



The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club

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Meet Comedian Jerry Corley - A Stand-up Guy!



Would you like to inject a healthy dose of humor into your writing? Try something a bit different? Wake up your reader? Here's your chance to learn a few new tricks: Come hear a veteran comedian, Jerry Corley, give a presentation at our June 2nd. meeting.

Corley, founder of the Stand Up Comedy Clinic, is an experienced comedic writing teacher. He's been a stand up comedian for 25 years, spending much of that time touring 30-40 weeks out of the year all over country. From strip clubs to banquet rooms for corporate America, Jerry has played to almost every crowd imaginable. He also spent 8 years as a writer for Jay Leno and "The Tonight Show," pumping out hundreds of jokes per week. He has also written hundreds of jokes for his fellow comedians, from Bill Hicks to Chris Rock.

Corley spent many years studying past and present big-time comedians and gradually developed theories on why they get laughs. He has networked with top comedy writers and developed an understanding of the fundamentals of comedy.

He knows surefire ways to trigger human laughter and has broken down the art of comedy into a science. He believes that if comedians and humor writers understand the methods behind a comic's performance, they can write jokes that are not only funnier, but *consistently* funny. Jerry's theories and methods have gained his peers' attention and created interest in his Stand Up Comedy Clinic.

Even if you don't plan on writing stand-up comedy in the near future, creative writer workshop leaders often ask writers to stretch and try out a new genre. Jerry Corley will give us plenty of pointers in the light humor category. Join us in the Katzenberg Pavilion this Saturday.



It was June, and the world smelled of roses. The sunshine was like powdered gold over the grassy hillside.

Maud Hart Lovelace

—KH

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Veep's Message



Bob Okowitz

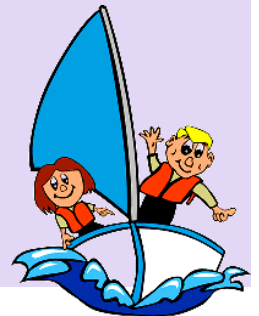
President Gabe Owens is out of town so my Veep's Message is filling in for the President's Message. I hope you all had an enjoyable Memorial Day weekend and are circling the date—June 2nd—for our last meeting of the year. But, don't worry, we plan to hold our traditional August potluck and will send word in July about that event.

At our upcoming June meeting, we will vote for new Board members. On page 4 you will find a bio of our Presidential candidate, Rafael and a list of Officers who are up for re-election.

The CWC bylaws require a quorum to complete this vote. Your vote is crucial. If you cannot be physically present for the group vote, send in your vote by proxy. (See the proxy attachment.)

The Board members and I look forward to seeing you at our June 2nd meeting. The talk by comedy writer Jerry Corley should help us end the year with a smile.

Sail on, Bob the Veep



Summer Break

For the next two months, The Valley Scribe presses will be silent. Our club will be in summer hiatus. But in the back rooms, Board officers and directors will be busy. Lori Hamilton is lining up new speakers and our Critique Director Geri Jabara, with the assistance of Lillian Rodich, will work with me to spotlight our critique groups. Every monthly issue we'll feature one of the groups - members, critique style, creative work ... and their snacks. I can hardly wait!

Pass the brownies, please. May I borrow a pen? How long have you been in this group?

—Kathy Highcove

Layer in the Highlights

In his May talk, mystery writer Ed Blythe confided to the CWC-SFV audience, “I’m a visual person. I look really hard at things and notice details that other people might miss. I watch how people react in certain situations.”

Blythe's visual acumen is the result of early childhood experiences. His mother banned television from their home and channeled her high-spirited child into other types of activities. He was enrolled in art classes that trained his young eyes to look closely, to note details, and try to re-created what he saw on canvas.

Interestingly, Blythe found a career that needed someone with his visual acumen. He works as a forensic accountant, someone who works in fraud and identity theft investigations.

