

The Valley Scribe

Next Meeting Saturday, March 4, 2017

Volume 10

Issue 7

President's Connections

Andi Polk



Marching through the rain, here comes spring! The January & February rains renew our earth, soften the hardpan soil and green our hillsides and mountains. Seeds and bulbs are sprouting that have waited years for the moderate deluge. This awakening bodes well for all of us. Writers' hearts and pens beat a little stronger in spring. And winter's struggles and heartaches are softened by the blooms that daily remind us of the power of new life.

In four months we will hold an election for our board members, giving us a chance for new life. Our writers' club founded thirty years ago was full of enthusiasm and promise. The members were eager to write, explore genres and styles. Soon they published anthologies, conducted workshops and special events and contests. In time our club was more than one hundred members.

This last year we challenged ourselves with a thirty-year anniversary anthology—the first anthology since 2009. The experience has been very positive. The team Rita Brown put together works with spirit, enthusiasm and cooperation. We have new resolve to continue to be active and outreach into the community expanding the wealth of talent we currently have.

We are confident we have talent within our current membership to excel in leading the club into exciting avenues for our professional and novice writers. The current board members will mentor and assist all new board members. I am looking forward to the next four months as we develop a new board.

Invite your writing friends to visit and see what we have planned. We offer excellent feature speakers, new social media outlets, critique groups, networking, the coming of the anthology before June, up-to-date list of writing contests and publishing opportunities, promotion and press releases for your newly published books and articles either on the website or in this newsletter.

Enjoy your spring 2017.

March Speaker *Cyrus Nowrasteh*



The man in red, the award winning screenwriter and film director, *CYRUS NOWRASTEH* will speak Saturday, March 4th. *'Screenwriting and TV writing, my experience & the future -- a general overview of working in today's ever-changing media'*

If you wish you knew more about screenwriting, have an idea that you're sure would make a great film DON'T MISS this. Here's a chance to learn and to ask your questions.

CYRUS NOWRASTEH in 2006 produced "A Path to 9/11" a controversial ABC miniseries attracted 28 million viewers. Cyrus wrote and directed the indie feature, "The Stoning of Soraya M," released by Lionsgate Entertainment in 2009. Telling the true story of a woman stoned to death in Iran, the movie won wards at film festivals around the world. Although it was banned in Iran, the movie was smuggled in and the positive reception forced the Iranian government to announce a moratorium on stoning. His next film, "The Young Messiah" released to over 2000 screens nationwide by Focus Features in 2016, was based on the Anne Rice novel. The film explored bold new territory in telling the never-before-told fictionalized story of the childhood of Jesus.

Cyrus's work focuses on meaty and important themes. His current projects include the "Last Campaign", a visceral account of Robert Kennedy's inspiring 1968 run for the White House; The Battle of New Orleans, the story of Andrew Jackson's spirited defense of America from British invasion; and El Krim, the story of the man who defied Spain and France in 1920s Morocco with the help of the United States.

WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY!! CAN'T MISS!!!

February Program Review

Andi Polk

Last month author Chris Lynch shared his experience writing magazine articles. He remarked that revenue from magazines sustains writing his novels. His energy and passion was evident as he walked among the members and guests with examples of his articles.

He encouraged us for numerous reasons. He regaled us with the ease, the fun and the money. He asked himself why and how when he saw a possible story, his research into the answers allowed him to honestly say, "The stories fell in my lap."

Chris reminded us the 500 to 1,500 word articles can be written in as little as a day for most novel writers. Writing for magazines will make us better writers. The exposure will aid the promotion of our larger work. Compared to the revenues for novels, the magazine payment is much more profitable. You will learn "amazing things and meet interesting people" and can adapt what you learn to larger work.

In order to get started he reminded us that it essential to know the magazines that may be interested in our story. Use the Writer's Market and Google as sources and search the magazines for up-to-date information about them. Start close to home with local magazines. If you are local to the story you know the territory and have greater credibility.

Prepare an angle that is different from the norm on the subject. Writer's Market can provide examples of good and bad query letters. If you do not get a response, follow up. Chris was successful receiving the assignment in 50% of his follow-ups. Know the readership of the magazine and your readership. Look for a good match.

Finally Chris generously sent his talking points for distribution to our members. He wishes us Good Luck!!

Thank you Chris. Members have already started to seriously explore this opportunity. Applause.

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Opportunities: Publishing, Contests, Marketing *Mary Freeman*

F.Y.I. - What is New Adult?

