



The Newsletter of The San Fernando Valley Branch

The Valley Scribe

"Our Members' Voices"



Vol. 7

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No. 5

Next Meeting: May 3rd, 1:00!

May's Speaker — Helga Schier



Top Ten Errors Writers Make that Editors Hate
by Rita Keeley Brown

Editors want to discover GREAT new writers and read compelling stories.

How then does one avoid that dreaded *slush pile* and actually get read???

Our speaker for our May 3rd meeting is **Helga Schier, PhD** who has worked in the book publishing industry for more than 20 years as editor and executive editor in The Big Five publishing houses. In her presentation entitled **Top Ten Errors Writers Make that Editors Hate®**, she will take us by the hand and walk us through the ten most frustrating errors writers make that catch the discerning eye of editors and compel them to turn down the manuscript.

Helga will cover the story elements of plot, structure, character, and dialogue, as well as general writing issues like style and voice. She will help us understand the dangers of the forced plot twist and the cardboard character; explore ways to avoid unnatural dialogue; gather ideas to boost the interplay between dialogue and narrative; and learn strategies to self-edit and fix common mistakes. She will emphasize the importance of a great opening that will spark the attention of an editor and propel your manuscript past that slush pile. Editors do want you to succeed, but there are some mistakes that can crush all that good will. They do seek new authors with compelling stories.

A true writer's editor, her goal is to guide writers through the development and writing process, helping them to write the books they want to write and do it in the best way possible. She founded withpenandpaper.com, which provides independent consulting and editorial services to help writers refine their story ideas and produce the best manuscript possible. She works on book-length fiction and non-fiction and with published, self-published, and not-yet-published writers. As one Award-Winning Film Director and Novelist put it, "Her critiques were inspiring, not dispiriting... She got it...even more than I got it."

As an author, she primarily writes YA non-fiction, travel and language-related materials for the general trade market, as well as *Going Beyond*, an essayistic work on contemporary English and

American fiction. She has translated several screenplays, memoirs, and a novel series. She is a member of GLAWS, the American Society of Journalists and Authors, the American Literary Translators Association, and the Editorial Freelancers Association. Helga has also edited, written, and/or translated over fifty fiction and nonfiction titles. Fluent in German, she translates either from or into German.

Bring your pen and paper for an hour of great ideas!

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Next Meeting:

OPEN MIC!

**Sign up for 5 minutes
of FAME. 12:30 SHARP!**

April Speaker Review: The Transformative Power of Poetry

Doug Douglas

Imagine...

John Lennon? No, it's the key starting point in writing poetry, like an hypothesis in scientific study according to award-winning and widely published poet Shelley Savren. Following an introduction by friend and CWC member Karen Gorback, Ms. Savren related both her methods of inspiration and composition.

By my count, our speaker related six guidelines especially pertinent to poetry: 1) manipulation of words, primarily economy; 2) imagery, including use of simile and personification; 3) consistency of form (e.g. narrative vs. scenic, etc.); 4) use of the five senses, sight being foremost; 5) emphasis on specific details, as when the closely observed, apparently random brush strokes become a detailed and beautiful painting when viewed from a distance; and 6) emotion, recreating an experience by showing, not telling (throw that damned dinner plate at your lazy-ass husband instead of writing "I hate his guts").

Ms. Savren further explained that we unconsciously use imagination all the time, anticipating our day's activities, trying to take another person's point of view when misunderstanding arises, and as a survival tool to 'keep the spirit alive' during times of hardship.

In relation to poetic form, she said it has a kinship to music, with free verse following the function of the poem, the line or rhythm being significant. Further comments touched on persona writing (someone else's voice), and the role of 'craft' and revision.

Ms. Savren concluded her presentation by reading poems from two of her published collections (mainly about family and friends), and then by taking questions and extended personal anecdotes from the audience. She also apologized for beginning her talk by disparaging "dead white poets". I appreciate that, since that's what many of us in CWC will end up being some day. □

President's Message Nance Crawford



Happy May Day!

Here in the U.S. we don't take it nearly seriously enough. It is, after all, International Workers Day, although I'll bet nobody includes housewives and writers in that category.

