



The Valley Scribe

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

CWC-SFV CLUB NEWS

REVIEW OF THE CWC-SFV OCTOBER SPEAKER

REMEMBERING THE LATE POET SUSAN GLUCK US LAUREATE

TWO HIT STAGE PRODUCTIONS IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

INTRO TO NEW MEMBER ACTRESS/WRITER DARWYN CARSON

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CWC-SFV CLUB INFORMATION AND CWC-SFVS OFFICERS AND



JOAN GELFAND—YOU CAN BE A WINNING WRITER

By Heather Bradshaw, CWC-SFV Program Chair

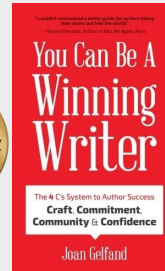
The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome poet, novelist and memoirist, JOAN GELFAND, as the keynote speaker on Saturday, November 4 at 1:00 pm via Zoom with a presentation entitled, "You Can Be a Winning Writer."

Joan is the author of three well-reviewed volumes of poetry, a novel, *Extreme*, and an award-winning chapbook of short fiction. She is the recipient of numerous awards, nominations and honors, and her work appears in national and international literary journals, magazines and online.

Joan will discuss how to become an accomplished writer using her 4 C's approach to successful authorship; Craft, Commitment, Community and Confidence. *You Can Be a Winning Writer: the 4c's of Successful Authors* was an Amazon #1 best seller and is published by Mango Press.

For the past ten years, Joan has been teaching the 4 C's to aspiring authors at book festivals, writers' conferences and CWC branches, as well as helping writers around the country realize their dreams of becoming published.

From first draft to building a reputation, Joan will talk about craft and commitment, and give solid tips on how to build a literary community and a fan base. However, becoming a successfully published author does not stop with mastering craft, commitment, and even building a community. Confidence is key, and Joan tackles this sensitive subject that keeps writers unpublished and



2021 INTERNATIONAL BOOK AWARDS
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manuscripts in the drawer.

Her book, *You Can Be a Winning Writer*, includes post-publication strategies such as:

- The mistakes that even the most talented prize-winning authors have made
- How, with the help of the 4 C's, those same authors could have enjoyed greater success
- What it means to "fire on all burners" and work to develop each of the 4 C's simultaneously

Be ready with your questions about writing and publishing during the Q & A after her presentation! Joan's forthcoming book, *Outside Voices: A Memoir of the Berkeley Revolution* will be published by Post Hill Press (division of Simon and Schuster) in January 2024. Find Joan online at joangelfand.com.

Joan will be on the big screen at the MPTF. We encourage you to attend in-person to meet and talk with other members about your writing. Looking forward to seeing you there!

All members of the CWC-SFV will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches should contact Zoom host, Anat Wenick, by noon on November 3 at SFV.CWC@gmail.com for an invitation to register. Guests may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org by noon on November 3. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. We regret we cannot accommodate late requests.



VALLEY WRITERS



A BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

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. Meetings begin at 1 pm. Presenters will join us either in person or via Zoom on the huge screen in The Saban Center for Health and Wellness. 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



Join poet, photographer, author 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. (Zoom)

February 3, 2024

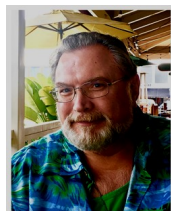
BLACK AND IN LOVE



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)

October 7, 2023

A LONG STRANGE TRIP - A WRITER'S 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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

June 1, 2024

COACH WOODEN AND ME



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)



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)

JONATHAN MABERRY IS A VERSATILE BEST-SELLING WRITER

By Elaine L. Mura

At our October meeting, author Jonathan Maberry, spoke on “A Long Strange Trip – A Writer’s Journey through the Landscape of Publishing.” Maberry is a New York Times best-selling author, a Bram Stoker award winner, a writing instructor and an editor who wrote his first novel at the beginning of the twenty-first century – proof that age should never be a factor in talent and motivation. He described himself as a person who has always wanted to tell stories: “I was born to it.”

Adventure Tales

Horror Novels

Scripts



Young Adult Fiction

Short Stories

Marvel Comics

Novellas

Living Dead, which led to his interest in writing zombie novels.