New Adult (NA) is a relatively recently added category in the marketplace, picking up after Young Adult (YA). While YA generally targets ages 12-17, NA's audience are readers ages 18-25—though, of course, adult-aged readers express interest in both categories.

YA and NA are categories rather than genres. Examples of genre include romance, historical fiction, fantasy, and so forth.

In most books, the main characters are usually the age of the target audience for the category. If you're writing NA, your protagonist would be age 18-25.

YA can include coming-of-age themes, high school conflict, rebellion, and first love. NA takes a more independent stand on issues such as college and first romantic relationship. Main characters in NA are making their way in the world, moving beyond their first jobs. They are trying to find a career path and, with it, learning about financial responsibilities. Sexual content can be more explicit than in YA; *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E. L. James was a popular NA trilogy.

While some publishers link NA with their children's division, others include it with their adult books.

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F.Y.I. - What is New Adult? (Continued)

Identifying your category is important as you will need to list that in your query letters and use it when you pitch. Stating that your book is "YA/NA" may send your query to the slush pile. Instead, take the time to read and research both YA and NA, then correctly categorize your manuscript.

Christine Van Zandt

Christine@Write-for-Success.com

THE WRITE LIFE TEAM ANNOUNCES:

Each year, *The Write Life* releases an annual list of the 100 Best Websites for Writers. Today, we're thrilled to share with you our 2017 edition. [The 100 Best Websites for Writers in 2017](https://thewritelife.com/100-best-websites-for-writers-2017/) Thanks to your suggestions, you've helped us curate hundreds of websites to bring you the best of the best. Special thanks to contributor Marisol Dahl who compiled this year's list.

<https://thewritelife.com/100-best-websites-for-writers-2017/>

GREAT AMERICAN THINK-OFF:

"Has the 2016 election changed our perception of truth?"

Deadline April 1 (must be received by this date). Free contest for US writers seeks essays up to 750 words on a selected philosophical theme. Four finalists receive \$500 and an expenses-paid trip to New York Mills, MN in June for debate to determine the contest winner. The 2017 topic is: "Has the 2016 election changed our perception of truth?" Enter online or by mail. Sponsored by New York Mills Regional Cultural Center.

<http://www.think-off.org/2017thinkoffquestion/>

WATERSTON DESERT WRITING PRIZE:

Deadline April 1 (must be received by this date). Free contest awards \$2,000 and a four-week residency at PLAYA in Summer Lake, OR for "literary nonfiction that illustrates artistic excellence, sensitivity to place, and desert literacy--with the desert as both subject and setting." Send 10-page nonfiction writing sample (published or unpublished), along with 1-page proposal description and 1-page biographical statement, via sponsor's online submission portal. Named in honor of Writing Ranch founder and author/poet Ellen Waterston.

<http://www.writingranch.com/waterston-prize-for-desert-writers/>

From winningwriters.com: SCAM BUSTING

"Poor Poetry, Rich Deceit"

Nigerian journalist Ugochukwu Ejinkeonye denounces American poetry scams. An eye-opener.

[*Absolute Write Water Cooler*](#)

Absolute Write provides [warning signs](#) of low-quality contests. Their [Beware and Background Check forum](#) is invaluable for discussions of questionable agents and publishers.

[*Author Solutions and Friends: The Inside Story*](#)

This 2015 article from self-publishing expert David Gaughran's blog "Let's Get Digital" exposes the deceptive marketing practices of Author Solutions and its questionable partnerships with major publishing houses. Author Solutions is the umbrella company for several well-known self-publishing imprints such as iUniverse, Trafford, AuthorHouse, and Xlibris. According to allegations in a pending class-action suit: "Author Solutions operates more like a telemarketing company whose customer base is the Authors themselves. In other words, unlike a traditional publisher, Author Solutions makes money from its Authors, not for them."

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Scam Busting (Continued from Page 3)

It does so by selling books back to its Authors, not to a general readership, and by selling its Authors expensive publishing, editing, and marketing services that are effectively worthless."

[Avoiding Literary Agency Scams](#)

Warning signs include agents who advertise too aggressively for new clients, or gather most of their fees from the writer rather than the publisher.

[Indies Unlimited PublishingFoul Survey](#)

Indies Unlimited is a platform to promote the work of self-published and small press authors and discuss best practices in the industry. This page summarizes the results of their 2015 PublishingFoul survey, which asked authors to share stories of being scammed by publishers. Follow them on Twitter @IndiesUnlimited and search the #PublishingFoul hashtag to keep up with and contribute to this conversation.

