



The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club

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A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery.

— James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Literary Agent Paul S. Levine is our March Speaker

According to Literary Agent and Attorney Paul S. Levine, few entry-level authors know how to earn money from book publishers. On Saturday, March 7, Levine will present *How Authors Go from Fingers to Keyboard to*



Dollars in Their Bank Accounts: Four Ways Book Authors Make Money from Publishers. This event starts at 1 p.m. in the Saban Center for Health and Wellness. A \$10 donation per guest is requested.

Paul Levine started his career as an associate attorney at the Law Office of Stephen F. Rohde, where he specialized in business transactions and civil litigation with an emphasis on trade secrets, trademark, unfair competition, copyright, book publishing, and the rights of privacy and publicity for more than half a decade.

“When I give lectures to beginning writers, I find that they have very little idea of how they can go from slaving away on their keyboards at night and on weekends to actually quitting their day job,” says Levine, who was born in New York City and grew up in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.



At the meeting, Levine will share several ways that authors can make money from book publishers. He'll also speak on how publishers sometimes attempt to avoid paying or postpone compensating writers for monies they are owed.

Levine has practiced entertainment law for more than 35 years. He specializes in representing those in creative industries, including writers, actors, musicians, publishers and theatre and production companies.

In 1998, he launched the Paul S. Levine Literary Agency, which has sold more than 150 adult, young adult, and children's fiction and non-fiction books.

—Stephanie Dufner, Media Relations

Wiki, what's a literary agent?

A literary agent (sometimes publishing agent, or writer's representative) is an agent who represents writers and their written works to publishers, theatrical producers, film producers, and film studios, and assists in sale and deal negotiation. Literary agents most often represent novelists, screenwriters, and non-fiction writers.

—Wiki

Prez Bob Makes His First Pitch



My book, *Dug In*, was released on Amazon about six months ago. The publishing process was not fun. I recommend choosing a formatting company from Amazon's official list, not just any company that pops up on an Internet search. Yikes, it's all very complicated.

Anyway, to market a book, an author has to go out and talk to people and do book signings. I called my local Barnes and Noble in November and the spokeswoman informed me, "Call back in February, we're swamped with Christmas book signings."

Then I called the Agoura Library and the librarian said, "Oh no, book signings don't work here. No one shows." I called the Westlake library and got the same message from that librarian, but she said I could do a short introduction of the book at the library's Book Club. I made that appearance and told them about *Dug In*.

Other than selling my book at our club, this was my first pitch to an audience. I showed them a copy of my book and introduced the plot and characters. At the end, one woman asked me to spell my name, which I took as a good sign. Then I passed out flyers about my book to the group.

I wasn't as nervous as I thought I'd be, which is great since stumbling over my words would not be helpful. Unfortunately,

You'll get a free bottle of Guinness beer with each *Dug In* you purchase!



my Kindle report does not indicate any sales, but at least I got my foot in the door with this talk, which is important.

Funny story: a few weeks ago, I was talking with a friend of forty years and asked him if he had read my book. He replied, "No, but I haven't read a novel in 30 years. I'll buy your book, but it'll take me a year to read it."

At that moment, I realized that not everyone reads novels, so I should stick with book club and book store marketing gigs.

I know it'll be March when you're reading this column and if it's March, it's time to celebrate St. Pat's Day. Being three-fourths Irish I can't forget

what my Irish/American family said every March 17th: *Tis a great day for Irish soda bread and a Guinness or two.*

And St. Pat's day makes me think about famous Irish authors. Here are inspiring quotes from two of them.

W.B Yeats: *Education is not the filling of a pail, but rather the lighting of a fire.*

George Bernard Shaw: *Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.*

Bob Okowitz: *Write on, everybody! And read my book. Don't make me beg!*

Ara Grigorian Summed Up the Action



In February, Ara Grigorian returned to the Saban Room to lead a workshop on *Story Beats –Your Story’s Heartbeat*. His lecture on *Story Concept* or effective plot development, was presented with a new collection of power point slides and movie clips produced by his *Novel Intensive* company. For two hours, Grigorian was an energetic and enthusiastic speaker for writers who wanted to better understand a story’s DNA. He stated that every story, in every genre, must contain this basic format: three acts of plot development. But he also emphasized that no good story can take shape without commitment by the author. This is no job for an habitual procrastinator, he emphasized. Quoting well-known screenwriter, Syd Field, he told us, “Writing is God’s gift; either you’ve got it or you don’t. But writing is a personal responsibility; either you do it or you don’t.”

