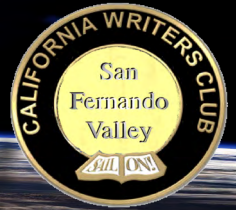




The Newsletter of The San Fernando Valley Branch

The Valley Scribe

"Our Members' Voices"



Vol. 7

April, 2014

No. 4

Next Meeting: April 5th, 1:00!

April's Speaker

Shelley Savren —

Poetry

by Rita Keeley Brown



I think most people are poets at heart whether they realize it or not. There is poetry in the lyrics of the songs we love, even in those nagging rhythms of commercials that we can't

get out of our heads.

April is Poetry Month and our speaker, Shelley Savren, will be talking to us about, "The Transformative Power of Poetry." She explains, "Poetry is the art of transforming the human spirit through words. Poems are revelations, empowering us with the ability of self-expression – our innermost thoughts and feelings put into a lyrical or narrative form – an art form that utilizes the sensual, the experiential and the imaginative, paying close attention to sounds, images, rhythm and line."

Shelley is the author of two poetry collections, *The Common Fire*, (Red Hen Press, 2004) and *The Wild Shine of Oranges*, (Tebot Bach Press 2013). She has been published widely in journals and literary magazines such as *Prairie Schooner*, *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Magazine*, *Solo*, *Rattle*, *Main Street Rag*, *Solstice: A Magazine of Diverse Voices*, *Serving House Journal* and *Earth's Daughter*. She has read at universities, libraries, and coffee houses throughout the U.S. She won first prize in the 1994 John David Johnson Memorial Poetry Award; finalist in the Cleveland State University Poetry Center Prize; and semifinalist in the University of Arkansas Press Poetry Series Prize. She has won numerous grants from the California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the City of Ventura, and was also nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Shelley holds an MFA from Antioch University Los Angeles and is a full-time

Professor of English and Creative Writing at Oxnard College.

In her spare time she gives poetry-writing workshops for homeless, abused and neglected youth, emotionally-disturbed adolescents and developmentally disabled adults and at a maximum security men's prison, juvenile halls and at every grade level through California Poets in the Schools.

We can learn much from such a competent and caring person. You don't want to miss this! □

Next Meeting:

OPEN MIC!

**Sign up for
5 minutes of FAME.**

12:30 SHARP

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The Newsletter for San Fernando Valley Brunch

The Valley Scraps

"Our Menu's Dices"



Route 66

April, 2014

Catch 22

April Fool!

April Forum: "Pro Nouns — Are They Better Than The Amateurs?"



Big Pol Causes Big Problem

Pic Proof Christie Involved In 'Bridgegate' (March 16, 2014, Teaneck, New Jersey) An amateur photograph surfaced today which seems to point to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's personal involvement in the recent 'Bridgegate' scandal. (Story on Page 12.)

in Germany! What's next? Will they ban puking at Miley Cyrus concerts?!

"Oh sure! You can pass gas in your car. Big whoop! Do you know how much air fresheners are going for?!"

"And that stuff can build up and get toxic, Man! I've got a friend who wound up in long-term care! The car had to be red-tagged."

The battle continues, but for now Calabasas Citizens can breathe freely.

As yet, there has been no comment from Miley Cyrus or her organization. □

Calabasas Compels Clean Air!!

City Passes 'Gas Tax.'

(March 17, 2014, Calabasas, California) The City Council of Calabasas, California overwhelmingly passed Measure 12-20750-20, the Zero-Tolerance Flatulence Ordinance, commonly called 'Flat Ord' or simply the 'Gas Tax.'

The Gas Tax prohibits 'expelling intestinal gas' in all public places, indoor or outdoor, where anyone might be exposed to the 'second-hand' gas. The ban includes outdoor cafes, bus stops, soccer fields, condominium pool decks, parks and sidewalks.

'Tooting' in one's car is allowed — unless the windows are open and someone nearby might be affected.

'Gassing' scofflaws face warnings, fines of up to \$500 for repeat offenses, and misdemeanor charges.

California, ever in the forefront of social trends, has been a leader in limiting when and where people can pass gas. Cities and towns around the state began banning tooting in offices and restaurants more than 15 years ago, and lawmakers enacted a statewide ban on it in restaurants, workplaces and public venues in the mid-1990's. 'Gassing' has been prohibited on most Southern California beaches and piers since 2003.

Calabasas wants to "push the envelope," local citizen, Reginald Airloft said, adding, "This is clearly a ground breaking public health law. Secondhand gas kills! ... And it's a fire hazard."

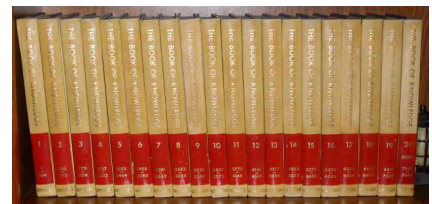
He continued, "The problem is you never know when the wind will shift. One minute the air is safe; the next it's lethal!"

