



# The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club

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## To Stay Safe, CWC-SFV Meetings Are Cancelled

In response to the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19, The San Fernando Valley Chapter of the California Writers Club will not meet in May. This is the third month out club has had to cancel our meeting, typically held the first Saturday of each month at the Motion Picture and TV Fund, located at 23388 Mulholland Drive.



"We're continuing to adhere to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and the Los Angeles County Public Health Department on maintaining social distancing practices to prevent community spread of the coronavirus," says author and CWC-SFV Branch President Bob Okowitz.

The branch's Executive Board decided to cancel its meetings since early March as cases resulting from the disease grew in California and Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency. At that time, the Motion Picture and TV Fund closed its space to the public to protect those who reside at their facility.



**CWC-SFV Meeting Site  
MPTF Health and Wellness Center**

"Even though this health crisis has affected our monthly meetings and our collective daily activities, we hope our members, guests, and the general public remain healthy and safe at home," Okowitz says. "We'll keep monitoring this situation until public health experts deem it secure for groups to convene for public gatherings."

on writing compelling stories. Recent speakers have included novelist Ara Grigorian, *Game of Love* and *Ten Year Dance*, and Laurie Stevens, author of the lauded *Gabriel McRay* psychological suspense novels.

The California Writers Club welcomes writers in all genres, and at all stages of their careers. To learn more about events and activities for writers, visit <http://cwc-sfv.org/>

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**CWC-SFV Meeting in the Saban Community Room**



**CWC President  
Bob Okowitz**

## President's Message: May 2020

When I was young, sit-ins were used to protest racial discrimination. Years before I was born, there were stay-ins, where an industry's workers refused to leave so the scabs could not take over.

Now, in 2020, we have Sheltering At Home. What does that mean? We must "imprison" ourselves at home so there's less chance of getting sick, or making someone else sick, and possibly die of the corona-19 virus.

Sheltering in place, at home, is so not fun. Personally, I find it ridiculously stressful. My feelings of tension and worry have increased, so I'm not very productive on the writing front. (I did, however, clean off my desk of many months of junk.)

Apparently, the long term goal of sheltering is to destroy the virus, so we can get back to our usual day-to-day activities. A country free of covid-19 is a good thing, a very good thing. Our short term sacrifices should force the virus to die out, and hopefully not return, or at least not return until we have an effective vaccine to deal with it. That's the hopeful future.

But right now, most of us miss our usual routines. That would include me. I find that daily walks, Tai Chi and stretching exercises reduce my stress. And I listen to lots of Sixties and Seventies hit songs.

For example, I find George Harrison's music to be very calming. *All things must pass*, for example. What a brilliant song and what a brilliant guy wrote it! He surely had adversity in his life, and overcame it. Harrison is now my role model for handling my own stress.

It's unfortunate that our club has been forced to cancel our May meeting, but I'm hoping we can hold a June workshop, either in the Saban Room or at home, using Zoom.

Until we meet again, try to find ways to reduce your own stress. Please wear a mask in public places and while you're sitting at home, feeling bored ... get back to writing !! And to quote once again from George Harrison's famous song, *All things must pass*.

### How to Network with the CWC-SFV

**H**ow are you doing during this pandemic? We miss seeing your faces and hearing your voices. And we certainly hope none of you have contracted the covid-19 virus. If you're ill or know of a member who is ill, please let one of us know.

Do you need anything the club may be able to provide or help you network with our members? We want the critique groups to continue to flourish. Do not hesitate to submit your stories or poems to our editor.

These unique times call for extra effort and sensitivity. The CWC practices information privacy and, with few exceptions, successfully sends email info to our members using the blind copy feature. If you

want to network with certain members, please send their names to Andi Polk, Membership Chair. She will try to help you reach him or her.

Our member database (MRMS) is also available to all members. If you have difficulty logging in—contact Andi Polk. The database has tutorials and help lines on each page.

Stay well and keep your distance. Write On!

Bob Okowitz, President ([aphealth@gmail.com](mailto:aphealth@gmail.com))  
Pat Avery, Secretary-Treasurer ([rpavery@mac.com](mailto:rpavery@mac.com))  
Andi Polk, Membership ([andipolk4@gmail.com](mailto:andipolk4@gmail.com))  
Kathy Highcove, Editor ([khighcove@gmail.com](mailto:khighcove@gmail.com))

## CWC-SFV MEMBER FOCUS

I'm a Sansei, meaning a third generation Japanese-American. On my father's side, I come from a long line of farmers in Hiroshima, and on my mother's side, I'm descended from generations of samurais. Both sets of grandparents were born and grew up in Japan before moving to Hawaii. My parents were both born and grew up in what was then the American Territories of Hawaii. My older sister was born in Hawaii. In 1957, my family moved to Los Angeles and in 1959, I was born here, in L.A.

Born deaf, due to maternal rubella, I attended an elementary school for the hearing-impaired in Los Angeles, a boarding school for the deaf in Riverside, California, Gallaudet University (the world's only liberal arts university for the deaf) and CSUN in Northridge, California.

