

# THE VALLEY SCRIBE

“But when fall comes, kicking summer out on its treacherous ass as it always does one day sometime after the midpoint of September, it stays awhile like an old friend that you have missed. It settles in the way an old friend will settle into your favorite chair and take out his pipe and light it and then fill the afternoon with stories of places he has been and things he has done since last he saw you.”

— **Stephen King, 'Salem's Lot'**

Welcome back, readers, to this month's edition of “The Valley Scribe!” I hope everyone is bunkering down their houses with decorations and candy to fend off the little ghoulings that will be going door to door at the end of the month. October has always been my favorite time of the year; the leaves changing and falling has always felt like the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new era. We, as Californians, have been seeing nothing but tragedy the past few weeks. Personally, I have suffered a loss, and half of California is withering in an inferno. It is more important than ever that we maintain our sense of community until the wheel turns and life begins anew in January.

This month's edition shall include, as usual, information about the past meeting and news of the future, as well as some wicked writing events that might interest you. Our Showcase this month shall be Kylee Birnberg, with a wonderfully melancholy piece that will put things into perspective for all of us during these trying times.

Thank you once again for tuning into this month's edition of “The Valley Scribe.”

Your faithful Editor,

*Maxwell Dawson*

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## A Message from the President

We provide great speakers, excellent critique groups and lots of informal support that has helped many of our writers on the road to success. However, many would-be writers in our area don't know we exist.

Can I ask all of you to help grow our branch?

- Invite a guest. Introduce someone new to our club; once they see how nice a group we are and our interesting speakers many of them will join us. Every member can bring a free guest to a meeting twice a year. Or two guests to one meeting...
- Share our newsletter. Email it to friends who might enjoy it.
- Give brochures or cards to schools and libraries. If you have contacts at places where writers might go, please ask to leave a small stack of cards or brochures.
- Like and Share our social media posts. We are on Facebook and Twitter. Every like or share makes our posts more visible to others.

We have a lot to offer writers and as we grow we hope to also grow what we offer. Wouldn't it be nice to have workshops? To publish more frequent anthologies? To have more critique groups? To make all the ideas we have reality? With more members to help we can.

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## CWC-SFV and MPTF Recognized at Special 30th Anniversary Ceremony

By Gary Wosk

The atmosphere was positively charged at the October meeting held by the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club. Ebullience was high as branch members anticipated giving and receiving kudos.

Yolanda Fintor, charter member and past president of the branch, opened the special ceremony with the recounting of the California Writers Club's state history and ended with describing the branch's history.



She then introduced Los Angeles City Councilman Bob Blumenfield, who presented a proclamation certificate, signed by each member of the Los Angeles City Council, to CWC-SFV to commemorate the 30th anniversary of its charter. He made note of the anthology, "Cascade of Pearls," the branch had published to mark this achievement.

"I am impressed and humbled to be in the same room with all of you," said Blumenfield. "It was exciting to learn about the

California Writers Club, with its long history and its mission to support one another in reaching your goals toward publication through your critique groups and inspirational speakers.”

Next, Mary Freeman, also a charter member and past president of CWC-SFV, made it a point to highlight the many contributions made by Betty Freeman (no relation) to the branch.

“Betty spearheaded the movement in 1986 to form the first CWC branch to be chartered in southern California. Her leadership and energy enabled the club to reach the professional standards it enjoys today.

“When Betty moved to the Motion Picture and Television Fund home, she arranged for the use of the Katzenberg Villa for our monthly meetings. She immediately became active at MPTF by forming writing groups among the residents. Always eager to learn, she interviewed the many talented residents, all of whom had been involved in the world of film and television. She realized she had enough material for a book and ‘Behind the Silver Screen’ was born.”



Freeman expressed CWC-SFV’s gratitude to MPTF for the use of the meeting room, by presenting engraved bookends of William Shakespeare’s bust to MPTF’s Chief Executive Officer, Bob Beitcher.

“Betty Freeman is a legendary, iconic person on campus. In fact, a corner of our library has been named after her,” Beitcher said. “We are incredibly proud to host this club. It’s very meaningful to be a good community partner.

“Our campus also promotes creativity, engagement, and social action. It’s incredible for us to be able to do this. Our residents, most of whom have spent their lives in the art of

storytelling, and the average age of eighty-seven years, are looking for a purpose in life, looking for engagement and looking for ways to channel their creativity. The branch and MPTF enjoy a symbiotic relationship.