Local activist, Arnold Pétomane, has a different opinion. "If they can take away this, they can take away anything! This is how it started

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President's Message — Nance Crawford

It was delightful to welcome our California Writers Club State President, David George, to our March meeting. Afterward, the Board gathered around, and we were able to discuss our concerns about our branch. David's observations regarding sharing our experiences as writers with new members – as well as attracting those new members – are going to serve us well, as we move forward.

I was very pleased to be able point out to David the high number of published writers in our group. On my way home, I determined to conduct an informal poll, which is why everyone received my very first message through the (wonderful! - Kudos, Ray Malus, Divine Webmaster!) MRMS List, asking for a quick overview of everyone's published works.

Those of you who were not able to respond within the limited time, don't worry. I'll be after you again later in the year, because it's really inspiring to see and share the energy and creative perseverance bouncing off enthusiastic keyboards from this end of the San Fernando Valley.

I don't know how many of the folks who sent in their information came to us as established, published writers, or how many feel they owe their publishing success to the networking and guidance available through friends and acquaintances at CWC, but I do know that my own experience continues to be an invaluable ongoing education in the challenges now confronting the contemporary wordsmith.

Oh, the informal poll. Yeah, it should have been the headline.

Of The Respondents So Far,
Eighteen Members Have Published A Total of Fifty-five Books!
Essayists Abound!
Poets Win Prizes!

All that and mountains, desert, and seashore, too.
We are nobody's April Fools.

Two of Erica Stux's poems, *Crosswords*, and *New Years Eve* have won second-place ribbons in the Chatsworth Women's Club annual district arts festival.

March Speaker: Alexis O'Neill "Hearing Voices — Writing and Revising Historical Fiction."

By Howard Goldstein

Alexis O'Neill transformed the March CWC meeting by telling us stories about strings – of words. Writing about a jump rope, she had pictured the white clothesline rope of her childhood. When a girl today commented she had never seen a white jump rope, Alexis realized how things had changed. So she addressed us with a series of questions and statements.

"How many like researching?" she asked. When our hands went up she said, "All writing is researching."

An early book of hers, *The Recess Queen*, took seven years to write. Alexis suggested writers are confronted by questions. "How to translate (what we have learned) into what others will appreciate? We never know how we are going to translate it."

"I do the writing. I have no control over who does the illustrating." (She said she was pleased at the images.)

She began writing professionally for, "...magazines in Syracuse, New York, plus a history book about Syracuse, and a big book about the city of Syracuse. And a book about Gustav Stickley, a furniture manufacturer and designer in the American Craftsman style, who was also from Syracuse."

Alexis O'Neill is the author of *Loud Emily*, *The Recess Queen*, and *Estela's Swap* and has also been published in numerous children's magazines. At the UCLA Extension Writers' Program she teaches writing, is a Regional Advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and a founding member of the Children's Authors Network. A former elementary school teacher, Alexis holds a B.S. from Skidmore College, and an M.S. in Instructional Technology and Ph.D. in Teacher Education from Syracuse University.

She researched and wrote *Freeze, Hiss, Puff, Squirt* about the horned lizard and its defense mechanisms, noting its, "...ability to squirt blood out of its eyeballs to hit a critter several feet away!" Alexis believes, "Writing as fiction is a disservice to the creature."

Demonstrating how seriously editors take their work, she showed us a manuscript page marked up with serious edits and notations, saying she wrote 900 words, which the editor cut to 732. She cautioned us, "Everything you do, every source, document it!" Every book she has written, she claims, is from her own head.

In 2009 an editor asked her to meet to discuss an idea. Both of them had read *The Great Bridge*, a book about the Brooklyn Bridge.

Artists and writers know the most complicated projects often begin with a line. And so it had been with the bridge across the Niagara River in 1848. Those who proposed the bridge to connect the United States of America with Canada realized the value and difficulty of throwing a cable across that large river of falling waters. She believes the word "awesome" was invented to describe Niagara Falls. She showed us old photos of the Falls and how, although discussed, linking Canada and the United States originally failed because there was no way to bridge the enormous gap.

However, after years of consideration they realized a simple string might serve. A kite flying contest was held because kite string could be tied to rope, and then to cable, which drawn across the waters would establish a foundation link.

She showed us an illustration done at the time of hundreds of kids all flying kites, noting that the wind blew their kites away from the falls instead of across the waters. No kite was able to accomplish the feat until a young man named Homan Walsh persisted. Homan, she told us, faced the snow and wind and temperature, flying his kite all day and into the night.

"At midnight the wind changed, but his kite hit a snag and he lost it. After being stranded for eight days in Canada he went back, tried again, and succeeded."

Alexis tried several different formats to write the story, including poetry, and even, "...took an art class and got stuck."

In March of 2010 at a retreat in Santa Barbara, reading about the era, she wrote a draft about kites in the first person using a boy's voice. "Whenever wind lifted off the trees..." entitled, *A Boy Like Me*, and sent it to the editor. To her surprise she received a reply, "I'm sorry to say this isn't working for me..."

So she went to a children's class and asked them. "Your family, friends, and kids will always love what you do," Alexis cautioned. So before she asks kids for their opinions she trains them in methods of criticism.

The children didn't like the two men who approached Homan while flying his kite. The men were strangers! Taking them out of the story she submitted again, and it was accepted! The book took four years to write, but she feels, "There is something wonderful about people knowing something is true."

