



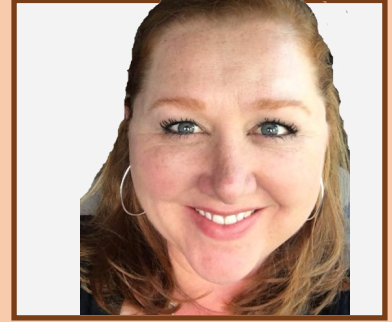
The Valley Scribe



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



Come hear the
"Contract Ninja"
Kendall Jones, Esq.



On Saturday, February 5, at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom, the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club welcomes Attorney Kendall Jones, with a presentation titled, "Publishing Contracts and Pitfalls."

An Atlanta Journal-Constitution columnist once wrote: "Kendall Jones has red in her hair and a bit of bulldog in her personality." In Georgia, home of the National Champion University of Georgia Bulldogs, that's high praise.

Kendall Jones has been an attorney for more than 25 years and is licensed to practice law in four states, including California. She is currently Vice President of Legal for California Pizza Kitchen Inc. in Costa Mesa, California. Prior to her role at CPK, Kendall was General Counsel of VS Media, Inc., an entertainment and tech company in Westlake Village, California. And prior to that, she ran her own law firm for more than ten years.

For decades, Kendall has been recognized as a "Contract Ninja," the go-to contract attorney for people in the entertainment and business worlds. She helps her clients understand the pages of complicated contract language that often confuses those without an "Esquire" behind their name.

Kendall is also an award-winning writer, having won multiple journalism awards, primarily for investigative reports and business and community journalism on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Also, Kendall co-founded and served as Editor-in-Chief of two publications in Florida, both of which she sold to larger media companies before moving to California in 2010.

Currently, Kendall is writing her first book, *Lawyer-Proof Your Writing*, based on several presentations she has given to members of the California Writers Club. Come see her in action in our Zoom meeting on February 5th!

Kendall lives in Seal Beach, CA., with her three kids and too many pets.

CWC-SFV members will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. CWC members from other branches who wish to attend should contact Monte Swann at cwcsfvhost@gmail.com by noon on February 4 for an invitation. Guests who are not members of CWC may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org by noon on February 4. After purchasing admission, they will receive a Zoom invitation. We regret that late purchases cannot be accommodated.

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Writing is easy, All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.

—Mark Twain

Karen's Corner

By Karen Gorback, CWC-SFV President



“Kill your darlings,” advises Stephen King.



Like most of you, I’ve enjoyed writing my whole life, but I didn’t take it seriously until my high school journalism class. I still feel the sting of the teacher’s red pen editing my wordy news and feature stories, reminding me that clarity and brevity are not only the watchwords of journalism, but the foundation of all good writing. While I didn’t appreciate her advice at the time, those early lessons continue to shape my writing today – across the many genres in which I work.

Following Stephen King’s advice, “Kill your darlings, kill your darlings, even when it breaks your egocentric little scribbler’s heart, kill your darlings (*On Writing*, Scribner, 2010), I edited down a 78,000-word manuscript into a 65,000-word novel, *Freshman Mom*. He was right. It broke my egocentric little scribbler’s heart, but I killed chapters full of darlings and ended up with a story that was far stronger than the original manuscript. I also love this advice from Dr. Seuss. “The writer who breeds more words than he needs, is making a chore for the reader who reads.” Yep.

Then, there’s the famous quote often attributed to Mark Twain, “If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter.” This is so true. One of the reasons why I enjoy writing picture

books is the challenge of telling a compelling story in 500 or fewer words. For me, it’s killer difficult and takes a long time, but I love it. As Beatrix Potter said, “The shorter and the plainer, the better.”

On the topic of brevity, I enjoyed an article in the September/October 2021 *Writer’s Digest* titled “10 Reasons to Write 100-word Stories” by Ran Walker, author of twenty-three books, including *Keep It 100* (45 Alternate Press, LLC, 2021). Among his reasons for composing 100-word stories are: “You can let your inner poet come out;” “It allows you to refocus your story and choose only what is important;” and “It’s an excellent way to learn how to edit.” As someone who has written many 100-word stories, I’d like to add, “It’s really fun!”

Each fall, I enter a contest called “Fiction in a Nutshell,” for 100-word stories, sponsored by the Acorn newspaper. I’ve been recognized with Honorable Mention a couple times. But even if the contest had no honors, I’d still enter each October, wracking my brain, killing the darlings, and counting the words, until I have 100 of which I’m proud.

Just for fun, try wracking your own brain, killing your darlings and counting every word until you have your own 100-word story of which you’re proud. It’s a terrific exercise, and maybe we can print a few in an upcoming edition of the *Scribe*. Besides, it’s fun!

Karen Gorback, CWC-SFV President



My Voice! My Message! My Problem?

By Anat Golan Wenick

You're an amazing writer. You have a very important message to your readers, but somehow, only your drawer gets to hear it. Time to get yourself out there. But where to start? Author Jill Lublin joined our January club meeting to give some valuable pointers. Here are 10 ways to get your name out there:



A key element to publicizing yourself is Face and Name recognition. This is easier to do these days with the rise of social media. Be sure to have a good picture of yourself people can associate with the name. Be active: post useful tips, share other people messages, comment on other postings, and tell others about achievements and milestones like if your book was number one or if it sold a certain amount of copies. Be sure to include a link to where reader can get more information or where they can purchase the book.

Create anticipation. If your book is not quite ready yet, post about it. Share your process with the readers. Design several covers and ask for opinions. Speak of how excited you are that the book will be out in... and so on.

Don't discard networking in the community. Sure, social media allows one to interact with people from all around the world from the comfort of one's couch, but it doesn't hurt to get your message whenever you are out and about. Start a conversation with the person in line with you. Ever go to an event at your kids' school? Consider sponsoring or donating copies of your book to raffle.

Podcasts are IN these days. Consider starting one but be sure to search first for hosts and topics that match your expertise to see what is already out there. Some places you can look are blogtalkradio, PodMatch, iTunes and MatchMaker.fm.

Newsletters are not dead, they just moved to the internet. There are a lot of them out there and they all need content, so think about becoming a Columnist. Hey, here's an idea: the San Fernando Valley Newsletter is always on the hunt for a good columnist.

Want to talk to audience but wish to do so face to face – no problem. Find a place with captive audience. Speak where people are already in attendance. Some of those include: Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Mom Clubs, Places of Worship, Community Centers, Schools and even a place called The San Fernando Valley Writers Club (when back to in-person, that is, but you're always welcomed to do an online presentation).

Pound the pavement. Contact bookstores (both chains and independent stores) and ask to do a book signing or a reading event. Remember the advice from number 2? Create anticipation on social media. Tell readers how excited you are to reveal a chapter from your new book at a certain book event. Want a similar experience from the comfort of your home? Throw a party.

Develop a book announcement strategy that is short and simple. Lublin suggested a message that is four sentences long. Submit the announcement to local press (some have "people in the News" section), business journals, Alumni Newsletters, and yes, your friendly San Fernando Valley Writers club newsletter.

Got Friends? Then tell them about the book. Lublin suggested identifying 10 people in your network who have "Big Mouths" and asking them to spread the word. If your book is available online, perhaps they can post a good review of it. They can talk about it on their social media, or they can post a recommendation on your social media pages like LinkedIn.

Got a little money to spare? Hire a publicist, do a commercial on local TV or on city benches, or take a publicity crash course like the one offered by best-selling author, Jill Lublin.

Want your free Publicity Action Guide? Head to:

<https://jilllublin.com/action-guide/>

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE

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A review by Elaine Mura

The Ahmanson Theatre is excited about its latest production – especially after COVID necessitated the premature closure of its entertaining and whimsical holiday presentation of “A Christmas Carol.” Most certainly the North American premiere of the West End hit musical EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE is sure to please – especially since Layton Williams and Roy Haylock will be reprising their London roles as Jamie and Hugo/Loco Chanelle. Inspired by a true story and winner of three WhatsOnStage awards including Best New Musical, EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE opened in 2017 and wowed British audiences until the pandemic struck and closed theaters around the world.

Jamie (Layton Williams) is 16, a high school senior being pushed by his counselor Miss Hedge (Gillian Ford) to talk about his future plans while he hides his true dreams from almost everyone. Only his mother (Melissa Jacques) and her best friend Ray (Shobna Gulati) know what's going on inside his secret mind. Jamie wants more than anything in the world to wear a dress to the senior prom. And then he meets Hugo (Roy Haylock), who runs a fashion boutique specializing in flashy outfits for men who entertain audiences dressed as women. And who also just happens to be the retired Loco Chanelle, one of the town's most famed drag queens. It doesn't take long for Hugo to realize that Jamie is ready to be groomed for his show biz debut as MimiMi. All the while in the company of popular performers Sandra Bollock (Leon Craig), Tray Sophisticay (James Gillan), and Leika Virgin (David O'Reilly), Jamie's dreams are coming true – or are they?



are going on the rocky road to adulthood. And then there are the very real and poignant family relationships that must be navigated – with mom, who turns out to be the perfect accepting and sacrificing mother we all hope for – and his macho absent dad, who can never allow himself to accept his quirky son. Add to this elements of sexual identification – gay or straight? And how about dealing with the high school bully? Further nuances enter

into the equation in a class of racially and ethnically mixed youngsters who must figure out complex questions about the future while holding true to their heritage. Is it any wonder that the audience broke out into cheers when a conflicted Jamie hugged his mother, bested the school bully, and got to wear that elusive dress to the prom?

Kudos to Director Jonathan Butterell and a very talented cast who brought the show to life. To add humor and charm, the production even featured a trio of real live drag queens. And a special nod to Melissa Jacques, whose resounding vocal efforts led to an audience ovation. The production also has a real live band to back up the tunes, as well as choreographer Kate Prince to keep the many feet moving. The entire production team did a splendid job of infusing life and energy into the musical. Inspired by the FIRECRACKER documentary film, “Jamie: Drag Queen at 16,” EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE will tickle your fancy with good old-fashioned musical entertainment – but may also spark memories about

the pitfalls and perks of growing up in today's world.

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE runs through February 20, 2022, with performances at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Sundays. The Ahmanson Theatre



is located at the Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Tickets range from \$35 to \$145. For information and reservations, call 213-972-4400 or go [online](#).

At first glance, EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE is a clever and bouncy musical about what we secretly want and what reality will give us. As such, it is an entertaining and fun tale steeped in youthful vigor and energy. But the production is actually about much more as it tiptoes through multiple minefields that we all faced when we were 16. There is adolescent angst about approval and acceptance by one's peers, along with issues of self-esteem and self-image as kids try to figure out who they are and where they

The Vegetable I Love The Most: Pumpkin

By Anne Hansell



As a child, I loved anything that was made with pumpkin. Let it be pies, coffee, cakes, or cookies. Every year, often in the autumn, my parents used to buy pumpkin pies for me. I used to eat a half of the pumpkin pie and leave the rest to my family. I remember seeing my older sister's face smile with amusement when I tried to eat an entire pie.

During my elementary school years, my family pitched in to hand-make a large pumpkin costume for me. When I went to school, wearing my new costume for the school's Halloween festival, many people took delight in seeing a small girl, dressed in a huge pumpkin, made of soft wires and orange cloth, with a Jack O' Lantern look. I remember so many parents taking pictures of me.

Later, during my middle school days at a boarding school for the deaf, I brought my old pumpkin costume to their Halloween costume contest, and I ended up winning an award for the most original costume design.

I remember everyone looking at it, oohing and aahing. Even the popular clique who used to rule the school's social life took a strong liking to my costume. They told me that they thought it was cool.

However, during my high school days at the same school, my pumpkin costume developed huge tears; its wires became tangled. So my parents threw it away for safety reasons.