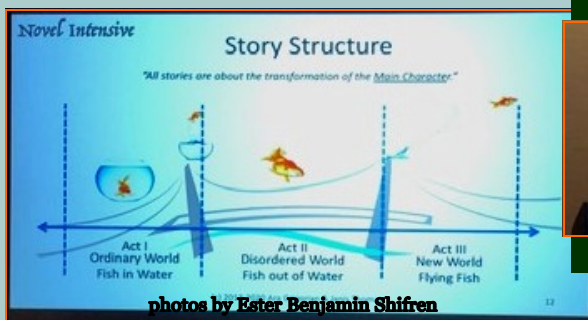
After those delivering those *bon mots*, Grigorian began his talk on *The Timing of a Story Structure*.

The action in any completed story develops in three “acts.” (Refer to the Story Structure chart.) In the first act, in the very first pages of the first chapter of any story, the main character or hero must feel discomfort or a need for change in his life. A problem increasingly preoccupies this main character. Like a seed into dark soil, a solution to the problem is introduced to the plot that will impel the hero to break out of the status quo and enter a new world.

The pursuit of this remedy is the theme of the story. And theme development is the heart of the adventure or the inner journey of the protagonist.

Act I must also introduce a life changing event that forces the main character to venture out of his comfort zone. Something is askew. He has a problem. After some thought he has a goal or a tentative solution to his new problem. He sees a sudden need to fix the problem. He may pause to mull over the disadvantages of change, become discomfited by the new challenge, yet he decides to pursue his goal no matter what the cost. That’s the story concept.

In Act II, the protagonist moves forward, resolved to make things happen somehow, some way. He feels empowered by his new insights and feels that change will be good for him. But as the action continues, complications arise, and he’s continually



Gregorian lectured on the three acts of story structure.

frustrated by new barriers to his goal. He realizes that there’s an anti-hero or an opponent who wants to stop his pursuit of his goal. Tension grows as the two sides clash and parry for dominance. The hero is shaken, and asks himself if he’s on the right path. *Maybe I’m wrong*. At this point in the narrative, a “clock” might start ticking to pressure the hero and force him to double his efforts toward the goal.

Act III should show a mentally focused hero who tries and fails and tries again, solving new problems at every plot turn. With each win, he feels more energized or ready for the next confrontation. His old world slowly morphs into a new world.

The last chapter in Act III must show a dramatic change in the hero’s world in contrast to his old world in Act I. Even if his goal has not been met, he must be in a new normal or experiencing a major change in the status quo.

Kathy Highcove

Freddy the Goldfish Has a Problem.

Being a firm believer in the value of recycling good material, I reviewed the June *Valley Scribe* issue and copied the illustration I created after Ara Grigorian's lecture on *Finding the Heartbeat of Your Story*.

He told us last spring that an author builds a story by beats, a certain pattern of events from the first to the last chapter.

The illustration/story board was pasted onto this page because the story of Freddy the Fish is also applicable to Grigorian's recent February lecture.

Included below is a chart developed by Grigorian in his popular *Novel Intensive* writing workshops. The titles and percentages below depict what percentage of a story's plot—or a book's content—should be used to present a story concept.

For example, if you were writing a child's story about Freddie, a humble goldfish who wanted to be an exotic flying fish, *Novel Intensive's* chart below outlines plot development. In the next column, I've illustrated how that fish story could be resolved.

-KH

The Beginning (0%)

My Aquarium (1-10%)

Thematic Seed (5%)

Crack in the Glass (3-5%)

I like my Aquarium! (11-20%)

Jumping Out of the Tank (20%)

Learning to Breath (23-50%)

I like it Out Here, but...(50%)

Flopping Around (50-75%)

I Can't Breathe (75%)

I Want My Aquarium Back (75-85%)

I Want to Fly (85%)

Flying Fish (100%)

And here's how Freddy's fish story might be published in picture book format:

Freddy Takes Flight

I'm Freddy Goldfish and I live in this little glass bowl. I get one shake of dried flakes a day and then I just swim round and round while that fat cat watches me. I'm bored.



Uh-oh. I see a big crack! It's leaking! I gotta get outta here! But how? I thought this was my forever home! Now what?