In her efforts to write the story, she hired a researcher, encouraging us to do the same when necessary, as well as to look at the biographies of others who solved their problems, and, "Don't be afraid about the level of writing in your books." □



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!

ESQUIRE

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Esquire is geared toward smart, well-off men. Monthly magazine covering the ever-changing trends in American culture. Established: 1933. Simultaneous Submissions: Yes. Guidelines on website. Retains first worldwide periodical publication rights for 90 days from cover date.

Circulation: 720,000. Publish period after acceptance:

Publishes ms an average of 2-6 months after acceptance.

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Nonfiction: Buys mss/year: 4 features and 12 shorter.

Submission Method: Magazine no longer accepts paper submissions. To submit, use online submission manager at esquiresubmissions.com. Columns average 1,500 words, features average 5,000 words, short front of book pieces average 200-400 words. Payment varies.

Fiction: "Literary excellence is our only criterion." Needs novel concepts, short stories, memoirs, plays. No pornography, science fiction, or 'true romance' stories.

Send complete ms. To submit a story, use online submission manager at esquiresubmissions.com. "A writer has the best chance of breaking in at Esquire by querying with a specific idea that requires special contacts and expertise. Ideas must be timely and national in scope."

FICTION

Dept. of English, The City College of New York, 138th St. & Covenant Ave., New York, NY 10031.

Website: www.fictioninc.com. **Contact:** Mark J. Mirsky, editor. "As the name implies, we publish only fiction, we are looking for the best new writing available, leaning toward the unconventional. Fiction has traditionally attempted to make accessible the inaccessible, to bring the experimental to a broader audience." Reading period for unsolicited mss is September 15-May 15.

Established: 1972. Simultaneous Submissions: Yes. Guidelines available online. Buys first rights. Circulation: 4,000. No kill fee. Sample copy for \$7. Responds in 3 months to mss. Publish period after acceptance: Publishes ms an average of 1 year after acceptance.

Fiction: Needs: experimental, humorous, satire. Also needs contemporary, literary, translations. No romance, science fiction, etc. Submit complete ms via online submissions manager. Length: up to 5,000 words.

"The guiding principle of *Fiction* has always been to go to terra incognita in the writing of the imagination and to ask that modern fiction set itself serious questions, if often in absurd and comedic voices, interrogating the nature of the

real and the fantastic. It represents no particular school of fiction, except the innovative. Its pages have often been a harbor for writers at odds with each other — as a result of its willingness to publish the difficult, experimental, and unusual, while not excluding the well known.

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Phone: (660) 543-8106 E-mail: pleiades@ucmo.edu.

Website: www.ucmo.edu/englphil/pleiades. Contact: Kevin Prufer, editor-at-large.

"We publish contemporary fiction, poetry, interviews, literary essays, special-interest personal essays, and reviews for a general and literary audience from authors from around the world." Reads August 15-May 15.

Covers: Semiannual journal. Established: 1991. Simultaneous Submissions: Yes. Guidelines available online.

Buys first North American serial rights, buys second serial (reprint) rights. Occasionally requests rights for TV, radio reading, website. Circulation: 3,000. Byline given. Pays on publication. No kill fee. Queries accepted by mail. Sample copy for \$5 (back issue), \$6 (current issue). Responds in 2 months to queries. Responds in 1-4 months to mss. Publish period after acceptance: Publishes ms an average of 9 months after acceptance. 100% freelance written. Editorial lead time 9 months.

Nonfiction: Contact: Phong Nguyen, nonfiction editor. Needs: book excerpts, essays, interview reviews. "Nothing pedantic, slick, or shallow." Buys mss/year: 4-6. Submission Method: Send complete ms via online submission manager. Length: 2,000-4,000 words. Pays \$10 and contributor's copies.

Fiction: Contact: Phong Nguyen and Matthew Eck, fiction editors. Reads fiction year-round. Needs: ethnic, experimental, humorous, mainstream, novel concepts. Also wants magic realism. No science fiction, fantasy, confession, erotica. Buys 16-20 mss/year. Send complete ms via online submission manager. Length: 2,000-6,000 words. Pays \$10 and contributor's copies.

Poetry: Contact: Wayne Miller and Kathryn Nuernberger, poetry editors. Submit 3-5 poems at a time via online submission manager. Needs: avant-garde, free verse, haiku, light verse, 'traditional.' "Nothing didactic, pretentious, or overly sentimental." Max Number of Poems: 5. Buys 40-50 poems/year. Pays \$3/poem, and contributor copies.

"Also sponsors the Lena-Miles Wever Todd Poetry Series competition, a contest for the best book ms by an American poet. The winner receives \$2,000, publication by Pleiades Press (1,000 copies), and distribution by Louisiana State University Press. Check website for details."

"Submit only 1 genre at a time to appropriate editors. Show care for your material and your readers. Submit quality work in a professional format. Include cover letter with brief bio and list of publications. Include SASE. We accept queries for book reviews." □

Writing to the Right Brain

Ray Malus

Central Casting

A lot of these columns start with, “A friend said...,” or, “A colleague mentioned...” This is not a literary device. One of the main reasons I’m a member of CWC is that I love to talk about writing. So...