In grade school, I became interested in learning to write stories when I discovered and read Lewis Carroll's book, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. I learned from a children's encyclopedia that Carroll enjoyed writing stories for children, so I decided to try to learn his craft.



Anne Hansell

Since high school, I've studied English grammar because of my family's bilingual background: Japanese and English. My parents hired tutors to help me learn to read and write only in English, so I'm not fluent in Japanese.

At CSUN, I had interpreters for most of my classes. My reading interests have focused on the ancient world, the Middle Ages, Asian history, early modern Europe, investments, stories of the business world and forensics.

As an adult, I focus on reading and researching historical events. I continually search for interesting historical facts that might be used in my stories.

In my spare time, I watch streaming TV shows with my husband, while crocheting afghan blankets. I mostly give my creations to people who are sick or have lost their jobs.

I work as a paraeducator (a teacher's aide) in a deaf program on a public-school campus.

I know that I need to learn skills that will improve my writing. Eventually, I hope to publish and sell my stories. That's why I joined the CWC-SFV.

*Ed's Note: Aided by her U. of Northridge signers, Anne regularly attends our monthly meetings and participates in writing activities, such as the prompt exercises.*

*Rita Keelley Brown, our prompt leader, passes out a list of prompts to her audience members, asks us to select one, and then quickly write down whatever comes to mind. Sometimes, participants write an intro to a longer story.*

*Please read Anne's "Lord Snow" scene. Perhaps she will opt to extend this brief scene into a longer tale.*

*I would read further.*

*K.H.*

### Lord Snow

by Anne Hansell

In my dreams, I keep seeing a small, snowy dog on a high boulder, overlooking a forest of pines and firs. This dog might be a Samoyed puppy. It insistently barks, turns around, walks away, stops and looks back at me as if it wants me to follow it. I normally have all kinds of dreams, but lately, I have had this particular dream every night

Last night when I found myself in the same dream yet again, so I asked the dog, "What's your name?" Then this thought appeared in my mind: *My name is Lord Snow. My owner is Prince Godwin, and he's in big trouble. You're the only person who can help him out.*

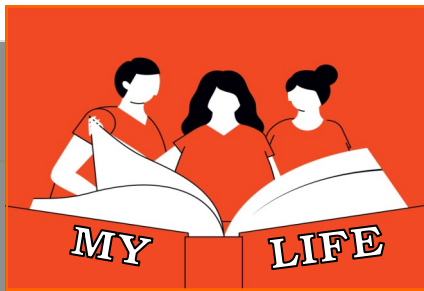
I frowned. "Why me? I'm only a dog sitter with a high school diploma."

Lord Snow blinked his blue eyes and shook his head. *No. You're more than that. They call you, 'Ryland the Giant Killer.' My master is in a dungeon inside a huge castle, belonging to a giant named Jalen.*



# How To Write A Memoir In Six Easy Steps

by Nathan Everett



Everyone has a story or two to tell. As time passes, these precious personal and family memories can be lost. But how and where do you begin? Right here. All you need are your memories, a pen or pencil, and 4-6 sheets of paper.

The following steps will show you how to write memoirs, the personal stories about your life experiences. Memoirs are not narrations of historic events; they are stories about the things you remember because they are important to you.

You'll learn how to write a single memoir in a quick and painless fashion. You may decide to write additional memoirs, too. And in later articles, you'll even learn how to turn your individual memoirs into a book you can share with others. But for now, let's keep it simple.

## Step 1 – List several life experiences

Take out a sheet of paper. Think of some significant experiences you've had and write down a few words or phrases about them. Some phrases that might inspire you include:

**The time I ...**

**How I learned ...**

**Why I don't ...**

**Where I found ...**

**How I met ...**

Carry that paper with you all day. Whenever you think of one of your experiences, jot down a few words about it. Don't write the story, just make a list. That's all. We suggest you carry that paper and think or write about various experience for at least one day, if possible, before you continue with Step 2.

## Step 2: Choose one and name it

The truly liberating discovery about how to write memoirs is that you don't have to tell your whole life story at once. Even though you listed several experiences, just focus on one event at a time. What makes an experience memoir-able? Should you start with the earliest memory? The story you tell most often? No. Choose the third one on your list. Why? We could pretend there is scientific evidence that proves the third idea will be the best, but that isn't true. It doesn't make any difference which one you choose. There is no right or wrong place to start. We've saved you time by simply choosing number three. Now imagine that experience is about to become a major motion picture. What would the title be? Write that on the second sheet of paper.

## Step 3 – List significant details

Under the movie title, jot down some things that make this event significant. Try to list at least six details, in any order they occur to you, such as:

**Who was involved?**

**When did it happen?**

**Where were you?**

**What were you thinking?**

**Why do you remember this event?**

## Step 4 – Write an opening sentence

Every memoir has a beginning and an end. The opening sentence sets the context and tone of the story, and, if done well, has an irresistible "hook" that makes us want to read more.

