



The Valley Scribe



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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE YOU WILL MEET OUR TEN GUEST SPEAKERS FOR 2023-24

THEY ARE EAGER TO SHARE THEIR STORIES WITH YOU



HIRAM SIMS



JONATHAN MABERRY



JOAN GELFAND



VANESSA FOX O'LOUGHLIN



PAUL LEWIS

In this August issue, we're excited to include your speaker program for the 2023-2024 season. We hope you'll find the variety of presentation subjects and speakers interesting and diverse; from poets (including past and present poet laureates), best-selling novelists and memoirists to motivational speakers. Our meetings will be hybrid with some speakers appearing via Zoom (from the UK, Ireland and all over the US), local presenters and in-person. We hope you'll attend many of these meetings, not only to help the speakers feel welcome but also to share these unique experiences with fellow club members

Our meetings take place in the Saban Health and Wellness Center at the Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF) in Woodland Hills. It is through the generosity of the MPTF that we're fortunate to be able to use this space for our club. The meeting room is large and comfortable with plenty of seating for everyone. We hope you will attend many meetings at the MPTF.

When you attend in-person, you'll be able to enjoy discussions, over coffee and cookies, with writers, share your ideas and find out what other members are working on, perhaps even form that critique group you have been looking for. And, if the presenter is also in attendance, you will have the opportunity talk to him or her face-to-face about writing.

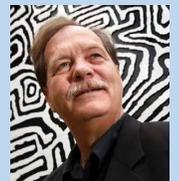
No matter the topic, it seems there is always something new to be learned about the writing process, such as: a path to becoming published, the habits of successful writers, or how to break writer's block. Whatever their chosen genre, our presenters put aside all of life's daily distractions, actually sit down and write, put up with 'failure' or rejection or projects that went nowhere, but still manage to forge ahead and get published. Sometimes writing is a second or third career for our speakers!

The presenters are delighted to share their time and expertise with CWC-SFV. Our first meeting with poet, essayist and creative writing professor, Hiram Sims, is on Saturday, September 9 at 1pm. Presenting to us in-person, Hiram will share some of his poetry and discuss writing in various genres. We are looking forward to seeing you at the MPTF!

Heather Bradshaw
CWC-SFV Program Chair



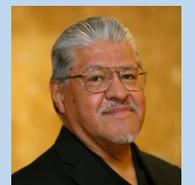
SYNITHIA WILLIAMS



CHRIS VOGLER



KIRSTEN CASEY



LUIS J RODRIGUEZ



WOODY WOODBURN

Karen's Corner

By Karen Gorback, CWC-SFV President

Cashing In



I've always been interested in brain science. Maybe that's why the topic of artificial intelligence (AI), about which I wrote last month, fascinates me. And that's why I've also devoured three of Lisa Cron's books: *Wired for Story: The Writer's Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook Readers from the Very First Sentence* (2012); *Story Genius: How to Use Brain Science to Go Beyond Outlining and Write a Riveting Novel (Before You Waste Three Years Writing 327 Pages That Go Nowhere)* (2016); and *Story or Die: How to Use Brain Science to Engage, Persuade, and Change Minds in Business and in Life* (2021). If you read only one, you'll be well on your way to more impactful writing. Special thanks to club member Rita Keeley-Brown, who invited Lisa to be our guest speaker a couple of times, several years ago.

The July/August 2023 *Writer's Digest* also addresses brain science in an article titled "The Right vs. Left Brain Dilemma" by C. Hope Clark. You probably know that the left side of the brains functions to process logic, attention to detail, writing, etc., while the right side attends to emotions, creativity, and imagination.

Clark explains that writers can exercise both sides of their brains to improve their writing, whether or not one side is dominant. She says, "Regardless of the genre, style or voice of your writing, however, and in spite of all the mythical tests across the internet, you draw upon both sides of your mind."

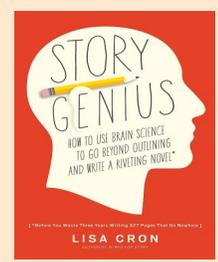
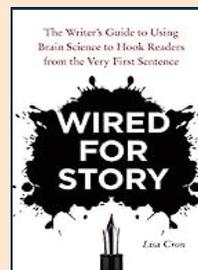
To exercise the left side, she suggests reading more often and more diversely, writing in a different POV or in an unfamiliar genre, plotting differently from your usual "plotter or pantser" habit, practicing writing to prompts, expanding your vocabulary, and keeping a journal of phrases that catch your fancy as you read. I tend to read

with a highlighter to mark the verbs and expressions I may want to repurpose at a later date.

To exercise the right side, Clark recommends enjoying the arts more often, meditating, socializing and laughing! I love this – especially the laughing part!

Finally, as a career counselor in my earlier career, I worked with adults returning to college to learn new skills. Sadly, they were often fearful of being "too old" to learn something new. In response, I referred to brain science – specifically a phenomenon called *neuroplasticity*. Neuroplasticity refers to a healthy brain's ability to accommodate for new stimuli by making new, neural pathways as we assimilate knowledge throughout our lives. Outdated science suggested that our brains "stopped" learning at a certain age, but recent studies in neuroplasticity have proven the contrary.

Thus, understanding brain science to improve our writing is completely do-able, whether tapping into Lisa Cron's research or exercising the less dominant sides of our brains, per Clark's article. Finally, circling back to AI, I'm thinking of cashing in a few left brain cells to learn ChatGPT. Maybe I'll try it on an upcoming column for the *Scribe*. Will you be able to tell if it's me or GPT?