“It’s a great honor for Motion Picture and

Television Fund campus to be the home of the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club.”

Be sure to read more about it in Gary’s article for *The Acorn* [here!](#)

**The CWC Literary Review is Under New Management!** You may have heard that Dave LaRoche who started the CWC Literary Review at least six years ago has retired from that post. The best compliment to him is that a team of six has agreed to produce the next Lit Rev!

So, members, polish up a story, poem, essay, or memoir piece, check out the guidelines at

<http://calwritersorg/publications/#submit> , follow the guidelines, and submit, submit!

Submissions will be accepted Sept 1 – Nov 30!

## Annette Rogers, CWC-SFV Speaker, October 7

By Yolanda Fintor

As editor of Poisoned Pen Press, Annette Rogers gave writers valuable information on how to get a publisher's attention. We've all heard the axiom, 'you've got to grab the reader with the first sentence.' Rogers goes on to say this applies to the first paragraph and the first page. And she wants action, right up front.



As examples of attention-getting factors, Rogers passed out a list of books Poisoned Pen Press had published recently. She made comments about attributes in each book that caught her attention enough to accept the manuscript for publication.

Rogers liked one book for its humor, another, because it was written in two voices---a 10 year-old boy and a grown man. She favored one author because he put the reader in the now of the story. He immersed the reader in the immediate. One author was a therapist who wrote mysteries, another, a painter who made his protagonist a painter. These examples certainly lend credence to the old saying, 'write what you know.'

Other bits of advice she passed on:

- A reader needs a sense of place. Make settings powerful. Identify the city or town. Show rather than tell in what season the action takes place.

- Make protagonist likeable, but your villain someone your readers will hate.

- Engage the emotions. A story is stronger when you insert fear, surprise, grief, anger, tension, sorrow, loss, passion.

- Be credible with facts. You will be fact-checked.
- Have dialogue carry the story.
- Show the editor how you will touch the reader.
- Follow guidelines exactly when submitting.

In addition, Rogers' pet peeve is the use of semi-colons. She prefers writers use dashes instead. (Good to know if you are sending her your story).

Her final bit of advice: if your story is rejected, write back to the editor who rejected you thanking her/him for reading your book. She/he will remember you for that.

# Helga Schier

Next Speaker - November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017

*Helga Schier, Ph.D., is the founder and owner of [withpenandpaper.com](http://withpenandpaper.com), an independent editorial services firm.*

*With over 25 years of experience in the book publishing industry, formerly serving as editor and executive editor in several publishing houses, Ms. Schier guides authors through the development and revision process.*

*Handling a manuscript like a diamond in the rough, Ms. Schier's editorial work focuses on the refinement of story, character,*



*and style, helping writers sharpen their vision, refine their voice, and unlock the potential of their manuscripts. Her clients are published, self-published, and not-yet-published writers. Ms. Schier has published essayistic works on contemporary English and American fiction, and has translated several screenplays, memoirs, and a novel series. Visit her [www.withpenandpaper.com](http://www.withpenandpaper.com) or contact her at [helga@withpenandpaper.com](mailto:helga@withpenandpaper.com)*

## **On Saturday, November 4, 2017 Helga Schier will be speaking on More than Just Talk: Painting a Scene with Dialogue and Narration**

People don't always say what they mean or mean what they say. That's true in real life and in fiction. Dialogue is not only about what is being said, but also about what is left *unsaid*. That is the playing field of narration: it shows us how people interact *nonverbally*, exposing the subtext that may not be apparent if you only hear the spoken words. So, how do you strike a perfect balance between the two? This talk will explore how the interplay of dialogue and narration...

1. Creates the atmosphere of a scene
2. Exposes the context and circumstance of the dialogue
3. Reveals the personality and relationship of the dialogue partners
4. Builds the underlying tension, conflict, or motivation
5. Drives the plot forward

*A writer's job is to create a world that unfolds before the reader's eyes. We want to hear people speak and see what they do and where they do it. With the well-tuned interplay of dialogue and narration, you can create scenes that sizzle with romance, suspense, excitement, or joy, engaging the reader in your characters' plight.*

## Be sure to come!

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## Editor's Choice



As I am still relatively new serving as your editor, please excuse me experimenting with the newsletter over the new couple months until I decide what I think looks best. I thought it would be best condense all my recommendations and such into one column I am calling the “Editor’s Choice.” Since we are very close to Halloween, this month I am going to be concentrating on the spine-tingling and chthonic. Lucky you!

