



# The Valley Scribe



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

## Get Known Everywhere: Hear Jill Lublin’s Publicity Strategies For Writers



*The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club welcomes best selling author and marketing guru Jill Lublin on January 8 at 1:00 pm via Zoom with a presentation titled “Get Known Everywhere: Publicity Strategies for Authors.”*

- 1) To understand the real purpose of publicity- To boost your credibility and amplify your visibility.
- 2) To uncover your "Ohhhh, Ahhhh!" factor. Find the Wow! that sets you apart from the crowd.
- 3) You are the news! Craft a riveting message that lets others know who you are and what you do.
- 4) To simplify! Learn how the pros mesmerize the masses by tailoring their message to the level of a five-year-old.
- 5) To pass the all-important "Who cares?" test by showcasing your expertise in a way that commands attention

Special thanks to Ms. Lublin for providing us with the following: Many authors have a great message but haven't learned how to use a book to leverage expertise and generate revenue. As an author, it is important to understand the real purpose of publicity - to boost credibility and amplify your visibility. If you want to be known as an author of influence, you’ve got to get noticed by the media.

Lublin is considered the go-to person for building success through influence marketing, networking, and publicity. Her books include *Get Noticed... Get Referrals* (McGraw-Hill), *Networking Magic* (Morgan James Publishing), and *Guerrilla Publicity* ((Morgan James Publishing), which is regarded as the “PR Bible”.

Based on her international bestseller, *Guerrilla Publicity*, 4x Best Selling author and publicity expert, Jill Lublin, shares simple strategies and doable tactics, helping you to stand out, get noticed and go from unknown to newsworthy. Whether you're already an author or you want to write a book, Jill will reveal insider secrets that any author must know!

**All CWC-SFV members will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches should contact Monte Swann at [cwcsfvhost@gmail.com](mailto:cwcsfvhost@gmail.com) by noon on January 7 to request an invitation. Guests may purchase admission at [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) by noon on January 7. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation to “register in advance” for the presentation. After registering, they will receive a link to join the meeting.**

Dig down into what makes your genre tick! Discover what editors, agents, and audiences want, and learn how to give it to them—all the while staying true to your vision. In this presentation, you will learn:

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# Karen's Corner

By Karen Gorback, CWC-SFV President



## Something Old, Something New

**H**appy New Year! I hope your 2022 is filled with good health, the love of family and friends, and the joy of writing! For me, in addition to writing, I want to take more time for pleasure reading in the upcoming year, especially old favorites I've read before.



I've always enjoyed curling up in the corner of my second-hand sofa on a rainy afternoon with a familiar book. Thus, I've pulled some books off the shelf to reread this year, in addition to perusing new titles that catch my eye at Costco. Terrific books are meant to be enjoyed over and over. How many times have you read *Green Eggs and Ham* to someone small? Here are a few titles I hope to revisit in 2022:

***Story Genius: How to Use Brain Science to Go Beyond Outlining and Write a Riveting Novel (Before You Waste Three Years Writing 327 Pages That Go Nowhere)* by Lisa Cron (Ten Speed Press, 2016).** Although my undergrad degree is in English, I am a would-be, brain science geek – *kinda* like our December speaker, Barri Evins. The relationship between neuroscience and a reader's experience is fascinating, and I've read nearly everything Lisa Cron has written on the topic. Several years ago, Lisa was a guest speaker for our club and I'm going to invite her to join us again.

***Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* by Anne Lamott (Anchor Books.)** I recently watched a TED talk on YouTube featuring Lamott and smiled throughout her presentation. I've often told my writing students the lovely story behind the title of this classic must-read and look forward to reading it again. Give yourself a treat this year and enjoy *Bird by Bird* for the first or hundredth time.

***Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* by Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown and Company, 2005).** This is an author whose books I devour as soon as they pop off the press. I love them all but have a special affinity for *Blink* because it relates to the science of decision making. (That hard science connection ropes me in

every time!) I marvel at Gladwell's writing because he explains complex issues in terms of entertaining stories. He's a journalist, a researcher, and a remarkably skillful storyteller. When I grow up, I want to write like Malcolm Gladwell.