“When I question a suspect, I watch to see if they act nervous, fidget with their hands, sweat, blush, jiggle their knees, swallow hard, or have a hard time looking at me when they answer a question.”

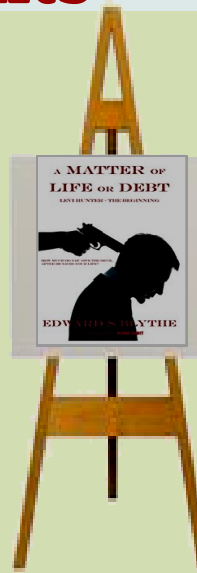
Interestingly, Blythe’s visual acumen has helped him create his fictional characters’ body language. He gave us several tips for building a character by using the visual skills he’s learned as a painter.

“Writing should be three dimensional,” he said. “Slowly build the image. Work to find the descriptive words that will make characters and the action come alive in a reader’s imagination.”

During his talk, Blythe gave us several clues on how to improve body language in one's writing.

1) Writing is three dimensional. Creating a character, a scene, a plot, is similar to painting a picture. A base coat. Another base coat. And then the highlights. Especially the highlights. Fill in the spaces with action, and colorful emotion. Carefully build your scenes and flesh out the characters.

2) Don't be too specific and bog down the



scene with inconsequential details. Leave room for the reader’s imagination.

3) If too much telling is distracting, too little detail will also strain the reader’s visualization. The tension may stall and slow the action.

4) Don’t use words that will cause the reader to stop reading and head for the dictionary. Your content should be aimed at the average Joe or Jody, not a Rhodes scholar. Keep the action flowing and the reader engaged.

5) Finally, when your scene is written, wait a day, and then read it back to yourself. See if it still seems really good, or ... meh. Is it a scene with vivid colors or more like a washed-out water color? If the latter, get out your “palette” and start working in the right highlights. If your word picture is garish with neon embellishments, tone it down.

After giving us those words of advice, Blythe departed the MPTF and left his listeners inspired to use colorful language in their character portrayals and action scenes.

—Kathy Highcove



It's Election Time!

The June 2, 2018 meeting of CWC-SFV is election time for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. In sync with our newly revised Bylaws, The election of Officers will take place at our June meeting to elect a new President and to re-elect the current Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer (Pat Avery is currently serving as both Secretary and Treasurer) . The candidates are as follows:

President – Raphael Beer

Vice President – Bob Okowitz

Secretary and Treasurer – Pat Avery

[Another candidate for President, Alan Wills, withdrew due to illness. We wish him a strong return to health.]

I asked Rafael Beer, as a new candidate for President, to write this short statement of his qualifications and what projects/activities he would like to accomplish with the club, if elected.

A reader and writer since childhood, I have developed, conducted, and published an educational program for inner city schools called "Jump Start" adopted by LAUSD; I am currently writing a novel; have worked in TV and, though retired, still have a career as a professional photographer.

As President I hope to begin a vigorous membership recruiting program; schedule all-day writing workshops for members; expand the number of critique groups; and design a mentoring program as is included in the CWC mission statement.

I want to use the club's July and August hiatus to form a Development Committee to establish a plan for the coming year. Your ideas, comments, and participation will be needed and welcomed.

A Proxy Ballot page has been attached to this newsletter. Any member who cannot attend the June 2nd meeting may vote by proxy and indicate that another CSC-SFV member will pass on his/her vote to the Election Committee.

—Rita Keeley Brown, Nominations Committee Chair



PIERCE COLLEGE

New Scholarship Award

Last September the Board members were excited to hear about an opportunity to provide a scholarship to a college student. CWC agreed to put up two hundred and fifty dollars if we matched the amount. Since we are eager to increase our outreach to colleges, we decided to take advantage of this opportunity. We contacted Pierce Community College English Department and they eagerly accepted our scholarship offer.

