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The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club

he multi-creative-talented English author, film producer, music promoter and much-in-demand lecturer Diane Hinds will appear at our November 3 meeting. Her presentation, "How to Promote Your Book," will be held in the Saban Community Room.

"Unfortunately, many excellent writers are not savvy enough to obtain important media coverage, reviews or improve sales for their books," Hinds

said. "The goal is to provide them with the knowledge that is needed to develop and implement a sound, personalized public relations plan."

During her presentation, Hinds will discuss how an author should research, identify the target audience, create the key message, and then compose and distribute a news release.

"It is imperative that writers today quickly come up to speed on evolving public relations strategies," Hinds explains.

She has promoted some of the biggest names in the music industry, including pop artists Barry Manilow, Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, opera singer Lesley Garrett, plus many other greats. She has produced internationally acclaimed and New York Times bestselling mystery novelist Anne Perry's films "Put Your Heart on the Page: An Introduction to Writing," and "Plotting to Enrich Your Back Story."

In her own YouTube film, "How to Promote Your Book: Aimed at the Small or Self-Published



Diane Hinds

Writer," Hinds takes the mystique out of what she describes as "PR-ing," and helps viewers organize basic public relations campaigns.

She said: "The world is changing in exciting ways.
Social media is blurring boundaries and the Internet is removing obstacles of accessibility. Digital sales are increas-

ing and many continue to enjoy success through self-publishing."

Our SFV-CWC has been successful recently in bringing in British speakers as part of a ramped up international outreach effort to expand and reinforce our chapter's excellent reputation.

"There are no limits to how far we will go to bring in the most interesting speakers," said SFV-CWC President Bob Okowitz. "We are committed to creating a strong bond with writers from everywhere. This pushes the boundaries of learning about our craft to a much higher level."

A visiting lecturer at the University of Westminster, Hinds regularly speaks at literary festivals and libraries and at the UCLA's person essay writing course taught by the popular author Victoria Zackheim. She also coaches writers in person or on the Internet.

—Gary Wosk

President's Message

Back in NYC, November days were crisp, but often sunny. It was a great time for walks or going up to Central Park. When Indian summer was over, colder fall weather meant it was time to bundle up for football season.

Of course, the Thanksgiving holiday is November's main event.

Thanksgiving meant a week of family fun-gobbling lots of turkey, stuffing, vegetables and endless pies. Looking back, I remember way too much eating for one day.

Sometimes it snowed in November. We'd watch snowflakes floating down from the heavens. Fresh drifts of snow always looked beautiful, almost sacred ... the earth looked purified by this white gift from heaven.

Here in Los Angeles, when leaves turn red and yellow, it reminds us that change is inevitable. No matter how much this ex-New Yorker might want our pleasant warm weather to continue ... L.A.'s version of Indian summer will inevitably give way to cooler autumn weeks.

In the past three months, our CWC-SFV branch has gone through many changes.



Bob Okowitz

Recently, we've had to accept a very sad event: the passing of long-time CWC-SFV member David Wittenberg.

Dave was a co-founder of our MPTF branch, served several terms as president and one term as SFV state

representative

Through the years, at every meeting, Dave wore a friendly smile and chatted amiably with members over cookies and coffee. The retired English teacher was interested in member feedback and he would listen closely to folks' thoughts and concerns about the club.

When Dave was president, he led our new CWC branch in many projects, such as co-sponsoring writing contests with nearby schools, book fairs that showcased our members' writings, and several PR efforts to attract Valley residents to our meetings.

In the coming year, Dave Wetterberg will be greatly missed by many SFV members, and by people in CWC branches around the state.

-Bob Okowitz

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FAREWELL TO A FRIEND

ongtime member Dave
Wetterberg passed away on
October 13th. He was a cofounder of our branch and past
President when our club was
called *The West Valley CWC*, and
President twice more after our
branch became the *San Fer-*nando Valley CWC.

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He also served a term as our representative to the State CWC

and was a member of SFV critique groups for several years. He was a special friend to members who worked with him on a board, or n a critique group.