On a third sheet of paper, write an opening sentence. Write several versions, until you believe you have something that will capture your readers' interest. Give enough detail to make it interesting without giving away a vital clue to the mystery.

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)

## Step 5 – Write the conclusion

Your experience probably taught you something about life or about yourself. Ask yourself, “What is the point?”

On the third sheet of paper, beneath your opening sentences, write a sentence that summarizes the significance of the event. You might even imagine your memoir is one of Aesop’s fables by saying to yourself, “The moral of my story is ...” Try reducing that idea to a sentence that expresses why this event was important to you. If you can distill your events down to their simplest ideas as you write memoirs, you’ll find it is easier to tell your stories.

## Step 6 – Connect the pieces

At this point you have a title, an opening sentence, a list of important details, and a conclusion. Now it’s time to connect the pieces.

First, re-read the notes you wrote on the second sheet of paper in Step 3.

Next, put all those papers aside. You do not need any of them as you write. Everything you need is in your head, or your heart. You know how the story begins and how it ends. You know which parts are funny or tragic, and which parts are so important that you can’t tell the story without them.

These six how to write memoirs steps gave you a structure to help you get started—now all you have to do is write it all down.

So take out a fourth sheet of paper. Write your title and your opening sentence, and then tell your story, writing in a way that is comfortable and natural for you. Make it as short or as long as you like; there is no minimum or maximum length. Wrap it all up with the conclusion or life lesson.

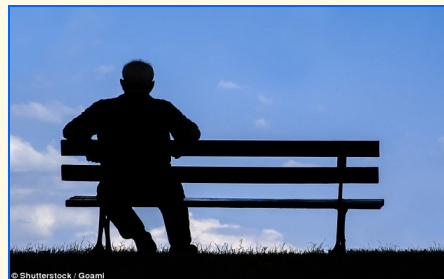
Bravo! You now have the first draft of your first memoir. Repeat these steps for every story you want to tell and before long you will have a treasure to pass on to future generations.



Story source: *Freelance Writer*  
[https://www.freelancewriting.com/author/freelance\\_writer/](https://www.freelancewriting.com/author/freelance_writer/)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Nathan Everett has been involved in the publishing industry as a writer, editor, publisher, and publishing technologies designer for thirty years. Most recently he has developed a site where regular people can publish their memoirs. Get expanded lessons and free worksheets at: <http://howtowritememoirs.com>*



## This Is My One And Only Life

**I have become older. I have become bolder.**

**I express myself more readily to others, now, much more so than in the past.**

**It is in good ways. It is in virtuous ways.**

**I have become enlightened, empowered.**

**I can tell you, this is my one and only life.**

**What this means to me is my lifestyle, more chest breathing, more heart beating, more leisure, more pleasure, hopefully not despair, more inspiring poetry, more encouraging poetry, for me to compose, for me to share.**

**Norman Molesko**

# High Desert CWC Branch Short Story Contest

**T**he High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club announces that it will conduct a short story contest and showcase the winners in a future anthology. We'll offer cash prizes on or before December 1, 2020. The contest is open to all CWC members in good standing. The theme of the stories: pandemics, past, present or an imagined future that affects characters in your story and their involvement in and reaction to those disasters.

A pandemic, as defined in the theme, is an outbreak of a deadly disease that affects a significant portion of the world's population.

Submitted stories must be fiction. As interesting as real-life tales of your real-life Covid-19 experiences might be, this project is limited to the creative fiction.

We do not want memoirs, biographies, essays or poetry. No politics, no proselytizing.

Maximum word length - 5,000. Two submissions per member will be allowed with a non-refundable fee of \$15 per submission. Pre-published entries are okay as long as you fully own the right to publish it.

Submission deadline: June 30, 2020. Winners will be notified on, or before, December 1, 2020. Prizes are \$150 for first place, \$100 for second place and \$50 for third place. In addition, all net profits from the book that are made through December 31, 2020, will be divided equally among the winners.

Checks will be made payable to a charity of the respective winner's choice, or to their branch. Those checks will be distributed in January of 2021.

Note: This is not a fundraiser for HDCWC. It is the intention of our branch to give away all net profits.

"We offer this opportunity in recognition of the cathartic effect of writing, that in times of disaster, writing is healing and satisfying as we use our minds and hearts to explore ideas and concepts," stated Dwight Norris, President of HDCWC. "When we write we understand things better and bring understanding to our readers as well."

We also recognize that the current pandemic is a tragic event that warrants documentation. Even though the submissions are fiction, CWC writers will provide a legacy of this historic occurrence.

Submission guidelines and full details of this project may be found on [www.hdewc.com](http://www.hdewc.com).