The criteria for receiving the award is the student has earned a B or higher in at least two English classes, was recommended by an instructor for the quality of their work and would agree to come to a SFV meeting to speak briefly about how the scholarship benefited their writing. The award of \$500 will be made in June and the recipient will come speak to us in the Fall.

—Pat Avery

Refresh and Review

Clichés

A cliché is an expression that, when it was first dreamed up, was doubtless imaginative and creative: *chicken-livered, happy as a lark, run like a deer*. But by the time it was borrowed and used over and over ad infinitum, it lost any or all of its original freshness: *left high and dry, the finger of suspicion, a whale of an appetite*.



That's a horse of a different color.

Clichés are acceptable and basic to informal conversation, and necessary to the comfort and the flow of the discourse: *red letter day, hard as a rock, leaps and bounds*. But even though they economize on time and effort, good writers try to avoid them, or at least use them rarely and with discretion: *warm as toast, old as the hills, the life of the party*. Why use someone else's overused expressions when you can create your own?

You can spot a cliché coming: *a diamond _____ ; an ace _____* Some of them have been around as long as the Bible: *a parting of the ways, the blind leading the blind, a multitude of sins*.

Certain nouns and adjectives have been glued together so long, they have become clichés: *clockwork precision, whirlwind courtship, crushing defeat*. Some expressions that were once new have been used so much they have become clichés in my lifetime and perhaps yours: *support mushroomed, a real hang-up, what a rip-off!*



He's sharp as a tack!

Song lyrics, especially country, are the real champions of the cliché. Check out some for illustrations. The truly beautiful songs have always had imaginative lyrics. The corny ones string one cliché to another from beginning to end.

Avoiding clichés is especially important in poetry, description and narration. After you write your rough draft, go back and line out all the clichés. You can do better.



Clichés are, of course, not *verboten*. Sometimes you just can't come up with anything better than *the old tried and true*. (See what I mean?) Just try not to overdo them. And refer to a thesaurus if you feel at a loss for words, or if you're ready to leave the job half-done. *Go the whole nine yards. Keep the faith. Carpe diem.*

And now I should quit while I'm still ahead.

- Dave Wetterberg

Book Review

Mystery Is Afoot at Pemberley

By Sheila Moss

Imagine your favorite English mystery writer crossing pens with the ghost of Jane Austen. This is exactly what happened when P.D. James created *Death Comes to Pemberley* in 2011. According to the book blurb “P.D. James combines her two lifelong loves— author Jane Austen and murder mystery novels in this masterful sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*.”

James makes no bones about it: her two life-long loves are Jane Austen and murder mysteries. When you pick up this novel, you are suddenly in Elizabeth and Darcy’s world. You see the renowned library, the grand ball room, busy kitchen and the manicured grounds. Elizabeth is in her sitting room. It is the day before Lady Anne’s Ball. Thomas Bidwell is polishing the silver for the affair. He has to leave his family alone to accomplish the task but he has no fears leaving them alone.

Elizabeth is busy answering correspondence when a maid announces that Colonel William Fitzwilliam wishes to speak to her. Fitzwilliam, a possible suitor for the hand of Darcy’s sister Georgina, wants Elizabeth’s approval when he tries win Georgiana’s hand. Having reached her majority, Georgiana can make her own decisions. She alone can select whom she wants to wed. Elizabeth knows it will be for love.

The young, handsome and ambitious attorney Henry Alveston is the other potential suitor for Georgiana’s hand. It turns out that both have a love of music in common. Georgina plays the pianoforte with Alveston turning the pages

Entering the flow is the cursed name at Wickham whose marriage to Elisabeth ‘s sister Lydia has led to their being permanently banned from Pemberley.

That night fierce winds start to blow. A chaise lurches and sways. The horses are wild eye and agitated. Suddenly a coach door opens and a woman stumbles out. It is Lydia, hysterical and screaming.

