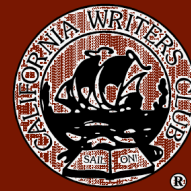




# The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club

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All forest photos in this issue were provided by



Dave and Matt Crean

## Literary Agent Paul S. Levine is our November Speaker

According to Literary Agent and Attorney Paul S. Levine, few entry-level authors know how to earn money from book publishers. On Saturday, November 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 Zoom event starts at 1 p.m. A \$10 donation per guest is requested.



Paul S. Levine  
<https://paulslevinelit.com/>

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 theater 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.

Come to our Zoom Room on Nov. 7 to

### FYI: What is a literary agent ?

hear Paul Levine's informative speech.

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.

Source: Wikipedia



## ***SURVIVAL: Tales of Pandemic*** is ready for pre-orders!

The idea that writing often puts fears into perspective was the inspiration for *SURVIVAL: Tales of Pandemic*, the CWC-statewide effort published by the High Desert Branch. Earlier this year, members of every branch of the California Writers Club were challenged to take their concerns about COVID-19 and turn them into fictional short stories.

The result is twenty-five original stories from twenty-three authors from across the state. Some are upbeat, some romantic, one or two include humor, and several are just downright scary. Many contain the idea that mankind will triumph, and a few predict that things could be a lot worse. But all the stories are unified by a singular resolve: we are not giving up and we shall prevail.

The California Writers Club does not intend to profit from the world's troubles, so the net proceeds from the sale of this anthology will be donated to charities chosen by the authors who wrote the three winning stories, or donated to their CWC branch.

Congratulations to the winning authors:

1<sup>st</sup> Place: Violet Carr Moore, Tri-Valley, for "Fatal"

2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Susan Helene (Nack), CWC-Long Beach, for "The Rose"

3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Michael Raff, High Desert Branch, for "Zander's Box."

Additional contributing authors were:

Fremont Area Writers: Penelope Ann Cole

High Desert Branch: Mike Apodaca, Jemma DeSantis, Rusty LaGrange, Jenny Margotta, Katina Newell, Karen Ohta

Inland Empire Branch: Ben Alrez

Mount Diablo: David George, Deven Green, Bob Poirier

North State Writers: Joan Goodreau, Paul Quinn

San Fernando Valley: Brian Muldoon

Redwood Writers: Roger Lubeck, Tommie Whitener

SF Peninsula: Richard E. McCallum, Karen Sundback

Tri Valley: Lani Longshore, Ellen Turner

The HDCWC is offering a pre-publication discounted price of \$10 per copy for participating branches instead of the cover price of \$12.99 purchased at amazon.com. Members wanting copies of this price can order through their branch presidents, and one shipment will be sent to them by our HDCWC editor, Jenny Margotta.



The book will be available on Amazon the 1st week of November. Further details may be found on the High Desert CWC website by visiting [www.hdcwc.com](http://www.hdcwc.com),

Thanks, Bob Isbill

# Karen's Corner



I love a good writers conference – both for the opportunity

to attend instructional workshops and the camaraderie of sharing time with other writers.

This past summer, I was excited to attend the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators virtual Summer Spectacular, an international conference welcoming more than 4000 attendees worldwide via Zoom.

The 5-day event opened with remarks by author and writing coach Jolie Stekly who offered the following advice to conference goers, "Over the next five days, find the one thing you're meant to hear."

Perfect. My conference goal was clear; but as it turned out, what I needed to hear were two comments from two terrific presenters that I will share with you.

The first came from legendary author, Judy Blume, whose collections filled my kids' bookshelves as they were growing up. She's a unique writer, who has successfully navigated the genres of children's and adult literature, a skill to which I aspire. But when she admitted that her mind "was messy and cluttered," I nearly leaped to my feet. "Me too!" I wanted to shout.

Between my own writing, club work, teaching, marketing and volunteer commitments, my mind nearly always feels messy and cluttered. Now, I guess messiness is okay!

Blume also noted that writers did not need to feel obliged to include the pandemic in their current writing projects. "Not every book needs to be about the

virus. They'll be plenty of those," she said, with implicit permission to continue following that lovely, non-COVID-related muse that led us into this life in the first place.

Still, my writing had stalled in the first several months of the pandemic, and I knew I needed to slay the dragon. With the poem titled "When," published in the September Scribe, I accomplished that, and now feel free to take Judy's advice and move on. I wish I could rid the world of the virus as easily.

The other thing I was meant to hear came from author Jeff Kinney, creator of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. He said that every writer should read Steve Martin's memoir *Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life* (Simon and Schuster, 2007).

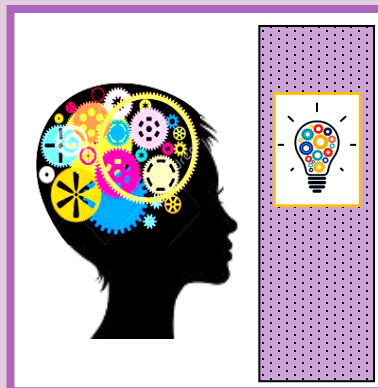
I thought it was an odd recommendation, but after devouring Martin's book last month, I understood. It is beautifully written and paints a picture of dogged discipline and perseverance in pursuit of artistic perfection. I agree that this is a book every writer needs to read – maybe twice.

Kinney also noted that after completing many books based on his youth, he worried about his well of creativity running dry. He recommended a tool called *Systemic Inventive Thinking*, which

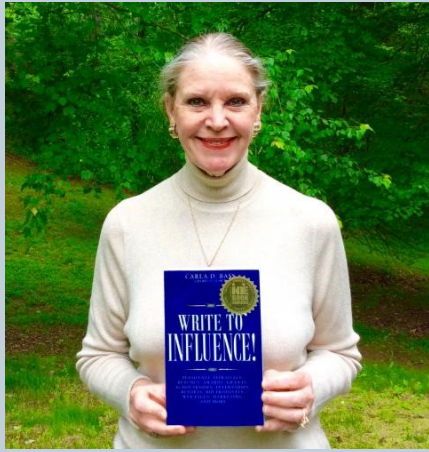
helps people learn to break patterns, solve problems and think creatively – all valuable skills for writers. It sounds wonderful. Definitely something I'm going to investigate.

Oh, dear. My mind just got a little messier ... Karen Gorback

[karen.gorback@gmail.com](mailto:karen.gorback@gmail.com)







Our October speaker, **Carla D. Bass, Colonel, USAF (Ret)**, is a prominent popular writing coach, an effective fiction and non-fiction writing instructor for business CEOs and educators. She has helped thousands of

people learn how to rev up their writing, to pack a punch in their predicate, to set off a few sparks in their subject matter.

For three decades, Bass has been showing people how to put a pulse in resumes, proposals, websites, pitches, theses and both fictional and non-fictional writing. Her students come from business, government, corporate circles, universities and writer clubs like our CWC-SFV. Bass's rep for powerful, concise writing, promised our Zoom Room an hour of potent pointers on effective editing and how to "make every second of the reader's time play to your advantage."

When Carla Bass was Lt. Col Carla Bass, she noted a problem in a key area of her command: bland meh evaluation report writing. What are these reports? They are performance reviews which are done every six months for every officer in the Air Force. Too often, these reports can be monotonous monosyllable summaries of a service person's performance in their job. He/she is a responsible person .... did a good job .... can be depended on ... takes his/her job seriously. Yawn. Col. Cass called a halt, researched promotion writing skills and taught her staff how to compose powerful prose. Their improved reports got results—a high percentage of her officers were promoted!

When she retired from the service, Bass started a stellar career in teaching civilians how to put zing in their prose. And she often speaks to writing groups who look for pointers on improving their word craft, groups like the CWC-SFV members who were impressed by her talk.

My favorite part of Bass's presentation was her compari-

son of story writing and editing to carving out a sculpture from a block of stone. She told us, "Like a sculptor looks at big chunk of hard material, the writer has an idea, not quite in focus, that needs to be shaped into a story. Both writers and sculptors must cut or delete the parts of the block or idea that don't belong -the excess or unneeded parts."

How to word sculpt a draft:

1. Find the image and chip off the excess
2. Take your time, sentence by sentence
3. Choose every word for maximum meaning
4. Select the useless words.
5. Chisel them away and discard.
6. Revise with precise powerful verbs.
7. Sharpen your word imagery.
8. Edit and proofread and
9. Read aloud—have you clearly presented your idea?
10. If your idea is not "there" yet, go back to 1.and start again.

Whether you write of fiction or nonfiction, you must be familiar with multiple rounds of editing your material and doing rewrites. In your writing career, have you ever thought that a story, poem, essay, article or composition of any kind, was in perfect form? And passed it on to a publisher, e-zine, professor, boss or ... newsletter. Not this writer and editor. Every time I think I'm done with a story or article, I get the "rewrite itch." There's no "calamine lotion" for this obsession. "Rewrite itch" will always agitate my muse. We writers are wordsmiths by trade and like any other kind of craftsman, we work every day to improve our talent and product. And sell our product. Which brings us to marketing advice from our October speaker. Bass is adept at marketing. Here's a few of her pointers:

- Know what your audience expects from your speech.
- Appraise their knowledge of your topic.
- Tailor your terminology to fit the audience.
- Meet or exceed their expectations.

I finish with what Carla Bass terms her Forte:

***Powerful writing often tips the balance between success and failure. The secret – make each second of the reader's time play to your advantage.***

More about Carla Bass at:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/carladbass>

Kathy Highcove, Ed.



## Getting through the Coronavirus Sheltering-In-Place

Our months-long COVID-19 sheltering-in-place ordeal reminds me of the popular 1993 movie, *Groundhog Day*. In this film, the protagonist, a visitor to a small town, awakens in his hotel room on the morning after the community's celebration of Groundhog Day. As the day progresses, he's shocked to discover that ... somehow ... it's Groundhog Day again! The very same things happen on the day after, as if he'd been magically inserted into a video rerun of the day before. As the week progresses, our hero finds that each day is an exact replay of Groundhog Day. Frustratingly, no one else is aware of the repetitions. He continues to awake at the same time, hear the same news, see the same people who say and do the same things. He goes from shock to frustration to rage to resignation to depression. Eventually, he realizes that he has to figure out his escape from an a the Groundhog Day Limbo. Spoiler alert: he finds a way.

Back to 2020, and our coronavirus days ...

After months of sheltering-in-place, I can easily identify with the movie's story line. Every day, I awake at the same time, see the same things outside our windows, see the same people, walk on the same streets and hear news alerts that are like a rerun of last spring's alerts. Every day, my spouse and I wear a mask on our walks, socialize with our devices and limit family and friend gatherings. Unlike the characters in the *Groundhog Day* movie, however, real people living 24/7 in their homes, and in shutdown mode, are very aware of the passage of time.

Many of us have lived through several nation-



al crises during our lifetimes, but nothing has affected our daily lives like this 2020 pandemic.

Without my family and friend contacts, interesting social media, streaming TV, a garden and my Kindle library, I would feel like we're under house arrest.

Every day, I've looked for hopeful signs in our hood. Sometimes we see a new bird, or meet a new baby or note a home improvement project. On a recent morning walk, my spouse and I saw a truly heartening change: a neighbor had mounted on their fence a handsome hand-crafted cupboard. A sign said, "Free little library." We noted a low stool to help young children to take a peek in the little windows.

