

MAY 2013

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 9

# The Valley Scribe

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



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## Clear the Way for Inspiration

Every writer has had dry spells. As a deadline looms, an editor waits. A half-finished manuscript languishes in limbo. Writer's block has struck again. What to do?

Author Barbara Abercrombie, our May speaker, has been inconvenienced by writer's block many times in her varied career, but she's persevered into print.

Her solution? Know thine enemy. She researched writer's block and wrote a book about suggested ways to push aside the obstructions and distractions and finish the assignment, memoir or essay.

The result? She is now the author of *A Year of Writing Dangerously*, chosen by *Poets and Writers Magazine* in 2012 as one of the best books for writers.

Besides the current best-seller, Abercrombie has written and published 15 books, received the UCLA Extension Distinguished Instructor Award, and the UCLA Extension Outstanding Instructor Award in Creative Writing.

Here's an interesting quote by Abercrombie found on the UCLA Extension website:

"There is nothing until there is something on the page. My job is to create an atmosphere that feels safe so students can get that something down on the page. ... I offer guidelines in craft but encourage risky paths into uncharted territory. I use a lot of examples from books and poems because I think ultimately our best teachers are the writers we love the most."

If you'd like to know more about Abercrombie's writing techniques, read her blog at <http://writingtime.typepad.com/>

Also check out her website at <http://www.barbaraabercrombie.com>.

— KH



Barbara Abercrombie

## west valley whimsicals

## A Schwartz / Highcove Production



## SWEET TWEETS

Remember when Mother's Day cards used were full of birds and flowers, saccharin sentiments and cloying couplets? And a postman delivered the card?

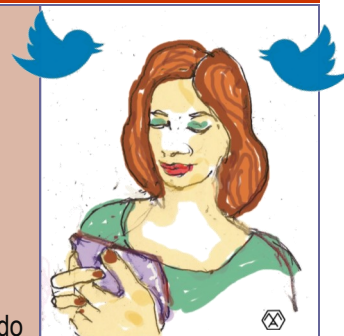
Mother's Day greetings, like modern American families, have certainly changed since those *I Love Lucy* days. Today's busy mom might expect her

kids to text a terse greeting to her iPhone. Perhaps something like: DM, JTLY, CURSN, VBS, HAK, LY, Junior. You don't "get" text? You can look it up at [http://www.webopedia.com/quick\\_ref/textmessageabbreviations.asp](http://www.webopedia.com/quick_ref/textmessageabbreviations.asp)

My mom used to say, "Learn to do it yourself. Can't always expect ME to do it for you." I've heard modern moms admonish their offspring the same way. Some things don't change. IMHO ☺ —KH



Mother's Day  
1953



May 2013

## Executive Board

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## **Literary Review Winners**

**Our San Fernando Valley Branch was well represented in the newly released California Writers Club *Literary Review*, Winter 2012.**

**Two members discovered last month that their submissions were selected for the second issue of this publication: Ray Malus and Kathy Highcove.**

**Both entries were chosen for the fiction section of the magazine. Ray's story is titled, "Parkview 212B" and "Partners" is the title of Kathy's piece.**

**Editor Dave LeRoche informed all CWC members that there were 103 submissions for the issue, and several deserving entries were passed over due to lack of space. LeRoche hopes to publish a larger literary review in the future so more work by CWC members will be spotlighted and appreciated.**

**When you have an opportunity, read through the review and enjoy work by creative writers who represent nineteen CWC branches. Sail on!**

—KH

## **President's May 2013 Message**

It's that time of year when nominees are sought to fill board vacancies. A nominating committee made up of Linette Stone, Doug Douglas and Dave Wetterberg has been working to fill the positions of president and secretary. Next year Gary Wosk will relinquish the office of secretary to become our publicist. My two-year term as president ends in June.

I thank the committee for their due diligence in finding a nominee for president: Nance Crawford. And Gabriella Owens has agreed to serve as secretary.

Membership chair Andrea Polk and treasurer Mary Freeman will remain in office. Rita Brown will stay on as program chair, but would like to have an assistant. She'll continue to develop programs and contact potential speakers, but needs help with follow-up details. This position might work for someone who wants a voice in program planning.

Serving as president has been a rewarding experience and I regret I cannot return for another year in the position. But the next SFV president will enjoy working with the conscientious, enterprising and energetic SFV board. I could not have done the job as President without these officers.

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE:**

Our members often ask, "If my work has appeared in the *Scribe*, isn't it considered a 'previously published' piece when I submit it elsewhere for publication?"

An expert opinion has been provided by entertainment lawyer Kendall Jones, our popular January speaker. Kendall tells us, "If your newsletter is available online, the entire world can read the items and therefore all work is a public distribution and considered 'previously published.'"

If you are wary of sharing a creative work then hold on to it. But many publications only ask for **one time use** for a submission.

There are advantages to publishing in our *Scribe*. You'll gain publication credits that can be listed in a bio or in social network sites. And your work will be enjoyed by your peers and friends in the CWC-SFV.

Please keep sending *The Valley Scribe* your stories, articles and verses.