Mr. Wickham and Captain Denny have left the coach after a quarrel. Pratt the driver explains he heard one gun shot.

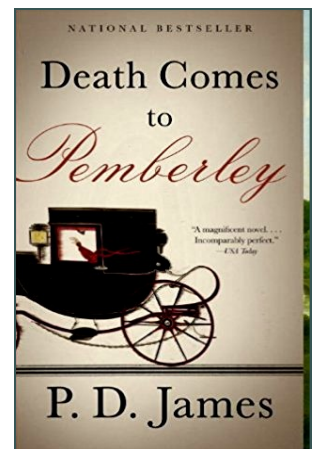
Suspense builds as the search party finds Captain Denny dead with Wickham kneeling over him.

“He’s dead! Oh God, Denny’s dead. He was my friend, my only friend, and I’ve killed him! I’ve killed him! It’s my fault.”

With that I leave you, gentle reader. Can you untangle the intrigues and motives and proclaim the murderer?

Afterword: *In her Author’s Notes James did make an apology to Jane Austen for involving her beloved Elizabeth in the trauma of a murder investigation, especially as Miss Austen had quit such odious subjects.*

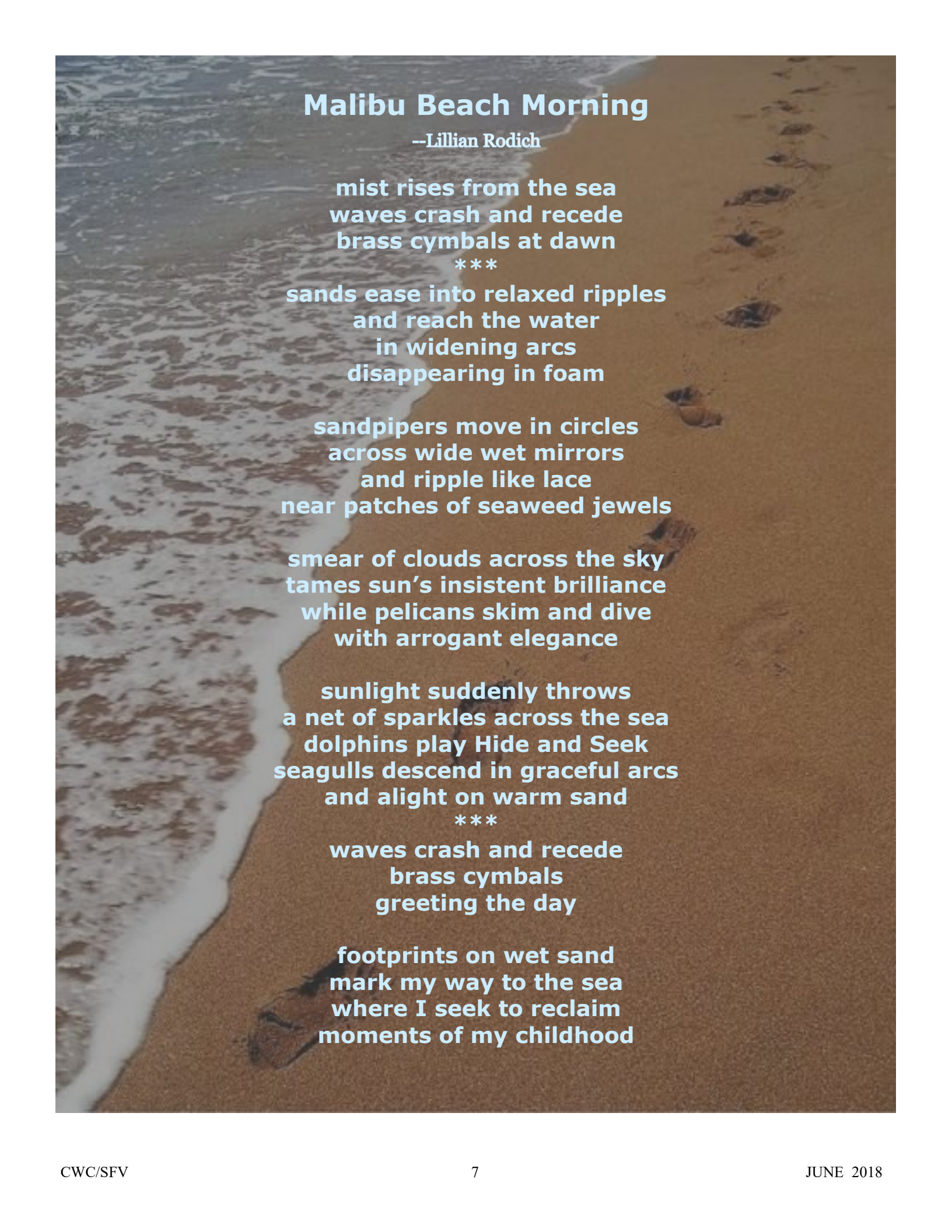
James commented, “I suspect that if she wished to dwell on such an odious subject, she would have written this story herself and done it better.” —Sheila Moss



