



The Newsletter of The San Fernando Valley Branch

The Valley Scribe

"Our Members' Voices"



Vol. 6

January, 2014

No. 4

Next Meeting: January 4th, 1:00!



January's Speaker Victoria Zakheim — **THE POWER OF ONE** Rita Keeley Brown

This is one speaker you will not want to miss! Victoria Zackheim teaches an on-line Creative Writing course in the UCLA Writers Extension Program. There is a long waiting list of students wanting to sign up for her class at every session. Her talk for our CWC-SFV January 4th meeting is titled "The Acorn Class" – that from which those mighty oaks grow. She will show how a single idea can be developed in the many different genre – fiction and nonfiction. She says, "That idea about Grandmother's jewelry, the indiscretion you never wanted revealed, the risk you took when you were beyond middle age – is it a short story or poem, a feature film or a documentary, an essay, memoir, novel, short story, or play?"

Victoria will also talk about anthologies. She has been the editor of six anthologies, the latest of which is *Exit Laughing*. "There's nothing funny about dying...or is there?" It is a compilation of 24 stories that show how in times of grief, humor can help us with coping and even healing. Another anthology, just accepted by Simon Schuster/Beyond Words is *FAITH: Believers, Agnostics, and Atheists Confront the Big Questions*. She has written a new play based on a memoir entitled *Entangled*; a film *Maidstone*; and also published a novel called *The Bone Weaver*.

As you can tell, Victoria has a wealth of accomplishments and writing wisdom to share with us. □



President's Message Nance Crawford

Happy New Year!

Of course, as I write this, it isn't even Christmas, yet – but, these days, Christmas seems to start in September, so I'm actually behind myself. (You have my permission to put this column aside until Boxing Day, December 26th, if that helps.)

It's been six months since the present Board of Directors took office and, no, it's not hard for me to believe. It's been challenging for us all, getting to know each other and learning how to function as a team. Anybody who has herded cats (or turkeys – but that's another column) and thinks it difficult has never sat down at a table with five or six inspired, truly creative people and tried to get a word in edgewise.

Talk about a learning curve. At first, I felt as if I were the

Next Meeting:
OPEN MIC!

Sign up for
5 minutes
of FAME.

12:30 SHARP!

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Reminder: Please Take The On-Line Survey.

President from page 1.

referee at a doubles tennis match, with a couple of extra grounds people thrown in, for good measure – and they kept trying to rake the lawn underfoot.

Thank you, Yolanda, for the gavel. Even with a foam-lined tablecloth, it does give a very satisfying “thump” when popped against an ancient mahogany table.

It is a measure of the affability of the group that the gavel has never had to be applied to a cranium.

The Holiday Book Fair was a great success. We may not have had the vast numbers of shoppers anyone would love to see, but we have an enviable number of active members who are published, working authors. In fact, if every member of the San Fernando Valley Branch who has a book (or books) in print had been there selling, we would have been forced out of our comfy meeting room (and away from the hot coffee! And goodies), into the parking lot. It's wonderful to know that such a high percentage of our fellows have applied the lessons they have learned with us, from our speakers, and by exchanging information among ourselves.

There are a lot of exciting and inspiring ideas being brought to the Board. We are all well aware that we're only steering the boat – the engine is our fellow members, and implementation of even a small percentage of them will depend on an active, involved membership.

We're here to serve each other. That's the purpose of our group, the most important legacy of our founders: helping each other, each of us supporting characters for the others in our mutual adventure as we pick, stroll, dash, or fall headlong into our individual journeys in the literary life.

It makes no difference what the goal of a CWC-SFV member may ultimately be, that road will not be traveled alone. We are our Mentors. Whatever our separate goals, we continue to strengthen each other.

Have a Blessed 2014! ☐

Your Member-at-Large

By Doug Douglas



I first read about CWC in a blurb in our local fish wrapper. I had recently started writing poetry again (although initially an English minor at UCLA, since that time I had written only technical articles about pharmaceuticals). At the meetings I would just sit in the back of the Encino Community Center and listen. Eventually I tried sharing my work, the microphone shaking in my hand, the nervous perspiration drenching my clothes. Well, one thing has led to another, and many of you are now my close friends. With the help of my first critique group, the fabulous Scott Gitlin, Liz Cooke, and Stephanie Sharf, my deadly-boring prose actually became readable. And that process continues with the critique groups I'm in now.

When Nance and Ray asked if I'd be interested in the position of Member-at-Large, honestly, I demurred (it was kind of like asking Lamb Chop to be United Nations Ambassador). But, hey, if in some way I can give back, the least I can do is to try.

My humble opinion is that our club exists for the edification and instruction of our members, to come alongside one another in support, and to make us the best writers we can be. Please give me your suggestions, and, yes, your complaints, and together I believe we can accomplish those goals.

I'm not by nature a joiner. I don't even have very good social skills. Years after my parents were both gone, I asked my eldest sister why, with only one exception I can remember, they never had guests over for dinner (other than close relatives and my school mates). She said mom told her it was because they considered our home to be their cave—a place to hide from the world. I guess that makes me a cave-man. So if I'm grunting, scratching my underarms and dragging my knuckles on the ground, don't let that stop you from talking to me. I am evolving. ☐

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2014!
Only 332 DAYS UNTIL BLACK FRIDAY!

San Fernando Valley Branch Biennial Book Fair

(Note: 'Blurbs' [in quotes] were furnished by the authors.)