And the feeling was mutual. Dave enjoyed leading our little band and often mentioned the SFV goings-on when with his family.

His daughters recently sent this message to me,: In 1994, Dad joined the SFV Writers Club after he retired from LAUSD. He was looking for a hobby and writing and grammar were always a big part of his life. He lived to share the beauty of words and sentences with others. In 1998, after our mom died, he left the club. After a few weeks, some

of his writers club friends came to the house and asked him to return to the meetings. And he did. It seemed clear to us that the club members needed him as much as he needed them.

Dad enjoyed the camaraderie and fellowship of the gatherings as well as the creative exchange of thoughts and ideas during the meetings.

We're grateful for the friendships he developed over the years in your group.

Dave's family and friends will hold a Celebration of Life for Dave on November 3rd, 12 -2 pm, at The Foothills, 5300 E. Los Angeles Ave., Simi Valley.

The December issue of this newsletter will also celebrate Dave Westerberg's years of service to our club. Please send me a short anecdote, a poem, any memory about Dave you'd like to share with us. Send your thoughts to kghighcove@gmail.com.com

—Kathy Highcove

Beta Readers Wanted

If you're a member of our club, and have finished writing your book, hold the presses. You need a beta reader. A **better** reader? No, a **beta** reader, a person who'll carefully read your final draft, looking for typos, misspellings, continuity issues—any type of grammatical error or content inconsistency that slipped by earlier editors.

A beta reader doesn't need to be a professional copy or content editor or a paid employee of a publishing house, just an experienced reader.

Every year, SFV club members who've finished their manuscript start looking around for a beta reader. In response to this need, our board will keep an official list of beta writers for our members' use. If you want to be on the Beta list, email me at kghighcove@gmail.com. Send your name, phone number and email address. Write and read on, SFV members!

How to write a good sex scene—A group of San Fernando Valley 80-year-olds learn the do's and don'ts

By Matthew Carey,

The Los AngeleS Daily News October 10 2018

t the Motion Picture and Television Fund campus in Woodland Hills over the weekend, a group of mostly elderly writers gathered in a brightly-lit room to shed light on a taboo topic: how to write good sex scenes.

"Is it safe to say subtle is better than blunt?" asked one gray-haired gentleman.

"I actually think blunt is better than subtle," replied Jonathan Beckman, a British author and editor who led the discussion dubbed "When Good Writers Turn Bad in Bed." He addressed members of the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club — many of them in their 80s — reading explicit passages from books worthy of the Bad Sex in Fiction Award, an annual honor presented by Literary Review magazine.

One frothy excerpt he cited went, "He gave substantial attention to her thighs." Other examples were too graphic to be printed here. One or two listeners walked out, apparently offended by the frank subject matter, but most remained closely engaged, taking notes as Beckman described do's and don'ts of sex writing.

Sheila Moss, 78, of Porter Ranch, raised her hand to ask whether writing about rough sex was out of bounds. Later, she told CWC/SFV



Author Jonathan Beckman shares tips on "good sex writing" with members of the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club at the Motion Picture and Television Fund campus in Woodland Hills. Saturday, October 6, 2018 (Photo by Matthew Carey, for the Southern California News Group).

the LA Daily News her preference as a reader is for more gentle romantic writing.

"I like it sexy but pleasant, loving. That's why I asked about the rough sex," she commented, confessing that when she was younger she enjoyed reading risqué books. "I remember Lady Chatterley's Lover and I remember a book called Behind the Green Door," she recalled, referring to a circa 1940 tome otherwise known as The Abduction of Gloria. "When I was in eighth grade my sister caught me reading it. She said, 'You're too young to find out what's behind the green door."

Behind the wood door of the MPTF conference room, Beckman's advice focused on the practical.

"Don't be a medical textbook. That's not what we're there for," he remarked. "Don't

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make this the most transcendental, enlightened, out-of-body experience these [characters] have ever had... Make it funny. Show the ridiculous side of it."