Bob Isbill

## Sisters In Crime Offers May Webinars

**I**n May, Sisters in Crime is pleased to offer three webinars, including a special added Saturday offering.

Are you determined to get some writing done during this time of quarantine, but finding it difficult? Did you know that the range of skills most forensic psychologists can offer is greater than what we typically see in fiction? And those overlooked activities offer opportunities for fresh characters and plots. Curious how? Then join us for:

"How to Become a Better Writer in Quarantine – Even If You Don't Feel Like Writing" Tiffany Yates Martin has spent nearly thirty years as an editor in the publishing industry, working with major publishers and bestselling authors as well as newer writers, and is the author of *Intuitive Editing: A Creative and Practical Guide to Revising Your Writing*.  
Tuesday, May 2, 2020  
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

"FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY 101: What Crime Writers Should Know" with Dr. Katherine Ramsland is a professor of forensic psychology and criminology, SinC's own InSinC reporter and a renowned author (including *How to Catch a Killer*). She is also a clinician, researcher and consultant for death investigations, who wants to fill us in on all the overlooked activities of the Forensic Psychologist.  
Tuesday, May 12, 2020  
8:00-9:30 pm ET

"MASTERING PLOT TWISTS" Jane Cleland is the real deal, an award-winning author of both crime novels, short stories, and non-fiction. "The stories that keep people on the edge of their seats and up all night, are filled with unexpected twists and turns. By integrating plot twists, plot reversals, and moments of heightened danger (TRDs) at tactically sound moments, your stories will captivate readers with their I-can't-wait-to-see-what-happens-next unpredictability.  
Tuesday, May 19, 2020  
3:00-4:00 p.m. EST

All webinars include Q and A after the lecture. If you have questions, please, please email us, Sisters in Crime <[admin@sistersincrime.org](mailto:admin@sistersincrime.org)>

While walking up Sunset Street in Seattle, Washington, I passed office buildings, parking lots, restaurants and other businesses. I believed I'd seen it all, yet to my surprise, I came across an outdoor flying saucer sales and lease service center. I knew that technology is advancing in the USA but this was truly amazing.

It is 2035 and I'll be retiring from ownership of a CPA firm where I spent the last thirty years consulting and hunching over my desk, juggling figures and accounts on income statements, balance sheets, inventory sales and profit margins from my company's customer base. I'm done with the stress.

Before heading back to my hotel, I spotted a saucer dealership and I walked over to look in the showroom. A salesman approached me. "Hi, how ya doin' today! Can I interest you in this little run-about? It is the perfect vehicle for a hop, skip and jump to anyplace in the solar system?" he said, pointing to one of his smaller saucers. "The X87 turbo cruiser gets up to Mach 5 in the earth's atmosphere and has an automated re-entry system second to none. Four travelers fit comfortably and everyone gets his own window to observe the show out in the realm of the sun. It's just perfect for that solar system cruise! Take the family out to Jupiter, look at that big red spot then come back for the grandkid's birthday party. What d'ya say?"

I was dumbfounded. Could this really be happening? After catching my breath, "An X87 Turbo cruiser huh. Well, sure. I'll check it out!"

"Great! This little model is fresh off the production line. Came in first place at the inter-planetary race earlier this month. It kicked the crap out of the Chinese Dong-Fu model. This little baby was built to last and will keep you traveling for years and years to come."

"What's next? A test flight?" I ask.

"Sure, we can do that. Follow me!"

"We'll just need to run a quick credit check." he said as we walked toward his office. "It's company policy before we take a test flight. What's your social security number?"

About two minutes later he came back wearing a big smile.

"Great number you have—a credit score of 789. Let's do that test flight!"

We walked over to the sporty little model and the salesman put a key card into the anti-radiance security sleeve.

"This is just a formality as your card will open the sleeve as you approach."

"This sounds so fantastic. Is it very complicated?"

"I have this model and my little grandson does a lot of these preliminary chores. It's so easy a monkey could do it. You'll see!"

LED bulbs light-up all over the fuselage, a titanium drawer slides to one side revealing a set of steps. With a welcoming gesture, he led me on board the model X87 turbo cruiser.

"Wow! This is spectacular! We could actually travel to the moon in this baby?"

"Sure, buckle yourself into the seat by the left window and we'll start. It operates by voice command to the control panel. Start X87 turbo."

I could hear the engine humming while a cloud of dust breezed past the window.

"Okay, you comfortable? Ready to take it for a spin?"

"Sure! Let's go!"

"Rise to fifty-thousand feet X87!" he commanded.

The saucer rose like a fast elevator above the sales lot; higher than the office buildings; the space needle; higher than the clouds. Looking

out the window, I could see the ocean, a forest and the city of Seattle.

"Hang on to the handles on your seat, we're heading to hyper-drive."

The g-forces pushed me back into my seat. I looked through the window and saw all of North America, then the earth and beyond! We passed into vacant stellar space.

"We are reaching cruising speed. The g-forces will be less apparent and we'll have a smooth ride."

After twenty seconds, "You can unfasten your seat belt now and relax. Would you like a cocktail?"

"Sure!"