P.D. James

P.D. James was an English mystery writer best known for her series of novels featuring fictional detective Adam Dalglish of Scotland Yard.

The author was an Jane Austen devotee all her life. After writing many best selling mysteries, she wanted to take on a special challenge: write a book in the style of Jane Austen. In fact, she aspired to write in the voice of Jane Austen. And so she completed *Death Comes to Pemberley* in 2011, three years before her death in 2014.



Malibu Beach Morning

--Lillian Rodich

mist rises from the sea
waves crash and recede
brass cymbals at dawn

sands ease into relaxed ripples
and reach the water
in widening arcs
disappearing in foam

sandpipers move in circles
across wide wet mirrors
and ripple like lace
near patches of seaweed jewels

smear of clouds across the sky
tames sun's insistent brilliance
while pelicans skim and dive
with arrogant elegance

sunlight suddenly throws
a net of sparkles across the sea
dolphins play Hide and Seek
seagulls descend in graceful arcs
and alight on warm sand

waves crash and recede
brass cymbals
greeting the day

footprints on wet sand
mark my way to the sea
where I seek to reclaim
moments of my childhood

Cruel Elul

-Keyle Birnberg



Elul (August)...you are supposed to be the month of renewal, where everything is new, fresh, and fragrant. Instead, YOU, cruel and rude took away Dad, stepping on my flowers, closing the brilliant light of the sun, bringing the darkness of death into my happy home with a perverse precision of no return. No machines to pump the heart, or the life-giving breath for his silent bluish lips.

Darkness came erasing my smiles my shadow floating with no direction, walking the streets he knew in Quito, in the very Middle of the World seeking his presence now hiding in foreign ground. This new land he called home was now claiming his body as one of their own.

Thought I heard his whispers across oceans and miles, I wasn't there for our last good-bye. Anger took residence in my soul, destroying the beauty I had known. I was lost roaming the world in a private hell blaming all creatures, not even sparing the lonely shadow I had become.

My face wore the mask of death, my eyes reflecting the cold white-marble wearing a permanent necklace with Dad's Hebrew name announcing possession on

what he once was. I stayed secluded, alone in a monk-like Sabbatical of one willingly retired from life.

In one of my dreams Dad demands that I end this madness of pain. I see the months fly like magic rain...years bring back August, September, April, May and all the months in between but, anger is gone. I tend his marble from afar, leaving small stones in the old tradition to let him know... I've been there in my dream-like visits. Stay warm Dad! I come to cover you with my thoughts.