Maberry had some advice for CWC-SFV writers, which he outlined while offering the audience the opportunity to learn from his website. He strongly suggested taking the “path less traveled,” stretching as a writer by sampling multiple genres. He also advised writers to create a network so

Maberry described his difficult early childhood years: He was born poor and grew up in a bad neighborhood in Philadelphia. His father whom he termed a career criminal didn’t allow books in the home. But young Maberry, fortunately, was close to a caring grandmother: “She was fun...she had lots of books in her house... she was born on Halloween and died when she was 101...that’s how reading became the backbone of who I was.” But other acquaintances also gave him a “nudge,” including the librarian in his middle school: “She let me choose one book but then I had to choose another book out of my comfort zone...that forced me to grow.”

When he was only twelve years old, his grandmother took him to a book-publishing launch party. There he met Ray Bradbury and Harlan Mathewson – two key figures in his evolution as a writer. “Bradbury told me to write a book I’d search for to read...to write with passion and intense love for the English language... Mathewson gave me advice about how to write...when I grew up, they both wrote statements for my first book.”

Our speaker continued in his talk to outline changes in the “how and what” he wrote: “When I was in high school, I was more interested in journalism...I went to Temple University and wanted to become an investigative reporter...from 1978 to the late ‘90s, I wrote about 1,200 feature articles...I also taught self-defense...I got involved with a lot of things because I had a problem making a living as a writer...first I wrote three nonfiction books on martial arts...but my fourth book contained folklore stories about the supernatural...something I got interested in with my grandmother...the book sold 30 times more than the nonfiction...I wrote six books in the genre I wanted and taught myself how writing is done in other genres by reading authors as a writer...my first novel took 3 ½ years and 18 revisions...now I can write a novel in a few months.” Maberry described his search for an agent. Despite being advised to get a low-level agent – “That was bad advice” – he researched the top people in his areas. He also taught himself how to write an excellent query letter – a skill which he offered to the audience on his website. He added that “I got lots of rejection letters...but that helped me grow too.”

Maberry described himself as “a high-output writer...who stretches as a writer.” He has penned books in multiple areas such as horror, adventure, Marvel comics, young adult fiction, and even a Wizard of Oz novella for an anthology. He gleefully recounted meeting George Romero, author of *Nights of the*

that they can ask for and receive information when they’re stuck and/or need support. He cautioned against putting advisors on a pedestal: “Equality opens up conversational relationships.” He also assured us that “everything has a solution...all writers face some of the same problems...ask other writers how to handle those problems...there are 1,000 answers to every question.”

He cited advice about writing that he received long ago from Ray Bradbury: “Ninety-nine percent is thinking about it, and the rest is typing.” Maberry encouraged writers to “get into the writing world...have a community of peers...become friends with multiple authors because writing isn’t a solo trip ...you need to be part of a community.”

At the end of his talk, Maberry told us that prejudice against self-publishing has ended and that self-publishing is now a legitimate way for a writer to be known. He indicated that he likes to outline his writing before beginning: “I’m not a pantsler.” He usually writes eight hours a day, beginning at 5 a.m. (about 4,000 words/day – with a target of at least 3,000 words/day). Over the years, his planning and scheduling have reaped huge rewards. He said that he now completes a novel in three months and completes a short story in one and a half days. “That time is writing time...my goal is to quickly produce a polished draft, ready to go out.” He also said that he writes the ending before the body of the piece “because then I know where I’m going.”

He makes multiple submissions: “Sometimes I send something to ten agents at once...I don’t want to wait forever for feedback.” He added that, while writing one book, he is doing research for the next one. He advised doing interviews with “information experts” in the email format “because I don’t have the time to transcribe long verbal interviews.” He indicated that, when an author finds the perfect agent, editor, etc., “Stick with that person.” He said that www.PublishersMarketplace.com would help us find the right agents or a genre/subgenre.

Finally, for those writers interested in films and television, he mentioned a new category of agents who specialize in that genre. He cautioned that the writing MUST be published before an agent is willing to market it in Hollywood.

For several years, this newsletter featured a monthly English grammar column written by the late David Wetterberg. A retired English teacher, Dave could quickly recall any obscure rule of English grammar. He was also a long-time SFV member who served as an editor, President and eventually our club's resource for members with an urgent grammar question. Dave, like an affable A.I., would immediately and clearly recite the right answer. He was rarely wrong.

Here's his 2010 alusion lesson from the newsletter archives.

Kathy Highcove, *The Valley Scribe* editor

Allusions

An **allusion** is a reference to something in an area you expect your audience to be familiar with. Note how in the first example below the literary allusion to Tom Sawyer draws Tom's freedom, his innocence, and his sense of adventure into the nature of the priest.

Literature *Luckily, the priest had experienced a similar Tom Sawyer youth.*



Mythology *She wouldn't stop trying to play Cupid.
The chocolate covered creampuff proved to be an Achilles heel.*

Folklore *Trying to stop it was like putting your finger in the dyke.
Abner ran off like the gingerbread man.*



Theater / Movie *She cherished it with the passion of a Scarlett O'Hara.
The little girl's charm, like Dorothy's oil can, loosened up the gruff old man.*

The Bible *The professor carried an air of Solomon about him.
This simple honesty was about to bring down a giant.*



Geography (Cyrano's nose) *"When it bleeds ... the Red Sea!"*

History *Poly High playing El Camino is like the Spartans fighting the Persians.
Tired of fighting the Battle of the Bulge, Sam finally went on a diet.*

Contemporary *The heat came in like an Iraqi summer.*



An occasional literary, biblical, historical, mythological, or contemporary allusion can be intelligent and effective. Just don't overdo it. Your readers will think you're showing off.

- Dave Wetterberg

There is no creation without tradition; the 'new' is an inflection on a preceding form; novelty is always a variation on the past.

— Carlos Fuentes (*Myself with Others*)

The Engagement Party Review – Whom Do You Trust?

By Elaine L. Mura

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Brilliantly written by Samuel Baum and skillfully directed by Darko Tresnjak, *The Engagement Party* makes its West Coast premiere at the Geffen Playhouse in 2023. Originally produced in Hartford, Connecticut, in 2019, the play has been described as “a masterful piece of playwriting...a theatrical experience worth its 80 minutes in gold.” Reviews praised Baum’s script as “accessible, exciting, and thought-provoking, building just enough tension at just the right time... delivers a shocking twist that no one sees coming.” When asked about the play’s theme, playwright Baum responded, “There’s an old saying, that trust takes a lifetime to build, but it can be destroyed in an instant...I wanted to understand how that happens, why that happens.”

The time is 2007 and the place is an elegant apartment in New York City’s elite upper Manhattan. The champagne is chilled, the hors d’oeuvres are exquisitely arranged, and the table is impeccably set. For this is the engagement party for up-and-coming financier Josh (Jonah Platt) and debutante Katherine (Bella Heathcote). They’ve invited Katherine’s parents Conrad (Richard Bekins) and Gail (Wendie Malick) and some of their closest friends, including Alan (Mark Jacobson), Kai (Brian Lee Buynh), Haley (Lauren Worsham), and down-to-earth Johnny (Brian Patrick Murphy), perhaps Josh’s very oldest and dearest friend. This intimate little group have come together to offer their congratulations to the happy couple. All is going well until a glass of wine spills. In the ensuing chaos, Katherine’s \$300,000 diamond engagement ring goes missing. Or does it?

The Engagement Party is a fascinating mix of drama, mystery, whodunit, and soul-searching questions, a tale of lies, half-truths, misunderstandings, and possible treachery. As tension very slowly and inexorably builds up, unavoidable questions begin to surface. Whom can you trust and depend upon? Whom can you believe? Parents? Close friends? Lovers? Baum’s script is tight and carefully drawn, with each event inevitably tied to every other event with an invisible but unalterable cord – even if some of the connections escape notice until the final moments. Director Tresnjak helms the production with a sure hand as long-held secrets begin to creep into the light. Kudos to Alexander Dodge’s clever and fascinating scenic design, so essential to tell the story and yet so subtle in presentation. Joshua Pearson’s costumes are perfect for the partygoers: they also offer artful nonverbal cues into each character’s personality. Matthew Richards’ lighting and Jane Shaw’s original music and sound design round out a flawless production team. In no small part, he is amply assisted by excellent performances from each of the people in that doomed party.

The Engagement Party is a must-see production for all theatergoers. It is evocative, provocative, involving, and thought-provoking. It is also one of the most entertaining shows this season. Whether you enjoy drama, comedy, mystery, or any other genre in plays, you will find something to grip and entice you in *The Engagement Party*.

The Engagement Party runs through November 5, 2023, with performances at 8 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Sundays. The Gil Cates Theater at the Geffen Playhouse is located at 10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Tickets range from \$39 to \$129. For information and reservations, call 310-208-2028 or go **online**.



Brian Patrick Murphy – Photo by Jeff Lorch



Bella Heathcote and Jonah Platt in THE ENGAGEMENT PARTY - Photo



Mark Jacobson, Brian Lee Huynh, Wendie Malick, Lauren Worsham, Richard Bekins, Bella Heathcote, Jonah Platt, and Brian Patrick Murphy – Photo by Justin Bettman



Lauren Worsham, Bella Heathcote, Jonah Platt, Richard Bekins, Wendie Malick, and Mark Jacobson – Photo by Jeff Lorch



Wendie Malick, Richard Bekins, Bella Heathcote, and Jonah Platt – Photo by Jeff Lorch

Louise Glück: An American Poet Extraordinaire

By Kathy Highcove, *The Valley Scribe* Editor



Nobel Prize Outreach. Photo: Daniel Ebersole

Louise Elisabeth Glück, 80, a former US Poet Laureate and 2020 Pulitzer Prize Winner, passed away on October 13, 2023. She will

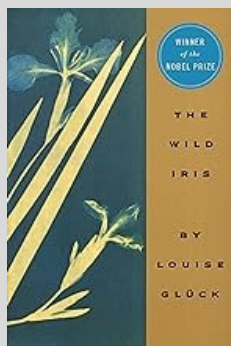
be remembered as one of the most important poets of her generation. Some countries honor an older creative artist, performer or craftsman, as a “national treasure.” Our country has a similar way of honoring our singers, artists, writers and performers: the National Humanities Medal.

In 2016, President Obama awarded Louise Glück this medal. (4)

In her 60 year career, Glück wrote and spoke about “trauma, disillusion, stasis and longing, spelled by moments— but only moments—of ecstasy and contentment.” In awarding her the literature prize in 2020, the first time an American poet had been honored since T.S. Eliot in 1948, Nobel judges praised “her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal.” (5)

She was born on April 22, 1943, her parents’ second child. Her father, a businessman, created hundreds of inventions, and co-founded the X-acto company, which is still known for its precision cutting tools, blades and knives. Her mother, was well-educated, but as would be typical for many women in the post WWII era, a housewife renown for her culinary skills. Intriguingly, Glück once wrote that her mother “had the temperament and stamina of an empire builder.” (2)

Glück began reading at an early age and consumed the *Wizard of Oz* books and, surprisingly, Greek myth. Her father encouraged her to write little books and draw pictures to accompany her stories. As a teen, she discovered an anthology of poetry and as a teen went on to read the works of William Blake, John Keats, Emily Dickinson, Willaim Yeats, and William Shakespeare. (3)



Glück once commented, “I felt intensely that these were the people I wanted to be talking to. I wanted to be what they were.” At 16, she wrote her first poetry book and sent it to several publishers, who ignored it. However, the verse she wrote at 13 and 15 would later reappear in her published adult work.(4)

All through her adult years, critics, fellow writers and poets have striven to describe or label her poetry. Some have said she was a confessional writer—a poetic style that focuses on the poet’s personal traumas or emotional struggles, feelings of adequacy or domestic failure.

Glück, when asked if her poems were in the confessional genre, scoffed at that label. However, she didn’t protest being described as an autobiographical poet who often took on the persona of an intimate object, a Greek god, a flower, or some form of nature.

After Glück’s passing, critics, journalists, literary publications and poets lauded her genius and terse verse. Many detected an ambivalent quality in her poetry. Others felt that she seemed to restrain or withhold a strong emotional reaction to life’s challenges and the extremes of nature. (1)

After reading a selection of Glück’s work, I chose to finish this essay with a quote from writer Robert Boyer: “Glück’s poems at their best have always moved between recoil and affirmation, sensuous immediacy and reflection, for a poet who can often seem earthbound and defiantly unillusioned, she has been powerfully responsive to the lure of the daily miracle and the sudden upsurge of overmastering emotion.”(1)



Poet Louise Glück, seen here receiving the National Humanities Medal from then president Barack Obama at the White House in 2016. Photo by photojournalist SAUL LOEB

She Review – The Caged Bird Sings

By Elaine L. Mura

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Camille Ariana Spirlin and Lorenz Arnell in *SHE* - Photo by Jeff Lorch



Karen Malina White and Jon Chaffin – Photo by Jeff Lorch



Camille Ariana Spirlin and Gerard Joseph – Photo by Jeff Lorch



Camille Ariana Spirlin and Veronica Thompson – Photo by Jeff Lorch



Lorenz Arnell and Jon Chaffin – Photo by Jeff Lorch

The world premiere of *SHE* by Antaeus-commissioned playwright Marlow Wyatt comes to the Kiki & David Gindler Performing Arts Center in 2023. *SHE* is the recipient of the second annual Los Angeles New Play Project (LANPP) grant designed to attract excellence in playwriting in the Los Angeles theater community and encourage the production of exciting, untried plays. The script was also a CTG/HUMANITAS finalist and a Long Beach Playhouse New Works winner; it was also designated as the National Black Theatre Festival A-List. Directed by Andi Chapman (“Native Son” and “The Abuelas”), the coming-of-age tale stars Camille Ariana Spirlin.

SHE lead character Sojourner Freeman (played by Camille Ariana Spirlin), has an awful lot of dreams for a Southern Black girl of 13. She’s a nascent poet who longs to attend the best and most exclusive academy in the South – even if the cost is probably too high for her single mom. The world begins to intrude on her plans when her mother Bernice (Karen Malina White) impulsively marries her unemployed ne’er-do-well boyfriend Lonnie (Jon Chaffin). Then, to make matters worse, the factory that employs her mother, shuts its doors and mom turns to alcohol to cure her ills. As the family’s finances rapidly go downhill, Sojourner begins to see the downside of growing up – even if her 14-year-old boyfriend Davie (Lorenz Arnell) offers all the support he can muster. Despite her problems, Sojourner still yearns to make her dreams come true - if only she can find her own set of wings and take flight.

SHE is flawlessly directed by Andi Chapman, who clearly “gets it” and wants the audience to see it too. The characters are perfectly cast with as talented a set of actors as you’ll find anywhere. Kudos to Spirlin, Arnell, White, and Chaffin for running the gamut of emotions in this dramedy of dreams colliding with reality. Black cultural insights shine throughout *SHE* as it roller-coasters through the twists and turns of the real world in this unvarnished coming-of-age tale. Eli Sherlock’s scenic design makes the perfect backdrop for *SHE*, with Wendell C. Carmichael’s costumes, Andrew Schmedake’s lighting, Jeff Gardner’s sound, and Nicholas Santiago’s projections – to name but a few of the excellent production team – adding that special something extra.

The *SHE* production will find a home with both Black and White theater-goers as it tenderly tells She’s story – for don’t we all have dreams and aren’t we all, sooner or later, forced to face obstacles to reaching our goals? Above all, *SHE* is the saga of hope, a never-give-up attitude which makes dreams possible. *SHE* is highly recommended for all audiences.

SHE runs through November 20, 2023, with performances at 8 p.m. on Thursdays (11/9 and 11/16 only), at 2 p.m. (11/11 and 11/18 only) and 8 p.m. on Saturdays, at 2 p.m. on Sundays, and at 8 p.m. on Mondays. The Kiki & David Gindler Performing Arts Center is located at 110 East Broadway, Glendale, CA 91205. Tickets are \$40. For information and reservations, call 818-506-1983 or go [online](#).

ACTRESS AND WRITER DARWYN CARSON REJOINS THE CWC-SFV



Darwyn hails from Akron, Ohio, where she attended St. Mary's, an all-girls high school. After acquiring an Arts & Communications degree from the University of Colorado in Boulder, she headed to Los Angeles to establish a career in the entertainment industry, behind and in front of the camera.

She has served as a newsletter editor for fine arts groups and industry membership organizations and has been a Managing Editor and Contributor for [Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide](#) for the final six years of its 35-year run:

Darwyn's writing has won awards in contests sponsored by the California Writer's Club, with her essay, *Pompeii and the World Trade Center*, which was published in the CWC's [Voices of America](#) anthology series.

She has been employed as a ghostwriter for celebrity clientele. Her last "traditional gig" was as Managing Editor for Leonard Maltin's *Annual Movie Guide*, an annual for which she was also a contributor. Her film, television reviews and essays have also been read online in [Zap2It.com](#), [Indiewire](#) and Leonard Maltin's [Movie Crazy](#). [TheTVolution.com](#), an arts website, covers local theatre, film and television and is her current online project.

Her Women's Fiction novel *Time-Out at Warp Speed*, made the finalist list in the 2023 Pacific Northwest Writers Association literary contest for unpublished works, ultimately taking second place at the PNWA's Conference award ceremony this past fall. Darwyn confides: "I am joy-filled to return to the CWC community and looks forward to many energizing meet-ups, conversations and inspirational literary adventures." And we are joyful to see her name once more in our membership. Below is the first paragraphs of Darwyn Carson's story in the CWC-SFV 2003 *Voices From The Valley Anthology*:



Pompeii and the World Trade Center downloading the past to the present

By Darwyn Carson

It's Sept. 11, 2001 and we're in the ancient city of Pompeii. A seaport founded around 600 B.C. I'm with my friend, Richard. We're on vacation. Entering Pompeii's mammoth portal, I crane my neck to take in its stoned archway as I pass underneath. The gate more than twice my height leaves me feeling small and insignificant.

Chunks of hardened lava carved into polygonal shapes serve as both street and walkway. I walk up rutted wheel impressions once reserved for mule-pulled carts and horse-drawn chariots. In the forum I discover an area brimming with urns, utensils, furniture and statues. And then I see it. A plaster cast of a human being. A reminder of Pompeii's final horror.

People from all over the world, upwards of two million visitors a year, come to view, to learn and to get an inkling of a time of greatness, the rise of the Roman Empire; and a time of disaster – the destruction of this budding city of industry by the volcanic eruption of 79 A.D.

I'd heard of Pompeii but had no idea, until now, the immensity of its destruction; many, many lives were lost. I also had no idea, until now, of the magnitude of the miracle: many, many lives were saved.

Members: If you have access to the 2003 Voices From the Valley Anthology, please read Darwin's intriguing story.

Kathy Highcove, The Valley Scribe newsletter editor



ONE NOVEMBER MORNING

I stood alone
one glowing pearl morning
an inanimate portrait
with solitude's memory

barren streets crackled with chill
anticipating an icy breeze
still I was warmed with gratitude
and love's arms around me

tradition's bountiful table set with
hand-printed paper mats in place
for each guest's special feast
polished apples in silver bowls
and Pilgrim dolls, uneasily scattered
songs and stories repeated like old friends

hands held in a tight circle
prayers and promises
celebrating Thanksgiving
in a "tract house" in Pacoima

our bounty-filled table
children's laughter mingling
with memory filled gratitude
lighting a gray November day
this moment savored in its frame
sepia prints in memory.

Lillian Rodich 10/22/23

My life is now slowly returning to normal after co-piloting a small experimental plane that suddenly crashed soon after take-off. Luckily the injuries were not life-threatening.

Weeks later, sans walker or cane, I am still hobbling around, recuperating, receiving physical therapy. I cannot tie my shoes, sleep on my side or drive, plus other little things I used to take for granted. Honestly, it could have been a lot worse.

It's been nearly seven weeks now since an ambulance and fire trucks rushed to the scene of the calamity. No one from the FAA was called in to investigate because it was clearly my fault. What should have been an uneventful Sunday morning turned into a disaster for me. At least the pilot was spared any injury. And fortunately, no one else was aboard.

I can state with confidence that I will never be involved in a mishap like this again. My license to fly has been voluntarily revoked. Someone else will have to take over the controls. Maybe my wife will be able to wing after receiving the proper training.