It didn't rival Cyber Monday, and it won't show up on any Government economic report, but the CWC-SFV Biennial Book Fair was a great success, and a perfect ending to 2013. Twelve of our Active members toted and touted their published books.

Nine of these authors, who have published in the past two years, were 'Featured Vendors.' They were given three minutes to 'pitch' their books. (This went surprisingly well, with almost all presenters keeping cheerfully within the time limit.)

Three other members, who had published prior to two years ago, were 'Additional Vendors.'

The general membership and guests socialized, shopped, and supped on a sumptuous 'cookie buffet.'

Featured authors included Howard Goldstein presenting two fiction books: *BENCHES* — "Stories shared by 'older' folks in the 1940s as they sat on the park benches in Bronx, NY," and *BENCHES: JAKOB & CHARLIE* — "Two of the Bronx 'Benches' move to Southern California and these are their stories."

Karen Gorback with her fiction work, *FRESHMAN MOM* — "Single Mom, Meredith, decides to go back to college. Her Mother tells her to 'grow up' and her teenage daughter suggests hormone shots. Meredith perseveres and takes us along for the ride of a lifetime as a Freshman Mom."

Nan Hunt with a "soon-to-be-released" memoir, *THE MAP AND THE PERFECTION OF DISTANCE* — "A widow at mid-life, a compelling dream, a quest for a new life, now alone, the author ventured to Tokyo, Bangkok, London, and beyond often facing dangerous, religious and social turmoil not unlike today. She finds a man who haunted her dreams for 20 years found in Bombay – a lie and a confession; in Kashmir a sublime and treacherous Himalayan trek. She meets remarkable women and seductive men, finds sanity in England, soul with Van Gogh in Amsterdam, and a surprise love at home."

John Klawitter with a How-To for Videos, *VIDMAKER 101* — "Come with me on a journey into your potential and bright future as a storytelling vidmaker... about life – love – and creative stuff. This author also has many other interesting books available."

Marganit Lish with her memoir of her parents, *THE TALE OF THE RINGS* — "A true tale of the lives of Marganit's parents – their mutual idealism that shaped their destiny living on three continents. This book is Marganit's tribute to them as their legacy." (Sadly, there were no copies for sale.)

Ray Malus with a work of fiction, *ASHES IN YONKERS* — "The story of one day in the life of The Courier and four decades in the life of the Kearns, an Irish-American

family. As part mystery, part romance, and part saga, it takes the reader on a journey of discovery. Its characters live on the page and will endure in your heart. 'This is a moving and involving book, extremely well written. More than a story, this is literature. Ashes in Yonkers will endure.'"; and a humorous memoir *STORIES YOU'D GIVE A SHIT ABOUT – IF I WAS FAMOUS* — "You've discovered a literary breakthrough! The world's first Toilet Tank Book. It is a hilarious collection of anecdotes from the life of the author. J. Raymond Kent (Ray Malus) takes a quirky look at life in the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s from a personal viewpoint. The result is a fascinating, outrageous, often side-splitting chronicle. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! (And the paper is soft and gentle.) 'The "Pet Rock" of books – everybody needs one!'"

Gabriella Owens presenting a humorous cookbook, *BBQ PIZZA; A FLAMING EXPOSE ON MACHO COOKING* — "Take a collection of delicious pizza, dough, and sauce recipes; add some superb wine and beer pairings; mix in the ridiculous antics of some macho cooks; fill with practical party advice; sprinkle with a handful of cartoons; half bake and serve with a smile. Shameless sales pitch: This is the most hilarious cookbook you will ever read! (Reading a cookbook sounds odd, doesn't it? But this one is both entertaining and useful!)"

Judy Presnall with her first *fiction* for children, *YUKON SLED DOG* — "A children's picture book that tells the story of Yukon, a female puppy, from birth through training to become a sled dog. Yukon is enthusiastic, obedient, strong, intelligent, and gets along with her teammates. All of these are necessary qualities for being a sled dog. An author's note gives interesting historical information about the Alaskan Iditarod."

Erica Stux with two poetry/photography books: *INCREDIBLE INSECTS* — "Poems for children about the 26 species of insects;" and *NATURALLY INSPIRED: POEMS OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS* — "Two Hundred, fifty-six nature photos with poetic captions."

Additional vendor/authors included Nance Crawford with her fantasy/adventure, *DRAGON SOLSTICE* and her "Dream Dictionary," *DREAMS AND PORTENTS*; Rita Keeley Brown with a memoir, *GOOD LUCK, MRS. BROWN*, and a "Biography," *A PAWN OF FATE*; and Yolanda Fintor with her cookbook, *HUNGARIAN COOKBOOK, OLD WORLD RECIPES FOR NEW WORLD COOKS*.

With the holiday season looming, there were certainly some books sold. Many more were raffled off. But neither was really the *raison* for the event. Far more important was the camaraderie and fellowship. The excellent (and opulent) 'cookie buffet', while probably bad for the figure, was good for the soul. We'll all look forward to two years from now.—mm—



As always, please check the websites for more information before submitting. When you see "ms" or "mss" this means manuscript and manuscripts respectively. Best wishes and good luck to all!

THE SUN

107 N. Roberson St., Chapel Hill, NC 27516
Phone: (919) 942-5282. Fax: (919) 932-3101.

Website: www.thesunmagazine.org.

Contact: Luc Sanders, assistant editor.

Sy Safransky, editor.

