



# The Valley Scribe



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

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## THE FIRST DRAFT CLUB

By Heather Bradshaw, CWC-SFV Speaker Chair

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome freelance writer, editor and story teller, Angie Chatman as the keynote speaker on Saturday, January 7 at 1:00 pm via Zoom, with a presentation titled "The First Drafts Club".



Writing wasn't Angie's first career. An engineer by degree, she earned an MBA from MIT-Sloan and an MFA from Queens University in Charlotte; she didn't begin her writing career until after she turned forty!

Now Angie is a Pushcart prize nominated writer and a WEBBY award winning storyteller. Her short stories and essays have appeared on the Brevity blog, TaintTaintTaint Magazine, Literary Landscapes, The Rumpus, Pangyrus, Blood Orange Review, Hippocampus Magazine, [fwriction:review](#), and elsewhere. She's told her stories on the stages of The Moth Radio Hour, World Channel's Stories from the Stage, and Story Collider. A native Chicagoan, Angie now resides in Boston with her family and rescue dog, Lizzie.

Angie comes highly recommended as a speaker from our fellow CWC branch, the Fremont Area Writers. She is a member of

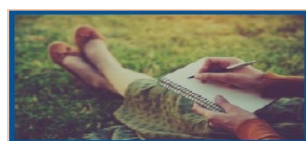
the inaugural class of Fellows of the Kimbilio Center for African American fiction and she has also received fellowships from the Virginia Center for Creative Arts (CFCA) and Ragdale .

During the presentation, Angie will discuss that, as with any

product, your story needs beta testing. Belonging to a critique group is necessary to iron out any wrinkles in your text. Angie refers to this essential group as the First Drafts Club but she warns that you must be careful who you allow to join your club. Angie Chatman will discuss the criteria to use so that you can get help to polish your piece for publication.

For information on this popular speaker, visit Angie's website, [www.angiecwriter.com](http://www.angiecwriter.com), where you can also sample her work, including the moving essay, *The Bitter and the Sweet*, and *An Ode to Pound Cake*, which, yes, includes a delicious recipe!

*Please note that all members of the CWC-SFV will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches and guests should contact President and Zoom host Karen Gorback by noon on January 6 at [karen.gorback@gmail.com](mailto:karen.gorback@gmail.com) for an invitation. We regret we cannot accommodate late requests.*



Dear Colleagues: Happy New Year, and best wishes for a year filled with good health, happiness, and abundant creativity. I generally do not make New Year's resolutions, but this year I'm going to break the pattern and write them down – for you and everyone else to see! Besides, I've heard that when people share their goals with others, they're more likely to achieve them!

To begin --- this spring, I will advocate for the passage of a resolution by the California Legislature to approve my proposal declaring May 1- 7, 2023 as Ageism Awareness Week throughout the state. The proposal is being authored by State Senator Janet Nguyen from Orange County; and I resolve to direct tons of energy toward help her obtain the political support necessary to see this resolution approved in both the state senate and assembly.

In 2023, I will complete the first draft of a novel I started last summer with the working title of *Naomi's Next Chapter*. It takes place the year after Naomi retires from her job in public education. Autobiographical? Nope. It's a novel and lots of fun to write – but I resolve to make it a priority!

Over the next year, I also resolve to publish my manuscript for a picture book titled *Mazel's Mishpacha*. It's about a lost pup who discovers that the acceptance he sought from his new family was there all along!

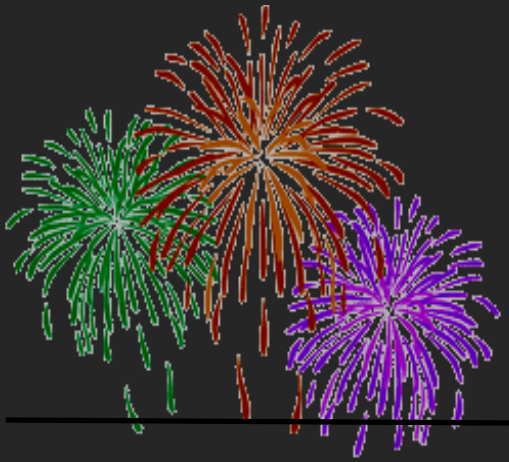
It's always fun to ponder new beginnings and the opportunities the lie ahead. But as we learned in the Book of Ecclesiastes, as well as from Pete Seeger, the Byrds and Judy Collins, all beginnings must also have endings: *To everything, turn, turn, turn. There is a season, turn, turn, turn. And a time to every purpose under heaven. A time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant, a time to reap. . .*

And so, as our club ended 2022, we said good-bye to three longstanding members: Ray DeTournay, Alan Wills, and Monte Swann. Ray's writing, along with his creative work at Channel 22 at the Motion Picture and Television Fund, brought hours upon hours of happiness to the residents and staff of that esteemed organization. And Alan's writing, along with his volunteer work as the hospitality host for our meetings at the Saban Center, endeared him to everyone he met.

As the club's VP and Zoom host for the past two and a half years, Monte was my backup and a friend – although we never met in person. He volunteered his time and expertise freely and kindly – a professional who handled whatever needed to be done without fuss or fanfare. I knew I could count on him to be certain that the technology necessary to conduct meetings in our new, virtual meeting space would operate correctly. Rather than by email, we discussed club business by phone, which we both preferred. I will miss Monte and am grateful for the time we worked together.