— Yolanda Fintor





## New Perspectives

Carol V. Davis addressed our April gathering on her genre and area of expertise: contemporary American poetry. Modern American poetry is a very large topic, covering most of the past hundred years and innumerable American

poets. But Davis quickly focused on her own collection of contemporary poetry,

“Listening to poetry is different than reading poetry,” she told us. And she proved her point by occasionally reading poems from her published works. Her poetry is composed of short spare lines that employ colorful and potent images. Her deft descriptions trace and tint a mental picture that lingers in the listener’s imagination.

Much of her lecture was on her work,—several books that focus on her experiences living in Russia. Davis had grown up listening to stories of St. Petersburg, the home country of her Russian Jewish grandparents.

The American poet wanted—no, needed—to experience Russian culture firsthand. She sensed that the abrupt change in lifestyle would invigorate her senses and enrich her poetry. After receiving a Fulbright grant in the mid—1990s, she schlepped her entire family, which included three young children, from Los Angeles to St. Petersburg, Russia. The city of her ancestors. While residing there, Davis taught Jewish literature and contemporary American literature. And in her spare time, she watched, as only a poet watches, the city and people St. Petersburg.

The family’s sojourn in Russia meant complete immersion in a new culture and language, which sharpened her

poetic senses. Everything was completely different from the warm laidback life of Southern California. Davis and her family struggled to learn the language and to adjust to the frigid Russian winter—none of her kids had seen snow. And yet, in time, Davis felt a strong connection to her ancestral home, a deep spiritual connection. Her poetry thrived. She returned home to teach and write, but returned to Russia in 2005. Her Russian sojourns inspired several critically acclaimed books of poetry. In 2007, Davis was awarded the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry for *Into the Arms of Pushkin: Poems of St. Petersburg*.

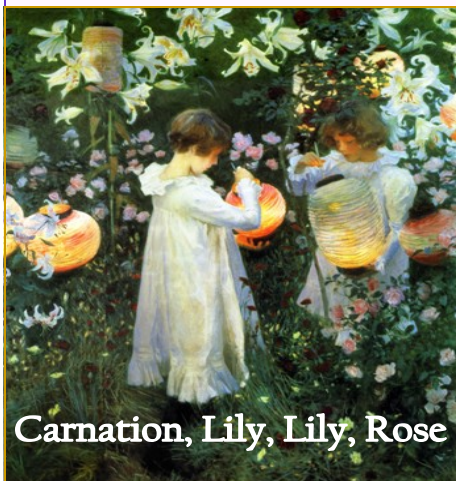
Our April gathering listened intently to Davis’ presentation. Several times she stopped her talk to answer questions—which led to interesting asides, such as her small daughter’s aversion to a picture by John Singer Sargent (see insert) her mother had hung over her crib. The child, when she learned to talk, demanded the picture’s removal because she found the images spooky. Her surprised

mother took it down. In retelling this story, Davis emphasized how differently everyday images appear to a child.

“The senses are astute. New places are inspiring because in a new environment all kinds of things stand out. Everything is different. Similarly, when I write my poetry I try to see my environment in a different light.”

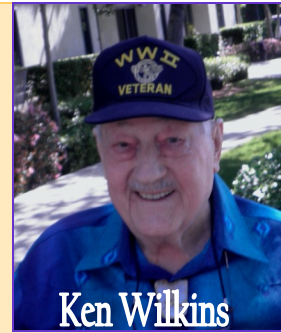
At the end of her talk, Davis mentioned her trip to a Wyoming workshop. She drove through the dramatic scenery of the Old West and was reminded of similar landscapes in the Old Country. Her reactions to shadowed canyons and crags might become another story, and a topic for a future appearance by poet Carol V. Davis.

— Kathy Highcove



Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose

# Ken's Pet Peeves



## TASTELESS MEALTIME COMMERCIALS

It is most disgusting when one sits down to eat  
To see a TV ad direct from the street.

They cross the line for us delicate diners  
When they air commercials about pantliners.

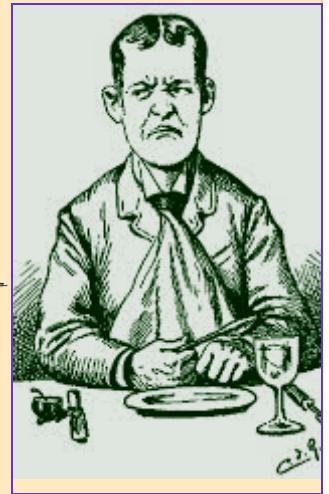
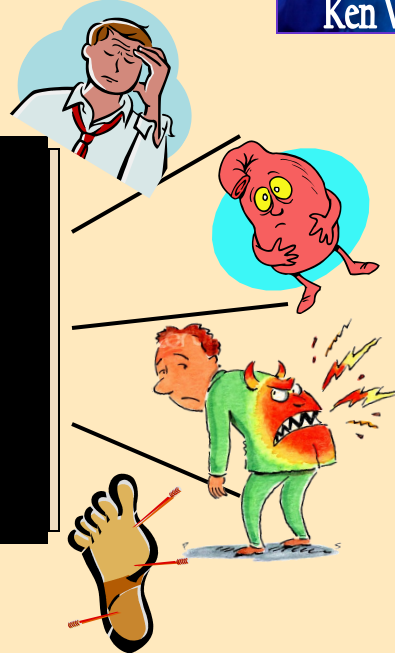
Hemorrhoid cures have little appeal  
When one is trying to enjoy a meal.