“We are open to all kinds of writing, though we favor work of a personal nature.”

Covers: Monthly magazine publishing essays, interviews, fiction, and poetry.

Editor’s Note: Magazine: 8 1/2×11, 48 pages, offset paper, glossy cover stock, photos.

Freelance Facts

Nonfiction

Contact: Sy Safransky, editor.

Needs: essays, personal experience, spiritual, interview.

Buys mss/year: 50.

Submission Method: Send complete ms. 7,000 words maximum

Pays \$300-2,000.

Reprints: Send photocopy and information about when and where the material previously appeared.

Fiction

Contact: Sy Safransky, editor

Open to all fiction. Receives 800 unsolicited mss/month. Accepts 20 short stories/year. Recently published work by Tony Hoagland, David James Duncan, Poe Ballantine, Linda McCullough Moore, Brenda Miller.

Does not want: No science fiction, horror, fantasy, or other genre fiction. “Read an issue before submitting.”

Buys 20 mss/year.

Send complete ms. Accepts reprint submissions.

Length: 7,000 words maximum.

Pays \$300 -1,500.

Poetry

Contact: Sy Safransky, editor

Submit up to 6 poems at a time. Considers previously published poems but strongly prefers unpublished work, no simultaneous submissions. “Poems should be typed and accompanied by a cover letter and SASE.”

Guidelines available with SASE or on website.

Responds within 3-6 months. Acquires first serial or one-time rights.

Needs: free verse

Does Not Want: Rarely publishes poems that rhyme.

Pays \$100 - 500 on publication plus contributor’s copies and subscription.

SPECIALIVING

P.O. Box 1000, Bloomington, IL 61702

Phone: (309) 962-2003 . E-mail: gareeb@aol.com.

Website: www.specialiving.com.

“We are now an online-only magazine. There is no subscription fee. Subject matter is the same. Payment is still the same, (max 800 words). Need photos with ms.”

Covers: Quarterly online magazine covering the physically disabled/mobility impaired.

Freelance Facts

Nonfiction

Needs: how-to, humor, inspirational, interview, new product, personal experience, technical, travel

Buys mss/year: 40

Submission Method: Query.

Length: 800 words.

Pays 10¢/word.

Columns/Departments

Shopping Guide, Items.

Buys 30 mss/year.

KASHRUS MAGAZINE

The Kashrus Institute

P.O. Box 204, Brooklyn, NY 11204

Phone: (718) 336-8544.

E-mail: editorial@kashrusmagazine.com.

Website: www.kashrusmagazine.com.

Contact: Rabbi Wikler, editor.

Freelance Facts

Nonfiction

Needs: health, travel, new product ,personal experience, photo feature, religious, technical

Special Issues: International Kosher Travel (October), Passover Shopping Guide (March), Domestic Kosher Travel Guide (June).

Buys mss/year: 8 -12

Submission Method: Query with published clips.

Length: 1,000 -1,500 words.

Pays \$100-250 for assigned articles. Pays up to \$100 for unsolicited articles.

Reprints: Send tear sheet or photocopy and information about when and where the material previously appeared.

Payment for Reprints: Pays 25-50% of amount paid for an original article. □



Summing It All Up

We have a luxurious website. It is packed with features and information — so much so, that it can be daunting. Let's take a few minutes and explore.

When you first go to <http://cwc-sfv.org> you'll see an antique typewriter with a sheet of paper in it. That paper is our main menu. As you move your mouse pointer over the typing on the sheet, 'hints' will appear which tell you what's on the destination page. These may take a little while to 'pop up,' so we also show you this information in a rather large box, on the right-hand side of the page. Clicking on either the menu entry or the box itself, will take you to that specific part of the website. This Menu is duplicated (in slightly different form) on all the other pages. Let's explore each entry.

Home — Clicking on this will always take you back to the 'Typewriter' page.

About Us — This takes you to a whole section dealing with California Writers Club and our branch, 'San Fernando Valley.' There are lots of sub-topics: "More about California Writers Club," "More About The San Fernando Valley Branch," "Bylaws of The San Fernando Valley Branch," "Talk To Us (Full Contact List)," "Location And Directions," "Critique Groups," "Minutes of the Board," "Check Request."

Meetings — This will show you our next Program. Also on that page are links to pages showing our meeting format, our location (with directions), and our full speaker calendar. On the Full Speaker Calendar page, you can see thumbnails of the speakers (by pointing to their name) and go to their website (by clicking on their name), or see the blurb about their presentation (by clicking on the title of the presentation).

Officers — This will take you to a list

of all our Officers. You can send an email, by clicking on the Office, or look up their bio and picture, by clicking on the name. You can also click on the "Full Contact List" button to go to a page which contains ALL of our Board Members (with their email addresses), and do the same there.

Coming Events — This contains links to the Next Program and Full Speaker Calendar pages (as a convenience for those unfamiliar with our site).

Valley Scribe — This is a full archive of past Newsletter editions. These are shown five at-a-time. (You can navigate through past editions with the 'Oldest,' 'Older,' 'Newer,' 'Newest' buttons.) When you put your mouse pointer over a date, the two large thumbnails will show the cover page and table of contents for that issue. You can show an enlargement of either of these by simply pointing to it. Clicking on either the name, the enlargement, or either thumbnail, will download a copy of the issue into your browser. From there, you can read, or 'Save' the issue. At the top of the page is a link to take you to the *InFocus* archives, where you can do the same things.