Three of Lisa Cron's books available on [Brain Science](#)



Whether you're a published author or "have always wanted to write," please join the CWC-SFV for monthly meetings at the Motion Picture and Television Fund Wasserman Campus in Woodland Hills. Presenters will join us either in person or via Zoom on the huge screen in the Gianopulos Family Community Center. You'll enjoy networking with other writers while learning more about the craft and business of writing. For more information and single lecture prices, visit <https://www.cwc-sfv.org>. Presentations are free for CWC members

CWC-SFV GUEST SPEAKERS FOR 2023-2024

September 9, 2023

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Join poet, author, and photographer Hiram Sims as we explore the power, history and significance of the Ekphrastic poetry. We will identify homemade images and artwork that will be the basis of writing new poems. (In-person)



HIRAM SIMS

October 7, 2023

A LONG STANGE TRIP - A WRITERS JOURNEY

NY Times bestselling author, Jonathan Maberry, will discuss how writing horror got him started in his writing career, share insider tips, fresh perspectives on the changes in the publishing trade, and strategies for getting in gear and getting in print. (Zoom)



JONATHAN
MABERRY

November 4, 2023

YOU CAN BE A WINNING WRITER

Award-winning poet and author of seven books, Joan Gelfand, will talk to us about various strategies to getting published. Her book, *You Can Be a Winning Writer: the 4c's of Successful Authors* was an Amazon #1 best seller. (Zoom)



JOAN GELFAND

December 2, 2023

BEATING REJECTION

Best-selling author Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin, (aka crime writer Sam Blake), will discuss exactly what the industry is looking for and how best to submit your work. She will show you how to improve your pitch and build your author platform. (Zoom)



VANESSA FOX
O'LOUGHLIN

January 6, 2024

A COMPLICATED LIFE

Author, lecturer and BBC presenter, Paul Lewis, will talk to us about prolific Victorian author Wilkie Collins's incredible work ethic and his colorful private life. (Zoom)



PAUL LEWIS



SYNITHIA WILLIAMS

February 3, 2024

BLACK AND IN LOVE

Romance author, Synithia Williams, will talk about why she started writing romance novels and why she likes to focus on black love in her award-nominated stories. (Zoom)

March 2, 2024

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Inspired by mythologist. Joseph Campbell, screenwriter, author and educator Christopher Vogler, will show us how to use the hero's journey to improve our creative writing. (In-person)



CHRIS VOGLER

April 6, 2024

PUTTING THE FUN BACK INTO WRITING

Kirsten Casey is a California Poet in the Schools, creative writing teacher, and the current Nevada County Poet Laureate. She wants you to enjoy writing, even if you feel undisciplined and blocked. (Zoom)



KIRSTEN CASEY

May 4, 2024

WRITING TRANSFORMED MY LIFE

Poet, writer, and activist, Luis Rodriguez, will share his poetry and discuss the transformative experience of writing his memoir: *Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.* (Zoom)



LUIS J RODRIGUEZ

June 1, 2024

COACH WOODEN AND ME

Author and award-winning columnist, Woody Woodburn, will discuss what we can learn from his memoir, *WOODEN & ME: Life Lessons from My Two-Decade Friendship with the Legendary Coach and Humanitarian.* (In-person)



WOODY WOODBURN

ITS TIME TO PAY YOUR DUES! PLEASE READ THIS IMPORTANT MESSAGE.

Club members have until September 30, 2023 to renew their annual membership at the low rate of \$45.00. After September 30, the rate goes up to \$65 and members will need to reapply for membership with all applicable paperwork.

Please check out the program that our Program Chair Heather Bradshaw developed for the upcoming year. It's a graduate-level lecture series for \$4.50 a month—the cost of one, fancy coffee drink. Such a deal! And you have the option of attending either in-person at the beautiful MPTF or on the cozy sofa in your living room via Zoom. But we hope you'll take advantage of attending in-person to resume friendships and networking with other club members.

Remember the benefits of being a member of belonging to our organization.

Members of our branch are entitled to all of the following:

1. Free admission to all regular events and presentations of the branch throughout the year.
2. A free subscription to our monthly newsletter, *The Valley Scribe*
3. Reduced membership dues if already a member of another CWC branch
4. Access to regular meetings held by the other 21 branches of the CWC at no charge or whatever the branch members may be asked to pay to attend. This does not extend to special branch events.
5. Free membership in one or more of the critique groups maintained by our branch (subject to space availability)

Renew today with one of the renewal methods below.

**PRESENTING OUR 2023-24
MEMBERSHIP DRIVE
RAFFLE WINNER:**



MICHAEL EDELSTEIN

who will receive a full refund of his 2023-24 membership fees.

What a sweet delight
Opportunity
to write
I did something right
The pleasure's easy to see
In our CWC

Michael Edelstein

Payment Options

Payment by check made payable to: CWC-SFV

**Mail to: CWC-SFV Woodland Hills
PO Box 564,
Woodland Hills, CA 91367**

OR

Pay your dues with an easy online payment:

Go to www.cwc-sfv.org

Click on "Membership Information."

At the bottom of the left-hand column, click on

"Membership Renewals."

**Pay with either a PayPal Account
or your debit/credit card.**



MY JOB AS YOUR EDITOR

BY KATHY HIGHCOVE



Before the CWC-SFV launches our 2023-24 year, I'd like to discuss my role as your editor of *The Valley Scribe*. I have edited this newsletter – and its predecessor, *The West Valley InFocus* – for several years. And now, I think its high time to review for all of you, my readers, how I define my role as editor of *The Valley Scribe*.

First of all, let's look at the most common definitions of an editor. I went online and selected these two definitions. Here's what I discovered in the *Collins English Dictionary*:

1. An **editor** is a person who collects pieces of writing by different authors and prepares them for publication.
2. An **editor** is a computer program that enables a user to change and correct stored data.

The second definition obviously refers to an editor's AI, such as my many-tooled Microsoft Publishing System. This AI will alert me to changes of text size, format, grammar and spelling errors. I would not publish any document, let alone a multi-page newsletter, without the help of an AI. However, an AI is not able to sort out the spelling of many names and foreign terms.

I identify very strongly with the first "editor" definition. Every month, I carefully choose articles and members' creative work for our newsletter. Occasionally I will select a story or article or poem written or published by a member of another CWC branch or another CWC editor.

Occasionally, I will publish works by a guest writer, someone I've corresponded with and who's given me permission to publish their work in our newsletter. It's not often that I feature a guest writer but when there's *Scribe* page space and if I decide the submission has merit in some way for my readers, I will give the author a place in our newsletter.

