

# *The Valley Scribe*

Next Meeting Saturday, April 1, 2017

Volume 10

Issue 7

## *President's Connections* *Andi Polk*



Nightmares and guilt work night and day. My personal frantic rabbit has been chanting in my nightmares, “You’re late! You’re late for a very important date. No time to say, ‘Hello. Good Bye’. You’re LATE!” It is soon April Fools, but this no trick and I am not a fool. This newsletter rabbit has to be trapped by someone else, or there will be no CWC-SFV newsletter. *The Valley Scribe* will be on hiatus until...? Try as I might I cannot continue to manage my workload and unlike Alice I am not going down the rabbit hole.

I regard the monthly newsletter one of the four most valuable benefits of the club. It announces the speaker; gives countless information about contests, publishing sites and cautions; and provides a venue for members to have their work printed for all to see and read. The others are the critique groups, the networking and our guest speakers. I could be prejudiced, so if the newsletter is not important to you, it can RIP. I would much rather see raised hands of eager souls wanting to step up to the design and layout of *The Valley Scribe*.

On another subject, your board has not stunted on ideas and action. Our anthology will be published and available for pick up by the June meeting. Rita Brown and her anthology committee of talented and dedicated members are ready to launch member discount pre-sale reservations at the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. Be on the look out for Rita’s latest bulletin — coming soon. Be sure to be at the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting for the latest update; important information and anthology order forms will be available.

This is short and sweet. No April Fools.

## *Karen Gorback* *Writing Dazzling Dialog*



Karen Gorback, PhD, will lead us in the art of writing dialog. Not stiff, contrived dialog, but natural and dazzling. Witty words, where called for, cutting, humorous and sparkling when provoked. This hour won’t be just show and tell, but Do and Polish. Bring your notepad and pen or your fully-charged laptop because this will be a fast-paced workshop on the use and craft of dialog — dazzling dialog.

Karen has been a member of CWC-SFV since 2007 and served on the board as the Member at Large and Publicity Chair. Her novel *Freshman Mom* (Outskirts Press, 2014) won the USA Regional Excellence Book Award for Adult Fiction set in the Western United States. The book also placed as a Finalist in the Readers' Favorite Book Awards. Karen enjoys writing in a variety of genres. Several of her short stories and a poem are included in anthologies published by the Ventura County Writers Club. Four of her one-act plays have been produced in the New Works Festival at College of the Canyons. She won a local memoir contest and was recently notified that another memoir had been selected for publication in one of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books due out in Spring, 2018. She is currently teaching writing classes through Conejo Valley Adult School in Thousand Oaks.

Karen is most proud of her four grown children, their spouses, and five grandbabies, all born over the last two years. What a joy! Contact Karen through her website at [www.karengorback.com](http://www.karengorback.com)

Dialog a very valuable art and vital to move your story and develop realistic characters.  
**DON'T MISS THIS!**

## The March Program Review, Cyrus Nowrasteh



Andi Polk

Cyrus Nowrasteh, writer, director and filmmaker provided valuable and interesting information about the current independent filmmakers' world. He described what we might experience with agents that are necessary for our scripts to be read, but who do very little to help. This was eye opening. The time spent chasing funds and seeking inspiration for the next project are all consuming. Thank goodness he loves his work.

He has experienced death threats and required police protection for his ABC TV mini-series about the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Not something to encourage us.

Docudrama is his preferred genre. Although his projects are based on true stories and events they are not documentaries. In the case of *The Young Messiah*, based on an Anne Rice novel, the story is a fictional exploration of the young Jesus from age seven to his recognition of his divinity.

In answer to a question about how he filmed a graphic scene in *The Stoning of Soraya M*, Cyrus explained in some detail the process of making this award winning film. The use of puppets and computer special effects made for the very graphic, horrific, torturous realism of the Iranian practice of stoning women to death.

He completed his compelling presentation by donating a DVD of both of his feature films for our member raffle. It was a unique experience from a passionate filmmaker. Be sure to follow his next provocative projects.