While I am mostly going to talk about books, I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to also recommend some podcasts! Podcasts, for those who are unaware, are like audio books in a sense. They have their own method of storytelling, often embracing the style of old radio *War of the Worlds* type broadcasts, but they come in many variations.

I would like to introduce you all to **TANIS**, one of my favorite podcasts of all time, [available for free on iTunes.](#)

TANIS is a monomyth of sorts; a Blair Witch type “mockumentary” of a cast of people researching a section of forest near the Puget Sound. They recount stories of unexplained events and paranormal happenings that occur in the area, speculating on how they connect to this mysterious region of TANIS. The protagonist, Nic Silver, also goes on his own journey to find TANIS. I won’t say anymore for fear of spoiling it, but it is a great chiller mixed with a dash of true crime that all audiences can enjoy!

*“The Runner continued to tie dark red string she pulled from a large spool around certain trees. I assume to mark the way back, but I could never find logic in her choice of trees. As we set out this morning, The Zealot told me that he felt different, that a couple of days ago he was someone else. He was having second thoughts. I could tell he wanted me to reassure him that it was all in his head, that these were just trees, that this was just a forest. But I just nodded and kept moving.*”

*The wind had picked up and it had started to rain. The sound was constant now, a distant thrum and throb, a kind of constant, deep sigh. The sound had simply become part of the landscape. We stopped talking about it, but it was always there. The wet, water smell was constant as well, the feeling of breathing in something... alive.*

*I looked back occasionally, and this is going to sound crazy, but... sometimes I felt like I was looking at a completely different forest. I don't know if it was fatigue, I still wasn't sleeping at all, but early on day three, I saw a path I knew we hadn't taken or seen in the exact spot we'd stood a few seconds earlier. At that point, I stopped looking back completely. This was right around the time The Novelist had her breakdown.*

*Sometime after we reached the first clearing, the Novelist fell to her knees and started screaming and clawing at her eyes. She kept yelling the words, asking the question, 'Why are you here? Why are you here?' We tried to calm her, ask her who she was talking about, but she just faded, curled up in the fetal position, and mumbled to herself.*

*I have to concentrate, really hard in order to try and... feel the way I used to feel, to push back the... blur. The blur that's been growing inside, threatening to fill my mind. Sometimes it feels like if I just relax, just fall into what feels lately like the deep, muddy, green water of my mind, the blur will take over and make things...easier.*

*These moments pass and I find clarity and I do understand that I'm just myself in the woods with these people, but... And I don't know if it's just the hunger or the lack of sleep, the constant hum or not knowing exactly where we are, but most of the time, I'm uncertain about everything.*

### ***There are wondrous things.***

*I told the Runner that I'd like to leave, to stop, to go home. But she told me it wouldn't be long now, that we've come this far already. She told us all that she started hearing The Calm last night; that it woke her up. She seems lighter somehow, and yet stretched thin. I don't know how to explain it other than she looks to me like a guitar string that's continually being tuned up. At some point, it's going to snap, like a balloon being expanded, it's only a matter of time.*

### ***There are magical things.***

*The Runner spoke to the Novelist and whatever she did or said seems to have worked. The Zealot hasn't spoke in forever, he appears to be gathering his strength, as if he knows that something is coming, something that is going to require everything we've got. We pack up and head out after the Runner. I'm constantly fighting the blur now, but my energy is waning. I'm trying hard to stay focused, the birds sound different; everything sounds different. Not like we're underwater exactly, but more like we're under some kind of dome or thick, invisible mist, something.*

*Later on, while we stopped and made tea, the Zealot pointed out that there had been birds flying above us, but that they didn't seem to be willing to fly over this part of the*

*woods. I don't remember the birds, I don't remember much now. The days have started to blend together. The nights are... harder.*

***There are dangerous things.***

- TANIS, episode three from Pacific Northwest Publishing

## SFV WRITER SHOWCASE

Last but certainly not least; big round of applause for this month's club showcase: Kylee Birnberg! To me, October is a month of somber melancholy. I thought Kylee's piece exemplified that!

Kylee Birnberg

*At an early age traveled the world with her Family learning foreign languages and visiting the world's major museums. At age five, her Mom gave her a handmade small green journal which was to be the keeper of her private thoughts. "There is one catch", she said. Before you start*



*writing, you must stand straight read your poems to my friends who are coming to our Earl-Gray tea this afternoon." So, a poet was born. She still has the original handmade green journal with delicate filaments of old words burning her mind when sleep eludes her dreams*

### Grandmother's Photograph

BY: Kylee Birnberg

I'm awake. Another night... fighting my pillow again. A train crosses far away; I can clearly hear the special whistle that only trains make.