At age 36, Beckman was decades younger than many in the audience. Rita Brown, 84, of West Hills, called the presentation useful.

"For me and people who come into writing 'in later years,' shall we say," she offered euphemistically, "it was just very valuable in broadening your approach to how to do it."

But Ester Benjamin Shifren, 80, of Encino, blanched at particular excerpts Beckman read.

"It went a little bit far in places. Some of the examples were very strong," she noted. As for the possibility of writing a sex scene herself, she stated, "I wish I could but I can't. I wouldn't know where to start." She added, speaking of sex itself, "This is an act that is done daily, every day, every split second of time it's being done somewhere by many people. You have to write about it in such a way that people react, 'Oh, wow, this grabs me' or 'I can learn something from this.' It has to evoke some thought."

Alan Wills, 77, of Calabasas, himself a British native, has not shied from drafting sex scenes, mentioning a series of books he has written of an autobiographical nature.

"It is a boy's coming of age in London and his inability to know what girls think and do, so he misses a lot of opportunities for sex," he said. "It's very humorous."

Lori Hamilton, 86, a California Writers Club member from Camarillo, told the LA Daily News she



photo by Ester Shifren

"Don't be embarrassed about it," he urged. "Don't be evasive. Just look at it directly in the eye and go straight for it." has penned sexual scenarios before.

"In my last novel, which I finished in August, I do have a sex scene but not pornographic. I found that if you set the scene and you just give a little bit of action people use their imaginations," she observed. "And that's my style."

After the roughly 90-minute seminar, the writers club adjourned for snacks, beverages

and more conversation about sexually-oriented compositions.

"I've never thought about writing that kind of material," commented Yolanda Fintor, 87, of Northridge. "And if I did I'd probably use a pen name. Probably be quite explicit."

Hamilton, who organized the event as the club's program chair, pronounced it a success.

"When I was listening to [Beckman] I was apprehensive some members would be shocked and dismayed," she avowed. "But the way they participated and the questions, the level of interest they had, that was a good thing."

Beckman agreed. "Everyone seemed to be enthusiastic and engaged, so I'm pretty happy about it," he commented. "I hope no one is mortally offended by the whole thing."

Before leaving, he offered final words for people of any age who want to write effective sex scenes.

"Don't be embarrassed about it," he urged.

"Don't be evasive. Just look at it directly in the eye and go straight for it."

A Meeting of Minds-The Inside Story

--Lori Hamilton

n 2014, an article in the Wall Street Journal Leaught my eye: When Good Writers Turn Bad In Bed. The writer, Jonathan Beckman, stated that publishers forced good writers to



write salacious cheesy sex scenes to increase book sales.

As judge of the "Worst Sex in Fiction Award," Beckman had plenty of examples to choose from. Then he listed four rules that writers might follow to avoid falling into that trap. Someday, I thought,

it might be relevant to my writing. I stowed the article in my research file.

In 2016, I was appointed Program Director for our SFV club and immediately decided to delve into my research file. I'd use it to find speakers who would help our members improve their writing skills.

A year later, my speakers had presented many essentials of the writing craft, but the tantalizing promise of the Bad Sex article remained unfulfilled. I have another year as SFV Program Director, I thought, and did more research on Jonathan Beckman.

I learned that Jonathan Beckman was an upand-coming literary figure in London! Well, I saw nothing to lose by sending this message to the author: If you ever come to L.A., would you come speak to our writers' group? He enthusiastically agreed and after a year of exchanging emails, we finally settled on a date. Hurray, I thought, Jonathan Beckman is coming to visit us! What could be better?

Then Jonathan surprised me by offering to do a morning workshop before his afternoon lecture!

"A workshop would be wonderful and amazing," I told the Board. "But it would be a major

challenge to schedule and his subject might be somewhat controversial." There was no hesitation.



"Let's do it," board members replied.

Beckman requested that twenty members send him a 2500 word submission. After reading all twenty entries, he would chose a few that were well-written and offered the most opportunity for improvement. Twenty were sent. Seven were selected.

Then Beckman asked that all attendees read those seven submissions prior to the workshop so they could follow his critique and join in the discussion.

Our workshop convened on October 6, 2018, and Beckman swiftly began his critiques. He made constructive comments and asked questions—both to the writer as well as the whole group. Soon he was leading an animated productive discussion.

After the intense two-hour session, a few attendees shared their evaluations.

Paula Diggs said, "I left the session inspired to work on ideas that I hadn't fully developed."

"The workshop experience was worth my time," Bob Bunes said. "I especially appreciated his examples of the best ways to begin a story."

And from Stacey Hammes: "He gave me several interesting suggestions on how to improve my manuscript."

And now, here's my POV: This event was accomplished with many members' enthusiasm and eagerness, even though it was a major challenge for a small writers' club. But we did it! We hosted a prominent London author who gave our gathering an unforgettable experience! Perhaps our email paths will cross again.

Let's Go Fly A Kite

ven at the early age of seven, I had been fascinated by science fiction movies. I wanted to believe that the impossible was possible.

Flying kites with my dad, Murray, at the park surely contributed to making my imagination more vivid.

"Okay, everything is ready," he'd tell me just before liftoff. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, Dad." He'd then hand me the kite.

With the wind toward my back, I'd run as fast I could, peeking over my shoulder to see if the kite had gained any altitude. It's a miracle I didn't fall into a hole and break my ankle. Sometimes, the take-offs didn't go smoothly. The kite would get entangled in a tree or high-tension wires or come crashing down to earth because it was too windy. We felt like the Wright Brothers, but we'd try and try again, until we succeeded.

Up, up and away flew my paper kite until it became a little speck, imperceptible to the naked eye. That's when I began to get really worried.

"It's gone. It's gone," I said with alarm to my dad.

"Don't worry, Gary. Here, take these." He handed me a pair of binoculars.

Sure enough, there she was, still soaring. And I could still feel the tug on the controls (the hundreds of feet of string that was



by Gary Wosk

wrapped around a stick). That was a positive sign that the mission would be a success.

I was still concerned.
"Dad, if the kite
keeps going higher and
higher, will the sun
burn it up?" I asked.

"No, the sun is too far away."

"How far will the kite go?"

"To the moon. That's still the plan."

My friends, all about my age, seven, stood beside me and my dad. They were in awe after I gave them a chance to look through the binoculars too, however, they wanted more than a look. There was no way I was going to give up the controls to inexperienced kite flyers. On the other hand, I was trained by one of the best in the aviation field, my dad (he actually installed linoleum for a living and never flew an airplane). He was then in the prime of his life back in the early 1960s. In his 30s, slender, hair still black, his hands calloused, Dad was able to guide that kite as if he was Charles Lindbergh. And at the first sign of danger in the sky, he'd ask me to hand over the controls to him so he could prevent the kite from going into a nose dive. He was my hero.

My dad was a great builder, too. Within minutes, he could assemble a rudimentary

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kite purchased from the local market for about twenty-five cents and attach a tail, usually made out of a stripped piece of white cloth. Mom wasn't too happy when she found out he'd "borrowed" the material from the linen closet.

He'd pull a fast one on me too, which I didn't mind.

When my dad told me once that "The U.S. Air Force was scrambling its jets to intercept a UFO flying over us." I readily accepted this as fact.

"Are they going to shoot my kite down?" I asked with trepidation.

"No way. It's too difficult of a target," he reassured me. "This baby is going to the moon." I believed him. We'd be famous. My kite would be the first to make it to the moon. A wonder of wonders.

For what seemed like hours, I'd move the controls this way and that way and gaze into the sky, watching every zigzag the kite would take, ready for the unexpected.

The unexpected came in the form of, "Gary, it's getting late. I promised Mom we'd all go out for dinner."

"What about the kite?" I asked.

"She's well on her way to the moon and doesn't need us any longer."

