



INKSLINGER

HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC

SAIL ON

Vol. 24-No. 6 - June 2010

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



CAROL'S COMMENTS

The time is coming to a close for my term serving as your president these last two years. It has been such a thrill and a privilege to share our programs, marvel at our growth (as individuals and a Branch) and look forward to even more in the coming months and years.

The opportunities and ideas just keep coming and our September writers conference is just one of the exciting plans coming to fruition.

I have every confidence the High Desert Branch will continue to do great things and help many writers with their dreams and improving their craft. I appreciate each and every one of you and know you will continue to give your enthusiasm and support to the new board of officers you will elect at our June meeting.

Keep writing.

Thank you for your selfless service to our Branch, Carol, and we know you will continue to be active as a State representative to the HDCWC. Good things happened on your watch and we're all proud of you and your efforts.

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE HD CWC:

A friendly reminder that renewal dues of \$45.00 are due in June of 2010. To remain a member in good standing, be sure to bring your dues to the June 12 meeting at the Apple Valley Library, or send your check with the notation "Dues" to Treasurer Anne Fowler at:

HD CWC

20162 Hwy 18, Suite G-281
Apple Valley, CA 92307

Thanks!

Lots of excitement and educational programs coming up.

Don't miss any of the fun. Renew now!

Bob Isbill
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"HOWL AT THE MOON" **WRITERS' CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED**

The 100 year old California Writers Club announced plans for an all day writers' conference scheduled for Saturday, September 25, 2010. The affair will be held at the Lone Wolf Colony in Apple Valley and sponsored by the High Desert Branch of the CWC.

"Doors open at 8:00 a.m. and we'll go until about 5 p.m.," said branch President Carol Warren. "We'll feed you, entertain you, educate you, and you're bound to meet some of the best people around because they're writers just like you. Even the coffee is included!" The lineup of guest speakers includes:

Mike Foley - Past president of the HD CWC. Writer, teacher, co-founder of the Big Bear Writer's Retreat in Big Bear, California. Mike Foley is author of over 750 published stories and articles, and teaches fiction and non-fiction writing at the University of California at Riverside.

Glen Hirshberg - Won the 2008 Shirley Jackson Award for his novella, "The Janus Tree." Both his two story collections, *American Morons* (Earthling, 2006) and *The Two Sams* (Carroll & Graf, 2003), received the International Horror Guild Award and were selected by *Locus* as a best book of the year. Mr. Hirschberg teaches writing and the teaching of writing at Cal State San Bernardino

Alton Gansky - Christian Novelist and author of over thirty books,. Gansky has been a Christie Award finalist (*A SHIP POSSESSED*) and an Angel Award winner (*TERMINAL JUSTICE*). He holds a BA and MA in biblical studies.

John Moffet - Long time Television Producer and Writer ,Producer, co-producer, executive producer of dozens of TV shows.

"It's a non-profit organization," Warren said. "And we're trying to keep the quality very high and the admission price low. It's hard to beat this conference price because it also includes a continental breakfast and a catered lunch. We expect an early sell-out because of that and because of limited seating. We're encouraging people to take advantage of our early bird non-member price of \$45.00. We even have cooperating hotels such as Quality

Inn providing special rates for out of town visitors. If you're a writer, or have ever wanted to write, this conference is for you!"

The California Writers Club is the largest professional writing club west of the Mississippi. They have over 1100 members in 18 branches throughout California. The High Desert Branch meets the second Saturday of each month at the Apple Valley Library. For further information, please visit www.hdcwc.org or call (760)242-3367.

A Reminder...

Please remember to bring any BRAND NEW items that you'd like to donate to the HD CWC for the purpose of raffle to enhance our funds or enhance our meeting and/or conference. We want to track these donations so please bring a fair market value so we can note it. (If anyone has a brand new Mercedes that they intend to donate, please see me privately

HEAR YE! HEAR YE! **BRANCH ELECTIONS SLATED FOR JUNE 12** **MEETING**

This is a reminder that elections will be held at our next meeting, June 12. In accordance with the Article III of the Bylaws of the HDCWC, which provides for four elected officers, President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, election will be in June and the new officers installed at the July meeting. Currently nominees for these offices are Bob Isbill, President; Curt James, Vice President; Anne Fowler, Treasurer and Naomi Ward, Secretary. Nominations from the floor will be accepted at the open meeting. If you or someone you know would make a good officer and wishes to run, please attend the meeting and place the name in nomination. Nominations should be made with the consent of the nominee(s).

The President, with advice and input from the Board, may appoint to the Board of

Directors members in good standing to serve as needed but in any event, the Board may not be less three nor more than seven members. Included among these would be the Membership Chair, Newsletter Editor, Member(s) at Large or any other position deemed necessary according to the needs of the Branch.

We need to remember that serving on the Board is good training for taking over the Branch leadership in years to come. We have the momentum going – let's keep it going and the Branch growing.

THANKS!
(from Bob Isbill)

I'm going to have to start this message with an apology because every time you start thanking people, you're bound to miss someone. And that's not intended.

In fact, last issue of the newsletter in naming volunteers, I left Winnie Rueff off the list, and I'm sorry for that, Winnie!

But it's necessary to thank a bunch of good people who chipped right in and helped with the May 8 meeting, and we have to acknowledge them. So if I miss your name, please excuse me.

Thanks to Fran Savage for being our "banker" in the absence of our Treasurer, Anne Fowler; thanks to Alyssa and Barbara Schultz for responding to our gift tracking and PulsePen needs, and to Brian Cooper for coordinating and manning the coffee table, and to Thomas Kier for lending muscle to haul stuff out, and to Ann Heimbeck just for being Ann Heimbeck (Oh, well, okay, for the coffee assistance and help cleaning up) and to Curt James for jumping right on the microphone hookup problem, and to Suzanne Holbrook-Brumbaugh for assisting with gathering the name tags, to Jimmy Dabbas for moving the chairs around and setting up the room, and to Dwight Norris for bringing and distributing bottled water... and on and on and on and I'm REALLY sorry if I missed mentioning your help.

Result: a really good meeting with a fun, informative guest speaker, Julia Amante.

And a big thank you to Ann Heimbeck for the elegant and effective bell to call our meetings to order. Beats a gavel every time. Thanks, Ann, for remembering us on your recent vacation. Welcome back.

And how about those Nieman Marcus cookies provided by Diane Neil? Delicioso!

(And I'm going to tack onto Bob's kudos because tucked away by the door and lending much needed help to someone fervently wishing she were an octopus, were Diane Neil, Anne Heimbeck and Alyssa Schultz, each of whom saw the need and moved in to help pass out the ID badges, be sure the arrivals were greeted and signed up on the appropriate sheet, and, above all, extended the warm welcome to both members and guests relieving the bottleneck. We've had comments from guests about how nice it is to be greeted by friendly people on their first visit. As we grow, and the initial convergence of people coming in becomes more dense, it's truly great to have a team working to keep the wheels moving smoothly. Thanks to each of you - from Naomi Ward, Frustrated Secretary)

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE HIGH DESERT ANTHOLOGY

The anthology manuscript has been submitted to the publisher in Colorado. We had a nice response with 34 members submitting 72 submissions of stories and poems. There will be further editing when we see what the book will look like. Once we give a final OK to print, an email will confirm acceptance of work to the authors. Thank you to all who participated in this project.

George Gracyk, Editor

A writer needs three things, experience, observation, and imagination, any two of which, at times any one of which, can supply the lack of others.

William Faulkner

COMING SATURDAY ATTRACTIONS

Lots of excitement is in store for our branch in the coming months.



June 12, 2010: HD CWC elections followed by our featured speaker. Jesse Pomeroy, Best Director for his film, *"World Full of Nothing"*,

scripted and co-produced by this former Apple Valley High School graduate who has worked on over 500 films.

June 26, 2010: Hesperia Library special meeting to get you going on building your own web site! Be thinking about what YOU want to say and how you want to say it online and on your own site.

July 10, 2010: Installation and introduction of new officers followed by a new feature, *10 Minute Techniques*. These will be short presentations by our own membership who will share valuable tips and insights into getting the writing job done!

August 14, 2010: *Open Microphone Meeting*.

A time for our own members to read from their works and share their craft with the branch. We want to hear your poetry, short story, or excerpt from your novel or screenplay. It won't be a critique meeting—it's simply a time for you to put your efforts into the spotlight.

September 11, 2010: Special presentation. Watch for more details!

JULY CHALLENGE

By Bob Isbill

Do you have a great technique?

How do you stay on schedule? How do you make your characters come to life on the page? How do you say in a few words what takes the rest of us many words to say in? Did you recently (or not so recently) learn a technique of some kind that you would share with the rest of us?

Can you do it in 10 minutes...?

We're in the process of putting together just such a program. We'd love YOU to share that special something that has helped you as a writer to develop in a meaningful way.

But it needs to be brief and to the point. Ten minutes brief, absolute maximum.

Can you do it? WILL you do it?

Let us know. Give us a title, a topic, an estimated time, and an intro that takes 15 seconds or less.

Please send your email subject line "MY TECHNIQUE" to risbill@aol.com

Target date for presentations: July 10, 2010 meeting.

(Here's a good sample of what would be a great "TECHNIQUE" hint, offered to us by Dwight Norris)

HOW TO KEEP THE COALS RED HOT

Moving Seamlessly into the Next Chapter

I've discovered that upon completing a chapter that I really like, my emotions are piqued in the drama, and my mind is sharp. Rather than close up shop for the night, why not begin the next chapter before turning in? With my mind and emotions right there, what better time to do it? Why wait until I've cooled off and sat down at the computer again where I have to reconstruct the dramatic arc, the context and details of the scene, and the emotions? Why not just move seamlessly forward into the next chapter, even if for only a paragraph or two? That way, when I return for another sitting, I hit the ground running, with the chapter already begun, and my mind re-focused. Before I know it, I'm off and running on the chapter's third and fourth page with the action moving right along. It speeds up the entire process, and keeps the transition between chapters as seamless as possible. I hope this is helpful.

And while we are speaking of the art of writing, you need know we're getting short on victuals in our "Pantry". I don't want to go back to the semi-monthly issues – particularly when I know there's a whole bunch of writers who aren't writing and sending in copy . The 4th of July is coming. Send me some memories of childhood celebrations How about summertime escapades? Your favorite vacation(s)? It will be a challenge to do it in 350 words. Are you up to it? Let's keep the chuck wagon serving the stew through out the roundup! Yee Haw! Let 'er rip! NW, editor

APPLE VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE MAKES IT BIG-TIME

By Bob Isbill

Award winning writer/director Jesse Pomeroy will be the guest speaker at the California Writers Club, High Desert Chapter, from 10 am to noon, Saturday, June 12 at the Apple Valley Library. Pomeroy will talk about writing screen plays as well as movie production and distribution. His feature film *World Full of Nothing* is available on DVD at [_www.worldfulofnothing.com_](http://www.worldfulofnothing.com) (<http://www.worldfulofnothing.com/>) and Indie Flix. (Parental guidance recommended) The film is billed as the first serious film for the YouTube generation. Pomeroy says "It's an entertainment, but also a warning." It deals with an epidemic of teen suicides, an internet predator, an FBI profiler and a young girl trapped in the middle of it all.

The film was screened in September at the Naperville Independent Film Festival in Illinois, where it was nominated for Best Feature, Best Actress (Angela Bozier) and won for Best Director (Jesse Pomeroy). Completing the main cast are Bella Nelson (who plays Rachael), Richard Gunn (James Cameron's *Dark Angel*) and Greg Travis (*Watchmen*).

Pomeroy graduated from Apple Valley High School (1988), where he participated in the cinematography program under the direction of Terry Kurtz. He attended the University of Southern California where he majored in filmic writing and graduated from Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, with a BFA in film production. His short films *Candlelight* and *The Fire Inside* have taken awards at the Charleston and Dallas - Fort Worth Film Festivals.

Pomeroy has been a supervising sound editor on over 500 feature films and is an owner/partner in Mission Post, a boutique post-sound company. A prolific screenwriter, he is busy developing new projects for his Hillrose Street production imprint and continuing work on two Young Adult novels.

"If you want your writing to be taken seriously, don't marry and have kids, and above all, don't die. But if you have to die, commit suicide. They approve of that." - Ursula K. LeGuin

"WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW"

Julia Amante

By Fran Savage

Even though Julia Amante ignored the advice "Romance writers never make money. . . Don't be a writer," she kept at it until she had several books under her belt. Like most of us, she had many times of disappointment

She attended a Romance Writer's Conference in Anaheim, and subsequently wrote books that were half English and half Latino with the hope that the two languages would help those trying to learn English. Those books didn't get the response required to continue.

Still her love of writing fell in the romance genre, along with the influence from her father who was an immigrant from Argentina. She wanted to encompass that culture in her writing. She realized how difficult it was for young Latinas to merge into American society.

About that time the successful movie *Titanic* hit the screens. She received a call from her publisher that a romance aboard a cruise ship would be appropriate. She went on a cruise to Argentina, and wrote the book. Four books were sold, and the publisher closed down that line. Twenty-two authors including Amante were left without a source to get their books published.

Three years passed, and still no publisher. She found an agent who started a bidding war between two publishers. Her books were called "Chick Lit" but that didn't stop her as she tried to straddle the line between two cultures.

The two publishers wanted outlines of her books, and character charts. That left her stymied, and she decided there are two types of writers. First there are "Plotters" those who plot the entire book. Second there are "Pantcers" those who write by the seat of their pants. *Not sure of that word Pantcers, but I think I fall in that line. But I digress, back to the article. . . Sorry!*

Her father died a bitter man in his eyes, and she wanted to prove him wrong. He came to America to achieve his dream, and she returned to Argentina in search of facts. There, she was given letters written by him, and copies of letters written to him from her grandfather.

She returned to America determined to build that bridge between the cultures.

Her advice to authors “Don’t write yourself into a box” and “Write What You Know,” remains good sound advice we have often heard. She followed her own advice, and now has a following of readers who even picked the name of her latest book through her web site.

“Have a strong opening in every book you write,” is advice that authors would be wise to follow. If you need to write your plot out for an editor say “can happen”, not necessarily “will happen.” That way you leave the door open to make changes, and still write what the editor wants.

Finally someone in the audience asked how she works writing into her busy schedule. She prefers to write between nine and twelve in the evening, and suggested that every writer find the most advantageous time.

Armante found the link between the two cultures, and she has used her writing to help those who need to adjust to a new culture - The American Dream.

NEW CAR FOR DADDY

Linda Bowden

This summer was going to be one of those summers I would remember for the rest of my life. My dad and mom had bought their first new car and they couldn’t wait to drive to Missouri and show off to their family their accomplishment.

Every other summer, as my sister and I grew up, we’d pile in the car and start the four-day, three-night journey to our grandpa’s house in Missouri. For several days my parents would sit and talk in the evening over coffee, while my dad would map out the trip on Route 66, as if he’d never driven it before. “This year,” he said, “It’s going to be different with this new car.” “Smooth sailing”. My mom would roll her eyes and I can only imagine what she was thinking. “It’s gonna be the same four days and three nights in a car with two children asking, when are we going to get there?”

Finally the departure day had arrived. My father, always overanxious to get going, piled the suitcases in the trunk before dawn. He carried my sister to the car and we all set out on a trip that would never be forgotten.

Two days passed as my parents took turns sleeping and then driving those long, lonely desert miles. Hours and miles of nothing along the way loomed before us. The time frame was the 1950’s. The country was less populated and in some places there was nothing to see except scrub brush, cactus and sand. Gas station stops were something my father had carefully planned out. He always asked the same question at each gas station, “How many miles to the next station?”

On the third day we started to hit bad weather. The sky was dark; so dark that my sister and I weren’t sure anymore if it was daytime or nighttime. The rain was mounting, the wipers swishing back and forth. My father hushed us as he often did while driving. I sensed urgency in his voice and I knew better than to sass him.

Other cars along the highway had pulled over on the side of the road. You couldn’t see to drive; my father relented and pulled over to the side also. Suddenly, without warning, my mom climbed over the front seat and sat between my sister and me. She put both arms around us and held us tightly under her arms. My dad lay down across the front seat.

HDCWC IS A PRESENCE ON VVC CAMPUS



On Cinco de Mayo, the HD CWC hand-billed the local Victor Valley College during Culture Craze, and created a huge publicity inroad to the campus. The club members volunteered to spread the word about our club and especially about our Howl At The Moon Writers’ Conference coming up on September 25, 2010.

Buenas Dias

My mom began to pray quietly but out loud, "Please God let us be safe." Over and over she prayed that same prayer. She instructed us to close our eyes. My heart was pounding and I didn't even know why.

Then I saw why. On the side of the car, in the distance, was a towering, whirling force traveling the desert scenery, with a fury that left your mouth drop open. The sound was the loudest sound I had ever heard. The huge funnel was whirling, picking up speed, approaching, uttering language all its own. Mom was squeezing us so tight I thought my ribs would break. I wanted to scream but no sound moved past my lips.

Just then with the wind funnel very close to the new car, God answered my mother's prayers. Just as suddenly as the fury approached it began to hover and as if it had a mind of its own the fury turned in the opposite direction and set out across the plains to claim new victims.

"You can be a little ungrammatical if you come from the right part of the country." - Robert Frost

THAT OLD DODGE

by
George Gracyk

A Christmas Present from my wife got me started. It was a book by Bob Greene, a general guide on preserving your family history. With the use of a simple word processing program, spell checker and thesaurus, this personal computer task has become quite popular. They even offer classes on this subject at many Senior Citizen Centers. The book is a basic outline using some key words and leading questions to trigger various areas of your memory. The general subject on page 187 is "Vehicles". Where does your mind wander to when it's suggested, "List all the vehicles you have owned." Are your memories sort of faded black and white tattered snapshots, or are they like mine? My memories are crisp, vivid pictures in brilliant full color!

In the spring of 1946, I was fourteen and a few months shy of an Illinois Driver License when I bought my first automobile. I gave \$45 of hard earned newspaper route savings to an old farmer named Keck down on south LaGrange

Road for a 1929 Dodge. It was a dull, sort of mottled green color and the tar coated canvas roof was gone. Full roof steel bodies were a few years down the line. The tires looked good but only because the car was up on blocks. Chickens wandered in and out at will and there were field mice nesting in the remains of the upholstery. Golly, it was just a flat out beautiful machine!

We got the tires pumped up and with a sturdy hunk of rope; my friend Tommy Milne towed me home behind his 1933 Hupmobile. Now that was a real nice car even with those so-called "suicide" front doors. Funny thing was, it didn't take a lot work or money to get that old Dodge to run. But of course, cars were pretty simple back then. A little research gave up the details that my Dodge was a Senior Six model and touted the marvelously advanced, fully hydraulic, four wheel brake system. Say what you will, that car would stop on a dime and give a nickel change! It wasn't much for speed and obviously built for stout. I think it could climb a telephone pole in low gear.

The Dodge was fun and I kept it for a year or so, but the bread and butter auto that saw me through High School and Junior College was a 1930 Nash coupe with side-mounted spare tires and a rumble seat. I had this car for a little more than six years. It had mechanical brakes that worked from fair to poor no matter how often you adjusted them. But it did have a little speed to it. I remember flying down that big hill in West Hinsdale with my sisters screaming in the rumble seat. We hit 65 MPH and I thought those big wooden spoke wheels were going to fly off. Gasoline was nineteen cents a gallon then at the Oklahoma Oil station in Congress Park. Two bucks worth would suffice for a week.

Did I mention that cars were simpler then? The Nash fuel gauge never did work, but not to worry. The gas tank was in plain sight back there under the luggage carrier. I would unscrew the big chrome gas cap and use a two-foot stick with graduated markings to check the fuel reserve. I got a lot of work out of that old car. The Sunday Chicago Tribune was far too big and heavy for a kid on a bike, teenagers with cars made those deliveries. I had two Sunday customer routes for years. The rumble

seat was great for holding the big, bulky Sunday papers.

The suburban Chicago winters were tough on those old six-volt systems. We were lucky. We had a two-car garage. The family car, Dad's '41 Chrysler, had a head bolt heater. As for my Nash, I would tuck a 100-watt light bulb on an extension cord next to the engine and cover the hood with a blanket. You had to spend more time taking care of your car back then.

As we come up through the years to pad out the auto history, the memories of the assortment of cars seems to fade just a bit. My Model 'A' Ford had an apple crate for the only seat but ran well enough for a \$25 investment. Never did have a Model 'T' Ford, I considered it a piece of junk! For a High School year or two, I had the second fastest car in town. My '35 Ford coupe with a '39 V8 truck engine would bow only to Eddie Webber's '34 Ford roadster. A metallic blue '41 Ford three window coupe (with '48 Pontiac coke bottle tail lights) saw me through my Army days.

I could recount the various sedans, station wagons, company cars and such to this date. There are a lot more memories tied-in with various automobiles in your life than meets the eye, unless given a little thought. They all have their own stories filed away in your memory bank. But like your first girlfriend and first kiss, your memory is crystal clear regarding your first car. The \$45 for that squat, ugly old Dodge sedan was some of the best dollars I have ever spent!



A YOUNG MAN'S FIRST LOVE

Publishers are in business to make money and if your books do well they don't care if you are male, female or an elephant .

Margaret Atwood

DENNY STANZ, AUTHOR, FOOD STORIES,

*Review written by Bob Isbill**

Food Stories" makes me think of two other words: What fun!

Denny Stanz has collected not only a series of relationship recipes, but fascinating scenarios that give us an insight into the fact that he must really be a pretty great guy.

Denny's writing is tight, purposeful and amusing. But he takes his food and his ambience seriously while taking us on a rollicking good time. You can almost smell the goodies cooking. You have to be careful while reading that you watch your snacking because I definitely was getting hungry by chapter 3.

Food Stories is a fast read that makes you lose yourself in Denny's kitchen as he walks any amateur through the steps of preparing a meal that will bring raves from your diners. He's prepared a book as enthusiastically as he prepares a meal, and it's every bit as tasty.

It's a great little gift for the friend, brother, father, husband, son or other guy in your life. (And it won't hurt the ladies to read it either!)

I loved it. I haven't cooked in years, thanks to being married to a wonderful chef, but I remember when I didn't make a bad peanut butter cookie and I'm getting enthused about exploring our galley further.

A sample chapter, his video, and the book are available online at Dennystanz.com.

WORDS, LIKE DANCING LOTTO BALLS

By Jenny Margotta

Ping! Ping, ping! Ping, plink, plonk!

Individual words. Phrases and partial sentences. Half-formed descriptions and snippets of conversation bounce around my mind like lotto balls dancing in their wire cage.

This usually happens early in the morning, long before the sun rises. "0-dark thirty" my military friends call it, that dark, dark, very early morning hour when few people are up and about and most of them wish they were not. My body struggles to remain still, relaxed in my comfortable bed. My body tells my brain, "Have patience. It's too early. Wait for the

alarm, or at least wait for the sun!" But my brain, like a rebellious toddler refusing his nap, argues back "No. Up now. Too many words. They have to come out."

Luckily this doesn't happen every day. Most days I easily sleep past that dreaded "0-dark thirty," but on those days when the words are awake, I can only answer their summons, sit myself down in front of the computer and let the words, thoughts, phrases, descriptions and conversations find their own way out of my jumbled brain and onto the page. Surprisingly enough, it usually even ends up making sense.

Once in awhile, as if having been bestowed with a special treat, I'll awake with nearly a complete story having formed in my mind while I slept. That's rarely the case, though. More often, there are 4 or 5 fractured story lines, half-formed and co-mingled, which need to be sorted into organized patterns.

I think, too, that my fingers are in on the word game along with my brain. Often, while my conscious mind is trying to pull just one storyline from my scrambled backlog of thoughts, my subconscious already has my fingers tapping across the keyboard, black letters on white background, independent keystrokes quickly building into coherent creation.

All too soon the household around me begins to stir. The welcome aroma of fresh brewed coffee wafts in from the kitchen. The sun makes its ever faithful appearance and peers into my office window, one finger of light catching the blue glass teardrop hanging from the curtain rod, sending faint pulses and flickers of blue across my monitor.

Time to greet my family and get started on the day's list of To-Dos. Today will be a good day. The words are quiet for awhile, having decided to nap while the body works, but they'll be back. Maybe tonight, maybe not for 3 or 4 days, but I never worry I'll be lonely for long. The words always return – nuggets of wisdom or droplets of fiction. They return in an unending stream for me to absorb and translate and transcribe.

THE WINDOW

By Dwight Norris

Jim Dyson was a therapist who practiced out of his own building, an ivy-covered brick structure on the east side of White Birch Avenue. He was an elderly gentleman with thin, scraggly white hair and a matching mustache that looked like the janitor's push-broom. His diabetes had caused him to slow down in recent years, but he still maintained a part-time practice for select cases, and his many years of experience allowed him to be effective for his patients.

On this Tuesday morning, Jim's receptionist, Louise, escorted a new charge into his office, a 38 year-old man from out of town named Leonard Duncan. Leonard had been injured in an industrial accident. Worker's Comp had authorized at least six sessions of psychotherapy.

Jim rose from his chair to greet Leonard with a firm handshake.

"So tell me what you're dealing with here, Leonard." Jim asked.

"Well, sulfuric acid splashed in my eyes, and I may never see again. It was my supervisor's negligence that led to the accident, and I'm having a hard time dealing with it. I didn't deserve this," Leonard said.

"What are the doctors saying?" Jim asked.

"They're gonna keep these patches on my eyes for three to four weeks, except for changing the bandages. They'll know more after that."

Jim engaged Leonard in conversation for a while, learning more about his new patient. After about twenty minutes, Jim rose from his chair and faced the window behind his desk.

"You know, Leonard, when I look out this window, I see a beautiful lake. A lush green carpet of grass stretches out all around it. Stout, squatty oak trees dot the landscape. Kids are out there having a ball. They're fishing and flying kites. I can see a father help his young son pull in a silvery perch, flopping around on the grass. Young couples are strolling by hand-in-hand, some sitting on the benches. It is so vibrant and alive! It reminds me there is a life to be lived outside this room!"

"Easy for you to say," groused Leonard.

I find television very educational. Every time someone turns it on, I go into the other room and read a book.

Groucho Marx

“Feeling sorry for ourselves today, are we?”

“You ain’t never been blind,” Leonard countered. “You don’t know what I’m dealing with.”

“There’s a family having a picnic,” Jim continued. “A man and his wife, and a young daughter and son. They’re spreading the blanket on the hillside, and reaching into the basket for their goodies. Reminds me so much of when Jenny and I were young. We had a son and a daughter about four years apart, just like the children I’m seeing. Mary was the oldest. She was a wonderful big sister, always looking out for Robert. Even when he got into her things, she’d act upset, but she really loved him and always took care of him.”

“So you got a family, huh?” Leonard asked.

“Yes, I do,” Jim answered. “A wonderful family. And I hope to be joining them all pretty soon. What about you, Leonard. Do you have a family?”

“Well, kind of, but it’s been a while since I seen ‘em. The wife and I don’t get along too good, you know, arguing all the time, so I ain’t lived at home for a while. And we got two small boys, but I been busy trying to make a living and all.”

“Leonard, I remember Jenny’s lunches like they were yesterday. Fried chicken, potato salad, warm rolls, corn on the cob. I don’t know how she did it. She put so much love into those lunches. I am a lucky, lucky man for being able to love that woman and my children, and for the love they gave me.”

The next three weeks passed quickly, with Jim and Leonard meeting once a week, and Leonard getting his bandages changed every day. Leonard saw nothing but the pictures Jim painted in his mind, and paint them he did. The window produced vibrant images of color and life, and Jim was attuned to all the details.

Leonard’s outlook seemed to improve.

At their fourth meeting, Leonard said, “You know, Jim, thinking ‘bout all those things you’re seeing out that window makes me really want to see again. And it makes me want to have a second chance with my family—you know, go on a picnic, play some ball with the boys, be a real father and husband.”

“Leonard, see what you want in your mind, and feel it in your heart. Believe it as you want it to be, and you shall have it. That is what I know!”

Jim called Louise into his office as Leonard left the building.

“Louise, see if you can get Mrs. Duncan on the phone. I’m gonna play a hunch here.” The following Tuesday, Leonard burst into Jim’s office. His cell was his only phone, and was not operating.

“Where’s Jim?” Leonard cried. “I can see! I can see! I can’t wait to tell Jim!”

“Uh, I’m sorry Mr. Duncan,” Louise answered. “I, I tried to reach you. Mr. Dyson passed away Sunday night, complications of his diabetes.”

“What?”

Leonard sat down not knowing what to say. He bent forward and grabbed the hair on each side of his head looking at the floor. He remained in his solitude for a long time.

“Oh my God,” Leonard said quietly. “I can’t believe Jim’s not here.”

“Mr. Dyson would be very happy for you, Mr. Duncan. He was a wonderful man.”

“Yeah he was. His family must be devastated.”

“His family?” Louise countered. “Mr. Dyson’s wife passed away about a year ago, and his two children years before that.”

“What? But...”

Leonard was stunned.

After a long while, Leonard asked, “Do you suppose I could just look out that back window in his office? He inspired me so much with the scenes that he saw out that window, I’d just like to see them for myself.”

“Well, I guess I can let you look out the window,” Louise answered, “but I don’t know what you’re gonna see”

Louise unlocked the office door and parted the curtains behind Jim’s desk. Leonard stepped to the window and his mouth dropped open.

“It’s just a six-foot block wall and a garbage can!”

Um, yeah, that’s what it is,” Louise answered.

“But Jim described the lake, and the trees, and the kids playing, and all the stuff!”

“Mr. Dyson was blind from his diabetes,” Louise answered. “He couldn’t even see the garbage can.”

“What?” Leonard was getting indignant. “He described all those beautiful things in detail!”

“Mr. Dyson gave you the gift of *vision*,” Louise countered. “Sounds like he thought a lot of you.”

As they turned to leave the office, two young boys burst through the door.

“Daddy, Daddy!” they cried as they leapt into Leonard’s arms.

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Then a woman, Leonard’s wife, haltingly stepped into the doorway, and Leonard met her with the biggest smile he’d ever shown. It was a family hug, with many tears—tears of happiness and joy.

Leonard’s youngest son, Seth, took his father’s face in his hands. “Can you see, Daddy? Can you see?”

“Yes, son, I can see. This window has helped me to see, and I can see better than ever before.”

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