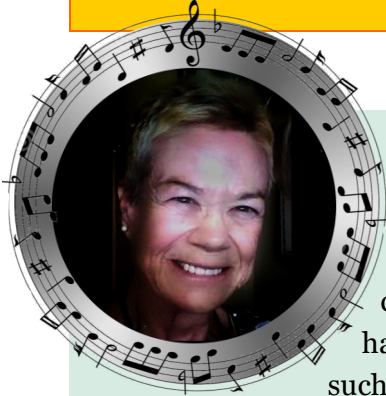




The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club



Want to write song lyrics? K.A. Parker will show you how.

Highly-regarded, international award-winning and former Motown lyricist K.A. Parker, who has written songs for such well-known recording artists as Juice Newton, Gloria Loring, George Duke and for national broadcast television network shows including “Felicity,” will present “What it Takes to be a Great Lyricist” at the monthly meeting of the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club at 1 p.m. on Saturday, March 2 in the Saban Community Room.

During her presentation, Parker, also a master teacher, writer, lecturer and producer, will conduct a lyric writing exercise, and play some of her best-known songs.

Over the span of more than three decades, Parker has been extensively involved in the music industry and worn many hats. Her songs have also been recorded by Sylvia Vartan, Roger Whitaker and Grammy award-winning singer Darlene Koldenhoven, plus many other recording artists.

“Love is An Action Word,” “They Don’t Make Love Like They Used To,” “Nobody’s Fool Anymore” and “Keepin’ It Up,” are among the award-winning 40 songs she is credited with writing. Parker has won awards in more than 26 songwriting competitions and her

more than 30 articles have been featured in music business publications.

“Writing lyrics can be a musician’s biggest challenge, but it doesn’t have to be this way,” said Parker. “I can teach people how to be a wonderful songwriter in any genre.”

“Discovering the ability to express our deepest feelings within ourselves in song is not just okay. It’s remarkable, and can be accomplished rather quickly,” she continued.

As a teacher, Parker has served on the faculties of UCLA Extension, the Musicians Institute, the Grove School, Golden West College, and many others. She specializes in helping creative people reach their goals. To enroll in her classes, contact her at songparker1@gmail.com or (747) 248-8722.

—Gary Wosk

Pre-Presentation Workshop

Prior to Parker’s presentation, author Rita Keeley-Brown will offer a 20-minute workshop entitled “Just Write.” Attendees will be asked to write a brief story based on any of the four short “prompts” that Brown will share.

“What causes ‘writers block’ or ‘blank page syndrome’ is usually how-to-start or stop worrying about the finished project,” Brown said. “Writing from short prompts cuts a scene down to a workable size ... so you can work with creative content and edit the copy later.”

President's Message: Get Your Green On!

Faith and begorrah, here comes March! Besides the early signs of spring, what do we associate with a month named for Martius, the Romans' god of war? The grim Ides of March, when Julius Caesar was stabbed to death, comes to mind. On a more positive note, people everywhere celebrate St. Patrick's Day on March 17th.

For me, a lad in NYC, St. Patrick's Day was a Big Event. My mother's parents were from Longford, Ireland and my father's mother was of Irish descent.

My Aunt Marie would make Irish soda bread, and my mother cooked corned beef with cabbage, potatoes and carrots, dishes that were served with beer. I don't know if my parents drank Irish beer at those dinners, but Guinness is my brew of choice.

But the NYC St. Paddy's Day Parade, was a must-see event for most New Yorkers, Irish or not. My high school senior class always marched in the parade until a drunk student ran up to a TV camera lens and gave it the middle finger salute. Alas, from then on, my St. Francis Prep senior class was banned from future parades.



Bob Okowitz

It's interesting that St. Patrick was not born in Britain, not Ireland. He was captured by Irish pirates as a youth and lived as a slave in Ireland where he learned the Irish language and culture. He escaped eight years later but was re-captured by other pirates. He ended up in France, where he became a priest. He built 300

churches in Ireland but never drove out any snakes. They were never any snakes in Ireland in the first place!

Besides NYC, many US cities celebrate March 17 with a St. Patrick's Day Parade. Strangely enough, the first American St. Pat's Day parade may have been organized by Irish Protestants who were in the English army, fighting against us rebels in the Revolutionary War. Yikes.