Recently another writer and I were talking about a novel in progress (his). He was bemoaning the fact that a character was a witness to an event, and that now he’d need to write a whole back-story to explain that character.

Well, maybe yes, maybe no.

The fact is, if you are writing a story, any moment represents the intersection of countless plot lines and characters:

Eighteen people are on a bus late at night. Which do you follow? When do you get off the bus? Why? These choices are what make you a storyteller, a writer. You can choose to focus on any of them. But, unless you’re Leo Tolstoy, you can’t focus on *all* of them.

So how do you choose?

Try ‘casting’ your story.

Here’s what I mean:

We’ll assume you have a plot, and a central character... and that you have a compelling reason to tell your story. (Meaning, you think other people will take the time to read it — and will feel rewarded when they do.)

Now, characters seldom exist in a vacuum. I mean, even a single-person story like *The Old Man And The Sea* had the sea — and let’s not forget that fish! Which other characters are important?

Let’s imagine you have to hire, and pay, actors to play each of your characters.

People who are just seen are *Background*. They get paid \$100 for each scene they’re in. People who say anything are *Extras*. They get paid \$250 for each scene. People we ‘get to know’ are *Players*. They’re under contract, but cost some money: \$3,000. People who are fully developed, who have back-stories, who engage us emotionally, are *Principals*. These are high-ticket folks: \$10,000 apiece. And then you have your *Star* (maybe, *StarS*. Can you afford more than one at \$100,000 each?).

(Those of you who are in Screen Actors’ Guild can

tell I am not. It’s the principle that counts.)

I am going to give you a budget of half a million dollars to cast your story. You can spend it on anything you want, and whatever is left over you can use for food, rent, and single malt scotch. Keep in mind that you’re going to have to pay for locations, props, and sets, so use a ‘sharp pencil.’

Now, this may all seem artificial and unnecessary, but it is a good way to approach the subject of how much detail to include. As a writer, you may have unlimited time and attention, but I can assure you, your reader does not. Every time you introduce a character, a location, an incident, you are giving the reader more to deal with. Mostly, this is exactly what you want — but only if it serves your story.

We started by saying that, “a character was a witness to an event.” So let’s see how important this cast member is:

We’ll start by postulating he isn’t a *Star* or *Principal*. If he were, we would be wondering about this. So he’s either a *Player*, an *Extra*, or *Background*. Let’s be as frugal as possible.

Will we encounter this person again? Will we want or need to know more about him? Or do we just cross paths with him this one time? Maybe we can save the cost of a *Player*.

OK. So he’s an *Extra*, or even better, *Background*. Does he have lines? Do we need him to tell us what he saw? Or is he merely the anchor for a point of view. (“Across the street, a homeless man looked up just as the car careened through the restaurant window.”)

The fact is, if he only represents a point of view, we may not need him at all. (“The car careened through the restaurant window.”)

I know every word you write is precious. But unless you’re getting paid by the word (and your editor isn’t paying attention), it’s probably best to err on the side of economy. (And single malt scotch isn’t getting any cheaper.)

Years ago I wrote an epistolary novel (a story told entirely in correspondence) called, “Letters To J.” I recently re-read it. At one point, the writer says, “... Elrich just came in. I’ll have to finish later.”

I did a word search. Elrich is not mentioned anywhere else. There is no explanation of who he is or why he came in. Just that he did. I found this charming. And it lent a wonderful sense of reality to the work.

The fact is, as readers, we are usually voyeurs — eavesdroppers. (Yes, yes. There are exceptions. Shut up, you!) If we are sitting in a restaurant, and we overhear someone say, “Margaret told me the juiciest thing about Sean...”, we don’t expect the person to stop, turn to us and explain that Margaret is her second cousin, and Sean is Margaret’s son by a previous marriage.

As with perfume, sometimes a whiff is better than a bath.

Bullet Drop Compensation

By John Klawitter

In the late 1970's I was Creative Director for Kelly Nason/Univas Los Angeles and San Francisco. We had Bushnell hunting riflescopes (with bullet-drop compensation) and Bianchi Gunleather (Bet your ass on a Bianchi!) and a big wine company that made swill in any flavor so long as it was cheap. We were cohabitating with another small agency in a bungalow on the relatively classy west end of Sunset just before it runs into Beverly Hills. This other agency had a loose connection to Kelly Nason, but they did cosmetics and local theatrical runs, and scorned us (as well they might) for our crass and manly accounts.

One fine summer day while my young girl art director and I were struggling mightily to create a believable commercial for Esprit (the light white wine with a touch of lime), a young fellow with plucked eyebrows, polished nails and a light coating of makeup rapped on my door, intending to present me with samples of his work. Suzie picked up her sketchpad, gave me a wink and a grin, and left the room. The applicant was more of a journalist than a copywriter; his portfolio was thin and he had done mostly articles for travel magazines. Not bad stuff, but a far cry from the woodsman, blue steel and screw-top swill copy that my clients demanded. So I sent him downstairs to interview with John, my counterpart in the other agency. The wanna-be copywriter was not a happy camper as he left. "I can write anything," he huffed.

