
	<h1 style="text-align: center;"><i>The Write Way</i></h1> <p style="text-align: center;">A publication of <i>The Writers of Kern</i>, a Branch of the <i>California Writers Club</i> <b>June 2008</b> © 2008, Writers of Kern</p>
<p><b>The Writers of Kern</b> PO Box 22335, Bakersfield, CA 93390-2335 <a href="http://www.writersofkern.com">www.writersofkern.com</a></p>	<p><b>President:</b> Carol Black; <b>Vice-President:</b> Joe Tomasi, <b>Secretary:</b> Lucinda Soria; <b>Treasurer /Membership/CWC</b> <b>Representative:</b> Sandy Moffett; <b>Program Chair:</b> Margie Custer; <b>Publicity:</b> Camille Gavin; <b>Newsletter:</b> Marty Gorsching</p>
	<p>Regular meetings are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month, 10:00 to noon at <b>Wyndham Gardens Hotel, 3001 Buck Owens Blvd, Bakersfield, CA</b></p>

## Speaker for July:

**Donna Hylton**, Executive Director Kern Adult Literacy Council

She will talk about the upcoming **November Gala** sponsored by the Literacy Council. Participants from Writer's of Kern will be able to sell books (!).

## Special Events & Announcements

**Linda O. Johnston**, romance and suspense novelist and member of the Orange County branch of Romance Writers of America, will talk about how to move between the two genres at 2 p.m. Saturday, July 12, at Beale Memorial Library, 701 Truxtun Ave. Free admission. Call 868-0745 for more information.

**Used Books Sale**, sponsored by Friends of the Kern County Library. Sale lasts four days:

Thursday-Saturday, July 17-19 and Monday, July 21. On Monday, all books are half-price. Beale Memorial Library auditorium, 701 Truxtun Ave. Call 868-0796.

**Writing For Dollars**, published weekly by Dan Case, Editor pays (on acceptance) for writing how-to information, including a regular feature, "My First Sale." Dan lists a number of markets each issue and has links to a long list of markets, including their pay scales. [www.writingfordollars.com](http://www.writingfordollars.com)

👍 Remember our new meeting address and time (see banner, above) – and don't forget, we now are required to charge a \$10.00 fee at the door.

***MEMBERS WRITE***  
***CONTRIBUTIONS FROM FELLOW WORKERS***

**Abandoned-By-The-Sea**

Part 8

Joe Tomasi



**A**s our plans solidified for the move to Oregon, it occurred to us that we didn't have enough capital to finance the move, or enough to live on until that first paycheck. So, after picking our brains, trying to come up with any source of ready cash, our sights fell on my State Teacher's Retirement. We immediately got the papers and filled them out. A representative from STRS called me and asked that I think twice before depleting my eight year savings. Even though he politely gave me the "You'll be sorry" story, I went ahead, after all, that \$7,000 was mighty appealing. My principal, Jerry, tried to dissuade me from emptying my retirement fund, but I told him we were never coming back to California—never. (What is that saying about never saying never?) Well, in spite of the advice, we soon had the check in hand and were ready to go.

Since we were moving into a new home, we carefully went through our belongings and pared them down as much as we could. We then contracted a local mover to load and ship our things to California. Even though they were to load the day after we left, under the scrutiny of our family, Debbie and I laughed that the moving van would probably pass us on the way north and we wouldn't be there to receive the goods. When we voiced our concerns to the representative, he assured us that in the event of such a happening, our belongings would be stored in Coos Bay until they were needed, so there was really no need to worry.

So, with plenty of cash, we loaded our tiny Ford Fiesta with suitcases and our unhappily drugged cat, JB. Just before we left, Alex and Diane came by to wish us well, and to remind us of the promise to "watch" the theater until they arrived at the end of the summer. In the midst of all our excitement, I had nearly forgotten that rash promise, but since Debbie was so positive that we could do it, I smiled and kept my mouth shut.

The trip to Oregon was pretty uneventful. We marveled at the wonderful scenery, the wide open spaces, the breathtaking views. It was late one evening that we rolled into Coos Bay, just twenty miles north of Bandon. It was late and the movers were not open, so we got a motel and settled down for the night. The next morning, we ate an early breakfast and Debbie then called Peggy. I stood outside the phone booth while Debbie talked. When I saw the smile fade

from my wife's face, I knew we were in trouble. After talking for five minutes, she hung up the phone and slowly came out.

"The house isn't finished," she blurted out.

"What?" I shrieked, "So what do we do now?"

"Don't worry," Debbie said, "Peggy has it all under control."

That control was the apartment she had rented for us. It was reasonably priced, but the catch was that it was unfurnished. We regrouped and decided that we would have to get into our belongings and remove enough to use in the apartment. While we waited for Peggy to meet us at the motel, I quickly called the local branch of the moving company, and explained that we needed to get into our things. Well, it appeared that, our load not only wasn't there, it hadn't even left California. I went ballistic, but the representative kept his cool, stated that we would have to wait until he notified us, then hung up. Now, it was my turn to bring bad tidings. When I told Debbie that it was a double whammy, I saw her resolve falter for the first time in this entire enterprise. However, we decided to find a K-Mart and buy only what we would need for a few days. Of course, we were banking on the idea that our house would be finished within days.

When we met Peggy, she announced that the "charming" apartment was actually the third floor of an old Victorian house, high atop Coos Bay's Telegraph Hill, which sounded interesting enough. Besides, what choices did we have? We were new to town with no where to stay--we had to make the best of the situation. After driving up a windy road, we arrived at the house, which looked like a set from Psycho. We paid the rent to the dour looking couple, then used the outside staircase to bring our pitifully few belongings up to the apartment. What we had been told was a third floor actually was a converted attic with a few dormers and sloping ceilings. After a few bumps to the head, we learned very quickly that it was best to walk in the middle of each room. We put JB into the bathroom with his litter box, food, and water, so he would feel right at home. From a large storage closet in the apartment we pulled a lumpy mattress, and after one look at the cramped bedroom, we drug the mattress into the living room. Then, without even going off to buy sheets, we flopped down on the dusty mattress and instantly fell asleep. Exhausted, a little shaken, but determined not to let Oregon break us, we slept until dawn.

\* \* \*

[The following is a repeat of Portia's essay about Helen Shanley. It is reprinted here because of the following related pieces –ed]

## HELEN SHANLEY

By Portia St. Claire

*I remember that lilacs enfolded the night  
in a soft June kiss,  
a never-never land  
of love in a candy store.*

(From "Lilacs," *Writers of Kern Anthology 2001*.)

Helen was born in Los Angeles, at the far end of the Bell curve. She recognized and pointed to colors at 6 months; her IQ was test at 188 when 7 years. She was brought up by a single mother. She married three times; and she had no children.

Helen had two primary pursuits in her life: Writing and healing. She had two master degrees, one in English and the other in psychology.

With her writing, she had over hundreds of stories and poems published in university and literary magazines, *Poetry*, *Saturday Review*, etc. Her works were aired on the *Valley Public Radio*, she performed at the **First Night Bakersfield**. She was recognized for her contribution to writing by the **California Writers Club** and the **Kern County Arts Council**.

Although Helen did not have children, she nurtured and loved writers. She mentored and inspired writers. She held two critique groups, one in fiction and the other in poetry.

Writers remember Helen. **Lee McCarthy** commented that after the performance at First Night Bakersfield, Helen was the happiest as Lee ever saw her. **Helen, Lee** and **Portia** had recited their poems together that night. **Sharon Patterson** expressed how there would be "No scratchy voice" telephone call reminding each of the poets of the monthly poetry critique group. Sharon remembers how Helen loved words, and it pained her when one of the poets misused language.

Helen inspired writers. Through her leadership and persistence, she influenced **Gary Hill** and **Joe Gottlieb** to write and publish. **LisaAnn LoBasso** was helping Helen to publish her memoir, *Sugar on my Lettuce*. Helen related how her mother would put sugar on the lettuce so that Helen could endure eating it. LisaAnn wrote that, 'whenever I question my role as a writer, and when life 'tastes sour . . . and difficult to endure'. . . I remember Helen's persistence.'

Other than her writing, Helen wanted wholeness and healing for others. She went to the ministerial school in 1986 at the Science of Mind Institute and became a practitioner for the Church of Religious Science. She would pray for healing and fulfillment of persons.

Her writing and healing came together in her book *Dancing on the Sun*. Interestingly, the cover for the book is of a painting that Helen loved. The painting was done by one of **John Young's** relative. Helen saw the painting years before she met John. In the forward to the book, Helen wrote "Word is creative, and that we can change our lives by knowing this. The Spirit within does the work. The healing, the integration, the resolution is always in the Spirit of Truth between you and your partner, or within you as you journal. . . As long (as) you really desire it."

In the end at the hospital, Helen was only able to communicate by scribbling on a spiral notebook. Recognizable words were: "Thank you so much for coming, when I only had called you mentally . . . so sorry . . . love."

Helen ended her poem "**Lilacs**":

*Sometimes I touch that lilac night  
when your grave opens,  
when dreams take us deep, deep  
to love without time, without loss.*

## Ann Williams Helen's Memorial



The afternoon and evening dedicated to the memory of Helen Shanley turned out to be quite beautiful...beyond anything I had imagined. About ten of us gathered at the home of Portia Choi for a light potluck supper as a preliminary to the coming ceremony. It was a lively group, some of whom I had not met before. Laughter and shared memories were foremost on the menu. After supper we carpoled in the direction of Arvin, our destination a three hundred acre cherry farm belonging to Vickie and Steve Murray, owners of Murray Family Farm and close friends of Helen's.

Rising rather mysteriously from the midst of the orchards is a sandstone hill with

rocks that bear grooves made by Native American grinding stones. After a little climb and just before dusk, we reached an area wide enough to accommodate us all. The weather was exceptionally beautiful, alternately cloudy and light, with the valley and the mountains in clear view.

Together we read several of Helen's poems, and exchanged memories of our experiences with her. Then Colette Shewcraft, a Native American and practitioner of traditional sacred rites, performed the ceremony with eagle feather, sage, drum, flute, and chanting. She was remarkably talented and able to evoke a sense of wonder and reverence. Then, as Portia and Liz Martinez took the ashes a little way downwards, several swallows came flying around the rock

hill and a small eastward wind came up.

When the ashes were released, they were wafted toward the mountains and just below the circling swallows.

Who could hope for a more wonderful final experience on this earth and among friends?

Helen's Song  
by Margie Custer



*The* ocean's breath washed over us  
As we stood  
Casting Helen to the wind  
While heartbeat drum  
And wooden flute chanted  
With human voice  
And sparrow song.

Aromatic sage and burning incense  
Infused the air while  
Totems of car, book, bird, and heart  
Brought cherry-sweet and cherry-acidic  
Memories to mind.  
Our common threads of recollections  
Brought us there  
To return her substance to the earth of life.

Reluctant to shed her bruised and  
Scarred vessel, she clung  
To a vibrant existence  
Giving back what she could:  
Her talents, her knowledge, her essence.

And now she's scattered at Gossip Rock  
Among the purple flowers  
Discussing theology with the ancestors  
Giving them her opinions  
As only Helen can.

## STICKY HEAT

Larry Megazzi

Chaotic fires burning west of Bakersfield  
have turned the smoggy sky into the roof of Hell.

Bakersfield Moon is puffy orange.  
Clown orange clouds form in squadrons, float in icy skies on the Moon.

On the Moon, it is cold---crazy cold.  
On terra firma, it is hot---sticky hot.

Heat settles itself into every corner of the city,  
stifling.

The town has asthma.  
Air can be smelled before one inhales.

Too much soot.  
Too little air.

\* \* \* \* \*

At four in the morning, I pop a Bud  
walk outside and curse the orange Moon.

Man in the Moon, an evil Happy Face, a cosmic gang banger,  
with no teeth, wearing tattoos on his head.

Bakersfield Moon went from hellish orange to nicotine yellow and he mocked:  
“Do you like Hell? How is your incarceration in that sprawling dusty mess?”

The darkness was so quiet and sticky like a great hairy animal.  
I felt like a man shot through with flyshit: itchy, dirty, sweaty, uncomfortable.

Just then, the newspaper girl drove up the driveway.  
I still had the Bud, still wearing underwear.

It is 4:32 am. I wave. She turns around  
after her car pukes transmission fluid on the driveway, drives off.

I go to bed and dream of blue things: water, sky, anything cool,  
then wake up in a sweat.

## COMING CLEAN

By David L. Norris



**T**hey say confession is good for the soul.

At Haven Drive Junior High School and Arvin High School in the '60s, my friend, Gary D. Smith and I were members of "The Untouchables". That was the name of Arvin's model airplane club. We bought model airplanes either at Fox Appliances or Gannon's Cycle Shop, and met once a week at the Arvin Community Center to work on them.

That was also the time when America and the USSR started the space race with the Soviet, *Sputnik I* (October 4, 1957), and the American entry, *Echo* (August 12, 1960). So a few of us were also into building basic rockets. Our first rockets were powered by water pressure. Next came fizzy rockets powered by baking soda and vinegar, *Alka-Seltzer*<sup>TM</sup> or anything else that created pressure. Then we moved on to solid rocket fuel engines. We would go to Dick Miller's Drug Store and buy jars of Saltpeter (potassium nitrate) powder, then coat moistened cotton twine with it to make fuses. We used these fuses to light off our rockets.

It was our freshman year at Arvin High School, and our first exposure to science. For one project, the teacher had each of us go to the Arvin Dry Cleaners to buy one cleaner's bag, which they sold us for 10 cents each. In the science lab, the students filled their bags with natural gas, and then tied them closed with string. The other end of the string was tied to a pill vial in which each student placed a note asking anyone who found the "balloon" to write back with the location where it was found. We turned our balloons loose at the same time in the quad area of Arvin High School. Several students receive responses from thousands of miles away, but alas, Gary and I did not.

We were disappointed that our balloons were not found, so we decided to release more balloons from my home, filling the bags with gas from the stove. Soon, it became an obsession, and we spent all our lunch money buying more bags. It never occurred to us that we could have blown the house down.

One day, Gary was making fuses for our rockets, and I was filling bags to make more balloons. Then I got a really bright idea. Why not tie a fuse to a balloon? At first we tried a short fuse and one balloon. We lit the fuse and released the balloon. Up-up it went. When it was about a thousand feet high, we saw a flash of light and heard a small "Boom!"

"Wow! That was exciting! Let's tie all the rest of them together, use a longer fuse and see what happens!"

By this time, it was getting dark, but determination prevailed and we finally got all of the balloons ready, lit the fuse, and sent them off. The balloons climbed out of sight, and we figured the fuse had gone out. Suddenly there was a giant flash in the night sky, and a tremendous boom.

A short time later, the siren at the Arvin Volunteer Fire Department sounded. We thought, “Wow! There’s a fire someplace!” Then our telephone ring. I answered it. The fire chief was looking for my father, who was the County Road Foreman. Their phone lines had lit up with calls about a mid-air collision, with flaming debris seen plummeting toward the ground. The search for the crash scene and possible survivors was on. All of the police and volunteer firemen were scouring every back road and field. Reports were coming from everywhere.

“It was north of Town!”

“No! East of Town.”

“Tell your dad to try South of town.”

The event had taken a life of its own, with crews driving aimlessly around most of the night, searching for wreckage. The following Wednesday, the *Arvin Tiller* lead with a story about the flaming mid-air collision. Was it a UFO, the article speculated, or a single plane explosion or a two-plane collisions? The paper went on to report that no wreckage had been found despite hundreds of hours of searching, at a cost of thousands of dollars. The last line of the article was a plea for anyone with information to come forward.

That was the end of our model rocketing and amateur ballooning for a while. I just hope the Statute of Limitations for “malicious mischief” has expired.

\* \* \*



#### A STAR AMONGST US By Sandy Moffett

My husband, Gregory Moffett was a child star... albeit a shooting star. His acting career only lasted a handful of years, but that was enough to secure him an invitation to the 2008 Memphis Film Festival. An annual event since 1972, this year’s gathering celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lone Ranger and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Superman. The connection for Greg was a role in the Superman television serial, “The Stolen Elephant,” released in 1957. Other film and television credits include, “Let’s Dance,” “Saddle Tramp,” and “Robot Monster,” which holds the honor of being in the list of the 10 Worst Movies Ever Made.

We had the opportunity to reconnect with and meet stars, past and present. There were some interesting moments. During an autograph signing session, Greg left his table to ask Sci-fi queen, Laurie Mitchell to sign a photo. When she



requested the standard \$10 fee, Greg walked away, only to have Laurie apologize later, hand us a picture and say, “I didn’t know he was one of us.”

Others in attendance were, Claudia Barrett, Greg’s co-star and the only other living cast member of “Robot Monster,” Michael Chapin, Dick Jones, Kenny Miller, Gregg Palmer, Beverly Washburn, Janine Perreau and Lanny Rees, who worked with Greg’s sister, Sharyn in “Banjo,” released in 1947. Also in attendance and the highlight of the trip was Noël Neill, the first Lois Lane. Even at 87 years of age, Noël remains beautiful, healthy and eager to participate in some of the radio show recreations performed over the weekend.

Greg came away with invitations to future festivals of multiple genres and I have a new found appreciation for my husband’s talent.

\* \* \*

## **Marty’s Muse**

Something to think about . . .

July 2008

Muse Takes A Holiday



My muse is on vacation again. She is, at the very least being very illusive these days. Or, perhaps, merely coy. I’ve tried to pin her down about it, but she never returns my calls, doesn’t answer my e-mails.

However, though I am sometimes speechless, I am seldom at a total loss for words. I can always recycle an old column (who remembers these things anyway?), or steal shamelessly from one of the many newsletters, blogs or commentaries I accumulate each week.

Instead, I’ll tell you that if you missed the ***GREAT ANNUAL SUMMER DINNER AND OPEN MIKE PARTY***, you missed another opportunity to socialize with some of the best authors in Kern County. We enjoyed good food and conversation, and some truly fine examples of our members’ diverse writing styles. Many of the readings this year displayed our authors’ senses of humor – I guess they felt we could all use a good laugh. Other selections were from current projects or memoirs. Here are a few snaps of the occasion. I apologize for the quality of the photos. The photog was the best we could get for the money we were offering. If you think you had your picture taken, but don’t see it here, be grateful. It was probably left out because if I had included it, you would be hunting me with torches and pitchforks. [*Example: the conspicuous exclusion of any pictures of my wife. -ed*]



## WOK Members' Websites

**WOK members: Do you have a personal site you would like to list here?**

Annis Cassells: [www.connectionsandconversations.com](http://www.connectionsandconversations.com)

Carol Black: [www.publishedauthors.net/CarolBlack00](http://www.publishedauthors.net/CarolBlack00)

Maggie Caldwell Smith: [www.magpiepress.com](http://www.magpiepress.com)

Peg Connelly: [www.grannywrites4kids.com](http://www.grannywrites4kids.com)

Marilyn Meredith: <http://fictionforyou.com> <http://www.marilynmeredith.blogspot.com/>

Sandy Moffett: [www.sandymoffett.com](http://www.sandymoffett.com)

Debra Blackmon: [www.debrablackmon.com](http://www.debrablackmon.com)

Susan K. Stewart: [www.skstewart.com](http://www.skstewart.com)

California Writers Club: [www.calwriters.org/](http://www.calwriters.org/)

Writers of Kern: [www.writersofkern.com](http://www.writersofkern.com)

Martin Gorsching: [www.martinlgorsching.com](http://www.martinlgorsching.com)

## Critique Groups

**Children's Fiction/ Memoir/Non-fiction:** Peg Connelly, 399-0423, 4th Mondays, 6:30pm,  
[mispegg@aol.com](mailto:mispegg@aol.com)

**Poetry:** contact Margie Custer [custer@ix.netcom.com](mailto:custer@ix.netcom.com), 397-1273, for more information

**Fiction Writing Group (all fiction genres welcome):** Carol Black & Bertie Warren, 832-9242  
2nd Tuesday at 1:00 PM, 7105 School House Lane. [Nanab5@bak.rr.com](mailto:Nanab5@bak.rr.com).

**Sci-Fi/Fantasy:** Joe Tomasi, 391-9124, 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 7 PM, (currently closed to new  
members) [jtomasi@bak.rr.com](mailto:jtomasi@bak.rr.com)

**Screen Writing:** Carol & Terry Baker-Willey, 588-4943, 4th Saturday 10 AM at the Barnes &  
Noble Café in the Barnes and Noble store on California Avenue.  
[Cinehunden@juno.com](mailto:Cinehunden@juno.com)

## Conferences, Contests, and Other Things

Central Coast Writers Branch 2009 Writing Contest for  
poetry and short  
stories.

Winners awards: \$500 and publication (print and on-line)  
in the Homestead

Review (Hartnell College).

Entry Fees: \$15 per short story and \$5 per poem.

Submission period: August 15, 2008 through November 15, 2008.

Guidelines and Info: [www.centralcoastwriters.org](http://www.centralcoastwriters.org)

### **THE CWC LITERARY ANTHOLOGY WANTS YOU!**

The CWC literary anthology is in the planning phase. This quality publication will be a venue for showcasing our members' essays, fiction, poetry, and art.

Interested in working with a talented and motivated committee of members to make the next CWC literary anthology a reality?

Contact I.D. Levy at [textractor@yahoo.com](mailto:textractor@yahoo.com)

### **2008 Four Way Books Intro Prize In Poetry**

<http://www.fourwaybooks.com/contest>

### **TOM HOWARD/JOHN H. REID SHORT STORY CONTEST**

Sixteenth year. August 15-March 31. Fourteen cash prizes totaling \$5,250. Top prize \$2,000.

Seeks short stories, essays and other works of prose, up to 5,000 words. Winning entries published online. Both published and unpublished work accepted. Fee per entry is \$12, payable to Winning Writers. Postmark deadline: March 31. Judges: J.H. Reid, D.C. Konrad. Submit online or by mail to Winning Writers, Attn: Tom Howard Short Story Contest, 351 Pleasant Street, PMB 222, Northampton, MA 01060. More information:

<http://www.winningwriters.com>

### **The Muse Online Writers Conference:**

<http://www.freewebs.com/themuseonlinewritersconference/>

### **A good source for market, contest listings, etc**

[www.writeradvice.com/markets.html](http://www.writeradvice.com/markets.html)

### **Coffeehouse For Writers**

<http://www.coffeehouseforwriters.com/>

"Coffeehouse for Writers is an internet-based community of writers from all genres. There are more than ten thousand members all over the world including ships at sea!"

### **Writer's Relief Inc**

<http://www.writersrelief.com>

"Writer's Relief, Inc. is a highly recommended author's submission service. Established in 1994, Writer's Relief will help you target the best markets for your creative writing. Visit our Web site to receive our FREE Writers' Newsflash (today, via e-mail) which contains valuable leads, guidelines, and deadlines for writing in all genres."

**THIRD ANNUAL FLASH  
PROSE CONTEST  
SPONSORED BY  
WRITER ADVICE**

WriterAdvice,  
[www.writeradvice.com](http://www.writeradvice.com), is searching for flash fiction, memoir, and creative non-fiction that grabs, surprises, and mesmerizes readers in fewer than 750 words. If you have a complete story with a strong theme, sharp images, a solid structure, and an unexpected discovery, please submit it to the WriterAdvice

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## About Our Organization...

**Writers of Kern** is one of fourteen branches of the **California Writers Club**. CWC was started by Jack London and fellow writers for the purpose of socializing together, and helping aspiring authors.

The **Writers of Kern** was formed in 1993 by Helen Gordon (an English professor at Bakersfield College) with the help of underwriting from The Arts Council of Kern, to bring together professional and aspiring writers in a creative atmosphere, sharing their knowledge and skills through critique groups, general meetings, conferences and workshops. WOK became associated with the California Writers Club in 1995.

We now have over 60 members in our club.

Based in **Bakersfield**, Writers of Kern serves the western half of Kern County. Our sister branch, **The Ridge Writers**, based in Ridgecrest, serves the eastern half.

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- Quotes used herein are found @ [www.quotationspage.com/](http://www.quotationspage.com/) and [www.thinkexist.com](http://www.thinkexist.com)

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