I think of an editor as someone who "constructs" the pages of a publication, I try to carefully select the right font and images for each page of each *Scribe* issue. In my opinion, each page should coordinate with other pages in the publication, like one room's décor coordinates with other rooms in a structure.

I always ask a submitters for permission to publish their

creative work in the *Scribe*, and every submitter receives a preview of their published work in order to make corrections and note errors or any changes I've unintentionally made in their document. However, when I need to reduce word **count** in a paragraph, I may reword a sentence or paragraph. If a submitter discovers that I've (apparently) misplaced, omitted or messed up their text, he or she needs to let me know. I'll try to rectify the error, especially if the mistake is brought to my attention before I publish the final draft.

Mention of a final draft reminds me of an editor's two neon-hued lines in the sand: **word count** and **deadline date**. Every editor, whatever their publishing styles, their do's and don'ts, personal quirks, favorite fonts, etc., will demand that submitters respect their word count allowance and the editor's deadline date. Whether a submitter must deal with bad weather, family vacations, earthquakes, rain storms, visiting relatives, religious festivals, car trouble, broken limbs or power lines, dental work, the final drafts of a promised work must be submitted on time. If not, the submitter has missed the boat.

The only way to make things right is to wait for another *Scribe* issue or perhaps I'll go back into the newsletter archives, wake up my publisher system and insert the missing word or fix a typo. I sometimes make these changes before the issue is published to all the CWC editors and presidents or., hopefully, sent to your relatives and good friends.

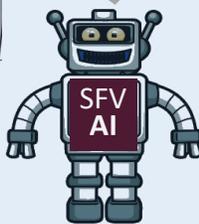
Finally, after an issue is published, if I learn of an error or typo in a published issue, I will fix the problem before the issue is stored in *The Valley Scribe* archives. And even after the offending pub in the stacks, I will make repairs. In summary: I will do my best to present your work in its best light. Thanks so much for your support!

In the coming year I hope to see many CWC-SFV members in person at future meetings in the Saban room at the MPTF, Write on, everyone! Stay cool.

OMG! I just found another blasted typo!



Boss Kathy, remember that, sadly, you are only human.



The California Writers Club Bulletin is a quarterly newsletter emailed to members of all 22 branches as a PDF attachment. The latest issue was sent on June 15. If you don't recall receiving it, you might want to check your spam folder, or if you're on Gmail, the Promotions folder. The current and past issues of the Bulletin may also be found at <https://calwriters.org/bulletin>.

The Bulletin was extensively revamped and revised a year ago, and is now full of helpful articles on writing craft, publishing and marketing. Equally important, there are now several opportunities for members to promote their books and literary achievements.

Announce your latest book release in the Member Spotlight. Also welcome is news of literary achievements: short stories, poems or articles published, awards and honors. Send your announcements, 50 words or less, to editor@calwriters.org. Attach a copy of your book cover in JPEG format. Be sure to indicate which branch you belong to. This is a free service to CWC members, so do take advantage of it!

The Bulletin is also looking for articles on writing craft, marketing, publication, and the writing life. Word count can be anywhere from 200 for short tidbits to 1200 or so for long pieces. Send a brief proposal to editor@calwriters.org. Contributors receive a short blurb and a photo, so this is a great way to promote your books or your writing-related services.

The deadline for the next issue of CWC's Bulletin is September 1, 2023, with publication slated for September 15.

Joyce Krieg

editor@calwriters.org

Summer Bulletin: [Bulletin Dec 2022. \(calwriters.org\)](https://calwriters.org/bulletin)

CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN
SUMMER 2023

ChatGPT Wrote My Query Letter. Sort of.

by Daniel Bacon, Marin

Unless you've been holed up in a Himalayan cave the last few months, you've read about ChatGPT, the revolutionary new AI (artificial intelligence) chatbot that interacts conversationally and can "write" follow-up questions, submit articles, challenge incorrect premises, and—get this—“reject inappropriate requests.” Created by OpenAI, a San Francisco-based company, ChatGPT thrived on headlines and is forcing tech behemoths Google and Apple to play catch-up.

Curious, I decided to test it, and to say I was flabbergasted is an understatement. I'm currently sending out queries to literary agents for a recently completed historical novel. For months I've slugged, sweated over, and used all my rhetorical powers to create a query that I hope will paper the interest of a worthy agent. I began my test by asking ChatGPT to write a query letter based on a two-paragraph description of my novel's premise. Now here's the crazy thing when I clicked on the "start" icon, a manuscript later a square cursor slid across the screen leaving trail of words, sentences, and paragraphs in its wake as my wordiness was steered in a different direction. In less time than it takes to tie your shoelaces, it wrote a six-paragraph query letter.

Wait a minute, I thought, it might just be gibberish.

As it turned out, the query looked all the more sane. It contained an enthusiastic opening sentence with a title (it created), the genre, and a brief description of the premise. This was followed by two paragraphs describing a plausible plot and two more paragraphs on why readers will like it. It even closed with a paragraph thanking the agent and noting that the first three chapters and a synopsis were included (they were not actually included). It didn't use the word "agent," which is mandatory, and it was a bit bland, but it described several details not in my prompt, probably because my prompt focused on a well-known event.

My appetite whetted, I wanted to see if ChatGPT could write a query that more closely adhered to my novel. I gave it more details and again it quickly scrolled out another query. However, it still wasn't as good as my hand-drawn original version.

Finally, I pasted in my entire query as a prompt and let it rip. One minute later, as I read the result, I felt a twinge of pride that aside from the open and closing paragraphs, Chat had used my text verbatim.

So takeaways: this tool can be useful in beginning writing a query letter that can be customized. But be careful. One important purpose of a query is to show off your writing style and, at least for the time being, only you can do that.

Daniel Bacon is president of the Marin branch. He is the founder of the Barbary Coast Trail, San Francisco's official literary walk. He is the editor of *Volcano*, San Francisco on the Barbary Coast Trail, as well as numerous articles for local and national publications. www.daniel-bacon.com, www.barbarycosttrail.org. This article originally appeared on the May issue of the Marin branch newsletter and is reprinted with permission.

CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN
SPRING 2023

Thriving as an Author in the Age of AI

Editor's Note: Five developments have ignited talk—and hand-wringing—in the literary world like the launch of artificial intelligence (AI) software, specifically ChatGPT. Nov. 30, 2022. If a robot can write a reasonably decent novel, what does this mean for the future of our human authors? Here's one opinion, reprinted by permission from the *Your Writer Platform* blog.

by Kimberly Grabas, Your Writer Platform

As an author, you know that the world of publishing is a wild ride—and it's only getting wilder with the rise of AI.

But you know what?

This is actually the best time in history to be an author and build a powerful personal brand. Let's face it, with AI automating the writing and editing process, and more and more competition entering the market, it's becoming a real challenge to stand out and get noticed. But here's the thing: this is exactly why you need to step up your game and create a brand that sets you apart.

Whether you're a newbie just starting out, or you're a seasoned pro looking to take things to the next level, this article is for you. So buckle up, my friend. It's time to turn your passion into a powerful brand that will set you apart, get you recognized, and help you grow your author business.

Understanding the Impact of AI on the Publishing Industry

Okay, let's talk about the elephant in the room—AI.

It's time to understand the impact that artificial intelligence technology is having on the publishing industry, and how it's changing the game.

First of all, AI is automating the writing and editing process like never before. This is a double-edged sword because while it can save time and increase efficiency, it can also lead to a saturation of similar content in the market.

Second, the rise of AI has significantly increased competition in publishing. With more and more people able to write and publish books, it's becoming harder and harder to get noticed.

But this can actually be a good thing.

With increased competition comes increased opportunity.

If you're willing to put in the work to build a powerful personal brand, you'll be able to rise above the noise and stand out in an increasingly crowded arena.

So, bottom line: AI is having a big impact on the publishing industry, but it's not necessarily something to be afraid of. Instead, think of it as a challenge to be embraced, and a chance to set yourself apart. Let's get to work!

continued on page 5

CWC's Geri Spieler (SF Peninsula) shares her experience using ChatGPT. See page 5.

CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN
WINTER 2022

Launching the 2022 CWC Literary Review

Good things are worth the wait, and that's certainly the case for the 2022 CWC Literary Review. By now, all members should have received a copy via the U.S. Mail, as they were mailed mid-to-late November. If you did not show up, check with your branch Membership Chair to make sure your mailing address is correct in MMS, the official CWC member database.

This is the biggest Literary Review in the 11-year history of the statewide anthology of prose and poetry, stocking it at 242 pages. The sheer length accounts for much of the delay in getting the publication into the hands of the members. Everything from editing to mailing simply took longer.

As President Roger Labrecque wrote in his message on page two of this edition of *The Bulletin*, "Timothy Tuck, Anita Holmes, and Joyce Krieg, along with a crew of member volunteers, have produced a wonderful new collection of poetry, prose, memoir, humor and essay."

This year, for the first time, the *Literary Review* has the potential to reach a broader audience than just the members, as it is available for purchase on Amazon. The price is just \$40, which hardly covers CWC's costs. This is one method for authors to underwrite copies, or for branches to stock up for promotional purposes.

At top, *Literary Review* Managing Editor Elizabeth Tuck (MC, Oakland) and Poetry Wrangler Anita Holmes (High Coast) other-year projects going forward in 2023 will be an "all-year" year. As Roger mentions in his message, "In this next year we will consider all aspects of creating the *Literary Review* from the purpose of the *Review* to submission guidelines, submission process, judging, editing, cover and interior design, proofing, production, printing, and distribution."

In other words, stay tuned for details and in the meantime—keep writing!

Joyce Krieg (Central Coast) did the formatting and cover design of this year's *Literary Review*. The stunning front cover image is a courtesy of all Hedgecock of the MC, Ukiah branch.

CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB BULLETIN
SUMMER 2023

An Entire Week Just for Writers

The third week in October has been designated California Writers Week by the state legislature—and it's all due to the work of your California Writers Club!

For this achievement, we owe our thanks to Anthony Folomireff of the Sacramento branch. Way back in 1983, the State Senator had passed a resolution declaring California Writers Week, but it was only good for one year. One day in 2000, Anthony had an inspiration—why not attempt for a similar resolution this time setting aside California Writers Week in perpetuity. He got the enthusiastic go-ahead from the CWC's Central Board and went to visit his contacts at the State Capitol. On September 4, 2003, at 10 a.m., California Writers Club members gathered on the Assembly floor in Sacramento to receive a Joint Legislative Resolution from their Assemblyman, Tim Latta. The resolution received the endorsement of the California Literary Association.

For his extraordinary service for the betterment of California Writers Club, Anthony was honored with a long-overdue Lou Coche/DH Award in 2017.

CWC commemorates the 22 branches in honor of California Writers Week, this year October 16-22. One simple idea is to approach your branch/library with a display featuring local authors. Most libraries have display cases that they make available to community organizations and they're usually open to unique ideas for content. Other ideas might be a reading of the works of well-known California authors at a coffeehouse or bookstore. A downloadable and printable poster is available at <https://calwriters.org/history/week>. Print up a bunch and hang them up around town.

The exact wording of the California Writers Week resolution is available at the above referenced website. Among other things, the resolution and "encourages the people of the State of California to reflect upon the contributions that California writers have made to humankind."

Our proud day in Sacramento, Sept. 4, 2003. From left: then-CWC President Barbara Truax (Merino) Assemblyman Tim Latta, and Anne Marie Gold, then executive board member of the California Literary Association. Photo by Don Truax.

Advertise in the Bulletin

Now advertise 4 times a year!

Want to increase your visibility? Sell your service? Promote your book? Increase speaker engagements? Pump up your web traffic? Or just send a greeting?

Each issue of The Bulletin — published four times a year — reaches close to 2,000 published and aspiring writers, in 22 branches throughout the state. AND it is published on calwriters.org.

We are accepting writing-related advertising from businesses, CWC members, and individuals who wish to reach our

Deadlines: March 1 June 1, September 1, December 1, with publication occurring on the 15th of those months.

target market at reasonable prices.

Four tiers of ads are being offered:

- Business card size (2" x 3.5") ads for \$35..
- Index card size (3" x 5") ads for \$60. These will be interspersed throughout The Bulletin as appropriate.
- 5" x 7" size ads for \$90 placed at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief

All of the above can be paid for by check as described below, or by PayPal (below).

We will make available one and one only full-page vertical or horizontal ad (7" x 10") for \$200. First come, first served, and for that reason, arrangement for this ad must be made by check and submitted by postal mail and by email as described below. Advertisers whose ads are received by mail too late to qualify will be notified of their option to buy a 5x7 or smaller ad and their checks will be returned.

All ads submitted must be self-edited, print-ready, and will be published as received. We reserve the right to decline material deemed inappropriate at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief.

All ads must be emailed as a jpg file attachment to advertisingcwc@gmail.com and a copy sent to editor@calwriters.org.

A physical copy of your ad must be enclosed with the postal mailed payment. Please include your return address, email address, and telephone contact number.

Deadlines for Branch news submissions are the same for advertising: March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1.

Each CWC Branch is eligible to submit one 5x7 ad to publicize a branch conference that they are sponsoring, and this ad will be published free of charge.

Capacity for advertising will be determined by the Editor-in-Chief. In case we receive more ads than can be accommodated, advertisers will be notified of the option to reserve space in the next issue.

Space is limited, and appropriate ads will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. A copy of The Bulletin will be emailed to advertisers upon publication. Please include your preferred email address along with your ad submission.

Questions? Call Bob Isbill at (760) 221-6367.

Checks or money orders for submitted ads must be made payable to CWC Central Treasury and mailed to:

Bob Isbill HDCWC

Director of Advertising and Promotions at California Writers Club

[Bob Isbill - Director of Advertising and Promotions - California Writers Club | LinkedIn](#)

SCBWI* CenCal's Annual Writers' Day Event - SPARK THE FIRE WITHIN!

*Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators



4101 Las Posas Rd, Camarillo, CA 93010

[camarillo library login - Search \(bing.com\)](#)

Day 1 Writers Day is in-person at the Camarillo Library's Community Room (Address: 4101 Las Posas Rd., Camarillo, 93010) << AND >> Day 2 Sunday 9/10/23 is the online Pitchfest via Zoom. *** NOTE: Written Critiques will be handed out at the end of Day 1 - 9/9/23 at the Camarillo Library.

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR SCBWI PREMIUM MEMBERS FOR \$110. (Be sure to log in into your account to see this price.)

This event is also now open to the public for \$130.

Join us for Writers' Day Saturday, September 9, 2023, 9:30am to 3:30pm at the Camarillo Library. You'll enjoy speakers, prizes, coffee/pastries and catered lunch, photo opportunities, and a chance to mingle with other writers and illustrators.

Check out our amazing lineup of keynote speakers and inspirational spotlight speakers--including Lin Oliver, Melissa Manlove, Jennifer Rofe, Jaime Zollars and more!

Optional Add-On (while supply lasts—Choice of either a live 10-minute Zoom Pitch (\$50) on Sunday September 10 with an Agent or Editor, or a Written Critique (\$55) by an Editor handed to you at the end of our September 9th event. (Add-ons available only to those registered for the above 9/9/23 in-person conference.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS EVENT, CONTACT:



Rebecca Langston-George
Regional Advisor
SCBWI Central-Coastal California
cencal-ra@scbwi.org
(805) 388-5222



Doris and Ivy in the Home Review – A Comedy for All Ages

Republished with the permission of Splash Magazine

By Elaine L. Mura

Penned by Norm Foster, Canada’s most popular and commercially successful playwright, DORIS AND IVY IN THE HOME are equally at home in Canada and further South – easily making the transition from frigid Canadian winters to the balmy clime of Beverly Hills. After a crowd-pleasing premiere in Canada in 2022, Foster’s hilarious comedy has journeyed south and is now generating a laugh-a-minute at Theatre 40 in Beverly Hills.

Get ready to laugh up a storm as master comedy playwright Foster tickles your funny bone with hilarious shenanigans that will keep your chuckling throughout.

Masterfully helmed by Warren Davis, DORIS AND IVY IN THE HOME keeps the laughs coming while also sneaking in some cogent messages about friendship, love, and ageing. Days before the opening, Melanie MacQueen, scheduled to play Doris, was benched by unexpected events – and her role was filled in at the last moment by Diana Angelina, who, script



Diana Angelina and Ann Hearn – Photo by Warren Davis

in hand, did a stand-up job of taking on the role. In fact, the entire talented trio really got into it with gusto. As always, Theatre 40’s production did a highly professional job, including Jeff G. Rack (set design), Derrick McDaniel (lighting), Nick Foran (sound), and Michael Mullen (costumes).

DORIS AND IVY IN THE HOME is a play which is entertaining, witty, and often uproarious. If you’re a senior, you’ll love it. If you’re hobnobbing with senior family members and friends, you’ll love it. If you’ve ever worked with seniors, you’ll love it. And if you plan to become a senior someday, you’re in for a hilarious preview of coming attractions.



Diana Angelina and Ann Hearn – Photo by Warren Davis

DORIS AND IVY IN THE HOME runs through August 23, 2023, with performance at 2 p.m. on Sundays and at 7:30 p.m. on other days of the week (7/20, 7/21, 7/22, 7/23, 7/31, 8/1, 8/2, 8/4, 8/5, 8/6, 8/7, 8/8, 8/9, 8/14, 8/15, 8/17, 8/18, 8/19, 8/20, 8/21, 8/22, and 8/23).

Theatre 40 performs at the Mary Levin Cutler Theatre, in Beverly Hills High School, 241 S. Moreno Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212. Tickets are \$35. For information and reservations, call 310-364-0535 or go [online](#).



Ann Hearn and David Hunt Stafford – Photo by Warren Davis

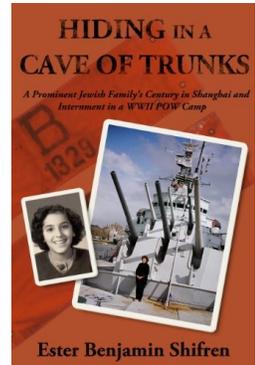
SFV Member Ester Benjamin Shifren—Always Ready For Her Next Adventure

By Kathy Highcove



In the two decades that I've known Ester Benjamin Shifren, I've admired her drive to take on life's challenges—head-on. For example, when Ester first joined the CWC-SFV, she wrote and spoke publicly about her traumatic childhood experiences when her family was forced to live in a Shanghai Japanese prisoner of war camp. She often told me that she longed to write a book about her interment and tell the gripping story of how the prisoners became a united community and helped one another survive the harsh conditions of their three-year internment. In pursuit of her goal Ester joined a SFV critique

group, and her new friends—all experienced writers—helped her write, polish, and publish her book. I remember how pleased I was to receive a gift copy of *Hiding in a Cave of Trunks*. Once published, Ester found myriad ways to market her book, mostly through presentations to all sorts of intrigued audiences—World War II historians, scholars, veterans' gatherings, television producers, synagogue groups, and at London's Imperial War Museum, just to name a few. Through the years her book has been sought, bought, and read by thousands of people. Recently, a professor who interviewed her was inspired to make her story part of his theatrical production, *Three Girls From Shanghai*.



Ester relates the latest in her ongoing efforts to market her book and presentations: *The Three Girls From Shanghai* play is based on interviews that Professor Kevin Ostoyich did of myself—a WWII Japanese POW, of a second woman who was a holocaust survivor as a refugee in Shanghai, and a third woman who was a resident in Shanghai during the war. Kevin is using my poetry that reflects the text in my book—my own words about my life in China, and internment as a British Ally in a WWII POW camp. At the end of the play, the producers will feature a video of me—singing the main poem I wrote with music composed by

myself. There will probably be only one actor performing the entire show but may include another person. They are in constant touch with me and are planning to show the play internationally. They're currently marketing it to acquire funding.

I recently addressed a large audience that had gathered in Monterey Park California for the annual commemoration of the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge incident that started the Japan/Sino War.



My talk, which was very well received, also paid tribute to Dr. Feng Shan Ho, savior of thousands of Jewish refugees. I, and other dignitaries, were invited to lay wreaths at a monument. My books were on display at the same event, and I, together with my guest Gil Skopp, also laid wreaths. Mark Liu, standing with us, recently published his book, Sarah's Shadow, in Chinese—about the Shanghai Jewish refugees—now translating it into English. I was his guest at his recent book launch and also spoke there. I have great photos of that event as well. Hundreds attended both events.

After an exciting event is done, Ester doesn't sit still for long. She's always ready to climb up another rung, meet more people, make presentations. on land or sea, anywhere in the world. Recently Ester took on a very public challenge. Please move on to the next page and learn how she met the intriguing Mr Beast.





Mr. Beast

Jimmy Donaldson, better known as [Mr. Beast](#) online, is an American YouTube personality, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, who has recently become only the second creator to reach 100 million subscribers. The 24-year-old pioneered a content genre focusing on expensive stunts, challenges and donations. The more popular he gets, the more money he gives away

Source: [Who is MrBeast and why is he so popular? | indoy100](#)

CHALLENGE SHOW AT MR. BEAST

By Ester Benjamin Shifren

Finally after waiting, my lips have been unsealed.
The secret of my whereabouts in March can be revealed.
I was in a Challenge Show of famous MrBeast,
Had to leave in one day, and to fly 5 hours East!
When invited to take part, (the link appears below,)
Without blinking, I told the casting agent, "YES! I'll go!"
I spent time thinking about clothes that I should choose,
And eventually packed in everything I thought I'd use.
What a surprise! I barely used a single thing
I'd carried—but had not been told to bring.
I had no inkling what MrBeast had in store—
This new show was one they'd never done before.
I, age number 85, and everyone else in the show,
Wore numbered red track suits—in each one-decade row.
We all—from one to one hundred years of age—
Stayed alone in a 10-foot-square see-through cage!
If we happened to put one toe beyond our entry door
It meant instant dismissal from the show, for evermore.
A bed, closed circuit TV, and two cameras in each place,
Recorded all our actions, words, and every face.
All that time, with no phones or access to news,
We had total rest from toxic remarks and views.
We didn't use a toilet outside our makeshift home—
They wheeled one in to us—we were not free to roam.
We had no running water—were issued cleansing wipes—
And very soon, adapting, there were hardly any gripes.
When boredom set in, I sang, then started to dance—
And started fitness exercises! it was a super chance
For remaining contestants, watching, to follow my lead
With enthusiasm—I was fulfilling an obvious need!
Five-Hundred-Thousand Dollars was the winning prize!
The challenges did not depend on whether you were wise.
I lasted five days of challenges—never going out my door—
Until, of 100 contestants, I was out at the last twenty-four!
My grandchild's admiring friends, scoring from 10 to zero,
Ranked me so highly! To them I'm both champion and hero!
What a privilege to have participated—never could I miss
The once-in-a-lifetime experience of a super-show like this!



Contestants must keep busy going nowhere
In these small bare cubicles.



"If two cubicle candidates outlast everyone else, one
of them can win **\$500,000!**"



Ester kept busy in her cubicle for five days!
The two finalists lasted eight days.

Go to <https://youtu.be/FM7Z-Xq8Drc> for a sampling of
the Mr. Beast game show.

**Rose Avenue
Venice Beach 1935**

By Lillian Rodich

waves reach far ashore

Sometimes

the porch shudders in salty wind
sometimes clouds scatter on the horizon line

sometimes

the rocker sits waiting

always

When I was little, maybe seven or eight, we spent our summers in a smelly dark apartment on Rose Avenue in Venice Beach and called it a vacation. Our home for July and August was half of a duplex, whose one redeeming feature, aside from being a block from the beach was its side front porch. Early afternoons I used to change into a scratchy woolen bathing suit and follow my mother and brother Lionel down across the ocean front walk, skipping over the hot sand in the wonderful relief of the Pacific Ocean's fingers of foam.