The Funeral

**Gone five days.
Feels like an eternity.
So many memories,
Intense feelings.
Holding it all in.
Meeting with the priest,
The undertaker wants to get paid.
Corporate guys need to get paid.
Calling relatives.
Making arrangements.
Get to the wake on time.
Please get to the wake on time.
Mom tells me not to laugh so much.
If I don't laugh, I may scream or cry.
Not supposed to cry.
Get to the church on time.
Please get me to the church on time.
Loss.
So much loss.**

—Bob Okowitz

Only In San Francisco

In the late 1970's my companion Toshio and I were in San Francisco setting up for the gift and jewelry show in the convention center. My business at that time was selling my designs and imports at wholesale trade shows. We travelled together throughout the country doing shows in places like Dallas and New York. He was my number one assistant as well as part of my family after coming to live with us as an exchange student.

After a hard work day setting up for the show opening the next morning it was time to relax. So I said, "Tosh, how about a Japanese restaurant for dinner tonight?" Tosh said, "Hai."

We found this authentic little place which was like going on a journey back to the countryside of Japan. First we had to remove our shoes and place them in open bookcase-like compartments where many other shoes were waiting to be retrieved by their owners.

A waiter in traditional attire and wearing a colorful headband led us to low tables and seats with recessed spaces for our legs. It was almost like sitting on the floor yet very comfortable. Cozy dimly lit lanterns hung above our table. The setting created a moody romantic setting.

Our waiter knelt down next to Toshio, flipped his hand in a feminine manner and said something that like, "So deskah," touching Tosh's shoulder while gazing into his eyes. He was surely flirting with him. And Tosh was surely embarrassed but still very cool. Now I knew that San Francisco was like the gay capitol but it was my first encounter with a gay Japanese waiter outwardly flirting with Toshio.

Tosh ordered a wonderful assortment of sushi, sa-



shimi, tempura and teriyaki. Also wonderful fun was the attention our waiter continued to pay my dinner mate. Since Toshio was a straight young man who liked girls, I felt free to tease him about this attraction as we left, after collecting our shoes.

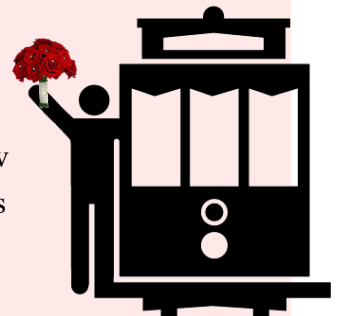
We were in town for a three-day show. We sold lots of stuff like ivory and cloisonné jewelry. At night we explored eateries. This second night we went to an upscale seafood restaurant. I noticed as we were seated that all waitresses were dressed like waiters. White shirts ... black bow ties ... black trousers and shoes ... white tailored long aprons ... and men's style short boyish haircuts.

This night it was my turn to have a new experience. Our stunningly handsome waitress arrived, placed one hand on the table, leaned her blonde blue-eyed face very close to mine and said in a whispery low voice, "What can I get for you?"

I swear she felt like a guy! My face flushed as I tried to regain my composure. Swallowing hard, I replied, "I haven't studied the menu yet but I'll have some rose house wine." She gave me a knowing smile and then turned to Tosh, who said, "Same."

I was shocked at my own response to her. Being a woman who loves men, how could she have affected me this way? I don't know. But she did.

So the same thing happened to both of us, two nights in a row. As we left the bistro after enjoying another wonderful meal, we gave each other a knowing smile and I said to Tosh, "Only in San Francisco!"



A touch of humor from the past ...



You Just MIGHT Be An Old Guy!