Looking back, I knew I would be taking a big gamble before we headed to the wild blue yonder. I had been grounded for weeks due to a bad back. Why not give it a try, I thought. What's the worst that could happen? My back gives out and at the layover, I ask to deboard.

So, here's how it happened. Ready for taxiing, I bent down, way down, below my knees, and once we had clearance, I began pushing my two-year-old granddaughter, Ellie, with my two hands down the runway that started near the kitchen and extended to the bedrooms. A distance of about one hundred feet. Her twelve-inch-high purple and red plane, which featured Mickey Mouse decals and made all sorts of weird noises when it moved.

The first part of the trip went flawlessly as we headed down the hallway. Across the wooden laminate floor we went. I could see the back bedrooms on the horizon. We were moving at a rather slow speed. Going back was another matter altogether. I pushed the plane faster and faster while Ellie propelled us with her feet. The fasten your seatbelts light went on in my head. Mayday! Mayday! We were going to break the sound barrier. Well, we didn't do that, but there was a boom.

It was too late. I went airborne, maybe a foot off the ground, landing on my ride side into Ellie's small plastic table then the larger walnut legged breakfast table. Ellie thankfully was all right. Not me. I was writhing in pain and she was giggling. The little rascal even let out a



"Wheeeeeee!" Translation: "Oh, what fun, Poppa. Let's do it again." Go figure. The girl has no sense of danger.

Meanwhile, my wife, son and daughter-in-law, who were talking in the living room heard my screams and quickly walked over to the accident scene. My wife, Mina, asked, "What happened, are you okay, can you get up?" I tried, but no way. The crushing pain felt like an elephant, or maybe two, were sitting on my right hip.

My family hovered over me, not knowing what to do for me. And then my daughter-in-law, Lauren, explained to Ellie, "Poppa has a boo-boo. Maybe he needs a band aid." The toddler sadly looked down on her fallen co-pilot. "Poppa, boo-boo."

My son, David, who is six feet four and strong, then tried lifting me up, but the slightest movement resulted in sending shockwaves up and down my leg. So, I remained lying there. My mind flashed back to years earlier when I was a young man and tore ligaments in my right knee after coming down with a rebound in a pickup basketball game at a community college gym tearing my anterior cruciate and medial collateral ligaments. I even thought about a broken rib I had suffered two years earlier and reoccurring kidney stones, subconsciously comparing the pain of each agonizing event. It was a tossup.

Back to the present, it was time to call 911. I could only imagine what the neighbors' reaction would be when they heard the sirens blaring and saw the ambulance and fire trucks pull up. After evaluating my injury, I was carefully placed onto a gurney by the paramedics, taken outside in the pouring rain from a rare tropical storm and placed into an ambulance for the fifteen-minute drive to Providence Holy Cross Hospital.

A plane crash, a rare tropical storm, but wait, there's more, as they say on TV commercials for this device and that. While waiting in the ER, before I was assigned my own room, an earthquake hit. Everything was moving and rattling. How bad would it become? My woe-is-me mindset was heightened. My first thought was I'm stuck here, how would I escape possible falling debris if I couldn't walk? How could I duck and cover? Would my wife who was by my side protect me? I looked toward the heavens, "Please give me a break," before I knew I really had sustained a break. Fortunately, the tremor ended soon after it began without causing any damage.

Sometime afterward, after reviewing my X-rays, the ER doctor confirmed the somber news. He said I had a broken right hip and I would need surgery. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I never thought this would happen to me.

After I was given rounds of morphine and opioids, my pain began

to diminish to where it was tolerable. My mental anguish, however, increased when I was told the partial hip replacement surgery scheduled for that first night was delayed until the following evening. The rain slickened roads had resulted in numerous automobile accidents and serious injuries with patients needing surgeries before mine.

Following my forty-five-minute surgery by whom I was told was one of most highly regarded orthopedic surgeons in the area, Dr. Alon Antebe, I was up and at 'em the next morning, walking, if you can call it that, down the hallway using a walker, accompanied by a physical therapist. I didn't last too long and it was back to bed.

Other than learning how to walk again with a partial prosthetic hip, I watched TV, waited for the next meal (one gets used to tuna fish sandwiches, tapioca pudding, low carb Jello and soup) and called on the nurses frequently for this and that. It was like time stood still.