Whenever I read history books, I always pick up tidbits about the origins of pumpkins.

The pumpkin, a member of the squash family, was a native of Central America so Europeans had never seen it until after Christopher Columbus' discovery of America in 1492. The Mexican and Central American natives included pumpkins and their seeds in their diet.

When the Spanish people arrived, they discovered pumpkins and brought them back to Europe. They started to use the orange squash in their cooking also.

While researching the history of pumpkin pie for the Thanksgiving presentation at my workplace, I was surprised to find out that the Mayflower Pilgrims didn't include the pumpkin pie in their original dinner party. Later, I read several more history books about Thanksgiving, and learned that the traditional dishes we eat during the holiday were Victorian in origin.

President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving as a national holiday in 1863, the height of the Victorian era. The Victorian version of the Thanksgiving included the pumpkin pie.

When I was learning to make pies straight out of fresh pumpkins, I found out that there were two kinds of the orange squash: Jack-O-Lantern and Sugar Pumpkin. The Jack-o'-Lantern type was suitable for carving faces but not for eating while the Sugar Pumpkin was suitable for making pies. Since then, I used to buy sugar pumpkins for my pies during Thanksgiving. Today, I buy cans of organic pumpkin puree to make another favorite dessert: pumpkin puddings. As you can see, I really love pumpkins!



Pie tips from Anne Hansell:

Small sugar pumpkins are perfect for pumpkin desserts but cans of pumpkin puree are way easier!



Is there anything more romantic than reading? Probably, yes. Nonetheless, if you are going to be alone this Valentine's Day why not curl up with your favorite author, under the glow of a soft table lamp, feet-up on a love seat in front of a roaring fire, and with a massive box of chocolates within easy reach; a box of chocolate you won't have to share, by the way. Think how luxurious it would be to go to See's Candies and pick out a pound or two (why not) of only the chocolates you like. Is there a law against having a whole pound of Bordeaux? No. You can thank yourself later. But, I should add, it would be unethical and immoral to torture the sales clerk by picking each chocolate individually while appearing to deliberate every time.

Once settled in the comfort of your fluffiest throw, listen to the wind howling outside and the waves crashing on the rocky seashore (Where are we? I don't know but there is wind and waves). Be aware of the ghost's footsteps treading lightly on the creaky boards of the stairwell, the icy draft as she glides across the room to read over your shoulder, and if that pale spectral hand reaches for a chocolate, let her, because her hand will simply pass through the box, and you will have the last laugh.

Hopefully by now you are in the mood for a quiet night in; all that's left:

choose a book. These writers with February birthdays will inspire you:

James Joyce, *Ulysses*, often considered to be the greatest book of all time, Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, William S. Burroughs, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, Jean M. Auel, *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, Ruth Rendell, *Dark Corners*, Richard Matheson, *Hell House*, erotica writer, Anais Nin, *Delta of Venus*, Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl*, the courageous and formidable Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave*, Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, diarist, Samuel Pepys, Josephine Humphreys, *Rich in Love*, and W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and prolific English romantic novelist, Denise Robins who penned 160 books! Also, we have poets; Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, W. H. Auden, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Christopher Marlowe.

Talking of Marlowe, if you are looking for inspiration this year on what to write in a Valentine's Day card to your beloved, look no further than his poem, *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, which some scholars believe he wrote as a comic caricature of the impossible pastoral promise-

The Passionate Shepherd to his Love

*Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasure prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.*

*And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.*

*And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;*

*A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair-lined slippers for the cold
With buckles of the purest gold;*

*A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs.
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love.*

*The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning.
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love.*

Perhaps after making a laughing stock of shepherds everywhere, Marlowe was murdered in the Dame Bull's House tavern by an irate shepherd who bludgeoned him to death with



The Passionate Shepherd to his Love



The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd

his crook, and not, as some historians have posited, because he was a spy of Queen Elizabeth I.

Another cohort of Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Walter Raleigh, wrote, in the manner by which some poets respond to another poet's work, a witty rejoinder from the maid.