What makes you think...??
It's obvious:

1. If your favorite Christmas present is your Social Security Check -
you just might be an old guy.
2. If you go to bed with a woman just to keep your feet warm -
you just might be an old guy.
3. If your favorite marital aid is a tank of oxygen -
you just might be an old guy.
4. If your favorite cologne is Ben Gay -
you just might be an old guy.
5. If your favorite chair is a foam-rubber donut -
you just might be an old guy.
6. If you think the price of gas is a pastrami sandwich -
you just might be an old guy.
7. If you hire a baby sitter - but don't have any kids -
you just might be an old guy.
8. If your favorite vitamin is Viagra -
you just might be an old guy.
9. If you're the only one at your class reunion -
you just might be an old guy.
10. If you think a "home computer " is someone who does his own taxes -
you just might be an old guy.
11. If your idea of a 'Day Excursion' is a trip to the bathroom -
you just might be an old guy.
12. If your electric shaver is also a de-fibrillator -
you just might be an old guy.
13. If you read the obituaries just to gloat -
you just might be an old guy.
14. If you think "getting hot" is turning up the electric blanket -
you just might be an old guy.
15. If you think of a Hula Hoop as a "Bowel Movement"-
you just might be an old guy.
16. If you consider "Free Love" as "having a coupon" -
you just might be an old guy.

- Ray Malus



Talkative Barbers

Snip, snip, snip as my hair he does clip,
But the barber has a non-stop lip.

Politics and sports are all I hear,
But much too loud and close to my ear.

Just wield your scissors and shut your mouth,
Before my ears decide to go South.

- Ken Wilkins

Wearing Many Hats



I have always told people that my motto is “show up”, and have always prided myself on wearing many hats and falling into any job or

event in my path—it's how I managed to survive in all the countries where I've lived. This past week was extremely interesting and proved my point!

It started out with a trip to the Bowers Museum on Wednesday, on a bus tour with a group of elderly people, (I just realized that it applies to me as well, in a sense!)

After several delays, we arrived an hour later than planned. The special Bowers exhibition, “The Kennedys”, showed black-and-white family events and tragic assassination photos. From there, I whizzed around alone to incredible exhibitions that all evoked tremendous nostalgia of my life in China, Africa, Canada and the USA. I also found time to chat with someone who asked me to do a book signing at a coming event.

I wore my second hat on Thursday when I had a Keynote presentation and book signing for another group of seniors, my fifth in the past six weeks. I can never stress the importance enough of showing up everywhere, with enough business cards to dish out, preferably with a photo of oneself so as to be unforgettable!

My third hat of the week was donned as a guest presenter on a panel honoring army veterans of both USA and Israel. I fully qualified, having spent two years in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) during the 1956 Sinai Campaign when it was my duty to inform the parents of the loss or injury of a child! A tough call at a tender age! I was also in the Entertainment Corp, singing with a big band, to a raucous, appreciative audience!

On the panel with me, were several veterans who are friends I met a few years back when I spoke at their weekly meeting, at “Wings over Wendy's.” I got that opportunity because I started a conversation with an employee at Barnes and Noble who turned out to be the daughter of the president at the time!

These events of the past week have led to new referrals—showing up and pitching is truly magical for me!

—Ester Shifren

Keeping In Touch

Recently, Judy and Lance Presnall were in town and our former member got in touch with some of her SFV posse. It'd been a while and all of us welcomed the opportunity for a reunion.

Here's a photo of our happy little group, from the left —Yolanda Fintor, Kathy Highcove, Stephany Spencer, Judy Presnall, Ester Shifren, Rita Keeley Brown and Sheila Moss, enjoying a bountiful lunch at Chatsworth restaurant. Between bites, we exchanged our personal news and a few memories with our old friend who now lives in a new community near Sacramento.

Judy, who once wrote a series of children's books titled *Animals With Jobs*, told us that she had at

work on a new book.

We all enjoyed our SFV version of the “Ladies Who Lunch,” and hope to repeat this gathering the next time Judy visits Los Angeles.



photo contributed by Ester Shifren

THAT'S A BIG DONUT

By Mary Freeman



In 1953 Los Angeles one of my fondest memories I shared with my father was our weekly trip to the Big Donut. (Not as exciting as when Engineer Bill or Oscar Meyer and his Weiner Mobile came to town but considerably tastier.) Daddy told Momma that he would give her time to herself and take me with him to get gas in his car. I had two assignments on these trips:



- 1) Collect the S&H Green Stamps from the station attendant and paste them in the Green Stamp book
- 2) Keep our secret about our Big Donut excursions.