So, here I am, weeks later, limping around like so many older people I see every day. Before my crash, I always wondered what had happened to these aging geezers. Car accidents? Slipped? Stopped exercising and let their bodies atrophy? Either way, I was determined that wouldn't happen to me. I'd be careful. As it turned out, fate had caught up with me. I let my guard down. So much for outsmarting Father Time.

Poppa boo-boo!



Translation: *Grandpa Gary got a bad owie.*

On a positive note. In an ironic silver lining, the blood tests taken at the hospital revealed that my type 2 diabetes was very much out of control due to eating too much bad food. If this had gone undetected, who knows what would have happened to me. My intake of Metformin was doubled and I began to receive insulin shots. I am happy to report that my numbers are looking much better now. My primary doctor doesn't know how I improved so quickly.

I've given some thought to what made me do it, that is, co-pilot the plane. Obviously, I love Ellie very much and wanted her to have a good time. Perhaps the underlying motivation was I felt compelled to prove to her parents that at the age of 71, I could still be a lively poppa, and not someone who sat down in a recliner and fell asleep.

My plan went awry. I paid the price.

According to the Web, approximately 450,000 hip replacement surgeries are performed each year in the United States. More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling. The leading reasons for hip fractures, I was told by my surgeon, are taking a header while playing with grandchildren and tripping over dogs. There are of course other minefields that one may fall prey to.

Anyway, this poppa has flown his last flight on Ellie Airlines. I will make every effort to act in accordance with my chronological age realizing my bones are not as strong as they used to be. That doesn't mean I'm ready for a snooze on the recliner. I'll find other ways to put a smile on my granddaughter's face and hear her gleeful "Wheeeeeee!"

YOUR SUBMISSIONS ARE WELCOME!

As our warm October and November days grow shorter, and our nights grow longer and cooler, we are reminded that the winter holidays are just over the horizon. Soon we will be busy with holiday trees, New Year celebrations and Valentine cards and sweet gifts. A newsletter editor is always thinking of future events and entertaining content for club members and readers.

If you have a special story, memoir, poem, op-ed or writing triumph to share in this newsletter, please submit it to the *Scribe*. As you may have noted, every issue of our newsletter contains content from CWC-SFV members or from CWC members in another branch. I accept work that can be viewed on one or two pages, and the submission's content should be appropriate to the season.

Perhaps you have a special Christmas or Hannukah story, a memorable New Year celebration or a romantic Valentine tale. Send it to me at least a month ahead of the targeted issue. I also accept a story about a member's art display, a successful presentation to a group or a special literary award from an organization or another publication.

Also, and this is a very important detail to remember, share your offering with an experienced writer—a friend or spouse or mentor—or your critique group—before you send in your draft. Submitters should always edit for typos, an imperfect line of poetry or any correction that will improve your submission. Such proofing is a great help to this editor, who has her own work to proof and perfect. Unfortunately, I have no official editing crew —any experienced proofing volunteers? If so, send me a note.

I understand a member's sudden need to correct or make a change, but please try to send me the correction before the fourth week of the month—my deadline. Write on, everyone!

Kathy Highcove, *The Valley Scribe* Editor



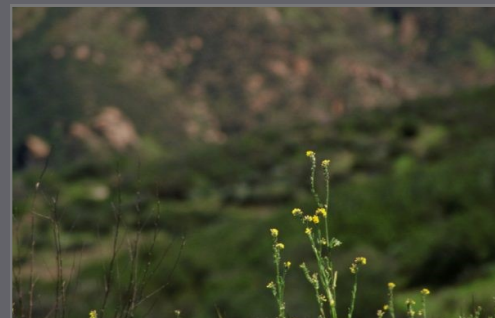


Deep in the Canyon

By Michael Edelstein



Deep in the canyon
 Fog wakens above the creek
 And blankets the ground
 Showing no movement at first
 Then it stretches and rises
 Upward to the highest ridge
 Almost a transparent veil
 Fills the bowl then disappears
 As sunlight reaches over
 Rugged gray precipices
 To meet with morning's hikers
 On the Pentachaeta Trail
 As they slog into the hills
 That elevate to become
 Santa Monica Mountains



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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 Club, please check out our website at: CWC-SFV.org