Hyperkeratosis, a word I cannot spell  
Is an itchy scalp that is far from being well.

"Use Depends! You've got a lot of living to do."  
But, must I be reminded while eating my stew?

Without warning they will discuss jock itch.  
So it's best right now I flip off the switch.

KEN WILKINS



## LATE PHONE CALLERS

I do not go to bed along with the chickens  
But I hate late callers like the very dickens.

Friends calling before nine I'll accept with grace  
A minute later and here's pie in their face.

A salesman calling at the forbidden hour  
Could easily be hung from the nearest tower.

Solicitors calling for a charity  
Find a reception missing hilarity.

Now the evening hours were made to unwind  
But the telephone brings little peace of mind.

So spare your fingers from dialing my number  
And let me prepare for a night of slumber.

KEN WILKINS



# Review and Refresh

By Dave Wetterberg



## Figurative Language

### Similes and Metaphors

When a poet describes the color of his sweetheart's eyes by comparing them to the blue color in the morning sky, he is using *figurative language*. (To avoid confusion, note that the terms *figurative language*, *metaphor*, *metaphorical language*, *language of comparison*, and *figures of speech*, are often used interchangeably.)



*Figurative language* makes use of similes and metaphors. A *simile* is a comparison using *like* or *as*. Not much thinking is needed to see the comparison.

*His shoes were like violin cases.*

A *metaphor*, on the other hand, is a comparison stated indirectly. A little thinking is needed.

*Play after play, the fullback chugged down the field, piling up yardage.*

A *simile* or a *metaphor* has three parts:

- 1) the object being described (*shoes; the fullback*)
- 2) the object pulled in from another area (*violin cases; locomotive*)
- 3) the quality the two objects share (*largeness; unstoppable power*).

Part 3 ... the quality shared ... is perhaps the most important. In other words, in the simile *like violin cases*, how were his shoes like violin cases? Shoes are not really like violin cases. But the writer sees a quality similar in each: largeness and space.

And in the fullback metaphor, the fullback is not really much like a locomotive. But to the writer, both the fullback and the locomotive share an important quality: steady, seemingly unstoppable power.

The next two examples are from Hemingway, about German bombers.

*If their orders are to strafe the road on their way home, you will get it. Otherwise, when they are finished with their particular objective, they go off like bank clerks, flying home.*

German bombers?

bank clerks?

Both groups are eager to get home after a day's work.

*"... down here on the delta, the artillery were still only warming up, like baseball pitchers lobbing them over in the bullpen, "*

artillery?

baseball pitchers in the bull pen?

leisureliness; no great attention to control.

## Other Figures of Speech

### Personification

A form of metaphor comparing non-human things to humans.

*Death stands above me, whispering low*

*Symbol* An image that has dimensions of meaning larger than the image on a simpler level: *The red, white, and blue of his speech*

### Pun

A play on words whereby one word has another meaning:

*Samson died of fallen arches*

### Irony

The opposite of what is expected: *What a great day for a picnic!*

(When it's really a terrible day for a picnic)

### Hyperbole

An overstatement: *You could have knocked me over with a feather.*

### Oxymoron

*Parting is such sweet sorrow, Rose thought, as she waved good-bye to Debbie. See you in three months, dear daughter. Three months without your irritating music and constant iPhone conversations everywhere we go. It hurts so good.*



# Coping with Rejection

by Moira Allen

**R**ejection slips. Is there anything worse than those humbling, preprinted letters, too light to trick you into thinking your SASE might contain an acceptance, too impersonal to tell you *why*? Rejection slips are the writer's gremlin, the nagging suggestion that we don't measure up. What can we do about them? How can we live with them? How do we make them stop?

Unfortunately, rejection is part of being a writer. Not just a beginning writer, either; experienced writers get them as well. (Admittedly, Stephen King's editor probably adds a nice note... Well, admittedly, I'm not sure Stephen King ever gets rejected these days, but on the other hand, where do you suppose he got the inspiration for all that horror?)

One of the most important steps you can take as a writer is to learn how to cope with rejection, how to understand what it means to your career, and how to move on.

## Building Boundaries

Writers are sensitive souls. If we weren't, we'd find something else to do. Unfortunately, that sensitivity also makes us more vulnerable to rejection.

The first step in handling rejection, therefore, is learning how to distinguish yourself from your work. You may pour your heart and soul into your writing, but, in order to survive as a writer, you must also be able to establish "boundaries" between yourself and your creation. Your writing may be like a child to you, but like any child, it must go out into the world to succeed or fail on its own merits. If you can't develop that sense of boundary, you'll go nuts—and quite simply stop. Success will become impossible if you cannot bear the pain of failure.

## But *Why*?

You've probably heard that editors who reject your work aren't rejecting *you*—and that's true. However, they may not be rejecting your work either. Lack of quality is only one reason for rejection. There are many others. While the standard "Does not meet our editorial needs at this time" doesn't tell you why a piece was refused, it could have been for any of the following reasons:

- A similar piece is already on file. "Similar" can mean simply relating to the same topic—for example, if you submit the perfect article on Antigua to a travel magazine, and they have another

article on Antigua on hand (even though vastly different from yours), they won't be able to accept another.