If I were a flying fish I'd just sail through the open window over my bowl. Maybe I can LEAP thru!

I did it! But, oh no!



I'm falling ...

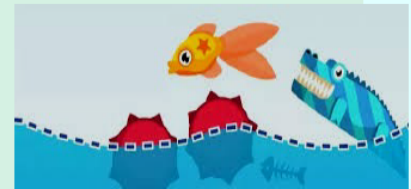
falling ...

into a ... stream.



Looks like I've gotta learn some new tricks to survive down here.

But I think if I just keep going I'll find a new home..



Made it, whew! Hmmm ...

This place isn't boring! I've got friends and tasty things to eat. But ... don't laugh ... I wanna learn how to fly! Why not?!



Many weeks and adventures later ...

How'd he do that?



Beats me!

Now I'm Fantastic Fredo the Flying Fish!



THE END

CWC Poet Honored By The Los Angeles Poet Society

Norman Molesko's ninetieth birthday and achievements will be celebrated by the Los Angeles Poet Society on March 27, 2020.

After retirement, Norman chose to start a new career as a poet. For the past twenty-one years, our SFV member has been active both as a poet and a **Senior Advocate**.

Now a published writer and a local Los Angeles performer, Norman has been professionally known by various names: **Normie The Poet, Senior Poet, Resident Poet, LA's Young Oldie, Ambassador For Seniors and Elder Bard.**

In 2016, the Los Angeles Poet Society honored our SFV member with the **Spirit of Life Award**. Also, in 2016, he was recognized as **Ambassador For Seniors** by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and past Los Angeles Councilmember Mitchell Englander.

During his watch, Norman has given inspiring and uplifting words to senior audiences on how stimulating and creative activities can help each of us maintain a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle.

Since retirement, Norman has nurtured his own literary career. For example, in 2013, three online articles were posted which described the nature and extent of his activities. An article was posted on the *Senior Journal.com* website, *The Daily News for Senior Citizens*, and a second ar-

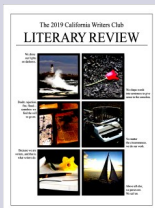
TIA CHUCHA'S
OPEN MIC
MARCH 27, 8-10PM
*7 MIN OPEN MIC
*ALL GENRES
*FREE COFFEE
featuring Poeta Rosalia Giraldo
Norman Molesko
L.A's Young Oldie
Come and join us, everyone is welcome.
13197 Gladstone Ave, Unit A, Sylmar, California 91342

ticle was posted on the *Erickson Living* website for several retirement communities located in ten states and the District of Columbia. The third article, titled *Senior Advocacy*, was linked to the home Facebook page of the Los Angeles Poet Society.

The CWC-SFV membership wishes Norman Molesko a very happy ninetieth birthday. We hope you'll continue your good work in Senior Advocacy and we also hope to see you at many future CWC-SFV meetings in the Saban Room at the MPTF.

Congratulations, Norman!

There's Still Time to Submit Your Work



The editors of the *CWC Literary Review* have extended the submission deadline for the Literary Review to March 31, 2020. They must receive any and all submissions no later than that date, and any payments in the form of a check must be postmarked no later than that date. Submission is open only to members of the California Writers Club.

For all needed submission information, go to <https://calwriters.org/publications/> You can also refer to your issue of *The Valley Scribe*, February 2019, pg. 5, to find the same submission requirements for all CWC members.

-KH

Mullingar, 1916

Here is a scene from *Dug In*, an historical novel by Bob Okowitz

For 121 years, Mullingar, Ireland was a British military garrison town. The troops were like a harsh occupying force—aligned with Britain, not Ireland.

The British War Office leased the site for the barracks from the Landlords of Mullingar. In 1819 the first British Army Regiment to be stationed here was one called the Gordon Highlanders. The last Regiment posted at the town garrison was the Sussex Regiment. They left Mullingar in January, 1922.

In the opening action of his book, SFV President Bob Okowitz gives the reader a taste of the Regiment's oppression of the town's Irish populace.



Sergeant Bannister and Officer Scarborough marched into the Longford Granary where Joe Duggin worked as a repairman. They walked up to his work station and said, “Mr. Duggin, you need to come with us.”

“What’s the matter? I haven’t done anything wrong.”