He'd then cut the string.

Thanks, Dad, for making me a more curious and imaginative person.

Join a SFV Critique Group There's always room for one more



This is Geri Jabara's Saturday a.m. group who meets twice a month. From left to right: Erica Stux, Geri Jabara, Ilan Sendowski, Alan Wills, Sam Glenn

Why Join a Critique Group?

Major benefit of being a CWC-SFV member is the opportunity to join a critique group. Our SFV branch has <u>six groups</u> that meet during the day, plus one new evening group.

SFV meetings are held in the comfort of our homes. There's an atmosphere of enthusiasm, camaraderie and respect within each group. Our group members always strive to critique the writing—not the writer.

We think it's essential to arrange a good fit between the member and the group. We administrators ask about your individual critique needs before you are assigned a group. As a result, we've found that a social network and new friendships grows within the six gatherings.

Join a SFV critique group? Yes! Try it, you'll like it! We'll save a chair for you.

Geri Jabara, CWC-SFV Critique Group Coordinator Lillian Rodich, Critique Group Advisor

We Can Be Heroes

Some of my warmest memories of parenting come from reading picture books to my four children – long before they could talk or read for themselves. Authors Mercer Mayer, Laura Numeroff, Eric Carle, Richard Scarry, and Dr. Seuss, of course, were among our favorites.



My own picture book, titled Nathan and Nana Cas-

sandra – Superheroes (Waldorf Publishing, 2018) is about a little boy who learns from his nana that we are all superheroes when we take the time to help others. It was important to me that this book be entertaining, illustrate diversity, embrace the warm relationship between a grandparent and grandchild, and provide a platform for adults to talk to children about kindness and good deeds.

Please enjoy the video trailer at https://youtu.be/nHLUzr7oGOw

Special thanks to CWC-SFV members Rita Keeley Brown and Gary Wosk who wrote beautiful endorsements for the back cover.

-Karen Gorback

The Masquerade



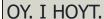
Every day is like Halloween to me I make up my face to disguise what the people will see I select what to wear to enhance my best assets As I primp and I pose to expose many facets

Then I brush out my hair that is blonde not by chance And pretend that Prince Charming will take me to dance

I am two different people by day and by night The makeup comes off and the clothes that were tight I'm stropped bare of my assets no longer the Queen But tomorrow once more it will be Halloween

—Leslie Kaplan





"So kiddo!"

One person flippantly comments, as a comic, "So you hoyt. So you are having discomfort? Tell some funny jokes and you will feel better."

Another says with psychological overtones, "The discomfort will go away. It's only mental. Just pay attention to this advice.
Change your attitude! Relax! Take it easy!"

And a third person relates, as a magician, "Just forget you are having discomfort. You know you are imagining it.
A-bra-ca-da-bra! Your discomfort is no more."

An elderly man, more philosophical, remarks, "So, what's new? You are getting older, not a kid anymore. What to do? So it hurts. I hurt too. Get used to it."

A really helpful, supportive person advises, "Consider your doctor's recommendations. Connect with your experiences and judgment. Choose the best possible option available to you."

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My First Hot-Dog in America

A true story by Marganit Lish

In the spring of 1955, I arrived in the United States, specifically to Glendale, CA., to live with my cousin whom I called my aunt out of respect for her age. My eyes were wide open with wonder and newness of the American life style.

Before arriving in the States, I visited the American library in the consulate building in my homeland for the purpose of reading and learning about a new country. Also to be familiar with its people, culture, and any pertinent information I could get. The reading sources were limited to an encyclopedia, geography books, information directory, picture magazines such as *Life Magazine*. (My knowledge of English was very limited at that time.)

My aunt, who was very happy with my arrival, wanted to treat me to a special American meal in a "good American deli" (since she thought that this kind of food was most familiar to me). She took me to the only deli in Glendale.

We were seated at a table near the deli counter, so I could see all the varieties of foods that were being served. When it was our turn to order, my aunt asked me in Yiddish, "Mine kind, do vilst a heise hont?" (translated: "My child, do you want a hot dog?")