*To everything, turn, turn, turn. There is a season, turn, turn, turn. And a time to every purpose under heaven.*





HAPPY NEW  
YEAR TO ALL,  
FROM THE  
MEMBERS OF  
THE CWC-SFV.

WRITE ON IN  
2023!



## Ring in the New Year **2023**

We are here to revel in the New Year  
We have mustered, to share convivial cheer  
All have come to sing, to lend a true ear  
And to linger with each of company dear.

When the cold wind blows we shall be warm  
In the new year's throes, we shall meet no harm  
Whilst night breathes its snows, we have our charm  
And each of us knows to reach for an arm.

We are here in awed reverence  
All drawing near in communal presence  
Shall none of us know fear, as we go hence  
Renewed at this time in the glow of friends

Tonight we cross a new frontier  
To one and all, Happy New Year!

**Michael Edelstein**

# CWC-SFV WRITERS CLUB SPEAKER SUMMARY: DACRE STOKER

By Elaine L. Mura

On 12/3/22, CWC hosted Dacre Stoker, great grand-nephew of Bram Stoker, author of “Dracula.” Dacre spoke on “Secrets of Dracula Unearthed.” Dacre indicated that he has spent the past 15 years studying Bram Stoker’s life and the why, how, and when Bram Stoker made the choices he did when writing the famous Dracula novel. “Dracula” was published in 1897 and has been translated into 30 languages. It has never been out of print and went into public domain in 1962. There have been 700 movie citations since the 1922 film, “Nosferatu.” At least 1000 comic books and multiple stage adaptations emanated from the novel.

At this point in time, Dacre has unearthed a huge quantity of material to help him understand how “Dracula” came about. Relatively recently, Bram Stoker’s notes became accessible; and the biggest group of Stoker’s materials which were in Dublin were purchased and brought to London, where they will be available to the general public. Apparently, they are currently being digitized. Bram Stoker’s lost journal has also surfaced and contains information about things that were deleted from the novel. Dacre has written several books about his findings, which clearly offer captivating reading. These include “Drakul,” “Dracula the Undead,” and “Dracula.”

But the most intriguing part of Dacre’s talk was his compilation of the little-known facts about Bram Stoker and Dracula. Bram was born in 1847 in Ireland during the potato famine and the cholera epidemic – which exposed the child to many frightening events in his young life, including a supposed dead woman who miraculously came back to life.

When he was a toddler, he contracted a mysterious illness and his family did not expect him to survive. He was probably subjected to blood-letting, a common “cure” of the time. He continued to suffer from the undiagnosed malady until he was seven years old, when the family moved away and he recovered. Eventually, he became a tall, athletic man with multiple interests who attended Trinity College in Dublin from 1864 to 1870.

He married Florence Balcombe in 1878 and was hired as a petty sessions legal clerk. His performance was so impressive that he was eventually promoted to Chief Inspector. His legal background came in handy when he wrote “Dracula.” Remember that Jonathan Harker was a law clerk whose job took him to Transylvania. Bram loved the theater and would write reviews for Lyceum Theatre productions (even though he was not paid). His articles were so well received (and he also developed a close relationship with Henry Irving, a highly renowned actor and influential person of

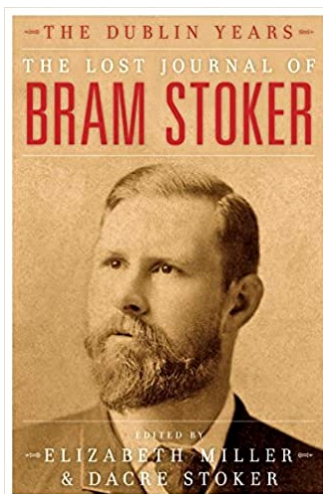
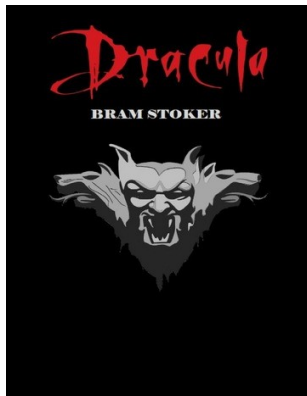
the time) that he was offered the position of Lyceum theatre manager, a job which he held from 1878 to 1905. He moved to London, where he wrote “Dracula.”

Originally, Bram’s Dracula was an ugly and frightening man, but the cinema soon corrected that impression. Multiple events and experiences influenced his writing, including the cholera epidemic in 1832 in Ireland, his mysterious childhood illness (“I never stood upright for the first seven years of my life”), his fears of a premature burial, his work as a legal clerk, his work-related investigations of bribery, fraud, and other criminal activities, his time in Dublin Castle, his family holiday in Whitby (a coastal town in England with its own castle and graveyard), and his extensive research which led him to Transylvania and the strange superstitions in the remote mountainous land.

His research also helped him to name his undead main character. When he was doing research at the Whitby Library, he found a passage in which the word Dracula appeared, a name drawn from the Wallachia language meaning Devil. By the way, Bram’s notes are still visible in library books. He wrote in the margins when he found an interesting piece for his novel. He discovered how to kill a vampire by reading a book on local superstition by Emily Gerard. Whitby also gave him the famous Dracula shipwreck – an actual shipwreck of a Russian ship called the Demeter. Local myth has it that a black dog jumped off the ship –perhaps Dracula as a wolf? Bram Stoker also visited Cruden Bay, Scotland, where he visited the ruins of Cruden Castle. He modeled the interior of Dracula’s castle after this eerie Scottish residence.