"What's your pleasure?"

"Bourbon, please. On the rocks."

"Two bourbon on the rocks, X87."

Immediately, two glasses with alcohol and ice rise out of the center console. The salesman gave me one and I sipped it, "Very good."

"So, what do you think about this little doozy? The transporter engine is guaranteed for thirty million miles. The body's made by Boeing and the hyper-link engine is made by Northrop. I've sold dozens of these to happy travel-oriented customers. Have a large backyard? You can land next to your

*(Continued on page 8)*



barbeque or Jacuzzi!”

“Yeah! Sounds great.”

“What would it take to get you into one of these little gems today?”

“How much does this model’s cost?”

“This clean new model starts at two million. You’ll get a thirty-million-mile guarantee on the transporter that’ll last for years and years. Just fly it to the service lot and we’ll take care of everything. Would you want financing or a cash payment?”

“I’d take advantage of financing. But is there a manual or something where I would learn to fly it?”

“We have a three DVD set that explains everything you need to know to travel in style. Also, included with the leasing, are four flight lessons. You’ll be cruising to Mars in no time!”

“Terrific!”

“After the test flight we’ll get your info and set you up in this baby!”

“Hey, there’s the moon!” I said, looking out the window.

“Yeah, we’ll just circle around it.”

“Oh, there’s a base right there!”

“Yes, take the wife out for a flight to the lunar base. Experience the latest in comfort and speed. Spend the night in the Lunar hotel. Then travel to Mars in the morning.”

“That sounds fantastic!”

“Put your seatbelt back on and hold onto your drink—we’re headed back at hyper-speed. We’ll be back shortly and then I’ll start on the paperwork. So you can sign the lease.”

“Sounds good.”

“We have your SSN. What about your work?”

“I’m retired. But I own a chain of accounting offices with fifteen CPA’s.”

“Good, a solid steady profession there won’t be any delay when we run the paperwork.”

“Oh, there’s Earth again.”

“Yes, you can travel extremely fast in this turbo-charged number.”

I could see the North American continent and a few seconds later, the city of Seattle and the Space Needle came into view.

“There’s the sales lot!”

Touch down was very smooth and after we landed the seatbelts automatically unbuckled. The door opened and we walked over to a service attendant.

“How was it?” he asked the salesman.

“Great. Clean it up, Johnny, this one is a lease.”

“Yes sir!”

The salesman went to his office and confirmed the final paperwork. I saw it on my cell.

“Okay. Ready for your signature,” he said.

I traced my name on his screen.

“It’s all done,” he said. “Here’s your key card with access to voice command. We’re signing you up for our flight class’ and here is your three DVD set to understand the advanced voice control system. Classes start tomorrow. We’ll see you then.”

“Great! I hope my wife likes it!”

“Perhaps she would like one of her own?”

“Yeah maybe. Thanks for all your help. I can’t wait to see Saturn’s rings close up.”

“As a token of our appreciation here’s a gift certificate for a five-star weekend at the lunar base. You and your wife will love it. See you at three o’clock tomorrow afternoon.”

“Great, bye!”

“Wait! Where are you headed?”

“The Somerset Regency Hotel.”

“Would you like a lift?”

“Sure!”

After we got to the lot, I impulsively said, “Let’s take my saucer.”

The salesman opened the door with his key card and we took a seat inside.

“Would you like to fly it this time?”

“Excellent!”

“Just tell it where you want to go.”

“Somerset Regency Hotel X87”

I felt the smooth start of the engine and the saucer slowly started to rise.

“This craft will get us there quickly.”

“It’s so unbelievable what I’ve experienced today. I feel like I’m living five hundred years in the future.”

“We’re touching down.”

When door opened, I got out and said, “Thanks. You’ll see me tomorrow.”

“Great! “

I turned to walk away, but then I stumbled and had to catch myself from falling on the sidewalk.

I chuckled and said, “I went to the moon today and here I nearly fell on my face tripping over my own shoelace!”

“You’re doing fine.”

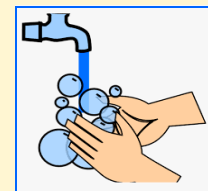
“Okay! See you tomorrow.”

“Tell a friend.”





# HOW WE SHELTER IN PLACE



## Lonesome Leslie Learns Face Time

Now I know what it feels like to be lonely. Until this sheltering-in-place, privacy and space since the death of my husband has felt like a luxury. However, being a social person by nature, the importance of enjoying friends and family celebrations is also my emotional and physical need. Places to go, and people to see, are vital to me. So I make lists. So I make plans. But that daily routine has changed recently.

Plagues of the past did not have the benefit of today's science, like antibiotics and other life saving cures. But along comes this new epidemic in the year 2020 by the name of **coronavirus**. It's highly contagious ... travels around the world ... very serious and life threatening.

How to stop it? What to do? This virus turns our normal life into an inside-out and upside-down world. How can we stop it? "Isolate ... stay at home. Do no hugging. Do no touching. Do no physical contact." That's what the experts say.