Lori Hamilton, Program Chair, presenting a CWC tote bag to speaker Cyrus Nowrasteh

## In This Issue

Presidents Connections.....	pg 1
Featured Speaker.....	1
March program Review.....	2
Opportunities: Publishing, Marketing .....	2-4
Short Story.....	5-6
Poems.....	7-8
Announcements & Accomplishments.....	8
Calendar, Program Schedule & Directions.....	9

## April Opportunities for Publishing, Marketing Tips and Contests

Mary Freeman

### 2017 Travel Writing Contest Submissions are Open!

<http://www.imustbeoff.com/p/blog-page.html>

It's that time of year again! Time to type up those travel articles, travel anecdotes and travel reflections. We want to read about that place that changed you, about the experiences you can't wait to share with other travelers. Whether your work is humorous, informative, quirky or profound--send it in. This year, submissions are free until May 31; afterward there will be a nominal charge (see below). The purpose for this twofold: to prevent what happened last year (300 submissions in the last two weeks) and to perhaps add a bit of money to the prize pot. All proceeds from entry fees will go towards the prize money.

#### Submission Guidelines:

- Maximum 1000 words
- Edited for spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Up to three photos may be submitted with your entry. Photos are not necessary to win.
- Previously unpublished work only! Blog posts are considered published.

**No entry fee until May 31. Simply mail your entry and 50-word bio to**

**christopher@imustbeoff.com.** From June 1 to July 31 there is a €3 entry fee payable via PayPal. **To enter after May 31, follow these steps:**

(Continued pg 3.)

Travel Writing Contest continued from pg 2.

- At PayPal pay €3 fee to christopher@imustbeoff.com
- Important: Have your travel article submission and bio ready! Forward your PayPal confirmation of payment/receipt to christopher@imustbeoff.com with your travel article **attached** to the email and your 50-word bio in the body of the email. Please put TRAVEL WRITING CONTEST in the subject field.
- You will receive a confirmation from *I Must Be Off!* that your submission has been received and that you have been entered into the competition. This is not an automatic notification, so please be patient if it takes a few hours.
- Entries must be in English
- **One free entry per person until May 31.** Open to anyone worldwide, but you need (access to) a *PayPal* account if you enter after May 31 and *in case you win*.
- After May 31, you may enter as many times as you like. Each entry must be separate and accompanied by an entry fee, €3 each.  
**Deadline for entry fee submissions: July 31, 2017**
- Entries will be read blind by this year's judge and travel writer, Graham Mercer. It is not necessary to delete identifying information from your entry. If your name appears anywhere, it will be removed before it's forwarded to the judge.
- Word doc, docx and rtf files only.
- Finalists announced in mid-September. Winners announced and published in autumn 2017.

#### **The Prizes:**

- The Top entries will be published at *I Must Be Off!* with authors' permission. Authors retain copyright.
- First place prize: €200
- Second place prize: €50
- Readers' Choice Award: €50 based on unique hits and comments tallied on October 30.

All proceeds from entry fees will be added to these amounts.

#### **ON THE PREMISES NEWSLETTER March 2017** (OnThePremises.com)

##### **Don't Be That Story: Where's the Story?**

It's time for our next installment of "Don't Be That Story!" our guide to avoiding mistakes that get short stories rejected from our magazine (and other magazines, too).

Over the years, we've received a large number of contest entries that, at first, make us think we're reading a story we'd gladly publish. Sometimes the entry presents us with a set of characters who seem so real, and so interesting, we're immediately absorbed by them. Other entries develop a fictional world of some kind--often speculative, but sometimes real-world--that is presented in such evocative detail that we feel we've been there ourselves. Some entries give us both, which is why we start out so excited about them.