My childhood memories of May Day are chiefly of black and white photos of a whole bunch of chubby gentlemen gathered on a balcony in Moscow, watching their favorite toys parade by, gloating over the effect their bristling tanks, and trucks, and endless lines of matched-set, immaculately uniformed soldiers were having on the rest of the world.

Party poopers of the first order, until jackhammers, and bare hands, and swarming humanity tore down a concrete divide – a small piece of which, frozen in Lucite, now proudly graces my piano.

But, elsewhere on the planet, the first day of May is cause for joyful silliness.

They take Spring very seriously in England. You'll find the Morris Dancers jingling their stuff, the election of a Queen of the May (nary a village without one), and the giddy weaving of ribbons around a tall pole by pubescent girls in their Springtime Best. A British Thoroughbred named May-Day won at the Newmarket Racecourse in 1834, and who could ever forget?

In France, historical homage is paid to Charles IX, who received a gift of Lily-of-the-Valley as a lucky charm: on May 1, it is sold tax-free to offer a loved one (the other choice is Dog Rose and I'm not going to go there). The Irish have pretty much given up bonfires to celebrate chasing off winter but, in their inimitably idiosyncratic way, officially celebrate May Day on the first Monday of the month. The Bulgarians connect it with snakes and lizards and spend serious time with rituals to protect people from them. In Romania, country women do not work in the fields or the house on May Day Eve, to avoid devastating storms and hail coming down on the village.

It took seconds to find the above information. I love Wikipedia. There are few more handy tools in a writer's kit, these days, and it's a relief to "Google" *May Day* after spending the past week going back and forth between mediaeval biographies, trying to work out an accurate, understandable time line for the book I'm researching.

Surf the Web. Best advice I can offer this month. □

(The following is a slight re-write of an editorial that first ran in our January, 2010 Issue.)

Charlie Gordon?

The question is from the movie, *Charlie* (adapted from the novella, *Flowers For Algernon*, by Daniel Keyes). It is asked by Charlie Gordon, himself. Charlie has lived most of his life as a mental child — a recorded I.Q. of 68. Now, a miraculous operation has given him a brilliant intellect. At a symposium, Charlie asks the assembled medical experts the question: “Charlie Gordon?”

In the manner of all great teachers, Charlie already knows the answer: “Charlie Gordon... is a fella... who will soon be... what he was.”

It’s a gut-wrenching moment. For, you see, Charlie Gordon has discovered that the effects of the operation are temporary. He will soon return to his original capabilities.

Less than five years ago, our Branch was suspended from CWC. We were, basically, non-functional and non-existent — the equivalent of Charlie Gordon. A group of energetic, generous people formed a committee and got us reinstated. It was, in its own way, miraculous. In July of 2011, West Valley and San Fernando Valley Branches re-united. Another milestone!

Our Branch functions smoothly, and the efforts of our Board are transparent and efficient. But the coordinating of facilities, programs, records, Critique Groups, website, newsletter, inter-branch relations, and a myriad of other things is time and energy intensive. There are too few on stage, and no-one ‘in the wings.’

So, I must ask the question: “San Fernando Valley Chapter?”

Tragically, the answer is much the same as Charlie’s: “CWC-SFV ... is a Branch... that will soon be... what it was.”

We have good attendance at meetings. We have (in my opinion) some of the finest writers in CWC. We have congenial personalities.

The problem is that too few members are coming forward to do active work. Too few are “getting involved.” Chair positions go unfilled, members do not ‘sit in’ on Board meetings, no one is being prepared for leadership roles.

Yes, it’s wonderful to show up every month, hear provocative Open Mics, socialize, have a nosh, and watch a presentation by an expert speaker. But we’re like children who believe in Santa Claus, trusting that the presents will just magically appear on Christmas morning, waiting to be torn open. It’s time to wake up!

The Branch runs by a lot of effort — effort that, if it’s successful, is invisible. Moreover, there are administrative and leadership functions that never stop. We have relationships and responsibilities to the State Organization. If all this doesn’t get done on a continuing basis, we die.

I know many of you will respond, “When the time comes, I’ll do my part.” The fact is, one doesn’t just assume Office. It takes familiarity and experience. ‘The time’ is *now*!

There is also the matter of membership involvement. I hear a lot of comments and criticisms about the way things are. I usually suggest the dissatisfied person get involved. It doesn’t happen.

An involved membership ensures that the benefit of the whole is being judiciously considered.