"I'm sure you can," I agreed.

A half hour later, I had an outraged call from John. "What do you mean, *We're different down here?*"

My heart dropped faster than one of those bullets I was always writing about. John's snappy little agency was bustling with tinseltown assignments and I liked show biz and was hoping I myself could pick up some of the slack.

I stuttered and stammered, "Well, you *are* different."

"And just how are we different, *Mister Bullet Dropper?*"

"Think about what it's like around here." I looked at the mad scribbling on my desk and blurted out the first thing that came to mind, "Did you ever have to put a dash of lime in a fine Riesling?"

Do you have any idea what that tastes like?"

"Ungodly repulsive," he whispered. Silence from his end. I took that for an opportunity. "Stick that guy in the woods and he would shit uphill and try to pet a skunk."

"I guess you're right about that one."

"Yes, I am. I should be pissed at you. Here I am trying to pass a really talented writer your way and—"

"He doesn't like you very much."

"I don't blame him. Copywriters always think they can write everything. But they can't."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sorry. Look, I'm busy." And with that, he hung up on me.

Three days later I received a fancy stopwatch in a gift box. "Sorry," the note from John said.

And a week after that he gave me an assignment, to write a 30 second radio spot for *The Gin Game*, playing at the Almansor Theater. I got to produce it, too. After that, we worked on projects for nearly two years; stage plays, concerts and rock festivals, and I used those credits to help me land the Creative Director job at Disney Studios.

And I still have the stopwatch. □

Consider the horse

— an animal designed by God, or evolution, to convert hay into horse shit.

The horse will continue to do this as long as it lives. It performs this process compulsively with no thought of the disposition of the product.

Now, a wise man may collect this horse shit, package it, and sell it as fertilizer. Through these means, he may become wealthy. This is a side effect. It means absolutely nothing to the horse. He is unconcerned. He is simply busy producing horse shit.

So it is with the artist. He converts experience and insight into works of art. The artist will continue to do this as long as he lives. He performs this process compulsively with no thought of the disposition of the product.

There may be wise men who collect his 'art' and sell it. This is a side effect. It means absolutely nothing to the artist. He is unconcerned. Like the horse, he is simply producing horse shit.

The above separation of roles may seem a bit artificial; artists are more complex than horses. But the principle holds. We sell if we can.

We create because we must. □

— J. Raymond Kent

Home Ray Malus

The theme of 'land ownership,' is one of the main elements that drives my novel, *Ashes In Yonkers*.

This desire to own land is common to many cultures. (But by no means all. Native American cultures don't seem to have 'owned' land, so much as lived cooperatively with it.) This probably stems back to the finite amount of arable land in Europe, and the equating of land ownership with personal freedom.

For whatever reason, the desire to own 'a place of our own' remains a strong imperative.

In the very early 1950s Quaker Oats sponsored a radio show, "Sargent Preston of The Yukon." As part of a promotion, they gave away deeds to land in the Yukon Territory of Canada. These were certificates which came in a box of Quaker Puffed Wheat or Quaker Puffed Rice cereal and which granted ownership of one square inch of land.

Theoretically, I may still own my square inch. I certainly was proud of it. I knew one square inch was very small, but I could imagine its stretching thousands of miles down to the core of the planet,

tapering ever so slightly as it went. Reckoned this way, it was a substantial holding for a ten-year-old boy who had never lived in anything but a rented apartment.

Many years later, I bought a home in California. In due time, I paid off the mortgage.

I never think about what's under my tiny little portion of an acre. That's because, no matter what the nomenclature and how much money we've spend, we never really own our property any more.

Don't believe it? Try missing a tax payment or two and see who owns your home.

But back then, I owned a piece of the planet, as surely as the sun came up.

I'm older now. Not as adventurous. Not nearly as naïve.

But there's a part of me that believes that one day, I'll go to the Yukon, and locate my inch. Like John Henry, I'll drive a long $\frac{3}{4}$ " steel rod deep into the permafrost with a sledgehammer.

Then I'll pull myself up to the top of that rod. I'll perch there like a Jazz Age flagpole sitter, and like an Ice Age mastodon I'll roar: "Go away and leave! me! alone! THIS IS MY LAND!" □

March Madness Leslie Kaplan

Every Saturday night, I go to the basketball game followed by a dance at the Broadwood Hotel in downtown Philadelphia. The season begins from October through the mad month of March. I'm about seventeen years old and dancing is my first love.

I'm not what you call an ardent sports fan. The Harlem Globe Trotters are playing against the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association known as the Sphas ...pronounced Spas. Just picture the big black giants against little short Jewish guys. Sphas stands for "South Philly Hebrew Athletic Assn.

It's also St. Patrick's Day, so I search through my wardrobe and find the only green dress that I own. As far as I'm concerned, everybody is Irish on St. Patrick's Day. Now I'm all dressed up for dancing and even my eyes have a touch of green eye shadow to match my dress for this Irish holiday.

Much to my pleasure, the basketball game is like watching a graceful comic ballet. A short guy named Red Klotz, dribbles right under the wide open legs of a seven foot Globe Trotter. It's very funny and entertaining. The globe Trotters and the

Spas perform frequently by popular demand.

