



# The Valley Scribe



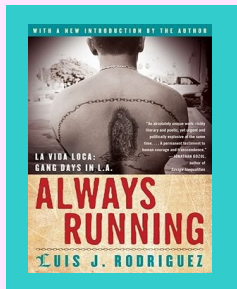
Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch  
of the California Writers Club

## GUEST SPEAKER LUIS J. RODRIGUEZ PRESENTS:

### "The Transformative Experience of Writing My Memoir"



The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome award-winning author, poet, memoirist and activist, LUIS J. RODRIGUEZ, as our keynote speaker on Saturday, May 4 at 1:00 pm, via Zoom, to talk about the life-changing experience of writing his memoir, *Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*



the San Fernando Valley. Luis is also the founding director of Barking Rooster Entertainment, which produces content for the Internet, TV, film, and books. He hosts a podcast with his wife Trini, The Hummingbird Cricket Hour.

A recipient of the California Arts Council Legacy Fellowship and the *Los Angeles Times'* Robert Kirsch Lifetime Achievement Award, Luis is the author of sixteen books. He is a novelist and memoirist, a short story writer, children's book writer, poet and essayist. He is also a community and urban peace activist, mentor, healer, youth and arts activist, husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather!

Over the past 40 years, Luis has traveled extensively in the United States and Canada, Central and South American, and Europe to speak, give poetry readings, and conduct indigenous ceremonies; including at prisons, jails and juvenile lock-ups. His political aspirations have seen him make a run for California Governor in 2014 and 2021, and for the Los Angeles School Board, at the age of twenty-two! Dedicated to his indigenous roots and Native American spirituality, Luis's Mexika (Aztec) name is Mixcoatl Itztlacuilo (Seven Rabbit), and his Navajo given name is Naayee' Neezghanii, which means Monster Slayer. *From Our Land to Our Land* are essays from the imaginings of a Native Xicanx Writer. To learn more about this fascinating, multi-award-winning author, visit [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis\\_J.\\_Rodriguez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_J._Rodriguez).

Luis's best-selling memoir, *Always Running*, is considered a 'fearless classic' that chronicles his early life as a young Chicano gang member surviving the dangerous streets of East L.A. in the '60s and '70s. The book was made into a sell-out play.

*It Calls You Back* is the 'deeply insightful and beautifully written follow-up - an odyssey through love, addiction, revolutions, and healing of a former teen gang member, and was a finalist for a 2012 National Book Critics Circle Book Award.

While Luis will be joining us via Zoom 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!

From 2014-15, Luis was Poet Laureate of L.A. County. To Luis, poetry is soul talk, a prophetic act, a powerful means to enlarge one's presence in the world. His latest poetry collection is *Borrowed Bones*. In his short story collection, *The Republic of East LA: Stories*, Luis gives eloquent voice to his neighborhood, squeezing humor from the lives of people who are not ready to sacrifice their dreams due to circumstance.

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 May 3rd at [SFV.CWC@gmail.com](mailto:SFV.CWC@gmail.com) for an invitation to register. Guests may purchase admission at [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) by noon on May 3rd. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. We regret we cannot accommodate late requests.

Luis is the founding editor of Tia Chucha Press, and co-founder with his wife, Trini, of Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural & Bookstore in

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## SPRING MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 2024

Please participate and make  
our CWC-SFV membership grow!  
Here are three ways you can help:



1

Renew your \$45 club membership between May 1 and June 30!  
The names of all CWC-SFV members who renew their membership by May 1 will be entered into a raffle. The winner will be notified in July and will receive a full refund of their renewal fee.  
That's a free membership for a year!

### Payment Options

Payment by check made payable to: CWC-SFV

Mail to:

CWC-SFV

Woodland Hills PO Box 564,  
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

2

Persuade a writer friend to join our club by June 30, and then receive a \$20 refund on your dues.

2923 RAFFLE WINNER



Michael Edelstein

OR

Pay your dues with an easy online payment:

Go to [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org)

Click on "Membership Information."

At the bottom of the left-hand column, click on "Membership Renewals."

3

New members pay \$65 to join our club. Those who join in May or June will immediately receive CWC-SFV club benefits. That's 14 months for the price of 12!  
Such a deal!

# KIRSTEN CASEY: THE MAGIC IS WHY WE WRITE

A Review by Elaine L. Mura, Ph.D.  
Vice President/Secretary, CWC-SFV

At our May gathering, the CWC-SFV welcomed noted poet Kirsten Casey, Poet Laureate of Nevada County, California. Celebrating National Poetry Month, Kirsten spoke on “Putting the Fun Back in Writing.”

Kirsten is a creative writing teacher and a California Poet in the Schools, where she taught high school workshops as part of the Academy of American Poets Laureate fellowship. She has penned two collections of poetry: “Ex Vivo: Out of the Living Body” (2012) and “Instantaneous Obsolescence.” She plans to publish another poetry collection, “Grieving Bird,” in the near future. Currently, she is an associate editor of “Small, Bright Things,” a collection of 100-word stories by teens, collaborating with author and editor Kim Culbertson. For almost 30 years, she and her family have resided in Nevada City.

Kirsten began her presentation by cautioning writers that they often forget to have fun when writing. To boost the fun ratio in writing, she suggested that, not only should writers should write about what they know, but - more importantly—also about what they love.

Kirsten indicated that deadlines help her produce and that urgency in writing can prove valuable. She stated that, as Poet Laureate, she is often commissioned to write poems – perhaps for an event or celebration. Typically, she begins by doing substantial research about the theme or topic. For example, if asked to write about a new bridge opening, she studies articles, photos, etc. about that bridge or even bridges in general in order to find the inspiration to write the poem.