- A similar piece has been assigned. Great minds *do* think alike—and you'd be amazed how often two or more writers will query on a similar topic.
- A similar piece (or a piece on the same topic) was published within the last two or three years. (Many publications won't repeat a topic for that long.)

It's also possible to write an excellent article that still doesn't quite mesh with an editor's tastes in terms of style, tone, approach, angle, viewpoint, or even length. (I once had a piece rejected for being "too short"—when I added 300 words, it was accepted.) Again, this doesn't mean that your article was poor; it means that it came close but not quite close enough.

That brings me to the final reason for rejection: Sheer volume. If an editor can accept five articles per month out of a pile of 500, it isn't only the "bad" articles that are going to be rejected. Perfectly good articles will also be rejected, simply because the editor can't buy all of them. Your article may be perfect in every way, yet be sent back just because it was #6 in the stack of "maybes."

## "Good" Rejection Slips

Is there such a thing as a "good" rejection slip? Absolutely. Any rejection slip that offers actual information is "good"—because it helps you understand the reason for the rejection. Some magazines offer a "checklist" letter, listing many of the potential reasons for rejection and "checking" the one that applies to you. Finding out that someone else had already been assigned to the topic is a lot more comforting than being left to assume that the editor thought your article stank.

Even better than checklists, however, are rejections that include a personal note of any kind. Even the barest scribble shows that the editor thought enough of your piece to respond personally, rather than scrawling "No" on the outside of the envelope and passing it off to an assistant. Treasure those scribbles; they mean that you are making a positive impression.

Still higher on the list of "positive" rejections is the "please try again" note. When an editor asks you to come back with another submission, believe it: No editor will ever say this unless s/he means it. This is often the result of a submission that "just misses" acceptance for one of the reasons listed above. Quite often, the editor truly wishes s/he could purchase your piece, but

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

can't—and doesn't want to lose the opportunity to grab you as a contributor. Whenever you're asked to try again, *try again!*

### Self-Honesty

While there may be dozens of reasons why an editor rejected your piece that have nothing to do with quality, a writer must also be willing to ask honestly whether, in fact, quality was the issue. When we write, we often become so involved in a piece—so close to what we have written—that an accurate assessment of quality becomes difficult. Often, our work isn't as good as we thought it was—or wasn't what our target market required.

When I teach writing, I'm amazed by how many students expect to sell their first piece of writing to *Cosmopolitan* or *Woman's Day*. There's nothing wrong with dreaming "big." There's also nothing wrong with having to work up to those dreams. Failure isn't a matter of aiming at *Cosmopolitan* and missing. Failure is a matter of failing to take the steps necessary to hit your target—maybe not today, maybe not this year, maybe not even next year, but eventually.

Good writing evolves over time. For most of us, it is a skill, not a gift—and skills are refined over time. Sure, there are occasional "prodigies" who craft the perfect bestseller the first time they pick up a pen—just as there are "prodigy" musicians who play perfectly the first time they pick up the violin. For the rest of us, perfection is achieved by plodding—and by endless practice that may, for a time, make everyone around us cover their ears and wince.

The reality of writing is that when you start, you think you're pretty good. After a year, if you've been writing steadily, you're likely to look back on those first efforts and wonder what on earth you saw in them. After you've been writing for five years, you may look at those first-year masterpieces and wonder why you didn't burn them on the spot. (This process never ends: As you continue to improve, you'll feel this way 20 years from now about the stuff you write 19 years from now.) To some writers, this scenario sounds depressing—but what would be even more depressing is the idea that you *can't* get better!

Writing is a somewhat schizophrenic process. We must be able to look at each piece we produce and say, honestly, "This is the best I can do." At the same time, we must also be able to say—equally honestly—"I can do better." Both statements are true. What you write today is the best you can do—today. Tomorrow, quite probably, you'll do better. But only if you don't stop writing

today.

### It Sank. Get Over It.

Someone developed a t-shirt with a picture of the Titanic on the front and, on the back, the words: "It sank. Get over it." The same can be said of rejection.

It came back. Get over it. Or more to the point, get used to it—because if you practice your craft, you're going to get a lot of rejections over time. "Getting used to" rejection doesn't mean that rejection ever loses its sting. It doesn't. Nor is that a bad thing: I suspect that the day rejection ceases to hurt is the day one has lost one's passion for writing. Pain isn't a bad thing. Pain simply means we care.

At the same time, there are things you can do to ease the sting. The next time your material comes back with one of those awful slips, try one of these:

- Have a rejection party. "Celebrate" your rejection with a pizza, a dish of ice cream, a trip to the movies. You have a right to celebrate: You have to be a writer to be rejected. (It never happens to dreamers.)
- Start a rejection slip file. Besides being useful for taxes (it proves to the IRS that you are attempting to conduct a business), it can come in handy down the line, when you're famous. Then you'll be able to say, with a smug flourish, "Well, I was rejected 48 times before my story/novel/article was accepted by Megabucks Publishing ..."
- Send your material on to the next publisher on your list.

