

Syndic Literary Journal

December 2016

I publish an online literary journal named: Syndic Literary Journal. The Journal contains poetry, music, stories, art work, photographs, essays, memoirs – in fact anything that could be construed to be literary. Take juggling, for example, or documentary films, or even cartoons – I publish it all.

The origins of Syndic date back to 1958 when I was a high school English teacher at Sacred Heart High School in midtown San Francisco at Franklin & Ellis Sts. I began to publish – in those days, publishing was only hard copy - the literary work of the high school students. Before Syndic petered out, I had published six issues, the last one in January 1960.

The 1950s in San Francisco marked the founding of Ferlinghetti's City Lights Book Store (and Publishing House) in North Beach and the arrival of the Beats who were attracted to it. It was the era of sit-ins on San Francisco's Auto Row and the ushering in of the "Pill" with its subsequent influence on the sexual mores of the United States and the world!

Truly, this early period of social change opened all the windows and doors to A Brave New World, especially in San Francisco, and in a real but minuscule way, I was a part of it.

I was motivated to publish the work of my students because I saw it as a validation of their efforts to express themselves, but more than that: after seeing their work in print and available for others to read, they would be motivated to write more and others would follow suit. And on a small scale, that is what happened!

Frankly, it seemed like a common-sense and practical kind of teaching technique that any English teacher would embrace and be thrilled to offer their students. Instead, it became controversial – especially in a Catholic school setting – and generated some critical grumbling from older religious faculty members. Some of the pieces were "dark" or "negative" I was told. Should our students even be reading – let alone writing - this kind of stuff? I was asked. Is there something wrong with the English classes we teach now?

Being a young and newly minted teacher, I was unsure of myself but despite the grumbling, I continued to publish. Finally, it came to the point where it didn't seem worth the stress and insecurity it created in my life, and I let it go. Well, not quite "let it go".

Fifty years later, 2010 to be exact, I resurrected my beloved *Syndic* and tried my hand at online publishing. Of course I had no students so my first task was to reach out to authors and artists – at first, friends, colleagues and acquaintances mostly – to ask for suitable literary submissions.

Suitable? Yes, suitable defined as pieces that interested me, pieces that were different, maybe even a little off the wall, and finally, pieces that exhibited a sincere and honest effort to say something. Easy to gin up such a generalized criteria but hard to define and even more challenging: would I recognize it when I saw it? Six years and fourteen issues later, I have an active literary stable of about 100 authors/artists who submit work for publication – not every issue, of course, but enough submissions to publish 35-40 chapters in each issue.

What I had not anticipated was the revelation I received while working on *Syndic* No.5. Thanks to submissions by two authors who are active in a monthly Open Mic program in Sonoma CA, I discovered the use of the Spoken Word. How could I have been so clueless?

Poetry is meant to be narrated aloud. In fact, in its earliest origins that was its only mode of presentation. Of course, in hard copy publishing only the written presentation can be used. Why wasn't I thinking? I was now publishing using a multimedia platform and had access to the spoken word. That was it for me! Henceforth, every written submission published in *Syndic* would be narrated – poetry, stories, memoirs, essays, etc. No exceptions . . . well, almost none.