"Oy," I say. When one is a senior who lives alone and no longer drives ... the cupboard contents dwindle. Depending on others to shop for my food and other household necessities, makes me feel more insecure and less independent. And the "others" are trying to take care of their own needs. "Toilet paper! We need toilet paper," is heard from everyone.

"Self-shelter ... stay away from other people ...," Oh my God !! I feel so alone! How can I ease this ache? I know. The telephone and computer. Virtual contact. Better than nothing, isn't it?

So I get busy on Facebook. I post my feelings about being so very lonesome. The responses and phone calls are amazing and comforting. I hear from people I'd lost contact with and friends from all over the world. Like ... cousin Sam from Hawaii ... cousin Paris from Nevada ... relatives in New Jersey and Florida ... friends in Pennsylvania and strangers on Facebook. They tell me, "We feel the same way so you're not alone. We're with you."

It's a good thing I can still read although my cataract needs to be taken care of—but not now. Thanks to my computer and social media, I can still reach my friends. Yet, there's much more tech I need to learn, but I don't have enough young people around to keep



me updated. Many new ways to connect on social media are foreign to me. And so that's the way it is. Grandma feels like a dummy in today's world.

My daughter, Julie, tries to grocery shop for me. But I know that help is tough for her. Her grown-up kids are all home from college because of school cancellations. Some of them have lost their jobs. And Julie

works full time. Life has become hard for even my four grandchildren. Not to mention one girlfriend and one boyfriend who have entered our family circle.

For me, writing down my thoughts is like talking out loud and helps me vent my feelings. Writing is my way of speaking to friends and strangers. So ... at the risk of repeating myself ... the main point I want to make in a pandemic, is that it's normal to be ... LONESOME !



# Takng It One Day At A Time



Week three. April 6, 2020

**I**n this very special week, where leaders of religion speak, to congregations far and wide, the bulk of whom are locked inside. Let's reflect and make a pact, to be the better, not exact a toll on any—think it through—refresh, replace old thoughts with new. Be happy to have been the one to help the healing that's begun.

In a world turned upside down, just resolve you will not frown. Find some funny TV shows, make screening misery your "no goes". Then laugh out loud, and shout and holler, don't be led by leash on collar. You're the captain of your ship—don't let others crack a whip! Just be careful, safe and sensible—Bad behavior is indefensible!

Pesach 2020 Today—this Jewish Holiday—we've always gathered round to pray. Now's not the Passover we would choose, but there's no choice, it's win or lose. So please keep distance, zoom or call. Stay safe—and Happy Passover to all.

For those who celebrate these sacred days in other modes and different ways, And any other denomination—blessings—stay safe from Corona abomination.

When you feel you're folding up, use techniques for holding up. Dancing, music, , make a call—anything to break your fall. Meditate, or write a story—make it funny, never gory. Then, just spread it far and wide, helping all survive this ride.

Virus lockdown hasn't ended—cant go out, so unintended! Now it's raining without end. How much rain can heaven send? Sunshine, rainstorms , we don't care! Kill the virus that's so rare. Give us back our peace of mind—what a task you've been assigned! All of those who take the call, heartfelt thanks, God bless you all.

Ester Benjamin Shifren

SHELTERING IN PLACE

By Monte Swann

Nothing's really changed much  
What's with all the fuss?  
There's no sign of that virus  
As I ride this city bus

The bus is filled with people  
They're all sitting very close  
And talking with each other  
No germs to diagnose

The world outside the window  
is moving by real fast  
The streets are filled with people  
In groups they have amassed

No one's hoarding dry goods  
No one's wearing masks  
Everyone's simply going  
about their daily tasks

The bus is moving faster now  
Clearly, something has gone wrong  
I'm standing near the driver  
Who seems to not belong.

She's holding on for dear life  
A death grip on the wheel  
She looks like Sandra Bullock  
The tires start to squeal.

A man has jumped aboard the bus  
With a gun and rolled up sleeves  
He's trying to help poor Sandra  
Hey, look it's Keanu Reeves!

Wait, something isn't right here  
I've seen this all before  
The sound effects are booming  
With a theme to underscore

I look up from my couch  
In front of the big screen  
Outside the virus rages  
And, I'm still in quarantine.

# A Personal Best

by Gary Wosk

I've taken the most steps in my life because of the pandemic. Instead of being cooped up in the house, I've become an outdoors person. My workout could become costly though. I'm quickly wearing out my New Balance walking shoes and they weren't inexpensive. But I'm the antsy type, too, so sitting around all day was not going to work. I'd go batty!



During one stretch, I had walked nearly 160 miles in three weeks — the equivalent of six marathons, or going slightly further than from Los Angeles to San Diego.

It's not like I didn't walk a long way before — my Australian cattle dog, Shelley, made sure of that — but now I'm walking further than ever. Shelley comes along only one of my four daily walks. She'd just plop down and roll around in the grass if she tried to keep up with me every day.

This time, I decided to take my workout to a new level. I didn't want to sit around all day and stare at a 55-inch flat screen TV or my computer screen, and put on pounds from snarfing up generous portions of vanilla wafers and peanuts.

Years ago, when I was a young runner, I'd jot down the distance I had covered in a journal. Now, in 2020, the Fitbit — that my son and his wife gave me — keeps the statistics. When I wake up in the morning, I strap that little baby around my left wrist and wear it until just before bedtime. All my waking hours, the Fitbit keeps my statistics. Over time, more and more steps have become an obsession ... but a good one, I've decided.

Music has also motivated me to maintain a steady pace during my walks and jogging. If I start to get tired, I just turn the volume up on the Spotify songs filtering through my iPhone ear buds.

Recently, I tried a variation in my routine: as I circle the block, I walk a few steps, and then jog a few steps, over and over. So far, my repaired right knee has held up, and I know better than to overdo it. But until that knee weakens, I'm going to enjoy the heightened endorphins from my workout. And ironically, the plantar fasciitis in my right heel has improved. A miracle. Go figure.

I've found that my daily workout — achieving a personal best in walking — takes the edge off all the stressful coronavirus news on the Internet, CNN and MSNBC. Getting my steps in and breathing fresh air at least four times each day, has helped me keep a more positive mental outlook during the shelter-in-place.

Television can also be a stress therapy. I relax while watching the Turner Classic Movies channel. And recently, my wife, Mina, introduced me to the magnificent series *My Brilliant Friend* (always puts me in the mood for pasta) on HBO. I also enjoy having more time to read, write and

send short stories to publishers.

While there are many home activities a person can engage in during the pandemic, such as starting a new hobby, learning a new language or a musical instrument, I have found that my walking and jogging combo exercise has been my most beneficial activity. I may not always be in the mood for a long walk, but I always feel better afterward. I am more relaxed and I feel younger. And while I'm out there pounding the roads and sidewalks, a competitive spirit also resurfaces. I like to make believe that I'm training for a marathon.

Before the pandemic, I thought I'd pushed myself to the limit as far as my exercise was concerned. Now I know that wasn't true. During these weeks at home, I've achieved a personal best.

## Culinary Creations

by Yolanda Fintor



At first, during our sheltering-in-place, I spent a ridiculous amount of time binging on Netflix. Soon my need for human contact found me on the phone calling friends and family. When I exhausted my list of contacts, I decided it was time to do something productive.

As a writer, I should have turned to a creative writing project. Instead, I went online and explored food websites. All those delicious recipes put me in the mood to create in the kitchen!

The next few days produced double chocolate brownies, corn bread, no-bake cookies and even bagels. I've become so obsessed with baking, my alarmed daughter is warning me about cholesterol and weight gain. I am taking heed, but with so many more weeks of confinement ahead, this would be a good time to try my hand at making homemade bread.

# What Virus?

by Sheila Moss

Back in the day. Was it only last week? No, it's been three weeks since my adult sons' stern warning filled the family home. "Stay home; don't go out!" edict.

At first the thought of doing nothing sounded great. But then I sensed a void. What does one do to shape the day and not go insane?

Aha a schedule. The alarm buzzes at 6 am and I crawl out at 6:30, carefully making my bed. No fair crawling back into the warm covers. That's an important step to getting my world going. Then it's coffee and oatmeal and the newspaper.

At 7 am, if my neighbor's dog Cooper is prompt, I yell across the street to my neighbor to see if I can get some Cooper love. Although I'm not a dog person, Cooper is the exception. If it is Monday morning I cry "Thanks for bringing in my garbage bin, Mark." We keep our distance but I get some love from Cooper, a Golden Retriever, who is the ambassador of the neighborhood.

Realizing I'm still in my pj's, I head for the bedroom to get dressed. I expect to wear the same outfit two days in a row—don't want to do extra loads of laundry.

Chores—there are always chores. Emptying the leaf trap, running the waterfall. Although it's not a chore, checking on my resident squirrels is part of my routine. Through my windows, I see them swishing their fuzzy tails and playing a game of hide and seek.

Noon—I need my news fix and lunch. I also need to treat my hematoma which entails a hot compress on the swollen part for 15 minutes, every hour.

Finally I can read—Geraldine Brooks' *The People of the Book*. The evening finds me throwing my schedule to the wind. I've gotten though another day—a sort of Groundhog Day—once again. Now what? Do I get into my stash of M&M's hidden in the lower pantry shelf? Try my luck at binge television? Reflect on a special call from a college roommate? Or, enjoy a gift of fresh eggs from a new neighbor.

Together, I feel certain, we will make it through sheltering-in-place!



HUMPH!

COVID19

You make me want to scream  
You're more than a bad dream

You keep me inside  
In here I need to hide  
It's you I can't abide

I can't go out  
It makes me want to shout  
Just what are you about

You are so ubiquitous  
And so all around us  
While we're afraid you've found us

What can I do  
It's really up to you  
I can't I find more things to do

So I sit at my T.V.  
When I'd much rather be free  
But it isn't up to me

Go away!  
I want to play  
Today, today, today  
Humph!

