



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

September 2023

JILL HUNTING EXPLORES "NOT FAMOUS" SEPTEMBER 7



Author Jill Hunting's talk "Not Famous" for the September 7 Ridge Writers meeting, 6:30 p.m. at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores, will ask (and answer), "To a writer, does fame matter? If yes, why? If no, what matters more?"

She will explore these questions in the context of her recent book, *For Want of Wings: A Bird with Teeth and a Dinosaur in the Family*.

In 1872, at the age of 20, Jill's great-grandfather Thomas H. Russell discovered the fossil of a flightless bird with teeth, one of the most important but least-known finds from the Age of Dinosaurs. The bones he unearthed in a Kansas canyon, *Hesperornis regalis*, did not achieve the celebrity of Brontosaurus, Stegosaurus, and Tyrannosaurus. Jill will discuss why, and what became of this missing link between reptiles and birds.

Except to paleontologists, *Hesperornis* remains largely unknown today. So does Tom Russell, who instead of taking up paleontology as his lifework became a surgeon and professor. In his time, he gained recognition for taking on difficult cases—including that of General William Tecumseh Sherman's grandson, who fell in a climbing accident.

In our time, when social media dominates everyday life and publishing alike, Jill believes it worthwhile to ask ourselves, "What is the merit of an unseen life?"

Jill is the author of two hybrid memoirs that combine personal narrative and U.S. history: *For Want of Wings* (2022) and *Finding Pete: Rediscovering the Brother I Lost in Vietnam* (2009). Editor of John McReynolds's *Stone Edge Farm Cookbook* (2013), named Book of the Year and winner of the Julia Child Award from the International Association of Culinary Professionals, she also served as senior editor for two wine and food magazines in Napa and as marketing manager with HarperCollins. She resides with her husband in Pasadena. Her website: jillhunting.com.

A book signing follows her presentation. Please come and please bring your friends. Public welcome. No admission fee.

AUGUST 3 OPEN MIC A FIVE-STAR EVENT

Report on the August Meeting written by Donna McCrohan Rosenthal



Charlotte, with the help of Liz Babcock, presents "A Take on Chewy Pet Food."

We held our annual public-invited-light-refreshments open mic on Thursday, August 3. We had five readers of original works and a from-the-archives bonus.

Kathy Killinger read "Morticia, the Raven," her poem about a family of ravens who adopted her. Linda Saholt had two short pieces, one on "My Writing Process" ("pick your muse with care, because otherwise one will pick you, and you may end up with one with a very strange sense of humor") and the other, "Poet's Lament." Gerry Wisdom shared her essay, "Words."

Charlotte Goodson's "A Take on Chewy Pet Food," accompanied by a chart and easel, analyzed the current TV commercial that presents a mom, dad, son, daughter, and talking dog at the dinner table. The dog seems to make the most of his place of honor as a full-fledged member of the group.

Mark Your Calendar...

September 7 – Jill Hunting,
For Want of Wings

October 5 – Robert Rippberger,
The Art of Storytelling

November 2 – Robert R.
Abbot, *Appetite for Risk*

December 7 – Ridge Writers
Member Holiday Party

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Repeat After Me: I Am Not Butter



Say you're like me. You get involved. You burn bright with your passions for the creative arts and the desire to bring opportunities to create to everyone around you. You love what you do so much that, even when it's hard, it fuels you emotionally as deeply and importantly as food and water. And you start to build your passions into an active life of community outreach and involvement. And it builds. And builds. And builds. And—

You get the idea.

You acquire more responsibilities as time goes on and your work gains traction. None of this happens overnight. There grows in your heart a sense of elation which proves to be a touch addictive—It's hard to ignore the satisfaction of following your dreams and getting to do what you love. But that can turn into a double-edged butter knife. It becomes hard to say no to opportunities. I find myself, more often than not, agreeing to work that strains my own mental limits out of strong and sometimes altruistic interests. They are short a performer. They need a stage manager who can handle large productions. They need a tech director. They need a prop built. They need a director for the show. They can't solve a stage problem. They have a question. As time wears on, you wear down. You can't keep it all together. The chaos stacks like Jenga on your shoulders. For the love of Thespis, don't sneeze.

This is a chaos of my own construction, and I know that. Those of us who like getting involved can sometimes find ourselves diving so deeply into a never-ending ocean of projects that stopping for a breather might give us the bends. I will always champion the need for volunteerism. Many hands make light work. The more people who are able to accomplish the work needed makes for greater success. But some of us forget we are not elastic beings. We cannot stretch and shape and twist ourselves into new forms *ad infinitum*. We get enthusiastic, forget that our malleability is finite, and burn out. It's okay to breathe. To stop and reassess. To recover. Even we elastic volunteers need time to pull ourselves back into shape and regain our ability to work. Never let something you love turn into something that harms you.

Repeat after me: I am not butter. I will not spread myself too thin.

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 socalwritersshowcase.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.



Janis gave us a sneak peak of her new play with the opening of “How to Solve a Murder,” slated to debut this fall at the VFW Ship 4804.

I ambushed Andrew Sound and asked him to perform one of the two roles of the classic Bob and Ray* “The Giant Dragon of Komodo” routine, which I consider one of the finest comedic exchanges ever. It perfectly captures the mindset of interviewers who don’t listen and don’t care about what their guests might have to say. So – not original by either of us -- but timely.

The evening went very well as we basked in the glow of the talent of our Ridge Writers gang.

*Bob Elliott (1923–2016) and Ray Goulding (1922–1990), the brilliant duo whose career spanned five decades.

Pictured left: Donna and Andrew read “The Giant Dragon of Komodo.”

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

Weird Weekend 2023

Weird Weekend 2023 happened this past month, and it was a success. We moved our celebrations to Red Rock Books for the first time. We experimented with a new format this year more in line with the Independent Bookstore Day celebrations the bookstore has held over the years. Rather than three performances, we created a series of smaller games and activities to celebrate local landmarks, scenery, and travel. 2023 marks the 90th anniversary of Death Valley being declared a National Monument, so Weird Weekend was themed “Adventures in My Own Backyard” to encourage people to explore the area’s sights.

Our activities were: a revival of What Am I Looking At?—the game where you can identify local landmarks from blurry photos—from Weird Weekend 2021, our Weird Weekend Group Story poster where people could each add a sentence to a story, a story challenge called What They Carried (an example shared with us is printed below) which allowed guests to look through a packed suitcase and write a story of who would own those belongings, a chance to craft figures from old maps, and a stuffed animal giveaway. It was a lovely chance to connect with the community and we plan to expand upon the idea for next year.

At night, Master Mystery Productions performed *Tourist Trap*, an interactive road trip mystery starring Tristan Ridsen, Leslie Blake, Nicole Johnson, Allison Mitchell, Murolo Patchin, Madeleine Smith, and Libby Mitchell. Funny and fast-paced, the show had a family of nightmare tourists get lost on the way to Death Valley and lose an important bit of body-shaped luggage. We had laughs and lots of fun during the show. Bravo to Weird Weekend!



Weird Weekend 2023 group story poster in progress.



Scene from Tourist Trap.

WHAT THEY CARRIED by Mackenzie Flowers (*reprinted with the author’s permission*): She was a craftswoman, creative and curious. Her name was Calliope; Calliope sought knowledge of the vast world, showing her discoveries through poetry, her art, her clothing...Colorful and diverse. Her love for the world and knowledge brought her to Ridgecrest, a bit [of] a small town but nonetheless colorful and a melting pot of curiosities. She loved the local people here, they were kind and welcoming, the perks were lovely to set up her crystal stands and palm readings. Calliope’s kind nature and outgoing personality made her many friends, sharing drinks of summer teas in the heat and discussing different authors with her Ridgecrest friends. Wearing colorful jewelry that jingled when she walked, she made her way to a neat bookstore called Red Rock Books, settling inside for a good book and more knowledge of the world to gather.

New Member

Congratulations and thank you our newest member, Angela Anderson, who joined Ridge Writers—the East Sierra Branch of the California Writers Club—last month! We're so happy to have you join our growing family of wordsmiths and word lovers.

Writer's Block Challenge

Happily ever after? We know there's more to that. Find a fairy tale you love and outline the events of the first year *after* the ending. What happened to those characters? See what develops.

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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"What They Carried" by
Mackenzie Flowers

ANDREW SOUND ADDRESSED INYOKERN CHAMBER

Andrew Sound, Ridge Writers member and treasurer and Director of programming for the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert at the Historic USO Building in Ridgecrest, addressed the membership of the Inyokern Chamber of Commerce at their historic Town Hall (pic below) on Wednesday, August 16th.

For many years, he has presented a diverse slate of guest lecturers to the members of the HSUMD. His knowledge of local Valley history is vast, and his lecture of that gateway city, "Inyokern: 100 Years Under the Sun," included historical pictures of Inyokern through the years 1874 to at least 2004.

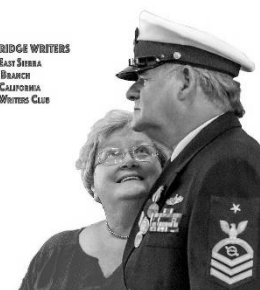
For the past several years, the fate of the Town Hall building, constructed in 1914, has been in question. The hope was to re-ignite an interest in the preservation of this local iconic structure and the part it will play in the promising future of the city of Inyokern.



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
East Sierra Branch
California Writers Club
P.O. Box 484
Ridgecrest, CA 93556**