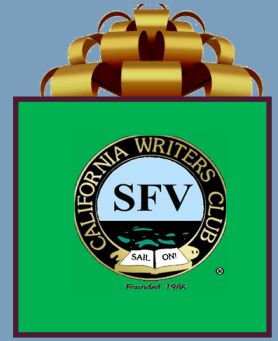


# The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch  
of the California Writers Club  
Serving Los Angeles and Ventura Counties

## Shawna Kenney Will Help You Find the Heart of Your Story

By CWC-SFV Speaker Chair Heather Bradshaw

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**T**he San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome author, story teller, editor, and writing coach, SHAWNA KENNEY, as the keynote speaker on Saturday, December 7 at 1:00 pm with a Zoom presentation on the crucial information we all want to know: “How to Write a Winning Book Hook, Query an Agent, and Find Your Place in the Publishing World.”

During her presentation, Shawna will discuss how to approach agents and publishers with a completed manuscript, and whether they are even necessary for your particular project. She will teach how to leverage the heart of your story to get it into the world while also exploring today's plethora of publishing options. Additionally, Shawna will explain how to keep momentum going during the challenging process of getting your book published.

Shawna has an MFA in Creative Writing. She is the author of four books, including the award-winning memoir *I Was a Teenage Dominatrix* (Punk Hostage Press) and the oral history *Live at the Safari Club: A History of HarDCore Punk in the Nation's Capital 1988-1998* (Rare Bird Books). Her arts journalism and personal essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Playboy*, *Ms.*, *Pitchfork*, *Vice* and more. She teaches creative writing with UCLA Extension, serves as a Contributing Editor with *Narratively Magazine*, and leads international writing retreat, [Hamlet's Hideaway](#), in Denmark every summer.



Shawna's experience with writing and editorial services can help you in all aspects of writing from finding the heart of your story and getting started to developing book pitches and proposals to finishing and targeting the literary marketplace. So make sure to have your questions ready for the Q & A after the talk. To learn more about this presenter, visit: [www.shawnakenney.com](http://www.shawnakenney.com) We look forward to seeing you.

*In-person Attendees: Mingle with other writers and see this presenter on the screen in the Katzenberg Pavilion at Motion Picture Television Fund, 23388 Mulholland Drive, Woodland Hills, CA 91364. In-person attendees do not need to register in advance. Members are free. Guests pay \$10 at the door. A first visit is free. Please arrive a few minutes early.*

*Zoom Attendees: All members of the CWC-SFV will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches: contact Zoom host, Anat Wenick, by noon on December 6 at [SFV.CWC@gmail.com](mailto:SFV.CWC@gmail.com) for an invitation to register.*

*Zoom guests may purchase admission at [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) by noon on December 6. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. Regrettably, we can't accept late requests.*

### ATTENTION PLEASE

A Room Change is scheduled for our December 7 meeting. If you plan to attend in person, please meet us at the Katzenberg Pavilion—the building directly across from the Saban Center. All following monthly meetings will continue to be held in the Saban Room.

# Karen's Corner

By Karen Gorback, CWC-SFV President

Be present in all things and  
thankful for all things.

Maya Angelou



## Dear Colleagues:

As I write this article, election season has ended and Thanksgiving is near. In my family, as in others, our Thanksgiving dinner begins with the tradition of inviting all the people around the table to say what they are thankful for. Occasionally, an outlier will express thanks for Costco™ pies; but generally, it's the more important things in life – family and friends. So, here's a twist: What if all the members of the California Writers Club were sitting around a table, and we each took a minute to say why we were thankful to be part of the writing community. What would you say?

I'll start.

First, I'm thankful to work among other, like-minded individuals who believe in the wonder of the written word – to teach, to entertain, to enlighten, to motivate, to bring people together. Although we know that words can also sting, mislead and tear people apart, I choose my colleagues carefully and

feel safe among all of you.

Second, I'm thankful for an umbrella organization that believes in the value of diversity among its members. A few years ago, I volunteered to help write a policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the California Writers Club (CWC). The policy was approved by the Central Board and is now part of CWC's [Policy and Procedures](#) (page 28). Please read it when you have a chance and help bring even greater diversity into the organization.