She told the audience that she might carry figments of poetic lines in her head for weeks or even months as the creative process begins to gel. Recently, she did significant research about pockets to develop a poem: “Us writers can be time machines, map makers, people who listen to both sides of the confessional...we have to find a way into what the poem is saying.” At the same time, she tries to connect her emotions to what her readers will understand.

Our speaker suggested that we write because we must and followed with a number of silly – and often true – reasons: finding an excuse to sit down, telling lies about secrets, seeing faces in shower tiles, exercising words. She strongly suggested that authors write their ideas down as soon as they are inspired – using methods like keeping a journal or having a notebook handy at all times. She also suggested that the writer must pay attention to “the gift of knowing whether to go forward with an idea or not.”

If feeling depressed, the writer should look for distractions like nature and intriguing or even bizarre things that other people say or do.



**“Poetry is saying  
the most with  
the right words  
...it becomes  
magic.”**

**Kirsten Casey**

Kirsten likened a poem to “looking through a microscope,” while novels are “looking through a telescope.”

She also mentioned that authors must give themselves permission to occasionally be “weird.” She opined that poetry frees the writer from details with a focus on language and avoidance of clichés. To develop the process of inspiration, Kirsten suggested looking at a random phrase as a prompt into an idea. She cited a Bulwer-Lytton contest – the contestants’ challenge is to write the worst opening lines for many different genres. This audience participation opportunity proved very amusing as our group tried to respond weirdly to Kirsten’s prompt. Here is the 2023 Grand Prize winner: *“She was a beautiful woman; more specifically she was the kind of beautiful woman who had an hourlong skincare routine that made her look either ethereal or like a glazed donut, depending on how attracted to her you were.”* \*

She advised that the first line of any writing was essential and should read like an invitation with an appealing flare to hook the reader. She mentioned that Stephen King wrote in his book about writing that the author wants the reader to be curious and pleased. She noted the opening line of the novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* – “They threw me off the truck just before noon.” Kirsten emphasized that this first line is actually a promise or hint about what will be revealed in ensuing chapters.

Kirsten also described another fun prompt used by a different author who writes one-star reviews of famous tourist attractions like the Great Wall of China. After describing a number of prompts to help grease the writer’s creativity, she read her recent poem about pockets, roundly appreciated by the audience as both historically fascinating and also representing a brilliant use of words.

Finally, our guest writer strongly recommended that writers should try to keep their own interests alive: “Surround yourself with creatives...do research...read a lot...write what you feel.”

An audience member asked for her opinion about poems with rhyme: “Today we tend to be more involved with structure than content...the important thing in poetry is emotion...and the concise use of words.” In other words, our speaker stressed, whether or not to rhyme was up to the author’s preferences.

\*[Home | The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest](#)

# PRESENTING THE CWC-SFV CANDIDATES FOR 2023-24

## PRESIDENT



**KAREN  
GORBACK**

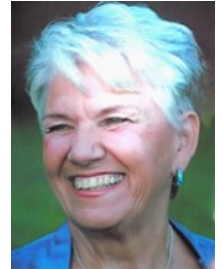
**K**aren Gorback has been a member of CWC-SFV since 2008, serving on the board as a “member at large,” publicity chair, assistant program chair, program chair, representative to the SoCal CWC Board, and most recently as president. Karen is president and Zoom host for the CWC Presidents' Group and is a recipient of the 2023 CWC Jack London Award for service.

In addition, Karen represents Ventura County as a Senior Senator in the California Senior Legislature, where her job is to research and write legislative proposals to better the lives of older adults and people with disabilities throughout California. Karen is also a member of the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and hopes to publish a picture book later this year titled "Mazel's Mishpacha." A former college dean with a doctorate in education, Karen has four grown children and nine grandchildren “who live too far away.”

## VICE PRESIDENT

**A**ndrea “Andi” Polk, current membership chair, joined CWC-SFV in September 2011. Actively writing a novel, memoir and poetry. Retired HR administrator at CSUN, experience in CSU internal publications as a proofreader and HR database management. Became Membership Chair with new CWC database (MRMS) in 2011.

Subsequently, I have served as president, secretary, central board representative, temporary editor, temporary program chair, and critique group coordinator but I've never served as treasurer. I was honored with the Jack London Service Award in 2013.



**ANDREA  
POLK**

## SECRETARY

**E**laine Mura was born in New Jersey, relocated to Manhattan for her advanced degrees, and eventually re-located to live and work in Denmark, Germany, Portugal, and Iran (with quick trips to lots of fascinating (preferably off the beaten path) spots.

Her website calls her The Traveling Psychologist, and she had these comments about her work history: “Obviously, I am a psychologist. Currently, I work full time for the CA Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, where I determine whether or not inmates coming up for parole are too dangerous to be released to the community. Before that, I was a full time professor of graduate psychology for Pepperdine University. I am in the process of writing in several genres (novel, short story, play) and write articles for Splash Magazine, particularly reviews for plays, movies, etc. Special interests include photography, travel, and anthropology/archeology.”

Also, Elaine reviews several plays and performances in the L.A. area for *Splash Magazine* and shares her reviews in the our newsletter, *The Valley Scribe*.



**ELAINE MURA**

## TREASURER

**U**pon joining CWC-SFV, Andi Polk, who was President at the time, asked me to be Hospitality Chair and I accepted the challenge. In subsequent years I took on the roles of Secretary, Treasurer and Critique Group Coordinator. I would be happy to serve as your Treasurer. By agreeing to participate on the Board, I feel I pay back some of the gifts I have enjoyed as a CWC-SFV member.

When I retired, one of my goals was to focus on writing. As a clinical social worker, I provided treatment to numerous families, individuals and children. At the agency I was working for, I advanced from therapist to program director and finally Chief of Clinical Service. I retired in 2014 after thirty-five years at the agency. As head of services, I was instrumental in writing many successful proposals that funded new and continuing social service programs. I enjoyed proposal writing, figuring out how to provide new services. Now, as a retiree, I enjoy the freedom to write for the joy of playing with words and telling a tale (usually a mystery).