However...At some point, we readers figure out that while we're learning a great deal about these characters, this world, or both, nothing of any importance to anyone seems to be happening. Sure, characters are **doing** things--making breakfast, planting a garden, fixing a spaceship's engine--but it doesn't seem to be anything that matters to anybody. Eventually, the same question enters my mind when reading these kinds of stories: "What's the point?" Or more clearly, "What is this writer trying to make me think or feel with this story?" Everything is interesting or pleasant (or maybe unpleasant) enough, but life seems to just be happening as people do things well or badly, and nothing anyone does seems to have any lasting consequence. (Or to avoid any lasting consequence.) And I think: "Where's the story?"

Remember, by our OTP definition, a story is supposed to raise questions in the reader's mind about what's happening in the story's world. It's not supposed to raise questions about the story itself, as a fiction piece, such as "Why was this written?" or "When will this thing finally end?" We want to read about interesting characters in interesting situations that require them to do something equally interesting. Sometimes we get stories that give us interesting characters with nothing to do, or interesting situations with no real characters in them, and that's not good enough.

Don't be that story!

Member Rita Brown shared this informative article from **Writer Unboxed**

### **The Perfect Back Cover Blurb**

Posted By *Sophie Masson* On January 9, 2017

Does it even exist, that perfect enticement to readers, that perfect pearl of a teaser which makes you instantly go to the counter and hand over your hard-earned cash? Perhaps not...but chances are that as an author—whether traditionally or self-published, whether this is your first or your fiftieth book—you'll have to create, or help create, a back cover blurb for each of your books. And it's something that in my experience takes some time—as you have to distill quite a few elements to make a sparkling blurb cocktail!

What exactly are those elements? Speaking both as a reader and a writer, for me a good back cover blurb includes:

- A mention of setting and time period of the story
- A mention of the main character
- An intriguing glimpse of the plot, but with no reveals
- A question, or hook, at the end

**Optional** (but good to have at least one):

- A one-line description which gives an idea of genre of book and perhaps age range—eg *A gripping, magical fantasy for young adults*
- A line or two from the text itself, which gives a nice flavor of what you might expect of the author's style
- A mention of the author, which could be in the one-line description, eg, *A gripping, magical fantasy for young adults by multi-award winning author XYZ/* or *A gripping, magical fantasy for young adults by the author of ABC*
- Very short extracts of reviews taken from author's other books, with mention of where the reviews were published eg 'XYZ is a spellbinding writer' (The New York Times) 'A book to savour' (The Sydney Morning Herald) Note: If you or your publisher has asked another author to write a 'puff' or endorsement for your book, this will often go on the front cover, unless you have a few such endorsements, when they go on back cover.
- Of course if the book/author is 'an international bestseller' :- ) that gets mentioned too in blurbs though personally speaking that isn't going to entice me if I'm not interested in the story as revealed in the blurb!

**Also**, style-wise, a good blurb should be:

- Short and succinct—around 150 words is ideal, to give enough information without overloading the reader
- Snappily and enticingly written with no confusing bits
- Written in third person, even if book is in first-person voice
- Attractive to look at—well-designed in terms of text on the page, what's around it, colour background, etc—

And finally, starting with a tag line, in italics, works well: maybe setting time and place—eg, *Moscow, June 1937*—or introducing a main character, eg, *Meet Septimus Drake, master magician*—or an intriguing line of text from the book, usually from very early on, eg, *It was supposed to be a foolproof plan...*