Finally, I'm thankful for the time to spend pursuing an encore career in a field that satisfies my need for creativity, brings me immense joy, and provides me with an opportunity to help make the world a better place.

Best wishes to you, dear colleagues, for a joyous holiday season, a Happy, Healthy New Year, and continued opportunities, in whatever you write, to help make the world a better place.

## EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS YOUR WRITERS CLUB

**D**ecember is the month for celebrations with family members and close friends. Gifts are often exchanged or donated to a special person, a favorite charity and organization such as this club.

Our CWC-SFV writers club serves its members in many ways. Volunteers find interesting speakers, support this newsletter and provide helpful critique groups. Why not acknowledge these efforts with a modest donation?

Donating is easy. Make your check out to CWC-SFV and mail it to PO Box 564, Woodland Hills, CA 91365. Or visit [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) and click on the "Donations" button at the bottom of the first page.

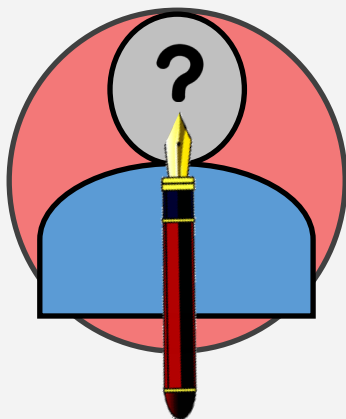
*KH Editor*

Many thanks to the  
following donors:

Bob Okowitz  
Phyllis Butcher  
Andrea Polk  
Karen Gorback  
Pat Avery

By CWC-SFV Member Dr. Elaine L. Mura

**O**n 11/2/24, CWC-SFV hosted Lee Barnathan who spoke on the ghostwriting profession. After 16 ½ years working as a journalist with a focus on sports, Barnathan tried his hand at technical writing, general copywriting, speech writing, websites, resumes and blogs. But not until a Philadelphia school teacher asked him to ghostwrite his book, did Barnathan realize his current **fascinating and lucrative calling** as a full-time ghostwriter with a specialty in nonfiction.



Barnathan defined ghostwriting as writing as someone else, capturing the other person's essence, encouraging him to keep writing until his story is told in the best way possible. Many celebrities use ghostwriters for their memoirs – for example, J. R. Moehringer ghostwrote Prince Harry's *Spare*. Does a ghostwriter get credit for his job? Sometimes yes and sometimes no. He may be mentioned on the cover, or he may be credited with another task (like editor). But currently, lots of folks are trying their hand at writing, and often with the assistance of a ghostwriter. **The client always remains the story expert, while the ghostwriter he hires becomes the writing expert.** The two must **collaborate** effectively for the project to work – especially since the project may take a year or more. They have to get along and have the same goals in mind. Each must remember that they have different skill sets and respect their specific talents. Since only about three percent of people who start a book actually finish it, **hiring a ghostwriter increases the odds of the story reaching publication.**

The **process** of putting together the story is paramount. As Barnathan emphasized, "Poor process costs 30 percent of the ghostwriter's annual revenue. **The story must be clear and concise, and the story teller must know who his audience will be** – and of course, **storyteller and ghostwriter must click.** Elements feeding into the amorphous issue of "clicking" include **reliability, philosophy, and enthusiasm.** The ghostwriter needs to determine how realistic the client is so that he can balance encouragement and honesty." Barnathan added that the ghostwriter sometimes assumes the role of therapist and coach. He indicated that both must be enthusiastic about the project, which will directly enhance its chances of becoming a finished product. The ghostwriter must also set some realistic expectations and always remain tactful.

A **written contract** is crucial to the process in order to legally protect both sides of the project. At the same time, there is **no guarantee that the finished product will be published.** The usual questions must be answered clearly, including **who, what, where, when, and why.** The ghostwriter needs to recognize what constitutes a compelling story. If it is not, then the ghostwriter should reject the project. Once accepted, however, the ghostwriter becomes a critical thinker who is able to separate the

relevant from the extraneous.

Barnathan recommended writing just one chapter and submitting the draft to the client. Together, they must work to improve that chapter as much as possible. Once that is done, the client must approve the chapter and then the two move on to the next chapter. Again, the project must be collaborative. The ghostwriter must be honest – but diplomatic as well. Both must remember that their goal is a compelling, powerful and irresistible story.

**Fees** are obviously an important part of the process. Barnathan emphasized that **time is money** and that you get what you pay for. Rates range from \$15,000 to \$50,000 – with six or seven figures for a celebrity memoir. Barnathan added that "sometimes the client can't afford me," so the two must go their separate ways. He indicated that he usually works with three clients at one time – and that these three clients are usually at different points in the project (some just starting, some half way through, and others in the finishing stretch).

The Q&A session produced some fascinating information. Is the ghostwriter's job done when the manuscript is completed? Barnathan indicated that the client must decide whether to self-publish or to attempt to interest the Big Five. However, he added that the Big Five typically prefer celebrity memoirs. If the client chooses to self-publish, then marketing may become an important issue. The ghostwriter can serve as the person with information – but also is not responsible for the ultimate fate of the manuscript. Barnathan strongly suggested that the ghostwriter take out liability insurance – with slander and libel covered and a contract clause that says that the author must cover any suit against the ghostwriter. Barnathan observed that about half of his projects actually get published. And that fewer than five percent of books published make any money.

Barnathan noted that some clients keep a journal – and, even if poorly written, the journal might prove useful in remembering key points in the story. He commented that some clients do not want anyone to know they used a ghostwriter. When asked if it was acceptable to use real names in a memoir, he strongly recommended that the client consult with an attorney. Sometimes it works to ask the individual if he minds his name being used in a book – but be sure to get his acceptance in writing. Otherwise, it might be prudent to change names. He concluded that "Ghostwriting is rewarding emotionally and financially...and ghostwriters remain relevant and in high demand."

Barnathan succeeded in opening up a new perspective – and perhaps a new field - for prospective writers attending his presentation.

# THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB



## PRESENTS OUR 2024-25 GUEST SPEAKERS



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 at 23388 Mulholland Drive, Woodland Hills, CA 91364. Meetings begin at 1 pm. All meetings are hybrid—available online, so you can join from anywhere. 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. Programs are free for all CWC members. Contact us at [cwc-sfv.org](http://cwc-sfv.org). For guest admission, visit [cwc-sfv.org](http://cwc-sfv.org).

*CWC-SFV Program Chair Heather Bradshaw*

September 7, 2024

Holly Watson

Book Publicity: The Basics and Beyond

<https://www.hollywatsonpr.com/>

(In-Person)



February 1, 2025

Lisa Teasley

The Art of the Short Story

<https://www.lisateasley.com/>

(In-Person)



October 5, 2024

CLAY STAFFORD

Incorporate Mystery, Thriller, Suspense, Romance and Action into Any

Work <https://claystafford.com/>

(Zoom)



March 1, 2025

MANDY JACKSON-BEVERLY

Self Publishing and the Independent Bookstore

<https://mandyjacksonbeverly.com/>

(In-Person)



November 2, 2024

LEE BARNATHAN

All About Ghost Writing

<https://leebarnathan.com/>

(In-Person)



April 5, 2025

MARCIE RENDON

Native American Poetry-Song Writing

<https://www.marciarendon.com/home>

(Zoom)



December 7, 2024

SHAWNA KENNEY

How to Write a Winning Book Hook, Query an Agent, and Find Your Place in the Publishing World

<https://www.shawnakenney.com/>

(Zoom)



May 3, 2025

MATTHEW FELIX

A Nontraditional Path to Self-Publishing

<https://www.matthewfelix.com/>

(Zoom)



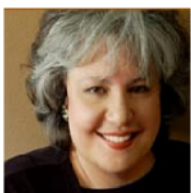
January 11, 2025

DARA MARKS

Story Development

<http://www.daramarks.com/>

(In-Person)



June 7, 2025

THOM HARP

Writing A Low Budget Feature and Getting It Made

[www.thomharp.com](http://www.thomharp.com)

(In-Person)



# SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CWC NEEDS SUBMISSIONS FOR THEIR



## 2025 ANTHOLOGY: *BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS*



**T**he San Joaquin Valley Writers Club is pleased to announce the theme for its next anthology San Joaquin Valley Writers , to be published in the fall of 2025: *Beginnings & Endings*.