**PAT AVERY**

# CWC POLICY AND PROCEDURE USER'S MANUAL

*CWC User's Manual* Now Available for Distribution  
by Bob Isbill  
CWC Publicity and Public Relations

As announced in the Spring CWC Bulletin, we are proud to announce that the *CWC User's Manual* book, presented to the California Writers Club central board meeting on October 22, 2023, has been revised, updated, and is now in publication. With gratitude for their feedback to Andrea Polk, Joyce Krieg, Karen Gorback, Carole Bumpus, Tim Flood, June Gillam, Lenore Hirsch, Linda Brown, Constance Hanstedt, Roger Lubeck, Elisabeth Tuck, and Mike Apodaca.

Changes to correct the publication have been made and the book, published through KDP, is available for purchase on Amazon.com. Any profits generated will be given back to the central treasury of the California Writers Club.

A free version is available on '[WWW.CALWRITERS.ORG](http://WWW.CALWRITERS.ORG)' a PDF format, available for download to anyone wanting the book. Links are as follows:

Amazon.com link for the CWC User's Manual

Both Kindle and Paperback versions are available

**[Amazon.com : CWC User's Manual](#)**

**[Amazon.com: CWC User's Manual: How It Works eBook : Isbill, Bob: Kindle](#)**

Or get your free PDF copy by downloading it on [WWW.CALWRITERS.ORG](http://WWW.CALWRITERS.ORG)

You will find it under the Resources banner.

**[Resources for Branches | California Writers Club](#) [WWW.CALWRITERS.ORG](http://WWW.CALWRITERS.ORG)**

Robert Isbill, High Desert Branch, CWC Publicity and Public Relations

Roger C. Lubeck, CWC President

# Ophelia Review – Memory Plays Tricks

By CWC-SFV Vice President/Secretary Elaine L. Mura, Ph. D.



Deborah Geffner and Stefan Marks in OPHELIA - Photo by Baranduin Briggs



Stefan Marks and Tatum Langton – Photo by Baranduin Briggs



Deborah Geffner – Photo by Baranduin Briggs

Written and directed by award-winning playwright Stefan Marks, *OPHELIA* makes its world premiere at the Odyssey Theatre in 2024. Marks creates a tale of tragedy, laughter, love, dementia, blood spatter, time travel, and broken lives in this existential dramedy. Besides all that, he also acts in his own three person play.

The place is the real world – and a little bit of an altered world too. The time hops here and there as memories, dreams, and wishes juxtapose with the real and almost-real worlds surrounding the trio. Mom (Deborah Geffner) is getting older and now needs more care than her devoted son can provide. Before she moves to a memory care facility, however, she has one paramount wish: she wants to see her middle-aged son (Stefan Marks) settled and the father of her yet-to-be-born grandchild. Before it's too late, Mom longs to see and remember happy times as a grandma before her memories slip away completely. Pointing Son in the right direction, however, may be a tougher job than Mom anticipated. Then Son bumps into Her (Tatum Langton), and his awkwardness and personal problems seem to evaporate – except that one day Her disappears without a goodbye – and Son doesn't know how to reach Her. The dating game seems to have lost another round. Will Mom's dream come true? Or will reality throw a monkey wrench into her plans?

Marks helms the existential production with a light hand while the tangible world slips into the proverbial rabbit hole. Yes, there are laughs – but also some pathos as the story unwinds. Kudos to the cast, with special note of Geffner's splendid performance as Mom, a performance which neatly balances the tragic with the comic. The production team – Mark Svastics for lighting and set design, Stephen Epstein for sound, and Paula Higgins for costumes – makes valuable contributions to the overall mood and ambience. Throughout, there is an otherworldly quality to the show which resists conventional boundaries.

*OPHELIA* will intrigue people who find family dynamics fascinating, as well as middle-aged folks who find themselves re-entering the dating scene. Additionally, the piece compassionately deals with dementia as it begins to take memories away, forcing family members to make some hard decisions. At the same time, this is an entertaining and often amusing peek at life's challenges and how to survive them.

*OPHELIA* runs through May 18, 2024, with performances at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and also at 3 p.m. on Saturday 4/27, 5/11, and 5/18. The Odyssey Theatre is located at 2055 S. Sepulveda Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90025. Tickets are \$45. For information and reservations, call 310-477-2055 Ext. 2 or go [online](#).

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Stefan Marks – Photo by Brandun Briggs

# SHE SERVED LOVE WITH EVERY MEAL

By SFV-CWC Member Michael Edelstein

My mother said she loved me  
It wasn't an easy love  
I said I loved her too  
Although I could not stand  
Tall enough to kiss her lips  
It resounded with inequality  
She did her best, I know  
In those post-depression days  
But I wasn't easy and couldn't be, either  
Hold on,  
This is about her, not me  
She was very bright  
Had lovely script handwriting  
Unlike my left-handed scribbles  
Mother was well-spoken  
Liberated, with a sharp tongue  
And a ribald sense of humor  
She required hard work from me  
Sometimes I complied  
Or got harsh words  
Or harsher hand-delivered retribution  
She cooked really well  
I remember that  
And would tell me I was fat  
Also, that I didn't eat enough  
She made great pot roasts and stews  
In her big pressure cooker  
But fish was not her forte  
Actually it tasted pretty ugly  
On those Friday nights  
I ate baloney sandwiches  
She never complained  
As long as I ate something  
She would skip breakfasts  
Which I made for Steve and me  
From cornflakes, shredded wheat or Cheerios  
Whole milk and a banana  
Dad cooked oatmeal on Sundays  
With butter, condensed milk, Wheaties  
And a little salt  
He'd take us to breakfast at The Greeks  
Once a week on Mondays  
School was around the corner  
I hated school lunches,  
With skinny margarine-coated  
American cheese sandwiches  
Tomato soup with celery and, "No noise"  
But Mom made sure we got to eat  
She served love with every meal



# MEET LISA AND RICHARD: TWO NEW CWC-SFV MEMBERS



LISA HAHN

## A REBORN STORYTELLER

I have been a writer since the age of 5, and hopefully my writing has improved since then. Although, nothing can match the imagination and wonder of a child. I wish I still had the stories I wrote back then.

My profession required that I write all the time, from executive memoranda, strategic plans, ad copy and white papers. During the last 20 years of my career, I published and contributed to writing a professional journal on water resources. My best, and maybe only, bragging right is that the Library of Congress actually paid to have copies of my journal.

Now that I am retired, I have returned to being a story teller based on true events and the joyous and often funny behavior of humanity. My writing is meant to inform while being amusing. Humor is the secret sauce that enables us to continue living and giving to the world around us. Stay tuned for a few forthcoming articles and books that are in progress.

I want to thank the California Writers Club for the encouragement and resources provided by its talented members.

## A WRITER WITH A KNACK FOR ENTERTAINMENT

Richard Allan Jones is a baby boomer, who before retiring, spent some forty years earning a living in marketing, advertising, and public relations in the non-profit, government and private sectors. He is a widower with two adult children who has traveled the world and lived in seven states, California being the latest, and Ohio, the first. Lots of highlights, but when George Bush invited him to the White House to help launch his Points of Light Foundation--that was special.

Since retiring in 2008, he has focused on the three “jobs” he enjoys the most—music, writing and acting. A former DJ in the sixties, Jones sings and has played guitar/bass in several bands, the latest a 60/70s classic rock band called Revolution Road. He has written and performed many original songs that can be heard on Amazon Music, like “Caribbean Lime,” and “A Really Bad Day.”

He has appeared on stage many times, once with Academy Award winner Eileen Heckart and recently as Avram in “Fiddler on the Roof” at the Santa Clarita Performing Arts Center. His IMDB page as a member of the Screen Actors Guild lists more than fifty TV and film appearances.

Writing has been a passion since middle school where he was the sports reporter for the school newspaper. Jones has been published in several trade publications, as well as five short story anthologies. He holds an MA in Journalism and has written two novels under the pen name Rich Allan, “Drafted,” a story based on his experiences as a first lieutenant during Vietnam, and a thriller, “Identity Check.” In the pipeline, a new thriller, “Case of the Killer Sasquatch,” a memoir, “Okay, Boomer,” a children’s picture book series, “The Menhune Twins,” and a collection of my short stories, “My Shorts: Tales from a Twisted Mind.”



Richard Allan Jones



# Downsizing: Not for the Weak of Heart

By Lisa Hahn

According to the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, a garage is *a building where car or cars are kept, especially one that is next to or part of a house.* For me, and perhaps for you, my garage is a Purgatory filled with old stuff. Over the years, when trying to decide where to store articles that I might need sometime in the future; or if I felt that some family member might someday want it—then the item was thrown into the garage.

And while garage storage can be well-organized, mine was more like geographic, archeological strata of my thirty-four-year history of living in that house. I was suddenly inspired to begin my personal stratigraphic excavation to explore, sort and organize the stuff in the garage.

Digging downwards, I started with the wedding decorations from my daughter's wedding five years ago....fourteen flower vases, 8 white lanterns decorated with bows and butterflies, sixteen tablecloth toppers in shimmering gold....well you get the picture. It was not that she had any nostalgic connection to the items. She simply thought if she waited for spring she could sell it to some beaming bride-to-be on a budget.

Twice, spring came and went, and still the decorations sat in my garage. When probed, my daughter replied, "I'll get to it when I have the time. And besides, you have plenty of room to store it."

I confess: I didn't ask my daughter if that was ok. I just did it.

Lifting one of the decorated lanterns out of its box, I noticed the butterfly wings were slightly bent and laden with dust. No longer suggestive of anticipated adventure, the decoration evoked thoughts of staleness and neglect. I recalled the love and creativity had gone into taking a plain white patio table lantern and turning it into a festive, colorful and fanciful wedding decoration. I shuddered thinking how many of the past joys in my life, not just physical items, had also degraded due to neglect.

I discarded the paper butterflies and carefully dusted all eight lanterns. Then I set them aside, as well as the other wedding decorations, to be donated to a local wedding chapel that provided a free wedding venue to low-income families.

Underneath the wedding items sat 15 business filing boxes, left over from former publishing and writing business. Not knowing the legal length of time required to maintain research findings and background information on published articles, I had simply stored them in filing boxes in the garage. I was capable of finding out the legal requirement, but I was also unable to let go of my past professional iden-

tity. But now, when I glimpsed those boxes again, I felt reassured that I'd been successful and that my work had really mattered to those who subscribed to my publication. I felt reassured that my intelligence and writer skills had influenced other writers, I needed to be reminded from time to time of this legacy, I thought.



However, I suddenly realized that I had lost all interest in my prior field of endeavor and frankly, had been too lazy to update myself on the current state of play in Western water resources. I no longer relished the fight, so all those boxes were dumped in the recycle bin. I knew the pounds of paper would make great environmen-

tally responsible kitty litter.

Suddenly, I found myself on fire with new energy and a passion to transform the garage into a working garage! I ordered a second garage door opener to present to visiting guests. Now their they could park their car in my garage at night, protected from catalytic converter thieves, blowing dust, and bird poop.

My new goal: a two-car garage with well-organized and beautifully displayed tools, a gleaming laundry nook, and a few storage shelves demonstrating my skill at saving money through purchasing the 64 pack of paper towels, and 42 rolls of toilet paper.

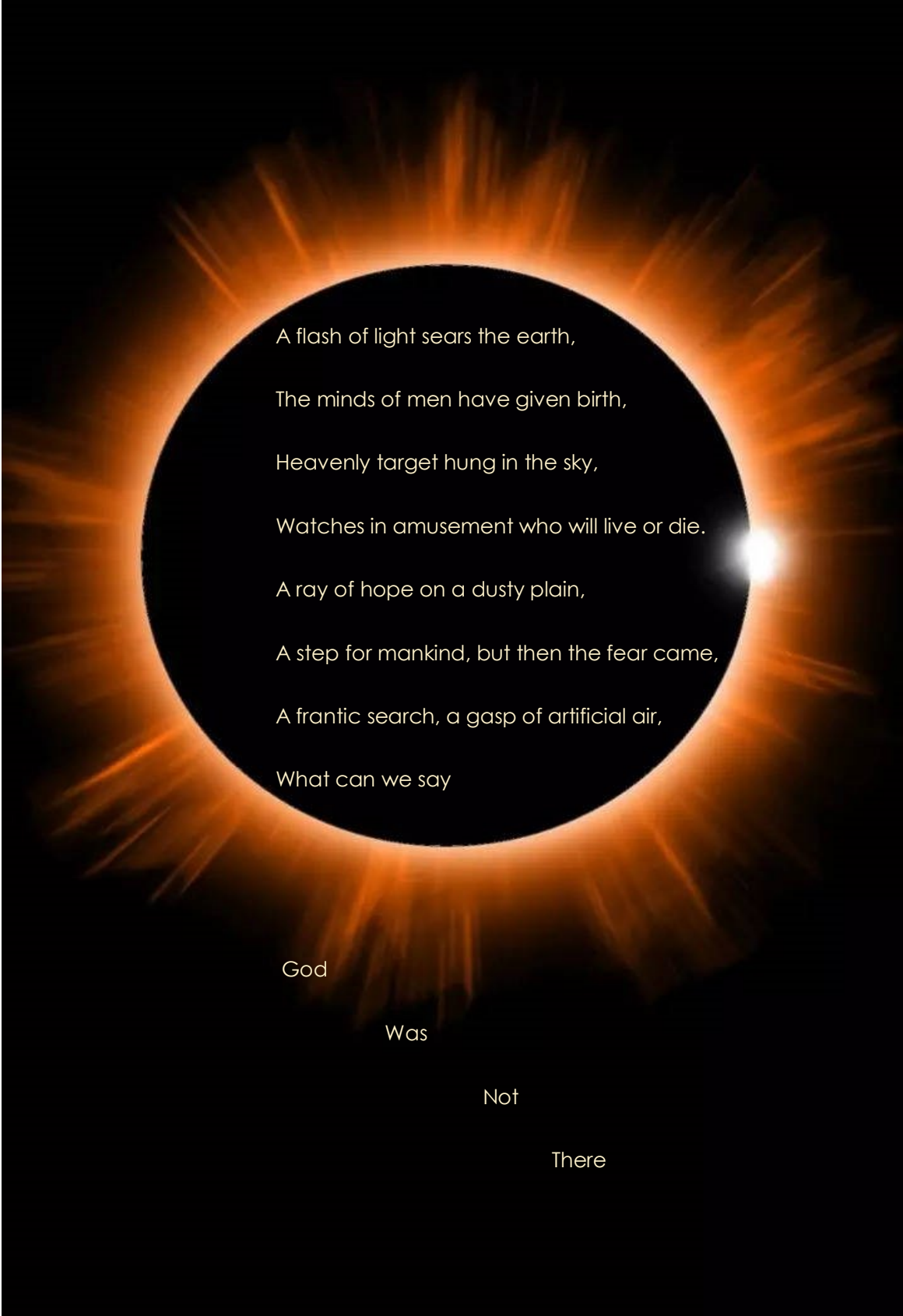
My cleaning-the-garage project changed my life. Like a snowball rolling down a long slope, picking up speed and mass, I became increasingly driven to remove the chaos around me and create space, calm and a place to germinate creativity. Since that epiphany, I've come a long way, and still have a long way to go! Living an organized, quasi-minimalist lifestyle is an ongoing effort filled with pitfalls and temptations.

Ulysses was called by the Sirens to sail toward the rocks. My Siren is named Amazon. The deal of the day can makes me salivate at the thought that the latest kitchen tool can be mine at 25% off if purchased today. So what, I think, if the toaster-air fryer-convection oven-rotisserie take up half of my counter and gets used once a month?

The book I'm currently writing describes my eighteen-month journey from a stuffed five-bedroom house to a one-bedroom cozy, organized nest. It was a crazy time, filled with unexpected challenges, such as a twenty-day escrow and a worldwide pandemic. When the book is completed, I think readers will enjoy my humorous narrative and more importantly, learn practical and time-saving tips for their own organizing journey.

# THE EAGLE

By CWC-SFV Member Richard Allan Jones



A flash of light sears the earth,  
The minds of men have given birth,  
Heavenly target hung in the sky,  
Watches in amusement who will live or die.  
A ray of hope on a dusty plain,  
A step for mankind, but then the fear came,  
A frantic search, a gasp of artificial air,  
What can we say

God

Was

Not

There

## **Maypole Celebration**

**A tall pole  
From earth to sky  
Waterfall of ribbons  
Rippling in anticipation  
Music from ancient songs  
Calls to the children  
And they soon dance  
In a tapestry of traditions**

**Ripples of rhythms  
Children bedecked in costumes  
That tell their story**

**Those that dance soon fly  
Swinging on magical colors  
From earth to sky  
And the tall pole turns**

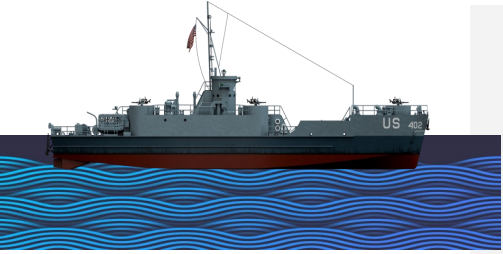
**Lillian Rodich**



# **MAYDAY!**

by

The Late CWC-SFV Member Ed Rasky



“Whup! Whup! Whup,” repeated over and over again as I rushed to my battle station on the Antigonish, a corvette carrying 91 men. It was November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944 and I was very proud to be a sick berth attendant in the Royal Canadian Navy.

