



*Writers
of the*

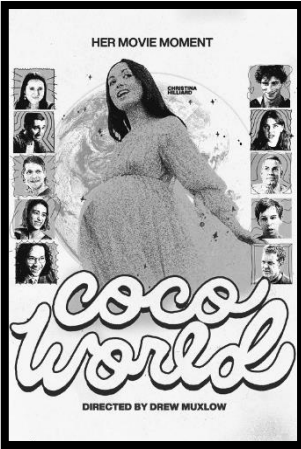
PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

June 2024

How to Make a Movie in 150 Days - Thursday, June 6 program



Film poster for Coco World.

Ridge Writers will present Drew Muxlow as our June 6 speaker, with the program “How to Make a Movie in 150” Days. The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. Public welcome. No admission fee.

In June of 2023, Drew Muxlow had zero filmmaking experience and zero connections. After losing his job editing compilations for the Snapchat Discover Page, he decided to make a movie in the time before his unemployment checks dried up. He sifted through his pile of screenplays and realized none of them could be shot for less than \$5 million.

In a frenzy, he wrote a no-budget script and showed it to the funniest person he knew, Christina Hilliard, former UCLA classmate and current Second City cast member. She hopped on board, but the script still demanded a heartthrob. After cold-emailing hundreds of up-and-coming actors, Drew landed Chris Barnett, who had over 10 million online followers. With Chris’ prowess, Drew could scrape together just enough cash to hire a barebones crew and plan a 12-day shoot.

By the end of production, he realized that he had stumbled backwards into what he considers “the greatest team of artists in the history of art,” and with their help, created a film that he says, “will split the timeline of movie history into two categories: BCW (Before ‘Coco World’) and ACW (After ‘Coco World’).”

Drew will share the story of how his team wrote, produced, shot, and edited a no-budget feature film in 150 days. He will focus on: Writing for Your Budget, Finding the Right Cast and Crew, Planning for Disaster, working With All Experience Levels, and Cutting the Fat.

See more at Coco World on YouTube and cocoworldmovie.com.

We hope to see you at our meeting and be sure to bring your friends.

TONY PIAZZA SHARES HOLLYWOOD MEMORIES

Report on the May Meeting written by Gerry Wisdom



Guest Nicole Johnson gets her books signed by Tony Piazza at the May general meeting.

The May meeting featured storyteller/film historian Tony Piazza who is a writer from California’s Central Coast. He is also a member of the Mystery Writers of America, past president of Central Coast Sisters in Crime, and the California Writers Club.

During the meeting, with the aid of his wife, he showed some of his extensive collection of photos taken when he was an aspiring actor himself when he was either a bit actor, extra or stand-in in many Hollywood movies and TV shows. He entertained us with personal stories of some film and TV luminaries he had worked with such as Steve McQueen, Raymond Burr, Clint Eastwood, Paul Newman and many others.

His personal story provides an excellent background as source material for his writing and storytelling. For instance...

Mark Your Calendar...

June 6 – “Making a Movie in 150 Days”

July 11 – Richard S. Thomas (author of the Earth Wizard series), “A Brief History of Sci-Fi, Fantasy, and World Building”

August 1 – Open Mic Night, members and public read from their own works, 5-7 minute limit, light refreshments.

Continued on page 3

Balancing Act

Due to a very active transition from May to June, President Daniel Stallings offers us a past message about work-life balance. The irony is not lost on him.



One of the hardest things to do in life is to balance all the responsibilities you have with a desire to stay relatively sane. This couldn't be truer as a working writer where there any number of looming deadlines, upcoming projects, and the day-to-day activities with being a functioning human being. Managing this balancing act can feel as difficult as the balance beam in the Olympics. And sadly, we all can't be Simone Biles.

It's more than just how many hats you wear. It's juggling all those hats. Am I a novelist today? An actor? A producer? A playwright? A club president? A son? A brother? Time for myself? And most days, I have to juggle all those hats at the same time, swapping them minute to minute.

How do I do it? I wish I had a simple and concise answer that made it all easy for others. And honestly, I think moms put me to shame with all their balancing and juggling in this circus called life.

However, I have worked hard to find the work-life balance that allows me the freedom to work and play. Scheduling is a big thing, setting aside definite rehearsal times, writing times, and quitting times. This makes it so I have definitely established periods to work and recover, because my work can feel like it never ends. Another big thing is to forgive myself for taking a break. We can often punish ourselves for not working long enough or hard enough. But we are humans. We can't plod away like machinery. We need to find those moments to recover and recharge, so we can work the next day. Forgiving myself of that desire takes away the stigma and allows me to be a happier, healthier worker. How do you find balance?

Ridge-Con Fantasy Festival



May the Fourth be with you! On May 4, Ridge Writers had a booth at the first ever Ridge-Con Fantasy Festival at the Desert Empire Fairgrounds. Alongside promoting upcoming meetings and offering information about the club, we provided interactive activities such as The Event Horizon writing workshop, our collaborative group story



continued from Weird Weekend (pictured right with member Linda Saholt), places for junior and adult writers to work on stories, poems, and more, and books, DVDs, manga, and more for \$1 donation to the club. We had very successful outreach with over twenty sign-ups to learn more about the work Ridge Writers does. Thank you so much to Donna for organizing with the fairgrounds and Daniel, Janis, and Nicole Johnson (pictured left) for working the booth for the entire event.

Ridge Writers Leaders

President – Daniel Stallings
Vice President – Janis Kunz
Secretary – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
Treasurer – Andrew Sound
Member at Large – Vacant
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 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.
- The text must be printed in its entirety, without additions or changes.
- 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.

Piazza has written a memoir called *Bullitt Points* which provide a behind-the-scenes look at the now-classic Steve McQueen movie. It is clear that Tony is especially passionate about his own involvement in this movie and knowing McQueen himself. He described him as a very nice man who cares about others. The book would be an excellent purchase for McQueen buffs who also want some insight into the man himself.

As for film history students, what a delight it would be to be taken on a tour of Piazza’s extensive film library. It is comprised of thousands of classic titles in many forms, such as reel-to-reel, and the equipment to view them. He also has a collection of stills, which often include himself in them. He also became a member of the Screen Actors Guild.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Piazza used his storytelling and raconteur talents at the third and final session of the year of Read the Book, Meet the Author to discuss *A Murder, Well-Scripted*.

The book will be enjoyed by aficionados of mysteries that feature Private Investigator duos. Anyone who has read *McMillan and Wife* will feel right at home with these characters from the bygone era of Hollywood in the 40’s and 50’s.

He takes the reader from Hollywood and a traditional movie set, up Highway 14/395 via location movies sets of false western towns, all the way to the Alabama Hills, where the real action takes place. You can actually feel as if you are there. The scenes could have been written by Ellery Queen, Dashiell Hammett, Rex Stout *et al*.



Tony Piazza at Read the Book, Meet the Author

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.

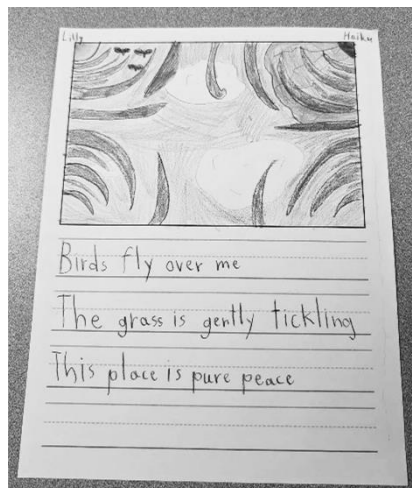
Maryann Butterfield 1997
Casey Wilson 1998
Rlee Peters 1999
Judy Dutcher 2000
Curt Danhauser 2001
Judy Martin 2002
Donna McCrohan Rosenthal 2003
Holly Dworken Cooley 2004
Liz Babcock 2005
Allison Aubin 2007
Steve Wersan 2009*
Margaret Luebs 2013
Daniel Stallings 2015
Julianne DiBlasi Black 2017
John Anderson 2019
Andrew Sound 2021
Janis Kunz 2023

*With a special Charmian London Award to Fran Wersan

If this book managed to convey an appreciation for the magic world of Hollywood, surely *Bullitt* will do the same for the streets and neighborhoods of San Francisco. Of his many novel, three have won awards, and one, *Murder Will Out*, has been translated into Spanish. His books are available on Amazon, in print, e-book and audio formats.

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Art + Poetry Workshop



comment throughout the workshop that we heard from the junior writers, their parents, and our lovely collaborator at the library, Charissa Wagner who helms the Library’s youth programs, was that they would love for there to be more Ridge Writers junior writers events throughout the year. What with the blossoming talent and sparkling imagination that these budding writers and artists are exhibiting, that sounds like a fine idea indeed!

Pictured above: One of the haikus and pictures created by a junior writer at the workshop. **Pictured right:** The table set up at the workshop in the library.

To celebrate National Poetry Month and inspired by the CWC’s art and poetry themed contests and upcoming release, *Vision and Verse*, Ridge Writers held Art + Poetry, a junior writers workshop on April 27th at the Ridgecrest Branch Library. As we have been happily seeing at all our junior writers events, the youngsters who attended brought enthusiasm and creativity! The younger children created their works of art by drawing and writing evocative couplets, and by filling a picture outline with a poem about that object. The middle schoolers were inspired to write haiku and add vibrant art that enhanced the words. Donna Rosenthal and Janis Kunz, who ran the workshop, enjoyed seeing returning students from previous events that were excited to be back! A recurring



Membership Dues Will Be Due Soon

Membership dues for the California Writers Club, of which Ridge Writers is the East Sierra Branch, will be due starting July 1st.

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, able to publish 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 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.



Inside ...

Page 1:

June Program:

“Making a Movie in 150 Days”

“Tony Piazza Shares Hollywood Memories”: Report on May Meeting by Gerry Wisdom

Upcoming Speakers

Page 2:

President’s Message by Daniel Stallings: “Balancing Act”

Ridge Writers Leaders

Ridge-Con Fantasy Festival

Page 3:

Read the Book, Meet the Author

Art + Poetry Workshop

Jack London Awards

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.**

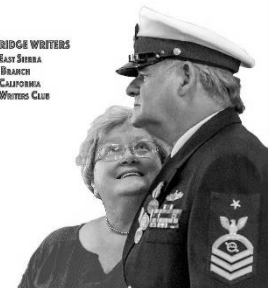
*If you are new to Planet Mojave, we will need your author bio for the back of the book. No longer than 150 words each, please.

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

The East Sierra Branch of the California Writers Club (Ridge Writers) meets the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church (633 W. Las Flores Ave.).