Fast forward to 1978, while driving on the 405 Freeway nearing Manchester, I would spy the Big Donut and regale my two youngsters about my adventures with my father. Not just once but every time we passed the landmark. Like the three-story Big Donut, the outside of the donuts weren't smooth but covered in nubs. Daddy would buy my donut reward. I would scrape the crunchy nubby goodness off with my teeth, then slowly savor each donutty delicious bite. Thankfully the sweet treat made me forget the awful taste of licking the Green Stamps.

By the time 1986 rolled around, my exasperated teenagers finally let me know that I had told them the story so often they could recite it verbatim. And there were more stories I retold every time a related landmark or street sign came into view. A song, a sound or even a fragrance would prompt me to share another anecdote. My kids needed a way to stop me — to preserve their sanity.

We agreed they could kindly say, "That's a Big Donut," and I would kindly hush up.

This Is a little bit of donut lore.

Between the optimist and the pessimist, the difference is droll. The optimist sees the doughnut; the pessimist the hole!

Oscar Wilde



A flute without holes is not a flute. A doughnut without a hole is a Danish.

Chevy Chase

June Meeting Agenda

- 12:30 p.m. Registration
- 1:00 p.m. Club Business
- 1:30 p.m. Speaker
- 2:30 p.m. Questions, Raffle
- 3:00 p.m. Refreshments
- 3:30 p.m. Farewells

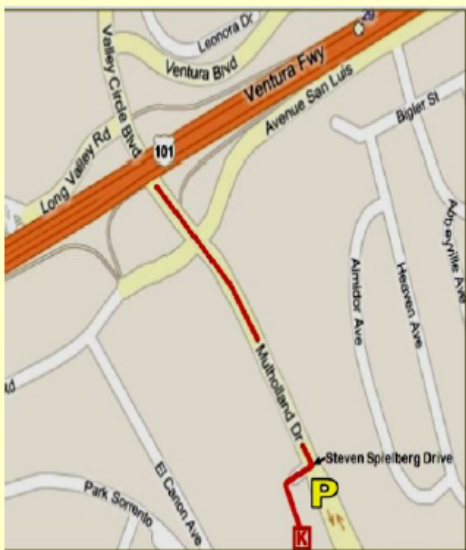
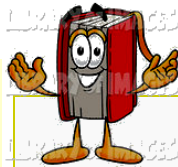
SFV-CWC Location

Motion Picture & Television Fund
Katzenberg Pavilion
23388 Mulholland Drive
Woodland Hills, CA 91364



Looking for us? Here's our address.

And here're your driving directions.



Driving west on the 101 freeway to the Woodland Hills area, exit at the Valley Circle/Mulholland off-ramp. Coming east, exit at Calabasas Rd./Mulholland off ramp and move left with traffic onto Calabasas Rd.

West bound travelers go south over the 101 freeway you just exited and drive straight on until you see Spielberg Drive on your right.

Eastbound motorists must be in the far right lane on Calabasas Rd. so they can easily turn right onto Mulholland road. Continue to Spielberg Drive.

Drive along Spielberg Drive, turn left at an intersection and continue along the road to a kiosk with a gate across the road. Inform the kiosk attendant that you've come for the California Writers Club meeting and ask for parking directions.

The parking lot for our meeting is near a statue of a trombone player. When you leave your car and look around, you should spot a group of building nearby. That's where the Katzenberg Pavilion is located. There's a large koi pond and small bridge over the pond right beside an entrance to our meeting room.

Another clue—if you're lost, wandering around the facility's campus, Katzenberg Pavilion is directly across from the Stark Villa. Look for our sign-in tables set up outside the Pavilion. Club members are waiting to welcome you into our gathering.

