

THE WRITE STUFF

SEE YOU TUESDAY
JULY 10TH

UPCOMING SPEAKERS:

August
Lori Wilde
Romance /
Contemporary
Fiction
September
Michael Mehas
Attorney
October
Alice Rene
Author

*Think not what's in
it for you; think
what you can do for
your club.
Volunteer for a
board
position.
Now!*

Please
welcome our
newest
members:
Melissa
Grossman
Lois Reimers
Michelle Soto

**Note Our
Meeting Time
7:00 PM**

**Borders
125 W. Thousand
Oaks Blvd,
Thousand Oaks**

Our July Speaker, Ellen Sandler Emmy-Nominated Comedy Writer



Ellen Sandler, who received an Emmy nomination for her work as Co-Executive Producer for the CBS hit *Everybody Loves Raymond*, has worked as a writer/producer on more than 25 network television comedies, including ABC's long-running series, *Coach*. In addition to staff work, she has created original pilots for ABC, CBS, NBC, and the Family Channel, among others. Ms. Sandler also founded Sandler Ink, a consulting company which provides script development and career coaching for professionals and emerging writers in the entertainment industry. She is a sought-after seminar leader at conferences and universities both in the U.S. and abroad.

Ellen teaches film and television writing for the UCLA Extension Writer's Program, and is a star speaker at the annual Screenwriter's Expo in Los Angeles. In New York, she has taught Television Writing for Playwrights at The New School and at The HB Playwrights Foundation.

Many of Ellen's students have gone on to success, earning positions on hit television shows including *Sex in the City*, *Men in Trees*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *Everybody Hates Chris*, and *The New Adventures of Old Christine*. Ellen's students have gained acceptance in the Disney Writing Fellowship and the Cosby Writing Fellowship, and have won numerous writing competitions including those at the Austin Film Festival and Scriptorialooza.

A member of the Dramatist Guild, Ellen began her career in New York as a playwright and director and continues to work in theater. Her autobiographical one act, *Jewish Roots*, was produced at the Hudson Theatre in Los Angeles; her comic play *How'd It Go?* was produced at the HBO/Warner Bros. Workspace and starred Megan Mullally.

Ellen is a member of the Writer's Guild of America. She also serves on the board of The American Screenwriting Association, is a judge of The Hartley Merrill International Screenplay Award, and is a mentor at the Duke City Shootout Digital Film Festival.

Ellen holds a BS from Syracuse University and an MFA from The American Film Institute.

VCWC Short Story Contest

The 2007 Short Story contest is now underway. The prizes and rules can be found in an insert in this newsletter, and are also available on the club website.

Someone Else's Garden By Audrey Bishop

This garden couldn't ever be really mine, I thought, as I gave it a cursory glance while moving in to our new home. It was pleasant enough, with its well-maintained lawns and bushes, clipped hedges that screened surrounding walls, and a perfectly straight no-nonsense path leading to the front door.

This was a suburban garden, disciplined and neat; a sensible, functional garden. Regretfully, I knew it would be more suitable for me when I reached my declining years—a time drawing closer than I cared to admit. I was prepared to leave it be and employ one of the many workers I'd seen mowing and blowing neighborhood gardens to maintain neatness.

The garden I had left behind only a few miles away in the Santa Monica mountains was uniquely mine, lovingly crafted over forty-seven years. Through the decades I had poured my heart and soul into its soil: carved paths that meandered to secret places, etched terraces into its hillsides. I had planted straggly pine seedlings that overcame adversity to grow into majestic landmarks.

My beloved garden with its profusion of exuberant flowers, shrubs and lofty trees had not started out that way. I had been faced with mostly bare ground in December 1958, when I had purchased the small house with a spectacular view of Malibu Lake and the surrounding mountains. During the escrow period a raging brush fire had blackened the natural chaparral to within inches of the foundation.

The rains of that first Spring restored the mountains to luminous shades of green interspersed with yellow Scotch broom, mountain lilac and snowy flags of yucca—a perfect background for the garden I dreamed of.

I made many mistakes during my early days as a novice gardener. Rabbits, deer, and raccoons ate my flowers and shrubs as fast as I planted them. Over the years I learned what would grow, what the wild creatures would leave alone and what I could share with them. I soon discovered that geraniums, with their shades of pink, white, red, purple and magenta, seemed immune from predators, and their continuous bloom rewarded me through the hot summers.

Each autumn I added small groups of daffo-

dil bulbs to cheer me in February with their orange and yellow trumpets. In March, snowy white African daisies spilled down the slopes, reaching further every year as their seeds propagated without restriction. I hung baskets of purple and yellow pansies high enough to thrive out of reach of hungry rabbits. The deep roots and shiny green leaves of myrtle held the steep hillside, and azure blossoms emerged to announce the spring. Rosemary, oregano, sweet basil and lemon thyme were among the many herbs that flourished in my rock garden. I would share apricots and plums with squirrels and raccoons and they'd leave the lemons untouched for me.

Having left my heart in that free-spirited garden that had been part of my very existence, the manicured garden of my new home had little appeal. But after I had lived here for a few weeks, I started to notice things. It was late winter and in one far corner by the wall, green shoots of daffodils were emerging. I cleared debris and thinned bushes to give them air and was soon rewarded by their bright golden flowers. I discovered tulips struggling to fight their way clear of a mass of ivy and I assisted their efforts. A few days later, to my delight, a jumble of rosy-tipped vines in a brick planter exploded into fragrant mounds of pink and white jasmine.

That was all it took. Now, I once again pore over gardening books and wander through nurseries. I envision clumps of purple Mexican sage erupting among the green bushes and imagine vines spreading over the bare white walls. I plant roses.

I should have known that it would be impossible for me to stay aloof from a garden I gaze upon each day.

I will be patient. In time this garden, too, will become uniquely mine.

Longtime member Audrey Bishop writes essays, short stories and children's novels.

Civil Strife Averted
by James W. Vernon

As I waited in a long checkout line at a supermarket, two men in front of me were disputing what should become of the Camarillo State Hospital facility when it is closed. One said, "It must be converted to a hotel, convention and sports center, with a stadium, golf and tennis facilities. It would perform wonders for the economy of the whole county."

The other man said, "Not so. It's an ideal place for an orphanage. Many facilities there can be adapted to that use and also shelter political refugees and homeless people."

A man behind me was also listening and he broke in: "Amigos, you should know that the hospital is on a Spanish land grant that was usurped by early American settlers and must be returned to the Hispanic community. We will convert it into an institute for the study and development of Latino culture and a home for our war veterans. Our plans are cast in concrete; there's no turning back."

A second man behind me looked grave and said with ponderous dignity, "Gentlemen, you should all know the hospital land is sacred to my tribe that lived there for thousands of years. The King of Spain usurped it from us. Justice demands that it be designated as tribal land again and utilized for the benefit of Native Americans to preserve our cultural heritage and help rejuvenate the number and vitality of our tribe." We were all hushed and touched.

I asked, "Sir, how would you finance that operation?"

"We would open a gambling casino, bingo parlor, restaurant, and bar. We'd present high-class girly shows. We owe it to our revered ancestors."

I was entangled in an increasingly heated discussion; I paid for my Pepsi and slipped away while they continued to argue and strike hostile stances.

I stopped next at a health food store. While I squeezed some tomatoes, a young, longhaired Amazon nearby punched the cantaloupes. She wore a T-shirt that said, "SAVE THE EARTH." I suspected that she held an opinion about the State Hospital.

I said to her casually, "Hi, there's much talk these days about what to do when the State Hospital closes. Have you heard of any reasonable plans for it?"

She stiffened, as if I had pinched her bottom, looked at me as though she knew I was an AWOL patient and said, "The whole area must be restored to its natural, pristine condition. All the buildings must be removed. The ground must be graded to its original configuration and replanted with cactus and chaparral.

All the displaced indigenous animals—coyotes, mountain lions, deer, bear, jackrabbits, cottontails, gophers, moles, condors, monarch butterflies and a host of others—must be reestablished." I began edging away from this outpouring and wished I hadn't asked the question, but she followed me, holding my gaze with a fanatical stare.

I stuttered, "Yes, yes, good idea."

She frowned, "Idea? Indeed! I, with God at my side, shall make it happen."

I fled, took refuge in my car, locked the doors and scrunched down, but she saw me. As I fumbled to start my car she strode toward me and knocked on the window. I opened it an inch.

She raised her voice and said, "And we won't forget the rattlesnakes." She turned and vaulted into an ancient, robin's-egg blue Volkswagen van; on each side a painted whale spouted in a garland of multi-colored flowers. The rear window was plastered with decals of every environmental group I had ever heard of and a few others besides.

Her engine started with a growl and a cough of black smoke. The van clanked into gear, jerked into motion and disappeared in a haze of exhaust fumes, except for a fluorescent bumper sticker that read "KEEP THE SESPE WILD."

Fear and awe gripped me when I realized I had uncovered violent political, ethnic and religious conflict that smoldered below the surface of our tranquil community. I judged it was only a matter of days before violence spilled into the streets. As I drove home I knew I must prepare for the worst; visions of Sarajevo, Gaza and Belfast nagged me. I resolved to start hoarding gasoline, food, toilet paper and ammo for my assault rifle.

Poet's Corner

Without Words

A stillness now beyond this dune
all gulls and pipers gone into the dark,
gray ocean quiet, tides breathing
yet asleep, their thinking
washed away.
So silence falls on us,
the ending to our day.

By Pat Hoad

Newsletter of the Ventura County Writers Club

Writing workshops are free to members and for members only. Call the numbers listed for more information on meeting times, etc. The phone numbers listed are in the 805 area code unless otherwise specified. **KEY:** Ago=Agoura; Cam=Camarillo; OAK=Oak View; OJ=Ojai; Oxn=Oxnard; Simi=Simi Valley; TO=Thousand Oaks; Ven=Ventura; WLV=Westlake Village. Please call leader for location where alternating meeting place indicated.

<p>All Genres: WLV Claudette Young 3rd Tues 1:00 pm</p>	<p>Waiting List 495-8730</p>	<p>Fiction/Creative Non-fiction: TO Greg Elliot (818)991-0783 2nd Tues 11:30-4:00 Opening: please call</p>	<p>Novels: Cam/Somis/Mpk/TO/Simi Debbie Tash 529-8108 Friday 7:00pm</p>
<p>All Genres: Cam Jim Vernon 2nd Wed 1:00 pm</p>	<p>Waiting List 388-1891</p>	<p>Novels/Short Stories: TO Terri Goodwell 493-2717 4th Wed 7:00-9:00 pm Opening: please call</p>	<p>Poetry: Ven/Oxn/Cam Elnora McNaughton 485-5425 Joyce LaMers 985-6336</p>
<p>All Genres: TO Theresa Schultz 4th Tues 6:30-9:30 pm</p>	<p>Waiting List 492-6497</p>	<p>Novels: Ven Doug Spalding Every other Wed 12:00 pm</p>	<p>Non-fiction Books & Articles: Ven Andrea Bircher 642-4220 1st & 3rd Tues 6:30-9:30 pm Members Welcome</p>
<p>Children's/Romance/Memoirs: Ven/Oxn/Port Hueneme Danielle Brown 648-4165 1st Tues 7:00-9:00 pm Members Welcome</p>			

Workshop Leaders Needed! Call Greg Elliot at (818)991-0783

Executive Board Meeting: First Monday of each month, 7 P.M. at DuPar's Restaurant, 75 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd., in Thousand Oaks. All members welcome.

Evening Meeting With Featured Speaker: Second Tuesday of each month at Borders Books, 125 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd. Exit 101 at Moorpark Rd., go north To Thousand Oaks Blvd., left to Borders. Program begins at 7:00 P.M. Members receive a 20% discount on items purchased at Borders on night of meeting from 5:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Meetings are open to public.

Writers Workshops: Specific interest groups meet one or more times a month to read and critique manuscripts and discuss the business of writing. Free to members.

Membership: If you'd like to become a member of VCWC, dues are \$45.00 the first year, with \$40.00 annual renewal. Call Cathryn Andresen for a membership package at (805) 491-3242.

Newsletter Contributions must be received before the 20th of the month to be considered for the next month's publication. Please email Danielle Brown at cdbdpb@yahoo.com. All contributions must be typewritten, double spaced. Submissions to *The Write Stuff* are accepted for one-time publication. Contributing authors receive no compensation and retain all rights. Reprinting or other use of materials appearing in this newsletter is prohibited without express permission of the author. The mention of any business or service in this newsletter does not imply an endorsement by the Ventura County Writers Club.

The following members are kind enough to volunteer their talents to our fine organization:

Gerry Schiller - President Greg Elliot - 1st Vice President
Cathryn Andresen - 2nd Vice President
Jody Avery Smith - Publicity Karen Gorback - Treasurer
Tracey Semeling-Zabel - Recording Secretary &
Newsletter mailing
Historian - position open
Danielle Brown - Corresponding Secretary & Editor

Check out our website:
www.venturacountywriters.com

Ventura County Writers Club
1550 Santa Barbara St.
Ventura, CA 93001

Deliver to: