



## MANGO WRITERS CONFERENCE

*By Jonathan Rose, Program Director*

The first Saturday in February falls on the 4<sup>th</sup> when the South Florida Writers Association, in collaboration with the Miami-Dade County Health Department, presents the second Mango Writers Conference.

Mort Laitner, SFWA's Conference Director, is Chief Legal Counsel for the Miami-Dade County Health Department which has generously donated its facility for the conference as Sponsor.

The Mango Writers Conference runs from 8:00 am till 5:00 pm and is of value even to those who can only attend a portion of the conference. The SFWA Board decided to keep the price of the conference at a super-reasonable level and not raise the rate for non-members of SFWA.

The price is only \$40 for adults and \$20 for students.

Online registration and details are available at [www.southfloridawritersassn.org/mango\\_writers\\_conference\\_2012](http://www.southfloridawritersassn.org/mango_writers_conference_2012).

We feature outstanding writers and encourage everyone to join us. Part of SWFA's mission is to promote education and information among writers. Limited seating is still available.



The South Florida Writers Association  
Presents

***The Second Annual  
MANGO WRITERS CONFERENCE***

**Saturday, February 4, 2012**

**8:00 A.M. -5:00 P.M.**

Miami- Dade County Health Department  
4th Floor Conference Room  
1350 NW 14th Street, Miami

**\$40 per person (\$20 for students)**

Contact: [Mort.Laitner@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:Mort.Laitner@doh.state.fl.us)

**Sponsored by:  
The Miami-Dade County Health Department**

## JUNIOR ORANGE BOWL CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS CEREMONY

*By Connie Goodman-Milone*

The Junior Orange Bowl Creative Writing awards ceremony was a very inspired event. The January meeting of the South Florida Writers Association was held at Books & Books. We honored the most outstanding eighth grade writers in Miami-Dade County. The theme of this essay contest was "Why We Need to Care about Nature and the Environment."

**Diana Proenza** from South Miami Middle School won the First Place prize. **Yael Rosenberg** from Rabbi Alexander S. Gross Hebrew Academy won Second Place. **Ilan Gilhuly** from South Miami Middle School won the prize for Third Place. Our double winning teacher, **Mrs. Alison Wood Griñan** from South Miami Middle School, shared in the celebration. We also honored **Mrs. Jennifer Ohana**, winning teacher from RASG Hebrew Academy.

The awards event was hosted by **Books & Books** in Coral Gables. We thank **Mitchell Kaplan** for his generosity and support. Irving Fields at the Books & Books Cafe gave us a splendid brunch.

Creative Writing Chair **Connie Goodman-Milone** was emcee at this children's literary event. A number of SFWA members and board members attended. Several Junior Orange Bowl Committee (JOBC) members were there, including JOBC President Dallas Brown and Executive Director Mark Pidal. The JOBC Royal Court, **Queen Mikayla**, **Princess Monet**, and **Alternate Princess Hannah**, lent a sparkling presence with tiara and sash. Contest judges Steve Liebowitz, Lenore Van Wagner, Dorothy Danaher White, and Georgina Marrero were there as well.

- Continued on Page 3

The South Florida Writers Association publishes the *AUTHOR'S VOICE* monthly. The official publication of SFWA carries authorized notices and articles regarding activities and interests of the organization but does not assume responsibility for the opinions of author's articles, stories, or other materials.

Members' subscriptions sent via email are included in the annual dues of \$50 for regular membership or \$20 for student/out of area membership. Printed editions are available during monthly meetings.

**Editor**

Evelyn Benson

**Associate Editor**

Connie Goodman-Milone

**Photography**

Michael Marko

Federico Pirruccio

**Publications Committee**

Chairperson - Evelyn Benson

Gonny van den Broek

Connie Goodman-Milone

Holly Schwartztol

Hillary Bartholomew

Cara Nusinov

Estefania Jaramillo

*Submissions/Comments/Suggestions?*

Contact the Editor

Tel. 305-772-5857

[Evelynbenson2@aol.com](mailto:Evelynbenson2@aol.com)

**Author's Voice** accepts submissions by the 15th of each month for publication the following month. AV's mission is to inform and enlighten writers with news, articles, and current affairs *related to writing*, as well as members' accolades. Letters to the editor are also appreciated.

SOUTH FLORIDA WRITERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 56-2652

Miami, FL 33256

Tel. 786-877-0136

[www.southfloridawritersassn.org](http://www.southfloridawritersassn.org)

**PURPOSE OF SFWA**

The purpose of the South Florida Writers Association shall be to establish and maintain a forum for fellowship, education and information among writers; assist in establishing and supporting high literary standards; encourage and promote interest in literary achievements in the community.