Sylvia Molesko

# Reflections On Being Isolated

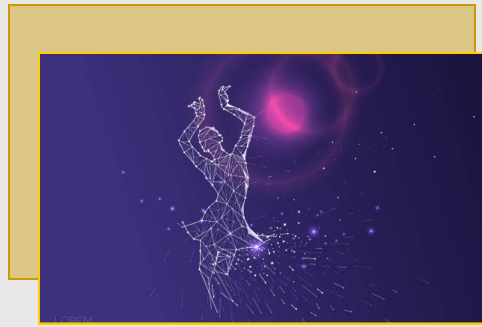
by Ester Benjamin Shifren

Isolation happens in many ways! My older daughter remarked that being isolated for coronavirus must have triggered emotions in me that my children, and most others, could never experience. I thought about it and how I was coping with my current situation, alone in an apartment. I am classified in the highest risk category for catching the dreaded COVID-19.

My first experience of isolation occurred when I was five and our family, being British, was interned for three years by the Japanese during their WWII occupation of Shanghai. There were only three Jewish families in our camp. I suffered extreme loneliness, exclusion, and overt racism from kids needing little excuse to regularly shower me with pent-up hate. I learned to depend on my own resources and creativity to entertain myself during the long days in which we were free to roam around the grounds of our camp, surrounded by high walls and guarded gates. I sketched and colored with whatever limited tools I could find, read books brought in by internees, and danced and sang to myself. I watched over babies in prams for moms doing chores. We were schooled by fellow internee teachers.

My formal schooling ended abruptly when I was nearly fourteen and we emigrated from Hong Kong to Israel. I experienced intense loneliness born of unfamiliarity and lack of a common language with peers and other new immigrants. I became a teenage ballroom dancing teacher in my mother's new dance school, and eventually taught modern dance. Daily survival was challenging! Early on, magically, I was awarded a piano tutoring scholarship—a solace and hedge against the acute pain of being uprooted. I served two years military service, married a South African, and moved to his country, to a small town where I was, once again, “different”. I raised 4 kids, worked, studied music, wrote songs, read a lot, and sewed clothes for hours. I penned and produced full length musicals celebrating Israel's independence, and played Maisie, the lead in the staged musical, “The Boyfriend.”

Thirty-six years, and a couple of new careers later—



living in Toronto—I spent days alone, painting in a basement, descending in the morning, and emerging early evening, both while it was dark during long hostile winters. I only left home to teach art and history of music part-time for the board of continuing education, or when I felt

signs of cabin fever.

My history as a painter, writer and musician certainly prepared me for this Corona-test of isolation—though I hope it's my last lock-down! I've felt a surge of creativity and for several weeks have published an inspirational poem a day on social media and I will soon self-publish my collection, interspersed with my own artwork. I call friends—walking while talking, play the piano, dance, watch webinars and movies, and way too much TV news! I'm zooming regularly—from meditation to Zumba classes, meetings, and Passover online with family and friends. My days are not long enough—I'm too busy these days to reflect on isolation!

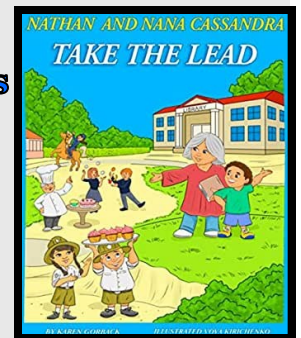
## Karen Gorback Presents A New Video Trailer

Here's what I've been doing during the "stay at home" order: Along with zooming and searching for toilet paper, I worked with videographer Kim McDougal to develop the video trailer for my new picture book, *Nathan and Nana Cassandra Take the Lead*.

In a post-pandemic universe, the world will need creative, compassionate problem solvers to help humanity heal and move forward. This little book provides us with a story to begin talking to children about the concept of leadership. Please enjoy the trailer at <https://youtu.be/m1DsLayVmdU>

Karen Gorback, Ph.D. [www.karengorback.com](http://www.karengorback.com)  
[Nathan and Nana Cassandra Take the Lead](https://www.karengorback.com/Nathan-and-Nana-Cassandra-Take-the-Lead)

Video Trailer <https://youtu.be/m1DsLayVmdU>



# Send In The Clowns

clowns  
dancing on  
tightropes of despair  
balancing while  
music roars and

umbrellas collapse  
slippery uncertainty

look up  
to the sun  
to stars  
to cavorting clouds

look down and  
curl your toes  
around ropes of steel

alive, strong  
upright, aloof  
quivering to harsh notes  
and applause echoes

alone, together  
swaying, still balanced

not forgetting  
how to pray

Lillian Rodich 4/2000

“Where are the clowns  
There ought to be clowns,  
No matter they’re here.”



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