

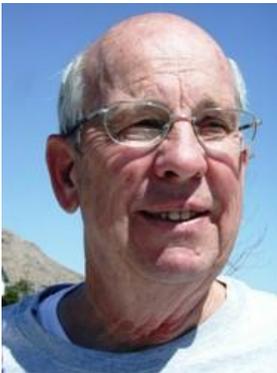
# INKSLINGER

HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC

SAIL ON

December 2011

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



The  
President's  
**POV**  
Bob Isbill

## A TIME TO PULL TOGETHER

As writers, there's an occasion for "alone-time".

But there's a time when we need to stretch ourselves to work with each other and that's what I'm addressing today. Not just for our Branch members, but CWC members all throughout the state of California.

We request and require your involvement in this project.

Your participation with us and our Branch can help you and your Branch in the coming months.

The High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club has contacted Barnes & Noble and has scheduled a Book Fair for Sunday, December 11, 2011.

Here's how it works.

On December 11 and for the next five days through December 16, 2011, our HD CWC Branch will receive 10% of almost all sales in Barnes & Noble at the Victor Mall.

Here is where the other branches and the 1300 members in California come in.

We will also receive that percentage of everything (except gift cards and digital software) sold online through Barnes & Noble!

And here's the really exciting thing: These vouchers will be accepted in every Barnes & Noble store in the U.S.A.!

There is only one requirement. The purchaser **MUST** use our Voucher Code **#10620284** during this window period between 12/11 and 12/16/2011.

On the payment page for your online purchases, you will see a prompt "Check if this is a Bookfair Order". When you click on it, you will get a payment screen where you can enter your book fair ID number in the space provided. This book fair ID number is the same provided by your organization for in-store shopping.

If you are signed into an existing account, from the Checkout screen, click on the Change Button on the upper right of the Payment tab. This will bring you to the full payment page where you can enter your Bookfair ID in the space at the bottom of the page.

Why should other CWC Branches participate in a fundraiser for the High Desert Branch?

Here's why: Because the other 16 branches can hold a Book Fair at their local Barnes & Noble **PLUS** get a percent of the online sales purchased through [www.BN.com/Bookfairs](http://www.BN.com/Bookfairs) throughout the coming year.

Just let us know when and we'll do our online purchases for you!

Does that make \$ense to you? ALL our Branches can do successful Bookfair fundraisers by getting together and sticking together!

We are not asking for money. We're not even asking for people to spend money. All we are asking for is that IF they are going to buy products from Barnes & Noble, to do it during the time period between December 11<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> and use our voucher code **#10620284**.

Please support our fundraiser, and we pledge to support yours.

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### A FUNDRAISER THAT DOESN'T COST MONEY!

This will be HUGE with your full cooperation!

The High Desert Branch of the California Writers club has contacted Barnes & Noble and has arranged for a Book Fair for Sunday, December 11, 2011!

Here's how it works.

On December 11 and for the next five days thru December 16, 2011, our HDCWC Branch will receive 10% of almost all sales in Barnes & Noble at the Victor Mall.

Here is where the other Branches and the 1300 members in California come in.

The High Desert Branch will also receive that percentage of **everything**(except gift cards and digital software) sold online through Barnes & Noble!

Furthermore, this voucher is good AT ANYSTORE IN THE COUNTRY! That means that if you spread the word and pass along the voucher, and a customer in Wisconsin goes into a Barnes & Noble with our voucher OR EVEN OUR ID # 10620284.

There is only one requirement. The purchaser MUST use the Voucher Code #10620284 during this window period between 12/11/11 and 12/16/11.

Why should other CWC Branches participate in a fundraiser for the High Desert Branch?

Here's why: Because the other 16 Branches can hold a Book Fair at their local Barnes & Noble PLUS get a percent of the online sales purchased through [www.BN.com/Bookfairs](http://www.BN.com/Bookfairs) throughout the coming year.

The High Desert Branch has pledged to reciprocate and support all other branches who choose to participate in such a fundraiser.

If you are signed into an existing account, from the Checkout screen, click on the Change Button on the upper right of the Payment tab. This will bring you to the full payment page where you can enter our Book Fair ID in the space at the bottom of the page.

We are not asking for money. We not even asking for people to spend money. All we are asking for is that IF you are going to buy products from Barnes & Noble, to do it during the time period between December 11<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> and use our voucher code **#10620284**.

Please support our fund raiser, and we pledge to support yours!

Thanks!

*Please copy and paste the following message to all your friends and family and let them know about this project:*

I am a member of the California Writers Club.

The California Writers Club is a non-profit statewide organization devoted to promoting excellence in writing, and dedicated to helping authors market their works.

The High Desert Branch is having a Barnes & Noble Book Fair during the week of December 11 through December 16, 2011.

**We are NOT asking for money!**

We are asking that if you plan to purchase Barnes & Noble products soon, to purchase them **AT ANY** Barnes & Noble store in the country. Vouchers are available on our web site at [www.hdcwc.org](http://www.hdcwc.org)

Will you please send this along to those you know? It would help our branch tremendously! Thanks!

Also, please copy and paste the above message into your Facebook page, and forward this email (blind copy) on to everyone you know. We are trying to have the biggest Fundraising Event possible, and want to message to go viral!



**WE CAN  
"SAIL ON"  
TO  
SUCCESS  
TOGETHER**

**DUAL SUBJECTS SCHEDULED  
FOR DECEMBER 10 MEETING**

On December 10, 2011 our meeting will feature Dr. Robert Kirk's PowerPoint presentation of United States Air Force jet fighter pilots in the Vietnam war, which was the basis for writing his collection of short stories, "Warriors at 500 Knots". Dr. Kirk is a veteran flyer of the F-4 jets. During his tour, he completed 197 combat missions in the F-4D and was awarded several medals including the Distinguished Flying Cross.

John "Rocky" McAlister, author of "Legacy Encounter", will lead off the next part of the meeting, a "Pitch Fest" consisting of pitches limited to five minutes.

The selection of four other published authors who will have opportunities to do a five minute pitch will be done by lot. All published author members of the HD CWC are invited to bring, display and sell their books to those present at the meeting. The authors will be on hand to autograph their books.

**BARNES & NOBLE GIFT WRAPPING  
SCHEDULE FOR SUNDAY 11/27/2011**

10 TO 12:30	12:30 TO 3:00
Iris Baker	Loralie Pallotta
Carol Warren	Virginia Hall
Rusty LaGrange	

**CHRISTMAS CAROLERS NEEDED FOR VIDEO**

How's this for a visual...?

There are several shoppers in Barnes & Noble Booksellers and they are doing various things: browsing, looking around, etc.

Then, a man suddenly starts singing a Christmas Carol. People stop to listen and look because he has a rich, mellow voice.

Then, about twenty feet away, a woman responds with a stanza. She has a beautiful voice, and other shoppers then look at her. Another joins in. Now it's a trio, and they sing together, now moving towards each other.

Other shoppers are coming from all over the store to see what is going on.

A few of them also join in so now we have a full complement of singers and they continue to sing other carols.

We now notice that a man with a video camera has captured all this with digital sight and sound.

The store has become a happier place to be, and a place filled with Holiday spirit!

...are you down for it? Can you sing? Can you video? We could go viral with this and put it on our [www.hdcwc.org](http://www.hdcwc.org).

Contact Bob Isbill at [risbill@aol.com](mailto:risbill@aol.com). Come on! Be a writer.



**FEDERAL PRISON WRITERS' WORKSHOP  
SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER**

Mary D. Scott, author of "Spirit Driven Events" and "How To" Market Your Book", will present her marketing PowerPoint to the HD CWC Federal Prison Workshop on Wednesday, December 7, 2011. There is a great deal of interest among the class of 20 inmates about the field of marketing, and there are published authors within the group.

Mary Scott presented this program to the HD CWC in a meeting earlier this year at the Apple Valley Library

**A DAY WITH TERESA BURRELL**

Several months ago, the HD CWC was contacted by the Bureau of Prison's Assistant Supervisor of

Education to request our club to bring writing workshops to the Federal Prison in Victorville.

Ann Heimback, Rusty LaGrange, Mary Langer Thompson, and I first met with an inmate panel of seven to discover their interests and determine how we could help. On Wednesday, November 2, 2011, Rusty LaGrange, Mary Thompson, Dwight Norris and I held our first workshop. It was well-received and the four of us had an enjoyable time meeting with the 20 enrollees.

When the HD CWC first began making our plans to comply with their request, I contacted some of our past guest speakers to see who might be interested in speaking to the inmates. We had no funding for this project, and told the potential guest speakers that.

Teresa Burrell, attorney, author and advocate for children, was one of the first to respond. We coordinated her visit, and on Wednesday, November 16, 2011, Dwight Norris and I accompanied Teresa Burrell to become our very first guest speaker for our prison writing project.

Did the inmates like her? What's not to like?

She's intelligent, talented, beautiful, and interesting on so many levels. Her talk soon evolved into a Q&A meeting, which was okay with everyone. The class of 20 inmates had many questions about marketing and what her writing life was like, and we discovered that they have a high interest in marketing their work. There are some in the class who have written and published stories, articles, and books, and the variety of interests is as varied as the educational level. Several have their masters and a couple have law degrees.

Teresa Burrell was generous enough to bring 20 of her second novel to donate to the group of writers in our workshop, and Natalie Griffith of the Apple Valley Library agreed to facilitate the donation. Thanks, Natalie.

Time for lunch at Viva Maria's where I found out one of Teresa's passions is for the albino victims who lose body parts to barbaric "looters" who cut off the victims' arms or legs and sell them to medicine men who make "healing" elixirs out of the albino body parts. Many people do not know this problem exists, but I had seen the same television documentary that alerted Teresa to this practice. Fear, greed and superstition have led to horrific murders and trade of body parts of albinos in east Africa. A complete set of albino body parts can sell for multiple thousands of dollars.. She is

determined and devoted to doing something about it, physically and financially.

Just one more reason to like her.

Then to the Apple Valley Library where we set up the room for her presentation and book signing that evening. She fielded questions about writing habits, publishing, and marketing; much the same questions that were asked by the prisoners. Writers are writers wherever you go.

Teresa shared a vignette about her writing of the second novel, "The Advocate's Betrayal".

About half way through the book, she had the idea for the perfect ending, and that consisted of just two words. She decided to end her book that way.

"Don't go to the end of the book and read them because it will ruin the story for you," she said. "But my editor told me that it was the best ending she had seen in a long, long time." To find out what that ending may be, you'll have to read the book, and that's also not a bad idea for a gift at Christmas for your friends or family.

Teresa Burrell's books, while totally absorbing, are not graphic. They're legal thrillers. Her first book, "The Advocate", was nominated for the International Thriller Writer's Debut Novel Award. Her subsequent novels are "The Advocate's Betrayal" and "The Advocate's Conviction".

But when you buy them, please buy from Barnes & Noble, either at the Victor Valley Mall or anywhere in the country, or online, but buy it during our Book Fair dates of 12/11/11 through 12/16/11 and use our Voucher #10620284.

Thank you, Teresa Burrell, for your kind generosity and friendship.



Friendship  
has a glow of  
its own

**B&N BOOK FAIR OPEN MIC SCHEDULE**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2011**

**10:30 TO NOON                      1:30 to 3:00 PM**

Mary Scott	Barbara Badger
Diane Neil	Winifred Rueff
Mary R. Hughes	Ann Heimback
Jim Elstad	Jenny Margotta
Freddie Gold	Thomas Kier
Virginia Hall	Mary Thompson
Anne Fowler	Denny Stanz
Roberta Smith	Michael Raff
Josie Sotomayer	

**HDCWC OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT – *Bob Isbill***  
[risbill@aol.com](mailto:risbill@aol.com)  
760-242-4148

**VICE PRESIDENT – *Freddi Gold***  
[dcaurum@aol.com](mailto:dcaurum@aol.com)  
760 956-2727

**SECRETARY – *Naomi Ward***  
[naomiwc@verizon.net](mailto:naomiwc@verizon.net)  
760- 241-9642

**TREASURER – *Jenny Margotta***  
[jennyj821@yahoo.com](mailto:jennyj821@yahoo.com)  
760- 843-5448

**MEMBER AT LARGE –**  
*MaryThompson*  
[mh\\_thompson@hotmail.com](mailto:mh_thompson@hotmail.com)  
760- 553-1644

***Congratulations to Anne B. Fowler on the recent publication of her novel, "The Jesuit Papers".***

**HELP WANTED BY THE HD CWC**

As announced at the November meeting, our Branch needs some special people to fill some jobs within the club. We are therefore posting some of these jobs with a hope that they will interest and/or challenge members to step forward and enjoy extending their club participation.

Thanks, Michael Raff, for accepting the job announced at the meeting, and for your spirit of volunteerism.

Many of these positions are small jobs, but the alleviation of the duties will be much appreciated. Take a look at what we are announcing in this issue and if you are willing, please contact Bob Isbill at [risbill@aol.com](mailto:risbill@aol.com).

**MEETING COORDINATOR**

Plans meeting content, contacts guest speaker, creates meeting agenda, works with Publicity Chairman to coordinate advertising.

Works in conjunction with Volunteer Coordinator to make sure all bases are covered with respect to having a successful meeting.

Training required: Should have natural ability to organize and plan events, and communicate needs to others. Must be a creative self-starter with a desire to contribute and enhance the quality of the club.

Time required: 4 to 10 hours a month

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**  
**POSITION**  
**OPEN DECEMBER 18**

Solicits, collects, compiles content of the monthly newsletter, then edits and formats e publication ready for distribution.

Training required: Should have the desire to create and have a high standard of quality and pride in the result. Be computer literate enough to work with publication software and to work on a deadline.

Time required: 4 to 15 or more hours per month

**OPINION SURVEY MONITOR**

Prints out surveys, brings surveys to each meeting, passes out surveys to visitors and guests.

Takes returned surveys and enters the data on a computer file and sends the files to the president and the membership chairperson.

Training required: 15 minutes

Time required: 30-60 minutes per month

### STARBUCKS POSTER MONITOR

Prints out poster(s) of upcoming events, places the poster on Starbucks Public Bulletin Boards, including other coffee shops and/or public locations near them, and keeps material current.

Training required: None

Time: 20 to 30 minutes per month

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### BIZ PITCH UNDER 30 SECONDS COMPILED BY RUSTY LAGRANGE

The environment that you face when stepping into an elevator is often stunned and awkward silence. Then if someone is bored and knows he has a long ride to the top floor, he might even break the silence by asking you: "So what is it that you do?"

So, maybe you're not in an elevator but you've just entered a networking party of business men and women... your peers. You know *that* question is coming. Are you prepared to tell them your Biz Pitch in 30 seconds?

Here are Three Easy Steps to make creating a Biz Pitch less stressful... and it's really easy. Trust me.

#### **First:**

Ask a question: "Do you know...?" that identifies the problem or need that your product or service addresses. **Example:** Do you know that many authors love to write but shiver at the thought of selling their books?

#### **Second:**

Describe your service or product starting with: "What I do is..." **Example:** What I do is offer a book about interviewing techniques and tips.

#### **Third:**

Explain why your service is valuable by defining benefits that it delivers, beginning with the words: "So that"... **Example:** So that authors, inexperienced in marketing their books, will gain confidence when being interviewed. Their confidence helps sell more books.

And here's how my Biz Pitch looks:

Do you know that many authors love to write but shiver at the thought of selling their books? What I do is offer a book about interviewing techniques and tips. So that authors, inexperienced in marketing their books, will gain confidence when being interviewed. Their confidence helps sell more books.

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### NOVEMBER DISCUSSION GROUPS A HIT!

HD CWC Vice President Dr. Freddie Gold presented and moderated the November meeting that consisted of "break-out" discussion groups of from one to seven members led by a facilitator. The format was very well received by the membership, and it made for a unique and interesting type of get-together where we got to know one another better through group discussions.

Topics and facilitators were:

"Organizing & Procrastinating" - Rusty La Grange

"Writer's Block" - Anne Heimback

"Short Stories" - Denny Stanz

"Contests & Festivals" - Mary Thompson

"Self Publishing" - James Elstad

"What's Your Favorite Genre" - Debby Weltin

"Character Development" - Elizabeth Pye

"1st and 2nd Draft" - Holly La Pat

"E-Books and Podcasts" - Freddie Gold

"Teaming up with your Illustrator" - Vic McCain-Buzzelli

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### REMINDER FROM ROBERTA

RE: Personal Advertising

For those of you wanting to advertise in the January, February and March *Inkslingers*, don't forget to give your standard-size business card with payment of \$10.00 to Roberta Smith at the December club meeting. If you will not be at that meeting, your business card and payment may be mailed to the club's mailbox:

HD CWC  
20258 Hwy 18 Ste 430-PMB 281  
Apple Valley, CA 92307

If you miss the deadline of December 10th, don't worry. Business cards and payment will be accepted for the April, May and June *Inkslingers*. Deadline for those issues is March 10, 2012.

Advertising does not have to be writing related and you may submit more than one business card. There is a \$10.00 fee per card.

If you have any questions, contact Roberta Smith at [cwrlsmith@verizon.net](mailto:cwrlsmith@verizon.net).

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### **ATTENTION ALL PUBLISHED HDCWD AUTHORS**

We are trying to compile a "one sheet" published author directory to hand out at our membership meetings to guests and at such things as the Barnes & Noble Book Fair.

This will be for public information and dissemination.

It would read such as this:

Mitchell, Margaret *Gone With The Wind* \$14.95  
Available online at [llnevergohungryagain.com](http://llnevergohungryagain.com)

DiNiro, Robert *Taxi Driver* \$12.50  
Write to "You Talking To Me?" PO Box 123 New York, NY

Get the picture?

Please send Mary D. Scott the following information:  
[Mary\\_Scott@spiritdrivenevents.com](mailto:Mary_Scott@spiritdrivenevents.com)

Your Name  
Your Book Title  
Cost per copy (plus tax and/or shipping if any)  
Where to contact you to buy it

We would like to have these available at every single meeting to help you market your book.

They will be updated as other authors are added to the list.

Will you help us do this...?

**WE ARE REQUESTING THE FOLLOWING:**

**IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO BUY A BOOK, ANY BOOK, PLEASE DO NOT DO IT UNTIL DECEMBER 11, 2011!!!!**

**THAT IS THE DATE FOR OUR BARNES AND NOBLE BOOK FAIR AND THAT IS THE TIME WHEN OUR BRANCH WILL GET 10% OF ALL SALES AT BARNES & NOBLE, IN STORE OR ONLINE, IF YOU BUY IT THEN AND GIVE THEM OUR VOUCHER NUMBER**

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### **HOLD IT! HOLD THIS DATE OPEN FOR A SPECIAL EVENT**

On Saturday, January 21, 2012, it will be the eve of HD CWC member **LEO DULAC'S** 100<sup>th</sup> birthday!



On that date (time and place to be announced later) we will have a rip-roaring 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration for Leo, so whatever you do, don't miss this affair.

Leo has written sixteen published books including fiction and non-fiction, and we want to honor this man and celebrate his 100 years of life and his love of writing!

More later. Just keep it open. You won't regret it!

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### **A CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED**

By Bob Isbill

It's a small, very small town in west Texas.

It's a family in the depression years. The father and the mother are school teachers, and they have seven children. The entire family has the measles.

And it's Christmas time.

I was about four years old, and the baby of the family. The Isbills had five daughters, and it made the headlines in the small town newspaper when my older brother, their first boy, was born. When I came to town, it was barely noticed by the community, and my older siblings took just enough time to say among themselves, "It's another baby."

The oldest girls were convinced by now there was no Santa Claus, of course. They'd never whisper those thoughts to us younger children because it

was still fun for them to see us so thrilled on Christmas morning. They were at the age where reason and logic argued against the reality of Santa, but who, nonetheless, still wanted to believe.

But this year it was different. They confessed to me much later that they were convinced there would be no Christmas at all. We were quarantined. The whole family was trapped. Mother would write down her grocery needs and stick the list and the money in a knothole in the wood fence around our back yard, and Mr. and Mrs. Carter next door were kind enough to do our food shopping for us and leave the groceries on our front porch.

It was a gloomy prospect at our house, but we would never want Santa to be exposed to such a dreadful illness, so we were prepared to survive our disappointment with no Christmas as best we could. Mother and Daddy tried to keep our hopes up but, shoot, we didn't even have a chimney!

It was forever between Christmases and we just hoped we would all be well by next year so that we could get the orange and apple and nuts in the shell and hard candy with stocking lint and the presents. And especially the banana. That was a special treat to find a banana in the stocking because with nine people, one did not often get that piece of fruit to enjoy all by himself. It was to be found only in a custard pudding with vanilla wafers, and even today, I can overindulge in that comfort fruit and be grateful for such a blessing.

I never remember a Christmas that I didn't get a book. Of course, that would be a future memory, and a lifelong tradition, but even at that age, Christmas meant getting a book along with some other gifts.

We were expected to be just as polite and appreciative with new underwear or a jacket as we would be with a toy. I didn't get many new clothes throughout the year because of the hand-me-down situation that began at birth, but Christmas was a time when that did happen, and I was genuinely happy to get a brand new anything to wear.

There is no O. Henry ending here; no twist or surprise for the reader.

By now you have probably guessed that Christmas came to us in the same way the groceries did. We had remarkable neighbors, the Carters, and they retrieved the Christmas gift list and the money in the same knothole in the fence, and Santa

delivered all our goodies (gift wrapped) to our front porch.

We were, to use today's expression, blown away.

If there was any doubt in anybody's mind about the reality of Santa Claus, it was nonexistent that Christmas, and for a long time afterwards. There was only the screaming of joy and surprise as we discovered, as a delighted group of seven, that Santa had been there during the night and knew just what we all wanted!

Our parents taught us so much by example. They lived what they believed.

That's the best way to teach, I think, because seventy years later, I still know I can get through anything any time with friends I can trust and depend upon.

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## **THE SPELL CHECKER POEM**

*From Barbara La Grange for the fun of it!*

Eye halve a spelling chequer  
It came with my pea sea  
It plainly marques four my revue  
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word  
And weight four it two say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write  
It shows me strait a weigh.  
As soon as a mist ache is maid  
It nose bee fore two long  
And eye can put the error rite  
Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it  
I am shore your pleased two no  
Its letter perfect awl the weigh  
My chequer tolled me sew.



THE COPIER  
By James Elstad

“George, take the prisoner into room one.” Harrison walks down the hall, around the crate holding the new copier, and into the break room. He pours two cups of coffee and yells, “Cream and sugar right?”

“You’re finally getting it, thanks. Get a cup for Jason.”

“Only if he’ll cooperate, if he’s gonna wait for his lawyer, his lawyer can get him a cup.”

Inside the interview room Jason, an eighteen-year-old wanna-be street hood, perks up at the mention of coffee. “I ain’t gonna wait for any lawyer. I ain’t done nuttin. I’ll take my coffee black.”

Harrison comes back carrying a tray with three cups of coffee, sugar, and creamer, all while carrying his organizer under his arm, and a pen in his mouth. “All right, you answer a question and we’ll give you a cup, the more answers, the more coffee.”

Jason nods. “Sure, ask away.”

George holds the pot in front of Jason, “Where were you last night? Don’t lie, we know the truth.”

Jason rocks back and forth in his chair. “Weeeelll, I was walkin’ down the street mindin’ my own business when this guy jumps me and beats me up. Now, pour my coffee.”

George fills a cup, puts it to his nose and savors the aroma. “Ah, this is the best I’ve ever tasted.” He glares at Jason, “What street, what time, give me a description of the guy.”

Jason folds his arms, “You lied, you said if I gave you an answer you’d give me coffee. I ain’t sayin’ nuttin till I get some joe.”

Harrison fills a cup half-way and places in front of the prisoner. “Okay, half an answer half a cup.”

The skinny man grabs the cup and rolls it in his hands. “At 4:30 last night I was walking down Main Street and this guy jumps me. He drew his knife I drew mine. We fought, I won, I ....”

Harrison strokes his beard, and interrupts, that’s not how we heard it, are you sure that’s the story you want to tell us?”

“If that’s how you want to play it I want a lawyer. Ain’t gonna say another word until he gets here.”

Harrison stands, “Excuse me, I’ll be right back.”

Ten minutes later Harrison returns with a piece of paper, the operations manual for the copier, and a helmet.

George hides his surprise, *what’s the boss come up with now?*

Harrison slides the paper in front of Jason, sets the manual and the helmet aside. “I had the tape recorder going while you were telling us your lies,” he pauses and taps the paper, “read and sign this to verify it’s true.”

Jason stares at the paper, runs his finger down the page. “Where do you want me to sign?”

The Chief Detective points to the bottom of the sheet, “Right here.”

George puts his hand in front of his mouth to keep from laughing.

Jason signs and shoves the paper back, “I want my lawyer.”

Harrison pushes the paper away and picks up the helmet. “This, is an accessory for our new copier, Here’s the manual for you to read, but when I,” he holds the end of the cable attached to the helmet, “when I plug this in, the copier will print a picture of your answer to every question. You won’t have to say a word, it’s like we searched you.”

Shocked, Jason cries out, “I don’t believe you! That’s the craziest thing I ever heard. What do you think I am? An idiot?”

Harrison smiles, “Didn’t think you’d take my word for it, here’s the manual,” he opens it to chapter 7, and flattens it. “Take your time, this is important, I wouldn’t try to trick you. This new copier has the new mental feature.”

Jason runs his thumb down each page of the chapter, and looks up, “It’s amazing what they can do. I may as well tell you everything.”

Harrison winks at George while looking at Jason. “If I put the helmet on you, I don’t have to wait for your lawyer. If you give me a statement without your lawyer present, I get in trouble; unless you put it in writing that you’ll waive your right to a lawyer.”

Jason’s eyes flit back-and-forth between them, “I changed my mind, if you use that machine on me who knows what else you’ll find out. Then I’ll really look foolish.”

An hour later, as Jason’s led away George busts out laughing. “Boss, you never cease to amaze me, you knew he couldn’t read, that he’d pretend to understand. I don’t know where you come up with these ideas.”

---

When I was younger, I could remember anything, whether it had happened or not; but my faculties are decaying now and soon I shall be so I cannot remember any but the things that never happened. It is sad to go to pieces like this but we all have to do it.

-----Mark Twain

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## THE WISH

by Thomas Kier

*Candy canes and Christmas trees  
Light up my childhood memories.  
But wishes made in a jealous state  
Bring consequences of terrible fate.*

Something was poking me in the back when I woke up. I knew it was little Josh's gun he had gotten a year ago at Christmas. He loved to torture me with it. That was the year he got his best wish; this year it was my turn. I would make my wish while unwrapping my first present.

"I surrender. Don't shoot!" I called out.

I slowly turned around, feeling the hollow barrel trace a ticklish line around me until I could see him. In his sleep he had shifted the plastic toy so it rested on his pillow pointing directly at me. If it was real, would he still sleep with it? Probably.

I still hadn't made up my mind for sure what my wish would be. It was a tossup for either a room of my own or for Christmas every second. Yeah, I had seen all the kids' TV specials about the dummy who wished for Christmas every day and it always turned out bad. But I was old enough to know that those shows weren't real. I would fool them all by wishing for Christmas every *second*. That what would make the difference.

Suddenly Josh's eyes flew open and he started screaming. I rolled off the other side of the bed in alarm and hit my head on the wall. Stupid little kid!

"Christmas! It's Christmas!" was what I made out. He yelled something else I couldn't understand and I found a little comfort in the cold wood floor. At least it saved me from the spray of spit that surrounded the brat whenever he got excited.

"Put on your robe and slippers, ya little leech," I told him, "and try not to fall down the stairs this time."

"I never fell down!" he screamed into my face from above. "Watcha doin' down there?"

"Taking a shower," I replied, reaching for the bedspread to dry off.

"Huh?"

I didn't answer. His confusion would be gone in an instant anyway, swallowed up in his passion over the best day of the year. He had always been that way.

Then there were pounding feet on the stairs, loud enough to wake Mom and Dad at the other end of the hall. I no longer wondered why they let an empty bedroom gather dust between our room and theirs. It wasn't to help us grow closer as

brothers. It was to let me babysit the munchkin while they slept like a rock every night.

I naturally figured that wishing for Christmas every second was like fooling the genie into three more wishes on the last one: this could go on forever. And every second for the rest of my life, I could make a new Christmas wish. The next one would give me my own room and the rest could be payback on my little brother. *Sweet!!!*

Dad was now heading down the stairs to make sure Josh didn't destroy everything in his haste. I took a moment in the little niche between bed and wall to savor my victory--and to let my pounding heart slow down before it made me sick. This Christmas was too good to waste in bed with a towel and a bucket for my only company. I poked my head up over the bed and saw Mom just turning the corner into the stairwell.

"Come on, honey. You don't want to miss this."

No, I certainly didn't. I followed her down the stairs.

Josh's slippers feet were actually sliding as he ran on the bare floor and Dad held him back with a single hand. It was like a cartoon. Once I had caught up, Dad let go and Josh went face-first into the litter of wrapped boxes, scattering them everywhere.

"Dad!" I whined. "What if he broke something?"

"Just find something with your name on it," was his advice.

There was one, a big one. It took both arms outstretched to lift it. I backed a couple of steps away from the little monster struggling to sit up under the packages and ripped paper with all my might. As I opened the lid of the box, I made my wish with my eyes squeezed tightly shut. . .

\* \* \*

This is the complete length of our celebration. Obviously time has been altered for us, because all these things could not possibly have happened in one real second.

These days I am a stooped and shrunken wreck of a man and I perform this Christmas dance unceasingly with the decaying corpses of my family. They have all lost crumbling bones to the ravages of the ages, but there is no time to repair them and they stumble through their appointed rounds the best they can. I am still in one piece, I suppose because it was my wish.

At least mine was better than my lame brother's sucky toy gun. It outlasted that thing by a country mile.



## THE BEST CHRISTMAS EVER

By Ingrid Claus

It was December 24, 1947. My Mom and my three siblings lived in a shack with nine other families near the woods in Northern Germany. Each family occupied one room. We had no electricity, no gas, no heat, no running water or flushing toilets. However, we had a roof over our heads and most importantly we had each other.

Nature provided us with wood for a one-burner cast iron stove as well as mushrooms, berries, and different kinds of edible plants which my Mom magically transformed into tasty meals.

Every day after my sisters and brother went off to school, my Mom would take me out to the fields to dig up potatoes, pick beans or strawberries. At the end of the day the harvest would be turned in to the farm for a few measly pennies. After six days of hard labor my Mom had earned enough money to buy one half of a loaf of bread for a week.

When Christmas Eve came around my parent always served a very special meal - Hot Dogs and Potato Salad. My siblings never knew where the hot dogs came from. After we gave thanks and enjoyed our meal, we set out on a six mile journey.

The sky was clear, the air was cold and crisp. The moon and bright stars were shining down on us while we were stomping through the deep snow saying rhymes with every step in hopes it would shorten the long, agonizing trip to church.

The bell tower of God's house had been bombed and destroyed during the war. The rest of the sanctuary except for the colorful stain glass windows was intact.

My Mom was the only one concentrating on the service. The four of us were shaking from the wetness and coldness dreading the way home since none of us owned enough clothing to keep us warm.

What awaited us at home, however, was worth every frozen nose, finger, and toe. Homemade candles on a fresh cut Christmas tree, garlands and stars made out of dried grass lit up the whole room. Our bodies were overcome with warmth, calmness, and happiness. We all sang Christmas songs while Mom doused a branch on fire ever so often with a bucket of rain water.

Each one of us received a knitted cap, scarf, and gloves. My sister and I each got a doll made out of old nylon stockings, cotton balls, and cloth remnants.

Our singing was interrupted by a knock on the door. Our Mom opened it and let out a happy scream. A tall, frail, skinny, unshaven man was

standing in front of her. He was wearing an old grey long sleeve shirt and torn black long pants with worn out sandals. The stranger then put his arms tightly around Mom. Our eyes were fixed on both of them in disbelief.

The stranger turned out to be our Dad who had been released as a POW a week earlier and had finally located us. Our family was reunited which made this Christmas Eve the most memorable one ever.

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## THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON

By John Margotta writing under  
John Ferrara © 2011

If you should be inclined to ask one hundred people to give their version of the most powerful weapon ever, you may get answers ranging from the hydrogen bomb to the AK47 to the Sherman tank. As for me? My vote goes to the plain, white, blank piece of paper.

It was on a plain piece of paper that Pontius Pilot gave the order to crucify Jesus Christ. Words on a blank piece of paper became the siege of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, thereby developing into a feud between Christians and Muslims that carries on to this day.

The Sack of Rome, The Hundred Years War, and the Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams – all were originally blank sheets of paper lying dormant on the shelf. The French Revolution and Napoleon's march on Moscow – again initiated on innocent pieces of paper.

Words on a piece of paper gave the order to assassinate the Arch Duke Ferdinand starting World War One; Adolph Hitler's "Mein Kampf" suggesting the elimination of the Jewish Race; Yamamoto's strategy to bomb Pearl Harbor; FDR's famous "Day of Infamy" speech; Truman's order to release the atomic bombs, forever changing the world as we knew it – all were born on blank pieces of paper.

The World Trade Center towers came down, devastating thousands of lives. The plans for that probably started with scribbled notes, then became full blown, detailed plans written on plain white paper. George W. Bush's desk held blank notepads that eventually held words sending thousands of troops into the Middle East. Now, ten years later, papers are still changing hands, continuing what many believe to be a wasted effort costing trillions of taxpayer dollars - also printed on blank paper.

Eventually we all face the blank paper covered with symbols we call words and numbers.

Utility bills, mortgage payments, eviction notices, birth certificates, marriage licenses, drivers' licenses, death certificates – “the beat goes on.”

An author's worst nightmare has changed from a blank paper staring him in the face to a blank computer screen. Yet, in spite of the digital age, the blank paper covered with symbols, held in our two hands, is still the most effective and the most devastating weapon of all.

This morning on my desk I found my own “blank paper.” On it were the symbols: “Dear Johnny: “I must move on.” And then the most dreaded words a man in love can read: “I hope we can remain friends.”

As I ponder the light reflecting off the .38 Special by my side, I am creating symbols on my own blank paper.

**“To my family and friends, I am so sorry, but I can't go on. . . .”**



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**I WON ONE EYE!**

By Jenny Margotta, © 2012

I've been laid up on the couch in the living room with an injury for the past week and have been reduced to an audible TV world as opposed to a visual one since I can't get to a room with a television in it.

Last night my husband, John, tuned into the World Series baseball game and I was dozing in the other room. Suddenly he shouted, “All right, Cardinals won!”

At least, that's what I thought he said. Then I thought to myself, *wait a minute. The game just came on. How can it be over already?* So I asked him just that.

“No, not won,” he said, “one.”

“Huh?”

Patiently he repeated himself. “They just scored a run.”

“Oh, O-N-E,” I said, spelling it out. “Not W-O-N.”

Four and a half hours later it truly was ‘The Cardinals won - W-O-N.’ But the one –

O-N-E - had turned into fifteen. However, that's not the point of this piece.<sup>1</sup>

I love words. John and I both do. We often get out our huge encyclopedia dictionary and look up the etymology of a word. It's fun learning where a word came from, when it came into common usage, language of origin, that sort of thing. And we often talk about how difficult learning English must be for immigrants.

Take the simple “I” for instance. It is, of course, the personal pronoun I. But it is also eye, and for those Navy people out there, there's the affirmative aye. In the written form, of course, the three are easy to differentiate, but if you're in an audio-only world, words such as these can easily lead to misunderstandings. Phrases like “the read book . . .” Is that the action of having absorbed the story or does it pertain to the color of the book as in the “R-E-D” book?

In my bored state - B-O-R-E-D not B-O-A-R-D - my mind – that ‘mind’ is my ‘brain’ state, not my ‘I don't care’ state – took me in another direction. Everyone knows the old question, if a tree falls in the forest and no one's there, does it still make a sound?

So here's a new question. As human language was being developed, our ancestors arbitrarily decided the color of the sky was blue. Russian, Arabic, French, Chinese, English – whatever the word for blue is in that language – we still universally agree the sky is blue. So what if – way back centuries ago – we'd arbitrarily decided the word for the color of the sky should be orange? The sky would still be the same color – but what color would a tangerine be?

And then. . . . Okay, I agree, I had too much time for thinking. But another thought. You agree the sky is blue. I agree the sky is blue. But how do I know that the color you see for the sky is the same color I see for the sky? We both say blue, but does your brain see the same blue as I do? Do you see powder blue when I see Pepsi blue? Do you see cerulean when I see more of a cobalt? Here's another thought – that's H-E-R-E not H-E-A-R – what if your brain sees – S-E-E-S not S-E-A-S – the color of the sky as what my brain says is orange, but everyone tells you the sky is blue – that's B-L-U-E not B- L-E-W and . . .

My brain hurts. How about you? That's Y-O-U not E-W-E.

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## HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS

On a cold, quiet night,  
An eastern star shined bright,  
At the birthplace of our Lord.  
Old Bethlehem in Israel, the birthplace of our Lord.

Three wise men travel far,  
Bringing gifts led by a star.  
To **B**ethlehem, old Bethlehem,  
The birthplace of our Lord.

Listen to the angels sing,  
Honoring the newborn King.  
The Holy One of Israel,  
Who'll save us all from hell.  
Who'll save us all from hell.

Welcome baby Jesus, we love You!  
Welcome Christ the Savior, we worship You!  
Welcome Lord of Lords, we praise You!  
Welcome King of Kings we serve you!

### CHORUS

Happy Birthday Jesus!  
Our Savior, Lord and King!  
Our Savior, Lord and King!  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

*(Lyrics and melody by Josephine Irena Sotomayer.)*

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