



The Valley Scribe



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

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CRISTOBEL KENT SEARCHES FOR SIGNIFICANT SETTINGS

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome bestselling author Christobel Kent as the keynote speaker on Saturday, September 10 at 1:00 pm via Zoom, with a presentation titled: "Writing Setting: From Italy to Britain."

Christobel Kent was born in London in 1962 and educated at Cambridge. She has lived variously in Essex, London and Italy. Her childhood included several years spent living on a Thames sailing barge in Maldon, Essex, with her father, stepmother, three siblings and four step-siblings. She now lives in both Cambridge and Florence with her husband and five children.



Kent has had seventeen novels published: the first four being standalone thrillers set in Italy, followed by the six novels in the Sandro Cellini Florentine detective series. Since then she has written seven psychological thrillers roughly in the 'domestic noir' genre, including the Sunday Times bestseller *The Loving Husband*.

Kent will speak about her personal trajectory as a writer, and how she used a period living in Florence as her springboard to becoming an author. Her first nine books were set in Italy, principally Tuscany, her trademark being skillful immersion in Italian life. The books did reasonably well but her big breakthrough came when she finally turned her attention to her own country, something, she says she'd been putting off, for a mixture of superstition and prejudice that's fairly common among writers.

The first of these homegrown works, *The*

Crooked House, set in a part of the UK she grew up in, received critical acclaim and her second English novel, *The Loving Husband* became a Sunday Times bestseller and ended up selling 200,000 copies across the media.

Kent is very interested in how significant setting can be in a novel, how much fun it can be to engage with and

how many functions it can perform.

You can follow Christobel Kent on Instagram @christobelkentnovelist.

—Program Chair Heather Bradshaw

Note: 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 by noon on September 9 for a free Zoom invitation. Guests may purchase admission to this presentation at www.cwc-sfv.org. Click the button below the speaker article by noon on the day prior to the presentation to receive a Zoom link for the meeting. We cannot accommodate late requests.

For the first time, our speaker's talk will be recorded and made available to any member who missed the presentation or would like to hear it again.



Dear Members,

Welcome to September – the beginning of our 2022-23 program year. By now, I hope you have renewed your dues for \$45; because after September 30, the CWC requires your renewal fee be raised to \$65, as though you were a new member. Please refer to the Membership page in today's Scribe for directions on renewing your membership.

While some of the other CWC branches charge their members for meetings, the SFV branch has never gone down that path. But please renew your membership today and encourage a friend to join, so we can keep our meetings and programs free for all members.

We will continue meeting via Zoom through the end of the calendar year. Since my crystal ball is cloudy today, I do not yet know what 2023 will bring. Our hope is that Covid will become a distant memory and we'll be able to return to the MPTF and conduct meetings in a hybrid format – both in-person and via Zoom. Our new board member, MPTF liaison Phyllis Butcher will keep me apprised of the room situation as it develops, and I will keep you updated. At this time, the MPTF is not able to invite outside groups onto their campus.

Thanks to our amazing program chair Heather Bradshaw for securing international bestselling author Christobel Kent as our September speaker, with a presentation titled "Writing Setting: From Italy to Britain." I am really looking forward to this one. I have always loved the challenge of writing engaging settings, as though the setting were another character, and am eager to learn her approach.

Be sure to make a copy of the Speakers' Calendar in today's Scribe and stick it on the fridge, so you'll be ready for each new lecture through December!

As a special treat for our members, we're going to record Kent's September presentation and provide you with a link to watch it over and over, at your convenience. Thanks to Heather and our VP Monte Swann who will perform the technology magic to make this happen.

Thank you, again, to Monte Swann who will be enabling Closed Captioning for our September 10 meetings. The captions will appear as subtitles either at the bottom or top of your Zoom screen. We hope this will facilitate everyone's enjoyment of our meeting and presenter.

FYI: I recently received an email from another CWC branch that made their Zoom links open to the public; and unfortunately they were "Zoom bombed" with horrible obscenities. This is why we ask everyone to register in advance for our meetings when we send out the Zoom invitations.

We take the security of our meetings seriously and hope you do, too. If you know someone who wants to attend who is not a member of another CWC branch, refer them to our website at www.cwc-sfv.org to purchase admission. They will then receive their own Zoom link.

That concludes the business portion of my column! Your hard-working board is excited and ready for the new year! So, on September 10, pour yourself a tall, cool beverage and settle into a comfy chair near your computer for our first meeting of the year!

I'll see you soon in the Zoom room!

CWC-SFV President Karen Gorback, Ph. D.

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-San Fernando Valley, P.O. Box 564, Woodland Hills, CA 91367
 2. Use PayPal with your credit card at 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.
- Any questions or concerns? Email me at karen.gorback@gmail.com or call me at 805-300-2078. I look forward to hearing from you.



Whether you have been published or have always wanted to write, please join us for monthly Saturday meetings via Zoom to learn more about the craft and business of writing. The CWC-SFV will continue to meet via Zoom through the end of the 2022 calendar year. See www.cwc-sfv.org for membership information and single lecture admission prices. This series is free for CWC-SFV members. Guests may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org. CWC-SFV programs begin at 1pm.

CWC-SFV SPEAKERS FALL 2022



SEPTEMBER 10, 2022

Christobel Kent

“Writing Setting: From Italy to Britain” By sharing her own journey from her first book set in Italy to becoming a Sunday Times bestselling author, Christobel Kent explores the importance of setting in our stories. Follow Christobel on Instagram @christobelkentnovelist .



OCTOBER 1, 2022

Beverly Olevin

“Power of the Pen: Short Stories and Beyond”

Author, memoirist, playwright, and director, Beverly Olevin hopes to inspire you to craft your own tale by discussing what makes a short story great as well as how to bring a memoir to life.

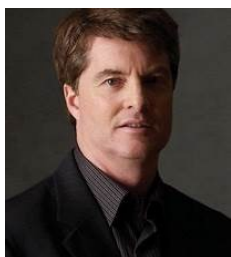
Visit www.beverlyolevin.com for more info.



NOVEMBER 5, 2022

Vincent Virom Coppola

“The Power of Myth in Storytelling” UCLA Professor and author, Vincent Virom Coppola will take us on a journey to the heart and soul of a story, however that story is told, whether on stage, screen, or on an iPad, and in that truly see the power of Myth.



DECEMBER 3, 2022

Dacre Stoker

“Stoker on Stoker: The Mysteries Behind the Research and Writing of Dracula”

Blow the dust off Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and read it again. Stoker’s great-grandnephew will share the story behind the story of the greatest vampire tale ever told. Visit www.dacrestoker.com for info.

Rules of the Road – Egyptian Edition

By Elaine L. Mura

Republished with the permission of *Splash Magazine*.



Cairo Traffic

cart, serenade of sirens as hapless ambulances scream for space – all the while turning three lane roadways into six or seven lanes as frantic pedestrians weave in and out trying to cross the street, taxis stop in the middle of the road letting out or taking in passengers, and voices are raised in Arabic curses. Let's not forget hand and finger gestures out of almost every window in an international language that doesn't need translation.

I always thought that Los Angeles won hands-down in the category of traffic congestion. That is, until I went to Egypt a few months ago. Move over, Los Angeles. You've got competition.

It really doesn't matter time of day or night, season of the year, weather, or any unexpected or catastrophic events. Without a doubt, Cairo's vehicles manage to congest bar none. Cairo is a sprawling city without any clear-cut way to get anywhere without a vehicle of some kind – again reminiscent of LA.

It's almost like a symphony to hit Cairo's thoroughfares. There's the constant toot-toot of horns, whine of motorbikes and tuk-tuks, roar of semis, screech of brakes, coughs of elderly cars and vans, squeaks of bike tires, belching smoke from ancient buses, clip-clop of horse and

But somehow, traffic moves – as Shakespeare would phrase it, "... in its petty pace." After an hour in sweltering heat trying to go from Point A to Point B, it occurred to me that there must be some unwritten rules that make it possible to finally arrive at any destination. Thus, I decided to discover the rule book for Egyptian drivers – and any foreigners who just happen to be looking for a quick route to madness.

Rules of the Road

Might makes right. There is a distinct advantage being bigger than the guys around you. Size and muscle determine who wins the weaving game, and I would hate to be on one of those wobbly bikes, motorcycles, or Vespas in this competition.

He who hesitates is lost. Unbridled nerve beats caution every time. The opening may only be six inches – but that's six inches to your benefit. Grab it!

There can only be one winner. If you want to be Number One, you've got to press every advantage. A sliver of sidewalk? An inch of shoulder? All are fair game for a true Type A competitor

Horns let others know that the driver is on the ball. Whether it's making a turn, forging forward, changing lanes, or scattering pedestrians, horns are meant to let everyone know your intentions. Use them! Constantly.

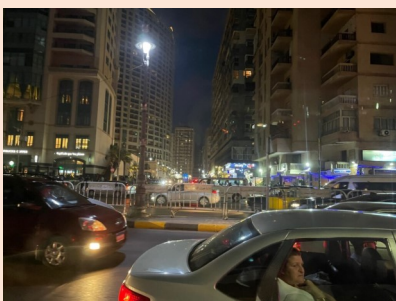
All those lines on the road are suggestions, not mandates. Don't be fooled by painted stripes on the street. They are simply there to give the Department of Transportation employees jobs to do. Kind of like an art project. If you approve of them, you can try to keep your vehicle inside a pair. But if you're in a hurry, it's okay to ignore them.



A typical traffic day – Photo by Elaine L. Mura



The mighty prevail— Photo by Elaine L. Mura



Night time traffic – Photo by Elaine L. Mura



That extra inch – Photo by Elaine L. Mura



Horns are everywhere—Photo by Elaine L. Mura



Pay attention to signs—Photo by Elaine L. Mura



Red regulates traffic – Photo by Elaine L. Mura



The Open Road – Photo by Elaine L. Mura



Big city traffic – Photo by Elaine L. Mura



Don't leave home without it - Photo by Elaine L. Mura

The same can be said of red lights, stop signs, and one-way signs. They're useful if they don't get in the way. On that note, it's also okay to use both sides of the road if there's stopped traffic on your side. Or at least to muscle yourself over a little if you need to. Don't forget that MIGHT MAKES RIGHT.

Speeding is acceptable if you happen to be lucky enough to find a road with open lanes. That would probably be way outside of any city/town/village. Just be careful that the road stays paved. You wouldn't want to get dust on your car.

Age is no limitation. Even though there are written laws about when Egyptians are allowed to drive, these are flexible. If the driver next to you looks about ten years old, he probably is. The only real limitation to driving is being too short to see out of the windshield or reach the pedals

Cell phones? These ubiquitous companions keep the driver informed and entertained. As such, it's reasonable to keep them in your hand at all times.

Try to keep loads on top of your vehicle from exceeding three times the height of the vehicle and make sure that the rope is tight. Otherwise, that precious cargo might fall onto another vehicle and get damaged.

What about those frequent daily calls to prayer? Try not to miss even one. You need all God's help you can get to survive the Egyptian roads.

These are just a few of the important rules that everyone on Egyptian highways and byways knows and follows. But never forget the Golden Rule ("Might makes Right"). A little knowledge can make all the difference.

Next month, in the October issue,
Elaine takes us to
Luxor - A Gem in the Temple Chain.



Furniture Delivery a la Cairo – Photo by Elaine L. Mura



Precious Cargo—Photo by Elaine L. Mura



A few inches more and it becomes a skyscraper—
Photo by Elaine L. Mura



The traffic never ends — Photo by Elaine L. Mura

Nickelodeon Launches Content Accelerator Program For Creatives To Pitch New Series

By Anat Golan-Wenick

Have you ever written a preschoolers or young kids' book and thought:

This story would make a great television series. Or, perhaps you've finished a pre-teens novel and mused: This plot would be a perfect fit for a Nickelodeon series.

Well, here's a chance to see your dreams come true! Right now, from August 8 to September 30, 2022, anyone can pitch their product to Nickelodeon at Nickelodeon Content Accelerator (Nickelodeon Content Accelerator (<https://nicknca.splashthat.com/>))

The show's producers are searching for scripts



with: Live Action, Big Kids Animation, and Pre-school /Upper Preschool story-lines.

You don't need to write an initial screenplay, just submit a written pitch in Word or PowerPoint format. Check out the above site for full details and description

and a sample pitch.

And here's the best part—it's FREE! **But remember to first register your work with the Library of Congress.**

Now's your chance to reach for the stars ... (the ones on Nickelodeon, that is).

Here's Another Way to Share Your Creative Work: A Podcast

CWC-SFV member, Anne Hansell, informs us:

"A podcast named Kaidankai featured my story, *Charles Stonebridge*, in its August 16th issue. The podcast was broadcast on an international level. I've been informed that the story was spoken aloud in the podcast, but would also be available in printed form for those who'd rather read than listen to the podcast."

Kaidankai is a weekly podcast of fiction—new episodes are read out loud on Wednesdays. The producer of this podcast, Linda Gould, looks for stories that are "... touching, scary, gruesome, funny and heartwarming."

Read the collection of weekly stories at:

<https://www.whiteenso.com/ghost-stories-2022>

Follow *Kaidankai: Ghost and Supernatural Stories* on Twitter: @GhostJapanese



Anne Hansell

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Contributed by Bob Isbill, CWC Vice-President



As the CWC VP and Director of Public Relations, I am writing to remind you of an upcoming opportunity to express your branch's appreciation for the contributions of other cultures in literature. The Internet tells us:

Every year from September 15 to October 15, Americans celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month by appreciating the community's history, heritage, and contributions of the ancestors of American citizens who came from

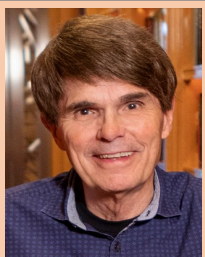
Mexico, Spain, the Caribbean, and South- and Central America.

Hispanic Heritage Month originally started with one week of commemoration when it was first introduced by Congressman George E. Brown in June 1968. With the civil rights movement, the need to recognize the contributions of the Latin community gained traction in the 1960s. Awareness of the multicultural groups living in the United States was also gradually growing.

Two heavily Latinx and Hispanic populated areas, the San Gabriel Valley and East Los Angeles, were represented by Brown. His aim was to recognize the integral roles of these communities in American history. Observation of Hispanic Heritage Week started in 1968 under President Lyndon B. Johnson and was later extended to a 30-day celebration by President Ronald Reagan, starting on September 15 and ending on October 15. It was enacted into law via approval of Public Law 100-402 on August 17, 1988.

September 15 is set as the starting date for the month as it is important for many reasons. It is the independence anniversary for Latin American countries El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Honduras. From here onwards, the independence days of Mexico and Chile fall on September 16 and September 18, respectively. Dia de la Raza or Columbus Day also falls within this month, on October 12.

Hispanic Americans have been integral to the prosperity of the U.S. Their contributions to the nation are immeasurable, and they embody the best of American values. The Hispanic-American community has left an indelible mark on the U.S. culture and economy.



IT'S NOT TOO LATE! YOU CAN STILL HEAR HIS TALK

If you missed the CWC-High Desert July 26, 2022 presentation by best-selling author Dean Koontz, you can still see his tips for mystery writers.

Go to: [A Conversation with Dean Koontz - July Act 2 Meeting - YouTube](#)

Here's why many CWC members filled the Zoom gallery that afternoon: Dean Ray Koontz is an American author. His novels are billed as suspense thrillers, but frequently incorporate elements of horror, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and satire. Many of his books have appeared on The New York Times Best Seller list, with fourteen hardcovers and sixteen paperbacks reaching the number-one position. Koontz wrote under a number of pen names earlier in his career, including "David Axton", "Deanna Dwyer", "K.R. Dwyer", "Leigh Nichols" and "Brian Coffey". He has published over 105 novels and a number of novellas and collections of short stories, and has sold over 450 million copies of his work.

Source—[Dean Koontz - Wikipedia](#)

Valley Song Review – Can Dreams Come

Republished with the permission of *Splash Magazine*.

By Elaine L. Mura



Michael A. Shepperd and Belle Guillory in VALLEY SONG
Photo by Kayte Deioma

A renowned South African playwright, novelist, actor, and director, Athol Fugard is considered by many to be South Africa's premiere writer. Born in 1932, Fugard has a long string of awards, including the Obie in 1971, Tony Awards in 1975 and 2011, and the New York Drama Critics Awards in 1981 and 1988. He also received an Oscar for best foreign language film in 2005, a movie based on his novel "Tsotsi." His political views were considered radical and frowned upon by the South African government. So much so, in fact, that his passport was confiscated in 1967. For several years, Fugard lived in the U.S. – but returned permanently to South Africa, where he currently resides, in 2012.

Fugard is best known for his political and penetrating plays targeting apartheid (separateness), the South African government policy institutionalizing racism

through the Population Registration Act (1950), where every South African was mandated to register his race at birth; the Group Areas Act (1950), in which geographic areas designated where different races might live; 96 percent of the country was designated white; and the Bantu Education Act (1953), in which all non-whites were mandated to attend only government-run schools designed to develop docile, obedient coloreds, Indians, and Bantus.

VALLEY SONG is the first play Fugard wrote after apartheid ended. The play premiered in Johannesburg in 1995, with Fugard playing both the white narrator (author) and the colored farmer (Abram Jonkers aka Buk). Set in Karoo, a semi-arid region of South Africa, the play digs into the relationship between Buk and his 17-year-old granddaughter Veronica – contrasting the differences between youth and age, dreams and tradition, and just how hard it is to make changes after a lifetime of doing things just one way.

Buk (Michael A. Shepperd) has been raising Veronica (Belle Guillory) since she was a new-born after his daughter Caroline died in childbirth. Now Veronica is a teenager gifted with a lovely voice who wants only one thing – to leave the small dusty village where she was raised on Buk's meager pumpkin farm and seek fame and fortune in the big city. Apartheid has just ended, and she is sure that everything will be different. Buk, however, is not convinced and cannot bear the thought of his only family leaving him – just like Caroline left years before. Then the pot is further stirred when a well-to-do white man (author/Michael A. Shepperd) stops in the village because he's thinking of buying Buk's small holding – which, of course, in times past would mean that the village would be designated white and all non-whites would be forced to relocate. But that is the past – where Buk seems to be stuck – even though Veronica, with the passionate optimism of youth, tries to assure him that change is in the wind.



Michael A. Shepperd – Photo by Kayte Deioma



Michael A. Shepperd and Belle Guillory –
Photo by Kayte Deioma

VALLEY SONG is an intellectual topic seen through the eyes of non-intellectual people whose emotions struggle to be heard. This is a historical and political piece – and also the story of a family being torn apart by the need to grow and change. A family we can all recognize, regardless of where they live.

VALLEY SONG runs through September 11, 2022, with performances at 8 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. The International City Theatre is located in the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, 330 East Seaside Way, Long Beach, CA 90802. Tickets range from \$49 to \$52. For information and reservations, call 562-436-4610 or go [online](#).

MY MOTHER, POET LENORA SMALLEY

CWC-SFV President 2003-2005

By Robert Smalley

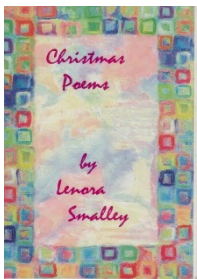
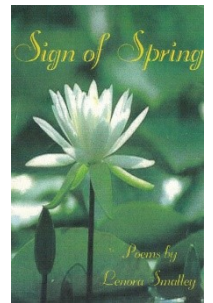


Lenora Smalley was born Hester Lenora Griner on July 20, 1927, in Thomasville, Georgia. Among her many interests and accomplishments, she was a pianist, a wife, and mother of four children, a teacher, a poet, and a student of biblical archeology.

Lennie began learning piano at an early age. By the time she was in high school she was playing classical pieces in recitals and public performances. She attended her first year of college in 1945 at John B. Stetson University in Deland, Florida and then transferred to Mercer University in Macon, Georgia where she graduated in 1949 with a bachelor's degree in English. Throughout the time she was in college she continued to play the piano and was a member of the Chi Omega social sorority, the Ciceronian Literary Society, and was "Outstanding" in the Baptist Student Union. She met her future husband, Allison Kent Smalley, in a class they both had in American Literature, which

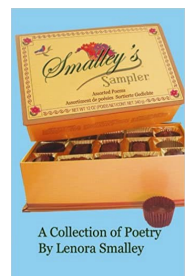
was coincidentally taught by Kent's father, professor W.T. Smalley. Kent and Lennie both graduated in 1949 and were married on October 1, 1949.

Lennie gave birth to their first child, Donald Allison Smalley on June 18, 1950, and their second child, Karen Lenora Smalley on February 29, 1952, both in Macon, Georgia. Immediately following the birth of Karen, the family moved to Columbus, Ohio where Kent had started a new job as a chemist in the ceramics division of Battelle Memorial Institute. Her third and fourth children were both born in Columbus, Ohio. Charles Kent Smalley was born February 16, 1957, and Robert Adrian Smalley on October 18, 1958.



In June of 1963, the family moved again, this time to Canoga Park, California, an area later renamed West Hills. In 1964, with four kids in school now, she went back to school to get her teaching credential at what was then Valley State College and is now California State University at Northridge. With her teaching credential in-hand she was offered a position with the Simi Valley School District. On September 1, 1969, she began a 24-year career at Justin Elementary School in Simi Valley where she taught 3rd, 4th and 5th grade at various times.

After she retired in 1993, Lennie became more and more involved with her church and traveled with a church group to Israel, Egypt, Italy and Ireland. She studied biblical archeology with a focus on the Dead Sea Scrolls. She received her Master of Arts in Religion in May of 1997 and her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theological Studies in 2000.



Lennie was also active in the California Writers Club - San Fernando Valley Chapter. She received several "Outstanding Service Awards" and was Chapter President from 2003 – 2005. She wrote poetry extensively and had many of her poems printed in booklets. Among the booklets are *Poems Inspired by the Passion Play*, *Sign of Spring*, *Christmas Poems*, *On the Mark*, and *Smalley's Sampler*. In 2006 the Chapter presented her with a Certificate of Merit for her poem, *On a Day Like Today*.

Lenora Smalley passed away peacefully and in good spirits on June 8, 2022, about six weeks before her 95th birthday. She had an amazing, productive, and full life. She will be loved, remembered, and missed by her multitude of friends.

We honor the memory Of Lenora Smalley

September Silence

**Sunlight dapples leaves
on a sycamore tree outside my study.**

**Leaves still full and green give
shade and solace for a white butterfly**

**I watch from the window as it flits
in ecstatic zig-zags along its path,
to me a wistful sign of summer's end.**

Before cold nights crackle their brazen

**leaves green and friendly
wave and flutter in a gentle breeze,**

**like silent wind chimes
they celebrate today-
not a smell of coming winter,
not a sound of tomorrow.**

Lenora Smalley 2009

I was sorry to hear of Lenora's passing. She was a longtime CWC-SFV member and had a strong presence in our club—serving as a board member some years and as president during 2003-2005.

What I remember most about Lenora is that she was such a gentle and generous soul. Her specialty was writing poetry. In fact, she produced a booklet with a collection of her poems.

She found inspiration for her poetry all around her, but especially, it was the beauty of nature that spoke to her.

—Yolanda Fintor

Lenora was a humble person and a great humanitarian. She worked behind-the-scenes to resurrect the San Fernando Valley Chapter of the CWC, spending several hundred dollars of her own money for our first meeting place. Lenora was a silent angel for many projects and made every room brighter that she entered. She had a big heart that she shared with everyone lucky enough to know her.

Poetry was her passion for which she was highly applauded. We will miss Lenora greatly as she continues in her role as angel, but now among the angels in heaven.

—Ethel Ann Shaffer
Former CWC-SFV President

Autumn Trees

**Autumn trees lining streets,
tawny-haired colonnades on each side,
shower shade and summer secrets,
leafing sidewalks yellow-brown.
Burnished arches overhead
they shed rusty coats, peeling to skin,
bare themselves in winter wind;
dance with abandon, stretch, twist
feeling strength deep down in roots.
When air is still in chill of winter,
chagrined they surrender with uplifted arms,
subletting to silent, scrawny lions,
gray sphinxes stoned in rows
standing guard till warmth of spring--
till bouffant shade and summer secrets
touch heads above the streets again.**

Lenora Smalley 2009

Lenora often shared her work with her writers club.



Sugar Cookie Moon

Half moon, overhead at noon

overlooked in the daytime sky

Smudged stencil, sponged white

eyes cast down chagrined

at being seen in bright daylight

for the laughing sun had bitten you

and left half a sugar cookie

on a blue translucent plate.

Thin, white bite-bitten moon,

I empathize since in the mornings

as of late I feel the sun has taken a bite out of me

and I am half of what I was yesterday.

Lenora Smalley 2008

Metal Magnolia

bright,

remote molded magnolia

bowl made of metal

or a cup,

each petal turned up cold

fingertips,

spray-painted smooth enameled

white.

Lenora Smalley 1998

The poem, Sugar Cookie Moon, is reprinted from Lenora's book: *Smalley Sampler*, copyright 2008.

I knew Lenora when we were both in the same critique group, some time ago. I remember that she often contributed poetry that had "moon" themes.

A serious poet, who attended many conferences and workshops, I also recall that Lenora was a warm and friendly person.

—Lillian Rodich

It was my pleasure to find Lenora Smalley's poems in the CWC's anthology, *Voices from the Valley*, 1998. It is a gift to re-read her poignant poems, visual and succinct, and be reminded of the times spent with both Virginia Hutchinson and Lenora in the workshop conducted by Michael Collings, Pepperdine University professor, at the Border's Thousand Oaks location and other poetry venues. Virginia and I were CWC-SFV founding members, along with our special friends, Yolanda Fintor, Mary Freeman and Judy Presnall. Virginia and I attended Collings' workshops and later Lenora joined us.

The 1980s-1990's, with bookstores dotting the landscape, venues for poetry workshops and readings, along with the CWC-SFV meetings/critique groups, contributed to our poet/writer friendships and creative development.

Thanks to your request to check if I had any of Lenora's poems, my search became a return visit to joyful memories.

—Carla Bollinger
CWC-SFV founding member

THE HEARTS AND SOULS OF MONSTERS, VILLAINS AND CLOWNS

By Phyllis M. Butcher
MPTF Outreach Chair



The Grey Quill Society is a writers' workshop for a dedicated group of residents on the Motion Picture and Television Fund campus. They usually convene every Thursday to offer up their contributions of fiction, poetry, memoir, essay, and life stories. They critique their colleagues' works and share laughs and tears and high fives.

I picked up a copy of one of their published anthologies, and when I scanned the Table of Contents I noticed an entry by a well-known comedy entertainer, one of my lifetime favorites. He had me laughing when I was still in high school and continued to do so throughout his long career. I couldn't wait to read his work, assuming it would be hilarious. I was mistaken. The contribution he brought to the table was a letter he had written many years before to his terminally ill child. It was a beautiful, poignant, remarkable testament of love, support and understanding. I found myself stifling sobs, not guffaws. How presumptuous it was for me to have assumed that someone could not step away from his laugh-a-minute profile and submit to his profound grief, and then express it so eloquently. We just never knew.

Finding out that one's perception of people is not necessarily accurate or all-conclusive is sometimes surprising or even shocking, but always interesting. As impressionable young children, it is understandable how characters in movies and television can impact them to the extent that they assume the on-screen personae translates to those people in real life. By way of a personal example, at about the age of six or seven I saw the classic movie, "Frankenstein". Loved the movie, but the actor who played him so realistically continued to terrify me in his many subsequent films, even in his "non-monster" roles. This led me to believe, therefore, that in real life Mr. Boris Karloff truly was this stern, spooky-voiced, unsmiling human being.

I had the same problem with another great actor, Vincent Price, who was best known for his work in the horror genre. His mellifluous voice, like drizzled honey, could send chills up your spine, even if he were reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. How then could I not assume that this was an inherently evil man who went home every night and terrorized his wife and children and the family dog?

If all of this were true, at the opposite end of the spectrum, it would make sense that all of those fabulous comedy entertainers who left us laughing hysterically--the comedians, the stand-up comics, the clowns--in everyday life could not possibly be any way different: always "on", whenever or wherever. So how, for example, could a Red Skelton possibly sidestep his buffoonery to chase other dreams?

All of the above said, imagine one's surprise to discover what lay hidden behind the outward masquerade of these monsters, villains and clowns. Picture, if you will, Boris Karloff who, beginning in 1940, every Christmas dressed as Father Christmas and handed out presents to hospitalized physically disabled children. And would you believe that beneath those scary bushy eyebrows there was always a twinkle in his eyes when he hosted his own weekly children's radio show, playing music and sharing stories and riddles? We just never knew

And who would have thought that the villainous Vincent Price was a noted art lover and collector? Or that whenever possible he used that compelling voice of his to openly denounce racial and religious prejudice as a form of poison? We just never knew.

As for Red Skelton--a.k.a. Clem Kadiddlehopper a.k.a. Freddie the Freeloader a.k.a. Willie Lump--Red's hobby of painting clowns took a different turn when his wife persuaded him to have a showing at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. Long story short, at the time of his death his art dealer believed that Skelton had earned more money through his paintings than from his years of television work. We just never knew.

But now we know.



[Free Images Of Frankenstein png images](#), [Free ClipArts on Clipart Library \(clipart-library.com\)](#)
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TWILIGHT MEETING

branches

tall network of dark wires

pressed into a fading sky

birds

flutter in V's

like a waving hand

change direction

then scatter onto twigs

and become black lace

bordering the sunset

Lillian Rodich

I knew taking my aging mom to the baseball game instead of my dad wasn't a good idea. She liked to kvetch. He was the quiet one who was home recovering from a diverticulitis attack caused by eating too much popcorn.

Earlier in the day she had complained for the umpteenth time, "You never take me to the game."

That wasn't exactly true, but it had been some time.

"Okay, I'll take you to the game soon."

"Soon, smoon. You're taking me tonight, Boobalah, and that's that.

I'll get ready. What time does the game start?"

I reluctantly gave in. "Uh, seven o'clock."

Even though my dad Jacob was in pain, she stridently said to him, "Sidney, take me to the beauty parlor!"

I suddenly began experiencing anxiety-generated stomach cramps. Not only did Mom complain a lot, but she never stopped talking about her dislike for this person and that person. She could be the sweetest person in the world, but she held grudges.

Mom, as it so happened, was well-behaved a good portion of the game. Other than asking questions about a rule or two, there was hardly a peep from her.

During the seventh-inning stretch, we sang *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*, along with 54,000 other fans at Dodger Stadium. We swayed back and forth, our arms around each other's shoulders, just like we used to do years ago.

And then the real mom appeared.

After sitting down, she looked at her watch, turned to me and said, "I want to go home." Just like that, out of the blue, and I don't mean Dodger Blue.

"Home? "It's a great game," I insisted.

"Not so great," she said with a grimace.

"Do you have something better to do?"

"Maybe. Maybe not," Mom said coyly

"Stop playing games, Mom. This is the Dodgers versus the Giants.

The division is on the line, so we're not going anywhere. Besides, these



tickets cost a lot of money. Sit back and enjoy the show."

That didn't go over so well. Mom frowned like I'd never seen her frown before.

Up until her ultimatum, she seemed so peaceful and content. Why couldn't she have stayed that way?

"Mom," I said pleadingly, "Everyone is having a great time."

"Everyone except your poor old mom." What was I thinking when I gave in to her

demand to attend the game?

"Listen, Mom, I didn't buy these expensive season tickets just to leave in the middle of an important game," I reiterated.

"We've been here three hours and there hasn't been one fight with any umpire and no one has been tossed out of the game. This isn't the baseball I remember. I've had it. Take me home!"

"Mom, you can kvetch all that you want to do, but we're staying until the end of the game. I'm a loyal Dodger fan."

"You can be whatever you want. Just know that I'm very unhappy. After all I do for you, this is how you treat me? Think I'll do something nice for you anytime soon? You can whistle Dixie."

"Mom, they don't use real umpires anymore. It's all artificial intelligence. That's why there aren't any confrontations with umpires. There aren't any."

"Oh, I thought something was missing," she said.

"The digital strike zones have been used for years. If a batter or manager disagrees with a call, there's no ump to argue with."

"With their tails between their legs," Mom said with vitriol. "They took all the fun out of the game. The excitement is gone. What's a baseball game without a heave-ho, a face-to-face heated exchange?"

"Is that the only reason you came to the game, to see a bruhaha?"

"No, that's not the only reason. I wanted to see both benches empty and the players go at it. A good fight is always exciting."

“That doesn’t happen anymore, Mom. These guys make millions of dollars a year and don’t want to get hurt.”

“And the loud music they play, the constant promotions, and less I forget, the Kiss Cam. Disgusting. It’s as if the game itself isn’t enough! What crap. You can have it. I bet the players don’t even spit anymore.”

I stared at her. I didn’t know what to say.

“I’ll be back in a few minutes,” she said grumpily. “I need to use the ladies’ room. Would you like anything? Maybe another hot dog? But perhaps that wouldn’t be such a good idea, come to think of it. The buns are soggy and the hot dogs are rubbery and they give you indigestion. Maybe they should serve the Hebrew National brand. How about a chocolate malt?”

“That sounds good. Thanks, Mom. Don’t be long.”

“I won’t. See you soon,” she said.

Twenty minutes went by. Her “soon” began to feel like an eternity. Worried that something had happened to her, I approached a woman stadium employee at the top of the section.

“Hi. Would you do me a big favor? I asked.

“What is it?”

“I think my mom became lost in the restroom. She’s been gone for a long time. Can you check in on her to make sure she’s OK? She’s quite short, less than five feet, with gray hair, and her name is Rachel.”

“Did you try calling her on her cell phone?”

“She doesn’t believe in cell phones.”

“OK, no problem. Happy to go see if she’s in there.”

While waiting, I heard a commotion that seemed close by, which I dismissed as a donnybrook between beer-inebriated fans. I thought nothing more of it because I had more important things on my mind.

A few minutes later, the employee emerged and said, “I’m sorry. I couldn’t find anyone who matched your mom’s description. I called out

And now I was really concerned. So this time I went up to an LAPD officer and asked for his help. A light bulb went on in his head.

“Come to think of it, I did see someone who coulda been your mom,” he said. “She was carefully putting stuff on her hot dog. Seemed like it took her forever. And she was also talking to an elderly couple non-stop. Boy, did that lady have the gift for gab.”

If this was my mom, I wondered if she knew the couple, but it was like her to begin kibbitzing with everyone.

“Did you manage to see where she went?” I asked.

“Afraid not. There was a big crowd at the stand.”

“Maybe she’s waiting for me at my car—just to teach me a lesson.”

The cop had another theory: “More like she went for a long walk, thinking that’s what people do during the seventh-inning stretch.”

“No, I seriously doubt that. Mom’s not an exerciser.”

“Tell you what. I’ll alert everyone in security that we may have a missing person. We’ll check every corner of the stadium. I’m sure we’ll find her. Just relax, sir. Everything will turn out all right.”

“Thanks, officer. In the meantime, I’ll go check to see if she returned to her seat. I wouldn’t be surprised if she pulled something like that.”

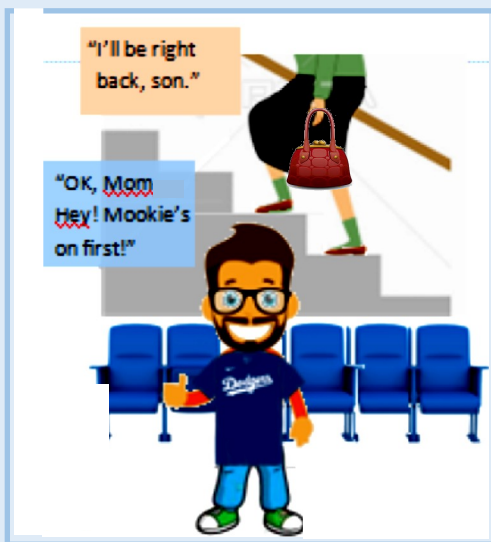
“Now, now, sir, be kind, be nice. She’s your mother.”

“You don’t know her. Anyway, I’ll wave up to you if she’s there.”

A minute or two later, I looked up at the waiting officer and shook my head. Then I joined the cop and he said, “Maybe it would help if you took an active role in the search. Come with me—we’ll hop in my patrol car and we’ll look around the parking lot.”

Two hours later, there was still no sign of Mom. The LAPD had checked everywhere, including the dugouts and locker rooms, just in case she had managed to sneak in there, hallways, staircases and the team store.

“Go home. Get some rest,” the cop advised me. “We’ll find her. I bet that by the time you get home we’ll know where she is.”



During the long, lonely drive home, all I thought about was how I would forever be known as the son who lost his mother at the Dodger game. I'd be reminded by everyone about my dereliction of duty. Rabbi Raskin would throw a fit and tell me not to attend services again.

My dad would never forgive me, or maybe he would if they found her in a few days and he enjoyed the break. It was late at night when I knocked on my parents' front door.

"Hello, Jeff. Where's Mom?" he asked me with a gleam in his eye, seemingly not at all concerned about her whereabouts.

"She's lost. It's on the news," I told him frantically. "We searched everywhere and couldn't find her. Maybe we'll never see her again!"

"Now, now, son," he consoled me. "Everything will be all right."

"How do you know that?"

"I just know."

"I'm a bad son."

He put his arm around me.

"You shouldn't say that. By the way, the Dodgers won."

"Yeah, I missed the action."

"Listen, son, I just called the TV stations to let them know it's not true."

"What's not true?" I asked him.

"That your mom's missing. She came home a few hours ago."

"How'd she get home?"

"She met up with the Katzes during the seventh-inning stretch.

Irma was bored too, just like your mom. Larry wanted to stay, but he



had no choice but to take everyone home, unless he wanted to hear it from Irma for days afterward."

"And she didn't tell me she was leaving?"

I wanted to go into her bedroom to confront her but that's when she walked into the living room wearing her pajamas and bathrobe.

"So nice of you to stop by Boobalah. I was just getting ready to call you."

"How could you have done that to me?"

Ditch me like that? I thought something terrible happened to you!"

"Well, the game was boring as I made very clear to you ... but also, I didn't want to miss *Cooking in the Kitchen with David* on QVC. I forgot my favorite show would be on tonight."

"What?" You must be joking. I was going out of my mind looking for you. Why didn't the Katzes let you use one of their cell phones?"

"I'm sorry, son, but I was really upset with you. However, on the

positive side, I ordered a nice ten-pound pot roast from David. It should be arriving in a few days. Great price. We can all enjoy it for Yom Kippur."

Even though I was boiling, with the holidays approaching, I found forgiveness in my heart. After all, she was in her eighties.

"Sounds good, Mom."

"By the way, I ended up having a better time at the game than I expected: I got into a

good fight with some one who tried to cut into the food line."

"That's nice. God bless you."

"And, by the way, I'm free for the game next Saturday night."



Let's Be Frank about Baseball



[Funny Baseball Quotes - Quotabulary](#)

"A baseball park is the one place where a man's wife doesn't mind his getting excited over somebody else's curves." ~ *Brendan Francis*

"Things could be worse. Suppose your errors were counted and published every day, like those of a baseball player." ~ *Author Unknown*

"Baseball is reassuring. It makes me feel as if the world is not going to blow up." ~ *Sharon Olds (American Poet)*

Seven Tankas by Michael Edelstein

Leaf Blower Bedlam

Leaf blower bedlam
Annoying sound intrusion
Blow the leaves away
Now they're the neighbors' problem
Tomorrow they will be back.

Autumn Gibbous Moon

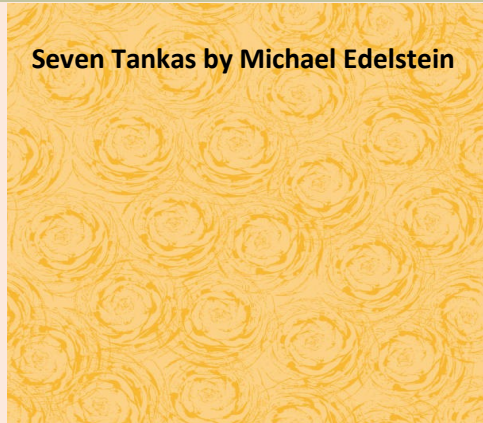
Autumn gibbous moon
Slit in the night sky's fabric
Fingernail paring
Soon you will be a full smile
Pleased with your nighttime presence.

A Cool Breeze

A cool breeze is here
Autumn has suddenly come
My shoulder joints ache
The air has become chilly
Summer's blaze is memory.

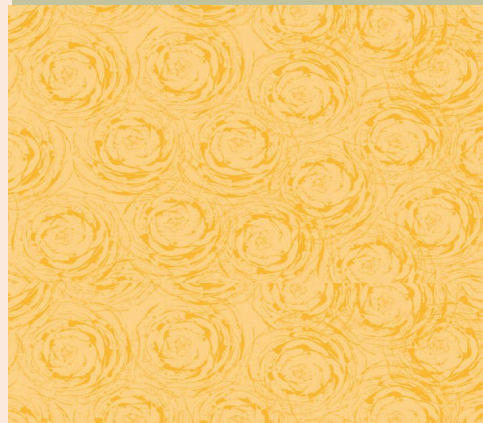
A Gray Leaf

I saw a gray leaf
Curled on its side stem outstretched
I thought, poor dead mouse
This switch from summer to fall
Brings me lots of surprises



Artist: Leonid Afremov. (Belarusian painter, was born in Vitebsk in 1955-2019)

Source: [Dina MasaPeintures](https://www.dinamasa.com/)



An Extended Drought

An extended drought
Water is a scarce resource
Why build more houses
More votes for politicians
'Til overcrowding sets in

The Cool Air

It's quite a relief
The oven's turned off for now
Low clouds have chilled us
The cool air is delightful
I should be wearing a sweater

Virtues of Watering

Birch trees drop their leaves
Lawns are bald as is my head
How shabby they look
I did not appreciate
The virtues of watering.

SOON WINTER

solitude
motionless and alive
with barely perceptible pulse
wind chimes metallic notes
in distant corridors

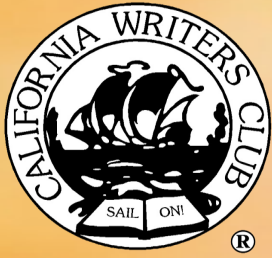
dried leaves drift away
from barren branches
like old dance cards lost
with a flutter
in a deserted ballroom

September's chilled dawn
awakens memories
of Summer's golden embrace
and dance of joy

dreams remain in crystal frames
while first chill winds
ripple sands and tease surf

September evening
scarf of stars thrown
across a charcoal sky
while in deserted corners
distant chimes announce
Winter's shadow near

Lillian Rodich



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