The game ends, the dance commences and most of us who know each other, are dancing our feet off to the rhythm of the big band on the same wooden basket ball floor.

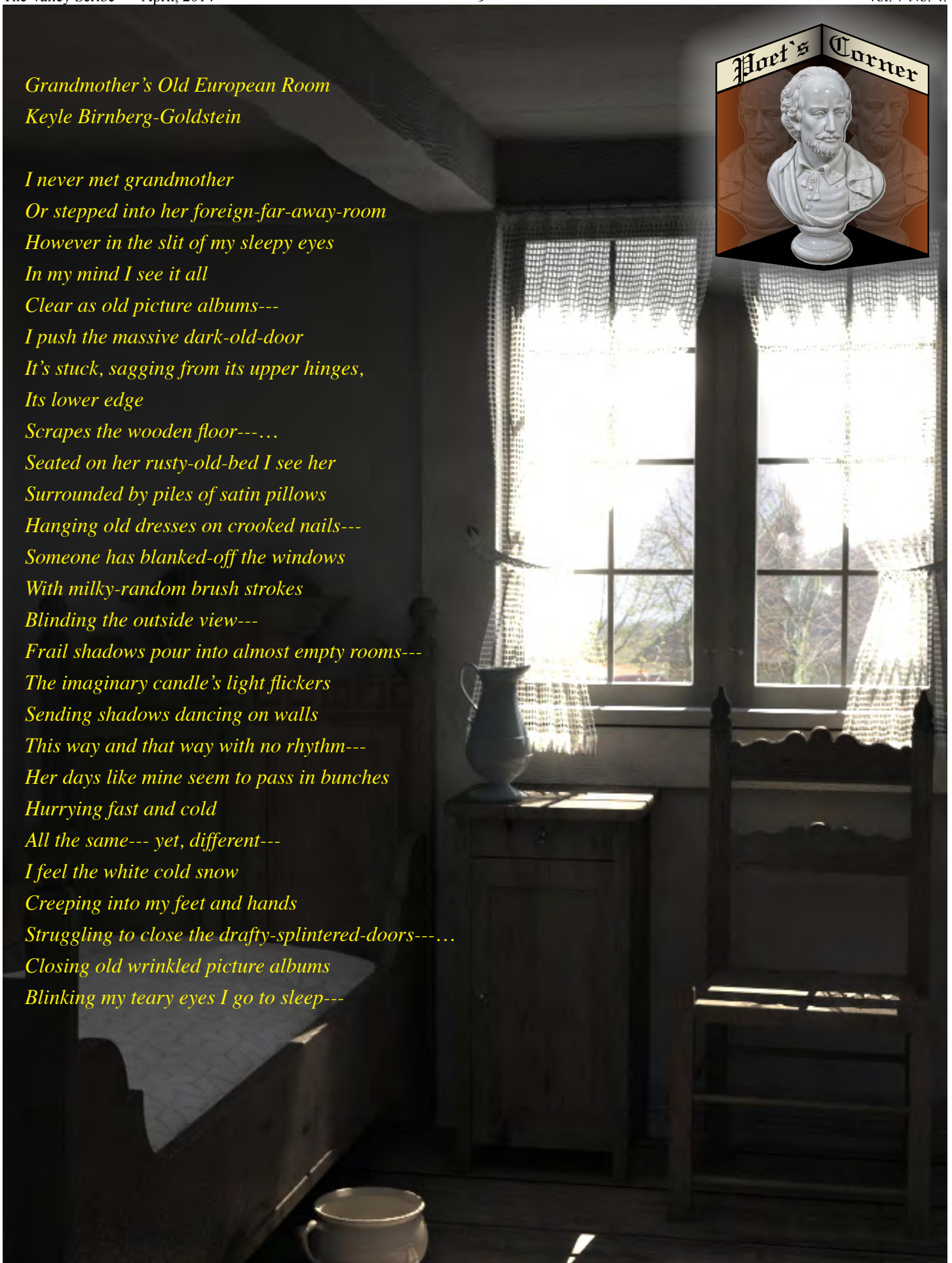
All danced out, a group of us decide to go to an Irish Pub called the House of Murphy. We sit around a piano bar, drink green whiskey and sing all of the Irish songs that most of us know, starting with, "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling." We aren't concerned about the howling wind, or the bramble bushes rolling down the street, typical for the season. We leave the Pub... happy, as Irish whiskey can make one feel. Basketball as I experience it, along with St. Patrick's Day and the winds, are all a part of March Madness as I recall it.

Since those wonderful days many moons ago comes the month of March... the Irish in me reappears to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. My only green sweater comes out of the closet. Off I go to an Irish pub, drink some green whiskey, have some corned beef and cabbage, sing all the Irish songs I can remember, reminisce about the Harlem Globe Trotters, and remember my old gang as we serenaded each other after dancing our feet off.

