



The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? DEVELOPING THE WRITER'S VOICE

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is honored to welcome screenwriter, teacher, and story consultant Barri Evins as the guest speaker on Saturday, December 4 at 1:00 pm via Zoom with a presentation titled “Can You Hear Me Now? Developing the Writer’s Voice.”

Special thanks to Evins for providing us with the following article:



Writers with a voice understand the power of matching their voice to the story in tone and genre to support and strengthen the story and create an evocative, visceral experience on the page. When we read their work, industry professionals can instantly tell that they are in the hands of a confident writer, who has mastered the medium. We can relax, allowing us to be completely in the moment and fully experience your story.

It is one of the highest compliments a writer can receive. The most sought after characteristic. The hallmark of a true storyteller. It sets pros apart from the rest. It’s *the writer’s voice*.

A developed voice is distinctive, evocative, specific, intentional, confident and expresses the writer’s point of view. Writers with a voice have a distinctive style. Their unique voice turns up the volume of every aspect of a story. Like the first line of a great novel or the opening image in a film, voice defines the entire piece.

Writers with a voice often have an outstanding, specific writing strength. By choosing stories and genres that highlight their strengths rather than rely on their weaknesses, their work advances and they become known to the industry and to audiences.

These writers have a distinct point of view on the world. They are clear on what they want to say, understanding the message that matters most to them, and that guides and permeates every choice they make.

Discover how to turn up the volume on your writing. This illusive magic ingredient makes your writing irresistible. It makes the industry eager to meet you, work with you, and learn what you’re writing next. Become a writer we want to know – a writer on their way to a career.

This presentation will show you how to:

Point out the Seven Qualities of a Writer’s Voice, hone your material and elevate your work to the next level.

Show the ways to improve your writing strengths and build stories that showcase these abilities.

Discover your Personal Thematic to skillfully drive your story, inspire your writing and draw an audience.

All CWC-SFV members will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches should contact Monte Swann at cwcsfvhost@gmail.com by 6:00 pm on December 3 to request an invitation. Guests may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org. After purchasing admission, they will receive a Zoom invitation.

IN THIS ISSUE

| | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2/ Karen’s Corner | 8-9/ Gift Giving | 12/ Xmas With Grandma | 18/ Break Out the Ornaments |
| 3/ 2022 Speakers | 9/ Submit to Lit Review | 13/ December Birthday | 19/ Happy Holidays |
| 4-5/ Gary Ginell | 10/ Estella Scrooge | 14—16/ Josephine | |
| 6-7/ 2022 Writer Gifts | 11/ A Christmas Carol | 17/ Candles | |





The Romance Writer and Hawking



Given the wide variety of genres in which I dabble, I'm often asked where I get the ideas for everything I write, and do I ever worry about running dry? The short answer is "No." Ideas are everywhere; my brain is bursting with potential writing projects. Unfortunately, I often find myself procrastinating and baking a batch of brownies instead of clicking the keyboard. Anyone out there have the same problem? I'd like to share with you a story I try to remember whenever I need a kick in the pants to keep my butt in the chair and out of the kitchen. 😊

Many years ago, I heard a presentation by an author who lectured on romance writing. She was clearly passionate about the genre and waxed poetic about her recent book, set in the lush vineyards of the Italian countryside. She loved Italy and wanted her novel to unfold in *the most romantic place on earth*. As she read from the exquisitely detailed, lyrical narrative, I was transported to a remote winery in *Italia*, along with the protagonist and the object of her affection.

Then, news flash.

The author had never been to Italy. She researched and wrote the first draft of her book while propped up in a hospital bed for many months, fighting a serious illness. Holy cow.

How do ideas sprout into stories or scripts or memoirs or poems, even against seemingly insurmountable odds? Stephen Hawking, of course, is the most amazing example of sheer determination and passion for his writing projects. With his body ravaged by ALS, he was one of the most brilliant scientific minds of our time and learned to write by twitching his cheek to activate a sensor on his glasses that controlled a computer.

Thus, whenever I think I'm too busy to write, or invent another lame excuse, I try to remember the romance writer and Hawking, who didn't allow anything to infringe on their work. For me, I simply need to honor my muse more than my mixer. . . .

I hope you enjoy our beautiful, SoCal winter and can spend time with family, friends, and your own writing muse in December. To those who celebrate Hannukah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa, Happy Holidays! And a Happy, Healthy New Year to you all.

Karen Gorback, Ph.D., CWC-SFV President .



Whether you have been published or have always wanted to write, please join the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club for monthly Zoom meetings to learn more about the craft and business of writing. This series is free for members from any branch of the California Writers Club. Please visit cwc-sfv.org for membership information or single-lecture admission.

CWC-SFV SPEAKERS FOR 2022

JANUARY 8, 2022

Jill Lublin

[Get Known Everywhere: Publicity Strategies for Authors](#)

If the PR part of writing gives you nightmares, join Jill for a wake-up call. We need this!

FEBRUARY 5, 2022

Kendall Jones, JD

["Self Publishing Contracts and Pitfalls"](#)

Learn to look beyond the hype and promises of self-publishing with this not-to-be missed presentation.

MARCH 5, 2022

Jonathan Maberry

["The Genre of You"](#)

If your muse beckons you to multiple genres but you're afraid to follow, don't be. Join Jonathan to learn why.

APRIL 2, 2022

Lynne Thompson, Poet Laureate for the City of Los Angeles

["Celebrating National Poetry Month"](#)

Celebrate the joy of poetry with our city's acclaimed Poet Laureate. What a treat!

MAY 7, 2022

Anat Golan-Wenick

["Turn Your Novel Into A Screen Play"](#)

Want to see your novel come to life on the big or little screen? Learn how, now!

JUNE 4, 2022

Pamela Samuels Young

["Write Your Next Page Turner"](#)

Whether you write mysteries, romance, or nonfiction, learn the tips and tricks best-selling authors use to keep readers turning pages.

It's All in The Bio

Ever heard a good life-story and thought it would make a great book? Ever had a childhood hero you thought was never captured perfectly on the page? If you answered yes, you might consider Biographical Writing.

To answer all the What's and the How's of this genre, our November Zoom meeting featured an experienced biographer, Cary Ginell. This author gave the SFV gallery the main reasons one might consider writing biography: interest from both the person writing the book and the reader who wishes to learn more. It's a two-way street.



Author Cary Ginell

In other words, it's not just about how passionate you are about the subject, or that you have something to say that hasn't been said before, or even that you are refuting someone else's writing. You should also consider what about the project would attract the reader to the book: perhaps it's a timely interest (a person who was in the news recently), maybe one whose life is still shrouded in mystery, or maybe you came by some explosive and sensational material the reader was not familiar with before.