We have a short hiatus coming up. Originally, the current Board intended to continue meeting throughout the Summer. They now understand that, with our current staff, rest is not only welcome, it is necessary.

We will take July off, and have a ‘social’ in August.

Meanwhile, I urge you to consider how you can get involved.

You may ask why I’m not following my own advice. I am. I am not an ‘Officer,’ simply because I feel I am of more value as a ‘worker bee.’ But, believe me, I am involved. You need to be, too.

This is not an appeal. I am not asking anything of you. It is simply a warning — and a question: “San Fernando Valley Branch?” —mm—



(POETS: This month's column is part of a list compiled by Nance Crawford from a website at: <http://bernadettegeyer.blogspot.com>. For more, please go to the site. Thank you, Nance.)

ForeWord Magazine Book of the Year Awards

Sponsor: ForeWord Magazine.

Cost to enter: \$60, plus 2 copies of book.

Prize: publicity of being first, second or third place in Category. Money only awarded to one best "fiction" and one best "non-fiction."

Submission/entry by: publisher.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: not specified.

Deadline: January 15.

<http://www.forewordmagazine.com/awards/>.

Levis Reading Prize (1st or 2nd book of poetry).

Sponsor: Virginia Commonwealth University, Dept. of English.

Cost to enter: 1 copy of the book.

Prize: \$1000 & expenses paid to give reading at VCU in Richmond.

Submission/entry by: author or publisher.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: no vanity presses.

Deadline: January 15.

http://www.has.vcu.edu/eng/resources/levis_Prize/levis_Prize.htm.

The Eric Hoffer Award for Independent Books (includes poetry).

Sponsor: The Eric Hoffer Project.

Cost to enter: \$50.00.

Grand Prize for independent books: \$1,500; other awards & distinctions given as well, including the da Vinci eye award.

Submission/entry by: publisher, author or others.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: none.

Deadline: January 21.

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

The Balcones Poetry Prize.

Sponsor: Austin Community College.

Cost to enter: 3 copies of book plus \$20 nomination fee.

Prize: \$1,000.

Submission/entry by: publisher, author or others.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: none.

Deadline: January 31.

http://acc creativewriting.com/Category/balcones_poetry_Prize/.

Paterson Poetry Prize.

Sponsor: The Poetry Center at Passaic County Community College.

Cost to enter: 3 copies of book.

Prize: \$1,000.

Submission/entry by: publisher.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: minimum press run of 500 copies.

Deadline: February 1.

http://www.pccc.cc.nj.us/poetry/Prize/2005/2006_Paterson_Poetry_P.html.

Devil's Kitchen Reading Award in Poetry.

Sponsor: Southern Illinois Univ. Carbondale & GRASS-ROOTS.

Cost to enter: \$15.00 plus one copy of book.

Prize: \$1,000 & reading at Devil's Kitchen Fall Literary Festival.

Submission/entry by: publisher or author.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: no vanity press or self-published books.

Deadline: February 1.

<http://grassroots.siu.edu/dkawards.html>.

Library of Virginia Literary Awards (VA writer).

Sponsor: Library of Virginia.

Cost to enter: 4 copies of the book.

Prize: \$1,000.

Submission/entry by: publisher or author.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: none.

Deadline: February 5.

<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/litawards/index.htm>.

Milton Kessler Poetry Book Award (book in previous calendar year).

Sponsor: Binghamton University.

Cost to enter: 3 copies, plus entry form.

Prize: \$1,000.

Submission/entry by: publisher or author.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: minimum press run of 500 copies.

Deadline: March 1.

<http://www2.binghamton.edu/english/creative-writing/binghamton-center-for-writers/binghamton-book-awards/kessler-poetry-awards.html>.

Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPY).

Sponsor: Jenkins Group Publishing Services.

Cost to enter: \$75/title/Category (early entry), plus a copy of the book.

Prize: Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals in each of 72 categories.

Submission/entry by: author or publisher.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: none.

Deadline: March 15.

<http://www.independentpublisher.com/ipland/ipawards.php>.

Grub Street Book Prize (for a 2nd, 3rd or beyond book).

Sponsor: Grub Street, Inc.

Cost to enter: copy of book, CV, synopsis of proposed craft class, \$10 fee.

Prize: \$1000, reading/book party in Boston, all-expenses paid trip to Muse and the Marketplace conference to lead a craft class for Grub Street members.

Submission/entry by: author or press.

POD or self-publishing restrictions: none.

Deadline: March 15.

<http://www.grubstreet.org/index.php?id=24#bookPrize>. □

Writing to the Right Brain

Ray Malus

Sez Who?!

My first ‘published’ prose works were plays. (I put ‘published’ in ‘scare quotes’ because occasionally regional theaters have embraced me, even if Samuel French has not.) So naturally I’m comfortable writing dialogue. It’s one of the greatest luxuries I know.

For one thing, you’re not responsible for what your characters say. If I (the author) make an incorrect statement of fact, you (the reader) have every right to contradict me and consider me pompous and ignorant.

If one of my characters makes that statement, *I’m* not responsible. It was *him*!

As the writer, you are unique in holding the reader’s trust and sympathy. You betray that trust at your own peril, so you must adhere to very strict social and factual limits. Your characters, on the other hand, have absolutely no limits other than the ones you impose. You can set them up as heroes, or villains. Moral or immoral. Perfect or flawed.

They can be fully developed real people who engender empathy, or they can be straw men — puppets acting out morality plays. There are no boundaries. The same pen which limned Desdemona also created Iago. And neither is ever confused with William Shakespeare himself.

Dialogue interrupts the dull, endless droning of the narrator. (Yes, *you*!)

The modern reader wants variety, color, *life*! This is especially true in modern American writing. Open a British book to its beginning, and you may find pages and pages of exposition and narrative. You don’t even have to read it to know. The paragraphs are big and ‘blocky’.

In modern American novels, it is rare to not have some dialogue within the first two pages.

Dialogue breaks up monotony. You, as the writer, speak with a single voice. But each of your characters should have a voice all his own. The vocabulary is unique. The phrasing, the dialect, the music, are all distinctive.

Dialogue provides variety for the reader’s ear.

It also provides variety for his eye.

For the average reader, a page-long paragraph, an enormous block of black ink, is daunting. The mind’s eye quails at the task endlessly shuttling back and forth — always careful to avoid skipping a line.

In comparison, speech tends to be relatively short, clipped. That’s because people have to breathe. Usually, at that point the ‘ball gets passed’. (Yes, there are people who talk for endless minutes at-a-time. You will not find them at any of *my* parties.)

Let’s suppose you have a long bit of exposition (perhaps a character’s back-story) that needs including. Well, you might just set it out as a long narrative and risk boring your reader into a stupor (and having him

overlook key details).

Or, you could have one of your characters explain it to another of your characters. Now, the second character can act as the reader’s surrogate. He can react, encourage, argue, spur the narrative on, direct it, ask for clarification — and most importantly — break it into chunks that are easy to digest. And you can also repeat the process endlessly, without making the reader feel patronized.

This is an almost ubiquitous practice in Mysteries, where it is vital to keep reminding the reader of clues, and to direct his attention. The art in telling a good mystery is, at the end, the reader must say, “*Of COURSE! I should have known!*” To accomplish this, you must have given him all the clues. (Hopefully, you made him look the other way while you were doing it.)

Almost every successful detective has his ‘foil’ whose function is to let the detective ‘recap’. Holmes has Watson. Nero Wolfe has Archie. Monk had Sharona (later Natalie). One could make an evening’s entertainment out of playing ‘Name The Sidekick’. These characters are not mere ornaments. They are vital story-telling devices.

But the most important reason for dialogue is to put *life* on your page. This is the essence of writing. People must *live* in your work.

And people who are alive talk! (*Believe it!*)

If you know your characters, if they are ‘real’, they will even do much of the work for you.

(Here’s where I divide you into two groups: The scoffers, and the ones who will grin and nod.)

Create your situation, know your outcome, and start your characters talking with one another! One response will lead to another. All you need be is a stenographer.

This can sometimes lead to surprises:

Years ago, I was commissioned to write a religious drama for a church. My story was basically: ‘Jesus is crucified, and the disciples are demoralized until he appears to them.’

The writing was going OK. There was a little tension, some insight — but nothing that hadn’t been said many times before. (These projects are hard because the audience already knows the story!)

I was writing the scene where the disciples have despaired and are discussing disbanding.