Bannister answered, “We’re not talkin’ about that here. Just get your jacket on and we’ll be going.”

Joe clenched his fists, angry that the police were interfering with his job. “How long will this take? I need to fix this machine today.”

“It’s time to go,” Sergeant Bannister grabbed Joe’s right arm, told Officer Scarborough to take Joe’s left arm, and they dragged him out of the granary.

Joe shouted to his friend, Séamus, “Tell Mary what’s happening. Tell her everything will be okay. I don’t want her to worry.”

But there was a reason to worry. No one in Mullingar even knew about the Rebellion in Dublin, but the police had received a telegram informing them of the conflict and telling them to round up the anti-English leaders in the area. The Irish Brotherhood and other pro-independence groups in Dublin had started a rebellion against the English, who had controlled Ireland the previous 800 years.

When Joe got to the police station, he found out

his friends Ian and Luke were already there. Ian looked nervous; Luke was angry. Police Chief Bushkill, from Athlone, was at the station and took command. “We know you guys are the leaders of the Brotherhood out here, Mr. Duggin here being the main leader. Under no circumstances are you guys getting out of this jail until we get further orders from Dublin.”

Joe responded, “What the hell are we supposed to have done?”

“Your friends in Dublin have declared war on England, the stupid fools that they are. It should be over in a few days, in which case we may let you out of here. King George doesn’t look kindly on men who kill his soldiers, or who don’t believe that Ireland’s not a rightful part of England.”

Luke screamed, “There’s nothing rightful about Ireland being stolen from its people. This has been a dictatorship for over 800 years.”

Sergeant Bannister walked over and slapped Luke so hard he fell to the floor. Bannister then kicked him in the stomach just to make sure his point got across.

Joe stated, “We have nothing to do with what’s going on in Dublin, and there’s no legal reason for us to be here.”

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(Continued from page 6)

“War’s hell, Mr. Duggin.” Bushkill said and then nodded to Officer Scarborough, who kicked Joe from behind, knocking him to the ground. Joe used his hands to break his fall. Sergeant Bannister walked over and kicked Joe between his legs; Joe screamed so loudly that they probably heard him in Dublin. He pulled his legs up to protect himself, and Sergeant Bannister then kicked him a few times in his back and face. Blood dripped from his mouth.

The sergeant looked down at Joe and said, “You don’t decide what happens here in Mullingar.”

Chief Bushkill looked sternly at Ian, “Do you have anything you want to say?”

“No sir.”

“You must be the smart one of the group.”

Ian looked down at the floor, more angry, but knowing this wasn’t the time to talk.

Chief Bushkill looked at Scarborough and told him, “Put Duggin in the small cell and the other two in the larger cell. They don’t look hungry, so don’t bother with dinner. They can have water if they ask nicely. I’ll be back in the morning.”

Mary was shocked when Seamus showed up at her front door, instead of Joe. “Mary, Joe doesn’t want you to be worried. For some reason, the police took him to jail. I’m sure it’s a mistake. If you want, I can walk over there with you.”

She just stared at Seamus for a moment, and then answered, “God help us, I have no idea what happened. Yes, that’ll be great for us to go together.”

When they got to the station, the front door was locked due to the men being beaten up. Mary knocked. Officer Scarborough came to the door, but didn’t open it. He asked what they wanted.

“I heard that my husband, Joseph Duggin, is here and I want to see him.”

“We aren’t havin’ any visitors, Mrs. Duggin.”

“What’s he here for?”

“There’s a revolt in Dublin and all anti-English activists are being arrested.”

“A revolt? In Dublin? What does that have to do with my Joe?”

“We all know he’s the leader of the Brotherhood, ma’am.”

“Oh, I’m sure that’s not true. There must be some kind of mistake.”

“Sorry, ma’am, you need to get going.”

“Can I bring him some dinner?”

“You need to get going, ma’am.”

Séamus put his hand on Mary’s shoulder and realized how nervous she was.

“I think we better get going. I’ll walk you over to your mom’s house.”

Mary turned and looked at Seamus’s kind eyes teared up and said, “Thank you.”

When Mary and Séamus got to her family’s home, they told everyone about Joe and the revolt in Dublin.