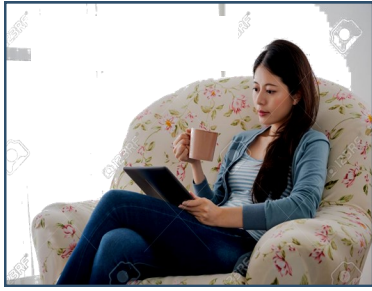
***The Giving Tree* (Harper and Row, 1964) and *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (Harper and Row, 1974) by Shel Silverstein.** I've read these books to my own children and discuss them with my writing students today. Each is a literary hug, wrapping words around the complexity and joys of life and childhood. As I compose children's literature, I continue to be inspired by the brilliance of Shel Silverstein.

***Freshman Mom* (Outskirts Press, 2013) by me.** It's my debut novel, but I haven't read it in a long time. I know that my writing has improved over the years, and I'm sure I'll wince at my rookie blunders. Still, the novel's universal themes of family, love, and the undeniable value of education remain as relevant today as ever. It's an early work, but one of which I'm proud.

That's my read again list. I hope you enjoy 2022 with time for both writing and reading throughout the year – either something new or a familiar title to read again in the corner of your sofa on the next rainy afternoon.



# How to Strengthen Your Writer's Voice



**H**ave you ever tried to explain to someone why you enjoy the writing of a particular author and why you **MUST** read this writer's latest book as soon as it appears in the Kindle store.

What could be the reason that the writings of this particular author leads you on and on, like you're under his or her magic spell? It's as if you're bewitched by a writer's voice, the wondrous words on each page, from the intriguing introduction to the last chapter. All you really know is that the writer has a confident, distinctive, alluring and resonate voice. After the last page, you feel that the book was worth your time and you'd recommend it to a friend.

Last month, guest speaker Barri Evins told our Zoom gallery several crucial ways to develop this sort of distinctive, confident, evocative writer's voice. She listed several methods that popular authors use to strengthen their writing and build stories that showcase those strengths. Her talk spotlighted the crucial importance of a writer's voice. Evins states that authors who carefully craft a strong writers voice also know their own mind, have a strong sense of self-direction and the confidence to write a strong story.

For example, a writer's voice must have resonance and strength. The first sentence should catch the reader's attention and lead on, enticingly, to the next paragraph, and the next, until the end of the story. Then, most readers while still abuzz after the last chapter of an intriguing story, will immediately Google other books or stories this author has had published and available on Kindle. Invariably, a successful writer will have published an wide assortment of past and present works to choose from.

A successful writer has built a distinctive. confident writ-

er's voice. Like a popular painter uses a distinctive brush stroke, a singer has a distinctive voice, pr a preacher has a distinctive delivery, a popular writer has a distinctive, evocative way of telling a tale—a writer's voice.

"Light-weight or bland writing bores a reader," Evins reminded us. She advised that anyone, child or adult, who has been forced to read a story told with trite dialogue, simplistic characters or predictable plots will easily appreciate Evins' emphasis on the need for a distinctive writing style.

A strong writer's voice must be rigorously developed like a singer works to build a professional singing voice. It takes practice, more practice and the ability to listen to pointers and advice from writing coaches, peers and editors.

Any writer who thinks their writing needs just a little bit of adjustments, here and there, will not attain a writer's voice, Evins stated. In the real writing world, professional. published authors may spend hours, days or more to get just one paragraph or page in shape. And that choosy writer will still make changes during countless hours of revision and rewrite.

And since life's not fair and a reading public is fickle, the revisions are not always appreciated by an agent or the editors of a writer's publishing house. And thus the



**Writing Coach Barri Evins**

For more information about Barri Evins and her writing workshops, go to: [Home - Story Consultation and Seminars by Barri Evins - Big Ideas Story Consultation and Seminars by Barri Evins - Big Ideas Shining Light on Story](#)

*(Continued on page 4)*



work might begin anew.

Here's a very canny tip from Evins for serious writers who strive to improve their product: add a thick thesaurus to your home office bookcase. She emphasized that experienced writers will carefully adapt their writing for their readers (adult or child) by using a variety of eye-stopper words to enrich or spice up their work. A thesaurus, with thousands of alternative terms for a part of speech, is an inexpensive and yet crucial resource.