In 1896, he visited the U.S., where he found a newspaper article attributing a series of deaths to vampires. Even Darwin spoke of the vampire bat in 1859. Dacre Stoker’s talk encompassed so many other fascinating facts that it is impossible to cite each one.

Suffice it to say, everyone was glued to Zoom that day. And Dacre continues to unearth new information each day, some of which may surface anew if one of his books, “Drakul,” is made into a film “but now they’re talking about making it a TV series.” After hearing Dacre’s talk, I am sure that each and every CWC member will eagerly watch the tale, no matter the medium.



# HERE'S AN OFFER A HOPEFUL WRITER SHOULD NOT REFUSE!



Sometimes, it's really hard to find what you really need. Like whenever you decide the time is right to write your dream book, where's the how-to, the know-how, the last-word in writing skills?

Even if you're savvy to social media and online contacts, you can't quite find the right writer source. For instance, in 2023, you are seriously interested in writing the book that's been on your New Year 's TO DO List for a decade. Sadly, in spite of good intentions, that item never gets crossed off your list.

But this year, you've vowed, will be the year that you get finally get beyond the first paragraph. However, writing a book is not a simple task. It take time and a great deal of effort to develop that talent. And the right plan. Following a rigid outline will not teach you how to write. Writing is a learned skill, and would-be authors who try to launch a book without any guidance or feedback, soon give up in frustration.

But with the right help, at the right time, most folks can successfully learn how to write. And joining a writers club, like the California Writers Club, is often the best source for professional help and inspiration! That's why the CWC is happy to announce: **Right now, the statewide club is offering an amazing opportunity to "try" us for six months at the low, low price of \$45!**

If you've occasionally visited a Zoom meetings of the San Fernando Branch of the California Writers Club, and enjoyed the speaker, the rapport and the convivial conversation, perhaps you'd like to officially join the party.

Or, if you're a member of another writers group but crave more interaction with a new group of writers.

Or, If you're currently a member of CWC-SFV, and know other writers who have searched for a local writer community, tell him/her:

**NOW IS THE TIME to join a branch of the California Writers Club for six months—for only \$45!** Yes, just \$45, about the same price per month that you'd pay for a cup of coffee and breakfast sandwich! What a deal!

The CWC-SFV offers **1.** quality speakers, **2.** a monthly subscription to this newsletter, The Valley Scribe, **3.** contacts with a statewide writers community and **4.** an opportunity to join a **free** critique group. Even if you are immersed in a series of writing classes or have already found a local writers group, remember that even published authors, learned university lecturers or professional journalists, admit that they never stop trying to learn new writing skills! Writers believe in the never-ending story.



**Interested?** For more information about the CWC and this six month membership offer, contact Membership Chair, Pat Avery, at [www.facebook.com/CWCSFV/](http://www.facebook.com/CWCSFV/)



—Kathy Highcove

# A Classic film, *The Apartment*, is now a musical: *Promises, Promises*

By Elaine L. Mura

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Based on the 1960 film “The Apartment,” written by Billy Wilder and L.A.L. Diamond and starring Jack Lemon and Shirley McClain, *PROMISES, PROMISES* transitioned to the stage with grace, musical charm, and lots of laughs. And could it be otherwise with a book by Neil Simon, music by Burt Bacharach, and lyrics by Hal David? *PROMISES, PROMISES* originally opened on Broadway in 1968 starring Jerry Orbach as Chuck Baxter. It was revived in 2010, and, between 1968 and 2010, racked up three Tony Awards and five Drama Desk Awards among multiple nominations, as well as a Grammy for best musical show album. With songs like “I’ll Never Fall in Love Again,” “I Say a Little Prayer for You,” and “A House is not a Home,” who could doubt the musical genius of Burt Bacharach? [The Group Rep](#) has taken on this big theater musical for its 2022 holiday show. Directed by Brent Beerman with musical direction by Kathi Chaplar and choreography by Paul Reid and Hisato Masuyama, this is the perfect production for the season.

The time is the later 1960s, and the place is the Consolidated Life Insurance Company in New York City. The unassuming and quiet Chuck Baxter has big dreams and hopes to make his mark in the corporate world of insurance. Try as he might, this is a man who’s easy to forget, a man who doesn’t stand out in a crowd, a classic example of a nerd. But that isn’t preventing him from shooting for a promotion from



Alec Reusch and Danica Waitley in *PROMISES, PROMISES* - Photo by Doug Engalla

junior executive to the seventeenth floor, where he can join the Big Boys with a key to the executive bathroom. Chuck has hit upon the perfect plan: he is allowing his midtown apartment to be used by his married superiors for romantic trysts. True, he is often stuck out in the winter cold while he waits for permission to enter his own digs; and he’s losing a lot of sleep because of it. But what’s a little sacrifice for the golden apple?

All seems to be going well – until Chuck (Alec Reusch) takes a shine to Fran Kubelik (Danica Waitley), a waitress in the corporate dining room. Little does he know that Fran is the current girl-of-the-month for J.D. Sheldrake (Kevin Mi-



Hisato Masuyama, Ray Mainenti, Diane Linder, and Rob Schumann – Photo by Doug Engalla

chael Moran), the very powerful personnel director in the company. He has been taking Fran to Chuck’s apartment. Unfortunately, Fran also does not realize that she is Sheldrake’s girl-of-the-month and thinks that Sheldrake is planning on an imminent divorce. Meanwhile, the heavy traffic in and out of Chuck’s apartment has even drawn the attention of next-apartment neighbor Dr. Dreyfuss (Stan Mazin), who considers Chuck the stud-of-the-year.

