



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

February 2024

EVA POOLE-GILSON RETURNS ON FEBRUARY 1st



Member and award-winning poet Eva Poole-Gilson has delighted Ridge Writers audiences with past programs and a “Read the Book, Meet the Author” visit. The author of the beautiful *Love Letter from a Poet to the High Sierra* will speak at our Thursday, February 1, general meeting that starts at 6:30 pm and we hold in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. Public invited. No admission fee.

Eva will update us on “my life as a writer in a rural backwater, what I’ve done over the past 50 years or so, and what I’ve published and how. I’ll bring along copies of the books I’ve published via Amazon for possible sale, that most recent (August 2023) *A Spark in Slow Motion*.”

She’ll add a reading of her work now in progress: “A dig into memory; I’ll also create a writing prompt to encourage those in the audience to write...and share.”

Eva has degrees from the University of Wisconsin and Mexico’s Institute Allende. For 20 years, she taught writing and literature for Cerro Coso College. With California Arts Council grants, she served as poet-in-residence at two High Sierra high schools. Looking back, she has no trouble identifying her favorite job, as a teaching poet via California Poets in the Schools. Through California Poets, she taught in four counties and found ways to bring over 70 illustrious poets to Bishop, to work with children during three-day poetry conferences each spring for 18 years.

A book signing and Q&A will follow. We hope to see you there, and bring your friends!

JOSHUA FOX ON TIPS FOR METICULOUS FORESHADOWING

Report on the January Meeting written by Donna McCrohan Rosenthal



Josh Fox speaks at January meeting.

Ridgecrest author Joshua Fox gave our Thursday, January 5 program, “The Meticulous Art of Subtlety and Foreshadowing.” He has produced fiction in various genres for a large and enthusiastic audience online and recently brought out his first print novel, *No Good Man*.

He began his talk by telling us that he always enjoyed subtlety in stories, particularly mysteries, and embellished on that by underscoring that the reader needs every piece of pertinent information, which foreshadowing helps to provide. You can hint at a secret, such as by indirectly referring to origin, birthplace, and background. With foreshadowing, you essentially create a metaphorical trail of breadcrumbs.

Stylistically, Joshua also likes working with fear to promote character development.

Mark Your Calendar...

February 1 – Eva Poole-Gilson, award-winning poet and author of *Love Letter from a Poet in the High Sierra*

March 7 – Carole Wagener, author of *The Hardest Year: A Love Story in Letters During the Vietnam War*

April 4 – Ken Waldman, author, poet, and traveling fiddler

May 2 – Tony Piazza, Central Coast film historian and author of seven mystery novels.

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To See a World in a Grain of Sand



"To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour..."

— From "Auguries of Innocence" by William Blake

I'm most likely butchering any traditional analysis of this poem by William Blake, but I wanted to use those famous opening lines—which I first heard, if you can believe it, in the Angelina Jolie movie, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*—to explore the idea of finding writing inspiration in humble places. When did you last see a world in something as small as a grain of sand?

I've personally noticed a trend in many young writers an overwhelming interest in world-building, crafting epic landscapes for their stories. They dive into the fabrication of society, commerce, geography, systems and cycles, flora, fauna, and everything in between. Their vision is immense in scope, all-encompassing in detail. It's a tremendous, commendable beginning of the journey of writing. But it's never enough. Because a giant world is hollow without people to occupy it and stories to tell.

I think of stories such as the *Harry Potter* franchise. Yes, the world-building is rich and full-bodied. However, think of those scenes. How many of them are just Harry, Ron, and Hermione talking out problems over homework around the common room fire? How many of us remember Harry's first real Christmas at Hogwarts where he received his first presents and spent the day with his best friend? It's not the lore that makes this work. It's the humanity. It's the ability of readers to relate to the characters. Best friends and study parties. Sleepovers and Christmases. The magic world lends it a flavor, extra spice added to the recipe. Yet, at its core, it's a tale of love and human relationships. We need to be able to see ourselves in these small moments. That's where the power comes in storytelling. We cannot relate to a scene which we have no connection to. Writers make us care in these heartbeats of intimacy with a character. Our hearts connect with little moments, not large-scale swaths cut through pages of text. The story makes us care; The lore keeps us around. It's a delicious bonus to a work. Much of what you dream up will never see the printed page, because it's not necessary to the actual propulsion of the plot. It can add fullness to your writing, but it's not support structure.

So I ask all of you to remember your small moments. Craft a tale of the intimate, the insignificant, the human-scale. It can be easy to lose yourself in the breadth of your universe and realize you have no story to share. Make sure you see the value and beauty and exquisite detail—a whole world of possibility—in a breath of time as small as a grain of sand. Seek inspiration in those humble spots where we all feel the same things. That is where magic can bloom.

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 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 over 100-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:

- The author's name and original publication credit must be printed with the text.
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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.