Four Irishmen have won the Nobel Prize for Literature. W.B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. Father Noon, S.J., my college English professor, was probably upset that James Joyce didn't get one, but we can't win them all.

Hope to see ye all when our CWC-SFV clan gathers on March 2.

— Bob Okowitz



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The first time I edited *The Valley Scribe*, the newsletter often featured a comic strip titled “west valley whimsicals.” I wrote the text and the late Max Schwartz drew the illustrations. Here’s a panel we did on editing song lyrics. In future issues I will republish more panels of “west valley whimsicals.” Max and I did our takes on several topics related to writer techniques and marketing. Some things never change in the writing trade! —Kathy Highcove

west valley whimsicals A Schwartz / Highcove Production

**Every good writer must also be a good editor.
And a songwriter can't make a living
without editing skills.**

It's a start...



This is Truth with a capital letter,
A hug is good, but a kiss is better.
You'll always ring my chime,
Every blessed time after time.
And when we get to sparking,
In my Chevy while we're parking,
Believe me when I tell you,
Our love will always be sublime,
Every blessed time after time.

**Let's go back in
time to 1931
and imagine how
Herman Hupfeld
might have
composed a very
famous song.**

Nope, not there yet.



Try to keep in mind,
That important ties will bind.
Romantic rules don't change,
And together we must range.
Like a boy and a girl
Giving love's wheel a whirl,
No telling what fates will arrange,
And on together we must range.

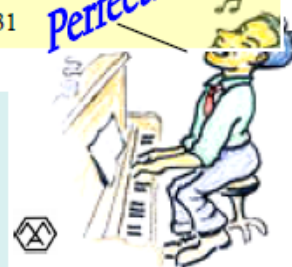
Eventually, with editing:

**You must remember this
A kiss is just a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh.
The fundamental things apply
As time goes by.**

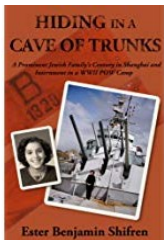
**And when two lovers woo
They still say, "I love you."
On that you can rely
No matter what the future brings
As time goes by.**

© Herman Hupfeld 1931

Perfect!



**Artwork by Max Schwartz
Practice verses are fictional
Cartoon text by Kathy Highcove**



On April 6th

Last month, a rainstorm caused the cancelation of our meeting. Consequently, the presentation by CWC-SFV member Ester Shifren,

author of “Hiding in a Cave of Trunks,” has been postponed until the April 6 meeting.

Come hear her talk on how to secure speaking gigs and deliver winning talks that sell books. Ester says, “That’s what it’s all about, really, the art of public speaking. I know how to make them sit up and listen. And I can teach YOU!” —KH

Wanted: Current Events and Creative Work

I’m always interested in new content for *The Valley Scribe*. SFV members often send me creative work but a newsletter also needs announcements, articles about local writer activities and members’ news about their own marketing experiences. Here’s a list of what I’d like to see in my email:

- A book review—no more than 700 words.
- Any member’s recent publishing or marketing milestone.
- The url of a helpful website for writers.
- Next month, please submit short stories of 200 words or less on this topic: April Fool jokes. Write in any direction on this topic: the best AF joke you’ve seen or performed or experienced. Or? It’s your call.
- Send your submissions to kghighcove@gmail.com —KH

Sheila Moss Is a Star in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin



Last month's issue of this newsletter featured a humorous essay by Sheila Moss about the delights of a chocolate candy mix in a Valentine box. After publication in this newsletter, she sent her whimsical story to her home town paper: the *Sun Prairie Star* in Wisconsin. Two years ago, they'd published her tongue-in-cheek piece about the joys of peanut butter, so she thought this story might also be welcomed. And it was. The essay ran on February 14 in the *Star*. Below is the paper's accolade to Sheila Sullivan Moss, a hometown gal.

The Sun Valley Star Intro to Moss's Valentine's Day article

Sheila Sullivan Moss began working in the newspaper game in the summers when she was 13, when she worked summers for her dad on his weekly newspaper — the *Sun Prairie Star Countryman* (now the *Sun Prairie Star*). She received her bachelor's of science degree in journalism and education and a master's degree in public relations from the UW-Madison, where she met Jerry, who be-

came her New Yorker husband, They moved to Los Angeles where she did PR for the PKU Newsletter for Children's Hospital of Los Angeles and for the Los Angeles Community College District. Sheila returned to teaching and retired in 1992 after more than 20 years. A widow now, she finds her two adult sons, Aaron and David, and daughters-in-law Rosa and Blythe and four grandchildren keep her going.

After I heard of the *Star's* publication of the Valentine story, I asked Moss, "Why do you send your Valley Scribe articles to the *Sun Prairie Star*?" She replied, "Because I've heard from my Sun Prairie friends whom I haven't seen in many years. For example, my grade school pal, Rae Ann Weiss, told me that after reading the story she'd gone out in a snowstorm to buy several copies of the *Star*. Then she mailed them to me! I was so touched!" Sounds like Sheila Sullivan Moss has a soft place in her heart—like the caramel center of a See's chocolate—for her home town folks.

—Kathy Highcove

Whenever Possible, Ester Shifren Shares Her Story

I recently addressed a Havura (from the Hebrew word "friend"), one of the Valley Outreach Temple groups that meet monthly. A woman, a member of the group, contacted me after she'd heard me speak at Temple Aliyah in Woodland Hills, three years ago. At that meeting, she bought four of my books, and picked up one of my business cards.

However, she put aside my business card until she saw our club's article in the *Acorn* paper (Yay, Gary Wosk!) and was reminded of my Temple Aliyah presentation. She emailed me and we chose a day and time for my talk. Afterwards, my Havura audience of nine couples bought a few books. I was thrilled! And this presentation is currently leading to a couple more events! That's the power of advertising and referrals.

I'm always happy to share my success stories with new writers and readers. I wrote my book, "Hiding in a Cave of Trunks," so people would learn more about the WWII Japanese occupation in the Far East, and the incarceration of Allied civilians in POW camps. My talk is not a dark tale of suffering and maltreatment, I try to stress the strength of the human spirit in the face of extreme diversity.

Speaking to a smaller audience about my life and my book is a lovely way to spend a couple of hours —much more intimate than speaking in big halls. I've included that info, with a



Ester Shifren with members of the Valley Outreach Temple Havura.

lot of photos, in my upcoming Keynote presentation at CWC-SFV. Our CWC branch is extremely supportive of its writers and promotes them whenever possible. Gary Wosk's *Acorn* article is proof of the power of well-placed publicity.

All temples, churches, and organizations have groups of people who meet regularly and search interesting speakers. This popular speaker can be you! Once you've published, the importance of social media and marketing kicks in. Develop the required skills and knowledge to skillfully pitch to anyone, and thrill audiences whenever you speak publicly.

My persistent marketing and social media visibility has paid dividends in every way. You can do it too!

—Ester Shifren

The Case for Writing a Book Even If It Sells No Copies

By Marty Nemko, Ph.D.,

First published in *Psychology Today Magazine* at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/>

I've written 11 books, most published by Wiley, Random House's Ten Speed Press, etc. Yet perhaps surprisingly, I feel best about the few I self-published using Amazon's CreateSpace.* And here's the punchline: That's true even though those self-published books have sold far worse than my commercially published ones.

Especially today, when most publishers will look only at agented submissions—and it's hard to get a respected agent—I believe it's usually wise to write for self-publication, even if you've previously written books that have sold well. Indeed, I made that choice with four of my five most recent books. (I couldn't refuse the opportunity to write another *for Dummies* book. The brand is too helpful. It's *Careers for Dummies*.) Why am I so high on self-publishing?

The process

When you write for a publisher, it's a partnership with your editor, with the latter having final say about everything: the book's structure, content, cover, etc. Of course, you have input but, unless you're a big-time author, the editor ends up with most of the decision-making power.

In contrast, when self-publishing, you have complete control. Yet if you want input, you, of course, can get it from people you select to read a draft and/or with a consultation from an editor or book packager. Whether self-published or not, if writing comes relatively easily to you, it's worth writing a book for other reasons:

- You clarify your thoughts on the subject.
- You learn a lot from your research.
- You will work on a long series of small solvable challenges that culminate in a major achievement: a book.

So even if you don't sell a single copy, all those process benefits can make writing a book more worthwhile than how most people spend their discretionary time. Thanks to Amazon CreateSpace and Kindle Direct, you can easily take your Microsoft Word manuscript and convert it into a print and a Kindle book with a beautiful cover. CreateSpace has a remarkably easy-to-use set of cover templates—you'll have a professional looking cover in just minutes. (You might want to have a book designer massage your Microsoft Word file into a version that will look good in print and a version that will look good on Kindle.)

And then there's the time-saving. With CreateSpace, you go from complete manuscript to publication on Amazon.com in just a few days, with your new book in your hot little hands just a week or two later. In con-

trast, with most publishers, it can take months after submission until the editor finally approves the manuscript and six months to a year after that before the book is published. And occasionally the publisher changes its mind and decides, after all your work, to not publish it at all!

The outcomes

Even most books that are published by a reputable publisher sell poorly unless of course, you're a household name or a major platform, like a nationally popular show or column.

But even assuming you don't sell a single copy, your book is a great gift to give to friends, relatives, clients, colleagues, and, if you're a job seeker, to prospective employers. And Amazon's policy is that you can buy your book, in quantities of even just 1 at remarkably low cost, like \$3 for a 200-page book with full-color cover and black-and-white interior.

And chances are you will sell some copies. Books self-published using Amazon get posted in major wholesaler catalogs and on Amazon.com so it's easy to tell your friends how they can effortlessly buy it. And you'll certainly sell some if you do even a bit of marketing: emailing the Amazon link to your friends and on your social media, giving a reading at a local library or bookstore, throwing a book launch party—whatever feels pleasurable for you.

Yet another benefit of the Amazon platform is that you get to keep 70% of the sales, unlike with a publisher, which usually pays you just 5 to 10%.

The takeaway

Even if I knew in advance that my next book would sell no copies, I'd write it for those process benefits: the challenging project, the learning, speed of publication, and control of what ended up in my book. And unless a respected publisher threw serious dollars at me, I'd self-publish. I encourage you to do the same. Write on

* Since this article was written Amazon CreateSpace merged with Kindle Direct Publishing. Go to www.KDP.com)

*Named the San Francisco Bay Area's "Best Career Coach," Marty Nemko, Ph.D., has been career and personal coach to more than 5,000 clients and enjoys a 96 percent client-satisfaction rate. The author of 11 books (250,000 copies sold) including *Careers for Dummies*, plus 3,500(!) published articles, including in TIME, The Atlantic, and the Washington Post. He teaches at Berkeley*



Lyrical Limericks from a few SFV Folks

There once was a gal named Lori,
Who carefully crafted each story.
Her words were unique,
Only hers to speak,
Whether poetry or allegory.

—Lillian Rodich

The Valley Scribe March 2014

Ode to Peugeot

There once was a young man named Barry
Who learned to live mobile and wary
From finding his toes
In it up to his nose
With the women he met, hot to marry,

“There has got to be more,” he would sigh,
As a new one, with sweet smile, passed by.
“From the look of that grin,
There is nobody in,
But she’s selling – I may as well buy.”

They came and they went in parade.
Yes, Barry had everyone made.
He partied and roared
Until frightfully bored,
But consistently, endlessly laid.

“I have got to get out of this bed
And do something constructive,” he said,
One morning at noon
(Which came hours too soon),
“There is more than this ache in my head.

“A writer!” he shouted out loud,
And left the young Miss there quite cowed.
“I’ve got stories to tell!
No offense, what the hell,
You can leave – for today, two’s a crowd.”

He now lives as a hermit, they say,
Weaving words into novel or play.
No longer a suitor,
He’s bought a computer
And plays with himself all the day!

—Nance Crawford

There once was a barmaid named Hannity,
Who had little reason for sanity,
She’d the face of a pony,
And knees that were bony,
And her figure resembled a manatee.

—Ray Malus

The Valley Scribe March 2014



There once was a cook from New York,
Who said you should always stew pork,
He said he once tried,
To eat it fried, And claims he would rather
chew cork.