AND THAT'S WHAT I CALL MARCH MADNESS! □

Grandmother's Old European Room
Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

*I never met grandmother
Or stepped into her foreign-far-away-room
However in the slit of my sleepy eyes
In my mind I see it all
Clear as old picture albums---
I push the massive dark-old-door
It's stuck, sagging from its upper hinges,
Its lower edge
Scrapes the wooden floor---...
Seated on her rusty-old-bed I see her
Surrounded by piles of satin pillows
Hanging old dresses on crooked nails---
Someone has blanked-off the windows
With milky-random brush strokes
Blinding the outside view---
Frail shadows pour into almost empty rooms---
The imaginary candle's light flickers
Sending shadows dancing on walls
This way and that way with no rhythm---
Her days like mine seem to pass in bunches
Hurrying fast and cold
All the same--- yet, different---
I feel the white cold snow
Creeping into my feet and hands
Struggling to close the drafty-splintered-doors---...
Closing old wrinkled picture albums
Blinking my teary eyes I go to sleep---*





WHEN COOL AIN'T COOL

Norman Molesko

Wherever I go
There are things
I need to learn
Need to discern
When COOL ain't COOL

Whatever I feel
Whatever I see
I need to learn
Need to discern
When COOL ain't COOL

Whatever I do
I'm me, not you
I need to learn
Need to discern
When COOL ain't COOL

No matter at what age
No matter what appeals
I don't intend to be caged
I need to learn
When COOL ain't COOL

All remains the same
Nothing has been changed
I need to learn
Need to discern
When COOL ain't COOL

Now, isn't that COOL?

Pitter Patterns Lenora Smalley

I love the pitter of rain In puddles
where little translucent men jump up
and down in glee
and with all their tiny kin
dance down the concrete sidewalks
into windy, rain-slick streets,
celebrating in big block parties
the imminent coming of spring.

Poets Pirhiya Goldstein

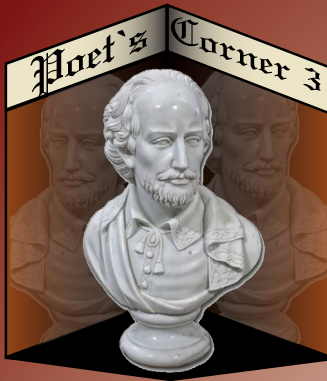
Tap into that agonizing spot
Search for that eerie corner
Scrape that old wound

Bring to a bleeding
Create a rupture
Compose a melody

Sing your song
For yourself and others
Tormented and daring

Why this craving
Wonder who really cares
One cannot deny it

Cannot stop the flow
It is this madness
Salvation to one's soul



At Our Piano
By Andrea Polk

Doink.
A key strikes
out of tune.
Around it
wraps Amazing Grace.
Grandma sings
"... but now I see."
A rough soprano
head bowed
in reverie.
Old fingers
hunt the chords.
Eyes closed
some distant memory
guides her words.
Hearing her
I cross the room.
My alto joins
in harmony.
From piano to forte
Our voices ring.
When age chokes off
her next ...
Only I am left to sing.

Visiting Skirball Museum
Lillian Rodich

echoes
encased in glass shrines
or behind polished woods
Bubba's babushka turned
smoothly over her forehead
doors and windows bolted in fear
Zayda's head covered
with a moth eaten felt cap
he was a rabbi in Poland
echoes again in Skirball's halls
what once was
and always will
remain in legends
voices I knew
my father's square stained finger
dipped in Passover wine
his prayer chanted in Hebrew
Friday sundown my mother
bent over Sabbath candles
her bushy hair uncovered
her blessing whispered
voices I knew echoing
ornate Chanukah menorahs
in Skirball's simple cases
still speaking of childhood's innocence
frail voices singing
in celebration of faith
most sacred of artifacts
from humble to ornate
a history of my people
and in forgotten corners
sometimes barely visible
sometimes a tiny stone in a vast mosaic
an echo of my own family's voice



Seasons Of Laughter

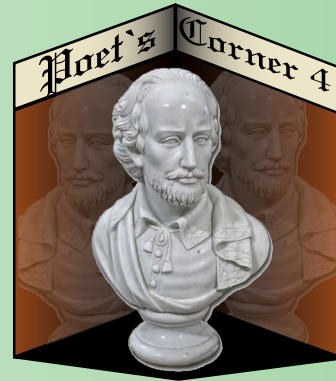
Ray Malus

The winter icicles along the frozen eaves,
like wind-chimes, crack and tinkle in the falcon breeze.
And laughing children stand and fire snowballs up
to crash them to the earth like flashing meteors.
Then, squealing, bound into the drifts like playful pups
to seize their prey and suck the fresh and icy tang
of gleaming sunlight frozen in its crystal fire,
and savor winter's flavor on their eager tongues.

In spring, the coeds giggle in the empty stands,
and titter at the taut and tightened haunches of
young bucks who whet their antlers on the playing field,
in practice for uncertain combat yet to come.
They jeer the posturings they watch with craving eyes,
their bodies flushed with adolescent eagerness.
They hug themselves with fancied strangers' lusty hands
and clutch their thighs together to protect their warmth.

