to give all interested members an opportunity to share their work. Remember to time your selection beforehand so it won't exceed the five minute limit."

FYI: The State CWC website, [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org), now has a resource page which lists markets for non-fiction writers such as BellaOnline. This link, [www.writeradvice.com](http://www.writeradvice.com), lists writing contests and more markets. Follow the links and you'll find a listing for Paying Markets. If you want to know what goes on at our SFV board meetings, our minutes are always posted on our website. Go to [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org)

Finally, speaking for all San Fernando Valley Branch members, I extend a warm welcome to our newest CWC Branch, Napa Valley.

**—Yolanda Fintor**

## SFV-CWC BOARD MEMBERS

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Open Mike ... Bill Sorrells



## Contests and Workshops

**Senior Poet Laureate Competition** is open to American poets 50 years and older. The deadline is June 30. For rules, go to [www.amykitchenfdn.org](http://www.amykitchenfdn.org)

**Writers Digest Flash Fiction Contest** - no entry fee; seeks flash fiction, memoir and creative nonfiction; limit 750 words; 1st place winner-\$200; 2nd place-\$100; 3rd place-\$50. For additional information click on [www.writersadvice.com](http://www.writersadvice.com).



# SFV Panel on Publication

Many of our SFV members are published authors or hope to publish sometime in the coming year.

In the old days – maybe a decade ago – our writers sent out multiple inquiries to agents, editors and publishers. Or, after several rejections, a few of our independent types paid for publication and found themselves with stacks of unsold books in their garage or spare bedroom.

In contrast, today's social network has made any type of info sharing extremely easy. An aspiring author has only to google on the Net to find an endless list of publication choices. In fact, the number and variety of publication services is downright confusing for writers when they research current options.

To address members' need for the latest information, our Program Chair Rita Keeley Brown asked three recently published authors to speak briefly on their own publication paths. Judy Presnall, Ester Shifren, and Gagik Melikyan formed a publication panel at our February meeting.

Judy has sold her work to traditional publishers that specialize in school/library juvenile books, and is currently working on a new line of 15-minute e-books. Ester, after years of interviews with family and friends and diligent research, has recently self-published a family history. Gagik, a busy CSUN professor, chose a publishing house to help him publish his informative book on popular consumer products. In short, each of the panelists had recently published and each had chosen a different path to publication. And although Ester and Gagik expressed satisfaction with their publishing choices, these two authors revealed that they planned to make a few different choices publishing their second book.

As I listened to each author describe their experiences working with different publication houses, I realized that there is no One Right Way to publish. Some writers are more comfortable with editing, formatting and promotion assistance; some writers are able to edit, format and promote on their own. It's a matter of finding your own comfort level when publishing your own book.

A decade ago, publication expenses were often the bottom line for the fledgling author. Today, with many companies competing online, publication becomes cheaper and easier every year. Perhaps the new bottom line for today's writer is ... time. How much time are you willing to spend online looking at publication houses with long menus of options? Are you willing to search out your peers' advice? Try it. If you take the time to look, listen, and learn, you might find yourself serving on a future panel of published authors. —KH



Ester Shifren



Moderator Rita Keeley Brown



Judy Presnall



Gagik Melikyan

## Backup Your Files

by Casey Wilson of the CWC-East Sierra Branch

Sometimes troubles come in bunches. A few weeks ago my laptop was stolen in a home burglary. With it went more than a decade of work, except that all my working files—manuscripts, photos, research; altogether about 30 gigabytes of data—were on an external hard drive that the thieves overlooked.

When I bought a new computer to replace the stolen one, all I had to do was plug the external hard drive into a USB port and I was back in business. Sounds like an excellent plan for backing up years and gigabytes of work, eh?

Read on.

A couple days ago, that external hard drive crashed! I spent several hours over the past couple days attempting to troubleshoot and retrieve those gigabytes without success. That little box contained copies of magazine and newspaper articles I'd published since 1992, more than 2,000 digital images, the manuscript for my published book on computer technology, years of back issues of the CWC Bulletin and other newsletters, manuscripts for two novels I'd been working on along with outlines for a few more, and uncountable hours of research material.

That little black gadget plugged into the USB port is now

nothing more than a paperweight.