For example, one might write: *She spent hours cleaning out the old workshop.* Hmm, not too interesting, so let's try: *She labored for hours sorting out ancient tools and hardware.* Better, but let's tinker a bit more: *She rummaged through stacks of dusty crates, each a filthy jumble of rusty saws, hammers, hinges, screws and nails.* Ah ... now the word picture has become much more descriptive and perhaps more interesting.

A running theme in Evins' lecture was the crucial importance of self-awareness. She stressed that a writer must know themselves, the world, their environment, their personal goals and what they want to achieve in their stories. Before starting one page of the next story, he/she should know exactly how the plot should start, progress, while taking the characters to a satisfactory ending, Evins asked us, "How can an author start a story, a journey of sorts, without a plan?"

I especially appreciated Evins' views on character and dialogue development. She thinks that an author must create believable characters who have a distinctive voice and POV on whatever challenges the main protagonist in the story line. Evins emphasized that dialogue between characters should be quick, convincing and easy to follow. Conversation between all your characters



should be natural, with SPACE for a reader's reflection on meaning of a remark, or an intriguing silence.

Often, a character might make references about past history between the characters. But Evins cautioned against long passages of boring backstory. After all, in the real world, folks don't usually talk to each other in long diatribes or elaborate accusations.

"Keep it short and crucial to the plot," is what I heard in Evins' pronouncements on dialogue and the plot development. She underlined this precept: the story arc must result in a satisfying ending. The reader's expectations should be respected with a logical ending, not a facile ta-da finish that leaves the reader feeling disappointed and dissatisfied.

"Tie up the loose end," Evins counseled, "unless you want to hint at a future adventure." That sort of ending is appropriate for a book chapter or a script that was written with a specific sequel in mind. Fans of serial adventures will be satisfied with an imperfect resolution. After all, an iffy ending means that future adventures are on the way in the next installment or the third book of a trilogy. Think of a soap opera or a Star Wars sequel, or prequel, and that promises more action and adventure is on its way.

I end this review with a quote on developing a strong writer's voice from John Grisham, an author of several adult and children's novels and non-fiction works:

***In life, finding a voice is speaking and living the truth. Each of you is an original. Each of you has a distinctive voice. When you find it, your story will be told. You will be heard.***

—Kathy Highcove, Editor

# A Plethora of Writers With January Birthdays

By Heather Bradshaw

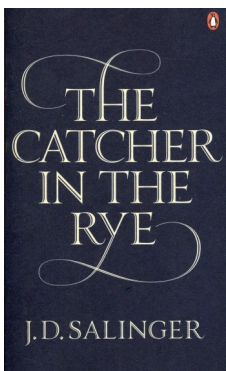
Apologies to our editor Kathy Highcove for my slow submission but my typing finger is stiff from wallpapering the powder room with the mountain of free 2022 wildlife calendars I received in December. Honestly, the ROI from my \$20 donation to Save the Whale in 1984 has been astonishing. I hadn't realized that my modest gift would result in a lifetime supply of calendars, holiday cards, return address labels and two totes all donated to me from a great variety of animal charities; birds, elephants, wolves, pangolins, you name it, and now the walls of my loo are a collage of fabulous fauna to keep me entertained throughout 2022.

So next, after actually *completing* a home DIY task, I turn to one of my other new year's resolutions which is to dedicate more time to reading. The list of writers' birthdays in January gives us many fine authors to choose from, which means I'll be able to successfully procrastinate even further by deciding who goes first. We have:

E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Olivia Goldsmith, *The First Wives Club*, Christine Baker Kline, *The Orphan Train*, Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, Karin Slaughter, *Pieces of Her*, William Peter Blatty, *The Exorcist*, Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, Simone de Beauvoir, *The Mandarins*, Philippa Gregory, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*, A. A. Milne, *Winnie-the-pooh*, Edgar Allen Poe, *Tell Tale Heart*, Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, W. Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, Anton Chekov, *The Lady with A Pet Dog*, Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, interestingly Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*, shared a birthday with his writer wife, Norris Church Mailer, Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy*, and many more.



