



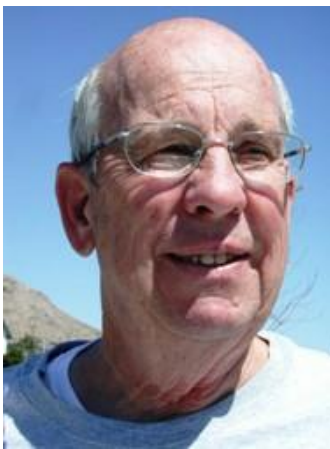
# INKSLINGER

HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC

SAIL ON

Vol 25, No. 11,

The California Writer's Club (CWC) shall foster professionalism in writing, promote networking of writers with the writing community, mentor new writers, and provide the literary support for writers and the writing community as is appropriate through education and leadership



The  
President's  
**P O V**  
Bob Isbill

## THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN A STORY

Blake Snyder, author of "Save The Cat: The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need", said that a good logline must have irony. A logline is movie talk for (usually) a one-liner that describes what your movie is about.

That's good advice, but where do we find irony?

Real life. It's all around us. We just have to train our scouting senses to recognize it when we see it or hear it, and be aware that it's a great ingredient for a story.

Remember when the Washington, DC intern, Chandra Levy, was killed while jogging in 2002? She was implicated in an affair with a married California Congressman, Gary Condit, who became the number one murder suspect. It was in the newspapers every day and we thought it would never stop being on the evening TV news.

There was a Grand Jury probe, and Chandra's heartbroken father testified during those hearings. I'm not privy to what was said there, but it was no secret that Robert Levy despised Condit.

The affair was pretty much factual and very much publicized.

I suppose that the calamity tore at that father's emotions so much that all his belief system would allow was to focus on Gary Condit and the retribution Levy would get when justice was doled out to his daughter's murderer.

But something went wrong with that thinking, and Condit was never tried or held for Chandra's killing. Eight years went by and now a 29-year old man was tried for Chandra Levy's slaying, and is suspected of attacking other women in that park.

The quirk of fate is that Robert Levy has now admitted that he tried to steer the Grand Jury away from the idea that someone else could have done it, and that he attempted to make Gary Condit look worse.

The irony begs the question: "How much did that loving man delay justice for his murdered daughter by down-playing the suspicion that it could have been someone else?"

Gary Condit, the prosecution is convinced, had nothing to do with her killing, and Chandra's father is in agreement.

The account of Robert Levy's deception, told recently in the newspapers, was buried in the midsection among other mundane tales. Almost a decade later, in November of 2010, closer to page one was the story of the conviction of the real killer.

Dramatic irony is not always obvious. Strange situations exist all around us. We, as writers, need to be looking for interesting incongruities that make our stories real and give them heart.

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## **MEMBERS GENERATE HOLIDAY MEETING**

By Fran Savage

Saturday December 11, 2010 the High Desert California Writers Club enjoyed hearing our own members read from stories and poems printed in our upcoming *Howling At The Moon* Anthology.

Mary Thompson, HDCWC Board member and Critique co-chairman read a couple of her poems.

Holly LaPat who warned us not to think of our first book as our only book. She also suggested that we plot the first book before we begin, and tone our muscles by writing.

Curt James was scheduled to read *A Different Kind of Magic*, but he was ill and could not attend the meeting. We missed him as well as the sound system he always brings with him so we in the back corner can hear.

George Gracyk, editor of our Anthology read "Bitter Lemon", one of his short stories.

Linda Bowden offered a poem "Partying With Nina" based on a true story.

Marilyn Ramirez is our club's historian, and she read "The Letter".

Naomi Ward is the Secretary of our club, and Editor of the monthly *Inkslinger*. Naomi read "The Organist".

A good idea to promote our own writers. Thank you all.

### **NORM GOYER – THE QUERY LETTER**

By Fran Savage

Listening to Norm Goyer speak about writing makes one want to hurry home to finish that novel, to write a successful magazine article or simply write a query letter. "The query letter is the most important part of writing," he said. He is still a successful writer, earning his living writing for various publications.

Norm spoke at HDCWC October 9 of this year, and it was a pleasure listening to a member of our club speak with such authority. He told of the time he worked at CBS. The military services needed money, so they agreed to have announcers join them on a 'World Record- Setting' trip. He took his camera with night time lens, but he was bumped from the trip.



Not to sit around waiting for further instructions he hurried to an area where he could get additional footage of the takeoff. He was in a good position when the plane crashed. The area was surrounded by a sea of fire. He took pictures of everything. He broke into a nearby farm house and phoned CBS. He told them, "I've got something very valuable. This is Norm Goyer, and I'm a stringer standing at the scene of an aviation accident." He asked if they were willing to pay him for the information and pictures. They said "yes", and they sent an airplane to pick up his film. Right on the spot, at the right time, and he gave them what they wanted. He dictated the story over the phone from beginning to end. "That story and pictures went around the world and I made enough to pay for a house and everything else." And it changed his life.

Times have changed, but editors still want to know what you can do for them. "Ten years ago everybody wanted letters a special way: One page, 20 lb. stock, Times Roman, 12 point. Certain paragraphs a certain way. Time accelerated to now. Editors don't have the time, and a one page e-mail is perfect. In the subject line, write "Query 'Upside down no fuel' 1700 words."

"In the body of the e-mail write what your article is about, the title of your story, the number of words, and 'I can have this article for you in thirty days, fifteen days, etc.' At the bottom list your accomplishments, your writing experience - no junk- to and document everything. Never add an attachment to an e-mail, worms are usually in attachments. Make sure your information is 100% accurate. They won't give you a second chance." He continued to advise us "get experience any way you can. You've got to start someplace."

"Make sure you have the right name and e-mail for submissions. Never write 'to whom it may concern. No 'Hi Bill.' Make sure the address is correct. Don't broadcast a query letter; never send out three or four query letters at a time. Nothing could be worse than to have an article appear in more than one magazine at the same time."

Norm continued by giving us hints in writing: "Every category has different rules. Novels should be completed before you send it out. A fictional novel should consist of 80,000 to 100,000 words. Getting it published is almost impossible without an agent. Get an agent who specializes in what your novel is about."

He specializes in World War II aircraft, but writes about other aircraft because that is where he makes his money. One magazine called him on Friday and said they needed an article about balloons by Monday. He knew nothing about

balloons so he went to his computer, did the research, copied and pasted, and sent the article in on schedule. "Everything you need to know is at your fingertips on your computer, and they are up-to-date. Manuals are out of date."

He continued, "E-mail is different than a formal letter. No letterhead. Don't make your e-mail address ridiculous. Change your e-mail to make sense and be professional, and have one for Query Letters only. And get your own web site." His is [www.normgoyer.com](http://www.normgoyer.com).

Thanks Norm for sharing your knowledge with us.

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## **PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS FOR JANUARY 8, 2011**

Special featured speaker to start the new year... is Roy Rogers' goddaughter, **Lucinda Sue Crosby**, an award-winning journalist as well as a published and recorded Nashville songwriter! She's also co-written four tele-films. Her first novel Francesa of Lost Nation – a Hollywood Book Festival Honorable Mention for General Fiction – was released in 2010, and is now available online and at book signing events.

### **BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!**

Our Guest Speaker for February, **Gerald A. Schiller**, is the author of nine books and more than a hundred articles, short stories, reviews and poems. Born in Philadelphia and educated at both Temple University and UCLA, he has taught classes in English, Cinema and Creative Writing. He wrote and directed educational, documentary, and promotional films for many years, including the award-winning documentaries: CHAPLIN – A CHARACTER IS BORN and KEATON: THE GREAT STONE FACE.

He is profiled in *Who's Who in America*.

### **FOOD, FOOD AND MORE FOOD**

I grew up in a family of eaters. Scratch that. I grew up with food. Some of my family ate anything in sight, one ate like a bird and one, well, she was the picky eater of the family. But she ate her fair share when it was something she liked! I can walk you through every notable event in my life to date using only the subject of food to mark the occasion.

There were the traditional holidays where if "PLENTY" was the rule of thumb in most houses, "EXCESS" was the rule in ours. Thanksgiving tables at our house struggled to remain upright

under the weight of a whole roasted turkey and a baked ham, candied yams, mashed potatoes, dressing – soft from the turkey or crunchy from the casserole dish --- succotash, green bean casserole, scalloped oysters, giblet gravy, cranberry relish, rolls and butter and, then... apple pie, pumpkin pie and mincemeat pie with hard sauce. All for a family of five! To this day I can still remember the rich buttery smell of roasting turkey overlaid with the spicy, cinnamon goodness of the apple and pumpkin pies cooling on the counter.

Every Sunday after church the whole family sat down to dinner. It was about the only time all five of us were together since my dad worked away from home during the week. Winter Sundays there would be roast beef, ham or fried chicken, multiple veggies, breads and, of course, dessert. My father was of the old school: no meal was complete without dessert. And, no, fruit or Jell-O do not count as dessert.

Winters in West Virginia seemed especially made for staying home and filling the house with the mouth-watering scents of sweet, sugary homemade donuts on a cold, rainy day or the nothing-comes-close-to-smelling-better, yeasty fragrance of homemade, just-out-of-the-oven bread, slathered with butter and eaten hot with homemade apple sauce and thick slices of cheddar cheese.

Summer Sundays saw a little break for Mom, as Dad took over cooking the main meal. He handled the backyard barbecue, producing mouth-watering, thick, rare sirloin steaks, grilled corn-on-the-cob and baked potatoes. From the kitchen would come the butter, sour cream and homemade bacon bits, and salad made from produce picked fresh from our garden just minutes before. Dessert was often strawberry or peach shortcake. The shortcakes were homemade, of course, and the whipped cream was always fresh, whipped with just the right amount of vanilla and sugar. Or sometimes we'd have peach cobbler, apple pie, or some other dessert made from fresh summer fruits. Christmas baking started at Thanksgiving and often continued into late Christmas Eve. Six flavors pound cake, rum balls, chocolate fingers with butter cream icing, grandma's marshmallow fudge... both chocolate and peanut butter, of course. Date bars, sea foam, poinsettia rolls, sticky buns with pecans, decorated sugar cookies, cookie press cookies and more.

Summer of 1960 – My first taste of lobster at my aunt's apartment on Riverside Drive in New York City. I was more interested in riding the elevator up and down. I was 8.

August of 1964 – My first Chinese food at the New York World's Fair in Flushing Meadows, New York.

July of 1967 – My first taste of Mexican food at a little hole-in-the-wall restaurant in Romeo, Colorado. "Lord," I thought, "I have surely died and gone to heaven."

Thanksgiving, 1971 – My first holiday as a married woman. Stuffed Cornish game hens, succotash and hot rolls. As college students, an entire turkey was well beyond our budget, but I did manage to include cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie and apple pie.

Spring of 1973 – The "If this is Tuesday, it must be borscht" Tour of Europe. Bad sauerkraut and wonderful chocolate cream pastries in Berlin. Breakfasts of fried lunch meat and lumpy mashed potatoes at a Moscow hotel and hot, raised, sugared donuts made on the spot at a sidewalk kiosk in Leningrad. Steak... smothered in nutmeg... in Belgium. Fresh, boiled-while-still-at-sea shrimp and hard rolls eaten while strolling the streets of Oslo, Norway. Some of the best pizza I've ever tasted... in Stockholm, Sweden. First husband? I tackled the art of making good Mexican food. Second husband? Chinese food cooking lessons. Third husband? Oh, the wonders of delicious Italian food. Italian desserts at Ferrara's in New York City's Little Italy. Six hour sauce, chicken marsala, homemade pesto with fettucine, cannolis oozing mascarpone cheese, tiramisu.. Yummmmm!

Funerals? Food. Weddings? Food. Birthdays, graduations, family reunions? Food, food, and more food. Name a special occasion, happy or sad, and chances are it's marked in my life's journal with food. Several months ago, a good friend of mine scheduled her weight loss surgery... and celebrated the "coming new her" with a pig-out party of all the foods she wouldn't be able to eat afterwards.

LIFE equates FOOD. At least in my world. It's a faithful companion through every step of life; it comforts when you're sad, celebrates with you when you're happy, provides an endless topic of conversation and, oh, yes, nourishment, too. Some people eat to live. My family motto: live to eat! That said, a glance at the calendar reminds me that my anniversary is just around the corner. Time to pull out the cookbooks!

Jenny Margotta © 2010

## PUMPKIN PIE – A HOLIDAY STORY,

by Mary D. Scott

Pumpkin Pie is the traditional holiday pie and ever since I was a little kid, I have hated Pumpkin Pie. Each year I try a small piece to see if my tastes have changed. Each year I find that I still don't like Pumpkin Pie.

In 1980, I was twenty years old and a newlywed. I decided to try and please my husband by making him a pumpkin pie. His mother was a fantastic cook and did everything from scratch. I also wanted to try making a pumpkin pie from scratch. So, I followed a recipe from a cook book she had given me.

I bought a pumpkin and proceeded to follow the recipe. It was a messy job and took me a long time to separate the seeds from the pumpkins gook inside. After finally completing that task, I put all the ingredients together and baked the pie.

When my husband came home from work, we finished eating dinner and I surprised him with my pumpkin pie for dessert. The look on his face was not only surprise but something else. I admit the pie did not look good. In fact it looked more like pumpkin quiche! He tried to hide his astonishment and proceeded to eat the pie. He was a good sport about it. After a few minutes he said he had never seen a pumpkin pie that looked like that. He asked me how I made the pie. I told him it was very time-consuming. It took me a long time to separate the seeds from the pumpkins gook inside. He tried very hard not to laugh.

I called his mother to ask her why my pumpkin pie did not turn out so well. She asked if I followed the recipe. I told her I did, but it took me a very long time to separate the seeds from the pumpkin's gook inside. There was total silence at the other end of the telephone for a bit before she asked me what part of the pumpkin I used and I told her the inside gook...(that was why it took so long,) I had to separate the seeds. Well, that is when the laughing began and went on for a very long time! Apparently, I was not supposed to use the gook from the inside of the pumpkin! However, in my defense, all the recipe said was to use a 1 3/4c of pumpkin mixed with the other ingredients and bake.

During the last thirty years, I have never attempted to make another pumpkin pie! However, ALL my family members had all heard about my pumpkin pie fiasco. Every year it becomes the holiday joke! My nieces, nephew, cousins (who were not even born at the time) have heard about my pumpkin pie and tease me. Good Lord, after

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***(One more food story then it's everyone onto the scales! HAPPY NEW YEAR!)***

thirty years one would think this would stop, but--- it has not.

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## **A New Year's Tradition**

By Curt James

Archibald "Gus" Gormly was a man who prided himself on living a life of preciseness and exactitude. His appearance, like his domicile was impeccable. Gus, a committed bachelor, had never felt the need for companionship in all his sixty seven years. The mere thought of bringing someone else in to his carefully articulated life was enough to herald the onset of an apoplexy attack. Gus tended his daily routine in much the same way that the Japanese tended a zen garden or a bonsai tree. Every moment of every day was accounted for in an incredibly detailed daily planner that was hardly necessary, given that he had lived within this routine for so long that it really wasn't necessary to consult, except of course, that it too was part of his daily routine.

Year's end was quickly approaching and Gus had allowed himself thirty seven minutes to swing by the local office supply store and purchase his next year's planner. The last forty seven planners had all been identical. Black leather, a brass locking snap, a calendar with the days of societal importance highlighted, and of course a sturdy pen lock that ensured his pen would be there when it was time to mark off each of the days tasks, and all purchased from the same store.

Gus arrived at Harder's Office and Fine Paper at approximately 11:34 a.m., his designated time. He exited his vehicle and began walking the thirty seven steps necessary to take him into the stores entrance. Being such a creature of habit, Gus tended to ignore things that didn't directly affect his daily routine. Consequently, it came as a rather tremendous shock when having counted his thirty seventh step reached for the door only to find that we was reaching towards a brick wall. Gus immediately stepped back and looked up. There before him, was an enormous brick building which he had absolutely no recollection of ever seeing before. There were no signs and no other entrances to the building in sight. Gus immediately checked his watch. 11:36. He still had thirty five minutes to find Harder's or a suitable replacement.

Gus returned to his car and decided to drive around the block to the other side of the building and perhaps at least find who was in the building and what the devil had become of Harder's.

However, when he arrived at the end of the block, Gus was shocked to see that a right turn only

sign had been placed there. This was totally unnerving in that Gus most assuredly needed to go left. He, being a man of principle and a law abiding citizen resolved to turn right and travel down to the next block and then, perhaps navigate his way back to the other side of the building. Unfortunately, it seemed that someone had decided to place a freeway just two blocks over and that street was now a dead end.

Despite the gloomy day, with brisk winter temperatures, Gus began to break out in a sweat. He again checked his watch, the time was now 11:40 and he still had not found Harder's or a suitable replacement. Time was running out.

Gus was about to do the only thing he could think of, which was to turn right again and attempt to go around the block the other way. It was just not meant to be. For as he activated his turn signal, he noticed a sign that proclaimed to all who would read it that in this precise place, no right turn was allowed. Gus was flummoxed. No left turn. No right turn. He could proceed in the only direction that took him farther and farther away from ever discovering the mystery of what had become of poor dear Mr. Harder and his Office and Fine Paper store.

With no other options available, Gus drove through the intersection and realized that by the time he would be able to turn again, he would be just a mere two blocks from his house. By this time, Gus, sadly, concluded that he would not be able to travel to any other location, or find what happened to Harder's. There was no way that he could bring himself to break from his routine. It was who he was.

Gus pulled into his driveway and exited his car only to find a delivery man standing on his porch.

"Are you Mr. Gormly?"

Gus eyed the man, "Yes, I'm Mr. Gormly."

"Got a package for you," the delivery man said. "Just sign right here."

Gus signed for the package and quickly entered the house. He checked his watch, 11:57. He opened the package and inside was black leather planner with a brass locking snap, and a card. He opened the card and read:

"Gus, it's been forty six years since you have been to the store, and forty five years since we have moved. And every year I have sent you your planner by special delivery at the precise time on the exact day. I guess you could say that it's become a New Year's tradition."

Yours truly,  
Mr. Ted Harder.

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## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PACKAGING

by Emily Pomeroy

OK, so I got the grapes home from the market all sanitized and protected in their flimsy, plastic container, two pounds of beautiful, large, purple orbs.

At lunch I brought them to the sink counter and began the process of gently prying the top up. I couldn't find the seam between the top and bottom of the plastic container. So, I got a table knife and tried to find a way in between the top and bottom layers. No success! I got my "Cutco" paring knife. It's thinner. That worked. Success! And I removed some of the grapes.

After lunch, I snapped the lid back on and put the container in the refrigerator. I was pretty proud of myself. I always tell my husband, laughingly, that life is "all about the packaging" as I rip, tear, cut and complain about everything that comes encased in boxes and plastic containers. Don't even get me started on child proof medicine bottles.

The next morning I decided to put out some of the grapes with breakfast. expecting once again to fight the good fight. I even had the "Cutco" knife ready on the counter. This time as I squatted down to reach the container and as I pulled it toward me out of the refrigerator it seemed to lose its rigidity. I must not have secured one of the snaps properly when I closed it. The whole thing opened up and pulled apart. I was doing a juggling act trying to catch grapes and not fall over. I started yelling some profanity. Grapes dropped and rolled under the refrigerator. Others smashed to the floor. I managed not to crush too many as I staggered to my feet. Then I got ruler and a flashlight, and stretching out flat on the floor, I carefully persuaded the runaway grapes forward from under the refrigerator and placed them in a garbage bag. No telling what else is under there. The frig just fits its space and no one wants to move it unless it's absolutely necessary like the time the ice machine broke down and water leaked all over the floor.

Next time when I get home from the market I'll put the grapes in a plastic baggie, one that has a zipper, and declare myself a winner. Why is it we can't have recycled brown bags in the produce department?



## DISREGARD THE STATEMENT

By Linda Bowden

Disregard the statement,  
Now what does that really mean?  
We hear it in the courtroom,  
As the judge reigns over his scene.  
Can you disregard any words,  
Once they enter in your brain?  
I don't think it can be done,  
Unless perhaps you are insane.  
Can you forget your teachings,  
Those words implanted in your soul?  
Can you forget what was paid before,  
And how the meaning took its toll?  
I don't think you can,  
I don't think you can,  
I don't think you can disregard,  
The words wrapped around the golden band.  
Don't you love it when a mate,  
Or a parent or a friend,  
Says disregard the statement,  
I really didn't mean it.  
If they said it,  
They meant it,  
If even one split second,  
You can't disregard it.  
It's there beside you,  
Waiting to remind you,  
It lurks around each corner,  
And locks itself deep, within your brain.  
Now, you'll never really disregard it,  
You'll never let it go.  
For a word that's spoken,  
Lies, smoldering below.  
So don't pierce me with your words,  
If you want me to forget.  
Cause I'll never really disregard it,  
Just save it, and save it and save it.

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## THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT

by James Elstad

Paul was my brother David's best friend, they'd known each other since the third grade, and they did everything together. Maybe they got along so well because both had the same sense of humor.

Paul was my brother's supervisor at a local catalog store, that didn't affect their relationship, and he was a practical joker. There wasn't any opportunity he wouldn't take advantage of.

One day I was visiting my Dad when David came home, "Boy am I glad you're here, I need some help, Paul's been creative lately and you're the only one I know who can come close to matching wits with him. Are you up to it?"

Knowing Paul's reputation and eager for a challenge I shrugged and said: "sure, why not? Where's he now?"

The gleam sparkled in David's eye, "He's at work now, what're you gonna do?"

"Don't know."

David looked at his watch, "Let's see, it's two pm, everyone's on break, he's sent everyone on break, we have about fifteen minutes, come on, tell me what're gonna do?"

I smiled and shook my head, "don't have a clue, get me a catalog, then dial the store, I'll wing it from there."

David tossed me a catalog and ran out of the room, ten seconds later I heard him from the other room: "It's ringing! Get on the line!"

Paul answered just after the second ring, "Catalog store, Paul speaking how may I be of service to you?"

I cradled the phone on my shoulder and started thumbing through the catalog. "I WANT MY ORDER!" I shouted.

With Paul the customer's always right, so he calmly responded: "I'm sorry we made a mistake sir, would you please give me the last two digits of your street address and I'll fix the problem."

I tried to restrain myself, "Look here young man, I came in last week, I made my order, I came into your store three days ago and you didn't have my order as you promised. You took all the information then, just now my wife informed me that you still don't have my order. I'm not giving you any other information. I gave it to you twice and my wife gave it to you once, that's three times. I WANT MY ORDER!"

I placed my hand over the mouth piece to muffle my snickering as I kept turning the pages. Excuse me let me put you on hold while I look for your order." I heard a tinny version of "Love Story" over the earpiece.

While I waited David ran into the bedroom I was sitting in, "This is awesome, he doesn't have a clue! What are you going to tell him you ordered?"

I shook my head, "Don't know, haven't found anything I want yet."

Paul came back on the line, "Sir, I've personally looked through every bin we have and I can't find any misplaced or old order, I know we've failed you, but I'm the supervisor, I've worked here for years, there isn't anything I don't know about our operation, I will find your order, I will waive tax

and delivery charges and I will pick your order up from the warehouse and deliver it. Would you please give me the last two digits of your street address?"

"Well, I guess I can, I don't want to be uncooperative, it's 67."

It seemed as if he felt he'd won a significant battle, later I found out that at this point in our conversation his three employees came back from their break."

"Listen guys, I've got a lulu here, help me out, Mary go through these files, George look in all the bins, Mike look in the back storeroom. I want all of you to look for something that's out of place and shouldn't be there." Then he came back on the line.

"Sir, I have all of my employees helping me, could you please give me your name?"

"Well, I never, how many times do I have to do this, well my wife wants me to be more cooperative in these situations, do you have pen and paper available?"

"Yes sir I do."

"It's Paul Klopfensteinerski, and it's spelled just like it sounds."

I could hear him gulp on the other end. "Yes sir, thank you sir."

After five minutes he came back on the line, "Paul, I hope I can call you Paul, we've looked all over for your order, would you please tell me your order, like I said I'll personally deliver your item."

I'd been thumbing through the catalog and finally found my item.

"Sir, which catalog is your item in?"

I started to get mad at him but I realized I was close to losing him, so I spoke very calmly: "It's in your spring/summer catalog on page 437, item "d."

"Oh that's a good choice sir, that's the leotards, did you want them in beige, brown, or natural?"

With as straight a face as possible I said: "Not the leotards dummy, I want the girl!" Then I hung up.

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*"All good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath." - F. Scott Fitzgerald*

Time to take a deep breath, fellow Members, and come up with some more stories, articles, observations, poems, what-have-you, for the February issue. The Pantry is rapidly becoming bare! It will be waiting for you..

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**TRILOGY**  
By Diane Neil

SONG OF A MORNING LOVE

They met upon a morning path – a boy, a girl.  
An arrow of wheat between his teeth,  
a blood-red rose in her hair.  
They stood beneath the dew-damp trees – a boy, a girl  
girl  
Morning cherries spiced the breeze  
with a gypsy nip in the air.  
Shafts of sunlight pierced between the boy, the girl;  
scattered spice on the rose and the wheat  
and shattered their silent song.  
They passed upon the morning path – a boy, a girl  
An arrow of wheat between his teeth,  
a blood-red rose in her hair.  
Cherries ripen where they stood – the boy, the girl.  
Should they return in the afternoon  
Calm shadows will tame the sun.

SONG FOR MIDDAY

They met upon a midday path,  
A woman with a pail and a man with a hoe.  
The sun was hot and high in the sky  
and both had a long way to go.  
They both had a long way to go.  
“Just for a moment there,” she said,  
“I thought you was my Joe.  
I always took him his lunch before.  
It’s still a habit...” She wiped an eye.  
“He ain’t here anymore.”  
The man laughed as he wiped his brow.  
“Never you fear,” he said.  
“You put me in mind of my Ruth  
the way you swing that pail.  
But she’s gone, too, for a truth.  
She’s agone too, for a truth.”  
The sun slid down the wall of sky  
and they tarried and they talked.  
He spread his shirt beneath a tree.  
They sat and shared the lunch,  
and neither wanted to leave.  
No, neither wanted to leave.  
“Stay with me,” she asked one day.  
“My house is big enough.”  
“So is mine,” he said. “But no,  
We must start out fresh.  
We will have to build anew.  
We’ll build us a house anew.  
But first I want to know,” he asked,  
“if you’re still hankerin’ after Joe.”  
“What’s gone is gone,” she said.  
“The man I carry my pail to –

he’s the one that’s mine.  
I’ll love the man that’s mine.”  
I saw them on an evening path,  
strolling hand in hand.  
“How’s Ruth?” I asked, “ and do you ever hear from  
Joe?”  
“Ruth who? And who in the world is Joe?”  
And as one they turned to go.

EVENSONG

I see them on their evening walks,  
my neighbors down the lane.  
He is bent and stooped  
and she must use a cane.  
At the curb he takes her hand  
to help her cross the street.  
They make their halting way across  
on slow and shuffling feet.  
Another curb. He pulls her up.  
The cane hits solid ground.  
Leaning together like two trees  
they make their way around.  
I know it wasn’t always so.  
They used to ski and dance.  
The years have slowed them down,  
but not their long romance.  
I take them dishes now and then  
and they always ask me in.  
He takes the albums off the shelf  
to show where they have been.  
With wrinkled eyes he smiles at her,  
no longer young and slim.  
I see the beauty that she was  
With only eyes for him.  
I always leave their little house  
with wonder in my heart  
how plain and simple folks  
made love a living art

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## **KEEP UP THE FRONT**

**By Linda Bowden**

To pretend that everything was right as rain, that's what she wanted from her. She said, "Smile and don't let anyone know the truth". Well, that's a job in itself, holding all that stress in for one more minute, one more hour and one more day. Susan decided that she couldn't do that, that she couldn't pretend that everything was right as rain. Susan decided that the truth would have to come out, whether or not it was ugly or sunshiny. At least, the smile wouldn't be fake, but a genuine smile, one that could be remembered.

Looking back, she remembered a day when everything was right as rain. There were lots of those days, her childhood, her adolescence, and her early married years. Those were the thoughts she loved to dwell on, not the ones she dwelt on now. She looked in the mirror; her eyes were tired, not sleepy, but tired. Her body was failing, her mind was still sharp.

She thought about what fun it was to ride her bike along the meadow lane. She thought about how convenient it was to have your bike ready after school and how some of her friends envied the red color. She thought about the wind, blowing through her hair and the crispness of the morning as she rode with vigor to her destination. Susan preferred to live in those years passed because lately the ones approaching seemed anything but bright. Her mother always said that when you got wealthy enough to travel your body wouldn't let you do it. She was right. Susan snickered; she was right about so many things.

The hospital room seemed dim and she supposed that the lights had been turned down. She didn't like the lights turned down and she had said so many times, but those nurses didn't seem to listen. They wanted her to rest all the time, the way you shush babies when they are crying but Susan doesn't want to rest. Susan wants to recapture all the vigor and strength she once felt because now she is feeling as if she is slipping away.

Somewhere, where there are no lights, no talking, and no riding bikes.

Just then, as she began to doze, her thoughts were interrupted with the clang of the medicine cart.

Free drugs for everyone came to mind. She looked

back into her repertoire of memory and remembered another time when that phrase was one of significance. Everywhere you looked there was a sign that captured the sentiment, free drugs, free love. What is free, anyways? There always seemed to be a catch to that one, something to ponder, something to resolve within your own mind. Is there anything that's free? Susan could hear her mother's voice saying it over and over, "There's nothing free in this world, Susan, only in the world to come. The only thing we can count on is the love of Jesus." "You want free Susan; ask God for it, His love is the only thing that's free." She could hear her mother's words, as if she was standing next to her.

Here comes that woman again, the one who says smile, keep everything right as rain. In a few minutes, her wish would come true. Susan smiled, closed her eyes, and everything was right as rain.



## **CONDOLENCES TO THE FOWLER FAMILY**

As you may know, our treasurer, Anne B. Fowler, and her family recently suffered a tragic loss of a son, Ramsey Bancroft Fowler. Our very deepest sympathy and compassion go out to her, Clark, their entire family and to all those Ramsey left behind.

In response to member inquiries, the following information is provided:

An educational trust fund has been established at the Apple Valley Branch of Desert Community Bank in the name of Jenna Bancroft Fowler. Donations may be made directly to the DCB Apple Valley Branch, 16003 Quantico Road, Apple Valley 92307.

You may also donate through the High Desert Branch of the California Writers' Club by sending your check made payable to Jenna Bancroft Fowler. Please just mark your envelope "Jenna".

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## A REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2010

By Bob Isbill, President, CWC

January of 2011 is the first anniversary of editor Naomi Ward taking the bi-monthly newsletter, the Inkslinger, to a monthly publication. Congratulations, Naomi, and a job really well done.

In 2010, our critique groups grew in scope, popularity and numbers. By the end of January, the HD CWC will be able to accommodate more genres including childrens' stories and screenwriting.

A small group of writers within the branch created a new branch of the critique process by forming a Readers' Panel to give members who have written books (so far) an opportunity to get marketing feedback by anonymous readers. Special thanks to Hazel Stearns, Dwight Norris, Holly La Pat, Roberta Smith, Jim Elstad and Curt James for their contributions to its development and implementation.

We presented an internet meeting on blogging and building your own web site at the Hesperia Library, paving the way for more such quarterly presentations planned in 2011 to reach out to other areas in promoting the craft of writing and marketing.

10 Minute Tips and Techniques were introduced to spread the word about valuable lessons learned, and to share techniques and tips to make the writing life easier, or at least more informed.

Of course, our first Writers' Conference in years, "Howl at the Moon" was a tremendous success even though done on a shoestring budget. Not only was it a great fund raising event for our branch, but it was also a vehicle to show the quality of talent and information that can be attained through volunteerism by members and our guest speakers. Thank you again, to Glen Hirshberg, Mike Foley, Alton Gansky and John Moffett for your splendid presentations, and to all our HD CWC volunteers. Special thanks to the community and to the individuals who donated gifts and money to support this great event.

The 2010 "Howling at the Moon" anthology is still alive and well which, upon its completion anticipated early in 2011, promises

to be a quality project that includes 34 writer participants. Even though we've had unexpected delays in its publication, the fact is that there will be some members who have been in the club less than a year who will have been published in a major collection of stories, essays and poetry.

Aside from the guest speakers at our September conference, we have been blessed with outstanding monthly speakers including Dwight Norris, S. Kay Murphy, Marilyn Meredith, Julia Amante, Teresa Burrell, Dr. Freddi Gold, James Brown, Todd Anton, Norm Goyer and Paul S. Levin.

Our genuine thanks to every one of you for contributing to the quality of our meetings.

Through major illnesses—and even deaths-- of members' family and friends, we have come through 2010 with increased solidity, experience, and bonding friendship.

Thanks to all of you for your help and participation in 2010 as we move forward in the year we come of age. The HD CWC will be 21 years old this coming October. And if you haven't heard, we plan to celebrate with a special conference on the first weekend of the month of October 2011.

In the last two years we have grown in membership from #18 out of 18 branches to #5!

And with that impressive number, we believe we are rapidly approaching #1 in quality.

In 2010 our slogan was "Get Out of the Comfort Zone". We did, and it showed up in excellence!

In 2011, let's strive to come of age in our writing and our personal development. Continue to get out of your personal comfort zone and go for being the best you can be!

A happy and successful year to all! Go for it!



HAPPY NEW  
YEAR  
2011