URL to article: <http://writerunboxed.com/2017/01/09/the-perfect-back-cover-blurb/>

~~~~

## **WOMAN IN A RED DRESS, By Keyle Birnberg**

It has been six months since Lilli last saw her friend Marsha. When she calls after the New Year she jumps at the chance to join her for lunch and catch up with the latest gossip. As always she rings the bell and doesn't even say Hello, or gives her the customary hug.

"Three casualties in the paper this morning," she says grabbing a chair and a cup of coffee, then proceeds to enumerate with details, all the tragedies in the San Fernando Valley.

Lilli stares shocked to see her. She is but a fraction of the person she used to know, calculating that she has lost at least thirty pounds.

"Let's go to Orchid Park so we can talk with nature," she says dumping her coffee in the kitchen sink. Lilli has not said one single word yet her eyes not believing this gorgeous friend seating in front of her.

"I know! I know what you are going to say. I'll bring you up to date in a minute," she says, waving her hand in mid air.

The park is deserted. They sit on the old rusty favorite park bench, witness of all secrets and deadly sins. Marsha is quiet; the toes of her red high-hilled shoes scrape the ground making circular designs on the dirt.

"All right, you are exasperating, out with it this minute."

Marsha's voice crackles, like the peeling of an egg shell. "I'm asking Fred for a divorce and this time I mean it!"

"You said that many times before and you are still together. You have so many years invested in this marriage," Lilli sadly says.

Marsha is silent for a long time. Her eyes focused on a bird drinking water from a tree branch. "You know I didn't marry him for his money. I loved him and I still do but, this time I can't forgive him. I know he has been seeing someone else for the last six months."

"Fred? Are you crazy? He adores you and you know it!"

Marsha pops a green and pink pill into her mouth.

"I thought we were going to TEMPO the new Israeli restaurant everyone is talking about. I'm starved."

"You don't understand. I lost all this weight for him. I practically starved and lived on salads, water malts and exercise all day only to lose him to someone else. Not even younger than me. Now, he loves thin women walking skeletons like you Lilli," she says viciously.

"Excuse me?" Lilli can't believe her ears; annoyed she grabs her purse getting up to leave.

Marsha soon follows kicking small pebbles from the ground and lifting a cloud of dust. She is crying nervously searching for a Kleenex at the bottom of her big red purse. "Yes Lilli, he was seen at the Fallbrook movie theater with a woman dressed all in red last Friday." She blows her nose several times, her eyes red.

Lilli rubs her eyes as well trying not to cry. She coughs nervously hoping she'll change the conversation.

The sunny day turns cloudy-grey realizing that they have to rush to the restaurant on the run to keep their lunch reservations. They get there minutes before the sky empties its wet-dark fury on their heads. Their umbrellas and coats left, forgotten inside the car.

The restaurant is full, not a single place available. Marsha convinces the waiter pointing to their names registered at the reception desk, only then the maître-d grabs a couple of menus walking rush-rush-rush ahead with giant steps.

They sit quietly at a beautiful table dressed in a white linen cloth with blue napkins rolled like flowers in the center of the charger plate. Half a dozen different size glasses circle around it. Out of

breath Marsha looks at the menu with hungry eyes the aroma of food once again appealing to her. Lilli can sense her friend is afraid of straying from her water diet malts...

"Yesterday I bought this size four red dress and fits like a glove, if I eat the smallest piece of bread, the zipper in the back will burst."

Lilli stares at her hollow flat stomach afraid her friend can't break the starving habit anymore.

"This looks yummy," Lilli continues looking at the menu. She asks the waiter for all the ingredients, listening suspiciously for the hidden fat... "It's Turkey-burgers a-la Israeli with buttered-mashed potatoes and greens all around it" Lilli says, taking a falafel bite anxiously trying to give her order.

"Don't get testi--e with me," she says using her favorite nasty expression for pain in the ass.