Mary’s grandfather, Tim, spoke up. “Clearly, Joe had nothing to do with the revolt in Dublin; none of us knew anything about it. The English often do whatever they want, but they don’t just kill people for no reason. For sure, he’ll be out soon. I sure wish we knew what’s going on in Dublin. Let’s get the word out. I’m going over to Callaghan’s to tell the guys what we know. Then I’ll stop off at the church and tell Father John about it. He needs to know. I’ll be home in an hour or so.”

He walked over to Mary, kissed her forehead, and then kissed his wife.

Then he looked at Mary and told her, “It’s a difficult situation, but I know everything will be okay.”

“Thanks, Gramps. I’ll see you later.”

Séamus got up and told Tim he would go with him to the pub. “Good. You were at the jail, so you can explain what’s happening.”

Only the beginning of the action in *Dug In ...*



Charlie

by Mary Freeman

Mary Jane absently stirred the steaming liquid in her cup, “That coffee was terrible this morning.”

“Coffee?” Charlie raised his head to look at her.

“That’s why I had only one cup. We won’t go back to that restaurant. If you can’t trust their coffee, you can’t trust the food.”

“Oh, the coffee was bad.” He sat staring at his gnarled hands on the kitchen table.

Mary Jane patted his arm, “Don’t you think this is much better?”

He grasped his mug with both hands and cautiously slurped a taste. His weathered face crinkled into a smile, “This coffee is good. How many days have you been with me?”

“Five days tomorrow.”

“Are you going to stay with me now, Marcia? No! Your name is Mary Anne right?”

“You’re close, my name is Mary Jane. You can call me MJ if it’s easier, Charlie.”

“Oh, Mary Jane. Sorry, names are hard for me. Faces are easier.” His raspy voice waivered with concern, “Are you going to stay with me now? They said I needed a person at home or they wouldn’t let me leave.”

“I’ll be here Monday through Friday. Rosemarie will stay with you Saturday and Sunday. Your son John made the arrangements. You’ll be home for good.”

“Home for good.” His eyes pleaded for understanding, “Will you stay with me?”

“Mondays through Fridays.”

“*Monday. Tuesday. Wednesday. Thursday. Friday,*” he sang as he tapped his mug with the spoon. “*Saturday. Sunday.* This coffee is good.” His expression changed from playful to distress, “Why are you leaving me Saturday and Sunday? I can’t be alone. The man with my young face said so.”

“Right, your son John said so.”

“Silly me, my son John looks so much like me way back when. Did I ask a question? What do I need to know? A good question, right?”

“You asked who will be here Saturday and Sunday. Rosemarie will be here with you for those two days. I will be back on Monday. No worries.”

“*Oh Rose, my Rose Marie, Oh Rosemarie. I love you-oooh-oooh. I’m always dreaming of you-oooh-oooh,*” he sang softly. “Nelson Eddy wooed Jeannette MacDonald with that song. One of our favorites. Remember, Sarah?”

“I remember the song, Charlie.”

“NO!” His eyes flitted back and forth as he studied her face. “WAIT... sorry, Mary Jane, my Sarah was just sitting here. You are here now. Why won’t you stay with me all the time?”

“Well — my husband and kids need me. And I need time with them.”

His forehead wrinkled with confusion as he said, “It didn’t used to be that way.”

“What?”

“The doctor told me today. Stop taking those pills. Take these pills. I must slow down. The girls all like me.”

“Right, Charlie. You do what the doctor says. I’ll help you.” Mary Jane went to the stove and stirred the soup. “It’s getting late. Lunch is almost ready.”

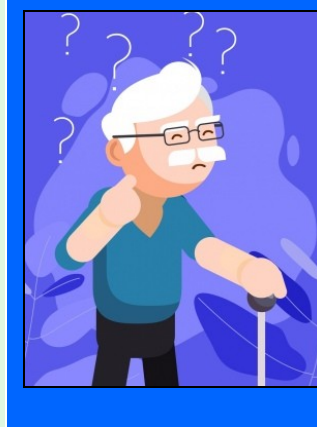
“Will you take me to the doctor’s office? Next time I need to go?”

“Yes, Charlie.” She set his bowl of soup on the table. “Let’s put this on now so we don’t stain your shirt.” She put his bib on him, ever-cautious not to demean him by referring to it as a bib.

“Do I get a spoon? I want to try myself.”