It is human nature to conceptualize the world consisting of beginnings and endings. This duality permeates almost everything we see, imagine, feel, and hope for. Beginnings and endings can be real and tangible such as birth and death, marriage and divorce, the first and last day of school. They can be metaphorical, perhaps not even visible, such as a thought that blinks into existence only to disappear just as quickly from someone's mind, or a first impression of someone or something that changes over time. Beginnings and endings can be fast, sudden, or they can be slow, gradual.

They can be far apart or blend into each other. Maybe a beginning is also an ending and vice versa. Send us your stories, memoirs, essays, or poetry in which a beginning and/or an ending takes center stage or is the background for something else. Show us the human experience through images, dialogue, verse, but no matter what, with beautiful words. And maybe, just maybe, show us a new take on beginnings and endings.

Submission information and guidelines can be found by [clicking here](#).

Submission deadline: March 1, 2025.





# A-CAROLING WE WILL GO!

By CWC-SFV Member Phyllis Butcher



## O AMAZON

*(O TANNENBAUM)*

O AMAZON, O AMAZON  
 YOUR SERVICES DELIGHT US!  
 O AMAZON, O AMAZON  
 YOUR OVERNIGHT EXCITES US!  
 JUST PICK AND CLICK IS HOW TO START  
 AND IN A TICK IT'S IN MY CART  
 I ORDER MORE, IT'S AT MY DOOR  
 HOW DID I FIND THIS WONDEROUS STORE!  
 BUT AMAZON,  
 MY AMAZON,  
 I FEAR THAT ALL MY MONEY'S GONE!



'Tis the season and, of course, the reason, for all of those holiday songs and carols that we tucked away last year to return to the fore. For those who were introduced to the traditional standards at a very early age and have carried them through the years it is not surprising that the lyrics and melodies are permanently ingrained and can be recalled in an instant. For the most part that is a good thing. However, when they begin coming over the airwaves (is that still an operative word?) and permeate the department stores and elevators as early as September, one might have cause to try to tune them out, at least until the holidays are closer. That said, I found myself resisting the invasion by having a little fun with some of my favorites. It certainly proved to be an enjoyable distraction, and not to mention good exercise for my mental acuity. Here are the results, which I preface with a sincere apology to the marvelous lyricists and musicians whose wonderful work they have bequeathed to us.



## HIT THE MALLS

*(DECK THE HALLS)*

HIT THE MALLS WITH LITTLE POLLY  
 FA-LA-LA-LA-LA-ET-CET-ER-A!  
 LOOK FOR SANTA, HE'S SO JOLLY  
 FA-LA-LA-LA-LA-ET-CET-ER-A!  
 POLLY BEAMING, BABIES SCREAMING  
 FA-LA-LA-LA-LA-ET-CET-ER-A!  
 SANTA'S LUNCH BREAK, POLLY'S SCREAMING,  
 FA-LA-LA-LA-LA-ET-CET-ER-A!



## BLACK FRIDAY

*(WHITE CHRISTMAS)*

I'M DREAMING OF A BLACK FRIDAY  
 JUST LIKE THE ONES I USED TO KNOW;  
 ALL THE PRICES CHEAPER BUT PARKING STEEPER  
 WELL, WHO CARES, I'M SET TO GO!  
 I'M DREAMING OF A BLACK FRIDAY  
 STOP, SHOP AND DROP AND THEN GO BACK!  
 MAY YOU FIND THOSE BARGAINS OFF-THE-RACK  
 AND MAY ALL YOUR FRIDAYS JUST BE BLACK!