[On Entering Your Poems in Competition](#)

Kurt Heintz advises poets on the kinds of online contests worth entering.

[Poetry Winner \(I & II\)](#)

By Jessica Westhead. Satirical chapbooks by one of Poetry.com's innumerable "semifinalists" memorialize her mostly fruitless efforts to contact the contest operators. Email [Jessica](#) to obtain a copy.

[Professor Roy's Amazingly Bad Poetry Journal](#)

Satirist "Professor Roy" searches Poetry.com for the worst possible poems, and explains just why they're so bad. Visit his User Info page for warnings about poetry scams.

[Rip-off Report.com](#)

A good place to check for complaints about contests and publishers.

[The Flarf Files](#)

"Flarf" is a collaborative poetic technique that creates nonsensical poems from the results of odd Google keyword searches, Internet chat-room lingo, and the "corrosive, cute, or cloying, awfulness" of the amateur poetry that is popular in online forums. Begun as a spoof of Poetry.com's innumerable "semifinalists"

(Continued 🐼)

low standards, the Flarf "movement" also satirizes how so-called "mainstream" poetry is actually produced by and for an irrelevant elite class, while the poetry that most people read is the (generally bad) amateur poetry circulated between individuals and posted on the Internet. For more on the latter point, see the related

website <http://mainstreampoeetry.blogspot.com/>.

[Warnings and Cautions](#)

Website dedicated to identifying scams.

[Wocky Jivvy: Poems of Shame](#)

Brave and as yet unsuccessful attempts to write a poem that The National Library of Poetry won't accept. From "Dawn of a New Eve": "Now he offers me dark fruit;/A piece of pie for my bloodroot./Thick serpent slithers through my verse;/Is what he seeks inside my purse?/'Oh Eve, I sssavor what you wrote!'/Now he's coiled around my throat..."

[Writer Beware Blog](#)

Authors/scam hunters Victoria Strauss and A.C. Crispin give advice on avoiding scam contests, working with editors and agents, and understanding your legal rights. Writer Beware is a project of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America's Committee on Writing Scams.

[Writer Beware's Thumbs Down Agency List](#)

Invaluable literary watchdog site Writer Beware lists the signs of a literary agency scam and the top 20 offenders.

[WritersWeekly Warnings](#)

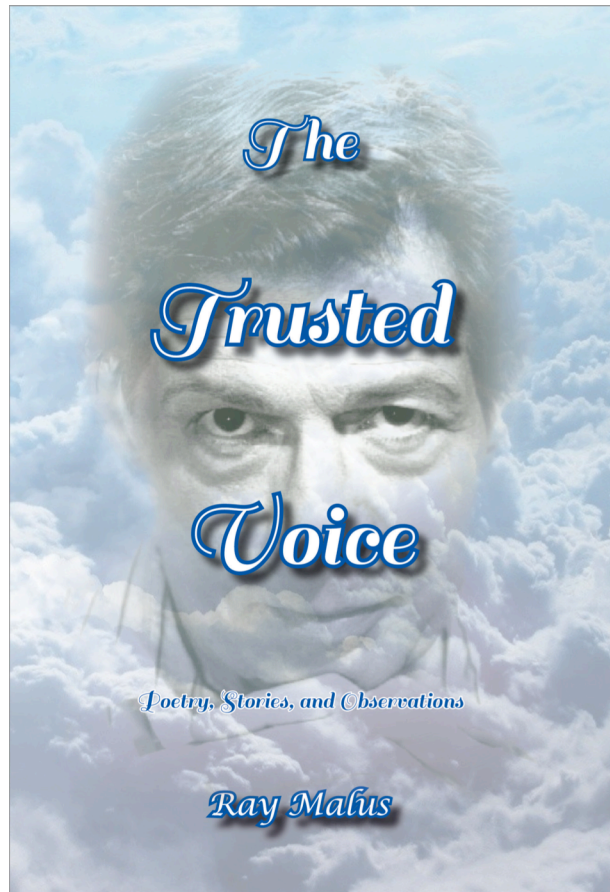
Names publishers and organizations that writers have had disputes with.

[Writing.org: Poetry Scams?](#)

The good news: You're a winner. The bad news: It's costing you fifty bucks...For a struggling poet, it can be painful to admit that a letter from a poetry contest or publisher is nothing more than a sales hustle. But what's worse: being honest with yourself or being the victim of a company that exploits the vanity of aspiring poets?

WOW, Lots of interesting SCAM warnings here.

Thank you, Mary Freeman. AP



Ray J. Malus March 20, 1943 – February 5, 2017
So much talent, so little time.

Small Talk
 Ray Malus

I refuse to suffocate my life in small talk.
 To try to volley the marshmallow of the mundane.
 To swim through pools and leave no wake
 To tread the sandy verge and leave no print.

Do not come to my board with candy floss
 Bring meat and blood and bone, or abstain
 Nor fill my air with vain and vapid chat.
 Silence holds, at least, the promise of meaning.

January 17, 2017
 Sent to Keyle after a visit to Kaiser

The Trusted Voice is an eclectic collection of shorter works by acclaimed Novelist, Humorist, and Poet, Ray Malus. It contains poetry, short stories, essays, and observations garnered from anthologies, and websites all over the Internet. These are assembled in this collection for the very first time.

A 'must read' for those who love poetry, vivid fiction writing, and pithy commentary; for those who love to laugh, cry, and ponder.

Malus writes as several personae: Ray Malus, J. Raymond Kent, R. Marlow.

Now, all these pen names come together in one volume, *The Trusted Voice*.

"Ray Malus writes with a huge heart, trenchant wit, and elegant diction. His writing is as refreshing as strong sweet tea on a hot afternoon. He wastes no time in the telling of his tales, but he cuts ever so gently to the chase. I found myself in the best of company with Malus. He's a born story-teller."

Ted Walch, Endowed Chair for Performing Arts & Cinema Studies,
 Harvard-Westlake School

Read 5 pages, and you'll be hooked!

Available at: Amazon, Kindle, and Better Book Stores

Tribute to Ray, by Lil Rodich

Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow.

Don't walk behind me, I may not lead.

Just walk beside me and be my friend.

Friendship was a very important concept to Ray Malus. Ray was my friend and I shall miss him very much and remember him with a smile and appreciation. Our friendship grew from mutual interest in writing and a sense of unadorned respect and approval. We often proofed and/or commented on each other's work and I always discovered new ways of looking at literature... from quotations to life to "meaning" of it all or lack thereof.

Gaining a new perspective, I was interested in "right brain" discussions and careful choice of words. Ray's critiquing was "on spot" and delivered objectively. He honored age and youth and talent. I am richer in many ways for having known him. Of course, I realized that he used his words with complete honesty at all times in his interaction with peers and worked with complete devotion to CWC.

In the end the writing world, the music world, the world of mentees and philosophers, and his church lost a brilliant writer and talented performer.

And, in truth, CWC lost a friend.

NOTES TO MY GOOD FRIEND RAY *an excerpt*

BY: KEYLE BINBERG

I get up today tired and spent from a restless sleep. Tossed and turned this way and that way, but sleep didn't come as if sleep has escaped from my body forever.

It's a boring Thursday in February. It doesn't matter the day or the week, I feel Emptiness all around me.

The sun is shining everywhere outside my window but its dark in my heart. I stay awake every single night just thinking about Ray's departure to the unknown. I refuse to believe that He is gone forever. I don't think so. How come I sense his presence everywhere I go? He follows every step I take day or night. Now, how am I to know or guess all the answers to my questions, which were hanging from his lips before he gave me an answer?

At night when all is dark and quiet, I venture into the back patio and look-up at the moon. We were MOONIE pals.

Is he also looking up at the very same time looking for the dark stains inside? I stare until my eyes blink my tears away. Where is he? He inhaled and exhaled his breath into the universe...so; I know this is not a final phenomenon, but some kind of permanence Floating around me and all the people he loved.

Perhaps he is a tiny velvet-like little bird who comes around to tap my window when I'm sad. Sometimes I convince myself that it is HIM...in a good mood because pain is not a part of him anymore. His pain went away the day someone called his name way up there into the blue sky behind the clouds saying he 'HAD' to go leaving this earth on his own terms. Just like my brother did. Now, someone ask me? How can anyone be satisfied with this answer? I don't think. I will ever be.

The sun is up lazily stretching his brilliant yellow with sparkles of red, like fire Forever spraying warmth everywhere, except where I am looking at it, trying not to blink away any tears forming inside my eyes without my consent.

