

Sacramento Suburban Writers' Club

suburban

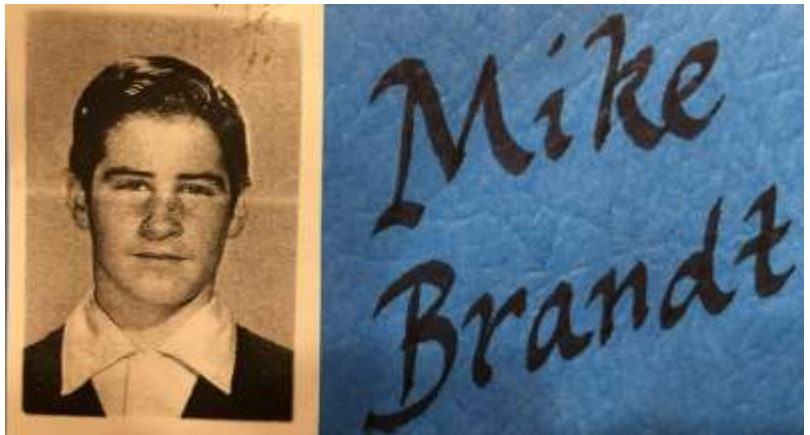
SCRIBE

Join us on Monday evening, June 8, when Mike Brandt will talk to us about Writing a Daily Travel Journal.

The meeting starts at 7 pm at the Friendship Hall of the Crossroads Church, 5502 Dewey Drive, Fair Oaks, CA (near the corner of Dewey and Madison).

Mike's picture is to the right. He certainly holds his age well, doesn't he?

Mike started writing in 1947 and travel articles in 1999 after completing the Two Oceans Marathon in Cape Town, South Africa.



Mike has had numerous articles/short stories published, including three stories in SSWC's Anthologies. He has written articles for international travel magazines about running in Belize, volcano boarding in Nicaragua, while writing his crime thriller on Mt. Elbrus in southern Russia. Mike is an extremophile who enjoys traveling, skydiving, mountaineering, and marathoning.

Mike has been a member of the Sacramento Suburban Writers Club since 2015 and has been a keynote speaker at writers' conferences and multiple healthcare fraud conferences nationwide.

Be sure to come on June 8 to hear Mike share his experiences and his commitment to journaling.



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SSWC's Scholarship Winner Kailee Lou

The Sacramento Suburban Writers Club sponsors an *Excellence in Writing* award for local high school seniors. This year, three students won scholarships, which go to their college of choice in the fall. Awards were presented at the annual May Banquet and the three winning students, their parents, and teachers attended.

First prize, a \$1000 scholarship, was awarded to Ms. Kailee Lou from Cosumnes Oaks High School for her short story, "Sweet Peas." Her story follows on the next page.

A second prize of \$500 was awarded to Mr. Nick Cha for his story, "The Beginnings of Mephi Pholes." He attended Valley High School.

Third prize of \$250 went to Ms. Samantha Vannatta (aka Athena Alicorn) for her story "Mission Breakout" from Valley High School.

Scholarship Team Club members: Westley Turner, Linda Villatore and Karen Sepahmansour conduct outreach beginning each fall to many Sacramento High Schools and later judge the submitted entries.

This fall, the club will reach out to local high schools for submissions to the 2027 Excellence in Writing Award.



SSWC President Ron Smith and
Winner Kailee Lou

Sweet Peas

Kailee Lou

Cora stares out the window. The last dregs of winter are just beginning to fade. Small shoots of grass peek out from the dirt, and Cora knows that if she were outside right now, she would be able to smell the scent of sun-warmed dirt and dew.

“Pass, please.”

Cora feels a smile pull at her lips as she pulls away from the sunlight view. She rests her chin on her hands, staring back at the expectant gaze watching her.

“Pass what?” she teases, tapping her pointer finger against her cheek idly. Adeline, who’s lying on the floor, stares at her balefully. Her lips are twisted in a disapproving frown, and Cora can’t help but chuckle. Being the grand, old age of *five*, her expressions are more charming than intimidating. Shooting her an appealing smile, Cora slides over the slim box of colored pencils. Adeline’s expression quickly shifts to a pleased one, and Cora can only wonder at her mercurial moods.