## HELLS BELLS!

*(JINGLE BELLS!)*

A DAY OR TWO AGO I THOUGHT I'D TAKE A DRIVE  
 DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO, DECIDED ON I-5.  
 TRAFFIC STOPPED, LOTS OF COPS, CAR CHASE  
 JUST BEGUN  
 CUT OUT HERE, MAKE A RUN, AND TRY THE 101!  
 HELLS BELLS! HELLS BELLS! HELLS BELLS ALL THE  
 WAY!  
 101 IS NO WAY FUN, TWO LANES CLOSED TODAY!  
 HELLS BELLS! OH WELL, THIS IS WHAT I'LL SAY:  
 WHAT FUN IT IS TO RIDE AND SWEAR  
 IN MY SIX-HORSE CHEVROLET!

# NEW CWC-SFV MEMBER ELAINE COLE HAS BEGUN TO WRITE HER STORY



**I** always dreamed of writing a book but never felt I had a story worth telling until I divorced my husband of nearly five decades. My method? A blend of secrecy, strategy, and meticulous preparation, inspired by Sun Tzu’s *\*The Art of War* and its principle of winning without fighting.

But my journey is about much more than that chapter. While married, I returned to school and earned my bachelor’s degree from UCLA at 40, a milestone that reshaped my life. Later, I completed a master’s in psychology and, since 1998, ran a clinical practice while teaching at the American Jewish University for 22 years—until COVID forced the program to close its doors but not my clinical online practice.

Outside my professional life, I’ve dedicated time to causes close to my heart, including the Special Olympics, hospice care, and chairing the UCLA Scholarship Committee. Considering my less-than-stellar start as a young student, graduating from UCLA and later contributing to its programs has been one of my proudest achievements.

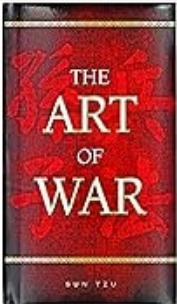
I live at University Village, a senior community offering continuing care. Moving my lifelong home in Los Angeles, particularly Encino, to Thousand Oaks was a significant shift but rewarding. (Did you know there aren’t any parking meters in Thousand Oaks?) I’ve made wonderful new friends while keeping close ties with lifelong friends, some of whom I’ve known since Brownies.

I was born in Los Angeles when the San Fernando Valley was still covered in orange groves, and the 405 was just a distant dream. My then-husband and I raised two wonderful children, and now I delight in the joy of my grandchildren. Despite—maybe even because of—the turbulence in my 78 years, I am deeply grateful.

Joining this club’s supportive writing group has been a joy, and I’m thrilled to embark on this next adventure.



**ELAINE’S NEXT CHALLENGE:  
WRITING HER MEMOIR!**



*\*The Art of War* is traditionally attributed to an ancient Chinese military general known as [Sun Tzu](#) (pinyin: *Sūnzi*), meaning 'Master Sun'. Sun Tzu is said to have lived in the 6th century BC, but the earliest parts of *The Art of War* probably date to at least 100 years later.<sup>[9]</sup> Outside of military use, *The Art of War* has also become a source of inspiration in business, politics, sports and esports, and its usage has extended to film and television.

# The Muse

By CWC-SFV Member Pat Avery



My muse swims in dark water  
Obscuring logs and roots  
Fish nibbling her toes  
She minds them not

Surfacing  
She blows thoughts  
Puffs of words  
To caress my mind

With my life choked  
By chores and monotony  
Diving into emptiness  
She leaves me bereft

Undone tasks wait  
As I sit to recapture  
Those illusive whispers  
And her breath on my ear



**CHRISTMAS**

**family  
tree  
lights  
prayers  
repast  
joy  
together  
celebration  
songs  
embraces  
peace**

**Lillian Rodich 2024**

*Candles*

a Christmas tree's  
moist green branches  
support candles  
glittering in my neighbor's window  
and reflected in a wreath of good will

eight Chanukah candles  
each kindled by the Shammash  
and greeted by children singing  
relating tales of anguish and triumph  
survival of my ancestors

crystal and champagne  
candlelight reflected in loving eyes  
hands held across a table  
in the glow a promise made to be kept  
one rain drenched December eve

one hundred birthday candles lit  
combined in a blaze of glory  
Zayda begging the youngest guests  
to help him extinguish each tip of flame  
celebrating a century of life

lonely candles burning brightly  
in remembrance of our deepest losses  
lighting dark corners of grief  
continuity in life's circle  
treasured flames never extinguished

symbolic candles lights of hope  
ignited in classrooms of a ghetto school  
students' eyes glowing with discoveries  
teachers amidst Asia's turmoil and Africa's strife  
holding fragile tapers up to the black draped night

Source: *On the Wings of Words 2014*  
Lillian Isenberg Rodich

# The Producers Review – Mel Brooks’ Comic Masterpiece

By CWC-SFV Member Dr. Elaine L. Mura

**B**ased on Mel Brooks’ 1967 film, THE PRODUCERS received new life when adapted for the stage by Brooks (music and lyrics) from the book by Brooks and Thomas Meehan. The musical opened on Broadway in 2001 and played until 2007 for a whopping 2,502 performances. THE PRODUCERS received an unprecedented 12 Tony Awards for best musical, best original score, best actor, best featured actor, best featured actress, best director and choreographer, best orchestration, best scenic design, best costume design, and best lighting design. Since then, there have been multiple national and international productions, along with a 2005 motion picture. Clearly, THE PRODUCERS was a film just waiting to be adapted for the stage. In 2024, the Kentwood Players proudly present THE PRODUCERS.

Formerly a Broadway great, producer Max Bialystock (Karl Schott) has just suffered his worst flop. “Funny Boy,” a musical based on “Hamlet,” bombed, lasting for only one performance. With his career in shambles, Max encounters accountant Leo Bloom (Darian Calderon), whose throwaway idea that a theater disaster could turn into a pot of gold catches Max right between the greedy eyes. A resounding flop just might fill his empty coffers. So Max begins his search for the worst script, the worst director, and the worst actors that he can find. Although at first a bit reluctant, Bloom is soon enchanted by the plan; and so the two work at presenting the worst production ever to hit Broadway.

Within days, “Springtime for Hitler” is born. Penned by Franz Liebkind (Shawn Summerer), a Nazi-in-hiding with a life-long love affair with Hitler, and directed by Roger De Bris (Jon Sparks), a gay flop-master extraordinaire, the play is off to an exciting start – aided in no small measure by De Bris’ “common-law” assistant Carmen Ghia (Emmon Amid) lending a flighty helping hand. Last but not least, enter Swedish bombshell Ulla (Katelynn Ostler), who becomes the pair’s secretary/receptionist/actress – while also catching Bloom’s adoring eye and other parts of roving Max’s anatomy. Finally, the opening night. Will the show become the worst in Broadway history? You’ll have to join in the side-splitting fun to find out.

THE PRODUCERS is an uproarious, utterly ridiculous look at the inner workings of Broadway. The play pokes fun at everything and anything with nonsensical accents, caricatures of homosexuals and Nazis, physical humor coupled with clever lines. In a word, nothing is sacred in Brooks’ hilarious comedy. Kudos to everyone involved in the production, including director Susan Weisbarth, music director Mike Walker, choreographer Luke Arthur Smith, the entire production team, and – last but not least – a terrific ensemble cast with the energy, joie de vivre, and enthusiasm to keep up the rollicking pace to the last note. Special congratulations to Karl Schott and Darian Calderon, who are onstage almost throughout. And let’s not forget the live band adding zip and zing to the almost two dozen snappy tunes. The Kentwood Player’s latest production, THE PRODUCERS, is one of their best. This is a not-to-be-missed show.

THE PRODUCERS runs through December 14, 2024, with performances at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and at 2 p.m. on Sundays (no performance on Thanksgiving weekend 11/29 to 12/1). The Westchester Playhouse is located at 8301 Hindry Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Tickets are \$30 (\$4 discount for seniors, children, students, and military; based on availability, \$10 rush tickets may be offered at select performances 30 minutes before curtain time). For information and reservations, call 310-645-5156, the box office, or go [online](#).

*Republished with the permission of Splash Magazine*



Darian Calderon, Katelynn Ostler, and Karl Schott -  
Photo by Gloria Ramirez-Plunkett



Darian Calderon and Karl Schott -  
Photo by Gloria Ramirez-Plunkett



Emmon Amid and Jon Sparks -  
Photo by Gloria Ramirez-Plunkett



Shawn Summerer, Darian Calderon, and Karl Schott  
- Photo by Gloria Ramirez-Plunkett



THE PRODUCERS cast - Photo by Gloria Ramirez-Plunkett

# HANUKKAH'S COMING

By CWC-SFV Member Michael Edelstein

**Hanukkah's coming the festival of lights  
It will last an entire eight nights  
That's one more day than a week  
Eating latkes laced with fenugreek  
That's how long the oil lamps burned  
After the tide 'gainst Seleucids turned  
And then Jerusalem's temple was restored  
So that we can all sing "Maoz Tzur"  
Once we're done paying dreidel fees  
We can salute the brave Maccabees  
Now roast chicken we "leck the baineih"  
Then intone: "Hanukkah, a Yom Tov a Shaineih"**



**N**o matter where you live on this planet, no matter when you view it – the Winter Solstice is your signal to celebrate a new season.

**What is it?** The December Solstice heralds the sun's southernmost point in the sky, for the entire globe, this entire year. On this solstice, the sun will be overhead at noon as viewed from the [Tropic of Capricorn](#).

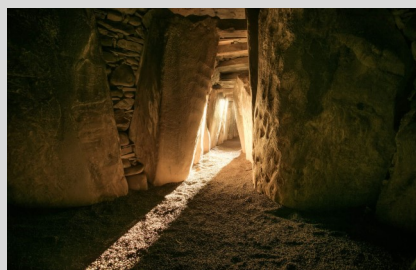
**When is it?** In 2024, the December Solstice falls at [9:21 UTC](#) on December 21 (3:21 a.m.)

**Note:** For people who live in the Northern Hemisphere, the December solstice will mark the longest nights and shortest days of the year. For the Southern Hemisphere, the event will mark the shortest nights and longest days. After this solstice, the sun will move north again.

Cultures all over the world have long held feasts and celebrated holidays around the Winter Solstice. Fire and light are traditional symbols of celebrations held on the darkest day of the year.

Humans may have observed the Winter Solstice as early as Neolithic period—the last part of the Stone Age, beginning about 10,200 B.C.

Neolithic monuments, such as Newgrange in Ireland and Maeshowe in Scotland, are aligned with sunrise on the Winter Solstice. Some archaeologists have theorized that these tomb-like structures served a religious purpose in which Stone Age people held rituals to capture the sun on the year's shortest day. These doorways were once portals for shamans' solemn ceremonies.



**Newgrange in Ireland**



**Maeshowe in Scotland**

**Stonehenge in England**, which is oriented toward the Winter Solstice sunset. Many archeologists believe the site was used for Stone Age peoples' Winter Solstice rituals and also for Summer Solstice celebrations.

*KH Editor*

Sources: [Wiki](#), [Earth Sky](#), [English Heritage](#) and [Microdost Bing](#) photographs



## HAIL TO THE SOLSTICE

By the late CWC-CWC Member Erica Stux  
*The Valley Scribe, December 2011*



### Hail To The Solstice

Beware of public pageantry  
For winter holidays;  
Some folks may take offense at such  
Sectarian displays.  
We don't dare sing of Hanukkah  
Or spread good cheer for Christmas;  
The only thing that's safe these days  
To celebrate: the solstice!

Banish now those long dark hours,  
Night-time's on the wane.  
Hail the sooner-lightening sky,  
Daylight's on the gain.  
Proclaim the news, the year is up,  
It's time for a renewal,  
As Merry Old Sol wins again  
The age-old annual duel.

Oh, winter solstice,  
Day of anticipation.  
Oh, winter solstice,  
We greet you with elation!

## Learn more about the California Writers Club



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), located at 23388 Mulholland Dr, Woodland Hills, CA 91364, 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](#)

Do 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 21 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.

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