**Yearly SFWA Membership**

**\$50 per person**

**\$20 student**

**\$20 outside Dade, Broward & Monroe Counties**

**Contact Teresa Bendana**

[terebend@yahoo.com](mailto:terebend@yahoo.com)

Register online at

[www.southfloridawritersassn.org](http://www.southfloridawritersassn.org)

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- 1 | *Mango Writers Conference*
- | *JOBC Awards Ceremony*
- 2 | *Editorial Staff/Submission Info*
- 3 | *President's Letter*
- 4 - 5 | *JOBC Winning Essays*
- 6 | *Poems by Cara Nusinov*
- 7 | *Quotes*
- 8 | *Message/Poem from Elyse Cunigan*
- 9 | *Spotlight: Mort Laitner*
- 10-12 | *Articles by Members*
- 13- 14 | *Photo Parade*
- 15 | *On The Bookshelf*
- 16 | *Ads and Announcements*
- | *Critique Groups*
- | *SFWA Board Contact Info*

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Dorothy Danaher White

February is the month of Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day can be interpreted very narrowly, as a day on which romantic lovers exchange chocolates, flowers, and cards with hearts and lace on them. More often now, Valentine's Day is seen as a day to celebrate love in general. One year, when I was laid up with a debilitating illness, I made Valentine's Day cards for many members of my family. Since I couldn't attend my Harvard classes or work on research projects, I found myself reflecting on the love I had for my family and was inspired to cut out heart shapes and lace and glue them together in attractive patterns. I was still in my twenties back then.

Now that I'm in my fifties, I find myself filled with love for my neighbors in South Miami, my brothers and sisters in this wonderful county of Miami-Dade, the State of Florida, the United States, and humanity in general. I won't even limit my love to the planet Earth. I am a science fiction fan, and recently, astronomers have discovered that most stars have solar systems, many of which can support Earth-type planets.

My Valentine to humanity is doing my best as a

writer; serving in my profession as a clinical psychologist; as well as volunteering for public service and political involvement, including attending protest marches and rallies.

Of course, there are those who don't like what I write; who don't even see the need for psychologists; who chafe under my leadership in public service positions; and certainly many would disagree with my politics. None of that matters. I am still bound by my love for humanity to do whatever I can to improve their lot, even if my efforts are criticized, resisted, or even rejected outright. When I was younger and concerned with prestige, vanity, and garnering rewards for myself and those close to me, I would be amazed when I met people who had discovered their great love for humanity and were giving themselves generously to some cause or another. It seems to me that as writers, we are writing Valentine letters to humanity every time we put pen to paper or set fingers to the keyboard. Happy Valentine's Day to all writers, and particularly to the members of the South Florida Writers Association.

---

*JOBC Awards Ceremony  
From Page 1*

All three Creative Writing winners were present to read their essays and receive awards. Diana Proenza, Yael Rosenberg, and Ilan Gilhuly gave impassioned readings of their works. Their essays reflect care and concern for manatees, the world's trees, and endangered animals of the North Pole.

**Alan Farago** was our special guest speaker. Alan is president of Friends of the Everglades, which was founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas. He is a longtime environmental activist and writer on Florida's environment. Alan spoke of the importance of protecting the Everglades and our environment. He emphasized the role of young people with this goal. **Leia Schwartz** sang an original song, "Keep Our Future." She gave a beautiful delivery of this song on the environment. Leia is a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at Coral Reef High School.

The Creative Writing winners and their teachers were given numerous awards. The students and teachers received Junior Orange Bowl certificates

and pins. SFWA President Dorothy Danaher White presented gift checks to the students. Books & Books provided gift certificates for winning students and teachers.

Mort Laitner gave a *Healthy Stories* book and Mango Writers Conference CD to students and teachers. The Miami Art Museum gave family memberships to the students. HistoryMiami provided guest passes for students and teachers. Friends of the Everglades gave the winning students two books, a t-shirt, and pen to inspire more writing.

These young writers and their teachers were awarded honorary membership in SFWA.

The winning essays are featured in the January and February issues of *Author's Voice*. Winning essays will be posted on the Junior Orange Bowl Committee website at [www.jrorangebowl.org](http://www.jrorangebowl.org) and Young Friends of the Everglades website at [www.everglades.org/young-friends/](http://www.everglades.org/young-friends/).

It is a gift to honor young authors who give us hope for nature and the environment.

## JUNIOR ORANGE BOWL WINNING ESSAYS

The Junior Orange Bowl Creative Writing Committee is proud to present the winning essays in the *Author's Voice*. **Diana Proenza** from South Miami Middle School is our First Place winner. Her winning teacher is Mrs. Alison Wood Griñan. Diana's essay, "To Justify Nerissa," is re-printed in this issue due to a typographical error of the principal character's name in the January issue.

**FIRST PLACE WINNER**  
**DIANA PROENZA**  
**South Miami Middle School**

**TO JUSTIFY NERISSA**  
*By Diana Proenza*



Glen Plude didn't like skateboarding, basketball and never read comic books or played video games. After school, most boys hung around at each others houses wreaking havoc.

Instead, every afternoon Glen biked to Everglades National Park, his place of refuge and comfort. He would sit on the damp grass to look at the sky. The birds busily collected twigs before disappearing into the thick foliage of the mangrove trees. The alligators lounged like fat men in a hot tub as they lurked eerily awaiting their prey. Yet, the otters played around like little boys, toying with pebbles and flipping into the water. Glen would laugh.

He did love the birds, the lazy, deadly alligators and the mischievous otters but, he had a single favorite. He spent hours watching the graceful manatees.