Director Brent Beerman and musical director and vocal arranger Kathi Chaplar have done an excellent job of keeping the ball rolling, the laughs flowing, and the upbeat music coming. Character development clearly takes a second seat to comedy, song, and dance. *PROMISES, PROMISES* has a lively cast who frequently swing and sway their way across the stage (with some amazing acrobatics occasionally thrown in) as they raise their voices to Bacharach’s iconic tunes. Congratulations to set designer Mareli Mitchel-Shields, who somehow manages to compress dozens of scene changes into simple small onstage revisions, no small feat in such a big musical. Michael Mullen’s costumes always remind us that it’s the 1960s, and the entire production team do a superb job converting a big theater production into a small theater setting.

*PROMISES, PROMISES* is entertaining, hilarious, and a genuine musical treat. The Group Rep presents the musical in its entirety, which runs as long as the original production – but with only one intermission. This is a fun show, and it will also remind some of us seniors what shows were like in the 60s and 70s, when attention spans were apparently far longer. Go for the flash and splash and stay for those lovely Bacharach songs. You’ll be glad that you did.

*PROMISES, PROMISES* runs through 1/15/23 with performances at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. The Lonny Chapman Theatre is located at 10900 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood, CA 91601. Tickets are \$40 (senior and students \$35; parties 10+ \$30). For information and reservations, call 818-763-5990 or go [online](#).

# Hands of Time

A Poem by CWC –SFV member Anne W. Lee

Reprinted from Anne W. Lee's book: *In Rounds*

Time sympathetically pats the heads  
of the historians and says,  
“There, there,”  
as they wince with guilt  
over their crumbling temples.  
Time protectively holds  
the back of the shirt of futurists  
as they lean farther over the edge  
to see what is beyond.  
So wild-eyed and cavalier.  
But Time prefers  
to cross its hands behind its head,  
lean back and rest in  
this moment of Now.  
Knowing its realm of influence is at the apex.  
Oh, but to let love embrace  
this moment of Now.  
Instead, we reach back behind us,  
trying to touch a moment  
as we rush by the details.  
Love’s clarity has no choice  
but to melt into abstract.  
We pant and complain  
of our emotional disconnect.  
Be intentional,  
if you long for my embrace  
with your love, warns Time.  
Tether all your neural senses to  
this moment of Now.  
Secure them deep in the recesses  
of the prehistoric mind.  
In the crawlspaces  
where blood relentlessly pounds the heart.  
Then the hands of Time will sign.  
Good.  
Now you’ve got it.  
Let’s move on!





# WHEN LIFE GIVES US LEMONS...

By Phyllis Butcher



Ah, yes, we know the drill! Alas, however, the remedy is not always that simple, nor is it within easy reach. What if life gives us one of the most unforeseen events to challenge our everyday existence, and practically brings us to our collective knees? We speak of the pandemic, of course. As we begin the third year of this pall that hovers over us and stubbornly refuses to exit for good, it is important that we try to find some silver linings that have emerged from these trying times; and they do exist. There are many positive results—correction, poor choice of words. “Positive”, when speaking of Covid-19, has taken on a different connotation; we’d rather “accentuate the negative”, as the song goes. So let us instead think in terms of beneficial consequences that have bolstered our morale. Glenn Geher, Ph.D. set forth several in a posting to *Psychology Today*\*. Here are some examples he discussed:

**Staying Connected:** Relatives, separated by the miles, became virtually accessible in several ways. The pandemic encouraged us to reach out to family and other loved ones much more.

**Learning New Skills:** This goes beyond baking bread. We surprised ourselves by picking up paintbrushes, learning a new language, expressing our thoughts through the written word, and exercising our brains with challenging and stimulating diversions.

**Appreciating Science:** We were stunned to learn that at unbelievable speed vaccines were being produced, approximately within twelve months’ time. Scientists throughout the world raced to slow down or halt the spread of the virus. An awesome feat worthy of immeasurable praise.

**Developing Resourceful Solutions:** Throughout the world, business and industry had to quickly and aggressively devise sustainable solutions to continue. Parents and teachers had to work individually and collectively to capture the minds and imaginations and patience of children. Accomplishing these tasks would have to be done almost entirely virtually. The bonus is that all of these skills can transfer to a post-pandemic world.

With respect to the discussion of resourcefulness, a cogent example is what transpired at the Motion Picture and Television Fund during those calamitous days and weeks when Covid-19 raised its ugly head. All activities for the residents were shut down, from Bingo to billiards, yoga to Yahtzee, Sing-Alongs to shuffleboard. Communal dining was terminated, as were any one-on-one visits with neighbors or family members. It was a totally devastating lockdown, and something had to be done to alleviate the situation as much as possible.

All of the residents had access to regular cable television programs, plus some additional occasional productions for the campus’s internal television station. The incredible people at Channel 22 decided to step up and find some way to fill the empty hours with some form of entertainment. With the advent of Zoom they were able to put together a collection of live programming, ranging from music to exercises, games and celebrity interviews. They enlisted participation by residents as much as possible. They called their four or five daily hours “Organized Chaos”. It was and is still an incredible accomplishment. At some point, our CWC friend and colleague, Ray de Tournay suggested a more appropriate and deserving name: “Creative Chaos”, and thus it remains. It has fostered several outstanding permanent segments, including Ray’s brainchild, “Wandering the World Wide Web”.