Lilli gives her a side glance. My God, she looks transparent, gaunt, with dark circles around the eyes. Why does she always go too extremes? She must tell her what she thinks but maybe after lunch. They order the same. Before the food comes Marsha is cleansing her new body with lots of ice water, cracking ice chips with her teeth.

"O.K., how did you do it? Your old diets never worked before."

"It's Fred's fault and his skinny woman. Of course, I had to be SKINNER than her." After a few bites she runs to the bathroom. Lilli wonders if she has a bag of carrots in her purse with imitation butter flakes. Marsha is soon at the table staring at Lilli.

"I can see that you have no problem with your appetite," she says tapping her foot making her feel guilty about the bread bite in her mouth.

"I am not going to answer that stupid remark besides; it's not polite to talk with a full mouth."

Marsha turns her attention to her meal. An hour later in between trips to the bathroom, she is still eating and drinking her third Whiskey sour, Lilli still on her third cup of coffee.

"Fred has been learning to cook since I stopped eating," Marsha says, half opening the zipper at the back of her dress.

"But I don't know where the food is going because it's never in the fridge. He's probably packing a doggie bag for that bitch, whatever her name is."

"You exaggerate. Anyway, with your new figure you have him trapped for good."

She now helps herself to a mound of mashed potatoes and polishes her plate with lots of bread.

"Are you going to eat that?" She points to Lilli's plate still full just watching her friend eat. She even orders desert. She is still the old Marsha she knows, bad habits included. She orders a lunch to go and asks the waiter to pack Lilli's as well. "For my dog," she says. But Marsha never had a pet.

"How considerate of you to take lunch for Fred," Lilli says, thinking 'that's who the dog is.'

"Are you crazy? I told you I'm going to divorce him."

"O.K., O.K.! Don't get testi—e with me," Lilli covers her ears.

They wait for the valet to bring Marsha's new Mercedes.

"See my neighbor over there; she is the one who told me Fred was seeing the woman in red in the lobby of the Fallbrook movie theaters on Fridays."

Oh, My God, it was Lilli wearing her new red dress; a Valentine's gift from her husband. He was waiting patiently for Fred's complaints about Marsha's divorce papers, which he still had in his bulging pockets.

It's not raining anymore. Lunch is over. Lilli has to get home soon and advise her husband of what has happened on a very ordinary day.

Marsha is thinking quietly. She lets Lilli off at her doorstep without waiting for a hug, her foot pressing the Mercedes accelerator hard. But, Lilli can still sense a big calamity coming. Just like Marsha says.



**I'm a Hack:** *A Hee-ha Comedy Bit o' Bio in Verse,  
Fer Better er Worse — With Truth 'n' Exaggeration  
Interspersed*

*Hey*, they say I'm a hit,  
Though Hillbilly music makes some sick;  
But my Hillbilly ways are here to stick;  
So you may as well *git* over it — And join in 'n' sing  
a bit,  
'Cause I'm a hit! And shit-kickin' music is my *shitick*.  
Born in Mexican sticks in 1946.  
I've dual citizenship; and I'm a hit.

I'm an *all-American-mongrel, apple-pie girl --*  
*A Hines-57 mixed-up mutt,*  
With apple pie stickin' to my gut 'n' butt;  
But *red-necked reactionary ignoramuses* ain't my  
thing.

I came here *fer* music an' to sing!  
Yeah, I'm an *All-American-Mexican, Scotch-Irish*  
*"Mick",*

With Welch 'n' English, so *sure*, I'm a Britt;  
With French, German, and Mohawk Indian a bit.  
If there's no Tom Slick hidin' in the pit,  
Far as I know, that's about it —  
That's my story an' I'm "*shitickin*" to it!

My father was a proud Veteran of World War I.  
Those Vets were well-appreciated for what they'd  
done!

Pa was an artist, creative, Jack-of-all-trades;  
Master of a few — Good at so many things,  
There was little he couldn't do.

Ma was a creative: author, artist, *thru 'n' thru*;  
Poet, performer, concert pianist — Whew!  
She loved to discuss religious principles  
And read religious Lit, old 'n' new --  
Long as it agreed with what she already "*knew*."  
She graduated with a BA in Journalism too;  
Quite an accomplishment for Mom was sixty-two!

She was runnin' me competition then,  
For I was still in College too,  
Strugglin' to make it up from the cult  
She'd put me through ... If she only knew!  
But her motto was: "*Anything you can do,  