Write something else. Better yet, start writing something else the minute your last piece is finished and out the door. Rejection stings less when your mind is occupied with a newer, and therefore more interesting, project.

At the beginning of this article, I asked whether anything was worse than a rejection slip. The answer is "yes." Far worse than a rejection slip is never having written anything that could have been rejected in the first place.

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**Moira Allen** is the editor of Writing-World.com, and has written nearly 400 articles, serving as a columnist and regular contributor for such publications as *The Writer*, *Entrepreneur*, *Writer's Digest*, and *Byline*. Allen is the author of eight books, including [Starting Your Career as a Freelance Writer](#), [The Writer's Guide to Queries, Pitches and Proposals](#), and [Writing to Win: The Colossal Guide to Writing Contests](#). In addition to Writing-World.com, Allen hosts [Mostly-Victorian.com](#), and [The Pet Loss Support Page](#), a resource for grieving pet owners. She can be contacted at [editors@writing-world.com](mailto:editors@writing-world.com).

# The Contest Girl

By Susan Keller

Last month, I won an Honorable Mention from the Bay Area Poets Coalition for my poem, *Dew Point*. I was pretty stoked as there were 110 entries from around the country. The HM came with an invitation to give a public reading of the poem. Again, pretty stoked.

I wrestled with the idea of asking friends to come. I've read at poetry slams and have invited friends and family to come. The events can be great, lively affairs celebrating the intersection of poetry and rap. The slams are designed to get the 20-35 year olds writing and performing their work. And they do!

But for some fuzzy reason when I got the BAPC invite, I felt unsure and decided to keep the reading on the down low. Good choice in hindsight.

I MapQuested the venue before setting out but didn't recognize anything about the location in the flats of Berkeley. Figured it was a hotel, a chic boutique hotel to be sure.

As we got close, I had a sinking feeling. The street was in need of some serious TLC. Pot holes punctuated the asphalt. Junker or abandoned cars were parked everywhere and all manner of trash scurried up and down the sorry street.

My husband drove slowly; I searched for the address. When we found it, I couldn't tell what the building was. It was a rambling structure with four floors. Overall, it looked a lot like the old Jack Tar Hotel on Van Ness during its lengthy eyesore period.

Is it possible to have a sinking feeling while hyperventilating? If so, that was my emotional state. I asked my husband, "Should we go through with this, or is it time to cut and run?" We seriously considered the second option. Then, with a shrug I said, "What the hell. It's an adventure." Besides, people hanging around the doorway had already seen us and waved. We parked and walked toward the building.

Upon entering the lobby, a curious smell greeted us. Besides the curious smell, the signage let us know that we had just entered a nursing home, but no fresh or sunny nursing home. Smelly, sad, dismal, and drab are more accurate adjectives. We asked where we should go and were directed to the fourth floor for the awards ceremony.

The room at the top was what you might expect: funky carpets, plastic chairs, and dirty windows. What you might not expect in a "normal" poetry reading—walkers, wheelchairs, and oxygen tanks—were also in evidence. I know, I know. I am petty and ageist. Where has my PC gone?

However, as dire as the surroundings, there was some excellent work read that afternoon. Moving. Fresh. Funny. Sexy. Alive. (The poets who read were not the residents. Although one woman resident in a wheelchair kept quipping that she would read, but we would all be far too scandalized.)

At one point, the president of the BAPC thanked the host (the nursing home) for allowing us to use their social room for this important event. Then he expressed his appreciation for the last seven years that the group had been allowed to use the room for their monthly meetings. Honestly, the image of Book Passage\* came to mind with its cleanliness, welcoming atmosphere, sunny rooms, and most of all its wonderful books.

I am not going to say that the poetic quality of the work transported me beyond the tawdriness of the environment. No. My husband and I skipped out at the break. But, if nothing else, I have a resume builder with an honorable mention in a national contest. Prospective agents—who I am currently pitching for representation of my novel—won't know that this award was handed out in a smelly nursing home.

The real irony of all of this is that my winning poem, *Dew Point*, is about cleaning out a house where elderly people no longer live. Tossing out the old and coming back clean and renewed.

\* *Book Passage is a popular bookstore in the Bay Area*

Susan Keller's poetry has won first place in Northern California Poetry Slams. It has also been awarded a semi-finalist position in the Atlantic Review Poetry Contest, and won an Honorable Mention in the Bay Area Poets Coalition national contest. She publishes a monthly column in the California Writers' Group Marin branch newsletter, entitled *The Contest Girl*. Her work has been published for several years in Northern California anthologies. Her story, "A Turn in the Road" earned an Honorable Mention in the Write Across the Bay Contest. Susan is busy marketing her first novel, *Three Men*, as well as writing a collection of personal essays entitled *The Go-Go Girls Guide to Rocking It After 50*.

## Dew Point

The taxi driver, careening out of the Palm Springs Airport,  
blames the humidity on 50,000 swimming pools and watered lawns  
few of them here when you grew up

In your parent's desert home, familiar smells remain  
the sweet dust of your mother's face powder  
the bitter breath of your father's Pendleton shirt worn too many times

We change the sheets on the bed and make love

For three days, we discard  
categorize  
clean  
toss out your mother's shopping lists that go back years  
on all of them she'd written, "Buy Socks!"