J.D. Salinger



Noteworthy to me this month are two writers who are inextricably linked through the ages by their works: J. D. Salinger and Robert Burns. The title of Salinger's 1951 book, *The Catcher in the Rye* was inspired by Burns' 1782 poem, *Comin' thro' the Rye*. While Burns' poem relates young Jenny's sexual encounter in a rye field, consensual or not depending upon your interpretation, Salinger's story explores the loss of innocence seen through the eyes of narrator Holden Caulfield whose sexual morality is clear:

"The thing is, most of the time when you're coming pretty close to doing it with a girl – a girl that isn't a prostitute or anything – she keeps telling you to stop. The trouble with me is I stop. Most guys don't."

When Holden talks about his dream of catching children before they fall, he misremembers a line from Burns' poem as, "*If a body catch a body*," (instead of *meets*). Perhaps he wished he could have saved Jenny from becoming a 'fallen woman,' as it used to be said. Alas, since Salinger was reclusive and is no longer with us, we can never really know for sure. Hopefully in a writer's afterlife somewhere he and Burns are in deep discourse about it. What I wouldn't give to eavesdrop on that conversation.

In regards to that wide field of rye... it looks so innocent but what really goes on amid those golden-crested stalks?



O, Jenny's a' weel, poor body,  
Jenny's seldom dry:  
She draig't a' her petticoatie,  
Comin thro' the rye!

Comin thro' the rye, poor body,  
Comin thro' the rye,  
She draig't a' her petticoatie,  
Comin thro' the rye!

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin thro' the rye,  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
Need a body cry?

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin thro' the glen,  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
Need the warl' ken?

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin thro' the grain;  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
The thing's a body's ain.



Sources: <https://www.writerswrite.co.za/literary-birthday-calendar/>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/>, [www.britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com), [www.thoughtco.com](https://www.thoughtco.com), <https://jeffreykelley.medium.com/> <https://interestingliterature.com/>

# Through Her Writing, Joan Didion's Voice Will Be Heard By Future Generations

**A** fifth-generation Californian, Joan was a pioneer of the new journalism movement of the 1960s, capturing in prose the state's growing counterculture movement that would soon influence the nation.

She was peerless in her capacity to write about life, loss, love and society—easily the best living writer in California. Her ability to put the tapestry of California and the times into words made her a treasure for her generation and generations to come.

While we mourn this great loss, Californians can celebrate Joan's tremendous contributions to the arts through her work. California belonged to Joan Didion; we cherish her memory.

California Governor  
Gavin Newsom



**Joan Didion 1934—2021**

*I am still committed to the idea that the ability to think for one's self depends upon one's mastery of the language—*  
[Slouching Towards Bethlehem](#) (1968)

*Life changes fast. Life changes in the instant. You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends.* —[The Year of Magical Thinking](#) (2005), which explores grief following the death of her husband

*I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear.* —  
[Why I Write](#) (essay originally published in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1976)



*I'm not telling you to make the world better, because I don't think that progress is necessarily part of the package. I'm just telling you to live in it. Not just to endure it, not just to suffer it, not just to pass through it, but to live in it. To look at it. To try to get the picture. To live recklessly. To take chances. To make your own work and take pride in it. To seize the moment. And if you ask me why you should bother to do that, I could tell you that the grave's a fine and private place, but none I think do there embrace. Nor do they sing there, or write, or argue, or see the tidal bore on the Amazon, or touch their children. And that's what there is to do and get it while you can and good luck at it.*—[UC Riverside commencement address](#) (1975).

*We tell ourselves stories in order to live.*—[The White Album](#) (1979)

—Kathy Highcove, Editor



This has been a difficult year for everyone. It's almost silly to write this since it's been so QUIET.