I was dumb founded. It took me a second to think how to reply. As young as I was, I knew that I could not upset this wonderful woman who "adopted" me as my guardian parent and reply to her with an unappreciated answer.

Yet on the other hand, I—who observed the Jewish culture rules of Kashrut, keeping a Kosher diet—perceived in my mind that she was asking me if I wanted to eat a meat item made from dog meat. In addition, a flash of memory entered my mind. It was remembering my reading in the American consulate library about the Indian tribes in the U.S. who ate dog meat.

So now I thought, Part of immersing myself in the American life style requires me to make a decision between my religious up bring or accepting an American life-style.

My aunt sensed my hesitation of a reply, so instead she told me in Yiddish:"Com, Ich vel dir vi-sin vos is a heise hont" (translation: come with me I will show you what is a hot dog").

She walked with me to the deli counter, and pointed to the hot-dogs and said:"Du zast, zey zaine kosher. Es is geshriben Hebrew National in Hebreish" (translation: "You see, they are kosher. It's written there Hebrew National in Hebrew.").

I turned around to her and said, "A dank, mir rofen zey sausages." (translation: "Thank you, we call them sausages.")

I had the hot dog in a bun (something new for me) with mustard, kosher pickles and a root-beer (also a new kind of a drink for me).

Thus began my adventure of life in this great land.

Tell Me a Story

Everyone has a story
Traded like coins in a casual conversation
Spoken through silent lips
Barely audible in dark dawn's mystery

A forgotten aria sung through laughter
A passionate exchange of intimacies over a cup
of coffee in Denny's one AM loneliness
An hour's fantasy love affair on a metro train

Tell me your story, slowly, tenderly
Guarding your thoughts with careful camouflage
Dictate your story into a book with words
Often overlooked by those who skim
Over its pages like restless birds

Your stories rest on my bookshelf Holding hands with each other and nodding Through the dusty sunlight within my view While mountains echo your voices through canyon Walls where few are ready to listen

I want to tell you my story
Some of it once scribbled on pages decades ago
Some shadow memories struggling for recognition
My pen trembles with the effort
Words tumble off pages denying their own existence
And I search for them in my dreams
awaiting their return

My story doesn't climb a mountain to reach its summit
Or remain breathless in pursuit of what I cannot comprehend
Or preside proudly and alone on my bookshelf
My story remains like an unfinished painting
An aging canvas empty of color
Waiting for completion
Words searching for a brush
I am trying to make peace with it and find
Peace within its frame

-Lillian Rodich

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SUBMIT YOUR BEST WORK TO THE CWC LITERARY REVIEW

The California Writers Club is looking for great writing from our members for publication in the 2019 CWC *Literary Review*.

Submissions are now being accepted in four cate-

gories: fiction, poetry, memoir and essay. For guidelines and the required submission form, go to the CWC website, calwriters.org. Deadline is November 30, so don't delay.

This year instead of the traditional Managing Editor, the *Literary Review* is chaired by four volunteers: Tish Davidson (Fremont Area Writers), Kimberly Edwards (Sacramento), June Gillam (San Joaquin Valley) and CWC



President Joyce Krieg. The team points out that even though the publication has "literary" in its title, genre fiction is welcome, as are pieces that are humorous or deal with lighter themes and topics. The emphasis is simply

on good writing that entertains, informs or inspires, regardless of style or subject matter.

The CWC *Literary Review* offers members the opportunity to showcase their work in a high quality, glossy print magazine that is sent through the U.S. mail to some 2,000 fellow CWC members. Publication of the next edition is slated for May or June of 2019.

—Literary Review Editors

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How to Find Us

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 you 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. (Buddy Rogers) When you leave your car and look around, you should spot a group of buildings 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.



The CWC-SFV Meeting
will be held at the
Saban Community Room
Across from the Katzenberg Pavilion
23388 Mulholland Drive
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

