



The Valley Scribe

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

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CONTENTS

MESSAGES
AND PLANS
FOR 2024

FROM CWC-SFV
BOARD

CWC CONTEST
AND THE
CWC WINTER
BULLETIN

SPEAKERS FOR
THE NEXT SIX
MONTHS

NEW YEAR
THEMED ESSAYS
AND POETRY
FROM CWC-SFV
MEMBERS



JANUARY 6TH : PAUL LEWIS SPEAKS ON THE COMPLICATED LIFE OF AUTHOR WILKIE COLLINS

By CWC-SFV Member Heather Bradshaw

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome, author, TV presenter, and lecturer, PAUL LEWIS, as the keynote speaker on Saturday, January 6th at 1:00 pm via Zoom with a presentation entitled, Wilkie Collins—A Complicated Life.

Referencing 3,400 known letters and thirty years of bank account records, Paul will illuminate the complicated and extraordinary life of prolific Victorian writer, Wilkie Collins, in this, his bicentennial year.

Born on January 8, 1824, at the end of the Georgian era, Wilkie is well-known for his extraordinarily close friendship with Charles Dickens. The two men were kindred spirits who wrote, played and traveled together. Both famous and well-paid writers in their time, their sense of humor and skillful storytelling is appreciated as much today as it was two hundred years ago.

Collins invented sensation fiction – dramas set behind the closed front doors of Victorian families – and is credited with the first detective story, *Moonstone*. Another popular work that has been adapted into movies and TV series is *The Woman in White*.

All told, Wilkie wrote thirty novels, more than sixty short stories, over 100 non-fiction pieces, and eighteen plays, many of which had great success both in the West End of London and on Broadway in New York.

Collins perfected the art of writing for serial publication so that every part ended in a way that compelled the reader to buy the next issue, aka cliffhangers. Although suffering ill-health, he had an extraordinary work ethic, writing to deadlines for periodicals as well as book publication both in London and abroad – the USA, Europe, Germany and France.

All his life he worked to protect copyright – especially from what he called the thieves in America and other countries who pirated his work without payment. Despite all this he had the reputation of being a kind and gentle man though he could fulminate with the best when roused.

A fascinating character, he challenged convention not just in his fiction, with its strong female characters and shocking plots, but also in his personal life. He maintained

two households with two different women one of whom was the mother of his three children and neither of whom he married. He hated formal dress, smoked cigars and drank brandy and dry champagne despite suffering from gout and painful illnesses all his life which led him to become addicted to laudanum. He spent money on extensive foreign trips and vacations with and without his family.

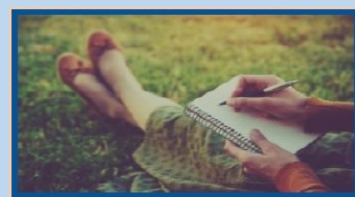
He earned well but spent every penny of it, leaving his two families only the money he had inherited from his father, the artist William Collins R.A. His sixty-five year life (1824-1889) was lived to the full and ended far too soon. And for his families, very sadly.

Our speaker, Paul Lewis, is one of the editors of The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins. He writes and lectures on Wilkie Collins extensively. Having studied Wilkie Collins's life and works for more than 30 years. He is Secretary of the Wilkie Collins Society.

Professionally, Paul is a well-known financial journalist and broadcaster in the UK, presenting a weekly personal finance program for the BBC and writing regularly in many periodicals and newspapers. He has won numerous awards for his work and has two honorary doctorates from English universities.

While this presenter will be on the big screen at the MPTF, we encourage you to attend in-person to meet and talk about your work with other members over snacks and drinks. 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—please contact Zoom host, Anat Wenick, by noon on January 5th at SFV.CWC@gmail.com for an invitation to register. Guests may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org by noon on January 5th. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. We regret we cannot accommodate late requests.



Enjoy the Journey

Happy New Year! I hope 2024 brings each of you good health, happiness and bushels of creative energy to continue along your writing journey!