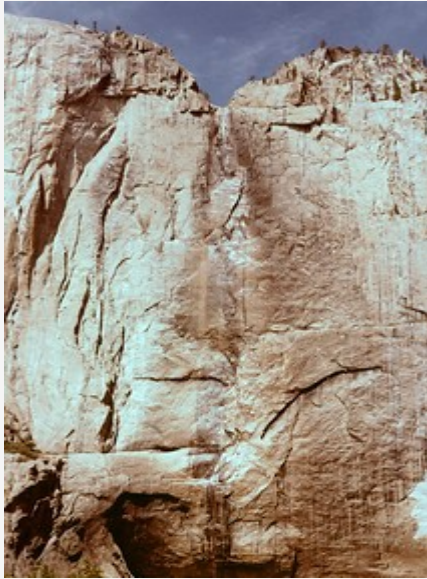
One good thing: Rita and I, our son Joey and daughter Heidi all met in Yosemite in August. I had called Yosemite last October, as I needed to get out of Covid Jail. It was suffocating. The earliest opening they had was 10 months away, so I grabbed it. Now I finally had something to look forward to

On the trip north, driving past Oakhurst we passed by two areas that had burned. One was small, like 40 yards square. The other was bigger, maybe 180 yards square. The fire department did a great job, stopping them before they got out of hand.

As we drove down into Yosemite Valley, Rita suddenly shouted, "There's no water in Yosemite Falls!" Sure enough, it was totally dry. When we later went to check out the park's famous falls, there was only a trickle of water in Lower Yosemite Falls, but the upper falls were totally DRY!

There were also a few places in the Valley that had burned trees. Yosemite is usually so green and serene, and it was really a shock to see all those burnt trees!

Mariposa County put limits on the number of people who could stay in Yosemite, including the number of workers. I was told the staff had been reduced from 4,000 to 1,200. Lots of restaurants were closed, as was the swimming pool, one of my hangouts in Yosemite, since I can't hike anymore. But I did some swimming in the Merced River, which had cold and not so cold places to swim. That was fun, and something I had never done before. I look forward to doing it again.



Heidi got Covid in the spring, but not a really bad case. She took a week off from work, and stayed in bed and watched the Olympics.

I found that watching the Olympics was fun, especially the swimming events. Michael Phelps is now a network commentator, and in his place as the fastest guy in the pool (at least on the American side) is a guy named Dressler. He has lots of tattoos, and is more ripped than any swimmer I have ever seen. Change happens.

Son Joey is still working for UPS at the Oakland Airport, making sure their computer system gets all the boxes where they are supposed to go. It's a lot cooler up there than down here in the LA area.

My sister Nancy is in remission from Multiple Myeloma, which is a big relief for friends and family. Her husband Peter is still running Infrared Analyzers. Their kids are doing fine. Courtney and Brendan live in New York, Chris lives in Senegal and Ann Marie lives in Malaysia. It's difficult to get everybody together at the same time, which Nancy hates.

I'm swimming regularly and include some of my physical therapy which I need to do to fight the neuropathy in my feet and legs. I trudge along writing my second novel and I'm on the board of my CWC writers club--a great bunch of people. We still hold our branch workshops on Zoom, which is not as much fun as meeting in-person, but it's proved to be a great way to learn more about writing.

I hope Covid stays far away from all of you and you have a great holiday season and wonderful New Year.

**I**t's that time of year again when scammers are preying on new writers wishing to get published. Unfortunately, if you haven't taken the time to learn about the business of publishing, you are a perfect target.

A WPN member wrote me earlier this week that she was approached by a magazine saying their talent scout had found her book and wanted to interview her. When we looked at their website, it had a beautiful magazine, but most of the site was pitching them selling publicity and marketing services to authors.

The next day, Author's Avenue Media Group called her, offering their services to increase her sales and other products. She looked them up and found a full page of complaints about the scams this company offers.

The granddaddy of vanity press scammers is Author Solutions. They have been a plague on publishing for decades, filling people's garages with thousands of printed books.

And now, since their name has been tarnished, they bought other once decent vanity presses and have turned them into the boiler room sales operations. Author Solutions is renowned for publishing scams and being the umbrella company for the numerous [vanity publishers](#) in the market today. *(click the link for a great article)* A few years back, there were many lawsuits against the company.

Author Solutions is the parent company of several self-publishing companies and imprints, including Author House, iUniverse, Archway, Trafford Publishing, and Xlibris. These companies are otherwise known in the industry as "vanity publishers."

Archway pitches that it's part of Simon & Schuster. Yes, in the beginning, S&S advised on the publishing packages, but Author Solutions owns the company. A dear friend refused to listen when I told him this was a scam. Their salesman convinced him that his book would be presented at an S&S editorial meeting. TOTAL LIE. And, of course, that cost my friend \$10,000.