Wow. We admired the handsome construction—that definitely wasn't there the day before. We felt touched that the occupants of this house had installed and stocked the shelves to promote the exchange of good reads and positive feelings in the hood. It was a very thoughtful gesture for our suburban community.

Sheltering-in-place has had a few good effects on our hood. We've had cheerful chats, six feet apart, masked, with both new and old neighbors. Daily conversations with friends has made our "groundhog days" more bearable. And now, we'll share good reads.

Keep the faith. Write on. Kathy Highcove



# Volunteers Are Needed

I know I'm preaching to the choir. This club is filled with generosity. You have volunteered over and over, above and beyond, time and again to keep this merry troupe of scribblers from writing its final chapter.



learn the in's and out's of being membership chair.

We need a critique group coordinator. If you belong to a group, would you please consider helping other members find or form groups of their own?

Yet, I've got the "chutzpah" to ask you again.

Some of our board members have kindly kept their positions for years and years. They need a break, but they're not going to dump work on anyone who steps up to help.

They will work with you until you're comfortable enough to fly on your own. Your call.

So, please consider volunteering again.

We need someone to work with Pat Avery to learn the position of the club treasurer.

We need someone to work with Andrea Polk to

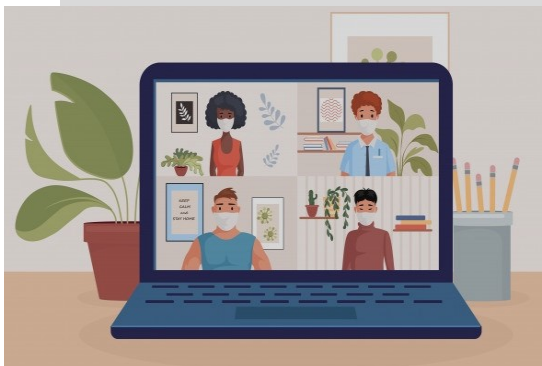
We need someone to assist our club webmaster Michael Rains.

We also need one or two volunteers to work with me as an *ad hoc* committee via Zoom for the specific purpose of discussing how our club can reach out to the community to market our programs and expand our membership. We will meet only 1 or 2 times.

Please contact me at [karen.gorback@gmail.com](mailto:karen.gorback@gmail.com) to talk about any of these volunteer positions.

Karen Gorback

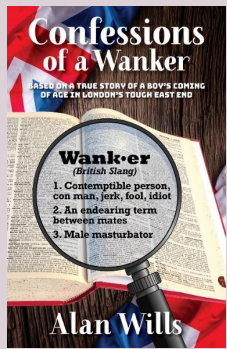
## Zoom Room Guest Policy



**A**t our October meeting, the members of the SFV-CWC board voted to revise the guest policy for the remainder of the fiscal year, through June 30, 2021. In place of members "bringing in" two guests per year without charge, guests are welcomed to join Zoom meetings and enjoy the presentations by purchasing single admission to the lecture(s) of their choice at the price of \$10.00 per presentation via the club's website at [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org). Residents and employees of the MPTF, as well as ASL interpreters, are welcomed to attend meetings without charge.

Karen Gorback

## Alan Wills Has Been Busy



Alan Wills announces that his book, *Confessions of a Wanker*, a book that's about a East End (London) boy's coming-of-age experiences, has been published. This book shows a young man's sexual naiveté. How this only child learns how to support himself at 15, when his mother

dies and his father goes into the hospital for six months with TB. The stories are very real, a few a little naughty, and all very humorous! Available from Amazon as soft cover book or an e-book—priced at \$4.95

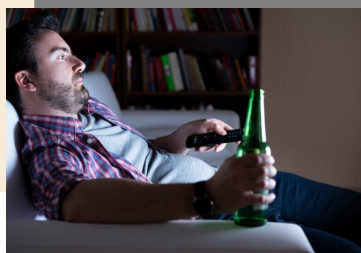
The sequel, *More Confessions of a Wanker* is now being edited and should be available by Christmas. There is one other book in the Wanker series. *Wanker Crosses the Pond*.

Alan, who was once the resourceful refreshments coordinator at our Saban Room gatherings, has a new gig. He's invented a diversion for the people who're shut-in during the epidemic. He's created a Multiple Choice Trivia and, don't worry, he says it's much easier than Regular Trivia. (Alan gives you a choice of 3 answers.) Several weeks ago he sent the game to just ten friends. Now, after interest has grown by word of mouth, he sends the game out every Friday to over 200 members. Would you also like to join this game? Just send an email —subject line, *M.C. Trivia*—to Alan at [awills@charter.net](mailto:awills@charter.net). The following Friday and every Friday thereafter you'll receive the game.

Also, Alan emphasizes, MC Trivia is FREE! He considers it “my civic duty” to promote and pass on this online game to anyone stuck at home.

Kathy Highcove, Ed.

Hey, here's Allan's Trivia Game is on screen. Must be Friday.