From Leslie Kaplan

The Pony-tailed One Sharron ... the wife of Ray Malus ... lost her partner in life.

I called her to lend some support when I learned of his serious condition. She burst into tears as she gave me the heartbreaking news that Ray passed away at 5:00 A.M. on Sunday, February 5, 2017.

Ray's brilliance and personality conducted our branch of the California Writers Club in so many ways. Professional quality writer ... actor who entertained us and made HIS open mic reads sound like theater ... branch photographer ... Newsletter editor ... and Webmaster.

Sharron told me that Ray tried very hard to get up out of bed twice. He wanted to go to the Saturday club meeting at the Motion Picture Television Fund campus on February the 4th and read his last poem about death but he was too weak and just couldn't make it. She lost her soul mate ... and we lost him too.

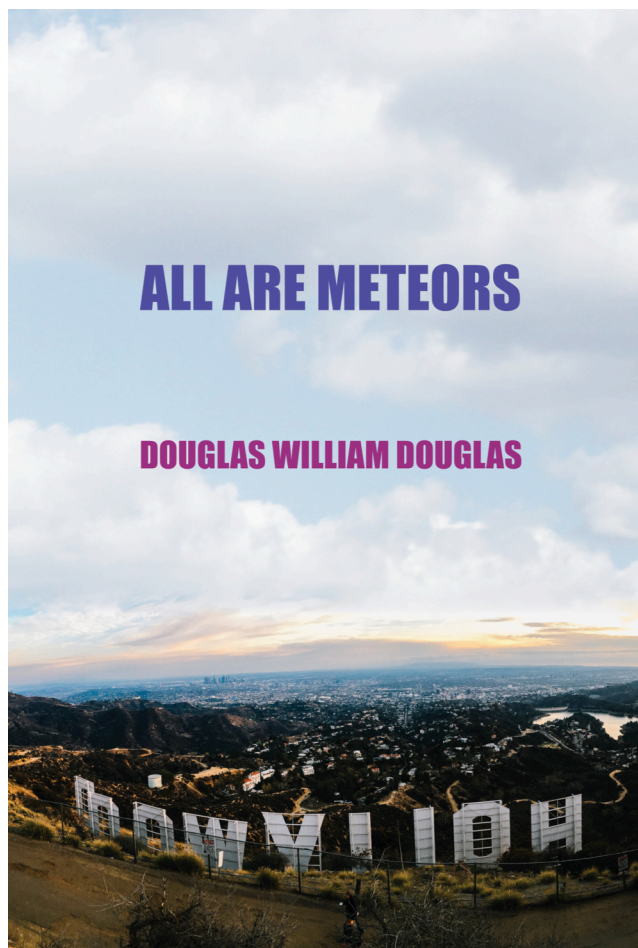
"Bye, Bye Mr. American Pie"

New Reader, by Andi Polk

A library of books
With thick cardboard pages
Animals with textured pictures
Rabbit and penguin with fur
Leather rhinos and elephants
Ribbed zebra stripes,
Dabbled fish scales
For his touch.

All within reach
His tiny hands pull down
One, two, three, four
Bright children's books
Scattered all around him.
He delights in wonder.

Upside down
Back page first
It doesn't matter
It is the thrill
Of turning pages.



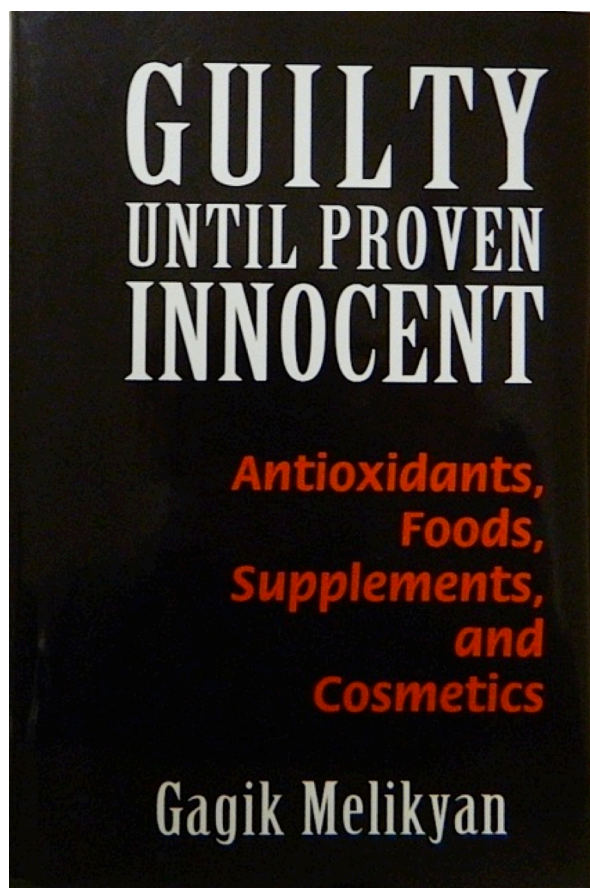
All Are Meteors
By Douglas William Douglas