It's dark outside and I can't bear to look at the clock, its neon-green hands always ticking telling me what to do every second. One good night's sleep that is all I want. I concentrate on the train whistle hoping to drift into peaceful slumber. I close my eyes tight until tiny worm-like red lights dance inside my eyelids. All of a sudden I sit up, knowing that I have to abandon the warmth of my bed and climb UP to the attic to fetch Grandmother's Photograph from one of

the old moth-eaten albums. Except, there is no attic in this house but my dream takes me there.

I get inside my warm old blue robe, grab the flashlight and go directly up the narrow stairs. I detour around the curved entrance bending my head to avoid bumping it on the heavy wood beam, but in the dark, part of it comes rushing into the side of my face and I feel the loose splinters tangling my hair. I rub my hurt and enter the cavernous dark space spitting out some nasty old cobwebs.

Nothing seems to be disturbed since the last time I was there. The flashlight wakes zillions of dust fragments pointing straight to the big trunk Papa brought over from Europe. It



is big and tall curving at the top in a curious pressed metal flower-like design. Leather-strap handles fading, cracking, and peeling hang limp on the sides. I can almost smell the sweat of many hands lifting the weight of memories throughout the years. The top and sides are full of colorful stamps and stickers glued at random, announcing the ports of entry and departure of foreign far away places. I sneeze and cough several times sending dust particles undulating in frenzy like a “Dance Macabre” all their own.

I open the trunk. Suddenly I feel a damp chill; family photographs of long departed ancestors I never met surround me. Old ghosts trapped inside Papa’s foreign trunk push-up wanting to escape the black pages of strange photo albums. I set aside a few of relatives I never met searching the pages for Grandmother’s sepia photograph.

THERE SHE IS ON HER WEDDING DAY! The young bride of seventeen looks at me, through me as if to say, ‘let me sleep inside these black pages with all my secrets, dreams, lies, and fears.’ She is leaning against a tall table like a fragile doll; her bent fingers allow a hand-embroidered handkerchief to shyly escape the long sleeve of her wedding gown. A delicate lace collar warms her neck connecting past lives with fine crochet stitches. Satin and lace drape her hips in noiseless folds, her small waist almost breaking her body in half. She is a beautiful bride inside her sepia photograph, petite, shy, and obedient. Her abundant shiny hair rests like a mink cape around her shoulders. Her eyes betray her fear, delicate lips rebellious silently protesting. A hidden camera capturing a desperate silent frozen NOOO!

A heap of rose petals at her feet...a set-up, a trap she tried to escape but couldn’t. It’s not easy to say NO to a Jewish father in charge of her life. She has to surrender her dreams of love, her dance card empty not ever knowing a

passionate kiss or the gentle squeeze of her gloved hand. Her anguish covered by a white satin wedding dress.

What would the groom look like? Would he be kind and tender and allow love to emerge? And now her wedding dress must not wrinkle. She swallows her tears, must not let the camera betray her fears. Could she ever fall in love with a total stranger?

In my dream I close the album with a slapping noise. My eye-lids open and I wake up. My legs hurt as if I have walked thousands of miles. The morning sun gently enters my room chasing the night away bleaching the mountain tips with a blush of pink and gold. I am alone in my bed holding an old wrinkled copy of Grandmother’s sepia photograph from a different time.

The original hangs in the family gallery half a world away still trapped by tradition, superstition, and ancient religion. When I was born, I was given Grandmother’s name and a box with her memories to keep.

I get up with an urgency to clean and dust the shelves that hold my memories intact. In a big drawer I come across Grandmother’s cracked and faded photograph, her metal sewing box with the iridescent-gowned figures dancing the Minuet regally in a tight embrace. It came to me smelling of chocolate. In a separate compartment is her silver thimble with holes and dents a miniature treasure inside her replica ‘Faberge’ Egg. Her fingerprints forever dormant, holding her life hostage throughout the years.

A bit of white lace fragment of her wedding dress was gifted to me by MOM. It is as fresh today as the day she wore it. Ribbons, buttons, toothless combs, and dry rose petals line the sewing box with Grandmother’s memories which are mine to keep forever.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

To end this edition, compiled here is a list of events lovingly and painstakingly put together by Margie Yee Webb of our Northstate Branch! Big thank you to Margie, as well as all our brothers and sisters at the Northstate Branch.

