



# The Valley Scribe

Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch



## CWC-SFV Summer News

Summer is here and our CWC-SFV branch activities are on vacation. There will be no Zoom Room meetings until September. And that makes sense because members may be taking trips that were deferred during the COVID shutdown. For example, Elaine Mura, whose monthly column that reported on SoCal plays and musicals, is traveling this summer. Her column is not included this issue, but don't worry, it will resume in *The Valley Scribe's* September issue.

Because current club news will never take a vacation, this July issue of *The Valley Scribe* has appeared in your email, and will be published again in August. The two summer issues will continue to send timely updates, a few informative articles, members' creative work and SFV plans for the coming fall months.

Our new program chair, Heather Bradshaw, has sent us a "Writers Born in July" story and she's also divulged our upcoming September speaker. (Look on page 4) Heather is on the job already!

If any member would like to submit an article, poem, art work or story to be published in the August or September issues, please send them to my email. I can't guarantee publication but I will definitely take a look and reply about your submission.

Kathy Highcove, Editor  
kghighcove@gmail.com

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# YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

AND SO DOES YOUR SUPPORT

PLEASE PAY YOUR 2022 DUES  
AND RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP



## A CWC-SFV Membership Offers Many Benefits

- ◆ Membership in one CWC branch provides access to meetings at the 21 other CWC branches and also at a discounted rate to join a second branch.
- ◆ Membership is the least expensive education on the planet for writers at all stages of their careers. A small membership fee buys a myriad of learning opportunities from the best and brightest in the craft and business of writing.
- ◆ Writing is a solitary pursuit, but membership buys the support of a critique group to provide you with the encouragement you need to keep writing!
- ◆ And if you're looking for publishing opportunities, membership allows you to submit articles to be considered for publication in the club's monthly newsletter, the Valley Scribe, as well as the CWC Bulletin and Literary Magazine.
- ◆ Occasionally, you'll have access to "Members Only" events, like this summer's presentation by bestselling author, Dean Koontz.
- ◆ Finally, membership is your golden ticket to leadership opportunities! Your board welcomes your creativity. Help increase our club's visibility by volunteering to update our Facebook page, send out press releases, and more. What would you like to do? Your time is precious and will always be valued and appreciated by your CWC peers.
- ◆ Dues are: \$45 for renewals; \$65 for new members. New member dues must be accompanied by the application on the website. **Members must renew by September 30 or they will need to reapply as a new member.**
- ◆ There are three ways to pay your dues:
  1. Mail a check to CWC-SFV, P.O. Box 564, Woodland Hills, CA 91262.
  2. Use PayPal with your credit card at [cwc-sfv.org](http://cwc-sfv.org). Click on "Membership Information", then on "Click Here for Dues Information".
  3. Set up a Zelle payment directly from your bank to [sfv.cwc@gmail.com](mailto:sfv.cwc@gmail.com).

Any questions or concerns? Email me at [karen.gorback@gmail.com](mailto:karen.gorback@gmail.com) or call me at 805-300-2078. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Remember!**

Renewing by June 30 puts you in a lottery to win the return of your renewal dues; and if you refer a new member who joins by July 31, you will receive a \$20 rebate from your renewal dues as a "thank you" from your club!

# HERE'S HOW TO WRITE A PAGE TURNER— A BOOK YOUR READERS CAN'T PUT DOWN!

A Review by Anne Hansell

My tips are sharp and to the point!



Author Jeri Westerson

**O**n June 4, 2022, our CWC-SFV Zoom Room welcomed best-selling author, Jeri Westerson, as our guest speaker. Jeri specializes in medieval mysteries and has won thirteen industry award nominations – from Agatha to Shamus. She’s also a member of the Southern California chapter of Mystery Writers of America and Sisters-in-Crime. Also, she’s in the Historical Novel Society. After laying down the basics, Jeri went into more detail. But before I began this review, I decided to first read one of Jeri’s books and determine how she followed her own advice for a page turner.

I noticed in *Oswald the Thief*, that Oswald’s friend kept reminding him that he’d better take his eyes off a certain lady because he’s still in trouble. I think that the “reminding” was a good example of how another character can keep the reader aware of the main problem.

Jeri also spoke about “dramatic impact.” In the third chapter, I read that a powerful man came around to Oswald’s door and blackmailed him into doing something illegal. I assumed this might be the dramatic impact.

Jeri said that through ten or twelve chapters leading up to a climax, readers should be reminded of the main problem, the original reason for the drama.

And, according to Jeri, the writer should not waste readers’ time with false leads, a tedious prologue, false promises, unnecessary details, or red herring endings. While reading her book, (spoiler alert) I noted that her hero discovered that he had been double-crossed by another character. This discovery made him mad enough to turn the tables on his former tormentor. I understood that this example of past history might be needed to propel the plot onward to a satisfactory conclusion.

In her talk’s conclusion, Jeri summarized her main points: every good story needs 1. an immediate hook 2. a problem or dramatic question, and 3. chapter structure that continually keeps the plot moving forward.

The characters’ narrative should also help propel the plot. Jeri reminded us of the five basic narrative drives: who, why, what, how, and where. She told us again that these elements are important because they orient readers to the protagonist’s situation. The writer must make characters more sympathetic so readers become concerned about their welfare and want to quickly read on—turn the page!

Here’s a final tip that made most of the gallery smile: The writer should never ever end a chapter with his main character deciding to go to bed. Why? Because, at that crucial point, the reader might read those words, feel tired, lose interest in the plot and close the book.

Jeri challenged us to write an adventure that “... causes the reader to want to keep reading ... you want to discourage any thoughts about sleeping.”

After reading *Oswald the Thief*, I knew just what Jeri Westerson had been talking about!



I selected *Oswald the Thief*.

In her opening remarks Jeri stated that stories must establish a great hook to attract a reader’s attention. Writers should avoid using a wordy prologue to lead into a conflict or problem for the protagonist. Instead, the writer should immediately build excitement in the first chapter. A dramatic hook in the first chapter will make readers ask themselves: *Who is this character and should I care about his problem?*

Jeri advised us to create a main character who immediately attracts readers’ interest. In *Oswald the Thief*, the main narrator is a young thief who introduces himself by describing his street work. In the first chapter, Jeri introduced a thief in action – using active verbs and short sentences. I read the intro and was hooked. Score one for Jeri!

In her talk, Jeri warned us against “cute, convenient easy coincidence endings” because they can lose the readers’ interest. She warned against putting minor characters into action only for a few chapters. She added that an author can’t use action in every paragraph; it’s important to balance active and calm situations. I noticed in *Oswald’s* second chapter, the action slowed as the narrator explained about his origins and his life companions.

To keep a reader’s interest, Jeri told us, the characters should be real, not “flat.” Personal stories for each character might keep a reader intrigued; they’d keep asking themselves questions as the story or plot line progressed. To further reinforce the readers’ interest, Jeri suggested that a writer should remind his characters why they’re pursuing their goal. The novelist’s job is to develop plotlines and to fill them with action, dramatic impacts, and characters’ personal stories. An author uses these devices to build to a climax that will help solve the characters’ main problem.

GET READY!  
HOLD ON!

But Oswald is  
closing in on his  
secret enemy!







# CELEBRATIONS

Within each celebration  
Event, plaque, anniversary  
Baptism, *bris*, election  
Lies a truth  
Sharp and searing  
Fundamental  
As carbon-bonding  
Muons, bosons, pulsars  
Certainty  
Beyond Heisenberg  
No Physicist's fogging  
No mathematical debate.  
No question  
As raw  
As the wound  
In your thigh  
When  
You fell  
On the milk bottle  
As bright as your scream  
When you birthed  
Your first child  
As hollow  
As the thud of the bullet  
In Hamilton's chest.  
This is it.  
Done, over  
*Acabado*  
It will never happen  
Again  
It will always be  
*Ex Post Facto*.



Never  
Not birthday  
Not the Fourth of July  
Memorial Day  
Presidents Day  
Thanksgiving  
Not the laugh  
When she took her first step  
Finished, gone, *finito*  
Each repetition  
Is a copy of a copy  
Of the old event  
Fading  
In lines and dots and splotches  
Until it is ragged and dog-eared  
Jamming the Xerox.  
Neutralized  
Over, done, history  
You and I  
Will never be  
What we were  
An instant ago.  
Each milestone  
Award, festival, diploma  
Is designed  
To obscure  
The shameless fact of passing  
Endless, enduring  
And unendurable completion.  
Death is the final celebration.

Michael Edelstein

## GRANDPAS ARE SPECIAL

A Memory of July 1960

By Lillian Rodich

**M**y daughter, Gail, was just two years old that July Fourth. I can still picture her in my father's arms, her head resting on his broad shoulder. It was a hot muggy day and electric with anticipation. The smell of active firecrackers was beginning to waft towards us even though twilight still glowed.

We all waited until sundown to cross over the park lawns and finally reach the baseball diamond where crowds had begun to gather. Mom, Dad, my husband and children were all at Chase Street Park in Panorama City eager to view a fireworks display.

Bleachers were set up and filling rapidly. Dozens of kids screamed with anticipation and skipped up and across the benches. The atmosphere was electric and about to explode. All the while Dad held Gail tightly in his arms. Finally, the show began. First, sparklers were whisked about. Then rockets blasted off and showered the sky with diamonds and colored gems.

Gail exploded too — with sheer terror ! Putting her hands over her ears, she began to shake and then scream. No amount of reassurance from all of us could calm her fears. It was then that Dad scooped her up in his arms and carried her down the steep bleachers and to the far end of the park where they both waited until the show was over.

When we found them, he was kissing her ice-cream smeared face with a tenderness that brought tears to my eyes. It was a Fourth of July that is crystal clear in my memory and the last one Dad was with us to celebrate.



## LAUGHTER

**Life can become too serious.  
Sprinkle seriousness with laughter.**

**If you don't ever laugh,  
your mind is not in use.  
If you can't ever laugh,  
you are handicapped.**

**So indulge in laughter,  
when it strikes your chords.**

**You have a better chance  
for health, for happiness.**

**It is in your behalf,  
to enjoy life and laugh.**

**© Norman Molesko, 2022  
Ambassador For Seniors**

Summer is finally here! The days are long and warm, which means it's time to stay indoors, keep your AC cool enough to wear a sweater, and read, read, read. Also, remember to wear socks with sandals when you go out so your toes don't get frostbite in movie theaters and restaurants.

Perhaps you'll venture outside for a July 4<sup>th</sup> barbecue and fireworks to celebrate Independence Day, which really, in hindsight, you have to ask, was it worth it? You could have had free healthcare and a royal family to complain about, the Beatles and One Direction, and an elected leader with a wild hairdo, Oh wait ...

Anyway while you're chillaxing on your chaise lounge this summer, we've got some big names to keep you occupied.

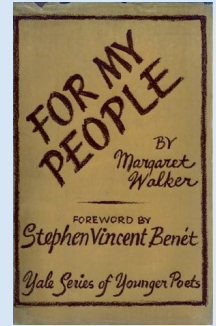
**Dean Koontz, *Odd Thomas***

***Join Dean for a CWC Fireside Chat on July 26<sup>th</sup>***



Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, who said, "Easy reading is damn hard writing,"  
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, related by married to Elspeth Huxley who wrote, *The Flame Trees of Thika*.

**Margaret Walker, *For My People*.**



Alice Munro, *Dear Life: Stories*, winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize for literature, the Swedish academy called her the "master of the contemporary short story," Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat Pray, Love*.

**Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winner, Ernest Hemingway**



Entrants to the Hemingway look-alike contest celebrate at Key West's annual Hemingway Days festival.



(Continued on page 8)



Irish writer, Sebastian Barry, *Days Without End*, who says, “Be mad enough to believe in yourself implicitly,” Academy and Tony Award winner, Sir Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*, also co-writer of *Shakespeare in Love*.

### Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*



The ruined farmhouse Top Withens, thought to have inspired the Earnshaws' home in *Wuthering Heights*

Hunter S. Thomson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, Cormac McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men*, Henry Dumas, *Play Ebony*, *Play Ivory*, Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*, playwright, George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*.

### Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*

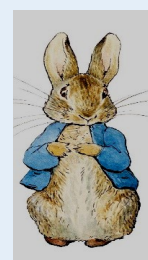


I haven't read Bessie's work yet but I love this picture.

Sources: [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com), [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), [www.writerswrite.co.nz](http://www.writerswrite.co.nz)

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall*, romance novelist, Barbara Cartland, who has sold over **1,000 million books**, Zelda Fitzgerald, *Save me the Waltz*, which, by the way, she wrote in a psychiatric clinic.

### Beatrix Potter, *Peter Rabbit*.



Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Karen Walker, *Swamplandia*, E. B. White, *Charlotte's Web*, Min Jin Lee, *Free Food for Millionaires*, Pulitzer Prize winner, Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*, Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, who said, “Every poet has trembled on the verge of science,” Iris Murdoch, *The Sea, The Sea*, and thriller writer, Lisa Scottoline, *After Anna*.

### J.K. Rowling, the *Harry Potter* series

“It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.”

J.K. Rowlings



Lastly, Noble Prize-winning Polish poet, Wislawa Szymborska, *View with a Grain of Sand*, who said, “I'm old-fashioned and think that reading books is the most glorious pastime that humankind has devised.”





## **DANCING WAVES**

**Waves dance along the shore  
In gossamer gowns  
Of emerald and blue  
Skirts swishing they flirt  
With seagulls and  
Adorn themselves with  
Seaweed necklaces  
Splashing crashing tidal rhythms  
Guide their capricious dances  
Whirling, twirling, appearing  
Disappearing with the changing tides**

**Lillian Rodich**

**June 2022**

# July Tankas



**Lantana Flowers**

**Lantana Flowers  
Buttons Red circling yellow  
Keep the bees busy  
Gathering golden nectar  
Soon there will be fresh honey.**

**Michael Edelstein**

## **Watercolor**

**The full moon's glass eye  
Stares down at me on my walk  
In its slow ascent  
Bleached white against a pale blue wash  
Floating on twilight pink clouds.**

**Michael Edelstein**



**Day Lilies**

**Yesterday's Green Pods  
Exploded in bright flowers  
Gold and purple stripes  
Painting slender white petals  
Tomorrow you will be gone.**

**Michael Edelstein**





# CWC-SFV INFORMATION

## EXECUTIVE BOARD OFFICERS

### President

Karen Gorback, Ph.D.

### Vice President and Zoom Host

Monte Swann

### Secretary

Elaine Mura

### Treasurer

Anat Golan

## BOARD CHAIRS AND DIRECTORS

### Central Board Representative

Bob Okowitz, Ph. D.

### Critique Group Coordinator and Membership Chair

Pat Avery

### Program Chair

Heather Bradshaw

### Editor of *The Valley Scribe*

Kathy Highcove

### Webmaster

Michael Rains

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The San Fernando Valley Branch is one of twenty-one branches throughout California, organized and operating under the auspices of The California Writers Club. We are a non-profit professional organization whose goal is to provide a friendly and inclusive environment for members to meet and network; to provide professional speakers who will aid in writing, publishing, and marketing members' endeavors; and other writing-related opportunities that will further members' writing enjoyment and careers.

In collaboration with the other branches and CWC as a whole, our purpose is to provide a forum for educating both members and the public in the craft of writing and in marketing their works. This is served by monthly public meetings, workshops, and seminars, as well as conferences, which are open to all writers and are conducted for the purpose of educating writers. California Writers Club networks with other groups and agencies involved in similar pursuits.

OUR WEBSITE: <https://cwc-sfv.org/>