Some of the things a writer needs to look for before writing a biography is what has already been published to ensure he has a unique angle on the artist that hasn't been approached before, and to decide the best way to relate the information to the reader: Whose point of view are you writing the story from? Are you relating to it from your current point of view (an adult point of view of a childhood hero), do you have a personal acquaintance with the subject matter, or perhaps you are approaching the writing from another person's point of view? Do you have a unique interpretation of something that has already been written? Whichever approach you take, it needs to offer something that hasn't already been done. Note that a biography doesn't have to cover a person's entire life and can even be about as little as a day in one's life.

Ginell listed different types of biographies:

Scholarly – In this biography the writer, much like a journalist, only provides facts. There is no personal bias. This type of writing is resourced, and foot noted, and it is best marketed to classrooms. University presses are usually open to publishing these types of books. On the other hand, the entertainment industry, which often adapt biographies to the screen, is not a good market.

Historical fiction – Historically based but written in a fictional style. Here the writer uses facts but arranges them in a more enter-

taining way by adding elements like well-paced dialogue and colorful description. Celebrities and political memoirs are often written this way.

Fictionalized academic – This type of a biography calls for balanced views. Writer provides both the heights and the depths (lows) of the person he writes about. This category is used to change public perception of a person or provide details not known before.

Subjective biography – The writer has a thesis to prove. There's a goal through which a life lesson is communicated. Once the message is delivered, it can possibly change the reader's views of the subject matter.

Autobiography – Artist write about his own life or as told by (if written using a ghost writer). It can be written in first or third person.

Once you settle on the type of biography you wish to write, a thorough research must follow. Ginell suggested organizing the research always keeping the thesis in mind. Why are you writing the book? What side of the story are you telling? Are you detailing how an artist fought pitfalls? Were they fighting sickness? what disabled or enabled the person's career? What life stations in a person's life will your book cover? Will you tell the story linearly or use flashbacks? Ginell also suggested a few resources to get the information one needs for their books. Those include personal knowledge with the subject matter, trying to get access to the actual person if alive, and those who know (or knew) them, and searching archives where the person's material like their diary and scrap books were donated to. Do not be shy of using other writers' research but be careful with second-hand research because there may be credibility issues that will need to be verified. Whatever is on the market can be used for reference, but make sure to get consent when needed.

Interviews is one of the main tools a writer has to find information about the person he is writing about. Ginell suggested strategizing interviews to follow a chronological order. Be prepared with questions to stimulate memory, but don't ask leading questions. Give your interviewees the ability to talk by answering open-end questions, and gently correct them if you find discrepancies. It is also a good idea to bring tools like a sound recording device, photos, other interviews you did with people the person knows, etc.

(Continued on page 5)

Ginell warned the audience to be aware of falling into the controversial material trap. Only use it if absolutely necessary and always approach it objectively and give it a fair treatment. Consider whether it was helpful to the subject matter or if it inhibited the person's life (like Charlie Parker's drug abuse). Ask yourself how relevant it is to the story as a whole and the point you are trying to make in particular. Are you mentioning it because it can prove or justify your thesis or because it can help you sell more books? Ginell also cautioned about allowing the family of the person you write about to control the content. Try to avoid signing an agreement with the family unless it's the only way to get their corporation and the material you need for your book.

Now that you have decided what kind of a biography you wish to write and have done some research, it's time to explore how to determine commercial viability: Ask yourself questions like: Is this topic currently a hot subject? How many people would know the subject matter? What makes them relevant? How do you make it relevant? Who are you writing to (Who is your target audience)? Are you writing it as a textbook or as an entertainment piece? How are you going to promote and publicize the book?

You've done your research. You've written the book. Time to publish. Make sure the type of biography you wrote, fits the publisher you are sending it to. Don't make the largest publishers your first and only stop. Head to the Internet and check publishers' submission guidelines, and to see if they have published anything similar to what you have written. You should prepare a one-paragraph summary of your thesis, stating why your work on that person is important. If possible, try to get recommendations from other writers, or speak to your contacts in the industry. You should also have a chapter summary or a list of chapters that explain how you are going to tell your story, what topics you'll be covering and how they will all tie into your thesis. A publisher might want to see a writing sample, so be sure to have it ready. In some cases, you might be asked to fill in a questionnaire explaining your target market, how long the book will be, etc.

And just like that, the publisher loved your idea and wants your book. Let's talk money. Generally, biographies make money if they are about a known person, so don't buy that Jaguar just yet. A writer might get a flat sum as an advance against royalties based on number of copies. The amount could be divided into 50% down and 50% when you deliver the manuscript. Beyond that, you'll receive subsidiary rights.

Want to increase your sales? Publishers will normally strategize with the writer how to publicize the book. Signing events is one good way, and so are press releases. A writer can publicize his book by contacting local radio stations, book critics and reviewers, writing posts on social media, establishing a website and even hiring a professional publicist. You can also take the self-publishing route with sites like Amazon and Lulu. Make sure to include in the contract that you get copyright and not the publisher so if there's an interest in turning the book into a movie, interested parties will contact you.

Ginell ended his presentation with a few more pointers:

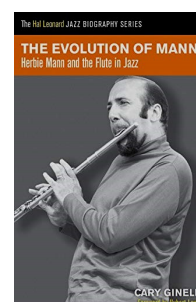
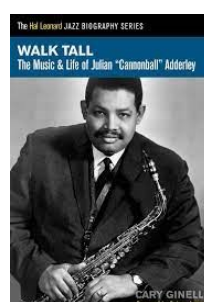
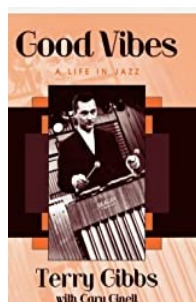
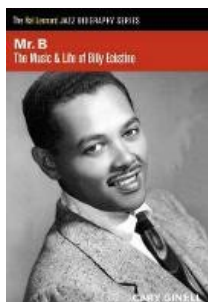
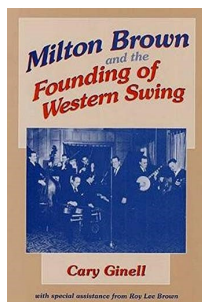
Expect there will be some expenses like license to use photographs. One chapter should naturally lead to the next, and you should thrive to make it a page turner.

Make sure each chapter in the book can stand on its own so that a magazine can publish an episode as a teaser to your novel.

Consult an attorney when it comes to rights to publicity, as they change from state to state. In California, one can be sued by the family if stating something that is not true. Generally, rights are owned during lifetime and seventy years after death. You can write an unauthorized biography while your subject matter is still alive, or author a biography (which is the person telling his story to an author who organizes the chapters and writes the book), but make sure to research and verify your claims or what you are being told by the person who commissioned your work. Be aware of bias. Find balance between good and bad.

Now that you have all the ins and outs of writing a biography, go out, look around and find a good subject to write on!

A sampling of biographies published by Cary Ginell



Once again, it's that time of the year when you rack your brain on what to get to the writer in the family. Fear not, in this article you will find presents fit for any budget and any writer.