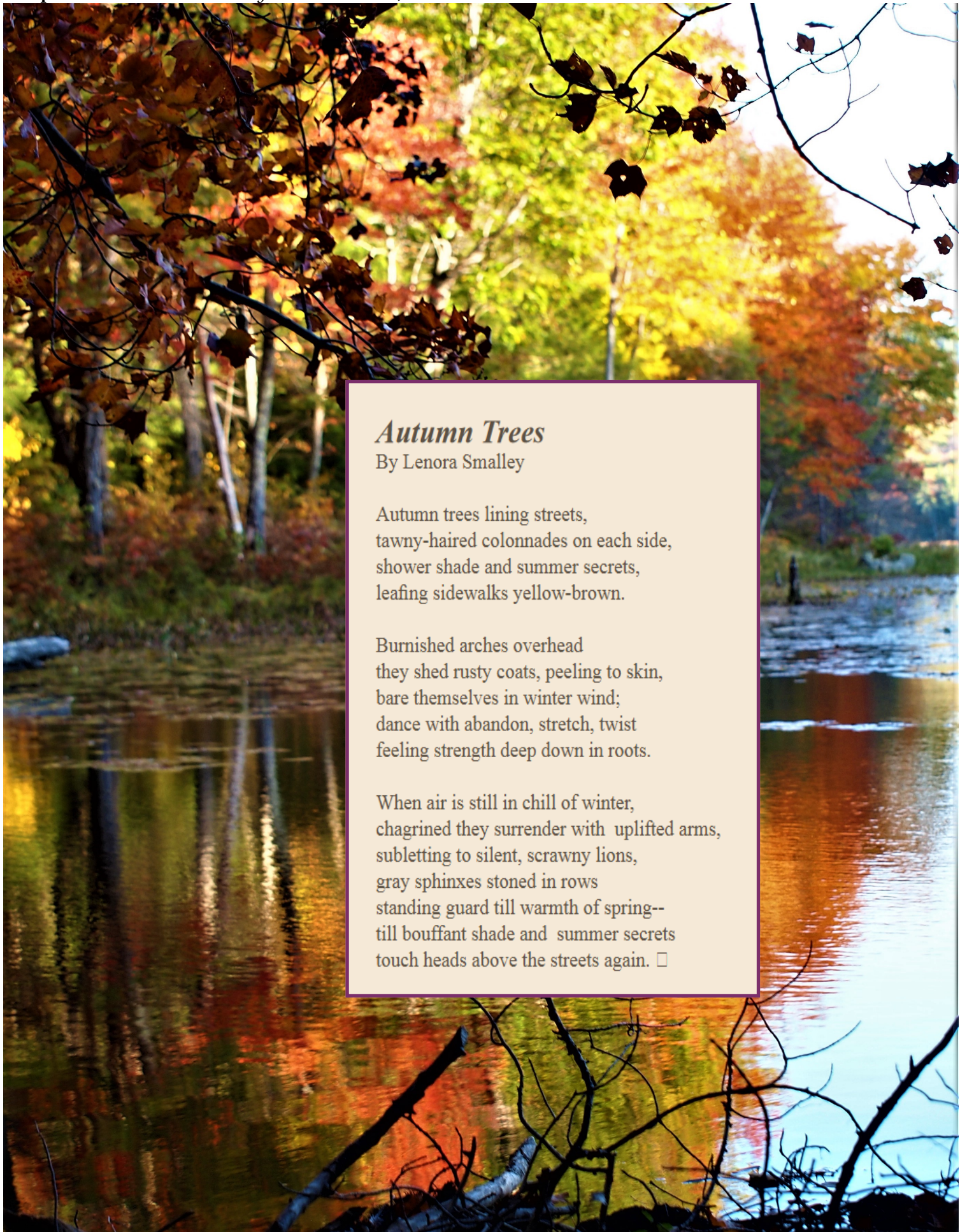
### Alan Wills Multiple Choice Trivia Week no. #27

- Which comedian played God in two movies?  
Choices: A. Peter Sellers B. George Burns C. Jim Carrey
- Which state has the highest mountain?  
Choices: A. Colorado B. Washington C. Alaska
- What was the favorite sport of the Kennedy clan?  
Choices: A. Touch Football B. Baseball C. Polo
- What does this new pandemic word—**anthropause**—mean?  
Choices: A. Zoom Vision B. Effects of animal behavior on humans C. The impact on animal behavior when people are captive in their own homes during COVID-10 shutdown.  
\*Definition of Anthropause is provided below.
- Which country did the Romans call Hibernia?  
Choices: A. Ireland B. Spain C. Portugal
- Who played Maria in the 1961 movie *West Side Story*?  
Choice: A. Alexis Mateo B. Natalie Wood C. Rita Moreno
- Which member of the Kennedy family was killed in WW2?  
Choice: A. Brandon B. Joseph C. Charles
- Who invented the railroad sleeping car?  
Choices: A. Stephenson B. T. B. Watson C. George Pullman
- What is the money called for the winner of a horse race?  
Choices: A. The Purse B. The Prize Money C. Winners Pay
- Which island is the Boot of Italy kicking?  
Choices: A. Capri B. Sardinia C. Sicily
- Who was The Little Tramp?  
Choices: A. Charlie Chaplin B. Rodney Dangerfield C. Stan Laurel (of Laurel and Hardy)
- The alternate name for *The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*?  
Choices: A. Pinocchio B. Peter Pan C. Finn
- Lactobacillus Bulgaricus* is added to milk to make what?  
Choices: A. Lactate Milk B. Yogurt C. Cream
- How many years of bad luck if you break a mirror?  
Choices: A. 15 B. 12 C. 7

*\*Also called as the “Great Pause,” anthropause is a term coined by the researchers in the UK. It refers to the coronavirus-induced lockdown period and its impact on other species*

TRIVIA ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 17





### *Autumn Trees*

By Lenora Smalley

Autumn trees lining streets,  
tawny-haired colonnades on each side,  
shower shade and summer secrets,  
leafing sidewalks yellow-brown.

Burnished arches overhead  
they shed rusty coats, peeling to skin,  
bare themselves in winter wind;  
dance with abandon, stretch, twist  
feeling strength deep down in roots.