“Here you go.” She placed the spoon in his trembling hand. He scooped the soup and looked at her for approval. “Fine job!” Mary Jane said

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(Continued from page 8)

as she guided his hand to his open mouth
 “Yummm. You cook good. Will you take me to the doctor next time I go?”
 “Yes, sir. I’m on your team.”
 “You are on my team.” Charlie smiled at her, then opened his mouth as the spoon came near. He swallowed and said with a grin, “So tasty.”
 “I’m glad you enjoy it.”
 Charlie’s eyes widened and a look of panic shrouded his face.
 “But I have to go to my bank and get money to pay the hospital bill. I was so tickled to get out, I forgot.”
 “You don’t have to worry about the hospital. John took care of the bill. You get to relax at home now.”
 “Oh, my son Johnny? He’s a good boy. I used to have red hair.”
 Charlie set the spoon down and gazed out the window over the sink.
 “I’m home. What’s your name? Are you going to stay and take care of me? They said I needed a person at home or they wouldn’t let me leave.”



Charlie

Rose Haven Adult Care Facility



Review the usages of semi-colons, colons and the dash.

The Semi-Colon ;

A semi-colon may be used to link two closely related sentences.
He was slightly nervous with her; he was utterly frantic without her.

But hardly any professional writers use the semi-colon colon this way any more. They just end the first sentence with a period and begin another.
He was slightly nervous with her. He was utterly frantic without her.

If the items in a series of word groups contain commas, a semi-colon is used to separate the items. In the following sentence, the semicolon makes it clear that Ivana took three people to lunch, not six.
Ivana took Mrs. Reed, her best friend; Marco, her boyfriend; and Artie, her agent to lunch at the Brown Derby.

When there are additional commas in a compound sentence besides the one before the connecting conjunction, replace the comma with a semi-colon.
Much to Orville's surprise, Sam, the Andersons' watchdog, bit him; and, because of the ensuing civil lawsuit, Orville and Sam had a strained relationship forever after.

The Colon :

A colon must always have a complete sentence to the left of it. Information missing from this sentence comes after it.
Some of the evidence was not in his briefcase: a camera, a map, and a pistol.

The example above has a list of three items after the complete sentence on the left. But a colon may be used before just one item as well as a list of items.
Every one of Mom's pasta recipes called for one basic ingredient: minced garlic.

The Dash —

If you prefer items to come at the beginning of a sentence, you might use dashes.
His laptop – the latest iMac – was now his most valued and useful tool at the office.

Good health, an active life style and sunshine – these ingredients added up to a pleasant retirement in the Bahamas.

Of course, if the items are within a sentence, you can use commas.
The most important items, a camera, a map and a compass, were missing from his day pack!

Or for a more dramatic effect, you might use dashes.
The most important items – a camera, a map and a compass – were missing from his day pack!

A Lucky Lad's Love Story

by Alan Wills

I was first married for fourteen years and was blessed to have three incredible children. In fact, it was those three children who made it almost impossible for me to leave them and my first wife.

After my divorce I was single for twelve years. One evening I was driving home on the 405 and remembered an article in the LA Times regarding a lecture on relationships at the Bel Air Presbyterian Church. When I entered the hall, everyone seemed to have paired-up, so I sat at a table by myself. A very nice-looking blonde asked if she could join me. Her name was Norma Jean and she told me she worked for IBM. The more we talked the more curious I became. Why was this woman so intriguing to me? Then it occurred to me, she has a brain! None of the other women I dated had one of those. After the lecture I asked Norma if she would like to go for coffee. She said she didn't drink coffee, so I offered her tea, and she accepted.

She was the easiest woman to converse with. We closed the restaurant, still talking. We talked every day on the phone, and we really got to know each other. She shared with me she had thought she would have to date at least five men to share all the activities she enjoyed: theater, museums, exercising, walking on the beach, travel, and nature hikes. Then she discovered I enjoy all the same pastimes. Eventually, she came to my house and I read her my poetry. Much later, she told me she learned so much about who I really was from my poetry that she fell in love with me. I have always been totally enamored with Norma; I believe for me it was love at first sight. I learned she had three children, as I did. They had been encouraging their mother to go out and meet people.

While at work, Norma often dressed in an IBM blue suit and a white blouse, and she had a very serious side. I, on the other hand, have always been a joker. Eventually, we went shopping and she bought some casual clothes. While having fun her whole demeanor changed, and I asked her to marry me. Five years later, I was still asking her to marry me. Not that I disagreed with her decision! After all, why would such a wonderful and intelligent woman marry someone like me?