Bank statements as old as expired medicines in the bathroom cabinet  
newspaper clippings of your father's career inhumed in a desk drawer

In the saffron evenings we walk  
you point out delicate smoke trees, spiny ocotillo  
yellow flowers of the Palo Verde

The nest of the cactus wren holds nothing extraneous  
and fits precisely into the prickly arms of the deerhorn cholla

After the last box is sealed, the empty rooms echo

We sit outside under a yellow bulb and drink beer  
while the humid air is cooled to dewy stars  
that fall silently throughout the night  
to rise again tomorrow with the sublime young sun

— Susan Keller



## Generations

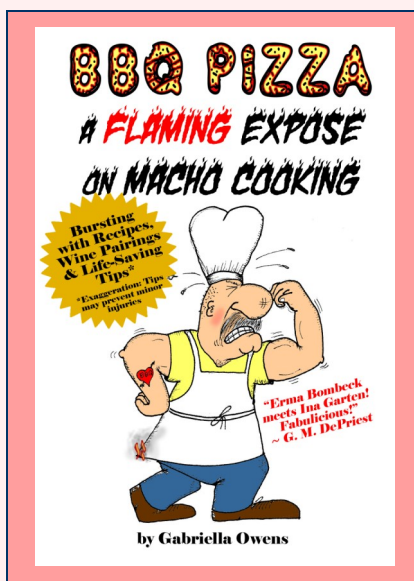
Bubbie crocheted lacy doilies  
patterned in cobweb designs  
cream colored  
over the faded brown sofa  
over the mahogany tables  
smiles in the cold dawn  
of a dark room

Nicole counts stitches  
winding thick yarn  
around her finger  
grasps a large hook  
pulling tight

a thick pad of purple and orange  
on the piano  
next to her great grandmother's  
fragile doily  
in the dusty sunlight

— Lillian Rodich





## A SHAMELESS SALES PITCH

By Gabriella Owens

*BBQ Pizza, A Flaming Expose on Macho Cooking* is guaranteed to be one of the most hilarious cookbooks you will ever read! Extraordinary, right? Ordinary cookbook sales pitches talk about delicious, simple, quick, tasty and so on. And of course all those things describe my book as well. But the extra hilarity is so unusual that you will probably never see a sales pitch like this again.

My cookbook is for real people. There are 47 simple recipes. (Had to be an odd number, so I'm counting the Pina Coladas too!) Most of the ingredients are easily found at your local store. The instructions aren't full of strange words that you need a dictionary to understand. There aren't long chapters on obscure procedures. (Translation: Chapters are short.) The idea is to get you started making and eating delicious pizza quickly.

This book has the basics of the type of cooking that worked best for us. It really is much more of a "what NOT to do" rather than a "how to" book. Remember those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Save yourself from fire department visits and patio remodeling by learning from our example. If there is a mistake to be made, our macho cooks have made it.

I've stolen some of the recipes from a wonderful group of people who are delusional enough to enjoy my company. I invite friends over to cook pizzas, taste each pizza, and pick only the best to write recipes from. (I have discarded each and every recipe that used sauerkraut. Sauerkraut on pizza was a very bad idea.)

I hope that after trying some of these recipes you will start experimenting and making your own creations. That is the real joy of pizza cooking; trying new ingredients or combinations. Try, Taste and Enjoy! Happy Grilling!

**LEGAL DISCLAIMER:** This book features stunts performed by amateurs not under the supervision of professionals. Due to the dangers of combining open flames with alcohol, the author must insist that no one attempt to re-create or re-enact any stunt or activity performed in this book. (Whew! Now I'm safe from singed nose hair lawsuits!)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

I was supposed to spend my life lounging on the French Riviera with a fancy cocktail in my hand, but somehow I got turned around and ended up in California with a glass of wine instead. Which is pretty darn close, except for that pesky working thing.

**ABOUT THE CARTOONIST:** Jack Russo grew up in the San Fernando Valley in the 1960's with a steady diet of Mad Magazine and the works of R. Crumb. His irreverent humor displays a total disregard for the opinion of the reader, and no topic is off limits.

More of his cartoons can be seen at <http://gascartoons.com>.

# OF NOTE

## Grief, Hope and Faith

**The plot:** It's far in the future and no one needs to shed a tear. All grieving has been cured; however, something terrible goes wrong in Gary Wosk's disturbing short story "They Are Here," which will go live May 5 on *Dark Futures* at <http://www.darkfuturesfiction.net/theyarehere> in the category of Short Fiction.

His profile will be posted (<http://www.darkfuturesfiction.net/garywosk>). *Dark Futures* publishes prose, poetry, and more, all with a dark future theme.

"There's something new every Sunday. We're always accepting submissions so there's much more to come," said founder and executive editor David Stegora.

**The plot:** An Elvis Presley impersonator has left the building for good and comes face to face with a catastrophic event. Gary's short hunk-a-hunk of burning inspirational story "Flameout" is included in the good versus evil, horror and the healing power of love themed anthology *Spiritual Awakenings: Stories of Praise and Redemption*.

The book, published by G.I.S G Heavenly Publications, will be available at Amazon.com beginning on May 10.