When air is still in chill of winter,  
chagrined they surrender with uplifted arms,  
subletting to silent, scrawny lions,  
gray sphinxes stoned in rows  
standing guard till warmth of spring--  
till bouffant shade and summer secrets  
touch heads above the streets again. □



**Y**ou wrote the next great American Novel. Now what? Assuming you didn't write it to collect dust in your drawer, the next step is to get it out there, hopefully by finding the right hands to handle it. If you attended the September 2020 members meeting, you learned from the very talented Ms. Ester Benjamin Shifren, how you can self-publish your work. Other than maintaining full control over who, what, where and how audience will be exposed to your material, you also get to keep 100% of the profit. However, there are obvious downsides as well. For once, you are responsible for all the marketing, which can be expensive and time consuming; time you can be working on your next book. In addition, the process of book-cover graphics, printing and shipping your book can put a big hole in your bank account. The other option is an agent; hopefully one with some contacts to the big publishers.

So you've chosen to find an agent. Welcome to the pitching game. Hopefully you'll join the December 2020 meeting, in which author Trey Dowell will dive into the art of writing query letters that command attention. But pitching is not confined to query letters. In fact, pitching opportunities can happen anywhere and anytime, so you need to be ready to discuss your work whenever the chance arises. In-person pitches can be as short as one minute or as long as an hour. They can take place while you are waiting in line, or in a pre-scheduled pitch session.

### The Elevator Pitch (The One Minute Pitch)

This type of a pitch is designed to provide short, concise and right-to-the-point details about your work. You should be able to do it in 30 to 90 seconds, and if successful, it should generate enough interest by the listener to request a follow up action like a longer pitch or to read the material. This does not mean that an elevator pitch is always made to a complete stranger you have just met and happened to notice is an agent. Many industry professionals may agree to hear your pitch,



but busy executives would often give you just a few moment's to introduce your project before moving to the next person. So if you know who you are about to pitch to – do your research. Learn what they are in the market for; something you can usually get from their website of LinkedIn page. Try and make a personal connection to them and to

the material you are pitching (i.e. “I noticed you volunteer at an animal shelter. Being a proud owner of a rescue dog myself, I wrote this kids’ adventure book about a rescue dog that ends up rescuing not just his owner, but the entire world from a gang of rats plan to take over the world by inflicting a deadly disease that only *they* are immune to”).

In his article “How Writers Can Master the Elevator Pitch” author Ken Miyamoto lists four important component for a well-structured pitch (<https://screencraft.org/2019/03/11/how-writers-can-master-the-elevator-pitch/>):

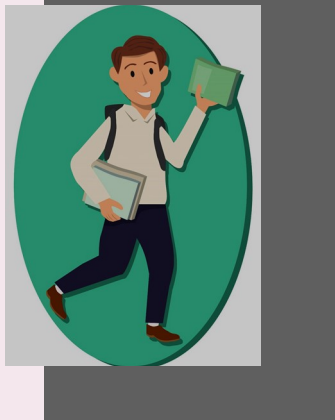
**The Hook.** The “what if” or “imagine...” Imagine an innocent girl swept by a twister to a magical land, and her only way to get back home is to seek a mysterious powerful wizard (“The Wizard of Oz”), or “imagine a New York police officer as the only hope for a group of innocent hostages, among them his wife, trapped in a Los Angeles high-rise building is taken over by terrorists (“Die Hard”).

**A Longer-Than-Normal Logline.** A logline is usually no longer than 1 to 2 sentences. It contains basic elements like the protagonist, the antagonist and what is at stake. For example: The rebellious daughter of a Hawaiian chief faces an ocean of troubles when forced to sail with a reluctant Demi

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

-God to save her world (“Moana”). However, in an elevator pitch, it is okay to go a little longer. “An innocent girl swept by a twister to a magical land, and must battles an evil fairy to get to a mysterious powerful wizard who’s is she is ever to go back home. Her only allies are a brainless scarecrow, a heartless tinman, a cowardly lion, and her loyal dog.



**Make it a Great Ending.** The object of the pitch is to hook the listener, so the better the build-up, the more chance you have to get your material requested. Ken suggests using phrases like “it all builds up to” followed by a quick summary of the resolution. “It all builds up to a final dual between a gang of ruthless outlaws and an aging sheriff, who unlike all those around him, refuses to desert his post and forgo his duty, even if it means leaving his young new bride a widow (“High Noon”).

**Make Good Use of “COMPS”.** Also known as “this meets that,” comps are a great way to give your listener an idea of what your story is like without having to elaborate. “Taken” can be framed as “Speed” meets “Die Hard.” Immediately we get the picture that “Taken” is a fast action movie with time ticking element against a ruthless antagonist, and some sort of a strong emotional connection between the two main characters. Make sure to choose known comps to ensure your listener has heard of them, and if possible, pick more recent and/or successful literary pieces. It never hurts to give the sense that your work as potential to be the New York Times’ next best seller.

**The Long Pitch.** Long pitches are usually done during an actual sit-down. Whether a scheduled meeting, a phone conversation, a zoom meeting, or a pitching events (which hopefully will resume in person once COVID19 is behind us). Since those can vary by length, make sure to have several versions of your pitch ready. When granted a longer meeting, be sure to know your material back and forth, and be ready to answer questions.

Practice your pitches to see how long each one takes and mark what you can add or omit without hurting the story, depending on the amount of time you have. Flesh out what is interesting and unique about your story and characters, and why you think it would appeal to the target audience. Do not bore your audience with too many details, and make sure to connect the dots. Don’t just throw subplots and characters into the mix, without showing how they connect to the main

theme, and how the mirror or are in contrast to the main plotline. Movies like Akira Kurosawa’s “Rashomon” introduce various characters, but each one details a different view of a certain event. However, just like with the elevator pitch, make sure to start with a great hook and end with the exciting climactic moment.