“What are you gonna draw today?”

Adeline is already focused on her drawing, posture as serious as a professional.

“Lu.”

Cora feels her expression soften.

Lu, or more accurately, Lucien. Her baby brother. Well, not really a baby anymore, Lucien is almost fifteen.

Cora looks around the room idly as Adeline draws. This room, now Adeline’s, reminds her of the watercolor art you would see in a children’s book. Walls a soft baby pink, a white wood ceiling fan. Pushed against the wall is a small dresser, beneath a multitude of art projects taped to the wall.

She doesn’t dislike her sister’s room. She helped her parents *paint it*. But she can’t help the fond little curl of nostalgia at the sight of the little scuff in the corner wall, poorly hidden after Lucien threw his toy sword too hard, that reveals the old green from when this was Lucien’s room.

As she watches Adeline, Cora doesn’t see her little sister. For a moment, she’s transported back to the past. A time before her senior year, and “Lu” didn’t mind holding her hand to cross the street. So sheltered in their small suburban town.

“You can shade his brows darker, Addy.”

Adeline pauses, contemplating the recommendation. Cora can’t help but smile when the girl hums, satisfied with the new feature. This goes on for a while, Cora chiming in with small recommendations, and Adeline carefully considering each suggestion. What forms is a charming, if not surprisingly accurate, rendition of their brother in colored pencil.

“Addy?”

Adeline turns to the doorway, and Cora can see her perk up. She quickly abandons her drawing space, though taking great care not to disturb the papers themselves, and runs to throw her arms around their father’s leg.

From her position at the window, Cora can see her father unobstructed. Dark hair and equally dark eyes. The same sulky brows as her brother. They look almost identical aside from the smile. Lucien's cheeks dimple; his lips always pressed together. But her father smiles with *all* his teeth, one of those smiles that crinkle the corners of the eyes, and makes you feel like smiling too.

Cora picks at the corner of the cushion she sits on. Both she and her father smile the same. But it's been a while since she's seen it. As he ushers Adeline down for breakfast, her father looks around the room for the first time since he entered. Cora stares back.

"Dad?"

For a few moments, it feels like he holds her gaze. But only for a few seconds. Cora tries not to let it sting when he stares right through her. The tassel of the cushion frays between her fingers as he turns away. It's been a long time since anyone, but Adeline, has spoken to her.

* * *

Breakfast is a modest affair. By the time Cora drifts downstairs, Adeline is already eating heartily. Her own setting is devoid of a plate, but that's normal these days. What's outside the norm is the empty seat to her right, between her seat and Adeline's.

"Nicky, is Lucien up yet?"

Cora's mother asks her question casually, but the way her hands twist at the placemat gives her away. Her father looks at the staircase over Cora's shoulder. From her position, she can see how an indiscernible expression crosses his face before he turns back to her mother on his right. His expression is reassuring, if not a bit more gentle than typical.

"Give him a bit. I think I heard the shower earlier."

The worry that has lined her mother's face doesn't fully abate, but the crease between her brows smoothes out just slightly. Cora can't help the faint worry and makes her way back upstairs.

* * *

Lucien's room, on a first glance, looks exactly how she remembers it from the past few years. She doesn't really know why she's in here. Within minutes, Lucien will be done, and she'll be walking them to school. But something drew her in. Maybe it was the new poster on the wall, of a band she didn't know her brother liked. Or maybe it's the little knick-knacks on his desk. A cute little figurine, a novel new Newton's cradle, all of it casting shadows on some binder paper coated in calculus problems. She doesn't know all these items, little tokens of a brother who seemed to grow up without her ever noticing. Standing in the middle of the room, Cora can't help but feel adrift.

"Just a second!"

She jumps, and before she can register what's going on, Lucien brushes past her, grabs his backpack, and is out the door. She only catches the tail end of his damp head of curls before she's left alone again.

* * *

They've been walking for a while, with Adeline in the lead, while Cora walks beside Lucien. It's relatively quiet along this street, the only noticeable sound being Adeline's nonsensical humming. It's almost always like this, their little slice of suburbia.

"Lu, look!"

Cora turns her head, Lucien doing the same at her right. Adeline is gesturing excitedly to the empty lot off the side of the sidewalk. Their town, the cute little slice of the suburbs it is, is host to dozens of these little lots. Overgrown, with nothing but yards upon yards of weeds

and untrimmed grass. A haven for mice and rabbits, which will eventually disappear once development finally starts. But this one is slightly different.

“Flowers!” Adeline exclaims, now tugging excitedly at Lucien’s coat sleeve. Cora can see a small smile tug at his lips before he smooths down her hair fondly. The movement, ironically, causes her cowlick to spring back up.

“I see it, Addy.”

Cora can’t help but chuckle at Adeline’s mulish expression. She’s reaching the age where simple acknowledgements aren’t enough to appease her anymore. Now she needs concrete answers.

“Can we pick some?”

Lucien snorts in amusement, but checks his phone in acknowledgement regardless. From her position at his shoulder, Cora can see that they have only a few minutes to get to school on time. Lucien seems to realize that too, scratching his cheek idly as he ponders what to say. Outright saying “no” could lead to catastrophe.

“Maybe after school, Addy, you and Lu are gonna be late,” Cora says softly, trying to smooth Adeline’s errant cowlick back down. It’s a futile effort; once it’s popped up only water can tame it, but she tries, if only out of habit. At her suggestion, Adeline perks up.

“After school?”

She can see Lucien relax at the compromise, before he nods. They even make it to school early, Adeline’s elementary school being a stone’s throw from the middle school and high school. They’re barely around the corner from the high school when he says it, so quiet Cora would have struggled to hear it if they weren’t alone.

“Bye, Cora.”

It’s brief, said so quickly and softly, Cora thought she imagined it as Lucien briskly walked away. A fond, if not slightly sad, feeling fills her chest as she waves to his retreating back.

“Bye, Lu.”

After a few moments, she turns around.

Things have changed since last summer.

* * *

She waits for Lucien out by the electric box. A dusty, sunbleached thing, that makes you wonder if it was ever new. When she pushes off it to meet with Lucien, she’s surprised the paint doesn’t rub off onto her fingertips. It’s relatively quiet as they walk; only the faint chatter of departing students fills the air as they turn the corner towards the elementary school.

“Lulu!”

Cora and Lucien turn their heads, watching as Adeline scurries over to them. With how quick she is, Cora is surprised her shoes don’t leave little Sketcher scorch marks.

“We go now?”

Lucien snorts, holding his hand out for Adeline to take. She seizes the appendage with fervor.

“Yes, *we are* going now,” he says, enunciating the proper grammar.

“Yeah. We go now,” Adeline says, unperturbed. Cora can’t help but chuckle.

It doesn’t take long to reach the little lot of flowers, and Adeline wastes no time. She gleefully begins hopping through the field. Lucien gives a sneeze, rubbing his nose sullenly.

“Can’t imagine ever being that energetic after school...” he mutters.

Cora smiles a little to herself.

“I don’t know...Someone I know used to beg me to take him to the park every day after school...”

Lucien only sneezes once more.

“Lu! Help me, please?”

Lucien squints out across the flowers, the sun’s glare likely burning his eyes. Across the field, Adeline is gesturing excitedly, waving her arms as if to pull him over by pure will. Lucien only sighs before wading through the knee-high grass. Pollen kicks up as he moves, clouds flying everywhere.

“Sweet tea!”

“Excuse me?”

Cora peers at the flowers Adeline holds out, before laughing.

“Sweet *peas*, Addy? Did you mean sweet peas?”

Adeline, unfazed by her laughter, only hums in confirmation.

“Want me to show you how to make flower crowns?” Lucien asks, holding out his hand in invitation. Adeline quickly shakes her head. He scratches his cheek, bemused.

“Have someone special in mind?” he teases, poking her cheek. Adeline grumbles, smacking his hand away.

“It’s for Joe.”

Cora’s heart stutters in her chest at the name. Just the sound of it brings back so many memories. The taste of tart lemonade. The sting of knees scraped by pavement. Something sweetened by nostalgia.

“Joe?” Lucien asks, puzzled. Adeline only nods firmly. Something flickers in his expression, before it smooths out cleanly. The little signs of tension are gone before Adeline could ever see them.

“Well, you’d better hurry up then, it’s gonna get dark soon.”

Adeline tackles her task like a soldier. Her movements are firm and concise, and would be utterly serious... if it wasn’t for the little tune she was humming, alongside the fact that she’s picking flowers and not running drills.

Adeline finishes just in time, as Cora can see the golden rays of sunset approaching as they leave the lot of flowers. The scent of pollen still clings to them by the time they get to Joe’s house.

“Go ring the doorbell, Addy, I’ll wait for you.”

Cora walks her up to the door, inexplicably nervous. She’s been to this house dozens of times. The walls are a soft cream, sunbleached to white after many days weathering the elements. The shingles in contrast, are dark. Freshly replaced last summer. She knows it like she knows her own house. She doesn’t have time to think about it further, before Adeline is eagerly ringing the doorbell. Joe’s dad, who must have been in the kitchen, opens it promptly.

“Adeline?” he questions, confused. Like Joe, Mr. Klein’s dark hair and eyes appear a softer brown in the porchlight. A face Cora had once found severe, now gentled by age.

“Hi!”

Mr. Klein smiles at Adeline gently, glancing over her shoulder to Lucien. At his searching gaze, Cora can see her brother wave, before shrugging helplessly at the silent question.

“Shouldn’t you be going home right now, sweetheart?” he asks, worry faintly creasing the space between his brows. At his question, Adeline cheerily holds out the little bouquet of sweet peas.

“For Joe!”

That soft smile appears again as Mr. Klein kneels, taking the dainty little offering. Although Lucien helped spruce the bouquet up, it still appears comically small in his hand.

“Came all this way just to drop this off?” he teases lightheartedly. Adeline looks down, shuffling bashfully.

“I’m sure Joe will appreciate it.”

“Joe isn’t here?” Adeline chirps, peeking over Mr Klein’s shoulder shyly, as if Joe was simply hiding.

“No, just upstairs, sweetheart. Joe has a cold.”

A grim expression overtakes her little face, comically serious.

“Make sure she drinks water.”

The phrase, something that Cora’s mother has said time and time again, is so comical coming from Adeline that she has to laugh. Mr. Klein doesn’t look at her, but Cora can see a faint smile tug at his lips.

“Of course.”

* * *

She follows Mr. Klein inside after the man says goodbye to her siblings, the motion practically habitual. The house is the same as always, down to the fuzzy blanket thrown over the brown leather couch, and the scent of orange air freshener. She only waits in the living room for a minute or so before he finishes his journey from upstairs, flowers now absent from his hand. At his quiet departure back to the kitchen, Cora makes her way upstairs as well. Even now, she’s never liked bothering Mr. Klein when he’s in the kitchen.

The journey upstairs is a short one, but Cora can’t help but take her time. She runs her fingers along the baby blue walls, staring at the framed photos decorating the surface. Photos of Mr. Klein and Joe at almost every stage of life. Baby photos, kindergarten, elementary, alongside a few miscellaneous scenes. It’s sweet, and Cora can’t help but pause at the most recent photo.

She’s in it this time, both she and Joe in dark, graduation blue. She, with the biggest, eye-crinkling smile she’s ever had. And Joe, diploma clutched in hand, arm thrown over her shoulder. One with a scholarship to any art school that wants her. The other on the way to Stanford for law.

What a future.

This photo is on the last step of the stairs. Joe’s room is just around the corner, and Cora really should get going. But if she stays there on that last step for a minute longer, that’s her secret.

* * *

Cora fidgets with the small bouquet of sweet peas, now resting in a crystal facet vase. The flower’s soft, ruffled petals sway in the faint breeze from the open window. The setting sun casts the room in a dreamy, honeylike glow.

She really shouldn’t be here.

Not in this room, filled with so many memories. Of sharing sweets on top of the covers, and sharing even sweeter kisses, legs swung out the window.

She shouldn’t be here.

And yet, if she tries hard enough, she can remember all of it. The fruity taste of those chewy candies, how the distinct individual flavor would give way to pure, mouthwatering sweetness. How the wind would push at her hair, the chill pushing them shoulder to shoulder as they talked about anything. About everything.

About the tentative, innocent concept of “us”.

“Corrie?”

Cora startles, turning to the bed. Josephine’s hazy, fever-ridden gaze stares back. It’s the most direct address she’s gotten in a while. Something small and lonely wilts at the realization, and she can only push it down as she sits on the edge of the bed.

“Hey Joe.”

Cora places her hand down near the pillow, just barely out of reach.

“You’re here...?”

It’s said with such wonder, such longing, that it breaks Cora’s heart a little.

“Yeah, Joe, I wouldn’t be anywhere else.”

At that, Josephine shoots her a tender smile. She shuffles back on the bed, giving Cora more room. She lies down on top of the covers, if only to indulge for just a moment.

It’s quiet this time of day. As she watches the dappled light of the half-shuttered blinds dance across Josephine’s tired face, Cora can hear only the faint noises of an errant biker.

“I’ve missed you.”

Cora stares at her face.

“I’ve missed you, too.”

They spend a few moments like this. Said moments stretch into a few hours, and Cora knows she should be going when the crickets start up. When she rises, Joe lets out a plaintive noise of protest. It’s a quiet, hurt thing, and Cora can’t help but want to stay.

But she steels herself.

“Get some rest, Joe. You can’t come see me anytime soon like this.”

She meant it to come out playful, but Cora can’t hide all the sadness.

“Don’t go. Please don’t go...”

It’s the fever. Horribly, it sounds like she’s about to cry, so Cora moves quickly to the door. But before she leaves, she hears Josephine’s quiet question.

“Why’d you have to go, Corrie?”

Joe’s already asleep by the time Cora turns around, but the damage has been done. She spirals despairingly at the doorway. She doesn’t want to go.

But she has to.

Had to.

Corrie had to go because during the summer right before college, a man entered a movie theatre.

He saw two girls.

They ate the same popcorn, the same candy, and had the same drinks.

But that didn’t matter.

Because he saw those girls kiss outside the theatre, short and innocent, something ugly festered in his chest. And when one of the girls made her way through an alley, one she had used so many times before, she didn’t come out.

‘Corrie’ had to go. But Cora still can’t comprehend *why*.

“I don’t know Joe.”

Cora snuffles before she begins to cry. The tears fall and fade to nothing before they even reach the carpet.

Ghosts can’t really cry after all.

“I *really* don’t know.”

MAY MINGLE

We discussed Writing Habits

Several members of SSWC came to the May Mingle at Denny's last month. We talked about our methods and habits we use to write consistently.

We always have a good time discussing the topic but also bring up other writing ideas and skills to discuss. If you miss a Mingle meeting, you missed a lot.

JUNE MINGLE

Join us on Saturday, June 20, for the opportunity of meeting other authors and getting inspiration and motivation to work on your own materials.

At June's meeting, we will have a bit of extra fun by sharing movies about authors and their antics to complete their works. (And remember, most movies start as a book ... and a future movie could be using YOUR book!)

Besides our chosen topic, we always get onto ... and into ... other writing issues, dilemmas, challenges, and solutions.

We meet at the Denny's restaurant at the corner of Douglas and Sunrise in Roseville from 9 – 11 am. It's the third (3rd) Saturday every month.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME. Hope to see you there.

Specifically for grammar lovers — which should be everyone who writes.

Jeannie Turner shared a fantastic YouTube site that is soooo funny. In fact, there are several videos available. The few that I watched had me laughing out loud.

Search **grammarian vs errorist** or, easier yet, **click here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@ElleCordova>

YOUR SOFTNESS

(For Mala)

(1980)

Tony M.

Softness is the better part of
All the things you are, by far.
And so, were I to draw your portrait,
I would need a piece of softness and
The dust of the finest star.



There's the softness of your face; it glows
And radiates a wondrous shine.
But one cannot escape
The bursting softness in your eyes,
For here softness borders divine.

The tender softness of your skin defies
All words of Nature's works,
An entire assemblage of tantalizing curves,
The kind of softness that flirts.

Not all my imaginations,
Nor all that is understood,
Can compare to the sacred softness of
Your womanhood.

And if there really is a God
And I must atone for some sin,
I would take a knee and confess that I
Would still seek my pleasure in
Your softness.

Ron Smith has devoted a lot of his time to our club. He writes under the pen name **Bryson Kilmer**.

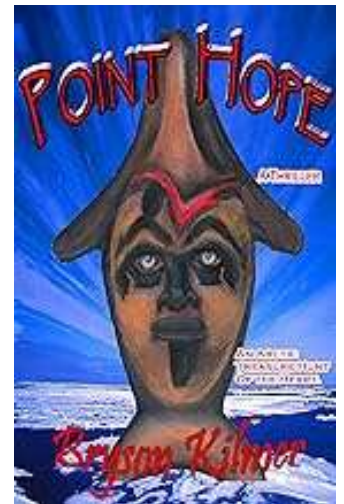
Unfortunately, he doesn't have a lot of time left with SSWC. Ron/Bryson is moving away where, I am sure, he will find another group of writers, who might be helpful but maybe not so outstandingly inspiring as SSWC.

Besides the many books Ron, er Bryson still has to finish editing or add refining touches to (or are still bouncing around in his head) he has published *Point Hope*, which is available on Amazon/Kindle.

He has copies of his book, so contact him to purchase one. Or, you might be lucky and find one on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0984604359/>

Yes, I am shamelessly promoting certain members' books because they VOLUNTEER to help keep SSWC running smoothly.



Past and Future Authors to be included (— Yes, I'm shamelessly promoting books by members who volunteer.)

M. L. Edson (Mary Lou) has books available on Amazon/Kindle – suspense thrillers, writing assistance from the Grammar Guardian, poetry, and more. Just point your phone's camera at the QR code to the right to see her books ... and maybe order something.



Next month, **Wes Turner**, aka Westley Stark, will be featured. Westley's book is *Ex Terra Expeditions*.

Then other published members of the Scholarship Committee who have books out, then Cathy McGreevy, then ... *you???*

More to come.

Want to be on this list? Become a member! Become an *active* member. Volunteer!

Join the Club!

We are a vibrant club with active writers, have several critique groups (with room for more), and stay wonderfully supportive of each other.

SSWC supports local writers and encourages everyone to write and publish. Attending meetings is free, but membership brings benefits, such as publication in the newsletter and anthology, use of our club's library, qualification for grants to attend conferences (limits apply), and ability to join our first-class critique groups.

MEMBERSHIP is paid on a yearly basis. If joining after April, dues are prorated by quarter (unless you are just really late in maintaining your membership!).

_____ Individual \$40 / year

_____ Couple \$55 / year

_____ Full-Time Student \$30 / year

_____ Platinum Senior (70+) \$30 / year

More information is on our website: sactowriters.org

Name: _____ Genres: _____

Published? Y / N (yes, includes self-published) Email: _____

OFFICERS

HELP FILL THE VOIDS

Elected Officers:

President	Ron S
Vice President	Brittany L
Secretary	
Treasurer	Jake A

Chairs:

Coffee/Treats	Everyone / Anyone
Conferences	
Critique Groups	Brittany L
Historian	
Librarian	Brittany L
Membership	Cathy M
Mingle	
Newsletter	YOU!!!
Nominations	
Prgm/Speakers	
Publicity	
Raffle	Cathy M
Scholarship	Karen S
Sunshine	Nan R
Website	Wes T
Workshops	Mary Lou A

When everyone thinks "I don't need to do it ... someone else will," there's a good chance **no** one will do it and nothing will get done.

MEETING INFORMATION

Future Meetings

Monday, June 8 – Mike Brandt, committee marathoner and prolific writer, will speak to the group.

Saturday, June 20 – Mingle held at Denny's, corner of Douglas and Sunrise, Roseville 9-11 am

Monday, July 13 – Someone great, for sure.

Club meeting held at the Crossroads Church Friendship Hall, 5501 Dewey Drive, Fair Oaks

*All writers are encouraged to attend.
Membership not mandatory but brings privileges ...*

like publication in the newsletter!