Actor, Lawyer, Politician, Millionaire...and Murderer? Jake Fanconi is young, sexy, rich, world famous, and loved by (almost) everyone. He's just steps away from the highest office in the land. Has his luck finally run out?

"Part Don Juan, part Holden Caulfield, part Ronald Reagan, Jake Fanconi's exploits will make you laugh and then cringe and then cry. *All Are Meteors* is that rare captivating romp that also has a heart."

"You'll LOL reading *All Are Meteors* as it follows the hilarious and poignant escapades of Jake Fanconi, lucking his way up from snotty teen to internationally acclaimed actor and politician."

Available on Amazon



Guilty Until Proven Innocent by Gagik Melikyan provides compelling evidence that antioxidants, foods, supplements, cosmetics, and natural compounds can be harmful to the human body. It arms a layperson with the critical knowledge that will allow him/her to make educated choices and protect themselves and beloved ones from potentially hazardous substances. When dealing with consumables, it adopts the novel concept of "presumption of guilt", as opposed to "presumption of innocence", borrowed from the criminal justice system: "A chemical compound, of any origin, is considered to be harmful to the human body ("guilty"), until proven harmless ("innocent") by qualified, independent parties." In laymen terms, the author explains why - despite public beliefs - green tea, red wine, coffee, sunscreen lotions, hair colors, antioxidants, supplements, and parabens in women's cosmetics can cause irreparable damage to vital body systems. The book criticizes the public's obsession with everything "natural" and convincingly demonstrates that "natural" is not synonymous with "safe" or "beneficial." It's written for the general public, and also for professionals from the food industry, academia, government agencies, consumer protection and advocacy groups. URL

Be Careful What You Wish For, By Sheila Moss

Be careful what you wish for. What sort of advice is that? I don't remember wishes coming with warnings.

Of course, it makes no difference to me because I'm a confirmed non-wisher; have been since I turned ten. Being a single twenty-eight-year-old male math teacher, I figure wishing just doesn't compute. However Jennie, who lives across the hall, is an ardent devotee.

Jennie is one of those mother hen types, always fussing over you. Now don't you start picturing a short, round, plain-faced female 'cause that is not Jennie. Jennie is twenty-five, gorgeous with big brown eyes, beautiful graceful neck and long, graceful legs. I admit I like her, but she's out of my league.

Last week she invited the 'no place to go' residents in our apartment building, including me, for Thanksgiving dinner. It didn't take much persuading since everyone knows what a great cook Jennie is. We were a motley crew—Miss Betty, an eighty-three-year-old widow, her forty-year-old son Harvey, Miss Lonely Heart, Sally, Jennie and me, Jake.

About a week later, when the turkey was a faint memory, Jennie knocked on my door. "Hello, best turkey cook," I said as Jennie walked in.

"Hello yourself. Want to come over later? I baked chocolate chip cookies."

"So that's the divine new perfume you're wearing. What's the occasion? Actually any digression would be welcomed since I have three sets of algebra tests to correct."

"I think the wishbone is ready."

"Ready, ready for what?"

"The battle of the wishbone, silly, to see who gets to make the wish."

"You don't really believe in that stuff, do you?" The look on her face told me her answer. Before I made an enemy for life, I replied, "How can I refuse such an offer: wishbone tug of war, followed by chocolate chip cookies?"

There we were thumb to thumb. I meant to let her win, but my thumb had never thrown a fight.

"What are you going to wish for?" asked Jennie.

I started to say, "Nothing" but then realized she was just testing me. Hadn't I learned that if you tell what you wish for, it wouldn't come true? "Mum's the word, Jennie."

Jennie just grinned, "I believe the Wishbone committee grants the recipient's wish within a day or two."

Boy was she right. When I got up Saturday morning, I heard a chomping noise outside my window,

Thoughts About John Grisham's novel *THE WHISTLER*,
By John Klawitter

The Whistler might have been better as an unpublished idea in John Grisham's head. One good thing about Grisham as an author is, he experiments a lot. So the reader doesn't always know what to expect. This can lead to some really good reads, like for instance *PLAYING FOR PIZZA* or *GRAY MOUNTAIN*. But one bad thing happens when a story like *THE WHISTLER* comes along: as the unfortunate reader, you have to pay \$28.95 plus tax for the experience.

That said, I do recommend it as an instructional piece for writers who think there's a "them" and an "us" and the "thems" never make mistakes.

Readers should know this is a slow moving plot with a set of characters without a lot going for them. Writers, wondering how this might be so, may find some answers in the subject matter and a legal process that is relatively unknown and full of legal complexity. The two main protagonists (Lacy and Hugo) work as relatively powerless employees of a state department that looks for corruption in state judges. They meet a furtive 'whistleblower' and start a hesitant investigation. After over a hundred pages of *hapless fustering about*, they foolishly agree to meet a supposed mysterious informant in a dark and lonely place. Hugo is killed and Lacy is badly injured.

After somewhat recovering, Lacy continues the investigation, but her employer is relatively powerless, the FBI is hesitant to join in, and things continue slowly. There is a slow pile-up of evidence and the bad guys are slowly uncovered and toppled over. And then, because the circumstances are complicated, there is something of a lengthy unraveling at the end where the narration explains what happened to all the good people, the bad people and the ugly people.

So what's the lesson for us writers? This was the wrong story to make into a novel. Too bulky, complex, slow-moving. And the investigating agency and its agents had too little power to move the plot along at a good pace. Or more to the point: there's room at the top because even great novelists can make big mistakes.

(Continued "Be Careful What You Wish For")

near the giant elm. Opening the blinds, I saw standing there, looking at me with big, brown soulful eyes, arching a long slender neck, and displaying legs that went on forever was a GIRAFFE.

And yes, there was Jennie, yelling, "You have to be VERY specific about what you wish for."

<i>Calendar March – April 2017</i>	<i>Directions and Meeting Information</i>
<p>Wednesday, March 1, Board meeting, MPTF Hospital Administrative Conference (ARC) Room 10 A.M. to Noon, presided by Andi Polk.</p> <p>Saturday, March 4 General Meeting, Katzenberg Pavilion MPTF See schedule below.</p> <p>Correction -- Saturday, April 1, 2017 Speaker Karen Gorback, “On Writing Dialog”</p> <p>Wednesday, April 5, 2017, Board meeting , MPTF Hospital ARC room 10 AM to Noon.</p>	<p>Location Motion Picture, Television Fund campus. 23388 Mulholland Dr. Woodland Hills, CA We meet in the Katzenberg Pavilion</p> <p>Freeway Directions from east Take 101 Freeway to the west end of the San Fernando Valley. Exit Valley Circle/Mulholland Dr. Go south over the 101 Freeway. Pass Calabasas Rd., on your right enter Spielberg Dr. the second entrance. Parking is free. Ask the kiosk attendant for directions to the parking lot with the trombone player statue.</p> <p>The Katzenberg Pavilion room is beyond the Dog Park. Take the winding path to the courtyard. We will set up for sign-in outside our room at 12:30 PM</p> <p>Guests are asked to contribute a \$5 tax deductible donation.</p>
<i>Election Schedule</i>	
<p>May 6, 2017, Announce Nominating Committee to consult and nominate with candidates permission at least one Active or Associate member for each of the four officers of the CWC-SFV branch. The term is two years.</p> <p>June 3, 2017 Election of officers: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Other vacant positions shall be appointed by the President</p>	
<i>March 4th Program Schedule</i>	
<p>12:30 P.M. Registration and sign-in for Open Mic</p> <p>1:00 P.M. Members 5 minutes Open Mic, bring an extra copy for interpreters</p> <p>1:30 P.M. Business Announcements & Introduce Guests</p> <p>1:40 P.M. Refreshments Break, Meet and Mingle</p>	<p>2:00 P.M Featured Speaker – film maker Cyrus Nowrasteh on <i>'Screenwriting and TV writing, my experience & the future -- a general overview of working in today's ever-changing media'</i></p> <p>3:00 P.M. Appreciation of speaker, Raffle Cyrus Nowrasteh’s DVD of one of his movies.</p> <p>3:30 P.M Doors closed</p>