Additional articles on the elevator pitch:

<https://insights.bookbub.com/steps-to-writing-a-killer-elevator-pitch-for-your-book/>

<https://www.clearvoice.com/blog/movie-elevator-pitch-examples/>

<https://gointothestory.blcklst.com/the-art-of-the-elevator-pitch-21fba4614e02>

<https://www.screenplayreaders.com/elevator-pitch/>

<https://jerichowriters.com/the-elevator-pitch/>

<https://nofilmschool.com/How-To-Write-Elevator-Pitch>

Additional articles on long pitches:

<https://alanrinzler.com/2010/03/insider-tips-for-preparing-and-delivering-a-winning-pitch/>

<https://nathanbransford.com/blog/2018/05/everything-authors-need-to-know-about-pitching>

<https://scriptmag.com/career/7-keys-to-a-great-pitch>

<http://www.movieoutline.com/articles/3-secrets-of-pitching-your-screenplay.html>



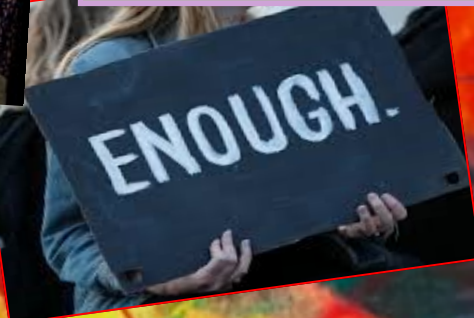
# AN APPALLING MESS

It's time to consider priorities  
To analyze the authorities  
Aren't all of us minorities?  
We must now cease superfluity  
And regain our lost acuity  
In smoke and shadow long gone purity  
If like me you are feeling smothered  
As child to the man that you have fathered  
Perhaps you'll wish you hadn't bothered  
It is the moment for consternation  
Ensnared as we are in conflagration  
Divided meanly across our nation  
'Tis trenchant moment to make some sense  
Our conundrum has become immense  
We've got to view it through a better lens  
*Quis custodes ipsos custodes?*

Time to peruse the book of remedies  
And to sing out truthful threnodies  
The Senate represents itself  
**The Senate represents itself**  
**Congress hungers but for their pelf**  
**The Supreme Commander is of no help**  
**Politics leaderless has become a joke**  
**Not least of it we are flat broke**  
**There's no spiff for us laboring folk**  
**The blessed victor takes home the spoils**  
**Low Mom and Pop have only their toil**  
**While terrified Terra is boiled in oil**  
**It's not only white on black**  
**Not just black on white. We lack**  
**Weltanschauung. Humanity is slack**  
**Where is love thy neighbor?**  
**Together separately we labor**  
**Buddy let me return a favor**

Now is when we pass it forward  
This poor world has become too torrid  
Global warming reality's horrid  
I don't doubt you'll say, "Heretic"  
My headache has got me dyspeptic  
As I wax frantically emetic  
Our jewelry has gone to smelting  
Heads are down we've taken a belting  
And the earth around us all is melting  
I'll shout to you I must confess  
I'll soon die from all of this stress  
Our world is in a rotten mess  
The mannequin is now undressed  
Covid-19 is our worst "bad cess"  
Our world is in an appalling mess

Michael Edelstein,  
September 20, 2020





# Two Boomers Embark On A Coast to Coast COVID Road trip

By Dorothy Lewis Crean



*Editor's Note: Occasionally, I will invite a guest writer to submit a story my readers might enjoy. This travelogue was contributed by a woman I've known for 60 years, Dorothy Lewis Crean. Recently she and her husband drove across our country. I hope you enjoy their adventure. KH*

Last August, sheltering from COVID in our Mercer Island home, my spouse, Dave, and I were two lonely bored seniors. Our children and our vacation home were on the East Coast, and here we were on the West Coast. Bummer.

We asked each other: "How about making a cross country road trip to our New Hampshire house? Our car's nearly new and just sitting in the driveway."

When our four kids were small, we'd drive east to visit Dave's family home in New Hampshire. And now, we have our own New Hampshire home, a partial rental. Every fall we travel there to enjoy the fall scenery and to host Thanksgiving for our children and grandchildren.

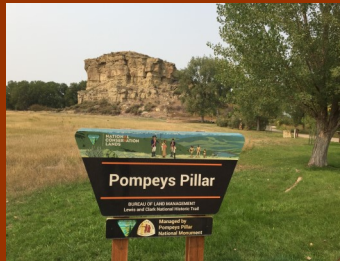
Now the 2020 trip seemed a great chance to visit both new and old places. We'd drive in national parks where we'd taken our kids on family cross-country trips - special places we wouldn't drive-by again.

Could we do it? Did we have the stamina for such a long drive? What could we safely sightsee around historic locations? Could we find a reputable "safe" motel? Yes, we'll do it! We found our maps, AAA guide books and began to plan our "drive-by" trip across America.

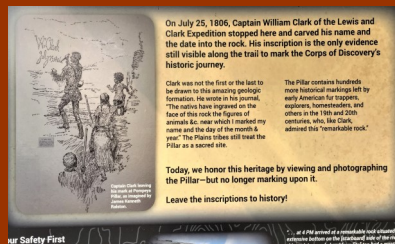
In mid-September, we left Seattle and headed east. On that first day we passed raging forest fires. Smoke followed us as we drove into Idaho and then Montana.



Stocked up and ready to go!



First stop: Pompeys Pillar



Pompeys Pillar History



Theodore Roosevelt National State Park Scenery



Our first night was in a Bozeman motel. We had joined a motel chain's rewards program so we could register with few interactions. Most guests wore masks. Good.

Up early the second day, we were off to Pompey's Pillar National Monument, which I'd first visited with my Montana relatives. The landmark rock was named for Sacagawea's son, Pomp. We hoped to view a rock signature made by William Clark as he returned home to St Louis in 1805-06. Instead, we experienced our first closed visitor center. We walked along outdoor pathways—wearing our masks and avoiding other tourists.