For the writer who loves technology: Categorize this under "coooool" the [AGS Wireless Laser Projection Bluetooth Virtual Keyboard](#) for Iphone, iPad, Smartphone and Tablets is a great tool for the writer on-the-go. For \$45.99 the writer will be able to project a keyboard on virtually any surface, no matter where they happen to be.



For the Health conscious writer: One might debate the benefits of a standing work-station, but if you like the idea, the [Seville Height Adjustable Mobile Laptop Computer Desk](#) Cart Ergonomic Home Office Stand comes in different surface colors, at around \$75-80.



Have a desktop but need a chair? Why not opt for a Gaiam Classic [Backless Balance Ball Chair](#)? What a great way to write and exercise at the same time? Different colors are available and all run for about \$45-60).



Writer needs a little more stimulation to get the writing juices flowing. Consider an under-the-table elliptical bike? The [Stamina 55-1602 Inmotion Elliptical](#) is one of them, but there are various models and styles for \$100-200+. You may want to measure the height of the desk before making a purchase.



Prefer to write on a real keyboard, but still want the convenience of taking it anywhere? Check out the Full Size Rechargeable [Bluetooth Folding Keyboard](#) for iOS Phone Android Smartphone Tablet Windows Laptop. At \$28.99, it's not just the keyboard that fits the pocket, it's also the price.



For the Less Technological Writer: Ever watched "Murder She Wrote" and thought how cool it would be to go back to those pre "Can't Load File" days? Well, if you have \$175+ to spend, why not go for [Vintage Typewriters](#)? Just remember, in later seasons, even the known Jessica Fletcher switched to a computer.



For the "taking it easy" writer: A hammock is a great way to relax after a day of writing, but while you're writing, why not indulge your feet with a hammock of their own, like the [G Ganen Mini Office Foot Rest Stand Desk Feet Hammock](#)? For about \$11 it's useful and inexpensive.

It's Sunday morning and you really need to write, but don't feel like getting out of bed. For about \$25 the [Mint Folding Laptop Lap Desk](#) would let you enjoy both worlds. And the legs even fold for easy storage under the bed, so you won't have to get out from under the cozy covers to start writing.



For the writer who loves to dress the part: A silk tie can make anyone feel like a million bucks and for \$52.00 you can inspire the writer's withing with this [lined paper tie](#) that comes in different styles and colors. Also, at \$56.50, the [Notebook Paper Print Pashmina Scarf](#) (college ruled, of course) is slightly more expensive, but still **And to complete the outfit, don't forget the [Writing Gloves](#).** This is where you can really tailor the gift to the writer, as the gloves cover many of the classics from "The Little Prince" through "Emma" to "Sherlock Holmes" and many others. Browse the entire collection and surprise someone with a gift that will keep their hands warm while writing; all at around \$28.00. Pictured here is the Alice in Wonderland gloves.



Let's face it, there are a few other ways a writer can relax. A nice cup of Joe is one of them. For about \$20 your writer can have an "[Instant Writer, just add Coffee](#)" mug to keep them invigorated all day long.

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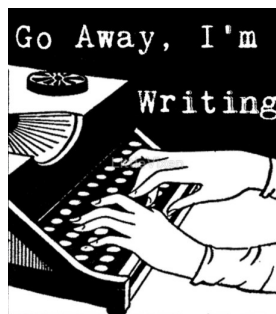


Want to personalize your mug? For about the same price you can add the name of the writer on the [“Future Best-Selling Author-Mug”](#) (different mug styles available ranging

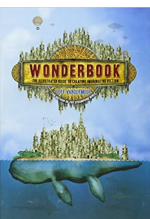
Writers often complain there’s never a pen when they need one. If you are sick and tired of their whining, spend \$7-12 and get them the [Bookaroo Pen Pouch](#) that can be placed on any journal, diary or notebook.



And if the writer requires something a little stronger to end the day with, for \$80-100 you can give them a premium hollow book with room inside to... you know what. There are plenty of “books” to choose from like Dracula, The Divine Comedy, and even Harry Potter and The Constitution.



And if your writer’s complaint is that there are just too many family disruption, get them the [Go Away, I'm Writing Poster](#) for \$15.00 (though cheaper options are available from different retailers).



For the Writer who needs a little push: Ideas don’t always come easily. To help a writer out of a writer’s block, gift them [“Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Creating Imaginative Fiction”](#) that costs about \$21.

Some writers do their best work under pressure. For them, a [30 & 5 Minute Gravity Hourglasses - Time Management Set](#) would be a good present. At a cost of about \$50 they can create and be reminded that “like sands through an hourglass, so are the days of our lives.”



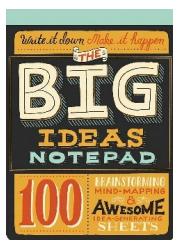
Wishing you and your family a happy holiday season filled with great writing!
Anat Golan Wenick
CWC-SFV Official Holiday Online Shopper



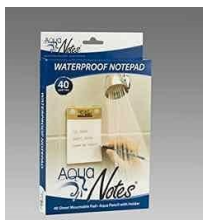
Thank you, Anat for researching all these nifty writer gifts. We appreciate your annual effort to keep us informed about new products and techie tools.

Kathy Highcove, *The Valley Scribe* Editor

Need an inexpensive stocking stuffer for a writer? For about \$10 you can get them [“The Big Ideas Notepad: 100 Tear-Out Sheets for Brainstorming, Mind-Mapping, and Awesome Idea-Generating.”](#) Pair it with a pen and your writer friend will never have a reason to complain of a writer’s block.



Ever been in the shower and came up with the best, most awesome, and greatest writing idea you ever had, only to forget it the minute you dried yourself? Well, problem solved. For \$9.50 you can treat yourself to the [Aqua Notes Waterproof Note Pad](#); the kind of invention you wonder why no one thought about it earlier.



Yes, 'tis the season! But wait! Are these holidays going to be different than last year, when trying to find a safe and sound way to celebrate them was almost impossible? When getting out to buy gifts for family and friends wasn't even up for discussion? We were confined to our homes for almost a year. Retail stores and the malls were shuttered. Yes, we have come a long way in those twelve months, thanks to due diligence on our part and a succession of tiny miracles. But we are once again faced with the reality of each passing day chipping away at the treasured time we have left to shop.

Mail order shopping has been around for a long time. The Sears Catalog arrived in the late 1800's and became the Amazon of its day. Ordering through the mail, however, for the most part has been eclipsed by online shopping. Thanks to the pandemic, to say it has taken on yet a new life is truly an understatement.

The "tease," of course, still arrives in the mail: a catalog—you know, those slick little magazines that on a regular basis take up 99 percent of the space in your mailbox. That said, it is with due modesty (blush) that I declare myself the self-appointed-or anointed-Catalog Queen of Tarzana.

During the past twelve months I estimate that I received more than 300 of these stuffers. That works out to about five or six each wee, including the ones that scream boldly across the front cover: THIS MAY BE YOUR LAST CATALOG! How embarrassing! What must my neighbors think? But evidently my oversight is quickly overlooked, and several more issues follow in short order. Sometimes the entire batch arrives on the same day, and is crammed through the one-and-one-half-inch slot in my curbside metal mailbox by my dedicated mailman.

Trying to retrieve my mail from the logjam has permanently maimed my right hand, so now I put on a heavy-duty gardening glove. Unfortunately, this depletes the remaining 1 percent of space in the box, so I must resort to sheer strength to tug and pull until I have dis-

lodged the contents, which are now in various mangled states. Ah, the trials and travails of the Royals!

To be totally transparent, I have been shopping from catalogs for many years, and for the most part with a great deal of success. But the downside is that the sources share my information, and I receive catalogs from retailers I've never even heard of, and more importantly, those who peddle goods, I couldn't possibly have any interest in buying.

A good example is those devoted exclusively to specialized and strange looking tools. As if I would know the first thing about what they are and how they are used. I consider myself a genius because I can tell the difference between a flat head screwdriver and a Phillips (not that I always choose the right one for the screw of the moment).

Next, exotic gifts from around the world from sellers like Petalura, creations specific to their countries of origin: Ireland, England, Italy, Thailand, Asia, Africa, etc. Am I expected to think that gifting my friends based upon their ethnicity will endear me to them for a lifetime?

And then there are the catalogs to tempt the palate, with all those scrumptious looking edibles. I cannot help to wonder, however, just how The Vermont Country Store found out that I love maple syrup and is now urging me to henceforth purchase it exclusively from them, never ever again to make the mistake of buying those terrible knockoffs at Ralph's. Swiss Colony offers a spectacular array of cheeses, nuts, jams and jellies, tiny sausages and mysterious wrapped items.

But a word of caution when ordering foodstuffs. If anything edible is labeled "Made in China", return it immediately. Also bear in mind that during hectic last minute holiday shopping, retailers can make mistakes with the timing and accuracy of their deliveries. You may have ordered a gorgeous basket of seasonal fresh fruit from Harry and David for your vegan friend, only to learn that she ended up with a box of Omaha Steaks on her doorstep.

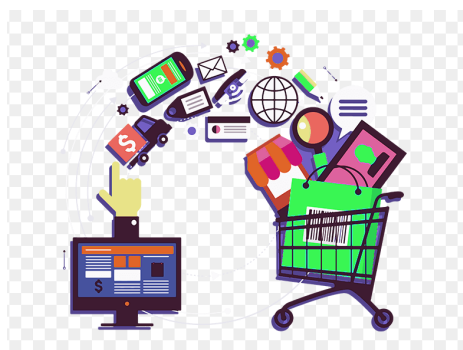
Catalogs "For Her" abound. Appealing to the feminine mystique, there are endless opportunities to enhance her wardrobe from tip to toe-outer wear, inner wear and underwear,

(Continued on page 9)



the latter I sometimes find confusing. Back in the day thongs were shoes, for Pete's sake! Baubles and bangles and beads and toe rings abound, as well as endless products and devices to embellish and preserve her natural beauty: from foot baths to Fat Freezers; magical lotions and creams to banish those pesky wrinkles; incense and other scents to calm and soothe while in the confines of a personal in-home spa; dainty pastel-colored little lady-tools, from tweezers to toenail clippers, facial hair removers, and a variety of oddly-shaped battery operated appliances to tone and treat those areas of concern.

“For Him”, Hammacher Schlemmer and The Sharper Image are the catalogs of choice for gifts ranging from the practical to the absurd, the latter referring to amazing gadgets and apparatus he can stash in his man cave. May we suggest: a 3-string fretless cigar box guitar with complete instructions on how to play Authentic American Blue Grass; the canned beer draft system that creates a dense micro-foam to boost the flavor of any canned beer; or Virtual Pong with a simulated “Ball of Light” that bounces off the wall using your electronic “Racquet” (ages 6 and up). On the



practical side, consider the #1 Selling Nose Hair Trimmer- “See Video Online!” (no, thanks); the Fat Burning and Toning Belt-a companion piece, perhaps, for your lady's Fat Freezer?; and when he chooses to venture out of his man cave, what could be more thoughtful than Night Vision Binoculars and a matching LED Lightup Beanie?

Lastly, we mustn't forget our pets. There are any number of catalogs dedicated exclusively to our feline and canine comrades, gifts ranging from toys to treats, and yes, inner wear, outer wear and underwear. Anything and everything to please and pamper our precious companions. They love to get

new things but hate to shop.

Good luck with your catalog/online holiday shopping! If and when all else fails: Amazon. And one last minute tip: many sources offer optional gift wrapping for an additional charge. Very convenient, but the downside is that when the beautifully wrapped gift arrives chances are you will be sorely tempted to oh-so-carefully unwrap it for a close up look at what you bought. Do not think for one minute that you will be able to perfectly rewrap it— not going to happen!

IT'S TIME TO SUBMIT TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO THE 2022 CWC LITERARY REVIEW

The 2022 California Writers Club Literary Review is accepting submissions. The Literary Review is the CWC's annual collection of the best poetry and prose submitted by our members. It is meant to represent our best writing as a club.

The Literary Review is the published face of the club. Every year there are suggestions on how to improve the Literary Review: the cover, the diversity of content, the quality, the process, what was accepted, what was rejected, and the feedback. This year, the editors and the CWC board are taking positive steps to address these suggestions and make the process fair and transparent. The result will depend on our authors.

Having a poem, story, or essay appear in the Literary Review is exciting. However, having had more stories rejected than accepted, I understand why authors stop submitting and find other ways to publish, e.g., a branch anthology. All I can ask is that our authors try or try again.

The Literary Review only is as good as the poems, stories, and nonfiction pieces our members submit. We want your best. A Poem, story, or essay that meets not only the submission guidelines: in format, carefully proofed, grammatically correct, but most important, is a piece that is interesting and compelling. Writing that moves and challenges a reader.

A piece that is unforgettable.

This year, submissions are limited to two poems or one short piece of prose (fiction or non-fiction.) The work must be original and unpublished. To be considered for judging, the piece has to be free of spelling and grammar errors and in the prescribed format. In some years, more than half of the submissions did not meet this requirement. Historically, as few as 10% of the submissions were published.

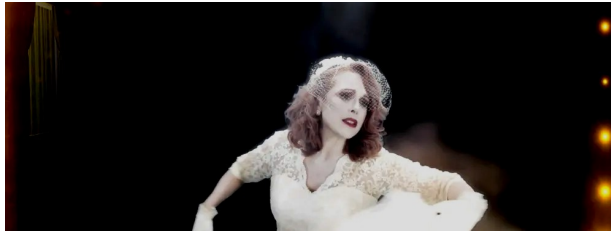
Our goal is to publish as many excellent pieces as possible, but that depends on you. Write a great first draft, edit and revise it, have others review it, finalize, format, and proof. When the piece is ready, send us what you know to be your best work. The only limit for this year's publication is the quality of the pieces submitted by our members. Now start writing.

Roger C. Lubeck, CWC State President

Deadline: January 31, 2022.

<https://calwriters.org/publications/#about>

The following article was first published in *Splash Magazine* (www.splashmags.com)



Carolee Carmello – Photo courtesy of WitzEnd Theatricals

Everyone knows that you can't get enough of Ebenezer Scrooge, that delightfully misanthropic man of "Bah Humbug" fame. Especially around the holidays. It took Dickens less than two months to pen the holiday favorite, and yet the classic remains the perfect holiday treat over a hundred years later. Few will dispute that – whether in Charles Dickens' Victorian age or in today's modern era – "A Christmas Carol" has become the go-to favorite of every seeker of holiday cheer. But how many of you have heard of Estella Scrooge, the great-great-great-granddaughter of that celebrated miser? ESTELLA SCROOGE offers you the chance to meet more of the Scrooge family. Originally developed and work-shopped at the Rubicon Theatre Company in Ventura, California, the musical was later filmed on location at the Milliron Studios in Harlem, New York, and is now streamed for audiences everywhere.

ESTELLA SCROOGE was conceived by Tony and Olivier award-winner John Caird and Tony award nominee Paul Gordon, who together have created a modern musical twist on the 1843 novella. Today's iconic Scrooge is a beautiful woman who just happens to be a Wall Street tycoon. She is the CEO of Bleak House, a banking conglomerate which specializes in making money – lots of money – even if it means that mortgage foreclosures and bankruptcies occur all too frequently. After all, you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs – and Estella (Betsy Wolfe) seems to have become Bleak House's master chef. Faithfully following behind Estella every step of the way is her trusty assistant Betty Crachit (Megan McGinnis), mother of the critically ill Tiny Tammy (Willow McCarthy), whose medical insurance coverage through Bleak House costs almost nothing and offers less.

It is Christmas Eve, and Estella has flown to Pickford, Ohio, the small Midwest town where she was raised. To visit family? Of course not. Estella is looking forward to delivering the news that she is foreclosing on the Harthouse Hotel in order to raze it so that she can build a mall in its place. The hotel is owned and managed by Philip (Pip) Nickleby (Clifton Duncan), who has filled the place with the poor, old, infirm, and abandoned – their last refuge from a world that has rejected them. Imagine her surprise when she discovers that she and Pip knew each other as children. But sentiments have no place in business, and Estella knows that she must proceed with her plan.

However, when she tries to leave, a blizzard has closed all roads; and Estella is forced to remain at Harthouse Hotel for the night – in the haunted honeymoon suite. We all know about her visitors: angry, unfulfilled spinster Aunt

Marla Havisham (Carolee Carmello) who raised her – and three spirits of Christmas past, present, and future who offer her glimpses of what was, what is, and what will be. Sissy Jupe (Sarah Litzsinger), cockney to the core, takes her on a journey down memory lane, while Ebenezer himself (Danny Burstein) gives her a fly-on-the-wall view of life around her. Finally Mr. Melchisedech Merdle (Patrick Page), another successful tycoon now doomed to wander the earth since he died, introduces her to what happens to people like them at the end of their lives.

We all know how the tale ends – but it is still fun to see Estella Scrooge become a new woman, a woman who loses no opportunity to shout her new-found love for everyone and everything about Christmas. Skillfully directed by John Caird, who wears two hats in this production, with the invaluable assistance of Brad Hack, music supervisor and arranger, ESTELLA SCROOGE is a charming, delightful, and entertaining story perfect for the holiday season. It is witty and clever – integrating names, plot lines, and details from many of Dickens famous writings into this adaptation. The cast sings its heart out – and sometimes dances besides. Filmed before a green screen, the production team expertly uses modern technology and contemporary music and lyrics to enhance this nineteenth century narrative and bring it into the twenty-first century. For a preview, check out the [trailer](#).

To add the cherry on top of this superb pandemic production, the producers of ESTELLA SCROOGE created a Theatre Affiliate program in which over 50 theaters across the U.S. receive 30 percent of sales of tickets with no risk or cost to the organization. Forced to shut down for over a year, the pandemic has weighed heavily on theaters everywhere, and ESTELLA SCROOGE will help them pay the bills and flourish. To that end, the producers encourage audience members to purchase access to ESTELLA SCROOGE through their local theater company. Tickets are \$29.99 for 72-hour viewing for each household, or \$44.99 for a VIP Premium Theatre Experience, which includes unlimited viewings, a download of the cast recording, and exclusive behind-the-scenes footage. To purchase tickets through the affiliate program, go to www.estellascrooge.com/affiliate.



A Christmas Carol Review – True Holiday Magic

The following article was first published in Splash Magazine (www.splashmags.com)

by Elaine L. Mura

So you sometimes think you’ve seen A CHRISTMAS CAROL one time too many? After all, A CHRISTMAS CAROL has become a holiday staple with hundreds of productions each December in every nook and cranny of our country. A Christmas classic contained in a novella that took only two months to write, Dickens’ A CHRISTMAS CAROL has charmed people for over 100 years. And that’s not even counting the dozens of theater productions that brought Dickens’ characters to life – people like the infamous, miserly Ebenezer Scrooge and the three ghostly spirits who haunt him on Christmas Eve.

Well, get ready for a new take on the old story. When two visionary Tony Award winners – playwright Jack Thorne and director Matthew Warchus – got together, a new and charming interpretation of this seasonal classic was born. Ably abetted by three-time Emmy winner Bradley Whitford as Scrooge, Tony and Emmy Award nominee Kate Burton as the Ghost of Christmas Past and Grammy, SAG Award, Critics Choice, and Hollywood Critics Association Award nominee Alex Newell as Ghost of Christmas Present, the Old Vic production of A CHRISTMAS CAROL breathes fresh life into the nineteenth century tale. Currently directed by Thomas Caruso, A CHRISTMAS CAROL digs into the heart of Dickens’ novella with new vigor and a thoroughly modern eye. Plus lots of mind-boggling special effects.

Bradley Whitford does a marvelous job of bringing Scrooge to life. It’s worth the price of admission to see our Bradley Whitford morph into a giddy Robin Williams clone as A CHRISTMAS CAROL progresses. Song and dance abound, all bringing a special exuberance to the holidays. Bob Cratchit (Dashiell Eaves) is appropriately humble, and beyond cute Tiny Tim (Sebastian Ortiz/Cad Robertson) will always win the audience’s heart. Belle (Sarah Hunt), the one who got away, finally gets to settle scores with Scrooge, while Marley (Chris Hoch) surprises all of us with his overwhelming voice as he drags his chains along behind. And let’s not forget about the Brussels sprouts sailing by on parachutes or the snow dancing through the air as the Scrooge crew gets ready for a once-in-a-lifetime Christmas feast. Without a doubt, the Ahmanson Theatre’s A

CHRISTMAS CAROL is exhilarating and joyous. Funny moments are interspersed with poignant to yield a satisfying whole. The Old Vic’s A CHRISTMAS CAROL is a not-to-be-missed production.

But not only do bipeds grace this production. Rob Howell’s set, coupled with Hugh Vanstone’s lighting and Simon Baker’s sound, certainly qualify as another super star. Suddenly Dickens’ words are transformed into dazzling sound and light. On top of that, audiences will be serenaded by Celtic musicians and dancers who play whistles, accordions, ukuleles, and even bells with abandon – sometimes tossing mandarins to eager audience members. For audience safety, COVID-19 protocols are followed (proof of vaccination, masks inside theater).

A CHRISTMAS CAROL runs through January 1, 2022, with performances at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Sundays (extra 2 p.m. performances on Thursday 12/23 and 12/30; 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. performances on Friday 12/24; only 8 p.m. performance on Saturday 12/25; only 7 p.m. performance on Friday 12/31). The Ahmanson Theatre is located in the Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, 90012. Tickets range from \$40 to \$150. For information and reservations, call 213-972-4400 or go [online](#).



Bradley Whitford as Scrooge with Tiny Tim

Photo by Joan Marcus

My grandma, Evelyn, my mum's mum, was central to our Christmas Day celebrations. I miss her very much. She was kind, witty, wise and made great pies; apple, bacon and egg, sausage and tomato, blackcurrant, you name it, it went in a pie.



In 1996, Heather chats with Grandma Evelyn

She was also forgiving. No matter how long it was since my last phone call, my grandma never wasted any time admonishing me. She shared secrets of her life with me, things I couldn't pass along to my mother even though my grandma is long gone. Barely five feet tall, she was blue-eyed and of Irish descent. Her hair used to be black but was grey by the time I knew her and she would often have a blue, purple or pink rinse in it.

Well into her seventies, she worked in a gay bar in the town center. Often as we walked around the shops, she was stopped and given a bear hug by various young men who very pleased to see her. It occurred to me years later that she probably felt safe working there instead of a regular bar.

She grew up poor, the youngest of five girls. They slept three to a bed under their Sunday coats because bedding and coats could not be afforded. There wasn't a chair for her at the dining table and her share of the weekly roast chicken was



In January, 2004, Great-Grandma Evelyn cuddles with photos of Heather's newborn twins sons.

She would not buy anything on credit because, as she would say, "Then your money's never your own."

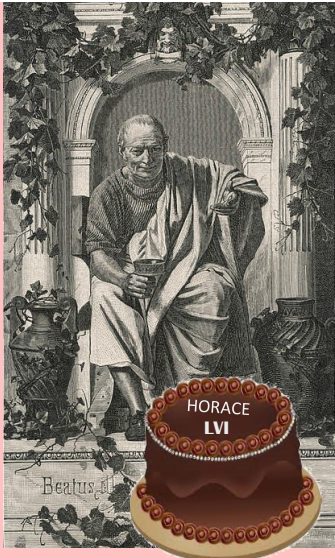
Her favorite tippie was gin and bitter lemon. One Christmas we horrible children laced her prawn cocktail with gin; she said it was the best she had ever tasted. I'm sure she knew by our suppressed giggles (and the taste) what had happened, or maybe it was when the prawns started to sing, but she never let on.

After the rest of the meal of roast goose with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding and custard, and competitive Christmas cracker pulling, she donned her paper party hat, sang "Danny Boy" and fell asleep in my mother's pink velour armchair by the fire.



Evelyn was wed in Kingston Upon Hull, England.

Not done yet, we hooligans placed empty cans of beer around her, stuck a cigar between her fingers and took pictures with the instant camera. When she was shown the evidence of her "descent into squalor," she only chuckled and requested a cup of tea with one sweetener and a slice of Christmas cake. What a wonderful woman, the perfect grandma.



Is it December already? Yes. As you are aware, this month there are many wonderful religious celebrations, which means, unfortunately, that December birthdays often come as an afterthought to your friends and family, seen perhaps as a nuisance, as an extra card to remember to buy, write, stamp and mail.

Think you're going to receive two gifts? Not bloody likely. Maybe you'll get two half gifts or a gift and a half to cover both events but never two full gifts. Money is tight at this time of year.

So who else in the world of accomplished writers has had their birthday cards shoved to the back of the credenza to make room for all the holiday cards? The list is quite long, which can remind us of favorite books and authors we meant to read or have read and would like to read again. Or perhaps a gift idea will present itself amongst them. (PM me for my home address).

To start with we have the author of one of the nation's favorite poems *IF*, Rudyard Kipling. Other December birthdays include; Ann Patchet *Bel Canto*, Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Joan Didian *The Year of Magical Thinking*, John Milton *Paradise Lost*, Emily Dickinson, *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*, Gustav Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Clarence Major, *Dirty Bird Blues*, Mary Higgins Clark, *The Cradle will Fall*, plus many more. And let's throw in a screenwriter: Dalton Trumbo, *Roman Holiday*, *Spartacus*.

Of particular interest to me this month is the ancient lyric poet, soldier and satirist, Horace, who wrote this famous limerick:

*There once was a poet from Rome
Who spent too much time on his phone
Life passed him by
With no idea why
He never completed his tome **

**The eagle-eyed reader may have spotted that Horace did not in fact write this limerick – not only were phones not around in Ancient Rome, neither were limericks.*

Considered to be perhaps the world's first autobiographer, a famous line from one of Horace's odes is "*Dulce et decorum est pro patri mori*" (What joy and duty to die for the fatherland), to which it is worth reading World War I veteran and poet Wilfred Owen's response.

But anyway how were birthdays celebrated in Ancient Rome? Funny you should ask because Romans were the first society to annually acknowledge the birth day, *dies natalis*, of the common individual. Before then citizens commemorated only the special days of gods and important people (i.e. not us). The Roman hoi polloi celebrated their birthdays much like we do with gift giving and parties with their friends and family. They also gratefully honored the birthdays of their patrons. Horace considered his patron's birthday 'almost holier' than his own.

As it is now, turning fifty in Roman times was considered a big deal with those marking the occasion with a cake made from wheat flour, olive oil, grated cheese and honey. Doesn't sound too bad. Did Horace have his cake and eat it too? Indeed he did. Born on December 8th, 65 BCE, he lived to the ripe old age of fifty-six. Upon his death he bequeathed all of his property to the Emperor Augustus, as was expected. Death and taxes, eh?

So, *felix sit natalis dies* to all CWC members with jolly December birthdays!



I've never met a kinder and gentler woman than the grandmotherly Josephine Dillon, the first wife of one of the world's most famous movie stars. I still think of her these many years later.