Suddenly, Mary, the Mother of Jesus (who was *not* in the scene, but had somehow, of her own volition, hidden herself in the shadows) leapt to her feet and screamed, “I HAVE LOST A SON!”

The other characters were stunned. Hell, I was stunned! *She wasn’t even in the play!*

But I’m not an idiot. I kept my mouth shut, and let her talk. I took down every word, as she tore the other characters to bits — scathing them for their lack of faith, their hypocrisy, their weakness — in one of the most powerful monologues I’ve ever heard.

She was the embodiment of grief, and rage, and faith, and women’s power. She was *magnificent*.

I transcribed it all.

Then, I went back and wrote her into the play.

She’d earned it. —mm—

THE PAN-MEXICAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

By John Klawitter

I had my biannual haircut at the local shop a few weeks ago. The owner doesn't like me much, because he doesn't approve of such long durations between clippings, so he usually hands me over to one of his apprentice clippers. That is how I got the lady barber from Nicaragua. They know I am a writer, and one of the other cutters started pestering me to write up the story of his 'best friend', who was serving a life sentence for participation in a murder he didn't commit.

"That is a nothing story," my lady barber scoffed with a dismissive toss of her head. "You must tell my story."

"Which is?" I politely asked.

"When try come here I am rape over and over by Mexican soldiers."

The clippers zoomed and dove in a menacing pattern around my head.

"Oh," I said, hoping we'd come to the high point in her agitation. But she was just getting started.

"I get here, I cross border, I am rob of my last money by coyote and I am dump on street in San Diego. I am pick up by nice old lady. I work like slave for six month, no pay, no time off, I do everything, and when I show I am with baby, I am dump again on street in front of hospital. I end up no baby, naked, I sell my body for dinero."

Lurid as that sounds, I was the ultimate captive audience.

"How did you get to the States in the first place?"

I was thinking about the tough South Mexican border. The reports I had heard were that, Central Americans caught trying to sneak into Mexico from Central America were beaten, jailed and if they were lucky, booted back to their own country. And it is thousands of miles from there to San Diego.

"I pay Mexican soldier," my lady barber said. "They rape me, but they take money for to transport me."

She made it sound matter-of-fact, grinding poverty and brutality a way of life. I gave her a big tip and promised to look into it. It was only later that I paused to think several waitresses at the Pollo Amigo restaurant in the same strip mall were from Panama. And many of the day laborers loitering in front of the Home Depot in Canoga Park were from Central America. And my own gardener was from San Salvador. The next week when Fernando came to mow the grass, I asked him if there was an illegal way to get across Mexico.

"Sure," he said. "Mexican underground railroad. More expensive than it used to be, but they still do it." But then he had a sobering thought. "I, of course, have my green card and I am here complete legal." He didn't offer it, and I didn't ask.

And there you have it. Mexico has an underground railroad that transports migrants from Central America across their own country and into ours. That's a journey of over a thousand miles. And those who successfully take that trip are not yet even across the border into the Promised Land, where the real adventure begins. □

Next Issue — Major Works Supplement!

June will be our final issue of this year. It will include our annual Major Works Supplement!

Due to the (necessary) limit of 800 words, there are many fine writers in our branch who get 'squeezed out' of the Scribe. These are folks who write novels, plays, screenplays, or reference works that simply do not fit the usual 800-word limit. Once each year, we try to shine our spotlight on them.

In our June issue, we will present (up to) six excerpts from members' major works. (This would usually mean a scene from a play or a chapter of a book.) Please try to understand and follow the spirit of this. Here are the guidelines for submission:

Length: 800 - 1600 words. Don't feel compelled to fill the limit.

Single excerpt only: Please don't send a collection of poems or essays; we will print these, singly, at another time.

No previously published work: We do a lot of exposing of published books by members. This is for works in progress.

(on the other hand)

Polished/finished work only, please: This is a potentially large project, and we do not have the resources to edit drafts. Sorry. We will have to discard 'first drafts' or careless work.

The first six eligible submissions will be used. We look forward to reading your Major Work!

TRUNK TREASURES

Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

We get up early this Sunday. Mom and I love antique shops, garage sales, ‘chatkies’, etc.

“Quelle heure est-il?” Mom asks pointing at her watch. I know she wants me to get ready pronto. Rushing breakfast, I burn my throat with scalding café.

There is a crowd of people looking at a huge garage sale.

“Attention, this looks like a forgotten piece of the Ming Dynasty,” Mom says holding a china atrocity. She puts it aside on her pile of would be treasures.

My mind wonders over a beautiful distressed trunk the sale owner has dumped into a corner.

“Look Mom, it looks just like the trunk Dad brought over from Europe,” I say excitedly looking it over inside and out.

Mom makes a face; SHE does not look interested.

“It does NOT look anything like the one your father had. Without a doubt you are definitely a ‘stuccos’, a baser trash collector,” discouraging me to buy it.

“Mom, you never paid attention to Dad’s old trunk. YOU even left it behind when we moved to the Sorbona house not caring about the memories inside.” I should bite my tongue. I can see her feelings are hurt.

“It was stolen in transit going to the new house,” she insists.

“Yes! That is what YOU said,” my mean streak still there. “I loved that old trunk Mom. How I wish we still had it. I remember his beautiful oil color portrait enlargements, his Tefilin and Hebrew Sidur prayer books with the hand-sewn leather cover Grandma made in Europe. Those were the only things Dad truly treasured, remember?”

“You seem to think that I’m not sensitive or caring about the past,” she says with a hurt tremor in her voice. “There was a small piece of lace from — remember? — Grandma’s wedding dress. I gave that piece to you on your Wedding Day. It was a miracle that it survived the horror of the Holocaust.”

I feel like a low class criminal.

“Yes Mom I still wear the lace piece for the High Holidays.”

How I wish I could retrieve those nasty words. How could I have been so mean and hateful? Dear Mom who always shared everything with us. MOM who made our Hanukkah dolls from her old stockings when Dad’s business failed and had to go on ‘money diets’ — her very words. Everything Mom did was fun and we never felt the lean years.

“Mom, I don’t want the trunk anymore.”

But she is already paying for it. “A small gift from me to you,” she says with a faint smile. We hug each other and cry, not caring about the people around us.

After getting the trunk home Mom and I can’t wait to start restoring it. We remove layers upon layers of rusty history. Brownish foreign newspapers disintegrate — even though we want to save at least a small fraction, and frame it in a small piece of glass.

The outside is all finished and Mom decides to go back to Quito insisting that 18 months with us was enough. I can’t travel back with her on Doctors orders.

The trunk looks magnificent! The inside is completely lined with old foreign newspapers. I try to salvage some small pieces but they disintegrate. A nail, sticking out, pierces my finger. Blood drips into the bottom. The nail is rusty, Ralph cleans the wound with peroxide.

Removing the nail carefully loosens a small piece of wood. I feel a small accordion-like piece of paper in my hand. Carefully I open it to find Mom’s neat calligraphy-like handwriting. It’s dated the same day she went back. She must have put it there before leaving for the airport.

My eyes blur with tears as I read. “I hope you finish the inside dear. I love this trunk mostly because we spent so much time talking during the restoration. Please forgive this old fool for being sentimental.”

LOVE YOU, MOM. My tears mix with the blood-drops at the bottom. I blend the sentimental mixture with the glue and start covering the old trunk with the nostalgic fabric of our treasured memories. □

Dead White Poets Doug Douglas

Lord Byron's gift of romanced bloom
From nurtured seed he'd sow it;
Once praised his craft, the world renown
But now mere Dead White Poet.

So self-possessed these critics' pride
His vaulted verse condemn;
Take heed, they cannot judge his art,
His art is judging them.



HOW 80 YEARS CHANGED MY ART — Max Schwartz

I plan to pass on my drawing talents
To the next generation of artists.
Drawing during my childhood was simple
It involved mostly close friends,
Like sketching Masha, my cat, or Misha, my dog

Other times I drew trees and houses
Or my fellow students at school
Then I was pushed towards art by the sweet
Mrs. Gough, my fifth grade teacher,
Whose husband was a commercial artist.

The next period of my life came at the age of eighteen
When I spent a year in Costa Rica
Surveyor's aide on the Pan American Highway.
There everything around me changed like...,
People, language, weather and food.

The most memorable parts of my life included
Tropical storms, sweltering heat, and dense forests,
Also, the high mountains with active volcanoes.
Food was also different. No clean water or safe milk.
Ate whatever the natives ate. But I had plenty to draw.

The next period of my life was with the Army Engineers
In Europe and the Pacific during WW2.
My work consisted of clearing mines and building bridges
across raging rivers and under severe mortar fire.
But I still sketched the scenes around me
Be they destroyed towns, bridges, or fleeing refugees

The post war years, my fourth period, was a relief
As a new civilization was being built
And I took part in it... as a Civil Engineer.
New cities, roadways, industries and hope.
Much different than the war years.

That helped my return to sketching and painting
With pencil, water color, acrylic, oil
Of landscapes, ship scenes like HMS Bounty,
Historic and biblical montages,
Temple in Jerusalem and Great Wall in China

During these retirement years, my tools of art
increased
From oil and water colors to digital tablets and
stylus
More time in art galleries to study the work
Of modern masters like hands and feet by Rodin
Heads by Picasso and bodies by Henry Moore.

The present will be my platinum payback period
When I pass on to the next generation
My talents in classical and realistic art,
With computer created brushes and stylus
To screens on the world network near and far.

Poetry- an abstract painting

Pirhiya Goldstein

Poetry- a coded language of ambiguity,
whereby the poet has the urge to reveal,
yet struggles with his need to conceal.

Poetry- an abstract painting of emotions,
whereby the poet hesitates to commit to his words,
while the reader attempts to decipher the codes.

The reader enters the ring,
brings along his inner being.

The reader attempts to unravel the colorful words,
from the angle of his own biased world.

At times the reader yearns to discover,
What the poet did not aim to uncover.

A SAGA IN GREEN

Norman Molesko

I was sitting worry-free by a tree
sensing a narrow expanse of grass.
I became awed by what I did see,
a particular single blade of grass.

My other thoughts were at an impasse,
except for this single blade of grass.
Then a light breeze descended slowly,
the blade began to sway to and fro.

This moving blade intrigued me
in a motionless field of greenery.
The swaying blade was in its own class,
ignored by the other blades as an outcast.

Watching the blade's swaying motion,
its unique gymnastics were amusing.

The concentration I had retained
was quite deep and all-consuming.

As if by magic other blades energized.
The breeze became strengthened by now.
Swayings of other blades started somehow,
changing the greenery into a busy pow-wow.

**TOGETHER**

Ethel Ann Shaffer

Ever since I can remember,
We have been together—
Sliding down the cellar door,
Dancing on the kitchen floor,
Sharing secrets, being clever—
We have been together.
Now I am a woman grown
With desires of my own.
No longer can I tolerate
A friendship that is second-rate—
One-time pebble, now turned stone—
Around the neck of a woman grown.
I wonder why I vacillate
The fate of this unwanted mate?
It's time I cut this kinship short.
Wouldn't you, if it were your wart?

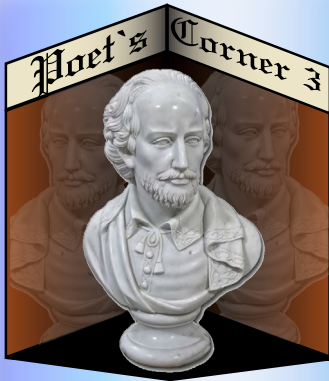
Chatter House Press

is pleased to announce a mini-memoir essay
contest for women. The topic for the essay is
"Success On My Own Terms."

Full details can be found at
www.chatterhousepress.com
(click on CONTEST in the menu).

There is no charge for entering the contest,
and first prize is a book publishing contract
(memoir, poetry, fiction, or non-fiction).

Deadline: May 2, 2014.



A Poets Lament ---

Keyle Birnberg-Goldstein

Last night I had a dream,
That I could write verses
Like a poet does
With candid simple words
Clear and transparent
Like rain drops in the fall-

Words that flow without interruption
Like a symphony
Played by angels in the sky

I dreamed of verses
Written with sensitive thoughts
Feelings left bare
Stretched on my page
Waiting for others to stare

But, that was just a dream
My words are not understood
Lethargic and confused they wander
Waiting to be rescued
Before they trip and fall

One day
The poet in me will awake
And then,
I will tie my words with ribbons
Splash them on blank pages
Where verses wait to glow

Mom
Ray Malus

From somewhere deep within a torpid Winter dream,
I woke to feel the urging of her quiet hand.
She hushed my lips and softly kissed my tousled hair,
and wrapped me in a robe and gently lifted me.