Back on the highway, we headed for Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Comprised of a sizable stretch of land once owned by Teddy Roosevelt, this park is near the area where Montana gives way to the Badlands. Despite the closed park buildings, a drive-by gave us a view of uniquely-shaped rocks in variegated colors. We spotted numerous animals - chattering prairie dogs, wild ponies and bison, enjoyed the spacious wilderness, then we motored on to Bismarck.

Here we encountered a nearly empty motel, with a quick check-in and a bagged breakfast, just as we would encounter each stay thereafter. Our Bismarck drive-by: a speedy circling of the North Dakota State Capital building. Nearby we noted a lovely statue of Sacagawea and her son, Pomp.

Next, we forged onward to Fargo, where my Swedish-born grandmother and her



Claire family immigrated when she was a child. In former family trips, North Dakota was never on the more direct routes we'd taken, so this was a perfect chance to view the place where my immigrant ancestors had found their American dream.

Alas, Fargo morphed into a quick drive-through event because most of the original historic town - where my ancestor's family would have lived— had been destroyed by fire in 1892. There was nothing to gaze upon and say, "Maybe Ida took a train from that station or went to that theater." Still, we appreciated seeing the Red River that runs through Fargo. I recalled how frequent flooding produced the town's fertile valley; I speculated that this still rich farm land likely helped support my ancestors' Swedish homeland.

Next up, we were off to Eau Claire, in nearby Wisconsin to visit my maternal grandparents' graves. This place was my #1 choice of stops this trip, knowing I might never be there again. In the cemetery we connected with a cousin I hadn't seen since 1981, on a prior road trips with our kids and my mother who wanted to visit her parents' graves. My cousin Paul Benish graciously drove us all around the much-changed city, including past homes I vaguely recalled and loaded us up with print-outs of family genealogy. His tour concluded at the family section of the cemetery where we reminisced about various family members now gone and I said a prayer for the only grandma I really knew.

The next day's stop was Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago, where Frank Lloyd Wright had designed many buildings. We were also able to observe his home and studio— oh, to have been able to tour it—his Unity Temple building, the childhood home of Ernest Hemmingway and the gracious Prairie style home of Definitely, we decided, there'll be another visit to Oak Park.



Author Dorothy Lewis Cream and her cousin Paul Benish visit a family burial plot in Eau



Rock and Roll Hall of Fame



Lake Winnepesaukee



New Hampshire Vacation Home

And then we moved on to Cleveland, Ohio; someplace we'd heard of, but never visited. A lovely Sunday morning (with no traffic) allowed us to drive-by a charming park and museum area. Just a breathtaking large greenway arrayed in cultural statuary and treed settings leading back to the waterfront of Lake Erie where sits the giant *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* designed by IM Pei. All of these sites made Cleveland another go-back-to-see city.

From then on we were immersed in the usual heavy East Coast traffic, with spots of fall leaves lining the freeway. We finally limped late one night into Wolfeboro, New Hampshire—our final destination.

Wolfeboro was the site of my husband's family vacation home which was located on the lovely Lake Winnepesaukee, one of the largest lakes in the northeast. This was where our children had spent their childhood summers attending Y Camps, learning to water ski and sailing with their aunts and uncles. Now, in 2020 our children hope to continue to bring their own families to the lake and build their new memories of summer fun with their own off-spring.

This Thanksgiving, Dave and I will host all our children and grandchildren, here in our New Hampshire home. Together, we will build new memories when we all listen to the loons, watch for the wild turkeys and enjoy the bright fall foliage.

When the weather grows colder and snowstorms loom, we'll reluctantly retreat back to our Washington shelter, our Mercer Island home where we began our drive-by pandemic journey.

Dorothy Lewis Cream



## Autumn Is

By Ray Malus

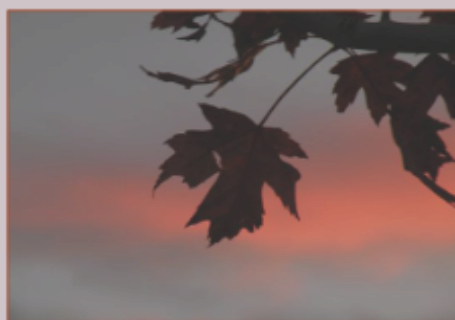
Autumn is the rekindled smoke of too-long-dormant hearths.  
The thrilling shiver of the year's first frost.  
The shrouded velvet dusk of hasty sunsets,  
and golden cider warmed and spiced with cloves.

Autumn is the waxy scent of freshly-opened crayons.  
The gleam of newly polished schoolroom floors.  
The smell of pristine notebooks, filled with promise.  
The must of textbooks, rife with unlearned lore.

Autumn is a tinkling harpsichord in muted, doiled parlors.  
The gleam of lemoned furniture in wanly sunlit dens.  
The camphor sting of cedar-chest-sequestered woolen blankets.  
The medicinal miasma of Vicks Vaporub.

Autumn is the caramel rainbow of a forward pass  
etched into an ice-blue sky, one Sunday afternoon,  
pomegranates, pumpkin pies and bowls of salted nuts,  
and dark arrays of sweet-sticky pitted dates.

Autumn is a meditation on eternity,  
A celebration of dearly purchased wisdom.  
It is the grace before the evening family meal,  
the quiet prayer before a winter's sleep.





## *How Sweet It Was ...*

I grew up in Scottsbluff, the largest town in western Nebraska in the 1940s. Population: 12,557. Surprisingly, in this Midwestern community, the most popular musical instrument in town was of African and/or South American origin: the marimba, a large instrument that looks like a xylophone, but it has a richer, more resonant tone than the similar instrument.