Eventually, we moved in together and discovered we were very compatible. She loved the ocean as I did, and we often went out on my boat. I decided it was time I bought a new boat. When I prepared to sell the old boat, I discovered the gas tank needed to be replaced. The manufacturer told me



the procedure for changing it. Norma encouraged me to bring the boat on the trailer, from the storage yard to outside the house to work on it. That way we could have lunch together. The procedure Sea Ray told me included chiseling away the foam around the gas tank, then sucking up the foam with a vacuum cleaner. I had evacuated all the gas one month before. So, there I was standing over the gas tank when it exploded and burst

into flames. My hair and beard were on fire along with my t-shirt and shorts. Sometime later, a friend asked me how did I survive? My answer was, "Set fire to an Englishman's boat and he gets off fast."

I jumped to the street, about a five-foot jump. Then tore off my clothes running up the driveway. Next, I jumped into our swimming pool. It felt so good being under the cool water until Norma grabbed my head and pulled me up, she thought I was drowning. She had called 911. The paramedics rushed me to the hospital. When Norma saw how burned my arms, legs and face were, she said, "Alan, I think we should get married, before you kill yourself."

We were married at the Calabasas Inn in front of the waterfall. Our six grown children stood up for us. My bride was incredibly beautiful in her white wedding dress, which brought tears of happiness to my eyes as her son, Chris, walked her down the aisle to me and the preacher. I wore a white suit to match the white bandages still on my burned legs.

Flowers were everywhere: the aisle, the chuppah, bouquets, banquet room - the most beautiful stargazer and white lilies and pink and white roses. My two sons, Adam and David, shared responsibility as my best men. My daughter, Julie, and Norma's daughter, Sandy, were our matrons of honor. Norma's son, John, played the music. About one hundred of our friends and family were at the reception in the ballroom of the Calabasas Inn. We started our married life feeling truly blessed. We danced the night away. It was the happiest day of my life.

That was twenty-one years ago. I still look at Norma and think I am the luckiest man alive to be in love with such an incredible woman! I buy her red roses almost every week to show her I love her with all my heart!

Tick Tock Story

by Gary Wosk

A public transit bus driver by the name of James “Wily” Williams, worried that he will lose his job if he reports to work late again, collects hundreds of alarm clocks. This of course drives his wife, Florence Williams, up the wall. What will she do about it before she goes completely batty? Will she exact revenge?

These are a few of the questions answered in the new Gary Wosk short story entitled *Tick-Tock*, which was accepted by the Pompano Beach, Florida-based Breaking Rules Publishing (BRP). Valley Scribe editor Kathy Highcove designed the whimsical cover art for the 2,000-word story which will appear in the publisher’s May online and print issue of *The Scribe Magazine* (not to be confused with our very own *The Valley Scribe*).

According to Gary, *Tick-Tock* was inspired by one of CWC-SFV member Rita Keeley Brown’s popular monthly meeting prompt writing workshops.

The incessant annoyance of one tick-tock clock is nothing short of maddening to me. Listening to the constant tick-tock of a hundred clocks, day and night is enough to drive anyone over the edge, and Gary Wosk with his wily wit has driven bus driver James “Wily” Williams’s wife, Florence over the edge for the last time. Gary’s keeps his foot on the pedal of tension throughout, with a wonderful pace that drives you to a satisfying and poignant twist at the end. A great read! wrote P. McCarthy, the editor of *The Scribe, Horror and Triangle Writers Magazines*, and *The Hollows* horror anthology in her review of Gary’s story.

Gary indicated that he was quite surprised and elated when he received the congratulatory email from the BRP editor. “Interestingly, at least from my perspective, is the fact that I had only sent my story to a few publications for consideration,” said Gary. “It usually takes much more of an effort than that to have any chance of success. In

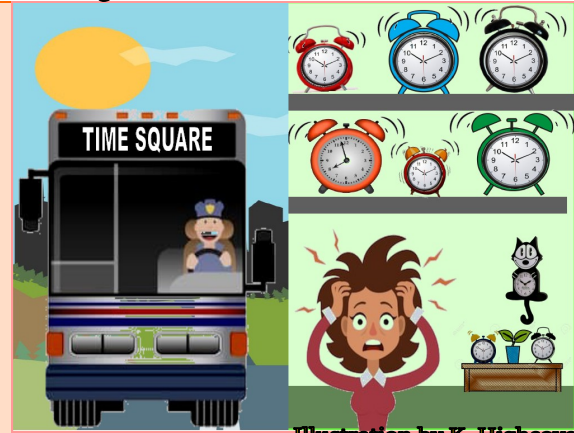


Illustration by K. Highcove

all honesty, I thought some of my other stories that haven’t found a home yet were better written. It just goes to show that anything is possible when writers send out their prose to publications.”

BRP publishes short stories, poetry, screenplays, novellas and novels in the fiction and non-fiction genres including cookbooks. The publisher also offers editing services, writing retreats plus many other resources.

The magazines can be read by subscribing or a one-time purchase. For more information, visit the BRP website at: breakingrulespublishing.com, [facebook.com/breakingrulespublishing](https://www.facebook.com/breakingrulespublishing) and [facebook.com/pmccarthywrites](https://www.facebook.com/pmccarthywrites).

In Gary's Future

Gary Wosk goes from the weird to the even weirder in his campy, sci-fi story *Executive Material* which was accepted by Cloaked Press for its digital and paperback *Spring Into SciFi 2020* collection.

The plot involves mysterious futuristic efficiency experts who make a surprise visit to the marketing department of a chocolate factory where they give the meek overlooked and disrespected Erwin Puddles a job performance review he never expected.

For more information about Cloaked Press, visit <https://www.cloakedpress.com/>.



A limerick is a poetic form comprised of one stanza with five lines and a rhyme scheme of AABBA that usually is humorous.

Enjoy these ten sly verses from clever SFV member Michael Edelstein.



Watered My Pants

**A distraught small boy from New France
Two-stepped in a tight mincing dance
Asked, "Son, what's wrong?"
His teary-eyed song,
Was, "Mama, I've watered my pants."**

Wearing A Wig

**A gal on a park bench in Brest
Brunette, was impeccably tressed
Said, "I don't give a fig
I'm wearing a wig
But I'm much cuter than the rest."**

Responded to Tweets

**A songster, one Darryl Honiker
Coming from old Santa Monica
Grew up on the streets
But responded to tweets
With dance tunes on his harmonica.**

A Limericist

**A limericist, quite 'duttty'
Tended to verse that was smuttty
He found a cure
In a gal who was pure
In her scrubbed hands he was putty.**



Borowitz Reports

**Borowitz reports his quick satire
Sure to arouse Republican ire
With tongue in cheek
He takes a peek
At a titillating donkey gyre.**

Sugared Sweets

**An attorney, known as John Dietz
Had a yearning for sugared sweets
Best filled with jelly
They swelled his belly
And busted his pants at the seats.**

The Porcupine

**The porcupine demonstrates skill
At glyphing the gist of his will
He writes with great verve
And uncanny nerve
While never requiring a pill.**

Seth

**The tall handsome detective was Seth
He was investigating Lisbeth
She did him in
With poisoned gin
And what he discovered was his death.**



Schrodinger's Cat

**A quantum physicist Schrodinger
Postulated a real humdinger
In a box a cat
Might be where it's at
Putting our small brains through a wringer.**

Like A Hen

**Paddy, a lad from County Glen
Had a taste for the dew now and then
When he'd had a drop more
He'd lie down on the floor
And cackled in his sleep like a hen.**

Margaret at the window

© Howard Goldstein 2008



**She sits at her window and closes her eyes.
A starling sails across oak-framed skies.
A sigh rises up and passes her lips.
A half-mended stocking escapes fingertips.
Sky beyond window spills clouds of whipped cream
as Maggie slips sleeping from seen into scenes
of seamless remembers from long left-behind
faces and follies and fears that once were
part of the child growing old, into her
sitting-here-self at the window, slow-sifting
through worn, dog-eared pages of pastimes, dream-drifting on by—
For there's time now, and time now, and infinite sky,
and the dream that was lived is a dream that can't die—
written forever into infinite text,
as quietly passed from this dream into next
wi' na' a regret—
Margaret.**

**On March 7, at 1 pm, join the members
of the CWC-SFV at the Motion Picture Home.**



**Here's the address:
23388 Mulholland
Woodland Hills, CA 91364**



**We meet in the Community Room of
the Saban Center for Health and Wellness.**



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