—Bob Okowitz

From Irish-Expressions.com

There once was a man named Muldoon,
Who thought his end would be soon,
He’d lost the ability to rhyme,
And thus, have a good time,
While others wrote limericks in full bloom.

—Brian Muldoon





A Writers Conference in Kern

WRITERS OF KERN ANNUAL SPRING WRITING CONFERENCE

MARCH 15, 2014

CLARION HOTEL



\$30 non-members, \$20 members

8:00 – 8:30

Meet & Greet with continental breakfast

8:30 - 9:00

Welcome. Writers of Kern President, Dana Martin

Ongoing

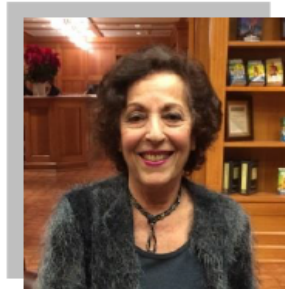
Book sales provided by Book Hounds, hourly door prizes, Q&A with speakers



9:00 – 9:45 – CAROL SANDERS

A WRITER’S JOURNEY: In this session, Sanders will discuss the requirements of the first chapter of a novel, then proceed with a verbal tour of her journey as a creative writer. Highlights of this tour include a peek into a writer’s birthing chamber, a place of both pain and delight. Discussion will include the traits necessary for a creative writer, the helps and hindrances for writing, and the roller coaster of publishing.

Carol Sanders is a retired high school English teacher. After 30 years in the classroom, Sanders moved to Oregon and wrote Spy on Clinton Street, published in 2013 by dMon Publishing, Dallas, Texas, which followed her first book, the already-published novel Selene, retitled One Last Kiss, published by Zebra Press.



10:00 – 10:45 – ESTER SHIFREN

HOW TO SELF-PUBLISH SUCCESSFULLY: Attendees will learn how to build a platform prior to self-publishing and the importance of social media as it relates to building your platform on the road to publication. Shifren will explain how to develop a theme to get speaking engagements and how to get noticed by subscribing to, and regularly commenting on, excellent blogging sites. She will also break down publishing using Createspace and Kindle (KDP) and other self-publishing engines.

Ester Shifren is a published author, artist, musician, and dynamic international speaker. In 2005, in England, she was featured in the BBC1 program “We’ll Meet Again,” and was a guest lecturer for several days at the Imperial War Museum. Ester’s book Hiding in a Cave of Trunks details all facets of Shanghai’s colorful multi-ethnic population and relates the saga of her family’s century-long existence in China.



11:00 – 11:45 – NINA AMIR

HOW TO BLOG A BOOK: Rather than just blogging and repurposing your posts into a book, or booking your blog, learn how to write, publish, and promote a book on the Internet using blog technology. Blogging a book is the easiest and quickest—and most efficient—way to write a book and promote it at the same time. If you can write, you can blog. That means you can blog your way to creating a successful book—one that attracts readers and publishers.

Nina Amir has 35 years of experience in the publishing field, earned a BA in magazine journalism from Syracuse University, and has edited or written for more than 46 publications on a full-time or freelance basis. She is the author of How to Blog a Book and The Author Training Manual, is a successful book editor, and speaks widely to inspire people to create books that positively impact others.

11:45 - 12:30

Q&A, discussion, book signings, books sales, closing

Member Focus



Meet Brian Muldoon

After finishing college, I went into politics, working on campaigns in various capacities. In even years, I would work on statewide or presidential campaigns; in odd years I worked on municipal campaigns. I think of those ten years either as a time of wandering from one arid place to another, or as my second childhood. Both ideas seem to work.

I eventually left politics to take over my father's business. At about the same time I met a woman who had two children. I fell in love with all three. After much, much persuading I got this woman to marry me. Did I mention lots of persuading?

This joyful union started a three-decade-long (and still ongoing) maturation process. Along the

way I became the Family Poet, writing poems and ditties for family and friends.

Three years ago, a very good friend asked me to join a writing group. I had always been interested in writing prose, but my efforts had never prospered. I found writing a good short story every week to be challenging and exciting.

Last year I joined CWC and through friends heard about and became interested in critique groups. When I heard a new evening critique group was forming, I decided to join. Though I was selected leader of the group at the organizational meeting, I am not the group's most important person—that would be Kay Henden, our literary god-mother. Her careful comments show us what we don't see and tell us what we need to know. We're very fortunate to have Kay with us.

Thank you, Maya Angelou

Thank you, Maya Angelou

I heard you

Speaking with great clarity

Clarity of not only elocution, but of instruction

That we must tell others who see our lives gleaming

Also of the tarnish

Because how can others properly assess themselves in comparison

If our whole person is not seen



—Brian Muldoon

Kay's Saturday Critique Group

BOB OKOWITZ

After anxiously waiting for six months, I and three others were asked to form this critique group. Andi Polk met with us twice to lay down the ground rules and demonstrate how the group should work.

I'm pretty sure she asked Doug Douglas to join us and be our ringer. Doug had been a member of other critique groups for five years and knew how a critique group should function, He was a really bright guy who wrote like a pro, but his critiques were gently instructive. He taught us some of the basics, like using contractions in dialogue. "Why?" someone once asked him. Probably me. Doug replied, "That's how people talk to each other." DOH. *I'm* still working on that one. It's terrible that we lost him to cancer over a year ago. I think of him often, especially when I use *then* instead of *than*.

The other members of our group are Kay Henden, Bob Bunes, Lori Hamilton, and Joan Zerrien. Lori recently started work on a murder mystery. Kay, our group coordinator, writes historical fiction. Affable Bob Bunes, a retired MD, helps us with medical questions. He's written novels set in Yellowstone Park, and published a book about his experience serving as an MD on an icebreaker in the Antarctic. Our newest member, Joan, is writing a novel set in a small town set in the mountains east of Los Angeles, a mere seventy miles from the Miracle Mile.

Mike Edelstein, a poet, met with us for a year and then dropped out because of health problems. We miss him.

In so many ways, this critique group has helped me improve as a writer and I hope we'll critique together for a long, long time.



Joan Zerrien Kay Henden Bob Bunes Lori Hamilton Bob Okowitz

KAY HENDEN

I've written, off and on, since I was a kid. I read voraciously, and even then I wanted to tell stories, paint word-pictures, craft scenes and dialog. But I have zero discipline, and even less insight into what I am actually producing. I have an echo-chamber in my head, which faithfully repeats back what I've written, but fails to give me any perspective on it. So when I found CWC I knew I was in for it.

I started in the short fiction Friday group (thank you, Andi-Sheila-Gary-Colin!), then joined up with my co-creators of longer works. It was like starting from scratch. I had to learn how to develop characters, build tension, craft dialog, set scenes—and most of all, keep the dreaded story arc moving along. At times it seemed I was just marching in place, but then I'd have an "aha" moment and it was all worth it.

The greatest joy, of course, has been seeing my fellow writers grow and flourish in their craft. I'm in awe of the talent and creativity they bring to the table, and I look forward to each batch of new submissions, anticipating a lovely day (or days) of reading their new material, all of it absorbing, well-written, and a joy to read.

Thank you, all of you, for keeping my feet facing forward and my eyes to the front—I value you more than I can say.

LORI HAMILTON

Five years ago, I joined a critique group that proved to be a disappointment. For example, fellow members emphatically told me that I couldn't write a novel in first person. I made a fast exit from that group—my bookshelves hold many first person narrative novels. I found my next group after I saw an ad for a meeting of the California Writers Club at the MPT. After I became a member of the SFV, I joined one of club's critique groups, which was a better fit than I ever anticipated.

When I compare my recent writings to what I wrote five years ago, I clearly see how my writing has dramatically improved. My SFV critique group has taught me the skills necessary to write a better story. And I found that the four talented writers in my group were receptive to my input. A strong bond formed based on trust and respect.

Our interaction resulted in clear, concise, expressive writing for all of us. The input from a good critique group has great value. Where else can you work with people whose sole intention is to help you improve your writing and ask only that you'll try to reciprocate? My SFV critique group has proved to be a wonderful gift.



JOAN ZERRIEN

I'm the newbie, only a couple months in. I came with 70,000 words worth of vignettes and I thought if I strung them together with chutes and ladders it would be a novel.

I was sadly mistaken.

The feedback has been encouraging yet adamant: I have to choose a main character. I need to create conflict to drive the action (otherwise this is *Mayberry With Sex*, I'm told). New Yorker-style observations are not action. Also, the POV has Multiple Personality Disorder, which drives these writers crazy.

I gnashed my teeth a bit because I wanted to be done!

But they're right. And I'm grateful.

BOB BUNES

As somebody who had only two quarters of freshman English in college, I entered the group as someone who needed tons of help as a writer. And I received it. In spades. The group helped me transform a poorly written nonfiction novel with some decent story elements into something an agent obviously liked, but rejected because she didn't feel there was a large enough market for my manuscript. Whether or not the book ever gets published, I have experienced the joy of learning. And I have thoroughly enjoyed seeing the progress and the accomplishments made by my fellow group members.

I think we're a cohesive group and I enjoy our meetings. We manage to critique each other's writings without creating bad feelings - although an occasional bruised ego is inevitable. I love the give-and-take as we brainstorm each other's minor sticking points or larger thematic issues. Most, if not all, of our sessions are full of laughter and good cheer. Each individual works on their own project but also feels part of a group creative process.

I feel lucky to be a part of this supportive group of talented writers.



Last month, while researching the Scribe archives for samples of Erica Stux’s (1923-2018) published work, I came upon a small announcement in the January 2012 issue: Erica Stux told Scribe readers that Cricket Magazines had accepted one of her poems – “Under the Willow Tree” — for future publication. What?! I was all agog after reading that little item. Since its beginnings in 1973, Cricket Magazines Company has produced high-quality, award-winning children’s magazines. For a freelance writer to have a creative work accepted by this group is very impressive.

When I read Erica’s announcement, I wondered when the poem had been published. Her family had no recollection of the Cricket connection. So I emailed Cricket Media and asked for their help in tracking down a publication date. After a week of online communication with a service representative, the poem was located! Originally the verse was to appear in Spider Magazine (ages 6-7) but the staff decided that it was a better fit for their younger Ladybug (ages 3-6) readers. It ran in the May/June 2012 issue.

And so, Valley Scribe readers, here’s “Under the Willow Tree” as it appeared in the Lady Bug May/June, 2012 issue. Almost seven years ago, hundreds of thousands of children, their parents and teachers, read Erica Stux’s poem,

Now it’s your turn. Enjoy ...

—Kathy Highcove



Under the Willow Tree

by Erica Stux * Art by Kris Aro McLeod

In my willow cave I lie
And watch the animal world go by.



A worm comes wriggling from the soil.
It stops and forms a small pink coil.



A big black ant crawls through the grass.
I move my arm to let it pass.



A squirrel dashes by and stops,
Then scampers off in three long hops.



A bird struts by, all shiny black,
Its feathers gleaming on its back.

A small brown butterfly flits by,
And dances on across the sky.



A tiny caterpillar’s swinging
On a thread to which it’s clinging.



Lots of things for me to see
Hidden beneath the willow tree.

Can you find the little creatures around the tree?



UNDER THE ARC OF LIGHT
Anne W. Lee

When I lay down upon
Mountaintop mesas
Rolling jagged shorelines
Dusty quilted fields
Or desert dunes choking out the day's heat

I stretch my mind and hands upward
Caressing the night
As it bends the milky path
Dripping crystal wedding beads
Glistening black and white netted tent
Perfectly arched overhead

Calculating my ever-changing fixed position
Longing for lovers distant
Aching for children growing
Self and soul question known gods
Wrestling universal meaning and anomalies

My day's weariness erases this brilliance
Eyelids darkened in timeless slumber
I rotate along with the galaxies

Then mysteriously I awaken
Renewed for this humble life
A curious witness to
The unfolding color spectrum of morning

Stretching my mind and hands upward again
I rise up to dance my shadow of life
Under this new day's arc of light



McGregor's Wildlife

by Kathy Highcove

Atholl McGregor pulled off his muddy boots, slid on his slippers and shuffled into the parlor. His wife, Mattie, was already seated by the fireplace, busily knitting.

She looked up at him and asked, "Done with your hoein', dear?"