I remember the sharp sting of the water as I backed into the surf. I remember running away and screaming as the ripples pulled into a giant wall of green and I barely escaped the next lashing wave. The joy of it, the utter abandonment, the hot, stick, salty sweetness of it left me singing and dancing in circles.

Showering and spreading Noxzema over my sun-burned back, I finally snuggled into soft flannel pajamas. I recall listening to Jack Benny and eating cream cheese and jelly sandwiches, sipping hot cocoa, eventually drifting off to the muffled sounds of the sea and the squeak of our rocking chair in the early evening breeze.

waves reach far ashore

sometimes

the porch shudders in salty wind
sometimes clouds scatter on the horizon line

sometimes

the rocker sits waiting

always



NUDE KRAUT



A 2001 Story Contributed

By Guest Writer
Shelley Lewelling



arbor heat pump. From the kitchen I brought out my big, wooden chopping block, and butcher knife, and carefully carried my Cuisinart to its new location. I used a grounded extension cord, which plugged nicely into a garage outlet. Before leaving for the office my former co-worker calibrated the scales to the weight of the huge bowl used to weigh and salt the cabbage before putting it into a crock. The 25 heads of cabbage took up one half the surface of the heat pump and resembled an assortment of bowling balls used by the Jolly Green Giant. I started the process,

one head of cabbage at a time, and never forgot to salt (3 tablespoons) and then stomp in five-pound batches. I started with a three-gallon crock, and it seemed I had just begun when the crock was filled to capacity. And I still had 19 more heads of cabbage to go.

By then it was getting hot, so I got myself a large glass of ice water. As I finished each five-pound batch, I would reward myself with big sips of the water. This went on for some time, until I decided it really was awfully hot working outside, and since I had no intention of changing my work setup, I decided to cool myself off instead. I retrieved my ratty bathrobe from the bedroom, and got a funky, old gardening hat from the garage, and returned to my workstation. Before getting down to business, though, I hooked the bathrobe on the clothesline, and proceeded to take off all my clothes. Every stitch, which I then carefully hung on the clothesline, as if they had just come from the washing machine. It felt wonderful. There is something to be said for freedom of movement, and I certainly had freedom of movement. The stomping took on a humorous cast, as I imagined what I would look like to someone observing me for the first time. I laughed out loud. A couple planes buzzed overhead, but I decided they wouldn't get much of a look at anything from their height, and if they did, they still wouldn't get much of a look at anything. I laughed again when I thought to myself, "I'll bet I am the only woman in Oregon right now who is turning oversize heads of cabbage into sauerkraut, while buck naked, dressed only in a birthday suit and floppy hat. Maybe, just possibly, I'm the only woman on the whole West Coast who is doing this in the buff today." I decided the chances of someone else anywhere having the

(Continued on page 14)

Well, this year's batch of sauerkraut is fermenting in the garage: Three crocks of varying sizes, and a baby crock to use for dipping fresh kraut at will. The process of turning the cabbage into kraut was pretty much as it has been in year's past, with a few added plot twists. I didn't have a co-worker, as I have every time in the last nine years since we—husband Asa and I—started putting up our own sauerkraut. This year, Asa was busy at the office, so I decided to tackle the task solo.

First, I called Farmer Scott Miller two days before the kraut-making session and ordered 25 heads of the oversize cabbage. He picked it fresh the next morning, and the day after that I was at my workstation by 10:30 am,

The usual Lewelling kraut-making scene included Asa as an integral part of the work force. I cut and chop the cabbage while Asa weighs and measures, and stomps. I would miss his help, as it was a tremendous amount of work, doing it all by myself, but I will probably operate as a one-woman kraut machine in future because it went surprisingly well, under the circumstances. (It actually was great fun.)

Another big change was the fact that I moved the operation outside for the first time. Adjacent to the south end of the house is what I call my arbor, although there are no trees or trellises, rather it is a small area with a clothesline, a small patch of grass, and a cement walkway. The entire area is fenced, because 25 years ago, when we envisioned the house and grounds, I wanted an area where my small daughter, Rory, could play safely, and I wouldn't have to worry about her running off with the gypsies. At this time of year, the border of the arbor is ablaze with color. I deliberately plant a variety of leftover seedlings late, and haphazardly, so I can enjoy the splash of color deep into fall (especially when it's raining and I'm looking out the single laundry room window).

The arbor also houses a heat pump, which has a large tabletop ideally suited for potting up plants, or cutting corn off the cob, or scrubbing fresh-dug potatoes. Or turning kraut cabbage into sauerkraut. One of the major drawbacks for me each year when making the sauerkraut has been cleaning up the mess. What a thankless job. Anyone who has chopped coleslaw knows those pesky bits and pieces of cabbage end up everywhere in the kitchen, and when you're chopping 25 heads of cabbage, it's a really big mess, I can tell you. Even putting old sheets down on the floor to catch the excess trimmings doesn't alleviate the cabbage clutter left at the end of the job.

So, I hit on the idea of setting up my kraut-making shop on the

privacy of the rural countryside, and the protective arbor fence—and the mindset to chop and stomp cabbage totally au naturale were slim. I wasn't caught in flagrante delicto, but I could be accused of being in fragrant delicto.

A marauding band of yellow jackets arrived, sniffed the cabbage remnants and promptly flew away, their craving for sweet booty unabated. Those annoying box elder bugs were kept at bay by the whirl of the chopping machine. Flies circled and stopped briefly, not drawn by the cabbage, but by my sweaty body. (I briefly wondered what it would be like to have a tail and whisk those pesky pests away as bedeviled cows do with such metronome-like precision. I had plenty of time to think about such things).

Finally, at a little before 2 p.m., the last crock was stomped and filled. (I put on my bathrobe to carry the crocks into the garage). All by myself I had turned 25 heads of kraut cabbage into a three-gallon crock, a five-gallon crock and an eight-gallon crock (plus the baby crock for dipping). Only once, when I heard a car drive by on the way to the neighbors, did I find it necessary to reach for my

bathrobe. And, too, I was only steps away from the backdoor to the kitchen, so there really never was any danger of anyone catching sight of a middle-aged woman chopping, weighing, salting, stomping cabbage while wearing nothing more than a smile and a floppy hat.