The resilience of the human component leads to unimaginable outcomes and—alright, positive results. It does, indeed, come down to making that lemonade. How sweet it is!

\* Source: *Psychology Today*: [10 Positive Outcomes of the Pandemic](#)





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.

## CWC-SFV SPEAKERS 2023



**ANGIE CHATMAN**

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 7<sup>TH</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (ZOOM)**

**“The First Drafts Club.”**

As with any product, your story needs beta testing. Having a carefully chosen critique group is necessary to iron out any wrinkles in your text. Pushcart prize nominated writer and WEBBY award winning storyteller, Angie Chatman, will discuss the criteria to use so that you can get help to polish your piece for publication. Please visit Angie’s website, [www.angiecwritter.com](http://www.angiecwritter.com), where you can also sample her work.



**LAURA JENSEN WALKER**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4<sup>TH</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (ZOOM)**

**“Writing by the Seat of my Pants: From Memoir to Mysteries.”**

A Self-described ‘pantser’, Agatha-nominated and bestselling Amazon author, Laura Jensen Walker, will share her journey (including mistakes) of writing memoirs and mysteries by the seat of her pants. Visit [laurajensenwalker.com](http://laurajensenwalker.com) for more information on this sought-after speaker and her work.



**MANDY JACKSON-BEVERLY**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (ZOOM)**

**“Getting Your Book Published in the Modern World.”**

This workshop by author, teacher and podcast host, Mandy Jackson-Beverly, explores traditional, hybrid, and independent (self) publishing and gives you the knowledge you need to decide which style works best for you and your books. Visit [mandyjacksonbeverly.com](http://mandyjacksonbeverly.com) for more info on this popular speaker.



**LUZMARIA ESPINOSA**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (INPERSON / HYBRID IF AVAILABLE)**

**“POETRY: A Method of Reflection, Reconsideration, and Revision of Your Thoughts, Beliefs, and Actions.”**

Ventura County’s Poet Laureate, Luzmaria Espinosa, will read some of her poetry and share how her own life experiences, culture and community activism have shaped her work. To learn more about this poet, go to [Internationally Acclaimed Poet Luzmaria Espinosa](#) )



**ADAM PLANTINGA**

**SATURDAY, MAY 5TH 2023 @ 1PM**

**“Writing Realistic Police Procedures.”**

Writing a crime novel? 21-year police veteran and Agatha-nominated author Sgt. Adam Plantinga will talk about various aspects of real-life police work crucial to writing a crime-related novel or screenplay. Visit [adamplantinga.com](http://adamplantinga.com) for more information on Adam and his work.



Alan and Norma Wills in a February 2018 photo.

There was and ever will be, only one Alan Wills—my true friend and an outstanding writer. As a member of our CWC-SFV Saturday, a.m. critique group, he shared chapter after chapter of his now published book: *Confessions of a Wanker*. His dialogue was humorous, shocking and addictive.

Our group of six critiquers learned so much about Alan's childhood in the UK, his young adult adventures, his romances, and wild business deals—one deal so wild that he had to escape to the U.S.A.—in a hurry!

I first met Alan about 10 years ago at a gathering of author Bernard Snellings's *Alumni Writers Group*. This creative writing class met in the recreation room of the Bella Vista Apartments in Woodland Hills, where several group members lived. Sam Glenn was a member and he persuaded me to join the group. Some time later, I convinced Alan to visit a CWC-SFV meeting. Ultimately, he joined our club and soon joined the Saturday a.m. critique group where I was, and still am, the group leader.

A few years later, Alan and his wife, Norma, founded the *Authors Preview*, an online website where writers could submit their manuscripts and creative work for critiques. Alan and Norma stressed in their ads that *Authors Preview* was a free service for writers of all genres. Norma posted their ad on all forms of social media, including the CWC-SFV *Valley Scribe* newsletter and our club's website. Unfortunately, when Norma fell ill, *Authors Preview* was no longer offered. But Alan remained an active member of our CWC Saturday morning critique group until

Gerri Jabara's Saturday Morning group in 2018. Currently, Yolanda Fintor and Michael Savage are members of this critique group.



From left to right: Erica Stux (deceased), Geri Jabara, Ilan Sendowski, the late Alan Wills, Sam Glenn

the passing of Norma. Some of you may have noted his presence at our CWC-SFV Zoom meetings.

The recent passing of Alan Wills has left an emotional and literary hole in our critique group.

Alan Wills is someone I and many others in the writing community will never forget.

# Alan Wills Told Us Never-Ending Stories



Alan Wills and his daughter, Julie Boyer

**O**n November 26, 2022, at 10 p.m., Alan Wills passed away gently in the arms of the lord. After months of cardiac health issues, Alan's spirit was dancing once more with Norma, his beloved wife of 23 years.

Alan loved life to the fullest. He made everyone happy wherever he went. He loved writing trivia every week; even when he couldn't physically type, he still read to me, and I became his scribe. He gave me life and I will miss him more than anyone ever imagine.

Julie Boyer

## A Man of Two Worlds

By Ilan Sendowsky

I am a friend of Alan from the Jewish side. As it is a great Jewish Mitzva to comfort the mourners, it is my honor to remember my friend Alan Wills.