Several months ago, I ran across "[Pixar's 22 Rules of Storytelling](#)," It's been around for a while; but it was new to me, and I love it. Credit goes to Emma Coates, former Pixar story artist who tweeted these principles in 2011. I'd like to share with you a few that resonate loudest with me.

#1 You admire a character for more than their successes.

As a hardcore foodie, I consume too many hours of television food programs. What I admire most about the lead "characters" in the cooking competition shows is their vulnerability and willingness to lose the "game," unless, of course, the storylines are orchestrated by the producers, who understand Coates' first principle. Regardless, as I develop the characters in my fiction, I try to remember that they, like all of us, occasionally experience failure; and for that, I admire them all the more.

#8 Finish your story, even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world, you would have both, but move on. Do better next time.

I'm a perfectionist, so this one is especially difficult for me. Still, I know that I can't move forward until the ideas bouncing around in my head exit my brain and land in a Word document. Voltaire was correct when he said, "Perfect is the enemy of good." I try to remember this when I spend hour upon hour searching for exactly the right words for my manuscripts, as well as for this column each month. Number 8 is a tough one for me.

#14 Why must you tell THIS story? What is the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of?

That's the heart of it. I discussed this a bit in *Karen's Corner* last month. One of the reasons why I need to write is to give voice to the themes and beliefs that are burning inside me. It doesn't matter whether I'm writing a memoir, a legislative proposal, a poem, or a novel. The themes in my heart are always at the core of anything I compose.

As you continue writing in the new year, I hope you'll refer to "Pixar's 22 Rules of Storytelling" to help you move forward. However, I also hope you'll also consider Karen's First Rule of Writing Anything, which is "No matter how long it takes, or how difficult it may be, or how many of Pixar's 22 Rules you observe or break, don't forget to enjoy the journey!"

SAD NEWS: LONGTIME MEMBER SHEILA MOSS HAS PASSED AWAY

By CWC-SFV Member Kathy Highcove, Editor



Sheila Moss, 1940 –2023

Sheila Moss was a longtime member of our CWC community. She was a joyful soul, who loved people, writing stories and our club. Where else could she interact with clever folks who also loved to write? She stayed active as long as she was able to find a way to a critique group meeting.

And she would phone—yes, call, not text—other SFV members I who weren't in her critique group. I loved to hear her cheery voice on the other side of the line. She might have be dealing with pain and discomfort, but she always sounded like she was ready for a new adventure. I will miss her so much. It's hard to lose a good friend.

When a member of this club passes away, *The Valley Scribe* presents a Remembrance section in the next issue. In preparation for these pages, I'll search through the Scribe archives for a member's work. Then I'll copy these stories, poems and photos as content for the Remembrance issue. But there is one more very important part of the Remembrance pages: tributes from CWC-SFV friends and critique group peers.

If you are so moved by Sheila's passing, please send me—in the next three weeks – a tribute or memory of Sheila that you'd like to share with Scribe readers. Please send them to:

Katherine Highcove, kghighcove@gmail.com.



This obituary was published in Sheila's home town paper, *The Sun Prairie Star*, [Sun Prairie Star | hngnews.com](http://SunPrairieStar.com) and was written by her two sons, Aaron and David Moss.

Sheila Sullivan Moss (née Sheila Patricia Sullivan) of Northridge, CA passed away peacefully on December 27, 2023, following a brief stay in hospice and a life filled with joyful memories and wholehearted connections.

Sheila was born on September 21, 1940, in Sun Prairie, WI. She was the daughter of Hazel and James Sullivan, who together edited and published the local Sun Prairie Star- Countryman. She took pride in her Irish heritage and passion for the written word.

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin, Madison with a bachelor's in journalism and a master's in public relations, Sheila married Jerome Moss in 1969. They lived in Northridge, where they raised two boys: Aaron, an attorney, and David, an IT professional.

Sheila taught English and journalism for the Los Angeles Unified School District for nearly 25 years. She was an active gardener, a voracious reader, and a writer of short stories and articles.

Following her retirement, she volunteered to read to children at the local library, actively participated in the San Fernando Valley Chapter of the California Writers Club, and enjoyed the company of her four grandchildren.

Sheila is survived by her son Aaron, his wife Rosa, and their children Ariana and Alyssa; and by her son David, his wife Blythe, and their children Kaya and Colin. She was preceded in death by Jerry, her husband of over 40 years (2011), and her sister Margaret (2023).

Sheila will always be remembered as a loving grandmother and mother, a talented writer, a thoughtful friend, and a lively person who could light up any room.



Hello CWC Members,

The Winter 2023 edition of the CWC Bulletin is here! This is the official quarterly newsletter/magazine of California Writers Club, the parent organization of your local Cal writers branch.

Inside, you'll find 26 pages of useful and inspiring articles and information, including:

- Two members-only opportunities to see your work in print in 2024.
- Marketing tips for niche nonfiction and short stories.
- Honoring our volunteers: CWC service awards.
- Zoom events available to all CWC members.
- Holiday traditions from a sampling of the CWC branches.

The Bulletin is in PDF format attached to this email. Click on the thumbnail picture at the top or the link button to open or download.

Click on [Winter Bulletin \(PDF\)](#) to read or download the Winter 2023 edition

This issue will be posted on the CWC website at [Cal Writers Website](#)

We hope you will read and enjoy our Winter 2023 edition *CWC Bulletin*.

Good Writing!

Joyce Krieg, Editor in Chief
Sandy Moffett, Associate Editor
Roger C. Lubeck, President

If you have questions or issues, contact: editor@calwriters.org
president@calwriters.org



CWC-SFV Membership Campaign 2024



Welcome to 2024. We are the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club. The CWC was founded in 1909 and has been one of the longest continuously operating writers club in the nation. Our club has been a chapter of the CWC since 1986 and survived growth and recession, division, pandemic, loss of our meeting locations, virtual meetings and never missed a beat. Now we have returned to the beautiful Motion Picture Television Fund campus and facilities.

Effective January 1st through June 30, the new membership fee is reduced to \$42.50. For full-time students between the ages of 8 and 22 attending accredited schools the fee is \$10. Let's capitalize on the reduced membership fee and grow. This is a call to all our members to volunteer to help develop the literature and campaign to encourage those who do not know about us to visit, to attend, to meet us and participate in learning and writing. I can't do it alone and neither can you. Call me or text me with your help, ideas, talent and suggestions.

Over the years we have produced and published more than a dozen anthologies and put together workshops, contests and participated in book festivals. We have dozens of published authors in our midst. We can continue to grow and better serve our large community of writers. These achievements take work. We need your help.

We welcome all genres and all levels of writing and all professions related to writing. We will reach writers to our south,

north, east and west. We have members in other states, who join critique groups, read the Scribe and attend our virtual meetings. Our club has remained valuable to members even when they leave our region. Some have left and come back. We can accept writers around the world.

Nearly two million people live within our 200 square mile San Fernando Valley. That is more people than live in the state of Nebraska. Yet we have only 56 current members. Think of what we can do with more eager members.

Ventura and Los Angeles counties are teeming with creativity, writers and those aching to become writers. They attend our universities, our libraries and our schools as students and teachers. We need to do a better job of outreach. Please help.

Andi Polk, Membership Chair
818-800-5596
andipolk4@gmail.com



If you have suggestions that might help our club's membership grow, please contact Andi Polk.

BRING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA UP TO DATE IN THE CWC-SFV MEMBERSHIP LIST

Our club is updating our members' info on our website. It's a great way to promote your work and something you can share on your social media pages. Participation is voluntary. Should you choose to update your page, please note our recommendation is for a 50 words or fewer introduction, one picture and one link. A picture can be of yourself or a cover of your book.

A link can be to your personal webpage, your social media account or a book that you currently have online for sale (like an Amazon page). If you need an example, please check out our club President, Karen Gorback's section.

To view your own information, go to cwc.sfv.org and click on "Our Member" at the top of the page and click on your name.

As a member you are able to change your own information at any time, but if you need our assistance, please email your request to:

sfv.cwc@gmail.com

Anat Golan Wenick
CWC-SFV Webmaster

HELP WANTED IN 2024: CWC-SFV CRITIQUE GROUP FACILITATOR

CWC-SFV critique groups have always been a valued feature of being a member of our SFV branch of the California Writers Club. But these groups need the leadership of a Critique Group Facilitator.

JOB DESCRIPTION

1. Help SFV members find a critique group suiting their needs.
2. Help members form a new group[when needed.
3. Inform group members about basic protocol in running meetings
4. Establish a basic atmosphere of trust and respect.
5. Gain access to valuable critiquing methods.

JOB PERKS

1. This is a truly rewarding job. You'll become familiar with fellow club writers and meet new and interesting friends.
2. Not too much time is needed to be a critique group facilitator.
3. Also, former facilitators will always be available for help and advice.

Written in 2011 by former Critique Group Coordinator, Lillian Rodich



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.



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

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)



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)



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)



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 Humanitari-*

Vision and Verse

A Fusion of Art and Photography



An ekphrastic book pairing artwork with poetry and short prose

California Writers Club announces a new CWC member-only book project for 2024. *Vision and Verse*, a fusion of Art and Photography.

There are two phases to this project.

Phase One is an art and photography contest open to members only. The CWC member-only art contest begins on December 1, 2023 through January 15, 2024. Member artists and photographers are invited to submit a digital image of their artwork and thought-provoking photography to this CWC contest. (The submission form is [below](#).)

In Phase Two the winning art will be published and used as the inspiration in a call for poetry and short prose submissions to appear in *Vision and Verse*.

Submitted poetry and prose will be judged and selected poems and prose will be published in 2024 along with the winning art in CWC's *Vision and Verse*, ekphrastic book.

Details regarding Phase Two submissions will be posted on the CWC website after the contest.

PHASE ONE (ART and PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST)

- The first-place winner will be featured on the cover, receive a \$100 prize, and a copy of *Vision and Verse*.
- The second and third place winners will receive \$50 each, and a copy of *Vision and Verse*.
- All other artists whose work is selected will receive a copy of *Vision and Verse*.

Submission guidelines:

- Artwork: We welcome original paintings, drawings and illustrations.
- Photography: original photographs only.
- All submissions must be submitted in a jpg format.
- Submissions must be received no later than January 15, 2024.
- Multiple submissions are allowed.
- There is a \$10 fee for each submission.

We look forward to seeing your talent shine in the CWC's 2024 *Vision and Verse*. The winning art will appear in the next issue of CWC Bulletin.

[See contest judges below the submission form.](#)

For more information, go to: [Vision and Verse Art Contest | California Writers Club](#)



HOW TO DECIPHER THE
Wild World
OF AMAZON ADS
 with Bryan Cohen

Saturday, January 13, 2024
9:00 a.m. PST on Zoom

[Redwood Writers Homepage - Redwood Writers](#)

HOSTED BY REDWOOD WRITERS & CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

Bryan Cohen, Workshop 1-13-24 - How to Decipher the Wild World of Amazon Ads

When
 Saturday, January 13, 2024 from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM PST
[Add to Calendar](#)

Price
 Members: \$25
 Non-Members: \$35

Where
 This is an online event.

Dear CWC Members,

On behalf of Redwood Writers and The California Writers Club, you are invited to a very special presentation with Amazon Ads expert, Bryan Cohen on January 13, 2024.

Did you know Amazon is now the third largest advertising network in the world (behind Facebook and Google)? As it becomes harder and harder to be seen on this major bookselling platform, learning how to run ads could be the difference between success and failure.

During this talk, Author Ad School Founder Bryan Cohen will help you take your first baby steps into the confusing and rewarding platform of Amazon Advertising,

You will walk away with a better understanding of what it takes to make Amazon ads work for you.

About Bryan Cohen:

Bryan Cohen is the CEO of Best Page Forward, a company dedicated to helping authors with ads, blurbs, and more. He's an author himself with eight novels and over 150,000 copies sold. He was recently invited to be a part of the Amazon Ads Educators and visited Seattle to collaborate with the Amazon Ads team on new content for authors.

On behalf of Redwood Writers and The California Writers Club, we look forward to seeing you at this virtual two-hour workshop on January 13th, 2024.

Sincerely,

Roger Lubeck, President California Writers Club
 Shawn Langwell, Immediate Past President Redwood Writers

THIS MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND SENT TO ALL REGISTRANTS.

[Get more information](#)

A Permanent Image Review – The Fleeting Nature of Permanence

By CWC-SFV Member Elaine L. Mura, Ph.D. *Republished with the permission of Splash Magazine*



Scott Jackson, Dalia Vosylius, and Terry David – Photo by Alex Moy



Dalia Vosylius, Terry Davis, and Scott Jackson – Photo by Alex Moy



Terry Davis, Scott Jackson, and Dalia Vosylius – Photo by Alex Moy



Scott Jackson, Terry Davis, and Dalia Vosylius – Photo by Alex Moy

“I wish we knew each other better.” How often have you said that to yourself, especially after a tragedy which ended someone’s life? Were you thinking of acquaintances or not-so-close friends? But it’s unlikely that you were referencing your parents or your children. Or were you? A PERMANENT IMAGE delves into the question of barriers – barriers which have kept you distant from those who should have been closest to you, barriers which may have become insurmountable. Idaho-born playwright Samuel D. Hunter explores a frequent theme in his plays – family dynamics, and the tensions inherent in exposing the how and why that have caused distance to become the norm. First produced in Boise, Idaho, in 2011, A PERMANENT IMAGE may be anything but. Never a group to shy away from troubling topics, the Pacific Resident Theatre tackles this complex piece in 2023

The time is Christmas Eve and Christmas day in December 2011, and the place is a small ranch-style house in Viola, Idaho. Bo (Scott Jackson) and Ally (Dalia Vosylius) have come home for the holidays – but not for the festivities of the season. Their mother Carol (Terry Davis) has summoned them back in order to attend the funeral of their father, Martin (Phil Cass). When they arrive, the kids can’t help noticing some pretty strange changes in the old homestead. Carol has painted every room in the house white. And that includes walls, furniture, magazines, pillows, family photos, and anything and everything with a surface. Is this grief speaking? Or recently discovered madness? What is going on here anyway? Those are the questions quickly posed by her son, an international photojournalist, and her daughter, a lesbian entrepreneur running a huge transportation business and juggling her life with her spouse and their toddler son. The family soon turns into the proverbial onion as layers and layers are unpeeled on the way to the core. What happened between mom and her kids? Why do they rarely visit and seem so completely estranged? How did this family turn out two kids who seem to have totally different world views? For that matter, what happened to dad? What’s all the antagonism about? Why all the videos?

Author Hunter manages to deal with very complicated and heavy themes by intertwining ridiculous and sardonic observations by the principals where least expected. At times, the asides prove to be hilarious as audience members nod their heads in tacit agreement. At times, the tale becomes poignant and almost painful to watch as reality makes its way to the surface. This is a masterful study of a family that might not be very different from yours or mine.

A PERMANENT IMAGE is skillfully directed by Andy Weyman, who knows his way around black humor as well as tender compassion. The cast does an excellent job of projecting sense into the senseless, with special kudos for Terry Davis for her diddly but **profound portrayal of Carol. The production team also deserves note; they probably had lots of fun putting together set designer Lando Piastris’ stage. With lighting by Michael Franco, sound by Keith Stevenson, projection design by James Morris, and fight choreography by Ned Mochel, A PERMANENT IMAGE sings. Don’t miss this show if you want to laugh, cry, and get to know a family that may be a lot like yours.**

A PERMANENT IMAGE runs through January 14, 2024, with performances at 8 p.m. on Thursdays through Saturdays and at 3 p.m. on Sundays. The **Pacific Resident Theatre** is located at 703 Venice Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90291. Tickets are \$35 (senior \$25; student rush at door \$12). For information and reservations, call 310-822-8392 or go [online](#).

A Renga for the New Year 2024

By CWC Member Michael Edelstein

It's January

I'm wearing my anorak

You know my parka

With the heavy fleece lining

It's also got a hoodie

And toasty as an oven

But my nose is a cherry

The wind is biting my ears

And my fingers have turned blue

Despite my woolen mittens

I'm heading inside right now

To lay back in the kitchen

Full of delicious brownies

Loaded with chocolate chips

To go with my espresso

And a layer of whipped cream

Nobody's got it better

For beginning the New Year

Unless it's hot buttered rum

Maybe eggnog with whiskey

Or Irish coffee drink time

Then a cup of my mulled wine

With cognac and mulling spice

Honey, sliced fruit and raisins

Too delicious to refuse

Midnight I'll be crapulent

While I'm singing Auld Lang Syne

To greet twenty twenty-four

New Years Eve will be happy



THE ONE THAT NOBODY KNOWS

By CWC-SFV Member Phyllis Butcher

MPTF Outreach Chair



That's what the historians have labeled the song that has defined our celebration of New Year's Eve for almost 75 years. I think a better characterization would be "the song that nobody knows what it means." I recall as a youngster, singing along with my parents (when I was old enough to stay up that late), heartily belting out "That Old Dang Swine." I eventually would sing the corrected version, but still having no idea what the words meant. Most of us haven't a clue as to the origin and progression of the song--let alone how to accurately pronounce the three-word title--but that doesn't stop us from joining voices from around the country as we watch the legendary ball drop slowly and dramatically. Just what is the song, "Auld Lang Syne" all about?

The title and text is a Scots-language poem written in 1788 by Robert "Rabbie" Burns, the national poet of Scotland, but it was based on a Scottish folk song that appeared two centuries before. In the Scots language, the phrase "auld lang syne" literally translates to "old long since" and basically means "days gone by." Merriam-Webster defines the phrase as meaning "the good old times". Burns added a few verses of his own, generously sprinkled with lines about drinking, such as "we'll take a cup of kindness yet" and "we'll take a right good-will draught." The ballad became a standard for celebrating the Scottish New Year. In 1799 it was set to a traditional tune, and this carried down to the version we manage to butcher (sorry, poor choice of words) every December 31st How did this song make it to Times Square?*

The Scots joyfully carried the song with them as they immigrated around the world. North American English speakers would eventually translate Burns's dialect into the common lyrics we know today. Guy Lombardo and his band, the Royal Canadians, first performed the song on New Year's Eve in 1929 and continued until about 1977. It's this familiar version that plays every year as the ball drops in Times Square. So, every time you refill your glass be sure to lift one to Rabbie Burns, who will know you are doing exactly what he would have wanted.

Some traditional holiday songs have been and will continue to be around forever and thank goodness for that. About the same age when I was robustly annihilating the three-word title of The New Year's Song, some examples of my idea of classic Christmas songs—those that would live forever--- were "All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth," "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus Underneath The Mistletoe," and the heart-wrenching "Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer." I can obviously chuckle now, looking back at my immaturity and lack of appreciation of the finer points of music.

I grew to realize that what we might consider to be classics or highly revered definitely changes with the ages and with ageing. But here, in my twilight years, some things can be very traumatic. Reading the morning newspaper recently a headline screamed at me, causing the hand holding my cup of coffee to tremble while the other flew to my mouth, muffling my gasp of incredulity.

65 Years Later, Brenda Lee's "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree" Hits No. 1**

BEATS MARIAH CAREY'S "ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS YOU" FOR FIRST PLACE!

What a blow! Is nothing sacred any longer? My wonderful world of Christmas music once again upended! Talk about "days gone by!" Of course they have, and it's time to turn another page. Let's lift a glass to hopes and prayers for a peaceful, bountiful, safe and joyous New Year!

*"[Auld Lang Syne](#)" Meaning 2024 | What Does "Auld Lang Syne" Mean? (rd.com)

^* [Brenda Lee's 'Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree' Tops Hot 100 - Billboard](#)



A 911 NEW YEAR'S EVE

By the Late CWC-SFV member Ray DeTourney
In the 2011 *The Valley Scribe*

Since the year 2020 has been such a bust, Louise and I tried to smooth over the bumps by recalling some of the most memorable New Year's Eves we have spent together. The first one, of course, was the best. It was 1958 when we celebrated with friends in Paris, France. We remember driving up and down the Champs- Élysées in our MG-TF, still wearing the goofy hats from the party we'd just left. The next most memorable happened in 2008, some 50 years later, in Woodland Hills, California.

Instead of attending a party, Louise and I decided to spend a safe and sane evening in the living room of our San Fernando Valley home while waiting for the ball to drop in Times Square. As it turned out, the ball wasn't the only thing that came down that night.

A year or so earlier the expensive vacant home next door was purchased by two men in their early twenties. They said they were in the mortgage business. Apparently, they'd gotten a deal on the house. Shortly after moving in, their roof bristled with multiple satellite dishes, but being young and unfamiliar with upkeep, the property began a slow decline beginning with weeds in the lawn and a pool that turned the color of cooked spinach.

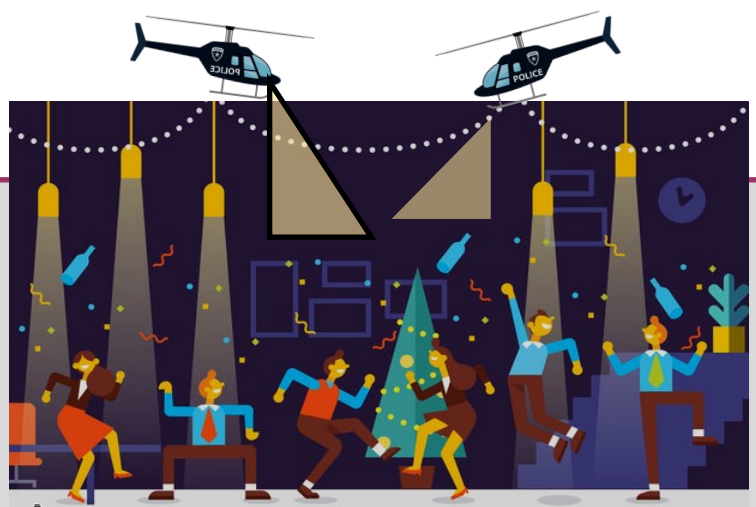
We never got to know the guys well, so when they decided to welcome 2009 by throwing a party for their friends and clients, we weren't surprised not to be invited. Even so, they provided several shows that evening that were more entertaining than any we'd ever paid to see. The first was a Car Show. Their guests all drove very expensive iron. Lined up along our hillside street was a stunning array of Mercedes, BMW's, Bentley's and Hummers...all black with darkened windows and leasing company logos where the license plates normally go.

Next was the Musical Show where a deejay played our favorite heavy-metal music really loud and piped it directly over our fence. "Well, its only once a year," we rationalized.

At the stroke of midnight came the Pyrotechnics Spectacular, a 15-minute display of heavy-duty fireworks blasted from their carport roof. Being high-spirited young men they probably didn't realize it was against the law to launch incendiary objects in a high ire danger area. We went out to watch, if for no other reason than to make sure our backyard didn't go up in smoke.

The fireworks were a trigger for the Helicopter Flyover Show, the one in which the police helicopters shine a high-powered searchlight on top of their house and ours. Standing under a leafless tree as the brilliant light passed back and forth, it felt like we were inside a huge kaleidoscope—very disorienting while sipping champagne.

Next came the display of Shock and Awe. Four police squad cars descended on our neighborhood, lights flashing and sirens wailing. The circling helicopter flushed out many guests who suddenly decided they had other parties to attend. They ran into the waiting arms of the police. This segued into the Street Floor Show. Officers lined



the guests up against a fence with arms over their heads and clasped behind their necks, and began a pat down and identity check. That's when the girls started crying.

The Fire Department Extravaganza came next. A fire engine, sounding its blast horn, threaded through the illegally parked cars on our narrow street. It was responding to calls from neighbors who'd found smoldering fragments of fireworks in their pools and patios.

Standing in our front yard with a panoramic view of the Valley and the entertainment playing out below us, we noticed the front window their house was shattered. A tipsy guy came out the front door, stepped on a beer can, lost his footing and rolled down about thirty steps toward the street. Someone stopped him just before he reached the waiting arms of the police. He shouted nasty words at the cops about search warrants and the like, but they just looked amused. Still steaming, he went into the house and threw some sizeable objects through the remaining windows. An attempt to improve ventilation we presumed.

The grand finale was the dramatic appearance of an ambulance whose flashing lights and siren had little effect in clearing the choked street. A girl had been severely cut by broken glass flying around inside the house during the earlier ventilation improvements. The injury didn't damage her vocal chords though and she had choice words for the cops and technicians as they whisked her off to the hospital.

Louise and I watched the whole production unfold while sipping our champagne and wishing we'd brought some chairs. We didn't realize until later we were watching a classic "stick it to the man" party – The kind in which guests are invited to tidy up the place before the bank takes over. The ventilation efforts were only the most visible effects.

In reflection, it was a great way to start 2009. We learned more about our soon to be gone neighbors and watched our tax dollars at work. We now have new neighbors and they seem really nice...but we made a resolution not to leave home next New Year's Eve.

You never know.



January

By CWC-SFV Member Ken Mazur

again

the gray ghost ship December
sails away with tattered sails
into a spooky mist
to fade beyond that mystic curve forever
past the reach of tiny hands
and great intentions
towards that sacred place reflected
only in our hopes



NEW YEAR'S DAY

**By the late CWC-SFV member
Lenora Smalley, 2010**



**As I clean confetti from last night's party,
Take down lights from a drooping tree,
The smell of ham and yams cooking.
Coins hidden in the black eyed peas
To bring good luck to the one who finds them.
I think about what New Year's means.**

**It's a colorful, left-over holiday gift
Labeled "Do Not Open 'Til January 1st,"
A while snowfall covering the past,
A dare to remember for letters and checks,
A first blank page in a brand-new journal,
A resolve to write as each day turns,
A new dance step,
A flame relit to burn all year,
A chance to start over,
A slate wiped clean,
A wave that breaks and washes the shore,
Waiting for footprints to mark the sand,
And new sand castles to be built again.**

I can't wait to get started.



LAST THOUGHTS

By CWC-SFV Member Yolanda Fintor, 2023

Did I get it right?
Did I give enough love to those who needed it?
Did I put their desires ahead of mine?
Was I strong when I had to be
But compliant when it was better to bend?
Was I forgiving to those who wronged me?
Did I befriend those who were left behind?
Did I rejoice with those who excelled?
Did I give comfort to those who grieved?
Did I get it right?
If not
Will I get another chance?

THEN AND NOW

Written By CWC-SFV Member

Lillian Rodich in 2014

then was then
and now is now

what can be said about yesterdays
except they were once tomorrows
changes take place somewhere in-between

some surprises
some ardently pursued
all of this fascinating
and humbling
sometimes joyous
sometimes devastating

decades ago
could we have imagined
this world as it is now
an ever-changing mystery

still in all these days and months and years
some things have remained a constant
youth has retained
ability to dream and create
and *love* has remained
in our vocabulary



CWC-SFV EXECUTIVE BOARD OFFICERS, BOARD CHAIRS AND DIRECTORS

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 CWC-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

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