If I could have, I would have taken a picture of myself stomping the cabbage, because it would have been hilarious. The stomper itself is more than 100 years old and was gifted to me by a Little Old Lady who lived down the road. It is wooden, and about four feet high, and three-inches square in shape, tapering at the top where you grip it to literally stomp the cabbage down.

Years ago, when it was given to me, I politely accepted, never imagining I would ever actually use the thing. But for nine years now we've made our own sauerkraut and would never go back to store-bought. As I will never go back to making the kraut in my kitchen. Only on a sunny, blue-sky day in my arbor. Without benefit of a helper. Sure, he's my husband, and he's seen me nude countless times, but as Jerry Seinfeld said on one of his shows in referring to a girlfriend who mopped his floor on her hands and knees in the nude, "There is good nude and bad nude." And this definitely was bad nude, I can tell you.

SHELLEY LEWELLING SHARES HER STORY

At my request, Shelley wrote about her experiences in the writing trade, (ed.)

My interest in writing began when I was 14 and won third place in a Catholic Daughter's of America contest with my poem 'A Child's Delight.' I decided then, at age 14, that I would pursue a career in the newspaper field, because I wasn't that great as a poet, and never considered writing a novel at that time. After attending a parochial school from first grade, I changed schools my senior year of high school because the public school near my home had an award-winning student newspaper, and my former school published a mimeographed sheet of paper that came out every six weeks!

After a year and half at Monterey Peninsula College, I got a job as the part-time librarian and obit writer for the Salem Capitl Journal, a well-respected afternoon daily. After two months on the job I had my first byline, and became the assistant to the women's editor. I returned to college a year later, and graduated in 1969 from San Francisco State with a journalism degree. I then was hired to be the 'swinging, modern' women's editor of the Albany (OR) Democrat Herald. A year later I became editor of the the Capital Life section in the Capital Journal. During my five years in that job, I won several awards for best in Oregon women's/family pages, and also third place in the national Penney-Missouri journalism awards.



In 1974, I was hired as the People Editor at the Honolulu Advertiser and returned to Oregon, at which time I married.

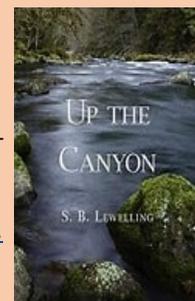
My newspaper career came to a close at that time, but I continued to write for my own enjoyment, and for that of interested friends. During those years I worked on my mystery novel, 'Up the Canyon,' and also wrote two cookbooks. I am currently working on a new cookbook.

I still write short stories, for my own enjoyment. Here's what I currently like to write : Observations on life, which I send on to my close friends and family. Also, I am working on a semi-autobiographical 'book' tentatively titled 'Calendar Years.' Since 1975 I've kept a written daily agenda, and traced my steps through time... It's very interesting to read what I was doing at various times in my life span. My agendas trigger memories of topics to write about. Quite fun. Tip-toeing in the past...

Thanks, Shelley, for sharing your writing experiences.

Shelley wrote *UP THE CANYON*-- A Kinkel review: This book is a page-turning mystery trip up the Santiam Canyon of Oregon -- A prominent businessman disappears, wreaking emotional havoc with his family and baffling the authorities.

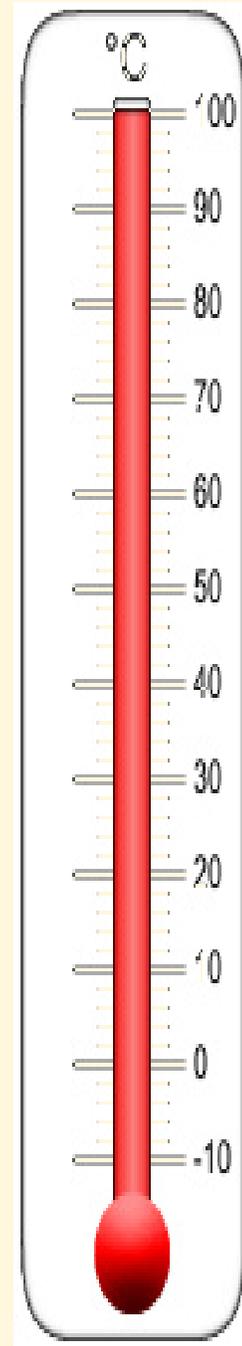
[Up the Canyon - Kindle edition by Lewelling, Shelley. Mystery, Thriller & Suspense Kindle eBooks @ Ama-](#)



One Hundred Degrees

By Michael Edelstein

One hundred degrees
Outside in the eaves' shadow
It's become torrid
Birds conceal themselves in shade
Offered by the ficus tree
Soon it will be much hotter
As the earth continues to heat
I know I shouldn't complain
That's not a senior's birthright
Summer has arrived at last
With full throttle roaring heat
That devours all of my strength
I'm perspiring profusely
Salt rivulets sting my eyes
While my wet shirt clings to me
Wretched until October
This isn't what I wanted
When I whined about the chill
At least I could add layers in March
Unworried about sunburn
There is some joy to be had
When the cover comes off the grill
For hot dogs and hamburgers
Plus spicy barbecue fiestas
Fresh vegetables are here
And corn-on-the-cobs devoured
While stews sit in the freezer
I can restow the blankets
Flannel shirts and wool sweaters
'Til the autumn equinox
Presages winter's shivers



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**CWC-SFV CLUB INFORMATION
AND SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES**

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 meetings at the Saban Health and Wellness Center at the Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF) in Woodland Hills 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.

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

For information and reviews on prior monthly speakers please go to [monthly editions of the Scribe at PUBLICATIONS | San Fernando Valley Writers \(cwc-sfv.org\)](#)

For further information about the CWC-SFV critique groups, contact Marlene Bumgarner at: marlenebumgarner@gmail.com

If you are interested in additional information about our San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers