

FRESH INK
March 2025



Inland Empire
California Writers Club

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 1/2

Hello Writers!

During our February board meeting, we discussed our program and ways to work together collaboratively. Members have been asking about:

- working on a play
- publishing an anthology
- community outreach
- ways to work more closely with the Ovitt library.

By the end of our meeting, we found ways to braid ideas together. It was a stellar brainstorming session!

Anthology & Theatre: For context, in 2022, Ben Alirez wrote, directed, and held rehearsals for his play "Murder in Huckleberry Heights." Ben signed me up as the detective and even found a fake badge and handcuffs. When my husband posted a picture of me in costume a few of my relatives thought I got a new job as a police officer! My acting was not as convincing as my outfit--but it was fun.

Club member Leticia Bradford has a background in drama and is willing to pick up the playwriting baton from Ben. She will tackle a script but wants help with stories. The working title for her play is "Library Takeover." She wants to write about authors like Shakespeare and Star Wars characters debating one another. Ben brought up the movie "Night at the Museum" where exhibits come alive at night. I thought of a theme with people trapped in the library, trying to get out, however, Sam pointed out that rather than fleeing the library, characters should have a story and a reason to stay in the library, Think about writing your Night in the Library adventure, a teachable moment, a conflict, or maybe, a romance.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 2/2

Imagine, someone is locked in the library overnight. They pull books off the shelves to pass the time, suddenly, characters jump out of the books! The club would like members to write a short story with two famous characters, or authors interacting with one another. Members can write to their interests or genre, poetry, western, historical fiction, science fiction etc. We are lucky to have Ovitt Library and could dedicate the book--and our play to the library.

These are two distinct projects: (a) library take-over stories for an anthology and (b) piggyback on these stories to develop a script. We need a small committee to brainstorm details and the timeline. I will send out a call for leaders, contributors, and coordinators, please let a board member know if you are interested.

Outreach and Publicity: The Annual Riverside Dickens Fest has been unable to restore itself after the pandemic. It was our only outreach event. However, the Ovitt Library is hosting an ART BOOK Fair, and we plan to have a booth. While we cannot sell books we can exhibit books and pass out flyers about CWC. We already have a few volunteers for booth duty. The more, the merrier. Let me know if you want to be added to the roster, or just show up!

Finally, we had a productive time writing about endings and beginnings in our February general meeting. We shared tender, funny, rebellious, and thoughtful moments. Thank you to all who participated. Our next workshop is poetry in March. Yikes. It may be out of our comfort zone for our fiction writers but I promise that developing an ear for rhythm, sounds, and syllables makes your sentences lyrical and lends an extra punch. The March workshop will be in the storytelling room. Join us.

Write on,
Judy

EDITOR'S NOTE

Anything Under the Clouds



This issue was edited using

Canva

Hello reader,

Spring is almost here and there are so many activities planned for March. I hope to see you all at our monthly meeting where we'll be workshopping poetry in preparation for Poetry Month in April.



@abigail_handojo

Thank you for your submissions! I had a pleasant time emailing the members back and forth, designing a page fit for their work. For this issue, I played around with earthy tones—orange like mud and gold, green like matcha lattes, salads, and avocados. March's birth flower is the daffodil, so I sprinkled in flowery clipart and transparent cloud graphics to depict the current weather.

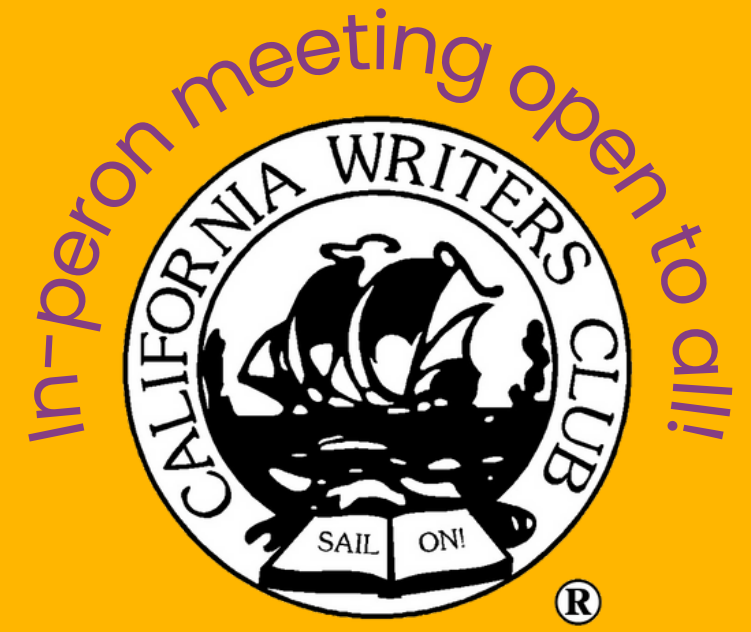
The publication date is also International Women's Day, so show some appreciation for the significant women in your life! Hope to see you all on the 22nd.

Faith, trust, and eraser dust,
Abigail Elina Handojo

*Photo of my murder mystery character, "Maria Cosmos," a fashion magazine editor



Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 10:00 am
 Ovitt Family Community Library
 215 East C St, Ontario, CA 91764



JOIN US FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP



Participants will experiment with various rhyme schemes, write based on prompts/themes, and share what they know about poetry in preparation for April's open mic. Bring your favorite poem (or stanza if the poem is long) to inspire the group!