"Aye," he replied and turned to warm his hands over the flickering flames.

"Atholl, ye look so pale! Has somethin' happened?"

"Dearheart, I ... don't know how to tell ye ... ,"

"Ye can tell me anythin', luv. Come sit down by the fire."

He walked over to his chair and sank down on its sturdy frame. He looked over at Mattie, shook his gray head and gave a heavy sigh.

She put down her knitting and said, "Did a troublin' thing happen in the garden?"

"Ye'll think I'm daft."

"I will not! Don't be keepin' secrets from your wife!"

"Well ... all right then. While I was hoein' in the turnips, I spied the ears of a rabbit stickin' up in the middle of the cabbage patch."

"The little thief! Nibblin' at our greens?"

"Aye. So's I crept up til I was real closelike, raised my hoe ... ,"

"Did ye clobber him, Atholl? Will I be makin' rabbit pie today?"

"Nae, I couldn't do it."

"Och, mon. Whyever not?"

"I suddenly saw that it was wearin' ... a blue jacket and brown shoes!"

"A jacket and shoes?"

"Aye, it was clad in wee-sized garb, like a stuffed plaything in Crawford's toy store window. Don't be lookin' at me like that, woman! I saw what I saw!"



"Did ye catch it? I must see this little clothed bunny."

"It scampered off in its wee shoes and slipped under the fence! Stop your laughin'!"

"Oh, my goodness, I'm sorry, dear, but ye sound like ye spent a couple hours at McCain's pub this afternoon."

"Mattie, I'm a sober God-fearin' Presbyterian! I work from dawn to dusk, rain or shine, in that vegetable garden and never have I shirked me duties."

"Aye, ye are a good hardworkin' man, Atholl. I'm sorry for havin' a bit of a laugh."

"Well, Mattie, I know my story did sound fanciful, but since the blasted Beatrix woman bought the farm next door, the beasts and folk 'round here are gettin' a bit ... strangelike."

"I don't feel any different, husband!"

"Oh, exceptin' us, of course. You and I are right as rain."

"Aye. After all, when would I be flittin' around the garden with fairy folk? Or be ridin' a white unicorn with the bonny Brownie Laird on bright moonlit nights?"

Mattie chuckled softly and picked up her knitting, shook it out and examined the last row she'd been working on.

Atholl watched her needles flash in the firelight for a few seconds, and suddenly his eyes widened. He put on his spectacles and peered over at her handiwork.

Then he asked, "Mattie, why are ye craftin' a wee yellow vest?"

CWC-SFV Board

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apthealth@gmail.com

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Nance@NanceCrawford.com

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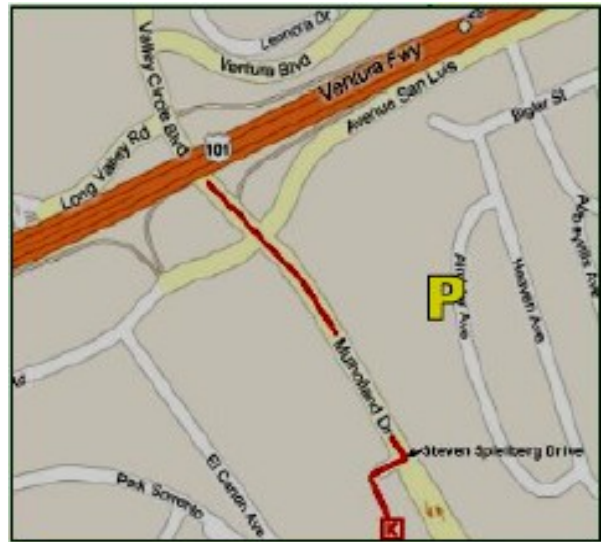
Critique Group Coordinator
Geraldine Jabara
geri.jabara@att.net

Newsletter Editor
Katherine Highcove
kghighcove@gmail.com

Member at Large
Stacie Hammes
Staciehammes@outlook.com

Our Location

**The Saban Center
for Health and Wellness**



The CWC/SFV Meeting
will be held on March 2, at 1 p.m.
in the
Saban Community Room
located at the
Motion Picture and Television Fund
23388 Mulholland Drive
Woodland Hills, CA 91364