She held me in her warm embrace and carried me
through shiv'ry darkness out into the living room,
and over to the window, where the parted drapes
revealed the miracle she'd wakened me to share.

A secret snow had fallen as I lay asleep,
and blanketed the squalor of the New York street.

I lay there in the luxury of loving arms
and looked out at a slum become a wonderland.

The traffic-melted flakes had wet the surface of
the grimy streets. The cobblestones lay glistening — bright
fresh loaves of crisp-baked whole wheat bread set tight upon
a rack to cool, with gleaming glaze sprayed on their crusts.

The hoar hung on the rusty pillars of the El.

A pristine coat of stucco had been new applied
to crumbling, shoddy, old decaying building walls
and made them seem like fabled villas in the night.

Across the avenue the intersecting street,
whose seamy asphalt in the summer seared and seethed
with undulating heat, was quenched — and veiled in white,
with tire ruts that made it seem a country lane.

The lights above the pavement seemed to perch upon
fluorescent cones of iridescent fireflies,
like blazing pom-poms set on tinsel party hats
that marched in single column down the boulevard.

And, as we watched, a grime-grayed train roared overhead.

A hail of sparks cascaded to the street below —
a dazzling show of incandescent meteors
put on by God for just the two of us to see.

I never felt we owned each other more than then,
through all the many years she loved and cared for me,
And there was no way either of us could have known
that this would be my most beloved memory.

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

May 3rd, 1 p.m. — Helga Schier
Top Ten Errors Writers Make that Editors Hate
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!

Larry Levine
Liz Cooke
Sylvia Molesko

May 5
May 10
May 31

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

Regular Features:
Submissions:

Submission deadlines:
TENTH of the previous month.
FIFTEENTH of the previous month.

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.

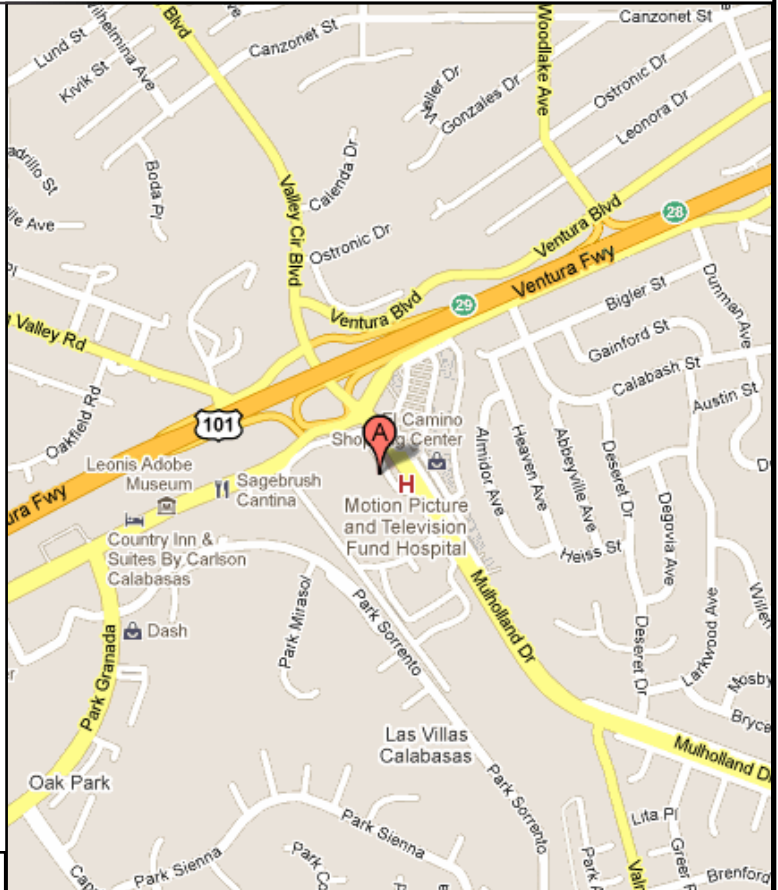
Parking is free in any of the lots.

(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](#)

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California Writers Club San Fernando Valley Branch

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LOTS of great information at our

Website:

www.cwc-sfv.org