Resources — This page contains links to on-line Dictionaries, Thesauruses, and other helpful tools.

Membership — This is the part of our Members' Section that is open to the public. It contains information on who can join, and an automated membership application. (It also has a printable application.) Here, you will find a link to our Members list and Photo Gallery. Clicking on that button will take you to our member roster. Many of the names are actually links. Pointing to these will reveal a thumbnail of the member. Clicking on it will take you to that member's page. This has their picture and bio. You may also go to the Member Photo Gallery, and access members' bios by clicking on their pictures. (This is further explained in *.ORG, The Valley Scribe*, Sept 2013.)

Photo Galleries — We try to take pictures at each meeting. They are posted, as slide shows, here — along with some (perhaps) humorous captions.

Extras — This is a 'miscellaneous' page. It currently has links to [SoCal Writer's Showcase](#), and a really cool map of California showing our branches and their current memberships.

Members Only — This is your gateway to the MRMS system, where you may change your member information, and use the on-line Membership Directory. (This is further explained in *.ORG, The Valley Scribe*, Oct, and Nov. 2013.) To access this you must know your UserID and Password. Ask our MRMS System Administrator or email CWC-SFV@roadrunner.com.

As I proofread this column, I realize that, in the past few months, we really have covered all the information you'd want to know, and there is no reason for *.ORG* to continue. If you ever need them, these columns will be on the website, under 'Valley Scribe' (but, see, you know that!). And, from-time-to-time, *.ORG* may make a guest re-appearance.

Starting next month, this valuable space will be taken over by a column on writing called *Feel Free to Argue*.

I think the name kinda says it all. —m—

Breaking Bread with Imperfection

Karen Gorbach

Stop me if you've heard this one before.

You worked on your first book for several years, emailing chapters to members of your writers' workshop, as well as to friends and colleagues for proofreading and input. You *showed* rather than *told*, deleted annoying adverbs, copied and pasted, edited and revised. Still, seeking assurance that your beloved book was without errors, you took out a second mortgage to hire a professional copyeditor to comb through your sentences, seeking out errant commas, misplaced apostrophes and absent articles. Certainly, the final product would be perfect.

But it wasn't. After just a few minutes of flipping through your newly published book, you find the typos, lurking among your lilting prose, hiding in plain sight. How could this have happened?

According to researcher Brené Brown in an article titled *Want to Be Happy? Stop Trying to Be Perfect*, "The quest for perfection is exhausting and unrelenting, but as hard as we try, we can't turn off the tapes that fill our heads with messages like "Never good enough" and "What will people think?" <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/11/01/give.up.perfection/index.html> When I saw the typos in my new book, my tape ran at full volume, all night long – over and over.

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop with motivational guru Anthony Robbins who also addressed this phenomenon, noting that our obsession with perfection can stifle creativity – not something a writer wants to hear. So I purchased a little book titled *The Art of Imperfection* by Veronique Vienne (Clarkson Potter Publishers, 1999). I thought *this must have been written especially for me* and devoured chapters with titles like "The Art of Making Mistakes" and "The Art of Not Being Right." I vowed to give it a try, but it's been tough going.

At one point in my new novel titled *Freshman Mom* (Outskirts Press, 2014), the protagonist had been arguing with her teenage daughter; and when the screaming stopped, Mom prepared dinner for the girl, noting, "Food is my peace pipe." Maybe I need to take a cue from my characters and make peace with my new book. How about we sit down together over a quiet dinner? We'll read out loud, enjoy a bottle of chardonnay, laugh, cry, and sincerely try to accept, appreciate and learn from our imperfections. But if we can't, I have the number of a terrific proofreader for my next book. □

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BRANCH

The San Fernando Valley Branch is one of nineteen Branches throughout California, organized and operating under the auspices of The California Writers Club. We are a non-profit professional organization whose goal is to provide a friendly and inclusive environment for members to meet and network; to provide professional speakers who will aid in writing, publishing, and marketing members' endeavors; and other writing-related opportunities that will further member's writing enjoyment and careers.

**Remember to check out (and send submissions to)
our CWC-South Showcase website:**

<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/>

The 500-Word 'DIET' Challenge

This month we challenged you all to write 'LEAN' stories — ones of five-hundred words or fewer (exclusive of title and by-line). This was in support of the CWC-South Writers showcase (above). The showcase is a website for displaying work by members of the seven Southern California Branches of California Writers Club. It has a limit for fiction stories of 500 words.

Seven of you (four men, three women) met the challenge with excellent stories.

The men seemed to be 'wordier' and more compulsive, with two actually hitting the 500 word mark. (This actually makes me wonder how much more they [we] could have cut.)

We are proud to include the results here, and will forward the stories for consideration by the Showcase.

Here, in no particular order except to fit them on the pages, are the results.

We thank you all for rising to the challenge.

Andrea Polk

BIKE, BITE, BOWSER DOWN

While tying my shoes, I hollered down the hall. "Mom, I'm late! Gonna ride my bike to the Heaths'. Gotta babysit in two minutes."

"Watch for cars!"

Racing through our living room, I shouted, "I'll be back about nine."

My parents bought me a used Dunlop racing bike last Christmas. I was thrilled. It had three speeds and I didn't have to saddle, feed or pick up after it. But bikes were harder than horses to ride on our dirt road.