I was about seven or eight years old the first time I saw and heard a marimba played. I grabbed my Mom's arm and pleaded, "Mom, can I play that instead of the piano? It looks like so much fun to play and it sounds so beautiful. Please, Mom, can I?" Luckily, there were five girls in town who played the marimba quite well. So ... I began taking lessons from the oldest girl of the five players and learned the instrument's technique very quickly. I even learned to play with four mallets—two in each hand—for four-part harmony.

Soon I was performing at most community functions, churches, and school programs.

I played classical and popular music from Bach to Gershwin. Once I performed on a national radio show that was heard by the master teacher of the instrument. He offered me a scholarship to study with him at Northwestern University in Chicago. When he moved to Los Angeles, I came to UCLA to continue studying with him.

I performed professionally for many years and was soloist with the UCLA Concert Band on tour. It was wonderful to see how much people enjoyed hearing the instrument and to see it being played. One time a lady even asked me if I would play it at her funeral because it had such a pleasant and relaxing tone – the atmosphere she wanted there.

My marimba playing became part of the Thanksgiving family ritual. When everyone—besides the turkey — was stuffed, all my brothers and my Dad would stretch out on the carpet under and around the marimba.

They'd say, "Rita, play us some music," which I always did while they took a short snooze.

And now, at my present age, the following poem tells today's story of my marimba play...



*- Rita Keeley Brown*

### **The Marimba**

[In the style of Raymond Carver's, *The Car*]

**The marimba stands in the outer room under a red blanket gathering dust.**

**The marimba's voice is mellow, resonant and soothing.**

**The marimba's sound brightens your outlook on life.**

**The marimba rhythms make you dance—you can't resist.**

**The marimba, exciting to play, mallets move in a blur or slow rolling harmony.**

**The marimba tone blends with all other instruments.**

**The marimba can sing out Bach, Bernstein, or Carlos Joabim.**

**The marimba's rosewood is keyed to life by yarn-covered rubber balls on bamboo sticks.**

**The marimba underscores TV travel tours across the Serengeti to the pampas.**

**Does the marimba miss me as much as I miss playing it?**

**The marimba gave me decades of enjoyment, challenge, and a bit of acclaim.**

**The marimba stands in the outer room under a red blanket gathering dust.**



**- Rita Keeley Brown**



SAN FERNANDO

# Valley Writers

A BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB



Whether you have been published or have always wanted to write, please join us for monthly Saturday meetings via Zoom to learn more about the craft and business of writing.

See [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) for membership information and single lecture admission prices.

This series is free for CWC-SFV members.

## **September 12, 2020 1 PM**

### **Self-Publishing – You Can Do It!**

Join author, artist, international speaker, and CWC-SFV member Ester Benjamin Shifren to learn the in's and out's of self-publishing. You can do it!

## **October 3, 2020 1 PM**

### **Spin That Captivating Tale**

Author, speaker, and retired Air Force Colonel Carla D. Bass teaches us how to keep our readers hanging on to each word, making our writing stand out from the crowd! We need this!

## **November 7, 2020 1 PM**

### **How Authors Go From Fingers on the Keyboard to Dollars in the Bank: Four Ways Authors Make Money from Publishers**

Attorney and Literary Agent Paul Levine gives us the answer to the age-old-question – how to make money as an author. Do not miss this presentation.

## **December 5, 2020 1 PM**

### **The Art of the Query**

Author Trey Dowell shows us how to write query letters that command attention! Whether you submit to publishers, editors, or agents, you need a well-crafted query. Learn how, now.

## **January 9, 2021 1 PM**

### **I Write Funny, and You Can Too!**

Author PJ Colando teaches us how to infuse comedy and satire into our manuscripts, with twenty-four tips for effective writing. Start the year with a smile in this interactive workshop.

## **February 6, 2021 1 PM**

### **Going Deep Into Point of View**

*USA Today* bestselling author Beth Yarnall shows us how to choose the most effective POV for our work, immersing the reader into our character's head and heart. Wow!

## **March 6, 2021 1 PM**

### **Sticks and Stones and the Stories We Tell**

Author and/or illustrator of more than 40 books, Pat Cummings explains ways to turn negative experiences into art for compelling storytelling. We will learn from the writing of BIPOC storytellers (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). Don't miss this important lesson.

## **April 3, 2021 1 PM**

### **Does Poetry Matter?**

Los Angeles Poet Laureate (2014-2016) Luis Rodriguez helps us celebrate National Poetry Month with a lecture on the undeniable value of poetry in our lives. What a treat!

## **May 1, 2021 1 PM**

### **Memoir – Emotion Bracketed by Time**

Author and CWC-SFV President Karen Gorback provides steps to composing an engaging memoir – a small slice of life.

## **June 5, 2021 1 PM**

### **Market Yourself with an Easy-to-Crete Website**

Create your own media presence with a step-by-step guide for a website with Script Consultant and CWC-SFV Secretary Anat Wenick. It's definitely do-able!



# The CWC-SFV Board and Coordinators

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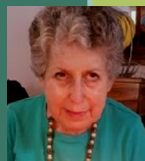
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Don't miss our next Zoom Room meeting on November 7, at 1 p.m. Tune in and hear Paul S. Levine, speak on *Four Ways Speakers Make Money from Publishers...*

<https://paulslevinelit.com/>

When the pandemic is gone and the CWC-SFV Writers Club returns to the Saban Community Room,



our monthly Saturday meetings will resume in the Saban Center For Health and Wellness,



which is located in the *Motion Picture and Television Fund Residence Campus* at 23388 Mulholland Drive Woodland Hills, 91364



## Alan Will's M.C. Trivia Game Answers

1-B, 2-C, 3-A, 4-B, 5-A, 6-B, 7-B, 8-C, 9-A, 10-C, 11-A, 12-B, 13-B, 14-C