MARCH 2025 MEETING

WHAT'S COMING UP



FEBRUARY 2025 MEETING MEETING REVIEW

Fellowship & Writing - Beginnings & Endings
by Ben Alirez

Saturday, February 22, 2025, at 10:10 a.m.
Ovitt Family Community Library
215 E. C St., Ontario, CA 91764

Inspired by the prompt "Beginnings and Endings," the Inland Empire California Writers Club convened for the monthly branch meeting, using the time to craft memoir pieces, short stories, and other writings based on free flow and stream of consciousness literary techniques.

Led by President Judy Kohlen and prompted by the request from the San Joaquin Valley Writers Club (SVJ) for manuscripts to include in their anthology, (hence the theme—Beginnings and Endings), the club experienced an encouraging number of imaginative pieces.

The meeting began with Judy making introductions, largely because five non-members were in attendance, and club member Monica Aleman was taking part via Zoom.

Pre-meeting notifications/updates

- 1.) A tentative concept for a 'Night at the Museum'-like play is being considered. If held, it would be scheduled for the fall, possibly for a writing retreat. At present, the concept is simply an idea and not an actual plan. Interested parties are expected to brainstorm ideas at a time and place to be determined.
- 2.) Next month's meeting will be a poetry-writing workshop with invaluable contributors like Sam Nichols, Abigail Handojo, and Leticia Bradford-Jimenez.
- 3.) In honor of National Poetry Month, April's meeting will be an open mic session.

4.) The Ontario Museum of History and Art will be holding its first-ever Art Book Fair, Saturday, March 29. In fact, the IECWC was welcome to have an Informational/Outreach booth on the premises. If the event generated enough interest, a schedule of shifts would be established. Sure enough, the prospect stirred a healthy interest, with Sam Nichols, Peter Hall, Vicki Peyton, Leticia Bradford-Jimenez, and Kelly Lewis raising their hands to participate. Ben Alirez will facilitate the effort and get in touch with the event's coordinator, Rebecca Ustrell.

ONTARIO ART BOOK FAIR

Saturday, March 29, 2025

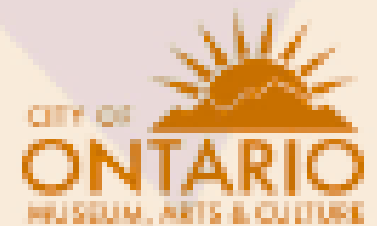
11 AM - 5 PM

Ontario Museum of History & Art
225 S. Euclid Avenue, Ontario, CA

A one-day unique and regional showcase of artists' books, catalogues, monographs, periodicals and zines.

 [ontariomuseum_artsculture](#)

 [OntarioMuseum.org](#)



Writing Workshop

Once the meeting began in earnest, Judy explained that "Beginning and Endings" could take many forms: birth and death, marriage and divorce, first and last days of school. The theme behind the workshop was intended to generate a myriad of ideas. And if participants were interested in submitting their work, the SJV Writers Club would accept them up until March 1.

The first writing prompt provided a minute for participants to generate a list of topics that aligned with the theme. The step that followed asked participants to choose the topic that resonated the most with them. How did that topic manifest a beginning and an end that they could elaborate on? The next exercise lasted five minutes. As with the first, several noteworthy interpretations were presented and read at the gathering. The final exercise saw a time limit of thirteen minutes. Many of the offerings were deeply personal and heartfelt, even drawing a humorous edict from our president. "What we share here, stays here!"

In conclusion, the workshop was very productive. There was not just writing exercises to go around, there was camaraderie and community. Two often overlooked elements in a content writer's life. In addition to the five first-timers, twelve club members attended. Afterward, 10 people continued the fellowship with lunch at Ontario's recently opened Mule Car Smokehouse.

Note: Vicki Peyton made flyers available that featured a list of Scott Skipper books to commemorate "Read an E-book Week."



benefits of IECWC

MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
 - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
 - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
 - Members who were published the year before
 - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
 - Our state-level parent organization at www.calwriters.org, with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
 - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at www.socalwritersshowcase.com
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

Active
\$65

Supporting
\$65

Student
\$15
ages 8-22

Renewal of Membership
\$45

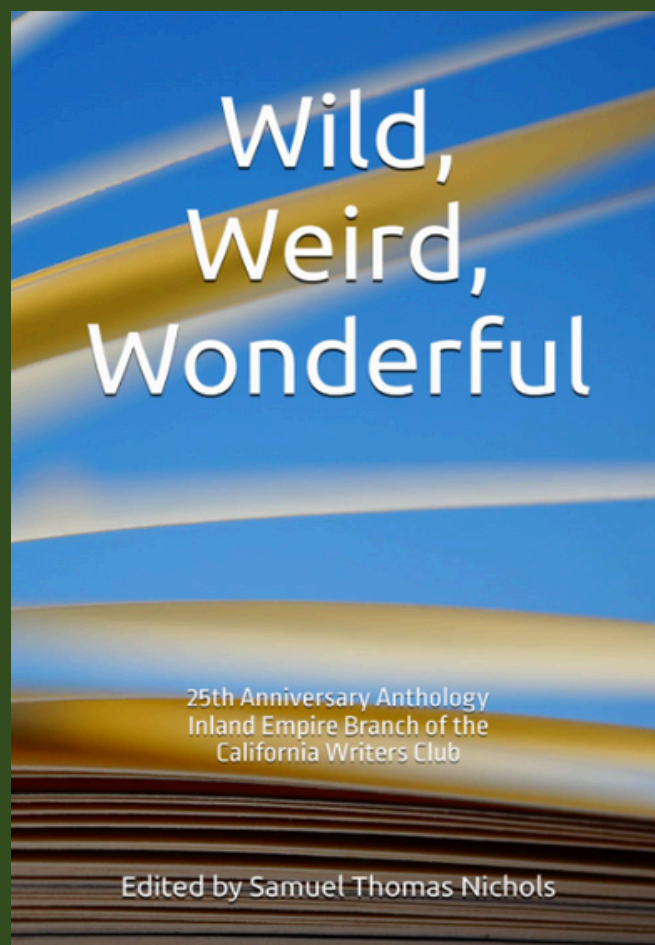
Renewal deadline September 30.
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls. If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.



THE SMALLS

The Smalls includes selections from the California Writers Club 2024 "Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose." This is a vibrant collection of unique voices chosen from the contest entries.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuPT>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

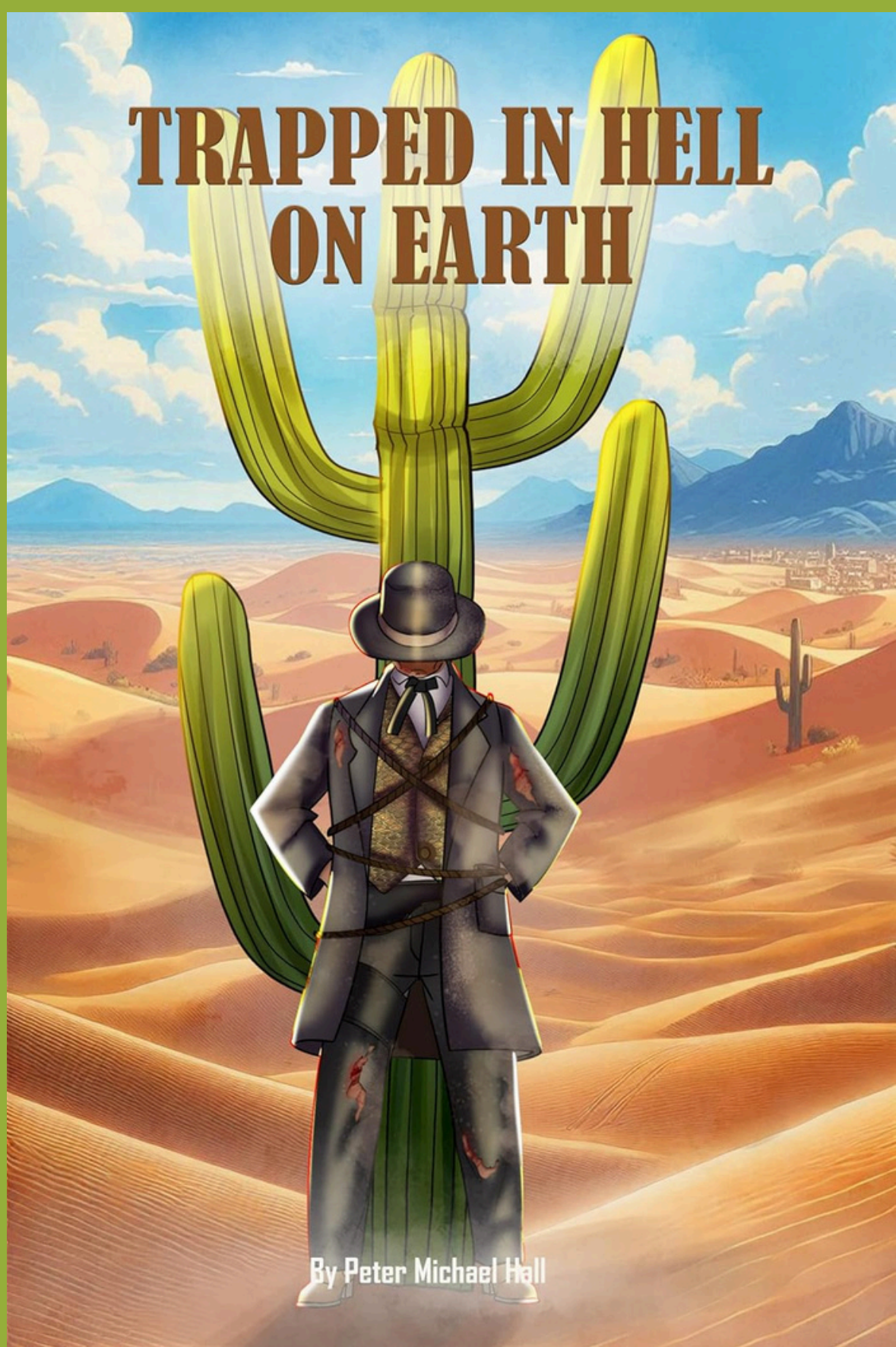
This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.

Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>





Link to purchase: <https://a.co/d/c0zSqtw>

kudos

Esteemed Colleagues,

It is my humble honor to share some recent news with you. The Department of Veterans Affairs conducted the competition, with 116 V.A. facilities participating. There were some 6,400 applicants across the country. The competition categories included performance, artwork, and various types of writing. It was quite humbling to finish in first place for creative writing for my combat essay submission of *The Burden of Command, My Worst Day in Iraq*. I also was awarded a Therapeutic Arts Scholarship and have been invited to attend a week-long, fully funded National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The festival will have many writing workshops and a climatic awards ceremony, where my literary work will be displayed.

Writing submissions are graded by a panel of judges for creative content, message clarity, use of language, originality of topic or idea, and overall strength of composition. You may read my various essays and other literary works on Amazon at the following URL:

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/John-J.-McBrearty/author/B0BNFDG3VF>

Additionally, another combat essay I wrote was featured in the Military Writers Society of America's Winter 2025 magazine, *Dispatches*, pages 41-45. That essay can be found on their website: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/559a3339e4b059a64f95b0ae/t/677d84ab6f0f5f26f49ae546/1736279232001/Dispatches_Winter2025_4th_final.pdf

Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,
John J. McBrearty

ABOUT ME, AND MY STORY

My name is Peter Michael Hall, I'm 37 years old, I live with my twin brother Josh in a 3-bedroom apartment, with an unrelated roommate. I'm a janitor at an engineering firm. I have another brother named Phillip who is mentally disabled, he lives with my parents Greg and Carol. I first published this story on a site called fictionpress.com, it was published online on February 22nd, 2012; and then I completely forgot about it for a while. I started attending a writer's club, The Inland Empire Writers Club to be exact sometime last year. This story was submitted to their monthly newsletter called FRESH INK, and was published on November 9th 2024. I finally decided to publish it a few days ago on Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing Platform, and it was successfully published on January 27th 2025. I hope to publish many more books in the future, both fiction and non-fiction.

THANKS, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to thank The Editor of The FRESH INK newsletter, I'd mention their name, but they asked me not to. Thank you for publishing my story in a publication that wasn't a fan site on the internet. I'd also like to thank Jennifer Olivares, who found my story on fictionpress.com and offered her services as a graphic artist. She designed the front cover, and that alone makes the purchase price of \$2.99 worth it. She also made another cover for another story I'm working on, but you'll have to wait to see that. All in all, I spent \$1500 for these two wonderful pictures, sure, that's a lot of money for me, it's nearly the rent of my 3-bedroom apartment; and I could have spent it on that, or any of any of a number of other things; most likely sodas and junk food, movies, books, etc.; but I decided to take a risk, and I'm hoping it pays off. Even if it doesn't, I crossed something off of my mental bucket list; I'm a published author. Lastly, I'd like to thank the members of THE INLAND EMPIRE WRITERS CLUB for their friendship and encouragement. They always have nice things to say about my writing when we meet to read our pieces and critique each other's work. Thanks again everybody! I hope we all find success and happiness in our personal lives and professional endeavors whatever they may be.

Sincerely,
Peter Michael Hall.

korner



HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO SOCALWRITERSSHOWCASE.COM

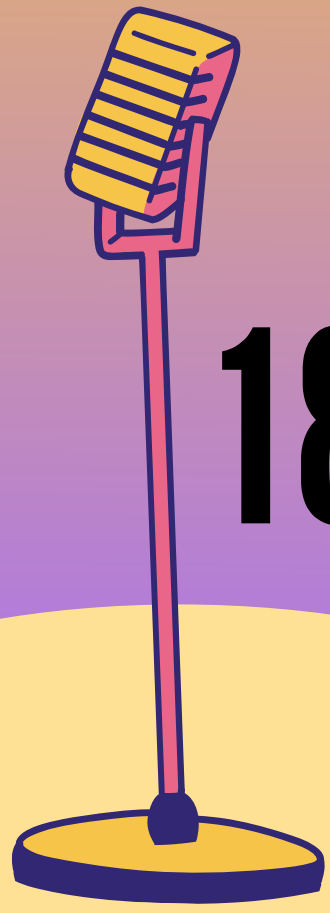
- You must be a member in good standing
 - AKA submitted application & paid your dues
- Maximum length of submissions: 500 words
 - You can add 1 link to your website
- Software: Microsoft Word (.docx) file attachment
- No indents, columns, tables or bullet points
- Subject line must read: SUBMISSION FOR SOCAL SHOWCASE
- In Body of email: list (1) your name, (2) your branch name, and (3) title of work
 - Also in the Body, include this permission: "I am submitting this for use on the CWC South website and confirm that I am a member of a Southern branch of the California Writers Club. I further confirm that it is my original work and all rights to its use belong to me. CWC South may use this on its website, archive it for future use on its website or choose to not use it, however the rights I grant are non-exclusive and I retain the right to sell it, allow its publication elsewhere including simultaneously, and all other rights to its use. CWC South is not paying me for its use. CWC South may not sell it or authorize its use outside of the CWC South website without"
- Send email & attachment to the current branch President, Judy Kohnen.
 - She will verify membership and will forward it on to be published.



Visit www.socalwritersshowcase.com to familiarize yourself with the categories of content.

- Short fiction: "flash fiction" – stories with beginning, middle, end
- Memoir: short memoir pieces or vignettes about our past
- A Writer's Life: ideas, humor, tips to keep your writing going
- Craft: "how-to" articles related to writing or marketing your work

Most work is accepted by the Editor if it is of appropriate quality. The site is updated monthly, but there may be a backlog in a category. Once your work appears on the site, it stays on the site for 6 months. After that, your name and the title of your work will appear on the Archive List page by month. You retain the copyright for your submission. Our website copyright notice: Articles or stories appearing on this website submitted by members are copyrighted with all rights reserved by their respective authors. Note that some contests/publishers will consider posting on a website to mean that the piece has been previously published and perhaps ineligible for a contest or future publication, so keep that in mind.



18+

OPEN MIC STORYTELLER NIGHT



Wednesday, April 9, 2025 from 6-8pm
Ovitt Family Community Library
215 East C St, Ontario, CA 91764

Love storytelling?

Seasoned storytellers or new writers – everyone’s voice is welcome!

Bring and share your own 5-to-10-minute story, or simply listen as others take the mic to share theirs.

No prior experience is needed, bring your creativity and a love for storytelling!

Vision & Verse II: A Fusion of Art and Writing
A CWC-members-only art and photography contest

CONTEST ENDS MARCH 15

Vision & Verse II

A Fusion of Art and Writing



Founded 1909

If you would like the opportunity to see your artwork or photography published in the book, we invite you to submit a digital image of your work to the CWC Art Contest. More information: <https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse-ii/>

Deadlines

Submissions are due the **15th** of every month

For example:

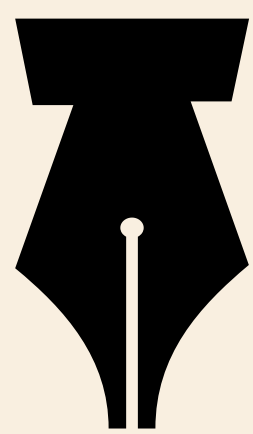
The deadline for March's issue is February 15th



Content Limits

Submissions with the following will not be considered:

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



FRESH INK

guidelines



Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment
Google or Word document
Times New Roman
12pt font



Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



Email

Share with Abigail Handojo at iecwcfreshink@gmail.com

Subject line must read "FRESH INK - month"

Replace "month" with your target month for publication

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor

Poetry Musings

SAMUEL THOMAS NICHOLS

Luck

Luck? What is it? I've known individuals, both male and female, who've placed a lot of trust in luck during their lives. This has always perplexed me because I've long felt that what we think of as luck is simply the result of the randomness of events culminating in either a favorable (good luck) or unfavorable (bad luck) outcome. Was the child born with the silver spoon ordained by fate or gods? Or is it merely one interpretation of the odds? I like the definition Wikipedia offers: *Luck is the phenomenon and belief that defines the experience of improbable events, especially improbably positive or negative ones.*

Wikipedia's definition is very much like many others, including Merriam-Webster and Cambridge, among many others. So what is it about our human psyche that behooves our belief in luck and its supernatural connections and, for what reasons, do we insist on our rituals and homages to this thing called luck? I believe it is because we homo sapiens are innately programmed to seek and to see patterns, whether such patterns even exist. Ah-hah, and that is why for so many centuries we have had poems distilled from patterns. The limerick, sonnet, triolet, villanelle, dansa, and the list seems endless. I wrote this last sentence and then asked Mr. Google, "How many poetic forms are there?" and our Internet crashed. Hmm, was that bad luck or is Athena trying to tell me that's forbidden knowledge?

Well, it turns out Spectrum had been having outages around Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties and it was just a coincidence - me asking and zap - no Internet. In the words of the great Herman Munster: *Darn, darn, darn, darn*, I kind of hoped it was Athena, and, by the way, Google was not able to answer my question.. Poetry and luck, a combination born in, well, born in the hearts and souls of poets and wannabes, which, after all, is where we all begin. One's good luck is another's fortune. Robert W. Service (1874-1958), in his poem, *The Call of the Wild* (from *The Spell of the Yukon*), concludes with:

They have cradled you in custom,
they have primed you with their preaching,
They have soaked you in convention through and through;
They have put you in a showcase; you're a credit to their teaching --
But can't you hear the Wild? -- it's calling you.
Let us probe the silent places, let us seek what luck betide us;
Let us journey to a lonely land I know.
There's a whisper on the night-wind,
there's a star a gleam to guide us,
And the Wild is calling, calling. . .let us go.



In *let us seek what luck betide us*, Service has not specified whether he seeks luck that is bad, good, or indifferent. Only that whatever luck, or fate, should befall them, they'll be so much richer than not having gone at all. Toward the end of the book, *The Spell of the Yukon*, Service presents another poem I find similar in sentiment to Edward Guest (1881-1959). Service's poem *Comfort* begins with:

Bad luck be damned because you can't take it all and there is still a *heap o' livin'* to be done. The accomplished American poet Jane Kenyon (1947-1995) who was known for her spare, but poignant, poetry, had a metaphorical look at luck that brought a smile to my face the first time I read it. Here is *The Shirt* (in its entirety):

Barbara Hamby (1952-), a contemporary American poet, known for writing odes, wrote *Ode on Luck*, in which she asks a series of questions of Lady Luck beginning with: *What was I thinking when I got into cars with boys?* Then, through observations and more questions, she poses the final *what if*:

Not by planning, that's for sure,
because I had no plans unless you could call reading
a plan, or daydreaming a plan, or making soup a plan,
so if I could ask Lady Luck what was the secret
to wooing her, she might say...

I think Barbara nailed the answer there, don't you? Yes, indeed, there is no secret to wooing Lady Luck since she is a construct of our need for patterns and predictions. Speaking of poets who are poignant, some might say there are none more so than Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). In her nearly 1,800 extant poems, there are very few that one might deem long. In her seven-line poem, #1350, *Luck is not chance*, Emily writes:

Say! You've struck a heap of trouble --
Bust in business, lost your wife;
No one cares a cent about you,
You don't care a cent for life;
Hard luck has of hope bereft you,
Health is failing, wish you'd die --
Why, you've still the sunshine left you
And the big, blue sky.

The shirt touches his neck
and smooths over his back.
It slides down his sides.
It even goes down below his belt—
down into his pants.
Lucky shirt.



Luck is not chance—
It's Toil—
Fortune's expensive smile
Is earned—
The Father of the Mine
Is that old-fashioned Coin
We spurned—

Here she argues one should not sit and wait for fortune to shine down upon them but to seek it, to toil for it, to take it upon ourselves to earn it and, in doing so, the reward is her expensive smile. It seems I should buy some lottery tickets since I won't ever be able to win if I don't play. Which brings me back once again to our rituals and ascriptions of what is bad and good luck. I remember learning from my wife, Denise, that they would raise their thumbs up when passing cemeteries back in Indiana.

I looked online and found many other superstitions when it came to cemeteries, like this one from *The Three Graves*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834):

★ To see a man tread over graves
I hold it no good mark;
'Tis wicked in the sun and moon,
And bad luck in the dark!

The Home Book of Verse - Volume 1, by Burton Egbert Stevenson (1872-1962), is full of wonderful little superstitions related to luck. Here are a few from the section *Old Superstitions*:



Cut them (your nails) on Sunday,
you'll cut them for evil,
For all the next week you'll be
ruled by the devil.

See a pin and pick it up,
All the day you'll have good luck;
See a pin and let it lay,
Bad luck you will have all day.

Marry Saturday, no luck at all.

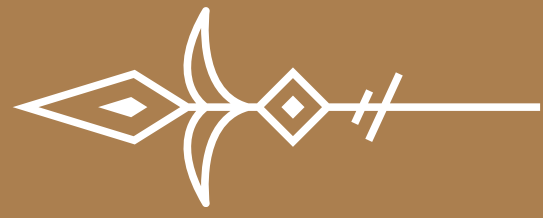
Sneeze on a Sunday, your safety seek -
The devil will have you the whole of the week.

We have our superstitions when it comes to luck, and the devil, engrained since children. I think of myself as rational, but even yet, without thinking, I *knock on wood*. My father's favorite admonition - *wearing a hat at the dinner table will make you prematurely bald* still has me removing it. For the *Writer's Digest 2024* April Poem a Day Challenge, Robert Lee Brewer asked us to write a Luck poem. This was my response:

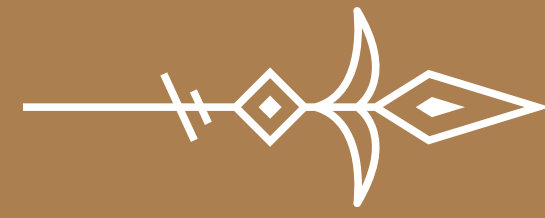
★ Luck, are you a lady or a louse?
Or a never-ending cat and mouse?
Are you bad, good, or indifferent,
To my hopes and mortal interest?
Are you, perhaps, devoid of meaning,
Never genuine, only seeming?
Or a something that does not exist
Beyond the vanity that persists
Within the daydreams of egoists?

★ Luck. You can hope for it, plan for it, beg for it, pray for it, and promise your firstborn, but in the end, luck is never the lady you can count on, no matter how well Frank Sinatra croons Frank Loesser's lyrics from *Guys and Dolls*. Nevertheless: *May the road ahead rise to greet you, and the wind be ever at your back. May the bad days be less than few, and may you and yours never be in lack.*

THINKING ABOUT NO. 30



Kelly Lewis



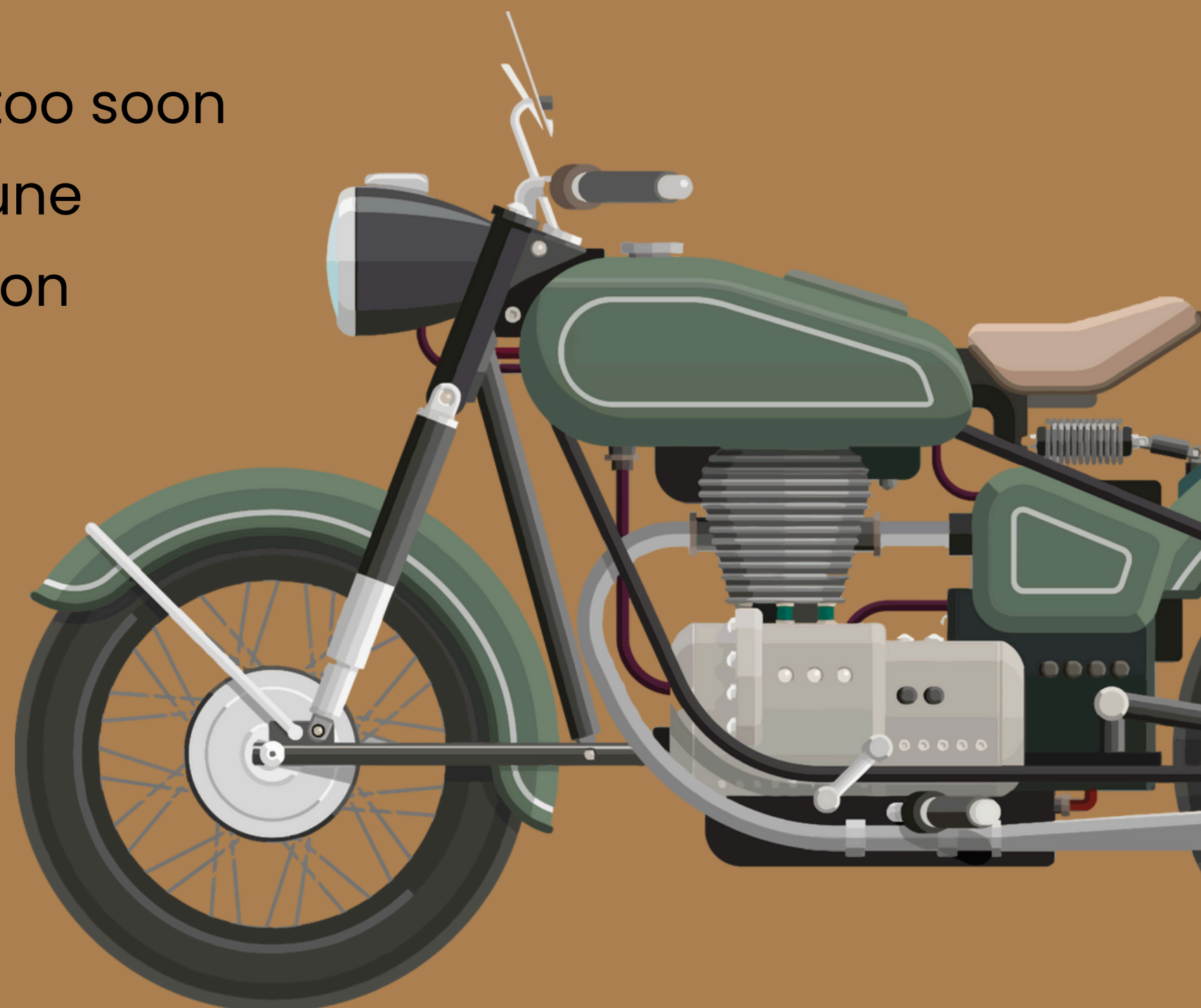
Our collaboration, it topped the charts
Led the competition on 3 of 4 score cards
You were always the rising and shining star
A pure radiance that shimmered near and far

Young innocence once asked me, what's in a dream?
I spoke of end-less possibilities, all meant to be
Recounting the fun shared in melody, now a memory
A decade past, before the fatal blow of our reality

On an ill-fated, and tragic night, what a horrific sight
Struck by a drunk hit-and-run driver, a devastating plight
Your love now a continuous flame that burns bright
A beacon in grief-stricken darkness, shining light

Though your life's journey ended far too soon
Your memory lives on in a heartfelt tune
Raw and underplayed, a melodic croon
That was so characteristically you

In loving memory of
Johnny Ray Akers
March 27, 2001 – November 4, 2024



Bon Voyage

Abigail Elina Handojo



So this is how sailors' wives feel like
When they bid their loves goodbye
So this is what it feels like
To be left behind

"Stay safe, return to me"
"Follow the stars, trust your instincts"
"May the winds treat you fairly,
I'll be waiting."

With fields of four-leafed clovers
Crossing my fingers, splitting wishbones
With baskets full of fortune cookies
Reciting whatever prayer will bring you home

With a challenge sealed behind my lips
Weaving a shroud I hope never to finish
My cries echo in the empty palace
Crowded with suitors who aren't you

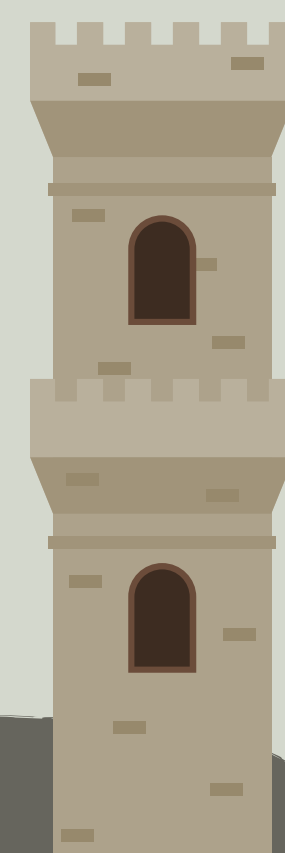
Flinging fallen eyelashes to the gods above
Aphrodite knows luck often conquers love
But it's been a vicennium
And my wishes aren't enough

I don't know
If I'm more viola, puppet, or bow
Strung up, held in place, and played
I don't know how much more of this I can take

I'm hopeful, but I'm not blind
I'll keep trying to buy you time
And bury the question in the back of my mind:
"How will I know if you've already died?"



Inspired by Penelope from
Homer's *Odyssey*
References to "The Challenge"
from *Epic: The Musical*





Hopes and Dreams

By *Sue Andrews*

Like most young children, I went through many stages of hopes and dreams for what I would do when I “grew up.” I didn’t know at the time that no one ever really finishes growing and that we all evolve as we grow.

When I was an adolescent, my mother called me her “little ballerina.” But if you’ve read my memoir, *To Live and Love Again*, you already found out that Mom never used that term because I was petite and graceful. It was quite the opposite. I was a chubby and clumsy child, and little oblivious of it, until someone called me names in school. Bullying is what they call it now. The words hurt but my mother could always soothe my pain making sure I was always loved. Words and phrases such as “Sticks and stones...” was one of many clichés she would say.

My mother had an idea she thought might help me build my self-esteem. She signed me up for modeling lessons in downtown Chicago. She hoped the classes would inspire me and teach me to become more graceful, poised, and maybe even lose a few pounds. Whenever my dieting on my own became too much for me, Mom kept insisting it was only a “little baby fat.”

The modeling lessons didn’t pay off or shall we say, have the success Mom wanted, though I did have fun. The only modeling gig I ever had was in junior high school when my Home Economics teacher had all the girls sew dresses for themselves which we modeled in a fashion show for our parents. I secretly thought that would be the closest I’d ever get to becoming a model as I was still somewhat overweight compared to my peers.

About the same time, my parents purchased a large Wurlitzer organ for our home, and I started taking organ lessons. I continued for seven years and thought I was quite good at it, after winning a partial music scholarship to college. But the scholarship only lasted one year until I flunked out of music school. It wasn’t from lack of effort my organ instructor said.

“You just started too late in life (age twelve) and although you deserved an F, I’m giving you a D minus because I see you’ve tried so hard!” Those words never crushed my spirit of maybe becoming a music or art teacher in elementary school. I had to take a year of art classes to finish with a Fine Arts degree. While still not knowing what I would do, I earned an elementary school credential while getting my degree, thinking I would teach school.



Hopes and Dreams

By *Sue Andrews*

But did I really want to do that? What about becoming a fashion designer? I also loved drawing pictures of fashion models in art class. Maybe a beautician? I loved fixing hair, but my parents would never let me do that with a college degree! Perhaps a stewardess? I always dreamed of traveling to Europe although I had never left the states. But back in the sixties the airlines employment guidelines were too strict for someone like me, which luckily I could laugh at then and to this day. I would tell people I was too fat (at least ten pounds overweight), too short (five feet tall), and too blind (you couldn't wear glasses or contacts), so I'd never make the cut.

Ten years out of college after teaching elementary school in lower-socio economic districts of Georgia and Florida, I had dreams of going back to college specializing in Special Education. I hadn't decided on which category to focus all my attention until I met a Deaf girl in my first special education class in my master's program. After watching the interpreter sign to her that first semester, I became fascinated with the idea of teaching Deaf children and switched my concentration of studies.

I graduated from the University of North Florida with a masters in Deaf Education and taught deaf and hard of hearing children in Florida for four years. Then I moved to California, and fifteen years ago finished my fortieth year in public education working primarily with Deaf students my last thirty years.

It wasn't until my retirement party that someone asked me what was in store for me next. I told everyone I wanted to author a book. My guests concluded it would be about teaching since I'd won Teacher of the Year and the County two years previously.

"No," I said. "far from it. It would be a memoir of my life."

Five years later, the result of that goal turned into the book, *To Live and Love Again*. It was after a friend handed me her card before she left my party that started it all. The card read, "Inland Empire, California Writers Club" (IECWC) and Jack London Award Winner. Since that chance encounter, I've written two more books, held many board positions including president of the club, was published in the State Annual Literary Review and also won the Jack London Award like my friend.

None of my younger hopes and dreams of the past were ever accomplished or attained. But now I can say my life certainly evolved into two careers and my hopes and dreams were accomplished in my later years.

Samuel Thomas Nichols

When I was a boy at William Green Elementary, I had a friend who lived nearby on 167th Street. I understood little at that early age, circa spring 1963, but I knew enough to know that her father was a disappointment to the family. He often disappeared to Las Vegas after leaving work on Friday and then, one Monday, my friend came to school with a story that her father never returned home. The neighbors were concerned, but I think more for the family than for the man. I don't remember if it was later that Monday, or later that same week, that he finally finished hitchhiking home from Nevada, where, after losing all of his wages, he had used his car's pink slip as gambling collateral and lost. My friend's family was without food and the neighbors helped. Soon my friend's mother took the kids and disappeared. Since then, I have despised Las Vegas and gambling.

A GAMBLER'S



Is where he seeks, be it the wheel or deck
Green table boxcars crowding come-out rolls
Not to worry and write another check
That the cashier bounces with no bankroll

What to hock that's not already been pawned?
Their wedding rings perished some time last year
His wife's silver secured less than a yawn
There's nothing back home but his children's tears

But the Gambler's luck is odds on to change
A dozen craps must come with a seven
For that's the way luck must often arrange
To end the Gambler's luck with a lesson

That he will, with a certainty, ignore
Because a Gambler's eyes are hypnotized

By neon lights and the allure of more,
More money, more gold, more to be excised,

More left to forsake than left to embrace
For the lights are off and no one's back home
No one to love, no dear little faces
No darling Susie, no master Jerome

And the Gambler wallows deep in his luck
Forgetting that once a life came before
The cards and the dice, the birth of the schmuck,
And the descent into the frost and hoar

In the end, the Gambler he'll break even
Trading his death for the life he forsook
Sacrificing something to believe in
For a perpetually empty bankbook





next month's
theme is...
renewal