For a decade or more, I have preached the absolute necessity of backing up files. One entire chapter of my computer technology book is devoted to the subject. Obvious now, keeping those working files on the external hard drive was NOT adequate backup. It wasn't backup at all.

Real protection is *offsite* backup, storing that precious data in another location altogether. It might not be just burglars. An acquaintance of mine, call her Judy M., came home one day to find her house had burned down. Where were her computer and files?

A decade ago, offsite backup meant recording your files on tapes or discs and finding someplace to stash them. Restoring was laborious, tedious, often frustrating.

Today much more elegant solutions exist. You can find a list of ten popular online backup solutions at <http://online-data-backup-review.toptenreviews.com/>. I subscribed to one of these starting a few years ago. Each night the program wakes up, scans my computer for new files or changes to old ones and backs them up without any prompting from me.

As I am sitting at my computer writing this, LEDs on my DSL modem are flashing furiously away while it is restoring all those precious, to me anyway, files that might have been lost forever.

What are your files worth to you?

## Filling In the Goodie Gap

Our fervent thanks to **Sharron Malus** for providing cookies, coffee and tea for our members this past fall and winter. Although Sharron is not a member, she generously donated her time to ensure that SFV members and guests found an ample supply of goodies and beverages ready and waiting during break time. So enjoyable!

And a super-sized thank-you to **Marganit Lish** for accepting the **Hospitality Chair** for the remaining meetings of the year. If you'd like to assist Marganit and **donate** snacks in the coming months, please call Yolanda Fintor at **818-624-1926**.

We hope to see Sharron Malus at future meetings, whether or not she arrives carrying a platter of goodies!

—KH





# Take Note

## Judy's New Fifteen Minute Books



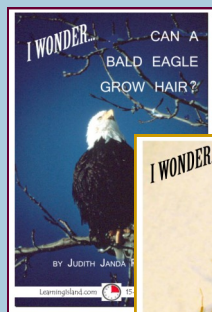
Shown below are three books now available for downloading on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com for 99 cents apiece. They're written for ages 7—10.

I Wonder ... Can A Bald Eagle Grow Hair?

I Wonder ... Do Bedbugs Snore?

I Wonder ... How Do Monkeys Prevent Mosquito Bites?

Speed reading to the max! I wonder how many "I Wonder ..." books are going to be filling up Judy's virtual library shelves? —KH



## Not a Jane Austin Tale

**S**ugar, a flash fiction piece written by Gary Wosk, will not disappoint those who enjoy big surprises and a little spice.



Filled with twists and turns, the story, part of Writers Haven anthology "Secret," is a twisted ode to romance and can be read for free at

<http://www.original-writer.com/writershavenis-sue9page10gary.html#USuMKFed2Mo>.

Besides his bizarre sci-fi/horror and fantasy writing, Gary has been producing a series of blogs for a data management company and pitching stories for a PR agency. He also was recently filmed for the TV pilot "Perfect Pitch," a show that gives writers a chance to promote their creative ideas to producers.



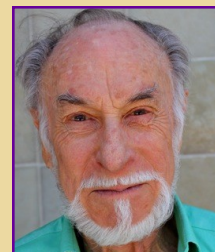
Once more, Leslie Kaplan gladdens a few hearts at our February meeting. Dave Wettenberg is shown receiving a chocolate rose and a big kiss from his pal Leslie.

## "Benches" Sequel Coming Soon

**H**oward Goldstein's book, *Benches*, received an unsolicited review from Rabbi Jerry Cutler, in his December 2012 *Creative Arts Temple Talk* newsletter.

To read the review, click on [www.creativeartstalk.org](http://www.creativeartstalk.org) and look through the 2012 archives.

Howard is currently working on the follow-up, *Benches: Jakob and Charlie*. Howard reports that this second book will soon be published and available on Amazon.com and Kindle.



## Benjamin Black Book Review

**K**athy Highcove has reviewed the latest book by Irish author Benjamin Black, (writer John Banville's pseudonym) for the Internet Review of Books. *Vengeance* contains the latest adventures of Dublin sleuths Dr. Quirke and Inspector Hackett.

Kathy's take on the mystery novel will be published on April 2 on the IRB blog at <http://internetreviewofbooks.blogspot.com/>



## Ken's Pet Peeves

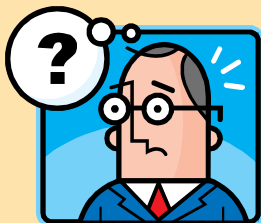
By Ken Wilkins

### ACRONYMS

I know the alphabet from A to Z,  
But most acronyms mean nothing to me.