Alan was a funny, witty person in our two writing groups. I enjoyed his presence. We loved to be shocked by his life experiences.

He lived in two worlds all his life, from growing up in England, speaking with a Cockney accent with his friends, and then going to Grammar School, speaking polished English to satisfy his stepmother.

In his books, he took us through his experiences living in the U.K. His first loves, his engineering degree, and TV repair shop, which set him in conflict with the local gang and the fast escape intended to go to the middle east that landed him in the USA.

His humor and sharp tongue got him swinging from success to failure and back to success again. I could not believe how fast he collected new friends and sailed through life.

I remember his shocking attempt to attract a beautiful lady by telling her he was a brain surgeon. He did it by correspondence, and they were mailing him heads to practice, stretching the suspension of disbelief to its limit.

We traveled with him to the ice-cream store he succeeded in purchasing at a great deal and also his escape from the venture. We followed him on his chance-meeting with Norma, the love of his life.

And through the words, he spoke as if he believed he was the man of the house when actually he was led and directed from behind in his various endeavors.

Our writer critique group enjoyed visiting Alan and Norma's house. Seeing the classic paintings on the walls and the international artifacts that were collected on their travels was such a treat. I loved his Christmas snow display, watching new figures appear every year.

I loved his idea of life celebrating activities - from a birthday, to a birth week, to a birth month, and he was on the edge of a birth year.

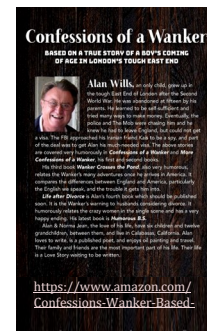
So many talents: writing, painting, poetry.

The view of white orchids ever blossoming in the kitchen window always hit me with envy. With open arms and a wide smile, Alan explained his technique. This was Alan, full of blossoming success, working the system.

Then, when Covid started, he took to entertaining us by emailing us his "Multiple Choice" quizzes. Of course, being unfamiliar with American culture and old actors and movies, it was too hard for me.

I thank Alan for allowing me to travel together in our real and imaginary voyage through life. Learn some life lessons to copy and some to be careful to avoid.

You were a good friend, Alan.



## Mr. Hospitality

**F**or several years, Alan Wills was CWC-SFV's "Mr. Hospitality." Every monthly meeting, he arrived early at the Saban Room to brew a pot of coffee, heat water for tea and lay out plates, cups and utensils for an assortment of snacks.

Alan was a gregarious soul, as befits his unofficial title as Mr. Hospitality. He loved to chat with any and all members of our writing group

But let's not minimize the fact that Alan Wills was a gifted writer and the published author of a memoir: *Confessions of a Wanker*.

This book reveals Alan's ability to write about his past history with flair and earthy humor. His book also shares how he met early difficulties in his life with a gritty determination to survive and strive for success.

The next two pages in this newsletter recount how Alan managed to leapfrog across the Pond and start a new life in the United States.

Please read on and enjoy one of Alan's fast-paced irreverent narratives.

Kathy Highcove, Editor

I toss and turn all night with nightmares of being chased by the Mob and the police. I awake in a pool of sweat, at six Tuesday morning. Wide-awake I worry and scheme. My mind is going a hundred miles per hour.

*You know Wills, you've kept Annette in the dark regarding any of your somewhat shady business ventures.*

*Well of course I did! A fiancée doesn't want to hear she's going to marry a wanker, a con man, does she?*

*Wills, are you sure you want to marry such a straight arrow? She's good and honest just like Mum.*

*Wills, she doesn't like sex, says you can have a blood mistress when you're married!*

*That's only part of the problem! Keeping my lies straight when she asks me about my shady business deals, that's like juggling flaming swords.*

By seven A.M., I have completely rehearsed my speech, and dial her number. As it rings, I realize that I still have to think up an excuse as to why I can't pick her up at her house. *I certainly can't tell her it's because she lives too close to the Billiard Hall and the Mob who wants to kill me.*

"Good morning, this is Annette!" she answers, sounding wide-awake. "Oh, hello my love."

"What a nice surprise, Alan. You never call me on weekday mornings. What's wrong?"

"Annette, I've just made a major decision concerning our future life together. Oh, by the way, I'm calling from up the West End!"

"What on earth are you doing in London so early in the morning?"

"Well, once I'd made up my mind, I decided to set all the gears in motion. So, call your work and tell them you're sick, then catch a train and...."

She interrupts, "Hold on a minute, Alan! What's all this about? Is it to do with our wedding in three months?"

"Well sort of! It's a surprise, my darling, and you'll love it. So, shake a leg, look pretty and meet me at Selfridges Department Store on Oxford Street."

"Alan! I can't take a day off work just like that! I have a Mason's speech to type for Mr. Montague for a luncheon today."

"Now look here, Annette," I say abruptly. "I'm talking about our life together! How can you consider a speech, which is a repeat of his last ten speeches your boss gave to the bloody Masons, being more important than our future?" I pause, and my mind flashes back to a picture of my own grandfather surrounded by his lodge brothers all wearing their Mason regalia. "Especially as it's to be read to a bunch of sleazy old farts dressed in their aprons with bloody gold fringe."



"Masons do a lot of good, Alan. Please understand the letter is not more important, but I must do it. Why don't I go into work early, and type the speech, then meet you for lunch? Surely a few hours can't make that much difference to your mysterious plans for our future."