Every afternoon, he'd walk along the shallow water, right into the "NO WAKE ZONE" meeting his favorite manatee family. There were three. A large one, who he named Nerissa and two calves, he named Jim and Jessica. The laws prohibited him from touching them, but merely sitting in their presence brought him joy. He knew they felt the same way.

He was insecure but, around them, he never felt lonely or afraid.

Glen was an artistic and creative boy. He'd sketch, draw and paint them. He was infatuated with them. Suddenly everything changed. It was hotter than usual that day. The humidity was

dense and thick as blood. He was not ready for the sight that stood before him. His Nerissa washed up onto the grass with a long deep gash down her belly. She was bleeding profusely, flesh exposed.

Glen knew immediately what had happened. A boat's propeller drove straight through her. Quickly, he called the wildlife emergency hotline number he had memorized from his Boy Scout days. She and her calves were then taken to an animal hospital, where they desperately tried to save her. Glen prayed all night for the well-being of his aquatic friend.

At twilight, he learned the propeller had punctured her heart. She did not make it. The calves were being taken to a facility for rehabilitation and released back to the wild.

Glen was heartbroken and completely irate. For days he stared up at his paintings of the once free trio. He refused to go to school. If only the boater had paid attention and slowed down for these gentle creatures! Nerissa would still be alive.

Suddenly, something surged through him for the first time, Nerissa died because of negligence. All this horrid suffering was because of boaters not paying attention. They deserve to be protected. There needed to be stricter laws.

And so, the next day Glen Plude found himself before the doors of town hall, followed by a horde of anxious citizens clad in t-shirts that bore his best painting of Nerissa. They waited earnestly, and finally pushed him forward.

"I'd like to speak to the mayor."

**SECOND PLACE WINNER**

**Yael Rosenberg**

**Rabbi Alexander S. Gross Hebrew Academy  
Winning Teacher: Mrs. Jennifer Ohana**

**WHY WE NEED TO CARE ABOUT NATURE  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

*By Yael Rosenberg*

I stand here, swaying in the wind. With a hole in my heart, I watch how the lumberjack's ax destroys my home and takes away my family. I try to scream, to beg him to stop. But I can only stand here, not uttering a single sound, while he continues on swinging his mighty ax.

"How have I wronged you? What could I have done that was so bad? All I have ever done was provide you with shade and the air that you breathe."

I look up at the dark and dismal sky, whose clouds hang low depressed and betrayed. What was once a clear blue sky, abundant with downy white clouds, is now gray and filled with smoke.

"Have they also done something wrong?"

TTTHHUUMPPP!!!!!!

He strikes his final blow into the helpless tree as it falls to the ground. He grows weary for a moment and sits down on the tree stump to catch his breath. I watch him open a candy bar, scarf it down, and carelessly throw the wrapper on the forest floor. For a moment I am hopeful, yes, hopeful, for I think that he has grown too tired to cut another tree. But he stands up, lifts his ax, and starts to walk towards me. As I watch him approach, my heart sinks with dread and anticipation. With one fluid motion, he lifts his ax over his head and then plunges it down on me. With each strike frightened leaves and weak branches fall to the ground. For a moment I pity this unfortunate soul, for he does not realize that every breath, every bite, and every drink was because of us, because of the environment. And with that thought another question comes to me in my last moments.

"What will we do when we are all gone, and there is no one left to save them?"

TTTHHHHUUMPPP!!!!!!

**THIRD PLACE WINNER**

**ILAN GILHULY**

**South Miami Middle School  
Winning Teacher: Mrs. Alison Wood Griñan**

**INTERVIEWS WITH NORTH POLE ANIMALS  
OF THE AIR, LAND AND SEA**

*By Ilan Gilhuly*

Every year billions of pounds of CO2 are released into the atmosphere. This causes holes in the ozone, allowing more heat and radiation from the Sun to reach Earth. What it means to us, is melting popsicles and a little more sweat. But to many inhabitants of the North Pole, it means weeks without eating, swimming for days to reach land, and too often, death.

These are the animals of the North Pole, and here are their stories.

**"Hello, what is your name and story?"**

*"I'm an Emperor Goose. During mating season we migrate to the Arctic Tundra. Recently, we have been struggling to find enough breeding grounds. The snow and ice that we need to breed is disappearing, and those areas that remain are too crowded. So, we must keep flying greater distances in search of a place to land and mate. Last mating season, I was lucky enough to find a safe spot, but I had to watch my brother plummet to his death because of exhaustion. Sadly, this is a common occurrence today for Emperor Geese."*

**"Hello, fish. What is your story?"**

*"My school lived by the icebergs. Our population was rapidly decreasing because the fresh water from the ice was melting into our saltwater. Many of my family died because our bodies can't tolerate fresh water. Because of the danger and death, the school moved to open waters away from the ice and land. While this helps our survival, it hurts many other animals that need a diet of fish to survive."*

**"Tell me Polar Bear, how were you affected by the melting ice?"**

*"One day I was hunting with my four cubs. We had to walk for miles to reach the shoreline in*

*- Continued on Page 10*

## TWO POEMS FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

First published in *Unrequited Loves and Other French Kisses*

### LOVING TOO MUCH

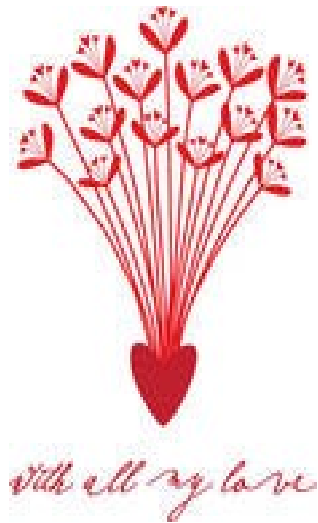
By Cara Nusinov

They asked, what do I love? I love too much. I am not love-selective. I love too much:  
I love words, how they have power and are humble, how they bring someone the inside light  
of a crescent moon, or tears you thought were veiled. I love odors, each one passionately until I find  
one that stuffs me up or clogs my lungs and make me wheeze, nauseates me, makes me sneeze,  
or causes stomach heave; and colors, I do not just like them- I relish in them. I mix them.  
I read about them. I imagine them. I paint them in broad strokes of oil and scrape them away  
from memories, and enjoy them on furniture and nature, and freckles on my skin, and in the depths  
of the expansion and contraction of my hazel iris in infinite examples, and when my eye went blind,  
I eerily observed the fading lights then grays of my world and giggled when color returned.  
And friends, I am passionate about them. They elicit deep feelings of affection, strong liking,  
attraction, intense feeling, deep enthusiasm; and of course, my children, my best, my first;  
I try to mother, not smother. I loved them before they even existed.  
All this in four letters: LOVE.

### A TABLE FOR TWO

By Cara Nusinov

I dreamt we were at a table for two--  
a desk in a forest with blotting pads and pens,  
sitting beside each other, writing, writing  
and writing some more.  
We'd lunch and talk without end.  
Then night. We'd read poetry  
and eat from kettles and heavy pans  
organic delights made by your hand,  
and walk under the stars and discuss the universe--  
the moon above casting our moonshadows,  
and we would dance around naked  
and make poetry love; and on the morrow  
we would begin anew  
this repetition of writing and laughing  
at a table for two.



Cara Nusinov is the author of *Unrequited Loves and Other French Kisses* (soon in Spanish). Available by writing to her at [readpoemswithme@gmail.com](mailto:readpoemswithme@gmail.com). Her next book: *Hallelujah! My brain is Working: From Remembering to Forgetting - A Challenge of Memory*. Visit her websites, [ReadPoemsWithMe.com](http://ReadPoemsWithMe.com) and [Poetrypaintingsbycara.com](http://Poetrypaintingsbycara.com).



## EMAIL FROM ELYSE CUNIGAN

*By Gonny van den Broek*

Many longtime members of the South Florida Writers Association may remember Elyse Cunigan, member until she moved to Gainesville, Florida. She and I stayed mostly in touch by sending each other interesting forwarded messages followed by our comments. About a year ago I learned that she had cancer. As she had not commented on that much, I was under the impression that she was doing fine but alas. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January I, and many others, received the following e-mail from her:

*"It's January 22nd! And the doctors said I wouldn't live to see the new year. What do they know?*

*However, my condition is not good. Can barely eat a bite. But I'm keeping the pain under control. The hospice center here in Gainesville is very nice, but limited to beds. I hope I can get in there around the end.*

*I've made the decision to have neither a funeral nor a memorial service. All my friends and family are so spread around the country and across the seas that it just didn't make sense. Carlye [Elyse's daughter] will probably notify you upon my demise. If you'd like to send a card to my family (no flowers, please) you can address it to the Cunigan and McCants families. The address for both is: P.O. Box 357596, Gainesville, FL 32635. Or you can call David at 305-968-6099.*

*I'm already missing all of you. Your friendship has brought fond memories.*

*I wrote a poem today. My last! Some would say, "Thank Goodness, it's her last." If you'd like to read the poem, please open the attachment.*

*Love to you,  
Elyse"*

### GAME FOR ONE

*By Elyse Lounsbury Cunigan*

Thoughts turn up one-by-one like cards  
put down upon a table. Reflections from the past  
of faces, days, events, each with its own value

like cards from a deck of solitaire, at first shuffled,  
unarranged  
then placed in sequence -- red on black, queen on king --  
in order of importance.

The what-ifs or if-nots of choices made --  
some by happenstance, some by design--  
too late now to rearrange.

Now, with memories gathered all around  
I sit, one last card in the deck to fall.  
As I recall. As I recall.



## SPOTLIGHT: MORT LAITNER AT THE HELM OF THE CONFERENCE

By Cara Nusinov

Mort Laitner is the smiling force behind the Mango Writer's Conference on Saturday, February 4, 2012, from 8AM to 5PM brought to you by the South Florida Writers Association (SFWA) and the Miami-Dade County Health Department, *Healthy Stories*.

A sell-out last year, writers come for this one day conference because they know readings and workshops are the best ways to hone your skills in writing. Having read more than 1000 short stories, and publishing *Healthy Stories*, Mort Laitner knows a bit about these skills.

"Writing is a passion. Once it is in your blood, it is almost impossible to extricate yourself from it. You act as a medium. Once you write, it flows from you," according to Laitner.

"I started writing seven years ago. I once met Isaac Bashevis Singer (Nobel prize In Literature in 1978.) My favorite short stories are by Singer and Sholem Aleichem." (*Fiddler On The Roof*)

Mort Laitner, Amy Tejirian, and Tracie Dickerson's workshop, Writers Magazines Autographing With Style; How to Write a Healthy Story & Poem, will open a world for writers who want to know more about writers magazines, such as *The Writer*, *Poets and Writers* and *Writers's Digest*. His team is in the loop about how to sign or autograph your book once you



publish. Hmmm, is there a proper method, a preferred method and why do it a specific way? I cannot wait to find the answer to this.

With Mort's sense of humor, his workshop is sure to be both informative and fun.

Our SFWA was ready to bring back a conference. Mort was also ready with a brand new venue with lots of parking and comfortable furnishings for a writer's conference.

"It's a juicy conference," said Laitner, "with juicy writers."

So let's get our pens, PDA and computers ready. There will be a lot of skill sharing at this Mango 2012 Conference.

---

SFWA officers and members commend the members of the Mango Conference Committee for their outstanding service and commitment to excellence.

### The Mango Conference Committee

**Chairperson: Mort Laitner**

**Publicity: Cara Nusinov**

**Catering: Ricki Dorn**

**Handouts: Mort Laitner, Amy Tejirian, Tracie Dickerson**

We also express our gratitude to the following for their outstanding contribution and kind support:

Sponsor: Miami-Dade County Health Department, *Healthy Stories*

Lillian Rivera, RN, MSN, Ph.D., Health Dept. Administrator

Keynote Speakers: Andrea Askowitz and Esther Martinez

Lip Service and the Craft of Sharing Your Story Out Loud

★ALL SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS/WORKSHOP FACILITATORS★

THANK YOU!

search of fish. We were desperate, we had not eaten in weeks. I was more concerned for my cubs' nutrition than my own, so I took a chance and went to an area made of thin ice. There, one wrong step meant a piece of ice breaking off with you on it. And that is what happened. The ice drifted, and we were stranded, floating miles from shore. My cubs were in a panic as I tried to calm them down. We had spent three desperate days on that block of ice, and it was getting smaller. The sea was getting rougher, and we were thrashed around on what seemed like an impossibly small ice cube at that point. We held on frantically for our lives, because to try to find the right direction and to swim far enough would be most likely fatal."

**"I see you're getting emotional."**

"Yes, it was an awful experience. My smallest cub was the first to fall. In panic, he grabbed his sister and took her down with him. I tried to reach them, but the violent water engulfed them, and they were gone. After suffering all night from that horrible loss, I awoke to find another of my cubs missing. He must have slipped into the freezing water in the dark. My last cub was on the verge of starvation when we finally drifted back to the shore."

**"I'm very sorry for your loss."**

"Yes, the story is almost too painful to share. My only hope is that we start taking better care of the environment to give my last cub and many other animals a chance to survive."



★SFWA NEW MEMBERS★

Patrick ODougherty  
Antonio Simone, Jr.  
Ilya Katz  
Ellen Gilligan  
Marcelline Jenny  
Donna and Travis Tillery  
Christopher Cobb  
Diana Proenza  
Yael Rosenberg  
Ilan Gilhuly  
Alison Wood Griñan  
Jennifer Ohana  
\* WELCOME \*

THE PEOPLE ON MY PATH

By Gina lafrate

Was it a coincidence? Or, the will of God that these people should have been on my path?

"How interesting!" I asked myself. "Have these people been sent my way for a purpose? Or for some good reason? Why these encounters?"

A lot of questions went through my mind. I could not help wonder and analyze. Here I was at the Los Angeles International Airport in August, 2000 waiting to connect with my daughter and son-in-law and my three grand children. I had caught a flight on American Airlines from Toronto with a stopover at Los Angeles. I had a three hour wait to reunite with my family and proceed to Melbourne, Australia.

My mental state at this period of time in my life was in a real turmoil. This is why I had been taciturn and in my own little world. I did not care to speak or even notice anybody around me during my flight. I had immersed myself in my own soul searching. The only desire in my heart was to be reunited with my young family, and mentally shut the rest of the world completely out.

Upon arrival at LAX, I immediately made my way to one of the magazine shops to purchase some reading materials, hoping to distract myself from my melancholic state and spark some interest. As usual, once in my reading, the time would just fly. But I needed to remain vigilant with my watch to check the time, and make sure I did not miss my children.

I had chosen a vacant bench to be at peace. No sooner had I settled myself in my comfort zone, a lovely red-headed lady plumped herself beside me. She had tons of silver durable luggage. I glanced at her from the corner of my left eye, resentful, of the invasion. I lowered my head and continued in my interest.

She seemed restless, trying hard to get my attention, her noises and movement were annoying. I finally put my magazine down and glanced at her.

She gave me the sweetest smile, her eyes imploring like a little puppy. She was well dressed

- Continued on Page 11

portraying an aura of elegance. She was wearing a peach colored suit with an organza blue flowered shawl adorning her shoulders, her blond hair was swept away symmetrically.

"Swishy," I thought. "She must be an actress. Whoever you are, leave me alone and let me be. I am in no mood to converse or meet new people."

I retreated into my corner to put more distance between us. Few minutes later, she mumbled words I could not comprehend. This stranger seemed adamant to disturb me. Finally, I gave in. She wanted to talk. I closed my reading and turned to her.

"Yes, Miss," I said. "What is the problem?"

In a very broken English, she responded.

"My husband ... he went to return the car long ago and he is not coming. I am worried".

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "I am sure he will be here soon. Where are you from?"

"Belgium," she responded. "How about you?"

"Toronto, Canada." I responded.

From there on the chitchat began. Before we both knew it, we were in deep conversation.

She was Mary Joe Milken, the kindest soul one could ever come across, sweet, gentle and classy, most of all with a heart full of love.

I told her I was in transit on my way to Melbourne, Australia. I noticed that her facial expression had transformed in delight, the worry on her face had disappeared.

Simply engaging in conversation, we exchanged names and related each other's lives. We sat there for two and half hours. Then her husband arrived. Exuberant, she introduced me to him. His name was Jack, cordial and friendly, extremely tall.

"Please, Jack," she asked him. "Give Celia our address."

By now, I knew their life story. She had no children. We made a promise to connect and write to each other. Although she could not write in English, her husband would do it for her. He was a professor of Physics.

They left before my connection. We embraced and Mary Joe had tears in her eyes. She regretted leaving me behind. Her husband was a gentleman

with panache.

I felt sad after they left. I had lost my new found friend. She had forced herself into my life and vanished in a short time.

Once in Melbourne I kept my promise and sent her cards. We winter in Florida. Mary Joe and Jack traveled abroad every year before Christmas. We planned an annual reunion. However, there always seemed to be a problem. When they were arriving South; we would be leaving to fly North. But we managed to meet on short precious hours stealing time. This continued for few years. Jack adored his Mary Joe and she was impeccable.

He once stated with a sigh, "I think we are destined to meet always between flights".

Many times they invited us to Spain, Belgium. We never made it there for lack of time. We remained good friends and Mary Joe became precious. I loved her letters, written for her by Jack.

Then one early December morning, a letter arrived. It was from Jack.

"We will not be coming abroad this year, Mary Joe is not to well."

We were sad to miss our reunion but promised, "Next time soon."

The following year, I had not heard from them. Certainly they were on my mind. I was on a return flight home for Christmas. My plane landed in New York to connect through Buffalo. While seating on the plane, I thought it would be funny if Mary Joe and Jack would be here connecting to Florida, and we have left already. I was puzzled because I had not received their special card.

Soon after we arrived home, a very elegant envelope stood out among my mail.

I immediately recognized Jack's writing. It was postmarked in New York. I opened it anxiously. Jack's writing was very detailed and said, "I am writing from New York, I am in my hotel room alone."

The letter was written the same day I was at the airport in New York. The news was sad. He wrote that Mary Joe passed away in his arms after battling colon cancer.

- Continued on Page 12

## **NEW FEATURE: QUERY LETTER**

Writing a query letter? As suggested by past SFWA president Steve Liebowitz, we're starting a new section about query letters. Please send your query letters to the Editor and participate in this new opportunity to learn, get published and receive feedback.

"Query letters are a vital step in attracting an agent or publisher," according to Steve. "This feature will enable our members to accomplish two things: get feedback on their query letters and share their work with readers of our newsletter. "

Here's the first query letter.

## **THE COVENANT AND THE SCROLLS**

*By Steve Liebowitz*  
[sliebowitz@aol.com](mailto:sliebowitz@aol.com)

(This is a generic e-query. It's best to mention something about the agent or publisher's interests and genres, to hook them somewhere in the first paragraph.)

How would the Bible be different if God was female? People are buying books on alternative views of bible stories. David Maine did well with *The Fallen, Samson and The Flood*, and more recently Riverhead released Jonathan Goldstein's *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bible!*, and Harper published David Plotz' *Good Book*.

I, too, am working on a series of novels based on a unique alternative view of Old Testament characters, tentatively titled, *The Covenant and The Scrolls*. The working title comes from the first book in the series, which is completed, focusing on the Covenant, and Devorah's unique personal relationship with a God that is more female than male.

A prophet, mother and the only female judge ever to rule ancient Israel, Devorah viewed God as an accessible, benign, loving and present force, not some distant, arbitrary, capricious and punishing monster. Aware of the punishing fearsome God, the God of the temple and formal worship, Devorah called it the God of the Scrolls; while the benign and accessible God she called the God of the Covenant.

*People On My Path*  
*From Page 11*

She never wanted him to tell me because she loved me so much and did not want to cause me sorrow.

My eyes filled with tears and sorrow engulfed my body. Envisioning our first encounter, I thought how grave of me. I almost missed the chance to allow this kind soul to come into my life. Our precious moments spent together were joyful, full of laughter and love. Jack must have made some arrangement; because every Christmas, I receive a card from Mary Joe wishing me a "Happy New Year."

My interest in alternative views of the Bible began when I read Kazantzakis' *Last Temptation of Christ* under fire during the first TET Offensive in Vietnam in 1968. What I've learned and want to share in these books – that God is both more than and less than we've always thought Her to be – not only sustained me in the defense of my doctoral dissertation (on alternative ways of knowing) in 1990, but continues to support my Business Coaching practice today. I've lived this stuff, as well as researched it.

The novels describe biblical events beginning with Devorah, through Saul, David and ending with Solomon, from the perspective of the Covenant and the Scrolls, two almost completely opposite experiences of God. For example, when King Saul is centered in the Covenant, he has no headaches; but with the Scrolls, he is tortured by 'evil spirits'.

Told with the same matter of fact, every day tone and interiority that David Maine used in the *Fallen* and *Samson*, readers will experience the familiar Old Testament characters and situations in a new light; one that might help them understand which of the two aspects of God – the Scrolls or the Covenant, they themselves believe in. Of course, all the passion, suspense, bloodshed color and spectacle of a C.B. de Mille version of the Bible are present, too.

*Devorah* is complete with approx 320 manuscript pages; the second book on Saul, is a two thirds complete at about 340 pages.

# PHOTO PARADE

By *MagicalPhotos.com/Mitchell Zachs*

## JUNIOR ORANGE BOWL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST AWARDS CEREMONY

January 7, 2012

Books & Books – Coral Gables



First place winner Diana Proenza reads her winning essay



Second place winner Yael Rosenberg reads her essay



Third place winner Ilan Gilhuly receives awards



Winning teacher Alison Wood Griñan with Ilan Gilhuly, Diana Proenza and Yael Rosenberg

## PHOTO PARADE

By *MagicalPhotos.com/Mitchell Zachs and David Milone*



JOBC Queen Mikayla with gift book from Friends of the Everglades



Leia Schwartz sings original song about the environment



Guest speaker Alan Farago, president Friends of the Everglades



Chair Connie Goodman-Milone with JOBC Royal Court Princess Monet, Queen Mikayla and Alternate Princess Hannah



## On The Bookshelf

ED AHRENS	<i>The Perils of Imprudent Writing - How to Watch What You Write and Stay Out of Court (Second Edition), Already Walks Tomorrow - A Love Affair, Reborn and Eternal, Ed'sitorials on Mediation - A Curmudgeon's Wit and Wisdom on the Perils and Pearls of Mediation (With Joe Klock's gracious consent!)</i>
LLOYD ALLAHAR	<i>Living the Beauty of Life</i>
LIZ ALEXANDER	<i>The House of Lucretius (Co-author: Jean M. Bratcher)</i>
SIMONE ANDERSON	<i>Totally Yours</i>
SIDNEY ANDREWS	<i>A Fall to New Heights</i>
ANDREA ASKOWITZ	<i>My Miserable, Lonely, Lesbian Pregnancy</i>
JAMES BENNETT	<i>Wilton Manors</i>
LOUIS BERENGUER	<i>The Labor-Value Theory</i>
SETH BRAMSON	<i>Hallandale Beach, Florida: For More Than 90 Years Broward County's City of Choice</i>
DAVE BRICKER	<i>The Dance and The One Hour Guide to Self Publishing: Straight Talk for Fiction &amp; Nonfiction Writers About Producing &amp; Marketing Your Own Books</i>
JEAN BRADFISCH	<i>The Hall Picture</i>
DON DANIELS	<i>Rhyme and Punishment</i>
LEITA KALDI DAVIS	<i>Roller Skating in the Desert</i>
DEBORAH DE NICOLA	<i>The Future That Brought Her Here, A Call to Awaken</i>
PESI DINNERSTEIN	<i>A Cluttered Life: Searching for God, Serenity, and My Missing Keys</i>
BARBARA GILBERT	<i>Spiritual Journey of a Child</i>
BOB GOLDSTEIN	<i>Your Head'll Turn Into A Ball</i>
MARY GREENWOOD, J.D.	<i>How to Negotiate like a Pro, 41 Rules for Resolving Disputes; How to Mediate Like a Pro; How to Interview Like a Pro: 43 Rules for Getting Your Next Job</i>
GROUP TEN	<i>Step into My Metaphor (Critique Group Jnita Wright)</i>
GEORGIANA HALL	<i>Hershey-A Tale of a Curious House Rabbit</i>
HOWARD HERSKOWITZ	<i>Aaron's Journey From Slave To Master</i>
RALPH HOGGES	<i>The Love of Books and Academic Excellence: A Memoir, and Lifting Our Literary Voices: An Anthology of Poetry, Short Stories and Essays</i>
ESTEFANIA JARAMILLO	<i>Todo Cuesta...</i>
JOE KLOCK SR.	<i>Like Klockwork, The Wit and (sometimes) Wisdom of a Key Largo Curmudgeon, The Real World Of Selling Real Estate, In Search of Maximence (4CDs and workbook)</i>
MORT LAITNER	<i>Healthy Stories, A Compilation of Short Stories &amp; Poems on Health</i>
STEVE LIEBOWITZ	<i>The New Professionalism</i>
MADELYN LORBER	<i>The Eyes Have It</i>
DAVID MILLER	<i>Translation of the Autobiography of Miguel Pineiro, publisher of the Yellow Pages in Spanish, and Chairman Bill: A Biography of William F. Buckley Jr.</i>
PETER NEVILLE	<i>The Awakening of the Lion: Singapore, The Rose of Singapore</i>
CARA NUSINOV	<i>Unrequited Loves and Other French Kisses</i>
ARNOLD PATRICK PARKER	<i>Ben's Tale, published by Xlibris, 2008 – (www.benstale.com)</i>
FRANK PARTEL	<i>The Chess Players, A Novel of the Cold War at Sea; A Wound in the Mind, The Court-Martial of Lance Corporal Cachora, USMC</i>
DAVID PEREDA	<i>Havana Confidential, The Highest Hurdle, Getting Filthy Rich, Havana: Top Secret, Havana: Killing Castro</i>
ROBERT E. PLATSHORN	<i>Black Tuna Diaries</i>
DEBORAH C. POLLACK	<i>Laura Woodward: The Artist Behind the Innovator Who Developed Palm Beach</i>
NINA ROMANO	<i>Cooking Lessons, Coffeehouse Meditations, and Writing in a Changing World (co-author)</i>
JEFFREY RUDELL	<i>Exercise Physiology for Swimmers and Divers: Understanding Limitations</i>
HOLLY W. SCHWARTZTOL	<i>In A Darkness, Sherry and the Unseen World</i>
RICHARD JAMES SULLIVAN	<i>Knights of Avalon-Diamond Hearts Chronicles, Volume One</i>
GUS VENEGAS	<i>Memories from the Land of the Intolerant Tyrant</i>
BARBARA WESTON	<i>One Song— Two Voices</i>
JNITA WRIGHT	<i>Crayola Psychology, An Apple Falls, Taming The Word, Neighborhood</i>

If you wish to appear on our BOOKSHELF list, please e-mail the information to Evelyn Benson at [Evelynbenson2@aol.com](mailto:Evelynbenson2@aol.com).  
Books should be written by current members and be presently in print.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

### ROMAN TUTORING SERVICES CHILDREN AND ADULTS

**HOMEWORK HELP!**

Spanish    Employability Skills  
English    Social Studies  
ESL, VSL    Basic Math



### **Need an Editor for your Manuscript?**

Award-winning professional writer **Deborah DeNicola**, author of 5 books of poetry, anthology editor and author of the memoir, *The Future That Brought Her Here*, will help you generate new work, give conceptual feedback or fine-tuning. Contact me for more info.

***dd1226@comcast.net***  
**[www.intuitivegateways.com](http://www.intuitivegateways.com)**

### ***Advertise your books, services, and products!***

3 lines for 3 months	\$10
Business card size for 6 months	\$25
Whole/Half/Quarter page	Negotiable

*Contact Evelyn Benson, [evelynbenson2@aol.com](mailto:evelynbenson2@aol.com)*

#### **SFWA CRITIQUE GROUPS**

##### **Group #1**

Leader: Don Daniels, 786-877-0136  
*d\_donald@bellsouth.net*

What: Novels, Short Stories

When: 4th Saturday  
9 AM -12 NOON (**NEW TIME**)

Where: Nordstrom eBar (NEW LOCATION)  
Merrick Park – Coral Gables (1<sup>st</sup> Level)  
358 San Lorenzo Ave.(off LeJeune Rd)

##### **Group #2**

Leader: Jnita Wright, 305-232-5200  
*jnita@juno.com*

What: Poetry

When: 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday  
from 1 – 3 pm

Where: Pinecrest Library  
(next to Pinecrest Gardens)  
5835 SW 111 St., Pinecrest

##### **Group #3 Telephonic Critique group**

Leader: Steve Liebowitz,  
*SLiebowitz@aol.com*

What: All genres

When: **2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday**  
from 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

Where: **\*Call Norma Chew\***  
Tel. 305-274-1337  
for conference phone #

#### **SFWA OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONTACT INFORMATION (2011-2012)**

President	--	Dorothy Danaher White	786-245-8148	warwick5552005@yahoo.com
Vice President	--	Ricki Dorn	305-905-5055	abbasone@earthlink.net
Immediate Past President	--	Holly Schwartztol	305-279-0007	hollschwartztol@gmail.com
Treasurer	--	Evelyn Benson	305-772-5857	evelynbenson2@aol.com
Secretary	--	Estefania Jaramillo	305- 934-0992	tefitajaramillo@gmail.com
Director - Membership	--	Teresa Bendaña	305-271-6869	terebend@yahoo.com
Director - Program	--	Jonathan Rose	305-374-0371	Proseguy@aol.com
Director - Communications	--	Margaret McLaughlin	305-858-7224	margaretj711@comcast.net
Director- Publication/AV Editor	--	Evelyn Benson	305-772-5857	evelynbenson2@aol.com
Director - Conference	--	Mort Laitner	786-845-0300	Mort_Laitner@doh.state.fl.us
Director – Contests	--	Don Daniels	305-251-6529	d_donald@bellsouth.net
Director - Website	--	Lynn MacKinnon	786-253-3393	lynn.mackinnon@yahoo.com
Director – Community Relations	--	Georgiana Hall	305-252-3926	hallh@fiu.edu
Director at Large	--	Connie Goodman-Milone	305-259-6215	cgmilone@bellsouth.net
Director At Large	--	Lloyd Allahar	786-343-6259	lloydsbooks@hotmail.com