They seem to abound everywhere I look  
Revealing nothing but gobbledygook.

I'm aware of some like the U-S-A  
Or the I-R-S, I'm sorry to say.



Now I know F-A-A has to do with  
planes  
F-E-M-A appears after flooding rains.

G-O-P stands for a party, old and grand  
Most of the others I don't understand.

I choke upon hearing of the A-Q-M-D  
Whatever it is you could easily fool me.

N-Y-S-E, N-A-S-D-A-Q  
I can't tell the difference. How about you?

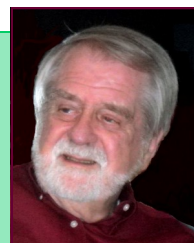
When N-A-F-T-A gets battered about  
The pros and cons will begin to shout.

But ask each opponent what the acronym means  
And they stare at you blankly as if in their dreams.

It would take more time and a little more space,  
But let's spell it out for the human race.

## Review and Refresh

By Dave Wetterberg



### Little Things Mean a Lot

Listed below are some common errors that affect this retired English teacher like the proverbial finger-nails down the chalkboard. Brrrr ...

#### Misusing *was* and *were* in a sentence.

Not *One of the children were missing.*

But *One of the children was missing.*

#### Mispronouncing the word "mischievous"

Not *miss-cheeve-ee-uss*

But *miss-cha-vuss*

#### Misusing the reflexive pronoun *myself*.

Not *That Toyota barely missed Sally and myself*

But *That Toyota barely missed Sally and me.*

Not *Myself, Mildred, and Sammy saw that movie.*

But *Mildred, Sammy, and I saw that movie.*

#### Misusing *either ... or* and *neither ... nor* to connect plurals.

Not *Either Mr. Gordon or his wife walk Fido each morning.*

But *Either Mr. Gordon or his wife walks Fido each morning.*

Not *Neither Martin nor Bruno know what happened.*

But *Neither Martin nor Bruno knows what happened.*

#### Misusing *fewer* and *less*.

Use *fewer* with items that can be counted ... *fewer pencils, fewer students, fewer bricks.*

Use *less* with items that can't ... *less sand, less milk, less booze, less smog.*

#### Misusing the correct pronoun after *between*, *with*, and *for*.

Not *between you and I*

But *between you and me*

Not *with her and Sally*

But *with Sally and her*

Not *for he and Martin*

But *for him and Martin*





## PIN UP GIRL

By Leslie Kaplan

Betty Grable was the number one Pin Up Girl during World War II. Being star struck as a young teen, I tried to emulate the way she and other glamorous movie stars looked, dressed and performed. Secretly, in my heart, that's what I wanted to be when I grew up.

My first boyfriend, Norman Tarin, five years my senior, joined the Marines and was sent to the South Pacific theater of war. He called me Angel in every letter. Some of these letters were so censored that all I could read was Angel and Love. The other words were blackened or cut out.

One day a package arrived from him. It contained a grass skirt in which the woven waist band read Essie, my nickname, and Tarin, his last name. That was his way of proposing. So I went

to our neighborhood photographer and had a studio portrait taken in full color wearing this authentic, beautiful grass skirt.

I had no idea on which island he might be engaged in battle. According to news reports, the fighting in the Pacific was fierce and costly in lives. But I sent an eight-by-ten full color "Essie Tarin" to his box number hoping he would receive it, and he did.

So there I was, a Pin Up Girl right next to Betty Grable in the Marine barracks. Who ever thought this little girl with the squint in the sun and the over-bite...the kid who dreamed of becoming a movie star would be represented on the wall of a Marine barracks somewhere in the South Pacific...becoming their number two ... PIN UP GIRL?!

## Red Roses

When she pictures the look on his face  
As she dresses down... to satin and lace  
Though the glow of her youth has grown dimmer  
Does he still view her younger and slimmer  
As his finger retraces her face

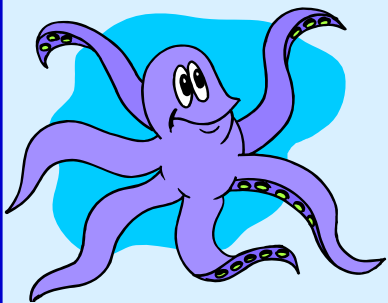
Like a mellowed and fine tasting wine  
Chocolate kisses still tasting divine  
Does he yearn... as she does... for romancing  
Holding close... as two pages... while dancing  
As he whispers to his Valentine

If he gifts her with roses of red  
Will he carry her off to his bed  
And though youth may forsake her  
Will he always awake her  
As he lays one red rose near her head



By Leslie Kaplan





# The Way It Was

By Bill Sorrells

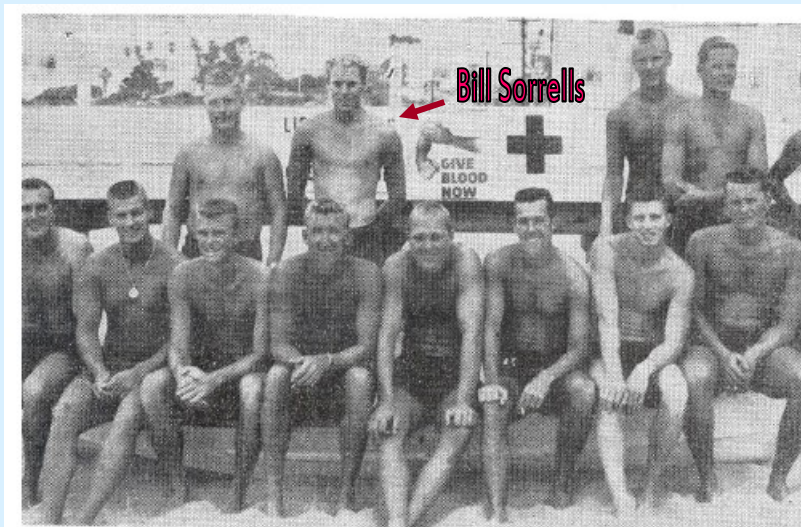
After my first semester at Orange Coast College and after football season ended, I headed for Palm Springs for my first pool guarding job. I had to wait until summer to lifeguard at Laguna Beach, my hometown. I'd body surfed, board surfed, played football on the sand, dove for abalone and lobster. I knew the territory. But this was lifeguarding.

Here I found that the ocean, unlike a swimming pool, has a mind of its own. When I swam in the sea, it cheerfully challenged me with its currents and rips and backwash and heavy surf and undertow, and I accepted.

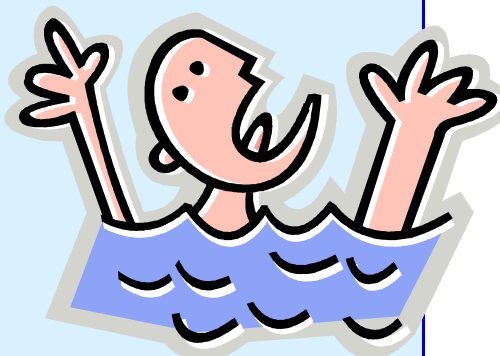
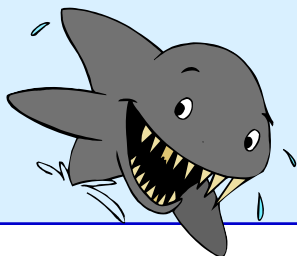
Marines from El Toro or Camp Pendleton came to swim at Laguna. They usually entered the surf in a manly fashion, but then couldn't get back to the beach and almost drowned. They didn't take kindly to my helping them back to shore, usually making a comment like, "I didn't need any help."

We had all kinds of rescues: little kids who'd wandered out too far, fellas who hadn't body surfed before and landed the wrong way (which is very hard on the neck), boats caught up in the surf, tourists who didn't know the difference between a pool and an ocean.

## Laguna Beach Lifeguards in 1955



This group of guys in the photo taken in 1955 were fellows you could count on, right down the line. We'd help each other out in a heartbeat and all those guys were responsible for another year in the now legendary 83 years of lifeguards in Laguna with never a drowning at this guarded beach.





**I**t was 10 p.m., a warm Saturday night in September, and I had no money.

I needed a cigarette. I felt tightening in my brain that came from expanding nicotine starved capillaries. If I had a cigarette those capillaries would instantly shrink and release a rush of euphoria. Every nicotine addict loves that euphoric feeling.

My car was low on gas, and, like I said, I had no money. So I decided to walk to town. I changed clothes and was off.

I walked down the sidewalk, wary of the darkness and rising cement sidewalks pushed up by overgrown tree roots. I didn't want to trip and fall, tearing my silk shirt or my jeans.

At the main boulevard I turned east, heading into town where I hoped to bum a cigarette from someone. With cigarettes costing five dollars a pack, I knew I'd have to get pretty friendly with somebody to get one free.

I reached a well-lit corner of the boulevard. I saw people there but no one smoking. By now it was around 10:30 pm. I decided to sit on the bus bench until I could bum just one cigarette from someone.

A bus stopped and a few passengers got off. I watched carefully to see if anyone reached for a cigarette pack. One guy stopped and reached for his shirt pocket. I got up and walked over to him, hurrying before he could walk away.

"Excuse me, but could you spare a cigarette?"

"Sure man, you look like you need one."

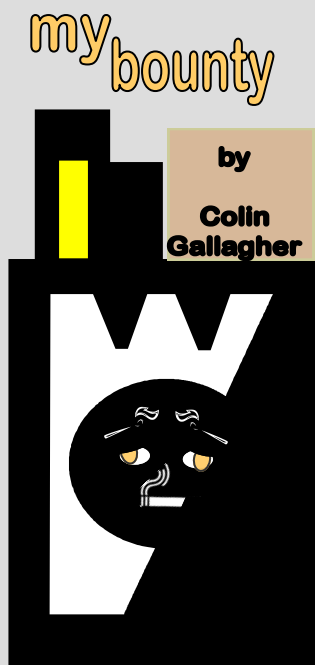
He handed me one, brought out his lighter, and lit the cigarette. That first puff was heavenly. Instantaneously I felt the drunken sensation, the euphoria. Only after that first drag did I thank him.

"No problem, man," he said and off he went.

I returned to the bus bench and smoked my little legal drug ... my little friend. Anytime I needed a friend, I would just light a cigarette, and be at peace.

Only when I was almost done with my bummed cigarette did I think, *Where will my next one come from?*

Years ago, during hard times, I would pick up butts from the sidewalk and smoke them, but today I didn't want to share the saliva.



I tossed the butt and leaned back on the bench. Looking around, seeing I was alone, I spotted a butt in the gutter not completely smoked. I told myself – *no, you aren't going that route again*. So I leaned back and waited for someone new with a cigarette.

A lady came and sat on the bench a few seats away.

She asked, "Would it bother you if I smoked?"

"No, not if you could spare one of your cigarettes."

"I can."

We lit up, and talked while we smoked. When my cigarette was almost used up, I realized that if I

wanted to find another one, I'd have to leave the bench. I didn't want to ask the nice lady for a second cigarette and appear desperate so I thanked her for the smoke and left.

As I walked along, I watched closely for someone smoking or someone who looked like a smoker. I needed another cigarette!

I spotted a smoker coming toward me. I got ready to ask for a cigarette when I recognized my friend Tony.

"Hey man, how are ya? Can you spare a cigarette?"

"Sure." He waited while I lit up.

"I've been bumming cigarettes all night. I just can't do without them."

"Need to borrow some money, pal?"

"Sure!" Tony gave me seven dollars. I told him I would repay him on payday. He said, "Sure," then continued down the sidewalk.

I walked into a corner liquor store and bought a pack of my favorite brand. No generic smokes tonight. Someone had given me a bounty and I was going to celebrate. I opened up the pack and lit one, inhaled, and smiled. I felt peace, and that euphoric feeling that only another smoker could understand. Completely contented, I stopped worrying on that warm September night in L.A.

I thought, *Will I ever give them up?*

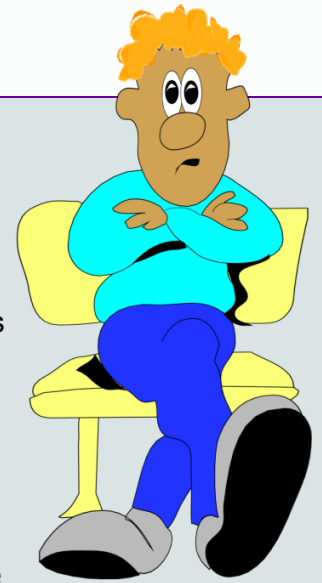
Sure, but not tonight. Tonight I had my bounty, so I put off worrying for another time.