"You just don't understand, Annette. What if it takes all day?"

"No, it can't! I'm a fast typist. I will have it finished before noon. "

"I ain't talking about 'ya bloody typing, silly! I mean, what we 'ave to do might take all day." I say, gritting my teeth, hating my Cockney coming out when I'm angry.

"But you won't tell me what's going on. You just sound so impatient like it's a matter of life and death. Why can't you just tell me?"

"Because then it won't be a bloody surprise, would it? I swear to God you women are the most frustrating creatures! Sometimes I can almost understand men turning gay. OK, look, I don't want to fight with you Annette. You meet me in the toy department at Selfridges at eleven o'clock."

"Alan, you're driving me crazy with all this cloak and dagger stuff." I hear a small whimper, and know she is close to tears.

*I hate when women cry!* I think.

*Wills, maybe you should have discussed emigrating with her before now!*

*No, then she would've asked loads of embarrassing questions, like why do we have to leave England in such a hurry?*

Then to my shock she says, "Well O.K! I'll see you at eleven."

I hang up the phone and head for Highams Park station. I board the steam train for Liverpool Street, and transfer to the Tube. As always, the rush hour commuters are packed in the Underground train like sardines. I stand, one hand in the air holding the strap all the way to Marble Arch. Leaving the train, I'm carried along by the flow of troglodytes, and as a herd we head for the escalator. I can't wait to reach the top for the cool fresh air of the street to escape the bad breath, body odors, and even farts.

I decide to go directly to the American Embassy, in Grosvenor Square, to pick up the emigration forms for Annette and me. In awe I look up at the huge white embassy, and I'm impressed. The nine-story building (three stories are below ground) with its distinctive stone columns and enormous golden eagle up top, with outstretched wings, that I hope is the symbol of liberty and justice.

*Wills, you sure it's not a bloody vulture that could pick you up in its claws and return you to England and the waiting police.*

*(Continued on page 13)*

Shut the hell up, that eagle represents my new life of honesty in America.

Two military policemen, in immaculately pressed uniforms with pistols on their hip, stand guard at the front entrance. Nervously, I hurry past them quickly, and head for the line of people waiting in front of the window designated 'INFORMATION.' Twenty minutes later, I am standing in front of a thin-lipped, pointy-nosed, Norman Rockwell farmer type. Squinting at me through tiny round gold spectacles, he asks "Want to emigrate to the good -old U.S. of A., do you, Sonny?"

"Oh yes, sir, very much, sir," I answer.

"Well, there's a quota list, and there's a whole army of Brits in front of you. I would guess you could reckon on a year or two wait."

"But sir," I plead, "I have to get to California by next week. Me poor old Aunt Alice is dying."

"Well Sonny, there's no problem. You just need a temporary visitor's visa."

"But, sir, you don't understand. I must move there and work to support the seven young children that she'll leave behind." I look at him for a reaction, feeling that I might have overdone the number of kids.

"There's only two ways to bypass the quota," he says, evidently having swallowed the seven-kid story. "One is to have evidence of support in the form of at least six thousand dollars in the bank. That's so you won't become a burden to the state. The other is to have a profession for which there are not enough qualified Americans. Even then, you still need a stateside employer to sponsor you." It is obvious to me from his monotone retort that he has repeated this a million times before.

"Christ, they make it near impossible to get to America, don't they?"

"Not really. Here, take this immigration form and fill it out, and return it in this envelope. The sooner the better! We've had a real



influx of applications from professionals since your government introduced Super Tax."

Super income tax can reach as high as ninety-four percent for earnings over twenty thousand pounds (\$60,000) a year. Consequently, England is experiencing what is called the "Brain Drain." Movie stars, rock group's doctors, barristers, and degreed professional men are all leaving England in droves because of this tax.

"That's another reason I'm leaving. Got to be bloody bonkers to work for six pennies out of a pound! Thanks, Mister. Oh wait, you'd better give me another form for my future bride, too."

I leave the embassy scanning the five-page, legal length form, in disbelief. There are hundreds of questions and each one is asked in three tenses.

- 47 (a.) Are you a prostitute? yes no
- (b.) Have you ever been a prostitute? yes no
- (c.) Do you intend becoming a prostitute? yes no

The same three tense a, b, and c questions continue down the page.

- 48 (b.) Have you ever been a homosexual? yes no
- 49 (c.) Do you intend becoming a communist? yes no

This form has my sit-com mind working overtime with crazy answers, such as:

*Wills: To The Man at the American Embassy, Take one:*

*Yes, I used to be a prostitute, but gave it up to become a homosexual communist. However, once I get to the United States, I plan to become a Black Panther radical and overthrow the government. I'll then write and publish my life story, hiding the millions of dollars I earn in a Swiss bank account. Then I'll live the American dream on welfare.*

My sit-com entertains me so well that I'm surprised to find myself already at Oxford Street. In spite of my humorous thoughts, I can see a certain irony to such a police state questionnaire being given to people who are trying to get to the **Land of the Free!**

Before Alan joined our club, he hosted a writing group at his home, called The Wednesday Morning A.M. group. When COVID struck our community, the group was forced to disband. Fortunately, Alan and his wife Norma, had already launched an online group called *Authors Preview*. Some CWC-SFV members might recall seeing Alan's ad in this newsletter from time to time.



Any writer who sought a free critique could submit their writing to *Authors Preview* and Alan would post it on his website to attract critiques from another online writer. For free. No strings attached. What could be better? However, Alan was initially dismayed that his new website was not a raging success. "After all, it's free!" he'd assure his SFV audience.

Eventually, his website caught the attention of critique-needy correspondents and thus Alan had finally gained new internet friends. All was well until ... his beloved Norma was unwell.

Kathy Highcove

The Authors Preview website is no longer active.



The library will be closed Sunday, January 1 & Monday, January 2, 2023 in observance of New Year's Day.

Events

- Adults
- Babies & Toddlers
- Bilingual Events
- Calendar
- Celebrations
- Dia
- Exhibits
- Exhibit: Barrier Breakers
- Exhibit: It Really is a River
- Kids
- L.A. Made
- Seniors
- Teens
- Winter Celebrations
- Your Author Series / Tu serie de autores

150th Anniversary

- Español
- Kids & Parents
- Teens

- How Do I? >
- My Library Account >
- Reserve a Computer >
- Ask a Librarian >
- Book a Librarian >
- Find A Library >

Connect with LAPL



Support Your Library

150th Anniversary Celebration

English | Español

Los Angeles Public Library



The library is celebrating its 150th anniversary with 150 days of activities and events, from December 7, 2022 - May 6, 2023.

Celebrate With Us



150th Anniversary Challenge

Register to join this fun activity-based challenge to earn badges and be entered into a drawing to win a gift card from The Library Store.



Library Timeline

Explore the path from the library's humble beginnings in 1872 to present day Central Library and 72 neighborhood libraries.



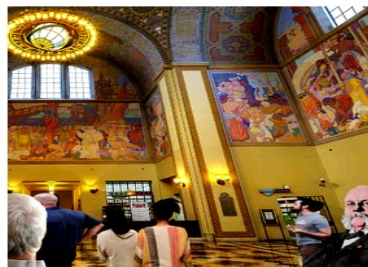
Their Story

Share your library memories using this web-based storytelling platform to help collect and preserve the stories that connect us.



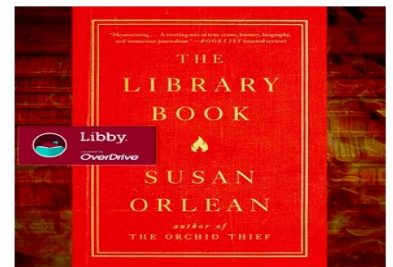
Freegal Birthday Party Playlist

Music for a 150th Birthday Party: A Century and a Half of Songs from the Los Angeles Public Library



Virtual Escape Room

Adventure through library history to see if you can solve a series of virtual puzzles and return to the present day. Time travelers wanted!



Overdrive/Libby List

Check out these great titles to expand your knowledge of L.A. and our library

150th Anniversary Commemorative Poster

In collaboration with Gallery 1988, limited edition posters celebrating the library's 150th anniversary were created by graphic designers DKNG.



- ▶ Go to your [local branch](#) to explore the poster in person.
- ▶ Read a book featured in this limited edition poster as part of the [150th Anniversary Challenge](#).
- ▶ A small number of copies will be available to purchase from [The Library Store](#).

See if you can read all 150 titles as part of the 150th Anniversary Challenge!

Check the book list below for all 150 titles featured in the limited edition poster. Easily place a hold on a title of your choice with your library card, and get started on this unique reading adventure.

[150th Anniversary Book List](#)

## Winter Haiku

Santa Claus flattened  
No air in the big balloon  
Maybe tomorrow  
The pump is turned off right now  
Don't want to bother neighbors

A foggy morning  
The mist is impenetrable  
And it's very cold  
Winter has finally arrived  
I wish that I enjoyed it

Naked tree, branches  
Point like arthritic fingers  
In accusation  
Sky, don't you know it's winter  
I'll be cold without my clothes,

Here comes the New Year  
I've so much left to complete  
There's a world undone  
I'm the nutty professor

My desk is overflowing  
Piles massed on the furniture  
I can't wait until next year  
To quit and leave it behind  
Then I can relax in time  
And polish up my golf game

Michael Edelstein

Winter trees photo by David Crean

# SEARCH

lost unspoken  
thoughts in crystal imagination  
reduced to a feeling

sadness darkens my text  
words dimmer without context  
thoughts become wandering symbols

with pen in hand once more  
I'll search the ashes of my memory  
for a glimmer of clarity

**Lillian Rodich**



## Who We Are And What We Do



The California Writers Club has been in existence for over 100 years, and the SFV Branch for over 20 years. Our mission is to encourage excellence in writing, fiction, non-fiction and poetry, as well as to reach out into our community and mentor writers at all stages of their writing journey. We hold Zoom meetings on the first Saturday of each month from 1 PM to 3 PM. Meetings are free for all members.

Our meetings feature presentations from published writers, editors and other writing industry experts speaking on topics ranging from how to improve our writing, overcome writer's block, get published, and promote our work.

For information and reviews on prior monthly speakers please go to:

[monthly editions of the Scribe](#)

To learn more about the CWC-SFV, check out our website for more information: [CWC-SFV.org](http://CWC-SFV.org)

In addition, we host six critique groups which meet monthly or bi-monthly to give CWC-SFV members feedback from their CWC-SFV peers. They meet in person, on Zoom, or in hybrid groups.

For further information about the several CWC-SFV critique groups, contact Pat Avery at:

[cwcsanfernandovalley@gmail.com](mailto:cwcsanfernandovalley@gmail.com)

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