I can do better; I can do anything better than you!*"  
And she meant it too! *Still, I'm a hit*;

*Though Hillbilly music makes some sick,*  
My Hillbilly ways are here to stick;  
So ya may as well "*git*" over it 'n' Join in 'n' sing a bit!  
Yeah, I'm a hit 'n' Shit-kickin' music is my *shitick*.  
Born in Mexican sticks in 1966, I've dual citizenship  
an' I'm a hit.  
Or am I a hack? I'm a hick-hack! Ha-ha-ha!!

(Stephany Spenser, 2016)

## **New Day**

Andi Polk, February 2, 2017

Thin clouds blanket morning skies  
Rain delayed is no surprise  
Predictions of man  
Cannot command

The sun to wink rather than burn  
Plants and animals to spurn  
Rain, rivers and snow  
To hold their show

While the warming world withers  
Icebergs melt and fall to sea  
Ants and roaches slither  
Ready to rise to see

Man has left the planet to thee  
The clouds wrung dry  
Evaporate and flee  
Roaches don't cry

Walking alone our streets' debris  
New and old, the roaches  
Survive among disease  
No one encroaches

Silence blankets the light blue sky  
Man lost his will to change  
As he continued to deny  
Our climate's range

(Continued pg 8)

Disobeyed our nations' borders  
Refused to follow leaders' orders  
Leaving man to kill himself, watching his demise  
The roaches peek into trash left behind knowing they will rise

A new day  
Opens its eyes  
Blinks in tune  
Sun winks  
At the  
Moon

## *Announcements & Accomplishments*

**Announcements:** *Anne Hansell* has been diagnosed with breast cancer and is undergoing radiation and chemotherapy. A card will be available on April 1st for your good wishes for her recovery. She predicts she will be unable to attend meetings until next fall.

*Doug Douglas* has chosen palliative chemotherapy for his pancreatic cancer. He appreciates your cards, emails and calls. Thank you for your support.

**Accomplishments:** *Ester Shifren* says she was privileged to be interviewed by Sara Troy of Self Discovery Radio (Canada). Interesting to discover how much Sara's own history matched Ester's, in that they are both 3rd and 4th culture kids! The interview is 1 hr 14 min but quite fascinating. An example of marketing Ester's memoir, the conversation goes beyond Ester's POW years. It takes you around the world and through several cultural and social events. As a result of the interview Ester was inspired to write her South African story. She says, "I hope you'll enjoy listening to the podcast." Here's the link:

<https://selfdiscoveryradio.com/2017/02/18/tsm-17-10-hiding-in-a-cave-of-trunks-internment-in-a-wwii-pow-camp-with-ester-shifren/>

*Gary Wosk* had another of his short stories published. Catch him and ask how and where you can read the anthology.

*Rita Brown* was invited to submit an article on teaching writing within the library system. The anthology just arrived hot off the press! Ask her about it.

## Calendar April – May 2017

## Directions and Meeting Information

Saturday, April 1st General Meeting,  
Katzenberg Pavilion MPTF See schedule below.

Wednesday, April 5, Board meeting, MPTF  
Hospital Administrative Conference (ARC)  
Room 10 A.M. to Noon, presided by Andi Polk.

Wednesday, May 3, 2017, Board meeting,  
MPTF Hospital ARC room 10 AM to Noon.

Saturday, May 6, 2017, Speaker Leonard  
Szymczak. WRITING NAKED Techniques to  
Help You Write With Heart and Soul

### Election Schedule

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.

June 3, 2017 Election of officers: President, Vice  
President, Secretary and Treasurer. Other vacant  
positions shall be appointed by the elected  
president

### Location

**Motion Picture, Television Fund  
campus. 23388 Mulholland Dr.  
Woodland Hills, CA  
We meet in the Katzenberg Pavilion**

**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.

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

Guests are asked to contribute a \$5 tax  
deductible donation.

## April 1st Program Schedule

12:30 P.M. Registration, net working and sign-  
in for a place on Open Mic

1:00 P.M. Members 5 minutes each for Open  
Mic,

1:30 P.M. Business Announcements & Intro-  
duce Guests

1:40 P.M. Refreshments Break, Meet and  
Mingle

2:00 P.M Featured Speaker – Dr. Karen Gorback  
conducting a workshop entitled Writing  
Dazzling Dialog. Bring your notebook and pen  
or fully charged lap top. There's work to do.

3:00 P.M. Appreciation of speaker, Raffle  
Karen's book, *Freshman Mom*

3:30 P.M Doors closed