It was a hot late afternoon. Dressed in yellow shorts, white sleeveless blouse and white tennis shoes, I hopped on my black bike and took off racing down our driveway. I struggled through deep dirt at our driveway's end and switched to first gear. No cars coming, pedaling fast, I climbed out of the soft powder to the crown of the road heading east. On the hard dirt I switched to third gear and raced. The Heaths' home was at the end of our road next to Bull Creek 'bout a quarter mile.

I just passed the cattle ranch when, across the street, Charlotte Barren's scruffy dog charged down her driveway heading my way. Bowser came at me barking and snarling his mean, mid-sized poochiness. His paws flying down the driveway running as fast as he could. I swerved and pedaled hard, but my rear tire hit the deep dirt at the road's edge slowing me down. Bowser got me. I kicked him and he snagged my right knee. "Damn dog!...Get out of here!



Go home!" I kicked him again. He yelped, turned and ran back home.

Skidding to stop, I felt short waves of pain and blood dripping from two puncture holes at the side of my right knee. Now what? Go to the Heaths or home? Ride or walk?

I chanced riding and with every push of the right pedal pain shot up my leg. Muttering, "Damn dog. He knows me, why'd come at me? Bad dog," I rode home squinting into the sunshine.

Our heavy front door banged shut. "Mom! Bowser bit me! Call the Heaths. I'll be really late."

"What! Bit where? How?" From the kitchen she raced over to check my wound. I babbled out the story. "Okay. Doesn't look too bad. When did you get your last tetanus shot?"

"When we got horses in '51, remember? It lasts a long time. Ten years, right?"

"Yeah, you're safe. I'll get Bactine." She swabbed the wound, got a gauze pad taped around my knee. "Okay, get going. I'll call Elizabeth and explain, then call the Barren's. Are you walking or riding?"

"I'll walk."

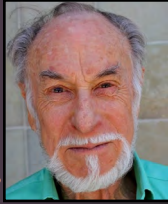
I survived with two puncture scars.

Decades later, my brother tracked down adult Charlotte. I discovered she was still pissed at me. "Bowser bit you because you kicked him. Because he bit you, your parents made us 'put him down'. I lost my dog. It was all your fault."

"No! You weren't there!" We haven't spoken since. Bad Bowser. □

(497 words)

Howard Goldstein
A MAN WHO DREAMED



All his life he had felt alone and outside. Growing up in the city, surrounded by machinery and the grey cement, brick and glass world of industry, something inside him yearned for trees and fields and open skies. When other children joined in games and sports, he played at playing. Always remotely aware he was not there.

And when he grew to manhood, writing poetry, acting as was expected of him, he wrote and painted, drew, and moved from job to job. Never finding a place to call his home.

Now and then, in sleep, would come a dream of travel on a lonely country road. Of walking down a misted earthen lane that led to... what?

Brief fragments lingered after sleep, between the years. Nestled in the quiet corners of remember, they comforted. Of pausing by a stone wall no higher than his knee, and speaking to a boy who worked the fields, as if the lad were his. Telling of his life and his beliefs. Counseling, guiding, and believing himself needed—his words important and valued. And there too, a house, like none he'd ever known. Warm, wooden, and welcoming. A country lane, and a girl who held her arms to him, and opened.

Years rolled by and over him, like weights and feathers—and still he dreamed—and worked his way between. Tired now, of body, not of mind, he wandered aimlessly from place to place with an old black Labrador, Digby, his companion. Driving. Pausing. Tasting. Using up the time.

Off the map, he wondered where he was. The countryside here was much like England, Napa, or New Hampshire. It could be anywhere of late summer, verdant with sunburned fields and farms. And yet...

The car motor stalled. Quit. It was getting late, and he would have to walk, to find a station or a phone. Soon it would be dark.

The pathlike road was curiously familiar. So many roads like this one. Dusty, hard-packed tracks where wheels had worn the earth to either side of a weed-grown center strip. Low stone walls, and post and wire fences, on one or either side. Shrubs, and an occasional, but distant, shed or barn.

There, ahead, a cluster of trees. A breeze, and small gusts of wind lifting dust to swirl about his feet. And then... a house. Familiar. As he drew closer the front door opened and a figure emerged, to stand upon the porch with one hand raised to shade her eyes.

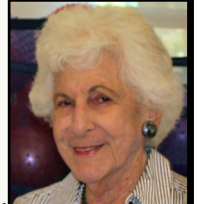
She waved. A greeting. A beckoning gesture.

He hastened, his steps quickening, his stride longer.

From the porch, her outstretched hand now reaching out to him...

Digby, whimpering, tried in vain to press his muzzle

Lillian Rodich
**A WEDDING DRESS,
 AN ALMOST TRUE FAIRY TALE**



Once upon a time many many years ago in the province of Larchmont in the Greater Kingdom of Los Angeles a young prince and princess fell in love. From the day they met, they knew they would marry.

The bride wanted a beautiful gown for her wedding. The very first gown she looked at spoke, "You must choose me above any other and keep me near you for many moons and suns, storms and sunshine. And I promise you I will bring good karma and love to all those who touch me. Please do not forget this special promise. And only reveal it to those born of your love."

The princess was taken by surprise by all this chatter. But after all she lived in a fairy tale and didn't doubt the words she heard.

"Remember," the dress said, "you must keep our secret for sixty years."

The princess smiled and tried on the dress. It formed to her figure as though it had been made for her. Its beautiful satin gleamed, the net trim was soft and sculptured, and a row of perfect tiny satin buttons marched all the way down the back.