"The world is a hard place to live and no one gets out of it alive. Between these pages, fiction stories and poems speak the truth of grief, pain, sin, and horror. Yet, despite that truth, the authors herein show us the blessing of hope. All we need do is let God take control," said editor Sara Basso.

## I WONDER ... BOOKS ARE COMPLETED

**Judy Presnall reports:**

**The final three e-books of my seven-book I WONDER ... series are completed and available for downloading at Amazon.com:**

**I Wonder ... Does A Camel Store Water In Its Hump?**

**I Wonder ... Does The Hairy Tarantula Comb Its Hair?**

**I Wonder ... Can Navy Dolphins Work For The Army?**

**These books are written for ages 7-10 and cost 99 cents.**

## FESTIVAL PARTICIPANT

**Karen Gorback's one-act play, "A Delicate Dance," was performed this past weekend at College of the Canyons. The New Works Festival has become an annual event and includes short plays, longer one-acts, large scenes from two-act plays, and concert readings. This year the festival also included a short play with no spoken text.**

**For additional info on the New Works Festival: E-mail: [newworks@canyons.edu](mailto:newworks@canyons.edu)**

## UPDATE FROM ESTER SHIFREN

April has been an incredibly rewarding month in which, thanks largely in part to speaking engagements and my own marketing efforts to individuals, I personally managed to sell more than a hundred copies of *Hiding in a Cave of Trunks*, which brings the total since December 2012 to more than three hundred books.

I've worked very hard to achieve these numbers by promoting in every possible way. I've joined clubs, attended conferences, and accepted invitations to appear as a speaker.

Commenting in online social media writing groups and webinars has brought new friends and connections, and added invaluable writing and marketing tools to my collection.

Combined sales figures from various April events: Chatsworth Women's Club, National Council of Jewish Women, Long Beach, Monterey Park, Bruggermeyer Library, a total of 85 attendees purchased 55 copies. The balance of sales was from networking and referrals. My Buffalo connection purchased 38 copies as gifts!

I was published in SAJAC's magazine in Toronto, Canada, and will be speaking next month in Buffalo, New York, as well as Toronto. I've recently spoken about self publishing at three venues, including Jeanette Shelburne's ongoing writing class at Reseda's One Generation Center.

There's a great deal of new interest in China and WWII, and I travel everywhere to address multi-ethnic groups about this little known subject.

It's essential, I believe, for fellow writers to become expert speakers on their subject, and submit stories and comments whenever possible.

I'm counting my blessings, and, thanks to many requests, I have started a sequel!

# Rainy Days Rainy Ways

By Lillian Rodich

**I**t's the merry month of May and not supposed to be raining. Not on my cracked and scarred condo, not on the roses smiling up at a gray sky, not on the dried out cement so recently shimmering in the heat. But rain it must to quench our thirst, to wash us clean of sorrow and debris, to allow the coming cumulus clouds access to a freshly painted sky.

"Into every life a little rain must fall." The phrase dances around in my brain as I sit curled up on my couch and stare through our cracked picture window at the splashes of water swirling around pots and patio chairs. Somehow this rain soothes my turbulent soul and confides the promise of better things to come. Streams of water satisfy the thirsty earth and gray skies become a blanket of consolation while sadness begins to fade.

I have known joy in the rain. The smell of wet earth. The comfortable patter of drops on the sidewalk. Twirling my umbrella and doing a splash dance on my driveway. The enchanting sight of a rainbow as I rode home from Palm Springs, my lover's proposal in the front seat of his truck—rain slicing all around us—sunlight glinting through the windshield. Endless afternoons when the kids were little and we all sat warm and cozy in our tiny den and played Monopoly or Pick Up Sticks and drank hot chocolate. School days at Morningside, smelling damp sweaters and the faintly camphor odor of mothballs when I greeted my students on a stormy morning. Playing Heads-up - Seven-up and laughing with the children. Rainy days so many years ago with my best friend Helen Weinblatt, splashing down Ogden Drive, sharing an umbrella, tasting the sweetness of raindrops on our tongues. Walking beach sands in a misty rain, holding hands with my guy, watching a muted sun sink into

the grayness, feeling the damp sand between our toes, suddenly breaking into a chase and falling into each other's arms overcome by exhaustion and laughter. Sitting in our daughter Gail's home watching the lightning illuminate silver sheets of water, having Jennifer cuddle up beside me and say, "Grammy, are you scared?"

Rain has framed sad memories and mixed with unshed tears. Standing by my father's grave, unable

to comprehend that he was really gone, unable to bear the fine needles of drizzle on my eyelids and forehead. Rain again in a sudden cloud-burst when my beloved nephew Barry left all of us in a flood of anguish we thought would never wash away. Saying "goodbye" to my first real boyfriend and mourning what might



have been when the sky suddenly darkened and rain began to splatter on my window pane. The floods of 1938 frightening me, muddy water swirling around our Chevy's tires, the streets like rivers and my father carrying me across, my head buried in his neck. Flash floods on our way to Las Vegas heading for higher land, my heart beating so hard I couldn't swallow and my love laughing up at the black clouds and shouting taunts at the thunder. The steady drumbeat of rain while waiting by telephones and in hospital rooms, and praying without words and without the comfort of sunny skies.