He went on to stress paying attention to a direction that may have gone off course, adding that he has thrown away scenes that he really appreciated and had spent considerable time on, but made the tough decision when he realized that they no longer served a purpose. “Let the audience experience a scene rather than simply go through it,” he explained. “Just as every brick goes into building a house, every word is part of the story.”

Joshua first immersed himself in writing at a very young age, stayed with and studied it, until he reached the point where he turned out 5000 words a day – because he had plotted his tales meticulously in advance.

His characters began as variations of himself but have evolved very differently. He has now finished two books, each completed in about 28 days, and has 13 planned out for publication. For his current project, he has picked a buddy cop murder mystery.

For anyone wondering about taking the Amazon route, he noted that this approach costs essentially zero (except for the copyright, arranged with the US Copyright Office online) and that Amazon sells tools to help market the product.

He uses the pen name Grimlock Bragi, a nod to Bragi, the Norse god of poetry. You can find *No Good Man* for sale at Amazon and follow Joshua online at Twitter/X: @GrimlockBragi.



Cover Art by Dustin George

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

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C L O U D 9

an ekphrastic poem by Janis Kunz



Photograph by Janis Kunz

Like a soft comfy blanket on the bed.
Ready for snuggling and offering protection from
daily woes.

Like a frothy topping on a hot drink.
Promising a flavorful journey underneath just right
for soothing the soul.

Like a covering of freshly fallen snow.
Making the world seem like a wonderland of
sparkling peace.

Like the fuzzy fur of an animal friend.
Perfect for relaxed companionship on your lap or at
your feet.

Like the bubbling surf of a serene beach.
Coming ever so rhythmically upon the shore.

Oh how I'd love to drift away on Cloud 9,
To feel all of these things and more...

* * *

Writers of Kern Spring Writer's Conference

Saturday, March 16th 8:00 to 3:00 p.m. at Hodel's in Bakersfield, California

“EARLY BIRD DEADLINE (before February 1st): attendance costs \$50.00 for WOK & CWC members, \$75.00 for nonmembers, and \$25.00 for full-time students (18 and up) with ID. After February 1st, the cost is \$60.00 for WOK & CWC members, \$95.00 for nonmembers, and \$45.00 for full-time students (18 and up).”

The registration fee includes a continental breakfast, snacks, and lunch at Hodel's. Our conference will feature a panel of experts on the ups and downs of navigating the world of self-publishing and speakers including Kern County's beloved journalist, **Bob Price**; songwriter, producer, and comedian **Dan McGowen** will discuss classic comedy and the importance of humor in writing and everyday life; and award-winning poet, author, and life coach **Annis Cassells**. Interested individuals are encouraged to register soon to secure their spot, as attendance is limited. Visit www.writersofkern.com for more information.”

2024 CWC Literary Review

The California Writers Club *Literary Review* has been published for many years, but with the blessing of the CWC, the High Desert Branch has created a new model. In order to expedite the process, and to make the costs more manageable, the branches themselves are responsible for selecting and editing their submissions. Our branch is only permitted to submit one poem and one story.

So if you, as a member of the East Sierra Branch, are interested in taking part in this publication, please let us know by emailing us at ridgewriters@yahoo.com. We will then set up a system to edit and format our submissions.

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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Jack London Awards

WOK Spring Writer's Conference

PLANET MOJAVE

In 2011, Ridge Writers compiled, edited, and published our first branch anthology titled *Planet Mojave: Visions of a World Apart*. Themed around Ridgecrest, the Mojave Desert, the Sierra Nevada, and Death Valley, the collection featured member stories, essays, articles, poems, flash fiction, and more.

We are coming up on thirteen years since that first printing, and our branch membership has grown and changed in those years. We want to give our current membership a chance to publish in our branch's anthology, so we are releasing a new 2024 edition of *Planet Mojave* as our major project for the year. We invite our current members to submit work for this new version. All the original material will be retained.

Submission guidelines:

*All pieces should be themed to our area.

*Members already in the first edition may submit up to two new pieces. Poems have no word count limits, but fiction and nonfiction are limited to up to 1500 words. We will also add new 55-word stories.

*Submissions will be reviewed and subject to editing by Editor Daniel Stallings. **All submissions should be sent to him at beinmyhaus@hotmail.com.**

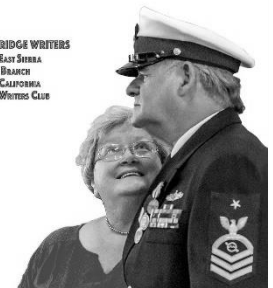
*If you are new to Planet Mojave, we will need your author bio for the back of the book. No longer than 150 words each please.

*Deadline for submissions is aimed for early summer to allow us to finish the book by the Petroglyph Festival. If you have questions, feel free to email us.

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
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