The prince and princess married and found, with each other, the deepest happiness they had ever known. The bride placed the dress, wrapped in dark blue tissue in a special box, and kept it in a safe place. Soon the young couple became king and queen of a new province called Chatsworth.

As years passed, the box was moved around frequently. Still the queen looked at the gown now and then and always returned it to a safe place. The tissue became wrinkled, the box dented, and the strange voice never spoke to the bride again. Sixty years passed and the queen felt it was finally time to give her beloved gown away. For, indeed, they had both kept their promise.

But then, the king and queen's first granddaughter fell in love with a wonderful prince. And just for fun the young princess decided to try on the wedding dress.

It fit her body perfectly. She twirled around in front of the mirror and felt pure joy embrace her. The satin shone in spite of its wrinkles and the tiny buttons marched down the bodice in a perfect row.

When the smiling queen quietly left the room, she could hear two voices whispering and she knew exactly what was being said. □

(405 words)

beneath an outstretched, motionless hand. Tugged gently at an unresponsive sleeve. After a while, he lay down beside, resting his grey muzzle upon the back of the silent figure sprawled face down in the afternoon dust of a nameless country road.

Home, at last. □

(495 words)

Ray Malus
RAIN



Bennie was gonna be pi-iss-ed!

And Mark wasn't too happy, either.

Why-the-hell was it raining in Southern California in the middle of August?! Nine damned months of drought, and now this!

Not that it was torrential. No, It was just a dismal, steady rain that brought a year's worth of oil slick to the surface of the roads and littered the roads with shards of glass from the fender-benders. It would kill business at the Tiki Lounge for the night, and that would put Bennie in a murderous mood. It wouldn't help Mark's tips any, either.

But right now, the worst problem was the premature dusk that had made all the drivers turn on their headlights. Mark still had a hangover from Sunday night's party, and the lights and the reflected glare from the wet pavement were making his eyes bleed.

A cut-rate gas station came up ahead on his right. On impulse he pulled in and rolled under the canopy of a self-service pump. *Might as well.*

He got out of the car, walked around and unscrewed the gas cap.

The rain had sucked summer from the air and left a dank, diesel-scented pall.

As he lifted the nozzle, the attendant came out of the office.

The man walked with a slight limp. When he got closer, Mark could see that he was fairly young — thirty-five, forty — but his bearing was old. Slumped and bent, defeated, he shuffled over to the car with his head down. He wore a discolored cotton T-shirt — heavy ribbed fabric, maybe part of a set of long johns. It had black oil stains on it. The armpits were umber crescents. Over the shirt, he wore grease-embossed bib overalls. The left strap hung loose, and the bib drooped across the man's sunken chest. Tom Joad in *The Grapes Of Wrath*.

The guy walked to Mark's car. He took a rag out of his back pocket, and started wiping the windshield.

"S'okay," said Mark. "It's self-service."

The man looked up. His face was lined and stubbled, sad — the eyes deep-set and watery.

"Gotta do sumthin'." Yup. An Arkansas twang, soft, but flat, dead. "Helps t' keep busy."

The man continued wiping the glass. "Fin'ly got us some rain," he drawled.

Mark sneered. "Great. We can stop worrying about the fires and start worrying about the mud."

The man stopped his work, and pocketed his rag. He walked over and confronted Mark. Mark could smell him: the sweet scents of gasoline and liquor mingled with the sour of sweat and the scorch of cigarettes. The man looked up at

Colin Gallagher
**FATHER THANK YOU FOR
BEING THERE**



And so, the Tow Truck driver swept the broken glass, and metal fragments into a large pile. He retrieved the

dust pan from his tow truck and removed those pieces that were left on the street. He had placed one of the crumpled cars on his flatbed. He climbed into the cab of the truck and drove off to the impound yard.

He had arrived soon after the fatal crash, getting a call from the dispatcher. The entire intersection had debris scattered everywhere from the cars involved in the collision. The Para-Medic ambulances had taken the injured parties to the emergency rooms. When he arrived only the Fire Department trucks and police cars were there, and the public, of course; watching efficiency at work; people under pressure trying not to let their emotions especially fear hamper their work, but it was a bad scene.

She was driving toward home, the dog in the back seat. Paying somewhat distracted attention to her soda in the cup holder, the light turned yellow, she wasn't paying attention, then red and then it happened: a broadside to the passenger side. Then onto its back. One more car hit the upside down SUV in the rear. The shattering glass the chrome car parts; busted into pieces and flying through the air. People were running and screaming. The terror of it all. The uncontrolled event only took a few seconds, yet some of the results were fatal.

There was a Priest walking nearby on the sidewalk when it happened: he was a witness, and had a duty to his calling. He stayed out of the way, but let the people know that a Higher Power was there too. □

(282 words)

Mark. Damn, the guy'd been crying.

The voice was flat, pitying, "Y'don' even know why it's rainin', do ya?"

"I, I guess not."

The man nodded and sniffed. "God's cryin'. King died, t'day."

He turned and shuffled back toward the office.

Mark called after him, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute! What king?"

Without stopping or looking back, the man said, "Elvis, Man," as if to himself, "Elvis." □

(500 words)

John Klawitter
VEGAS FALLS



The thick-chested pimp knocked the street whore to the sidewalk. This was behind the strip where there were second-rate bars and gaudy strip shows. It was rainy season and her butt splashed in a puddle. The pimp stood over her, fist cocked..