If you are approached, please don't let your first reaction be flattered but cautious. It's easy to research and learn who they are. A genuine publishing service provider offers to design your book, creating the eBook in both formats, posting it on all of the most important sales outlets, and charging a reasonable fee, usually under \$3000 for everything. They even get your ISBNs and copyright the book for you with the Library of Congress. They set up your accounts with all vendors, so profit from sales goes directly into your bank account, not theirs, and **THEY DON'T TAKE A PERCENTAGE.**

Please remain vigilant. If you are approached, please let me know. I will help you research the company and, if it's a scam, I will alert others.

Enjoy this joyous holiday season and don't get taken by a scammer.

**Kathleen Kaiser, WPN President**

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## Three Winter Tankas

Bleak black blizzards blow  
My fingers are all frozen  
I shake and shiver  
My nose is a waterfall  
Can this be California?



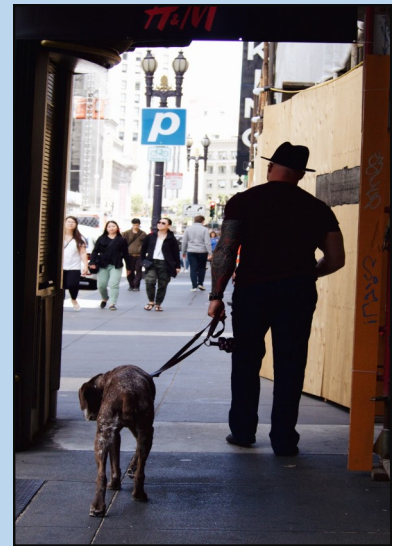
Flocked wreaths in the trash  
Graced with ribbons and pine cones  
Decorate the bin  
This year reached the lowest point  
Next one has to be better

Like far off thunder  
Deep throat rumble of trash cans  
Returned to the ground  
The truck grumbles, moving on  
Paper and fragments flying



**I wish you a happy and healthy New Year.**

**Michael Edelstein**





**Have you ever wished that you'd been able to register and join another CWC club's Zoom Meeting? If so, now there's a solution!**

**On January 1st, a new feature was added to the state CWC website: an event page with a virtual calendar of Zoom meetings in sister CWC branches.**

**In 2022, members of any CWC branch may attend the meetings at any CWC branch for the same price as members of the home branch.**

**Yes, what a deal! Attendance at another club's Zoom gathering may be free or CWC visitors will pay the same registration fee as the branch charges its own members.**

**To view the CWC guest speaker calendar, simply click on:**

**<https://calwriters.org/events/>**

**Please check this website often.**

## Finally Back Home

By Bob Okowitz

Dad's funeral is over,  
Two thousand miles away  
The world of my childhood,  
So long ago.

Now home, Rita holds me tight,  
The embrace healing.  
Tension releases, and releases some more.  
My kids smile and laugh,  
It's wonderful to see them  
Enjoying their lives

I'm still empty,  
Family and friends left behind.  
Issues unsettled.  
Grieving continues.

Soon I'll be fully home.  
My heart will catch up.  
I'll be able to cry.  
Smile. Laugh.  
My father is gone,  
But I'm back home.





# A National Geographic Documentary: New York's First Battle with COVID

A Review by SFV member Elaine Mura

Reprinted with the permission of Splash Magazine



**Photo from the Documentary, "The First Wave"**

<https://youtu.be/vZR2VltfBSg>

We all lived through it: The first shocking scenes of COVID-19 growing from an inconsequential "Chinese flu" to a devastating killer of millions across the globe. In the U.S., we first noticed one or two cases here and there – nothing to be concerned about. And then COVID-19 burst into the news as New York City suddenly became the epicenter of the mysterious virus, a pandemic which everyone thought would soon be history. Even if you think that you've already seen it all, THE FIRST WAVE will introduce you to events that will add to your understanding and may even shock you.

