



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

August 2023

OPEN MIC NIGHT FOR AUGUST 3 GENERAL MEETING!

Ridge Writers members and the general public will share and present their original works on Thursday, August 3, in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. The monthly general meeting starts at 6:30 p.m.

Open Mic Night is a chance for members, prospective members, and guests to have the spotlight to share their written work. A Ridge Writers summer tradition, it provides a forum for aspiring writers to showcase their work and get an audience's feedback. Hearing new voices and listening to the next great story from veterans is part of the fun and true joy of Open Mic Night. Many of our favorite pieces have emerged from this classic Ridge Writers, and we want to hear your voices added to the growing collection of amazing member works.

We limit each speaker to 5-7 minutes, and contents must be in good taste. We'll have light refreshments on hand, and plenty of time to socialize. Remember, the public is invited and admission is free. Bring your friends!

RESCUING THE STORYTELLERS OF THE PAST **Report on the July Meeting written by Janis Kunz**



Daniel displays the 2002 CLOTA Gypsy Robe, newly refurbished and updated by Margit Stallings and himself. Photo by Jessica Weston.

As Daniel Stallings said at the July program, as archival historians, he and Janis Kunz don't see the dusty boxes of old theatre programs piled on the counter as trash, they instead "see people." To them, those boxes house the shouldn't-ever-become-lost artwork of storytellers.

Daniel told of the almost herculean effort of digitally archiving 60 years of the Community Light Opera and Theatre Association's (CLOTA) myriad programs before time or some other destroyer of paper takes these artifacts away from us. There is so much information in these old programs that, Daniel expressed, current CLOTA members don't know a lot of it and can find many connections to CLOTA's rich past full of stories and artists. Another huge task for Daniel as the appointed historian of the theatre was to rescue and revitalize the two CLOTA Gypsy Robes. These are a tradition whereby winners are awarded a specially designed patch on the robe to celebrate their work that went above and beyond on a particular production. The overall effect is a colorful patchwork of past artistry! Daniel's motivation to restore patches ravaged by time or use and to create patches that had never gotten completed for certain shows was to honor and remember these artists in a way that you can only do by preserving these historic treasures.



Readers from Open Mic Night in August 2022.

Mark Your Calendar...

August 3 – Open Mic, members and guests read from their original work, light refreshments.

September 7 – Jill Hunting, *For Want of Wings*

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The Accidental Educator



When I was a kid, my favorite cartoon character of all time was Ms. Frizzle from *The Magic School Bus*. Her boundless enthusiasm for science and the world around her, her infectious whimsy, her openness to allowing her students to take chances, make mistakes, get messy, and figure out the answers to their problems, and her flair for the dramatic were wonderful to me. She was an icon. And something more. From a very early age, I wanted to be a teacher.

But of course, life takes a few surprising turns.

Even after falling in love with crafting stories on paper and onstage, I still had a passion to inspire and pass down knowledge. Thanks to the efforts of Youth Coordinator Janis Kunz, I had the chance to scratch that lingering itch with the Junior Writers' Story Bootcamp. It was a delightful experience, something that awakened hidden pockets of untouched joy in my heart. Janis created the camp structure and the topics of each day. I used some of my writing knowledge to help expand those topics and create concrete exercises for the young students to do, such as walking them through character designs to having them read each other's stories and learn about proper feedback. The entire experience was rewarding from beginning to end.

I reflect on my career so far and the accidental journey I have undertaken to become an educator. Part of it, I bet, just stems from the fact I like to accrue knowledge in my passions. You never stop learning. I am endlessly fascinated with stories, weird facts, processes of doing work, ideas, and more. And I like to remain open for questions if my actors need help. In the theatre companies I run or work with, I have found I am one of only a handful of artists with actual theatre education in my history. So I possess a lot of deep, working knowledge. Which means, in my role as director, I must ensure this knowledge is passed down and paid forward to the ongoing generations of artists. With local higher education and practical work on shows past high school in scant supply, when I am given the opportunity to helm a production, I try to include as many as I can into the fold because I want them to learn. Let's all be happy to accept those chances to become accidental educators, because these moments connect us to others and keep the knowledge flowing forward.

Membership Dues are Now Due

Membership dues for the California Writers Club, of which Ridge Writers is the East Sierra Branch, are now due! The dues are \$45 for the year (July 1st to June 30th) and grant you special perks such as newsletters, membership discounts for branch events, *The Literary Review* published by the CWC, access to be published on SoCal Writers Showcase, and more.

