



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

October 2023

RIDGE WRITERS EXPLORE THE POWER OF STORYTELLING: ROBERT RIPPBERGER SPEAKS THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

Author, writer, and director/producer Robert Rippberger will speak about “The Power of Storytelling: Social Impact Entertainment” and his new book by the same name, at the Thursday, October 5, Ridge Writers general meeting that starts 6:30 pm in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores, public invited, no admission fee.

He will discuss how entertainment and media have had a positive and negative impact throughout the last century and will provide unprecedented insight into how a simple narrative can change the world.

With a broad array of creative and executive experience, Rippberger most recently wrote and directed the feature “Those Who Walk Away.” Previously, he directed and produced the Harlem drama “Strive,” with Danny Glover.

In 2016, he directed/produced the documentary “7 Days in Syria,” a look at the human side of the war in Aleppo, a film championed by Angelina Jolie and screened at Britain’s House of Lords, to senior members of the U.N. He serves on the Producers Guild of America’s Social Impact Entertainment Task Force.

Current projects include producing the documentary “How to Build a Truth Engine” with Executive Producers George Clooney and Grant Heslov, the documentary “The Mouse That Roared” from Academy Award-nominated director Judith Ehrlich, and producing the stop-motion animated film “The Inventor” from “Ratatouille” writer Jim Capobianco.

Q&A and a book signing will follow the program. Remember to bring your friends.



Jill Hunting offers sparkling tales and book-writing tips **Report on the September Meeting written by Liz Babcock**



At Read the Book, Meet the Author, Jill Hunting points out her great-grandfather in a vintage photograph of the expedition.

Jill Hunting, our September speaker, followed her engrossing afternoon session at Read the Book, Meet the Author, with an evening event entitled “Not Famous” that offered sparkling insights and good advice for would-be authors (even those with publishers).

She cautioned that books today generally are not fact-checked and publishers hold authors solely responsible for errors. Literary agents are now doing much of the work that editors used to do. These conditions make it all the more important that authors take all the steps possible to ensure the quality of their work.

Mark Your Calendar...

October 5 – Robert Rippberger, *The Art of Storytelling*

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

December 7 – Ridge Writers Member Holiday Party

For those of us who plan to follow the traditional chronological order, she advised us not to start at the beginning. “Find the part of your story that’s most vivid for you. Start there, then back up and bring it forward.”

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What's Your Superpower?



Have you ever been asked "If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?" It's pretty standard fodder for school, parties, or just general chit-chat. I mean, who hasn't had a moment to wonder what sort of supernatural gift we would like? Pure escapist daydreaming. But which of us hasn't also selected a superpower designed to simplify some trying aspect of our life? To smooth the rough spots? Teleportation to skip commutes and long travel times. Shapeshifting to get change clothes faster or get out of uncomfortable situations. And so on.

If you pardon my sounding like a TV spokesman hocking a miracle cure for a second, what if I told you that you already possessed a superpower?

Those of us who work in any creative field should know and feel an almost magical power of inventing something from nothing. We as writers already have a super skill; We create worlds, personalities, images using a magic wand called a pen. We make ideas tangible. We craft visions in people's heads of stories they've never heard before, people they've never met, experiences far removed from their own. That's *magic*. How could sparking someone's imagination, inspiring passion for a story of your own design, fostering a bond between a reader and a character made of paper and ink be considered anything less than a superpower? That is the power of storytelling.

"But wait!" you tell me. "That's all well and good for a fiction author, but that's not me." Reflect on your own skills. A non-fiction author has the power to bring light to shadowy places, to untangle a jungle of ideas. A travel writer brings destinations and experiences from around the world into someone's home, inspiring further journeys. A poet reflects the hugeness of life in miniature. A blogger transmits ideas and stories around the entire planet in the blink of an eye, a click of a mouse. A reader can pass knowledge from person to person simply by sharing a book, a name, a recommendation, creating a web of wisdom that spans the globe. These actions are super in that they can wrangle the very essence of existence into logic or beauty. Often both. Isn't that amazing?

So tell me...what is YOUR superpower?

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.

True to that advice, Jill started her own book with a vivid description of a famed fossil hunter — and tenderfoot — caught in a buffalo stampede. Thus enmeshed in her story, the reader learns only pages later what brought Yale University scientist Othniel Charles Marsh to his wild ride on the vast Wyoming Territory plains.

That stampede also prepares the reader for a book that follows a wandering path deliberately chosen by its author.

Jill told us that as she began to research her book, *For Want of Wings: A Bird with Teeth and a Dinosaur in the Family*, she realized that her 19th-century setting was so rich that she needed to weave a tapestry of the places, people, and events she encountered along the way as she recounted the accomplished life of her great-grandfather, Thomas H. Russell, who discovered the complete fossil remains of *Hesperornis regalis* — yes, a bird with teeth — in 1872 when he was only twenty.



Jill demonstrates the mechanics of how prehistoric birds and dinosaurs may have evolved flight.

Her ancestor Tom Russell is far from famous today, but his discovery of the missing link between birds and dinosaurs was briefly famous indeed. Today *Hesperornis regalis* is chiefly known to paleontologists, both professional and amateur.

One of the best things about her engrossing book is her ability to take detours, whether they're a visit to a quilting circle, a celebration of her daughter's accomplishments, or an interview with 10-year-old triplets who “know their dinosaurs.”

She showed us an iconic photograph featuring a posed portrait of the members and guides of the 1872 Yale College Scientific Expedition. Contrary to what you might expect, Jill's ancestor appears to be the most relaxed and appropriately dressed of the bunch. This photo in itself was enough to lead Jill into fascinating detours, including a discourse on the ancestry of moccasins, a visit to a Hollywood costume company, and an exploration of 19th-century portrait photographers.



After Tom Russell returned from the Yale expedition where he discovered his fossil, he enrolled in the postgraduate program at Yale Medical School, receiving his M.D. in 1875. For the rest of his life, he was a surgeon and a professor of medicine and therapeutics. He continues to be celebrated within his family, but he didn't need to be famous. As Jill noted, he was one of those who, like the hero of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, “lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.”

If you haven't read Jill's book, I recommend you get a copy and prepare yourself for a fascinating read. Red Rock Books may have a few copies, but if not, you can purchase it on Amazon or abebooks.com.

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MEET OUR RIDGE WRITERS AUTHORS

Several years ago, Ridge Writers assembled and distributed a flyer titled “Meet Our Ridge Writers Authors,” a dossier of sorts introducing visitors to our club booths and tables at festivals and events to the wide range of talents at our branch.

We're redesigning the flyer to update it with the new generation of Ridge Writers authors to distribute at this year's Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival in November. If you want to be included in the flyer, email us at ridgewriters@yahoo.com on or before September 30th. You must be a member of the East Sierra Branch of the California Writers Club to be included.

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

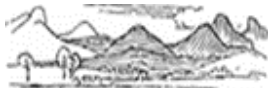
Writer's Block Challenge

Many stories are written from one perspective. One head. One voice. One view. Think how your favorite stories would change dramatically if they were told through a different character's eyes. Imagine if *Hamlet* was told by Laertes or Ophelia. What would they say? What would they *think*?

Give it a try yourself. Pick a story you love. It could be one of your own. Flip the perspective. Write the story from a different character's point of view and see where it takes you.

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 CELEBRATES CALIFORNIA WRITERS WEEK

California Writers Week is coming up on the third week of October. From the CWC website, "For several months in early 2003, with the expert help of Anthony Folcarelli, the Central Board of the California Writers Club worked to establish California Writers Week. The plan was successful and on September 4, 2003 at 10 a.m., California Writers Club members gathered on the Assembly floor in Sacramento to receive a Joint Legislative Resolution from Assemblyman Tim Leslie. The Resolution is endorsed by the California Library Association."

To celebrate this year, Ridge Writers is partnering with the Ridgecrest Branch of the Kern County Library through the efforts of Janis Kunz, Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, and Charissa Wagner. Donna will be creating the California writers display for the library for October. And Janis designed an event bringing guests an hour of writings, poems, and songs called the Ridge Writers Showcase.

Selections are written by California writers and members of Ridge Writers. Come by and share your work on **Friday, October 20th, 2023 from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Ridgecrest Branch Library Children's Room (131 E Las Flores Ave.).**

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**