Lucky was coming out of the Peppermint Twist when he heard the sucker punch. It gave him a sick feeling in his gut.

“That’s enough,” he heard himself say.

“What? You want some of this?”

“Yeah. I do.”

“Well, she’s all yours,” the pimp said, warily eyeing Lucky’s size. He scuttled away into the darkness.

Lucky bent over the girl. She was stick-thin, barely a teenager.

“Jimmy,” she whispered. “You came... Jimmy...take me to Vegas.”

Then another girl was there. “It’s okay. Jimmy will take you.”

“She’s already in Vegas,” Lucky said.

The new girl squatted next to her fallen friend. Her short skirt rode up her thighs; Lucky saw she wore nothing underneath. She glared up at him.

“Vegas is a real place, stupid. Not like here.”

The second girl was maybe a year or two older, but just as thin. She had needle track marks running up the inside of one arm.

The fallen girl raised one hand to touch Lucky’s face.

“We have to go now, Jimmy.”

“Is it far?” Lucky said.

“Pick her up, stupid.”

As he carried her to his beat-up Porsche, she whispered, “Our waterfall.”

It was a struggle to get her in the passenger seat, and when Lucky turned around, the second girl was gone.

His smartphone gave him directions. The girl slept as he drove out of town, and they ended up at a trail head in the desert. No one was around.

She woke and brightened when she saw the sign in the headlights.

“Yes, we found it!”

“It’s dark and raining. You sure we should go out there?”

“Jimmy, Jimmy, scardy-cat.”

They started down the trail. It was pitch-dark and the rain was icy cold. Lucky half-carried the girl, something like he’d dragged Corporal Januski back in Iraq. After stumbling along for a while, he knew it was impossible.

“It’s too dark,” he said. “We’re soaked, and it’s slippery and dangerous.”

“Just over there, Jimmy.” She pointed to the looming outline of a steep sandstone cliff. Lightning flashed and he made out a narrow indentation where they might find shelter. Lucky put his leather jacket around her and they huddled next to each other, backs against a rough stone wall, out of the worst of the weather. She leaned her head on his chest.

Marganit V. Lish
BLACK FRIDAY SALES DAY,
NOVEMBER 29, 2013



I have decided to “experience” a special after Thanksgiving shopping day, and help “contribute” as a consumer to “improving the U.S. economy with my purchases”.

I chose to shop at the Fry’s Electronics store. It was raining when I arrived at the store, but the parking lot was full of cars, not a single empty space was to be found. I took a chance and parked the car along an unmarked curb of a neighboring building.

Once inside the massive big store, I found myself caught up in the middle of waves of people who were walking, milling around and some pushing shopping carts with large cardboard boxes in them, while others were carrying arms full of smaller items. I too picked up two small items and headed for the check- out line.

I never saw, in all the years coming to this store, such a long line of people. (Yes, that can be seen in an airport nowadays, but a retail store?) The line stretched from the actual pre-register location, around a narrow aisle of a candy stand, and continued along the entire length of the building wall. Perhaps even longer but I could not see the end of the line.

A smiling young man standing in line about half way down the wall with a shopping cart that contained a big TV noticed me standing in front of the waiting line in wonder. He gestured to me to join him by standing in front of him in line, thus saving me the need to walk to the end of the line. He told me that he wanted to do “something good today”! It was a wonderful sign of the Holiday spirit especially expressed by a young man.

It took about forty-five minutes for me to get to the front of the line, and it took less than three minutes to pay for the two small items.

The next step was to pass through the “Payment Security Line”. What I noticed at that point was that most of the shoppers were men, who were patient and friendly.

When I emerged from the store, the sun was shining, the air felt warm, and “smelled” clean.

I found my car, free from any citation.

The experience was worthwhile because it was different from any routine day. □

(385 words)

“Jimmy, I always knew you’d come.”

“You’re worth it,” he said.

“Jimmy, Jimmy, my sweet Jimmy.” She snuggled closer and he thought she might be smiling. “Do you hear the falls?”

Lucky said he did.

She didn’t say anything more and when slow dawn finally arrived he saw she was dead.

Time passed and he found he was sobbing. He didn’t know why and he didn’t care. You do what you can, he thought. □

(500 words)

THE WORLD THAT CHIMES
Norman Molesko

*In the solitude of my mind
I wander along at times.
I recall heart-warming days
that I cherish solely as mine
and well-being in my rhymes.*

Mockingbird
Ray Malus

*Oh Mockingbird, you have no native song!
No joy or inspiration in your heart.
Instead, you bluster, raucous, through the long
dark night with notes that seemingly belong,
but only artifice is in your art.*

*You pose, a puffed up Puffin poised to preach,
arrayed in snowy shirt and pearl-gray coat,
oblivious of all you would beseech.
A smug and shallow charlatan, you teach
a sacred scripture — merely learned by rote.*

*Pontificating from your sacred tree
with stolen dogma you cannot defend,
you stifle those who dare to disagree,
purloining words and terminology,
from concepts you can never comprehend.*

*From cooing Dove and sighing Nightingale,
you slyly pirate paltry pieces of
their passion, and compile a cold and stale,
fragmented, mix-tape — tepid, patched, and pale,
a sallow simulacrum of real love.*

*Your arrogance and ignorance belie
the pith and insight of your stolen words.
More learned birds eschew your hue and cry.
The greatest truths are whispered with a sigh,
not parroted by screeching mocking birds.*



