



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

November 2023

NOVEMBER EXAMINES AN APPETITE FOR RISK AND MASTERING SURVIVAL SKILLS: ROBERT R. ABBOTT SPEAKS

Writer, musician, and adventurer Robert R. Abbott, author of “Appetite for Risk: What It Is, Who Has It & How I Survived” will talk about his recently published memoir on Thursday evening, November 2, 6:30 p.m. at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. No admission charge. Masks requested.

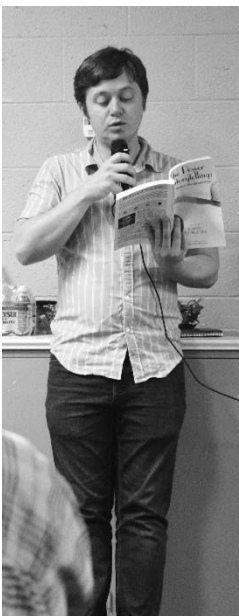
Robert Abbott, who says, “Like the appetite for a piece of dark chocolate, risk is alluring, and its taste is savory, dopamine-triggering, life-affirming, delicious,” will share tales of time spent in Hawaii, Africa, the Middle East, and South America – not at tourist resorts but “a half second to disaster over and over. Scuba diving, parachute jumps, river pirates, escaping from a fire in the tallest hotel in the world, and standing up to a gunman on the FBI most wanted list.”

As a young man, he marched with MLK and joined the Peace Corps to avoid having to kill in Vietnam. He subsequently found a career as a globe-trotting marine biologist as he embraced mysticism and started a family. “Appetite for Risk” combines the perspectives of genetic drivers (DNA), nurturing strategies, and spiritual linkages, looking back through generations to reveal the behavior of his ancestors as expressed in his own attitudes and actions. He advises parents to present numerous challenges to their children to better enable them to face and adapt to the changes inherent in our rapidly evolving global social-economic environment.

He will also perform his new song, “Change Is Coming Right At You.” A question and answer session and book signing will follow. We hope to see you there and please bring your friends.

SOCIAL IMPACT ENTERTAINMENT: Robert Rippberger on writing to change the world for the better

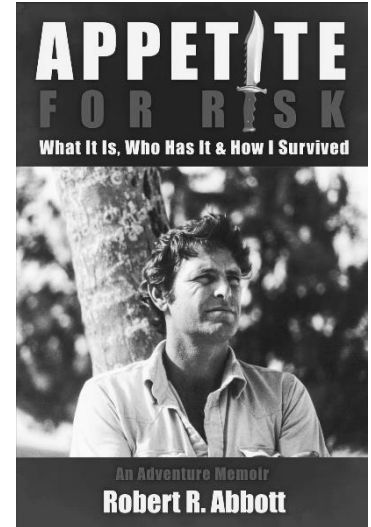
Report on the October Meeting written by Daniel Stallings



Robert Rippberger, an accomplished film director, producer, and writer, came to Ridge Writers to be our October speaker to share his knowledge and research into the idea of social impact entertainment—using media to help change the world for the better. His new book, *The Power of Storytelling: Social Impact Entertainment*, focuses all about that topic with a primary focus on cinema.

From his start telling creepy ghost stories around campfires to friends, Rippberger moved onto UC Berkeley where he studied philosophy and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts. He then asked himself, “What’s next?” He began to wonder about how storytelling affects change in the world. As a filmmaker, he started creating documentaries, such as the New York Times-featured film on climate change and *7 Days in Syria*. He asked himself, “How can we make entertainment meaningful?” This led him to founding and co-directing the Social Impact Entertainment Society and working on his book. Writing the book allowed him a chance to connect...

Left: Robert Rippberger reads the foreword from his new book, *The Power of Storytelling*.



Mark Your Calendar...

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

December 7 – Ridge Writers Member Holiday Party

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The Perfect Word



Reprinted from a prior Purple Sage, circa January 2017.

At our annual holiday party, a lively discussion sprang up about the nature of writer's block, perhaps in part motivated by Linda Saholt's brilliant sweatshirt which read "Writer's Block: When Your Imaginary Friends Stop Talking to You." It got us all thinking and sharing stories and tidbits and anecdotes about writer's block from famous authors down to our own experiences.

What I loved about the conversation was the way we writers--from greenhorns to old hands--got to pool our respective knowledge and experiences together toward the common goal of cracking the code on the perfect word. Everyone contributed. It didn't matter how long you've been writing or what you wrote. We all had something to add to the collective knowledge of wordsmithing.

The stories and tips about facing the terror of the blank page were at times helpful, enlightening, fascinating, or downright funny. We learned tips about ending writing sessions on cliffhangers or starting a new scene, so that your mind is always thinking about the next phase of the story and you don't stop when the scene stops. Another idea was a kind of free writing, where the author just starts writing a stream of consciousness about what he wants to talk about and his frustrations without any editing or reserve. This allowed his mind to work through the block. We heard a funny story about a columnist in the 1920's who, faced with a deadline, confronted the blank page by typing the word "the" on the sheet to motivate his brain. As the hours passed and no progress was made, he added "hell with it" and went to get a drink. We reiterated the usefulness of taking notes whenever an idea strikes to assist your memory. All put forward to help our fellow word weavers in their pursuit of the perfect word.

