



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

March 2024

RIDGE WRITERS DISCUSS HYBRID MEMOIRS BY VETERANS MARCH 7



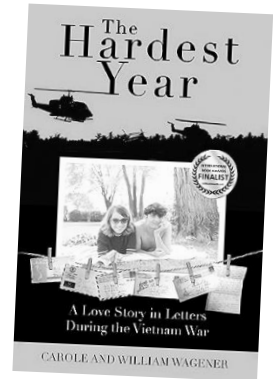
Carole Wagener, a charter member of the CWC Coastal Dunes Branch, will talk about her new book *The Hardest Year: A Love Story in Letters during the Vietnam War*, for our Thursday, March 7 general meeting that starts at 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. Public welcome. No admission fee.

This hybrid memoir (a literary genre that combines memoir elements with other forms or styles) – based on handwritten letters, cards, and newspaper clippings sent between Carole and Bill Wagener from September 1968 to August 1969 – won a Military History Finalist Award from the International Book Awards. The idea came after Bill found a shoebox full of old letters from

Vietnam in the garage, and Carole had just attended a program about turning letters into a book. She got busy organizing the material, but needing more help, hired editors, went to writers' conferences, and back to community college at the age of 70. It would take her seven years to complete the project.

She gives her presentation at our March 7 general meeting, and will also do a "Read the Book, Meet the Author" at 2 p.m. in the Pizza Factory party room on the same day. For this, buy your book at Red Rock Books and read it in advance. The ticket price of \$35 includes tea and scones at the event, copy of the book that the author will autograph to you, entry in a gift basket drawing, and convivial conversation with the author and group.

Coastal Dunes has published her short stories and poetry in their anthologies, and her work appears often on socialwritersshowcase.com.



EVA POOLE-GILSON SHARES TALENT AND ENTHUSIASM WITH RIDGE WRITERS **Report on the February Meeting written by Liz Babcock**



Eva Poole-Gilson talks about her late husband's abstract inkworks and how she fell in love with their "reckless beauty."

Energy, talent, purpose, and enthusiasm — those are traits author Eva Poole-Gilson shared abundantly with Ridge Writers at our February meeting.

Eva, a chronicler of the Eastern Sierra, has given programs here before, but this time she took a new tack. Rather than a how-to session,

her presentation had more to do with making opportunities and taking advantage of them.

As she shared poetry from several of her books, she also shared glimpses of her life as a "backwater poet."

She self-published her first book, *Love Letters to the High Sierra*, when she was living in San Francisco, a "city dweller so dulled by cement and buses and noises that she'd misplaced the belief in breath-taking natural beauty." She wandered down into the Owens Valley in her VW bug through scenery she found "silver and white and sky-blue and high and deep."

Mark Your Calendar...

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, Coastal Dunes Branch film historian and author of seven mystery novels.

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Supersaturation

There comes a point in writing that I think of as “an amassing of knowledge.” Writing is an act of creation. You’re putting work out into the world. And as Mr. Isaac Newton said, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Drag counters thrust, for example. So for every output, there must be corresponding input. Especially when it comes to creative endeavors. I like to think of it as replenishing the well. You draw from the well in your imagination to create your work. You need to take time for the well to refill before you draw from it once more. So you read, research, dream, watch different media, observe...



Recently, I have been conceptualizing a new collection of mystery short stories. This one is themed around celestial objects within our Solar System. Each individual story is named after one of the eight planets, the Sun, three dwarf planets, or a comet. Each story features a setting and plot that reflects several aspects of the object inspiring it. Where on Earth is most representative of Uranus, for instance? So, in this time of conceptualizing and brainstorming, I’ve been collecting as much information on the Solar System as I can, creating, by the time of writing this, over thirty pages (and growing) of detailed notes for this collection. I gather data on planet size, composition, year lengths, distance from the Sun, moons, outstanding features, temperatures, historic observations, formation, mythology of namesakes...it goes on and on and on. From there, the research shifts back to Earth where I start establishing links between these cosmic bodies and home. What areas on Earth can create an analog to each planet, our Sun, comets, asteroids, and so on? It’s been a delightful creative challenge with surprising success.

This is the “amassing of knowledge” I referenced at the top of this President’s Message. It’s a tiny bit distinct from regular research as there’s no definitive end goal here. I’m not researching information to fit into an already designed story or universe. This is the raw building state of a new world. A lot of this may not even end up in the final stories. But this allows me to collect as much as I can, so I can then build more bridges between ideas and form the final work. Let us compare it to spooning more and more spoonfuls of sugar into a sugar solution until it becomes supersaturated. I’m adding ideas and research to every story’s notes bit by bit, atom by atom until my notes are so inundated that I have to start writing. All I need to do then is find the seed crystal of an idea—the one that brings it all together—and add it to my notes. And watch the story crystalize right before my very eyes. Link by link. Atoms bonded to atoms.

I want to encourage our members that there is fun to be had in dreaming and designing and researching. Allow yourself the time to just gather ideas, learn as much as you can, without the pressure of a specific project. Watch linkages form. See your ideas crystalize into a story. Because by supersaturating your creative well, you’ll be delighted at the gems of stories that will grow in your imagination.

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 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:

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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.

Thus inspired, she packed up her meager belongings and moved to the Eastern Sierra, where she has made history ever since — not just as a working poet but also as a teacher of new crops of young enthusiastic poets.

Life with her house cat inspired her to write her second book, *Whiskered Wisdom. A Cat-Lover’s Cat-A-Log*. “That was a really fun book to write,” Eva said.

Her third book was *Little Star Sleeping*, which describes a teenager’s cultural experiences in the Owens Valley. The book is fiction but draws on Eva’s own experiences, notably in an Indian sweat lodge where she relaxed and learned during weekly visits for about eight years. She experimented with marketing the book on Amazon, a lot of work, she said.

Next she took advantage of an opportunity to edit a friend’s book, *A Spark in Slow Motion: One Woman’s Way With Parkinson’s Disease*, by Dianne Tucker-LaPlount. Eva contributed so meaningfully to the book’s creation that she is listed as the second author. The book shares not just the author’s journey through pain but also emotional pictures contributed by her husband.

As Eva became well known as Owens Valley muse, she made many fascinating friends, notably including a man she fell in love with after they met in an Owens Valley snowstorm. He had just closed an art gallery in Santa Monica. So they married — and the valley was the richer for it.

During her years in the Eastern Sierra, Eva has taught poetry in every school in Inyo and Mono counties. She loves teaching poetry to children, whose brains are open to poetic expression. Eva said that once she gets an idea for a poem, she writes it rapidly. “But if I can do it in 10 minutes, kids can probably do it even faster.”

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

Several successful grants allowed her to open the Imagination Lab upstairs in a shopping center in Lone Pine, a fertile place for artistic expression.. Gradually Eva gathered her books and artifacts there.

One day a friend stopped by and offered to organize Eva’s extensive library of art and literature, and although Eva hadn’t realized that needed doing, she remained open to the opportunity. With assistance from that friend, a replica of Gertrude and Leo Stein’s famous Parisian Salon de Fleurus took shape next door to the Imagination Lab.

“We were happily doing experimentation in artistic expression,” said Eva. “Then Covid came.” Eva has been successful in finding grants to fund her efforts over the years, so now she is writing an application for a grant that funds individual artists. “It’s a great challenge to come up with a biography of no more than 100 words,” she observed.

She’s also working on a memoir, *From Rape to Resurrection*, which she described as “a lifelong impetus woven out of trauma.” As she shared sections of both the grant application and the book manuscript, we were awed by the beauty of her writing.

As you can tell, Eva had a lot to say. You can learn more about her and buy her books at <https://evapoole-gilson.com>. Amazon also carries several of them.

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READ THE BOOK, MEET THE AUTHOR

Buy your book at Red Rock Books and read it in advance. The ticket price of \$35 includes tea and scones in the party room of Pizza Factory, a copy of the book that the author will autograph to you, entry in a gift basket drawing, and convivial conversation with the author and group. If you purchase a ticket but cannot attend at the last minute, please cancel by noon Wednesday. If you do this, we can refund part of the ticket price, and if you leave the book for us, we can have the author autograph it to you or to a name of your choice.

Thursday, March 7, 2024 – Carole Wagener, author of *The Hardest Year: A Love Story in Letters during the Vietnam War*.

Thursday, April 4, 2024 – Ken Waldman, author of *Now Entering Alaska Time*.

Thursday, May 2, 2024 - Tony Piazza, author of *A Murder, Well-Scripted*.

Vision and Verse

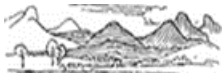
The first phase of *Vision and Verse*, the CWC's 2024 ekphrastic book has been completed. "Editor Les Bernstein and judge Cheryl Maeder selected 15 images out of the 276 submitted works of art," writes Roger Lubeck, CWC President.

From the CWC: "We have opened the submissions page for poetry and prose designed to be paired with the selected artwork. Ekphrastic writing is a literary reaction to a selected artwork. It is a way of using artwork as a writing prompt that is designed to inspire and ignite imagination."

Use the link below to see the winning artwork and details on how to submit:
<https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse-ekphrasticbok-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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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 **June 1 at 11:59 p.m.** 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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