Can the rain cleanse the sorrow from my soul, bring its sweetness and healing power into my perception, lull me with its special music and clear the marred canvas of earth and sky?

It's May ... much too late in the season for rain. Still the birds are soaring through the mist and singing their joy and the leaves and flowers are glistening.

# Groovy Silver Threads



"Did you find the shirt you wore to their last concert?" asked Lila as she finished her make-up.

"Yeah, I tried it on," Craig answered, "but it's too tight over my gut. Gotta find something that fits my mature manly form," he said with a wink to his wife.

"How about the shirt you bought in Rotterdam last year? The one with a marijuana leaf pattern."

"Perfect. What're YOU wearing? Your sexy tight jeans?" he asked, heading for his closet.



"Ha, ha, very funny. I haven't worn that style of hip-riding bell-bottoms since Eddie was a toddler. These days my Mom jeans are my tight jeans."

She dug through her jewelry box and found the vintage peace sign earrings.

Craig slipped on an olive green tee, contemplated his image in the bathroom mirror, turned sideways, and winced.

*Damn, he thought. Too much good living. Maybe I should join that new gym in the mall.*

Lila sorted through her closet and finally pulled out a caftan printed with big orange and yellow daisies.

"This'll do. Might make me look more like Mama Cass than Madonna, but I'll be able to breathe. Comfort is what's important these days."

"Right. No way we're going to enjoy a three hour concert feeling like a couple of trussed-up pork roasts. Uh, sorry, hon. Didn't mean to suggest ... "

Lila sighed, and pulled out a pair of her favorite sandals — the ones with arch supports.

"Don't worry. No offense taken. We've both changed since we first grooved to 'I Can't Get No Satisfaction.'"

"That song's taken on a whole new meaning forty years later," he replied, and they both chuckled.

Lila went downstairs. Craig laced up his extra-wide Nikes and straightened with a grunt. He took his allergy meds and headed downstairs.

"Lila!" he called from the hall closet. "Where'd I put the camera?"

She came in from the kitchen carrying her biggest purse. "Don't worry. I just packed it in here, along with two bottles of water, energy bars, Aleve, ear plugs, hand sanitizer, wipes, Kleenex, cough drops, and binoculars. And I made sure that the taxi's on its way. This time you can have a glass of wine at intermission because you won't be the designated driver."

"You've thought of everything," Craig told her. "But ... oh yeah, can't forget the tickets." He walked into his office, rummaged around in a desk drawer, and then joined Lila at the front door.

"Here, hon. Put our tickets in your bag too."

She peered at them, then got out her glasses for a closer look.

"Oh my God!"

"What's wrong?"

"The concert is TOMORROW!"

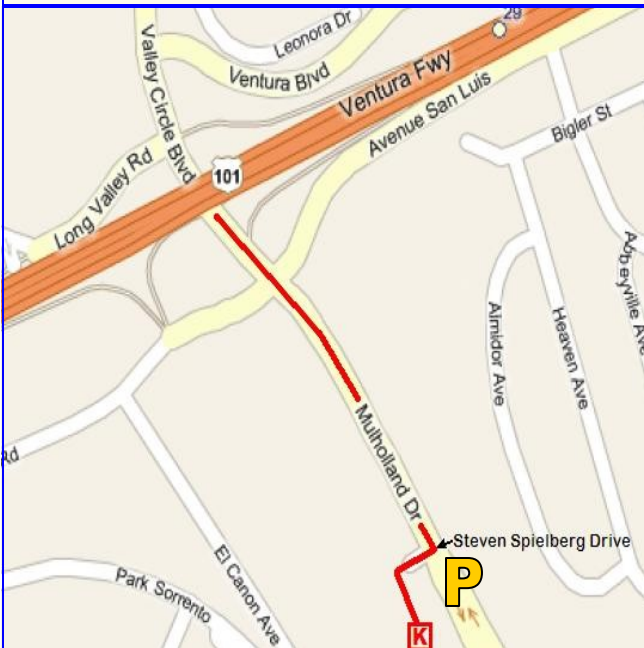


— Kathy Highcove

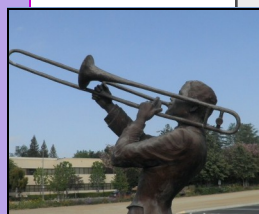
## THE BIG ITCH

By Bob Nagayama

L.A. THE PUEBLO OR THE WEST SIDE OF A FLASHER'S PARADISE  
HAPPY SCHMUCKS SOMETIMES CONTEMPLATING THEIR PUBICS  
SOMETIMES DREAMING OF BECOMING BABE BALLING BASTARDS  
WHAT A PLACE, POVERTY STRICKEN MUSICIANS, ACTORS, SINGERS  
DRIVING JALOPIES ONCE OWNED BY PRUNE-FACED DRAMA QUEENS  
FUSION FOODS, A MULTI-CULTURAL COMBO OF CHOICE  
GOOD PLACE TO RE-INVENT ONESELF, ADD A FEW INCHES  
ON YOUR GOD-GIVEN SALAMI



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



### 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 Drive  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364-2733

### NEXT MEETING:

May 4th, at 1:00 p.m.

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

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