Before I met her in 1962 when I was ten years old, my parents, brother and I had just moved from the Bronx to the San Fernando Valley in California. It was an arduous trip that took nearly three weeks to complete because my dad's old Plymouth broke down twice during the nearly three-thousand-mile trek. Nothing like staying in one-star Podunk motels days at a time.

The only people we knew out West and visited often were my Aunt Sylvia, Uncle Jack, and cousins, Jeffrey and Barry. They lived in a single family detached home on a quiet tree-lined street in Studio City close to the Little Brown Church where Ronald Reagan married Nancy Davis. We lived in a relatively simple nearby apartment building.

Etched in my memory is Jack barbecuing chicken in the backyard, our families watching the Oscars together and going to the beach in Santa Monica. After a few hours of sunning and braving the waves, the screams of people riding on the rollercoaster at POP (Pacific Ocean Park) prompted us to beg our parents for a few dollars that would cover the cost of admission, the rides, a carnival game or two and refreshments.

I'd sleep over at my cousins occasionally, listen to Barry's vast record collection (he loved the sounds of the 1950s, especially Chubby Checkers, go with them to Smokey Joe's restaurant on Riverside Drive for burgers and fries and attend movies together. Just down the street from their home on Landale Street was the Studio City Park where I played caroms, ping pong, baseball, and became a darn good basketball player for my age going up against the big guys. The best part was that I made friends.

And then one day, when we had nothing to do, Jeffrey and Barry's parents encouraged my cousins, brother and myself to keep company with Miss Dillon, the elderly woman who lived only a few houses away.

"Why don't you visit Miss Dillon?" my Aunt Sylvia would ask us. "She's lonely and would appreciate some company."

"Do we have to?" said the older cranky Barry.

"It's either that or practice piano," said my aunt.

"Aw, darn."



Predictably he chose option one.

I remember the first time we visited Miss Dillon. Aunt Sylvia led us to the front door. We were somewhat nervous. After ringing the doorbell, we were greeted with a big smile. My aunt made the introductions, instructed us to behave ourselves and bid us farewell. "I'll be back in one hour. Be good," she said.

"Come on in, I've been expecting you. So nice to see everyone," said the cheery Miss Dillon, whose gray hair was arranged in a bun.

As we entered her home, Miss Dillon gave each of us an unexpected peck on the cheek. "Don't be bashful," she said.

Who does she think she is? I thought. Our grandmother? It didn't take long for us to warm up to her. She couldn't have been nicer. On this and subsequent visits, Miss Dillon was always overjoyed to welcome us into her home.

"This way," said Miss Dillon, who was in her late 70s. She wore a house dress, cameo, an apron, flats and knee-high hosiery. She directed us into the living room. My initial impression was that the house was not as neat as my aunt and uncle's place or even our own. It dawned on me that the homes of other elderly people I had visited also were not that orderly. They all had a lot of stuff.

"Sit down and stay awhile. I just love having company especially young gentlemen like yourselves," she said.

Of course, my five-year-old brother, Lenny, didn't know what a gentleman was. He just knew that he was hungry even though he just eaten a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. His nose was twitching this way and that way, busy breathing in the sweet smell of something sweet cooking in the kitchen. He figured out what it was almost immediately.

"I wanna a cookie," he proclaimed without the slightest hesitancy.

"Well, aren't you a little rascal. I wanna cookie what?" asked Miss Dillon.

I whispered into my brother's ear, "I wanna cookie, please, Miss Dillon."

(Continued on page 15)

"I wanna cookie, please, Miss Dillon," he repeated.

"Now that's better," she said. "And you don't need to be so formal. Josephine is fine. Well, you're in luck, young fella. AS I'm sure you guessed, I'm baking a fresh batch of chocolate chip cookies. They should be done by now. I'll be right back."

I whispered another prompt into Lenny's ear.

Thank you, Miss Dillon," he said.

While our host was away, we checked out her plush but outdated furnishings, bookshelves, keepsakes and the rugs covering the hardwood floors. A brightly colored Macaw perched in a tall wooden cage mimicked the words, "Cookies, cookies."

We were particularly fascinated by the pictures of movie stars lining the walls, some whom I recognized. Charles Laughton, Errol Flynn, Robert Taylor, Tyrone Power and others. Who was Josephine? I thought. She lived in a modest house yet apparently knew all of these famous people. If she truly knew these people, surely I was in the presence of an important lady. Since I loved watching movies either at home or in the theatre, I was overcome with joy and fascination.

Josephine came back with a plate piled with cookies and poured us frosty glasses of Dad's Old Fashioned root beer. After serving the refreshments, she opened up the drapes to allow the sunlight in. It was as if something inside of her had awakened.

She then began playing classical music on the piano which was strewn with sheet music. She invited us to sit down next to her on the piano bench. We took turns learning to play chopsticks or some semblance of it.

"How long have you lived here Josephine?" I asked her.

"Oh, a long time. Before you were even born. I nearly had to move out not too long ago, but a very special person who I'd known for a very long time came to my rescue. The home is all mine now thanks to him."

Before I could ask her who that special person was, Josephine changed the subject and asked us about ourselves, our favorite foods, the schools we went to, our favorite TV shows and movies, what we wanted to do when we grew up and much more. She talked about growing up in Denver, Colorado, studying acting in Italy, and her career as an American stage and film actress and acting teacher.

That was very interesting, but I wanted to know more about the celebrity photographs.

"They were my friends, all of them," she said when I asked her. "I don't hear much from them anymore. And long after the

1940s, before you were born, I would see them quite a bit at parties and the Oscars. Would you like to see some more pictures?"

"Yes," I said eagerly.

"I'll be right back."

When she returned a few minutes later, she was holding a dusty photo album in her hands.

"I haven't opened this in a while as you can see."

After cleaning off the photo album, she sat down between us on the couch. And as she began flipping through the yellowing pages, I noticed she was becoming misty eyed. Moments later a few tears began trickling down her cheeks. -

"Excuse me boys. I tend to be emotional."

"What's wrong, Josephine?" asked Lenny. "Why are you crying?" She began drying her tears with a handkerchief.

"I apologize boys. I loved this man from the moment I met him and still do. He's the special person I mentioned before. Oh, how I miss him. Do any of you recognize him? Donny?"

"Nope," said my brother.

I knew who he was in an instant.

"Clark Gable," I said. "My parents had taken us to see *Gone with the Wind*. He played, Rhett ... Rhett..."

"Yes, Rhett Butler," Josephine said. "I was his wife and acting coach a long time ago."

I couldn't believe it. I was in the presence of the former wife of Clark Gable, my favorite movie star. Every time I turned on the TV, there he was playing a hero. The usually shy me blurted out, "Can you teach me to become the next Clark Gable?" I'm not sure if I was serious or just trying to be funny.

My cousins began to laugh. "Maybe Don Knotts," teased my twelve-year-old cousin Jeff.

"Yeah, Donny Knotts, the bumbling sheriff Barney Fife on *The Andy Griffith Show*," his fourteen-year-old brother Barry said.

"Don't mind them. They're just jealous." Josephine said. "If I did teach you how to act— I'll be up front with you—I will not pay to have your teeth fixed, have your hair style changed and train you on how to deepen your voice like I did for Clark. Where did that get me?" she said somewhat bitterly.

"Where did it get you Josephine?" asked Lenny.

(Continued on page 16)

“Loneliness, but not right now. I am so happy to have some company. Here, have another one,” she said to my brother, reaching out with the plate of cookies. I found out later in life that Clark Gable had dropped Josephine like a hot potato and ran off with another woman when his career took off.

Ninety minutes later, the doorbell rang. It was my parents, Murray and Charlotte.

“These are darling boys,” said Josephine. “They are so well-mannered. I do hope they come back again soon. Next time boys I’ll have hot apple pie and vanilla ice cream. I believe your son, Gary, has some hidden talent.”

With my parents’ consent, I began to attend Josephine’s weekly group acting class free of charge. Somehow the others in the group learned of my admiration for my teacher’s former husband. They called me Clark. After a while, I lost interest in acting. Spring was in the air and so was Little League Baseball.

“I’m sorry,” I said apologetically, “I’ve been thinking about it. I’d rather play for the New York Yankees someday and maybe become the next Mickey Mantle than become a movie star.”

“Oh, I see,” she said. “I am sorry to hear that. It’s a pity, but promise me that you will still visit me.

“I will. I promise.”

“And if you change your mind, there’s still time left for you to become another Clark.”

The acting lessons ended. but not our friendship. I would drop in on Josephine occasionally to see how she was doing. She’d offer me tea and biscuits (she didn’t have Coca Cola and chips) and regale me with stories about the Golden Age of Hollywood. Eventually, the visits became less frequent and after I entered junior high school, they ceased all together. I wouldn’t see her for another few years.

Perhaps inspired by Josephine or Uncle Jack, who entertained the troops with Burt Lancaster during WWII, my mom and Aunt Sylvia suddenly became interested in seeking fame and fortune. They worked as extras in *It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad World* (when the Three Stooges make a cameo appearance as firefighters and the stars of the movie held onto a towering fire truck ladder that swayed back and forth. I’m not sure if they signed up for the gig just to enjoy the free box lunches.

With a few acting lessons under my belt, (tongue in cheek) I tried to make a comeback years later

when I appeared as an extra in the movie *Your Six Minutes Are Up*, starring Rob Liebman and Beau Bridges. I sat behind a desk at the unemployment office and made believe I was conversing with an applicant. I was hoping I’d be discovered by the director and offered a much bigger part. That didn’t happen. And no, my appearance wasn’t enough to earn me an IMBD listing.

When I turned eighteen, I decided to visit Josephine. A much younger woman answered her door.

“Can I help you?”

“Does, Josephine Dillon live here?”

She replied, “The dear lady sold us the house to my husband and I two years ago. She now lives in Glendale in an assisted living facility and calls me once in a while to see how we and the house are doing. Oh, how she misses the house.”

“I’m a friend of hers. We haven’t spoken in a while.”

“Josephine was nice enough to provide me with her address in case anyone ever inquired about her whereabouts. Maybe it was you she had in mind.”

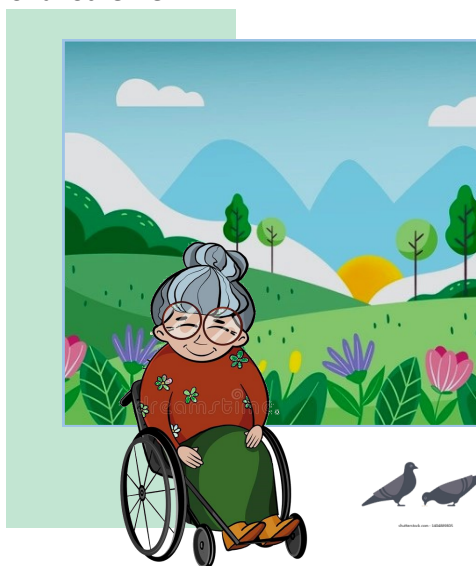
When I arrived at Sunrise, the assisted living facility, Josephine was sitting in a wheelchair outside near the lush, expansive garden. A nurse was holding an umbrella over her to protect her from the brilliant sunshine. She was half-asleep when I said, “Josephine. Do you remember me?”

She looked up at me with eyes that slowly began to open, reached over and grasped my hand. She had aged quite a bit since I had last seen her. “Well, of course, Clark. You’ve finally come back for me. I knew you would someday.”

I didn’t know if she had dementia or was trying to be funny because I had grown a mustache. Not exactly a King of Hollywood mustache. Either way, she remained relatively quiet during our reunion and smiled a lot. I did mention that I had just graduated from high school and would soon begin looking for a job.

As I began to leave, she surprised me. Dabbing at her misty-eyes with a handkerchief, she said, “Goodbye, Gary. If you want to start acting lessons again, it’s never too late.”

I turned and blew her a kiss.



CANDLES

A Christmas tree's
moist green branches
support candles
glittering in my neighbor's window
and reflected in a wreath of good will.

Eight Chanukah candles
each kindled by the shammash
and greeted by children singing
tales of anguish and triumph
survival of my ancestors.

Crystal and champagne
candlelight reflected in loving eyes
hands held across a table
in the glow a promise made to be kept
one rain drenched December eve.

One hundred birthday candles
combined in a blaze of glory
Zayda begging the youngest guests
to help him extinguish each tip of flame
celebrating a century of life.

Lonely candles burning brightly
In remembrance of our deepest losses
lighting dark corners of grief
continuity in life's circle
treasure flames never dying

Symbolic candle lights of hope
lit in classrooms of a ghetto school
students eyes glowing with discoveries
teachers amidst Asia's turmoil and Africa's strife
holding fragile tapers up to the black draped night.

Lillian Rodich





Break Out the Ornaments

**Here it is, that time of year when everything is merry.
It's really very scary how everything is merry.
Here it is, the seasoning,
When all of us, by golly,
Hang mistletoe and holly,
Determinedly jolly.**

**Who wrote the rule that says there must be cheer
At this most exhausting time of year?**

**Break out the ornaments!
Untangle all the lights!
Our street must be the gaudiest of all our city's sites!
Break out the ornaments and every box you see,
Then open each one carefully
Slut out that Christmas tree!**

**Most children on the planet could care less about the snow
They wait instead
In every bed
With avaricious dreams
Beyond the means
Of anyone they know.**

**Break out the ornaments!
The world around us cries
No, duck your head and smash instead
Those rows of mincemeat pies.**

**Don't break out the ornaments!
Let's break out from the herd.
Reject the call of hams and yams
And give them all the bird!**

Nance Crawford





Happy Holidays to all from the
 CWC-SFV board members!
 Please join our 2022 Zoom
 meets in the coming months.

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