The summer cabins echo with the bawdy bark
of laughter and the snapping of the poker cards
by ghostly t-shirt silhouettes of swarthy men
cast by a naked lamp on fly-specked window screens.
The air is censed by sweat and beer and kerosene,
by stinging citronella oil and cheap cigars.
They lick the foam from icy pop-top cans of beer
and brag of earthy passions — they have never known.

The autumn old folks gaze at faded photographs
on foxed and flaking pages cushioned on their laps.
Their memories, once keen and sharp as stainless steel
now blunted — gilded with the chestnut rust of years.
They chuckle at the gentle lies of endless youth
and boundless possibilities depicted there,
then, wrapped in mental tissue paper, set them by,
and clothed in afghans of nostalgia, hug the past.



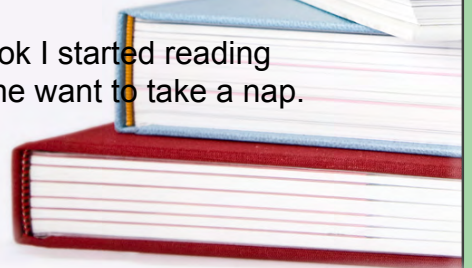
BOOK REVIEWS

Erica Stux

Writing a short book review
for many simply is a snap.
This book's really worth a read;
that one's such a bunch of crap!

A clever plot can figuratively
lead a reader's hands to clap,
while other plots bring the perception
that the flow leaves quite a gap.

One book I started reading
made me want to take a nap.



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

April 5th, 1 p.m. — Shelley Savren
POETRY

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

Check out our writers on the
So-Cal Writers Showcase.

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

Do YOU have a website?
Be the

'Member Website of the Month'!
Send your URL to:

cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com

This Month's BIRTHDAYS!

Judith Janda Presnall April 2
Yolanda Fintor April 27

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
- 150 words or fewer

Articles/Essays
Short Stories

Poetry

Book Release Notices

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.

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.

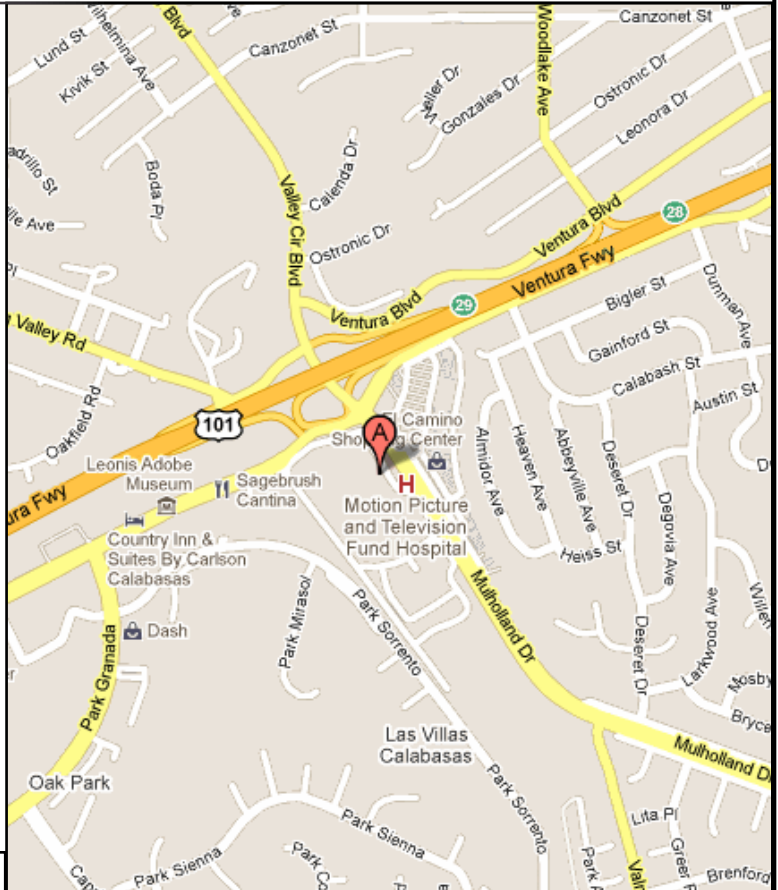
Parking is free in any of the lots.

(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

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

is published monthly.

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

Editor

[Ray Malus](#)

Staff

Proofreaders	Ethel Ann Shaffer, Doug Douglas, Sharron Malus
Columnists	Rita Keeley Brown, Nance Crawford, Ray Malus
Guest Columnist	Howard Goldstein

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California Writers Club San Fernando Valley Branch

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL & BOARD MEMBERS

President, Nance Crawford	Nance@NanceCrawford.com
VP-Membership, Andrea Polk	andipolk4@gmail.com
VP-Programs, Rita Brown	ritakeeleybrown@yahoo.com
Treasurer, Mary Freeman	mfreeman2207@yahoo.com
Secretary, Gabriella Owens	spoiledgrrapes@att.net
Member-At-Large, Doug Douglas	doubledouglas@verizon.net
Central Board Rep., Ray Malus	cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com

Pre-Session Leader, Bill Sorrells

N/A

Webmaster, Ray Malus

cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com

Newsletter Editor, Ray Malus

cwc-sfv@roadrunner.com

LOTS of great information at our

Website:

www.cwc-sfv.org