Oscar-nominated and Emmy award-winning director Matthew Heineman hoped to document the crippling effects of this new disease by following its progression in the city where it first caught the nation's undivided attention. And so a full film company led by Heineman entered the medical corridors of several NYC hospitals from March to June 2020 to explore what happened and how people responded to this novel illness as it raged through the most populous city in the U.S. Little did we know that this would become one of the worst pandemics in U.S. history. But THE FIRST WAVE is not simply about a medical catastrophe which struck the population without warning to wreak havoc almost overnight on medical systems throughout the world. THE FIRST WAVE also explores the people – medical professionals, victims of the newest plague, family members, and all of us as we watched the daily events unfolding on a television screen. This is a story about how individuals handled the overwhelming trail of death and despair in this once-in-a-century viral pandemic.

To bring home the tragedy inherent in such a deadly crisis, Heineman focused on a few individuals who lived through the crisis – a physician, a physical therapist, a few victims who hovered on the brink of death—some would survive and others would die. The story of COVID-19 in NYC became the story of an entire country forced to endure a sickness which never seems to end. Each distinct storyline serves as a microcosm through which we view the emotional and societal impacts of the destructive pandemic.

THE LAST WAVE also touches upon things going on in society at the very same time. The Black Lives Matter movement surged as the death toll in hospitals climbed to obscene levels and refrigerated trucks were brought in to hold the dead. During this terrifying and calamitous time, the people of NYC, even though sequestered, personified the strength of the human spirit as they leaned from their windows and balconies shouting their encouragement to everyone within hearing distance. Heroism flourished too as bedraggled and overtired hospital workers struggled to keep one step ahead of the tragedies unfolding daily.

Following a screening of the film, Heineman spoke of the power, love, and heroism he witnessed as his crew filmed hundreds of hours while NYC fought to survive. Miraculously, even though no one yet understood much about COVID-19 and how it was transmitted or effectively treated, not one member of his team caught the deadly virus. And two of the very seriously ill – an NYPD worker and a young nurse – survived after months on a ventilator, offering an ending with a spark of hope. THE FIRST WAVE was filmed in the spring of 2020 – and no one suspected that even now, as 2021 is coming to a close, COVID-19 would remain a deadly threat everywhere.

THE FIRST WAVE was released on November 19, 2021, and remains timely and engrossing. The National Geographic documentary is above all personal with an undercurrent of compassion but also honesty. Kudos to Heineman for spearheading the movie and the editor who plowed through miles of film to skillfully capture so many meaningful moments. Like the once-in-a-century pandemic, this is a once-in-a-century film which everyone should see.

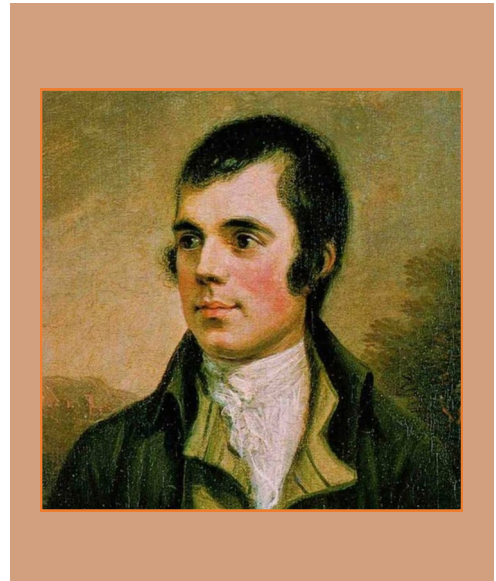
# Ring In the New Year With Robert Burns' Famous Song

"Auld Lang Syne" is traditionally sung every year at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. This song has become the most-performed song in the world after "Happy Birthday."

Here's a short bio about the composer of that traditional song, Robert Burns:

Robert Burns was born on January 25th, 1759, south of Ayr, in Alloway, Scotland, the oldest of seven children. His parents were tenant farmers William Burnes and Agnes Broun of the 70-acre Mount Oliphant farm, southeast of Alloway.

Young Burns was home-schooled in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and history by his father. Later, Robert



and his brother Gilbert were taught Latin, French, and mathematics by John Murdoch.

While living on the farm, young Burns showed a strong interest in poetry and began to write his own poems. His first composition, "O, Once I Lov'd A Bonnie Lass," was a song he composed for a local girl he met during the farm's harvest season.