# Parental Guidance

By Scott Gitlen



Just a touch past husky, in 1969, Benjamin Bergstrom was a twenty-one year old version of Noah, but with unruly blond hair. Detained in the brown leather barrel chair, he was puzzled why his mother's car keys were on his dad's desk, but most of all he smelled bacon. The older Bergstrom stretched out a stream of ticker tape and jotted down notes on a hand drawn chart.



"Dad. If you want to say something, at least say something."

"When I'm good and ready."

Noah Bergstrom swept the strips of tape into the trash. Taking another second, he straightened his metallic green silk shirt and patted his executive phone. "My personal private number. Explain how someone named Bill Peyton has it."

Benny's eyes widened. "I don't know."

Bergstrom let several seconds wither and die.

"He wasn't supposed to use it," his son said.

"Look at me. We do this in private so you just might learn to be a man."

For an uncomfortable instant, Benny met his father's eyes. "He's just some fella."

"What kind of fella?"

"From school. It's about money."

"You borrowed money? Don't I give you enough?"

"Dad. Cal Poly's got no real sports program, so the really cool guys track the schools that do. I was cashing in like you do until a couple of bad breaks happened."

"Gambling. Plotting the odds takes math skills. Now you have math skills?"

"Don't need them. I have an incredible edge. Inside dope and intuition and stuff."

"About the Pac-10? In San Luis Obispo? How much do you owe?"

"Only seventeen hundred. Peyton knows I'm good for it." Benny spoke into his clasped fingers. "It's kinda his fault. He knew I was strapped 'til October."

Noah rubbed his palms like a shiny green bottle fly fingering dog shit. "October. It's June. What about getting a summer job?"

"I phoned the Malibu Sea Lion, but busing tables—not my style. A waiter job's way cooler. Busing table's for wetback beaners."

"What about Riviera or Brentwood? There's good money caddying."

"I'm not much for manual labor."

"Since you have time on your hands, you'll do some tasks for me."

"Like what?"

"Like whatever I say." Bergstrom handed his son Ursula's Mustang keys.





# TOOTING MY OWN HORN

By Erica Stux

One of the things I've been thankful for is the fact that my mother started me (and my older sister) on music lessons at a relatively early age - seven in my case. Her choice of instruments for us was the accordion. Soon we also learned to play the recorder - a wooden flute that is played vertically, whereas the metallic orchestral flute is played horizontally. We acquired two of each instrument so that my sister and I could play duets.

A few years later we moved to a new community, and we kids were enrolled in the local junior high school, which shared a building with the high school. During football season I would watch the high school band emerge from the building and march about a quarter-mile down the street to the football field. I told my mother I would love to be a part of the band. I also expressed that desire to the band director. But of course neither the accordion nor the recorder is a band instrument.

It so happened that the school owned a French horn, but there was no student to play it. The band director offered to teach me, which involved producing various notes by using the three valves of the instrument and varying the strength of my blowing into the mouthpiece. After a few lessons I was turned loose into the band.

I loved being part of an ensemble making music. I played that horn all the way through high school. Dur-



ing those years my sister and I continued our accordion lessons. Occasionally we were asked to entertain a group of adults at some sort of meeting. For such an event we had to memorize certain pieces. Our repertory included classical and semi-classical numbers that had been arranged for accordion. Two of my favorites were Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *Poet and Peasant* overture.

We were asked to join a children's music club, where members took turns playing for the others. Most of the members played piano or violin; we were the only ones on accordion.

Upon completing high school, I enrolled at the local university. I told my mother I'd like to join the university band. To fulfill this desire, we sold one of the accordions, since my sister had given up playing, and with the money we purchased a French horn for me. So I became one of four horn players in the marching and concert bands. I enjoyed our twice weekly rehearsals and our half-time shows at football games, for which we had to learn intricate formations while playing our instruments. During college I had no time for the accordion.

After college graduation, my horn languished in the depths of a closet, where it joined my accordion. Looking back now, some fifty years later, I can state unequivocally that making music has added immensely to my life.

## JOINT DETERIORATION

We've cracks in the walls and the ceiling;  
The doors are all warped, you'd agree.  
But crossing the room in cold weather,  
It's not the house creaking -  
It's me!

— Erica Stux



## CRACK THE WIT

The clever comeback, tart retort,  
The perfect thing to say,  
Always comes into my mind  
Upon the following day.

— Erica Stux



## A Teacher Mourns

I looked up at a changing sky  
lights and darks  
like a charcoal sketch  
a sky covered by a cloak of mystery  
torn by slivers of silver  
and swept away in tattered wisps

dusk slowly approached  
the sun low behind me  
while a giant rainbow suddenly emerged  
its colors defined in a sparkling prism  
red orange yellow green blue violet  
an arch quivering within a drenched canopy

I stood alone shivering in late afternoon chill  
and felt mist tears on my cheek  
my heart throbbed and tears became a sob  
for a long time I contemplated the tenacious image  
my hands frozen in prayer

when I suddenly became aware  
realized  
finally understood  
felt with a certainty beyond reason or logic  
twenty small angels had painted  
that arch of wonder

and I remember my own first graders  
standing by easels  
their colorful paint-smeared aprons  
and joyfully splashed papers  
as they painted rainbows

Lil Rodich 12/12



## Just Desserts

"I see Jerry's car," said Louise.

"Where?" asked Ed.

"Over there in the handicapped zone."

"Why's he parking there?"

"Remember when he had a sprained ankle last year? He kept his handicapped permit so he'll always get a great parking place everywhere he goes, the lucky guy."

"Mr. Lucky is a half-hour late," said Phyllis. "Good thing we went ahead and ordered our breakfasts without him."

Her husband Ed nodded in agreement and buttered a stack of pancakes.

Louise announced, "He just walked in the door. Jerry!" She waved her napkin at the latecomer.

Jerry spotted his friends and sauntered over to their booth.

"Sorry I wasn't here when y'all ordered. Had to get my truck's tires rotated at Costco this morning." He took off his jacket and slid in next to Jenny. "Hey, guess who I saw walking around the Lexus car lot next door to Costco? Harvey Jensen!"

He waved the menu at the waitress and held up his empty coffee cup. She nodded and walked toward the coffee station.

"C'mon, Jerry, Harvey Jensen looking at fancy cars?" asked Louise. "Don't make me laugh! He can't even buy a decent bicycle. Been on disability since he came home banged up from Iraq." She stirred sugar into her coffee. "Poor as a church mouse."

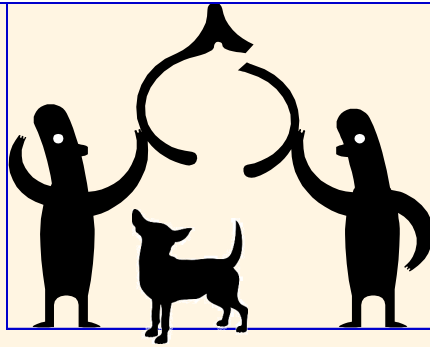
"I KNOW it was Harvey," Jerry replied. "His dog Gus was with him." He looked around at his friends' skeptical faces. "I'm not joking. Nearly didn't recognize him though 'cause he'd gotten a haircut and a shave. And he had on new clothes—and not his usual crappy Army surplus duds. Even Gus looked clean."

"Maybe he's finally lost it, what with trying to find a way to buy all his meds and pay rent," said Phyllis, as she bit into a scone. "I heard him tell the loan officer at our bank that he missed a couple rent payments because his veterans' check got lost in the mail. Sure looked miserable when he left the bank that day."

"Hmm. Come to think of it, Harvey wasn't at the bingo hall last night," said Louise. "He's always there, just like me, rain or shine—I mean, what else has he got to do 'cept walk around Walmart looking for bargains? He's ALWAYS hoping he'll win at bingo."

"Walmart's the best place to buy fertilizer and beer," said Ed.

"But honey," said Phyllis, "You sure as heck don't buy your shirts and slacks there. Or get your shoes secondhand at Goodwill, thank



the good Lord." She patted her husband's hand and smiled at him.

He beamed back at her and then told the group, "I remember when Harvey won the Thanksgiving bingo pot last year. You'd think he'd found buried treasure! Whoopin' and hollerin' like a kid at a football game. Said he was goin' to fix hisself and Gus a turkey dinner. We was all a bit embar-

rassed for him. Uh, goin' to finish your sausage and taters, Phyllis? No? I'll help you out. Thanks, sweetie." He deftly speared a link.

The waitress appeared, poured Jerry a cup of coffee and took his order. Jerry sipped his coffee and exhaled in pleasure.

"Ahh, I needed that. Can't live without my caffeine hit in the morning. Now I feel ready for anything. Man, I feel so blessed sitting here with my pals, having a great cup of joe, and waiting for a big Koffee Klatch breakfast."

"You surely do get a good deal at this joint," Ed opined. "All seniors get free seconds on the buttermilk biscuits. It's only fair. We retirees deserve a few breaks, like our Medicare."

"Amen," said Phyllis. "We worked hard, watched our money, and didn't ask for hand-outs. I've never been on the dole and I sure have my suspicions about how those so-called poor folks who get the government's hand-outs. You know they gotta be spending lots of those dollars on drugs. Tax-payers' money. Our money. Right? Please pass the cream, Ed."

Louise cleaned up her fried-eggs-over-easy with a piece of whole wheat toast and said, "That's what I was telling my cleaning lady yesterday. If you work hard, mind your Ps and Qs, then good things will surely come your way. I told her that God's gotta love a striver more than a slacker. Just stands to reason."

"Hey, Josie," shouted a café regular to the counter waitress.

"Turn the channel to news on that TV. I'm gettin' tired of Dr. Oz talkin' about tofu and broccoli. Let's see sports and weather."

Josie obligingly switched the channel.

"And the big winner of the state lottery has been located right here in Porterville!" enthused the Channel 5 announcer. "He's a Marine vet, living on disability and food stamps. Spent his last 12 bucks on a sweepstakes ticket and food for his dog. He expected to be homeless next month. Now he's the winner of 57 million dollars! Stayed tuned to hear the lucky guy's story, folks. It'll make you believe in miracles!"

"Bingo," muttered Louise. Ed spluttered coffee all over his white golf shirt.

— Kathy Highcove

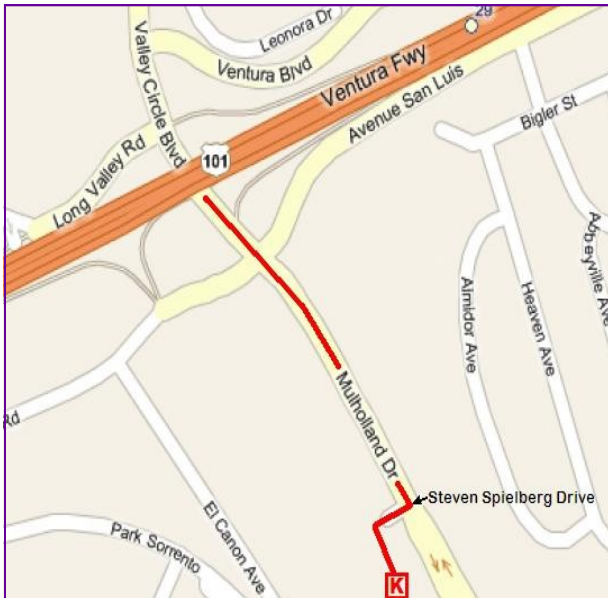


## Love's Resolutions

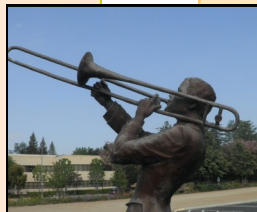
Yin and Yang  
Shadows and Sunlight

Winter and summer  
Loss and Treasure  
Argument and Resolution  
Tears and Laughter  
Memories and Erasures  
Passion and Boredom  
Music and Discord  
Clarity and Confusion  
Rainbows and Showers  
Conversation and Silence  
Separate hearts entwined  
And grown into one

**Lil Rodich**



A free parking lot —the closest one to the CWC-SFV meeting—is located just behind the Katzenberg Room. A trombone statue marks the entry to the lot.



## MEETINGS

The San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club meets the first Saturday of the month except July and August. We gather in this area of the Motion Picture and Television Fund complex:

Villa Katzenberg

23388 Mulholland

Woodland Hills, CA 91364-2733

## NEXT MEETING

March 2nd at 1:00 p.m.

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

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