I was 18 years of age after spending a full year at the Sydney Naval Hospital in Nova Scotia. We had been at sea in the Atlantic Ocean for four weeks now and the maneuvers we had been through prepared our ship for convoy duty to Ireland.

The dangers were all around us. A German sub called a U-boat had followed us for a week. Thank goodness for radar. The German sailors in the U-boat were all aware of our power. We could catapult 15 barrels of TNT into the water at one time.

Our ship was faster than theirs. Our depth charges could sink a submarine. Once we got a sub on radar, it could be over in a few minutes. If the garbage from the sub reached the surface, we knew we’d made a kill. On the other hand, if the U-boat got into a proper position it could torpedo us.

As I reached my battle station, I felt the sweat of fear on my forehead. When I saw our depth charges in mid air I said a prayer in Hebrew that might help them to their destination. It didn’t help. I day dreamed about my family. I had four brothers and three sisters. I was the only one in the military service. Would they miss me if my ship was sunk?

My job was to open up the sickbay each day from 9-12 a.m. and 1-4.p.m.. I did small stitching jobs when necessary. I had heard of some cases when a sick berth attendant had to operate. *Wow! Please don’t make me that person. I have enough on my plate right now, I thought.*

An hour later, “Whup! Whup! Whup! Whup,” and I was back at my battle station. I was informed that there might be dead bodies which would be my responsibility to prepare for burial. The sweat came back in earnest. I tried to appear calm.

The scene was not pleasant. I saw a lot of garbage. We were told over the loud-speaker that a U-boat had sunk a Canadian corvette like ours. There was no sign of the ship—just one life raft with three bodies remained in the sea.

I saw the three dead sailors later that day. They were all my age. Their stomachs were swollen and their skin was a purplish color. I had never seen a dead body before.

It took a while for the captain to maneuver the ship to pick up the bodies. I prepared them for burial the next day. Several times I thought I was going to vomit.

These three sailors were buried at sea. The captain said a few words. “May the three sailors and all 82 men aboard be blessed for fighting for our freedom.”

I will always remember the brave men and women who fought and died in World War II.

# Holding on for Dear Life

By CWC Tri-Valley Member Constance Hanstedt

SOURCE: CWC LITERARY REVIEW 2021



## HOLDING ON FOR DEAR LIFE

Brass trio of geese, pewter platters,  
plastic tabletop tree bearing artificial fruit.  
Mom's things are stored so she can see them again  
if she wants, her room at assisted living too small  
for objects more decorative than essential, except  
for a few teddy bears, photos of grandchildren,  
and Grandma mounted on her horse.

She doesn't remember her ranch-style house,  
but I still see her scrubbing shag carpeting  
on her hands and knees, vacuuming curtains  
and dark recesses of closets. After Dad died,  
possessions replaced human voices.  
Yet now she dangles her feet on the edge  
of the twin bed and hangs on to my every word,  
even though I'm a stranger with a name  
she doesn't recognize, a name erased  
like letters on a chalkboard.

How does one live without memories?  
Her wedding day, Dad in his crisp Navy uniform.  
Holding one baby, then the second and third,  
when we all became too much, when time moved  
slow as honey. Religiously flipping buttermilk  
pancakes every Sunday morning. Now when I ask  
what she had for breakfast three hours earlier,  
she frowns, the memory not even a dull shadow.

How will I live without a mother?  
Our weekly talks from two thousand miles away.  
Her political views, stories of who is ill, or died.  
My reports of grown children in college or working.  
How can I carry all of our memories?  
Tell me, how does one go on?

# TICKET TO BLISS

By CWC SAN JOAQUIN Member Pam Van Allen

SOURCE: CWC LITERARY REVIEW 2021



**M**y mother wouldn't leave the bowling alley, and it was already noon. She didn't understand it was the most important day of my life, and I wanted great seating. The show started at 3:00 p.m., and the doors were already open, according to the ticket held firmly in my hand—my ticket to bliss. There was no assigned seating for this show; it was first come, first served.

"If we don't arrive early, I won't be able to see their faces, even with the opera glasses Nanny gave me last Christmas." I complained. These performers had changed my life a little over a year ago.

My mother said I couldn't attend the concert alone because I was only eleven years old. It would be too dangerous for a little girl to go alone, but she understood how important it was for me to be there, so she agreed to chaperone us. She bought two \$5 tickets for us and another for my best friend Candy. The money for mine came out of my allowance.

Now Candy and I were antsy at the bowling alley, sweating it out while my mother finished talking to her friends before we could leave for the Houston Coliseum. We pointed at our wrists and fidgeted, but we knew better than to interrupt. Finally, she responded to our impatience, and we left.

A million cars blocked the streets downtown. Candy and I spent the agonizing wait in traffic, discussing the relative merits of our favorite group members. Mother finally found a parking space and we dragged her toward the venue door.

"We have to hurry. We'll never find good seats now."

Mother was surprised that so many people had already arrived. At last, she matched our pace.

We joined the entry queue and had our tickets torn.

"See, I told you we should have left earlier." I nagged her when the best seats we could find were high up in the nose-bleed section, two-thirds of the way back. Ninety minutes still remained until show time. Candy and I talked about fashion, hairstyles, and our favorite songs with the other teen and pre-teen fans.

When we thought we would all burst with anticipation, the lights went down and our idols took the stage. A deafening roar ascended from the crowd. The score board hanging from the center of the ceiling shuddered and threatened to fall on the masses below. We could barely hear the music and singing, but we were unconcerned. We were in the same cavernous room with these four people we had loved from a distance, breathing the same air. The screaming thundered throughout the twenty-five-minute spectacle.

My mother slapped the top of my head. "Stop that screaming, or you won't get any supper," she shrieked over the incessant din.

Tears streamed from my eyes at the rebuke. "You don't understand," I shouted, "I can't help it."

Sixty years later my memory of the Beatles in concert is as crystal-clear as if it had happened yesterday.

Thanks, Mom.



:Phoros source: [23 Photos That Prove Beatles Fans Were Doing The Absolute Most In The '60s \(buzzfeednews.COM\)](https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/23-Photos-That-Prove-Beatles-Fans-Were-Doing-The-Absolute-Most-In-The-60s)

# THE SWEEPING CURVE

By Gary Wosk

**M**y wife Sarah and I had big plans for our son's future, but that abruptly changed one fateful day in June, years ago. We had told all our friends that Isaac, who had just graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in molecular and cellular biology, would be attending medical school at UCLA in the fall. We were so proud of him.

Sure, we were stuck with a \$100,000 tuition bill, but we figured it was all worth it. He was our son, and we wanted him to succeed. Everything would have stayed on course if Isaac and I hadn't decided to go on an early afternoon walk. Weary, after conquering a very steep hill alongside the Veterans Hospital, we decided to rest on the baseball field bleachers located at the edge of the hospital grounds. We'd stay for a while, watch the players warm up and then head for home.

The cold water bottles we had brought had turned warm, so I bought a couple of icy Cokes for us at the snack bar. We then ascended the steps to the top of the decaying bleachers. A colorful banner tied high above us on the metal fencing declared this to be the home of the San Fernando Valley Amateur Baseball League.

Relaxing, Isaac and I began having a old-fashioned father-son talk, the kind we once had while watching batting practice at Dodger Stadium. I liked what I heard: He looked forward to becoming a pediatrician and that he would put off marriage and having kids until after he began his residency.

Under a partly cloudy sky and a light breeze, I felt as peaceful and content as could be. Everything was going so well... until a man showed up dressed in a white linen sports coat, wearing a Fedora, sporting a bushy mustache and holding a thick Cuban cigar. He called out to my son, "Hey, young man. D'you play ball? How about giving our team a few innings? Our first baseman couldn't make it today."

Obviously, he had caught us off guard. Neither of us knew what to say, so I spoke up. "Hi, I'm his father, Eugene Jacobs. And who're you?"

"My name's Mike Britton, manager of the North Hills Athletics. We're a bunch of amateur guys out to have a good time. Your son looks like a ball player."

"I haven't played organized baseball since Little League," my six-foot-ony son responded. "Once in a while, my college friends and I would meet for a softball game—but that's about it."

"Were you any good?"

Isaac, the modest type, shrugged his shoulders. "I guess so."

"Perfect. Are you still in shape? I wouldn't want you to hurt yourself."

Isaac just shrugged and smiled at Mike. I felt disappointed.

"Looks like you need to recruit someone else," I said.

"I don't give up so easily. Tell you what...um..."

My son cut in, "My name's Isaac."

"Give it a shot. If after an inning or two, you still don't feel up to it, just tell me. I don't expect you to hit fastballs. And even if you bobble a few balls, so what? You'll have fun. I'm hoping you can give us six



innings. Either way I'll treat you and your dad to a hotdog and a drink.

I laughed. "Wow, you're such a sport. Isaac, It's up to you."

I thought playing some baseball could be good for him. All he'd been doing since returning home from school was lay around watching ESPN or driving himself to Chick-fil-A for lunch.

"Tell you what," said Mike, "Instead of playing first base, I'll put you in right field and you'll bat ninth. Fewer balls hit your way and fewer at bats. No pressure. No expectations."

Isaac still hesitated, so I put my two cents in. "Go for it, son. It would be great to see you play again."

Isaac smiled. "Okay. I'm a little rusty, but it sounds like fun."

"Come on, young man, I'll introduce you to the guys," said the beaming Mike. "We have extra gloves. Wish we had a uniform for you, but your sweatpants and a T-shirt are fine. Go take some swings and catch a few fly balls in the outfield."

As Mike and Isaac walked toward the ballfield, I thought to myself I'd be happy if Isaac just fouled off a few pitches and didn't drop any flyballs.

After the players retreated to the dugouts, the umpires and managers gathered at homplate to exchange starting lineups and review the rules and regulations. By the time they finished, the bleachers were nearly full of friends and families.

At the bottom of the second inning, Isaac stepped up to the plate for the first time. I felt really nervous. The count was soon two strikes and three balls—the bat hadn't even moved from his shoulders. I had a feeling this wasn't going to end well. I closed my eyes. A man seated beside me whispered, "A strikeout is nothing to be ashamed about."

He was right. I took a peek. The pitcher went into his windup and uncoiled a zinger of a pitch. Crack! That was the sound of the ball hitting the sweet spot on Isaac's bat. The center fielder stopped running and merely watched the ball sail high over his head, easily clearing the fence.

I looked over at the Athletics' dugout. The whole team and a stunned Mike were wildly cheering on Isaac as he rounded the bases and headed for home. Beginners luck? Isaac easily disproved that theory. By the sixth inning, he had clobbered two more towering, colossal dingers. He also made a couple of dazzling catches in right field. Not bad for someone who hadn't played hardball in years.

The Athletics beat the Diamond Dawgs 12 to 5, thanks to the six runs Isaac batted in. As we got ready to leave, Mike approached us carrying three hot dogs and drinks. "Not so fast gentlemen. I'm a man who keeps his word."

After wiping some mustard off his right cheek, Mike said, "Now, let's get down to business, guys. I got something bigger in mind than asking Isaac to play for us again."

I said, "Go on."

"You see. Not only am I the manager of the Athletics, but I'm also a scout for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Would your son be interested in signing up with us?"

"The Athletics?"

*(Continued on page 16)*

“No, the Dodgers. Double A league to begin.”

Isaac and I were shocked, unable at first to utter a response. “My son just graduated from Berkeley, He has plans to attend medical school this fall.”

“Congratulations, young man. I wish you all the luck in the world, but sometimes life throws you a sweeping curve. I mean, plans can sometimes change just like that!” He snapped his fingers. “This may be one of those times.”

“Mike! Are you serious?” I asked. “Are you really offering him a chance to play ball with the Dodgers?”

Mike continued his pitch. “I know you must be tired of staying up late at night, pounding the books, and walking around like a zombie, right? How about taking a break from that grind? From what I’ve seen today, you have the tools to become a pretty good Major Leaguer, after you pay your dues in the Minor Leagues first.”

“But, you’ve only seen him play one game,”

“Listen, Eugene, I’ve been a scout for forty years. I know talent when I see it.”

I frowned. “We had our hearts set on him becoming a doctor—ever since he was in junior high school.”

“In all due respect, Eugene, let’s hear what the young man has to say. I mean, it’s his life.”

“You’re right. He can make his own decisions.”

So, what started out as an innocent walk, turned into the biggest dilemma of my son's life.

“I’m not sure, Dad. This is happening so fast. I must be dreaming.”

“No,” Mike said. “It’s the real deal.”

I Isaac said, “Do I have to make a decision right now?”

“Of course not,” said Mike. “I’ll give you one week to decide.” He handed Isaac his business card.

Even though I wanted my son to become a doctor, truth be told, ever since he began playing T-ball I’d fantasized that one day he’d be playing for the Dodgers. Sarah and I attended all of his Little League games. Watching him play was the biggest thrill in our lives.

And suddenly here was that sweeping curve that could change his life forever.

“I should warn you,” Mike said. “The pay is only \$1,500 per month, but we pay your room and board. Look at this way, you’re only 21 and if things don’t go your way, you can still enroll in medical school.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. “That’s it? A measly fifteen hundred dollars per month? “How will he afford to eat and where will he live?”

I know, it’s pathetic,” said Mike. “Don’t worry, Eugene. We’ll take of that. No worries. Look at it this way, if he makes it to the Majors, he’ll earn millions of dollars. That’ll pay off his student debt.”

“Dad, this all makes sense. It’s my opportunity of a lifetime.”

“Sounds like you’ve already made your mind up.” Mike reached into his pocket and pulled out a contract. “I always keep these with me just in case. Sign on the dotted line.”

“Wait one second, Mike,” I said. “Let’s not rush into anything. You said he had a week to think about it. You okay with that, son?”

“Sure, Dad. “Mike, may I have the contract to look over? After giving Isaac the contract, Mike said, “Gentlemen, it’s time for me to head back to Dodger Stadium and meet with general manager, Fred O’Claire. Can I offer you guys a lift back home?”

“No thanks,” I answered.

Mike shook our hands. “I hope to hear from you soon.”

Six days later, the big moment had arrived. Sarah and I sat down with Mike to hear if he’d go on to medical school or try to make it in the Big Leagues.

After going back and forth over the pros and cons, Isaac said with a bright smile, “It’s time for Dodger baseball, just like Van Shelleys says.”

My wife wasn’t exactly ecstatic. “All these years,” she lamented, all those Advanced Placement classes, tutoring, preparing for the SATs, tuition, and for what?”

I said, “He promised to pay back his student loan. We can still brag about him to our friends and family. There are not too many people who can say their son plays for the Dodgers.”

“After your call to Mike,” I said to Isaac, “let’s celebrate. Where will it be? Spago’s? Ruth Chriss? You name it.”

“In-N-Out Burger,” he said without hesitating.

Though Isaac was touted as one of the top prospects in baseball, he remained entrenched in the Minor Leagues for 2-1/2 years. Sarah and I would travel to Tulsa occasionally to watch him play in Triple A baseball games. She remained disconsolate though. “You’ll see, he’s going to wind up languishing in the minors for years and never get called up, not even for a cup of coffee.”

I said, “Let’s not go there. Our son is going to make it.”

As it turned out, shortly afterward, Isaac was called up to The Show as a utility player. This last year marked Isaac’s twelfth and final year in the Major Leagues as a right fielder. He played for the Dodgers for one year and then was traded to the Giants and from there he played for the Yankees, the Angels and the Red Sox

He never made it to the Hall of Fame with his .270 lifetime batting average, 200 homeruns and 840 runs batted in, but when he retired, Isaac had earned tens of millions of dollars and paid off his tuition. Our home became a Hall of Fame with dozens of photos from his playing days lining the walls and memorabilia adorning the shelves. He kept his Red Sox diamond-studded World Series Championship ring in a bank’s safe deposit box.

At the age of 36, he’s re-enrolled in medical school. It’s nice having him, his wife, Joyce, and twin baby daughters staying with us while he gets his graduate degree and starts his residency.

Sarah and I have our fingers crossed that there will be no more sweeping curves.







# 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 all CWC members.

September 9, 2023



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)

February 3, 2024

BLACK AND IN LOVE



Romance author, Synthia 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.

November 4, 2023

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

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 Humanitarian.* (In-person)





# LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SAN FERNANFO VALLEY BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

**D**o you live to write? Write for a living? Whether you're a published author or "just always wanted to write," there's a place for you in California Writers Club!

Our 22 branches range from Mendocino to Orange County and include writers of all levels and interests. Our mission: to educate writers of all abilities in the craft of writing and the marketing of their work.

## CWC-SFV CLUB INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

**T**he 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 \(cwc-sfv.org\)](#)

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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