## Childhood home of Robert Burns



His father died in 1784, and left Burns as head of the family and in charge of the tenancy. He eventually was relieved of his overseeing role and was then free to indulge his writing talent. Between 1784 and 1785, he wrote many of the poems contained in his first book, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. The book was a huge success with both critics and the public. Burns soon became famous in England and Scotland as the great "peasant poet."

In 1786 he moved to Edinburgh to meet and mingle with literary society and he made many close friends such as the influential Lord Glencairn and Frances Anna Dunlop.

Besides composing verse, Burns spent considerable time composing and collecting traditional Scottish songs. He revised, adapted and expanded many old Scottish folk songs. The adapted folk song that most people today recognize, is "Auld Lang Syne." Every New Year's Eve, party-goers around the English-speaking world, will raise a glass and sing, "Should old acquaintance be forgot ..."

And so, when 2022 arrives, I think I can safely predict that millions of celebrants will embrace and belt out a folk song written by Scotland's "peasant poet," Robert Burns.



—Kathy Highcove, Editor

Source: [The Vintage News - The Vintage News site](https://www.vintage-news.com/)



## Then and Now

then was then  
and now is now

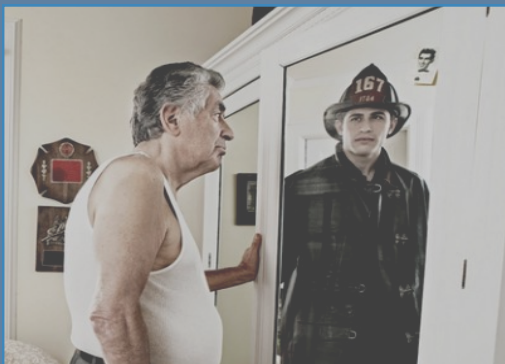
what can be said about yesterdays  
except they were once tomorrows  
changes take place somewhere in-between

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  
has the very nature of truth  
become an ever-changing mystery

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

Lillian Rodich





## **NOT FOR SISSIES**

I've never been afraid to fly  
Or jump into the ocean  
From a rowboat  
Tho I can't really swim  
As high waves threaten  
Just dog paddle to stay afloat  
There was never a fear  
Of entering foreign lands  
Not even knowing the language  
Nor friends or family  
Greeting me ... showing me around  
Was it youth that rendered me fearless  
Or just trust in the good  
Saying that ignorance is bliss  
May apply here  
As much of life is now behind  
Time for looking back  
While going forward

Where days grow shorter  
Physical body grows more frail  
Maintaining youthful courage  
is not an easy option  
As experience and maturity  
Have taught me that growing old ...

**IS NOT FOR SISSIES**

**Leslie Kaplan 6/21**





**W**hether you have been published or have always wanted to write, please join the San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club for monthly Zoom meetings to learn more about the craft and business of writing. This series is free for members from any branch of the California Writers Club. Please visit [cwc-sfv.org](http://cwc-sfv.org) for membership information or single-lecture admission.

## CWC-SFV SPEAKERS FOR 2022

### JANUARY 8, 2022

Jill Lublin

[Get Known Everywhere: Publicity Strategies for Authors](#)

If the PR part of writing gives you nightmares, join Jill for a wake-up call. We need this!

### FEBRUARY 5, 2022

Kendall Jones, JD

["Self Publishing Contracts and Pitfalls"](#)

Learn to look beyond the hype and promises of self-publishing with this not-to-be missed presentation.

### MARCH 5, 2022

Jonathan Maberry

["The Genre of You"](#)

If your muse beckons you to multiple genres but you're afraid to follow, don't be. Join Jonathan to learn why.

### APRIL 2, 2022

Lynne Thompson, Poet Laureate for the City of Los Angeles

["Celebrating National Poetry Month"](#)

Celebrate the joy of poetry with our city's acclaimed Poet Laureate. What a treat!

### MAY 7, 2022

Anat Golan-Wenick

["Turn Your Novel Into A Screen Play"](#)

Want to see your novel come to life on the big or little screen? Learn how, now!

### JUNE 4, 2022

Pamela Samuels Young

["Write Your Next Page Turner"](#)

Whether you write mysteries, romance, or nonfiction, learn the tips and tricks best-selling authors use to keep readers turning pages.





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