The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd

*If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy Love.*

*But Time drives flocks from field to fold;
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold;
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complains of care to come.*

*The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward Winter reckoning yields:
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
In fancy's spring but sorrow's fall.*

*Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither – soon forgotten,
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.*

*Thy belt of straw and ivy-buds,
The coral clasps and amber studs, -
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy Love.*

*But could youth last, and love still breed,
Had joy no date, nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy Love.*

Proving unrequited love is as old as the hills. Happy Birthday to all our members with February birthdays! Be kind to yourself.



A Jewish Bride

**hushed voices
silence washes over
satin and flowers
and my mother's tears**

**part of me stands far away
like a ghost
hovering over us
while we cling to each other**

**our heads bend in prayer
we seem to be strangers
a shimmering picture
lacking reality**

**until
my veil is lifted
and we taste in turn
new sweet wine
while the ghost has
disappeared**

and the glass is shattered

Lillian Rodich

The actual events that inspired this poem occurred in 1970, very soon after I returned from Vietnam. It was over fifteen years later before I was able to write this poem, give myself closure and say goodbye. I put the poem to music and performed it on stage. Ever since, there isn't a week that goes by that I don't recite this to myself sometime throughout the day, particularly in the evening when I and my day have become quiet.

Rich Peter

MY LOVE IN SILENCE

There's a loss I've seldom spoken,
a pain that ebbs and flows.

Tears dry in the darkness,
my love in helpless silence slipped away.

Like seasons through my fingers,
years pass on and on.

You went adrift in silence,
Your song has come again.

Years filled with sadness, anger fused with love,
no cry from tiny dove.

No one to bring you near or shield you from the gray,
no blessing from the heart of God that would bring you home one day.

No kisses for your blessings or colors for your hair,
no moment for my pleading arms no cradle for there.

Oh tiny girl your laughter's come again,
you are my love in silence, you never knew your name.

Kisses toys and playmates were kept from you that day,
girls and boys and precious joys won't join you on your way.

You've never drawn a picture or made castles in the sand,
and never felt my fingers, nor I your tiny hands.

No kisses for your blessings or colors for your hair,
no moment for my pleading arms no cradle for there.

Oh tiny girl your laughter's come again,
you are my love in silence, you never knew your name.

Years filled with regret of what I'll never see,
the smile that you save for me.

But I'll keep your name alive so you will always be,
an angel that lives inside and becomes a part of me.

I have ribbons for your blessings and colors for your hair!
One moment for my pleading arms a cradle for you here!

Oh tiny girl your song has come again,
you are my love in silence.

You're my love in silence.
Erin is your name.



Writing a love triangle is the easiest thing to do. Writing a love triangle is the hardest thing to do. No, this is not a take on Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities," it's just reality. A triangle comes with built-in characters and conflicts. One already knows there will be three protagonists and they'll need to be in conflict with one another in some manner. On the other hand, every possible triangle has been done before, so the challenge is to find a way to make yours unique. Here are a few ways you can make your love triangle stand out.

Play with time and space. In the series of "The Outlanders" books, a married nurse from 1945 was mysteriously swept back in time to 1743 where she fell in love with a man who was targeted by one of her future husband's ancestors. This allowed the writer not just to explore a love triangle that stretches over the time continuum, but also showcase the feud between England and Scotland from three sides: the two feuding ones and the outsider. An astronaut character can juggle between someone from earth and an alien (whether in human form or other).



And speaking of aliens, a love triangle can include sides that are AI computers, a mannequin, ghosts, Werewolves and Zombies, because the sky's is not the limit. In Star Wars, Luke Skywalker had to choose between remaining a Jedi (aligning himself with his sister) or joining his father. And though both sides were represented by real people, it was really a choice between good, evil, or go work a farm somewhere in the Galaxy, thus remaining neutral. In this case, the triangle was not just a physical one. When writing to the young market, animals can take the place of humans. An animal triangle can work great in children's books to teach about love and sharing.

If human triangle is what you wish to write about, but still want to make your story unique, explore different characters' backgrounds, different sets of beliefs, and different customs. With polarization in society today, a political triangle is very relevant. A religious triangle has been done before, but if you can't find belief that is unique enough, just invent one, as done in Fantasy and Sci-Fi books.

Locations can also be a good way to elevate your love triangle. Set your story in a circus, in an underground bunker, a city under the water, a hospice. Each location brings with it different sets of challenges and conflicts. Remember to give each side of your triangle a set of hardships to deal with, or your balance will be off. Those don't necessarily have to directly impact the love triangle but can be enough of a disruptive force. A meddling neighbor, a sick child, a demanding work and even a downfall of the economy can all pose challenges for protagonists, even if they don't threaten the love people have for one another.



Readers love fairytales, so why not create a love triangle between creatures that are in the public domain? What if Snow White had to choose between Prince Charming and the hunter? There is no rule in writing love triangle that says the protagonist must choose the one the reader expects. Want an even bigger challenge than just writing a love triangle? How about writing two of them? Going back to the astronaut example, what if while the astronaut decides between the spouse on earth and the alien, the two have their own triangle to deal with? A grown-up child still living with his parent, can yield a love triangle for both generations. And bonus points will go to those writers who can intertwine the two stories. Remember that triangles don't have to end in happy ending and when writing more than one, they can have completely different outcomes. Love is in the air, so go spread it (three ways).



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.

Introducing Our New Marketing Intern

It is my pleasure to introduce to you Chris Baldwin, MBA, who has graciously agreed to help us through June as a volunteer marketing intern. The board has been discussing for many months the best way to let more people know about this terrific organization, but we clearly do not have expertise in marketing. Chris does. Please note that Vice-President Monte Swann will be Chris' single point of contact for the club. If you have marketing ideas, please direct them to Monte, who will share them with Chris. Meanwhile, please continue telling your friends about the best branch of CWC in the state

Special thanks to Chris for providing us with the following information:

Chris Baldwin is a recent MBA Marketing graduate from California Lutheran University. He has spent the last 4 years as an audio/visual technician at his alma mater. Before his studies at CLU, he was an outdoor school instructor and social media apprentice for a camp in the Los Padres National Forest. His passions include rock climbing, backpacking the Pacific Crest Trail in the spring time and photography. He resides within Thousand Oaks with his partner, two cats, dog and bunny. He is excited to share his experience and talents with the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers club as a Marketing Intern.

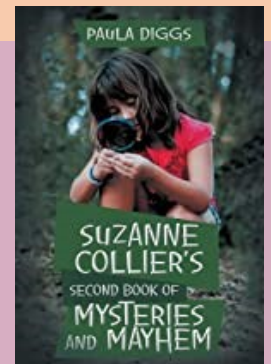
[Chris Baldwin, MBA - Marketing Intern - San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club | LinkedIn](#)

Kudos For Paula Diggs

In 2015, CWC-SFV member, Paula Digg's published: *Suzanne Collier's Little Book of Mysteries and Mayhem*.

Paula second book, *Suzanne Collier's Second Book of Mystery and Mayhem* (2019), has been selected to participate in the International Children's Book Fair in Bologna Italy.

The Fair will be held on March 21-24. Eighty countries will be represented. If you're interested in learning more, Paula's book is available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble book websites.



I LOVE THE GAME OF MAH JONGG

By Sylvia Molesko

When I was a little girl, my mother had to go to the hospital, so I stayed with my Aunt Tilly and Cousin Elaine. Every few days, three ladies would come to our apartment and sit at a square card table. My aunt brought out a heavy rectangular box, in which there were rectangular tiles about the size of dominos and four racks.

The ladies each received a rack onto which, taking turns, they would pick up and place tiles, until they had 13 tiles. Then they traded them, three at a time for a while, in something called the Charleston. As the ladies played, they picked up a face down tile to put in their rack. or they would call out the names of tiles if they threw them back onto the table. They played for hours, laughed, and had snacks and a good time. I learned that the name of the game was Mahi Jongg. That visit left me with good memories.

Soon after retiring from teaching, I took a course in the game Mah Jongg. After learning (almost) as much as the course could teach, I bought a Mah Jongg set, in a lovely wooden case, and went down to the local park's Senior Center. After playing at a table of four ladies for few weeks, I was invited to play at one of the ladies home on Thursdays. This turned into a social life with a group of five dear friends.

We called ourselves the "Mah Jongg Angels" Over the years the five of us celebrated each other's birthdays by giving each other extravagant gifts, and by going out to dinners in restaurants that I never would have visited otherwise.

Our hostess set up the table for dessert for after returning to play. I always made place cards for these events. I recently learned that one of the ladies saved them all, and uses them as bookmarks to this very day. We also found



angel statuettes to decorate these tables, and I have saved a large collection of these. We started wearing angel pins on the days that we played.

The five of us went places together, like Las Vegas to see the Bette Midler Show, and to Palm Springs, where we rented a house and enjoyed a few days of getting up, playing Mah Jongg,

having a leisurely breakfast. then enjoying the pool, and going to casinos, coming back to play some more Mah Jongg..

Sadly, over the years one, then another of our members passed away, leaving three of us. When Shirley moved onto a Senior Living Facility, we were able to play again, as there were ladies there who also played Mah Jongg. And we continued to play there, until recently, when we are locked out because of the pandemic. We are so looking forward to getting back together.

I do continue to play Mah Jongg in the mobile home park where we live. There, I taught a group of women the game, and we get together in the clubhouse every Monday afternoon to play Mah Jongg, to exercise our brains and enjoy each other's company.



Editor's note: In 2019, Bob Okowitz published *Dug In*, a novel based on his Irish American family, the Duggins. This clan has had a history of dealing with unjust social issues, both in citizens of Ireland and in the United States. In the past two years, Bob has written a second novel: *Sacrilege*. Below, you can read Bob's introduction to his latest work, *Sacrilege*, which will be published in December, 2022.

A CRY FOR JUSTICE

Sacrilege is the second novel based on the Duggin family's pursuit of justice. Joe and Mary were the main protagonists in the first novel. In this second book, Bob introduces his readers to Kevin, the grandson of *Dug In*'s protagonists, Joe and Mary.

Kevin became a Josephite priest and was assigned to a parish in Baltimore. After just over a year, he hears the confession of a girl who tells him she's being molested by a priest in another parish.

Kevin is very disturbed after hearing her story but can't repeat it to the authorities because confessions are protected in the Catholic religion. But at an anti-war meeting, Kevin blurts out what he knew had happened to a local teenaged girl.

After hearing this startling news, three other clerics do their best to stop the abuse. Eventually, Father Kevin gets himself in trouble—in a different way.

Here's the first chapter of *Sacrilege* and an intro to what becomes Joey's cause and his own pursuit of justice.

***Sacrilege*, Chapter One**

Maria walked into St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in a Black area of Baltimore. The Stations of the Cross were depicted on the side walls, under the circular windows.

She dipped her fingers in the holy water, then made the Sign of the Cross, and looked around for the confessional. The church had high ceilings, with large, circular windows that brightened the interior of the 170 year old stone structure. She was the only white person there. She found the empty confessional and went in to make her peace with God. Maria picked this

church because no one she knew would be there. "Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been four weeks since my last confession." Tears flowed down the young woman's face as Father Duggin heard her choking on her words.

"Tell me your sins, my child."

"I was raped last week and I want to kill the bastard who did this to me."

Father Kevin Duggin held his breath, uncertain what to say. Then he asked, "Who did this to you?"

Tears continued down Marie's face, but she didn't answer.

"Have you talked to the police?"

"Three times, Father," she told him, choking back her tears.

Then she turned her head and stared at the priest through the confessional screen. Angrily, she told him, "He visits the school during our recess, and orders me to go to an office. The first time he just talked to me, but it was weird. He asked about my parents, and knew that my mother was a drinker. I have no idea how he knew that. He also knew that my brother was in a mental hospital, which I guess everybody knows since he stopped going to school. He knew all kinds of things. The second time in that office, he asked me about dating and if I was a virgin."

"What did you tell him?"

Maria stood up, as if she were sick of being on her knees, and nearly shouted, "I lied and told him I'd never dated anyone! And then he asked me about Billy Connors, and I was shocked! He knew who I was dating! With a weird smile on his face, he came over and touched me ...all over."



Missing You

I'm missing your touch.
I'm missing rubbing your back.
You've been gone six years now
and I was thinking
that by now I wouldn't
miss you so much.

Even the conversations
at the dinner table I miss.
Now there is only one at the table.

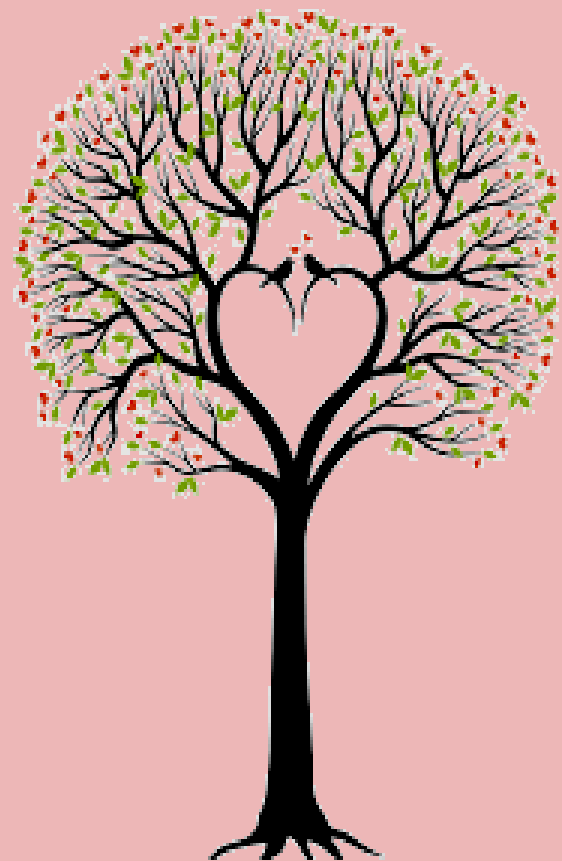
I remember the times you'd look at me and say
"You're a good-looking woman!"
How I loved to hear that!

Even though I thought maybe your macular degeneration
was affecting your eyesight.
But it didn't matter.
It sounded good anyway
and I know that I was lucky
to have you so long.

So I'll just dream
sweet dreams of you.
When I go to a meeting
I'll remember what you always said,
"Whatever you do, have fun!"

I will have fun and keep busy,
and feel blessed
that we enjoyed each other so long
Funny, how you remember
all the good times
and the sad times fade away,
which is just as well.
So sweet dreams my love, thanks for the memories!

Sara Coyle



HAPPY VALENTINES DAY, MEMBERS!

On the right, you'll see candid screenshots of your CWC-SFV Board members taken in recent Zoom meetings. Note that we're all paying close attention to our guest speaker of the month.

We hope you'll also join us in the SFV Zoom gallery until we are able gather again in the Saban Community Room.



Inside the Saban Center For Health and Wellness

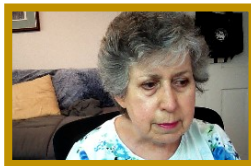
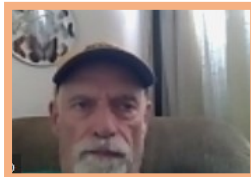
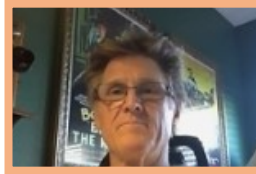
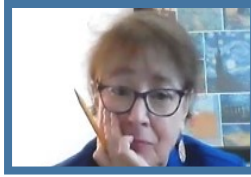


which is part of the MPTF campus.

WE



TO ZOOM!



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