### **Los Gatos Irish Writers' Festival**

October 5-8, 2017

Los Gatos CA

<https://irishwriterslogatos.com>

### EVENTS, CONTESTS & CONFERENCES

[www.northstatewriters.com](http://www.northstatewriters.com) Back to Top Throughline-Page 11

"The Los Gatos Irish Writers' Festival is devoted to bringing together writers and audiences at unique and innovative events in the historic and intimate town of Los Gatos, CA."

### **Litquake**

October 6-14, 2017

San Francisco CA

<http://www.litquake.org>

Litquake 18th Birthday -- "This year's festival will feature nearly 600 authors over nine days of eclectic and dynamic programming."

### **Lit Crawl San Francisco**

October 14, 2017

The Mission

San Francisco CA

<http://www.litquake.org/event-series/lit-crawl-san-francisco>

"The Lit Crawl brings literature to the streets, featuring smart and silly, worldly and wacky events in venues usual (bars, cafes, galleries, and bookstores) and unusual (police stations, tattoo parlors, barbershops, and cemeteries)."

### **NCIBA 2017 Fall Discovery Show**

October 19-20, 2017

**South San Francisco CA**

<http://www.nciba.com/fall-discovery-show.html>

Northern California Independent Booksellers Association presents "Two days packed with education, authors,

rep picks, publisher exhibits, and camaraderie."

**Writer's Digest Novel Writing Conference**

October 27-29, 2017

Pasadena CA

<http://novel.writersdigestconference.com>

"The Writer's Digest Novel Writing Conference—the only conference focused solely on the novel—returns to

the West Coast this fall!

Many of publishing's most respected and knowledgeable writers, agents, and editors will be on hand to guide

you. Hone your craft skills, refine your characters, explore the future of publishing, and get the tools you need

to advance your career as a writer."

**La Jolla Writer's Conference**

October 27-29, 2017

San Diego CA

<http://lajollawritersconference.com>

"Celebrating the Art, Craft & Business of Writing"

San Francisco Writers Conference

February 14-18, 2018

**2018 San Francisco Writing Contest accepting submissions!**

"We are now accepting submissions in Adult Fiction, Adult Nonfiction, and Children's/YA. Winning this contest—or even placing in it—will look so good on your writing resume.

The Grand Prize winner receives \$250 and a 15-minute in-person meeting at the conference (or a scheduled telephone call) with a literary agent who represents work in the winner's genre.

First place winners in each category receive checks for \$100. The entry fee is \$35.

All fees and entries must be received by 5:00 pm Pacific Time on January 12, 2018. San Francisco CA

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## **WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT TO THE VALLEY SCRIBE?**

**E-MAIL ME @**

**[CWCSFVNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CWCSFVNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM)**

**FICTION – 800 WORDS OR LESS**

**NON-FICTION- 600 WORDS OR LESS**

**POETRY/PROSE- 45 LINES OR LESS**

**SUBMIT! YOU COULD BE OUR NEXT  
MONTHLY SHOWCASE!**

**DEADLINE IS BY THE 15<sup>TH</sup>**

## California Writers Club San Fernando Valley Branch

### OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

President, Gabriella Owens, [SpoiledGrrrapes@att.net](mailto:SpoiledGrrrapes@att.net)

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LOTS of great information at our Website: [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org)

## San Fernando Valley Branch of California Writers Club

### meets at:

Motion Picture & Television Fund

Katzenberg Pavillion

23388 Mulholland Drive

Woodland Hills, CA 91364

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.

## **Program Schedule (Subject to change.)**

**Meeting Dates:** Normally the first Saturday of each month except July and August..

**Registration:** 12:30

**Guests:** Suggested donation \$5.00

**MPTF Residents:** Free

**Members only Open Mic:** 1:00

**Announcements:** 1:30 – 1: 40

**Break, Meet & Mingle:** 1:40

**Feature Speaker:** 2:00 – 3:00

**Speaker Book sales and signing:** 3:00

**Clean up and doors closed:** 3:30

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

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

In collaboration with the other branches and CWC as a whole, our purpose is to provide a forum for educating both members and the public in the craft of writing and in marketing their works. This is served by monthly public meetings, workshops, and seminars, as well as conferences, which are open to all writers and are conducted for the purpose of educating writers. California Writers Club networks with other groups and agencies involved in similar pursuits.