So if you find yourself staring at the unbroken, snowy field of a new story or article or blog post and the thought seems to cripple your imagination, maybe employ some of these tips. Talk to other writers to see how they have tackled the dastardly block. Try new methods of note taking or how you start pieces. Write out of order. Write backwards. Whatever you can do to climb the mountain of writer's block and proudly conquer it.

Submit to the Purple Sage

We love the members of our East Sierra Branch, especially when we get the chance to hear some of your wonderful works at Open Mic Nights or other readings. We would love to share some of these works with our members. If you have a short piece you would like to have published in the *Writers of the Purple Sage* (our newsletter), please feel free to send it to Editor Daniel Stallings at beinmyhaus@hotmail.com. You must be a member of the California Writers Club to submit.

Ridge Writers Leaders

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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.

...further with the ideas he was exploring. Media across history has been used, unconsciously and consciously, to introduce messages to the public. Rippberger's book details some of the studies he made on popular films, television, and much more on how this influence has transpired.

He opened his program reading the foreword to his book which was written by Howard Roffman who worked for years at Lucasfilm. Roffman shared his firsthand accounts of watching the power of storytelling with the influence *Star Wars* had on the public with its classic hero's journey of despair and hope. How that journey resonated powerfully with audiences. Roffman spoke, in the foreword, on his own journey as a gay man growing up in the 1960's and the impactful media such as *Midnight Cowboy* and *The Boys in the Band*, which allowed him to process his feelings and strengthen his own personal journey, how films, plays, TV and more gave him power. "There is no storytelling that doesn't deliver a message," Roffman wrote.

Returning to Rippberger, he then provided us with details of actual examples of Social Impact Entertainment. One such case study was of an issue with overpopulation in Mexico City. They turned to the popular soap operas for help. Soap operas began subtly including storylines regarding family planning and normalizing it. Within ten years, the population stabilized. A similar case was with the designated driver campaign to reduce drunk driving accidents. A psychologist actually invented the concept and turned to Hollywood to help put the message out there. TV shows and movies started including the idea we now accept as the designated driver, helping reduce accidents on the road.

But not every message ends up as a positive force. Cases of successes were countered with tales such as that of the hugely popular TV program *90210*, which led to a more negative impact on changing people's body image.

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

Rippberger continued with stories of how popular media can shape career choices—*Top Gun* saw a boost in army enlistment and if there is a shortage of doctors or medical professionals, new medical TV programs are greenlit—or impact social issues such as *Avatar*'s message on environmentalism or *Jurassic World* really being a metaphor for Sea World and ethics in zoos and aquariums. Rippberger believes that the most impactful media of this kind tends to follow an 80% entertainment, 20% message formula.

Our speaker then turned the tables on us and asked his own probing questions of us in the room. What pieces of media influences our lives? The result was a fascinating discussion deep into the sort of stories that shifted our own internal worlds, often for the better. Linda Saholt spoke about the influence of *Harry Potter* and the world's desire for magic. I spoke about my favorite musical, *The Band's Visit*, and how it showed me the magic, importance, and need for humble stories from all walks of life. As Don Goodson put it at the end of the meeting, "I'll never be able to watch a movie the same way ever again!"

The meeting was a wonderful melting pot of introspection and new ideas that had us all wondering about what media can accomplish. Currently, Robert Rippberger is working on a documentary with George Clooney as a producer called *How to Build a Truth Engine*, a study in the proliferation of disinformation. As his work continues to grow and find new footholds, Rippberger reminded us that to create change through our storytelling, we needed to find the story, find that person to connect to, and then take them on a journey.

* * *

RIDGE WRITERS AUTHOR SHOWCASE

A small but mighty gathering met at the Ridgecrest Branch Library on Friday, October 20 to celebrate California Writers Week. We heard poems, essays, short tales, and song lyrics from our members. It was a lovely time. Thank you, everyone!



Jack London Award

Our 2023 Jack London Award winner, Janis Kunz, just returned from Oakland this month with her plaque. Congrats!



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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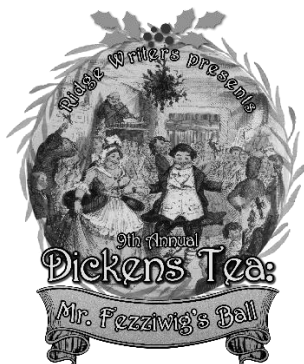
Ridge Writers Leaders

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Jack London Awards

Ridge Writers Author Showcase

DICKENS TEA: Mr. Fezziwig's Ball



Ridge Writers is bringing back the Dickens Tea for 2023. Over delicious holiday tea and treats, the event will feature festive and interactive activities with a literary or Dickensian twist.

The festivities will include our annual white elephant book exchange, a Yuletide craft for all the guests to create, and a holiday finery costume contest for our guests. The whole event will conclude with a dramatic performance of Fezziwig's Ball. Guests are welcome to dress in their holiday or Victorian best, join us for a hot cup of tea, and ring in the holiday season in true Dickensian style.

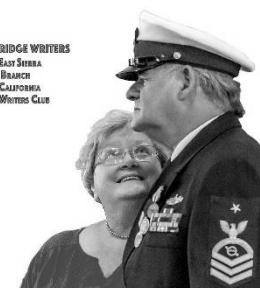
Ridge Writers' Dickens Tea: Mr. Fezziwig's Ball is on Saturday, December 2, 2023 at 2 p.m. at the Heritage Clubhouse (425 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.).

Tickets are \$25 each and are available starting November 3rd at Red Rock Books.

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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