In My Garden
Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

*As all seasons end
Like a thin veil of blurry color
Drifting sunlight through my trees
I hear sounds of fall rushing by
Trying to stop winter's blowing cold-*

*Sleepy blue jays in my garden
Disheveled from steamy weeks
Of hot summer days
Cry calling out the coming change-*

*Sitting in the morning sun
Drifting sunlight through my flowers
Lacy shades of green leaves
Fall in a bunch on my lap-*

*Turning my head away
A maple leaf turns red
Then many coming down
Gracefully kissing the ground,
In shades of red, gold and brown-*

*Cool days shorten in the dark
Trees leaning away from the sun
Old leaves tumble
In a heap of burgundy, copper and gold
But then, the wind came to claim one and all-*

The Bulletin Board

GUEST DONATIONS

Non-members attending meetings are asked to pay a \$5 (tax deductible) donation. New membership is immediate upon application at door. For more information, contact Andrea Polk, VP-Membership, at the meeting entrance or e-mail andipolk4@gmail.com.

MEETINGS

ARE HELD AT 1:00 P.M. ON THE 1st SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH

Katzenberg Pavilion, Motion Picture & Television Fund
23388 Mulholland Drive, Woodland Hills, CA 91364
(Directions & Map on last page)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

January 4th, 1 p.m. — Victoria Zackheim

Open Mic: 1:00 p.m. (Sign-ups start at 12:30)
Details on our website: CWC-SFV.ORG

Do YOU have a website?
Be the 'Member Website of the Month'!
Send your URL to:
cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com

SUBMISSIONS

Members are encouraged to submit writing contributions to *The Valley Scribe*. This is your newsletter, and you should be part of it.

Submit your prose and poetry to cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com

Please type "SUBMISSION" in the subject line. If submitting a hard copy, please bring it to the meeting and hand it to the Editor, Ray Malus, or to the President, Nance Crawford.

- 500 words or fewer
- 800 words or fewer
- Limited to 40 lines

- Articles/Essays
- Short Stories
- Poetry

Submission deadline is the FIFTEENTH of the previous month. ("Beware the Ides....")

The Editor (or President) has license to accept or reject any work submitted based on available space or editing problems. All submissions must include an e-mail address or a phone number. Writings will not be returned and may be included in future issues.

This Month's BIRTHDAYS!

Paula Diggs

Sharon Yofan

Lillian Rodich

1st

1st

7th

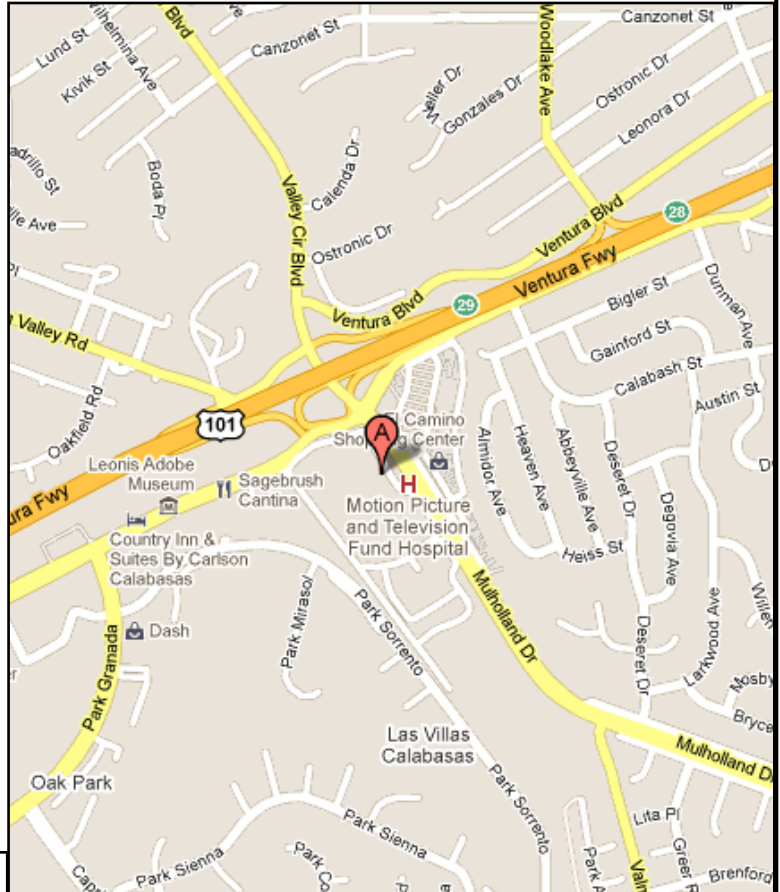
The Fine Print

San Fernando Valley Branch of California Writers Club meets at:

Motion Picture Television Fund
Katzenberg Pavillion
23388 Mulholland Drive
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

Directions:

From the 101 Freeway exit on Mulholland Drive South. Proceed to Steven Spielberg Drive and turn right into the campus. (If questioned at the gate, tell the official that you are attending a CWC meeting.) At the 'T', turn left and follow the road to the large parking lot on the left for Villa Katzenberg. Parking is free in any of the lots. (Please do NOT park on any of the streets. You will be ticketed!) Interactive maps at: http://cwc-sfv.org/Meetings/Location.php



The Valley Scribe

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We solicit submissions from members. (See Bulletin Board: "SUBMISSIONS")

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LOTS of great information at our Website: www.cwc-sfv.org