If your membership expires, you will have to pay the additional \$20 initiation fee for a total of \$65 to rejoin. So plan to renew those memberships soon! Dues must be collected by September 30th at the absolute latest.

Ridge Writers Leaders

President – Daniel Stallings
Vice President – Janis Kunz
Secretary – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
Treasurer – Andrew Sound
Member at Large – Monica Dwyer
Historian – Maryann Butterfield
Newsletter Editor – Daniel Stallings
Programs & Publicity – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
State Rep – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
Youth Coordinator – Janis Kunz
Webmaster – Julianne Black

To reach any of these leaders, use ridgewriters@yahoo.com.

Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/RidgeWriters and our website CWC-ridgewriters.org.

SoCal Writers Showcase



The southern region of the California Writers Club maintains the “zine”-format socialwritersshowcase.com, containing monthly content from members, ranging from fiction, nonfiction/essays, and memoir, to poetry, interviews, discussion on writers' life, the craft, and news.

The Writers of the Purple Sage is the monthly newsletter of the Ridge Writers, East Sierra Branch of the 109-year-old California Writer Club. Except where otherwise stated, all articles in this publication may be printed without special permission in newsletters of branches of the California Writers Club and in the State Bulletin, subject to the following conditions:

- a. The author's name and original publication credit must be printed with the text.
- b. The text must be printed in its entirety, without additions or changes.
- c. You must send a copy of the newsletter bearing the reprint to the author.

Contact the editor by mail at P.O. Box 484, Ridgecrest, CA 93556 or by email, ridgewriters@yahoo.com. **SPECIAL NOTICE:** Photographs for publicity and newsletter uses are taken at all Ridge Writers events. By entering the venue, members and guests are granting permission that their likenesses may be used for publicity purposes.

Another purpose of Daniel’s for archiving the history of one of our community’s oldest theater companies is for future stories and art. Daniel told us how he plans to reference the 1980’s programs to create one for the upcoming *Steel Magnolias* and give it a look that resembles actual 1980’s CLOTA programs, something that’d be hard without the new archival project in place. Part of the display of items that Daniel presented at the talk were two CLOTA memory books, which have contributions from past CLOTA president and Ridge Writers member Liz Babcock. Daniel wants to create a new memory book to chronicle the productions that have been staged since the last publication.

Also on display were Janis’ painstakingly collected artifacts of an almost-forgotten 1980’s TV show, *Misfits of Science*. Having watched it as a kid and being unable to learn anything about its cast, crew, and production, she was excited to use the internet to finally fill in the missing gaps – only to find there was hardly anything about the show readily archived! She said it was then that she set out on a crusade to find any and all tidbits or items about the show and collect them herself for inclusion on an extensive fan site so others could find them too.

Janis was able to search out press-kits, articles, prop schematics, magazines, interviews, and even a stunt-double of one of the iconic jackets worn on the show! These all went into the online collection and fans from around the world flocked to it.



Janis displays the original jacket used by a stunt double in *Misfits of Science*. Photo by Jessica Weston.

Our Jack London Award Winners

We’re proud of the Ridge Writers who have won the Jack London Award, the highest recognition each branch of CWC can give outstanding members.

The award was presented annually until 2005, and subsequently only once every two years.

Maryann Butterfield 1997
Casey Wilson 1998
Rlee Peters 1999
Judy Dutcher 2000
Curt Danhauser 2001
Judy Martin 2002
Donna McCrohan Rosenthal 2003
Holly Dworken Cooley 2004
Liz Babcock 2005
Allison Aubin 2007
Steve Wersan 2009*
Margaret Luebs 2013
Daniel Stallings 2015
Julianne DiBlasi Black 2017
John Anderson 2019
Andrew Sound 2021
Janis Kunz 2023

*With a special Charmian London Award to Fran Wersan

Janis related that even one of the actors uses the resource to remember the people and stories past and has “used my fan site to show his two boys about ‘when daddy used to be a superhero.’”

These stories, these *people*, might be forgotten without the efforts of historical archiving.

I Am a Writer, And I Have Stories to Tell

--Report on the Junior Writers Story Bootcamp by Janis Kunz--

Young minds full of creativity, hands grasping pencils, heads bent over notebooks, imagination hard at work - this was the case at the inaugural Ridge Writers Junior Writers’ Story Bootcamp that took place at the Ridgecrest Library during four days of the library’s “Find Your Voice” summer program and storytelling week. We had 11 participants and their families join us, some for all 4 days of the bootcamp, eagerly returning with questions and wonderful new ideas included in their writer’s kits that they received on day one.

The endeavor was spearheaded by youth coordinator Janis Kunz and aided wholeheartedly by librarian Charissa Wagner who we can’t thank enough for her support and contribution of ideas and materials. Each day of the bootcamp had presentations where the children joined in as Ridge Writer members helped them work out sample characters, plot, etc. on the whiteboard supplied by the library. Then the junior writers took up their own pencils and completed exercises such as choosing traits and backstory elements for their characters and writing six lines of dialog in their characters’ unique voices. Along the way there were read-a-louds of the work written, prize drawings for a chance to pick from writing-related goodies, a story title writing contest to win a gift certificate to Red Rock Books, and a whole lot of learning about the craft and structure of writing stories!

As the bootcamp came to a close, junior writers lamented that it was over, asked what we’d be hosting next, and thanked the members for this service. Truly it was a joy for us to meet these talented and engaging new writers and support them in their journey as storytellers!



New Member!

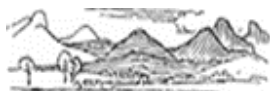
Congratulations and thank you our newest member, Rebecca Parker, who joined Ridge Writers last month! We're so happy to have you join our growing family.

Writer's Block Challenge

Here's a little twist on how to plan a story: Think of an opening line. It could be a famous one you know, one you create, etc. Now make that line the *ending* line a story. What would you need to write to get to that new ending? Start with a outline and grow your story from there. Have fun with it!

Ridge Writers does not endorse any contest, conference or publishing opportunity that appears in our newsletter. We merely collect and share news of opportunities for our membership. Member discretion advised.

The East Sierra Branch (Ridge Writers) is the California Writers Club branch serving the eastern part of Kern County. Over the mountains on the west side of the county is our Bakersfield-based sister branch, Writers of Kern.



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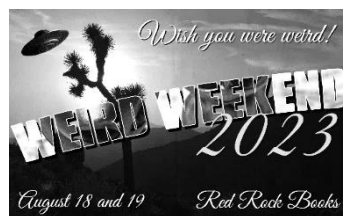
I Am a Writer, and I Have a Story to Tell: Report on Junior Writers Story Bootcamp

WEIRD WEEKEND 2023

Weird Weekend returns for 2023 with a new venue at Red Rock Books and a new theme: **ADVENTURES IN MY OWN BACKYARD**. Inspired by the style of Independent Bookstore Day, we will be hosting two days of interactive activities all about the landmarks and adventures possible in our slice of the Mojave Desert and Death Valley. After all, 2023 marks the 90th anniversary of Death Valley being declared a National Monument by Herbert Hoover. And we aim to celebrate it!

On August 18 and 19, 2023, we'll be hosting several daytime activities from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Red Rock Books. These include puzzles and games, a scavenger hunt, trivia, readings, crafts for kids and adults, and more.

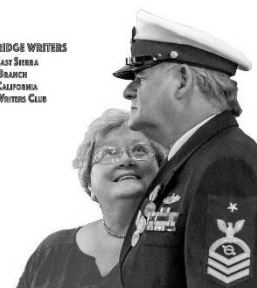
At 7:30 p.m. each day, we will be presenting *Tourist Trap*, a hilarious road trip mystery about a family of five and their lost "luggage," in partnership with Master Mystery Productions. Tickets are \$20 for general admission and \$15 for current CWC members.



SCENES FROM LIVES OF SERVICE

HIGH DESERT VETERANS OF WWI THROUGH DESERT STORM

By RIDGE WRITERS
EAST SIERRA
BRANCH
CALIFORNIA
WRITERS CLUB



Cover Photo by Laura Austin

Our book featuring stories of High Desert veterans, *Scenes from Lives of Service*, is on sale at Red Rock Books and through mail order. To order through mail, send a letter and check to Ridge Writers, PO Box 484, Ridgecrest, CA, 93556; buyer should state name, mailing address, number of copies wanted, and enclose a check for \$32.50 each. Ridge Writers members can buy the book for \$25 each.

**The Ridge Writers
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California Writers Club
P.O. Box 484
Ridgecrest, CA 93556**